LDF

Swindon Borough Local Development Framework

Swindon Central Area Action Plan

Giving Swindon Back its Heart

Adopted Development Plan Document

www.swindon.gov.uk/centralareaactionplan

Swindon Borough Council

Foreword

The Council has an exciting and ambitious vision to create in Central Swindon:

An area that has life and energy throughout the day and into the evening. An attractive, safe, healthy and accessible place that people choose for leisure, living, shopping and working. Where civic pride is strong and where its prosperity drives the region's economy.

To help deliver this, Swindon Borough Council has prepared a Central Area Action Plan, which provides a planning framework that will guide the future development of Central Swindon.

Through the full engagement of the Swindon community and other key stakeholders, we believe that the Action Plan represents a broad consensus of opinion on the best approach to delivering the much needed regeneration of Central Swindon.

Councillor Bluh
Leader of the Council

Councillor Greenhalgh
Cabinet Member for
Highways, Transport &
Strategic Planning

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1 Introduction

This Central Area Action Plan provides a detailed policy framework for delivering the regeneration of Central Swindon, an area that encompasses the Town Centre, the Railway Village, the historic Great Western Railway Works, North Star, Old Town and surrounding residential areas.

Development in Central Swindon has failed to match the economic success of the rest of the Borough. As a result Central Swindon fails to provide a real focus for the town. Central Swindon's poor image and the limited facilities that it offers threaten the future development of the town. Regeneration is essential to enable Central Swindon to develop to the level expected of a town of Swindon's status and to support the town's role as a regionally important centre.

Development Strategy Area Action Plan Boundary
Map Not to Scale

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The Council's Aim and Objectives for Central Swindon

The Council has an exciting and ambitious plan to create in Central Swindon:

An area that has life and energy throughout the day and into the evening. An attractive, safe, healthy and accessible place that people choose for leisure, living, shopping and working. Where civic pride is strong and where its prosperity drives the region's economy.

Informed by the Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan and public consultation, eleven core objectives for the regeneration of Central Swindon have been identified, which the policies of this Action Plan will seek to deliver. These objectives are in place to enable and ensure:

- Central Swindon is a destination of choice within the region.
- The co-ordination and delivery of high quality and accessible services and facilities that are needed to support the communities living in or adjacent to Central Swindon.
- The delivery of high quality and innovative design.
- The protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment.
- That new development promotes energy efficiency, prudent use of resources, and makes a positive contribution to the environment.
- The provision of wider opportunities for Central Swindon living.
- The delivery of commercial and employment generating development that contributes to the continued economic prosperity of the Borough.
- The creation of safe, convenient, user-friendly and attractive routes into, out of and through Central Swindon, to help develop a vibrant and active community.
- The enhancement of existing areas of public spaces and delivery of new public spaces.
- The delivery of a strong and vibrant university presence in Central Swindon.
- The creation of a Town Centre that provides a cultural and civic focus as a regional centre.

Purpose of the Central Area Action Plan

The Central Area Action Plan provides a planning framework to facilitate the delivery of the regeneration of Central Swindon.

The Policies of the Action Plan are informed by the Council's core objectives for Central Swindon. These are translated into development principles and enshrined within the Development Strategy (Part I of the Plan). The Development Strategy is amplified by area based policies (Part II of the Plan), which provide a detailed policy framework to deliver existing development opportunities, supplemented by more strategic guidance to deliver Swindon's longer-term aspirations for Central Swindon.

All planning applications submitted to the Council within Central Swindon will be assessed against the policy framework contained within the Action Plan. The Action Plan provides certainty to developers and infrastructure providers in their future investment programmes. They can be confident in making investment decisions knowing that planning decisions will be taken in the context of a sound policy framework and will not be arbitrary.

The Action Plan is an important means of facilitating the delivery of the Council's priorities and those of other public sector agencies.

Photograph by Roger D Smith ABIPP, Gosport

Format of the Central Area Action Plan

The Central Area Action Plan is in three parts.

Part I: The Strategy
Part II: Area Based Policies
Part III: The Implementation Plan

Part I: The Strategy

Part I translates the Council's core objectives for Central Swindon into a series of development principles. The four development principles which have an Action Plan-area wide application and which are considered to be fundamental to the successful regeneration of Central Swindon are Transport & Movement, Sustainability, Public Realm and Design.

Part II: Area Based Policies

Part II identifies five distinct 'character areas' within Central Swindon, each of which is subject to its own policy framework. This framework addresses the specific challenges and opportunities associated with that area and is informed by the Action Plan's objectives and development principles.

Part III: The Implementation Plan

Part III comprises the Implementation Plan, which details how the policies of the Action Plan will be delivered.

The Implementation Plan establishes a phasing mechanism for delivering regeneration in a co-ordinated manner, sets out the approximate development quantums for the identified development opportunities, and where applicable, outlines how the development will be funded. The Implementation Plan also details the Quality Assurance measures that will be put in place to ensure that Central Swindon's regeneration properly reflects the aspirations and needs of Swindon.

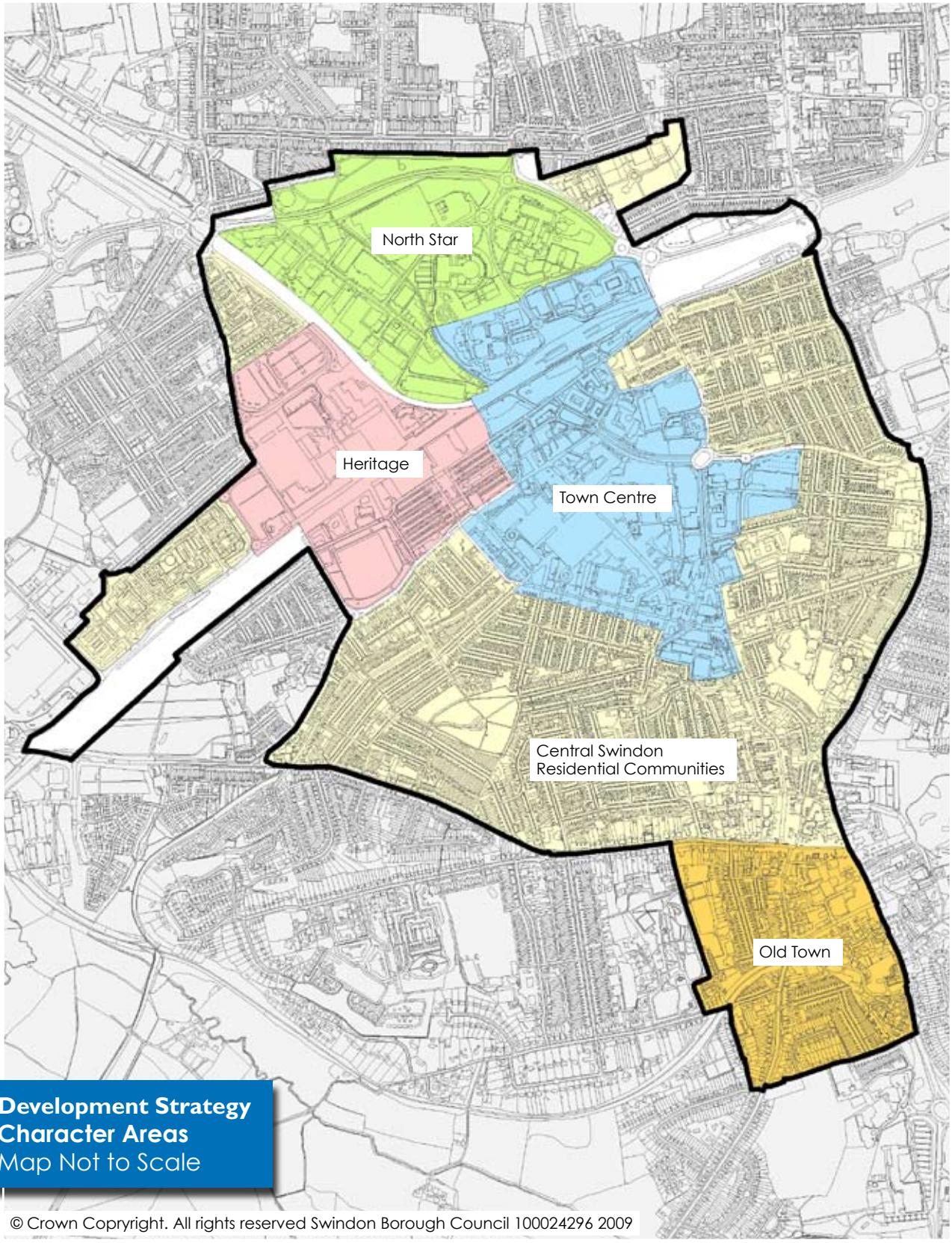
A summary of the key implementation issues is provided at the end of each Action Plan policy.

Development Strategy: Character Areas

tracing paper

Key

- Town Centre
- Central Swindon Residential Communities
- Railway Heritage Area
- North Star
- Old Town



Development Strategy Character Areas
Map Not to Scale

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Chain of Conformity

The Central Area Action Plan provides a detailed policy framework to facilitate and guide development in Central Swindon over the period to 2016. This detailed policy framework is supplemented by strategic guidance to facilitate the delivery of Swindon's longer-term aspirations for Central Swindon over the period to 2026.

The detailed policy framework to 2016 supplements and amplifies the adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan (2011) and the adopted Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan (2016).

The Action Plan updates and replaces the corresponding policies and allocations of the Swindon Borough Local Plan (2011). The adopted Action Plan therefore supersedes these parts of the Swindon Borough Local Plan in providing the statutory development plan framework for Central Swindon. However, the saved general policies of the Swindon Borough Local Plan still apply in the consideration of development proposals.

The policies and allocations in the Action Plan are fully in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Local Plan and the Structure Plan. In view of the scale and nature of the projects contained in the Plan, its implementation runs up to 2016, in accord with the adopted Structure Plan.

The Action Plan's strategic guidance to 2026 has been informed by, and fully accords with, the policies and proposals being taken forward in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (2006-2026) and the emerging Swindon Borough Core Strategy.

Should the final versions of the Regional Spatial Strategy or the Core Strategy conflict with the policies and allocations of the Action Plan the Council will seek to review the conflicting elements of the Action Plan at the earliest opportunity. However no conflicts are envisaged given that the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy and Core Strategy actively promote the regeneration of Central Swindon. We need the Action Plan to update the existing policy framework. Without the Action Plan regeneration would have no focus or context beyond the outdated Regeneration Framework and the Council's adopted Local Plan, which is not sufficiently specific to enable appropriate management of regeneration.

Part I:
The Strategy

2 Development Strategy

The Development Principles

The successful regeneration of Central Swindon will help Swindon achieve the status of a regional centre that looks, feels and functions in a way that capitalizes on the demand for urban living and that offers a wealth of social and economic opportunities to residents, visitors, businesses and investors alike.

This section sets out the principles that will shape the delivery of a successful Central Swindon.

Central Swindon is the sum of its parts and the future sustainability of the area and its communities is dependent on individual development opportunities being considered in the context of wider regeneration. The policies introduced through the Development Strategy allow us to consider the 'bigger picture', an approach that is fundamental to successful regeneration. An assessment of the individual contribution of new development to a better built environment is not sufficient to judge its impact. The ways in which the form and function of the wider area is improved by virtue of a development's collective contribution to public realm and transport and movement is now a key consideration.

The Development Strategy seeks to knit together the currently disparate areas of Central Swindon, address the existing structural deficiencies of the area and promote the consistent application of overarching spatial considerations packaged as four core development principles. The Central Swindon Concept Plan (page 22-23) identifies barriers to successful regeneration and proposes to overcome them by building on strengths and addressing weaknesses. An example of this is the Action Plan's commitment to improving the synergy between three of Swindon's strongest visitor destinations, the Town Centre, Old Town and the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre. Delivering better linkages between these centres will enable them work in unison to attract visitors and investment to Central Swindon.

The four core principles articulated through the Development Strategy relate to design (Policy CAAP1), sustainability (Policy CAAP2), public realm (Policy CAAP3) and transport and movement (Policies CAAP5 to 12). There is a strong commitment to deliver positive change in Central Swindon and these overarching drivers are the building blocks to deliver the step change improvement that the area requires.

Central Swindon, and in particular Swindon Town Centre, is characterised by a poor quality built environment. Similarly, Central Swindon's public realm is poor and as a consequence the area is difficult to navigate and appears neglected. A lack of green space further detracts from a positive recreational experience of Central Swindon. Movement into and around Central Swindon for all transport modes is difficult, in particular for visitors who are not familiar with its layout.

Policy CAAP1, High Quality and Innovative Design, seeks to deliver a step change in design quality throughout Central Swindon focussing in particular on the Town Centre. Policy CAAP3, Public Realm, acknowledges the need for investment in the Public Realm and is in place to deliver a legible and integrated network of streets, squares, parks and other spaces in and between key development opportunities that will positively transform the image of Swindon for residents, visitors, businesses and investors alike. In responding to weaknesses in the road network, the transport strategy seeks to improve access into and around the centre for the full range of transport modes (Policies CAAP5 to 12), with improvements being focussed in particular on enhanced linkages across the railway (Policy CAAP12) and reducing circulating and through traffic which will make a dramatic difference to congestion at peak times.

While all of the larger regeneration schemes will be mixed-use, they will remain 'use' led to reinforce area identities and promote day-long activity. The renaissance of Central Swindon will be built upon existing major development commitments and other identified development opportunities **(allocations D1-D10 on the Proposals Map)**, which offer opportunities for complementary and well connected new development.

The Promenade (Policy CAAP14 and Development Opportunity D8) is identified as the Cultural Quarter for Central Swindon which will build upon its anchor presence, the Wyvern Theatre. The area is immediately adjacent to the Retail Core, the centre for shopping and living (Policy CAAP13 and Development Opportunities D2, D3, D4 and D5 on the Proposals Map). Pedestrian footfall is highest here and focussed improvements to the environment through good design and high quality public realm will make a dramatic difference to connectivity and integration and help develop both their individual and complementary roles. The Commercial Quarter (Policy CAAP15 and Development Opportunity D6) is office led and will reinforce Swindon's strong economic profile. It is purposely located on a strong axis from the railway station, a key gateway to Central Swindon, and the Retail Core to encourage movement between the two along a primary route. In delivering the successful and inclusive regeneration of Central Swindon the residential communities adjoining the Town Centre (Policy CAAP19) should also enjoy tangible benefits of design quality and public realm improvements.

The most notable green infrastructure related public realm initiative is the Green Spine (Policy CAAP3) and it plays a major role in linking new and existing development in Central Swindon. All major regeneration proposals will be accessible directly off the main Green Spine or its green 'arms'. The Green Spine will not only deliver much-needed greenery to the centre but will provide a primary north-south route which will link Old Town and the Town Centre with North Star and beyond. This is vital in helping overcome the barrier created by the railway and will make the educational and leisure uses, both existing and proposed, at North Star (Policy CAAP17) and the Railway Corridor (Policy CAAP16 and Development Opportunity D7) more accessible, enabling the vibrant uses proposed to be sustained as an extension of the Town Centre.

Direct, legible and pleasant routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and at appropriate points vehicular traffic, will create a legible movement framework that can help repair the structural fabric of Central Swindon and make it a cohesive whole. The canal (Policy CAAP4) will offer up similar benefits as a route dedicated to alternative modes of transport. It will also provide an attraction that will encourage movement between the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre and the Town Centre and which will stimulate investment. The canal will also help raise the profile of the wider Railway Heritage Area (Policy CAAP18), a largely untapped gem at the heart of Swindon.

The Four Core Principles

Design

High quality, sustainable and inclusive design is a key priority. A step-change in design standards will be achieved through the rigorous examination of the design merits of all development schemes coming forward in Central Swindon improvements.

Sustainability

The Action Plan will help deliver the Council's commitment to make Swindon the 'UK's most sustainable place' by encouraging development that dramatically reduces its carbon footprint and generates a proportion of its own energy requirements.

Public Realm

The creation of a Green Spine through Central Swindon will bring much needed greenery into the area, and will also enhance pedestrian and cycle links between Central Swindon, the wider Swindon urban area and beyond. The main public spaces and routes within the Town Centre will be the focus of substantial improvements.

Transport and Movement

The Action Plan will facilitate improvements to all travel modes into and throughout Central Swindon to make it easily accessible to all. The Action Plan will also facilitate delivery of better linkages across the railway.

Further Guiding Principles

Supplementing these four principles, a further nine more detailed guiding principles have been identified, which have been informed by extensive public consultation. These principles are embedded within the area-specific policies in Part II of the Action Plan.

Improved Accessibility and Linkages

The Action Plan will help deliver dramatically improved linkages between the different parts of Central Swindon to create a safe and accessible environment that is easier to navigate and use for everyone.

Development Interfaces

Major new development proposals at key interfaces with existing communities will be required to address not just how the development works internally, but also how it links with, impacts on and complements these communities.

Existing Communities

StreetSmart and other environmental improvements will be implemented in the residential areas adjoining the Town Centre to make Central Swindon a much more attractive place to live in for new and existing residents. Communities will be empowered to identify and prioritise the improvements needed in their areas.

The Historic Built Environment

Central Swindon's rich historic built environment will be protected and enhanced and its profile raised.

The Canal

The Action Plan will help facilitate the re-creation of a canal through Central Swindon.

Culture and Leisure

The Action Plan will facilitate improvements and access to cultural and leisure facilities in Central Swindon. Such facilities will be expected to broaden the appeal of Central Swindon as a leisure destination.

Retail

The Action Plan will seek to radically improve the linkages between the Town Centre, Old Town and the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre to create in Central Swindon a shopping destination with the critical mass to allow the area to function as the prime shopping and leisure destination for a potential 250,000 resident population by 2026.

Office

Major quantitative and qualitative improvements are proposed to Central Swindon's office stock. These improvements will be primarily focused in the Railway Corridor Area and at Union Square.

Residential

Residential development in Central Swindon will be supported to create a more vibrant and non-threatening environment and to widen housing opportunity and choice.

The Concept Plan

These development principles are shown spatially on the Concept Plan.
(see following page)

Swindon Central Area Concept Plan

Legend :

- Transport Vision Area 2030
- The New Swindon Company Boundary

Existing Land Uses and Communities

- Major Vehicular Access Routes
- Landmark Buildings
- Existing Open Space
- Existing Retail
- Existing Commercial
- Existing Residential
- Existing Education and Leisure Provision
- Existing Railway Crossings
- Existing Communities

Opportunities and Proposals

- Green Infrastructure Opportunities
- New Railway Crossing and Existing Crossings Identified for Improvement
- New or Improved Public Spaces with Soft and/or Hard Landscaping
- Proposed Retail Improvements
- Firm Retail Proposals
- Proposed Commercial Improvements
- Firm Commercial Proposals
- Education or Leisure Opportunity
- Improved Gateway Sites
- Canal Route
- MU — Mixed Use Element to Scheme

Key Linkages and Development Interfaces

- Key Interface between New and Existing Development
- Linkages to Promote Accessibility and Integration
- Linkages to and from Key Areas

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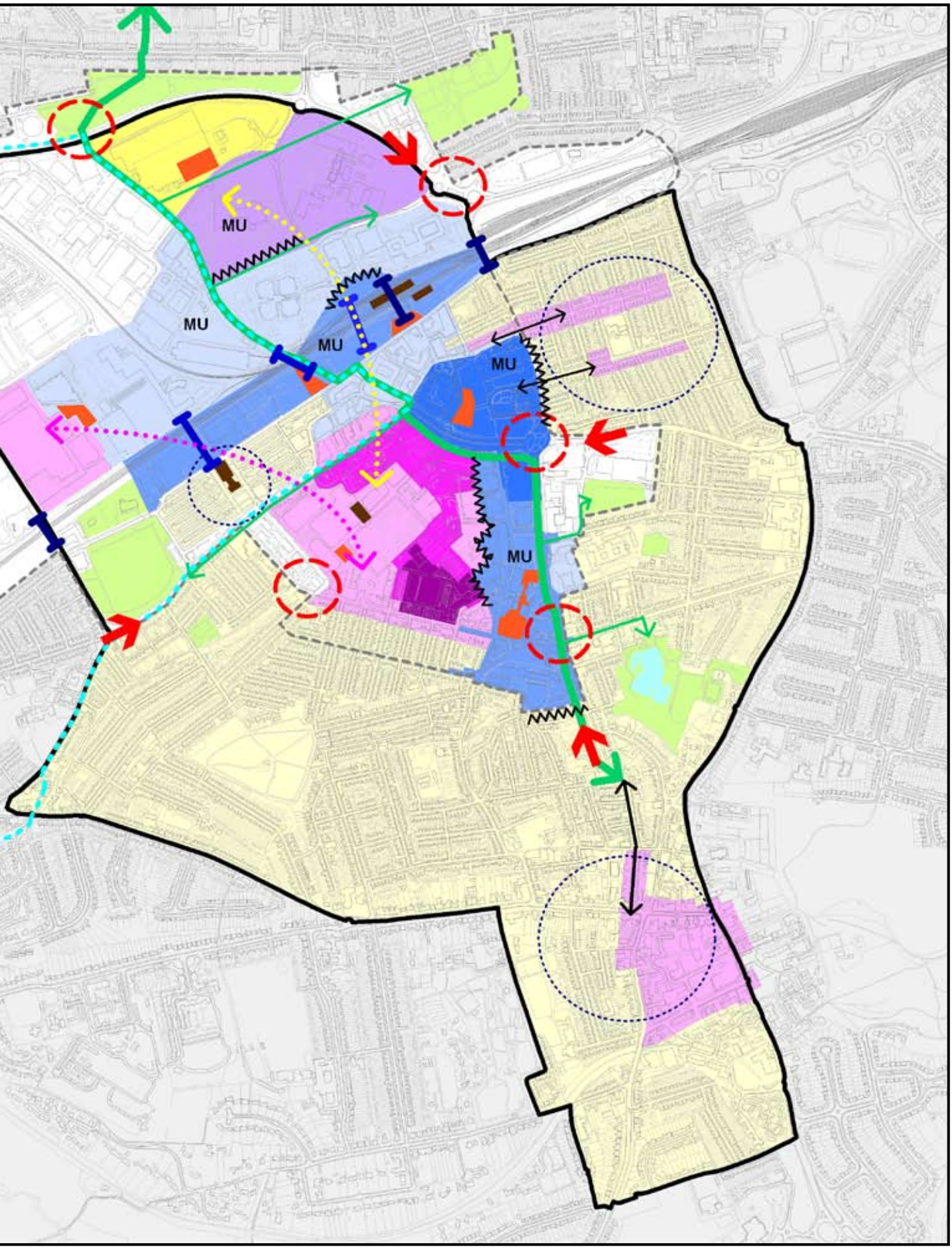
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Design Strategy

Context

This Section helps deliver the Central Area Action Plan objective of:

- Securing the delivery of high quality and innovative design.

Design is given prominence at the beginning of the Action Plan because of the existing poor quality of Central Swindon's built environment. A step-change in design quality is required to help Central Swindon foster a greater sense of pride, to attract visitors and new business and to create a more user-friendly environment.

Design Principles

Good design has an important role to play in raising the profile of Swindon, creating and reinforcing a distinct local identity and sense of place, strengthening confidence in the town and promoting inward investment.

Good design is also about creating an environment that allows all members of society to move around in a safe, predictable and convenient manner.

New development in Central Swindon will be guided by urban design principles aimed at improving the quality of new buildings and their surroundings, not only in terms of how they look, but also how they function. 'New development' covers proposals at all scales ranging from small public spaces and individual or grouped buildings to large-scale comprehensive development schemes.

New development in Central Swindon must satisfactorily respect and address the following urban design principles:

- **Order and unity** is the arrangement of separate elements of a group in a logical and comprehensible way.

- **Expression** is the communication of quality and meaning. It is important for the architecture of new proposals to express the use of the building. Public buildings should be expressed in a way that respects and gives a sense of civic pride to the public realm and public facilities, similarly office buildings can symbolise a sense of financial and economic strength through their architectural expression.

- **Integrity** - a building with integrity is honest to its time and to the design principles that embody the kind of architecture one is striving to achieve.

- **Detail** - concerned with the detailed design of both buildings and the public realm and the interface between these two.

- **Context** - relates to the way a new proposal interfaces with its surroundings. This may comprise the following principles:

- **Siting** - the relationship a building has to the urban grain of the town as well as the relationship the building has to other buildings and to the street.

- **Massing** - the three dimensional envelope of the building. This defines the building's height, bulk and silhouette. A good building respects its neighbours in terms of these criteria.

- **Scale** - can be assessed in terms of human and built scale. Every building has a relationship in terms of scale to that of a human being and also to its surrounding built form. A building can therefore be of human or inhuman scale and can be in or out of scale with another building. This is exactly measurable and not a matter of opinion.

- **Proportion** - is the relationship between different parts of a building. It is also the agreeable or harmonious relationship between parts of a building within a whole and to surrounding buildings.

- **Rhythm** - is the arrangement of the components of the façade and is the repetitive use of a group of visual elements along an elevation. This can consist of patterns of openings, projected bays and other architectural elements. Successful pedestrian streets are made up of vertically aligned rhythms across a façade. A logical form of rhythm across a façade adds to a sense of order to the streetscape. The same can be said for having respect for a common building line i.e. how buildings meet the street.

- **Materials** - Swindon Borough Council will be expecting to see a natural palette of materials, to a high quality that weather attractively over long periods of time.

Additional design guidance is provided in the Swindon Design Guide and the Swindon Shop Fronts Coding Guidance.

Reinforcing or Creating a Sense of Place in Central Swindon's Character Areas

Design principles should always be applied with local context in mind. High standards of architectural design and detailing are necessary to create new areas of townscape character and interest but equally to enable a new development to complement neighbouring buildings and assimilate into the environment in which it is located.

The Council expects that the highest standards of design and detailing to be employed in all new developments. The key to successful design is in the detailing. It is essential to think carefully about the way chosen materials work with each other, how the various elements of a building relate and how they line up. This is as vital to the architectural articulation of a building façade as it is to the detailing of a square, a street or an avenue of trees.

Further to their contribution to good design generally, these details can also help reinforce the distinctive features in each character area. By taking these cues from existing buildings in an area of Central Swindon it is possible to create an addition to the built environment that complements but does not slavishly copy the existing character. By respecting cues like scale and massing, but using an innovative approach to materials and detailing, it is possible to reinforce the identity of an area and contribute to its special character. Cues should be taken from positive features of a place. There is no reason why character and innovation should not go together. New and old buildings can coexist happily without disguising one as the other, if the design of the new is a response to urban design objectives.

The character areas are detailed in Part II of the Action Plan. Each have distinctive features, which should inform the design of new development within these areas.

Town Centre (Policies CAAP13-16)

Existing character

The civic and commercial heart of the town is itself characterised by distinct areas, which generally exhibit single land uses. Concentrations of these single uses in particular areas detract from the Town Centre's vitality to the detriment of a sustainable mixed use community. In addition to reduced functionality, the Town Centre's form has been marred by the legacy of late 20th Century development where many high quality older buildings were demolished and local street patterns were shattered to make way for more modernist architecture. This seriously detracts from local character.

General design aspirations for the Town Centre

Successful regeneration will depend on broadening the mix of uses. Injecting housing into the mix wherever possible will enable activity to be stretched beyond traditional shopping and office hours. Refurbishment of existing buildings should address the need for active frontages at ground floor level. Having frequent doors and windows will animate the public realm and reduce crime and fear of crime (Policy CAAP1). Introducing commercial or residential uses on the upper floors can enliven an area further (Policies CAAP13-16). Care must be taken to ensure uses are compatible.

A high housing density is appropriate in the Town Centre but this should not mean that flats are the only choice of home within the area. A mix of housing tenure and type, including family housing, is vital in ensuring the future sustainability of the Town Centre (See Policy CAAP19).

The Town Centre and gateways that mark a person's arrival to the Town Centre are perfect locations for landmark buildings. Landmarks help people move around a place. Whilst every building cannot be a landmark, distinctive features should be considered at key corners and within nodes of activity. Landmarks can be distinctive by virtue of height (particularly raised heights on corners), use, status, colour and location. High standards of design are especially important in prominent landmark buildings given their profile (Policy CAAP1).

Care must be taken to ensure that the Town Centre's few remaining high quality older buildings are protected and enhanced to add character and variety.

Old Town and Victoria Road (Policy CAAP20)

Existing character
Old Town is regarded more favourably than the Town Centre in urban design terms due to its collection of high quality older buildings. Its historic character merits conservation and enhancement. The predominant building height is two to three storeys in Wood Street and the High Street, and the area exhibits traditional shop front design.

In the residential streets a common building line is set back from the pavement with defensible private space to the front of residences. Property widths are fairly narrow and common materials include brick, brick with stone dressings, stone painted brick or render. Commercial premises generally front directly onto the street.

General design aspirations for Old Town
New development should respect the special local character of Old Town. Shop front design and signage should be in compliance with the Council's Shop Front Coding Guidance to maintain a unified street frontage on Victoria Road, Bath Road, Newport Street and Wood Street (Policy CAAP20). Public realm should be improved in line with the Public Realm Strategy (Policy CAAP3) to create the high quality environment for shoppers and pedestrians necessary to achieve its proposed status as a niche shopping destination well connected to the existing Town Centre. Proposals on Victoria Road should ensure that any changes to properties respect their historic character and respond positively to the Green Spine (Policies CAAP3 and CAAP20). Proposals incorporating contrasting contemporary design must be of an exceptionally high quality (Policy CAAP1).

Existing Residential Communities (Policy CAAP19)

Existing character
The existing residential communities in Central Swindon are largely characterised by Victorian terraced housing set out on grid patterns, which demonstrate a fine urban grain. New development proposals must not alter the character of the streets and should respect the form and function of the communities within which they are located.

General design aspirations for existing residential communities
All new development proposals which impact directly on these residential communities should demonstrate how they contribute positively to the area. Proposals that are out of scale with existing development or result in significant intensification of a site can have negative impacts on communities by creating overbearing buildings, casting of shadows, increased traffic congestion and parking problems. Improved physical and functional links to and from new and existing communities are vital to aid integration.

North Star (Policy CAAP17)

Existing Character
North Star is isolated from the Town Centre with the railway acting as a significant barrier. The least defined of the Central Swindon character areas, North Star exhibits mainly low-density uses with a substantial proportion of available land given over to surface car parking. It mixes predominantly leisure and industrial uses with a further education facility and office employment uses to the south.

The plots are large, with large 'pavilion-style' structures, mostly set within soft landscaping or car parks. Activity is limited mainly to internal areas depriving the street scene of life and interest.

General design aspirations for North Star
There is significant scope to increase the density of development in these areas and height is not a significant issue given the island nature of the site and its neighbouring land uses. Development will need to help enhance movement across the railway and should also enhance movement between North Star and the wider urban area, especially the residential areas and open space to the north of Great Western Way.

New development should incorporate active frontages to the street and newly created open spaces thus increasing the activity and variety of the street scene. There is great potential to improve physical and visual permeability at North Star. The area is highly visible from the railway, a significant gateway to Swindon. The design of new development should respond to its high profile location especially given the quality of the existing westerly approach to Swindon Station through the Railway Works area.

The Railway Heritage Area

Existing character
The Local Planning Authority has a duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and their settings. There are two such areas in the Railway Heritage Area, the Railway Village and Railway Works Area.

Swindon's Railway Works is Britain's main railway engineering showpiece, and is on the World Heritage Site tentative list as part of a wider bid. Many of the engineering buildings have been sensitively converted for contemporary uses, not least into the Swindon Designer Outlet Centre.

The high-density terraced railway cottages are largely in Council ownership and have been restored and maintained in a sensitive way so as to respect the village's historical character.

General design aspirations for the Railway Heritage Area
Development proposals within, or that will impact on the setting of, the Railway Heritage Area should not harm the character or appearance of the area. With the rate of change expected over the next twenty years and the high profile of regeneration in Central Swindon, preserving and enhancing our rich historic environment will deliver an area that complements the regenerated Town Centre. New development should take positive cues from the existing built fabric.

Crime and Fear of Crime

The principle of designing out crime is common to all character areas in the Action Plan. The quality of design and standard of maintenance is an increasingly important factor in people's perceptions of an area. Community safety is of fundamental importance when considering both the design and function of the built environment. Once a development has been completed the main opportunity to incorporate crime prevention measures is lost. The costs involved in correcting or managing badly designed development are much greater than getting it right in the first place.

Crime prevention will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Central Swindon. New development should deliver defensible space, by maximising natural surveillance, and by promoting active frontages. Developments should create a clear distinction between public and private area and who is responsible for these areas.

Police Architectural Liaison Officers should be consulted at the earliest opportunity and all new major developments should aim to achieve Secured By Design status.

The Swindon Design Review Panel

The Swindon Design Review Panel has been established to assess the design merits of major schemes in Central Swindon. The Panel will provide an important quality control function and its recommendations will be given significant weight in the consideration of planning applications. Where additional design advice is required the Council will also refer prominent schemes to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and / or the South West Design Review Panel for their expert consideration.

Tall Buildings

Tall buildings are often part of flagship developments and can play an important part in regeneration. The Council is keen to make efficient use of land in the Town Centre and to increase the vibrancy of the area. Tall buildings are a good way of meeting these goals and as such will generally be supported in the Town Centre, and in particular at gateway sites (detailed in the Public Realm Strategy Section) and at locations were they will enhance the skyline.

However, there is scope to get tall buildings wrong, and in light of their dramatic visual and physical impact on the community there are many issues that must be taken into consideration in their design. These include the visual impact of a tall building, which can usually be viewed from great distances, the impact on conservation areas and historic buildings, impact on the public realm and neighbouring properties caused by overshadowing and inadequate wind-testing, impact on traffic movements, and the impact on the environment from construction through to the design of internal layouts.

By virtue of their size and dominance, where there is a lack of appreciation or understanding of the context in which a proposed tall building will be sited, the resulting form is likely to fail to enhance the urban context.

Tall buildings in the vicinity of the Railway Conservation Area and Railway Works need to pay particular attention to their impact on these areas. Proposals that fail to do so will be refused.

Tall buildings should also incorporate safety systems, including sprinklers, and an ongoing dialogue should be maintained with the Emergency Services to ensure the buildings are accessible and manageable in safety terms.

For the purpose of the Central Area Action Plan tall buildings are defined as those that will have a significant impact on the urban skyline and which are considerably higher than the existing built environment within which they are proposed.

Policy CAAP1

High Quality and Innovative Design

High quality design will be required of all new development in Central Swindon. Applications will be expected to demonstrate that the design of the development proposal satisfies each of the criteria set out below.

The design should:

- incorporate active frontages especially where the development forms part of the Town Centre;
- ensure entrances are emphasised and designed to complement the public realm onto which they front;
- consider a mix of uses and where residential forms part of the mix, ensure a mix of housing tenure and type is achieved;
- respect and satisfactorily address order and unity, expression, integrity, siting, massing, scale, proportion, rhythm, materials and landscaping
- include any necessary provision for the screening of service plants
- where the existing design is good and much appreciated, respect the context of the site and the character of the part of Central Swindon within which it is located
- embody the principles of inclusive design and access for all;
- preserve or enhance the character, appearance and setting of Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings;
- deliver the sustainable construction requirements set out in Policy CAAP 2, including the provision of space for the storage of waste; and
- incorporate Secured by Design principles on all major new developments*.

* Major developments are developments of 1,000 sq. m. (gross) and over and developments involving 10 or more dwellings.

Tall Buildings

Any proposal for a tall building should:

- satisfy the Council that exceptionally high quality design has been employed throughout the proposal;
- enhance the existing skyline of the town;
- respond to and reinforce the natural topography of the land;
- create a celebrated entrance at ground floor level and demonstrate how the design of the building responds to the human scale at street level, and how the building relates to the street;
- respond sensitively to its site and be appropriate to its context;
- architecturally respond to the building's massing, shape, size and form;
- avoid negative microclimatic effects such as excessive over-shadowing, wind tunnels and drafts;
- provide a lighting strategy to determine how the building will be lit and how it will improve night time views of the town;
- provide a mix of uses, in particular at ground floor level which should usually front onto a public space;
- provide evidence why other forms of massing across the site, in place of a tall building, may be inappropriate in terms of density and urban form; and
- provide a parking strategy that illustrates how the development can accommodate demand for parking and how any reduction in provision will have an impact on adjacent car parks.

Delivery of High Quality and Innovative Design
Key Players

- Swindon Borough Council – as Local Planning Authority has role of enforcing a high quality of design in all development schemes
- The New Swindon Company, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), South West Design Review Panel, Swindon Design Review Panel – Key role in scrutinizing the design quality of development schemes
- English Heritage – key advisory role on the design of schemes that impact on the Railway Heritage Area
- The Police Architectural Liaison Officer – key role in ensuring that schemes embody the principle of designing out crime.

Land Ownership Issues

The policy is applicable throughout the Action Plan area.

Priority

On-going.

Delivery Mechanism

All planning applications will be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, which should demonstrate how the scheme represents a high quality and innovative design, how the scheme contributes to the character of the area, and how the scheme embodies the principles of inclusive design and designing out crime.

Quality Assurance

Rigorous scrutiny of Design and Access Statements.

Referrals to the Swindon Design Review Panel, CABE and / or the South West Design Review Panel.

Sustainability Strategy

Context

This Section helps deliver the Central Area Action Plan objectives of:

- securing the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment; and
- ensuring new development promotes energy efficiency, prudent use of resources, and makes a positive contribution to the environment.

The Council's Sustainable Building Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) aims to secure more sustainable ways of designing and operating new buildings in the Borough and sets out a 'Swindon Standard' for sustainable building design and construction. This standard will provide the baseline for all development proposals coming forward in Central Swindon. Development proposals should meet these standards as a minimum in addition to the requirements set out in this Section.

Sustainable Energy Supply

The Council's Renewable Energy Task Group has recommended that energy efficient design and zero/low carbon sources of energy should be maximised. The 'Swindon Standard' for sustainable building design and construction seeks to implement this recommendation by requiring new developments to incorporate on-site renewable energy and/or an efficient supply of heating, cooling and power to supply a significant element of the development's energy requirements. The expectation in Central Swindon is that development will meet or exceed the Swindon Standard.

Central Swindon lends itself well to the development of a decentralised sustainable energy supply scheme. The Council is committed to pursuing partnership possibilities for delivering such a facility, potentially involving the establishment of an energy services company (ESCo). The ESCo would develop and run a community energy scheme to serve Central Swindon. An implementation plan for this initiative will be prepared as a priority.

Sustainable Water Management

Flooding can occur from many sources and while there are no major rivers in Central Swindon, climate change and existing problems means that flood risk is likely to become much greater in the area. Developers will need to address this risk. It is essential that provision is made for appropriate water and sewerage infrastructure to service development and to avoid unacceptable flood risk impacts.

The Swindon Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) identifies areas of localised flooding and sewer flooding in Central Swindon. Localised flooding is most notable in the Swindon Railway Works Area, whilst sewer flooding occurs in the Railway Heritage Area, the residential areas south of the Town Centre and in Old Town. These areas are shown in the Implementation Plan (Part III of the Central Area Action Plan). Flood Risk Assessments will be required for all developments impacting on these areas. Likewise, development proposals on land of 1 hectare or more will need to be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment as required by the UK Government's Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25) - Development and Flooding. All Flood Risk Assessments will be forwarded to the Environment Agency for its approval. Developers are encouraged to consider sustainable drainage before the layout is set, consulting the Environment Agency before any planning application is submitted.

Much of the localised flooding that occurs in Swindon is a consequence of drainage systems operating beyond their capacity. Most developments involve the creation of impermeable surfaces that can increase the rate of run-off, thereby exacerbating the problem. All major development proposals will therefore be required to demonstrate that the rate of surface water run-off from the site is less than before the development with an additional allowance of 30% for climate change. The incorporation of sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) within schemes as a means to reduce the existing run-off rate is actively supported.

In addition to considering surface water run-off, major development proposals will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate waste water capacity both on and off site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing or new users.

Further technical guidance to developers on water supply and drainage is provided in Part III of the Central Area Action Plan.

Sustainable Waste Management

The Council's planning strategy for waste, as set out in the Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy, is to maximising re-use, recycling, composting and energy recovery strictly in that order of priority, with landfill being the last option.

With the recent roll-out of the Swindon-wide kerbside recycling scheme, the Council has delivered substantial improvements in the way that household waste is managed. The Council is also keen to pursue innovative approaches to reduce the amount of construction, demolition and commercial waste generated in Central Swindon and to manage these waste streams sustainably.

To this end the Council is pursuing options for co-ordinating the management of these waste streams across Central Swindon in a manner that can bring major benefits to developers and the environment alike. Developers will be actively encouraged to sign up to the Central Swindon Sustainable Waste Management Scheme.

Inner urban areas are important for biodiversity, yet preserving and enhancing Central Swindon's ecology in the face of wide scale regeneration poses a significant challenge. However, regeneration does not have to be at the expense of biodiversity. Every development provides opportunities for wildlife enhancement and Green Roofs, which convert a roof into an area where plants can grow, represent a key tool that can assist in delivering such enhancements.

The Green Roof concept embraces most of the Council's sustainable construction policy objectives, for example a Green Roof can be a Sustainable Urban Drainage system, a biodiversity habitat, an open space and an insulation source. It can also be visually attractive. The Council will actively encourage the construction of Green Roofs within new developments.

Detailed guidance on the creation of Green Roofs in Central Swindon will be published separately and will be regularly updated to account for emerging best practice in Green Roof design.

Green Roofs

Inner urban areas are important for biodiversity, yet preserving and enhancing Central Swindon's ecology in the face of wide scale regeneration poses a significant challenge. However, regeneration does not have to be at the expense of biodiversity. Every development provides opportunities for wildlife enhancement and Green Roofs, which convert a roof into an area where plants can grow, represent a key tool that can assist in delivering such enhancements.

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Detailed guidance on the creation of Green Roofs in Central Swindon will be published separately and will be regularly updated to account for emerging best practice in Green Roof design.

Policy CAAP2

Sustainable Construction

General

All development proposals will be rigorously examined against the 'Swindon Standard' for Sustainable Building Design and Construction.

Sustainable Energy Supply

Major new developments will be required to incorporate on-site renewable energy to supply a proportion* of the development's energy requirements.

As an alternative to delivering on-site renewable energy, schemes can connect to a 'community energy scheme', to provide a major element of their heating, cooling and power supply.

Sustainable Water Management

Water conservation and recycling measures will be required in the construction and operation of all new developments.

Major development proposals will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate water capacity both on and off site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing or new users.

All major development proposals must demonstrate that the rate of surface water run-off from the site is less than the conditions before the development.

Development proposals impacting on areas of localised flooding, sewer flooding, and occupying areas of 1 hectare or more, must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. Thames Water and the Environment Agency will be consulted on all such development proposals. Proposals will be expected to deliver any necessary flood mitigation measures identified by Thames Water or the Environment Agency. The incorporation of sustainable urban drainage systems into new developments as a flood risk prevention measure will be actively supported.

Sustainable Waste Management

Major development proposals must demonstrate that steps will be taken to:

- reduce, re-use and recycle any waste produced through the development process;
- minimise the use of raw materials in the development process;
- minimise the pollution potential of any unavoidable waste;
- dispose of any unavoidable waste in an environmentally acceptable manner; and
- ensure maximum waste recovery once the development is completed.

Major development proposals will be required to provide for, as an integral part of the design of development, the provision of facilities for the source separation and storage of waste for recycling and composting. These facilities should occupy convenient and accessible locations within the development.

*As specified in the Council's Sustainable Building Design and Construction standards.

Green Roofs

The creation of Green Roofs will be actively supported on all new developments. Where Green Roofs are provided they will be positively considered as a flood risk mitigation measure.

Publicly accessible Green Roofs may be considered as a component of a development's open space requirements, however, Green Roofs cannot be used to justify losing open spaces at street level.

Where major development proposals do not deliver Green Roofs, the application's Design and Access Statement will be required to explain why a Green Roof is not appropriate.

Note: Major developments are developments of 1,000 sqm (gross) and over and developments involving 10 or more dwellings

Photo Credit: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Delivery of Sustainable Construction

Key Players

- Swindon Borough Council – Implementing the 'Swindon Standard' in sustainable construction
- The New Swindon Company – In partnership with the Council has a key co-ordinating role in the delivery of sustainable design initiatives
- Environment Agency and Thames Water – Key advisory role on water resource issues
- Natural England and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust - Key advisory role on Green Roofs and enhancing biodiversity
- The Development Industry – Key role in delivering sustainable development

Land Ownership Issues

The policy is applicable throughout the Action Plan area.

Priority

On-going.

Delivery Mechanism

Central Swindon can benefit from a holistic approach to sustainable construction and design by looking at what opportunities exist across the area as a whole.

Swindon Borough Council and The New Swindon Company are working to provide a policy framework for joining up sustainability opportunities across Central Swindon. The development of a Sustainable Waste Management Scheme and the introduction of a Community Energy Scheme are both key initiatives that will be progressed.

All major planning applications will be expected to explain how the proposal represents a sustainable form of development within the application's Design and Access Statement. Where a major development scheme does not propose the creation of a Green Roof, the Design and Access Statement will be required to demonstrate why a Green Roof is not practicable.

A Flood Risk Assessment will be required on all development schemes impacting on areas of localised flooding, sewer water flooding areas and developments occupying areas of 1 hectare or more.

The Council's Sustainable Building Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides detailed advice to developers on a wider range of sustainable construction and design themes.

Quality Assurance

There will be full consultation with affected communities and businesses to inform the structure of the Sustainable Waste Management Scheme and Community Energy Scheme.

Where on-site energy supply, a sustainable urban drainage system, a waste separation & storage facility or a Green Roof is proposed, applications will be required to demonstrate how the proposal intends to deal with management and maintenance issues associated with these facilities."

5 Public Realm

Context

This Section helps deliver the Central Area Action Plan objectives of:

- enabling the enhancement of existing areas of public spaces and delivery of new public spaces; and
- securing the creation of safe, convenient, user-friendly and attractive routes into, out of and through Central Swindon, to help develop a vibrant and active community.

Spaces, Streets and Movement

Public Realm is described as the 'space between buildings', the streets, spaces and movement corridors, which inform our use and perception of a place. A high quality public realm improves our understanding of a place, adds to its attractiveness and enhances the experience of residents and visitors alike. High quality public realm is safe, accessible and predictable. As important as the buildings that make up a town, the quality of public realm determines how attractive, safe, user-friendly and welcoming a place feels. Public realm also provides a focus for a variety of activities and offers a place for people to congregate and interact.

Development Principles

The development principles outlined in Section 2 reinforce the importance of interfaces between new development and existing residential communities and greatly improved accessibility and linkages between these areas. Public realm is a key means of achieving these goals.

The Swindon Central Area Public Realm Strategy has been produced to inform the design of the public realm in Central Swindon. This will ensure a consistency of approach, by setting out design principles and a 'palette' of materials that will help create a high quality public realm. The Strategy is a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications and allows the Council to direct the design of the public realm.

The strategy has seven objectives:

- To create a distinct and positive identity for Swindon.
- To connect existing and new development with a legible and well connected hierarchy of routes that are accessible to all.
- To improve connections across the railway lines.
- To transform the quality, character and diversity of existing and new public spaces.
- To ensure the public realm is well used, fostering social interaction and facilitating arts and culture, trading and exchange and a vibrant evening economy.
- To ensure the design of public spaces can be effectively managed and maintained.
- To contribute positively to sustainable development.

Quality of the Public Realm

High quality public realm should seek to:

- Improve the ease of movement by encouraging low-vehicular traffic speeds through careful design.
- Create legible spaces and routes that add to the 'sense of place' of an area.
- Relate public spaces to surrounding buildings and vice-versa.
- Ensure a high quality of workmanship and materials of all hard and soft landscaping.
- Increase the adaptability of spaces for future use.
- Introduce diversity.
- Improve continuity and enclosure.
- Incorporate natural surveillance.
- Take the micro-climate into account.

Active Frontages

Much of the success of 'good' public realm can be attributed to active frontages, which enliven the street. A common building line creates continuity of frontage and provides definition and enclosure to the public realm. Minimising set back distances increases the ability of a building to interact with the public realm. In the Town Centre buildings should be built adjacent to the pavement.

Palette and Street Furniture

Central Swindon's poor urban design layout is demonstrated by the assortment of street furniture and surfacing materials used throughout. This uncoordinated approach results in clutter and creates obstacles to easy movement. All new public realm will be expected to accord with the principles and materials outlined in Swindon's Central Area Public Realm Strategy. Section C of the Public Realm Strategy provides product specification sheets for various public realm infrastructure, including lighting, street furniture and materials for floorscape.

Materials

Quality places are built to last. The specification of materials and maintenance regimes outlined in the Swindon Central Area Public Realm Strategy have been chosen because they represent a high standard of visual attractiveness, practicality and durability.

Junctions between spaces should not be abrupt but have a degree of continuity. Changes in paving colour and texture should be restricted. However, exceptions can be made to highlight important entrances, to denote ownership or to create a special sense of place.

Gateways

Central Swindon is accessed by car via seven key radial routes, which converge at four key junctions. These corridors and junctions are many people's first impression of Central Swindon and the Town Centre. As such the gateways identified on the next page are key to a person's sense of arrival and their understanding of the urban environment. They also serve to direct people to their chosen destination.

The four key junctions currently comprise:

- Whalebridge from the east;
- Groundwell Road/Victoria Road from the south and east;
- Whitehouse Roundabout; and
- Westcott Place.

Whalebridge roundabout will be redeveloped as a signalised junction. Development to the north, south and east will create a sense of arrival through the use of tall buildings, which will address their corner and gateway location.

Subject to the successful implementation of the Canal, the character of Westcott Place will change from a vehicular access into a waterway with pedestrian and cycle routes running parallel. The newly defined gateway from the west will be at the 'Gateway at Kingshill', which is explained in the Canal Policy Section of this Action Plan.

Other important gateways are the Railway Station and the proposed Bus Exchange at Fleming Way. These too need to contribute to a sense of arrival and serve to direct people to their chosen destination. The proposed Bus Exchange will be centrally located within the Town Centre, be easily accessible to shoppers and office workers alike and will therefore be ideally placed to encourage greater use of the buses.

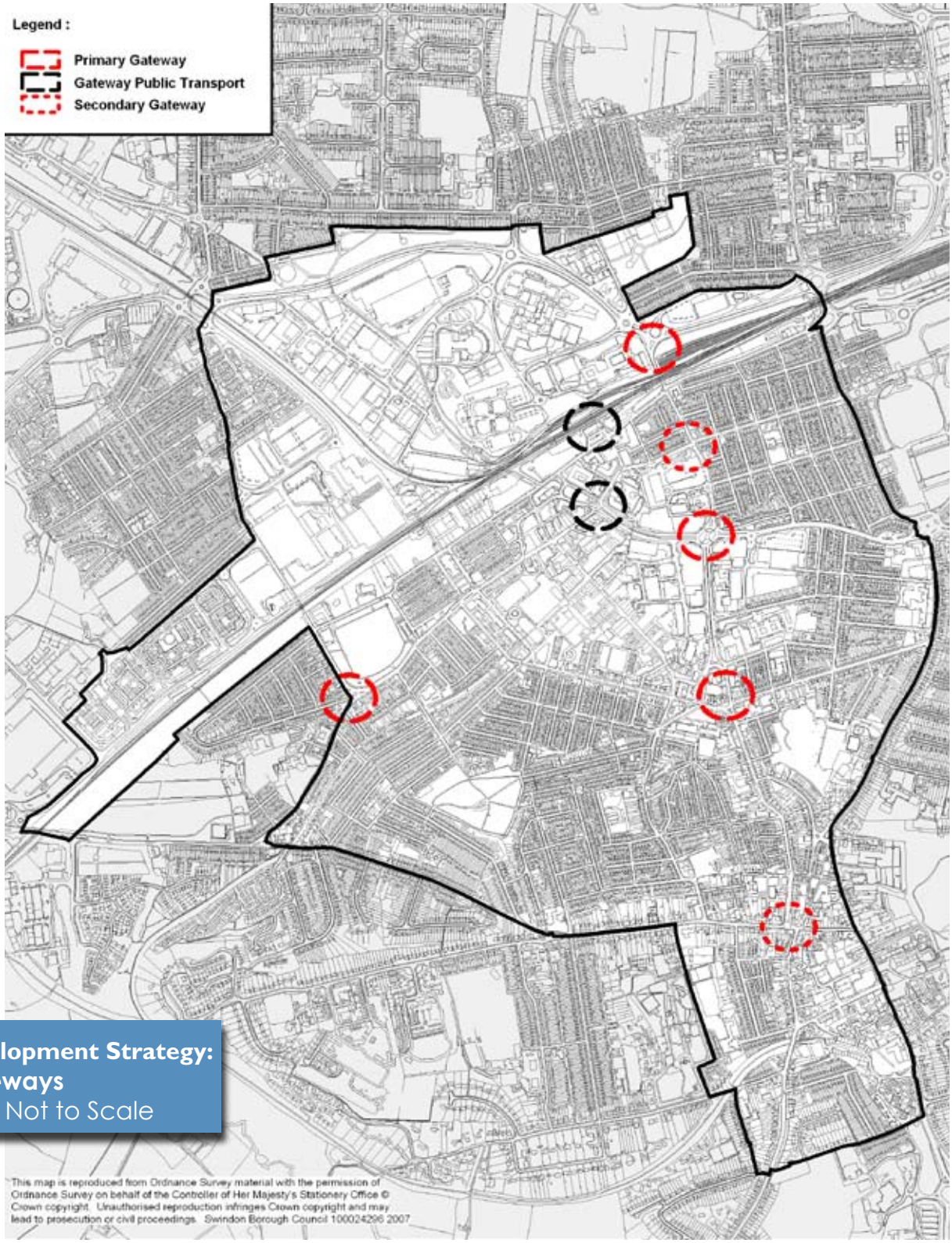
There are also key secondary gateways, which define the entrance to the Town Centre from a non-main route or signal an entrance to another character area.

These include:

- Old Town (Junction of Victoria Road with Bath Road and Devizes Road);

and

- Manchester Road and Corporation Street.



Development Strategy: Gateways
Map Not to Scale

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Streets and Spaces

Swindon's public realm comprises routes of different characters and widths. Recent additions to the highway network are vehicle orientated and there is a need to make them more cycle and pedestrian friendly without reducing their capacity to accommodate high volumes of traffic. Poor pedestrian environments are also made worse on many minor routes, largely due to the lack of enclosure of service, parking areas and little or no active frontage.

Primary Routes in Central Swindon

Primary routes are those that will carry the highest volume of pedestrian traffic or that link key destinations such as the Retail Core, Old Town, the Railway Station or Great Western Designer Outlet Centre and are described below.

The following routes are high priority and are programmed for delivery within the next 5 years. These improvements will be financed through the Council's Developer Contributions Guidance Note or bids to regional or community infrastructure funds.

1 **Regent Street and Bridge Street -** will be implemented in two phases. Regent Street is the principal shopping street, dominated by major high-street retailers. Its northern end benefits from high pedestrian footfall. Bridge Street is increasingly characterised by Class A3, A4 and A5 leisure uses and has a lower footfall than Regent Street despite being pedestrianised. Both of these streets will be redesigned to improve the pedestrian experience, and to meet the needs of cyclists through the provision of secure cycle parking at its northern most end. A coherent lighting scheme and high quality consistent floor surfacing are proposed for both routes.

2 **Canal Walk** forms the primary east west route through the Retail Core and the juncture with Regent Street presents an opportunity for Canal Walk to transition seamlessly into The Parade, currently a wholly retail street with tented canopies that incorporates The Garden - a public space explained in more detail later on.

3 **Wellington Street** is the key route to and from the railway station and is in need of a stronger and more readable character. The route is one of strategic importance and reinforces the entrance to the commercial part of the town from the station. It is proposed to narrow the road and to widen the footpaths. The resurfacing of the footpaths must be in line with the requirements of the Central Area Public Realm Strategy. Improved street lighting and the use of tree planting where services allow will give a stronger sense of direction. This route also provides an ideal location for a way finding piece of public art.

4 **Victoria Road** is the most direct route from the Town Centre to Old Town. The Action Plan proposes to improve this link and promote Old Town and its retail and recreational offer. The northern end of the Victoria Road forms one of the four primary gateways into the Town Centre at the junction of Victoria Road and Groundwell Road. At the southern end of the road where it meets Bath Road, an opportunity exists to deliver public realm improvements with the creation of a small public square at Albert Street.

The remaining routes and spaces are medium priority and are programmed for improvement within 10 years. These improvements will be financed predominantly through the Council's Developer Contributions Guidance Note or bids to regional or community infrastructure funds.

5 **The Railway Village** has a very different character to much of Central Swindon and the public realm needs to reflect its heritage status while acknowledging that it is a living community. The Railway Village, and wider Railway Heritage Area, will not be subject to the palette of materials identified by the Swindon's Central Area Public Realm Strategy given its special characteristics. A separate public realm scheme will be prepared for this area.

The Railway Village faces problems that affect residents' quality of life and some of these can be addressed by improvements to public realm. Improvements targeted to reduce anti-social behaviour could involve improved street lighting, gating of back alleys, and environmental improvements appropriate to residential environments and procured to conservation standards.

6 **Wood Street** in Old Town is a one-way street linking the High Street with Albert Street. It is proposed to greatly improve the pedestrian environment, which, subject to detailed design considerations, could include the introduction of 'spill out areas' for pavement cafes, bars and shops. This allows for a flexible approach to the management of activities and will lessen the potential for loss of passing trade. On street parking can be restricted to certain locations along the street to facilitate the outdoor café culture.

7 **Broadgreen** is the subject of an internationally acclaimed Streets for Living Project outlined in more detail in Section 10. Additional street scene enhancements in Broadgreen will be delivered to complement the extensive improvements currently being carried out. While the expansive programme of works for the improvements cannot be rolled out throughout Central Swindon, some principles can be applied to other streets in Central Swindon's residential communities such as Crombey Street.

8 **Manchester Road** is likely to become a more widely used vehicular route once Fleming Way is downgraded to bus only with limited evening access for private vehicles. The extent of the Major Local Centre will be reduced to consolidate activity with a view to improving residential amenity while maintaining the diversity and vitality of the area created by active frontages. Corporation Street will continue to function as a primary vehicular route into the Town Centre, which will guide vehicular traffic towards the strategic parking facilities accommodated within The Promenade and at Union Square.

9 **Commercial Road** is a busy street, which forms part of the inner ring road. Regent Place, a major mixed-use, retail led development will be accessed from it. Much of the repaving and improvement of the public realm on the northern side of the street will be delivered as an integral part of the Regent Place scheme.

The following public spaces will be substantially enhanced and new public spaces created in the priority order set out below. The majority of these public space improvements will be delivered as integral components of development schemes coming forward in Central Swindon. Where necessary, additional funding to deliver these improvements will be provided through the Council's Developer Contributions Guidance Note or bids to regional or community infrastructure funds.

Primary Spaces

1 **Wharf Green -** A renewed contemporary and multipurpose urban square enlivened by street trading and an 'interactive edge' on Brunel West Multi storey car park with a BBC screen. It will also be a focus for congregation and events such as Farmers Markets.

2 **The Interchange** is a crossroads where Regent Street meets Canal Walk and Bridge Street. This area benefits from a high concentration of activity, and as such it must be designed to minimise interference with pedestrian movement but also to incorporate a focal feature.

3 **Havelock Terrace** - This space will be redeveloped as part of Regent Place. This involves an extension of the upper floor level of the Brunel Centre and a split level walkway that slopes downward towards a second retail level. This structure will provide a dramatic design feature within the scheme and will maximise movement between the two retail areas. The space will incorporate play art and will seamlessly integrate Regent Place with Regent Street.

4 **The Garden** (currently The Parade) - A key space that together with Fleming Way will form an attractive transitional zone that funnels people from the Retail Core towards the Arena (over the page) and the office and residential development at Union Square and vice versa. This is vital to encourage pedestrian trips in both directions.

5 **The Arena and Fleming Way** - Located within the heart of Union Square the Arena will be the premier event space for the town, providing a venue for large scale cultural events, performances and celebrations. Key to the success of the square and the links from the Railway Station is the introduction of 'active frontages' where buildings meet the street. New development at the Tri-centre represents an opportunity to add vitality and vibrancy in this way. The Arena should be orientated such that there are direct visual links from The Garden and Wellington Street. The design of the space should allow it to be as flexible as possible to accommodate events.

Fleming Way, by virtue of its east west orientation is in shade for a good part of the day which should be considered in the final design of this new open space. The design of the Fleming Way open space would need to reconcile the use of Fleming Way as a busy Bus Exchange. However, Fleming Way, as a shared space has a vital role to play in drawing people to and from Union Square. Fleming Way is currently a barrier to movement and this must be addressed in order to deliver a well-used and accessible public space within Union Square.

6 **Regent Circus -** An existing public space incorporating York stone and bespoke iron railings, complements the attractive setting of the Town Hall. However, the space is currently compromised by variations in paving, division by a road and poor quality pedestrian links to Old Town. Further public realm improvements have been delivered as part of the new Central Library development but other longer term improvements will seek to address these wider concerns directly.

Theatre Square, as part of The Promenade redevelopment will be integrated with Regent Circus. This will need to involve creative solutions to the difference in street levels. Regent Circus will become a series of linked public spaces, and will form the focus of a new cultural quarter for Swindon. Its location at the juncture of Old Town and the Town Centre make it an ideal location for a welcoming gateway space that accommodates a bus interchange and improved facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and taxi users.

7 **Station Square South -** This space will involve a reconfiguration of the forecourt and be transformed into a more attractive, welcoming space with improved circulation. The space will be required to link directly into Wellington Street, a well-established 'desire line' route to the Town Centre, which needs to be made more pleasant for pedestrians. Wellington Street is likely to be delivered in tandem, albeit funded from different sources, with Station Square South. The master plan for Swindon Central must make appropriate provision for these spaces and any application will be expected to deliver them as an integral part of the development.

8 **Station Square North -** This space will make development at North Star more attractive and viable and also facilitate development at Swindon Central (Policy CAAP16). There will be a need to separate passengers and the public by a second crossing linking the two new spaces.

9 **STEAM Public Space** - Within Swindon's Central Area Public Realm Strategy the area between the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre and STEAM has been identified as a key public space, the detailed design of which will be informed by a Heritage Area-wide public realm scheme.

Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure includes green spaces, green routes and areas rich in biodiversity. Green Infrastructure can play a number of valuable roles, including delivering nature conservation and delivering health and well-being benefits to local communities. The Council has prepared a Borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy, which amplifies the green infrastructure guidance in this Action Plan.

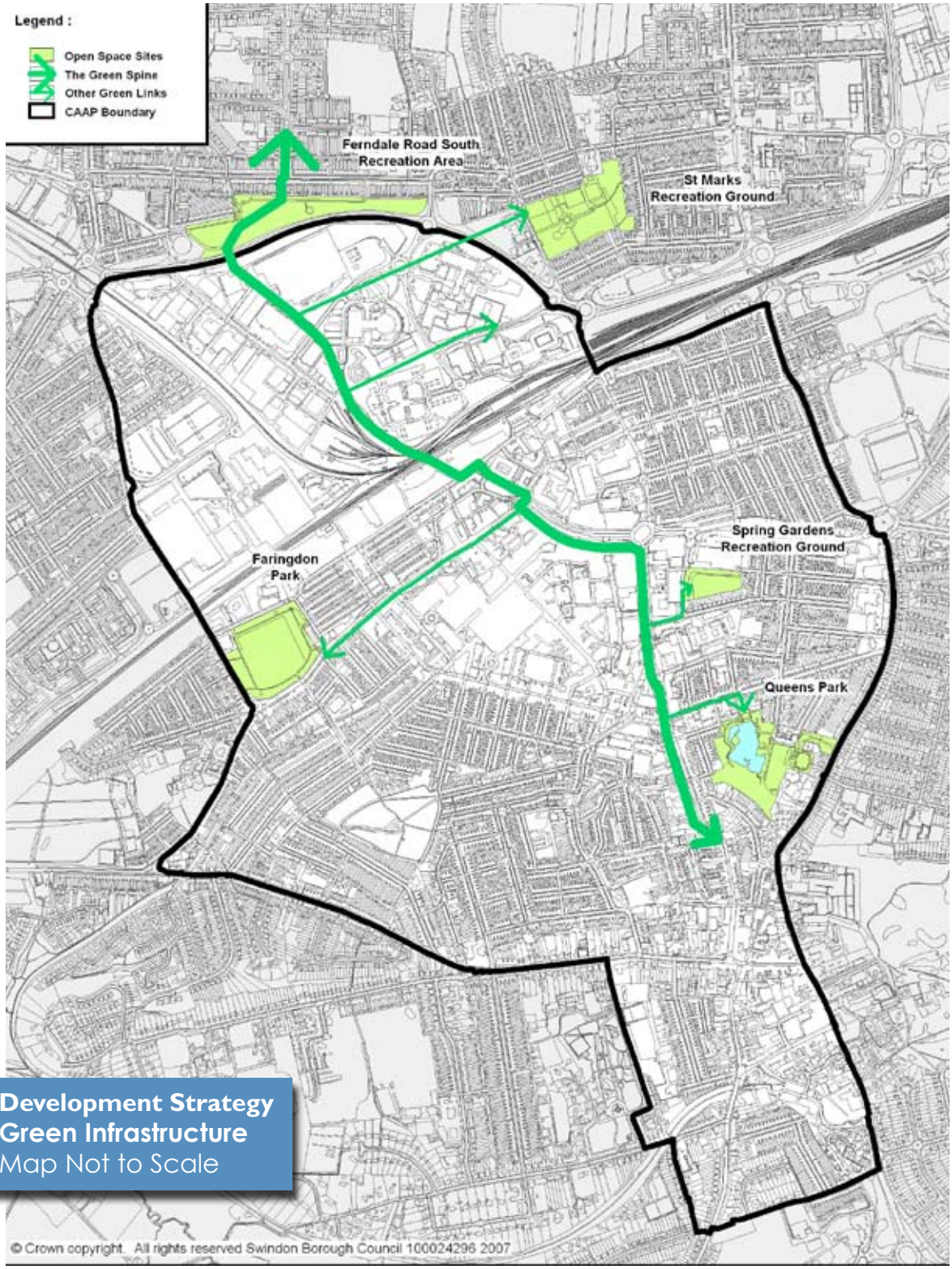
Green Roofs, as discussed at Section 4, are a widely recognised means of adding significant green coverage in urban areas where opportunities to incorporate significant street level green space to enhance biodiversity are limited.

Trees

Plants and trees offer a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits. They can improve microclimates and air quality and increase biodiversity. They can also provide a more attractive place to live and work by softening the urban landscape and providing colour and visual interest. Street trees can also help create legibility thus aiding navigation. The incorporation of trees into development schemes will therefore be actively encouraged.

Successful tree planting in Central Swindon, which is a highly urbanised area, will mean overcoming obstacles both below and above the ground. Many 'service runs' exist below the ground and in some areas restrictions have been imposed by utility companies on tree planting. An assessment of the nature and extent of service runs will need to be undertaken prior to planting taking place.

Appropriate species selection is also important. Consideration should be given to the size of tree at maturity and whether the tree would suitable for the street. It is imperative to consider the proximity of street lighting columns and to ensure that the planting scheme is designed in tandem with the surrounding lighting scheme so that no shading conflicts arise.



Development Strategy
Green Infrastructure
Map Not to Scale

The Green Spine

The Green Spine will be a key north-south route, which will link North Star with Old Town via the Town Centre and Victoria Road. It will provide a much-needed green element to the Town Centre, featuring generous planting along its length and linking the harder urban and built environment in Central Swindon with the green spaces within walking distance.

The Green Spine will provide a continuous pedestrian and cycle link, and also in part a bus link. Its character will change in different parts of the town responding to the different environments it travels through. Many of the Town Centre key spaces are located on the Green Spine or are linked to it by primary routes.

The Green Spine will be delivered in six phases. A number of the phases will be delivered in tandem with the new development adjacent to it, at Union Square and The Promenade for example. Other phases will be funded through developer contributions and/or bids to regional or community infrastructure funds.

The next stage in the realisation of the Green Spine is the commissioning of an advanced design scheme, which will include detailed design and engineering specifications.

Green Spaces

Central Swindon benefits from a variety of attractive green spaces and parks. While they are already well used most lack complimentary facilities such as cafés or kiosks and some need a focus. There are opportunities to capitalise on their potential. Good management and maintenance is key to their success. There are also potential opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in these green spaces and parks, which should be considered within any improvement schemes

These important green spaces comprise:

- Faringdon Park
- Queens Park
- Spring Gardens
- Ferndale Road South Open Space (north of Great Western Way)
- St Marks Recreation Ground
- Old Town Gardens on the periphery of Central Swindon

Connections to these green spaces from the Town Centre need to be improved to ease access and increase usage. These linkages were a key consideration in the conception of the Green Spine.

Faringdon Park - The Park is an integral part of the Railway Village and deserves to be fully restored and maintained as part of Swindon's railway heritage. Proposals to route the canal through this part of town can give the Park a new focus. Work has been undertaken to identify principles for its restoration, which include the reinstatement of the boundary walls and the replacement of the original iron railings. Enhancements to the original formal entrance to Faringdon Park, off Church Place would also promote its status as one of the town's most important green spaces.

Queens Park – The largest of Central Swindon's formal parks. Enhancements to its appearance and facilities would include the completion of the pathway around its perimeter that would allow for circular walks. There is also scope to improve the seating area adjacent to the pond, refurbish the toilet block, improve the café and its surroundings, restore the lakes and reinstate the glass house as a focus from its horticultural past. Durham Street, which links the Park to the Green Spine would also benefit from a revamped entrance as the nearest direct access to the park from the Town Centre.

Spring Gardens - A sizeable green space that lends itself to informal recreation. The timber fencing which surrounds the space is in need of replacement. A new boundary treatment will be required which opens the area up and allows for improved lines of sight, thus contributing to a reduction in crime and fear of crime. There is the potential to capitalise on the pedestrian desire line that follows the rear of Halfords. A footpath here would formalise this route.

Ferndale Road South - this linear open space north of Great Western Way accommodates a newly refurbished play area for the under 10's which serves the neighbouring residential area at Ferndale. There is scope to incorporate further play facilities, including an informal kick-about area and basketball court for older children. There is also scope to improve pedestrian and cycle links through the space and to incorporate an at-grade crossing to replace the existing subway under Great Western Way. This would greatly improve the pedestrian and cycle experience and strengthen its direct link, via North Star, to the Town Centre.

St Mark's Recreation Ground – Has recently been the focus of major investment in sporting facilities. Existing tennis courts have been upgraded and new ones added, whilst a multi-use games area is soon to be provided and design work on a central pavilion is underway.

Existing footpaths and cycleways are to be upgraded to improve linkages to the wider area, and new tree planting will soften the space and give it a sense of enclosure.

Old Town Gardens - while outside the Central Area Action Plan boundary, the gardens offer a unique experience to visitors and residents and host festivals and live music events. Significant infrastructure improvements are needed here, which involve restoration of the Bowl, major improvements to the footpaths, sensitive restoration of the listed gates and comprehensive horticultural improvements.

Complementary Public Realm Strategies

Signage Strategy

A consistent and coordinated design for signs will be used within Central Swindon, which will assist in its navigation and also help to 'brand' Swindon. All new signs within Central Swindon procured by the Council will come from one source and where individual developments incorporate signage the same signs will be recommended as part of pre-application discussions.

A strategy has been produced to identify key arrival points, destinations and trip generators and the most appropriate locations for wayfinding furniture including finger posts and map signs.

Lighting Strategy

A clear lighting strategy will allow for Central Swindon to have a special identity after dark where all the lit elements work together to provide a visually coherent and cohesive night time appearance. A hierarchy of luminance has been developed according to the type of street or space, the level of activity and proximity to residential dwellings.

Level 1 streets and spaces should be linked through the use of white light and have a level of illumination in line with British Standards highlighted in Swindon's Central Area Public Realm Strategy Section 7.0. Streets and spaces should be well lit with a minimum number of units to promote safety without disturbing wildlife or local residents. On pedestrian streets, access lanes and alleys, wall mounted and catenary lighting fixtures should be first choice.

Lighting also has a role to play as a feature element. At night, the lighting of landmarks, key buildings and gateways can dramatically increase legibility and identity.

The following key buildings and routes are identified for artistic illumination. Further detailed information about implementation of such lighting is available in Swindon's Central Area Public Realm Strategy Section 7.0:

- The Town Hall and Central Library, Regent Circus
- Signal Point, Station Road
- Wyvern Theatre, Theatre Square
- Mechanics Institute, Emlyn Square
- David Murray John Building, Canal Walk
- St Marks Church, Railway Village
- Christ Church, Old Town
- The Green Spine from Victoria Road to North Star

In the future, other landmark buildings can be identified for illumination by virtue of their architectural merit, landmark status or use.

Public Art Strategy

Public art can play a major role in creating a positive identity for Swindon. There are opportunities for new public art within Central Swindon. Public art must be conceived and created as an integral part of the design of public realm. Works that embrace the concepts of innovation, change and reinvention, and a new beginning are encouraged. The inclusion of the work of crafts people and environmental artists can contribute strongly to the achievement of a special place that reflects local uniqueness. New public art in Swindon Town Centre will be guided by a Town Centre Public Art Strategy.

'Play art' will be incorporated into the design of new public spaces. Play art is a means of incorporating play space into an environment that is generally orientated toward the adult. Given the preference for mixed use development play art offers an inclusive solution that offers all children a range of sensory experiences. Live performance art also has a role to play in enlivening the Town Centre. All events need to be coordinated through InSwindon, the Town Centre's Bid Company.

Policy CAAP3

Public Realm

The Council will facilitate the delivery of new and improved primary routes and spaces in Central Swindon in line with the principles outlined above. Development of sites on or in the vicinity of these primary routes or spaces will be expected to help deliver the public realm improvements as an integral part of development or provide developer contributions which will allow the Council to deliver projects at the earliest opportunity. Development proposals must not prejudice the delivery of improvements to these primary routes and spaces.

Major development proposals on sites adjacent to the Green Spine will be required to submit and implement a comprehensive landscape, public realm, management and maintenance plan for the section of the Green Spine to which their development immediately relates. Development at the Gateway Sites identified above will be required to help create a sense of arrival in Central Swindon and serve to direct people to the Town Centre.

All development proposals must prove that they consider and respond to the following:

- Development should front on to streets with the rear facing onto private secure areas;
- All public realm materials should comply with the materials palette defined in section 7.0 of Swindon's Central Area Public Realm Strategy and relate to typology and hierarchy outlined in sections 4.0 and 8.0. Some street design flexibility is allowed for in primary spaces with regard to detailing but the main components should be in accordance with the defined palette;
- On routes where street furniture is required, this should be aligned in a distinct zone to minimise visual and physical barriers to movement and legibility;
- Lighting signs and street names should be mounted on walls rather than posts where possible. Multi-use elements should be used wherever possible. Signage should be consistent with the Council's adopted signage standard;
- The provision of appropriate public art in the development of the public realm should be used to reinforce the creation of a distinct identity for the area;
- All applications that impact on or provide new public realm must demonstrate how the proposal intends to deal with management and maintenance issues at the design stage; and
- All newly created or refurbished public realm should embody access for all principles.

Note: Major developments are developments of 1,000 sqm (gross) and over and developments involving 10 or more dwellings.

Delivering Central Swindon's Public Routes and Spaces

Key Players

- Swindon Borough Council – Major landowner and has a key role in facilitating the delivery of public realm improvements
- The New Swindon Company – Co-ordinating role in the delivery of public realm improvements
- InSwindon – Key role in the day-to-day maintenance of the Town
- Centre's public realm and co-ordinating events / activities on the public realm
- Resolution Asset Management, CIT, Modus, M.USE, Ashfield
- Land and Parkridge Retail, PRUPIM – As major landowners / developers, key role in delivering public realm improvements within or adjoining their land holdings
- English Heritage – Advisory role in delivering public realm improvements in the Railway Heritage Area

Land Ownership Issues

The vast majority of Public Realm, by virtue of it being public highway, is in the ownership of Swindon Borough Council, as are the parks and gardens.

Priority

The Public Realm projects identified on this Section will be implemented according to need and timings of major development in the vicinity.
Town Centre Public Realm improvements are prioritised on the following basis:

- Regent Place and Canal Walk - completion by 2011.
- Other spaces and routes - completion by 2016.

Infrastructure Requirements

- Improvements to the primary routes and spaces
- The creation of the Green Spine
- Upgrading of existing green spaces
- New street signage as per the Council's Signage Strategy
- New lighting of streets, spaces and artistic illumination of buildings as per the Council's Lighting Strategy
- New public art as per the Council's Public Art Strategy

Delivery Mechanism

New developments in the vicinity of the areas identified for public realm improvements will be expected to help deliver the public realm as an integral part of development or provide developer contributions which will allow the Council to deliver projects at the earliest opportunity. Supplementary funding to deliver the identified public realm improvements will be secured through Corporate Sponsorship, S106 Contributions and regional or community infrastructure funds.

Detailed design work for Regent Street, Canal Walk and Bridge Street will be commissioned in early 2008 out of Council revenue funding. Timing of implementation will be dependent on capital funding available from other sources including our development partners, continued inward investment in Central Swindon through developer contributions and cyclical funding from Central Government.

The public art strategy for the central area requires that every public art commission demonstrates a commitment to sustainability

Quality Assurance

There will be full consultation with affected communities / businesses on major new public realm schemes.

The Reinstatement of a Canal through Central Swindon

Context

The benefits of town centre canal development are well demonstrated in places such as Banbury, Reading, and Bath.

There is a strong desire to create a 'wow' factor in the heart of Swindon by re-creating a canal through Central Swindon. A canal would also put Central Swindon on the map as a tourist destination, which would provide significant economic benefits for the area and health and well-being benefits for the Swindon community.

A canal along the preferred route would provide the opportunity to create a worthy 21st Century contribution to Brunel's legacy by raising the profile of the Railway Heritage Area.

The Safeguarded Route

The alignment of the preferred canal route is shown on the Proposals Map. The route starts at the currently restored section of the canal at Kingshill. A lock would then lower the canal sufficiently to allow boats to pass under Kingshill Road. The canal would then travel northeastwards to Westcott Place, along a route that will be informed by a subsequent detailed design scheme for this area. Westcott Place would be closed to through traffic and the canal would run along the line of the road towards Faringdon Road.

Faringdon Road would also be closed to through traffic and the canal routed along the north side of the road. The canal would travel along the entire length of Faringdon Road towards Fleet Street.

Due to the existing building frontages and space restrictions along Fleet Street the canal width may need to be reduced in this area. However, the need for the width of the canal to be narrowed can be removed through the comprehensive redevelopment of the land and buildings in the Fleet Street and Upper Bridge Street area.

The Proposals Map identifies an 'Area of Search' for a canal basin, which would be constructed in the Fleet Street / Upper Bridge Street area. Accommodating the basin in a Town Centre location would allow the area to be enhanced through the waterside development opportunities that will be created. The final location of the canal basin would be informed by a detailed master planning exercise for the Fleet Street / Bridge Street area as detailed in the Retail Core section.

Canal Feasibility

The Council commissioned the consultants Halcrow to undertake a comprehensive Feasibility Study, 'the Swindon Central Canal Route Study (August 2007)', into the preferred canal route through Central Swindon. This Feasibility Study considers a range of challenges, including water supply, transport and engineering issues. The Swindon Transport Study is also considering the wider transport implications of the canal.

As there are height variations along the route of the canal, the Feasibility Study identifies the need for a back pumping system to maintain a navigable depth of water in all the sections. In addition a waste pipe would need to be laid to take excess water away from the canal.

The Feasibility Study notes that the canal would provide additional surface water storage. The canal can therefore contribute to the sustainable water management of the area and should reduce flood risk for homes and businesses nearby.

New road bridges for access over the canal will be required at both Farnsby Street, for residents in the Railway Village and at Catherine Street to maintain access to the Brunel car parks. These bridges would be highly visible and as such they would be designed as 'feature' structures.

To avoid the dividing effect of the canal, new footbridges would be required at regular intervals. These bridges should be aligned with existing thoroughfares to enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross with the maximum convenience. The footbridges should provide safe and convenient access for everyone.

Impacts on Local Residents and Traders

The canal route travels through a built up area, which is heavily used, by both residents and businesses. The canal will impact on local residents and traders both during and after its construction. The key to the success of the canal will be ensuring that the public's concerns are addressed in the detailed design of the scheme. It is particularly important to ensure that appropriate service access to properties along the route is maintained.

A maintenance plan will be required to co-ordinate the on-going maintenance of the canal. The maintenance plan should set out the funding mechanism to finance the upkeep of the canal.

Impacts on the Built and Natural Environment

The canal represents an ideal opportunity to deliver biodiversity enhancements to the area. The requirement to enhance biodiversity would be expected to form a key component of the detailed design of the canal scheme.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would accompany the canal scheme. The EIA should consider the potential environmental impacts (adverse and beneficial) during construction, operation and maintenance.

There is excellent scope for environmental improvements to be carried out along large stretches of the canal route, in particular, by providing enhancements along the boundary of Robert Le Kyng Primary School and by linking the canal with Faringdon Park. Faringdon Park would be able to utilise the canal as a focal feature. The canal would complement the other improvements earmarked for the Park outlined in the Public Realm Section.

The stretch of the canal route that travels past the Railway Village is highly sensitive given the area's rich historic character. A comprehensive approach to the design of both the canal and the public realm improvements identified for the Village is vital. The two new road bridges in this area would also be highly visible and would need to be sensitively designed to make them a positive feature that contributes to the character of the area.

There are a number of interesting and distinctive historic buildings along the route of the canal, ranging from the larger scale Railway Village and Health Hydro down to a number of smaller pubs and shops. These buildings should be used as focal points and way-markers on the route.

The Gateway at Kingshill (Area D1 on the Proposals Map)

The buildings in the Shire and Erin Court area are visually poor. This area is, however, effectively a gateway into Central Swindon and as such is identified as redevelopment opportunity area on the Proposals Map.

The redevelopment of this area would remove the potential need for an awkward 'S bend' and would allow for the canal to be designed along a straighter alignment. The final alignment of the canal route through this area would be detailed at the design stage of the Shire and Erin Court redevelopment.

The Canal Basin

The Proposals Map identifies an 'Area of Search' for a canal basin, which would be constructed in the Fleet Street / Upper Bridge Street area. The construction of a canal basin within Central Swindon will be important to the success of the canal. The basin will allow boat owners to stop overnight when visiting Swindon and would provide a location for turning boats. This is particularly important during the period between completion of the Kingshill to Fleet Street stretch of the canal and the final connection to the North Wilts Canal.

The location of the basin within the Fleet Street / Upper Bridge Street area will be informed by a comprehensive master planning exercise as detailed in the Retail Core Section of this Action Plan.

Policy CAAP4

The Canal

Land is safeguarded along the alignment shown on the Proposals Map for the development of a canal through Central Swindon.
An Area of Search for a canal basin is identified on the Proposals Map. The final location of the basin should be informed by a detailed master planning exercise encompassing the Upper Bridge Street / Fleet Street area.

Development should not prejudice the delivery of the canal and where practicable should positively respond to the canal in its design.

The canal should be developed in accordance with a detailed design scheme and implementation plan. The design scheme should address the canal's relationship with adjoining land uses, should safeguard vehicular access to private properties and delivery access for traders and should maximise opportunities for enhancing biodiversity. Footbridges should be provided at regular intervals along the canal route. These footbridges should provide safe and convenient access for everyone.

The canal implementation plan should set a delivery framework that minimises disruption to local residents and traders during the construction phase.

Progress on the canal proposal will be monitored by the Council's Canal Task Force. The Canal allocation will be reviewed within the first two years of the Action Plan's adoption if any of the following occur:

(a) insurmountable constraints are identified as the detailed design develops;
(b) failure to secure a funding strategy sufficient to cover the full costs of the proposal; or
(c) public support is not secured as part of the ongoing consultation on detailed design work.

Delivering the Canal

Key Players

- Swindon Borough Council – Major landowner and has a key role in facilitating the delivery of the canal
- Wilts and Berks Canal Trust – Key player in implementing the canal
- Local Residents and Local Traders - Key role in scrutinising the detailed design of the scheme
- English Heritage – Key advisory role on impacts on the Railway Village Conservation Area
- Thames Water and Environment Agency - Key advisory role on water resource issues
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust - Key advisory role on delivering biodiversity
- British Waterways - Key advisory role in linking the canal to the Kennet and Avon Canal at Semington in the future

Land Ownership Issues

The bulk of the proposed canal route is within the ownership of the Council. The Erin Court / Shire Court residential area is privately owned, as are the properties fronting onto Fleet Street.

Priority

The Canal would be effectively implemented in 2 phases; Phase 1: Kingshill to Fleet Street, and Phase 2: Fleet Street to Bruce Street Bridges. Phase 1, whilst being the most difficult and raising the biggest challenges, is the priority, given the regenerative impact it will have. The canal basin would provide boaters with the incentive to use this stretch of the canal prior to the Fleet Street to Bruce Street Bridges route being created, which will ultimately link into the North Wilts canal network, being in place.

Route linking Kingshill and Fleet Street and canal basin (completion by 2016)

Route Linking Fleet Street and Bruce Street Bridges \ (completion after 2016)

Infrastructure Requirements

- Construction of the canal and canal basin
- Canal-side public realm
- Footbridges over the canal
- 2 x road bridges
- Back pumping system
- New road layouts in the vicinity of the canal

Delivery Mechanism

An Environment Impact Assessment would be required to be submitted with the application, which should ensure that the likely environment impacts of the canal development are fully understood.

Given the large costs involved, a range of funding sources are being pursued including Lottery Funding, EU funding, Corporate Sponsorship, S106 Contributions and Growth Points Funding.

A detailed Feasibility Study for the canal route linking Kingshill and Fleet Street has been prepared. A Borough wide Transport Study is being prepared, which will consider the impact of the canal on the wider road network. Detailed feasibility work into the route linking Fleet Street and Bruce Street Bridges and also linking the canal into the wider canal network will be commissioned. A detailed design scheme, along with a detailed implementation plan to guide the delivery of the canal, will also be commissioned.

The location of the basin within the Fleet Street / Upper Bridge Street area will be informed by a comprehensive master planning exercise of this area.

Compulsory Purchase Orders will be used where necessary.

Quality Assurance

There will be full consultation with affected communities / businesses on the detailed design scheme and implementation plan.

6 Transport and Movement Strategy

Context

This Section helps deliver the Central Area Action Plan objective of:

- securing the creation of safe, convenient, user-friendly and attractive routes into, out of and through Central Swindon, to help develop a vibrant and active community.

Easy access into and around Central Swindon is essential to attracting residents, visitors and businesses into the Town Centre. Much work has been carried out and further work is underway to identify initiatives and investment needed in transport infrastructure and to facilitate and encourage a wide range of travel options.

Swindon's 2030: A Vision for Transport and the accompanying Strategy for Transport in the Town Centre: Swindon 2030 were published for consultation in 2008. This section of the Swindon Central Area Action Plan is in accordance with and informed by the aims and objectives of the aforementioned documents. It sets out the key issues that need to be addressed in Central Swindon, suggests potential solutions and sets out additional guidance.

2030: A Vision for Transport

The Council aims to facilitate delivery of Swindon's long-term vision for its economy and prevent transport issues becoming a barrier to economic success and ensure that new expansion areas are well integrated within Swindon.

The strategic challenge is to improve the capacity and performance of the existing transport network by addressing issues of supply and demand, through:

- Reducing journey lengths and the need to travel.
- Better managing the existing infrastructure and influencing travel choice.
- Targeting investment in additional infrastructure.

Strategy for Transport in the Town Centre: Swindon 2030

The Strategy for Transport in the Town Centre aims to achieve:

- A Town Centre which is easily accessible from all parts of Swindon.
- Pedestrian priority which provides a pleasant and safe shopping and leisure experience.
- A road network which discourages through traffic and reduces the amount of circulating traffic.

Initial assessment using the Council's multi-modal transport model has made it clear that regeneration, designed to enhance the quality of life of those visiting, working and living in the Town Centre, cannot be accommodated by allowing unrestrained use of the car. It is, however, important that people can use and enjoy the Town Centre at their convenience and that all existing and newly developed areas across the Borough are linked successfully to the Town Centre.

Transport and Movement Strategy for Central Swindon

The guiding principles for transport in Central Swindon are to facilitate ease of movement into, out of and around Central Swindon and to support its economic growth and regeneration. The Council seeks to increase the choice of travel options so that the car does not dominate or have a detrimental impact on the environment, or the quality of the experience in the Town Centre.

The Action Plan seeks to improve the capacity and performance of the existing road network by discouraging through traffic and reducing the amount of circulating traffic. To deliver on this goal, development proposals will be considered by the Council not only in terms of the impact on the transport network in the immediate area of their site but also the cumulative impact of proposals in the area. Traffic management will ensure road systems operate efficiently to allow the road network to cope with traffic movement.

Promoting the use of public transport together with enhancing provision for pedestrians and cyclists will be key to reducing the dominance of the car. A well-located bus exchange will provide a new gateway for the regenerated Town Centre and this together with well-placed interchanges will encourage sustainable travel choices. Improving accessibility to the railway station will make the most of its gateway status.

Creating a balance between restraint and adequate parking provision within Central Swindon will be important in the context of the role of parking in enhancing accessibility and supporting the economic development of Central Swindon.

In addition to the limited Local Transport Plan funding, the bulk of funding for transport infrastructure will be from developer contributions, and through the direct provision of transport infrastructure within developments.

Policy CAAP5

The Transport and Movement Strategy

Development proposals and highway schemes will be assessed in terms of how they fit into the aims and objectives of the Vision for Transport, the Strategy for Transport in the Town Centre, the Local Transport Plan and the overarching transport and movement strategy. Regard will be had to the individual and cumulative impact of such proposals on highway capacity and performance, traffic management, car parking, public transport and provision for cyclists and pedestrians, as well as environmental quality in the Town Centre.

The Wider Town Centre Road Network

The current Town Centre road network will change significantly as a result of regeneration and development, and alternative routes will be required for traffic that will no longer be able to use the Town Centre as a through route.

To achieve this commitment, applications meeting the threshold in the Guidance for Transport Assessment (GTA) must be supported either by a Transport Statement or Assessment underpinned and informed by evidence gathered at an early stage in the process of developing proposals. Applications should be supported by a Travel Plan setting out measures to promote sustainable travel, together with any transport mitigation measures necessary to reduce the negative impacts on the environment associated with increased traffic.

The impact of development proposals on the transport network of the Town Centre must be considered in the context of wider regeneration objectives and not in isolation. Any highway scheme proposed as part of the Town Centre regeneration will be required to facilitate the over-arching aims of the Strategy for Transport in the Town Centre to help manage the amount of traffic, reduce the number of vehicles circulating to get to parking locations, and significantly reduce the amount of traffic using the Town Centre as a through-route.

The cumulative impact of development proposals on the local network is also a key consideration. Swindon Borough Council has made a commitment within its Local Transport Plan to promote and encourage sustainable travel. All new developments will be required to produce a Travel Plan setting out a commitment to reducing the negative impact on the environment that can be the result of increased levels of traffic associated with development.

This will apply to employment, retail and residential developments. The Council has a dedicated Travel Awareness Officer who works with businesses and developers to create practicable Travel Plans.

Policy CAAP6

Development and the Highway and Transport Network

To assess the effect on development proposals on the highway and transport network in the immediate vicinity of the site, all developments that meet the thresholds set out in the Guidance for Transport Assessment (GTA) should produce either a Transport Statement (TS), or Transport Assessment (TA) and Travel Plan (TP) as appropriate. This should include a commitment to reduce adverse environmental impacts arising from increased traffic associated with the development.

Traffic Management

Traffic management is about ensuring road systems operate efficiently to allow the road network to cope with traffic movement. Whilst the Town Centre is well signed from the key approach routes, there are still difficulties once arriving in the centre. Signage to the Town Centre, and specifically the car parks must be reviewed in order to reduce both the amount of circulating and through traffic.

Legible signage is important and larger developments will be expected to provide signs or appropriate way-markers within their development indicating direction and distance to specific locations such as the Town Centre shops, railway station and bus exchange. Additional signage to other key locations such as the new central library and civic campus, along with routes to satellite centres such as Old Town and the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre will also be required.

As part of a proposed wider Urban Traffic Management Control System, variable message signage is proposed to provide up-to-date parking guidance and information, which could reduce the average time spent searching for a parking space by 50%.

Travel signal management would also form part of the proposed Urban Traffic Management Control System, and developers will be required to contribute to this system in the form of provision and installation of hardware at junctions identified within their Transport Assessment and to the costs of the operation and maintenance of those facilities. Hardware will need to be approved by the Council to be compatible with the Borough-wide network.

Policy CAAP7

Traffic Management

Major development proposals will be expected to provide signs or appropriate way-markers within their development indicating direction and distance to specific locations. Clear signing to car parks in the Town Centre should be provided to reduce circulating and through traffic.

Transport Infrastructure and Developer Contributions

For the development and improvement of transport infrastructure within Central Swindon, it is anticipated that the bulk of the funding will be from developer contributions or through the provision of transport infrastructure within developments.

Highway infrastructure is not currently included in the Development Control Guidance Note on Developer Contributions and will be required in addition to these contributions. Work is currently underway within the Council to provide guidance as relates to highways and transport infrastructure developer contributions, and a tariff-based calculation will be introduced for transport during the period of this Central Area Action Plan.

All development proposals must address the transport impact on the local highway network within the vicinity of their site. Off site financial contributions will be required to mitigate the local and wider transportation impacts of the development.

The Council, as part of the development management process, must assess the transport impact of a proposed development and secure the relevant planning conditions or obligations as relates to highways and transport infrastructure improvement. This relates especially to development proposals that have the potential to create a material transportation impact on the local highway network.

Developer contributions will be sought to provide or improve transport infrastructure in Central Swindon. This will include contributions towards traffic management (Urban Traffic Management Control System), parking improvements and enhancements to the accessibility of the railway station. Contributions will also be sought towards infrastructure that will increase opportunities for travel by public transport, walking and cycling. This will include improvement to bus services, bus infrastructure, bus priority measures, Park and Ride schemes, taxi facilities, pedestrian and cycle movement, and to Borough-wide Travel Plan initiatives such as the car-share database.

Policy CAAP8

Transport Infrastructure Needs Resulting from Development

Developers will be expected to meet the transport infrastructure needs generated by their development proposals, be they on or off site, as well as contributing toward public transport services.

Where these requirements cannot be secured through a planning condition, an obligation shall be sought prior to the granting of planning permission to ensure that the necessary transport infrastructure is provided.

In such cases, planning permission shall only be granted when necessary infrastructure generated by the development is secured through planning conditions or obligations.

Public Transport

Central Swindon currently benefits from an excellent bus network, which links into the centre from surrounding areas. There are ten routes into the Town Centre, each running every ten minutes. According to annual monitoring reports, bus usage has increased by 18% in 5 years, more than any other location in the South West.

Encouraging more sustainable travel patterns is a key corporate objective. Promoting the use of public transport within Swindon and facilitating delivery of a high quality and high frequency service to users that will make bus travel an attractive, convenient and realistic alternative to the car, is central to this objective.

Meeting this challenge will involve the creation of a high quality priority bus network as set out in the Local Transport Plan. The bus network will have dedicated expressway routes constructed to form segregated lanes. These will be accompanied by priority measures on the road such as bus lanes and priority at signal controlled junctions.

The Council welcomes early discussions with the developer about opportunities to use bus shelter design to create local identity. All new shelters will be required to accommodate real-time information.

Park and Ride

Another effective way of encouraging the use of public transport is the creation of a ring of park and ride sites operating services over much longer hours. The park and ride sites will serve strategic locations and intercept long-stay visitors and commuters on the radial routes into the Town Centre. This will reduce traffic flow and congestion in Central Swindon thereby ensuring a higher quality environment.

Bus Exchange and Interchanges

In addition to improvements to the quality and frequency of buses, a modern, redeveloped bus exchange will be provided. A well-located bus exchange has the potential to provide a high profile and symbolic gateway for the regenerated Town Centre. It will also make provision for rural services and the necessary expansion of services as a result of growth.

The proposed location for the bus exchange is to the western end of Fleming Way, with Fleming Way becoming a bus only route with bus stops along the newly re-graded road. The bus exchange and associated facilities will be deliverable during Phase 1 of the Union Square development. It is proposed that the bus exchange be integrated with the rail station through a range of public realm improvements to provide an integrated transport network.

It is proposed that there will also be smaller bus interchanges located around the Town Centre. This distribution of stops will enable bus passengers to choose from a variety of drop-off and collections points, enhancing the flexibility and convenience of bus services.

Regent Circus will serve as a bus interchange at the southern end of the Town Centre and this will offer bus passengers the choice to alight at one end of the Town Centre, and board for their return trip at the new bus exchange. This is established passenger behaviour and should be incorporated into any new design.

A further bus interchange is proposed along Farnsby Street at the site of the existing bus stops alongside the Brunel West car park, for passengers arriving from a western and northern direction into Swindon Town Centre. This site has been chosen because it is currently well served by the core bus network and there is sufficient width in the existing road space. By upgrading bus facilities at this stop the accessibility to the Brunel shopping centre and neighbouring office accommodation will be enhanced.

Taxis

Taxis are an important means of public transport. As well as providing a service for people who wish to travel privately, they allow for sustainable travel choices. Taxis also serve an important role in the development of a vibrant and diverse night-time economy.

It is proposed that new, accessible taxi ranks will be developed at attractive and convenient locations around the Town Centre to complement regeneration and with due regard to the Central Area Public Realm Strategy. These facilities will be well lit to create a sense of safety and should be managed to minimize disturbance and nuisance to nearby residents.

Policy CAAP9

Public Transport

The proposed location for the new bus exchange is to the western end of Fleming Way as illustrated on the Proposals Map. This will be complemented by associated real-time passenger information and up-graded key supporting stops within the Town Centre. Two smaller bus interchanges will be safeguarded and enhanced at Regent Circus and Farnsby Street and will offer a choice of drop-off and collection points for passengers. The bus exchange and bus interchanges must be incorporated into any necessary master plans.

New, accessible taxi ranks should be developed at attractive and convenient locations around the Town Centre.

Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

Enhancing connectivity and pedestrian areas within the Town Centre is a key priority. Developing walking links throughout Central Swindon is integral to Town Centre regeneration. Possible barriers such as bridges and underpasses, including those at Whalebridge and Farnsby Street need to be removed. Pedestrian routes need to be well-defined, well-lit and offer direct routes to users to provide clarity and confidence for walkers, particularly for visitors arriving from the railway station and the bus exchange who are unfamiliar with the layout of the Town Centre. It is also important to provide improved connectivity to adjoining residential areas.

Over the past five years, the number of people travelling regularly by bicycle in Swindon has increased by 23%. Yet cyclists and pedestrians often find it difficult to move around Central Swindon as routes are frequently broken by large pieces of transport infrastructure such as ring roads, roundabouts and railway lines.

Work to complete the urban cycle network is underway as part of the current Local Transport Plan as well as being identified as one of the Swindon 2010 50 Promises. Existing and proposed cycle routes are indicated on the Proposals Map. New development should incorporate clearly signed continuous cycling routes within their developments that join into the urban cycle network.

Increased cycle linkages to rural areas have also been identified. Ample secure cycle parking is essential and will be consolidated at strategic locations throughout the Town Centre. These will be complemented by a general provision of small cycle parking facilities conveniently located throughout the Town Centre. It is important that all development proposals include appropriate bicycle parking facilities for short and long-term visitors and staff and appropriate facilities for secure parking for powered two-wheelers. The Council welcomes early discussions with developers on cycle parking, options available and the opportunity to introduce local identity to an area through god design.

As detailed in the Public Realm section, a project is underway to improve signage to key destinations within Central Swindon. This new, consistent and clear signage will make travelling around Central Swindon on foot and cycle easier.

Policy CAAP10

Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

A high quality, safe and continuous pedestrian network will be created through the Town Centre with clear linkages allowing access into the wider urban area.

New development should incorporate clearly signed continuous cycling routes linking to the urban cycle network and secure bicycle parking at key locations in the Town Centre as set out in the Local Transport Plan. Secure bicycle parking locations have been identified at Fleet Street, the new Central Library, within the Brunel West car park and within Union Square.

Parking Strategy

A balance between restraint and adequate parking provision within Central Swindon is key when considering parking as part of the overall strategy of regeneration and economic growth within Swindon. To create a functional and sustainable transport network for all users within a regenerated Town Centre, transport priorities are based around reducing car dependency through modal shift.

The emerging Swindon Borough Council Car Parking Strategy examines external influences on Town Centre parking, current travel trends, parking stock and tariffs and makes recommendations on the future location and quantity of parking that would best meet the needs of a regenerated Town Centre.

Within the Strategy for Transport in the Town Centre: Swindon 2030, car parks on radial routes into the Town Centre and a new parking facility to the north of the railway line, with clear signing to the car parks to reduce circulating traffic in the Town Centre, are proposed.

The Parking Strategy Aims

The Parking Strategy aims to:

- co-ordinate parking provision across Central Swindon and ensure that the operation of the individual car parks supports the overall strategy of regeneration and economic growth in Swindon as well as the national objectives for environmental protection and the provision of sustainable travel choices;
- retain influence over the availability and price of parking; and
- reduce the amount of circulating traffic in the Town Centre.

Number of Spaces Required

Central Swindon currently has 25 public car parks, which offer approximately 6000 parking spaces. These public car parks are distributed across the area in a number of surface and multi-storey configurations. A further 1,000 spaces are currently provided at Park and Ride sites on routes serving the town centre.

The Parking Strategy considers both the long and short-term car parking demands generated by regeneration in Central Swindon and aims to consolidate the existing car parks into a more legible system that uses real-time information to show where there are free spaces.

Public parking provision will need to be increased in the period up to 2026 to accommodate the level of growth identified for Swindon. Additional spaces will be provided at Park and Ride sites on key radial routes serving the Town Centre, and a new 1,000 space car park will be incorporated within the Central Swindon development scheme.

New and Existing Car Parking Provision

It is proposed to consolidate existing car parking provision within the Town Centre. Five large secure car parks, on key incoming routes, would intercept drivers entering the Town Centre, thus reducing circulating and through traffic. Clear signage to car parks is essential and variable message signage is proposed to provide up-to-date parking guidance and information.

A 1,000 space strategic car park is proposed to the north of the railway line as part of the Swindon Central development scheme. The proposed car park will help intercept drivers entering Central Swindon from the north of the town, and will play a key role in serving rail commuters which will help to remove traffic from the Town Centre. This car park will be linked to the Town Centre via a new rail crossing and by an enhanced subway, complemented by clear signage to the Town Centre and other key locations. Traffic entering the Town Centre from the north via Whitehouse Road, will be directed to parking provided as part of Union Square.

Traffic entering the Town Centre from the east will be served by the existing provision at Spring Gardens, Fleming Way and new parking available as part of Union Square.

New car parking will be provided as part of development schemes at Regent Place and Regent Circus for traffic entering from the south, whilst Brunel North and West will be retained to serve traffic entering from the west.

A further objective of the Parking Strategy is to improve the parking facilities through extensive refurbishment and maintenance programmes, which will make all car parks equally attractive to drivers. It is proposed that all car parks will be pay on exit with the ability to pay by credit or debit card or by mobile phone. All equipment will be state of the art. Within the newly developed areas of the Town Centre, on-street pay parking is proposed.

As part of any development, including the replacement of existing public car parking, or the provision of any new facilities, the Council will be working with developers to ensure agreement is reached concerning the number of spaces provided and the tariff and method of managing the tariff.

There is scope to modernise the approach to car parking provision. One method would be to introduce shared spaces. Currently, a maximum number of parking spaces are identified per development according to the scale and type of development. This maximum level of provision is already reduced according to an accessibility calculation, which is used to determine how easy it is to reach the development by modes other than by car.

In Central Swindon, which benefits from a number of good bus services, a railway station, and good walking and cycling routes, it should be possible to reduce parking requirements significantly. There is potential to introduce a policy that allows weekday long-stay spaces in multi-storey car parks to be used by shoppers as short-stay at the weekends, and in the evenings and overnight by residents. This minimises land take and maximises the use of car parks.

Within all and refurbished car parks provision will need to be made for disabled parking in accordance with the Council's adopted Parking Standards.

Shopmobility

Swindon's Shopmobility scheme is available to anyone with limited mobility and provides a selection of manually propelled and electrically powered wheelchairs and scooters. It is likely that Swindon's Shopmobility scheme will need to be extended and enhanced, and possibly even relocated, to ensure that it meets pressures provided by an expanded and enhanced Town Centre Retail Core. Related to the provision of car parks, and to access to the Town Centre, the Council proposes to ensure that Shopmobility is a well-recognised service within the Town Centre.

Policy CAAP11

Parking Strategy

The Council will support the development of a new 1,000 space car park to the north of the railway line as part of the Swindon Central development scheme. A new rail crossing linking the land north and south of the railway and/or improvements to the subway at the northern end of Bridge Street should be delivered prior to the completion of this car park

Strategic scale car parks are to be provided within the Union Square, Regent Place and Regent Circus development schemes.

Existing car parks located on key access roads into the Central Swindon Area will be modernised and refurbished.

The Railway Station

To improve the accessibility of the railway station and make the most of its gateway status, a new entrance is proposed on the northern side of the railway station linking into North Star and a proposed strategic car park of around 1,000 spaces within this area. As noted in Policy CAAP11 above.

Further improvements to the southern part of the railway station should also be carried out, addressing public realm issues, giving a positive first impression to visitors and improving pedestrian linkages to the Town Centre.

By enhancing the onward transport connections and the general environment surrounding the railway station we can encourage further business and leisure traffic to use rail as a mode of travel. Through a range of public realm improvements, the railway station will be linked to the proposed new bus exchange to provide an integrated transport network.

Railway Crossings

The railway effectively severs Central Swindon. Overcoming this barrier to movement is critical to the regeneration of Central Swindon, and in particular linking the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre and North Star to the Town Centre.

Existing crossings at Whitehouse Road and Park Lane are in need of refurbishment. The Council is keen to secure the upgrading and extension of the pedestrian and cycleway that crosses the railway along the old canal route as part of the Green Spine. The underpass linking the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre to the Town Centre requires extensive refurbishment to make it accessible to all and to allow for 24-hour access.

The Council will also seek to facilitate the delivery of a new pedestrian/cycleway across the Great Western mainline railway. It is proposed to complement it with a new crossing constructed to serve the Steam Museum and the Great Western Designer Outlet Centre. New crossings should be of a high quality landmark design that should be easily recognisable and desirable to use.

Policy CAAP12

The Railway Station and Railway Crossings

Major development schemes within the vicinity of the railway will be expected to make contributions towards improvements to existing crossings, which should be refurbished and made more accessible. The Swindon Central development scheme should help deliver a new crossing linking North Star with the land to the south of the railway.

Delivering Improved Transport and Movement

Key Players

- Swindon Borough Council – As Highways Authority
- Network Rail – Delivering improvements to the railway station
- Thamesdown Transport – Swindon's primary bus company

Land Ownership Issues

The bulk of the affected land is in public ownership.

Priority

New bus exchange and enhanced bus interchanges – by 2011

New North Star to Town Centre railway crossing – by 2016

Ongoing – New traffic management system, new signage, improved bus, pedestrian and cycle routes and improved parking facilities