

SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN



Project Partners:



SHREWSBURY
BUSINESS
IMPROVEMENT
DISTRICT



Created and designed by:

LDĀ DESIGN

In association with:



PHIL JONES ASSOCIATES



July 2018
Version 10

FOREWORD

This Big Town Plan heralds a step change.

A change in how we work collaboratively as a town and a change in what we can achieve together.

This is the first time that there has been a genuine willingness of all the key partners to pool resources and work cohesively to plan for our town's future with realistic, practical and sustainable aspirations – with a clear route map of how we get there.

It is ambitious and bold, reshaping the physical public realm and matching it with an outstanding public experience. Through this Plan, we revolutionise movement around our town and attract vital investment.

We are continually listening to what the public wants to see happen, and have taken soundings and insights from businesses and key stakeholders.

We are putting people at the heart of the town, so it becomes an even better place to live, visit, work and invest. The Big Town Plan provides the springboard to achieve it.

Now it's time together to make it happen.



Mike Matthews, Chair of Shrewsbury Business Improvement District



Councillor Nic Laurens, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Shropshire Council



Councillor Alan Mosley, Leader of Shrewsbury Town Council

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INTRODUCTION

Shrewsbury's Big Town Plan clearly sets out how we want to shape the evolution of the town over the next two decades. It is the result of an extraordinary coming together of individuals and organisations, decision-makers, business leaders, Council officers and local experts, working together to refresh previous Shrewsbury visioning work that informed the Local Plan, in a new way that has not happened before that re-establishes its relevance.

Everyone involved is united by two things; an abiding love of the town; and, an ambition to shape the town's future, ensuring that it thrives in the future.

The Big Town Plan is made-up of two parts. The first part is a shared vision which charts the course ahead for the Town and sets the level of ambition. The second part is a framework plan which shows how and where we want change to happen in the town. Over a period of just a few months individuals and organisations have worked together to set out the vision and to agree a far-reaching framework plan, making best use of the in-depth understanding and knowledge within the town and bringing in some of the best outside expertise in town visioning and development planning. This is the result.

Our aim is to put people at the heart of our plan-making and place-making and we want to achieve this in four ways:

- Rethinking movement and place;
- Supporting, creating and nurturing vitality, life and a mix of uses;
- Creating a place for enterprise;
- Nurturing natural Shrewsbury.



THE BIG TOWN VISION

We see the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan as a blueprint for how County Towns or other towns might adapt and evolve in the middle part of the 21st Century. As the birthplace of the father of evolutionary science we want to celebrate Darwin's legacy by developing the Big Town Plan as a blueprint for thoughtful and purposeful change and adaptation in the Town into the future.

We recognise how special Shrewsbury is and we want to direct and manage change in a way that is sensitive to its identity and its character. Our Big Town Vision supports the Local Plan to provide balanced growth over the next two decades in a way that is centred on people and place, with more attention directed to encouraging development and life in the town centre and those places on the edge of the town centre that are in need of new life and new purpose. We also want to make those places on the edge of town better connected, giving them identity and character that makes them better places and feel a greater part of Shrewsbury.

By 2036, we picture a Shrewsbury where in amongst the familiar landmarks and the timeless streets are exciting new and re-used buildings and new spaces where new life and new activities have taken hold. Parts of the town that were once dormant have now been re-colonised. Around the Station and the northern corridor, it feels very different. Great new buildings rub shoulders with re-used older buildings. New workers and residents pour in and out of the station, under the brightly-lit railway arches and colonise new cafes and the new square in front of the Station. Cyclists make their way along the new "low-line" green corridor to the busy Flaxmill.

Traffic in the town centre is very light and slow-moving. Pedestrians and cyclists can walk and move wherever they want, making the streets their own. There are beautiful dramatic steps and escalators cutting through the shopping centres and linking Pride Hill with a new traffic-free riverside promenade.

Shopping patterns have changed, the independents and destination brands are thriving, people spend more time in town, browsing, shopping, eating and drinking in roof-top bars and visiting the cinema. In the evening, people stroll up and down Smithfield, now free of traffic. New housing overlooks the river where the multi-storey and bus station used to be and people sit out in new cafés enjoying the view and the evening sun.

The Market is going from strength to strength and around it are clusters of new business start-ups, many connected to the growing University. The West End has changed too, the network of streets and spaces including Mardol are largely traffic-free. Surface car parks have been repurposed and replaced with capacity at the edges of the town centre with clear routes to move people into and around the town centre so the town remains accessible to all and the environment more welcoming. In their place are a vibrant mix of uses including new parts of the University, workspace and apartments. It feels very different walking down to Victoria Quay or to the Quarry with new, high quality pedestrian routes.

The whole town is much better connected by cycle or on foot, in a safe way, avoiding conflict with vehicular traffic. It is possible now to make your way across town by cycle or on foot. Not only is there a great network of routes into town but there are now new links to the River too and routes leading out into the wider countryside. Places on the edge of town that once felt a bit soulless have changed too. Old-style retail and employment parks are now mixed-use places with new housing, parks and greenspaces and

links into town. There are now much closer networks and links between the Hospital, healthcare, sports and leisure and schools and colleges.

We make decisions differently now. The Big Town Plan means that we test everything against the vision. New development and new infrastructure has to pass what we will call "the Shrewsbury Test". – referenced as the Shrewsbury Development Strategy (CS2) in the adopted Core Strategy. Does it support our vision? Does it strengthen the identity of Shrewsbury? Is it right for that part of town and most importantly, does it make life better for people?







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HOW WE ADAPT AND EVOLVE



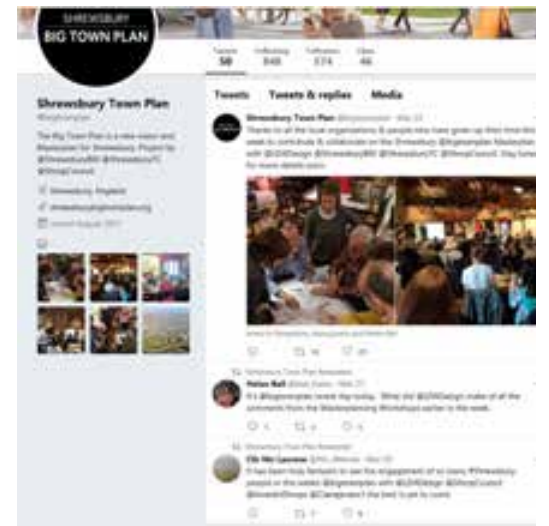
The process of developing our Big Town Plan meant we needed to do three things:

- Firstly, to draw together our collective understanding of Shrewsbury.
- Secondly, gain a better understanding of the challenges facing towns like Shrewsbury
- Finally, we needed to exchange and test ideas and set our priorities for change under the four main headings.

Improving our understanding of Shrewsbury

To make the right decisions about how the town needs to adapt to the challenges ahead, more needed to be done to understand the town. The views of the 5,000 residents, visitors and businesses who visited the Big Town Plan pop-up shop / consultation event that took place in September 2017 were instrumental to this process. The analysis of their views and the capturing of their desires and aspirations provided insights that enabled in-depth individual knowledge, in addition to gathering data and mapping from different sources. By overlaying and simplifying these complex layers, clear patterns emerged.

At the heart of this analysis was an ambition to understand the character and identity of different parts of the town. We also recognised that some parts of the town would be highly sensitive to change, in the historic centre for example, and other parts like the northern corridor where the right kind of change and intervention would be desirable.





10 Goals for Shrewsbury

1. We want to make it much better for the pedestrian and cyclist, especially in the town centre. This means shifting the balance of priority given to movement across the town from the private car to walking and cycling and greater use of rail and bus.
2. We recognise the rapid changes in working patterns and working practice. We want to create new, flexible workspace environments built around buzzy, active places, both in and around the town centre and out on the edge of town.
3. We want to plan for future sustainable growth that utilises development opportunities on a mix of sites, including land in and on the edge of the town centre, as well as development on land located on the periphery of town.
4. We want to build strong physical and virtual networks connecting education, healthcare, business start-ups, new industries and sports provision across the town to improve mobility and to form new alliances. The importance of well-being in Shrewsbury is key.
5. We want to open up the housing market in the town through increasing choice and improving affordability. This means increasing town centre living and introducing different housing models and tenures.
6. We are very proud of our education establishments. We want to retain more of our best young talent in the town and attract new talent from outside. We want to support innovation and start-ups in exciting new places.
7. We want to strengthen the all-round appeal of the town centre based around better place-making and the visitor experience. We want to strengthen independent shopping whilst continuing to attract destination brands. We want to inject greater diversity of use into the centre, housing leisure, entertainment, culture and the arts.
8. We want to make this green town greener still, by connecting existing green spaces across the town, making new links and new parks where we can and making much more of the River corridor. We want to make strong connections from the town centre, through the suburbs and out into the wider countryside and improve the health and well-being for everyone.
9. We want to raise the quality of design across the town, particularly for new housing. We will develop what we will call "The Shrewsbury Test" to raise standards for all new development.
10. We want to encourage new development, infrastructure and investment but will take a much more holistic and integrated approach to the way we make decisions making them more joined-up in line with the Vision and Big Town Plan.

Setting goals for Shrewsbury

The challenges facing Shrewsbury in the next two decades will bring about change whether we like it or not. Many of them are universal pressures and others are more individual to Shrewsbury. We want to face these challenges head-on and we will direct and shape the changes that emerge from them in the Big Town Plan in a way that delivers the greatest benefit to Shrewsbury. They need to fit with our vision and the Big Town Plan.

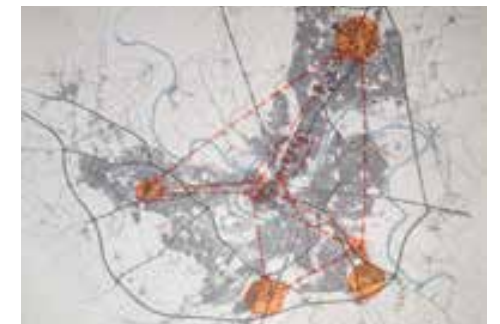
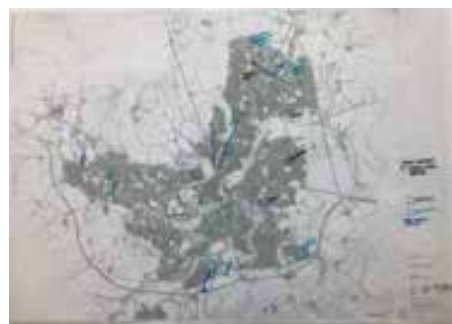
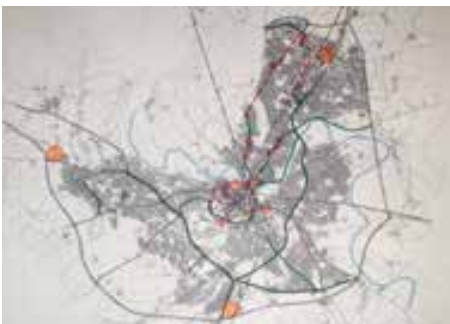
These are the goals we want to set for now, although we know that there will be others that appear over the next two decades that we don't yet know about. The goals we set are illustrated on the left and in setting these we know we can face these challenges head on.

What we decided - setting our priorities

The Big Town Plan had highlighted four key themes and the Big Masterplanning Week took these four themes to explore how they would be expressed in physical form as part of the framework plan and most importantly how they create synergy. These were:

- Rethinking movement and place
- Supporting, creating and nurturing vitality, life and a mix of uses
- Creating a place for enterprise
- Nurturing natural Shrewsbury

By focusing on each theme and utilising the understanding of Shrewsbury with the data gathered and the expertise involved three important priorities under each theme were identified.



Movement and Place

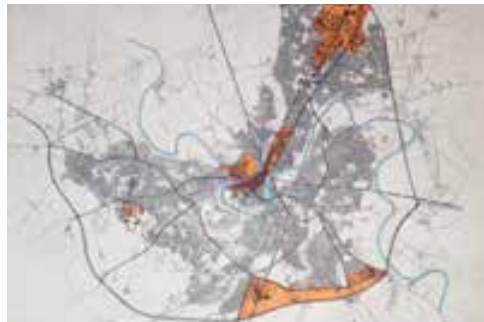
Top 3 priorities:

1. Pedestrian priority in town centre
2. Cycle and pedestrian network including new development areas
3. Measures to reduce through traffic

A Place for Enterprise

Top 3 priorities:

1. Grade A office space within the town centre
2. Flagship creative hub at West End
3. High quality shared space / studios along northern corridor



Vitality, Life and Mix

Top 3 priorities:

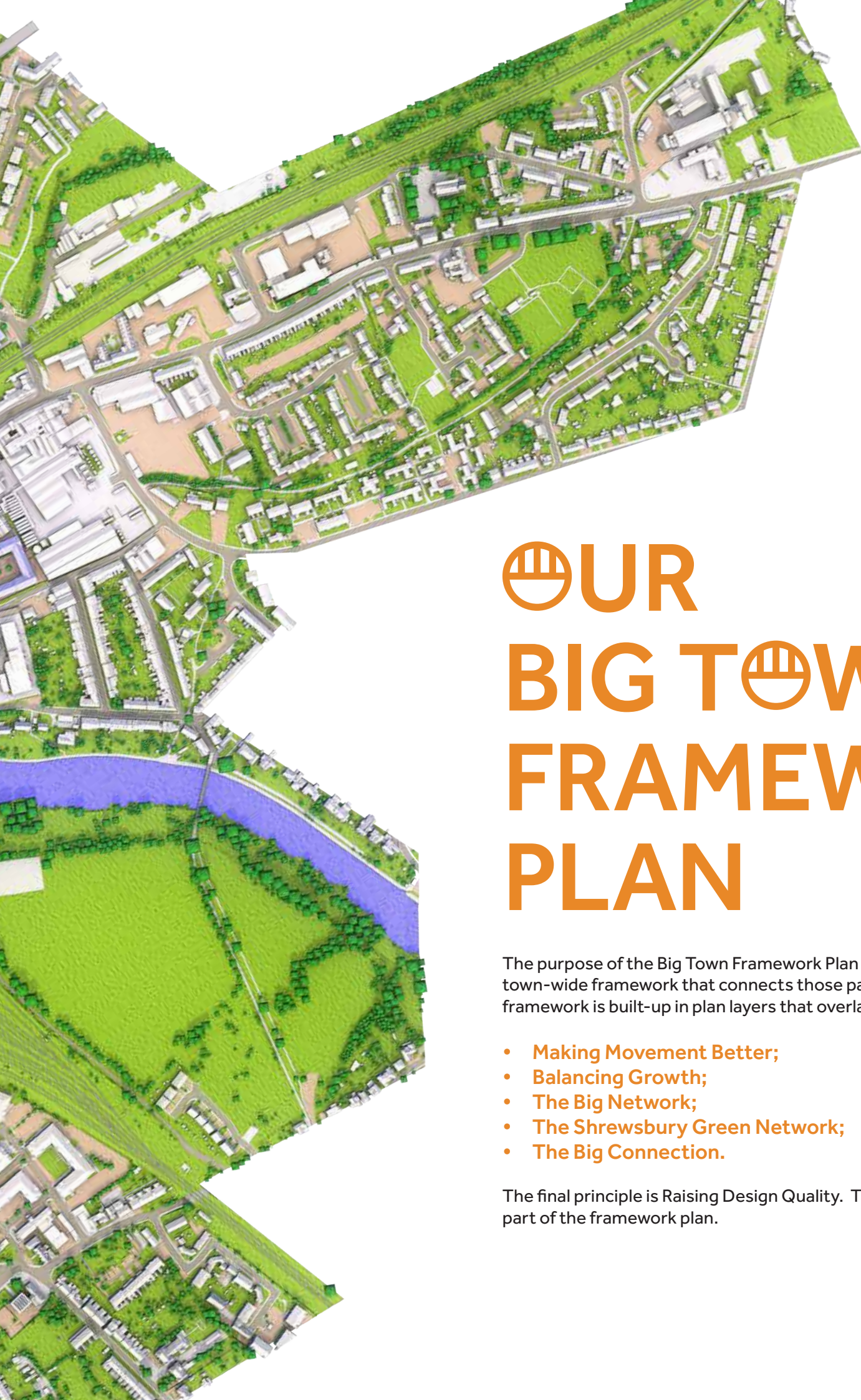
1. Victoria Quay – Riverside - Railway Station
2. Station approach / Castle Street
3. West End and Rowley's House

Nurturing Natural Shrewsbury

Top 3 priorities:

1. Severn Way national footpath
2. Valley parks
3. New west and north leisure corridor



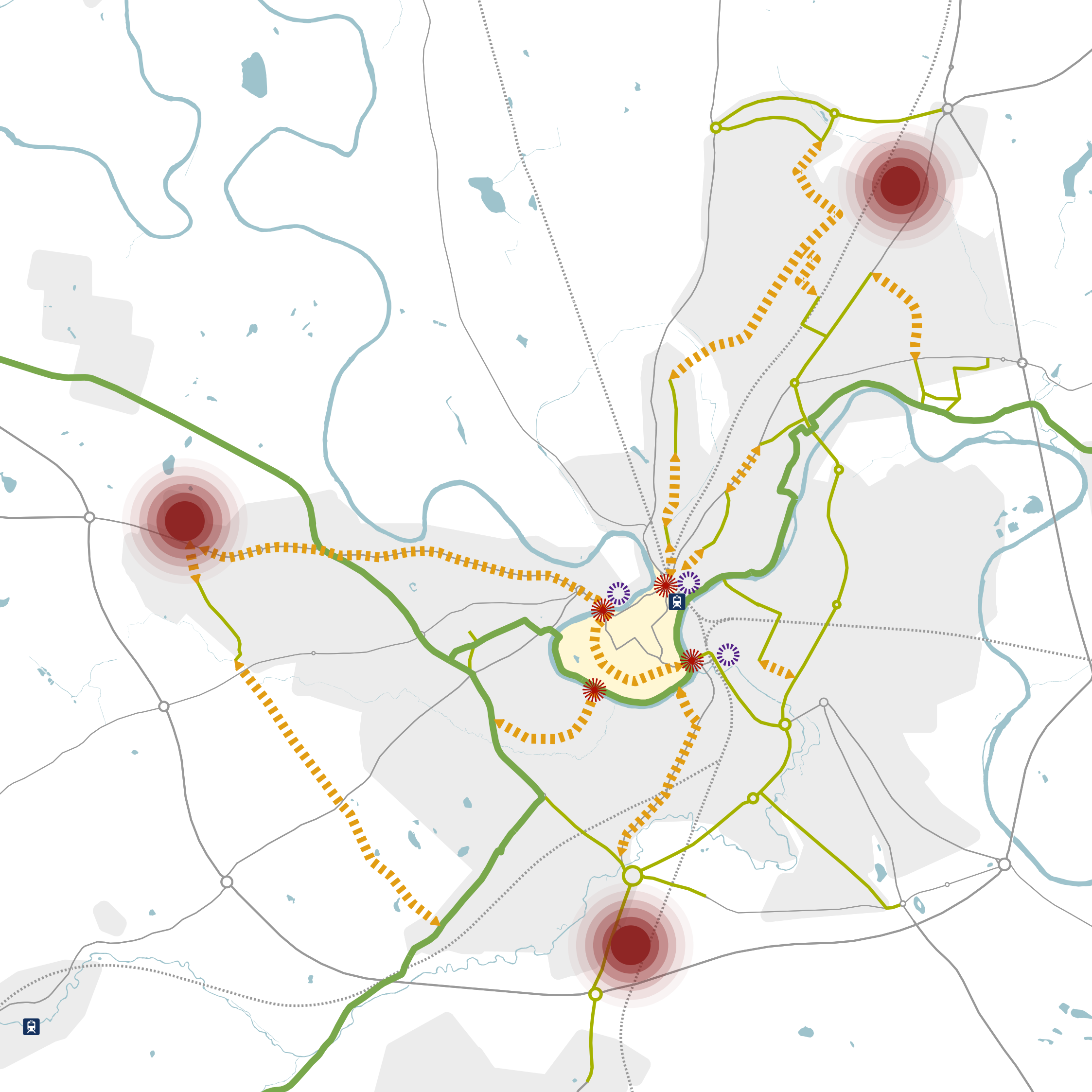


OUR BIG TOWN FRAMEWORK PLAN

The purpose of the Big Town Framework Plan is to establish a clear set of spatial principles, a physical, town-wide framework that connects those parts of town where we want change to happen. The framework is built-up in plan layers that overlay the town:

- **Making Movement Better;**
- **Balancing Growth;**
- **The Big Network;**
- **The Shrewsbury Green Network;**
- **The Big Connection.**

The final principle is Raising Design Quality. This is a town-wide principle rather than a plan that forms part of the framework plan.



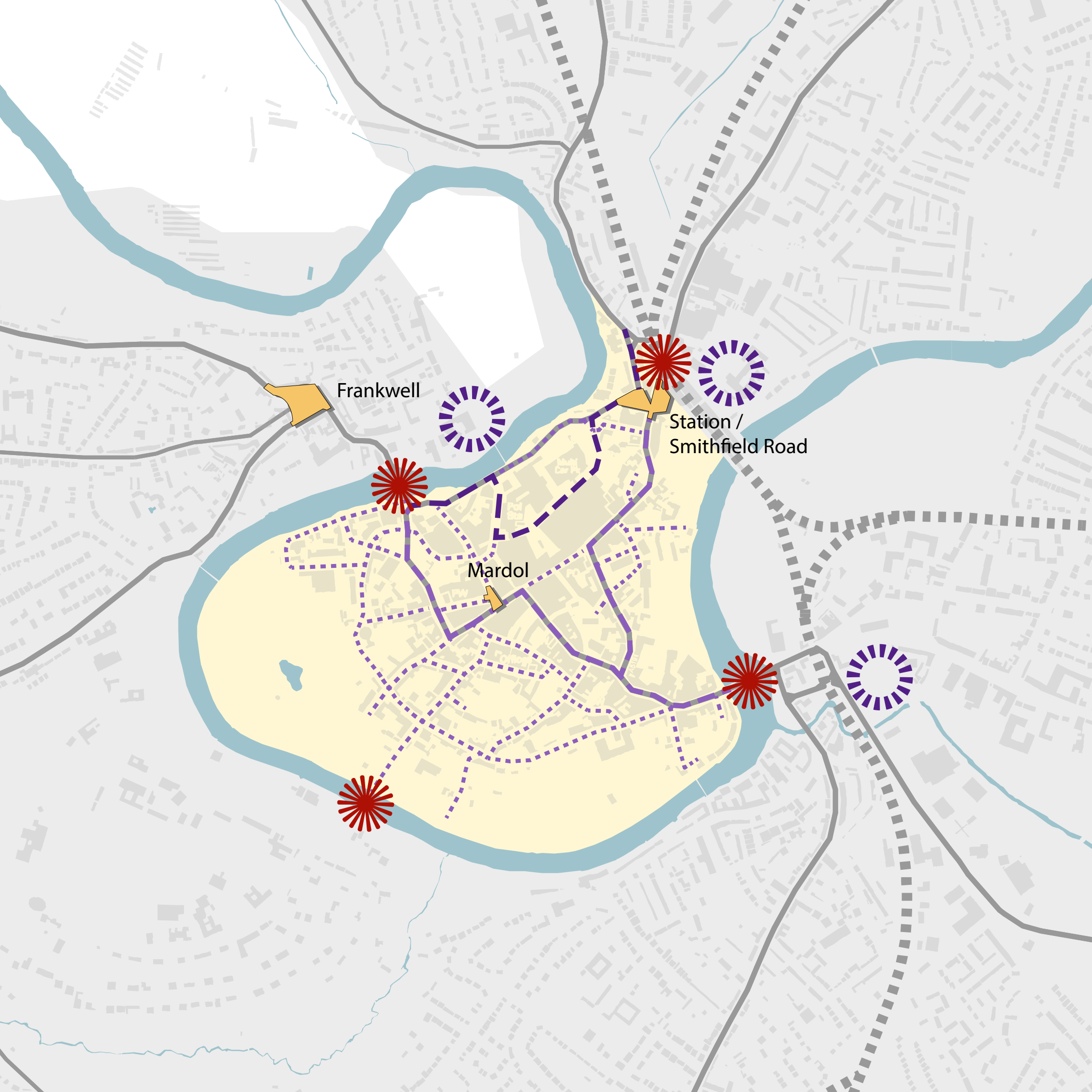
MAKING MOVEMENT BETTER



We want to make movement in the town better for everyone. Our three priorities are:

- pedestrian priority in the town centre;
- a better pedestrian and cycle network across the town; and,
- measures to reduce through traffic in the town centre.

At a town-wide level our proposal is to strengthen and extend the network of cycleways, primarily located on road but with the aim of creating off-road routes. This would involve the re-apportionment of existing road space in favour of pedestrians and cyclists over other road users. The town needs radial as well as arterial routes to link places like the hospital, edge of town employment sites and other destinations.



Frankwell

Station /
Smithfield Road

Mardol

MAKING MOVEMENT BETTER

-  Town centre pedestrian priority area
-  Pedestrian priority routes (highest place quality)
-  Informal streets (high place quality)
-  Enhanced streets (mixed priority)
-  Potential access control points into town centre
-  Enhanced car parks
-  Public realm improvements

The aim is to significantly reduce through-traffic in the town centre and the measures include:

- Better quality decked and multi-storey car parks on the edge of the town centre or at key gateways, ensuring adequate provision;
- Gradual rationalisation of town centre parking;
- Repurposing of surface car parking;
- Improving the arrival experience for shoppers and visitors with good car parking design;
- Giving priority to pedestrians over cars in the town centre;
- Public realm improvements that benefit pedestrians in the town centre;
- Explore environmentally-friendly methods of moving people in and around the town centre such as public bicycle hire schemes, electric hop-on hop-off buses and so on.
- A new strategic cycle route along Town Walls;
- The redirection of through traffic from Smithfield to Raven Meadows turning Smithfield into a pedestrian-priority promenade;
- Exploring demand management measures at the bridges using latest technology.



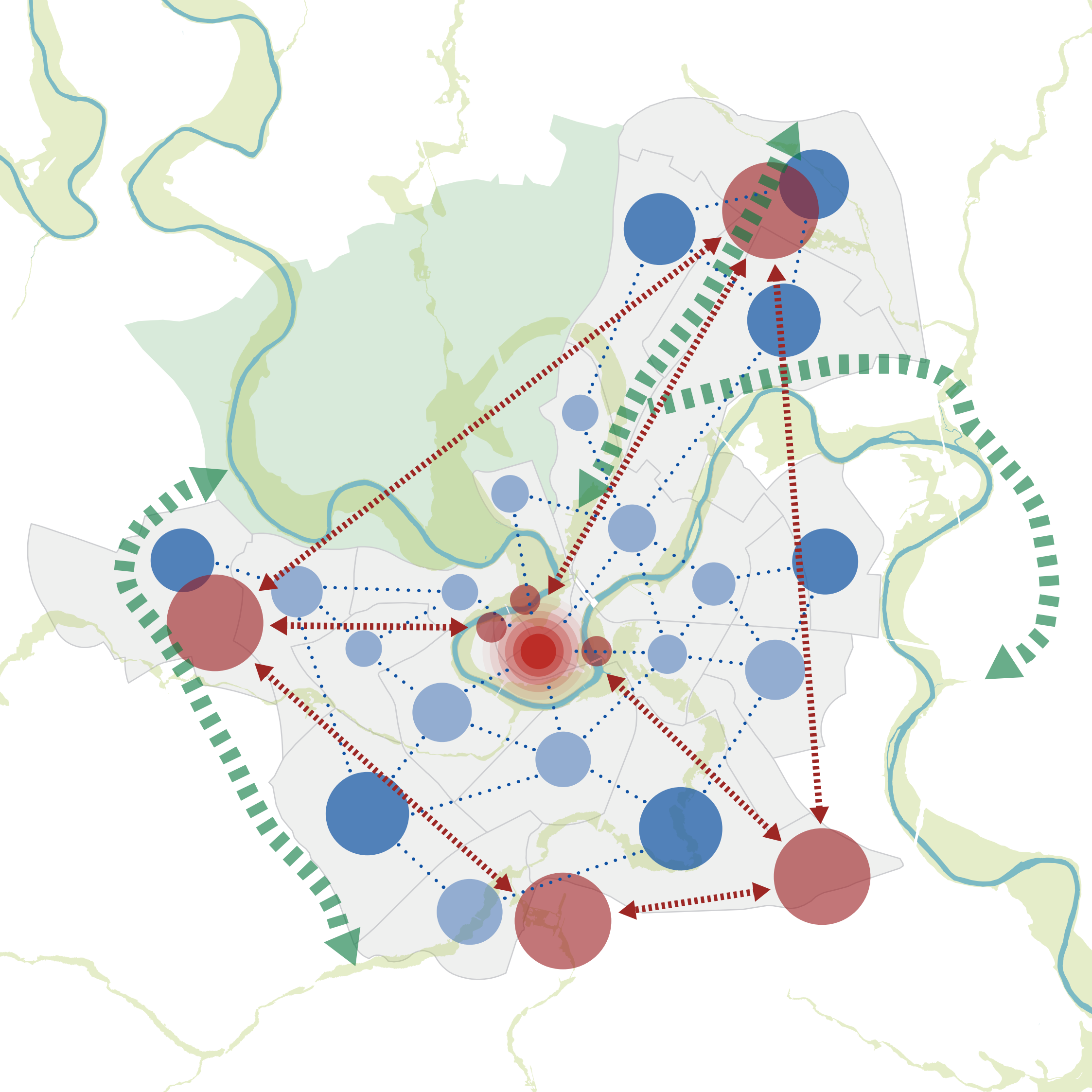
BALANCING GROWTH

SHEWSBURY'S OUTWARD EXPANSION


- Pre 1800
- C19th
- C20th
- Late 20th/Early 21st
- Establish limits to growth
- Strategic local plan allocations
- Increase density in existing urban extensions
- Direct Development to key areas in town centre
- Protect the green wedge

We want to achieve a better balance in future, between growth directed towards the edge of town and growth located in and around the town centre. Growth is planned and will happen on the edge of town, but we want to encourage and promote growth in and around the town centre too. Different parts of the town can deliver different things and a greater choice and diversity of housing and workspace. Our aims are:

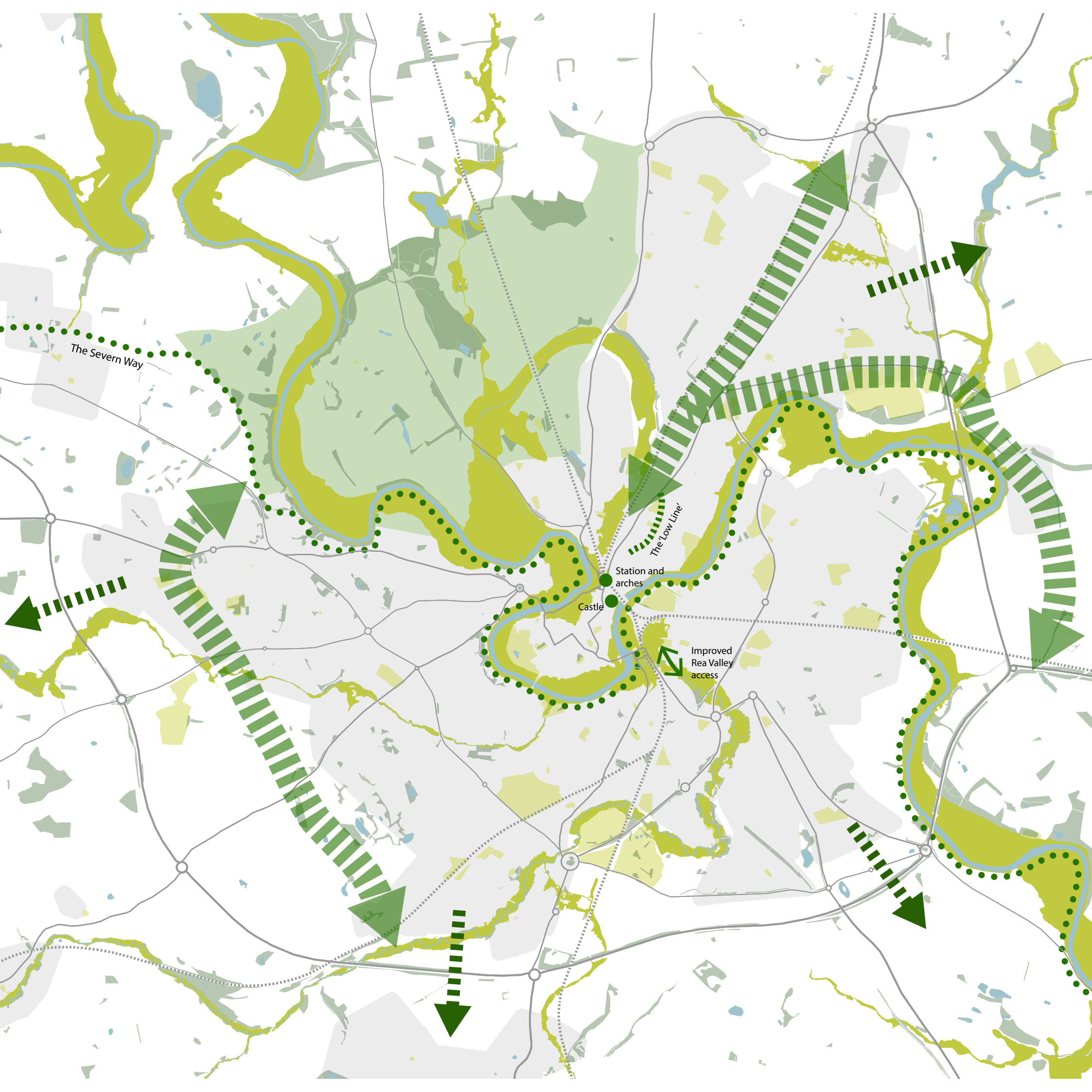
- To promote more intensive development on under-used or empty sites in and around the town centre;
- To promote better place-making in development planned on the edge of town with buildings brought closer together, creating more enclosure and attracting more activity including a better mix of uses and better connections into town and into existing neighbourhoods;
- To encourage smarter working and better networks both physical and virtual between important sectors such as education, healthcare, sports and leisure, industry and business.



THE BIG NETWORK

-  Green wedge
-  River corridors
-  Urban character areas
-  Employment / education hubs
-  Neighbourhoods
-  Town centre
-  Green corridors
-  Employment / education hub links
-  Neighbourhood links

The term “smart cities and smart towns” is frequently used when planning for future growth. This is about harnessing new technologies to connect people and businesses, understanding how they disrupt conventional patterns of land use and infrastructure. One of the smartest things Shrewsbury can do is to remain compact and to direct new businesses towards real places and avoid perpetuating standard edge of town business parks. We have mapped where these places are, some are on the edge and need to become more intensive and mixed use, others located in and around the town centre and in existing neighbourhoods, re-populating and intensifying areas like the northern corridor, re-using and re-fitting existing buildings in and around the centre. Networks need to be physical, involving better mobility between parts of the town. This is also about business and virtual networks that will link the Hospital, the College, training centres and business start-ups. Better networks can facilitate better outcomes, such as for example, understanding how to attract nursing staff into the hospital by delivering good quality key worker housing in the town centre and improving cycling and public transport links.



The Severn Way

The 'Low Line'

Station and arches

Castle

Improved Rea Valley access

THE SHREWSBURY GREEN NETWORK



The town is blessed with extraordinary greenspaces, courtesy of the River Severn corridor and a superb landscape setting. However, Shrewsbury does not make the most of what it has and we want to make greenspace much more accessible for people and to make it richer and more biodiverse. We want people to enjoy better access to the river and other waterside places. We want our Big Green Plan to improve the health and well-being of people in the town, by promoting walking, cycling, greater enjoyment of outdoor space and greater access to the countryside. Our aims are:

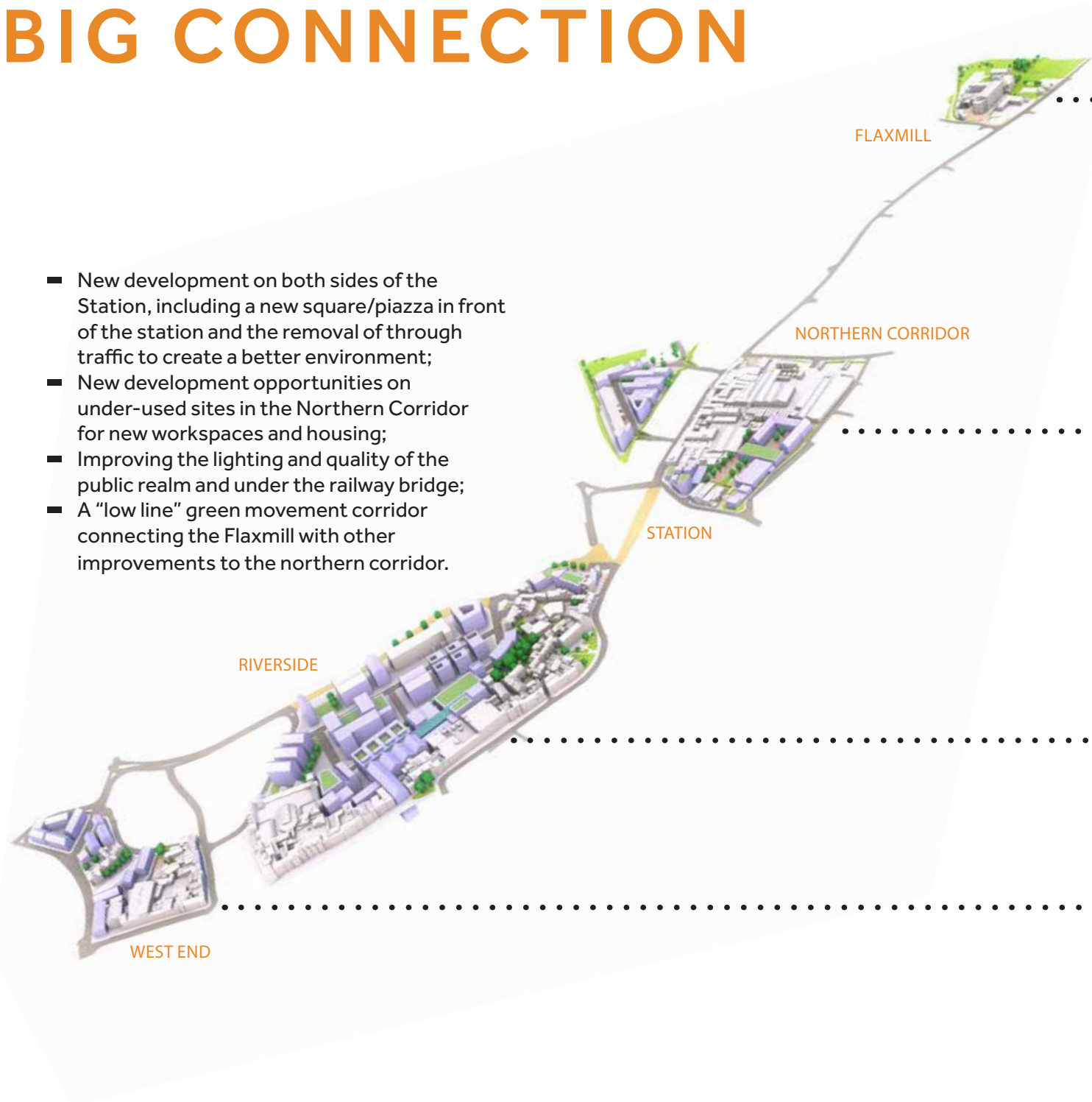
- To connect up the wider greenspace network across the town, making new green links where possible and improving existing links and green corridors;
- To make much more of the River Severn corridor and its tributary valleys and brooks that form key green spaces within the heart of the urban area ;
- To ensure that new development, wherever it is planned, delivers better quality and strategic greenspace that connects to our existing green spaces and proposed new corridors.

THE BIG CONNECTION

The Big Connection – West End : Riverside :
Station : Northern Corridor : Flaxmill

The Big Connection is an illustration of how all these principles can come together in the Big Town Framework Plan. The Big Connection is the biggest regeneration opportunity in Shrewsbury. Each area is different and each has its own character, but taken together, these areas form a large corridor of opportunity running from the West End up to the Flaxmill. Our plans are ambitious and transformative. The individual projects in the individual areas need to be developed and tested at the next stage, but the Big Town Vision and the framework is being created and refined. Our proposals include:

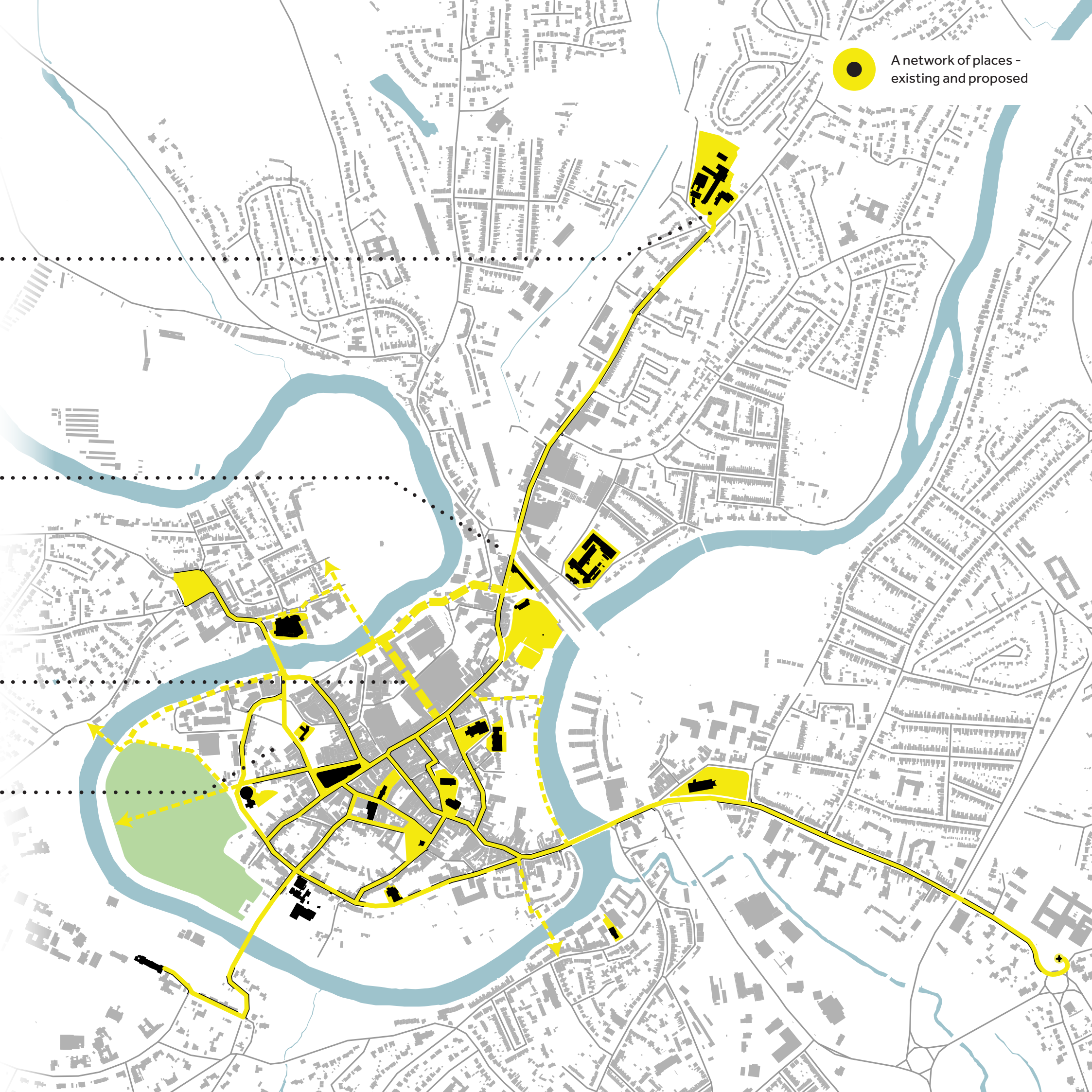
- New development on both sides of the Station, including a new square/piazza in front of the station and the removal of through traffic to create a better environment;
- New development opportunities on under-used sites in the Northern Corridor for new workspaces and housing;
- Improving the lighting and quality of the public realm and under the railway bridge;
- A “low line” green movement corridor connecting the Flaxmill with other improvements to the northern corridor.



- A balance of new mixed use development and high quality public realm in and around the West End;
- Improvements to the walkability and public realm on Mardol;
- The redirection of traffic along Smithfield to Raven Meadows, opening up the Smithfield as a pedestrian priority promenade;
- The re-configuration over time of the Riverside shopping centre and better integration and complementary activities with Darwin and Pride Hill centres with the introduction of new uses that could include leisure, food and drink, residential and commercial spaces. Including new pedestrian links from Pride Hill down to the Riverside.
- The redefining of the area around the multi storey car park and the bus station;



A network of places -
existing and proposed



FLAXMILL

The proposals for the redevelopment of the Flaxmill are illustrated here. Its connection with the rest of the town forms part of the Northern Corridor project. This is likely to include improved streetscape and public realm along Castle Foregate and St Michael's Street. The proposal also includes landscape enhancement and improvements to the pedestrian and cycle link that follows the former route of the canal. We have named this route the "low line" in deference to New York's High Line project that follows the former elevated rail route.





NORTHERN CORRIDOR AND THE STATION

Proposal around the Station include: a new station square with the removal of parking and the relocation of taxis. This will create a new arrival experience in the town and accommodate new activities from cycle storage and hire to cafes and workpoints; a new workspace and office quarter located north of the station; improved public realm, particularly under the railway bridges and along the Dana.





RIVERSIDE

The following section is an illustration of how the reconfiguration of the shopping centres could deliver an extraordinary connection from the top of the town at Pride Hill down to the Riverside. The idea is that the route would be animated by new food and drink, and maybe new leisure attractions. There is an opportunity to create new areas of public realm on the route making use of the dramatic change of level.

The removal of the multi-storey car park and the Riverside shopping centre creates a great opportunity to create a mixed use riverside quarter. This would include higher density housing, new workspaces, new food and drink venues set around a new public promenade stepping down to the river.

There is an opportunity to divert through traffic onto Raven Meadows thereby releasing Smithfield Road for the creation of a largely traffic-free promenade next to the river.





WEST END

The proposals for the West End are focused on connecting the town centre to the riverside at Victoria Quay and making better links to the Quarry. This would include opportunities for creating a new workhub in the West End and the potential for re-purposing some of the surface car parking for range of uses. The focus is on making this part of town more people and pedestrian -friendly, better connected to its surroundings and less dominated by traffic.



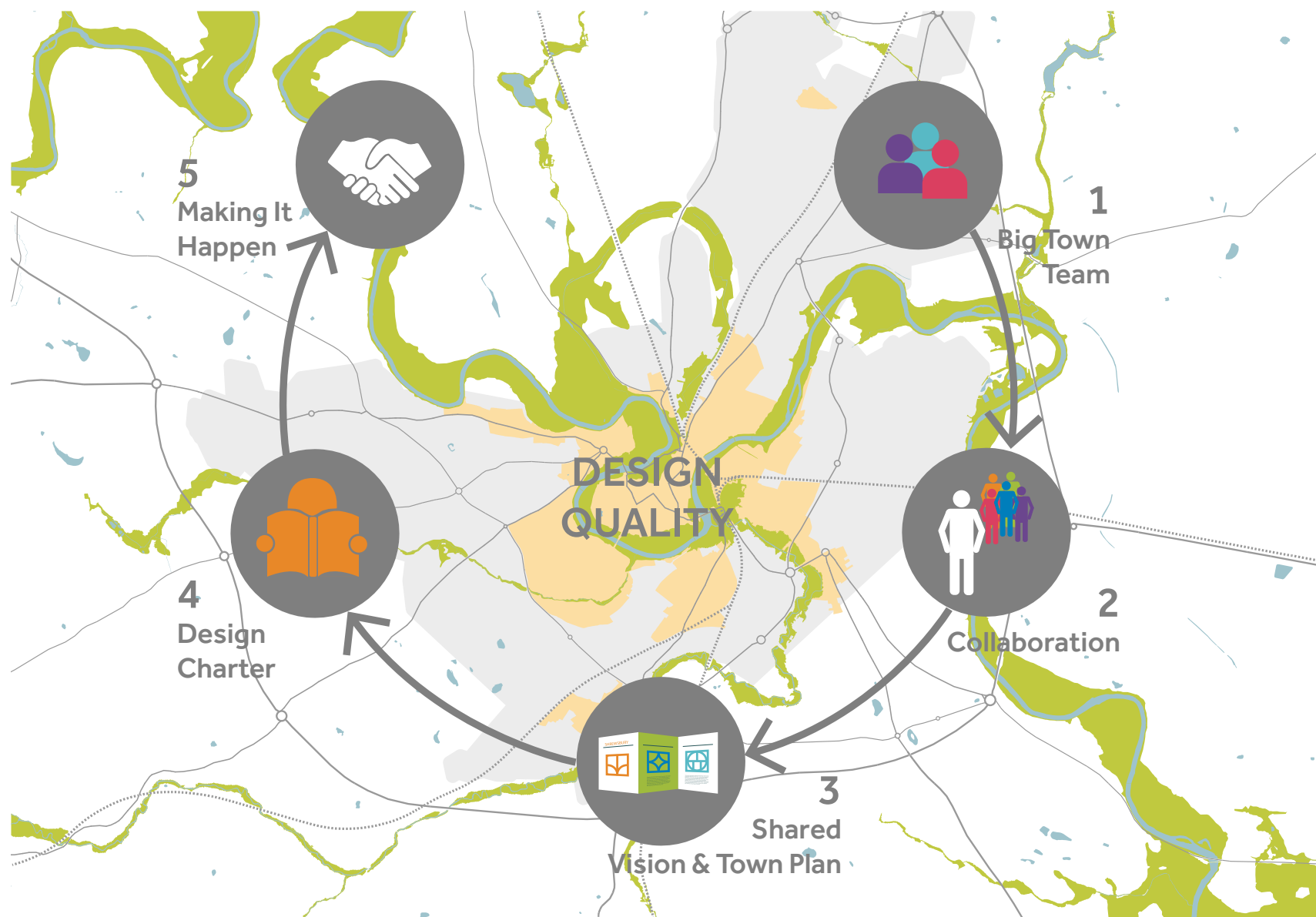
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RAISING DESIGN QUALITY: THE SHREWSBURY TEST

We want to see better quality development right across the town in the future. In particular, we want to see better place-making and the design of new housing that is much more distinctive and tailored to Shrewsbury's special qualities. We want to see that new development reflects our ambition as set out in the Big Town Plan. A Shrewsbury Design Charter will clearly set out our intention to welcome a two-way dialogue between the Town and the development industry and give guidance and our expectations on design quality. This will include what we will call "The Shrewsbury Test", a simple set of entry requirements for developing in the town.



PRIORITIES AND NEXT STEPS

The Big Town Plan is ambitious. Two things must happen to make it successful. The first is the identification of priority projects and initiatives, the second is shaping the way that day to day decisions are made to ensure that they are aligned with the Big Town Plan and principles it sets out.

Let's start with the priority projects and initiatives. The Big Connection is the most ambitious area-wide regeneration and redevelopment opportunity in the Town and within the Big Connection there are at least 5 major projects.

These are:

1. Shrewsbury Station – new public realm outside the station, re-use of vacant space in and around the station building, traffic management changes;
2. Northern Corridor Land Assembly – Identification and assembly of land immediately north of the station to deliver a number of mixed development opportunities and public realm initiatives;
3. The Shrewsbury Low Line and the Flaxmill connection – a public realm project focussed on connecting the Flaxmill into the Northern Corridor and into the Station;
4. Riverside Shopping Centre – the redevelopment of the Shopping Centre and the wider redevelopment opportunities to connect with the River, including the re-direction of traffic on Smithfield;
5. West End Creative Hub – the re-use of existing buildings and spaces for creative workspace including the reinvigoration of Rowleys Building and public realm improvements.

Development proposals, infrastructure funding and development opportunities are unlikely to arrive in order of priority or in the sequence that we would want to see. Priority also needs to be given to the development of the Design Charter, which is as much about the process of aligning all development and infrastructure activity across the town to contribute to and deliver the Big Town Plan.

Our Action Plan in the short to medium term is as follows:

- Prioritise projects 1, 2 and 3 of the Big Connection, in terms of phasing. This means development of a masterplan and a business and delivery plan at the next stage. This will include a programme and investment plan.
- Draw up the Design Charter and embed it in the development planning process through the Local Plan Review.

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