

IPSWICH BOROUGH COUNCIL

# IPSWICH TOWN CENTRE MASTER PLAN



MAY 2012

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Town Centre Master Plan provides a view of what Ipswich Borough Council and stakeholders agree is the way forward to achieve an enhanced town centre in Ipswich. The 15-year plan has an end date of 2027. It complements the adopted Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document and other relevant policy documents.
- 1.2 The Plan is not a statutory document but it should be taken into consideration when the Local Planning Authority considers any planning applications for the Plan area.
- 1.3 The aim is to enhance, remodel and develop the town centre, delivering a programme of regeneration and renewal which builds on the aspirations to be a regional centre for shopping and culture. The intention is to achieve this aim through the following: -
- encourage and promote the re-shaping of the town centre so its orientation extends more north to south
  - an additional 40,000m<sup>2</sup> shopping floor space between (1) the Waterfront and the town centre (Merchant Quarter) (2) northwards extension of Tower Ramparts and (3) Tacket Street car park west of Cox Lane
  - actively promote new developments which provide a range of unit sizes creating a greater variety to meet demands in the retail market
  - creation of street networks which promote leisure shopping and are attractive and convenient for all pedestrians
  - ensure that developments are cohesive and assist in the creation of a clean, safe and user-friendly town centre
  - promotion of a “café culture” by permitting more food and drink uses in the heart of the town centre and promote the development of a safe and family-friendly night-time economy
  - an improved open air market
  - concentrate any large scale office development in the Ipswich Village/ Portman Road areas
  - promotion of residential development, particularly family units, throughout the town centre. Any such development should create a safe, secure and friendly environment adequately balancing the needs of residents and businesses to improve quality of life for all and support growth
  - residential-led mixed-use development on the Cox Lane car park east of Cox Lane (formerly known as the “Mint Quarter”)
  - implementation of the Ipswich Major Scheme for transport improvements in so far as it does not compromise other objectives
  - provision of a series of medium-size short-stay multi-storey car parks at Tacket Street, Merchant Quarter, West End Road, Waterfront (east) and Crown car park
  - improve bus access to the central area
  - relocation of the two bus stations to a single bus station on the Tacket Street car park and creation of enhanced satellite bus stops strategically positioned around the town centre
  - improved cultural and leisure facilities, enhanced Museum & Arts Hub (High Street) and an arena/conferencing facility (Education Quarter on the Waterfront)
  - improve links for pedestrians between the Waterfront and town centre

- improve the comprehensive pedestrian information and wayfinding system, Walk Ipswich
- make Star Lane more pedestrian-friendly and easier to cross
- extend pedestrianisation
- incorporate quality open space within all new development
- enhance the look and use of public spaces (including Cornhill) throughout the town centre
- implement tree-planting schemes to improve the street scene throughout the town centre.

1.4 Sustainability is key to the development of the town centre in the future, providing a healthy and vibrant environment for businesses and retailers as well as an attractive place for people to enjoy.

1.5 The delivery of the majority of these will be driven by the private sector but the Council has an interest in some of the sites and is committed to delivery of the proposals in this Master Plan. It will be active in the pursuit of these objectives and will also consider Compulsory Purchase to unlock difficulties.

## 2. POSITION STATEMENT

- 2.1 Ipswich is the county town of Suffolk and is as a key centre for development and change. Ipswich is also recognised as a regional town centre, a regional transport node, and a priority area for regeneration. Ipswich as a local authority area has a population of 128,300 (2010) and a much larger catchment population in the region of 310,000. People live, work, shop and enjoy leisure and entertainment activities in the town centre.
- 2.2 The town centre was declared a Business Improvement District in 2007 and an independent management company, Ipswich Central, was established to market and initiate improvement projects within the central area including the Waterfront. Ipswich Central won a ballot for a second five-year term from April 2012.
- 2.3 Ipswich strives to be the greenest town in Suffolk and can already offer numerous parks and green spaces within the Borough. It has a low-carbon footprint and the intention is to reduce this further.
- 2.4 The regeneration of the Waterfront over the past decade has made Ipswich more attractive. University Campus Suffolk, Jerwood DanceHouse, high-quality apartments and a four-star hotel have all been built. There are more than 500 berths at Haven Marina and Neptune Marina, as well as luxury yacht manufacturers on the Island site. The emergence of the Waterfront as a





destination has emphasised the need for better links to the central shopping area, with its associated retail and tourism uses.

2.5 In recent years a number of projects have been undertaken to enhance the town centre. These include:-

- The Walk Ipswich Project is being implemented. It will provide a comprehensive signage system to help visitors and residents alike to find public, cultural, recreational, retail and educational facilities throughout the central area and at arrival points using high quality mapping of streets and sites
- Streetscape improvements were completed in September 2010 at the junction of Princes Street, King Street, Queen Street and Butter Market, an area known as Giles Circus with support from the Haven Gateway Partnership. The main objective to provide a larger, quality public space using natural materials. Additional improvements have been undertaken at Northgate Street and Upper Brook Street.

2.6 This Master Plan seeks to build upon these and bring together in a focused manner the various aspects of the town centre, to recommend improved links,

and attract new retailers, employers, residents, students, customers, visitors and leisure providers to the town.

2.7 The Master Plan is focused on the area defined in Appendix 1. The Master Plan will also feed into the statutory IP-One area action plan (AAP) development plan document, which is part of a suite of documents within the Ipswich Local Plan.

2.8 The Master Plan has an end date of 2027, and will be updated annually and as new information becomes available.

2.9 The Council has undertaken a SWOT analysis of the town centre; this has identified an initial scenario that the town centre has and will continue to change shape. Westgate and Carr Streets are likely to become peripheral retail locations (though the old Civic Centre site, now known as the Westgate Centre, has the benefit of a resolution to grant a planning consent for new retail development might offer the town centre something complementary to the high street). The core is likely to develop a more pronounced north - south axis towards the railway station and Waterfront. The links with the Waterfront will be assisted by an improved shopping offer. Overall retail floorspace will increase significantly.

### 3. POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 Current planning policy for the town centre is contained within the developing Ipswich Local Plan which includes three key development plan documents (DPDs):
- Adopted Core Strategy and Policies DPD
  - Draft IP-One Area Action Plan DPD
  - Draft Site Allocations and Policies DPD
- The Ip-One Area Action Plan DPD and Site Allocations and Policies DPD are currently in the process of being prepared.
- 3.2 The Council is currently producing an updated Economic Development Strategy.
- 3.3 The Council has recently adopted a new Corporate Plan - Building a Better Ipswich.
- 3.4 The Council approved an Environment Strategy in 2010 with the vision :
- “Leading by example to establish Ipswich as the greenest town in the greenest county”.
- 3.5 Suffolk County Council is currently undertaking the formal adoption process for Local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 (2011 - 31).
- 3.6 Ipswich is within the Haven Gateway Growth Point Area, and is a member of the Growth Cities network, a collaboration with twelve other towns and cities in the region including Colchester, Luton, Norwich, Peterborough and Southend.
- 3.7 The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) covering Suffolk and Norfolk and known as New Anglia was approved by the Government in December 2010. Ipswich is one of the founding partners of the LEP which will be the principal conduit for national funding.

## 4. A VISION FOR IPSWICH TOWN CENTRE

4.1 The formal framework for the future of the town centre is contained within the Local Plan. Ipswich Central, the BID company, has also produced a vision in collaboration with Ipswich Borough Council specifically for the town centre and branded Ipswich as a “Waterfront Town Centre”.

4.2 The council's vision (as stated in the adopted Core Strategy) for Ipswich is:

**“to improve the quality of life for all who live in, work in, learn in and visit**

**Ipswich, by supporting growth and ensuring that development happens in a sustainable manner so that the amenities enjoyed by local people are not harmed and the town is enhanced.**

**Ipswich will be a more vibrant, active and attractive modern county town successfully combining modern development with historic character - a true focus for Suffolk and beyond. It will be a place where people aspire to live, work, learn, visit and invest - and it will have a reduced carbon footprint”.**



*UCS on the Waterfront*



#### 4.3 Town centre vision

- there will be more people living and working in the town centre, which will be the focus for much of the new development
- people will enjoy an improved shopping centre that includes new stores of greater diversity occupied by both independent and national retailers on allocated sites, providing greater choice than at present
- pedestrian links between the central shopping centre and the Waterfront, Ipswich Village, Education Quarter and railway station and northern gateway (Henley Road and High Street access to the town centre) will be direct, attractive, safe and well-signed
- pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users will come first in Ipswich town centre. Traffic management measures, in conjunction with improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and buses, will ensure effective links between the wider Ipswich area and the town centre, and help keep congestion down and accessibility easy in the centre
- the distinctive network of beautiful parks and open water will be enhanced by the completion of the river path, and additional tree-planting and landscaping in new developments and on the streets
- the Education Quarter will continue to develop and grow to provide an integrated campus, adding to the vitality of the Waterfront
- culture and leisure facilities, both publicly and privately provided, such as the Ipswich Museum and Arts Hub, will be enhanced and increased in terms of provision.

4.4 Ipswich Central, the BID company, and Ipswich Borough Council have reproduced a Vision for a “Waterfront Town Centre”. The Vision is defined as:

“As a major regional centre, Ipswich should strive to create prosperity - enriching the lives of residents, businesses and visitors – by creating a waterfront town centre.

“It is a place whose estuary location gives rise to a culture that is at once outgoing and naturally welcoming. We will strengthen these attributes. Ipswich will be vibrant and dynamic and will also be pragmatic, progressive and diverse. It can be both reflective and imaginative, in keeping with its rural setting, but also gritty and hard-working, arising from its roots. Ipswich will thrive on such individuality and difference.

“Above all, we want Ipswich to recapture its adventurous spirit. We should challenge convention, look further ahead and embrace new ideas. With an eye on far horizons we should use our good connections and seek influence beyond our boundaries.

“By reconnecting the town centre with the Waterfront and the future with our natural spirit of place, Ipswich will be celebrated for where it is going as much as where it has come from.”

4.5 This Master Plan takes forward these aspirations and contains proposals on how it will meet these aspirations. The marketing and promotion of the brand “Waterfront Town Centre” will be used to increase awareness and profile of the town centre both regionally and nationally.

## 5. RETAIL

- 5.1 The town serves both the urban population, and outlying rural areas stretching from Felixstowe to Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury and Colchester. Ipswich is ranked by VENUESCORE 2010 as a regional centre, the third largest centre in East Anglia, behind Norwich and Cambridge and above Colchester.
- 5.2 The central shopping area has a good range of mainstream fashion and durable goods retailers, plus appropriately sized stores for Marks & Spencer, BHS and Primark, as well as a large Debenhams. Several new retailers, including Waitrose, have entered the high street over the past few years, despite the prevailing economic climate, increasing and improving the retail offer of the town centre. There is, however, a perception that a greater variety of shop unit sizes should be available within the town centre.
- 5.3 The main bulk shopping needs are met by the food superstores in out of centre locations. The Grafton Way mixed-use regeneration area will go some way to redressing the balance by providing a large food store in an edge of centre location and will provide synergies with the existing high street and improve linkages between the Waterfront and town centre. Potential for linked trips will help claw back shoppers and spend from other competing out of centre superstores. To secure the maximum potential for linked trips, opportunities for enhancing the accessibility to the central shopping area should be given priority.
- 5.4 Although Ipswich is a large and relatively popular shopping destination, there is some fragility in the town centre's overall vitality and viability. Key performance indicators show that:



*Thriving town centre*

- there are a limited number of high quality department stores
  - there is a "quality" gap in its overall retail and fashion offer
  - there is a lack of availability of different size units
  - it has not benefited from significant new development since the Buttermarket Shopping Centre opened in 1992.
- 5.5 New developments at Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Norwich have eroded Ipswich's status.
- 5.6 In contrast, Colchester falls short of Ipswich in certain respects and is ahead in others. Colchester has gaps in the representation of mainstream multiples, whereas Ipswich is perceived to be lacking to some degree in the department store sector, together with the quality and independent specialist segments of the market, though in recent years new entrants have opened in the town centre.
- 5.7 The main east west axis is some 1km long. A more compact centre would be more attractive with the potential to generate a greater variety of pedestrian routes with easier access to a greater number of stores closer to one another. Such a change in orientation would also conform with the aspiration of the Vision to blend the existing retail thoroughfares with the Waterfront area. There is evidence that as a consequence of retailer preferences and opportunity the axis of the town centre is changing to a more north - south orientation.
- 5.8 The threats to Ipswich are:
- the current linear street pattern discourages a complete shopping experience
  - strong competition from Cambridge and Norwich in particular.
- 5.9 The opportunities for Ipswich are:
- the historic street pattern, conservation areas and listed buildings
  - the recent improvements such as Giles Circus
  - the Waterfront
  - town centre is relatively flat and easily walkable
  - there are no major roads breaking up the central core
  - the station is within walking distance
  - Park and Ride.
- 5.10 Ipswich must build on its strengths. These are primarily its county town retail/employment status as a centre serving an extensive rural hinterland, extending from Felixstowe to Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury and Colchester; its heritage of medieval churches and the historic core; and the Waterfront regeneration, including the university and Grafton Way regeneration area. Thus, restoration of the historic street pattern and the associated uses, investment in the town centre, including the provision of more public open space and the spreading northwards of the Waterfront regeneration towards the town centre, would all contribute significantly to building on the character and strengths of the Borough.
- 5.11 It is forecast that in Ipswich there is limited capacity for new convenience (food) retail floor space before 2021, this capacity increases to 5,370 square metres net by 2026. For comparison (non food) goods, there is 13,320 square metres capacity to 2016 (allowing for completion of the Grafton Way

- mixed-use regeneration project and the Westgate Centre) increasing to 47,498 square metres by 2026 and 71,458 square metres by 2031. However, this is a broad indication of need at 2010 rather than a maximum or minimum that has to be met.
- 5.12 For the future retail direction of Ipswich there are two options: (1) to continue with the orthodoxy i.e. large scale retailing on the Cox Lane Regeneration Area (formerly Mint Quarter) of 50,000 square metres; or (2) to consider whether other sites in combination could be successfully delivered for retail together with reduced or no retail at the Cox Lane site.
- 5.13 The current and past strategy for many years has been to strengthen Ipswich's regional status. During the early 1980s the town was successful in securing two shopping centres, Tower Ramparts and the Buttermarket. Since these shopping centres were developed there has been no substantial retail development in the centre.
- 5.14 The development of the Cox Lane area for a major shopping centre has been envisaged as essential for regional status for over 25 years, but during several economic cycles no scheme has emerged.
- 5.15 A planning application for the Westgate Centre for a shopping complex of some 15,248 square metres net A1 use, 258 square metres of A3 use including some residential and an extension to the New Wolsey Theatre remains undetermined pending a planning obligation being completed. This is supported by the Council as an edge of town centre development.
- 5.16 To achieve true regional status the challenge remains to "raise the bar". Development of the Mint Quarter and Westgate Centre in a suitable format and with an appropriate retail mix has been the long accepted only means of achieving this.
- 5.17 The difficulties in securing an anchor tenant for any Cox Lane scheme and the site's position outside the central shopping core means that consideration should be given to the abandoning of the aspiration and the exploration of other uses for this site.
- 5.18 To make a more compact and convenient centre and to link the Waterfront in line with the Vision, the key development sites will be the catalyst: -
- extension of the Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre to the north, linking to car parks, Crown Pools and the new Museum and Arts Hub
  - extension south of the Primary Shopping Centre (Merchant Quarter)
  - Cox Lane having a role to play at its west end (Tacket Street car park)
  - Westgate Centre scheme being protected as an edge of town centre site, in the light of the planning commitment already given.
- 5.19 Spread over the three identified sites (Cox Lane, Merchant Quarter and Tower Ramparts) a total of some 40,000 square metres comparison floorspace could be provided. This will provide the opportunity to widen the range of unit sizes to improve and enhance the town centre offer. The action taken by the Council and market forces will determine the quantity and timing of

the provision of this space. The development of these sites should also assist in the promotion of the linkage of secondary streets and the creation of a circular shopping experience.

- 5.20 It is recognised that a successful town centre needs both a vibrant day-time and night-time economy offering places to meet, eat and drink, and satisfying a wide variety of interests and cultures. It is important that these activities are dispersed throughout the town centre, and also public spaces.
- 5.21 The Council intends to improve the town centre market offer and also ensure that the Cornhill's potential as the principal open space within the town centre is maximised. A vibrant market is an essential ingredient in the enhancement of the town centre.
- 5.22 Ipswich already has many of the requirements of a successful town centre as outlined in the recently published Mary Portas review of town centres, including successful markets, and a BID. Further actions will be undertaken to strengthen the town centre management.

#### **Recommended Proposals:-**

- **build on the aspiration for Ipswich to be a regional shopping and cultural destination**
- **achieve the goals of the Vision an additional 40,000m2 retail-led mixed use development on sites (1) between the Waterfront and the town centre (Merchant Quarter) (2) northwards extension of Tower Ramparts and (3) Tacket Street car park west of Cox Lane**
- **actively promote new developments which provide a range of unit sizes rather than large single department stores**
- **creation of street networks which promote leisure shopping and are attractive and convenient for all pedestrians**
- **promote a "cafe culture" by permitting more food and drink uses in the town centre retail heart**
- **an improved open-air market and more specialised markets**
- **encourage and promote the re-shaping of the town centre so that its orientation is more north to south**
- **encourage retailers to extend the opening hours to the early evening.**



## 6. BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE

- 6.1 Ipswich enjoys a diverse economy. The principal employment sectors in Ipswich are public administration (31.4%), finance, IT and other business activities (22.7%) and distribution, hotels and restaurants (26.3%). Service sector activities encompass more than 80% of the total employment of Ipswich. The overall structure of Ipswich is fairly similar to the national average except for the manufacturing sector, for which the figures are significantly lower than in Suffolk, the east of England and nationally. More people are employed within the public sector than in any other industry sector.
- 6.2 The economic activity rate for Ipswich is above those for the region and the country, but so too is the unemployment level.
- 6.3 Key local economic sectors are: port and logistics; financial services; education and applied research; culture; health, social work; energy, creative and media; distribution and hotels; and the public sector. The University hub including, UCS, Suffolk New College and the Waterfront seedbed office-based employment centres at Felaw Street Maltings and IP-City Centre have created a new employment dynamic which has added a new dimension to the employment composition of the town. The continued demand for new hotels in the town centre/Waterfront will also add to employment growth.
- 6.4 Continued strength is expected in financial and business services; any decline in public sector employment (Centre for Cities research identifies Ipswich as particularly vulnerable in this respect) is likely to result in an increase in



employment in the private sector. Education and health will remain key growth sectors (through University Campus Suffolk, Suffolk New College and Suffolk One); transport and communications are also expected to become key sectors.

- 6.5 A number of private sector and public sector office-based employers are present in the town centre, including in the insurance sector AXA Insurance, RBS Insurance and Willis Limited, with the main council offices of Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk County Council located in the Ipswich Village area of the town. These offices occupy key sites and

provide an important function in the current and future success of the town centre. There are also a number of smaller organisations occupying either small individual offices or parts of larger offices such as Crown House.

6.6 There is currently perceived to be an over-supply of vacant offices in the town centre. However, much of this is seen as not attractive to the market with no Grade A office space available and is dominated by secondhand space.

6.7 Longer term, the aspiration is to attract prime office space to the town centre specifically in the Ipswich Village and Waterfront areas, offering an alternative to that provided out-of-town. With good rail links to London and Norwich, the town centre is easily accessible by

foot, bicycle and public transport. Long-stay parking should continue to be provided in these areas.

6.8 The Merchant Quarter is likely to be an attractive option to professionals and small-medium enterprises, as these will provide a mixture of unit sizes as well as being close to various support services in a vibrant environment.

6.9 The provision of more employment in the town centre would support more sustainable living and travel-to-work patterns in line with the Council's vision.

6.10 Employment growth in the town centre is likely to be characterised by:

- the expansion of the education sector at the UCS/New Suffolk College hub



*The Willis building*

- small-office based IT/media/culture (Dance East) education support services growth at the Waterfront
- continuing hotel/retail jobs especially in the Grafton Way area
- traditional large-scale office based employment will be focused in the Ipswich Village area, including Portman Road. Numerically like for like replacement long-stay parking provision this area will be required
- Offices with large floorplates in an office campus design approach are likely to be developed
- the Merchant Quarter will accommodate a range of small/medium office suites and buildings. In addition there will be some retail and residential development all supporting the Waterfront
- the development of a conference facility on the Waterfront allied to the arts, leisure and educational activities
- development of the creative industries through the Ipswich Museum and Arts Hub and other publicly and privately provided cultural facilities.

#### **Recommended Proposals:-**

- **concentrate any large-scale office development in the Ipswich Village/Portman Road areas**
- **encourage and support creative industries to supplement and enhance retail and cultural activities**
- **support and encourage businesses in the growth sectors to locate and develop within the town centre.**



## 7. CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LEISURE



*Christchurch Mansion*

- 7.1 Ipswich has a rich heritage dating back to Anglo-Saxon times, with a modern vibrancy enriched by a diverse and multi-cultural community.
- 7.2 The town has a wealth of cultural, heritage and leisure assets which bring in significant visitor numbers (2.6 million day visitors per year and 1.0 million longer stay visitors, including those from overseas and the rest of the UK). This supports a burgeoning cultural industry and economy. There are a number of theatres and other cultural facilities (including five of the Art Council's nationally funded organisations) directly and indirectly employing a significant number of full and part-time staff.
- 7.3 This Master Plan will help make Ipswich an even stronger force regionally; will deliver the development of creative and cultural businesses; will bring in greater visitor numbers, and an increase in the leisure and recreational use of the town centre.
- 7.4 Performance arts
- the Regent Theatre, Corn Exchange, New Wolsey Theatre and Jerwood DanceHouse attract major popular performers with a regional and national reputation. Total attendance figures are running at 350,000 a year.
- 7.5 If these performing arts facilities are to continue to attract these large audiences and compete on a regional and national level, they will need further improvement. This plan provides for:
- developing the New Wolsey Theatre and Regent Theatre as centres for talent development and creative learning

- re-use of the vacant Odeon Cinema site as a complementary arts/leisure venue
- provision of an arena conference centre near the Waterfront (in the Education Quarter)
- support for the development of ancillary activities to further promote Dance East's local and regional significance
- support for the flourishing independent film theatre
- increased use of the Town Hall and Corn Exchange for cultural events.

## 7.6 Arts, Museums and Heritage

Ipswich's town centre galleries and museums attracted around 110,000 visitors in 2010 and have the potential for an increased regional draw. This could be achieved by:

- establishing a centre of excellence centred on the High Street with a £10 million refurbishment of Ipswich Museum and Arts Hub. This will include enhancement of the contemporary and modern art gallery and the development of new learning, performance and studio space for the creative arts. This cultural hub will include organisations within the Arts Council National Portfolio, such as New Wolsey Theatre, Gecko and the Robert Pacitti Company
- improved links to the northern gateway should support this, including any redevelopment of the former Crown Car Park site, and the opportunity to redesign the routes to Ipswich Museum, Crown Pools and Christchurch Mansion with trees and traffic calming measures
- highly organised promotional campaigns to develop Christchurch

Mansion as the Constable centre, where the largest and most unique collection of works by John Constable outside of London can be viewed and studied, with direct tourism links to Constable Country in partnership with the National Trust.

## 7.7 Events

Ipswich has an impressive and diverse annual Events and Festival programme that includes major concerts, outdoor film screenings, the award winning Ip-art festival (including Ipswich Music Day and the Indian Summer Mela), the Pulse festival, the Food & Drink Festival, Ipswich Maritime Festival and the annual fireworks display in Christchurch Park. The total number of visitors to these is in the order of 200,000 per year.

7.8 These and other events will be more successful as a result of this Plan's emphasis on creating more useable and open public space. In addition it is proposed to:

- establish a town-wide events group to co-ordinate a programme of events
- secure external funding or sponsorship to make Ip-art the premier regional festival with a dedicated director
- develop a regular Maritime Festival
- publish a programme of up to 20 major events each year.

## 7.9 Historic Buildings, Public Art and Green spaces

Ipswich has a particularly well-preserved built heritage with many listed buildings including Grade 1 examples such as: Christchurch Mansion, Ancient House and the Willis Building designed by Lord



Foster. Ipswich also retains much of its historic street pattern and architectural detailing. There is an unparalleled number of historic churches, many of which are in public use as places to meet and eat.

7.10 Public art and statues are key components in ensuring a high quality public realm. The nationally awarded Artathon initiative encourages people to walk between these sites and there are ambitious plans to have privately sponsored public art trails and a Never-Ending Mural linking key sites. This will support and be supported by the Ipswich Museum and arts hub development on High Street. The proposed expansion of the Museum and arts facilities is supported by the Arts Council.

7.11 The town centre and its Waterfront have two historic parks - the Green flag award winning Christchurch and Holywells parks. Access and signposting to these parks will be improved as part of this plan. The improved open spaces with new trees and sensitive planning will help meet our aspiration of being the greenest town.

7.12 The town provides a wide-range of high quality leisure opportunities and facilities, attracting more than 1,000,000 visits annually, including Ipswich Town Football Club, Cardinal Park, private and public sector gyms, Suffolk New College's Goals/Sports Centre, and the Crown Pools and Fore Street swimming pools. The regenerated Waterfront provides a range of leisure activities including a 500-berth yacht marina with complementary restaurants, hotels and bars. All of these will be developed to support the overall attractiveness of the

town centre. New facilities will also be provided and encouraged to support this existing provision.

#### **Recommended Proposals:-**

- **support the development of regional and nationally renowned cultural and leisure facilities in the town centre, such as the Constable centre in Christchurch Mansion's improved culture and leisure facilities**
- **promote an arena and conference facility in the Education Quarter**
- **develop a centre for cultural excellence based on the existing Ipswich Museum and Arts Hub on High Street with links to Crown Car Park, Crown Pools, Tower Ramparts and Christchurch Park through public realm improvements**
- **heritage centre and Waterfront visitor attraction.**

## 8. MARKETING AND TOURISM

- 8.1 Tourism is a key generator of employment and important in bringing in revenue, not only for accommodation providers but for local attractions, retailers, restaurants and leisure providers. The Vision for Ipswich seeks to create a vibrant town centre encompassing the unique Waterfront regeneration area and the development of a safe night-time economy. Both are vital in improving Ipswich's tourism offer.
- 8.2 In order to deliver this offer, the Council and its key partners are working together to formulate a new tourism strategy in order to provide targeted marketing.
- 8.3 The purpose of a new over-arching Ipswich Tourism Association would be to
- target marketing resources around a number of key campaigns with realisable goals (e.g. working with stakeholders outside the town and the Museum Service to promote Ipswich as part of a wider visitor campaign, and developing links with travel trade fairs and group bookers). The support of Ipswich Central, the Council, hoteliers and attractions will bring together retailers, tourist information, events promotion and the visitor attractions themselves.
- 8.4 Ipswich Borough Council is continuously updating its tourist information service by adopting new techniques to appeal to more residents as well as visitors. An information point has been opened at UCS on the Waterfont.



- 8.5 The Council is working with the Ipswich BID company on the development of a new interactive web site to promote the town centre, which will replace existing websites such as "Visit Ipswich".
- 8.6 In addition, Ipswich Borough Council with other local authorities in Suffolk and Norfolk are supporting a private sector tourism initiative known as "Visit East Anglia". The objective is to market Ipswich as a cultural, leisure and city break destination throughout the UK and beyond.
- 8.7 The Council and its partners will use the website, the Tourist Information Centre and its targeted marketing campaigns to ensure Ipswich's attractions are better known to both visitors and residents. It will also aim to maximise the contribution of tourism to the growth of the Ipswich economy.

**Recommended Proposals:-**

- **promotion of the evening economy which is safe and welcoming**
- **establishment of a new Ipswich Tourism Association**
- **development of effective web access to tourist information with Ipswich Central.**

## 9. HOUSING

- 9.1 Recent developments have brought people back into the centre of Ipswich to live. This in turn enhances the vitality and viability of the area through residents using the town centre to meet their everyday requirements. Living at higher densities and in central locations also provides the opportunity to pursue a low-carbon lifestyle. Ipswich railway station is on the Norwich to London mainline and also has good rail connections to Cambridge and Peterborough. Locating housing close to convenience and comparison retailing further ensures that shopping trips can be made on foot and by bicycle, and for a number of people employment opportunities are also nearby.
- 9.2 The presence of the university in the town has led to a rising student population living around the Waterfront area in purpose built student accommodation (e.g. Athena House - 600 beds). This, over time, will also result in a change in the demographic profile of the town centre and consequently lead to changing demand for services.
- 9.3 In the adopted Core Strategy and Policies DPD the Council plans to deliver 700 homes per year in the Borough to 2027 with a large proportion of these dwellings focused around the town centre, Waterfront and Ipswich Village. Residential development at the Waterfront has slowed down due to current economic conditions, with developers focusing on sites currently under construction. The regeneration at the Waterfront is of key importance to the town with high-density residential mixed-use schemes. The draft IP-One Area Action Plan DPD also identifies a number of sites in these areas that are suitable for housing or housing-led mixed-use schemes at varying densities and the development of family homes in these areas which will also be encouraged.
- 9.4 New housing developments are often cited as responsible for generating significant additional car traffic, and while car ownership may still occur in these town centre locations, they should reduce the need to travel by car due to the close proximity of employment, retail and leisure activities, bus and train services. They also represent the opportunity to build higher energy efficiency levels, particularly through the Code for Sustainable Homes. Community facilities can further be enhanced through new development and this can also meet any deficits identified, for example in the provision of play space.
- 9.5 Substantial additional housing in the town centre would make for sustainable living, less commuting, a diverse urban character, more evening activity and additional retail spend which all supports the Council's vision for the town centre.

### **Recommended Proposals:-**

- **residential-led mixed-use development on the Cox Lane car park east of Cox Lane (part of the site formerly known as the "Mint Quarter")**
- **the Star Lane area to the rear of Old Customs House should be the main focus for additional student accommodation**
- **sustainable mixed-use development incorporating residential should be promoted throughout the town centre**
- **residential development should be encouraged throughout the town centre, particularly family units.**

## 10. TRANSPORT

- 10.1 The town centre currently has good accessibility by all transport modes. There is a strong, mostly commercial bus network connecting residential areas with services that take people right into the edge of the town centre. Longer distance trips from the hinterland are served by buses as well as park and ride bus services to the south and east. There are also extensive rail services to the rest of East Anglia, London and the Midlands. Accessibility to and around the town centre for walking and cycling is fair but there is a need to increase the quality and safety of routes, to improve information and to provide more facilities for crossing the busy roads at the edge of the central area.
- 10.2 There are numerous short-stay car parking locations to support shops in the town centre. This is due partly to a number of development sites between the town centre and the Waterfront being vacant and used as temporary parking facilities. As these Waterfront sites come forward for development there will be a need for a sustainable approach to additional short-stay parking closer to the town centre. The retail core could be enhanced with a network of medium-sized multi-storey car parks strategically placed around the edge of the central shopping area and in the Waterfront.
- 10.3 Changes to the transport system will be needed to support the aspirations in this Master Plan.
- 10.4 A key challenge is to achieve greater use of sustainable transport through a modal shift from car travel to cut congestion, especially at peak times.
- 10.5 A further challenge is to provide highway and transport changes to the existing network through improvements at key junctions and additional crossing facilities.
- 10.6 Ipswich - Transport Fit for the 21st Century is a major transport scheme that has a planned implementation programme from 2012 to 2015. This £20 million project will improve the current transport network and is intended to accommodate planned growth in the town to 2025. There are three interconnected scheme elements: computerised traffic control and management; improvements to bus infrastructure; and improvements to walking and cycling facilities. These strands will be supported by programmes to encourage people to change travel behaviour and strong planning policies. The principal components of the transport scheme are:
- a computerised urban traffic management and control system will control all the traffic signals within the wider Ipswich area, providing priority for buses at junctions. The system will also include variable message signs that can provide information about car park occupancy, road closures, traffic information etc. This will be linked to the proposed A14 and A12 information systems
  - a real time passenger information system for the local bus network will include screen displays at both bus stations, at many bus stops around the town centre and on radial bus corridors
  - remedial works to both Old Cattle Market and Tower Ramparts is to be undertaken. However, a single bus



station is being considered in order to overcome the current separation of town and country services and to optimise the use of land. In addition, there will be improvements to key bus stops in the central area, providing better waiting and information facilities

- excellent walking and cycling networks will connect central areas such as Ipswich Village, the Waterfront, education quarter and town centre to each other, to the railway station and bus stations. Eight priority routes have been identified to achieve this aim. Included in this will be the removal of the roundabout and pedestrian subways at Princes Street/Civic Drive so people can cross at ground level. This change will also enable bus priority and enhance the setting of the Willis building as a gateway to the town centre.

10.7 A new bus service serving the Waterfront and town centre is planned, part-funded by the private sector.

10.8 The provision of a comprehensive information system, the Walk Ipswich Project, has been implemented to aid movements around the town centre and provide links between key centres such as the railway station, town centre and the Waterfront.

10.9 Expanding and changing the shape of the town centre retail core can be achieved through a programme of further pedestrianisation. In this Plan it is proposed to pedestrianise Princes Street (north), Queen Street and Upper Brook Street and further opportunities exist at Museum Street, Lloyds Avenue and Northgate Street.

#### Recommended Proposals:-

- **implementation of the Ipswich Major Scheme for transport improvements in so far as it does not compromise other objectives**
- **provision of strategically positioned medium-sized short-stay multi-storey car parks at Tacket Street, Merchant Quarter, West End Road, Waterfront (east) and Crown car park as and when the schemes are implemented**
- **improve bus access to the central area**
- **relocation of the two bus stations to a single bus station on the Tacket Street car park and creation of enhanced satellite bus stops strategically positioned around the town centre. This will enable the Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre to be extended northwards with a pedestrian link to Crown Street car park and creation of an improved link between the town centre and the Waterfront via Turret Lane**
- **making Star Lane more pedestrian friendly and easier to cross**
- **improve links for pedestrians between the Waterfront and Town Centre**
- **complete the installation of the comprehensive Walk Ipswich information system to help pedestrians get around the town.**

# 11. STREET SCENE

- 11.1 As with most urban centres, significant components forming the character of Ipswich town centre are its street pattern and its collection of urban spaces. The Ipswich central area is fortunate in having a fairly compact pattern of streets and lanes, some which date back to the 7th Century, and which form an attractive and intricate network of routes throughout the area, generally with a north to south axis. Ipswich is equally fortunate in having an extensive collection of urban spaces spread throughout the centre.
- 11.2 The development and enhancement of these urban spaces would result in a positive change in the perception and character of the town.
- 11.3 Ipswich town centre already benefits from extensive investment in the provision of pedestrian-priority and environmental enhancement schemes in many of the primary shopping streets and lanes. These schemes contribute greatly to the importance of Ipswich as a shopping and business destination.
- 11.4 There are more than 20 urban spaces in the town centre and along the town's Waterfront. The use of these spaces varies: some of the smaller spaces such as Arras Square are well-used by people. Others do not encourage people to sit and stop due to a lack of definition as a public space.
- 11.5 The major arrival points, the railway station, Old Cattle Market and Tower Ramparts bus stations and the main town centre car parks, do not create attractive gateways to the town centre and most lack a sense of arrival and information to support visitors and onward journeys.
- 11.6 Within the centre, the aim of the strategy will be to build upon the existing pattern of urban spaces, identifying enhancements where necessary and developing new public spaces as part of redevelopment schemes, (e.g. the Cox Lane Regeneration Area and Merchant Quarter), linking them to each other - and rail and bus stations with attractive and safe pedestrian routes. It is essential that any redevelopments or new developments within the town centre should respect the existing strong traditional corridor character of the centre's streets and lanes.
- 11.7 There is an opportunity to create an image/identity for the town through the design of public spaces. Public spaces can perform many different functions but should enhance visitors' experiences.
- 11.8 Residents and businesses within the town have expressed a desire to see more outside seating and the development of a café culture in town.
- 11.9 In order to provide greater integration of the town centre with important surrounding areas, stronger and well-defined pedestrian links are required. There will be improved links for the following –
- Town Centre to Christchurch Park, Alexandra Park and Alderman Road Park
  - Town Centre to Crown car Park and Ipswich Museum and arts hub
  - Town Centre to Waterfront
  - Town Centre to Cardinal Park/Ipswich Village
  - Town Centre to Education Quarter
  - Waterfront to Railway Station
  - Waterfront to Alexandra Park and Holywells Park

11.10 Some significant tree-planting along the main traffic routes encircling the town centre (Friars Road, Civic Drive, Crown Street, Woodbridge Road, Argyle Street and Grimwade Street) has already taken place. This initiative will be extended.

11.11 Street signs will clearly play a role in linking areas but public art also has a role to play. A route populated by public art can make a journey more memorable and easy to follow. It can also encourage people to walk.

The Council will promote and develop public art further.

#### Recommended Proposals:-

- improve linkages for pedestrians between the Waterfront and town centre
- extend pedestrianisation to include Upper Brook Street, Queen Street and Princes Street North
- improve linkages for pedestrians at the northern gateway between Christchurch Mansion, Crown Pools, Crown Car Park, High Street and town centre
- ensure the incorporation of quality open space within all new development
- enhance the look and use of public spaces (including Cornhill) throughout the town centre
- implement tree-planting programmes throughout the town centre and central area.



*Unitarian Meeting House*

## 12. IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

12.1 Ipswich Borough Council is currently collecting land ownership information to be able to contact landowners in respect of potential development sites to re-shape the town centre and to facilitate development. This data will be collected on an on-going basis as it becomes available and the Master Plan will focus on individual sites in order to deliver the overall aspirations. Using a GIS layer produced by Experian and known as the GOAD plan, the Council is able to focus on areas in detail, showing occupancy data illustratively.

12.2 Giles Circus is one of the most recent successes for the town centre. It follows Arras Square, which was constructed as part of the Buttermarket Shopping Centre. The Council will ensure that new development proposals incorporate similar public realm spaces in all major new town centre developments in order to support its Vision.

12.3 The Walk Ipswich signs project is well advanced.

12.4 The retail-led mixed-use development at Grafton Way between the Stoke/Princes Street bridges is expected to commence in 2012. It will be the most significant investment for many years in the town centre and will have a transforming effect on the town and how it functions.

12.5 The Ipswich Major Transport Scheme will inject £20 million into the transport infrastructure of the town centre. Delivery is projected by end of 2014.

12.6 The delivery of remainder of the Town Centre Master Plan proposals will be led by the private sector, with the active support of the Council and its partners.

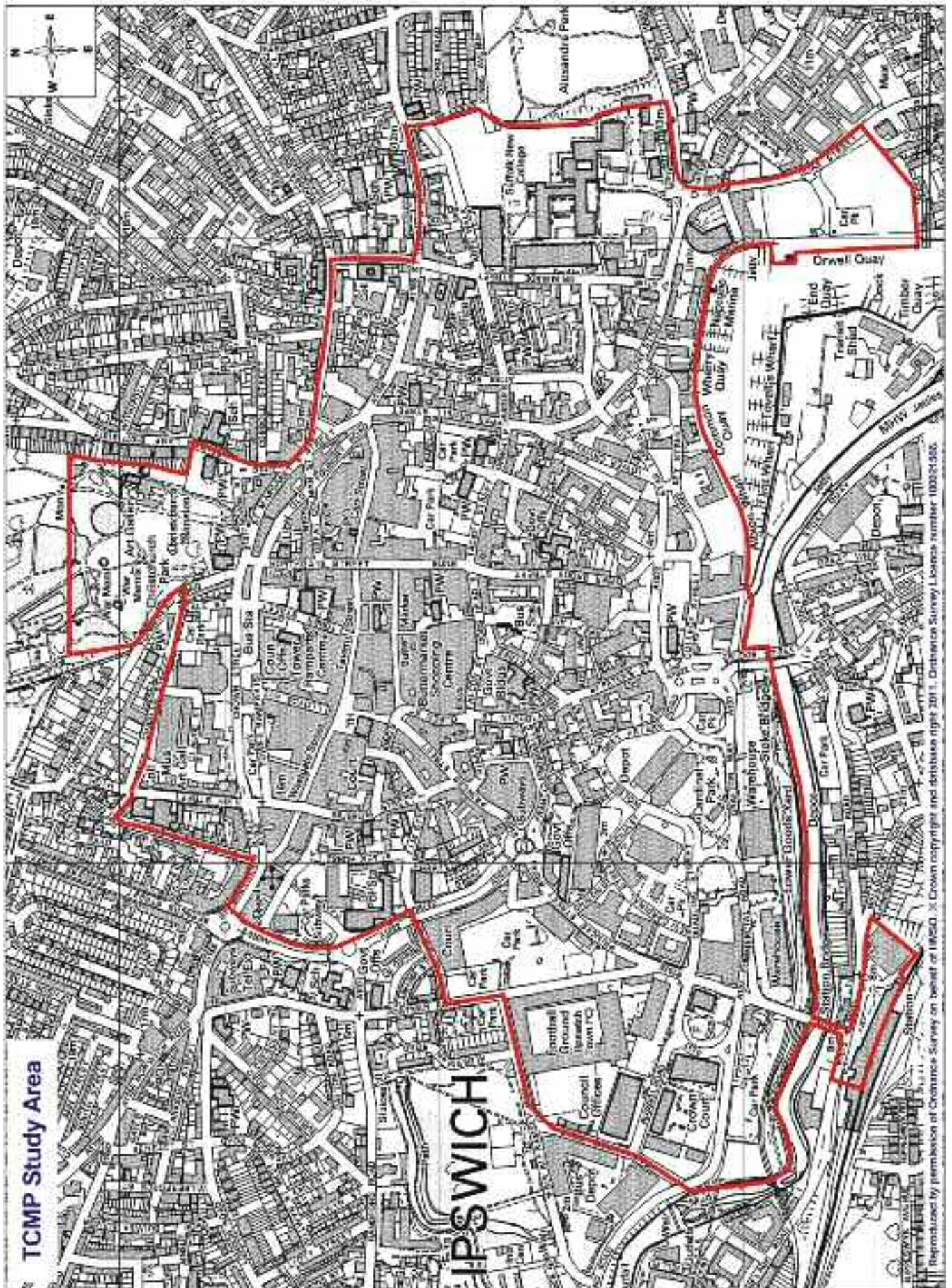
The Council will actively participate in the delivery of projects including the acquiring of assets and taking equity positions where such action can bring forward implementation.

### **Recommended Proposals:-**

- explore options for development of the key sites with the private sector
- determine a phasing plan for the key sites
- determine a delivery plan for first key site.



# APPENDIX 1 TOWN CENTRE PLAN





### MERCHANT QUARTER

- Retail-led mixed uses on the Old Cattle Market bus station and areas south including the redundant printing works. Up to 20,000 square metres retail floorspace could be provided
- A four-storey multi-storey car park would be needed to pump-prime the retail trade as well as the Waterfront generally
- Successful links with the Waterfront would depend upon reducing the Star Lane barrier.
- Relocating the bus station would be necessary
- The design of the development must respect the successful established heritage of St Nicholas/St Peter's Streets nearby
- Development of this quarter would strengthen the Waterfront and links with the town centre
- A mixed-use development incorporating housing would complement the established character of St Peter's Street.

### WESTGATE

- This is an important retail site very close to the prime shopping streets, and has an important role in linking the high street to the New Wolsey Theatre and boosting the low-value west end by increasing footfall and therefore values
- It is a highly visible site on the edge of the town centre with car parking.

### COX LANE REGENERATION AREA

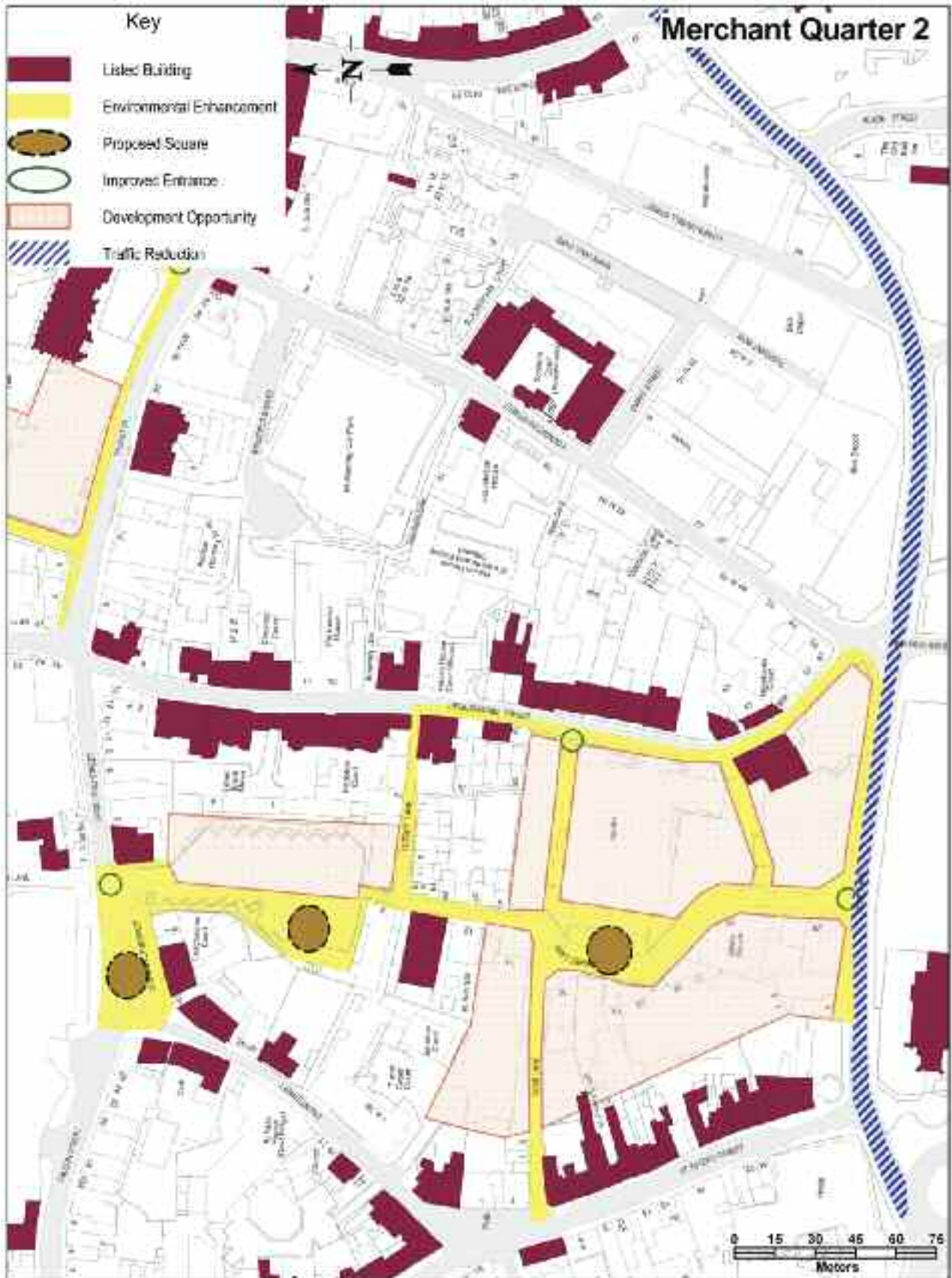
- Mixed-use development based on a restoration of the historic street pattern, incorporating some public open space/central plaza, would greatly improve this long-suffering area and stitch back together Tacket Street, Upper Orwell Street, Cox Lane etc. It would remove blight and restore confidence in Upper Orwell Street
- Buttermarket is enjoying something of a renaissance, with a greater number of higher quality specialist shops than Tavern Street. Strategies for Cox Lane should reflect this
- Cox Lane regeneration area should have good access direct from Buttermarket, e.g. by a wide boulevard south of the Cock and Pye pub
- The retail allocation should be reduced to the area of Tacket Street car park, which has good links/visibility to the Buttermarket. Some 10,000 square metres could be accommodated
- One of the town's strengths is the specialist shopping within the "lanes" of St Stephen's, Dial Lane and St Lawrence. The reconstruction of the historic lanes around Cox Lane could facilitate the expansion of this type of retail
- The area east of Cox Lane could then be primarily residential, including open space but possibly incorporating a medium size multi-storey car park, and incorporating good linkages to surrounding streets based on a reinstatement of the historic street pattern
- The development should include a bus station to replace the two existing, possibly with a multi-storey over.

## TOWER RAMPARTS

- This shopping centre is reaching a critical period in its life with the continued absence of an anchor department store. It is generally accepted to have design deficiencies due to topography and visibility. However, in essence, the site is well-related to the primary shopping area and there should be a presumption in favour of its retention and improvement
- It is considered that most of the bus services operating from the bus stations could be provided roadside at satellite stops around the town centre and convenient to where users want to go. Therefore, there is scope to extend the Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre up to Crown Street. This could provide a highly visible major anchor store to enable a significant and important increase in floorspace to make it the flagship shopping centre in the central area
- At least 10000 square metres would seem to be possible in the form of an extension of the Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre northwards to occupy the whole of the bus station and possibly the Electric House and Bingo Hall as well
- A multi-storey car park is, however, likely to be necessary in order to pump-prime a successful large extension and a rebuild of the Borough Crown car park could achieve this, if the pedestrian link is improved. A medium-size car park is the minimum necessary.



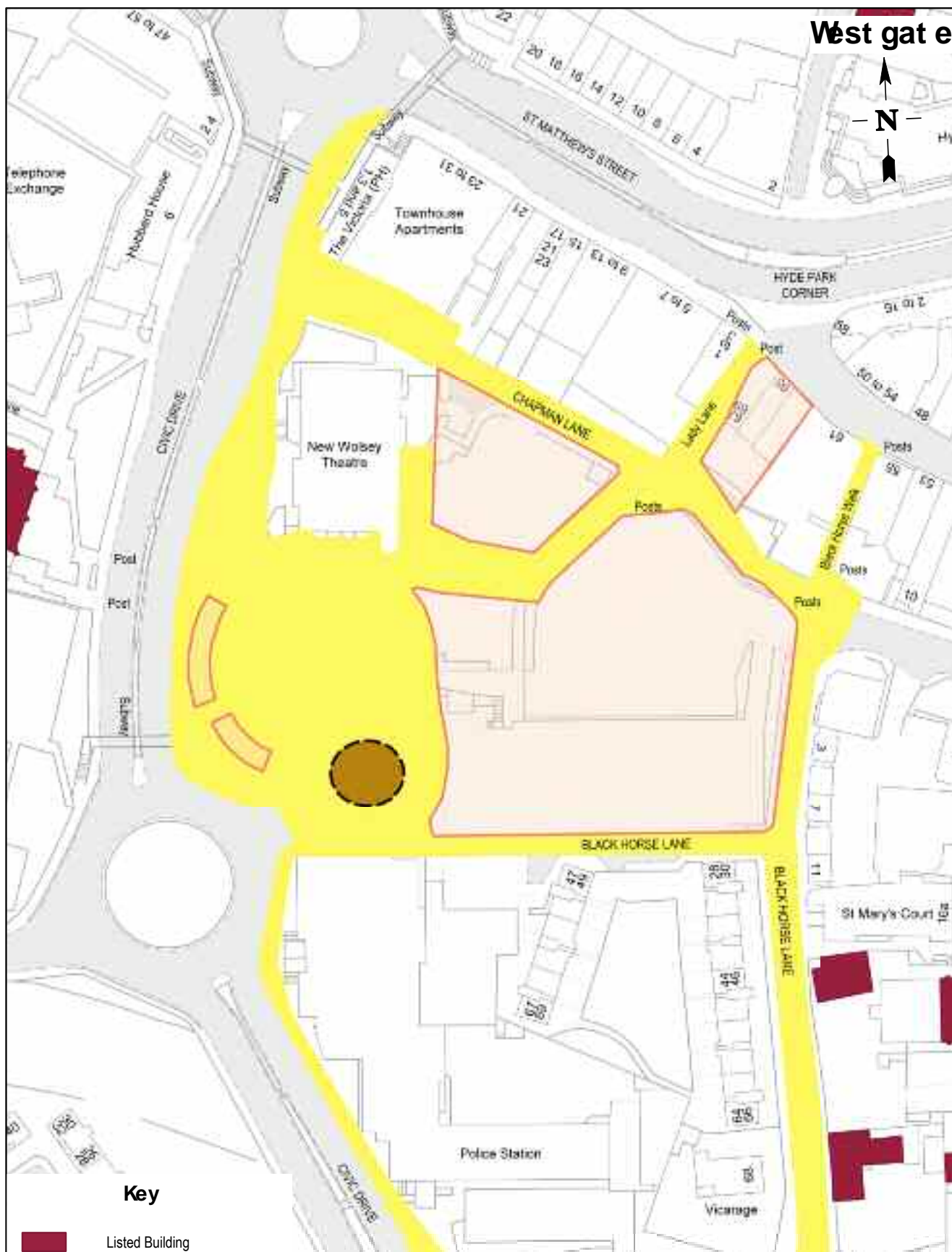
## Indicative proposals



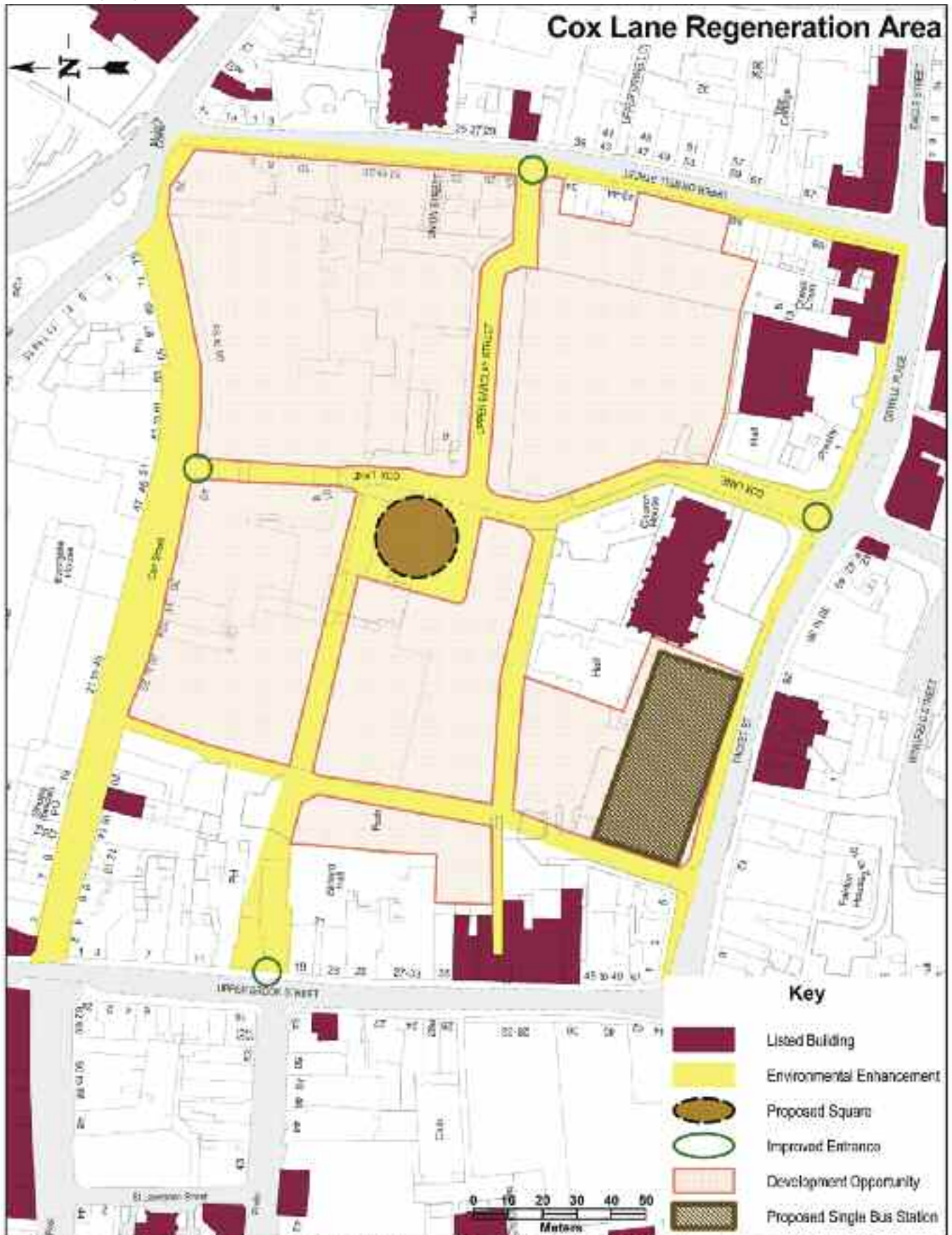
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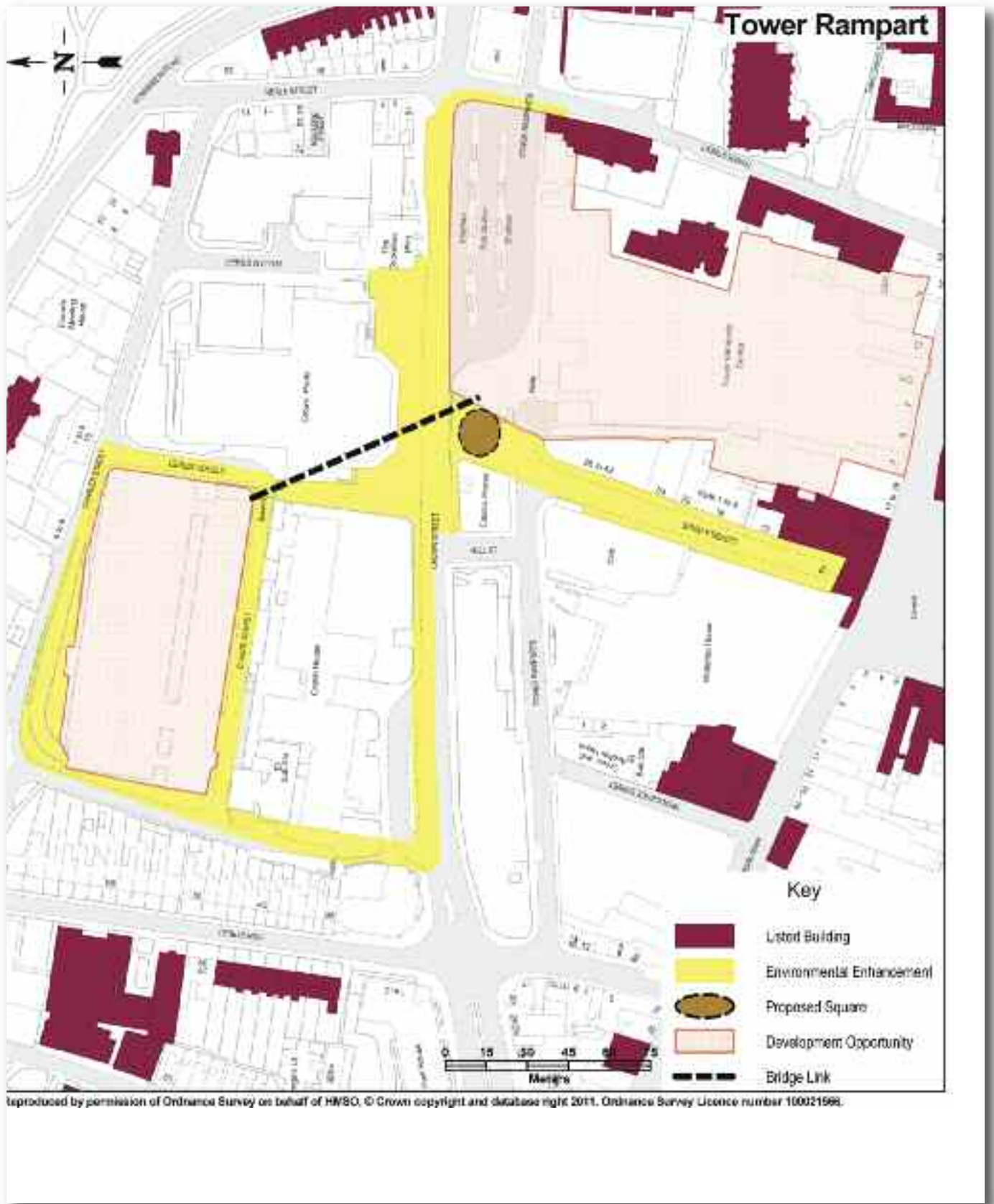
Indicative proposals



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Ipswich Borough Council thanks all the people and organisations who have contributed towards the preparation of this Master Plan, including Ipswich Central, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Chamber of Commerce.