



Hailsham: Town Centre

DRAFT
September 2025

Concept Masterplan

Prepared by Troy Planning + Design





Hailsham
Town Centre
CONCEPT MASTERPLAN
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Document status

This document has been prepared alongside the review of the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan and preparation of the associated Hailsham Design Guidelines document. It is linked to consultation exercises undertaken through that which identified a need for transformative change in the town centre, the extent of which is shown in [Figure 1](#).

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a project that indicates that the Town Council is keen to work with partner organisations, including, for example, the District and County Council (or their successor organisation subject to proposals for local government reorganisation), landowners and wider community, to prepare a masterplan for the town centre, and which will be use to guide future change and development. It is hoped that the output of this would be a Supplementary Plan or similar.

This document presents a starting point for discussion. It presents a concept masterplan for the town centre that seeks to capture and present, spatially, ideas raised, responding to issues and opportunities identified.

The drawings, diagrams, and concepts contained within this document are illustrative only. They are provided to demonstrate possible approaches and to inspire high-quality design.

This document does not:

- allocate sites for development;
- confer planning permission or presumption of approval; nor
- require that any particular design, layout, or form of development be delivered.

The material presented here should be understood as indicative, intended to support good design practice and future change in the town centre.

Any future proposals, including those for specific sites, will remain subject to the statutory planning process, including site-specific assessment and determination in line with relevant planning policies and regulations.

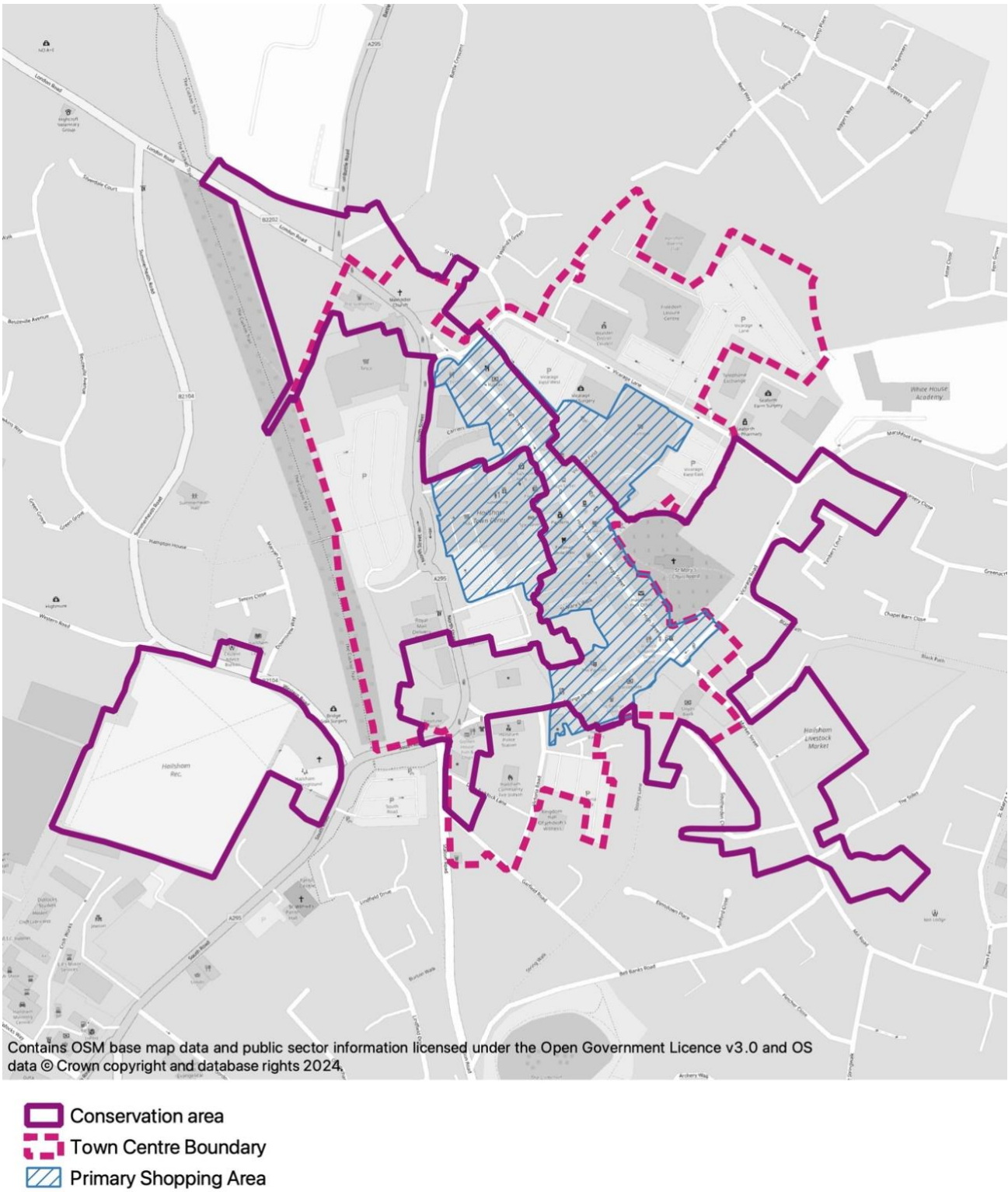


Figure 1: Defined town centre boundary, primary shopping area and conservation area, based on the emerging Wealden Local Plan policies map

Challenges

Analysis undertaken of the town centre shows that:

- **Built form:** The town centre benefits from a fine grain historic high street, but this is surrounded by larger scale retail and civic uses which contrast with the historic structure. The result of this is that the high street is surrounded by a 'transition area', where streets and frontages are fragmented and dominated by car-based infrastructure, before then moving into more traditional residential development. It is also notable that there are few green spaces within the town centre itself, though there is green space on the edge of the centre. The 'Town Square', adjacent to the Vicarage Walk shopping centre, comprises an important central public space in the heart of the town.
- **Car parking and frontages:** Surface car parking comprises the main use of land in the town centre, the presence of which, along with areas for servicing, has resulted in the fracturing of much of the town centre. Although parking is important to the operation of the town it represents an inefficient use of land in its current format. It also results in a series of traffic dominated spaces, which is particularly pronounced along North Street, undermining the pedestrian environment, welcome and visitor experience. The traditional street structure in the town centre benefits from strong and active frontages, with doors and windows opening onto the street, but there are also a series of exposed 'backs', often associated with the larger units and edges of car parks, which again, create unwelcoming and unattractive spaces.
- **Historic environment:** As noted above, the high street is of a historic nature and retains strong and well activated frontages related to the street. There are many buildings of high quality in and around the town centre, including listed buildings along George Street, with the Church being an important local landmark. The scale and materials of many of the buildings reflect the local geology and generate local character. Much of the town centre is designated as a Conservation Area. Although this doesn't preclude change and new development from coming forward, it does mean it must be of the highest quality. The quality and setting of the conservation area is though undermined by the fractured environment and poor quality of many of the frontages to the rear of the High Street.
- **Movement and access:** The structure of the road network in Hailsham 'funnels' routes through the town centre, with resultant congestion at key junctions and high volumes of traffic along North Street. Movement at these junctions results in conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. This is emphasised by a review of traffic accident and collision data in the town centre, showing safety concerns associated with (a) the junction of the High Street and George Street, (b) the junction of the High Street and Battle Road, and (c) pedestrian crossing points on main routes into and around the town centre. Linked to this last area of concern is the network of pedestrian routes which, in many places, are incomplete and unconnected. Furthermore, the Cuckoo Trail is poorly integrated with the town centre: the main 'arrival point' for the Trail is the South Street car park, which is

neither conducive to pedestrian nor cycle movement, and where traffic is at its busiest. The route from here and along North Street also suffers from high levels of traffic noise, which further undermines the quality of the environment.

- **Retail offer:** The Council's Town Centre and Retail Study found that expenditure is leaking from the town. Equally, the proportion of comparison floorspace in the town centre is below the national average and only provides for basic or specialist needs, and that there is a high leakage of expenditure to towns such as Eastbourne and Brighton. It also suggests that although the area between the Vicarage Fields shopping centre (anchored by Waitrose) and the Quintins shopping centre (anchored by Asda) forms the heart of the shopping area, the public realm would benefit from investment and improvement. These are considered to be dated, do not offer the right format of units, and have a poor relationship with the street. Improvements to the quality of floorspace and street environment would enhance access and enjoyment of the town centre. Furthermore, it is suggested that the town centre would benefit from higher quality food and beverage establishments, supporting the day and night time economies. The presence of the market is considered a positive for the town centre.

Wider context

Creating an attractive Town Centre experience that offers a range of services and facilities is embedded within Local Plan Policy. The emerging Wealden Local Plan, at Policy TCI, supports proposals that:

- Provide a mix of uses, diversifying the offer and avoiding over-concentration of any single use type.
- Support and develop the evening and night-time economy, adding to the vitality and viability of the centre.
- Provide an attractive, accessible public realm, and where the design of this and new development reflects local character and responds positively to local heritage assets.

Proposals for the regeneration and redevelopment of the town centre were previously explored through the 'Aspires' project. This envisaged major redevelopment of the Vicarage Fields shopping area as well as land around the District Council office and adjacent Leisure Centre. The timing of the proposals coincided with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and have since faltered.

The importance of the town centre and improving the quality of this remains a priority.

Town Centres, and 'High Streets' in particular, are going through a period of transition. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, financial crisis, changing lifestyles, work patterns and shopping preferences has had a profound impact on the High Street. The House of Lords inquiry, [High Streets: Life beyond retail?](#), sets out some important considerations for thinking about the future of the High Street and, by extension, the town centre as a whole.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Providing good, safe and easy access to the High Street for all.
- Designing places that are safe and inclusive at all times of the day.
- Celebrating local history, character and sense of place.
- Providing high quality public space, that is well maintained and is designed for all to feel comfortable using.
- Provision of essential local services, such as public toilets.

The vision for the town centre is that it will be a thriving centre with a diverse range of facilities, uses and attractions, and where new development responds to the historic qualities of the built form. It is intended that the town centre is the beating heart of Hailsham, where public, economic and cultural life all come together.

A wider range of uses should also be encouraged to locate in the town centre, providing for greater diversity and activity in the town centre throughout the day, drawing people in at different times of day and thus supporting retail and other commercial activities. Providing for some new residential development in the town centre will also help create life and activity, and offer a new housing offer for Hailsham.

The emerging Wealden Local Plan includes a windfall allowance for new housing development in Hailsham and, at the same time, seeks to minimise the loss of and impact of development on the surrounding countryside. Opportunities that make more effective and efficient use of land are thus supported, including the potential for mixed-use development in the town centre.

Objectives

The Hailsham Design Guide & Code presents a series of design principles for future change and development in the town centre, which are framed by the following objectives:

- An accessible town centre.
- A diverse town centre
- A walkable town centre
- A green town centre
- A climate resilient town centre.

These seek to put in place a framework that creates the conditions for an attractive centre that caters for the needs of all, which builds on its assets and can be taken forward incrementally, and with the potential for change and adaptability in the future. The objectives are expanded upon in the Hailsham Design Guide & Code. They are:

Objective 1: An accessible town centre

This objective provides the basis for the following ideas and interventions:

- Multi-modal access provides travel choice and opportunity for all ages and abilities.
- A safe and well-connected walking, wheeling and cycle network enables this to become an attractive proposition and mode of choice.
- The Cuckoo Trail is well-integrated with the town centre, supporting daily use by residents as well as visitors to the town centre.
- New growth around town is well-integrated into the urban fabric and provides locally-based facilities, reducing travel needs and supporting reduced car use.
- Good quality bus infrastructure and improved services enable use of public transport.
- Travel by car remains an option with parking provided in the town centre but where space used for parking is rationalised, allowing for more effective use of land.

Objective 2: A diverse town centre

This objective provides the basis for the following ideas and interventions:

- A mix of uses is provided within the town centre – both across the centre and within individual developments.
- Support for windfall development that makes efficient use of land. Residential use incorporated in new development supports life and activity in the centre and helps meet ‘windfall’ housing figures for Hailsham in the emerging Local Plan.
- Provision of services, flexible work space, entertainment, culture and leisure uses brings diversity and activity at all times of the day, providing ‘something’ for all ages.
- The retail focus of the town centre remains but other uses bring additional footfall.
- Multifunctional public space allows for different activities to take place in the public realm.
- Flexible building design allows for change and adaptability over time.
- Design quality responds to the positive qualities of the urban fabric, in terms of historic growth, scale and massing of buildings

Objective 3: A walkable town centre

This objective provides the basis for the following ideas and interventions:

- A pedestrian friendly town centre.
- Safe and attractive walking routes for all ages and generations.
- Links between arrival points and the High Street celebrate the sense of arrival and journey between these and the High Street
- Streets and spaces are well defined benefitting from a mix of active development frontages that supports use throughout the day.
- Sensitive lighting, wayfinding and public art help animate spaces, creating interest and sense of safety.
- A pedestrian friendly High Street, which is part-pedestrianised during the day, forms the backbone of the town, and strengthens the quality of the pedestrian environment.
- Multifunctional spaces, including part pedestrianisation of the High Street, allow for different uses and activities in the public realm throughout the day and at different times of the year

Objective 4: A green town centre

This objective provides the basis for the following ideas and interventions:

- A connected network of green streets and spaces is provided across the town centre.
- Green space connects the town centre with the surrounding countryside and the landscape setting of the town.
- A range of green infrastructure typologies is provided, including street trees, grasses and wildflowers, green walls and roofs.
- Provision of green infrastructure supports health and wellbeing, supports townscape quality, and contributes to biodiversity and resilience to climate change

Objective 5: A climate resilient town centre

This objective provides the basis for the following ideas and interventions:

- Introduction of permeable surfaces help to manage the risk of surface water flooding. Sustainable drainage that takes the form of raingardens brings added amenity and biodiversity benefits.
- The retrofit and refurbishment of existing buildings is encouraged over redevelopment to reduce embodied carbon.
- New development meets high sustainability standards, with the layout of buildings designed to give consideration to microclimatic conditions and air quality.
- Roofspace (on existing and new buildings) is utilised for renewable energy generation and green infrastructure.
- Transport hubs and associated information support the use of active travel networks to access and move around the town centre.

Key opportunities

Key opportunities for the town centre, and which are expanded upon in this document, include:

- Strengthening east west connections to and through the town centre, linking with the wider green space network and completing the pedestrian network within the town centre, making these better connected, more convenient and comfortable to use, convivial and conspicuous.
- Maximising the Cuckoo Trail through improved connections to this and promoting complementary uses close to this that will enhance the user experience.
- Promoting public realm improvements and a network of enhanced public space, with improved street fronts as places where people enjoy being and feel safe in.
- Repairing fractured streets by exploring the potential to rationalise car parking space and bring forward new development opportunities that make more efficient use of the land and help bring vitality and life to the town centre.
- Rationalising major junctions to provide a better balance between competing users, making conditions safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Enhancing the quality of the town square as a multi-functional and lively space that is active and welcoming throughout the day.
- Optimising the use of land by exploring opportunities to bring forward more effective parking solutions that makes land available for new mixed, town centre uses and activities.
- Reflecting and respond positively to the prevailing building heights in the town centre and heritage assets.

Concept Masterplan

Overview

An illustrative masterplan concept for Hailsham Town Centre is presented in [Figure 2](#).

It is important to note that the concept masterplan illustrates one way in which development could come forward in the town centre. It does not preclude other options, arrangements and distribution of land uses. These are to be explored further in partnership with key stakeholders and in consultation with the wider community.

The concept masterplan does though show a series of ‘key’ moves which could help transform the quality and experience of the town centre. These include:

- Part pedestrianisation of the High Street, with the street being closed to through traffic during regular business hours but open early morning and later in the evening to allow for servicing and maintenance etc. This would require further feasibility testing and consultation, giving consideration to impacts on aspects such as bus and taxi movements, as well as management and policing of access restrictions. Part pedestrianisation would allow for a public realm improvement scheme to be rolled out across the High Street and which might comprise installation of a shared surface with multi-functional spaces designed within this which, at various points of the day or week, could provide outdoor dining space, space for market stalls or inset parking and servicing bays. The introduction of street greening would be integral to any scheme, including new street tree planting and rain gardens. Areas of planting would be strategically positioned to help demarcate multi-functional spaces along the street.
- Delivery of a multi-storey car park, potentially on the site of the current Tesco surface car park. This would provide sufficient parking spaces to enable other surface car parks to be redeveloped for a mix of commercial, community and residential development, supporting the vitality of the town centre and contributing towards the delivery of windfall housing targets. The multi-storey, which would be accessed via existing traffic arrangements along North Street, would help relieve other, narrow streets of traffic. The multi-storey should be ‘wrapped’ with development creating an active frontage to North Street. Combined with this is the opportunity to deliver a mobility hub, integrating vehicle, bus and cycle movements, and a new public square between the car park and frontage of Tesco, maintaining visibility of the store.
- Provision of new mixed-use development on surface car parks to the rear of the Quintins Centre along North Street. These would provide a new frontage to North Street and connect with the network of snickets leading into the High Street. The development would thus help improve the sense of arrival into the town centre and create new active frontages that screen areas of parking and servicing.
- Mixed use redevelopment of the surface car park to the north of Waitrose. This would complete the perimeter block formed by buildings lining the High Street but where the rear of these, their associated servicing, parking and waste areas is currently exposed to public view. This would help create a new street frontage to Vicarage Lane, with new pedestrian routes provided that better connect the High Street to the Leisure Centre and beyond. Provision of a new health centre within the town centre would allow for redevelopment of the existing health facility (see below) and thus improve routes through the Vicarage Field shopping centre.
- Redevelopment of the Charles Hunt Centre and The Hailsham Club, providing modern facilities that cater for a range of activities. This would enclose the currently exposed area of parking within the Vicarage Field development and be orientated to provide a new frontage that addresses the Church Grounds. A new pedestrian route around this would replace the existing snicket that runs through the service area, improving the sense of safety and better integrating the Church within the town centre. This could continue past Waitrose (involving reorganisation and landscaping of the existing surface car park, but retaining spaces close to community facilities), via the Leisure centre towards the surrounding countryside, thus helping to create a green link that connects ‘town with country’. Redevelopment and modernisation of these facilities could also potentially include new health care facilities.
- A potential mobility hub and or visitor centre at the entrance to the Cuckoo Trail on the site of the South Road car park. This would help reinterpret the historic role of this site as a gateway into Hailsham, being the former location of the railway station. Rationalisation of parking spaces, which would be possible as a result of providing a new multi-storey car park in the town centre, would enable an outdoor arrival space to be provided alongside the facility, enhancing the attractiveness of the Cuckoo Trail for residents and visitors to Hailsham.
- Street greening is integrated within the public realm, enhancing the quality of the environment but also supporting biodiversity, managing and mitigating the risk of surface water run-off, and providing a series of connected spaces that connect the town with the surrounding landscape. This is supplemented by green walls and roofs, as well as public art that enriches the quality of the public realm.

Further information on component parts of the masterplan concept are presented on the following pages.



Figure 2: Illustrative masterplan concept for Hailsham Town Centre

Part pedestrianisation of the High Street

Example part pedestrianised High Street public realm schemes are illustrated in [Figure 3](#) and [Figure 4](#). In Hailsham the aspiration is to improve the quality of experience along the High Street, making this an attractive place for people to visit and spend time in. The success of such schemes elsewhere demonstrates this is possible. Research undertaken by Living Streets and presented in [The Pedestrian Pound](#) indicates that pedestrianisation and other public realm improvements can help support local businesses, drive inward investment, support healthier and active lifestyles, improve wellbeing and help respond to the pressures of climate change. Further testing, design and consultation of a suitable scheme for Hailsham Town Centre would be required. Key components of such a scheme would likely comprise:

- Part pedestrianisation of the High Street during business hours, with electric bollards used at entrances and exits to the High Street to help manage access.
- Creation of a shared surface between buildings facing each other across the High Street. Materials should respond sensitively to the historic setting of the centre with a consistent palette and design utilised that unifies the street as a whole. Feature paving may be used at key points along the High Street to help define different zones or areas of activity, including the Town Square (adjacent to the Vicarage Fields centre) and at locations where the network of snickets adjoin the High Street.
- Tactile and contrasting paving surfacing should be used alongside the centre of the street to help define vehicular space.
- Establishment of a ‘furniture zone’ along the High Street within which street furniture, including benches and bins, should be located. Street tree planting and raingardens should also be provided in this zone.
- Furniture zones along the street could be multifunctional: some being permanent locations for benches and planting, and others being temporary locations that enable different use through the day and week, including outdoor dining, market stalls and parking.
- Establishment of a furniture zone should be undertaken alongside a ‘decluttering’ exercise to remove unnecessary signage and other highways paraphernalia.
- The design and layout of the street and furniture zones along it should allow vehicle access either side of pedestrian only hours, but should encourage drivers to adapt behaviour and drive at slow speeds, respecting pedestrian priority and safety.
- Buses and Taxis would need to be rerouted during periods of operation, with North Street being the main focus of services, although Vicarage Lane would remain accessible. To support access between these and the High Street improvements should be made to the network of snickets in the town, including installation of material that matches the High Street and new lighting. Where development takes place this should help create clear sightlines and overlooked routes that enhance permeability.

Alongside the above, opportunities should be taken to improve the quality of shopfronts along the High Street as well as exploring opportunities to introduce wayfinding, public art and lighting that reflects the character of the town and supports orientation.



Figure 3: Example part-pedestrianised shopping street, Drachten, The Netherlands



Figure 4: Example part-pedestrianised shopping street, Shoreham



Figure 5: Artists illustration of public realm improvements along the High Street forming a 'part-pedestrianisation' scheme, with the High Street as existing shown in the inset image top right

Tesco car park

Concept plans illustrating the potential for a new multi-storey car park and other associated components on the site of the current Tesco surface car park are presented in [Figure 6](#), which also outlines key principles that should inform future development proposals.

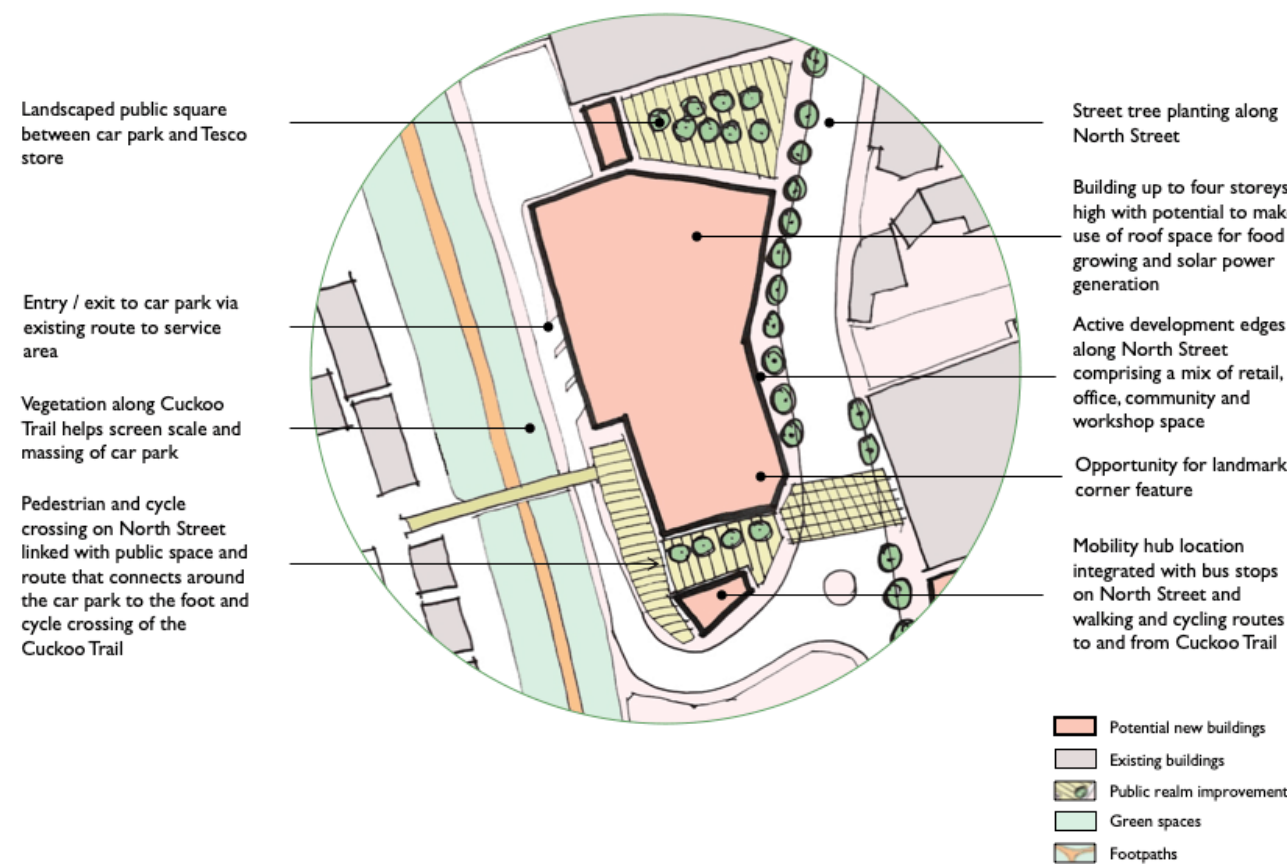


Figure 6: Illustrative masterplan concept for Tesco car park site



Figure 7: Multi-storey car park in Utrecht, The Netherlands, which incorporates active frontages at ground floor level, including retail and restaurant uses. The car park is co-located with a cycle hire stands, a bus and rail station, forming a multi-modal transport hub (source: Zecc Architecten en Stijn Poelstra)



Figure 8: Multi-storey car park in Miami which has active frontages to the street, including retail use, at ground floor. The car park structure is set back slightly from the retail frontage and wrapped with green walls (source: Google Streetview image capture © 2022)

Quintins Centre car park

Concept plans illustrating the potential for mixed use development, improved connectivity and other associated components on the site of the current surface car park to the rear of the Quintins Centre are presented in Figure 9, which also outlines key principles that should inform future development proposals.

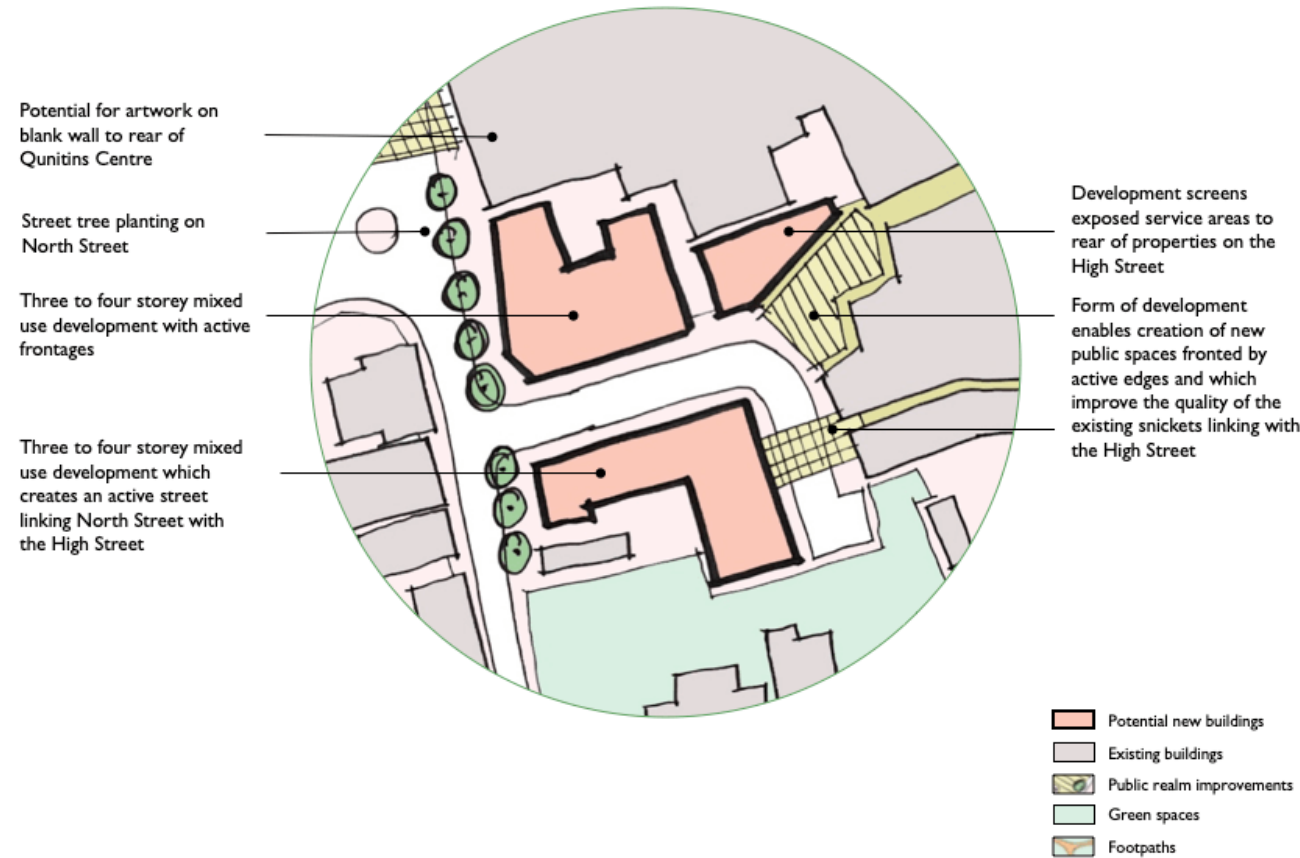


Figure 9: Illustrative masterplan concept for car park to the rear of the Quintins Centre



Figure 10: Selection of images showing the new retail lined pedestrian street that has been created in Chelmsford on a former car park and which has reimagined a historic twittern, successfully integrating this with the High Street

Vicarage Lane car park

Concept plans illustrating the potential for mixed use development, improved connectivity and other associated components on the site of the current surface car park on Vicarage Lane and to the rear of properties on the High Street are presented in Figure 11, which also outlines key principles that should inform future development proposals.



Figure 11: Illustrative masterplan concept for development of surface car park along Vicarage Lane



Figure 12: Selection of images of the Eccleston Yards ‘backland’ development in London, showing a newly created public space, new development and routes into the area from surrounding streets. Public art in and around the development site acts as wayfinding and supports movement between this and the wider area.



Figure 13: Opportunities should be taken to improve the network of twitters in the town centre, making these more attractive routes that encourage use at all times of the day, with ne active edges and intimate spaces created alongside clear sightlines to connecting streets

Charles Hunt Centre

Concept plans illustrating the potential for a new multi-functional community hub on the site of the Charles Hunt Centre and Hailsham Social Club, as well as other associated components, are presented in Figure 14, which also outlines key principles that should inform future development proposals. An artist's illustration of this is shown in Figure 15.

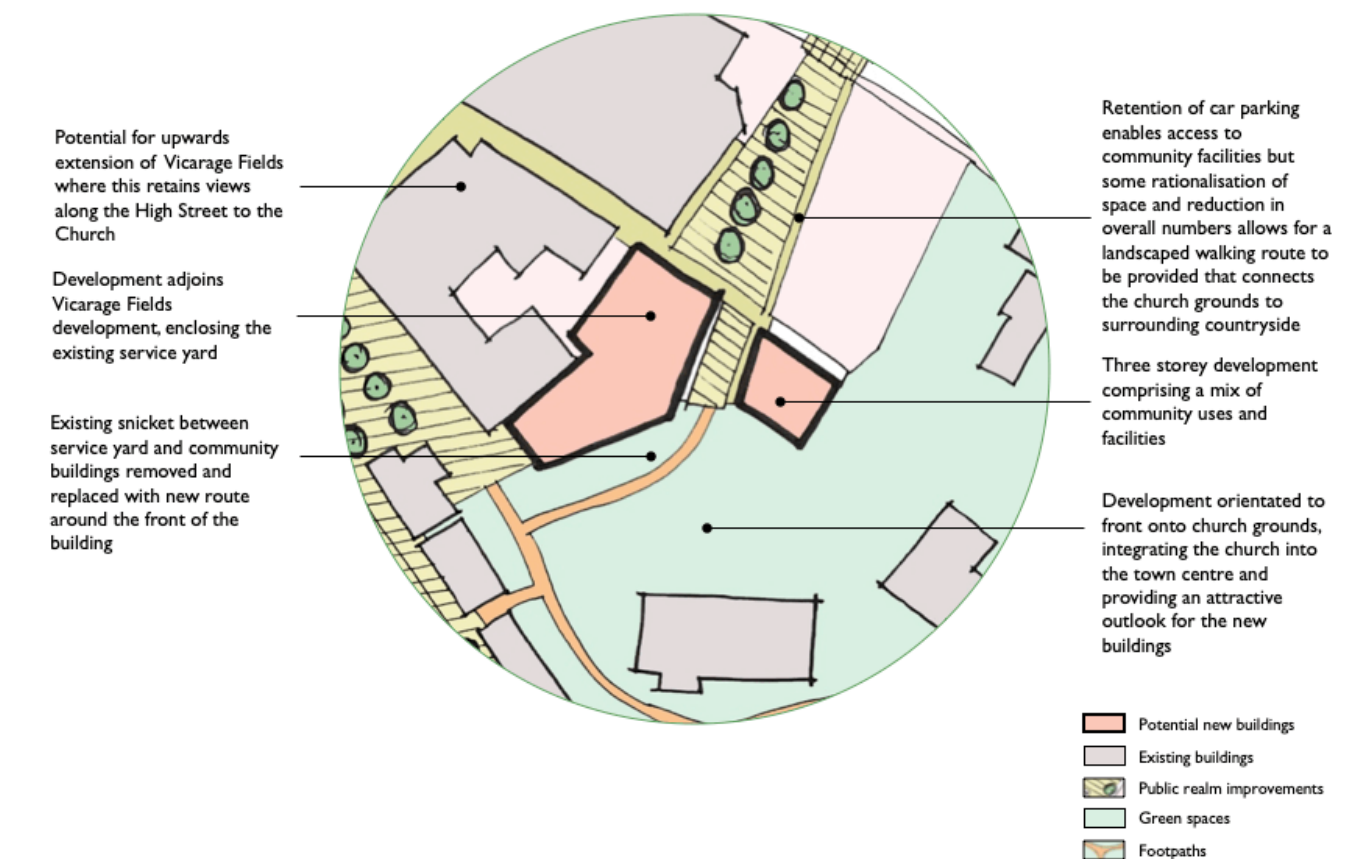


Figure 14: Illustrative masterplan concept for redevelopment of the Charles Hunt Centre and Social Club



Figure 15: Artist's illustration of a new and improved multi-functional community hub on the site of the current Charles Hunt Centre, bringing together various services and facilities into a central location (including new health care facilities) and which help better integrate the Church and it's grounds with the town centre, including new paths around this that provide a safer route replacing the existing twittern. The illustration envisages a light, airy and inviting building, with materials reflecting the Church and strengthening the setting of the Conservation Area and listed Church.



Figure 16: Associated with potential development and as part of a public realm scheme for the High Street, the opportunity exists to revitalise the 'town square' outside the Vicarage Field shopping centre, introducing new paving, planting and street furniture



Figure 17: New green infrastructure and street furniture should be provided within the public realm in the town centre

South Road car park

Concept plans illustrating the potential for a mobility hub and visitor centre at the entrance to the Cuckoo Trail on the South Road car park, as well as other associated components are presented in Figure 18, which also outlines key principles that should inform future development proposals. An artists' illustration of this is presented in Figure 19.

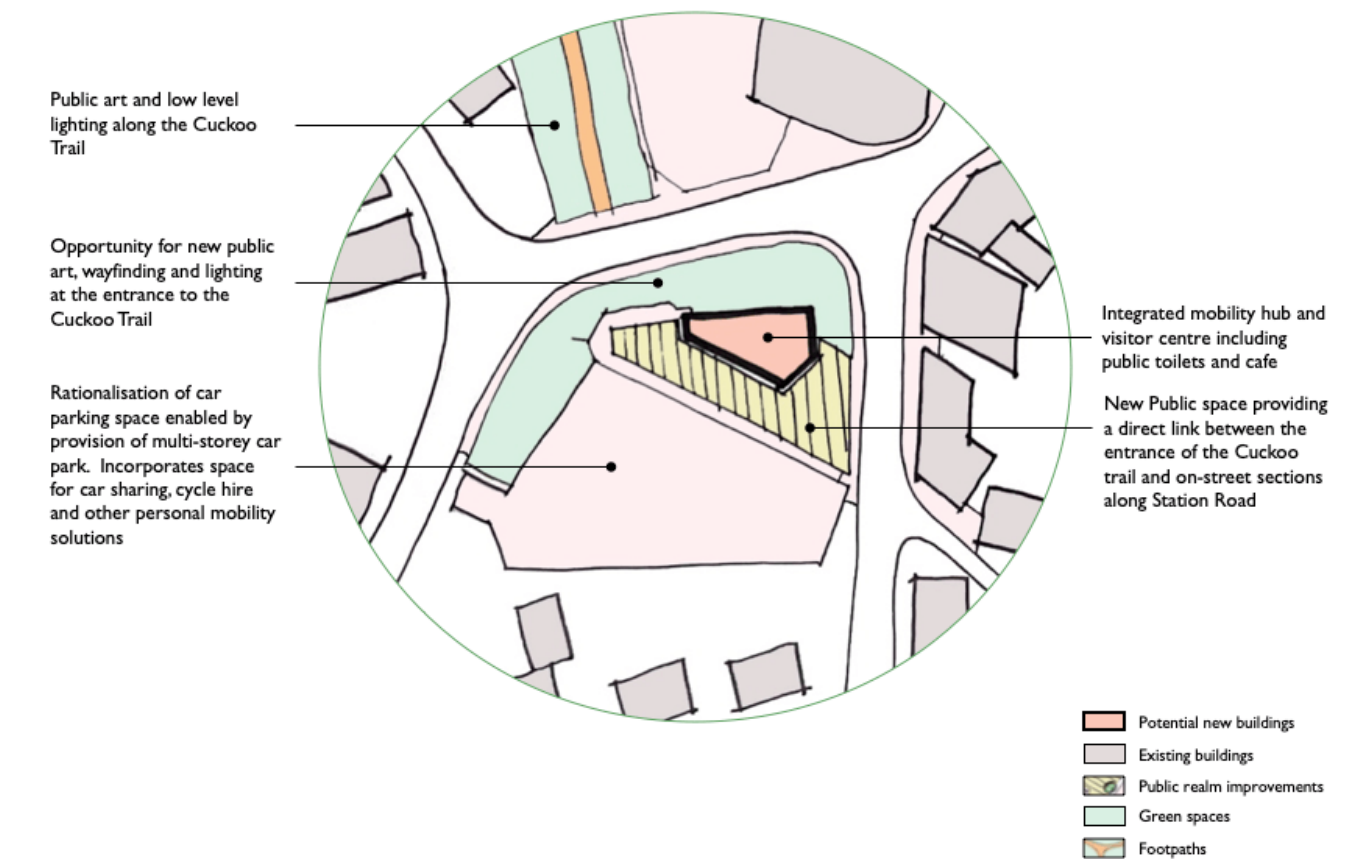


Figure 18: Illustrative masterplan concept for South Road car park



Figure 19: Artists' illustration of a potential mobility and visitor hub at the South Road car park, including public realm improvement works, connected active travel infrastructure, wayfinding and public art



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