



George Street Mini Masterplan (DRAFT)

Aberdeen City Council
December 2022



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On behalf of:



1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by Optimised Environments Ltd. on behalf of Aberdeen City Council.

The purpose of this document is to establish a clear vision, supporting objectives and set of development principles that will stimulate and support the delivery of incremental but transformational change for the George Street area, securing a range of economic, social and environmental benefits.

Delivery of the Mini Masterplan will help to ensure that George Street becomes a successful and vibrant community that plays its role in the ongoing transformation of Aberdeen City Centre.

1.2 Role Of The Mini Masterplan

The overall objective of the commission is the development of a Mini Masterplan for the George Street area. This Mini Masterplan forms part of a wider City Centre and Beach Masterplan which will be regularly reviewed to ensure Aberdeen City Council's strategy for the City Centre and the Beach remains up to date and relevant, with a clear focus on delivery.

The Mini Masterplan puts forward a strategy for the George Street area in the wider city centre context, complementing its existing strengths and building on recognised opportunities. The strategy for the area will be informed by a thorough understanding of place, a SWOT analysis and a strategy for change guided by a clear vision and objectives.

It focuses predominantly on urban realm improvements but will also consider and suggest recommendations for more fundamental and widespread change (both physical and non-physical) across the study area informed by community and stakeholder consultations as well as in response to wider City Centre projects.

It sets out a regeneration Masterplan identifying areas of change and supporting design aspirations. Supporting the Masterplan is a list of potential Mini Masterplan projects that can be implemented, through a combination of public and private sector involvement to secure the vision and objectives of the Mini Masterplan.

The Mini Masterplan acts as a tool to promote the following aspects:

- Consider the appropriate policy, cultural and physical fit for change;
- Engaging with the needs and ambitions of local residents, businesses and stakeholders;
- Establishing development potential (in the form of indicative sketches and scenarios) for areas of change;
- Mediating between a range of landowner and other stakeholder interests to realise areas of change;
- Promoting a vision for change that can stimulate market action;
- Celebrating and respecting the area's cultural heritage; and
- Engendering a sense of cooperation and coordination between different agents of change to deliver on the Mini Masterplan's place vision.

1.3 Structure Of The Document

The structure of the document is as follows:

1. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

A summary of the community and stakeholder engagement feedback to date and its key themes.

2. Vision And Objectives

Describing the Vision for the Mini Masterplan and its objectives. It also describes how the vision aligns with the wider objectives of the Aberdeen City Centre and Beach Masterplan.

3. George Street in Context

Setting out the wider context to the area and identifying any important influences and considerations.

4. Place and Features

Review of the physical features across the study area as well as brief summary of the land-use and planning context.

5. SWOT Analysis

Summary of the Mini Masterplan area's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

6. How to Respond

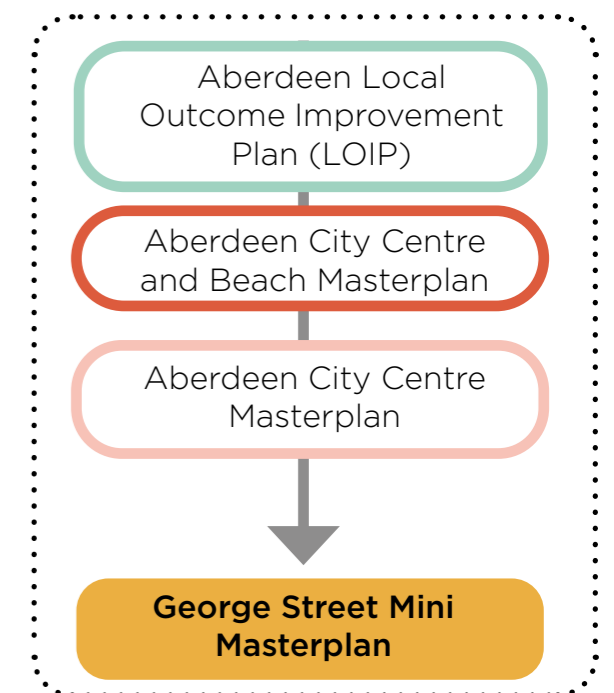
Describing the Mini Masterplan principles for change and how they align to the Vision and Objectives.

7. The Mini Masterplan

Setting out the Mini Masterplan strategy for change with supporting information on public realm, movement and environmental interventions.

8. Future Projects Action Plan

Identifying suggestions and interventions to help deliver short, medium and longer term change across the Mini Masterplan area.



Hierarchy diagram of Aberdeen's strategic plans and the role of this document within the City Centre Masterplan

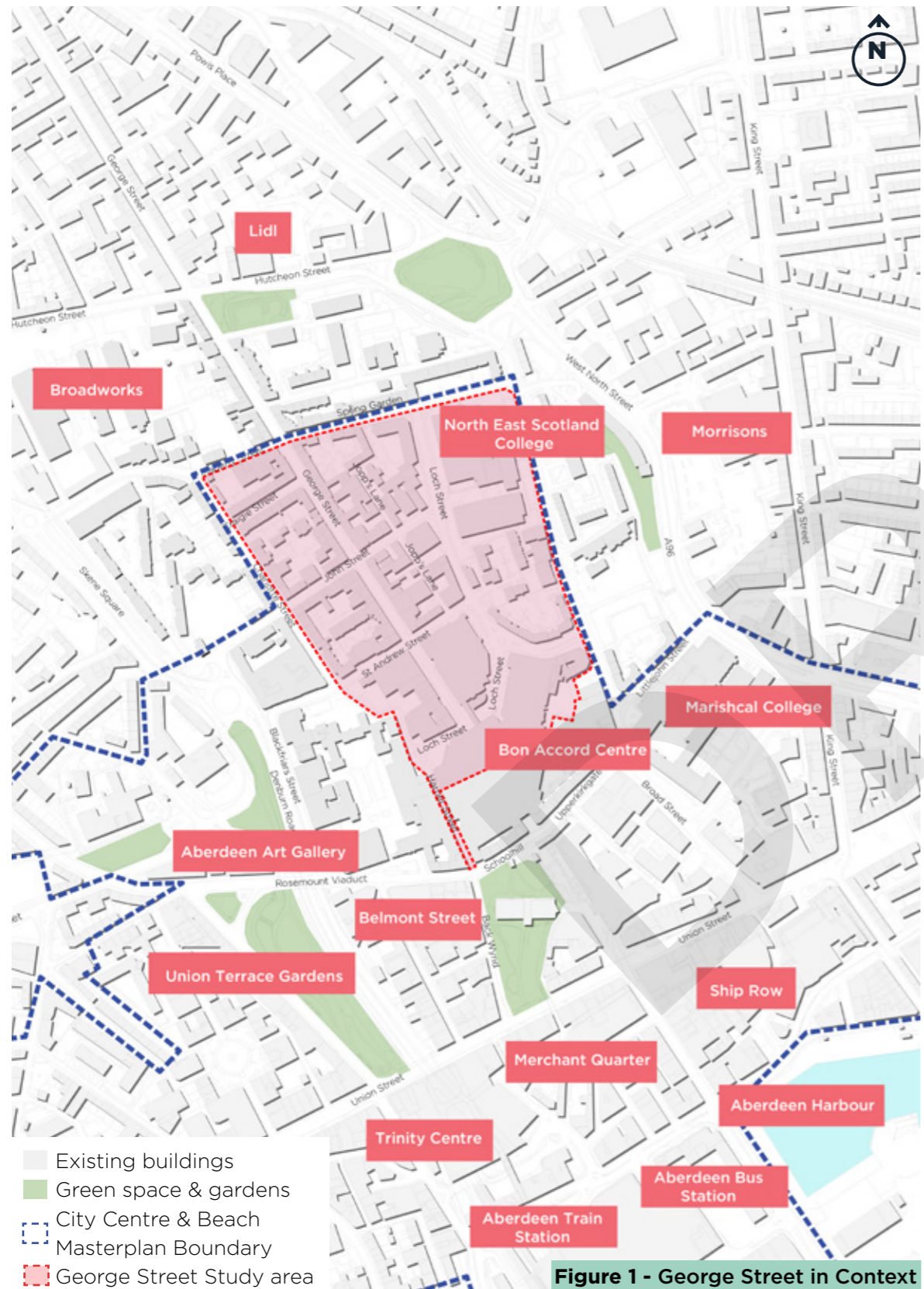


Figure 1 - George Street in Context



The Mini Masterplan sits amongst some of the City's most well known locations

2. Community And Stakeholder Engagement

2.1 Background

In February 2022 Aberdeen City Council undertook a consultation exercise to understand local stakeholder and community members views and aspirations for the George Street area.

As part of the exercise a report was commissioned to detail the feedback and key themes arising. A copy of this report can be found online: <https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s133398/Appendix%20E%20-%20George%20Street%20Consultation%20Analysis.pdf>

The following pages provide a summary of the key findings of the consultation feedback.

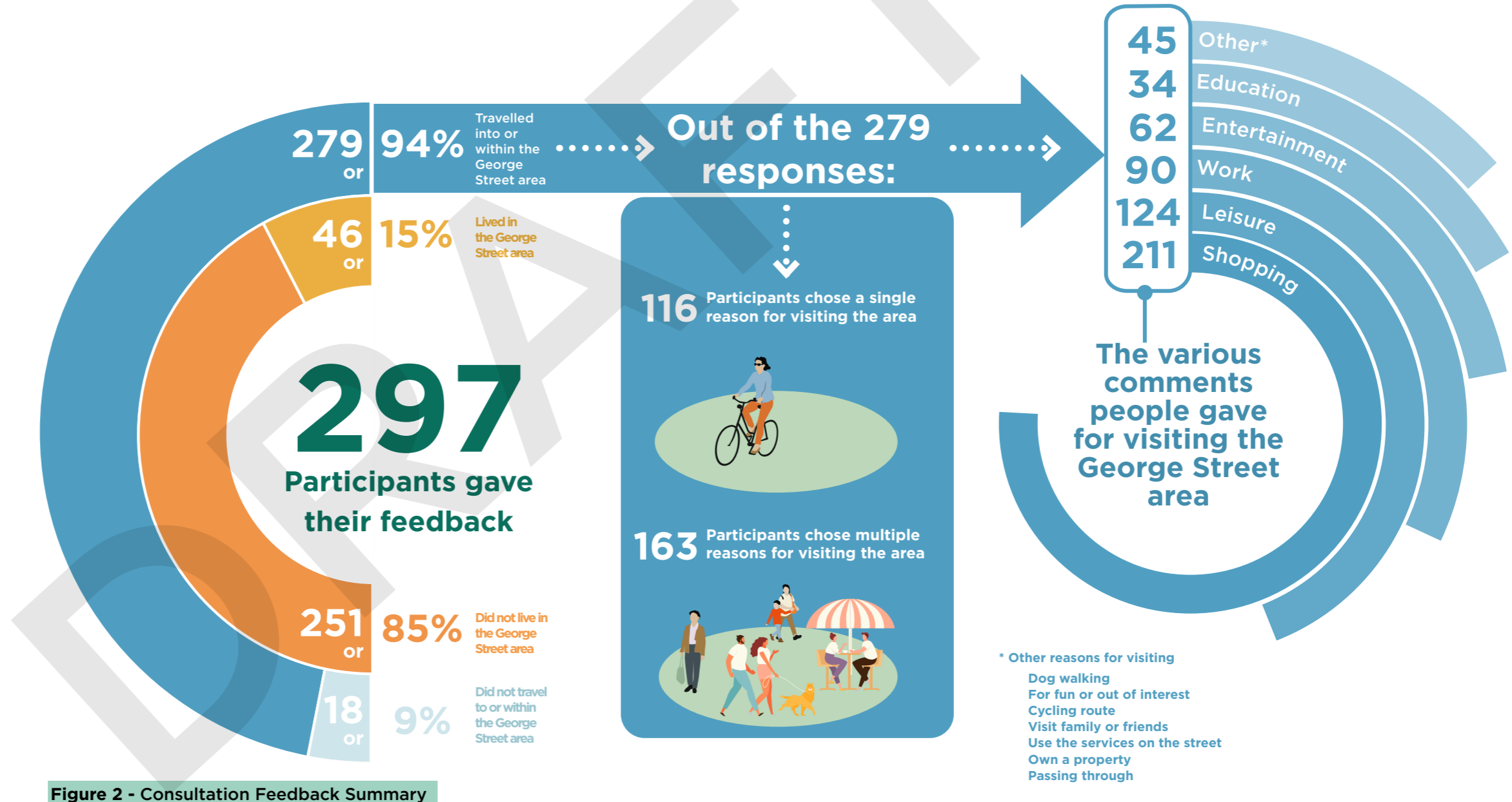


Figure 2 - Consultation Feedback Summary

Consultation feedback summary. Extract taken from the George Street Consultation document.

2.3 Potential Interventions

Through analysis of the consultation feedback and establishing key themes, a number of potential interventions were identified. These interventions, both physical and non physical, could be further considered through the development of the Mini Masterplan to sustain and enhance the dynamic community within George Street.

Potential physical / place interventions

- Opportunity to enhance and modernise the streetscape of the George Street Area, which could include enhancements to the public realm, de-cluttering and provide improved pavements, places to dwell and spaces to host street events;
- Revitalising the streetscape by looking at ways of filling vacant properties and establishing a co-ordinated shop frontage design. These would help to reactivate the area and reduce perceptions of decline / dereliction;
- Introduce space and facilities to help support temporary and meanwhile uses, to introduce more activity and animation to the area. This type of intervention could include pop up events, temporary road closures, temporary seating, planting features, signage and wayfinding. The space created would also allow businesses to expand out into the street to host events;

- Improve the pedestrian experience through enhanced materials, low level lighting, wayfinding, pedestrian prioritisation measures, better managed and potentially reduced street parking as well as planned cycle lanes and safe cycle storage to encourage more cyclists into the area;
- Improve safety and crime rates in the area, through enhancements to the public safety such as more CCTV, better street lighting and greater levels of activity (through different uses and types of spaces) to improve the sense of safety both during day and evening; and
- A more radical suggestion raised through the consultation feedback was to demolish both the Bon Accord Centre and Norco House and to replace with public facilities, public space, green space. This and other options would need to be tested and appraised through the George Street Mini Masterplan Area study.

Potential non physical / place interventions

- Creation of a brand identity and localised incentives for visits for George Street that helps to promote a stronger online presence;
- Working with the council, local community groups and stakeholders to expand the city centre events programme to include the George Street area;
- Creation of a business community to support those investing in the area and to coordinate local businesses;
- Feedback suggests the existing community is strong and well connected, however a coordination group could be set up among residents to liaise with businesses to organise local events;
- Continued inclusion and collaboration with locals and stakeholders throughout the design and decision making process;
- Creating incentives for local entrepreneurs to set up in the area; and
- Increase investment opportunities in the in the area to attract larger brand names. There is a view among feedback that big brand names would encourage more business and footfall in the area.

2.4 Additional Engagement

A key part of continuing the conversation has been to host a number of stakeholder workshops as well as a public consultation exercise. The following feedback has come from initial stakeholder discussions.

Stakeholder Feedback Summary

First reaction feedback during these sessions includes comments as follows:

- Lack of urban landscaping and green spaces;
- Feels busy and vibrant – but not alive after 5pm;
- Historical connection severed by Bon Accord Centre – some connections are constrained;
- There is a real fragility of business – although George Street has survived Covid relatively well, its small independent businesses may be lost because of energy costs;
- The area doesn't feel overly safe at night – lighting is poor;
- Concern about transport and bus routes;
- George Street has become increasingly constrained with clutter;
- Only decent green space is on Hutcheon Street;
- Diversity is great - lots of ethnically diverse shops;
- College, Robert Gordon's, Sandman and Finnies are all attractors. Estimate of 11,000 people potentially associated with all on a daily basis; and

- Broadford works really needs to be tackled – there are few big sites that could be real game changers.

Community Planning Feedback Summary

- There are several community organisations that are operating in the area, but what they do not have is a knowledge of what each other are doing and how they could support each other;
- Create a Community Network were groups, organisations and individuals would be asked to share ideas and take forward some actions;
- Add to the already developed and well attended George Community Council;
- Use of notice boards and a social media presence to promote what is going on;
- A small minority do not like the shops and would like to see a return of more traditional offer, such as butchers, bakers, or clothes shops; and
- Accessibility issues with uneven pavement and minimal seating opportunities.

A copy of both the Stakeholder Feedback Report and Community Planning Feedback Report can be found online: <https://committees.aberdeency.gov.uk/documents/s133398/Appendix%20E%20-%20George%20Street%20Consultation%20Analysis.pdf>

3. Our Vision

George Street Connected!

The 'local' Neighbourhood: a vibrant and inclusive city centre community at the heart of reinvention.

George Street will become a place to form new connections; Social, Cultural, Economic and Educational. An authentic neighbourhood offering an evolution of George Street; a place for people to come together; with spaces that link activities, aspirations and ideas.



3.1 Aberdeen's Wider Masterplan Vision

A primary role for the George Street Mini Masterplan, is to ensure that its underlying principles support and complement those of the wider City Centre and Beach Masterplan.

The current vision for Aberdeen City Centre is:

‘To create a world class city centre and beach that respects and enhances Aberdeen’s unique qualities and characteristics and puts people at its heart...’

The key objectives of the City Centre & Beach Masterplan are categorised into three themes, taken directly from the LOIP:

Economy

- Eradicating poverty;
- Supporting residents into fair work; and
- Enabling 500 residents to upskill and move into economic opportunity.

People

- Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026;
- Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026; and
- Increasing satisfaction and use of community facilities and green environment to increase the health and well-being for older people and people managing long term conditions.

Place

- Increasing sustainable travel with 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026;
- Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen’s carbon emissions by 61% by 2026; and
- Addressing the nature crisis by protecting/ managing 26% of Aberdeen’s area for nature by 2026.

3.2 George Street’s Contribution To Aberdeen

Building on the wider the LOIP’s key themes of Economy, People and Place, George Street can directly support and contribute to the success of the City.

It can do this successfully by:



ECONOMY

Fully contributing to a more varied and dynamic local economy, where local businesses are supported, and where new businesses, and people with ideas are encouraged to start-up, to grow and to thrive.



PEOPLE

Supporting a neighbourhood full of a diverse mix of people and communities, participating in all that our district has to offer in terms of culture, education, everyday activities, a place to call home and a bustling street-life.



PLACE

Becoming a place that is vibrant, comfortable, inclusive, playful and inviting. Being part of the city, but with a sense of the local intact.

4. George Street In Context

4.1 Study Area

With a thriving business economy, Aberdeen is in a prime location spatially and economically for future development. Further information on the strategic context can be found within the Aberdeen City Centre and Beach Masterplan. <https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s135130/CCMP%20-%20Appendix%202%20-%20City%20Centre%20Beach%20Masterplan%202022.pdf>

The area identified for the Mini Masterplan is outlined opposite. The development of the Mini Masterplan will focus primarily within the study area. However, in order for wider benefits to be leveraged from investment within the George Street area, the Mini Masterplan must acknowledge and respond to opportunities beyond it's boundaries, understanding the influence of planned investment / development.

The George Street neighbourhood is located towards the northern boundary of the City Centre & Beach Masterplan area. George Street itself runs North to South, forming a once historic key route between the city centre core and areas to the North of the city.

The area is defined to the south by the Bon Accord Centre, which serves the historic connection to the City Centre. It is bounded to the south west by Robert Gordon College and by Gallogate, Spring Garden and North East Scotland College (NESCOL).

George Street hosts a diversity of uses which give the area its own distinct character all of which sit within the wider context of Aberdeen's economy and cultural offer.

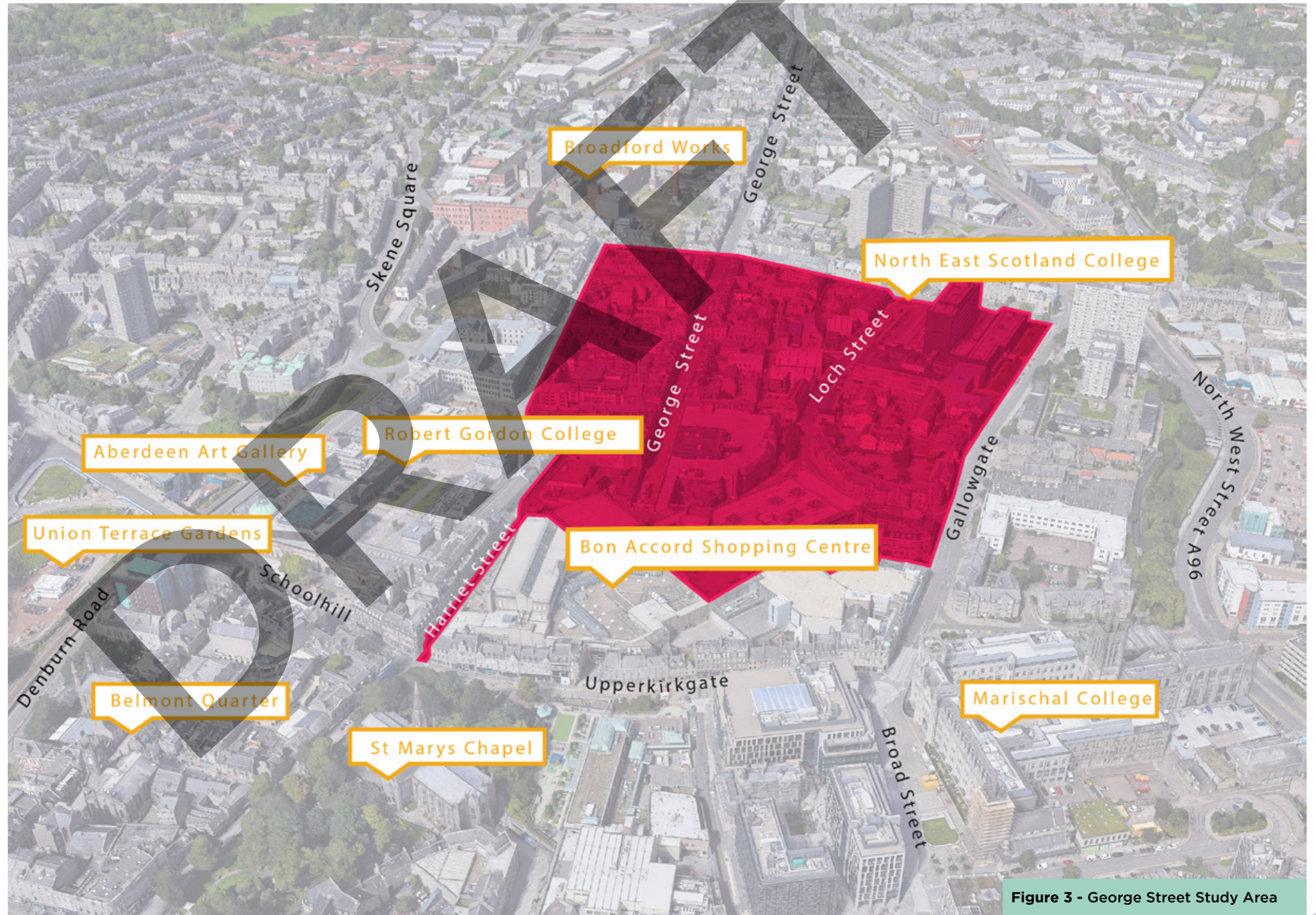


Figure 3 - George Street Study Area

4.2 Areas Of Influence

George Street sits to the northern fringes of a dynamic part of Aberdeen City Centre.

To the south lies a number of leisure and cultural destinations and established city quarters (Belmont Quarter Merchants Quarter and Ship Row), some of which are undergoing phased regeneration programmes.

Also influencing the George Street area is its relative proximity to the retail core of the City, Union Street and the soon to be delivered Union Terrace Gardens.

Immediately adjacent to the study area are a number of significant civic and education institutions which form important destinations within the city and which influence the future potential role of the George Street area.

Importantly, the study area is also surrounded by an existing residential influence to the north, with several existing residential communities located along and near to the George Street corridor north towards Kittybrewster.

The future role of the George Street study area must look to respond to these surrounding influences and to help support emerging regeneration priorities whilst supporting those existing residential, civic and educational communities that currently exist.

There are 5 immediate areas of influence which will directly influence and shape the future character, identity and role of George Street. These are:

Broadford Works - a significant new residential and mixed use community to the north of the study area (c.890 new residential units). The George Street area will be influenced not only by future residents visiting local amenities within the area, but also but an increase in pedestrian traffic through the area to access the south of the city.

North East Scotland College (NESCOL) - a significant stakeholder within the Mini Masterplan boundary. It is home to a student population studying and living within the area. The influx of students and the supporting uses and activities required will influence the future use and role of the area. Students will also likely pass through the study area, due to the poor quality links across infrastructure to the east, to access outdoor, retail and leisure destinations to the south.

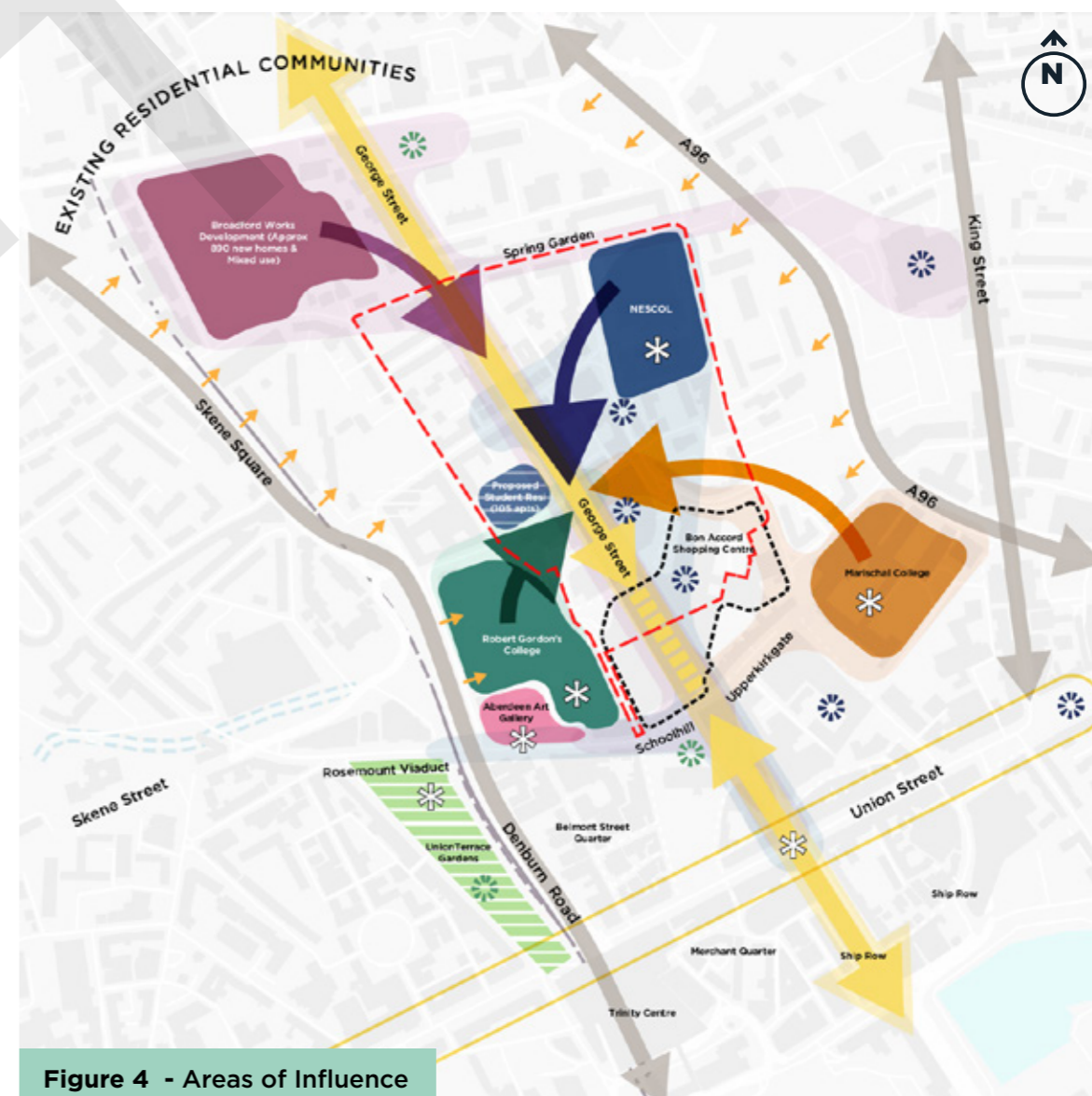
Robert Gordon's College & Art Gallery - one of Aberdeen's most prestigious education institutions and Cultural assets. Although currently

both have no direct physical connection through to George Street other than via a rear service access and along St. Andrews Street, the George Street area is influenced by the potential to capture and respond to the patrons and visitors to these destinations.

Both NESCOL and Robert Gordon's College have the potential to see a significant amount of students, staff and parents use their facilities and the Masterplan should seek to ensure that George Street both supports the functions of the college as well as capturing the potential benefits of such a significant number of people attending both institutions.

Marischal College - an important Civic and Cultural destination for the city, and although located immediately east of the study area, it presents a significant influence both physically (townscape quality and distinctiveness) and as the headquarters of Aberdeen City Council. An influence which drives footfall and which could look to be better integrated with the George Street area.

George Street - the historic corridor characterised by traditional granite buildings and active ground floor uses is itself a key influence on the rest of the study area. The main onward connection to Union Street is via a private connection through the Bon Accord Shopping Centre. The influence of George Street is currently contained to its corridor but in the future it may look to expand or focus activity to help establish a better defined sense of place and centre.



4.3 Planning Policy Review

This section sets out the policy and guidance at local administrative levels that have influenced preparation of the George Street Mini Masterplan, and with which this exercise seeks to comply.

The policy sections of the Aberdeen City Centre and Beach masterplan document provide further policy and guidance at UK, Scotland and Regional administrative levels.

City Centre Recovery Task Force: Report

Covid-19 has changed the face of city centres up and down the UK. As a result of necessary health measures, businesses and streets usually bustling with people were transformed overnight.

In 2021, the Scottish Government and Scotland's seven cities established a Task Force to identify the actions needed to take together to support city centre recovery from the effects of the pandemic, working through our existing successful partnership of the Scottish Cities Alliance.

The pandemic has heightened awareness of inequality, poverty and disadvantage, and there is clear evidence that harm has been felt unevenly. The Scottish Government has set the national direction with its ten-year National Strategy for Economic Transformation, which will build on the Covid Recovery Strategy to create a greener, fairer, more inclusive wellbeing economy.

The key messages arising from the report were about the nature and role of city centres and how, without people, city centres are just empty spaces and buildings. What makes our cities flourishing, vibrant, social, creative, interesting and resilient is that they are places where large numbers of people come together.

The principal challenge considered in Task Force Report is how to attract people back into our city centres, and this is something that should be applied when looking at the future of George Street. How to attract people back into George Street.

Local Policy

At the Local level, planning policy and guidance is provided by the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017, which will soon be replaced by the emerging Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2022. Both of these plans provide detailed planning policy to be considered when assessing proposals across the city, including the city centre and beach; and also provide more detailed information and briefs in relation to specific opportunities (OP sites).

The Council's Local Outcome Improvement Plan and associated Locality Plans are key in setting out a vision for Aberdeen as "a place where all people can prosper", and considers the People, Place and Economy of Aberdeen. The refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan was approved in July 2021, with an annual

report published in July 2022. The LOIP identifies 15 'stretch' outcomes to be delivered by 2026 and 75 shorter term improvement aims. Stretch Outcomes particularly relevant to George Street include: Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026; Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026 - this includes the Key Drivers of encouraging adoption of healthier lifestyles, and increasing satisfaction and use of community facilities and green environment to increase the health and well-being for older people and people managing long term conditions); Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate; and, Increasing sustainable travel with 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026.

4.4 Supplementary Guidance Within The Development Plan 2017

Shops and Signs

The repair and replacement of shops and signs is a prevalent topic. Historic and original features add to the overall pleasant experience of buildings, streetscape and their wider surroundings. Inappropriate design, proportions or materials can detract from a building and the wider streetscape and setting.

The Supplementary Guidance acknowledges a principle of retaining and repairing historic materials, with replacement requiring thorough consideration. New shops and signs need to be designed for their location to ensure they provide a positive experience to the streetscene.

The guidance applies to existing and new shop fronts and signs. The guidance is to be used on a citywide basis for retail and commercial premises including banks, betting offices, restaurants, estate agents and beyond. The signage guidance should be considered in all instances.

Hierarchy of Centres

Scottish Planning Policy states that a sequential approach should be used when selecting locations for all uses which generate significant footfall, including retail and commercial leisure uses, offices, community and cultural facilities, and where appropriate, public buildings; and requires that locations are considered through a hierarchy of centres. Within this SPD, George Street is identified as a Neighbourhood Centre which is the preferred location for local retail, commercial leisure, community and cultural provision only.

Transport and Accessibility

Transport provision should be considered from the very outset of a development proposal, with particular attention paid to the need to encourage sustainable travel.

The Local Transport Strategy highlights the role that spatial planning can play in ensuring Aberdeen has "a sustainable transport system that is fit for the 21st Century, accessible to all, supports a vibrant economy, facilitates healthy living and minimises the impact on our environment" through the careful siting and design of development and the implementation of parking policies and Travel Plans to discourage unnecessary car travel.

A sustainable transport system will also help reduce emissions to tackle climate change, improve air quality, and lead to a healthier population.

Green Space Network and Open Space

Access to good quality green and blue infrastructure, including areas of open space and green networks, will contribute to a greener, healthier, smarter, safer, stronger, wealthier and fairer city. This guidance will assist the George Street Mini Masterplan in assessing and demonstrating their compliance in enhancing and improving green infrastructure to create useful, sustainable and well used places. This will benefit the wider community, the natural environment and support a healthy economy.

Big Buildings

Guidance is given to ensure big building proposals, when appropriate, will have a positive impact on the streetscene and surrounding area, and Aberdeen's skyline.

Big buildings can be tall buildings and/or bulky buildings. Generally a big building is regarded as one that exceeds the general height of the surrounding built context and/or whose footprint is in excess of the established development pattern of the surrounding area.

According to guidance, big buildings should:

- Complement or improve the existing site context, consider the natural topography, scale and height of structures, urban grain, streetscape and built form, open spaces, effect on the skyline, and respect, reinforce and, where applicable create opportunities for enhanced views and vistas and

make a positive contribution to the skyline when viewed from all angles from near, middle and distant views, both during the day and at night;

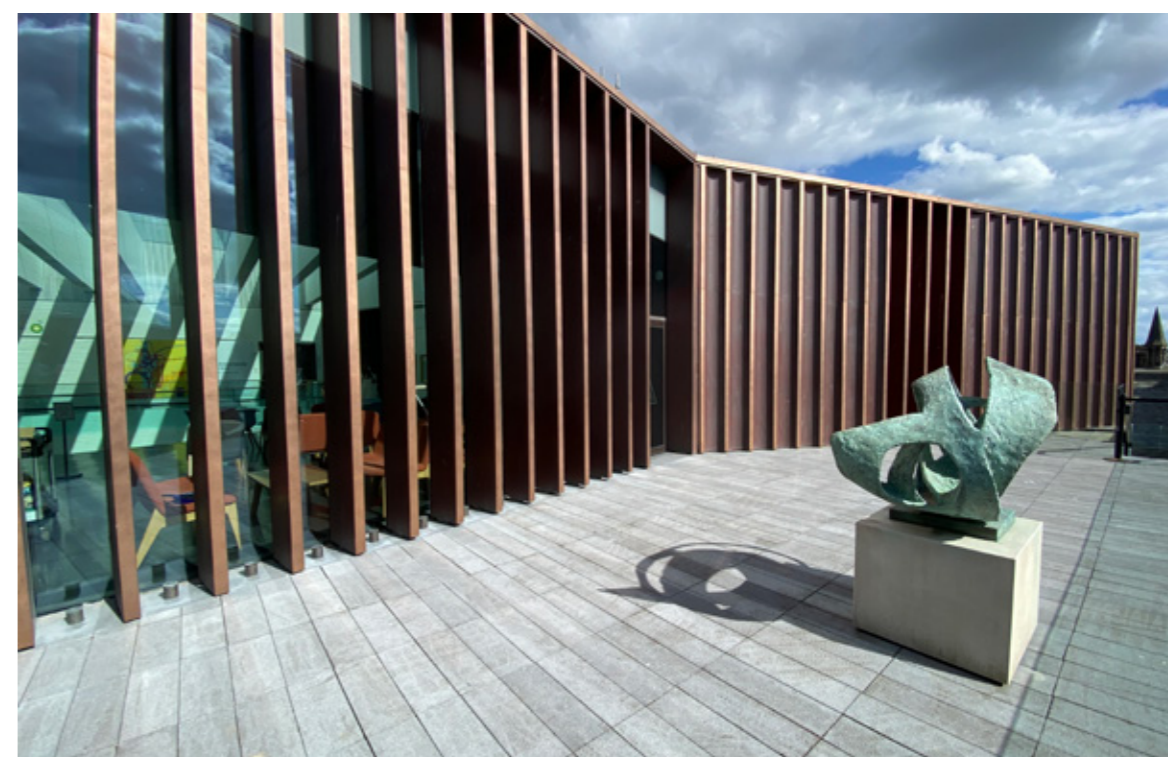
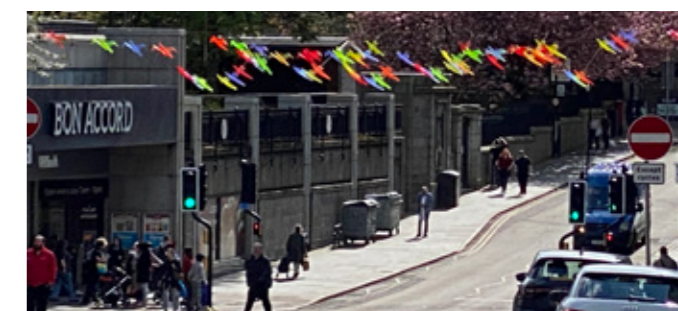
- Consider the environment and amenity of those in the vicinity of the building, including micro climate, overshadowing, glare reduction, night time appearance, internal and external lighting;
- At street level, present an active frontage and be comfortable for people and, where feasible, include publicly accessible areas within the building;
- Be situated in areas where existing topography, urban scale and transport make them sustainable;
- Have a well-designed vertical emphasis;
- Be constructed of high quality materials, craftsmanship and have detailing with low maintenance implications;
- Provide fully integrated servicing arrangements which are, wherever possible, off street;
- Comply with civil aviation requirements and those of other telecommunication, television and radio transmission networks; be adaptable over time and utilise best sustainable practices; and
- Contain a mix of uses rather than rely on a single use to achieve a viable development. It may be appropriate for big buildings to form part of a wider development mix with smaller scale buildings that reduce any dominating impact.

Urban Realm Manual 2021 (Draft)

The Draft Urban Realm Manual 2021 aims to provide clarity, certainty and consistency on the city's requirements for a comprehensive approach to understanding and developing place and movement hierarchies, their appropriate hard landscaping material specifications, the retention and re-use of important features as well as identifying new opportunities to sustainably enhance and green the city.

Maintaining and enhancing the existing built environment, as well as delivering new development of distinctive high-quality places, is important to Aberdeen. To consistently have sustainable and efficient streets and places that are easy for all to use, that look good and have longevity give a positive impression and a lasting sense of place are fundamental to successful city life.

The public realm of George Street and the surrounding streets is something to be enhanced throughout this masterplanning process, so by considering the principles of the urban realm manual and responding to the place and movement context in planning, design, responsible sourcing, responsible use and the principles of the circular economy, a successful place can be achieved.



4.5 Development Pipeline

As outlined in the City Centre and Beach Masterplan, there is a concentration of growth across the city of Aberdeen, which is prioritising people focused development, with an emphasis that supporting infrastructure and public spaces are integrated.

An emerging development context is changing the way the City will function over the course of the next few decades, through a suite of committed projects and those that are already well under construction.

Connectivity is an important consideration, with increased connections promoted through the area and to other key points in the city centre by foot, cycle and public transport.

Within the Mini Masterplan study area, at the time of writing, both the former John Lewis store (Norco House) and the Bon Accord Centre have potential to influence the future regeneration of the neighbourhood. The Bon Accord Centre has an active planning consent for proposals along George Street and Norco House is currently for sale.

1. Some of the immediately significant pipeline development and infrastructure projects which will influence the George Street Mini Masterplan beyond its boundary include; Upperkirkgate and Schoolhill Street Improvements which look to pedestrians sections of the street as well as improve public realm quality along this corridor.

2. Improved public realm setting to the Aberdeen Art Gallery
3. A new urban park in Union Terrace Gardens
4. Broadford Works delivering c.890 units as part of a mixed use development, incorporating conversion of Listed Buildings.

Moving further out from the immediate city centre, some other developments of influence include:

1. Aberdeen Beach and associated developments
2. Aberdeen Stadium
3. Beach Boulevard

Pipeline developments have been identified on the plan on the following page.

Aberdeen City Council's role in the future regeneration of George Street will be one that supports growth and change, using its powers to help facilitate and co-ordinate the appropriate type of change in line with George Street vision and objectives. The Council will not be expected to deliver development beyond land in its control or additional projects across the city. It welcomes the opportunity to engage with and work collaboratively with stakeholders and interested parties.



Indicative view of north Belmont street status: detailed design and delivery in conjunction with local stakeholders



Schoolhill + Upperkirkgate
Birds eye view from Aberdeen Art Gallery



Aberdeen Beach Projects
Concept visualisation of urban park

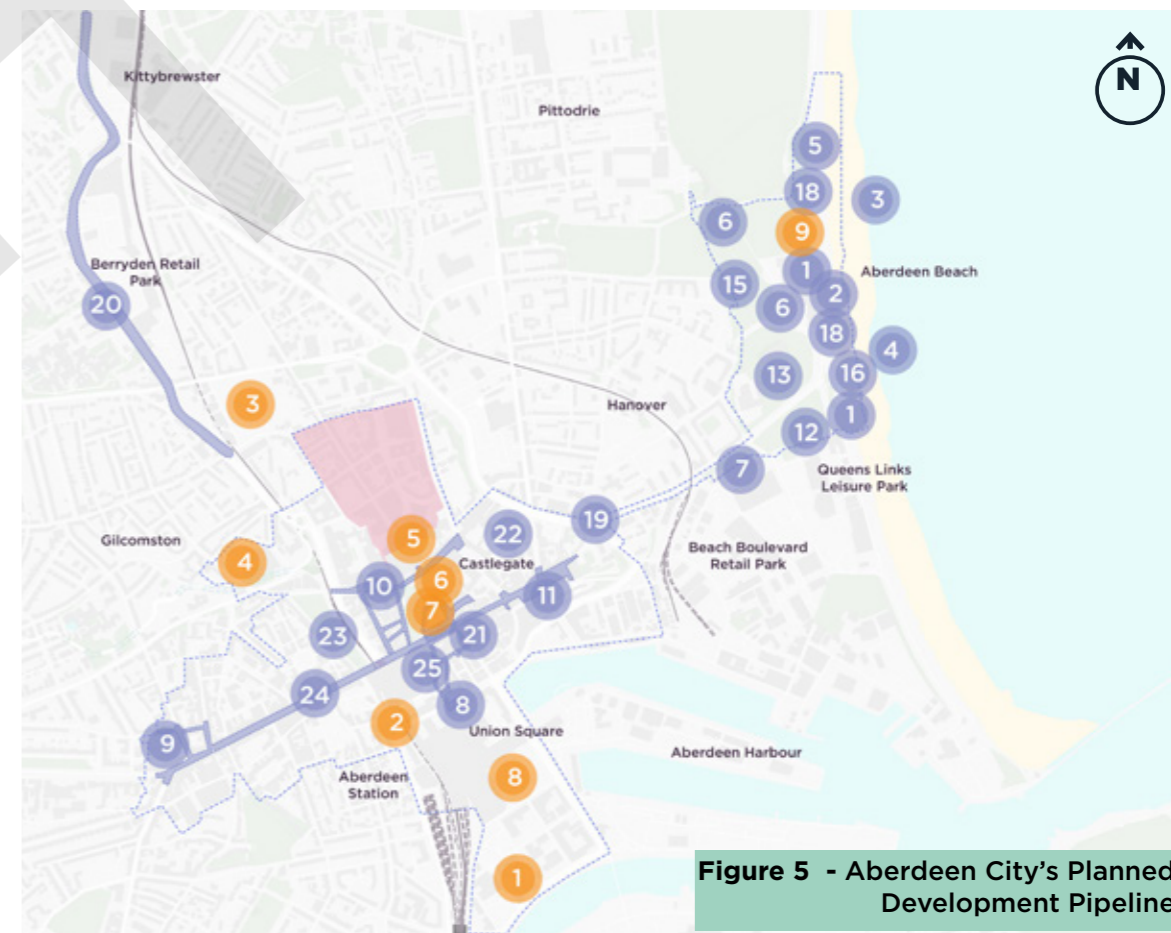


Figure 5 - Aberdeen City's Planned Development Pipeline

Aberdeen City Council Projects

1. Leisure facility
2. Beach ballroom
3. Slipway
4. Boardwalk
5. Beach pavilion building
6. Broad Hill structures
7. Beach Boulevard
8. Guild Street
9. Rose / Thistle / Chapel Street
10. Upperkirkgate / Schoolhill
11. Castlegate
12. Urban park
13. Events park
14. Landscaping
15. Broad Hill
16. Reconfigured beach landscaping
17. Beach ballroom plaza
18. Beach village
19. Justice street roundabout
20. Berryden Improvements
21. Aberdeen Market
22. Queen Street
23. Union Terrace Gardens
24. Union Street Public Realm
25. Aberdeen Market Public Realm

Privately Led Projects

1. North Dee Business Quarter
2. Mither Kirk
3. Aberdeen Broadford Works
4. Woolmanhill Former Hospital
5. Bon Accord Centre
6. St Nicholas Centre
7. Trinity Centre
8. Union Square
9. Stadium

5. Place and Features

5.1 Introduction

Understanding the characteristics of a place, and what its strengths and weaknesses are, is part of the process in developing the Mini Masterplan. This understanding of place and its features allows opportunities for change and enhancement to be explored. This section introduces the five most pertinent influences affecting the Mini Masterplan area, which are:

- **Activity and Vibrancy** - understanding where areas are busy and active and where others suffer from inactivity, and consequently issues around anti-social behaviour and decline;
- **Legibility** - how easy an area is to get to and navigate around;
- **Public Realm** - a review of the quality of the public realm, its capacity to support change and areas where it is affecting the potential of the place;
- **Access and Movement** - understanding the movement and flow of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles across the area; and
- **Heritage and Conservation** - understanding the historical character of the area, heritage value of buildings and how the urban grain has evolved over the years.

5.2 Activity And Vibrancy

The plan adjacent illustrates areas where active and non active frontages are located across the study area.

George Street and the immediate sections of John Street and St. Andrews Street, which connect with George Street, are where the highest degree of frontage activity is focused. This corridor is the active day time spine to the area.

Craigie Street and parts of John Street experience some degree of passive surveillance but as uses along these streets change to more domestic and residential uses the degree of activity begins to drop.

Streets such as Spring Gardens, Loch Street and Charlotte Street have lower amount of active frontages, with a noticeable reduction in building activity and sense of 'coming & going'. Frontages have some windows looking onto the street but these areas feel much less surveillanced with buildings being predominantly residential, built as enclosed, inward facing apartment blocks, with only a few communal entrances.

Towards the south of George Street, particularly along Loch Street, Harriet Street and around the Norco House, building frontage activity is extremely low or absent.

What this means:

- The nature of the uses means that although activity along George Street is high during daytime hours, the area's evening activity is significantly lowered as shops close;
- Streets with low or no active frontages negatively impact upon perceptions of place, often making them feel unsafe and unwelcoming. This discourages visitors or encourages people to use alternative routes through;
- Future interventions should look to work both to increase activity in areas of low activity and introduce improvements to further increase levels of activity in those that have passive or higher levels of activity.

- George Street Area Boundary
- Building frontages with high surveillance and an activated ground floor use
- Building frontages with passive surveillance and ground floor activity
- Building frontages with no active use or surveillance at ground floor
- Building frontages with some passive surveillance but no direct access or activity to the street

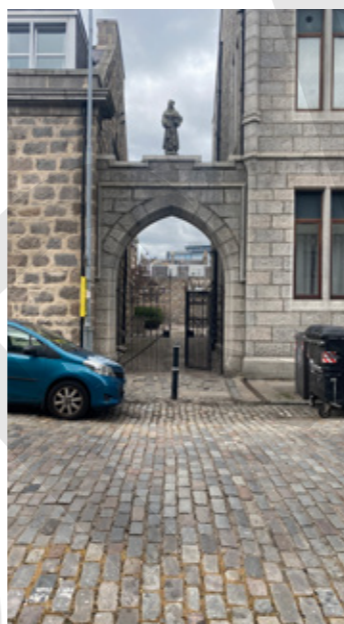


Figure 6 - Active and Non-Active Frontages

5.3 Legibility

The urban design structure of George Street is set out in the plan adjacent. There are a number of features and characteristics of the area which provide design cues and influences which should be considered when future development is brought forward. Some of these features help to drive a sense of place and character.

- The historic grid helps aid orientation and legibility north - south along George Street as well as east - west.
- Long range views and vistas along grid of streets within the study area help legibility within the study area
- Legibility breaks down further east towards A96 and along Loch Street and Harriet Street.
- A number of attractive & prominent architectural features on street corners help reinforce role of George Street as the central corridor of the study area
- Number of taller feature buildings on edge of the study area provide long range views along internal east - west perpendicular streets to George Street
- The quality of arrival points surrounding street network in many instances is difficult to read
- Internal courtyards of residential courts prevent pedestrian permeability and through movement



What this means:

The area is easier to understand and navigate from within the centre of the study area, but as you approach the edges it becomes less clear as to how you can transition to the next part of the city, particularly to the west, south and east of the study area. This means clear and well co-ordinated signage and wayfinding may be required to help people to move more successfully through the neighbourhood.



Figure 7 - Legibility

5.4 Signage And Promotion

The variety of commercial shop front signage is focused along the George Street Corridor. In many instances retailer signage varies and contrasts in order to draw consumer attention. In addition, there are also a number of retail units which have smaller signs attached to building façades.

This creates an uncoordinated and negative visual impact to George Street and increases the degree of visual clutter along the street. As a result a number of the historic features of the buildings are lost or hidden. However, these are also part of the identity of the local retailers and traders of the area and are part of the area's social makeup.

In contrast, the historic street signage is much more consistent and understated.

There may be opportunities to better integrate and co-ordinate retailer signage so that it responds to local historic characteristics but still allows retailers to advertise and promote their trades.



5.5 Public Realm Quality

The quality of public realm within George Street is varied. Public realm is predominantly medium or low quality.

There are some examples of high quality materials (for instance, along the northern side of George Street where new high-quality paving has been incorporated), but these tend to be localised and sit within low-medium quality streets.



Ongoing improvements across the wider area

In the wider George Street area, there are a number of locations which have undergone recent public realm improvements. These spaces have a higher quality of materials and signage (see image below). At present, because of the lower quality of materials, George Street feels cut off from these refinements. There is an opportunity to further expand upon recent city-wide improvements to George Street.



High quality public realm

- A higher quality of materials is present within these spaces, but instances of this area low within the study area.
- Pedestrians are prioritised within the streetscape.
- The public realm is accessible to all users and feels safe at all points.
- Although there are areas with high quality public realm along George Street, these are currently limited to the finish of pavements (see image). There is an opportunity to enhance the quality of the public realm across the entire streetscape.

Medium quality public realm

- Elements of high quality spaces including street furniture and trees, but with a dominance of lower-quality materials and/or damaged materials.
- Vehicles are prioritised within the streetscape.
- The public realm is accessible to all users and feels safe at certain points.

Low quality public realm

- The streetscape is lacking in both high quality materials and street furniture.
- Vehicles are prioritised within the streetscape.
- The public realm is not accessible to all users and does not feel safe.



Figure 8 - Public Realm Review

5.6 Pedestrian Experience of the Public Realm

There is a sense of 'here and there' when moving through the George Street area. This is enhanced in places where the public realm looks directly into spaces such as residential courtyards and disused buildings.

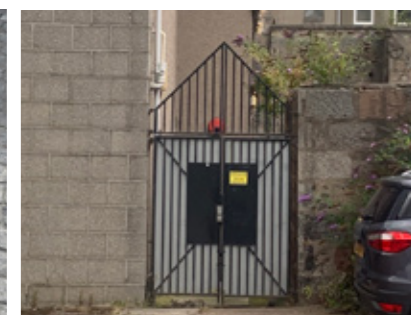
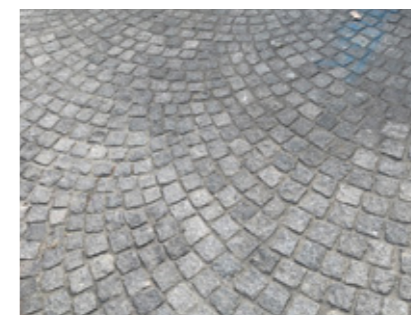
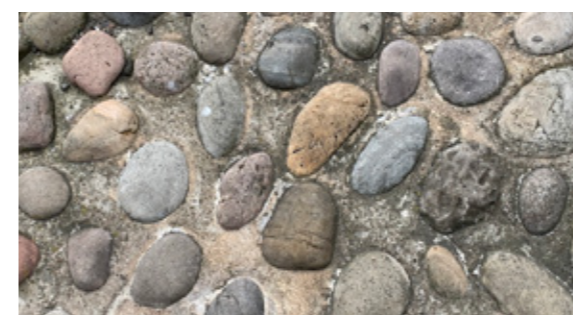
There is a sense of intrigue as the eye is drawn to artworks and graffiti, framed by archways and doorways. Movement through the site is often characterised by travelling under bridges towards an object or building in the distance.

Contrastingly, some boundaries feel hostile. Locked gates and boarded up windows signify to the pedestrian that this is a space to quickly move past, rather than stop and dwell.



Form and textures of the public realm

Notable shapes in the public realm include circles, curved sweeping edges, and arches. Whilst the most prevalent colour is grey, there are variations in tones. Hints of pink, lilac, ochre, and red tones can be identified across site. In some places, the public realm is representative of Aberdeen's urban-coastal interface. This can be spotted with the use of large weathered pebbles and in gravel planting that is reminiscent of a coastal environment.



5.7 Green Space

There is a lack of accessible and functional green space within the George Street area. Existing street trees within the public realm are either struggling, or have died.

There is an opportunity to incorporate functional green space to soften the surrounding hardscape and perform a number of valuable functions. These might include well-being benefits, nature-interactions, and stormwater management.

There are existing areas of greenspace within walking distance of the study area (as shown on the adjacent plan) however the quality of the pedestrian journey to and from these spaces is often uncomfortable, due to conflict with vehicles or narrow pedestrian footways or more difficult to navigate. A summary of these issues is set out below;

- **Route from Union Terrace Gardens:**

Cuts through Harriet Street which feels unsafe due to the lack of surveillance and pedestrian blind spots.

- **Route from Churchyard:**

Most straightforward route involves cutting through the shopping centre demonstrating lack of connectivity to George Street.

- **Route from Pocket park / Cruyff Court:**

Main route is along vehicular dominated streets.



Accessible green space

Accessible green spaces are currently located outside of the George Street area. Notable nearby green spaces include a cruyff court set within a small pocket park, Union Terrace Gardens and the churchyard on Schoolhill. There is a need for more accessible public green spaces within the George Street area, as these currently fall outside of the site boundary.



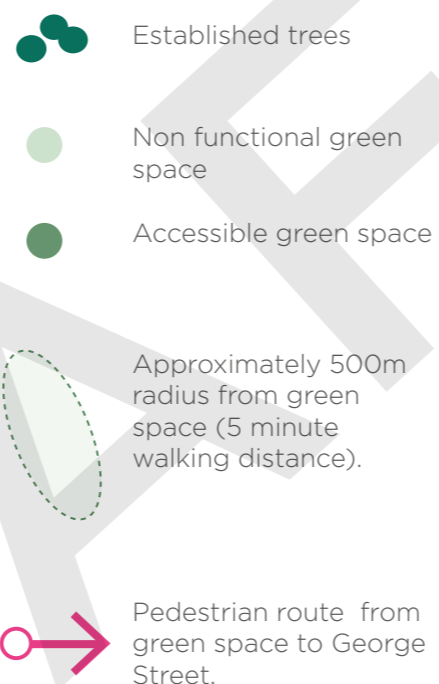
Non-functional green space

Whilst there are 'green' spaces within the George Street area, these tend to exist as grass verges adjacent to roads, or are set behind a boundary adjacent to residential property. There is a clear need to enhance existing green spaces so that they perform an environmental, social, and aesthetic function.



Established trees

Established trees in George Street are mostly located along main vehicular roads or within residential courtyards. There is an opportunity to incorporate tree planting within the public realm to perform a number of social and environmental functions.



What this means:

Although there are accessible green spaces within a 5 minute walk of George Street, the routes to these spaces are of a low quality in terms of pedestrian experience and safety. Existing accessible green spaces are also limited in the types of functions they perform and users they attract. Additional green spaces which serve a wider range of users are required.

5.8 Street Furniture

As demonstrated in the plan, there is a lack of seating and dwell space within the George Street area. Contrastingly, issues with bin storage are visible across the entire site. A clear demand for cycle storage presents an opportunity to expand existing cycle facilities.



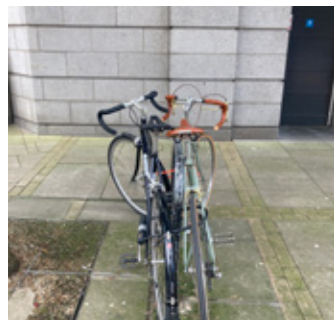
Residential Bin storage

There are bins which spill out into the public realm across the wider George Street area. As well as lowering the visual appeal of a space, these also pose accessibility issues.



Provision for dwell space

There is a low provision of seating within the George Street area. Existing seating environments could be improved. For instance, whilst there are benches on George Street, these are positioned with their backs to the road and next to bollards. This makes for an unwelcoming dwell space.



Cycle storage

Cycle storage is located adjacent to the college and also along George Street itself. This is well used and there is clearly a demand for adequate cycle storage and repair stations. There is an opportunity to incorporate additional facilities for cyclists across the area.



What this means:

Additional seating elements are required across the George Street area to improve accessibility and to create areas for dwell space. Bin storage is a problem across the entire site and negatively impacts visual quality and accessibility of the streetscape.



Figure 10 - Locations of public facilities

5.9 Access and Movement

City Centre Movement

Aberdeen City Centre is accessible using a variety of modes and routes. The rail station provides access for local towns to the north west and south of the city (e.g. for commuter and retail purposes) as well as more strategic access to Dyce Airport and longer-distance trips to Inverness, Edinburgh and beyond. The city centre is well served by a network of bus routes, providing radial access to and from adjacent towns and residential areas, as well as key land-uses including Robert Gordon and Aberdeen Universities, hospitals including Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and Aberdeen Harbour.

Further information on the strategic movement and access to the city centre can be found in the Aberdeen City centre and Beach Masterplan.

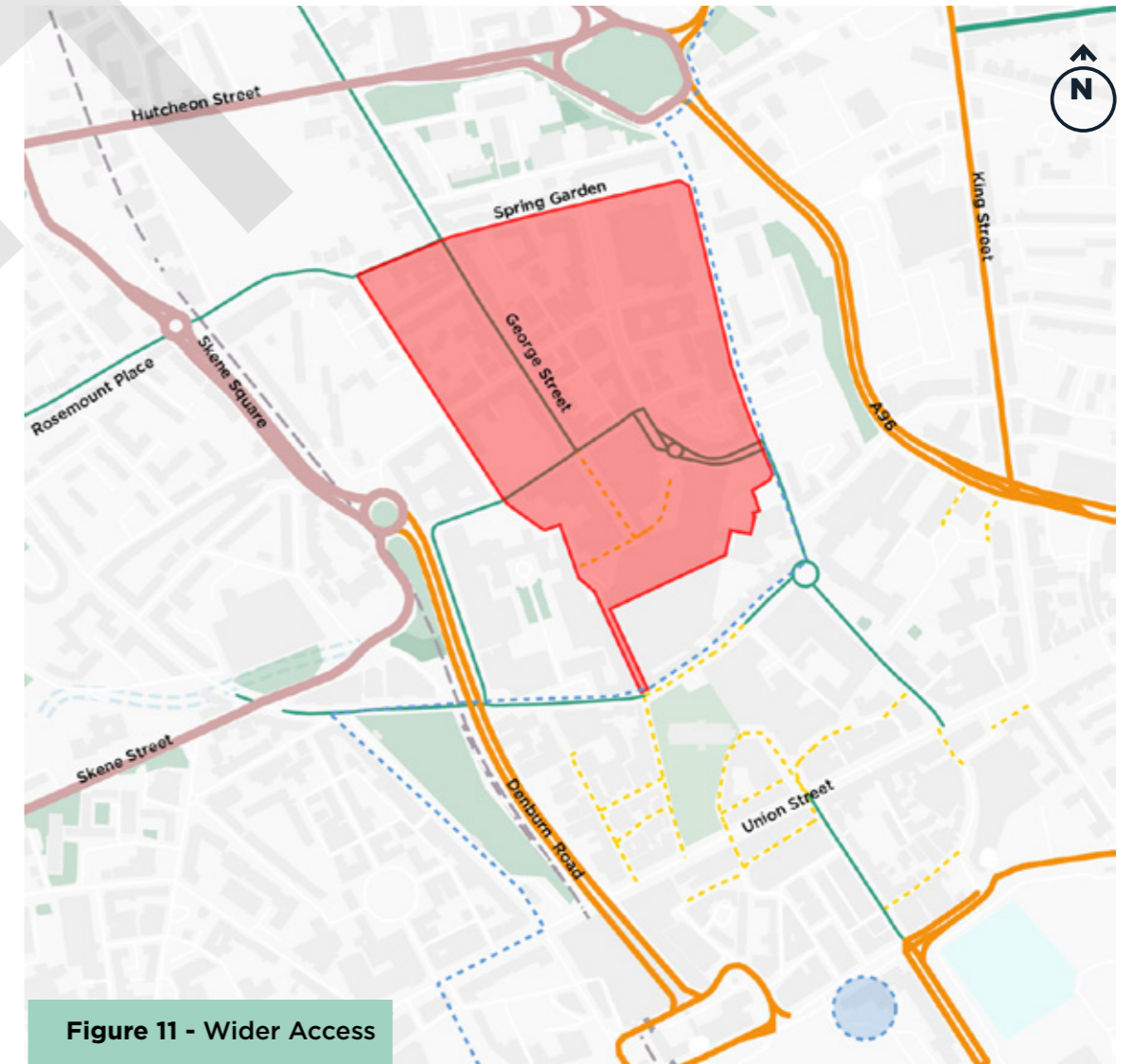


Figure 11 - Wider Access

- Study Area
- Primary Vehicle Routes
- Secondary Vehicle Routes
- Tertiary Vehicle Routes
- - - Pedestrian Priority
- - - Railway
- - - National Cycle Route
- Aberdeen Bus Station

George Street

The George Street area is a walkable neighbourhood with a number of links into the core of the city centre on foot. It is also well connected by bus to the wider city centre.

From a vehicular perspective, George Street is identified as a tertiary route within Aberdeen's roads hierarchy, predominantly providing access to local residential and commercial properties. However, it also connects directly to primary routes at Powis Place and Hutcheon Street and, with it lying approximately midway between the Denburn Road/Woolmanhill (primary) and West North Street (secondary) routes, does provide an alternative to these north-south routes, either as a local rat-run or when seeking access to local facilities including North East Scotland College and West North Street car park.

George Street is, however, multi-functional in nature with its pedestrianised access to the Bon Accord Centre in the south and all vehicle operation in each direction along the rest of its length. It serves various local bus routes, has pedestrian activity on both sides and also contains some advisory cycle priority measures along its length. In addition, the combination of on-street resident permit and short-stay pay and display parking serving the mixed residential and commercial frontages along George Street ensure that the competition for the available streetspace is significant.

What this means:

- Aberdeen is a walkable city centre, with numerous pedestrian priority streets
- George Street is well positioned and connected via bus links and a National Cycle Route
- Push to make the city centre a destination rather than a through route
- Future pipeline projects to promote pedestrianised zones and vehicle restricted areas

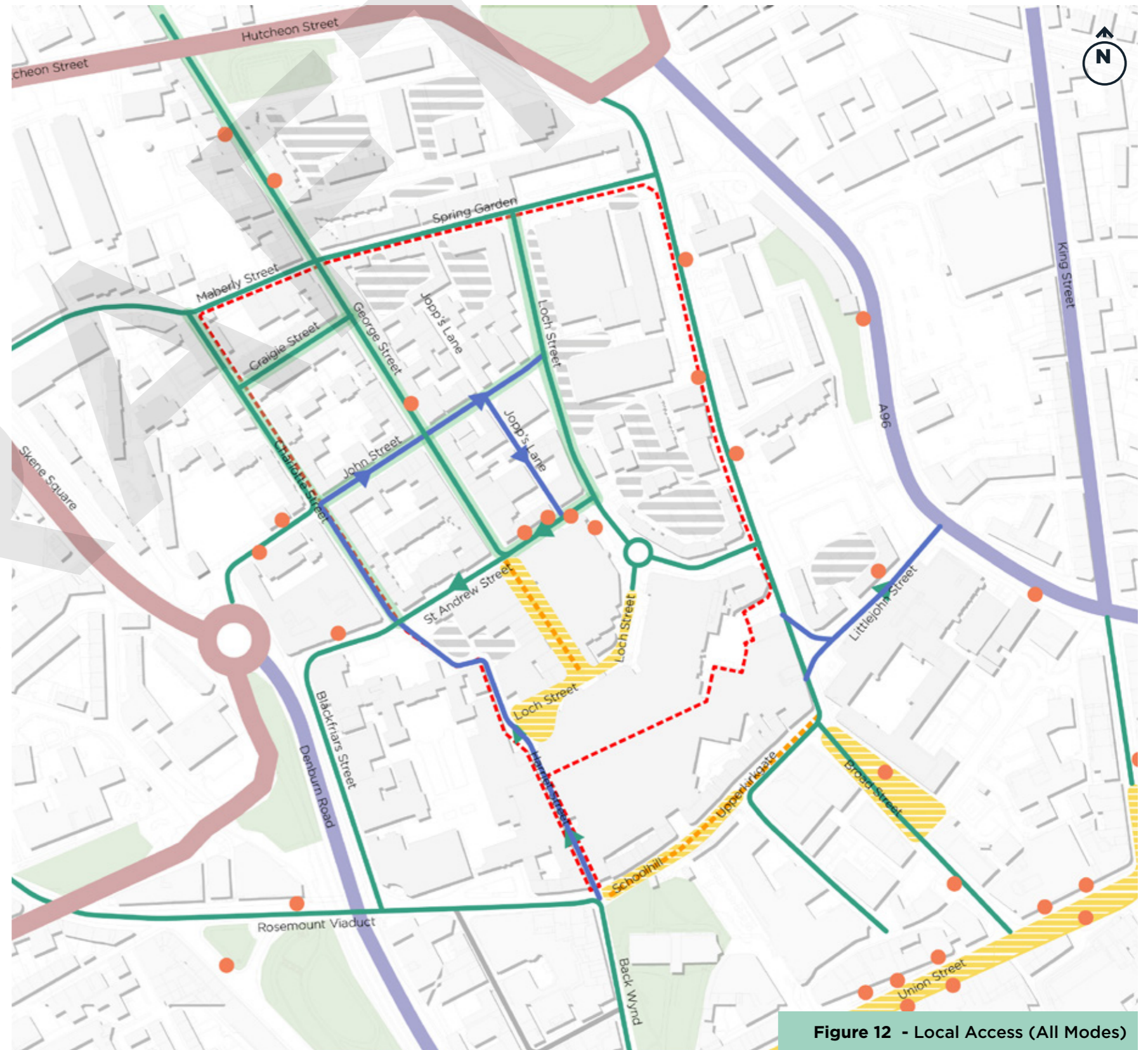
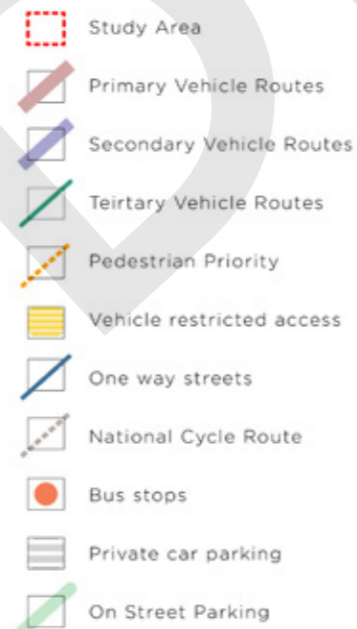
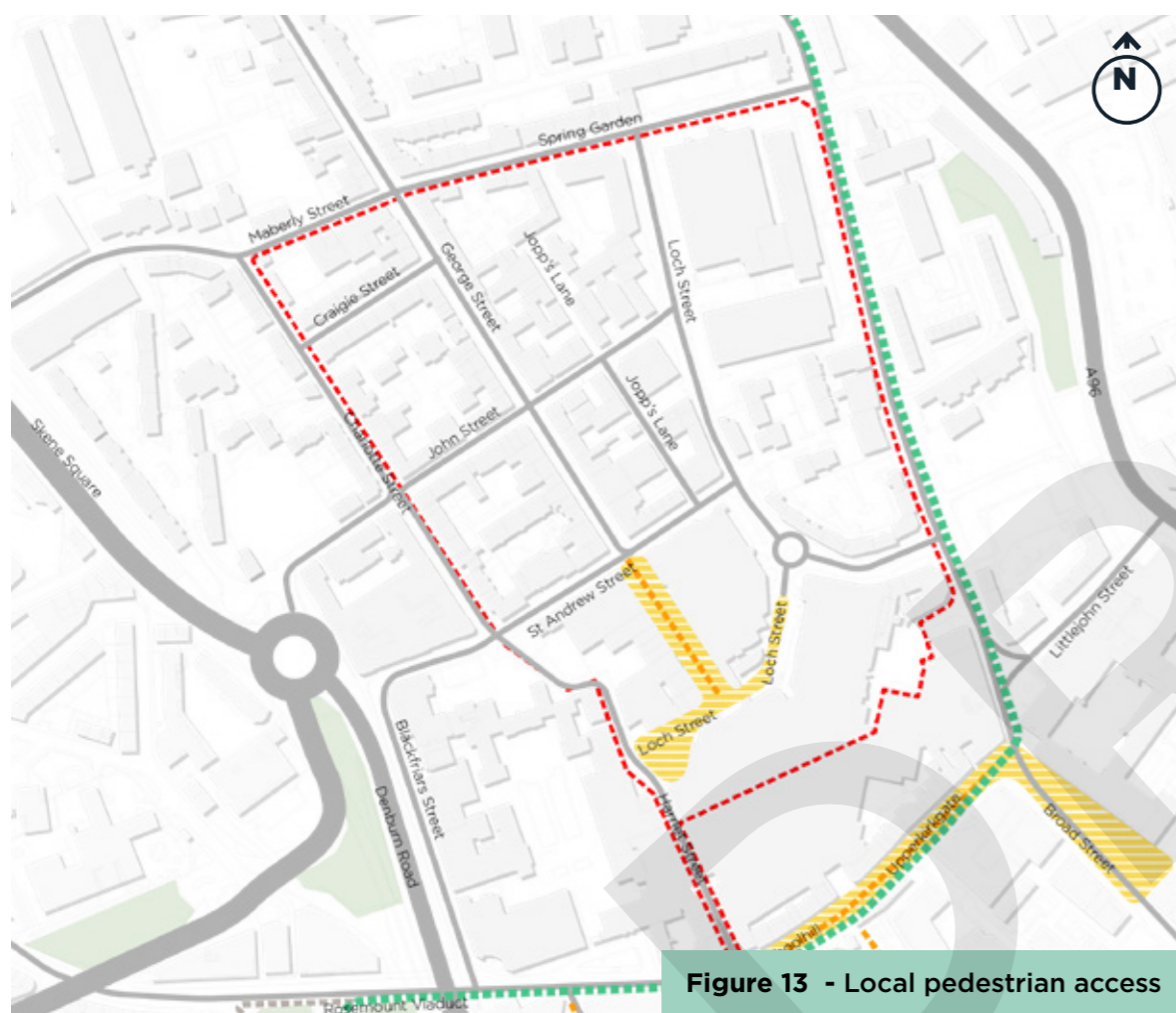


Figure 12 - Local Access (All Modes)

5.10 Street Network Function

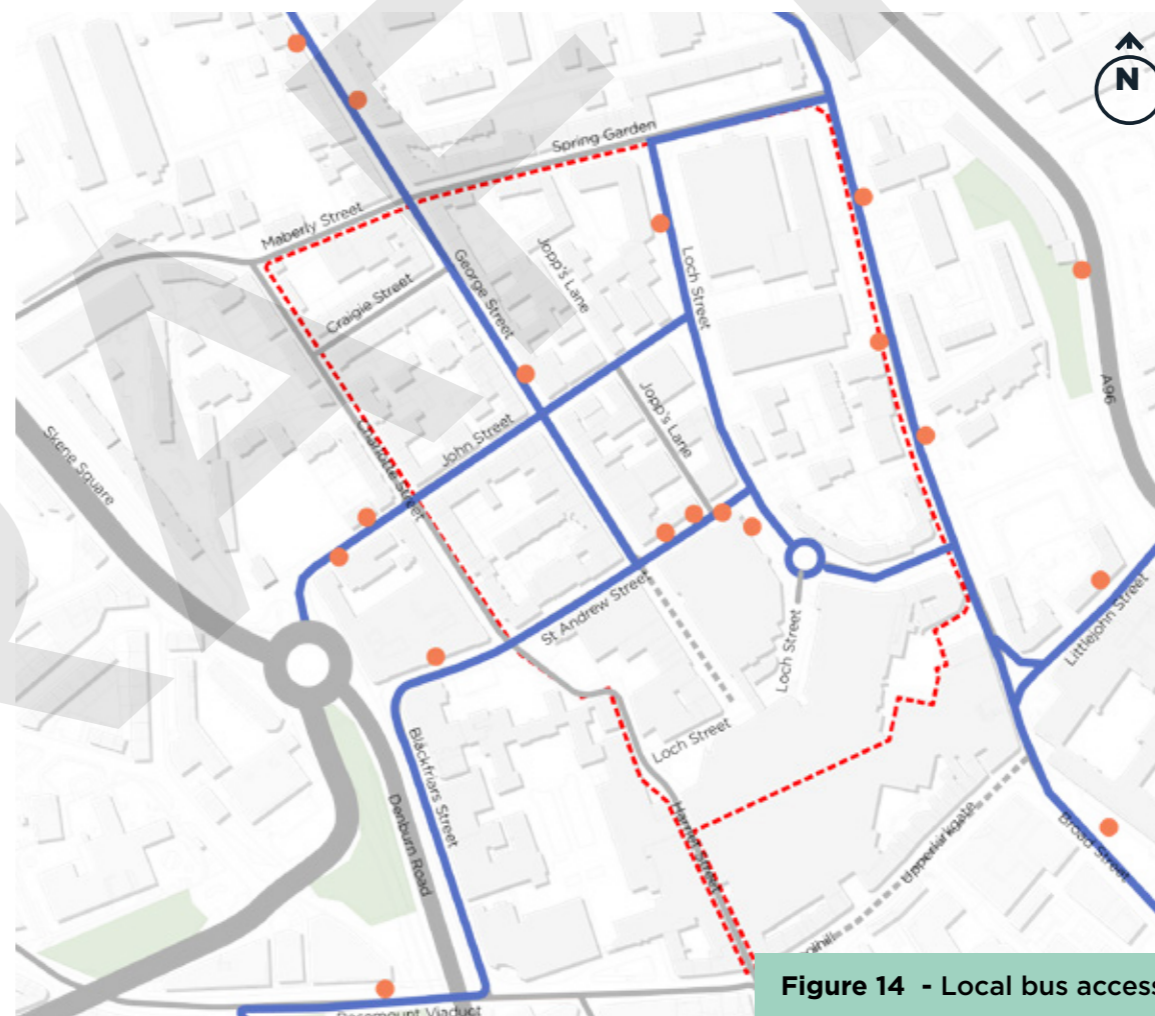
Pedestrian And Cycle Accessibility



The plan above demonstrates the existing public walking and cycling networks across the George Street area. The cycle network is limited to the designated National Cycle Network Route 1 which runs along the eastern edge of the study area connecting Loch Street to Upperkirkgate and across to Union Terrace Gardens. With that said, George Street is identified as a local cycle route with cyclists still using the busier road network despite a lack of designed cycle lanes.

The plan highlights the lack of cycle infrastructure across the study area. The levels of pedestrian connectivity through George Street are reasonable but with limited direct access to Schoolhill / Upperkirkgate. The Bon Accord Centre in some way restricts north - south pedestrian and cycle movement, forcing cyclists travelling south to Loch Street and to Harriet Street for those moving north.

Public Transport



St Andrew Street, John Street, George Street, Loch Street and Gallowgate are streets which service the local bus routes in the area. These are important for access and connections to Aberdeen's Bus Centre which acts as a travel hub for the city centre, as well as connections to further afield, beyond the city centre. John Street is one way in the eastbound direction from Charlotte street to Loch Street, while St Andrew Street is one way westbound from Loch Street to Blackfriars Street. The figure above shows the bus routes and where stops are located with 400m of the study area.

Vehicle Movement Function

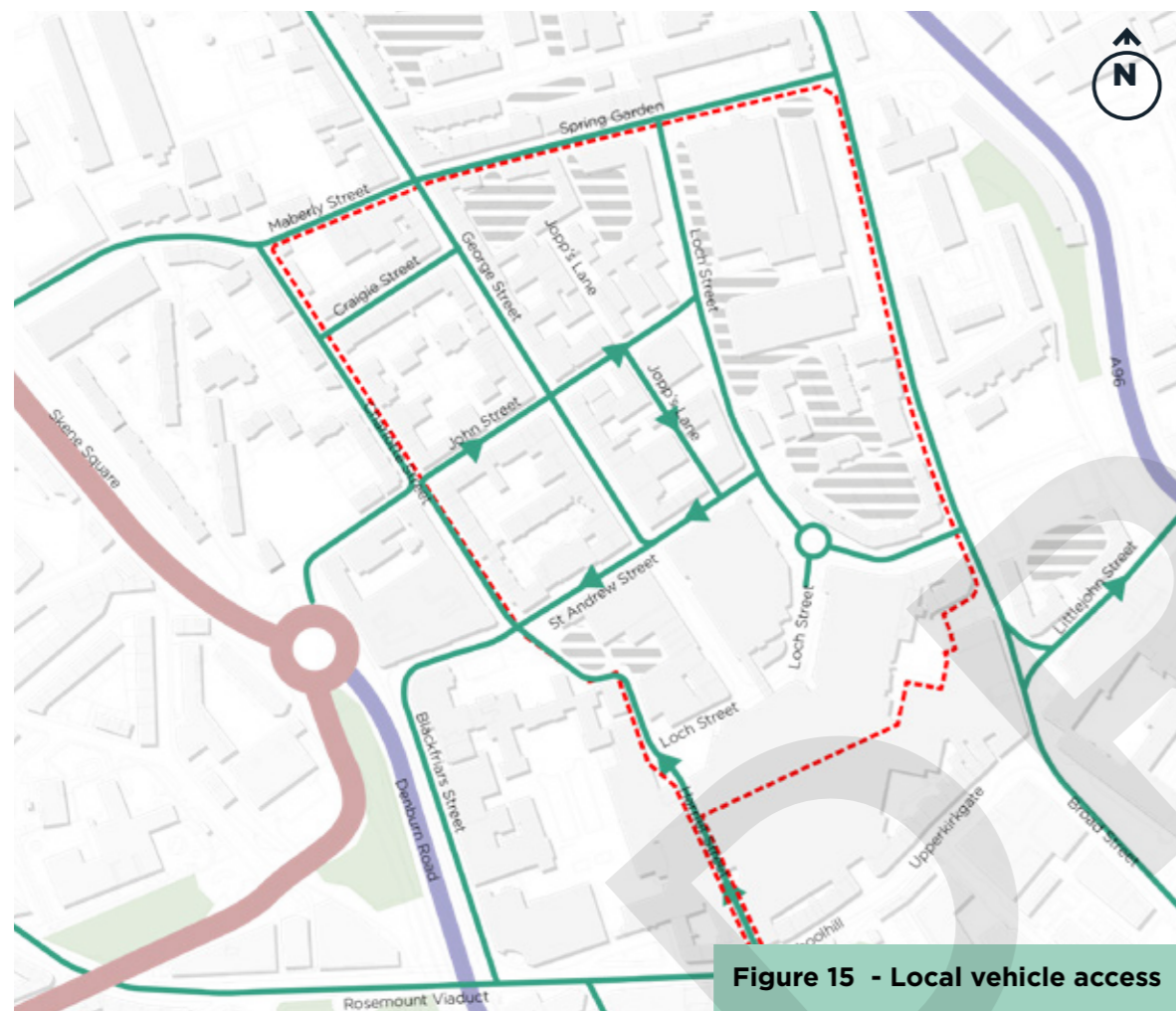


Figure 15 - Local vehicle access

Streets within the study area have a wide range of functions, varying from those with very high volumes and mixes of vehicular and pedestrian traffic along the boundaries, to those that are for local access only. Regardless of mode there is a shared objective by users: quick, safe journeys that experience minimal disruption. The figure above highlights the significance of streets within the study area; Primary, Secondary and Tertiary routes. Arrows also denote which of these routes are one way. Primary routes streets support the movement of various modes of travel and at greater volumes, including pedestrians, cyclists, bus and vehicles. Tertiary streets have a lesser impact upon the network and carry low numbers of vehicles and traffic.

Street Place Function



Figure 16 - Street functions and place

-  Vehicular dominated street
-  Vehicular dominance resulting in restrictions to other forms of movement
-  Pedestrian priority spaces
Streets where pedestrians are prioritised over vehicles.
-  Residential vehicular streets
Quieter residential streets where vehicles are still prioritised.
-  Pedestrian crossing points which could be improved.

What this means:

The pedestrian and cyclist experience of George Street is negatively affected by the prevalence of cars. The design of key routes subtly signifies to cyclists and pedestrians that this is a space for cars rather than people. There are safety concerns around pedestrian/cyclist conflicts with cars, and local air quality.

*For the purpose of this analysis, vehicular dominant streets are understood as streets where vehicles have priority over pedestrians.

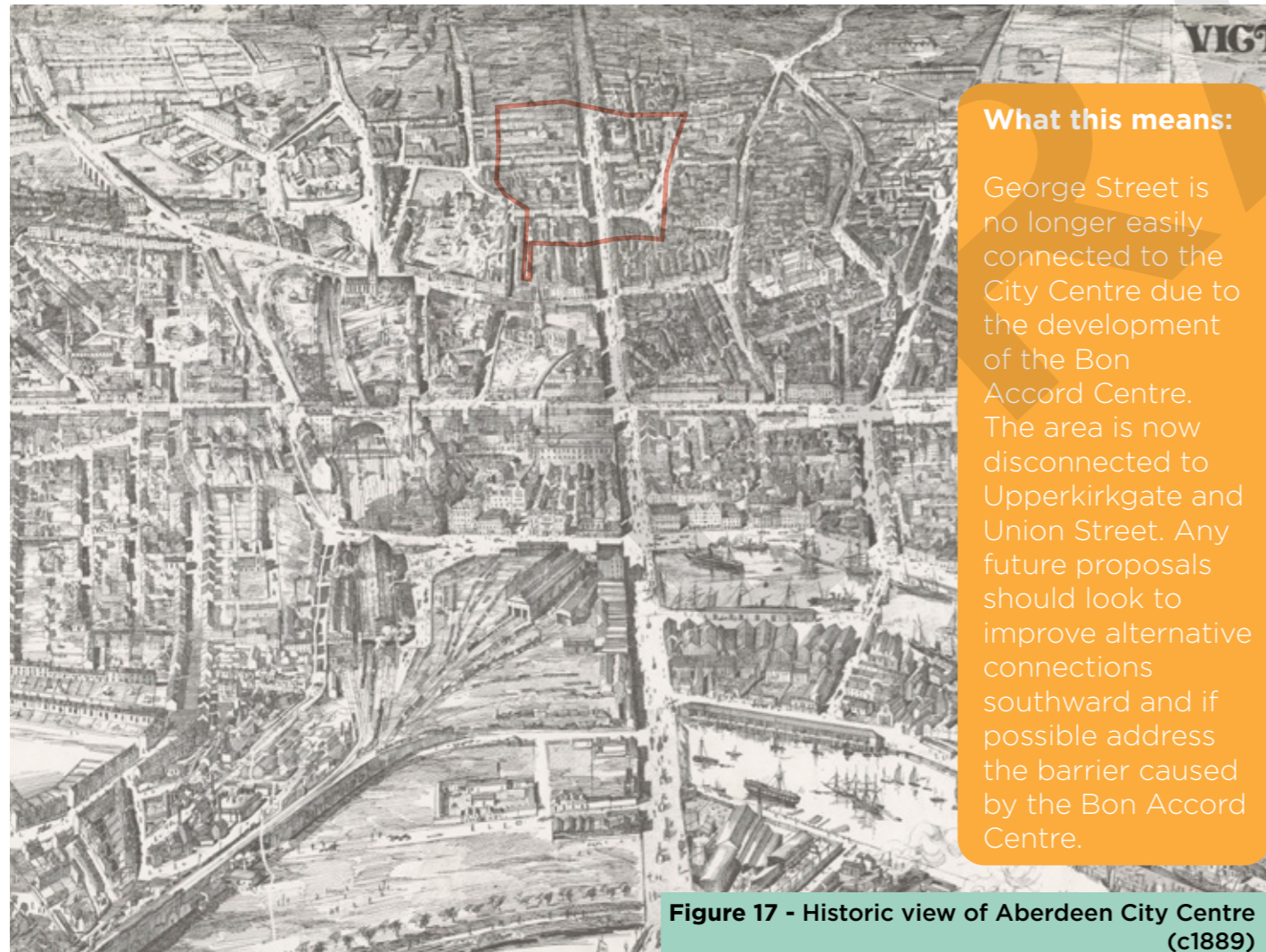
The most common type of street across site are vehicle dominant streets. In contrast, there has been little provision for pedestrian priority streets. Whilst there are locations where cyclists have been considered e.g. markings painted on the road along George Street, vehicles still dominate the streetscape. There are a number of crossing points which could be improved to ensure better pedestrian and cyclist safety. These tend to break up the pedestrian journey and significantly lower the pedestrian experience of a given space.

5.11 Respecting Conservation And Heritage

The George Street area has a long standing, dense urban character, with most of its historical urban grid remaining intact today. George Street once formed a powerful urban corridor, which ran parallel to King Street, leading from the City's docklands, across Union Street and northwards out of the city centre towards Kittybrewster where local farm marts and agricultural trade was located. George Street was further reinforced as a key corridor in the early to mid 1900's, carrying a tramway along its length.

Over the years, the urban context of George Street has dramatically changed with the construction of the Norco "Ziggurat" building, and later the development of the Bon Accord and St Nicholas centres across the southern end of George Street.

The historic mapping on this page reveal the original nature and character of George Street. Much of current thinking in urban planning seeks to reinforce and identify historic patterns and character to create a strong sense of "embedded place."



What this means:

George Street is no longer easily connected to the City Centre due to the development of the Bon Accord Centre. The area is now disconnected to Upperkirkgate and Union Street. Any future proposals should look to improve alternative connections southward and if possible address the barrier caused by the Bon Accord Centre.

Figure 17 - Historic view of Aberdeen City Centre (c1889)



A dense work community with Candle & Soap Works, Stables, Public Baths and Foundry's. George Street provides a direct connection through to Union Street and further south to the docks.



Introduction of the tramway along George Street which connected Kittybrewster train station to the tramway along Union Street to the south. An important neighbourhood through which activity and people moved



Some of the denser historic grain becomes eroded with new development and infill. Robert Gordon's College also sees redevelopment. A central tramway through George Street has been discontinued.



Relatively little change through to the 70's although Loch Street continues to function as an important secondary street to George Street providing access to local schools, Places of Worship and Public Offices.



By 1990- 1995 both the George Street and Loch Street connection to Upperkirkgate and further south to Union Street are severed, with the area cleared to make way for the Bon Accord Centre Development.



By 2022 the area has undergone significant change to the south and east of the study area. Most of the historic grain remains intact along George Street, St. Andrew Street, John Street & Craigie Street

5.12 Listed Buildings

The George Street area sits just north of the City Centre Conservation Area, with Harriet Street and Gallogate connecting into the study area.

There are a number of listed buildings / structures surrounding the George Street area and a small number within including:

Within study area

- Category B listed 230 George Street And 34 John Street (3-storey, 4-bay Classical Bank);
- Category B listed 261-265 (Odd) George Street (former college building with prominent octagonal tower);
- Category C listed 46 Charlotte Street and Arched Gateway;
- Category C listed 26 John Street (3-bay warehouse with ornate Dutch gable to John Street elevation);
- Category C listed 119-127 (Odd Nos) George Street (5-bay commercial and residential building with distinctive wallhead stack and flanking crow-step gables); and
- Category C listed 111 Gallowgate including Boundary Wall and Railing.

Beyond study area

- A number of Category B & C listed buildings along Upperkirkgate;
- Category A listed Porthill Court Residential tower blocks;
- Category A listed Robert Gordon College; and
- Category B listed Gerrard Street Baptist Church (former united free church)

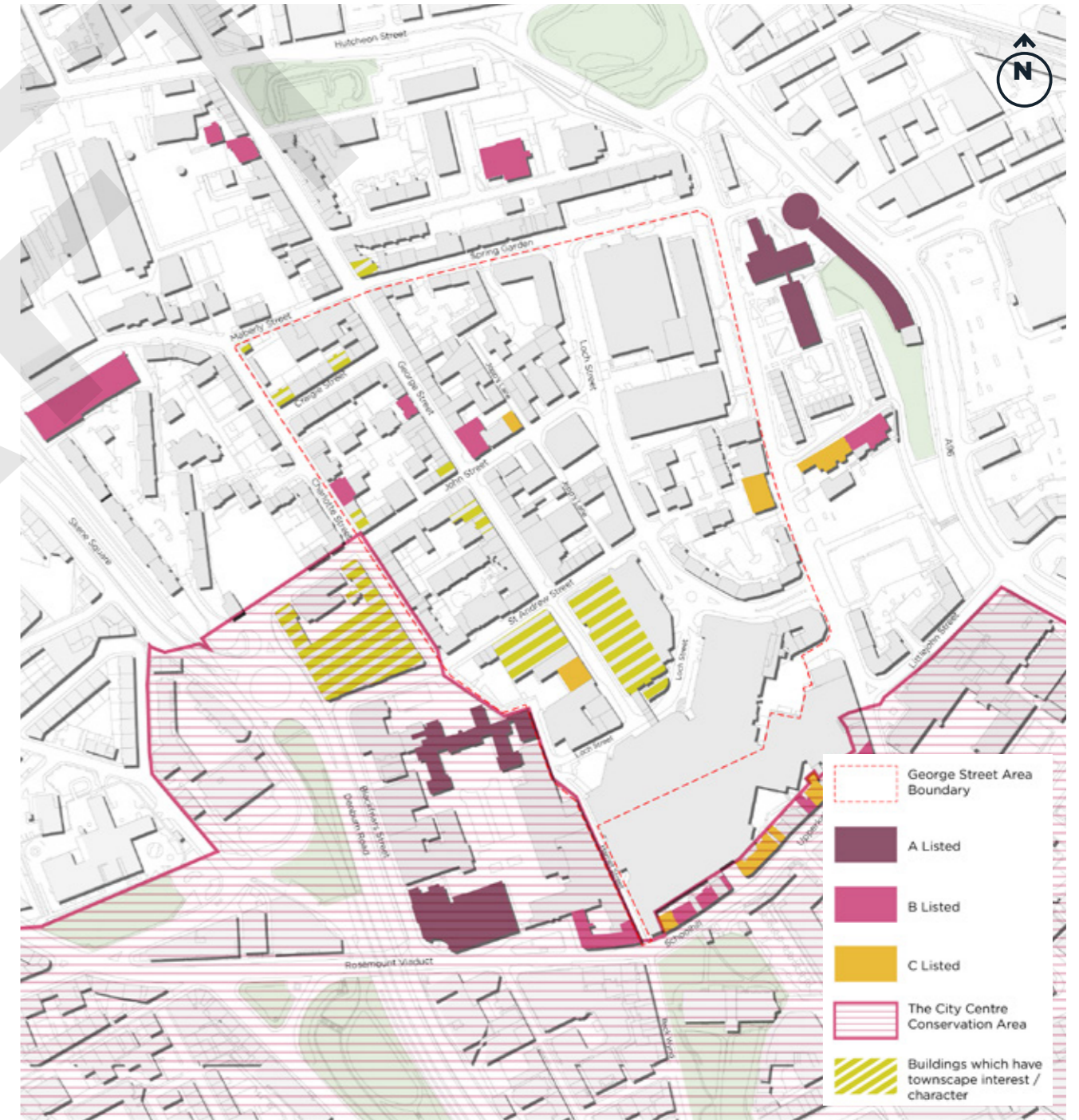


Figure 18 - Historical Character

There are a number of buildings identified through the baseline analysis which also add to the overall character and identity of the place, which are identified in the plan adjacent. These buildings have no formal protected designation. The purpose of identifying these is to understand their relationship to George Street and is not intended as a recommendation for formal listing or categorisation.

Norco Building

Northern Co-operative Society's Norco House (most recently occupied by as John Lewis) was built in 1966-70 for the (now-defunct) Northern Co-operative Society.

Designed by Covell Matthews Architects, the building is an example of brutalist, modernist architecture and intended to be a showpiece within the city's architectural make-up. The rippling, mound like profile of the massing of the building was particularly striking and unlike anything within the George Street area. The exposed concrete strips take similar design language from other well known brutalist buildings e.g Preston Bus Station as well as examples from other department store façades in Europe.

The building was taken over by John Lewis and renovated and converted in 1987. The department store was the organisation's northernmost store and was further expanded to the east in 1987 as part of the expansion of the John Lewis Partnership into Aberdeen. John Lewis has since closed (2021) and now used by the NHS as a temporary vaccination hub on the ground floor.



Loch Street Soup Kitchen

Aberdeen Public Soup Kitchen was first established as a charity in 1800 in St Mary's Chapel in St Nicholas Church. It supplied a breakfast of coffee and bread and a lunch of bread, soup and a piece of beef or mutton to the needy of the city.

The Soup Kitchen moved to Loch Street in 1838 and this new building was opened by Lord Provost Stewart in December 1894. The ground floor dining room had accommodation for at least 50 people and the tables were marble topped. In 1926, a total of nearly 27,000 meals were provided with funding still coming from charitable donations since few could afford even the two pence for the lunch.

The building survived major developments in the surrounding area but in recent years its charitable purpose was no longer thought necessary, and it was converted into a café in the mid 1990s. In 2022, the building still stands at 41-43 Loch Street, with the covered walkway for the Bon Accord Centre to its south. It is occupied by a outlet of the Jo Malone London fragrance and candle store.



5.13 Local Character

George Street sits to the northern fringes of a dynamic part of Aberdeen City Centre. The area can be broadly characterised into six character areas based on their location and type and uses found across the area (figure 6). A visual selection of images over the following pages illustrate the features described below. The character areas are identified as;



-  Historic grey granite with distinct facade, roofing detail and expressions;
-  Areas with predominantly grey granite / pebble dashed façades as well as buildings with street facing fenestration and roof pitches
-  Brutalist / geometric built form with minimal façade detailing
-  New built structures
-  Former industrial
-  Buildings with a lack of distinct structural elements / façade quality



What this means:

- George Street is the focus of character and identity with intact building architectural features and could be reinforced to create a sense of centre
- John Street & Craigie Street are most visually and architecturally connected to George Street
- Areas to south and east lack strong, cohesive character and could experience greater degree of intervention.
- Historic texture / materials within intact core add positive character and could be celebrated
- Street art works successfully to animate & add colour contrast in areas with poorer quality townscape

In addition to these immediate characters; to the south lies a number of leisure and cultural destinations and established city quarters (Belmont Quarter Merchants Quarter and Ship Row), some of which are undergoing phased regeneration programmes.

-  George Street Area Boundary
-  Historic grey granite buildings with distinct facade and roof detailing and expressions
-  Areas with predominantly grey granite/pebble dashed facade buildings with street facing fenestrations and roof pitches
-  Brutalist / geometric built form with minimal facade detailing
-  New built structures
-  Former industrial buildings
-  Buildings with a lack of distinct structural elements or facade quality



Figure 19 - Local Character

5.14 Land Uses

The section of George Street within the study area is predominately a mixed use urban high street. George Street is comprised of primarily granite tenement buildings with small local retail shops at ground floor, complemented by small flatted residential units on the upper floors.

Within this retail offer, units are dominated by a variety of independent health and beauty shops, takeaways and repair shops, creating a vitality to the area. The distribution of these uses is identified on the plan on the following page.

As shown on the GOAD plan, at the time of writing and according to GOAD plan records, there are a number vacant units to the south of the study area. The Norco House site is currently vacant (the building's ground floor is used as a temporary COVID-19 vaccination centre) as well as units along George Street and within the Bon Accord Centre. However, some of the vacant units are being used for other meanwhile uses and/or being brought to market, presenting an evolving context of change.

Residential

Aberdeen as a whole has experienced an over-supply of second hand stock, mainly flats and predominantly tenement flats, since the oil price led downturn in 2015, of which there are a considerable amount within George Street.

George Street plays an important role within the wider city centre, offering people the opportunity to access more affordable and attainable residential accommodation within a city centre setting. An opportunity to access accommodation within the heart of the city centre, it provides a sustainable and well connected urban neighbourhood to allow those who choose to live there with access to Aberdeen's city centre.

However, the area has struggled to secure any new residential growth due to the suppressed values across the market and fewer larger, readily available development sites.

Retail

The retail market on George Street has historically been split in two. The presence of the former John Lewis adjacent to the Bon Accord Centre attracted national retailers such as Santander, Blacks, Magnet Kitchens and Greggs occupying larger units at the South end of the street. These created and benefited from increased footfall brought by the department store. George Street also has a well regarded local business in Finnies, The

Jewellers, which attracts city centre visitors and those from further afield further along George Street.

However, lower George Street's retail market dynamic has been impacted by the closure of John Lewis. The Bon Accord Centre also has a current planning application for expansion however at the time of writing the Bon Accord Centre is in administration.

In contrast, the retail market to the North of George Street comprises smaller, local and independent retail units offering low everyday items to the market, serving the people that live there. These include local takeaways, beauticians and cafés.

Education

The presence of North East Scotland College within the study area and Robert Gordon's College to the south west are important local institutions that interact with George Street. Their student populations frequently travel into and through George Street and the offer of some local businesses caters for local students (including cafés, convenience retail, gaming cafés and student residential). Both College curriculum will drive and influence the future uses within George Street and the Masterplan should look to ensure the ability to support and respond.

Existing and Emerging Business

Across the George Street neighbourhood, there are several organisations such as George Community Council and the Greater George Street Traders Association, that are operating in the area with each having their own distinctive role. However, it is apparent through local studies that each lacks a knowledge of what the other is doing and how they could support each-other. There lies the possibility to create a Community Network where groups, organisations and individuals would be asked to share ideas and take forward some actions that had come from the event and further consultations that exist for the area. It would add to the already developed and well attended have views on what is needed in the area.



6. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

6.1 Introduction

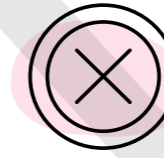
The following SWOT is based on the spatial analysis of George Street. It is also influenced by feedback from the consultation exercises with both the local community and local stakeholders.

The SWOT analysis will help shape the masterplan detailed in the following sections.



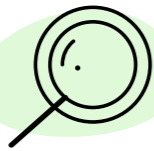
Strengths

1. George Street sits on the northern fringe of the City Centre, within a short walking distance of local amenities, the retail core and adjacent to recently delivered investment around Marschial College.
2. A long established, resilient, community who proudly support the independent business offer within the area.
3. The NuArt festival includes Jopps Lane and other areas of George Street, displaying an annual programme of murals, helping draw people into the area and add colour and vibrancy to the streetscape.
4. Along with its listed buildings, there are buildings of character and interest that add a strong identity and townscape character to George Street.
5. Strong links via bus to the immediate city centre as well as north to existing residential communities along George Street
6. Range of independent shops and businesses which play an important role in providing tertiary services for locals as well as the wider city. Includes some higher end and well regarded businesses including Finnies the family jewellers.
7. A present residential and student community within the study area who can support local services and amenities.
8. Two of the city's well known educational institutions in North East College Scotland and Robert Gordon's College, who between attract significant number of users to the area, and recognise the role of children and young people.
9. Strong sense of local community and entrepreneurial, self starter spirit. Several successful organisations in and around the area including the George Community Council and Greater George Street Traders Association.



Weaknesses

1. Loch Street pedestrian environment is poor and creates severance between both Colleges and the core of George Street.
2. Quality of the built form adjacent to NESCOL, industrial low storey units, is of a poorer quality than the intact historic core and creates a visual disjoint.
3. Arrival gateways and thresholds to George Street area are poorly defined in some locations, namely on approach from Maberley Street, John Street, Spring Garden and Harriet Street. The experience along many of these connections for pedestrians is poor.
4. The northern elevation of the Bon Accord Centre is a dominant, imposing and poorly activated frontage. It reads as the rear of the building with entrance accesses which are difficult to read and parts are dominated by servicing areas.
5. George Street is an area of predominantly poor quality urban form. Inactive façades, surface car parking and run down / vacant units to the rear create a poor quality arrival point to the area via Harriet Street.
6. Limited wayfinding across the neighbourhood. George Street is 'hidden' from the rest of the city to the south (by the Bon Accord Centre) and from the west (by dominant highways infrastructure).
7. Quite a lot of street clutter and untidiness which weakens the aesthetic and townscape quality of the place; limited bin storage, over grown planting, seagull and dog fouling.
8. Little to no basic necessities available such as accessible public toilets, information stands, water fountains or shading etc.
9. Area has limited activity in the evenings and therefore can feel unsafe and uninviting. NESCOL evening classes are the exception which are offered throughout term time.



Opportunities

1. Form stronger and better defined routes in and out of the neighbourhood and avoid relying solely on pedestrian access via the Bon Accord Centre (private link) and Harriet Street (heavily constrained).
2. Reduce the impact of private car through journeys and create more space for pedestrians, cyclists and other modes of transport and active travel.
3. Develop a cohesive approach to character of the public realm - through shop frontage, wayfinding and street materiality.
4. Re-activate areas of low activity (spaces and vacant buildings) both short and longer term to address issues of vacancy early.
5. Improved environmental maintenance and facilities across the area to tackle issues that impact on the day to day experiences of residents and businesses.
6. Norco House is an example of brutalist architecture, which invites opinion and interest, a recognisable piece of Aberdeen's social history which could be brought back to life as part of a mixed use development.
7. Better promotion of George Street businesses.
8. Creation of more dwell spaces across the neighbourhood.
9. Introduce more urban greening to what is a hard environment through new and retrofit interventions.
10. Further encourage start ups and independent retailers and businesses into the area and support those already there.
11. Explore opportunities to encourage more residential accommodation into the area by offering a new form of residential offer.
12. Diversify the anchor of the neighbourhood, away from traditional retail (Norco House) to a more mixed use, experiential and potentially cultural based offer.
13. Develop stronger programme links to surrounding, well established institutions.



Threats

1. The George Street area remains visually hidden from the main pedestrian thoroughfares and areas of planned public realm investment planned via the wider City Centre and Beach Masterplan. Risk of the area become further detached (physically and psychologically) from the rest of the City
2. Linked to the above, at the time of writing, significant changes to the surrounding retail assets. Bon Accord Centre is under administration, Norco House is on the market for sale and other large floorspace properties (currently vacant) are on the market. The area could be at risk of further decline if no action is taken.
3. Threat of demolition of Norco House if a suitable use isn't found and loss of embedded carbon.
4. Threat of other areas in the city centre having a stronger and more inclusive presence than George Street and taking opportunity away.
5. Threat of online and out of town shopping having a stronger appeal to some of the larger brand stores within the neighbourhood.
6. Older and ageing populations being isolated due to poor provision and public realm quality
7. Aging buildings can require more maintenance and may fall into disrepair if vacant for long periods of time causing further issues of urban blight.
8. If the public realm falls into further disrepair, anti social behaviour will be encouraged in these areas and lower daily footfall.
9. With most parking on street for local residents, anticipate future issues with EV charging for historic buildings.

7. How Does George Street Respond?

7.1 Understanding

Our understanding of the place and the aspirations of the people who are part of it will shape the strategy for change across the area.

The strategy for the Mini Masterplan seeks to capture the potential of the area's physical characteristics, its diverse community and the emerging wider opportunities that the city is looking to secure.

Our focus for the Mini Masterplan strategy, in response to public and stakeholder engagement, our baseline assessment and our George Street Vision, proposes to:

- Embrace difference..... highlight the quirks & celebrate the variety
- Build our reputation – Encourage discovery & build recognition (place branding & curation).
- Create new reasons to come to the area
- Unlock big changes (Stimulate & Deliver) through incremental interventions
- Fix the edges and enhance the arrival
- Demand more from our streets - invite activity but manage movement
- Create a greener form of urbanism & more liveable environment

7.2 Vision

George Street Connected!

The 'local' Neighbourhood: a vibrant, creative and inclusive city centre community at the heart of reinvention.

George Street will become a place to form new connections; Social, Cultural, Economic and Educational. An authentic neighbourhood offering an evolution of George Street; a place for people to come together; with spaces that link activities, aspirations and ideas.



ECONOMY

Fully contributing to a more varied and dynamic local economy, where local businesses are supported, and where new ones, and people with ideas are encouraged to start-up, to grow and to thrive.



PEOPLE

Supporting a neighbourhood full of a diverse mix of people and communities, participating in all that our district has to offer in terms of culture, education, everyday activities, a place to call home and a bustling street-life.



PLACE

Becoming a place that is vibrant, comfortable, inclusive, playful and inviting. Being part of the city, but with a sense of the local intact.

7.3 Our Objectives For People

1. A place to continue to call home. An enhanced, greener environment in which to live sustainably and safely.
2. Encouraging community and individual wellbeing – creating amenity spaces and enhanced streets that foster greater social interaction, build and reinforce local community networks, and which support relaxation and dwell time.
3. Supporting community diversity from local shop owner, student, street artist, start-up business, exhibitor to resident with opportunities for all.
4. Encouraging a sense of local ownership & stewardship through events and initiatives shaped by the variety of local residential, educational and business communities.
5. A people focused place which offers a variety of uses and activities to support people of all ages – for residents and visitors.



Figure 20 - Ingredients for a more people focused place



Figure 21 - People Concept Diagram

7.3 Our Objectives For Place

1. Define a coherent, colourful street aesthetic with a co-ordinated palette of quality materials, planting and street furniture distinctive to George Street.
2. Harder working streets - somewhere that is easy and safe to navigate, with a clearer hierarchy of streets and wayfinding. Reclaiming streets to prioritise a positive pedestrian experience, manage traffic movements, improve their environmental sustainability.
3. Tackling areas of inactivity through a programme of transformational change - from short to long term - making space for pop-ups, tactical urbanism and interactions that are experience focused.
4. Supporting the core to do more - addressing infrastructure barriers and poor-quality movement thresholds to encourage more comfortable journeys into & out of George Street.
5. Illuminating culture and identity - inviting you to learn about the built and social history through interpretation, intervention in the public realm and lighting.



Figure 22 - Ingredients for a colourful and experience focused place

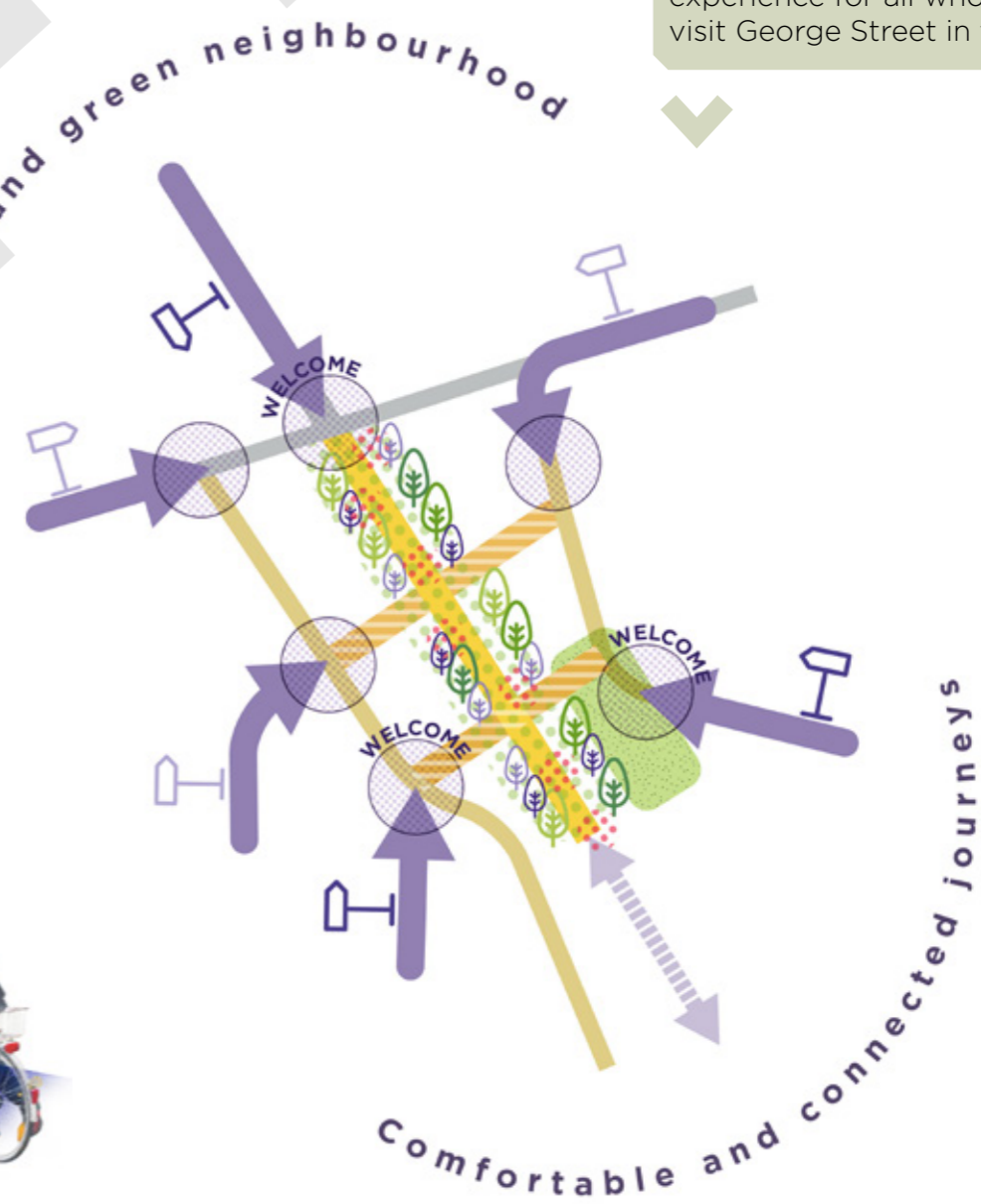


Figure 23 - Place Concept Diagram

Concept diagram exploring the role of environmental and place interventions to improve the experience for all who live, work and visit George Street in the future.

7.4 Our Objectives For Economy

1. Retain the existing economic heart of the neighbourhood.
2. Encourage renewal and diversification to support new small and local enterprises that can define the culture of George Street.
3. Foster a culture of entrepreneurialism and experimentation – providing flexible spaces, space to fail and a means to support experimentation and trial.
4. Help the neighbourhood to respond to new residential, student & other demands – finding new locations to grow.
5. Establish a distinctive role in the city’s cultural offer – create a home of sorts for a burgeoning scene for arts, craft and independents.
6. Play a key role in evolving the city’s retail offer and reshaping its core.



Figure 24 - Ingredients for a sustained and diversified economy

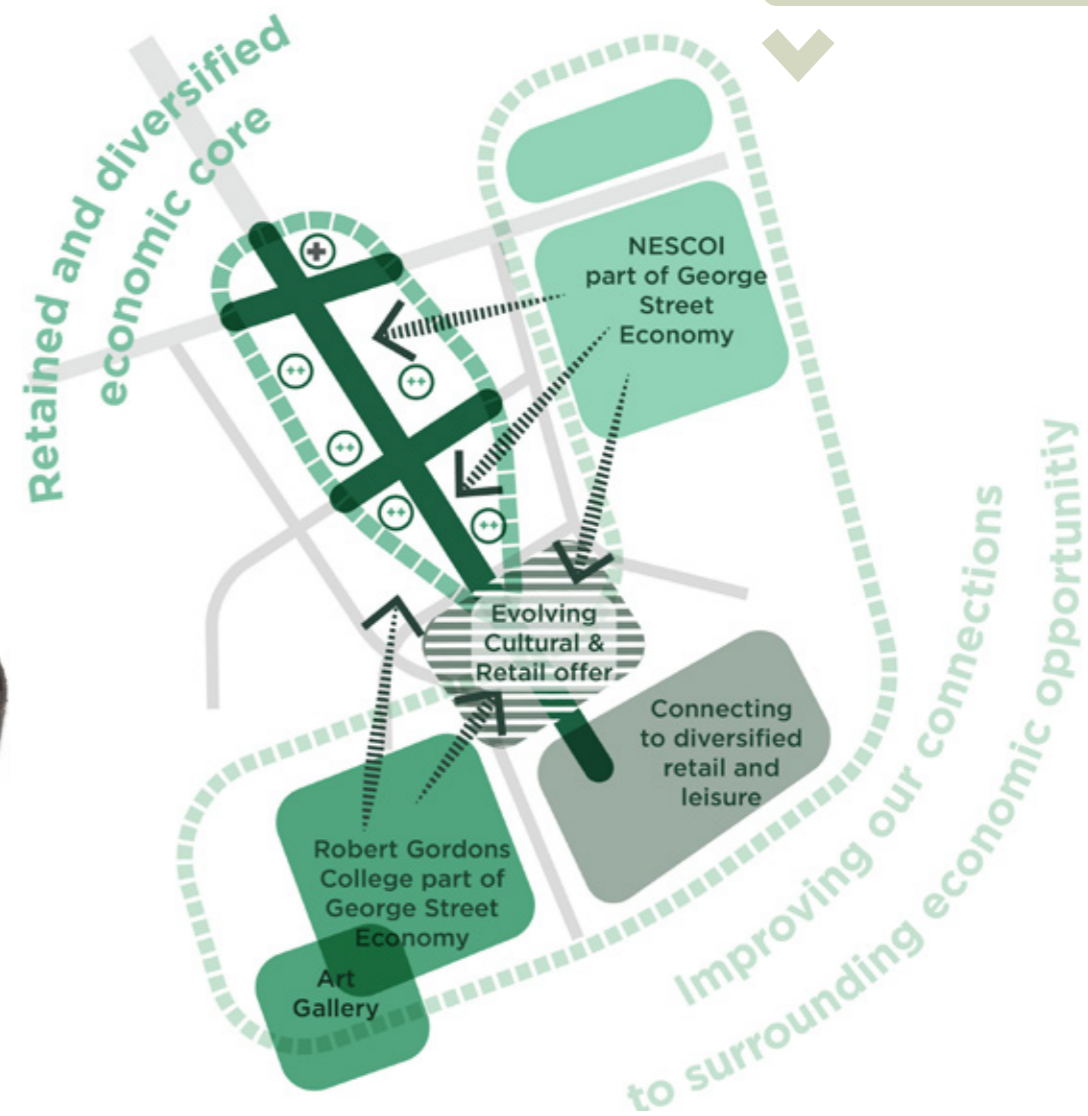


Figure 25 - Economy Concept Diagram

Concept diagram exploring the future role of George Street’s economic assets and how surrounding significant economic drivers can contribute to George Street’s future.

8. The Mini Masterplan

8.1 Masterplan Strategy

The masterplan sets the long term regeneration for George Street over the duration of the wider City Centre & Beach Masterplan.

George Street is a complex existing urban environment and the scope of physical change must be carefully managed and delivered alongside the existing requirements of local businesses and residents. It must, however, also create a clear step-change in the quality and function of the environment and look to support longer term redevelopment opportunities when they become available.

The Masterplan will be used as a tool to co-ordinate and prioritise key projects and areas of focus for the neighbourhood. The Council has a clear ambition for the area and it will seek to both deliver and support projects alongside existing stakeholders and those seeking to take forward future development.

The Masterplan identifies where physical change should occur to support the mini-masterplan's vision and objectives. Supporting the Masterplan are a number of projects, ranging from the short term to longer term which will secure the vision and objectives.

Delivery of the Masterplan will require a co-ordinated and a collaborative approach across public and private sector organisations.

The following plans and illustrations set out within this section illustrate what is proposed by the Mini Masterplan strategy for George Street.

The place plan on the following page sets out areas of change and focus. These are explained in more detail below. The following pages explain in greater detail the public realm and movement aspirations for the Mini-Masterplan.

1. Streets & Spaces

- Connections to existing green spaces such as Cruyff Court and Union Terrace Gardens will be enhanced for active travel creating better access to the City's existing greenspaces;
- George Street will become an active travel friendly neighbourhood, promoting safer and more equitable sustainable journeys within, focused along George Street, John Street and St. Andrews Street;
- Potential to create new and improved pedestrian links across key anchor destinations as well as part of potential future redevelopment to the south of George Street;
- Opportunity to create a new public, flexible space for the neighbourhood. The scale of the space is dependent upon future proposals for Norco House. There is potential for a space to be delivered as part of a more holistic redevelopment to the site. If future proposals for Norco House require it to occupy the same development footprint (of Norco House and the later John Lewis extension), there is still potential to create an improved environment along Loch Street and

2. Built Form

- Berry Street, reducing the size and width of highway infrastructure to make way for public space which can accommodate green infrastructure and outdoor uses; and
- Creating improved arrival gateways into the neighbourhood, either through public realm enhancements (signage, improved crossings, carriageway amends etc) or through a combination of public realm upgrades and well designed, new built form creating a positive presence onto the street.
- The Masterplan will support a landmark building for George Street. This could be achieved through the re-purposing and revitalisation of Norco House, bringing it back in to active use, creating a distinctive landmark feature due to its architectural form and future use. Alternatively, a new landmark building could be created as part of comprehensive redevelopment. A landmark building should be sensitively designed, of high quality and which positively activates the surrounding streets. It could explore expressions of height so long as its form and orientation respect the adjacent historic character of George Street and proposals are in alignment with the Council's Big Buildings Guidance;

- Local landmark buildings will focus on activating the ground floor and better dressing building fronts / boundaries to create a positive relationship with the street;
- Improvements to the existing shop frontages of George Street. A balance needs to be achieved between retaining the individual character & identity of the various businesses but also applying guidance and ordering principles to help manage the degree of visual clutter and disjointed appearance of the street. This will also involve clearing other redundant clutter such as satellite dishes and unnecessary street signage;
- Improvements to the north elevation of the Bon Accord Centre and multi storey car park (MSCP) elevations. This could include increasing the aperture of the pedestrian entrances to the north to create better visual permeability into the building. For the MSCP elevations it could include introducing animation to the blank façades, including green walls / projection space / artistic installations and / or ground floor retail offer along Loch Street;
- The Masterplan will support longer term, market led interventions focused around Loch Street (adjacent to the NESCOL) and the Spring Garden Charlotte Street area. There is potential to improve the quality of the built

form and public realm environment around the college. This could involve short term improvements to existing buildings, or longer term redevelopment should opportunities become available; and

- There is also the opportunity to introduce a better balance between car parking and available green / multi-functional space within the NESCOL site, offering more space to students, visitors and enhance the environment along Loch Street.

3. Land Uses

- Potential to redevelop land to the southern end of George Street. The Council has no direct land ownership in this area however the Masterplan supports an aspiration to see the area re-activated through mixed use and residential redevelopment of vacant buildings or underutilised parcels of land;
- Future residential development to the south of George Street has the potential to diversify and uplift the type of accommodation on offer within the wider city centre, attracting young professionals and young families into high quality residential accommodation. This will encourage more local spending to be captured within the area, benefiting local businesses.

- Improvements will better link future development to new and existing open spaces and all that the city has to offer and drawing in the ongoing regeneration around Marschial College;
- George Street corridor remains as a mixed use led environment supporting some residential development. It should also extend to the east towards NESCOL and south west towards Robert Gordon's College, helping to integrate and support these existing educational institutions; and
- Both educational institutions have the opportunity to establish stronger physical and programme connections with the George Street area. NESCOL currently hosts a number of evening classes which attract people to the area in the evenings and improvements to the pedestrian experience will help the College to continue to host and grow this offer. The Masterplan will also support opportunities for both educational facilities to diversify the use of their campus through weekends, summer and evenings recognising that there is potential to attract a significant number of people to the area more of the time, and helping to diversify and support the local economy.

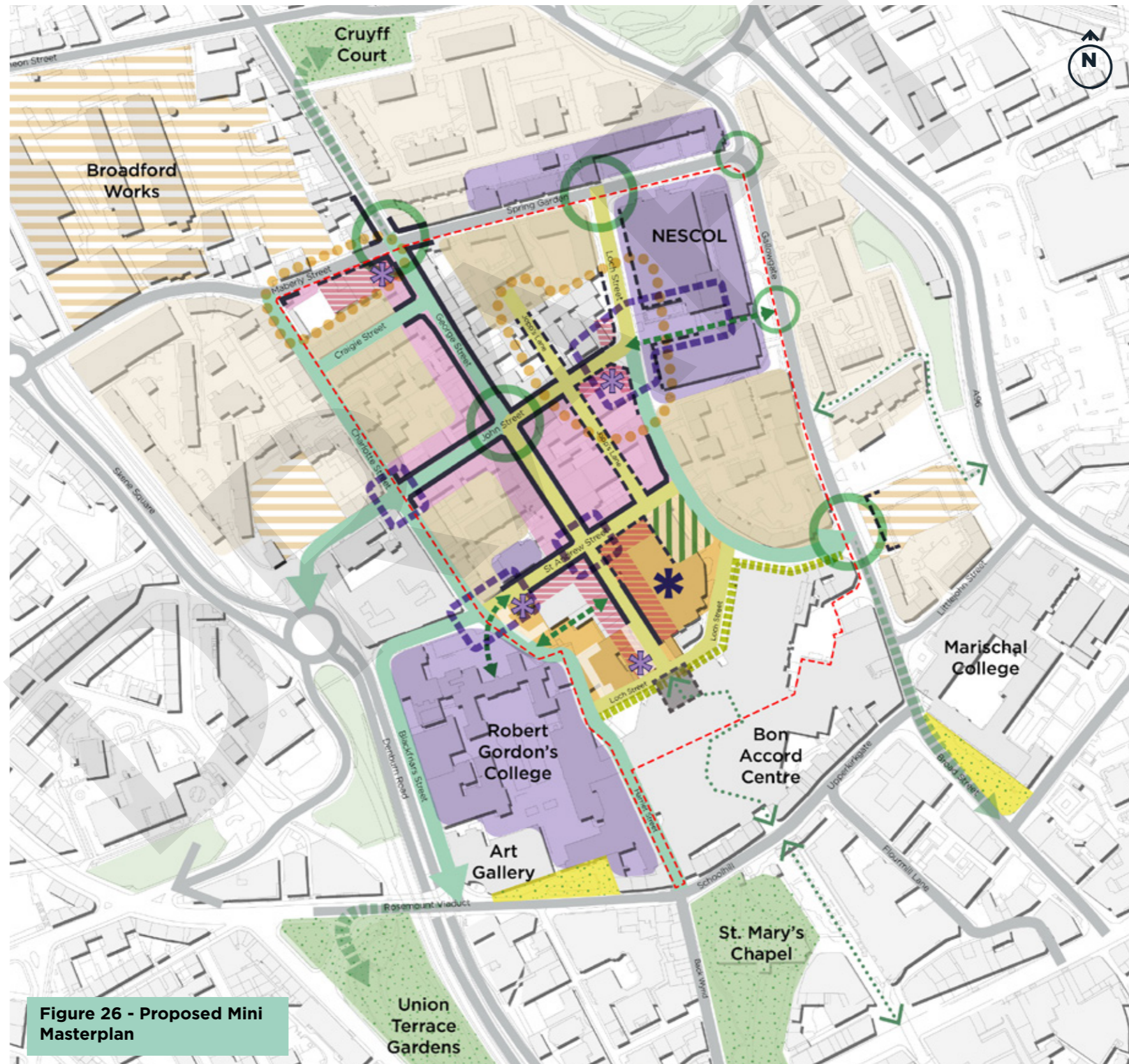


Figure 26 - Proposed Mini Masterplan

- Study Boundary
- Streets & Spaces**
 - Existing Road Network
 - Existing Green Spaces
 - Existing Public Civic Spaces
 - Active Travel Friendly Streets
 - Pedestrian Promotion Streets
 - Existing Pedestrian Links
 - Potential Improved / New Pedestrian Links
 - Potential New Public Space
 - Improved Arrival Gateways- Public Realm Interventions & Crossing Upgrades
 - Improved Arrival Gateways - Public Realm, Crossing Upgrades And Potential For Built Form Focused Interventions
- Built Form**
 - Existing Buildings
 - Opportunity For Landmark Building - Expressed Through Quality Design And/or Building Height
 - Opportunity For Local Landmark / Gateway Buildings
 - Improving And Supporting Existing Shop Frontages - Visual Improvements & Promoting Spill Out Space
 - Potential To Improve Or Create Activated Frontages
 - Potential To Activate Key Corners Through New Built Form / Enhancements To Existing Buildings / Activation Of Spaces With Meanwhile Uses
 - Opportunity To Improve The Bon Accord Centre's Existing Entrance By Increasing The Aperture (Openings), Improving Visual Permeability And Connection
 - Activate & Animate The Multi Storey Car Park Facades Of The Bon Accord Centre
 - Areas With Potential For Longer Term Change Subject To Market Demand
- Landuses**
 - Potential Areas For Redevelopment / Reconfiguration
 - Predominantly Residential Led With Some Mix Of Uses
 - Predominantly Mixed Use Led With Residential Above
 - Educational Uses And Associated Student Accommodation
 - Surrounding Existing Residential Communities
 - Proposed Future Development Opportunity Sites

8.2 Public Realm Strategy

The consistency and quality of the public realm across the Mini Masterplan area, and those areas immediately surrounding it, are vital to the ongoing vitality of the neighbourhood. There is an opportunity to celebrate the unique quirks of the area through a distinctive, George Street specific, visual identity but to also ensure that it is joined up and connected with the surrounding parts of the city.

The public realm strategy for the Mini Masterplan area focuses on the following elements:

- 1. Greener Streets** - the role of Green Infrastructure as part of the street
- 2. Legibility** - how improved wayfinding and signage can help journeys into and around the area
- 3. Materiality** - ideas as to how a materials language which works with the wider city but also reinforces George Street
- 4. Illuminating** - how lighting can help define and prioritise routes; and

Greener Streets

Greener Streets will increase the level of green infrastructure through various interventions. However, George Street is a historic environment, with many historic

streets sections, which means that there may be limitations in some places to fully implement all of the proposed greening interventions. The suitability of these will be determined though more detailed design testing through a combination of new build and retrofit.

There are opportunities to re-configure, improve and redefine the existing street network across George Street. This would create more opportunities to introduce the following features, helping improve environmental sustainability as well as enrich experiences for those who travel along them;

- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs);
- Tree planting;
- Mini habitats;
- Street greening features such as shrub planting, wild-flowers, edibles and sensory planting; and
- Vertical green walls and features.

All streets within the Mini Masterplan should look to introduce more green infrastructure elements, a combination of short term, modest interventions to more interventionist approaches which could include carriageway re-configuration.

Establishing a strong network of 'Green Streets' will also help to connect to wider existing and planned open space assets including Union Terrace Gardens, St Nicolas Gardens and the wider City Centre streetscape projects. Public Realm Street Function.

The future public realm function of the Mini Masterplan streets is set out below. Interventions are identified but subject to more detailed design testing.

Green Vehicular Street:

Vehicular streets with interventions to improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience, and to perform a greater range of environmental functions.

Expect to see:

- Widened pavements, improved pedestrian crossings e.g natural stone setts, cycle opportunities, bioretention verges and/or rain gardens with pollinator friendly perennial planting, semi-mature tree planting of pollution-tolerant species.

Tree-lined Avenue:

Leafy green avenue with trees (single or both sides) to help perform a number of place-making, social, and environmental functions.

Expect to see:

- A mixture of semi-mature tree planting with below ground

soil cells and/ or standard trees in large planters, cycle opportunities, accessible rain gardens with sensory pollinator planting, planted green verges adjacent to roads, cycle racks, a mixture of lighting columns and wall-mounted lights, new natural stone paving.

Spaces within the public realm.

Public realm interventions are more bespoke and distinctive to George Street in these locations to encourage visitors to dwell.

Expect to see:

- Large semi-mature specimen trees, new natural stone bespoke feature paving, sensory perennial planting, bespoke lighting columns, new playful and bespoke street furniture including cycle parking, lighting and seating.

Incubator Street:

Streets with lower cost, moderate interventions which may initially begin as temporary installations. Examples include: parklets, multi-purpose moveable planters and street furniture, and/or playful artworks and road markings.

Expect to see:

- Moveable planters, cycle opportunities, mixture of evergreen climbing plants, colourful perennial planting,

parklets, new murals and artworks created in conjunction with the local community. Painted road markings in collaboration with local artist(s) and/or local community.

Play + Grow Street:

Streets with a mixture of permanent and ephemeral interventions to encourage playfulness in the public realm. Interventions might be linked to ongoing exhibitions or events within new cultural building(s).

Permanent interventions include: accessible rain gardens and/or the movement of water to encourage incidental play. Ephemeral, short term interventions include interactive outdoor exhibitions and/ or public art.

Residential streets with new growing beds and/or planters. These could also function as a traffic calming method, for bin screening, and to help formalise on street parking. Grow Streets might be linked to future site wide well-being and community initiatives.

Expect to see:

- Timber raised growing beds, timber planters for trees, cycle storage / parking, EV charge points, standard fruiting trees, hardwood play equipment and residential grow spaces.



Repeated tree planting to help with street sequencing and to draw eye upwards.
Image: Newcastle-upon-Tyne University.



Community growing spaces within the public realm to strengthen community ties and foster a connection to nature.
Image: Edible York



Moderate greening interventions could include moveable planters and vertical screening
Image: Brussels

- Study Boundary
- Existing squares
- Green Vehicular Street
- Tree Lined Avenue
- Key Space Within Public Realm
- Incubator Streets
- Play + Grow Streets
- Opportunities for facade greening / vertical planting walls / art installations to create an attractive new facade to the Bon Accord Centre
- Rationalised street carriageway to include removal of mini roundabout creating more space for key spaces
- Opportunities to introduce public realm and landscape features within private land to create stronger pedestrian and place connections into George Street
- Potential future expansion towards existing public parks and squares
- Retained existing tree
- New clear stem street tree (Illustrative number of trees shown)
- New mature tree (Illustrative number of trees shown)
- New fruiting tree (Illustrative number of trees shown)

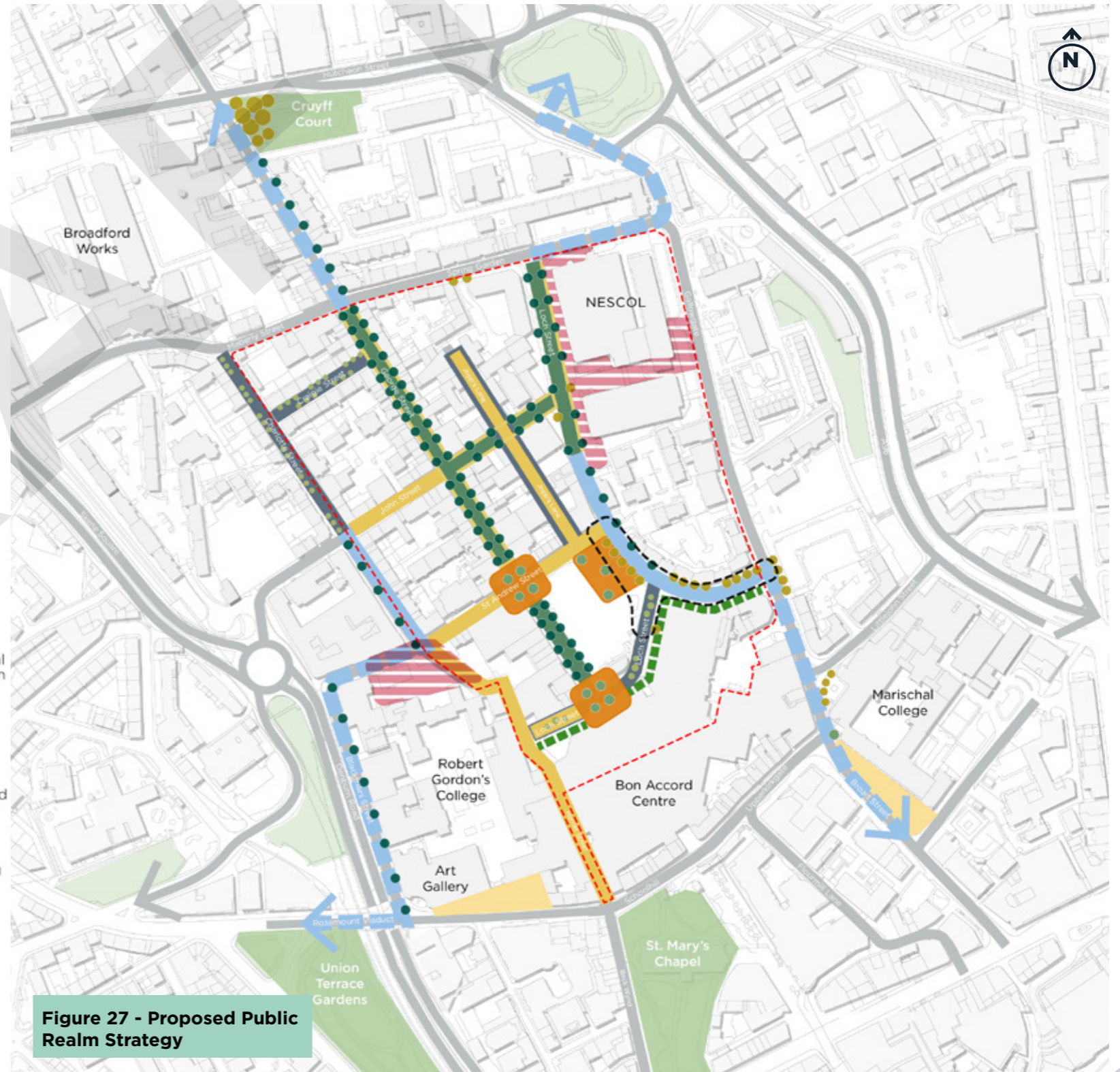


Figure 27 - Proposed Public Realm Strategy

8.3 Public Realm Influence

Some streets within the Mini Masterplan will still be required to provide a function that allows buses and other vehicles to travel along them more frequently. This means that there must be a balance between street function and aesthetic, accepting that there may be limitations to the degree of public realm interventions in some locations in order to preserve function e.g. maintaining a minimum carriageway limiting scope for footway widening / tree planting or minimum corner radii for bus turning meaning possible restrictions to materials.

The balance of form and aesthetic will be evaluated through more detailed design studies as projects develop.

Nevertheless, all streets should seek to ascertain an improved public realm aesthetic alongside their function and look to secure as much improvement to the public realm as possible. Some public realm features, although more modest, can still deliver impact and an improvement on current condition.

Strong Public Realm Influence:

A strong public realm influence reflects and reinforces George Street's unique local character. The look and feel of these streets will reinforce its sense of place and accommodate features unique to the neighbourhood. Hard and soft materials within these areas will be bespoke and eye-catching. Crossing points and gateway spaces will incorporate visual cues that the visitor is arriving to George Street. These might include the use of colour, artworks, and/or bespoke

lighting within key spaces. Public realm interventions here should look to take priority over vehicle function.

Moderate Public Realm Influence:

These streets also reinforce the George Street neighbourhood's local character with the use of materials featured within the local Urban Realm Design Guide. Design elements such as planting, lighting, and paving subtly communicate the local character of George Street whilst also reflecting the visual patterns of the wider area. The consideration of public realm appearance may have to consider some vehicular functions along these streets.

Modest Public Realm Influence:

The public realm identity is more modest in these spaces, which tend to be residential streets or areas adjacent to the Mini Masterplan boundary. Design elements are in keeping with the Urban Realm Design Guide. These streets need to fulfil important, wider vehicle movement functions and as such public realm influence must be balanced with technical design requirements, established through more detailed testing.

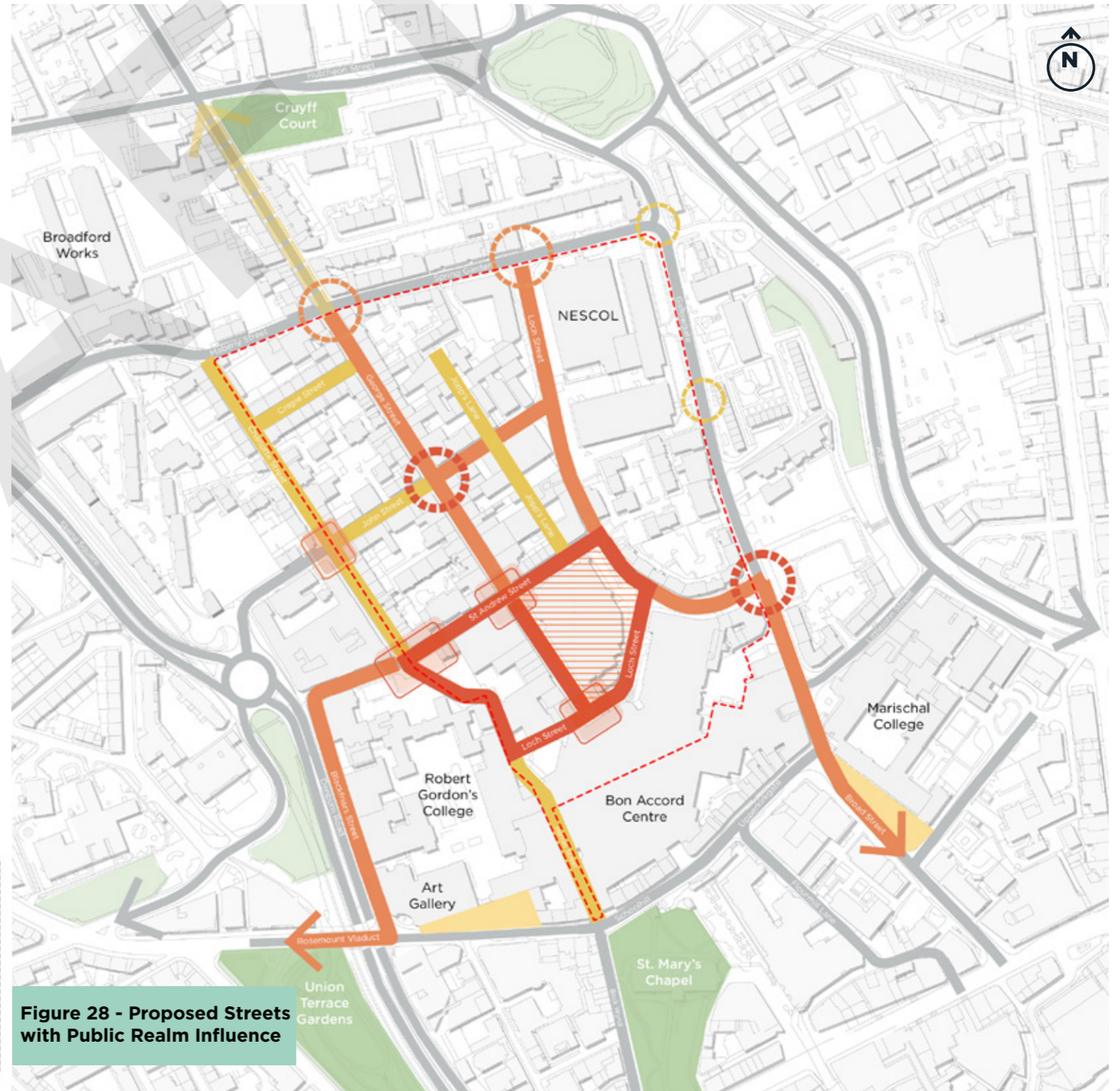


Figure 28 - Proposed Streets with Public Realm Influence

Materials

The approach to materials for George Street should build upon the principles of the Urban Realm Guide, establishing a co-ordinated palette of materials and textures consistent with those across the City Centre. Opportunities to introduce additional materials and details to support George Street's character could then be added as additional layers. The adjacent table sets out opportunities to develop this.

BESPOKE



CONSISTENT



Colourful artwork and supergraphics painted onto asphalt.
Image: Superfreshdesign by Andra on Bujdoss, Williamsburg. Image rights TBC.



Coastal plants to reference George Street's geographical location and enhance the urban-coastal setting.
Image: Pink Sea Thrift (*Armeria maritima*). Copyright P. Shannon.



Bespoke lighting projections to communicate the story of George Street.
Image: Vitre heritage lighting by Urbis. Image rights TBC.



Playful painted markings to distinguish active travel routes and encourage playfulness in the public realm.
Image: Station Road, Harrow by Europa. Copyright Mark Smith.



Bespoke sets and/or public art might be integrated into granite paving within key spaces.
Image: Regent Street by Hardscape.



Flowering / fruiting trees or trees with distinct visual interest to distinguish key spaces and promote urban biodiversity.
Image: *Prunus subhirtella Autumnalis*. Copyright Deepdale.



Wall-mounted lighting to be integrated in certain areas to help minimise street clutter.
Image: Legend Wall-mounted Street Lights, Thorn Lighting.



Edge detail within pedestrian friendly spaces formed with three rows of granite sets laid in a stretcher bond to complement citywide public realm improvements.
Image: Urban Realm Design Guide.



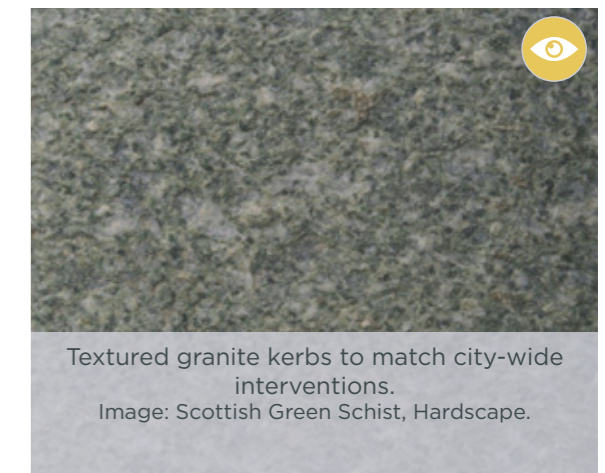
Contemporary granite slabs and sets of various sizes as a high-quality urban realm surface material.
Image: Granite, Urban Realm Design Guide.



Pollution tolerant trees with an upright habit as street trees.
Image: *Tilia cordata* green spire, Urban Realm Design Guide.



Modern matt black street lighting with reference to old Aberdeen street lanterns.
Image: Legend Street Light, Thorn Lighting.



Textured granite kerbs to match city-wide interventions.
Image: Scottish Green Schist, Hardscape.

Spotted: In select areas within George Street. Playful and bespoke interventions which respond to the unique local character of George Street.

Spotted: At repeated intervals within key spaces of the George Street area. Elements informed by both Urban Realm Design Guide and the unique character of George Street.

Spotted: Across the entire George Street area to ensure consistency throughout the public realm. Elements informed by Urban Realm Design Guide.

8.4 Illumination

Lighting will be used across the public realm to improve pedestrian, cyclist, resident, student and visitor safety as well as improving both the approach experience to George Street. The illumination strategy focuses on improving lighting for both safety and wayfinding in the following ways;

- Lighting is responsive to Urban Realm Design Guide with pedestrian, vehicular, and wall mounted lights in a cohesive matte-black;
- Where possible, wall-mounted lights have been integrated into the public realm as a way to both add character and reduce street clutter;
- In key arrival and public realm spaces there will be bespoke artistic lighting interventions which respond to, and enhance, George Street's unique identity and help to celebrate an enhanced sense of arrival to the neighbourhood; and
- Lighting should be used to highlight important gateway locations, subtly signalling to pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles that they are arriving to the George Street area. Lighting can also illuminate buildings of interest across the Mini Masterplan.

- ▭ Study Boundary
- Vehicular column lighting
- Pedestrian column lighting
- Wall-mounted lighting
- Mixture of column lighting at key intervals and wall-mounted lights to avoid street clutter
- ▭ Bespoke lighting columns in key spaces of public realm
- ▭ Bespoke artistic lighting interventions at arrival spaces
- ⊙ Lighting to highlight key gateway to George Street
- * Bespoke lighting to highlight key façades and buildings e.g. up-lighters and projections

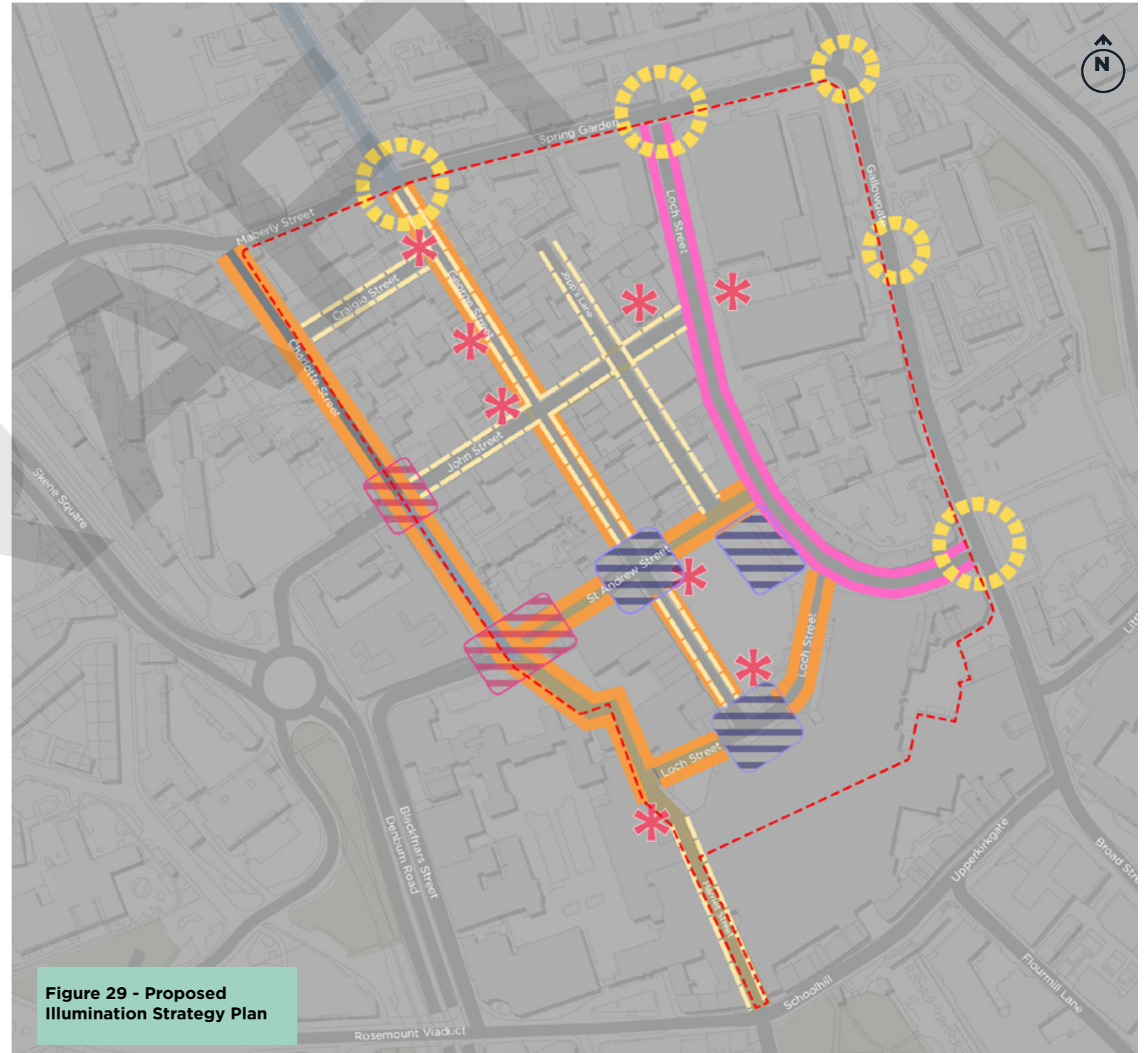


Figure 29 - Proposed Illumination Strategy Plan



Playful lighting interventions to illuminate heritage features and buildings
 Image: St Blaise Bradford, Urbis Lighting .
 Image rights TBC.



Lighting as public art to distinguish key spaces
 Image: Phoenix Flowers, Garscube Landscape Link by Pudsey Diamond in collaboration with Land Engineering and 7N Partnership
 Copyright: Pudsey Diamond.



Uplighters to highlight key heritage features.



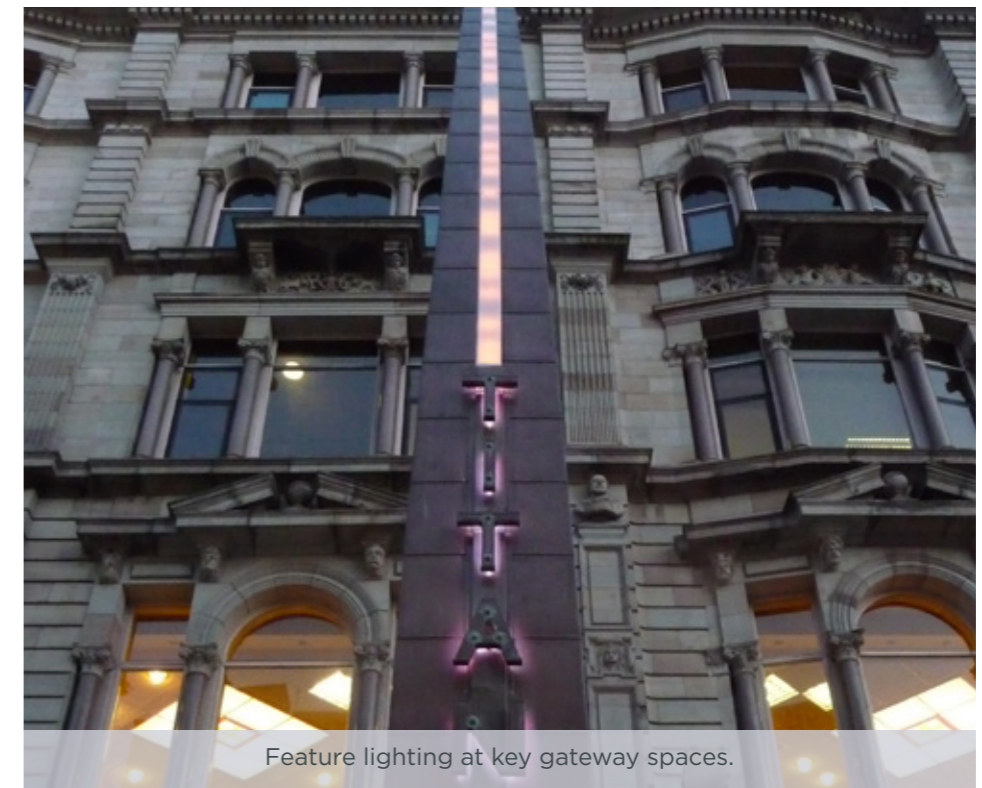
Artistic projections to communicate the narrative of a place
 Image: Giraffe Playground, Uppsala, Philips Lighting. Image rights TBC.



Wall-mounted lighting to reduce street clutter
 Image: Legend Light by Thorn Lighting.



Wall-mounted lighting to reduce street clutter
 Image: Altrincham, Greater Manchester



Feature lighting at key gateway spaces.

8.5 Shop Fronts & Clutter

George Street is home to many independent, successful and varied local businesses as well as regional and national retailers, each with their own graphic identity and approach to shop frontage promotion. As a result, the quality of the overall townscape of George Street can become cluttered and visually disjointed.

There are advantages to creating a more considered and co-ordinated approach to shop frontage appearance. Achieving more consistency with a broad set of guides can help to still promote local businesses and retailers whilst also ensuring that the architectural and visual aesthetic of George Street is able to be seen.

The images to the right illustrate some of the issues and how they could be overcome.

Opportunities to co-ordinate the design and aesthetic of shop frontages should be explored, in accordance with the Council's Shop Frontage Design Guidance.



Figure 30 - Inconsistencies in George Street's shop frontage



Figure 31 - Indicative approaches to creating a more coherent townscape and retail environment

8.6 Pedestrian Movement

All streets across the neighbourhood should promote pedestrian and sustainable movement to the top of the movement hierarchy. George Street will have a series of pedestrian and active travel focused streets that enable this and support a vibrant neighbourhood.

Local access vehicles will still be permitted to move around the neighbourhood, but vehicles travelling to other destinations will be relocated around the periphery of the Mini Masterplan area, in line with the existing road hierarchy.

The Mini Masterplan establishes three types of street environment across the neighbourhood, with streets varying depending upon their location and the uses they serve.

1. Active Travel Friendly Streets

Streets that are adapted and re-configured to support the highest levels of pedestrian, cycling and wheeling movement across the neighbourhood. These streets will prioritise safe and comfortable active travel movements, helping to encourage activity and vibrancy, creating spill out uses from the ground floor, space for temporary pop-ups, market stalls, outdoor exhibition space as well as dwell time and relaxation space within George Street. These streets will aim to reduce conflict with cars, contribute to improved local air quality and promote a safer environment for socialising, exercise and play.

2. Pedestrian Promotion Streets

A network of streets adapted to provide greater pedestrian footpath space, more managed street car parking, improved pedestrian crossing points and reduced carriageway widths.

3. Pedestrian Friendly Streets

Streets with improved pedestrian foot ways and environments that provide comfortable and accessible links to surrounding parts of the City. These streets will also include improved pedestrian crossings at key gateway locations into George Street to help improve pedestrian legibility and comfort into the area.



Relatively simple measures as a starting point can help to promote pedestrian movements to the top of the movement hierarchy



Figure 32 - Proposed Pedestrian Street Types Plan

8.7 Cycle Accessibility

The cycle strategy for George Street aims to increase cycle accessibility to the heart of the neighbourhood by creating safer and accessible cycle routes.

The Mini Masterplan will promote cyclist provision that is on the vehicle carriageway, as part of the aspiration to create low speed, lower traffic neighbourhood streets.

A cycle route is proposed that is complimentary to the existing National Cycle Network (NCN) Route which travels along Gallowgate and Schoolhill / Upperkirkgate. This proposed route will help to make the environment more cycle friendly, both for travelling to and through the area, while also complementing existing cycling facilities (e.g. access to cycle parking at Bon Accord Centre).

The proposed route will travel from Gallowgate along Spring Garden, onto Loch Street, along John Street to George Street, west along St Andrew Street before heading along Blackfriars Street and connecting back to the NCN route along Schoolhill.

The current NCN route provides more efficient and direct access to the City Centre and this will continue to function as such.

The proposed route through George Street is intended as a leisurely route and the design and routing will reflect this function. The routing also responds to the proposed bus routing through the area to ensure that both modes do not run along the same street (as far as practical) to avoid modal conflicts.

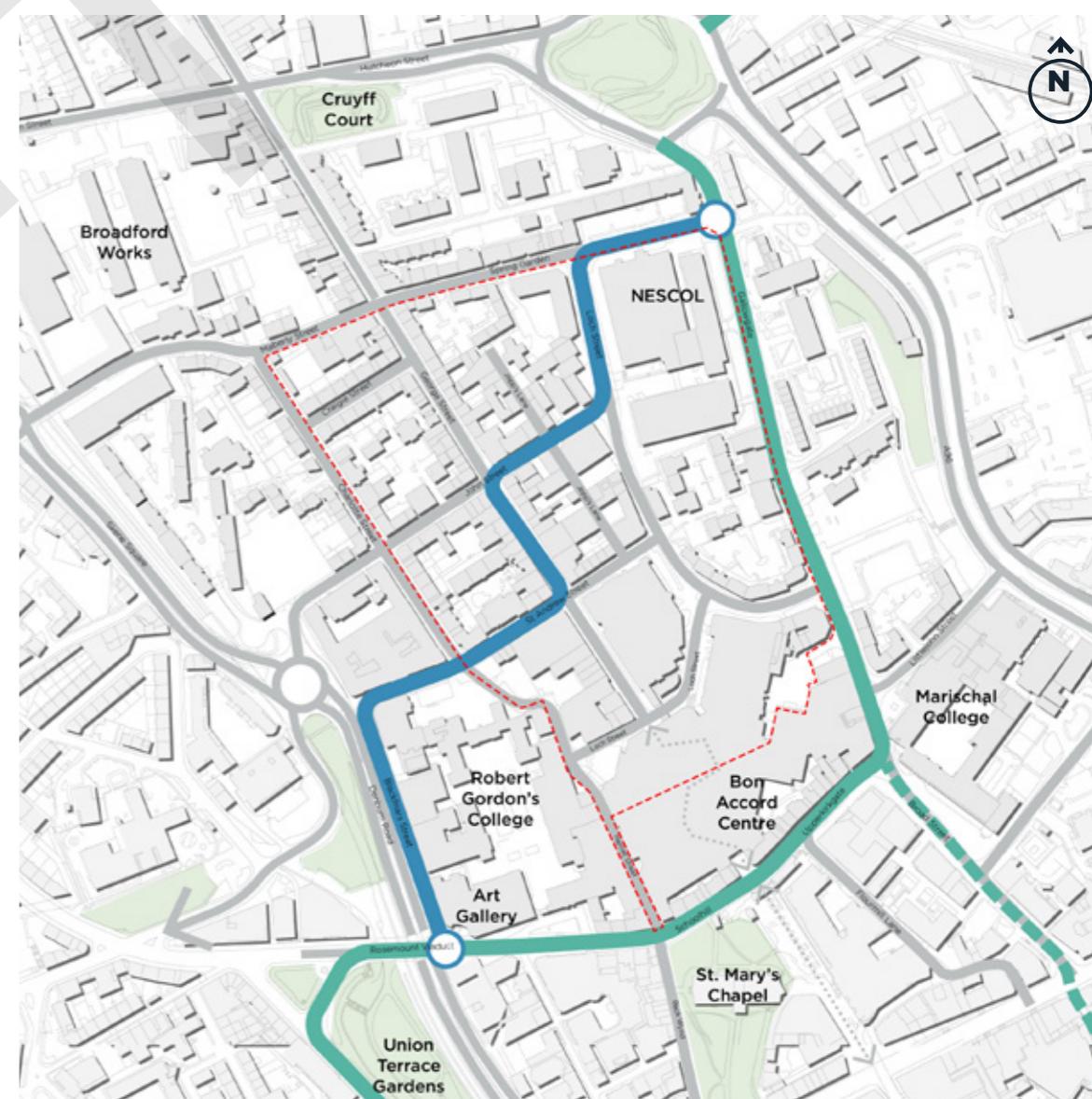
The Masterplan seeks to restrict vehicle through movements in and around George Street, by lowering vehicle trips (allowing only for local access) and as a result creating more space for active travel opportunities.

The cycle route will encourage users of all ages and abilities to use cycling as a means of getting to and from George Street and part of the wider cycle provision offer across the City.

The route design and alignment will be dependent upon more detailed traffic analysis and volumes. It will also be designed in line with Cycling by Design 2021 (or subsequent) guidance. There will also likely be a requirement to improve cycle connections at key junctions and where the route connects with the NCN route to support active travel across the area.



↑
Cycle accessibility through George Street along with other active modes of travel



- - - Study Boundary
- Existing Road Network
- National Cycle Network Route
- - - National Cycle Network Link Route
- Cyclist Infrastructure

Figure 33 - Proposed Cycle Accessibility Plan

8.8 Bus Accessibility

The approach to bus servicing across George Street is to continue to maintain high levels of overall bus penetration by public transport into the George Street neighbourhood.

With lower numbers of overall car journeys through the area, bus services will have less competition for carriageway space meaning that there are more opportunities for more comfortable journeys by bus in and around George Street. Potential opportunities include the introduction of targeted public transport improvements (e.g. local bus priority measures, better boarding/alighting facilities etc.).

The bus accessibility strategy looks to work with the existing bus routes as far as possible. The only

alteration to existing routing would be along the section of George Street between John Street and St. Andrews Lane. Removal of buses from this short section will allow for more active travel and spill out space. This area is well served by existing bus stops along George Street and St. Andrews Street. This also reduces the potential conflict for cycle accessibility along George Street.

Any future amends to existing bus routing would be in agreement with existing bus operators across the local network. The design requirements for streets providing bus services will need to be carefully considered, for example the design approach to narrower streets / tighter corner radii and the potential for vehicle over-run onto footways. This will be further explored through more detailed design testing.

Maintaining and improving public transport accessibility and facilities in the area is key in order to provide a realistic and equitable alternative to private car use and to promote sustainable travel choices for the future. The Mini Masterplan proposals for bus accessibility would support the City's wider sustainable transport ambitions, including Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) and wider Bus Priority Fund Studies currently ongoing.



Investment in bus journey infrastructure as well as a sustainable bus route can help increase patronage



- Study Boundary
- Existing Road Network
- Bus Routes
- Bus Stops
- 100m Coverage From Bus Stops

Figure 34 - Proposed Bus Accessibility Plan

8.9 Car Movements

The main principle for managing car access within George Street is towards prioritising accessibility to those who need to enter or exit the area (e.g local residents, patrons to local businesses). This principle is complementary to the Council's Roads Hierarchy where traffic is focused on appropriate roads. The proposed street network within George Street will ensure that primary streets facilitate movements around the area and that the secondary and local access streets provide access **to but not through** the neighbourhood.

Providing local access for vehicles can lead to an improvement in local air quality, reduced vehicular conflict for public transport and active modes of travel, creating more space within the street which can be dedicated to enhanced public realm and better facilities for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and spill out space for local businesses.

The proposed vehicle movement network across George Street comprises of:

1. Two Way Primary Streets

Streets that allow for vehicle movements in both directions. They are located to the edges of the neighbourhood and provide easy access to the surrounding Strategic Routes.

2. One Way Secondary Streets

Streets converted to one way car movements. These provide access along sections of George Street and along St. Johns Street. Vehicles are directed back onto Primary Streets. Their one way movements prevent 'rat-running' through the area and allow for a lower car environment around the George Street, John Street, St. Andrew's core of the neighbourhood.

3. Local Access Streets

Streets open to vehicle access and which allow local users and patrons access to the neighbourhood. These streets will be enhanced to promote greater pedestrian and active travel movements and designed in a manner which manages traffic speeds.

4. Car Park Access Only

Berry Street must remain accessible to vehicles to allow access to the Bon Accord Centre multi storey car park (MSCP). It will provide access from Gallowgate and Loch Street and egress from the MSCP onto Berry Street.

Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) could be used to begin to test the suggested re-ordering of vehicle movements. The northern section of Charlotte Street could be piloted to reduce through traffic in what is a predominantly residential part of

the neighbourhood, opening up opportunities to make use of the street for other uses (e.g play / urban grow spaces). Another area to apply an ETRO could be along Berry Street by maintaining access to the car park via Berry St while restricting through traffic. There will be a requirement to understand the extent to provide right turn egress from the Bon Accord Centre MSCP across an existing central reserve as well as the rationalisation of the junction at Gallowgate.



Streets with local access supporting the neighbourhood but managing car movements and access

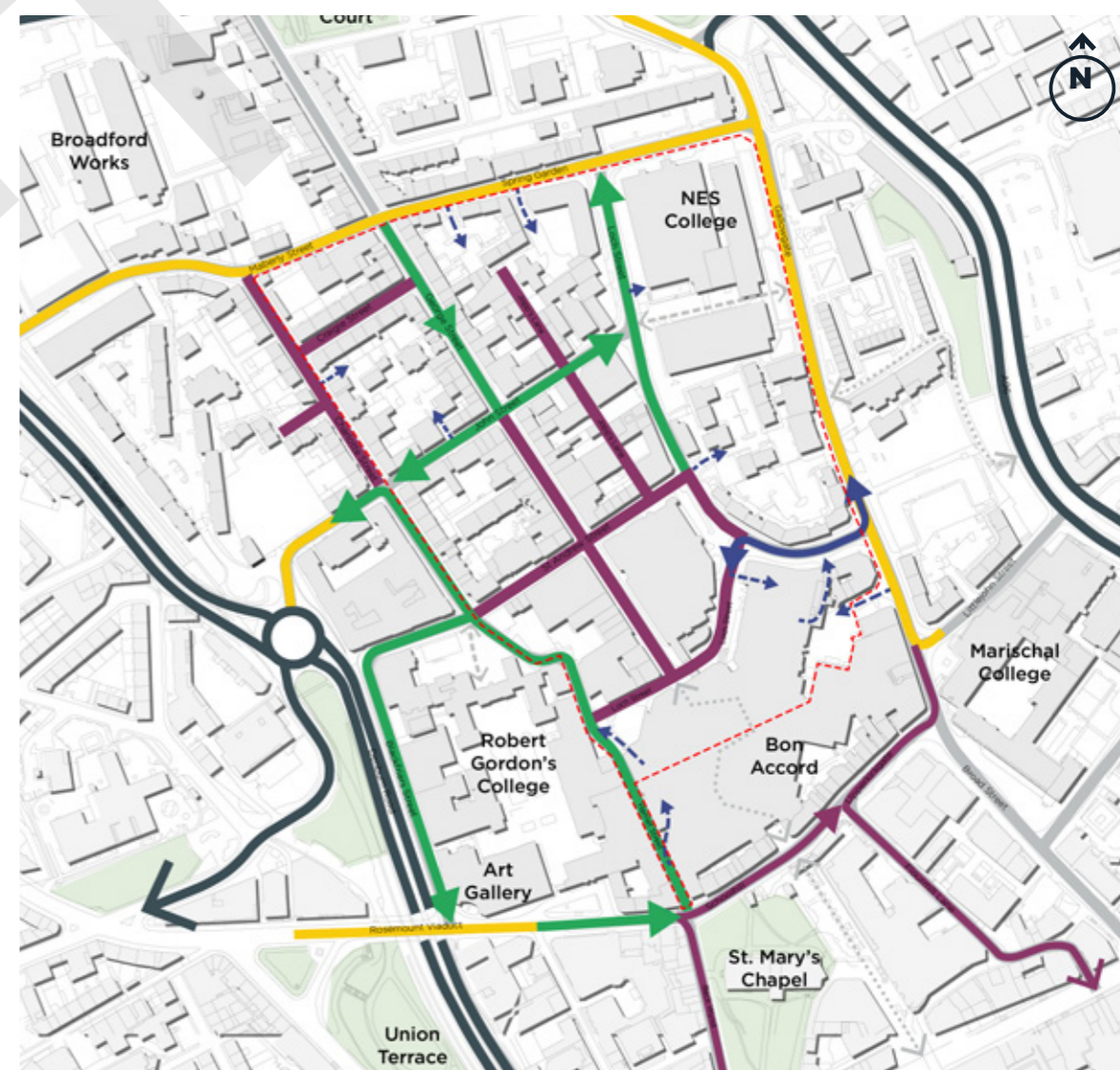


Figure 35 - Proposed Car Movement Plan

9. Future Projects Action Plan



Community Led Projects

9.1 Future Projects

The Mini Masterplan has set out a vision and objectives to deliver change across George Street. It aims to promote and deliver change from the outset, through short term or meanwhile interventions, whilst longer term opportunities are being developed in greater detail.

The following pages provide a number of actions, described in summary, which seek to support the established Vision and Objectives for George Street. Each intervention is delivered through projects (both physical and non physical) which will have positive impact on improving the vitality of George Street. A more detailed breakdown of emerging projects can be found in Appendix 3.

The Council have the ability to both stimulate change and deliver change in areas across George Street; however the interventions highlighted will require collaboration, mobilisation and coordination across community, private and a variety of other stakeholders in order to determine and deliver change.

The potential projects list will continue to be co-developed by local stakeholders, community members and Council officers. It is intended to be a 'live' resource which can be updated and reviewed as opportunities emerge, so long as they support the vision and objectives of the Mini Masterplan.

2. INTERVENTIONS
3. Potential PROJECTS are suggested here

1. OBJECTIVE

The circles show in order of significance:

1. The objective we are trying to achieve
2. The intervention that could help achieve the objective
3. The various projects that sit within each intervention.





Local Business Projects





Aberdeen City Council Projects



9.2 Deliverability & Implementation

Going forward, stakeholders, the private sector, the Council and the community will be crucial to the delivery of the interventions emerging from this Mini Masterplan.

It is recommended that dedicated working groups are set up to drive specific short term priority actions forward. The action focused working groups will be responsible for:

- Defining the details of the proposed action;
- Considering how it could be funded;
- Determining who needs to be involved in supporting its delivery and what their role will be;
- Seeking funding - this might require support from other partners;
- Determining the timetable for intervention;
- Monitoring and evaluating progress against key performance indicators and refining actions if agreed outcomes are not being met; and
- Reporting progress to relevant bodies.

The makeup of the working groups will vary depending on the specific actions they are focused on. It is important to ensure that the same people are not tasked with getting involved in all the working groups as this will impact on progress. As such, the number of working groups and pace of delivery will depend on the number of stakeholder partners that can be engaged with and encouraged to get involved.

9.3 Sustainability Assessment

Sustainability is a broad and all encompassing concept. One approach to understanding its application and relevance to an existing urban neighbourhood like George Street can broadly consist of the following five capitals (established by Forum for the Future), which include:

- Manufactured Capital - provision of goods and services to meet human needs;
- Natural Capital - use of renewable materials / energy, ecological diversity, environmental capacity;
- Financial Capital - generating income and financially sustainable;
- Social Capital - community diversity, community governance and inclusivity and engagement; and
- Human Capital - improved quality of life, well-being, knowledge and skills as well as protecting minority interests.

The social, economic and environmental sustainability of George Street is paramount to the Mini Masterplan and the series potential projects identified across the following pages will help to deliver it's vision and objectives around People, Place and Economy.

The following describes how, as the Mini Masterplan develops through Consultation. Options or interventions can be assessed to determine the Best Practical Sustainable Option (to be further developed by Sonas Energy).

The Mini Masterplan sets out a vision which aims to promote local enterprise, encourage social mobility and respond to the climate change crisis through environmental improvements. The balance and delivery of these will have various positive impacts for the neighbourhood as a whole.

The Mini Masterplan will set out a best practicable sustainable solution to meeting the objectives set out within the strategy. This would be carried out through a Sustainability Assessment, which sets out potential criteria to provide well defined benefits across each of our People, Place and Economy objectives.

A key outcome is defining what success for George Street looks like. The assessment would apply a process which is designed to measure the impact of social, environmental and economic interventions and where the balance or emphasis across each should lie to deliver the most impactful and long term positive change for the neighbourhood.

The Sustainability Assessment would recognise that any specific intervention has a mixture of advantages and disadvantages. As a result, the most favourable option is that which provides the most overall benefit with the fewest down sides. Understanding what is the most favourable option will be assessed against a set of agreed and weighted criteria.

The selection and weighting of these criteria should transparent and explicit, developed through engagement and consultation.

Example criteria that could be assessed under each of the five capitals could include:

- Manufactured Capital - Pollution Risk, Transport Impacts, Ease of Construction, Quality, Recyclability at end of life;
- Natural Capital - Construction CO2, Embedded Carbon, Waste Production, Enhancement of Bio-diversity;
- Financial Capital - Capital Cost, Impact on Growth, Affordability;
- Social Capital - Improves links and access, Supports Voluntary & Charities, improves social interaction; and
- Human Capital - Promotes well being, improves security, improves access to leisure.

9.4 On-going Communication & Engagement

There is scope to expand on the current online presence of George Street to engage more effectively with a wider range of residents, visitors, workers and businesses.

Having articulated priorities for intervention within the Mini Masterplan there is a need to begin to share important messages with key stakeholders including:

- Recent and proposed investment in the centre;
- Projects that are being worked up;
- Funding that is being sought and accessed; and
- How to get involved.

The key partners to be engaged with on a regular basis include:

- Public sector partners (Police, NHS, Fire, NESCOL);
- Local Resilience Partnership;
- Local businesses;
- Residents; and
- Local community and interest groups.

Quality engagement should generate potential volunteers to get involved in the delivery of specific actions and potentially resources to support their delivery.

The following mechanisms should be used to engage with key partners:

- Further enhancement of the website and strengthen profile on social media;
- Public engagement consultations will be consulted upon and this be used to continue the dialogue with local residents;
- Piggybacking Events – for example a stall at markets showcasing what’s on and how to get involved;
- Existing and enhanced business networking events – to share emerging ideas, test support and encourage ideas to refine and support their delivery; and
- Identification of a team of local ambassadors – they could be trained and then kept up to date about what is going on in George Street and then they can showcase positive messages to their contacts. Ambassadors can be proactive local independent businesses leaders and other individuals who come into contact with lots of local people e.g. shop keepers.

9.5 Next Steps

This Mini Masterplan report is just the first building block for George Street and should be updated as a live programme of works to record progress on delivery of the projects within the Masterplan.

Further work will be carried out by the Council to understand and develop future opportunities, options and projects, aligned with the agreement of stakeholders.

Development at George Street will support and contribute towards delivering the wider objectives of the LOIP and City Centre and Beach Masterplan.



**George Street
Mini Masterplan (DRAFT)**
December 2022

open
optimised environments
PART OF SLR



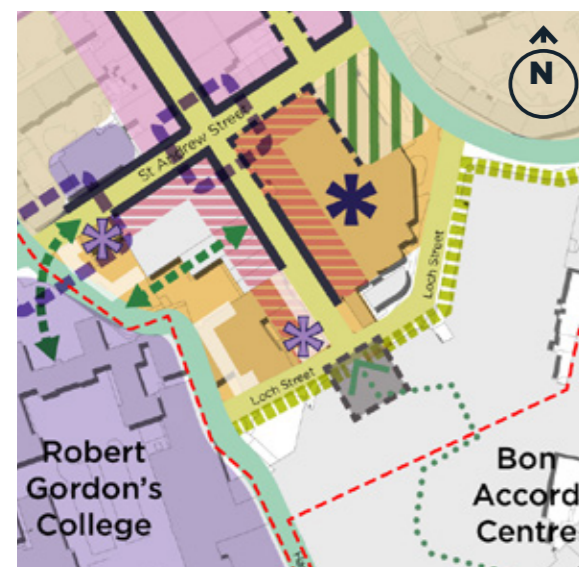
Appendix 1: Re-imagining South George Street

Introduction

This section sets out potential, illustrative future proposals for Norco House and surrounding area. It explores 3 potential development scenarios each with a different approach to future development use and provision of space.

These proposals are not ranked in order of preference but are meant to explore the art of the possible whilst also demonstrate how each work with the principles established within the Mini Masterplan Strategy. It is hoped that these help to re-frame the potential of the building and identify new potential design responses, uses and public realm opportunities which re-establish the area as an important city wide anchor.

The extract of the Mini Masterplan below illustrates the key spatial considerations for the area, which each proposal seeks to address to varying degrees.



Scale Of Change For Norco House

Two of the proposals set out over the following pages assume the retention of the Norco House building, retaining the striking and distinctive brutalist form of the building. The options work to reactivate the building and assume that the current floorplate and column grid remain in situ.

There may be potential to retain the brutalist exterior of the building but strip back the interior floor plates to offer a greater degree of flexibility and accommodation of uses. This would require further design testing and development and would be subject to more detailed surveys.

Each proposal also considers a variety of potential future landuses. Residential accommodation is recognised as an important element that will contribute to the economic sustainability of the neighbourhood. If residential development is to be brought forward within this area, it should look to accommodate a variety of people and be diverse in its property type, avoiding mono-type development.

Extract from George Street Mini Masterplan Strategy Plan

A Retrofit First approach To Norco House

Two of the three proposals retain the Norco House building, both its brutalist building envelope and its interior floor slabs and column grids.

This approach allows for a retrofit first approach to Norco House in response to the climate crisis and the increasing demand on our natural resources. It looks at retention and reuse in order to minimise the carbon produced through demolition, landfill and extraction of new materials for new development.

Norco House in particular is a building with high embedded carbon due to its concrete construction. Demolition of this building, the removal and processing of the waste and the redevelopment of the site would all produce more carbon emissions.

Demolition isn't just an environmental problem. It is frequently undesirable on social and economic grounds. Research by the London School of Economics identified that demolition is both costly and unpopular in many instances. Retrofit of existing buildings



can be cost-effective, depending upon local market conditions because it conserves and enhances existing places and neighbourhoods. As for carbon emissions, retrofit makes sense because of the substantial embodied energy savings made in re-purposing existing buildings, compared with the ultra-high embodied energy costs of demolition and rebuild.

When looking at design options for the retrofit of Norco House we have outlined some of the buildings main challenges to retrofit

- Deep floor plan;
- Crude concrete facade with minimal windows;
- Inactive frontages at ground floor;

Yet the building also has positive qualities that will allow it to be successfully refurbished:

- It has a regular and widely-spaced structural grid allowing for internal efficiencies;



- Generous floor-to-ceiling heights;
- Potential for high live retail floor loadings allowing for additional floors to be added.

There is potential to totally re-imagine the future use of Norco House, diversifying it's offer to the area and wider City. The retrofit and reactivation of this building being a statement of success and an example of how we can work with the challenges of reducing reusing and recycling across our built environment.

All scenarios are indicative and would be subject to further design development, detailed assessments of the building conditions, viability testing and collaboration with the private sector, who retain control of the building, and who will continue to do so. The Council would welcome proposals for this area to be brought forward in line with the Mini Masterplan strategy and place making goals identified within this document.



Scenario 1 - Renovation and Rationalisation

This scenario explores the potential to demolish the later Norco House extension, retaining and refurbishing the brutalist and distinctive Norco House.

The demolition makes way for a new George Street urban civic space - Greyfriars Square (*the name Greyfriars is a nod to a historic ward which encapsulated part of the study area*). A new glazed facade to the east of the building allows a greater amount of natural light into the building whilst providing an animated new, mixed use address onto the square.

Development Approach:

1. Norco House 1990's extension demolished;
2. Retained and refurbished Norco House to accommodate new ground floor and upper floor uses;
3. Demolition of the extension allows for more natural light to infiltrate the floor plan and allow for more flexibility of use;
4. A new pocket park, Greyfriars Square, providing new residential and public amenity along St. Andrew Street and Loch Street. There is potential for this to become a sculpture park, outdoor exhibition space or more flexible uses civic space;

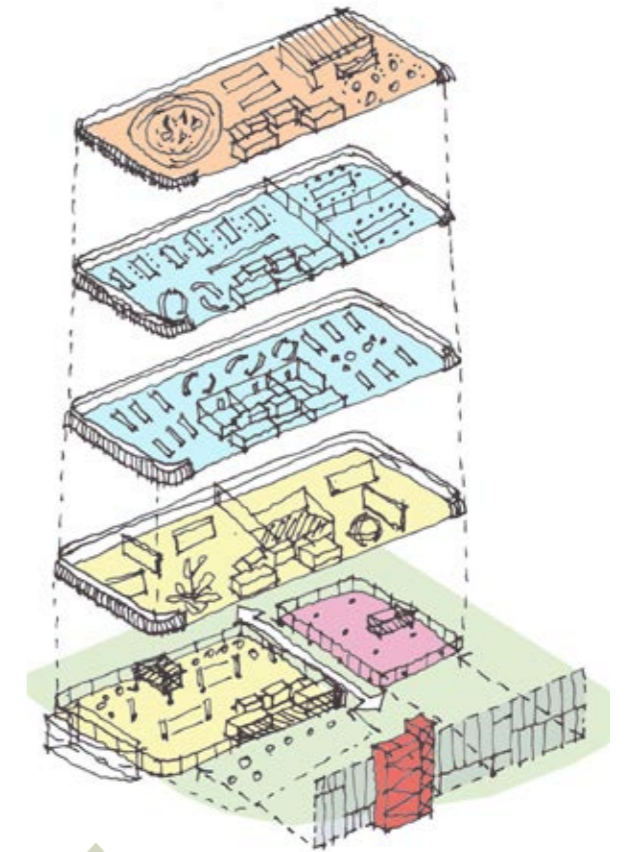


Illustrative layout

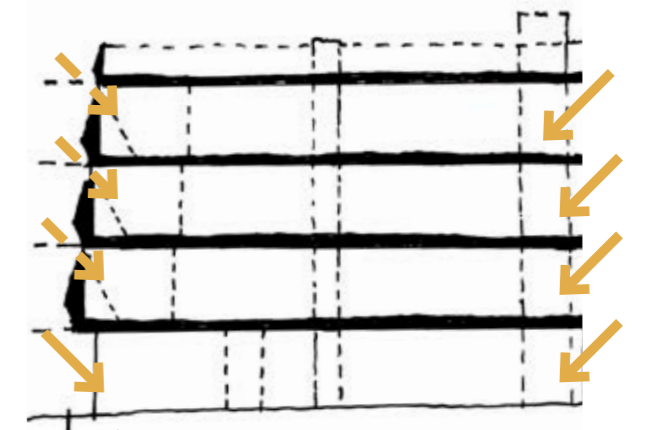
- Existing buildings
- Retained buildings
- Proposed new development
- Refurbished / re-purposed
- Enhanced public realm
- Pocket Park

Illustrative layout showing how Norco House could be retained and brought back to life next to a new civic space

5. Infill development could comprise of ground floor retail, food and beverage and commercial spaces with residential above;
6. Existing road infrastructure along Loch Street narrowed to create larger pedestrian space and pocket park;
7. Alteration to elevation of Bon Accord Centre along Loch Street with potential for single storey food and beverage units facing onto Greyfriars Square;
8. St. Andrew's Street traffic calmed to create new space to Norco House;
9. Sub station retained on Crooked Lane;
10. New residential frontage onto St. Andrews Street and Crooked Lane.
11. Approximately 98 new residential dwellings created.



Flexible structure and column spacing allows for many different uses throughout the building.



Demolition of 1980s extension allows for more natural light deeper into the plan. More natural light will allow for a greater flexibility in use.

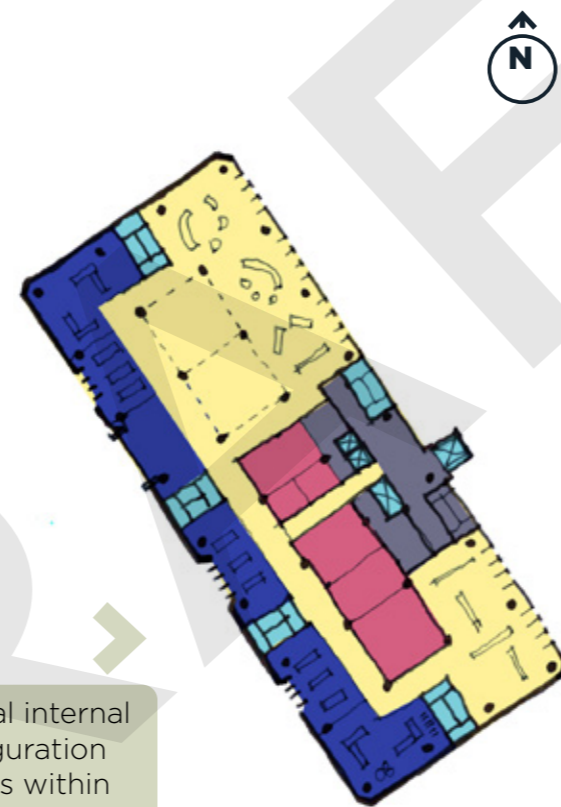
Norco House Potential Uses



Ground floor plan

The proposed ground floor looks to accommodate a number of different occupants and users within the floor plan. The open plan and large span between columns allows for the plan to be split up for different functions. The central yellow area is accessed from George Street and provides access to the lift core to the uses above. The areas in light pink could accommodate food and beverage operators bringing

day and evening activity to George Street. The dark blue spaces could be flexible workshop spaces for the community, entrepreneurs and start ups. Areas around the lift core and stair cores can act as back of house storage and plant for the different occupiers.

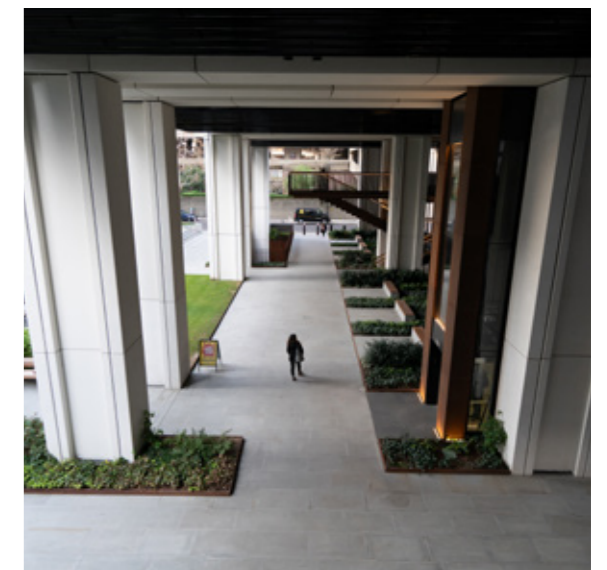


Typical upper floor plans

The upper floors separate the uses based upon the amount of natural light that penetrates into the floorplan. The existing facade to George Street has mostly clerestory glazing. These locations could be occupied by focused workspaces or incubator workshops that don't require large amounts of natural light and views. The middle of the plan, with the lowest levels of natural light, could accommodate recording studios, photographic light rooms, storage

- Food + beverage
- Workshop/ incubator
- Flexible entrance space/co-working space
- Back of house
- Recording studio/ lightroom
- Vertical circulation

Potential internal reconfiguration and uses within Norco House



Examples of how the new exposed building elevation can be celebrated and connect to a potential new public park adjacent

and plant rooms. The new glazed east facing facade could accommodate open plan co-working spaces, meeting rooms and cultural functions (e.g galleries / exhibitions) etc.

There are four lift cores in the existing building and this allows the building to be let out to multiple operators on different levels of the building. For example, the external lift onto the park could provide exclusive access to the activities on the roof, including roof top cinema, urban allotments or community performance space.

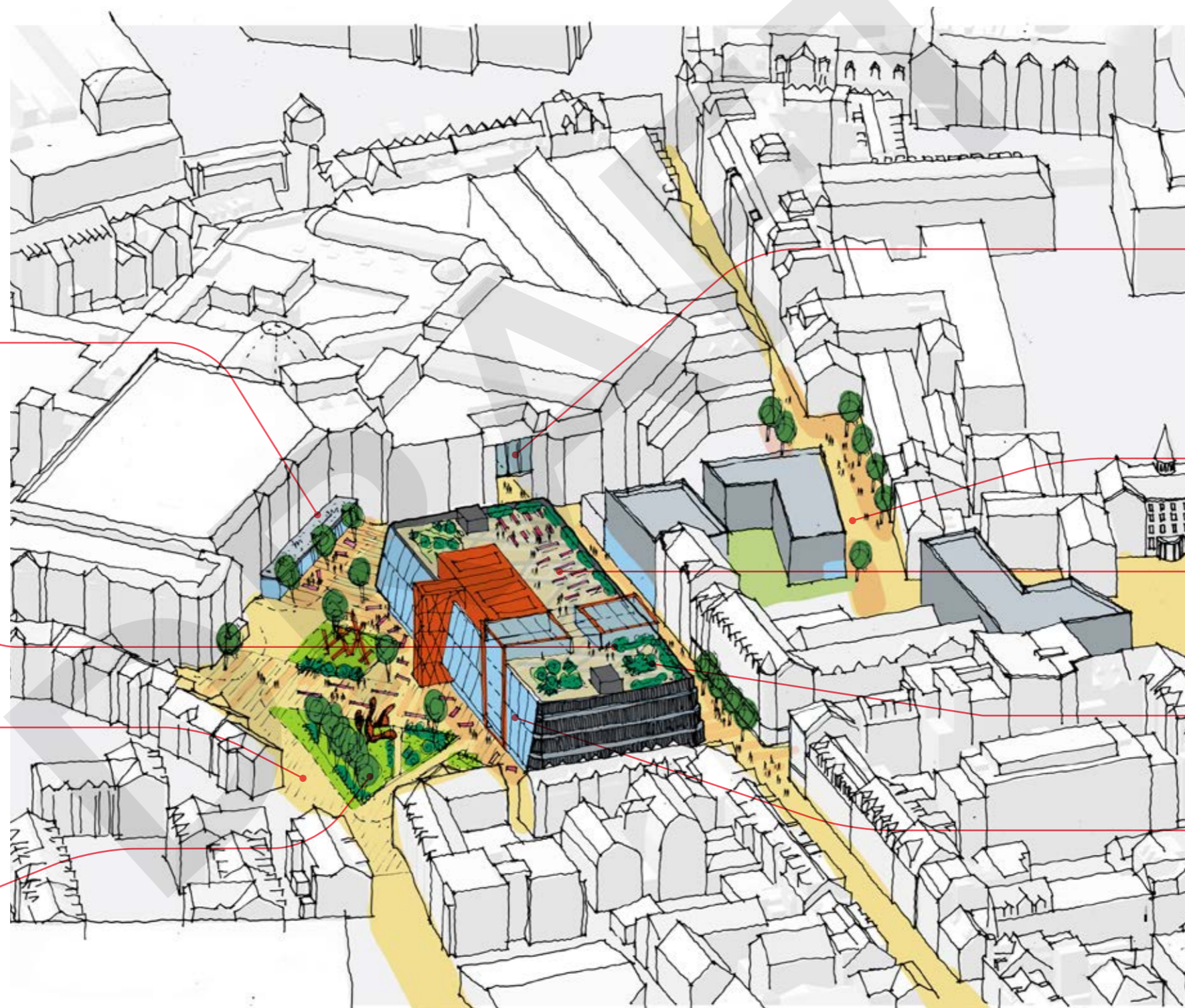
Scenario 1 - Renovation and Rationalisation

Alteration of Bon Accord Centre's elevation to provide single storey cafe/restaurant/bar units to create animation onto Loch Street

Atrium cut into the existing Norco House structure to provide natural light to illuminate the link between Greyfriars Square and George Street

Existing road infrastructure along Loch Street narrowed to create larger pedestrian space and pocket park

Greyfriars Square: Ground floor uses from the refurbished Norco House spill out onto the new park and create animation. Potential for sculpture park and external exhibitions.



Indicative sketch view of Scenario 1

Facade alteration to Bon Accord Centre to allow for better visibility into the shopping centre

Infill mixed use development. Potential for commercial/retail on the ground floor and residential above

New street trees and public realm improvements to Crooked Lane

Roof top public space

Infill mixed use development. Potential for commercial/retail on the ground floor and residential above

Making the most of roof space for solar collection, rainwater collection and sedum roofs

New glazed facade to Norco House onto the Loch Street pocket park. Glazing will allow for more natural daylight into the deep floor plan

What If!

Norco House was re-imagined as a cultural, entrepreneurial, community and mixed use hub adjacent to a new civic space in the City.

Scenario 2 - A New Residential Scale

This scenario explores the potential to introduce residential development as part of an integrated redesign of the Norco House site. It looks to demonstrate an approach that retains the most distinctive elements of Norco House whilst introducing a mix of residential typologies. It proposes to demolish the eastern extent of the 1980s Norco House extension, refurbishment of Norco House, additional residential floors to Norco House and a new build development of residential development adjacent.

The new building element screens views of the Bon Accord Centre car park and alongside a new elevation to Norco House, frames and overlooks a small pocket park along St. Andrews Street.

This scenario explores the ability to deliver the potential for circa 150-200 new dwellings which could help to attract a different type of resident to the area, for example graduates, young professionals or starter families who wish to access all that the City has to offer whilst being in walking distance to high quality public spaces and a vibrant local community.

Development Approach:

1. Demolition of the 1980s Norco House Extension;
2. Refurbishment of Norco house - Ground floor and first floor refurbished to accommodate

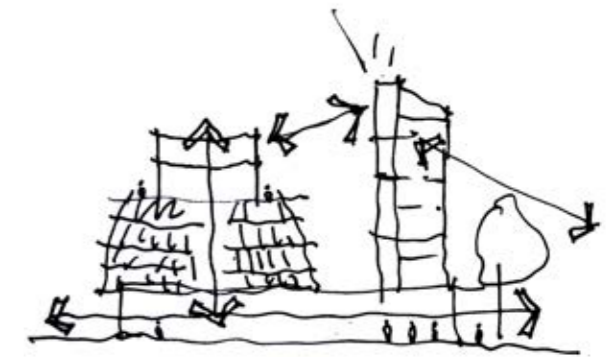


Illustrative layout

Illustrative layout showing how Norco House could be retained integrated as part of a residential led, mixed use development

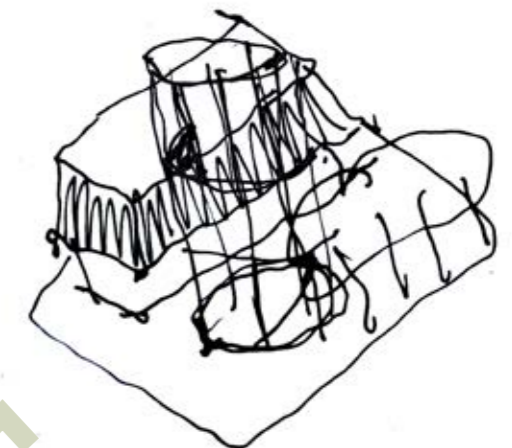
- Existing buildings
- Retained buildings
- Proposed new development
- Refurbished / re-purposed
- Enhanced public realm
- Pocket Park

3. Interventions to ground floor of Norco House to allow for a clear route from George Street to Greyfriars Square. Creation of strong visual permeability and connection between Loch Street and George Street;
4. New residential building to the east of Norco House. This makes the most efficient use of the site for higher density residential development whilst still allowing for a park and public amenity;
5. Service area entrance to north west corner of the Bon Accord Centre re-located to enter / exit onto Harriet Street
6. Infill development along St. Andrews Street could comprise of ground floor retail and commercial spaces with residential uses above;
7. Existing road infrastructure along Loch Street narrowed to create larger pedestrian space and pocket park;
8. Alteration to elevation of the Bon Accord Centre along Loch Street with potential for single storey cafe/restaurant/bar units facing onto the new Greyfriars Square;



Concept sketch

Ground floor link between the refurbished Norco House and the new residential block. Additional floors to Norco House and a new atrium to bring in natural light. Active frontages onto the public realm.



Concept sketch

A slim block beside the long squat ziggurat of Norco House. A higher density residential development that links into the existing Norco House.

Norco House Potential Uses



Ground floor plan

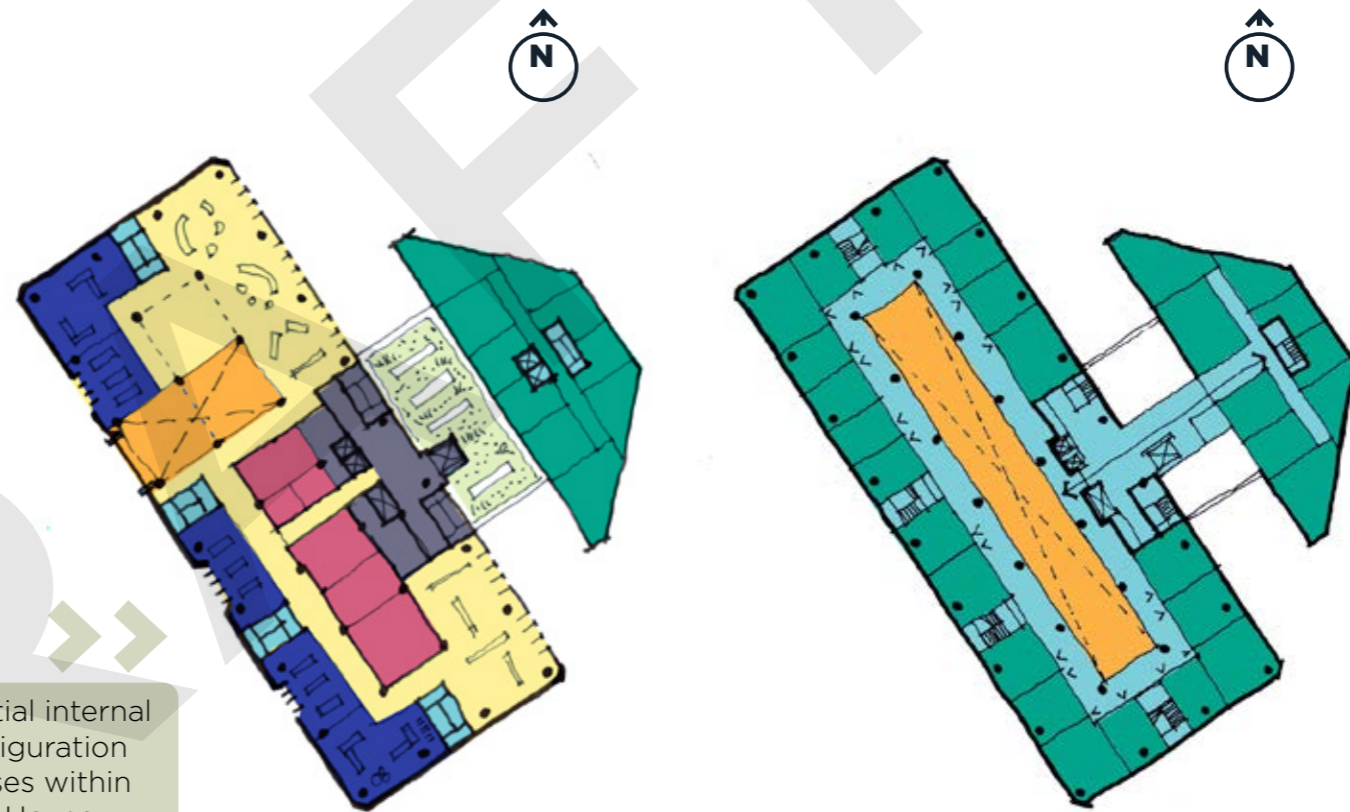
The proposal for the ground floor looks to accommodate a number of different occupants and users within the floor plan. The open plan and large span between columns allow for the plan to be split up to allow for different functions. The central yellow area is accessed from George Street and provide access to the lift core to the uses above. The areas in light pink could be food and beverage operators bringing day and evening activity to George Street. The dark blue spaces could be flexible workshop spaces for the community. Areas around the lift core and stair cores can act as back

of house storage and plant for the different occupiers.

An atrium is cut through the existing slabs of Norco House to provide natural light to the new link to George Street and to enhance the entrance experience.

To the west of Norco house a new residential tower is proposed. Ground floor food and beverage floorspace allows for activation onto the pocket park. A single storey link between the two buildings could be the entrance/reception to a hotel use or convention centre.

Potential internal reconfiguration and uses within Norco House



First floor plan and Upper floors

The first floor uses are connected to the ground floor and accessed via it. The uses respond to the amount of natural light in the floorplan. The existing facade to George Street has mostly clerestorey glazing. These could be occupied by focused workspaces or incubator workshops that don't require large amounts of natural light and views. The middle of the plan, lowest levels of natural light, could accommodate recording studios, photographic light rooms, storage and plant room. The new glazed facade

onto Loch Street and the new park could accommodate open plan co-working spaces, meeting rooms etc.

The top two floors of Norco House are to be refurbished to accommodate residential use. An atrium is required at the centre of the plan to allow for natural light to the apartments. Two additional floors are added to Norco House around the perimeter of the atrium. All circulation is arranged around the atrium. There is a shared lift core between Norco House and the new residential block.

Key

- Food + beverage
- Workshop/incubator
- Flexible entrance space/co-working space
- Back of house
- Residential
- Potential link to between tower and existing building (hotel/conference centre, student residential/education, PRS/co-working space/gym)
- Recording studio/Lightroom
- Vertical circulation
- Atrium space

Scenario 2 - A New Residential Scale

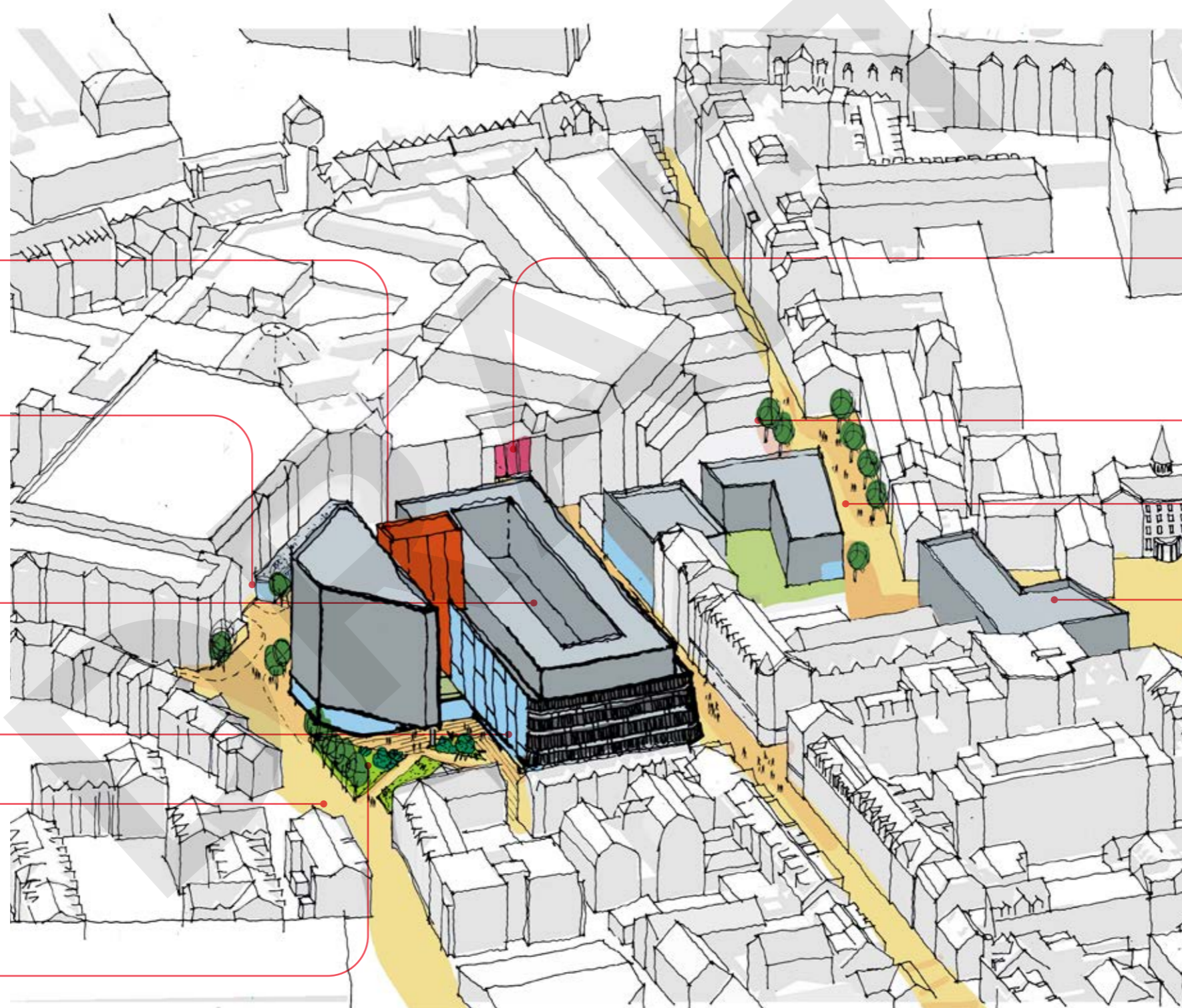
New lift core to serve both the residential accommodation within the refurbished Norco House and the new residential building to the east

Alteration of the Bon Accord Centre elevation along Loch Street to provide single storey cafe/restaurant/bar units to provide animation to Loch Street

Atrium cut into the existing structure of Norco House to provide natural light into the middle of the building and make it suitable for residential accommodation

New glazed facade to the east elevation of Norco House to allow for more natural light penetration
Existing road infrastructure along Loch Street narrowed to create larger pedestrian space and pocket park

Greyfriars Square. Ground floor uses from the refurbished Norco House and the new residential building development spill out onto the new pocket park and create animation and activity



Indicative sketch view of Scenario 2

Facade alteration to the Bon Accord Centre to allow for better visibility into the shopping centre

Visual screening of the Bon Accord Centre Service area and car park ramp

New street trees and public realm improvements to Crooked Lane

Infill mixed use development. Potential for commercial/retail on the ground floor and residential above



What If!

Norco House could be retained as part of a residential led, mixed use redevelopment of the site.

Scenario 3 - A Mixed Use Community

This scenario considers the full demolition of Norco House and the Norco House Extension to allow for a new residential led development to occupy its place.

The proposal is a mid-rise, mixed-use development accommodating residential, ground floor retail, commercial, food and beverage uses.

A new pocket park sits on the corner of George Street and St. Andrews Street to offer community focused dwell space and that is framed by ground floor active uses. This approach shifts the sense of centre towards the core of the study area and addresses the issues along Loch Street and the interface with the Bon Accord Centre.

This scenario achieves circa 250-300 residential dwellings.

Development Approach:

1. Demolition of Norco House and extension to create new residential led neighbourhood of scale along the southern extent of George Street. Approximately 201 residential dwellings accommodated.
2. Assumes residential development across all floors but could facilitate some non-residential uses on ground floor along George Street to animate the surrounding streets and public realm;
3. Combination of 3-12 storey blocks in locations which create new gateway features as well as respecting the established ridge and shoulder heights of historic buildings along St. Andrew Street;
4. Approximately 250-300 new residential dwellings created;
5. New east - west connection from George Street to Loch Street;
6. Internalised, private green space and residential parking enclosed with residential development and former Soup Kitchen forming part of the setting of the space.
7. Alteration to elevation of the Bon Accord Centre along Loch Street with potential for single storey cafe/restaurant/bar units;
8. Service area entrance to north west corner of the Bon Accord Centre re-located to enter / exit onto Harriet Street



**Illustrative
layout**

- Existing buildings
- Retained buildings
- Proposed new development
- Refurbished / re-purposed
- Enhanced public realm

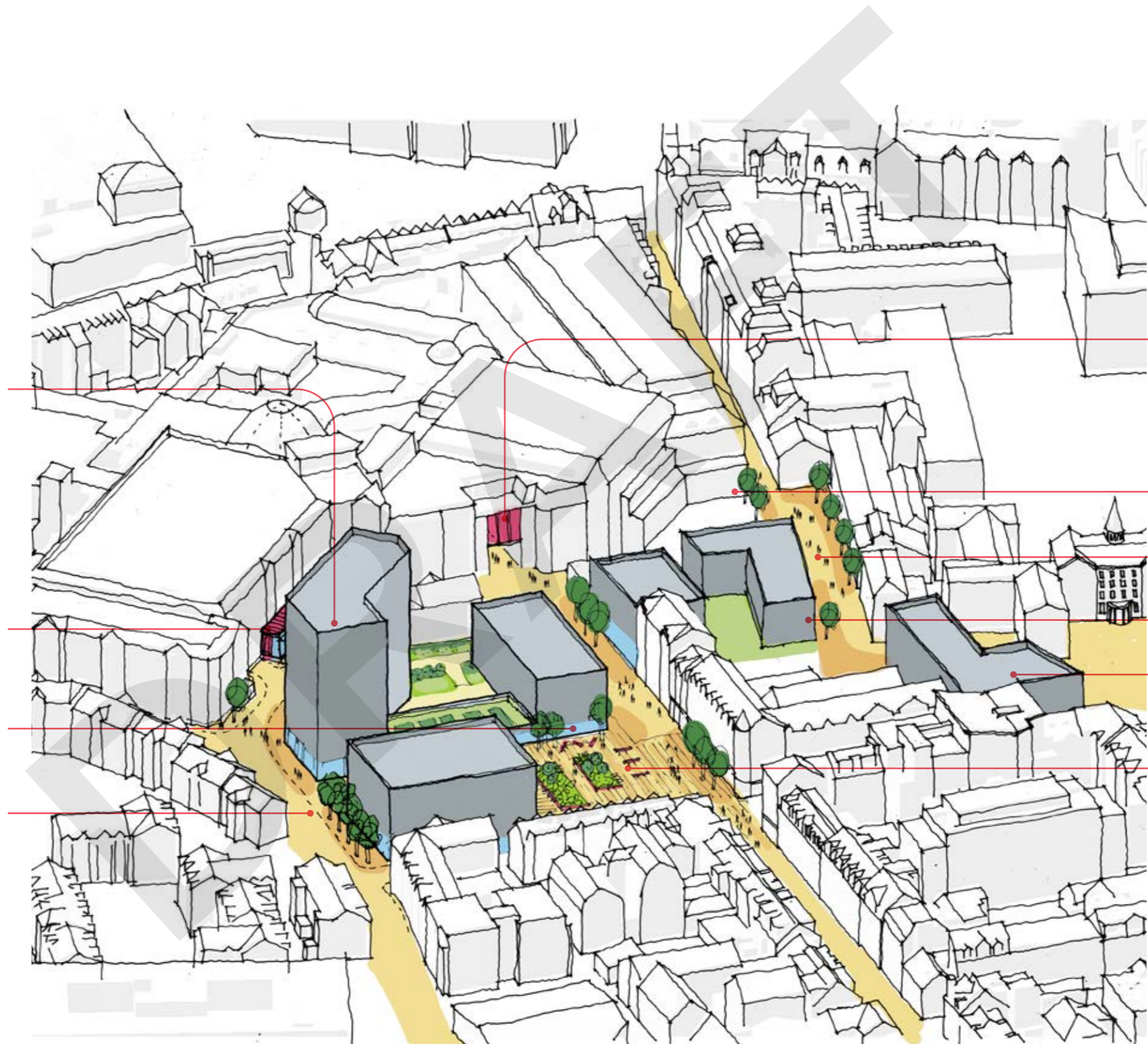
Illustrative layout showing how, if Norco House was demolished, the site could be redeveloped.

New build mixed-use development. Potential for retail, commercial, food and beverage on the ground floor. Residential accommodation above.

Alteration to elevation of the Bon Accord Centre along Loch Street with potential for single storey cafe/restaurant/bar unit

Active frontage onto George Street Square

Existing road infrastructure along Loch Street narrowed to create larger pedestrian space and pocket park



Indicative sketch view of Scenario 3

Facade alteration to Bon Accord to allow for better visibility into the shopping centre

Visual screening of the Bon Accord Centre Service area and car park ramp

New street trees and public realm improvements to Crooked Lane

Front doors onto Crooked Lane to provide overlooking

Infill mixed use development. Potential for commercial/retail on the ground floor and residential above.

George Street Square - Public realm pocket park at the corner of George Street and Saint Andrew Street. Active frontages onto the space to animate it.

What If!
A variety of residential housing typologies within a mixed use development could be created along George Street.

Precedents

Hammonds of Hull

A new store was designed in 1952 by T.P.Bennett, with further extensions added in 1954 and 1957. One Strikingly European in style, it married classicism and modernism with triple height stone columns on the corner facade and Art Deco wavelets in the glazing.

A local developer, Redefine Paragon Square Hull Ltd, took on the building in 2020 and, with the support of Hull City Council, converted the first floor into office space (fully let to a local contact centre business), with the 30,000 sqft ground floor opening as an artisan food hall, organic deli, bars and lounges in December 2021. With the complex rebranded as 'Hammonds of Hull, or 'HoH', there are now further plans for a rooftop bar and letting the remaining two floors out to office and commercial tenants.



The Barbican

The Barbican is a Grade II listed Brutalist icon and is one of the UK's architectural treasures. Designing and developing the Barbican Centre was part of a visionary plan from architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon to radically transform how we experience buildings and cities.

Today, the Barbican Centre attracts almost 2 million visitors a year, as well as thousands of artists and creatives, and the wider Barbican complex is home to a community of around 4,000 residents. The Barbican houses art galleries, theatres, cinemas, school of music and drama and City of London School of Girls.

The Barbican Centre has undergone a phased program of refurbishment over the past 40 years. The reuse of this building illustrates the incredibly flexible nature of these Brutalist concrete structures to adapt to modern times and uses.



Northampton International Academy

A vibrant educational 2,200 pupil community accommodated within a former derelict brutalist Royal Mail sorting office on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council and East Midlands Academy Trust.

The largely windowless, industrial building was derelict since the 1970s and considered a local eyesore that attracted levels of anti-social behaviour. It has been transformed into an education hub, experiencing natural light and expansive internal views, creating a positive and inspiring environment both internally and externally.

The £30m redevelopment includes a 400 seat theatre, a rooftop 4 court sports Hall as well as integrated commercial and retail units along the ground floor.

As well as a raft of internal reconfigurations, major interventions into the façades provide new classroom windows as well as a new entrance plaza and highly polished mirrored veil, which reflects the sky and buildings of the surrounding local community. This veil has been perforated, derived from the local tradition of leather goods making and brogue patterns, giving glimpses through to the existing building.



Re-use of Brutalist Boots in Kensington

The Kensington Building is a mixed-use, regeneration project designed by Pilbrow & Partners on behalf of Ashby Capital. The building provides 11,974m² of office and retail space. Construction was completed in April 2022. This project is the same scale as Norco House, with a floor area of 1,800m².

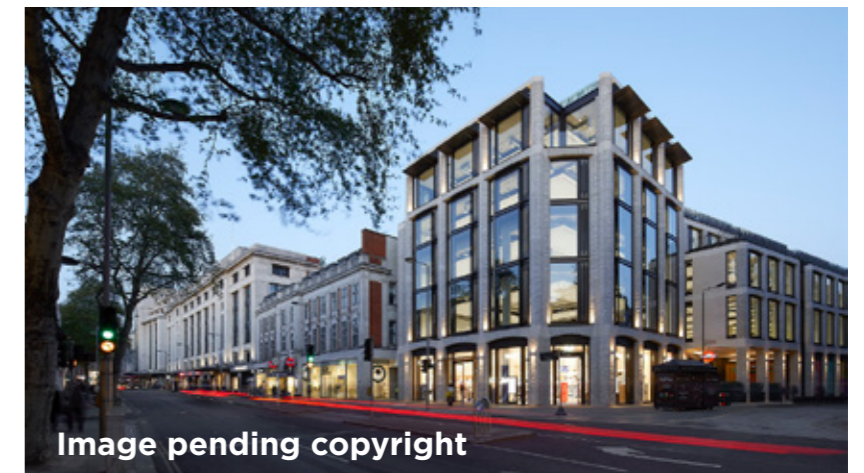
The project started with a 1970s building. It had many shortcomings: its crude concrete façades detracted from its historic setting; its orthogonal, Brutalist massing eroded traditional street lines, and blank, inactive frontages at ground floor level created a hostile presence.

Yet the building had positive qualities that allowed it to be successfully refurbished. It had a regular and widely-spaced structural grid, good floor-to-ceiling heights and high live retail floor loadings.

The building was stripped to its frame and then extended the structure laterally to restore the historic building lines on the high street. Three levels of accommodation were added above, making use of the intrinsic high structural loadings of the existing building. These are set back behind richly landscaped garden terraces.



Original Brutalist building



Retrofit of Brutalist building completed in 2022

Appendix 2: Future Projects Action Plan

The following table provides a more detailed overview of the potential future projects identified in section 14 of the Mini Masterplan document.

The projects identified will need further discussions with the local community, business and stakeholders to deliver. It should also be noted that the Council will support both the local community and local businesses where possible to bring these projects forward.

Community Interventions

Objective	Intervention	Project	Lead & Partners	When	Where
Appearance and Character	De-cluttering the Streets	Removal of clutter & unnecessary signage, satellite dishes, pole signage etc	Local Community - Partners to be identified	Immediate	Focus on areas with proliferation of clutter e.g George Street and agree priority areas based on early implementation of public realm change to maximise positive impact.
		Residential front door enhancements - painted, restored, highlighted through public realm materials	Local Residents Groups	Short - Medium Term	For residential properties that open onto Local Access Streets and which have no front porch or threshold to the street
	Identity	Create an online neighbourhood presence	Community Organisations (to be identified)	Immediate	To cover the George Street Mini Masterplan as well as the wider George Street Community to the north
	Place Management	Appoint local champions for George Street who will focus on delivering agreed vision and strategies in the area	Local Community Groups with ACC	Short Term	To cover the George Street Mini Masterplan area (and ensure co-ordination with adjacent community initiatives / projects)
		Establishing a core group of businesses owners / residents to represent George Street	To be identified / connected if existing	Short Term	To cover the George Street Mini Masterplan area (and ensure co-ordination with adjacent community initiatives / projects)
Enhanced Pedestrian Experience	Security	Woman and Vulnerable Group Safety Audit	Local Community with ACC	Short Term	Area wide
	Lighting	Pop up street canopy / overhead lighting	Local community & arts groups	Immediate	Smaller lanes and pedestrian focused streets such as Jopps Lane as well as areas which host pop up events.
		Front door lighting for residential tenements	Local community / ACC / Aberdeen Inspired	Short Term	Focus on residential properties that open onto public streets and which have no front porch or threshold to the street. A priority area could be George Street
Tackling Inactivity & Vacant Space	Redefining Residential Streets - Urban Pilot Project	Customising existing streets to support healthier and sustainable urban life for residents - interventions could include designated bin storage, defined parking bays, EV charge points, street greening / communal gardens, play street elements, urban allotments, lighting, SuDS etc	Local residents supported by ACC	Medium Term	Focus on areas with density of residential accommodation eg. Charlotte Street and Craigie Street. Exact areas to be co-ordinated with community and developed in co-ordination with ETROs
	Reactivating alleys, lanes and back streets	Making use of and activating underutilised spaces in a creative way.	Local Community Groups, George Street Businesses and ACC, Arts Groups, Outreach Groups	Short Term	Focus on streets, vacant spaces, car parks where there are low levels of activation.
George Street as a Destination	Creating an Adaptable Neighbourhood	Using empty units for art exhibitions, book launches, College end of year exhibitions, temporary performance space, overspill exhibition space for the nearby Art Gallery, local street library etc	Local Community Groups, Arts Groups, Educational Institutions	Short Term	In areas vacant units that address primary or secondary streets to limit negative perceptions of void units. E.g Lower George Street and St. Andrews Street
	A multi-generational space	Consider the diversity of visitors and residents, ensuring facilities and amenities can provide for various ages and abilities - interventions could include temporary seating, drinking water stations, shade etc	ACC / Local Community	Immediate	Across areas with higher pedestrian footfall and near to local retail. Should be considered alongside parklets and spill out space being created.

Local Business Interventions

Objective	Intervention	Project	Lead & Partners	When	Where	
Appearance and Character	Improved Street Appearance for People	Deep clean of existing paving, street furniture and building façades	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired, Local Shop Owners	Immediate	Areas to be identified by local community. Suggest focus on buildings where public realm interventions are proposed to maximise impact.	
		De-clutter existing streetscape - combine highways and pedestrian signage, where possible and remove unnecessary items	ACC	Short Term	Focus initially where public realm interventions are proposed and prioritise pedestrian focused environments e.g Lower George Street	
	Art & Colour	Commission Creative Placemaking and creative work onto pedestrian areas / Research the possibility of commissioning creative artwork on focussed areas	ACC, Other Art Institutions	Immediate	In pedestrian focused areas such as South George Street. Longer term this can be expanded to junction locations with improved pedestrian links	
		Attractive visual screening across poor quality environments	Bon Accord Centre, Shop owners, private landlords, ACC	Short Term	Focus on areas where there are low levels of activation (see page 31) for example service yards / gable ends / blank elevation. Prioritise larger and most visible façades	
		Street & pedestrian crossing colouring	ACC	Short Term	In pedestrian focused areas such as South George Street. Longer term this can be expanded to junction locations with improved pedestrian links	
		Shop front creative interventions	ACC, or a Creative and Cultural Organisation/ Institution, or Culture Aberdeen	Short term	Along streets where majority of shops close after 17:00. Focus along George street, St Andrew Street and John Street to deliver co-ordinated impact.	
		Commission a sculpture trail across the area	ACC, Creative and Cultural Organisation/ Institution, or Culture Aberdeen	Short - Medium Term	Area wide, beginning on George Street	
	Animating buildings / façades	Animating buildings / façades	Research Creative Commissions for the façades of buildings in George Street	ACC, Creative and Cultural Organisation/ Institution, or Culture Aberdeen	Immediate	Build from Jopps Lane in partnership with willing land / property owners. Community can help to determine priority areas.
			Early dialogue with owners of Bon Accord Centre to discuss enhancements to the north and eastern façades of the shopping centre and car park	ACC / Bon Accord Centre Owners	Short Term	Focus on the northern and eastern elevations of the Bon Accord Shopping Centre
			Uplighting and feature lighting to illuminate buildings	ACC / Business Owners / building owners	Medium Term	Primary focus on buildings of interest including Norco House and other historic buildings
Signage & Fronts		Removal of clutter & unnecessary signage, satellite dishes, pole signage etc	ACC / Local Community	Immediate	Focus on areas with proliferation of clutter e.g George Street and agree priority areas based on early implementation of public realm change to maximise positive impact.	
		Create a signage and wayfinding strategy including at key arrival points into the neighbourhood	ACC / Business Owners	Medium Term	Focus on edges of the neighbourhood where people travel into the area (gateway locations). Develop along main pedestrian routes that flow from those gateway locations.	
		Improve quality & consistency of shop front signage	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired, Local Shop Owners	Short - Medium Term	Area wide, beginning on George Street	
Animating buildings / façades		Create active uses and frontages along Loch Street at ground level.	Bon Accord Centre	Longer term	Loch Street and George Street	
	Improve entrance to the George St approach by widening the openings to the building at ground floor					

Local Business Interventions (cont.)

Enhanced Pedestrian Experience	Street planting & urban greening	Installing Green Walls, Living Walls and other Urban Greening solutions as part of a neighbourhood wide strategy	ACC / Business Owners	Medium term	Focusing on large scale blank gable ends and façades that are orientated to support green walls. Secondary focus on smaller infill areas
	Improved Environmental Performance	Retrofitted rain gardens, SuDS, and planting which filters out pollutants. Programme could also be extended to existing buildings for retrofit for improved thermal insulation and reduced energy consumption.	ACC / National Govt, private occupiers, local businesses, local residents.	Medium - long term	Area wide intervention across existing streets
Tackling Inactivity & Vacant Space	Reactivating alleys, lanes and back streets	Encourage meanwhile uses such as pop ups, street closures, parklets etc to improve activity	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired, Local Shop Owners	Short Term	Area wide, beginning on George Street
George Street as a Destination	Alive after 5pm	Establishing a strategy to co-ordinate later opening times / weekends etc across various uses. E.g NESCOL & Robert Gordon's Colleges evening openings promoted to local restaurants, cafés, bars etc to encourage college patrons into the area. Introduce reward vouchers initiative etc to promote cross business patronage between retailers and other businesses as well as local residents' discounts.	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired, Local Shop Owners, Local Business Groups, NESCOL & Robert Gordon's College	Short Term	Across the neighbourhood
	Calendar of events	Curate a calendar of events for George Street and the immediate surrounds which encourage patronage across the area	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired	Immediate	Area wide
		Celebrate heritage and the ornate architectural diversity through commercial events, walking tours, online/apps and feature lighting.	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired	Immediate	Focusing on historic buildings of architectural interest and / or social and cultural significance.
	A Smart High Street	Encouraging local businesses are promoted on George Street apps / websites / social media etc and use a means to run promotions and special events.	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired, Local Shop Owners, Bon Accord Centre	Short Term	Primary retail focused areas
Creating an Adaptable Neighbourhood	Tap into local talent by providing space for start-ups / pop up events to encourage students to stay beyond their course.	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired, Educational Institutions	Short - Medium Term	Adjacent to Bon Accord Centre. Any new urban spaces created within Neighbourhood	

Aberdeen City Council Interventions

Objective	Intervention	Project	Lead & Partners	When	Where
Appearance and Character	Improved Street Appearance for People	Develop a palette of materials and street furniture to help celebrate George Street character (to be developed alongside public realm detail design stages)	ACC	Medium Term	Across streets which are undergoing interventions to increase pedestrian space
		Refurbish and restore existing street bins, bollards, cycle stands	ACC	Medium Term	Area wide but focus firstly on John Street, St. Andrews Street, George Street and Gallowgate
		Introduce bin storage or shelters where bins are required to be stored on street	ACC / Aberdeen Inspired	Short Term	Residential locations and pedestrian focused areas e.g Craigie Street & St. Andrews Street
Enhanced Pedestrian Experience	Improved Street function for People	Street redesign to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carriageway narrowing • Footpath build out at junctions / junction improvements • Pedestrian prioritised crossing points • Footpath widening • On-carriageway bus stops to prioritise public transport and slow cars • Spill out space for businesses • Seating and rest points • Cycle parking and repair stations 	ACC	Medium - Long Term	Area wide but focus firstly on John Street, St. Andrews Street, George Street and Gallowgate.
	Increasing dwell time	Coordinated palette of street furniture including provision for elderly, range of physical abilities, visually impaired and cyclists	ACC	Short - Medium Term	Area wide but focus firstly on John Street, St. Andrews Street, George Street and Loch Street
	Security	Improved CCTV coverage	ACC?	Medium term	In areas where community and local businesses report most Anti-social behaviour incidents
	Lighting	Lighting strategy for George Street - for both wayfinding & security	ACC	Medium term	Area wide as part of wider public realm strategy
	Street planting & urban greening	Street trees and planting	ACC	Medium term	Area wide as part of wider public realm strategy
	Making primary routes work harder	Inclusion of cycle lanes along key routes	ACC	Medium term	Along streets identified within the Mini Masterplan cycle accessibility strategy
George Street as a Destination	Smart High Street	Visitor and residential information points - these could be pop up kiosks / interactive stands / live cycle counters / air quality readings etc	ACC, Aberdeen Inspired	Short - Medium Term	Area wide, beginning on George Street and along cycle routes
	Necessities	Consider provision of basic services, public toilets, 'changing spaces' toilets, and disabled access points.	ACC	Short - Medium Term	Along streets with pedestrian activity and along local access streets.
Reducing Vehicle Dominance	Making primary routes work harder	More flexible use of parking spaces - creating PARKlets which reclaim parking bays for socialising, play and dwell time. Create a PARK(ing) Day which could bring a festival of parklets to the area.	ACC	Short Term	Focus where the type of existing businesses can benefit from adjacent spill out space / dwell space i.e cafes, bars, community uses and along reduced traffic streets (ETRO locations)
		Better provision and / or quality of cycle parking in convenient locations	ACC	Short Term	Prioritise anchor locations such as Bon Accord Centre, NESCOL and George Street as well as at arrival gateways / bus stop locations.
		Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) 1 - retain the 2-way operation of Berry Street but for car-park access/egress only	ACC	Short Term	Berry Street, Loch Street and St Andrew Street. (Note existing small central reservation exists along Berry Street which will need some minor amends to implement ETRO).
		ETRO 2 - Reduce and restrict speed of traffic by narrowing carriageway with temporary build-outs and signage. If successful restrict access to local access only.	ACC	Short Term	Charlotte Street between Spring Garden and John Street
		ETRO 3- Remove general traffic along Blackfriars St northbound, creating more freedom for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.	ACC	Short Term	Blackfriars Street
	Prioritising Sustainable Travel	Reconfiguring current bus routes as well as provision of enhanced bus stops with interactive boards / wifi / charging points to encourage greater use and improved passenger experience	ACC	Medium - Long Term	John Street, St. Andrews Street, George Street and Loch Street (in liaison with bus operators).
		Ensuring there is adequate space for cyclists along key routes with cycle parking through the area would encourage more cyclists to use the area safely.	ACC	Medium - Long Term	Along streets identified as formalised and advisory cycle routes as per the Cycle Accessibility Strategy.



**George Street
Mini Masterplan (DRAFT)**
December 2022

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