

Folkestone Town Centre Spatial Strategy



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	Originator	Checked by	Reviewed by	Approved by
ORIGINAL	NAME Helen Mullin	NAME Helen Bradley	NAME Helen Bradley	NAME Helen Mullin
DATE 22 March 2011	SIGNATURE 	SIGNATURE 	SIGNATURE 	SIGNATURE 
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REVISION	NAME Helen Mullin	NAME Jamie Gosden	NAME Jamie Gosden	NAME Helen Mullin
DATE 31 March 2011	SIGNATURE 	SIGNATURE 	SIGNATURE 	SIGNATURE 
Document Status				

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Public Realm Appraisal	2
2.1	Public Realm Character	5
2.2	Land Use	17
2.3	Existing Highway Network	21
2.4	Pedestrian Access & Circulation	25
2.5	Car Parking	32
2.6	Public Realm Constraints	37
3	Spatial Strategy	41
3.1	Spatial Strategy Plan	42
3.2	Spatial Strategy - Key Areas	43
4	Next Steps	47
5	References	48
Appendix A Alternative Highway Options		

In February 2011, Jacobs was commissioned by Kent County Council's (KCC) Regeneration and Planning Department on behalf of Shepway District Council to develop a Spatial Strategy for improvements to the area to the north and west of Folkestone Town Centre.

Spatial Strategy Objectives

Key objective of the study is to improve the quality and functionality of the public realm through identifying:

- opportunities to re-model the highway network to reduce its dominance and improve legibility
- improvements to accessibility and connectivity for pedestrians, particularly from the station to the town centre and seafront
- opportunities to enhance the character and public realm of the town centre

Report structure

The report is divided into two main sections – a Public Realm Appraisal of the existing town centre, and a Spatial Strategy that comprises an overall plan of the study area identifying opportunities for improvement at a strategic level.

Public Realm Appraisal

- a brief desktop review of existing material and visual/on-site review recording landmarks, streetscape character, public/open spaces etc
- an overview of current land use
- identification of the existing highway network and its shortcomings
- an initial assessment of pedestrian movement and integration - current movements, destinations (partly identified by existing surveys plus on-site observations), opportunities/options to improve
- an overview of parking provision with and around the town centre

Spatial Strategy

- public realm improvement options and opportunities - drawn from the public realm appraisal
- highway options at an outline level to identify opportunities/options to reduce the dominance, improve legibility of the highway, and integrate public realm and pedestrian improvements
- recommendations for the next steps that would be required to maximise the opportunities identified and deliver the project

Folkestone is located on the south east coast of Kent. The town centre sits above the harbour basin separated from the coastline by dramatic greensand and gault clay cliffs. To the north of the town it is enclosed by the rolling North Downs. Parts of the North Downs are nationally designated as the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which extends to incorporate part of the urban area of Folkestone.

The town originated as a result of its proximity to mainland Europe, becoming a wealthy fishing and trading port and part of the Cinque Ports, when it was added to as a Limb to Dover in the 13th century. By the start of the Tudor period it had become a town in its own right. At the beginning of the 1800s a harbour became a reality, but it was the coming of the railways in 1843 that proved to be the town's future. With it came the tourist trade, and the two industries, port and seaside resort, were the making of its prosperity until changes in tourist opportunities in the mid twentieth century brought about its present somewhat depleted fortunes. Up to the 19th century Folkestone was a small fishing community, until the harbour and a pier were developed in the 1800s. The railway in 1843 triggered further expansion of the town and the tourist trade, with much of the town we see today being planned and developed during this time. The prosperity of this time is evident in the grand avenues and villas that were constructed during this period.

As with many British holiday resorts, Folkestone's prosperity as a seaside resort declined in the latter half of the 20th Century a result of the rise in popularity of holidays abroad. Commercial trade with Europe and passenger services sustained a cross-channel ferry service between Folkestone and Boulogne for many years, until the opening of the Channel Tunnel, and emphasis on Dover as the main port in East Kent resulted in the cessation of the ferry from Folkestone.

More recently the town is enjoying a resurgence in popularity as a coastal resort with the development of The Lower Leas Coastal Park along the seafront and the ongoing regeneration of the Old High Street and Creative Quarter.

Overall Urban Character

Folkestone has a varied character, depending on the proximity of the sea and provided by architectural contrasts. There is a picturesque quality within the historical core, with narrow, winding and enclosed streets, traditional public houses, Georgian terraced properties and an emphasis on the individual style of buildings. In contrast the seafront has an open and exposed character, hosting architecture of a large scale and grand nature which coincides with the national trend of 19th century stucco architecture within other coastal settlements such as Brighton and Hastings. At the top of the cliffs, the elevated land known as The Leas forms a major landmark within Folkestone. Here it is the elevated and exposed sea views, and the grandeur and imposing scale of buildings that characterise the area. The wider surrounding expansive 19th century residential areas throughout Folkestone demonstrate a different

palette of materials, including dressed stone and polychrome brick colours. The scale and density of residential areas vary, with larger semi detached properties to the west and smaller terraced properties to the north and east.

Highways and Access

Folkestone is linked to a comprehensive road network, with easy access to the nearby towns of Ashford and Maidstone to the northwest, Canterbury to the north and Dover to the east. The M20 terminates in Folkestone, providing a major link with London and the wider national motorway network.

The highway network within Folkestone is complex, with numerous one way streets and a ring road that encloses the commercial heart. The current road network evolved to cope with the freight and volume of traffic passing through the town when the ferry service was in operation. The generous streets developed through the 19th Century were re-configured to provide the current one-way system and new roads were developed at Middelburg Square and Foresters Way to cope with capacity. However the cessation of the ferry in Folkestone has meant that need for the highway capacity in the town centre has declined.

There are good rail connections, with Folkestone Central Station within walking distance from the town centre and nearby access to the Channel Tunnel providing links to France and continental Europe.

Strengths

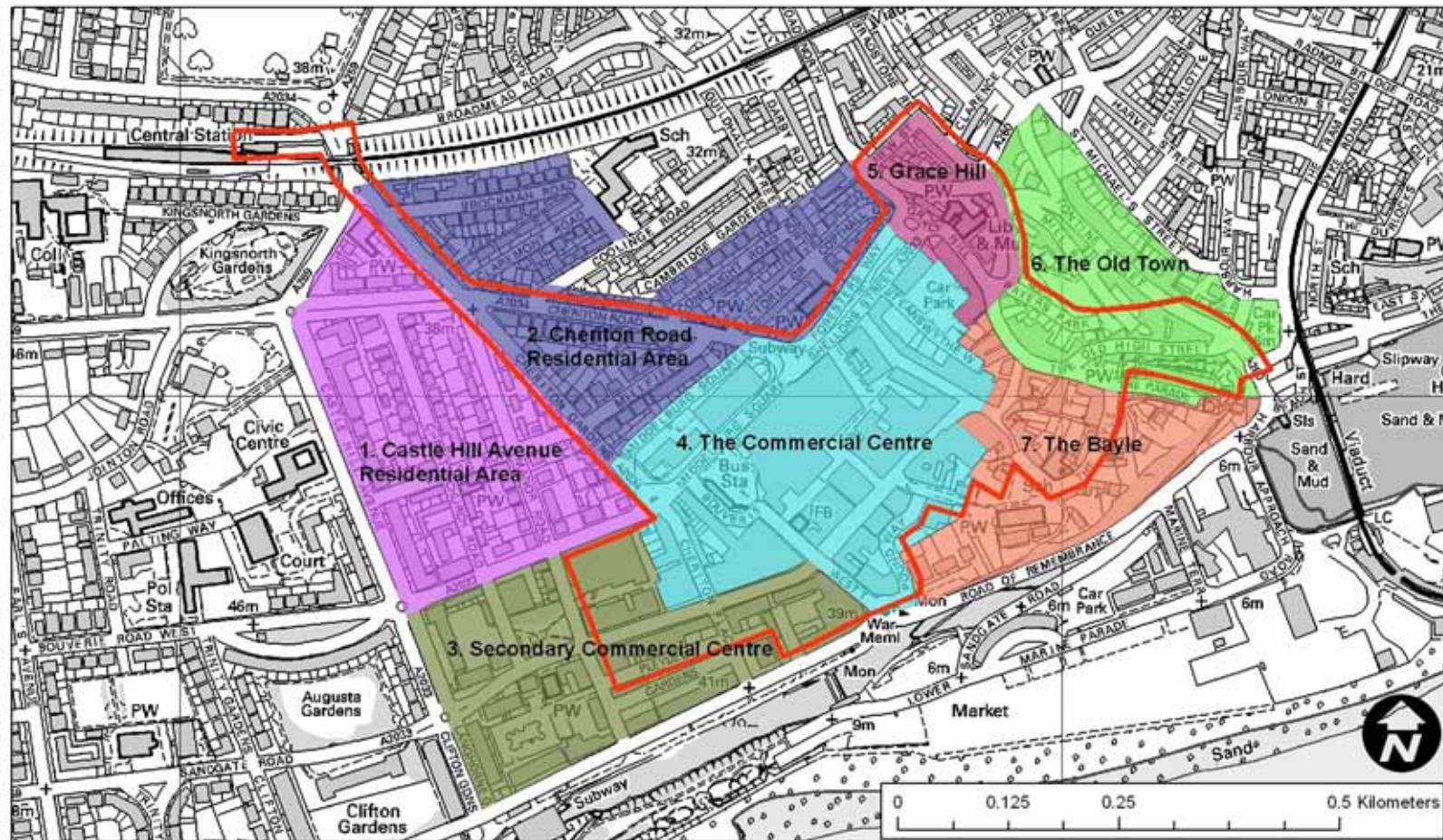
The grand Victorian architecture that prevails throughout the town provides an element of regularity and consistency throughout Folkestone. The imposing buildings and the abundance of intricate detailing, grid like development pattern and tree-lined avenues promote strength of character. The coastal setting of The Leas offers quality public open space with impressive views. In contrast, the historic core of The Old High Street, harbour and The Bayle possess a picturesque charm and some village like qualities, with the Stade on the harbour adding to its historic charm.

Weaknesses

New development does not always respect the character and the setting of traditional buildings and is sometimes inappropriate in terms of style, scale and materials. Insensitive alterations and extensions, the removal of traditional features and front gardens to accommodate car parking have led to deterioration in building quality in places. Inappropriate usage and signage also degrade the visual quality of some buildings, but it is vacancy and physical deterioration which degrades the built environment most of all.

Folkestone Central Station lies north of the railway line and its location is particularly inconspicuous. Even when viewed from north of the railway line at close proximity, the station frontage is not visually prominent. Similarly, the link between Folkestone Central Station and the town centre is unclear both for pedestrians and vehicle travellers.

The one way system and the ring road complicate movement and access, and vehicular routes provide physical barriers for pedestrians at Middelburg Square, Bouverie Square and Foresters Way. Unappealing pedestrian subways further complicate pedestrian access in these areas, and guardrails create physical barriers throughout the town. There appears to be little or no provision for cyclists.



Legend

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| — Study Area | ■ 3. Secondary Commercial Centre | ■ 6. The Old Town |
| ■ 1. Castle Hill Avenue Residential Area | ■ 4. The Commercial Centre | ■ 7. The Bayle |
| ■ 2. Cheriton Road Residential Area | ■ 5. Grace Hill | |

Figure 1
Townscape Character Areas

This assessment aims to define townscape character areas within the study area, based on general aesthetics such as land use, development density and scale, architectural type and height, distinctive and landmark features and patterns.

Seven townscape character areas have been identified:

- Castle Hill Avenue Residential Area
- Cheriton Road Residential Area
- Secondary Commercial Area
- The Commercial Centre
- Grace Hill
- The Old Town
- The Bayle

These areas are informed by the townscape character areas identified in the Folkestone's Conservation Area Appraisal (Shepway District Council 2006). The boundaries of the character areas extend to true character area boundaries rather than being confined to the extent of the study area. The unique character of each of the areas has been described, and weaknesses within each area are identified.

1. Castle Hill Avenue Residential Area

Description

This area consists primarily of residential streets with a suburban character, although commercial development and increased traffic and pedestrian movement along Bouverie Road West suggest the proximity to the town centre. Houses are mostly generously sized red brick and stuccoed Victorian semi detached properties, often with numerous storeys, attics and basements. Some more recent blocks of flats have been integrated, although these are often insensitive to the style, materials and setting of Victorian buildings. Housing is generally set back from the roads beyond small front gardens; promoting a less dense and oppressive and more open and vegetated character in comparison with housing to the east (refer to Cheriton Residential Area). In general, the Victorian housing is in very good condition and many of the original features and detailing are intact. Typical ornate features include intricate tiling, multiple chimneys, carved faces above doorways, fanlights, balconies and balustrades. However some alterations and extensions are insensitive to the original style and materials, many front boundaries have been altered, and it is also apparent that much ironwork is missing – presumably lost in World War II. Recent commercial shop frontages and modern buildings along Bouverie Road West detract from the strength of character and conflict with the prevalent Victorian architecture.

The bold stucco architecture, the grid like pattern of development and the straight roads provide a consistent, very grand, formal character and a strong sense of place. The rectilinear road pattern allows comprehensive access and traffic flow generally appears to be light, although some roads are one way only. With its significant width and tree lined central boulevard, Castle Hill Avenue is particularly formal and impressive. Overlooked by large, grand, stuccoed properties, its formality, grandeur and consistency in character are very distinctive and reminiscent of the Victorian era when public gardens, squares and avenues were central to the focus on social interaction. Many of the large buildings have been converted into flats or business premises, which along with the proximity to a number of civic offices there is a demand for car parking in the area. From a visual point of view it is unfortunate that car parking lines Castle Hill Avenue as well as other residential streets. Many car parking areas are also scattered along narrow access routes to the rear of properties.

There are numerous impressive buildings and striking details, and the straight roads provide long, focussed vistas. There is a suggestion of the proximity to the coast from the southern extents of Castle Hill Avenue and Manor Road, where nothing is evident in the distance but open skies. Whilst there is little public open space, garden planting and street trees soften the built environment. In particular, the open aspect of Castle Hill Avenue gives the perception of a more spacious and less heavily developed townscape than is reality.



Weaknesses

- Insensitive style and positioning of recent development in relation to traditional buildings
- Car parking along highways detracts from the open grandeur of key routes such as Castle Hill Avenue
- Insensitive alterations and extensions to Victorian buildings



2 Cheriton Road Residential Area

Description

This area consists primarily of densely developed residential streets, although there are a small number of convenience stores at the western end of Brockman Road and several public houses/social clubs nearer the town centre to the south. The architectural style is generally red brick or stuccoed Victorian, with mostly semi detached properties throughout the area and some terraced rows to the south and east. The style of housing is grand yet imposing, because housing is often up to four storeys in height and is generally set close to the roads with very small front gardens. Bay and dormer windows are often highlighted with pale plinths and decorative brickwork, and other typical ornate Victorian features include fanlights, columns, balustrades, multiple chimneys and intricate tiling. Residential plots are small, with linear gardens to the rear but very little open space to the front. There has been a small amount of more recent infill development, often in the form of flats, where space has allowed, although such development does not always respect the style or setting of the more prevalent Victorian architecture.



There are a number of landmark buildings within and adjoining the character area. The Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady Help of Christians stands out along Guildhall Street North. This is a late 19th century Grade II listed building of a perpendicular Gothic style, built of red brick with stone dressings and tiled roof. At the sides, mullioned windows sit between brick buttresses, and an octagonal copper covered bellcote is set above the tower. Although situated outside this area, Radnor Park United Reformed Church at the northern end of Cheriton Road also forms an attractive landmark building because it contrasts with the Victorian housing in style and materials, and is particularly prominent in views facing west along Brockman Road. The enormous Bouverie Place Shopping Centre forms a significant landmark in views facing south along Cheriton Road, although the location and proximity to the town centre is unclear because bulky development and Foresters Way act as visual and physical barriers. To the north, evidence of the railway line is suggested by views of parts of the railway



embankment and Victorian railway bridges from Guildhall Street North and Cheriton Road. However, despite the proximity to Folkestone Central Station, it is not visible and there is a lack of clear signage.

The residential streets generally run parallel with each other, set at an acute angle to Cheriton Road. Many of the roads are one way and lined with parked cars because there is generally no off road parking (although there are some garages along Brockman Road). There is little public open space because development is dense. Raised brick planters along Cheriton Gardens are positioned to control vehicle movement. These lie empty of plants over winter and add little to the townscape. Mature street trees, often pollarded, line many of the streets, although many are irregularly spaced implying they are remnants of former avenues

Weaknesses

- Lack of orientation in terms of locating the town centre
- Location of Folkestone Central Station is unclear
- Undefined main route between Folkestone Central Station and the town centre
- Bulky modern buildings and infrastructure to the south form visual and physical barriers



3 Secondary Commercial Area

Description

This is a high density mixed commercial and residential area which forms part of a 19th century expansion of Folkestone, representing the prosperous middle classes of the era. Great investments were made by Lord Radnor *et al* during the 19th and early 20th centuries to produce the grand stucco, and fine terracotta, architecture which was fashionable at this time in other coastal towns such as Brighton and Hastings. The grandeur of this architecture still remains today, particularly along The Leas where the elevated situation above the cliffs and the panoramic views out to sea add to the impressive character. For example Hotel Ambassador and The Southcliffe (Grade II listed) comprise an impressive four storey mid 19th century stuccoed terrace with attics and basements. The scale and setting of this building are impressive, and details such as a first floor cast iron balcony add to the character. However some of the original buildings appear tired or to have undergone insensitive alterations, and large scale modern infill development weakens the strength of character.

Throughout the wider area there are numerous tall and impressive Victorian and Edwardian buildings and features, many of which are listed. However, many of these buildings have been adapted to provide modern shop frontages and a typical modern day high street/town centre character. The setting of some of the Victorian and Edwardian buildings has also been compromised by the insensitive location and inappropriate scale and design of recent development. For example the setting of Victorian terraces along Shakespeare Terrace has been compromised by the large superstore and multi level car park and other commercial development along Bouverie Road West. The built development is segregated into square and rectangular blocks by the highway network, much of which is one way only. This section of Sandgate Road is not pedestrianised, and is heavily trafficked.

Many pockets of former open space, such as along Pleydell Gardens and Langhorne Gardens, are often used for car parking. However Christ Church Tower, which is an attractive landmark feature with clocks on each side and stone gargoyles to the parapet, stands within a grassed public open space. Built in the 1850s, the stone Christ Church Tower (Grade II listed) stands alone as a distinctive landmark, the remainder of the church having been hit by a bomb during the Second World War. To the south there is an open perception adjacent to The Leas with panoramic views of the sea. Whilst the large scale development restricts open views throughout much of the area, the straight, grid like pattern of roads provide some long vistas that often suggest the proximity to the coast. For example there are long views, channelled by enormous stuccoed terraces, along Clifton/Langhorne Gardens to the raised statue of William Harvey (Grade II listed).



Weaknesses

- Many shops vacant
- Some buildings in poor or deteriorating condition
- Traffic congestion along Sandgate Road
- Insensitive style, scale and positioning of recent development in relation to traditional/listed buildings
- Inappropriate use and signage within/on the frontages of traditional/listed buildings
- Significant amount of car parking and limited public open space



4 The Commercial Centre

Description

This is a high density mixed commercial and residential area, with buildings of varied architectural styles and eras. Whilst there is a consistency in land use, the varied architectural styles and the contrasts in building scale provide some inconsistencies in pattern and legibility. Many original red brick and stuccoed Victorian terraces and Tudor – gothic brick and stone buildings have been adapted to provide modern shop frontages and a typical modern day high street/town centre character. Occasional unaltered traditional buildings provide landmark features and strengthen the sense of place. As Folkestone's commercial core, there has been much large scale recent infill development such as The Saga Building and associated multi level car parking at Middelburg Square. Recent large scale buildings and infrastructure often compromise the setting of traditional buildings and fail to respect the historic character of the town. The enormous scale and bulk of Bouverie Place Shopping Centre is particularly dominant, dwarfing the mixture of Victorian terraces and more recent properties along the adjacent Gloucester Place. The setting of Bouverie Square, and the 1937 neo – Georgian Post Office with its distinctive window architraves, is compromised by the modern bus station and traffic flow.

The highway network, access and movement are complex. The wide, pedestrianised nature and the consistency in paving and land use along the high street (Sandgate Road) and along Guildhall Street provide a clear sense of place and attractive setting. In stark contrast, the bus station at Bouverie



Square, the road network around Middelburg Square, and car parking between Foresters Way and Shellons Street provide a character that is dominated by vehicular movement. This area is difficult to interpret and negotiate as a pedestrian, with few pavements and crossing points and the extensive use of pedestrian guard railing providing physical obstruction in places. Whilst there are pedestrian subways here these are difficult to locate and not easily accessible from key routes. They are also uninviting because they are dark, enclosed and covered in graffiti. Extensive guard railing is also prominent in other parts of this area, suggesting dominance of vehicular movement over pedestrian access.



The built up and large scale character of the town centre allows few long views, although the proximity of the coast is suggested in open views facing south along West Terrace. There is very little publicly accessible open space within the area, with vegetation restricted to narrow strips and corners that are dictated by the highway pattern and trees along Sandgate Road. Trees within containers along Bouverie Place Shopping Centre are small in scale and will struggle to reach maturity in these confined conditions, and therefore will do little to soften the harsh bulk of the building's façade. Whilst the area is generally well lit throughout, Albion Mews Road and St Eanswythe Way are uninviting for the pedestrian because they are enclosed by built development and they are used as delivery areas at the rear of shops. However this route is heavily used as it is a logical route for pedestrians despite being of very poor visual quality. St Eanswythe Way is in notably poor condition, with broken windows, boarded up access points and deteriorating brick walling.



Weaknesses

- Movement dominated by vehicular use and poor pedestrian circulation around Middelburg Square, Bouverie Square, Foresters Way and Shellons Street
- Lack of direction for pedestrians between land north of Bouverie Place Shopping Centre/Folkestone Central Station to/from the town centre
- Uninviting pedestrian routes along Albion Mews Road and St Eanswythe Way
- Lack of cycling routes and facilities
- Some buildings along St Eanswythe Way in poor condition
- Some modern shop fronts are not in keeping with, and do not respect the character of, traditional/Victorian buildings
- Inappropriate use and signage within/on the frontages of traditional/listed buildings
- Setting of Head Post Office and Bouverie Square compromised by bus station
- Very little publicly accessible open space
- Poor public realm throughout Bouverie Square, Middleburg Square, Foresters Way and Shellons Street



5 Grace Hill

Description

This area is primarily residential, and housing is generally high density Victorian terraces. Grace Chapel (Grade II listed) is of particular note, especially in views from Foord Road because it is elevated on significantly higher ground. Constructed from Victorian red brick and Bath stone, details of Grace Chapel and the adjoining Library and Museum include the use of terracotta, stone and brick pilasters, parapets with stone finials and part stone balustrades, sash windows with glazing bars, an elaborate pedimented door case. Another key landmark building is the Masonic Hall (Grade II listed) to the west of Grace Hill. Again it is the detailing of this mid 19th century building that make it stand out, such as the Roman columns, pilasters, stone balustrades and Tuscan porch. However some recent infill development, particularly flats, compromise the setting of these landmark buildings. Some buildings that are in poor condition, especially one ivy clad building along Grace Hill, also weaken the visual significance of these buildings and detract from the sense of place. Alterations to Victorian housing, such as the removal of original doors, further weaken the condition of the built heritage. Overall the townscape has a feeling of being secondary to the main town centre.

The landform is hilly, so that a tall stone retaining wall defines the change in level along Foord Road South. The highways are quite narrow in this area, and junctions, dead ends, one way streets and the hilly topography give way to a challenging area to negotiate by vehicle. The roundabout at Grace Hill restricts pedestrian access, and there is a general lack of orientation in terms of which direction the town centre is in and how to walk there. There is no public open space, with vegetation restricted to the small rectilinear gardens and a vegetation belt with some mature trees south of Foord Road South.

There are views of the Foord Viaduct from the junction of Dover Road and New Street. The huge structure forms an impressive and dramatic landmark feature in these views because of the way it towers above the Victorian terraced housing along Bradstone Road. The changes in level allow elevated views along Foord Road South from New Street.

Weaknesses

- Insensitive/inappropriate alterations to historic buildings
- Recent buildings often fail to respect views, and the setting, of historic/listed buildings
- Loss of original architectural features
- Some buildings in poor condition, with frequent signs of poor maintenance
-



6 The Old Town

Description

This area is a mixture of residential and commercial development, and includes the organic layout of the densely crammed together, narrow plot curtilages of the medieval town core. The busy streetscape of The Old High Street is characterised by its hilly topography and its narrow route, lined and enclosed with small terraced properties. Many of the buildings are of 18th/early 19th century origin (several are listed), with some later alterations and shop fronts. Generally of three to four storeys in height, details include sash windows with glazing bars, tiled roofs and dormers. Tight, enclosed, narrow lanes and flights of steps lead off The Old High Street, leading to wider and more open streets beyond. Much regeneration is currently underway along The Old High Street and Tontine Street with the promotion of the 'Creative Quarter'. Building and public realm improvements include brightly coloured facades and the promotion of 'boutique' type shops and galleries, which enhances the strength of character and give an element of continuity.

Buildings along Tontine Street are slightly larger than The Old High Street, although the density is similar. Many of the buildings are early Victorian and three storeys high, stuccoed with neo classical detailing. Although some restoration is evident along Tontine Street, many of the buildings appear to be in poor condition due to neglect, vacancy and insensitive alterations. There was once a water mill at Mill Bay on Tontine Street, connected with the Pent Stream (which has since been culverted). No longer present, this area accommodates The Cube Adult Education Building, and some light industrial activity. There is little public open space and vegetation, although an area of steep grassland and trees is located south of Mill Bay. This area is run down and poorly maintained, however, and appears to be used for fly tipping, car parking and as a pedestrian cut through. Whilst Tontine Street is a busy vehicular road, The Old High Street and part of Mill Bay are narrow pedestrianised routes. The varied layout and buildings densities provide a slightly disjointed townscape in terms of legibility. Whilst The Old High Street and some of Tontine Street share a strong sense of place, parts of Tontine Street have an edge of town character. Views are generally well contained by the built environment but from the north western extent of Tontine Street, the Foord Viaduct is partially visible as a key landmark feature.

Weaknesses

- Many buildings in poor condition, particularly in parts of Tontine Street, with notable disrepair, vacancy and stripping of ornament
- Poor quality shop fronts and insensitively altered building fronts often conflict with the character of traditional buildings
- Lack of public open space and vegetation
- Heavy traffic flow along Tontine Street



7 The Bayle

Description

This area is mostly residential, although there is a significant amount of public open space around The Parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe and the site of a Benedictine Priory (founded in 1137). The density and pattern of development is varied and contrasting. To the west above the cliffs, Albion Villas and housing along Priory Gardens have an open aspect with sea views. Of particular note, Albion Villas (Grade II listed) form a consecutive group of stuccoed, semi detached mid 19th century three storey and basement properties that are typical of this architectural era. Here the coastal location is prominent but, in contrast, the coastal character diminishes to the east/north east where the clustered buildings prevent open sea views.

The Bayle is part of the historic core of Folkestone and, with its winding streets and abundance of historic buildings; there is a picturesque quality to the area. There is a strong sense of place provided by the clustered and non uniform, mostly 19th century buildings and terraces, many of which are listed. Building materials are varied, with the use of stone, brick and occasionally faience (ornamental coloured glasswork). Bayle Pond and its surrounding well maintained public garden add to the charm and village like character, as does the setting of individual properties within large grounds to the east. West of The Bayle, The Parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe (Grade II* listed) forms a dominant landmark because of its size, historic character and open grounds that are overlooked by the quintessentially Victorian red brick St Eanswythe School (1876/1901). Although the church was largely rebuilt in the 19th century, the arcade of the Chancel is 13th century.

The varied pattern of development, and the slightly sinuous layout that has evolved, provide an area that is not easy to interpret either by car or as a pedestrian. However, it is this lack of legibility that provides strength of character and charm. The historic market place at the junction of Guildhall Street, Rendezvous Street, Sandgate Road and Church Street is picturesque and is in keeping with the village character of The Bayle. It is both the character of the buildings and the manner in which they form the space that make this historic part of the town so attractive. Of particular note, are house numbers 18 and 20 Church Street (Grade II* listed). Originally one 18th century house, number 20 retains the original main doorway with pilasters and 16 panel moulded door. It is unfortunate that some recent large scale buildings do not respect the character and setting of this area and some of the historic buildings. For instance, the modern bulk of Westcliff House fails to respect the setting and views of St Mary and St Eanswythe Church.

Views are generally contained by built development, although there are sea views from coastal



properties to the west. Whilst views from The Bayle are generally restricted, there are some long views to the north of the elevated and rolling North Downs. On Guildhall Street, The Guildhall (Grade II listed) is constructed of Portland type stone (which is a rare facing material in Folkestone) and, with its Tuscan portico with coupled columns and stone balustraded parapet with clock, it provides a key focal point in views along the high street (Sandgate Road).

Weaknesses

- Recent buildings often fail to respect views, and the setting, of historic/listed buildings
- Some buildings along St Eanswythe Way in poor condition



2.2

Land Use



Legend

Proposed Study Area	Green Space	Transport Hub
Civic Use	Residential	
Commercial	Retail	

Figure 2
Land Use Plan

Land Use

Figure 2 graphically represents land use in and around Folkestone town centre, including residential and retail, commercial and civic uses, amongst others. The plan illustrates broad land use categories, the intention of which is, to help show why certain parts of Folkestone experience greater pedestrian and vehicular movements than other areas. This plan should be read alongside the Pedestrian Movement and Existing Highways Plans to give a fuller understanding of how the presence of certain land uses, services and facilities has influenced movement in and around the town centre.

Please note, the land uses described in the above plan are the dominant ground floor uses only. Buildings may contain other uses on first and second floors but this has not been included in this plan.

Civic Use

Civic Uses (highlighted in orange), such as Folkestone Library, University Centre Folkestone (UCF), schools, council buildings and churches are generally located on the periphery of the town centre core. This enables services to be easily accessed by local residents, usually within walking distance of other town centre functions. Property prices in the centre of town typically restrict civic uses dominating the town centre, hence their location on the outskirts of the town centre where rental prices are relatively less.

Commercial

Commercial services (highlighted in yellow), in this instance, are classed as private sector, usually office based functions, that provide a service and therefore employment opportunities within Folkestone. Most notably in Folkestone Town Centre is the Saga building that provides several hundred jobs and forms a focal point for employment within the town centre because of its seven-storey office building. The other commercial building of note is the five-storey Castle House located to the west of the town centre. Other than these buildings, commercial office space is usually smaller scale and found on first and second floors scattered throughout the town centre, the Old High Street and Tontine Street.

Green Space

There are no significant public green spaces (highlighted in green) within the study area boundary or in the town centre generally. Radnor Park and Kingsnorth Gardens to the north west of the town centre provide recreational and leisure opportunities for residents outside of the immediate town centre. The Leas cliff top open space provides a pleasant walk with extensive sea views in close proximity to the town centre, whilst the recently developed Lower Leas Coastal Park along the seafront provides recreational opportunities on the lower seafront to the south of the town centre. Links between the two areas are difficult because of the significant

change in topography, and whilst steps and a zig-zag path provide the opportunity for movement between the spaces it is not desirable particularly for those who are less than able bodied or have young children. There is also a seasonal cliff railway of heritage and tourist interest. Overall, usable green space is limited within the town centre core. Much of the green space is either private open space around residential blocks of flats/houses or is unusable land because of severe topographical issues due to its coastal location.

Residential

Residential buildings (highlighted in blue) are the predominant land use surrounding the town centre core. As highlighted in the earlier Public Realm Character Appraisal, residential land use to the west (Castle Hill Avenue Residential Area) is defined by large, period town houses with wide tree-lined streets. Cheriton Road Residential Area is slightly smaller in scale and more dense, with more semi-detached period villas, narrower streets and on-street parking. Residential areas to the east of the town centre are commonly terraced properties and more densely populated. There are residential properties scattered throughout the town centre with many first and second floors, above shop units, being used as residential properties. Around the Folkestone coastline there are large numbers of flats, hotels and B&Bs to cater for those wishing to live near or visit the coast.

Retail

The typical 'high street', retail services and facilities (highlighted in maroon) are concentrated around Sandgate Road and the new Bouverie Place shopping centre development. The major 'high street' stores are mostly located between Cheriton Place and Guildhall Street and provide the town with its 'magnetic stores', i.e. those that attract large volumes of pedestrian footfall. Some smaller retail units exist around The Old High Street and Tontine Street but these are largely boutique, independent stores that attract fewer visitors. To the western edge of the town centre, there are many smaller, independent retailers, including some restaurants and specialist services, which attract less footfall than the main 'high street' areas of Sandgate Road and Bouverie Place.

When comparing pedestrian movement against current land uses, it is clear that the retail centre peters out, in terms of the popularity of services, from Cheriton Place to the west and from Guildhall Street to the east. The retail uses are also less dominant along Foresters Way and Shellons Street which creates an unattractive entrance scene to what should be the frontage of the retail area for people arriving in the town centre from the north.

A number of factors are likely to make these areas less attractive to pedestrians. It is partly the draw of major retailers to the core town centre area away from more specialist and independent shops, and partly the distance and topography from the town centre and major car parks. They are also areas that are less visible from, or do not make a strong impression from, the through routes and hence visitors less familiar with the town are less likely to discover these areas, particularly if frustrated or disorientated by the one-way system.

Transport Hub

Key to the movement of pedestrians around the town centre is the location of Folkestone Central Station and the Bouverie Place Bus Station (highlighted in purple).

The railway station is located out of town just to the south of Radnor Park and promotes pedestrian movement along a north-south corridor between the railway station and town centre. Central Station is poorly connected to the town and other public transport networks, particularly buses. There is a single on-street bus stop and no cover from the weather.

The bus station is well sited for the town centre and brings pedestrians into the heart of the town centre which helps support local services. However it dominates Bouverie Square with pedestrians funnelled and corralled around the edges making it a particularly unwelcoming area and unattractive to anyone who is not using its services.

Pedestrian and cycle links to and from both the railway and bus station are particularly poor with a lack of way finding information.

2.3 Existing Highway Network



Legend

- Proposed Study Area
- Existing Two-Way Street
- Existing One-Way Streets
- Pedestrian Streets

Figure 3
Existing Road Layout

Description of existing network

The existing highway network, within the defined study area (see Figure 3), is a combination of one-way and two-way streets, with many of the town centre streets being pedestrianised.

The one-way system was originally intended to facilitate the movement of HGVs around the town centre, taking traffic from the M20 motorway, through the town, and towards Folkestone Harbour. This imposed upon the predominantly historic road layout with some more recent 'improvements' such as Middelburg Square and Foresters Way. With Dover's established and continuing function as the primary port in the south east, and the opening of the Channel Tunnel, the necessity for a dominant one-way system within Folkestone has become somewhat diminished.

The one-way system extends from Shorncliffe Road, along Cheriton Road towards the town centre, before reaching the Middelburg Square / Foresters Way junction. At this point, vehicles can head east along Foresters Way, and onto Dover Road which either leads down to Folkestone Harbour, or out of town towards the A20 or Dover.

Alternatively, heading west along Middelburg Square gives the option of continuing west along Bouverie Road West and towards the West End residential areas of Folkestone. The Middelburg Square loop also enables users to circle back on themselves and head along Foresters Way. Alternatively, vehicles using Middelburg Square can head north along Cheriton Gardens and back towards Junction 13 of the M20. The system is particularly confusing to drivers.

There are also a series of residential one-way roads, such as Millfield and Connaught Road. The period properties along these streets have no off-street parking; hence the amount of on-street parking reduces road widths on many of these roads, necessitating one-way traffic.

Although the majority of local roads are two-way, the motorist's route is dictated by the presence of the one-way system, i.e. the route taken out of residential streets depends on vehicles using the one-way system at some point during a journey and this affects choice and movement.

The pedestrianised streets are centred around the eastern end of Sandgate Road which provides traditional 'high street' town centre functions. To the north of Sandgate Road is the Alexandra Gardens cut-through which serves delivery vehicles and leads to the recent Bouverie Place shopping centre development. Running north to south at the end of Sandgate Road is Guildhall Street. This leads to the pedestrianised Old High Street to the south, leading to Folkestone Harbour, or Foresters Way to the north.

Constraints of the Existing Highways Network

Town centre traffic is generally free-flowing as the one-way system was intended for much heavier traffic movements. However, the one-way system has a negative affect on pedestrians. The road layout was designed to provide wide carriageways for capacity, which has had the affect of encouraging higher vehicle speeds now that volumes are reduced. This therefore makes streets potentially more unsafe and certainly more unpleasant for pedestrians.

Although the one-way system allows for rapid movement around the town centre, connectivity is a major issue for vehicular travellers with convoluted detours frequently necessary to reach relatively nearby destinations. In terms of direct movement between two locations, the one-way system is inefficient, i.e. what appears a short journey on plan, may be significantly longer as users negotiate the one-way system.

Folkestone has some highly impressive period architecture, including imposing four and five storey town houses which line many of the major roads through the town centre. Although this creates an attractive backdrop along many of the town's roads, it also creates a significant parking issue. Most properties along roads such as Cheriton Road and Cheriton Gardens, and those that adjoin them only have on-street parking. This restricts what can be done to these roads without reducing the level of parking. If anything, schemes need to be considered to alleviate parking pressures and improve parking capacity and layout.

Further highways modelling work should be carried out to determine the capacity of local roads and possible parking improvements that could be made. Options might include narrowing carriageway widths, and formalising and demarcating parking along both sides of the highway. This would increase parking capacity and allow residents to park closer to properties. Improving parking facilities would also allow for some landscape improvements to be made, perhaps through tree planting and pavement treatments. This would help to soften the impacts of increasing parking capacity by reducing the appearance of the road width and making the street a more pleasant pedestrian and parking environment. A second option would be to allow for angled parking along one side of the road. This would increase capacity and would allow for other landscape street improvements to be made. English Partnerships publication, 'Car Parking: What Works Where (May 2006) gives the case study of Sutherland Avenue, London and is an example of how on-street parking can be managed to maximise capacity, whilst creating a positive streetscene for other users.

Conclusion

Since the one-way system in its current form is considered excessive in terms of the town's current and future anticipated transport needs, there is an opportunity to improve connectivity and legibility for vehicles and provide a more attractive and safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Folkestone has more highway space and more capacity than it currently needs. This means there is land that could potentially be transformed from highway to attractive streetscapes, benefiting motorists by achieving better connectivity and benefiting pedestrians by creating improved pedestrian environments. This will benefit local people, visitors and tourists providing the opportunity to make Folkestone a more pleasant town centre to use for all.

2.4

Pedestrian Access & Circulation



Legend

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| — Minor Route | ● Minor Destination | ● Major Destination |
| — Popular Route | ● Popular Destination | - - - - - Proposed Study Area |
| — Major Route | | |

Figure 4
Existing Pedestrian Movement Map

Existing Pedestrian Movement

The following section describes pedestrian movements through and around Folkestone town centre. Pedestrian movement is influenced by the location of desirable destinations, i.e. the more attractive (in terms of service, land use and quality) a destination is, the more footfall will be generated to and from that site. These destinations have been identified on Figure 4. They are categorised into three broad groups:

- **Major Destinations:** These are destinations that attract a large number of users / visitors on a daily basis either because of the variety of services it offers or because it offers significant employment opportunities within the town. Footfall to and from these sites is high.
- **Popular Destinations:** These are destinations that generate regular trips throughout the day. They provide a particular service for which people make a specific journey but do not generate as much footfall as Major Destinations.
- **Minor Destinations:** These are destinations that provide local services that generate mostly local trips for a specific activity. Footfall to these destinations is either relatively low and / or infrequent, compared to Major or Popular Destinations.

Due to the location of these destinations, surrounding streets will experience differing levels of footfall, i.e. streets aligning Major Destinations will experience higher footfall, compared to streets with Minor Destinations aligning them. Figure 4 (Existing Pedestrian Movement Map) graphically represents the busier and quieter streets by categorising pedestrian movement into three broad groups, these are:

- **Major Routes:** These are pedestrian routes regularly frequented by a large number of people to access a variety of facilities or services.
- **Popular Routes:** These are pedestrian routes that are regularly used, either because of the services or facilities that align them, or because they connect to other major routes or destinations.
- **Minor Routes:** These pedestrian routes are predominantly used for local access to residential areas, and connect to busier routes.

The following section provides a short summary of the main destinations in Folkestone and how this has influenced pedestrian movements in and around the town centre. (The numbers below correspond to the numbers on Figure 4).

Major Destinations

1. Bouverie Place Shopping Centre
2. Sandgate Road (main shopping street east of Bouverie Place)

The above are classified as Major Destinations because of the high levels of footfall they generate. These destinations are used regularly by local residents and attract visitors from a wider catchment area. Both the new Bouverie Place shopping centre and Sandgate Road offer a wide range of typical town centre services. Sandgate Road and Alexandra Gardens are pedestrianised which increases the capacity for pedestrian footfall.

Footfall along Foresters Way, Shellons Street and Guildhall Street is not quite as high as the aforementioned streets but does still offer a wide range of town centre services and heavily used as a route for pedestrians looking to access Bouverie Place and Sandgate Road.

Foresters Way / Shellons Street acts as a main pedestrian route for residents accessing the town centre from the north and east of Folkestone Town Centre. Guildhall Street North is a Popular Route, well used by local residents wanting to access the town centre via Foresters Way and Shellons Street. The car park and bus stop facilities along these streets also increases footfall towards the town centre.

Popular Destinations

3. Saga Building
4. Folkestone Bus Station
5. Folkestone Central Station
6. Civic Centre
7. Sainsburys, Bouverie Road West
8. The Leas Coastal Park
- 8a. Leas Lift
9. Creative Quarter

The above are classified as Popular Destinations because of the level of footfall that they generate, both in terms of the services that they provide for the general public and/or because of the employment opportunities generated.

Saga is a major employer within Folkestone Town Centre and creates hundreds of journeys to and from its office on a daily basis. The majority of the footfall is concentrated around the start and ends of the day. Footfall along Cheriton Road and Cheriton Gardens from the railway station and the town centre is high.

The central location of the bus station, in close proximity to the Bouverie Place shopping centre and Sandgate Road shops, creates considerable footfall along Bouverie Place, Middelburg Square and Bouverie Road West throughout the daytime, and more so at the start and end of the working day and at weekends. The location of the bus station also creates a pedestrian 'rat-run' around the rear of Asda, along Albion Mews Road.

Folkestone Central Station is located on the periphery of the town centre. Although inconspicuous in terms of its legibility from the street, the station generates footfall along Cheriton Road and Shorncliffe Road, and then along Cheriton Gardens and some along Castle Hill Avenue, with the majority of users travelling to and from the town centre. The crossing beneath the railway bridge near the station is particularly unattractive and likely to discourage some from using the most direct route.

The Civic Centre is another major employer with Folkestone Town Centre, and attracts regular visits from the town's residents. This combined creates high levels of pedestrian footfall around the Council offices, Magistrates Court and Police Station. Castle Hill Avenue and Bouverie Road West therefore experience reasonably high amounts of footfall from both employees at the start and ends of the working day, and during lunchtimes. Whilst there is also a constant flow of visitors accessing various Council services on the site.

The Sainsburys supermarket along Bouverie Road West is also a generator of pedestrian footfall. Although slightly removed from the immediate town centre along Sandgate Road (pedestrianised area) it still creates many pedestrian visits throughout the daytime and into the evening. Pedestrian movement along Cheriton Place, Cheriton Gardens, Bouverie Road West and Middelburg Square all leads towards Sainsburys, hence the Popular Routes that surround the supermarket.

Lower Leas Coastal Park, accessible by the Leas Lift, is a recent addition to the Folkestone seafront and attracts many visitors, particularly during summer months. The Park contributes to considerable pedestrian footfall along The Leas, Langhorne and Clifton Gardens and along Bouverie Place with those users coming from the town centre to access seafront attractions.

The Creative Quarter, located along the eastern edge of the town centre, provides a variety of shops and boutique services, set along The Old High Street that reaches down towards Folkestone Harbour. The arts-led approach to the redesign of this part of Folkestone has regenerated this area and now promotes increased pedestrian footfall along The Old High Street and Tontine Street.

Minor Destinations

10. Cheriton Road Shops
11. United Reformed Church
12. Christchurch Church of England Primary School
13. Clock Tower, Sandgate Road
14. Leas Club
15. St Mary's and St Eanswythe Church of England Church
16. Lidl
17. Folkestone Library
18. University Centre Folkestone (UCF)
19. The Quarterhouse
20. The Cube (Adult Education Centre)
21. East Kent Community NHS Trust

The above are classified as Minor Destinations because although they attract pedestrian footfall on a regular basis it is usually only a relatively small number because of the specialist service they provide, i.e. a service that caters for a particular demographic, rather than for the whole community.

The convenience shops, United Reformed Church and Christ Church Primary School contributes local footfall from residential areas to the north of the town centre, utilising Cheriton Road and other local roads, such as Brockman Road, Claremont Road and Coolinge Road. These minor services also contribute footfall to other busier routes, such as Shorncliffe Road (to the west) and Guildhall Street North (to the east). Journeys to the school will be at their peak during drop off and pick up times.

Roads such as Christ Church Road, Manor Road, Ingles Road and Millfield are largely used by local residents accessing the town centre and other local services. These roads rarely attract other pedestrian users.

Roads to the south of Sandgate Road, including Langhorne and Clifton Gardens, Pleydell Gardens and The Leas have generally low levels of footfall. However, footfall is likely to be considerably higher during summer months when pedestrian access to the seafront increases.

To the south east of the town centre, around St Mary's and Eanswythe Church and along streets such as The Bayle, Church Street and The Parade, pedestrian activity is relatively low. This is partly due to there being less dense residential areas towards Folkestone harbour and fewer shops and services that attract larger pedestrian numbers.

To the east of the town centre, a collection of minor destinations contributes to a combination of *Popular* and *Minor Routes*. Folkestone Library, the NHS Trust, University Centre Folkestone (UCF) and venues such as The Cube and The Quarterhouse, contribute to busier local streets, such as Grace Hill, Dover Road, Bradstone Road and Tontine Street.

Constraints to Pedestrian Movement

The following section takes the information gathered from the Pedestrian Movement survey and highlights existing constraints that limit the efficient movement of pedestrians through and around Folkestone Town Centre.

A general problem that affects most, if not all, roads around Folkestone Town Centre, is the number of highways barriers at junctions and pedestrian crossings. The use of barriers has several negative impacts on pedestrian movement.

Barriers effectively limit a pedestrian's choice and often funnel people into places they do not want to be. This makes walking often an unattractive option because a journey that should be straightforward becomes more difficult because the route dictated by the barriers is more complicated than it needs to be. As a result, this can result in people looking to hurdle barriers or use the road side to take short-cuts; resulting in a more dangerous journey than necessary.

The street clutter created by highways barriers also has a negative visual affect on the quality of the street. This can make walking an unappealing option and influences the choices pedestrian make when deciding whether to walk or drive to a nearby destination.

Generally, footpath and pedestrian space is good throughout Folkestone. There are pinch points where pedestrians would benefit from more space but generally the constraints are legibility issues and heavy traffic movement that affects the pedestrian experience.

Coming from Folkestone Central Station there is little indication of how pedestrians should navigate towards the town centre, other than by following the heaviest flow of traffic. The crossing beneath the railway bridge is also particularly unappealing.

The main pedestrian routes to and from the town centre are along Cheriton Road and Cheriton Gardens. However, these are also the busiest routes in terms of vehicular traffic and often an unpleasant experience for pedestrians who have to share a relatively narrow footpath, compared to the relatively wide highways.

Upon reaching Middelburg Square, vehicular movement takes priority and pedestrian movement is restricted by the width of the road, speed of the traffic and highway barriers. This restricts movement for pedestrians wanting to access the town centre. The one-way

system around Middelburg Square encourages faster vehicular movements that discourage pedestrians from using this part of the town centre, despite the presence of the bus station and entrance to Bouverie Place shopping centre nearby.

Foresters Way and Shellons Street discourages pedestrian activity as, again, the one-way system dominates the street and prevents easy pedestrian movement along its north-south and east-west axis, with Guildhall Street noticeably severed. The confusing and cluttered combination of two one-way streets, a car park, bus stops and drop-off areas make it a difficult place to navigate and use. The busy one-way streets to the east of Grace Hill, with high vehicle speeds and cluttered streets have a similar affect on pedestrian movements, making them unappealing to use.

2.5

Car Parking

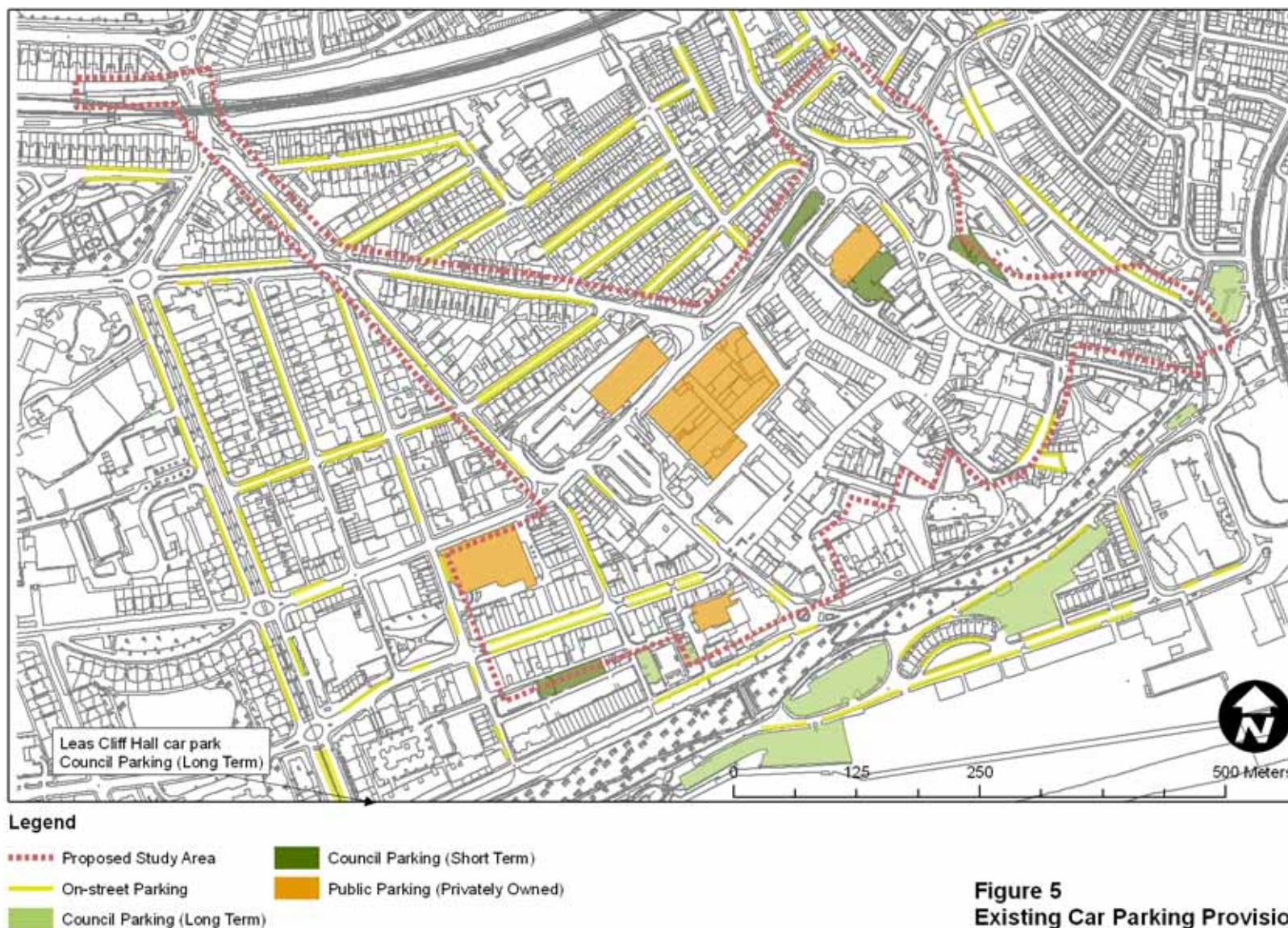


Figure 5
Existing Car Parking Provision

Existing Car Parking Provision

Parking provision in and around the town centre could have a considerable effect on the extent of possible alterations that can be made to the existing road layout. A potential constraint to achieving significant change is the current form of parking provision throughout the town centre and its residential suburbs. However there is a need to provide equal or better town centre and residential parking provision to maintain and enhance the vitality of the town.

The following section summarises existing car parking provision, its estimated capacity and how this affects possible street improvements.

Public Parking (Privately Owned)

The town centre has five large public car parks that are privately owned and run. Three of these are supermarket car parks (Sainsburys, Iceland and Lidl), of which Sainsburys is multi-storey. There is also a major NCP multi-storey car park that serves the town centre and ASDA at Bouverie Place and another multi-storey car park next to the Saga building, two thirds of which are dedicated for staff use only and the other third is for public use.

With the exception of the NCP, these parking facilities primarily serve customers and workers, and restrictions apply to control against their use for general town centre visits, although this is still possible. As they are privately owned and run, opening hours correspond with shop/office opening hours and as such public use is restricted to core business hours. Parking fees are also required. They are neither suitable nor attractive as residential parking given the distance from residential property and the restrictions that apply. Clamping is enforced to ensure this does not happen at present.

The Leas Cliff Hall Car Park sits just outside the study area and, in addition to providing parking for the Leas, it also serves the town centre particularly visitors to the western side of town such as Sandgate Road.

Accessibility Rating: Good

These car parks are located close to key town centre functions which enabled users to easily access the services they require. The exception to this is the car park at Lidl supermarket which is physically detached from the town centre and offers poor, disconnected pedestrian links between the car park and town centre. Improvements to the public realm are needed between St Eanswythe Way and onto Rendezvous Street, particularly lighting and legibility improvements.

Council Parking (Short Term)

Shepway District Council own four short term car parks within the town centre. They are located at Foresters Way, Shellons Street, Pleydell Gardens and Upper Payers. These restrict parking to up to three hours and are some of the smaller car parks found in the town centre.

They are conveniently located for those visiting the town centre, particularly if visiting facilities located to the northern side of the town centre. However, the numbers of spaces they provide are relatively low and therefore, during peak times, car parks reach capacity regularly.

Although short term car parks are located relatively nearby existing residential areas, they do not represent a viable alternative to on-street parking because of their low capacities. Many of the period town houses within the Cheriton Road and Castle Hill Avenue residential areas have been subdivided into smaller flats and therefore require several spaces per town house. It is unlikely that these short term, town centre car parks would be capable of providing sufficient parking to cater for the surrounding residential need. Neither would they be attractive to residents as they are distant from their properties.

Accessibility Rating: Medium

Short term car parks are located on the periphery of the town centre. They are generally situated within a 2-5 minute walk of most shops and services which makes them a viable alternative to the multi-storey car parks described above. Despite their relatively central location, these car parks are hindered by being located in less accessible locations that do not provide good pedestrian links. The car park on Shellons Street is situated in the middle of a busy central reservation and access from the car park next to Lidl supermarket provides very poor pedestrian links to the town centre via St Eanswythe Way onto Rendezvous Street, which is unlit and provides no passive surveillance.

Council Parking (Long Term)

Shepway DC also own five long term car parks, situated mainly to the south of the town centre around Lower Sandgate Road and at Leas Cliff Hall to the west of the town centre and the project study area. Parking around the harbour primarily serves peak season visitors to the town and seafront. During off-peak season they remain largely unused as there is no obvious or convenient links to the town centre without negotiating a significant change in level. This makes these long term car parks a less attractive option for town centre users. The Leas Cliff Hall car park is more popular all year around and can be used by season ticket holders.

Other than housing around Marine Crescent, there is little residential land use around Lower Sandgate Road that would benefit from these long term parking facilities and as such the majority of these spaces remain unused most of the year. However, during the

summer months, demand for long term parking in this area is high as it provides good access to the seafront and the recent Lower Leas Coastal Park development.

Due to the location of the long term car parking facilities in Folkestone it is unlikely that they would be able to provide viable alternatives to on-street parking in residential areas. Major pedestrian accessibility improvements, catering for the dramatic change in topography around the seafront would need to be considered in order to make these long term car parks viable alternatives for on-street or town centre car parking in the local area.

Accessibility Rating: Poor

These car parks are located too far from the town centre making them unpractical for town centre users. Although they provide large numbers of parking spaces they are not close enough to town centre services to make them viable alternatives to existing multi-storey car parks. Public realm improvements could be made to help better connect these car parks with the town centre but this is unlikely to increase patronage due to their distance from the town centre.

On-street Parking

Due to the number of period properties within the study area, on-street parking remains the only option for many residents in these areas. The Commercial Centre has a limited number of on-street parking as many of the streets are pedestrian only. It is assumed that residents within this area park elsewhere where they do not have their own provision. The Bayle and The Old Town have pockets of on-street parking as individual streets allow.

Some individual dwellings have converted front gardens into parking spaces but this is only a minority and would not be encouraged as a solution as it would affect the character of these period properties and streets.

Accessibility Rating: Medium

On-street parking appears close to capacity (a more detailed parking study is needed to confirm this) meaning that residents can be required to park away from properties. Improvements to the street layout and pedestrian environments could increase parking capacity and create a more pleasant pedestrian environment, which may encourage users to walk into town.

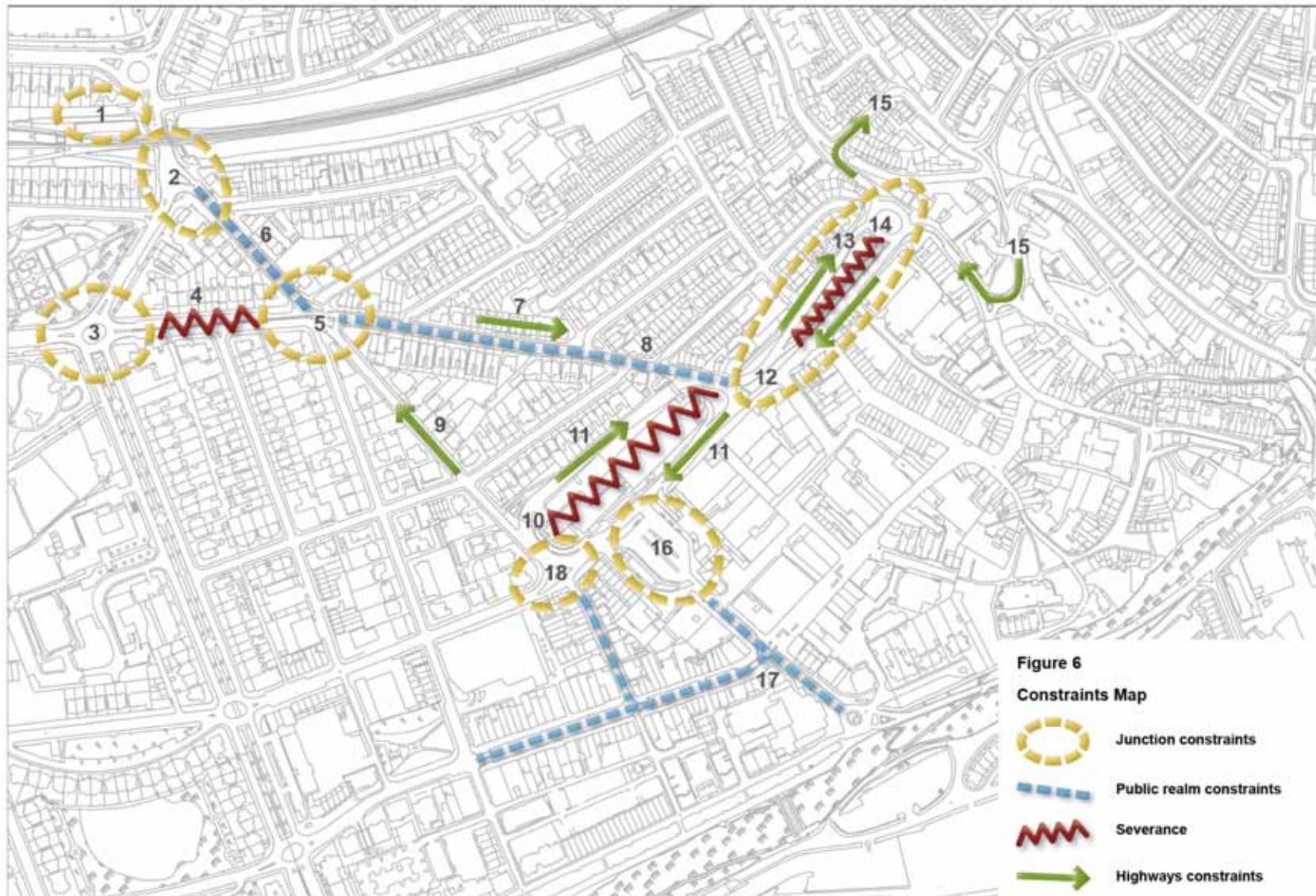
Conclusion

The need for on street parking in residential areas is a significant constraint on the flexibility to redesign the highway. To change many of the one-way streets to two-way, without losing pedestrian space would require moving some or all of the on-street parking. Moving on-street parking to alternative locations i.e. SDC car parks, is unlikely to meet the demand, and in turn would reduce town centre

parking for shoppers and visitors. It is also unlikely to be popular or practical for residents, and could ultimately affect the attractiveness of town properties to owners, who are less likely to invest in them.

Supermarket car parks, which make up the vast majority of town centre parking, is unlikely to be able or willing to accommodate additional parking. Council owned short term parking does not have the capacity required to accommodate residential parking and long term car parks are not convenient enough to provide an alternative to on-street parking. As such, it is unlikely that removing any on-street parking is a viable option for Folkestone Town Centre. Reorganising on-street parking to increase capacity should be considered, and where possible, narrowing of carriageways and widening of footpaths may also be considered to improve the interface between pedestrian and vehicular users.

Further investigative work is recommended to identify where additional parking capacity exists and where car parking improvements could be made.



Constraints

The following section summarises the constraints identified through the public realm appraisal that exist with the current layout of the highway and pedestrian network.

Central Station

- (1) Folkestone Central Station forecourt and entrance lacks legibility and a sense of arrival
- The lack of signage or information makes it difficult for vehicles and pedestrians, particularly visitors, to identify the station entrance
- Links to other transport networks are weak, particularly for buses and cyclists

Cheriton Road (North)

- (2) Shornccliffe Road/Cheriton Road is a cluttered junction with excessive highway barriers and large brick planters that restricts pedestrian movement
- The pedestrian crossing under the railway bridge is poor. Legibility of the crossing is affected by its location under the bridge and poor lighting
- There is also a lack of information for pedestrians wanting to access the town centre

Shornccliffe Road

- (3) Shornccliffe Road/Castle Hill Road Avenue roundabout does not allow for easy pedestrian movement because of the excessive highways barriers
- (4) Extensive use of highways barriers along Shornccliffe Road restricts pedestrian movement

Shornccliffe Road / Cheriton Road / Cheriton Gardens Junction

- (5) The Shornccliffe Road/Cheriton Road interchange is a confusing pedestrian junction. Legibility is poor and movement is restricted by unnecessary highways barriers and large brick planters

Cheriton Road

- (6) Footpaths along Cheriton Road are narrow and ad hoc off-street parking can cluttered footpaths making crossing difficult.

- (7) The one-way system and wide carriageway allows for higher vehicle speeds
- (8) Narrow pedestrian footpaths along Cheriton Road align a busy one-way carriageway

Cheriton Gardens

- (9) The one-way system and wide carriageway allows for higher vehicle speeds

Middelburg Square

- (10) The dominance of the ring-road layout severs the town centre from residential areas to the north
- (11) The dominance of the one-way system allows for high vehicle speeds, particularly around the northern section of Middelburg Square

Foresters Way / Shellons Street

- (12) The combination of two one-way streets, car park, bus lane, bus stops and footpaths creates a challenging pedestrian environment. The hierarchy in this area clearly places the needs of pedestrians behind that of private motorists, buses and taxis. Pedestrian space is minimal and highways dominate this part of the town centre
- (13) The wide, one-way streets with the high retaining wall to the north create a high speed vehicle corridor
- (14) The location of the car park and bus lane in the central reservation creates further conflict for pedestrians

Grace Hill

- (15) The dominant one-way system with wide roads and narrow footpaths encourages high vehicle speeds

Bouverie Square (Bus Station)

- (16) The bus station has little provision for pedestrian users. Unattractive use of space
- Links and way finding are weak, with the bus station creating an obstacle to pedestrian movement for those not using its services
- A lack of secure cycle parking and not connected to cycle network

Sandgate Road (West)

- (17) Bouverie Place, Cheriton Place and West Terrace all contain town centre functions but have poor quality public realms compared to the pedestrianised parts of Sandgate Road. This part of the town centre feels secondary to that of the pedestrianised areas of Sandgate Road, despite containing similar land uses

Bouverie Road West / Middelburg Square

- (18) Bouverie Road West / Middelburg Square is a large highways junction making pedestrian movement across it difficult. The subways are redundant and therefore do not help move people through this awkward junction layout. High vehicle speeds around Middelburg Square (north) also contributes to making this a difficult junction for pedestrians

Main Objectives

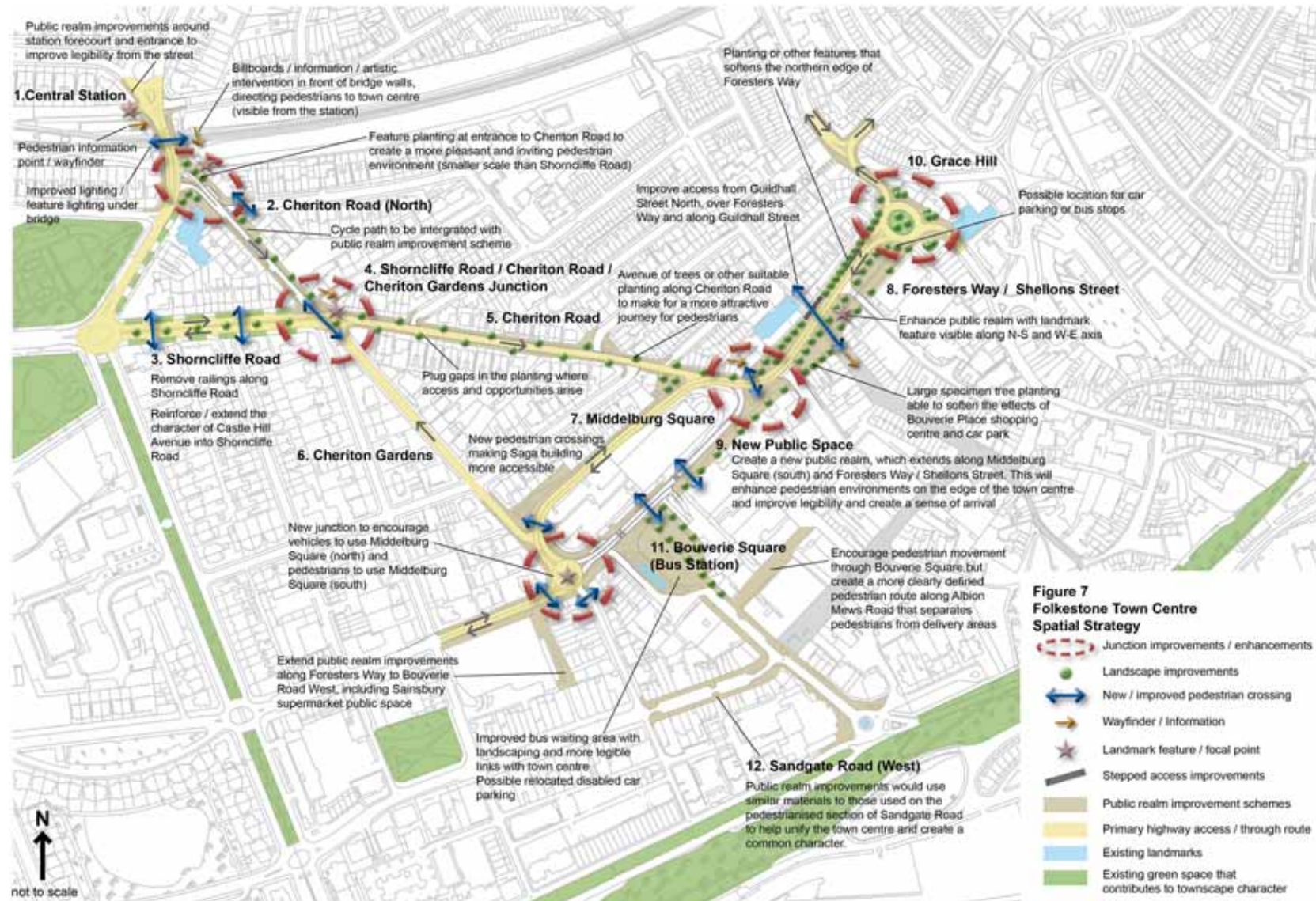
A spatial strategy for Folkestone Town Centre has been developed, informed by the public realm appraisal that meets the following key objectives:

- A more legible and less dominant highway environment
- New and improved public spaces
- Improved access between town centre/seafront and station

Other Benefits

Appropriate detailed design based upon the spatial strategy has the potential to create additional public realm benefits, including:

- Controlled and improved pedestrian crossing points at key locations
- Reduced number of railings and street clutter
- Better defined bus stops and taxi ranks
- Clearly defined and easily locatable parking areas
- Improved signs, information and way finding
- Quality, affordable and sustainably sourced materials in keeping with local character
- Designed to be easily and economically maintained
- Improved setting to landmark buildings and enhances local character



3.2 Spatial Strategy - Key Areas

The following opportunities should be read conjunction with Figure 7. The proposals identified are indicative and would be subject to detailed studies and design. Alternative highway options that have been explored and are shown Appendix A

1. Central Station

Emphasise Central Station's importance as a key arrival/destination point through public realm improvements around station forecourt and approach.

- Improve legibility and orientation through pedestrian information point/way finding
- Improve pedestrian crossing
- Improve lighting/feature lighting under bridge
- Opportunity for billboards/artistic intervention
- Investigate to improve links to other transport networks – particularly bus stops and cycle provision

2. Cheriton Road (north)

Create a quieter, predominantly residential street and main pedestrian/cycle link between the town centre and Central Station.

- Reinforce the local hub around existing shops with enhanced public realm around the forecourt to shops and bus stops
- Improve the setting of Radnor Park Church
- Introduce feature planting at the entrance to Cheriton Road to create a more pleasant and inviting environment
- Signpost town centre traffic along Castle Hill Avenue/Shorncliffe Road
- Integrate a cycle path within the public realm improvement scheme
- Introduce street trees where practicable to create a more attractive journey for pedestrians

3. Shorncliffe Road

Increase status as a main traffic route to town centre.

- Strengthen character to extend the grandeur of Castle Hill Avenue
- Remove/replace central railings with a more sympathetic treatment that stops u-turning traffic but allows pedestrians to cross informally
- Consider additional tree planting to green the road corridor using species of appropriate scale and character

4. Shorncliffe Road/Cheriton Road /Cheriton Gardens Junction

Improve appearance and legibility of junction for motorists and pedestrians.

- Improve pedestrian experience by removing superfluous railings and planters and upgrading pavement treatments
- Remove planters and small scale planting, and replace with tree planting of appropriate scale to define main route and enclose the end of Claremont Road
- Create a focal/pivot point for pedestrians and motorists to aid orientation
- Introduce pedestrian way-finding to key destinations e.g. Station, Town Centre, Civic Centre etc

5. Cheriton Road

Promote as main route between the town centre and Central Station creating a more obvious and attractive route for pedestrians.

- Carriageway narrowed and pavement widened on northern side to accommodate a shared footway/cycleway
- Create an avenue effect by plugging gaps in tree planting where access and opportunities allow
- Improve paving treatments to enhance visual appearance and define and contain on-street parking areas

6. Cheriton Gardens

Introduce minor improvements to the public realm treatments to enhance visual qualities of the road.

- Narrow road and widen pavement where practicable to improve the pedestrian experience
- Improve paving treatments to enhance visual appearance and define and contain on-street parking areas

7. Middelburg Square

Reduce the dominance of the highway on Middelburg Square; improve pedestrian connectivity and legibility for road users.

- Redesign highway network so that through traffic uses a two-way road on north side of Middelburg Square
- Discourage vehicles, other than car park accesses, buses and taxis, from using Middelburg Square (south)
- Create a new junction with Bouverie Road West to encourage vehicles to use Middelburg Square (north) and pedestrians to use Middelburg Square (south)
- Create new controlled and uncontrolled crossings to maintain and improve pedestrian access between shopping centre, car parks and bus station with potential to create an area of shared or semi-shared space at the eastern end
- Reverse 'in' and 'out' of Saga Building Car Park to enable it to function with two-way traffic on northern side
- Review use and need for the existing pedestrian subways, with the objective of closure and if alternative safe routes can be provided.

8. Foresters Way/Shellons Street

Rationalise highway to create a single two-way road.

- Remove highway from Shellons Street
- Realign Foresters Way to allow a comfortable gradient for steps from Guildhall Street North to a new crossing linking to Guildhall Street
- Create a planted buffer along the northern edge of Foresters Way to soften the highway and define the edge of the residential area to the north
- Create a new public space along Shellons Street linking to Middelburg Square (south) and Grace Hill, including parking provision, cycle storage, bus stops and taxi ranks

9. New Public Space

Create a new space extending from Bouverie Road West through to Grace Hill, encompassing Middelburg Square (south) and Shellons Street. The space will:

- Extend and build upon the character of Guildhall Street to provide a 'shop front' to the town centre
- Use paving and street trees to bring unity to the diverse architectural styles and soften the impact of large buildings
- Increase footfall to Guildhall Street area by encouraging pedestrian routes to this area and mending the severed pedestrian link from Guildhall Street North with steps and a new crossing point
- Provide a landmark feature visible along the N-S and E-W axis near the junction of Shellons Street and Guildhall Street
- Provide a meeting and information hub, with nearby bus stops, taxi ranks and cycle storage
- Provide a place to gather both within the public realm and through the encouragement of pavement cafés – it would also be suitable for markets and other events, being highly visible to passing trade
- Provide space between the commercial land uses to the south and residential areas to the north
- Physically connect the large scale chain stores and supermarkets with small scale independent businesses and public facilities such as the library

10. Grace Hill

Enhance the public realm and reduce the dominance of the highway and traffic.

- Reduce the diameter of the existing roundabout and, where possible, remove or improve levels and retaining structures that have a negative effect on the townscape in this area
- Narrow roads and widen pavements to improve the pedestrian experience

- Extend public realm paving materials from proposed new public space as far as the library to help incorporate this area into the wider town centre character
- Seek opportunities to improve the appearance and reduce the 'rat-run' feel of the one-way system around Grace Hill through defining car parking areas and tidying up of the public realm

11. Bouverie Square (Bus Station)

Investigate opportunities to reduce the dominance of the functional elements in this space and create an attractive town square that links, rather than obstructs pedestrian movement between the town centre, Sandgate Road and the new public space at Middleburg Square.

- Strengthen and encourage pedestrian movement through Bouverie Square, and away from the Alexander Gardens cut through.
- Remove railings where not essential. Where required for safety reasons consider alternative treatments and barriers that are more aesthetically appropriate
- Continue materials palette from the new public space
- Create more legible links with the town centre
- Strengthen visual and pedestrian links towards the seafront and war memorial
- Improve public realm around Alexander Gardens to enhance its appearance, whilst maintaining its primary function for delivery access
- Investigate opportunities to redevelop the bus station, and/or a full or partial relocation of the bus station (with possible location of some routes/stops to Shellons Street) to create a more attractive and accessible public square. This space could include generous areas for pedestrians with views/links to the town centre and seafront, some carefully sited and designed car parking – particularly for disabled users, which in turn could be an extension or alternative to on-street parking on Sandgate Road (west)

12. Sandgate Road (west)

Extend the town centre character and make it more accessible and attractive to pedestrians.

- De-clutter by the removal of railings and signs where they are not essential
- Consider an alternative paving treatments to the highway to reduce its visual dominance
- Investigate opportunities to reduce or relocate on-street parking to reduce the effect of traffic circling for spaces around Cheriton Place, Sandgate Road, Bouverie Place
- Prioritise pedestrians over motorists at Cheriton Place/Sandgate Road and Sandgate Road/Bouverie Place/West Terrace by continuing the pavement treatment across the threshold of the junctions – possibly in conjunction with raised tables in the highway

To aid the selection of a preferred spatial strategy and test the assumptions made so far, further detailed studies would need to be undertaken. The following should be considered:

- Traffic assessment and testing of proposals
- Pedestrian movement survey – particularly looking at trends throughout the year to assess the seasonal nature of visitors to Folkestone
- Parking Assessment - to look beyond existing provision and establish demand and opportunities for improvement
- Stakeholder engagement exercise(s) – to include public transport providers and taxis
- Preliminary costing exercise

Employment Land Review

Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, January 2011

Folkestone Conservation Area Appraisal

Conservation Architecture & Planning, 2008

Town Centre Health Indicators

KCC Research & Intelligence, 2008

Retail Need Assessment Study 2010 Update, District of Shepway

KCC Research & Intelligence, July 2010

LDF Summary Document, Core Strategy to 2026

Preferred Options Consultation 8 June to 24 July 2009,
Shepway District Council, 2009

Kent Design Guide

Kent County Council, 2006

Manual for Streets

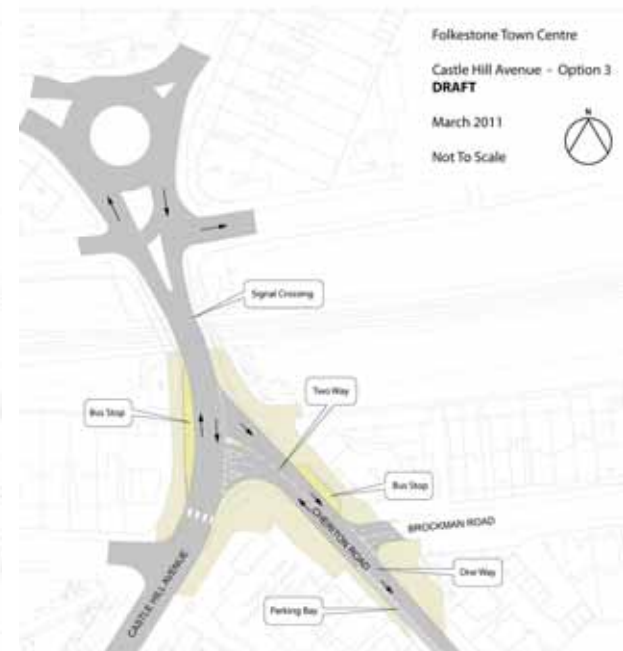
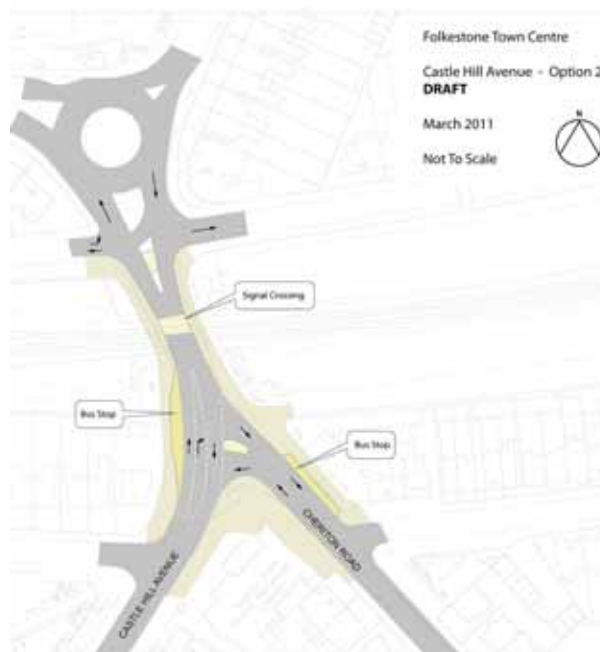
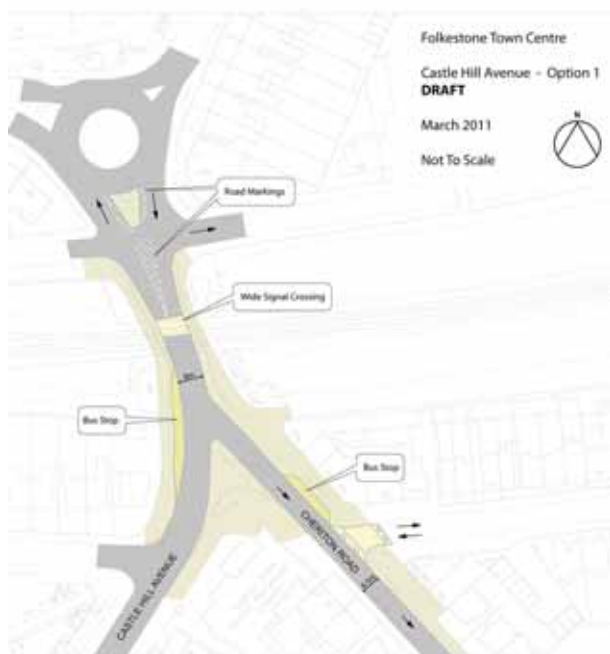
Department for Transport, 2007

Car Parking: What Works Where?

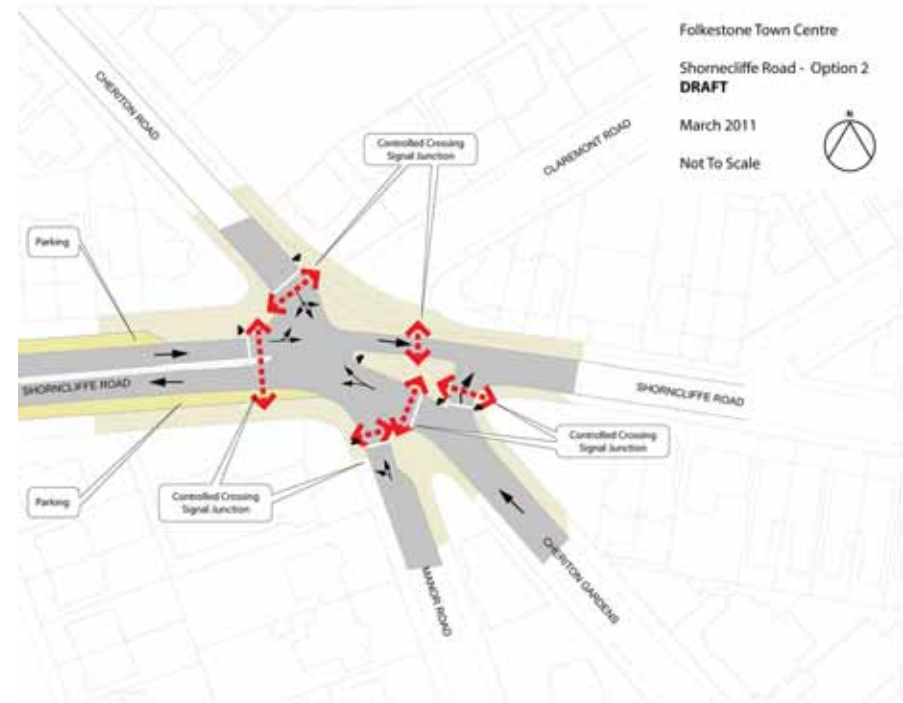
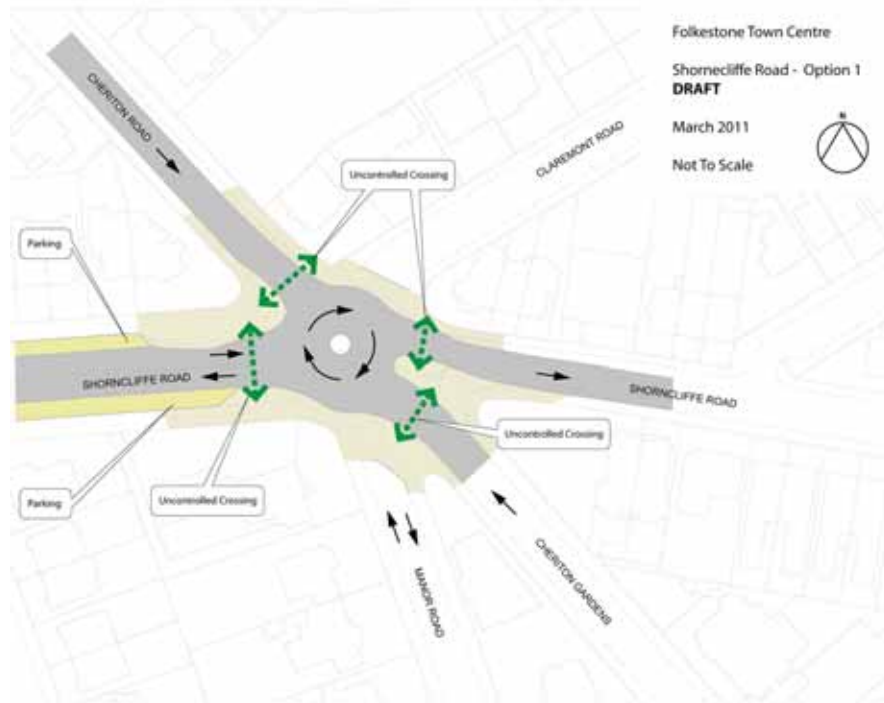
English Partnerships, May 2006

Appendix A Alternative Highway Options

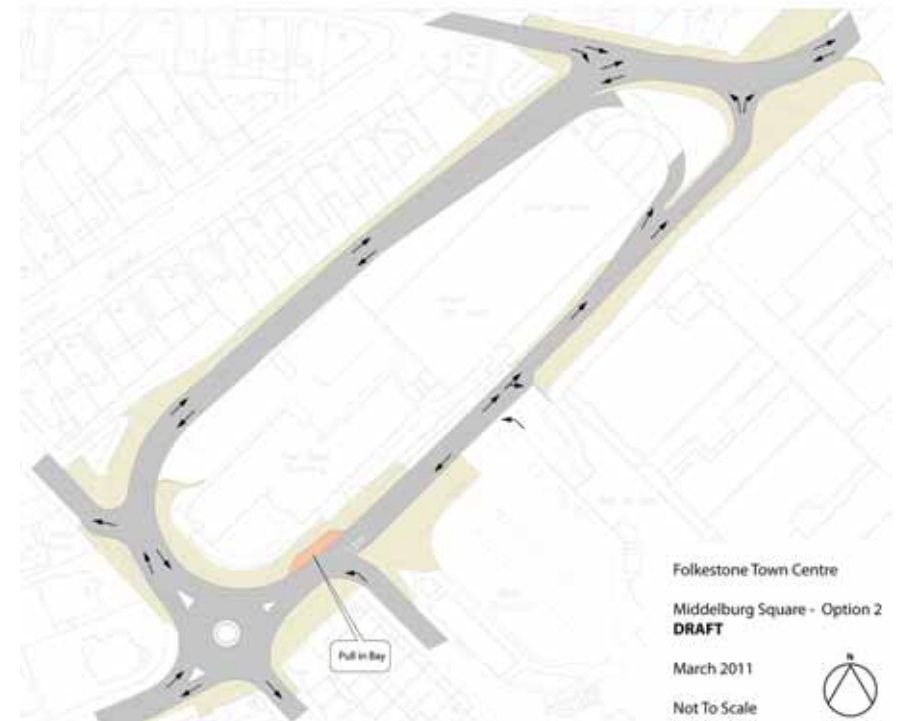
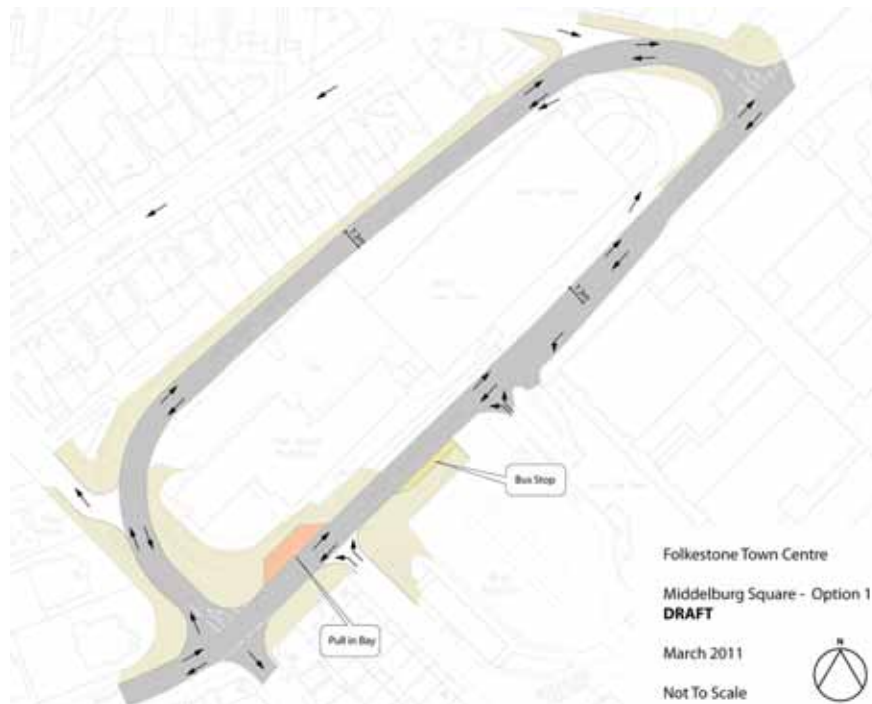
Central Station – Cheriton Road (North)



Shornecliffe Road / Cheriton Road /Cheriton Gardens



Middelburg Square



Foresters Way/Shellons Street



Grace Hill

