

Rugby Central Development Brief

Supplementary Planning Document

DRAFT - CONSULTATION VERSION



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1. Purpose of the development brief

Purpose

- 1.1 This Development Brief has been prepared by Rugby Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority to facilitate and guide the development and delivery of the Rugby Central Shopping Centre.
- 1.2 Policy TC1 of the Local Plan (2011-31) seeks for proposals for the redevelopment and refurbishment of the existing natural and built environment within the town centre to demonstrate high quality design that complements and enhances the existing environment and townscape in a manner which contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place.
- 1.3 The enhancement of Rugby Town Centre is vital and Policy TC1 seeks to ensure that any changes improve the town centre, adding to its vitality and vibrancy. The shopping centre is the largest catalytic site in the town centre which has the potential for redevelopment.
- 1.4 The Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan which seeks to support the revival of Rugby town centre. Draft policy C1 (Regulation 18 consultation) sets out that development within the town centre will include the redevelopment of Rugby Central Shopping Centre to

restore street-based, mixed-use development. The purpose of this document is therefore to provide more detailed guidance in relation to the redevelopment of the site to ensure high quality development comes forward.

Scope and Status of the Brief

- 1.5 The Development Brief will be adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This document will sit alongside the Development Plan, and other local guidance such as the Climate Change and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2023) and Shopfronts Design Guide SPD (2024) to ensure high quality design and appropriate development is brought forward on this site.

Methodology

- 1.6 This document has been prepared by Rugby Borough Council. Comprehensive analysis of the site (including economic feasibility) was undertaken in order to determine the options for the site and preferred approach to development.

This brief will be subject to a period of public consultation in order to be adopted as a supplementary planning document which can be afforded weight in decision making.

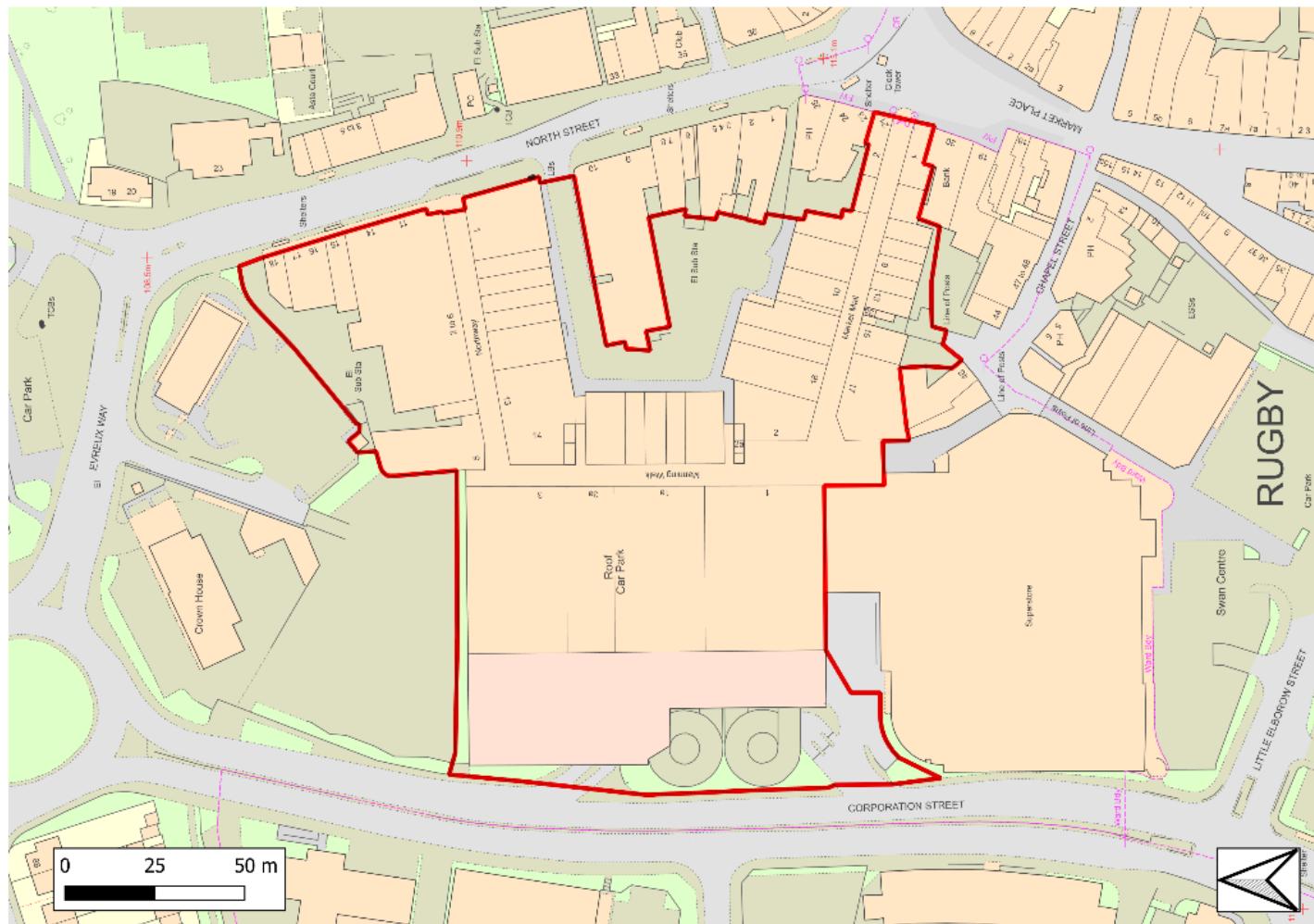


Figure 1: Scope area of the development brief

2. Policy Context

Introduction

2.1 This chapter of the SPD provides an overview of relevant national and local planning policy and guidance. With regard to local policy, the commentary summarises the adopted policy, but has due regard for emerging policy, which will have increased relevance during the lifetime of this SPD.

Planning Policy and Guidance

3.1 The site is covered by policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and Rugby's Local Development Plan. Proposals for the site should take account of any national and local planning policies that apply to the site and its environs.

2.2. Appendix 1 contains a list of relevant local policies for the site.

Other Material Considerations

2.3. Other material considerations are listed below (not exhaustive):

- Rugby Corporate Strategy (2025-2035)
- Rugby Regeneration Strategy (2022)
- Rugby Local Plan – preferred option consultation version (March 2025)

- Local Transport Plan (2011-2026)
- Rugby Public Realm Masterplan (2025)

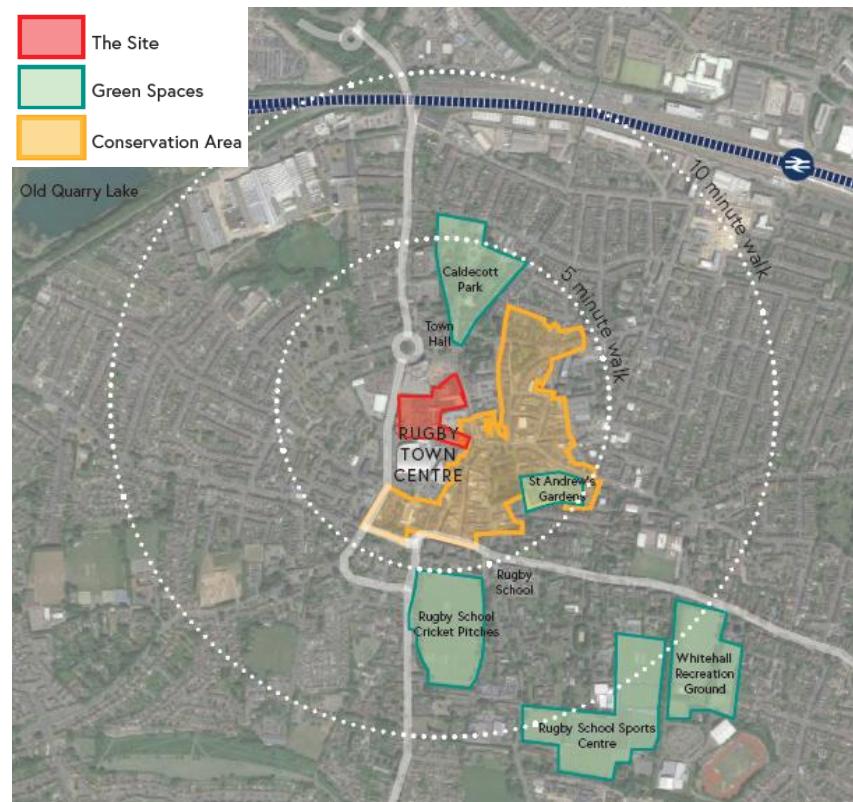


Figure 2: Context Plan

3. Site Information

Site Description

3.2. Rugby Central (formerly known as The Clock Tower Shopping Centre) is a c.210,000 sqft covered shopping centre in Rugby Town Centre constructed in c.1980 and last refurbished in 1994. It covers a 2.18 hectare site in rugby town centre. The shopping centre has a mezzanine floor and associated 535 space multi storey car park.

3.3. The site has pedestrian entrances on North Street, Market Place and within the Swan Centre and a vehicular entrance off Corporation Street. Servicing is through the Corporation Street car park access and within the service yard to the rear of the current NatWest building on North Street.

3.4. In recent years the site (freehold) has been marketed for sale. As of November 2025, 35 of 65 units (54%) in the



Figure 3: Google Earth of site

centre are vacant (this includes all units within North Mall). Due to this the shopping centre has limited footfall and is not contributing as it should be to Rugby's economic vibrancy.

3.5. The surroundings of the site are predominately commercial as shown within the site analysis. The character is a historic market town.

Site Analysis (including planning designations)

3.6. The site is currently within retail use class (class E formerly class A1) and has an ancillary multi-storey car park and service areas.

3.7. The site is within flood zone 1 but has medium/high chance of surface water flooding to the east (figure 4).

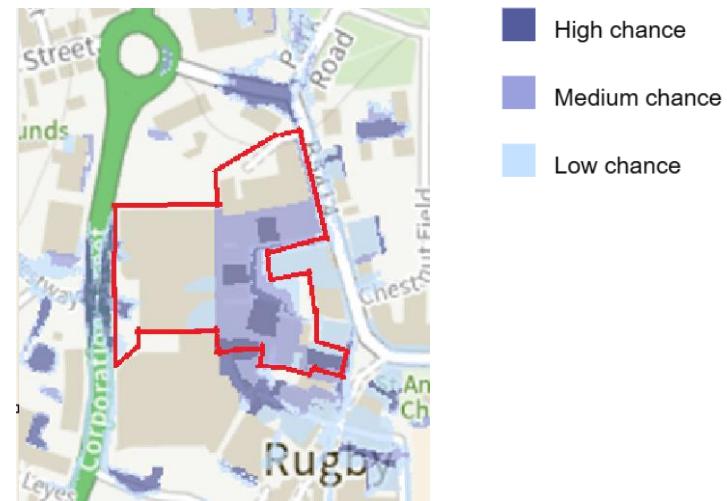


Figure 4: surface water flooding map (source: GOV.UK)



Site Analysis (continued)

3.7. The south mall which has an entrance onto Market Place is partially within the Town Centre Conservation Area and 21 Market Place is a Grade II listed building within the site. 20-25 Market Place are all listed buildings within close proximity to the site alongside the Grade II Clocktower. St Andrew's Church is Grade II* listed. There are also a number of important buildings within the immediate vicinity which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area (figure 7). Further detailed information on these historic designations can be found in appendix 2.



3.8. Historic maps show the historic grain of development in rugby town centre (figure 5). Development to the north of the site came forward in the mid-19th century with the shopping centre not being developed until the 1980s. East-west connects are shown to be present in historic development.

3.9. A high-level heritage impact assessment has been undertaken and can be found within appendix 2.

3.10. Figure 6-9 provides all of the remaining site and contextual analysis.

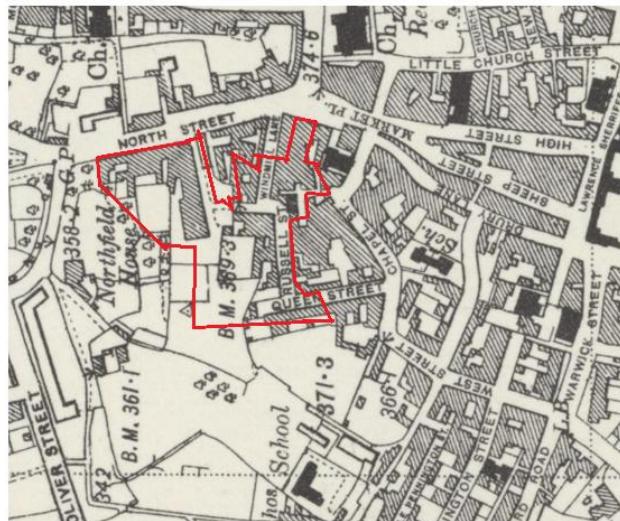
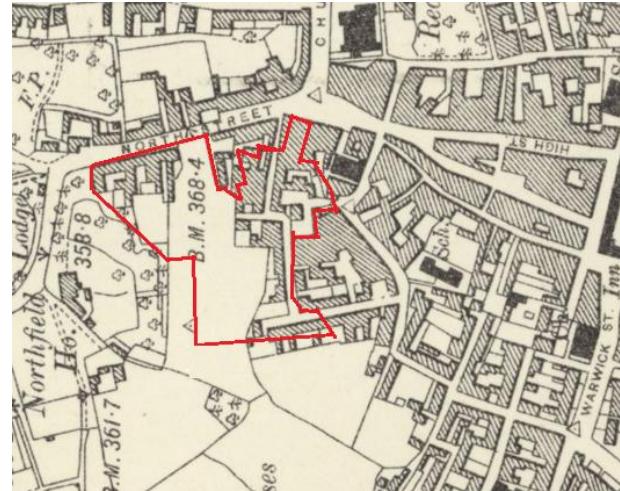


Figure 5: Historic maps of the site – 1905 (top) and 1947 (bottom) (source: National Maps Scotland)

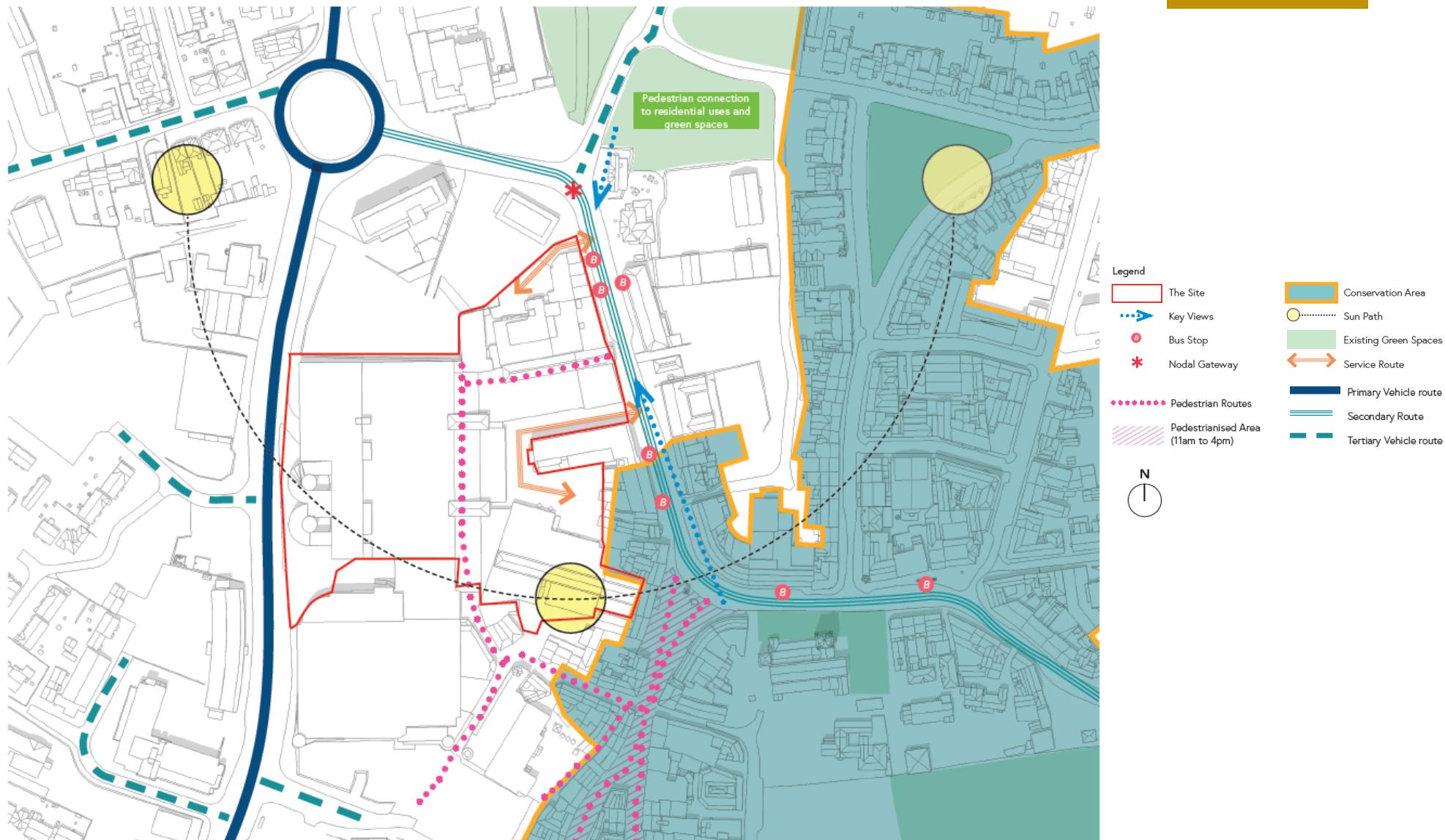


Figure 6: Site Analysis – Connectivity and Constraints

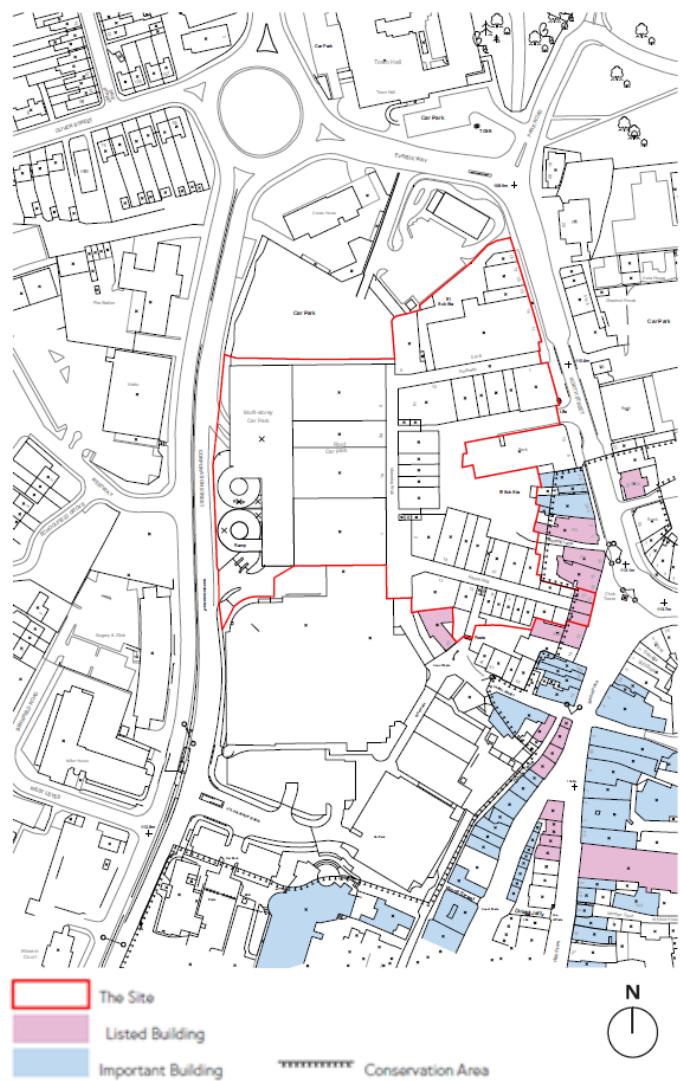


Figure 7: Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

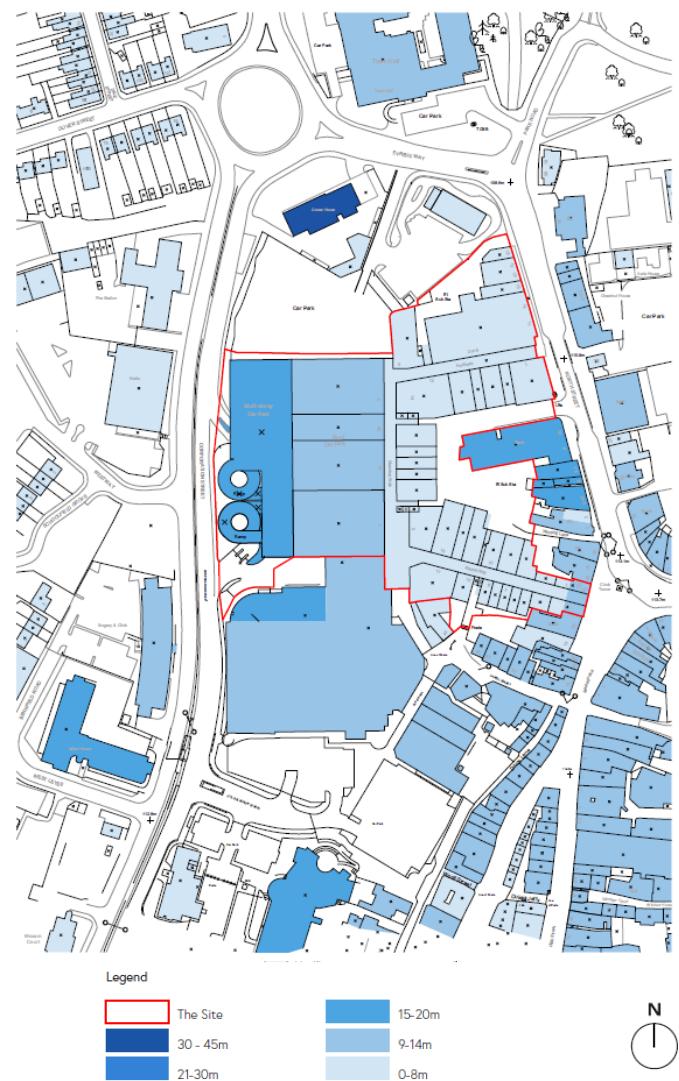


Figure 8: Existing building heights

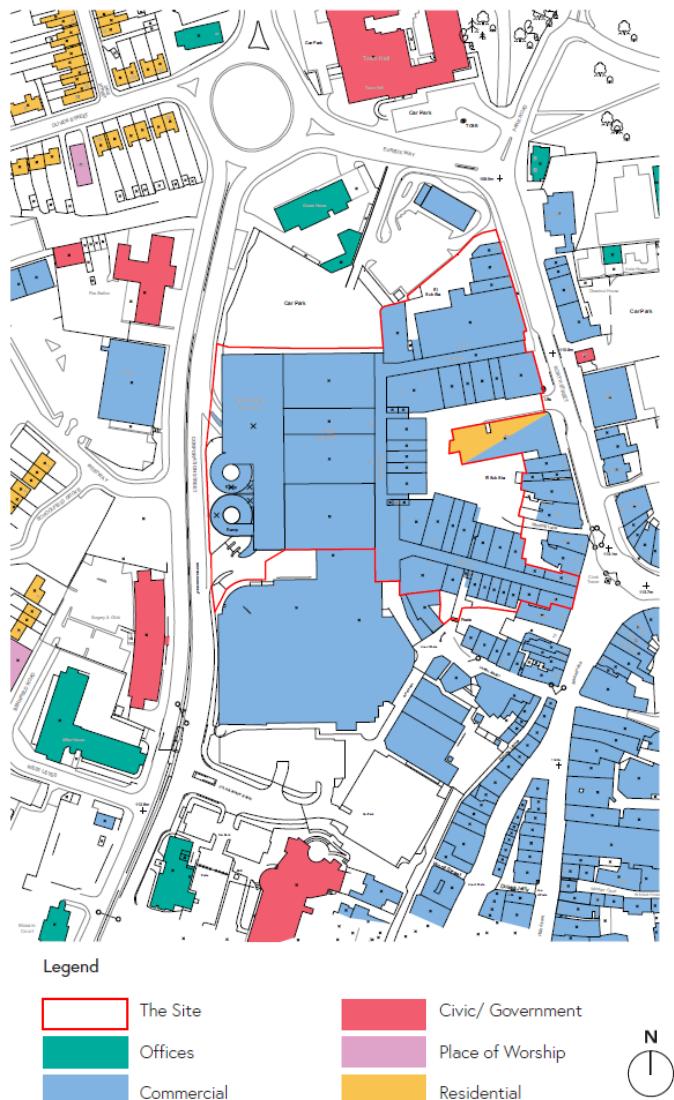


Figure 9: Existing building uses

Existing planning permissions

3.2 The area referred to as Northway has planning permission to be demolished and for two 7 storey blocks to be built in its place. The block would consist of commercial space at ground floor level and 200 open market apartments (R22/0657)

3.11. The east-west connection and improvements to the public realm alongside a high-quality built environment were key considerations for this planning permission.



Figure 10: Illustration of proposals approved under R22/0657

5. Appropriate Development Responses

Challenges

- 5.1. The sense of arrival into the town from Evreux Way Roundabout onto North Street is underwhelming and lacks 'gateway' quality.
- 5.2. Windsor Street has been degraded over time, with gaps in the urban fabric and traffic impacts.
- 5.3. There are several designated and non-designated heritage assets within the site and its vicinity that have the potential to be affected by its redevelopment. These are potential constraints but also impart a distinct sense of character which will need to be considered in any detailed design.
- 3.3. Due to the size of the site the delivery and phasing needs to be considered carefully. Along with how remaining tenants can be accommodated during the construction phases.
- 5.4. Overlooking from and towards neighbouring buildings and uses will need to be carefully considered.
- 5.5. Reprovision of existing car parking.

Opportunities

- 5.6. An opportunity to improve the sense of arrival into the town centre especially along North Street where public realm interventions are proposed through the Public Realm Masterplan (2025).
- 3.4. Creation of a new mixed-use destination to rationalise retail within the site and diversify offer (complementary to historic high street) and to improve footfall.
- 3.5. To introduce high-quality design.
- 5.7. Potential to improve connections/active travel and establish a better sense of integration between the different areas of the town centre (east to west).
- 5.8. Potential to improve the quality of the public realm for residents and visitors.
- 5.9. Potential to foster a vibrant mix of complementary uses that will extend and compliment the town centre offer, extend dwell time and tourism spend in the town centre.
- 3.6. Mitigate climate change by introducing landscaping throughout the public realm.

Taking all of the site analysis, challenges and opportunities, an appropriate development response has been derived, and a framework masterplan has been produced.

Framework Masterplan

5.10. The framework masterplan follows placemaking principles set out in the National Design Guide. The masterplan for the site and the proposed building heights is shown below. Key nodes throughout the development are shown overleaf.





Objectives

5.11. This SPD provides a positive framework to significantly improve the built form, public realm and connectivity in the town centre. The definitions on this page relate to the key for the framework masterplan and what is expected for each identified element.

5.12. To achieve the vision, successful implementation of the SPD will deliver the following objectives:

- Objective 1: Maximise the regenerative opportunities this site provides by virtue of its location in the town centre.
- Objective 2: Improve access through the site, especially east west connections and also those to the south to improve the linkages to the wider town centre.
- Objective 3: Regenerate an underused and underutilised area of the town centre and improve the built form through the provision of high quality buildings.
- Objective 4: Achieve significant improvements to the public realm (including landscaping and ecological gains) in and around the site to promote walking and visitation.
- Objective 5: Make a positive contribution to the historic context including securing the long-term future of the gateway listed building on Market Place.

DEFINITIONS

Active Frontages

Street frontages or edges that allow a visual or physical engagement between the street users and the ground floors of buildings.

Main Links

Identifies main pedestrian and cycle links required to be provided from each key node.

Key Active Frontages

As above except location within key views and only class E will be allowed unless robust justification is given.

Gateway Building

Buildings which are in visually prominent locations, addressing key routes and spaces. The architectural expression of these buildings will therefore be given particular consideration at the design stage. Proposals should demonstrate how gateway buildings have been designed to reflect their prominence and status. They will demonstrate qualities over and above neighbouring buildings such as distinct architectural form, increased height (in accordance with proposed height ranges) and additional external structure or features.

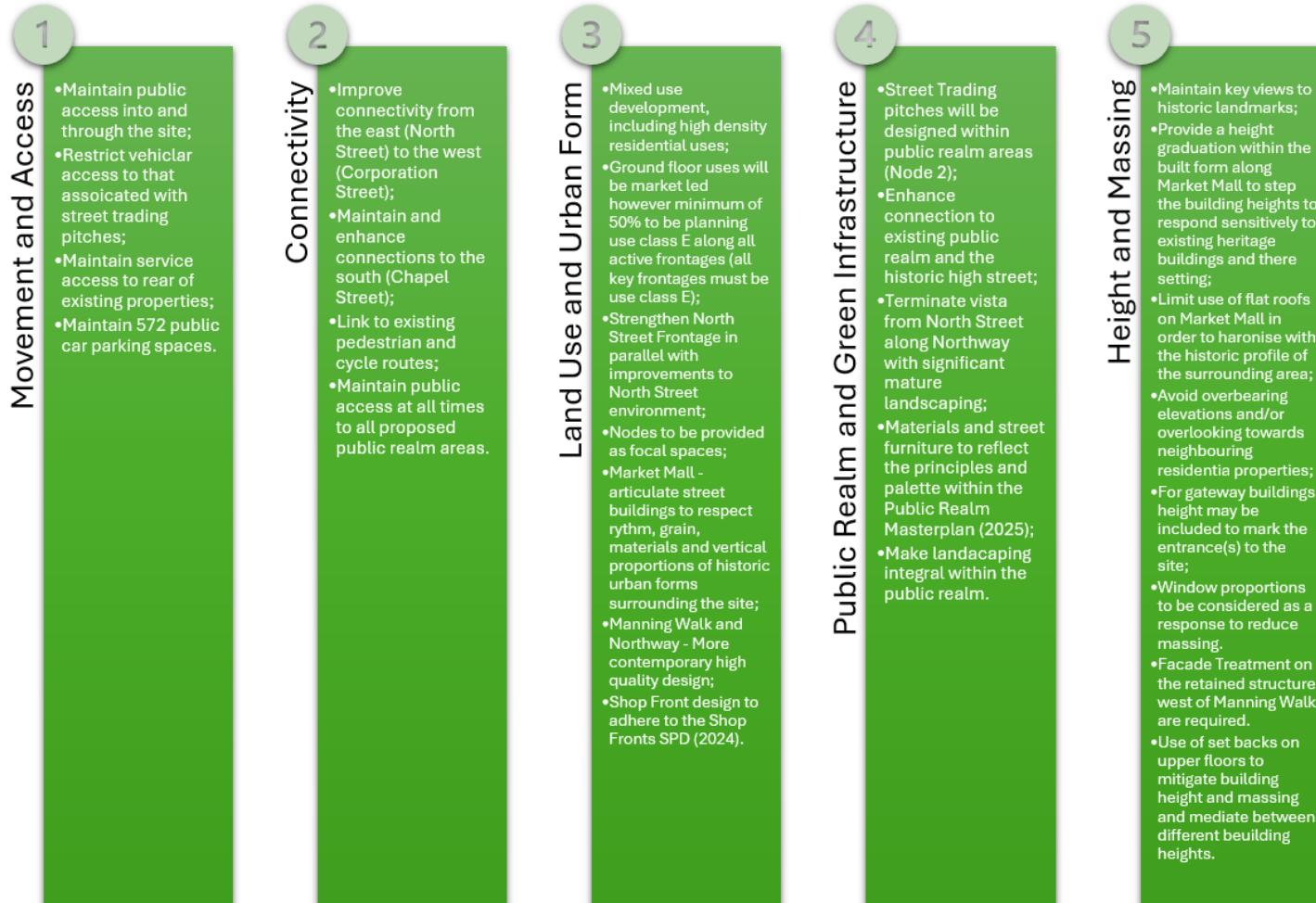
Key Nodes

Grouping of buildings and public realm which is vital to creating a sense of place.



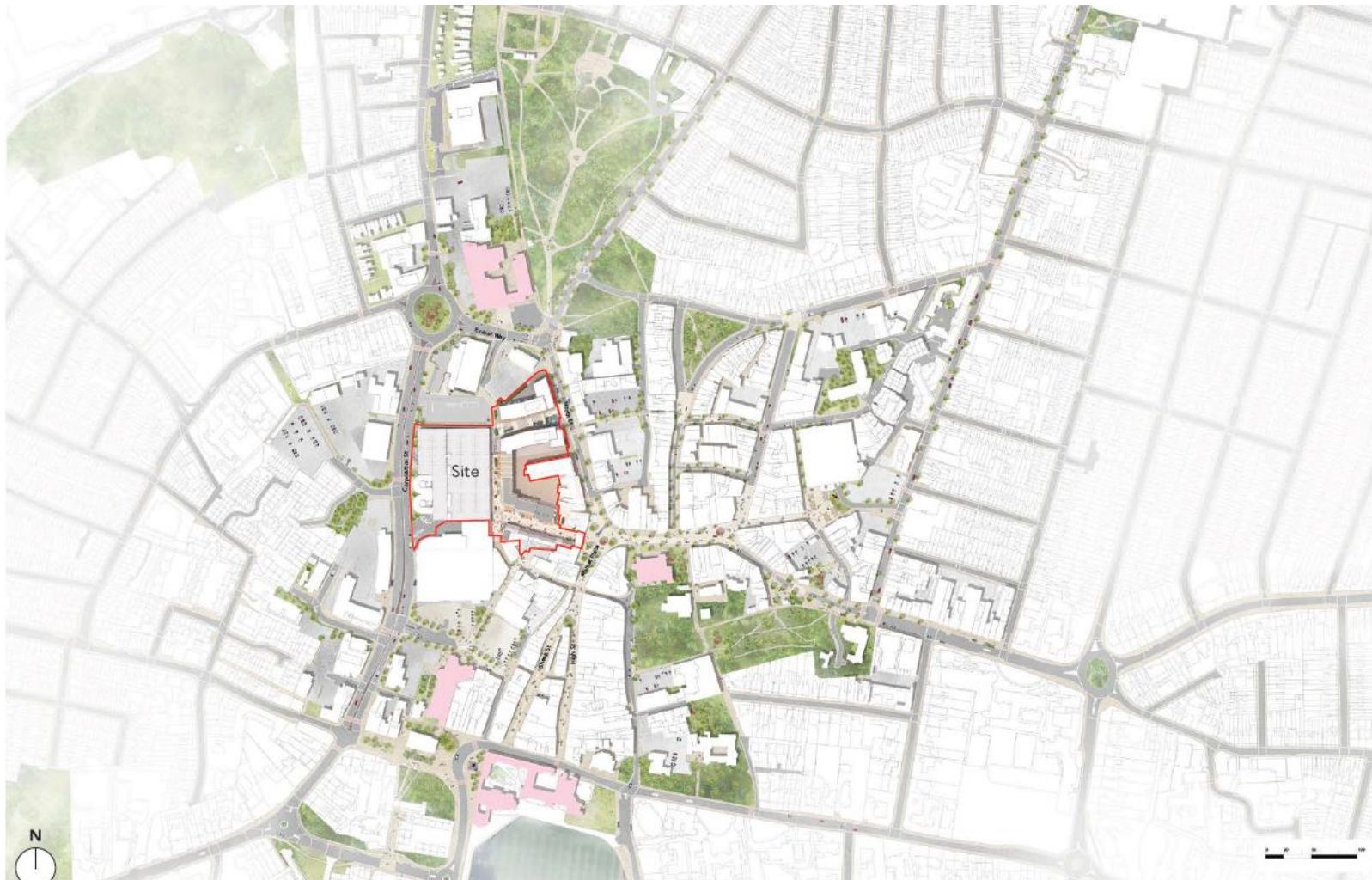
Design Principles

5.13. Relevant planning policies and design codes/guides should be adhered to in relation to the detailed design of this site however design principals have been derived to sit under each objective as follows:



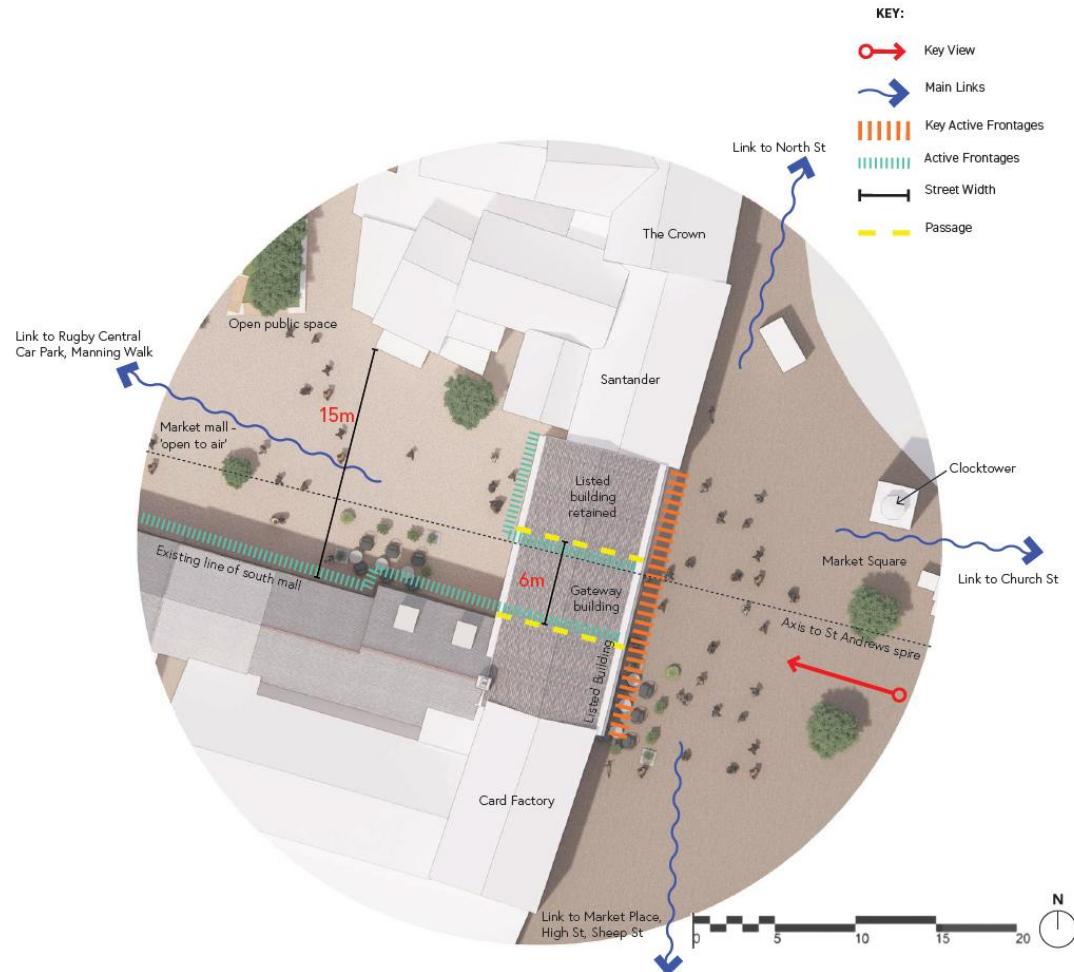
Public Realm Masterplan Integration

5.14. Integration with the Public Realm Masterplan is key to this SPD. This is shown below.



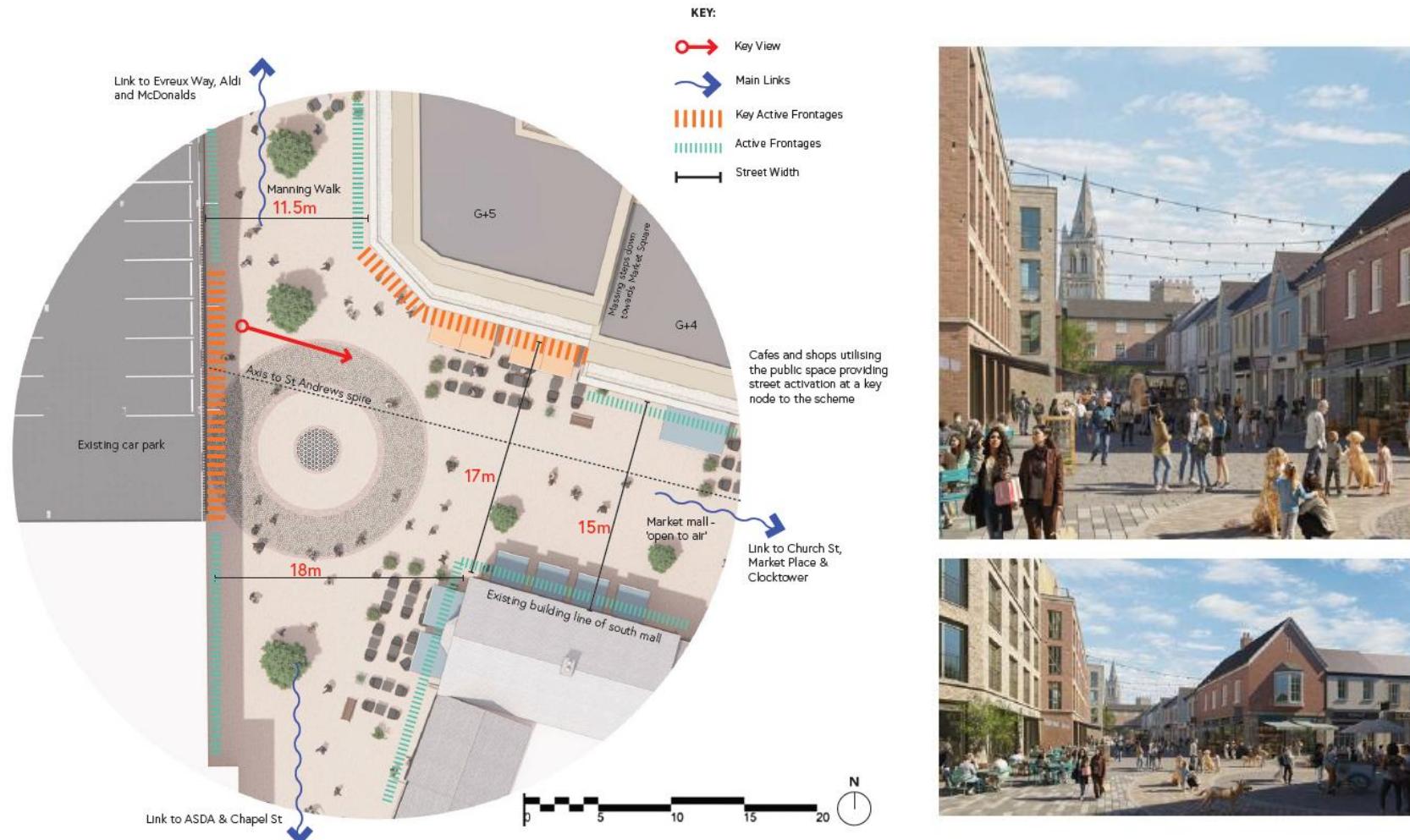
Key Nodes

5.15. **Node 1** is the gateway entrance from Market Place and is framed by a listed building. It focuses the axis along the proposed 'open-to-air' Market Mall. The massing steps down to this key node and is aligned with St Andrew's Church Spire.

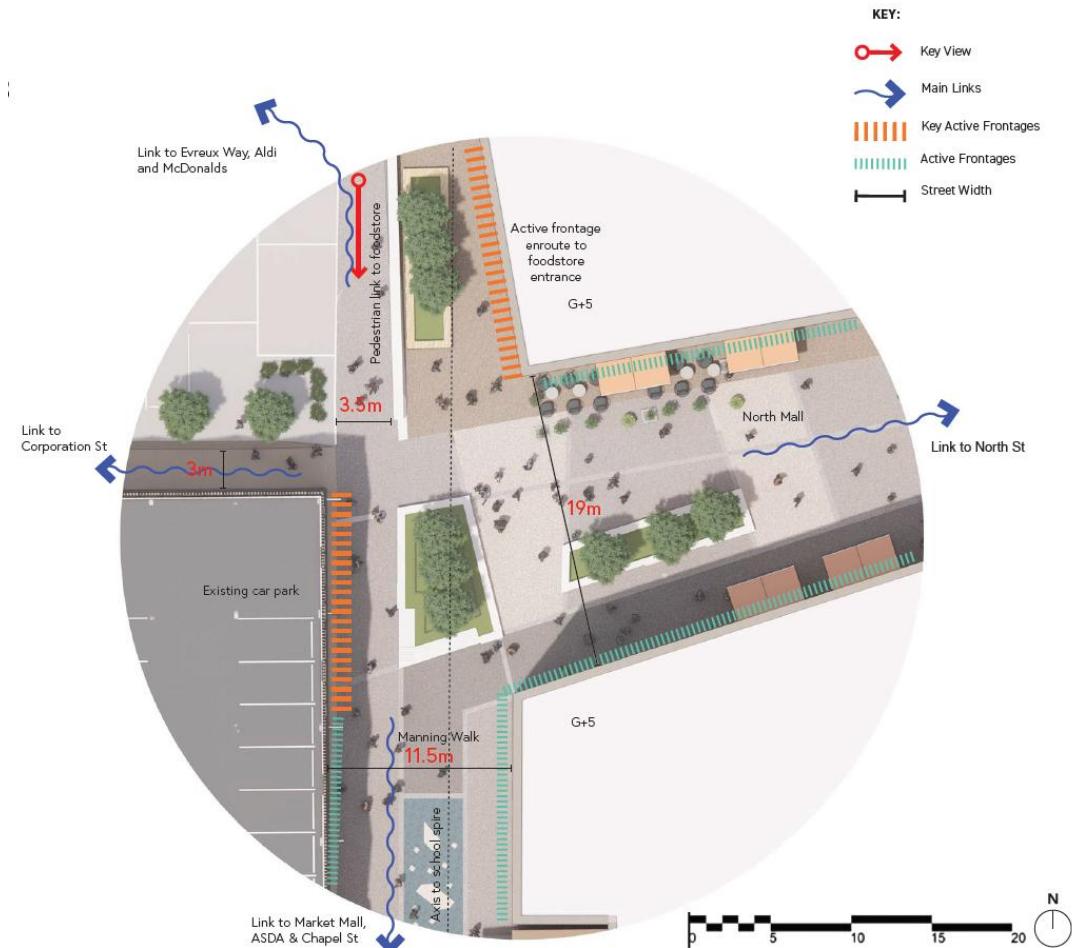


Framing the entrance to the 'Market mall'

5.16. **Node 2** is the heart of the scheme, where Market Mall and Manning Walk meet. A key façade of the existing car park provides the focal backdrop therefore façade improvements are essential in this location. The view from Chapel Street incorporates an identified gateway building. This node is where street trading pitches should be included.



5.17. **Node 3** is the junction between Northway and Manning Walk. This node links to Cemex House and McDonalds for which pedestrian and cycle connections should be provided. Opening Northway further creates a clear axis to the corner of the existing Cemex House car park which then turns to Manning Walk, which is aligned to Rugby School spire.



6. Delivery

How regeneration will be delivered

Rugby Central is a key site within the town centre with significant redevelopment potential. The SPD is to guide that redevelopment.

The framework masterplan, parameters and design principles within it have been devised to focus on the site however key connections are also identified. Adjoining sites therefore must have due regard to providing these connections or links to them.

It is recognised that to deliver redevelopment on this site may require additional public funding.

Relocating existing land uses

As the majority of the site except for south of Manning Walk is shown to be redeveloped with a rationalisation of the ground floor class E units there will be an element of displacement during the delivery of regeneration of this site.

There will therefore need to be a displacement of existing uses plan which will need to cover the different phases of development across the site and consider the potential of temporary units on the site and other vacant units within the town centre.

Indicative Phasing of Development

Phase 1 – Northway development blocks (Planning permission already secured)

Phase 2 – Demolition of east of Manning Walk and north of Market Mall, façade improvements to west of manning walk and removal of roof. Introduction of temporary uses within demolition area.

Phase 3 – Development of east of Manning Walk and Market Mall connecting to Market Place.

Phasing Plan:



APPENDIX 1 – Relevant Local Plan Planning Policies

Local Plan

- GP1: Securing Sustainable Development
- GP2: Settlement Hierarchy
- GP3: Previously Developed Land and Conversions
- GP4: Safeguarding Developed Land and Conversions
- DS1: Overall Development Needs
- DS5: Comprehensive Development of Strategic Sites
- H1: Informing Housing Mix
- H2: Affordable Housing Provision
- TC1: Development in Rugby Town Centre
- TC2: Rugby Town Centre – New Retail and Town Centre Uses
- TC3: Primary Shopping Area and Shopping Frontages
- HS1: Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities
- HS2: Health Impact Assessments
- HS4: Open Space, Sports Facilities and Recreation
- HS5: Traffic Generation, Air Quality, Noise and Vibration
- NE1: Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets
- NE3: Landscape Protection and Enhancement
- SDC1: Sustainable Design

- SDC2: Landscaping
- SDC3: Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- SDC4: Sustainable Buildings
- SDC5: Flood Risk Management
- SDC6: Sustainable Drainage
- SDC7: Protection of Water Environment and Water Supply
- SDC9: Broadband and Mobile Internet
- D1: Transport
- D2: Parking Facilities
- D3: Infrastructure and Implementation
- D4: Planning Obligations

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Air Quality SPD (2021)
- Climate Change and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2023)
- Housing Needs SPD (2012)
- Planning Obligations SPD (2012)
- Shop Fronts SPD (2024)
- Rugby Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

APPENDIX 2 – Heritage Information

High-level heritage impact assessment

1. Paragraph 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. This should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
2. The development brief sets parameters for development but does not go as far as setting out detailed design proposals therefore a high-level heritage impact assessment has been carried out. This assessment has been undertaken based on the five step approach within Historic England's The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (second Edition).

Step 1: Identification of affected heritage assets and their settings

3. The application site itself contains 1 listed building (21&22 Market Place) which is Grade II listed. It is then also within the setting of all the listed buildings within table 1. All of the listed buildings within close proximity to the site are Grade II listed with St Andrews Church building Grade II*. A small part of the site which adjoins Market Place is within the Town Centre Conservation Area. 1 North St and 20-25 Market Place are all Grade II listed however they also form a group as stated within the individual listings (see table 1). The historic connection of these buildings amplifies the experience of the significance of each building in this group. There are also non-designed heritage assets located within the vicinity of the application site (shown as important buildings on figure 4 of this document).
4. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is therefore relevant to these listed buildings and their setting. It requires the Council to have "special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses." Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also places a duty on the decision maker to give special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character of a Conservation Area.

Step 2: Assessment of the contribution to significance

5. In relation to listed buildings it is noted that there is no statutory definition of setting. However, having regard to the definition of setting is outlined in the Framework, it is possible for a site to be in the setting of a listed building even if there are no clear visual links between the two. In relation to conservation areas, it is again important to recognise that a site can influence and make a positive contribution to its setting.
6. The numbers and proximity of heritage assets in urban areas mean that the protection and enhancement of setting is intimately linked to townscape and urban design considerations. These include the degree of conscious design or fortuitous beauty and the consequent visual harmony or congruity of development, and often relates to townscape attributes such as enclosure, definition of streets and spaces and spatial qualities as well as lighting, trees, and verges, or the treatments of boundaries or street surfaces.
7. The main contribution of the existing shopping centre is in terms of the setting of the Town Centre Conservation Area. When approaching the town centre along North Street from Evreux Way the shopping centre is of a similar scale at 2 to 3 storeys to the prevailing character of the conservation area. When looking along North Street, the site does not currently provide a strong edge to the streetscape.

Step 3: Assessment of effects of the proposed development on significance & Step 4: Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

8. The Rugby Town Centre Conservation Area appraisal, does not consider the existing shopping centre to be of any great architectural distinction and therefore the removal of existing poor-quality buildings and the provision of high-quality replacement buildings and public realm would have a positive impact on the setting of the conservation area. It is acknowledged however that there would be an adverse impact from the partial loss of the open skyline above the site where the building heights are proposed to be increased in relation to the existing structures with the highest part being to Northway and the contrast of scales in this location.
9. There is a notable and sudden drop in building heights from the 5-storeys (18.3m) high Napier Building to the 2-storey (10.7m) high to the shopping centre. The impact of this 7.6m drop is compounded by the blank and uninspiring appearance of the

building which is of almost no architectural merit. When coupled with its horizontal massing it is left wanting and undeniably detracts from and has an adverse impact on the Conservation Area.

10. The proposed parameters for development of this site seeks to rectify the current deficiencies of the existing buildings and provides an opportunity to comprehensively enhance the site and better connect it with the surrounding context. It is pertinently clear that in order to do this the height of any proposed development on the site would need to increase to redress the sudden drop in heights when looking north along North Street. Moreover, an increase in height provides a greater opportunity for a stronger design to be created which in turn would uplift the visual appearance and character of the area.
11. When looking along North Street from the town centre the proposed maximum building height parameter within this development brief would follow the ridge line of the adjoining Napier building. When looking south along North Street towards the town the buildings would appreciably provide a stronger sense of urban form that better tie in and connect with the rest of the town centre.
12. Regarding the Grade II* listed Church of St Andrew, it considers that the proposed scheme would result in a minor adverse impact on its setting as a result of the spire becoming less apparent in certain glimpsed views across the site from the northwest and west. This would correspond to a negligible adverse impact on its significance. It is considered that there would be no impact on the setting of the Grade II Lawn and a neutral impact on the Rugby Baptist Church, Sunday School, 1 North Street and 46 Chapel Street. In relation to 20-25 Market Place it is considered that the enhancement and retention of 21-22 Market Place would have a beneficial impact upon this group of listed buildings subject to the final design. The setting of the Clock Tower would also be enhanced subject to a satisfactory design being proposed. The identified levels of adverse impact are considered to be less than substantial harm which should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme when planning permission is sought.
13. it is accepted that the proposed scheme would have some impact upon designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the site. In relation to the Rugby Town Conservation Area this impact would moderate beneficial to the setting and minor beneficial impact to its significance. However, in the case of the Grade II* listed Church of St Andrew, there would be a minor adverse impact on its setting as a result of the spire becoming less apparent in certain glimpsed views across the site from the northwest and west. This would correspond to a negligible adverse impact on its significant. It is judged that the proposal would result in 'less than substantial' harm to this asset

14. Being tall structures, church towers and spires are often widely visible across land- and townscapes but, where development does not impact on the significance of heritage assets visible in a wider setting or where not allowing significance to be appreciated, they are unlikely to be affected by small-scale development, unless that development competes with them, as tower blocks and wind turbines may. Even then, such an impact is more likely to be on the landscape values of the tower or spire rather than the heritage values, unless the development impacts on its significance, for instance by impacting on a designed or associative view.
15. The development brief sets out that the listed building within the red line of the site (21&22 Market Place) must be retained and enhanced and the illustrative masterplan and design principles reflect this. If the Rugby Central entrance which has been retrofitted to the building is removed this will provide a positive change as the building will become more prominent within the street scene and its setting.

Step 5: Decision and monitoring

16. It is not envisaged that there would be any substantial harm or loss of the significance any designated heritage assets based on the parameters and design principles set out within this brief. When planning applications are submitted in relation to this site a heritage impact assessment will be required to confirm this based on the detailed design proposals.

Table 1: Key listed buildings

Address	Picture	Listing Information
The Windmill Inn, 1 North Street <i>Grade II</i>		<u>THE WINDMILL INN, Non Civil Parish - 1035029 Historic England</u> Note: No1 North Street and Nos 20-25 Market Place form a group as stated within all the individual listings.
25 Market Place <i>Grade II</i>		<u>25, MARKET PLACE, Non Civil Parish - 1365033 Historic England</u>
23 and 24 Market Place <i>Grade II</i>		<u>23 AND 24, MARKET PLACE, Non Civil Parish - 1184103 Historic England</u>

21 and 22 Market Place <i>Grade II</i>		<u>21 AND 22, MARKET PLACE, Non Civil Parish - 1035027 Historic England</u>
20 and 20A Market Place <i>Grade II</i>		<u>20 AND 20A, MARKET PLACE, Non Civil Parish - 1365032 Historic England</u>
46 Chapel Street <i>Grade II</i>		<u>46, Chapel Street, Non Civil Parish - 1035045 Historic England</u>

Clocktower <i>Grade II</i>		https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1300276
Church of St Andrew <i>Grade II*</i>	 	CHURCH OF SAINT ANDREW, Non Civil Parish - 1183695 Historic England