



# Congleton

Public Realm Strategy

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regenerating our town



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## 01: Introduction



# 01: Introduction



Existing pedestrianised street demonstrating 'tired appearance' of materials

“We need to re-think the way that we design both pedestrian spaces and the carriageway so that the impact of vehicular traffic is minimised. This means slowing down the traffic, whilst at the same time improving the design of the street as a place, rather than a transport corridor. Dramatic improvements can be made by... simplifying signing, street furniture and road markings.”

From Towards An Urban Renaissance [pp.93 Urban Task Force 2000]





*High Street*



*Swan Bank*



*Moody Street / Chapel Street Junction*



*Park Road*

## 01:01 Purpose

A Public Realm Strategy is a document which sets out a cohesive approach to refurbishment and or development of the streets, lanes and public spaces within an urban context whether it is a new development, village, town or city Quarter.

This Public Realm Strategy is designed to provide guidance for Congleton Town Centre, ensuring that an integrated strategy is in place to improve the quality of the environment for those who live, work and shop within the town.

This document includes a Strategic Public Realm Plan which provides specific guidance for a number of streets, lanes and spaces, which designers and developers will need to accord with when bringing forward proposals for sites and improvements within the town. This specific guidance is based upon that outlined in the Congleton Town Centre Plan (2008), which advocated the production of this document and provided a clear steer as to the focus/scope of this strategy.

This Strategy focuses on 12 projects within 10 character areas which are designed to deliver transformational change within the public realm. Development proposals within the town will be expected, within reason, to support and assist in the delivery of these projects. The subsequent chapters provide guidance on the over arching approach to particular routes, the materials and street furniture that will be appropriate and expected. The strategy then illustrates examples of how this would manifest itself within the 12 key projects.

In developing this Public Realm Strategy, we have taken account of Congleton's status as a 'Transition Town.' The Public Realm Strategy contributes to that process through the delivery of a high quality public environment. This commitment is reaffirmed throughout this strategy document covering aspects that encourage the use of public transport and influence the choice of materials to ensure that it supports sustainable funding strategies.

Transition Towns are community-based initiatives that recognise the urgent challenges brought about by climate change and dwindling supplies of oil. Transition Towns aim to build resilience at the local level by raising awareness and adopting energy efficient practices. A great part of this involves being as self-sufficient as possible and, drawing upon the collective genius of the community, fostering greater independence moving forward.

Congleton has Transition Town status and a number of active initiatives led by the Congleton Sustainability Group. These include transport initiatives such Congleton's Cycling Campaign as well as community-based initiatives including the Bromley Farm Community Trust, Energy Projects Plus and Congleton Community Projects, many of which encourage walking and cycling.

More information about the transition towns initiative can be found at: [www.transitionnetwork.org/](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/)

Congleton Sustainability Group's website can be found at the following address: [www.congletontransition.org/](http://www.congletontransition.org/)



## 01:02 Relationship between policy and the town plan

The Public Realm Strategy is a progression from the Town Centre Plan (2008), which recommended that a public realm plan be prepared to tie together the range of development sites and economic development opportunities identified. The Town Centre Plan Vision remains the guiding principle for this Strategy.

The Vision states:

“Congleton should seek to re-establish itself as an attractive location to work and shop as it is to live, providing a desirable, inclusive, sustainable and distinct Town Centre.”

The Town Centre Plan also established 10 objectives, of which Objective Five focuses specifically on improving the public realm. The Town Centre Plan diagram (on page 15 of that document) shows a series of routes, squares and gateways under the title public realm. This Strategy provides more detailed guidance as to the delivery and design of these features. Other objectives remain relevant, such as enhancing the retail and leisure offer, creating a strong townscape and creating a safe centre, although it is accepted that this Strategy alone cannot deliver these objectives in their entirety.

The Operational Development Plan at the local level remains the Congleton Borough Local Plan (2005). Policy GR3 (Design) of that document states the importance of quality design in maintaining streetscapes and external design features. The role of street furniture and other elements within the external environment is clearly highlighted in this over arching development policy. Further to this Policy, GR5 introduces a presumption in favour of landscape enhancement as part of any development. The policy states that particular attention should be paid to the protection of urban features and settings (especially within the Conservation Areas) as well as supporting the wider character of the area.

The Sustainable Communities Strategy for Cheshire East sets seven priorities for the Council. The second priority focuses on the need to set the correct conditions for business growth in the area’s shopping and commercial centres (such as Congleton), maximising the potential for tourism and using the natural and built heritage of the area to achieve this. The Public Realm Strategy should be mindful of this priority, and where possible this should help in ensuring this is achieved, which in turn will help deliver the Transition Town goals. The fifth priority states that the vitality and viability of the market towns should be pursued. This Public Realm strategy will have a clear role to play in creating an attractive place to live, work and shop, which will contribute to this priority.

## 01:03 Scope

As noted, this Public Realm Strategy focuses on the areas outlined by the Town Centre Plan, taking these further and providing the detailed guidance behind them. It does not cover any areas outside of the Town Centre boundary.

This is a Strategic document and is NOT a final deliverable design for Congleton Town Centre and therefore each project will require further design work before implementation. This Strategy highlights the required principles that will need demonstrating at the detailed delivery stage by the designers/developers.

It is to be read in conjunction with the Baseline Assessment that formed the first part of the study. The character areas of Congleton Town Centre that are referred to and outlined in Chapter 3 of this Strategy were identified in the Baseline Assessment and formed the basis for the prioritisation of the potential projects.

The document is structured in a manner that allows the goals and aims of the Strategy to be expressed through the use of narrative text supported by plans, diagrams, sketches and photographs. Some of the images have been inserted purely to provide inspiration and a flavour of what could be achieved in Congleton.

This Public Realm Strategy provides the following guidance:

- **Chapter Two** provides the strategic context and setting for this document.
- **Chapter Three** sets out the character areas for the public realm, distilling the essence of place and what makes each area individual in public realm terms and how the twelve key public realm projects and their priorities can support this identity;
- **Chapter Four** illustrates a collective Strategic Plan for the town, detailing the approach that it is to be expected at each level of the hierarchy, with details on the approach to vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport;
- **Chapter Five** details the appropriate surfacing materials, trees, planting, lighting, signage and street furniture for the Town Centre, including where appropriate guidance on the delivery of public art projects;
- **Chapter Six** indicates details for each of the twelve key projects, providing a broad design of how the guidance set in Chapter Four and Five might be delivered, providing indicative costs for delivery;
- **Chapter Seven** provides over arching guidance for designers and developers regarding construction, management, maintenance and access, all of which will need to be demonstrated at detailed design stage; and;
- **Chapter Eight** focuses on phasing and delivery, looking at marrying significant projects to specific developments within the Town, as well as setting out the over arching funding mechanisms that can be used to ensure delivery.

02: Interface with the wider town





## 02: Interface with the wider town



Congleton Bridge Street during a festival

“It is common planning practice to separate pedestrians and cars. This makes the pedestrian areas more human and safer. However, this practice fails to take account of the fact that cars and pedestrians need each other: and that in fact, a great deal of urban life occurs where these two systems meet... where there is total separation between the two, [they] seldom have the same sort of liveliness.”

From A Pattern Language [pp.271 Alexander et al. 1977]





## 02:01 Sustainable town objectives

This chapter is designed to place the public realm strategy within the wider town context. The previous chapter has alluded to the goals that Congleton and its community had agreed to, when it achieved 'Transition Town' status. To comply with that status, the document, and all the related strategies, need to consider the holistic approach to sustainable design and lifestyles.

Whilst the Town Centre Plan and this study are specifically targeted at the town centre, there is a strong presumption for them to deliver wider benefits for the surrounding town. The Public Realm Strategy should link cohesively with the wider green and sustainable networks in the town, to achieve its greatest benefit. The town centre public realm will be pedestrian and cycle friendly, based around a green network within the streets and spaces.

This chapter therefore explores the wider context for these elements, so that designers and developers can address the widest possible context in developing their plans. The following narrative provides design criteria that should be considered for all public realm schemes in the town, in order to assist in the delivery of the wider objectives.



## 02:02 Green and blue infrastructure

Congleton has a considerable green infrastructure (trees, parks and greenspace) network, which links its parks and spaces with the wider countryside. This, when coupled with the blue infrastructure elements (Rivers, canals and water bodies), such as the River Dane and the Macclesfield Canal, creates a fine grained and multi-dimensional landscape ‘matrix’.

A number of ecologically significant elements, such as Astbury Mere are coupled with the more incidental open spaces and urban fringe environments which attract wildlife, breeding birds and provide opportunities for walking and cycling. Not only will the green and blue network assist in encouraging and supporting wildlife and biodiversity, but trees and green spaces assist with urban cooling and reducing the effects of climate change.

The public realm strategy needs to effectively integrate with this network, forging new links between green and blue elements if it is to deliver the transformational change envisaged for the town. Linking to the River Dane for example is easily achieved in this public realm strategy, however, it is important that every public realm intervention considers the goals of establishing a green infrastructure network.

Schemes which do not take every opportunity to deliver the goals of green and blue infrastructure will not be accepted. **Designers and developers should consider the following:**

- Using a balanced mix of native and ornamental tree species in all of the streets and spaces to create and extend the green network throughout the town centre, which will encourage wildlife and assist in urban cooling;
- Using permeable paving or SUDs systems to reduce the effects of runoff and limit the risk of urban flooding; and;
- Ensuring pedestrian and cycle access to the parks, waterside and other green spaces is designed into schemes (either through new routes or improvement to existing links) to allow the community to make use of its existing assets and any new ones proposed.



## 02:03 Sustainable transport links

Congleton is keen to support the use of sustainable modes of transport. That does not mean that it is against the use of private transport, such as the car, but that in the first instance the design for the public realm in the town centre should be geared towards public transport, walking and cycling. Also of note are the pedestrian links within the town centre and out to the wider town, as well as the connectivity to bus stops and the railway station.

Congleton has a growing number of cycle users who require quiet and safe routes to the town centre for shopping and leisure activities. The town also links to the National Cycle Network (Route 55 links with Biddulph and Stoke-On-Trent) and the Canal Towpath links Macclesfield and Newcastle-under-Lyme). The town is also a popular destination for day cyclists exploring the Peaks and cycling routes are important for tourism throughout Cheshire East.

In terms of walking, the town is compact, and from most places, the walk to the town centre is under 15 minutes, however, the lack of sufficient crossings and direct safe routes means that walking is not as common as the distances may suggest. Account must be taken in all proposals coming forward for the schools walking buses, the needs of the disabled and those with young children.

Schemes which do not take every opportunity to deliver the sustainable transport objectives will not be accepted. **Designers and developers should consider the following:**

- Encouraging and supporting existing public transport routes in all town centre proposals, through the provision of new bus waiting facilities and/or taxi drop off points;
- Ensuring that all public spaces and those adjacent to community buildings include well surveilled and secure cycle parking; and;
- That all pavements are a minimum of 2m wide to allow for ease of pedestrian movement and for use by disabled users and those with small children.



## 03: Hierarchies & priorities





## 03: Hierarchies & priorities



Planting in public realm-Halifax Town Centre

“Getting the movement right effects uses and activities, density, security and the impact of development on neighbouring places. The movement framework concerns the structural aspects of movement, focusing on the street and footpath networks... Because every site is different there can be no standard formula. What suits a large suburban site will be quite different from a pocket site in the inner city.”

From Urban Design Compendium Pt 1 [pp.34 Housing Corporation & English Partnerships. 1999]





Figure 3.1 Character Plan

## 03:01 Character areas

As part of the preparation of this strategy, a detailed analysis on a street by street basis was undertaken to explore and describe the varied characteristics of the town. Whilst the town has a cohesive and unique character, different streets and spaces have different scales and uses which suggest a different treatment and layout of the streets and spaces.

This study has identified 10 sub-characters within Congleton, which have helped to shape the scope and the content of each of the projects. The character areas are not precise and there is some degree of overlap.

A full description of the characters is provided in the Baseline Assessment. The boundaries of projects have loosely been designed to conform to these character areas.





Figure 3.2 Priorities Plan

## 03:02 Establishing the priorities

### Priorities

As part of the wider study for the town, a full assessment of the quality of the current public realm was undertaken. This was based on elements such as the usability for pedestrians and cyclists, appropriateness of street vegetation and the quality of the existing paving. All of these elements were scored on a scale between 1 and 5. Each street also was assessed for its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Clearly the public realm in Congleton has a number of poor quality areas, such as Mountbatten Way, which scored badly; however, the majority of the streets and spaces were of reasonable quality and functioning appropriately. To further develop the priorities we considered how the streets would connect to the surrounding network and the opportunities it provided to create better links to a number of routes and locations. As a result, a number of streets were further identified as priorities. The baseline study provides full details of this assessment.

The diagram opposite (Figure 3.2), illustrates the results of this assessment, showing the two immediate key priorities being the Pedestrianised Shopping Streets and Mountbatten Way/Rood Hill. Many of the intermediate priorities identified by this study include those with routes to the park, public buildings or those with shops and other retail premises fronting them.

However, it should be noted that there is an intention to implement improvements in order of priority but this should not prevent a low priority scheme going ahead if opportunities arise for that scheme first.

### De-cluttering – The overwhelming priority

One of the key problems identified in Congleton, and a number of other urban areas in the UK, is that of street clutter. Congleton is a prime example where a proliferation of street signs, advertisements, posts, bollards and pedestrian guard rails have cluttered the urban environment. This clutter not only visually intrudes on the quality of the architecture and streetscape, but means that it is difficult for pedestrians, especially those with young children or the disabled, to move through the town.

As illustrated overleaf (Figure 3.3) a cluttered streetscape has a negative impact on streets and spaces, especially for locations such as the junction of Market Street with Bridge Street and along Mountbatten Way.

As an immediate and short term priority, Congleton should be addressing this clutter. The removal of signs, bollards, guard rails and other pieces of street furniture that are irrelevant within the public realm is reasonably easy to undertake and inexpensive to deliver. The projects that are detailed in chapter 6 show opportunities to address these points in a practical, yet, transformational way at very little cost.

Traffic and highways engineers should review the size and number of road signs within the town where possible. Traffic speeds are low in and around the centre and there is no need for multiple signs and large motorway or trunk road signage. Priority should be given to reducing junction, one way and other multiple traffic signs. Where possible existing duplicate signs should be removed from the streets.



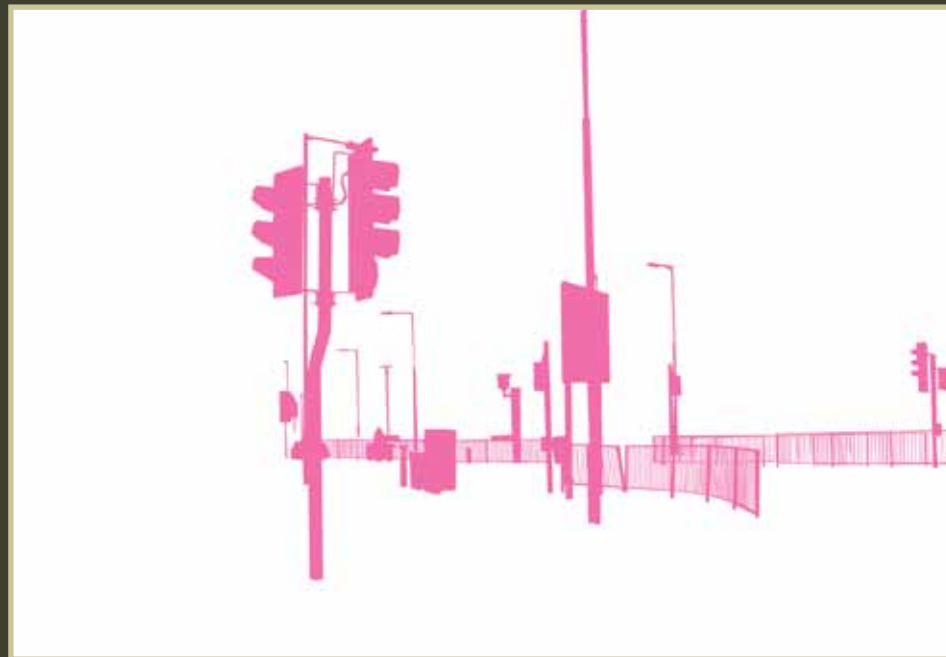
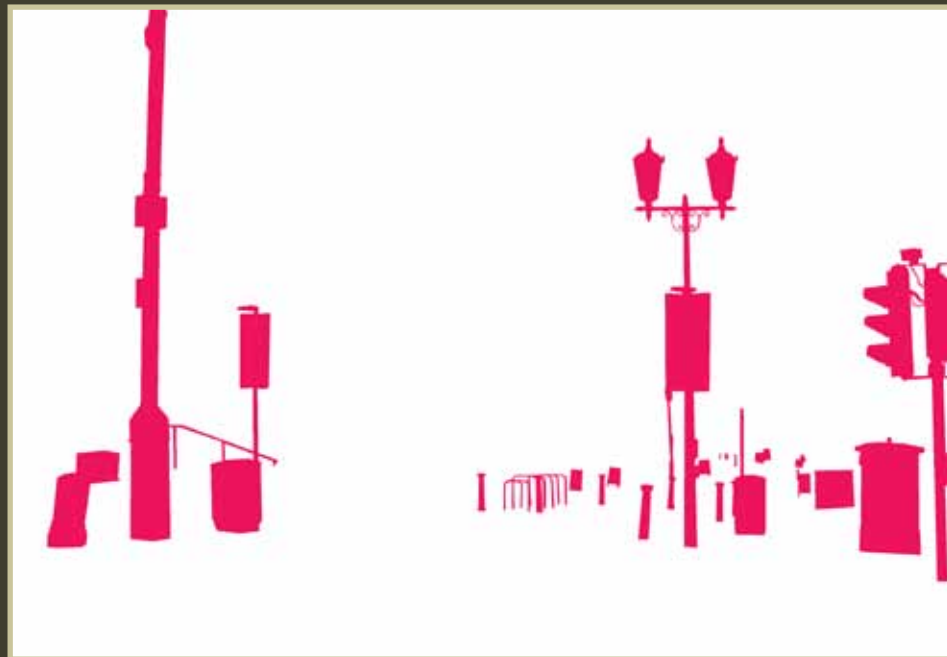


Figure 3.3 Clutter Assessment

## 03:03 Key projects

As a result of our assessment of the town, the following projects have been identified. We have prioritised these into Immediate Priorities, Secondary Priorities and Tertiary Priorities. This does NOT denote any lesser importance to secondary or tertiary priorities; this simply established those projects that will address the most significant issues and problems in delivering an attractive and well connected town centre.

The closer the whole project comes to realisation, the closer we are to achieving transformational change for the town. In the interim, de-cluttering and establishing a regular regime of street cleansing and maintenance should be established in all of the project areas, so as not to undermine the work undertaken within the higher priority projects.

Whilst there are a number of streets that have not been identified as specific public realm projects, they are covered by the strategy set out in Chapter 4 of this document, and these areas should be refurbished (new surfacing etcetera) so as not to detract from the overall effect.

### Immediate Priorities

These projects should be undertaken in the short term as a means of facilitating and promoting further developments; setting the standard for the remainder of the town's public realm. These projects will have the most effect on the physical appearance of the town to visitors and shoppers.

- Mountbatten Way
- Rood Hill
- Pedestrianised Area (Bridge Street/Duke Street/Little Street)
- Festival Square (Junction of High Street/Bridge Street/Market Street)

### Secondary Priorities

These projects focus on providing links to residential areas, car parks, community facilities and the secondary shopping areas. These are focused on improving the footfall and access to the town for local residents and smaller businesses.

- High Street
- Lawton Street
- Mill Street / Swan Bank
- Route to the Park (Kinsey Street / Park Road)

### Tertiary Priorities

These projects are designed to complete the delivery of the public realm strategy, providing the main gateways to the town for vehicles and public transport. These secondary nodes are designed to celebrate arrival in the town and provide an indication as to the boundary of and approaches to the town centre and indeed the extent of pedestrian priority environment.

- Leisure Centre
- West Street
- The Bus Interchange
- Outer Gateways

## 04: Strategic public realm plan





## 04: Strategic public realm plan



High quality public realm - Kensington High Street

“The urban environment has an impact on millions of people on a daily basis. The places we build must therefore be sound, efficient, constructed to last, uplifting and inspiring. [These are] schemes that create spaces and places that people will enjoy and be proud of.”

Design Review: Practice and Principles [pp.02 CABI 2009]





## 04:01 Introducing the strategy

As noted in Chapter 1 this Public Realm Strategy is not a design code or a comprehensive design for improvement of the streets and spaces in Congleton. It is intended to provide a strategic plan advocating an approach and range of treatments that should be implemented to help address the Town Centre Vision. The previous chapter has identified the priorities for the Public Realm and the 'projects' that might be pursued to deliver transformational change and maximum benefit.

This 'Strategic Plan', described in this chapter is therefore focused on providing the over arching framework for the town. It is designed to provide the approach that should be taken for each of the routes and spaces highlighted in the Town Centre Plan that require Public Realm intervention. This ranges from simply refurbishing the existing pavements, roads and spaces, right through to a total redesign of streets or creation of new squares and spaces.



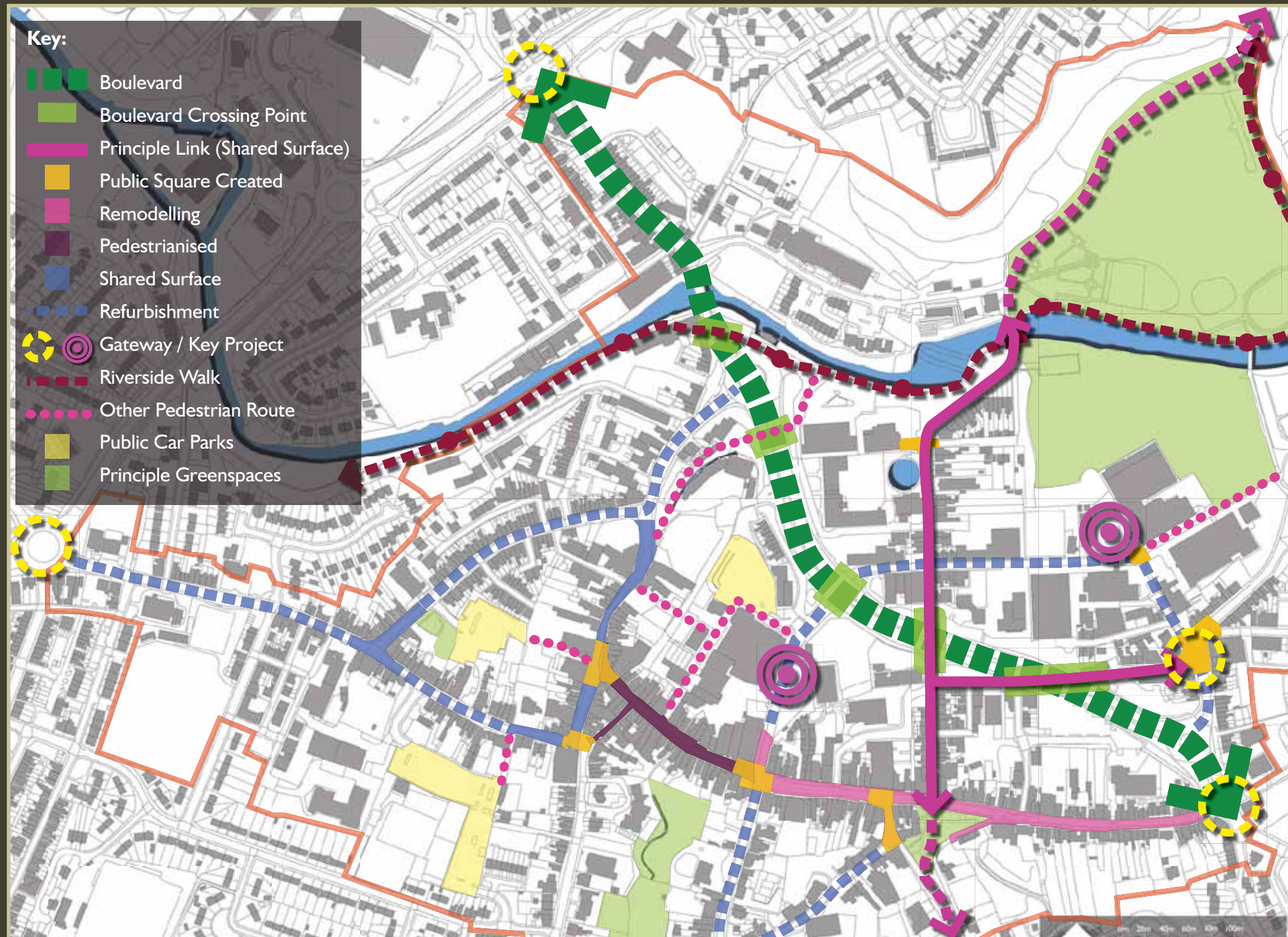


Figure 4.1 Strategic Public Realm Plan

## 04:02 Key public realm treatments

The Public Realm Strategy diagram should be the first point of reference for any statutory undertaker, (such as water, electricity and telecommunications providers etc), any local authority led programme, developer or designer proposing public realm works within the Congleton Town Centre boundary. A hierarchy has been developed into which each of the key routes or spaces is placed, and that hierarchy sets out principles in terms of the quality of design, furniture and materials expected. Proposals for the public realm and planning applications for associated developments will be expected to take these treatments into account.

The Strategy recommends a series of public realm intervention levels that are outlined below. Beyond this strategic level the reader/designer may use this intervention alongside the Design Parameters set out in Chapter Five to arrive at a specific design. Chapter Six illustrates how the key projects could be designed and implemented, but it is expected that designers shall use their own creative abilities to develop proposals that seamlessly tie new developments into their context.

There are a number of key proposals that have been developed for the town centre; their specific locations are shown on the accompanying plan and detailed in the following table. These range from wholesale change and redesign of the streets and spaces, through to remodelling or the refurbishment of the existing pavements and carriageways. The strategy table explains in some detail the approach that developers and designers will need to take for each of the routes highlighted in collaboration with the elements set out in Chapter Five.

Developers and designers will be required to demonstrate how they have accorded with the general principles set out in this chapter and the transformational opportunities shown which are expressed in physical terms within Chapter Six. Schemes that do not take every opportunity to deliver the principles and opportunities set out within this document and thus deliver the long term Vision for Congleton will not be acceptable and will be rejected.

The following pages provide guidance as to the characteristics of each of the treatments detailed in Figure 4.1.

The following pages provide guidance on the characteristics of each of the treatments shown on Figure 4.1. This is in the format of a quick reference table, Figure 4.2, which explains how the designs should accommodate different transport modes and the key design features that should be included. The information contained in the table is for guidance only, but designers and developers should demonstrate how they have considered all of the characteristics covered in the table in their preparations of detailed design proposals.

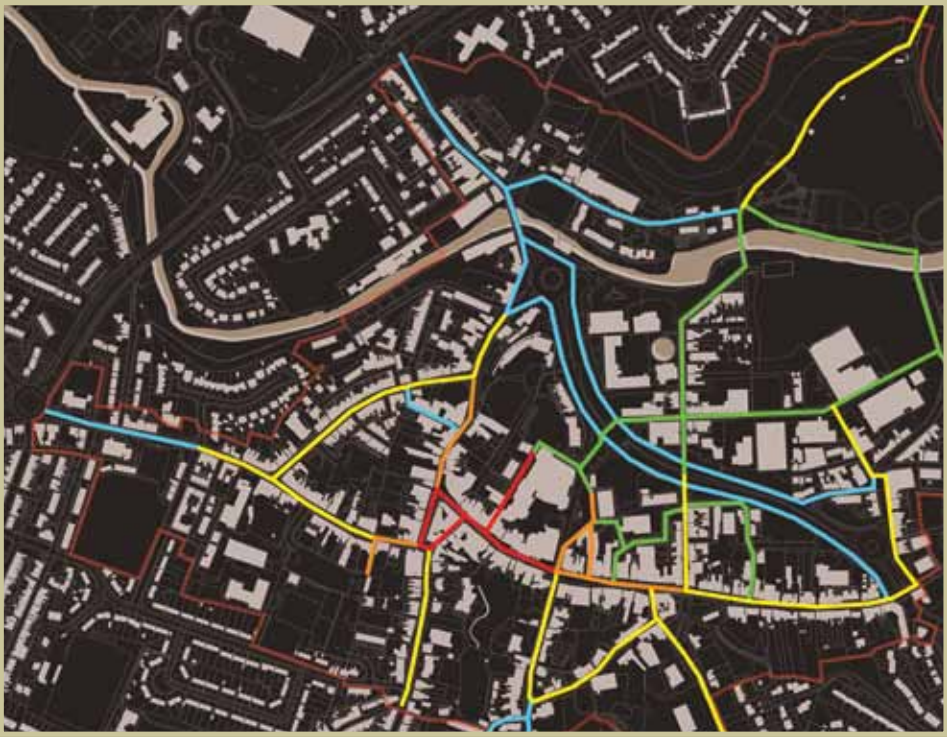


Public Realm Treatment		Mode or User Description					Features Description			
	General	Vehicles	Delivery	Public Transport		Pedestrians	Cyclist	Vegetation	Lighting	Furniture
Boulevard	Roadway with vehicle dominance, but shared surface or raised table crossings. Signalised junctions and crossings should be removed.	Lanes narrowed to a maximum of 3m and traffic lights removed at key junctions.	Not applicable.	Retained route allows for unimpeded bus and taxi use.		New raised crossings in place at key points based around routes or historic street pattern.	Cycle friendly crossings and route through central reservation as applicable.	Strong tree'd character using an avenue of trees in central reservation and in the front of carparks or adjoining land	Tall columns with a white light head and space for a banner or bunting as applicable (See Chapter 5).	Limited - benches and bollards at crossing points. Remove all guard rails.
Key Square	Raised table or shared surface throughout. These areas should each have an individual character and identity.	Traffic movement retained but space designed to reduce dominance. Square design for periodic closure for festivals etc.	Reinforced pavements will allow for overnight delivery vehicles between 17:00 and 9:30.	Public Transport should use the square and be co-ordinated with pick-up and set-down points.		Pedestrian priority within the square using shared surface/ raised table approach.	Shared surface allow the cyclist priority over vehicles. Cycle parking provided in all squares.	Selected tree planting as focal features only. Enclosure by built form is the priority.	Specific architectural form, but also functional lighting to allow ensure maximum use of the space.	Limited in these locations to bollards and cycle parking. Benches and bins used strategically to maximise flexibility of area for events.
Carriageway Remodelling	Carriageway and pavement separate, but priority to pedestrians. Raised crossings at all side roads.	Traffic movement retained, but road is narrowed to lanes of 3m width. Kerb and pavements replaced and widened.	Delivery and short stay parking should be provided as necessary. Delivery only overnight between 17:00 and 9:30.	Bus routes unhindered but without lay-by or similar to further slow traffic.		Pavement used but widened to minimum 2.5m. Raised table crossings to all side roads to improve wheelchair and pushchair access.	Where appropriate Cycle Lanes are identified.	Street trees included as appropriate, but limited.	Lighting Column (See Chapter 5)	Street furniture including benches, bins and bus waiting facilities as appropriate. Retain clear-zone of 2m for pedestrian thoroughfare.
Shared Surface	Shared surface throughout. Kerb/gutter delineation for visually impaired and transition kerbs where necessary for buggies and wheelchairs.	All areas suitable for maintenance/emergency vehicle access, but swept path indicated using small unit paving or stud.	Reinforced pavements will allow for overnight delivery vehicles between 17:00 and 9:30.	Bus routes as existing, but bus stops relocated to key locations.		Pedestrians and cyclists have priority over vehicles. 'Pavement' zones delineated for the visual impaired using transition kerb or material/ colour change.	Cyclists have priority over vehicles. Cycle parking not in these areas.	Limited tree planting to reinforce architectural form. No planting in narrow areas less than 8m street width.	Lighting Column (See Chapter 5)	Limited furniture to benches and bins.
Pedestrianised Areas	Existing area to be refurbished. Clear routes for pedestrians and cyclists should be provided. Shop/Cafe/Restaurant forecourts delineated.	No vehicles - overnight/early morning deliveries/servicing also allows for emergency vehicles.	Reinforced pavements will allow for overnight delivery vehicles between 17:00 and 9:30.	No public transport - pick-up and set-down points positioned at all gateway locations (see key squares).		Pedestrian zone - clear zone of movement not less than 4m wide to allow easy through movement.	For safety cyclists to dismount in this area.	Limited use of trees and planters to frame built form and emphasise streetscape features.	Feature lighting (main shopping area) - white light	Limited to a 1-2m street furniture strip accommodating planters, bins, benches and information boards to the north side of streets (to maximise solar warming and thus active use).
Refurbishment	Existing carriageway resurfaced and paving re-flagged (stone units). Front property boundaries to be renewed.	Vehicles continue to use the route, but possible kerb build-outs to accommodate on-street parking and street trees.	Deliveries as existing. Pavement reinforced in front of all retail areas to protect again run over damage.	As previously but bus stops improved and replaced.		Pavement as existing but relaid and improved. Raised table crossings to all side roads to improve wheelchair and pushchair access.	As existing.	Improvements to boundaries may include planting. Street trees placed in kerb build outs where space is available.	Lighting Column (See Chapter 5)	Street furniture including benches, bins and bus waiting facilities as appropriate. Retain clear-zone of 2m for pedestrian thoroughfare.

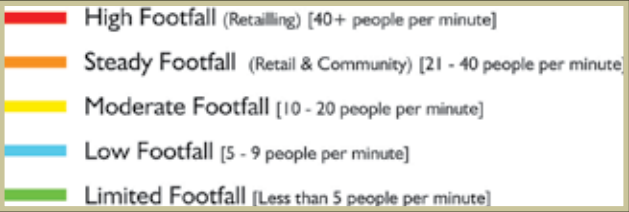
Figure 4.2 Treatment Characteristics Table



# 04:03 Shopping Circuit, Key Routes and Footfall



The strategy that has been developed for Congleton not only seeks to improve the quality of the main shopping area, but looks holistically at the Town Centre and its surroundings, linking the lesser used routes to and from the town centre and providing new and improved connections. Through a study of the existing flows in the town and a perceptual map of these, it is clear that there are key areas where pedestrian activity is at its highest, but this is limited to the area around Bridge Street and Duke Street and similar in a linear arrangement. There is no shopping circuit, no connections across Mountbatten Way and there appears a great distance between the 'hot areas' and the Park. Lawton Street is at the end of a length 'cool' arm of the town centre, exposed and unconnected.



Congleton Town Centre is not a large area; in fact at a brisk walk a pedestrian may cross the Town Centre in less than ten minutes. However, this is would prove difficult for many pedestrians and cyclists, specifically young children and the elderly and less able. Good Urban Design notes that five minutes' walk through an attractive environment is no distance at all, whilst in an unattractive environment this distance is a significant barrier. Christopher Alexander in his 'Pattern language' (1977) expressed the quality of the environment and the distances involved as key to providing successful streets and spaces.



Figures 4.3 & 4.4 Perceptual footfall assessment - (Before and After).



Figures 4.5 Riverside Walk Cross-Sections

The strategy seeks to remedy this with the development of the shopping circuit and improving links. We have prepared a revised map of the town looking at the possible footfall that might be created should the strategy be developed, (Figure 4.4). Of course, this will only be a reality if all of the elements are delivered but a clear 'hot' shopping circuit is visible with links to a number of hotter routes across the town, linking gateways, community uses and the green spaces – including the route to the park and enhancing connections to Lawton Street. These contribute to an attractive five minutes' walk that will revitalise the town and allow sustainable development to flourish.

The riverside walk is an important element of this public realm strategy, see Figure 4.1. Figure 4.5 illustrates through indicative cross sections how the riverside walk should provide a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The route should also be designed to accommodate the elderly and disabled users. As part of this route, opportunities for accommodating public art and interpretation should be included wherever possible.

The above recommended treatments are to complement the existing initiative for the three phases of the Dane Walkway. Phase One is now completed and Phase Two includes the introduction of new lighting.

For street furniture - see Chapter 5.



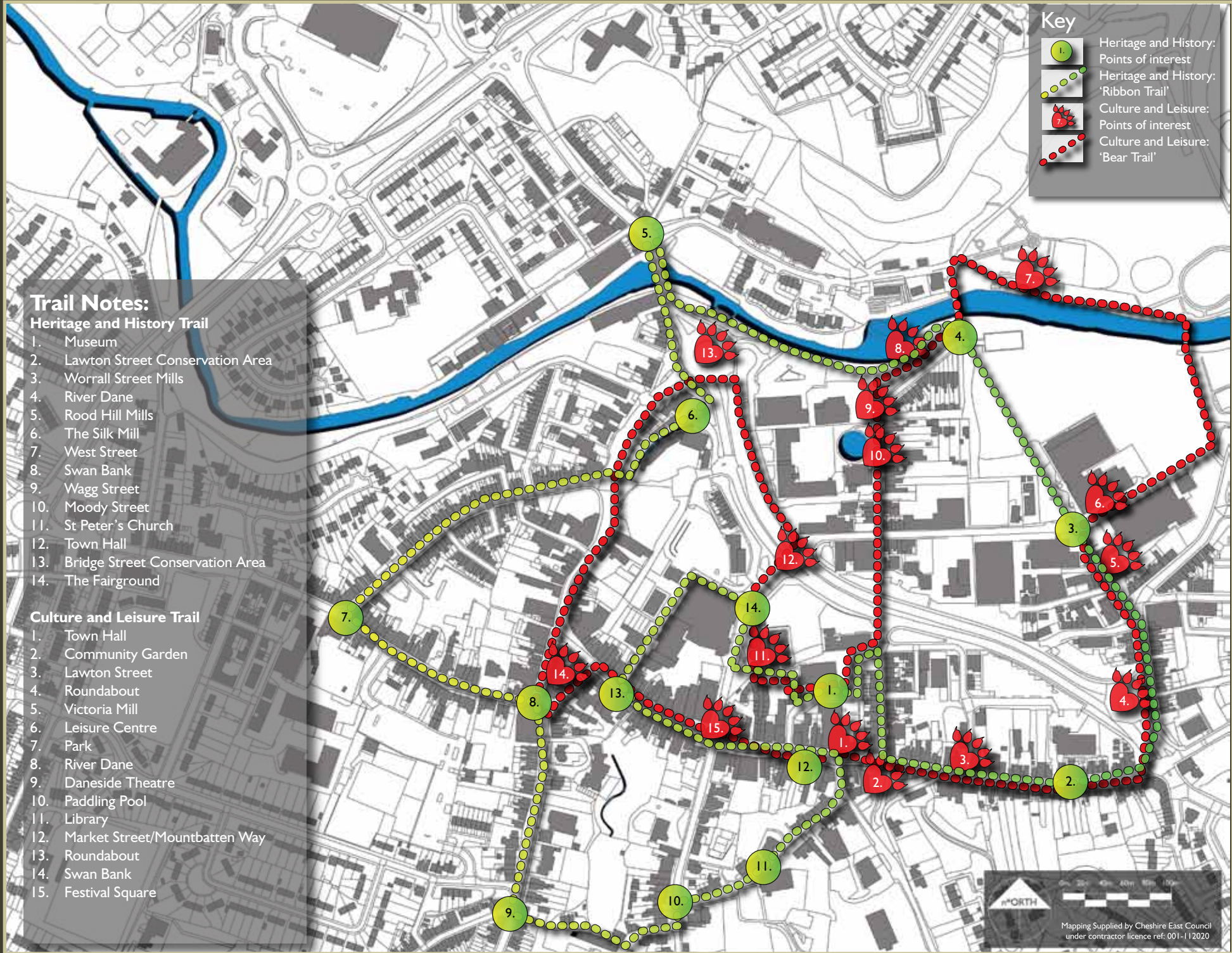


Figure 4.6 Heritage and Leisure Routes

## 04:04 Heritage and leisure routes

One of the key objectives for the town centre – as set out in the Town Centre Plan (2008) – was to improve the leisure and tourism offer for the town. A number of routes have been designed/designated to help deliver that objective. Figure 4.6 illustrates the position of two of these routes. A third route, the riverside walk is in part encompassed by both of the routes illustrated here.

This strategy envisages that these routes will eventually be delivered through visual connectors, in the form of key surfacing and lighting treatments, based around local themes i.e. bear prints and/or ribbons.

The **Riverside Walk** will be established alongside the Dane, but cannot currently be delivered on both banks due to private ownership issues. Future development alongside the river will be required to deliver sections of the riverside walk with free access to the public.

The Riverside Walk has for some time been a key goal for the town and its community. The ability for the community to walk alongside the River Dane is seen as a key benefit and this offers the opportunity to create a route for walking and cycling connecting the surrounding neighbourhoods with Congleton Park and Hankinson Field. New lighting, signage and the possibility of public art or sculpture should be introduced to identify and strengthen the identity of the route.

The **Culture and Leisure 'Bear' Trail** shall connect a number of leisure and tourism assets within Congleton, including the Daneside Theatre, Paddling Pool, Leisure Centre, Park, Library and the Victoria Mill Craft Centre. As part of this route there should also be a Children's trail which explores activities and self learning using art, sculpture and furniture at a variety of heights and levels, with special attention to the floorscape. This route will also include a series of locations for public art, sculpture – whether temporary or fixed. In 2011, the 'Bearmania' event placed over 65 Bear Sculptures around the town. This trail will be able to support further cultural events similar to this.

The **Heritage & History 'Ribbon' Trail** will celebrate Congleton's rich and diverse history, ranging from its architecture and urban form, through to its cultural, agricultural and industrial history. The public realm should begin to reflect and explore this history by signposting the key built form and architecture that encloses the streets and spaces. The route links some of the most historically important elements within the Town Centre, such as the Lion and Swan Pub and the Church of St James the Great as well as the locations where traditional and historically important industries remain. Either interpretation boards or information set into the public realm will help create a managed trail of about 1 – 1.5 hours in length.

Chapter 6 details some of the ways in which the 'ribbon' may be delivered within the town centre. In the interim, the routes should be set up with 'temporary' surface treatment such as painted lines or finger posts. As part of the early delivery of the trails, interpretation plaques/boards should be developed and installed to establish the route, as the public realm works are implemented, the plaques/boards can be accommodated and integrated within the urban form. The trails are described in more detail in Chapter 5 below, as part of the signage strategy.



# 04:05 Traffic and transportation

The Public Realm Strategy is not designed to remove or change the traffic flows within the town. Whilst some of the treatments set-out in the strategy are likely to slow traffic down, or make crossing the roads easier, there are no roads that are to be closed, diverted or stopped up, and therefore the traffic management will be entirely as existing.

In some cases carriageways will be reduced, but in all cases a 3m route should be retained in both directions in order to allow for the smooth flow of traffic. Only the materials and vertical alignment of these roads may be changed, either through introducing raised tables, shared surfaces or similar. As noted in Local Transport Note 1/08, designers of highways schemes in Congleton will be expected to use their “professional judgement when designing schemes and should not be over reliant on guidance.” (p24.)

Along Mountbatten Way and along Mill Street and High Street the crossings and traffic signals have been removed, and in their place are a series of ‘self-managed’ junctions. Whilst this is somewhat unorthodox, examples in the Netherlands, Ashford in Kent and more closely to Congleton, Poynton in North Cheshire, have been entirely effective. Mountbatten Way, is flexible enough in highways terms to accommodate some fundamental change as part of the Public Realm Strategy.

However, it should be stressed that in each of these case study examples, significant traffic modelling has been undertaken to support their detailed design and implementation. Designers and developers will be expected to provide this information along with any proposals affecting the highway. Designs should consider whether signs, lines and other markings are needed or required and whether they can be minimised in size and number. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 document should assist in this element of the design process.

It should be stressed that in determining the acceptability of proposals, designers should have regard to the following guidance notes/documents:

- Urban Design Compendium
- Manual for Streets (Parts 1 and 2);
- Local Transport Note 1/08 – Traffic management and Streetscape
- Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions

It will no longer be acceptable to deliver road and highways layouts which are little more than DB32 compliant. As advised by LTN 1/08, designs should be prepared as a partnership between Urban Designers and Traffic Engineers in order to balance the technical and design requirements of both in a robust fashion to create an attractive environment.



# 04:06 Enhancing the shopping experience

Whilst the Public Realm Strategy, when implemented, will go some way to delivering a better quality shopping experience for local people and visitors, it can only address one part of the problem.

The quality of these areas is as much about the buildings which line these routes and spaces. Many of these are high quality, historically significant examples, such as the Lion and Swan Public House or the Town Hall, but some are marred by poor management and maintenance.

The most notable of these quality indicators is the shop fronts. Many of the shops in Congleton Town Centre take special care to deliver frontages worthy of this historic market town and will compliment the new public realm when implemented. However, for the most transformational effect to be realised, there needs to be a concerted effort to bring the overall quality up. As a separate project the Congleton Town Council, Congleton Partnership and others are developing guidance for shop fronts.

It is therefore important that proposals for any public realm consider the relationship that it has with the surrounding shops and services, specifically looking to support improvements to shop frontages and establishing forecourts for cafés or street displays further animating the street, adding vibrancy, colour and enhancing the shopping experience.





## 05: Public realm design parameters



## 05: Public realm design parameters



“A comfortable and stimulating public realm that encourages social interaction requires detailed attention to the structure of a space and the elements it contains. This involves the surfaces; what is hard, what is soft; what forms of planting are appropriate; and what surfaces are for vehicles as well as pedestrian use, for example. It also requires that the issues of security, public art, street furniture, lighting and signage and so on be looked at in tandem. The designer will need to move freely up and down the design scale of elements.”

*A thriving public realm: Urban Design Compendium 1*

# 05:01 Street furniture

Street furniture is a key part of a town's character. If well designed and positioned it contributes to the town's identity and helps to generate income by welcoming and encouraging visitors to use and stay within the public realm. Here, they can focus on the retail opportunities in front of them and spend more money on food and goods within the town itself.

The illustration below sets out the full range of furniture proposed for Congleton. It also illustrates the range of lighting, as this is a key component of the streetscape as opposed to just a functional element of the town's night life. Lighting is dealt with later in this chapter, the following pages describe the various components of the street furniture in more detail. It should be noted that this furniture is to complement the sponsored Millennium benches that already exist in the Town.

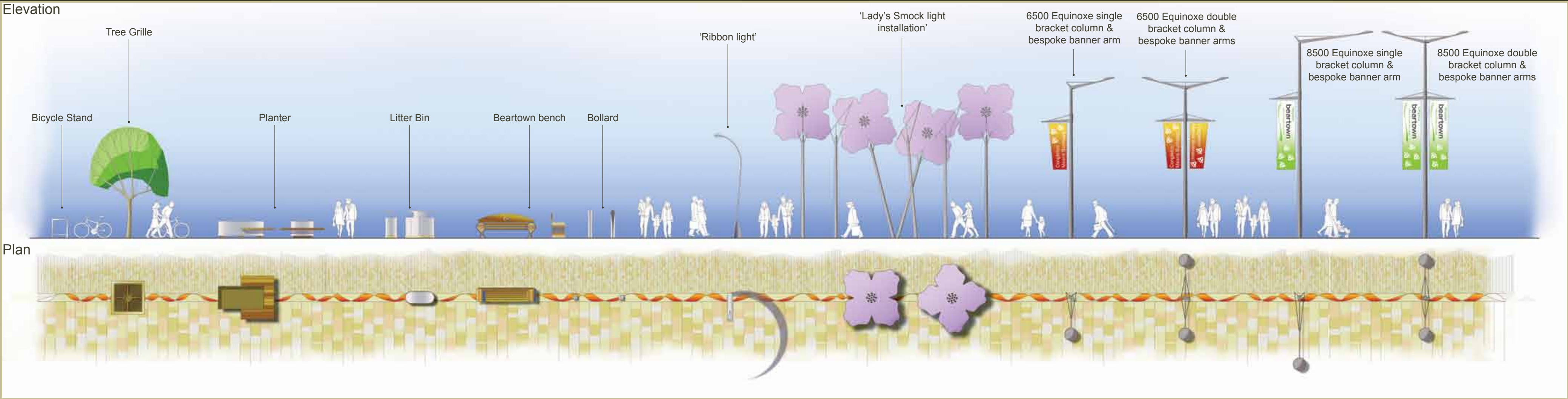
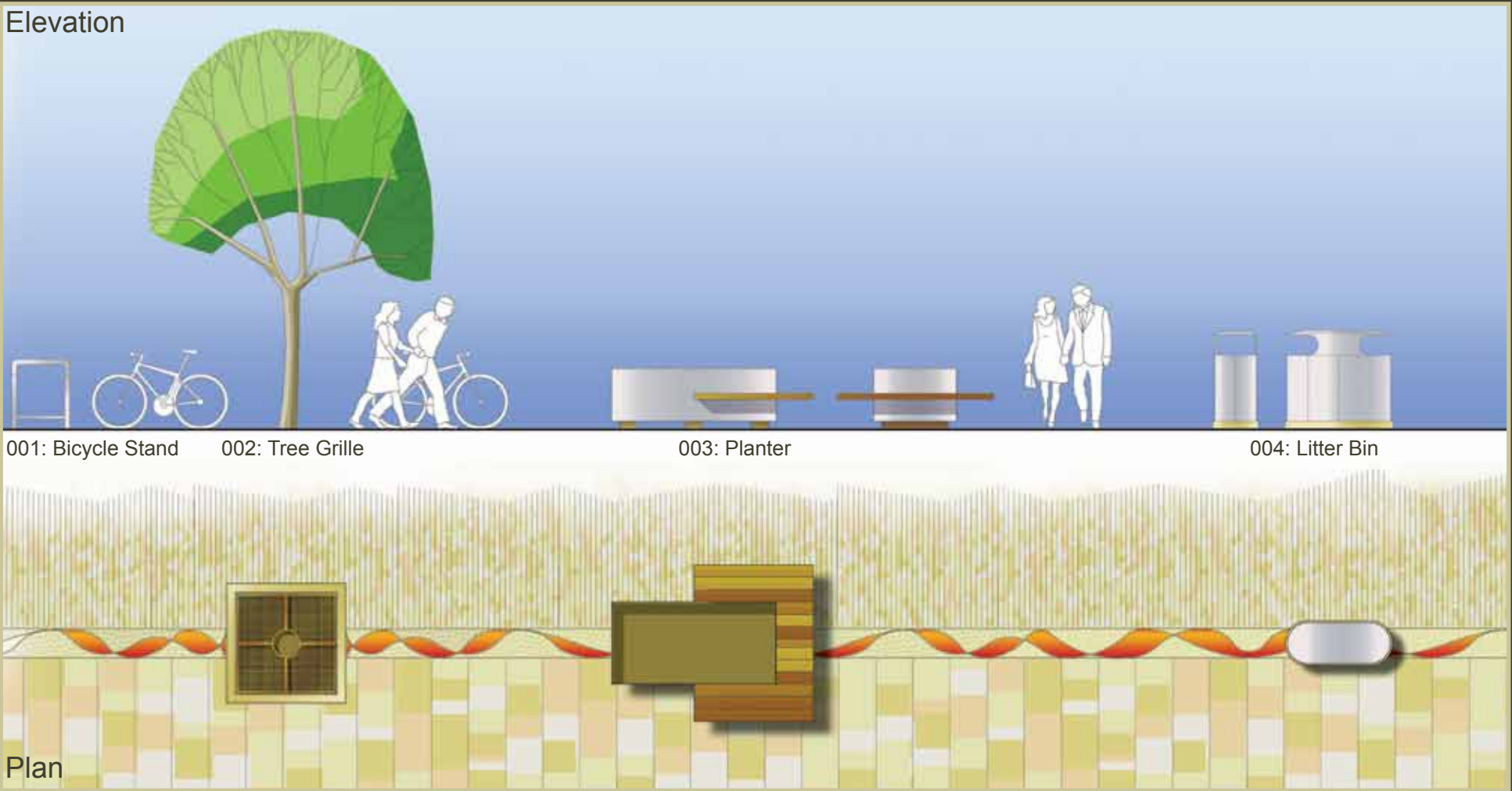


Figure 5.1 Street Furniture Palette





The furniture illustrated here is a combination of available stock items from leader manufacturers and bespoke elements, specific to Congleton, adding to the town's unique identity and 'sense of place'.

Bespoke design or detailing is related to Congleton's heritage, history, character or image.

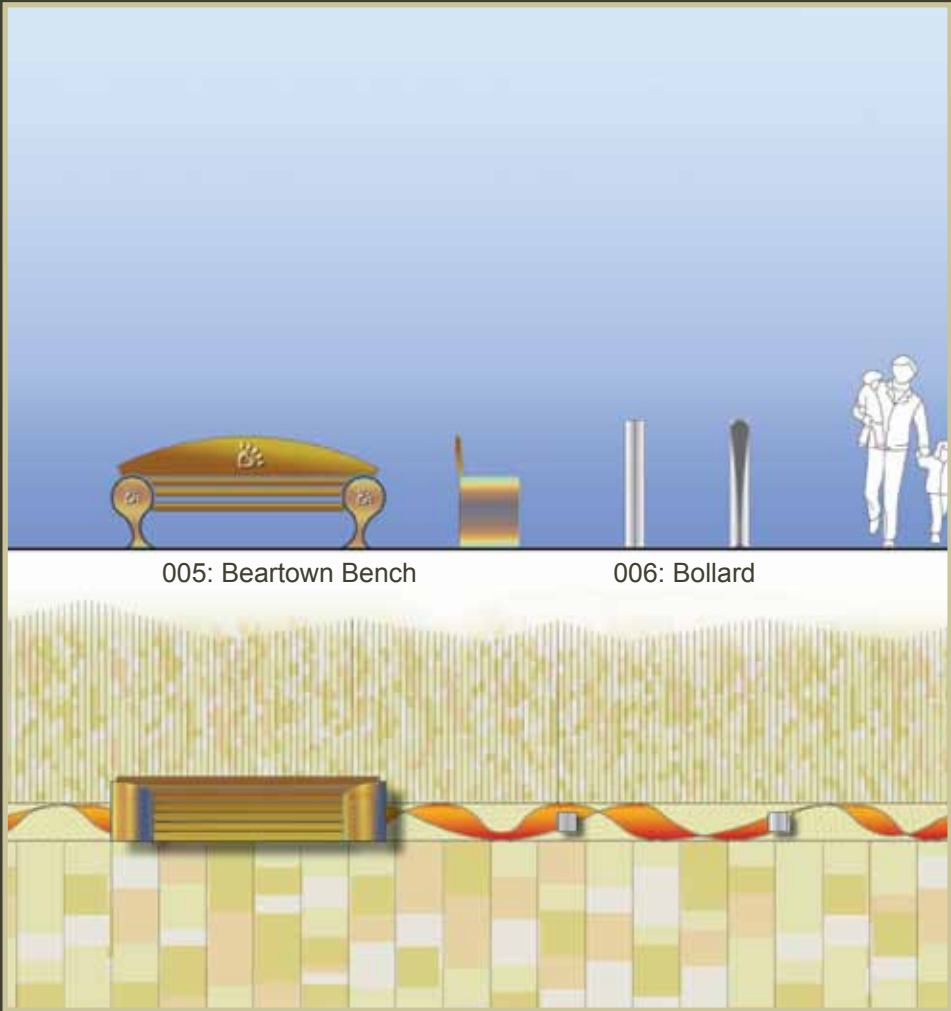


Figure 5.2 Street Furniture Reference Diagram

Ref:	Item:	Location:	Description:
001	Cycle Stand	All locations <b>Note:</b> Ensure stands are located at: Library, Leisure Centre, Bus Interchanges and Town Hall etc.	Geo 316 grade stainless steel bicycle stand <b>Finish:</b> Brushed. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Woodhouse
002	Tree Grille	All locations where specimen trees are located within hard surfaces.	TBC
003	Planter (removable)	High Street Bridge Street Lawton Street Market Street Mountbatten Way	Bespoke design to enable the unit to be moved via fork lift truck. Suggest use of planting liners containing pre-grown stock at nursery. Liners then transplanted out to planters, to create seasonal and instantly mature displays within streetscape.
004	Litter Bin/ Recycling Unit	High Street Bridge Street Duke Street Victoria Street Lawton Street Market Street	316 grade stainless steel litter bin <b>Finish:</b> Brushed. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Woodhouse
005	Beartown Bench	High Street Bridge Street Duke Street Victoria Street Lawton Street Market Street	Bespoke design which creates an inviting 'sofa in the street'. A curvy, voluptuous bench, which just has to be sat on. Beartown motive routed into timber back and cast into iron/ bronze arms.
006	Bollard	High Street Bridge Street Duke Street Lawton Street Market Street Mountbatten Way	TBC

Figure 5.3 Street Furniture Reference Table





Figure 5.4 Lighting Strategy

## 05:02 Lighting Strategy

Figure 5.4 opposite is an illustrative plan which demonstrates the lighting hierarchy for the town centre.

A series of ‘**outer gateways**’ into the town centre i.e. Rood Hill traffic lights, West Street/Clayton Bypass Roundabout and the Mountbatten Way/Park Lane, Lawton Street/Park Lane junctions provide the opportunity to celebrate the town centre through creative use of light. This would be achieved through the use of projectors onto the retaining wall at Rood Hill, advertising events and projecting local art. At the roundabouts trees, planting and sculptures on the roundabouts can be up lit and accentuated using various light sources.

Key junctions and spaces within the town centre, ‘**the inner gateways and squares**’ should also be creatively lit, including:

- Bridge Street/Market Street (New Festival Square)
- Canal Street/High Street (Town Hall Square)
- Kinsey Street/Lawton Street (Community Garden)
- Swan Bank/West Street (Little Square)
- Mill Street/Duke Street (Mill Square)
- Market Street/Mountbatten Way (as part of Fairground redevelopment)
- Kinsey Street/Mounbatten Way (Park/Town link)
- New Market Square (as part of potential Bridestones redevelopment)

These spaces will be lit using 6500mm high free standing lighting columns (see over page), to provide the appropriate levels of lighting for general use, along with the up and down lighting of the enclosing building frontages and specialist lighting of focal features within the spaces, such as sculptures, feature signage, paving art (mosaics, engraved poetry and local history etc.) and specimen trees (including the implementation of a permanent Christmas tree for all round interest in ‘Festival Square’.

The **primary retail streets** - High Street, Lawton Street, Bridge Street, Mill Street, Swan Bank, Little Street and Victoria Street shall be lit with 6500mm high free standing lighting columns (see over page), to provide the appropriate levels of lighting for general use. Additional interest for both night and day shall be created at key points by the use of ‘sculptural lighting’. This lighting should be used sparingly and be themed around a particular unique feature of the town. An example illustrated over, the ‘Lady’s Smock Lights’ provide colour, interest and art, all-in-one and is a reference to the Cheshire flower and towns sense of community and recent recognition by the Mercian Regiment (“a small town with a big heart”, it also has a sense of fun and is a unique, one-off feature, which would act as a landmark and attractor for visitors. The Lady’s Smock lights are proposed to be used as a cluster of say two groups of five to seven units along High Street/Lawton Street, creating a focus and anchor for that part of the town centre.

Kinsey Street/Park Road make up the ‘**Park Promenade**’ vista, which links the town centre to the paddling pool, theatre, river and park. The lighting columns shall be specific to this vista, emphasising it’s particular role and character. The columns shall be both sculptural and practical by providing the correct levels of light for general use as well as creating a particular aesthetic feel (see ‘Ribbon Light’).

Market Street and Worrall Street make up the ‘**Leisure Link**’, which, like the Park Promenade links the town centre to other key attractions, in this case the Library and Leisure Centre. This route shall be lit with 6500mm high free standing lighting columns (see over page), to provide the appropriate levels of lighting for general use with the banners specifically displaying exhibitions and activities related to the library and leisure centre.

Mountbatten Way/Rood Hill/West Street/Antrobus Street shall be lit with 8500mm high free standing lighting columns (see over page), to provide the appropriate levels of lighting for this newly integrated Boulevard and the other key approaches.



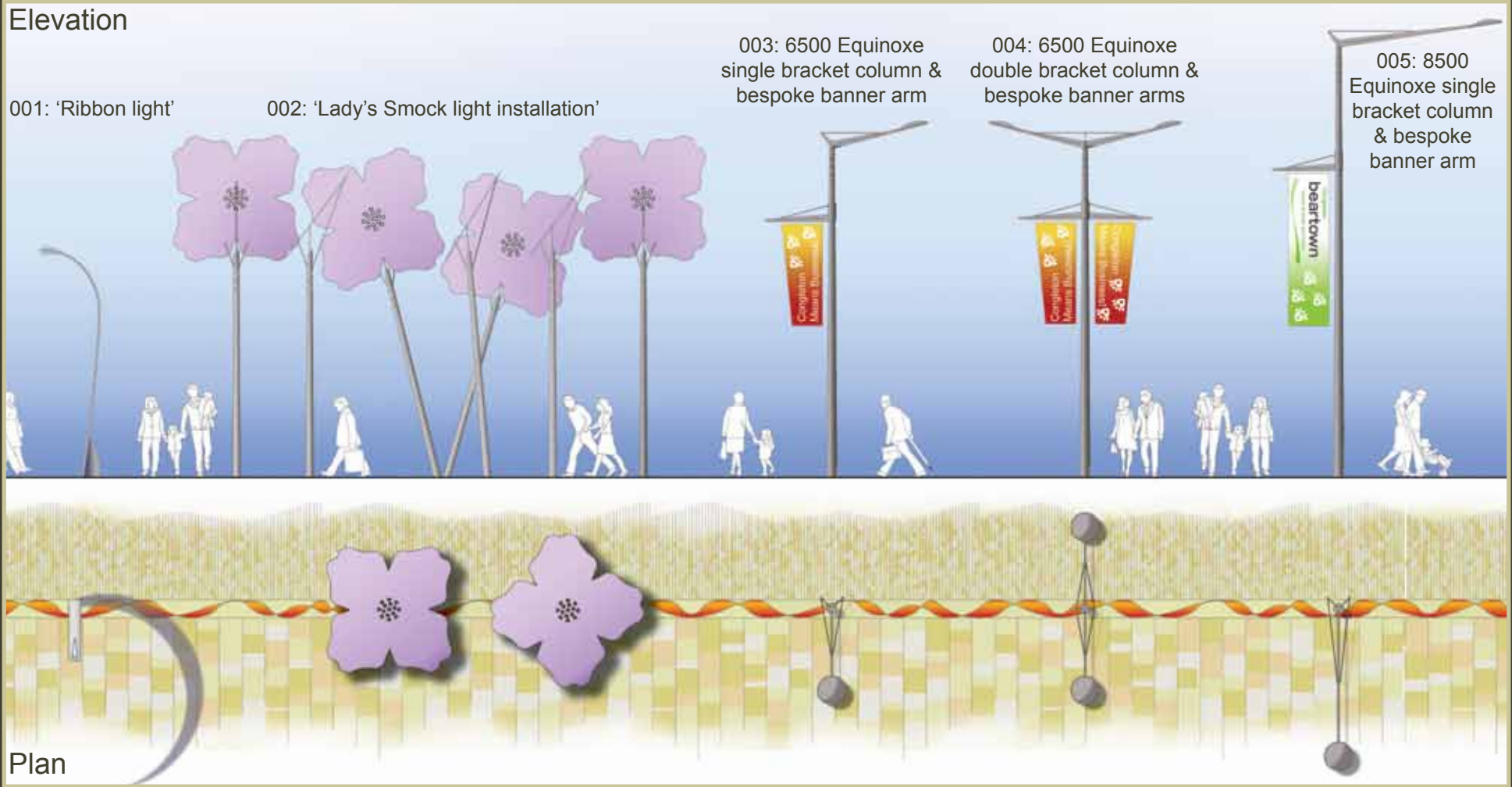
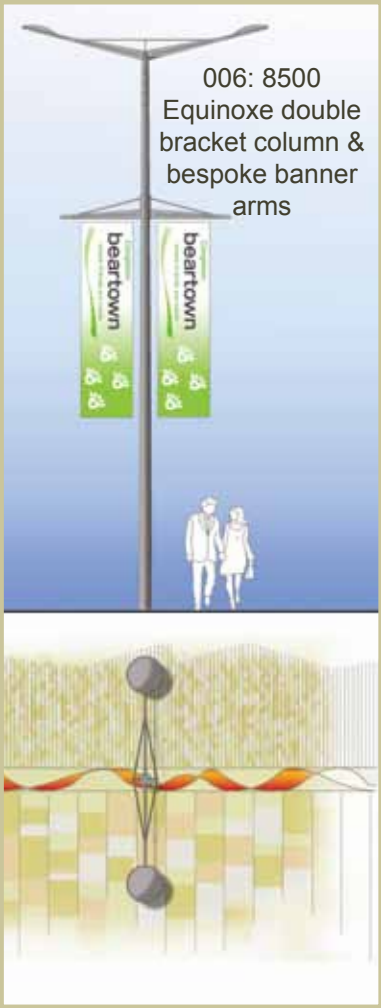


Figure 5.5 Street Lighting Reference Diagram

The height and style of the units, along with the banners shall provide presence and drama to the primary arteries into the town centre.

Secondary routes (vehicular and pedestrian) i.e. Princess Street, Park Street, Foundry Bank, Waggs Road, Chapel Street, Moody Street, the Riverside Walk and town centre carparks shall all be lit using 6500mm high free standing lighting columns (see opposite) to the appropriate lighting levels for their use.



Feature Lighting has to a degree been discussed in earlier paragraphs as part of the overall feel of specific streets and spaces. Also refer to the target notes in Figure 5.6 for more specific information.

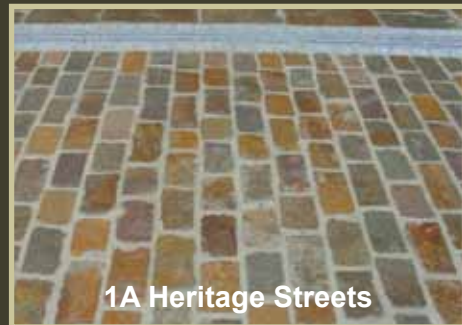
The lighting columns illustrated here represent both the need for a well lit public realm, to ensure safety and ease of movement around the town, as well as the use of light for aesthetic purposes. To highlight a particular theme or key route, as well as the use of up and down lighters to light interesting buildings, trees and sculptures. We have also illustrated here the use of light projectors to create or display art onto buildings and walls.

Lighting is not purely about function, but can also be part of the town's brand and image to the wider region.

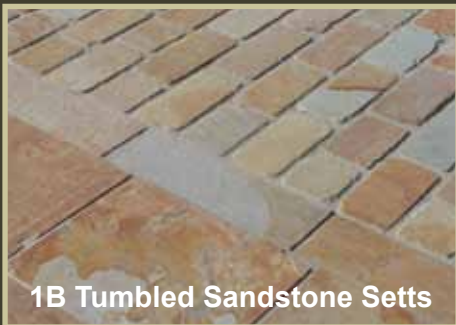
Ref:	Item:	Location:	Description:
001	Ribbon Light	From Community Garden, down Kinsey Street/Park Road to river, as part of vista.	Francesca curved lighting column in aluminium. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Aquila/Schreder Italia SPA
002	Lady's Smock Light Installation	High Street Lawton Street Community Garden	Based on Geo Asymmetric Parklight in cast aluminium. <b>Finish:</b> Powder coated silver. Top & underside of reflector - 'light mauve'. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Woodhouse
003	6500 Equinox single bracket, column & bespoke banner arm	High Street Bridge Street Lawton Street Market Street Mill Street West Street	Equinox 6.5m lighting column, illustrated with Maya luminaire. <b>Finish:</b> Galvanised, thermolacquered steel with aluminium brackets. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Aquila/Schreder Italia SPA
004	6500 Equinox double bracket, column & bespoke banner arm	At key junctions on: High Street Bridge Street Lawton Street Market Street Mill Street	Equinox 6.5m lighting column, illustrated with Maya luminaire. <b>Finish:</b> Galvanised, thermolacquered steel with aluminium brackets. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Aquila/Schreder Italia SPA
005	8500 Equinox single bracket, column & bespoke banner arm	Rood Hill	Equinox 8.5m lighting column, illustrated with Maya luminaire. <b>Finish:</b> Galvanised, thermolacquered steel with aluminium brackets. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Aquila/Schreder Italia SPA
006	6500 Equinox double bracket, column & bespoke banner arm	Mountbatten Way	Equinox 8.5m lighting column, illustrated with Maya luminaire. <b>Finish:</b> Galvanised, thermolacquered steel with aluminium brackets. <b>Manufacturer:</b> Aquila/Schreder Italia SPA

Figure 5.6 Street Lighting Reference Table





1A Heritage Streets



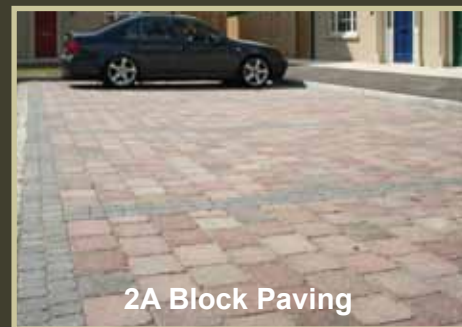
1B Tumbled Sandstone Setts



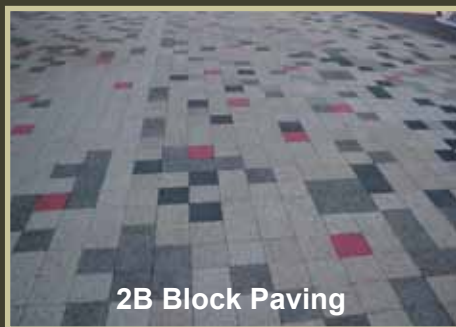
1C Porphyry Blend



1D Resin Bound Surface



2A Block Paving



2B Block Paving



2C Conservation Kerb



2D Strada Terrapave



3A Bitmac



3B Central Reservation



3C Silver Grey Mistral Paving



3D Bitmac &amp; Block Paving



4A High Quality Tactile Paving



4B Blister Paving &amp; Drop Kerb

## 05:03 Hard Landscape



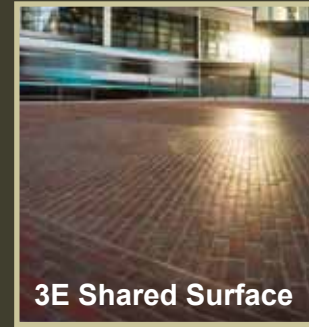
1E Porphyry Footpaths



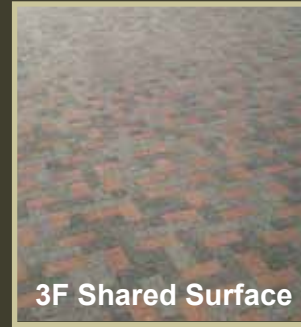
1F Tumbled Sett Street



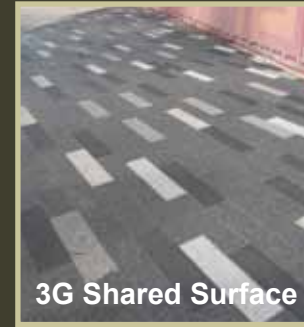
2E Keyblock Paving



3E Shared Surface



3F Shared Surface



3G Shared Surface

The paving of surfaces is an important element that grounds the built form and street furniture of a town - The quality of these horizontal planes greatly contribute to the overall character and sense of place that ultimately promote 'Quality of Life' within the immediate locality.

However, not all areas of the town are identical and the uses vary from places to live, shop, work and play and therefore the treatments of these different areas will require different approaches.

We have identified a number of sites that should be prioritised for refurbishment and have applied a hierarchy of treatments for these areas, namely Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. The quality and finishes of materials reflect the nature of the projects in respect of their use by the pedestrian, rather than the vehicle user and all have significant importance in the overall improvements to the town. The suggested hierarchy is a useful tool to achieve an overall consistent treatment, however, some of the materials are interchangeable within the sites. See Table 5.7 for specific locations of treatments.

Within the Conservation Areas it is only acceptable to implement materials from the primary treatment palette. This is illustrated by the use of typical layouts in the next chapter.

The images opposite illustrate the treatments to be applied to the different sites, in accordance with the hierarchy of treatments. There are also suggestions for other paving surfaces that are associated with easing access for those with disabilities.

The tables over page outline and describe the materials proposed and identifies where in the hierarchy they are to be applied.



Item	Materials Description	Street Hierarchy and Location
Primary Treatment		
1A; 1C; 1E	Porphyry Blend - A very robust and hard- wearing natural stone that possesses a range of warm colours. The stone reflects materials used in the past and can still be seen in historic buildings throughout the town. Small unit sizes can be used in vehicular areas and the larger flag module can be used to delineate pedestrian only areas.	Primary Treatment for streets such as High Street, Bridge Street, Lawton Street. Also to be used in Swan Bank. Item 1E to be used in Kinsey Street.
1B; 1F	Sandstone tumbled setts and flag paving - A slightly softer, but robust, natural stone that can be successfully used in conjunction with the porphyry to define high quality spaces. Will be suitable for pedestrian and vehicular areas.	Primary Treatment - Swan Bank to Mill Street to tie in with future Bridestones Development. Shared surface on High Street/ Market Street and on Lawton Street to provide a high quality setting to the Town Hall.
1D	Resin bound surfacing - a decorative and flexible homogenous surfacing that complements the natural stone paving. Ideal for areas of irregular shapes and surfaces with varying cambers. Robust enough to withstand traffic and easy to clean with jet wash.	Mostly Primary, but also effective as Secondary and Tertiary Treatment. Can be used in pedestrian areas on High Street and new squares. The central reservation of Mountbatten Way will be greatly enhanced with this material. Ideal for all nodes and junctions requiring special announcement. Could be used in shared surface at Outer Gateways, especially Rood Hill.

Item	Materials Description	Street Hierarchy and Location
Secondary Treatment		
2A; 2B; 2D	Concrete block paving- A robust material that can withstand heavy vehicular traffic. A range of colours provides a versatile palette that can be used in areas of shared surface, footpaths and parking bays.	Secondary and Tertiary treatment. Can be used in shared surfaces in secondary areas such as Worrell Street ,Park Road and the parking bays in the High Street and Lawton Street. Can be used in improved public realm around the Leisure Centre.
2C	Conservation Kerb - This concrete product with granite chip surfacing is a relatively inexpensive method of providing uplift to areas that do not warrant the primary treatment. Can be used to replace existing kerbs in the carriageway or provide edges to planting beds throughout the public realm.	Secondary treatment. Can be used on Kinsey Street, Antrobus and West Street. May be used in certain detailing within the newly created squares and pedestrianised areas.
2E	Concrete block paving - Footpaths can be refurbished with this modern material to provide immediate uplift. The effect is not as long lasting as natural stone but can be effective in certain areas.	Secondary treatment - Refurbishment of footpaths along West Street, Park Road and Antrobus Street. Can be used as a material to announce junctions where footpaths meet the carriageway. To be used on newly created footpath on Rood Hill.

Item	Materials Description	Street Hierarchy and Location
Tertiary Treatment		
3A; 3D	Bitmac - Standard material for carriageways and footpaths.	Tertiary treatment to be used when remodelling Mountbatten Way and single carriageways in High Street. Can be used in conjunction with Conservation Kerb, ( item 2C) where an 'accent' is required on the refurbishment.
3B	Concrete surfacing with pattern relief. A method of providing uplift and a level of interest in areas that usually receive standard treatment. Colours can be incorporated into the process.	Tertiary treatment- To be used in the central reservation areas of Mountbatten Way - Can incorporate theme of 'the ribbon' and 'beartown' .
3C	Concrete block setts with natural granite chippings. This relatively inexpensive material is very robust and versatile- It can be used as a paving material in shared surfaces and at crossing points. Also works well as the ramp up to share surface tables in carriageway.	Mostly Tertiary treatment but can also be used effectively in areas warranting secondary treatment. Use as crossing points on Mountbatten Way and the High Street.
3E; 3F; 3G	Concrete block paving for shared surfaces. Concrete block paving- A robust material that can withstand heavy vehicular traffic. A range of colours provides a versatile palette that can be used in areas of shared surface.	Secondary and tertiary material for use as a shared surface on major junctions on Mountbatten Way, Rood Hill and the Outer Gateways.

Item	Materials Description	Street Hierarchy and Location
Tactile Paving		
4A; 4B	Blister paving can be milled from natural stone to offer a complementary treatment within the primary areas. Brass and steel studs are also an effective way of achieving tactile paving.	Mainly a primary treatment to be used in Swan Bank, Mill Street, Duke Street, Bridge Street, High Street and Lawton Street. It may be considered appropriate to also use this treatment throughout the town centre as well as on Mountbatten Way.

Figure 5.7 Hard Materials Table



Spring



Summer



Autumn



Winter



*Sorbus aucuparia*



*Tilia cordata*



*Corylus colurna*



*Acer campestre*



*Pyrus 'Chanticleer'*



*Malus 'Tchonoskii'*

# 05:04 Soft Landscape

A simple planting palette shall be used which emphasises the street and space hierarchy within the town centre and also be complimentary to the other elements of street furniture, lighting and paving materials. See Table 5.9 for specific locations of planting.

As with any town, streets need trees and planting to frame views and buildings, cast dappled shade, reduce wind tunnelling and bring an element of the natural environment into the very heart of the town.

Trees should be introduced to provide an overall green infrastructure to the town centre. Street trees will offer visual amenity with colour and texture, softening the hard edges of walls and buildings. Specimen trees can be used to accentuate specific areas, such as squares and forecourts and form boulevards along arterial routes.

To compliment the tree planting the use of selected shrubs, grasses herbaceous and bedding plants will provide a healthy and green environment. It is envisaged that this planting will provide seasonal colour in Gardens and planters within the pedestrianised areas of Duke Street, Mountbatten Way and the High Street. These will contribute to and complement the existing Britain in Bloom initiative in Congleton.

Generally it is important to gain balance between hard Civic Squares, as active vibrant and energetic spaces and softer Garden Squares with a greener and calming feel, away from the hubbub of the main shopping areas. Thought should be given to the location of quieter spaces within the development sites, as well as within the public realm, care is needed to ensure these Gardens are overlooked and feel safe, without losing the essence of what such spaces are intended for.

Location	Species	Description
Primary Planting Treatment		
Bridge Street, High Street, Moody Street, Mill Street, Market Street & Swan Bank etc.	<b>Trees:</b> Acer campestre; Pyrus 'Chanticleer'; Malus tschonoskii	Street trees can be used to soften hard facades and emphasize areas of importance. Seasonal interest will be introduced through spring and autumn colours. Species such as ornamental Pears, Apples and Cherries as well as Maples are suggested for Street trees.
	<b>Shrubs &amp; Herbaceous:</b> Seasonal herbaceous planting - All species	Colourful and structural seasonal planting, contract grown off-site and delivered in established planting trays, to be dropped into planters for instant effect. Provide variety of species.
Secondary Planting Treatment		
Moody Street, Chapel Street, Kinsey Street, Park Road, Worrall Street, Antrobus Street & West Street etc.	<b>Trees:</b> Sorbus aucuparia 'Sheerwater Seedling'	Light, open canopy, columnar trees, such as this Rowan variety aren't space hungry or block too much light from adjacent properties and can be used in the more residential streets.
Tertiary Planting Treatment		
Mountbatten Way, Rood Hill, Riverside Walk & Outer Gateways etc.	<b>Trees:</b> Tilia cordata; Corylus colurna; Sorbus aucuparia	Boulevard tree planting to Mountbatten Way will soften the large expanse of carriageway and provide a linear emphasis to the street. The proposed tree planting will also add further interest through the seasons with autumn and spring colours.
	<b>Shrubs &amp; Herbaceous:</b> Seasonal herbaceous planting- All species	Colourful and structural seasonal planting, contract grown off-site and delivered in established planting trays, to be dropped into planters for instant effect. Provide variety of species.



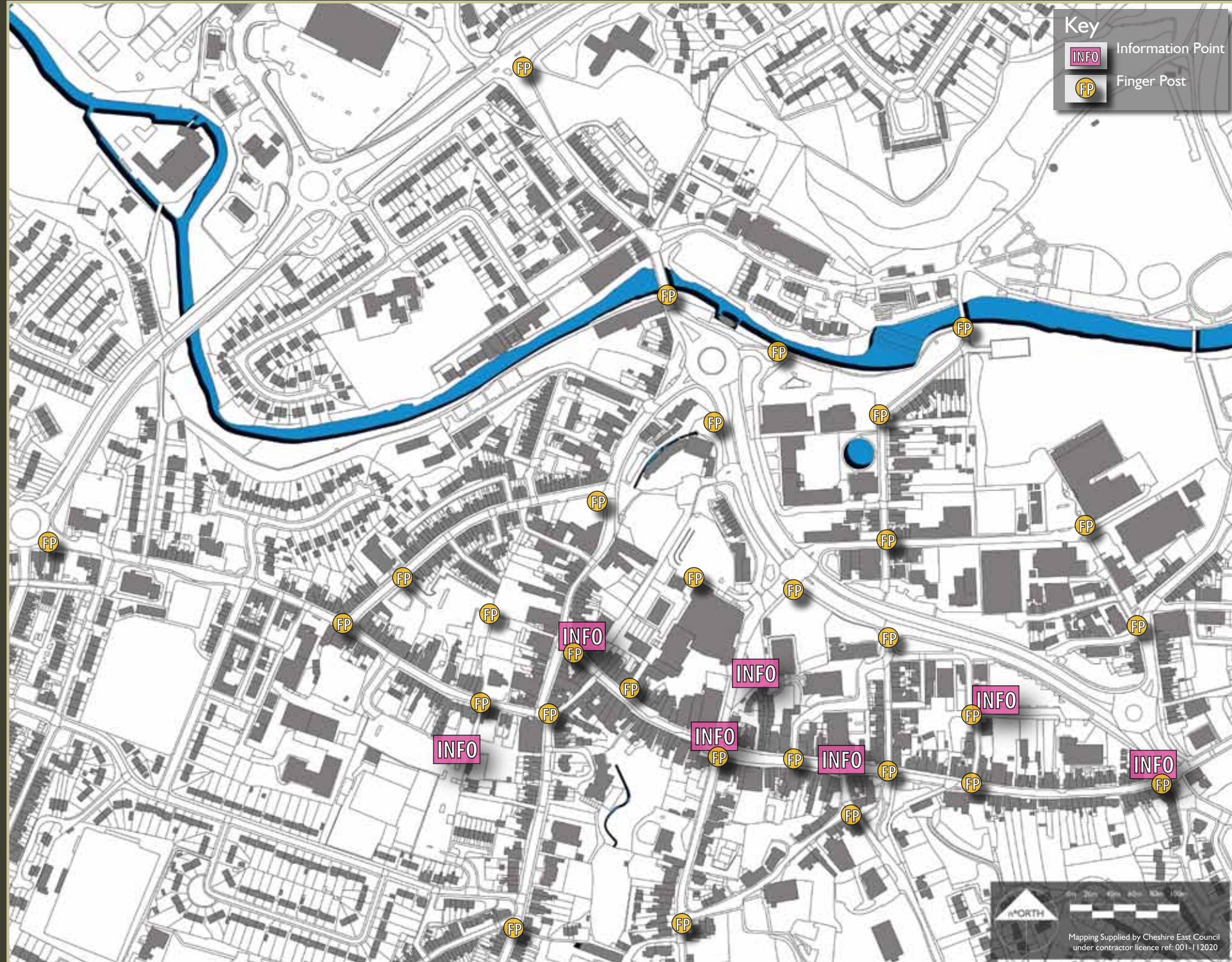


Figure 5.10 Signage Strategy

## 05:05 Signage Strategy

As demonstrated in earlier Chapters statutory signage, lighting columns, street furniture and traffic management barriers can, if implemented piecemeal create a highly cluttered and confusing public realm.

Stepping back from the individual requirements of highways and local bylaws and taking a co-ordinated partnering approach to signage will have benefits in terms of a cleaner, more understandable and aesthetically pleasing town centre.

Using one column for a grouping of signs and reducing unnecessary signage where the townscape is readable in itself through the urban grain will assist in improving the townscape generally.

In terms of the Strategy, there are three classifications of signage:

- Statutory
- Town Information
- Town Trails

The location or relocation of statutory signage will need to be agreed in discussion with the Highway Team, acting on behalf of Cheshire East Council.

Figure 5.10 opposite illustrates suggested positions for town information signage. The town trail routes are dealt with in Chapter 04, with Figure 4.6 illustrating the routes and potential location of information plaques. However the trail signage itself is included and described as part of this strategy.

Existing signage i.e. the millennium finger posts and the traditional cast iron street name plaques shall be retained and any new posts/ plaques provided should match these existing units.

The following paragraphs set-out and describe the various elements or levels within the signage strategy:

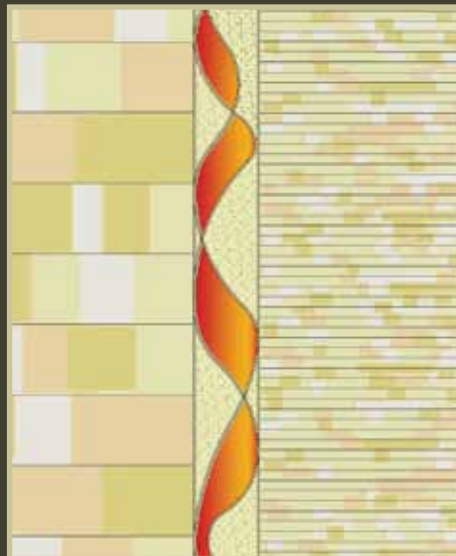
**Statutory signage** for parking, delivery and vehicular access restrictions shall be relocated onto lighting columns or bollards depending on the location and audience the signage is required to be read by (i.e. vehicular or pedestrian traffic), but will need to be agreed with the Highway Authority.

**Town information** shall be incorporated into town centre signage, which provides information on the location of civic, community and retail facilities within the town centre.

Large scale maps, as part of free standing **information points** shall be located at entrances to the bus station, main car parks and key locations within the public realm. The maps shall be colour coded with Civic and community facilities in one colour, retailing another and cafes, restaurants and pubs another etc. A numbered and alphabetically ordered key shall be included to cross refer actual facilities to the map, in a similar way to those found in 'out-of-town' shopping malls etc. The maps shall be designed in such a way as to be easily updated and can be reproduced at any scale for use in leaflets, handouts and web-sites. **Real time information** should also be considered as part of the information point, with space for weekly 'what's on' posters or digital displays, providing information on town centre and town wide events, traffic and travel information, retail offers and new businesses coming into the town centre etc.

**Finger posts** shall be used at keys junctions and spaces within the town centre, to provide directions to civic and community facilities, the bus station and car parks, as well as providing directions for the trails (see below). The existing finger posts shall be retained and new ones added to the same specification and design.





The **town trails** shall be creatively signed to provide interest within the public realm for young and old alike.

Trail leaflets shall provide maps and quick reference information on points of interest and the locations of information plaques, viewpoints and art installations.

Physically the trails shall be signed by the following means:

- Finger Posts
- Way Markers and Info Plaques
- Ribbons/Bear Footprints

The following paragraphs describe the trail signage and its use.

**Finger posts** shall be used as part of the wider Town Centre information signage as described previously, specifically for the town trails they shall be used to indicate the location of the start of the Trails. Where there is either an existing finger post or a new one proposed as part of the general town centre signage and it sits on the route of a trail, an additional finger can be added as part of the trails overall way marking.

**Way markers** in the form of cast metal plaques shall be located along the Culture and Leisure Trail to highlight specific features or points of interest i.e. the location of a sculpture. It would contain information about the artist, the inspiration for the work and its meaning to the town etc. Way Markers could also be used to denote the start of fitness trails and wider walks beyond the town centre, providing information about the route, anything of interest that will be seen or the location of any pieces of fitness equipment etc.

The plaques will also be used on the History and Heritage Trail, as part of the 'Museum in the Street'. Plaques could contain historic drawings, maps or photos with informative descriptions, chronology and what effect that area/building/person had on the evolution of the town itself etc.

All plaques could be sponsored by individuals, community groups or businesses, the plaques could thus incorporate a subtle reference to the sponsor as a footnote.

The route of the trail shall also be incorporated into the pavements of the Public Realm as an integral part of the floorscape.

Initially the whole route could be marked by the use of road marking paint. The History and Heritage trail marked in the form of a ribbon, referencing the textile industry in two entwined lines of red and orange. The Culture and Leisure Trail marked by stencilled white bear paws.

As the public realm is implemented, the paint would be replaced with a more permanent solution. The ribbon being created as a recessed steel plate, infilled with resin bound recycled glass beads and the paws being replaced with etched paws, shot blasted into the paving or cast metal/bronze paws set into the floorscape.

This phased approach to the trails enables their early implementation at minimal cost, then more permanent way marking can be delivered as funding and/or sponsorship becomes available.

This holistic approach to signage will offer a cohesive and uncluttered town centre, which enables visitors to focus on their reasons for coming to the town; to shop, for tourism, for business or for socialising, whilst enjoying all aspects of the Public Realm and Town Centre unhindered.

Examples of Public Art in other towns



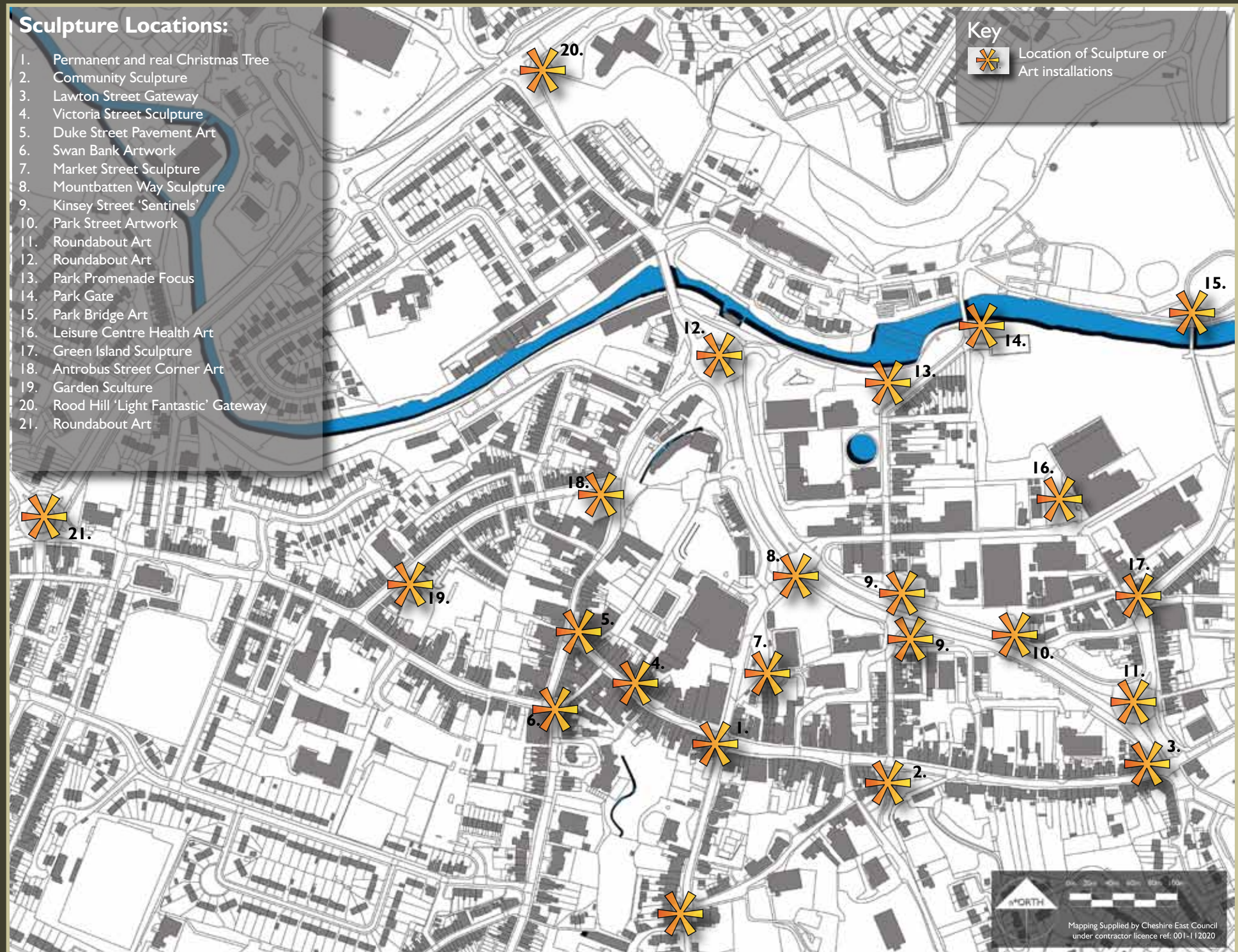


Figure 5.11 Public Art

## 05:06 Approach to Public Art

Art within the public realm is crucial to add uniqueness, create focus, attract visitors and provide a reason to actively use the streets and squares of the town centre. There are a variety of ways art can be incorporated into the public realm:

- Creating a set-piece
- Part of the fabric of the place
- Transient and ephemeral art

Each of the above forms is described below in more detail:

Creating a **set-piece** of art or sculpture as a focus in a square or as a reference within the street provides interest, a meeting point, informal play and holds a persons attention for them to identify and take in the wider setting, encouraging them to explore the town, utilise the facilities and local shops.

Set-pieces in the form of sculptures need to be located where space permits, whilst mosaics, friezes and graffiti will obviously require a 'canvas' in the form of a pavement, wall or blank gable. Set pieces should be commissioned by competition with an artists brief being prepared, which includes a description of the location, the requirements of the final piece, the theme, the budget and programme. The competition judging should be a combination of public choice and an expert panel to ensure the piece is deliverable physically and financially.

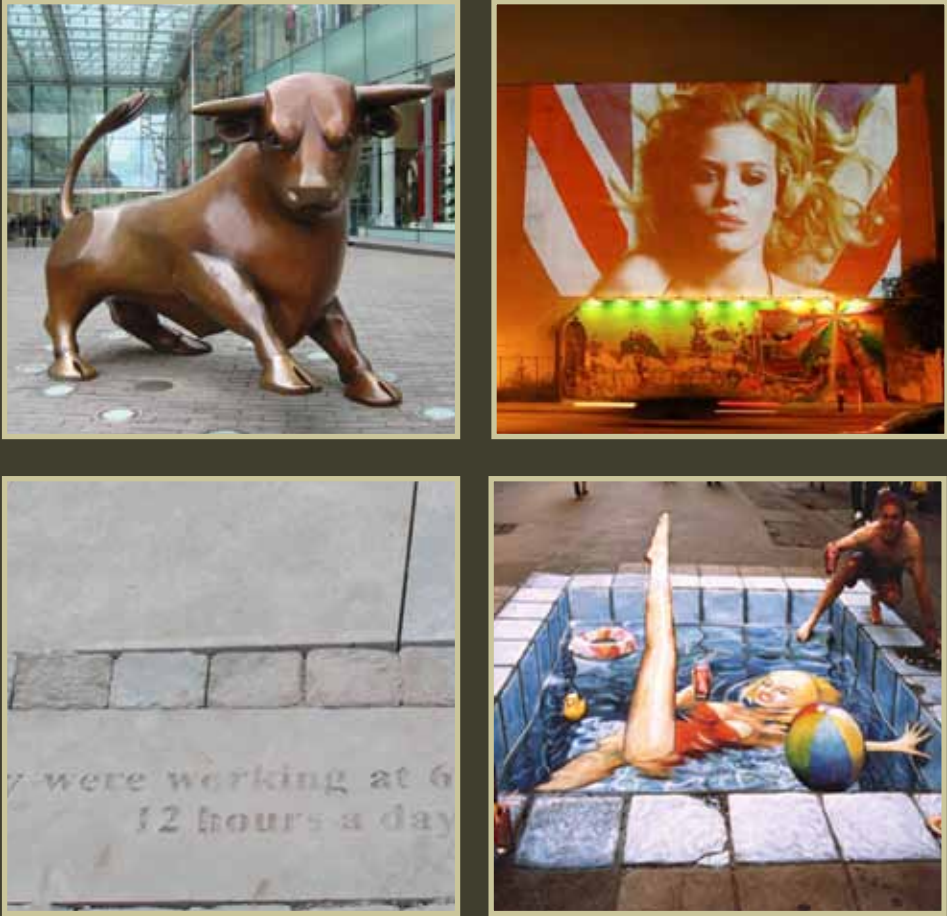
Art can also be installed as part of the general public realm, incorporating poetry and historic or relevant quotes into pavements, adding banners, theme lighting and creative way-marking to the trails (as described previously).

For years street artists have been drawing highly creative chalk drawings onto pavements, street actors have mimed, sung and generally performed to create a vibrant and lively streetscene. Also the use of projectors, lasers and spotlights can all help to create a

buzz and interest within the street and surrounding environment.

Figure 5.11 opposite indicates the position of potential set-piece art installations across the town centre. The incorporation of art into the general public realm will be developed as implementation phases come forward.

In terms of the transient art opportunities then part of this delivery falls under general town centre management in terms of attracting street actors and artists to the town. Lighting projection has been discussed as part of the lighting strategy above.





## 06: Coding & detailing - key projects





## 06: Coding and detailing - key projects



*Town Square with high quality paving and tree planting*

“Direct, attractive connections between key facilities, avoiding dead ends, help to create more convenient and comfortable places, forging links with surrounding areas and reducing severance.”

*Urban Design Compendium [pp.36 English Partnerships, 2000]*



# 06:01 The power of ‘12’

As stated in Chapter 3 the town centre has been broken down into 12 key projects, as set-out below and illustrated in Figure 6.1 opposite. The projects are as follows:

- 1. Festival Square
- 2. Pedestrianised Zone
- 3. Mounbatten Way
- 4. Rood Hill
- 5. Kinsey Street/Park Street
- 6. Mill Street/Swan Bank
- 7. High Street
- 8. Lawton Street
- 9. West Street
- 10. Bus Station
- 11. Leisure Centre
- 12. Gateways

All these projects take their illustrative designs from the guidance set-out in the previous chapters, to develop creative solutions to a variety of Public Realm settings and situations.

The projects also demonstrate that the guidance works and can be translated into real designs that can be readily implemented.

This chapter is all about ‘space and place making’, using the best of what’s already there and developing designs that are creative, forward thinking, vibrant, exciting and specific to the town of Congleton.

Each project is illustrated in plan form and accompanied by either an artists impression or a best practice precedent over a double page spread.

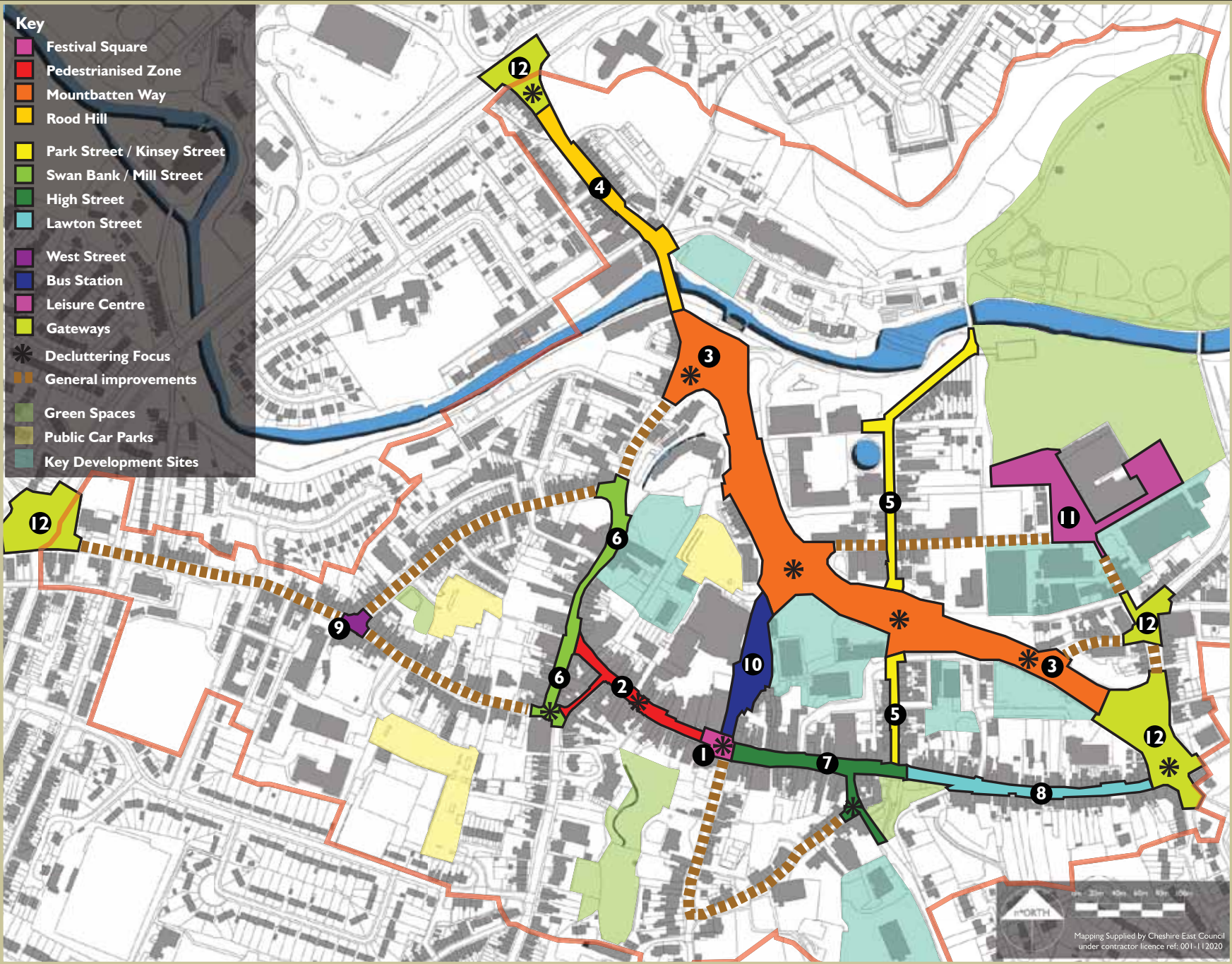


Figure 6.1 Project Locations





## 06:02 Festival Square '1 of 12'

Festival Square lies at the junction between High Street and the pedestrianised zone. It is the principle square for the town at the main junction and will be a high quality multi-use space. It can be used for occasional markets, festivals, street activity and performances. It will provide a flexible space that will act as a focus for the town centre.

It will be a primarily pedestrian priority surface with street trees, planting beds and information totems to create a vibrant and attractive space. A large specimen tree will act as a landmark and add a unique character. Features such as a mounting post for the Christmas tree, retained post boxes and cycle stands make the space not only aesthetically pleasing and suitable for larger gatherings but also functional on a day to day basis. The ribbon motif will be included in the paving, seating and bollards linking it into the Heritage and History trail.







## 06:03 Pedestrianised Zone '2 of 12'

The current pedestrianised area of Bridge Street, Duke Street and Little Street is seen as a key opportunity. The focus is on improving the space through the removal of the posts, bollards and street clutter. This will create improved views and enhance the appearance of the existing buildings and architectural features. The addition of high quality street furniture, trees, lighting and surface improvements will create a positive pedestrian environment.

A key feature of the detailing on this site is the ribbon effect detailed in Chapter 5. This will add visual interest and follow the flow of pedestrian movement. Variations in paving will denote forecourts for the retail units and cafes. Lighting will enliven the area at night and extend the time during which the space can be used. Lighting may be a mixture of architectural lighting of key buildings or new light standards. High quality benches, information totems and street trees will add visual interest without creating clutter.







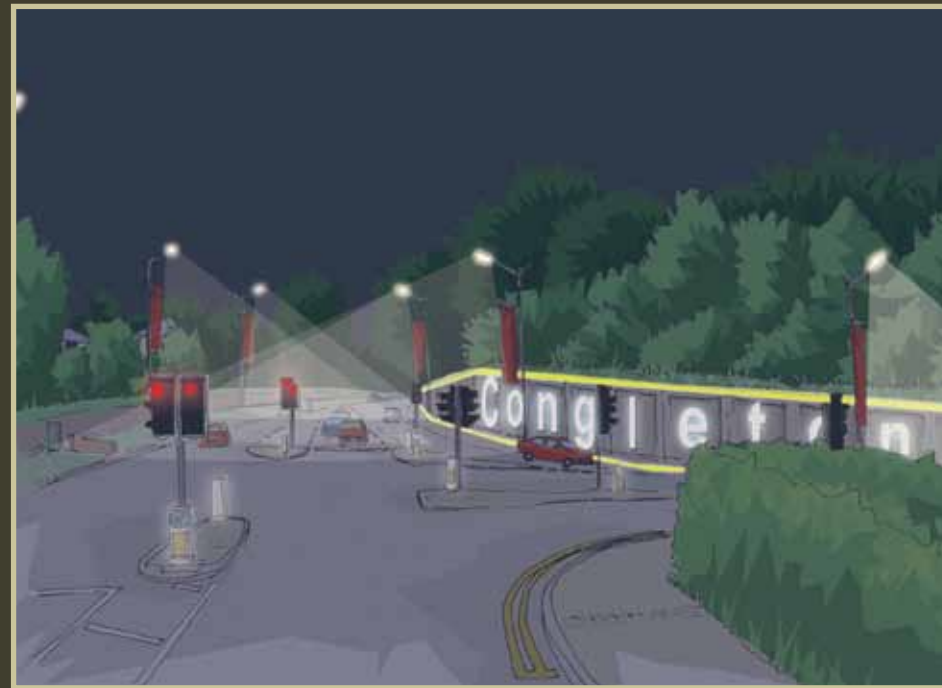
## 06:04 Mountbatten Way '3 of 12'

Mountbatten way is currently the most significant barrier to creating a walkable town centre. The public realm strategy will improve crossing points, soften its appearance through greening and reduce its influence on pedestrian movement. This will create an attractive and safe route for visitors to the town centre and for local people.

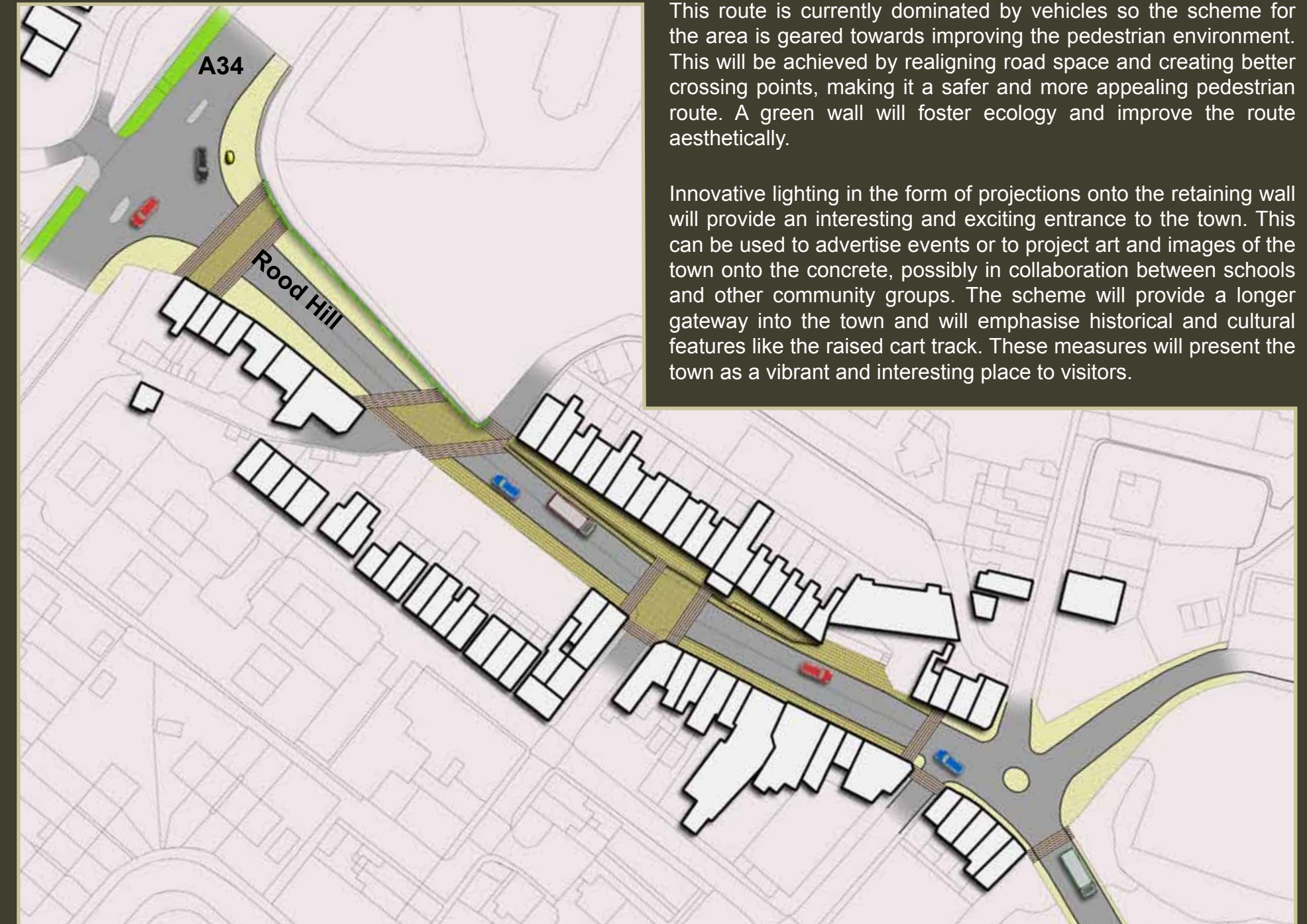
The scheme will firstly remove the central barriers and create shared surface crossing points, making a strong link with Kinsey Street and Park Road. This will form part of the principle link across the town shown in the public realm strategy diagram. A boulevard will be created along Mountbatten Way by lining it with three rows of street trees. These will provide shade, improve the aesthetics of the route and create a positive impression to people travelling through the town. Innovative use of surface treatments will differentiate between vehicle and pedestrian spaces while terraced planting on verges and information totems will enliven the street scene and create visual interest.







## 06:05 Rood Hill '4 of 12'



This route is currently dominated by vehicles so the scheme for the area is geared towards improving the pedestrian environment. This will be achieved by realigning road space and creating better crossing points, making it a safer and more appealing pedestrian route. A green wall will foster ecology and improve the route aesthetically.

Innovative lighting in the form of projections onto the retaining wall will provide an interesting and exciting entrance to the town. This can be used to advertise events or to project art and images of the town onto the concrete, possibly in collaboration between schools and other community groups. The scheme will provide a longer gateway into the town and will emphasise historical and cultural features like the raised cart track. These measures will present the town as a vibrant and interesting place to visitors.

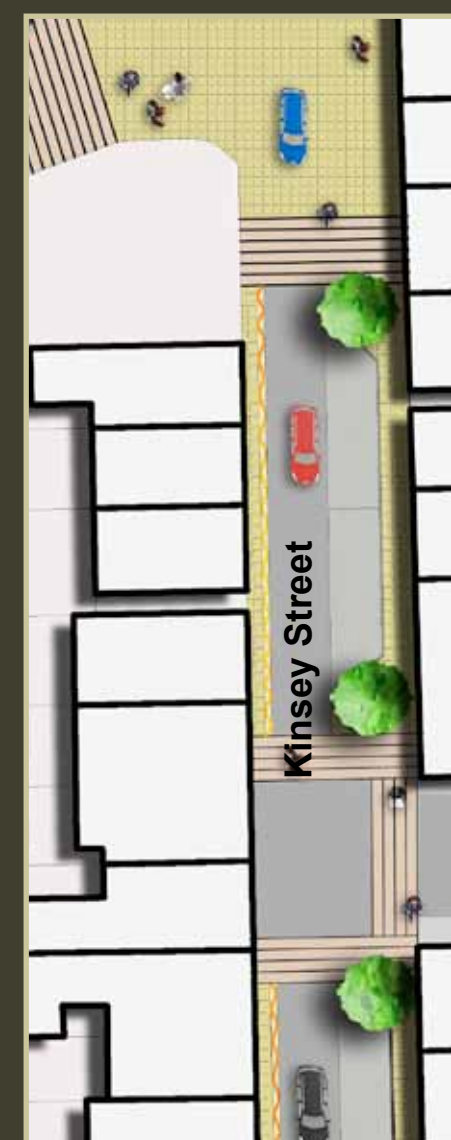
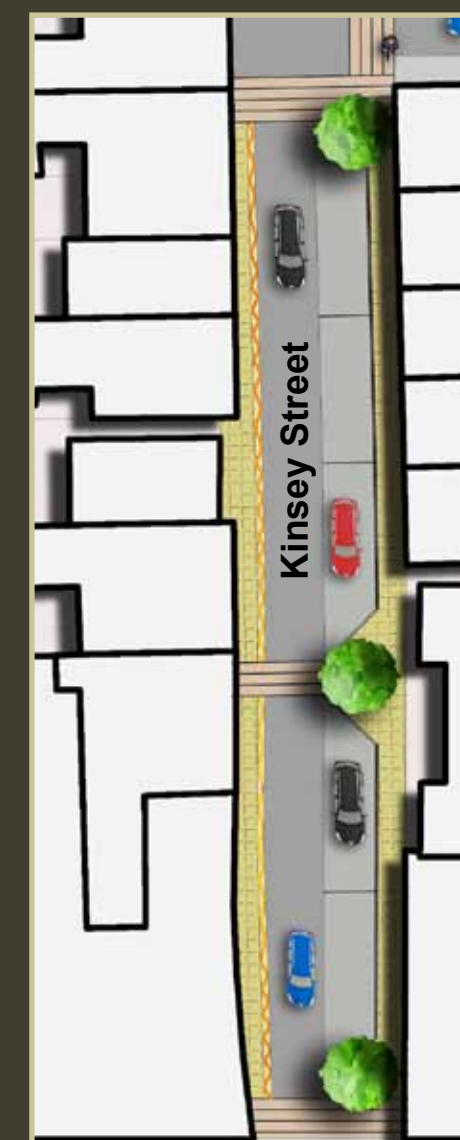




## 06:06 Kinsey Street/Park Road '5 of 12'

This route has been identified within the Town Centre plan as being particularly important. It links the community garden on Lawton Street across Mountbatten Way to Park Road which will link the theatre, park and lido with the town. The scheme will ensure that the town is linked across Mountbatten Way, improving permeability and contributing to a strong movement network.

Specialist lighting, street furniture and public art will be linked with wide pedestrian crossing at Mountbatten Way allowing pedestrians and cyclists to use the route effectively. Street trees, shared surface paving and new public spaces will define the route, creating a series of attractive spaces connected by sustainable transport links. These form part of the heritage and history ribbon trail shown in Chapter 4.







## 06:07 Mill Street/Swan Bank '6 of 12'

Mill Street and Swan Bank comprises mainly of a one way street running up from Mountbatten Way into the conservation area. This will form part of a shopping circuit linking the currently outlying retail areas back to the town centre core. The most significant feature of this treatment is the extension of currently narrow footpaths that will be made wide enough for two pedestrians to pass each other without using the road space. Some kerb build outs will be used for traffic calming. These measures will contribute to creating a more attractive pedestrian route.

New squares and shared surface areas will be created with benches, seating and street trees to reduce vehicular dominance and create a more pleasant and relaxed pedestrian space. The ribbon motif will be continued both on the ground and integrated into walls adding historical context. Surfacing will denote vehicle and pedestrian areas, with some parking bays at swan bank. Overall this treatment is intended to create a connection that enhances the pedestrian experience and contributes towards creating a more walkable town.







## 06:08 High Street '7 of 12'

The High Street is an important traffic and bus route. As a result of that it will not be possible to pedestrianise the area. The area is currently dominated by traffic and has very narrow footpaths. A shared surface solution will enable the continued use of the route by vehicles while giving pedestrians a higher priority. This will create a more enjoyable and leisurely retail experience and emphasise the number of attractive buildings outlined in the conservation area appraisals.

The core of this scheme will focus on a new shared space in front of the town hall including Albert Place and Canal Street. The town hall will be linked with the pedestrianised area through wider pavements. Street furniture, trees and cycle parking will create a vibrant retail area with a strong character. Parallel parking spaces and vehicle lanes with reinforced pavements allow for loading. This scheme will also contribute towards delivering the shopping and cultural circuit shown in Chapter 4.







## 06:09 Lawton Street '8 of 12'

Lawton Street was identified in the Town Centre Plan as being at the heart of the night time economy, consequently the public realm treatment here will seek to provide opportunities for cafe's and bars. The narrow and historical nature of the route makes this difficult to achieve without undermining the character of the area.

Outdoor mood lighting will create a lively atmosphere extending the time during which activity can take place in the area. Extending the pavements and using materials that complement the historical and individual character of the area will create an attractive leisure environment. The area will be treated with materials that are appropriate for the Conservation Area.



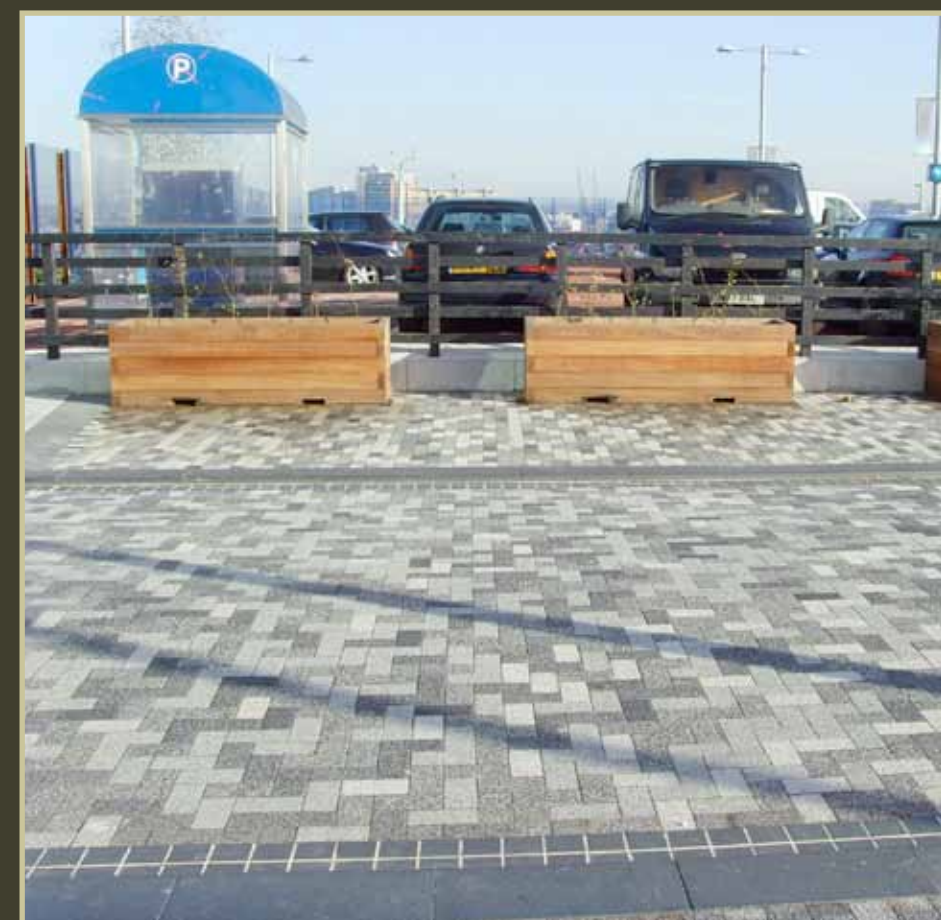




## 06:10 West Street '9 of 12'

West Street is the main route to the large town centre car park off West Street itself. Currently the pedestrian links to surrounding shops and leisure activities are poor and vehicular uses dominate the area.

The scheme here focuses on linking the car park to the surrounding uses and creating a quality street environment for pedestrians. This will involve limiting the road space at junctions, improving surface materials and pedestrian crossings which will create a more positive and attractive link to the surrounding area. There is also the potential to create a direct link into the town centre along West Street for pedestrians and cyclists.







## 06:11 Bus Station '10 of 12'

The bus station is the principle gateway to the town centre for residents and visitors. It is currently dominated by traffic so this scheme will seek to create an attractive environment for waiting visitors, pedestrians and public transport users. The orientation of the bus stops and waiting area will be changed and a new space created which celebrates arrival and departure.

The area will also be considered in its relation to civic, retail and leisure elements of the town for pedestrians. It will be linked in with the improved pedestrian movements, networks and cycle routes across the town. Lighting and the introduction of passive surveillance will increase the useability of the area at night creating a safe and attractive place to wait at any hour of the day and a positive introduction to the town.

This public realm strategy does not intend to provide full guidance for this project as it is acknowledged that this scheme will need the support and detailed consideration which is beyond its remit. However, the importance of this project to delivering wider public realm benefits should not be under-estimated as it provides the transition from vehicle to walking as a personal mode.

When detailing this project, street lighting, street furniture and paving materials should take its lead from the strategy. It is envisaged that this project will be delivered in partnership with the development of the fairground site.





## 06:12 Leisure Centre Forecourt '11 of 12'

The gateway and entrance to the Leisure Centre is a particular issue for the town. The pedestrian links between the town and the leisure centre are blocked by a large area of car parking. Car parking at the rear of the building can accommodate patrons which will free up the front area which will be redesigned to accommodate parking only for minibuses and disabled users.

This will include an attractive "drop-off" area, with seating and planting which will create an attractive gateway to the leisure centre. This area will link with Foundry Bank and Moor Street, connecting leisure uses with the emerging cultural and craft industries along those routes.





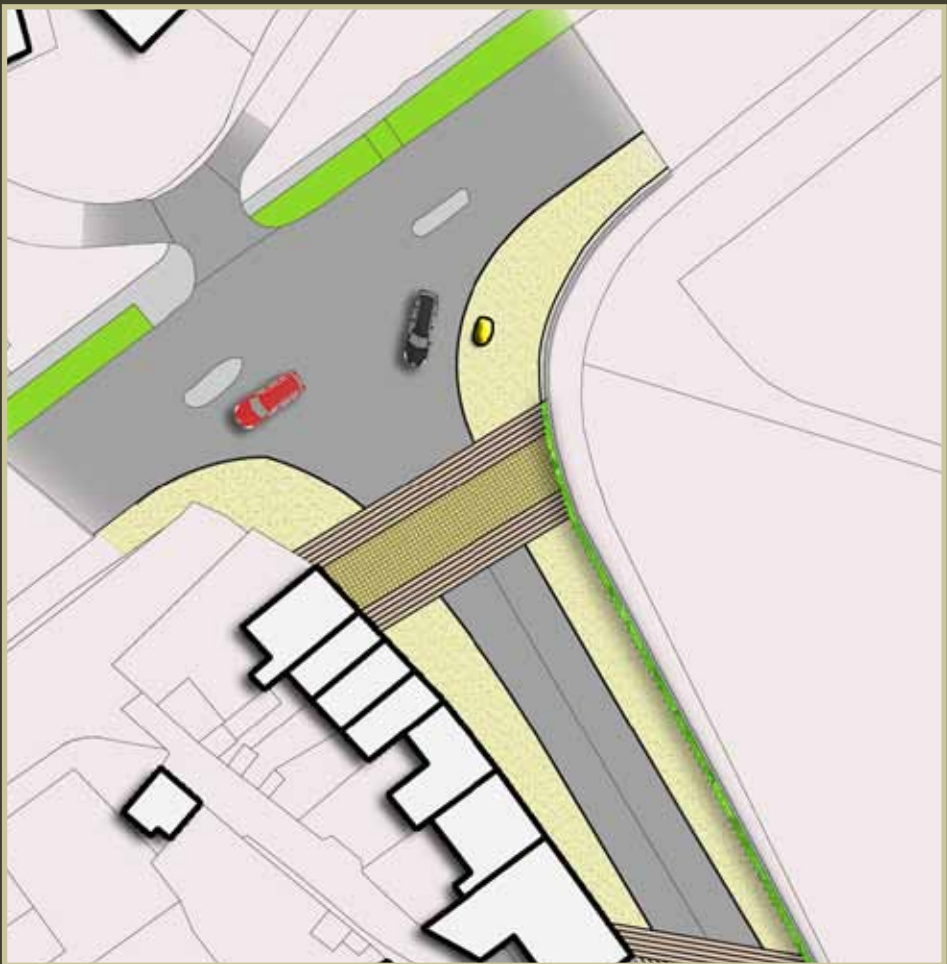
## 06:13 Gateways '12 of 12'

There are five gateways to Congleton identified within the town plan. This public realm strategy has selected four of these- West Street, Rood Hill, Willow Street, Mountbatten Way/Lawton Street. These areas will create a sense of arrival and welcome, leading to a positive first impression for visitors to the town and an attractive environment for locals. Arrival at the edge of the town centre will be identified by special public realm treatment, for example lighting, paving and individual pieces of public art designed specifically for the location.

Inner gateways will also be identified, demonstrating the entrance to the shopping and commercial core of the town. Possible locations are the junction of Mill Street/Bridge Street, Mill Street/ Antrobus Street, Lawton Street/ Kinsey Street and West Street/ Antrobus Street.



Roundabout western end of West Street



Junction of Rood Hill and A34



Mountbatten Way Park Lane Roundabout



Willow Street / Foundry Bank





07: Quality, longevity & management



## 07: Quality, longevity and management



“To create a public realm with positive amenity value requires a comprehensive approach to planning, urban design and management which gets over the current fragmentation of the statutory roles and responsibilities.”

Urban Task Force Report (2000)

*Cafe seating on street*



# 07:01 Approach to construction

The following chapter is designed to give some guidance to developers and designers as to how to approach the construction requirements for the streets and spaces covered by the Public Realm Design Strategy. The chapters that follow are guidance only and therefore should not be seen as set in stone, however, they reflect the approach the Town Council, Partnership and the relevant Cheshire East Council departments would like to follow in ensuring robust delivery.

## Durable Construction

This Strategy clearly illustrates that only a high quality and creatively designed Public Realm will do for the town of Congleton. This expected quality is not all about surface finishes, but also about the quality of construction below ground.

Foundations and sub-bases must be to the correct specification for their anticipated load bearing needs and engineers must be employed to ensure that all specification are fit for purpose. This will be particularly the case within pedestrianised areas. In all of these locations footpaths and paving should be designed to support a large HGV for servicing needs.

In all other areas, it is recommended that the following construction detailed design standards be maintained:

- All pavements at corners should be reinforced to accommodate run-over by HGVs.
- All areas in front of shops be reinforced to accommodate 7.5 ton overrunning for loading / unloading.

- All areas in front of financial institutions should be upgraded to 15 ton overrunning to accommodate armoured vehicle deliveries.
- All areas designed specifically for pedestrian or light vehicle traffic should include the use of bollards or similar to restrict vehicles entering these spaces.

As with any historic town, there are basements and cellars, utilities, culverted watercourses and soft spots in the sub-grade which will need to be dealt with during the construction process. Allowance must be made for rectifying these issues in both the detailed costings and tendering process.

Day-to-Day cleansing of the wider public realm will lie with Cheshire East Council and their ‘Streetscape’ team, whom are responsible for street cleansing and general management. Discussions with their team indicate that daily sweeping (Weekdays only) and cleansing occurs within the pedestrianised area and the High Street. In these areas, construction will need to be more robust to accommodate this regular sweeping and suction associated with mechanised vehicles.

Therefore, paving must be grouted with a solid material and / or screeded, as opposed to sand filled joints to ensure that it withstands the current cleansing regime. All materials are smooth, non-slip finishes which will also aid in the cleansing process. Furthermore, in areas that host the evening economy (i.e. outside hot-food takeaways and public houses) it is anticipated that resin covering or grease resisting chemicals be introduced to aid the cleansing process and to resist grease staining.

There is a great deal of local knowledge that is available through the team at the Congleton Partnership, but all final designs will need to be ratified by Cheshire East Highways Engineers.

# 07:02 Sourcing Materials

The sourcing of materials for surfacing is a high profile issue to the people and businesses within Congleton. As a ‘Transition Town’ they are committed to ensuring the overall sustainability of the products within the township. Schemes for the public realm will be expected to look carefully at the sustainability credentials of the materials they use, in terms of durability, possible end-life reuse, and the carbon associated with the construction of non-natural products.

Schemes will need to demonstrate how they have balanced the overarching goals of low carbon materials, that are economically deliverable (i.e. Are so expensive as to stifle delivery) whilst ensuring long term robustness. Natural stone products, from sustainable sources (even those from abroad) are likely to be most favourable. It is advised that designers work closely with their supply chain to ensure this. A reputable supplier will be able to advise accordingly on ‘sustainable’ choices.

Manual handling must be considered in the specification and design of all aspects of the Public Realm, especially so where there is a long term and regular need for maintenance such as litter bins, information signs and lighting fittings. Bins must be front opening, reducing the need to lift full receptacles, doors and access points to signage must be light weight, hinged and pneumatically assisted wherever possible and lighting units and their internal mechanisms must be easily accessible and easy to repair or replace.

The strategy has recommended a smooth, rather the riven, finish to the surfaces of sett and flag materials. This is to aid the street cleansing process, including the removal of gum. The detail designs that come forward as part of future interventions will have to ensure that the surfaces possess a non-slip/anti-skid factor in line with the PSV values that are acceptable to Cheshire East Highways.



# 07:03 Management & Maintenance

The Town Council and Partnership fully appreciate that the implementation of this strategy is only the beginning of the Public Realm Strategy’s delivery. The quality of the public realm must be maintained in perpetuity to ensure this high quality environment benefits the community, shoppers, visitors and retailers alike.

Day-to-Day maintenance is under the control of the ‘Streetscape’ team through their management and cleansing regime and this is unlikely to change as a result of this process. Cheshire East is also responsible for the ‘green elements’ within the town, acting as they do either on their own land or under the guidance of the Town Council on such areas such as Congleton Park. The hanging baskets, roundabout displays and other floral elements are currently prepared by Cheshire East Council and the Town Council and this can easily be rolled out across the public realm, including the management of other planting.

The management of new street trees will fall within Cheshire East Council’s remit unless they fall within the curtilage of a private plot or development site, in which case they will be the responsibility of the land owner. Applications for new development should seek to deliver street trees within their curtilage rather than the public realm in order to provide ‘green elements’, and limit the management strain on local government facilities.

Maintenance budgets will be a mixture of obligations collected from developers within the town and existing maintenance budgets. Undoubtedly the new public realm, including all the additional trees will increase the necessary budgets.

At implementation of the first element of the strategy, it is expected that a Maintenance Manual shall be produced, which shall list:

- Maintenance strategies and techniques;
- Services/utilities locations and their access points, and;
- Service/utility company re-instatement procedures.

The manual shall be re-visited at each subsequent phase, revised and expanded as necessary – specifically where a great suite of street furniture or surface materials are to be used. The latter two bullets are the most common element of failure within public realm schemes and care should be taken to ensure that permissions for works are given alongside strict reinstatement orders. It is important that the manual includes a list of materials, and their suppliers alongside their detailed design/ laying guidelines in the event that more material needs to be sources as replacements.

It is proposed that the overall responsibility for long term management of the town centre public realm shall lie with the Town Centre Manager in partnership with the shopkeepers and community users, ensuring deliveries arrive between the correct hours, refuse is not left on the streets overnight, and any damage or vandalism to the public realm is made safe in the first instance and repaired quickly thereafter. As well as ensuring all relevant and beneficial bylaws/ planning conditions are observed by all sectors of the town centre community. This will be a partnership between the local police and PSCOs, traders and the highways authority. It is likely that this can be self-policed, through working with the Congleton Retailers Group.

A stock of spare materials shall also be provided at the completion of each phase for storage by the Town Council or other partner to be used to repair and replace damaged areas of paving or items of street furniture or lighting. The Town Centre Manager shall oversee the storage and use of the materials in the maintenance of the town centre to ensure all repairs are carried out immediately and to a high standard. Costings for this project (see subsequent chapter) has accounted for an additional 5% of materials being purchased and set aside.

Cheshire East’s street cleansing and highway maintenance teams must be consulted on the final designs for the street furniture and lighting and approve their use prior to implementation.

## Emergency Access

Whilst we wish to ensure that the Public Realm is of a high quality and pedestrian friendly, the detailed design of each phase must take into account the requirements of the emergency services in terms of their unrestricted use and operations within the Public Realm.

A clear and dedicated fire/emergency path must be designed into the detailed proposals and approved by the Emergency Services. Axle loadings and vehicular swept paths must be accommodated in both the surface design and sub-surface construction, to ensure the emergency vehicles can utilise the areas without hindrance or damage to the pavements or edgings.

Demountable barriers and bollards used to exclude general vehicular traffic from the pedestrianised parts of the town centre must be either collapsible or removable with ease by the emergency services. Discussions with the relevant bodies will be expected as part of any work within the town centre.



08: Phasing & funding





## 08: Phasing and funding



“The structure of the city should invite and encourage public life, not only through its institutions, but directly and symbolically through its public spaces. The public environment, by definition should be open to all members of the community. It is where people of different kinds meet.”

*Appleyards and Jacobs (1987)*

*People congregating under mature trees*



# 08:01 Approach to delivery

This chapter sets out the practicalities of delivering this Public Realm Strategy. It has little use if there are not practical steps taken to ensure that the projects demonstrated in chapter 6 can be taken forward. Clearly the 12 projects all have cost implications attached to them and this chapter attempts to allocate an indicative cost to them. Based on this, guidance on phasing and the necessary funding streams is also provided. It should be noted that each project will have to prepare detailed phasing, funding and overall delivery programmes as they are delivered.

Furthermore, whilst this strategy seeks to marry developments within the town with prospective Public Realm improvements and suggests which projects have a higher priority (i.e the most capacity to deliver transformational change within the town), there will undoubtedly be projects that come forward more quickly and therefore the framework set out below should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it supports the practical delivery on the ground.

The ‘immediate priorities’ are those that are both higher cost and more difficult to deliver given their strategic context and therefore it is envisaged that work to deliver these should begin at once to ensure that the agreements, funding and delivery tools are in place as soon as possible. For example, we have envisaged the gateway works being delivered as part of a number of other projects to ensure economies of scale, and therefore they are not shown as a separate element.

Fundamentally, this document is a strategy and if the Council, Partnership and the Community wish to ensure that delivery is fully secured an Implementation Framework needs to be commissioned to ensure precise procurement and installation of materials and planting.

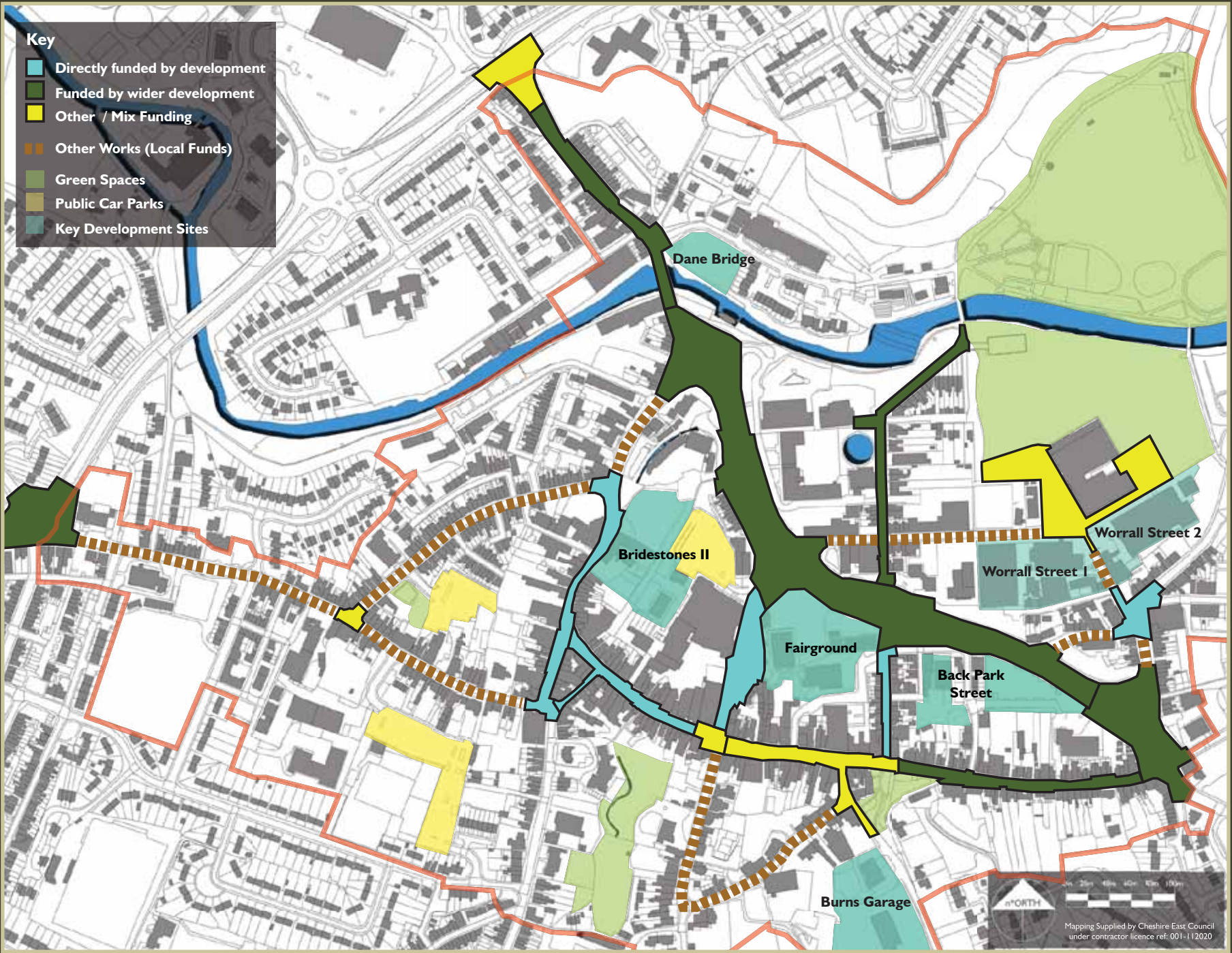


Figure 8.1 Project Funding



08:02 Indicative Costs

As part of preparing this Public Realm Strategy we have begun to set out the likely costs to deliver this project. There are a number of elements that at this stage we are unable to quantify in great detail, including service diversions, abnormal ground conditions and drainage works, however, we have prepared indicative preliminary costs for these elements within our approach based on our past experience and visual site survey.

It is also important to note that these figures are based on levels of lending, finance and relevant taxes as set in Autumn 2011 and therefore are subject to change over the coming years, however, it is not expected that these will change dramatically. In all cases a generous 7.5 % contingencies fund has been included to allow for any unforeseen changes as well as specific designs and planning / building regulations costs. All costs are approximate.

The costs below are grouped according to their level of priority:

Immediate Priorities -Total Cost Approx £4.1 Million

Project 1: Festival Square	£420,000
Project 2: Pedestrian Zone	£650,000
Project 3: Mountbatten Way	£2,600,000 (including Park Lane gateway works)
Project 4: Rood Hill	£430,000 (including the gateway works)

Secondary Priorities -Total Cost Approx £3.3 Million

Project 5: High Street	£1,250,000 (including works to Albert Square)
Project 6: Lawton Street	£585,000
Project 7: Mill Street / Swan Bank	£870,000
Project 8: Route to the Park	£510,000 (Park Street and Kinsey Street)

Tertiary Priorities -Total Cost Approx £1.1 Million

Project 9: West Street	£595,000 (including gateway and Central Square)
Project 10: Bus Station Zone	£345,000 (Does not include any new structure)
Project 11: Leisure Centre etc	£75,000
Project 12: Gateways	[All included as part of the above projects]

The strategy also recognises that there are a number of other streets that should be improved as part of the process and these include Moody Street, Chapel Street, Antrobus Street, Back Street, Back Park Street and Park Road. To resurface the pavement in similar materials to existing and ensure that these tie in effectively with the wider public realm improvements it is anticipated that will cost a further £1 million. Therefore the total cost envisaged to deliver this strategy is likely to be in the range of £9 - 10 million.

08:03 Funding for Delivery

Delivery is principally related to the funding mechanisms that are available. This strategy cannot identify all the funding sources available, and it is acknowledged that there is a lack of funding streams available at the regional level. In the main, the delivery mechanism will undoubtedly be developer contributions and these may account for up to 70% of the total monies necessary to deliver this project.

This strategy cannot, in itself, provide the necessary funding guidance or framework for retaining planning obligations from developers; however, the paragraphs below provide a framework by which other documents, such as the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan or a separate funding SPD. The Town Council and the partnership are committed to working with the local business, community and developers to attract funding bids for this work, and these can be robustly based on this strategy.

**Grant Funding:** There are a number of funding grants still available within the UK. The scope of this strategy means that it may be able to bid for moneys from a number of sources ranging from the National lottery, Arts, Heritage and Tourism Grants, Cycling and Sustainability Grants and other community based enterprises. The Town partnership and the Town Council have a strong track record in delivering these. It is anticipated that this may provide funding for some of the smaller elements within the Public Realm Strategy - especially schemes such as the Festival Square, Gateways, and Heritage Trails, Finger Posts.

It may be anticipated that this could deliver in the region of £1.5 Million in funding over the next five - ten years. Projects such as this will be important in kick-starting the process, delivering early wins and demonstrating a commitment and confidence within the town.

**Planning Condition:** If a Town Centre development project achieves a consent which has frontage onto a number of streets within the town centre, then those streets would be part of the overall development proposals and their delivery conditioned as part of the planning approval process, whether they were identified as a priority or not. Policies within the existing Congleton Borough local plan and the emerging Neighbourhood plan will ensure that this can be achieved in line with the government guidance on appropriate and robust conditions. In some cases, where there is a less than physical interaction, a planning obligation may be use (See below). Figure XX shows where the development sites in the town are best related to areas of public realm improvement.

Schemes such as the Bus Station, Mill Street, Pedestrian Area and the Route to the Park may be funded through this mechanism. This would be a total cost sought of around £1.8 Million over the next ten years.

**Planning Obligations:** For offsite works developers may be request to pay a commuted sum or planning obligation towards the delivery of a necessary element related to the scheme. Given the scope of this project, any development in the town - even housing sites on the edge- may be able to fund, in part some of the public realm. Contributions from this will need to pool if they are to have any specific effect and deliver any of the projects.

The Neighbourhood Plan offers an opportunity to begin to place requirements for this into the policy context. The exact contributions that are sought will be subject to government guidance. The emerging Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) may also provide an opportunity to deliver this element of the contribution.



The Town Council should work closely with Cheshire East Council to ensure that public realm monies are collected and ring-fenced so that sufficient funds are in place when they are needed. Figure 8.1 shows where the projects that may require this approach are located.

It is likely that the larger, more strategic projects will form the basis of this project covered by this funding stream. Improvements to High Street, Rood Hill, Mountbatten Way and Lawton Street (none of which have specific sites adjacent to them) may be funded through this mechanism. In this instance this would amount to a total cost of around £5 Million over the next ten years and should be seen as the dominant funding source.

**Benefactor funding:** Certain items within the Public Realm may be deliverable through sponsorship or bequeathed by individuals or companies. Examples include sculptures, streets furniture or lighting features. Such funding would require careful management and targeting around specific areas of the town, to ensure the sponsor’s ‘message’ did not overwhelm and was tasteful in its context. In many cases this has already been a part of the Congleton Public Realm through the sponsorship of floral displays, sponsorship of the millennium benches and the BearMania sponsorship.

**Public Sector Funding:** There are still funds available for the management and maintenance of the streets and spaces within Congleton. As part of their regular renewal of these elements there will be an opportunity to ensure that new additions to the public realm are delivered. It is anticipated that this will mainly be on the surrounding streets and spaces, rather than for the key projects. In that respect, it is advised that the Council’s limited funds are targeted to these areas that are outside of the main project areas where possible to ensure that they do no waste monies on areas that are undergoing more substantial change.

## 08:04 Phasing

As set-out in earlier chapters a series of high, medium and low priority areas have been identified. These are based on the assessment undertaken by the professional team, but also as a result of consultation with the community. This does not necessarily mean that these elements should be brought forward in that order, the exact order with which they are delivered will depend on the individual circumstances and what funding streams are available and when.

It is important that when new developments are delivered within the town centre that there immediate surroundings are improved at the same time - especially where the primary shopping circuit and hot routes are involved. Failure to do this will mean that new development is dislocated from the town centre and linked trips associated with new development are not fully realised.

When improvements are being implemented it is essential that the developer creates a programme that allows for all businesses and shops to continue trading through the construction phase. Inevitably, this will cause a prolonged construction period but not at the costs to the retailers and local businesses.

It is anticipated that the first phase of this programme may be related to the development of the Bridestone and Fairground development plots which have a series of planning applications and interest already committed to them. These are the two major town centre sites and collectively have the possibility of addressing public realm works in the pedestrianised area, bus station area and the Mill Street area.

Notwithstanding the above point, work must begin immediately regarding setting up the funding and obligations systems to gather the money for Mountbatten Way and Rood Hill, which without, they projects will be delayed for some time to come. It is anticipated that

it may take up to 5 years to gather the funding necessary to deliver elements such as Mountbatten Way given the scope of works and the necessary supporting studies that are outlined in chapter 5.



09: Conclusions





## 09: Conclusions



*Town streets decorated for festivals*

“What is the future of our public space? Not an unreasonable question to ask at the threshold of a new century. A hundred years ago the question would not have crossed our minds - then there was no reason to be concerned about our public space...”

T. Banerjee (2001)



# 09:01 Achieving Success

The Congleton Public Realm Strategy is one in a suite of documents produced in collaboration between Cheshire East, Congleton Town Council, Congleton Partnership and many other stakeholders, which all influence or have been influenced by one another in order to improve the Quality of Life for the whole community within the town.

This strategy is only part of the answer to improving the economic and social vibrancy of the town centre and wider town. It must be coupled with the delivery of high quality development within the sites as identified within the Town Centre Plan and subsequent studies undertaken by Cheshire East of their assets. All involved must ensure development within the wider town contributes to and is beneficial for the town centre’s evolution, as well as supporting existing and new retailers and businesses wanting to be part of the town centre.

This Strategy provides the framework onto which the Public Realm can physically manifest itself, ensuring it is of a high quality, creative, attractive and unique. It must be translated in that way by developers and the design teams to ensure it delivers the aspirations of the town. The towns Transition Town status is an important element of the Congleton market town identity and the strategy has embraced its goals and desires throughout.

This Public Realm Strategy is important as it can contribute to a significantly wider range of the objectives set out in the Town Centre Plan and delivers the first three projects that that parent document outlines - public realm, Mountbatten Way and the Riverside Walk. By looking cohesively at these elements, and setting them in their strategic context, the various stakeholders are able to offer their support and funding to a common goal, improving the quality of the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and the other road users.

## 10 Key Points of Delivery

The following ten key points below summarise the elements of this strategy that are most important to ensure transformational change to the Public Realm environment over the next ten years:

**A. This strategy needs to be embodied in all the relevant planning strategy and documents:** the planning system is the delivery vehicle for all development within the UK and therefore will provide the statutory underpinning of the ideas and concepts outlined in this strategy. The forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging Core Strategy provide the most effective ways of delivering this.

**B. This strategy puts ‘sustainability’ at the centre of the design process:** The ongoing design and delivery process should seek to embrace the wider sustainability goals of the Transition Town and the Cheshire East Sustainability Strategy. This includes using street trees for passive solar cooling, examining and making informed decisions about the source and embedded energy in materials used, encouraging the use of sustainable drainage systems and permeable paving where possible and ensuring the sustainable modes - public transport, walking and cycling - are enhanced as part of any new design delivered.

**C. This strategy puts the pedestrian first in the design and delivery of a new public realm:** Whilst other modes of transport are important, and are carefully considered as part of this strategy, the pedestrian is the most important - all journeys begin and end of foot! Ensuring that there is adequate pavement areas for pedestrians, the shared surface elements are delivered effectively and that those with pushchairs, wheelchairs or of restricted mobility are free to use the public realm environment. Raised crossing points, drop kerbs and tactile paving are all part of ensuring designs are suitable and appropriate in their setting.

**D. This strategy advocates carefully placed street furniture is important:** The designs in chapters 5 and 6 give some indication about appropriate street furniture and its location, but designers and developers should take great care in choosing the appropriateness and position of street furniture. Too much and this will add to the street clutter and too little and the spaces will become unusable and dirty.

**E. This strategy requires that designs should use the pre-defined palette of materials:** the materials palette set out in Chapter 5 of this document is designed to ensure that the public realm is both durable and is comprised to complement the historic architectural setting. In the Conservation Areas only natural stone products will be acceptable (Type A), in areas away from the Conservation Areas other products will be acceptable so long as they are chosen to complement in style and colours those in the rest of the town centre.

**F. This strategy ensures that durable construction is achieved throughout the implementation:** The new public realm will have to be built to high quality standards, including surety that paving is laid effectively and on suitable bases. This is especially important where vehicles and HGVs will run over them. As part of this, the strategy recommends an Implementation Framework be produced providing the key design details alongside each phase / or project.

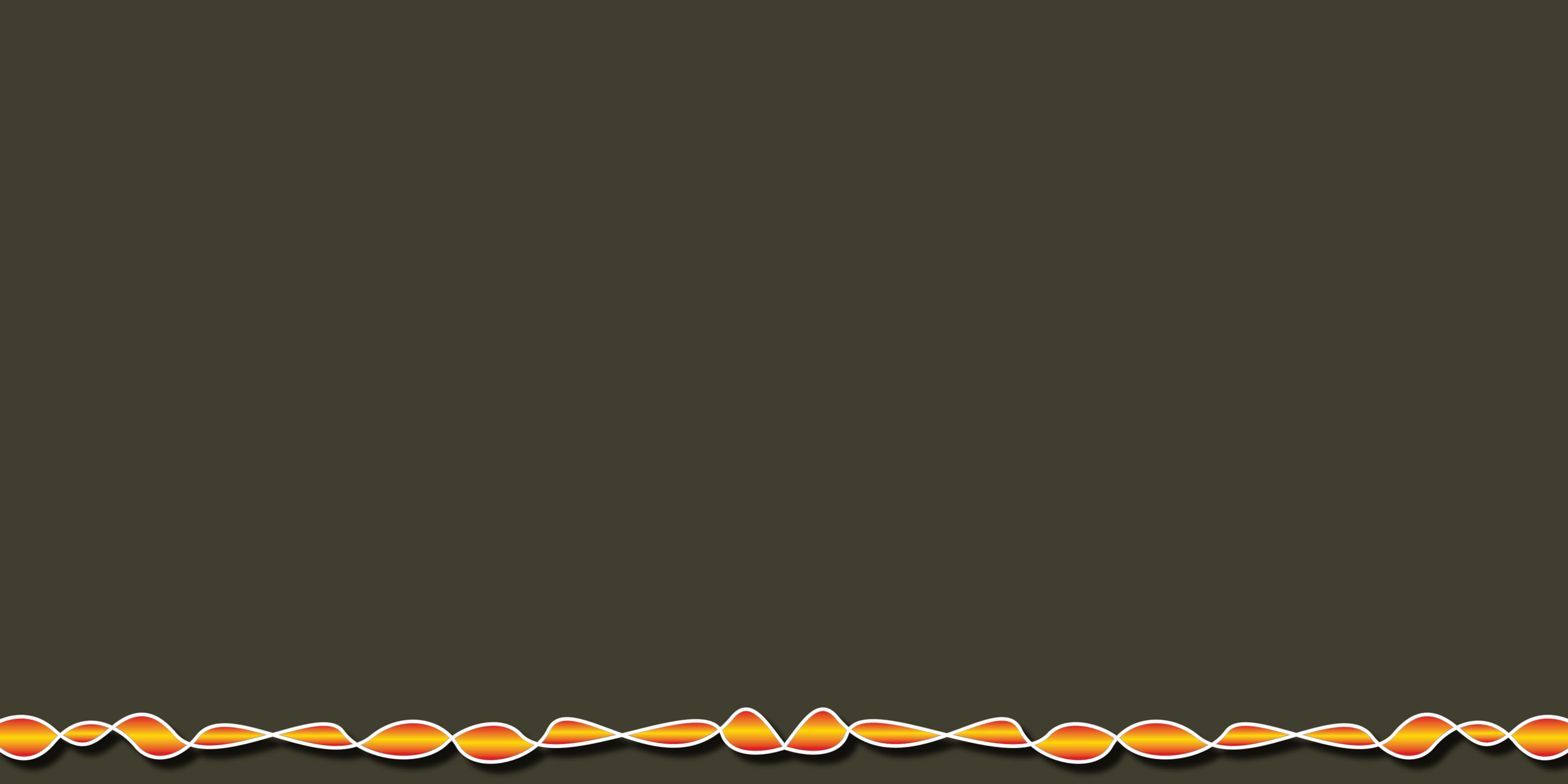
**G. This strategy requires that all new development in the Town contributes to the Public Realm:** Whether it is as a result of a direct obligation or condition attached to a planning application for one of the key sites in the town, or as a contribution for a wider development, new development is the primary funding mechanism for the Public Realm Strategy. Moneys should be identified, ring fenced and collated to ensure smooth delivery of entire projects, rather than in a piecemeal fashion.

**H. This strategy is not strict on phasing or priorities and should be flexible to accommodate opportunities:** Whilst the community and this project have identified what are the most important projects to ensure the success of the Public Realm Strategy, there will always be opportunities that arise and these should be taken advantage of at the time when they arrive. Projects of differing sizes, costs and importance make up this strategy so there is always something that can be delivered as funds, grants or opportunities present themselves.

**I. This strategy must foster strong relationships between different users and managers of the public realm:** Only a long term strategy that builds a strong relationship between retailers, traders, Town and Borough Council officers and the community will ensure the long term success of the goals of the document. Everyone has a role to play within the Public Realm and its ongoing management and the dissemination and ‘ownership’ of the public realm will ensure its longevity.

**J. This strategy recommends that long term street management and maintenance manual is important for providing lasting benefits:** Notwithstanding the quality of the initial delivery of the public realm, without high quality and thorough management and maintenance this will be eroded. This goes further than ensuring the litter is collected and the chewing gum removed, it means enforcing the loading and unloading times, self-policing refuge collection and taking pride in the appearance of the shops, planters and street furniture and as such retailers, businesses and the community have a key role to play. A management and maintenance document is recommended at the delivery of the first phase.







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