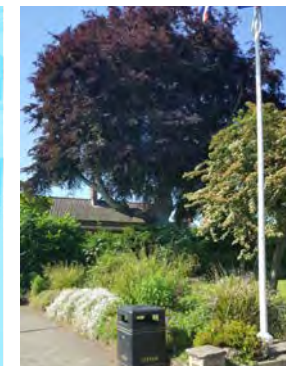


Wymondham Town Centre Strategy

Prepared for: South Norfolk Council

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One: Introduction



Fig. 1.1 Local vernacular architecture



Fig. 1.2 Market Cross

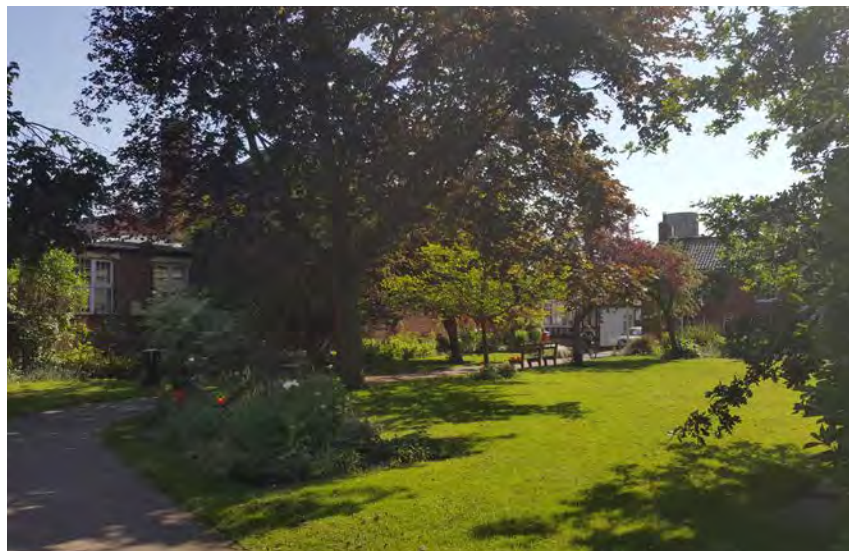


Fig. 1.3 Priory Gardens

Wymondham is a historic market town with a wealth of heritage assets. The town centre benefits from a high proportion of independent retailers and conveys a strong sense of community. Being just 9 miles from Norwich with good train and road links, Wymondham is a desirable place to live.

Despite Wymondham's many inherent positive attributes the town centre's material, physical qualities have been degraded by piecemeal intervention and an uncoordinated approach to change. As the town is set to double in size with the proposal of new housing developments, Wymondham can expect significant changes, and it would be unwise to allow further uncoordinated changes to take place. Now is a good time to reflect on Wymondham's many assets and consider strategies for future changes to unfold.

Through a process of analysis this summary report proposes a strategy and approach for enhancing the 'Town Centre Experience'. Its broad aims are to boost the ability of the town centre to function as a shopping, services and leisure facility for residents and for visitors alike.

1.1 Objectives

Wynne-Williams Associates (WWA) were employed by South Norfolk Council (SNC) to:

- Prepare an overall town strategy for Wymondham town centre taking into consideration of the wider context of the market town.
- Review and make proposals for the physical landscape within the town centre.
- Make Wymondham an acknowledged and respected visitor destination which: gives people a reason to visit; encourages people to stay longer and spend money; has a distinct and dominant character
- Set out a series of priority projects for town improvements
- Prioritise outputs and advise on methods of funding which might be sought to fund the project - a budget has not been defined.

1.2 Scope

This report firstly looks at the history of the town, to consider the town's heritage and how these assets can be drawn upon. Studies

and reports which have been published previously, and are pertinent to this study, have also been reviewed for their research and findings.

An inventory of the town's facilities and attractors was established, to consider their offer to the town centre. As well as this, the physical attributes and qualities of the town centre have been appraised. The focus of these analyses was taken from SNC, who asked that particular attention be given to:

- parking
- access and circulation
- arrival points
- destinations and connections between
- signage and waymarking
- heritage walks and trails
- use of digital platforms
- the market place
- street furniture
- street surfaces
- shopfronts.

To understand the current habits and needs of stakeholders in the town, consultation was undertaken with: local people, visitors, and businesses.

Using the findings from research, site appraisal and consultation, assets and challenges which face Wymondham Town Centre were identified. From these a strategic vision was created for the town centre. Detailed areas were investigated to determine how these strategies would be implemented in the form of design proposals.

Lastly, consideration was given to implementation - how the strategies and proposals could come to realisation, and what funding options could be considered.



Two: Context Research

2.1 Local Context

Wymondham is situated 9 miles south-west of Norwich and is the largest market town in South Norfolk, the Parish of Wymondham is also the largest parish in South Norfolk. The river Tiffey runs through the town, east to west, before joining with the Yare (which flows eastwards).

2.2 Geology and Topography

The prominent geology of Wymondham is of a chalky glacial till, typical of East Anglia. The soil in Wymondham is mostly formed of a loamy and clayey soil, this soil has a moderate to high fertility however it also impedes drainage. Cultivation of land would be difficult were it not for the development of drainage ditches which has meant that most land has been in cultivation since at least medieval times. Soil differs to the south of town in the Tiffey Valley, this area contains soils which are loamy and sandy, a result of the formation and flooding of the river.

The local geology of Wymondham has brought about industries besides from agriculture, notably in the 19th and 20th centuries. Brickmaking utilised the brick earth clays to the north of town, and gravel extraction took place to the south of town along the Tiffey Valley. The utilisation of brick earth clays meant that brick and pantile became prominent local building materials from the 18th century. As well as this the glacial till contains flints, with the lack of local building stone, flints have long been used in local buildings.

The topography of the area is flat to the north and east and gently rolling to the south and west, owing to the Tiffey Valley. Land cover is predominantly arable farmland and the sparsity of hedgerows and boundary vegetation gives open and long range views especially where land is flatter in the north.

2.3 Pre-history and Archaeology

There is prehistoric evidence, in the form of hand axes and flints, of humans being in Wymondham as far back as the Middle Paleolithic period.

Evidence from the Bronze Age includes more flint tools and weapons and a palstave (bronze axe head).

Significant evidence of an Iron Age settlement and/or industrial site was found in Silfield, just south of the town. Along with artefacts (such as pottery, flints etc.), evidence of: four-post structures;

quarrying; bone/antler working; flint working, and iron smelting were found.

There is little evidence of Roman occupation in Wymondham, aside from at a site near Browick Road (south-east of the town) where there was found evidence of Romano-British Buildings. Due to the lack of building stone in the area, buildings would have been wooden and therefore left little trace.

The name 'Wymondham' has Anglo-Saxon origins: the suffix 'ham' refers to a village or settlement, and is usually preceded by a personal name which in this case is thought to be 'Wigmund'.

Archaeological evidence is rare for the 5th and 6th centuries following the departure of the Romans, however at the Browick Road site another timber structure was dated to the early Anglo-Saxon period. Metal objects dated to be late 5th to early 7th century were found near this site and are indicative of a cemetery, which are commonly found close to settlements.

Christianity reached East Anglia in the 7th century, after which burial with grave-goods ceased and cemeteries datable to this time became rarer. In conjunction with this, the formerly sprawling arrangement of settlements became more compact and nucleated. Wymondham had probably emerged as an estate by the end of the 7th century.

The Viking rule in East Anglia had resulted in the rapid growth of major towns and in the 10th century Wymondham found itself a quarter of the way between two of these: Norwich and Thetford. This passing through of people and goods would have brought extra custom to Wymondham, it is possible that with this influence an existing market to service the rural population grew and prospered.

It is thought that the parish of Wymondham was an Anglo-Saxon royal estate.

2.4 History

The d'Albini Family

The first documented evidence of Wymondham was in the Domesday Book. After the compilation of the Domesday Book in 1086, the manor of Wymonndham was given to William d'Albini I by King William II. In this an existing church is mentioned. Archaeological evidence suggests there may have been a church in the location of the abbey as far back as the 11th or even 10th

century, predating the monastic foundation. However it is possible that a church was present from as far back as the 7th or 8th century as it would be usual for an estate of this size to have its own church.

In 1107 William d'Albini I founded Wymondam Priory (which later became Wymondham Abbey in 1448).

Moot Hill, which consisted of a small earthwork castle, known as a ringwork, defended by rampart and ditch, was probably also founded by William d'Albini I as it resembles work which he carried out in New Buckenham. A deer park was also founded south of the town.

The arrival of the d'Albini would have significantly changed Wymondham, not only because of material changes such as the establishing of the priory, castle, and deer park, but also because their interests brought boosts to the commercial fortunes of the market town.

In 1174 William d'Albini, son of the earlier William d'Albini, built a chapel in Wymondham, dedicated to St Thomas Becket.

Market

The first market charter was issued to Wymondham in 1204. It is generally considered that, although the presence of the abbey would have had some effect, the growth of the town was centred about the market which was likely held there before King John's official grant.

Dissolution of the Monasteries



Fig 2.1 The Ruins of Wymondham Abbey

The Abbey was partially destroyed in 1538 and reduced to just the parish church which remains today (Fig 2.1). Wymondham Abbey was one of the first to be destroyed, possibly because of its close association with St. Thomas Becket.

Kett's Rebellion

In 1549, following the Enclosure Act, common land was enclosed by land-owners for their own use. This meant many people did not have land on which to graze their livestock and as a result living standards were falling for many.

There were many rebellions across the country, Kett's Rebellion being the most serious. In Wymondham aggrieved villagers set on Robert Kett's land to rip down his fences, Kett being a wealthy farmer. When he heard their grievances he joined them in pulling down his own fences and offered to become their leader. They met at an oak tree between Wymondham and Hethersett before marching to Norwich. On arriving in Norwich they set up camp around another oak tree on Mousehold Heath and the oak became a symbol of rebellion.

After the battle Kett was captured and hanged for treason.

The Great Fire (1615)

The Great Fire destroyed approximately 300 buildings in the town. Few buildings survive to the present day but those that do include The Green Dragon building and some buildings along Market Street (Fig 2.2). The Market Cross which sits in the town today was a replacement, built in 1618, of the previous town cross which was destroyed by the fire.



Fig 2.2 Parke's Butchers, believed to have survived the Great Fire

There is a strong 17th Century vernacular in the town centre due to the redevelopment at this time following the fire. Building work was fuelled by the wealth that the wood turning and weaving industries brought.

The Railway

The railway from Ely to Norwich, via Wymondham was opened in 1845. As a result the mail coach route ceased to travel through Wymondham and in 1846 the inns and public houses were described as "having a quiet and deserted appearance".

In 1878 the land for a cemetery was purchased adjacent to the railways and by 1881 the keeper's lodge and the chapel for the ornamental cemetery were completed.

Industry

Wymondham has had a number of key industries - the town was renowned for weaving, wood turning and brushmaking, however these industries no longer exist in the town.

2.5 Designations

Scheduled Monuments

There are three scheduled monuments in Wymondham, two of which are in the town centre, these are the 17th century Market Cross, Wymondham Abbey, and Moot Hill.

Conservation Area

The majority of Wymondham Town Centre is within the Wymondham Conservation Area.

Listed buildings

The majority of buildings in the town centre are either listed or noted as buildings of townscape significance in the Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

Most listed buildings are grade II or grade II* listed, however four buildings are grade I listed, these are: Wymondham Abbey, Becket's Chapel, Market Cross, and Cavick House.

2.6 Town Facilities and Attractors

Shopping

The shopping area in Wymondham is centred around the market

place, and continues along market street linearly, including Fairland Street, Middleton Street, and Town Green.

There is a market held at Market Place every Friday between 9am and 2.30pm. There is also a Farmers' Market held on the third Saturday of each month between 9am and 1pm.

A high proportion of the shops in Wymondham are independent shops and there are also many charity shops. There are very few chain stores in Wymondham, which can act as key attractors drawing people to the centre. There are some convenience shops in the town centre, including a Co-op and two One Stops.

There are also many banks/building societies and estate agents.

The high proportion of independent stores and banks result in the town centre being very quiet on Sundays.

A Morrisons store opened in Wymondham in 2014, this is situated in Postmill Close, a 5 minute walk from Wymondham town centre. Some have attributed a decline in the town centre to the opening of the store.

Dining

In terms of dining in Wymondham, most of the offer is provided by cafes and takeaways. These are for the most part independent although there is a Dominos take-away. Many of the cafes are not open on Sundays.

There are also a small number of pubs which provide food. There is a limited offer for evening dining however good eateries that are available, e.g. The Queens Head (refurbished), prove to be popular.



Fig 2.3 Wymondham Library

Library

The Library building is a relatively new facility (2008) open Monday to Saturday. It is located adjacent to Central Hall and benefits from the associated car park. The external area provides cycle parking and seating (Fig 2.3).

Central Hall

This is a community facility located in Back Lane and adjacent to the Library, it has a large attached car park. Central Hall is owned by a charitable trust and provides recreation and leisure facilities - it is the location for clubs and organisations including keep fit, pilates, street dance and drama.

Leisure Centre

The Leisure Centre is located outside the town centre and is open 7 days a week. It is newly refurbished and includes a swimming pool, sports hall, pitches, **gym, spa and cafe facility**.

Wymondham Medical Centre

Open Monday to Saturday, the Medical centre is situated postmill close, near to Morrisons. It provides a range of NHS medical services, including GPs, nurses and clinics.

Wymondham Health Centre

Open Monday to Friday, a base for community care personnel for example midwives, podiatrists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists etc.

The Windmill Surgery

This GP surgery, situated on London Road, is open weekdays 8.30am-6pm, with additional evening hours on Mondays.

Kings Head Meadow

Kings Head Meadow is owned by Wymondham Town Council and is home to Wymondham Town Football Club. It includes a play area which was installed in 2014, the location of the play area has been controversial locally and the future of it has yet to be decided.

2.7 Green Infrastructure

Wym Trails App

South Norfolk Council provide an application which allows users

to 'walk through time'. While following heritage trails, walkers can engage in augmented reality, merging real and virtual worlds allowing them to view medieval Wymondham in 360 degree 3D imaging. As well as providing trail information the App has short 'stories' which provide a historic background to the town. The App also provides useful information for visitors including places to eat, dine, stay, and visit.

Tiffey Trail

A series of footpaths run through the Tiffey Valley from Hethel to the Lizard, south of Wymondham. These footpaths and historic features along them form the Tiffey Trail. The trail also includes Tolls Meadow and The Lizard.

Tolls Meadow

Tolls Meadow is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and County Wildlife Site. It is a wet meadow and woodland habitat which is connected to the Tiffey Trail. It also has a circular path which is suitable for wheelchair users and others with physical disabilities.

The Lizard

The Lizard is in a secluded location to the south of the town. It comprises a tight knit of cottages with meadow to the north and east, either side of the River Tiffey. The meadow is a public open space, it is linked to the footpath network which forms the Tiffey Trail, it is also within a conservation area.

Kett's Country Walk

There is a Norfolk Trail connecting Wymondham with Norwich called Kett's Country Walk. This is intended to follow Robert Kett's footsteps and visit interesting villages along the way.

2.8 Heritage & Tourist Assets

Wymondham has many heritage assets which are not all covered extensively here. The below is a summary of what is considered the most significant and relevant heritage and tourist assets.

Wymondham Abbey

Wymondham Abbey, founded in 1107, is a scheduled monument and Grade I listed building. The Abbey was partially destroyed following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538.

What remains of the abbey is now the town's Anglican Parish

Church, although it is also a well-used community facility with regular events for different audiences.

The Abbey was recently in receipt of heritage lottery grant funding.

Market Cross / Tourist Information Centre

The current market cross (Fig 2.4) was built 1618 to replace the building destroyed in the Great Fire of 1615. It is a scheduled monument and a Grade I listed building. The market cross originally functioned as a central point for the market, ensuring trading rules were followed.

The market declined with advent of railway and from 1870-1912 the market cross was used as a library. Today the market cross is used as the Tourist Information Centre. Opening hours are limited especially in the off-peak season. The tourist information centre is accessed via stairs, it is therefore not fully accessible.



Fig 2.4 The Market Cross

Beckets Chapel / Wymondham Arts Centre

Beckets Chapel was founded in 1174. Following the dissolution of monasteries it ceased to be used as a chapel church. From 1559 to 1835 the chapel was used by the grammar school, following which it fell into a degraded state (Fig 2.5). In 1876 it was restored for public meetings and events, and again was used by the grammar school between 1888 and 1903. From 1912 it was used for Sunday school classes, and later in the 20th century became the public library until 2008. Since the library vacated the building Beckets Chapel has been home to Wymondham Arts Centre. This runs events and exhibition throughout the summer.



Fig 2.5 Becket's Chapel 1870

Railway Station

Opened in 1845 on the line running from Ely to Norwich. In 1847 a new line was opened connecting Wymondham to Wells-next-the-sea. This branch closed in 1969 although a freight service continued between Wymondham and Dereham until 1989.

The Station buildings, including the goods shed and station cottages, are grade II listed.

Mid Norfolk Railway

The line which was closed in 1969 now operates as a heritage rail system between Wymondham and Dereham. It was purchased in 1998 by the Mid-Norfolk Railway Preservation Trust and is owned and operated by volunteers.

The trains run throughout the year with regular events including themed days for families with children.

The MNR Station is at the end of Becketswell Road near Wymondham Abbey. This is a 15 minute walk from the main station and there is a section of Becketswell Road which has to be walked on the road. There are currently discussions underway to connect the MNR with the main station, however the outcomes of this are currently unknown.

Heritage Museum / Bridewell Prison

The Bridewell Prison was built in 1785 by John Howard. Having visited the dungeon that was previously used to hold offenders, his aim was to treat prisoners humanely. This was the first prison with

individual cells and the design was used as a model for prisons in the UK and USA. The building is Grade II listed.

From 1850 until 1963, the Bridewell was used as a police station until a new police station was built. Between 1879 and 1992 one wing was used as the magistrates court. The Bridewell subsequently became derelict and was bought by Wymondham Heritage Society in 1994. Since 1996 it has housed Wymondham Heritage Museum, a Red Cross Centre, a Citizens Advice Bureau, and sheltered accommodation.



Fig 2.6 The Bridewell - Wymondham Heritage Museum

Today the Bridewell continues to house the museum with an interesting collection of memorabilia and displays on Wymondham life past and present (Fig 2.6).

Green Dragon Public House



Fig 2.7 The Green Dragon Public House

This is a grade II* listed 14th century tavern. It is one of the few buildings that survived the Great Fire of 1615. It is located in Church Street (Fig 2.7).

Kett's Oak

The oak under which Robert Kett and other rebels met before marching on Norwich is still present to the North of Wymondham along the B1172. It has been subject to many attempts to support its structure over the years, including being filled with concrete.

The tree is one of the fifty Great British Trees selected by The Tree Council in honour of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. It was also shortlisted for England's Tree of the Year in 2014.

2.9 Car Parking

Central Hall Car Park is close to the centre of town and is operated by Central Hall Trust. It is well-located and well used. Its pricing is 50p/hour or £3/day.

Back Lane Car Park is close to Central Hall Car Park and is also popular due to its central location. It is operated by South Norfolk Council, with the first hour being free. Market Street Car Park is similarly centrally located and is operated by South Norfolk Council, with one free hour of parking. Both Back Lane and Market Street car parks are operated by short stay car parks and are priced accordingly - there is a maximum stay of 4 hours with 4 hours of parking being charged at £5.

Town Green is another South Norfolk Council Car Park however it is a little further out of town and is operated as a long stay car park. This also gives one hour of free parking but offers cheaper parking for stays over than 3 hours.

There is also a car park along Becketswell Road, which is close to the Abbey and the Mid-Norfolk Railway Station. This car park is in a very poor condition, particularly with regards to the surfacing. There is no directional signage towards the car park and there is no charge for parking. It is not known who operates the car park.

Cemetery Road Car Park is located close to the main station and is in a good condition, however it is not well-located for those wanted to use the town centre.

There is some on-street parking available along Market Street and at the Market Cross. These offer half an hour's free parking and no

return within 1 hour. The Parking on Fairland Hill is free.

2.10 Public Transport

Bus Services

Bus services connect Wymondham with Norwich and the rural hinterland. Connections to some rural areas is better than others and there are more services on market day (Friday). Many of the bus routes connecting rural areas to Wymondham, also connect with Norwich, meaning shoppers may choose to take a longer journey to shop in Norwich rather than to stop in Wymondham.

First 13 (turquoise line) travels between Spixworth - Norwich - Wymondham - Attleborough. This runs up to every 30 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays and up to every hour on Sundays and bank holidays.

First 14, 14A, 14B, 15 (green line) travels between Acle - Norwich - Wymondham. This runs up to every 15 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays. It does not run through Wymondham on Sunday.

Konnectbus 6 operates Monday to Saturday with approximately 1 bus per hour between 7am and 6pm. This runs from Watton through Wymondham and on to Norwich. The 6A also runs through Wymondham a few times a week, connecting Wymondham to Attleborough and Norwich.

Semmence 805 operates on Fridays only (market day) with just one bus travelling Wreningham - Bunwell - Wymondham between 10am and 11am, and one bus returning between 1pm and 2pm.

Semmence 806 operates on Fridays only (market day) with just one bus travelling Bawburgh - Barnham Broom - Wicklewood - Wymondham between 9am and 10am, and one bus returning between 12pm and 1pm.

Train Services

National Express and East Midlands services run between Norwich, Wymondham and Cambridge. These connections allow many people who work in Norwich or Cambridge to live in Wymondham. It also means that these city centres are in easy reach for shopping and leisure to people who live in Wymondham.

2.11 Policy & Previous Studies

Wymondham-Focused Reports

Wymondham's Future Strategic Plan

This study defines Wymondham as 'A forward looking market town recognizing the need for sustainable growth whilst retaining an strong sense of its own history'

With the common vision of:

- Protecting Wymondham's cultural and historic heritage and ensuring that both the town's growth and economy progress in a controlled manner
- Supporting a vibrant local community where all age groups can develop and enjoy the quality of life that Wymondham can offer
- Improving access to the surrounding countryside and protecting the town's open and natural spaces
- Seeking ways of improving public transport and traffic management

Wymondham Character Appraisal 2012

This document contains information which is still relevant today, including:

1. There is no traditional style of street furniture that has survived in the town. Most recently, a problem has arisen concerning the number, the variety of styles and proliferation of street and other signs which do detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area in some places. Further rationalisation and improvement of these signs should be promoted.
2. There are a number of trees and tree groups identified as significant in the streetscape. There are a number of open spaces which make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.
3. Good architectural details and craftsmanship can be seen in shop fronts but problems arise from the use of modern shop fronts and the pressure for corporate identities. It should be possible to adapt standard approaches to suit individual

buildings.

4. There is a need to work with the Town Council and other owners of key spaces and trees to ensure their suitable management and enhancement. This should include:
 - An audit of the public realm including footway and highway materials, and street furniture
 - An appraisal of public and private lighting to encourage sensitive and appropriate illumination of historic streets and buildings while maintaining a safe environment
 - Liaison to ensure the careful siting and choice of highway signing and public utilities (eg BT poles), in order to protect and preserve focal points, important views and vistas.
5. Specific enhancement schemes were identified:
 - Improve pedestrian access to the Market Place, in particular to the alleyways linking to Back Lane
 - Improvements to pedestrian alleyways e.g. Chain Entry
 - Improvements to the junction with the B1172 and Avenue Road, including the rationalisation of signs and street furniture
 - Improvements to the junction of Bridewell Street/Norwich Road
 - Boundary improvements to car parks on Back Lane and Chandlers Hill and to the Church
 - Street frontage of Becket's Chapel
 - Provide advice and guidance to owners for improvements to boundaries at the meeting hall on Church Street, Church Hall, the Windmill Public House in Norwich Road and the garage on Avenue Road.
 - Provide advice and guidance to owners for improved surface treatments to private yards e.g. Damgate Street
 - Improve surface at West End of Market Cross
 - Encourage improvements to the site west of the car park on Cemetery Lane

Wymondham Action Area Plan 2015

This study aims to guide development in the town between 2008 and 2026. It sets out a number of objectives:

- A minimum of 2,200 houses to be built along with new infrastructure and open space to support this
- Land allocated for new employment opportunities
- Conservation of historic landscape setting of town and abbey with improved connections and linkages of green infrastructure
- Protection and enhancement of existing open space and provision of new open space
- Wymondham town centre will be improved to give a greater choice of shops and services whilst retaining and enhancing its distinct historic core and its role as a vibrant market town.

The report contains a section on the character of Wymondham and the need to define the town centre. Commenting as follows:

"Although the historic character of Wymondham is important the attractiveness of the town centre for shoppers and visitors also depends upon the mix of shops and services in the centre. The town centre of Wymondham should be the heart of the community and should be made up of the types of uses that will attract shoppers and other visitors. Such uses should include a variety of shops, eating places and other services that would normally be expected to be found in such a town centre."

There are a number of specific policies (WYM 16 to 17) which seek to control change in use and the rate of development in Wymondham's retail sector.

AMT Town Benchmarking Wymondham 2014

This study found that, in terms of shopping, Wymondham has many positive aspects, these include:

- Users rate it highly for access to services

- Vacancy rate is very low
- Footfall is higher than average, especially on market day
- High business confidence
- High number of potential customers
- Higher than average spend

In contrast to these advantages there are also two improvements identified: car parking and retail offer:

- The study found that 70% of traders and 40% of town centre users felt that car parking was a negative aspect of the town. Suggestions from both business owners and town centre users centred on the need for free parking periods and more spaces.
- 55% of town centre users rated retail offer as a negative aspect of Wymondham - 13% higher than the National Small Towns average. A key theme identified was retail mix, specifically reduction in charity shops.

Car Parking Cabinet Report 2016

This car parking report, produced by South Norfolk Council, addressed many of the issues raised in the AMT benchmarking study (above).

The main issues identified were:

- Availability of parking spaces is poor - number of available spaces was found to be below the standard benchmarks, and almost non-existent on market day
- Town centre spaces are frequently occupied by long term parkers who: use the car park for park-and-ride purposes; are workers in the town centre; or are permit-holders
- Outdated payment methods which are cash only and pay on entry, reduce dwell times in the town centre.

Based on the findings in this and the AMT report, proposals were identified. South Norfolk Council have reported that the strategy has been implemented and has successfully transformed the car parking situation in the town. Proposals delivered comprise:

- New directional signage to all car parks
- Short stay car parking in the town centre (max. stay 4 hours)

- Long stay car parking on the periphery of the town centre (no maximum stay)
- New multi-payment ticket machines
- Facilitate pay on exit to increase dwell times.

South Norfolk Reports

Visit Norfolk Tourism Report

South Norfolk is identified as a being best known for its heritage attractions and is visited most by those ages 55 and over. The area is identified as being 'less well known' as a destination with trips being predominantly short in duration.

South Norfolk Economic Growth Strategy

This document identifies 4 sectors:

- Place
- People
- Innovation
- Enterprise

Although it cannot be viewed in isolation, we are most concerned with 'place' which is identified in the study as a focus on 'promoting a sense of place and culture, connecting residents and visitors, to enhance the local economy'.

The following issues were identified under 'Place':

'There are a number of issues to address relating to the place of South Norfolk. These range from a lower than average share of tourism visitors and falling high street footfall through to lower levels of high speed broadband and mobile connectivity and availability of ready serviced employment land in key centres.

Improving the connectivity of people to place will help not only from a social and community based perspective but also from an economic development viewpoint encouraging more people to live and work locally.'

Catalyst programmes are proposed to encourage and support economic growth including;

Market Towns Initiative (Phase III) – Building on success from

Phases I and II of the initiative there are plans to develop a more commercial and sustainable model. This may involve a range of place based and event support services to stimulate and enhance economic and community activity in the Market Towns (and potentially other localities) and a stronger focus on business engagement and tourism.

Wymondham is one of the areas in South Norfolk that has been identified for growth. It's key characteristics are identified in the South Norfolk Place-Making guide as follows:

- Tightly defined urban grain; narrow "burgage" plots in historic core, larger houses and plots to the west.
- Focal point of Market Place and Market Cross.
- All streets vary in width with changes in level and alignment, often opening up into squares and crossing points.
- Buildings mostly two storeys, but great variety of styles and status.
- High quality of craftsmanship and design.
- Number of key landmark buildings. Significance of the Abbey both within the town and its setting.
- Traditional materials, mostly pantiles and brick, but examples of slate, flint, timber framing and render.
- Modest but significant open spaces and trees make a positive contribution in the town centre, with Tiffey valley and associated river meadows to the south and west making an important recreation and ecological green corridor.
- Outlying hamlets and settlements, landscape dominated and visually separate and distinct. Presence of large parkland estates with estate dwellings, railings and other features.
- Poorer quality of 20th century expansion with standard design and highway dominated layouts; loss of local distinctiveness.
- Lack of connection between estates and the town centre.
- Lack of imagination in the use of aspect, views and integrated landscaping.
- Physical and visual disruption of main transport routes dissecting the eastern part of the parish.

These key defining features are elements of the townscape that need to be protected and enhanced within the development framework.



Three: Consultation

3.1 Introduction

The consultation ahead of this report has consisted of:

- Detailed surveys filled out by those who use the town centre for services (186 respondents)
- Morrisons shoppers questioned about their general shopping habits (100 respondents)
- Short surveys to collect baseline data on visitors (136 respondents)
- Interviews with Farmer's Market stall holders
- Preliminary feedback from businesses in town on the proposals presented here
- A meeting with the Town Council

Consultation has been largely successful with the exception of the business consultation, which was poorly attended. We anticipate that attendance at a future consultation may need to be incentivised.

Generally with regards to the consultations, we received feedback from businesses and residents alike that they had been saturated with studies of the town, and were therefore less inclined to participate in consultation.

3.2 Questionnaire for Service Users

Transport

Based on our survey information, most people who use the town services live within Wymondham itself. Some people do however, drive for as long as half an hour to use Wymondham town centre (Fig 3.1).

Most people using the town centre travel there by car, however over a quarter walk to the town centre (Fig 3.2). When asked how easy it is to find a parking space in Wymondham, there was a wide ranging opinion, with the majority saying it was between 'fairly difficult' and 'fairly easy'. This difference may be accounted for the time or day that people visit. For instance parking will likely be more difficult on a Friday when the market is on. When asked what could be improved in the town the most popular answer was the town's

parking scheme.

Note: since our survey was undertaken, car parking has been changed to 'short stay' and 'long stay'.

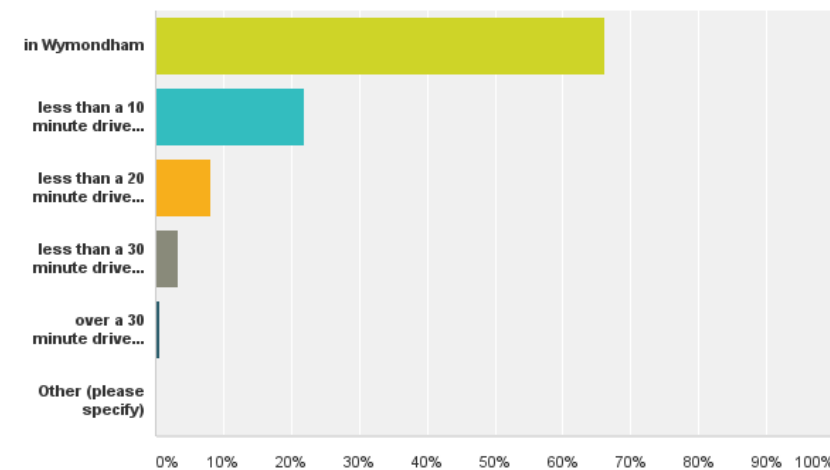


Fig 3.1 Question: Where do you live in relation to Wymondham?

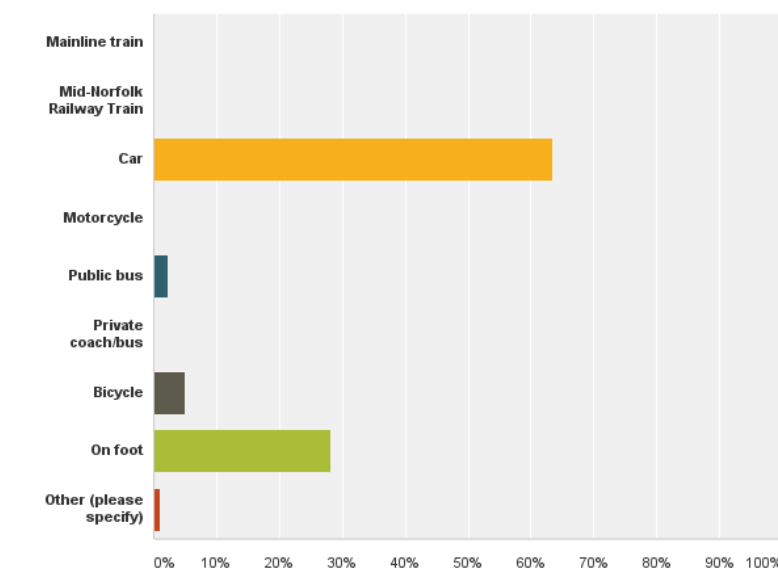


Fig 3.2 Question: On your most recent visit, what form of transport did you use to get to Wymondham?

User Habits

75% of those questioned said that they use the town centre at least once a week, and many said they visit the centre more than once a week (Fig 3.3). However, nearly half of those surveyed said they generally stay in the town centre for less than one hour, and the vast majority of people stay in the town centre for less than two hours (Fig 3.4).

The reasons given for visiting the town were wide ranging, most commonly cited reasons were shopping, dining, and other services e.g. financial, health, library etc.

Shopping

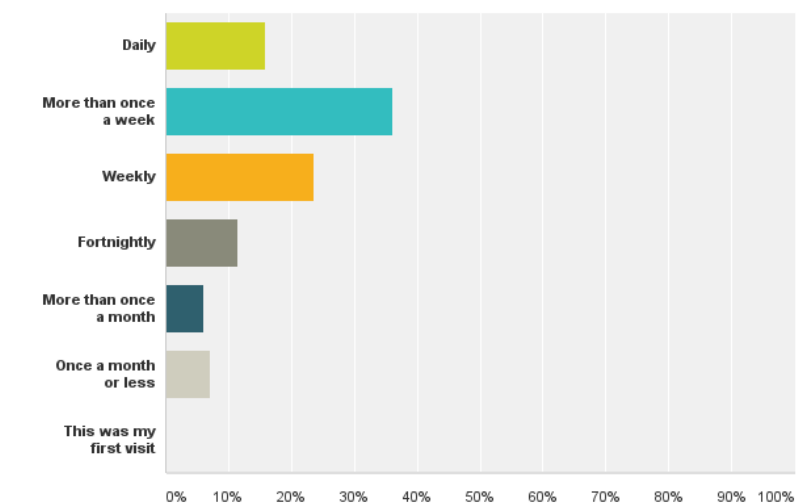


Fig 3.3 Question: How often do you visit the town centre?

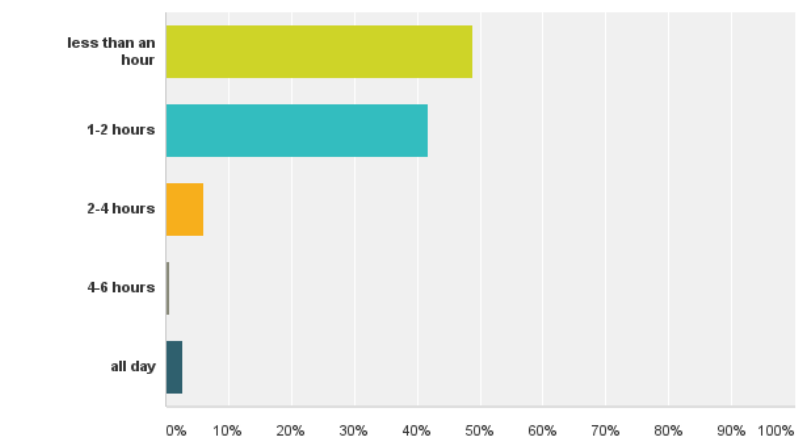


Fig 3.4 Question: How long do you generally stay in the town centre?

Respondents were asked what new shops they would like to see in the town centre, some of the suggested answers given were shops identified as 'Key Attractors' in the AMT Benchmarking Report. The majority of those questioned also selected the 'other' option in their answer (Fig 3.5).

Of those who answered 'other', over 30% made reference to clothes/shoes, children's clothes/shoes, or specific clothing chains.

Just under 30% made positive comments about the small/local/independent shops, or commented that they would not like to see any more chains.

In a later question 'what do you think is positive about the town centre?' the most commonly cited aspect of the town was the local feel/shops. However, in the question 'what do you think could be improved in the town centre?' more practical/chain shops was the second most popular answer.

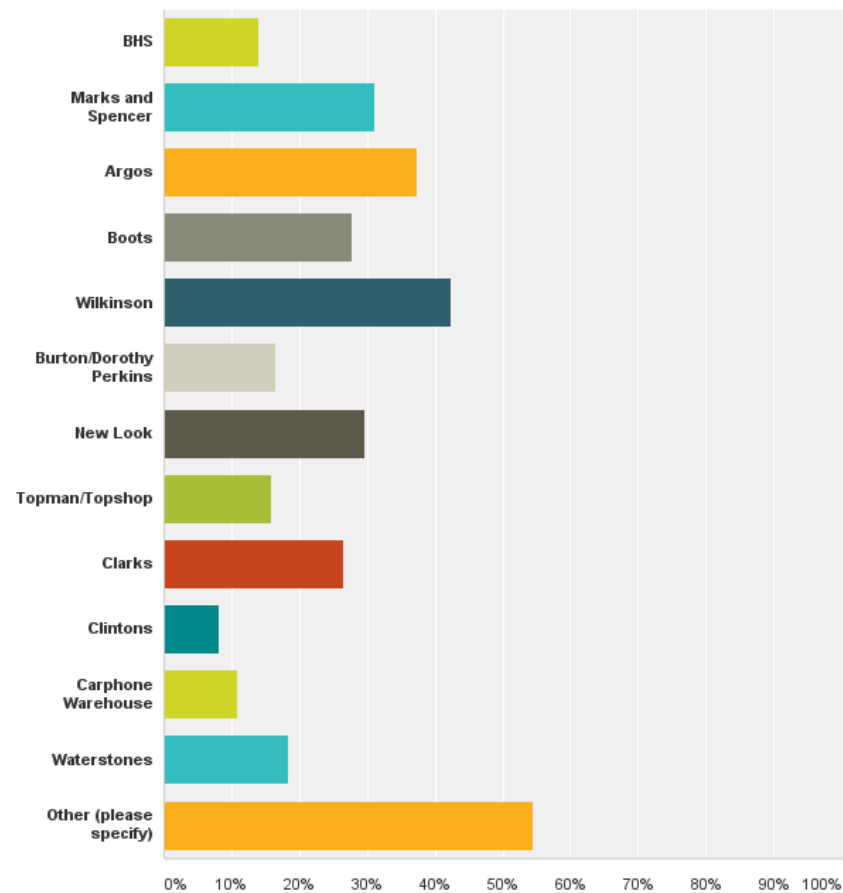


Fig 3.5 Question: What other shops, if any, would you like to see in the town centre?

There are obvious contradictions here , the balance of independent and chain stores needs to be carefully considered.

3.3 Morrisons Shoppers Questionnaire

Due to the perception by some that Morrisons has had an effect on shopping in the town centre, we surveyed people shopping at the Morrisons store in Wymondham. We surveyed during a 2 hour period, around midday, on a Saturday. We asked them a few short questions about their shopping habits.

85% of those surveyed said that they did use Wymondham Town Centre for shopping (Fig 3.6) and, similarly to the main questionnaire, over half of those said they visited more than once a

week (Fig 3.7).
When asked what people go to the town centre for, the most common answer was to use the bank/building society, with over 25% giving this answer. The next most common answer was to shop at Savers, a chain discount store.

Other popular answers were: using charity shops, using the Co-op, do general shopping, and to eat/drink.

3.4 Farmers' Market Stall-holders

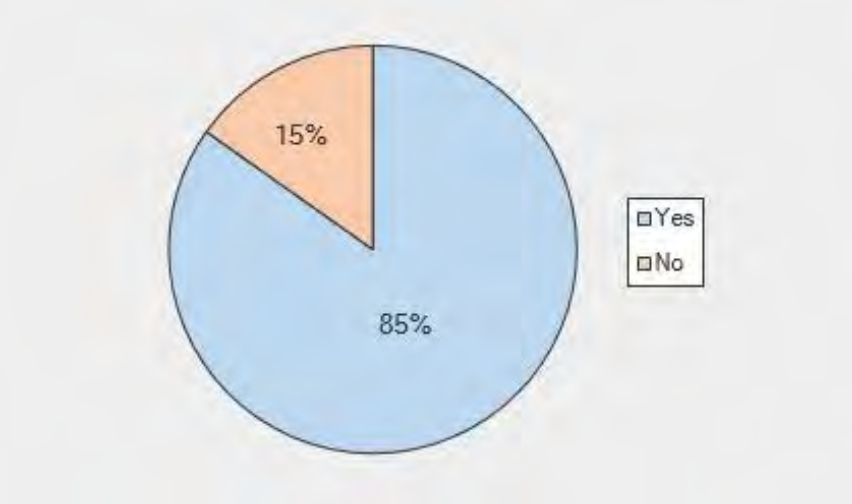


Fig 3.6 Question: Do you go in Wymondham Town Centre to do any shopping?

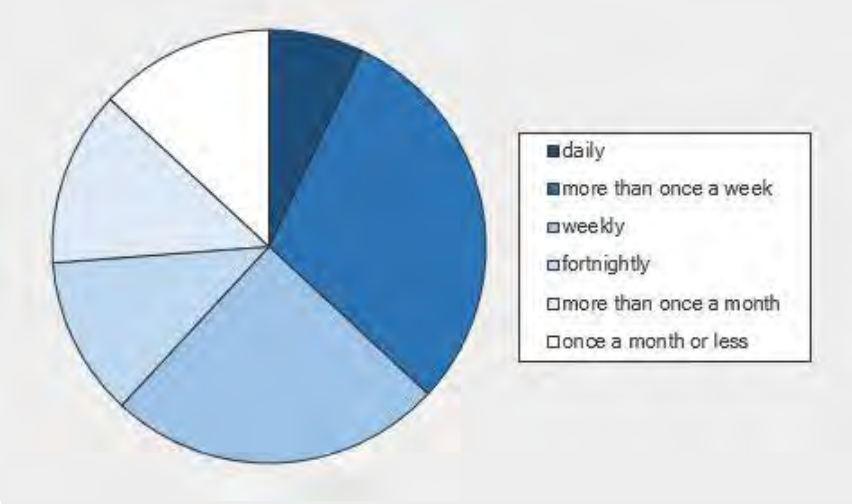


Fig 3.7 Question: If yes, how often?

WWA attended Wymondham Farmers' Market which takes place monthly at Wymondham Market Place. On the day of our visit the weather was overcast and rainy. The intention of the visit was to assess the offer of the market, identify the needs of the stallholders, with the ultimate aim of making recommendations which would

improve the Farmers' Market and other markets which are held in Market Place.

There are currently 18 stalls occupied on the Farmers' market, with 5 being empty. The range of products is good with local cakes, juices, jams and honey, confectionary, cheese, asparagus and hot food.

On the day of our visit we undertook spot counts of the number of people in the market at any one time on three occasions. We took three counts at hour intervals and the numbers ranged between 12 and 16 people. Despite the bad weather this is nonetheless a low number of potential customers.

In the interviews we undertook with stall holders, many of the stall holders mentioned a decline in the Farmers' Market over the last few years. Speculative reasons they gave for this were:

- that the Local Council had stopped advertisement/support;
- that parking in town was an issue;
- that the monthly stall rent had risen;
- the declining support of customers;
- the arrival of Morrisons.

The stall holders gave suggestions for improvements which included: social media; council advertising; parking to be made free on market days; and to extend the operating hours of the market.

Since these interviews were undertaken, Wymondham Town Council set up a working group to address the decline in the local market. They are currently offering free or reduced rentals to new occupiers, with some success.

The market currently sets up at 8am and has gone by 12 noon. Changing or extending the operating hours to when Wymondham has a greater footfall is a consideration.

3.5 Questionnaire for Visitors

Visitors were asked to answer questionnaires on a Mid-Norfolk Railway Steam Day, where steam trains were running between Wymondham and Diss. There was also a small event on at the Abbey on this day. 85% of those questioned were visiting the Mid-Norfolk Railway, just under 30% were visiting Wymondham Abbey, and just under 30% were visiting the town centre. Other attractions



Fig 3.8 Question: Where have you travelled from?

were far less visited. These numbers are likely skewed because of the events that were taking place on the day.

At this visitor day, we provided links for a more detailed online survey, however the uptake on this was fairly low with 26 respondents. Of the people that answered our online visitor survey, the town centre, Wymondham Abbey and the Mid-Norfolk Railway were most visited. Conversely, only 40% knew about the Heritage centre, and even less knew about Becket's Chapel/WAC, and The Tiffey Trail.

We found that people travelled large distances to visit the MNR, although many didn't do anything else while they were in Wymondham. Distances travelled are shown in Figure 3.8.

3.6 Town Council Meeting

A meeting was held with representatives of the Town Council in April 2016 to advise them on progress with the study and concerns were raised about the future of the Market Cross and Becket's Chapel, as well as the market.

3.7 Summary

The consultation carried out has gathered opinions from a wide range of stakeholders.

We know that many regular users would like to see an improvement to the town centre parking scheme. We also know that many people visit the town centre regularly, however the time spent in town is generally short. This could be a result of the parking scheme which generally gives free parking for only one hour. This may also be a result of the shopping offer in the town centre. Opinions on shopping were mixed with some wanting more practical chain shops, specifically for clothes, with others supporting retention of independent shops. The local feel/shops was the most commonly cited positive feature of the town, the unique character is something which clearly needs to be maintained and enhanced.

The results from the Morrisons survey showed that those who shopped in Morrisons continue to shop in the town centre, and did so fairly often. This suggests that there is the footfall in the town centre, but not the shopping offer to entice people to spend more time and money.

Surveying of visitors was fairly minimal, however we found that people visiting Wymondham had travelled quite far. We found that

people tended to visit one attraction, and not necessarily know about the other aspects of Wymondham.

In visiting Wymondham Farmers' Market, we discovered that the stallholders believe the market to be in decline. On the day that we visited the market shopper numbers were low. The market should enliven the town. Both the Friday Market and the Farmers' Market should be nurtured to provide an enriched shopping experience in the Town Centre.

The proposals in section 7 of this report have been prepared based, in part, on the outcomes of these consultations. It is considered that further consultations to review proposals should be undertaken with both residents and businesses.

Four: Landscape Appraisal



Through a series of site visits the physical environment of the town centre was assessed in terms of its ability to function for visitors and for local people, as well as its aesthetic character.

There were several recurring issues which were identified, as well as some key areas which were determined as in need of improvement.

4.1 Street Furniture

There are many types and styles of street furniture throughout the town centre, often next to one another, giving a cluttered appearance (fig 4.1 - 4.2). This is apparent throughout the town, both on streets and in car parks.

This uncoordinated approach detracts from the historic quality of the townscape. The clutter of street furniture around the grade I listed town cross in particular detracts from this historic space.



Fig 4.1 Market Street street furniture



Fig 4.2 Street furniture around the Market Cross

Street furniture should be rationalised, reduced where possible, and unified to be of a consistent style which is appropriate to the historic setting.

4.2 Shop Fronts

The shop fronts vary considerably in their appropriateness and condition (fig 4.3 - 4.5), however many have good potential. There are a diverse range of shop fronts in Wymondham, some traditional styled fronts on historic buildings as well as more modern designs on infill developments. Modern shopfronts vary in their appropriateness. Many shops have significant historic frames retained, although often adapted or spoiled by inappropriate colours or materials.

Shop fronts should make a positive contribution to the local environment by respecting the predominant character of the area and, wherever possible, the proportions, character, design details and materials of the building into which they are set.



Fig 4.3 Savers - modern infill shop with inappropriate shop front



Fig 4.4 Wymondham Kebabs - a traditional shopfront with some inappropriate additions



Fig 4.5 Hemstock's Jewellers - appropriate traditional frontage

A coordinated approach to shop front design in Wymondham will enhance the appearance of the built environment and help to provide an effective marketing tool for promoting the wider area to visitors, shoppers and investors. Guidance for shopfronts should be provided: to advise shopkeepers on appropriate interventions; and to be used by the local authority when making planning decisions about changes to shopfronts.

4.3 Heritage Interpretation

Heritage assets with good potential are underplayed and tired (fig 4.6 - 4.8). It is established that Wymondham has a wealth of heritage assets, however these are not displayed to their advantage and there is little interpretation in the town to provide information and enhance the visitor experience.



Fig 4.6 Wymondham's War Memorial



Fig 4.7 Wymondham Town Sign outside Becket's Chapel



Fig 4.8 The Fire Arch

Becket's Chapel, The Town Cross, The Bridewell/Heritage Museum, The Abbey, Mid-Norfolk Railway, Kett's Oak, Moot Hill, and the historic buildings generally would benefit from interpretation. Those assets which are slightly out of

town - the Abbey and The Bridewell - and even those that are further out would benefit from a presence in the centre through interpretation. This would connect different areas of the town, enrich the heritage story for visitors, and may encourage visitors to more attractions.

4.4 Priory Gardens

Priory Gardens is a small park in the centre of town, connecting Middleton Street with Back Lane (fig 4.9 - 4.10). It is a well maintained pocket park which provides a pleasant place to sit in the centre of town. The park has the potential to offer a lot to both local people and visitors, however it is understated and under-utilised at present.



Fig 4.9 Priory Gardens from Middleton Street



Fig 4.10 Connecting footpath between Middleton Street and Back Lane

Enhanced planting and improved quality of hard landscaping, along with the provision of more seating, would create an tranquil space where people could sit during a visit to the town centre.

4.5 Entrance points

Entrance points to the town centre, both by foot and by vehicle, lack a sense of arrival and welcome (fig 4.11 - 4.13). This is apparent on all approaches into Wymondham town centre.



Fig 4.11 Fairland Street Junction



Fig 4.12 Elm Terrace junction to Back Lane

The approach to Fairland Street is off a busy junction and the turning to enter the town is not immediately obvious as an entrance.

This is also true for pedestrians who may have travelled by train. The junction to back lane similarly is not obvious as an entrance point. On entering Elm Terrace, the approach is winding onto Back Lane, terminating in either Central Car Park or Back Lane Car Park. When approaching from the west of Wymondham, the point of entry to the town, and entry into Town Green Car Park, is not obvious. As with the entrance to Fairland Street the junction is confusing and drivers may miss the turning to either the car park or on to the high street.

An enhancement of visual cues would make the approach to Wymondham town centre more welcoming and coherent. Signage should be improved to make navigation to car parks, and to the town centre, simpler. As well as signage, other landscape measures such as traffic calming and paving materials will alert visitors to entrance points.



Fig 4.13 Junction at Town Green

4.6 Car Parking

Poorly laid out car parks give an unsatisfactory first impression of the town centre (fig 4.14 - 4.16). As a town which serves a rural community, many of those visiting the town centre do so by car. Visitors are also likely to travel by car.

The car parks generally are in a sorry state, due to paving quality, visual clutter, and poorly defined boundaries. Some simple interventions to make the car parks more presentable would provide a much improved welcome for those using the town centre.



Fig 4.14 Market Street Car Park



Fig 4.15 Market Street Car Park



Fig 4.16 Back Lane Car Park

4.7 Access

Pedestrian access routes between car parks and the town centre are in a poor state and feel unsafe (fig 4.17 - 4.19).



Fig 4.17 Alley to west of Back Lane Car Park

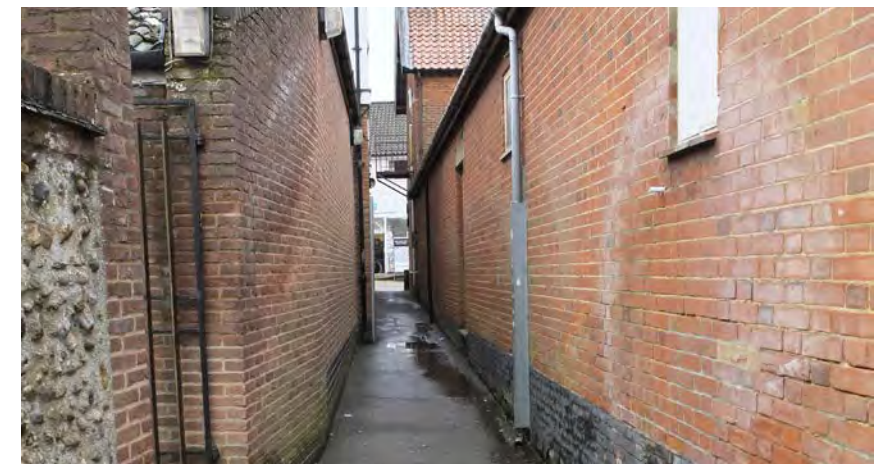


Fig 4.18 Alley to east of Back Lane Car Park



Fig 4.19 Wharton's Court from Market Street Car Park

From Market Street Car Park, the town is accessed via both Wharton's Court and the Fire Arch. Wharton's Court is a pleasant space, however not all materials are appropriate and entrances are not obvious. The Fire Arch is the entrance for cars and is also an

access for pedestrians. The area under the fire arch is unpleasant as birds perch in the roofspace. The building itself would benefit from some restoration works to revive its historic value.

There are two alleyways connecting the town with Back Lane Car Park. This is a back of house location and bins are on display adjacent to both alleyways. As such the alleyways are not obvious as public accesses to the town centre.

An improvement in the quality of paving, lighting and signage would improve the experience of these access routes.

Five: Strategic Masterplan



5.1 Findings

From the research undertaken, key assets and challenges were identified. These summarise: the qualities of the town which are to be emphasised and the shortcomings facing the town which need to be addressed. From these assets and challenges, design strategies have been established on which proposals for change will be based.

5.2 Assets

- Heritage buildings – Wymondham Abbey, The Market Cross, Bridewell Prison, Becketts Chapel, Railway buildings, and many other listed buildings in the town centre, many of which house shops.
- The Market – with a grade 1 listed market cross which is also a scheduled monument, the active markets are an important piece of living heritage in the town centre, they also inject vitality into the town and offer a start for enterprising independent businesses.
- Other heritage assets – The Mid-Norfolk Railway, Moot Hill, the story of Kett's Rebellion, Kett's Oak .
- Wymondham has a large proportion of independent stores, a quality which is highly valued by residents and which adds to the specific character of the town.
- Wymondham harbours a strong community spirit with many active local groups and year-round events held in the town.
- Strong Green Infrastructure – cycle and walking routes draw people through the town e.g The Tiffey Trail, The Lizard and Tolls Meadow.

5.3 Challenges

- Wymondham exists in a rural setting and as such many shoppers travel to use the town centre by car. Parking is a potential barrier to people using the town centre.
- Wymondham is only 9 miles from the city of Norwich, a city with a large retail offer so Wymondham has competition to maintain its customers– especially as many potential shoppers will need to travel by car to either centre.
- A recently opened Morrison's supermarket, close to the town centre, has resulted in a perceived reduction in footfall to the

town centre.

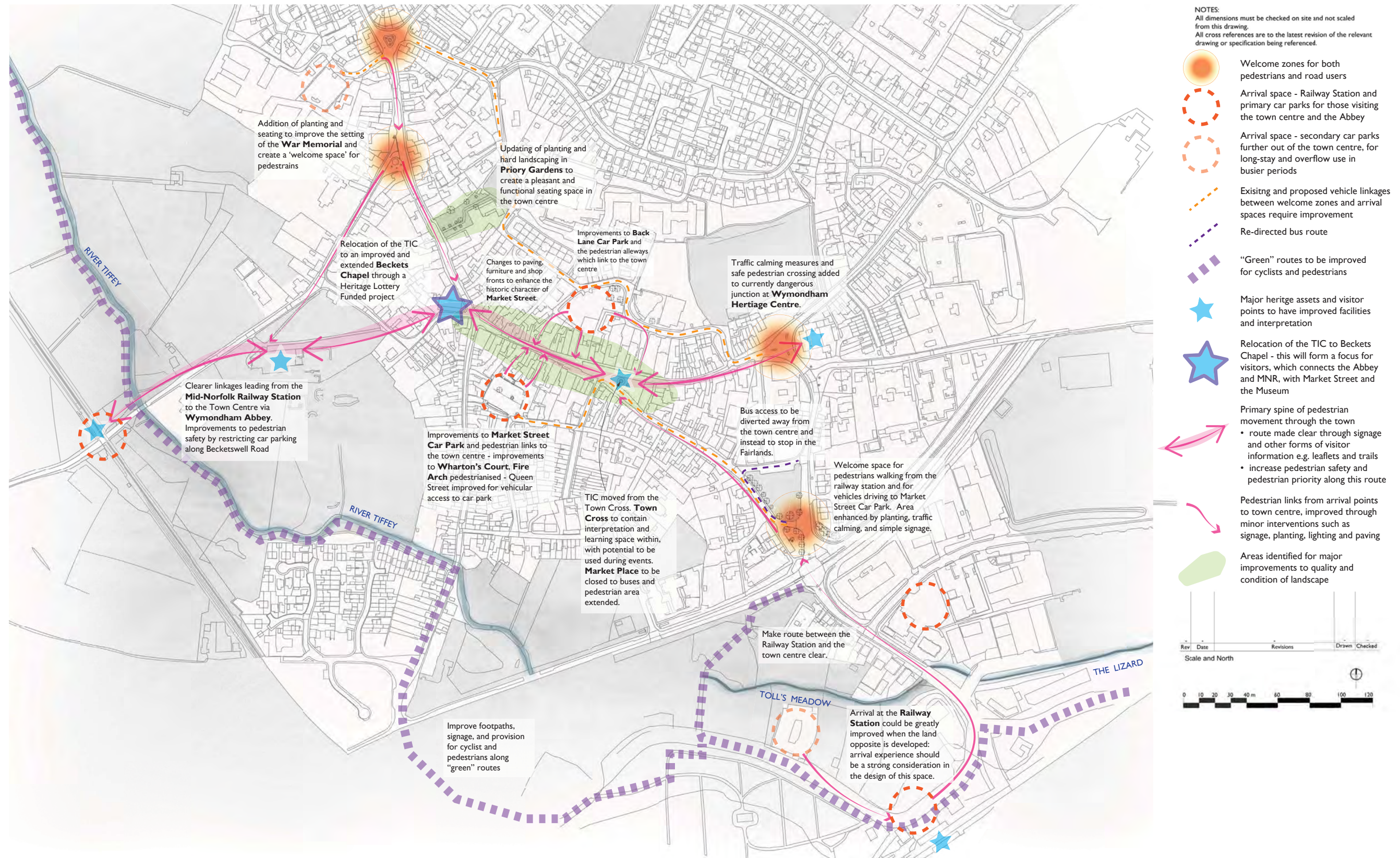
- Wymondham is heritage-rich for such a small town, however heritage is poorly interpreted and individual visitor attractions are poorly connected - routes and access are not always pedestrian friendly and orientation is not always clear.
- The physical appearance of the town centre has been gradually degraded by incremental changes and a lack of overall vision or guidance for the town centre.
- The population of Wymondham is set to double in size with the proposal of new housing developments - with such a large oncoming change there should be a strategy for the town going forwards, to prevent large changes that would be difficult to undo if detrimental to the town's character.
- South Norfolk as a tourist destination generally is undersold and places within it are little-known by people from outside the district.
- Traditional shop fronts and associated features remain on many retail outlets. These have been degraded by piecemeal change.

5.4 Design Strategies

Strategies have been defined based on the assets and challenges identified. The aim of these strategies is to establish Wymondham as; a respected visitor destination, and a vibrant and active town centre for residents.

The vision below is illustrated in the strategic masterplan.

1. Make arrival clear and simple for those travelling by all modes of transport
2. Introduce welcome zones to enhance the sense of ceremony when entering the town centre
3. Increase the feeling of pedestrian-safety on Market Street and reduce vehicle-dominance in the town centre
4. Strengthen pedestrian links between visitor attractions and the town centre
5. Improve and co-ordinate the material quality of the town centre, inclusive of paving, furniture and shop fronts
6. Reveal hidden history through interpretation of existing heritage assets
7. Encourage existing event, markets, and community activity through suitable designed spaces
8. Improve the shopping experience with a focus on new and better shops. The question is whether they should be more specialist shops or some key 'attractors'
9. Improve the Market experience

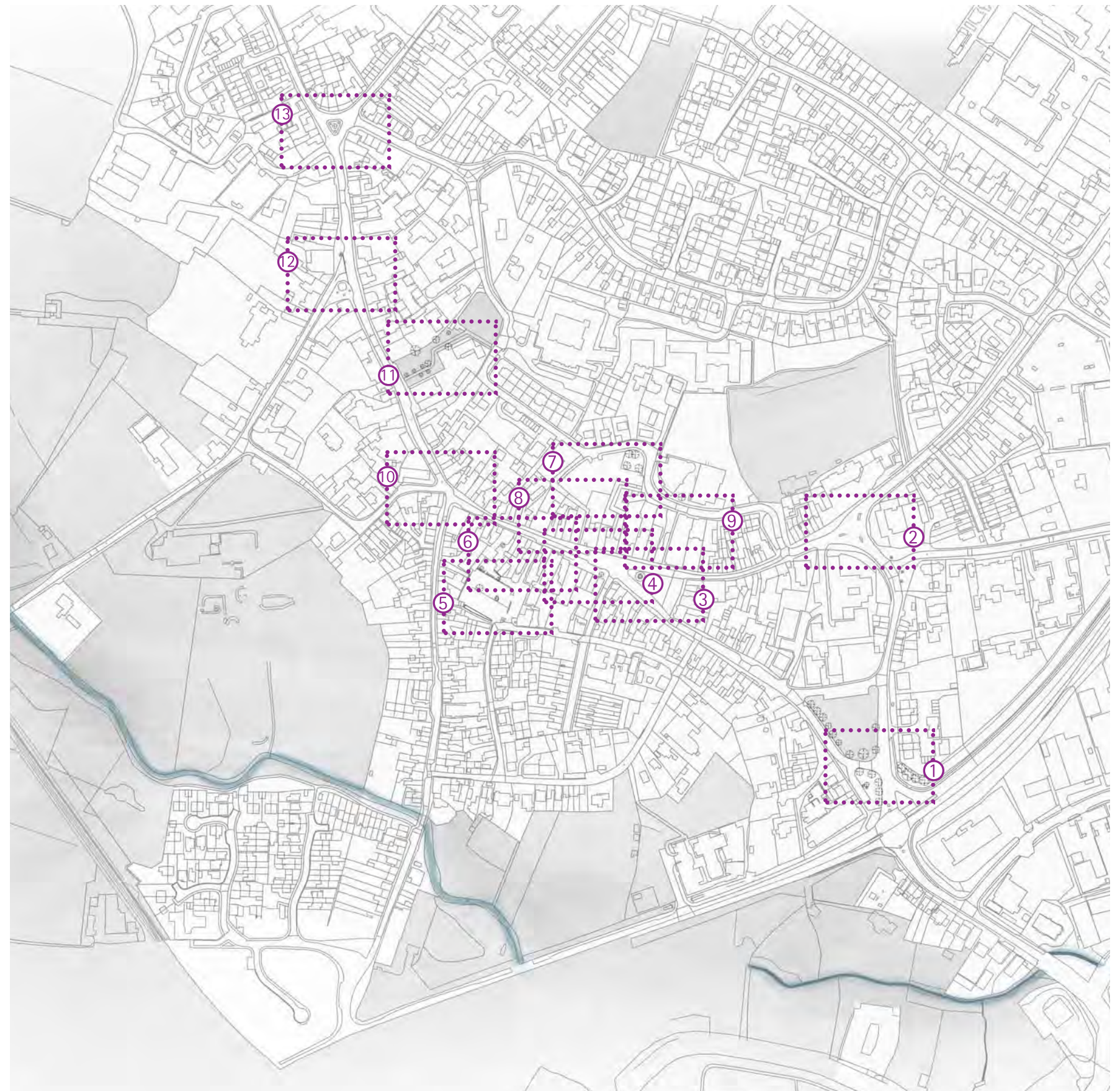


Six: Detailed Area Analysis



Through the findings from the site appraisal, and development of the strategic masterplan, 13 sites throughout the town centre were identified for concept proposal plans. Ahead of developing proposals, site analysis was undertaken identifying the main issues and areas for improvement.

The areas chosen for site analysis plans are shown on the plan opposite. The numbers on the plan coordinate to the associated section in this chapter.



6.1 Fairlands Junction

Analysis

This junction at the Fairlands is accessed off the B1172, and is used by those travelling on the A11, either northbound or southbound.

Pedestrians travelling from the train station and from the south of the B1172 are also likely to enter the town centre at this junction.

The junction is not an obvious one, as it is very close to another junction off a three lane road, this entrance can be easily missed. The signage at this junction creates visual clutter and is not clear, adding to confusion. The turning into Fairland Street leads into the town centre, however there is no clear 'gateway' to Wymondham here.

Refer figures 6.1 - 6.6.

Recommendations

This area would be greatly improved by introducing a clear entrance to the town centre at the Fairlands Junction. A statement 'gateway' would welcome people and provide a visual cue for the town centre while providing a sense of arrival. Some traffic calming measures, such as extending the raised table and paving in a clearer material would encourage vehicles to slow down and notice the entrance. The rationalisation of street signs would also be beneficial. Additional planting directly opposite the sign would add a visual buffer to house frontages.

Refer to section 7.1 for design proposals.



Fig 6.1 Entrance to the Fairlands as viewed from pedestrian crossing on the B1172



Fig 6.2 Entrance to Fairland Street from south



Fig 6.3 Raised table at entrance to Fairland Street



Fig 6.4 View from Avenue Road driving southbound, Fairland Street to the right is not very visible, and signage is confusing



Fig 6.5 Entrance to Fairland Street from north

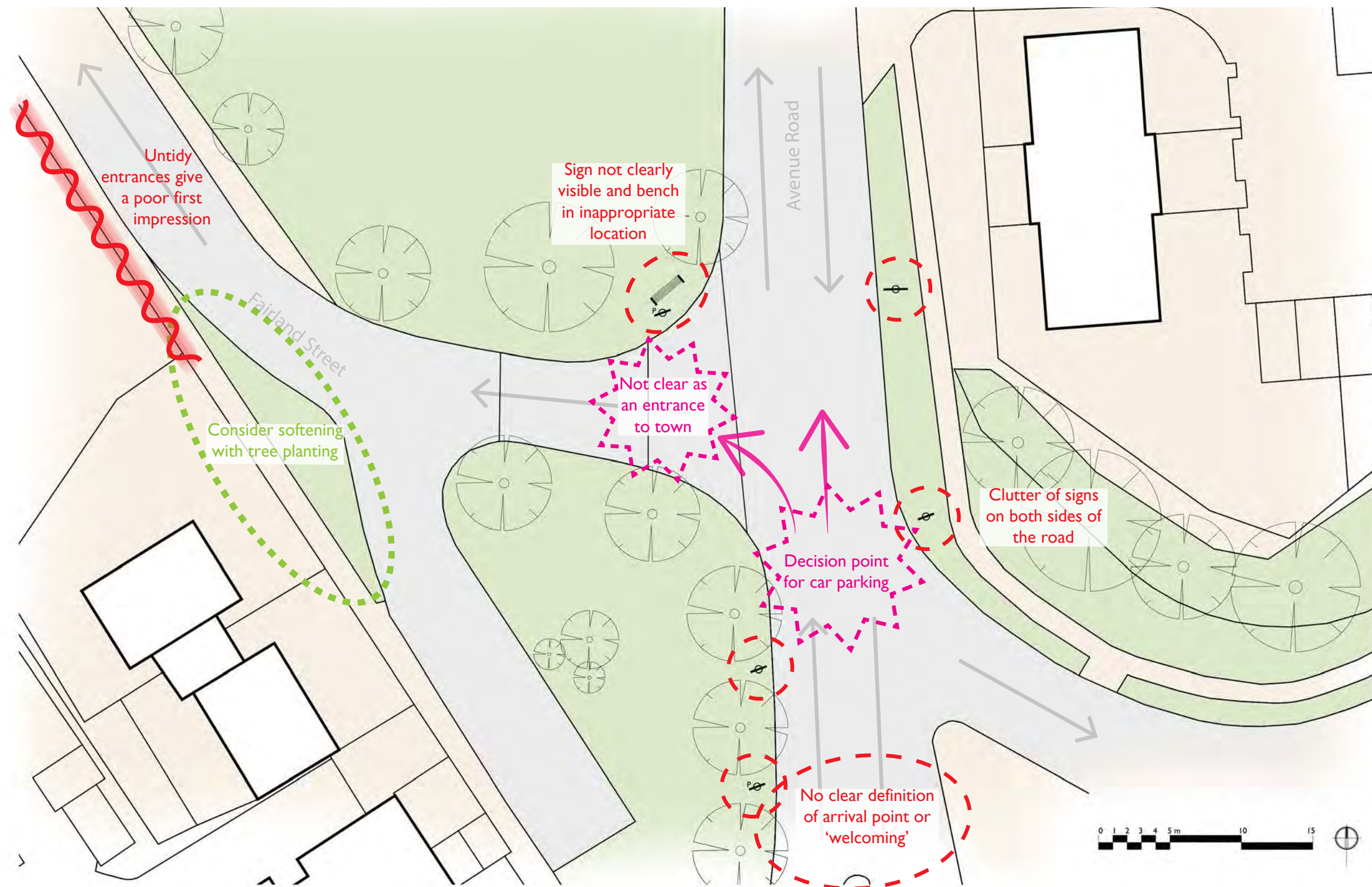


Fig 6.6 Fairlands Junction Analysis

6.2 Bridewell Junction

Analysis

The Bridewell Junction is along Norwich Road/Avenue Road, there is a turning in front of The Bridewell onto Elm Terrace, which leads on to Back Lane where there is car parking.

This is another entrance point into the town centre, however there is no clear marking of a 'gateway'.

There are three pedestrian crossing points; one either side of the junction, and one across Elm Terrace. The road is on a tight bend making visibility poor, the crossings are very wide, and vehicles travel round the corner at speed, making the crossing unsafe.

The Bridewell is a Grade II listed building and would also benefit from some improved setting.

Refer figures 6.7 - 6.10.

Recommendations

The Bridewell junction would benefit from traffic calming to allow for safer pedestrian crossings. This would have the added benefit of slowing down traffic ahead of the entrance to the Town Centre and provide a 'gateway' experience. This junction is quite stark and open, the introduction of trees would soften the space and add interest.

Refer to section 7.2 for design proposals.



Fig 6.7 View to the Bridewell from Elm Terrace



Fig 6.8 East of junction, crossing point is wide and cars travel quickly around the corner



Fig 6.9 West of junction looking along London Road

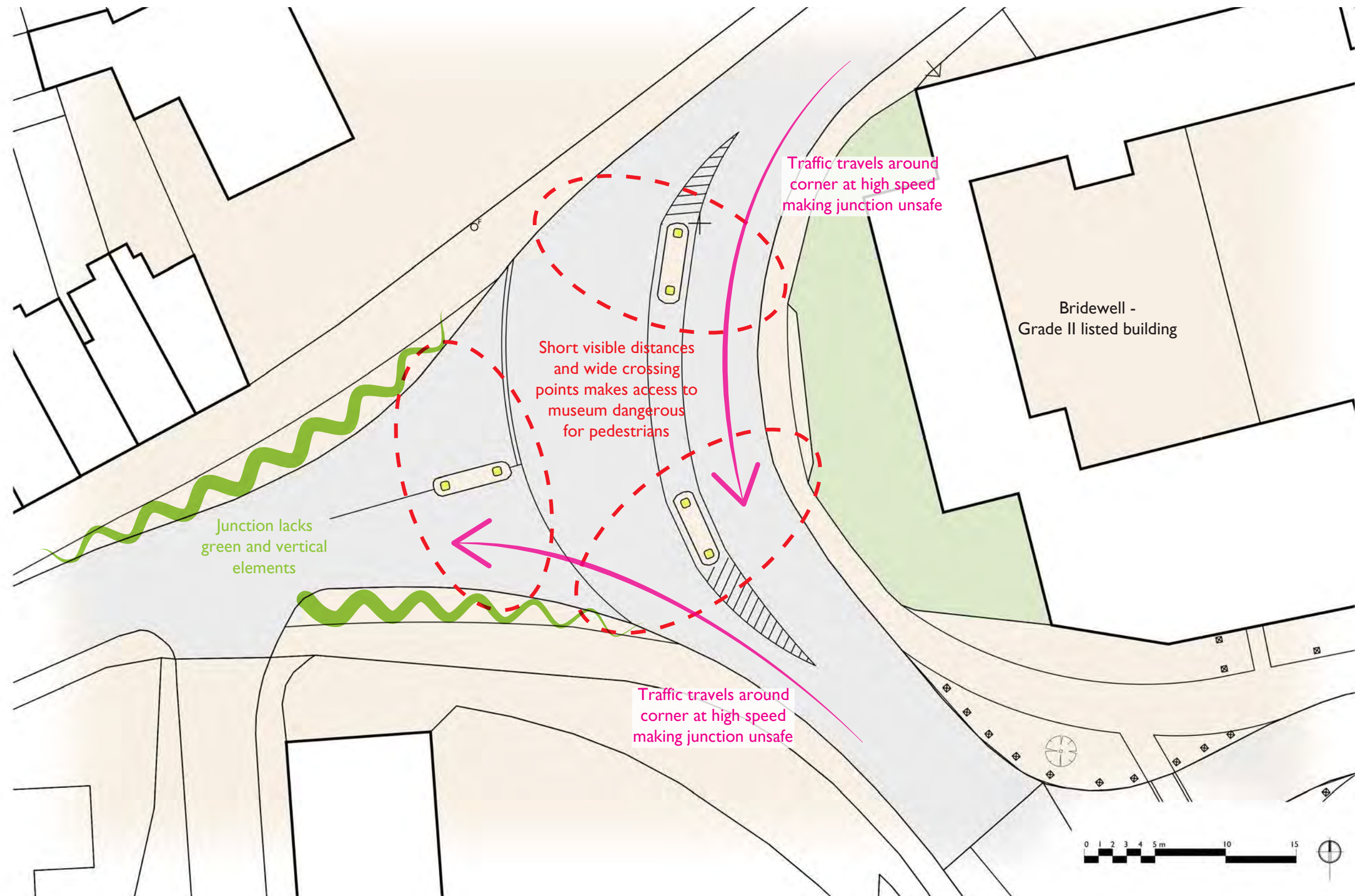


Fig 6.10 Bridewell Junction Analysis

6.3 Market Place

Analysis

Market Place is at the centre of Wymondham and is the location for both the Friday Market and the Farmers Market. The Town Cross is located within Market Place at the top of Market Street. There are some good quality business/shop frontages which look onto Market Place

The Medieval street layout is such that there are roads surrounding Market Place, isolating the central space, where markets are held. There is a steady stream of traffic which heads down Market Street towards the Market Street car park, and buses use the roadway north of Market Place.

The clutter of signs, lights, bollards, and other street furniture in this area, detracts from the town's heritage and character. Much of the street furniture which is in place is of a poor design or out of character.

The Market Cross is a Grade I listed building, and a scheduled monument. The setting of the cross, however, is not sympathetic. The tree planted adjacent to the Market Cross detracts from the setting of the cross itself.

Refer figures 6.11 - 6.16.

Recommendations

The dominance of traffic around Market Place, and the resulting isolation of the space, need to be addressed. Preventing buses using Market Place on market days, and introducing traffic calming measures to the south of Market Place will give pedestrian priority and make the space more open and inviting. There is also a lost opportunity to use this space for performances and events, introducing an area of level paving will allow the space to be used more flexibly. Street furniture generally should be rationalised, especially around the Market Cross where clutter should be minimised. The tree should be removed and trees could potentially be introduced elsewhere in the space.

Refer to section 7.3 for design proposals.



Fig 6.11 Bollards around Market Place



Fig 6.12 Bollards, cycle parking, planters and bins on Market Street



Fig 6.13 Street furniture and tree around the Market Cross detract from the historic building



Fig 6.14 Cars parked and street furniture along Fairland Street at the top of Market Place



Fig 6.15 Shop fronts adjacent to Market Place

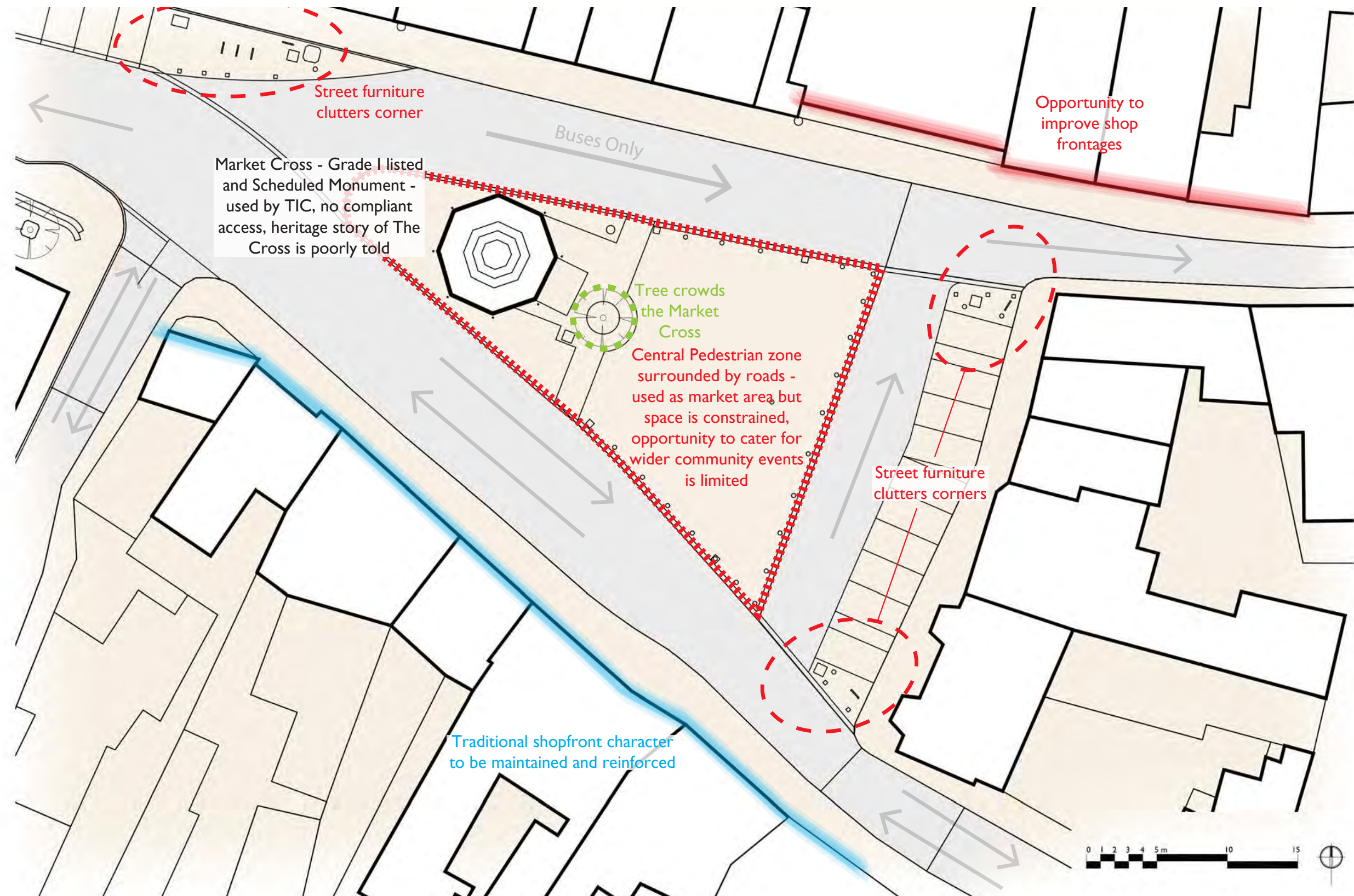


Fig 6.16 Market Place Analysis

6.4 Market Street

Analysis

Market Street, the main street in Wymondham town centre, is a single carriage roadway leading down the street, with the pavement variable in width.

There are some traditional shopfronts, although many have been modified in a way which is not traditional and require further consideration. There is a row of five 1960s shops, the architecture of these is not in keeping with the town's character, and the street frontage to these shops is cluttered. The level change down market street adds to the clutter, as steps and railings are needed to allow access to the shops.

There is a single tree in front of the shops, this makes a positive contribution to the streetscape, adding to interest and softening the effects of the modern buildings.

Refer figures 6.17 - 6.20.

Recommendations

An architectural review should be undertaken to consider what can be done with the 1960s shopfronts so that they are more in keeping with Wymondham's character. The levels at the front of the shops should be simplified, and street furniture generally should be rationalised. The tree on Market Street is a great asset, and further trees could be added to this space. Paving materials used should be in keeping with Wymondham's character.

Refer to section 7.4 for design proposals.



Fig 6.17 Parade of 1960s shops on Market Street, area complicated by level changes and street furniture



Fig 6.18 Some shop frontages use inappropriate designs and materials



Fig 6.19 Traditional shop fronts adapted and modernised

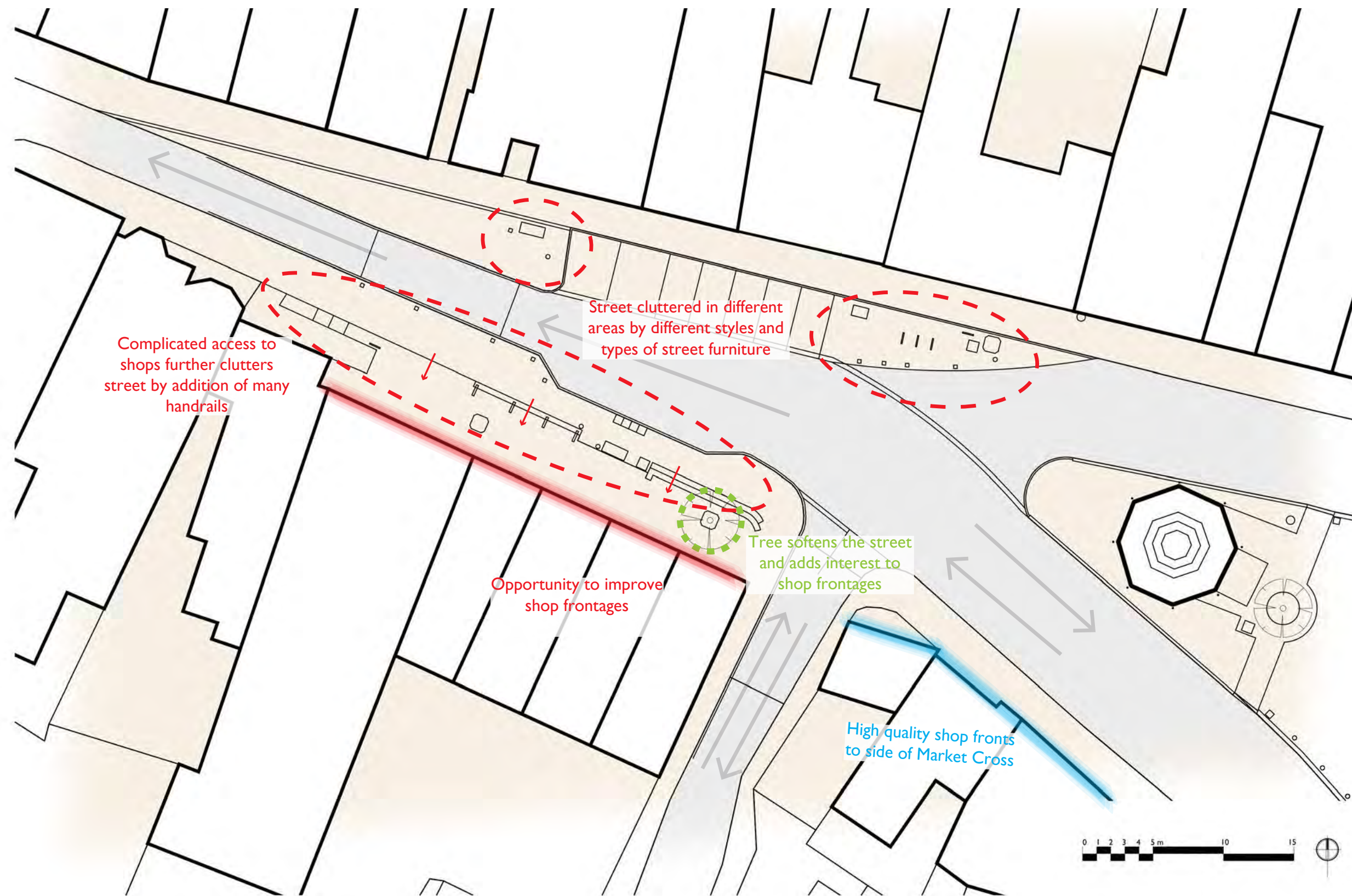


Fig 6.20 Market Street Analysis

6.5 Market Street Car Park

Analysis

Market Street car park is in a central location, accessed off Market Street with an exit on to Brewery Lane.

There is a view to Wymondham Abbey from but the car park is generally untidy and uncared for and does not give a good first impression for visitors. Boundaries to the car park are in a poor condition and look unsightly. The car park information and ticket machines are poorly located, and other street furniture is a cluttered mix of styles. There are two trees in the car park, one of which has recently been planted. Planters used in the car park are out of scale and out of character.

Refer figures 6.21 - 6.26.

Recommendations

Changing the access through the Fire Arch to pedestrian only would make the space feel safer for pedestrians, reduce traffic on Market Street, and allow for a greater opportunity to enhance the Fire Arch and create an area of public space. The entrance to the car park could be off Brewery Lane, and this entrance could be enhanced with planting. The boundaries to the car park should be made more robust and ticket information and street furniture should be rationalised. Additional tree planting is recommended.

Refer to section 7.5 for design proposals.



Fig. 6.21 Car parking and town centre information



Fig 6.22 Poor condition boundaries and access



Fig 6.23 First impression to the town centre is poor



Fig 6.24 Untidy and poor condition boundaries



Fig 6.25 Views to Wymondham Abbey

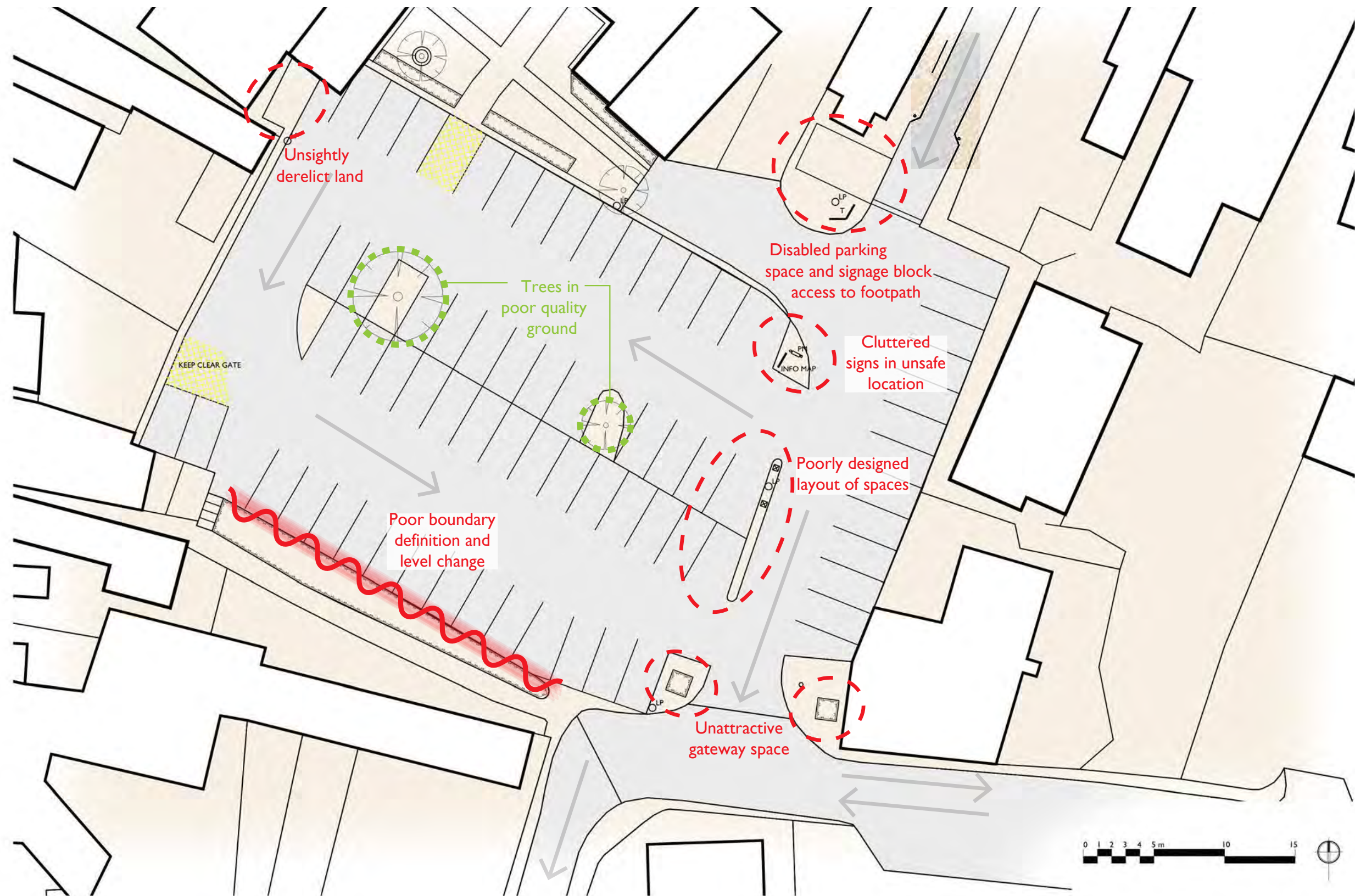


Fig 6.26 Market Street Car Park Analysis

6.6 Fire Arch and Wharton Court

Analysis

The Fire Arch was once the frontage for the fire station, but is now used to access the Market Street Car Park for vehicles and pedestrians. The historic building is in a sorry state, with no floor to the first storey, allowing pigeons to live in the roof. The inside of the arch is dirty, messy and feels unsafe. The interior walls are unattractive and is used as a public notice area. There is cycle parking provided under the arch, however parked bikes are susceptible to being covered in bird droppings.

Wharton's Court is a pedestrian access between Market Street Car Park and Market Street; there are shops and cafes within the courtyard. The threshold between the car park and Wharton's Court is poorly defined and not very obvious. This is a nice intimate courtyard space, however unsympathetic paving materials have been used which detract from local character.

There is no directional signage, at either access route, to help visitors orientate themselves.

The arch would benefit from restoration to preserve the remaining heritage.

Refer figures 6.27 - 6.32.

Recommendations

The Fire Arch should be tidied up and restored to conserve its historic assets. We would recommend that the Fire Arch is closed to vehicles and used for pedestrians only, creating a safe and pleasant public space and walkway. It would also reduce vehicle dominance on Market Street. Additional landscape and tree planting is recommended.

Wharton's Court would benefit from some light touch improvements such as resurfacing with traditional materials and making pedestrian entrances more obvious and inviting. Improvements to signage are recommended.

Refer to section 7.6 for design proposals.



Fig 6.27 Wharton's Court entrance from Market Street Car Park



Fig 6.28 Wharton's Court



Fig 6.29 Underneath the Fire Arch



Fig 6.30 The Fire Arch for Market Street



Fig 6.31 The Fire Station 1905

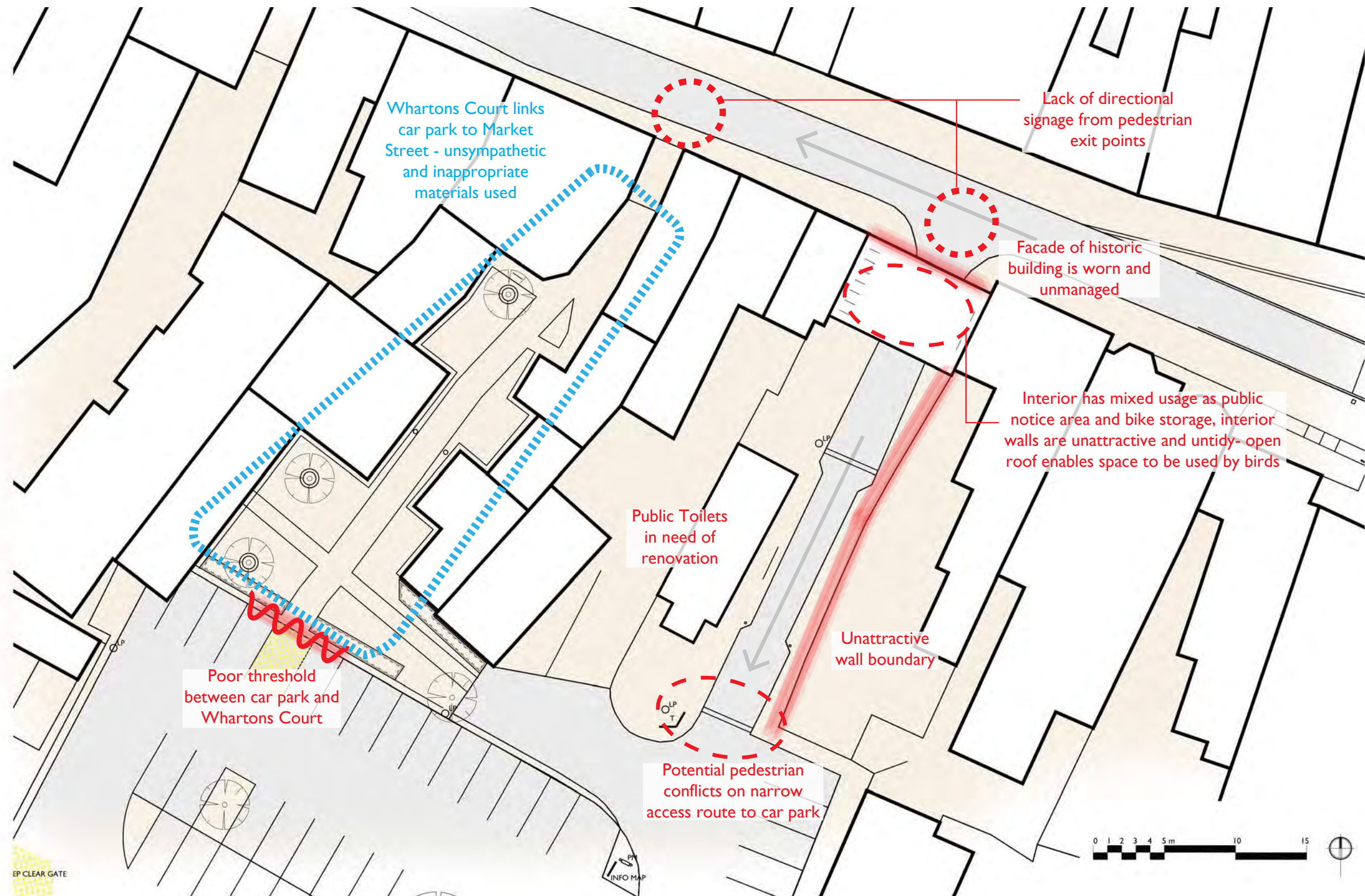


Fig 6.32 Fire Arch and Wharton Court Analysis

6.7 Back Lane Car Park

Analysis

Back Lane Car Park is in a central location and accesses Market Street via two alleyways. The Car Park has poor boundary treatments with no screening to the back of shop service areas. The boundary is mainly formed by bollards which are not of a uniform style. A landscaped area with trees in the north-east corner of the car park softens the hard landscape and visually improves the approach to the car park.

Access from the car park into the town centre is badly waymarked, and bins, bollards, and cycle stands add to this confusion. There is a central island in the car park which contains all the ticket information, however this could be better organised.

The abbey can be viewed from the car park, this is a nice feature for those who are visiting for the first time, however the overall feel of the car park could be much more welcoming.

Refer figures 6.33 - 6.38.

Recommendations

The layout of the central island could be improved, and softened with the addition of trees. Access from the car park to the town centre needs to be made more clear. The boundaries of the car park need to be improved so that service areas are screened and not clearly visible.

Refer to section 7.7 for design proposals.



Fig 6.33 Service area to rear of shops at boundary of Back Lane Car Park



Fig 6.35 View to Wymondham Abbey from Back Lane Car Park



Fig 6.36 Boundary to car park and exit to alleyway



Fig 6.34 Trees in Back Lane Car Park



Fig 6.37 Furniture, signage and ticket machines at centre of Back Lane Car Park

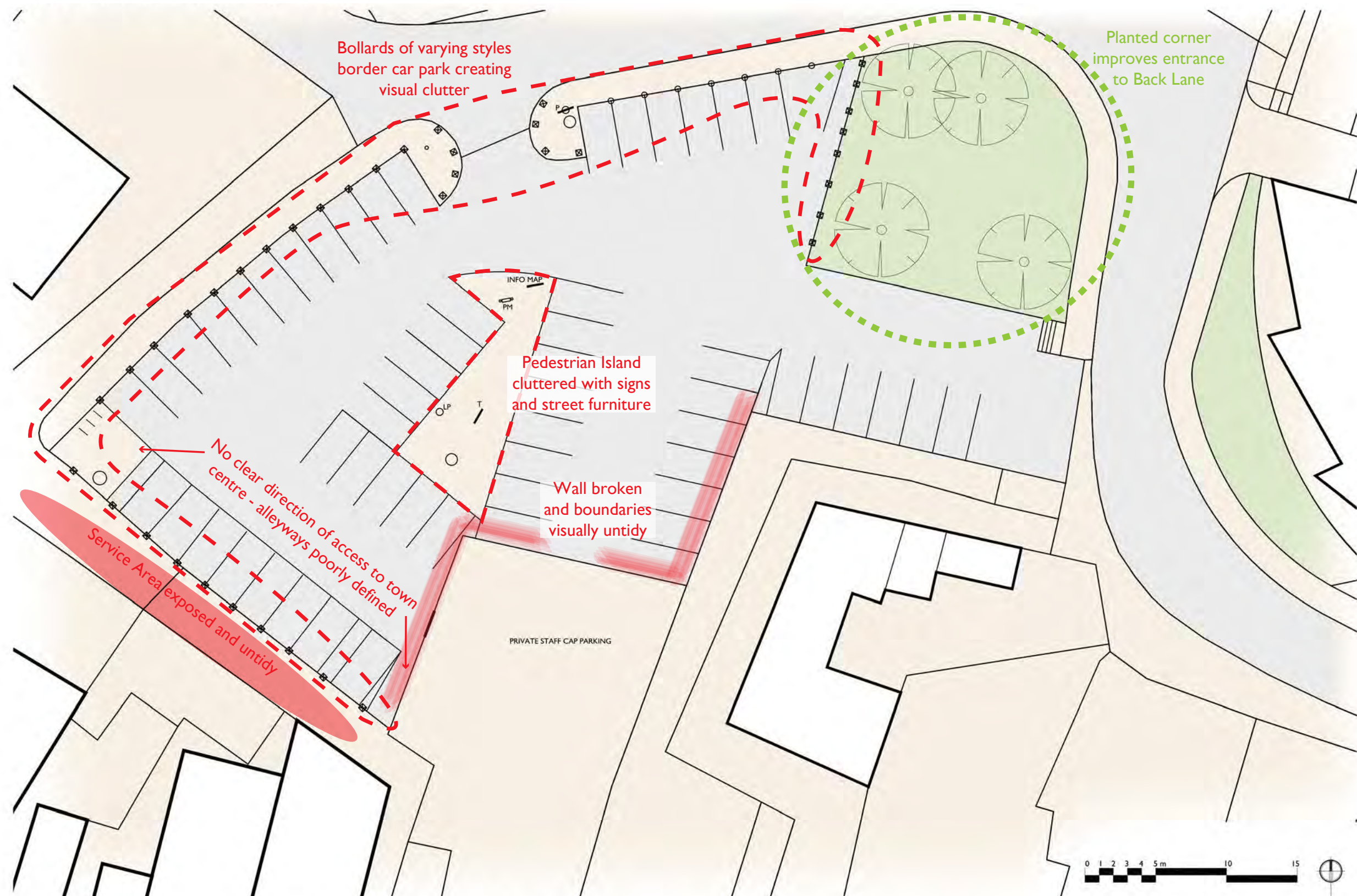


Fig 6.38 Back Lane Car Park Analysis

6.8 Back Lane Alleyways

Analysis

These alleyways provide access between Back Lane Car Park and the town centre. Both have poor entrance definition, and are not immediately obvious as routes to the town centre.

The perception of safety is not good and needs to be improved, particularly in the eastern alleyway.

Refer figures 6.39 - 6.42.

Recommendations

Improvements should be focused on waymarking of the alleyways, and improvements to lighting, paving, and drainage.

Refer to section 7.8 for design proposals.



Fig 6.39 Access to western alleyway



Fig 6.40 Access to eastern alleyway



Fig 6.41 Alleyway to east

6.8 Back Lane Alleyways

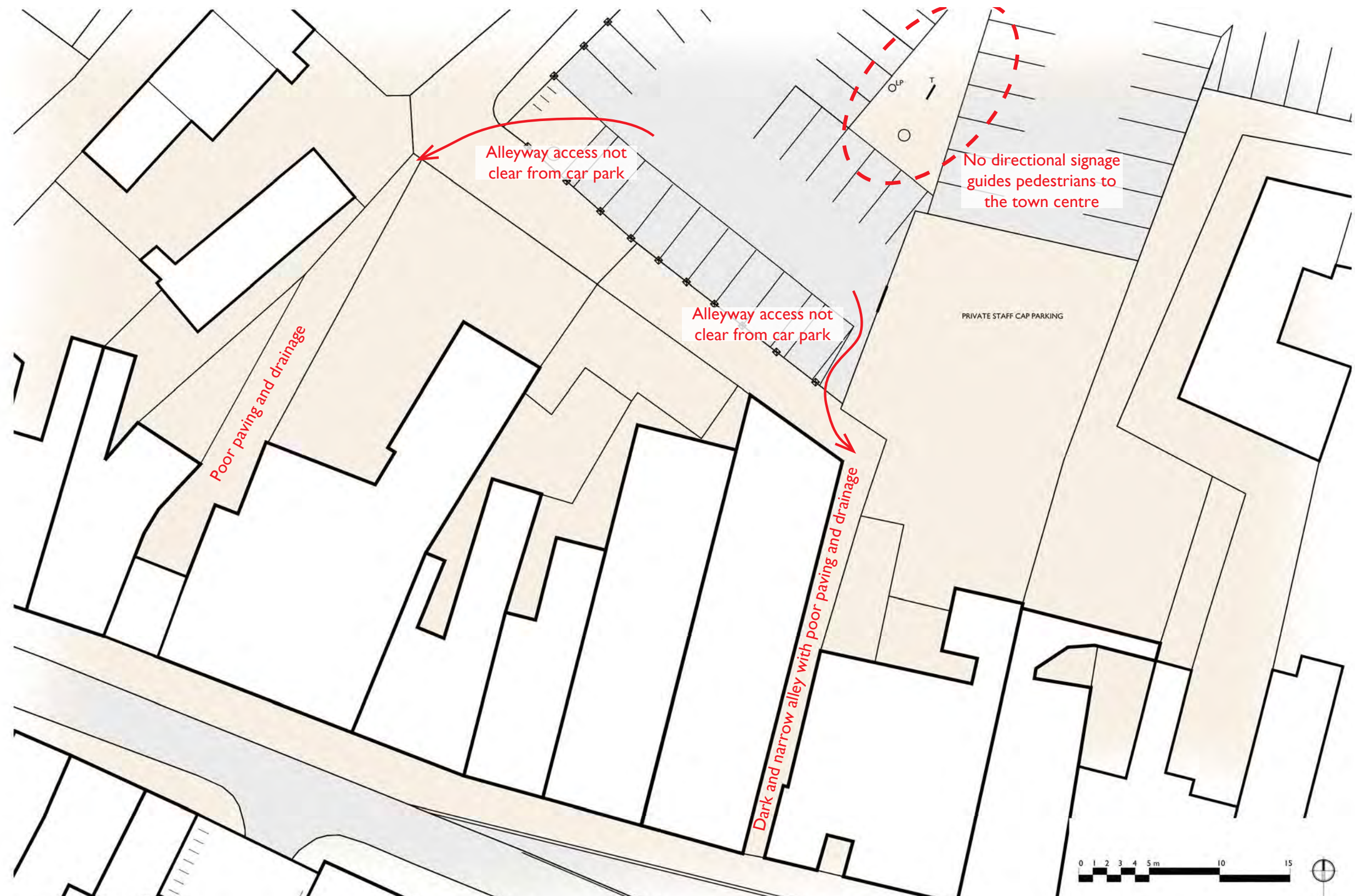


Fig 6.42 Back Lane Car Alleyways Analysis

6.9 Library Alleyway

Analysis

The Library Alleyway forms the route between Central Car Park and town centre. As with the Back Lane alleyways, the perception of safety is not good and needs to be improved, particularly in the eastern alleyway.

Refer figures 6.43 - 6.45.

Recommendations

As with the Back Lane alleyways, improvements should be focused on waymarking and improvements to lighting, paving, and drainage.

Refer to section 7.9 for design proposals.



Fig 6.43 Entrance to Library Alleyway



Fig 6.44 Library Alleyway

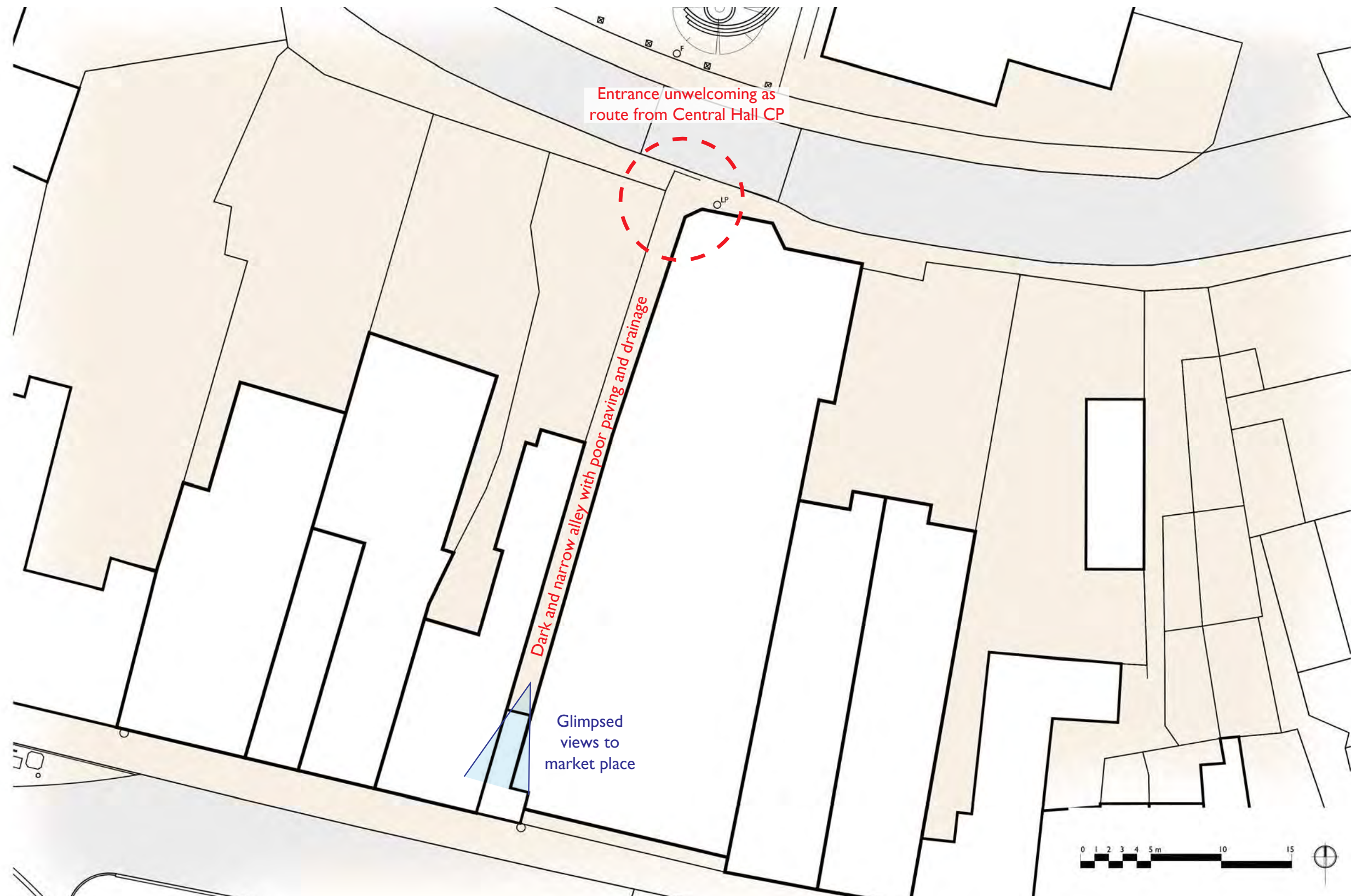


Fig 6.45 Library Alleyway Analysis

6.10 Becket's Chapel

Analysis

Becket's Chapel is Grade II listed and is currently used as the Wymondham Arts Centre. The chapel itself is in need of repair and restoration. Architectural proposals have been drawn up for improvements to the building. The external landscape to the chapel, home to the Town Sign, is in bad condition and does not provide an appropriate setting for the building. The quality of the shopfronts in this area are mixed with some needing improvements.

Refer figures 6.46 - 6.50.

Recommendations

There is a proposal to refurbish and extend Becket's Chapel. This would provide a cafe, drop in centre, and community facility. In addition, this facility could also house the Tourist Information Centre, placing the TIC between the town centre and the Abbey, and making the TIC accessible to those with physical disabilities.

The external area to Becket's Chapel is in great need of some attention; new paving, seating and planting should be introduced sensitively so that the setting of Becket's Chapel is enhanced.

Refer to section 7.10 for design proposals.



Fig 6.46 The town sign outside Becket's Chapel



Fig 6.48 Inside Becket's Chapel



Fig 6.47 External space to Becket's Chapel



Fig 6.49 Shop fronts and junction outside Becket's Chapel

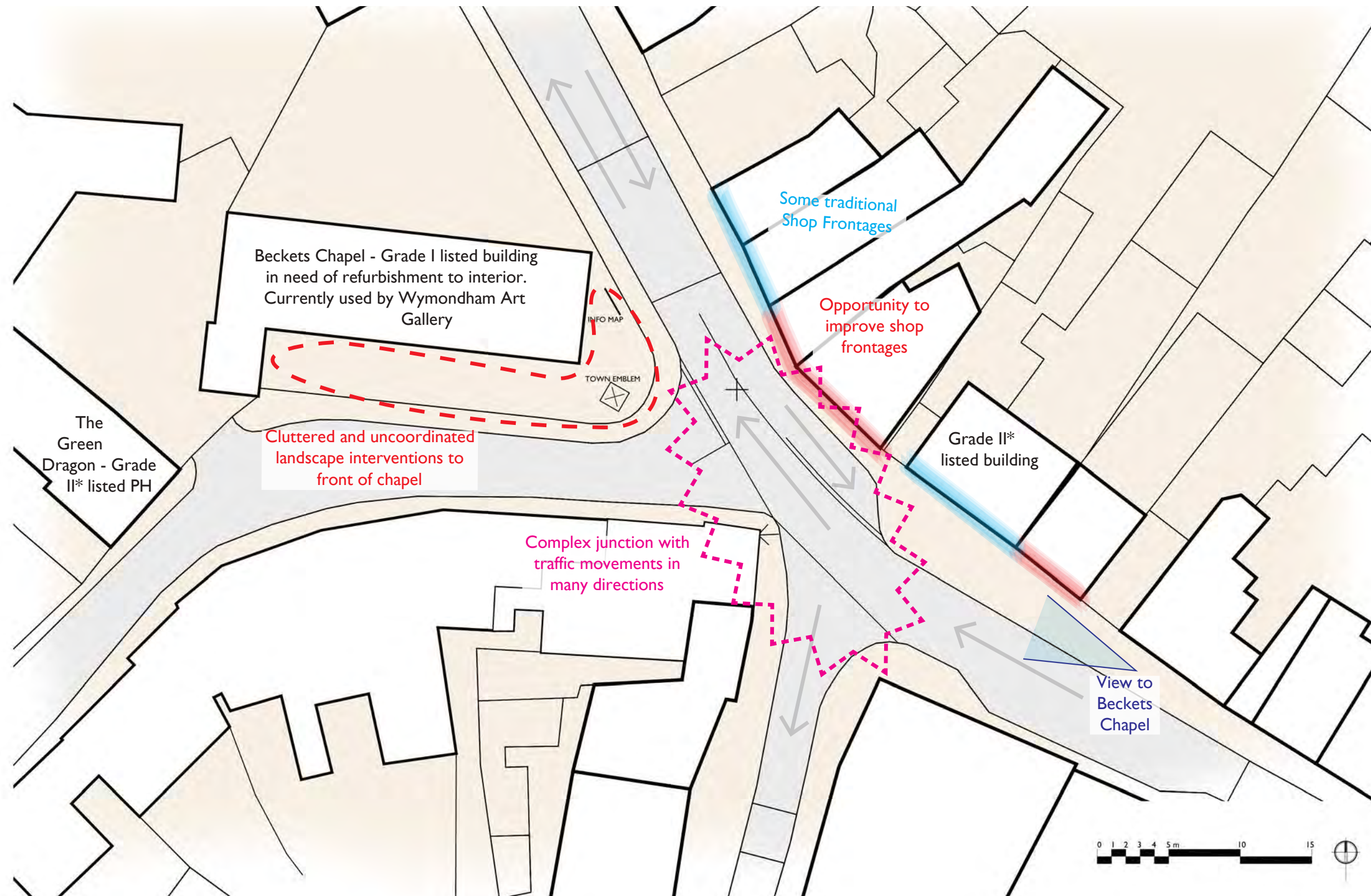


Fig 6.50 Becketts Chapel Analysis

6.11 Priory Gardens

Analysis

Priory Gardens is a small park off Middleton Street, often used as a cut-through from Middleton Street to Back Lane. It is in a good location to provide a quiet seating area in the town centre, and has some mature trees and boundary vegetation. However at present it is underwhelming with a lack of colour and interest. There are very few benches in the gardens.

Refer figures 6.51 - 6.56.

Recommendations

Additional seating and design improvements to the park would create a quiet park space rather than merely a cut through. Some of the trees will require arboricultural work or replacement, and planting generally would benefit from some updating to increase interest and seasonal variety.

Refer to section 7.11 for design proposals.



Fig 6.51 Seating and cut-through in Priory Gardens



Fig 6.52 Priory Gardens from Middleton Street



Fig 6.53 Priory Gardens with glimpsed views to Wymondham Abbey



Fig 6.54 Priory Gardens from Middleton Street



Fig 6.55 Cut-through to Back Lane from Middleton Street

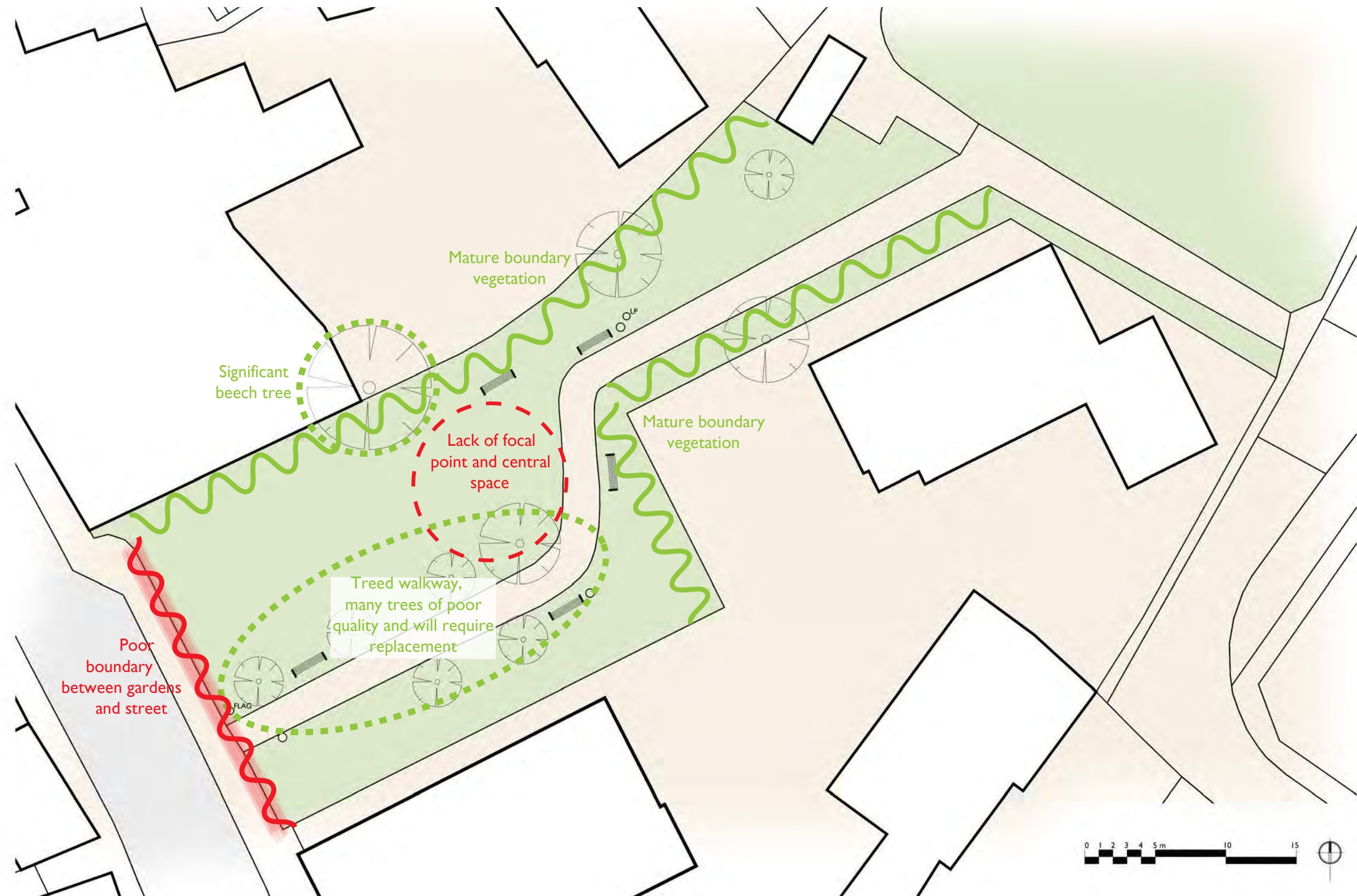


Fig 6.56 Priory Gardens Analysis

6.12 War Memorial

Analysis

The war memorial is located at the junction of Middleton Street and Vicar Street. There is a good view down to the Abbey, this should be retained and enhanced. The area around the war memorial itself is rather sterile, although there are some large planters, these do not do much to soften the space, and are not an appropriate style for the memorial. As with other locations throughout the town centre, the shop fronts and pavements are cluttered with street furniture and could be rationalised.

Refer figures 6.57 - 6.62.

Recommendations

Planters around the War Memorial should be removed as they are not appropriate in style. Instead permanent planting should be introduced and could include some tree planting - located sensitively so as to not block views to the Abbey. There is some good interpretation here which should be retained. A small amount of seating could be introduced to provide a contemplative space. A buffer of space should be left around the memorial to allow for ceremonies.

Refer to section 7.12 for design proposals.



Fig 6.57 Wymondham War Memorial



Fig 6.58 The War Memorial from Vicar Street



Fig 6.59 Interpretation panel at the War Memorial



Fig 6.60 Shop fronts opposite the War Memorial at Town Green



Fig 6.61 Views to Wymondham Abbey from the War Memorial

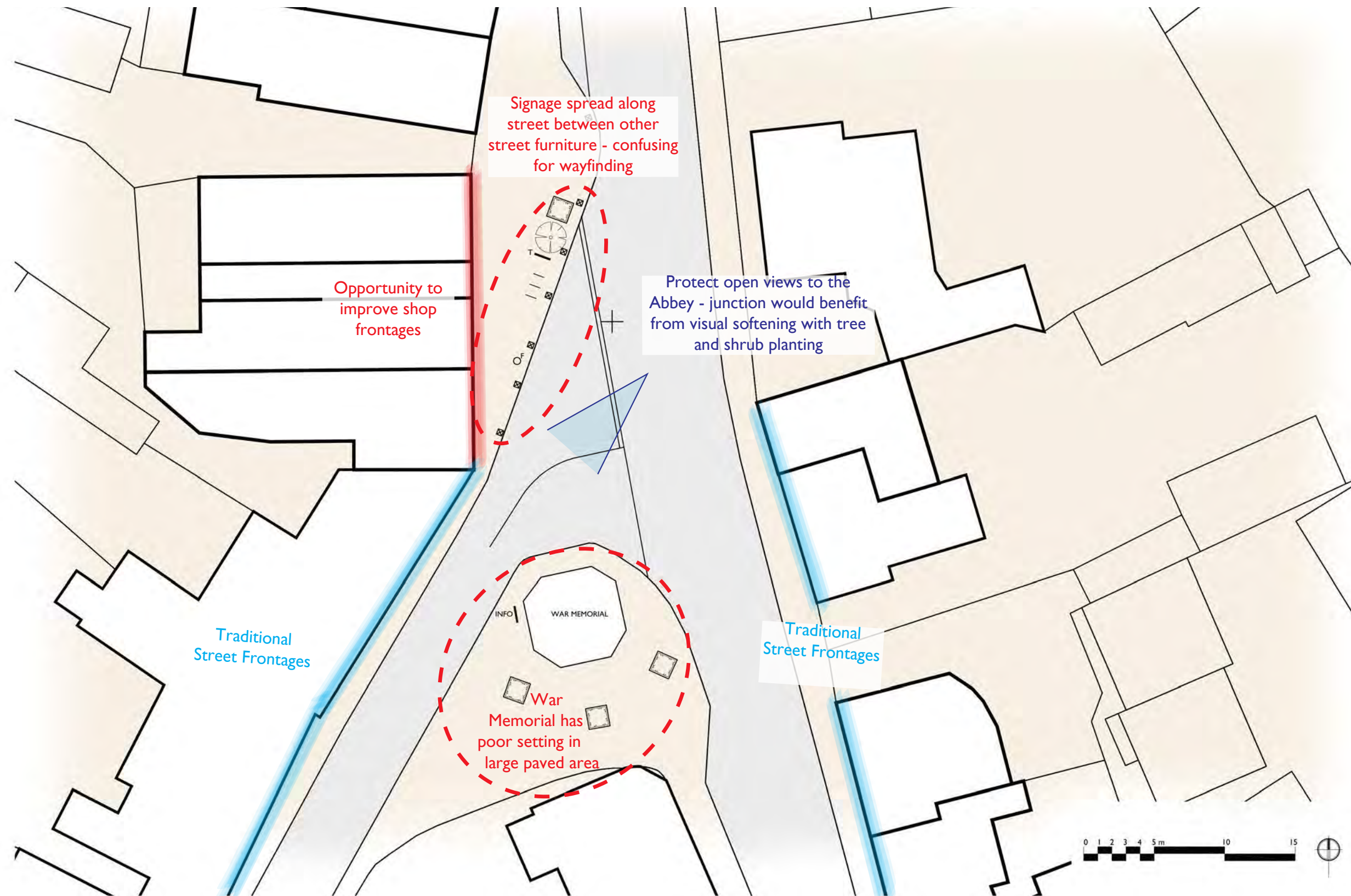


Fig 6.62 War Memorial Analysis

6.13 Town Green Junction

Analysis

The Town Green junction is the gateway to Wymondham from some villages and other market towns to the north and west. It is the junction of Town Green, Pople Street, and Cock Street. Although it is the entrance to the town centre this is not clear as there is no welcome or 'gateway'. The visual appearance of the junction is quite stark.

Recommendations

There is a missed opportunity here to provide a sense of welcome into the town centre with a 'gateway'. The visual appearance of this space could be softened with improvements in planting, paving, and wayfinding on the traffic island and from Town Green Car Park.

Refer to section 7.13 for design proposals.



Fig 6.63 Traffic island at Town Green



Fig 6.64 Town Green



Fig 6.65 Town Green

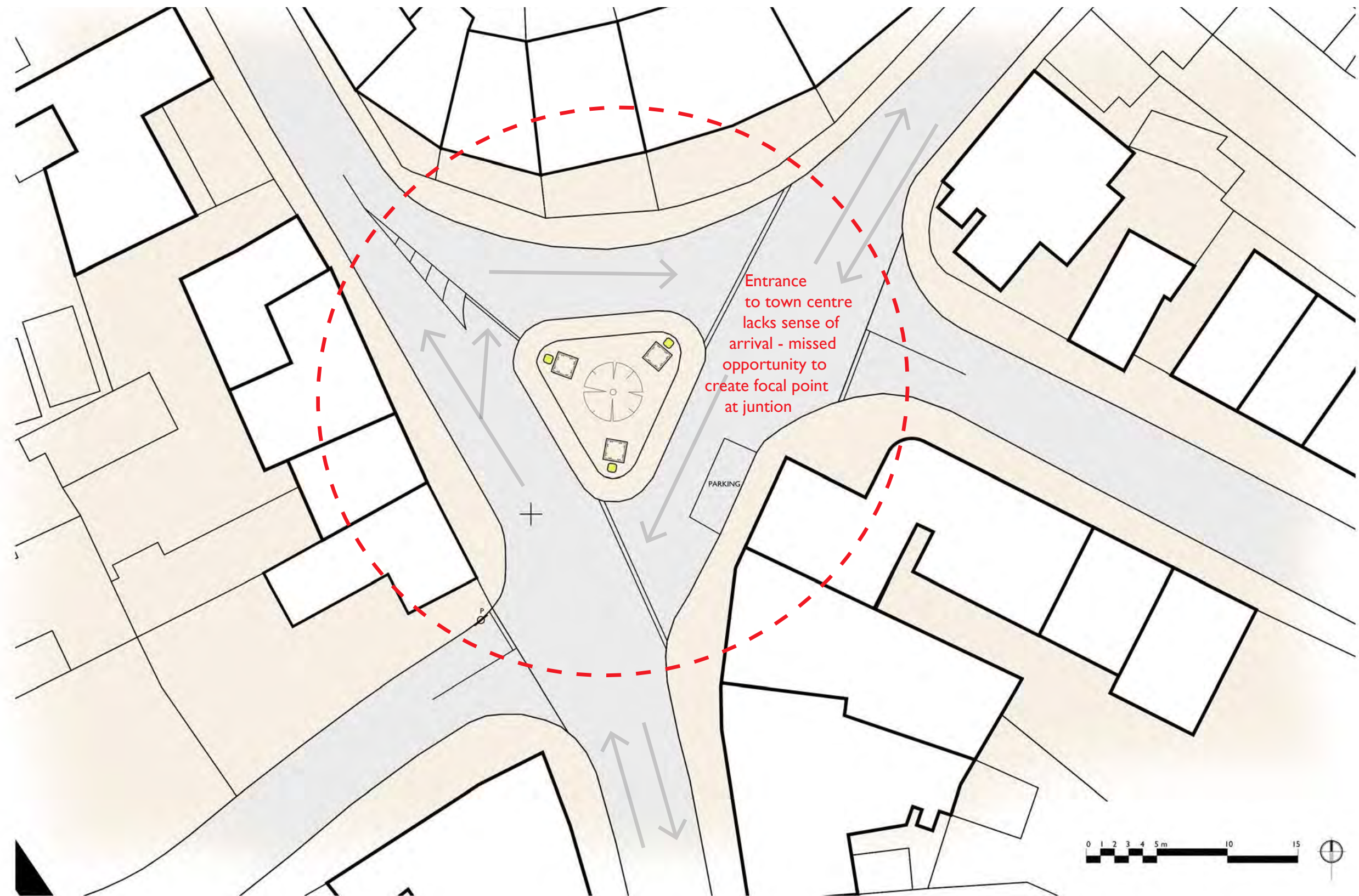


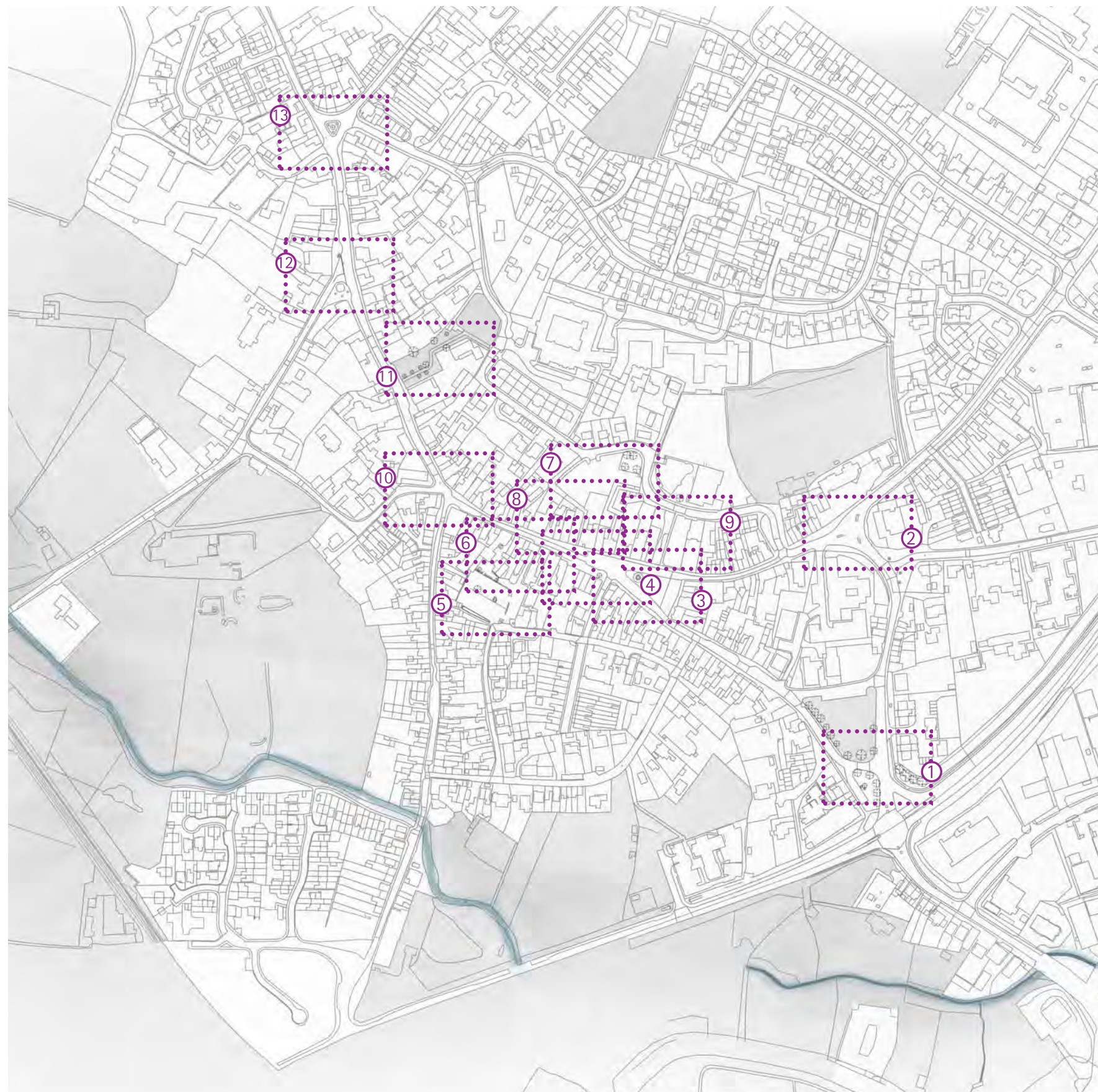
Fig 6.66 Town Green Junction Analysis

Seven: Design Proposals



The following 13 plans show the design proposals which would implement the town strategies as shown in the strategic masterplan, and address the issues raised in the site analysis plans in the previous section.

The areas for each design proposal are shown on the plan opposite. The numbers on the plan coordinate to the associated section in this chapter.



7.1 Fairlands Junction



Fig 7.1 Fairlands Junction Proposals

7.2 Bridewell Junction

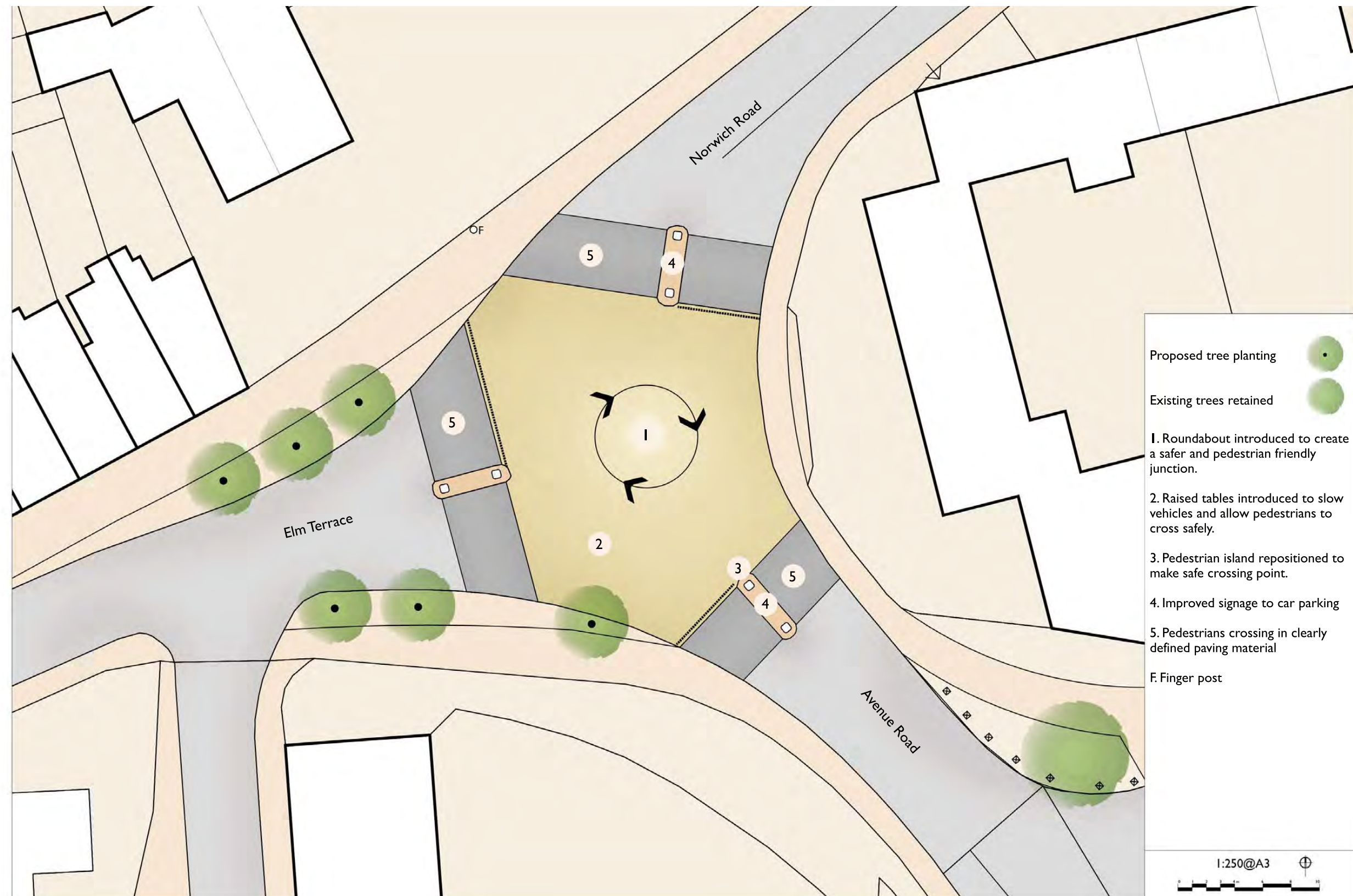


Fig 7.2 Bridewell Junction Proposals

7.3 Market Place

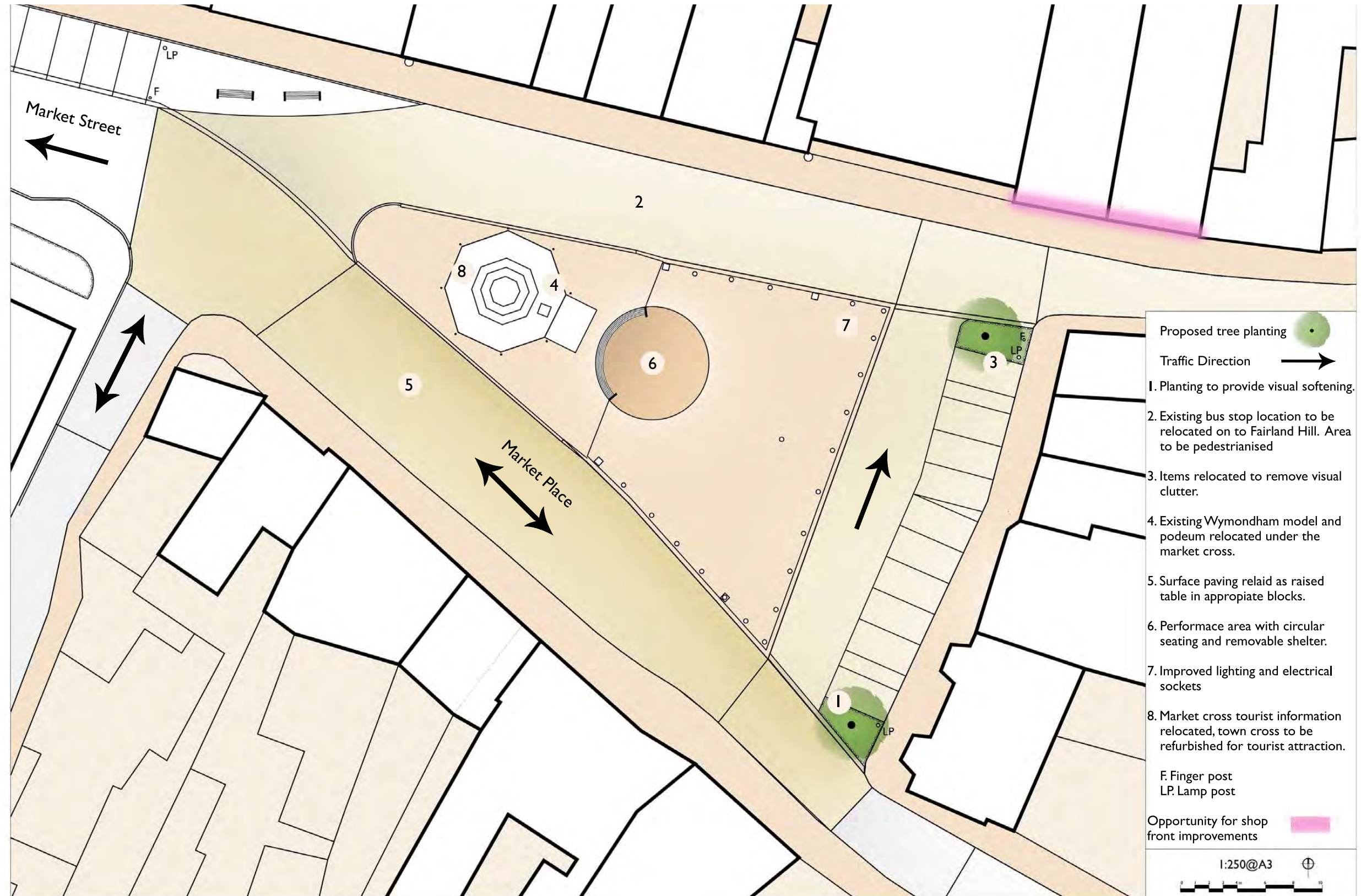


Fig 7.3 Market Place Proposals

7.4 Market Street



Fig 7.4 Market Street Proposals

7.5 Market Street Car Park



Fig 7.5 Market Street Car Park Proposals

7.6 Fire Arch and Wharton Court



Fig 7.6 Fire Arch and Wharton Court Proposals

7.7 Back Lane Car Park



Fig 7.7 Back Lane Car Park Proposals

7.8 Back Lane Alleyways



Fig 7.8 Back Lane Alleyways Proposals

7.9 Library Alleyway



Fig 7.9 Library Alleyway Proposals

7.10 Becketts Chapel



Fig 7.10 Becketts Chapel Proposals

7.11 Priory Gardens

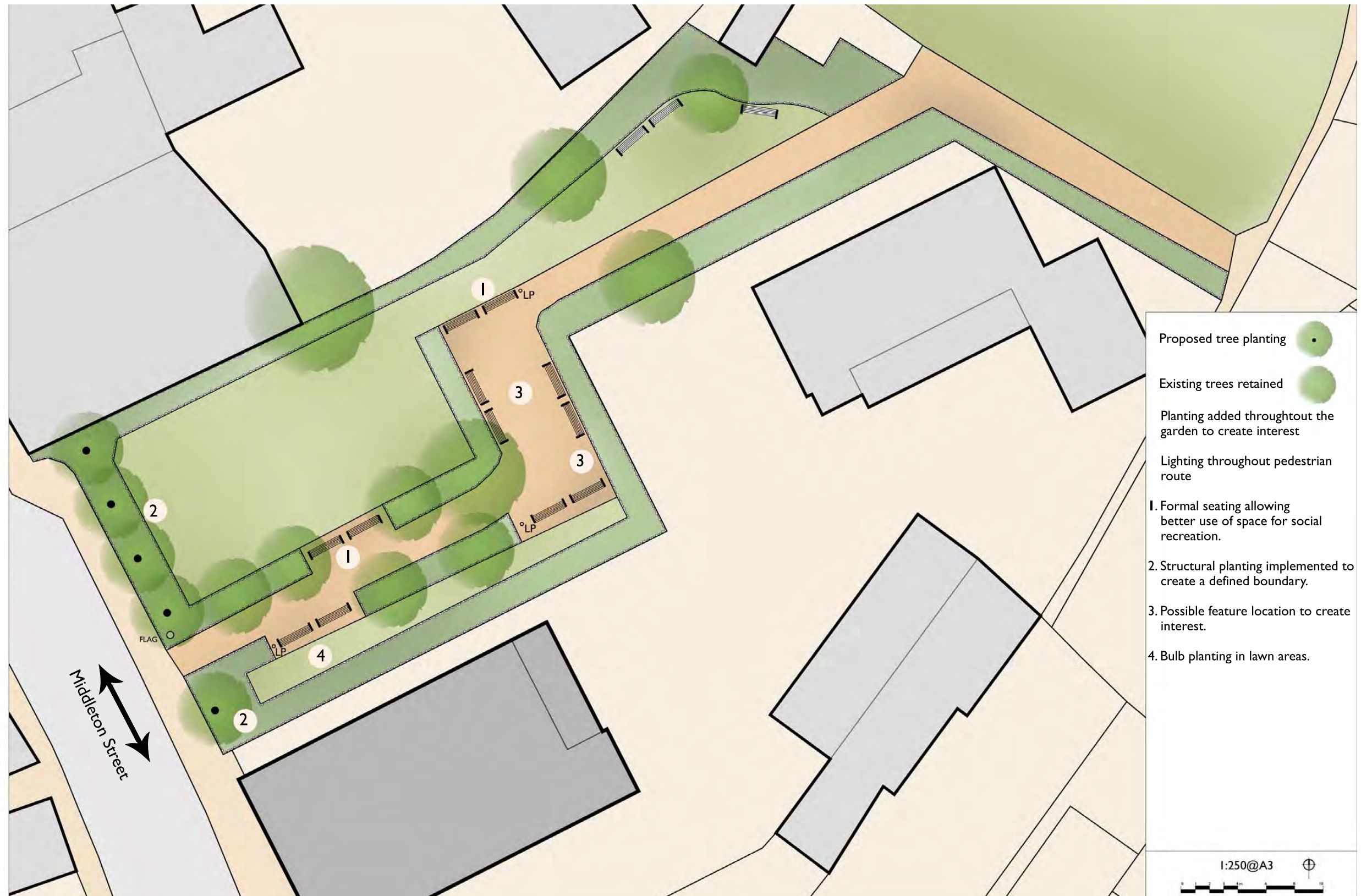


Fig 7.11 Priory Gardens Proposals

7.12 War Memorial



Fig 7.12 War Memorial Proposals

7.13 Town Green Junction

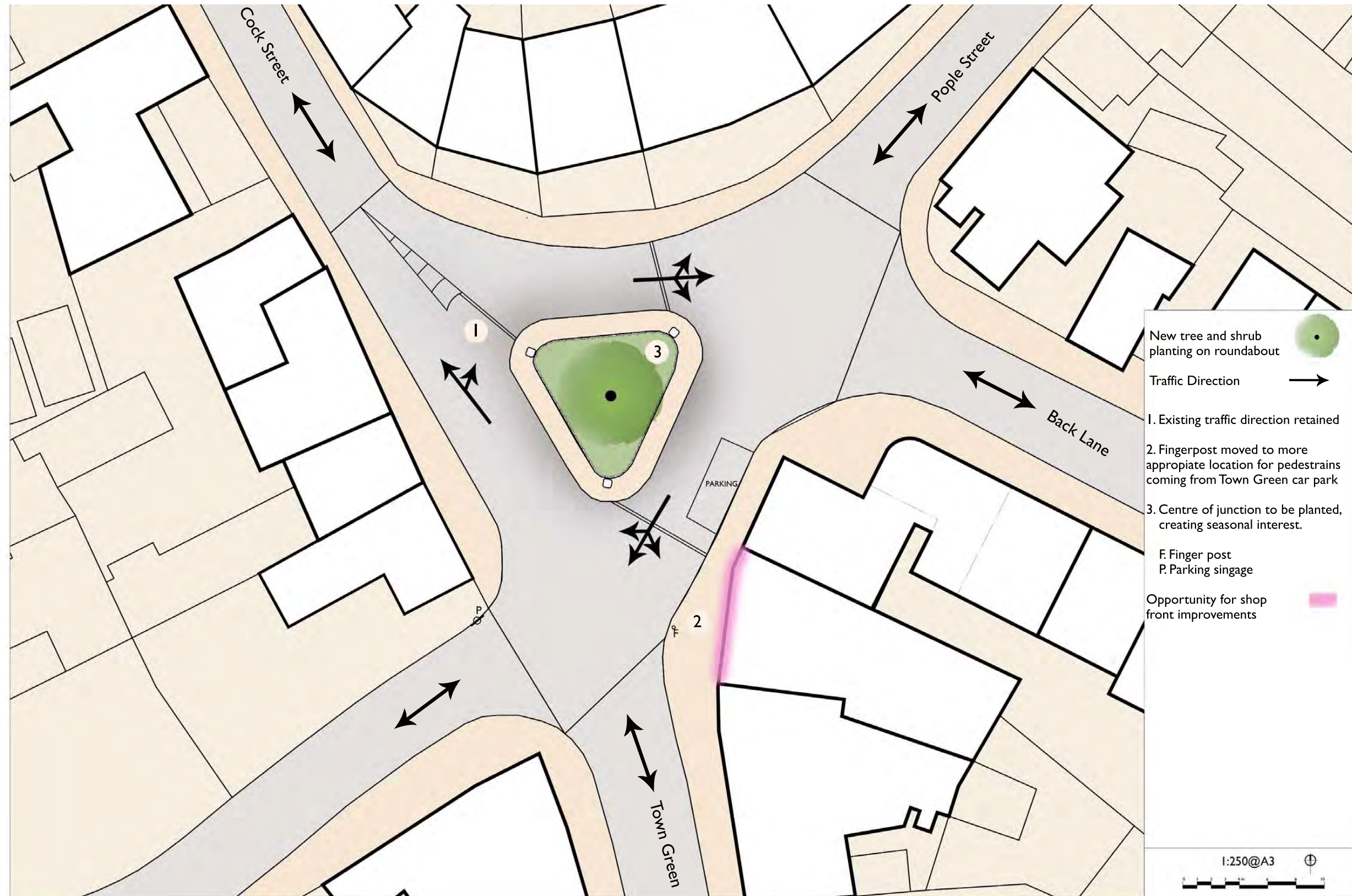


Fig 7.13 Town Green Junction Proposals



Eight: Implementation

8.1 Consultation

The next step is to undertake consultation with the public and with businesses to gather their opinions, feedback, and support for the proposals made in this report.

We would suggest consulting with the following:

- Shopkeepers and businesses operating in the town
- The Town Team
- Market stall holders
- Members of the general public
- The Town Council

8.2 Outstanding Information

There is some additional detailed information which would strengthen and further the proposals we are making. It would be helpful for this report to coordinate with information on the following:

- Car parking strategy and the related signage strategy current under consideration
- Plans for Coaches to bring visitors to Wymondham
- Plans to move the MNR Station

8.3 Implementation

We are aware of a potential application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for monies to restore Becket's Chapel. We would strongly endorse this bid and would go as far as to suggest that it could be extended to encompass other heritage improvements to the town such as:

- Restoration of the Town Cross and provision of interpretation
- Town wide heritage interpretation including visitor trails which provide greater connectivity
- Creation of a Shop Front Design Guide to assist in conserving and restoring the traditional shop frontages in Wymondham.
- There may be opportunities for funding to support interpretation and education at the Bridewell

Changes to shop frontages will be a sensitive matter. WWA have

prepared a preliminary guide to shopfront design which is appended to this report. The key to successful implementation of any recommendations will be to incentivise and fund change.

Additional funding from the district and town councils will be required to provide a phased approach to the implementation of recommendations set out in this report.

8.4 Funding

Funding for Restoration Work

Heritage Grants are available from the HLF for the restoration of buildings with a grant value of £100,000 to £5 million. Match funding is 5% (less than £100,000) and 10% if over £1 million. The work at Becket's Chapel and The Town Cross are intimately linked and a case could be made for funding to:

1. Restore Becket's Chapel to a tourist information centre with additional community facilities including café and rooms for hire. Plans have already been prepared for restoration and these could form the basis for a stage 1 application.
2. Restore the Town Cross to its original glory as a tourist asset with an interactive display about Wymondham's Market Town heritage.

Applications are in two phases; a preliminary round 1 application with outline proposals and costings following by a round 2 application with detailed information. The process from stage 1 to completion of stage 2 can take up to 2 years. Match funding must be in place before the application process can begin.

The group currently working to fund improvements to Becket's Chapel are finding it very difficult to work with the HLF programme as it currently exists. Alternative funding options may need to be considered.

Funding for The Bridewell Museum

Financial support for improvements to the collection of artefacts and archives at The Bridewell might be possible through the Our Heritage Funding Programme run by the HLF. Investment in the museum site to improve the heritage offer could help to increase visitor numbers and improve the educational experience. Grants are available up to the value of £100,000 and there is no need for match funding.

Funding for Interpretation

Financial support for interpretation including signage, leaflets or oral history projects might be possible through the HLF Sharing Heritage funding programme. This is a light touch programme which offers a decision within 8 weeks on grants up to the value of £10,000. There is no requirement for match funding.

Funding for Shop Front Improvements

Shop front improvement grants are widely offered through local authorities with funding of between £2,000 to £10,000. There are many excellent examples throughout the UK with particularly good work being done in Scotland. The Falkirk Heritage Townscape Initiative provides 85% funding for shopfront improvements including:

- removing & replacing inappropriate modern alterations such as external roller shutters, plastic signage, and excessive shopfront clutter;
- re-instating the original architectural detail, scale and proportions of the shopfront using traditional materials and techniques
- new signage;
- painting and decorating;
- replacing solid roller shutters with alternative security measures;
- repair to the historic pattern and detail of distinctive architectural features, for example tiling, decorative ironwork, canopies and other historic finishes;
- professional fees, provided the advisors belong to a recognised institution such as RIBA/RIAS, RICS etc;
- sundry costs including planning fees, surveys, necessary prelims, and any VAT that cannot be recovered.

It is strongly recommended that South Norfolk Council in partnership with Wymondham Town Council consider setting up a similar scheme for funding shop front improvements.

It is understood that there is currently no central funding available to implement an incentivised scheme. In the meantime a shopfronts design guide, provided by South Norfolk Council, would advise

shopkeepers of appropriate interventions and could be used by the local authority when making planning application decisions. This approach is more passive as it relies on shopkeepers initiating change when shops change hands/rebrand. Therefore change would be incremental and improvements would take longer.

8.5 Conclusions

There are many stakeholders for this project, and further consultation with all is needed. There therefore needs to be a multi-agency long term solution which will involve input from many parties including Wymondham Town Council, South Norfolk District Council and Norwich County Council.

With future funding uncertain at present, it is recommended that the proposals in this report present an overall vision. In practise however, the proposals should be implemented as a series of projects, as funding becomes available.

Nine: Appendix



9.1 Wymondham Shop Frontages Guidance - Preliminary Proposals

Shop Front Proposals

A coordinated approach to shop front design in Wymondham will enhance the appearance of the built environment and help to provide an effective marketing tool for promoting the wider area to visitors, shoppers and investors.

There are a diverse range of shop fronts in Wymondham, some traditional styled fronts on historic buildings as well as more modern designs on infill developments.



Many of the older buildings within historic parts of the town have had their original shop fronts completely or partially replaced by modern ones.



Shop fronts should make a positive contribution to the local environment by respecting the predominant character of the area and, wherever possible, the proportions, character, design details and materials of the building into which they are set.

Key objectives seek to:

- Protect traditional character and features especially on listed buildings and retail outlets on historic buildings
- Encourage better design in order to enhance the appearance of retail frontages in newer shopping outlets or those where quality and tradition has deteriorated.

Design Approach

The potential contribution that high quality and traditional shop fronts can make to the appeal of a town centre is undervalued or unrecognised. Some of the high street buildings in Wymondham suffer from neglect, with ill-designed shop fronts and poorly maintained façades - a poor advertisement for a town centre to consumers, visitors and potential investors.

Some modern developments have inappropriate shop frontages and some older buildings have had their original shop fronts completely or partially replaced by modern ones, and the quality and design of these shop fronts varies considerably.

Design Standards

Fascia Board

The fascia board is located over the whole shop front. The scale and design of the fascia should be appropriate to the character and period of the building and, as far as possible, be in proportion with the shop front. Excessively deep fascia boards should be avoided.



Fascia board in good proportion



Fascia board too deep

Columns

Columns can be square or rounded and provide visual and physical support to the building façade. They should be appropriate in colour, size and style to the built form. Many shop fronts in Wymondham have these and they should be retained and incorporated tastefully in to the overall frontage design.



Columns over emphasised and inappropriate colour



Columns emphasised but colour choice inappropriate

Windows

It is recommended that large undivided areas of glass are avoided both for visual and security reasons. Windows should ideally be framed and subdivided vertically with mullions (vertical sections) as most buildings will have a vertical emphasis. The method of subdivision should be in keeping with the character of the building and shop front. Windows should be flush to the building.



Windows framed and divided with vertical mullions

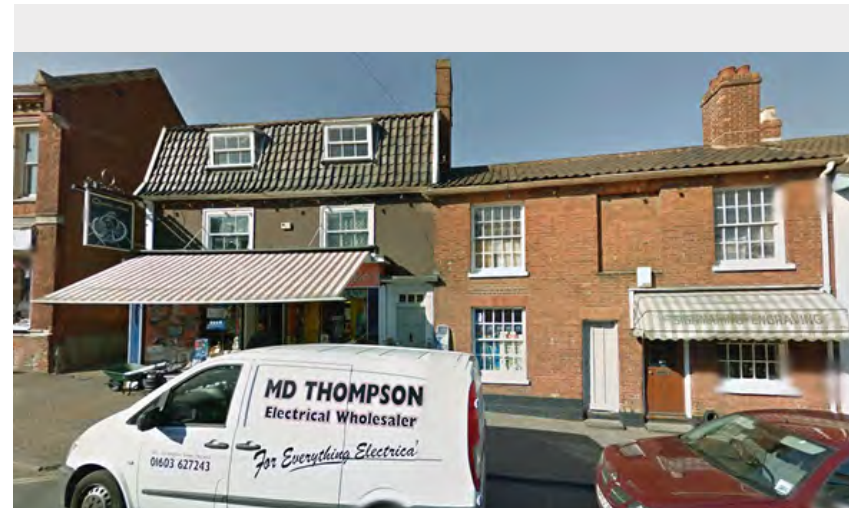
Traditional panelled doors should be retained where possible, whilst the design of new doors should harmonise with the window and shop front design. Windows and doors should be constructed of the same material and painted in the same colour.



Traditional frontage and panelled door

Blinds & Canopies

Simple and traditional blinds or canopies in muted colours and without branding are recommended.



Examples of good and less acceptable awnings

Dutch blinds are to be avoided with a more traditional retractable blind preferred to reduce visual clutter and unify the character of the streetscape.

Modern Shop Frontages

Modern shop fronts should reflect and interpret the symmetry and proportions of the building. Rows of modern shop fronts and buildings need to be designed with a balanced and controlled approach with good proportion and scale. Colour and materials need to be carefully unified and restricted in palette.



Modern shop front which is poorly designed with large glass frontage

Materials, Colour and Signage

Materials should harmonise with the building above and, where suitable, with neighbouring buildings. Careful materials choice is required for modern shop frontages on an historic building.



Colour, signage, lettering and materials need to be carefully controlled

The use of modern materials such as glossy plastics, aluminium, stainless steel and plastic coated or anodised metals is not considered acceptable.

Colour is very important to the character and quality of a streetscape. When used sensitively colour can add much to the streetscene but its use needs to be carefully controlled.

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