Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan

August 2020

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Multidisciplinary Joint Venture

urban movement

THE RETAIL GROUP

SQW

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THE
ROYAL TOWN
OF
SUTTON COLDFIELD

Foreword

Great town centres are focal points for their communities. They are places to live, work, relax and socialise. They are steeped in history and key to the future. The ambitious yet achievable plans set out within the Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan are the first bold steps to ensuring the town centre can meet the needs of residents, appeal to visitors, and attract new investment with confidence.

The clear, shared vision outlined in the following pages provides an exciting and innovative route map towards a resilient, multifunctional town centre, guiding investment so that as individual projects are delivered they support a holistic plan that is far more than the sum of its parts.

This plan is vitally important in a social and economic environment that remains uncertain. The Masterplan was in development as the 2020 coronavirus pandemic emerged. The subsequent lockdown was unprecedented and the impacts of this across our community are not yet known. However, the underlying economic challenges faced by high street businesses remain and have become even more acute as a consequence. This makes this Masterplan even more critical in providing a framework to make the most of the many considerable local opportunities that exist. These include the sustainable urban extension at Langley, developing closer links between Sutton Park and the town centre, and a long overdue and generational chance to reshape the very fabric of the town centre.

The 'Big Moves' at the core of the Masterplan provide tangible opportunities to lead in the delivery of Birmingham City Council's Birmingham Development Plan, Urban Centres Framework, and the draft Birmingham Transport Plan. The bold and deliverable proposals align with Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council's Strategic Plan priority to support regeneration of the town centre, including reshaping streets and public spaces, diversifying what the town centre is used for on a day-to-day basis in conjunction with landowners, and supporting ambitious proposals to address movement in and around the town centre.

The Masterplan will play its part in supporting West Midlands Combined Authority's Strategic Economic Plan building on Sutton Coldfield's already strong connectivity by creating a diverse business, retail and leisure offer, and providing new homes for those wishing to live in the town centre. Royal Sutton Coldfield town centre will support regional economic development by not only being a place to do business in its own right, but also by offering a lifestyle that attracts and retains employees in key sectors such as advanced manufacturing, digital and life sciences.

The Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield is ideally positioned to become an exemplar for the sustainable regeneration of local centres locally and nationally. The three authorities, Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council, Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Combined Authority, are committed to delivering the ambitions within this Masterplan alongside members of the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership, private sector partners, and the residents and businesses of the Royal of Sutton Coldfield.

Simon Ward
Leader
Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council

Ian Ward
Leader
Birmingham City Council

Andy Street
Mayor of the West Midlands

1 Introduction and Purpose

1.1 Purpose and status of the masterplan

Town centres are the hearts of our communities. They provide important services, facilities, and crucially, spaces that bring people together. With the role of the High Street changing everywhere, the need to bring activity, life and vitality into town centres has become a fundamental component to regeneration. To do so, town centres must become attractive places to live, visit and do business for a wide range of people.

The town centre of Royal Sutton Coldfield was experiencing a decline well before the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and the current situation only prompts greater urgency to transform it into a town centre that lives up to its Royal title, takes advantage of its relationship with Sutton Park, focuses on the health and wellbeing of its community, and provides a sustainable and environmentally-resilient future for its residents and businesses.

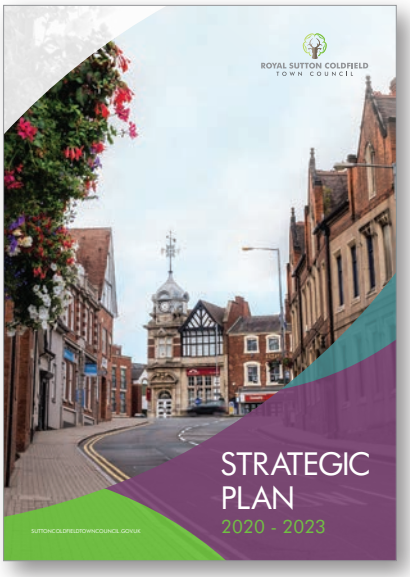
The preparation of the masterplan has been led by the Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Regeneration Partnership (TCRP) and funded by Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBLSEP) and Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council (RSCTC).

The masterplan was launched in mid-2019 for the purpose of promoting and developing a new vision for the town centre. Whilst the partnership is led by the RSCTC, it involves a broad range of stakeholders including GBSLEP, Birmingham City Council (BCC), Sutton Coldfield Business Improvement District (BID), community organisations, and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), amongst several others. This wide ranging group has been closely involved with the development of this masterplan and is committed to driving it forward. They have ensured that this masterplan framework and strategy for Sutton Coldfield Town Centre:

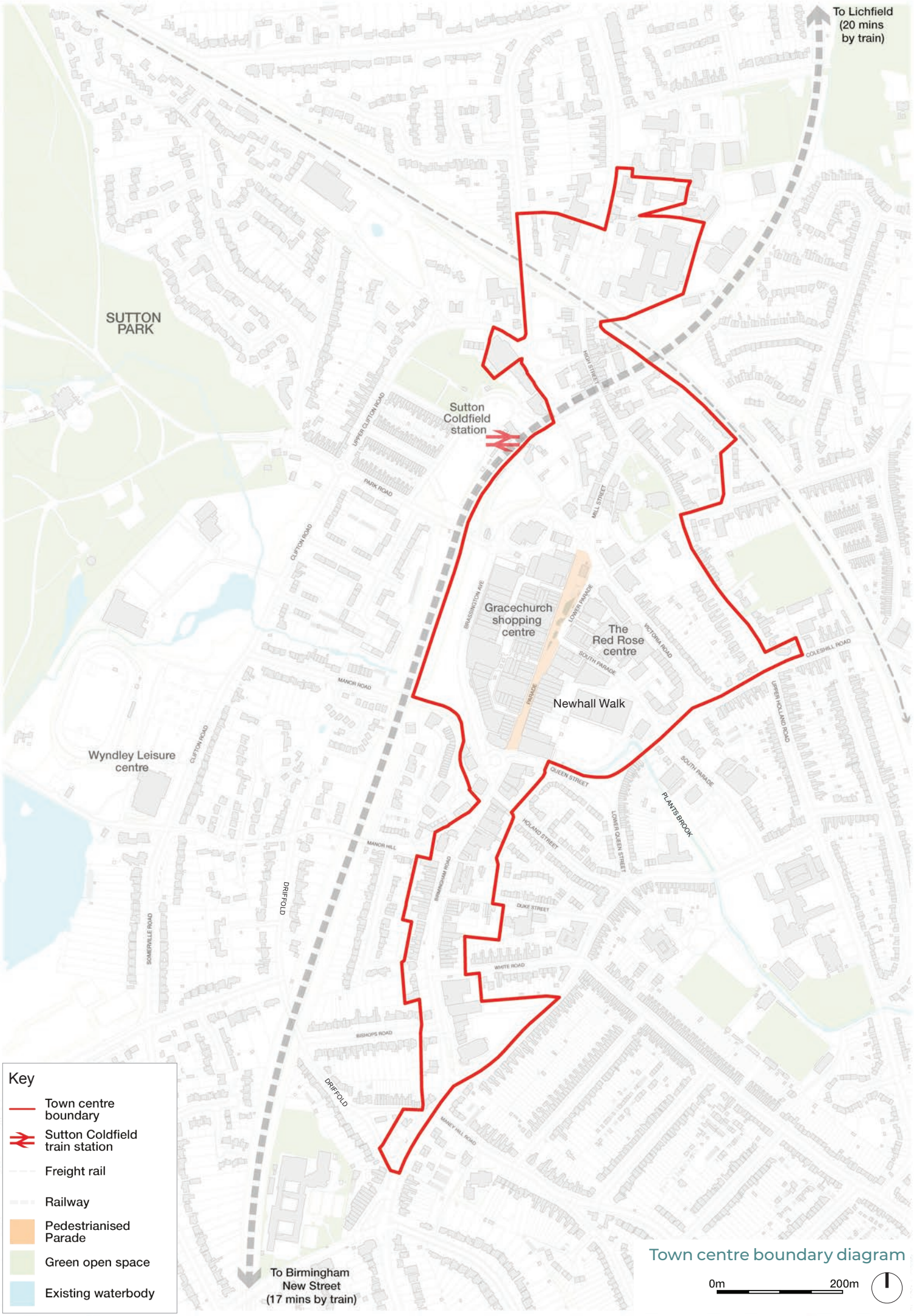
- provides a bold and ambitious vision that unites stakeholders;
- identifies the impacts, influences, constraints, consequences and opportunities for the town centre;
- presents deliverable transformational placemaking projects / opportunities;
- provides confidence to private sector developers, investors and businesses to commit long-term to the town centre;
- builds on existing local planning policy; and,
- acknowledges the financial implications of any proposed interventions.

In addition to BCC's Birmingham Development Plan (2017) identifying Sutton Coldfield as a key opportunity for "significant growth and diversification of the town centre to improve the limited retail and leisure offer", Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council's Strategic Plan (2020-2023) identifies the regeneration of the town centre as a corporate priority.

Birmingham City Council will seek to adopt the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). As an SPD, future proposals and development within the town centre boundary will be expected to be in accordance with the vision, objectives and Big Moves set out within the masterplan. Once adopted, this document will supersede the Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Regeneration Framework 2009 SPD.



The Town Council's Strategic Plan (2020-2023)



Town centre boundary diagram

1.2 Outline methodology

Consultant team

The masterplanning team is led by Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design and supported by Urban Movement (transport planners and landscape architects), SQW Land & Property (land and property specialists) and The Retail Group (retail development and consumer needs specialist).

Approach

This masterplan framework has been developed through a two-stage process. The first stage sought to establish a solid foundation of understanding and knowledge in regard to:

- Sutton Coldfield – its character, assets, constraints, opportunities, previous plans, and ambitions,
- existing studies and the broader policy context and objectives, and
- the factors impacting on the acknowledged decline of the town centre as a reputable shopping destination.

This involved site visits, review of existing information, stakeholder engagement including conversations with landowners, key community groups including FOLIO Sutton Coldfield, meetings and workshops with the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership (TCRP) and Sutton Coldfield BID, and a consumer survey which enabled a shopper and resident catchment analysis. The outcome of Stage 1 is summarised in a separate Baseline Report.

Stage 2 involved identifying an initial vision and objectives for the town centre masterplan, as well as exploring potential ideas and projects through technical studies, viability considerations, and engagement with stakeholders and members. By testing these ideas through a series of engagement events, including online consultation, the feedback raised helped the project team to further define the masterplan vision and overall strategy. This was brought together in a draft format which was refined through discussion with the client team.

Stakeholder consultation and input into masterplan

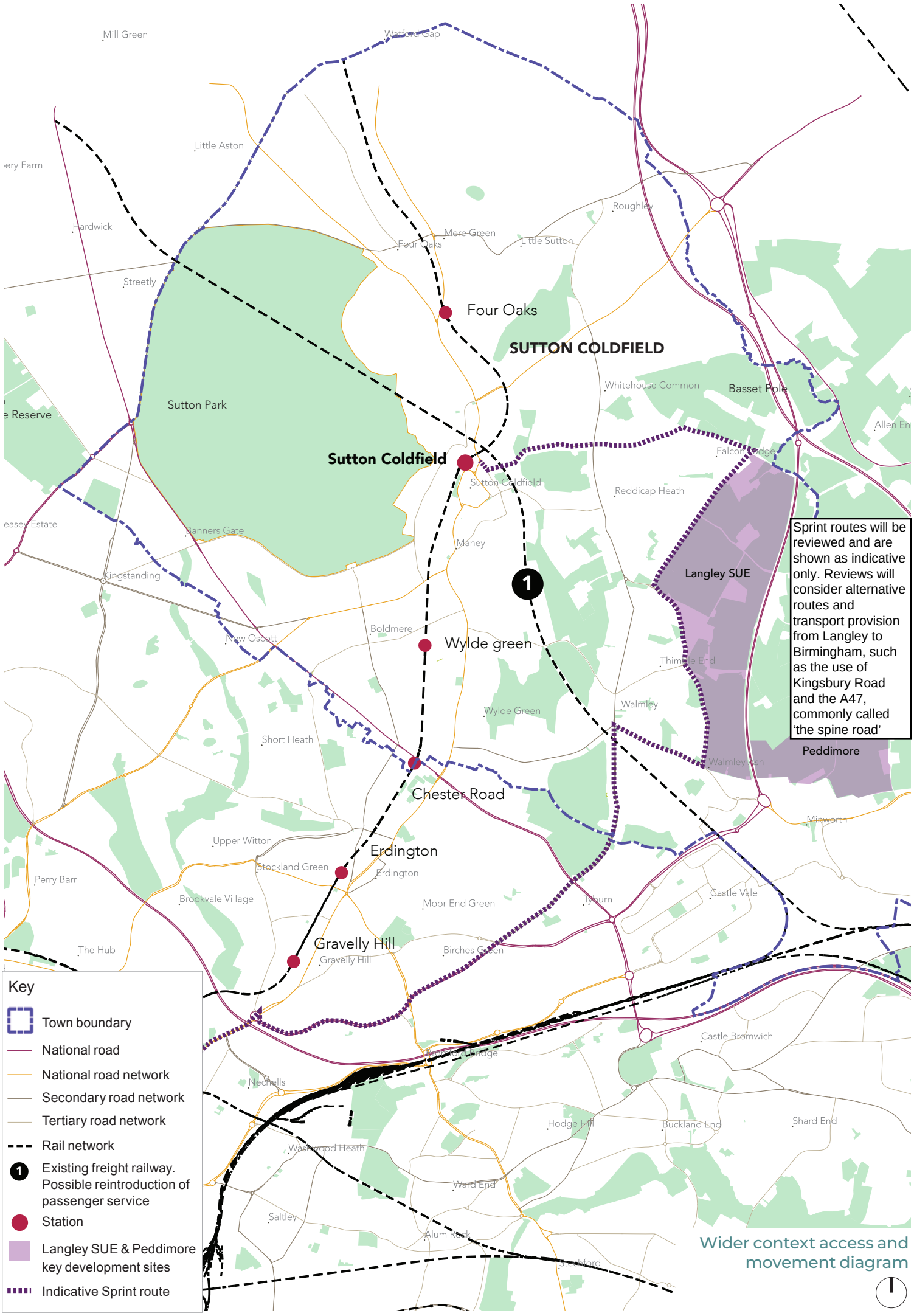
The initial vision, objectives, and projects defined as the masterplan's 'Big Moves' were shared with Town Councillors and publicised to residents and the local community to prompt discussion and request feedback during invited workshops, public drop-in sessions and via online consultation over four weeks from mid-February to early March 2020. A summary of all feedback received (involving around 130 responses) was compiled and recurring themes and concerns were identified.

Overall, initial proposals for the Vision, Objectives, and Big Moves were received well, and many were eager to see them implemented as soon as possible. Response to 'Economy and Community' and 'Heritage and Environment' (now 'Built Environment and Identity') Big Moves were particularly positive as ideas for diversifying town centre uses and creating a central civic open space were viewed as vital to the regeneration of the town centre.

Most of the concern raised during consultation focused on traffic impacts of the proposals and a list of FAQs was prepared to address some of the common questions asked throughout consultation. Where possible, feedback was incorporated in the further development of the masterplan framework and strategy for the town centre. Further details on consultation feedback are provided within Chapter 3.2 Big Moves.

"I completely agree with the proposed Big Moves. They are exactly what Sutton needs to become the heart of north Birmingham."

Feedback received during public consultation



Wider context access and movement diagram

1.3 Policy context

This masterplan document sits in context to several other documents and plans prepared by Birmingham City Council, including:

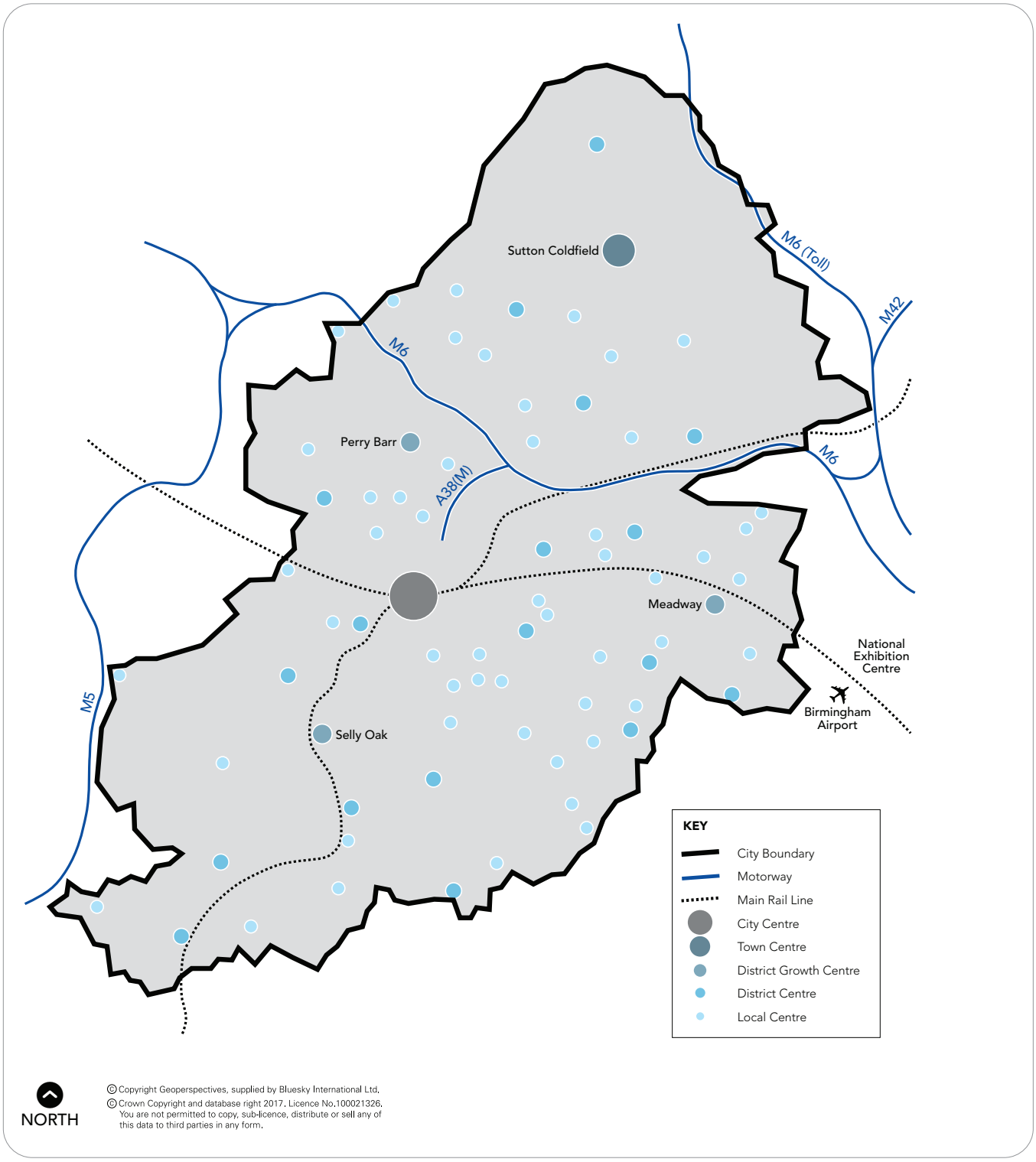
- the Birmingham Development Plan 2031 (adopted 2017) – which identifies Sutton Coldfield Town Centre for *"significant growth and diversification of the town centre to improve the limited retail and leisure offer"* (Policy GA4) and also states that as a sub-regional centre, Sutton Coldfield *"is capable of accommodating significant additional comparison retail floorspace and some office space"* (Policy TP21);
- GBSLEP Towns and Local Centres Framework (March 2019) - which sets out guidance and criteria for investment into town and local centre regeneration within the region (providing the avenue for funding this masterplan);
- the Urban Centres Framework (adopted 2020) – which provides the strategy for identified urban centres within Birmingham, including Sutton Coldfield, to transform into diverse, well-connected and unique hubs at the heart of local communities;
- Birmingham Connected Green (2013) and White Papers (2014), Birmingham's 20-year Mobility Action Plan, and the Birmingham Transport Plan (draft issued January 2020) – an ambitious document that sets out the future direction of transport investment and design for the city region, focusing on a sustainable transport system for all;
- Birmingham Walking and Cycling Strategy (January 2020) – which focuses on increasing walking and cycling in Birmingham for transport, leisure and health and subsequently reduce traffic congestion, overall carbon emissions, and improve air quality;
- Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan (May 2020) – which prioritised and accelerated some of the measures within the draft BTP including those which increased space for walking and cycling to support social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for the High Street Conservation Area (February 2015) – which provides a summary of the heritage issues in Sutton Coldfield that the masterplan should address (the Anchorage Road Conservation Area to the north of the town centre has also been noted);
- Langley SUE and Peddimore Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) (both adopted 2019) – which set out guidance to ensure both new developments are high quality and sustainable; and;
- the Sutton Coldfield Regeneration Framework SPD (2009) – which set out a 10-15 year vision and strategy to help regenerate Sutton Coldfield into a key strategic centre for Greater Birmingham.

A more comprehensive review of the above documents and plans and how their key objectives apply to the Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan can be viewed in the Baseline Report. However, it is clear that planning policy context is well-established, providing this masterplan with a firm basis and direction. It is worth noting that some of the above documents propose a set of 'Big Moves' which have helped to inform a definitive set of 'Big Moves' for Sutton Coldfield Town Centre within Chapter 3.

The Climate Emergency and 'Route To Zero'

In June 2019, Birmingham City Council unanimously voted to declare a climate emergency with a commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. This is the City Council's 'Route to Zero' (R20). This commitment has been factored into the masterplan to ensure 'business as usual' dramatically changes to reflect the urgency of the environmental situation, now further exacerbated by the impact of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.

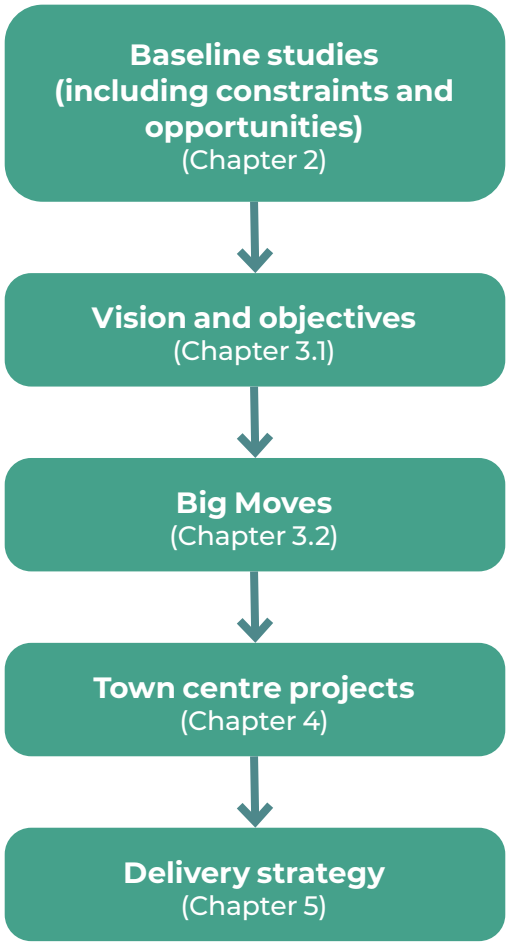
The R20 taskforce was created in Autumn 2019 and brings together Members and officers from the City Council and representatives from the West Midlands Combined Authority, the NHS, higher education, business, faith communities, the third sector, young climate strikers, climate campaigners, and other key partners and stakeholders. The taskforce is currently working to develop recommendations for how everyone in Birmingham can contribute to tackling climate change and benefit from a safer, fairer, and more sustainable city.



Hierarchy of centres (Plan 16 extract from the Birmingtham Development Plan (2017))

KNIGHT'S HOUSE

1.4 Structure of the masterplan



The objectives identified in Chapter 3.1 have been illustrated as symbols to help signify how Town Centre projects (Chapter 4) align with specific objectives and the town centre Vision overall.

2 Understanding Sutton Coldfield

2.1 Sutton Coldfield today

Sutton Coldfield, officially the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield, is a historic town with origins acknowledged within the Domesday Book (1086), with Sutton Park established as a royal forest and deer park similarly early on. The status of royal town was granted by Henry VIII in 1528. It is located in the West Midlands and is the largest suburban centre within Birmingham City Council's administrative area. It is about 7 miles north east of Birmingham City Centre, very much on the edge of Greater Birmingham, and as such it is close to large areas of open space and green belt. To the north is the cathedral city of Lichfield, and to the east the town of Tamworth.

The town is perceived as having a good quality of life and an attractive natural environment, reflected in its leafy residential streets, higher house prices and relatively more affluent social groups. Despite this Sutton Coldfield has some pockets of relative poverty.

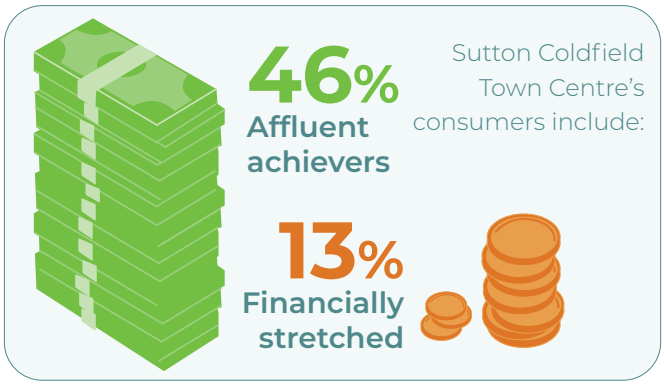
Overall, Its resident community is outward looking, creative and aspirational. Unlike many of the larger towns in the conurbation, Sutton Coldfield does not have large areas of industrial land and is overwhelmingly residential in nature.

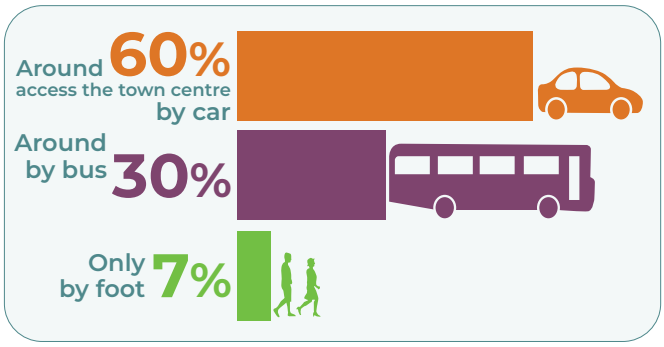
The town is well connected by road and public transport, with the M6 Toll Motorway and other main routes close by with direct links to Birmingham City Centre. The main railway station is on the (Cross-City) Lichfield to Birmingham line and is a busy commuter service with services into Birmingham New Street typically every 10 minutes. The second 'Sutton Park' railway line, running roughly east-west, is currently used by freight only.

Langley Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) and the associated Peddimore employment site are within the boundary of the town, in former green belt land, and are set to provide 6,000 new homes and 6,500 new jobs in the local area. Close by, and as a result of its good accessibility, are the major attractions of Drayton Manor theme park and The Belfry Hotel and Resort.

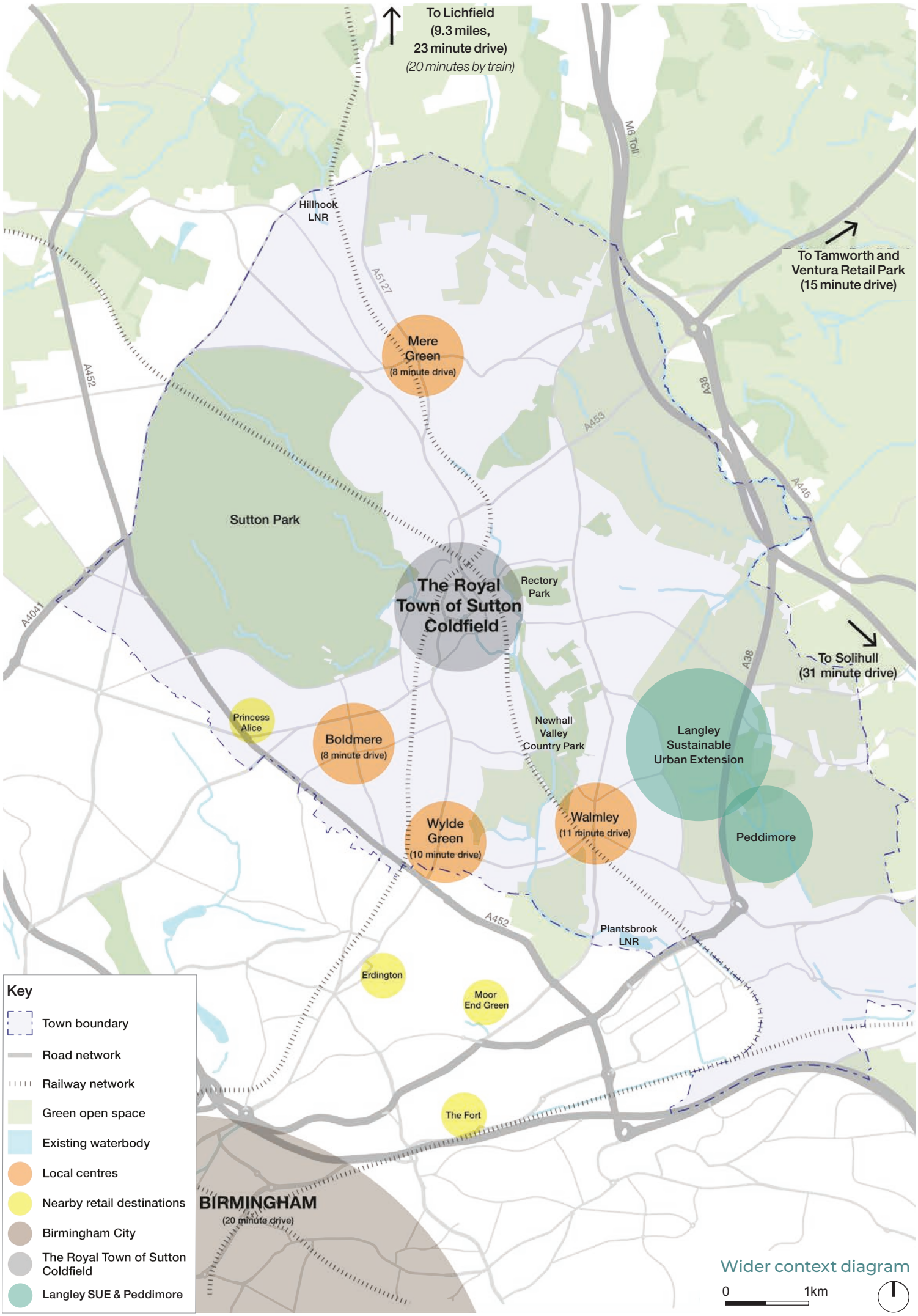
Despite a long list of positive qualities, Sutton Coldfield Town Centre is currently in crisis. It needs swift and firm action and attention to address structural problems in its offer and environment. The problems within the retail sector are well documented, and Sutton Coldfield's reliance on retail and, to a large extent, past glories is no longer providing a broad range of choices for the catchment population. The people who live within easy reach of Sutton Coldfield Town Centre are broadly a mobile and affluent catchment group, able to access a broad range of shops and services in a number of alternative locations, including nearby local centres such as Boldmere and Mere Green.

Sutton Coldfield Town Centre needs to be updated and reinvented for the entire community to be a strong destination for a unique shopping and leisure experience. Improving its relationship with Sutton Park and providing a variety of high quality, centrally-located homes and workplaces would also help to increase overall footfall and subsequently its general vibrancy and ongoing viability as a town centre. The public realm has the potential to be upgraded and made into an attractive, inviting and green environment making it pleasant to move through and spend time.





Information based on consumer survey results (refer Baseline Report for further details)



Wider context diagram

2.2 Character areas

Sutton Coldfield's town centre area falls into six main character areas. These are easily defined due to the nature of the town's growth and the transport network infrastructure, which has inadvertently caused a strong sense of disconnection across the town centre.

Sutton College

North of the railway, Sutton College dominates the area, a large educational establishment with a distinctly institutional character set back from Lichfield Road. The Police Station, former Court, and Fire Station are opposite and similarly set back on the western side of the road. The public realm environment is focused on vehicle movement with large expanses of road. The former School of Art and the adjacent red brick former Catholic church provide some hint at the area's history, but the tighter grain and more human scale of these buildings have limited impact on the nature and character of the area.

Station Quarter

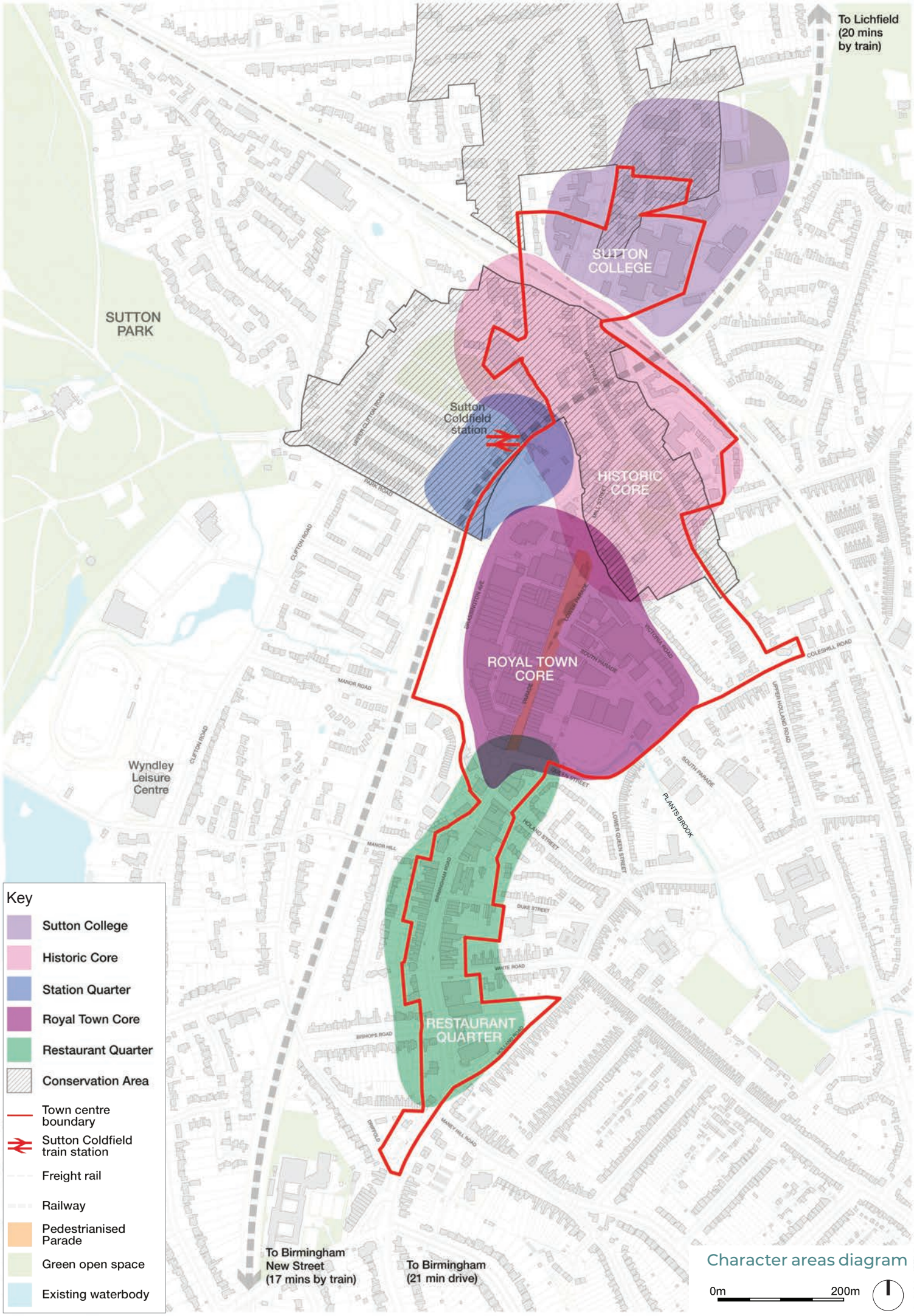
The Station Quarter consists of the area immediately around the station, including the station building and Station Street, which is rather featureless with the exception of the Station Pub located opposite the station entrance. The historic station building, built in 1862, features similar characteristics as buildings within the Historic Core, however the eastern entrance facing the town centre is clearly a secondary access.

The area to the north, between High Street and the station is mostly characterised by informal surface parking due to the area being safeguarded for the relief road proposal included in the 2009 SPD, however there are direct pedestrian links in this area connecting the Station and Historic Cores. The Station Street car park was originally identified as the potential location for a bus interchange.

Train services run frequently to Birmingham New Street

Mill Street looking south, down The Parade

The station entrance onto Station Street



Character areas diagram

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GIVE WAY
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Historic Core

Much of the Historic Core falls within the High Street Conservation Area. Sutton Coldfield historically developed around High Street, Mill Street, Coleshill Street and the triangular Vesey Gardens in front of the Holy Trinity Church. King Edward's Square, with its central war memorial, is another distinctive space in front of the Town Hall and former hotel (now apartments). Along these streets, much of the historic feel of the place remains due to a reasonable amount of well-maintained architectural heritage.

Uses within the Historic Core include small-scale commercial and retail units, comprising a range of professional services and independent businesses, a pub, community uses, residential varying from apartments and terrace housing, and the only hotel in the town centre. Main streets feature a consistent building line which meets the pavement creating a good sense of enclosure. Building heights are consistently around three storeys in height, and use of a similar dark reddish brown brick is prevalent throughout.

Fast-moving traffic movement heavily dominates the area with large road widths and oversized junctions. Footpath widths are typically narrow making it a hostile environment for both pedestrians and cyclists. The lack of active ground floor uses along Mill Street also contributes to the poor public realm environment.

Historic architecture on Mill Street with the clock tower in the background

King Edwards Square with war memorial in front of the former hotel (now private apartments)

Corner of Vesey Gardens at the junction of Coleshill and Mill Streets

Royal Town Core

Effectively enclosed by the ring road, the Royal Town Core area is perhaps what most people may think of as the town centre. It is dominated by the three main shopping centres (Gracechurch Centre, Red Rose Centre, and Newhall Walk), with little else other than retail and their associated parking facilities going on. The Market Village on South Parade provides a unique experience within the town centre, and semi-frequently an outdoor market occupies The Parade which is pedestrianised along its length. The Parade steps down the natural topography to meet Lower Parade, which currently contains the busy bus interchange.

The three main shopping centres vary in architectural style, with the Gracechurch Centre distinctly reflecting the 70's period in which it was built. The Gracechurch Centre has a partly internal arcade which runs parallel to The Parade with no connections to Brassington Avenue. There is a small entrance to the north of the Gracechurch Centre which leads towards the station past the United Reformed Church which is an attractive building but undermined by its relationship with the private carparking facilities within the Gracechurch Centre.

The Red Rose Centre also appears dated and is characterised by its internal courtyard, off The Parade, where access to the popular library, Wilko, and the largely unoccupied Victoria Road car park can be found. Access to the internal courtyard is also available from South Parade via stairs to navigate the changing topography.

Newhall Walk consists of retail frontage along The Parade, including an Aldi at the corner of Queen Street, as well as a 90s-style retail warehouse park with a large surface carpark to the rear. A walkway connects this area with The Parade via a set of stairs. The presence of Plants Brook along Newhall Walk's Victoria Road boundary provides one of the only natural features within the town centre, however there is no signage and indication of its presence apart from continuous railings on both sides and the gap it surrounds.

Enveloping the Royal Town Core, the ring road (Queen Street, Victoria Road and Brassington Avenue) acts as a collar which effectively disconnects the overall town centre both physically and psychologically. The ring road's one-way gyratory system creates an environment which encourages aggressive driving, further affecting the experience of pedestrians and cyclists and likely the attractiveness of the site west of Brassington Avenue as a development opportunity (further exacerbated by the Gracechurch Centre's extensive blank frontage).

The prevalence of large-scale parking, alongside the shopping centres, also impacts on the overall character of the Royal Town Core by sending a message of a car-dominated environment rather than one which is focused on community and public life.

View from the south of Parade at the intersection with Birmingham and Victoria Roads

View of the Gracechurch Centre along The Parade

Restaurant Quarter, Birmingham Road

Birmingham Road is the southern part of the through route across Sutton Coldfield, and is a busy and wide two-way highway with reasonably sized footpaths particularly on the eastern side. Businesses appear to prosper, and both sides of the street have a mix of services, shops, cafes, restaurants and pubs. There are also residential uses, including large detached houses towards the south, Sutton Cottage Hospital, and the art deco Empire Cinema located at the Holland Road junction. Building heights and character vary from the six storey office block at Duke Street, to the mixed one- and two-storey small shop units at 10-38.

There is limited on-street parking available, and parking on the highway is discouraged through the placement of small concrete bollards which vary in character. The evident lack of parking however contributes to a variety of issues along the street including parking on the highway (some illegal), as well as within bus laybys and on zig-zag lines. This activity creates a poor streetscape environment, particularly where it obstructs the footpath, and can disrupt the flow of traffic. There is also a significant lack of pedestrian crossings with only two signalised crossings along its approximately 450m stretch.

Birmingham Road has the potential to offer an attractive gateway into the heart of the town centre, but this is currently compromised by the dominating nature of the road and traffic. Whilst the area is said to thrive on a Friday and Saturday night, there is little interaction between the Royal Town Core and this area, partly due to the ring road and partly because there is no real trading of uses between the two areas that could enable it.

View of Birmingham Road looking south showing a variety of small businessses

Some buildings along Birmingham Road are small in scale

Birmingham Road hosts a number of cafes and restaurants which create a lively environment on the weekends

2.3 Land ownership

Within the core of the town centre, there are a number of significant landowners:

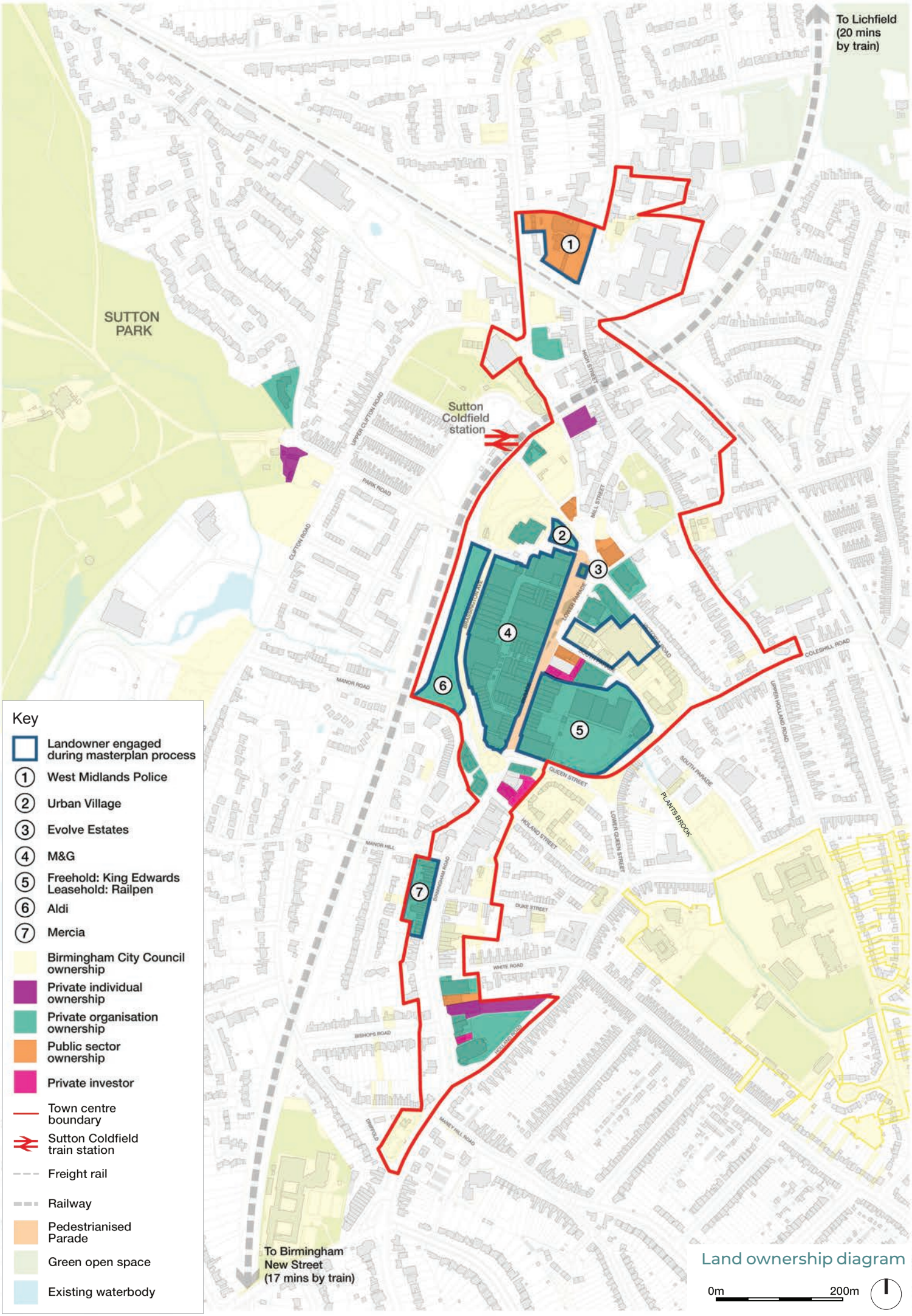
- M&G Investments purchased the Gracechurch Centre in 2013. This included the office building to the northern end, which was subsequently sold on to a residential property developer (now coming to the market as Knight's House).
- Birmingham City Council purchased the Red Rose Centre in 2016. The City Council previously leased space in the car park and the library, though the Council's ownership makes them a key player in future regeneration.
- King Edward's Independent Day School owns Newhall Walk shopping centre and car park on the south eastern corner of the current town centre (including the units on The Parade from Aldi in the south to Waterstones in the north). The lease on the site is owned by Railpen, the rail industry pension fund.
- Aldi own the site west of Brassington Avenue. A previous planning application for a retirement village on the site (by former landowners Pegasus Life) was submitted during 2014. This received consent but has since lapsed without any start. An earlier planning consent from 2004 was started, though the developer and promoter no longer exists.

The limited number of landowners who own substantial areas and key sites within the town centre is an opportunity to bring about strategic change.

The northern entrance off The Parade into the Gracechurch Centre

View of the Red Rose Centre from South Parade

Warehouse-style retail units to the rear of Newhall Walk



Land ownership diagram

2.4 Constraints

The town centre faces various constraints that hinder its ability to thrive. By identifying these constraints, this masterplan highlights the challenges posed and proposes what could be done to overcome them.

Transport infrastructure and connectivity

- The ring road severs the Royal Town Core from the rest of the town centre, as well as surrounding areas, creating a poor sense of arrival to the Royal Town Core by all modes of transport.
- The combination of wide carriageways, wide junctions, and narrow footpaths creates an environment which encourages fast-moving traffic, creating an unsafe and unattractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Pedestrian connectivity is poor generally, including to Sutton Park making the close physical proximity to Sutton Park unapparent.

Poor public realm

- The public realm is generally low quality, and undermines perceptions of Sutton Coldfield as a place to live or visit.
- Despite the green setting and the proximity of Sutton Park, street trees and landscaping are conspicuously absent from the town centre.
- The general absence or poor provision of street furniture, places to sit, and play features further contributes to the uninviting nature of the public realm and discourages people from spending more time than necessary within the town centre.
- The topography change between Lower Parade and The Parade with its steps and fenced-off landscaping feels like a barrier which physically disconnects the two spaces.

Retail and the 'big three'

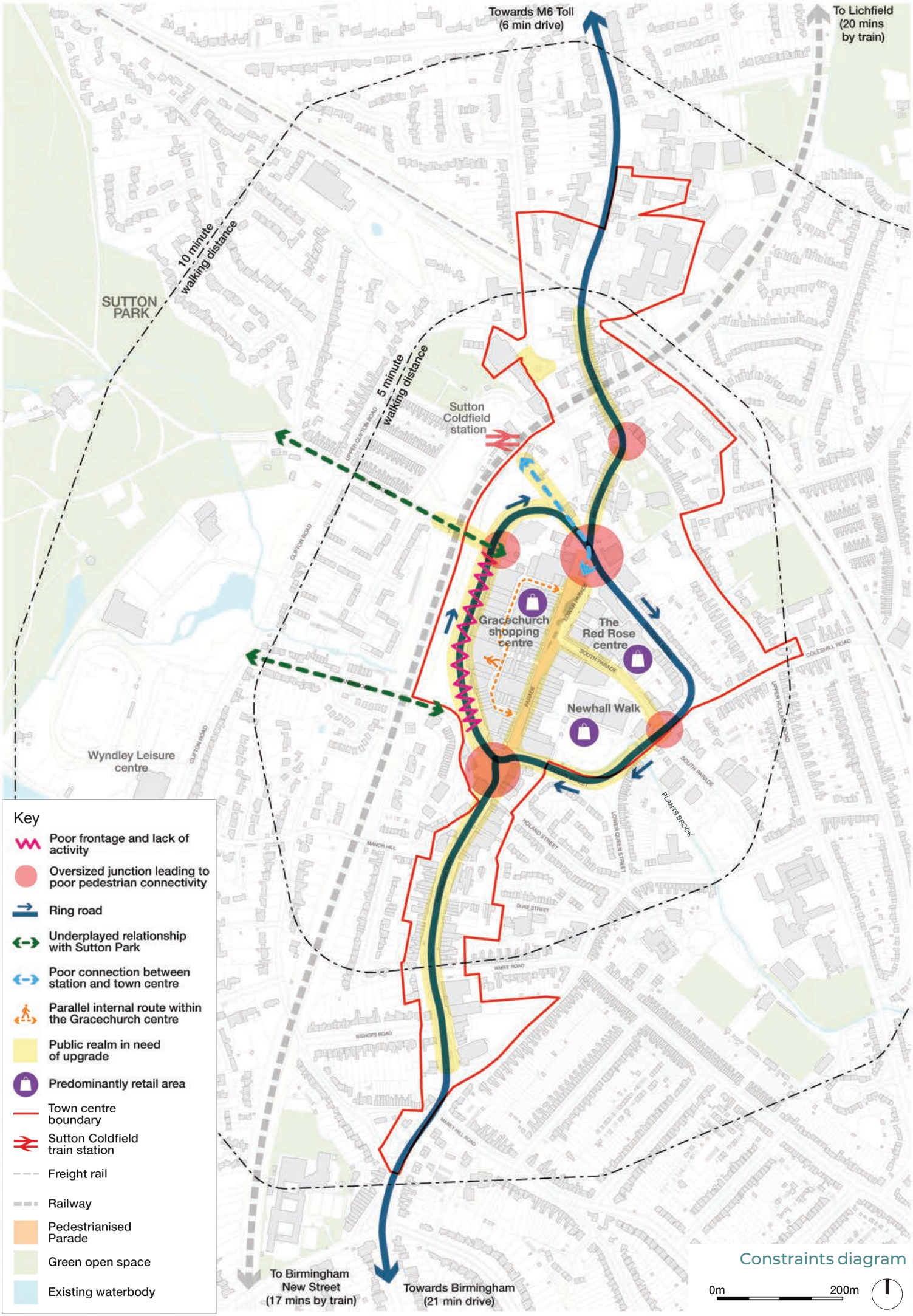
- Retail uses are dominant within the Royal Town Core and Sutton Coldfield is losing its ability to attract visitors for its retail offer alone. Competing centres, including Birmingham City Centre, Tamworth, and Solihull/Touchwood, and destination retail parks (e.g. Ventura, Princess Alice) have shown to be more attractive to residents.
- The town centre suffers from a lack of diversity, despite pockets of restaurants and pubs along Birmingham Road and commercial premises in the Historic Core. The lack of cultural and leisure uses, including visitor accommodation, is distinct.
- Consumer trends now look towards providing 'convenience' and 'experience', both of which Sutton Coldfield fails to provide.
- The remaining retail offer is mismatched with the relatively affluent local residential community.
- The physical make-up of the Royal Town Core is dominated by the 'big three': the Gracechurch Centre, Red Rose Centre, and Newhall Walk. Only the Red Rose Centre is publicly owned limiting the scope of direct intervention by the masterplan.
- The Gracechurch Centre makes up a significant part of the Royal Town Core and its internal mall arrangement running parallel to The Parade is problematic for maintaining active frontage and positive development edges onto both.
- The Brassington Road edge of the Gracechurch Centre provides little activity.
- There is little to no activity after hours along The Parade, despite a comparatively bustling restaurant and pub scene on Birmingham Road.

Lack of identity and heart

- From conversations with stakeholders as well as site visits, Sutton Coldfield clearly lacks a strong identity, as well as a physical 'heart'.
- Due to the design of the ring road, it is hard to distinguish where the town centre starts and ends.

Non-physical threats

- Due to high volumes of traffic travelling along the ring road, noise and air pollution are at high levels in these areas.
- The declared climate emergency by Birmingham City Council has been an important consideration on proposals for changes and new development within Sutton Coldfield Town Centre.



Constraints diagram

2.5 Opportunities

Sutton Coldfield benefits from a number of strengths and opportunities which the masterplan should utilise to ensure it enables a distinct and revitalised town centre.

An enthusiastic and affluent community

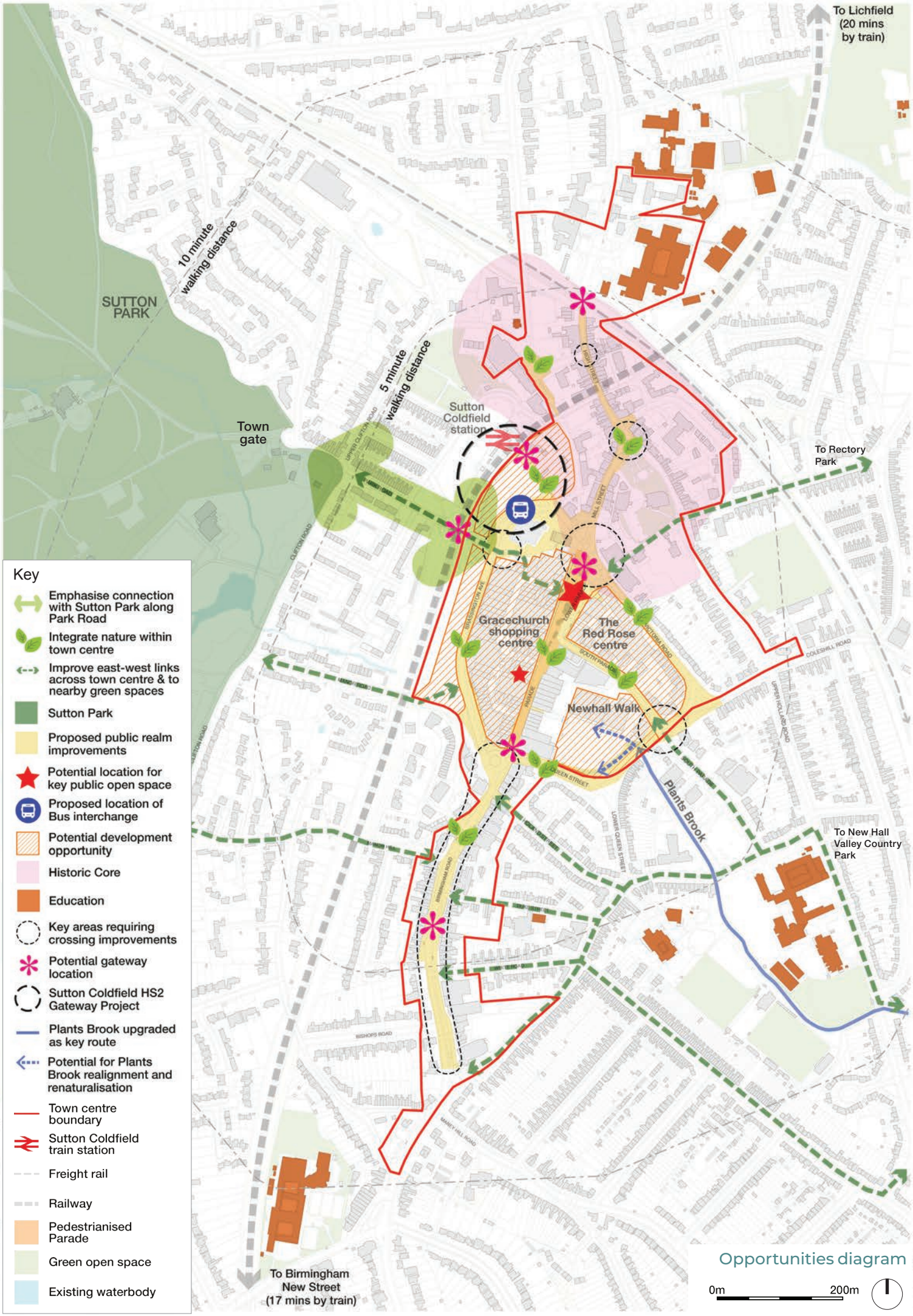
- Sutton Coldfield residents are loyal, proactive, and enthusiastic to see positive changes made to ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of their town centre. The majority of residents living within the core catchment are particularly discerning and affluent, at levels considerably above the UK average. As consumers, they tend to be well-educated, well-travelled and have high expectations of service and quality. This suggests that a diversified retail offering which targets high quality, boutique and specialist services, e.g. bakeries, butcheries, delicatessens, health and beauty, etc, could succeed in Sutton Coldfield.
- Sutton Coldfield Library is highly regarded by the community and FOLIO Sutton Coldfield runs a well-attended programme of events. There is an opportunity to build on this strong sense of community by building a new combined purpose-built library and community facility which has a visible and prominent face onto the public realm. It could host a number of different community-focused services including drop-in health service provision to increase accessibility for residents.

Nature in the town centre

- Being so close by, and as a destination in its own right, Sutton Park should have an obvious and more visible presence within the town centre to reinforce the proximity of each to the other. This could be achieved by bringing more natural features into the town centre, such as integrating more trees or planting within all streets, alongside street furniture which features natural materials and/or motifs, to convey a strong visual association with the park.
- Plants Brook is a culverted stream which can be seen along the Queen Street edge of Newhall Walk. It is one of few natural features within the town centre and should be celebrated as such. It could be uncovered and realigned to be made into a distinct feature which brings nature and added value to its surroundings, including potential future development at Newhall Walk.
- The need to consider the climate emergency and unpredictable changing weather patterns, which are already bringing hotter temperatures and increased rainfall, insists on the need to design for climate resilience. This includes integrating more trees and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) for shading and managing increased surface water flooding. These should be considered as key design opportunities to create multi-functional features within the townscape which can provide informal play spaces or pleasant areas for resting and meeting others.

Creating a people-focused town centre

- With road carriageways overly wide and footpaths being overly narrow in places, there is an opportunity to reclaim part of the carriageway for cycle ways and/or widened footpaths. Widened footpaths would create a safer and more pleasant walking environment as well as provide the space for safe social distancing, street furniture, or businesses to spill-out onto the pavement which may continue to be necessary due to the ongoing pandemic. The presence of street furniture (and trees, refer above) will help to create an attractive people-focused town centre environment which will help to naturally calm traffic and cater for more people to be able to travel without the use of their cars, reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.
- Improving and tightening road junctions so they are still functional for traffic but are easier to cross for pedestrians will help to create a more integrated town centre. Better crossings will also help to connect residential, working, and school populations to the town centre to help increase the viability of shops and businesses.
- The lack of gateways and visibility of the town centre undermines its importance within the Birmingham region. Gateways, and other landmark features, should be identified and developed to



Opportunities diagram

be distinctive to Sutton Coldfield Town Centre, and could include interventions within the public realm, built development, public art and signage. These changes will help advertise and announce the town centres presence and offer. Public art could be designed with input from community groups and utilised to communicate Sutton Coldfield's identity and their pride as a community.

- Wayfinding signage will also help to ensure all parts of the town centre and nearby destinations are equally accessible and prominent. Providing signage which shares the distance and travel time will encourage more people to walk and cycle once they know how close everything is.
- A strategic cycle route connects Sutton Park to New Hall Valley Country Park to the east, which is located nearby the proposed Langley SUE and Peddimore developments. Ensuring this link is legible, direct and well signposted will be important in establishing this connection as a key link to and from the town centre.
- With proposals to shift the bus interchange closer to the station, Lower Parade can be relieved of high volumes of through traffic and transformed into an attractive public open space. By rethinking the change in levels between The Parade and Lower Parade, this area could be opened to create an expansive town square and public 'heart' to Sutton Coldfield which could host markets and other community events and festivals.

Development opportunity sites

- The Red Rose Centre is in public ownership and is therefore a major opportunity for regeneration within the town centre. It is large, prominent, and well-located being within the heart of the Royal Town Core and therefore in excellent proximity to the train station.
- The Gracechurch Centre occupies such a large area within the Royal Town Core that its role within the town centre regeneration should not go understated. A number of constraints (refer previous chapter) hold it back however these should also be seen as opportunities. Its extensive façade along Brassington Avenue should be an opportunity to signpost the town centre with a positive frontage and create activity, with the potential to create direct routes through to The Parade. Its large vacant units should be considered for short-term interventions which could test alternative uses before committing to more long-term changes. They could provide temporary indoor marketplaces or leisure uses to entice families and young people to visit and spend time within the town centre.
- Newhall Walk is also a prominent site as the interface between the Royal Town Core and adjacent residential communities. Newhall Walk must continue to provide direct and clear connections to South Parade.
- The vacant land along Brassington Avenue is a key site which, if combined with improvements to the streetscape and Gracechurch Centre, would help to create a positive and vibrant extension to the town centre.
- New development should respond to the climate emergency and zero-carbon aims established by Birmingham City Centre. Buildings should consider innovative design and use of materials to ensure long-term flexibility, reduced embodied carbon, and minimum requirements for energy use and future maintenance. Where possible, development should integrate nature-based solutions such as green roofs and walls, and SUDS within landscaping.

Reimagining Sutton Coldfield Library will be an important element of regenerating the town centre

Creating a mixed-use diverse town centre

- Market research and consumer survey findings support the possibility of a diverse range of uses within the town centre. Due to high market value, residential uses are likely to be a good investment for land owners and would benefit the town centre by increasing the immediate catchment for businesses and facilities. New homes could cater both for affluent downsizers as well as young professionals and families who work nearby or in Birmingham City Centre.
- Potential for local employment growth has been identified in the professional, scientific and technical, and information and communication sectors. Combined with an absence of high grade office space this provides an opportunity. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that existing businesses are unable to find suitable premises to expand into. Frequent rail connections to Birmingham City Centre suggests that Sutton Coldfield would be a suitable satellite location for large businesses, as well as for start-ups seeking to be close by.
- The hotel and commercial leisure market has been growing in the Birmingham City Centre due to increased business and visitor demand. In Sutton Coldfield Town Centre, there is currently only one hotel: the Townhouse on High Street. Being in close proximity to Birmingham City Centre and with Sutton Park on its doorstep, a hotel could be an attractive prospect within the Royal Town Core and would support an increased evening economy.
- A lack of choice for daytime cafe offerings is a major shortfall and opportunity for the town centre, particularly due to the number of businesses and affluent retirees providing a good customer base. With most of the restaurant and pubs located along Birmingham Road, the town centre would benefit from more options located within the Royal Town Core and in close proximity of the station. If culture or leisure uses, such as a new boutique cinema or theatre, were also located centrally within the Royal Town Core, this combination of uses could create a lively evening economy which would in turn make town centre streets safer in the evening.
- Other opportunities are in the health and fitness and family entertainment leisure sectors. The recently opened Gym Sutton Coldfield has been hugely successful. Family entertainment is largely absent from the town centre with stakeholders confirming a lack of attractions for children and young families.

Funding and potential investment

- Public sector funding to develop the Sutton Coldfield HS2 Gateway proposal has been identified. However, the delivery of the project is currently unfunded. Further funding will need to be secured to deliver the upgrade of the public transport interchange facilities and ensure Sutton Coldfield and its surroundings are well connected.
- The significant development of Langley SUE and Peddimore will potentially attract investment to the town centre, provided connections between the town centre and the new developments are well-established to create a strong relationship for residents, visitors and workers.

Heritage and the 'Royal' title

- The Historic Core is an attractive concentration of built heritage within Sutton Coldfield and should be celebrated as part of the town centre's identity.
- Sutton Coldfield's 'Royal' title and distinct history, while present within some of the built fabric, could be more effectively communicated as part of a Heritage Centre to create a destination for both residents and visitors.

The attractive Vesey Gardens is currently undermined by the over-dominance of vehicles within the Historic Core

3 Town centre vision, objectives and Big Moves

3.1 Vision and objectives

Reinvigorating the town centre by capitalising on Royal Sutton Coldfield's attractive green and historic assets and high degree of connectivity by: diversifying the town centre, increasing its accessibility, and strengthening its distinctive identity by uncovering its true heart to create a vibrant, sustainable and welcoming place for all.

Connecting

- Connect The Parade, the station, Birmingham Road and Sutton Park better through active street frontages, minimising perceived distances, attractive streetscape and improving the overall built environment
- Improve and establish strong connections between the town centre, green spaces, public transport hubs, and to destinations within wider Sutton Coldfield, e.g. Langley SUE and Peddimore
- Overlap the character areas and reduce the barrier effect of the ring road to achieve better pedestrian connectivity across the town centre and to capitalise on the population of office workers and students to service the economy

Communicating

- Publish and promote Sutton Coldfield's assets and attractions – the markets, festivals and performances, the magnificent parks, and the evening economy – through a diverse range of communication methods to reach a variety of audiences to increase its appeal and create a sense of pride
- Ensure City Council and Town Council partners work positively together towards a common vision and clear objectives
- Establish a clear and cohesive branding strategy to establish a strong visual identity for Sutton Coldfield which is integrated as part of improvements to the public realm

Celebrating

- Harness the existing assets of Sutton Park and the historic town and integrate these with the town centre's identity and experience, in particular by making nature a distinctive part of the overall built environment
- Define Sutton Coldfield's identity as a characterful and unique place to live, ensuring local people appreciate its value and are proud to be residents
- Promote and support local events such as markets and festivals (including arts, food and literature) which allow the community to gather and be celebrated within key areas of public open space

Community

- Enhance areas of key public open space to create attractive environments where people can sit, meet and gather, and that can be used to host community events including markets and outdoor performances
- Invest in the library as a significant community asset and a catalyst for improving community and cultural facilities for the town centre
- Recognise and promote local community groups who are actively investing their time and energy in Sutton Coldfield and its residents

Changing

- Change the town centre offer to reflect how people want to live, work, socialise, and spend their free time by shifting the focus from traditional retail and onto the experience-based economy with independent businesses, leisure, cafes, restaurants, and workplace hubs, and provide flexibility to facilitate a more dynamic approach to testing new and temporary uses
- Change 'business as usual' to ensure the town centre addresses the climate emergency by proactively moving away from carbon-emitting practices and towards design that positively mitigates environmental impacts, including improving air quality, decarbonisation, and use of sustainable energy and materials
- Change the design of movement corridors to prioritise active travel modes and make walking and cycling safe, attractive and convenient ways to get around

Complementing

- Support the strategic framework for Birmingham City Centre with localised services and housing choices with Sutton Coldfield
- Ensure a diversity of uses which complement each other to encourage linked journeys and prolonged stays within the town centre, making it an attractive place to live, work and visit
- Create a high quality town centre environment which is proportionate in services, attractions and architecture to its position as the largest suburban centre in Birmingham, including the provision of suitable commercial space for existing companies to grow and stay local, and subsequently creating new opportunities for new businesses

3.2 Big Moves

As an extension of the 'Big Moves' set out in many of Birmingham's policy documents, this masterplan defines the 'Big Moves' for Sutton Coldfield Town Centre under three headings in no particular priority, as follows:

Movement and Transport

MT1 **Achieve the relief road objectives through alternative means**: enabling public realm enhancements and development opportunities to come forward

MT2 **Reduce segregation caused by the ring road**: reducing the speed and impact of cars and refocusing the ring road to help people travel more safely and easily to and across the town centre by all modes of transport.

MT3 **Improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and connectivity across the town centre:** by implementing traffic calming measures across town centre streets and reallocating excessive road carriageway space to cycleways and footpaths where possible, to ensure improved accessibility for all users, and installing well-located cycle parking and regular seating along pedestrian desire lines

MT4 **Improve pedestrian environment along Lower and South Parade:** reducing vehicles and enabling improvements to the public realm

MT5 **Sutton Coldfield Gateway:** integrating the town centre with the rail station, bus interchange and Sutton Park

MT6 **Consolidate parking and promote flexible solutions**

Economy and Community

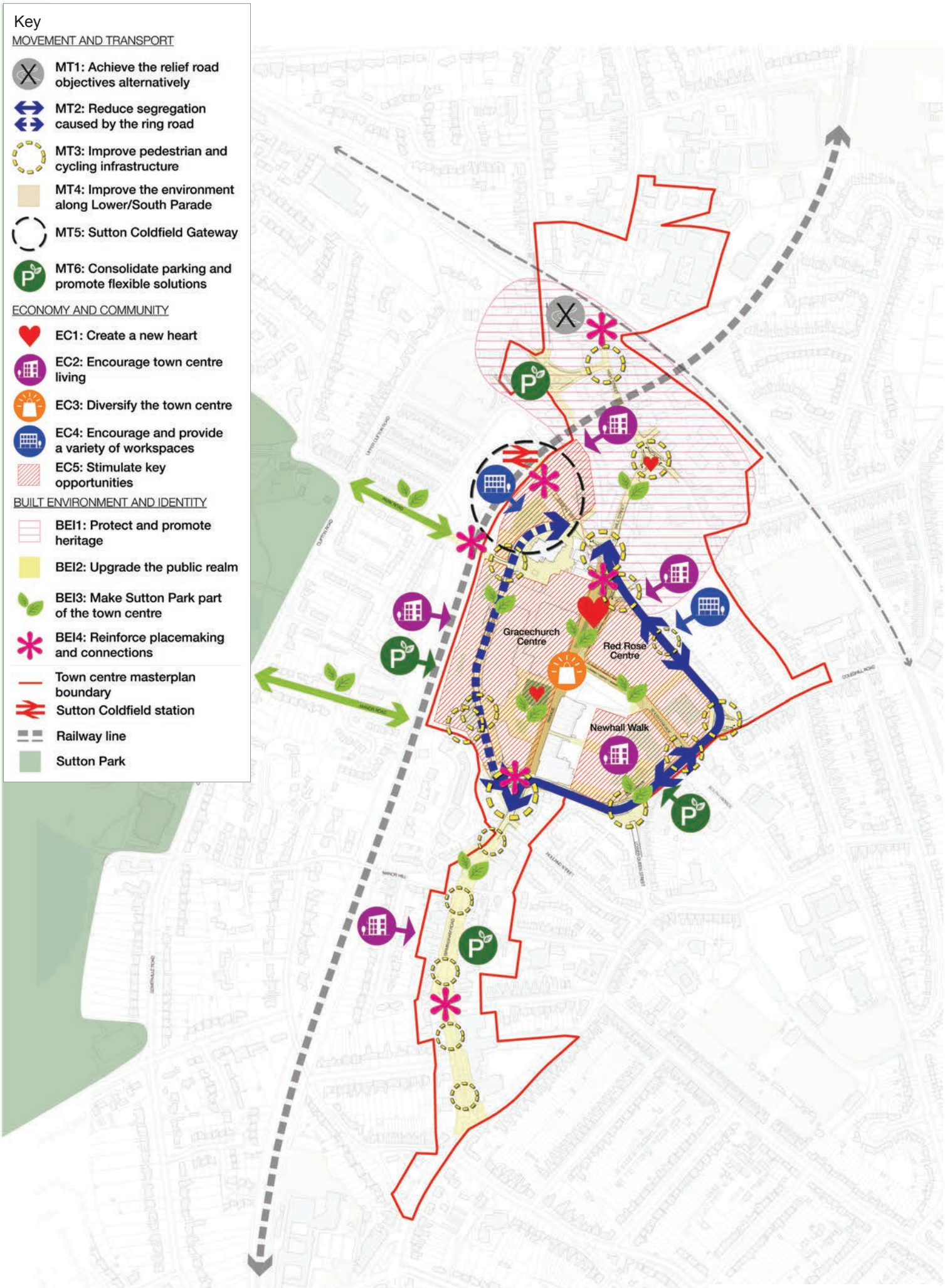
EC1 **Create a new heart:** providing the community with a distinct area of dedicated public open space which combines the northern Parade and reimagined Lower Parade to enable people to convene and gather for events

EC2 **Encourage town centre living:** bringing more residents into the central area to support shops and services

EC3 **Diversify the town centre:** creating a better experience, with a broad range of complementary uses and options for activities including more focused retail, community, leisure, accommodation, and food and beverage

EC4 **Encourage and provide a variety of workspaces:** to enable existing businesses to remain and grow locally and to attract new opportunities

EC5 **Stimulate key opportunities:** notably the three shopping centres, to meet the wider objectives



Big Moves diagram

Built Environment and Identity

BEI1 **Protect and promote heritage:** celebrating the history of Sutton Coldfield as part of the town centre's identity as a uniquely 'Royal' town and designing enduring spaces and buildings worthy of becoming future heritage

BEI2 **Upgrade the public realm:** facilitating a consistent, comprehensive, and resilient public realm strategy which creates distinctive public open spaces and integrates street trees, planting, SUDS, local materials, street furniture and play features to improve the overall attractiveness of the town centre

BEI3 **Make Sutton Park part of the town centre:** introducing more planting and natural material, reopening Plants Brook, and making the town centre feel like an extension of the park

BEI4 **Reinforce placemaking and connections:** establishing the town centre as a place with a strong identity with high quality sustainable architecture, gateway features, significant local assets and active travel networks with clear signposting and wayfinding, including 'green links' to Sutton Park, Langley SUE and other significant open spaces and destinations within Sutton Coldfield

Delivering the Big Moves

The bold and ambitious vision for this masterplan is to capture and capitalise on Sutton Coldfield's great potential and ensure that its many seemingly disparate elements come together harmoniously to create a whole greater than its parts.

Delivery will need to be considered carefully, due to the cost and timeframes involved in achieving such an ambitious masterplan. This framework will enable further detailed studies to be initiated to help facilitate implementation. Individual development proposals will be expected to contribute to achieving the masterplan objectives and delivery of the Big Moves.

All proposals are purposefully high level and designed to enable the regeneration of Sutton town centre. Wider strategies will also need to be kept in mind and co-ordination between different stakeholders will be essential.

The following sections elaborate on the benefits of the 'Big Moves'. Chapter 4 outlines the key projects which will enable the town centre to achieve them, the Vision and objectives over time, establishing an aspirational urban design framework for Sutton Coldfield Town Centre. These projects are brought together into a Delivery Strategy, in Chapter 5, created in collaboration with the Partnership to help illustrate the way forward.

3.2.1 Movement and Transport

All movement and transport proposals will be subject to modelling as they are progressed to ensure that all required measures are in place to ensure a safe, reliable transport system in Sutton Coldfield.

MT1 **Achieve the relief road objectives through alternative means**: enabling public realm enhancements and development opportunities to come forward

Despite good public transport and road network connections, baseline findings confirm that movement and transport within Sutton Coldfield Town Centre need significant improvements. The 2009 SPD recognised this and proposed a new relief road to help solve a number of issues, including the need to respect the historic environment within the Historic Core. This masterplan proposes to solve these issues by reconfiguring the ring road and other town centre streets, as well as reallocating road carriageway space to footpaths and cycleways to rebalance the priority towards people, rather than traffic.

MT2 **Reduce segregation caused by the ring road**: reducing the speed and impact of cars and refocusing the ring road to help people travel more safely and easily to and across the town centre by all modes of transport.

Reconfiguring the ring road to create two-way streets along Victoria Road and Queen Street, could enable traffic to move at much more appropriate speeds for a town centre environment, leading to the re-prioritisation of local roads for local movements at local speeds.

Alongside the potential to allow two-way traffic on the eastern side of the ring road, there is also potential to downgrade Brassington Avenue. This could see its closure to through-traffic (except for buses and access to the Gracechurch Centre carpark and United Reformed Church) to enable the reallocation of road space to benefit people and encourage active frontages and connections. Improving Brassington Avenue will also have a positive impact on the proposed relocation of the bus interchange to the northern end of Brassington Avenue (pending further detailed studies).

Refocusing the ring road includes narrowing the road carriageway, expanding footpaths to include trees and seating, and instating cycle lanes where possible. By reshaping the ring road to create a pleasant and people-friendly environment, the site west of Brassington Avenue will also become more attractive for development. This will be further supported if the Gracechurch Centre opens up its Brassington Avenue frontage to create better permeability towards The Parade, and providing more life and activity to both sides of the street.

MT3 **Improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and connectivity across the town centre:** by implementing traffic calming measures across town centre streets and reallocating excessive road carriageway space to cycleways and footpaths where possible, to ensure improved accessibility for all users, and installing well-located cycle parking and regular seating along pedestrian desire lines

With proposals to tighten up currently oversized road carriageways to create a better balance between cars and people, the opportunity to use that excess space for cycle lanes and additional footpaths must be taken advantage of. This would create a significant improvement to walking, cycling and access for less able-bodied people across the town centre, particularly if complementary infrastructure, such as seating, cycle hire, cycle parks, tree planting, drinking fountains, etc, are also implemented.

Particular attention must be made regarding pedestrian crossings at junctions. Many key junctions across the town centre are similarly oversized and should be significantly improved to address ease of connectivity. The connection with Sutton Park, and therefore at Park Road, will also be integral in helping to better integrate the park with the town centre generally (refer Big Move BEI3).

All of these measures would help to encourage sustainable movement which would consequently improve air quality, health and wellbeing, and Sutton Coldfield's overall carbon footprint.

MT4 Improve pedestrian environment along Lower and South Parade: reducing vehicles and enabling improvements to the public realm

By reducing the segregation caused by the ring road and reconfiguring the way traffic flows around it, the need to have general traffic moving through Lower and South Parade would be minimised. These streets can therefore be upgraded into pedestrian priority spaces which still allow essential vehicle movement (including for emergency vehicles), but are designed primarily as spaces for public life and ease of pedestrian and cycle movement.

Lower Parade could be reimagined as an extension of the northern end of The Parade to create a more unified civic space for the town centre which could be a key site for markets and community events (also refer Big Move EC1).

MT5 Sutton Coldfield Gateway: integrating the town centre with the rail station, bus interchange and Sutton Park

The Sutton Coldfield HS2 Gateway Project is committed to upgrading the station area into an attractive, improved and well-connected public and sustainable transport interchange. With the proposed location of the bus interchange at the top of Brassington Avenue (pending further detailed studies) to keep it at-grade (i.e. at the same level) and easily accessible from the Royal Town Core, opportunities identified separately to improve the station, and potential future development on both sides of Station Street, Sutton Coldfield Gateway will ensure a lively and welcoming 'front door' to the town centre.

Cycle parking facilities will need to be well-integrated within Sutton Coldfield Gateway and streets will need to be designed to be safe and well-connected to encourage sustainable multi-modal journeys.

Further technical studies will need to ensure any design for a relocated bus interchange will sufficiently accommodate current and future bus travel demand.

MT6 Consolidate parking and promote flexible solutions

Within the Birmingham Parking SPD (Nov 2019), Sutton Coldfield has been designated as a 'Green Travel District' with a key aim of encouraging modal shift from car use to walking, cycling and public transport.

This masterplan seeks to make accessing the town centre by a range of modes as simple and safe as possible. This means making walking and cycling more appealing and viable for residents, supporting public transport choices, and providing suitable levels of car parking.

By proposing a strategy to consolidate parking within the town centre, certain sites currently used for car parking can be repurposed for development or public open space. Where any new parking is proposed, design should be flexible and well-integrated with trees and landscaping to provide multi-functional spaces for when cars aren't present.

Disabled parking provision and EV charging points will be required, where appropriate, and be evenly distributed across town centre streets. This can be achieved by reclaiming road carriageway space as proposed throughout the Movement and Transport Big Moves.

Public engagement feedback which has informed the Big Moves

"The buses need to be closer not further away from the shopping areas. If people are going to be encouraged to use a bus and purchase goods they don't want to walk far to catch transport home."

"In principle ending the one way system has merit, but how it would impact on the church."

"It feels like the ring road around the centre acts as a mental block and adds a false perception that the centre is different to Birmingham Road."

"Commit to cycle routes please and cycle storage."

"Reduce traffic flow. Please seriously consider safety of pedestrians."

Image: New Civil Engineer

Image: Civic Engineers/Adrian Lambert

Image: Suzanne H. Crowhurst Lennard

1. The upgrade of West Croydon bus station was an important part of the town centre's redevelopment
2. Trees and landscaping are integrated as part of parking layouts to soften the appearance of parked cars
3. Upgrades to the public realm at Stamford New Road, Altrincham, including a visual median to help naturally slow vehicles, still allow for high volumes of traffic
4. Wide footpaths and street planting create an inviting and people-focused environment whilst providing integrated space for cycle parking
5. Cycle parking infrastructure
6. Wide footpaths encourage spill-out activity without disrupting the flow of pedestrians

3.2.2 Economy and Community

EC1 **Create a new heart:** providing the community with a distinct area of dedicated public open space which combines the northern Parade and reimagined Lower Parade to enable people to convene and gather for events

The heart of a town centre is an important focal point for public life and community activity. A new heart for Sutton Coldfield must be developed to provide a key area of public open space to hold such activities which can help bring residents and visitors together at an informal gathering point, as well as a local destination for community events.

As a well-used pedestrianised high street, an upgraded Parade at its wider northern end could provide an ideal setting for the town centre's new heart, particularly alongside Big Move MT4 which proposes to reclaim Lower Parade as an extension of public open space. A more formal square could be provided elsewhere, e.g. potentially within the Gracechurch Centre site, to complement the northern end of The Parade.

EC2 **Encourage town centre living:** bringing more residents into the central area to support shops and services

Town centre living brings life into centres and enables a sustainable way of life. Sutton Coldfield is a particularly attractive offer for town centre living with strong transport links and connections to Sutton Park. Residential prices are also strong compared to other areas in Birmingham, indicating huge potential to increase the amount of homes within the town centre as part of mixed-use proposals.

Emphasis should be placed on quality with generous internal space standards and access to well-sized private outdoor space, minimising the sense of compromise to quality of life by living in an apartment or urban townhouse. After experiencing life under lockdown, the quality and layout of our homes has become even more important and all homes will need to consider how quiet working spaces can be integrated.

Town centre living in Sutton Coldfield should target a wide range of people, including young professionals, downsizers, families and older people in need of care. Residential within a mixed-use environment will help shops and services to be supported, and add to the diversification of uses while retail is in decline.

EC3 **Diversify the town centre:** creating a better experience, with a broad range of complementary uses and options for activities including more focused retail, community, leisure, accommodation, and food and beverage

Sutton Coldfield Town Centre wants to be a lively and vibrant destination with something for everyone to attract prolonged stays and repeat visits. The town centre offer must therefore be diversified to achieve this to enable people to feel like they can have a 'day out' in Sutton Coldfield, starting with a walk around Sutton Park in the morning, to ending with a nice meal and a movie, possibly with a drink to cap the night off, in the evening.

With a relatively affluent catchment, more specialist and independent retail would be well suited in Sutton Coldfield and complementary to convenience retail. The town centre would also benefit hugely with family and health leisure uses, cultural attractions, community facilities, and more good quality cafes and restaurants. Overnight accommodation could help to support an evening economy, whilst uses targeted towards younger children will help to attract their parents as well. This masterplan proposes a number of short-term interventions (refer Chapter 4.6) which could help test and/or establish alternative uses within the town centre whilst bringing a sense of excitement and vibrancy.

EC4 **Encourage and provide a variety of workspaces:** to enable existing businesses to remain and grow locally and to attract new opportunities

There are significant opportunities in providing more and higher grade workplace accommodation in Sutton Coldfield Town Centre, particularly near or within the Sutton Coldfield Gateway. Prior to the pandemic, the professional, scientific and technical sector was seeing growth for local employment, as well as the information and communication sector. Well-managed workplace hub-style accommodation for start-ups, satellite offices, and drop-in facilities, will still be in demand following the pandemic with working from home becoming more prevalent.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of existing businesses are concerned with their ability to expand within Sutton Coldfield, however maintaining the local business community is viewed as a top priority and development proposals must take this into account.

Shared workspace hub with public ground floor cafe, Second Home, Hackney

EC5 **Stimulate key opportunities:** notably the three shopping centres, to meet the wider objectives

This masterplan identifies the key opportunity sites as those within City Council ownership (refer chapter 2.3), as well as the three main shopping centres (including the Red Rose Centre which is also City Council-owned). These sites make up a large proportion of the Royal Town Core and represent some of the most prominent sites within the town centre. Therefore, these sites hold the greatest potential for reasonably delivering the much-needed changes to the town centre, however timing and costs will have implications on delivery and need to be considered at a wider level.

In addition to helping the town centre to diversify its uses, these key sites will also be important for achieving many of the other objectives including enhancing pedestrian connectivity and permeability across the town centre, creating sustainable development, and ensuring the Sutton Coldfield Library continues to be a well-loved asset for the community.

Public engagement feedback which has informed the Big Moves

"We need a better cinema and bowling alley... There is nothing for family entertainment."

"An area for events is crucial [...] an indoor space to be used all year round, bringing people a reason to visit for more than just shopping and work."

"Local businesses selling fresh food i.e. vegetables, meat, bread, etc need to be encouraged."

"Increased residential is important for the town centre renewal."

"The reason people come to Sutton Coldfield is to shop, but there's not much choice."

"It would be nice to see more independent food and clothing shops around town as I am the kind of person that buys into that and likes to support small businesses."

Image: Bournville Village Trust Telford

Image: Hatch Manchester

1. The terraced central civic space in Lightmoor Village, Telford provides an excellent venue of community events
2. Indoor food hall with high quality dining options in a casual setting at Mercato delle Erbe, Bologna, Italy
3. Mixed-use development at Elephant Park, London
4. The Idea Store Whitechapel, is a community facility which combines library and educational space, as well as a café, dance studio, crèche and holistic treatment centre
5. Hatch, a pop-up shipping container village for independent traders in Manchester
6. The public square in Addington, Cambridge, is surrounded by a mix of retail and residential uses

3.2.3 Built Environment and Identity

BEI1 **Protect and promote heritage:** celebrating the history of Sutton Coldfield as part of the town centre's identity as a uniquely 'Royal' town and designing enduring spaces and buildings worthy of becoming future heritage

In addition to the visible built heritage within the Historic Core, Sutton Park and the 'Royal' title of Sutton Coldfield clearly indicate the presence of a notable history. The High Street Conservation Area is established to inform how the area should be protected and enhanced, and Big Move MT3 proposes to create an environment which rightfully respects it.

Existing and new buildings across the town centre should be identified and assessed for their potential heritage value and positive contribution to local character. Where buildings are underused, they should be brought back to life and repurposed for contemporary activity, particularly for community or cultural uses where their significance can be appreciated by a wide audience.

BEI2 **Upgrade the public realm:** facilitating a consistent, comprehensive, and resilient public realm strategy which creates distinctive public open spaces and integrates street trees, planting, SUDS, local materials, street furniture and play features to improve the overall attractiveness of the town centre

The public realm environment should be attractive, inviting and pleasurable to move through and spend time. It encompasses all streets as well as bigger areas of open space, and therefore are a significant element of the town centre and how it expresses itself to the world. The Parade is a particularly key space for Sutton Coldfield and should be a focus of upgrades to create an engaging and lively space for all ages and all levels of accessibility. The addition of colour, trees, planting, water features, seating, and elements for play, could all be transformative.

By investing in upgrades to the public realm, it will encourage more walking and cycling, particularly in conjunction with Big Move MT3 to improve infrastructure and connectivity. It will also help to make the town centre a more attractive to visitors, as well as to potential business owners, event organisers, property developers and investors.

BEI3 **Make Sutton Park part of the town centre:** introducing more planting and natural material, reopening Plants Brook, and making the town centre feel like an extension of the park

Sutton Park and Sutton Coldfield are intrinsically linked through history and this relationship should be celebrated and made visible as part of the town centre's identity. Plants Brook should be integrated as part of the public realm, promoted as a key town centre asset, and harnessed in its potential to establish pleasant green routes towards New Hall Valley Country Park and Langley SUE.

More high quality trees, planting (including as green roofs and walls) and water features (including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems or 'SUDS') should be encouraged as much as possible to make nature a significant element within the town centre. These features will also help to achieve climate resilience against increasing risk of surface water flooding and overheating, whilst providing carbon mitigation measures.

A cluster of trees and low-maintenance planting provides a 'mini forest' and pleasant seating area within an urban environment

BEI4 **Reinforce placemaking and connections:** establishing the town centre as a place with a strong identity with high quality sustainable architecture, gateway features, significant local assets and active travel networks with clear signposting and wayfinding, including 'green links' to Sutton Park, Langley SUE and other significant open spaces and destinations within Sutton Coldfield

Increasing the visibility and prominence of Sutton Coldfield will be supported by strong placemaking in its development opportunities and public realm enhancements. Creating bold gateway features, including with the delivery, design and placement of distinctive architecture, will help to announce your arrival into the town centre. Wayfinding signage will encourage more people to walk and cycle, especially when they realise distances and times to local, and less local, destinations are relatively short.

Establishing attractive and convenient connections between the town centre and new development at Langley SUE will be essential to creating a strong relationship between places early on.

Public art and playful elements, such as an outdoor table tennis table, can make the built environment engaging to a wide audience

A mix of hard and soft landscaping, with integrated SUDS features, provides a multi-functional civic space for events and general public life at Jubilee Square, Leicester

Public engagement feedback which has informed the Big Moves

"Informal parking is prevalent along Birmingham Road and it impacts negatively on an area that could be made more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists."

"The Big Moves recognise the charm of the historic quarter, and the need to join the town up into a cohesive whole with distinct areas of speciality."

"The green space in Sutton currently is minimal, the pedestrianised area feels like a road."

"The proposals are welcomed as Sutton Town Centre is not a pleasurable place to visit and shop. I have started to go to Tamworth, Wednesbury, Walsall and Solihull instead as they feel much nicer and offer more variety and choice."

"[Sutton Park] should be a big part of coming to Sutton, but it feels hidden away with little or no promotion in the centre to get people to go there."

"Plants Brook should be re-naturalised - could be beautiful asset and great for wildlife."

Image: Civic Engineers/Adrian Lambert

1. Use of vibrant signage can reinforce civic pride and identity
2. A permanent white-line graphic doubles as art and play at Marmalade Lane, Cambridge
3. Level changes provide the opportunity to create terraced areas of public open space
4. Bold murals painted on a rail bridge reflect the diverse local community in Brixton, London
5. Public realm enhancements in Altrincham, Greater Manchester have led to 27% increase in footfall
6. Naturalistic planting features in Kings Crescent Estate, London provides informal seating and play
7. Supergraphics used in a crossing in Hackney, London

4 Town centre projects

The projects described within this chapter demonstrate how the town centre Vision, Objectives and Big Moves will be achieved.

Whilst projects vary in scale and impact on the regeneration of the overall town centre, all projects have been identified to highlight an element of the built environment which would bring benefits to the immediate surroundings as well as to the overall impression and identity of Sutton Coldfield Town Centre. The success of these projects will rely on robust and well-considered details to ensure high quality and enduring results.

Alongside each project (A-Q), organised by Character Area (refer Chapter 2.2), the relevant symbol/s representing the six keyword Objectives (Connecting, Complementing, Celebrating, Changing, Communicating, Community) will indicate which Objective/s the project meets. Symbols for the Big Moves codes (MT1-6, EC1-5, BEI1-4) are also used.

Each project sets out key principles for how they can be achieved allowing for some flexibility to enable external factors, including detailed viability and wider policy context, to inform the development of more detailed proposals following this masterplan. Viability has only been considered at a high level in the production of this masterplan, for example by understanding current market trends and conditions at the time of writing. Suggested heights for development are therefore based on a character and context assessment, rather than on viability.

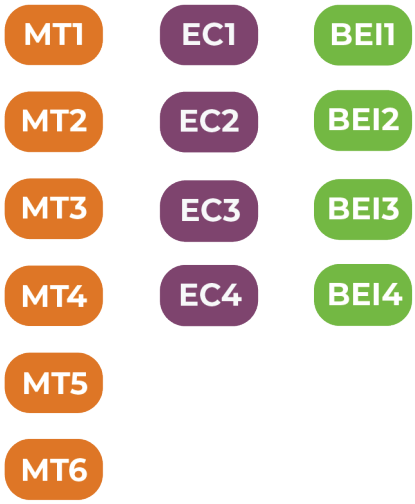
The Development Principles diagram, on the following page, sets out to illustrate these principles through the use of symbols and indicative site layouts.

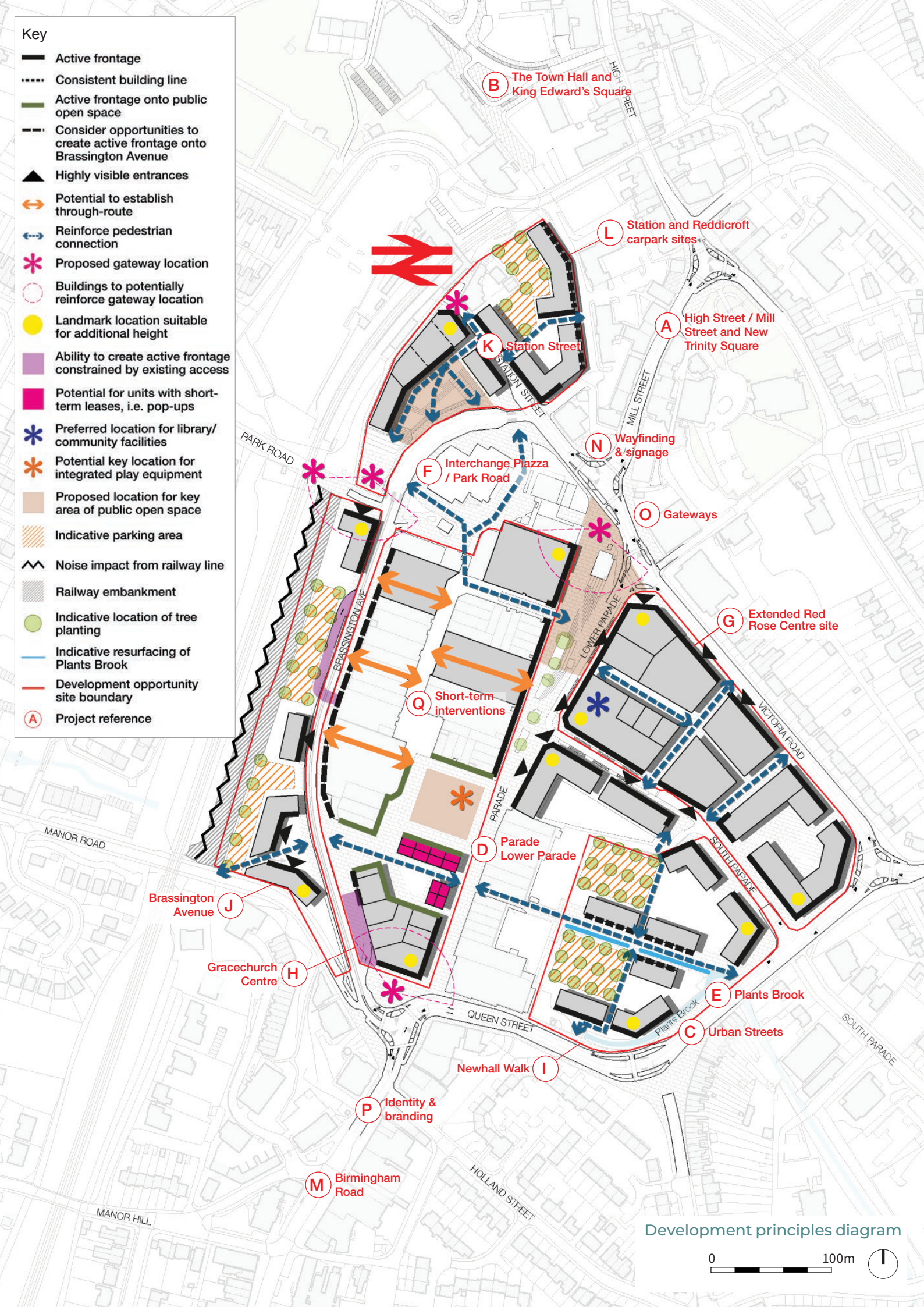
A strategy for short term interventions (project Q) to help kick-start the regeneration of Sutton Coldfield Town Centre is outlined in Chapter 4.6.

The Delivery Strategy in Chapter 5 sets out a framework for implementation.

Symbols indicating Objectives

Symbols indicating Big Moves





Development principles diagram

4.1 Historic Core (and Sutton College)

A High Street/Mill Street and New Trinity Square

High Street and Mill Street currently suffer from an overdominance of vehicles. To overcome this, the movement corridor should be reduced to the minimum amount of space that it needs to function effectively and successfully, whilst the rest of the space is given to civic life, sociability, zero- and low-carbon movement, and town centre enjoyment.

Upgrades to the Historic Core must focus on improving the setting for the retained built heritage and architecture within the High Street Conservation Area, allowing it to fulfil its potential as a historic asset to the town. By reclaiming the road space, pedestrian and cycle movement will become safer and more comfortable, particularly at crossing points where it will encourage better connectivity with Sutton College, the Royal Town Core and other areas within the town centre.

The High Street/Coleshill Street intersection by Vesey Gardens is a key junction where the excess of space would be better utilised to improve the benefit of Vesey Gardens and to provide a new point of focus for the town centre. A new 'Trinity Square' would offer an attractive and inviting space to meet, relax, and enjoy the heritage of Sutton Coldfield Town Centre, adjacent to the serenity and calm of the Gardens themselves.

Materials and street furniture selected for the Historic Core should be inspired by the historic architecture and assets highlighted by the High Street Conservation Area guidance. Arguably, the 'royal' status of Sutton Coldfield should be most visible in this area with Holy Trinity Parish Church and Vesey Gardens, in their formal nature, being highlighted as the heart.

MT1 MT3 MT4 BEI1 BEI2 BEI3 BEI4

In summary, proposed improvements to High Street and Mill Street are as follows:

- Reduce the road carriageway to the minimal functional width and designate the excess space within the street section to cycle lanes, widened footpaths and improved crossing points
- Transform the High Street / Coleshill Street intersection by Vesey Gardens into a trafficable square which is designed to slow traffic and provide additional dedicated public open space to expand the amenity surrounding Vesey Gardens, creating a new focal point for the town centre
- Ensure any improvements to the public realm use materials appropriate to the High Street Conservation Area and to the identity of the Historic Core

Illustrative sketch of proposed 'Trinity Square'

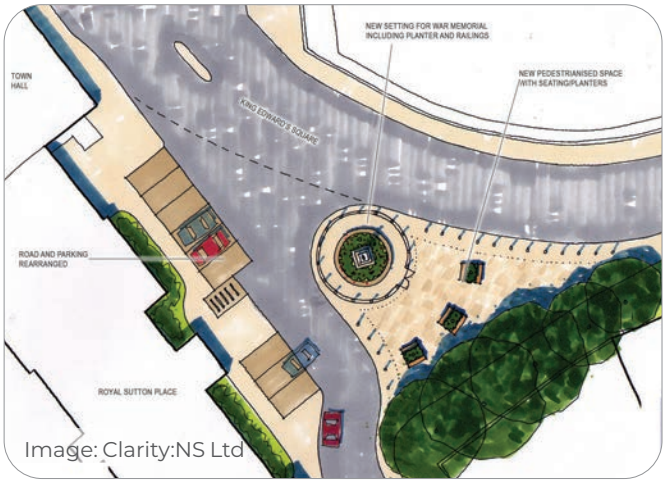
B The Town Hall and King Edward's Square

MT1 MT3 MT6 BEI1 BEI2 BEI4

The Town Hall is an integral heritage asset within the town centre and is currently a venue for community, arts and cultural events. Enhancing walking, cycling and access for individuals with impaired mobility to the Town Hall will improve connectivity between it and the railway station, Royal Town Core and Historic Core, encouraging increased movement of people between these areas.

Removing the need for the relief road offers the opportunity to rethink the environment at King Edward's Square and create a more appropriate setting for the war memorial, while delivering a stronger sense of arrival at the Town Hall. The current Square is identified as a key space within the High Street Conservation Area, and could be remodelled into a contemplative space; the excessive tarmac and scattered parking should be redesigned as a pedestrian priority space. By taking a thoughtful approach to materials, paving could integrate patterning that is related to the memorial or the adjacent Town Hall, which is an attractive example of local built heritage.

Parking could remain part of the function of the square, provided it is integrated alongside trees/ planting and/or well-designed street furniture to create an attractive, contemplative environment where people can feel comfortable to sit and enjoy a quiet moment.



A draft proposal for a refurbished King Edward's Square

4.2 Royal Town Core

MT2 MT3 MT6 BEI2 BEI3 BEI4

C Urban Streets (Victoria Road / Queen Street)

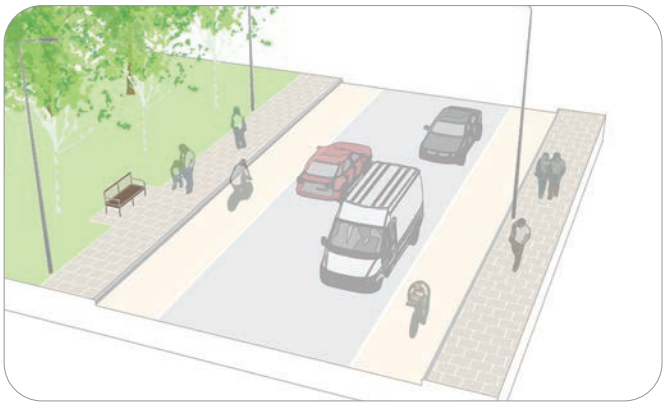
The backbone of the improved transport network is to create simple two-way urban streets that accommodate the required vehicular movements to replace the existing one-way urban motorway. Two-way traffic will move at safe, local speeds, i.e. 20mph, around the eastern side of the existing ring road (Victoria Road and Queen Street), where segregated cycle lanes, tree planting, SUDS, and seating will also be integrated.

These urban streets will also provide convenient and inviting street crossings at key locations as well as an attractive environment for future development and the existing residential communities. This two-way street will be wholly reimagined from what is there today, with interventions to keep traffic moving slowly, to improve air quality, and to create more sociable streets.

A new direct and dedicated pedestrian and cycle crossing connecting the two sides of South Parade, across Victoria Road, will be a significant benefit to residents and help to bring people directly to and from the town centre (also refer project E Plants Brook).

A second dedicated crossing is located at the bend of Queen Street, coupled with the proposal to close the top of Lower Queen Street to traffic to prevent rat running following changes to the ring road, and improve the pedestrian environment generally.

Parallel / tiger crossing for pedestrians and cyclists right-of-way in Hackney, London



Indicative section of the reconfigured urban street at the eastern edge of the ring road, where existing road space can be reorganised to accommodate cycle lanes

Visualisation for a reconfigured urban street in Manchester

D Parade / Lower Parade / South Parade

This masterplan proposes to create a new heart for Sutton Coldfield. To achieve this, the public realm within The Parade needs to be upgraded and surrounding uses need to provide activity and interaction to create a safe, vibrant and engaged space. With non-essential traffic removed from Lower and South Parade, due to the reconfiguration of the ring road and relocation of the bus interchange, these spaces can be repurposed into key areas of public open space.

Lower Parade in particular can add to The Parade at its northern end, creating an expanse of safe, inviting and convivial civic space, capable of holding markets and community events. The change in levels can be utilised to create an attractive mix of hard- and soft-landscaped terraces to provide informal seating, opportunities for play and a local landmark for meeting and congregating.

The reimagined use of Lower Parade would suitably complement the new community hub and library proposed within the extended Red Rose Centre site (refer project G) as a key grouping of civic and public uses. In addition to considering uses along the Lower Parade, activity within the Gracechurch Centre along The Parade frontage should also lend itself to 'spilling out' into the public realm, for example, cafés and restaurants.

South Parade should be upgraded as an extension of enhancements to The Parade/Lower Parade. It is a key connecting route to and from South Parade east of the ring road, as well as further on to Rectory Park, New Hall Country Park and therefore Langley SUE. An improved crossing across Victoria Road (refer project C) will help to facilitate movement and proposed development within the extended Red Rose Centre and Newhall Walk sites (refer projects G and I) will help to achieve a positive minor gateway into the heart of the town centre.

MT3 MT4

EC1 BEI2

BEI3 BEI4

Indicative aerial sketch of the combined Parade / Lower Parade to create a new civic 'heart' for Sutton Coldfield Town Centre

Play elements integrated within public open space

Public realm improvements across The Parade, Lower Parade and South Parade should include:

- resurfacing on Lower and South Parade to create pedestrian-priority spaces
- trees and landscaping to increase the presence of nature, provide shade, and support the relationship with Sutton Park
- integrated urban water features, particularly SUDS to ensure climate resilience and potentially along the natural alignment of Plants Brook (also refer project E)
- an upgraded street furniture strategy, including bins for recycling, seating, and elements designed for informal and formal play and interaction – these could be designed to a distinctive theme consistent with Sutton Coldfield's identity and branding (refer project P)
- integrating 'plug-in' points to increase the functionality of these areas for markets and outdoor events

A new formal square is also proposed within the redevelopment of the southern section of the Gracechurch Centre (refer project H) which will complement the potentially more informal nature of the northern Parade/Lower Parade civic space.

MT3 MT4
EC1 BEI2
BEI3 BEI4

A vibrant pedestrianised open space with a combination of landscaping, different pavement materials and active uses

Rain garden SUDS can be attractive multi-functional features

Informal play elements within an urban environment

E Plants Brook

Plants Brook is a culverted and channelised stream that runs across the town centre, connecting Sutton Park and Newhall Country Park. It is currently visible along the Queen Street corner of the Newhall Walk development site, however any opportunities to reinstate Plants Brook as an open watercourse should be explored, where feasible, as a positive element of sustainable development.

In the short-term, the portion visible along Queen Street should be made into a feature by:

- significantly paring back surrounding vegetation;
- replacing the continuous railing on both sides with more discreet provision, but which allows people to look down safely onto the Brook;
- dedicating an area of public open space to the enjoyment of the feature, e.g. with seating within the Newhall Walk site to be shielded from moving traffic and pedestrians; and,
- installing education boards which signposts the presence of Plants Brook and indicates where it is flowing to/from.

Further studies should be carried out to understand how Plants Brook could be realigned and resurfaced as part of public realm enhancements, e.g. within Newhall Walk and The Parade (refer projects I and D, respectively), and discussed with the BCC Flood Risk Manager.

As the town centre land form naturally becomes elevated to the west, detailed investigations to ascertain the prevailing water level will need to be carried out. Alternatively, markers and/or water features at ground level could help to illustrate the direction and flow of the Plants Brook running underneath (also refer project N Wayfinding and signage).

MT3 BEI2 BEI3 BEI4

South of Queen Street, Plants Brook openly runs behind properties on the western side of South Parade amongst trees and planting. It continues across Upper Holland Street and adjacent to Plantsbrook School until it meets Ebrook Road and the footpath to New Hall Valley Country Park. This portion of Plants Brook should be established as a primary green pedestrian/cycle connection to provide a pleasant, dedicated non-vehicular access to and from the town centre, taking only between 5-10 minutes to walk.

Watercolour in Redhill, Surrey successfully reinstated a culverted brook as part of the SUDS and landscaping strategy

An urban rill at More London provides drainage as a multi-functional streetscape feature

F Interchange Piazza and Park Road

A key opportunity for the downgrading of Brassington Avenue is the possibility of overcoming the vehicle dominance between Park Road and Mill Street / High Street. This includes proposals to relocate the bus interchange at the northern end of Brassington Avenue, keeping it level with the Royal Town Core, and limiting movement within the Park Road tunnel to pedestrians and cyclists only. These changes brings two important improvements to the area:

- The public realm surrounding the United Reformed Church can be upgraded significantly into an inviting landscaped Piazza which serves the bus interchange and better stitches Sutton Coldfield Gateway together with The Parade, Lower Parade, and the rest of the town centre. This will also create an improved setting for the popular Church, and make it a more visible feature within the town centre fabric.
- Park Road and the tunnel can be transformed into an attractive gateway feature (also refer project O) to both the town centre and Sutton Park in either direction. As an already charming and leafy street to the west of the tunnel, additional priority to pedestrians and cyclists should be given. Additional seating, planting, and graphic wayfinding measures indicating the very near proximity of Sutton Park could be also used to improve the important connection and create a key town centre experience.

MT2 MT3
MT5 BEI2
BEI3 BEI4

A painted mural by street artist Jimmy C in Stoney Street, London, brings colour and significance to a through tunnel

Playful features could be added along Park Road to create a strong relationship between Sutton Park and the town centre

G The extended Red Rose Centre

EC2 EC3 EC4 EC5 BEI4

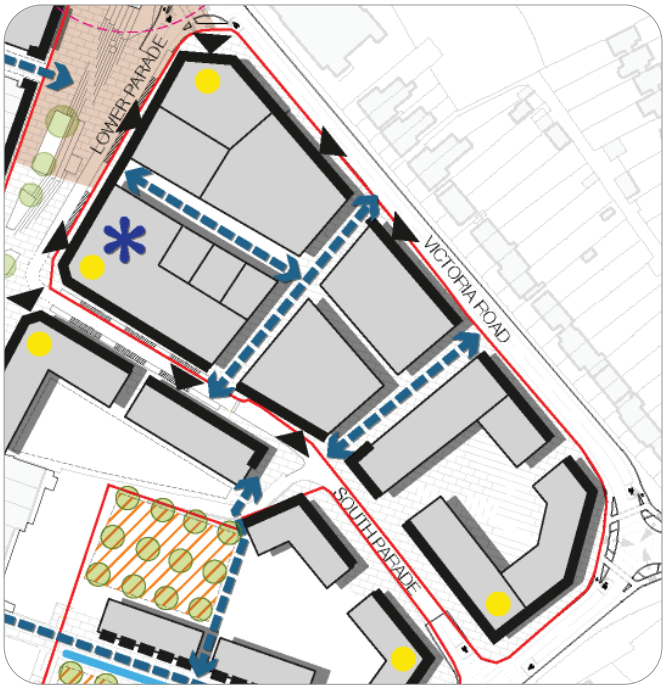
The Red Rose Centre, and its associated Victoria Road Car Park, both owned by the City Council, occupies a large and significant site within the town centre. For the purposes of this masterplan, however, the development opportunity considers the full block up to Victoria Road to encourage an ambitious comprehensive redevelopment which could be transformative for Sutton Coldfield.

Its prominent location within the town centre is fundamental to considering how the site may be reimagined, being at the gateway for people approaching the town centre in all modes of transport. It also fronts onto the reimagined heart of the town centre on Lower Parade (refer project D).

The overall aim for this site will be to create a distinctive, vibrant daytime and evening destination alongside contemporary new homes and workspace that will attract people to visit, live and work within the town centre. It should include a new contemporary purpose-built library facility which reinstates the successful Sutton Coldfield Library in its established location within the town centre. As a key community asset, it could provide library services alongside complementary community functions, such as an accessible archive and heritage centre, drop-in council and health services, flexible spaces for hire, and other facilities that can support the needs of the local community.

Other development guidelines for the site include:

- High quality buildings and spaces with a focus on contemporary sustainable design, that complements the existing historic context whilst creating a distinctive new part of the town centre; any significant areas of public open space should be covered or indoor to complement the primary outdoor space at The Parade/Lower Parade.
- Maximise active frontages and entrances onto existing streets and proposed lanes ensuring these are well-connected.
- Buildings of between 4 and up to 6 or 8 storeys at key corner locations that contribute to the town centre's urban character, providing flexible spaces that can be adapted to different uses over time
- Delivery of a mix of uses in the west of the site: e.g. retail and bars/restaurants/cafés providing active frontage; library and other cultural attractions (arts, local heritage); potential for cinema or other family leisure uses; and office workspace and/or residential on upper floors.
- Delivery of residential buildings to the east which provide well-designed homes with high levels of amenity including direct access to private outdoor space.
- Design for a place that encourages sustainable travel, with limited parking for cars.
- Retain existing retail tenants on site and office tenants within the town centre. BCC also own land at the Sutton Coldfield Gateway where workspace accommodation would also be suitable (refer project L). Interconnections between the development of the Red Rose Centre and new workspace near the station should be explored.

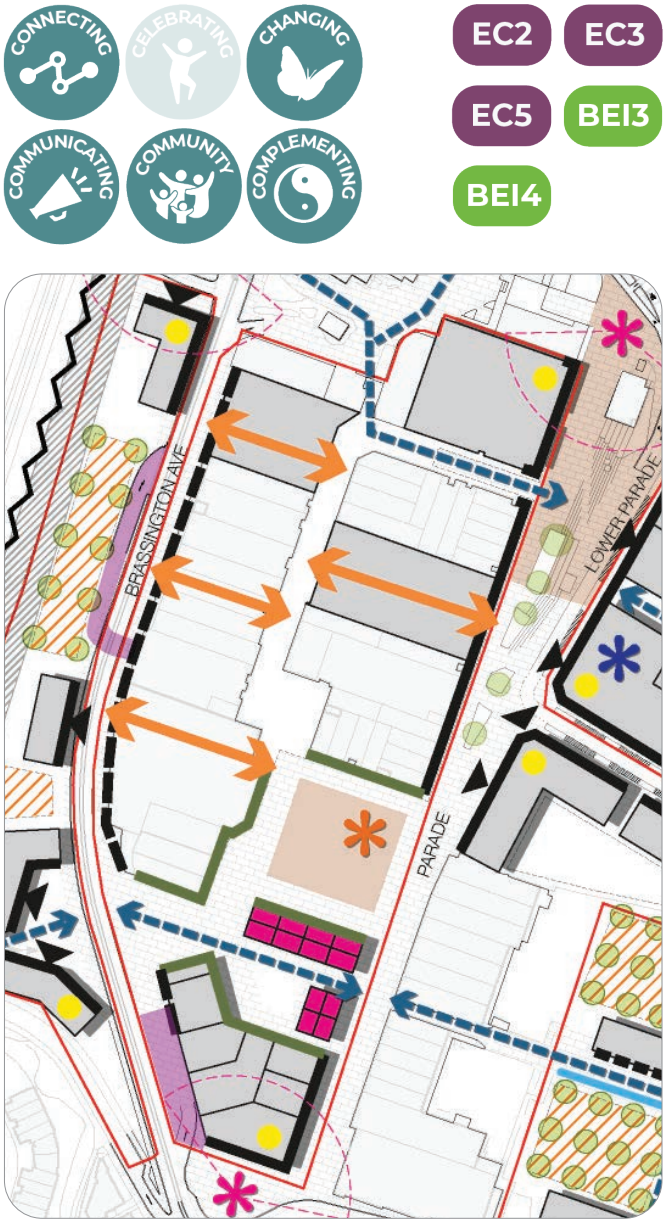


Excerpt from Development guidelines diagram showing an indicative layout for the extended Red Rose Centre site (refer page 41)

H Gracechurch Centre

As such a significant component of the town centre, the Gracechurch Centre has a big role to play in the regeneration of the town centre and fostering a vibrant town centre atmosphere. The Gracechurch Centre should:

- Ensure active frontage and front-door activity along the length of The Parade; for large units that face onto both The Parade and the internal mall, thoroughfare should be encouraged to improve interconnectivity
- Seek to create activity along the Brassington Avenue frontage with active and front door activity, and through-connections where possible
- Consolidate the northern end of the shopping centre to the indoor mall area, so that the area to the south can be demolished, opened up and reconfigured to provide a mix of independent retailers focused on boutique and artisanal products and services, e.g. butchery, bakery, delicatessen, cafes/restaurants and bars, etc
- Provide a new public space, for example an urban square, at the interface between the internal mall, new development to the south of the Gracechurch Centre, and The Parade (refer following 'Gracechurch Square' text)
- Create a direct link between The Parade and Brassington Avenue which connects up with the east-west route through Newhall Walk onward to Queen Street, and the link between Brassington Avenue and Manor Road, via the west of Brassington Avenue site (refer project J)
- Utilise vacant units to enact a meanwhile uses strategy (refer project Q), where large-footprint units could be transformed to create adaptable and innovative spaces which are flexible in size and configuration. Family leisure activities such as a market arcade, a large soft play centre, an escape room, or climbing facilities could be explored for some of these units as an alternative and complementary attraction to retail, and to test the market for the long-term success of such uses
- Integrate permanent smaller units adjacent to the new urban square which could be used for short-term incubator business opportunities, or for existing stallholders currently situated within the Market Village, to create an exciting, changing environment for residents and visitors
- Investigate the potential for a hotel and/or residential uses above ground floor units at either end of Gracechurch Centre to provide further diversification of uses, at the same time as attracting more people into the town centre. There is potential for both of these to provide sufficient height (in consideration of character and context) to act as key landmark features within the built environment.



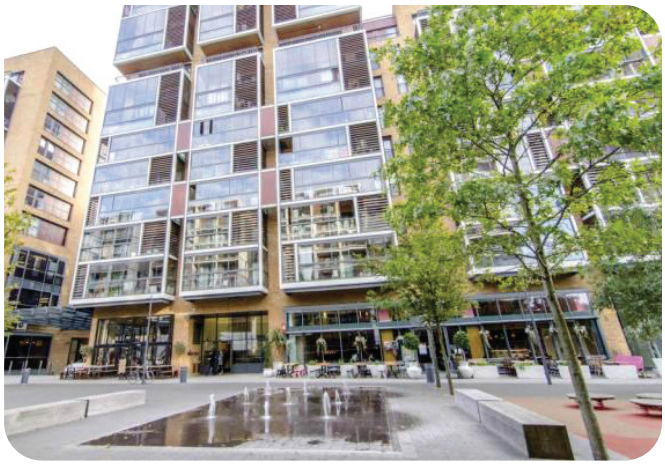
Excerpt from Development guidelines diagram showing an indicative layout for the Gracechurch Centre (refer page 41)

Gracechurch Square

Providing a key area of public open space will help to open up and integrate the Gracechurch Centre site with the town centre as a whole. As the secondary space to the new heart created at the northern end of The Parade/Lower Parade (refer project D), it should:

- be designed to be multi-functional, with integrated landscape features, seating and formal play equipment;
- be able to support the town centre in hosting community events;
- be activated with all surrounding development being oriented towards the space and provide opportunities for spill-out activity; and,
- explore how it can provide a complementary experience within the town centre by referring to the masterplan's wider objectives, for example with an emphasis on trees, planting and nature to help bring Sutton Park into the town centre (Big Move BEI3) and/or with public art to help reinforce identity (refer project P).

EC2 EC3 EC5 BEI3 BEI4



A combination of trees, seating, water and play elements are used within Dalston Square, London, to provide a multi-functional community space

An urban square surrounded by active frontage

I Newhall Walk

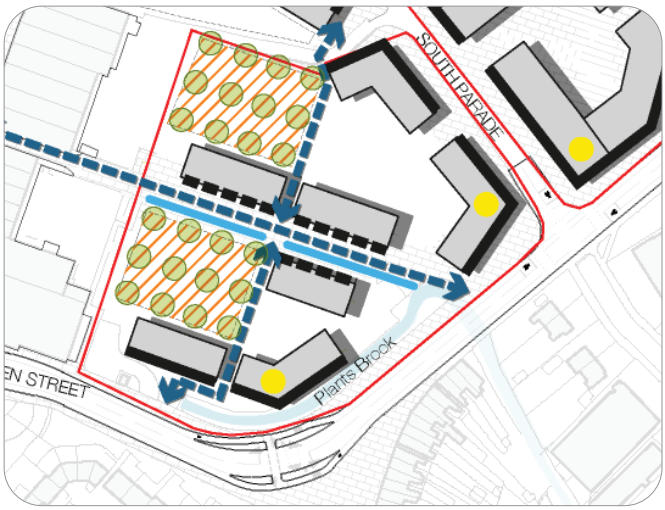
Discussions with landowners confirms that development opportunity at Newhall Walk is likely to be a long-term consideration due to current lease agreements, however the presence of Plants Brook along the Queen Street boundary presents a short-term opportunity (refer project E).

With changes in the way people live, shop and travel, the land could conceivably change use in the longer term. Whilst retaining its well-functioning units along The Parade, the area occupied by the car park and warehouse retail units should be viewed with the potential to densify the town centre residential population as a natural transition between The Parade and residential neighbourhoods in the east.

A range of home types designed to high quality specifications and generous space standards could suit urban family living, as well as young professionals and downsizers. From the lessons learnt during the coronavirus lockdown period, homes must also have direct access to reasonable and proportional private outdoor space and have areas within that are suited to quiet working. Some ground floor units may be suited for commercial or retail/F&B uses where development is next to town centre retail and to provide activity along key routes.

The overall design of the Newhall Walk site will need to:

- Provide strong, continuous and active frontages and front door activity along key routes, particularly along Queen Street and South Parade
- Address corners positively, e.g. at South Parade and Queen Street, and at Plants Brook, potentially with additional height and/or more detailed architectural articulation
- Integrate landscape features within dedicated parking areas so they are designed to be flexible and future-proofed for if and when private car ownership within the town centre declines (refer chapter 3.2.1, Big Move MT6)
- Incorporate Plants Brook as an open watercourse feature along the main east-west pedestrian route (also refer to project E)



Excerpt from Development guidelines diagram showing an indicative layout for Newhall Walk (refer page 41)

Newhall Walk's ongoing role within the town centre will be to continue facilitating pedestrian connectivity. With improvements to the pedestrian environment along Queen Street and South Parade (refer projects C and D), the public realm within Newhall Walk should feel integrated with the wider pedestrian network, including the use of providing regular seating, trees, planting, and integrating Plants Brook as an attractive town centre feature.

The key east-west route would benefit from being extended towards Manor Road via the Gracechurch Centre and Brassington Avenue sites (refer projects H and J).

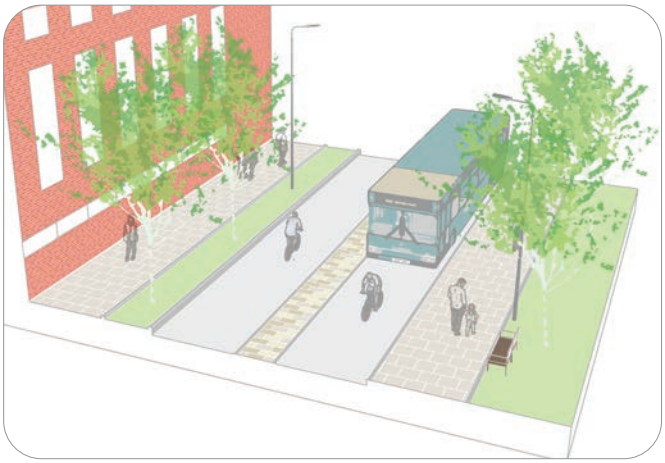
J Brassington Avenue

The proposition is to downgrade Brassington Avenue in order to prioritise bus movements to the new bus interchange, stimulate development frontage onto the street, and dramatically improve the connection between the town centre and Sutton Park. Brassington Avenue will operate as a two-way street primarily for buses, whilst maintaining access to the car parks, business servicing, the United Reformed Church and the vacant development site.

A bus gate on the Avenue will ensure that the street delivers the bus priority intended and reduces rat-running through the residential areas around the park. Brassington Avenue will be reinstated as an 'avenue' with tree planting lining both sides of the street, alongside SUDS planting, seating, and other public amenities to improve the sense of place and make for an inviting street to walk down.

With no traffic turning from Brassington Avenue into Park Road, the street can be reimagined as a child-friendly walking and cycling route between the town centre and the magnificent park. Vehicles will be using the street further along still, but these measures will calm traffic and create a low-traffic neighbourhood through which people are the priority (also refer project F).

A tree-lined avenue in Glasgow with a generous amount of space given to pedestrians, seating and cycle paths



Indicative section of reconfigured Brassington Avenue

Restricting the bus interchange at the northern end of Brassington Avenue to bus-only traffic will help to create a pedestrian-focused environment

Site west of Brassington Avenue

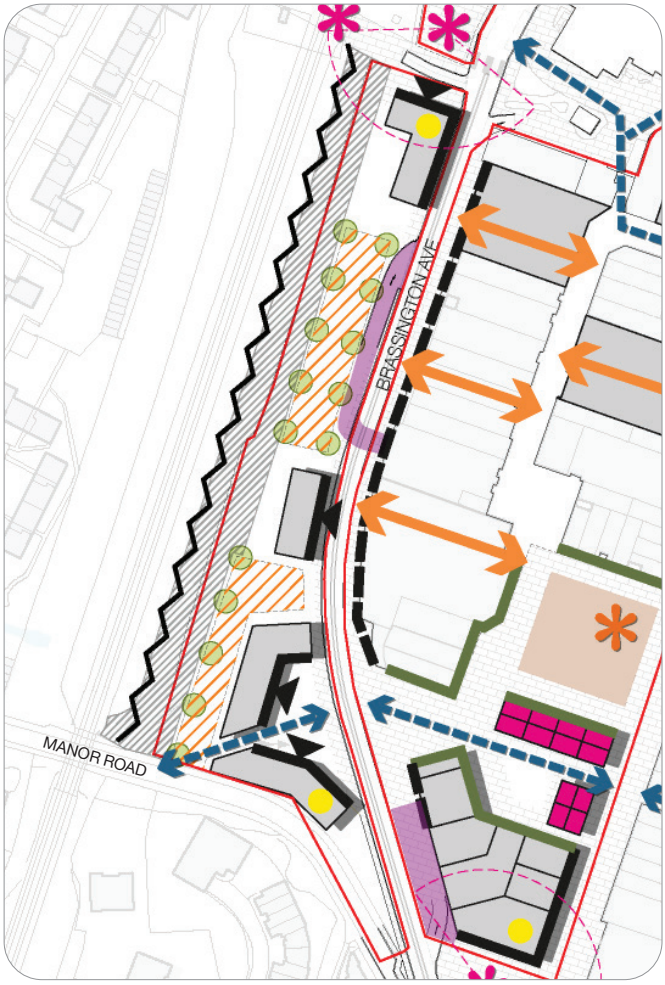
The site to the west of Brassington Avenue, adjacent to the railway line, has been undeveloped and vacant for a significant period of time and represents a key opportunity for town centre development. It faces a number of constraints including the railway line and embankment to the west, the long, blank Gracechurch Centre façade to the east, the exit ramp from the Gracechurch Centre car park, and the culvert carrying Plants Brook from Sutton Park.

With Brassington Avenue transformed, this narrow and elongated site would be an attractive prospect for new residential or commercial development. Providing active frontage along Brassington Avenue will be key to its success, as well as to the site's contribution to the town centre's regeneration as a whole. With new activity provided along an attractive, quiet street, close to public transport facilities, the Gracechurch Centre will also be incentivised to face Brassington Avenue, and help to link Brassington Avenue through to The Parade.

The northern end of the site, at Park Road, will contribute significantly to the ambition to utilise Park Road's connection between the town centre and Sutton Park. Built development here will need to respond to this location's role as a gateway moment through the railway tunnel, contributing to, and reinforcing, this link.

Due to the site's limiting constraints, development can only take on so many forms with buildings potentially needing to be linear, except for at the southern end where an opportunity to front buildings onto an area of public open space could help contribute to development amenity, as well as to the upgraded environment of Brassington Avenue itself.

The relationship between the site and Manor Road must also be considered. Active frontage or use of a green roof, depending on the scale of development, will be necessary to provide a positive edge or attractive view towards the town centre. A direct publicly-accessible connection should also be made, e.g. via steps, between Manor Road and Brassington Avenue to link up with the east-west connection created across the Royal Town Core to Queen Street.



Excerpt from Development guidelines diagram showing an indicative layout for the Brassington Avenue site (refer page 41)

4.3 Station Quarter (Sutton Coldfield Gateway)

MT1 MT3 MT5 BEI2 BEI3 BEI4

K Station Street

Station Street should create a strong sense of arrival into Sutton Coldfield as a key gateway to the town centre and Sutton Park. By reimagining Station Street into a distinctive pedestrian priority environment, it would become a more visible and attractive front door to the town centre, with traffic movement limited to taxi pick-up/drop-off and disabled parking. The entrance to the station should be made to be more prominent and inviting, and could include planting, seating, and a dedicated cycle parking area to promote joint sustainable movement journeys.

With The Station Pub and mixed-use development (refer project L) proposed along both sides of Station Street, this area could become a vibrant area of activity which connects with the Interchange Piazza and Park Road (refer project F) and feels well-integrated with the town centre as a whole. By improving this area to be a pedestrian priority zone and providing the type of environment we have come to expect from a transport interchange hub, travelling via public transport will be more attractive, and will consequently make Sutton Coldfield a more sustainable place to live and visit.

Improvements to Shaw's Road, Altrincham, has positively impacted local businesses including Altrincham Market

Integrated planting and seating could be used along Station Street to provide a visual connection to nearby Sutton Park

L Station Street carpark and Reddicroft carpark sites

The Station Street carpark and Reddicroft carpark sites provide a significant opportunity to improve links between the Historic Core, Station Quarter, and Royal Town Core. Development should provide significant improvements to the Station Quarter and help to embody the area's role as the Sutton Coldfield Gateway.

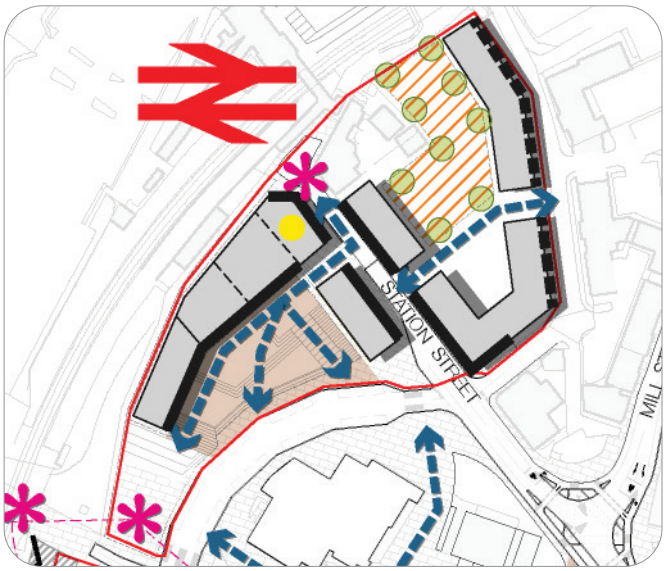
Station Street car park site

New development at the station carpark must consider its role within the public transport interchange. Its adjacency to public transport suggests that commercial and workplace uses would be attractive in this location and could accommodate a relatively significant volume, with ground floor units being suitable for convenience retail or cafes/ restaurants typical for a transport interchange environment. It is important, however, that retail in this location does not detract from the primary retail environment within the Royal Town Core.

The Station Street carpark site should also:

- deliver varied and flexible workspace that provides a potential homes for existing and new employers within Sutton Coldfield as well as supporting home working within the wider community
- integrate pedestrian routes which enable direct and convenient connections between the surroundings, particularly to the Interchange Piazza and Park Road (refer Project E)
- as a large site, integrate public open space to create a distinctive environment adjacent to the bus interchange, taking into consideration the natural site topography – for example, a terraced amphitheatre-like arrangement facing south onto Brassington Ave would create an attractive multi-functional public open space
- consider how the change in topography could be integrated into the overall design of the site and buildings, particularly to aid access and minimise the need for extensive retaining walls
- ensure a consistent building line and active frontage along Station Street (also refer Project K)

MT1 MT3 MT5 EC2 EC3 EC4 EC5



Excerpt from Development guidelines diagram showing an indicative site layout for Station Street carpark and Reddicroft carpark sites (refer page 41)

Sergels Torg public square in Stockholm, Sweden, provides an informal ampitheatre amongst a mix of uses provided at different levels

- consider how buildings on the site could take advantage of views towards Sutton Park where designed building heights are deemed appropriate to the surrounding site context

Reddicroft car park site

The northern side of Station Street, adjacent to The Station Pub, would be ideal for residential uses above convenience retail or cafes/restaurants, with similar considerations to the Station Street car park site. With existing high density residential uses along the other side of Reddicroft, it would reinforce this area as a urban neighbourhood with excellent proximity to town centre conveniences. Residential apartments in this location could also help to cross-subsidise commercial development on the Station carpark site, to help ensure the delivery of commercial space, which may be considered a risk in the market.

The Reddicroft carpark site should also:

- demonstrate sensitivity to the adjacent High Street Conservation Area, e.g. by considering the historic development grain of the Historic Core to help inform site layout
- retain and improve the pedestrian and cycle link to Railway Road to the north of the site, as well as provide high quality connections across the site to Reddicroft
- ensure a consistent building line and active frontage along Station Street (also refer project K), as well as onto Reddicroft which should provide direct front door access to homes at ground level
- integrate well-designed semi-public/semi-private open space which could be used communally by residents
- integrate some parking on-site at a level which is appropriate to a town centre, station-adjacent location, which is well-designed and reasonably landscaped

CONNECTING CELEBRATING CHANGING COMMUNICATING COMMUNITY COMPLEMENTING

MT1 MT3 MT5 EC2 EC3 EC4 EC5

Town centre living with a positive street frontage

4.4 Restaurant Quarter

MT3 MT6
EC2 BEI2
BEI3 BEI4

M Birmingham Road

As a key gateway into the town centre, Birmingham Road should be a positive and vibrant street brimming with energy and experiences. Birmingham Road needs to overcome its feeling of disconnection with the town centre and feel more intuitively integrated as a key Character Area which contributes to the diversity of activity within Sutton Coldfield.

The key junction with Queen Street and Brassington Avenue must be dramatically reduced in size to prioritise the movement of pedestrians, whilst still being able to serve traffic. As an identified gateway moment (refer project O), this junction could become more distinct with a different surface treatment and/or public art within the currently landscaped roundabout.

Across Birmingham Road itself, multiple pedestrian-priority crossings must be introduced to improve general cohesiveness and connectivity between both sides of the street, particularly as Birmingham Road is also home to many residents and businesses, as well as eateries and shops. Zebra crossings, for example, would help to naturally calm traffic. Crossings could also be utilised as a feature within the streetscape by using less traditional graphics. Such interventions would help in Birmingham Road's role as a gateway into the town centre.

Other considerations for Birmingham Road include:

- a general upgrade to footpaths to aid with the overall consistency and presentation of the Restaurant Quarter Character Area
- use of positive street furniture elements including seating and additional trees/planting, particularly in areas in front of businesses and to replace bollards and unnecessary road markings/signage
- Improving and consolidating parking provision so it positively contributes to the overall streetscape and does not disrupt pedestrian movement

While this masterplan does not highlight any key development opportunities along Birmingham Road, this is due to no public land ownership or the absence of large areas within a single landholding, rather than suggesting there is no potential. On the contrary, as there are residential uses already, mixed-use residential development, with active ground floor uses, should be actively encouraged particularly where building heights are currently limited to 1-2 storeys.

Capacity for height and bulk would need to assessed based on immediate context and viability. Impact on the existing character of Birmingham Road would need to be carefully considered, and setbacks at upper levels could help to retain a human scale at street level. Frontage should be continuous with neighbouring properties to reinforce building lines.

The need for additional pedestrian crossings across Birmingham Road should be used as an opportunity to engage with local artists to create a unique crossing for Sutton Coldfield Town Centre such as this piece by Camille Walala in Southwark, London

4.5 Site-wide

N Wayfinding and signage

Due to the topography and linear nature of the town centre, it is not always obvious where to go. As Sutton Coldfield is inherently walkable and cyclable, and distances within the town centre and nearby facilities and attractions are not significant, a new wayfinding and signage strategy would be extremely beneficial. This should:

- Be clear, coherent and consistent;
- Include simple signposting of key assets, facilities and amenities, including maps, directions, and travel times for both walking and cycling;
- Consider use of supergraphics and bespoke street furniture to indicate directions and routes as well as to announce destinations;
- Incorporate educational or historical information in key locations;
- Indicate dedicated pedestrian- and cycle-only routes;
- Help to promote active travel, e.g. walking and cycling, generally;
- Be supported by a well-connected and high quality pedestrian and cycle network;
- Consider how signage could be interactive and linked to public transport real-time information;
- Reinforce the town centre's identity and branding; and,
- Be considered in conjunction with gateway features, to help establish and reinforce character areas.

The wayfinding framework established for Birmingham City Centre, 'Interconnect Birmingham', could be a useful starting point and precedent for Sutton Coldfield.

Looking beyond the town centre, wayfinding and signage should include directions to Sutton Park, Rectory Park, New Hall Valley Country Park, Langley SUE and Peddimore, community facilities on the eastern edge of Sutton Park and along South Parade east, hospitals, nearby local centres such as Beeches Walk, Boldmere Green and Wylde Green, as well as towards Birmingham City Centre itself.

BEI1 BEI2 BEI3 BEI4

Routes to the nearby green spaces could be presented as 'green routes'. This could be established by adding unique 'green route' markers along key footpath connections, for example as small embedded plaques or by painting a continuous green line. These sorts of features can provide playful elements within a typical street scene, sparking the interests of children as well as providing useful directions. Additional features, such as planting or vertical signage, could also be used to further punctuate these routes.

Small plaques are embedded into the pavement to indicate the directions to the different train stations in Bradford

Wayfinding signage created through the Interconnect Birmingham initiative has been well received by the public

O Gateways

Gateways are important town centre features to help provide definition to the town centre area and to provide a sense of arrival. More formally, they can indicate a change of speed limits and help to signal pedestrian priority by communicating to drivers that they are entering an area focused of people and public activity.

Gateways can be distinctive buildings and/or marked by signage, public art, supergraphics, lighting, and/or landscape features and should be designed to be site-specific, picking up on the characteristics of their location. For example, the rail tunnel over Park Road could be painted on the bridge itself and within the tunnel with supergraphics in a style or with imagery related to nature and Sutton Park. The inside of the tunnel should also be illuminated to help create a safe environment at the same time as helping to create an attractive gateway feature.

Proposed gateway locations are:

- Station Street, at the railway station and bus interchange, to announce the arrival into 'Sutton Coldfield Gateway' (refer Project J);
- High Street railway bridge, the town centre's northern gateway;
- the northern end of The Parade, potentially to include the junction with Mill and Queen Streets;
- Park Road, at the bridge tunnel, and potentially also at the junction with Brassington Avenue, to indicate the transition between Sutton Park and the town centre;
- the southern end of The Parade, potentially to include the junction with Victoria and Birmingham Roads (refer Project L); and,
- along Birmingham Road, the town centre's southern gateway.

BEI1 BEI2 BEI3 BEI4

Unlike wayfinding signage, which tends to be more functional, gateway features provide the opportunity to engage with community organisations, schools, and local artists to help produce creative and significant gateway features that are relevant, attractive and embedded with town centre residents.

Image: Civic Engineers/Adrian Lambert

Gateway sculptures at Stamford New Road, Altrincham, announces the arrival into the town centre

Street art in Cork, Ireland references a local historic landmark

P Identity and branding

Sutton Coldfield is a well-loved town, with a proactive and passionate community, however its identity feels unclear. With its unique assets, particularly its history, Sutton Park and its Royal title, and the Vision and Objectives set out within this masterplan, there are clear starting points for establishing a strong and distinctive identity which would subsequently inform graphic branding and communication.

Feedback during public consultation insisted that the town be aligned with strong social, economic and environmental sustainability credentials as it seeks to establish its values and create its future heritage. This masterplan supports the idea of sustainability and climate resilience being embedded into the town centre through its Big Moves, and all proposed development and enhancements should be assessed on how they align with an identity associated with environmentally responsible development.

Multiple projects within this masterplan encourage bringing more natural features into the town centre, to soften the urban landscape and raise awareness of the proximity of Sutton Park. This will need to be supported by a general upgrade to park facilities near the Town Gate, but use of consistent wayfinding signage and street furniture could be used to reinforce the relationship.

Sutton Coldfield's proud history could also be more prevalent. Whilst there are a number of town centre elements (especially within the High Street Conservation Area) that convey the rich heritage and connection with its 'Royal' name, upgrades to the public realm across the town centre could incorporate details which help embed heritage in a contemporary and modern way. Suggestions for a Heritage Centre, potentially within or co-located with a new town centre library, would also help the town to proudly display its history, creating a new town centre attraction.

BEI1 BEI2 BEI3 BEI4

Establishing a common place brand for Sutton Coldfield will help attract residents and visitors and promote the town centre experience. The brand should be clearly visible in co-ordinated marketing and promotional activity both online and in-print, as well on-street on lamp column banners or shop windows.

Identity can be integrated into street furniture as well as town centre banners and signage

Q Short-term interventions

Whilst the focus of the masterplan is the long-term recovery of Sutton Coldfield, it is equally important to create a strategy that builds on the work already established to help and positively uplift the town centre and make it exciting and relevant for its residents. As Covid-19 will continue to impact on the short- to medium-term future of the country, building confidence into our town centres will be important for the health of our communities.

Short-term initiatives, changes and meanwhile uses could be progressed more quickly than other projects identified within this masterplan. The town's role in the 2022 Commonwealth Games provides an excellent target in which to think about what could be achieved in the short term to inform how Sutton Coldfield can benefit from and support this key event. The expectant success of the Games will also provide essential momentum needed to instigate further initiatives.

Short-term interventions should serve as a means to excite, inspire, reinforce identity, and as an opportunity to create spaces for people to meet. They can also provide a means to test ideas (including road closures) and alternative uses within the town centre without long-term commitment, and should be supported by both City Council and Town Council. Local groups and organisations should be invited to contribute to exploring some of the following ideas to ensure initiatives are co-ordinated and utilise local expertise and insight.

Several of the ideas below already feature in the projects presented within this chapter, however they are all collated here, together with additional suggestions, for ease of reference.

Proposals for short-term interventions

- A series of workshops between residents and the TCRP could help ensure that short-term initiatives are appropriate and help guide future activity. The workshops would explore how participatory design, art and technology could improve the town centre in a way that is unique to Sutton Coldfield. Successful elements could provide the basis for a next stage of temporary interventions, or more permanent installations as part of a public art strategy (also see below).
- A programme of events including music festivals, food festivals, street performance, cinema, and historical re-enactions, for example, could build on the existing arts and events programme. These could take place both indoors and outdoors, include talks or workshops, and potentially be a part of wider regional activity. Events should be co-ordinated so resources and funding are shared.
- A regular weekly market schedule which involves high-quality producers, artisans and specialist products – in line with aspirations to cater for the relatively affluent catchment as well as to create a more diversified town centre offer generally. It could be accompanied by street food vendors which are accompanied by temporary tables and seating.
- Investigating how large vacant units could be repurposed, particularly within the Gracechurch Centre, to achieve town centre objectives will be essential. These units could also be part of other short-term strategies including using them temporarily as venues or markets (or even as a Heritage Centre), similar to how the art gallery has been occupying the former BHS. If uses cannot be found, public art projects or similar could be used to window dress.

- Sutton Coldfield's visual identity could be translated into street furniture, including a town centre sign which is as much public art as it is signage.
- A public art strategy should incorporate both still art, e.g. sculptures, as well as interactive pieces which invite people of all ages to engage with. Shopfront windows could be incorporated within the strategy, with businesses invited to create display according to a theme.
- The permanent smaller-scale units proposed for the Gracechurch Centre site (refer Project H) should target start-ups or small independent businesses with some units dedicated to short-term 'pop-up' style lets to help test business ideas, e.g. for food or retail, or create a temporary presence for established brands that are popular in nearby local centres or Birmingham City Centre.
- Specialist event operators could be approached to investigate their interest in holding an event in Sutton Coldfield.
- Involvement from and with younger people should be encouraged as much as possible in all short-term interventions. This could involve public art competitions for different age groups, or the weekly market could include facepainting, storytelling or games. A vacant unit within the Gracechurch Centre could also be dedicated to appropriate leisure uses, e.g. soft play, ball pens, table tennis, table soccer, etc.

The use of social media will be an essential component to the success of short term interventions. The Sutton Coldfield What's On platform (run by the local BID) could be one medium. Creating new #hashtags (e.g. #LoveSuttonColdfield) to generate an online following behind initiatives will also help built momentum and exposure.

Appear Here units facilitate short-term leases for a range of different businesses

The 'Happy Wall' in Copenhagen, Denmark, invites passersby to flip over small black hinged panels to reveal colour and create pixelated images or messages, whilst the #HappyWall title promotes the use of social media to share photographs

Street art in Dublin, Ireland, provides a burst of bright colour

5 Delivery strategy

The following table summarises the Town Centre projects identified within Chapter 4 against their relevant Objectives (refer chapter 3.1) and Big Moves (refer chapter 3.2). It also identifies who would be responsible for delivering the project, including where joint ventures between parties will be required to achieve an optimal result, as well as potential avenues for obtaining funding as the first step to delivery.

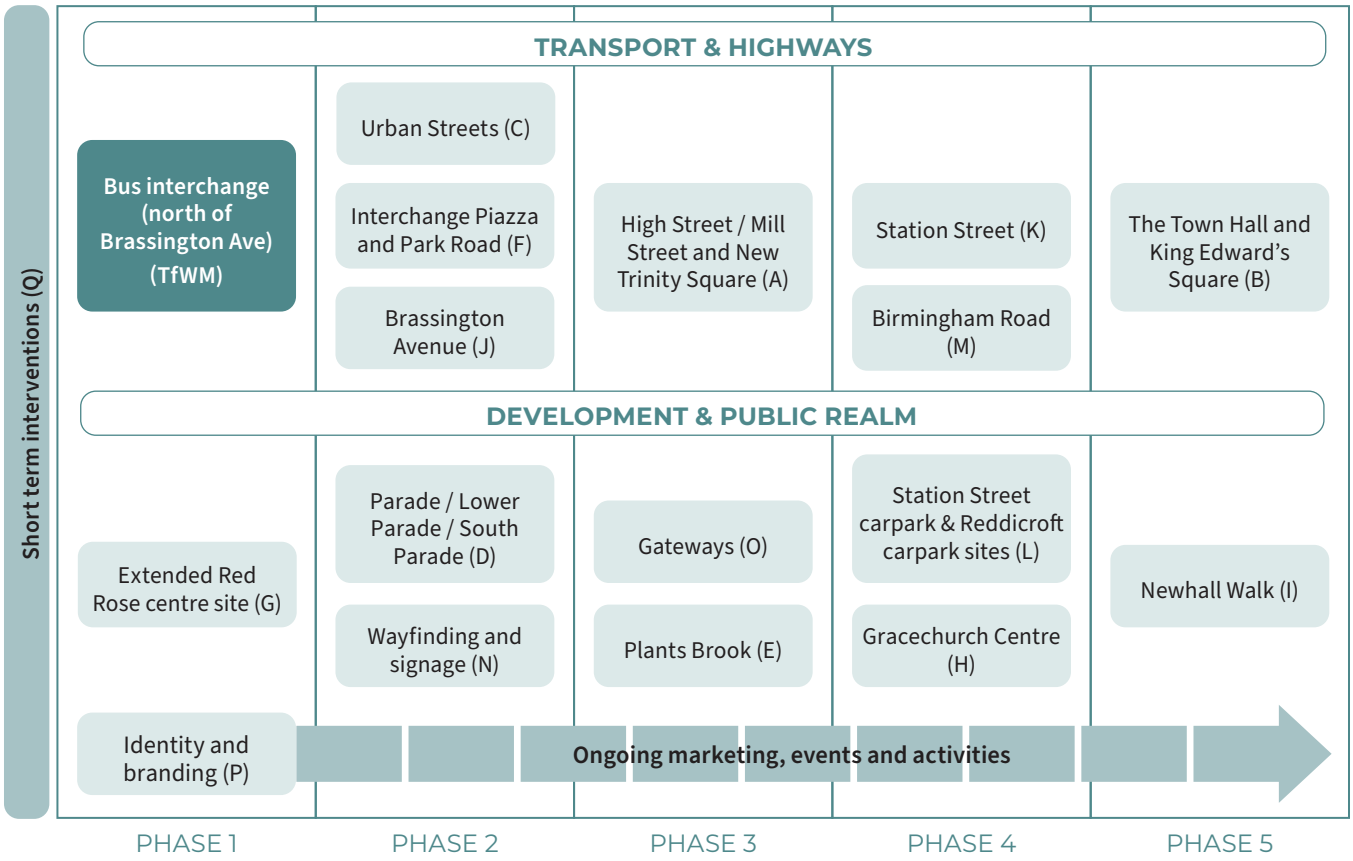
All projects will require further design and technical studies and, in many cases, public consultation throughout the process of moving towards finalising schemes and consequently delivery.

Whilst exact timescales are difficult to predict in this uncertain economic climate, in terms of transforming the town centre into a more positive and healthy environment, project C 'Urban Streets' which proposes the reconfiguration of the ring road and in turn public realm improvements, should be seen as a top priority.

The 'Urban Streets' project would create a significant impact in leading a step change that will have a number of positive knock-on effects as well as serve as a catalyst for other projects proposed within this masterplan. Other projects that should follow closely behind extend to the more significant changes to the primary road network, including project A 'High Street / Mill Street', project J 'Brassington Avenue' and project D 'Parade / Lower Parade / South Parade', where streets and the town centre's public open spaces will serve to improve the overall town centre environment.

In terms of development opportunities, the extended Red Rose Centre site (project G) will be a key long-term project as a part City Council-owned site.

Initiating a full strategy regarding short-term interventions (project Q) will also be essential to positively kick-starting the regeneration of Sutton Coldfield Town Centre.



Indicative phasing timeline for the regeneration of Sutton Coldfield Town Centre

Ref	Project	Objectives	Big Moves	Delivery Partners	Method
Historic Core (and Sutton College)					
A	High Street / Mill Street and New Trinity Square	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT1, MT3, MT4, BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC WMCA	Transport infrastructure funding Capital public realm project
B	The Town Hall and King Edward's Square	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT1, MT3, MT6, BEI1, BEI2, BEI4	BCC RSCTC WMCA Landowners	Capital public realm project CIL Landowner
Royal Town Core					
C	Urban Streets (Victoria Road / Queen Street)	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNITY	MT2, MT3, MT6, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC WMCA/TfWM	Transport infrastructure funding Capital public realm project
D	Parade / Lower Parade / South Parade	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT3, MT4, EC1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC WMCA	Capital public realm project CIL Landowner
E	Plants Brook	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT3, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC	Capital public realm project Environmental / Biodiversity project
F	Interchange and Park Road	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT2, MT3, MT5, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC WMCA/TfWM GBSLEP	Transport infrastructure funding HS2 funding

Delivery partner codes: Birmingham City Council (BCC); Transport for West Midlands (TfWM); RSCTC (Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council); Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP); Business Improvement District (BID); West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

Royal Town Core (cont.)					
G	Extended Red Rose Centre site	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	EC2, EC3, EC4, EC5, BEI4	BCC Landowners WMCA	Major project – BCC Planning Landowner
H	Gracechurch Centre	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	EC2, EC3, EC5, BEI3, BEI4	Landowners BCC WMCA	Major project – BCC Planning
I	Newhall Walk	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT6, EC2, EC3, EC5, BEI3, BEI4	Landowner / leaseholder BCC	Landowner
J	Brassington Avenue	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT2, MT3, MT5, MT6, EC3, EC5, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC WMCA/TfWM	Transport infrastructure funding HS2 funding
Station Quarter					
K	Station Street	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT1, MT3, MT5, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC WMCA/TfWM	Capital public realm project CIL Landowner
L	Station Street carpark and Reddicroft carpark sites	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT1, MT3, MT5, EC2, EC3, EC4, EC5	Landowners BCC WMCA/TfWM	Landowner BCC Planning

Restaurant Quarter					
M	Birmingham Road	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	MT3, MT6, EC2, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC TfWM BID Landowners	Capital public realm project Landowner
Site-wide					
N	Wayfinding and signage	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC BID WMCA/TfWM	Capital public realm project Art project RSCTC
O	Gateways	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	BCC RSCTC WMCA/TfWM BID	Capital public realm project Art project RSCTC
P	Identity and branding	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING	BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4	RSCTC BID	Capital public realm project Art project RSCTC
Q	Short-term interventions	CONNECTING, CELEBRATING, CHANGING, COMMUNICATING, COMMUNITY, COMPLEMENTING		BCC RSCTC WMCA GBSLEP BID Landowners Community groups	Capital public realm project Art project RSCTC Landowner

Developed by: