

North Hertfordshire District Council

Prepared by: Building Design Partnership



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Royston Town Centre Strategy

Supplementary Planning Document June 2008

Foreword

Welcome to the first edition of the Royston Town Centre Strategy. This sets out our vision and aims for the town centre over the next 15 years and supports our vision for the District 'Making North Hertfordshire a Vibrant Place to Live, Work and Prosper'.

We are grateful to the many individuals, landowners, businesses and community organisations including the Royston Town Council and the Royston Town Centre Forum who have contributed to the Strategy, which will now provide the necessary framework to guide development through to 2021. It will ensure that the future development of the town centre is co-ordinated. The Strategy has a clear vision for Royston, which is

'to have a thriving Town Centre with a strong sense of identity with a clearly identifiable and vibrant 'heart.' New development will contribute to meeting the community's aspiration for Royston to be an attractive, successful and sustainable historic market town in the local area. The Town Centre will be a welcoming place that is a pleasure to live in, work in and visit.'

The Council has adopted town centres as one of its main priorities for 2008-09 and this will include delivery of actions arising from each of our town centre strategies and sustaining our town centre businesses.

The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan which demonstrates our commitment to acting as an enabler in delivering the aims of the Strategy. This Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that our efforts in working together with key partners and developers plus the local community will contribute towards a more vibrant town centre for Royston now and in the future.

The Strategy has been adopted by North Hertfordshire District Council and now has the status of a Supplementary Planning Document within the Council's Local Development Framework.

F John Smith
Leader of the Council

Fiona Hill
Chairman of Royston and District Area Committee

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Royston Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document, hereafter referred to as SPD provides guidance on how development proposals should be carried out in Royston Town Centre as well as forming a creative vision for its future. Full Council adopted this Strategy as SPD on 26 June 2008.

1.2 The SPD is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The SEA is in line with EU adopted Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. The SA extends the concept of the SEA to include economic and social concerns.

1.3 The SA/SEA provides a framework for appraisal in which to assess the policies laid out in this document to ensure that they are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

1.4 In line with the Local Development Framework (LDF) for North Hertfordshire, the SPD covers the period from 2008 until 2021. The document will, in line with PPS1, “expand or provide further detail to policies in a development plan,” and will be a material consideration in assessing development proposals.

1.5 This SPD is not a standalone document and should be read in conjunction with other national and local planning policy including the saved policies from the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations (1996) and the emerging Core Strategy and Development Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) (2007), which will supersede the Local Plan when adopted. This SPD is also prepared in line with the East of England Plan (technically known as the Regional Spatial Strategy RSS), published on 12th May 2008.

1 The Local Development Framework System was introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Planning Act 2004 and comprises the portfolio of documents that will replace the adopted Local Plan.

2 Under the Planning and Compulsory Planning Act 2004, the policies of the local plan were saved for three years from September 2004. In September 2007, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government granted that certain policies be continued to be saved until the adoption of replacement documents.

1.6 It is also informed by the North Hertfordshire Corporate Plan, which sets out the district's vision of "making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper," and the Council's mission "to work collaboratively with its partners and communities to achieve the vision." Its six strategic Objectives are:

- Sustainable Communities
- Safer Communities
- Healthier Communities
- Equal Communities
- Prosperous Communities, and
- Satisfied Communities

1.7 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) outlines the timetable for adoption of new planning documents. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPD will be adopted in March 2010 and May 2010 respectively.

1.8 The SPD will be reviewed in line with emerging trends in the District and sustainability indicators to ensure that it delivers sustainable outcomes. The policies laid out in this SPD use current and emerging policy to inform development proposals for the Town Centre. The purpose of this document is to make it relevant to the context of Royston Town Centre. It therefore refers to both existing saved Local Plan policies and emerging development

policies DPD in the LDF, whilst being conscious that these last policies are not, at the time of production of the SPD, adopted, and may therefore change.

1.9 In terms of national policy guidance relevant to town centres, the SPD has been prepared in consideration of:

- Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) – Delivering Sustainable Development;
- Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) – Housing;
- Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) – Planning for Town Centres;
- Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) – Local Development Frameworks;
- Planning Policy Statement 22 (PPS22) – Renewable Energy
- Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG3) – Transport; and
- Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15) - Planning and the Historic Environment.
- Planning Policy Guidance 16 (PPG16) – Archaeology and Planning

1.10 A number of other key documents are referred to and have been used as an evidence base for the production of this strategy. These are referred to in appendix 1.

1.11 This SPD is a result of a collaborative process between NHDC, the local community, key stakeholders and key landowners. Consultation was undertaken prior to and during the preparation of the SPD since February 2007 to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the key issues facing Royston, and in order to inform the document's production. The draft SPD was formally consulted on in January/February 2008. All views have been addressed and where possible included in this final version of the Strategy.

1.12 This SPD contains the following sections:

- Vision and Aims – This section sets the overall vision of the SPD and describes the strategic aims which the SPD is seeking to achieve. It focuses on key issues facing the Town Centre and provides background to the current health of the Town Centre, which forms the baseline to the SPD.
- Development policies for the Town Centre – This section describes the general development policies, which apply to the Town Centre. It is based on the existing policy framework prescribed through national, regional and local policy and makes reference to both adopted and emerging policies.
- Opportunity Sites – This section identifies various key sites within Royston Town Centre and describes how the policies in the document should be applied to the various sites.
- Appendices – Appendix 1 provides a list of documents referred to throughout the strategy. Appendix 2 provides details of the public consultation carried out in the production of this SPD. Appendix 3 provides a delivery strategy for the opportunity sites.

1.13 This Strategy is supported by an Action Plan which sets short to long term actions and outputs to deliver the aims of the Strategy and the opportunity sites.

2 VISION AND AIMS

Introduction

2.1 This section provides a contextual description of the key issues facing Royston at the time of the production of this SPD and provides a clear framework on which the SPD must build on and measure its success over the period to 2021.

Vision

2.2 A crucial starting point to the SPD is the development of a vision, which directs its purpose and enables the SPD's implementation to be monitored. The following vision statement has informed the Royston Town Centre Strategy SPD:

“Royston will have a thriving Town Centre with a strong sense of identity with a clearly identifiable and vibrant ‘heart.’ New development will contribute to meeting the community’s aspiration for Royston to be an attractive, successful and sustainable historic market town in the local area. The Town Centre will be a welcoming place that is a pleasure to live in, work in and visit.”

Context of Royston Town Centre

2.3 Royston is an historic market town, and with a population of 14,570 (2001 Census) is one of the three main market towns in North Hertfordshire. The Town Centre primarily serves the day-to-day shopping and service needs of the local area, including the surrounding villages; there are an additional 15,000 people living within an 8km radius of the town. Economically, the town is fairly prosperous with 82% employment; it is also noted that the age profile of the population has increased significantly in recent years (HNS, 2007).

2.4 Royston is located 10 miles from Letchworth Garden City and 12 miles from Cambridge. The town is connected to other towns in North Hertfordshire including Baldock and Letchworth Garden City by the A505. Other major transport routes include the A10 passing north-south through the eastern part of the town. Both the A10 and A505 connect the town to the M11 in the north-east. Royston railway station is located 500 metres to the north of the Town Centre on Old North Road. It is situated on the London Kings Cross – Cambridge railway link, with direct services

approximately every half an hour providing good access to and from Royston in the local and wider area.

2.5 The Royston Development Limits Saved Local Plan Policy (number 9) establishes the physical extent of the town.

2.6 The boundary of Royston Town Centre is as defined in the saved Local Plan. The defined Town Centre area is the area within which policies in this SPD apply.

2.7 Royston is defined as a Town Centre in the PPS6 hierarchy of Town Centres, which means that it performs as an important service centre for its rural catchment area. Under PPS6, the Town Centre's role must be protected as it serves a defined and distinct area. This important local role is recognised by the Town Centre and Retail Study (2004 and 2006).

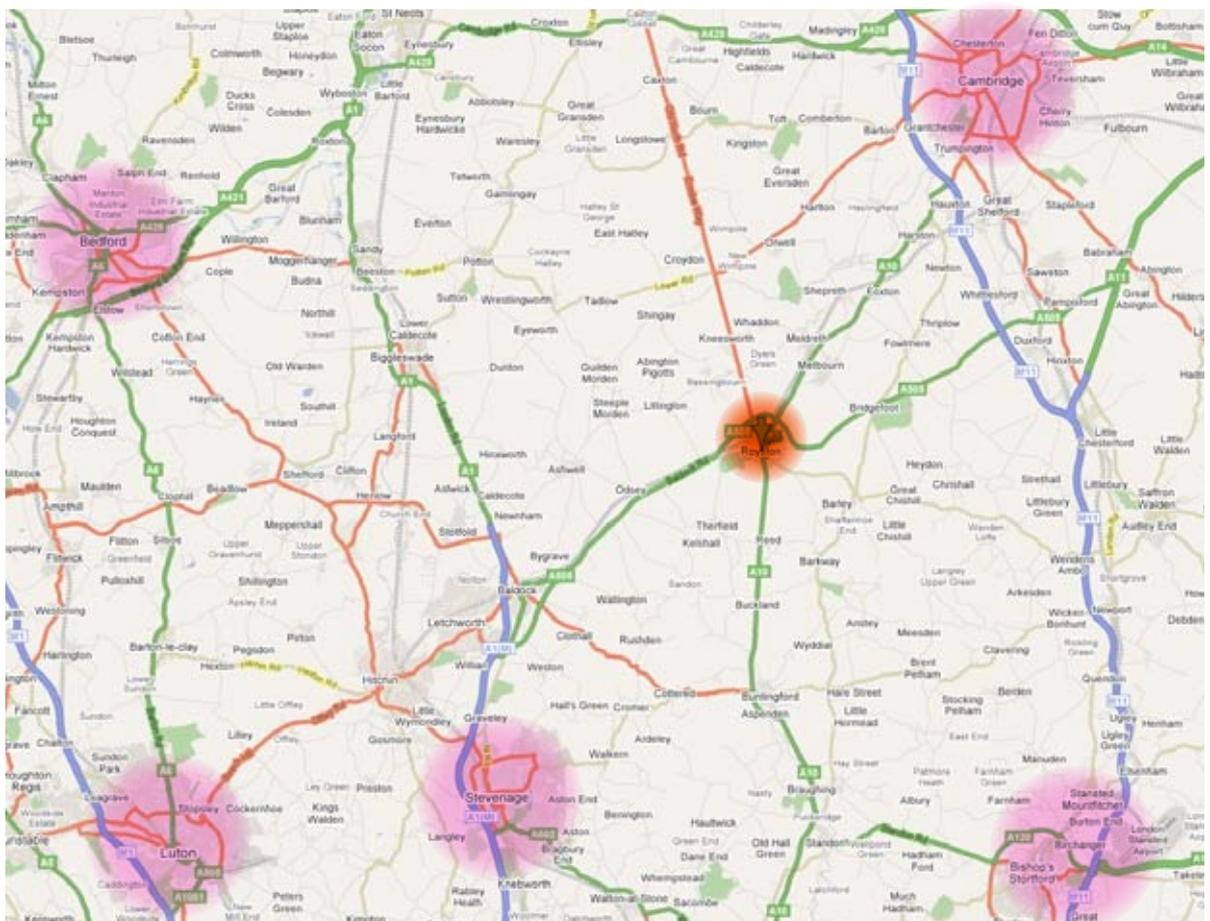
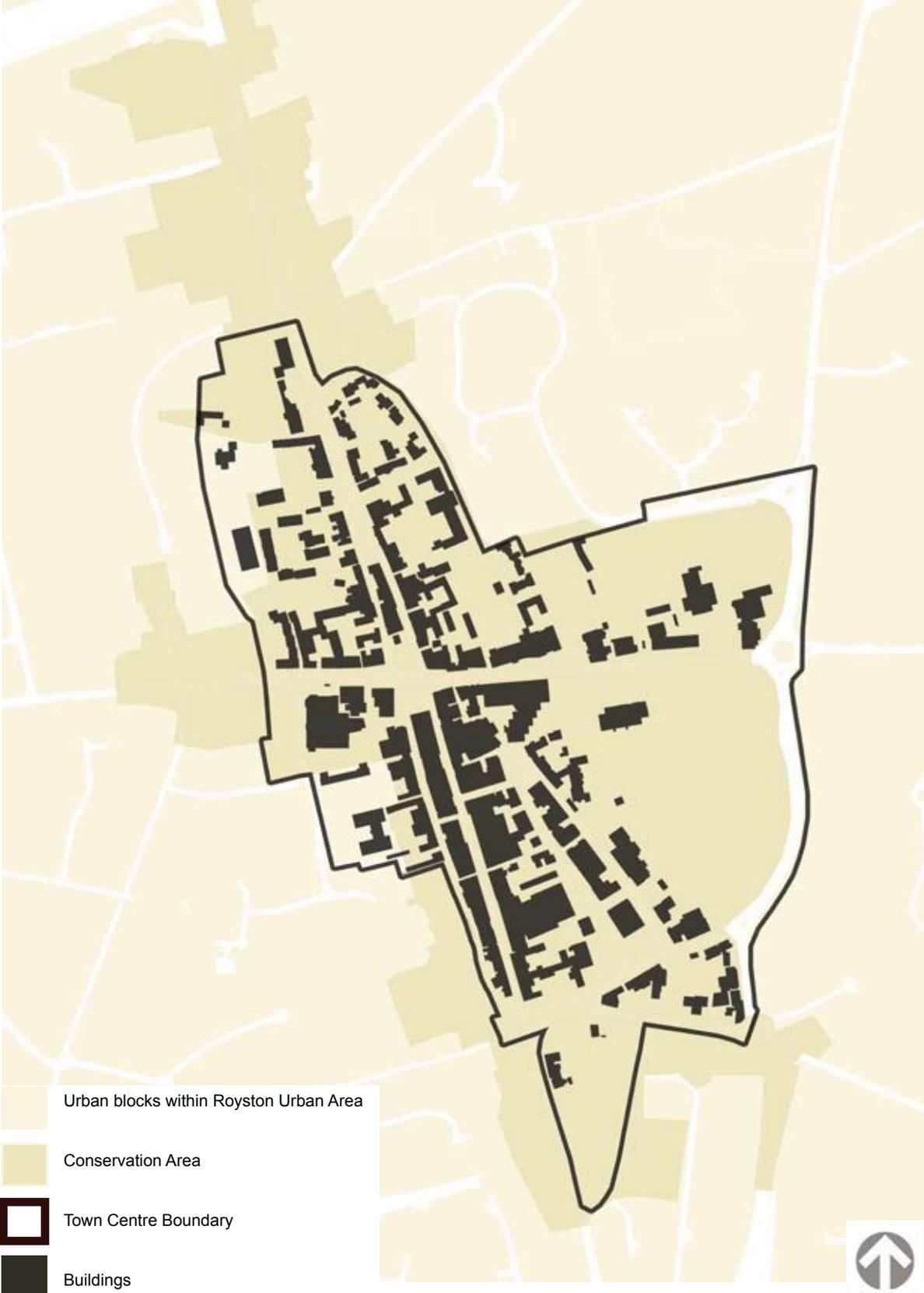


Figure 1. Royston in context,
Source: maps.google.co.uk

Figure 2. Boundaries and existing grain



The Built Environment

2.8 Royston grew around the crossroads of two ancient routes, leading south to London, across to Thetford to the east, Buckinghamshire to the west and Cambridge to the north. Royston Cross currently acts as a gateway into the core retail area both for road-users coming from the west along Baldock Street and also for pedestrians entering the Town Centre from the station.

2.9 Figure 3 shows the main corridors of movement and destination points within the Town Centre. The main corridors are from north to south and east to west. However, this dissects the town meaning that certain parts of the town are cut off from one another. The Town Centre core tends to be very permeable while the area adjacent to the core is formed of larger blocks that are more restrictive to pedestrian and vehicular movement.

2.10 Whilst the Town Centre is compact and easy to walk around, Melbourn Street and Baldock Street act as (perceived) barriers to pedestrian movement, creating an apparent severance effect in the Town Centre. The position of the two roads creates a definite north-south split. This is shaped not only by the block structure of Royston Town Centre, but also by these two streets that carry east-west through traffic.

2.11 The Town Centre is flanked by the A10, which runs along the Priory Memorial Gardens. The A10 also acts as a major barrier to movement and strongly delineates the eastern boundary of the Town Centre.

2.12 In terms of the main destination points in the Town Centre, the High Street area, which includes the retail core, provides an important attraction for visitors. Priory Memorial Gardens has an identifiable character that provides a unique recreational and leisure function, whilst the Civic Centre site provides an important focus for community facilities comprising the Town Hall, Health Centre and Police Station.

Figure 3. Main Routes & Destinations

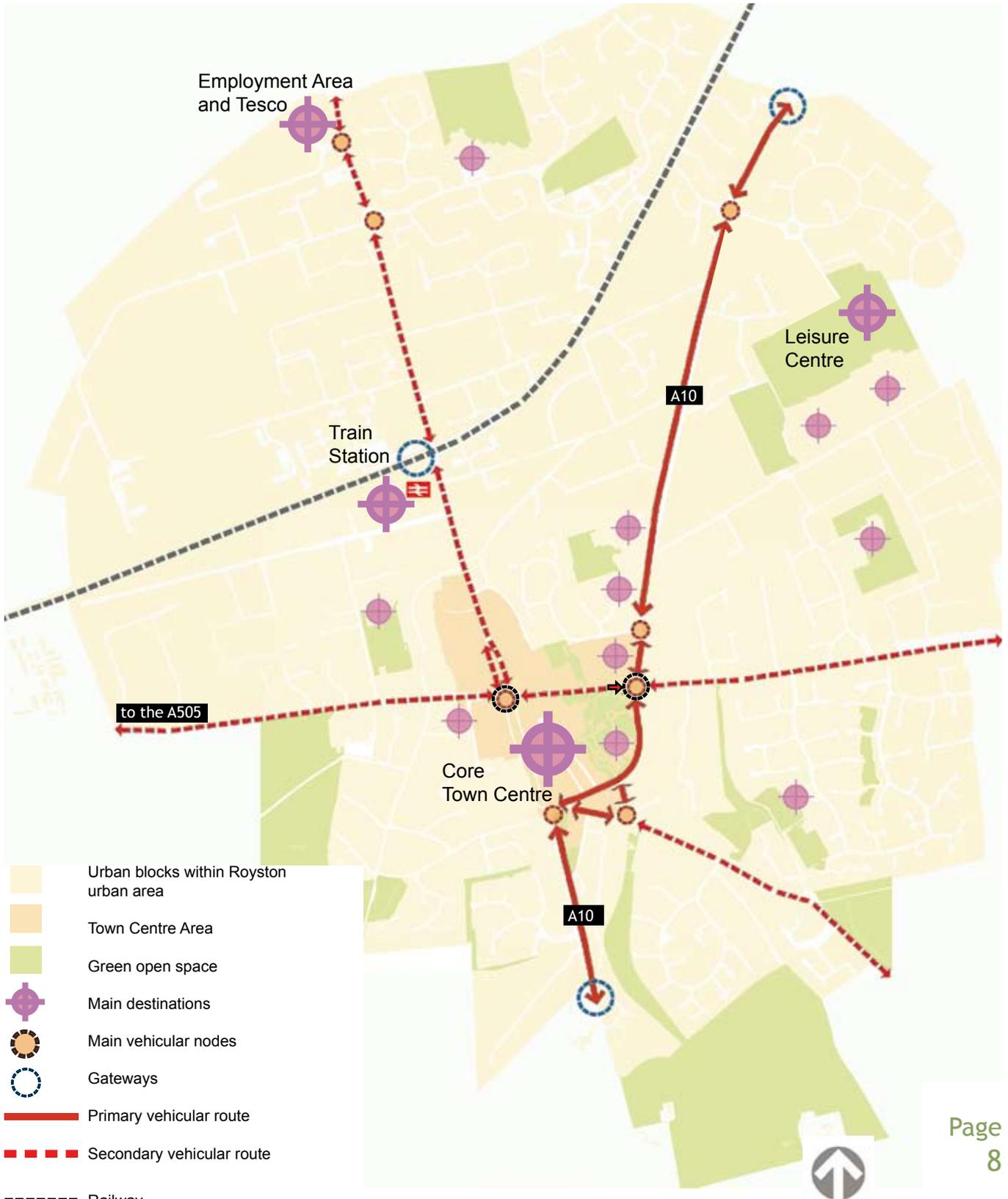
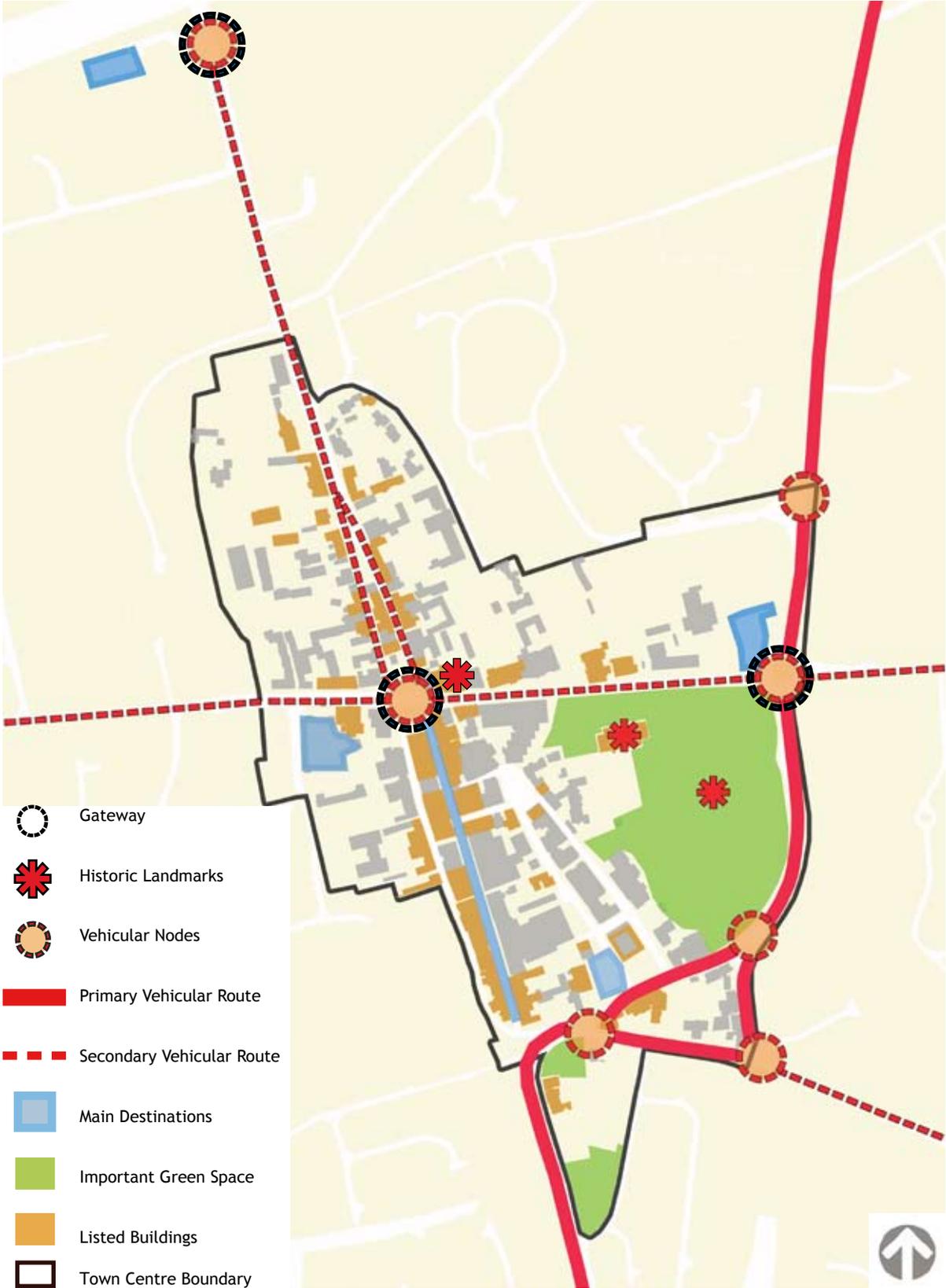


Figure 4. Strengths



2.13 A detailed urban design assessment for Royston was carried out in July 2007 which found that there are a number of key design characteristics in the town including:

- The building typology is predominantly terraced and residential properties form a continuous building line with frontages along the back pavement edge along High Street / Kneesworth Street and Lower / Upper King Street, while the eastern end of Melbourn Street and the northern end of Kneesworth Street are detached in character
- Two storeys are most common, with the occasional three-storey building reflecting Royston's generally domestic scale.
- Royston's block structure is generally impermeable. However, pedestrian circulation around the Town Centre core area is good because of the diverse linkages, which permeate the historic layout.

- The continuous frontages in the Town Centre create very strong building lines.
- Priory Memorial Gardens is an excellent large, accessible and well maintained area of public open space in the Town Centre which also provides a number of sport and recreational uses.
- There are some blank building frontages in the Town Centre. Providing a use that will open up these areas will help to improve vitality in the Town Centre.

2.14 Figure 4 identifies Royston's strengths, which include assets of both the built and natural environment. The plan shows a number of Listed Buildings, which contribute significantly to the historic character of the Town Centre, as well as the Royston Cave, a Grade I Listed Structure and Scheduled Ancient Monument.

2.15 The historic development of the town has given rise to the layout and pattern of a medieval town with buildings set abutting the road on long narrow plots, with the narrowest end onto the street. The majority of Royston Town Centre is included in the Conservation Area. The Town Centre has a compact character with buildings spaced tightly together. This is shown in Figure 2.

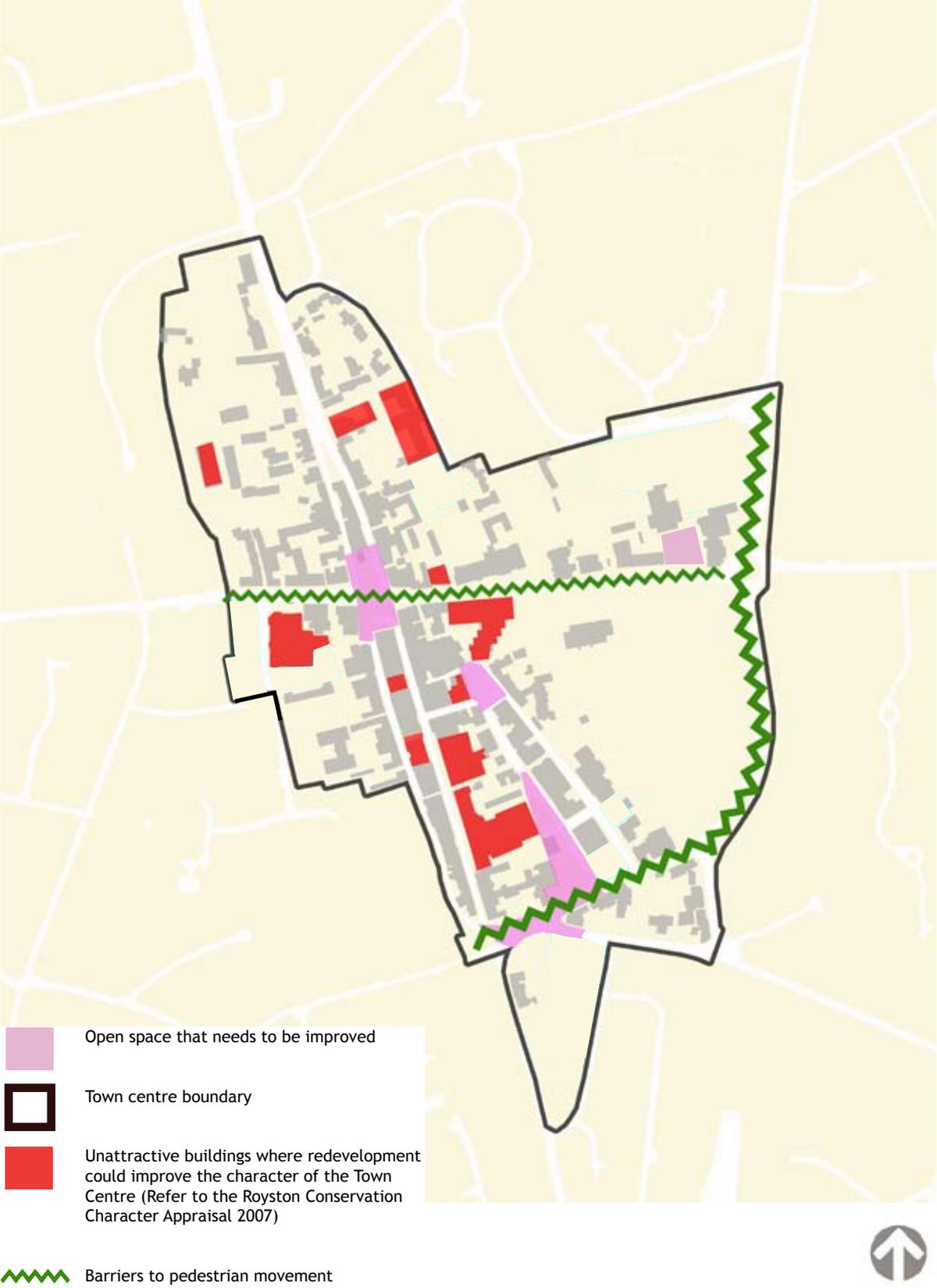
2.16 Extent and quality of the historic environment in the Town Centre limits development opportunities, although it is recognised that there are some buildings that are not sympathetic to the character of the built environment and redevelopment would also enhance both the retail offer and the wider urban environment. These are identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal review for Royston (2007) and are highlighted within Figure 5. The Royston Urban Design Assessment also identifies a significant scope to improve the built environment, especially the public realm.

2.17 St John the Baptist's Church is a Grade A listed building, which is a highly recognisable landmark within Royston. Due to the raised topography, the church creates attractive views from a number of points within the Town Centre, although these are limited.

2.18 The Church is situated on higher ground to the south of Melbourn Street fronted by trees, which enhance its setting. Priory Memorial Gardens adjacent to the churchyard contributes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of St John the Baptist's Church. The Gardens contains a number of important trees and also forms an attractive gateway to the Town Centre.

2.19 Figure 5 shows the main weaknesses and areas for improvement within Royston Town Centre. The baseline analysis, in accordance with the Conservation Area Appraisal Review, has highlighted a number of shops in the Town Centre that would benefit from improvement. This is especially the case with the retail units on Church Lane and on the south side of Melbourn Street, where a number of units are considered unattractive and their layout does not make efficient use of space. Similarly, Angel Pavement, a shopping precinct located towards the southern end of the High Street, linking the High Street to the Market Place at Market Hill, contains a significant number of vacant units that detract from the overall appearance of the Town Centre.

Figure 5. Weaknesses



Residential

2.20 The Housing Needs Survey (2006) for Royston highlights the fact that house prices have increased by 37.3% since 2002. This is confirmed by the DTZ Health Check report, which recognised that the market was buoyant but is likely to have levelled out. New build dwellings show a preference to smaller unit sizes (two/three bed) as these are the type of properties with the highest demand. The need to increase housing supply is noted as being one of the biggest challenges to the town and one which needs to be addressed for future growth (ECOTEC Market Town Study, 2005), although it is noted that there is little new development currently underway in Royston.

Retail Health

2.21 The DTZ report identified that the retail market in Royston had performed flatly recently with values remaining static over the last ten years. The report identifies an increase in vacancy levels throughout the town centre, which was particularly noticeable at Angel Pavement, and also identifies the demand for retail premises within Royston being limited, partly due to the restrictive size of retail units which are constrained by the historic character of the town centre. However, it was estimated that the vacancy rate at April 2006 was 8.89%, below the national average of 10.8%.

2.22 This report also highlighted that “the listed status of some of the buildings in and around the High Street and the historic nature of the road layout have made it difficult for the retail units in Royston to respond to multiple retailers’ current requirements which tend to be for larger, regular shaped floor areas. The units are generally too small for most multiple national retailers and given their age, are potentially difficult to fit out to modern standards.” It was further noted that there was reluctance for newcomers to take on businesses due to the apparent difficulty in viability and servicing arrangements of small units. The report also noted that the Tesco store on the northern outskirts of the town appears to have had a detrimental effect on the town centre.

2.23 The DTZ report also recognised that ‘the relatively wealthy catchment and attractive, historic nature of the town provides the opportunity to attract more restaurants into the town to expand the limited evening economy.’ This is supported by the NLP Town Centre and Retail Study, which identified that there was demand for more restaurants in Royston.

2.24 The retail health of the town is also represented through the Royston Market, which is chartered, to operate 60 market stalls on Wednesdays and Saturdays. It was identified by the market manager that at peak times the market usually operates at approximately less than half its full capacity, and there are concerns about decline. This view is supported by the NLP Town Centre and Retail Study as well as the consultation undertaken when preparing the Royston Parking Strategy. A regular Farmer's Market and occasional French and Italian markets are held at Royston Town Hall on Sundays and also at the Corn Exchange, which are considered very successful and are a big draw to the Town Centre. The consultation undertaken with key stakeholders highlighted that whilst these are a success, the shops within the Town Centre did not open concurrently, resulting in an uncaptured potential for increased trade.

Office Market

2.25 The DTZ report identified that the office market in Royston Town Centre "appears to consist mainly of small to medium sized units, most of which are serviced offices. The units appear to occupy mostly period building conversions, 1960s or 70s standalone buildings of around 10,000 – 20,000 sq ft". The serviced offices were identified as being almost fully let but with little additional demand for increased capacity.

2.26 Royston has a strong employment base within the industrial areas on the north-west periphery of the town centre. This contains the major employer in the town, Johnson Matthey, who recently relocated their corporate HQ from London to Royston. Johnson Matthey currently employs 1,300 people and has experienced growth of 45% over the last 18 months. During the stakeholder consultation, it was estimated that 40% – 50% of the company's employment base is located in Royston making the company a significant driver for the local economy.

Consultation

2.27 In order to inform the preparation of the SPD, NHDC carried out a series of consultation events throughout February and March 2007, which identified some of the key issues affecting the Town Centre. To

support these findings, further consultation was undertaken between August and November 2007 with key stakeholders, including landowners and also through on-street surveys and postal surveys as part of Parking Strategy Work. Outputs from the surveys and the discussions with key stakeholders confirmed many of the initial findings raised in the previous paragraphs.

2.28 The approach to consultation has been produced in accordance with the requirements set out in the NHDC Statement of Community Involvement and PPS12. Details of involving the local community, landowners and key stakeholders including the Royston Town Council and the Town Centre Forum in the preparation of this strategy are included in appendix 2. The key issues raised at the workshops are also included in appendix 2.

2.29 In summary, following discussions with the key stakeholders, there was general agreement with all concerned that the Town Centre's retail health had been in decline, and that this was attributed to the impact of the recently enlarged Tesco Extra store on the edge of town, which had been exacerbated by the store's recent expansion of non-food goods. However, it was noted during consultation with Tesco that the store is willing to work in partnership with various

stakeholders in the Town Centre to ensure the future success of Royston.

2.30 The decline in the retail health of the Town Centre was also considered to be associated with an increase in car parking charges, which were not justified given the poor retail offer within Royston. The noticeable number of independent retailers that had or were soon to close down was also considered to be detrimental to the retail offer.

2.31 One point that was also raised was the lack of large stores within the Town Centre that could act as a draw to attract visitors into the Town Centre. This supports the findings of the DTZ Health Check report.

2.32 There was a shared view that Royston was an attractive historic market town that was compact and easy to walk around.

Opportunity Sites

2.33 A number of Opportunity Sites within Royston Town Centre were identified through the initial consultation process with members of the local community and key stakeholders including landowners.

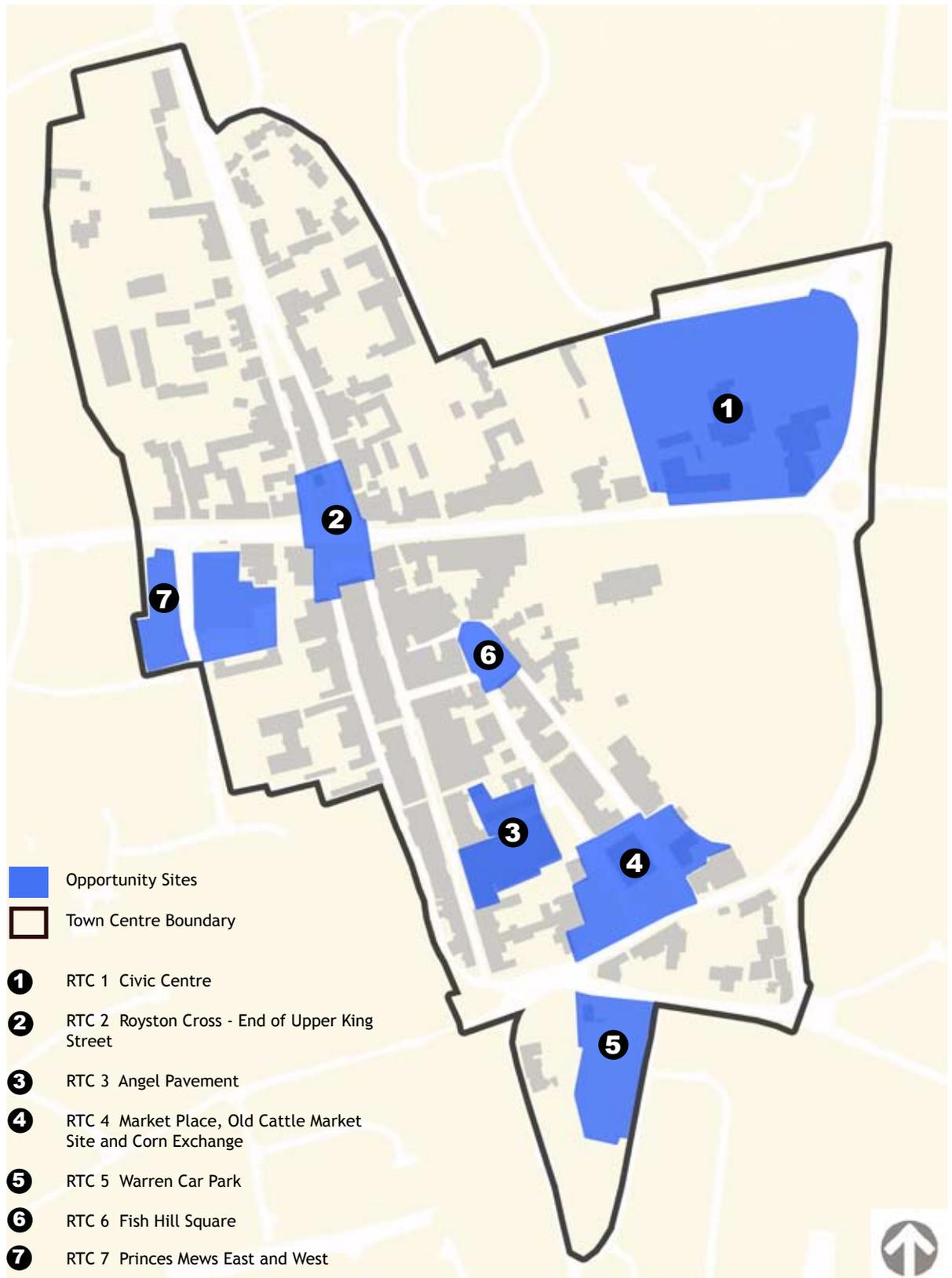
Following a detailed assessment, it was considered that 7 key opportunity sites have the scope to address some of the main issues facing the town and could seek to transform and support the vision for Royston Town Centre, by:

- strengthening the linkages between sites,
- improving the local environment,
- encouraging improvements to the retail offer of the town centre, and by
- promoting more leisure and cultural activities within the town centre.

2.34 The Opportunity Sites include:

- The Civic Centre site, located between Melbourn Street and Melbourn Road, comprising the Health Centre, Town Hall, Police Station, and adjacent car park (Site RTC1),
- The Royston Cross, at the junction of Melbourn Street, Baldock Street, Lower King Street, Kneesworth Street, Upper King Street and High Street (Site RTC2),
- Angel Pavement located between High Street and Market Hill (Site RTC3),
- Market Place and the Corn Exchange located on Market Hill (Site RTC4),
- The Warren Car Park located off Barkway Street (Site RTC5),
- Fish Hill Square located at the northern end of Market Hill and Fish Hill (site RTC6), and
- Princes Mews Car Park and the Somerfield store located off Baldock Street (Site RTC7).

Figure 6: Opportunity Sites



2.35 The detailed guidance for each of these Opportunity Sites and how they could contribute to the overall vision for the town centre are included in Section 7. Appendix 3 outlines the timescales for delivery of the sites.

2.36 A number of additional sites were discounted as they were not seen as being deliverable within the identified timeframe of the SPD, or they were under private ownership without long term plans for development. These included the land adjacent Richard Cox House, the Telephone Exchange, and former swimming pool and cinema site. Since the formal consultation Hertfordshire County Council have indicated that Richard Cox house could come forward for development within the time frame of this SPD subject to an alternative suitable location being found for the elderly persons facility elsewhere within the town. The Strategy does not preclude this site from coming forward subject to policies in the emerging Core Strategy and Development Policies DPD and the policy guidance provided within this SPD.

2.37 In light of the contextual appraisal, the following are considered to be the key Aims that this SPD must address in order to achieve the vision:

- To preserve or enhance the special character of Royston Town Centre.
- To promote the vitality and viability of Royston Town Centre through planning for its growth and sustainable development.
- To promote a Town Centre that is accessible to all.
- To promote sustainable use of resources and protect the wider environment.
- To develop the Town Centre's role as the focus for civic and social life and as a place, which is pleasant, safe and inviting to visit, live and shop in.
- To provide a mechanism for delivery and implementation of the strategy.

3 POLICY GUIDANCE

Introduction

3.1 This section identifies the key spatial planning policies that apply to Royston Town Centre. These take the form of policy guidance that interpret existing policy and apply in the context of Royston.

Land Use

3.2 By their very nature, Town Centres comprise numerous service functions and are social and recognisable hubs to towns. They serve larger areas than their immediate environs, which includes their more extensive urban areas and suburbs as well as their rural hinterlands. These functions are supported by residential and office uses that help support the vitality and viability of centres throughout the day and into the evenings. In securing the future health of any centre, it is therefore necessary to consider the whole range of uses that are components of Town Centres.

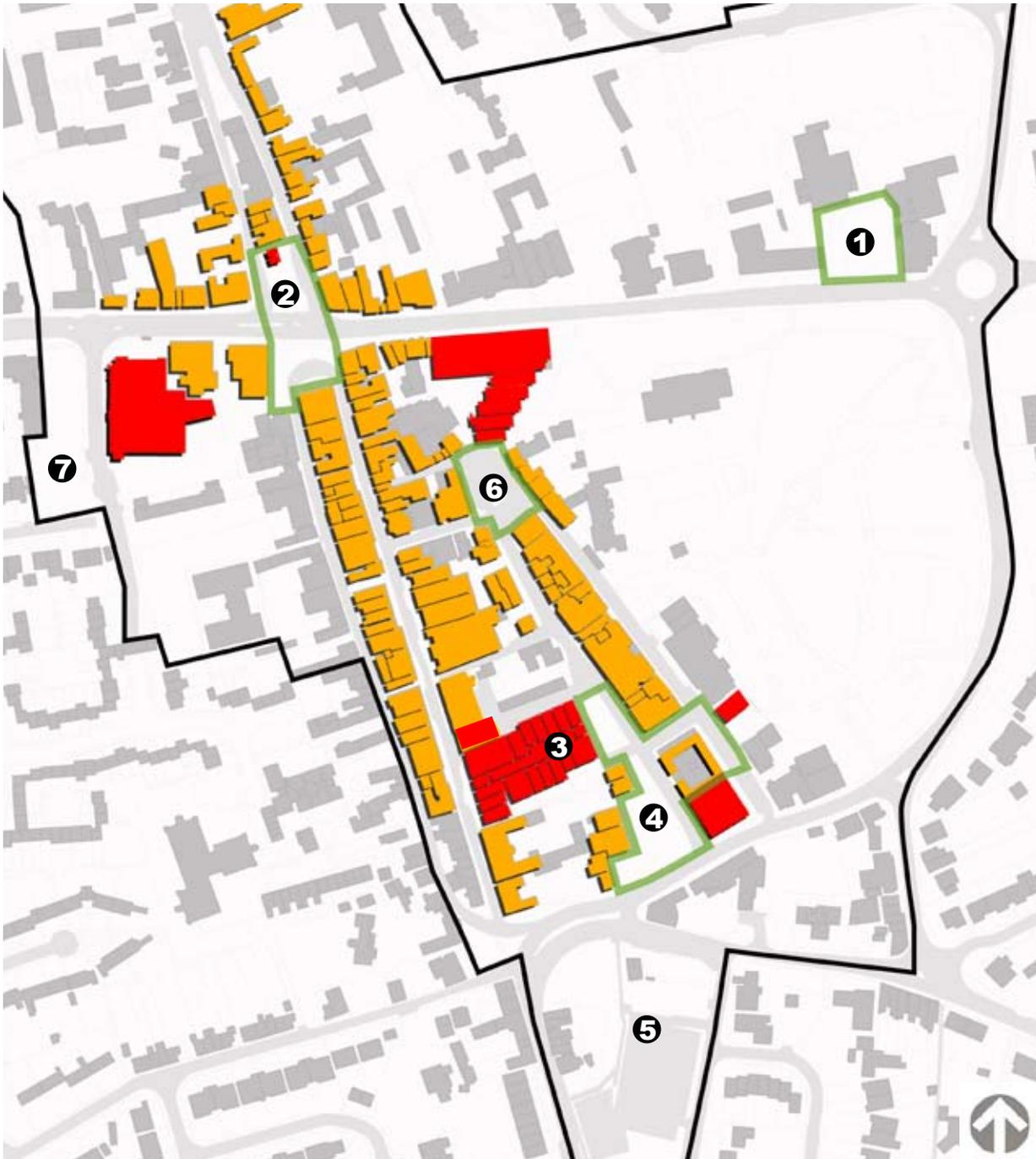
Retail

3.3 The NHDC Town Centre and retail study (2004 and 2006) found that Royston Town Centre primarily serves the day-to-day shopping and service needs of local residents, who visit the centre regularly, including many who walk to the centre. These findings were reinforced by the transport survey for Royston undertaken to inform the Parking Strategy 2007.

3.4 Royston Town Centre includes a core retail area covering primary and secondary frontages as identified within the emerging Development Policies DPD. The core retail area is shown in Figure 7. The primary area broadly comprises High Street, John Street, Melbourn Street and Angel Pavement. Secondary frontages are peripheral to the primary areas. The core shopping focus of Royston is centred around the primary frontages which constitute the most convenient and visible retail locations. The secondary frontages provide important support functions to the core area, and have more variety in the type of retail functions with a larger range of cafes, bars and restaurants.

3.5 Saved Local Plan Policy 42 aims to promote retail as the main activity in Town Centres, but only if it safeguards and enhances their environment. The Development Policies DPD sets out specific development policies relating to the type of uses that will be permitted in primary and secondary shopping frontages. The aim of the Town Centre Strategy SPD is to protect the retail functions of the Town Centre, and the specific policies in relation to the identified primary and secondary shopping frontages should be referred to. While it is recognised that further shopping development opportunities are limited, where such opportunities within the core area arise, retail functions on ground floors will be expected.

Figure 7: Retail Plan



-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Core Retail Area
-  New and Improved Retail Offer
-  New and Improved Public Spaces

- 1** RTC 1 Civic Centre
- 2** RTC 2 Royston Cross - End of Upper King Street
- 3** RTC 3 Angel Pavement
- 4** RTC 4 Market Place, Old Cattle Market Site and Corn Exchange
- 5** RTC 5 Warren Car Park
- 6** RTC 6 Fish Hill Square
- 7** RTC 7 Princes Mews East and West

3.6 A mix of other uses including office, residential and community facilities will be expected in the Town Centre in appropriate locations. Where located within the core retail area, these uses will be above ground floor level. However, should opportunities arise for leisure uses, these will be encouraged within the Town Centre area; whilst they help attract visitors and shoppers to the Town Centre area, such uses would not be acceptable within the primary shopping frontage areas.

3.7 The NLP Town Centre and Retail Study 2006 forecast the need for 30,000sqm of gross additional comparative goods floorspace district-wide by 2016. If Royston were to maintain its current market share, it suggests that 3,500sqm gross of additional comparative goods floorspace may be required in this period, although this is not a target.

3.8 It is considered that the type of retail units available are too small to attract modern day multiple retailers and are further restricted from redevelopment by the historic nature of the Town Centre. There are few anchor stores/multiples in Royston town Centre, which all successful market towns depend on to attract a critical mass of shoppers.

3.9 A balance needs to be taken to encourage the provision of new and larger sized retail units, whilst seeking to support and develop local retailing by maintaining or

increasing the number of independent retailers. Retail opportunities should therefore be brought forward through the re-use of existing vacant units, and within the identified Opportunity Sites, where some of the additional floorspace capacity may be accommodated. Opportunity Site RTC3 Angel Pavement and the area immediately to the north of the site provides the greatest opportunity for larger sized retail units through redevelopment to attract key anchor stores/national retailers that would contribute to the longer term health of the Town Centre. Refurbishment of the existing Angel pavement would be a shorter term solution, although this would not seek to increase the required comparison floorspace.

3.10 PPS6 seeks to actively promote the growth of Town Centre retailing. In order to address the number of vacant units in the Town Centre, a positive approach to planning is encouraged in favour of protecting existing retail and promoting the growth of A1 uses in primary shopping frontages. Any development proposals outside of the Town Centre will need to apply the sequential test outlined in PPS6, to ensure the most suitable location for new retail development. The lack of larger sized units to meet the needs of new retailers may be used as a factor in locating new retail functions outside of the core area. This would be considered a disadvantage to the health of the Town Centre.

3.11 PPS6 advises that secondary frontages can provide greater flexibility and diversity of uses. Secondary shopping frontages in Royston will be preserved predominantly for retail uses but there will be a greater degree of flexibility over the type of uses permitted. It has been recognised that there is a potential to increase the attractiveness of restaurant and cafe uses to the Town Centre. The potential exists within the key opportunity sites, such as RTC2, RTC4 and RTC6, to provide new nodes/urban spaces around which Royston can respond positively (See Figure 7). Around these new urban spaces, A3 and A4 (restaurant, pubs and cafe) uses will be encouraged. This would further benefit the daytime and evening economy and create destinations in their own right.

POLICY GUIDANCE 1 – Retail

Royston Town Centre includes a core retail area with identified primary and secondary shopping frontages (as indicated in the emerging Development Plan DPD Policies). Within this core area, retail should remain the predominant use and different controls will apply in primary and secondary shopping areas to promote an appropriate balance. Where development opportunities arise within this area, retail use should occupy the ground floor premises. Residential and office uses will be supported in upper levels where considered appropriate. Where opportunities arise for leisure uses, preference will be made for these to be located outside of the primary retail frontage area.

Where opportunity arises for larger retail units, this will be encouraged to address an identified shortfall in these types of units. However, such developments should not adversely affect the historic character of Royston. Opportunity Site RTC3 provides the unique potential to provide large retail units. Redevelopment or refurbishment will be encouraged within this area in order to respond to the needs of modern retailers and contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Opportunity Sites RTC2, RTC4 and RTC6 provide the opportunity to create nodes of activity within the Town Centre core area, in particular focused around restaurant and cafe uses. Within these areas, changes of use at ground floor level will be encouraged where they contribute to developing an attractive and balanced daytime and evening economy in Royston.

Other Town Centre Uses

3.12 Royston includes a range of uses other than retail within the Town Centre such as leisure, residential, commercial and cultural uses. A mix of uses helps contribute to the aspirations for sustainable communities by meeting the needs of different groups and providing sustainable alternatives to the private car.

3.13 PPS6 recommends that a wider range of services can promote the diversification of uses and improve the environment of Town Centres. The

consultation process and economic report carried out by DTZ highlighted concerns over the future economic potential of the Town Centre. Offering a greater diversity of uses and attracting more commerce into the Town Centre will go some way in seeking to improve the vitality and viability of the town centre and complement the existing offer. The Marketing and Promotion section suggests mechanisms to promote the town centre.

3.14 Whilst the identified Town Centre core area should retain its key retail function, other uses if considered appropriate will be encouraged in this area where they are located over ground floor premises. In other areas of the Town Centre, a range of other uses will be encouraged, where they are deemed appropriate, contribute to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, and maintain or enhance its historic character.

POLICY GUIDANCE 2 – Other Town Centre uses

A range of uses will be promoted within the Town Centre area where they contribute to its vitality and viability. Where these are within the retail core area, they should be above ground floor premises

Residential use within Royston Town Centre

3.15 Residential uses in a Town Centre make an important contribution to promoting vitality and viability throughout the day and into the evening, as well as at weekends. They provide natural surveillance and overlooking onto their immediate environment, which promotes safety and security. There is demand for such residential units within central locations, where proximity to services and facilities is key. This is highlighted in PPS6 whilst PPS3 recognises the opportunity to provide housing as part of mixed-use schemes within Town Centres. With a fairly buoyant residential market and proximity to Cambridge and London, Royston continues to have potential for further residential development, although the Town Centre area is physically constrained by its historic character.

3.16 The Housing Needs Survey (2006) for Royston found that house prices have increased by 37.3% since 2002. Smaller sized units are in high demand in Royston, the Housing Needs Survey identifying that flats and maisonettes have the highest volume of sales (18.4%) and are the main access property for first time-buyers. The need to increase housing supply is a key challenge to the town and one, which needs to be addressed for successful future growth highlighted by the ECOTEC Market Towns Report.

3.17 In order to encourage the development of a mixed community, residential development within the Town Centre should provide a mix of unit types, although it is clear that this will only realistically apply where relatively large residential schemes (above 5 units) are proposed. There are only a few opportunities within the Town Centre where this may take place, the majority being identified as part of mixed use developments at Opportunity Sites RTC1, RTC3 and RTC7 and to a limited extent at RTC4.

3.18 The need to provide affordable housing must be reflected within any development proposal. All applications for housing development of 5 units or more should provide a proportion of affordable units in consultation with the Council and the guideline targets for affordable housing set out in Saved Local Plan Policy 29A and emerging Core Strategy Policy G.

3.19 The number of car parking spaces should be provided in line with car parking guidelines, and the NHDC Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development SPD. Where an application for reduced standards is sought, the exact number of spaces should be discussed with the Council and this policy should be treated on a site by site basis.

3.20 In addition, there is a need to preserve the existing stock of residential development. Any proposal that affects existing residential property will not be considered acceptable if it reduces the number of residential properties available.

3.21 Change of use in favour of housing will be considered positively throughout the Town Centre. Where such proposals are within the retail core area, they will be considered in appropriate locations above ground floor retail units. Conversion from upper storeys of retail uses will be supported where they are shown to be disused or underused and they are not needed to support the retail functions of the property. Specific criteria for change of use to residential development are set out in emerging DPD Development Policy 14.

3.22 Proposals for residential development will need to have careful consideration for the existing built environment in Royston, paying particular attention to the Conservation Area status afforded to much of the Town Centre and the listed status of many individual buildings. Consideration will need to be made to ensure that the relationship between residential properties and retail properties, such as those areas used for delivery access, or for air extraction, etc, do not negatively affect the amenity of the residential property.

3.23 Emerging Development Policy 14 states that “residential developments on sites of 0.5ha or more should include no more than 75% of its dwellings in any one dwelling type (detached house, semi-detached house, terrace, flat/maisonette or bungalow). A mix of sizes of dwellings will also be encouraged. Mixed use developments will also be supported, especially in town centres, provided any potential for conflict between uses within and adjoining the site has been addressed.”

3.24 The emerging Development Policy 14 states that housing development should respect the character of the local area and be of the highest standards of design when considering the density of development. In Royston Town Centre, this could be in the range 40-75 dwellings per hectare. However, higher densities of 75 dwellings per hectare would only be considered appropriate if the proposals were of the highest standards of design and did not detract from the historic character of the town centre.

POLICY GUIDANCE 3 – Residential Development

Residential development will be supported in Royston Town Centre. It should be considered in relation to the historic character of the Town Centre. Where proposals arise in the retail core area, these should be above ground floor premises.

Where proposals are for the conversion

of upper floors, these should be underused or disused properties.

All applications for residential development over 5 units should provide a mix of dwelling types and a proportion of affordable units in accordance with guideline targets for affordable housing set out in emerging Core Strategy Policy G.

The number of car parking spaces should be provided in line with car parking guidelines.

Commercial / Office uses in Royston Town Centre

3.25 Office and commercial uses (B1) benefit Town Centres as they diversify the economy and help sustain vital and viable places whilst being complementary and supportive of retail uses. Such uses often require central locations, although within Royston Town Centre, the majority of office uses are relatively small scale and occupy the upper floors of often historic properties. The Review of Market Towns in Hertfordshire noted that almost 40% of businesses were occupied within the banking, finance and insurance sectors, a much higher proportion than both national and regional averages. The DTZ Report noted, however, that there was limited demand for additional office uses within the town centre.

3.26 To ensure that a mix of uses is retained in Royston Town Centre, it will be necessary to retain the provision of commercial and office space. New office development will be supported in the Town Centre to sustain a strong employment base and a diverse economy.

3.27 The development of office space in town centres is further encouraged by PPS6. It is also in accordance with emerging Development Policy 23, which states that office uses will be acceptable in Royston Town Centre where it does not conflict with retail policies and proposals. Office development will therefore be promoted in appropriate locations above ground floor levels within core retail areas.

Community, Leisure, Recreational and Cultural Facilities

3.28 Royston Town Centre contains a number of community facilities including a library, town hall, a youth centre, local police station, voluntary and primary care facilities. These are essential to the functioning of the town and provide much-needed community resources. There is also a new leisure centre outside but in close proximity to the Town Centre area.

POLICY GUIDANCE 4 – Commercial / Office Uses

The development of office and business use (B1) is encouraged throughout the Town Centre (subject to other policies), and above ground floor level in the identified core Town Centre retail areas.

3.29 There is currently only one youth drop-in centre, “The House,” which is located on Market Hill and caters for young people between the ages of 12 -18. The centre provides after-school and holiday recreation facilities for approximately 80 children. This is a popular service but has limited capacity to cater for all young people in Royston.

3.30 The Civic Centre site performs a vital community role for the town and acts as a hub for community development, providing a range of community facilities including a health centre, voluntary services, the town hall and local police station. It is situated in a prominent position on Melbourn Street, acting as a gateway to the Town Centre. Its location on Melbourn Street also makes it an accessible area for residents as it is a short walk from the core Town Centre area. Future proposals for the site should make use of the location to provide improved community facilities.

3.31 As well as providing a civic function, many of these uses also provide a recreational function in the town. This is recognised in the Community Strategy, which identifies that the provision of local leisure, community and particularly health facilities is important to local residents. This is also supported by the 2006 District wide survey.

3.32 Emerging Development Policy 6 states that community facilities will be protected unless there is demonstrable proof that the facility is no longer required.

3.33 In Royston Town Centre, these uses fall in areas located on the fringe of the main shopping core and perform an essential function for the Town Centre. Their function within the Town Centre area should be protected from development unless it can be proved that there is no longer a need for such a facility. Development proposals that result in an increase in community facilities will be supported either as part of a larger development or as development within their own right.

POLICY GUIDANCE 5 – Community, Leisure and Recreational and Cultural Facilities

The development of new and improved health, children's and youth facilities within or close to the Town Centre will be supported where appropriate as part of sites identified as opportunities for development and/or through contribution secured as part of planning obligations for development proposals within Royston.

The development of improved community facilities will be supported as part of the redevelopment of the Civic Centre site (RTC1).

Promotion and Marketing

3.34 One of the key methods of supporting a viable and vibrant Town Centre is through strengthening its identity and the associated promotion and marketing of the centre. Through the consultation that was undertaken as part of preparing this SPD, it was stated by consultees that they believe creating a sense of identity will be key to ensuring the long term success of Royston Town Centre.

3.35 The architectural character of the town contributes positively to Royston as do its various historic assets such as the Royston Cave (Grade I Listed Structure and Scheduled Ancient Monument), Priory Memorial Gardens (important green space), St. John the Baptist's Church (Grade A Listed Building – as per grading for churches prior to 1977) and the town's museum.

3.36 Royston Town Centre contains a number of Listed Buildings which are fundamental to the character of the Town Centre together with its other buildings of historic interest. Particular landmarks include:

3.37 The historic and cultural heritage of Royston as an attractive market town should be drawn on as the means to provide a clear identity for Royston. This will act as an attraction for visitors and complement the retail offer. There is particular scope to encourage the

St John the Baptist's Church	Grade A Listed
Royston Cave	Grade I Listed Structure (and Scheduled Ancient Monument)
Thurnalls	Grade I Listed
Court House	Grade II Listed
The Corn Exchange	Grade II Listed

development of restaurants and cafes within key areas of the Town Centre area. This will provide a focus to the town and help stimulate the daytime and evening economy. Such an initiative will also act as a draw to capture the wealth identified within Royston and its hinterland. The aim is to project a positive image of Royston, and to have a beneficial effect on the retail provision.

3.38 Royston also contains a chartered market and now has established regular farmers and specialist markets. Royston should draw on this feature to encourage and highlight its identity as an active Market Town. Markets are major draws that animate outdoor areas, and this in turn provides positive benefits in particular to surrounding retail functions that take advantage of the passing trade. Existing markets could therefore be located at the new and improved public spaces within the core area of the Town Centre (see Figure 7). Drawing on Royston's role as a Market Town, there is scope to encourage further specialist

markets to locate within Royston, such as an antique market or book market as in Hay on Wye. These markets would need to be ancillary to the main market and would add vitality to the town.

3.39 PPS6 encourages markets to be located within Town Centres. Paragraph 2.27 states that “street and covered markets (including farmers’ markets) can make a valuable contribution to local choice and diversity in shopping as well as the vitality of town centres and to the rural economy. As an integral part of the vision for their town centres, local authorities should seek to retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones. Local authorities should ensure that their markets remain attractive and competitive by investing in their improvement.”

3.40 The combination of all these activities will encourage footfall, which will have a beneficial effect upon the health of the Town Centre. Encouraging more vibrant and viable places also increases the natural feeling of safety and security within the town centre and reduces the tendency for anti-social behaviour.

3.41 There needs to be a step change in the value of the retail offer in Royston in order to create a desire to visit and spend time there. A balance needs to be created that allows for the development of larger sized retail premises to meet the requirements for national retailers, whilst

maintaining, and if possible, increasing the number of local independent retailers. The local catchment is relatively wealthy and there is therefore the opportunity to capture more of this spend. Independent retailers which do not require large floor areas, such as antique dealers and specialist food shops, could contribute in developing a niche role for Royston.

POLICY GUIDANCE 6– Promotion and Marketing

Royston should develop a niche role for itself within the District based on the historic and cultural characteristics of the Town Centre and its status as a Market Town. Uses and functions that contribute to this identity will be encouraged within the Town Centre. The redevelopment and enhancement of the opportunity sites will be supported, where they contribute to the Town Centre’s identity and promote its vitality and viability.

3.42 Another important factor in the success of the Town Centre is the creation of partnerships between the various stakeholders in the town. There are a number of key stakeholders within the Town Centre including the Royston Town Council, the Town Centre Forum, the Chamber of Commerce, landowners, and the Town Centre Manager.

3.43 The future prosperity of the Town Centre will, in part, rely on the ability of different groups to communicate with each other and take forward the vision set out in this SPD. Regular communication between the key stakeholders involved should be established and will ensure that progress to deliver the SPD is monitored and delivered as per the timeframe it sets out. It is the role of all stakeholders involved in Royston to agree and define the distinctive role of Royston Town Centre.

3.44 The delivery of the Opportunity Sites as per the vision established within this SPD will be particularly dependent on this partnership working. The delivery of these key opportunities is crucial in projecting the image and perception of Royston as an attractive and vibrant Town Centre. Mechanisms for the delivery of the Opportunity Sites are set out in the Action Plan forming a supporting document to the Strategy.

3.45 The Town Centre Manager will be a key agent and link with these stakeholders. Promotion and marketing will be the joint responsibility of the Town Centre Forum, led by the Town Centre Manager, the District Council. Royston Town Council will also play an important supporting role in helping to promote and market the Town Centre.

3.46 The Companion Guide to PPS6 Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on

Design and Implementation Tools highlights Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) as a way of improving town centres. Paragraph 3.9 notes that BIDs provide “local authorities with the opportunity of working together to put in place additional services or projects to improve their town centres.”

3.47 A BID (Business Improvement District) process is currently underway for the town, led by the Town Centre Manager in conjunction with NHDC. This intends to raise funding through an additional levy on businesses for specific and identified improvements within the wider area of Royston. If the BID process is successful, the funding raised could be used to fund projects to promote the delivery of the vision set out within this SPD. The BID itself could therefore be a means by which the vision of the SPD and the individual Opportunity Sites are delivered.

POLICY GUIDANCE 7– Partnership Working

Partnership working must be established in Royston to build on existing synergies and further enhance the dialogue between the different stakeholders in order to implement policies and proposals and support the long term successful development of the Town Centre.

4 DESIGN AND CONSERVATION

4.1 The Town Centre forms a significant shopping and service role that primarily serves Royston and its immediate environs. It comprises a number of uses that are normally associated with a Town Centre in what is a largely well preserved and attractive historic environment.

4.2 The combination of historic buildings and open space is an appealing asset to visitors to the Town Centre. There is significant opportunity to continue to improve the quality of the environment and the retail offer through a focus on public realm improvements and in particular the development and enhancement of the Opportunity Sites.

Conservation and Heritage in Royston

4.3 The built heritage in Royston Town Centre is protected by the Town Centre Conservation Area, which covers the majority of the Town Centre area as shown in Figure 2.

4.4 The historic environment in the Town Centre, together with its listed buildings, limits development opportunities, although it is recognised that some buildings are not particularly sympathetic to the character of the Town Centre and redevelopment would enhance both the retail offer and the wider

urban environment. These are identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal review for Royston (2007) and are highlighted within Figure 5. The Appraisal is also supported by the NHDC list of Buildings of Local Importance in Royston, which provides further guidance on buildings of local importance.

4.5 The Appraisal also identifies Priory Memorial Gardens as an important open space and St. John the Baptist's Church as a prominent historic building within the town, although views towards the church are limited. Where the opportunity arises, new developments should therefore consider enhancing the views and setting of the church.

4.6 In addition to this, the setting of the most important features within Royston merit special attention. All development proposals within the vicinity of the Priory Memorial Gardens and St. John the Baptist's Church must protect their setting.

4.7 The Royston Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2007), amongst other goals, seeks to ensure that the character of the retail core is preserved. The appraisal provides guidelines for Shopfronts in Royston. Changes to existing or applications for new retail units should be carried out in line with the conservation area character appraisal.

4.8 The Royston Extensive Survey (2001) produced by Hertfordshire County Council provides an assessment of the archaeological and historic development of Royston. It is recognised that the town has a very rich archaeological heritage including nationally important remains. Any development proposals should not be detrimental to the archaeological heritage or the character of the historic townscape of the town. As such, applications for new development will need to take account of the potential for archaeological assessments as part of the planning application requirements.

POLICY GUIDANCE 8 – Conservation and Heritage

Development within the Royston Conservation area will need to preserve or enhance the town's special character. There is a presumption in favour of retention of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. Proposals for new buildings in the Town Centre will need to show that they are sympathetic to their surroundings.

Any development proposals within the immediate vicinity of the Priory Memorial Gardens and St. John the Baptist's Church which would adversely affect their special character, appearance or setting will not be supported. Where the opportunity arises, views towards the church should be encouraged and enhanced.

Urban Design

4.9 Any future development proposals in Royston will need to ensure that the character of the built and natural environment in Royston is protected. PPG15 (paragraph 4.19) emphasises the need for new development in conservation areas to preserve or enhance the existing character of an area. Emerging Development Policy 3 also seeks to ensure that development in conservation areas is within the context of the original townscape.

4.10 It is clear that historic styles and detailing do not need to be mimicked. There is encouragement of high quality contemporary architecture in Royston, however, all proposals must respect their context and should not detract from the aesthetic appeal of the Town Centre environs. Development proposals should, where possible, enhance the existing character and be sensitive to the Conservation Area. The choice of materials is a key consideration in the need for new developments to protect and add to the character and quality of the built environment.

4.11 Design and Access Statements are statutory documents that must be submitted alongside any planning application for development proposal. In the case of Royston Town Centre, they should be clear in demonstrating not only how their design

has been developed but how it fits into Royston's particular historic character and context. In addition, in order to ensure that development proposals are responsive to the historic context of Royston, an Urban Design Assessment should support all planning applications and demonstrate how the proposed scheme relates to the principles and policy guidance set out in this strategy and the development plan.

POLICY GUIDANCE 9– Urban Design

All development within Royston Town Centre should be of high quality design that:

- i) Respects and enhances the historic character of the Town Centre,
- ii) Has continuous built frontages particularly within the core area,
- iii) Is sympathetic to the largely domestic scale and appearance of the Town Centre,
- iv) Makes use of high quality materials in their design,
- v) Provides improvements to the public realm,
- vi) Has active frontages and any blank walls in these locations should be modified where the opportunity arises and, where appropriate, improve the surrounding environment.

All new developments in the Town Centre will require an urban design assessment as part of the statutory Design and Access Statement, setting out how the proposed scheme relates to these principles and policy guidance in this strategy and the development plan.

Open Space

4.12 There are three areas of public open space in Royston. These include the two areas of open space located adjacent to the Warren Car Park, and the third being the Priory Memorial Gardens located to the east of the town centre (see Figure 4). Priory Memorial Gardens contributes to the overall amenity of the Town Centre and provides a number of functions including sport and recreation. The Gardens are also important in terms of their historic and archaeological value. The other two areas of public open space provide amenity value to the town centre.

4.13 These areas are major assets not only in terms of their visual but also in terms of their amenity and wildlife value, and have an important role to play in contributing to and enhancing biodiversity and the natural environment within the town centre. The ability of these areas of open space to preserve and enhance biodiversity in line with PPS9 should be encouraged.

4.14 Saved Local Plan Policy 21 and emerging Development Policy 20 both emphasise the need to retain open space and protect it from development. These policies also actively seek to improve and enhance the network of open spaces in the town.

4.15 Proposals for development on or near these areas within the Town Centre should be carefully assessed on the basis of these policies. It is also recognised in national policy, for example PPG17, that sport and recreational facilities should be protected unless it can be demonstrated that they are surplus to requirements. Opportunities may arise to enhance these areas of public open space, which should be encouraged, in particular where it enables better or more intensive use for leisure and recreation purposes. Any such development will need to be in keeping with, and be respectful of, the character and amenity value of these areas of public open space

POLICY GUIDANCE 10 – Public Open Space

Areas of Open Space in Royston Town Centre will be protected from development. Where appropriate, improvements will be made to encourage their use for recreation and leisure activities especially in Priory Memorial Gardens, whilst protecting and enhancing their amenity and wildlife value and the potential for diversification of biodiversity.

Public Realm

4.16 Government policy sets out the standards for good design in *By Design* (2000). This includes the need to promote

public spaces and access routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including the elderly, sensorily and mobility impaired.

4.17 Development in Royston should maintain and protect the character and reinforce local distinctiveness of the Town Centre and should positively contribute to the public realm and local streetscene.

4.18 New development in the Town Centre will, in line with emerging Development Policy 5, need to show that it does not discriminate against any potential users gaining access to buildings and spaces in the Town Centre. All development proposals will need to demonstrate through the Design and Access Statement how they will comply with the Disability and Discrimination Act (1995). The standards within the DDA will also be applied to all improvements within the public realm.

4.19 Royston has a number of key areas of public realm such as along the High Street and the Royston Cross. It is recognised, however, that certain areas could be better used and would benefit from aesthetic improvements, such as Fish Hill Square. In some areas, this includes improvements to design and layout, whilst other areas would benefit from improvements to street furniture and paving to enhance the streetscape. A hierarchy of new public spaces is promoted with improved pedestrian linkages as shown in Figure 8. New and clear pedestrian routes

and crossings, with appropriate signage, are proposed along Melbourn Street and across the A10 to encourage pedestrian permeability within and into the town centre.

4.20 Surviving historic materials in the public realm should be retained. A coherent palette of materials and street furniture should be considered to complement these and provide Royston with a recognisable identity. An existing range of street furniture has been used within the Town Centre area, which complements the historic nature of Royston. Any new development linking in or forming part of the public realm would best continue to use this established range so that improvement can be undertaken in a phased approach.

4.21 The key public realm improvements to Royston have been identified and are designated as Opportunity Sites at Market Hill (RTC4), Fish Hill Square (RTC6), Royston Cross (RTC2) and at the Civic Centre site (RTC1). These are areas that should be treated as a priority for improvement as part of any enhancement or redevelopment proposal. These provide the potential to enhance the environment through treatments and improvements to the hard landscape, although there will also be scope to provide new trees and planting to soften the appearance of the Town Centre area. Other Opportunity Sites such as the Angel Pavement (RTC3) also provide the

potential to add to the public realm through either refurbishment or comprehensive redevelopment.

POLICY GUIDANCE 11– Public Realm Improvements

Proposals for new development in the Town Centre should improve the public realm to create an attractive and usable environment for all.

New development in Royston should also improve the network of open spaces within the Town Centre.

These improvements should be achieved by the requirement of:

- i) High quality hard and soft landscape throughout the Town Centre
- ii) Protection of important trees
- iii) Pedestrian linkages into and within the Town Centre to be enhanced, especially into Priory Memorial Gardens and through Market Hill
- iv) Streetscape elements in the Town Centre should be of high quality and well maintained.

Public realm improvements should be considered in the context of the historic nature of Royston. Any new development in the public realm should take into account the existing palette of materials and street furniture to ensure a coherent approach to design in the Town Centre.

Safety and Security

4.22 It is important to ensure that everyone has access to community facilities throughout the District and that Royston is a safe Town Centre in which to work, live and spend leisure time. One of the concerns for local communities is crime or the fear of crime.

4.23 North Hertfordshire has a relatively low crime rate and has no areas with severe or long-standing crime and disorder problems. There are, however, some areas in the District where some types of crime and disorder are concentrated, and this can impact on the quality of life of those that live and work there. Royston, in common with North Hertfordshire district, has relatively low levels of crime. However, there are areas within the Town Centre where people feel that “low –level” crime and antisocial behaviour are a problem. Priory Memorial Gardens was noted as a problem area for this type of disturbance.

4.24 Recognising the importance of providing a safe and secure environment, the Council together with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has produced a new Community Safety Strategy for North Hertfordshire for the period 2005 to 2008. In line with Home Office guidance, this will be replaced from 2008 with annual strategic assessments of need, informing a three year rolling strategic action plan.

4.25 The key priorities of the Community Safety Strategy are to tackle anti-social behaviour, seek to reduce crime (both acquisitive and violent crime), alcohol and drug related issues, as well as reducing fear of crime within the district, including the Town Centres. This is to be achieved through partnership working and locality panels have been set up to work together with the Police, schools, local businesses, residents and other organisations to tackle and solve crime and disorder issues. These initiatives aim to ensure that Royston Town Centre remains an area with relatively low crime rates and high levels of community safety.

4.26 One of the key themes in the Community Strategy is to create community safety. The Community Safety Strategy sets out a number of actions that can be taken to help reduce crime, many of which cannot be addressed through this SPD. However, there are some measures that can be promoted which will help to create safer communities, primarily relating to the way that buildings and the streetscene are designed.

4.27 The design and layout of development proposals including enhancements to the street scene and car parks are important contributors to the prevention of crime. The Council encourages the use, by developers, of government guidance on Safer Places.

4.28 Secured by Design is a set of principles applied by the police to promote safety and security through the design of places. It includes measures such as incorporating lighting schemes as part of development to encourage safer places and reduce fear of crime. Secured by Design also recognises that CCTV can have a positive impact on crime, especially when implemented as part of a wider package.

4.29 Provided that new developments are designed in accordance with the guidelines described above, it is also possible for the Council and its partners to make the most effective use of CCTV. The public CCTV system, run in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council, East Hertfordshire District Council, Hertford Town Council and other adjoining authorities, is the largest system in the UK. It proves most successful not only in the detection of crime but also in reducing the fear of crime.

POLICY GUIDANCE 12 – Safety and Security

Through Partnership working and implementation of the community safety strategy and subsequent strategic plans, actions will be undertaken to ensure that the Town Centre remains an area with overall low crime rates and reduced levels of anti-social behaviour.

Crime and anti-social behaviour prevention measures, including CCTV should be designed into development in line with Secured by Design Principles to promote safe and attractive public spaces. Design and Access Statements that support development proposals should demonstrate how new development has achieved this.

5 MOVEMENT

5.1 The patterns of movement of both people and vehicles in Royston town centre have evolved around the historic town centre layout formed by intersecting north-south and east-west routes. Whilst this layout has served the town well, it is important to recognise opportunities to make improvements to facilitate movement as they arise. Efforts to increase pedestrian permeability and provide appropriate levels of convenient access for vehicles will benefit the town as a whole, and assist towards achieving the vision of Royston Town Centre set out in this Strategy.

5.2 Royston is well connected to the local area by both road and rail. The Town Centre is only a ten minute walk from the railway station which has services connecting to Cambridge and London Kings Cross. The town is served by four regular bus services and there are good road links via the A10, A505 and A1198; these roads join Royston to the A1 and M11. The major road network connects Royston to a number of larger settlements, including Letchworth Garden City, Hitchin, Stevenage, Cambridge and Buntingford, and the town's catchment area contains a number of villages, which are accessible by minor roads.

5.3 The context for this strategy is currently provided by the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006/07 - 2010/11, prepared by the County Council in partnership with the District Council and transport operators. This document will be supported by the Royston Urban Transport Plan to be prepared in 2009/2010 by Hertfordshire County Council.

5.4 The Council supports the government initiative to improve the attractiveness of walking, cycling and passenger transport as alternative modes of travel. Through its recently revised Bus and Rail Strategies (2005) and Accessibility Strategy (2005), the County seeks to meet the following Objectives of the LTP:

- To provide a transport system which provides access to employment, shopping, education, leisure and health facilities for all, especially those without a car and those with impaired mobility;
- To work in partnership with transport providers and users to achieve an efficient, affordable and enhanced transport system, which is attractive, reliable, integrated and makes the best use of resources;
- To raise awareness and encourage the use of alternative modes of transport through effective promotion, publicity and information;
- To improve safety for all by giving the

highest priority to minimising the number of collisions and injuries occurring as a result of the transport system;

- To obtain the best use of the existing network through effective design, maintenance and management.

5.5 In line with these objectives, this SPD seeks to encourage a shift to sustainable travel modes where practicable. The size and topography of the town are such that walking and cycling are both viable alternatives to car travel for Town Centre trips. When considering the town's wider catchment area, it must be recognised that the level to which sustainable transport policy objectives can be achieved is dependent on local circumstances.

5.6 In the context of Royston, it is currently recognised that there is greater dependence on the private car because of the limited bus services to and from the town centre. However it is the intention of this Strategy to improve access by public transport, on foot and by bicycle.

Road Network

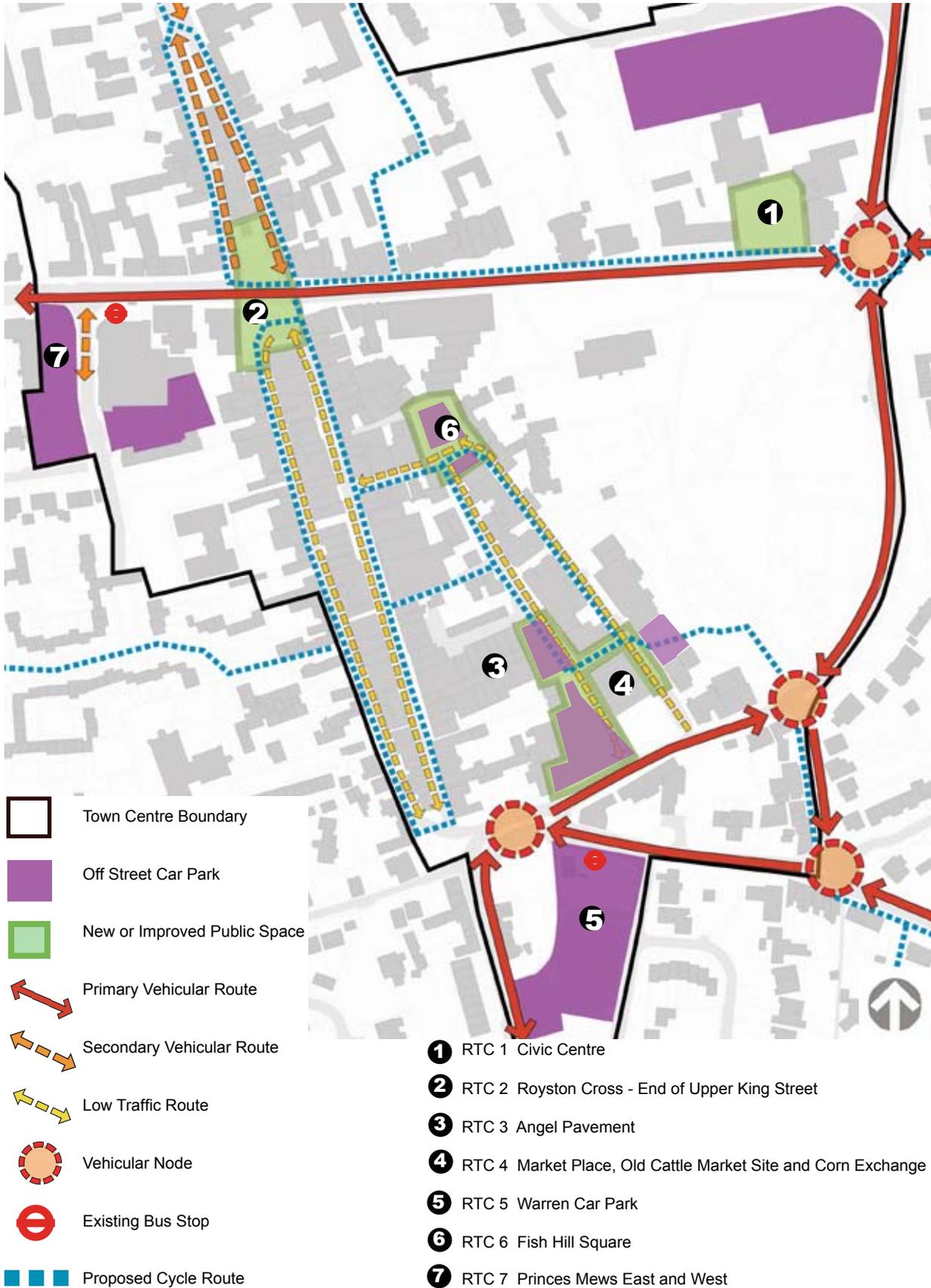
5.7 In line with best practice nationally and elsewhere in the district, through traffic is directed onto local distributor roads outside of the main town centre shopping areas. These roads are the A10 London Road/Melbourn Road, the B1039 Barkway Road, the east-west route along Melbourn

Street/Baldock Road/Newmarket Road, and the north-south route along Kneesworth Street/Old North Road (see Figure 3).

5.8 Town centre roads such as Fish Hill, Market Hill and the High Street have a relatively high level of vehicle activity, which detracts from the appearance and amenity of the town. The core Town Centre's traffic circulatory system currently requires all vehicles to enter along routes with high levels of pedestrian activity. This arrangement, although allowing adequate access to town centre businesses and homes, also contributes to traffic congestion on the narrow Town Centre streets.

5.9 Changes to the management of traffic movements, combined with an increased focus on the needs of pedestrians within the context of the Town Centre may offer worthwhile benefits. Any improvements to the Town Centre road network should seek to increase its efficiency, minimise vehicle numbers and minimise the distance travelled by circulating vehicles. Improvements should accord with the overall strategy of increasing the amenity and attractiveness of the Town Centre for all users, and pedestrians in particular, whilst ensuring adequate vehicle access is maintained.

Figure 8 Movement and Town Centre Car Parks



5.10 A reduction of traffic in the Town Centre would be specifically beneficial around Opportunity Site RTC6 - Fish Hill and would link positively with the proposal to enhance the general amenity of the square and provide an attractive focal point.

5.11 Specific proposals for reducing the impact of traffic in the Town Centre will be carefully assessed as part of the Royston Urban Transport Plan and any related development transport assessments.

5.12 The area at the junction of Melbourn Street and Kneesworth Street/Lower King Street, known as The Cross, has been identified in the SPD as a potential Opportunity Site for enhancement. There is scope within this area for public realm improvements to create a more pedestrian friendly gateway into the core retail area on the approach from the station, reduce the present severance effect of Melbourn Street between the north and south of the town centre, and encourage a reduction in the speed of through traffic. Care will be necessary to maintain sufficient through capacity on Melbourn Street for vehicle movements on this locally important road link. Opportunity Site RTC2 provides guidance of how this may be achieved.

5.13 Such improvements may help improve the amenity of the town centre as a whole, but would need to be carefully

considered to ensure that issues relating to road safety and access needs are properly addressed.

5.14 With the individual development proposals likely to be put forward over a period of time it is important to consider the impact of development on the transport network of the town centre as a whole, rather than just relating to internal circulation and immediate access (updated guidance on the content of transport assessments and likely schemes which will qualify has been published by the Department for Transport – DfT). Transport assessments may be required for larger development proposals such as RTC1 – the Civic Centre Site.

POLICY GUIDANCE 13 – Road Network

Opportunities to improve vehicle circulation in and around the Town Centre will be pursued as they arise. Proposals should seek to reduce the impact of vehicle movements in the core Town Centre area, promote a pleasant and safe environment, in particular for pedestrians and cyclists, and improve access for users of sustainable transport modes.

Transport assessments may be considered necessary as part of any large development scheme as required by the Hertfordshire County Council.

Buses

5.15 The study undertaken to support the Parking Strategy developed alongside this SPD notes that over 50% of visitors into the Town Centre travelled by car and under 40% of visitors travel on foot. Very few visitors travel by public transport, the survey estimating that just 4% use this mode.

5.16 The town is served by four bus services, one of which is a circular service connecting residential areas around the town. Other less frequent services provide connections to outlying villages, some with only one or two inbound and outbound journeys per day and others with services on single weekdays only.

5.17 Bus links to the town's wider catchment area are currently of variable coverage, frequency, and quality, and this situation is unlikely to change in the short to medium term. Given the relatively dispersed population of Royston's hinterland and the low established bus patronage levels, journeys into the town by private car are likely to continue to represent a substantial proportion of all movement.

5.18 However, in line with local, regional and national sustainable transport policy, continued efforts will be directed where practicable towards encouraging movement

by this travel mode. For some, bus travel will continue to provide an important town centre link for visitors, and as such encouragement must be given to improvements to ease movement between bus services and facilities in the town centre. There is potential to relocate bus stops to make them more accessible and further encourage travel by bus.

5.19 The main Town Centre bus stops are located to the south of the town, on the A10 adjacent to The Warren car park, and to the west of the town centre close to the Somerfield supermarket (see Figure 9). On its busiest day (Wednesday), the southern bus stop is the most frequently used.

5.20 It is recommended that opportunities be sought to provide improvements to bus facilities and design for bus movement as part of the Opportunity Sites and that measures which will allow an improved integration of bus services with the Town Centre as a whole are implemented wherever practicable.

POLICY GUIDANCE 14 – Buses

Partnership working will be promoted with Hertfordshire County Council to engage with bus operators to bring about improvements to bus services and encourage an increase in bus passengers accessing the Town Centre.

Opportunities will be sought to provide improved facilities for buses and bus users as part of new Town Centre development proposals.

Walking & Cycling

5.21 Hertfordshire County Council's cycling strategy seeks to encourage an increase in cycling, and sets a target of an 11% increase in cycling by 2010/11. The Strategy would however support a more significant increase in cycling to reflect the council's intentions to implement a proposed cycle route network across Royston. The topography and layout of Royston is such that walking and cycling offer viable alternatives to car use for people who live in the town.

5.22 Although the National Cycle Network's routes do not currently run through the town, there is a signed cycle through route connecting Baldock Road to the west to the B1039 Barkway Road to the south-east, running via Briary Lane and Sun Hill.

5.23 Cycle lanes are currently provided on the approach to the Town Centre along the Old North Road. NHDC document 'SPG19 North Herts Towns Cycle Routes – Part 1, Royston' identifies a further four routes, the implementation of which would improve links into the Town Centre for cyclists. Improvements within the Town Centre that help facilitate the implementation of these links should be encouraged. These proposed routes are shown on Figure 9.

5.24 The Town Centre environment currently accommodates a substantial number of parked and moving vehicles, and this may act to discourage cycling activity in the Town Centre. Where possible, improvements within the Town Centre area that may encourage cycling should be implemented. These improvements may include increased, more visible and better sited cycle parking facilities than at present and a reduction in inappropriately sited street furniture.

5.25 Town Centre user surveys highlighted that a significant proportion of visitors arrive on foot. These surveys identified that nearly 94% of interviewees were satisfied or very satisfied with the walking environment within the Town Centre. The implementation of proposed public realm improvements will serve to further improve the walking environment, to the benefit of all, and the consideration of improvements to wider pedestrian links into the Town Centre may identify additional opportunities for enhancement. Improved pedestrian linkages at Melbourn Street and at the A10 to Priory Memorial Gardens and between the Warren Car Park and the Market Place will be promoted as indicated in Figure 9.

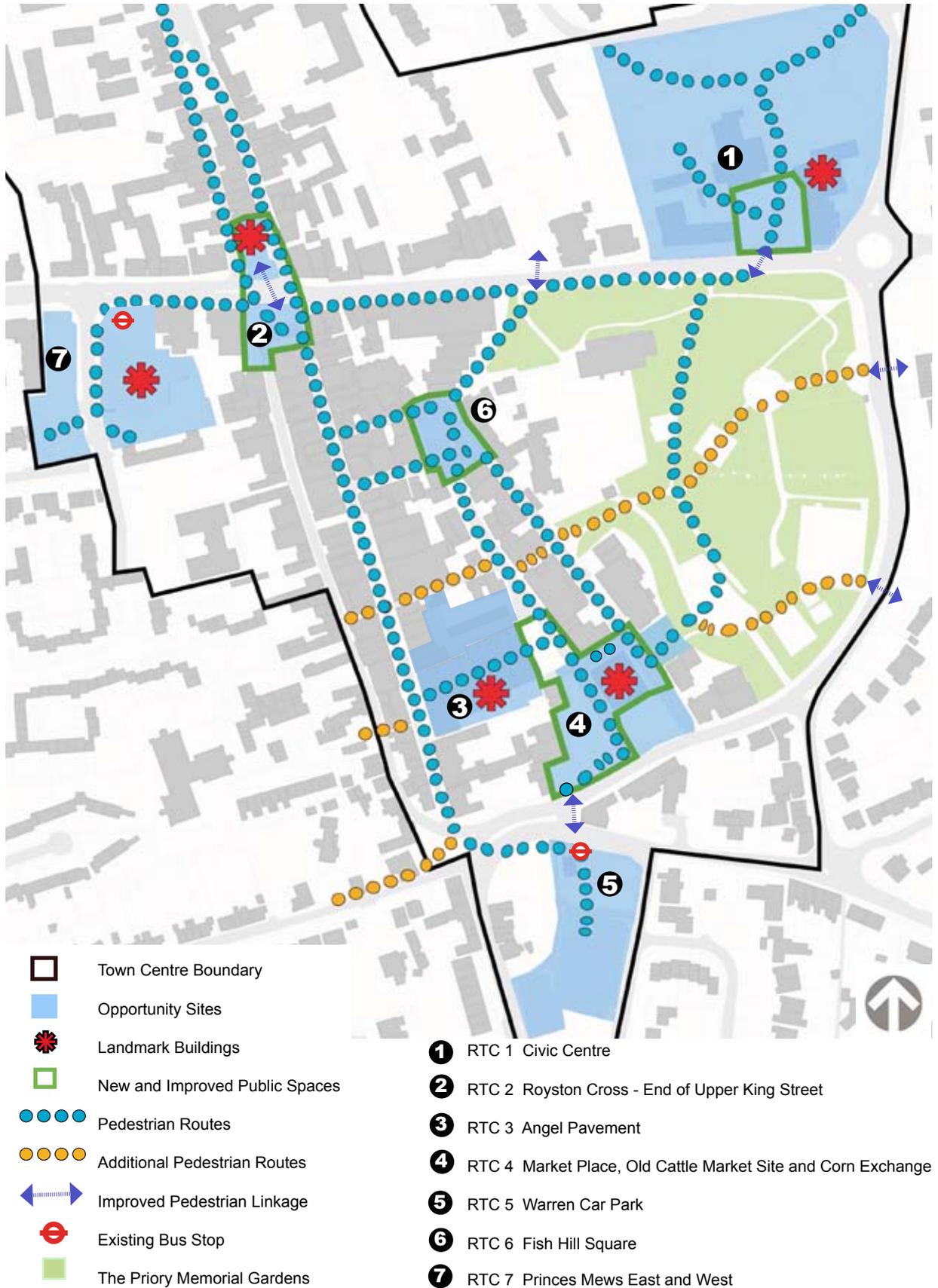
POLICY GUIDANCE 15 – Walking and Cycling

The Council in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority will continue to work towards the implementation of safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes and facilities into and around the town centre via the Royston Urban Transport Plan and through planning obligations.

Specific measures to improve pedestrian priority will include:

- i) An improved linkage for pedestrians and cyclists at the junction of Melbourn Street, Baldock Street, Kneesworth Street and Lower King Street as part of the enhancement proposal to Royston Cross (Opportunity Site RTC2),
- ii) Improved linkages at appropriate locations along Melbourn Street to strengthen the link between the Civic Centre site (RTC1) and the town centre core area,
- iii) Improvements to pedestrian linkages along the A10 into Priory Memorial Gardens and between the Warren Car Park (RTC5) and Market Place (RTC4).

Figure 9 Permeability Plan



Taxis

5.26 Taxis offer an important transport link in rural areas, particularly for those without access to a private car.

5.27 Provision for taxi waiting in Royston is currently limited to a shared loading/taxi bay at The Cross. Although located at the heart of the town, this rank is reached via a necessarily circuitous route through a largely pedestrian area.

5.28 Consideration will be given to relocating this rank to a more appropriate location, possibly in Market Hill, as part of any improvements to the public realm in this area. A revised configuration would offer the advantage of a more coherent layout better integrated with the public realm and assist in preventing traffic congestion in the High Street. This would occur through further consultation with relevant taxi operators.

Vehicle Parking

5.29 Since the adoption by the Council of the North Hertfordshire Car Parking Strategy 2004-2009 in July 2004, the need for a specific parking strategy for each of the four main towns within the NHDC area has arisen. A Parking Strategy for Royston has been prepared which supports this SPD, and the policies identified in that document should also be taken into account when using this guidance.

5.30 The Royston Town Centre area contains both off-street and on-street parking totalling approximately 600 spaces. Parking within the core of the Town Centre includes four NHDC-operated off-street car parks (John Street, Market Place, Angel Pavement and Priory Gardens) providing 76 public spaces and 8 spaces for holders of blue badge permits. Tariffs in these car parks are structured to encourage short parking durations and a high turnover of spaces. An additional 44 spaces are provided at on-street locations in Fish Hill, Market Hill and the High Street, and these are free for users (See Figure 8).

5.31 Three other car parks (The Warren, the Civic Centre and Princes Mews) are situated on the edges of the Town Centre and together provide a further 440 spaces for shoppers and Town Centre visitors. The Warren and Civic Centre car parks have tariffs structured to provide for both short-term activity and longer-term parking for those who work in the town. (See Figure 8)

5.32 An additional 35 parking bays are provided at other on-street locations, which are a short walk from the Town Centre, including Lower King Street and Kneesworth Street.

5.33 Car parking within the core Town Centre area is widely used especially on market days; however, the larger car parks, which are a short walk from the Town Centre, seldom reach full capacity even on market days.

5.34 Car parking tariffs in Royston are set at a consistent level across the Town Centre for short-stay durations, and are structured to encourage long stay parking activity into the larger car parks on the edges of the Town Centre. Long stay parking durations of over four hours currently only account for 8% of parking activity in Council operated car parks. This indicates that demand for off-street long-stay parking is currently low, and also supports the view that the town centre offer is insufficient to encourage visitors to stay in Royston for extended periods.

Parking Strategy Objectives

5.35 The Royston Parking Strategy 2007 is a supporting background document to this SPD, and as such aims to contribute to the wider objectives of this strategy by identifying a direction for parking policy over a 10-15 year period that is specific to Royston's needs. Its phased approach will contribute to the overall aims of the Town Centre Strategy of stimulating growth and increasing the vitality and amenity of the Town Centre area for all users.

5.36 Over the medium to long term, the Parking Strategy aims to:

- Provide and manage an appropriate amount of parking to support growth in the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- Promote the improvement of the public realm in the Town Centre by reducing the impact of parking and vehicle movements on the area;
- Improve the use of existing car parking stock, particularly in car parks outside the core retail area;
- Maintain an appropriate balance between short and long-stay parking provision; and
- Ensure that long-stay parking activity is sited in appropriate locations away from residential streets.

Car Parking

5.37 Public parking in the core of the Town Centre will remain an important parking resource in future years. Conveniently located, central parking benefits disadvantaged users such as the elderly and supports the Town Centre economy as a whole. However, it is important to maintain an appropriate balance between vehicle and pedestrian activity, taking into account the conflicting demands imposed by the desire to stimulate Town Centre vitality whilst improving amenity. In

order to meet the aims of improving the Town Centre's public realm and creating an environment which will encourage visits by pedestrians and cyclists, the level and type of core Town Centre parking should be rationalised over future years in line with these wider objectives.

5.38 The current level of unused parking spaces in car parks located around the Town Centre indicates that there is, in the medium to long term, potential to promote improvements to the public realm and reduce traffic circulating around the retail core area. However, full consideration will need to be given to the effects that a reduction in parking capacity may have alongside the projected growth in retail activity in the core area. It is important that an appropriate balance between short and long-stay parking provision is maintained, and that the needs of businesses and employees within the Town Centre are also taken into account. The specific parking needs of the town will change over time, and a process of continuing review should be undertaken to reflect that change.

5.39 A reduction in the overall level of parking provision in the core town centre overtime would offer the joint benefits of reducing the number of vehicle movements in the main retail area and allowing better

use of existing, currently under-used, car parking resources. Visitors should be encouraged to use the first car park they encounter on entering the town in order to reduce parking pressure on the main retail area and remove a proportion of circulating traffic from Town Centre roads.

5.40 Parking on streets on the periphery of the Town Centre that are not subject to parking restrictions can provide a useful additional Town Centre parking resource, providing that this activity does not compromise road safety or unduly affect residents. A high proportion of the roads close to Royston Town Centre are already subject to restrictions or will have restrictions imposed in the near future. Given the largely residential nature of roads that surround Royston Town Centre, non-residential parking activity should be concentrated in those Town Centre car parks that have sufficient capacity. These long-stay car parks already have tariffs intended to support this strategy, but these tariffs may be reviewed in the future to further encourage long-stay parking activity at these locations.

5.41 Parking tariffs provide a tool that allows the regulation, management and rationalisation of car parking in Town Centre locations. This benefits users through managing parking demand and making best use of parking supply, giving a better service and increasing the chance of finding parking space in convenient and appropriate locations. The cost of operating and maintaining car parks and parking enforcement teams' needs to be met, and this is usually achieved through the collection of parking fees for off street parking and fixed penalty notice for on street parking. A process of regular review of parking tariffs will be undertaken in order to ensure the appropriateness of charges as the parking requirements of the town change over time and will be linked to the outcomes of the North Hertfordshire District Council Transport Fundamental Services Review across the whole district to be completed late 2008.

5.42 A car parking rebate scheme has recently been introduced in the Town Centre. This operates on the premise that shoppers who park in the Town Centre and visit a participating retailer are entitled to reclaim a proportion of the price of their parking ticket. North Hertfordshire District Council has provided the necessary tickets and equipment to facilitate this venture.

Other Parking Requirements

5.43 The needs of blue-badge holders and the requirements of retail servicing all need to be met. Reduced public parking levels in the Town Centre will allow a more even distribution of spaces for blue-badge holders and for loading/unloading activity to take place in appropriate locations.

5.44 When seeking to encourage visits to the Town Centre by sustainable transport modes, it is important that suitable facilities are provided to support this aim. Cyclists also have a need to park their vehicles in convenient and safe locations, and it is intended that an increased number of cycle parking facilities are provided throughout the Town Centre area in future years.

Opportunity Sites

5.45 The Opportunity sites that are identified for development and enhancement are likely to come forward successively over time. It will be important to consider the impact of each development on the town's parking system and road network, both on an individual and cumulative basis. The transport context will change over time in terms of volume by transport mode and the distribution of those movements across the network. New proposals will need to be assessed in the prevailing context.

POLICY GUIDANCE 16 – Vehicle Parking

Parking policy for the Town Centre will be consistent with the Royston Parking Strategy 2007. Elements of the strategy that relate directly to the Town Centre area include:

- i) The provision and management of sufficient Town Centre parking capacity to support the aims of the Town Centre Strategy;
- ii) The rationalisation of on-street parking provision to benefit Town Centre users and the streetscape;
- iii) A limited reduction in the proportion of parking spaces in the core of the Town Centre over time, led by an increase in retail activity and economic viability to meet the Town Centre Strategy Aims of an improved public realm and pedestrian environment;
- iv) The allocation of sufficient long-stay parking provision to meet the needs of

businesses and Town Centre workers;

- v) The discouragement of Town Centre related parking in residential streets and at locations where road safety may be compromised;
- vi) The provision of parking for blue badge holders at appropriate locations around the Town Centre; and
- vii) The facilitation of loading/unloading activity at appropriate locations within the Town Centre.

An ongoing review of parking demand and supply will be undertaken with a view to optimisation of provision whilst recognising the conflicting demands of amenity, environment, commercial vitality, visitor convenience and sustainable transport objectives.

6 SUSTAINABILITY

6.1 Protecting and enhancing the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole is a key priority for the Council.

6.2 Chapter 4 of the Energy White Paper (2003) states that by 2010, 10% of energy should be generated from renewable sources, with an aspiration to increase this to 20% by 2020. Both national government, through PPS22 (para 18), and regional guidance through the draft RSS, require the inclusion of policies which encourage renewable energy schemes, including the incorporation of small-scale renewable energy technology within all new and some existing developments (e.g. solar panels, Biomass heating, photovoltaic (PV) panels, micro-scale wind power systems and geothermal heating). The Government aims to put the UK on a path to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by some 60% by 2050, with real progress against this target made by 2020. Policies should ensure that appropriate renewable schemes come forward and that they help to meet the targets set out in PPS22 that 10% savings from CO2 is made via the use of on-site renewable energy.

6.3 Given the local setting of Royston as an historic market town and the urban design assessment, the scale of new development in the Town Centre is unlikely to lend itself to incorporating large-scale renewable energy measures. As supported by PPS22, micro-scale measures will therefore be encouraged in all development proposals. These will need to be considerate to the historic context of Royston.

POLICY GUIDANCE 17 – Sustainability

Proposals for new development in the Town Centre should show how they contribute to targets for 10% reduction in carbon emissions. In doing so, renewable energy proposals in Royston should ensure that they fit in with the local built environment and historic context of the Town Centre. Any opportunity for new development will be assessed on its ability to preserve or enhance the character of the Town Centre.

Sustainable Design

6.4 Buildings such as houses and offices account for approximately 50% of all carbon emissions in the UK (Carbon Trust). Reducing the amount of emissions from this source is therefore extremely important. This is to be encouraged by making new development as energy efficient as possible, as well as requiring a proportion of energy use to be met through embedded renewable energy (where small scale generators are connected directly to electricity distribution networks) where appropriate for larger developments.

6.5 Development proposals for residential schemes should be assessed against the Building Research Establishment's (BRE) Code for Sustainable Homes. The Code measures the sustainability of a new home set against identified categories of sustainable design. The Code sets minimum standards for energy and water use and uses a rating system to communicate the overall sustainability performance of a new home.

6.6 For non-residential proposals, the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) method of assessment should be used to review and improve environmental performance throughout the life of a building. BREEAM assesses environmental performance on the following criteria:

management, energy use, health and wellbeing, pollution, transport, land use, ecology, materials and water usage.

6.7 A County-wide approach on embedded renewable energy is being developed by the Hertfordshire Districts. The thresholds, which have been agreed where this must be considered within development proposals are for developments greater than one dwelling and 500m² of non-residential floorspace. Within this relatively buoyant part of the country, these thresholds are considered to be reasonable, taking account of viability and deliverability issues.

6.8 The efficient use of materials from local and sustainable sources and the reuse and recycling of materials is also required by government guidance. In addition, the use of local materials will help achieve local character and distinctiveness, which is especially relevant given Royston's unique identity and the conservation area status of the majority of the Town Centre. Where new developments are proposals, the local sourcing of materials, the use of recycled materials, and the application of good practice guidance for the construction phase of all developments, will be encouraged.

6.9 All development proposals should include sustainable design features where appropriate, including green roofs and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). Full consideration should also be given to the need for contaminated land studies and maintaining water quality as part of any new development.

6.10 Providing buildings and spaces that are energy efficient and accessible to all is a key priority of Government policy at all levels.

POLICY GUIDANCE 18 – Sustainable Design

Proposals for development in the Town Centre must show how they have included energy and resource efficiency measures in their design. Construction that achieves an “excellent” BREEAM rating will be encouraged, but should be, as a minimum, “very good” or equivalent rating or the level 3 rating under the Code for Sustainable Homes.

New development in Royston Town Centre should use innovative design measures to reduce energy and waste and optimise the potential of the site. Building materials should be locally sourced, where possible, and efforts to minimise waste and make use of recycled materials, will be encouraged. All new proposals should also take into account possible future changes in lifestyle, uses, changes in technology and likely changes to climate.

7 OPPORTUNITY SITES IN ROYSTON TOWN CENTRE

Introduction

7.1 Royston Town Centre contains a number of relatively large sites that are not seen as fulfilling their potential or contributing to the quality of the townscape and the character and appearance of the conservation area. The small scale of the Town Centre means they could provide a major contribution to the health of the Town Centre. For some sites this will involve refurbishment or public realm works in order to project an improved image, whilst others will require significant redevelopment to provide more intensive use and encourage a greater mix of uses. The potential for each site was discussed with the relevant landowners and stakeholders and forms the basis of this section of the SPD.

7.2 There are 7 key opportunity sites in Royston, which would benefit from redevelopment, public realm improvements or refurbishment as part of this Strategy. These are illustrated in Figure 6.

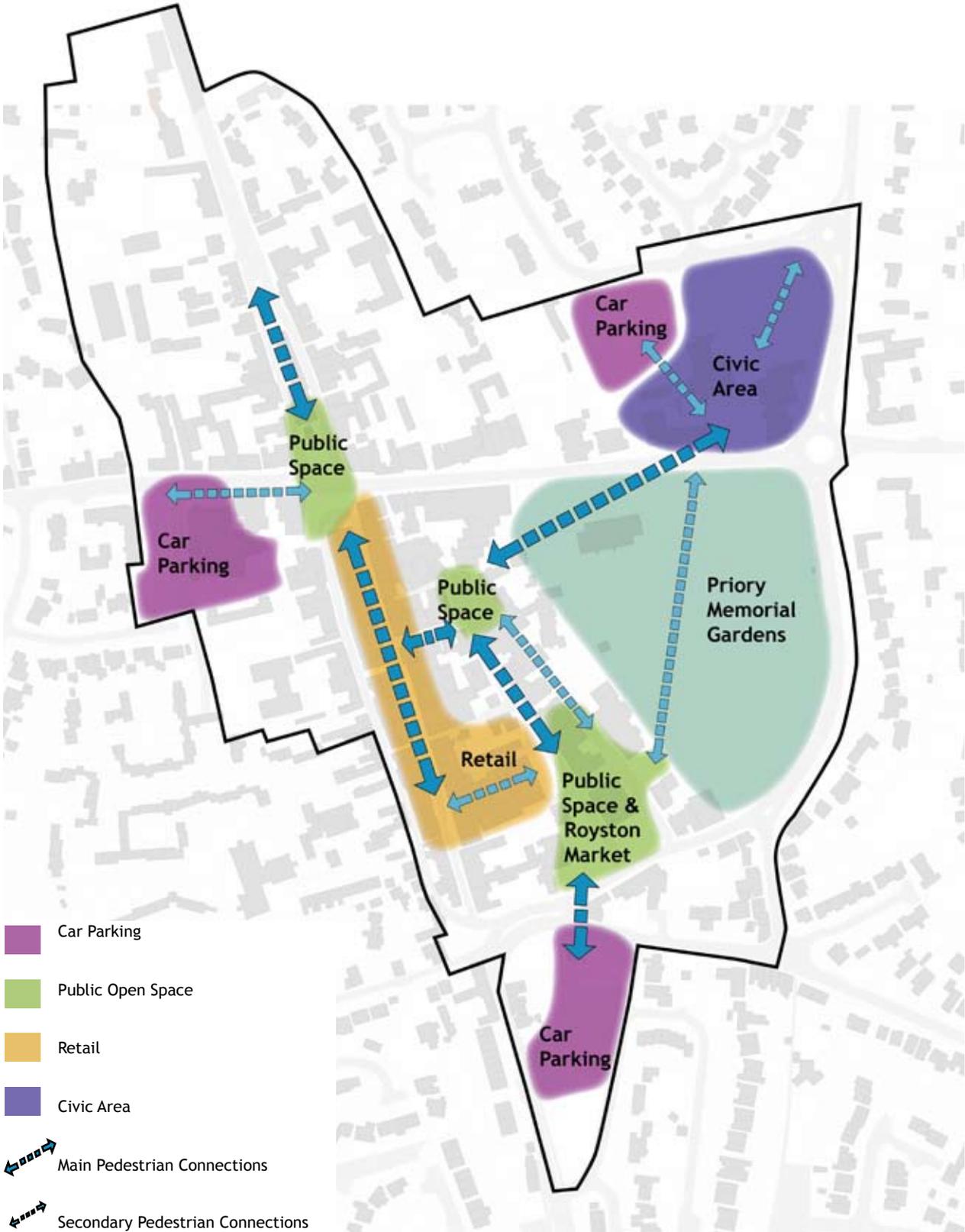
7.3 This section demonstrates how the general policies identified in the preceding section can be interpreted to provide solutions for each of the Opportunity Sites.

It is not necessary to state that, for each Opportunity Site, development must preserve or enhance the Royston Conservation Area. All sites lie within it and national and local policies apply.

7.4 This section is to be read alongside Appendix 3 and the supporting Action Plan, a supporting document to the Strategy. Appendix 3 provides an indication of the anticipated timescale for delivery, ownership details, identified development constraints. The timescales for delivery for each of the opportunity sites is considered important in contributing to the creation of a viable and vibrant town centre for Royston. These are referred to as short, medium and long term in both Appendix 3 and the Action Plan. Short-term refers to a period where delivery should take place as soon as possible, ideally within 5 years up to 2013. Medium term refers to a period between 5 and 10 years (to 2018), whilst long term is over 10 years.

7.5 It should be stressed that the illustrations showing the urban analysis and the potential development option for each of the opportunity sites are diagrammatic and conceptual. They are not prescriptions of layout, as there might be equally and better means of meeting the design principles for each site.

Figure 10 Concept Plan



Linking the Opportunity Sites

7.6 Figure 10 shows the concept of how the 7 opportunity sites are linked to provide an overall spatial strategy for future development in the Town Centre. The plan shows that car parking is consolidated in three main areas around the periphery of the Town Centre. These are the Civic Centre car park, Princes Mews car park and The Warren which are located at the main gateways into the Town Centre. This will reduce the amount of traffic moving within the town centre core thereby creating a better pedestrian environment and have the additional benefit of allowing the core Town Centre area to be maintained for active uses such as retail.

7.7 The concept also provides for a hierarchy of public open space in the Town Centre, including an improved, pedestrian dominated Fish Hill Square and a potential new civic space at the Civic Centre site. The plan gives priority to creating and improving linkages and improving the public realm.

7.8 It is recognised that the provision of a suitable number of car parking spaces will be critical to the future success of Royston Town Centre. As opportunity sites come forward for development, careful consideration will be given to assessing car parking numbers to ensure adequate capacity is maintained throughout the Town Centre to cater for increased demand.

RTC 1 – Civic Centre

7.9 This site currently provides a number of civic functions for the Town Centre and includes a police station, primary care facilities, voluntary facilities and the town hall, as well as the largest car park in the Town Centre area with 235 marked spaces. The site currently suffers from an inefficient layout which could be improved to enhance the functioning of the site. The Urban Design Assessment identifies the site as a major gateway into the Town Centre. This site also contains a number of mature and important trees to the east of the site that will need to be taken into account through any development proposal.

7.10 A landholder surgery was carried out in September 2007 as part of the consultation for this site. It was revealed that although there is a willingness to redevelop the site, many of the landowners are constrained by a lack of funds. Any future development will therefore need to be funded by a use that releases commercial value from the land.

RTC 1 Civic Centre: Urban Analysis



Civic Centre Car Park



Important Buildings and Green Areas

Source: Royston Conservation Character Appraisal 2007

-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest
-  Important Green Space
-  Green Area

RTC 1 Civic Centre: Urban Analysis

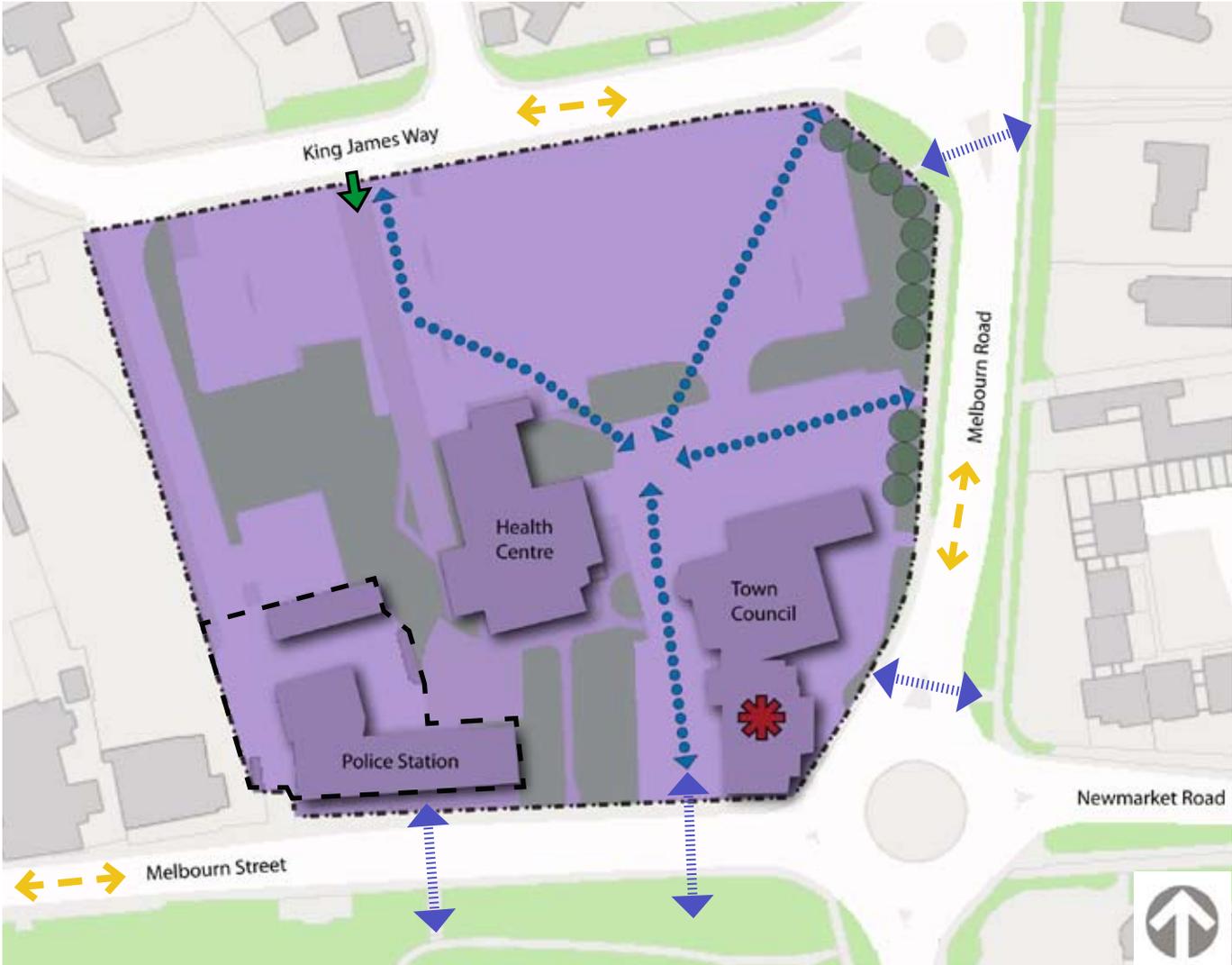


Urban Analysis

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
|  | Active frontages |  | Key views |
|  | Passive frontages |  | Pedestrian linkages |
|  | Inactive frontages |  | Vehicular routes |
|  | Landmark building - Town Council |  | Trees with landscape amenity value |
|  | Barriers to pedestrian movement |  | Site boundary |

RTC 1 Civic Centre: Potential Development

Site area: 13580 m²



- Existing buildings
- Mix of land uses including car parking
- Pedestrian route
- Improved pedestrian linkage
- Vehicular route
- Landmark buildings
- Trees with landscape amenity value
- Site boundary
- Vehicular Access

7.11 The District Council is working with the Primary Care Trust to arrive at a scheme that incorporates a new clinic. Should this not come to fruition, a potential medium term redevelopment option may allow for the retention of the police station and primary care facilities in their current location. These could then be redeveloped independently of other uses when these buildings come to the end of their useful life. All options would need to be the subject of a detailed viability assessment.

7.12 Given the complexities associated with bringing this site forward for development it is considered appropriate that a detailed development brief be prepared for the site. In preparing such a brief the following guiding principles will be taken into consideration:

(i) The type of acceptable land use activities. The site would be suitable for a mix of land uses with the predominant use being the retention of community and civic uses with an element of residential and other uses that would support the civic and community uses such as a café or some form of office or leisure use.

(ii) The number of car parking spaces that should be provided on site to serve the proposed land use activities, as well as

ensuring that the site continues to meet the longer term parking needs of the town centre as a whole. This may be accommodated through part of the site being given over to decked parking.

(iii) Access being provided for all modes of transport to maintain site efficiency, legibility and permeability around and through the site. Consideration will need to be given to providing suitable access and parking arrangements for the police station.

(iv) Vehicular access and egress being from King James Way. This would be subject to an overall Transport Assessment which should have specific regard to the possible impact on the two junctions immediately adjacent to the site at Melbourn Road. The scope of any Transport Assessment will be agreed with Hertfordshire County Council (as Highway authority).

(v) Some of the existing buildings may be retained. In particular the Town Hall, which is considered an important landmark building in Royston, given its location at the junction of the A10 and Melbourn Street. It should be retained as part of any development proposal to extend the Town Council premises and preference should also be given to its refurbishment to provide more modern facilities.

(vi) Public realm and landscaping improvements. There is the potential to create a new civic square to the front of the Town Hall thereby contributing to the concept of linking the hierarchy of open spaces within the town centre.

Improvements to the pedestrian links across Melbourn Street between the civic centre site and the core Town Centre area, in particular with Fish Hill square, would also help increase the perception of the civic centre site as an integral component within the Town Centre. This would also improve the route between the existing or a newly developed civic centre car park and the core retail area.

(vii) Design quality and layout. Given the prominent location of the Civic Centre site, any development within the site must be of the highest quality in terms of layout and design and must respect the context of its surrounding area. Its status means that it will set the benchmark for any future development within Royston.

(viii) There should be continued partnership working between the landowners and potential developers in preparing the development brief in accordance with the aims and policy guidance set out in this SPD.

RTC 2 – Royston Cross - End of Upper King Street

7.13 This site forms a gateway into the retail core from the railway station and the north. The site currently comprises a public convenience with an area of hard surfaced public realm to the south. It forms two areas of pedestrian hard standing separated by the relatively busy Melbourn Street and Baldock Street. The site also contains two important historic landmarks – the Roys Stone and Royston Cave.

7.14 The Cross is considered an important public open space and the suggested development solution seeks for an improvement to the area. It is considered that, as part of the transport assessment of this site, the area would benefit from a more efficient junction layout which will slow down traffic moving along Baldock Street and Melbourn Street and improve the quality of the public space.

7.15 Extending the paving at the end of Kneesworth/Lower King Street and the opposite side on High Street/Upper King Street could provide a more generous pedestrian area whilst maintaining the traffic flow at this important junction. The extension of the public realm would also mean that a more pedestrian and cycle friendly

environment is created in the Town Centre, encouraging visitors and creating an interesting focal point. An opportunity could be created to provide a safe right turn for cyclists from Melbourn Street to Lower King Street as part of this improvement. Materials could be used to complement the historic context of Royston. Consideration should also be given, as part of the Royston Urban Transport Plan, to extending the public realm in an west east direction along Baldock Street and Melbourn Street to increase the sense of pedestrian priority.

7.16 Taxi ranks are currently located on the carriageway where Upper King Street links with High Street. In association with the longer term aim of reducing the impact of traffic within the retail core area, the existing taxi ranks in this location could be relocated to Market Hill, to ensure more direct journeys for taxi users.

RTC 2 End of Upper King Street - Royston Cross Urban Analysis



Site North of Melbourn Street



Site South of Melbourn Street

Important Buildings and Green Areas

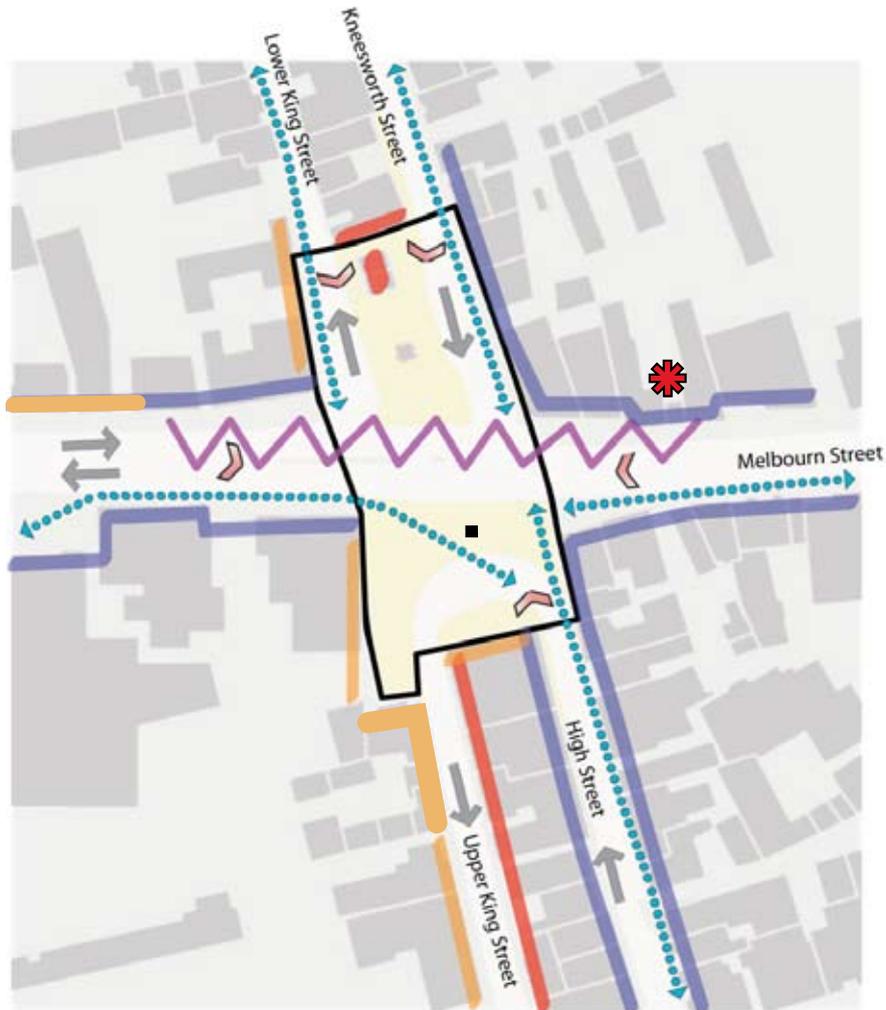


Source:
Royston Conservation Character Appraisal 2007

-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest

RTC 2 End of Upper King Street - Royston Cross

Urban Analysis



Urban Analysis

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | Active frontages |  | Barriers to pedestrian movement |
|  | Passive frontages |  | Key views |
|  | Inactive frontages |  | Pedestrian linkages |
|  | Landmark building
Royston Cave |  | Vehicular routes |
|  | Royston Stone |  | Site boundary |

RTC 2 End of Upper King Street - Royston Cross

Site Area: 1155 m²

Site North of Melbourn Street 465 m²

Site South of Melbourn Street 690 m²

-  Existing buildings where retail offer could be improved/implemented
-  Public Toilet
-  Hard landscape
-  Soft landscape - Green area
-  Extended pavement at remodelled junction / Shared surface for pedestrians and vehicular crossing
-  Pedestrian route
-  Enhanced pedestrian and cycle link
-  Vehicular route
-  Landmark buildings
-  Royston Stone
-  Site boundary



7.17 The northern part of the site is considered suitable for some form of development which would benefit the character of The Cross area and help to improve the vibrancy of the Town Centre. However, this will be dependent on the proposed use, scale and highway details of the proposals.. Any development on this side of the Cross should respect the setting of the adjacent listed buildings at nos.2 and 14 Kneesworth Street and should incorporate conveniences available for public use.

7.18 The current blank façade between the High Street and Upper King Street could be landscaped with trees and planting as a means of softening the appearance of the Royston Cross area. This will need to respect the status of the National Westminster Bank as a Grade II Listed Building and the Barracuda pub as a Building of Local Interest.

7.19 This area would also be suitable for public art to enhance the townscape and public realm.

RTC 3 – Angel Pavement

7.20 Angel Pavement creates a link between the High Street and Market Hill, connecting the retail core area with Royston library, the Corn Exchange and Priory Memorial Gardens. This open shopping arcade is not currently fulfilling its potential and contains a number of vacant retail units. This projects a negative image to the health of the overall Town Centre, in particular for visitors arriving in Royston from The Warren Car Park and Royston Market. Upper levels are used as storage facilities for the retail units below and for office space. A recent planning application for conversion of one of the upper units to residential use has been approved. The ownership of this site is fragmented, having been sold piecemeal only fairly recently.

7.21 A need was identified in the initial public consultation with key stakeholders and local residents to increase the number of larger stores in Royston Town Centre. These could be accommodated in Angel Pavement. Large sized retail units could also help attract anchor stores/national retailers to Royston that would act as an important draw for visitors to the Town Centre.

RTC 3 Angel Pavement

Urban Analysis



Angel Pavement

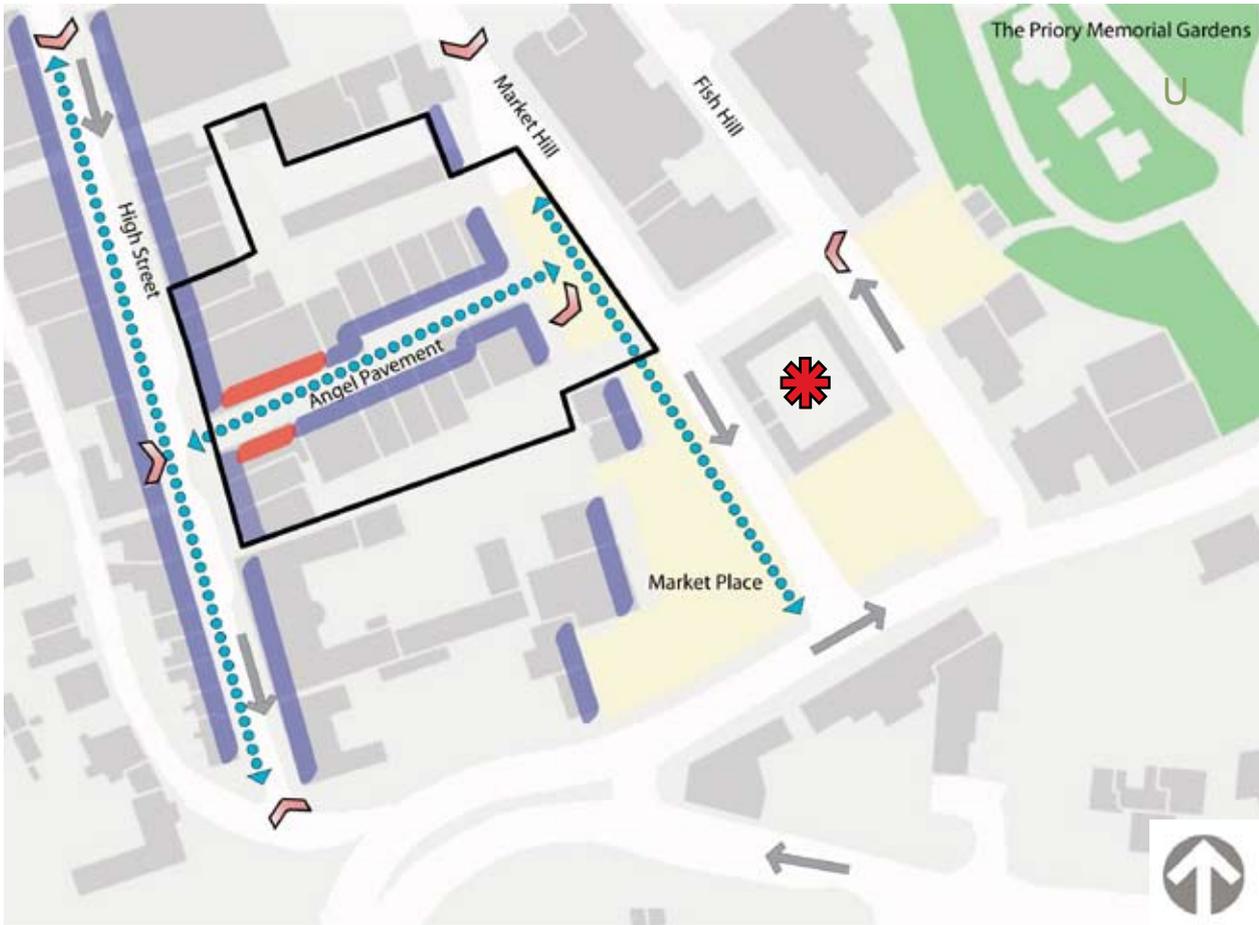


Important Buildings and Green Areas
Source: Royston Conservation Character Appraisal 2007

-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest
-  Buildings where development would improve the area
-  Important Green Space

RTC 3 Angel Pavement

Urban Analysis



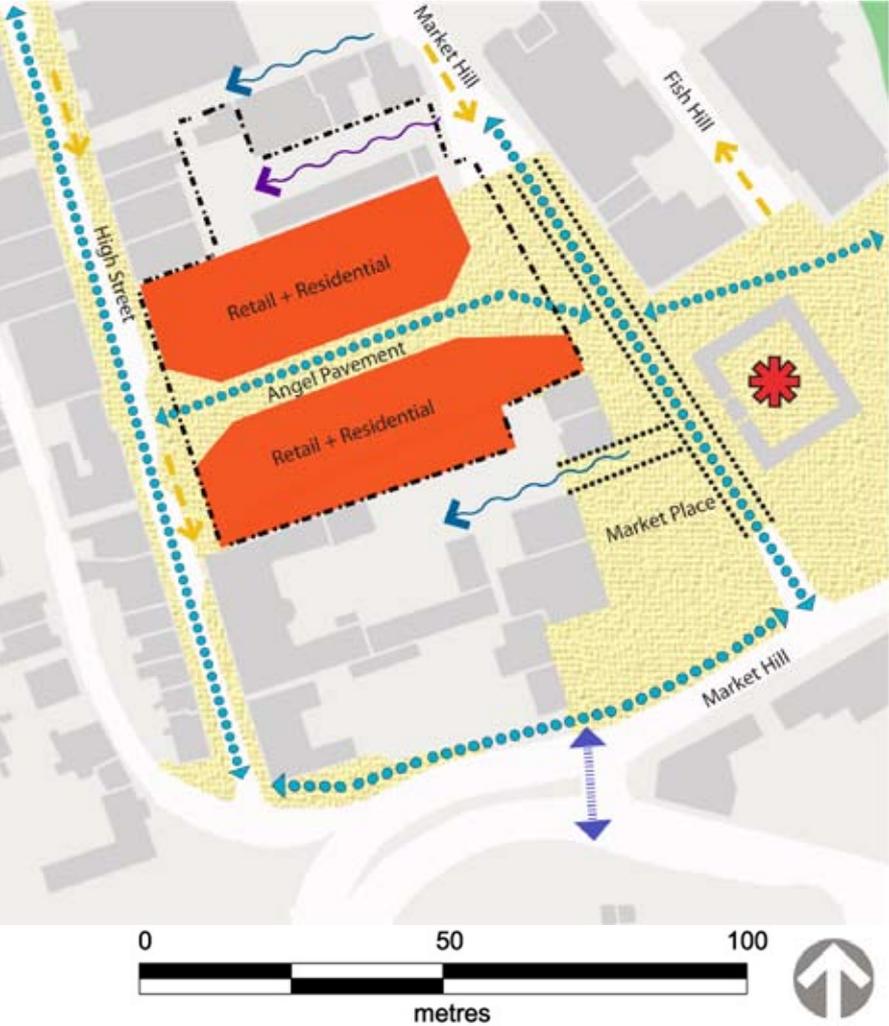
Urban Analysis

- Active frontages
- Passive frontages
- Inactive frontages
- Landmark buildings
- Barriers to pedestrian movement
- Key views
- Pedestrian linkages
- Vehicular routes
- Site boundary

RTC 3 Angel Pavement Potential Development

Site area: 2000 m²

- Mixed use: Retail and Residential
- Landmark building
- Hard landscape
- Shared surface for pedestrians and vehicular crossing
- Pedestrian route
- Improved pedestrian linkage
- Vehicular route
- Proposed Servicing Access
- Proposed Servicing Access if access unachievable from George Lane
- Site boundary



7.22 The opportunity exists to refurbish the centre in the short term and to generally enhance the physical environment of Angel Pavement. There is scope to provide an attractive pedestrian arcade with active frontages. Restaurant and café uses could be considered towards Market Place that will help to improve the vibrancy of the centre and the pedestrian link between the Market Place and High Street. The predominant use of the arcade should be retained primarily for retail uses.

7.23 This site has the unique potential to not only change its own appearance and make a positive architectural contribution to the street scene, but also to improve the retail offer of Royston. There is significant scope to comprehensively redevelop the site, whilst retaining a pedestrian link through the site that could be opened up at either end to create more inviting and visible frontages to encourage pedestrian movement and linkages between the active nodes of Market Place and the High Street.

7.24 While the emerging Development Policies identifies the existing site within the Primary Shopping frontage, this is subject to further consideration as the Development Policies DPD moves towards Submission Stage. In particular, landowners have suggested re-classifying Angel Pavement

as secondary rather than primary shopping frontage. Such a designation would still resist the complete loss of shops from Angel Pavement, but would allow a greater proportion of other complementary uses. Consideration on whether to treat Angel Pavement as primary or secondary will be carried out in the Development Policies and not this document. If the Development Policies do reclassify the parade as secondary shopping frontage, the units which front High Street should stay primary shopping frontage. Similarly, therefore, as part of any redevelopment, the High Street frontage of the Angel Pavement should be retained as primary shopping frontage and the remainder of the site could be considered for a more diverse range of complementary uses whilst ensuring that retail remains the predominant use and accords with the policies in the emerging Development Policies DPD.

7.25 The site could therefore provide a mix of uses with retail at ground floor and residential or office uses above to ensure a more efficient use of this site and greater footfall throughout the day and evening. There is the possibility that the parking spaces immediately in front of Angel Pavement at Market Place could be lost as part of opening up the site and improving the public realm. Reduction in car parking would

need to be reviewed in line with the provision of increased parking provision at The Warren Car Park (RTC5).

7.26 There may be additional scope to extend the Angel Pavement site northwards towards George Lane. This would make more efficient use of the site area and would provide a key opportunity for a mix of retail unit sizes that could attract national retailers to the Town Centre. The size and configuration of the individual units would be left flexible in order to maximise useable, lettable space to meet individual retailers' requirements.

7.27 Extending the site northwards would have an impact on the Barn, a Building of Local Interest at the rear of 48 High Street. As such all feasible means for preserving the existing building and its effects on the conservation area must be explored in line with the tests set down in PPG15, before redevelopment can be contemplated. Such a development must respect the setting of the backs of the buildings fronting High Street and also the listed buildings on the corner of Market Hill and George Lane. Servicing access to the site and to the rear of the retail units fronting High Street would need to be adequately addressed as part of any comprehensive development.

7.28 The potential loss of a Building of Local Interest would need to be balanced

against the opportunity that comprehensive redevelopment of Angel Pavement would contribute to the overall retail offer of the Town Centre. There is a recognised need to provide additional comparison retail floorspace in the district, as identified by the NHDC Core Strategy and the various retail and health check assessments.

7.29 It is recognised in appendix 3 that this site is critical to the long term health of the town centre and there is a need for the site to come forward for development as soon as possible. To achieve this, the key Town Centre stakeholders and landowners should work together to bring this site forward for redevelopment as soon as possible.

RTC 4 – Market Place, Old Cattle Market Site and Corn Exchange

7.30 This area of the Town Centre is used for Royston Market, which operates on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The Market currently has a charter to accommodate up to 60 stalls, although it does not operate at full capacity. This area also includes the listed Corn Exchange building, the privately-owned car park alongside this building (the former Cattle Market site), and the public convenience facilities located to the entrance to the Priory Memorial Gardens. On non-market days, extensive parking is provided in Market Place.

RTC 4 Market Place, Old Cattle Market and Royston Corn Exchange

Urban Analysis



Market Place



Corn Exchange



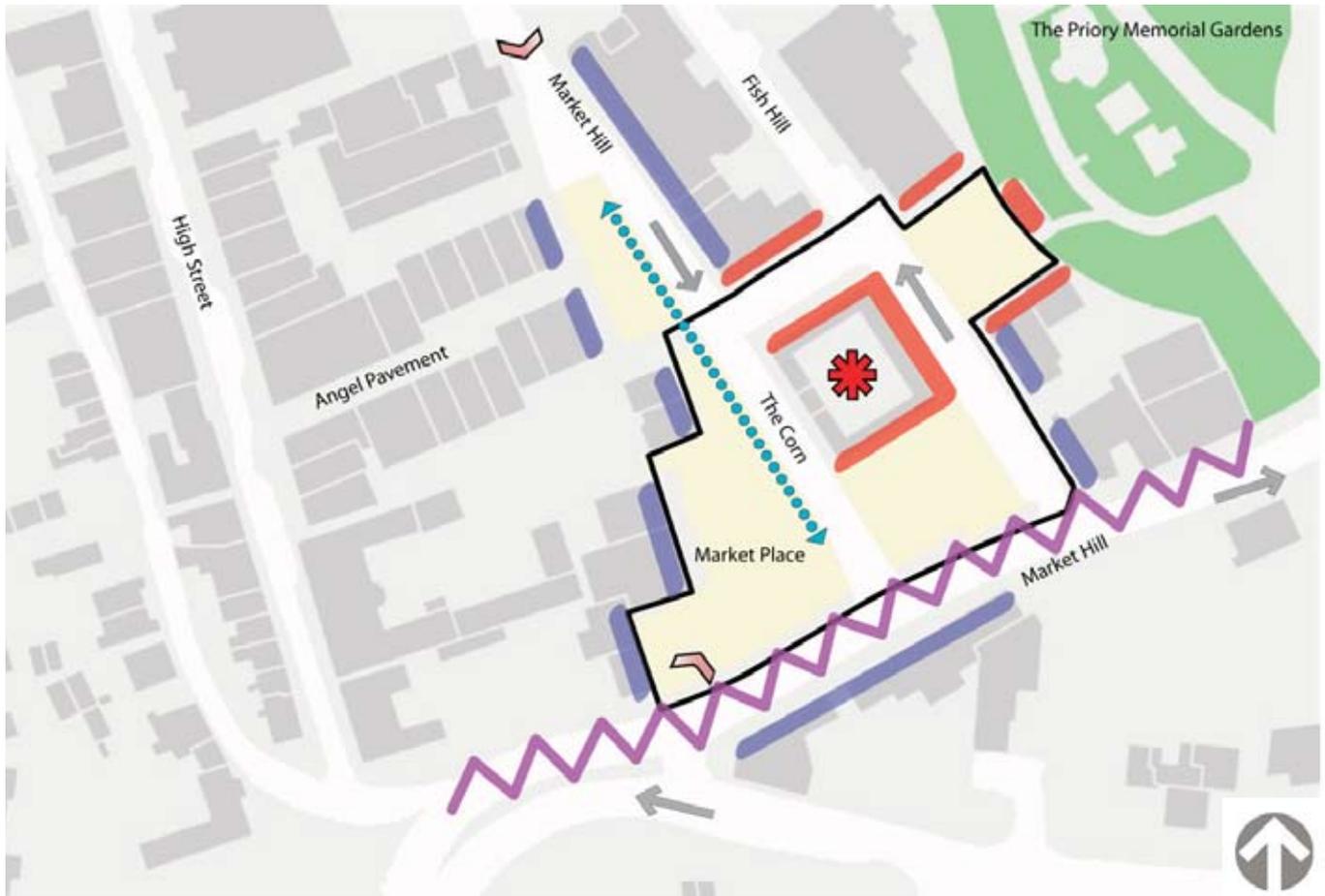
-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest
-  Buildings where development would improve the area
-  Important Green Space

Important Buildings and Green Areas

Source: Royston Conservation Character Appraisal 2007

RTC 4 Market Place, Old Cattle Market and Royston Corn Exchange

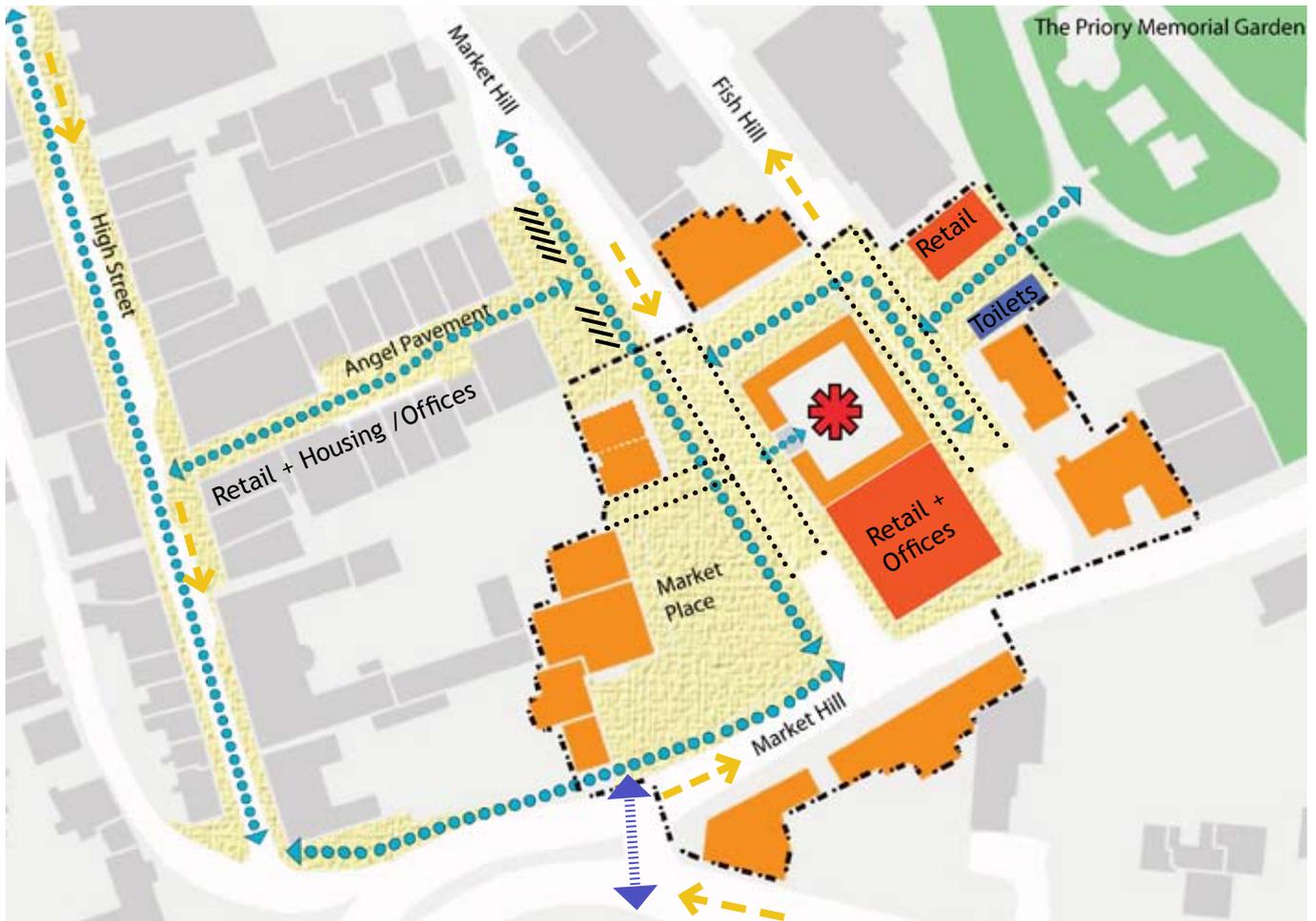
Urban Analysis



Urban Analysis

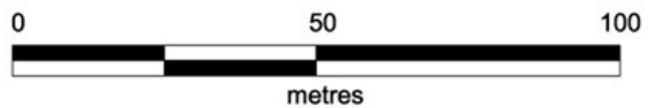
-  Active frontages
-  Passive frontages
-  Inactive frontages
-  Landmark buildings
-  Barriers to pedestrian movement
-  Key views
-  Pedestrian linkages
-  Vehicular routes
-  Site boundary

RTC 4 Market Place, Old Cattle Market and Royston Corn Exchange Potential Development



Site area: 3380 m²

Market Place	1100 m ²
Old Cattle Market	410 m ²
Fish Hill South Car Park	370 m ²



 Existing buildings where retail offer could be improved

 New retail or offices

 Public toilet

 Hard landscape

 Shared surface for pedestrians and vehicular crossing

 Pedestrian route

 Improved pedestrian linkage

 Vehicular route

 Landmark building

 Site boundary

 Possible relocation of taxi rank

7.31 The Urban Design Assessment highlights the fact that Market Hill's frontage lacks clarity because of the car parking arrangement along its length. Future proposals for this area should therefore aim to improve the public realm on the site of the current Market Place in order to provide a more attractive environment for Royston Market.

7.32 Any improvements to surfacing and the public realm could include improvements to facilities for market traders. Improvements could extend to the entrance to Angel Pavement and the adjacent area around the Corn Exchange and Old Cattle Market Site. This would help to improve the aesthetic appearance of the area overall and create an attractive approach to the Town Centre from the direction of the Warren car park and the A10 which are key access points for visitors to the Town Centre.

7.33 The existing provision of car parking on non-market days should be retained in order to retain activity within this area at all times. On market days, this parking is lost, to make space for market stalls. The current reduced size of the market means that this space is not always efficiently used, and future development proposals should consider opportunities for retention of a proportion of the car parking in Market Place for use on market days. This could be achieved through improved management of the market layout, including the possible

relocation of sections of the market to areas that have a reduced parking function. Any public realm improvement should reflect the dual-use requirement of the Market Place area.

7.34 The Priory car park entrance to Priory Memorial Gardens could itself be enhanced. This could be achieved by relocating the public conveniences and providing a café that would benefit from its position at the interface of the Town Centre and the Gardens. The recently constructed public conveniences could be repositioned to enhance the view towards the Priory Memorial Gardens. The potential for this would need to be explored in the longer term, as this could mean the loss of existing parking spaces in this location. Reduction in car parking would need to be reviewed in line with the provision of increased parking provision at The Warren Car Park (RTC5).

7.35 The bus stop located at The Warren Car Park could be relocated to Market Hill on the A10. This would have the advantage of facilitating the use of public transport and increasing its visibility. It would also have the advantage of enabling people alighting from buses to do so on the correct side of the road, eliminating the need to cross the busy A10. The possible relocation of the bus stop will need to be investigated in further detail as part of the Royston Urban Transport Plan. Any potential relocation must acknowledge the need for suitable layover space to be provided.

7.36 The Old Cattle Market Site is suitable for sensitive commercial development that fits into the context of the existing built environment. This would likely include a mixed-use development with retail/office uses on the ground floor and residential or office units above.

7.37 Proposals for new development will need to respect the existing built form in the area, most importantly in terms of height and building materials. The existing building height is fairly low at 1 to 2 storeys. Any proposals for new development would need to sit in this context.

7.38 New buildings should also take advantage of the site's strategic location on Market Hill. This is a suitable location to provide a landmark building of high architectural quality whilst respecting the setting and quality of the Corn Exchange, a Grade II Listed Building.

RTC 5 – Warren Car Park

7.39 This site has been identified in the Royston Car Parking Strategy as being a strategic location for car parking due to its close proximity to the retail core of the Town Centre. It is also the closest car park to Royston's market, and the most accessible parking area for visitors to Royston, in particular for those arriving from the south. The parking strategy seeks to promote this site as one of the primary car parks serving the Town Centre, and as such its current capacity should be maintained or enlarged as part of any development proposals, to meet the needs of existing visitors and to encourage new visitors to Royston.

7.40 Development presents an opportunity to visually enhance this car park through landscape treatments, making the area more attractive. The existing bus stops that front the site could be relocated to Market Hill on the A10, with the existing stops given over to bus layover space. This would both improve the visibility of the bus stops from the town centre and free up a proportion of existing bus waiting space within the site for parking or landscaping. The pedestrian crossing points between the Warren Car Park and Market Place should be improved, with priority given to pedestrians over vehicular traffic.

RTC 5 Warren Car Park

Urban Analysis



Warren Car Park looking North



-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest
-  Buildings where development would improve the area
-  Important Green Area
-  Green Area

Important Buildings and Green Areas

Source: Royston Conservation Character Appraisal 2007

RTC 5 Warren Car Park

Urban Analysis



Urban Analysis

- Active frontages
- Passive frontages
- Inactive frontages
- Barriers to pedestrian movement
- Bus stop and layover
- Key views
- Pedestrian linkages
- Vehicular routes
- Site boundary

RTC 5 Warren Car Park Potential Development

Site area: 3320 m²

-  Bus stop
-  Car parking
-  Additional car parking area
-  Proposed decked area for car parking
-  Pedestrian route
-  Improved pedestrian crossing
-  Vehicular route
-  Site boundary
-  vehicular access



7.41 An option for redevelopment of this site would be to provide decked parking closest to Barkway Street to maintain the capacity of the car parking serving the town centre core lost in the medium term through public realm enhancements and redevelopment of the Opportunity Sites RTC2, RTC3 and RTC4. Consideration would, however, need to be given to the effective provision of bus stops, layover facilities and parking for taxi operators. The Warren Car Park currently operates at close to capacity on market days (i.e. Wednesdays and Saturdays), and an increase in capacity would be of benefit to the town centre when the parking capacity of the core town centre car parks is reduced.

7.42 If parking demand requirements increase and if there is a recognised need to allow for a more appropriate design of the site, it may be possible to incorporate part of the adjoining open space to the south in a redevelopment of the site. However, this will need to be done sensitively to ensure that the landscape and amenity value of the remaining open space is enhanced.

7.43 RTC5 also has the potential to provide some element of residential accommodation. This may be required to part fund the associated decking to increase car parking capacity in the Town Centre.

7.44 Any detailed proposals for decking and residential development must respect the setting and location of the Listed Buildings along the western boundary and the surrounding residential properties to the east. Given the prominent location of this site any development must be of the highest quality design and layout.

RTC 6 – Fish Hill Square

7.45 This area of the Town Centre is currently used for surface car-parking accessed by John Street, Jepps Lane, Market Hill and Fish Hill. There are a number cafes and retail units and the attractive County Court building (Grade II listed) overlooking the square.

7.46 This area would benefit from improvements to the public realm, in line with the conservation area review for Royston. This could include resurfacing and removal of the car park to provide space for an ancillary local market in the town with a capacity of 12 stalls. It is anticipated that this would be a specialist market at the southern end of Market Hill, complementary to the existing established Market. There is potential to attract the existing farmers markets which currently use the Town Hall to this area.

7.47 Attracting these uses would benefit the Town Centre overall as it would provide a new public square to act as a focal point for the Town Centre.

RTC 6 Fish Hill Square

Urban Analysis



Car Park and Cafe at Fish Hill



Old Court House at Fish Hill

Important Buildings and Green Areas



Source: Royston Conservation Character Appraisal 2007

-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest
-  Buildings where development would improve the area
-  Important Green Space

RTC 6 Fish Hill Square

Urban Analysis



Urban Analysis

- Active frontages
- Passive frontages
- Inactive frontages
- Landmark buildings
- Barriers to pedestrian movement
- Key views
- Pedestrian linkages
- Vehicular routes
- Site boundary

RTC 6 Fish Hill Square

Potential Development

Site area: 870 m²



 Existing buildings where retail or leisure offer could be improved

 Future retail development

 Hard landscape

 Pedestrian route

 Vehicular route

 Landmark building

 Site boundary

7.48 Existing ground floor premises around this square could be encouraged to open out onto the square and become café or restaurant uses with the potential for outdoor terraces. Such activities should be encouraged at the earliest opportunity so that there is immediate benefit to the use of this space. This would support the findings of both the DTZ Report, and NLP Town Centre and Retail Study, which identified scope for an increase in restaurants within Royston. Centring on this area would provide a focus to the daytime and evening economy within Royston and could provide an active and vibrant heart to the Town Centre core.

7.49 It is considered that the benefits of creating a new and attractive public space which has the potential to transform the image of this part of the Town Centre offsets the loss of the small number of car parking spaces that currently occupy this area. The recent conversion of selected loading bays to parking spaces within the High Street as a short term measure could be considered to help alleviate this loss in parking provision.

7.50 Vehicular access for servicing requirements to the existing buildings surrounding the new public space should be retained.

7.51 The creation of a strong new public space at the northern end will help to connect the High Street with Priory

Memorial Gardens and St. John the Baptist's Church. The potential also exists to enhance and/or improve the public realm along Jepps Lane and John Street to strengthen pedestrian movement and linkages between the High Street and a new public space at Fish Hill Square.

7.52 Plans should allow for the relocation of the taxi rank from Lower King Street/High Street to Market Hill. This would be well integrated with the public space in Fish Hill and would allow for easy pick-up and drop-off that does not create congestion within the retail core and improves the public realm at The Royston Cross (RTC2).

7.53 The retail units within the building to the north of the square would, in the short term, be combined to provide one larger sized unit. In the longer term, the whole building could be redeveloped. Such an opportunity could encourage further activity to the square and provide an enhanced frontage. Any future plans for redevelopment should ensure that necessary vehicular access to existing buildings for servicing are maintained.

7.54 This area of the Town Centre would also be suitable for public art which would help to enhance the streetscape and public realm and contribute to providing an attractive public square.

RTC 7 – Princes Mews East and West

7.55 This site covers an area of parking on Baldock Street and includes the Somerfield store and related car parking area. The site comprises two parking areas, Princes Mews East and Princes Mews West, separated by Princes Mews.

7.56 A long term option for this site could be to extend or redevelop the food store in line with increasing demand for more comparison retailing within the Town Centre. Residential development could be accommodated on the upper levels. A redeveloped store would be more in keeping with the historic character of Royston. Through redevelopment, the site could be more efficiently laid out to enable the re-creation of an important building line on Baldock Street, whilst retaining the existing bus stop and the provision of parking at Princes Mews West Car Park. Sufficient parking would need to be provided on site with the possibility of decking the car parking in line with increased retail and residential provision. The retention of the Princes Mews West car park is important for visitors travelling to Royston Town Centre from the west.

7.57 Proposals for new development would need to take into account the existing residential context in terms of height, density and design. A transport access statement may be required by Hertfordshire County Council as part of any proposed development on the site.

7.58 The potential to reprovide pedestrian access from Princes Mews or another suitable location, through to Upper King Street should be explored to strengthen the link and integrate RTC7 into the retail core.

7.59 There is also the opportunity to improve the existing bus stop facilities located in Baldock Street.

RTC 7 Princes Mews East and West

Urban Analysis



Princes Mews West



Princes Mews East

Important Buildings and Green Areas



Source: Royston Conservation Character Appraisal 2007

-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest
-  Buildings where development would improve the area

RTC 7 Princes Mews East and West

Urban Analysis

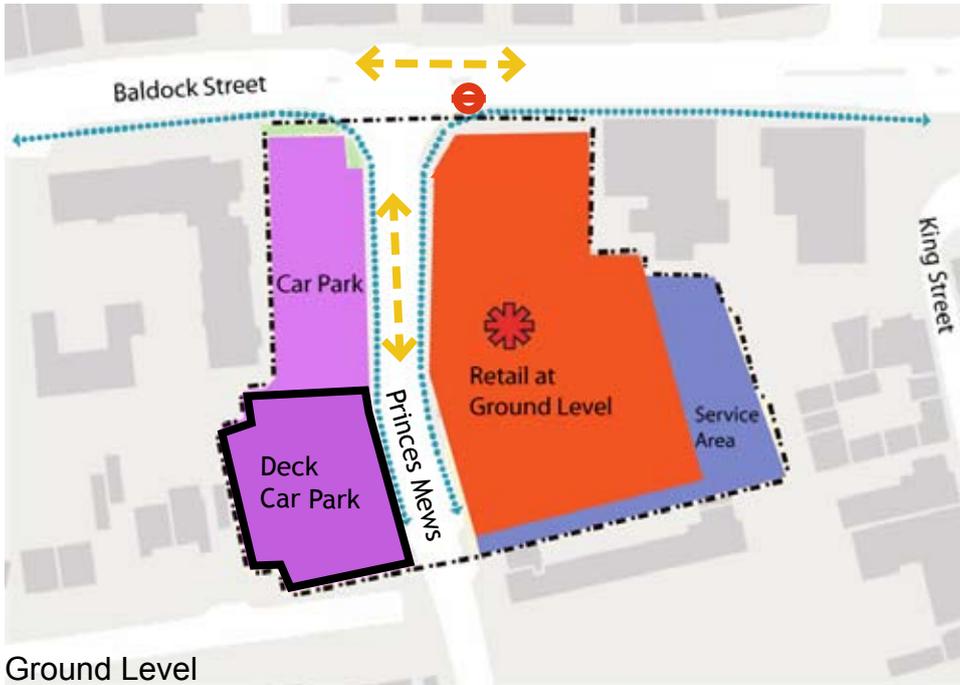


Urban Analysis

- Active frontages
- Passive frontages
- Inactive frontages
- Barriers to pedestrian movement
- Bus Stop
- Key views
- Pedestrian linkages
- Vehicular routes
- Site boundary

RTC 7 Princes Mews East and West

Potential Development



Site Area: 2660 m²

Princes Mews West 1530 m²

Princes Mews East (Car Park) 1130 m²

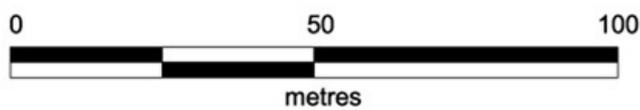
- Retail
- Service Area
- Car Park
- Decked Car Park
- Landmark retail building

Pedestrian route

Vehicular route

Improved bus stop facility

Site boundary



8 Delivery

Implementation

8.1 The implementation of this Town Centre strategy and the ability to develop the various opportunity sites will be partly guided by the ease of assembling land in the Town Centre. This will be relatively straightforward on some of the sites as they are owned by the District and County Councils.

8.2 Other sites will involve more careful negotiation between landowners to bring them forward for development.

8.3 Key to the delivery of this strategy is the role of the County Council and District Council, partly as landowners, partly as occupiers of property, as well as their statutory positions as providers of services and of giving regulatory approval to schemes.

8.4 Because of the position of the delivery role of the Council, this section does not contain policies on delivery; the strategy itself is intended to establish an agreed vision for partnership working between the Councils in order to deliver projects.

8.5 A range of potential partnership models will need to be discussed and agreed with other key stakeholders including the Royston Town Council, the Town Centre Forum, key landowners and with local businesses and organisations to ensure that the vision of the SPD is delivered.

8.6 Having now established a working dialogue through the consultation for this SPD, the District Council should therefore take on the lead position in establishing the correct grouping that maintains the focus of delivery over the lifetime of the SPD. It needs to act as enabler for partnership working between all parties involved in delivering the opportunity sites and other projects that will contribute to a revitalised and healthy Town Centre in Royston. This medium will be key in agreeing to the merits in the delivery of certain measures within the town centre.

8.7 Having agreed on the vision for Royston Town Centre it will be critical for all stakeholders to take a pro-active approach and ensure that the strategy is delivered within the specified timeframe.

8.8 Appendix 3 shows a potential delivery strategy for the opportunity sites along with anticipated timescales for delivery and land ownership.

8.9 This Strategy is supported by an Action Plan, which sets out short to long term actions to deliver the policies and aims of the Strategy. The Royston Town Centre Strategy Action Plan will be linked to the Council's Corporate Plan and to other relevant corporate plans to ensure continuity and efficient use of resources, in particular to the Council's Corporate Business Planning Process. The Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis and reported to the relevant committees.

8.10 Phasing of the projects is a key implementation issue. Strong efforts will need to be undertaken to avoid disruption to the operation of the Town Centre.

8.11 Positive planning powers will be used wherever possible, in partnership with landowners and developers to enable the delivery of opportunity sites. Compulsory Purchase may be considered as a measure to bring forward sites for development if other options for delivery have been unsuccessful.

8.12 Planning Obligations will be negotiated within the context of this strategy and the District's adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document. Over time, it is likely that there will be direct provision of schemes linked to where the need is generated by development

Appendix 1: Documents used to prepare the strategy

- a. Setting Strategic Direction: A Parking Strategy for Royston 2007 by MVA Consultancy
- b. Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (March 2006)
- c. NHDC Corporate Plan 2005-2015 (2005)
- d. Royston Town Hall Redevelopment Masterplan (RH Partnership, February 2005)
- e. Community Safety Strategy April 2005-March 2008 (2005)
- f. Review of Market Towns in Hertfordshire (March 2005)
- g. Royston Conservation Area Character Appraisal (March 2007)
- h. Urban Design Assessment for Royston (2007)
- i. North Hertfordshire Community Strategy (2003, which is currently under review)
- j. NHDC- Town Centre and Retail Study by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (2004) and updated 2006
- k. Draft Study of Public Conveniences in North Hertfordshire (2006)
- l. Housing Needs Survey (2002) updated 2006
- m. Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document
- n. NHDC Statement of Community Involvement (July 2006)
- o. NHDC Core Strategy Preferred Options Paper 2007
- p. NHDC Development Policies Preferred Options Paper 2007
- q. NHDC Parking Strategy 2004-2009
- r. Statement of Community Involvement (NHDC, July 2006)
- s. ECOTEC report on the market towns of Hertfordshire
- t. DTZ report on health of Royston Town Centre (October 2007)
- u. North Hertfordshire Cycling strategy and towns Cycle Route Network SPG (2000)
- v. Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD (2006)
- w. Royston Extensive Urban Survey Project Assessment Report (2001)

Appendix 2 – Public Consultation

There has been a number of public consultation events involved in the production of this SPD. The first stage was to hold three consultation workshops that were undertaken in February and March 2007. Participants were asked for their opinions on a range of topics including:

- Areas of value in the Town Centre
- Opinions on the conservation area review including the boundary
- Perceived barriers to development
- Opportunities for improvement, enhancement and change
- Opinions on the range and quality of community facilities
- Community Safety and security within the Town Centre
- Opinions on retail and leisure offer
- How the profile of the town could be raised
- Transport and access in the Town Centre

A summary of the key points to emerge from the workshops and stakeholder interviews is included below:

- A focal point to the Town Centre should be created at the end of Fish Hill
- The redevelopment of other sites

around the Town Centre including the old cinema site

- Aesthetic improvements to other areas including Priory Arcade
- Desire to make Fish Hill into the focal point of the Town Centre
- The need to improve Angel Pavement
- The need for an improved civic hub around the town hall area of Royston
- Issues over the amount charged for car parking in the Town Centre car parks
- Need to provide a good range of independent shops supported by an adequate range of high quality national brands
- Improving footfall to ensure a viable commercial centre
- Provide a good mix of restaurant and café uses
- ensure uses cater for all age groups both during the day and the evening to support the night time economy

Residents thought the negative aspects included:

- There are a number of poor quality shops in the Town Centre which could be improved
- Limited number of day-time leisure activities

Residents thought the Town Centre performed well in the following areas:

- The mix of retail units
- The night time economy

Residents thought the Town Centre could be improved by:

- A wider range of multiple stores
- Improving partnership working with the different actors in Royston including the Town Centre Manager and the Chamber of Commerce

Further to this a number of stakeholder interviews took place with local stakeholders in Royston over the period August to October 2007. These interviews and discussions generally supported the findings made earlier in the year through the stakeholder workshops. The view that generally arose was that Royston was considered as a centre in decline, although it was a physically attractive centre, and its health in terms of vitality and viability needs to be reversed in the quickest time possible. A full list of participants is contained below:

- Andy Williams – Youth Manager at The House (drop-in centre)
- Geraint Burnell – Town Centre Manager
- Mark Montgomery – Hertfordshire Police Authority
- John McBride - Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- James Keatly – NPK Holdings
- Stuart Eyres – Tesco
- Cath Holt – Tesco
- Steve Crowley – NHDC

- Terry Burgess – Business Link
- Mrs Thornton-Bjork – Town Clerk and Town Council
- John Gourd – Johnson Matthey

The draft SPD was the subject of formal public consultation for 6 weeks from 12 January to 22 February 2008. Nearly 90 responses were received to the draft SPD including submissions from key organisations such as:

- Hertfordshire County Council
- Royston Town Council
- Town Centre forum
- English Heritage
- English Nature
- Environment Agency
- Business Link
- Royston Arts Society
- Herts Country Market
- Greater Cambridge Partnership
- Royston volunteer Service
- Royston and District history society
- Trinity Life Church
- Butlers Car Services

All comments have been summarised and are documented in a separate report which is available to view on the Council's web-site at www.north-herts.gov.uk. Amendments have been made to this final version of the SPD in light of the comments received to the public consultation.

Appendix 3: Delivery of Opportunity Sites in Royston Town Centre

This table is designed to complement the analysis and concepts for the opportunity sites in Section 7. The timescales referred to in the table are not a recommendation as to how long the sites should take to deliver, but a guide as to the anticipated timescale for how long they will realistically take to come forward for development. This SPD, once adopted is intended to last until 2021. In terms of timescale short-term refers to the 5 year period to 2013, Medium term refers to a 10 year period (to 2018) whilst long term is over 10 years.

Opportunity Site	Ownership Details	Anticipated time-scale for delivery	Development Considerations
RTC 1 – Civic Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented Ownership split Town Council and District Council own a freehold. The PCT and Police own extended leaseholds. Hertfordshire County Council own the car park which is leased to NHDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short - Medium term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving consensus over development options for the site Limited sources of funding to finance development. Achieving consensus between key landowners Best form of enabling development for the site
RTC 2 – Royston Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility of changes to the road network and traffic layout Capital cost to Council Responsibility for delivery Relocation of taxi rank

Opportunity Site	Ownership Details	Anticipated time-scale for delivery	Development Considerations
RTC 3 – Angel Pavement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented ownership. Freehold interest of the shop units split between different landowners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term – discussion with landowners Medium term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented ownership Achieving consensus between key landholders Viability of redevelopment Commitment of anchor tenants/national retailers to successful redevelopment
RTC 4 – Corn Exchange/Market Place/ Old Cattle Market Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freehold interest of Market Place owned by NPK Holdings and leased to NHDC for the bi-weekly market Freehold of the Old Cattle Market Site owned by NPK Holdings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium term Longer term – toilet block rebuilt or relocated to encourage permeability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to provide development that respects local context – viability of development proposal Potential loss of on-street car parking The ability of NPK Holdings to assemble land currently owned by the County Council for access arrangements to former Cattle Market Site Scale of development most suitable for the site whilst being viable The possible need for layover space to be provided for buses in Royston

Opportunity Site	Ownership Details	Anticipated time-scale for delivery	Development Considerations
RTC 5 – The Warren Car Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owned by NHDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short - medium Term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resurfaced car park to enhance the quality of key Town Centre car park Securing funding to deck car park
RTC 6 – Fish Hill Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owned by NHDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to test whether surface car parking can be removed Integration with relocated taxi rank and road network Retained delivery access needed through square Change of use for certain premises to restaurant, café, bar uses Commitment needed that new public square will be used for market and restaurant/café/bar terraces
RTC 7 – Princes Mews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somerfield NHDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somerfield aspirations for site Viability of redevelopment Respecting the setting of existing residential properties adjacent to Princes Mews West

Royston Town Centre Strategy

Draft Supplementary Planning Document June 2008





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(Cantonese)

Jeśli mają Państwo trudności ze zrozumieniem tej publikacji, albo jeśli angielski nie jest Państwa językiem ojczystym, prosimy o kontakt z Zespołem ds. Planowania i Projektów przy Radzie, pod numerem tel. 01462 - 474000 a my dołożymy wszelkich starań, aby Państwu udzielić pomocy.

(Polish)

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਇਹ ਪਬਲਿਕੇਸ਼ਨ ਸਮਝਣੀ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਆਇਲੋ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਕਰਨ ਦੇ ਸੈਮਿਨਾਰ ਦੇ ਪਲੈਨਿੰਗ ਪੋਲੀਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟਸ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ 01462 - 474000 ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਅਤ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ।

(Punjabi)

Se avete difficoltà a capire questo opuscolo oppure se l'ingese non è la vostra lingua materna, vi preghiamo di mettervi in contatto con il "Council's Planning Policy and Projects Group" (Gruppo per i Progetti e la Pianificazione del Consiglio), chiamando lo 01462 - 474000 e faremo del nostro meglio per aiutarvi.

(Italian)

Ru yayını anlamakta zorluk çekerseniz ya da İngilizce anadiliniz değilse, lütfen Belediyenin Planlama Dairesi ve Proje Ekibini 01462 - 474000 numaralı hattan arayın ve yardımcı olmak için gerekeni yapacağız.

(Turkish)

اگر آپ کو اس اشاعت کو سمجھنے میں دشواری ہو یا انگریزی آپ کی دینی زبان نہیں ہے تو براہ مہربانی کونسل کے پلاننگ و پروجیکٹس گروپ سے 01462-474000 پر رابطہ قائم کریں اور ہم آپ کی مدد کرنے کی پوری کوشش کریں گے۔

(Urdu)