

Wharf Street Character Area
Townscape Analysis & Design Guidance
Evidence Document

Draft v.13

Urban Design Team
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Part A: Townscape Analysis

1. Introduction: The Central Development Area (CDA) and Character Areas

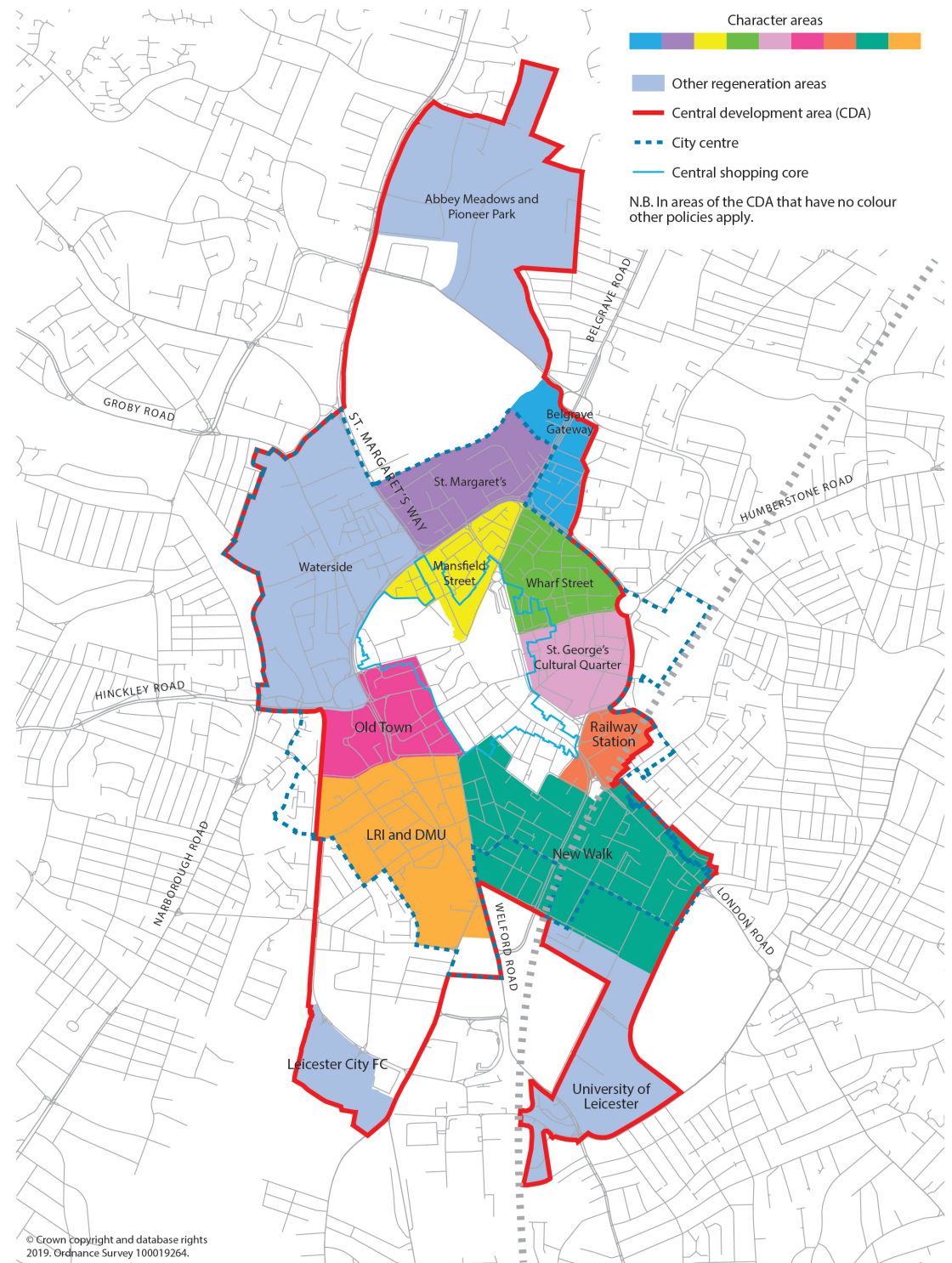
The regeneration of Leicester is a key theme of Leicester's development plan. In considering the central area of Leicester, areas have been identified which have distinctive characters and context, identity, opportunities and challenges and therefore different development objectives. These areas will also make a very important contribution to addressing the city's future housing needs.

Much of the development activity needed to enable restructuring of the economy will occur in the area within and around the City Centre, within the Central Development Area (CDA). Leicester's future economic prosperity will depend on making sure that it has the right appeal to a skilled and mobile workforce as well as being an attractive place to live and work. The quality of life, environment, housing, jobs and the cultural, leisure and retail offer of the city and central area in particular, will play a major role in this. The aim of the Central Development Area is to enable the City Council to direct, optimise and encourage investment, whilst managing development appropriately within a local context, so that they deliver high quality development, which in turn creates certainty and developer confidence.

The City Council has divided the Central Development Area (CDA) into 13 distinct areas, including 9 Character Areas and 4 other Regeneration Areas to recognise the individual context of each area and for future policy to be based on the area's defining characteristics.

There are 9 Character Areas :-

1. Railway Station;
2. Mansfield Street;
3. St. Margaret's;
4. Wharf Street;
5. Belgrave Gateway;
6. LRI and DMU;
7. St. Georges Cultural Quarter;
8. Old Town;
9. New Walk and



Four Other Regeneration Areas:-

- Abbey Meadows and Pioneer Park;
- Waterside;
- Leicester City Football Club;
- University of Leicester.

Policy Basis:

Section 12 of the revised NPPF (February 2019), paragraphs 124 – 126, Achieving Well-designed Places, states the importance of plans for creating a clear design vision and expectations at an early stage, tailored to the context and an area's defining characteristics. This will support the creation of high quality buildings and spaces and give applicants some certainty on what is likely to be acceptable. This is currently being achieved through the Waterside SPD adopted in 2015 which is successfully promoting and delivering regeneration, which in turn, creates certainty and developer confidence.

The 9 Character Areas have been comprehensively assessed by the City Council. A detailed 'Townscape Analysis and Design Guidance' evidence document has been prepared for each character area to respond to the requirements of the NPPF, build on the success of the Waterside SPD, and develop policies and clear guidance for development that is tailored to the circumstances and context of each character area.

It is expected that in time this guidance will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, including proposed building heights, which will also focus on directing and prioritising pro-active interventions which may include public realm, transport, heritage, streetscapes etc. and objectives and townscape guidance specific to each character area.

12. Achieving well-designed places

124. The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

125. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.

126. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, plans or supplementary planning documents should use visual tools such as design guides and codes. These provide a framework for creating distinctive places, with a consistent and high quality standard of design. However their level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.

Extract from the NPPF (February 2019): Paragraphs 124 - 126

1. Introduction: The Central Development Area (CDA) and Character Areas

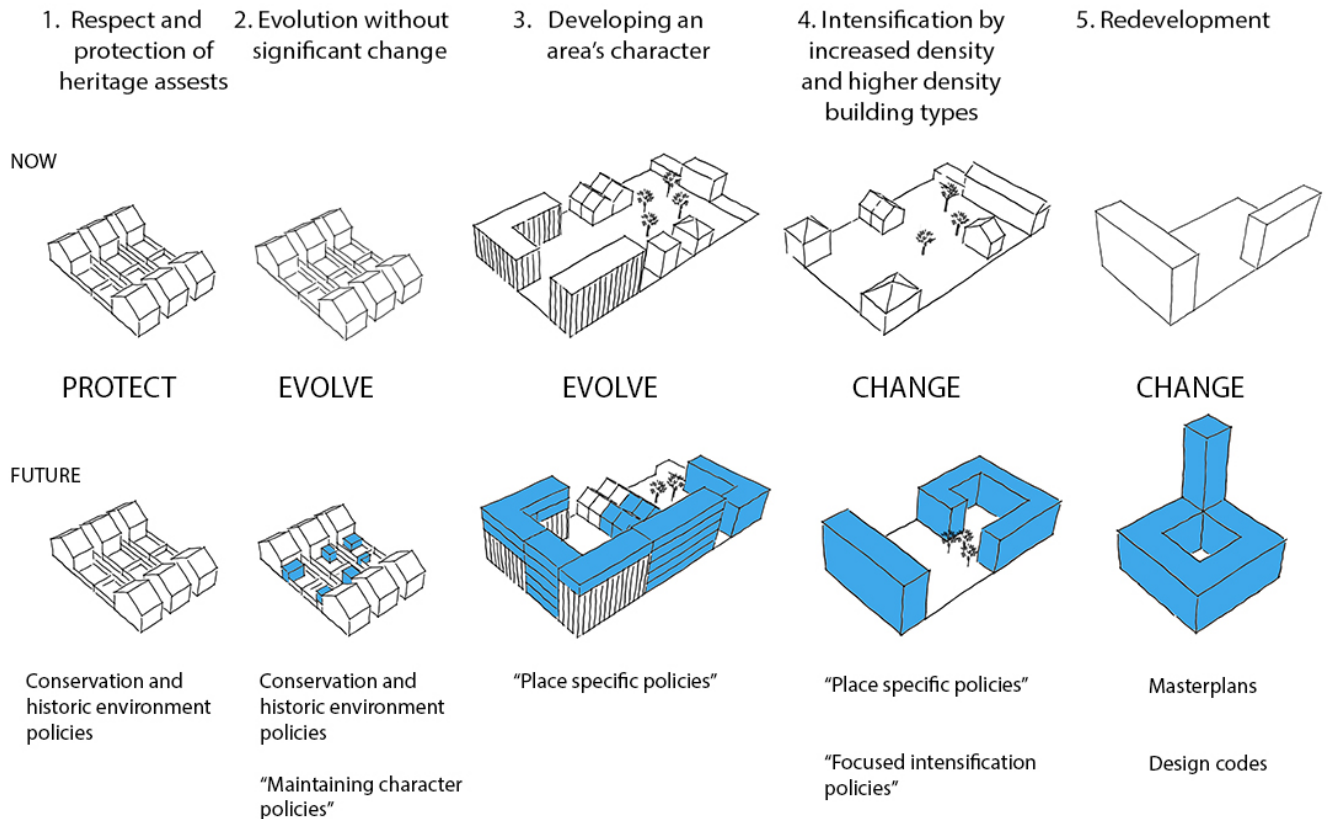
Townscape Character Management:

To inform and guide policy it is helpful to understand the level and scope of change the distinct character areas are likely to undergo during the plan period and beyond. Some Character Areas will be predominantly heritage assets, with few development opportunities and require protection to conserve their very distinct character. Others may undergo significant residential growth and intensification and require guidance to manage this growth cohesively and comprehensively, also considering the need for new infrastructure as residential neighbourhoods grow.

The Townscape Management Options used by London Borough of Croydon in their Local Plan 2018 outlines five options to categorise and understand this level of change and how it will be managed through planning policy.

1. Respect and protection of heritage assets
2. Evolution without significant change
3. Developing an area's character
4. Intensification by increased density and higher density building types
5. Redevelopment

The Townscape Analysis and Design Guidance for each character area will establish the relevant Townscape Management Option(s) attributed to that area to develop policies and clear guidance for development that is tailored to the circumstances and context of each Character Area.



Reference; London Borough of Croydon

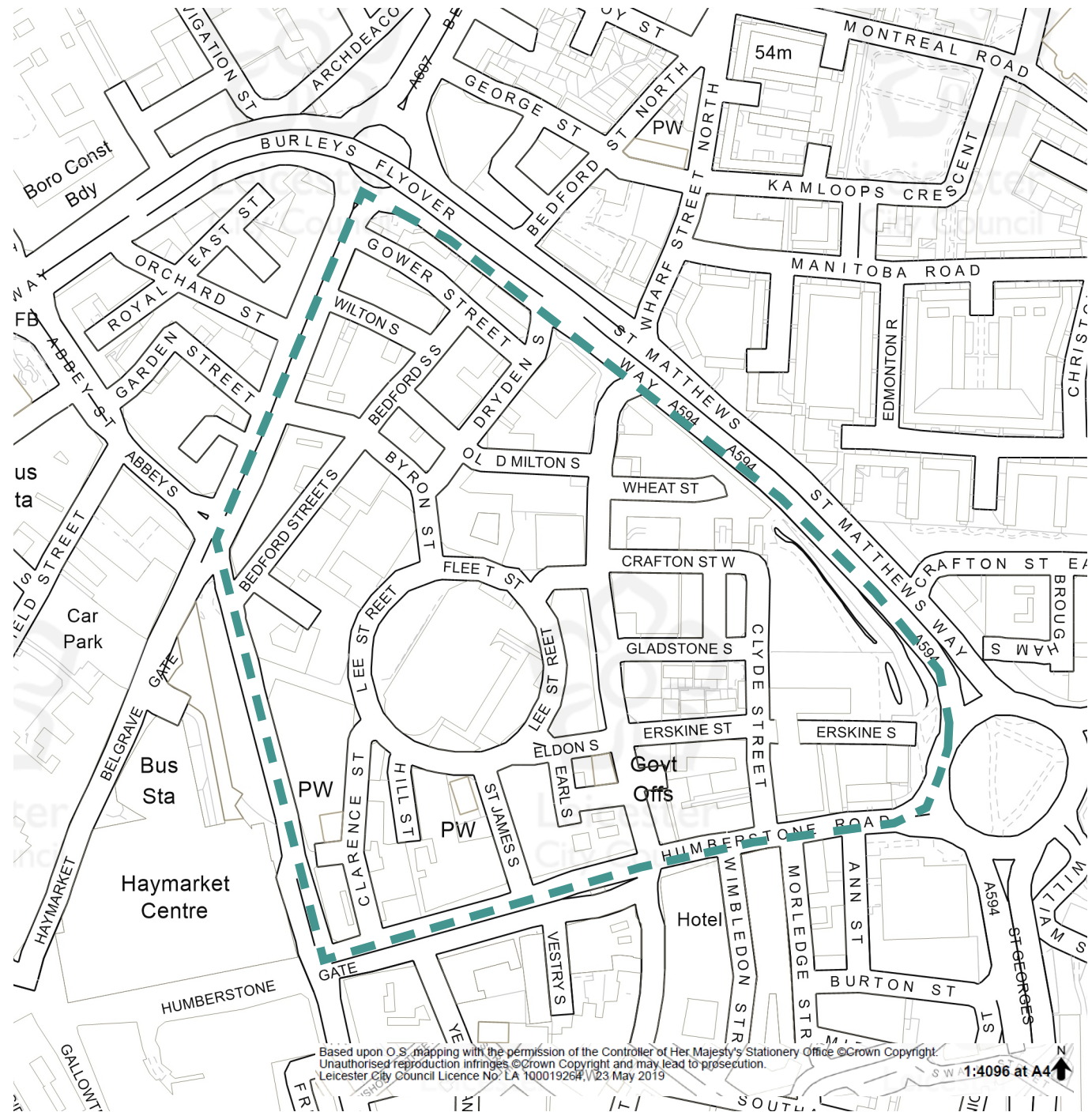
Wharf Street Character Area

Leicester City Council recognises the opportunities and issues within the Wharf Street Character Area.

The Wharf Street area has been subject to a high level of applications and pre-applications for residential development in recent years. In the past proposals have been considered in isolation in the absence of a vision for the area. This level of potential growth requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach to enable the creation of an attractive, successful and sustainable place with a distinctive identity. A place that will become, over time as development comes forward, a great place to live.

The Council also recognises that the area has challenges and issues which need to be overcome. The area was subject to planning guidance in the early 2000's, however, this recommended ambitious changes to the area which would have been difficult to implement.

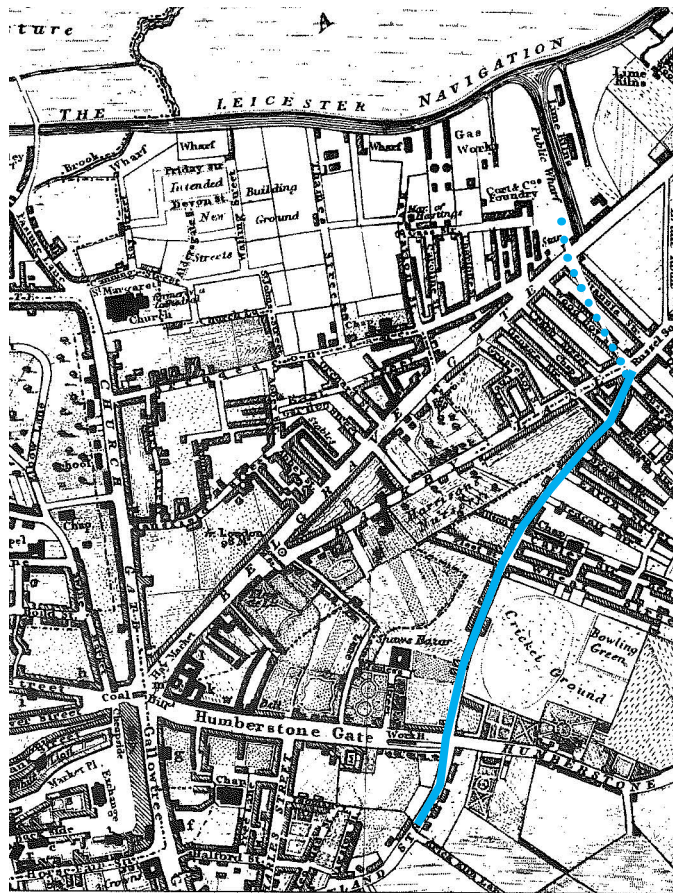
The Wharf Street / Lee Circle area will undergo significant change in the next 15-20 years and this process needs to be managed positively and proactively.



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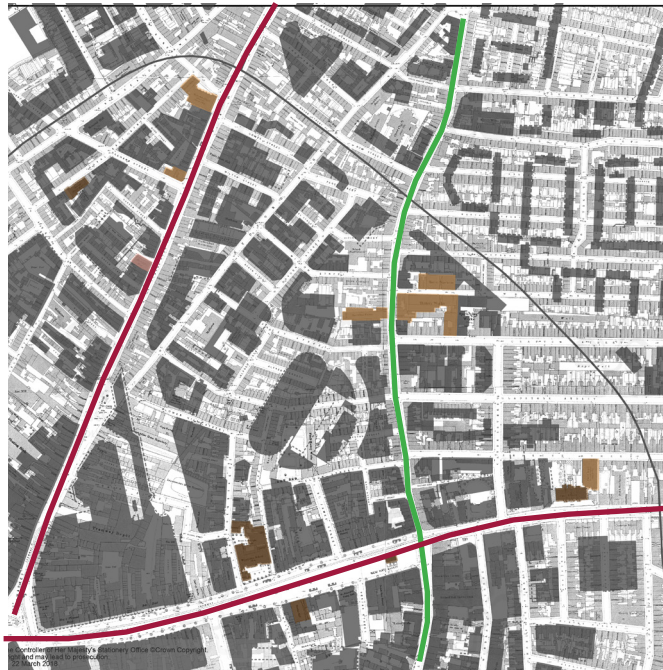
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2. History of the area



5

1828



1886-87



1914-16



1940



1952

2. History of the area

Historic maps are shown below the figure ground from the present day. The heritage assets are highlighted showing their relationship to the historic plans and to emphasise their importance in this area at particular times in the past.

Key references for this section are two books; 'Post war Leicester' published 2006 by Ben Beazley and 'Wharf Street revisited' by Cynthia Brown published 1995.

Eighteenth Century

At this time there was very little development, with a small amount concentrated along Belgrave Gate and Humberstone Gate which had become major routes into the city, as illustrated in the Robert's map of 1741.

In the 1770s the improvement of the Harborough Turnpike route to London, which ran via Gallowtree Gate, encouraged further development east along Belgrave Gate and Humberstone Gate. As illustrated in Prior's map of 1779, the site of the present Clock Tower was at this time a major junction in the city.

The 1828 map continues to show the importance of the main streets of Humberstone Gate and Belgrave Gate, which are clearly identifiable. Wharf Street is legible and the street pattern of the present day Bedford Street. At this time the intention was to link Wharf Street, hence its name, with the public wharf to the north

Victorian Era

Before 1828 there was very little development in the Wharf Street Character Area. The late Georgian and early Victorian era, however, saw the first significant growth with most housing having been built to house local factory workers, with clusters of closely built streets. Some of the housing became lodging houses attracting the very poor.

Industrial premises, both large and small, were also scattered throughout the area. This was a convenient arrangement, and typical of many working class areas in the 19th century. Employees were saved the effort and expense of travelling to work, while employers benefited

from lower land prices on the fringe of the town, and a workforce literally on their doorstep. Shops and public houses became established to serve the emerging working community.

Many of the firms in the Wharf Street area were associated with Leicester's main industries - hosiery and footwear manufacturing and the engineering industry which grew up initially to supply both with machinery. One of the largest and best known employers in the Wharf Street area was William Raven and Co. and occupied large premises in Wheat Street. In 1914, when he died, 1000 people were employed by the company and it continued to trade until the 1960s.

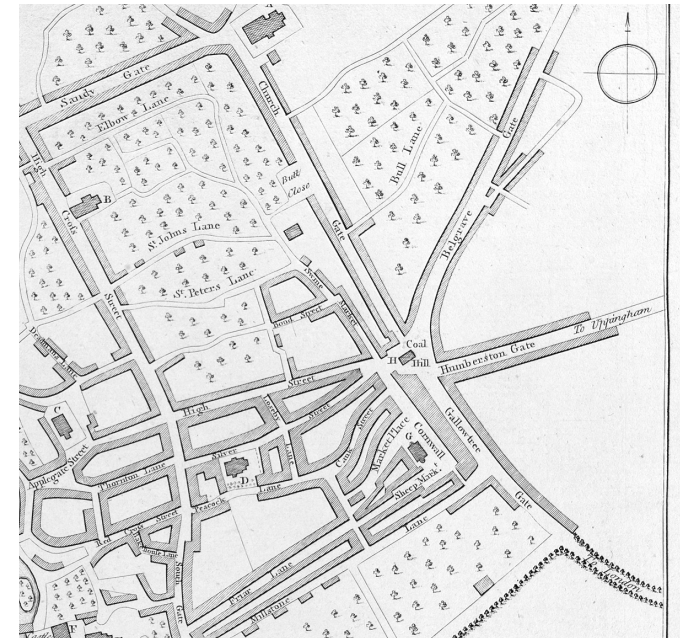
Some of Leicester's most notable manufacturing companies originated in the Wharf Street area - Imperial Typewriter Company and Pearson and Bennion, which eventually merged with British United Shoe Machinery Company.

With the growth of new industry and housing, more and more open space within the city was being developed. The Wharf Street Cricket Ground was significant to the outdoor social life of Leicester and 'the 10 acre pitch incorporated a bowling green and was said to be the largest in the country outside Lords itself'. In 1860, however, the ground and adjoining land were sold to meet the demands for industry and working class housing.

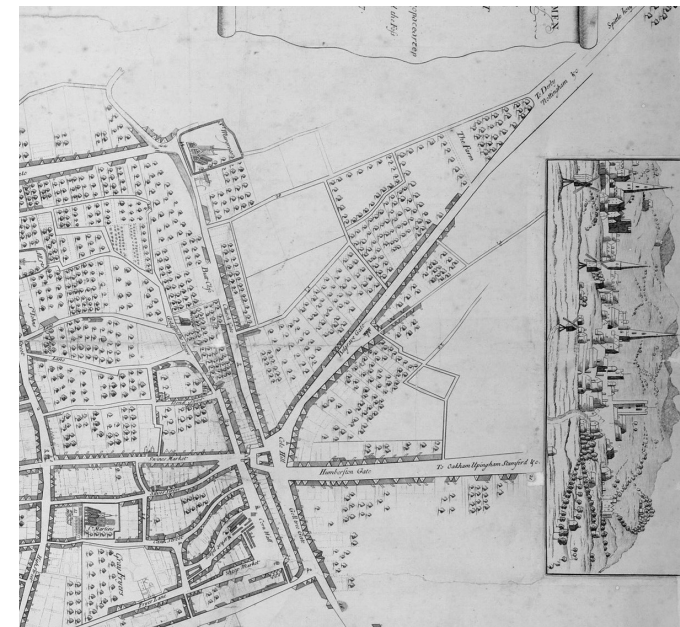
By 1886 the cricket ground had been developed and the dense concentration of industry and housing is clearly illustrated. The area is characterised by narrow streets and terraces. As noted by Ben Beazley, 'According to Jack Simmons, one of the foremost modern historians of Victorian Leicester stated that in 1840's the town contained no back to back housing, there were thought to have been 1,500 such dwellings by 1864'. Many of these were in the Wharf Street area.

Bedford Street and Wharf Street provided main connections through the area with the streets terminating at the area formerly known as Russell Square. The previous connection to the west is apparent.

During the Victorian era the Wharf Street area was much larger than the proposed Character Area and included a large area of the city centre which included most of



Robert's Map (1741)



Prior's Map (1779)

2. History of the area

the present day St. Matthews Estate over the central ring road. The district was bounded by Belgrave Gate, Humberstone Road and the Great Northern Railway.

Famous characters over the years had an association with the, often described 'squalid thoroughfares' of Wharf Street. Joseph Carey Merrick, the 'Elephant Man' was born in Lee Street in 1862, and the gymnasium over the Jolly Angler pub at 122A Wharf Street, was regularly used for training by well known boxers such as Reggie Meen, 'Pop' Newman and Larry Gains.

Early to mid Twentieth Century:

The main impact on the Wharf Street area, and the city as a whole, was the increasing influence of the motor vehicle. In the post war era the city's largely medieval and Victorian street pattern was unable to cope with increased traffic demands.

Plans for a central ring road system were originally conceived in the 1930s, although most construction didn't start until the 1950s. Construction started with the widening of Burley's Lane into Burley's Way, which terminated in a new roundabout at the end of Church Gate and along Belgrave Gate. Also, in the 1950s Leicester City Council planned for a further phase of the ring road between Belgrave Gate and Humberstone Gate to provide access to 21 acres of land that had been set aside for industrial development. This is the north-east edge of the Wharf Street area we see now. It was also to be a 'buffer' between new industry and the new St. Matthews Estate.

Undeveloped bomb sites and demolition sites from the first phases of the clearance of 'slum housing' provided a solution to off-street car parking which was also becoming problematic. In the late 1930s and early 1940s Charles Street was widened and the circle of concrete of Lee Street surface car park was constructed providing space for 1,200 cars. This geometry which characterises the area can clearly be seen today.

Slum clearance and the influence of the motor vehicle created large fragmented plots for industry and wide streets that disconnected people and places. The Wharf Street area lost its well defined streets and blocks and connections to the east.

Most of the heritage assets which characterise the Wharf Street area we see today survived this period.

Mid to late Twentieth Century:

The 1960's saw the construction and completion of the central ring road between Belgrave Gate and Humberstone Gate. Other landowners took the opportunity to develop cleared sites. Major infrastructure in the area included the laying of underground cables in preparation for the new General Post Office (GPO) telephone exchange. The Exchange Building, opened in 1960, along Wharf Street, remains today a positive landmark to the townscape of the area. The International Exchange (Cardinal Building) was completed in 1970.

In October 1959, in another of its ten year plans, the Transport Corporation recommended 5 sites for multi-storey car parks to alleviate traffic congestion. One of these sites was Lee Circle and construction began in early 1961 on plans by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners of London. It was opened in December 1961 with space for 1,050 cars and as much celebrated at the time, a Tesco supermarket and bowling alley.

Epic House, in Charles Street, was for 38 years home to Radio Leicester from 1967 until the station's relocation to St. Nicholas Place in 2005. It was completed in the mid 1960's as part of a mixed use development on at the time considered to be a 'prime site'. On Wednesday 8 November 1967 BBC Radio Leicester went live, broadcasting from the eighth floor of Epic House. It was the first home town radio station in Britain to begin broadcasting.

'Wharf street has since the mid nineteenth century been viewed as an area of dense, enclosed housing and over the years had become enveloped in a mythology that in some ways belied its true nature. The romanticised view was of a tightly knit community sharing a common bond of adversity and poverty, with a pub in every street and a shop on every corner; a place where justice was rough and policeman seldom ventured. Much of this was true.'

The inhabitants were universally poor, the houses in many cases were hovels without bathrooms, a shared outside tap and toilet the only token of plumbing and sanitation. Unemployment was high and it was a place where an outsider was immediately identifiable. Given the opportunity to escape into new and better living conditions, very few of those trapped in the area would have declined to move'

Ben Beazley 'Post-war Leicester'



Slum Clearance Plan from Leicester City Council Planning Office archives. The plan is dated from June 1974 and by that time most of the slum clearance illustrated in the plan had already taken place, or if it had not taken place, resisted and improvements undertaken.

3. Heritage and Townscape Assets

This section does not seek to reproduce the Conservation Area Appraisals which are relevant to this Character Area, although they have informed the content. For more detail the Conservation Area Appraisals and Conservation Area Management Plans should be referred to.

Additional buildings which make a positive contribution are identified. They are buildings which are not listed, locally listed or within conservation areas, however, this classification reflects their importance as part of the townscape of the character area. As such there is a general presumption against the demolition of these buildings.

Reflecting the area's history and importance, the Wharf Street area contains a good number of heritage assets both nationally designated and locally listed.

A number of heritage assets reflect the industrial heritage of the area. For example, the former W. Raven & Co Hosiery Factory (4-18 Wharf Street South) is an excellent example of a late-19th Century large-scale hosiery works complex and has a strong visual presence upon the streetscape. Grouped with (4 Wheat Street) and the former gothic revival shoe and boot industry (80 Wharf Street South). It adds to the appreciation of Leicester's hosiery and shoe and boot industry and how it transformed the townscape of the city. Fleet House is a good example of an early-20th Century head office building, built circa 1900 for the company British Steam Specialists Ltd. The architecturally distinct row of late-19th Century terraces on Jubilee Road originally comprised of 4 shops, 11 houses and both shops/houses, including a haberdasher's and pawnbroker's serving the local community alongside the former girls school on Humberstone Gate. The distinctive former Art Pattern Co. building on Bedford Street is amongst buildings that make a positive contribution to the townscape.

Other heritage assets represent the evolution of the area. Lee Circle car park is a significant building and was one of the first multi-storey car parks to be built in an American style in the UK and St. George's Conservation Area, to the south of the area, protects many more buildings including



3. Heritage and Townscape Assets

the former Telephone Exchange. The Conservation Area was designated in 1989, but extended in 2003 to include the south of the Wharf Street area. The reason given its inclusion not only gives some protection to a number of unlisted but, nonetheless interesting, buildings in the area, but also protects an important part of Leicester's commercial, industrial and social heritage.

The placemaking contribution of this collection of buildings and frontages should not be underestimated. Their current setting is often lost within the streetscape due to the fragmentation of the streets and poor quality development within the area. They also represent the historic evolution and social heritage of the area.

Archaeological Alert Area

Leicester has a clearly defined historic core. The historic core formed part of the town's defences, first established in the Roman era and re-adopted in the medieval period. The historic core of the city centre is defined as an Archaeological Alert Area and indicates, to developers, where development is most likely to have an impact upon archaeological remains.

The Wharf Street area lies outside of the Roman and medieval core of Leicester and although there was extensive development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its archaeological potential remains to be fully investigated and the presence of sites of archaeological importance cannot be ruled out.

Opportunities should be taken to use the historic cityscape to create and enhance the distinctive character and ongoing identity of the area as it undergoes change. They will aid legibility, be dominant 'markers' and frontages and help to create familiar and navigable places. New development within Wharf Street should, through appropriate size, scale and design, reflect and respect the historic environment whilst introducing high quality architecture.



Please see Heritage and Townscape Plan for location of key building frontages

3. Heritage and Townscape Assets



Wharf Street area from above taken in 1947 (Historic England) - looking south west



Wharf Street area from above taken in 1947 (Historic England) - looking south east



The Telephone Exchange/Cardinal Square, Humberstone Road, 1967 (Leicester A Modern History, Richard Rodger, Rebecca Madgin)



Leicester Telephone Exchange 1957. Shops and houses were demolished to make way (Leicester in the Fifties, Leicester Mercury)

BSS advertisement 1947 (Leicester City Council) whose Headquarters were in Fleet House



View of Charles Street and the Lee Circle surface car park (Leicester City Council)



Complete with a Tesco shopping centre and an American-style bowling alley, Lee Circle car park, built at a cost of £750,000, opened in December 1961 (Leicester City Council)



Former Art Pattern Co. Building on Bedford Street. They operated for 100 years from this location. (Leicester City Council)

4. Streets and Spaces

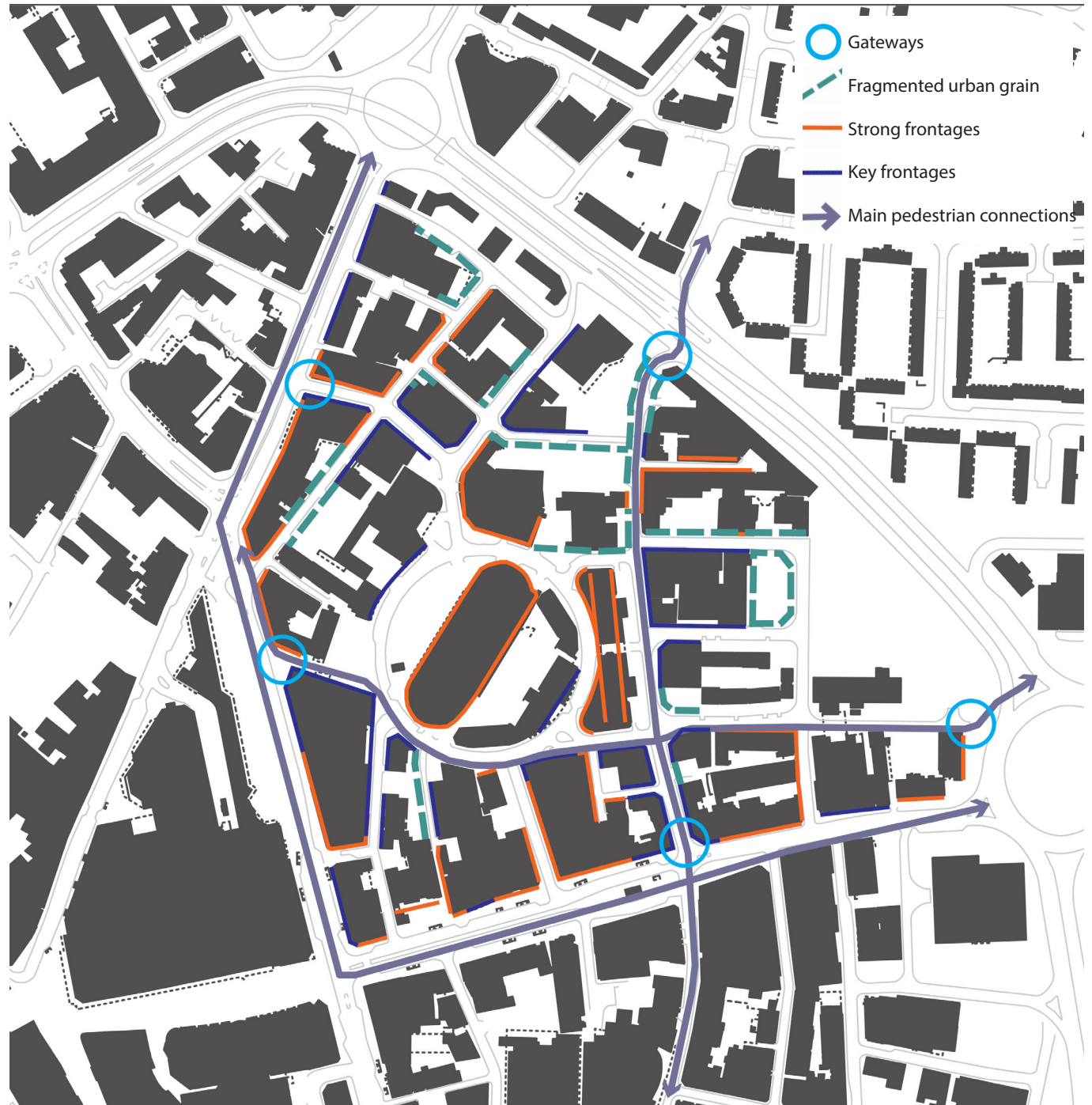
Successful places have well enclosed, active and connected streets, well defined perimeter blocks and well designed public spaces. Strong frontages, local markers, nodes, gateways and public spaces are elements of the townscape that together contribute to the familiarity of a place, making it easily understandable to find your way. They also contribute to the character of a place, its story and distinctiveness, which forges a sense of belonging and pride.

Fragmented urban grain identifies locations where perimeter blocks have been lost over time to the detriment of the townscape. Strong frontages are those frontages where both the building line and the building are important to the townscape. Key frontages are those which provide a well defined edge to streets and spaces and so the building line is important, but not the building.

The key connection of Wharf Street South remains very legible and is a well used connecting route through the area linking St. Matthews to the north with the Cultural Quarter and city centre. The dominance of the ring road is apparent, but pedestrian crossing points across reflect the desire lines. The main pedestrian east-west route is not so well defined, although there are strong frontages along the route and again improved connections across St. Georges roundabout. Former east-west routes shown in the historic plans have been severed by the central ring road.

Gateways and views into the area are varied, but for the most part are legible. This is considered in more detail in the next section.

The legacy of slum clearance, making way for vehicles and car parking and new manufacturing uses has led to a fragmented urban grain in parts of the area. The area around Lee Circle car park is dominated by the surface car park and the 'circle' geometry of the highway which also creates problematic left over spaces. The legacy of the vehicle continues today to the detriment of the many positive townscape elements in the area.



The Wharf Street area is not a blank canvas for development, although it has been often seen as such in recent times. Informed by its long history it has many townscape elements that should be protected and enhanced and continue to make a significant contribution to the character and ongoing identity of the area as it undergoes change.

Changes to the street design to respect and enhance these townscape elements whilst creating a more pedestrian and cycle friendly environment would have a significant impact in this area. Repairing the fragmented urban grain so streets can once again become enclosed, will ensure these are well defined and legible.

5. Key Views and Legibility

Key views into and through the Wharf Street area have been captured.

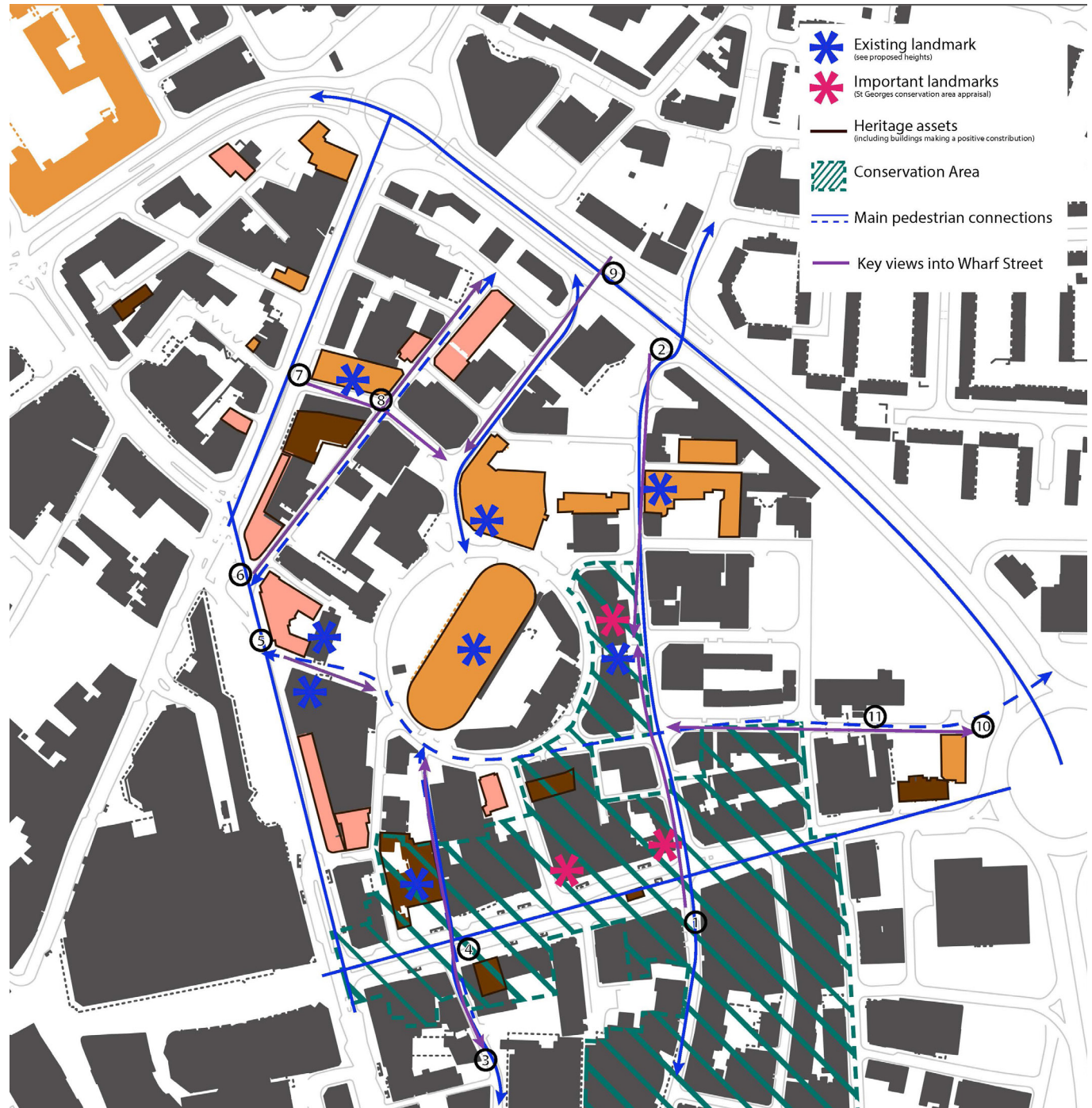
Views 1 and 2 show the legibility of the main north-south pedestrian connection of Wharf Street South and the contribution of the Exchange building in particular. Views 5, 10 and 11 show the experience along the main east-west connection. Lee Circle car park is clearly visible in view 5 alongside the tall buildings of Crown and Epic House. A secondary pedestrian connection from the south is from Yeoman Street, across Humberstone Gate through Hill Street. Views 3 and 4 show this progression with the Grade II listed former school dominant in both views with Lee Circle car park in the background and clearly visible.

From the east (view 10) Cardinal Tower is dominant, and as expected has an imposing presence with annexe buildings bridging over the street. However, the Exchange building again can be seen terminating the view which then becomes much more prominent in view 11 moving west given the lower scale homes on Erskine Street.

From Belgrave Gate the main pedestrian connection is from Jubilee Road (view 7) which is enclosed on the north side by the locally listed late-19th Century terraces and terminated by an unremarkable industrial building. Progressing east (view 8), Cardinal Tower, can be seen in the distance and the west elevation of Fleet House.

The view up Bedford Street South (6) looking north-east is much lower in scale characteristic of the west of the Wharf Street area. The positive townscape elements along that street are not clearly visible with a poor termination of the view between industrial buildings.

The Wharf Street area is very legible within although improvements to the quality of the gateways is needed. From a pedestrian perspective it is easily understood. The contribution of the existing heritage assets and landmarks cannot be underestimated where they terminate views and contribute to wayfinding. The area does not need additional landmarks. However, the fragmented urban



grain and poor street enclosure and the dominant highway configurations do need addressing to enable the full benefit of these townscape assets to be realised and experienced.

In addition, the current tall buildings in the area, whilst contributing to a legible place, need improvements to their appearance, in particular Crown House.



6. Existing Building Heights and Planning History

Context:

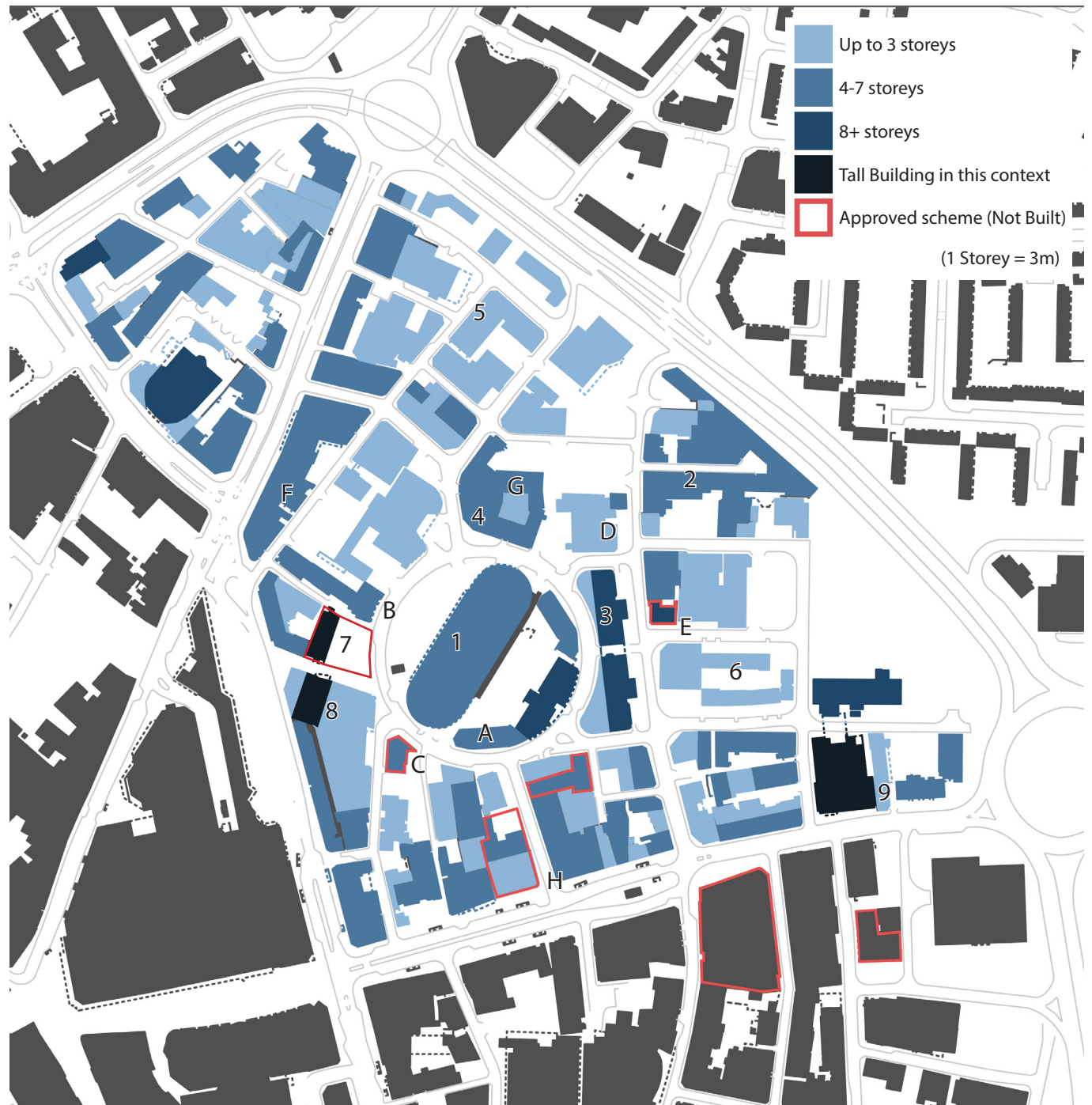
The heights shown are based on 1 storey at 3m. Given the variety of storey heights that is possible within a Character Area it was necessary to calibrate them across the city centre. Therefore, a heritage asset of 4 storeys may be shown at 5 or 6 storeys to reflect the higher floor to ceiling heights and there may be differences between residential and commercial uses.

The existing heights in the area generally reflect the uses and hierarchy of the streets. The height of frontages along Humberstone Gate, Belgrave Gate and Charles Street are generally 4-7 storeys. Some of the heritage assets, which provide prominence and a distinct sense of place are also within this height range.

- Lee Circle Car Park is 7 storeys (1),
- Gilroes Business Centre (the former W. Raven & Co Hosiery Factory) (2) is equivalent of 5 storeys,
- The Exchange (former telephone exchange) (3) is 5 and 6 storeys, although given the increased height to the ground floor and generous floor to ceiling heights this is approximately 8 storeys equivalent (ie 24m).
- Fleet House (former British Steam Specialists Head Quarters) (4) is equivalent of 4 modern storeys.

Almost two thirds of the area is in the lower height range of up to 3 storeys characterised by manufacturing buildings both old (e.g the former Art Pattern Co. on Bedford Street) (5) and more recent manufacturing sheds to Gladstone Street and Dryden Street. There are also some small pockets of 2 - 3 storey residential properties saved from the slum clearance of the 1950s and the very recent homes to New Erskine Street (6).

Crown House (7) and Epic House (8) are tall buildings in their context at 11 storeys and can be considered to be appropriately proportioned tall buildings contributing in scale to the townscape. The Telephone Exchange (Cardinal Tower) (9) at approximately 80m is the tallest structure in the city centre, a legacy of the 1960s.



6. Existing Building Heights and Planning History

Planning History:

The planning history within this section reflects the most up to date information at the time of publishing.

In considering the planning history of approved / determined applications in the area:

20011249 Lee Circle, Leicester House (next to Lee Circle car park) which is currently under construction was approved at 7 storeys (A).

20081176 Crecy Court, Lower Lee Street was approved at 7 storeys and is now occupied (B).

20162286 47 Clarence Street was recently approved at 7 storeys (C).

20172259 80 Wharf Street South. This application has been refused. In the view of the LPA the proposal of 8-11 storeys would not contribute positively to the area's character and appearance in terms of scale, height, urban form, massing and appearance (D).

20172678 20172677 Fleet House. These applications have been refused. It is the view of the city council that the demolition of Fleet House was not acceptable and that the proposal of 8 - 11 storeys would not contribute positively to the area's character and appearance in terms of scale, height, urban form, massing and appearance. Other reasons for refusal were outlined (G).

Further, 27 Wharf Street 20071365 was approved in 2007 at 10 storeys and, although it has been technically implemented, it has not been constructed. This approval would not now be consistent with the findings of this townscape analysis. It reflects former planning objectives and should not be viewed as a model for future development of the character area. (E)

20151153 28 Bedford Street South was approved at 4 storeys to Bedford Street South and has now been built

(F).

20171868 64-66 Humberstone Gate was approved in 2017 for partial retention of the Palais de Dance and the construction of a 5/6 storey building to provide 42 flats. (H)

20041683 Crown House. This application was approved in 2007. This approval would not now be consistent with the findings of this townscape analysis. It reflects former planning objectives and should not be viewed as a model for future development of the character area. It is understood by the city council that the proposal may have been implemented although not fully constructed.

Although the exact sites cannot be stated we have also provided pre-application advice on nearby sites in accordance with the townscape analysis.

Recommendations for proposed heights is covered in Section 11.



Leicester House (A) currently under construction at 7 storeys.



Visual of the approved scheme for 47 Clarence Street (C)

7. Transport Network / Movement

Cycling routes are taken from the Leicester Cycling Map and includes cycling infrastructure relevant to the city centre; on road cycle lanes, off road routes, bus lanes where cycling is permitted, pedestrian streets and recommended on road routes. Future cycling infrastructure guaranteed to be delivered is also identified. Bus routes are taken from bus operators information in Leicester.

The main pedestrian connections are identified through a combination of local knowledge, observation, previous research undertaken by Leicester City Council and Space Syntax™ online information.

Wharf Street South is the principle street through the Wharf Street area. This connection is the main north-south route for both pedestrians and cyclists to and from the city centre from the St. Matthews and Belgrave areas.

The east-west route connecting the Haymarket Bus Station to St. George's retail park and beyond is less direct, but nonetheless well used by pedestrians passing through the area.

Whilst the historic streets of Bedford Street South and North and Wharf Street are still apparent the central ring road has severed the original connections. Further, it has severed connections to the east.

The network of streets is dominated by the vehicle movements required to access the Lee Circle car park and managing access on and off the central ring road. The central 'circle' configuration dates back to the 1950s plans to provide car parking for the city centre on the site which opened up following slum clearance. The dominant 'circle' configuration was produced to allow ease of access and egress around the car park and surrounding streets.

The area is well served by bus connections running along the primary streets on the periphery.

The current character of the Wharf Street area is



dominated in the area around Lee Circle car park by streets designed for vehicles and vehicle circulation with areas of highway too wide and over engineered, providing no contribution to the townscape or assisting legibility. The fragmentation that resulted from the loss of well-defined streets enclosed by building frontages has never been addressed and does not give an appropriate setting to the heritage assets and buildings that make a positive contribution to the area. These buildings should define the space and streets, not the highway layout.



Vehicle dominated streets within the Wharf Street area. Over engineered junctions, wide carriageways and excessive on street parking impact negatively on the townscape.



8. Active Frontages

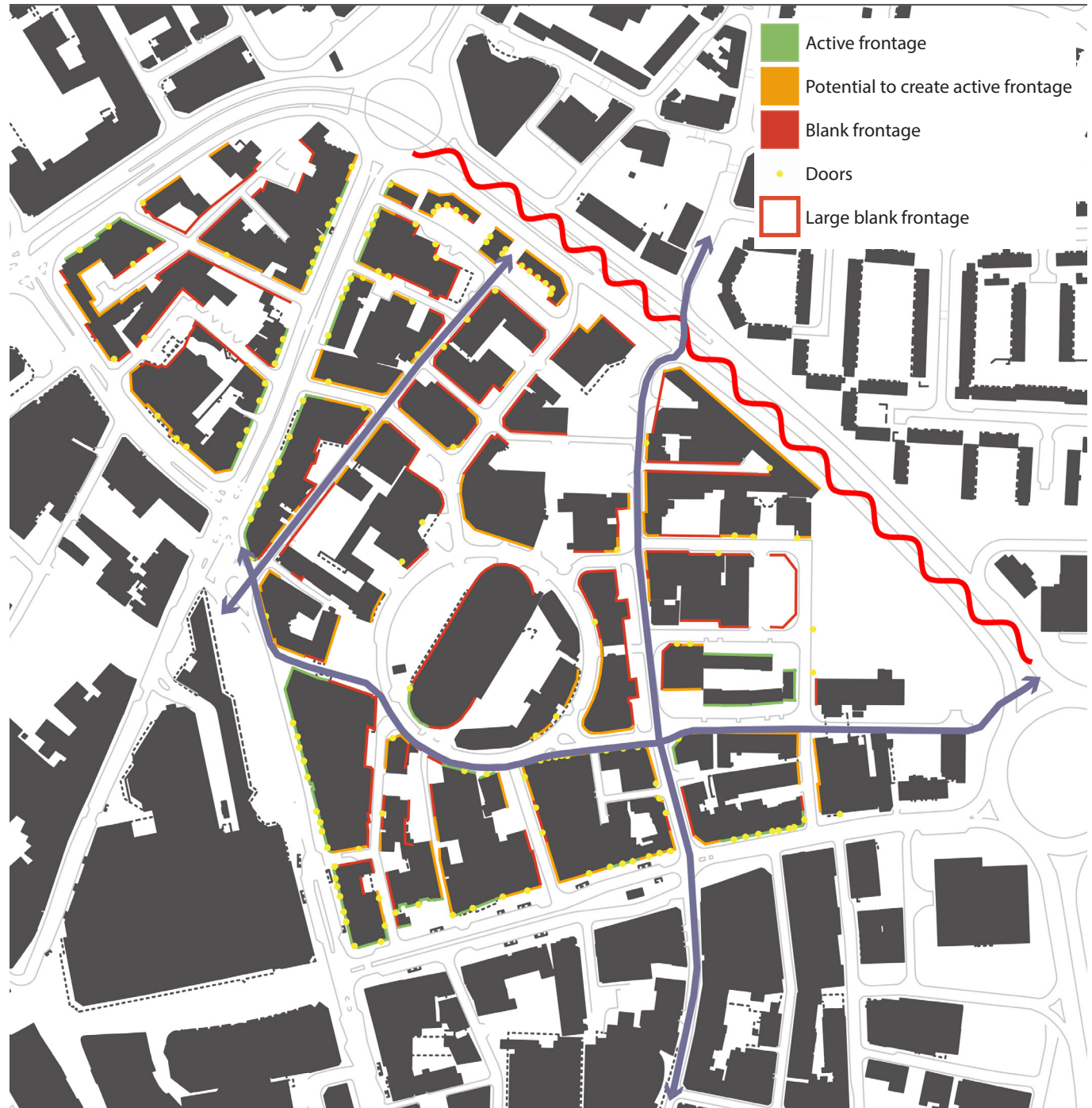
Active frontages are important to creating successful places. They are street frontages where there is an active visual engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floor of buildings. This quality is enhanced where the front façade of buildings, including the main entrance faces and opens towards the street. They are vital to creating activity and vitality to an area and a sense of safety with well overlooked streets. Blank frontages provide no active visual engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floor of buildings. Frontages in existing buildings could contain blocked up or screened windows and doors for various reasons.

Opportunities for reversing these changes and opening up facades have been identified as providing potential active frontages. The frequency of doors also assist in establishing the likely level of activity and interaction within a street.

Most of the active frontages in the Wharf Street area are to the 'primary shopping streets' of Humberstone Gate, Belgrave Gate and Charles Street on the periphery. These would be expected given the retail uses on the ground floor.

Within the Wharf Street area itself there are very few areas of active frontages and significant areas of blank frontages. These are characteristic of the employment uses and the form of buildings which dominate the area. In addition, the lack of active frontages to the main pedestrian routes through the area are also very apparent, although there are a few retail uses along the east-west route.

There are parts of the facades of existing buildings which could be opened up through very simple interventions. Often doors and windows are covered or screened as if occupants wish to 'turn their back' on the area as a whole. This may be a consequence of how the area is perceived and it may take time for the confidence in the area to be established for this trend to be reversed.



Some other uses in the area, by their nature, wish to retain privacy within the building.

Overall, within the Wharf Street area the streets are busy with pedestrians, but the visual engagement of ground floors with the street is very poor.

Some recent residential development, eg. Crecy Court and 28 Bedford Street South, have tried to address the need for an active frontage and a threshold space, but it is not successful with harsh brick boundaries and more of a desire to 'turn away from the street' rather than look over it and contribute to it. The balance of privacy and surveillance and outlook has not been achieved. The design of ground floors giving consideration to building line, thresholds, glazing and boundary treatments in particular needs specific attention.



Blank ground floor frontages and frontages which have the potential to create an active frontage with the removal of screens and obscured glazing. New residential developments have a poor relationship with the street.

9. Land Uses

Ground floor:

There are a variety of uses within the Wharf Street area representative of the changing nature of the area. Between the 1850s to 1950s the area was dominated by manufacturing and dense housing for the workers. Today, industrial and manufacturing and residential uses remain dominant. The demand for residential is increasing. Retail, as expected, is predominantly along the three primary shopping streets of Humberstone Gate, Belgrave Gate and Charles Street.

Some of the uses may have located in Wharf Street to take advantage of the low land values and rents compared to other parts of the city. If they were not located in Wharf Street then it could be argued that they would be priced out of the city centre. These 'low rent uses' such as music venues, leisure uses, specialist services and niche retail contribute to the diversity of uses in the area. As the area changes over time these uses must co-exist with the potential increase in residential use. It is also possible that some uses are attracted to the area because it is secluded and away from the city centre.

In addition, given the low rental market in this area compared to other parts of the city centre, it is likely that a large proportion of the residential is for private / affordable rent (buy to rent). It is unlikely that there will be a market for owner occupiers in the short to medium term, although with improvements to the area a longer term forecast could include the latter. It is therefore vital that the future development of the Wharf Street Character Area is cohesive, comprehensive and managed.

For a relatively small area of the city centre there are also a reasonable number of places of worship and community uses.



9. Land Uses

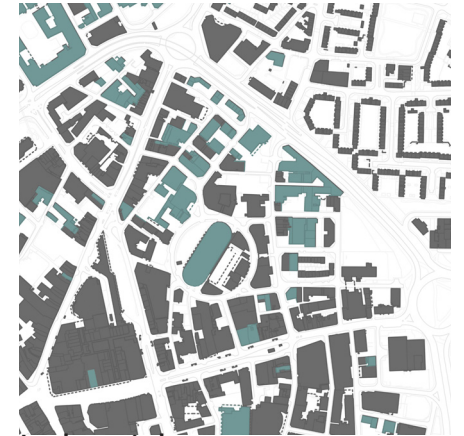
(includes above ground distribution)



Domestic



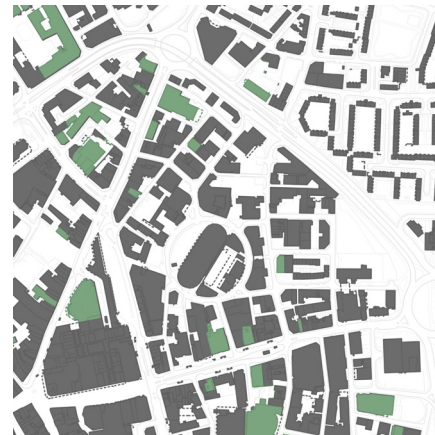
Community



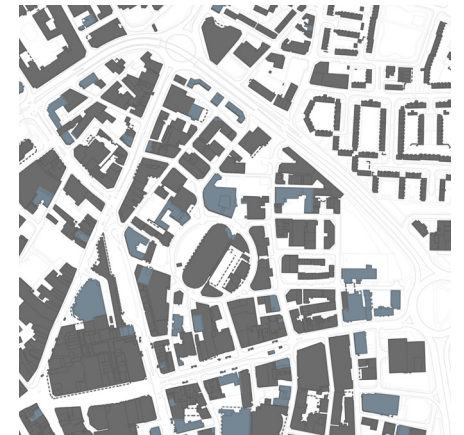
Industrial



Education



Leisure and Hotels



Office



Places of Worship



Retail Pubs and Cafes



Utilities

10. Connecting Leicester Improvements

Connecting Leicester is a vision to create and provide a connected, safe and family friendly city centre. The City Mayor is committed to creating a thriving heart of the city that takes away barriers and greatly improves the connections between key places within the city, including the 'hidden gems' as part of Leicester's story, and shopping, leisure, heritage, housing and transport facilities. Connecting Leicester is a series of key projects bringing together special buildings and places, reducing the dominance of roads and helping to create an attractive, pedestrian friendly environment.

The Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) is a Government fund with the aim of driving up productivity and spread prosperity through investment in public and sustainable transport in some of the largest English city regions between 2019 and 2023. The Fund is focused on intra-city connectivity, making it quicker and easier for people to get around and access jobs in some of England's biggest cities. The Council's TCF bid has progressed to the next stage to develop packages of proposals to support growth and prosperity and meet the Council's objectives regarding improvements, for example, to public transport, cycling, air quality. Potential schemes are highlighted.

Within the Wharf Street Character Area Connecting Leicester public realm projects have been focussed on the streets to the periphery of the area.

Projects already completed include Humberstone Gate, Charles Street and the new Haymarket Bus Station and Humberstone Road roundabout. Belgrave Gate is the most recent completion.

Proposed works include a further phase to Belgrave Gate (almost completed) and a new bus and pedestrian connection through to Mansfield Street which will allow further public realm improvements to Church Gate and Belgrave Gate.

Within the Wharf Street area itself there have been minimal improvements in the public realm. As part of the Exchange



Buildings development public realm improvements were undertaken along the extent of the frontage of the building including tree planting, new footway materials and street furniture. This small stretch of improvements makes a significant contribution to improving the setting of the Exchange Buildings and improving the streetscene along Wharf Street South. The trees, in particular, make a difference in an area lacking in green infrastructure. Projects to extend these improvements along Wharf Street South and consideration of the highway to Lee Circle could be future priorities.

Improvements to cycling connections along the ring road are also identified as a potential scheme.



Improvements to Charles Street



Wharf Street South public realm improvements secured with the planning permission for the Exchange Building



Improvements to Belgrave Gate



Improvements to Humberstone Gate

11. Street Hierarchy

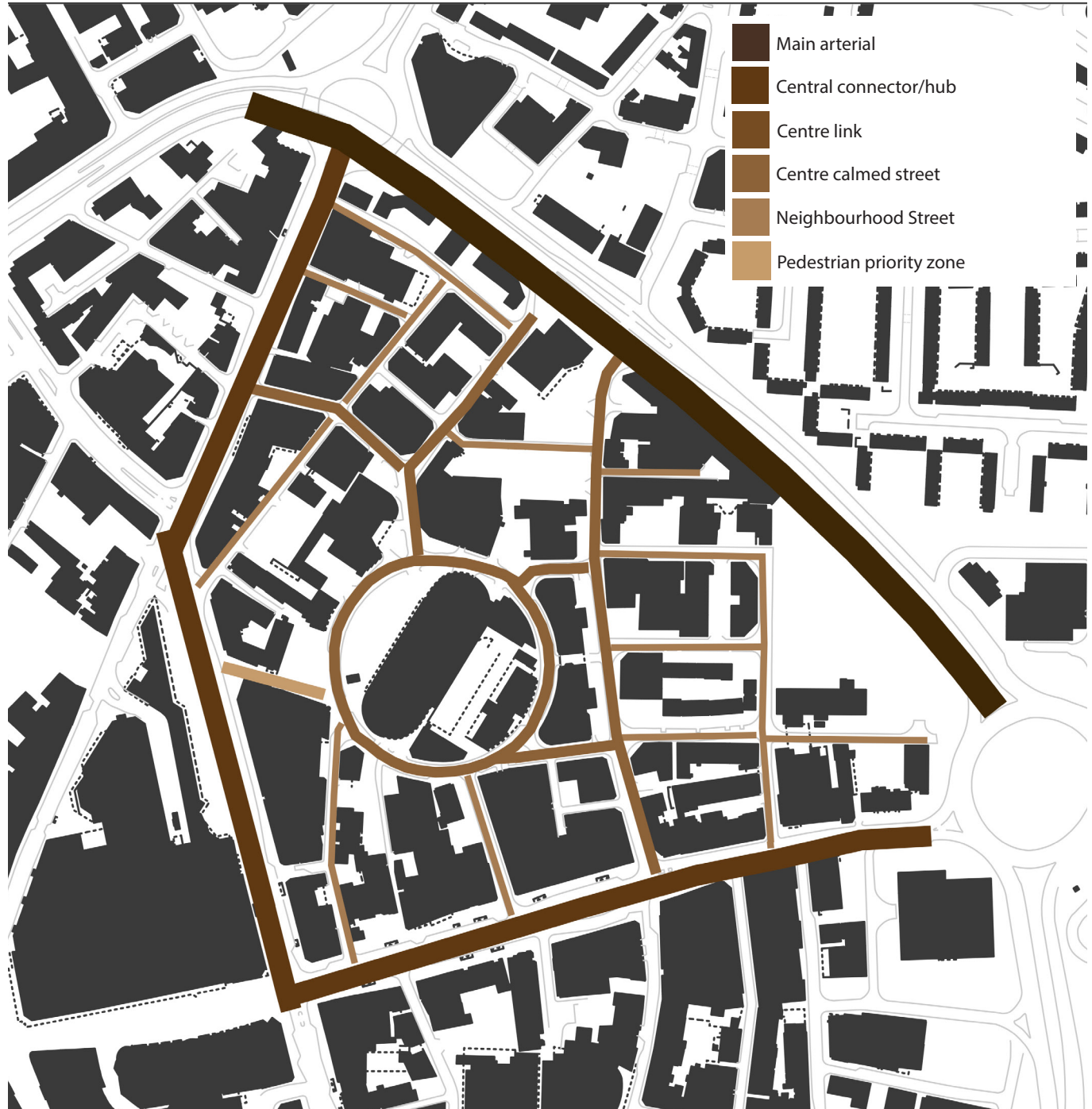
The street typologies or street character types are taken from the Leicester Street Design Guide (2019) and are representative of the street types found within the city centre. Although not all street types will fit perfectly into each category it is useful to understand in each Character Area where priority has been given to vehicle movement, through the higher order roads (ring road, centre connector / hub) and those which are lower order roads (neighbourhood streets, centre calmed streets, pedestrian priority zones) which do and could prioritise their place function and meeting the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. As stated in Manual for Streets (DfT 2007) 'streets make up the greatest part of the public realm. Better designed streets therefore contribute significantly to the quality of the built environment and play a key role in the creation of sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities.

Important for place making is the contribution different street character types within a street hierarchy make to enable people to find their way around and easily understand a place. For example, the informality and lower building heights of a lower order neighbourhood street provides a very different townscape and feel to a formal tree lined boulevard (centre connector).

The street hierarchy is very clear. The ring road is the main arterial to the north-east edge of the Wharf Street Character Area, with the remaining periphery served by the central connectors of Charles Street, Belgrave Gate and Humberstone Gate.

Within the character area itself most streets are centre link and lower order neighbourhood streets. Centre link streets provide the main vehicle circulation through the area and access to the ring road and Lee Circle car park. These streets include Wharf Street South, Lee Street, Dryden Street and Byron Street.

The only pedestrian priority zone in the area is the connection from Charles Street to Lee Circle.





Part B: Guiding Future Development

Part B: Guiding Future Development

Part A Townscape Analysis outlines the comprehensive townscape assessment undertaken for each of the 9 character areas. Part B Guiding Future Development, is based on the findings of this assessment and identifies criteria to guide and manage development across the whole character area to provide a comprehensive and cohesive plan. The guidance is tailored to the circumstances and context of each character area reinforcing and responding to their unique qualities and opportunities, the level of townscape management required and their individual contributions to the Central Development Area (CDA).

Development guidance includes;

- criteria to guide new development shared across all character areas
- criteria to guide new development specific to each character area
- areas of focus for criteria
- opportunities for improvements
- recommended interventions to be considered in future policy, plans and infrastructure delivery.
(future supplementary planning guidance will identify these improvements and interventions to be delivered with associated timescales)
- These will be shown on a 'Future Guidance Plan' within each SPD

Wharf Street Character Area is categorised under 3. Developing an area's character.



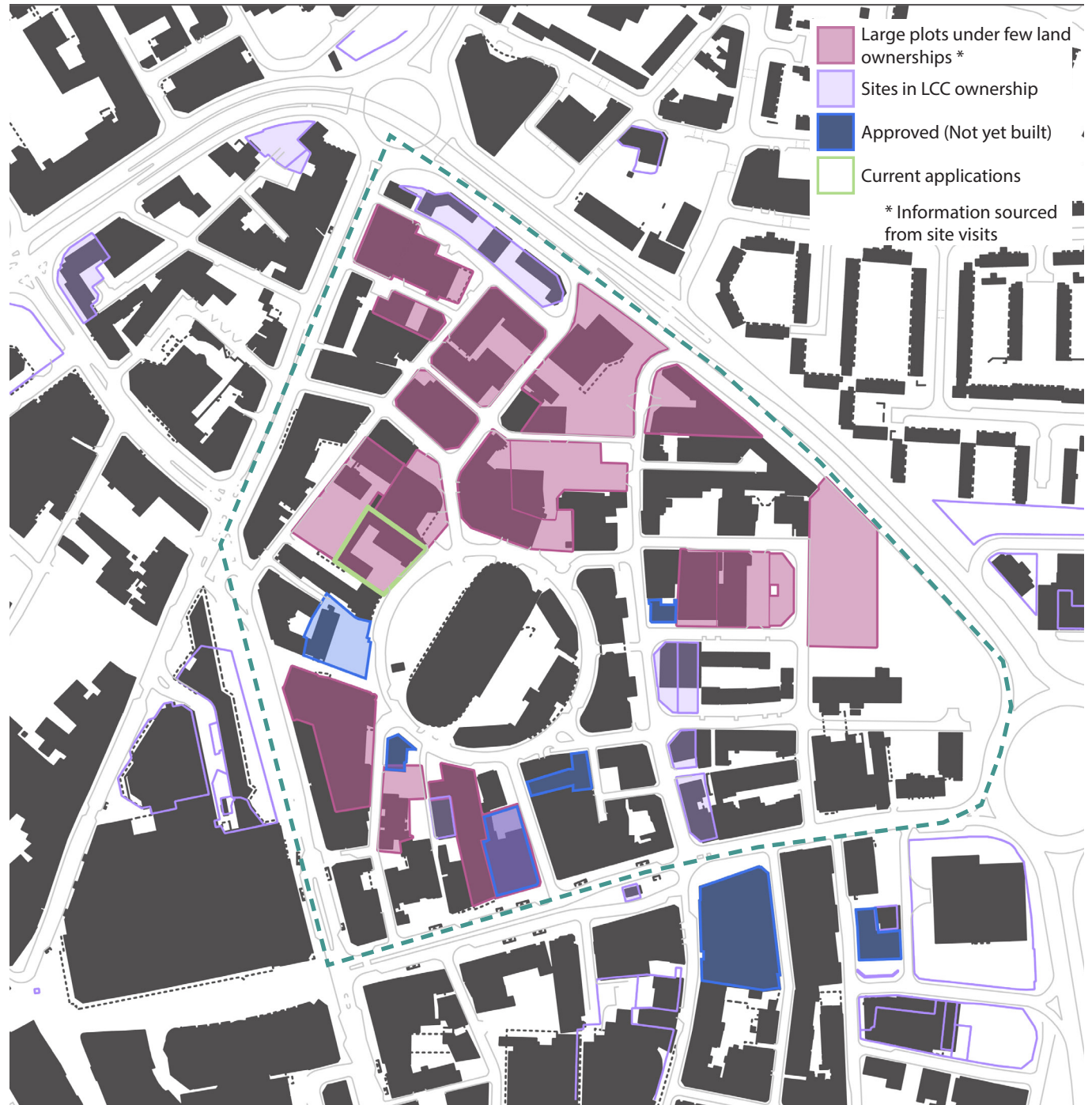
12. Growth and Development Potential

It is essential to understand the growth and development potential of each character area and the likely rate and scale of change for the plan period. This will assist in establishing priorities and the level of townscape management required. To do this we have considered the level of planning activity in the area and the amount of large plots under one or few ownerships and sites with redevelopment potential, also referred to as 'soft sites'. Sites in Leicester City Council ownership are also identified, but their inclusion does not suggest future development or redevelopment. Views on other areas/sites with development potential would be welcomed to inform the progression of the Local Plan and Supporting Guidance.

The Wharf Street area could make a significant contribution to new housing to the city centre. Residential uses are increasing and planning activity for residential use has increased in recent years.

A large proportion of the Wharf Street area is covered by large plots and development blocks under one or few ownerships and could be considered to be 'soft sites' for redevelopment. For residential development to come forward some of the existing uses, mostly industrial, would need to relocate elsewhere in the city. The availability of employment land and appropriate premises would be a consideration. However, there is evidence that such industrial sites are coming forward for residential development in this area.

Given the level of planning activity in the area combined with its development potential the Wharf Street area will undertake significant growth in the plan period and beyond. This will significantly change the area. It requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach to guide development to ensure the Wharf Street area becomes a place that has a coherent character, a sense of place and a distinctive identity. It must also provide the infrastructure for an increasing residential community. Development sites must not be considered in isolation of the wider objectives for the area.



The type of residential accommodation is most likely to be apartments and for the buy to let / private rental market. Further work needs to be undertaken to understand the future market for residential use and the type of 'products' that will be successful in the Wharf Street area.

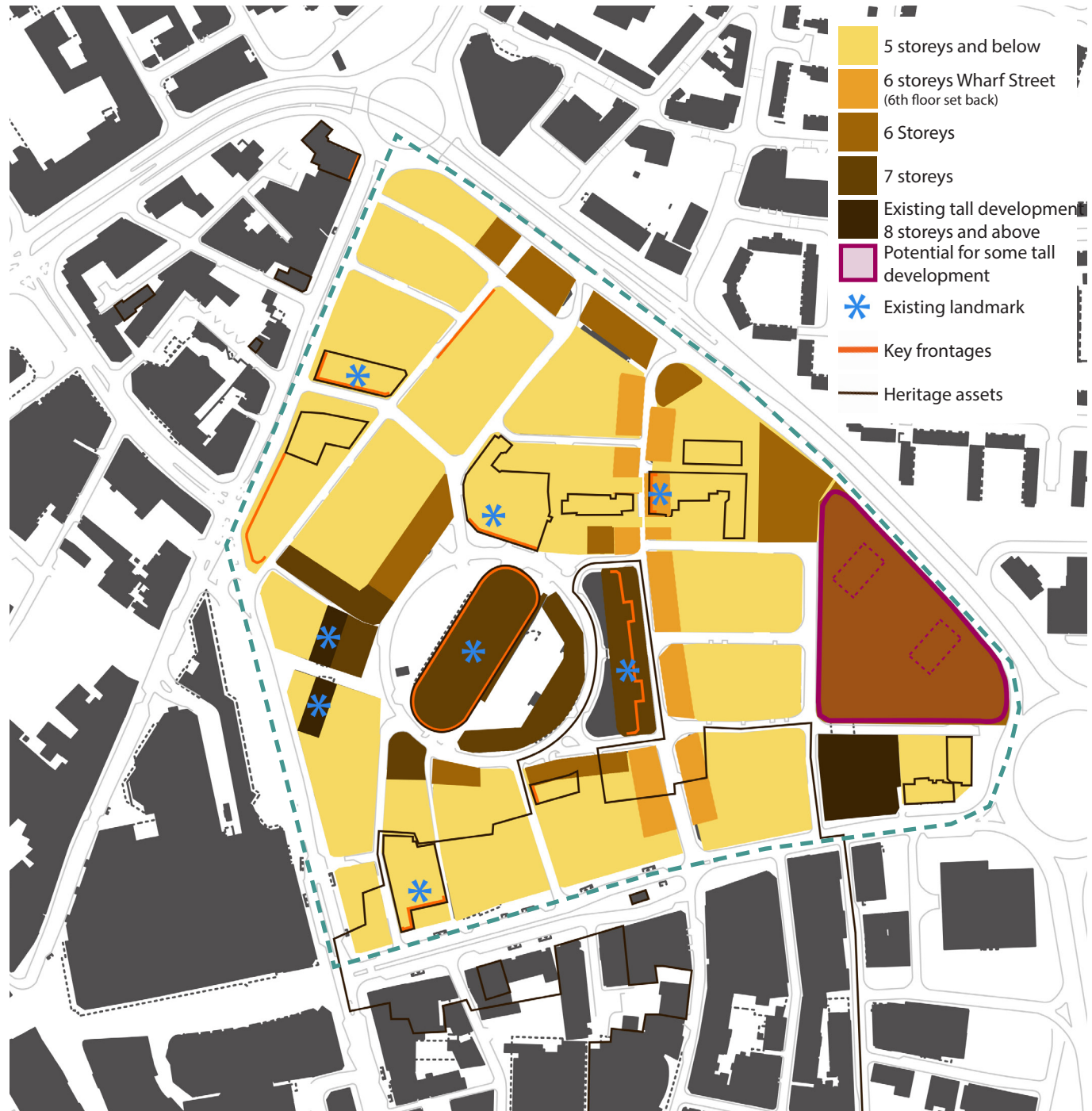
13. Proposed Building Heights

The proposed building heights are based on the townscape analysis undertaken in Part A and where required following more detailed site testing, for example, with the city 3D model. The heights shown are based on 1 storey at 3m, as stated in Part A. The parameter to be used should be the overall parameter of height measured in metres and not the storey height. For example, a commercial use requiring an increased floor to ceiling height above 3m within an area identified as 5 storeys (15m) will use the 15m as the guiding height. This may result in a commercial development of 4 storeys. Notwithstanding the proposed heights, each proposal will need to be considered in relation to its context.

Where there is an existing tall building within the Character Area it should not be assumed that a replacement tall building on that site, should it come forward, is acceptable. The proposed building heights reflect the Council's up to date view. Taller buildings will only be permitted where exceptional design quality can be demonstrated including a positive ground floor relationship to the street and the surrounding context, including the setting of heritage assets. They should comply with the Local Plan Tall Development Policy and Tall Development SPD.

An average height of 4-5 storeys is proposed across the Wharf Street area to create a place of human scale suited to a new neighbourhood. It is proposed that most of the area will be 5 storeys and below. This respects the scale of the existing heritage assets and the ambient height of the frontages to the main streets of Belgrave Gate, Humberstone Gate and Charles Street and the area overall.

There are opportunities for buildings of up to 6 and 7 storeys around Lee Circle and along Wharf Street South (5 storeys with a set back 6th storey). This is to reflect the heights of the Lee Circle car park and the Exchange Building whilst allowing them to remain the dominant frontages / structures within the streetscape. A uniformity of height along Wharf Street South will help define and enclose the street with a uniform height and reflect its importance as the main connection through the Wharf



Street area.

As outlined in the previous analysis there are townscape markers, gateways and buildings in the area that already make a significant contribution to the legibility of the area which will be enhanced through retention and improved setting. Consequently, there is no townscape justification for new tall development to provide local landmarks and improve legibility to the area.

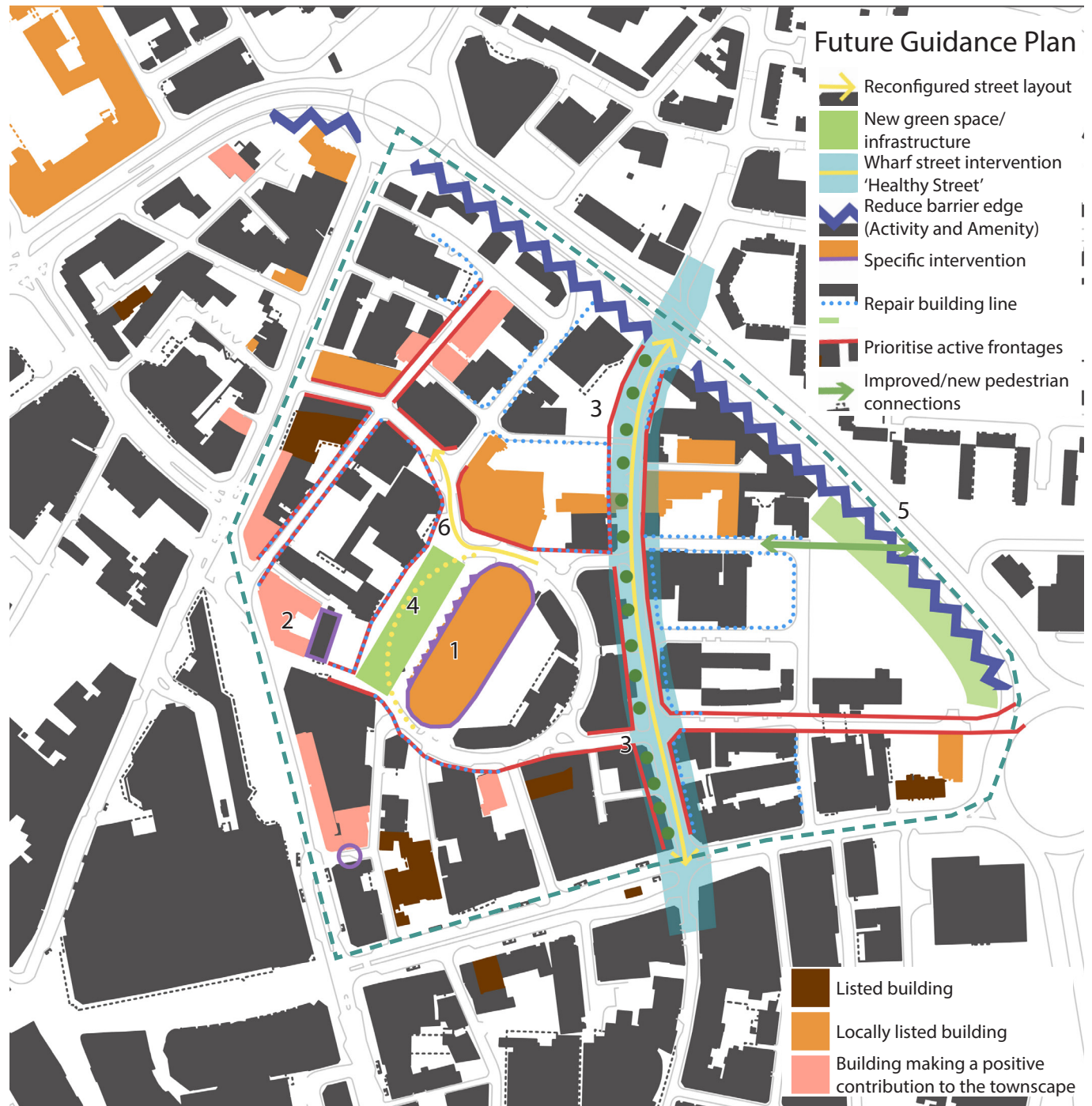
There is potential for some tall development to the east adjacent to the ring road as identified. Tall development is defined as 8 storeys and above (24m and above). However, the mass, scale, and form must be appropriate to the context, respect the setting of heritage assets, in particular to the Grade II listed Spa Place (36-42 Humberstone Road) and locally listed former Zion Chapel to the south, and be of exceptional design quality. The area is also accessed by lower order streets and therefore acceptable access may be a further consideration.

14. Future Planning and Future Guidance Plan

The Wharf Street area will provide significant future growth to the city centre. The area has a number of heritage assets and buildings that make a positive contribution to the townscape. To the south, St. Georges Conservation Area already provides some protection and consequently this area will undergo evolution without significant change guided by national and local heritage policies.

North of the Conservation Area growth needs to be managed in developing a new character for the area. This includes ensuring that heritage assets and buildings which currently do so, continue to make a significant contribution to the character and ongoing identity of the area as it undergoes change. This requires specific area policies and a coordinated and comprehensive approach to guide development to ensure the Wharf Street area becomes a place that has a coherent character, a sense of place and a distinctive identity. Development sites should not be considered in isolation of the wider objectives for the area.

It must also provide the infrastructure needed for an increasing residential community creating a new neighbourhood.



Criteria to Guide New Development:

Building Heights:

Proposed building heights are outlined based on the contextual and townscape analysis undertaken.

Heritage Led Development

All development must enhance the setting of the heritage assets and other buildings which make a positive contribution to the townscape, ensuring that they continue to make a significant contribution to the distinctiveness of the area as it undergoes change. Development must be designed to recognise their importance in contributing to the legibility of that character area, ensuring they remain the dominant 'markers' and frontages in the area.

Creation of Active Frontages and the Design of Ground Floors

Proposed development will be expected to present active frontages to the street, to maximise natural surveillance over the public realm. It is expected that particular attention will need to be given to ground floors, where there is a need to balance privacy with surveillance and provide appropriate design solutions. Specific streets and spaces where new active frontages are needed and the reinstatement of active frontages are of vital importance to the character area are identified.

Areas of focus: see Future Guidance Plan - red line

Improving streetscape, pedestrian and cycle connectivity

New development will be expected to improve connectivity both within the character area and to surrounding areas, by contributing to the opening of new connections and improving the streetscape. This includes improving the quality of existing connections for pedestrians and cyclists.

Areas of focus: see Future Guidance Plan - green arrows and

(3) Wharf Street south - to be improved as a healthy street with pedestrian and cycle priority reinstating its importance. To include trees, public realm improvements, active frontages and improved highway configuration.

(5) reinstate east-west pedestrian and cycle link between Wharf Street South and ring road.

Improving the Character and Appearance of the Character Area

Opportunities for improving the appearance and setting of specific existing buildings and spaces will be encouraged and actively promoted by the Council. The Council will work positively with landowners of identified buildings and spaces.

Areas of focus:

(1) Lee Circle Car Park

(2) Crown House

(6) Redesign the streets around Lee Circle car park to reduce the dominance of the current 'circle', overengineered junctions and 'left over spaces' to provide an improved streetscene, improve the setting of heritage assets and better enclose the streets and spaces.

Designed to Repair Street Frontages

New development will be expected in design terms, to repair street frontages and fragmented urban grain, to reinstate perimeter blocks and recreate well defined and enclosed streets.

Areas of focus: see Future Guidance Plan - blue dotted line

Buildings and Structures Making a Positive Contribution to the Townscape

Buildings which make a positive contribution, but are not locally listed, are identified in the Future Guidance Plan. There should be a general presumption against their demolition, due to their importance as part of the townscape and appearance of the character area.

Delivering infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing community:

In the Character Areas which will undergo significant residential growth it is expected that new development will contribute to the delivery of new infrastructure required to meet the needs of a growing community.

Proposals will be outlined in the Townscape Analysis and Design Guidance for each area and could include improved public realm and new public space

Areas of focus:

(4) New public space

Supporting the existing and future mix of uses

Development should allow for the retention and ongoing provision of a mix of uses in the area, allowing them to co-exist. This is an essential part of its character and contribution to the city centre.

Development adjacent to the ring road:

Ensure any future development along the ring road is well designed to address the need for activity and surveillance to a currently poor environment whilst also providing a good quality living environment.

Green Infrastructure

Provision of new green infrastructure will be expected, which makes a significant contribution to the character of a place and how it feels. This is needed particularly in building dominated urban environments, where the relief of trees, landscaping and planting provision is important.

Areas of focus: tbc

Recommended Interventions:

Outlined in sections above.

