a master plan for worcester city centre

STAGE ONE

VISION & MASTERPLAN

Prepared on behalf of:
Worcester City Council
In partnership with:
Worcester Alliance
Visit Worcester
Worcesteshire County Council

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January 2012
“Worcester will be unrivalled within the West Midlands as a city that combines all of the excitement and bustle visitors would expect to find, with a celebration of the beauty, richness and interest to be found in one of England’s most important historic cities...”
Worcester City Centre will be a dynamic, successful, attractive and vibrant place – a bigger city centre, which is more
diverse and choice laden, and which is representative of the success of the wider city of Worcester as a “First Rank
Cathedral and University City”.

A strong economy will form the backbone of this prosperous city centre. Businesses will recognise Worcester as a
desirable place to invest and grow, where educational achievement is high, where graduates want to stay, and where
an adaptable and proficient workforce can be found. They will also see a place where visitors will be attracted to
shop, dine, stay, and spend their leisure time.

To achieve economic prosperity, the city centre will embrace its wider potential and look beyond jobs and
consumerism, to foster an altogether richer and more rewarding experience that is available to all of the city’s
residents and visitors. It will be unrivalled within the West Midlands as a city that combines all of the excitement
and bustle visitors would expect to find, with a celebration of the beauty, richness and interest to be found in one of
England’s most important historic cities, and with a level of convenience and compactness which makes it very easy
to get to and very easy to walk around. This in turn will confirm the image of the city as a good place to invest, live,
study and visit.

Whilst valuing its heritage, the city centre, and with it the city, will move with the times. It will look forward, as the
University grows in stature and importance, as the face of the national economy shifts, and as the value of natural
resources increases, and it will become a more equitable city centre, conscious of its obligation to use resources
efficiently, reduce the carbon footprint of the city’s residents and businesses, and ensure those for whom personal
tavel becomes less affordable still have access to jobs and services. To achieve this, the city centre will commit to
becoming a more sustainable place. It will become greener, cleaner and healthier, and will deliver choices for living
and working in more sustainable ways. It will offer enhanced choices for accessing the city centre as provision for
walking, cycling and using public transport improves, and as the city’s streets and spaces are made more attractive.

The city centre will make more of its natural environment. In particular the riverside will become a focus for leisure
and entertainment; for boating and cycling, watching a performance on a summer’s evening, visiting artists markets
on a Sunday morning, and just sitting and watching the world go by.

Achieving this Vision and masterplan represents a substantial challenge. It requires not only bold, strong and decisive
leadership from the city’s guardians, but also the buy-in of businesses, organisations and residents of the city, who
can lend support, innovation and ideas to make change one that is positive and allows everyone to share the benefits.
To achieve the aspirations set out in this document, the focus must be on continued commitment and delivery.
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View of River & Deansway from Cathedral Tower
Worcester has the makings of a vibrant city centre, as the focus of a prosperous city. Strategically positioned on the banks of the River Severn from its early beginnings, with prominent roles in England’s ecclesiastical development, civil conflict and manufacturing influence, the city centre is steeped in centuries of history which remain evident in its pattern of medieval streets and remarkable collection of old buildings.

This historic foundation creates a distinction which now singles out Worcester within the context of the West Midlands. In the early twenty first century the city centre displays many of the characteristics which make for an attractive and desirable place to live, work and spend leisure time. Despite an ongoing economic recession, it retains healthy levels of retail activity, including a strong independent retail sector. It has a growing university, which has also provided the catalyst for the new Library and History Centre due to open in 2012, and it continues to benefit from investment in business and innovation through employers such as Worcester Bosch.

Nonetheless, it is not yet fulfilling its potential and can ill afford to rest on its laurels. Taken together, the strengths outlined above cannot sustain the city’s growth and prosperity indefinitely. Changing technologies, shifting consumer and visitor demands, the relative competitiveness of nearby towns and cities, and the move towards a “greener” urban agenda mean that Worcester must harness all of its potential if it is to remain relevant and of interest to prospective residents, investors and visitors. The time is ripe therefore for the city to consider the future of its centre, and to begin to sketch out a route map to that future. It will not be the first city to do this, but it is essential that it does move now to capture its potential; throughout this report examples of the initiatives taken in other comparable cities, recognised as “peer places” including York, Chester, Exeter and Cambridge, are highlighted.

In policy terms, the city is moving in the right direction to respond to these challenges. The Local Strategic Partnership, Worcester Alliance, has produced The Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcester, aimed at delivering social and economic progress and the ambition to become a First Rank Cathedral and University City. Its priorities are to achieve:

» communities that are safe and feel safe;
» a better environment for today and tomorrow;
» economic success that is shared by all;
» improved health and well being;
» meeting the needs of children and young people; and
» stronger Communities (including housing, culture, poverty and volunteering).

The city centre has a substantial role to play in achieving these goals. The City sought and received Growth Point status in recognition of the need to pursue a package of measures to bring about growth and investment. The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, which established a remit for Worcester to achieve balanced and sustainable growth capable of delivering long term economic prosperity, excellent travel choices and broad social benefits, has been abolished under the new Coalition Government. In it’s place a National Planning Policy Framework and the South Worcestershire Development Plan will be put in place with proposals for the city to grow beyond its current boundaries by 2030. The emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan will provide the basis for the planned expansion of jobs, homes and related infrastructure. Within this context, demands on the city centre will increase, and it remains critical to consider its future direction.
Concurrently, the Worcester Transport Strategy (WTS), which encompasses substantial funding for the first stage works, sets out the mechanisms required to address the demand for travel in the city over the coming decades. This encompasses existing as well as forecast future concerns.

In the context of growth and change, it is vital that the opportunities evident in the city centre are capitalised upon. Its performance is intrinsically linked with the wider success of the city, and its future therefore warrants special consideration. Local stakeholders, including Worcester Alliance, Worcester City Council, Advantage West Midlands and Worcestershire County Council, have been working together to devise a master plan for the city centre which will provide certainty about decision making to give investors confidence in Worcester, and which will create a framework for public sector initiatives aimed at improving the overall quality of the city centre experience.

The Vision and masterplan for the future city centre represents the consensual view of a wide range of participants from the city. Its purpose is to establish clear aims and objectives for the city centre for the next twenty years and to provide a basis upon which more detailed delivery strategies can be devised. The final version of the vision and masterplan will be taken to Worcester City Council members for their endorsement.
SECTION 02

today’s city centre
City centres are dynamic social and economic places, which are constantly changing. Even during the course of the UK’s economic recession, this has been borne out in Worcester’s city centre, where in 2011 development continues apace at Diglis Basin and at the former Vinegar Works, and the University of Worcester’s new city campus at the former Worcester Royal Infirmary nears completion. Additionally, considerable interest and forward planning from developers remains relatively strong, indicating that the city centre has untapped potential.

The challenge is to capture this potential, whilst simultaneously capturing the imagination of Worcester’s citizens and the commitment of landowners and developers. Without a shared Vision and masterplan, decision making will continue to be piecemeal and reactive, and the important co-ordination between land use, transport planning and the urban realm, which now underpins the success of those modern cities characterised by stronger, more resilient economies, high quality environments and a better quality of life, will not take place.

The strengths of the city centre today are plain to see, and can be summarised as follows:
“A clear set of objectives for the riverside is needed to inspire and guide changes to ensure that it becomes an integral and valued part of the city centre.”

The River offers major potential for water based and riverside leisure and recreation. It is an under-utilised resource, largely because it is so poorly connected from the heart of the city centre, and partly because it lacks focus and amenity. A clear set of objectives for the riverside is needed to inspire and guide changes to ensure that it becomes an integral and valued part of the city centre. A successful strategy will demand fruitful engagement with the College of Technology as an adjacent landowner, English Heritage and the Environment Agency.

LESSONS FROM PEER PLACES: YORK

The rivers Ouse, Foss and Derwent are key features of York. The retail area extends to the river network and the increasingly important night time economy in York is focused on river front bars and restaurants. Further exploiting this potential is an important part of the future economic vision and masterplan for the city centre.
The heritage of the city centre is unique. It includes the important Worcester Cathedral and an impressive collection of listed buildings such as the Guildhall, as well as the legacy of the Royal Worcester Porcelain factory, the Worcester and Birmingham Canal and The Commandery with its focus on Worcester’s key role in the English Civil Wars. This heritage collection, which underpins the most beautiful aspects of the city centre, must be made to work much harder to emphasise the special qualities of the city.
The city’s retail, cultural and educational offer is diverse, and has the potential to grow considerably in the next decade. A growing and increasingly diverse population, including greater student numbers, will increase support for cultural activities. There is much interest in expanding the retail offer, but caution is needed to avoid past mistakes which have seen twentieth century shopping mall and street designs superimposed on the medieval street pattern. As always, excellent access to and promotion of these primary city centre uses will be essential.

LESSONS FROM PEER PLACES: CHESTER AND EXETER

Chester’s proximity to Liverpool and Manchester means it faces competition, particularly in terms of retail, but the city’s unique cultural and historic character has helped it to continually out-perform the region in economic terms.

The Princesshay development in Exeter offers a good example of a development which strengthens and updates Exeter’s retail and entertainment offer to visitors. The new development of 530,000 square feet was designed to ensure that it respected existing architectural styles and the traditional street layout.
The medieval street pattern creates a compact urban form, which ensures compatible uses can locate closely together to encourage high levels of on-street activity. As a consequence, the retail core of the city is also compact, and benefits from extensive pedestrianisation. Pedestrian concentrations are highest in such environments, which are attractive and are perceived as safe. They generate a sense of vibrancy and vitality, and because they appeal to the pedestrian they provide a good model for sustainable city centres. There are good lessons here about how to plan for sustainable city centres, which can be observed in the future.

LESSONS FROM PEER PLACES: CHESTER

The Chester Place Marketing Strategy was completed in 2006. The strategy sets out the goal of making Chester a “must see” European destination, a beacon of retail quality and distinctiveness and a leader in applying world class solutions to the development of small historic cities.
In contrast to the medieval core, there are parts of the wider city centre which have a coarser street pattern. These are the transition areas at Carden Street, Lowesmoor, The Butts, where a wide mix of manufacturing and lower grade business activities exist side by side, in an uncoordinated manner and to the detriment of the city environment. Nonetheless, the nature of these opportunity areas means that they are ripe for change and many key local landowners are keen to move regeneration forward, to the direct economic benefit of the city. It is essential not only that this change dovetails with the Vision for the city centre, but also that the wider city is able to capture some of the benefits brought about by regeneration.

Areas in transition, such as Lowesmoor, provide scope for expanding the city centre.
Simultaneously, there are substantial concerns which the Vision and masterplan exercise has taken account of.

- The city centre will become increasingly difficult to access due to growing traffic volume and the limitations of the transport network, notably the limited river crossings which lead to a concentration of through traffic in the city centre. It is important that the city remains accessible to people by all means of transport including road, public transport, cycling and walking. In particular, the city centre will need to take account of increases in traffic volumes and the limited river crossings which lead to a concentration of traffic in the city centre. The medieval fabric of the city presents considerable challenges to ensuring continuing access and economic activity as the city grows and capacity will need to be provided with a balance between all travel modes.

LESSONS FROM PEER PLACES: CAMBRIDGE

In Cambridge, it is recognised that economic growth is challenged by congestion and transport links within the city; accommodating growth, housing affordability and improving the city centre are the impetus for developing a multi-modal transport strategy. High visitor numbers also contribute to traffic and public transport congestion. Cambridge does however have the advantage of having the highest level of cycling in the country.
Vehicle approach to the city centre occurs via direct radial routes, which are easy to understand and which will continue to play an important role. However, arrival at the heart of the city can be disorientating and disappointing by any mode. Car parks are abundant and the rail and bus stations are centrally located but motorists are bound up by highway restrictions which often force drivers into counter-intuitive directions of travel. Onward pedestrian movement can be frustrated by street clutter and the poor amenity of some routes between car parks, rail and bus stations and the retail core. There is considerable congestion around the bus station which reduces the impression of arriving at and being welcomed to the heart of the city’s street life. Rail passengers are ejected into hostile environments, and at Shrub Hill the route to the city centre is illegible and dominated by heavily engineered roads. These matters are highlighted in the Worcester Transport Strategy, but are also seen as critical to the Vision, because they impact directly upon the economic prosperity and quality of the city centre experience.
East-west movement through the city centre is characterised by a lack of consistency in the continuity and quality of the available routes for all modes of transport. This relates in part to the nature of the street pattern, and also to the poor lining of streets with inactive frontages. Improved east-west movement by public transport is a key objective of the Worcester Transport Strategy. Particular effort is needed in the transition areas, particularly to the east of City Walls Road at Lowesmoor, to ensure that new development facilitates stronger connections and integrates all areas of the city centre.
The quality of the public realm is varied. There is no cohesion to tie the various components of the city centre together, or to highlight important places and locations. Piecemeal decision making must be replaced by a wider strategy for public realm improvements, aimed at making the city centre environment a richer, more pleasant place to spend time.
There is no sizeable public space where local citizens can gather. This is despite the fact that historically places such as The Cornmarket functioned as places where people came together for events and for trade. Modern cities aiming to stimulate lively, safe streets must devote space to accommodate activities such as markets, outdoor performance and outdoor dining. If Worcester’s cultural advancement is to continue it will be critical to identify and deliver spaces for human interaction.

Further analysis of the characteristics of the city centre is contained in the Stage One Report produced in March 2010.
SECTION 03
building consensus
First Steps: Developing a Vision & masterplan

Establishing a Vision and masterplan calls for a process of debate, discussion and consultation in order that an optimum solution can be identified. This section outlines how that process has commenced, and explains how a consensus building exercise, attended by investors and democratically elected representatives in the city, produced this draft Vision and masterplan as the start of a set of wider discussions.

In March 2010 a two day “Scenario Planning” event was held in the city centre. Scenario planning is an important stage of the vision and masterplanning process. It was an opportunity for local partners to explore the different futures for the city centre, to confront tensions and long-term challenges, and build consensus around a shared and ambitious vision and masterplan.

Two consecutive full-day scenario planning events were attended by 70 stakeholders, including the Council leader and other prominent councillors from the City and County Council, senior managers from public agencies, representatives of Malvern and Wychavon Councils, local business people, representatives from the sport, culture and hospitality sectors, and the local media. The participants represented a sample of those who are influential in the city, and who are involved directly in making change happen.

Participants identified a number of global and national trends that impact directly on Worcester, including changes in living patterns and consumer demand, economic re-structuring and the changing demand for new skills and specialisms. The pressures, challenges and opportunities, which these changing patterns create, were openly discussed and debated.
From a wide range of issues, participants then selected the two most pressing and important issues likely to drive change in the city centre, and indeed the city, during the coming ten to twenty years:

» Nurturing sustainable, high-skill economic growth; and

» Pursuing sustainable urban development, encouraging a range of sustainable transport choices.

Building up from these two core drivers, local partners worked to identify a preferred scenario described as Bold Worcester, where sustained investment in economic development, aligned with successful advances in sustainable travel, lead to a vibrant and diverse city centre.

The “Bold Worcester” scenario describes a city centre which is:

» driven by a high-skill, high value-added knowledge economy;

» home to a growing and academically excellent university that makes a strong contribution to the local economy;

» a prestige tourist destination, offering a range of experiences to shoppers, day-trippers, holiday-makers and business visitors;

» famous for its beautiful and well-managed city centre;

» led by ambitious and visionary leaders, drawing on the skills of all partners;

» served by integrated and high-quality transport infrastructure; and

» plays a part in delivering housing growth in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive way;

Bold Worcester is an ambitious and challenging but deliverable goal. It requires a consistency of focus, a willingness to embrace change and take advantage of new opportunities, and a shared desire to build on Worcester’s existing strengths while nurturing new creativity, skills and capacities.

“The Vision and masterplan is of a Bold Worcester, where sustained investment in economic development, aligned with successful advances in sustainable travel, lead to a vibrant and diverse city centre.”
The three alternative scenarios set out below were rejected by participants:

- **Dispersed Worcester** – economically successful, but with a pattern of dispersed growth in the sub-region and reduction in the vitality of city centre;

- **Woeful Worcester** – jobless growth, with new housing focused on the periphery, but residents dependant on jobs and services in other locations;

- **Dormitory City Centre** – Low economic growth with a city centre dominated by housing development and visited for recreation and leisure purposes, leading to a less vital local economy;

The preferred scenario forms the basis for the Vision and masterplan of the city centre which is set out in the following section under a series of related themes, designed to encompass the essential elements of the Vision and masterplan.

A copy of the full written account of the Scenario Planning Workshop is available on request.
Next Steps: Wider Consultation

To ensure a wider opportunity to comment and contribute to the Vision and masterplan, the City Council ran a six week consultation exercise during June and July of 2011. Awareness of the draft Vision and masterplan was increased though local press articles, social networking sites and at a manned exhibition held in the city centre on Saturday 11th June. Local stakeholders and organisations, including the Worcester Civic Society, the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce and Worcester Cathedral Chapter were also invited to review the draft Vision and masterplan and provide a response.

Whilst a questionnaire was prepared to allow the Council to gauge the overall reaction to the draft Vision and masterplan, written comments on any issues of interest and concern was particularly encouraged. Full copies of all the responses can be viewed at the Council’s Orchard Street offices during normal working hours.

The questionnaires generated over 100 responses, which are summarised in the table to the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, do you agree with Worcester City Council’s Vision and masterplan for a Bold Worcester?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that the Council’s leaders should work towards a strong and diverse local economy?</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that the City and the City Centre should work towards improving choices in sustainable travel?</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree with the general emphasis for each of the identified development areas?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Shrub Hill Station Area</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Riverside</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. City Core</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Carden Street</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Cathedral &amp; Sidbury Quarter</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that the City Centre would benefit from squares and spaces of a civic quality, which could hold more outdoor activities and events?</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that improvements to the City Walls Road and Deansway should be pursued to improve connections across the City Centre?</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City Centre plays host to a large collection of important historic and listed buildings. Do you agree that these could be better promoted and protected?</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Written responses, including those sent with the questionnaires, those left on social networking sites and those from stakeholder organisations produced comments in relation to a number of themes. The over-riding result is one of support for the draft Vision and masterplan, coupled with concerns about the practicalities of achieving successful implementation and a concern that decision making should be both transparent and robust, and carried out in partnership with key organisations, including the business sector.

A summary of the comments is provided below.

**History & Culture**

Respondents see Worcester as a beautiful city, with many fine buildings and a distinguished heritage. There is a desire to see more made of the City’s assets, in particular the riverside which could become more of a focus for health and wellbeing, and which is seen as a good location for restaurants and cafes and water based activities. There was a consistently expressed view that old buildings should be protected and care given to the relics of the City’s industrial past (for example the railway arches). Overall, more opportunities for sports, leisure and evening activities were sought.

Several respondents called for a “cultural vision” which is imaginative and ambitious, with others noting that the University has a responsibility towards the cultural life of the city. It is recognised that the City’s cultural life needs a focal place; some suggested this might be created through a new public hall.

It was noted that the Vision and masterplan makes a good attempt to integrate the historic core with proposed new development.

**Civic Quality & Design**

Respondents identified a number of places and buildings where physical improvements would benefit the City Centre. The view was generally in accordance with that expressed in the draft Vision and masterplan and included areas around the Commandery, Cathedral Plaza, City Walls Road, Shrub Hill Station, the riverside, the Cornmarket, Deansway and the High Street. Mixed views were expressed about the technical college, with some believing it to be a good example of 1960’s architecture, and others suggesting it is not in keeping with Worcester. Respondents consistently called for the demolition of Elgar House, but were keen to ensure Shrub Hill Station was protected.

Respondents recognised the importance of street cleansing, floral displays, good maintenance and pollution control in creating an attractive city environment.
Recent buildings in the City Centre provoked a response; views about the new library and history centre varied, but disappointment about the quality of the Asda scheme and the inappropriateness of the materials employed. Suggestions were made that in future schemes light red coloured bricks, glass and wood should be more widely used.

Support for better outdoor space was given, particularly for outdoor performance and markets. It was noted that scale, enclosure, design and management would all be critical to the success of any new space. In addition, more trees, shrubs, sculpture and civic art were called for.

Reference to the need to look at national and international examples of best practice was made; respondents mentioned places such as Sienna, Bruges and York, which provided good examples of desirable civic quality. However, architecture should avoid suggesting it could be “anywhere” and should be relevant to Worcester.

Views and vistas, and the City Centre’s skyline should be afforded policy protection.

Access, Traffic & Parking

The Vision and masterplan’s ambition to achieve improved access and connectivity between different parts of the city was supported, notably between the city and the riverside and between Shrub Hill and the centre. In addition, several respondents acknowledged that recent improved provision for cyclists had led to more people cycling, and the City should seek to extent the cycle network to encourage this sustainable mode of travel.

Access for those coming from outside the City Centre is seen as important if Worcester is to compete against other destinations, particularly in retail terms. Overall, respondents used private cars, bus, rail and bicycle to travel to the City Centre, and the experience of all was regarded as being capable of improvement. Views about car parking varied considerably, with some calling for more free spaces and others suggesting Worcester should follow the example of Oxford and Cambridge, where car parking is very limited and expensive. Calls were made for more secure cycle parking, increased capacity for coach parking, and better provision for disabled parking, as well as future proofing in the form of electric vehicle charging spaces. Considerable support was expressed for the relocation of the lorry park away from the City Centre.
Respondents were clearly divided on the subject of traffic, and views generally fell into three types:

» traffic should continue to be allowed free access to the city centre because public transport is not a viable alternative, and any impediment to this, including for example the rationalisation of City Walls Road, should be avoided. Plans should aim to make the driver experience better, but space should also be given over to good pedestrian experiences;

» priority investment should be given to the completion of the ring-road to remove unnecessary through traffic before any improvements such as the removal of the Cathedral plaza roundabout were started in the City Centre; and

» the Vision and masterplan should be supported and widespread improvements to the City Centre to reduce the impact of traffic should be promoted, but should be planned as part of a comprehensive strategy for traffic and access management. The Chamber of Commerce stated that better integration between journeys and services was essential to tackling road congestion which is hindering the city. Park and Ride should be located in relation to railway stations such as Fernhill Heath.

Closer working between the County and City should be evident on matters of transportation.

Community & Consultation

Many respondents called for continued consultation with the City's residents and businesses. Some suggested there was scope in the current economic climate for members of the community to play a direct role in the management and maintenance of the City Centre and its properties.

The planned revitalisation of the City Centre was welcomed; proposals should be backed up by research, and working with other partners, for example community police, was seen as important if the improvements are to be effective.
Economy

The potential economic impact of the Vision and masterplan’s physical regeneration strategy was recognised and supported. Calls for more work in relation to the community regeneration, a business case for investment, a local economic development strategy and a retail and tourism strategy were made.

The redevelopment of the Cornmarket is seen as important in improving the shopping experience. Small retailers should be engaged, and should be supported through planned events and attractions which will encourage people into the City Centre. Expansion into areas beyond City Walls Road should not undermine the current retail area.

Support was given for new office development to increase professional services and office based jobs. Suggestions were made that funds arising through planning contributions might be used to assist industrial companies to relocate out of the City Centre to allow regeneration to occur.

Calls were made for continued dialogue and communication with businesses in the areas identified for regeneration, and with local retailers. This will help to ensure more certainty, allow for more informed business planning and investment, and encourage and promote business opportunities in areas like the riverside. The regeneration of the City centre should be linked to education, training, skills and creativity. Opportunities for business start-up and space for entrepreneurs were supported.

Much support was expressed for a high quality hotel and conferencing facilities within the city; the Council must be proactive in planning for and promoting this opportunity with potential investors, in particular by building Worcester’s business profile and focusing on economic growth.

Deliverability & Viability

Whilst support for the Vision and masterplan was widespread amongst respondents, there was understandable doubt about the ability of the City to achieve change on the scale proposed given the prevailing economic climate (although it was acknowledged that plans to grow the population of the City through major residential development would create new opportunities).

Particular note was made of the number of empty shop units, and the consequent viability of any new retail development. Suggestions were made about how the Council could assist, for example by creating the right conditions for small local traders, helping landlords to improve their shops, and investing in apartments over shops to provide affordable accommodation for young people.
Future Steps: Ongoing Engagement

The Vision and masterplan represents the first stage in a longer term master planning project for the City Centre. As the City Council, County Council and partners they will look to engage with stakeholders and members of the public and business community in order to ensure everyone has the opportunity to shape the future of the City Centre.
This is a Vision and masterplan of a dynamic, successful, attractive and vibrant place – a bigger city centre, more diverse and choice laden, and therefore economically much stronger. The city centre will represent and exploit everything that is positive about the wider city, and will encapsulate the image of the city.

The Vision and masterplan comprises three key, related themes:

1. **The Diverse City** – one that promotes its heritage, retail and diversity and is much visited
2. **The Enterprising City** – one that values learning for all and has a prosperous, knowledge based economy
3. **The Sustainable City** – one that is green, liveable and healthy

Each theme is expanded upon below, with potential interventions and opportunities highlighted.
The Diverse City

A key factor in Worcester’s successful accession to a First Rank Cathedral and University City will be its cultural richness and its attractiveness to visitors.

As the city’s population grows the demand for different activities will affect the cultural life, events, food and retail offer, and artistic life of Worcester.

This section examines what could be explored to enhance the city’s culture attraction and improve visitor numbers.

The Cultural City will:

» Embrace a rich tapestry of culture, ranging from the incidental street life that arises where the appeal of the urban realm encourages people to spend time, through to investment in venues for cultural events. This is a broad spectrum capable of offering diversity and choice for all interests.

» Maximise the unique selling point of its ecclesiastical heritage by ensuring the city centre is of a quality and standard befitting a “first rank cathedral and university city”.

» Establish the river as a key destination for leisure and recreation:
  – The water side should accommodate performance and market spaces; and
  – Ambitious plans for a series of water based activities should be developed.

» Found an enhanced programme of cultural events, building on the success of the Christmas Market and the Elgar connections, to deliver regular attractions. Music, food, military history, architecture, antiques, ceramics, the visual arts and theatre are all intrinsically woven into Worcester history, and provide excellent themes for cultural activities

”Music, food, military history, architecture, antiques, brewing, ceramics, the visual arts and theatre are all intrinsically woven into Worcester history, and provide excellent themes for cultural activities”
Creating the Cultural City

To achieve the Cultural City Centre, the following objectives should be delivered:

» As a priority, work should commence to improve and enhance the city centre’s public realm and spaces. In particular, changes which can occur without impact on the current travel needs of the city should be pursued in order to begin to create an appropriate setting for street based activities.

» To achieve this, consideration should be given (perhaps within the context of the emerging SWDP) to the mechanisms available for funding public realm enhancements. It will also be appropriate to establish the extent to which Worcester Transport Strategy funding will be spent to enhance the public realm, and to work with Worcestershire County Council in relation to a streetscape strategy, so that over the longer term a cohesive public realm can be achieved.
Suitable locations for cultural venues should be identified. Proximity to public transport infrastructure should be considered, as should compatibility with neighbouring uses. Scope exists to explore the further potential of Foregate Street to the north of Foregate Street Station, which already plays home to an array of cultural activities (for example Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum) and an evening economy. This area benefits from proximity to popular urban residential areas (at the Arboretum and Britannia Square), allowing people to walk to the city centre.

The evening economy should focus on entertainment and dining, with limited emphasis on drinking. Overall encouragement should be given to restaurants, cafes, and bars. This will be particularly important if the city centre is to successfully accommodate new homes, including homes for families and the elderly who should regard the city centre as a safe place to be in the evening.

A strategy for riverside leisure should be pursued. Building on the success of the current strategy designed to enhance the quality of the riverside walk, scope now exists for more ambitious plans for activities which make full use of the water.

The City should approach the Arts Council, MADE, the University and the College of Technology to seek advice and support in how best to bring together and work with local artists who are keen to engage in the city centre. Over the longer term a public art strategy should be delivered to encourage a city centre wide programme of public art commissioning. This should enable reliance on developers to install public art to become a thing of the past; instead funding contributions to a city centre wide programme should become the priority.

Exeter has undertaken a major review of its art, culture and heritage functions and the contribution of these activities to the physical regeneration and economic development of the city. This was undertaken in light of concerns about a lack of coherence in the management of these activities. As a consequence of seeing tourism and the arts as an economic activity rather than a leisure services one, a single Directorate in the City Council now brings together economic development, tourism, arts, festivals and events to ensure streamlined activities.
Streets play an essential role in the cultural life of city centres. The quality of the public realm is key to a successful city, as seen here in Copenhagen.

Visual art can help to enliven streets and spaces. This quirky display at London’s South Bank encouraged visitors to linger and enjoy the outdoor space.
The Visited City

The Visited City will:

» be a recognised tourist and weekend destination, attracting UK and overseas visitors for increasingly longer stays, as well as being the shopping and recreation destination of choice for the city’s residents and those able to easily access or travel to the city.

» be distinguished by its unique blend, within the West Midlands, of historic, cultural, sporting, retail and natural attractions

» be characterised by a high quality environment which projects a positive image of the city and enables the City Council to work with owners to showcase the city centre’s listed buildings as a cohesive collection

» be renowned for catering for special interests, including food, antiques, crafts, and independent shops and markets

» afford easy access for visitors, making them a priority in terms of access by private vehicles and bus and rail Park & Ride

» offer a range of hotels, close to railway stations and the main tourist attractions, capable of responding to different demands and budgets

» market itself on a world stage to continually raise awareness of what the city has to offer above its competitors

» act as a base for visitors to the wider region, including the Vale of Evesham, Cheltenham and Gloucester, The Cotswolds, The Malvern Hills, Hereford and the Forest of Dean

» benefit from strong city centre management services

LESSONS FROM PEER PLACES: YORK

In comparison to Worcester’s 635 hotel rooms, York offers 2,418 hotel rooms. Worcester attracts 2.5 million visitors per year, whereas York attracts 3.9 million. Proportionally, York earns far more pounds per tourist than Worcester – the former’s annual tourist income is £333m, whereas Worcester’s is £89m.
Creating the Visited City Centre

» The following objectives should be evident in a successful Visited City Centre:

» Retail will be prioritised as a primary city centre use and as an essential ingredient and magnet for visitors.

» Locations for retail improvements should be identified, whilst continuing to protect locations dominated by independent retailers. The redevelopment of the CrownGate and Cathedral Plaza centres should be pursued to increase retail floorspace, improve the size of available units, locate anchor stores in the best possible locations, and reinstate, insofar as is possible, a traditional pattern of streets and building frontages.

» Areas for independent retail, including Friar Street, New Street and parts of Broad Street should be protected because of the special qualities and distinctiveness they bring to the city centre.

“The Visited City will afford easy access for visitors, making them a priority in terms of access by private vehicles, and bus and rail Park & Ride.”

A choice of good quality hotels is key to attracting visitors for longer stays.

The redevelopment of key retail sites, such as Cathedral Plaza, will help to secure greater visitor numbers.
Good locations for cultural developments and activities should be identified. This includes the provision of public locations for outdoor activities, such as market and performance spaces, within the context of an improved public realm. Such locations, which should be accessible by all modes of travel, could include:

- the riverside – suitable for performance space, and with the potential for an amphitheatre design to create a permanent feature. Also suitable for summer markets

- Shrub Hill Station forecourt – suitable as a space to mark the point of arrival in Worcester, for public transport interchange, and as a setting for the historic station building. High quality access to the station will be critical design challenges here

 The Cornmarket – may once again become a market place. Also, The Cornmarket could act as a gateway and key link to Lowesmoor

» New and reinvigorated retail locations should be supported in the right location, where they are able to reinforce and complement the existing retail offer. New retail development at Lowesmoor has already marked the expansion of the city centre in an easterly direction, creating a triangular retail circuit between CrownGate, Lowesmoor and Cathedral Plaza via Friar Street and New Street. The former Co-op building forms part of this circuit, and has great potential to be redeveloped for a flagship retail store.

» Appropriate locations for hotel development should be identified, which afford easy access to all city centre amenities and attractions, including Foregate Station and key bus arrival points
A creative lighting strategy would help to bring the city centre alive after dark, opening up new business and recreation opportunities.
» Cathedral Square – as a setting fit for the Cathedral, offering opportunities for people to dwell and enjoy views of the Cathedral

» The challenge involved in delivering public space which reallocates road capacity or car parking is acknowledged. It is essential that these issues are addressed through carefully planned changes which are aligned with other moves to address and ensure parking revenue streams are unaffected. Further thoughts on this are recorded in the final section of this report.

» A series of established city trails should be established, related to key points of arrival and departure, complemented by a “blue plaque” scheme, and available as downloads using GPS mobile phone technology, to help showcase, interpret and make accessible the city’s rich architectural and cultural heritage.

» A lighting strategy should be planned to offer a unique night time experience of the city centre, capitalising on the dramatic lighting of the Cathedral and spotlighting other historic buildings and public spaces.

» City Centre car parking should be subject to a strategy which ensures good quality car parks are conveniently located at or close to the city centre gateways. Accessibility will be improved through all transport modes.

» Park & Ride sites should be the first point of information for visitors using these facilities. They should make it easy for people to use rail and local bus services by offering comprehensive travel information as well as tourist information on the attractions and services provided in the city centre.
Worcester’s sporting traditions are an essential part of its distinctive offer.
The Enterprising City

The Enterprising City will be dynamic, flexible and responsive to new patterns of work and entrepreneurship. It will be a place of learning, where access to information about heritage and history, architecture, food and manufacturing will be evident, and where active discourse in civil issues is encouraged. The University of Worcester, the College of Technology and the Library and History Centre will have a positive impact on the city dynamics.

The Enterprising City will be stimulated by two key activities: the expansion of a knowledge based economy, with an equally expanding support sector; and the development of learning within the city.

The City Centre Master Plan will be used to encourage “enterprise” development by ensuring a strategic approach to providing workspace, business advice and access to finance for new, young and growing enterprises. The City Council will work with businesses and key partners to ensure that there is access to a comprehensive range of business advice and support through the private, public and third sectors.

The City centre will be vibrant and easily accessed with excellent broadband provision. The City Council will proactively engage with businesses in order to understand need and to work with businesses to enable growth and job creation in sustainable and growing sectors. This will include a vibrant retail and tourism offer.

Worcester will ensure that it has the right level of skills in the right place at the right time in order to meet its City Centre growth aspirations by ensuring that young people in the City have the skills and experience demanded by existing and new employers and that they are able to benefit from work experience through work placements, apprenticeships or internships. It will also aim to ensure that adults are able to benefit from life long learning opportunities to meet the developing needs of employers including those in sectors that have the potential for growth through the City Centre Master Plan by establishing a strong relationship with education, further education and higher education providers to ensure that skills supply is focussed on demand.
Worcester City Council will prioritise, in partnership with the private sector, the regeneration of key gateway sites to the city centre which will encourage increased economic activity across a range of sectors and improve the flow into and between areas within the City Centre by providing a cohesion easily navigated via a range of transport options.
The Knowledge City will:

» Be a viable choice for investors, businesses and employers looking to locate in England and the West Midlands

» Offer a high standard of living, housing, education, cultural activities, recreation and healthcare to retain and attract highly skilled professional employees to the city

» Have a thriving knowledge economy, resulting from a detailed understanding of the city’s economic potential, with sustained inward investment, and successful marketing and business support

» Develop strong links between the University and businesses, with a high proportion of graduates choosing to remain in the city to live and work

» Support the development of the College of Technology in recognition of the vital role it will play in training people for an expanding service sector

» Provide business incubator and start up space to allow innovation and enterprises to flourish, complemented by premises suitable for companies wishing to expand in order to support the progression of locally based companies

» Have a healthy creative industries sector, which builds on the industrial and crafts heritage of the city

» Make the Library and History Centre a key facility for business connections and skills development

“The Knowledge City will have a thriving knowledge economy, resulting from a detailed understanding of the city’s economic potential, with sustained inward investment, and successful marketing and business support”
Creating the Knowledge City

The following objectives should be pursued to achieve these outcomes:

» Land should be allocated for the provision of high quality commercial offices, as part of mixed use areas, to attract knowledge industries to the city centre. Shrub Hill provides a good location; it is immediately adjacent to the railway station and planned high quality interchange, accessible by all modes, it is in need of regeneration and rejuvenation, and it has traditionally been characterised by coarse grained development which would not be undermined by a development form dominated by large footprint buildings. The canal would enhance the setting of development, and listed buildings should be incorporated into a master plan for the area, which due to its scale, would provide a suitable mechanism for co-ordinating development and infrastructure/public realm works.

Birmingham’s Brindley place combines high quality commercial space with other uses, and has a carefully maintained public realm. Although different in scale to Worcester, there are lessons here about land use mix and built quality.
Smaller scale business premises should be encouraged as part of a mixed use development. Carden Street, Lowesmoor and The Butts offer ideal locations, where more incremental change might occur over a period of time. It should be noted that the medium to longer term enhancement of City Walls Road should ensure it becomes a desirable business address within this area.

Start-up and innovation premises should be directed towards suitably scaled and serviced areas. The Butts and Shrub Hill offer scope to accommodate a variety of different start-up and incubator premises.

Smaller office spaces could be mixed with housing in areas such as Carden Street to cater for start-up firms and creative industries.
» Creative industries would benefit from clustering together. The area around the Worcester Porcelain Museum provides a suitably scaled environment and ambiance for this type of business activity. Moves by the Museum to encourage such activity in the area to the immediate south of the Cathedral (often referred to as “Cathedral Quarter”) should be supported, as this would be of benefit to the tourist economy as well as local employment.

» Buildings which are currently underutilised should be considered as potential business premises, particularly where they are worthy of retention. A study to establish the capacity of such premises, followed by a strategy to encourage their re-use, should be considered.

» The relocation of the College of Technology to a new site, potentially at Carden Street or Shrub Hill but certainly within the enlarged city centre should be supported by the City. This would ensure state-of-the-art accommodation to facilitate modern teaching, and in addition would lead to the release of areas of riverside for redevelopment.

» The design of employment buildings, including their settings, should project an image of quality, which over time can become synonymous with Worcester. High quality architecture and public space design should be demanded, and a series of design briefs or design codes for different employment locations should be put in place to help achieve this.

» The vibrancy, diversity and environmental quality of the city centre should be vigorously pursued to ensure Worcester city centre achieves its full potential in attracting investment. Building on its current assets it should seek to distinguish itself and the quality of life on offer to encourage both business and employees to locate there.
The Learning City

The Learning City will:

» Be recognised and promoted as a “first rank university and cathedral city”, with a high-skill, high value-added economy, supporting growth in knowledge-based industries, whilst continuing to contribute to the growth of existing industry and commercial sectors and recognising the importance of tourism

» Be a creative and innovative hub for formal and informal learning, offering learning opportunities for all, with an emphasis on learning throughout life

» Be a focus for formal education offer, ensuring that the success of the University’s growth and development is reflected in the quality of the city centre

» Attract people to study, teach and research in the city, reflecting local needs and increasingly gaining a national and international profile

» Have 12,000 university students by 2012, with Worcester Business School and high level professional development courses based at the City Campus, on the former Worcester Royal Infirmary site, and other disciplines based at the St John’s and Riverside campuses

» Have easy access to University facilities

» Benefit from the University’s high quality ambitions for key specialisms: particularly in vocational education and the professions, such as teaching, nursing and midwifery, work with children; in the humanities, science, creative media and sport

» Benefit from the University’s high ambitions for key areas of research expertise, particularly in aerobiology, dementia studies, performance analysis, children’s literature and rural research

» Be a focus for skills development through an expanding College of Technology

» Maximise the opportunities for partnership working between businesses, the public and private sector to create more learning and healthy living opportunities

» Maximise employment opportunities, through improving the skills base of local residents and by retaining students

» Attain and sustain high educational standards at primary and secondary level, with a high proportion of students opting to pursue further and tertiary education, many of them in the city

» Provide sporting and performance activities for its citizens, including students, and ensure dual uses of University and College sports and cultural facilities to maximise the benefits of investment

» Maximise informal learning opportunities for all, through development and promotion of the city’s cultural, heritage and physical amenities

» Focus on the new and unique Library and History Centre as a key centre for learning for all
Creating The Learning City

To realise the Vision and masterplan of the Learning City Centre, the following objectives should be achieved:

» The city should work in partnership with the University, to ensure that the University’s contribution to economic regeneration and the knowledge economy is maximised, alongside less tangible benefits in terms of the University’s contribution to culture, social, health, heritage of the city, making Worcester an excellent place to live, work, study and play.

“The city should work in partnership with the University, to ensure that the University’s contribution to economic regeneration and the knowledge economy is maximised...”
The longer term accommodation needs of the College of Technology should be addressed in partnership with the City Council and appropriate funding councils.

Discussions with the University should identify sites for student accommodation. As well as campus-based accommodation, there are numerous opportunities throughout the city centre, which should ensure a dispersal rather than concentration of student accommodation, allowing them to be absorbed into mixed use areas, including other types of residential accommodation.

Proximity to bus routes, walking and cycling distance to university facilities and railway stations should inform the choice of location, and help to stem student car ownership levels.

Continued investment in the built quality of the City centre should be pursued, through the measures identified within this report, to ensure an impression of a rich, diverse, and interesting city centre is projected to potential students and staff and visiting scholars.

The City should work with partners in industry and education to develop and retain the workforce with the knowledge and skills to match employment opportunities and industry needs.

The College of Technology has a strong role to play in the learning city centre.
A positive city centre image will help to attract and retain staff and students.

The new city centre campus will raise the university’s profile.
(both images © BDP Architects)
The Sustainable City

The city must be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable; this will require new approaches to development standards, and a move towards different ways of living, travelling and working. The city centre forms the base for this activity.

The Green City will:

» Have a well maintained and clearly cherished urban environment (affording good protection to “veteran” trees), with high quality landscape design and investment in structural planting and green spaces, in order to enhance biodiversity, improve visual quality and help to mitigate against the effects of climate change.

» Encourage green technologies, with key developments striving to create exemplar sustainable buildings, whilst continuing to respond to the character of the local vernacular.

» Incorporate innovative yet proven technologies into housing design to ensure excellent standards of energy efficiency, solar gain, rainwater harvesting, insulation and ventilation.

» Include creative ways to provide private open space for new city centre housing, including courtyards and rooftop gardens.

» Provide easy walking, cycling and access to public transport throughout.

» Offer good connections to the river and to the open countryside beyond. Awareness of the proximity of the open countryside should be fostered by ensuring important views into and out of the city are protected and created.

» Incorporate opportunities for sustainable urban drainage into new development.

» Reuse existing buildings where practicable, and reuse and enhance historic and listed buildings to ensure their useful life is extended.

“The city must be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable; this will require new approaches to... living, travelling and working.”
Creating the Green City Centre

The preceding elements of the Vision and masterplan set out a range of objectives, which when achieved together will enhance the sustainability of the city centre, making it a greener, cleaner more efficient and attractive place. The following objectives will also help to deliver a Green City Centre:

» Design performance criteria should be established for all new city centre development, in particular:
  » Design and Sustainability in commercial buildings;
  » Design and Sustainability in new urban housing;
  » Design for sustainable urban drainage;

» Corridors which afford views of the surrounding countryside should be identified and protected (or indeed created) through new development. This is particularly applicable at Shrub Hill, including at the station, where development on higher ground can take advantage of long distance views across the city skyline to the Malvern Hills. Views into and within the city should also be protected. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a policy which identifies views, vistas and the nature of the city skyline to be maintained or (re)created, and puts in place height and built form restrictions on new buildings.

» The strategy for public realm enhancement should include provision for its long term maintenance and care. Also, materials used throughout the public realm should be high quality, durable, easy to install and above all, simple in design to allow for easy maintenance.
The Healthy City

The Healthy City Centre will:

» plant more trees, to green help improve air quality and help mitigate against the effects of climate change

» enjoy excellent standards of air quality, brought about by more balanced travel choices and a corresponding reduction in the concentration of vehicle emissions, and by the prominence of well maintained trees and vegetation

» offer safe and attractive walking and cycling routes, encouraging citizens to move around and colonise the city centre’s public streets and spaces, and over time rely less on motorised transport

» benefit from reduced incidences of road traffic accidents, as a consequence of reduced reliance on the car and redesign of the transport infrastructure

» offer a connected network of streets and routes to connect urban and green spaces, the riverside and sports facilities, to allow people to enjoy the city centre environment and to encourage recreation and physical exercise

» emphasise opportunities for sports and physical activity using both existing and future opportunities

» have an enlivened public realm, which is playful and interesting, and which encourages people to spend time in the outdoors

» be a good and stimulating place for children and families to live and visit

» ensure high quality, direct and safe links between public transport nodes and locations to make walking and cycling a viable option for access to city centre services, locations and activities

» make local produce readily available to local citizens to ensure good quality, affordable fresh food is available and accessible

» deliver a comfortable climate, through attention to the location and design of buildings and landscape, which offer daylight and sunlight in winter and areas of shade in summer
Creating the Healthy City Centre

Delivering a Healthy City Centre will depend on achieving a range of objectives, including:

» All development form should reinforce the compact, walkable nature of the central area of the city centre. The scale of the streets, blocks and buildings should together embody the lessons evident in the medieval fabric, adapted to reflect Twenty First Century living and development standards.

» New and existing streets should be improved to enhance connectivity and access, to both the city centre and to public transport. By catering first and foremost for the needs of the pedestrian, high quality and safe access can be achieved. Scale is of the utmost significance; pedestrians move at slow speed, and appreciate the detailed qualities of the city. Attention to detail will be essential in the creation of a rich and stimulating urban realm. Some streets have the potential to be calmed and redesigned to achieve a better balance between cars and pedestrians.

“City Walls Road could be made more attractive through a reallocation of road space and redesigned facilities for all road users that do not impact negatively on traffic flows but improve legibility and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, This would also increase awareness of the remains of City Wall”
To complement this objective a comprehensive strategy for public realm enhancements, incorporating materials, lighting, planting, secure cycle parking, bus passenger facilities, signage and street furniture should be pursued across the city centre.

Essential traffic will continue to be able to access the city centre, in the interests of a vital local economy. However, to moderate driver behaviour can ensure a greater degree of comfort and safety for all, and a better environment in which business can prosper. In particular:

- City Walls Road should be made more attractive through a reallocation of road space and redesigned facilities for all road users. Junction design, wider pedestrian footpaths, safe cyclist provision, tree planting and landscaping, better appreciation of the remains of the City Wall, and the removal of unnecessary clutter, including signage, pedestrian guard rails and pedestrian crossings should be considered as part of a comprehensive improvement scheme.

Fresh produce from local producers should be readily available in the healthy City centre.
The redesigned ring road in Ashford, Kent has attracted attention because it has been transformed from a car-dominated road to an attractive shared street, where vehicle capacity remains the same, but driver behaviour has changed as a consequence of the improved environment. Early empirical evidence suggests the scheme has been very successful. It provides a useful example of how car dominated roads can be improved for the benefit of all users, and contribute to a more beautiful city.

College Street and Deansway may command a different design response. Here the emphasis should be on ensuring easy crossing of the road to enhance overall connectivity across the city centre. The points at which the routes of City Walls Road/Edgar Street, High Street/Cathedral, Fish Street, Copenhagen Street, Broad Street/Quay Street meet College Street and Deansway can be redesigned to reduce the severance effect of these roads and to improve pedestrian connectivity between the city centre and riverside.
Promotion of the riverside as a key location for activity should be undertaken. Building on the existing facilities, including the Cripplegate Park and riverside cycle route, opportunities for “trim-trails”, watersports and recreational boating should be pursued.

Easy access to the riverside should be provided to ensure it becomes an integral part of the city centre. This will require the layout of any new development on the College site to deliver high quality pedestrian links to Quayhead, aligned to the strengthening of connections across Deansway.

Pedestrian access at Quayhead should be extended north of the Worcester Bridge mirroring the success of the riverside regeneration, to ensure access for local people and visitors, and to allow this to become a key public place for riverside activity. A review of the highway movement network will be required to establish how this key objective can be realised.

Oxford Circus in London has recently been redesigned with a similar objective in mind, allowing free movement of pedestrians in all directions for a limited time. The redesign also removes roadside barriers and much of the pavement clutter. This boosts available space for pedestrians by around two-thirds, as well as encouraging all road users towards a more thoughtful, responsible attitude.

Oxford Circus (©The Daily Mail).
» Improved bridge crossings over the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, complemented by enhanced surrounds, and suitable and animated development form can encourage more people to walk and cycle to the city centre. This should be provided as part of a comprehensive plan for redevelopment at Shrub Hill and Carden Street, to relate public realm restructuring and enhancement with new development.

» Improved pedestrian links and signage on routes between the rail and bus stations and the city centre.

» The inclusion of provision for excellent public transport access to and across the city centre.

City centres which are safe and accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, such as Cambridge, have lively streets and good air quality.
The Liveable City

Whilst the city centre will continue to grant primacy to retail, employment and cultural uses, there is a clear role for housing in adding to the vitality of the city centre and enhancing housing choice across the city.

The Liveable City will:

» offer a high quality living environment which provides good levels of residential amenity, including provision for play, good air quality, low noise levels, safe streets and personal security

» make available good quality modern housing designed to meet the needs of a cross section of the local population including families and elderly people, in order to create a socially integrated, equitable and balanced community

» ensure a good supply of affordable housing, with a range of tenure choices including housing for rent and partial ownership, to create a socially integrated, equitable, balanced and inclusive community

» provide support facilities and services for city centre residents, including local shops and primary healthcare

» ensure transport choices, including easy access to public transport, to allow residents the opportunity to make journeys beyond the city centre without relying on the private car
Creating the Liveable City Centre

The Liveable City Centre should deliver the following objectives:

» Identify sites for housing in suitable locations, where they will not impede the development of primary city centre uses.

» All new city centre housing should be designed according to recognised best practice urban design principles to ensure good quality living environments. Layout will incorporate small open spaces designed to cater for local play where family housing is included in the mix. Streets will be designed as shared spaces cater for a range of needs.
The Dutch “Woonerf” or Home Zone provides an excellent model of how high levels of residential amenity can be incorporated into urban residential environments (in particular where the intensity of development exceeds that typically found in suburban housing areas). The needs of all users are balanced through a comprehensive design approach which affords equal status and access to all, including children and families.

Different types of housing should be located in a context which best relates to their form and type.

- At Shrub Hill opportunities exist for apartments, particularly alongside the canal, following the pattern established at Diglis Basin. This will take advantage of the waterside setting to create an attractive place for more intense forms of housing.

- At Carden Street and Lowesmoor, a traditional pattern of residential streets lined with urban town houses can be created, offering a variety of dwelling types. The recent multi-award winning development at Acordia in Cambridge includes a choice of modern townhouses, good play space standards, roof terraces and integrated resident parking within a high quality setting. As a model of contemporary urban town housing, it is of a scale, design and density which is appropriate for Carden Street & Lowesmoor.

City centre housing should cater for a cross section of the population including families.
Affordable housing should be delivered at a level which helps to achieve a balance in terms of tenure, household type and social profile.

All residential development should be delivered in mixed land use areas, to ensure a vibrant city centre, stimulate local employment opportunities and avoid areas which are devoid of activity during the daytime:

- At Shrub Hill, apartments should form part of a commercial office development, in close proximity to the proposed multi-modal public transport hub. The canal side will not be used exclusively for housing; space will be given over to shops, restaurants and cafes, particularly in close proximity to the canal bridge crossings. Brindley Place in Birmingham, although of a greater scale than what is envisaged at Shrub Hill, contains a similar mix of uses and exploits its canalside location to enhance the setting of cafes and restaurants.

Provision for play is critical to the achievement of a liveable city centre.

“At Shrub Hill, apartments should form part of a commercial office development, in close proximity to the proposed multi-modal public transport hub.”
– At Lowesmoor and Carden Street, small scale businesses should exist alongside townhouses. In particular there is scope for creative industries and small professional business premises.

– Opportunities to create homes above existing ground floor premises should be pursued. In particular the local planning authority and local environmental health authority have a role to play in ensuring safe and private access (this is important in historic buildings especially) and compatibility of ground floor activities with upper floor residential uses.

» Public transport provision should ensure that all residents live within a 2-3 minute walk (200m radius) of a bus stop. Furthermore, to enable residents to opt not to own a vehicle, car sharing clubs should feature in new city centre residential developments. Secure cycle storage should be integral to all houses.

» All new homes within the city centre should improve opportunities for recycling.

Modern townhouses, such as these at Accordia in Cambridge, offer flexible, high quality homes in city centre.
SECTION 05
identifying opportunities
The Vision and masterplan highlights several locations where development and intervention can occur in order to bring about regeneration and improvement.

The Vision and masterplan is accompanied by an Illustrative Plan. At this Vision and masterplan stage, the role of the plan is to show how these ideas might begin to take shape, and how, when put together, they have the potential to improve the environment and use of available land within the city centre.

On the basis of this work, it is possible to define potential areas of opportunity, taking account of what already exists on the ground. These areas of opportunity should be subject to further master planning beyond the Vision and masterplan stage, in order to develop ideas about design, land use, transport and access and public realm. This process should lead to the production of site briefs, design guidance and delivery strategies to ensure development is co-ordinated and moves towards the fulfilment of the Vision and masterplan objectives.

The Illustrative Plan
Shrub Hill Station

Commercial office space and city centre housing could be developed throughout the Shrub Hill area, exploiting the opportunity of the canalside location and the proximity of the station, where a new public transport interchange would be delivered. The redevelopment of this area, which should embrace the historic and listed buildings, will be a key point of arrival to Worcester; it should make a positive first impression, and welcome visitors to the city. Routes to the city core should be direct and attractive.

Several key development sites can be identified.

Redevelopment of the station, its immediate foreground and land to the east of the railway line are critical to the enhancement of the area and local travel choices.

A network of terraced routes links the city to the station

The approach to the station presents a poor impression

The station area should be developed to create a new city gateway
View from the station towards the city - a terrace and route leading to the city.
Shrub Hill: Cromwell Street & Padmore Street

The redevelopment of Cromwell Street offers the opportunity to connect Lowesmoor, the canal and the station together.

A number of existing buildings such as the Great Western Hotel can provide a mix of uses to the area, alongside new canal side buildings and spaces.

In the longer term, redevelopment of the retail park may provide scope for further employment and residential development.

Redevelopment of the retail park could help to facilitate better pedestrian links to the city centre.

The Grade II Listed Engine Works can be renovated and become a central feature in the area’s redevelopment.

The Great Western Hotel provides a landmark for the Cromwell Street area.
Shrub Hill: Tolladine Road & Lowesmoor Wharf

The site is presently used for low density uses such as storage yet it is an important gateway site into the City situated between Rainbow Hill and Tolladine Road.

The site’s attractiveness is also enhanced by being in close proximity to Shrub Hill railway station.

A mixed use development focused around a new canal basin will create a new active quarter for the city.

A range of mixed use buildings will enliven the new canal basin.

New mixed use development to overlook the canal.

A new canal basin will become a focal point for new development.
Shrub Hill: Shrub Hill Road

The Shrub Hill area is a slightly under utilised area of the city given its proximity to the main railway station.

Establishing links between the listed engine works and the station through new development will be crucial in unlocking this buildings long term future.

Located in the centre of the Shrub Hill area the Grade II Listed exhibition building could become a catalyst for change.

New additions could breathe new life and commercial interest into the exhibition building creating a new business centre similar to Manchester’s former mill buildings.
New development in Shrub Hill will create a strong link between the station towards the exhibition building and further afield to the new canal basin off Tolladine Road.
Riverside

The relocation of the College would release this site for redevelopment. A range of uses could be developed here, and it would be an ideal location for new hotels and creative industries. An enhanced riverside space at Quayhead could be created, with a new amphitheatre for outdoor performances.

The riverside is a major attraction for the city, extending its pull by putting on evening events and concerts extends visitors time in the city.

Temporary structures offer the opportunity for events on the riverside.
The active river will provide opportunities for boating, performance and relaxation.
Riverside (continued)

Investment has already been made at Quayhead in terms of improved public realm if the riverside is to reach its full potential. Improving links and connections within the city needs to be created, particularly across Deansway.

New development opportunities within College Way present themselves which can assist this process. These will need to be of the highest architectural quality and pay full regard to the rich archaeology that lies within this area of the city.

Quayhead at present, a city space that could perform better.

New development at Quayhead should focus on a terraced atmosphere which provides a strong link along Copenhagen Street between the river and the city centre.
Proposed environmental improvements to the riverside will further enhance the river as a key destination for the city.

A new Sustrans pedestrian and cycle bridge to the south of Diglis Basin will improve access to the riverside as well as to the city centre.
Retail Core: Cathedral Plaza

Several key sites, including the CrownGate, Cathedral Plaza and the former Co-op building, have potential for redevelopment with the aim of delivering an improved retail offer in the city centre.

Cathedral Square could be given a new lease of life if non-essential road surface were given over to the creation of pedestrian space.
Cathedral Square is to become a major city space, allowing visitors to shop and dine in the shadow of the Cathedral.
Retail Core

The Cornmarket could become an important public space, enhancing the setting for a new flagship retail store and acting as the main point of arrival for bus users.

Existing buildings can be included in the retail regeneration as seen at Highcross in Leicester.

New high quality retail development on Queen Street, providing a link between Lowesmoor and the city centre retailing.
Artist’s impression of revamped Conmarket. This view looks north, with City Walls Road to the right.
Carden Street

A network of intimate shared surface streets can provide access to the area to support incremental change and regeneration over time. Improved opportunities to cross City Walls Road will help to draw this area into the city centre core.

New bars and restaurants, focused on a revitalised section of the canal.

New urban living – bringing people back into the city centre.
A view of a redesigned City Walls Road with cycle lanes and street tree planting, breaking the severance and improving the connectivity between Carden Street and City Centre.
Cathedral Quarter & Sidbury

Scope exists to improve the point of arrival at Sidbury, and to help consolidate recent investment in “Cathedral Quarter”. This may help to encourage the Artisan Village initiative.

New residential development at Diglis Basin

New business units created in retained buildings at Diglis Basin

The sensitive incorporation of the Royal Worcester works creates a vibrant new riverside development
SECTION 06

public realm, access & movement, & relationship to the worcester transport strategy
Public Realm

The quality of the urban environment is a recurring theme throughout the Vision and masterplan; in fact, the streets, spaces, waterside areas and pathways are seen as the “glue” which will bind the city centre together, making it a legible, attractive, safe and easy place to move around and visit.

A large body of evidence now exists to underpin the notion that where public realm is seen and treated as a priority, particularly in historic places, cities become more popular and attractive to investors and visitors.

In the longer term, a public realm which is well planned, detailed and maintained is likely to endure. Individual buildings may come and go, but streets and spaces remain as the fundamental DNA of the city, holding within it the history and values of local people.

The importance of the public realm to the Vision and masterplan for the city centre cannot be overstated.
The street in a high quality public realm also helps stimulate business activity such as cafés and restaurants being able to use the street.

The Cornmarket at present, unloved and car dominated. It is an important link between the city and Lowesmoor.

People watching traffic at Cathedral Plaza – a new urban space will create a new outlook.

The Cornmarket could be a new urban space whilst still providing access and car parking.
Access and Movement
The transport network can and will support the objectives of the City Centre Vision and masterplan; high levels of access and an ability for people to move easily and safely through the city centre are an important prerequisite to the achievement of the city’s Sustainable Community Strategy highlighted in the Introduction. It is therefore critical that measures to improve and enhance access and movement are explicitly part of any initiatives within the city centre. This means that a wider raft of transport choices must be made available to effect a shift in travel patterns over the short, medium and longer term. Environmental quality, air quality, pedestrian and cyclist safety, easy interchange between modes and a high degree of connectivity are not optional, but an essential ingredient of a progressive city.

Signage and removing obstacles is key to a successful improvement strategy

Improvements are needed to certain routes to improve safety

The canal towpaths offer convenient routes through the city
Relationship with the Worcester Transport Strategy

The master plan Vision is closely aligned to the Worcester Transport Strategy (WTS), recognising the important role that the city centre should play in achieving the wider objectives of the WTS. Conversely the WTS provides an important contextual framework within which the Vision and masterplan has been prepared, recognising the importance of all trip types and travel modes that access the city centre, and ensuring these are managed and accommodated in an appropriate way. As a complete package, the WTS will release capacity in the city centre for new development, reduce the need to travel through the city centre and provide new transport opportunities and improved facilities.

The 2011 Autumn Statement allocated funding through the National Infrastructure Plan for Phase 1 of the WTS. A total of £14.2 million was granted for a number of projects to make it easier to travel by all modes.

Service access and HGV access needs to be effectively managed to avoid highways domination to the detriment of cyclists and pedestrians.

Cycling is a key component in developing a sustainable transport strategy.
The city centre cannot by itself achieve the transport outcomes advocated by WTS, but it can significantly assist by ensuring a desirable mix of land-use is provided within the city centre, and ensuring that appropriate facilities for all transport modes are provided.

The approach advocated by WTS is to provide genuine choice for travellers, enabling the city to grow in a sustainable way, and to positively encourage access to and through the city centre by bus, train, walking and cycling. WTS seeks to capture car based trips travelling to the city from other areas, particularly those for long stay commuting and tourism trips, on the outskirts of the city through the provision of bus and rail park and ride sites on key radial roads. For journeys to and across the city centre from within the city boundaries, there will be increased opportunities to walk, cycle and use the bus. This, combined with systematic bus priority measures on all key routes into the City Centre, allied to improvements at key railway stations, will provide a radically enhanced public transport environment.

The Vision and masterplan, and any subsequent master planning, therefore has an important role to play by embracing this opportunity, and ensuring that public transport users are able to access the whole of the city centre area in an efficient way, encountering minimal delays. This will require that the rail stations are properly integrated with the city centre and that bus services entering the heart of the city centre encounter minimal delays, and can drop off and pick up passengers at appropriate locations. This includes the ability to interchange services on City Walls Road (including at The Commarket and an enhanced Cathedral Square) and Deansway / College Street, and the ability to service directly enhanced interchange facilities at both Shrub Hill and Foregate Street rail stations. The opportunity to redevelop the existing bus station and relocate this function to The Commarket area and sites along City Walls Road / Deansway accords directly with the ambition of the WTS to re-organise bus services across the city centre and provide a better customer arrival experience for bus passengers.

Parking policy has a key role to play within the WTS, and therefore also has an important bearing on the development of the Vision and masterplan. Parking availability and pricing influences the demand to travel to the city centre by car, and WTS recognises this through the provision of low cost long stay parking provision on the outskirts of the city (encouraging the take-up of rail and bus based park and ride bus based services, and reducing the demand to travel by car in the central area), with parking in the core city centre focussing upon short stay (less than 3 hour) trips. This, combined with efficient, regular, reliable and high quality bus services linking the park and ride sites to the city centre, will positively encourage a shift towards public transport accessibility for Worcester city centre, whilst still enabling essential access by car for appropriate trips.
Pedestrian and cycle network improvements within the WTS provide much needed connectivity on an east-west alignment across the City, integrating with the already established national Cycle Route network which runs predominantly north-south. The Vision and masterplan seeks to embrace these new connections, and provide a welcoming and safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists, in particular on the network around the canal towpath, which is currently well used by cyclists as recreation routes, but is not well integrated with the city centre.

The WTS proposals for strategic highway improvements, in particular junction enhancements on the southern link road detailed in the Phase 1 package, provide much needed relief to the existing congestion problems on the orbital routes, and Phase 2 proposes further enhancements around Worcester, which will be significant in releasing city centre capacity. They also provide the opportunity in the medium to longer term to potentially remove some of the through traffic within the central area, thus enabling greater priority to be afforded to pedestrians, cyclist and public transport users. The Vision and masterplan advocates interventions to regulate driver behaviour, for example along City Walls Road and College Street; a public realm/streetscape strategy to incorporate secure cycle parking facilities & way-finding signage; and attractive streets which give equal or greater priority to pedestrians & cyclists where appropriate, particularly in the northern part of the city centre, to complement the ambition of the WTS in this regard.

The Vision and masterplan’s role in providing a dynamic, diverse, and attractive city centre will have significant benefits in concentrating the demand for travel, making public transport a more viable travel option for many more people. The inter-relationship between the vision and masterplan, the WTS, and development proposed on the outskirts of Worcester are crucial to ensure that those moving in to Worcester can easily access the city centre by sustainable modes, and for the city centre to become the destination of choice for retail, leisure and employment. This is also essential if the city is to fulfil its role as a self sustaining sub-regional centre, and to avoid the potential to drift towards a commuter settlement for the conurbation.

**Bringing Ideas Together**

The following framework drawing seeks to highlight the key areas of change in the public realm, reflecting both improvements in public realm quality and interventions to secure a sustainable travel system.
Bringing Ideas Together
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The Framework Plan
Towards Delivery
Throughout this report reference has been made to a number of strategies which might help the city centre progress from Vision and masterplan to Delivery. Here, a summary of these ideas is provided, and whilst this list highlights the scale of the challenge, it also suggests a way in which it can be broken down into a series of phased tasks, with co-ordinated contributions from a range of stakeholders, including developers.

It must also be noted that the master planning of the city centre is an ongoing process; the Master Plan Vision should be reviewed and where necessary adjusted at key milestones to ensure the city makes the most of the investments, opportunities and initiatives which have been stimulated. Achievements need to be incorporated, and progress towards the city’s Sustainable Communities Strategy and other initiatives needs to be monitored. It should therefore be regarded as a living, working Vision and masterplan.

Funding & Delivery
Most critically, mechanisms need to be established to plan, phase and co-ordinate change in as seamless a way as possible. Several organisations and individuals need to come together to lead and oversee the implementation of the Vision and masterplan.

In addition, there is a need to identify how change will be funded; there is no doubt that considerable sums of money need to be invested within the city centre to realise the Vision and masterplan, and in the face of immediate public spending cuts, the role of the private sector becomes even more critical. It is also important to recognise that the Vision and masterplan is the basis for a twenty year plan for change, and as the UK economy recovers, new opportunities for funding will arise.

Consideration should be given to the creation of a City Centre Fund, where developer contributions can be pooled and spent across the city centre to meet the objectives of the Vision and masterplan.

Cultural and City Environment
A Public Realm Strategy, which must place emphasis on quality, durability, simplicity and maintenance.

This should be followed by Detailed Design Briefs for Public Realm Improvements, in tandem with the standards established for redevelopment areas. This may manifest as a Streetscape Plan, setting out appropriate materials, landscape treatment, street furniture, lighting and signage, construction details, design criteria and maintenance, to be applied across the city centre.

A Lighting Strategy, to ensure a safe city centre, support the evening economy, and help showcase important buildings.

City History Trails and a blue plaque scheme, to promote the city’s buildings as an art collection and enhance the tourism offer.
A strategy and policy for the protection and management of the city skyline and identified important views and vistas.

An “Active River” Strategy, building on the success of the existing Riverside Strategy, in order to establish a range of suitable waterside and water-based activities.

A Public Art Programme, including visual art, installation, sculpture, performance and street theatre, in conjunction with the Arts Council and MADE.

A Programme of Cultural Events, to build upon the success of existing events, to develop a fuller programme of city centre activities.

Architectural quality should be a priority for Worcester. The legacy of fine historic buildings should be complemented by outstanding examples of 21st century design. An architectural design agenda, which can be applied to prominent and priority sites, should demand design excellence.

Ongoing Master Planning
Further master planning of:

» Shrub Hill, which should incorporate planning for the new multi-modal interchange
» Carden Street, The Cornmarket, to include the former Co-op building at The Trinity, and City Walls Road
» The Butts
» The Sidbury area along to Deansway and Riverside

Followed by:

» site specific or subject related design briefs, including sustainability standards, which should be embedded in planning policy documentation

The City Council should work with landowners and developers in these locations where they are promoting master plans.

Transport Planning
Multi-modal transport and accessibility studies to establish how the following key objectives can be realised:

» pedestrianisation of the riverside, north of Worcester Bridge
» the transformation of City Walls Road into a boulevard
» the enhancement of the crossing of Deansway and College Street

A car parking strategy, to ensure maintenance of revenue alongside the rationalisation and regulation of parking locations (including on-street parking)
Economic Development

An Economic Development Strategy will be essential in creating the confidence to invest in Worcester. This should account for local conditions and local assets, to produce a locally tailored solution.

Thorough knowledge (gained through a credible body of evidence) of the potential of different growth sectors in relation to Worcester will enable any strategy to work towards removing the barriers to investment, and allow a focused policy platform to be created. This should provide certainty and should clearly highlight any obligations investors will have to meet.

In the context of greater austerity, Worcester should also look to its own assets, and ensure the management and possible disposal of these is closely aligned to its regeneration objectives.

The Economic Development Strategy should be integrated with the Vision and masterplan, and any further spatial planning, to ensure a streamlined decision making process is in place. This should capture the imagination and interest of local as well as outside investors.

The Economic Development Strategy should form the basis for informed marketing, site promotion and business support, developed in conjunction with Worcester Alliance, local businesses and AWM.

A Retail Strategy developed in conjunction with VisitWorcester, aimed at preserving the best of Worcester’s retail offer, including its strong independent sector, and enhancing it to secure Worcester’s prominence within the region as an important retail destination.

A Strategy for the re-use of old buildings, led by the City Council, with input from property owners.

A Strategy for the relocation of the College of Technology, in conjunction with the local planning authority and the Learning Skills Council.