

5.0 GALLERIES & MARKETGATE CENTRE REVIEW

Introduction

- 5.1 The Marketgate and Galleries Shopping centres were built as two independent schemes, the Marketgate Centre having been completed in 1972, and the Galleries completed in June 1990. The two centres have a history of changing ownerships, and came into a single ownership in 2002 when Prime Commercial Properties (PCP) acquired both investments. The investment was subsequently sold in April 2006 to Propinvest Limited as part of a portfolio transaction. Propinvest have subsequently acquired the Makinson Arcade which previously separated the ownerships of the Marketgate and Galleries Shopping Centres.

Trading Conditions

- 5.2 From inspection of the shopping centres it is apparent that certain areas of the Marketgate Centre in particular have struggled to attract and retain tenants within the centre. The development of the Marketgate Centre independent from the later Galleries Shopping Centre has resulted in the design of the Centre being compromised as it does not provide for the optimum control of pedestrian flow. This has led to those parts of the mall that do not form through routes for pedestrians being

largely unseen and by pedestrians. This has clearly had a negative impact of the trading potential of these units and eventually rental levels. This pattern has now led to a number of instances where it would appear that businesses have not wanted to, or have not be able to, remain in the centre leading to a significant number of voids units. This is particularly the case on Market Street Mall (lower ground floor) where there are currently 12 void units out 14 units. Notably the only units that have remained open are those at the entrance to the mall at Billinge Arcade / Market Street.

- 5.3 Since it is apparent that the Marketgate Centre is struggling to let in the current environment, the opening of the Grand Arcade will do one of two things (though probably both):

(1) Attract the new and better tenants away. It is understood that Boots have taken a lease in the new shopping centre and (subject to availability). As other tenants reach the ends of their lease obligations they may well consider alternative locations. It is already known that new entrants to the town (Waterstones etc) have been attracted by the development of the Grand Arcades and as such it is difficult for Marketgate shopping centre to attract anchor tenants (the recognised anchors are already present in town) to reverse the trend of decline when there is a better alternative available.

(2) The development of the Grand Arcade and resulting expansion of the size, range and quality of the town's retail offer will encourage those shoppers who are leaking from the town to return thus increasing the attractiveness of the town and improving its ranking position. As this improves other retailers will be attracted subject to suitable accommodation being available. This will drive rental growth and thus improve the underlying development viability of making significant changes to the underperforming parts of the Marketgate Shopping Centre. These changes (notably an increase in the profile and size of a number of units is a pre-requisite to capturing the opportunities in this scenario).

Movement and Townscape Issues

- 5.4 The internal and external layout of the Marketgate and Galleries Shopping centres together with the indoor market creates a number of issues to be considered in the emerging strategy. These relate to both the viability and attractiveness of the centre (internal issues) and how it relates to the wider townscape (external issues).
- 5.5 A number of these points have been referred to in the wider townscape analysis and earlier in this section. However it is worth rehearsing these again here:

Internal

- Lack of profile of many of the units;
- Poor relationship with the rest of the town;
- Confusing pattern of pedestrian routes - lack of clarity;
- Lack of profile of the market;
- Poor quality of the indoor market.

External

- Poor quality facades onto Market Street and Northway - lack of active frontage;
- Exposed service yard on Market Street;
- Lack of evening/ night time activity;
- Impermeable urban block when the centres are closed;

Consultations with ProplInvest

- 5.6 Consultations with ProplInvest point to their aspirations to improve the fortunes of the shopping centre. At this time these are:

Short-term

- Acquiring the multi-storey car park and investing in improvements.
- Addressing the vacancy in the Markets Street Mall by introducing a large space user into the area. No tenant has yet been secured. This unit would have a frontage to Market Street.
- Re-letting the Boots unit.

Medium to Longer term

- Re-develop Wigan Square by constructing four or five new retail units in eastern area of the square effectively extending Leigh Arcade. The Square would effectively be removed at ground floor level. A new Square would be created at first floor level. This clearly has a direct impact on the future of the out door market which is recognised and requires discussions with key stakeholders including the Council.
- Relocate the outdoor market to Market Street to improve the fortunes of both.
- Construct new retail space circa 4180sqm (45,000sqft) in the area above Morrison's and the Market Hall to strengthen the Northern end of the

shopping centre. This space would be aimed at large space users.

5.7 As regards the relationship with the Bus Station, Propinvest would welcome improvements to the public realm and access routes between the bus station and the Marketgate Centre. They suggest that Orrell Arcade generates around 40,000 movements per week largely due to the bus station. As such they consider the links between the Bus Station and Market Street are key and could be improved.

5.8 Propinvest are keen to work with the Council and indeed with other stakeholders such as Modus to develop proposals.

Options

5.9 In the light of this assessment there are a number of approaches taking forward the Marketgate and Galleries Shopping. These are outlined overleaf.

Option Development: Marketgate and Galleries Shopping Centres

Development Initiative	Rational	Time Frame	Issues / Deliverability	Possible Actions by WMBC
Do minimum	A` passive response to potential opportunities (and risks) generated by the Grand Arcade development and general growth in the retail sector.	Short-term	Likely to result in the continued decline of the centre.	None
Reconfigure the lower ground floor of the Marketgate Shopping Centre and Wigan Square	To respond to the vacancy and to capture the increased shopper activity in the town on opening of the Grand Arcade. Strengthening the Marketgate Centre will assist in maintaining a balance in the town centre and prevent further decline in this part. New development on Wigan Square could strengthen The Galleries offer and satisfy increased demand for retail space on opening of the Grand Arcade.	Short	Propinvest are developing a proposal to bring vacant areas back into use. Ideally this should be through an anchor tenant to encourage movement between the north and south.	Liaise with the Propinvest regarding embryonic proposals. Review options for reorganising the market offer to release development proposals in the Wigan Square area. Liaise with the Market traders regarding relocation to Market Street or other alternatives.
Morrison's site / Market Hall - Investigate the potential to create a new retail space over the existing uses as being considered by Propinvest. Demolish the existing Morrison's and Market hall (to be relocated) and develop a new 80,000sqft super market for Morrison's	Re-address the decline of the northern end of the Galleries shopping centre and encourage pedestrian flow through the centre. To address the lack of a quality food offer in the town (as identified in the Wigan Borough Retail Study 2001/16) and crucially provide a strong anchor in the northern part of the town to drive pedestrian flow between the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre and the northern area of the town centre (through the Galleries and Marketgate Shopping Centres).	Short/ Medium	Impact on the existing structures and the continued operation of the ground floor uses during the work. The Council would have substantial leverage through their long leasehold interest in the Market Hall, the Market Square and the ownership of the Multi Storey car park (Prop Invest have indicated they would very much like to acquire the car park to raise it to more acceptable modern standards, and also their current ambitions require the relocation of the outdoor market. CBRE have spoken to Morrison's and they have indicated that this could be of interest to them.	Liaise with Propinvest and market traders. Appraise the options available in broad financial terms to understand the potential additional value arising from using the Councils' assets to facilitate and promote radical development activity.

Residential Development	Continue the introduction of town centre apartments to attract citizens who can support a more diverse range of nightlife and leisure facilities	Short/ Medium	Viability will be crucial issue due to sensitivity to sales values. Affordable housing policy could undermine viability. The tower proposed by Modus is unlikely to be developed until 50% of the units are pre-sold. Should it appear that this will not proceed in the short to medium term then capacity could be delivered on other sites in the Northern Crescent area.	Consider PPG 17 issues in respect of the playing fields site adjacent to the Civic buildings
New Hotel	To encourage and support the growth of business in the town and broaden the very narrow current offer and increase competitiveness	Medium	Could form part of a mixed use development within the study area or be stand alone in a visible location. A new hotel is planned at the Trencherfield Mill scheme.	Engage with the Hotel operators to establish the strength of the interest and any time constraints which may be of relevance. Understand the detailed requirement.
Improved Restaurant Offer	The improved retailing in the town should support demand for a better quality restaurant offer in the town that can be used by shoppers and workers during the day		Probably best suited to a location near the Grand Arcade and close to (but not in) the existing area of bars and clubs.	The Market Place is a good candidate subject to availability albeit outside the study area.

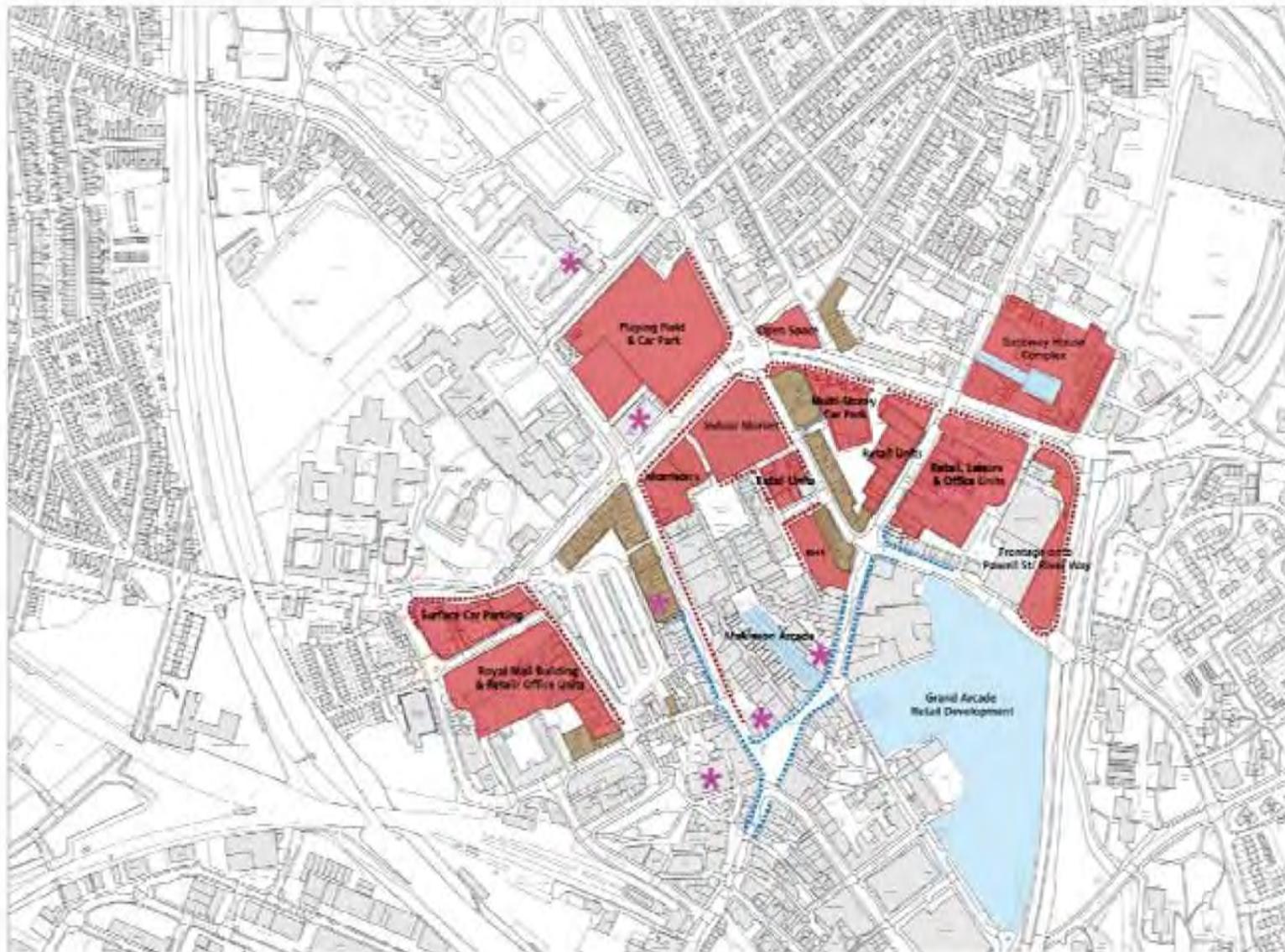
6. CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

- 6.1 As this point in the report it useful to confirm the key strengths and weaknesses of the Northern Crescent area as a basis for developing options. These are summarised in the table overleaf.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Transportation / Access	
<p>High profile location adjacent to the ring road and central retail area</p> <p>Adjacent to the bus station</p> <p>Served by a number of car parks</p>	<p>Ring road creates a barrier to pedestrian movement</p> <p>Poor relationship with the Standishgate central shopping area</p> <p>Complex network of pedestrian routes within Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres - poor legibility</p> <p>Servicing area on Market Street</p> <p>Restricted access in the evening and at night through Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres</p> <p>Unclear linkage with the Bus Station</p>
Commercial Environment	
<p>Number of independent traders - give town individuality</p> <p>Grand Arcade will improve the overall offer of the town and prevent leakage to other rival towns</p>	<p>Competition from higher other centres such as Bolton</p> <p>Possible shift in focus of retail activity from the northern crescent area to the south leading to an increase in vacancy rates in this part of town</p>
Built Environment	

<p>General retention of historic street pattern and preservation of important historical assets - Makinson Arcade, Industrial Buildings, All Saints Church</p> <p>A pleasant mix of architectural styles and periods and good integration of modern development around Market Place and lower Standishgate</p> <p>Attractive narrow courts off Hallgate provide a pleasant alternative shopping destination</p> <p>Dominant features on the skyline include the tower of All Saints Church and the clock tower of the former Grammar school</p> <p>Number of key landmark buildings provide important reference points within the town</p>	<p>Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres provide poor frontage onto Market Street, New Market Street and Mesnes Street</p> <p>Number of visually exposed inappropriate buildings that detract from the character of the town centre (Royal Mail, British Telecom)</p> <p>Lack of legibility within Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres</p> <p>Poor quality gateways into the town centre from the ring road</p> <p>Exposed service yard for Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres terminates the vista along Hallgate</p>
<p>Public Realm</p>	
<p>Fine grained street pattern of historic core</p> <p>Shared surfaces and pedestrian priority measures in place along principal shopping streets</p> <p>Market Place as focal point for activity</p>	<p>Significant variation in the quality of the public realm, particularly between the north and south of the town centre</p> <p>Poor quality street furniture, signage and surfacing gives negative impression of certain areas and creates visual clutter</p>
<p>Natural Assets</p>	
<p>Close proximity to the attractive Mesnes Park</p> <p>Topography provides good views of the town centre skyline from Mesnes Park</p>	<p>Poorly defined and landscaped Mesnes playing field provides inadequate interface between Mesnes Park and the town centre.</p>



- Redevelopment Opportunity
- Retention, Refurbishment & Reuse
- Assets
- Weak Frontage
- Strong Frontage
- * Landmark Feature or Building



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Wigan Town Centre Assets & Opportunities

NTS

- 6.2 The emerging strategy for Wigan Northern Crescent should be based on overcoming the area's weaknesses and capitalising on its strengths. The emerging strategy should also recognise that a number of potential threats also face the Northern Crescent, which include:
- Further loss of (anchor) retailers from the Galleries/Marketgate shopping centre;
 - Shift of retail core towards the Grand Arcade.
- 6.3 There are, however, a number of opportunities which should be harnessed and capitalised on, including:
- The role of the Grand Arcade in retaining and increasing footfall in the heart of the town centre;
 - The proactive intervention of PropInvest;
 - public landownership which could be used to facilitate/trigger change in the Northern Crescent area; and
 - The refurbishment and reuse of high quality existing building stock.

7.0 EMERGING OPTIONS

Introduction

- 5.1 This section of the report considers a number of options as a response to the issues highlighted earlier in this report.
- 5.2 The emerging options set out in this section aim to introduce spatial, physical and urban design approaches to the Northern Crescent area to enhancing its vitality and viability as a mixed use, although pre-dominantly retail area within Wigan Town Centre.
- 5.3 The options considered are at two levels: the strategic - that is what are the overall objectives or approach to the area; and secondly the spatial - how could new development and the approach to the public realm be designed so as to capitalise on the potential of the area.

Strategic Options

- 5.4 A series of strategic options are appraised in the table below. These options promote differing levels of change for the Northern Crescent, including no change and bringing forward urban design improvements to the area.

Scenario	Outcomes	Issues	Policy Fit	Feasibility/ Deliverability	Market Potential	Sustainability
Strategic Options						
Do Nothing	Continued fragility of the area as a retail area	Likely decline of northern crescent area; loss of further retail units; shift of focus of retail core to the south	Contrary to policy which aims to promote vitality and viability of town centre	Possible scenario if lack of investment	Likely to lead to significant value depreciation for current landowners	Poor level of sustainability, may lead to greater reliance on out-of-town facilities
Urban Design Approach	Potential to improve linkages through and around area	Improve permeability and legibility within the town centre core; better links to facilities/services and public transport	May improve vitality and viability by encouraging greater pedestrian activity	May require some demolition and investment in public realm improvements	Likely to be public sector led and public sector financed	High levels of sustainability can be achieved if people can be encouraged to walk
Diversify	Introduce new non-retail uses such as residential in place of existing development	Current lack of town centre residential community; poor levels of natural surveillance and activity (other than pubs or clubs) at night	Consistent with national policy on residential development; good access to shops/services and public transport	Thought to be some demand for residential development sites within the town centre	May require high levels of pre-sales and limited availability elsewhere in the town centre	High levels of sustainability could be achieved by creating a residential community in the town centre
Expansion	Significant increased in floorspace / 'scale of development - i.e. development of superstore.	Value of an anchor store in northern crescent area to maintain retail interest and attract smaller retailers; closure of Morrison's; possible need for associated free car parking	Consistent with national and local policy on retail; within the primary retail zone; good public transport links	Main anchor stores already established in town	There may already be sufficient retail provision in and around the town centre; main anchor stores already established in town; possible lack of demand/ user interest	High levels of sustainability could be achieved if this can attract retail use to this sustainable location; will support the retail offer of the town centre and strengthen its attraction
Retraction	Redefinition of the areas as non-retail and not core part of core town centre	Lack of demand for additional retail space could force the need for alternative designation; possible employment/ office/ residential area	Contrary to existing local retail policy; diversification of land-uses however may fit with national policy for employment/ residential uses etc	Unlikely to fulfil aspirations of current land owners; mix of uses can be achieved within town centre designation	May lead to a decrease in land values and have a negative economic impact on the remainder of the town centre	Possible adverse impact on sustainability if leads to non town centre uses occupying this sustainable location

Potential Major Positives

Potential Major Negatives

Strategic Options - Assessment

- 7.5 The appraisal of strategic options suggests the following:
- a do-nothing option creates a significant risk of further decline in the area to the detriment of the town centre as a whole;
 - there are significant opportunities to enable the area to 'work better' through public realm and development projects;
 - there is some merit in diversifying uses away from retail. However residential is unlikely to create sufficient critical mass whilst there are significant downsides in diluting the retail role of this important part of Wigan Town Centre;
 - The attraction of a major anchor development to the Northern Crescent would be a significant plus and would underpin other improvements. A major food store would appear to provide the best fit and the most market potential. However attracting an operator (to an area already well served by large format food retailing) will depend, in part upon creating an opportunity of sufficient scale, profile and accessibility.

Spatial Development Options

- 7.6 The strategic option analysis underlines the challenges faced by the area in terms of its townscape and the emphasis that should be placed on (in any development scenario) in developing the environmental quality, legibility and connectivity of the area. This section therefore considers a number of spatial development options which propose a progressively more radical urban design approach to address the constraints and opportunities of the area. The options comprise both short and long term elements. The short-term elements of this analysis place an emphasis on the approach to the Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centre reflecting its pivotal role in the future of the area as a whole. However, the longer-term elements of these spatial options also consider the approach to a number of other important sites.

Option 1: Minor Intervention with Improved Linkages

- 7.7 The minor intervention option identifies a number of possible short and longer term solutions to existing issues in the town centre which could be undertaken without substantial remodelling of the Northern Crescent area. The main actions within this option include:

Short-term

- Improve interface between the indoor market and the surrounding areas by glazed frontage at ground-floor level and direct linkage to the outdoor market;
- Explore possibility of multi-storey car park (MSCP) on the existing Morrison's store site. This will locate a key arrival point within the study area and support the market (as identified in the gap and market analysis). Ground-floor retail units within the building would ensure active frontage along the key routes;
- Consider combining the existing Marketgate shopping centre and Makinson Arcade to improve pedestrian circulation and rationalise the number of retail routes (improve footfall);
- Improved pedestrian links between the bus station and the Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres and between the Mesnes Terrace MSCP and the Galleries/Marketgate Shopping Centres;

Long-term

- Some street-scene improvement works to the Lower Standishgate area including new hard landscaping, street furniture, lighting and signage;
- Landscape improvements at the Gateway House complex, particularly at the corner with Standishgate and Powell Street and in the church yard around St John's RC Church.

Option 2: Moderate Intervention with New Market Square

- 7.8 The moderate intervention option would require a greater level of investment and structural change including some demolition. The priority element of this option gives greater emphasis to the role of the market and to the possible creation of a new market square. The longer-term element of this option identifies the need for physical improvements at the Lower Standishgate and Gateway House areas. The main actions within this option include:

Short-term

- The demolition of the existing Morrison's Store to facilitate the creation of a new market square with improved visual and physical links to New Market Street and the north of the town centre;
- Re-modelling of existing indoor market building to create stronger focus onto new market square. Glazed frontage and a wide entrance could enable the market to 'spill out' into the square creating a seamless link between the indoor and outdoor offer;
- Simplify the internal layout of the galleries shopping centre creating fewer routes with increased footfall;
- Consider combining the existing Marketgate shopping centre and Makinson Arcade to improve pedestrian circulation and rationalise the number of retail routes (improve footfall) as Option 1;

Long-term

- Promote the redevelopment of No. 70 Standishgate (Iceland store) comprising a bespoke corner building which fronts onto both Northway and Standishgate and provides a welcoming gateway to the town centre. Development should abut the footpath on both sides to create a strong building line;
- Promote development adjacent to Bryan House (61-69 Standishgate). This site should accommodate a bespoke corner building which fronts onto both Northway and Standishgate and provides a welcoming gateway to the town centre. Development should abut the footpath on both sides to create a strong building line;
- Explore development opportunities at the Gateway House complex, including the two vacant sites adjacent to Standishgate, to reinforce this area as an edge-of-centre office location. Improve the setting of the multiple listed buildings in this location, in particular the grounds surrounding St Johns Church and open up to public access.

Option 3: Major Intervention with Green Link

7.9 The major intervention option would require a substantial level of investment and structural change in the existing built form, initially around the Galleries/Marketgate Centres and as a longer-term priority around Lower Standishgate and Gateway House Complex. The high priority option attempts to forge strong links between the Galleries/Marketgate Centres and Mesnes Park to the north of the study area and to rationalise the existing network of routes within the centre. The longer-term element of this option also seeks to create a high quality office destination on the edge of the centre and to improve the gateway to the town centre via Standishgate. The potential for both public and private investment in office accommodation here should be explored. The main actions within this option include:

Short-term

- Major public and/or private investment in new office space on parts of Mesnes Playing Field to consolidate Council office provision in this key location. Buildings should be orientated around a linear landscaped 'urban park' creating a green link between Mesnes Park and the town centre;

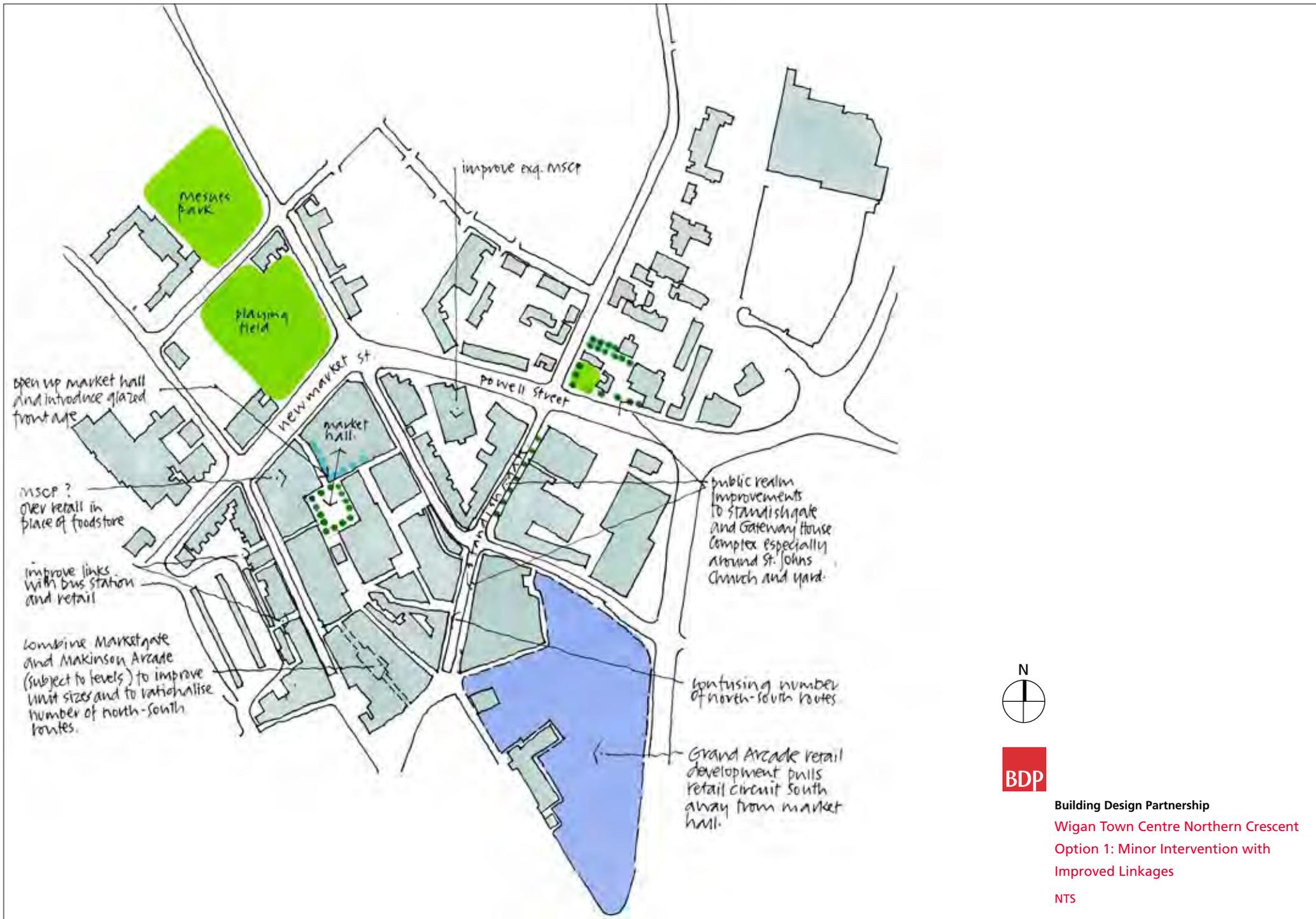
- The demolition of the existing Morrison's Store and the indoor market to accommodate opportunities for ground-floor level restaurants, bars, café's and retail and upper floor residential;
- Creation of a central square framed with restaurants, café's, bars and retail. Retention of Makinson Arcade as key link to square and Grand Arcade;
- Demolition of large parts of Galleries Shopping Centre and redevelopment with new indoor/outdoor market and upper level MSCP. Rationalisation of the number of routes to improve legibility and increase footfall;
- Consider combining the existing Marketgate shopping centre and Makinson Arcade to improve pedestrian circulation and rationalise the number of retail routes (improve footfall) as Option 1 & 2;

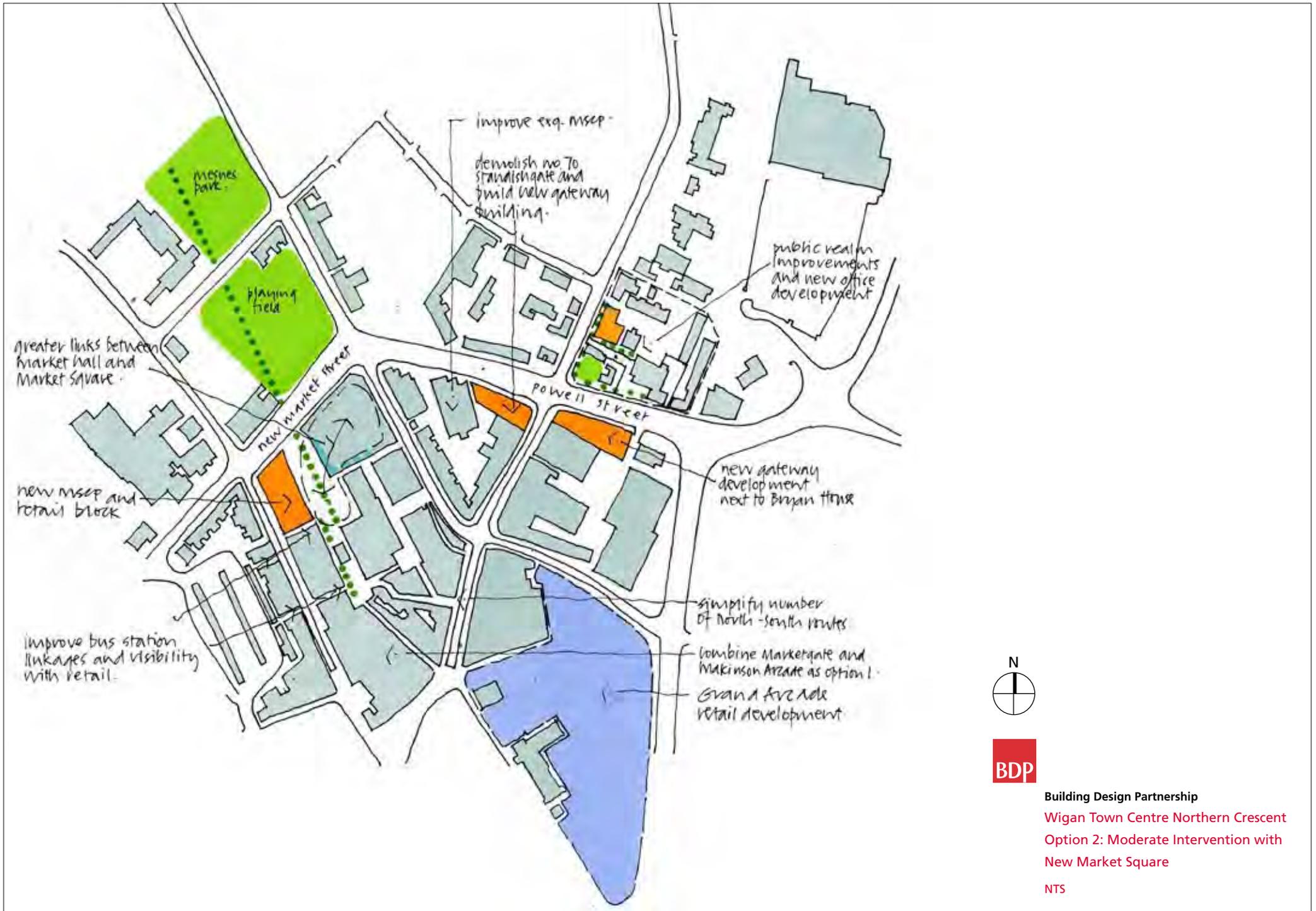
Long-term

- Demolition of two Wigan Council office buildings (Economic Regeneration and Education and Business Partnership buildings) within the Gateway House

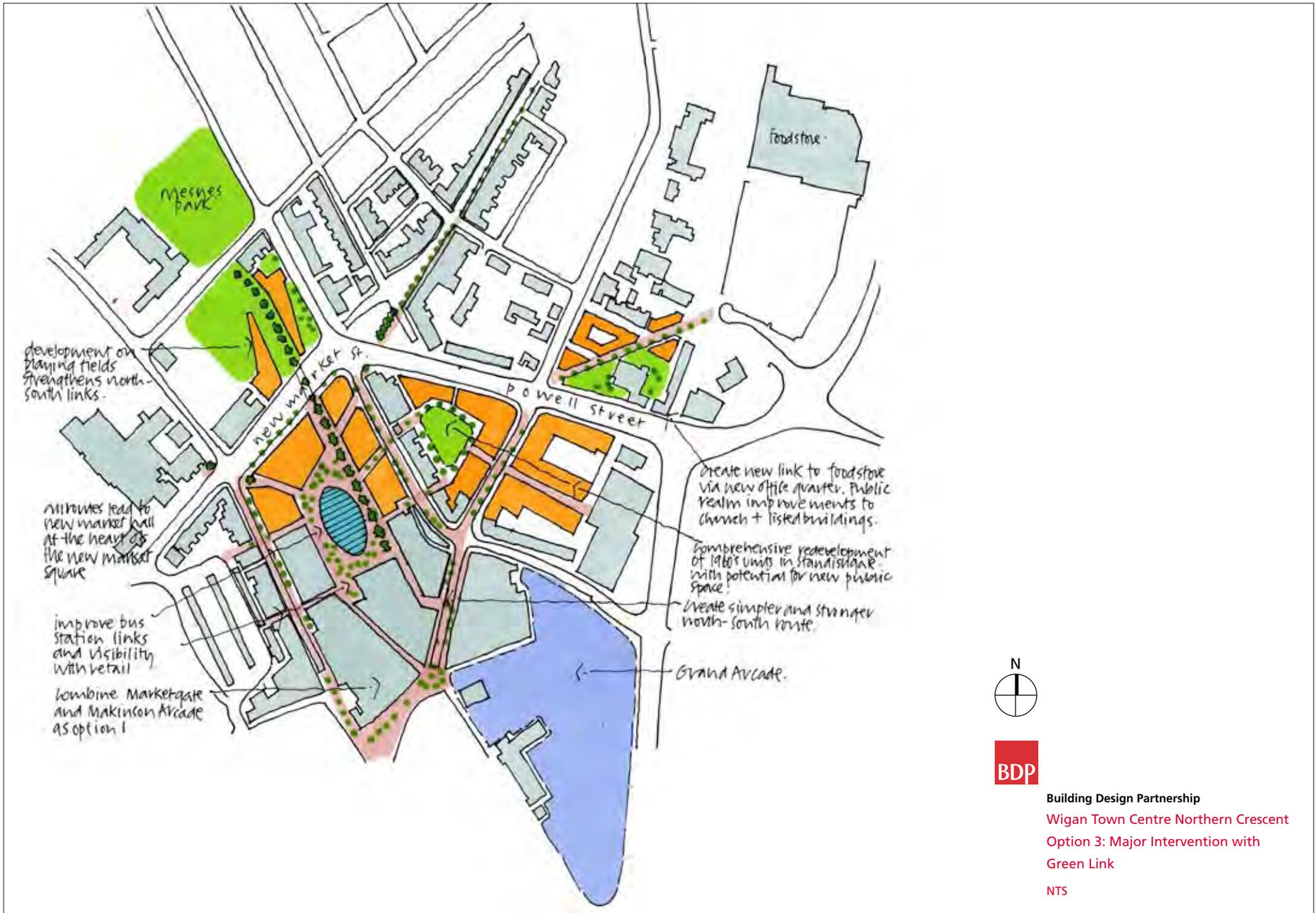
complex to facilitate a complete remodelling of the area. Open up space around St John's RC Church and monument to create an attractive setting and an accessible outdoor space. New high quality office buildings should provide an attractive frame to the church yard and provide a new pedestrian link through the area to the major supermarket;

- Comprehensive demolition of 1960's retail units and mixed use office/leisure development around the Lower Standishgate area. Redevelop for a mix of uses to create strong frontage onto both Northway/Powell St and Standishgate creating an attractive gateway to the town centre and compliment the scale, massing and materials of buildings to be retained.





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 Wigan Town Centre Northern Crescent
 Option 2: Moderate Intervention with
 New Market Square
 NTS



Building Design Partnership
 Wigan Town Centre Northern Crescent
 Option 3: Major Intervention with
 Green Link
 NTS

8.0 DELIVERY STRATEGY

Introduction

8.1 This section of the report considers the delivery issues inherent in the Framework. These are:

- Wigan Council as landowner;
- Working with PropInvest;
- The Development Plan context;
- The Public realm and movement strategy;

Wigan Council as landowner

- 8.2 Wigan MBC should take advantage of its significant land interests in the Northern Crescent area to facilitate development. Key assets include the Indoor Market, Wigan Square, the land off Northway, the car park off Mesnes Street and the two WMBC office buildings (Economic Regeneration and Education and Business Partnership buildings) within the Gateway House complex.
- 8.3 The key relationship here is with PropInvest, who, as previously noted, have expressed interest in acquiring the car park and developing over the Wigan Square area.
- 8.4 Wigan MBC need to take a strategic approach to these landholdings to ensure maximum wider benefit and consideration should be given to developing a partnership / informal joint venture approach with PropInvest. This approach should have as a founding principle agreement to promote significant changes to the Market and Galleries Centres.
- 8.5 The scope of this partnership approach will be dependant on confirming the scale and range of potential development opportunities. This will need to be considered in conjunction

with ProInvest. The potential benefit of an anchor foodstore has been considered earlier in this report. Wigan MBC should test the market potential for this further through the commissioning of a market report, comprising direct consultation with potential retailers.

8.6 The opportunities can be maximised through the incorporation of the indoor market into the redevelopment opportunities. The Indoor market is an important part of the commercial and cultural life of the Town Centre. However like most markets, it is facing an increasingly challenging time, both from competition and changing shopping habits.

8.7 The accommodation of indoor market does not particularly add to its competitive position. It offers little in the way of wider visibility and it is poorly connected into the heart of the town centre (and the peak areas of footfall). The decline of the Markets and Galleries Shopping Centres has also impacted on the market.

8.8 A comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of the areas would offer the opportunities to re-provide for the market in more attractive and better located accommodation. Adjacency to a major food retailer could also offer new opportunities. Changes to the market are however likely to be raise concerns amongst the traders, the community and other stakeholders.

Proposals for change will therefore need to be handled sensitively and on the basis of a clear and deliverable opportunity.

8.9 As noted earlier, Wigan Council owns a number of properties and sites in the Northern Crescent area. Consideration should be given to packaging these and potentially other assets (along with those relevant parts of the ProInvest estate) to create a critical mass of opportunities for the market to respond to. This could include the phased release or transfer of sites over time as appropriate.

8.10 Packaging a number of sites in such a way could have a number of advantages, including:

- Raising the profile (and value) of the constituent parts of the development package.
- Reducing the (staff) resources requirement for Wigan Council to take the opportunities to the market (although effort would be perhaps more intense over a shorter period).
- Sharing the risk across a number of sites with the private sector and enabling an element of a 'cross-subsidy' between sites.

- Creating a strong impetus for change in this area.
- Capitalising on the private sectors commercial expertise and creating an opportunity to innovation.

8.11 Given the potential 'planning risks' and to provide a degree of certainty in the bidding process, it is considered that, in the absence of a revised planning framework for the area, consideration be given the gaining planning approval for key elements of the scheme ahead of seeking development partners.

Working with ProplInvest

- 8.12 Wigan Council should place a strong emphasis on seeking to work in partnership with ProplInvest to achieve shared goals. ProplInvest have suggested that they are keen to consider improvements to the Market and Galleries Shopping Centre and in acquiring a number of Council assets.
- 8.13 Wigan Council should seek to enter into a land/property based partnership with ProplInvest. This may be informal or a formal joint venture depending on the scope of the opportunities being considered.

8.14 The Council should also develop a Supplementary Planning Document to provide some additional control over the design of any redevelopment opportunities in the Northern Crescent area and in particular in and around the Market and Galleries Shopping Centre.

8.15 Early action by Wigan Council, not least in opening up discussion with ProplInvest will be helpful in enabling them to 'raise their game' in the light of some of the potential development scenarios.

Development Plan

- 8.16 Wigan Council should seek to develop the strategy for the Northern Crescent area through the Local Development Framework. However given the necessary timescales for the preparation of that document there may be merit in preparing an informal document for approval by the Council to provide additional clarity to how the area is to development as well as establishing some key design principles.
- 8.17 Alternatively, as suggested above there would be merit in considering whether the Council, in partnership as appropriate, should apply for planning permission for key aspect of the regeneration strategy.

Public Realm and Movement

- 8.18 The enhancement of the public realm and related improvements to (pedestrian) movement is an important part of developing the Northern Crescent area. Improvements to the public realm should run alongside development proposals. The Central Area Action Plan (and earlier documents) should create the framework within which developer contributions can be made to a scoped programme of public realm and related improvements and plans can be incorporated into the Local Transport Plan and other funding programmes.
- 8.19 The importance of creating a high quality public realm around which investment and activity can take place should not be under-estimated. The experience of Liverpool Ropewalks underlines the role that advanced public realm works can have in promoting regeneration. This approach is also reflected in the delivery of the Stockport Masterplan (BDP 2005). St Peter Square is a key early project of the Masterplan which is seen as promoting further development and investment. The project is part funded via the South East Manchester Multi-Modal Study and by finance identified from the future disposal of local authority land assets in the Town Centre. The costs for the project are in the order of £1,000,000.

Conclusion

- 8.20 The Northern Crescent area does offer some significant potential. However the achievement of this potential will require the concerted effort of Wigan Council and its partners. The private sector will not be able to unlock the potential without the Council taking a leading role.

9.0 URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

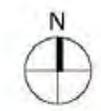
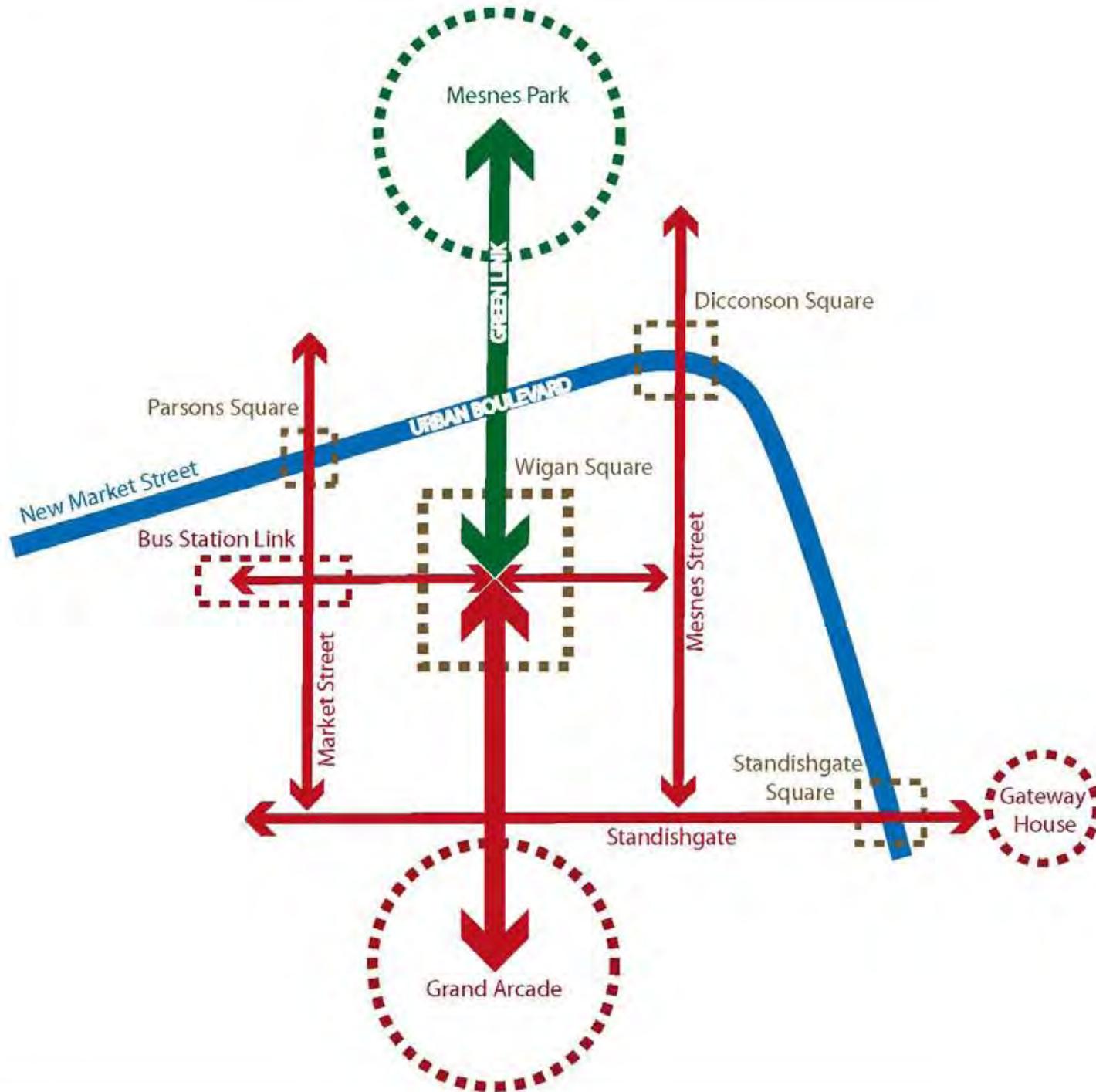
Introduction

- 9.1 This section of the report establishes some of the key design principles which should underpin the development and regeneration of the Northern Crescent area.
- 9.2 This framework is based around a physical framework which proposes a hierarchy of streets and spaces, each fulfilling a particular role in developing a sense of place in the area.
- 9.3 This framework will therefore consider:
- The physical framework for the Northern Crescent;
 - A pedestrian strategy geared toward enhancing links across traffic routes;
 - A series of design principles for developments. These are:
 - Active frontages;
 - Making the most of the public realm;
 - Uses and promoting diversity (in use);
 - Massing;
 - Building design;
 - Fostering local distinctiveness;
 - Preserving and enhancing local character;
 - Adaptability and sustainability;

- Managing servicing and car parking;
- Safety and security.

Physical Framework

- 9.4 The Physical Framework Conceptual Diagram demonstrates the main principles that should be fostered as the Northern Crescent area is developed. Key aspects of the framework include:
- 9.5 **The development of New Market Street/Northway as an urban boulevard.** This route will remain a key traffic route. However, it should also serve to add to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre by providing active frontages and a high quality pedestrian environment supporting free-flowing pedestrian movement. Development should be at least 3 to 4 storeys in height, front onto the route and comprise active ground-floor frontages. High quality surfacing and street furniture should be implemented to provide a pleasant pedestrian environment and improved pedestrian priority crossings. Tree planting along a central reservation would go some way to break up the physical mass of the carriageway and promote a more human-scale.
- 9.6 **Gateways at the junctions with Market Street, Mesnes Street and Standishgate.** These strategic locations provide key access points into the town centre within the study area. As such they should aim to provide welcoming gateways to the town centre and improve legibility. Development at these locations should 'turn the corner' successfully presenting active frontage along both elevations. The junction with Mesnes Street represents the main gateway in this



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 Physical Framework - Conceptual
 Diagram
 NTS

area. Significant intervention is required at this location to promote a welcoming environment of a human-scale. There is an opportunity for integrated junction improvements (aimed at improving the pedestrian environment) at Northway / Mesnes Street with the space to the front of Dicconson Street and public realm (and other development) improvements at the entrance of the Indoor market to create a gateway square / space (which just happens to have a road passing through it). This approach to space and design would create a more seamless link across the ring road and underpin the particular potential of Upper Dicconson Street as a location for restaurants, taking advantage of the historic environment in this area. The increased integration of this area into the town centre would also promote the re-use of the properties on Dicconson/ Upper Dicconson Street.

- 9.7 **New and revitalised civic spaces at Mesnes Playing Field, Mesnes Gateway and Wigan Square.** Mesnes playing field represents an under-used resource occupying a key location between the town centre and Mesnes Park. A proportion of the field should be developed for potential office use to provide a framework for a linear urban park. The landscaped park should provide a green link between the town centre and Mesnes Park. Mesnes gateway provides significant scope for the creation of a new public space. The square should facilitate free-flowing pedestrian movement across the road and be framed by attractive landmark development. Wigan Square currently sits at the centre of the Galleries shopping centre enclosed on all sides and with restricted access. Revitalisation of the square should seek the remodelling of the shopping centre to open it up to direct access and views into and out of square.

- 9.8 **Market Street and Mesnes street as vibrant shopping streets.** Both Market Street and Mesnes Street lack the vibrancy of other key streets in the town centre such as Standishgate. Opportunities should be explored to improve the quality of frontage onto these streets, to increase their retail/town centre offer and to improve hard and soft landscaping. The potential for on-street activities should be encouraged such as market stalls, temporary displays, public art and street entertainment.
- 9.9 **Improving the legibility of the Galleries and Marketgate Shopping Centres.** Remodelling of the Galleries/Marketgate Shopping centres should seek to rationalise and simplify the complex network of pedestrian streets and passageways and to open up access to Wigan Square. A simplified network should emphasise key routes east-west, connecting the bus station to Mesnes Street and north-south, connecting New Market Street and the Grand Arcade.
- 9.10 **Remodelling of the Gateway House complex and church yard of St John's RC Church.** The Gateway House complex and the adjacent St John's RC Church and associated buildings is an untidy collection of poorly related buildings with a number of vacant space. The remodelling of this area should seek to improve frontage onto Standishgate, particularly at the corner with Powell Street and the car park. The area around St John's RC Church should be opened up and provided with a landscaped setting to include the existing listed monument. New high quality office development should frame the church and provide a new pedestrian link to the Tesco store.



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Perspective Sketch 1: Market Street
Active Frontage
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Perspective Sketch 2: Remodelled
Wigan Square
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Perspective Sketch 3: Mesnes Field
Green Link
NTS

Pedestrian Strategy

9.11 Town Centres thrive on accessibility and activity. The enhancement of the environment for the pedestrian will be important for regeneration of the Northern Crescent area. The better integration of the town centre with Mesnes Park and with the residential areas to the north will also be of benefit. It is therefore recommended that an approach be taken to reducing the barrier effect of New Market Street/Northway. Approaches to this will include:

- Reduce the scale of the road by implementing a tree planted reservation down the centre of the carriageway;
- Reduce the taxi rank to a single lane and bring the Market Hall/ Morrison's buildings out to meet the pavement;
- Increase the width of the footpaths to improve the feeling of pedestrian safety;
- Incorporate raised level pedestrian priority crossing points at the junctions with Market Street, Mesnes Street and Standishgate and a direct connection to the Mesnes Playing Field urban park;
- Remove street clutter, including all unnecessary signage and guard rails etc, and replace with appropriately designed and high quality street furniture.

Design Principles

9.12 Within the overall physical framework and pedestrian structure as outlined above, a number of key design principles are applicable to guide the detailed design of buildings and spaces within the Northern Crescent area. These are as follows:

9.13 **Active frontages;** Active frontages provide visual interest in the street-scene and contribute substantially to the vitality of the town centre. Within the Northern Crescent area active frontages should be encouraged on all key routes, especially: Market St; New Market St/Northway; Mesnes St; and Standishgate;

9.14 **Making the most of the public realm;** The quality of outdoor public spaces has a significant impact on the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre. Activity will generally be encouraged where the quality of the public realm is high such and where informal optional and social activities may take place, such as at Market Place and Standishgate. To make the most of the public realm, improvements to outdoor spaces should be focused around Market Street, New Market Street, Wigan Square and Mesnes Street. Improvements may include new active frontages, hard and soft landscaping and street furniture;

9.15 **Promoting a diversity of uses;** The town centre should support an appropriate mix of uses to provide for the general shopping, leisure and office needs of the population of Wigan. However, the mix of uses should also encourage high levels of activity and natural surveillance at different times of the day and night. The vertical mixing of uses within buildings should be encouraged where this

attracts residential development into otherwise office and retail dominated areas;

- 9.16 **Scale and Massing;** The scale and massing of development varies considerably within the study area. A number of individual large scale buildings occupy positions on New Market Street including Market Hall, Morrison's, the Council building and the College. Elsewhere in the town centre buildings are of generally small scale occupying narrow plots and rising to approximately three storeys in height. New development should seek to reflect the scale and massing of appropriate existing development and integrate successfully into the street-scene. Large scale development should therefore be restricted to sites adjacent to New Market Street/Northway. In those areas characterised by a fine grain with small scale buildings occupying narrow plots, the amalgamation of plots for a single building should not be permitted;
- 9.17 **Building design;** Overall there are no dominant building styles or periods evident in the study area. Rather the area is characterised by its diversity. The design of new development should therefore not seek to conform to a particular style but be compatible with the immediate context, having regard to scale, height, massing and materials. In areas dominated by late 19th Century/ early 20th Century development, particularly in and around the three Conservation Areas, the use of traditional local materials including red brick, terracotta and sandstone are prevalent;
- 9.18 **Fostering local distinctiveness;** the local distinctiveness of the area is reflected in the built form and in the social and economic

activities that take place. For Wigan key factors include the historic street pattern, the fine grain of development around Market Place and Hallgate, the historic landmark buildings, Mesnes Park and the presence of the market. These assets should be preserved and enhanced as far as possible with high quality new development at strategic locations providing contemporary new landmarks. A new setting for the market should be sought to improve its prominence within the town and to ensure its continued presence.

- 9.19 **Preserving and enhancing local character;** the character of the area is defined to a large extent by the built heritage of the town. The Listed buildings, Conservation Areas and Historic Parks and Gardens designations aim to protect those most important heritage assets. The continued protection of these key assets and of the setting and important views of such assets is essential to the preservation and enhancement of local character. A number of historic buildings however are currently vacant and in a poor state of repair. Every effort should be made to bring these assets back into active use and to encourage their sympathetic restoration;
- 9.20 **Adaptability and sustainability;** To ensure their longevity, buildings and spaces must be designed with flexibility in mind and be adaptable to change or reuse. Investment in high quality materials and design will ensure that these assets can continue to adapt to changing needs and demands. All buildings should also seek to achieve high standards in design and sustainability assessment achieving an excellent BREEAM rating wherever possible;

- 9.21 **Managing servicing and car parking;** Good service access to buildings and adequate safe car parking are essential elements of a successful town centre. However, they may often have a negative impact on the street-scene. To avoid this service access should be located away from the main pedestrian environments and screened from view with secure access. Multi-storey car parking within the retail core should be well integrated into the street-scene and wherever possible provide active ground-floor uses;
- 9.22 **Safety and security.** A good mix of uses within the town centre will encourage activity and natural surveillance at different times of the day and night. The reuse of vacant buildings and spaces will also improve activity. The orientation of buildings and the positioning of windows and habitable rooms should ensure that all publicly accessible spaces in the area benefit from good levels of natural surveillance. Those areas that do not benefit from natural surveillance should be secured.



Character & Local Distinctiveness

1. The Makinson Arcade sits at the heart of the retail core and provides an important heritage asset.
2. Market Buildings, Mesnes Street – evidence of former uses are important indicators of the history of the place.
3. The long established presence of a market adds significantly to the distinctiveness of Wigan.
4. The Co-ops Building has a dominant presence on Dorning Street and reflects a strong character.
5. The Council Building sets a strong building line for New Market Street and denotes the scale and massing for new development in this location.
6. The terrace of Georgian Town Houses provides an attractive frame to the potential Dicconson Square and the gateway to the Dicconson Conservation Area.
7. The imposing bank building is a key landmark in the retail centre on Standishgate.
8. St Johns RC Church off Standishgate and Powell Street could be a key feature in the redevelopment of the Gateway House complex.
9. Narrow courts off Hallgate offer an alternative shopping experience in Wigan.
10. Uncle Joes Mint Ball Factory – the confectionary manufacturer has a long established presence in the town and contributes a distinctive smell to the area.

Urban Environments

11. An urban park can provide a multi-functional open space and provide an attractive setting for buildings.
12. A tree-lined green link provides a pleasant pedestrian experience.
13. Wide footpaths and active frontages can provide vibrant pedestrian spaces alongside main vehicular routes.
14. Encouraging outdoor activities can bring life to urban squares and spaces.
15. A bus station with a prominent entrance from the High Street which blends into the historic fabric.
16. Good quality paving and street-furniture can transform the perception of a place.
17. Public Art adds visual interest in the street-scene and can be an excellent way to showcase local artistic talent and express the distinctiveness of a place.
18. Where the pedestrian environment is a pleasant place to be optional and social activities can thrive.
19. High quality landscaping can be used to define an area within the urban environment.
20. Landmark buildings that 'turn-the-corner' can provide active frontage on two sides and create a welcoming gateway to an area.



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Wigan Town Centre Urban Design Framework

10 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Overview

10.1 This report has provided a comprehensive analysis of the key issues facing the Wigan Northern Crescent study area, in the wider context of the Town Centre as a whole and in particular in response to the potential impact of the Grand Arcade. The report has considered in detail the:

- policy and regeneration context of the area at the national, regional and local level including the Community Strategy, Unitary Development Plan and the Local Transport Plan;
- state of the existing market economy of the area and the potential demand for retail, leisure, office, and residential uses;
- physical form and structure of the area and quality of the general townscape including the historic context, general layout, land use, gateways, landmarks and movement patterns; and
- general economic condition of the Galleries and Marketgate shopping centres with emphasis on the nature and extent of potential physical improvements.

Key Issues

10.2 The analysis of the physical and economic condition of the study area revealed a number of key findings which have been considered under the constraints and opportunities section of the report. These key findings indicate the main issues that need to be addressed in the study area. In particular the issues identified focus on three key themes:

- the potential decline of the Galleries/ Marketgate Shopping Centres, the lack of sufficient anchor retail development, the poor quality frontage onto key streets and a complex pattern of pedestrian routes through the centres;
- the impact of the Ring Road (New Market Street/ Northway/ Powell Street) as a barrier to pedestrian movement and providing a poor gateway into the town centre;
- the quality of the public realm along key streets within the study area and at key spaces including Mesnes Field, Wigan Square and the Gateway House complex.

Opportunities

- 10.3 The Northern Crescent area does offer some significant potential. However the achievement of this potential will require the concerted effort of Wigan Council and its partners. The private sector will not be able to unlock the potential without the council taking a leading role. The council's position as landowner is helpful in this respect.



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