

Chesterfield

Town Centre Masterplan

October 2009



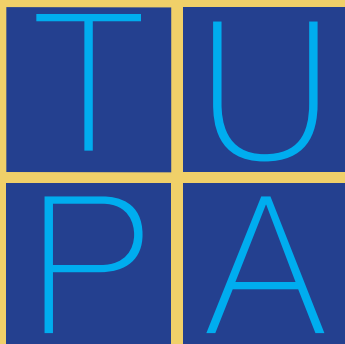
Part 4

Masterplan

URBED's 2009 update of the 2004 Chesterfield TEN Plan

Masterplan concepts:

- Transport
- Urban Form
- Public Realm
- Activity



The following pages develop clear masterplan concepts from the vision, themes and principles.

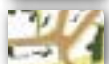
We build the plan layer by layer, starting with Transport, then Urban form, Public realm and finally Activity.

Chesterfield's 13th Century Church of St. Mary and All Saints is famous for its Crooked Spire, one of England's most evocative landmarks.

Public Realm



Main vehicle routes



Shared surface



Pedestrian areas

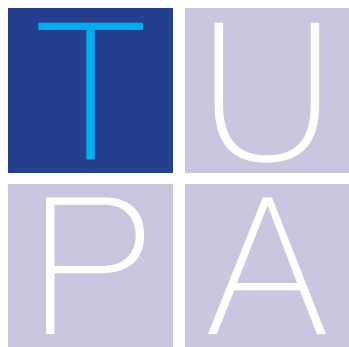


Bus routes



Car parks





Masterplan concepts: Transport

The first masterplan layer seeks to maintain Chesterfield's accessibility - to promote walking, cycling and public transport whilst reducing traffic impacts and barriers created by road infrastructure.

The first layer of the masterplan relates to transport and impacts of the highway and movement system on the town centre. In order to implement the principle of 'moving traffic out' the plan to the left shows a proposed new highway structure for the town.

Traffic

The key move is to take traffic away from the spire area. This involves a new route from Saltergate via the Brewery Street bridge over the A61 to Chesterfield station, following the railway to the Hollis Lane Junction.

This will take through-traffic out of Holywell Street, St. Mary's Gate and Lordsmill Street, allowing the public realm of this part of town to be transformed.

The plan also shows removal of the West Bars and Lordsmill Street roundabouts on Markham Road, in both cases part funded by the value of development land that would be released. This will allow the aspiration to "boulevard" Markham Road to be more fully realised.

Pedestrians and Shared Surface

Taking more traffic out of the centre allows the environment around the spire to be rebalanced in favour of those on foot and bikes.

The plan shows two types of space: light yellow means pedestrianised with vehicles only allowed for servicing; brown denotes shared-surface streets where local traffic and pedestrians would mix.

Shared-space is a concept successfully imported from places like the Netherlands and Scandinavia. Examples in the British Isles include Dublin's O'Connell Street, Plas Mawr in Caernarfon and London's Kensington High Street.

More locally, Sheffield and Nottingham have proved it possible to humanise and reclaim even busy inner ring roads.

Bus Routes

The red dotted lines on the plan show suggested key bus routes in the town. There has been debate during the course of the study about the merits of a bus station in the town centre. On balance the consensus is that traders and shoppers benefit from the current layout, which offers close accessibility via a series of bus stops encircling the retail centre.

The concept is therefore to allow buses to skirt the centre at low speed, using the shared surface. Consideration may be given to moving buses out one block, taking them off Knifesmithgate and Church Way

(where they currently dominate the environment) to St. Mary's Gate and Holywell Street. This would reduce bus accessibility very slightly but significantly improve pedestrian comfort and safety in the core.

Cycling

Chesterfield is already well connected in terms of long distance cycle routes. However the system is less coherent around the town centre. The shared space will create a safe environment for cyclists throughout. In addition a new route is proposed from Queen's Park around to the station on a former rail line (shown in green on the plan). This will require construction of a new bridge, which could be the subject of a design competition.

Parking

The masterplan involves redevelopment on a number of surface car parks - the Northern Gateway site, near the Spire and around the Town Hall.

Car access is still essential to retail health and the masterplan is committed to maintain overall parking numbers.

This apparent paradox can be resolved by replacing surface car parks with decked and multi-storey parking (suggested in orange on the plan), and unlocking on-street capacity. New parking infrastructure may be funded as development comes forward on the basis of land value released. This has happened successfully in other towns (such as Wakefield) and is a crucial part of mending the 'shatter zone' described in previous sections.

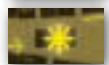
Urban Form



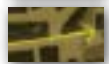
New buildings



Area of intensification

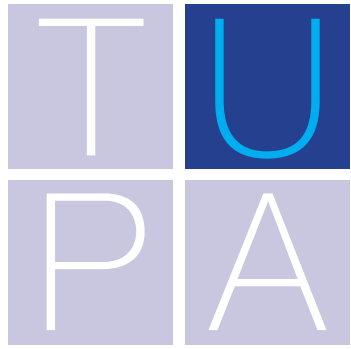


Landmarks



Key views





Masterplan concepts: Urban Form

The second masterplan layer addresses urban form. Concepts build on the principle of fixing the town centre edges by suggesting where new buildings can repair or reinforce the structure and create attractive public spaces.

Our analysis of Chesterfield is that the beauty of its heart is hidden within an ordinary shell. Unfortunately it is this that shapes many people's image of the town. The masterplan therefore aims to mend the edge through the creation of well integrated infill development and a stronger definition of Markham Road to the south, together with better gateways and links.

Arc of Change

On the facing page, the light brown arc around the north and east of the town centre on the facing plan shows the main opportunity for change and development. The attractive suburbs and neighbourhoods to the north have been separated from the centre by the doughnut roundabout.

To the east of the Spire and St. Mary's Gate the urban fabric falls apart very quickly, partly because of the impact of the A61.

The Town Hall is also surrounded on its east and north side by gap sites.

The masterplan proposes a programme of work to mend the 'holes' through a series of major development projects,

described in the following section.

Alongside this plan is the Chesterfield Waterside scheme, being progressed by a partnership between the Council and the main landowners, promising a significant improvement to the historic canal area.

Town Wall

Because of flood-risk in the Hipper's valley and its severance from the main core by both Markham Road and a steep slope, the masterplan does not propose further development along the river.

Instead the plan is to green the valley and to use development opportunities to create new gateways within a clear edge or 'Town Wall' along Markham Road.

This involves taking out the two large roundabouts at West Bars and Lordsmill Street, and developing gap sites in between to create a strong and attractive edge to a 'boulevarded' Markham Road.

The 'Town Wall' is split into three schemes described in the next section; Lordsmill Square, Town Wall and West Bars.

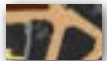
Landmarks and Views

It is important for new developments to relate to the historic heart of the town, and particularly to preserve and enhance key views and vistas. The three iconic landmarks of Chesterfield town centre are highlighted with yellow stars on the plan; the Crooked Spire, Market Hall and the Town Hall.

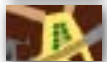
Proposed new urban form has been designed to respect views of these landmarks and to create new views where possible. So for example, the station gateway has been designed such that new development frames a view of the spire as the first thing that people see arriving in the town.

Some of these schemes will not be possible until the end of the plan period. Putting a framework in place now can ensure that all development in the coming years can work towards this vision.

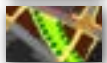
Public Realm



Environmental works to streets



Urban squares



Green spaces

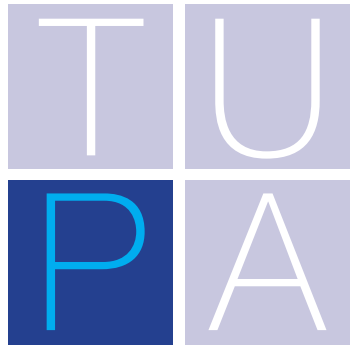
2

1

3

4

5



Masterplan concepts: Public Realm

The third masterplan layer addresses public areas between the buildings. Part of this relates to aspects described in the transport section. Here we look at the squares, spaces and parks that are such an important part of Chesterfield's character.

Chesterfield is a town defined by its market. The tapering twin squares flowing around the Market Hall constitute one of the finest market places in England. In Queen's Park the town also has a beautifully restored Victorian pleasure ground, as well as the more formal Shentall Memorial Gardens sloping down from the Town Hall. The aim of the strategy is to improve these spaces and to develop them into a stronger network. This will include:

Market Place and New Square:

In terms of form and materials there is relatively little that needs to change about the market area. One issue is the layout of the stalls. The wooden structures on the main square are effectively permanent. This gives the market the great advantage of a unity, clarity and quality that dismountable stalls lack. However it does mean empty stalls restrict other use of the space on quieter and non-market days. Perhaps more problematic is the strict linearity of the

layout, which blocks pedestrian desire lines from north to south, displacing footfall around instead of into the trading area.

The suggestion is therefore that stalls are arranged in a modified Union Jack layout to allow people to cross the space diagonally and to open up the heart of the space. New Square already has stalls that can be taken down allowing it to be used for events.

Improvements to existing spaces

There is scope in the masterplan to improve other spaces within the town. This includes the Shentall Memorial Gardens and better links from the town into Queen's Park. Reducing the impact of buses will also allow improvements to Rykneld Square, the space around the Tourist Information Centre. The grounds around the Crooked Spire should be improved by protective railings to secure the area at night, and the reduction of traffic on St. Mary's Gate, becoming a more attractive part of the network of spaces in the centre.

New Spaces

In addition to these existing spaces, the plan includes a network of new spaces throughout the town centre. These include:

1. Town Hall Gardens: To the rear of the Town Hall we are suggesting a deck over the car park with two blocks of offices and formal gardens framing the northern elevation of the Town Hall.

2. Civic Quarter: The Town Hall is linked by an axis to a new public square in the Civic Quarter. This is envisaged as a quiet public space as part of a mixed use development.

3. Northern Gateway: This in turn is linked by a new east west route to the Northern Gateway site and a more formal public square at the heart of the development. This is envisaged as a location for restaurants and leisure uses.

4. Green Bridge: The plan also proposes a lightweight green bridge spanning the A61. This will create a small new urban park and will link the College, Chesterfield Waterside scheme and the station into the town centre.

5. Lordsmill Square: Finally we are proposing a new public square on Lordsmill Street as part of the Lordsmill Square development.



College

Waterside

Northern Gateway

Civic Quarter

Railway Terrace

The Spire

Market Place

West Bars Gateway

Lordsmill Square

Town Wall



Masterplan concepts: Activity

The final masterplan layer relates to the uses and activities that will occupy buildings and enliven streets and spaces. It sets out a series of quarters with distinctive characters and a mix of uses:

Civic Quarter

This is Chesterfield's administrative quarter and the democratic heart of the town. Shentall Memorial Gardens provides a formal public setting for these buildings but the area north of the Town Hall is dominated by parking and lacks places for informal interaction, eating and leisure for the area's employees. The masterplan proposes a public space north of the Town Hall, framed and funded by new development on the surface car parks, and Sun Inn Yard, an intimate 'garden terrace' linking the Shentall axis with the market squares. New development layouts will permeate footfall from adjacent areas, including Northern Gateway.

Northern Gateway

This area has been marginalised and activity is limited to car parking and the timber merchants. This is a key opportunity to create a retail anchor in the northern part of the centre to generate footfall and attract visitors and spending. It will need to be anchored by a food retailer or a department store. Strong pedestrian links to the market and Vicar Lane will allow other traders to capture the increased trade. A mix of complementary uses, parking, leisure and smaller scale retail will prevent the area from being a 'day-time only' destination.

College

With at least 8,000 staff and students on site during term time, Chesterfield College is part of the town's lifeblood. The masterplan allows for better definition and overlooking of pedestrian routes, encouraging more interaction.

Waterside

Ambitious changes along the canal corridor promise to bring thousands of new residents and visitors to the very edge of Chesterfield town centre. It is essential this adds to rather than draws from existing footfall levels. Leisure and cultural facilities need to complement and not compete with the town centre - the Green Bridge allows a clear route along the sight line between the canal and Crooked Spire.

The Spire

As Chesterfield's most famous attraction, the Crooked Spire ought to be surrounded by a high quality lively urban quarter. That this is only partly achieved is a result of the underuse of land along the A61 and the need to reduce traffic on Church Way and St. Mary's Gate.

Railway Terrace

This is a suggested new identity for the currently isolated area of parking between the A61 and the railway. New road access and development can open up future development opportunities here,

perhaps for residential or commercial use. Of course, the station parking function is important, and, by use of multi-storey structures, parking capacity should be at least retained and perhaps increased

Lordsmill Square

This high-profile intersection of east-west and north-south routes could be a vibrant gateway to the town centre, but pedestrian and commercial activity is suppressed by traffic domination. The masterplan promotes a landmark redevelopment including a new public space. Uses here could include hotel and conferencing space, to take advantage of the road and public transport connections (equidistant between the coach and rail stations).

Town Wall

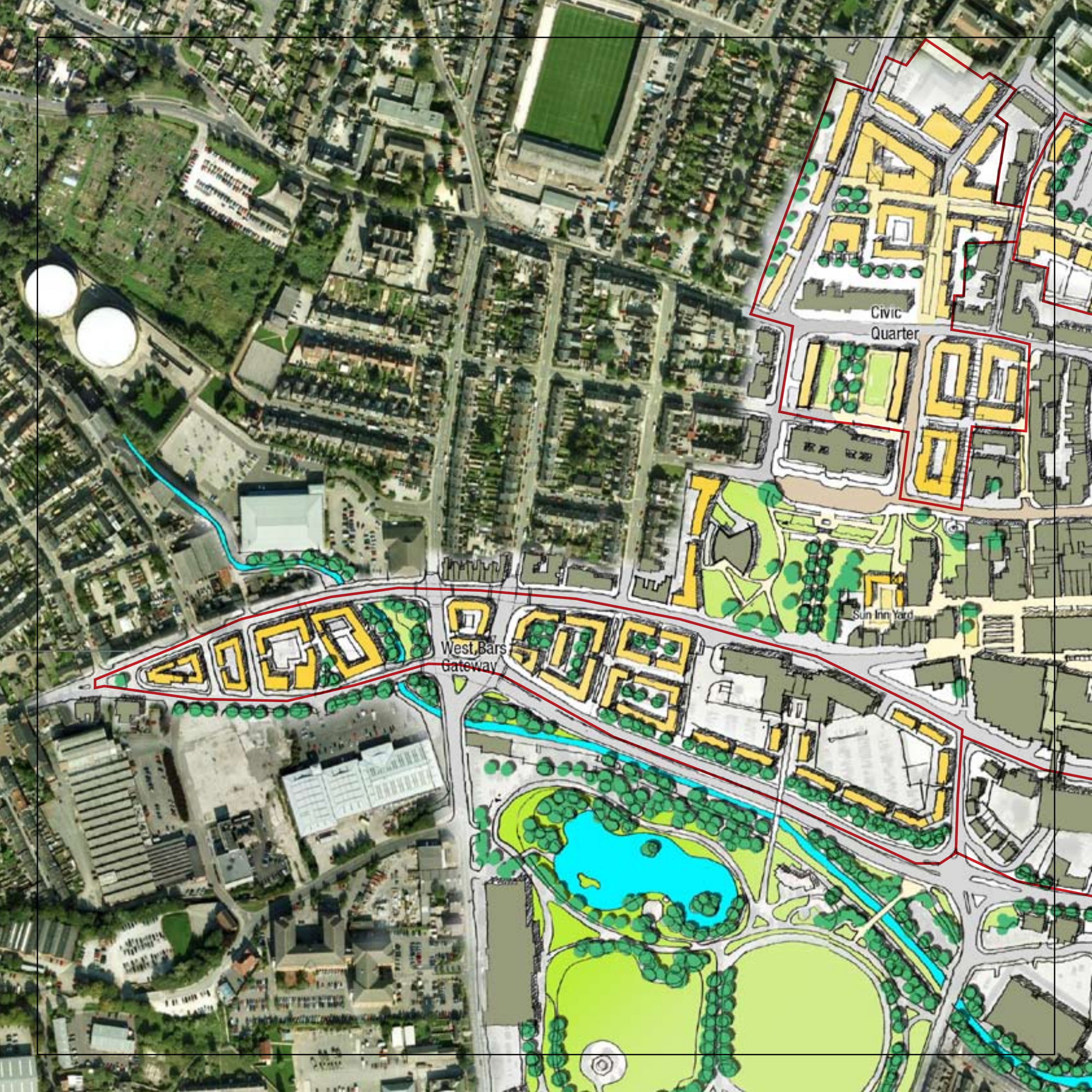
The southern edge of the town centre along Markham Road has a poorly defined building line, little ground floor frontage and a hostile pedestrian environment. This precludes street level activity. The new vision sees the edge developing over time as a 'boulevard', with buildings several stories high giving good enclosure, and active frontages at ground floor level, similar to busy Great Ancoats Street in Manchester. By calming the traffic, a wider range of uses become viable, anchoring higher land values. This will also help link the edge of centre retail sheds with the town centre.

West Bars Gateway

There is an opportunity to join the town centre with the linear centre of Chatsworth Road. Active uses on the ground floors of buildings along the corridor should be maximised and sections of dead frontage avoided. A wide range of uses are appropriate here, but the emphasis should be on capturing passing trade in ways appropriate to a residential area.

Market Place

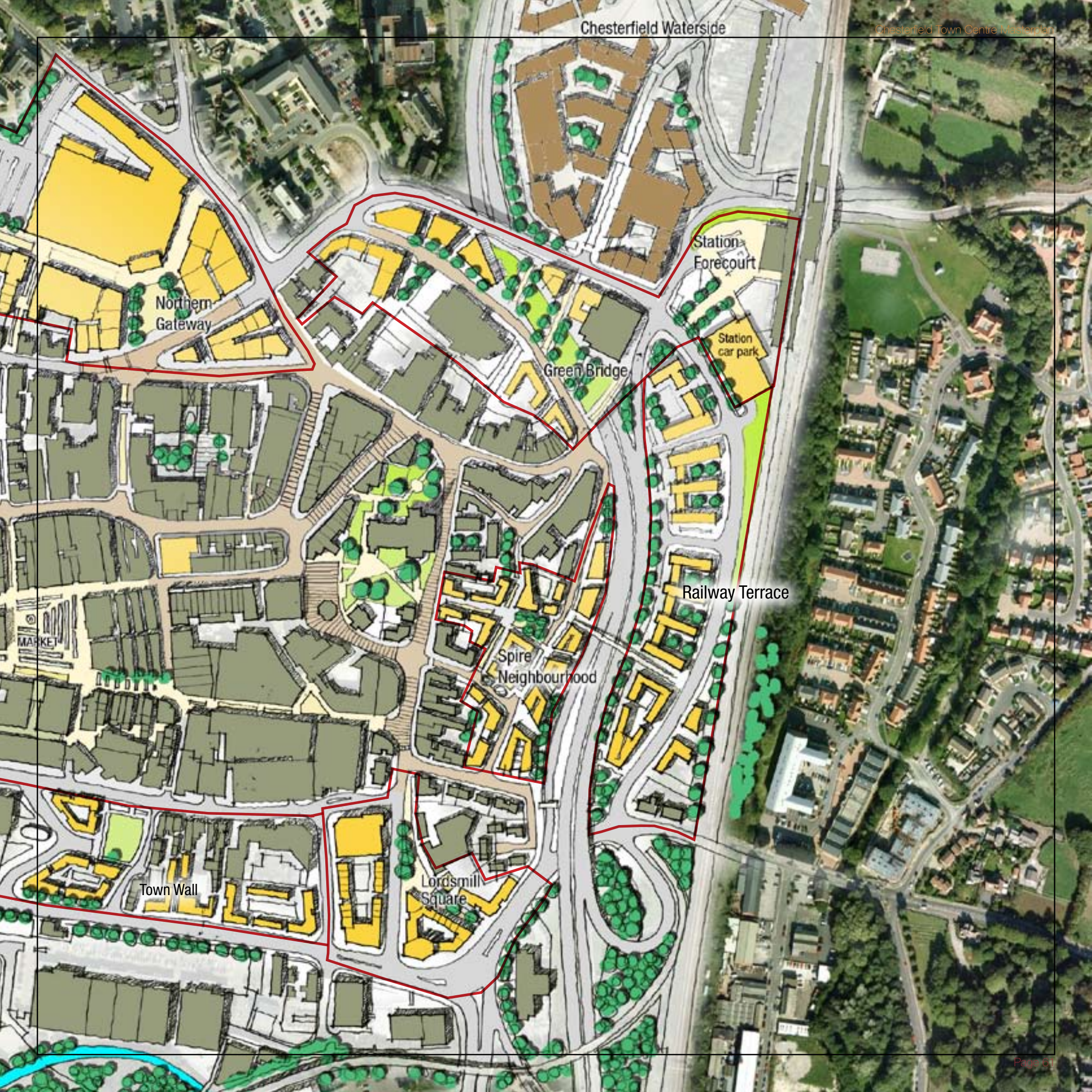
At the heart of Chesterfield's economy and identity is the retail centre, anchored by the market, Vicar Lane and the Pavements, and symbolised by its landmark Victorian Market Hall. Chesterfield balances vibrant independent traders with a strong mainstream offer to form a healthy retail core. The masterplan seeks to protect and expand this core function. A key aim will be to maintain and enhance footfall throughout the day and into the evening. A more diverse mix of town centre uses will help achieve this - measures include town centre living, new hotel accommodation and a higher quality food and drink offer. Events like the Chesterfield Market Festival create a great sense of life and activity. The Market Hall is recognised as an asset with more potential than is currently delivered, and a detailed study into future improvements has been commissioned.



Civic
Quarter

Sun Inn Yard

West Bars
Gateway



Northern
Gateway

Station
Forecourt

Station
car park

Green Bridge

Railway Terrace

Spire
Neighbourhood

Town Wall

Lordsmill
Square