

# Northstowe Town Centre Strategy

Revision C

September 2024



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This document is a revision of the Town Centre Strategy prepared by Allison and Morrison and Avison Young in 2020. This revision incorporates a small number of updates and a revision of the Indicative plans in Section 3C. The copyright for photos, images and illustrations lies with the original authors of the strategy. Additional precedent images have been supplied by Next Phase.

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# Introduction

## The Opportunity

Northstowe will be a new kind of new town. One with a keen eye on the future, whilst being grounded in its context and what has gone before.

The town will be well connected physically and economically within its Cambridgeshire context. Providing 10,000 new homes, and with the first phase almost completed and the second phase under construction, Northstowe will play a vital role in addressing the growing gaps in housing and business space in the Cambridge sub-region.

At its heart will be a new town centre to serve the 25,000 people living in Northstowe, residents in surrounding villages and visitors drawn to the town centre by its dynamic offer.

The town centre will be the focus of life within Northstowe. At each stage of its development it will provide for the needs of its community, embedding early habits and a strong sense of community. The town centre will have inherent ability to evolve and adapt as the town grows and wider needs and lifestyles change.

The planning behind Northstowe has sought to learn valuable lessons from previous new towns. Sustainability objectives have been at the core of the vision for the town from the very beginning. The town centre will be a vital cog in delivering economic, social and environmental sustainability across the town and as such needs to be underpinned by a well considered and agile strategy. This includes a mixed offering where retail, leisure, open space and play interact to serve all users.

The Northstowe Town Centre Strategy provides a framework for the town centre. It will guide its makeup and layout, the nature of the development that comes forward, the delivery models used and its long-term stewardship.

This strategy is both evidence and research based. It learns from past mistakes in new town centre planning and is informed by future trends to ensure the town centre works in the short, medium and long term.

The strategy sets out proposals for the town centre that utilises the routes, fixed assets (such as schools) and a town wide green infrastructure network established in the wider masterplan to underpin the vitality and activity.

The strategy has been shaped by some important questions:

- How do people want to work, shop and spend their leisure time today and how will this change in the future?
- And how should Northstowe be planned in this uncertain context?
- How can Northstowe help meet the needs of Cambridge and diversify the offer?
- How should this shape the identity of Northstowe?
- How do we avoid the mistakes of other new towns?
- How can we make Northstowe stand out?

## Purpose of the Strategy

### Updating the 2020 Town Centre Strategy

This document is a revision to the approved Northstowe Town Centre Strategy (2020). While that strategy was always set out to be a flexible framework, it is felt by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Homes England that an update to the strategy is necessary to provide a robust planning context for the town centre parcels to come forward, the first one including the Market Hall and the Civic Hub.

This revision re-sites the Civic Hub, introduces a new Civic Plaza and is more detailed around the role of meanwhile uses.

This revision does neither change the principles and objectives nor the core components set out in the previously approved strategy but provides updates to selected sections. These include:

- Section 3c: indicative spatial plan
- Section 3d: movement & parking
- Section 4b and the indicative sequenced approach

The strategy remains a framework to guide the delivery of the town centre. Spatial plans are indicative only and illustrate one way in which the development could come forward in line with the principles agreed in the approved Town Centre Strategy.

It is intended that this Town Centre Strategy is flexible to allow any development partners to adapt to changing markets and economic climates.

Each future town centre parcel should identify how it fits within the strategy framework and provide an updated indicative spatial plan as an appendix to its supporting Design and Access Statement. This plan will demonstrate how the full town centre offer will be delivered in future phases.

### Building on the original 2014 strategy

An early strategy was originally prepared to support the Phase 2 Planning Application in August 2014 submitted by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), as Homes England was then known.

Subsequently the Town Centre Strategy (2020) expanded on the original 2014 document. In line with the outline consent it *“provided more detail on the layout and distribution of activities and enabled the early delivery of the town centre”*. It was approved in discharge of Condition 14.

It draws together detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis, technical and design work undertaken by the Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners and Avison Young team, on behalf of Homes England. This evolves the vision for the town centre and establishes a unique and future looking strategy. It promotes a dynamic approach that can secure early delivery and support the evolution of the town centre offer as it grows.

The 2014 Town Centre Strategy to support the Phase 2 planning application by the HCA established the following vision statement for Northstowe Town Centre:

***“Northstowe town centre will be distinctive, dynamic and convenient. It will be the place to learn, do business and have fun.”***

Building on this vision as a starting point, a research-led approach has been undertaken drawing together extensive quantitative and qualitative analysis and technical retail needs analysis to explore this vision in more detail and develop the Town Centre Strategy. This is supported by spatial design work and masterplanning.

Through this analysis it has become clear that the drivers of the town centre's economy will be distinct from almost anywhere else. Whilst influenced by the context of the wider Cambridge market area, the town centre will be established in a new untested market, evolving over time in response to the phased delivery of Northstowe's 10,000 new homes.

### Defining and shaping a new framework for the town centre

In response to these findings, Northstowe should strive for **distinctiveness**; taking risks and making bold moves relating to the unique character of the town centre's offer. It's offer should be **fit for purpose**; meeting the diverse needs of all residents as the town centre evolves and addressing any identified gaps in provision within the wider market area. **Resilience** must also be achieved; striking a balance in the mix of town centre uses that generates and supports footfall from a wide audience, whilst being versatile with the ability to adapt to changing requirements and audience dynamics over time.

With this in mind, the Town Centre Strategy establishes a framework for the town centre that is inspiring, attractive, distinct, but most importantly deliverable over the long term. It determines the nature and mix of uses that should be promoted within the town centre, which respond to the opportunities and challenges facing this new town centre in the context of the wider Cambridge market dynamics, and ensures it can show resilience alongside distinctiveness.

The aspiration for Northstowe town centre is to provide a dynamic and innovative centre that meets the needs of residents throughout its phased delivery and long into the future, as well as serving residents in surrounding villages and attracting a diverse range of workers and visitors.

This means it must establish itself as a destination and a hub of activity right from the initial development phase, and must grow and evolve as development progresses to continue to meet the wide ranging needs of new residents, workers and visitors.

In order to establish a new framework for the town centre within the Town Centre Strategy, the key priorities for Northstowe have been identified as:

**Flexibility** – ensuring every piece of the town centre and commercial space can have alternative futures

**Destination** – establishing Northstowe town centre as a destination for residents, workers and visitors, beyond convenience

**Enterprise** – supporting and creating local business activity and providing opportunities for small and growing businesses as a core element of town centre activity.

The identification of these priorities is underpinned by a range of detailed evidence and technical analysis, with a detailed evidence based process leading to the approach and solutions that form this Strategy.

Relevant elements of this evidence are incorporated within the main body of the document, supported by the full documents which are provided in the Appendix. This relates particularly to the retail modelling work underpinning Section 2d of the Strategy.

## What does the Strategy include?

The Strategy encapsulates the following key elements across its four sections:

### 1: Town Centre Vision

Establishing the key principles and unique selling points of Northstowe and how these shape the town centre:

- An ethos as much as a place
- Meeting a full range of needs
- A destination and departure point
- A place of enterprise and experience, as well as providing places to shop

### 2: Why this approach?

Exploring the range of factors shaping the approach to developing the strategy for Northstowe Town Centre:

- Rapidly changing strategic commercial market context (retail, food & beverage and leisure trends).
- An opportunity for local distinctiveness (in the context of the wider offer and hierarchy), reflecting the strength of existing places, gaps in the existing offer in the wider area, and displacement resulting from the increasing pressure on Cambridge.
- A different mix of residents, accommodating a distinctive population base from the wider area, which drives needs across the income and generational spectrums.
- An opportunity to capture a more diverse range of spending, rather than relying the core retail offer which is already well catered for in the wider area.

### 3: A flexible mix and environment

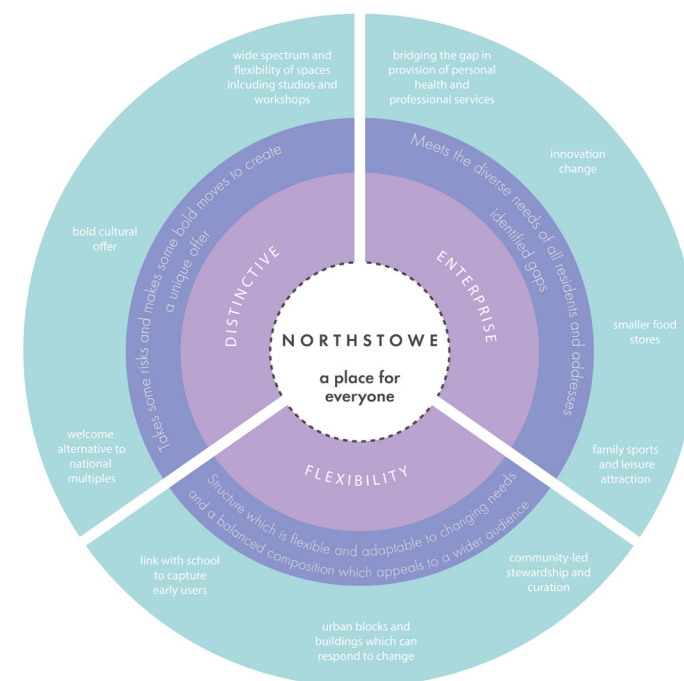
Setting out the proposed mix, scale and nature of the town centre area which focuses on the following key elements:

- Scale of non-residential uses, which establishes the proportional mix of uses, efficiency of the layout and creating the right commercial environment.
- Indicative spatial plan, presenting the key masterplan diagrams for the town centre and the flexibility this accommodates for the evolving nature of uses over time.
- The high street, providing an appropriate sense of scale and promoting the activity and vibrancy of spaces.
- Highlighting the proposed green spaces and their purpose, as part of the wider green network, taking the form of town gardens and a town park.
- The scale, nature and timing of parking provision in the town centre.

### 4: Making it happen

Setting out the approach to delivering the strategy over time as housing is delivered and the weight of Northstowe residents increases:

- The fixed elements of the town centre where we know when and where they are coming forward, subject to market demand.
- Driving forward demand related to the evolution of the town centre audience and the relationship of different uses.
- Unlocking the potential of the town centre by tapping into the spirit and nature of the local area.
- Actively managing and curating town centre uses and activity across the town over time.



Northstowe - a place for everyone

# I. Town Centre Vision

## A place for everyone

As identified in the Purpose of the Strategy section (page 4), flexibility, destination and enterprise have been established within this strategy as the key priorities for Northstowe town centre. This is steered by the Economic Vision and Strategic Aims established in the Economic Development Strategy, but takes this forward to shape and inform the new framework and set the tone for Northstowe as a vibrant, attractive and deliverable town centre.

**Destination:** A destination that appeals to as wide an audience as possible (including residents, workers and visitors). It will move beyond functionality to deliver a distinctive mix of uses and activities that drive footfall. This means focusing not solely on delivering the 'essential' elements, but on the range of additional uses and activities that diversify the offer and make it attractive for visitors.

**Enterprise:** A place for ideas and exchange; for SME's starting and growing businesses through supportive range of networks and spaces, pursuing key sector opportunities, and providing a place for creativity and creative endeavour through the integration of building typologies and spaces to work, exhibit and trade.

**Flexibility:** Providing flexibility for changing needs and future generations. The town centre will secure fixes, but allow for flexibility that delivers resilience and dynamism to meet future needs. This flexibility will be inbuilt, and will reflect the aspiration of continual growth and evolution of Northstowe in response to growing and diversifying audience needs, rather than aiming to reach an 'end state'.

Creating a desirable environment is a crucial cross-cutting element which will support these three town centre priorities, providing a positive sense of place for all users of the town centre throughout its phasing.

Providing a strong and positive environment complements the structuring of the town centre around a connected network of green spaces, providing safe, active and accessible areas for people to experience and move through.

The town centre environment will support its attractiveness as a destination, reflect the creativity and enterprising nature of its workspaces and activities, and promote flexibility across all aspects; in relation to the built form, uses and occupiers within the town centre.

## Destination

Residents working in Cambridge return to Northstowe to spend their leisure time

Non-residents working in Northstowe also choose to spend their leisure time in Northstowe after work

Visitors choose Northstowe, as well as or instead of Cambridge

Broadening the range of uses / spaces available in the wider area

## Enterprise

An ethos as much as a place

Promoting an innovative and dynamic way of doing things

Providing spaces to experiment and test ideas, with a range of workspaces supporting start-ups, small and growing businesses

Supporting a creative and experience-focussed lifestyle

Accommodating a mix of independent and chains that cater to diverse audience needs

## Flexibility

Anticipating future needs

Attracting and supporting a diverse audience

Developing and evolving an ongoing meanwhile strategy

Securing fixes, but with flexibility to achieve alternative future

Providing the functional through the exceptional

## 2. Why This Approach?

### 2a: Dynamic strategic context

The traditional activities that have underpinned town centre activity for the past 50 years are facing unprecedented challenges. The retail, leisure, food and beverage (F&B) sectors in the UK are facing increasing pressures as people radically change the way they shop, relax and interact. These fundamental changes are creating a structural transformation in the way 'town centre' businesses operate. This reflects a complex web of influencing factors, particularly changing consumer habits, technological innovations and digital disruption, combined with unprecedented economic factors and pressures on town centre property assets to accommodate a more diverse mix of modern occupiers and to provide positive investment prospects.

The rise of internet retailing and 'click and collect', as well as the change in behaviour towards 'top up shopping' for groceries rather than a weekly shop, is having significant implications for space requirements and retail formats in town centres, with knock-on impacts for occupiers. The full integration of online and physical stores is leading to smaller shop footprints with more nimble and focused stock, and a shift in food shopping habits is being driven by more regular small trips generated by easier access, concern over food waste and irregular working hours. The pandemic has further accelerated the trend to online shopping and changes in consumer habits as set out above.

This sets a dynamic and challenging context for developing the strategy and realising the delivery of Northstowe Town Centre, which leads to the unique approach being taken.

#### Fewer occupiers in the market for space

The decline of traditional retail and leisure uses in town centres in light of this context has reduced occupier confidence in the market, which means there are fewer retail and leisure occupiers in the market for space.

Some occupiers are weathering the storm but putting hold on any plans for expansion or new stores, some are entering into company voluntary arrangements (CVAs) and closing stores and reducing staff numbers (such as Prezzo and House of Fraser) and others are ceasing to trade entirely (such as Maplin and Toys R Us). This situation has been exaggerated following the pandemic, where many national chains have gone out of business and are being replaced if at all with smaller independent, localised outlets.

For Northstowe this limits the pool of national chains who would traditionally locate in a town centre, and requires a more flexible and creative approach to creating an attractive opportunity that can draw in the right type of occupiers now, and in the future.

#### Increased focus on strategic centres for comparison retail

The challenging operating conditions for retailers within town centre and high street environments is seeing the shift of comparison retail occupiers specifically towards strategic centres where there is a critical mass of this type of offer.

This responds to consumer preferences shifting either towards online offers or shopping experiences in these strategic centres, like Cambridge City Centre, Cambridge Retail and Leisure Parks and Ely Leisure Village, with access to the full comparison retail and leisure offer in one place.

For existing and new town centres and local centres this changes the composition of the retail offer that can be supported, and therefore the approach to attracting footfall and activity.

#### Increased consumer preference for new forms of 'experience'

One of the major factors driving the significant and ongoing changes in the retail and leisure sectors is consumer expectations.

Consumers are turning more and more to online retailing for their convenience and comparison retail needs, and when they do choose to visit a town centre this is in search of the experience.

The role of town centres is therefore transforming into social destinations for experience, rediscovering their role as places of interaction and exchange, and reflected in the growth of co-working spaces, coffee shops, social and community spaces, leisure 'venues' and cultural offers.

Creative solutions are being explored to repurpose underused assets in town centres for a range of different retail and business activities. This includes the accommodation of 'pop-up' and 'meanwhile' spaces (which ideally can evolve to become permanent as required), as well as the rise of a range of workspace facilities which can counteract the loss of traditional office floorspace to other uses through permitted development rights.

Adopting flexibility towards use classes and how land is used over time is becoming increasingly important in this changing context, providing an ability to accommodate the shifting demand for different types of uses and space which can help to promote dynamism within town centres.

The Northstowe town centre offer therefore must be positioned very much towards creating an experience for visitors and residents in order to be a viable centre, alongside the provision of facilities that meet core resident needs.

The physical environment is also vitally important, creating a vibrant environment that is a pleasure to be in, and encourages social interaction. This adds to the experience a town centre provides for its visitors, with the nature and character of public realm and the spaces between uses being as crucial as the uses themselves.



## 2b: The Evidence

### The Case for a Truly Mixed Use Town Centre in Northstowe

The concept of a town centre for Northstowe has been a long-term commitment and objective of both Homes England and the wider partners involved in the delivery of Northstowe. However, there are legitimate questions to be answered about why this is necessary and how it can be achieved. The Town Centre Strategy seeks to answer both those questions for Northstowe.

In developing the strategy what has become clear is that the town centre is not only needed to meet the retail needs of Northstowe residents, but can play a more strategic role as a new urban centre in the wider region – offering opportunities for new businesses to start, locate and grow in the region in an environment that is different from other developments. Through integrating uses it can create a place where people can both live and work in a new urban centre.

This approach creates opportunities to deliver a town centre that extends beyond a place that meets basic needs (both in terms of scale and breadth of offer) to one that can be a vibrant and dynamic urban heart to the wider town and the villages that surround it. However, it has to be recognised that realising this opportunity can't happen based on a traditional approach to development, innovation in development approaches, building typologies and space management will all be required to establish and grow the town centre over time.

Our research suggests that the town centre cannot simply be left in the hands of a traditional development approach. There are a number of large new towns and urban extensions where aspirations for a 'town centre' have not been fully realised, locations such as Cambourne and Cranbrook are still yet to deliver their centre despite significant housing growth.

Our detailed analysis of the opportunity for Northstowe (presented in the accompanying Baseline Report) provides the evidence and rationale for retaining an ambitious vision for Northstowe town centre, however we summarise some of the key elements here to provide a context for the strategy approach set out in the rest of this report.

### The Strategic Needs

The Cambridge sub-region is one of the UK's leading economy success stories, its economy has seen unprecedented levels of growth, driven by its world class education and research capabilities which has placed its businesses at the cutting edge of the economy, enabling them to drive innovation and technological advances.

However, as the economy has forged ahead growth has not benefited everyone equally. Whilst many science and technology businesses have thrived there is increasing evidence that their success, coupled with the ongoing expansion of the University Colleges, has led to an overheating commercial property market.

This has had a number of impacts for small and start up businesses that operate outside of these sectors – including independent retailers, creative and arts based businesses, the general service sector and even cultural/leisure operators. On the one hand space has become limited, leading to increases in rents that are pricing out all but the highest value businesses. On the other new development has not provided a diversity of stock, catering to global technology and science businesses or high growth start ups with a range of specialist properties and sites at the expense of more general workspace typologies.

These issues have now gained strategic recognition through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review, which predicts an acceleration of economic growth in the coming years and therefore identifies a need to enhance the provision of workspace within the Greater Cambridgeshire area in particular to avoid business activity being lost from the region. The success of developments such as the Enterprise Campus at Alconbury or the Bradfield Centre in Cambridge have had in letting space are identified as evidence of unmet demand for different forms of workspace.

The theme is then picked up by the Local Industrial Strategy which, as one of its foundations, argues for "the creation of more places with the ability to absorb economic growth in a sustainable way" to ensure that businesses have "access to the right kind of space at every part of their evolution". Fundamentally the provision of a broader range of space, in appropriate environments that are also available at more affordable rents are seen as critical to support ongoing economic growth.

The commercial space challenges are further evidenced by a range of market reports that focus on the local market dynamics. Research by Savills ("A City State of Mind", 2018) suggests that demand for office and lab space in central Cambridge has increased significantly, with c.£139mn of investment channelled into commercial property in 2018 alone, with half of that invested in office stock. The report goes on to suggest that prime rents could reach £45/sqft as a result of ongoing demand and the lack of supply with a likelihood that occupiers will (and already are) seeking greater value elsewhere, seeking to balance access to the city with the cost of space. Even in these fringe areas (such as the northern fringe) Carter Jonas reported rents around £32.50/sqft in 2017 and more peripheral business parks reaching up to £29/sqft.

Similar issues have been experienced in the retail sector. Despite a fall in Zone A rents in recent months Bidwells report that space in Cambridge is still in excess of £235/sqft demand for space is still strong, reflecting the City's role as the first ranked retail centre in Harper Dennis Hobbs Retail Vitality Index.

### Why Northstowe?

The overheating commercial market within Cambridge itself is clearly having an impact on the ability of a range of occupiers to be able to locate or remain within the city. That provides an opportunity for other locations to step in and fill the gaps in provision that the city has left, however it is clear that not all locations will benefit.

Research used to inform the CPIER which surveyed a range of young professionals and students in the city revealed that there is a strong desire to be based within urban locations to benefit from the dynamism and mix of amenities that provides. If urban environments are where talented people will live, it follows that it is also where they'll want to start and grow businesses.

Similarly the CPIER recognises the importance of agglomeration and close supply chain relationships to the success of the Greater Cambridge economy, with businesses relying on a 'network density' to thrive. If businesses can't be within the city itself they will therefore seek out other locations that offer good links within those networks, for some that may mean fringe science park locations, for others that may mean less proximity but good accessibility in order to be in a more mixed environment.

Ultimately of all the growth opportunities within Greater Cambridgeshire (and indeed the wider Combined Authority area) Northstowe provides a unique opportunity to bring many of these desirable factors together. The more intense urban context that will be created in and around the town centre can create the living environment young, skilled workers crave but cannot afford in the city. Similarly, it can also create the range of amenities and networking opportunities for small and start-up businesses that fuelled Cambridge's initial growth.

With the dedicated busway offering direct, uninterrupted, links to the city centre and beyond it also offers the accessibility to wider networks and clients for businesses seeking to be part of or service the burgeoning Cambridge knowledge intensive economy. In the opposite direction it also offers the potential to access from elsewhere the diverse cultural, leisure and retail offer that can cluster in the town centre as a result of more affordable, and more diverse types of, premises.

This focus on workspace and leisure opportunities can help broaden the appeal to residents considering moving to Northstowe. It will also support the early retail offering, when there are fewer residents than needed to provide significant spending power to the town centre.

Making this work in Northstowe will require a range of tactics and approaches to come together. As noted in the latest London Residential Development bulletin by Savills there is need to curate a high-quality mixed retail and leisure offer in new development in order to help residential succeed - the two have to come forward together for places to succeed at each step of delivery. It considers it important for this to be a focus in early phases of large schemes in order to establish a sense of place in locations where the market is weak, needs establishing or perceptions of place need to be changed to attract occupiers and

residents.

Our research for this strategy has shown how a wide number of regeneration and development projects have harnessed wider trends and demand by providing a type of non-residential offer that is not provided for elsewhere in a particular economy. Whether the Baltic Triangle in Liverpool, Trinity Buoy Wharf in London or Wapping Wharf in Bristol a mixture of creative workspaces, specialist retail and vibrant leisure offers have been combined with progressive letting strategies to create thriving new centres in formerly peripheral locations.

What is clear, despite these success stories, is that nowhere is like Northstowe in terms of the opportunity and challenges such a 'blank canvas' presents. The scale of ambition is not in doubt and it is the purpose of this strategy to set a direction for how this can be achieved.

This vision for Northstowe is shared by the existing residents, those living around it and even some of those who are considering moving to the town as houses are delivered. An open exhibition held in April 2019 gave people the opportunity to understand the plans and help shape them for the future, some of the key messages were:

## The Public's View

Over the years the emerging community and partners have been engaged to inform the ongoing delivery of the wider town. Some key comments are included here:

"Northstowe has a vital sub regional role as a new, exemplar community."

"There needs to be a positive and involved relationship with the surrounding villages."

"It needs to focus on the things that Cambridge can't provide and be complementary."

"Focus on the spaces between the buildings creating cool, quirky experiences."

"A place that is calmer, more relaxed and not fast paced."

"Remember to weave in the history and character of the area"

"It's great that it is already multi-cultural, diverse and international."

"It must be a place to live an active, healthy life with well-being at its heart."

"A big positive to have such high quality education and sports provision so early on in the place's development."

"The town centre needs a cinema, family pub, clubs, play areas; spaces to have fun."

"It's important that it builds a close relationship with Cambridge: the university, science parks, businesses and hospitals."

"Would like to see a shared workspace and space for spin out and start up businesses."

Consultations also generated interest in business space, prompting the creation of a new registration of interest function on the Northstowe website which has seen local businesses register interest in space from a variety of sectors. This adds to the number (c.40) of more speculative enquiries Homes England have received in the last few years.

## 2c: An opportunity for local distinctiveness

Northstowe sits in a strong strategic context within the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor (LSCC) and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, as one of the key growth and development opportunities alongside Alconbury Enterprise Zone, Waterbeach and Cambourne.

It also lies within a network of existing towns, villages and other centres that play varying roles in meeting local and strategic needs.



Northstowe in context of existing towns and villages

The economic strength of knowledge and innovation within the city region will shape and influence the economic opportunities for Northstowe town centre and provide a platform for innovation.

However, in order to succeed Northstowe must distinguish itself within its wider context, respond to weaknesses and gaps in the wider offer, the opportunities from businesses being displaced from Cambridge, and the mix of residents the town centre can appeal to.

## Established places have strong roles

There are a clear set of existing places in the wider region which have a strong and well-established commercial role, in retail, leisure, office and workspace terms.

**Cambridge City Centre** is 10km / 6 miles from Northstowe and plays the most significant commercial role in the wider region as a heritage focused regional centre with good public transport links and a wide range of comparison and convenience retail, leisure uses and office and workspace provision. The centre has significant creative and tech clusters with a strong sense of innovation and entrepreneurship underpinned by the university presence and its cultural and creative offer (with museums, galleries, music venues) which attracts and promotes a diverse mix of independents, creatives, start-ups and small businesses.

The comparison and convenience retail offer and F&B offer in Cambridge City Centre is also strong, offering a breadth of comparison retailers on street and within shopping centres, a number of different convenience retailers, and a mix of independent and chain cafés and restaurants, bars, pubs and clubs. The retail and leisure offer is further supported by a number of retail and leisure parks surrounding the centre, including Cambridge Retail Park, Cambridge Leisure Park and Ely Leisure Village.

There are a number of **Science Parks** in the wider sub-region, reflecting Northstowe's location within the Cambridge Compass Enterprise Zone (CCEZ), which provide clusters of high quality, purpose built office, tech and Research & Development (R&D) space. These include; Cambridge Research Park, Cambridge Science Park, Cambridge Innovation Park and Alconbury Enterprise Park. These clusters support the strength of the bio-medical, R&D, high tech manufacturing and professional sectors in the region, providing a very attractive location and environment for the life science sector activities ranging from start-up to space to wet labs and bespoke build packages.

A number of these parks are in the process of being built out so can continue to meet the demands of future occupiers. Northstowe town centre should seek to complement rather than compete with the 5ha **Northstowe Enterprise Zone**, which is being taken forward by the Council and likely to attract predominately office development..

There is an opportunity for Northstowe to become a hub for businesses who are seeking great connections to these parks and campuses, without paying the premium of being located within them.

The **surrounding villages** within Northstowe's core catchment area, such as Longstanton, Oakington, Cottenham, Willingham, Over and Swavesey play a strong role in serving local resident needs.

**Bar Hill** is the exception to this; providing a Tesco Extra store which acts as the first choice for the majority of residents' food shopping in the local area.

However, gaps in the offer exist.

Whilst the strength of established places in the wider context for Northstowe is evident, an assessment of the offer in the local area suggests some gaps in the offer which Northstowe can seek to fill:

In the local villages **convenience retail** is reasonably well represented but there is a very limited comparison retail and personal services offer. These type of amenities could be provided in Northstowe town centre as an option for residents in the wider area looking for a more local offer rather than having to visit Cambridge City Centre.

The convenience retail offer is well provided throughout the local and wider area, which limits the scope for a significant scale of this floorspace within Northstowe town centre. The purpose of the Northstowe offer is not to act as direct competition for nearby villages, but to provide a scale of offer that primarily services local needs. This is supported by quantitative needs testing (see section 2.d).

Cambridge has an extensive and well established **cultural and leisure offer**, however this is poor in the surrounding villages to Northstowe. There is therefore an opportunity for Northstowe town centre to provide some form multi-use cultural space such as an events space, gallery or destination museum. This would constitute part of its anchor as a 'destination'.

In terms of **business space** the extensive number of business parks support clusters of technology and R&D activity, specifically for businesses specialising in biomedical, pharmaceuticals, electronic and software engineering, and information technology. This builds on the sector opportunities of being within the LSCC context, and attracts large occupiers, including the likes of AstraZeneca, NAPP Pharmaceuticals and Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute. These clusters provide Grade A and bespoke fit out lab space, much of which is leased on fixed terms.

At the other end of the spectrum Cambridge City Centre is an attractive potential location for small business activity, particularly in the creative and cultural sectors, however it does not provide much of the flexible small business space they need. Instead, its offer is more polarised towards the very large spaces that support science and tech businesses like Astra Zeneca, and the very small incubator spaces for start-ups. These spaces are high spec and tailored towards either the big corporate occupiers or the tech/science start-ups. SMEs in the professional services, creative and productive sectors struggle to find space here, and what little space is available is experiencing increasing levels of demand, and is therefore becoming unaffordable for these businesses.

Whilst the university presence is a key anchor for the centre which attracts businesses to want to cluster here, it actually compounds the challenges further through the office space it accommodates, which is therefore not available to the general business population.

This points to the opportunity for Northstowe town centre to provide a 'middle ground' offer between the current spec and flexibility of the business park and city centre offers. This would counteract the increasing demand, typology and affordability challenges of accessing flexible workspace within the centre and a shortage of this type of space outside of the city centre. It would also provide lower spec, smaller floorplate 'out of centre' space for businesses who are not looking to pay the premium of a Cambridge business park location, and seek the amenities and connectivity provided by a town centre context.

## Increasing pressures on Cambridge

As inferred in relation to business space, the displacement of a number of activities from Cambridge City Centre is rising. The character of the city as a diverse, creative, entrepreneurial centre and the nature of the activities it supports as a result of this identity and the workspace and other commercial spaces it provides (strengthened further by its strong connectivity) is driving the squeeze of activities further out of the centre and beyond it entirely.

This mirrors its housing affordability pressures which is making it increasingly difficult for people to both live and work in the centre. Yet it creates a significant opportunity for Northstowe town centre to capture this displaced activity and position itself as an attractive alternative to Cambridge for both occupiers and visitors.

The squeeze of activities is far-reaching, but is most notably impacting the creative and entrepreneurial activities such as cultural and exhibition spaces, creative workspace, independent retail and start-up, SME and general R&D spaces.

## 2d: A different mix of residents

The Economic Development Strategy (2014) and the updated Economic Development Strategy (2022) provides a picture of the future socio-economic characteristics for Northstowe to 2040 through the Reference Case, which is essentially based on mirroring current trajectories for South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge combined, and therefore follows the performance of the wider Cambridge region and its expected growth trends.

This provides a baseline understanding of the scale and nature of the Northstowe's future population and what this would mean for the town centre audience. However, we have already determined that the drivers of Northstowe's economy will be unique, and this can also be said for the nature of its audience in comparison to the wider area.

We have undertaken analysis to better understand the people who are likely to be living, working and spending money in Northstowe, in order to ensure the strategy promotes a town centre mix that fully meets all needs. This draws on the lessons from a range of other examples of new developments in proximity to a dominant city. This reflects the relationship between Northstowe and Cambridge and considers the nature of the audience for the new town and how this compares to the wider city catchment. There has been a particular focus on age/life stage, affluence, disposable income levels, expected spending habits and type and tenure of housing.

By exploring the age/life stage, affluence, disposable income levels, expected spending habits and the type and tenure of housing in a number of examples (including Trumpington Meadows in Cambridge and Cranbrook in Exeter), it becomes evident that the audience characteristics and spend profile for new towns often differs from the dynamics in the wider audience catchment for the nearby city. This is heavily influenced by the type of homes being provided and the characteristics of residents this accommodates.

The greater the diversity of the housing offer, the greater the diversity of the residents and town centre audience and the wider range of activities and levels of affordability to town centre will need to accommodate.

**The nature of Northstowe will mean a different population base from the existing wider area**

The economic vision for Northstowe sets an ambition to create a unique employment and town centre offer, which complements the wider Cambridge corridor. The socio-economic research undertaken to underpin this Strategy demonstrates the potential diversity of the Northstowe town centre audience, and the opportunity to attract a highly skilled demographic which may have higher disposable income than the average levels in the wider area.

The housing offer of Northstowe and the nature of the 10,000 homes that come forward as the town builds out is the main factor that will shape this, and will help to achieve the diversity in audience supported by the diversity of the town centre offer.

The diversity of the size and type of units proposed for the wider 10,000 homes across Northstowe will shape the diversity of Northstowe residents, and support a mix of town centre uses that cater to all needs. It will also bring in residents and a town centre audience with a higher spend profile and more disposable income.

The housing mix within the town centre could include discounted market sale, affordable rent and private sale apartment typologies. Built to rent is also a possibility. This would create a more affordable dynamic that also support residents with a lower income and spend profile (such as junior employees at the science parks, key workers and SME / start-up business owners). This plays into the opportunity to capture some of those priced out of Cambridge, but requiring proximity to the city centre.

The diversity of residents and the town centre offer will ensure it provides a wide range of activities and amenities, which is what will make Northstowe more attractive to businesses squeezed from Cambridge or from further afield who are looking for an opportunity to locate closer to the city, attracted to the connectivity provided by the guided bus route.

## Driving different needs at either end of the spectrum

The Northstowe town centre audience will be diverse, in part reflecting the housing mix. This means there will be a focus on meeting requirements for meeting affordable housing and starter home requirements, which needs a certain type of offer. Conversely the wider demographics of Northstowe town and those attracted to private sale units may seek something different and more aspirational. There is therefore a need to cater for both ends of the 'audience spectrum'.

This is not just about residents. It is also about differentiation of this town centre from all the others in terms of its function; driving the opportunity for something different.

This concept of driving needs at either end of the spectrum resonates at a number of levels, relating to generational factors, spend profile levels, and housing affordability.

The variation in the population base for Northstowe compared to the wider area reflects the nature of the offer of Northstowe town centre **from the functional to the exceptional**, making sure it caters for all audience needs. It will become a place for all ages and generations, all backgrounds, all levels of affordability, and all levels of employment.

In terms of our proposals, this translates into providing a mixed offer that meets core needs (in terms of local services, convenience retail and community space), however it is also complemented by a much greater diversity of retail, leisure and cultural facilities. This includes significant opportunities for independent and innovative activity.



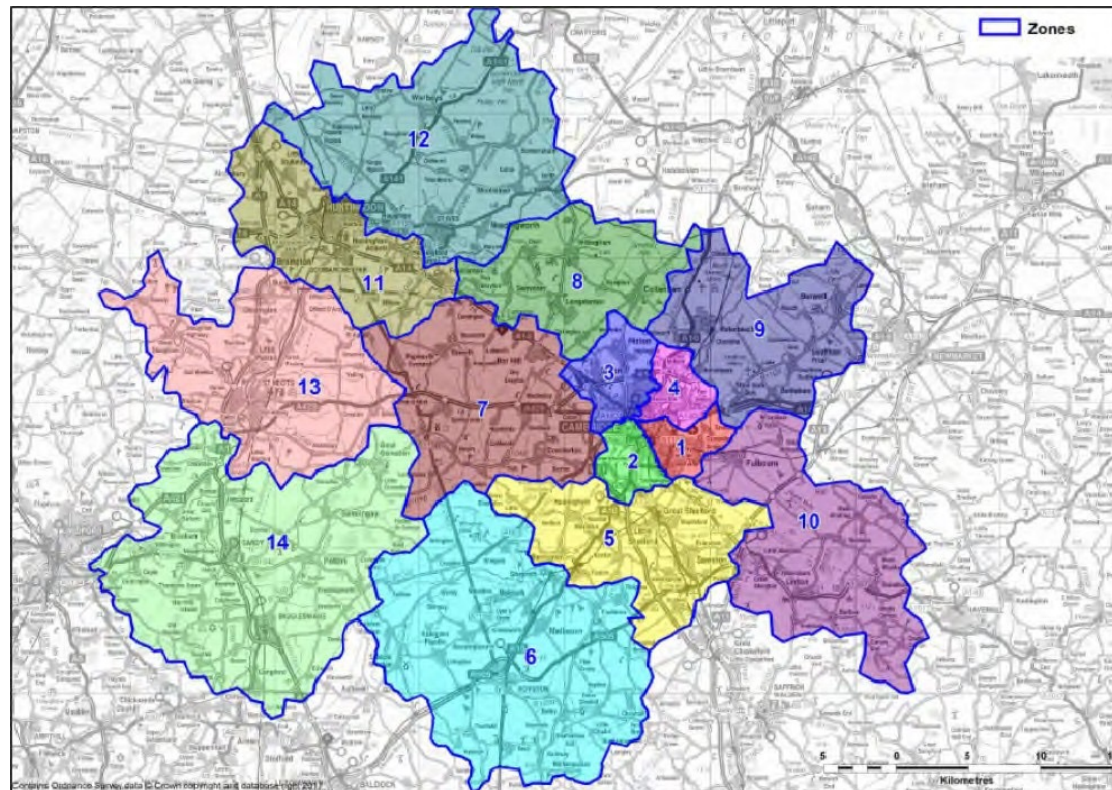
## 2e: Limited core retail 'need' but can capture 'footloose' spend

### Existing retail context

As already outlined, Northstowe town centre is being delivered in the context of an established set of retail provision. This includes Cambridge city centre, out of centre provision in Cambridge, medium-sized market towns such as Cambourne and Huntingdon, plus Bar Hill and smaller scale provision in the surrounding villages.

In relation to food shopping provision in the local area, the surrounding villages have small scale stores which are orientated towards top-up / basket functions. These include Co-op stores in Longstanton, Cottenham and Willingham, along with local independent stores in Longstanton, Oakington, Swavesey, Over and Willingham. The closest large scale supermarket is a Tesco Extra at Bar Hill. This store extends to 15,215sqm gross floor area and sells a wide range of convenience and comparison goods.

Data on food shopping patterns around Northstowe can be found in the documentation supporting a planning application for a large scale retail development proposal at Bar Hill. The extent of the survey area is shown in the following figure, with Northstowe lying in Zone 8. Zone 8 also contains Longstanton, Cottenham, Willingham and Swavesey. Bar Hill lies in Zone 7.



2018 Household Survey Area Map

The main food and top-up food shopping patterns associated with Zone 8 residents are contained in the following table. This shows the dominance of the Tesco Extra store at Bar Hill for main food shopping amongst Zone 8 residents, although the data also shows that shoppers are willing to travel to other stores further afield for other main food shopping.

Store / Centre	Most Recent Main Food Shop	Other Main Food Shop	Most Recent Top-Up Food Shop	Other Top-Up Shop
<b>Tesco Extra, Bar Hill</b>	55%	41%	4%	7%
<b>Co-op, Willingham</b>	4%	5%	17%	24%
<b>ALDI, Ely</b>	2%	-	-	-
<b>Co-op, Longstanton</b>	-	-	10%	11%
<b>Co-op, Cottenham</b>	-	2%	5%	6%
<b>Waitrose, Cambridge</b>	2%	1%	-	-
<b>Cottenham village stores</b>	-	-	3%	4%
<b>Oakington village stores</b>	-	-	3%	2%
<b>Willingham village stores</b>	-	-	2%	1%
<b>Over</b>	-	-	1%	-
<b>Swavesey</b>	-	-	1%	4%
<b>ALDI, Cambridge</b>	5%	10%	1%	1%
<b>Sainsbury's stores, Cambridge</b>	-	6%	2%	1%
<b>Tesco stores, Cambridge</b>	3%	4%	-	-
<b>Waitrose, St Ives</b>	2%	-	-	4%
<b>ALDI, Huntingdon</b>	5%	3%	-	-
<b>Morrison's, Cambourne</b>	2%	1%	-	-
<b>Internet</b>	12%	8%	2%	3%

For top-up food shopping the data shows that the Tesco Extra store becomes much less dominant and smaller stores, closer to home in the individual villages, are more popular.

For comparison goods shopping, Cambridge, followed by Bar Hill, are the most popular destinations. Overall, the city centre has a significantly higher market share for all comparison goods shopping trips amongst Zone 8 residents, whilst Bar Hill's market share is relatively low. In terms of individual comparison goods categories, stores at Bar Hill have the following market share amongst Zone 8 residents: (in order from highest to lowest:

- Clothing and footwear – 4%
- Furniture, furnishings, floorcoverings – 4%
- Domestic appliances – 6%
- Audio-visual equipment – 10%
- Health and beauty products – 36%
- Toys, games, sports, recreation products – 12%

## Expenditure capacity

In order to set the context for the level of retail floorspace which the town centre is able to support, this strategy document has reviewed the level of potential retail expenditure capacity within Northstowe itself (as the new town continues to grow) and also in the wider area.

As a starting point, this considers the level of retail floorspace which could be supported by the spending associated with the residents of Northstowe. This is detailed within the Baseline Report (provided as an appendix to this document) and is based upon the following data sources:

- The latest estimated completion rates at Northstowe, taken from South Cambridgeshire Council data;
- An assessment based upon year-on-year expenditure growth from 2018-2031 and then a single post-2031 total for the remainder of Northstowe;
- Local per capita retail expenditure levels (from Experian) for convenience and comparison goods, plus expenditure on cafés and restaurants; and
- Testing floor space capacity levels for each type of retail use based on differing levels of retention within Northstowe.

The 'ring fenced' capacity assessment finds that:

- If 40-50% of convenience goods expenditure generated by Northstowe residents can be retained, then this would accommodate the turnover of the foodstore envisaged for the Phase 1 local centre and, overall, between 2,200sqm net and 2,800sqm net convenience goods floorspace for the completed new town.
- The retention of 50% of locally generated expenditure on food and beverage would accommodate 500sqm of Class A3/4 floorspace by 2031 and an additional 1,500sqm post-2031.
- Given the close proximity of Cambridge and Bar Hill, we would expect a lower level of market share/retention of expenditure for comparison goods trips in Northstowe. Should 10% of expenditure be retained, then this would support 860sq m net by 2031 and 2,500sqm net for the completed settlement. Should the retention increase to 20% then 1,700sqm net could be supported by 2031 and 5,000sqm net for the completed settlement.

Whilst the ring-fenced capacity assessment is a useful indicative exercise to show the level of retail floorspace which residents of Northstowe could support, it is expected that the new town centre will also draw trade from a wider catchment.

This Strategy is therefore supported by exploring the contribution that residents in a localised catchment could make in supporting retail floorspace in the town centre, which again is fully detailed in the Baseline Report.

## Convenience goods floorspace

The assessment therefore tests the market share of retail floorspace in Northstowe town centre within Northstowe itself and the surrounding parishes of Longstanton, Willingham & Over, Swavesey and Cottenham. For convenience goods shopping, three scenarios have been tested: market share levels assumed in the supporting assessment for the Phase 1 outline planning application and alternative scenarios which assume that Northstowe is less/more successful in terms of its market penetration rate. The results are as follows:

- Based upon the assumptions used in the Phase 1 planning application – including a 25% main food market share for Northstowe residents and a 15% market share for Longstanton residents – c.2,900sqm of net sales convenience goods floorspace could be accommodated when Northstowe is complete.
- If the new town centre is less successful in attracting main food shopping trips from Northstowe residents and main and top-up trips from Longstanton residents, possibly because a smaller sized foodstore is provided, then capacity falls to c.2,000sqm net.

- Conversely, if a large store is provided, and exceeds expectations in terms of main food shopping trips from across the catchment, then
- c.2,200sqm net could be accommodated by 2031 and c.4,500sqm net in totality.

## Comparison goods floorspace

For comparison goods floorspace, two alternate scenarios have also been adopted: one assuming that the Northstowe town centre can achieve a 5% market share for comparison goods shopping across the localised catchment and an alternative assessment which assumes a 15% market share.

The 5% market share scenario results in a localised capacity of c. 2,000sqm net when the whole of the new town is complete, rising to c. 6,000sqm net for the 15% market share.

For food and beverage floorspace our local catchment capacity assessment assumes that 15% of expenditure from Northstowe residents is retained, falling to 10% for Longstanton and 5% across the rest of the catchment. This results in a total capacity, when Northstowe is complete, of c.2,000sqm of A3/4 floorspace.

The above analysis shows that in order to provide the level of Class A retail floorspace allowed for in the outline planning permission for Phase 2 of the new town, the town centre will be required to draw convenience, comparison and food & beverage from further afield and/or achieve a higher market penetration rate in the local area (i.e. be capable of competing more aggressively against Bar Hill and Cambridge). In addition, in order to achieve these levels of market share it is likely that competition from surrounding retail destinations, such as Bar Hill, cannot intensify.

## Northstowe Town Centre retail offer opportunities

Given the surrounding context as outlined above, along with the finite level of retail expenditure capacity in the local area, the opportunity for Northstowe town centre's retail offer will be focused around two areas: **meeting local needs of Northstowe residents and providing a distinctive retail offer which attracts visitors from a wider catchment.**

The retail offer, in terms of serving the needs of local residents, is likely to focus on a modest amount of convenience goods floorspace, encompassing a small to medium sized foodstore, in part influenced by the content of the local centre in phase 1. This will be complemented by F&B and other service uses.

The F&B offer may well be combined with workspace uses and should be seen as being attractive for the local workforce and local residents in order to create activity during the day and in the evening. In order to create the best possible circumstances for the success of retail provision in the early phase, retail provision should be located close to the education, health and other main town centre uses so they can take advantage of the vitality/footfall created. Given that the scale of Northstowe will not, on its own, be supported by local residents, the town centre will also need to be attractive to a wider catchment. The town centre cannot replicate Cambridge city centre and will not be a direct competitor. Therefore, it will take advantage of retail uses which are:

- **Complementary to Cambridge** (i.e. retail businesses which see an opportunity for additional provision), and
- **Provide a differentiated offer** which isn't available in the wider catchment and, potentially, focus upon a leisure-related retail destination.

Such uses, particularly the latter, may require larger site areas and the development of the town centre will need to offer the opportunity to accommodate these as and when demand/proposals arise. This would accord with the current Development Plan Strategy in the 2018 Local Plan which identifies Northstowe as the location which should accommodate retail demand after Cambridge.

However, in order to make Northstowe town centre successful and achieve the objectives in this strategy, all of the main partners involved in its delivery – Homes England, South Cambridgeshire District Council etc. – must ensure that development proposals in the wider area do not threaten its delivery. As a consequence, this Town Centre Strategy is as much about the wider context in South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge as it is about the content and design of the town centre. This will include careful examination of planning applications for main town centre uses elsewhere in South Cambridgeshire which may impact upon planned/committed investment in the town centre.



## 3. The Core Components

### 3a: Spaces with purpose

The town centre has been designed to be a series of **spaces with purpose**. This goes beyond simply allocating areas of green space and public realm within the masterplan without due consideration. No single space can cater for all people and all occasions. Instead thought has been given to provide multiple types of green space that can cater for all - parents, children, older people, young adults etc..

These spaces will accommodate a flexible mix of activity which promote experience, work, play, learning, movement and curation, as the Northstowe town centre grows and develops. Importantly they also cater for different moods; for exercise, for celebration, for socialising and for contemplation. As well as being visually attractive, these spaces will spark delight and provide experiences that residents and visitors to town centres are searching for.



Range of activities undertaken within Marlborough High Street  
(Neil Goodwin copyright)

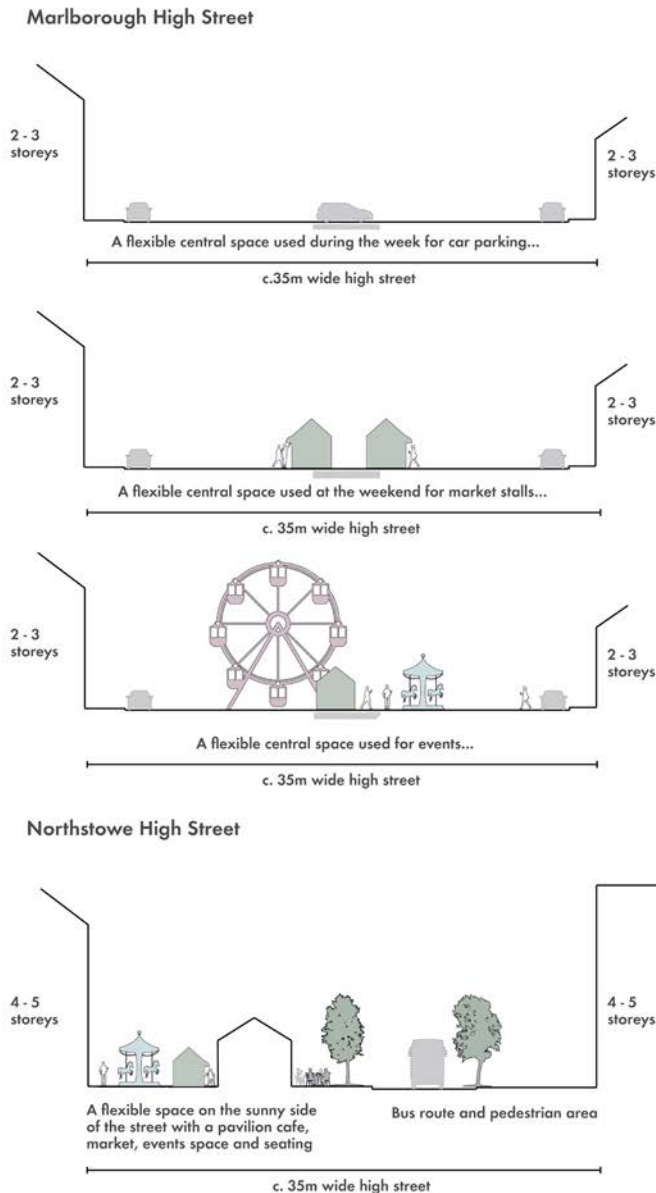


## High Street

Historically, town centres have taken many forms often determined by the confluence of routes. The alignment of the high street through the town centre and the surrounding street pattern offers the opportunity to introduce a widened high street space between two junctions. The widened high street form can be seen in many historic centres across England, from **Marlborough in Wiltshire** to St. Ives in Cambridgeshire. The space created here offers an opportunity to create a meaningful public space at the heart of the town, a space which can be used differently through year for events and activities, and will define the town centre's role as a place of exchange, drawing visitors and residents to it.

The widened high street section has two elements. In the early phases of development, the northern and middle section will be established first. This will be a narrower space, lined by predominately residential uses, with unit shops and the Civic Plaza, bringing early non-residential uses close together to support their success. The Civic Plaza will have a more formal civic character, reflecting the uses that will cluster around it early on. It will be heavily influenced by the green corridor crossing the high street at this point and will include formal landscape planting and trees.

The middle and southern sections will be a wider space overall, creating capacity for activity that enhances and supports the active frontages that will come forward along it. The use of this space will change over time, retaining a dynamism that attracts repeat visits, uses could range from a street market, to a festival, to outdoor performances or community events throughout the year. To appeal to the full spectrum of Northstowe residents we imagine clusters of informal play space, landscaping and water features, within the high street, creating a further focus for families to gather and interact.



Comparison between Marlborough High Street and Northstowe High Street





Northstowe Town Centre - widened high street looking south

The high street forms a series of differently scaled hard landscaped spaces to serve the town centre, including a Civic Plaza and events space. Planting and urban trees and water features will be a vital component of the town centre, creating character and also helping to manage the variations in climate over time. In contrast to the high street, other routes will feel more enclosed and intimate with a creative character, ready to be explored by visitors to the town centre.

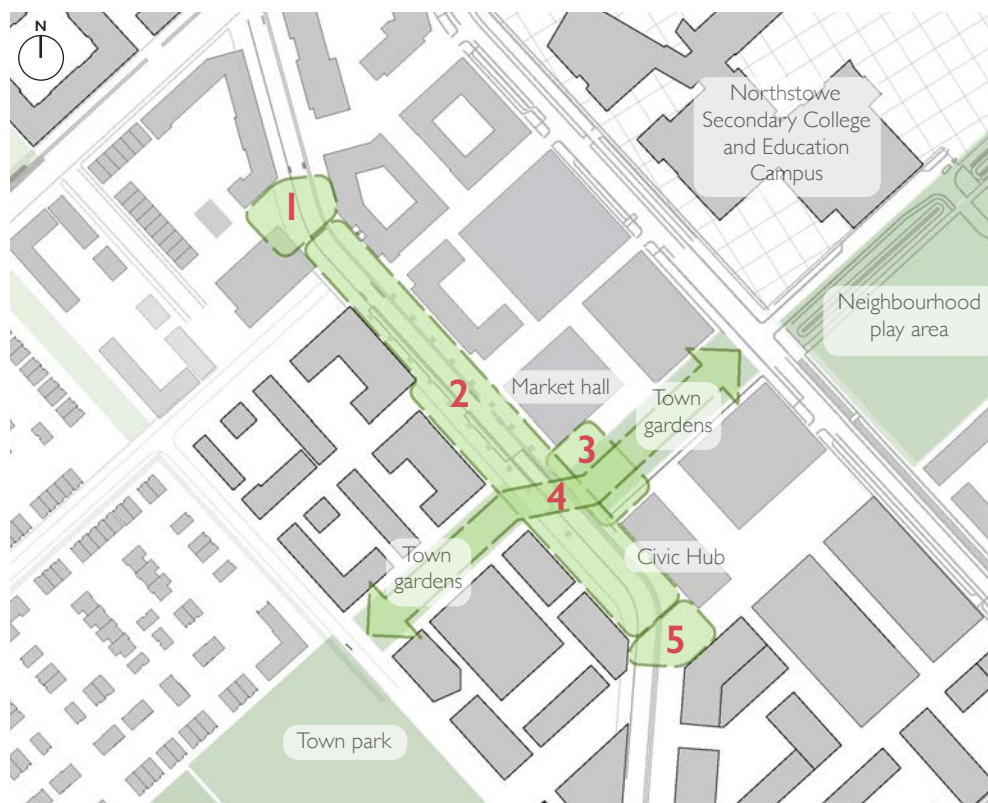
The following sketch provides a zoomed in view of the high street public realm network, which uses both the green corridor and the high street itself as primary structuring elements.

**Spaces 1 and 5** are the entry spaces into the town centre. These spaces announce the town centre and facilitate the transition of the route from spine road to high street. They are opportunities to design public spaces with a different identity associated with the change in width of the street with tree planting, soft landscaping, play equipment, seating to relax and water features including SUDS incorporated into these green spaces.

**Space 2** is the core of the High Street with shops and cafés, spilling out into the High Street as well as other opportunities for seating and informal play.

**Space 3** This Civic Plaza provides the central space in the town centre and it is animated by the Market Hall on one side and the Civic Hub on the other. It provides a flexible space which could be used for temporary market pitches, events or concerts. The Market Hall provides activity in the space throughout the year and has the potential to act as a covered extension of the Plaza. The Civic Plaza also provides an attractive forecourt and setting for the Civic Hub.

Within **Space 4** the Town Gardens connect right through the high street, with tree planting, soft landscaping, play equipment, seating to relax and water features including SUDS incorporated into these green spaces, with views through to the Town Park and Waterpark.



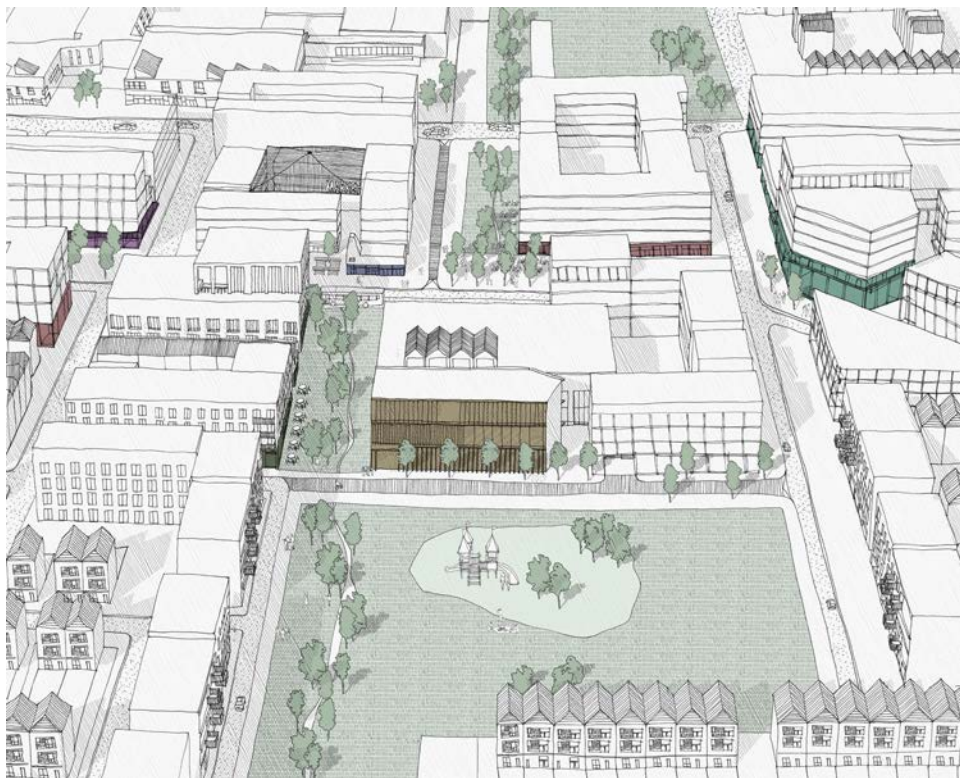
Northstowe Town Centre - public realm spaces on the high street



## Green Space

The town centre will be structured around a network of green and open spaces, enhancing connections to the wider countryside. Each of these spaces will have a distinct role and function in the town centre, with green spaces helping to shape the future character of Northstowe.

The green corridor forms the focus for a series of green spaces which bring nature right into the heart of the town centre.



Northstowe Town Centre – birds eye view of the Town Park and Town Gardens, looking across the high street



Northstowe green spaces sequence in the context of the wider countryside



## Town Gardens

The focus of the town centre is the design of a safe and active high street environment, with places and spaces to play, places for events and green spaces to relax.

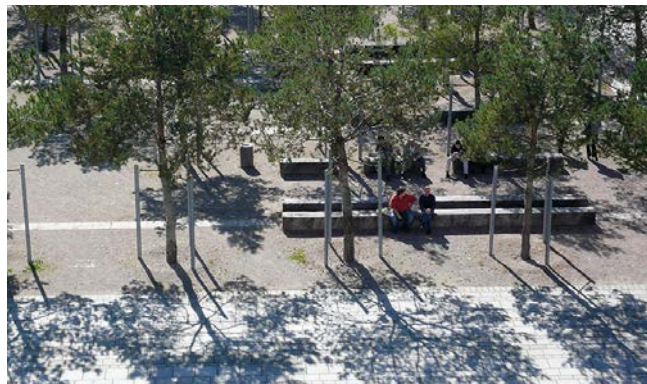
The Town Gardens link this central space to the wider green corridor sequence of the town park, recreation ground and into the wider countryside. The town gardens will have an important role in greening the town centre and will contain swales and rills as part of a sustainable drainage strategy for the town centre. A fine grain block structure will support comfortable streets with generous street tree planting, providing shade and shelter.

## Civic Plaza

This multifunctional hard surfaced space is located between the Market Hall and Civic Hub. It forms an extension to the Town Garden located immediately adjacent to the High Street.

This area will be the focus for activity, spill out space for the Market activity and civic events.

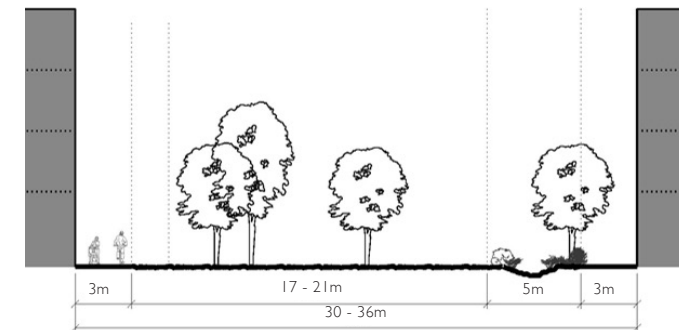
The area will need to be serviced with electricity to enable market activity, concerts and screenings.



Civic Plaza precedents



Town Gardens precedent - Pancras Square  
Photo courtesy of Allies and Morrison architects



Town Gardens cross-section diagram. The eastern Town Garden is expected to be wider (approximately 26m in width) to allow direct views between the School Square, the High Street, Civic Plaza and the southern Town Garden.

## Town Park

The Town Park will form an important resource for both the town centre and the town as a whole. The park is located on the green corridor and linked to the high street via the widened Town Gardens. The park will be framed on all sides by a variety of uses and an active south facing block on the north side spilling out into the space.

The Town Garden spaces and the Town Park support the overall character and activity in the town centre, bringing usable green space right into and across the high street itself. The additional green space created on the high street provides more diversity and opportunity for sustainability, biodiversity and wellness. It creates opportunities for social interactions, space for relaxation and play.



Northstowe Town park - Computer Generated Image



## The Education Campus

The Northstowe Education Campus will provide the largest facility of its kind within the Cambridgeshire County, bringing together education, community and sporting facilities which will cater for the needs of residents in Northstowe, Longstanton, and the wider area. This offer will be crucial to the community sustainability of Northstowe Town Centre.

More specifically, the Northstowe Secondary College opened in September 2019 and is run by Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT). 600 students are accommodated at the academy in the first phase, which will increase to 1,200, then 1,800 students in subsequent phases. The second phase of development, envisaged to open in September 2024 will expand the secondary school from 4FE to 8FE and deliver a post-16 facility co-located within the academy which will accommodate 400 students.

The first phase of the Education Campus also provides a sports hall, flood-lit sports pitches, a multi-purpose school hall which can be used as community and theatre space, and a Special Education Needs (SEN) school known as the Martin Bacon Academy.

Northstowe already has its first three-form entry primary school, the Pathfinder Primary School (managed by the Diocese of Ely Board of Education) and the second one is envisaged to open in September 2024 on the Education Campus in Phase 2.

From September 2019 the Education Campus has brought people to the area and is therefore one of the key early drivers of the town centre's success, a role that will grow as both the Campus and the town centre evolve.



Northstowe Education Campus



Northstowe Primary School  
( [https:// www.northstowe.com/content/education](https://www.northstowe.com/content/education) )



## Market Hall

The Market Hall is the most significant of the bespoke typologies - a place of exchange, enterprise, and creativity. It will be one of the first places built in the town centre, establishing a dynamic sense of place and character that can be carried forward across the rest of the town. The building will have multiple layers, with an open-plan internal space, mimicking market halls from many historic towns, connecting with sheltered outside space to allow expansion of the market and street food trucks to attend the market. The internal space can be flexible; by day, market stalls may fill the ground floor space with tables for eating and drinking, and at night, these could move to allow for performance or events. The surrounding structure will be home to small businesses, in kitchens, retail units, creative studios, and relaxed coworking spaces. On the upper floors, small office spaces, podcast studio, and youth club overlook and interact with the internal and external space with shared circulation encouraging visitors and exchange.

The Market Hall is a crucial element of the town centre mix which draws together creativity, culture, and food and drink to provide an exciting focal point for interaction and exchange within the town centre, a hub for all small businesses and the town centre.

There is flexibility in how activities can use the spaces to interact and innovate, which will evolve over time as the town centre grows and attracts more activities and visitors.

The most important characteristic of this space is the diversity and flexibility of the space provided to support the full range of local business activities, as well as encouraging growth and evolution of business activities organically on the streets around the Market Hall. This will appeal to pioneering workspace operators and business occupiers, provided there is a level of fit-out that allows them to customise and adapt spaces to best suit their activities. This will provide an affordable entry point for small businesses to secure the space in Northstowe that they may be unable to access elsewhere (i.e., in Cambridge City Centre). The entrepreneurial spirit and creative nature of businesses that this space can accommodate will rub off more widely on the town centre and contribute to its sense of place as it grows and evolves.

There is an opportunity for market activity to spill out into and animate adjoining space. There is a range of possibilities for market hall format, some of which are shown by the following four precedent images:



Market Hall precedent: Manchester Craft Centre



Market Hall precedent: Warrington Market



Market Hall precedent: Brixton Market



Market Hall precedent: Pop Brixton



## Civic Hub

Civic and community uses will help to provide activity to the high street. A Civic Hub delivered by South Cambridgeshire District Council will be the focus for uses that people need including healthcare facilities, a library and community spaces for the town council, parties and events. This central hub should also include shared workspaces and areas for public art and heritage displays.

Other community uses which could be incorporated into the hub or clustered elsewhere include youth facilities, a place of worship and a gym. It is intended that the Civic Hub building will be in a very prominent location, adjacent to the Market Hall and Plaza and overlooking the High Street.

There are many examples of successful civic spaces which Northstowe could take lessons from, as shown in the following precedent images.

Below: Civic Hub precedent: Bethnal Green Mission Church - community centre and residential scheme. This provides a community facilities (basement), two storey church (ground and first floor), charity and co-working spaces (first floor) and private residential above.

Image copyright: Gatti Routh Rhodes Architects (<https://www.grr-architects.com/selected-projects/bethnal-green-mission-church>) and Jack Hobhouse.



Civic Hub precedent: Brent Civic Centre



Civic Hub precedent: Deptford Lounge



Civic Hub precedent: Lambeth Civic Centre



## Workspace

Northstowe will be a place to have ideas, start and grow a business. A spectrum of employment spaces will serve these varied needs and add activity to the town centre. New spaces will complement the region's sci-tech cluster and create a new place for creative endeavour, with space to create, exhibit and trade that is currently lacking in Cambridge. A strong link will be fostered between Northstowe's businesses and the Education Campus.

The workspace offer is a key component of the town centre composition that should be considered early, providing both office and creative workspace typologies that appeal to a broad range of small business requirements. With in-built flexibility, the typologies provided should meet the current gaps in the wider workspace provision, providing more affordable and accessible space that will attract both creative businesses and those seeking to serve both the local population and wider Cambridge economy. To support and attract economic pioneers and further enforce affordability new forms of live-work development could line some of the mews streets.

The workspace offer and other business uses (such as conferencing facilities) will grow and strengthen over time as town centre footfall increases and continues to drive commercial demand, taking advantage of the wide range of town centre activity and supporting amenities that will be established. This will create a range of space that promote the widest possible spectrum of employment within the town centre, and can adapt and evolve to meet changing needs and/or differed economic growth directions.

Employment uses will permeate all parts of the town centre. Commercial uses and office space will form part of the high street frontage and also address the primary road, promoting links to the Education Campus. Workshops and a range of employment spaces will colonise the mews streets, one block back from the high street, reflecting the more intimate and informal nature of these streets. Space will also come forward in the town centres first buildings, the Market Hall and Civic Hub.

A number of bespoke typologies have been considered as part of the DNA of the town centre which can lay the foundations for enterprise and vitality in Northstowe. These will integrate a variety of business space through innovative building types to create places that will foster the seeds of enterprise in the town centre. These bespoke typologies are; Mews Typologies, Standalone Enterprise Space, a Market Hall and Civic Hub.

Activity should not just happen right on the high street. **Mews typologies** create alternative spaces for a range of uses - creating enterprise spaces which could be colonised by creative businesses and 'messier' industries which need direct access to a street. These streets could add vitality to the town centre, encouraging a unique mix of people and activity, focused in the town centre. Upper floors could be workspaces or homes.

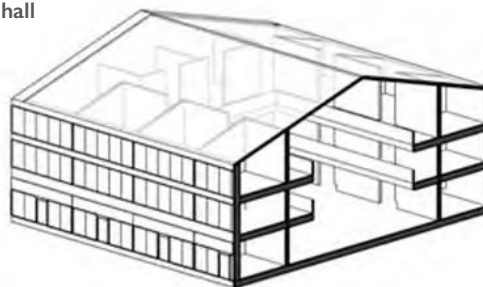
Integrating opportunities for enterprise across the town centre will be vital in establishing the culture and ethos of the town centre. However, these spaces alone will not deliver against the opportunity available to the town centre. Alongside these a series of **standalone enterprise spaces** will be created which all businesses to start, locate and grow within the town centre.



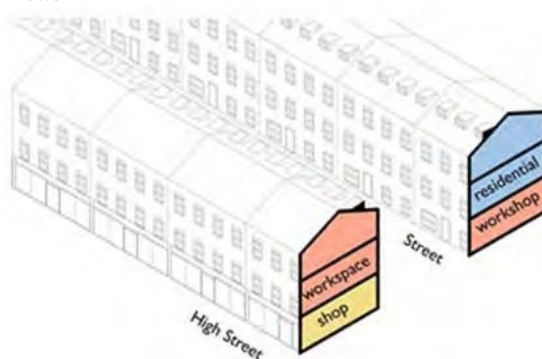
Northstowe Town Centre Mews CGI

The **Market Hall** and **Civic Hub** typologies are particularly crucial town centre components, bringing together employment space with a range of other uses; retail, leisure, community and cultural. As we have shown in this section, a mix of office, light industrial and studio spaces will provide a working environment that encourages a range of business types and sizes. This space will address the gaps in supply locally and complement the wider employment offer of Northstowe that may come forward in the Enterprise Zone. An illustration of these typologies is shown in the following diagram.

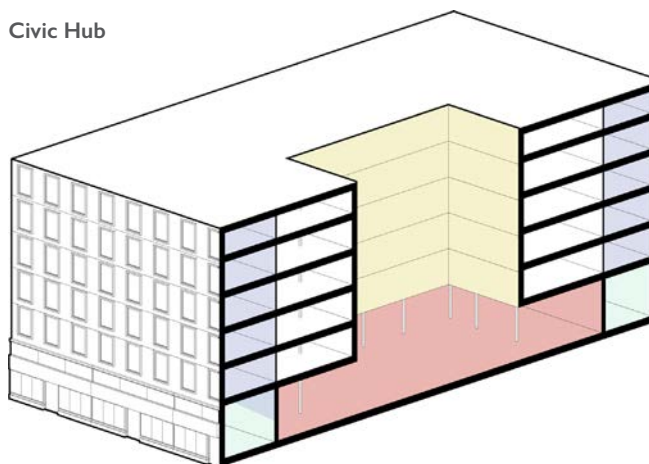
**Market hall**



**Mews**



**Civic Hub**



Typology diagrams - Market Hall, Mews and Civic Hub

### 3b: A focused centre

The framework for Northstowe Town Centre shapes a focused centre, balancing the scale and mix of uses within a well-connected layout underpinned by a high-quality public realm and town centre environment.

#### Scale and share of spaces

The mix of commercial uses promoted within the Town Centre Strategy seeks a true balance between retail, employment, commercial, leisure and civic activity to ensure future vitality. It has the ability to accommodate a wider range of activities, such as a hotel, should the market demand grow for this type of space, however this is an element of the mix which may not necessarily come forward depending on market appetite. The flexibility of the town centre mix allows for its delivery in later phases but is not in any way contingent on it.

As shown in the pie charts on the next page, this evolves the shares of space as presented in the previous masterplan / outline consent. The approach in the outline was about establishing the maximum floorspace that could be accommodated without impacting negatively on local centres, and as such was always intended to be refined at a later date. The mix of spaces in the Town Centre Strategy therefore makes this refinement, and establishes an approach which is deliverable and 'viable' in this market context.

This evolution is therefore partly a response to the challenging retail sector dynamics and the contraction in space demand, but also a reaction to a greater level of understanding of what purpose and role the town centre can play, not just for Northstowe but also in addressing some of the sub-regional gaps and priorities. Ultimately this greater diversity of employment, commercial, leisure and civic uses (alongside residential) will attract footfall to the high street and therefore create greater resilience and vibrancy within a town centre.

#### A tighter, more efficient centre

Not only does the framework for the town centre promote a healthy balance in the mix and shares of uses, it also prioritises the relationship between uses to establish strong connections between key anchors. This involves the clustering of similar and related activities around the key anchors of the Civic Hub, Education Campus and Market Hall established in the early phases, in order to create a tighter, more efficient centre.

Emphasis is also placed on guiding footfall between key anchors and maximising the opportunities for uses reliant and high levels of activity passing by. Providing a strong, consistent high street frontage reinforces this, and strengthens the core of the town centre, complemented by the green route and town park that connect directly with it without disrupting the flow of footfall along the high street.

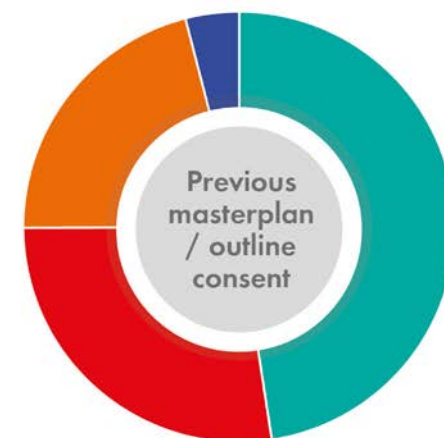
#### Creating the right environment

High quality public realm forms an important part of the placemaking approach that will help to create an attractive town centre environment where people want to spend time. This is demonstrated by the importance placed on the town centre's green routes and open spaces, plugging into the wider green and open space network leading to Longstanton, the Waterpark and, in time, Oakington. This focus on public realm and open space, combined with the mix and location of different activities in an efficient town centre layout, will drive Northstowe's attractiveness.

The Strategy for Northstowe Town Centre is about creating a place that appeals to a wide audience both today and tomorrow through a distinctive mix of uses and activities. It is a centre that is about more than just retail, with leisure, cultural, employment and civic functions underpinning the strategy. This reflects and responds to the strategic sector trends seeing a shift in focus from the dominance in 'pure' retail in town centres towards a more experience led retail and leisure economy.

#### Retail

Retail floorspace forms a component of the non-residential mix in the town centre, but it is far from the dominant use. It consists of the functional convenience retail floorspace that is essential to meet the full range of residents' needs, providing an affordable and every day offer from day one, but will also attract the exceptional, providing a differentiated offer that contrasts and complements surrounding centres. This retail floorspace is accompanied by a small proportion of personal/professional services that completes the functional offer of the town centre expected to support all residents.





## Commercial

Workspace is commercial in nature, and constitutes a significant proportion of the town centre's floorspace, promoting the aspiration for enterprise and providing the space to support local business activities. As well as the pure workspace provision, it features as a key part of the mix within the Market Hall, as well as providing potential for some provision within the Civic Hub, and within the mews in the form of live-work units.

The Market Hall is a crucial element of the town centre mix which draws together creativity, culture and F&B to provide an exciting focal point for interaction and exchange within the town centre through its range of commercial uses. Whilst there must be a certain level of 'fix' for the floorspace within this typology to establish certainty and provide security to early occupiers, there is also flexibility in the how activities can use the spaces to interact and innovate, which will evolve over time as the town centre grows and attracts more activities and visitors.

Space for private children's day nursery provision will be considered in later phases, as these help parents work locally and supplement early years provisions as part of the primary schools. This nursery provision will further enhance Northstowe Town Centre as a place to work.

It must be acknowledged that the commercial proposals identified here are somewhat speculative. The alternative is more traditional office and employment floorspace that contributes less to establishing character and identity, and shaping and evolving the nature of the town centre over time, however this alternative is unlikely to come forward in the early development phases in an untested market location such as Northstowe.

## Hotel

The potential hotel floorspace within the town centre supports Northstowe's appeal as a destination for visitors, and could potentially come forward in the medium to long term once the town centre's reputation as a destination for visitors is established. The nature of the hotel could be aligned specifically to business visitors, linked with a conferencing facility, or aligned to the town centre's leisure and destination anchors, depending on the specific types of uses coming forward and what this means for visitor requirements.

## Leisure

Destination uses are not a distinct non-residential category, but the term reflects a range of leisure uses, and cultural activities that will attract residents and visitors to the town centre. There is a cross-over here with retail uses, however leisure related retail is focused towards providing an experiential offer, rather than the more traditional retail floorspace already discussed. This mix of uses make up the most significant proportion of non-residential floorspace in the town centre. This floorspace should come forward as early as possible to provide the key anchors for the town centre and create a buzz and excitement around its offer from the outset, however this will obviously be developed and evolved over time. Whilst the Market Hall typology is predominantly a commercially focused offer, this also has some cross-over with the leisure uses and the intention of promoting experience and establishing the town centre as a destination.

## Civic

Community uses are a crucial part of the civic offer, meeting core requirements of residents, and promoting the civic and cultural heart of the town centre. Flexibility is retained in the type of uses and how these are clustered, however this will include the library and health facility elements.

Space for faith and voluntary groups will become available in the later stages of the town centre once the town centre has become the civic focal point for the emerging communities.

## The 'Big Bang' alternative

The preceding text summarises the uses which will lay the foundations for organic growth of the town centre, building out from these core components. However, as a growing town the flexibility which could accommodate a 'big bang' alternative must be enshrined in the strategy.

By this we mean a big hit investment into the town centre from a significant key anchor. Whilst Kings Cross has seen this type of move from tech giant Google, it has been suggested that their attraction to this regeneration area was in part a result of the early pre-let from the University of Arts London into The Granary Complex in 2011. Other examples include the introduction of major cultural or institutional offers (such as galleries, museums etc.) to establish a distinct character. Success of these approaches relies on ensuring they integrate into existing networks, or networks are created to embed them locally.

It is likely to be a cultural institution that provides Northstowe's big bang, should it happen, reflecting the strength of South Cambridgeshire's arts and cultural offer anchored by Cambridge University. However, a significant leisure use, exploring the greater creativity and imagination infiltrating the leisure sector, could also provide such an investment opportunity. Think increasingly popular competitive leisure forms like urban golf, escape rooms and the re-imagining of more traditional experience-focused leisure activities like bowling, cinemas and the health fitness and lifestyle offer.

The flexibility built into the strategy means the town centre is not reliant on the 'big bang' alternative, but allows for it to happen and can welcome it as a completely integrated part of the core town centre.

### 3c: Indicative Spatial Plan

The spatial element of the town centre strategy is not a rigid masterplan. It is a flexible framework that allows for evolution and change. It will guide the make-up and layout of the town centre, the nature of the development that comes forward, the delivery models used and its long-term stewardship.

This flexible strategy will help ensure that the town centre is uniquely agile and resilient to a changing and unpredictable economic context.

A framework has been developed that responds to the connections within the wider masterplan and grid pattern of Northstowe. The high street is the identifiable centre of the town - both the key connector and destination.

#### Learning lessons from resilient town centres

Northstowe must be both brave and cautious. Brave in challenging the norm and breaking out models focused on short-term commercial decision making, but cautious and mindful of mistakes made before within previous new towns. Northstowe's character can learn lessons from successful, traditional and resilient historic town centres, applying the rules that we know work - their form, natural structure and evolution.

Historic towns and villages have not been built all at once but have adapted to the needs of a growing community. We should think of Northstowe town centre in this way - adapting and evolving in response to the phases of development as new homes are built. Similarly, once the planned phases are complete, the town will need to be able to respond to future change or unforeseen opportunities.

This might come in the form of changing retail or employment trends which shift the demand for a certain land use, or a new occupier that requires a different floorplate. These may be trends and changes that are impossible to predict now, but at the same time are highly likely to occur in the life-cycle of a new town.

Attracting a creative workforce will be crucial to creating the town centre's character and identity, and establish a strong sense of entrepreneurship. This will add to the diversity of activities taking place in the town centre and its vibrancy and attractiveness as a destination for a wide-ranging audience.

The town centre will have a modern market hall that enlivens the town centre early - creating a place for work, leisure and experimentation. There will be destination sport and leisure facilities, public spaces for outdoor events and modern community facilities to serve residents. The centre will also look to attract a significant cultural use to draw visitors.

#### A block structure to support resilience

The town centre street network will be formed by buildings within a flexible block structure. The sizes of these blocks have been defined to allow for evolution of uses over time. A wide range of building typologies have been explored to determine the dimension of blocks, as shown in the image overleaf.

Northstowe will be a uniquely agile town centre that is able to respond to the unexpected through a masterplan that set the essential fixes and allows flexibility within these. Northstowe will be a place that evolves as it develops. This is what 'normal' places do.

Underpinning the Framework are a series of 50x90m development plots that will enable the Town Centre to have in built flexibility as it is delivered. As shown above these plots can be configured in multiple ways, ultimately allowing a range of uses and characters of buildings to be accommodated.

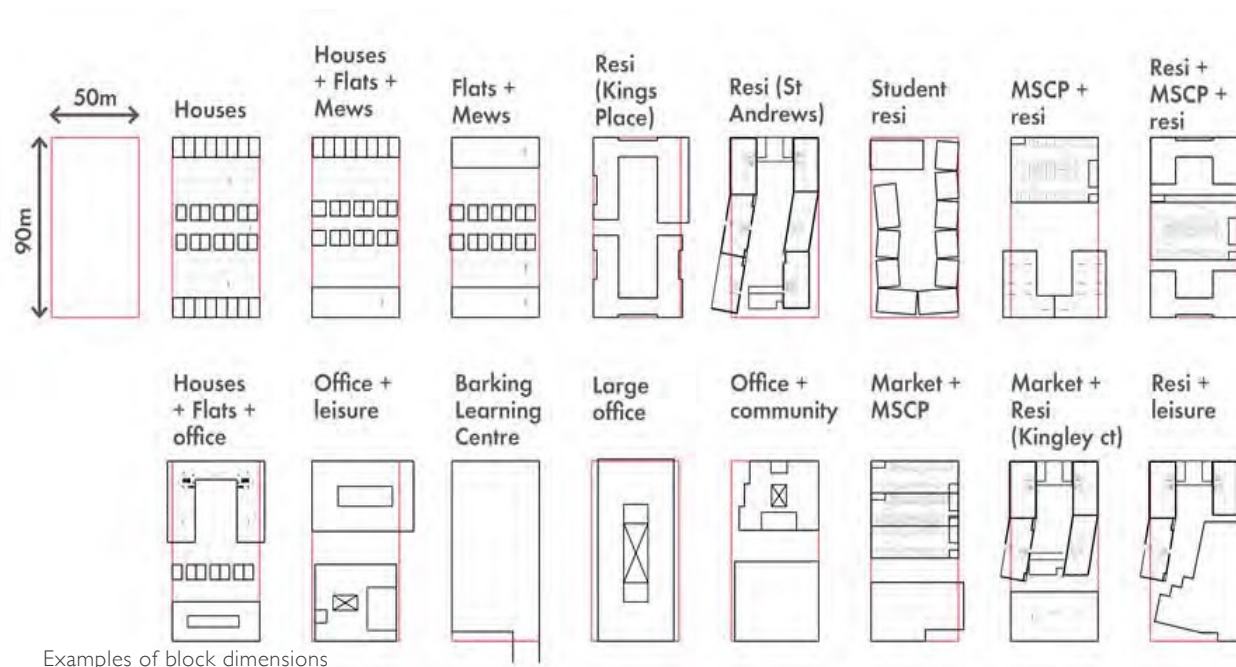
This flexibility is critical for the town centre in the future, ensuring it has the ability to adapt to demand without having to fundamentally rethink, replan or reprovide key routes, infrastructure or character areas.

An indicative land use mix is set out in a later section. Utilising these plot structures, as shown by the range of opportunities above each plot can successfully accommodate a range of alternative futures in the long term. As such should one use not be delivered, others can easily be accommodated to ensure the health of the town centre is maintained.

#### Essential fixes vs. flexible parameters

A block plan has been developed as also shown on the following page. This only controls the essential elements.

The grey areas on the plan illustrate the idea of 'super blocks'. These are areas of the masterplan that can be broken down in a flexible way to respond to alternative uses or future adaptations.



### Key elements

As shown in the block plan opposite, bespoke typologies and land uses are in locations that help to drive activity to the high street, between uses and at different times of the day and week.

Considering these adjacencies and relationships of mutually supporting activities will be key to the future success of the town centre.

A number of these uses and bespoke typologies are important elements which underpin the wider strategy. The following will be early deliverables in the framework to create a tight early phase of the town centre:

- **Important Civic Hub.** The Civic Hub is located prominently at the southern bend of the High Street. It is highly visible and faces onto the High Street as well as the Civic Plaza. In this location the community uses, such as library, health facilities and community hall are highly accessible.
- **The Market Hall** occupies an important central position on the northern edge of the high street and adjacent to the Civic Plaza, the Town Park and opposite the Civic Hub.
- The eastern **Town Garden** creates a green corridor between the high street, the Civic Plaza and the Education campus, eastern sports hub and countryside beyond. In the early stages, the opportunity for the western Town Garden to provide a direct connection to the Town Park will be considered.

These core uses are planned to be delivered early, alongside the first phases of residential, attracting footfall and meeting residents needs. The anticipated timing of these key elements are shown in the table below.

Element	Indicative Delivery Date	Responsible Partner
Education Campus	2019	CCC / CMAT
Town Park (North)	2025	Homes England / Developer
Market Hall	2026	Homes England / Developer
Town Park (South)	2028	Homes England / Developer
Civic Hub	2028	SCDS / CCC / NHS / Homes England



Northstowe Town centre - Block plan showing development parameters for potential implementation of Masterplan framework, with core components

The dotted lines illustrate one way that these larger blocks could be broken down to create a logical block structure.



## Town centre character

The illustrative updated masterplan framework embeds a diversity of spaces, both in terms of internal and external space.

The framework takes forward the spirit of the original development framework and vision for the town centre, and draws in the design objectives set out in the Design Code.

The focus for activity is the high street, and as such the greatest density and height is focused here, particularly around the core piece of widened high street. This is shown in the Massing Plan below.

The scale of spaces and the relationship with building heights have been balanced to create comfortable and attractive streets, squares, gardens and parks.

### The following updates have been made to the illustrative masterplan framework:

- Locate the Civic Hub in a prominent location on the High Street, adjacent to the Civic Plaza and Town Garden.
- Created a Civic Plaza as focal point for activity.
- Group the Civic Hub and Market Hall around the Civic Plaza and Town Garden.
- Bring it in line with the approved parameter plans and progress on site, such as the constructed busway.
- Increase the animation of the Town Park frontage with community, culture, leisure and commercial uses as well as residential.
- Made the eastern Town Garden wider to enable views between the school square the High Street and western Town Garden.

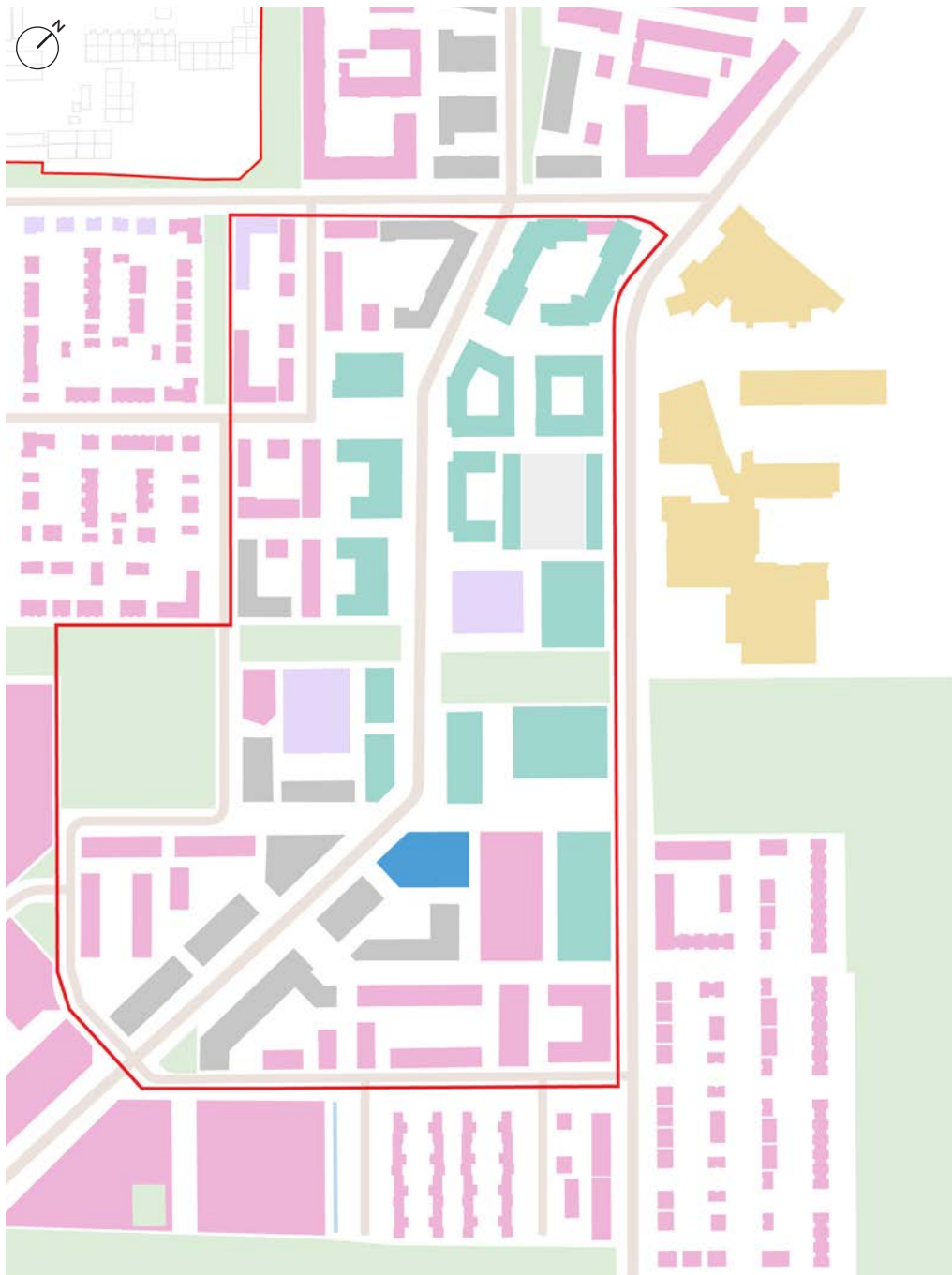
The overall quantum and breadth of town centre uses remain in line with the approved Town Centre Strategy.

Northstowe Town Centre - indicative groundfloor land use block plan for potential implementation of Masterplan framework



### Key

- Phase 2 Site boundary
- - - Site boundary
- Primary road (Stirling Road)
- ... Bus only route
- Residential flats
- Residential homes
- Retail / mixed use - convenience, comparison, personal services, professional services and F&B
- Leisure uses (gym, big leisure)
- Community uses (Civic Hub, place of worship, nursery)
- Commercial building (workspace, office)
- Market Hall
- Potential hotel
- Museum / gallery
- Multi-storey car park
- Educational building
- Open spaces, greenways and private gardens



#### Key

- 2 Storeys
- 3 Storeys
- 3 Storeys School
- 4 Storeys
- 5 Storeys
- 6 Storeys

Northstowe Town Centre – illustrative heights for potential implementation of the Masterplan framework

### 3d: Movement & Parking

Integration of the Cambridge Guided Busway means the vision for the town will not be shaped by a reliance on and dominance of private vehicles but on sustainable transport modes.

All streets, including the service/mews lanes, are to be designed to support walkability and active modes of transport. A key feature of Northstowe is the bus only route that provides a public transport and active travel corridor the entire length of the town. This bus only route will form High Street through town centre.

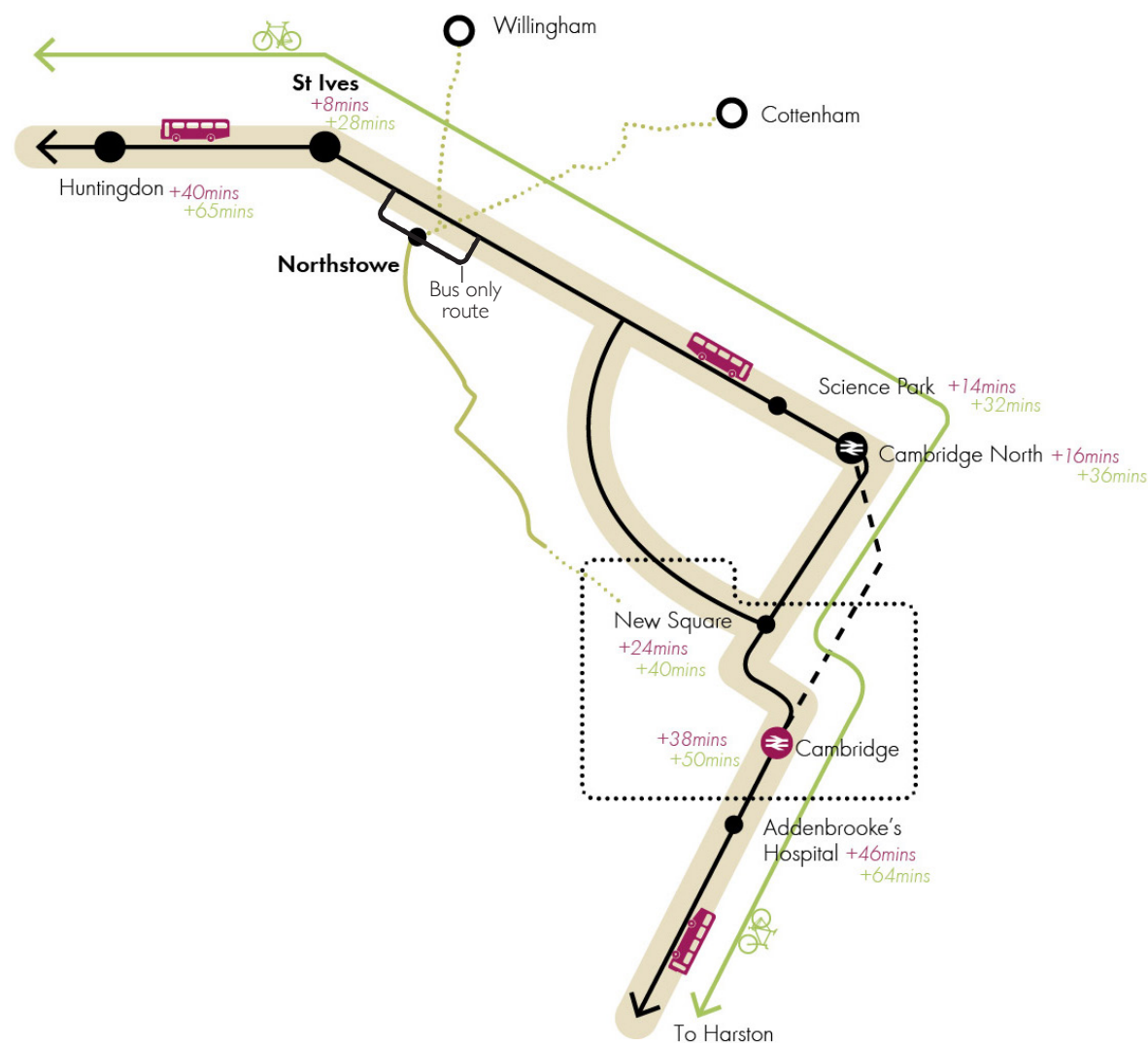
Cycling will be prioritised given the very good cycle connectivity along the Busway into the city, within Northstowe and to Cambridge Science Park.

#### Sustainable Transport Modes

The Town Centre Strategy has been designed with future movement trends in mind, with less emphasis on private vehicles. Sustainable transport modes have prioritised access to the high street with the majority of users arriving by foot, on bike or by bus.

Although the wider movement strategy for Northstowe has assumed bus only access to the high street the framework has been designed so that all streets could be used by all modes in the future, designing in flexibility and the option to increase all vehicle movements through this space if required. Sustainable transport modes have prioritised access to the high street with the majority of users arriving by foot, on bike or by bus.

Local buses will run on the bus only route as well as on Sterling Road and the Cambridge Guided buses will run along the bus only route/High Street.

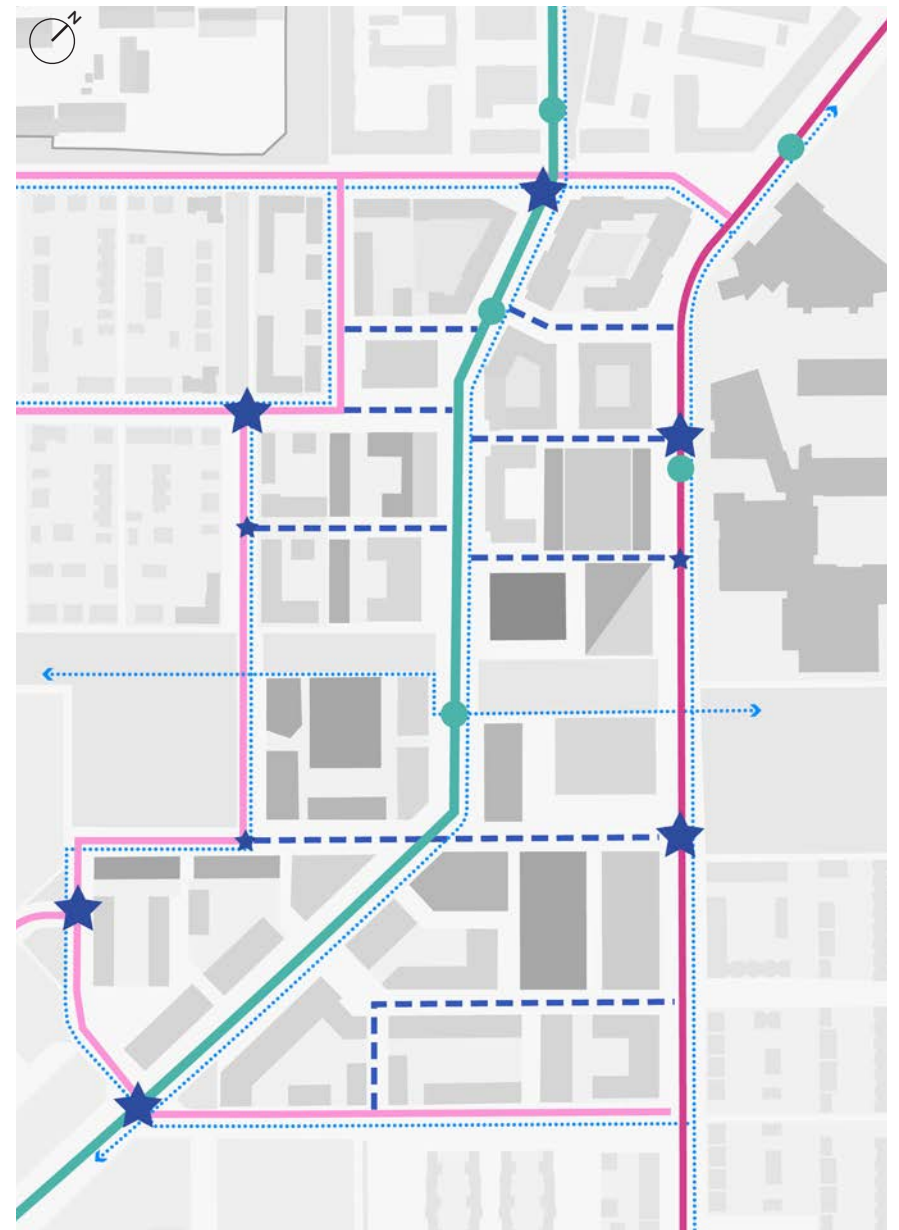


Movement Routes - Cambridge Guided Busway

### Key

- ..... Primary cycle movement
- Primary
- Secondary
- - - Local access only
- Bus routes
- Indicative bus stop locations
- ★ Important thresholds
- ★ Secondary thresholds

Northstowe Town Centre Movement & Access Diagram



## Services and emergency vehicles

While originally conceived as bus-only, the bus only route (High Street) can accommodate limited services access, provided it is managed to take place outside of core hours. Homes England has agreed with Cambridgeshire County Council that there could be restricted hours access to High Street for delivery vehicles and taxis.

This is shown in the Movement and Access diagram.

## Car Parking

Car parking is provided on the edge of the town centre but should be delivered in phases to help encourage more sustainable habits. Initially the car parking will be provided at ground level, but as the town centre begins to near completion, and space becomes limited, multistorey car parks may be required. Flexibility in the parking provision within the town centre is crucial, with on-going monitoring as the town centre grows and evolves over time - providing convenient and frequent public transport is also key to limiting the need for parking.

This will require collaboration between the County, Homes England and town centre occupiers.

## Residential parking

Residential parking standards applied within the town centre will be substantially lower than those outside the town centre and requirements will partly be market driven.

Up to 75% of residential parking demand will be delivered within residential blocks. The remainder will be delivered as part of centralised town centre parking.

## Commercial parking

The parking strategy looks to deliver non-residential parking in a manner that embeds early sustainable movement habits. Cycle parking will be prioritised first and provided in the most attractive and convenient locations.

Commercial parking demand has been estimated using vehicle trip generation, and the resulting multi-storey town centre car park should be informed by close monitoring of demand in the early phases of development. Until the completion of the town centre parking for non-residential uses will be provided in a combination of permanent and temporary car parks, utilising adjacent vacant sites in the early phases until such time as a multi-storey car park is required.

Town wide parking strategy has been approved but will be revisited in time to provide enhanced clarity and certainty in relation to the town centre.

## 4. Making It Happen

The consented outline planning permission for Northstowe Phase 2 (S/2011/14/OL) secures the following, as outlined in the description of development:

- Up to 3,500 dwellings
- 2 primary schools and 1 secondary school
- Town centre including employment uses
- Formal and informal recreational space and landscaped areas
- Eastern sports hub
- Remainder of Western sports hub
- Bus only route
- Primary road link to the southern access
- Construction haul route
- Engineering and infrastructure works
- Southern Access Road (West)

This determines the planning parameters for Phase 2, which includes the town centre, yet as an outline application there remains flexibility in the exact form and scale of development to be determined through detailed planning applications. This section sets out how development could be delivered in the Town Centre, including sequencing, subject to changing market demands.

Despite this flexibility of the outline application, a number of 'fixes' for Northstowe town centre exist. These elements reflect more detailed requirements related to the outline application described in the decision notice conditions and/or S106 schedule, as well as aspects that have been fixed through the development of this strategy in order to achieve the important adjacencies that will drive footfall and activity within the early stages of the town centre's development.

Details of when and where the fixes will come forward within the town centre has already been determined, and forms an important driver for the sequenced approach to town centre delivery.

The combination of fixes identified within the town centre strategy not only confirms the required elements of the town centre in line with the relevant decision notice conditions and S106 obligations. They also prioritise the crucial adjacencies and distances between the education campus, Civic Hub, market hall and town gardens, with routes to drive footfall between these key anchors.

### Unlocking the potential

To unlock the potential for Northstowe town centre there will be a number of strategic delivery challenges to overcome related to commercial occupier demand and the viability of commercial delivery in this untested location.

To better understand how these challenges can be overcome and shape the delivery approach for the town centre, engagement has been undertaken with a number of 'operators' of diverse commercial space portfolios across a range of specialisms.

These conversations targeted operators at varying scales who are understood to implement innovative approaches to commercial delivery, and who have experience in managing, or a relationship to, the key uses for Northstowe. More insight into the 'concept testing' undertaken with these occupiers is provided in Appendix A3.

The conversations identified 9 cross-cutting strategies that would help to ensure the town centre delivers the on the aspirations of Homes England and local communities:

1. To attract pioneers the town centre should offer opportunities for them to have a positive impact and shape its future;
2. The town centre will need to offer a competitive advantage over established locations, including space typologies, cost and character;
3. Businesses and individuals will have longevity if given a sense of ownership that encourages them to invest time and energy;
4. Flexibility and diversity are key - use classes, programming and development plots should not be prescriptive;
5. Workspace is central to the offer and should be of the appropriate type and quality, not just cheap, if sustainable businesses are to be grown here. An ability to customise is also critical;
6. The town needs to work together as a whole and identity, quality and activity needs to permeate commercial and residential offers to support the overall sense of place;
7. Hands on management and curation is fundamental to the character of the town centre, ensuring all uses work together financially and in terms of character; and
8. Long term sustainable funding / income will be needed to support high quality curation, management and programming.

These cross-sector perspectives has enabled the fine tuning of our thinking about how we can attract activity to Northstowe town centre from day one, how we can support its growth and evolution, and the types of creative and innovative approaches that could be explored to achieve this. In particular it has informed the focus on the sequencing of activity, design and space types, future partnering opportunities, and the motivations underpinning occupier and operator drivers.

Most importantly to support the deliverability of the town centre, the commercial offer should not rely on a single 'traditional' town centre anchor i.e. John Lewis, instead encouraging a variety of activities and smaller tenants, and the components of the town centre should promote flexibility to enable responsiveness to market conditions.

The future nature and prospects for town centre uses is changing rapidly, this Strategy provides a framework for Northstowe to adapt to these but its delivery will need ongoing monitoring and management.

Key stakeholders, such as Homes England, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Development Partners will work together on monitoring and management of implementing the Strategy.



## Delivery & Floorspace

Delivering a new town centre, given the current uncertainty about the future of the High Street, will be challenging. Having the flexibility to respond to emerging trends will be crucial to its long-term success.

The proposed town centre / economic leadership group will have a central role in guiding the priorities for development as it progresses. This group will need to seek constant feedback from residents, workers, visitors, the development market and commercial operators to establish what is required and what is deliverable after the initial stages of the town centre's formation. With that in mind, the figures in the following table represent the indicative composition of the town centre, following the principles that are laid out in this Strategy.

These figures should be used to guide the town centre towards the type of place this Strategy aspires to create. This should not exclude the ability to accept unexpected but beneficial proposals which cannot be anticipated at the outset, or limit the ability to shift the proportion of each use to respond to new realities.

Indeed, since the Phase 2 Planning Application was submitted in 2014, there has been a significant shift in way we shop. There has been a retraction in the demand for, and development of, retail space across the country. This Strategy is based on the new reality of what town centres will be used for in the future.

The consequence of this that we propose a significantly lower amount of retail space than is allowed for under the Phase 2 Outline Planning Permission. This accounts for the majority of the difference in overall floorspace and predicted jobs compared to the Phase 2 Outline Planning Permission.

## Indicative Northstowe Town Centre Floorspace

	Outline Planning Permission (sqm)	Minimum floorspace (sqm)	Maximum floorspace (sqm)
<b>B Use Employment</b>			
<b>Workspace and Market Hall</b>	16,200	12,730	16,200
<b>Non B Use Employment</b>			
<b>Retail</b>	35,000	7,375	12,000
<b>Market Hall</b>	-	1,200	6,810
<b>Leisure and other community uses</b>	13,500	13,500	13,500
<b>Hotel</b>	-	8,230	8,350
<b>Civic Hub and other Community Uses*</b>	9,000	5,232	9,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	57,500	35,527	49,660
<b>TOTAL Floorspace</b>	73,700	48,257	65,860

<b>Phase 2 Jobs</b>			
<b>Education Campus and Primary Schools</b>	375	375	375
<b>Town Centre Employment</b>	2,008	1,160	1,522
<b>Homeworking</b>	892	892	892
<b>Total Jobs</b>	3,275	2,427	2,789

\*Civic Hub and other Community Uses - This represents the total floorspace for the Civic Hub and Community Uses as defined by the Phase 2 Section 106. Where other uses are co-located e.g. office space on upper floors, these should be counted towards their respective use categories.

## 4a: Placemaking & pioneer uses

### Why is placemaking so important?

In preparing the Strategy we have looked at multiple ways of bringing forward the town centre; reviewing a range of successful regeneration projects and talking directly to those involved in delivering and managing new commercial centres.

What is clear from this work is that pursuing a 'traditional' approach to delivering the town centre will be doomed to failure, given the challenges facing the established retail and leisure operators.

Therefore, a **placemaking led approach** will be crucial to guiding Northstowe town centre's delivery. The analysis underpinning the Town Centre Strategy has made it clear that this type of approach is required in the early stages in order for the town centre to become a commercial success over time and complementing the early residential development in the town centre. In fact, it will be the only way to drive commercial demand in this type of unproven market location, which requires 'starting from scratch'.

The sequenced approach to the build-up of commercial activity alongside new homes within the town centre will unlock commercial demand by creating early activity and developing this over time as the town centre matures. This will grow the resident base (the captive audience for the town centre who are likely to have the greatest spend levels within the town centre), alongside a more diverse town centre audience that draws in residents from neighbouring areas, people coming to work in Northstowe, and visitors coming to enjoy the retail and leisure offer.

By understanding the implications of audience build-up for the demand drivers for commercial floorspace from different user groups, the priority of uses for the early delivery trajectory has been established. This aligns floorspace provision with the requirements from the emerging audience dynamics. It reveals the importance of culture and sports related leisure anchors, supported by destination retail and F&B uses, as the key footfall drivers for all audience groups. This is in addition to the school, health centre and community facilities that have been established as fixes for the town centre, and the workspace offer that will support SME business activity.

This can only be achieved by attracting a series of **innovative and pioneering uses**, with occupiers who are willing to take the risk to locate here, which is entirely reliant on creating a place which they can buy into. These types of uses can create early vibrancy and develop a unique identity to evolve as the town centre grows, which must be supported by establishing a high quality of place from the outset. This will help to encourage people and businesses to use the town centre throughout the day and evening, which will support commercial viability for businesses despite limited demand in the early phases.

### Supporting & attracting pioneer uses

The town centre must therefore instil confidence as a place that meets the unmet needs of the wider area by providing a diverse and exciting mix of activities that will draw people to it, as well as an attractive and high-quality place to be in supported by the public realm, open space provision and wider town amenities. Part of its attraction should come back to its complementary position with Cambridge City Centre and other neighbouring local centres, as part of the wider South Cambridgeshire landscape, demonstrated through the nature of the commercial offer and the response to identified gaps in the market such as high quality flexible and affordable business space.

In advance of a critical mass of residents which will come as later residential phases of Northstowe are delivered, this is only possible with a place-making approach which makes the town centre an attractive destination, driving the required levels of footfall and activity to support the community, civic and commercial uses in the town centre from day one and overcome the market barriers to achieving this.

This approach will facilitate the growth and evolution of the town centre offer over time, which provides the flexibility and dynamism that will be a key selling point for Northstowe, and will help to sell the opportunity to potential occupiers through the ability to shape their offer and test different models and activities in a way that would not be possible in an existing town centre context.

It will also drive and shape the nature of future commercial demand, and help to understand the space requirements for later phases of commercial development, so that these can be integrated seamlessly into the development approach.

The early delivery of commercial uses in the town centre will play a key role in generating demand for the residential phases of development, demonstrating that the location is not only well provided for in amenity terms, but provides an exciting and unique offer that is a real asset for Northstowe and the wider South Cambs area. This will also create long term value across the wider development, therefore benefiting future residential development phases and marking Northstowe a more attractive proposition for investors and developers, allowing much needed homes to be delivered faster.

From day one the town centre will deliver new homes, creating a new community within the town centre that will form the core town centre users. It is critical the town centre meets their needs immediately as well as providing space for the offer to broaden as the population grows.



**General and convenience retail uses** will provide the fundamental base for the town centre which will cater for early resident's retail needs from the outset and establish the earliest activity levels and reason to visit the town centre.

The **workspace offer** is another key element of the town centre composition that should be considered early, providing flexible office and workspace typologies that appeal to the broadest range of small businesses possible. This should be supported with niche retail and F&B uses from the earliest stage possible, setting the intention for the innovative and diverse town centre mix that will evolve over time. Once established, employment uses will be supported by private nursery provision, adding to the early year facilities within the primary schools and supporting working parents.

Critically for the local community the town centre will provide a series of **meeting spaces** where groups can gather. We envisage these spaces ranging from formal community rooms in the Civic Hub and conference rooms with workspace buildings (and potentially the hotel) through to more informal spaces in the Market Hall and any future cultural facilities.

**Places of Worship** will also provide valuable community space. These spaces will ensure the town centre attracts regular visitors beyond shoppers. This space will be provided in the later town centre phases, potentially on the edge of the Town Park.

The **public open space and public realm** within the town centre will act as the glue that brings everything together, helping to encourage footfall and transition from establishing early uses to bigger more significant forms of similar and related activity. The public realm will play a particularly important role in defining the routes between different anchors and driving footfall between them. The updated Town Centre Strategy makes provision for an additional focal space - the Civic Plaza – which provides space for activity and socializing as well as a setting for the market hall and Civic Hub.

The relationship and physical connections created between these key anchors will allow the town centre uses to work together and create a place, with a real sense of innovation and dynamism. As the town centre grows and evolves new supporting and related activities will cluster around the existing anchors to strengthen the commercial offer, as well as diversifying it and responding to the changing requirements of new audiences.

## Meanwhile use spaces

The meanwhile use of spaces and land within the town centre will be critical to its evolution, allowing uses to be established in advance of development and underutilised spaces to contribute positively to the atmosphere of the town centre. The very best places are often born through a combination of thoughtful purpose and well considered design and in doing so creates the perfect conditions from which they can grow from both a practical and organic point of view.

Meanwhile uses are generally for the benefit of the local community, for example; pop-up shops and cafés, to studios and exhibition spaces, which can offer a breeding ground for innovative ideas and empower the local community. Some of the best examples of placemaking and meanwhile use have a strong narrative around local community initiatives and a commitment to social value.

It is important to ensure that any approach to meanwhile uses is aligned to the aspirations of the development project, otherwise the opportunity to drive value across all aspects of the place can be compromised as initiatives start to work in silos, limiting their effectiveness. Defining a purpose and vision is the starting point from which this can be achieved and with that in mind, it is possible to develop and implement a wide range of appropriate functionality and associated amenities to help build a credible sense of place.

As the town develops meanwhile strategies can be used to populate new commercial spaces by enabling start-ups to access space, create space for trial trading or showcase activities prior to their 'permanent' home being delivered. Ultimately the whole town centre will be developed in this spirit, reflecting an on-going Meanwhile Strategy that sees spaces being able to reinvent themselves time and again to reflect trends and consumer demand.

This will require a combination of flexible space typologies, plots which can accommodate a range of building types and a hands-on management regime to curate and coordinate the occupier and programming activity.

## Embedding a pioneer spirit

Northstowe town centre's pioneers are likely to be as concerned by the wider Northstowe town centre proposition and its audience and their requirements, as they are about the pool of potential commuters to Northstowe as a business location. This reinforces the importance of the place making approach for town centre delivery, considering the opportunity beyond the commercial units themselves to the quality of public realm and spaces within the town centre, the nature of the immediate and wider residential offer, and the range of supporting amenities for business activity.

Enabling early occupiers, as well as town centre and wider Northstowe residents, to find a **sense of ownership** of the town centre will be crucial for embedding activity and promoting growth, promoting sustainable economic growth and supporting the longevity of activity.

Allowing the initial uses and users of the town centre to contribute to shaping the nature of the later stages of development can help to achieve this sense of ownership which is intrinsic to embedding a pioneer spirit. This means businesses are more likely to be able to stay in the town centre as it develops, and as their businesses grow, because of their input in shaping its future form.

To enable this, the **defined fixed elements of the town centre must also promote flexibility**, so that businesses have the freedom to shape their spaces and wider environment to respond to new and evolving needs, whilst fitting within the existing framework.

It seems this approach is most successful where the emerging new places provide fairly basic commercial spaces, which are not too specified for particular needs, and can be adapted by occupiers. Ensuring the quality of the connections and environment between these spaces becomes more attractive to occupiers and businesses than the spaces themselves (provided they offer flexibility).

The shaping of spaces could even extend as far as building and self-customising units, including the delivery of temporary structures, allowing pioneers to deliver their own space within an allotted piece of the town centre 'grid'. This could relate to early residents and/or businesses, drawing from examples like Le 56/ Eco-interstice in the St Blaise area East of Paris, an eco-construction project with a partnership approach ( <http://www.urbantactics.org/projects/passage%2056/passage56html.html> ).

Again, the crucial dynamic here is the balance between the fixed elements of the town centre framework and the opportunity for innovation and creativity to be defined as it becomes established. To achieve this balance and the opportunity for fluidity and evolution of the use mix over time, planning use class flexibility will be a critical requirements.

## Creativity at the heart of growth

Another key tool for embedding a pioneering spirit in the town centre is the exploration of early delivery of **events and installations**, which can help to embed creativity at the heart of the town centre's growth.

This could take a variety of forms, such as art installations which spill out from one of the key cultural anchors (i.e. The Market Hall) or provide an early pop-up that generates excitement about a more permanent use to come, interactive performances or other activities related to a theatre or music venue, or a sports/leisure destination. Whilst pop-up activities can have their drawbacks if the activities are unable to progress into more permanent spaces, in the context of Northstowe they constitute an effective method for seeding creative activity into the town centre, which can be embedded from the outset and grow as part of a greater creative cluster and character as the town centre evolves.

A number of types of creative activities that provide successful events and installations often struggle to find flexible space to accommodate their business operations (such as theatre rehearsal and set design). There is an opportunity that Northstowe could provide more long-term space of this kind within the town centre, which could introduce and embed a much broader range of uses and create links and possibilities for other types of creative space, installations and related activities, therefore acting as a cultural anchor. This could fit into numerous components of the town centre, like the Market hall, mews workspace and even within the Civic Hub. There is also the possibility that this type of activity could be accommodated nearby in the Enterprise Zone, which would still enable links to the town centre in terms of installations and related activities.

## Approach to activating the town centre

Ensuring this vision is brought to life in an appropriate way through regular activation and engagement is crucial to the success of the new Town Centre. These initiatives should involve a mixture of short and long-term engagement opportunities in order to demonstrate change and start to changing perceptions in terms of the previous lack of amenities.

From day-to-day small-scale activity such as fitness classes and community groups, through to landmark annual events such as switching on Christmas lights and summer music performances, delivering consistent and engaging activity throughout the evolution of a place will help ensure its longevity for the benefit of those it serves.

Following some creative interventions onsite, a series of pop-up events would raise the profile of the Town Centre and help to reposition it in the minds of locals and stakeholders. Events could range from a couple of days to seasonal campaigns in order to build a sense of community and partnership with local residents.

'Pop-up' events will generate a dynamic atmosphere and sense of excitement within the town centre, using the public spaces for performance, exhibitions and other activity. Interim structures can be used to reduce start-up costs and grow demand for future phases of development.

## Plugged in to local networks

Whilst the nature of Northstowe as an 'un-tested' location makes it distinct from the opportunities where growth can spring from an existing centre, no place is truly created from scratch. There is an existing wider context which accommodates a range of local activities and networks that can be embedded in the delivery of the town centre, and will help to create a sense of place, ownership and uniqueness that will appeal to residents and business alike.

This could be reflected in residential design, providing foodbox receiving areas within each residential block to encourage and enable local food sourcing which connects with the wider South Cambridgeshire food network.

## The 'Right Approach' for Northstowe

Taken together the evidence used in developing this strategy makes it clear that a different form of delivery approach is necessary if Northstowe is to truly deliver the distinctive, full service town centre that delivers on the needs and aspirations of residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders.

A 'business as usual' market led approach will limit the potential of the town centre, both in scale and delivery timeframes. The UK has a number of examples where the delivery of a commercial centre has been left to the private sector; with underwhelming results. The likes of Cambourne and Cranbrook deliver against basic functional needs, but lack the diversity of offer to create true urban town centres.

Critically our consultation activity with residents have highlighted their greater aspirations for this town centre and a stated objective for it to be 'better' than Cambourne in terms of its character and offer.

## 4b: A sequenced approach

Whilst there is an exciting opportunity for Northstowe town centre to become the vibrant and dynamic new heart of Northstowe, the phased approach to the delivery of the town's 10,000 new homes means there will be limited indigenous demand in the early phases when few residents live in the town. This creates a significant challenge for establishing commercial demand and attracting occupiers to the town centre, which traditionally relies on high footfall and passing trade to attract commercial occupiers.

The challenge is intensified by the strategic issues facing the retail, leisure and F&B sectors, combined with the commercial competition from Cambridge, and the more locally focused competition from nearby centres like Bar Hill.

As a result the town centre will require a creative and innovative approach to attracting residents and visitors in the early stages to establish a critical mass of people spending time and money in the town centre. This will help to establish a sense of identity and define Northstowe as a destination people choose to use and visit, which in turn will help to provide commercial confidence and attract commercial development, workspace operators and business occupiers.

The response to this need for creativity and innovation comes in the form of **a sequenced approach** to the delivery of town centre elements, including the identified fixes, in order to create early activity within the heart of the town centre and develop and expand this over time as it matures. The success of its phasing relies on having a strong relationship between the physical components, uses and audiences integral to each phase. The sequenced approach consists of three main stages of development.

It is important to recognise that the Stages outlined in the following pages are indicative and show one interpretation of how the aspirations for the town centre can be delivered. They highlight how different types of activity can work together to ensure the town centre is complete at every stage of its evolution and always meets the needs of its users.

The Ground Floor uses plan should be seen as indicative and a demonstration of how a balanced mix of uses can be secured in each stage.

The town centre could come forward in a different sequence or mix within the same broad framework given the flexibility of each plot. This will ensure the spirit and character of the town centre is enshrined and its structure is capable of responding to changing market demands.

In order to deliver the aspirations flexibility is required. Opportunities may come forward unexpectedly from commercial operators, such as a food store or cultural / leisure provider or one of the 'pioneers' mentioned above. To utilise these opportunities for the benefit of the Northstowe residents Homes England may need to act quickly and uses may come forward out of sync with the indicative sequenced approach and illustrative framework or approved phasing plan.

A collaborative approach between SCDC and Homes England is required for this. Homes England would provide a note to SCDC that explains the opportunity, how it meets the vision and objectives set out within this strategy and the benefits it will bring to the community. Similar to any other town centre Reserved Matters Application, any subsequent application would be accompanied by a statement setting out how it fits within the strategy framework and provide an updated indicative spatial plan as an appendix to its supporting Design and Access Statement.

The following changes have been made to the indicative plans:

- Locate the Civic Hub adjacent to the Town Gardens, the new Civic Plaza and opposite the Market Hall. This will place it also in near proximity of the Education Campus to establish strong connections and deliver a focus of activities within the early phase of the town centre.
- Integrate a new urban space, Civic Plaza, as a focus of activity and setting for the Civic Hub and Market Hall.
- Start delivering the activity with an initial phase of meanwhile uses from the north in close proximity of existing residents in Phase 1 and emerging communities in phase 2.
- Bring it in line with the approved phasing and parameter plans and delivery on site, such as the constructed bus only route.
- Increase the animation of the Town Park frontages with culture, leisure and commercial uses as well as residential.
- Move the potential hotel use into a later town centre phase following commercial advice and the need for Northstowe to establish itself as a destination first.
- Made the eastern Town Garden wider to enable views between the school square the High Street and western Town Garden.

The overall quantum of town centre uses remains the same.

## Stage A

Stage A represents the birth of the town centre, providing the essential facilities and services required by its initial audience which come together to deliver the fundamentals of a town centre offer. The initial components accommodate the diverse range of early uses in the town centre, which caters for and attracts the early town centre audience, and begins to establish a strong sense of place within the town centre from day one.

## Components

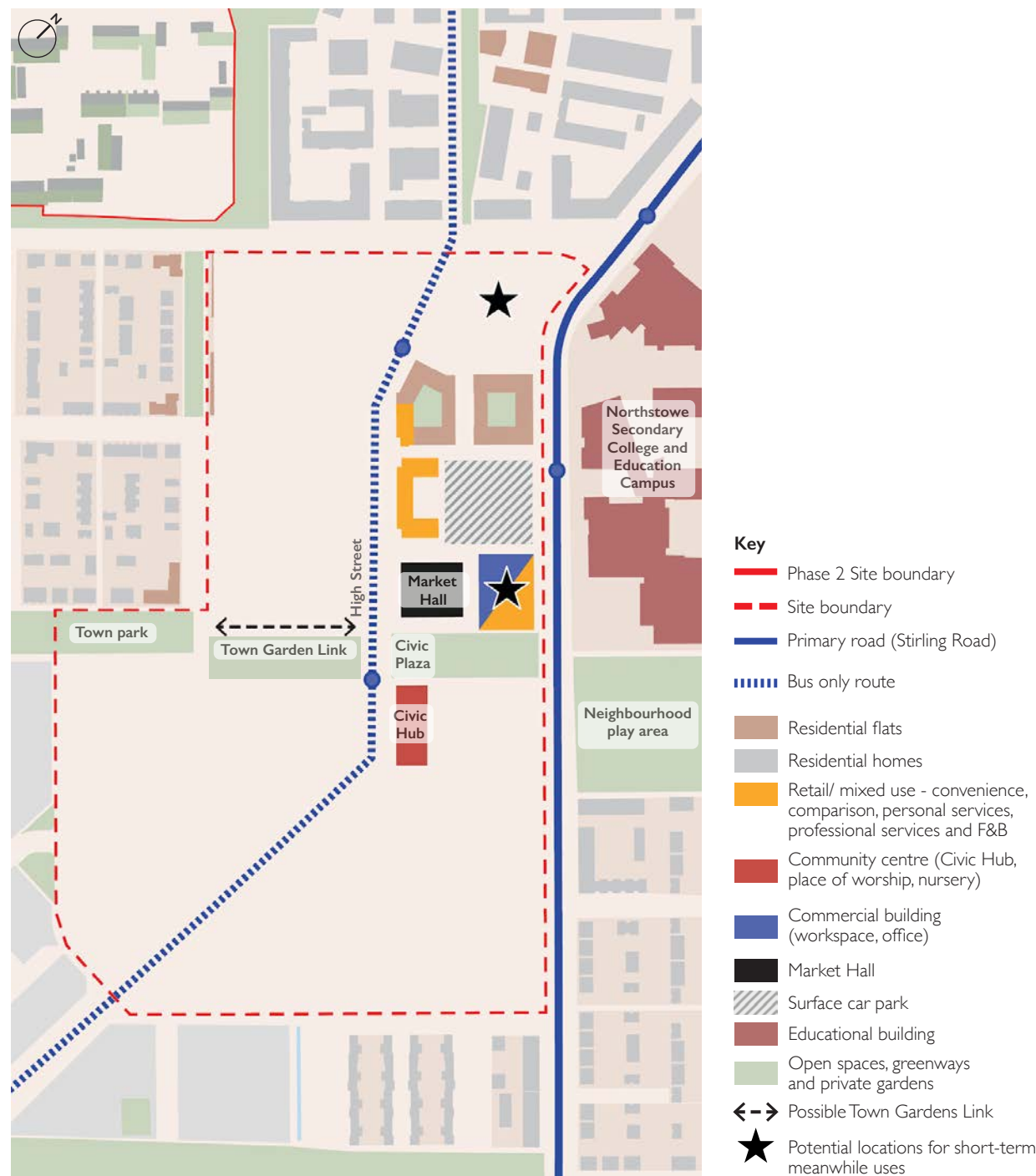
There is the opportunity within Northstowe Town Centre to pilot a range of amenity and retail uses through an early meanwhile use component which will help to bring early activation to the initial entry point to the Town Centre development area. The uses and activations that prove successful during this early period will provide a blueprint for potential future activity within the Town Centre public realm and adjacent to the Market and Civic Hall buildings.

The key non-residential components delivered in this first stage are the Education Campus, primary road link and busway, green corridor, market hall, and Civic Hub.

The **Education Campus** within the north east edge of the town centre is being delivered in phases with the first elements already delivered. The **school square** and **recreational green space** sit adjacent to it. The provision of this green space links with the **green corridor** which will run through the town centre perpendicular to the high street. The route of the green corridor is designed to fit as part of a wider network of green spaces. It also provides an uninterrupted green connection between the high street and the town park, which is fixed into position one block back from the high street.

The **primary road link** is already completed, plugging into the wider town development and its connectivity with the surrounding area. This provides connectivity to the B1050 and future phases of Northstowe, and will be supported by a primary and secondary road network that develops following delivery of the primary road link. The **bus only route** also comes forward in this stage, running directly through Northstowe town centre as part of the wider Cambridge Guided Busway. The route through the town centre has been built, although some surfaces are interim pending redevelopment of adjoining parcels. Homes England is working with the bus company and local authority partners to achieve early access for buses.

The **Market Hall** is a crucial element of the first stage, supporting the creation of a new commercial heart within Northstowe Town Centre and the first seeds of the enterprise culture that will underpin the town



## Northstowe Town Centre – Stage A Components

centres success. As the first commercial building it creates a destination for residents and promotes activity and vibrancy. The concept of the Market Hall and its location in the block between the education campus and the high street has been determined to maximise footfall and link the early sites and activities together. The workspace offer that can sit within the Market Hall could accommodate the first non-public anchors within the town centre if provided well.

The final core component coming forward in Stage A is the **Civic Hub** building, delivering an integral part of the town centre's civic heart. Its positioning in the masterplan is crucial to supporting vibrancy - completing an early area of activity by linking to the Education Campus, the Market Hall and the High Street. This provides a civic anchor for Northstowe residents and a further range of reasons to visit the town centre.

In addition to the core components, the initial phase will potentially deliver a convenience store, unit shops and town centre living introducing the first residents into the town centre to create additional footfall and vibrancy.

As shown in the diagram the initial build-up starts from the north as close as possible to existing and emerging communities in Northstowe Phase 1 and key components form a central cluster; without which the functionality of the early phase town centre could not be achieved. The Market Hall and Civic Hub build out from the Education Campus, linked by the Civic Plaza, Sterling Road (primary road) and bus only route as well as the town gardens. This maximises the connectivity of these components and enables people to move easily between them. It also achieves a critical mass of development that supports activity and avoids 'gaps' between different parts of the early built form.

### Uses & Audience

The key to unlocking early vitality and vibrancy in the town centre around this central cluster is the diverse mix of uses the core components are designed to accommodate, and the range of audience needs these uses cater for. Anchor tenants will be attracted to the town centre through the provision of a flexible and unique range of commercial spaces, where they can see the scale of opportunity Northstowe provides.

The immediate users of the town centre at this early stage are the **Phase 1 Northstowe residents** and those who live in immediately neighbouring villages, as well as a small proportion of **Phase 2 Northstowe residents**. This initial audience will create a base level of demand, however it is crucial the offer meets their core requirements for **convenience retail and services** (personal, health and professional) to establish habits early and minimise loss of trade to locations such as Bar Hill. This will require the Market Hall in particular to deliver core and wider offerings to attract residents who may already be going elsewhere.

The **civic and community facilities** are also important to residents, uses such as a public services, library and health facilities will be attractors and provided within the Civic Hub. The flexibility in the Civic Hub space, learning lessons from successful civic facilities elsewhere, means that places of worship, dentistry and pharmacies and even workspace or art/heritage displays could be accommodated. The space also provides a focal point for the community, where a range of local community groups can meet.

**Local children** will attend the schools within the Education Campus and the associated green space will accommodate **leisure activities and play** for students, their **families** and the wider community.

**Small businesses and entrepreneurs** will be particularly attracted to the possibilities of the Market Hall and the flexible workspace it provides. This will provide them with the opportunity for their activity to grow and develop as part of the wider evolution of the town centre, in some cases helping to shape the nature of the town centre's evolution. The green corridor will enhance the appeal of the town centre by contributing to a positive public realm and quality of space that links its early spaces and encourages people to dwell.

**Workers and Visitors** can also form part of the Stage A audience mix, drawn to the town centre by the **flexible range of retail and creative workspaces** that will fill the Market Hall, complemented by a **locally focused food & beverage offer**. This will support footfall during the daytime and into the evening, however the scale and nature of visitors, and therefore when they are using the town centre, will depend on the form of retail and leisure destinations established in this initial stage.

Complete at every stage:

- The blocks within the first stage are all delivered adjacent to one another and the education campus to form a legible place from day one.

- A small convenience food shop alongside services within the market hall will serve the new community, with a doctors surgery and other community spaces within the Civic Hub.
- The market hall and adjacent Civic Plaza will include spaces for flexible meanwhile uses in the early stages.
- The Town Gardens are more than a route and provide a wide green space that connects through the high street providing play areas and spaces to relax from the outset. A small section of the town park will be provided to serve the early town centre community.

Transport and movement:

- The local bus runs along Stirling Road with one stop between the town centre and the education campus.
- Key cycling connections run along these bus routes and along the green corridor.
- Two bike parking areas will be provided. One adjacent to the school and the other on the high street in the Civic Plaza.
- Surface car parking will be located within the same parcel of the future MSCP with access to and from the Stirling Road.
- A temporary pedestrian / cycle link will be established if practical on the alignment of the western Town Gardens ensuring connectivity between the High Street and the partially delivered Town Park.

Timing:

- Stage A is already underway. The secondary school has opened in September 2019 and provides a range of wider community facilities that will be accessible to users of the town centre.
- South Cambs District Council, working in partnership with Homes England, the NHS and the County Council have committed to deliver a new Civic Hub which will provide a range of further community facilities. Whilst the full offer is yet to be determined it will provide a health centre and library for the town. Given the acute need for healthcare facilities at Northstowe, an NHS health room has been delivered as part of the temporary community facility in Phase 1 (cabin). The Civic Hub will formalize the health care provision in Northstowe.
- The Market Hall will be one of the first elements delivered in the town centre and the design and planning process is underway. The concept of the market hall will evolve over time, and the initial buildings may be delivered in a temporary format.



## Stage B

Stage B offers the first expansion of the town centre and begins to broaden its offer in terms of both the scale and mix of residential and non-residential space. It builds out from the intense cluster of activity established in Stage A to link the town centre to the new Town Park and onwards to new residential development to the west.

Depending on the speed of housing and town centre delivery an alternative phasing could be building out the eastern side of the bus only route, followed by the western side in later stages. This would provide connectivity to residential parcels being delivered south and east of the town centre and safe construction traffic to enable house building to the north of the town centre.

### Components

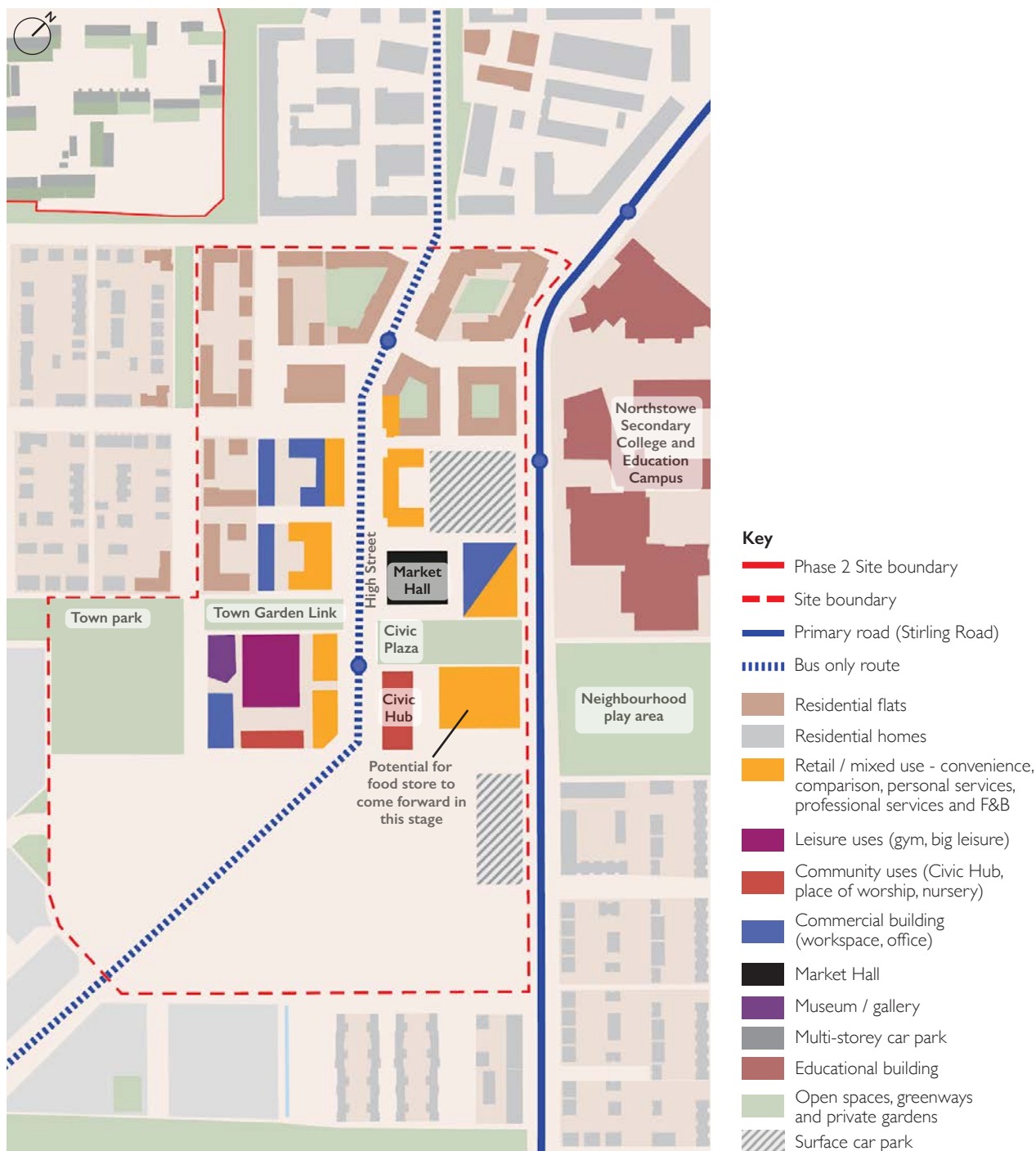
Stage B will provide the first 'two sided' part of the high street, complementing the Market Hall and Stage 1 convenience offer with further ground floor **retail space** to the west. This space will provide additional 'standalone' facilities for retailers and other activities to graduate from the Market Hall into their own units and be joined by other occupiers attracted to growing of the town centre.

A mix of **leisure and cultural facilities** will complement the core commercial offer, providing a new driver for footfall in the town centre.

The **cultural spaces** are flexible and will link strongly to the town centre's leisure spaces, supported by clustering with retail and food and beverage spaces. These spaces seek to address unmet demand for this type of space outside of Cambridge City Centre.

Should a 'big bang' investment happen, this is likely to deliver the core cultural space, which could provide space for creatives and arts uses or re-imagined sports/ leisure activity. Alternatively, these spaces may evolve and grow over time allowing more grass roots initiatives to populate the area. A strong relationship between these facilities and the Town Park and Gardens will encourage animation and may support **community facilities** such as a new nursery that can benefit from outdoor space.

The network of green spaces is completed with delivery of the **Town Park and final Town Garden** to the west of the high street. Its link to the high street via the Town Gardens and the active frontage along its eastern edge support the appeal of this space for recreation and play, even without the activity of its other frontages at this stage.



Northstowe Town Centre – Stage B Components

The workspace offer will broaden in Stage B, with new mews style **workshops and studios** occupying ground floor spaces on a series of internal and secondary frontages. To the west of the High Street these could provide space for artistic endeavours that are attracted by a new cultural anchor.

The **workspace** offer is a key element of the town centre's second phase, providing both office and creative workspace typologies that appeal to a broad range of small business requirements. These will take the form of **mews typologies** and **ground and first floor units** within mixed use buildings.

Additional residential space will complete Stage B, integrating into plots where additional commercial and cultural space is brought forward. This will complement the first elements of residential to be brought forward in Phase 2 that adjoins the town centre to the west.

### Users and Audience

The biggest change in the Town Centre audience in Stage B will be the introduction of a major new residential population on the fringes of the town centre. Phase 2b will be build out engaging the Town Park and town centre directly for the first time. The wider Phase 2 residential area will also increase in size. These **new residents** will increase the demand for a wide range of retail and service facilities in the town centre.

The new culture and leisure facilities will act as an attractor for new **visitors** to the town centre from beyond Northstowe itself. This will support the success of these facilities but also create new levels of spend in the wider retail, F&B and Market Hall offer.

The further expansion of workspace will increase the daytime population of the Town Centre, with workers using the range of amenities throughout the day. This is likely to be a small but important component of the vitality of the Town Centre.

A greater number of **local children**, from the growing wider Northstowe population, will be using the range of Education Campus facilities as they grow to provide 1,800 secondary school places once completed. The nature of retail, leisure and cultural activities accommodated in Stage B of the town centre will encourage the dwell time of these children and their families, capturing greater spend levels and boosting high street footfall and use of the formal and informal green spaces within the town centre.

The greater levels of commercial demand established through the town centre's growing audience mean that it becomes a more enticing and less-risky location for commercial occupiers, increasing the critical mass of **small businesses and entrepreneurs** who are attracted to the town centre because of its unique offer, and where they may be unable to locate in Cambridge City Centre due to increasing affordability.

Some workers will be drawn to the town centre by these pioneering businesses with entrepreneurial spirit, and the draw will strengthen as the economy of Northstowe town centre evolves to provide a supporting function for Cambridge City and the region's science parks, with small and medium sized enterprises establishing themselves in Northstowe clustered around the anchor occupiers. The town centre's attractiveness to workers will also increase as its retail, leisure and cultural offer develops, establishing itself as a destination in its own right.

The retail & leisure spaces delivered in Stage B accommodate a curated mix of **independents and a niche retail and F&B offer** which maximises the creative character established through the Market Hall and Stage B space. Further 'spill out' from the Market Hall for businesses who arrived in Stage A and B and are expanding into new spaces will drive demand and free up space for new start-ups in the Market Hall itself. This builds up around the general and convenience core, establishing a sense of destination

Complete at every stage:

- As more of the residential units within Phase 2 are delivered the town park will connect these neighbourhoods with the town centre. These homes will also provide frontage to the park.
- The block between the town park and the high street is delivered which provides residents with a more significant leisure and cultural offer.
- The full Town Park is delivered in Stage B, evolving the Town Garden route established in Stage A into a fully functioning public space.
- The Park will be activated on two sides by development, giving it a sense of enclosure and overlooking that will promote its use and enable it to feel more comfortable for its users.
- Further retail and residential buildings within the town centre are delivered within this stage.

Transport and movement:

- The fundamental connections are provided in Stage A, with Stage B providing greater life along these.
- The green corridor and streets parallel to this will provide pedestrian and cycle access to the high street from the emerging residential neighbourhoods.
- Surface Parking will continue to be provided within plots identified for later multi-storey formats.

Timing

- Indicative timescales suggest Stage B would be underway by 2029

## Stage C

Stage C sees significant growth in the town centre. This diversifies the mix of uses along the high street, catering for a much wider audience base. This town centre growth happens alongside the delivery of a significant number of new homes within the Town's wider phases.

### Components

The residential units which come forward within the town centre in Stage C are south of the civic hub and to the west of the primary road link, completing four more blocks within the town centre framework. Surrounding the town centre residential community is growing to the south and east. The commercial components delivered are more workspace, retail, leisure and cultural spaces.

The workspace offer and other business uses (such as conferencing facilities) will grow and strengthen over time as town centre footfall increases and continues to drive commercial demand, taking advantage of the wide range of town centre uses and supporting amenities that will have been established in Stage A and Stage B.

This will promote the widest possible spectrum of employment within the town centre, and can adapt and evolve to meet changing needs and/or different economic growth directions. Importantly in this phase the workspace offer in the town centre can begin to work alongside space propositions within the Enterprise Zone and other parts of the area.

Despite the challenges facing the retail and food and beverage sectors and their changing nature as a component of mixed use town centres, there is still a role for these uses collectively to create a destination – albeit in a different (more locally relevant) form to capturing increasing levels of residential expenditure as housing is delivered.

**Leisure spaces** are a key component of Stage C. The Stage C components fill the key high street blocks east of the bus only route, with a particular focus on completing the blocks to the south of the town centre to align with the delivery of the wider Northstowe Town residential development. This brings more retail, leisure and cultural activity to the town centre offer and will draw footfall along the length of the high street.

The block at the south end of the high street (shown green in the diagram) shows a potential hotel element within it, however this will need to be considered flexibly in terms of the form, nature and timing of this use. It may initially take a part or full building within the block.



Northstowe Town Centre – Stage C Components



The key to this element is the flexibility to accommodate a range of different types of hotel offer depending on how town centre activity and value drives investor and occupier demand, as well as the ability for the block and northern mix to come forward without a hotel.

A new bus stop is introduced in the heart of the High Street to promote access to new retail, leisure and workspace provision.

### Uses & Audience

As the wider Northstowe Town progresses residents grow the **town centre's residential audience**. The wider Phase 2 residents will strengthen and diversify the levels of commercial demand and therefore the range of retail, leisure and cultural uses the town centre is able to provide. To capture their spending and embed good habits in terms of town centre usage it is critical services are available in the town to attract them from day one of their life in Northstowe. This will lead to the development of a much more comprehensive town centre offer; growing and evolving the 'exceptional' elements of the town centre.

Evolving the workspace offer established in the Stage A and B, so that a greater range of spaces are delivered in Stage C. These have an inbuilt flexibility, with space types directly addressing identified gaps in the wider sub-regional offer. They will provide more affordable space that is attractive to **creative businesses, those in the professional and business services sector and those engaging in less formal R&D activity**.

**Cultural, sports and leisure occupiers**, determined to an extent by the audience demand drivers and accommodating activities that are not available elsewhere outside Cambridge City Centre.

**Ancillary retail and F&B uses** can support this offer to capture audience spend and dwell time within the town centre, as well as the attractiveness of the play and relaxation opportunities provided by the variety of green space designed for all audience groups.

This mix is attractive for town centre residents as well as those in the wider area who are not reliant on the convenience retail offer. **Visitors and workers** are also drawn to this mix throughout the day and evening. With more visitors, workers and residents, the vibrancy of the town centre's evening economy will improve significantly.

Complete at every stage:

- A medium sized supermarket is delivered under a new MSCP to serve the town centre, if it has not come forward earlier.
- The southern end of the town centre is completed to create a high street with active frontage on both sides of the widened high street.
- A hotel is shown in this stage, but this plot could also be delivered as a residential block with commercial or retail space at ground floor; if there is no demand for a hotel use.
- It may be that this use remains undetermined until Stage D when the future of that plot will need to be confirmed to complete the town centre. In the interim meanwhile uses could be retained on site.

Transport and movement:

- By this stage a second stop on the High Street is opened with further areas of cycle parking provided.
- One of the surface car parks might be converted to a MSCP if required, with one way access from Primary Road.

Timing:

- Indicative timescales would see Stage C underway by 2031.

## Stage D

With Stage D comes the strengthening and consolidation of the full range of residential and commercial components. The residential development in the wider town maximises the audience of Stage D residents, and the increased and diversified commercial offer draws more and more workers and visitors to the town centre as it continues to evolve and grow.

### Components

The town centre components delivered in Stage D, enhance and further diversify the types of spaces which are already provided, particularly in relation to commercial spaces.

**Further office and workspace** components come forward in response to the town centre establishing its role as a supply chain location for Cambridge and the wider area. This is only possible due to the increasing commercial confidence in this location, underpinned by the key anchors and commercial mix already established here.

The **hotel offer** in the block at the southern end of the high street is likely to become more formalised during Stage D, supported by the town centres strengthened visitor demand. Alternatively it could be switched to another use that supports the established character and demand profile for the Town Centre.

The other obvious component of the town centre that is completed during this final phase is the **residential development** clustered in the southern parts of the town centre. This completes the activity fronting all sides of the Town Park and brings the residential audience up to peak levels.

The Stage D components complete the town centre blocks and create a fully active high street supporting a dynamic and diverse mix of uses and audience activity. The residential development within the town centre fills the cluster to the west of the high street, increasing footfall and activity levels across the town and bringing the Town Park fully to life with more commercial and leisure frontages, providing opportunities for F&B and higher end office space.

The commercial mix within the town centres blocks will draw footfall along the high street and the green corridor, underpinning activity throughout the town centre which will contribute to its vibrancy.



Northstowe Town Centre – Stage D Components

## Uses & Audience

Once a comprehensive town centre offer is established visitor numbers will increase significantly. **Town-wide and town centre residents, workers and visitors** from elsewhere will come to Northstowe to enjoy its health and lifestyle related leisure opportunities, the unique retail offer boasting independents and creatives (underpinned by a more traditional town centre retail offer), and to use the business meeting / conference facilities.

In the fullness of time, with the full town centre offer established, **commuters** could also be attracted to Northstowe during the morning and/or evening where they are traveling through the town centre to other nearby employment areas.

With the growth and strengthening of all commercial activities in the town centre throughout this phase, the nature of commercial occupiers will diversify to incorporate more medium sized businesses alongside the SMEs and key anchors who were the town centre's pioneer occupiers.

Whilst there is not a significant increase in the retail & leisure and cultural spaces within the town centre, the nature of these activities will continue to evolve in response to increasing audience spend and demand drivers, as well as the increasing commercial confidence from occupiers in the town centre as a destination. This evolution also reflects the way that pioneer small businesses and entrepreneurs providing the niche retail and F&B offer may have grown and curated the character and offer of the town centre through their own development.

The southern section of the High Street allows for additional non-residential uses within flexible ground floors within mixed use developments. Should demand exceed expectation town centre uses have the opportunity to stretch further south.

Complete at every stage:

- The remaining residential within the town centre boundary is completed, alongside the delivery of the wider residential hinterland.

Transport and movement:

- The southern surface car park is converted to a decked car park, as required.

Timing:

- Indicative timescales –would see Stage D underway by 2032.



## 4c: Active Management & Curation

Having established the importance of placemaking to guide the delivery of the town centre in a context where development cannot be driven solely by the market, active management and curation must lie at the heart of the Town Centre Strategy. This will draw on the success of early innovators in Phase 1 and aim to embrace the proactive community spirit that has established itself in Northstowe.

The 'curator' role will guide an all-encompassing approach towards delivering the town centre and supporting its growth and evolution over time. It will also help to ensure there is in-built flexibility with management that guides the direction of growth within the framework of the fixed town centre elements, whilst avoiding being over-prescriptive.

Coordination, promotion and communication are key aspects of this approach and will in this approach to town centre delivery and management will in itself act as a key selling point for Northstowe town centre.

Homes England are committed to working with their delivery partners to consider all options for pump priming the commercial provision within the town centre. Interventions which have been successful elsewhere which could be used at Northstowe include:

- An enhanced level of fit out to be provided in commercial space;
- The use of void space for meanwhile activity or pop up retail at nominal rent;
- The use of innovative (risk sharing) letting models;
- Discounted rents for particular activities or occupiers (e.g. third sector occupiers);
- Flexible leases that are tailored to specific business needs;
- Extended rent free periods for particular businesses/activities;
- Provision of business support services and advice for start-ups and independents;
- The creation of a recyclable investment pot accessible to local businesses who may struggle for 'market' finance; or
- Early identification of specific operators to help create 'purpose built' spaces.

### Coordination across the town centre

A key aspect of the curation role for Northstowe will be the coordination of activities throughout the town centre in the short, medium and long term. There is a real opportunity for Northstowe to create meaningful connections between uses across the town centre which is possible because of the town centre's unique situation. Commercial operators engaged with as part of the Town Centre Strategy development emphasised the importance of this coordination between uses in the town centre, particularly drawing on good quality placemaking and the links developed between the diverse spectrum of town centre activities.

Creating coordination between residential and workspace typologies is particularly important because it could offer opportunities to co-design space and see some tethering of the housing and commercial space to support entrepreneurs or businesses that may have long operating hours. This is in addition to the potential of this to provide an affordable package for entrepreneurs to live and work in the town centre.

### Reinforcing character

Enabling the town centre to develop its own network of business activity that in turn supports business growth and success will be critical to its growth. Curation will select particular tenants to match a specific sector focus, but provide a platform to working with businesses to help them make local connections and also ensure that activities across the town centre (i.e. beyond the businesses themselves) were complementary.

Through this every action and intervention can reinforce a character within the town centre and allow it to be embedded in the wider area with the 'curator' helping to bridge gaps and help integrate Northstowe into the Cambridge economy. Using a mix of space provision, projects and programming that link people together a network of small projects would allow a greater scale and presence to be achieved and reinforced over time.

That is not to say everything should be locally generated. Northstowe shouldn't be afraid to importing something to help establish/differentiate it and act as a catalyst for other activity. However, this needs embedding into wider networks to create benefits that stretch beyond its own activity. The Production Workshop and Costume Centre for the Royal Opera House at Purfleet is a great example. Local colleges have now tailored courses to help grow the local workforce and allied studio space has helped grow a cluster of linked activities.

An entrepreneurial spirit and creative ethos in the town can only be developed by coordination across the whole town centre, ensuring that public realm, commercial space and activity programmes all link to create a consistent place and image.

### Long term stewardship & investment

Curation and management will need to be in place for the long term. As such they will need to be sustained through the income generated from the town centre, particularly if this role is to stretch beyond commercial space operation to the management of public space and town centre programming.

A range of approaches could be used to achieve this long-term stewardship and would be embedded in any delivery approach undertaken by Homes England. Homes England is investigating the potential to retain control of commercial elements so that they could contribute to the wider long-term stewardship arrangement for the town.

However, regardless of the approach if management is to be sustainable it will be important to establish the management and curation strategy in the early stages of the town centre delivery, ensuring principles are in place from the start and opportunities are not missed.

There must also be flexibility in the long-term approach, as the nature of town centre anchors coming to Northstowe Town Centre in its early phases will shape and influence the curation approach and the share of investment between themselves and Homes England.

Opportunities exist for Homes England to collaborate on this long-term approach with the range of relevant actors including: South Cambs District Council, Northstowe Town Council, the County, the Combined Authority and the third sector organisations.

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