



Wellingborough Masterplan Strategic Framework



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Borough Council of Wellingborough

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About the Masterplan

What is the Wellingborough Masterplan?

The Government has identified Wellingborough as one of several towns in Northamptonshire into which growth will be directed over the long term. Around 12,800 new homes will be built in the Borough of Wellingborough by 2021, leading to a likely population increase in the order of 31,000. Although local shops and services will be built to cater for the everyday needs of these new residents, it is the Council's wish that they should look to the town centre for high street shopping, financial services and leisure. If this is to happen, the town centre will clearly need to grow and adapt. The Masterplan provides a framework for how this could be achieved.

Given the scale of growth proposed, it is important to remember that what may appear unrealistic today could well be viable during the period to 2025 and beyond. For this reason, the Masterplan proposes development that is both imaginative and far reaching.



The Impact of Growth

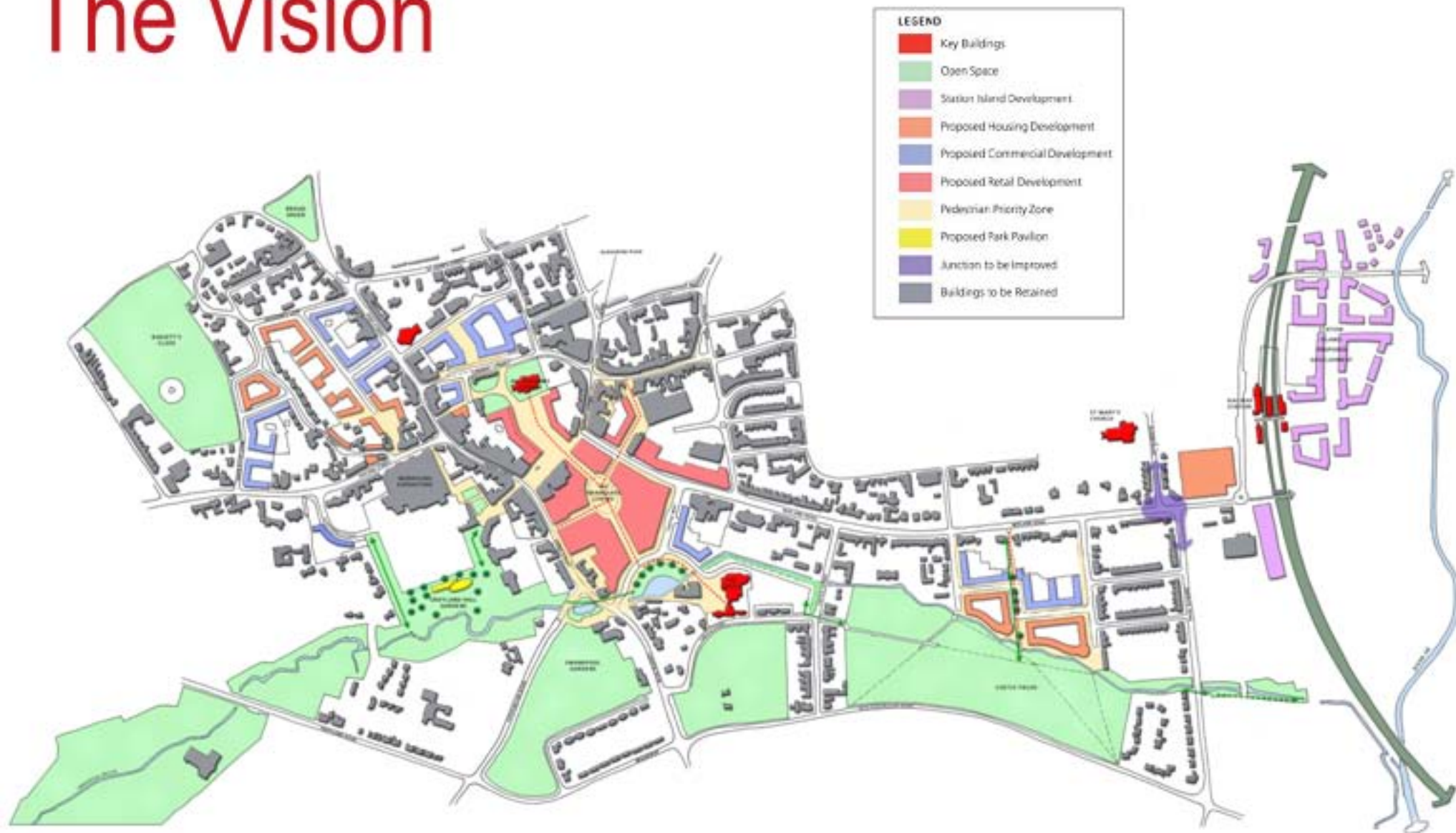
The development of 3200 new homes in WEAST (an urban extension of the western side of the town) will draw the town's centre of gravity ever further away from its original High Street and will put pressure on sites on the eastern side of the town centre to be developed.

In addition, it is expected that a further 2500 dwellings will be constructed on the urban fringe to the north of the town. This will increase the importance of the High Street area and the northern gateway to the town.

It is important that the growth of Wellingborough is seen not as a threat but as an opportunity. The chance should be taken to provide a first class town centre and to provide the identity and focus which has so far been lacking.



The Vision



A New Heart

What Wellingborough lacks most is a focus. A new heart is needed to bring together the various parts of the town centre and provide something with which local people can identify themselves with pride.

Central to the creation of the town's new focus and crucial to the long term success of the town will be the redevelopment of the Swansgate Shopping Centre. Although the present Centre fulfils a useful role in providing the town with prime retail space, its layout is hindering the development of surrounding streets, particularly the top end of Midland Road.

The Masterplan proposes a new Swansgate Centre with a broader range of shop units, a more open, street style layout, integral parking and active frontages on Market Street and Midland Road.

Town Centre and Station Island

The development of Station Island will provide Wellingborough with the opportunity of a second centre to complement and support the functions of the town centre.

The Masterplan proposes that the town centre should remain the main focus of shopping, administration and entertainment in the town and that Station Island should become a hub for offices and high density living.

The Masterplan proposes the redevelopment of the Swansgate Centre and some of the less attractive buildings on Market Street and Midland Road to provide a better retail offer, a new leisure quarter and a series of public squares.

There would still be a need for secondary shopping areas of course and these would probably continue to be found just beyond the expanded retail core in such streets as Oxford Street, Cannon Street and the far end of the High Street.



Station Island has the advantage of being a greenfield site. Its main role will be to provide the large scale Grade A office space that the town centre cannot accommodate. Hi tech industry and high density housing will also feature in the mix of uses.

The two centres should be linked by a variety of routes offering a choice of modes of transport with Midland Road acting as the main corridor for traffic and activity.

Midland Road

At present, Midland Road is, for the most part, a quiet residential street. In the forthcoming years it will have to cope with higher levels of traffic and more intense development pressure as it becomes established as one of the town's main thoroughfares. Our vision for Midland Road is that it should not simply end up as a

conduit for traffic. Rather, it should become a destination in its own right with competing uses carefully balanced to create a street that is lively, attractive and walkable.

The Green Link

The Swanspool Brook provides an almost continuous swathe of green space across the southern side of the town which includes the important public open spaces of Castle Fields and Croyland Hall Gardens.

The Masterplan proposes to use this space as a green link from WEAST to the town centre and on to the western suburbs of the town.

The centrepiece of the route would be where it passes the Castle Theatre. Here, there is potential to use the watercourse as a design feature in the proposed public square and to provide seamless access from the green link to the Swansgate Centre.

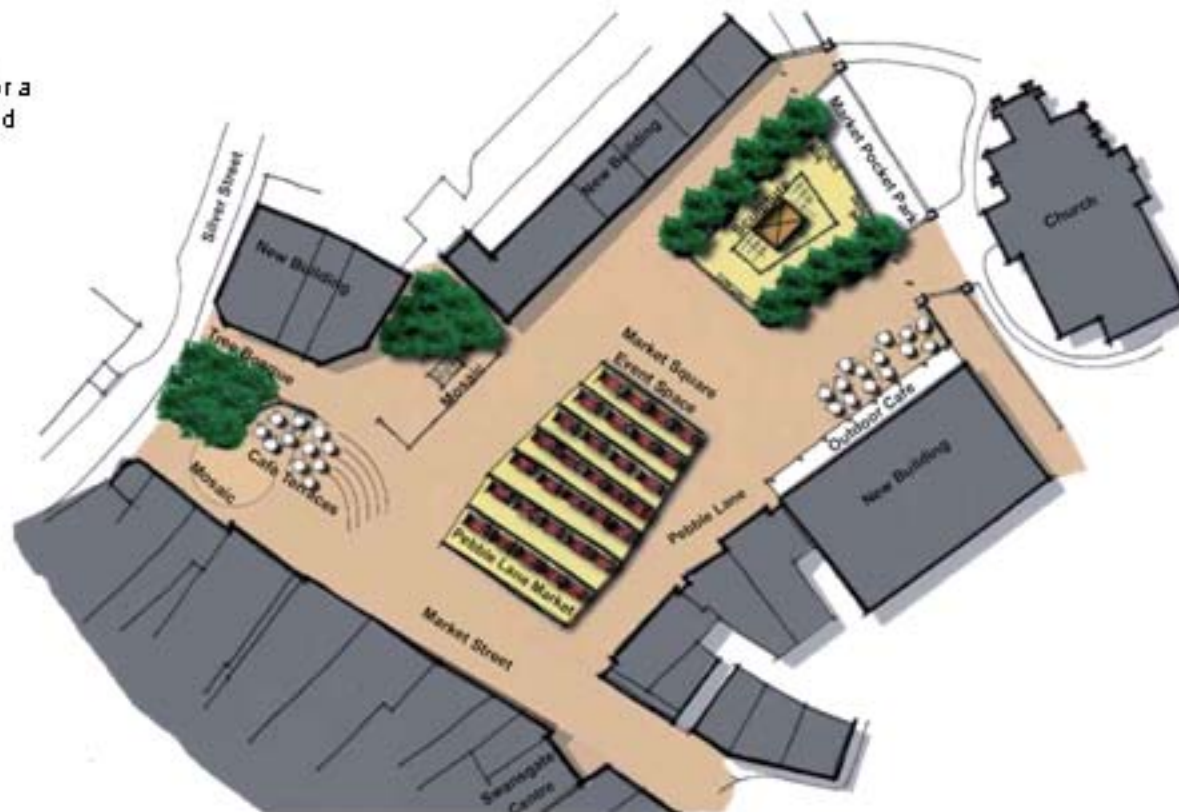
The quality of the towpath should be high enough to act as a combined walking and cycling route. Cycle access points are identified on the Masterplan.

Market Square



Looking Along Market Street from the Mosaic

Some initial concepts and ideas for a future Market Square are illustrated here.



Market Square

Wellingborough has no central square in which events can be held or people can meet. For example, the Market Place (shown), which could form such a square, is hidden behind Woolworth's. If Wellingborough's new residents are to feel part of the town it is important that they have something with which they can readily identify. A new focal square would be one way in which this could be achieved.

The Square could be framed by new buildings on either flank of the Square. A new library could be constructed in its existing location with apartments above with balconies overlooking the activities within the Square.

Development off Orient Way would provide enclosure and hide from views some of the unattractive 'backs' to the High Street. These buildings would provide opportunities for new retail floorspace possibly residential or offices above.

The removal of the 'Woolworths' block would open up views of the church and create a large space within which to create a new market set out on a series of steps. Pebble Lane would become more prominent as a route and providing a key vista of the church and activity within the Square.

A pocket park with sculpture and seating would provide an interesting area for relaxation. Between these two features an area could be retained for ad hoc events and entertainment.

The square would provide several opportunities for cafe culture.

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High Street

The vision for the High Street site is of a new urban quarter for the town centre – distinctive, vibrant, desirable and safe.

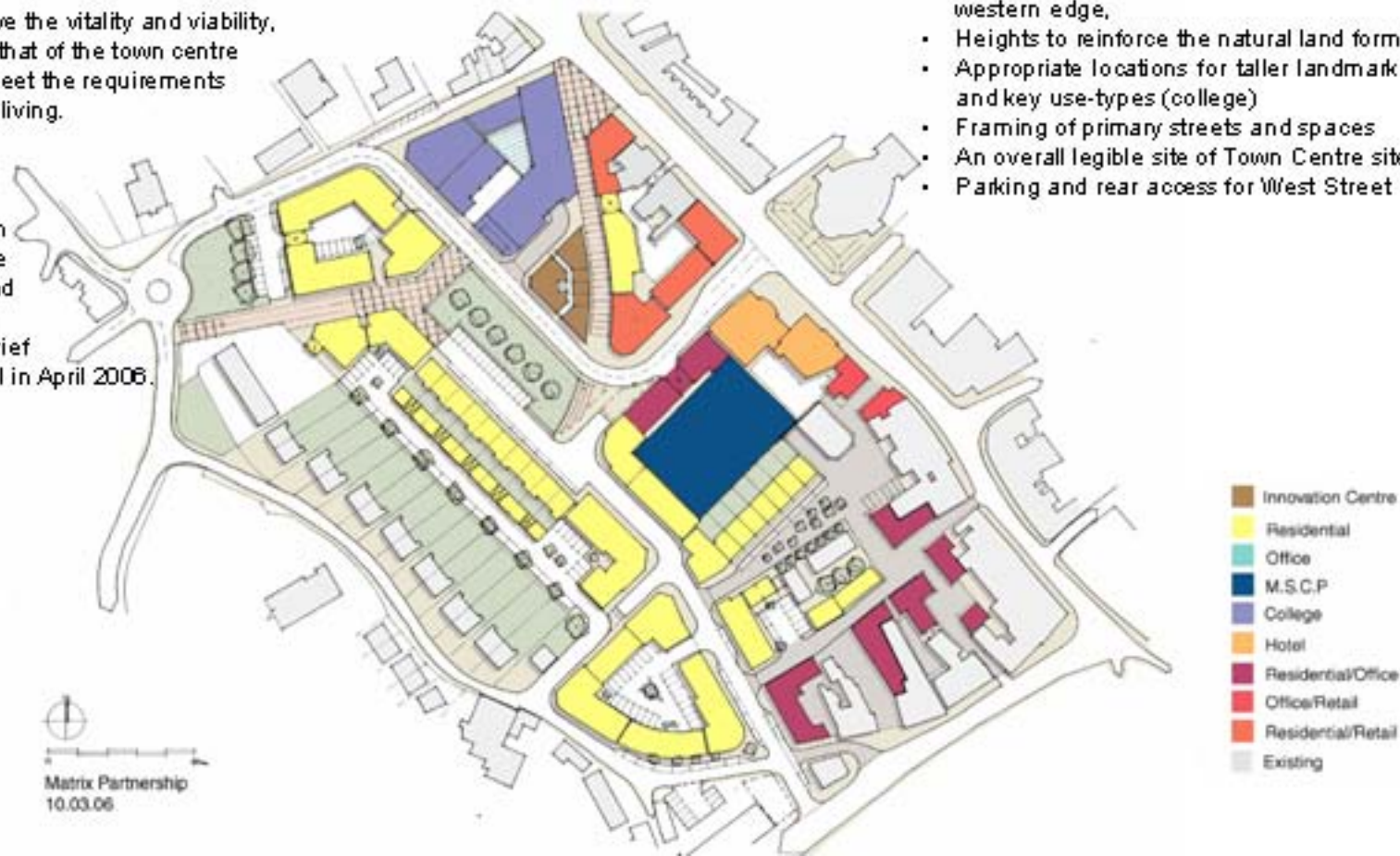
The proposals will protect and enhance the best of the old, whilst creating new streets and squares, a significant number of new homes and jobs supporting a high quality sustainable urban living. Fitting in with the surroundings, connecting better to the town centre, making good use of the slopes, bringing a green wedge of open spaces into the heart of the town – this development will be the start of the process of, and setting the standard for, the overall future town centre regeneration, helping to raise the town centre's aspirations and potential in relation to the growth in Wellingborough and North Northamptonshire.

The overall aim is to improve the vitality and viability, of this Brownfield site, and that of the town centre as a whole, so as to help meet the requirements of 21st century sustainable living.

A Development Brief has been developed by the Council and consulted upon over the last year to provide clear design, layout and land use planning guidance for further development, this brief was adopted by the Council in April 2006.

The land uses has evolved to knit the future development into the surrounding context:

- A vibrant, retail-led High Street edge
- A fine grain 'lanes & mews' mixed use area of residential and office space to the southern quarter
- Compatible land use types linking to adjacent existing development (e.g. residential western edge)
- Parking located in central location
- Re-using existing Listed Buildings
- Ensuring the development is viable
- Sensitive and appropriate heights along the western edge,
- Heights to reinforce the natural land form
- Appropriate locations for taller landmark structures and key use-types (college)
- Framing of primary streets and spaces
- An overall legible site of Town Centre site
- Parking and rear access for West Street residents



Implementing the Vision



The process of developing the masterplan over a period of time is dependant upon achieving an early critical mass of development. Much of the development activity will be private sector led. However, if the transformation of Wellingborough is to fulfil the vision set out by the masterplan, it will require considerable support from the Borough Council and its partners, as well as key business interests such as the owners of Swansgate Centre. The business case for the proposals will gather momentum, as the growth area proposals come to fruition at Weast and the 'northern growth zone'

It is anticipated that the Town Centre will adopt the following broad sequence of redevelopment:

High Street site

Church Street area

Market Square

Swansgate Centre

Detailed feasibility has already been undertaken for the High Street area culminating in an agreed Development Brief. It is hoped that over the next few months this will be followed up with a similar exercise for the Church Street and Market Square areas.

Further work will in due course be required to detail the proposals for the Swansgate, Midland Road and the Green Link.