

Open

Additional Papers Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item No. 9 Kidderminster 2040 – A Town Centre Vision

**6pm
Thursday, 13th May 2021
To be held remotely**



Wyre Forest District Council





Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Briefing Paper

Report of: Mike Parker – Corporate Director Economic Prosperity
& Place
Date: 13th May 2021
Open

Kidderminster 2040 – A Town Centre Vision

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the vision for the future of Kidderminster Town Centre for the next 20 years.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The District Council has a very strong track record of planning strategically for the development of Kidderminster town centre dating back in recent times to the adoption of the ReWyre initiative back in 2009. On the back of that ReWyre vision the Council was able to successfully attract funding from Worcestershire County Council to undertake the public realm works from Exchange Square to the High Street/Worcester Street junction and then more recently to enable the opening up of Worcester Street to traffic. In 2016 the Council adopted the vision for the Eastern Gateway which has now become known as Lionfields and this was successfully embedded into the adopted Local Plan to ensure that the proposals had materiality when key planning decisions had to be taken. As part of the Lionfields initiative the Council has been able to enter into a Development Agreement for the redevelopment of the former Glades Leisure Centre site and also adopted a vision for the redevelopment of part of the surplus spaces on Bromsgrove Street car park in 2019. All of this rich strategic narrative was undoubtedly a determining factor in the successful award under the Future High Streets Fund to enable the further transformation of the town.
- 2.2 However, what the Council did not have was a vision for the long term development of the town centre that linked all of these interventions. That was the catalyst for the bid to the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) enabling fund for initiatives under its Towns and Local centres programme which was submitted in January 2020. The Council was awarded £40k which it match funded with £10k to commission support to develop a new town wide vision; and Hemingway Design were appointed in September 2020 after successfully tendering for the project.
- 2.3 The significance of the Council having a vision for the future of the town has, of course, added significance in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic which

accelerated the decline of town centres, so the Council being able to use this time for setting the strategic direction for the town for the coming 20 years is never more timely. It is worth noting at the outset that this vision shouldn't be mistaken for a 'masterplan', it is not intended to be site prescriptive, that is the step following this one; this is about how the Council sees the vision for the town over that prolonged period, accepting that the Future High Street Fund success is relatively short term over the next three years, but will nevertheless represent the beginning of the delivery of that new vision. It should also be noted that the proposals in the vision should not be taken as prescriptive proposals for specific sites which might currently have a different land use. This is a 20 year vision and opportunities for implementation will ebb and flow, some elements will inevitably change over that period allowing some parts of the vision to be delivered as envisaged, some may need to adapt and may indeed become deliverable on sites which are yet to come forward for redevelopment.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The draft vision which has been produced by a multi-disciplinary team led by Hemingway Design in collaboration with the Council's key officers from the North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration (NWEDR) (Appendix 1) also followed public consultation which was undertaken in late 2020 which included a number of workshop sessions held over the course of a day with different key stakeholder groups.
- 3.2 Just under 2000 responses were received to the consultation from a broad age range from under 25s to over 65s. Seventy seven of the respondents live in Kidderminster and under half of the respondents only visited Weavers Wharf or a supermarket in the town; this corresponds with the challenge the Council has always understood which is how to get more people into the traditional town centre. Only a third of those visiting the town stopped for more than hour, also highlighting the known challenge of getting people to 'linger longer'.
- 3.3 The Vision is premised on inclusivity – *"town centres with a strong degree of social capital are more likely to be inclusive places reflecting the priorities of the people who use it. Increasing social capital is therefore a key part of the Vision for Kidderminster"*. The Vision is articulated under the headings of 'Process', 'Place', 'People' and 'Purpose'. Six top local priorities for change are highlighted from the consultation and workshops:
 - More independent and local shops
 - More green spaces and access to the river and canal
 - More local and independent cafes and restaurants
 - Better open public space to hold events and festivals
 - More cultural space for arts, music, film and theatre
 - More people living in the town
- 3.4 The Vision covers the wider extent of the town and in particular highlights a key 'civic street' linear connection from St Mary's Church to the north of the town, right up to the rail station on Comberton Hill, highlighting the

impediments to this route caused primarily by the presence of the ringroad. The opportunity to maximise the water environment created by the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and River Stour is also a key highlight.

- 3.5 The Vision highlights the distinctive place and heritage that makes Kidderminster the place it is, looking at how improvements can be made to its richness of diversity and how it could be more welcoming and better connected. It looks at how more town centre living could be created and how the town should increase the 'experiential' offer to encourage people to visit and stay longer. There is a strong entrepreneurial opportunity identified, particularly important as the town emerges from the pandemic. There is also a strong theme around the town being a 'healthier' town and maximising the waterside opportunities and the green space opportunities as well as recognising the need to develop in a sustainable way.
- 3.6 The Vision recognises the early interventions which can be achieved through the Future High Streets Fund initiatives and embraces those changes as early steps towards achieving the Vision, as well as looking forward at opportunities such as the recently announced Levelling Up Fund to take the Vision to the next level stages.
- 3.7 The adoption of this vision by the Council now is also timely in the context of future opportunities to bid for further transformational funding, starting with the Levelling Up Fund in June 2021 and expected in 2022/23 the Shared Prosperity Fund which replaces the European funding streams post EU exit. In the same way that previous strategic documents provided the firm foundation for the FHSF bid, so this 2040 Vision will demonstrate that the Council has some clarity over the direction it is heading in.
- 3.8 In terms of policy implications, it is intended that this Vision and any iterations of it or following masterplan documents will be part of the evidence base for the next version of the Local Plan which will need to be reviewed within five years of its adoption (expected early 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The future of our town centres has been a focus for some time now as shopping habits changes and visitors expected more experiential offers to complement the retail offer. The decline of the traditional town centre has been accelerated by the Coronavirus pandemic. Kidderminster is well placed to respond positively to this challenge with works already well underway to transform it such as the opening up of Worcester Street and the demolition of Crown House. The Future High Streets Fund opportunity will take that transformation to a new level over the next three years. However, the Council need to look further ahead than just the next three years and set out the future vision for the town over the longer period, the Kidderminster 2040 Vision is recommended to set that vision.

5. OPTIONS

5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the following options:

5.1.1 To recommend to Cabinet that the Kidderminster 2040 Vision is agreed.

5.1.2 To recommend to Cabinet any other alternative recommendation.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Kidderminster 2040 Vision

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Client: Wyre Forest District Council
Draft report 20th April 2021



Kidderminster Town Centre Vision

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will update for final version

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1. Vision

In 2040 Kidderminster Town Centre aspires to be a progressive market town that is truly inclusive, diverse and sustainable and celebrates its natural assets, its history, and is a place where everyone can socialise, relax and enjoy spending their hard earned cash.

Kidderminster Town Centre Vision

Town centres are changing. We have known this for some time, but the pace of change has accelerated and the need to respond is increasingly urgent.

Kidderminster's response to the challenges it faces needs to be bold. But it also needs to be planned and coordinated. There are significant opportunities for change, and substantial funding has been secured to help deliver this change. It is essential therefore that Kidderminster makes the most of this 'once in a generation' opportunity.

The importance of developing this vision has increased in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic and town centres need to respond positively to the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic. Kidderminster must think carefully about its response and build on the particular characteristics of the town rather than trying to develop a solution that can be rolled out in all town centres.

This document sets a clear direction of travel for Kidderminster over the next 20 years. It is not a 'blueprint' for development, but an ambitious Vision to steer the form and quality of investment needed in the town centre.

The Vision will help steer the variety of projects which are already planned in the town centre, including the £20m from the Future High Streets Fund, and it will help access other financial support, such as the Levelling Up Fund.



Kidderminster is a town with a long history, and the ingredients for a bright future. With a distinctive manufacturing heritage, an interesting and varied waterfront, excellent rail access, a strong civic presence, an independent spirit and an engaged local community that clearly values its town centre, it is well placed to address the major social, economic, and physical challenges facing all town centres.

This is an optimistic Vision for Kidderminster town centre. It places culture, learning, health, the environment and most importantly people at the heart of the town. It is a vision that celebrates Kidderminster's heritage, bringing historic buildings back to life. It is an inclusive vision, by and for local people, just under 2000 of whom contributed their views and ideas.

Kidderminster Town Centre Vision

The Vision prioritises four elements fundamental to creating successful town centres of the future:

Place: town centres need a clear identity rooted in ‘place’. This is a vision that celebrates Kidderminster’s heritage and natural environment, bringing life back to its waterways and its historic buildings.

People: town centres need to prioritise people. People focused environments encourage people to linger, to discover and to return.

Purpose: town centres need to demonstrate a wider social purpose. This Vision promotes action which will help address the challenges of physical and mental health, social exclusion, biodiversity and climate change.

Process: town centres need to engage continuously with their communities. An inclusive process will create an inclusive town centre.





2. Process

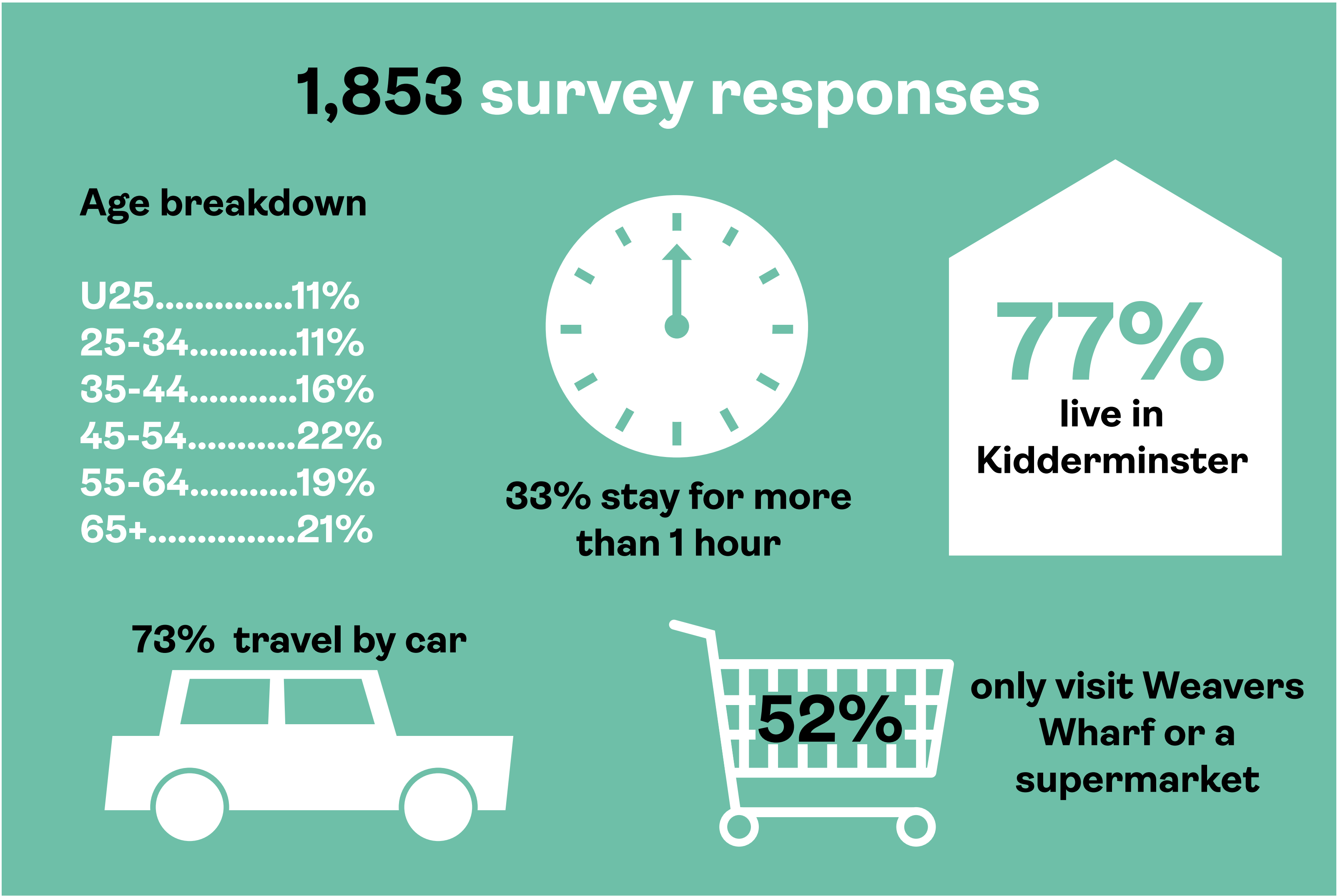
Inclusive processes build social capital - by this we mean that people of Kidderminster will have a say in how their town centre develops.

Social capital reflects the degree to which a community feels able to influence what happens in its town centre. Town centres with a strong degree of social capital are more likely to be inclusive places reflecting the priorities of the people who use it. Increasing social capital is therefore a key part of the Vision for Kidderminster.



The best places are shaped by the people who use and value them most, and almost 2,000 people provided their input to the Vision. Other stakeholders were involved in zoom workshops, socially distanced walking tours and meetings. The results showed a clear desire for change.

(provide link to read full report).



Local Assets

Process

The Vision prioritises those parts of Kidderminster town centre that local people value the most. This includes the canalside, the River Stour and the cluster of outdoor restaurants around Husum Bridge. It includes the market, independent shops, restaurants, and bars dotted around the town centre, with clusters on Worcester Street and Vicar Street. It includes civic assets such as the Town Hall, the library and the Carpet Museum as well as Brinton Park. It also includes celebrating the towns history like in the Carpet factory and Slingfield Mill, the former Brinton carpet factory.

Local residents were asked to identify their favourite places in the town centre:



Local Priorities

Process

Kidderminster residents value their town centre but recognise that it needs to change.

The top 6 priorities for change identified in the survey were:

- More local and independent shops
- More green space and access to the river and canal
- More local and independent cafes and restaurants
- Better public open space to hold events and festivals
- More cultural space for arts, music, film and theatre
- More people living in the town centre.

These priorities reflect the wider desire across the country to see more diverse town centres with more cultural activity and a focus on local and independent businesses. Residents and visitors want to see greener town centres with more open space. They want to see more people living and working in their town centres, bringing life outside normal shopping hours. This Vision therefore seeks to address the priorities for change identified by the people of Kidderminster.

97% of people supported change.

The top 6 local priorities for change were:



Understanding Differences

Process

Inclusive town centres recognise that not everyone has the same priorities.

Town centres are important social spaces for young people, particularly during the day. Young people in Kidderminster are significantly more likely than other age groups to visit with their friends, whether to eat and drink, see a film or just ‘hang out’.

The desire for better cultural and arts provision in Kidderminster is also strongest in the 18-25 age group suggesting an opportunity to bring more young people into the town centre. Younger people and older people are less likely to have access to a car and more reliant on walking, cycling and local buses. As a result, those under 25 or over 65 place a higher priority on improving public transport.

The biggest town centre priority for over 65s is improving access to the water and providing more green space. This age group also gives greater importance to building more homes in the town centre.

Those under 25 or over 65 place a higher priority on improving public transport links to the town centre.



18-25 year olds give greater priority to improving cultural activity in the town centre

U25s visit the town centre more often for eating, drinking and socialising.

20% of young people visit the town centre to study, and Kidderminster College is likely to play an increasingly important social and economic role in the town.

The biggest priority for over 65s is more green space in the town centre

Continuing Involvement Process

To be successful, Kidderminster will need to maintain the conversation with local people. Continuing to plan and design in partnership with the community will ensure Kidderminster is an inclusive town centre, meeting the needs of all its residents, visitors and businesses.

Kidderminster will put in place mechanisms to involve young people in the future planning of the town centre. It will start by working with Kidderminster College students to co-design the new public spaces.

Verify with the College that they are up for this shared approach



Bristol’s Urban Room, run by the Architecture Centre is an open, accessible and democratic space where everyone can actively participate in the future of our buildings, streets and neighbourhoods. The Urban Room project allows the community to come together to explore innovative and creative ways for people to experience buildings at first hand through:

- pop up installations in community settings
- travelling Urban Rooms
- live builds with communities
- immersive, interactive outdoor commissions
- talks and debates
- and as part of artist’s residencies.

Embedded within the project is Urban Room – Next Generation, a series of family workshops and creative collaborations with communities, children and young people which will explore the project themes of diversity and inclusive environments.

3.Place

Distinctive town centres are strongly defined, and have an understanding of their history and how that has been shaped by their physical environment. They have a greater sense of local identity, a better connection with their local communities and a stronger ‘brand’ to attract visitors.

Diverse town centres are more interesting, more inclusive and more resilient. They are more flexible and adaptable to social, environmental and economic change.

A welcoming town centre can be accessed and used by as everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, ability and sexuality. It is a place where design takes well-being and mental health into account. It is welcoming to residents, businesses, students and visitors.



Distinctive Kidderminster

Place

Kidderminster’s industrial heritage remains visible across the town centre. It is particularly prominent in the Church Street/Vicar Street/Exchange Street corridor, and in the Castle Street/Dixon Street/Green Street areas. New public spaces will enhance the settings of St Mary’s Church, Baxter URC Church, The Piano Building, Morton’s Works, the rejuvenated Former Magistrates’ Court and the Museum. New pedestrian routes will encourage exploration of a wider town centre, and raise awareness of the town’s industrial and civic heritage. All routes will connect back to the civic heart of Kidderminster, the Town Hall and Penny Black Square.

The town’s natural environment has shaped Kidderminster’s growth. The river and surrounding hills were the reason the town was established. The river and the canal supported the growth of the town’s manufacturing base and are the focus for many of the factory buildings that create Kidderminster’s unique identity.

Distinctive town centres are strongly defined. The historic image of Kidderminster shows a strong defined town edge with open landscape in the foreground. Dealing with the ring road in a positive way and not as the back of the town can create a strong town centre in the future.



The public said:
“Re-kindle Kidderminster’s heritage”

Kidderminster's identity is rooted in its physical and historical connection to the water. The Vision recognises the urban qualities of the canal and the natural qualities of the river corridor.

The Vision creates new public parks and social spaces that exploit the hilltop views and the waterfront setting with new homes, cafes and restaurants to bring life to these spaces.

Distinctive Kidderminster Place

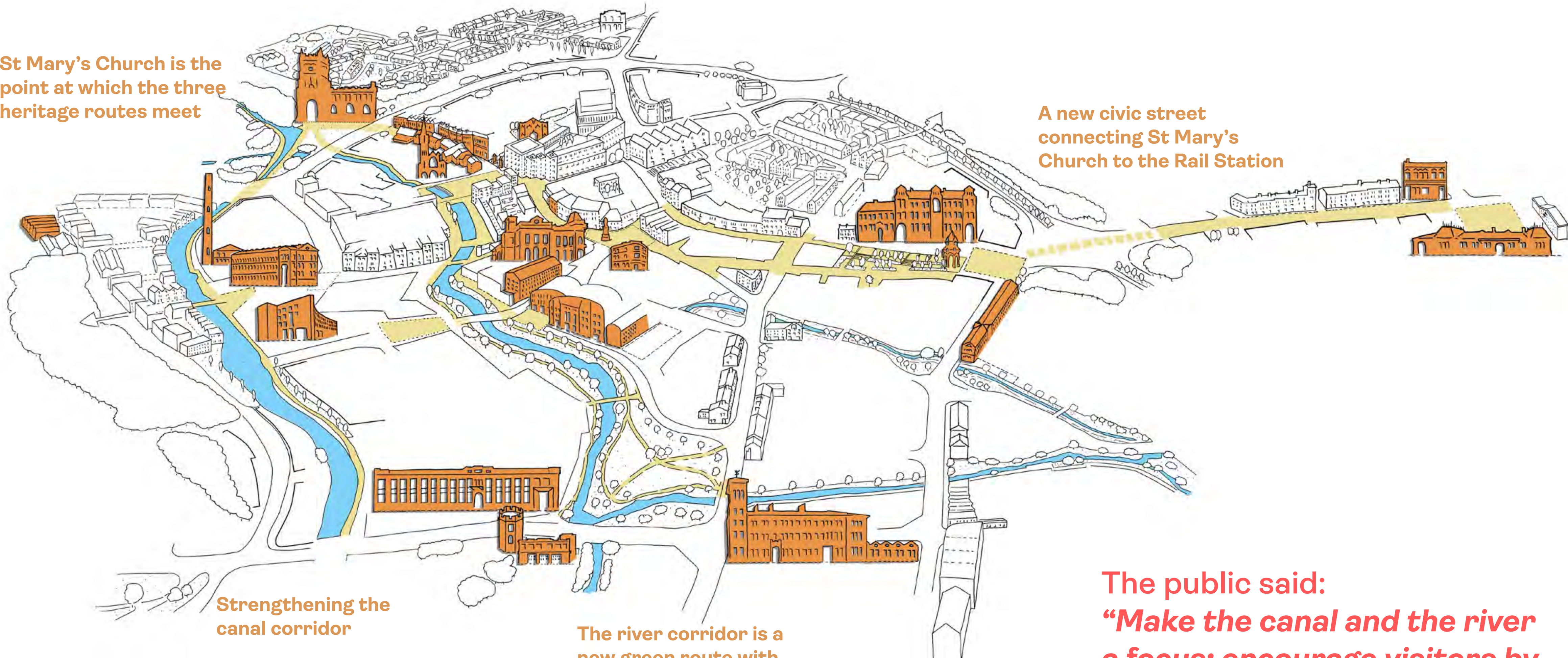
St Mary's Church is the point at which the three heritage routes meet

A new civic street connecting St Mary's Church to the Rail Station

Strengthening the canal corridor

The river corridor is a new green route with public spaces celebrating key buildings

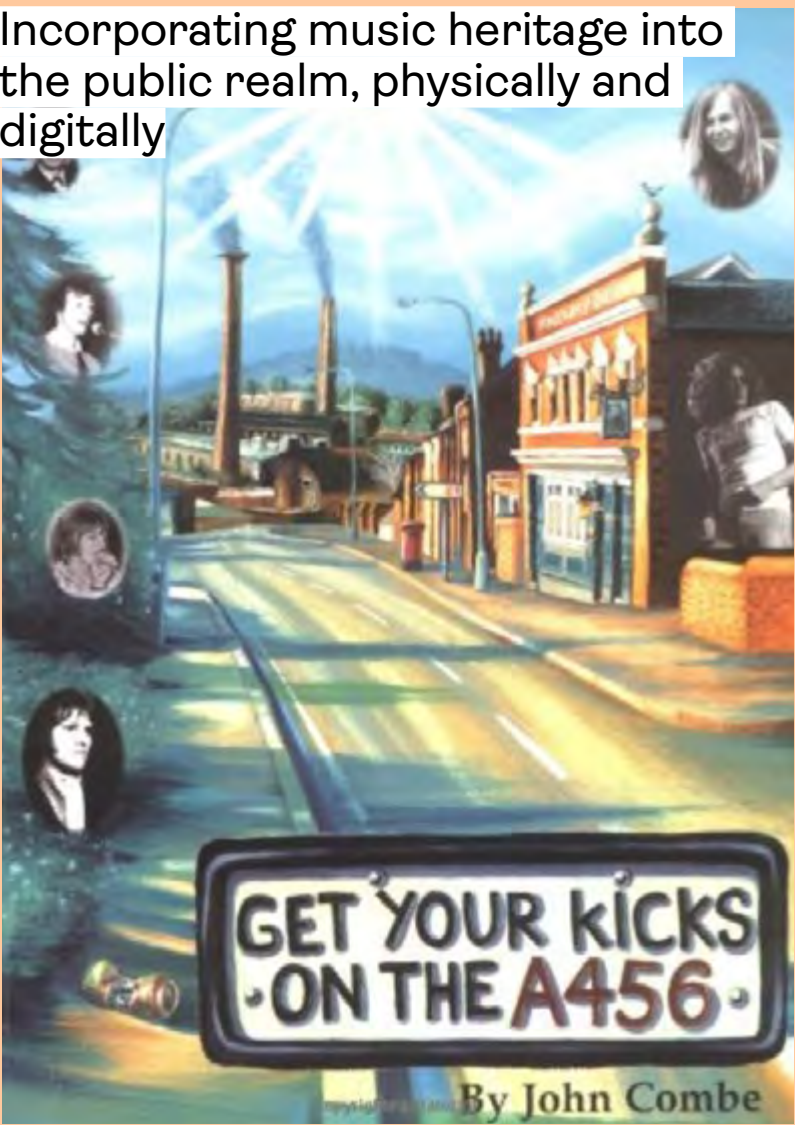
The public said:
“Make the canal and the river a focus: encourage visitors by making them really special, vibrant places with cafés, arts and cultural activities.”



Key project: Heritage and the Public Realm

The Vision identifies opportunities for new public spaces to enhance the setting of important heritage buildings and features. New spaces will be created outside the Museum and Former Magistrate’s Court, at the arrival from the railway station and to enhance the setting of the URC Baxter Church. The recently Grade II listed ‘Retaining Wall with Sculptural Relief’ by William Mitchell could also become a much stronger gateway feature in the town.

The potential also exists to incorporate Kidderminster’s heritage into the design of the public realm, both physically and digitally, to create a stronger trail around the town centre. Integrating carpet and textile designs into the physical fabric of streets and spaces can bring the heritage to life in a different way. Individual streets can have their own unique carpet pattern, complemented by the street furniture and lighting. Whilst the music heritage lends itself to audio-visual projects as well as distinctive street art.



Diverse Kidderminster

Place

The Vision for Kidderminster creates a varied residential offer across the town centre, with space for young people, families and older people. It provides space for small businesses to grow and expand. It brings health and community uses into the town centre.

The Vision creates new spaces and repurposes buildings for markets, pop-up retailing, street food and events, creating a more diverse town centre offer. Importantly it creates different experiences across the week, encouraging more regular visits and a sense of discovery.

The Vision supports new internal and external spaces for creative businesses, with a focus on improved events spaces within the the Town Hall.

Priority: More local and independent cafés and restaurants



Bringing a “festival vibe” to the town centre



Play can be simply fun



Bringing public amenity and artists together in temporary installations



Play can be architectural



Sustainable actions can inspire and be inclusive



The Vision creates a variety of places to live, eat, drink, shop, socialise and relax. It provides a distinctive setting for important civic and heritage buildings. It creates interesting and accessible routes for pedestrians and cyclists that connect Kidderminster's important streets, spaces and buildings. It encourages visitors to explore Kidderminster and strengthens local pride in the town's heritage.

Key project: Kidderminster Town Hall

Priority:
More cultural space for arts, music, film and theatre

Kidderminster Town Hall has been a civic and cultural focal point in the town centre for over 150 years. A venue for music concerts, business and community events, municipal functions and registering births and celebrating weddings, it is one of Kidderminster’s most important buildings, and sits at the heart of the town centre, physically and socially.

The Vision reinforces this role and makes the Town Hall relevant and accessible to the whole community. It identifies opportunities to improve facilities for performing artists and audiences with raked seating, new audio-visual and lighting systems. This will enhance the Town Hall as a performance venue for music, theatre, dance and film in the town centre.

A new meeting and community arts space, inserted within an existing courtyard with café and restaurant facilities and a stronger external presence will promote the Town Hall better, improve the visitor experience and bring more people into the town centre. Reinterpretation of the Court Room, improvements to the Council Chamber and old library area will improve the education facilities in the town centre and showcase Kidderminster’s heritage.



Welcoming Kidderminster Place

A range of jobs and homes brings a diversity of people, supports services throughout the week, provides ‘natural surveillance’ and creates a safer, friendlier town centre.

Streets and spaces will achieve a more appropriate balance between vehicles and other users. Some level of traffic can help increase activity and perceptions of safety but low traffic speeds are essential to ensure pedestrians and cyclists feel safe. 20mph will be the default approach within the town centre.

New public spaces encourage interaction between all sections of the community, reducing social isolation. Regular seating will provide opportunities for rest. High quality public toilets will improve health and make it easier for younger children, women, the disabled and older people to visit Kidderminster.

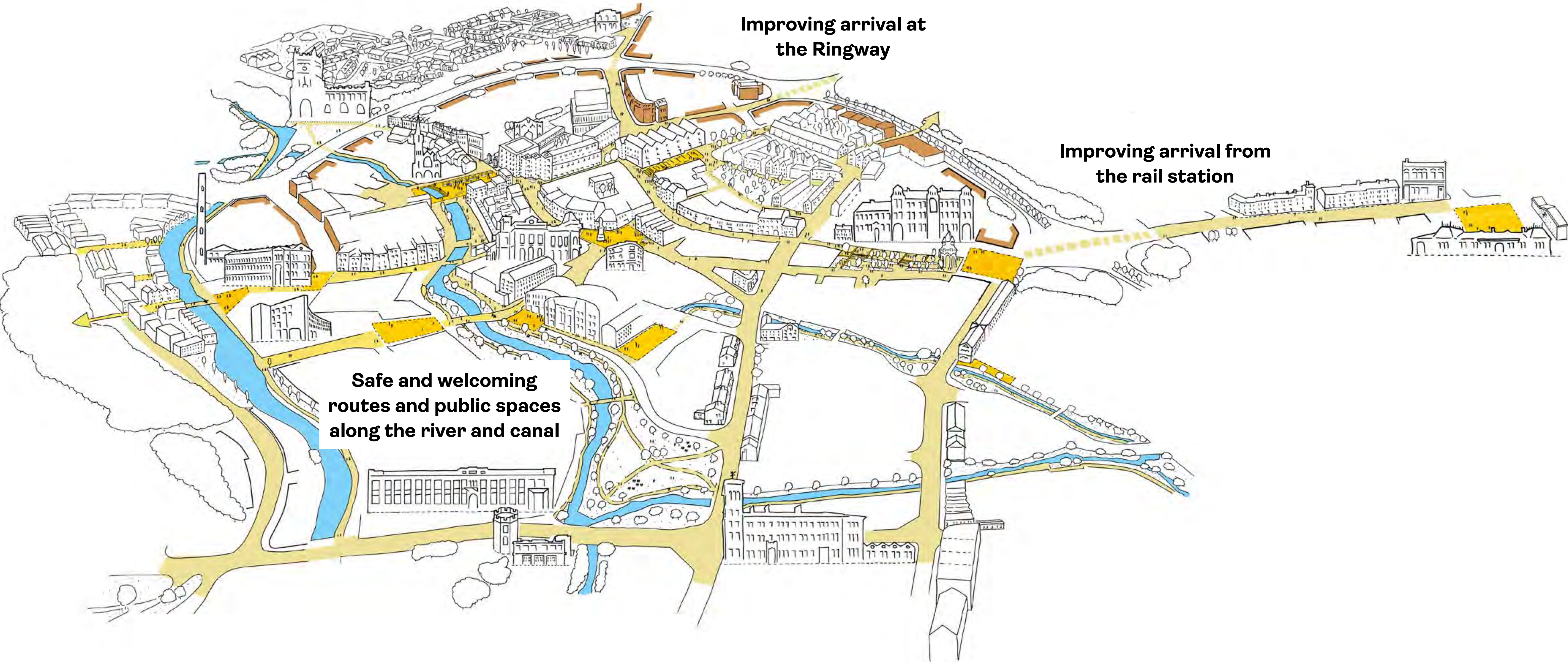
Whilst The Ringway will continue to move significant volumes of traffic, it will no longer act as a barrier between the town centre and those local communities that it currently divides. Revised junction layouts and new crossing facilities will ensure that key routes into town for those walking and cycling will be legible, convenient and enjoyable.



The Vision for Kidderminster is for all residents to feel safe and comfortable visiting the town centre, to feel welcome in its buildings, streets and spaces, and to be able to move easily and safely around it.

Welcoming Kidderminster Place

The Vision creates a variety of new pedestrian routes and new public spaces to help all people feel safe, comfortable and welcome in the town centre.



Key Project: The Bull Ring

Kidderminster has already invested in demolishing Crown House, which has opened up views of the Baxters URC church and created a significant new opportunity area at the Bull Ring. Funding has been obtained from the Future High Streets Fund to consider the potential of re-opening the River Stour in this area to create a new gateway into the town, and a new public space with new bars and cafes to enable visitors to enjoy the water.



Brotorget Square



The public said:
“Make use of the river area – restaurants and cafés, green spaces. Kidderminster could be beautiful. The old Crown House site should not be a car park.”

Key Project: Pop-up and Meanwhile

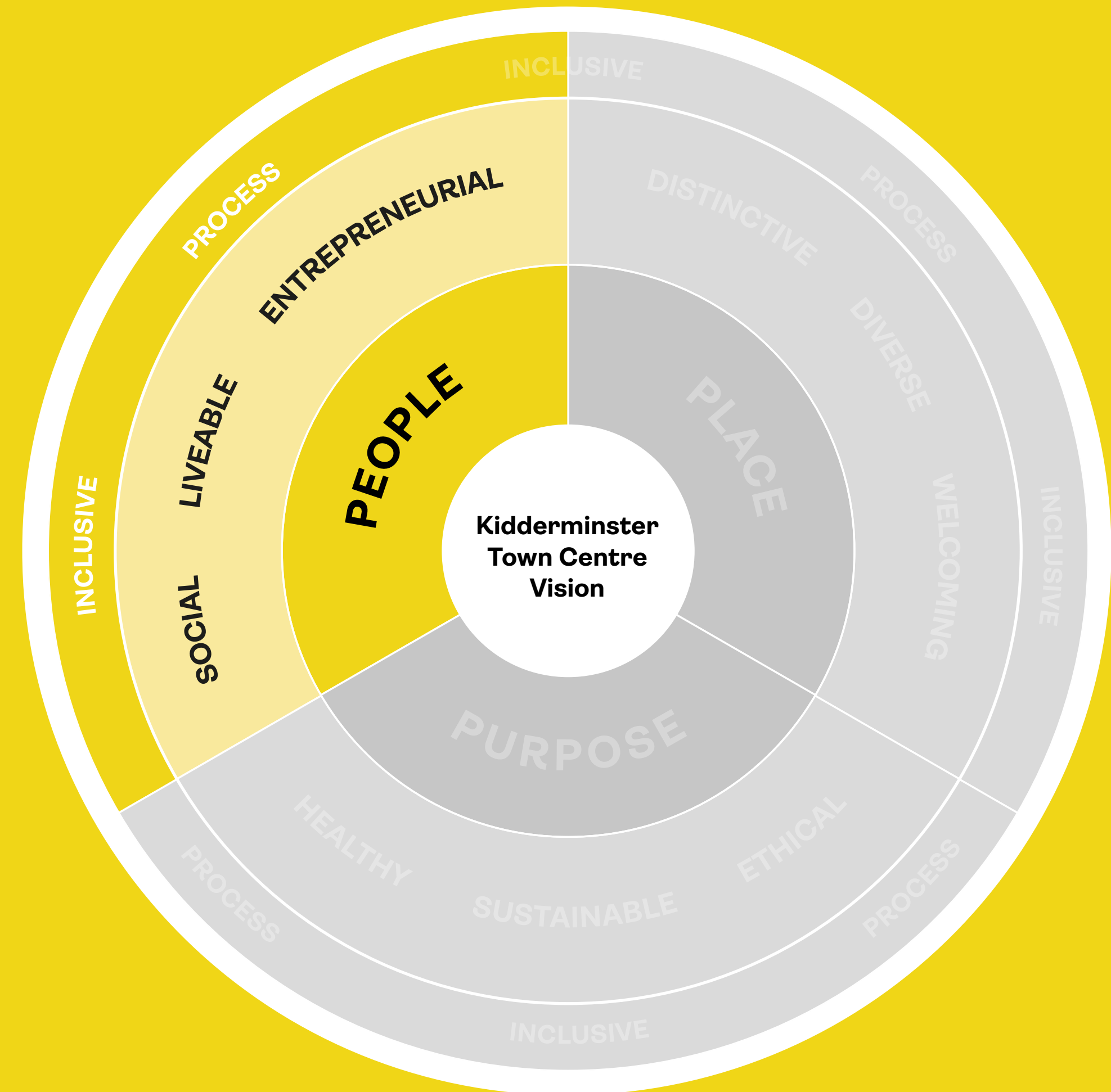
The Vision creates a ‘guerrilla’ quarter along the River Stour between the new Bull Ring and the bars and restaurants at Husum Bridge. Pop up stalls, street food, public art, events and meanwhile uses will create an exciting riverfront connection at the heart of the town centre.



4. People

Prioritising people creates ‘liveable’ town centres. Having more people living in the town centre supports the town centre retailers and services, stabilising and if done well, reversing the decline.

It needs more than just living. Kidderminster Town Centre will put people ahead of cars, consider accessibility for all, put people’s health, wellbeing and social needs ahead of the shareholder demands of business. Kidderminster Town Centre will prioritise the environment, learning and leisure in the knowledge that a vibrant retail and strong economic culture will ‘feed off’ a place where people want to be.



Liveable Kidderminster

People

Town centre living is contributing to the renaissance of towns nationwide creating vibrant and often entrepreneurial communities that themselves are major drivers of change, evolution and regeneration. Kidderminster deserves new living that is designed for Kidderminster, not something that can be rolled out anywhere – there are opportunities to lead on this through developments the Council is able to bring forward, instead of being reliant on third party landowners.

The public said: “*Be innovative and provide opportunities for co-living and home-working, alongside family housing*”.



In Cambridge, Marmalade Lane is an award winning co-housing scheme, in which residents benefit from larger areas of shared space and shared facilities and ‘a more social way of life’. The innovative and inclusive process ensures residents are involved at the design stage and in the management of the community.



Goldsmith Street is an award winning, eco-friendly affordable development in Norwich. It was the first social housing scheme to win the Stirling Prize for architecture



Better use will be made of surface car parks, with the opportunity to create higher density schemes bringing life to the town centre, creating safer public spaces and providing homes for young people. In Bristol, 11 affordable and low-carbon, modular ‘zedpods’ were built above Council owned car parking spaces as permanent living space for young workers.



Better use will be made of the opportunities for waterfront living, especially in terms of connecting the Timber Yard site over the canal to the town centre. In Walsall, Urban Splash are replacing a small canalside car park with 15 new modular homes and a small park.

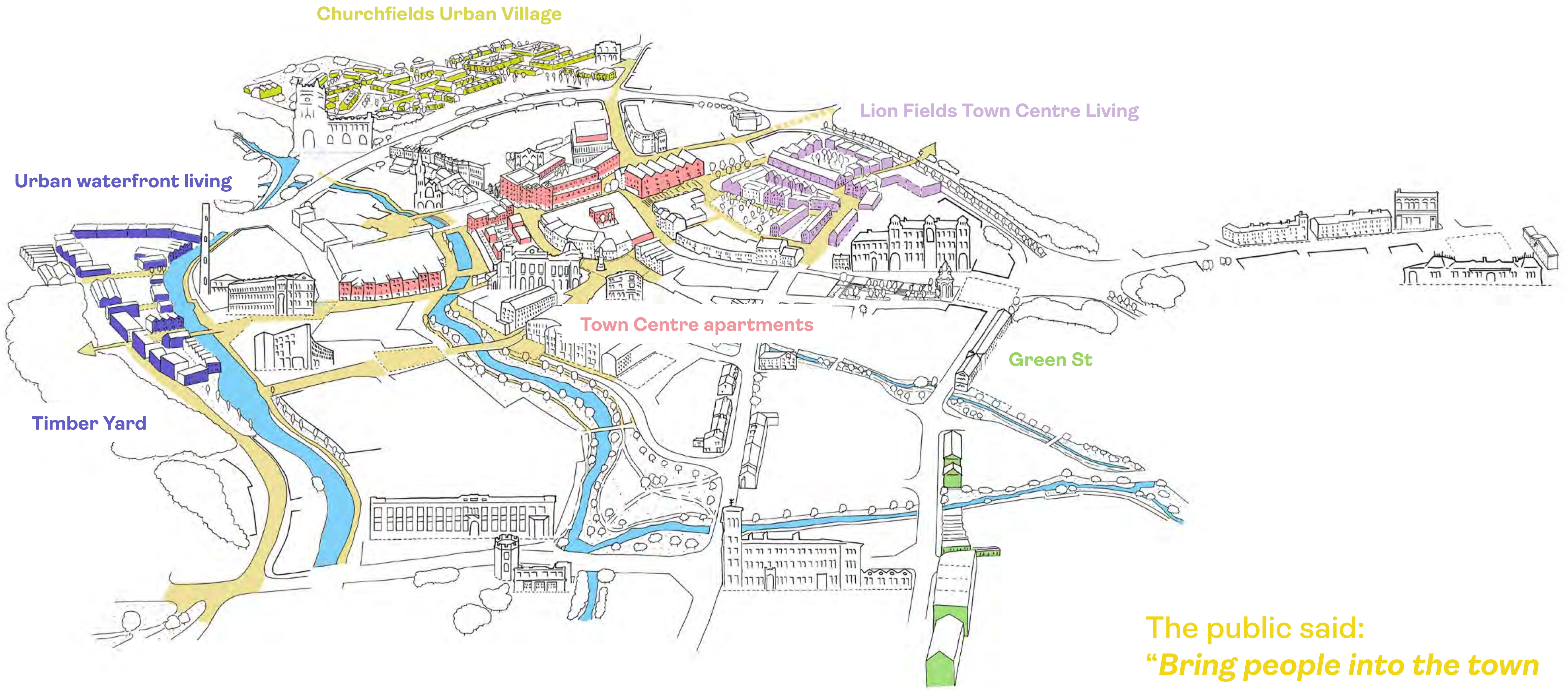


Redevelopment of a former industrial site provides new and improved tow paths, residential including 2, 3 & 4 bedrooms with parking and gardens, community, leisure and new green space all with a nod to the areas industrial heritage which is reflected in the architectural character and is helping to bring people back to redundant industrial sites.

The public said your “**Number one housing priority is affordable homes for young people.**”

The public said: “**Provide more opportunities for people to work from home in Kidderminster**”

The Vision brings a critical mass of new homes that will transform perceptions of town centre living in Kidderminster. It recognises the opportunities for waterfront living along the canal and river at the Timber Yard, new homes at Lion Fields with great views over the town and the 'urban village' qualities of Churchfields.



The public said:
“Bring people into the town
centre with more housing –
make it a community!”

Key Project: Lion Fields

Significant potential exists at Lion Fields for a new mixed-use quarter, providing a range of innovative housing and live-work space, connected to Worcester Street and the Former Magistrate’s Court creative quarter, complementing the proposed leisure investment and within easy walking distance of the rail station. An imaginative scheme could transform perceptions of family living in Kidderminster town centre.

Priority: More people living in the town centre



Key Project: Timber Yard Waterfront Living

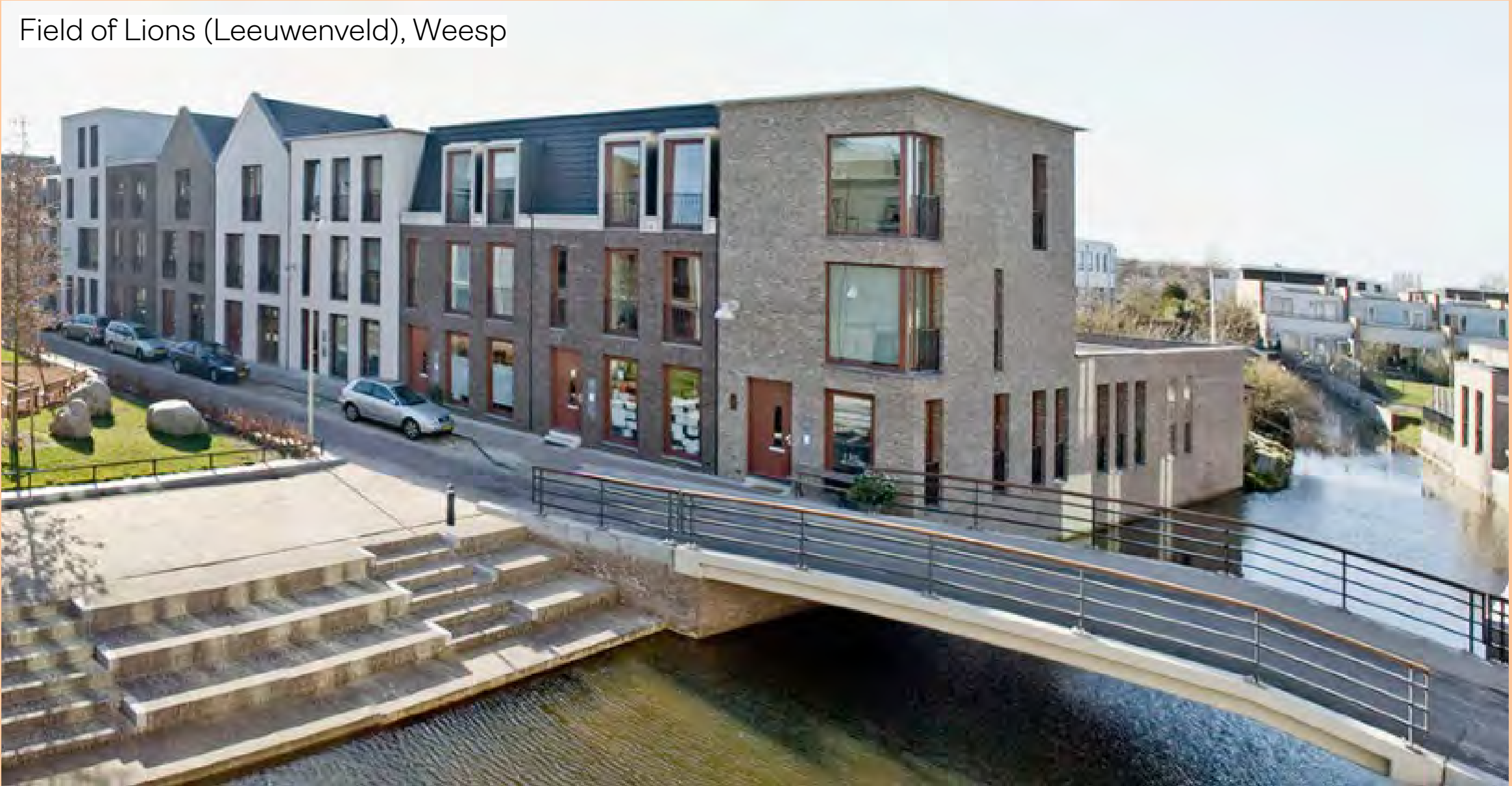
The Timber Yard site offers a great opportunity for waterfront living, taking advantage of the canal and creating a new connection across the water connecting residential areas into the town centre.

An innovative and forward-thinking scheme here could attract and retain a younger generation, by offering desirable and affordable homes within easy walking distance of the town centre facilities and public transport hubs. The site would complement the different character of residential opportunities at Lion Fields and Churchfields Urban Village.

The public said: “***Pack it full of people living and working there. A town centre full of people will make it a lot more vibrant and exciting place to be!***”



Buizengat, Rotterdam



Field of Lions (Leeuwendveld), Weesp



Foundry Mews, London



New Islington, Manchester



Field of Lions (Leeuwendveld), Weesp

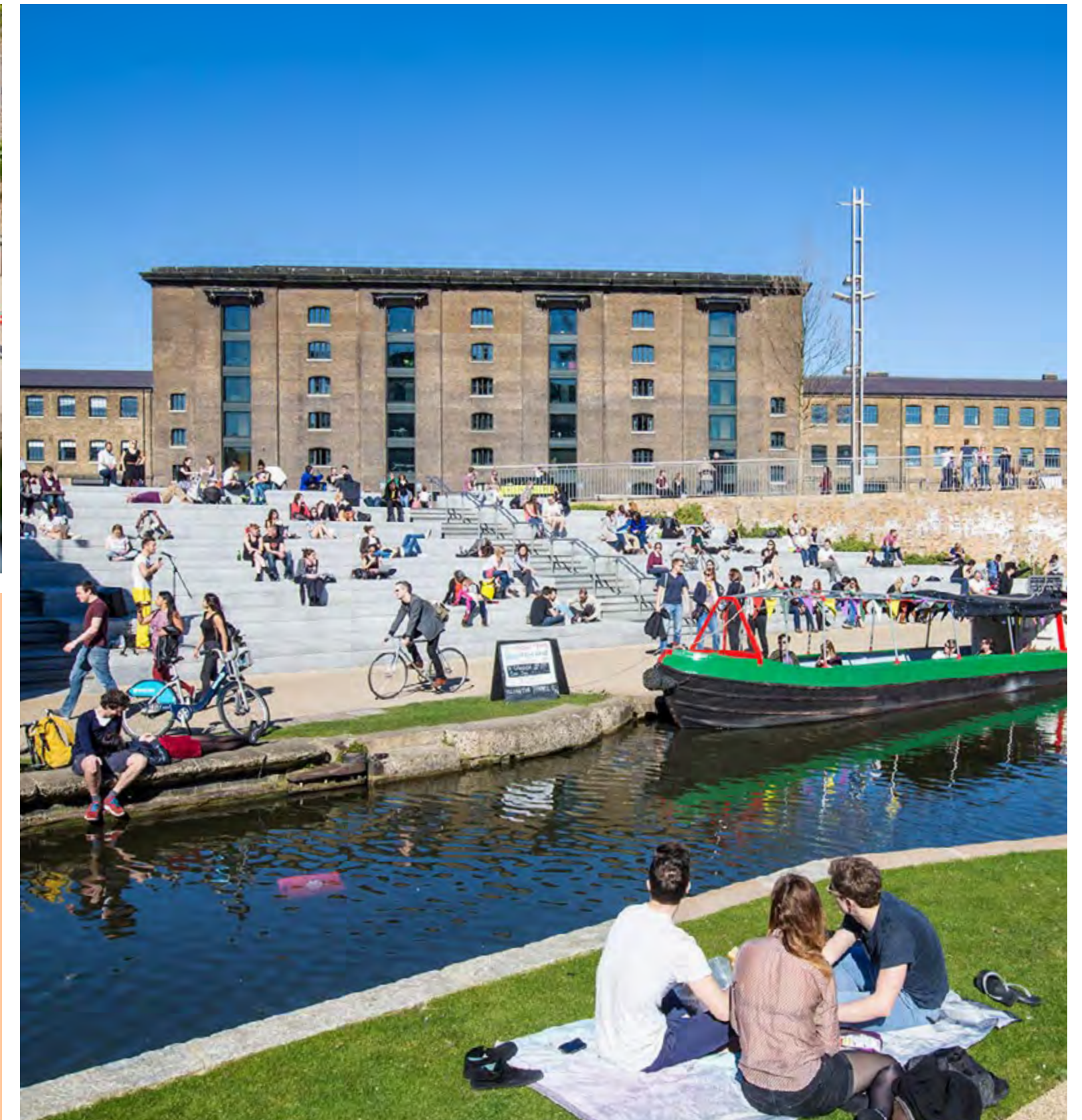
Social Kidderminster

People

Successful town centres have always been about more than shopping, we just forgot that for a while. Kidderminster must be a social place where people will choose to gather for eating, drinking, leisure, culture, education, recreation and community activities, as well as to shop. It will also be a place where people want to come just to relax, meet friends and 'hang out'.

The survey shows that local people value the independent cafes and restaurants in the town centre, and the opportunity Kidderminster provides for outdoor eating and drinking along the river. The Vision extends these opportunities by bringing new uses along the stretch of river between the Bull Ring and Husum Bridge and by opening up the river in the new 'Bull Ring' public space.

Priority: Better open public space to hold events and festivals



The Vision creates places to meet friends and relax in the heart of the town. It opens up the river corridor and shows the opportunity for a new town park. A new space close to the College will help younger people feel more at home in the town centre.

Key Project: Worcester Street Steps

The ‘Kidderminster Steps’ will create a new destination on Worcester Street, a space for residents and for those visiting the new town centre cinema and leisure attractions.



Entrepreneurial Kidderminster

People

Successful town centres evolve. This means they are flexible enough to be able to respond to social and economic change in a way. And in a way that makes the best use of their existing physical assets.

Currently, as the demand for physical retail space declines, town centre buildings and streets need to repurpose themselves for a variety of uses, including employment space. More and more new small businesses are being set up every year, and they need low-cost, interesting flexible space, close to town centres and rail stations.

The Vision provides opportunities for small businesses to test the demand for their products through pop up activity, street markets and market halls. This provides low cost opportunities for start-ups and encourages longer term for demand for permanent space in the town centre. Worcester Street is a perfect example, anchored by the Swan Centre and the Magistrate’s Court and with opportunities for reuse of vacant buildings.



We asked what do you want from Kidderminster in the future? The public said:
“Independent retailers with eco friendly ethics.” “Small local shops, more personal and interesting.”



Entrepreneurial Kidderminster

People

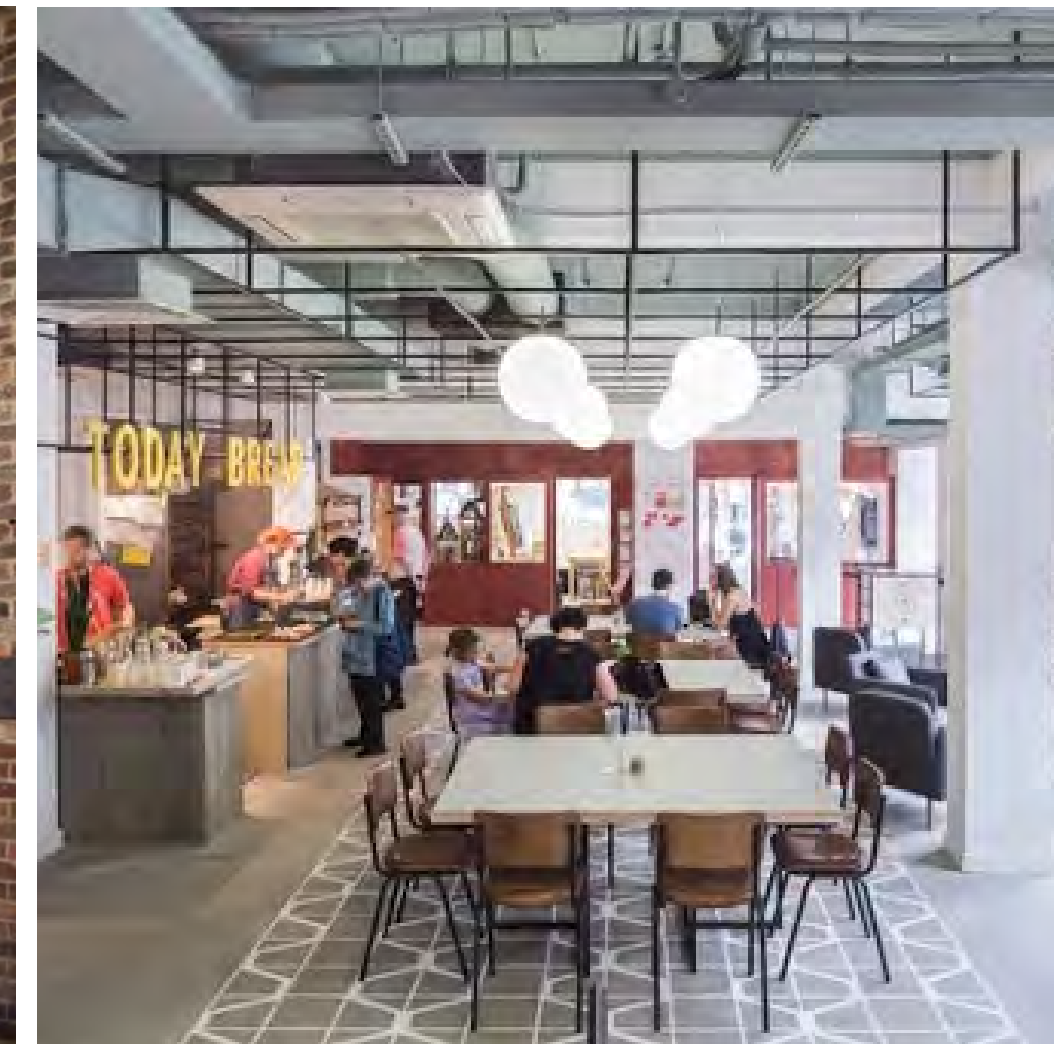
Swan Centre and Rowland Hill

Shopping centres are having to reimagine and ‘repurpose’ themselves as shopping habits change and the demand for retail floorspace falls. The Swan Centre and Rowland Hill shopping centres are well located to bring more homes and more business space into Kidderminster town centre.

Curating co-working space is an opportunity to meet the demand for ‘working from home’ and growth in small business formation. Rooftop space provides potential for community and leisure spaces, for pop up events, bars and restaurants and for new homes.

Post Covid, many shopping centres are also looking to meet the growing demand for local, neighbourhood based shopping. Curating foodhalls and independent ‘department stores’ for small businesses.

The public said the number one priority is: ***“More local and independent shops in the town centre.”***

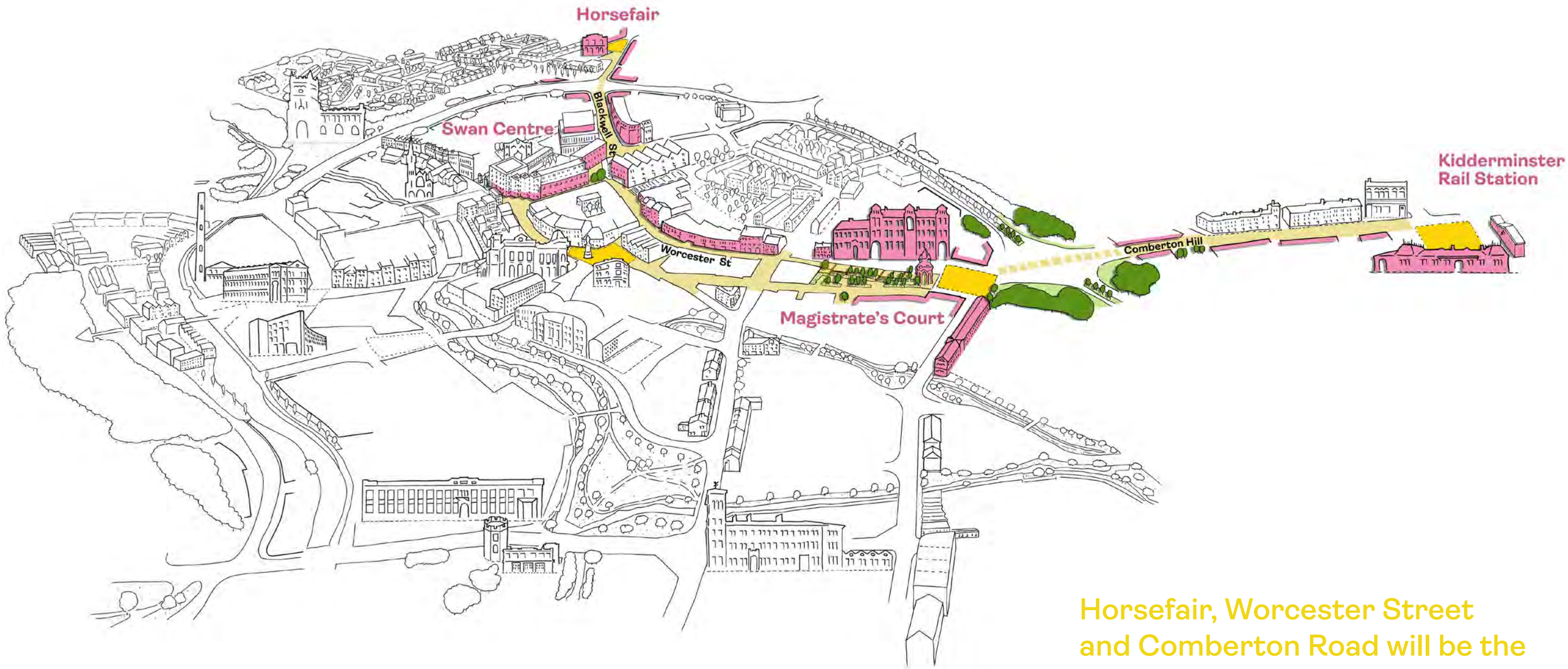


Central Parade, Walthamstow is former council office space on the High Street. It is currently being operated by a local community interest company as a mixed use creative hub, including a variety of retail, co-working, studio and exhibition space and a bakery-café. It also offers cultural events and activities throughout the week and into the evening.

The Avenue shopping centre in Bournemouth is being repurposed as a place where local independents will be combined with bigger brands. It will be more than just a place where you can buy things and be based more on experiences, for example a coffee come bike repair shop will provide the only covered café in the town centre. There will be offices, event spaces, a giant TV screen for public screenings and in due course a roof top bar and places to live.



This Vision places Worcester Street at the heart of an entrepreneurial mixed-use ‘neighbourhood’, providing interesting and unique places to eat, drink, shop, live and work. It would showcase the best of Kidderminster’s local, specialist, independent businesses through the day and into the evening extending from the railway station to Horsefair, incorporating a repurposed Magistrate’s Court, Rowland Hill and Swan Centre.



Horsefair, Worcester Street and Comberton Road will be the independent, entrepreneurial spine of Kidderminster

Key Project: Kidderminster Creative Hub

Former Magistrate’s Court Building

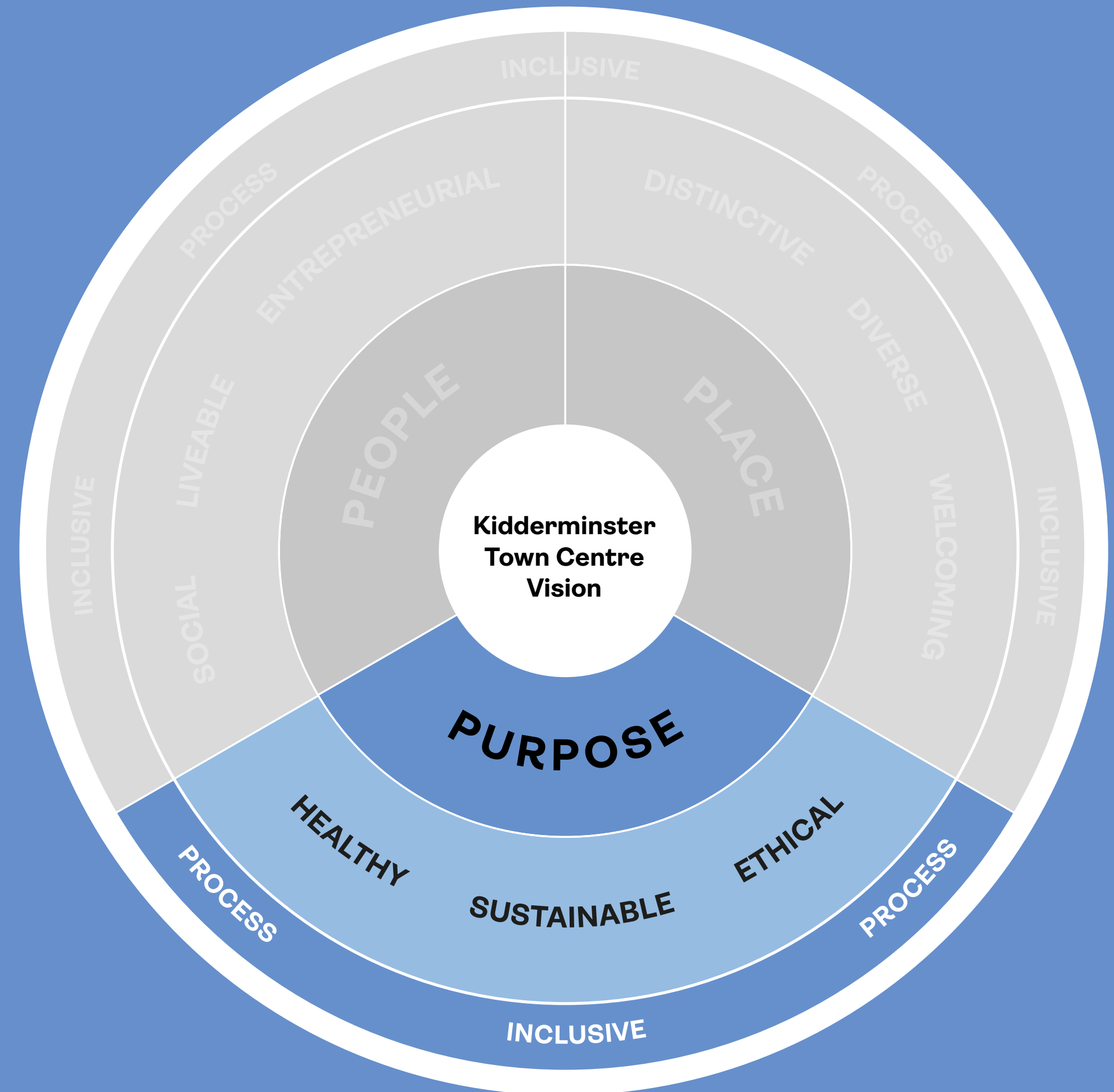
The Former Magistrate’s Court building has funding to create a focus for creative industries and small businesses. Large, empty buildings which are unsuitable for national retailers can be home to a variety of small businesses, bringing life and interest to the street and potential expenditure to support other independent shops, cafes and services.



5. Purpose

Successful towns have a civic and a social purpose, reflected not just in the uses and activities that it provides but in the way it does business.

A place with a clear, defined purpose will always be successful. By rooting a place in purpose you create a strong foundation for decision making, which in turn creates a clear path for the future.



Leading with purpose is essential to building and maintaining a successful town. It’s about coming together to get behind a common mission, creating a set of shared values and goals. By putting purpose at the heart of a town, you are essentially creating a blueprint for the present and future success of a place.

‘What do we believe in and how do we get there?’ sits at the heart of a town’s purpose.

Believing in a healthy town shows that you are dedicated to continually creating and improving the physical and social environments of a place. Health not only applies to residents but includes the health of the local environment too.

Believing in a sustainable town puts the climate crisis at the heart of a place’s purpose. Now more than ever it is vital that a town meets the needs of the citizen’s without compromising the ability for future generations to flourish.

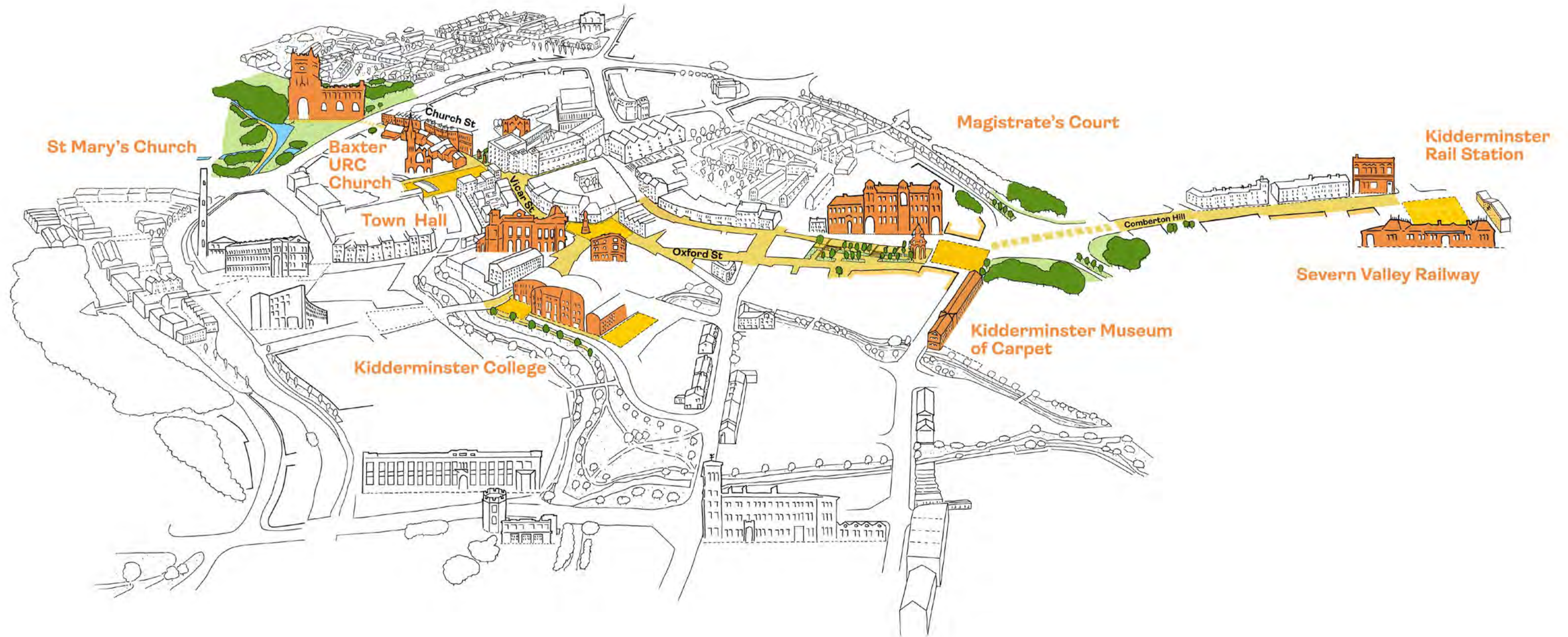
Believing in an ethical city is about promoting what is right, fair, just and good both for the people and the place. It’s about looking at good governance, transparency, social inclusion.

Kidderminster's Vision puts education and culture at the heart of the town centre, literally and metaphorically. Kidderminster College, the Library and Town Hall will be an accessible focus for education, culture and public services at the heart of the town, with a strong civic presence on Vicar Street, Exchange Street and the river corridor.

A new civic street

Purpose

The route from the Rail Station to Kidderminster Town Hall and St Mary's Church will be reimagined as Kidderminster's Civic Corridor, with treatment of the public realm highlighting the importance of its manufacturing heritage, the new creative industries, its civic and cultural buildings.



Key Project: Kidderminster College

A sustainable town centre makes the most of its existing buildings. A vacant building strategy has been commissioned, and Kidderminster will continue to explore ways in which its historical buildings can be brought back into productive use.

Kidderminster is demonstrating “purpose” with its plans to turn the magnificent Magistrates Court into a town centre creative community beacon. The creative industries have been and continue to be at the forefront of town centre renaissances creating economic and social benefit.

New public spaces celebrate the town’s civic and cultural activities, recognising its history and looking to the future:

- A new square to recognise the importance of modern rail connections to Birmingham and the visitor role of the Severn Valley Railway.
- A new arrival space to announce the regeneration of the Magistrate’s Court and the continuing relevance of the Carpet Museum to the fabric and identity of the town.
- New spaces providing appropriate settings for Baxter URC and St Mary’s Church.
- And new spaces to recognise the central role of education to the life of the town and its people.



A new extension and south facing public space would emphasise the important civic role of Kidderminster College, and provide a new space for young people to socialise.

Healthy Kidderminster

Purpose

Healthy town centres encourage physical activity, address social exclusion, provide clean air and a variety of green space. Kidderminster is a very ‘walkable’ town centre, and more of its residents could be walking and cycling. The Vision removes the key barriers to walking and cycling, particularly the underpass from the rail station and the difficult connection across the Ring Road to Churchfields and St Mary’s Church. Reducing car dependency will reduce pollution, traffic danger and congestion. Increased active travel will also improve residents’ health and quality of life.



The public said “*We need safe lock-ups for bicycles, I would cycle into town instead of taking the car.*”

Low traffic neighbourhoods are now being introduced across the country, but the London Borough of Waltham Forest in northwest London has been a pioneer in this regard, implementing modal filters to remove rat-running in residential neighbourhoods. Local vehicle access is still permitted whilst conditions for walking, cycling and simply living are all improved as the quantity and speed of vehicles is reduced.

The Mini-Holland scheme is part of the London Mayor’s Healthy Streets Approach and is aimed specifically at outer London boroughs where residents are more car dependent than inner London. It aims to make these boroughs as cycle-friendly as their Dutch equivalents – where more than 50% of journeys are made by cycle in some cities.

Key Project: Ring Road Arrival

Greening the Ring Road will improve arrival into the town centre for visitors, and improve the quality of the environment for residents. Improved pedestrian crossings and removal of subways will make it easier for residents to walk and cycle into the town centre. Revised junction layouts and new crossing facilities will ensure that key routes into town for those walking and cycling will be legible, convenient and enjoyable. Improvements will focus on connections to residential areas, to the rail station, to Horsefair and to St Mary’s Church.



In 2016 1.6km of Sheffield’s inner city dual-carriageway was transformed with two lanes of the original highway replaced with wild flowers, trees and shrubs as well as seating and public art.



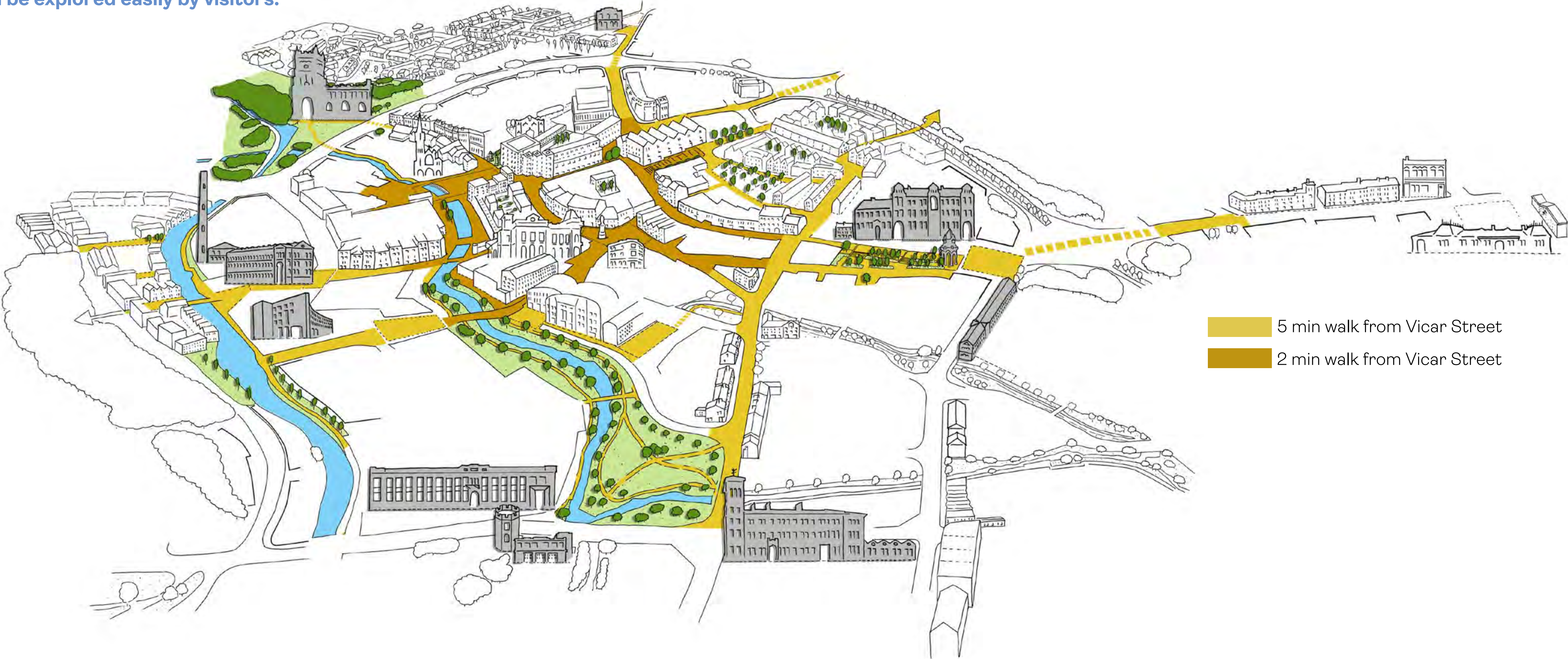
As part of the “Connecting Leicester” project the Belgrave Flyover, built in 1974, was demolished to create a landscaped gateway between the city centre and the Golden Mile.

The Vision creates a compact and walkable town centre. The survey shows that people who walk and cycle visit the town centre more often and spend more. People who walk are more likely to visit local businesses and more likely to visit pubs, bars and restaurants in the evening. So walking is good for physical health, mental health, environmental health and economic health.

Healthy Kidderminster

Purpose

Kidderminster is a compact and highly walkable town centre. A wide range of interesting retail, cultural and leisure attractions are within a comfortable 5-minute walk of Vicar Street, and can be explored easily by visitors.



Green space improves the physical and mental health of those living and working in the town centre. It encourages visitors to stay longer. It promotes biodiversity and helps to address the climate emergency.

The Vision addresses the lack of green space in Kidderminster town centre. It opens up the river as a more natural linear green space, connecting St Mary's Church to the Bull Ring to Castle Street and Dixon Street.

Sustainable Kidderminster

Purpose

The Vision capitalises on the opportunities for more green space in Kidderminster town centre, particularly along the waterfront but also in new public spaces and along the Ring Road.



Key Project: Riverside Park

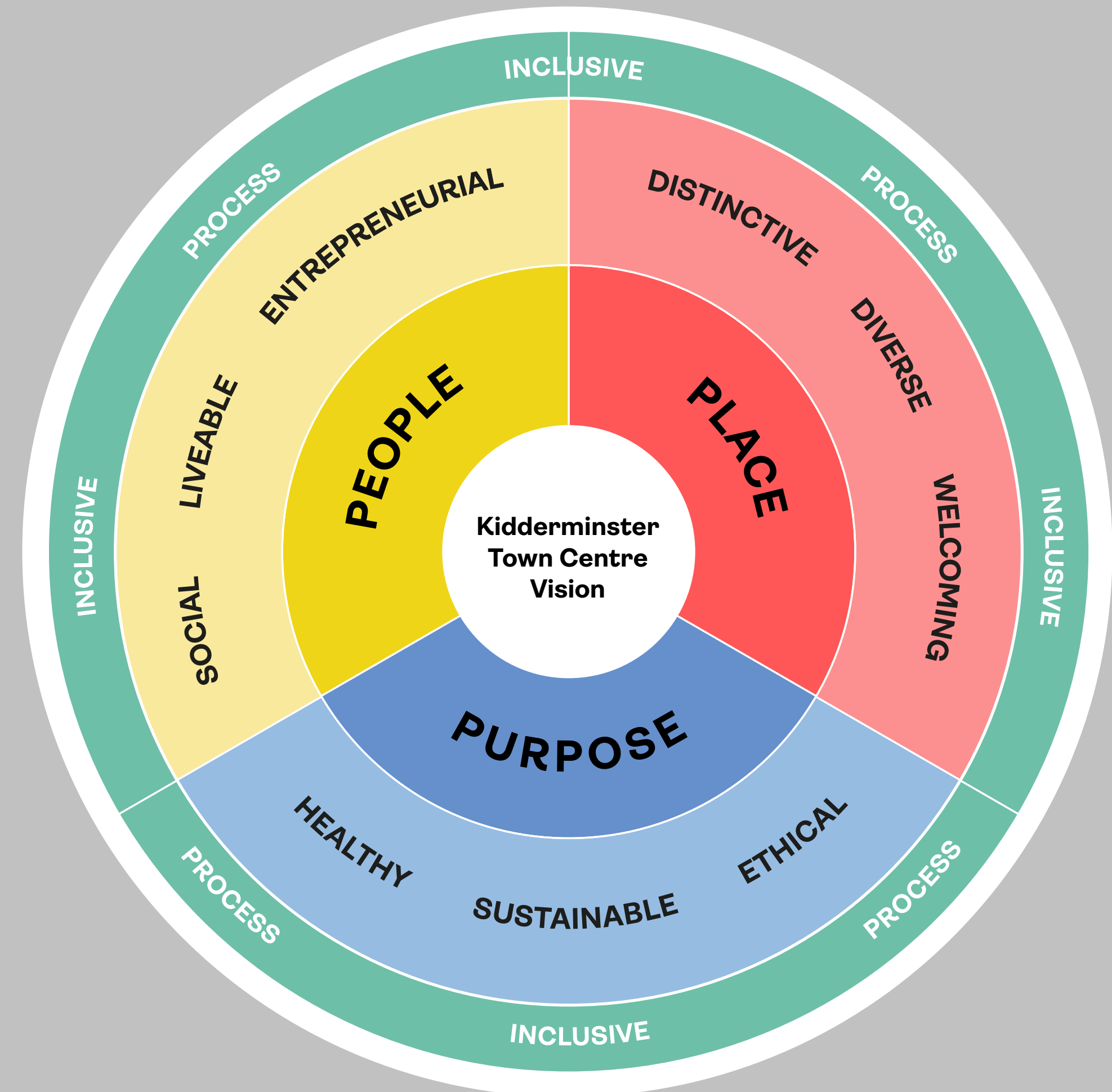
Decked car parking makes efficient use of space, creating opportunities for a larger riverside park, a place to relax and to celebrate the natural and built environment of Kidderminster.

Priority:
More green space
and access to the
river and canal



6. Projects

This is an exciting time for Kidderminster town centre. It has the essential ingredients for a successful future. There is public support for change, a clear Vision to guide that change, a Council that is willing to lead the way and funding available to start to implement that change. The town will ultimately be judged by its actions, by the way it engages with its community and by the quality of development that results.



The Kidderminster Vision Projects

Kidderminster has secured over £20m from the Future High Streets Fund which will help start to deliver this Vision. Funding is allocated for the regeneration of the Magistrate’s Court, for the new public space at the Bull Ring, for improvements to Worcester Street and to support strategic property acquisitions. The Vision will also be used to support Kidderminster’s bid to the Levelling Up Fund. Key projects could include the provision of new housing in the town centre, new uses for the Piano Building and connecting the Timber Yard site to Weavers Wharf across the canal. These programmes will reinforce other proposals to enhance the town centre, including improvements to the Town Hall facilities, expansion of Kidderminster College and measures to improve walking and cycling into the town centre.

A coordinated Action Plan will therefore be prepared to deliver the following projects identified within this Vision:

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	KEY VISION PRINCIPLES
Kidderminster Town Hall	Enhancement of cultural and performance facilities within one of Kidderminster’s most important civic buildings (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Liveable, Entrepreneurial, Ethical
Heritage and the Public Realm	Working with the Museum of Carpet and local artists to promote Kidderminster’s textile heritage through design of the public realm (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Entrepreneurial, Healthy, Ethical
Creative Business Hub	Renovation of the former Magistrate’s Court to create a focus for creative businesses in the town centre. (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Entrepreneurial, Ethical
Canalside Living	Redevelopment of the Timber Yard to create a new residential quarter for Kidderminster along the canal (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Social, Liveable, Sustainable, Healthy, Ethical
Churchfield Urban Village	Completion of the new residential quarter immediately north of the town centre(see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Social, Liveable, Sustainable, Healthy
Lion Fields	New mixed-use quarter, supporting new leisure and business development on Worcester Street and with potential for innovative new housing in the town centre (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Liveable, Entrepreneurial, Sustainable, Healthy, Ethical
Bull Ring	New public space, removing parking to enhance the setting of historic buildings and with possibilities to open up the river (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Liveable, Sustainable

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	KEY VISION PRINCIPLES
Pop up and Meanwhile	Promoting temporary uses to support new businesses, attract visitors and reuse vacant properties (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Entrepreneurial, Sustainable, Ethical
Riverside Park	Public space along the river edge to create new pedestrian routes and more green space in the town centre. (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Liveable, Healthy, Sustainable, Ethical
Worcester Street Steps	A new public space linking Lion Fields to the town centre, and creating a visitor destination to support independent businesses on Worcester Street (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Liveable, Healthy
Shopping Centres	Repurposing the indoor shopping environment at Rowland Hill and Swan Centre. Curating independent businesses and bringing opportunities for town centre living. (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Social, Liveable, Entrepreneurial, Sustainable, Ethical
The Ringway	Improving arrival for visitors and creating stronger routes for pedestrians and cyclists to ensure The Ringway is not a barrier to visiting the town centre (see page X)	Distinctive, Welcoming, Liveable, Healthy, Sustainable
Station Approach	A new public square for this important civic area. Encouraging travel by rail and visits to the Severn Valley Railway and Museum, improving arrival and strengthening walking and cycling routes into the town centre (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Liveable, Entrepreneurial, Healthy, Sustainable, Ethical
Kidderminster College	A new entrance space and social space to recognise the importance of education and young people in the town centre, and the key civic role of the College (see page X)	Distinctive, Diverse, Welcoming, Social, Entrepreneurial, Ethical

