

Chesterfield

Town Centre Masterplan

October 2009



Part 3

Getting There

Developing the vision into a masterplan

Scope for change

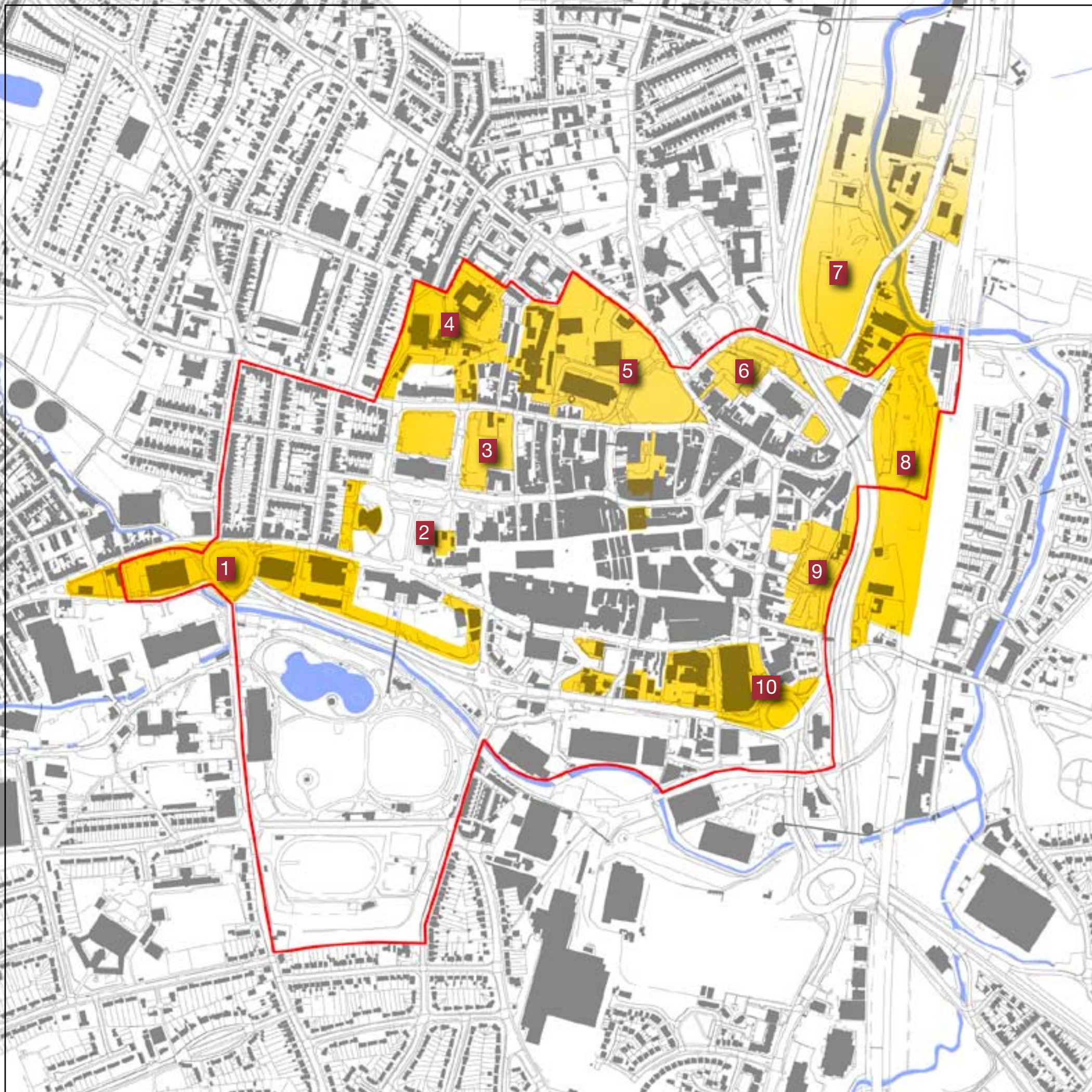
Masterplanning principles:

- Reinforce the core
- Move traffic out
- Fix the edge
- 'Green' the river corridors
- Create distinctive quarters

This section shows how the vision and themes described in Part 2 have been developed into the masterplan.

It explores the scope for change in the town centre and sets out five principles that shape the plan.

The Winding Wheel Theatre opened as a cinema in 1923, and contains lavish detailing such as this fine glass dome. It was rescued by the council in 1987 and was listed three years later. It now thrives as a concert and conferencing venue.



Scope for change

In which we describe the scope for change in the town centre over the next decade or so. Sites that may alter are characterised as ‘soft’ (highlighted in yellow), while those where little change is anticipated are left as ‘hard’.

The starting point for the preparation of a masterplan is an understanding of what elements are fixed or ‘hard’, and where significant change may be expected during the lifetime of the plan.

Based on consultations, analysis and surveys, we agreed the broad ‘hard and soft’ plan shown on the opposite page.

The areas shaded yellow are those where change is likely, possible or desirable over the 10 to 20 years of the plan - the ‘soft’ areas.

It shows the scope for change in Chesterfield town centre. Clearly such a long term view means many of the areas shown as ‘soft’ are not due for redevelopment in the short or even medium term.

However, in planning the future form of the town centre it is important to understand the full foreseeable scope for change, to avoid ‘ad hoc’ site development that relates poorly to its context.

We have therefore been authorised to look at how ‘soft’ areas should be laid out if they come forward for development, and suggest an integrated design approach.

Hard – Areas of Repair

Areas left as ‘hard’ on the plan indicate buildings/spaces of sufficient longevity they are expected to have a long term future.

These include Chesterfield’s many fine townscapes celebrated as part of the plan. They also include some elements that do not necessarily contribute to townscape but whose future is not in question because of recent construction, expense of removal and/or functional importance. In ‘hard’ areas the role of the masterplan will be to enhance, as far as possible, their impact.

‘Hard’ areas on the masterplan are:

- The central historic core of the town centre, between Saltergate and New Beetwell Street (accepting the need for improvement in e.g. the Market Place and the Market Hall).
- The neighbourhood of substantial Victorian and Edwardian terraces around Rutland Road.
- Retail sheds south of Markham Road.
- Queen’s Park - Accepting the need for better access between the park and town centre.

Soft – Areas of Reinvention

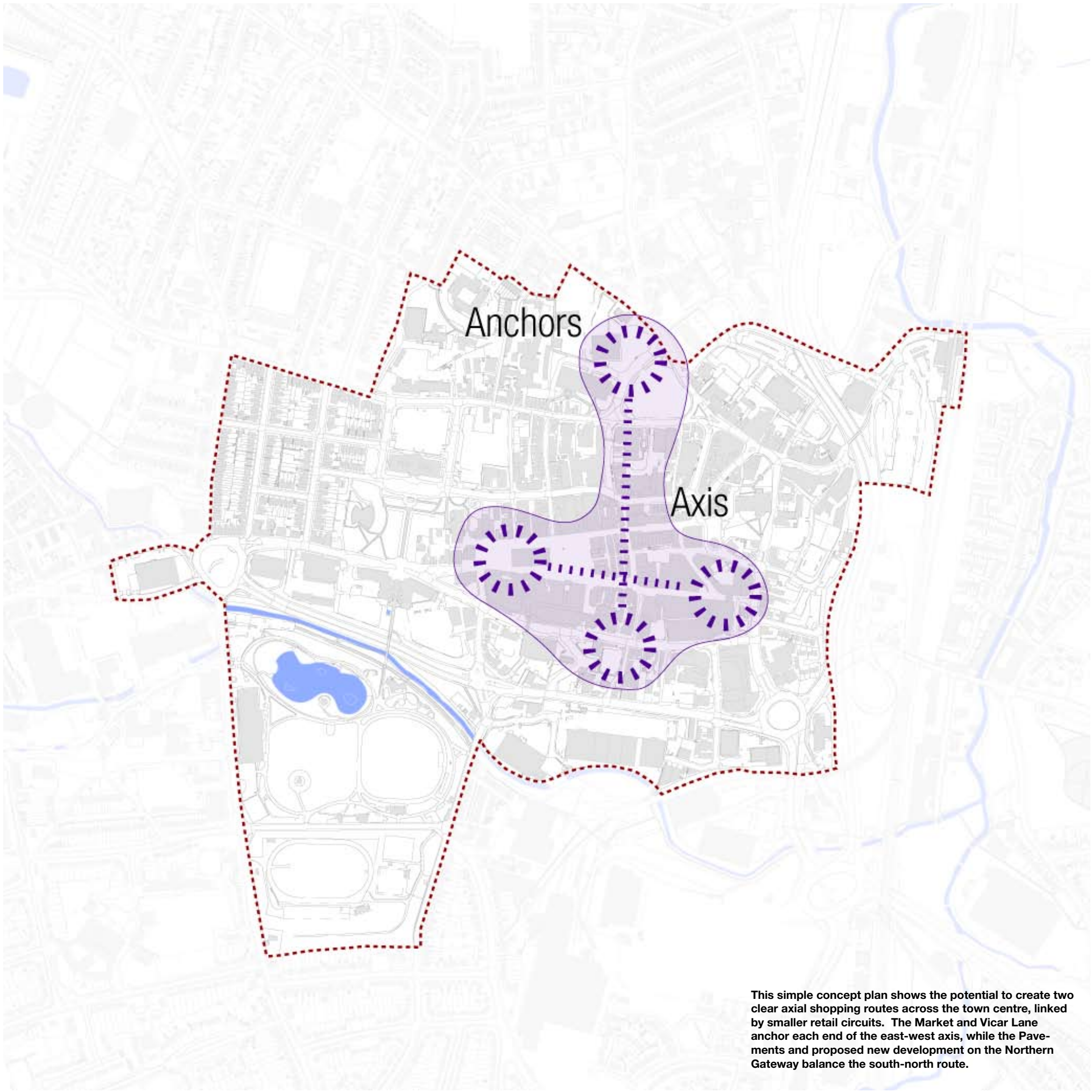
Areas shown as ‘soft’ (yellow) have potential for significant restructuring over the plan period.

Some buildings will reach the end of their sustainable design life while others elements are considered ‘soft’ because they undermine the townscape environment. Often both factors apply.

Most ‘soft’ areas are in the extensive ‘shatter zone’ that encircles the edge.

A scattering of ‘soft’ areas are identified within the central core, on buildings and spaces where change is expected or desired. Soft areas for masterplanning are:

1. West Bars and Markham Road.
2. Areas alongside Shentall Memorial Gardens.
3. Rose Hill car parks.
4. Nightingale Close NHS area.
5. Hollywell Cross, including link to Burlington Street (referred to as the Northern Gateway).
6. Durrant Road car parks.
7. Chesterfield Waterside
8. Land between the A61 and railway.
9. Mill Lane Car parks
10. Lordsmill/Markham Road.



Anchors

Axis

This simple concept plan shows the potential to create two clear axial shopping routes across the town centre, linked by smaller retail circuits. The Market and Vicar Lane anchor each end of the east-west axis, while the Pavements and proposed new development on the Northern Gateway balance the south-north route.

Reinforce the core



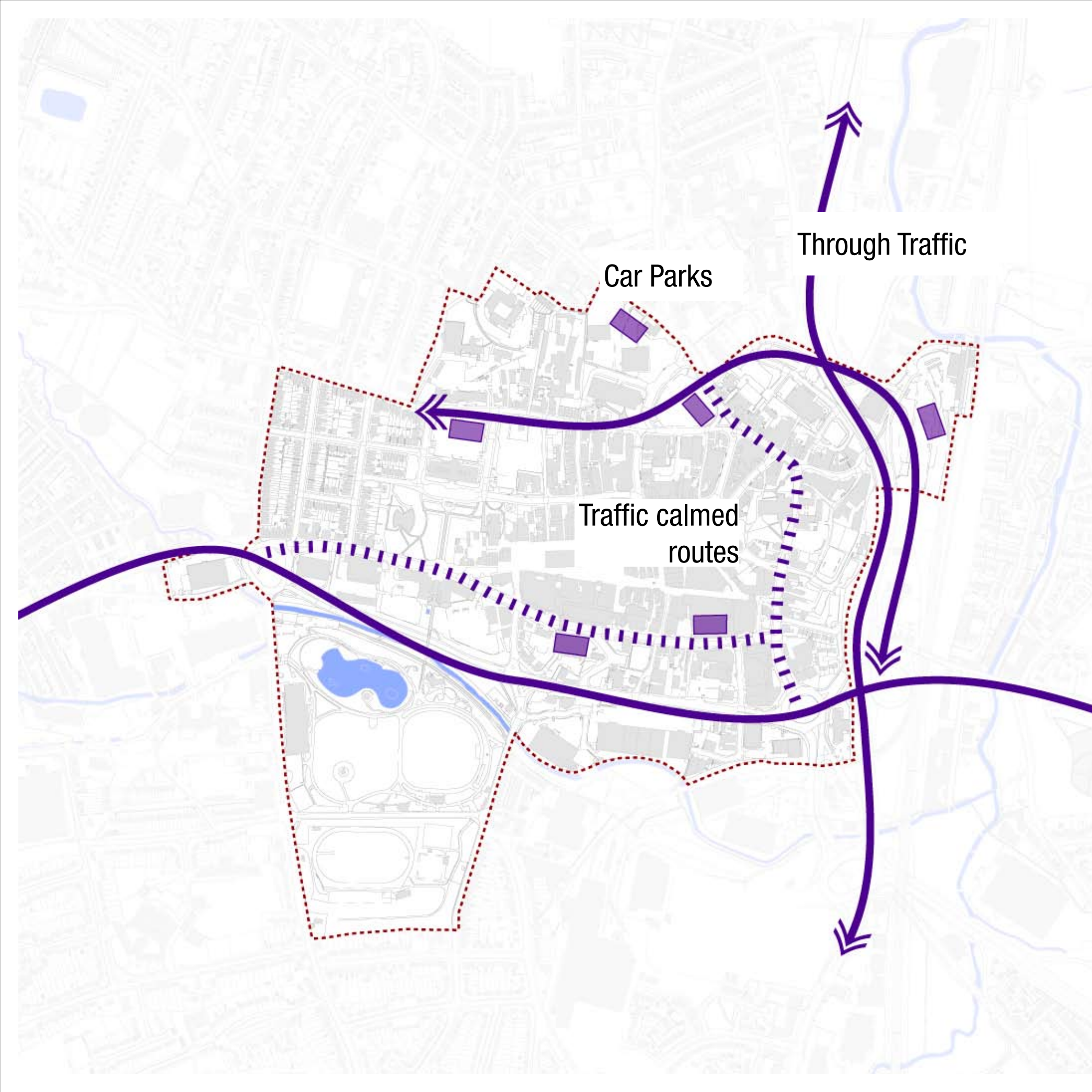
High Cross Leicester: A shopping centre and mixed use quarter, similar in size and location to the Northern Gateway that has been used to extend Leicester's retail core.

Sustained retail health is dependent on maintaining footfall and spending. The physical comfort, convenience and connectivity of walking routes are fundamental to success. Circuits connecting arrival points and strong anchor stores tend to be the best configuration for maximising trade. Chesterfield's street grid lends itself to a good choice of routes, so shoppers do not have to continually retrace their steps.

Arrival points generate footfall while anchors attract them. Car parks and bus stops encircle the centre, meaning there is a good spread of arrival points. The town has strong anchors on the east, west and south sides in the Market, Vicar Lane and Pavements/Library. To the north, the Co-op Department Store is well established and close to major bus and car park arrival points, but is severed from the main pedestrian circuits by the difficulty of crossing Knifesmithgate.

Our spatial framework shows the Northern Gateway developed as a fourth major anchor. It should be seamlessly connected to the main east west pitch of Low Pavement and Burlington Street by a reinforced north-south spine along Elder Way and Packers Row. This would involve substantially upgraded public realm and crossing facilities to give clear priority for pedestrians over Knifesmithgate and Saltergate. Successful integration will allow existing town centre traders to capture spend otherwise attracted to edge or out of town locations.

A shopper-friendly experience involves attention to quality in streets, spaces and buildings. Architecturally, the town centre has relatively few 'eyesores'. Replacing these over time with better design, and keeping the many attractive buildings in good repair, will help ensure Chesterfield's ancient town centre continues to trade successfully. A key early action will be to improve the Market Hall alongside continued support for the outdoor market as one of the anchors of the town. The council has commissioned work to unlock the Market Hall's full potential.



Car Parks

Through Traffic

Traffic calmed
routes

Move traffic out



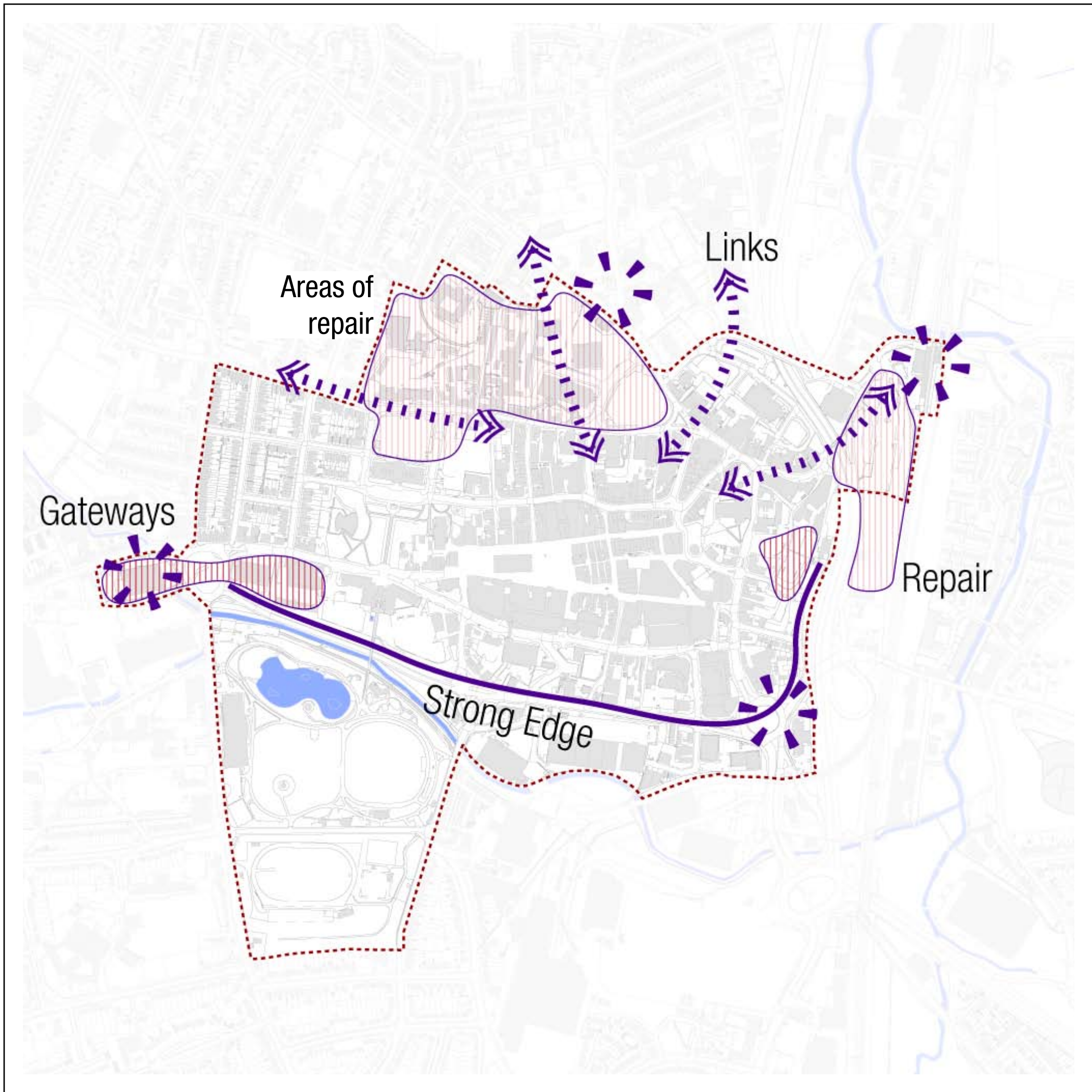
Pedestrians are given priority within the core area, supporting safe and comfortable movement on foot. The outer periphery is of course dominated by through traffic on the constantly busy A61 trunk route and A619 Markham Road. Between these two extremes are roads like Saltergate, Holywell Street, Beetwell Street and St. Mary's Gate, formerly part of the main routes to and through Chesterfield but now effectively by-passed. They are still configured for heavy traffic despite their modern role as local access streets, and as such attract 'rat-running' and higher speeds than appropriate within the town centre.



New Road in Brighton: A shared space designed by Jan Gehl and Landscape Projects shows how St. Mary's Gate could be developed once through traffic is removed.

We believe the business environment will benefit from expanding pedestrian priority further out from the core to cover the entire area within the main through routes. This rebalance would be achieved through new 'shared space' highways layouts, rather than full pedestrianisation.

Vehicular access is still desirable, indeed essential to provide traders with their life-blood, but must not compromise the safety and comfort of those on foot and bikes, as it does now. It may be necessary to remove some local through traffic between Holywell Street and Lordsmill Street; the masterplan suggests a new station link road to open up development sites along the railway and loop traffic away from the sensitive Spire area.



Fix the edge



Transforming the degraded town centre edge is at once the most pressing need and most exciting opportunity presented by Chesterfield's urban fabric. Part 1 of this report describes a 'shatter zone' of poor urban form around the historic core. The strategy is to repair this area and reconnect the town centre to its suburbs. In the south where this is not possible, the aim is to create a clear built edge to the Markham Road.

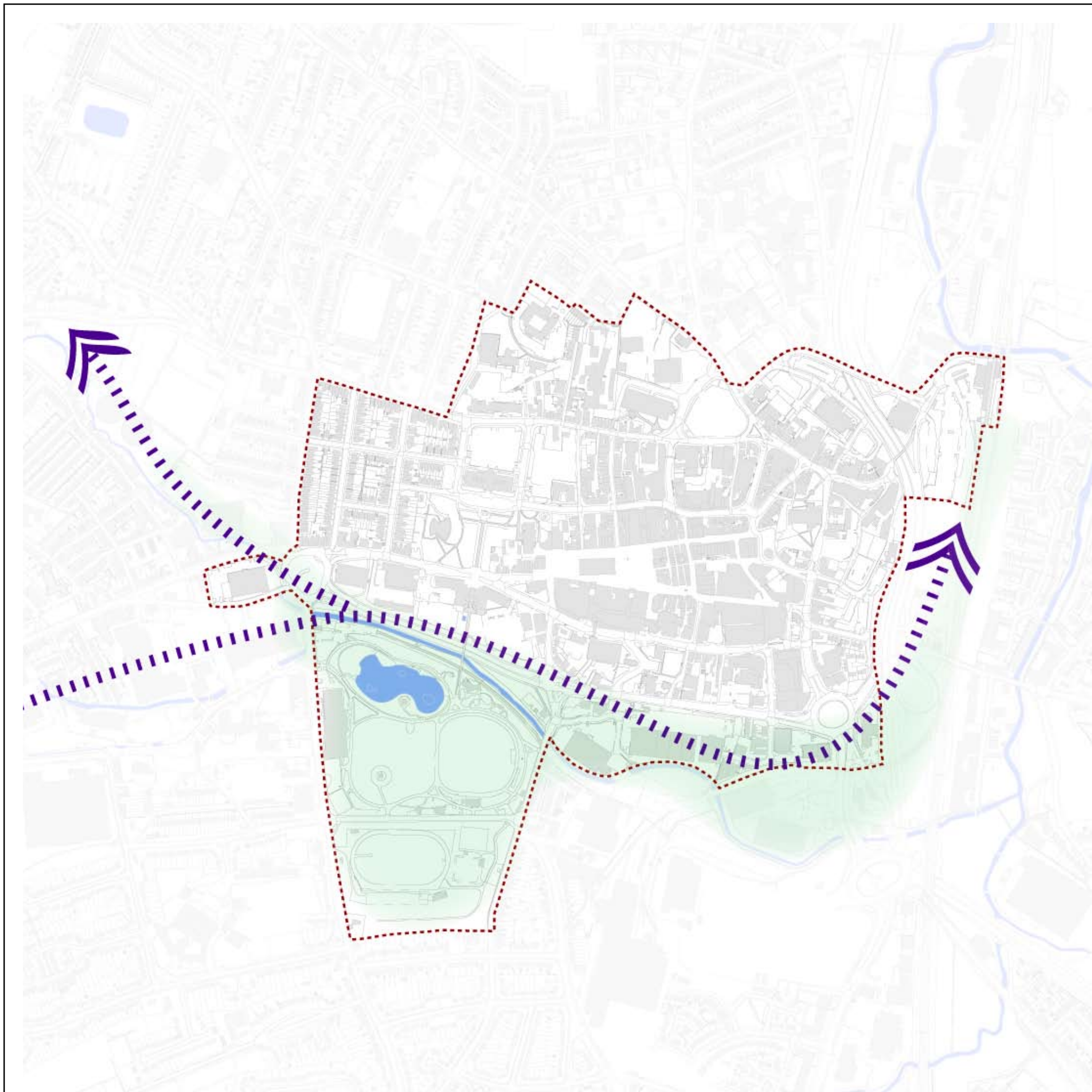
Poor quality building elevations and 'left over' spaces mask the fine market town from passers through, undermining overall image and public perceptions of Chesterfield. At the same time, some of these tired buildings, underused spaces and gap sites present the most obvious development opportunities in the borough.

The masterplan has explored how this frayed built environment can be repaired and the town centre reintegrated with adjacent communities. The plan to the left shows four elements to this process; the strong edge (or Town Wall) to the south, the development of the 'shatter zone' in the hatched areas, the strengthening of links to surrounding communities and the creation of welcoming gateways to the town centre.

Extensive surface car parks will be replaced; retention of spaces will require provision of undercroft and multi-storey parking.



Smithfield Manchester: Before (top) and after (below) of the Smithfield scheme in Manchester, masterplanned by a team including URBED and showing the repair of a 'shatter zone' on the edge of the city centre.



'Green' the river corridors



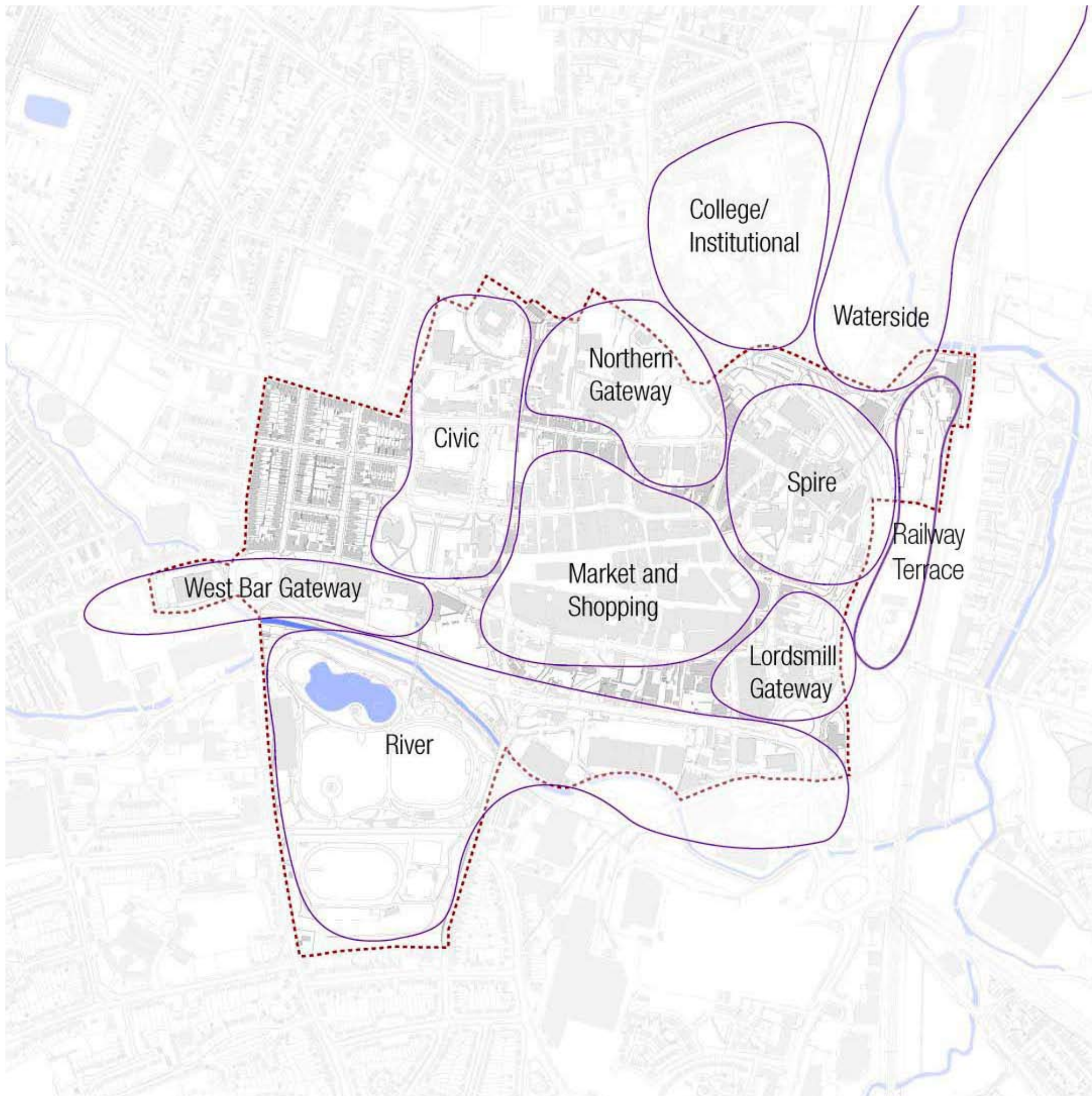
The rivers Hipper and Rother and their tributaries are important ecological and leisure resources for Chesterfield. They bring wildlife into the urban heart and sustain numerous species. Strategic cycle and walking paths run alongside them, connecting the centre of town to the countryside and linking 'waterfront' developments alongside the Chesterfield Canal.



Part of the 'shatter zone' described on the previous page lies within these valleys, and rather than try and develop this area the masterplan strategy is to 'green' it. Greening the river corridors is about improving their accessibility and environmental quality. Water has an eternal attraction for people - Chesterfield's rivers can play a greater role in promoting wellbeing and investment.

The plan proposes a closer visual relationship between watercourses and streets and buildings alongside. Instead of turning away from the rivers or burying them in culverts, future developments can help frame and animate their qualities. There is scope to build on the success of Queen's Park with new riverside access as well as pedestrian and cycle routes to create a green arc to the south and east of the town centre.

Emsher Park in Germany: Where a former mining valley has been greened (without removing historic industrial infrastructure) as a recreational resource and now as a focus for new employment (top).



Create distinctive quarters



The final principle of masterplan is to create a series of distinctive quarters. Each quarter should have a different mix of uses and an individual character, drawn partly from the way it looks and partly from what happens there.

The plan shows a series of quarters that could be promoted in the town centre. At the core is the market and shopping area that will be improved but not redeveloped. To the east is the Spire area focused around St. Mary's and All Saints Church, and also containing Chesterfield's main theatres and museum. Some of this area is currently dominated by bars but should evolve over time into more of a cultural and family leisure area. South and east of the Crooked Spire there are opportunities for residential development on underused areas between St. Mary's Gate and the A61.



The Northern Gateway, College area and Waterside offer opportunities to create new mixed-use quarters drawing on the vitality of shoppers, students, residents and leisure spaces. To the west the Town Hall provides a potential focus for a Civic Quarter 'central business district', with more formal design and a mix of new offices, homes and restaurants.

The southern edge along the River Hipper and Markham Road provides opportunities for clear town centre gateways at either end - West Bars and the Lordsmill Roundabout along with better links to Queen's Park and a green corridor along the River Hipper.

Bury: Where the Council is successfully implementing a 'quarters strategy' following URBED's masterplan. This includes the market quarter (bottom) and the slow transformation of Silver Street (top) from a bar dominated street to a cultural quarter.