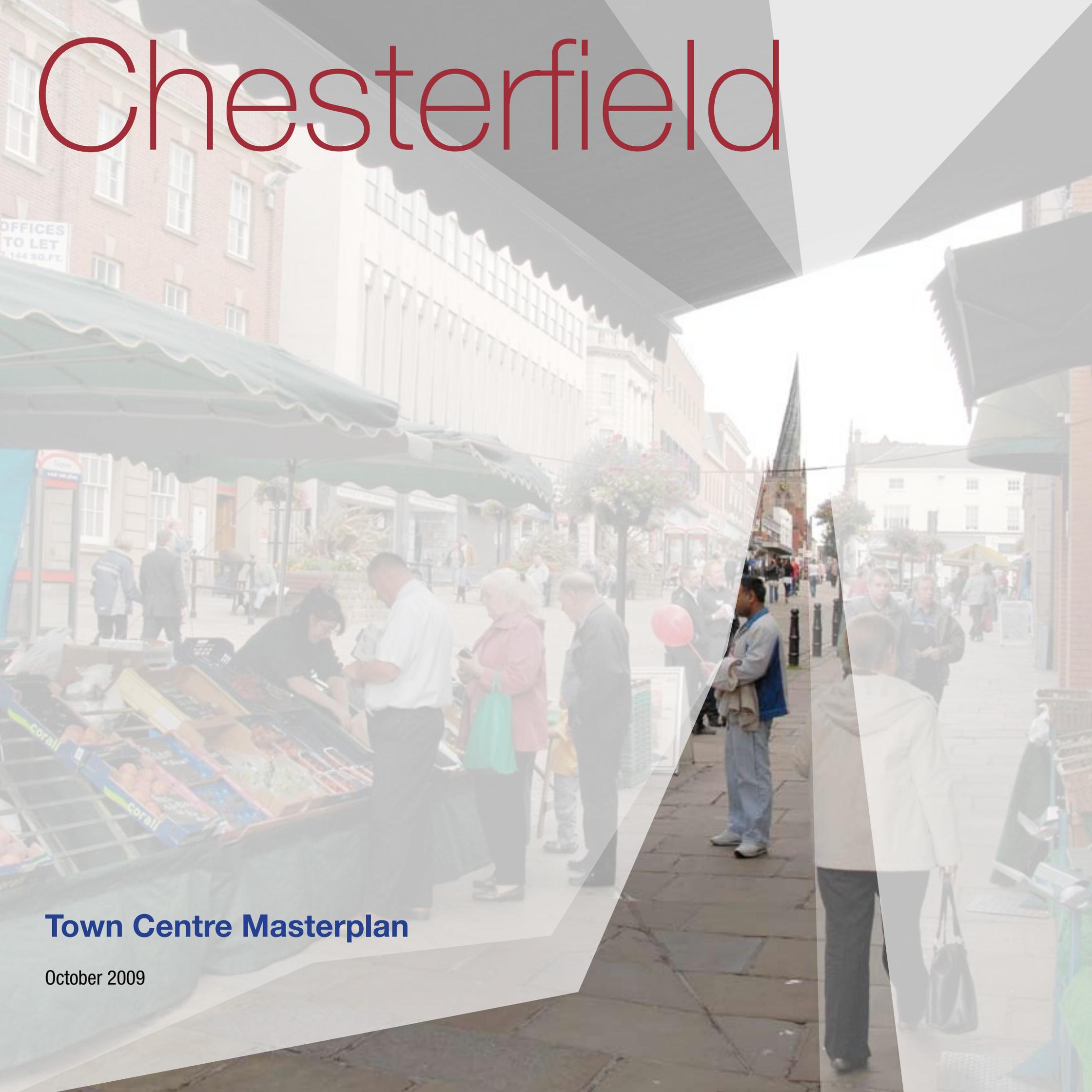


# Chesterfield



## Town Centre Masterplan

October 2009



# Part 2

## **Chesterfield Tomorrow**

Towards a vision for the town

Vision

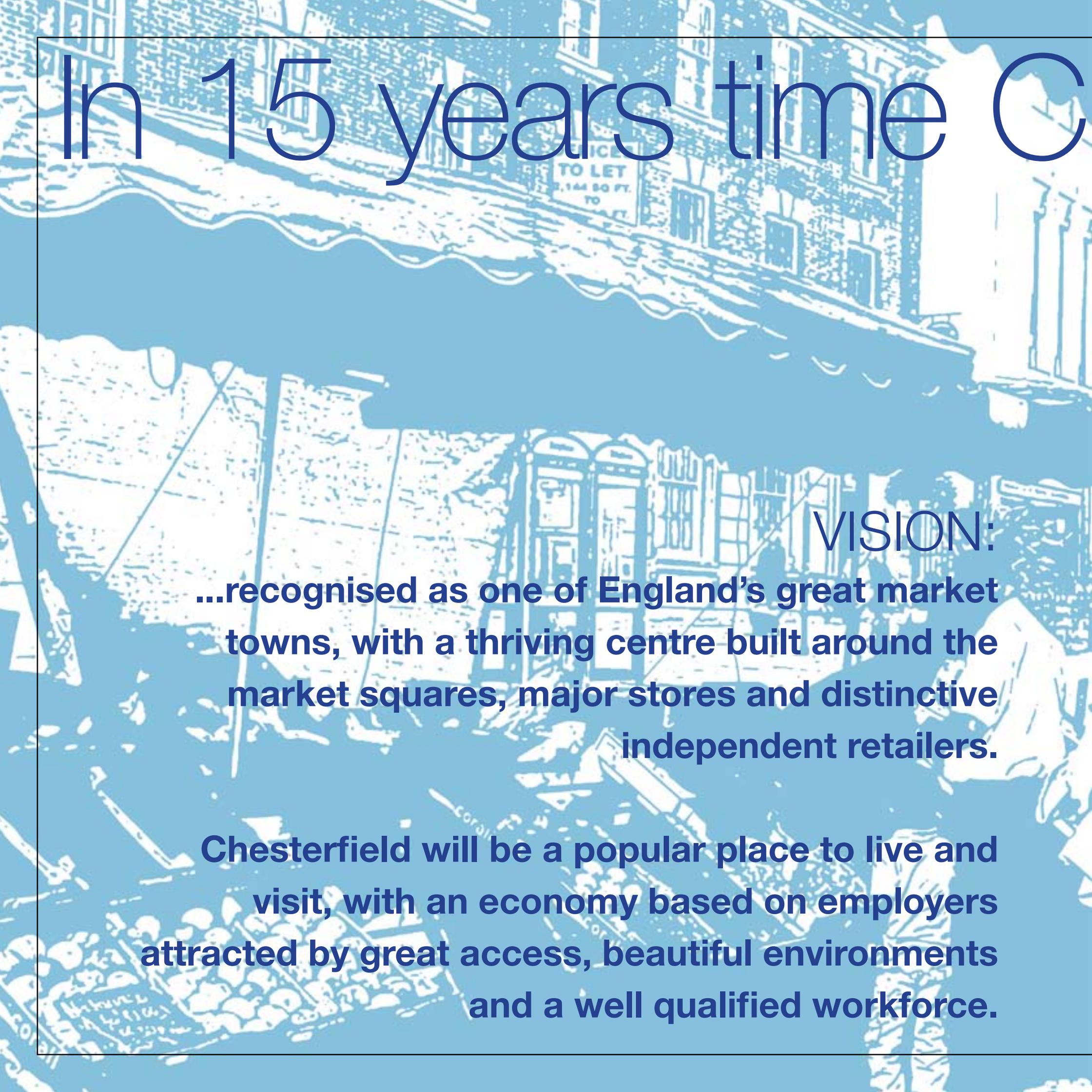
Themes

- A thriving market town...
- A destination in the Peaks...
- A learning town...
- A high value employment location...
- A really good place to live...

**Before developing a masterplan it is important to agree a vision for the town centre and the roles it should play.**

**Drawing on conclusions of the baseline study and numerous discussions, the following section sets out a vision and supporting themes for Chesterfield town centre.**

This artwork is under the footbridge crossing the River Hipper, viewed from the Queen's Park side.



In 15 years time C

**VISION:**

**...recognised as one of England's great market towns, with a thriving centre built around the market squares, major stores and distinctive independent retailers.**

**Chesterfield will be a popular place to live and visit, with an economy based on employers attracted by great access, beautiful environments and a well qualified workforce.**

# Chesterfield will be...





# A thriving market town...

**The market is Chesterfield's greatest asset and the vision builds on this as the base for the town's image, its character and its retail trade.**

Chesterfield's market is its 'raison-d'etre' and heartbeat. The squares and stalls with their colourful canopies define the town centre atmosphere, even on non-market days; in full swing on a sunny Saturday morning shopping there is a joyful experience, unmatched by soulless retail parks and malls.

Visitors come from near and far to enjoy the authentic atmosphere of Chesterfield's busy mediaeval centre, generating footfall and spend that allows the town's overall retail offer to compete with surrounding centres. Thus the market is as important an 'anchor' as major department stores are to a big city.

Chesterfield's distinctiveness is underpinned by lively market stalls and independent shops, but a strong mainstream retail offer is still the key generator of trade and employment, and its health is essential to sustaining a 'vital and viable' town centre. Vicar Lane, Low Pavement and Burlington Street, connected through the Shambles and Market Place, succeed as characterful shopping areas in their own right.

It will be vital to capture within the town centre spend currently 'leaking' to competitors by encouraging new shopping development that adds to the current offer, and builds on its strengths as a market town.

The city of **Chester** is similar in many ways to Chesterfield - Roman origins, mediaeval structure and black and white buildings, not all of which are as old as they look. Chester has also managed to retain a thriving centre, mixing independent retailers with chains and undertaking high quality environmental improvements. Chesterfield should see itself being in the same league as places like Chester.



# A destination in the Peaks...

**Although just beyond the formal boundary, Chesterfield should be seen as part of the Peak District's visitor offer - a venue where tourists can base themselves, an historic town to explore, and a place of culture to relax after walking the hills.**

Derbyshire's Peak District National Park is the second most visited protected landscape in the world, surpassed in visitor numbers only by Japan's Mount Fuji. Chesterfield town centre affords uninterrupted views to the hill-country setting, an especially attractive feature of the town.

Chesterfield's beautiful rural hinterland houses a range of attractions, both within and beyond the national park boundary. A few miles west, Chatsworth House, 'the Palace of the Peak', is an internationally famous destination. Other assets nearby include historic spa towns Buxton and Matlock, Elizabethan Hardwick Hall, with its innovative architecture and famous Long Gallery, and Bolsover Castle, one of English Heritage's flagship properties.

Chesterfield's historic centre is already accessible and interesting enough to position the town as a destination in its own right. More expression of cultural and creative endeavour will attract more visitors. To achieve longer duration and higher spending visits, the town needs high-grade hotel bed spaces within the core centre. There is an opportunity to pursue higher value 'business tourism' within Chesterfield – conferencing, exhibitions and so on; these tend to combine well with quality overnight accommodation.

Chesterfield is a gateway to the **Peak District National Park**. Many people arriving in the Peaks by train, bus or car will come through Chesterfield, but it is not currently seen as part of the 'tourism offer' in the same way as Kendal is for the Lake District.



University

# A learning town...

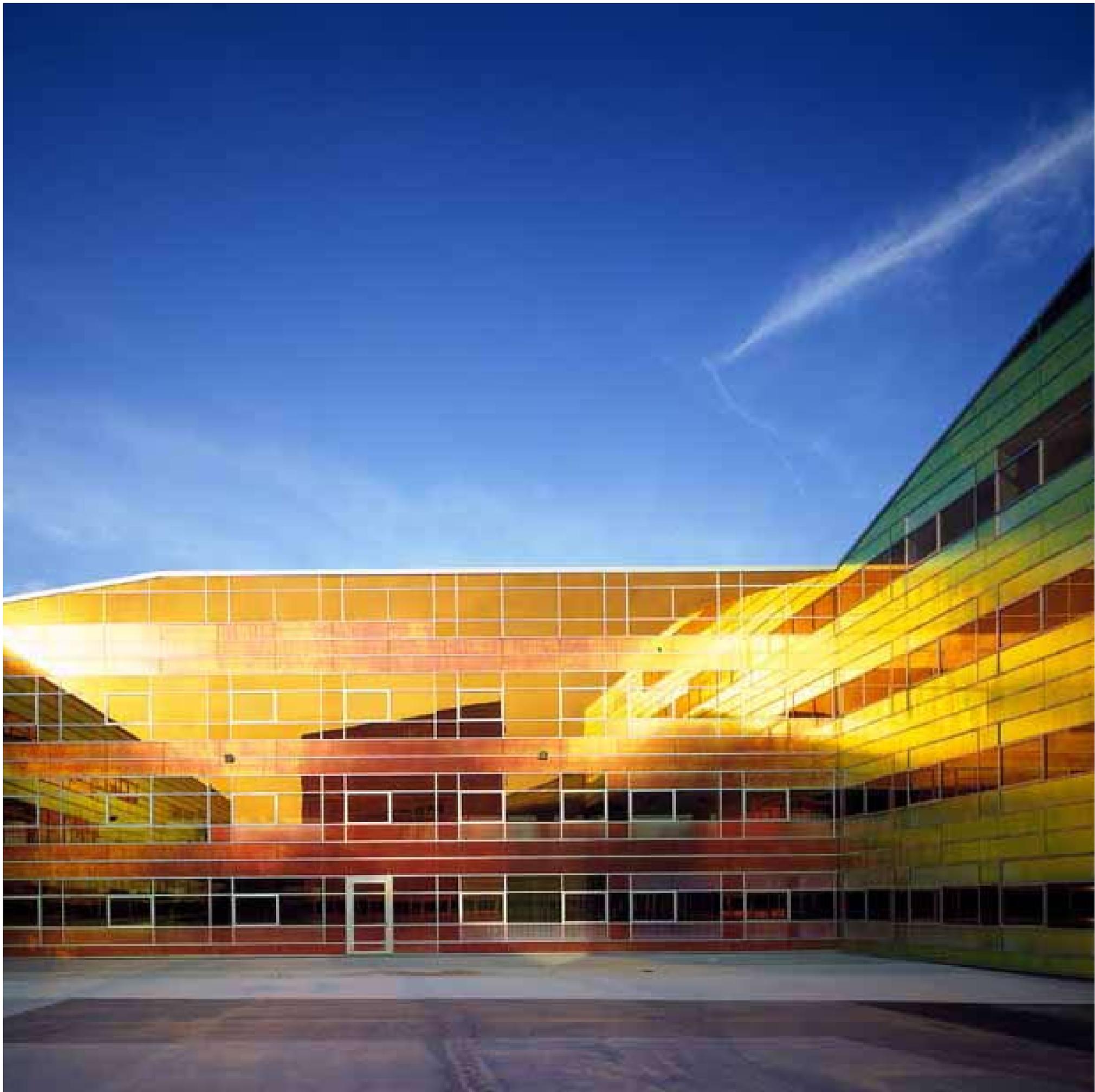
**The future of any town is based on retaining and attracting talented young people. Development and expansion of the college is vital to Chesterfield's future prosperity. The town centre would also benefit from improved links with the college campus.**

Chesterfield College has as many students as some larger universities, with some 15,000 registered on courses, 3,500 full time. There are also 800 staff employed there. This has a very positive impact on the feel of the town during the day, with interaction between the College and town centre especially obvious around Stephenson Place and the grounds of the Crooked Spire.

Education is important to the future skills base of the town, which currently draws in commuters despite having higher than average unemployment. Further increasing attainment will help residents access more of the opportunities within Chesterfield's extensive travel-to-work area, adding value to the Borough and town centre economy.

The College must be better physically integrated with the core centre – at present walking routes are poor.

**Huddersfield** is comparable to Chesterfield in terms of size and relationship to larger centres. The big difference is its university of 18,000 students. These have a huge impact on the vitality of the town and the skills base available to local employers.



# A high value employment location...

**Future employment will be increasingly knowledge-based. Chesterfield has been successful in developing itself as a knowledge employment location. This needs to continue with investment refocused on the town centre.**

Chesterfield has restructured its employment base in response to the disappearance of traditional mining and manufacturing trades. Winning investment in higher value employment tends to require both a skilled labour force and high quality business environments with good access and design.

The masterplan vision can entice delivery of more quality business accommodation, through a combination of public and private investment. Enterprise clusters within the town centre will stimulate multiplier effects. This happens when 'central business districts' achieve their own critical mass – they enable complementary uses such as restaurants and cultural infrastructure to thrive, which in turn support tourism, retail and town centre living.

High-tech offices like these in the Dutch new town of **Almere** have been successful in attracting office based businesses out of large surrounding cities. Contemporary design creates a strong image that will counterpoint the historic character of the town centre.



# A really good place to live...

**Good places to live tend to thrive economically. Quality relates to type and availability of housing as well as the town's character and conviviality. Chesterfield should increase the amount of housing around its centre to improve the environment and support vitality.**

Town centre living has helped drive urban renaissance across the UK, bringing life to retail and commercial areas once shuttered at the end of each trading day. The attractive Victorian houses to the north and west of the centre, and the small pockets of residential uses elsewhere, prove that Chesterfield's urban core is still perfectly viable as a place to live.

There is further scope to increase the central residential population, particularly around St. Mary's Gate but also in mixed use developments across the masterplan area. There are many advantages to this, including reduction in the need to travel, support for local facilities, improved activity levels and a better sense of evening security.

We would envisage development to be of a mix of appropriate types - medium density family townhouses and mews housing, and some higher density apartments. New homes in the centre can help Chesterfield meet targets for housing growth and reduce pressure on greenfield sites.

**Ludlow** in Shropshire has been voted the most livable place in the UK despite being quite isolated. Part of its strategy has been to embrace the Italian 'Slow Towns' movement, with a focus on quality of life, independent retailers, the personal touch and attractive environments. These are all elements that exist in Chesterfield.