

# WINCANTON TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Draft for Public Consultation



FOR SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL



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# Part One: Aims

## Overview and Context



# 1 Introduction

## Overview

South Somerset District Council (SSDC) has commissioned Chilmark Consulting, Owen Davies Consulting and Robert West Design to produce a Strategy for Wincanton town centre with the underlying objective to boost footfall, create a more vibrant centre and support future regeneration aspirations.

The importance of Wincanton town centre to its local community and wider hinterland in the east of the District is long established as it provides a range of services and facilities to meet local retail, social and community needs. The town centre's influence and attraction has and continues to face ongoing challenges, like market towns across the country, driven by changes in retailing such as online shopping and competition from larger centres.

The Council's Corporate Plan identifies the creation of a Wincanton Town Centre Action Plan as a priority for 2018-19. In accordance with this priority, this Strategy sets out the following:

- an overall approach to enhance and develop the economic vibrancy of the town centre, set within the context of the local issues relevant to Wincanton and the national trends impacting on market towns;
- opportunities to increase footfall and improve the vitality and viability of the town centre, including the potential for development sites; and

- complementary initiatives and interventions to improve the existing environment in the town centre and boost the local economy through increased use by residents and visitors.

This Strategy is informed by a comprehensive baseline review of the town centre working with the local business community and key stakeholders to embed local knowledge in the preparation of a SWOT analysis. This informs a clear overarching vision for Wincanton town centre together with key objectives to deliver the vision.

A number of projects related to potential development site options and public realm improvements are identified to help deliver change. To complement the 'physical' options, a series of softer initiatives and interventions are also proposed.

The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan which outlines the projects and initiatives considered a priority for the next 1-3 years to deliver the shorter-term objectives.

This Strategy sets out the proposed governance model for implementing the Strategy, maintaining progress and achievements, and ensuring the strategic framework can adapt to changing circumstances and priorities.



## Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

- understand the baseline performance of the town centre and the opportunities for change;
- outline a vision for Wincanton town centre that is supported by key objectives;
- identify the priorities for improvement and regeneration in the town centre in line with the key objectives;
- develop an action plan that outlines the priorities needed and the mechanisms for delivery, including a co-ordinated town centre partnership approach that identifies the responsibilities of the District Council alongside other public sector partners, local town centre businesses and the local community; and
- establish how performance will be managed and monitored.

## Structure

The Strategy is structured into three main parts:

- **Part One:** Aims – Overview and Context
- **Part Two:** Shape – Vision, Development Options and Initiatives
- **Part Three:** Delivery – Action Plan, Delivery Responsibility and Performance Monitoring.

A number of appendices support the Strategy and Action Plan, and provide a more detailed overview of the following:



*town centre way-finder*

- relevant national and local policy context;
- national trends impacting on town centres; and
- engagement undertaken with the local town centre business community and key stakeholders to inform the formulation of the Strategy.

## 2 Setting the Context

### Introduction

This chapter establishes the baseline for the town centre set in the context of the relevant policy framework, national trends and the characteristics of the centre today. It provides an assessment of the role and function of Wincanton town centre to inform the aims and objectives for the Strategy.

The analysis draws on a review of published information together with engagement with the town centre business community and key stakeholders in the form of a business survey, individual meetings and workshop events. This approach ensures the baseline fully incorporates local knowledge and aspirations in the preparation of a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis to identify key issues and opportunities.

### Wincanton

Situated in the east of South Somerset, Wincanton is identified as 'The Gateway to Somerset' from the east and is strategically located adjacent to the A303 trunk road which links London and the South West. The town is



*High Street: the historic London south-west road*

situated on the north eastern edge of Blackmore Vale and is closely located to Wiltshire, North Dorset and Mendip. Yeovil is 15 miles to the south west whilst Bruton, Castle Cary, Gillingham and Milbourne Port are all within 10 miles.

Wincanton is the fourth largest settlement in the district with a population of 5,435 (2011 Census). It acts as an important local retail and service centre for the rural east of the district and over recent years has experienced significant levels of residential development focused to the south east.

The employment role of the town is characterised by its associations with the dairy and food production industries, and historically logistics and distribution, with the main employment areas located in close proximity to the A303. A number of important tourist assets and attractors unique to the town include Wincanton racecourse and Terry Pratchett's 'Discworld Emporium' which contribute to the wider appeal of the town.

### Policy Context

A number of Council Plans and Strategies together with national policy and guidance have informed the preparation of the Wincanton Town Centre Strategy, including:

- South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (2015);
- Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2028 (2018);
- Tackling the Challenges: Council Plan 2016-21;



- South Somerset District Council District-wide Car Parking Strategy (2013);
- South Somerset Economic Development Strategy 2012 to 2015;
- National Planning Policy Framework (2018); and
- National Planning Policy Guidance (2014).

In addition, the Council are in the process of undertaking a Local Plan Review following the publication of the South Somerset Early Review Issues and Options Consultation in October 2017.

The importance of high streets to local communities and local economies is central to the Council and Governments commitment to supporting vibrant town centres and helping centres adopt and evolve as multi-functional destinations. The 'town centre first' policy approach seeks to encourage and promote growth and development of town centres that allow people to live, shop and work alongside access to entertainment, leisure and services. This extends beyond retail with policies and strategies focused on supporting the vitality and viability of centres which are diverse, attractive and unique to residents and visitors.

A policy overview is set out in Appendix 1.

## National Town Centre Trends

Market towns (and town centres in general) face significant commercial challenges driven by changing consumer dynamics and competition from online retailing. These challenges raise specific issues and pressures for smaller centres such as Wincanton.

While the issues vary by location, there are a number of core trends which are driving change in shopping patterns and the way communities use their centres. This threatens the vibrancy of market towns across the country and has serious implications for ongoing vitality and viability. The structural changes are shaping a policy response which seeks to future proof high streets beyond the traditional retail role and function of centres in order to evolve and adapt to the speed and nature of change.

In summary, the key trends are summarised as follows:

- the growth of online shopping, e-services and technology innovation has increased greater choice and convenience than high street retailers;
- changing retailer and commercial requirements, including estate rationalisation, flexibility of business models and consolidation towards higher order centres;
- competition from out of centre development which are increasingly focused on a mixed-use offer;
- national economic trends, including reduced forecast retail expenditure projections;

- the impact of business rates on many retail occupiers; and
- wider socio-economic trends driven by lifestyle and convenience considerations and a desire for a centre 'experience' based on a sense of community and offer of services not offered online.

Further analysis of the national trends impacting on town centres is outlined in **Appendix 2**.

## Town Centre Business and Stakeholder Engagement

The preparation of the Wincanton Town Centre Strategy has been shaped by stakeholder engagement to identify the key issues and opportunities of relevance to the Strategy. This has involved a business survey of town centre businesses together with presentations and workshops with town centre businesses.

Individual meetings and workshops have also been held with other key stakeholders with an active interest in the town centre on the key issues, emerging vision and objectives for the strategy.

Details of the engagement undertaken, organisations involved, and summary of stakeholder feedback is set out in **Appendix 3**.

## Wincanton Town Centre Today

The baseline analysis of Wincanton town centre has been assessed in relation to three themes:

- Land Use, Diversity and Performance;
- Townscape and Heritage; and
- Access and Movement.

A summary of the findings from the baseline review and feedback from business and stakeholder engagement is outlined below.

## Land Use, Diversity and Performance

### Composition, Representation and Offer

As one of the district's designated Primary Market Towns, Wincanton town centre is characterised by a noticeable level of 'independent' representation with national multiple representation limited (Boots and the Co-op).

In terms of convenience retailing, the Co-op acts as the main retail anchor with support from high quality retailers (butcher, grocer and baker).

Levels of comparison retail are varied, including



*some national retailers are represented in the High Street*



High Street: "Disc World Emporium"

specialist traders (e.g. photographer, cobblers, antiques, vinyl sounds, wine shop, jewellers, home furnishings and electricals). This ensures a healthy retail offer which is recognised by stakeholders for the scale and role of the town centre. There is a large presence of retail services, particularly in the hair and beauty sector. This issue is also acknowledged by stakeholders and reflects an evolution at the national level away from traditional transactional retail activity towards a greater mix of activities to meet consumer demands, such as retail services.

The overall level of diversity and attraction is considered healthy with many 'essentials'



Market Place: Bootmakers

present including the Post Office, newsagent, pharmacy, butcher, baker and grocer alongside key services (e.g. opticians). The town centre has also successfully attracted distinctive artisan and 'maker' lifestyle businesses, concentrated around the Market Place area. These new investments have contributed high quality additions to the offer of the town centre. Furthermore, stakeholders identify a unique asset in the town centre at Discworld Emporium. This is considered a Unique Selling Point (USP) for Wincanton.



The Balsam Centre

The attractiveness of the town centre is enhanced by community and cultural facilities including the library, museum and town hall together with the Balsam Centre and Memorial Hall. Stakeholders widely agree and have highlighted the importance of these facilities as key attractors from a wide catchment area.

Although the town centre provides a diverse mix of traditional retail, services and attractions with some strong specialist businesses, many stakeholders consider the town centre lacks a critical mass and 'browsability' associated with a more interesting mix of uses that reflect modern



*South Street: the Nog Inn*

tastes and customer expectations and which can retain shoppers and visitors.

The food and drink offer in the town centre is focused on cafes and public houses. Restaurant provision is currently limited for residents and visitors and impacts on the range, choice and quality of offer. Stakeholders are supportive of the need for an improved restaurant offer to support the evening economy and attract more younger families to the centre.

The level of workspace provision in the town centre is limited. There is a recognition from stakeholders that employment opportunities are

currently focused outside the town centre and opportunities for new floorspace to meet modern needs should be explored to help promote vitality and footfall in the town centre.

### Events

Events such as The Christmas Extravaganza continue although other events are either less frequent, for example The October Carnival (planned for 2019) or the one-off Wincanton Town Festival. Overall, this has led to a decline in the number and frequency of events organised in Wincanton town centre. Feedback from stakeholders indicates a desire to promote events but also a recognition of the need for support in organisational and attendance terms from the local community and local businesses.

Whilst located outside the town, Wincanton racecourse hosts various race and non-racing events throughout the year. It is considered as a key asset by stakeholders which offers strong potential to attract more visitors into the town centre from racecourse events.

The town centre lacks a regular market (with the exception of the small monthly indoor Country



*Wincanton Race Course is a key local visitor asset close to the town centre: "The Last Fence" by Clare Tupman*



Market). Previous efforts have not proved successful although there is a recognition amongst stakeholders of the need to promote a more innovative approach to markets.

### **Role, Performance and Catchment Area**

The Council's Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study confirms the role and function of Wincanton as an important top up retail and service centre that is characterised by an extensive rural catchment area. There is an identified capacity for additional convenience retail floorspace in Wincanton (circa 1,500 sq. m). The same evidence base confirms a more limited comparison retail role with a low level of market share and identifies the dominance of higher order centres, especially Yeovil.

The main food destinations in Wincanton are located out of centre at the gateway to the town, and dominated by Morrisons and, to a lesser extent, Lidl. The Council's retail study confirmed the appeal of these out of centre facilities as shown by their local market share and capture of food shopping expenditure. Stakeholders recognise that local residents are drawn to these facilities due to their convenience. This is considered by stakeholders to be detrimental to the town centre.

The Council Retail Study identified the town centre had a high vacancy rate of over 18% (at January 2017) which was well above the national average. Whilst the perception of vacancies has fallen, there remain a number of prominent long term vacant and under-used units and buildings in the town centre which reduce the quality of the



*The long-established hardware shop on High Street, Clementina, has now closed*



*A mobile facility in a car park now replaces branch banks*  
centre. There is strong support from stakeholders to encourage alternative re-use options, particularly for employment and, where appropriate, residential uses.

The town centre has lost a number of important services / retailers over recent years following the relocation of the doctors' surgery, closure of key shops including antiques/collectables and hardware on the High Street and loss of bank branches. There is no 24hr cash machine available with bank services restricted to mobile

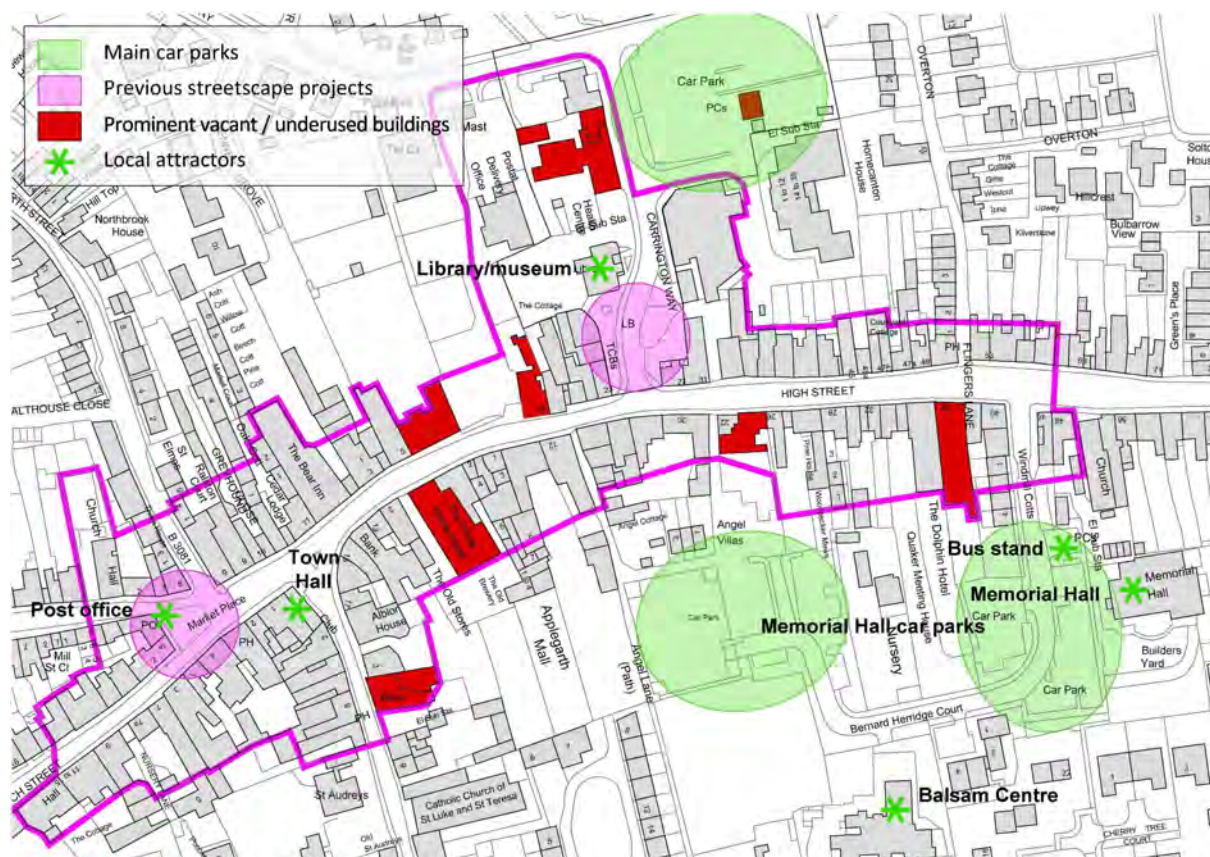
banks (provided four days a week from the Memorial Hall car park which lack a visible high street presence). The consensus from stakeholders is that these losses have contributed to a marked reduction in footfall and vitality. Observations suggest that there is an inconsistent range of business opening hours with several traders routinely closing during the daytime and many businesses closing on Saturday afternoon. This impacts on vitality of the town centre and limits the opportunity to serve the local population.

### Development Activity

A number of existing planning permissions in the town centre have the potential to contribute positively to a wider mix of uses. Construction of new homes is underway at Vedlers Hey, while unimplemented consents exist for a boutique B&B (10 High Street), residential infill (rear of 24 High Street) and refurbishment of the former White Horse Hotel into a restaurant/pizzeria. The encouragement for a greater mix of uses is firmly supported by stakeholders.

Figure 1 identifies the key areas and 'distinctive' attractors in Wincanton town centre.

Figure 1: key features in the town centre





## Townscape and Heritage

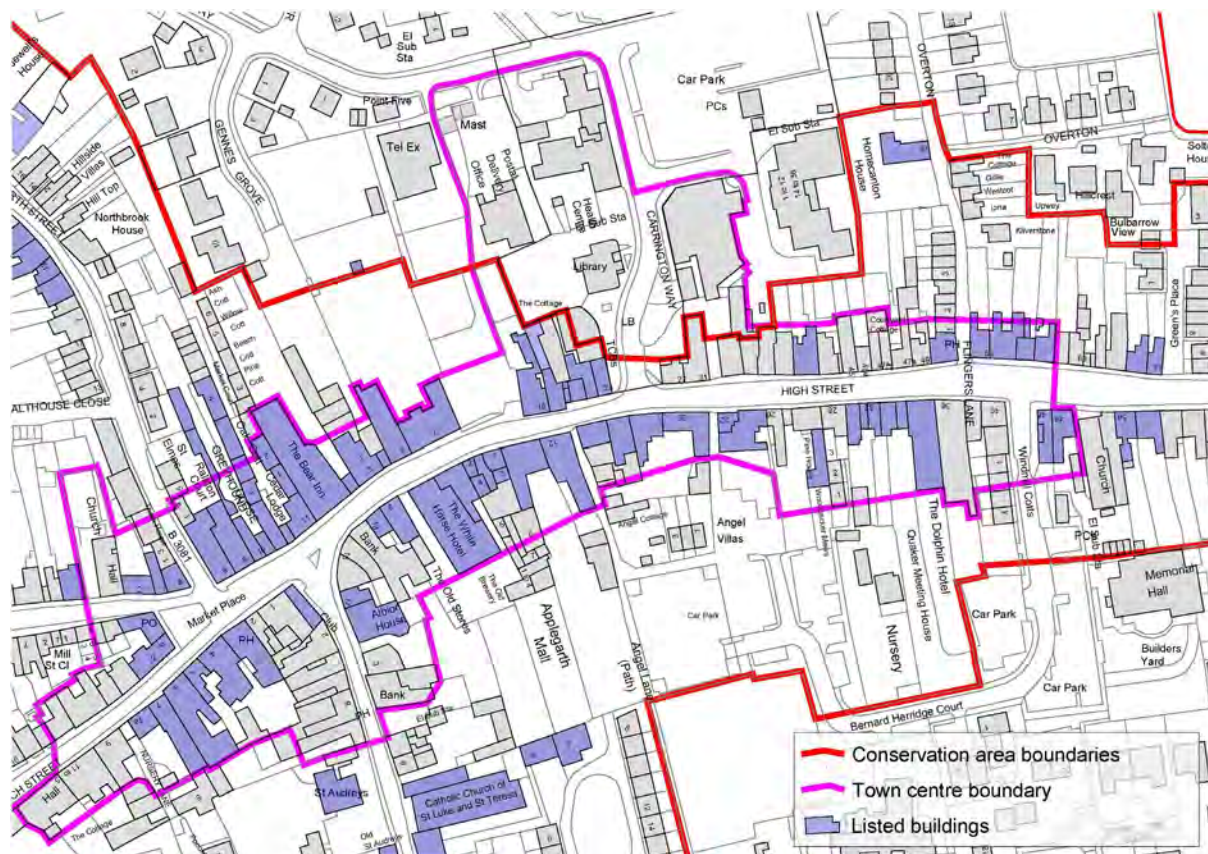
### Built Environment

The historic town centre contains many attractive and listed buildings and is largely designated part of the Wincanton Conservation Area which contributes to the special quality of the streetscape and heritage character of the town. The protection and safeguarding of this built environment is a key feedback from stakeholders.

Figure 2 identifies the extent of the Conservation Area and listed buildings in the town centre.

The distinctive townscape is influenced by topography and characterised by a limited number of landmarks and important town spaces (Market Place with its landmarks of the Town Hall tower and the lantern). The tight built up street pattern and return frontages (arches/alleys) in the town centre offer a series of views and vistas (especially from the car parks) which provide an attractive and unique outlook.

Figure 2: heritage assets



### Public Realm and Appearance

A number of heritage buildings are in need of maintenance and investment and detract from the overall quality of the townscape. The improvement in appearance of key buildings is considered important by stakeholders for enhancing the image of the town centre.

Parts of the town centre, particularly around Carrington Way/High Street junction and service area are compromised by poor public realm, which offers the potential for an attractive focal space. The western part of the High Street is also characterised by inadequate pedestrian



*High Street has evolved to a typical mediaeval “burgage” plot pattern*



*Alleys and archways typically link the High Street to the burgage plots behind*



*Carrington Way car parking and Co-op supermarket*

environments (narrow pavements). The focus on opportunities for improvements to the pedestrian environment forms a key objective of the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan alongside the complementary initiatives outlined in this Strategy.

A number of open spaces to the north and south of the High Street, accommodate the surface level car parking and include modern unsympathetic development at Carrington Way. Opportunities to improve the existing, and to create new focal spaces in the town centre would improve the sense of place and enhance use of



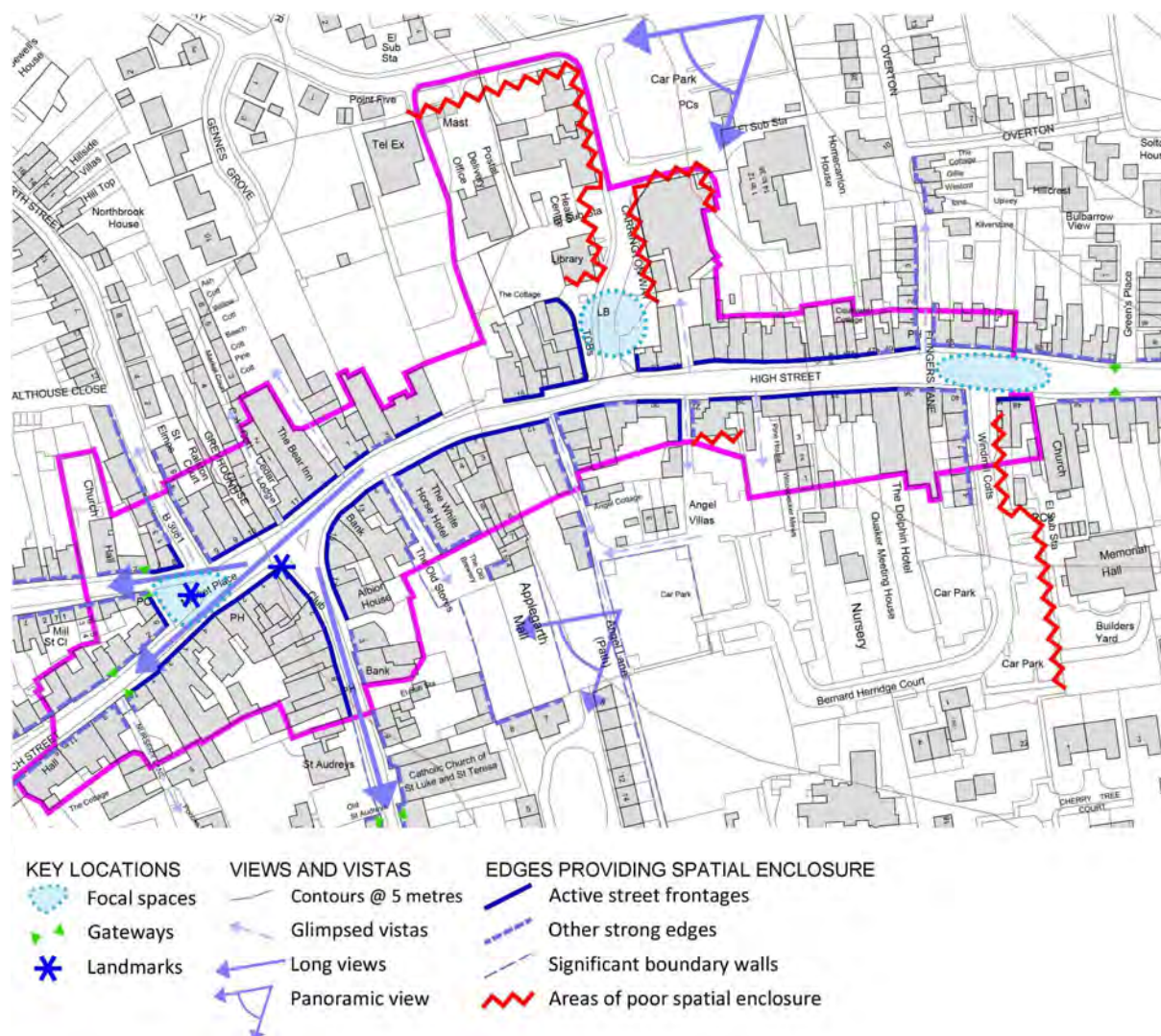
public spaces. Such improvements would complement wider public realm improvements.

Nearly all of the main streets in the town centre are contained within long building frontages associated with a 'burgage' pattern, especially to the south of the High Street, with significant boundary walls. This influences the layout of development and has led to elements of poor

spatial enclosure, particularly between Memorial Hall car park and the rear of some High Street properties. This creates a poor and unattractive impression.

Figure 3 provides a townscape appraisal of the town centre in respect of the key locations and landmarks, views and vistas and street frontages.

Figure 3: townscape analysis



## Access and Movement

### Pedestrian Movement and Traffic Circulation

The main vehicle approach to the town centre is from the west via the B3081 one-way system which is characterised by an historic pattern of narrow streets and a traffic flow which can be confusing for visitors, including scope for redirection away from the High Street. This has wider implications for traffic speeds, pedestrian safety and movement, and impacts on the 'gateway' experience into the town centre.

Pedestrian movement in parts of the town centre is compromised by narrow pavements and

limited crossing points whilst opportunities for cyclists are not considered easy. These issues form a key objective of the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan to improve the attractiveness and safety of the town centre for pedestrians through traffic calming (pinch points and speed zone) and widening of pavements, with suggested improvements at High Street and South Street. It also seeks to improve mobility and access to the town centre for cyclists and mobility scooters. Stakeholders endorse the need for improvements to enhance the pedestrian environment.

### Car Parking

The town centre benefits from two main surface level car parks at Carrington Way and Memorial Hall to the north and south of the High Street, which provide easy access for all and linkages to the town centre. Additional parking is available at Churchfields and on street along Church Street and the eastern part of the High Street.

Qualitative improvements to a number of the linkages from the Memorial Hall car park are considered important.

Car parking is free in the town centre with observations of high car park utilisation. The stakeholder consultation outlined key concern at the potential introduction of parking charges in the town centre. It also identified the need for a car parking strategy focused on parking management, particularly to address the reported impact of long stay and resident residential parking on town centre spaces.



*The pedestrian environment is frequently compromised by the highway layout*



*Car parks dominate areas south of High Street*



## Location and Gateways

The strategic location of Wincanton with direct accessibility from the A303 is considered a key opportunity by stakeholders for attracting more visitors to the town centre. This geographical advantage provides a convenient midpoint between London and the South West and offers strong potential to better promote the town centre through enhanced marketing and improved signage from the A303 and within the town.

The gateway for vehicle arrivals into the town centre is concentrated from the west which impacts on the sense of place. An opportunity exists to promote more arrivals from the east which represents a more attractive approach into

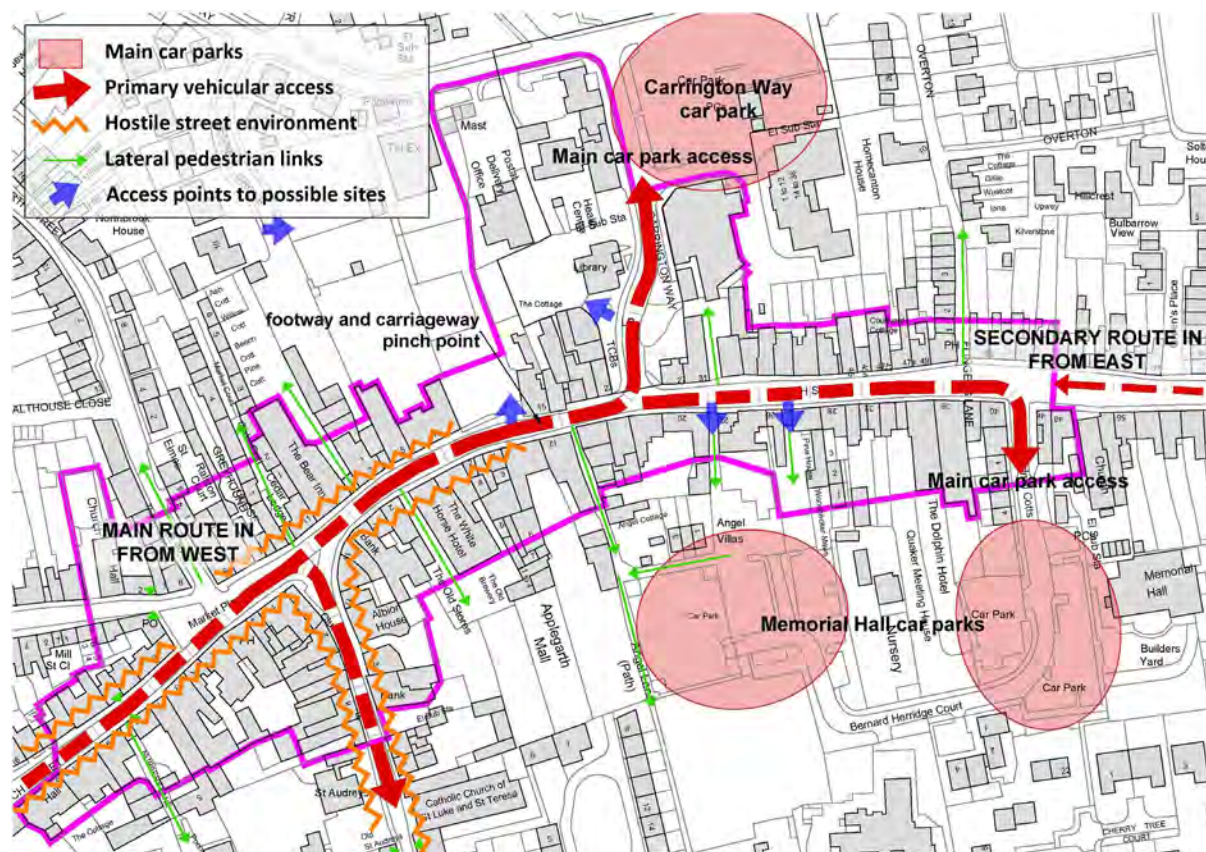
High Street with easier access to the main car parking areas.

## Public Transport

Public transport is focused at the bus stop at Memorial Hall car park which provides a network of bus services to local centres (of varied frequency) and a dedicated London coach service (geared towards commuting and weekends). Whilst stakeholders support an improved level of local services, there is recognition of the value of a centrally located bus stop for the town.

Figure 4 sets out key vehicular and pedestrian routes into and within the town centre.

Figure 4: vehicular and pedestrian access



## SWOT Summary

Drawing the summary analysis together, the following SWOT analysis has been derived for the town centre. This has been used to inform

the development of the Wincanton Town Centre Strategy.

### Strengths

- Designated Primary Market Town and identified location for future growth and development
- Strategic geographical location on the A303 between London and the South West
- Historic and attractive townscape with variety of frontages, mix of uses and Conservation Area setting
- Specialist high quality convenience and comparison retailers
- Independent retailer and service representation
- Healthy diversity and offer of 'essentials' available in the town centre
- Quality and attraction of service facilities attractors (Balsam Centre, Memorial Hall, Library/Museum)
- Business investment in new higher quality 'maker' retail offer
- Provision of centrally located and free car parking
- Market Place and supporting landmarks as a focal space for the town
- Unique Selling Point - Discworld Emporium
- Sense of community and appetite for change
- Views and vistas offered by the topography of the town centre
- Residential development activity in the town centre (Vedlers Hey)

### Weaknesses

- Out of centre provision
- Above average vacancy rate and long-term nature of large vacant and under used units and buildings
- Physical condition and appearance of some historic assets
- Limited evening/night time economy, especially restaurant provision
- Leisure and social facilities for the younger population are limited
- Absence of bank and 24 hr ATM provision in the town centre
- Limited range and choice of visitor accommodation
- Localised catchment area with low market share for comparison expenditure
- Unsympathetic design of certain buildings
- Poor spatial enclosure of certain sites due to burgage pattern
- 'Gateway' approach from the west, traffic speed and movement through the town centre
- Low activity in the town centre at weekends
- Limited key footfall generators in the town centre
- Poor signage from the A303 and within the town
- Decline in local events and festivals
- Poor quality pedestrian environment in parts of the town centre



**Opportunities**

- Levels of planned residential growth to expand local population
- Affluent rural catchment area
- Key sites with potential to accommodate new uses, including town centre anchor
- Identified capacity for additional retail floorspace in town centre
- Public realm improvements and traffic calming to improve pedestrian movement and safety, and slow traffic
- Linkage with major local quality visitor assets to encourage visits e.g. Wincanton racecourse, Emily Estates, Stourhead
- Time limited opportunity for mix of uses via unimplemented planning consents
- Lower property costs compared to local competitor centres to attract investment
- Management regime for car parking
- Promotion of artistic and wellbeing offer of the town centre
- Improvement in the quality, frequency and marketing of community events and festivals
- Innovative market for the town centre
- Branding of the town
- Support for heritage high streets and Government funding/support initiatives

**Threats**

- National trends and challenges facing markets towns
- Over representation of certain retail services
- Lack of investment in heritage buildings
- Community and business apathy
- Continued out of centre residential and employment development
- Edge of town sites
- Car parking charges
- Competition and differentiation from comparable local centres
- Landowner aspirations and intentions, including non-implementation of planning permissions



## Part Two: Shape

### Vision, Development Options and Initiatives



## 3 Vision and Strategic Objectives

### Vision

The 'vision' is for Wincanton town centre to become a place that:

- Is well used and a thriving place to live, work and visit
- Has an enhanced retail, community and social function that encourages visits during the day and evening
- Has a wider mix of uses, including commercial floorspace and quality housing that supports enterprise, creativity and vibrancy
- That makes more of the centres special cultural and heritage character through improvements to the public realm and buildings to attract investment into the town centre.
- Will create a convenient and attractive destination for local residents and visitors.

### Strategic Objectives

The Vision for Wincanton town centre is supported by six strategic objectives.

In combination, the strategic objectives set out the ambitions to help support and deliver the Vision.

The objectives are organised to form the basis for prioritising projects, actions and interventions.

The strategic objectives are:

#### Objective 1

**Catchment** - Encourage a greater level of use and strengthen loyalty for the town centre with local residents.

#### Objective 2

**Mixed Uses** - Encourage a wider mix of uses, including new employment, homes, community, leisure and creative enterprises.

#### Objective 3

**Historic & Built Environment** - Safeguard and improve the quality and attractiveness of the historic built environment and public realm.

#### Objective 4

**Culture & Heritage** - Protect and develop the cultural and heritage attraction of the town centre for visitors.

#### Objective 5

**Movement** - Strengthen and safeguard the convenient access and movement of people to and through the town centre on foot, bicycle, public transport and car.

#### Objective 6

**Communication** - Strengthen place branding, communication and marketing to the local catchment and visitors.



## 4 Town Centre Strategy

### Introduction

In order for the vision for Wincanton town centre to become reality, the key strategic objectives concentrate on three inter-related main themes to address the identified main issues and challenges. These relate to the following:

- Broadening the mix of uses to enhance footfall by residents and visitors
- Enhancing the attractiveness of the town centre environment
- Creating a destination

The themes guide the focused Wincanton Town Centre Strategy which sets the framework for the suggested projects, initiatives and interventions to deliver the key objectives. In summary, the themes are grouped under the following interventions:

- Development Sites
- Public Realm, and
- Complementary Initiatives

### Aim and Purpose of the Strategy

The Wincanton Town Centre Strategy aims to provide a clear direction to deliver positive change moving forward, encourage more quality investment from the public and sector and improve business confidence. It will support the promotion and marketing of the town centre, inform future decision making to ensure alignment with existing and emerging Council strategies, and guide the co-ordination of town centre activities to achieve complementary improvements. Finally, it seeks to encourage the development of partnerships amongst key

stakeholders in order to ensure a successful implementation of the Strategy.

The baseline assessment confirms Wincanton town centre as typical of a multi-functional centre with a need to diversify its offer, increase footfall and activity levels across the year. As a 'Convenience and Community Centre', it is characterised by a localised customer base and catchment area, often involving a short duration visit by car and foot to access essential shops, local services and facilities. Such centres support steady footfall over the year without any dramatic seasonal peaks typical of a tourism centre and offer a personal character to the visitor experience often developed through inter-personal relationships and word-of-mouth marketing.

The main objectives of this Strategy is to emphasise the convenience of Wincanton town centre as an attractive, reliable and mixed-use hub which responds better to the needs of its local community and catchment.

Rebuilding centre loyalty through enhanced use and community engagement will help encourage greater footfall. Equally the Strategy needs to focus beyond retail to generate activity through a wider range of uses and footfall generators such as employment, community, recreational, cultural, entertainment and residential uses.

## Development Sites

A key objective of this Strategy focuses on the promotion of a wider range of uses in Wincanton town centre, to help encourage greater footfall, attract new investment and extend the vibrancy of the town centre during the day and evening. In addition, the lack of a town centre anchor is identified as a perceived weakness for generating visits.

To prepare the Strategy, a review of sites has been undertaken to identify potential opportunities for new development within the town centre boundary together with edge of centre locations. Many of the sites have been identified through the existing and emerging

Local Plan process together with consideration of new sites that may, over time, offer opportunities for supporting an enhanced range and mix of suitable main town centre uses for supporting the delivery of the vision and its objectives. The physical regeneration of appropriate sites has considered the contribution and range of preferred uses that the sites could support but recognises the need to maximise flexibility in order to respond to market requirements. It has also taken account of relevant constraints and the land ownership position to ascertain the realistic prospects for development and delivery moving forward.

Figure 5: general development opportunities

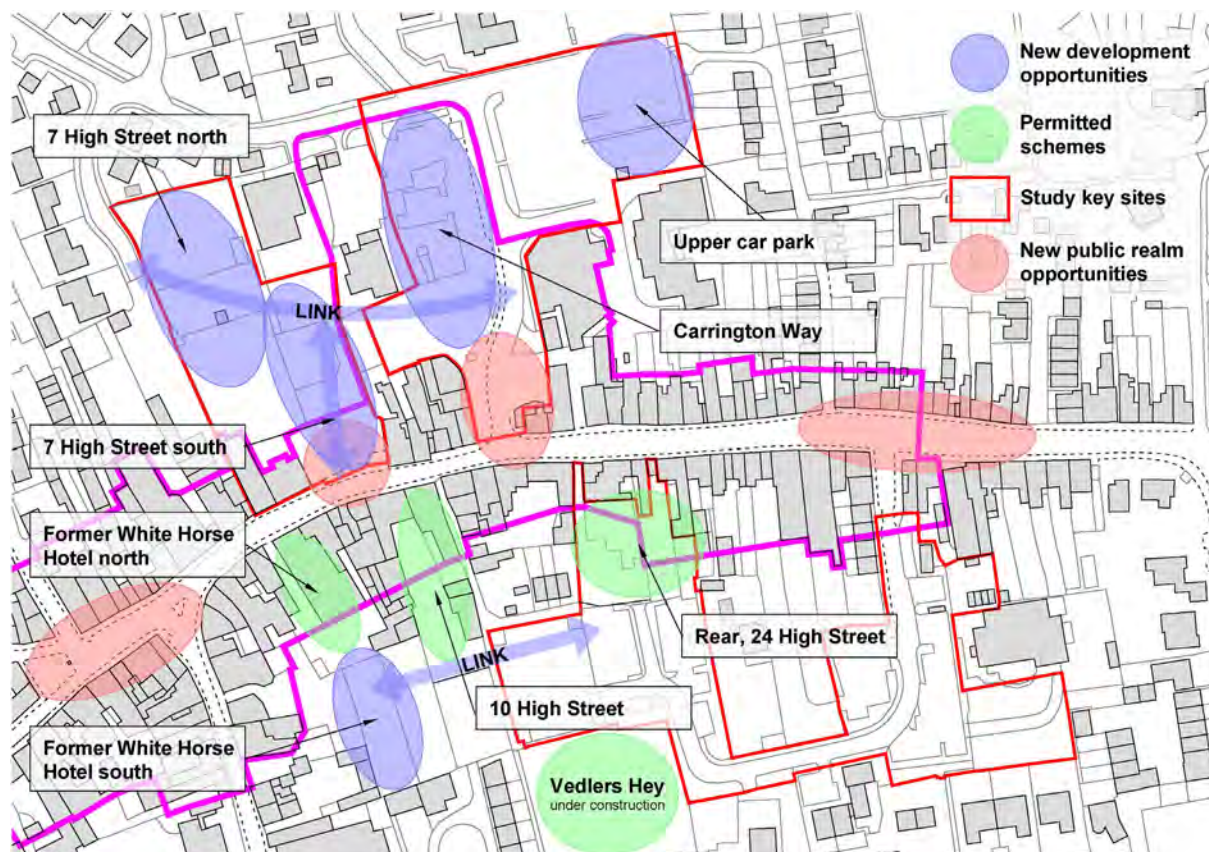


Figure 5 identifies the focus for the development opportunities together with key unimplemented planning permissions in the town centre.

The site options have been assessed on an individual basis although in a number of cases the opportunity exists for a larger development site through consolidation with adjoining sites. Further soft market testing remains ongoing to identify the realistic levels of commercial demand for suggested development sites.

In summary, the suggested key development opportunity sites are:

- Land side and rear of 7 High Street
- Former Health Centre, Carrington Way

#### **Land side and rear of 7 High Street**

The site comprises a vacant listed building, formerly occupied by Clementina for retail uses with occupied living accommodation over, an adjacent car parking area and extensive garden area to the rear. It represents a prominent location with a distinctive frontage to High Street

*Potential development site at 7 High Street, including the adjacent car park and access road*

and access from Gennes Grove. It also provides access to the operational BT telephone exchange. The front (southern) element of the site is located within both the town centre boundary and the Conservation Area, and is in single private ownership.

Whilst the main building remains in residential use (first floor), despite reported commercial interest, the retail floorspace remains vacant. Furthermore, the potential of the site has been tested as part of the Council's Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study which concluded the site offered a 'reasonable' development option (combined with the adjoining library/car park to the east). It is further identified as a potential allocation option in the emerging Local Plan Review.

The site is considered to offer a strong potential development opportunity directly accessible from the High Street which offers scope to retain the main listed building and its distinctive shop front for retail use thereby supporting an active street







*There is potential space for market stalls: e.g. Taunton farmers' market*

frontage. There is also the opportunity for removal of the modern unlisted single storey shop extension exists which does not contribute to the visual quality or setting of the main building.

Given the relatively large site size, it is considered the majority of the site to the rear lends itself to a number of defined developable plots, potentially for residential uses (with scope for a mix of terraced, apartment and family housing options on different plots). It also provides opportunities for pedestrian linkages between the High Street and Gennes Grove and is considered a key opportunity for contributing to greater activity and vibrancy in the town centre.



*Example of a small new town square at Brackley, Northamptonshire*

The eastern element of the site currently provides access to the adjacent car park and offers potential for a new square/market place together with mixed commercial uses, subject to resiting of the current access arrangements. The scope for a new public space, which could accommodate a street market, would further encourage public use of the town centre alongside improvements to the public realm.

Equally the scale of the site could support a range of mixed commercial uses although the nature of end uses will be determined by market requirements and need to represent an appropriate use in planning policy terms.

Although considered on an individual basis, the site offers a larger land assembly opportunity with adjoining landowners (BT, private landowner and the Somerset County Council owned library site). This however is considered a longer-term option.

In terms of prospective delivery, the site is a large centrally located opportunity in single ownership and is of key importance to supporting the objectives of the Strategy. Given the uncertainty of landowner intentions, there may be need for public sector intervention through the preparation of a Development Brief. This exercise would certainly be beneficial to guide the potential for amalgamation with adjoining uses at Carrington Way and offer a large redevelopment opportunity for the town centre.

Figure 6 provides a 3D visualisation of the potential of the site to the rear and side of 7 High Street.



Figure 6: aerial impression of the potential for a new town space next to 7 High Street, and development behind



### Former Health Centre, Carrington Way

The former doctors' surgery is located within the town centre boundary at Carrington Way and has remained vacant for a number of years. The site is in single private ownership and represents a modern building which is not part of the Conservation Area. Neighbouring uses include a funeral director, Royal Mail delivery office and the library. Although the site does not have dedicated car parking, opportunities exist at the public car park directly opposite.

It is understood potential workspace options for the site have been previously investigated by the landowner although no development has occurred.

The site benefits from a central and highly accessible location and is considered potentially suitable for mixed commercial uses, including employment floorspace. A key objective of the Strategy seeks to encourage a wider range of uses such as employment, particularly to support flexible innovative workspace to meet modern needs. No comparable offer exists in the town centre and such a use would help generate footfall, support existing town centre businesses and contribute towards vitality and viability. Given the local topography of the site, the opportunity also exists to increase the density of development on site if necessary (to accommodate further uses) although a refurbishment of the building remains the most realistic option.

Given the relatively small site opportunity, it is anticipated the site would be delivered by the



*Former doctors' surgery, now vacant, on Carrington Way*

private sector. However, it is recognised that opportunities could exist for a larger site assembly although this would require the involvement of circa 3-4 adjoining land ownerships. Under this scenario, it is recommended that a Development Brief be prepared to guide the delivery of the site. This is also relevant in considering the scope to link with the large Clementina site although the reality is that the opportunity is likely to focus on the individual vacant surgery in the short-medium term.

Figure 7 presents a 3D visualisation of the potential reuse of the former doctors' surgery.



*Example of head-on parking under trees:  
Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire*



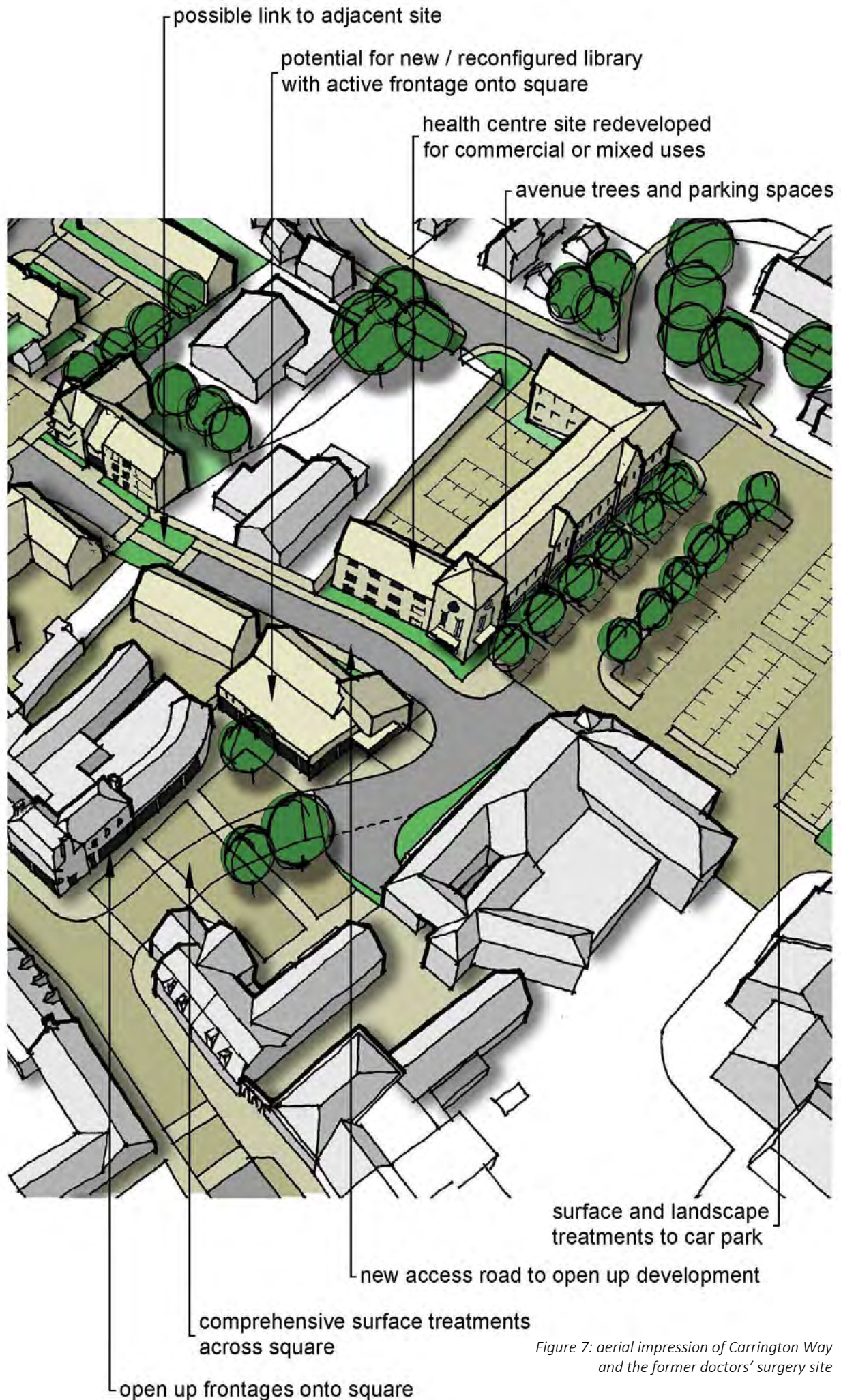


Figure 7: aerial impression of Carrington Way and the former doctors' surgery site



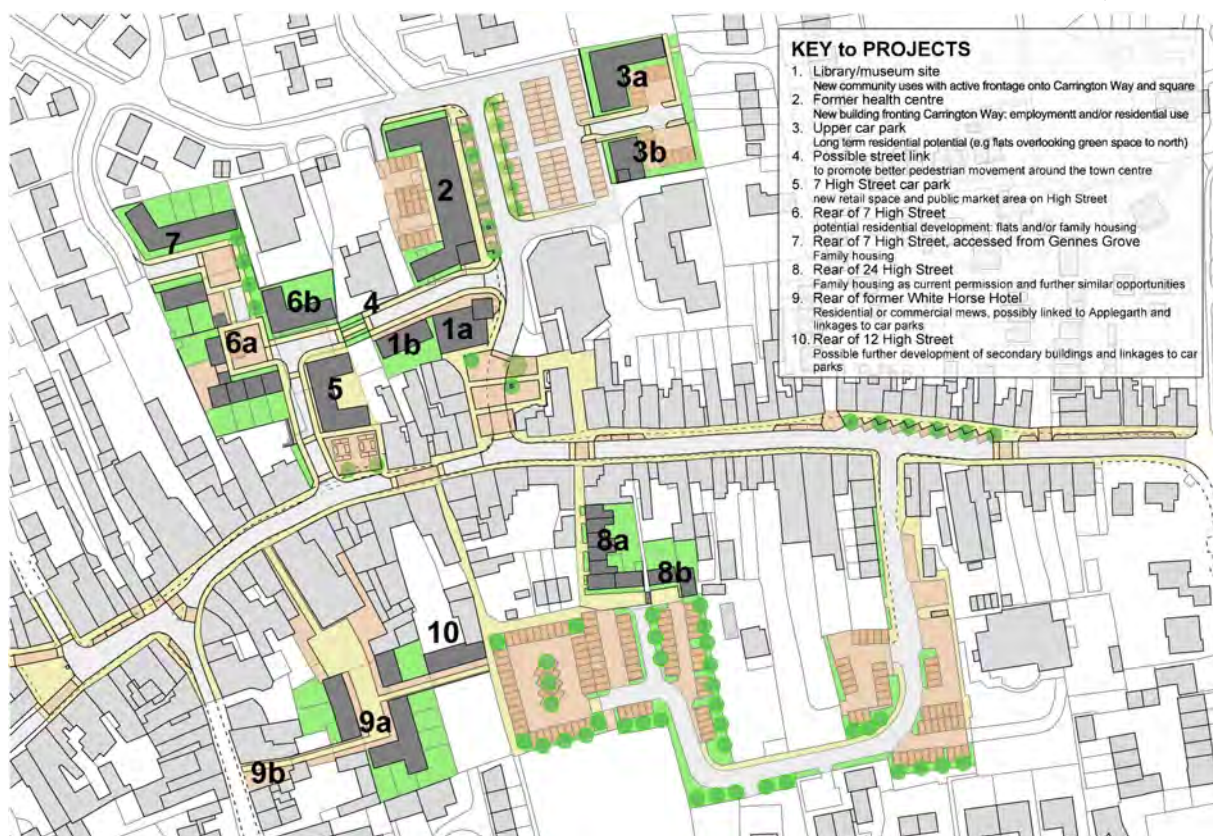
## Other Site Options

The Strategy has identified a number of prospective sites throughout the town centre which could offer further opportunities for development. These include consideration of the two public car park sites at Carrington Way and Memorial Hall. Of the two sites, Memorial Hall car park is discounted and considered an important town centre car parking facility. In relation to Carrington Way, potential for the upper car park is indicated, primarily of a high-density residential nature with reconfiguration of parking to minimise net loss of spaces, although this is not considered a priority option given its role as a main town centre car park and existence of other more suitable development sites.

In addition, whilst the library site (incorporating the museum) at Carrington Way occupies a large plot, this important community facility and attractor is well located and realistically could offer scope for enhanced community service provision. The site is in County Council ownership which may offer future development potential with public sector partners although this is considered unlikely in the short term.

Elsewhere in the town centre, site options associated with a number of unimplemented planning permissions demonstrate the scope for sensitive residential infill and refurbishment of

Figure 8: potential development opportunities and public realm improvements





*White Horse Hotel, awaiting redevelopment*



*Former Green Dragon unit on High Street*



*Attractive residential development opposite the Memorial Hall as an exemplar for similar development south of High Street*

some listed buildings. Examples include the former White Horse Hotel, Ash House and rear of 24 High Street. The principle of these approvals represents the type of development considered suitable for supporting the objectives of the Strategy to widen the mix of uses alongside enhancement of the townscape and heritage assets of the town centre, some of which are in poor quality and in need of urgent repair.

In addition, a number of underutilised sites exist in edge of centre locations. Examples include Churchfields, the Travis Perkins site and the former Cow and Gate site which may offer potential for appropriate alternative uses, subject to relevant planning policy considerations.

Figure 8 illustrates the overall potential for development opportunities and public realm improvements in Wincanton town centre.

In all cases, it is recommended that the status of prospective sites is kept under regular review to ensure changes in site circumstances are fully incorporated into the realistic assessment of the availability and suitability of sites.

## Public Realm

New and improved public realm is proposed to enhance the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the town centre environment. These improvements will help to create a pleasant environment for local residents and visitors in Wincanton town centre and help support wider objectives to encourage use and increase footfall. It also endorses the priority of the Neighbourhood Plan which identifies a number of qualitative improvements to make the centre



*Public realm improvements need to address issues such as very narrow footways*

safer for pedestrians and non-car users particularly to address the narrowness of footways and the impact of traffic circulation and speed.

The Strategy responds to the key objectives to improve the visual quality of the historic built environment and public realm and to safeguarding movement throughout the town centre, especially on foot. In addition, there are opportunities throughout the town centre to provide new public squares, where events/markets and other activities could take place which would help to enliven the centre. This also provides scope for associated qualitative enhancements such as tree planting, landscaping, improvements to the paving, lighting and public art, which together contribute to the quality of the town centre environment.

Like many market towns, Wincanton has evolved in a linear form along a single main street. As a result, the town lacks a main public space; although the focus of this Strategy is to maintain and improve the traditional form of the High Street and identify opportunities for the

enhancement of small spaces and creation of focal points for activity.

To achieve this, a number of guiding principles are suggested to promote the public realm objectives in the town centre. These support the Neighbourhood Plan and Wincanton Town Council Transport Plan and relate to:

- 2 metre minimum width footways in the town centre (noting this can be achieved over most of the length east of Market Place although some sections are well below 1 metre)
- 6 metre carriageway between kerbs and/or kerbside parking bays (which is acceptable for a bus route and clearly defined parking bays). Where this is not possible over all sections, there is scope for a 3.80 metre priority section which would provide a traffic calming feature
- Formalise on street parking with kerb build-outs and surface material changes
- Emphasise the central High Street as a linear space with surface materials and tree planting (designed in with the echelon parking)
- Encourage more arrivals into the town centre from the east as an attractive gateway to the High Street which leads more directly to the town centre car parks.

Drawing on these suggested principles, the Strategy identifies a number of priority areas for public realm improvements. These relate to:

- Market Place
- 7 High Street and 12 - 15 High Street
- Carrington Way
- High Street (eastern gateway)



## Market Place

Market Place acts as a busy junction on the town's one-way gyratory system which creates a perception of traffic dominance, particularly for arrivals from Church Street. It also acts as an important core retail and service cluster although the active use of outdoor space is impacted by the traffic environment.

The suggested improvements identify a continuous surface across Market Place in front of the Post Office with vehicle running lanes picked out in a contrasting material. Stone sett ramps into Market Place from Church Street and Mill Street will alert drivers entering the space. The main carriageway is narrowed with wider footways and raised kerbs. Parking and loading

areas are created by kerb build-outs with paved surfaces to differentiate from the carriageway. It is suggested that the parking spaces are removed from the front of the Post Office to enhance the quality of the space.

The Town Council Transport Plan recommended changing priorities at the junction with South Street. This is supported and offers the opportunity for improved management through the creation of a larger pedestrian refuge and level access across the carriageway in contrasting surface material and/or ramps.

Figure 9 sets out the suggested public realm improvements for the Market Place area.

*Figure 9: Market Place, suggested public realm improvements*



### 7 High Street and 12-15 High Street

Opportunities for public realm exist at 7 High Street but are related to the development potential of the site. This is focused on the removal of the shop extension and re-siting of the existing vehicular access into the site (and away from adjoining 15 High Street). This creates the potential for a new development plot between 7 and 15 High Street, set back to create a new paved space. It is considered this provides a southerly aspect to encourage commercial uses such as cafés on a new square. The new space could also be designed to accommodate an outdoor market.

This area is also one of the narrowest parts of the High Street (between no.15 on the north side and no.12 on the south). This provides the opportunity for traffic calming, with a raised table and reduction in carriageway to 3.8 metres with vehicle priority westbound. This improvement would help to widen the footpaths on both sides to c1.50 metres (from 0.87 and 0.97 metres currently).

Figure 10 identifies the indicative public realm improvements in the western High Street.

Figure 10: indicative public realm improvements western High Street



## Carrington Way

The area at the junction of Carrington Way/High Street was repaved in 2006 as part of a town centre enhancement scheme. The west side is used for outdoor seating by Hooga Coffee shop although no other buildings take advantage of this space. In reality, it remains a busy junction for access into the Carrington Way car park and the Co-op service goods entrance, which requires manoeuvring space for HGV vehicles. There is some potential for activity on the east side, with the recent extension of 27 High Street and an entrance into Boots chemists.

In the longer term, the potential exists to improve the wider space by linking the two sides of the junction visually. It is suggested this could be designed as a continuous surface with a 6-metre-

wide vehicle route demarcated in contrasting materials (largely aligned to the existing raised kerbs). Frontages to all buildings on the west, north and east sides should be opened up to use the outdoor space, and on the east side level changes would have to be designed into the scheme which offers opportunities for a west-facing terrace to a café/restaurant for evening trade.

Shorter term opportunities exist to declutter space through the removal or relocation of bins, phone boxes and raised planters. The clearer open space could also offer another suitable location for market stalls.

Figure 11 illustrates the suggested public realm improvements at Carrington Way/High Street.



Figure 11: possible public realm improvements at Carrington Way / High Street





Figure 12: indicative public realm improvements eastern High Street

### High Street (eastern gateway)

The eastern part of the High Street widens and currently supports on-street car parking. The carriageway offers scope for a reduction to 6 metres and allow widening of footways. In-line and echelon car parking can be maintained largely in current locations and defined by kerb build-outs.

As the arrival point from the east, the opportunity exists to improve the quality of surface materials, and elements such as street trees in the echelon parking, where the street is at its widest, can emphasise the sense of arrival. The eastern end of the improvement area also offers potential for a continuous surface crossing point, possibly with ramps, to calm traffic as it enters the core of the town centre.

Figure 12 outlines the potential for public realm improvements at the eastern part of High Street.

### Complementary Initiatives

The physically led options focus on potential development sites and suggested public realm improvements but need to be complemented by a range of softer initiatives. In combination, these interventions will together help to support the key objectives and deliver the Strategy.

Drawing on the key issues and challenges identified through the baseline review and stakeholder feedback, a number of initiatives are suggested. These are supported by examples of best practice from comparable market towns which are responding to similar challenges, but which have bucked the downward trend and managed to revive and reinvent themselves as multi-functional destinations.

Complementary initiatives often require a more holistic approach compared to a development

project. In much the same way that a successful centre will have both a multitude of users, there are a multitude of key stakeholders such as civic leaders, entrepreneurs, creatives and community activists who will need to contribute to the softer initiatives to help boost footfall and reposition the town centre in the minds of its residents, visitors and investors.

This Strategy provides a framework of ideas and examples. However, it is for the local stakeholders, preferably in conversation with local residents, to shape these initiatives into something local and deliverable for Wincanton.



A pop-up event at Lovingtons, Market Place

### Increasing footfall

Wincanton town centre needs to draw people in for a much wider 'bundle of benefits' than just shopping. This requires a better collective experience that serves differing needs, encourages the local population to use the town centre more often, and to strengthen its reputation as a reliable, convenient, and friendly centre offering great customer service. Areas identified where this could be achieved include the following:

- Opening hours - reviewing business opening hours to ensure more consistency and alignment with resident expectations. This includes remaining open as advertised, identifying residents preferred and consistent weekend hours and staying open for longer on one or more days a week reflecting the 'working town' character of Wincanton.
- Better served – encourage telephone or online orders during the day that can be collected from an out of hours town centre collection point shared by all businesses. Scope exists for an expanded offer which could encourage potential for use of a vacant/under used town centre building.
- Reposition the weekly mobile banks - relocate to a visible high street location that encourages linked visits, footfall and spin off expenditure to other businesses.

Successful centres place a greater emphasis on creating new reasons to visit a town centre through events, street markets and celebrations. Ideas include:

- Night market – as a market town, the absence of a regular market is a perceived weakness. However, there is a need to differentiate the market offer with a food orientated night market considered a healthy combination which appeals to all age groups, especially families but which also provides greater convenience for the working population. Well run night markets are entertaining, exciting and can have a wide catchment draw. The opportunity to link with local food and drink producers in South Somerset further supports wider economic benefit to the local economy.
- Festivals and complementary events – these do not necessarily need to be major events (e.g. the Christmas Extravaganza) but a more frequent programme of activity, events and celebrations to enhance footfall across the year appealing to residents and visitors. Suggestions include themed 'Super Saturdays', linked celebration for key fixtures held at Wincanton Racecourse such as the Badger Chase (November), Somerset National (January) or Cheese and Cider (May); and arts events linked to the range of



*Signposting to town centre attractions*

creative businesses located in the town centre. The loss of the annual Hogswatch Weekend should be investigated to encourage the opportunity for its return.

- Evening economy – successful town centres are multifunctional with importance attached to entertainment and leisure. The quality of the evening economy has grown in importance putting a greater emphasis on safety and convenience of the night time environment which appeals to a wider audience. This links with the public realm improvements and improved lighting

*Night markets are a popular way to extend the visitor day*







*Maximise use of public space*

recommended by the Strategy and can be augmented by encouragement of more intensive use of outdoor spaces, support for an improved restaurant offer and encouragement of 'pop up' restaurants.

- Footfall attractions – initiatives to enhance the expansion of the museum should be supported together with ideas under development to create an arts trail about the town working with local and 'media worthy' artists.

### **Reposition the town centre in peoples' minds**

The relationship between the town centre and the catchment population is an important variable that can heavily influence activity levels. Whilst retailer representation and offer remains an important factor that affect customer behaviour, successful centres have focused on the collective offer to attract visits. Suggested initiatives include the following:

- Management, marketing and promotion of the town centre – this is essential in a centre like Wincanton which is characterised by numerous private ownerships. It will be vital for collaboration and coordination amongst business community and stakeholders to take forward initiatives to develop a strong brand and communication strategy for Wincanton town centre which connects the local population with its centre and better understands what residents really want. This marketing and communication will also act as a promotional tool to investment and visitors.



*Initiatives to encourage use of local shops and businesses*

- Improved signage – the opportunity should focus on maximising Wincanton's strategic location on the A303 to attract more visitors, including enhanced signage such as 'brown signs' at the town junctions to promote the town centre. This offers a 'quick win', a visible improvement and clear statement of the town centre that communicates with the local population and visitors.
- Town centre campaigns - there are a number of tried and tested 'shop local' campaigns that have worked across the country, and free to use resources such as Totally Locally ([www.totallylocally.org](http://www.totallylocally.org)). These campaigns engage with people and foster pride in the town centre as a place to work, live and visit. It also helps to build community and stakeholder involvement around a strategy.

### **Property grants and support**

There are a number of prominent underused and/or vacant buildings in Wincanton town centre, which in certain cases have opened up the opportunity for more diverse enterprises and community involvement in the reuse of redundant space, alongside new quality investment.

Stakeholder feedback indicates the attraction of the heritage quality and relative affordability of certain town centre buildings to the creative community in which "creative people come here, like it, buy & refurbish buildings & stay".

Given the importance of the distinctive built environment alongside the availability of town centre property, this Strategy seeks to encourage new investment into existing buildings but recognises the additional costs associated with

the repair and refurbishment of listed and locally significant historic buildings. It also seeks to support more local entrepreneurship and community involvement in temporary and longer term uses to develop placemaking and promote the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Initiatives include:

- Property related grants – review of existing property related grants, including the existing Retail Support Initiative for shop front enhancements, to provide a more targeted approach to encourage investment and incentivise occupancy.
- Refurbishment of buildings – ensuring public sector partners and property owners work earlier together to encourage and maximise the appropriate conversion/refurbishment of town centre buildings that meet modern occupier requirements.
- Publish a town centre prospectus – working with property owners and locally active commercial agents to promote the 'golden opportunities' in the town centre to help attract new investment and encourage take up of vacant units.
- Temporary uses – work with property owners and commercial agents to encourage 'pop up' and meanwhile uses in long term vacant properties.
- Community ownership – in the longer term, the community may develop an interest in taking ownership of a property as an investment and to deliver community and social enterprise objectives through a Community Interest Company model.

## Car Parking

Wincanton town centre is served by two main public car parks (Carrington Way and Memorial Hall), located to the north and south of the High Street respectively. These facilities are complemented by the Churchfields car park located off Church Street together with on street parking in parts of the town centre. At the local level, Wincanton Town Council's Wincanton Transport Plan (2013) identified a total of 342 on and off-street spaces (including 15 disabled spaces) in the town centre. All of the parking spaces are free under the compensation scheme paid by the Town Council to the District Council.

The South Somerset Car Parking Strategy Review (2013) represents the most up to date district wide evidence base and identified a need in the short term to address car parking capacity in Wincanton (albeit related to an insignificant shortfall in spaces). The review identified this could be addressed through management measures or additional off-street parking provision. The Town Council Transport Plan further identified a number of recommendations related to active management suggestions or the re-negotiation of the current compensation scheme to retain free car parking.

There appear to be good levels of car parking occupancy in the town centre, at convenient locations which are well linked to the town centre and accessible to all. The location of car parking and current free cost is considered a major incentive by stakeholders for attracting visits to Wincanton town centre although there are

management issues related to long stay and resident parking which impact on parking availability.

Changes to the town centre car parking management regime (including withdrawal of the compensation scheme) are proposed in 2019 which will need to be carefully managed to ensure the attraction of the town centre is not diminished. To help positively inform this process, this Strategy recommends the importance of a car parking survey of Wincanton town centre to update the 2013 evidence base. This is considered essential for identifying the supply, demand and capacity of existing facilities and to complement and inform the District wide Parking Strategy that is due to be undertaken.

Whilst the need for additional spaces cannot be verified at present, it is considered important that any emerging car parking strategy for Wincanton town centre actively investigates appropriate management options. This should include options such as the differentiation of long and short stay parking areas, resident parking permits, and a charging strategy which is aligned to the parking areas including encouragement of opportunities for free and/or reduced parking charges for shorter term visits.





## Part Three: Delivery

### Action Plan, Delivery Responsibility and Performance Monitoring



## 5 Action Plan and Responsibilities

### Introduction

This section sets out an Action Plan to support the delivery of the key elements of the Wincanton Town Centre Strategy.

The Action Plan covers a 1-3 year period and sets out a series of priority interventions and projects which are considered the most crucial in the short term for supporting the Strategy objectives. The actions are all framed with the aim of enabling the delivery of the realistic and achievable projects and initiatives identified in the Strategy. A series of longer term aspirations are also identified for Year 4 and beyond to support the transformation of the town centre over the medium and long term.

### Action Plan

The focus of the actions aligns to the strategic objectives which seek to enhance footfall and extend activity within the town centre through support for a wider mix of uses. It also seeks the improvement of the town centre environment to encourage visits whilst balancing the heritage quality and character. Overall, the underlying aim is to create a vibrant destination for residents and visitors. These themes complement each other and together seek to achieve the aims, objectives and vision of the Strategy.

A number of Early Interventions are identified to be progressed over the next 12 months (2019 - 2020). These offer an opportunity for short term 'easy wins' and would produce immediate impact and generate momentum towards the medium and longer term projects and improvements. These are supported by Momentum Actions, which remain of core importance to the delivery of the Strategy but are considered of relevance over Years 2 and 3 (2020 - 2022) of the Action Plan and focus on maximising activity and community engagement to generate a change in behaviour.

The Action Plan outlines the Council's commitment to delivering change in Wincanton town centre and identifies the key partners working in conjunction with South Somerset District Council, who together can best achieve the identified priorities.

To focus attention, key milestones are identified at the end of Year 1 for each action. This is considered important for maintaining progress and assists with performance review and monitoring of progress.



## 1. Broadening the mix of uses to enhance footfall by residents and visitors

Early Interventions (Year 1)	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/Milestone
1.1: Prepare and maintain a register of vacant/under used town centre properties, working closely with commercial agents and property owners, to provide a town centre prospectus identifying golden opportunities for economic reuse and investment.	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Monitor  Partners – Property Owners, Commercial Agents	Year 1: to have created a town centre prospectus of available properties with owner/agent contact details.  Ongoing action supported by regular monitoring and updated twice yearly.
1.2: Engage with key town centre land and property owners to understand site intentions to maximise reoccupation and secure delivery of unimplemented planning permissions. Priority to focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Former White Horse Hotel</li> <li>• 7 High Street</li> <li>• Former surgery, Carrington Way</li> <li>• 15 High Street</li> <li>• 24 High Street</li> <li>• 36 High Street</li> <li>• County Council assets</li> </ul>	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Monitor  Partners – Property Owners, Commercial Agents, Somerset County Council	Year 1: to have identified and contacted the priority site owners to understand timescales for delivery and, where appropriate, research best practice to secure investment, including meanwhile/temporary uses.  Ongoing action.
1.3: Investigate potential for ATM provision (24hour) in the town centre and relocation of the weekly mobile banks to a more prominent location in the town centre to maximise linked trips.	South Somerset District Council – Influence, Support  Partners – Town Council, Business Community, Local Community, Third Sector	Year 1: to have engaged with the mobile bank operators to relocate the mobile banks to a more central location (that remains safe and convenient).  Ongoing action to encourage and secure provision of a 24/7 ATM.

Momentum Actions (Years 2-3+)	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/Milestone
<p>1.4: Support and encourage opportunities to maximise mixed use development, including change of use and 'meanwhile/ pop up' temporary uses where appropriate, with early signposting of advice and guidance to promote a diversity of uses.</p>	<p>South Somerset District Council – Lead, Support, Resource, Monitor</p> <p>Partners – Property Owners, Commercial Agents, Town Council, Somerset County Council</p>	<p>Year 1: to have engaged with relevant site owners (public and private sector) and identified opportunities for alternative uses. Input to Local Plan review to promote flexibility of uses in the town centre.</p> <p>Ongoing action to encourage appropriate change of use and temporary uses, including planning advice where required.</p>
<p>1.5: Prepare a Development Brief for the land to the rear and side of 7 High Street and adjoining sites to guide the longer term development potential of the key town centre site.</p>	<p>South Somerset District Council – Lead, Resource, Coordinate, Deliver</p> <p>Partners -Property owner, Town Council, Somerset County Council</p>	<p>Year 1: to have commissioned the preparation of a Development Brief and masterplan, in consultation with relevant land owners. Input to Local Plan review to promote allocation of key sites.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>
<p>1.6: Support work by other partners to ensure Wincanton town centre keeps pace with improvements in digital connectivity to help attract new enterprises, including new workspace provision to the town centre.</p>	<p>South Somerset District Council – Influence, Support</p> <p>Partners – Connecting Devon and Somerset, Government Agencies, Business Community, Third Sector, Somerset County Council</p>	<p>Year 1: to maintain support at a district level to secure improvements to digital connectivity.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>
<p>1.7: Work alongside key partners to investigate and encourage enhanced use of the library for community services and an expanded museum/heritage centre.</p>	<p>South Somerset District Council – Support, Influence</p> <p>Partners – Somerset County Council, Town Council, Third Sector</p>	<p>Year 1: to have identified the opportunity to expand use of the library for community and education benefit.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>

## 2. Enhancing the attractiveness of the town centre environment

Early Interventions (Year 1)	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/Milestone
2.1: Prepare a register of heritage buildings for improvement to identify priorities for action and engagement with property owners.	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Deliver  Partners - Property owners, Town Council, Somerset County Council	Year 1: to have prepared a register alongside owner engagement to identify priority list of town centre buildings in need of maintenance and refurbishment.  Ongoing action to be reviewed annually.
2.2: Investigate sources of funding to support the restoration of town centre properties.	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Monitor  Partners – Government Agencies, Town Council, Business Community	Year 1: to monitor and review funding eligibility and opportunities, including Heritage Lottery Fund and Future High Streets Fund.  Ongoing actions linked to application deadline.
2.3: Undertake a town centre car parking survey to understand local car parking patterns, to complement the District wide Parking Strategy.	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Deliver  Partners – Somerset County Council, Town Council, Business Community, Local Community	Year 1: to ensure the District wide Parking Strategy is supported by a comprehensive survey of town centre parking to inform advice on management and charging, if appropriate.  Ongoing action.
2.4: Work with the local community and town centre businesses to review better alignment of opening hours in Wincanton town centre.	South Somerset District Council – Influence, Support  Partners – Local Community, Business Community, Town Council	Year 1: to review and encourage opening hours which meet local community needs.  Ongoing action.
2.5: Review application of the Retail Frontage Initiative to ensure intervention in shop	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Deliver, Monitor	Year 1: to review existing grant and eligibility criteria and ensure focus on properties in most need of improvement. Proactive



fronts in greatest need of improvement.	Partners - Property owners, Town Council, Business Community	targeting of initiative to inform building owners.  Ongoing action.
<b>Momentum Actions (Years 2-3+)</b>	<b>Delivery Responsibilities</b>	<b>Timescale/Milestone</b>
<p>2.6: Work with key partners, including Somerset County Council Highways, to prioritise delivery of a series of identified projects to improve the public realm in the town centre, focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed zone</li> <li>• Traffic calming</li> <li>• Pavement improvements</li> <li>• Enhanced public spaces</li> </ul>	<p>South Somerset District Council – Influence, Support</p> <p>Partners – Somerset County Council, Town Council, Business Community</p>	<p>Year 1: ongoing dialogue with Somerset County Council to secure detailed design to plan and deliver programme of public realm improvements identified in the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>
<p>2.7: investigate a scheme to encourage floral/window box displays, signage and planting to town centre business frontages, including promotion of seasonal displays.</p>	<p>South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Deliver, Monitor</p> <p>Partners - Property Owners, Town Council, Business Community, Education Community</p>	<p>Year 1: linked to the Retail Frontage Initiative, to have identified potential to extend grant support to cover floral/window box/planting seasonal displays and new/refurbishment of existing signage. Scope to engage with local schools and local community to encourage ideas.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>
<p>2.8: Review town centre lighting schemes to promote a safe town centre at night and support the night time economy.</p>	<p>South Somerset District Council – Lead, Coordinate, Resource, Deliver, Monitor</p> <p>Partners – Somerset County Council, Town Council, Business Community</p>	<p>Year 1: to have identified areas in need of improvement, including the potential for new lighting.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>

### 3. Creating a destination

Early Interventions (Year 1)	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/Milestone
3.1: Establish a Town Centre Stakeholders Forum to develop a co-ordinated programme of actions and marketing initiatives to promote Wincanton town centre and report to the Wincanton Programme Board.	<p>South Somerset District Council – Influence, Support</p> <p>Partners – Town Council, Business Community, Third Sector, Local Community</p>	<p>Year 1: to have established a Town Centre Stakeholder Forum with identified structure and leadership. Regular meetings to be held and programme of events agreed, with active reporting to the Wincanton Programme Board.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>
3.2: Improve signage to the town centre, to include potential for a 'brown' sign on the A303	<p>South Somerset District Council – Influence, Support</p> <p>Partners – Government Agencies, Somerset County Council, Town Council, Business Community</p>	<p>Year 1: to have investigated potential and cost for a brown sign alongside wider review of signage to/within the town centre.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>
3.3: Work with key partners to investigate opportunities for a new themed festival, market and complementary events, including options to support the evening economy.	<p>South Somerset District Council – Influence, Support</p> <p>Partners – Business Community, Town Council, Third Sector</p>	<p>Year 1: linked to the Stakeholder Forum, establish a working group alongside partners to investigate and identify suitable market/festival/complementary events and review of existing events.</p> <p>Ongoing action.</p>

Momentum Actions (Years 2-3+)	Delivery Responsibilities	Timescale/Milestone
3.4: Investigate new promotional initiatives such as Totally Locally and identify suitable town centre campaigns for trial purposes.	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Resource, Support, Monitor  Partners – Business Community, Town Council, Third Sector	Year 1: to have reviewed available promotional networks and initiatives and identify a suitable scheme for trial in the town centre.  Ongoing action.
3.5: Encourage coordinated marketing and networking between partners and local attractions such as Wincanton racecourse and other local visitor destinations to promote the town centre.	South Somerset District Council – Influence, Resource, Support, Monitor  Partners – Business Community, Town Council, Third Sector, Local Attractions	Year 1: to have engaged with relevant partners to establish and identify appropriate promotional opportunities with Wincanton racecourse and other local destinations.  Ongoing action.
3.6: Investigate the potential for arts-based community involvement to deliver meanwhile uses, shopfront and public realm improvements and an arts trail.	South Somerset District Council – Lead, Support, Resource, Monitor  Partners – Arts Community, Third Sector, Town Council, Business Community, Property Owners	Year 1: to have identified and engaged with the local arts community to investigate opportunities for a programme of arts-based activities to support other town centre initiatives, including temporary uses.  Ongoing action.

### Longer Term Aspirations (Year 4+)

Although the Action Plan is focused on a 1 to 3 year period, the majority of identified projects and interventions represent ongoing actions which set the context and conditions for the rejuvenation of Wincanton town centre. Whilst it is considered inevitable projects may be reordered and new

opportunities emerge, this Strategy has identified the importance of a number of ambitious key projects which seek a positive step change in the attraction and performance of the town centre. Realistically, these could be considered medium term aspirations (Year 4 onwards) given third



party involvement. A summary of key projects is outlined below.

The delivery and implementation of a number of key sites are considered of core importance to the objectives of the Strategy. This will take time and whilst it is anticipated the focus of the Council's attention should focus on positive dialogue and support to private landowners to encourage the delivery of appropriate development, the site opportunities identified at 7 High Street (rear/side), former doctors surgery at Carrington Way and potentially the library site, individually and collectively, offer major transformation potential for the town centre.

These opportunities may require Council intervention if the prospects for private sector delivery is unlikely although the aspiration remains that the High Street and doctors' surgery sites should move forward to implementation early in the Strategy period. Both sites support ambitions to promote mixed uses in the town centre, including the potential for workspace provision whilst maximising flexibility for future commercial uses such as a potential anchor facility.

The delivery of unimplemented planning consents for prominent town centre sites represents an equally important ambition, particularly at the former White Horse Hotel and rear of 24 High Street. It is envisaged that both these sites should be developed within the short term by the private sector, including any need to revisit planning approvals although if this is not forthcoming, the sites offer scope for proactive

Council intervention. This is considered of particular relevance to the former White Horse hotel.

The reduction in the town centre vacancy rate through the beneficial reuse of long-term vacant properties, must be viewed as a key ongoing aspiration. The scope for reoccupation, including temporary uses or appropriate change of use, can again take time, although this should remain an ongoing priority for generating activity and footfall in the town centre. The potential to enhance the restaurant offer in the town centre is considered particularly important for supporting the diversification of the evening economy.

A series of public realm initiatives are identified for the town centre although once consideration is taken of County Council funding and the need for detailed design, procurement and implementation, this could become a Year 4+ priority.

## Leadership

The Action Plan provides a clear identification of the roles, responsibilities and partnering arrangements that will be required to effectively and efficiently deliver and implement the Wincanton Town Centre Strategy.

Leadership is fundamental to the delivery of the Strategy.

South Somerset District Council will provide the strong leadership and strategic direction required to drive forward the key Strategy objectives. This will be administered by the Wincanton Programme Board (to be set up by Spring 2019),

modelled on the dedicated boards at Yeovil and Chard, which will manage, direct and deliver the broad aims of the regeneration programme for Wincanton town centre. The Wincanton Programme Board will report to the Council's new Strategic Programme Board.

It is anticipated that the Wincanton Programme Board will include both Ward Members and the Chair of Area East Committee together with a stakeholder group of representatives from relevant local organisations. The role of the stakeholders will be to inform and advise the Board and represent a forum for sharing ideas, developing projects and identifying potential regeneration opportunities.

## Partnerships and Joint Working

The ambitions for Wincanton town centre are significant but entirely achievable.

However, South Somerset District Council alone cannot deliver and implement the identified projects and initiatives.

There will be the need to proactively work in collaboration with a range of local organisations and stakeholders where possible, including:

- Wincanton Town Council
- Wincanton Chamber of Commerce
- Town Centre Business Community
- The Balsam Centre
- Memorial Hall
- Private Owners

- Developers and Commercial Agents
- Voluntary (Third) Sector Representatives (Museum, Voluntary Organisations)
- Somerset County Council
- Education providers
- Wincanton Racecourse and other Local Attractions, including relevant Strategic Tourism Partnerships
- Government Agencies

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, the level and enthusiasm of local town centre stakeholder involvement provided to inform and shape the preparation of the Strategy has indicated a strong appetite for change. It has also confirmed a desire and willingness amongst key local partners and organisations to play a central role in helping to deliver the initiatives that are locally informed. This provides a solid community base for successfully progressing the implementation of the Strategy.

Wherever possible, it is intended to use existing structures to deliver the priorities complemented by the significant resources available from examples of best practice initiatives relating to market town regeneration. This sharing of expertise and ideas with the identified key partners will help to build confidence and support the delivery of projects that have been successful in other comparable locations.

## 6 Performance Monitoring and Review

### Performance Monitoring

The Wincanton Town Centre Strategy sets out a framework to guide development, investment and promotional activity. To achieve this, the supporting Action Plan identifies a number of priority projects and initiatives and also provides a mechanism for monitoring the progress and performance of the actions and the key partners working to deliver the Strategy.

The Strategy will act as a working document. At the current time, the Action Plan is focused on the short term (Year 1-3 period) and identifies key actions at the Year 1 milestone stage to guide activity towards early wins. This will be crucial for informing decision making by the Wincanton Programme Board which will be responsible for managing the delivery of the Strategy objectives.

The need for regular monitoring and evaluation of achievements and progress will further help to align funding and the allocation of other resources by South Somerset District Council and its key partners. This will ensure planning for constant progress, help maintain momentum and assist with changes as necessary to projects, responsibilities, budgets and timescales.

The importance of performance monitoring will also need to take account of ongoing changes in local and economic circumstances, such as trends and other policies/strategies which could impact on the identified priorities in Wincanton town centre. This may have implications for funding and the allocation of other resources by South Somerset District Council and its key

partners. For this reason, it is anticipated that as part of the ongoing monitoring of identified priorities, that milestones are set for subsequent years to ensure progress can be effectively measured in the context of the delivery of core goals.

There will also be the opportunity to link performance monitoring with other Council led monitoring publications, such as the Annual Monitoring Report.

### Review and Update

Alongside performance monitoring, it is essential the Strategy and Action Plan is regularly reviewed. This will ensure that the document remains updated and importantly responds to changes in circumstances, such as economic conditions and national policy. This is considered particularly important given the emerging South Somerset Local Plan Review which remains at the early stages of preparation, but which will set the future planning policy framework for Wincanton town centre.

Given the early years focus of the supporting Action Plan, it is recommended an annual review is undertaken which draws on the regular performance monitoring. This will allow for relevant changes and re-profiling as necessary to the individual projects/action priorities, including the adjustment of timescales or the identification of new projects/actions that may subsequently arise. This will also help inform the performance of the Strategy as a whole although the regular performance monitoring provides the opportunity



for ensuring any subsequent update is well informed and targeted.

It is recommended an update to the Strategy is kept under regular review and whilst much will depend on the achievement of projects and actions, it is anticipated a review and refresh be undertaken alongside key partners at end Year 3 and thereon at five-year periods moving forward.

