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Belgrave Gate Character Area

Townscape Analysis & Design Guidance

Evidence Document



Contents

1. Introduction.....	4	2.10. Movement & Connectivity	29
1.1. Development Context	4	2.11. Connecting Leicester Improvements	34
1.2. Townscape Appraisal & Character	5	2.12. Active Frontages	36
1.3. Overarching Policy	6	2.13. Key Views & Legibility	38
1.4. Townscape Character Management	7	2.14. Architecture, Materiality, Details	40
1.5. The Scope	8	2.15. Planning Activity	42
1.6. The Structure	8	3. Townscape Diagnosis.....	44
2. Townscape Analysis	10	3.1. Constraints & Opportunities.....	44
2.1. Location & Context	10	4. Guiding the Future	50
2.2. History & Evolution of Belgrave Gateway	12	4.1. Establishing a Vision.....	50
2.3. Heritage & Townscape Assets.....	16	4.2. Main Future Development Objectives.....	51
2.4. Urban Grain & Enclosure	20	4.3. Future Development.....	53
2.5. Height & Massing.....	22	4.4. Proposed Heights	56
2.6. Land Uses	24	Glossary.....	58
2.7. Community Infrastructure & Influence.....	26		
2.8. Housing & Tenure.....	27		
2.9. Open Spaces & Public Realm	28		

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1

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1. Development Context

The regeneration of Leicester is a key theme of Leicester's development plan. In considering the central area of Leicester, areas have been identified which have distinctive characters and context, identity, opportunities and challenges and therefore different development objectives. These areas will also make a very important contribution to addressing the city's future housing needs.

Much of the development activity needed to enable restructuring of the economy will occur in the area within and around the city centre, within the Central Development Area (CDA). Leicester's future economic prosperity will depend on making sure that it has the right appeal to a skilled and mobile workforce as well as being an attractive place to live and work. The quality of life, environment, housing, jobs and the cultural, leisure and retail offer of the city and central area in particular, will play a major role in this. The aim of the CDA is to enable Leicester City Council (LCC) to direct, optimise and encourage investment, whilst managing development appropriately within a local context, so that high quality

development is delivered, which in turn creates certainty and developer confidence.

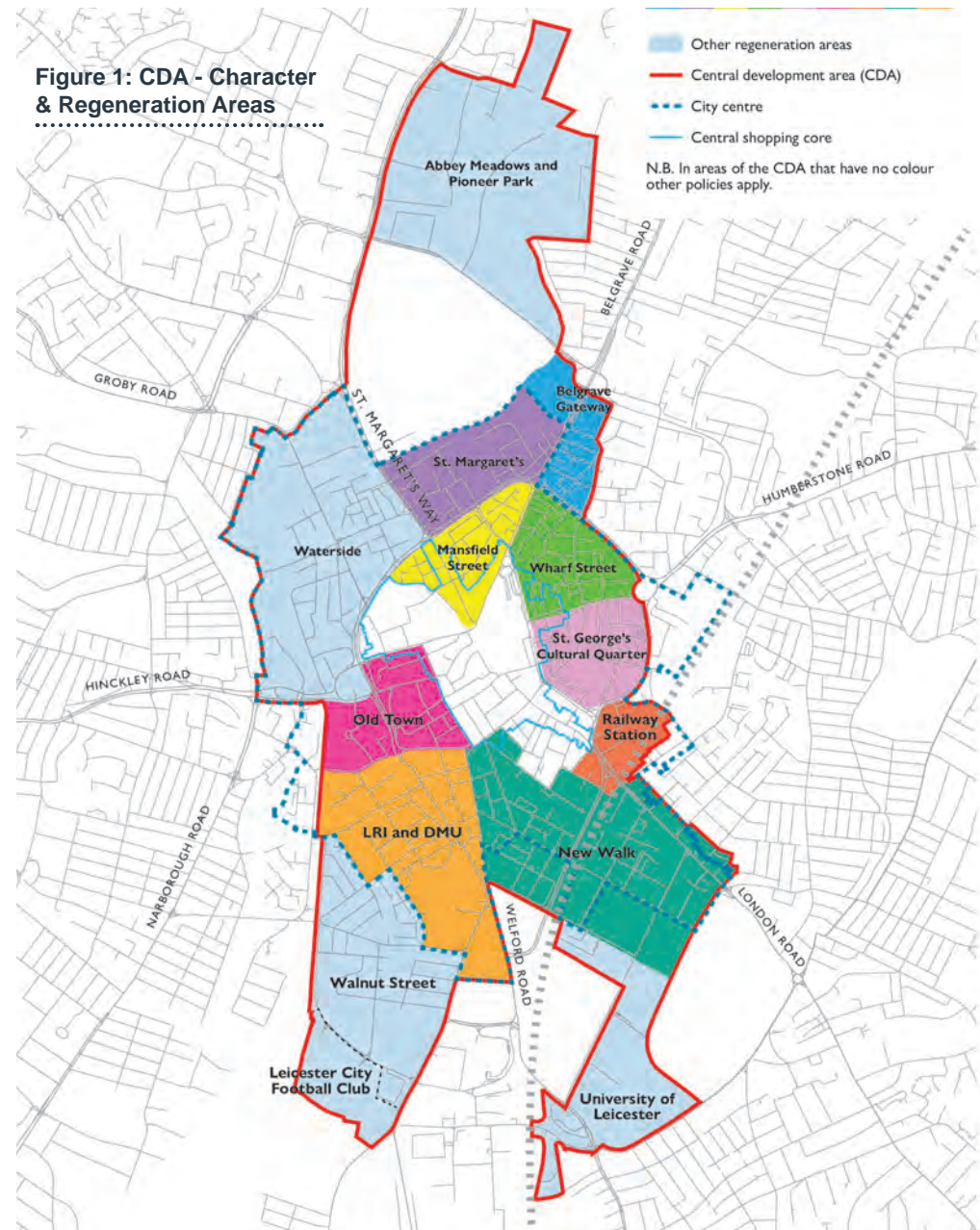
LCC has divided the CDA into 14 distinct areas, including 9 character areas and 5 other regeneration areas, to recognise the individual context of each area and for future policy to be based on the area's defining characteristics. These are:

Nine (9) Character Areas:

1. Wharf Street,
2. Mansfield Street,
3. St. Margaret's,
4. St. Georges Cultural Quarter,
5. Belgrave Gateway,
6. LRI & DMU,
7. Railway Station,
8. Old Town and
9. New Walk.

Five (5) Other Regeneration Areas:

1. Abbey Meadows and Pioneer Park,
2. Waterside,
3. Leicester City Football Club,
4. University of Leicester and
5. Walnut Street.



1.2. Townscape Appraisal & Character

What is Character?

Character is what defines a place. It's the main factors that help us distinguish one area from another based on its uniqueness and distinctiveness.

The report of CABE 'By Design' (2000) describes 'Character' as "A place with its own identity". Its objective as a key urban design principle in regeneration and the built environment is to "promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture" (By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System Towards Better Practice, CABE, 2000).

What is a Character Area?

"An area with a distinct character, identified so much so that it can be protected or enhanced by planning policy" (The Dictionary of Urbanism, 2005).

The nine character areas identified by LCC (see page 4) can be categorised by the following layers:

- History & Heritage
- Urban Grain & Built Form
- Scale, Height & Massing
- Socio-economic Characteristics
- Land Uses
- Open Spaces
- Access & Movement
- Frontages & Legibility
- Architecture, Materiality & Details

What is the Townscape?

The term 'townscape' is used to describe a town's overall character and structure. It can encompass the variety and quality of buildings in a given area, as well as the relationships between those buildings and the different types of space between and around them. It refers to the interaction between individuals and a place, as well as to the role it plays in shaping the environment for our daily lives. It is the consequence of how people connect with, understand, and experience the various components of our environment, both natural and cultural (Natural England, 2014).

As the vast majority of UK residents now live in urban areas, the nature and quality of the urban environment have a significant impact on people's life and well-being. Threats to local identity and distinctiveness are frequently a source of public concern.

Change is an inevitable aspect of a living, dynamic built environment. However, in order to achieve sustainable outcomes, change must be comprehended in context. Proper and detailed information on the nature of the environment that may be changed, as well as the implications or impacts that change will have on it, will be critical to achieving beneficial and generally supported change.

What is Townscape Appraisal?

A townscape appraisal forms the basis for managing change effectively. It can help to inform development strategies so that new development contributes positively to the townscape's character, supports local identity, and generates built-up areas that are appealing to live, work and visit. The appraisal, which is accompanied by maps, illustrations and pictures, explains how a place has changed over time in response to natural, social and economic forces and how this is represented in its streets, architecture and used materials.

The location, design, scale, massing and type of development that can be accommodated within an area can all be guided by the understanding of the area's intrinsic character and attributes. A townscape appraisal is a well-established technique for assessing the effects of change, informing decision-making and demonstrating the government's commitment to protecting and improving the character of our cities and towns.

Trends and drivers of change, including urban sprawl and regeneration, climate change, increasing use of electric vehicles and commuting patterns, can all be taken into account when appraising a townscape. These data can be utilised to create mechanisms that will guide positive decisions, activities and actions in the future to conserve, manage and promote distinctive townscape character. The results of a townscape character appraisal can be used to guide other processes such as judging and evaluating townscape quality or value, or deciding the appropriateness of specific development.

1.3. Overarching Policy

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021 in paragraphs 126 – 128 under Section 12, Achieving Well-designed Places, states the importance of plans creating a clear design vision and expectations, at an early stage, tailored to the context and an area's defining characteristics. This will support the creation of high-quality buildings and spaces and give applicants some certainty on what is likely to be acceptable.

To support the NPPF objectives and further comply with Local Plan policy, additional evidence data and clarifications towards the appropriateness of future development will be outlined within appropriate Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that will follow. Such an example is the Waterside SPD adopted in 2015, which successfully promotes and encourages regeneration, creating certainty and developer confidence.

The Townscape Analysis and Design Guidance evidence base document, one for each character area, intends to provide a framework to meet the NPPF objectives. Furthermore, a 'Quality Design Framework' for Leicester will be produced by the Council to provide extra clarifications and expand upon aspects of design policies within the Local Plan.

NPPF paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the quality of the overall area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development,
- are visually attractive because of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping,
- are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities),
- establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming, and distinctive places to live, work and visit,
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public spaces) and support local facilities and transport networks, and
- create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

12. Achieving Well-Designed Places

126. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

127. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.

128. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences. Design Guides and codes provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high level of design. Their geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety.

NPPF Extract (July 2021): Paragraphs 126 - 128

1.4. Townscape Character Management

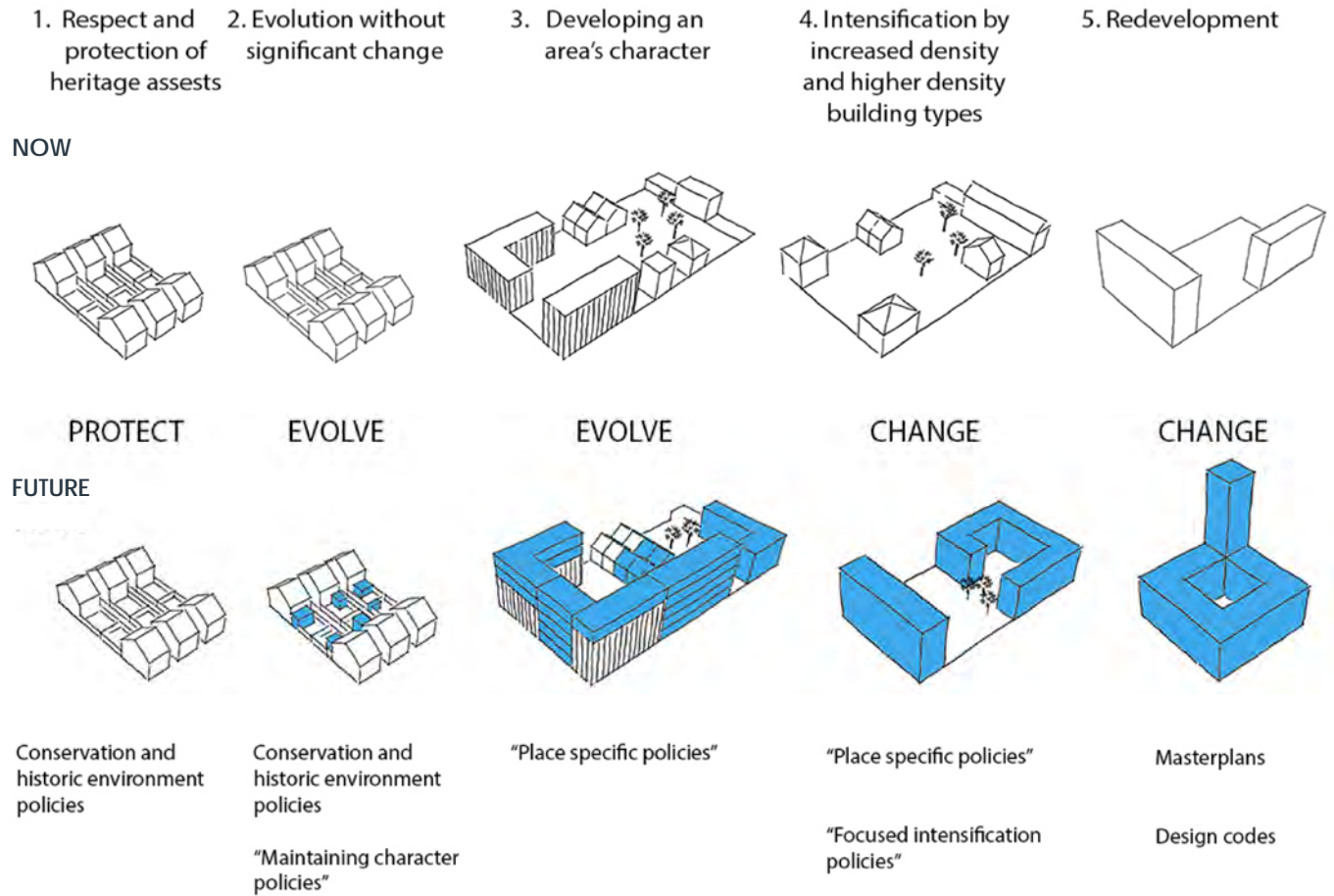
To inform and guide policy, it is helpful to understand the level and scope of change that the specified character areas are likely to undergo during the plan period and beyond. Some of the character areas will predominantly include heritage assets, with few development opportunities, requiring protection to conserve their very distinct character. Others may undergo significant residential growth and intensification and will require guidance to manage this growth cohesively and comprehensively, also considering the need for new infrastructure as residential neighbourhoods grow.

The Townscape Management Options used by the London Borough of Croydon in their Local Plan 2018 used a methodology to simplify growth, which is relevant to the Leicester context. They outline five options to categorise and understand this level of change and how it will be managed through planning policy. These options are:

1. Respect and protection of heritage assets
2. Evolution without significant change
3. Developing an area's character
4. Intensification by increased density and higher density building types
5. Redevelopment

The Townscape Analysis and Design Guidance for each character area will establish the relevant Townscape Management Option(s) attributed to that area to develop policies and clear guidance for development that is tailored to the circumstances and context of each character area.

Figure 2: Character Areas Townscape Management



© London Borough of Croydon, Croydon Local Plan 2018 (Feb 2018).

1.5. The Scope

Leicester is an important and spatially unique place, recognised for its heritage, vibrancy and multiculturalism. However, Leicester's city centre and the greater CDA is not without its challenges. The growth agenda, widespread regeneration and the value of the urban fabric are of particular importance. Furthermore, to support the review of its Local Plan, LCC is required to ensure that the Local Plan is based on sound, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the spatial, economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area (Paragraphs 31, 32, 33 NPPF). The Council is therefore revisiting and revising its existing evidence base to ensure it is robust and relevant for today and tomorrow.

A detailed 'Townscape Analysis and Design Guidance' evidence document has been prepared for each character area to identify, explain and illustrate the diverse identity, components and peculiarities that can be found within them. Through desktop and site analysis, various characteristics that inform local distinctiveness have been recognised.

Each evidence document focuses on one character area, providing the base of guiding future development, identifying opportunities for improvements, addressing urban design or spatial weaknesses and highlighting development opportunities and even intensification potentials. It responds to the requirements of the NPPF, building on the success of the Waterside SPD, while supporting policies and development guidance that is tailored to the circumstances and context of each character area.

Main objectives:

- Thorough understanding of the character, components and identity of each character area, providing the analytical basis for further decision-making.
- Identify potential development constraints, together with aspects that could present future development opportunities.
- Identify growth potential within each character area, developing a coherent vision and objectives for the area's development.

Delivering change may require amendments to current planning policy or difficult decisions to be made regarding the current urban grain and layout and land use development. It is not the purpose of each document to make detailed recommendations about the future of these areas but rather to identify areas where change could be positive for local neighbourhoods and where the existing character makes a particular (negative or positive) contribution to its context. Each document forms the evidence base to inform future planning policies and any relevant supporting guidance. It provides a strategic assessment and analysis of the character, distinctiveness and qualities found within the CDA.

It is expected that in time this guidance will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, which will also focus on directing and prioritising pro-active interventions which may include public realm, transport, heritage, streetscapes etc. and objectives and townscape guidance specific to each character area.

1.6. The Structure

The document is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Defines the development context, providing vital definitions for the comprehensive understanding and further usage of the present document. Furthermore, chapter 1 defines the document's scope and structure, while presenting the townscape character management framework through which every character area is evaluated and further developed.

Chapter 2 – Townscape Analysis

Sets out a detailed analysis of the elements that form the current character of the studied area, focussing on its components, unique characteristics, defining attributes and existing connections and relations between the built environment and the open spaces that will influence, impact and later define the area's development potential.

Chapter 3 – Townscape Diagnosis

Having critically evaluated all analytical outcomes, chapter 3 presents the main constraints and development opportunities that can be found within each character area.

Chapter 4 – Guiding the Future

Establishes a high-level vision for the area's future development, setting the main objectives and parameters through which development will take place.



2

Townscape Analysis

2. Townscape Analysis

2.1. Location & Context

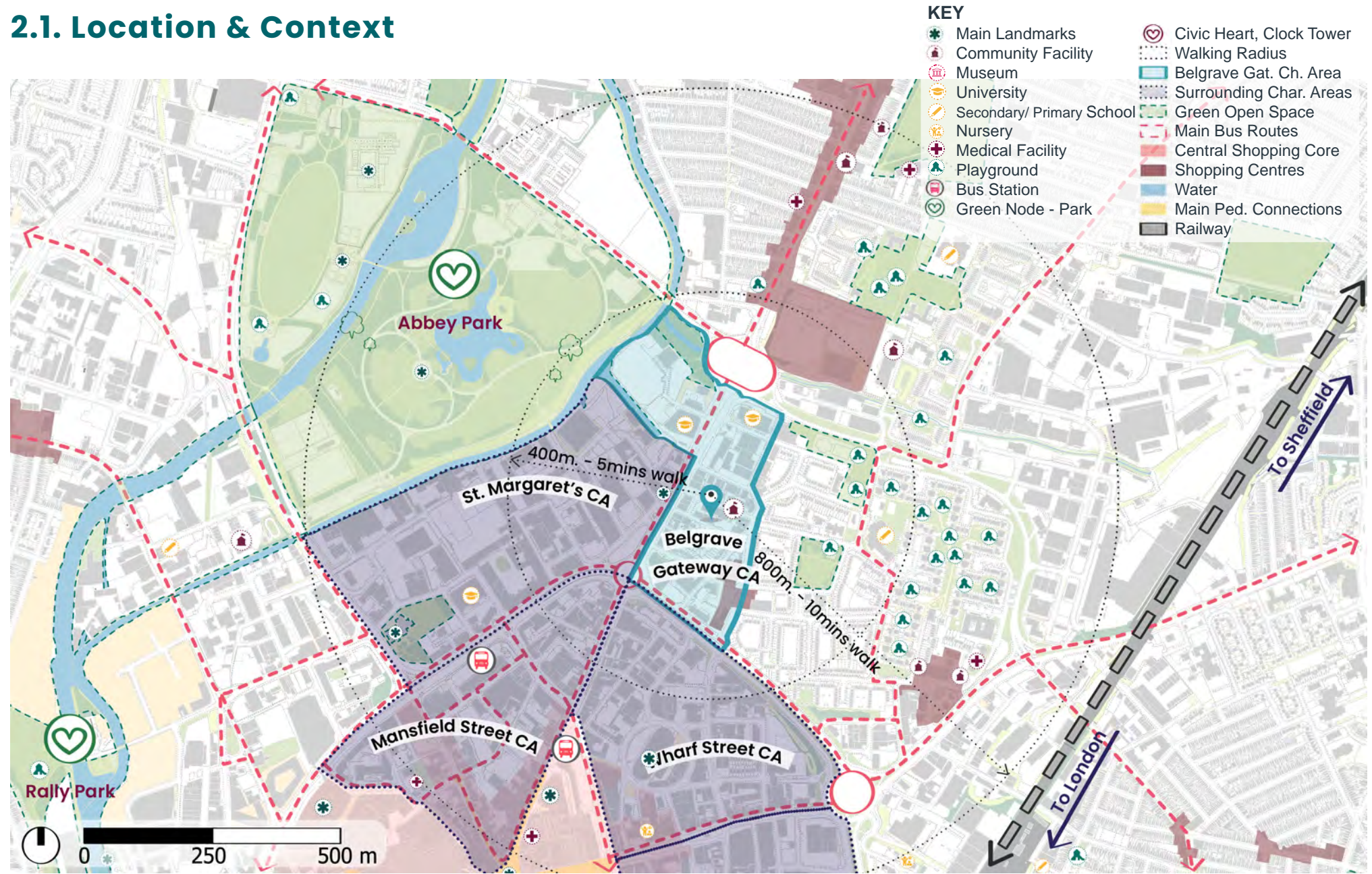


Figure 3: Belgrave Gateway Character Area within the Greater Context
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The Belgrave Gateway character area is located within the CDA, to the north-east of the city centre, connecting Leicester's city centre with the residential neighbourhoods to the east. Surrounded by Mansfield Street, St. Margaret's and Wharf Street character areas, it is a mixture of employment, residential and educational uses. Belgrave Gateway is situated between Belgrave roundabout and Burleys flyover, with more than half of the character area being to the east of the St. Matthew's Estate, while a portion of the area is adjacent to the eastern boundary of Abbey Park.

The Clock Tower, Leicester's civic heart, can be reached within a 10 minutes walk, whereas the two main bus stations (St. Margaret's and Haymarket) can be reachable within a 5 minutes walk. Likewise the Railway Station can also be reached within less than a 20 minutes walk.

Belgrave Gateway character area is bordered by Belgrave Gate (west), St. Matthews Way (south), Wharf Street North/ Russell Square/ Wanlip Street (east) and Abbey Park Road/ Belgrave Cir/ Dysart Way (north). From large industrial buildings to terraced houses and four storeys maisonettes, the character area has much variation. The east of the character area has more of a residential character than that of the west (as one moves towards Belgrave Gate and Abbey Park). The character area has a few heritage assets. Whilst not in the character area, the Grade II* Listed St. Mark's Church (the Empire) is a prominent townscape landmark.

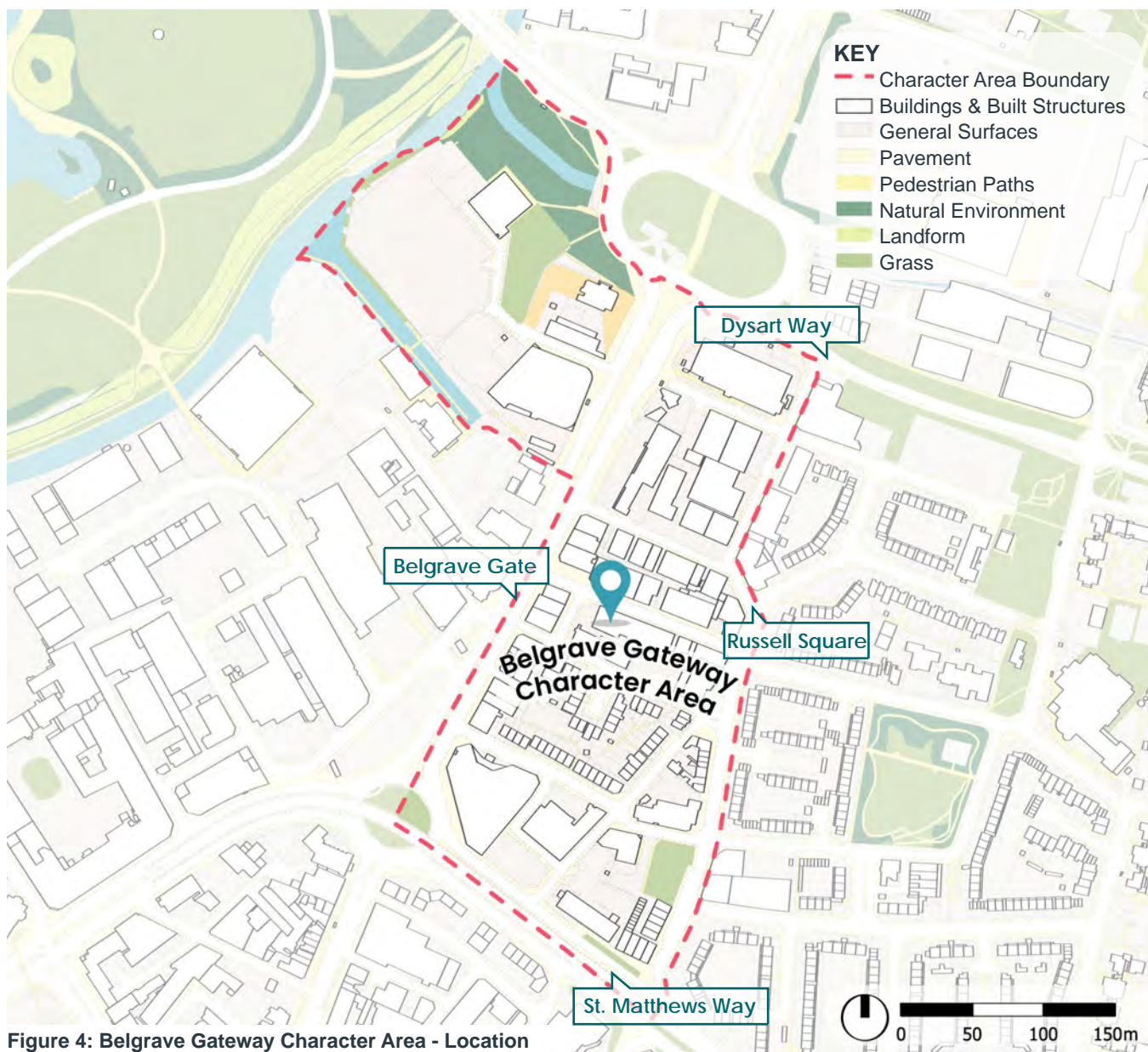


Figure 4: Belgrave Gateway Character Area - Location

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2.2. History & Evolution of Belgrave Gateway

The Belgrave Gateway character area is flanked by Belgrave Gateway to the north west and Wharf Street to the east.



Historic maps are used to illustrate the figure ground from the present day. Heritage assets are highlighted showing their relationship to the historic plans and emphasising their importance in this character area at particular times in the past.

The location of the Belgrave Gateway character area has been marked for further clarity.



1828

Like today Belgrave Gate was a key north-south route (plans as old as 1741 reflect this), the route of the Roman Road, the Fosse Way. A very important transport route that connected the town centre to the public wharf on the Leicester Navigation (canal). Much of Belgrave Gateway was considered part of the historic Wharf Street Area. Running almost parallel to Belgrave Gate through the area was Wharf Street. As the name suggests, it was intended for this route to connect to the centre of the city to the wharf.

1886-87

Belgrave Gateway had a tight urban grain during this period, with predominantly terraced streets being fronted by perimeter blocks. Russell Square, where eight streets converged, was an important central space in the character area. Foundry Square forms a key public space within the setting of St. Mark's Church (the Empire). As the name suggests the church was located in close proximity to large industrial buildings and iron foundries.

The city's Tramway ran along the length of Belgrave Gate. Wharf Street North, Junction Road and Wanlip Street combining to form another key north south route. A key east to west connection is terminated by St. Mark's Church (the Empire) on Belgrave Gate. The former Victoria Model Lodging House on Britannia Street and former boot and shoe factory at 7 Woodboy Street were built circa 1888 and 1898 respectively.

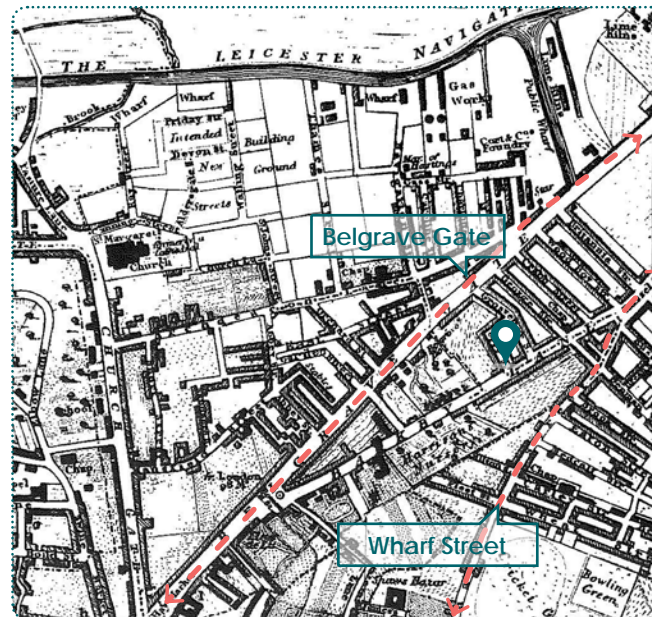


Figure 5: 1828 (Base map from Cockshaw's 1828 map of Leicester - First Development Phase, Wharf Street Area)



Figure 8: Belgrave Road Railway Station Opening 1882, Leicester County Council

1914-16/1940

There are no major changes to the plot and street pattern of the area between 1887 to 1940. However, slum clearances had begun to take place in neighbouring areas, reflecting changes in Planning within the Belgrave Gateway character area too.

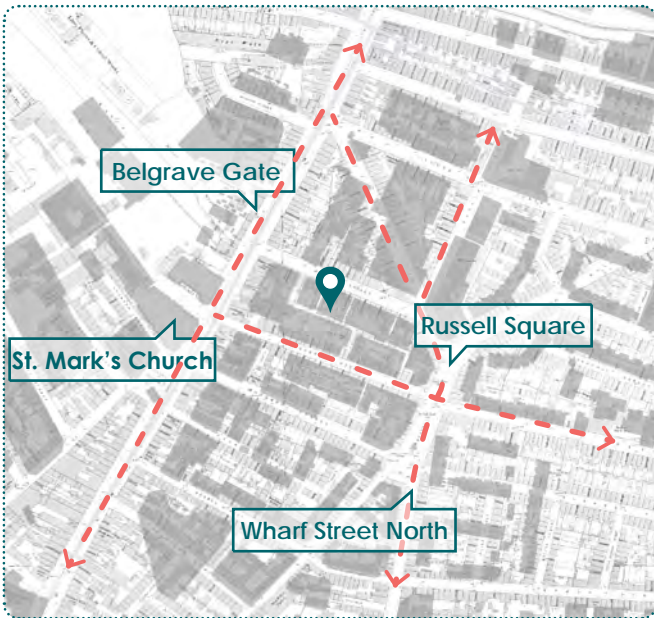


Figure 6: 1886-87

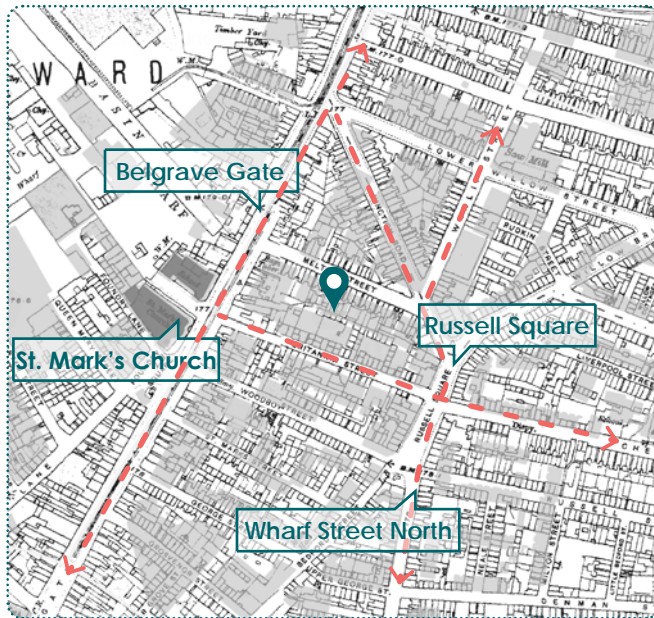


Figure 7: 1914-16

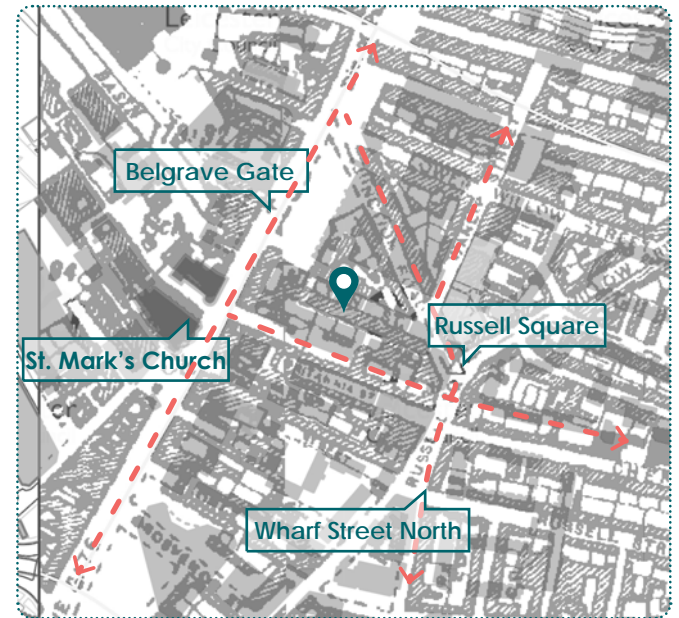


Figure 9: 1940

1952

By the 1950s the slum clearances, see figure 13, which had been on going at Wharf Street since the 1930s and following bombings during World War II, had resulted in the demolition of many buildings that fronted onto Belgrave Gate. The grain of Belgrave Gate became more fragmented, the tramway was removed and Belgrave Gate became primarily a route for motor vehicles.

During the 1950s the clearance of slum housing to the east of the character area took place. The two storey houses were to be replaced by 4 storey maisonettes - leading to a total of 727 new dwellings. These new dwellings formed the St Matthews Estate.

Just to the north of the character area on Belgrave Road, Belgrave Road Railway station was located. The main services from the station were to Peterborough and Grantham, with special summer services to Mablethorpe and Skegness. After being opened in 1882 the station saw regular services, which ended in 1953 and summer specials ending in 1962

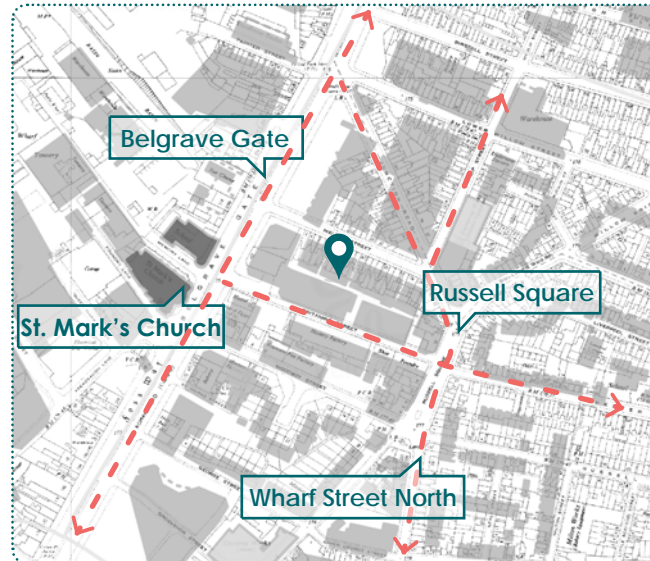


Figure 10: 1952

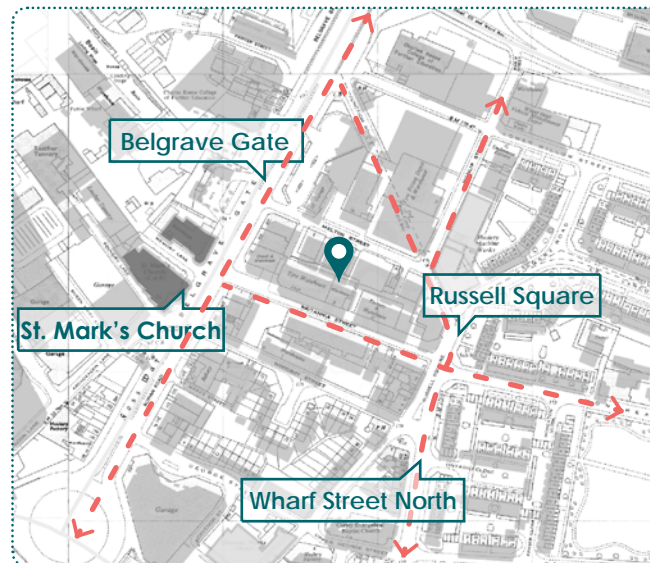


Figure 11: 1962

1962-2010s

There were major changes to the road and street network through the character area. Whilst new terraced housing had been built on Woodboy Street, there is a clear change in grain and character on the blocks to the east of the character area due to the change in style of the dwellings. Many streets, such as Liverpool Street, Russell Street and Chester Street were lost during this period. Junction Road was built on, severing a key connection between Belgrave Gate and Russell Square. The orientation of Junction Road also explains the geometry of the frontage of the factory building located at 1 Junction Street.

The area now consisted of many larger warehouse and factory buildings and the large Charles Keene College of Further Education (named after businessman and Leicester City Council Alderman Charles Keene). Belgrave Gate, to accommodate motor vehicles, was widened. A further sign of the street network now being designed for the motor vehicle in preference of pedestrians was the construction of Belgrave Circle and (as part of the ring road) Burleys Roundabout. In the following decade flyovers were constructed over the roundabouts and in doing so caused great detriment to the character of Belgrave Gateway.

In 2014, as part of the Connecting Leicester programme, Belgrave Flyover was removed and improvements made to pedestrians and cycle connections.



Figure 12: Belgrave Roundabout 2017



Figure 13: Slum Clearance Plans from Leicester City Council Planning Office archives. The Plan is dated from June 1974 and by that time most of the slum clearance illustrated in the plan had already taken place, or if not, had been cancelled and improvements undertaken instead.

2.3. Heritage & Townscape Assets

After reviewing the history and evolution of the Belgrave Gate character area, this sub-chapter presents the main heritage and townscape assets of the area (figure 14).

Additional buildings which make a positive contribution are identified. They are buildings which are not listed, locally listed or within Conservation Areas, however, this classification reflects their importance as part of the townscape of the character area. As such there is a general presumption against the demolition of these buildings.

There are a handful of heritage assets within and around the Belgrave Gateway Area. The main heritage assets are the Grade II* listed St. Mark's Church (the Empire) (1) and its Grade II listed school (1i) (figure 14). The church was first built in 1870s and was at the time surrounded by large industrial buildings. St. Mark's served one of the main working class parishes of Leicester.

There are three locally listed buildings in the character area.

The former Boot and Shoe Factory on Woodboy Street (2) was built in 1898 for G. Wilson & Co Ltd boot manufacturers (figure 14). The building was an important part of Leicester's boot and shoe industry in the 19th and 20th Century. The chimney to the rear of this property is part of the same listing. The old Transformer Station on Painter Street (3) was built in the 1930s in order to change voltage levels between high transmission voltages and lower distribution voltages, between the generating station and consumers (figure 14). The building was

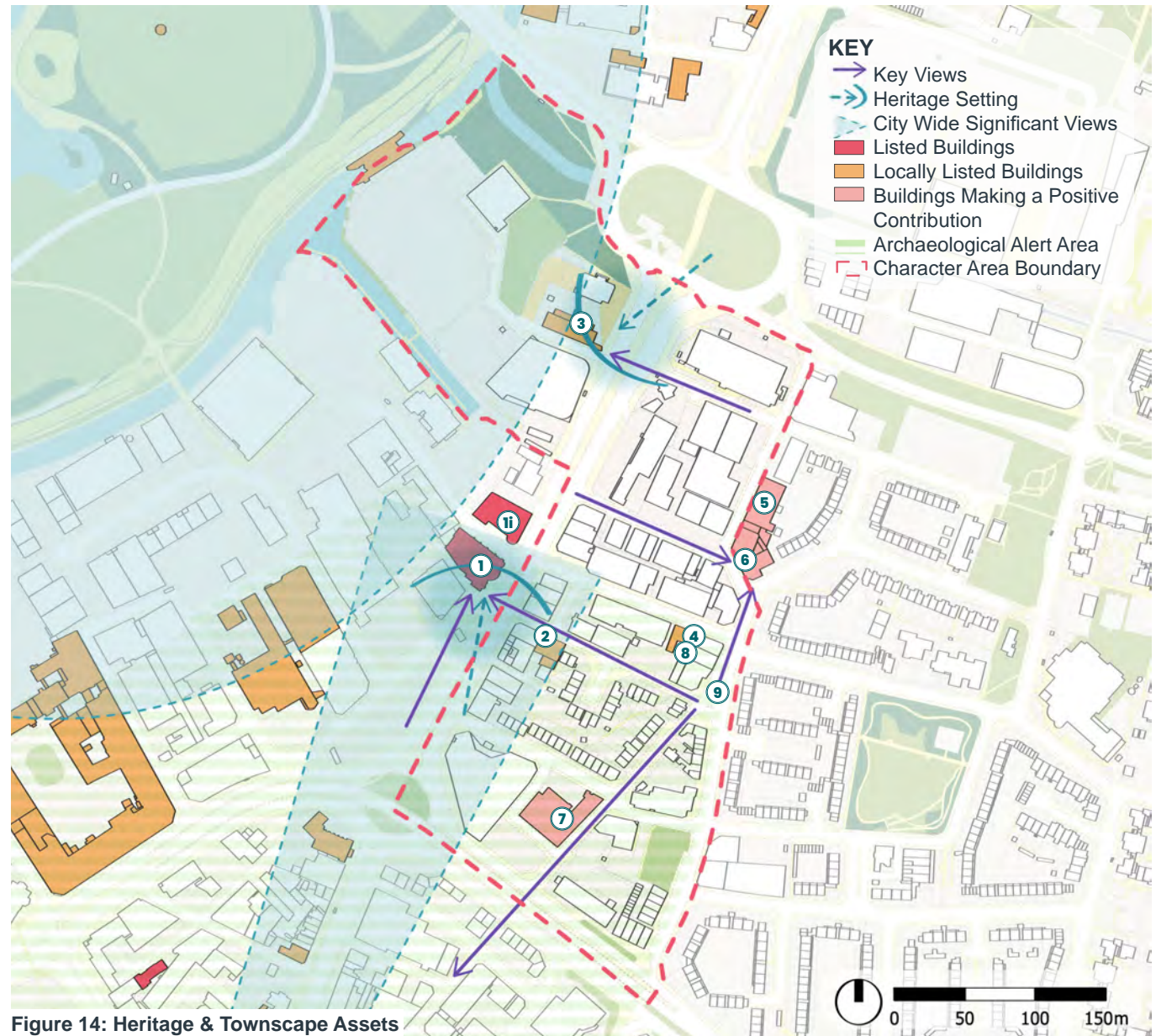


Figure 14: Heritage & Townscape Assets

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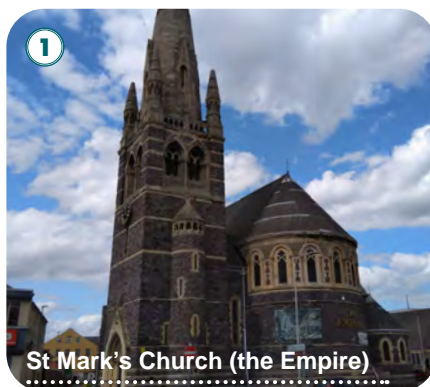
likely connected to the LERO Building (which was located adjacent to the building prior to it's demolition) which provided electricity for the city's tramway system. The former Victoria Model Lodging House on Britannia Street (4) was built circa 1887 for its proprietor Mr Harry Wilkinson to the designs of architect Thomas Hind (figure 14). The lodging house would have provided cheap accommodation for immigrants, predominantly Irish, whilst working within the city. The building has to its front a pair of high-quality ceramic panels that depict an Englishman, an Irishman, a Scotsman and a Welshman (8)(figure 14).

In addition there are three buildings that have been identified as buildings that make a positive contribution to the townscape:

9 Wanlip Street (5) is a two storey former industrial building (figure 14). It is connected to 1 Junction Street (6), also a former industrial building (figure 14). 1 Junction Street terminates the vista from the key north connection along Wharf Street North to Russell Square and reflects the former street geometry in its form. 1-5 Grosvenor Works at 1 Grosvenor Street (7) is recognised as a three storey building making a positive townscape contribution (figure 14).

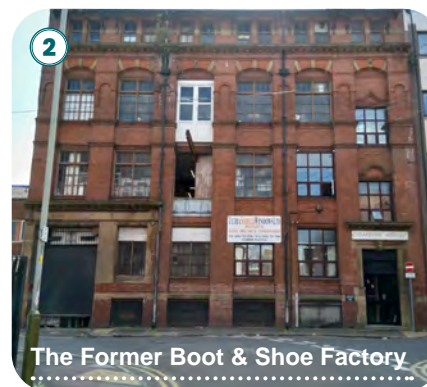
Some of the spaces that were historically the main public spaces and heart of the area, such as Russell Square (9) have since been lost and are not discernable today (figure 14).

* Please see Heritage & Townscape Assets Plan (figure 14) for the location of the following key building frontages.



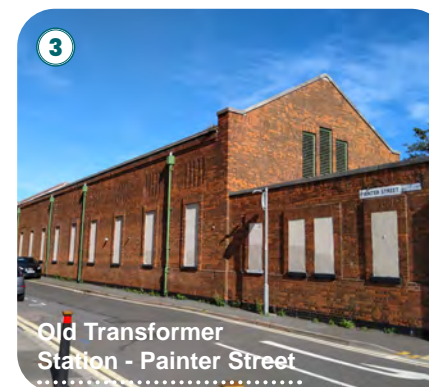
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St Mark's Church (the Empire)



2

The Former Boot & Shoe Factory



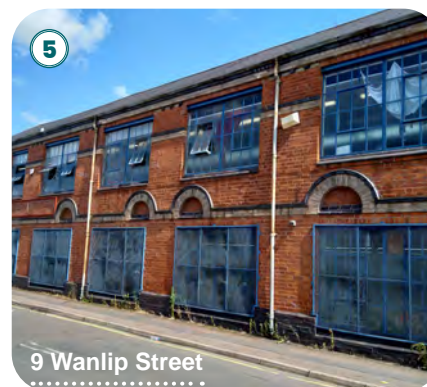
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Old Transformer Station - Painter Street



4

Former Victoria Model Lodging House



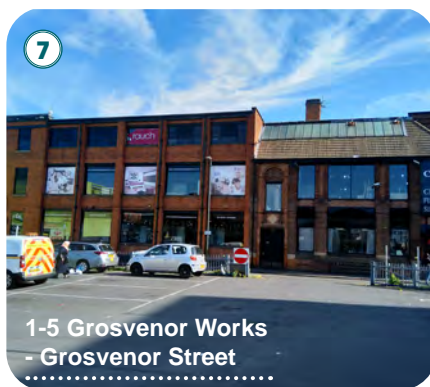
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9 Wanlip Street



6

1 Junction Street



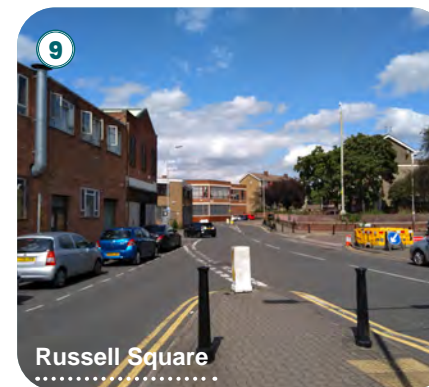
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1-5 Grosvenor Works - Grosvenor Street



8

Detail of Ceramic Panel



9

Russell Square

To the west of Belgrave Gate the wharf, canal and Lime Kiln locks are distinctive heritage features and this cluster of assets are part of the history of the area and the city and the latter are currently not accessible from the area.

It is important to note that the character area is bordered by Abbey Park (a Grade II* registered Park and Garden) to the north west.

Key views to be considered for the setting of heritage assets include two views, that are views and vistas of city wide significance. These include the view originating from the Clock Tower looking north east along Belgrave Gate terminating in St. Mark's Church (the Empire) and the setting of Abbey Park.



Figure 15: The junction of Metcalf Street & Lead Street, Leicester. Lead Street's junction with Carley Street is in the distance, pre 1950s. These streets no longer exist (Leicester Mercury)



Figure 16: William Hughes' shop on the corner of Woodboy Street and Russell Square, 1926 (Leicester Mercury)



Figure 17: Russell Square in the 1950s (BBC)



Figure 18: Belgrave Gate, 1954 (Leicester Mercury)



Figure 19: A typical court of back to back houses off Belgrave Gate (Wharf Street Revisited, Cynthia Brown)



Figure 20: Water fountain on Belgrave Circle, adjacent to the flyover 1974 (Leicester Mercury)



Figure 21: Communal Courtyard, St Matthews Estate Maisonettes 1965 (Leicester Mercury)



Figure 22: Construction of Belgrave Road Flyover 1973 (Leicester Mercury)

Archaeological Alert Area

Leicester has a clearly defined historic core. The historic core formed part of the town's defences, first established in the Roman era and re-adopted in the Medieval Period. The historic core of the city centre is defined as an Archaeological Alert Area and indicates where development is most likely to have an impact upon archaeological remains. Approximately half of the character area (predominantly in the south) lies within the archaeological alert area.

2.4. Urban Grain & Enclosure

Urban grain is usually defined as the pattern of streets and plots/ blocks of an urban area. When the pattern is composed of several small blocks in close proximity it is usually described as fine urban grain, a common characteristic of historic urban centres or areas that have not been car dominated.

Clarity of layout is crucial and is usually achieved through careful arrangement of buildings and spaces, taking priority over roads and car parking. Perimeter blocks are commonly used to achieve successful development through connected streets and well-defined frontages. Fragmented urban grain identifies locations where perimeter blocks have been lost over time to the detriment of the townscape.

The street and block pattern is varied across the area, mostly dependent on the current use. To the north of the area the perimeter blocks are larger and the fine grain of previous residential uses has made way for new factories and warehouses. To the west of Belgrave Gate there is a large undeveloped block with the Leicester College building fronting Belgrave Gate as the main use. This block is even larger if we consider it in relation to the most northern block in the St. Margaret's character area.

To the middle of the area to the east of Belgrave Gate, much finer grain is evident, the street pattern is permeable and frontages are well defined, mainly due to the residential use. To the south, perimeter blocks are larger but the street pattern remains permeable.

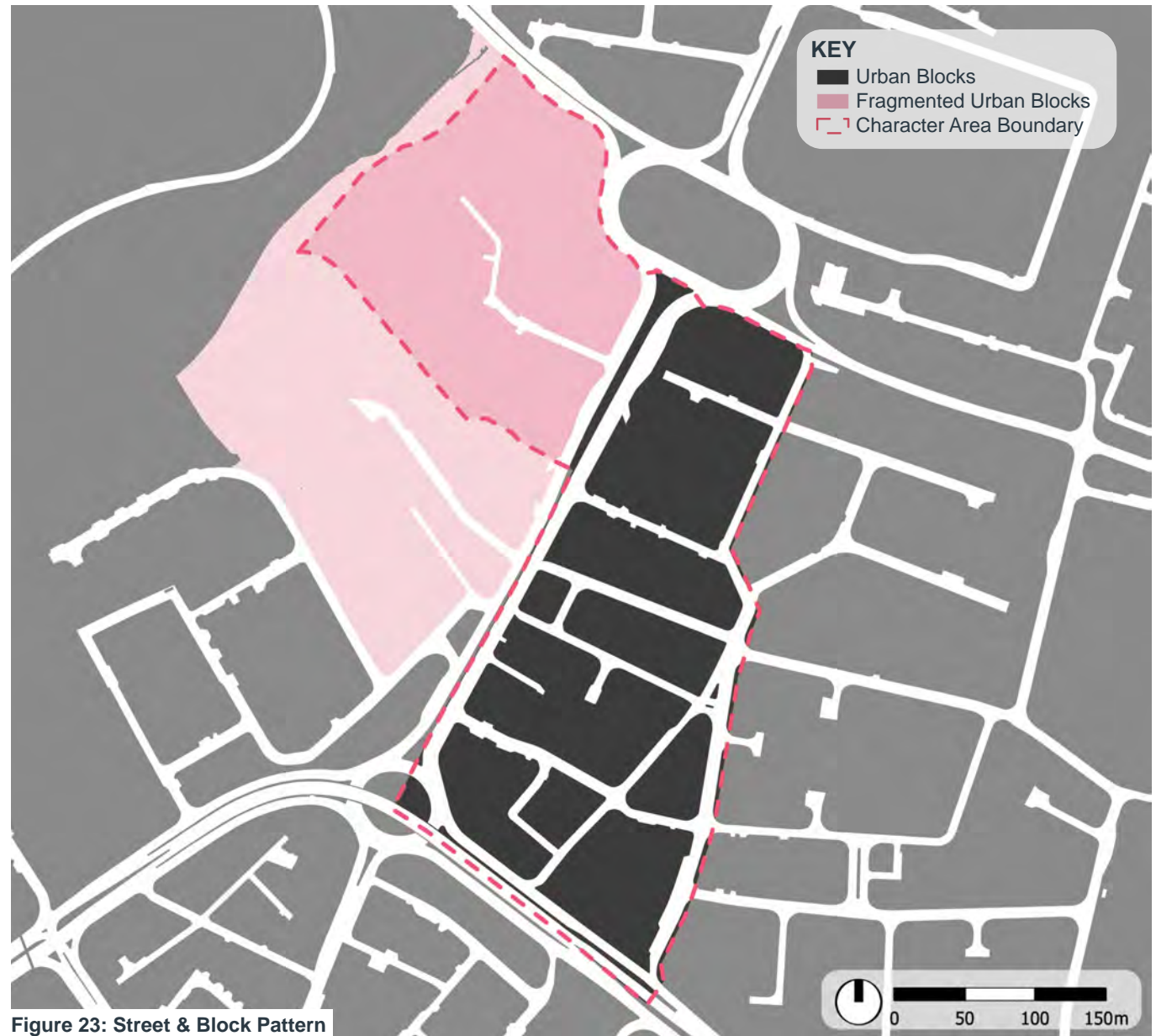


Figure 23: Street & Block Pattern

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Successful places incorporate a good sense of enclosure and definition, enabling places to be experienced as structured. They usually have a strong building line in combination with well-defined, well-connected and well-designed perimeter blocks, boundaries, streets and public spaces. Strong frontages, local markers and gateways are further elements of the townscape, contributing to the familiarity of a place, its story, character and distinctiveness, which forge a sense of belonging and pride.

The sense of enclosure to the streets and spaces varies across the area, representative of the changes over time. Generally, the streets that are historically well established are well defined and enclosed and include Wharf Street North, Bedford Steet North, Britannia Street and Woodboy Street.

Streets adjacent to the employment uses to the north are poor, with buildings set back within plots and poor frontages, The enclosure that was once characteristic of Russell Square, as a vibrant and well used public space in the area, is no longer discernable.

Given its prominence as a main gateway into the city centre, Belgrave Gate lacks enclosure, as a result of variations in building line, heights, plot widths and the variety of uses. There is a lack of cohesion and harmony.

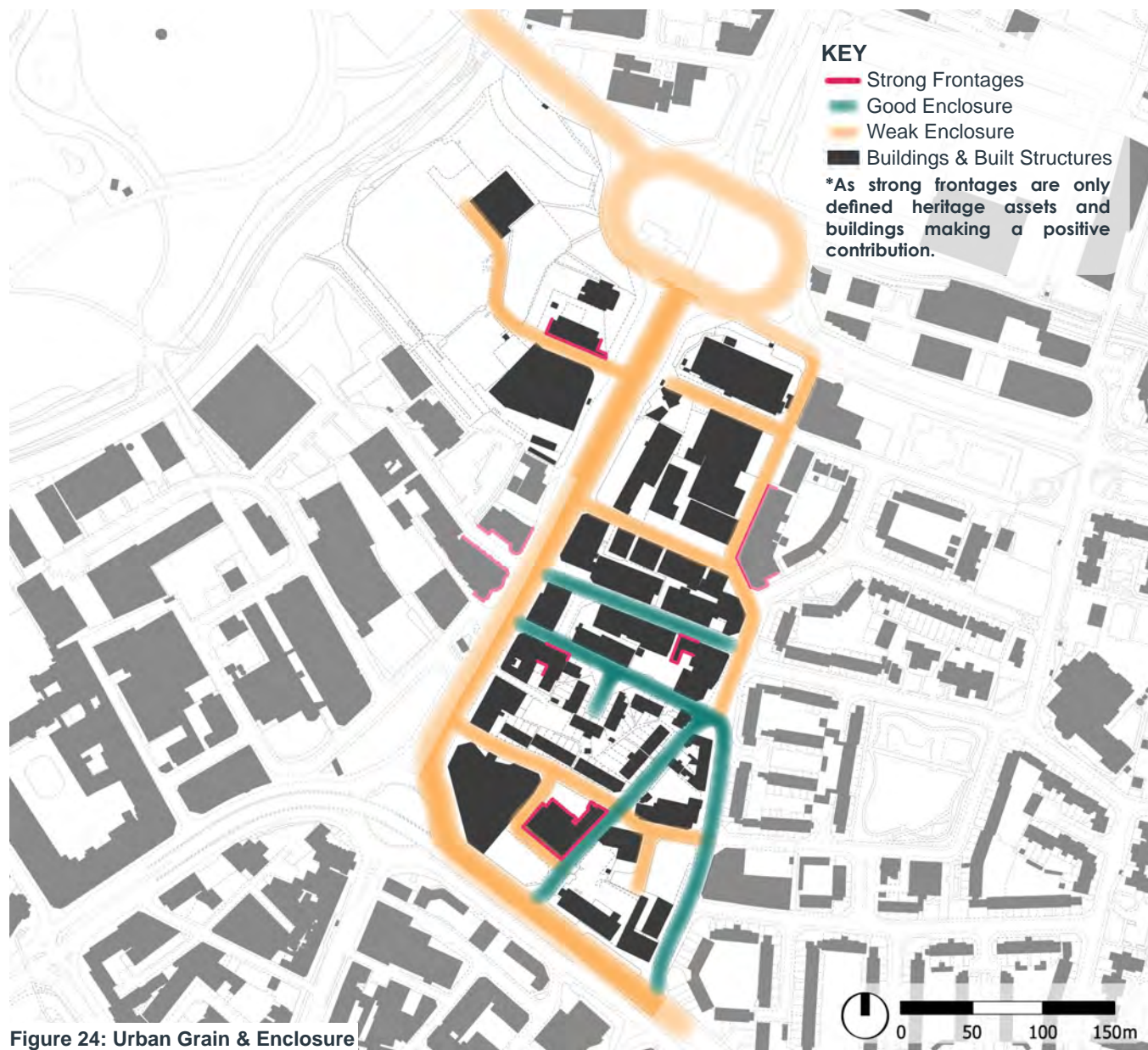


Figure 24: Urban Grain & Enclosure

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2.5. Height & Massing

Context

Five main height categories have been defined, in accordance with the 'Tall Development in Leicester' evidence base document, where any building/ built structure above 24 metres is considered as 'tall' and any above 45 metres as 'super tall'. Buildings/ built structures between 21 and 24 metres, although not perceived as tall, fall within a transition zone between what is and is not tall. Such buildings will need to be considered with care. Furthermore, another category that has been identified is the 'tall in context' buildings/ built structures, including buildings/ built structures of any height that are relatively taller than those within their surroundings. To note 3m is broadly equivalent to one residential storey.

Belgrave Gateway is generally of low scale, including the street of Belgrave Gate. The majority of buildings within the Belgrave Gateway, be it residential or commercial, are below 9m in height with a few clusters of 9 - 21m to the Belgrave Gate frontage.

At a height of 15m and 18m Leicester College is the tallest building in the area and is considered tall in context. However, in terms of structure, the spire of St. Mark's Church (the Empire) is the tallest structure, with a height of 51m, and is prominent on the skyline of Belgrave Gateway and an important townscape marker for legibility.

At the rear of the locally listed former Boot and Shoe Factory on Woodboy Street the factory's chimney is a tall structure (also locally listed) in relation to the immediate context.

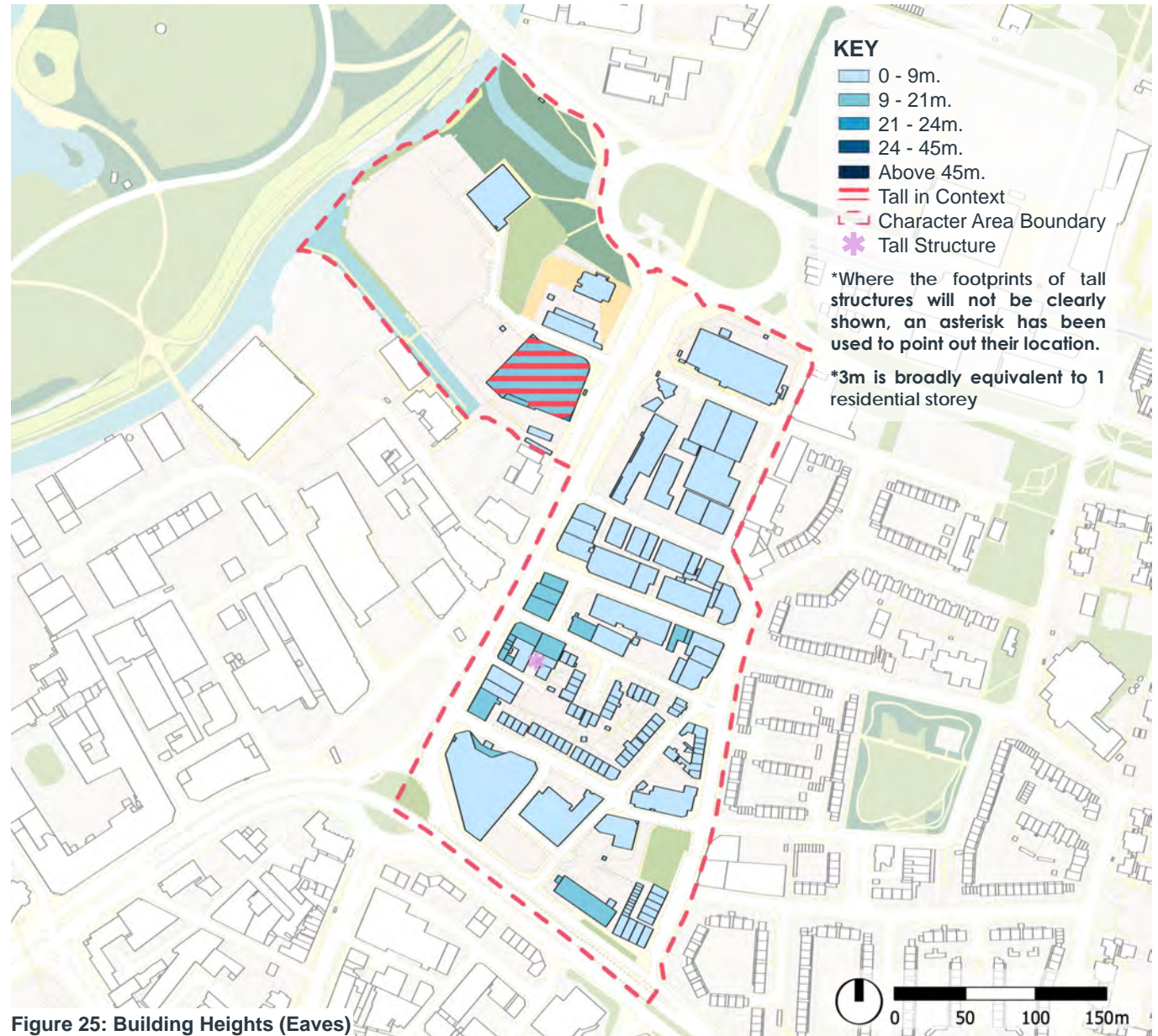


Figure 25: Building Heights (Eaves)

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Planning History

The character area has a low level of planning activity.

2.6. Land Uses

There are a variety of uses within the Belgrave Gateway Area. There was a great number of manufacturing and industrial uses in the first half of the 20th century. The industrial heritage of the area is still evident today with many of the land uses within the area being industrial, particularly to the north of the area east of Belgrave Gate.

Within the north of the character area west of Belgrave Gate, where the Abbey Park Campus of Leicester College is situated, there are some buildings with an educational use, such as the Technology and Engineering Centre. Retail uses are located mainly along Belgrave Gate and Wharf Street North where there is the local centre with retail uses and a few community facilities.

Housing is generally limited to two perimeter blocks in the south east, the terraced houses on the block between Woodboy Street and George Street and the triangular block between Bedford Street North and Wharf Street North. There are also flats above the shops in the local centre.

There are places of worship and some community uses pepper potted in the area.

The retention of employment uses within the northern and eastern portions of the area is important for the mix of the city centre and the availability of essential employment land. Redevelopment for residential use would only be encouraged along the Belgrave Gate frontage and vacant development sites, although opportunities to create a better integrated development of residential and employment uses could be explored.

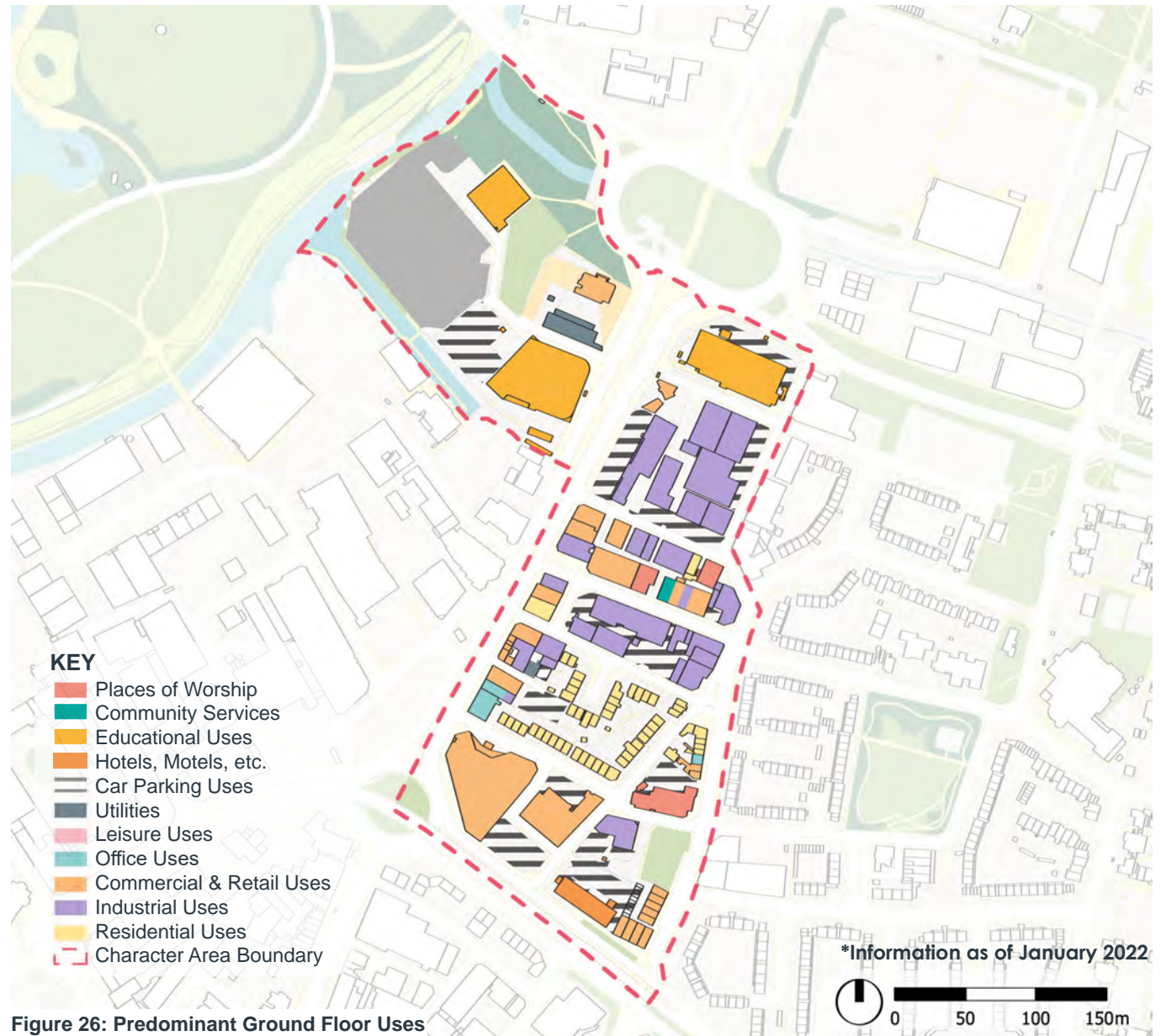
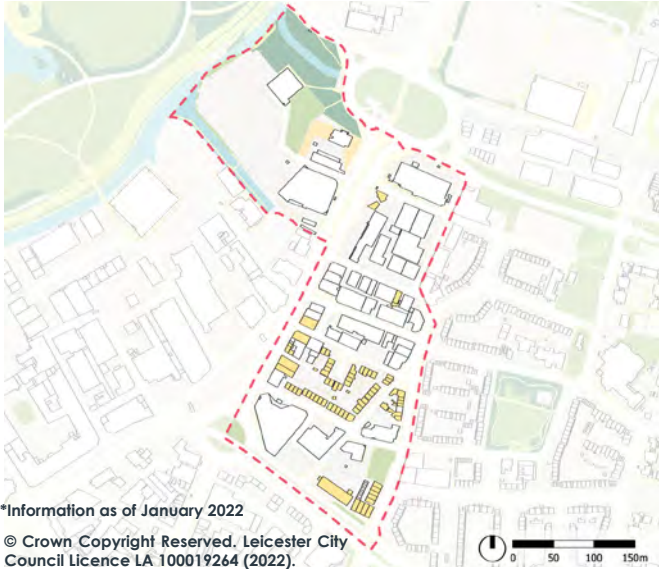


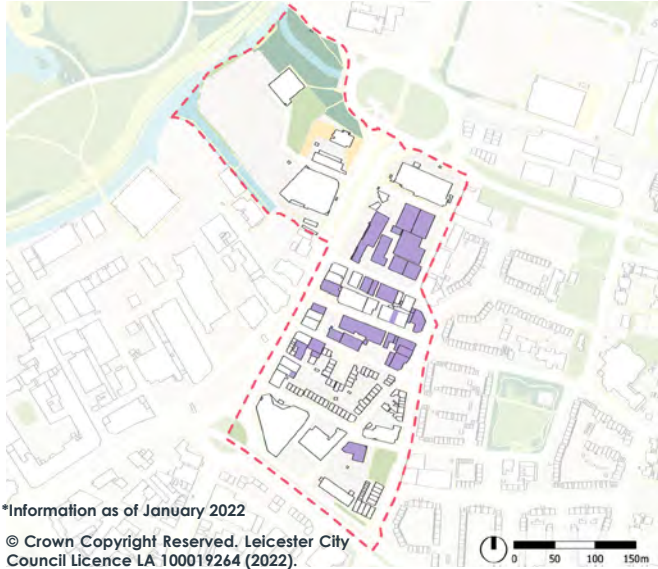
Figure 26: Predominant Ground Floor Uses

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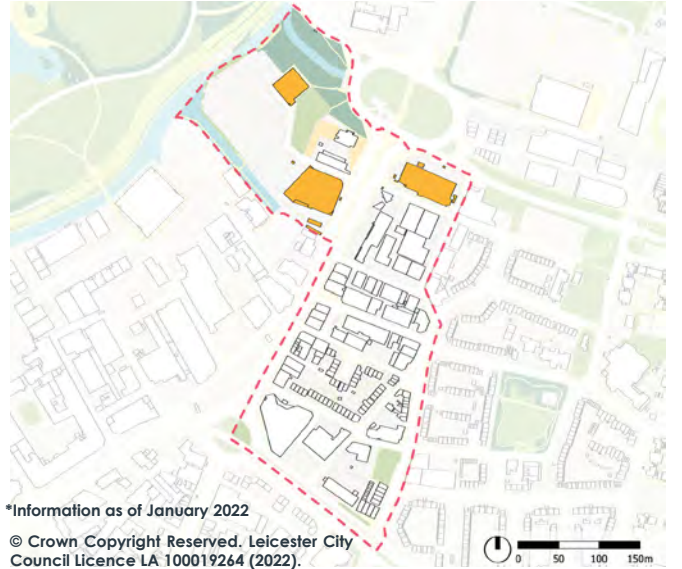
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Figure 27: Residential



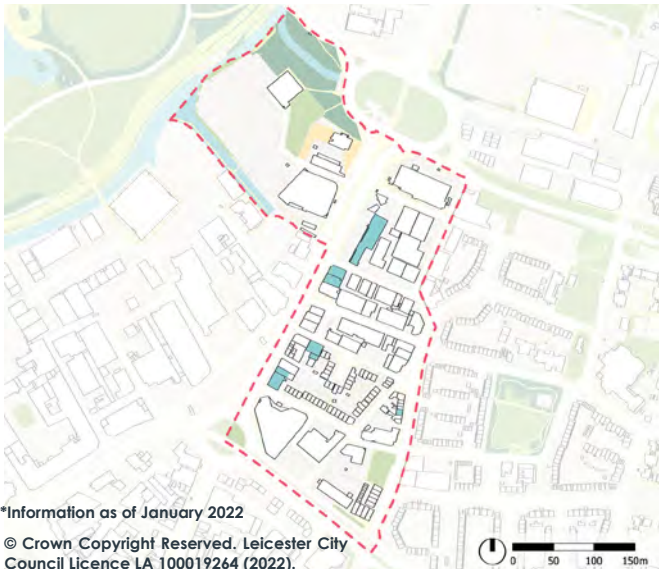
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Figure 28: Industrial



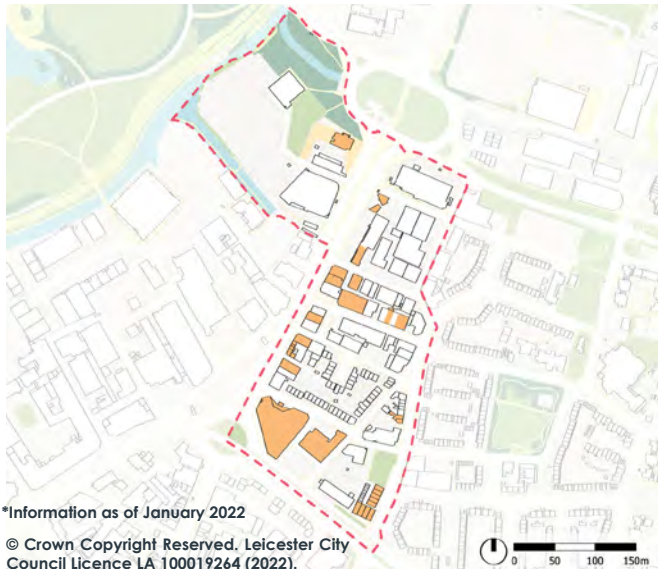
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Figure 29: Education



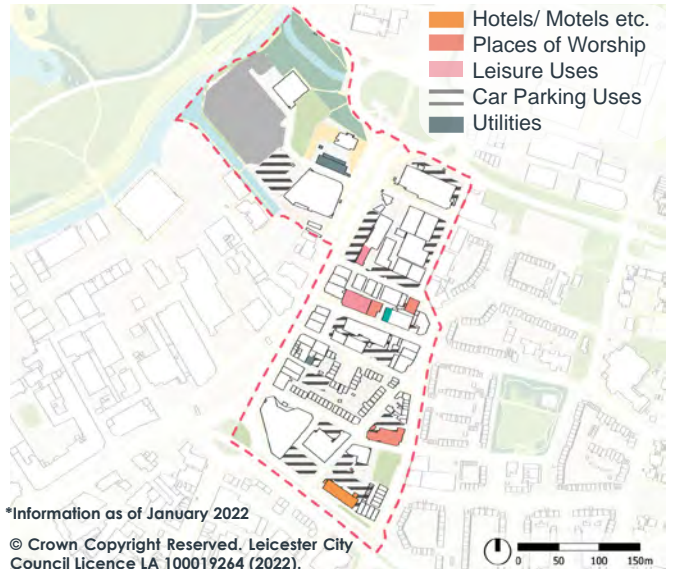
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Figure 30: Office



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Figure 31: Commercial & Retail



- Hotels/ Motels etc.
- Places of Worship
- Leisure Uses
- Car Parking Uses
- Utilities

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Figure 32: Miscellaneous

2.7. Community Infrastructure & Influence

Within the character area there are a small number of facilities that support the existing and neighbouring communities. This includes a number of places of worship and education centres for different religions, a local centre to the south of the area and along Wharf Street North, providing a newsagents, cafés, take-aways and hairdressers. Supermarkets are also available.

Outside the area, Abbey Park and the open spaces and sports and play facilities of Cruyff Court and the Multi Use Games Area and Kamloops / Bushy Park are within 5 minutes walk. Taylor Road Primary school is also within 5 minutes walk located to the east of the area.

Facilities that serve the wider city include the Leicester City College's Abbey park campus and the Technology and Engineering Centre to the north of the area.

The Belgrave Gate character area is connected both visually and physically to the wider city but also is very much an established community well integrated with the surrounding neighbourhoods and communities.

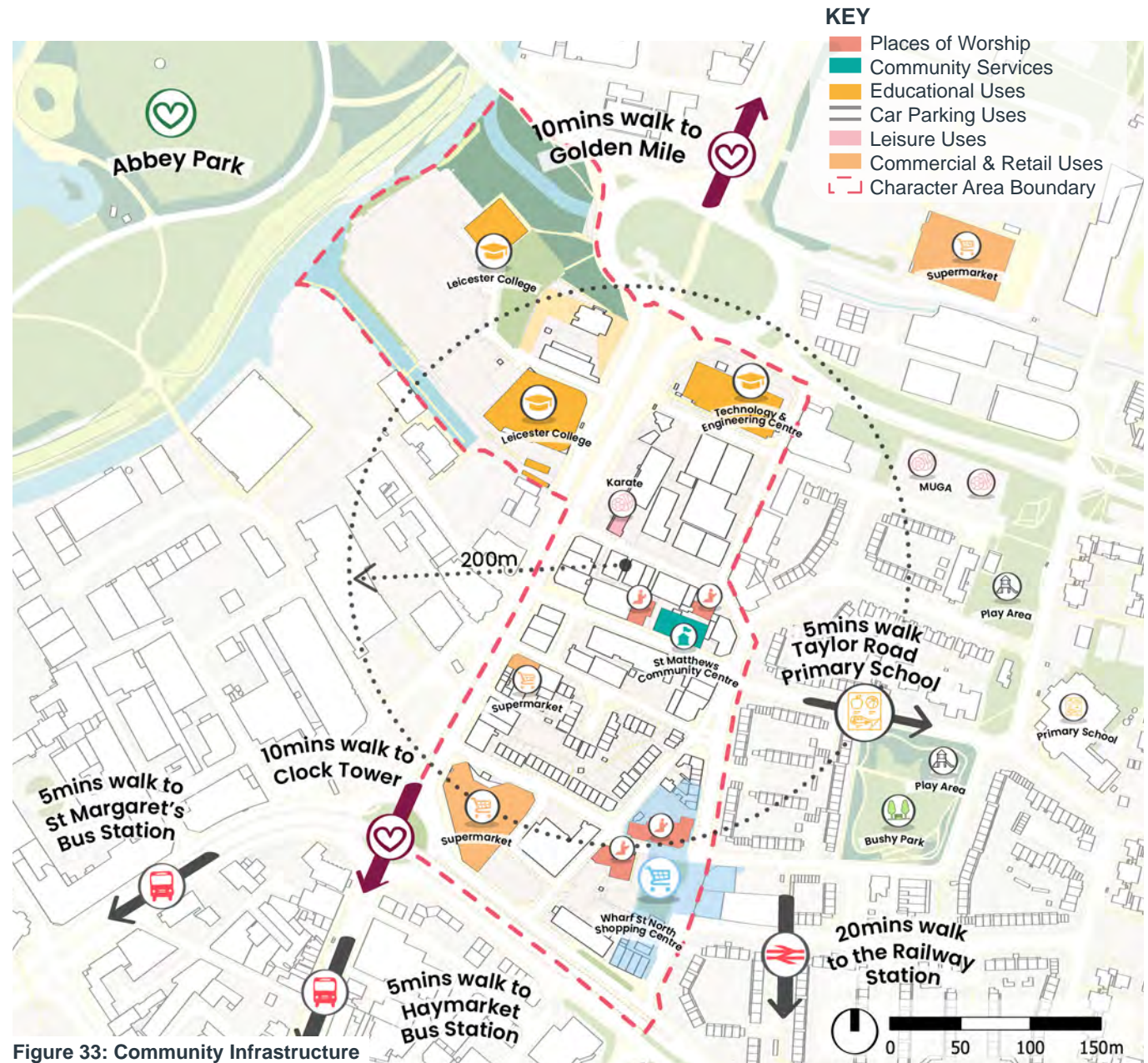


Figure 33: Community Infrastructure

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2.8. Housing & Tenure

Considering the Belgrave Gate character area, its residential coverage is relatively small compared to, in particular, the industrial uses to the north. The south east of the area, is however, located adjacent to the well established residential neighbourhood of St. Matthews and it feels very much connected to this place.

A large proportion of the housing is terraced family homes, which is most welcome in order to achieve a mix of homes within the city centre. The flats in the area are mostly smaller scale flats above retail in the local centre to the south, along Wharf Street North and to the frontage of Belgrave Gate.

Given the mix of uses in the area, and the impact of employments uses, the amenity and outlook of many of the homes are compromised and the public realm is generally poor.

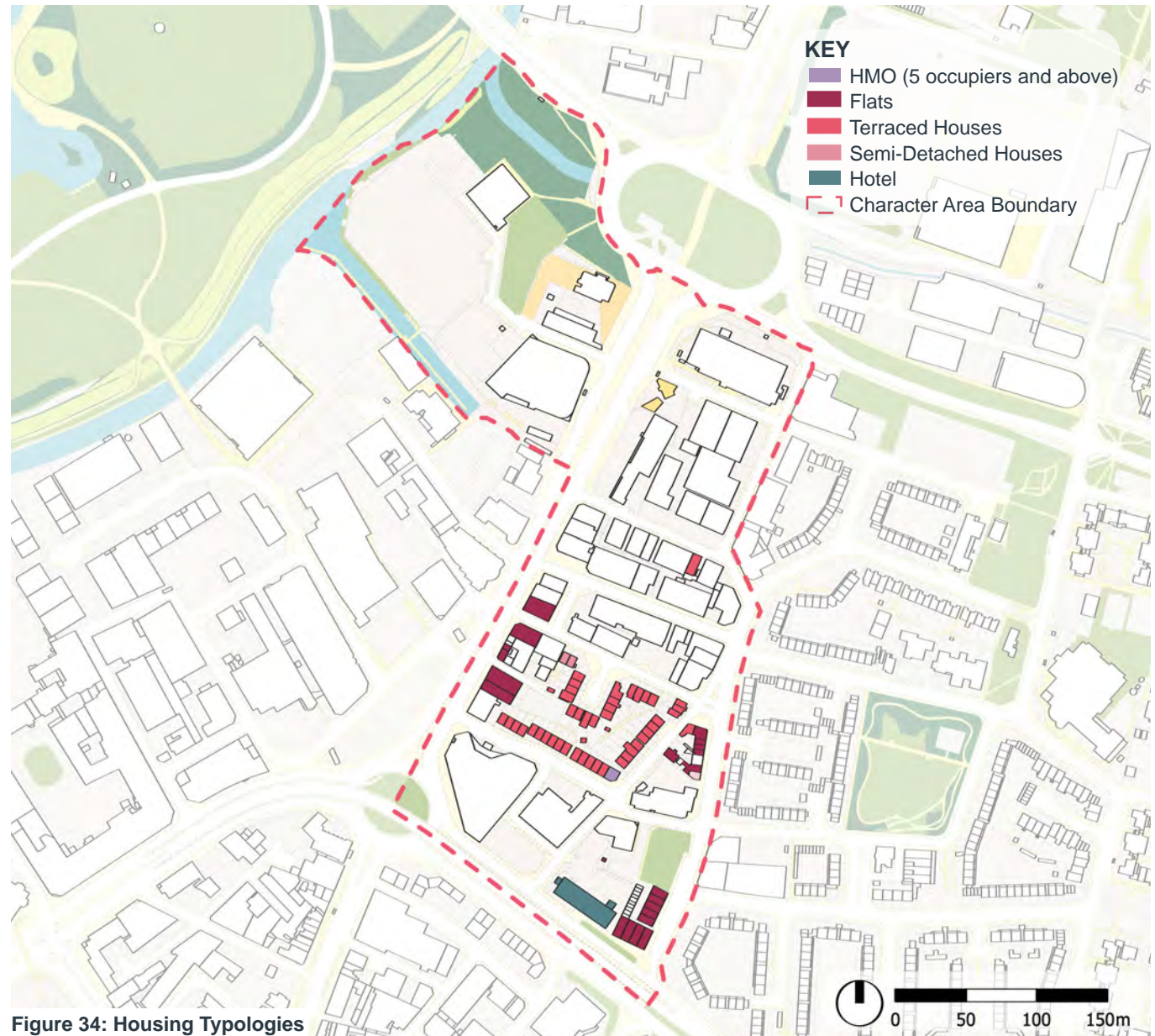


Figure 34: Housing Typologies

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2.9. Open Spaces & Public Realm

There are no public spaces within the area, and whilst improvements have been made to Belgrave Gate, the public realm is generally poor, which is particularly acute for the residential area to the south.

Outside the area, there are public spaces in the adjacent St. Matthews area which serve that community and neighbourhood. Within 5 minutes walk to the north of Willow Street is the Cruyff Court and Multi Use Games Area which also contains, alongside multi sports courts, an outdoor gym and a play park. Also, within 5 minutes walk is Kamloops / Bushy Park which has another play area and provides flexible open space enclosed with mature trees. The park serves the neighbourhood and is well connected to the local centre and adjacent community facilities. Both spaces are well overlooked.

Foundry Square is also within 5 minutes walk but is a very urban space and would not be used as a destination for relaxation, play and recreation.

Abbey Park is within 10 minutes walking distance and provides for a variety of uses. However, the walk west across the ring road and through the adjacent character area is challenging and would possibly be a disincentive as it is now. The new Charter Street bridge has improved the connectivity bringing access to the park much closer to this character area but surveillance is needed along this connection.



Figure 35: Abbey Park



Figure 36: Foundry Square



Figure 37: Current Public Realm in Belgrave Gate

2.10. Movement & Connectivity

Street Hierarchy

The street typologies or street character types are taken from the Leicester Street Design Guide (2019) and are representative of the street types found within the city centre. It is useful to understand where priority has been given to vehicle movement, through the higher order streets (arterial road, centre connector) and those which are lower order streets (neighbourhood streets, pedestrian priority zones etc.), which prioritise their place-function, while meeting the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. 'Streets make up the greatest part of the public realm' (Manual for Streets (DfT 2007)) and better designed streets therefore contribute significantly to the quality of the built environment and play a key role in the creation of sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities. They are also important for place making as different street character types enable people to find their way around and easily understand a place.

The highest order streets within the Belgrave Gateway character area are predominantly located around the Area's periphery. Belgrave Gate and roundabout and Burleys Way, along with the flyover, in the south of the area is part of the city centre's ring road. The ring road does form a barrier between the Belgrave Gateway, Wharf Street and St Margaret's character areas. On the eastern boundary of the character area, Wharf Street North, Bedford Street North and Russell Square are centre link roads.

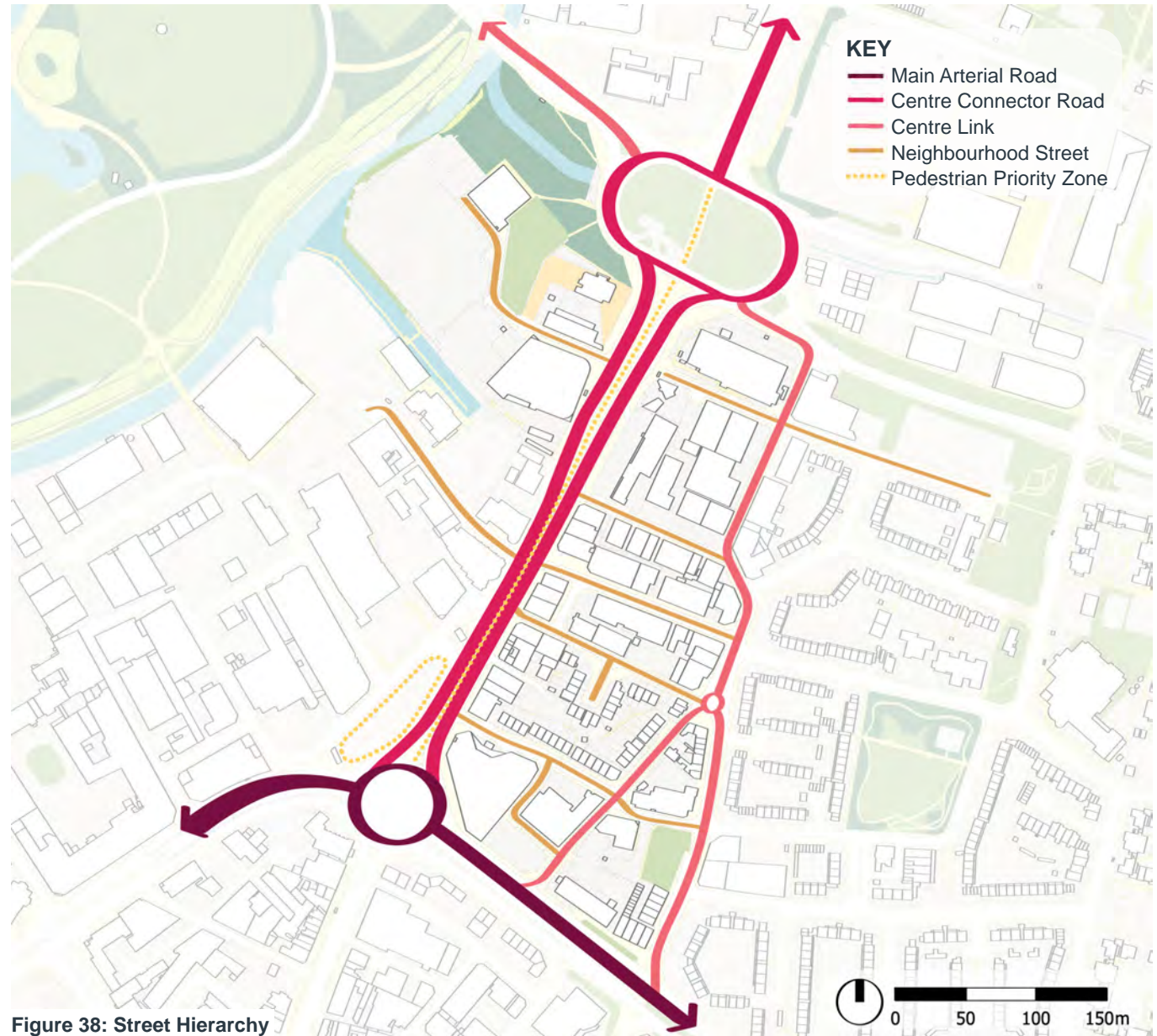


Figure 38: Street Hierarchy

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The streets within the centre of the character area are the lowest order streets and are classified as neighbourhood streets. Predominantly, these streets are used by residents accessing their homes and also used by delivery vans and trucks accessing service entrances for the industrial and retail units. So, even though they are neighbourhood streets, they are generally designed to accommodate a range of vehicles and are very much vehicle dominated with no emphasis on place to any streets in the area apart from Belgrave Gate where public improvements to the north of Belgrave Gate and around Belgrave roundabout have resulted in pedestrian priority zones (PPZ) that allow for pedestrians to have a key connection into and out of the area. There is also a PPZ following public realm enhancements to Foundry Square.



Figure 39: Ring Road, Burleys Way/ St Matthews Way



Figure 40: Central Connector/Hub, Belgrave Gate



Figure 41: Neighbourhood Street, Woodboy Street



Figure 42: PPZ, Belgrave Roundabout

Parking Areas & Streets Configuration

The network of streets within the area are generally vehicle dominated with a number of contributory factors. Streets are mostly narrow with building lines and boundaries to the back of pavement. Streets are lined with on street car parking bays, and in some streets where the width allows, this is on both sides of the street. Streets are made up of carriageway or parking bays with no relief of tree planting to reduce the visual impact of the parking. Anti-social car parking is a problem and the use of wider footways and junctions for parking appears commonplace, notwithstanding the many parking restrictions in place. The employment uses in the area are fine grain and concentrated with most of them without dedicated parking within their plot, pushing parking for workers and customers on to the street. These issues occur to the neighbourhood streets in the north and south of the area to the east of Belgrave Gate and are acute on the east-west streets. Footways are often blocked creating a disincentive to walk.

There are also a number of wide junctions which may be needed to accommodate larger vehicle serving the industrial area to the north but offer no contribution to townscape.

The demand for car parking in the area is obviously high and are detrimental to place-making. Further research is required to understand this in more detail and the impact on future development.

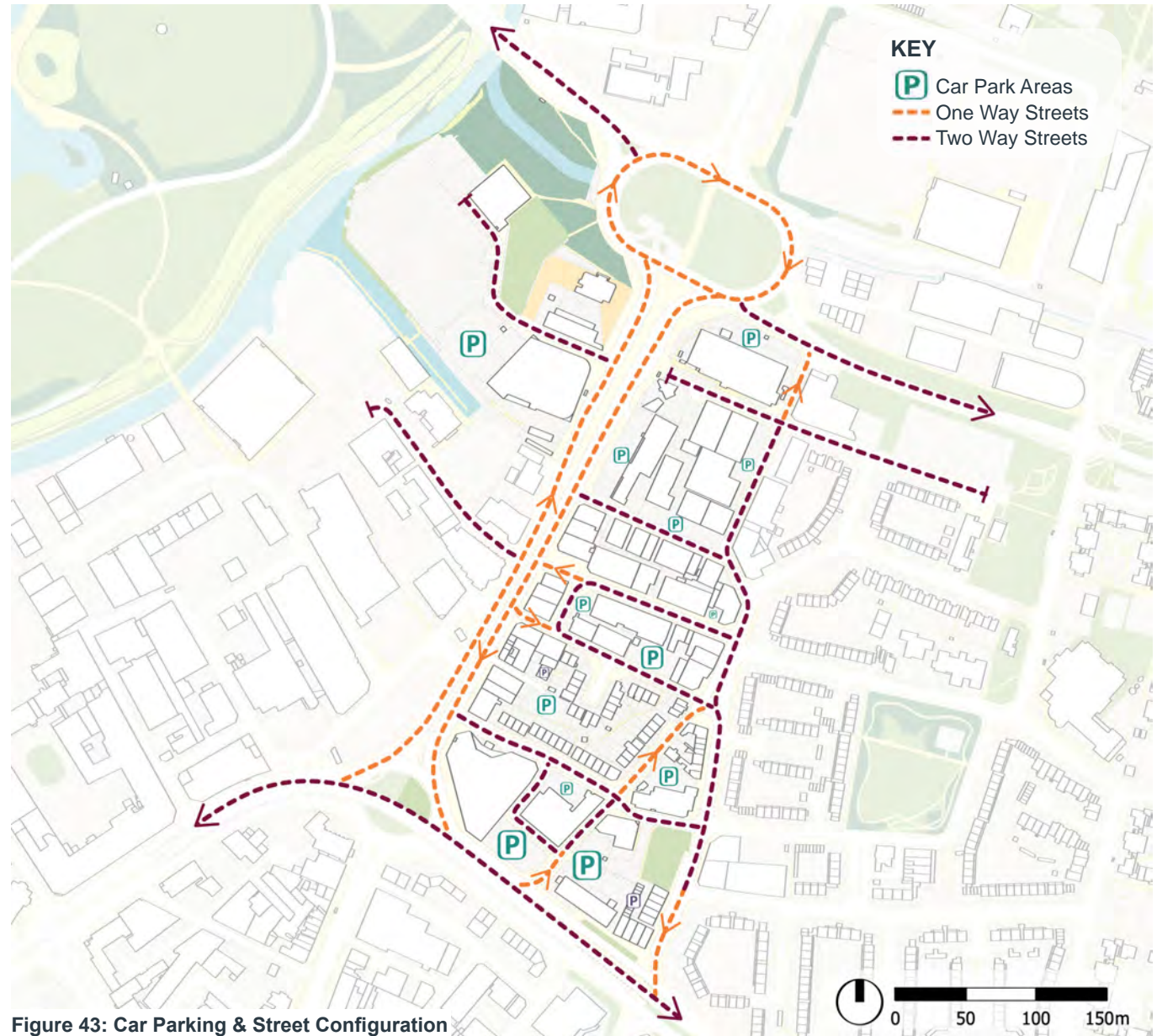


Figure 43: Car Parking & Street Configuration

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Public Transport

The area is well served. The main bus route in the area is along Belgrave Gate. Leicester College has two bus stops (in the north of the street) and the southern portion of the street has two bus stops adjacent to George Street Haymarket and St. Margaret's Bus Station are 5 - 10 minutes walk away.

The Railway Station is further away within a 20 minute walk.

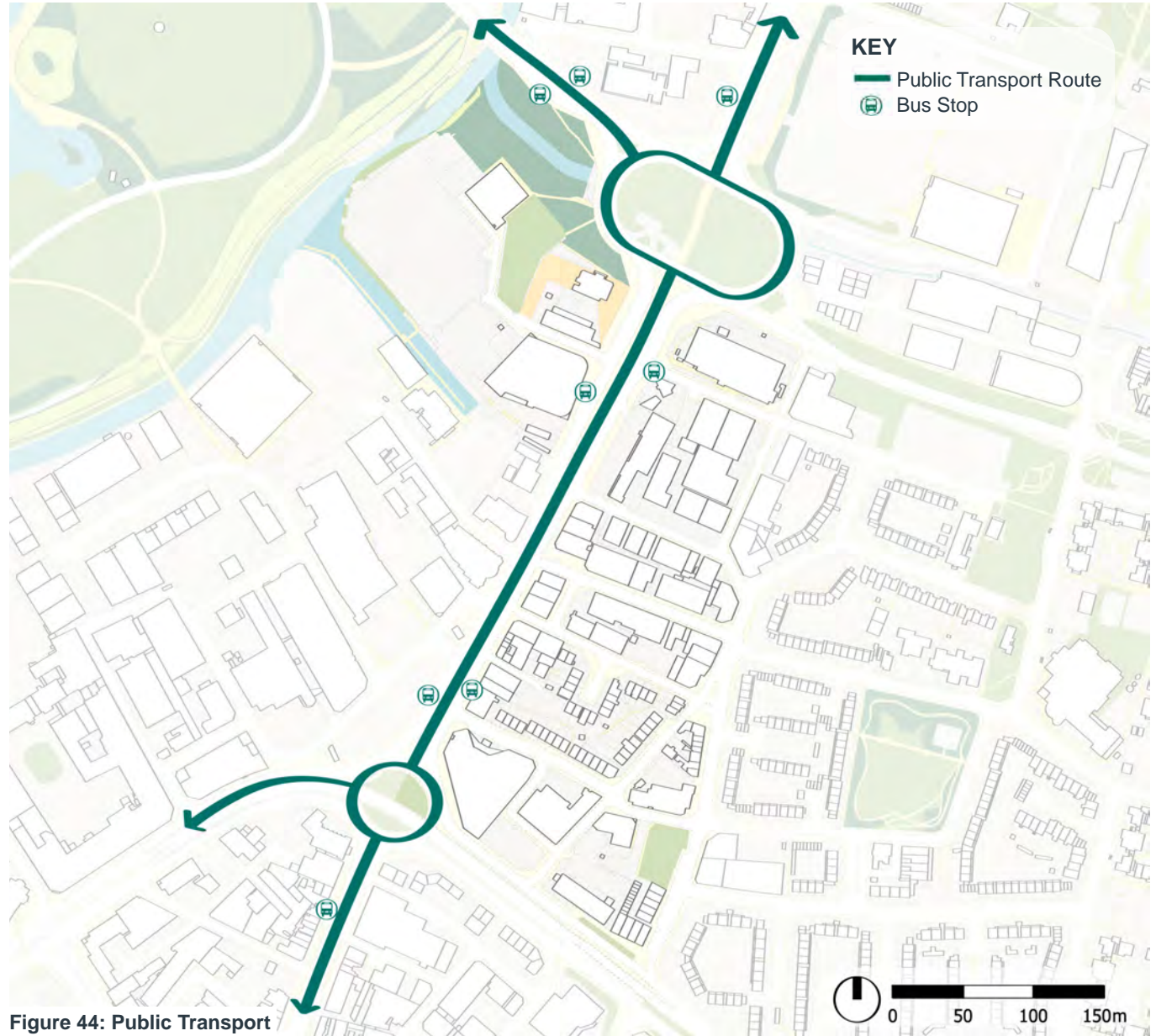


Figure 44: Public Transport

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Cycle & Pedestrian Movement

Cycling routes are taken from the Leicester Cycling Map, including cycling infrastructure relevant to the city centre, on road cycle lanes, off road routes, bus lanes where cycling is permitted, pedestrian streets and recommended on road routes. Future cycling infrastructure that is guaranteed to be delivered is also identified. The main pedestrian connections are identified through a combination of local knowledge, observation, previous research undertaken by Leicester City Council and Space Syntax™ online information.

As a large proportion of the area is surrounded by the ring road and larger vehicle dominant highways, connectivity to the north, south and west is challenging although signalled crossing points, are provided. These higher order streets inevitably create a barrier for access to the city centre, Belgrave Road and Abbey Park, although recent improvements to Belgrave Gate has created a better pedestrian environment and safer routes for cyclists travelling in and out of the city centre. A connection to Abbey Park is also important for the residents of St. Matthews and the route from George Street, to Charter Street Bridge, via Foundry Square, is quite direct but poorly overlooked given the uses along the route. Movement to the St. Matthew's neighbourhood to the east is much more straightforward supported by a network of well connected streets, although the streets themselves are vehicle dominated and issues of anti-social car parking are evident.

Melton Street and Britannia Street appear to be underused by pedestrians, with George Street and Woodboy Street preferred, perhaps due to them feeling more overlooked and safer.

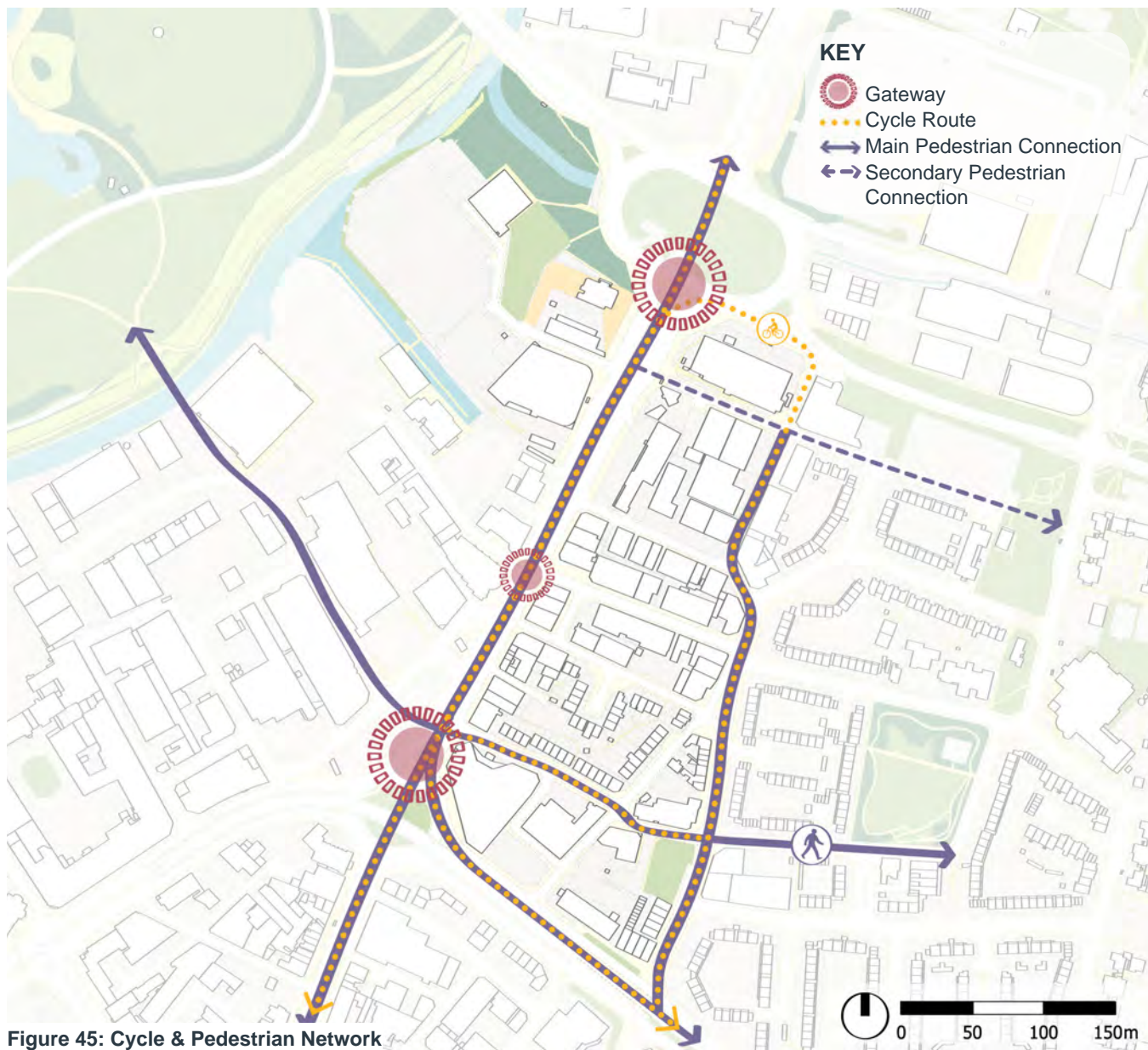


Figure 45: Cycle & Pedestrian Network

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2.11. Connecting Leicester Improvements

Connecting Leicester is a vision to create and provide a connected, accessible, safe and family friendly city centre. The City Mayor is committed to creating a thriving heart of the city that takes away barriers and greatly improves the connections between key places within the city, including the 'hidden gems' as part of Leicester's story, and shopping, leisure, heritage, housing and transport facilities. Connecting Leicester is a series of key projects bringing together special buildings and places, reducing the dominance of roads and helping to create an attractive, pedestrian friendly environment.

Improvements have been completed to the Burleys Way roundabout. A new shared footpath and cycleway now runs underneath the flyover providing a more direct and safer route along Belgrave Gate. The Lotus Flowers public art has been relocated to Foundry Square. A new bridge has been installed to Charter Street providing a much needed additional entrance into Abbey Park.

North of Burleys Way, a separate cycleway and footpath has been created along the central reservation, to link in with improvements made to Belgrave Circle following the removal of the flyover.



Figure 46: Leicester Improvements

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Belgrave Flyover was demolished in 2014, and the ageing, 1970s concrete structure replaced with a roundabout, landscaping, cycle lanes and pathways which created an improved pedestrian connection between the character area and the north east of the city.

To the south new cycle infrastructure has been provided along the ring road, where width allows.

Figures 47 to 49 show the area before Connecting Leicester improvements.

Figures 50 to 52 show the Belgrave roundabout and Foundry Square following the Connecting Leicester improvements and the new pedestrianised connection between Belgrave Gate and Belgrave Road.



Figure 47: Belgrave Gate Roundabout



Figure 48: Belgrave Gate Flyover

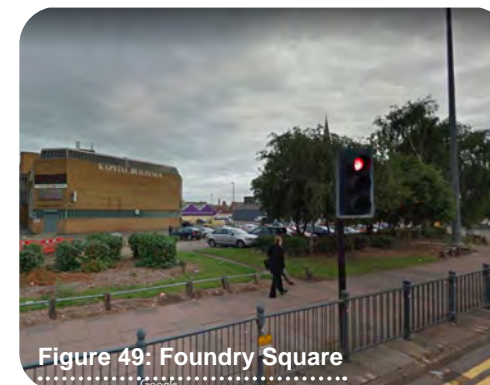


Figure 49: Foundry Square



Figure 50: Belgrave Gate Roundabout



Figure 51: Belgrave Gate



Figure 52: Foundry Square

2.12. Active Frontages

Active frontages are important to creating successful places. They are street frontages where there is an active visual engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floor of buildings. This quality is enhanced where the front façade of buildings, including the main entrance faces and opens towards the street. They are vital to create activity and vitality to an area and a sense of safety with well overlooked streets. Blank frontages provide no active visual engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floor of buildings. Frontages in existing buildings could contain blocked up or screened windows and doors for various reasons.

There is a high concentration of blank frontages in the area. Certainly in the streets in between Russell Square and Belgrave Gate many of the streets do not feel overlooked. The high number of blank frontages are caused by numerous factors such as surface level car parking, large warehouse and industrial buildings with delivery and services being accessed from roads such as Wanlip Street (1). The terrace houses along the north side of George Street (2), along the south of Woodboy Street and along Bedford Street North have good active frontages and doors onto the street. Thus balancing out the blank frontages from the southern side of George Street.

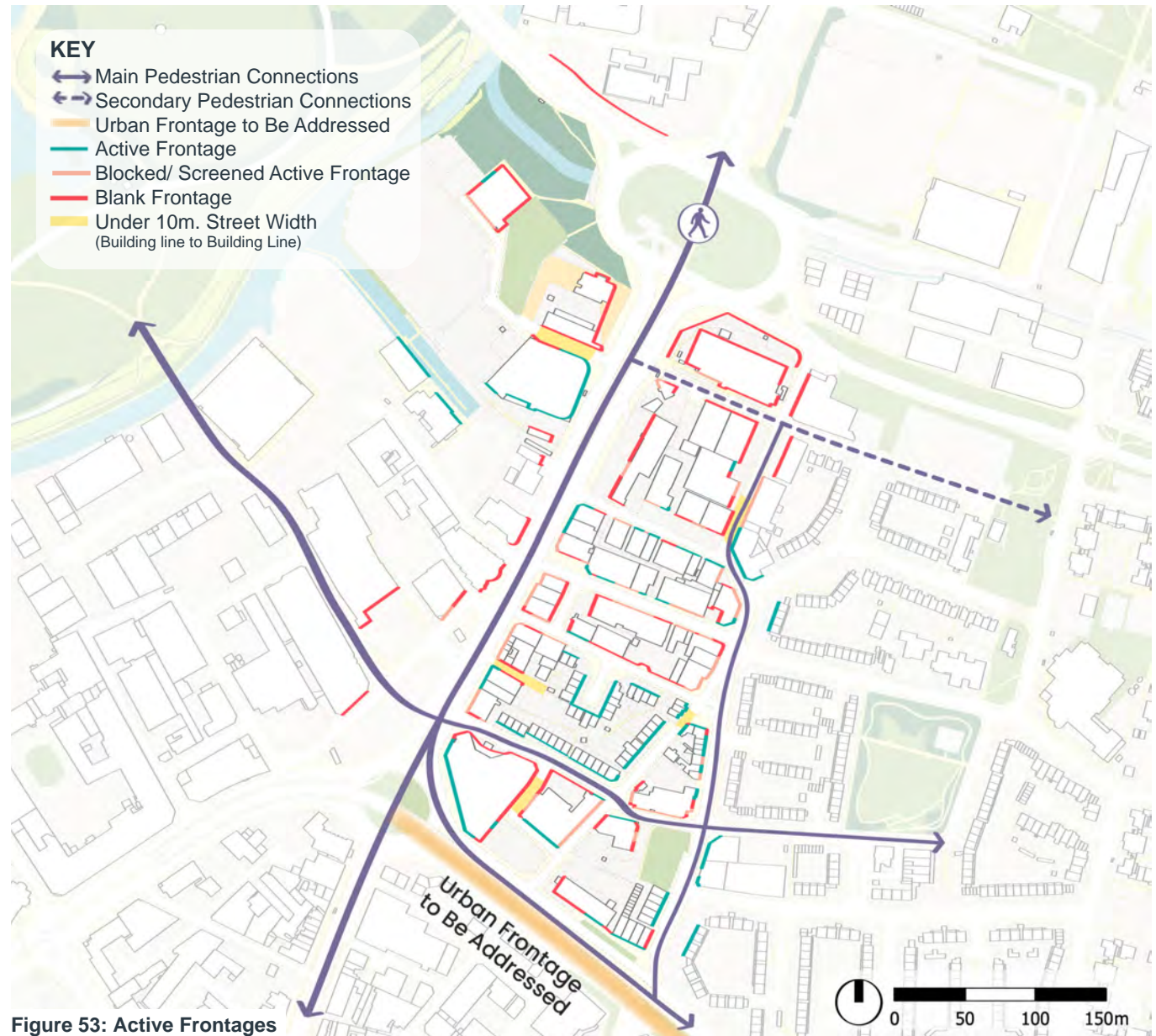


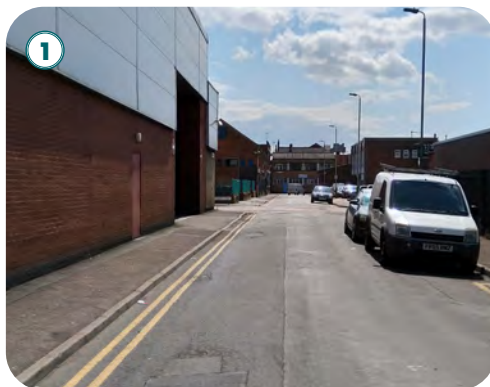
Figure 53: Active Frontages

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The Ground floor of the College (3) has windows on the ground floor. However, the scale of the windows appear domestic and the window sill is just above person height. Consequently, this results in a ground floor that is not active. With a long, almost fully blank wall surrounding the car park and blank frontage along Willow Street, the building contributes limited activity to the street. The former Transformer Station (4) with a blank gable wall, blank side wall along Painter Street with filled in windows and a blank boundary wall along Belgrave Gate, means the building provides no activity to the street. Along Belgrave Gate there are ground floor retail units (5) that have partial opaque glazing that limit the effectiveness of the active frontage. Minimal changes would result in an active frontage. Additionally, 9 Wanlip Street (6) has large openings that could provide excellent surveillance, but are covered with metal grilles.

A cluster of active frontages are evident in the local centre to the south.

Whilst the street pattern supports a well connected place, the lack of active frontages to some streets make them much less desirable for pedestrians and cyclists.



2.13. Key Views & Legibility

Given the street and plot pattern of the area, it is generally easy to find your way around in the area to the east of Belgrave Gate. There are a few local landmarks and important views that contribute to this.

1. The view north towards St. Mark's Church (the Empire) from the Foundry Square to the south west of St. Mark's Church (the Empire).
2. The view south along Shackleton Street that is terminated by the locally listed former Boot and Shoe Factory on Woodboy Street
3. The view west along Lower Willow Street towards the locally listed Transformer Station

Views 4 and 5, taken from Russell Square both complement each other and are unique key views experienced within the character area. View 4 is looking west along Woodboy Street towards the spire of St. Mark's Church (the Empire). View 5, from the same position, is looking south west along Bedford Street north, out of the character area towards the spire of St. Martin's Cathedral in Old Town. The point at which these views originate is the area was once the vibrant Russell Square.

6. View 6 looking north along Russell Square (part of a key pedestrian route) is terminated by the frontage of 1 Junction Street. The footprint of the building reflects historic street patterns and is prominent within the area.

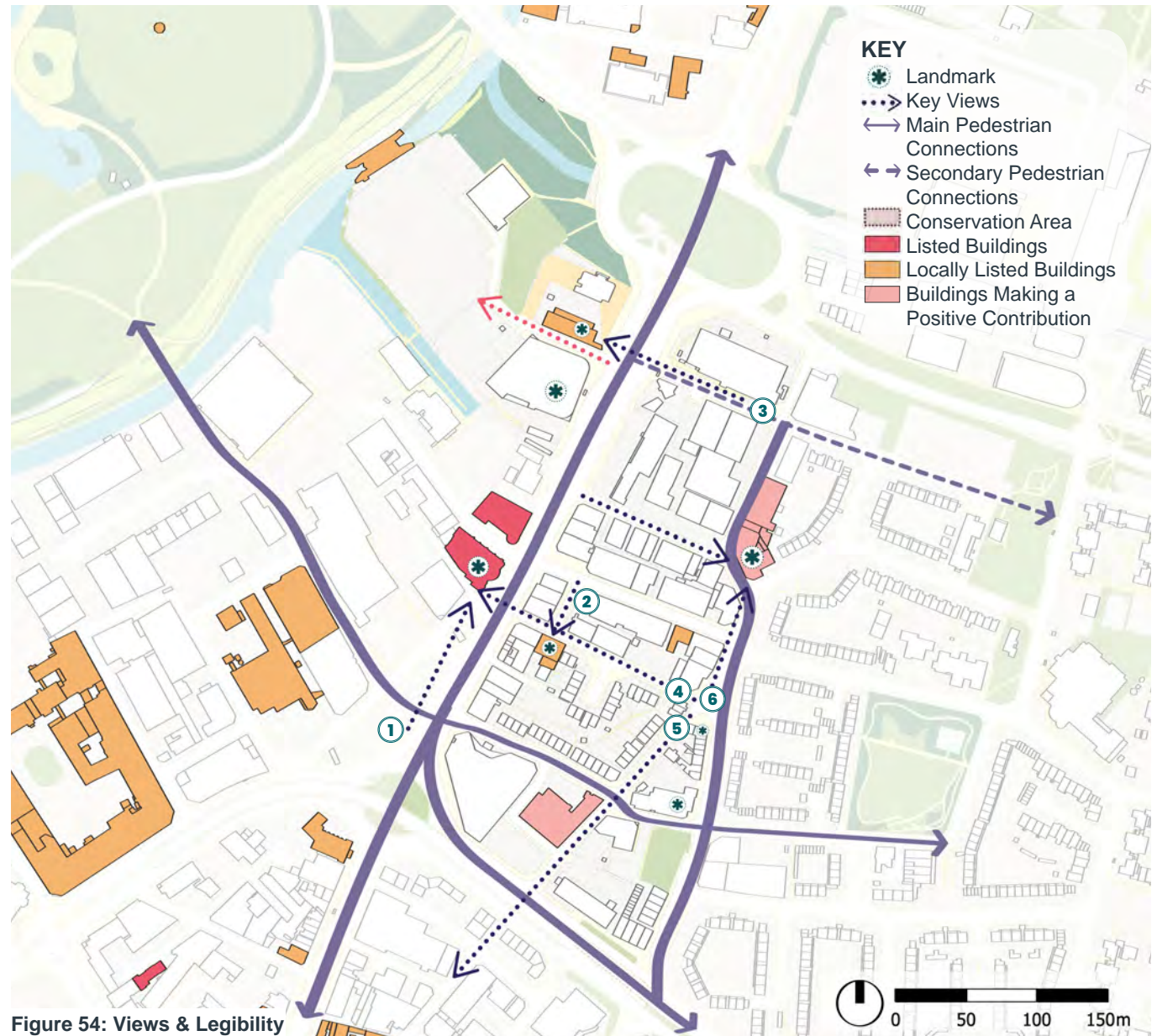


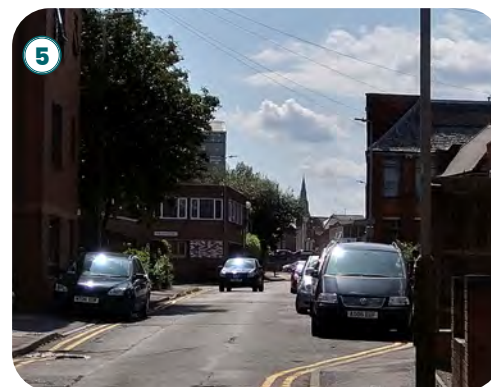
Figure 54: Views & Legibility

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The main connection east-west along Kamloops Crescent and George Street and Foundry Square is generally legible although many improvements could be made to make the route more welcoming and safe. It is a key connection for neighbouring communities to Abbey Park.

The main connection north-south along Wharf Street North and Russell Square is legible although this becomes less so adjacent to the industrial uses along Wanlip Street.

To the west of Belgrave Gate the area is much less developed although the wharf, canal and Lime Kiln locks are distinctive heritage features, alongside the old Transformer Station. This cluster of assets are part of the history of the area and the city and the latter are currently not accessible from this location.



2.14. Architecture, Materiality, Details

Architecture

The architecture of most merit in the area are the Victorian 19th century buildings, including the Kirtons Bakery Building and 7 Woodboy Street. There are also factories from the Inter war period.

The housing stock in the character area includes 20th century inter war terraced homes and more recent additions from the 1980 /90s. To the east, the 1950s-60s 4 storey maisonettes from the adjacent St Matthews Estate are distinctive and representative of the time.

Leicester College stands out as the most recent development but most recent buildings in the area are functional industrial warehouse style buildings clad in metal, that contribute little in in terms of quality architecture to the area.

Materiality

Variation is limited in the area, with the age and function of the buildings dictating the material. Most of the buildings of historic importance, use multi red brick whereas many of the more recent factory buildings in the north of the character area are clad with faceted metal from corrugated to standing seam. A few buff brick buildings are evident including the Leicester College Building.

Red Brick



Metal Cladding



20th Century Housing



Details

Brick detailing, characteristic of Victorian buildings including corbelling below the eaves, brick recesses, decorative mouldings, dentils under cornices. The level of sophistications and decoration varies. English, Flemish and Flemish Garden Wall bond are the common brick bonds in use in the area. Sussex Bond Bricks (aka Flemish Wall Bond) is used on the red and multi red brick 19th century former industrial buildings. Examples include 7 Woodboy Street. Multi Red brick is shown on the 20th century 1 Junction Road building.

Many of the early 20th Century industrial buildings consist of generous windows with large glazed openings. The distinctive arrangement of mullion and transoms for crittal windows can be found.

The predominant roof profile in the area is pitched roof. Many of the early 20th century homes have shallow pitched hipped roofs. There are a few sawtooth roof profiles on some industrial buildings.

**Brick
Detailing**



**Roof
Profiles**



**Fenestration
Glazing &
Openings**



2.15. Planning Activity

It is essential to understand the growth and development potential of the character area and the likely rate and scale of change for the plan period, assisting in establishing priorities and the required level of townscape management. As a result, the area's planning activity, the amount of large plots under one or few ownerships and sites with possible redevelopment potential, also referred to as 'soft sites', have been considered. Moreover, sites in LCC ownership are identified, although their inclusion does not necessarily suggest development/ redevelopment potential.

The character area has a low level of planning activity and limited development sites, although there are a couple of large and prominent sites. It is clear that the area has a few, possibly conflicting, identities. The south of the area has the potential to be a well served and well connected residential neighbourhood, with improvements to create a place for existing and surrounding residents and to encourage more much needed family homes. To the north, employment uses flourish but could, in their current form, be considered detrimental to the quality of the area for residents and so could future development better integrate employment and residential uses. The area also has uses that have a city wide reach and Belgrave Gateway is a major route into the city centre. Balancing all of these identities and demands requires further consideration as to the priorities for this area.

A clear vision, objectives and policy framework will be required if the current identities are to co-exist and integrate successfully in the future.

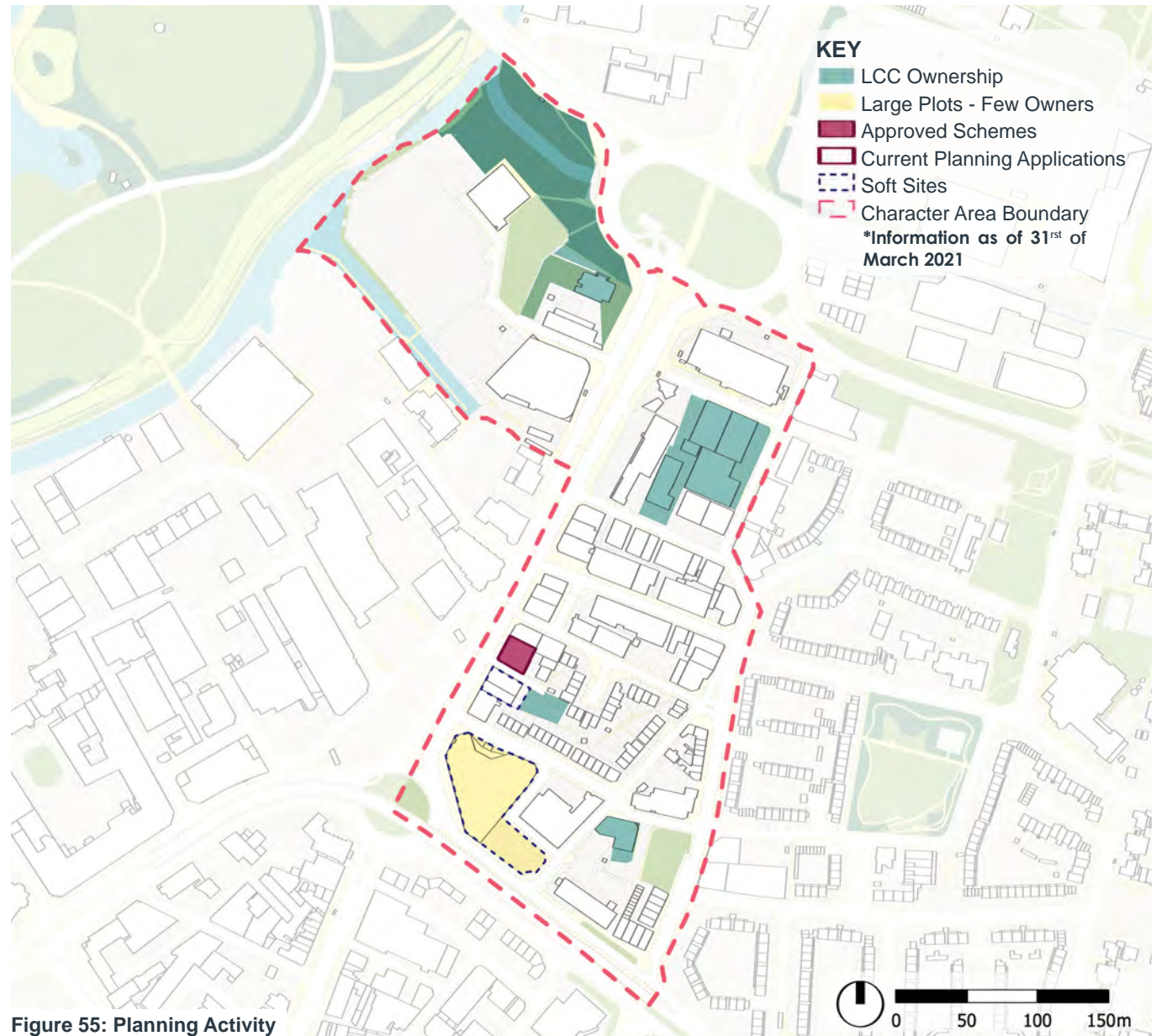


Figure 55: Planning Activity

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3



Townscape Diagnosis

3. Townscape Diagnosis

3.1. Constraints & Opportunities

The detailed townscape analysis of the Belgrave Gateway character area, set out above, considers all of its composing elements, peculiarities and unique characteristics. This chapter critically evaluates this analysis, defining the main existing development constraints and future opportunities presented within the area.

Today, much of the character area is used for commercial or light industrial uses but the area also has a strong relationship with the St. Matthews neighbourhood to the east and provides an opportunity for further homes. The area also offers a prominent gateway into the city centre. Understanding the emerging residential opportunities balanced with appropriate employment uses are key considerations for the Council.

As a result, it is recognised that a holistic vision for the area, together with the undertaking of a thorough townscape appraisal that will be able to identify and further highlight the state and potential of the current urban fabric, socio-economic activity and the overall use, function and perception of the area are crucial. In accordance with both the NPPF and the National Design Guide, it has to be understood that any potential growth and future development requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach to enable the creation of an attractive, successful and sustainable place with a distinctive identity.















It is recognised that the Belgrave Gateway character area has a few challenges to overcome, but at the same time further potential to explore.

Constraints

In creating a holistic, comprehensive and coordinated approach to the area's future growth the following constraints (figure 56) should be taken into account:

- To the north, employment uses are well-established but in their current form are considered to be detrimental to the quality of the area for existing and future residents.
- Views of city-wide significance recognise the heritage setting and landmark status of St. Mark's Church (the Empire) and its contribution to the identity and legibility of the city. Abbey Park is a listed Registered Park and Garden. New development will need to consider these views to avoid harm.
- Belgrave Gateway character area is an area with heritage and townscape assets that should be cherished and preserved within any future development. Furthermore, additional buildings that make a positive contribution to the townscape have been identified, which should also be retained.
- To the north-west of the area, the relationship with the canal is poor and access is not possible, offering no opportunity for people to engage with the water and the listed canal locks, neither to appreciate the proximity to Abbey Park.
- A number of problematic spaces are identified including the undeveloped area to the north-west and Russell Square.
- There are a significant number of blank façades, particularly to the employment uses and the retail uses to the south where servicing and deliveries are required. The main pedestrian connection along George Street, which crucially connects the area and Abbey Park, is generally unwelcoming. The north-south connection along Wanlip Street is also weak and poor legibility from Belgrave Gate to the north west is evident.
- There are some weak pedestrian and cycle connections both north-south and east-west where infrastructure needs improvement and /or the streets require overlooking by active frontages to feel safe.
- The urban grain is quite fragmented to the west of the area with blocks not properly defined and undeveloped sites. To the east of the area some of the streets are characterised by weak enclosure where functional employment buildings and surface car parking are detrimental to the townscape and have a poor interface with the street. To make matters worse, very narrow streets, with a width under 10 metres, put extra pressure on the built environment and the massing of the existing building forms, although there are only a few.

KEY

-  Problematic Space
-  Problematic Legibility View
-  Car Park Areas
-  Noise & Traffic Disruption
-  Streets of Weak Enclosure
-  Blank Façades
-  Frontages to Be Retained
-  Weak Pedestrian/ Cycle Connections
-  Significant Views
-  Under 10m. Street Width
(Building line to Building Line)
-  Fragmented Urban Blocks
-  Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings
-  Buildings with Positive Contribution to the Townscape
-  Very Poor Water Relation
-  Weak & Unidentified Frontage
-  Employment Allocation

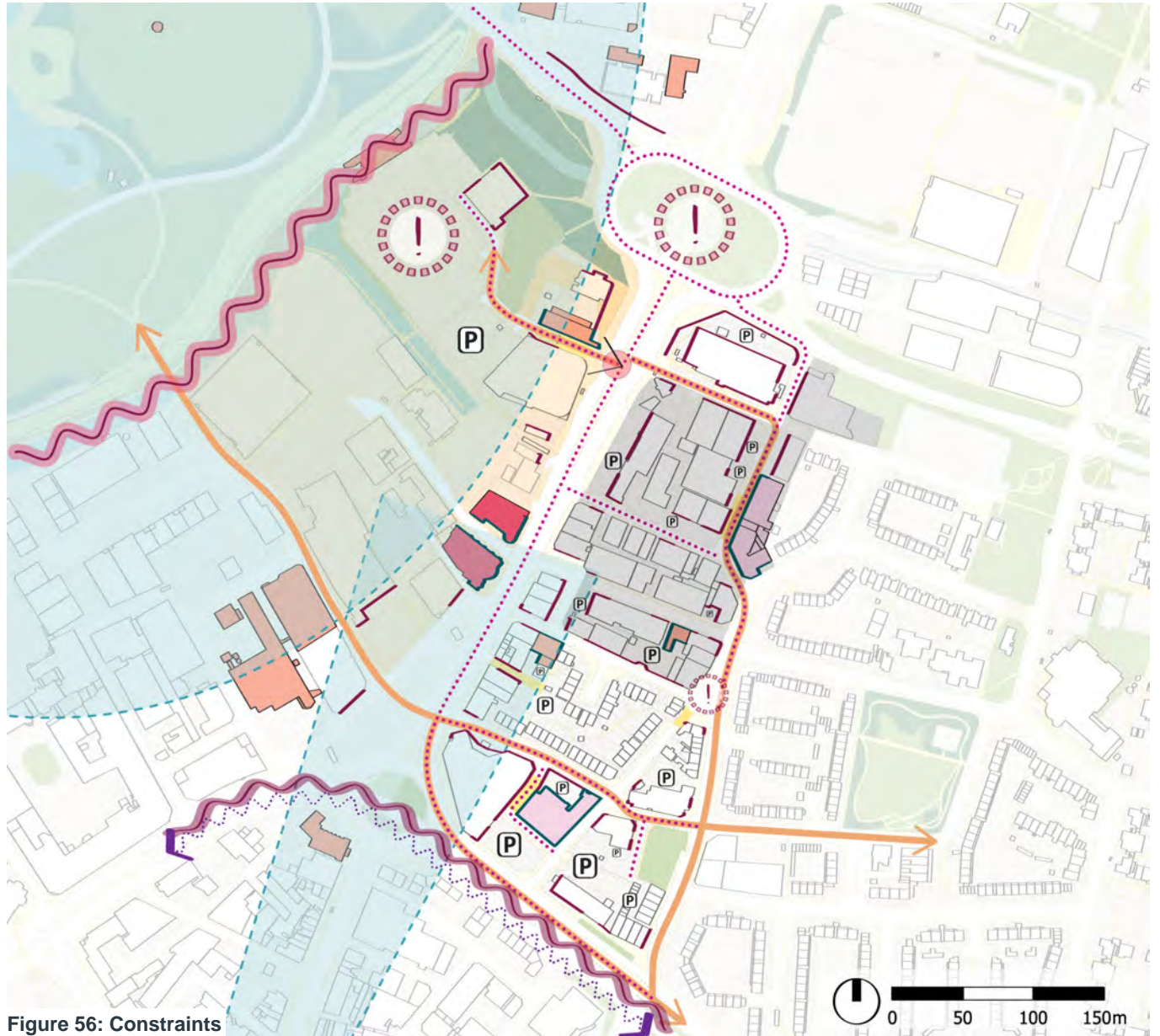


Figure 56: Constraints

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- Belgrave Gate has poor enclosure, exacerbated by its status as one of the major streets and routes into the city centre.
- Other issues that should be taken into account are the noise and traffic disruption mainly coming from the peripheral road network (main arterial and central connector roads).

Opportunities

The following points present development opportunities and assets that if properly utilised will enhance, upgrade and contribute to the Belgrave Gateway character area's aspiring regeneration and redevelopment.

- Key characteristic of Belgrave Gateway is its prime gateway location to the north edge of the city centre, and close proximity to Abbey Park and the Golden Mile. It is also located within a 10 minute walking distance of St. Margaret's and Haymarket bus stations, with the Railway Station within a 20 minute walking distance, giving it potential as an ideal place to work, live and visit.
- Family homes are located in the area providing a much needed housing type in the city centre. Much of the community and social infrastructure that serves the wider neighbourhood of St. Matthews is within the area or is accessible within a 5 to 10 minute walking distance.
- The historic setting and industrial legacy of the area contributes to its character and identity, which should be protected, respected and enhanced in any future development. There is potential to rediscover the historic node of Russell Square as a new 'neighbourhood heart' with its unique setting offering views of St. Mark's Church (the Empire) and Leicester Cathedral.
- The redevelopment of the area, given its proximity to Abbey Park, could significantly contribute to reintegrating the park into the urban fabric of the city centre by providing safe and welcoming east-west connections through the area, for future and existing residents to the north of the city.
- Redefine the frontage of Belgrave Gate, creating enclosure to the street and improving its townscape contribution and place-making potential.
- The adjacent figure illustrates the sites that could present future development, transforming and place-making opportunities for the overall area's regeneration. The area offers high potential for more educational uses or new residential development in the city, providing a range of home types and tenures.
- East-west pedestrian connections could be enhanced, linking to the current gateway of Foundry Square and beyond to Abbey Park. Foundry Square could be further enhanced, leading and guiding pedestrians through the area and upgrading the area's legibility and permeability and emphasising its identity, character and place making importance.

KEY

-  Existing Landmarks
-  Gateways
-  Bus Stops
-  Place-Making Development Opportunities
-  New Neighbourhood's Heart
-  Potential to Redefine Development Frontage & Ring Road
-  Improved Pedestrian/ Cycle Connections (Connecting Leicester Delivered & Planned)
-  Potential for New Pedestrian Connections
-  Redefined & Stronger Canal Relationship
-  Opportunities for Better Enclosure
-  Active Frontage Opportunities
-  Existing Active Frontages
-  Opportunity to Redefine Urban Blocks
-  Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings
-  Buildings with Positive Contribution to the Townscape

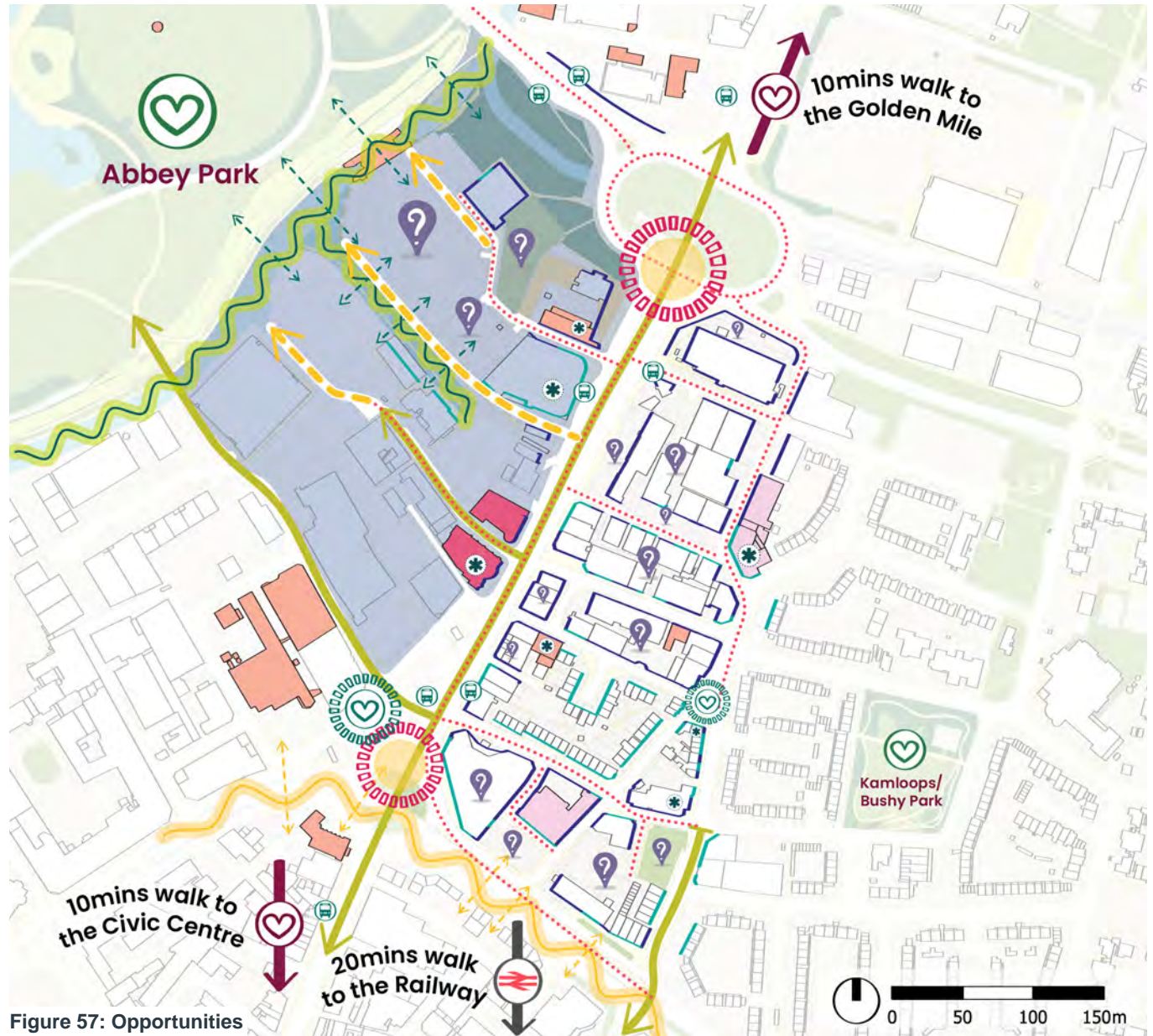


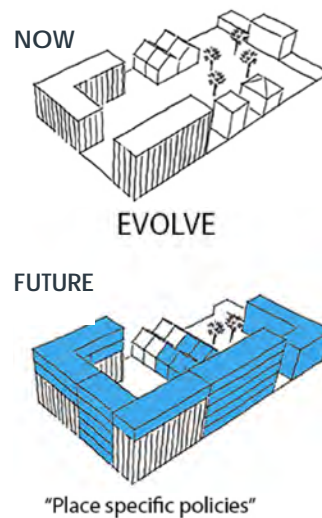
Figure 57: Opportunities
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Character Area Townscape Management

- Cycling and pedestrian connections have been improved along Belgrave Gate and to Wharf Street South. However, there is the potential for new pedestrian connections to create a permeable network of streets and spaces to the north-west of the area, including a redefined and stronger relationship with the canal. North-south connections could also be enhanced, particularly links to Wharf Street South in the adjacent Wharf Street character area.
- Existing green open spaces can be enhanced and made publicly accessible with potential for smaller spaces creating new green infrastructure network across the area.
- Figure 57 identifies existing active and strong frontages that are understood as development assets, but also locations which present active frontages or pedestrian-friendly façade-treatment opportunity areas. Screens and obscured glazing removal, together with development that properly addresses and engages with the street-level would enhance the overall streetscape. At the same time, areas have been identified where the urban blocks could be redefined and better enclosure and definition could be achieved through future, well-designed, well-structured, well-connected development.

Belgrave Gateway character area falls within 3. *Developing an Area's Local Character* where place specific policies will be used to guide future development (see page 7 - Townscape Character Management).

3. Developing an area's character



KEY

- 1. Respect & Protection of Heritage Assets
- 2. Evolution without Significant Change
- 3. Development an Area's Character
- 4. Intensification by Increased Density & Higher Density Building Types
- 5. Redevelopment



Figure 58: Character Areas Development & Management Plan



4

Guiding the Future

4. Guiding the Future

4.1. Establishing a Vision

Chapter 4 establishes a holistic vision for the character area's future development, setting the main future development objectives and parameters through which development will take place, be structured and come to life.

Taking into account the aforementioned elements of townscape appraisal, Belgrave Gateway character area is envisaged as:

A **place to thrive** where **family homes** promotion and guidance on the location, appropriateness and design of **well-integrated employment** and **educational uses** are at the foreground.

The **strengthened historic heart** celebrates the area's **unique setting** and **views**, while the **enhanced public realm** safely connects the surrounding communities to Abbey Park.

Its prominence as a **gateway** strategically **shapes** the neighbourhood's **identity**.

Figure 59 illustrates Belgrave Gateway character area's vision for its future growth and development, where the area's place-making and character development are key to the process.

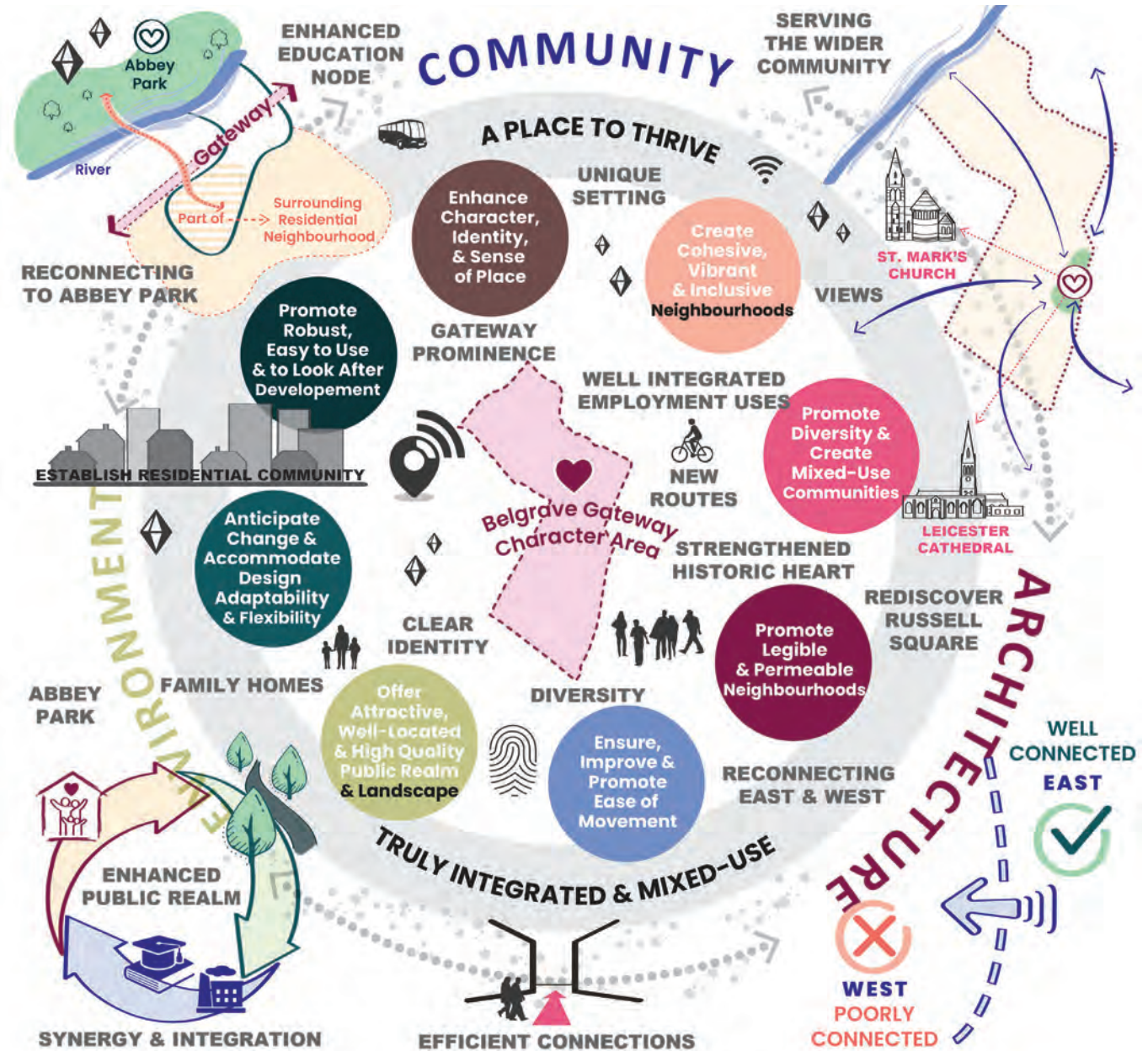


Figure 59: Belgrave Gateway Character Area Vision

4.2. Main Future Development Objectives

1 Character & Identity



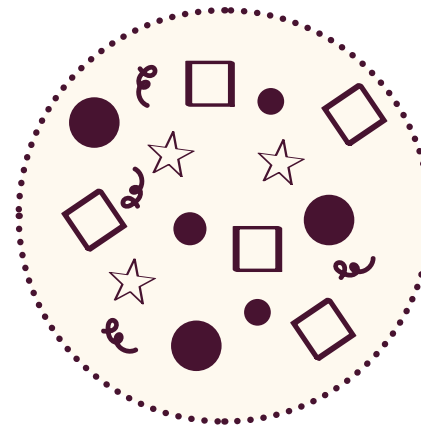
Development should enhance the character, identity and sense of place by considering the built, natural and historic context, responding to it ecologically, socially and aesthetically. All development should contribute to the unique character of the area by protecting and enhancing existing heritage assets, achieving creative re-use, while ensuring that they will continue to make a significant contribution to the area as it undergoes change. All development should celebrate the Character Area's local distinctiveness and create memorable places that are visually attractive and offer a unique experience to its users.

2 Cohesive, Vibrant & Inclusive Neighbourhoods



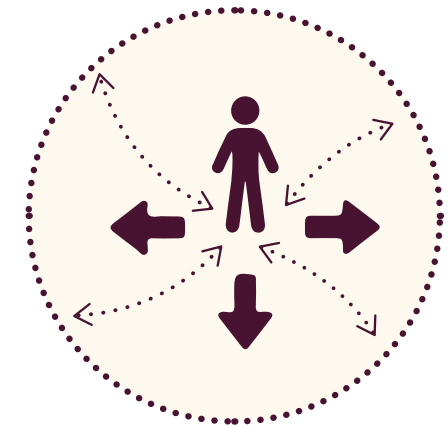
Ensure everyone's health, safety and quality of life creating buildings, streets and spaces that encourage people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to meet and mix. All development should use the appropriate built form, layout, scale and mixture of uses and tenures to create a welcoming and attractive place for people to live work and visit. There should not be any differentiation between the quality of market and affordable housing.

3 Diversity



Within each Character Area variety, choice and design sensory richness should be provided in keeping with local distinctiveness. Development should promote and create mixed-use communities through providing a diverse range of facilities, activities and residential typologies with good access to public transport.

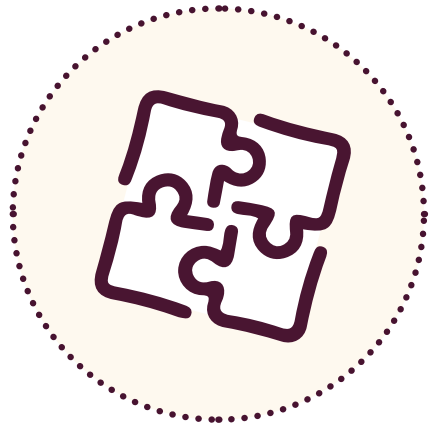
4 Ease of Movement



Ensure, improve and promote ease of movement, accessibility and connectivity within the Character Area and to the surrounding neighbourhoods. The use of creative and innovative solutions for reducing car-dominated streetscapes should be considered to promote safe and welcoming pedestrian and cycle movement. This is to allow direct and convenient access to existing and new local services, facilities and open spaces. Active frontages and doors on streets, especially along main and secondary pedestrian connections will maximise natural surveillance over the public realm.

5

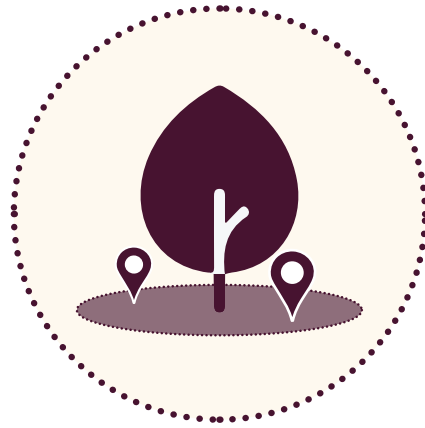
Legibility & Permeability



Ensure that each Character Area can be properly understood and easily navigated. There should be a positive relationship between the fronts and backs of buildings and structures, together with clearly defined public and private spaces, well-defined block and street pattern and distinctive townscape markers. Future development should enhance and create a clear and permeable hierarchy of streets, routes and spaces to provide safe and convenient ease of movement by all users.

6

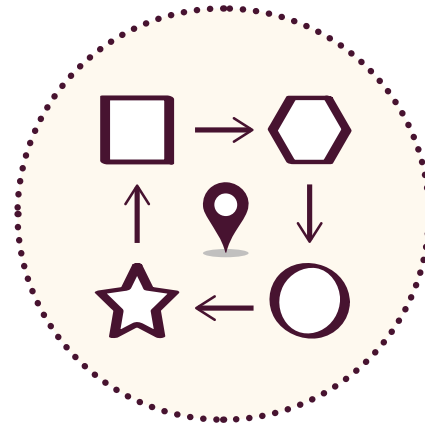
Public Realm & Landscape



Create a high-quality public realm with well-managed and maintained areas that incorporate natural features and new green infrastructure. Development and future changes within the Character Area should deliver attractive and well-located public realm and landscape features that contribute to a greater cohesion of the streetscape. Places for people to rest, meet and gather, together with the insertion of trees, landscaping and planting will encourage inclusivity and social integration, enhancing people's quality of life and a place's perception.

7

Adaptability & Flexibility



Anticipate the need for change to buildings and outdoor spaces so that they function well today, last for the future and can adapt to changing needs. This includes accommodating the changing dynamics of family life, the needs of older people, the ways residential and workspaces are used, environmental changes and future expansion of the development.

8

Lifespan



Development should be robust, easy to use and to look after. Materials should be chosen in accordance with their function and context, with the ability to be maintained over time and age well.

4.3. Future Development

Belgrave Gateway character area will provide growth to the city centre, which needs to be in accordance with the aforementioned vision and main development objectives. Specifically:

KEY

-  Existing Landmarks
-  Proposed Landmarks
-  Gateways
-  Bus Stops
-  Redefine the Development Frontage in Relation to the Ring Road, Minimising the Edge Barrier
-  Proposed Improvements to Main Network
-  Main and Enhanced Pedestrian/ Cycle Connections
-  Secondary and Enhanced Pedestrian Connections
-  Potential Streetscape Improvements - Materials & Layout
-  Active Frontages Priority Areas/ Façade Animation
-  Built Continuous Frontage - Repair Urban Grain
-  Proposed Road
-  Enhanced/ Proposed Civic Public Space - Neighbourhood's Heart
-  Enhanced/ Proposed Green Space/ Public Realm
-  New Visual Connections
-  Redefined Water Relation
-  Redefined Urban Blocks
-  Potential Development Sites
-  Larger Sites & Areas That Would Benefit from Redevelopment
-  Listed, Locally Listed & Positive Contribution Buildings

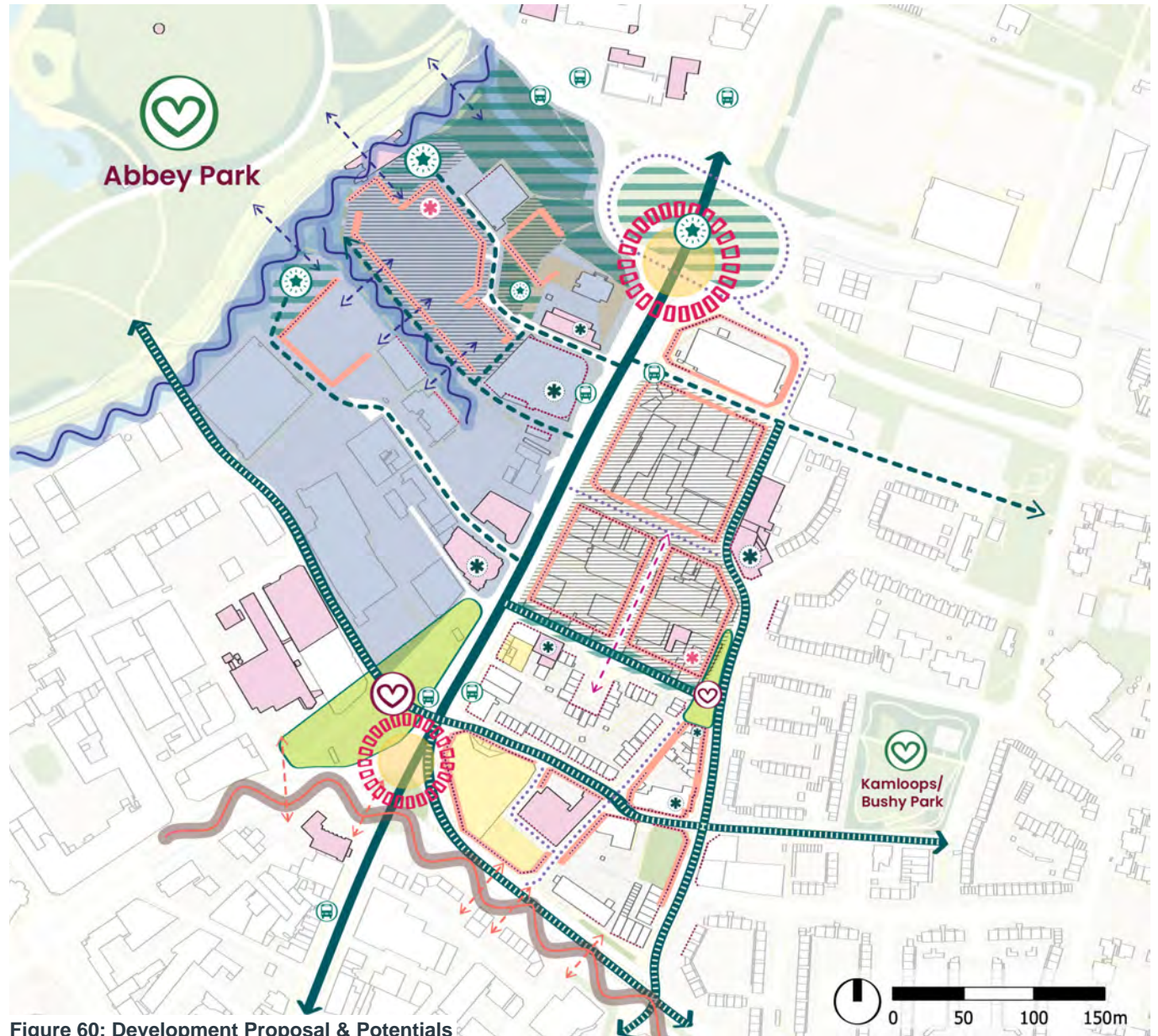


Figure 60: Development Proposal & Potentials

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- Specific area policies and a coordinated and comprehensive approach to guide development will ensure that Belgrave Gateway character area will preserve and enhance existing assets, while addressing current challenges and utilising present development opportunities. Potential development sites should not be considered in isolation to the area's main, wider objectives.
- To the north-west, a redefined waterfront to open up access and break the current solid waterfront frontage will create visual connections between the canal, Abbey Park and the Belgrave Gateway area. New development will provide enhanced public realm adjacent to the canal, physically connecting people to the water, increasing surveillance and animation to the water edge and providing enclosure to Abbey Park. A coordinated and comprehensive approach will be required guided by specific area policies and a future masterplan.
- Integrate Abbey Park to the city centre, both visually and physically through new and enhanced east-west pedestrian connections which are welcoming and safe, especially along George Street and Kamloops Crescent to Foundry Square and beyond.
- Enhance existing main pedestrian routes and explore the potential for new routes, to create more legible development between the character area and Abbey Park on the north-west edge.
- The historic and industrial heritage contributes to the identity of Belgrave Gateway character area. Heritage and townscape assets (listed, locally listed, landmarks and positive contribution buildings (buildings not nationally/locally listed or within conservation areas, but with a positive contribution to the townscape)) will be integrated into any new development so they successfully define the area's ongoing identity and legibility as dominant 'markers' and frontages. Adjacent new development will be designed to be sympathetic to the townscape and heritage value of these assets allowing valuable features to remain dominant in the streetscape preserving and enhancing the industrial heritage and the historic setting of the area.
- Consider the potential to better integrate employment uses and residential to allow them to co-exist and positively contribute to the area for existing and future residents. In particular, to the larger site identified between Woodboy Street and Lower Willow Street, which could deliver both a well-designed employment area and new homes by managing and guiding employment uses, providing different building types of various scales within reconfigured blocks, including live/work, providing creative parking solutions and more detailed design guidance.
- Rediscover Russell Square enhancing the public realm and creating a new 'neighbourhood heart' celebrating the unique historic setting and views. Recognise Foundry Square as a key node between the Belgrave Gateway and St. Margaret's character areas and ensure a coherent development approach.
- Redefine the frontages of Belgrave Gate improving their townscape contribution and emphasising their prominence and potential to shape the area's identity.
- Proposed development will be expected to present active frontages, especially along main and secondary pedestrian connections (according to figure 60) to maximise natural surveillance over the public realm. It is expected that particular attention will need to be given to ground floors, where there is a need to balance privacy with surveillance and provide appropriate design solutions. Areas have been specified where new active frontages and façade animation are needed. The frequency of doors will also assist in establishing the appropriate level of activity and interaction within a street.

- New development will deliver homes of various typologies and tenures to encourage and support a well balanced community. Recognise the opportunity for family homes supported by the easy access and close proximity to family friendly community and social infrastructure.
- New development will be expected, in design terms, to repair fragmented urban grain and the street-level status of the area, reinstating perimeter blocks that will be able to efficient facilitate both residential and mixed-use development and recreating well defined and enclosed streets (figure 60).
- Ensure any future development along the ring road is well designed and defined, addressing the need for activity and surveillance and providing a quality living environment, while minimising the effect of the ring road as a barrier.
- Provision of new green infrastructure will be expected, which makes a significant contribution to the character of a place and how it feels. This is needed particularly in building dominated urban environments, where the relief of trees, landscaping and planting provision is important.

4.4. Proposed Heights

The proposed building heights are based on the townscape appraisal and development guidance undertaken in the previous chapters, followed, where required, by more detailed site testing. All heights shown are defined in metres. To note 3m is broadly equivalent to 1 residential storey. Notwithstanding the proposed heights, each proposal will need to be considered in relation to its context.

Where there is an existing tall building within the character area it should not be assumed that a replacement tall building on that site would be acceptable. The proposed building heights reflect the Council's up to date view. Taller buildings will only be permitted where exceptional design quality can be demonstrated including a positive ground floor relationship to the street and the surrounding context, including the setting of heritage assets. They should comply with the Local Plan Tall Development Policy and Tall Development SPD.

A height of up to 15 metres, broadly equivalent to 5 residential storeys, is proposed to the east of the Belgrave Gateway area to create a place of a neighbourhood scale respecting the existing heights of existing low scale residential and the St. Matthews residential area to the east. Heights above 15m are also discouraged along narrow streets.

To create enclosure to Belgrave Gate there are opportunities for buildings of up to 21 metres, along the main street frontage. However, opposite St. Mark's Church (the Empire), proposed development should not exceed an eaves height of 5 storeys, and certainly not exceed the height of the ridge of the church. The church is a key existing landmark and should remain the dominant feature from a townscape perspective.

The area to the west, fronting Abbey Park, could accommodate buildings up to 24 metres, broadly equivalent to 8 residential storeys. Development between 21m and 24m falls within a transition height between what is and is not defined as tall for Leicester. Such buildings, or parts of buildings will therefore need to be considered with care and potentially tall building policies will apply. Furthermore, there is some potential for tall elements (above 24m). Tall development is defined as above 24 metres. However, the mass, scale, and form must be appropriate to the context, respect the setting of heritage assets, in particular Abbey Park and St. Mark's Church (the Empire), and be of exceptional design quality. Almost all of this area of potential for some tall development is located within the St Margaret's character area. Any proposals for this area should also consider the parameters and constraints outlined in detail within the St Margaret's character area evidence document.

In the south of the character area there is further potential for buildings up to 24 metres and potential for a taller element (above 24m) facing the ring road and St Matthews Way. Again, the mass, scale, and form must be appropriate to the context, respect the setting of heritage assets, in particular the view of city wide significance from the Clock Tower terminated by St. Mark's Church (the Empire), and be of exceptional design quality.

Figure 61 shows an illustrative location for potential tall elements, however its proposal should justify both location and appropriateness of design.

KEY

- - - Important Views
- Avoid the Canyon Effect
- - - Narrow Streets
- ⋯⋯⋯ Create Enclosure Around Public Space
- 0 - 15m.
- 15 - 21m.
- 21 - 24m.
- Potential for above 24m. - Illustrative Location
- Existing Tall Buildings
- Listed & Locally Listed Buildings
- Character Area Boundary

*3m is broadly equivalent to 1 residential storey

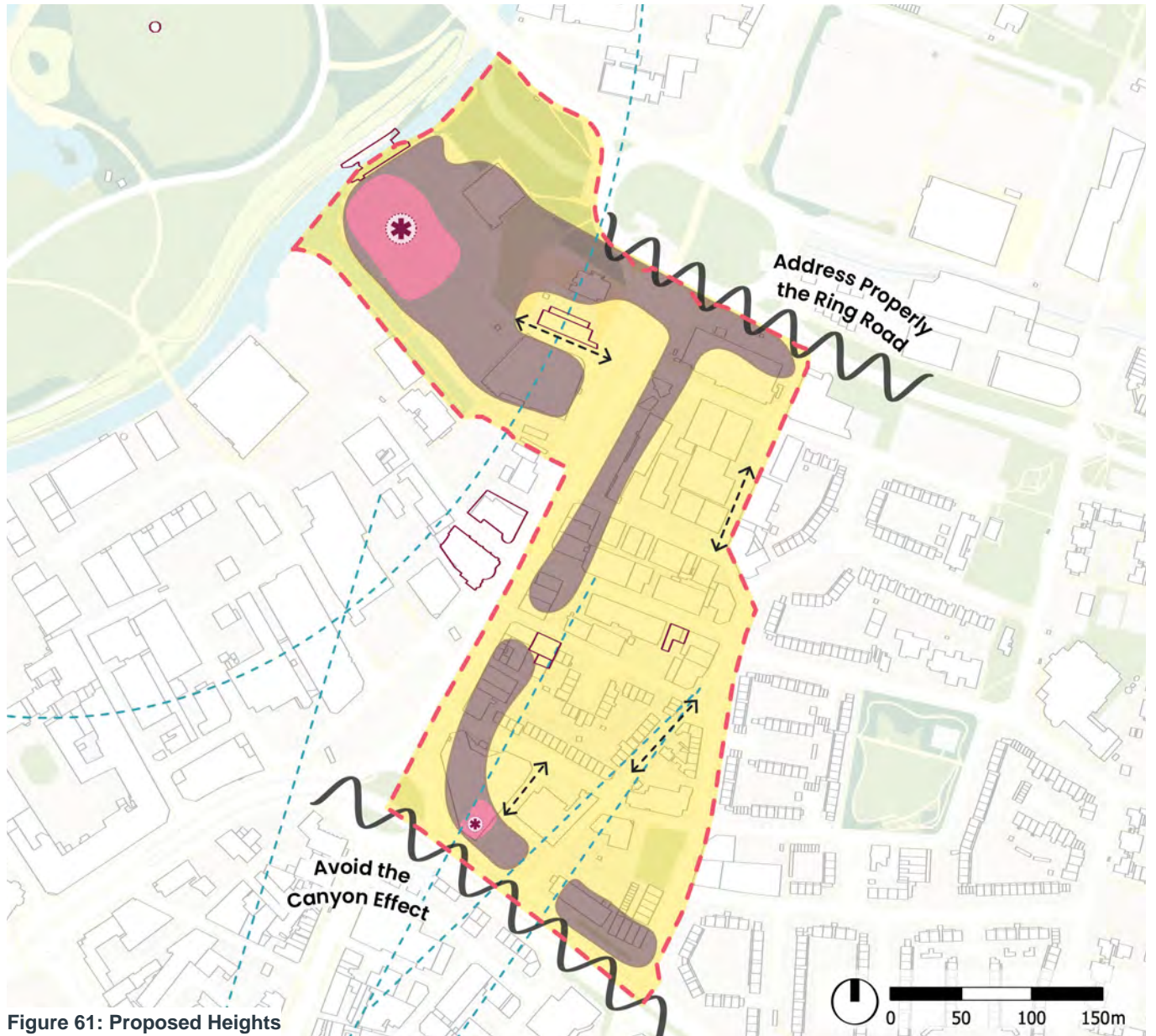


Figure 61: Proposed Heights

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Glossary

- **Accessibility:** The ease of reaching destinations. In a highly accessible location, a person, regardless of age, ability, or income, can reach many activities or destinations quickly, whereas people in places with low accessibility can reach fewer places in the same amount of time. The accessibility of an area can be a measure of travel speed and travel distance to the number of places to be reached prioritising walking, cycling and public transport.
- **Active frontage:** The interface between buildings and streets, where there is an active visual engagement and interaction between the public realm/ those on the street and the premises facing the street (ground and upper floors of the buildings), usually characterised by multiple entrances and windows. This quality is assisted where the front facade of buildings, including the main entrance, faces and opens towards the street. Ground floors may accommodate uses such as cafes, shops or restaurants. However, for a frontage to be active, it does not necessarily need to be a retail use, nor have continuous windows. A building's upper floor windows and balconies may also contribute to the level of active frontage.
- **Adaptability:** The capacity of a building or space to respond to changing social, technological, economic and market conditions and accommodate new or changed uses.
- **Ambient height:** The predominant height of an area is referred to as the 'ambient' or 'prevailing' building height.
- **Blank frontage/ wall:** A wall which has very few or no windows/ doors, providing no visual interaction with the public realm.
- **Boundary treatment:** The elements that define the extent of plots and differentiate between public and private space. Soft boundary treatments can be hedgerows and planting, whereas hard boundary treatments can include fences and walls.
- **Brick plinth:** A special shaped brick, which is used for aesthetic detail, allowing change in depth to brickwork, normally at the base of the building. Typically used for window cills, corbelling details, capping and kerbs.
- **Building cluster:** When several elements with similar characteristics are grouped in an area, making a distinct or prominent contribution to the townscape. For example, a cluster of tall buildings is formed when multiple tall buildings are grouped and placed together within a specific city area.
- **Building massing:** Refers to the overall configuration of a building in three dimensions. The height, volume and overall shape of a building as well as its surface appearance.
- **Building scale:** The size of a building in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts or details of the building, particularly in relation to the scale of a person. Scale refers to the apparent size, not the actual size.
- **Built form:** Refers to the function, shape and configuration of buildings as well as their relationship to streets and open spaces.
- **Character:** It is what defines a place. It represents a variety of physical and non-physical features and qualities factors that help us distinguish the identity of one area from another based on its uniqueness and distinctiveness.
- **Comprehensive development:** Development delivered on several interrelated sites over varying timescales that is guided by a long-term plan for the whole area and describes how the land is expected to be developed and how land uses may change over time. It incorporates the identification and creation of a shared vision, usually planned by local leadership/ government in partnership.
- **Connectivity:** The number of connecting routes within a particular area, often measured by counting the number of intersection equivalents per unit of area. An area may be measured for its 'connectivity' for different travel modes – vehicle, cyclist or pedestrian. An area with high connectivity has an open street network that provides multiple routes to and from destinations.
- **Cul-de-sac:** A street with only one inlet/outlet connected to the wider street network. A closed cul-de-sac provides no possible passage except through the single road entry. An open cul-de-sac allows cyclists, pedestrians or other non-automotive traffic to pass through connecting paths at the cul-de-sac head.

- **Definition:** Ensure that the height and width of buildings or landscape features and the gaps between them relate to the width of the street and space in front of them and those on the other side.
- **Enclosure:** Enclosure refers to the extent to which buildings, walls, trees and other vertical items frame streets and public spaces. The way public spaces are framed by vertical elements in relative proportion to the width of the space can vary providing different character and sense of enclosure a person can experience.
- **Façade:** The external face of a building or group of buildings that face the public realm. Usually refers to the principal wall of a building that is facing the street and is visible from the public realm. It is the face of the building and helps inform passers-by about the building and the activities within.
- **Façade's animation:** The support of sustained activity on the street through visual details, engaging uses and amenities.
- **Figure ground plan:** A plan which shows only building footprints, rendered in black, with the ground plane left white, providing an abstract representation of the development density and the extent that buildings define public spaces. A figure-ground plan is a two-dimensional map of an urban space that shows the relationship between built and unbuilt space. It is used in analysis of urban design and planning.
- **Fine grain:** Grain refers to the pattern of property lines, plots, streets and lanes. It is the general shape and direction of building footprints. Fine grain refers to the higher intensity of smaller plots or streets.
- **Fragmentation:** In the urban context, it refers to the process or state where the urban fabric is broken into fragments, being visually and physically disconnected.
- **Gateway:** A signature building, landscape or space to mark an entrance or arrival to an area. The gathering point or place which acts a transition between different areas and/ or spaces.
- **Groundscraper:** A large building of both significant mass and scale which extends horizontally. It sprawls along the ground, rather than soaring into the sky.
- **Height transition:** the gradual change in height between buildings within a community.
- **Healthy street:** A street defined by its response to 10 evidence-based indicators that create a human-centred framework, embedding public health in transport, public realm and planning. These 10 indicators must be prioritised and balanced to improve social, economic and environmental sustainability through how streets are designed and managed. Thus, 'healthy' is a street where everyone feels welcome, that is easy to cross, that offers shade and shelter, that provides places to stop and rest, that is not too noisy, where people choose to walk and cycle, where people feel safe, that offers things to see and do, where people feel extra relaxed and with clean air (good air quality), (Lucy Saunders, adopted by TfL).
- **Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.
- **Human scale:** Elements and features with a scale that relate well in size to an individual human being and makes people feel comfortable rather than overwhelmed.
- **Inclusive (neighbourhood):** A neighbourhood where all buildings and their surrounding spaces can be accessed and used by everyone (all ages, backgrounds and abilities).
- **Landmark:** An 'object' that provides 'external points of orientation, usually an easily identifiable physical object in the urban landscape' (Lynch, 1960). Usually refers to a tall or taller structure/ built element with great visibility and a significant impact on its surroundings but can also be a building or structure that stands out from the surrounding buildings. It offers distinctiveness to locations within the urban fabric, contributing to an area's character and making it memorable. Highly distinctive buildings, structures or landscapes that provide a sense of place and orientation.
- **Layout:** The arrangement of buildings, streets, uses and spaces in a development.
- **Left over space:** A space with no clear use, character and/ or purpose, usually formed by the residues between various plots. 'Left over' spaces are usually at risk of being neglected/ abandoned and it is best for them to be incorporated within a design.

- **Legibility:** The ease with which a person is able to see, understand and find their way around an area, building or development, reflecting the possibility of organizing an place/ environment within an imageable and coherent pattern. A 'legible' place is one that people find easy to navigate and move through.
- **Local distinctiveness:** The combination of features of a building or a place that give it a distinctive identity, features that define an area or development.
- **Landscape openness:** Landscape openness is determined by the number of elements above eye level, as slopes, tall vegetation such as woods, groves and wooded banks, buildings in towns and villages, houses and commercial buildings.
- **Local (character area) view:** A view identified in the detailed townscape analysis of each Character Area as significant to the urban fabric, contributing to the area's distinctiveness.
- **Marker:** A prominent feature or area of interest that can serve as a visual marker (focal point) and help a person to navigate through a place.
- **Mobile workforce:** A workforce comprising individuals who work outside of a physical office location. These professional workers are not limited to employees who work from home.
- **Overlooking:** Having a view from above into other people's private space. For example, a balcony on the rear extension of a house could easily look into the neighbour's garden.
- **Obscure glazing:** An umbrella term for any type of glass that obscures or distorts the view through the glass. There is not a single type of glass known as obscure glass, rather, obscure glass can be thought of as a category name for various other types of glass. There are different levels of obscurity in glass.
- **Outskirts:** The outer part of the city.
- **Perimeter block:** Development blocks where buildings front onto streets and spaces and back onto rear gardens. It is commonly used to achieve successful development through connected streets and well-defined frontages. It can work at a range of scales but should be large enough to fit adequate amenity space, parking, natural ventilation, use of the block for other purposes and to accommodate the site's topography; and small enough to allow a permeable and walkable street pattern. It enables a clear distinction to be made between public and private realms, as defined by the exterior and interior of blocks respectively and increases natural surveillance of the street.
- **Permeability:** The extent to which the urban structure permits, or restricts, movement of people or vehicles through an area, and the capacity of the area network to carry people or vehicles.
- **Place-making:** A term for the design of public spaces and the greater urban fabric, to create the physical conditions that residents find attractive, safe, neighbourly and legible. It is usually done in close consultation with the residents of a city or neighbourhood, resulting in places that have popular features for recreation, hobbies, socializing, interaction and personal reflection.
- **Positive contribution building:** Buildings that are not listed, locally listed or within Conservation Areas, however, they are important as part of the townscape of each Character Area. As such there is a general presumption against the demolition of these buildings.
- **Problematic view:** A view which is poorly terminated or defined and could be improved to make a better contribution to the townscape and place-making.
- **Rus in urbe:** An illusion of countryside created by a building or garden within a city. The phrase, which is Latin and means literally 'country in the city', was coined originally by the Spanish-born Latin epigrammatist Martial.
- **Sensory richness:** The human experience of the urban environment comes from different sensory channels i.e., sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The depth and breadth of these sensory experiences can be investigated under the general term, sensory "richness."

- **Screened frontage:** A frontage that is blocked by planting or physical objects, interrupting or making difficult the interaction between the public realm/ those on the street and the building premises facing the street (ground and upper floors of the buildings).
- **Sense of place:** A place with strong identity and character that is memorable and deeply felt by local residents and visitors. Sense of place is determined by personal experiences, social interactions, and identities.
- **Skyline:** The outline of land and buildings defined against the sky, the shape viewed near the horizon. It can be created by a city's overall structure, or by human intervention in a rural setting, or in nature that is formed where the sky meets buildings or the land.
- **Slender building:** A building, most notably a tall building, where its proportions of height to width creates a narrow or 'slender' built form.
- **Slum clearance:** Urban slums are regions accommodating people who lack the necessities to sustain a healthy and safe livelihood. Slum clearance refers to the removal for rehousing, by the state, of those people who previously lived in slum areas, to prepare the area for demolition and rebuilding.
- **Soft site:** A site with possible redevelopment potential.
- **Strategic vista:** A view of city-wide significance.
- **Street block/ Urban block:** The space within the street pattern of a city that is subdivided into land, usually containing several buildings.
- **Streetscape:** The visual character of a street space that results from the combination of street width, curvature, paving, street furniture, plantings and the surrounding built form and detail. The people and activities present in the street also contribute to the streetscape.
- **Street pattern:** Refers to the shape and distribution of streets which ultimately determines the shape of the city.
- **Strong frontage:** A frontage of heritage assets and/ or buildings making a positive contribution (as presented within each Character Area Evidence Base document). The building lines, characteristics and heights of these frontages are to inform the streetscape and for them to be retained as 'dominant features' in any street.
- **Tall development:** A building/ development which is significantly higher than the buildings/ developments in the surrounding area.
- **Three-dimensional, urban design framework:** An urban design vision for an area presented in three dimensions (length, width, height) with the use of 3D modelling.
- **Townscape elements:** The visual composition of buildings, spaces, views and features within a town that determine its distinctive character.
- **Urban grain:** The pattern of development in a settlement, the balance between open spaces and built forms, and the nature and extent of subdividing an area into smaller parcels or blocks.
- **View/ Vista of city-wide significance:** A view/ vista of city-wide significance meets a large number of important criteria, significant to the history, identity and place of Leicester.
- **View termination point:** A building or other feature which is placed at the end of a view down a street or square, to aid enclosure or provide a landmark.
- **Vista:** Direct and continuous views along straight streets or open spaces.
- **Visual impact:** The changes to the scenic attributes of the landscape/ townscape brought about by the introduction of visual contrasts (e.g., development) and the associated changes in the human visual experience of the landscape/ townscape.
- **Wayfinding:** All the ways in which people orient themselves in physical space, navigate from place to place and interpret their surroundings. It is a holistic concept with a focus on making all parts of the urban landscape easy to read and understand.



Leicester
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