

**8.0 Town Centre Strategy**

## TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY



The town entrance to the Priory



The River Avon waterfront



The Ducking Stool

## SETTING THE SCENE

8.1 The main objective of the brief is to set out a vision and strategy for the future development of Christchurch over the next 20 years. This strategy will also inform the developing community plan and be complimentary to the reappraisal of the Central Conservation Area that is currently underway.

8.2 DTZ's audit of the key themes:

- Historical and Cultural Context;
- Urban Design/Issues;
- Transport and Movement Appraisal;
- Tourism/Visitor Attractions Appraisal;
- Property Market Review; and
- Development Opportunities

reinforces the view that has been adopted by the Town Centre Forum that the strength of the town centre lies in its heritage assets and distinctiveness, which are required to be carefully protected, more efficiently managed and better marketed. At the same time opportunities exist for encouraging new mixed use development to take place in a number of key sites located at the heart of the town centre, principally:

- Saxon Square, modernisation and extension;
- The Lanes around Druitt Gardens;
- The Magistrates Court site; and
- Bridge Street/Stony Lane South sites.

8.3 The strategy has been prepared in the context of the adopted local plan and the Town Centre Forum's vision to develop a strategy for Christchurch Town Centre that is grounded in economic and market reality, that is sustainable and inclusive to all sections of the community and which builds on its quality environment, heritage assets and growing tourist market.

8.4 The parallel Borough-wide character assessment has also surveyed and assessed the character and capacity for future development in the town centre (see Appendix 3). It breaks the area down into a series of urban character areas and summarises the building form, scale, elevations and roofline of each character area within the town centre.

8.5 The workshop with the Town Centre Forum held in May 2002 focused on the audit carried out by the consultant and the client core team in March 2002. It identified a number of key issues reinforcing the view that the strategy should focus around a number of themes that emerged from the group and plenary sessions:

- Market Niche/Uses
- Urban Design and Development
- Heritage/Leisure/Events
- Movement/Transport Issues

## MARKET NICHE/USES

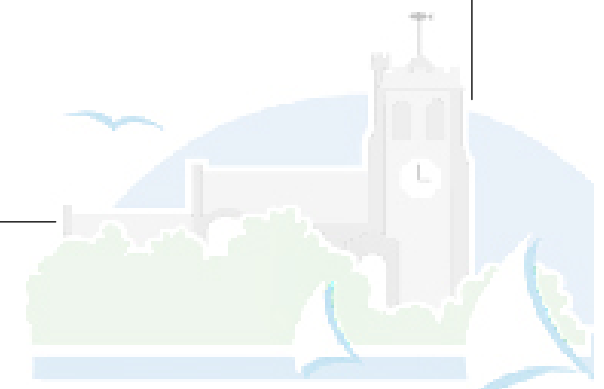
## Widen Community Focus

- tendency has been to package Christchurch as an historic/retirement location;
- the youth of the next generation also need to be catered for with links to multi-use facilities for youth and community that also encompasses older age groups; and
- a location in the town centre needs to be identified to provide a community hub and meeting place.

## URBAN DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

## Core Spaces and Places Need Enhancing

- Saxon Square needs to be upgraded and the precinct remodelled to relate more appropriately with the historic core on High Street;
- Druitt Gardens has the potential to be developed into a more attractive woodland garden that can become a community focus and frontage to the Lanes and Wick Lane development sites; and
- pedestrian friendly places should be created at Fountain Way Roundabout, around the junction of the High Street/Castle Street, at the heart of the historic core and in front of the Kings Arms Hotel and historic space, incorporating the Castle Mound and the ruins of Constables House.



### Development Opportunities

- achieve the right balance of mixed uses and high quality townscape for the Magistrates Court site;
- entrepreneurial flair of ‘The Lanes’ should be encouraged, producing an attractive setting which enhances the historic core and focuses on niche retailers, complimentary community facilities, residential and the evening economy, A3 uses;
- encourage a range of residential development, particularly for younger people, including affordable provision in and around the new centre of town at Fountain Way; and
- create a mixed use development with a leisure emphasis, focusing on the River Avon frontage at Bridge Street/Stony Lane South.

### Gateways

- encourage the creation of a new eastern face to the town on Co-op Pioneer and Somerfield car parks and service areas off the A35;
- announce the western entry to the town centre with the development of the Magistrates Court site;
- protect key views from the A35 Causeway; and
- create a new gateway at the junction of Bridge Street/Stony Lane South.

### HERITAGE/LEISURE/EVENTS

#### Target Markets

- professional/business older age group, day visitor;
- encourage weekend stays and a base for regional visits;
- but need to continue to attract families (local and visitor); and
- encourage a stronger evening economy to attract higher spending young professionals.

#### Heritage

- need to package the heritage features as a convincing story and visitor experience;
- take account of the archaeological landscape that informs the historic character and sense of place;
- introduce a visitor/heritage centre in a central location as a key attraction and gateway to the Saxon/Medieval

core; and

- take up the challenge of managing and interpreting the Castle/Constables House.

### Theming and Events

- explore historical re-enactment possibilities that could be linked to greater involvement of young people;
- Regent Centre should be focus of community events and link more effectively to the Library and to a replacement to Druitt Hall; and
- widen the range of themes and number of events – food and drink, sound and light, music, antiques, environmental, historical and horticultural (building on Britain in Bloom reputation).

### MOVEMENT/TRANSPORT ISSUES

#### Fountain Way Junction

- further work to explore improved traffic flow (see paras. 5.19—5.23) should also explore opportunities for making Fountain Way more pedestrian friendly and an enhanced gateway to the core retail area.

#### Buses

- need to aim for better co-operation and planning of routes by Borough Council, bus operators and Dorset County Council;
- need to review overall strategy for bus routing, how it relates to the shifting centre of activity in the town and the aim to increase patronage to help reduce car usage;
- identify new route options to reduce the volume of bus use in the High Street/Castle Street;
- continue to encourage greater frequency and use of buses to contribute to reducing the dependencies on private car use; and
- explore the provision of a public transport interchange as part of remodelling Fountain Way.

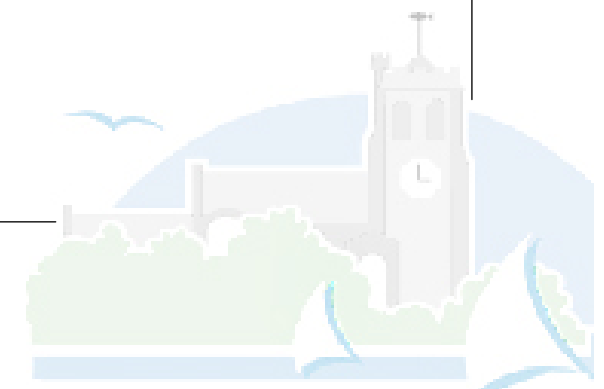
#### Parking

- address signage and logical sequence of car parks from edge gateways; and
- explore opportunities to rationalise the locations for focussed car parking including:
  - Saxon Square

- Pioneer
- Council Offices.

### Walking/Cycling

- develop 1 – 2 hour leisure walks around major attractions in the town; and
- encourage more cycle usage by extending links to residential areas in a 10 minute circle.





Interpretation Board



The Castle Mound and Constables House



View from Priory Quay over the River Stour

THE VISION FOR CHRISTCHURCH TOWN CENTRE

8.6 All the discussions that have been held by Christchurch Borough Council and the Town Centre Forum over the last few years have majored on the need to:-

- build on key strengths of the town centre, including its natural environment and heritage assets;
- Carefully reshape the built and spatial urban fabric by delivery plans, simultaneously taking account of archaeological and conservation requirements, that have the impetus to be delivered for the benefit of the local community and visitors to the town centre; and
- encourage the effective co-ordination of the public and private sectors to create a successful town centre through partnership and consultation.

8.7 As a result, the vision for Christchurch Town Centre over the next 20 years should be focussed around three key themes:

- **Heritage**
- **Environment**
- **Lifestyle**

Heritage

- tell the story of 6,000 years of historical development by providing more effective interpretation;
- provide an exciting new gathering and orientating point in the heart of the historic core;
- take account of the archaeological landscape that informs the historic character and sense of place;
- link the main heritage and visitor attractions to become a more effective integrated experience by better signage, in a more 'pedestrian friendly' streetscape, that can accommodate themed transport to make more remote attractions, such as the Electricity Museum, more accessible and that will occupy people for at least half a day; and
- continue to develop themed cultural and activity weekends and events to sustain visitor interest

throughout the year and link heritage closer to business opportunities in streets filled with people.

Environment

- a centre well connected to its unique natural features that define its physical boundaries—the Rivers Avon and Stour and the Harbour by encouraging better signage and opening up more waterfront to public access;
- improve the environment of the town centre by sensitive development and heritage improvement projects incorporating the built form and the spaces between, including streets, squares, parks, waterfront and car parks;
- ensure that the town centre is convenient and accessible for all the potential customers, residents and visitors, both young and old, by well signed and located car parks and appropriate bus routes and an easy place to walk or cycle into; and
- make the centre a safer place, by improving its appearance, having well lit streets, active throughout the day and into the evening and over looked by housing.

Lifestyle

- a town centre that meets the needs of all sectors of the community by:
  - providing appropriate mix of facilities for young and old people;
  - modernising central community facilities for the elderly; and
  - supporting the key role of the Regent Centre as the focus for the arts and entertainment in the town.
- the encouragement of a greater mix of land uses in the town centre by:
  - encouraging demand for more town centre living;
  - the retention and careful expansion of niche retail; and
  - the encouragement and marketing of a broader night time economy through encouraging the development of restaurants, cafés, tea rooms and bars located on the main pedestrian routes through the town centre.





The Town Hall and The Monday Market



'Spill out' space, Henley on Thames



Attractive retail space, Henley on Thames

- a central place that becomes an attractive place to visit and to
- keep returning to by:
  - securing the long term viability of the Monday Market in the High Street;
  - encouraging the development of regular themed markets, including Farmers' Market, Antiques Fair and seasonal continental markets; and
  - becoming a focal point for alternative lifestyles by promoting:
    - craft and wholefood shops;
    - successful specialist quality independent retail outlets; and
    - workshops in venues such as the Regent Centre, supported by the County and Regional Arts and Crafts Boards.

#### THE EMERGING STRATEGY

8.8 The strategy has been prepared in the context of the Local Plan and detailed consultation with key stakeholders, including the Town Centre Forum, local businesses and the community. The central theme and aim of the strategy is to maintain and enhance the attractiveness and performance of the town centre, to ensure that it is a distinctive, vibrant and a thriving place where people enjoy living, working and visiting. This will be achieved in a number of ways:

- by strengthening its local and distinctive retail offer;
- by encouraging more people to live in the town centre;
- by improvements to the management and marketing of its quality heritage assets;
- by promoting the town centre and the Borough-wide area as a destination for short stay and day visitor tourists;
- by encouraging more A3 uses, catering for a wider range of users;
- by improving linkages out from the town centre and along the waterfronts of the River Stour and Avon and the Harbour, that give the town centre its unique landscape and townscape setting; and
- by environmental enhancement of the streetscape and

parkland.

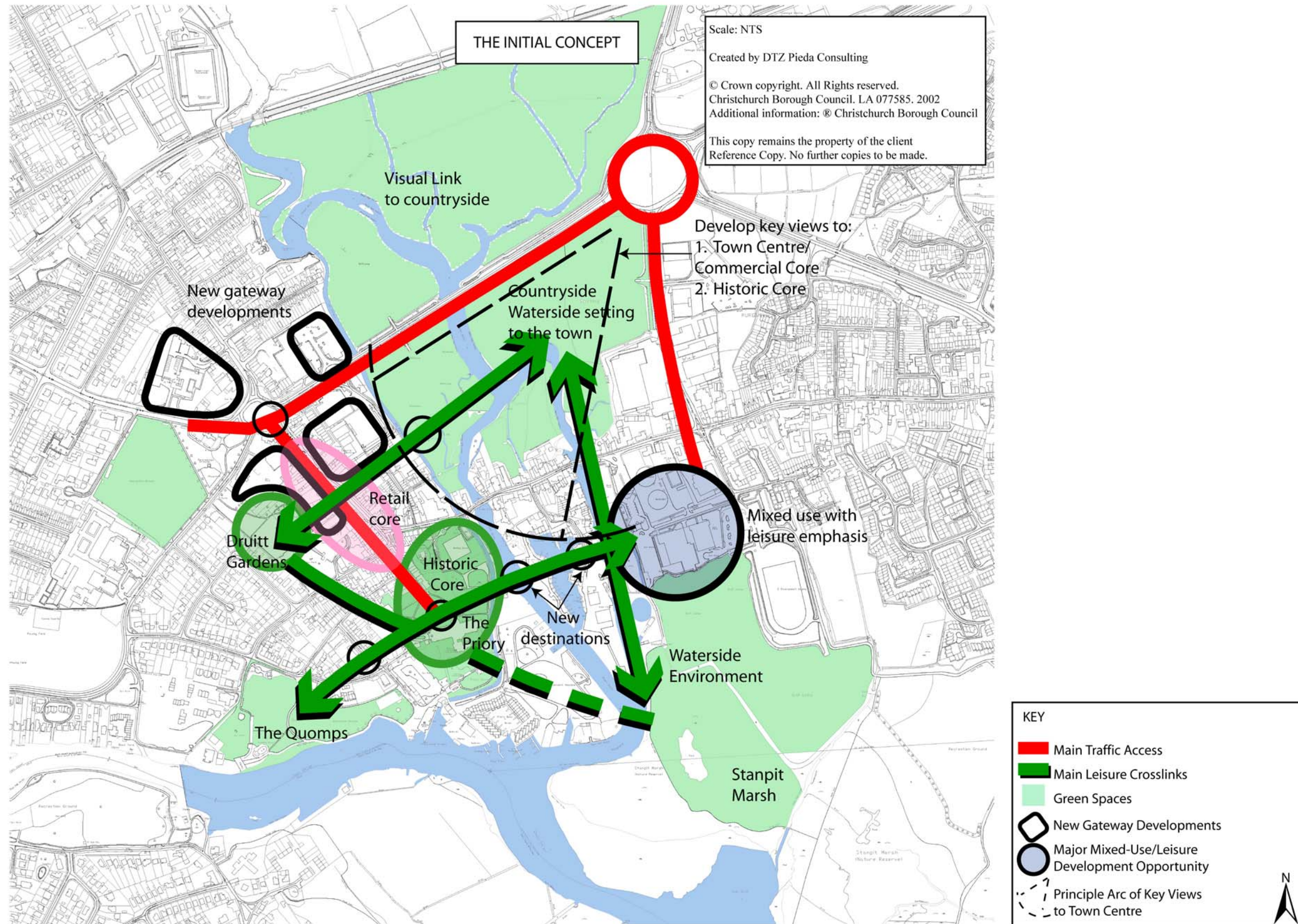
8.9 The strategy has identified the need for small-scale improvements to the town centre's shopping provision, rather than major new retail development. In combination, the opportunities identified will help to promote Christchurch as a specialist and quality retail destination. This, in turn, will help to differentiate it from the more mainstream multiple retail offer in larger centres, such as Bournemouth and Southampton. Christchurch has never, and will never be able to compete on an equal footing with these centres and will therefore need to position itself differently in the marketplace. The opportunities presented by the smaller-scale mixed use development in The Lanes to the west side of the High Street will help to reinforce Christchurch's role and performance. The mixed use proposals for the Magistrates Court will also help to reinforce the role of Bargates and, through changes to the A35, develop linkages and synergies between the two shopping areas.

8.10 Although the emerging strategy has mainly focused on promoting Christchurch's specialist quality shopping, this needs to be balanced by the retention and improvement of its multiple retailing. The existing multiples anchor the town's retail offer and are a major attraction for large sections of the population. DTZ believes the proposed redevelopment and reconfiguration of Saxon Square by London and Associated Properties will help to reinforce the vitality and viability of the town centre, by providing new and larger units which better suit the requirements of modern retailers and help to knit the damaged townscape back together. Although the independent retail assessment for the Borough Council (by Graham House, 2001) has indicated that there is no quantitative capacity for new food and convenience floorspace up to 2011, DTZ believes there may be a qualitative need for new or replacement quality food retailers to reinforce Christchurch's role as a quality shopping destination.

8.11 The remaining priorities should include:-

- leisure uses – health club, café/bar and restaurant type uses;
- mixed use – encouraging housing in the town centre such as the recent infill and initiative-led conservation themes for residential above retail floorspace in the High Street and Castle Street ; and







Retail units along Bargates



Saxon Square



Residential Development along Millhams Street

- focus on heritage product development and environmental enhancement (public realm strategy).
- 8.12 Therefore the emerging strategy should focus on:
- the influence of urban design on the future development framework;
  - the heritage/leisure/events strategy that will add vibrancy to the visitor offer;
  - the significant transport and accessibility initiatives upon which the development and leisure opportunities will be dependent; and
  - the future role and location of key community facilities.
- 8.13 In combination, these elements will help secure the future of Christchurch as a vital and viable centre and help to enhance its status as a niche retail and heritage visitor destination.

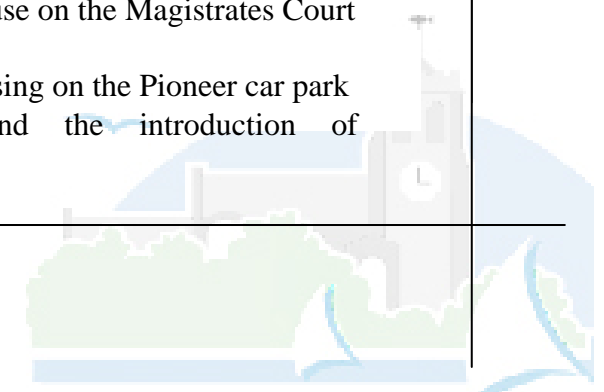
#### THE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

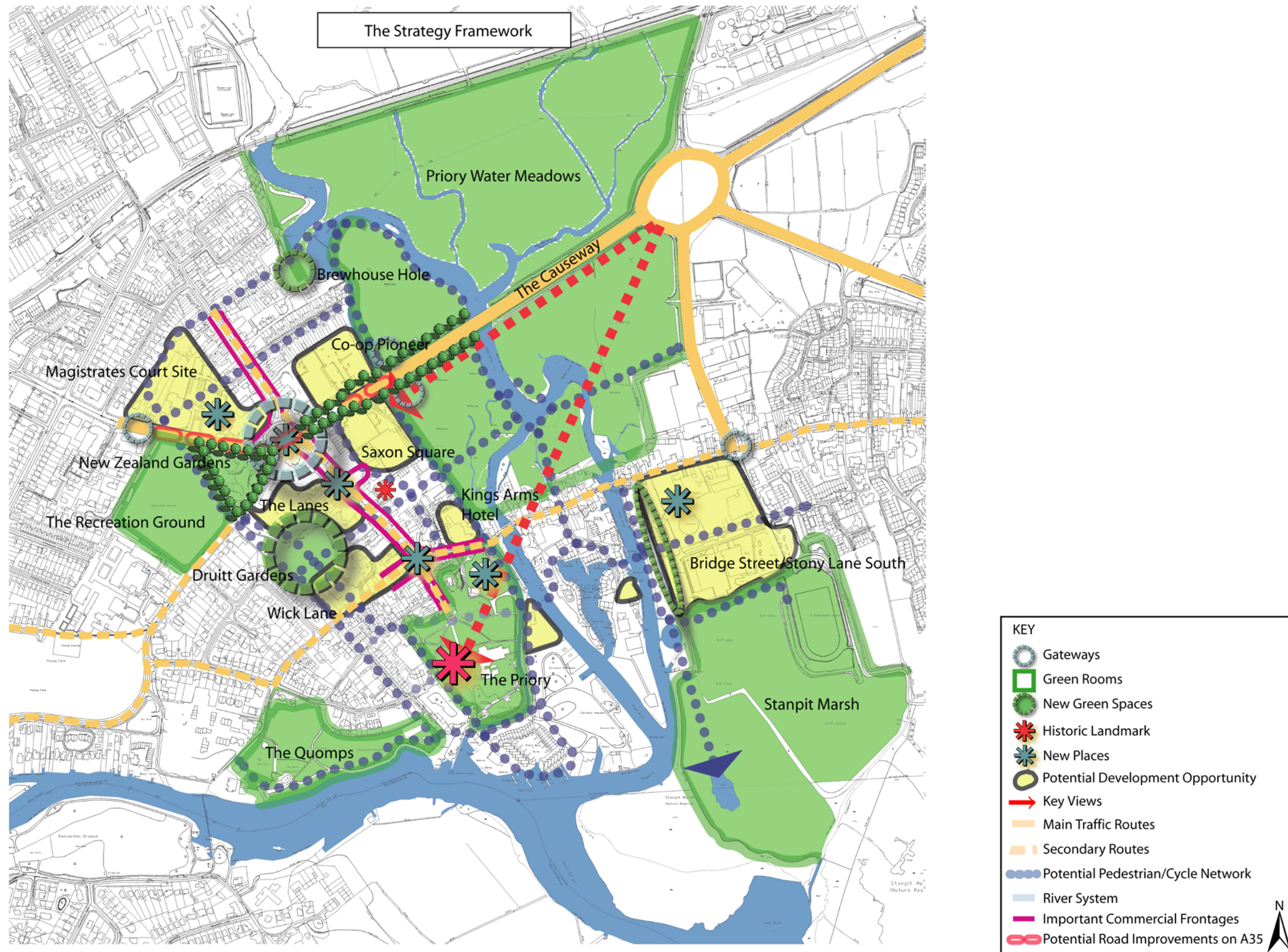
##### Urban Design and Development

- 8.14 The main issue confronting Christchurch Town Centre is connecting the town centre together and creating 'events' or activities along these connections to help people explore and enjoy the centre.
- 8.15 The initial concept (see figure 8.1) reflects this aspiration and illustrates two overlaid movement networks, one reflecting major development opportunities (red), the other more leisure related opportunities (green).
- 8.16 There is a series of links between the main development opportunities around the Fountain Way roundabout and the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South sites, with the historic core of the town centre at the Priory. New 'gateway' developments are linked by vehicular routes along the A35 'causeway' and Stony Lane. These form the 'bookends of development' to the Priory. At the same time, key views across the waterside setting of the River Avon Meadows need to be protected to the town centre commercial core and the historic core dominated by the Priory.
- 8.17 Running along and across these are key routes that connect:
- The Quomps, the Historic Core and the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South sites with their potential to develop a mixed use waterside destination with a leisure

emphasis;

- Druitt Gardens, the central woodland garden with the Historic Core and waterside environment at Stanpit Marsh, links to the harbour and the beach area around Mudeford Quay; and
  - the 'water meadows' with the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South sites and onto Stanpit Marsh and the harbour.
- 8.18 The Strategy Framework illustrated in Figure 8.2 then identifies components of the framework:
- (i) vehicular gateways, including entry and car park signage;
  - (ii) new potential places, including:
    - Saxon Square/High Street around the Town Hall;
    - the junction of High Street/ Castle Street;
    - the frontage of the Kings Arms Hotel on Castle Street;
    - around the new junction at Barrack Road/Fountain Way and Bargates/High Street;
    - within the Magistrates Court site; and
    - within the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South sites.
  - (iii) new/refurbished green spaces, including:
    - Druitt Woodland Gardens;
    - riverside parkland along the River Avon frontage of the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South sites;
    - New Zealand Gardens; and
    - Brewhouse Hole.
  - (iv) Green Rooms of significant parkland, including:
    - the Priory Gardens and Castle/Constables House environs;
    - The Quomps;
    - the Recreation Ground;
    - Stanpit Marsh; and
    - the Priory Water Meadows.
  - (v) important retail/business frontages in High Street, Saxon Square, Castle Street, Church Street, Wick Lane and Bargates;
  - (vi) the development opportunity sites, including:
    - housing/mixed use on the Magistrates Court site;
    - car parking/housing on the Pioneer car park
    - mixed use and the introduction of









The Bowling Green and Castle Mound



The Constables House



Chomley House Visitor Centre, Whitby

- residential on a remodelled Saxon Square Shopping Centre;
- mixed use development at The Lanes and Wick Lane;
- hotel refurbishment at the Kings Arms Hotel; and
- civic/housing/leisure/youth facilities and parking on Bridge Street/Stony Lane South.

**Heritage/Leisure Offer**

8.19 The connectivity strategy illustrated in figure 8.1 demonstrates the connections that can be made between key locations, including the Quomps, the Priory and Druitt Gardens. This will encourage the various visitor attractions to be more effectively linked by signed/interpreted trails that build on the millennium blue plaque trail and aim to tell an interesting story of 6000 years of history.

**Visitor Centre**

8.20 The key challenge will be the potential to provide a visitor centre that could combine the functions of tourist information and marketing of the town alongside an introduction to the important Saxon/Medieval archaeological history of the town centre. This would effectively introduce the historical/cultural aspects of the historic core and could also be linked to an integrated marketing and joint ticketing of the key attractions, including the Castle/Constables House/the Priory/Red House Museum and Place Mill. Although more remote in Bargates, it will also be important to encourage linkage with the Museum of Electricity. This could be achieved by some form of themed wheeled transport running between the main attractions and provide an introduction to the town centre’s history for visitors.

8.21 Informal discussions with English Heritage have identified several recent examples of visitor centres that have a setting and association with important historical monuments, notably at Caerphilly in South Wales and Whitby Abbey in Whitby in North Yorkshire. Appendix 4 gives a summary of these facilities.

8.22 In view of the archaeological sensitivities associated with this location, it will be prudent to proceed by supporting the application, that has been made to Heritage Lottery by the Local History Society to fund a study that would explore the extent and general arrangement of the original Castle

Bailey by photogrammetry techniques.

8.23 Action Plan 3 identifies the potential to explore the feasibility of developing a visitor attraction in, or close to, the Castle Gateway area.

8.24 Finally, there is the issue about the longer term future location of the Tourist Information Centre. The Borough Council is considering use of a number of possible future locations and this could influence the type of visitor centre.

**Events Strategy**

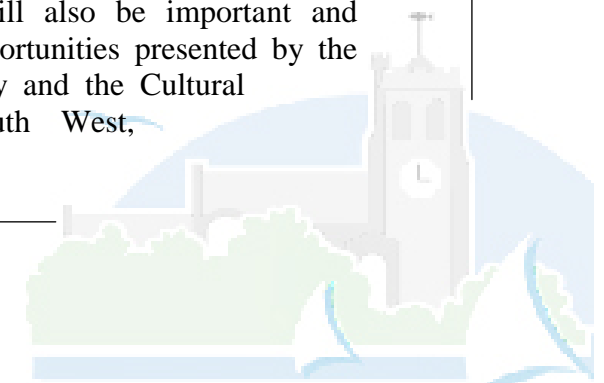
8.25 Themed events such as the increasingly successful Food and Wine Festival and the Christmas shopping events held in December are excellent examples of new initiatives that are encouraging a wider constituency of visitors to be attracted into the town centre. Furthermore, the decision of the Borough Council to make the Monday Market permanent in the High Street and Saxon Square provides a weekly year round event in the town centre.

8.26 The strategy should build on this success by identifying a major weekend event per month, particularly through the main tourist season, from May to October. An initiative that can contribute to an annual calendar of events which will keep Christchurch in the public eye and ensure it is a regularly visited destination in Dorset. These initiatives should also be linked to the setting up of a more formal town centre management presence to organise and sponsor such events.

8.27 A number of these events should have a historical/cultural flavour with re-enactments being encouraged involving the youth of the town. The sensitive improvement of Druitt Gardens to a woodland garden would provide ideal locations for outdoor themed events, both of a community and professional nature.

8.28 These initiatives will also encourage the development of a stronger evening economy associated with gathering/meeting/event spaces that are also well connected to the retail core along the High Street.

8.29 The role of the Regent Centre as the main arts/entertainment centre will also be important and should tap into the opportunities presented by the Dorset Cultural Strategy and the Cultural Strategy for the South West,





Re-enactment, Knarborough, North Yorkshire



May Fair, Knarborough, North Yorkshire



The Bandstand on the Quomps

particularly to encourage community access and participation in cultural activities and improve their quality.

#### Archaeology

8.30 It has been stressed throughout this document that it will be important that the strategy is sensitive to archaeological issues associated with the historic fabric above and under the ground, notably around the historic core.

8.31 'Sustaining the Historic Environment', an English Heritage discussion document, highlights a number of issues that should be addressed under sustainable development aims:-

- the role of archaeology and history in modern life, to create stronger public participation in conservation debates and ensure the past takes its proper place in the present;
- how to protect and enhance local distinctiveness, while still succeeding in protecting from damaging development those monuments and buildings which are most important in national terms; and
- how to keep alive the sense of discovery and promote public enjoyment of important heritage features.

8.32 These issues serve to underline the need to be both creative and sensitive in the conservation and interpretation of the historic fabric in the Town Centre and, there needs to be a thorough analysis of archaeological investigation to date.

#### MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT ISSUES

8.33 The deliverability of the development framework will be dependent on improvements to transport, access and car parking provisions in and around the town centre which are all linked and cannot be tackled in isolation. Figure 8.3 illustrates DTZ's initial view on measures for:

- A35—Fountain Way;
- public transport; and
- parking.

#### A35 - Fountain Way Junction

8.34 The presence of the A35—Fountain Way creates a major issue of severance of the town centre, isolating the area of Bargates to the north from the High Street to the south. It

also carries high volumes of traffic, often travelling at relatively high speed, and this creates a very unwelcoming and unfriendly pedestrian environment.

8.35 Three options exist to improve the pedestrian environment in this location;

- construct a road tunnel in the environs of the roundabout along the lines illustrated in the study brief;
- re-direct traffic on new roads through the area—possibly constructed on the Magistrates Court site; and
- reconfigure the existing junction to the benefit of pedestrians.

8.36 In the view of DTZ the latter approach should be adopted, as the tunnel option 1 will be extremely expensive and difficult to integrate into its urban context. Option 2 will only act to create new lines of severance in the town. The introduction of two signalised junctions opposed to the existing large roundabout arrangement would have the following benefits:

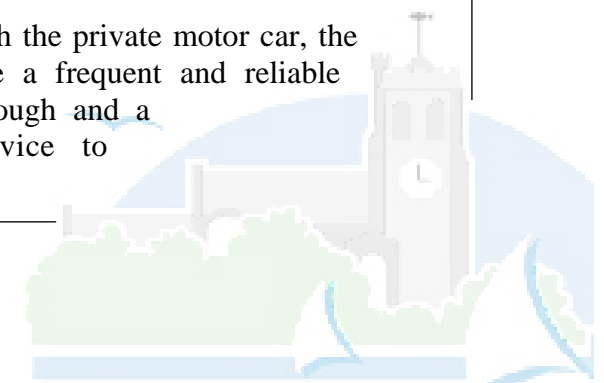
- improved urban form;
- improved pedestrian/cycle links;
- reduction in vehicle speeds;
- better use of available space; and
- opportunity to introduce quality bus waiting areas.

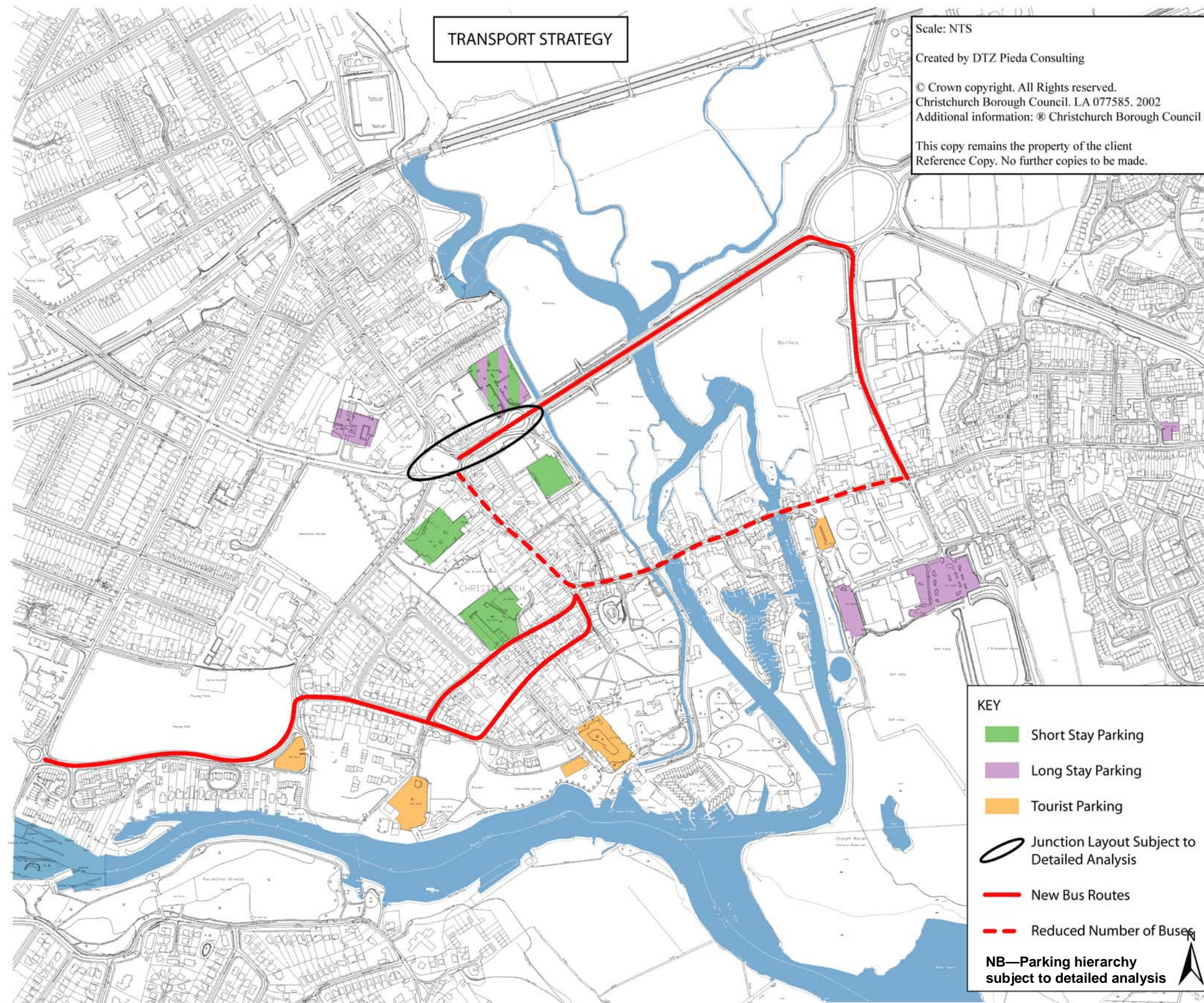
8.37 However, this recommendation has not been accepted by the Council. In order to progress matters, Dorset County Council has been instructed to undertake further analysis to consider options for improving the junctions.

#### Public Transport

8.38 Improvements to public transport provision will be critical to reducing the use of the private motor car in Christchurch and, due to the dispersed nature of the population in the Borough, this is likely to rely on bus services.

8.39 In order to compete with the private motor car, the strategy should provide a frequent and reliable service within the Borough and a fast and reliable service to







Underpass to Fountain Way



Fountain Way Roundabout looking towards the High Street



Bank Close Car Park

destinations outside the town.

8.40 The recommendations presented in Section 5 have concentrated on short-term proposals, which can be achieved quickly, and concentrate on reducing/removing buses from the High Street:

- improve the environment in the town centre by reducing bus services travelling down the High Street;
- redirect bus services along Fountain Way/Stony Lane;
- investigate a quality bus interchange at Fountain Way as part of proposed work for Fountain Roundabout improvement;
- explore opportunities of minor diversions to the existing routes that would halve the number of buses using the High Street from 16 to 8, without compromising the service;
- carry out a study of bus services and their usage to establish a strategy for the future network, based on shared knowledge and partnership between the councils and the bus companies;
- if this approach proves successful, bus services can in the longer term be removed entirely from the High Street; and
- a small hoppla bus could run from Purewell to the railway station, serving the High Street and the central visitor attractions.

8.41 In the longer term, consideration needs to be given to enhancing the accessibility of the town centre by public transport and primarily by buses, also considering sub-regional bus movements.

### Parking

8.42 To understand the parking requirements for the town centre, DTZ has carried out a broad assessment contained in Section 5. The key issues are as follows:

- the analysis indicates that a total of 2,200 spaces are required in the town centre, compared with 1,705 (+ on street) spaces that are currently available;

- capacity and location issues will be addressed in the proposed car parking strategy;
- additional provision and extra spaces on the new Magistrates Court site, may give the opportunity to reduce the size of other car parks, making land potentially available for other uses after archaeological issues have been taken into account;
- car parks should be classified to create a more logical approach and reduce parking traffic in the town centre during peak hours by locating long stay car parking as much as possible on the edges of the town centre;
- as tourist parking is seasonal and spaces required will fluctuate throughout the year, it is proposed that the car park at Bank Close could be used for tourist and short stay as the seasons dictate; and
- annual parking permit holders should be restricted to long stay car parks.

### Walking and Cycling

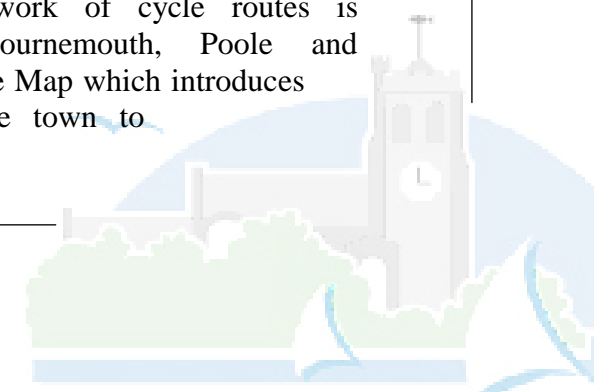
8.43 These activities are extremely important in terms of encouraging more sustainable patterns of movement in the Borough because:-

- the topography lends itself to walking and cycling;
- the Borough is very picturesque, with scenic views in pleasant countryside and coastline; and
- the town centre is of a walkable scale, almost entirely accessible within a 5-minute walk.

8.44 The main restrictions to pedestrian movement include:-

- the A35—Fountain Way which severs the area of Bargates from the High Street; and
- large areas of privately owned land, with no public access, particularly along the river frontages of the Stour and Avon.

8.45 A comprehensive network of cycle routes is proposed in the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch Area Cycle Map which introduces new routes linking the town to





Lively Street Scene, High Wycombe



Pedestrian Friendly junction, Tring, Hertfordshire



Attractive 'spill out' space, Arcan Gardens, Holland,

some of the surrounding residential areas.

- 8.46 A ten-minute cycle from the town centre encompasses as far as Southbourne, Somerford, Burton and Fairmile.

#### Public Realm

- 8.47 The earlier strategy work that was prepared on the public realm in and around the High Street for the unsuccessful THI submission of May 2000 should now be brought back into the strategy.

- 8.48 Part of this proposal, that included the footpath improvements associated with the single carriageway road improvement on Bridge Street, has been carried out and extended west to the junction of Castle Street and High Street.

- 8.49 The renewal/upgrading of High Street, particularly where the Monday Market is located, should be a priority. This would also link to the upgrading of The Lanes into The Lanes development site, which would link into Druitt Gardens and the 'freshening' of Saxon Square.

- 8.50 The following initiatives have been identified:

- High Street—including a new place around the Town Hall in Saxon Square/High Street—the core area of the Monday market;
- Castle Street—including a new place at the junction of High Street and Castle Street;
- Castle 'Gateway' - a new place on Castle Street providing the gateway into the Castle/Constables House historic area;
- these places would be connected by repaved traffic calmed streets, with supporting street furniture, lighting, planting and summer bedding;
- a new pedestrian signage system that would support and enhance the Blue Plaque Millennium Trail; and
- complete overhaul of existing signage to co-ordinate signs and improve legibility and a sense of place.

#### COMMUNITY ISSUES

- 8.51 The consultations DTZ had with the community groups and organisations and the various SWOT analyses carried out by the Town Centre Forum have highlighted the need to

address the future needs of the following:

- the future location of the new community police station;
- the library and possible Learning Resource Centre;
- the future of Druitt Hall community facility;
- the provision of youth facilities; and
- the future strategy for the Borough Council's own facilities.

#### Community Police Provision

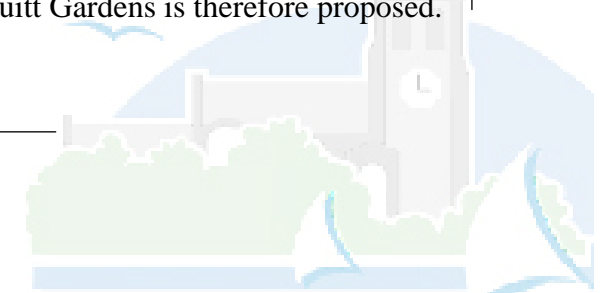
- 8.52 Discussions with the police have confirmed that they will wish to locate their new community police station in the town centre which broadly covers the area from the existing location on the former Magistrates Court Site to the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South Site, which incorporates the civic offices. In consequence, the likely locations for a new town centre police station are:

- the former Magistrates Court Site, now subject of a development brief;
- The Lanes development site; or
- the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South Site.

#### The Library

- 8.53 The Library (Grade II listed) occupies a central site on the High Street. The current thinking is that it should stay in this location and consider expansion to the rear as part of the proposed Lanes mixed use development. If a Learning Resource Centre was considered as part of the expansion, this could be located adjacent to the Druitt Gardens frontage, encouraging more use of the Gardens as a community provision.

- 8.54 The consultation process has highlighted the concern for appropriate community facilities, particularly for the elderly and youth. At present Druitt Hall on the edge of Druitt Gardens fulfils a function as a meeting place for, particularly, the elderly, but is a building in need of replacement by more modern facilities. An earlier draft development brief for The Lanes incorporated a requirement to replace this facility. A similar mixed use development brief that should include the provision of a new facility linked to Druitt Gardens is therefore proposed.



8.55 With regard to youth provision, there are several possibilities:

- provide a meeting place/cyber café close to the Regent Centre and Druitt Gardens;
- or by converting Stour Cottage adjacent to Barrack Road Recreation Ground; and
- develop sport related facilities—multi-purpose games court, skateboard and BMX—linked to the two Riversmeet Leisure Centre at Stony Lane South.

#### Civic Centre and Council Offices

8.56 The possibility of relocating these facilities to provide a location for waterfront housing and public river frontage has been raised. The Bridge Street/Stony Lane South development site has the opportunity to create a new civic quarter around the Bridge Street/Stony Lane junction that could accommodate emergency services and the new civic centre. Land use Action Plan 12 recommends that a masterplan for that site be prepared, accepting that the leisure facilities and possible youth provision should be retained as key land uses.

#### DRAFT ACTION PLAN

8.57 The physical strategy for Christchurch Town Centre focuses on the key public realm, development opportunities, as well as the transport and accessibility initiatives upon which many of these opportunities are dependent. In combination, these three elements will help to enhance and maintain its status as niche retail, leisure and cultural destinations.

8.58 The key elements of the Strategy and Action Plan are summarised in the tables set out in Appendix 1. These 'sub-area' action plans highlight the main opportunities and constraints facing the implementation of each of the public realm and development initiatives, including ownership, policy context, action required, possible sources of funding and likely timescales. Figure 8.4 sets out the delivery plan by illustrating 13 No. indicative development cameos.

#### Public Realm

8.59 The public realm strategy aims to improve and enhance the town centre's environment and streetscape, thereby making it a more attractive place to live, work, shop and visit. Four

key opportunities have been identified and a more detailed description is set out in the action plan tables:-

- High Street (see Public Realm Action Plan 1);
- Castle Street (see Public Realm Action Plan 2);
- the Castle 'Gateway' (see Public Realm Action Plan 3); and
- Druitt Gardens (see Public Realm Action Plan 4).

#### Land Use Proposals

8.60 A number of land use proposals have been identified which present the opportunity to significantly improve Christchurch's retail, leisure, housing, office and civic offer and respond to the market opportunities identified in Section 7.

8.61 They are listed below and described in more detail in the sub-area action plan tables in Appendix 1.

- Magistrates Court Development site (see Land Use Action Plan 6) and the separate development brief;
- mixed use development at The Lanes (see Land Use Action Plan 7);
- mixed use development at Wick Lane (see Land Use Action Plan 8);
- Saxon Square redevelopment (see Land Use Action Plan 9);
- Pioneer Car Park (see Land Use Action Plan 10);
- Kings Arms Hotel (see Land Use Action Plan 11); and
- Bridge Street/Stony Lane South (see Land Use Action Plan 12).

8.62 Each Action Plan will be subject to its appropriate level of consultation.

8.63 To ensure that these development opportunities are realised, it is important that they relate to the planning policies contained within the Borough of Christchurch Local Plan adopted March 2001, unless there is a good case not to adhere to these, especially for longer term projects. In some cases local plan policies may need reviewing, such as relaxing the policy on A3 uses within and around the High Street.

8.64 The Local Authority has a vital role to play in the delivery

of the development opportunities identified. Whether the Council owns the freehold to the sites identified or has part ownership interest, it can facilitate development through:-

- the preparation of planning and development briefs, to setting the framework for any site opportunities (i.e. Magistrates Court Site);
- partnership arrangements; and
- the use of CPO powers.

8.65 In short, the Council will need to adopt a variety of roles depending on the nature of each development site, using its powers as a landowner, development facilitator and/or local planning authority.

#### Transport and Movement

8.66 As already stated through the strategy process, the deliverability of the development framework is dependent on improvements to access, transport and car parking provisions which are all linked.

8.67 The A35—Fountain Way is the main road route through the town and also the principle point of access. The redevelopment of this and adjoining sites must take the opportunity to improve the pedestrian linkage between High Street and Bargates.

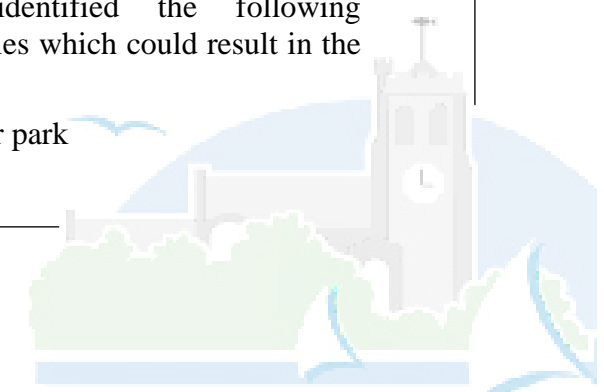
8.68 The priority in the short term with public transport is to reduce the number of buses using the High Street with an ultimate aim of removing them altogether.

#### Car Parking

8.69 It is widely acknowledged that improvements to the location, number and quality of car parking spaces in and around the town centre will be fundamental to the delivery of the potential development and public realm initiatives identified. The strategy in this case should involve the reduction of the smaller centrally located car parks which have been identified as having greater potential for redevelopment with larger, more easily accessible car parks on the edge of the town centre.

8.70 The strategy has identified the following development opportunities which could result in the loss of car parking:

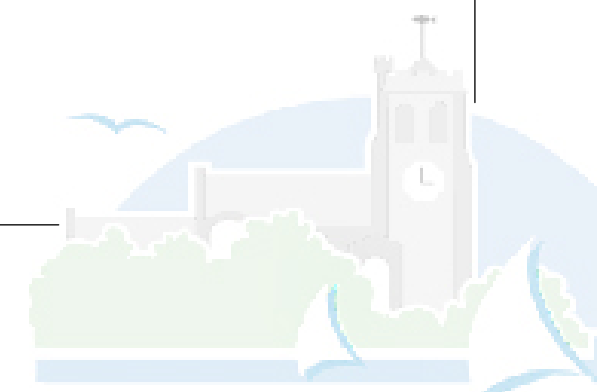
- Bank Close—this car park



- should be part of The Lanes Development Site and currently provides some 136 parking spaces. It is likely to be reduced in capacity to accommodate additional floorspace and servicing; and
  - Wick Lane—this car park should be part of the Wick Lane development opportunity and currently provides some 194 spaces. It is likely to be reduced in capacity to accommodate additional floorspace and servicing.
- 8.71 As suggested in the transport and movement appraisal, the primary car parks should be located at the edge of the town centre to help relieve traffic in the town centre and reducing the amount of traffic going through the town centre.
- 8.72 Further detailed analysis is required to identify whether capacity can be increased in existing town centre car parks.
- 8.73 It is clear that the potential loss of parking spaces, based on the redevelopment of existing opportunities could be balanced by the addition of significant new dedicated town centre parking to the edge of the town centre.
- 8.74 Regarding amenity parking, this is spread across a number of car parks bordering the waterfront associated with the main tourist facilities:
- Willow Way—60 spaces;
  - Mayors Mead—121 spaces;
  - Priory and Quay—120 spaces; and
  - Leisure Centre (long stay)—404 spaces.
- 8.75 The development of the Bridge Street/Stony Lane South site for a leisure-led mixed use scheme should allow for a modest increase in amenity parking provision in addition to the leisure centre provision.
- 8.76 Coach parking currently utilises space at Stony Lane South and it will be necessary to find an appropriate future location around the town centre if provision cannot be made available in this location.
- 8.77 As set out in paragraph 5.61, it is recommended that a full and comprehensive car parking survey is carried out to underwrite the broad assessment DTZ has undertaken within this strategy.


#### Draft Action Plan

- 8.78 The Draft Action Plan aims to prioritise the key initiatives identified by the strategy in order of importance and/or ease of deliverability and it draws on the sub-area action plan tables set out in Appendix 1.
- 8.79 The possible development timescale schedule (Figure 8.5) sets out an initial timescale DTZ believes would be needed to deliver the key public realm, transport and development opportunities identified by the strategy/action plan. In this case DTZ has assumed a 14 year period up to 2015 which will cover the plan period of the Local Plan (adopted March 2001) and some years beyond.
- 8.80 This action plan covers the initial 14 years of a 20 year vision and the delivery of this plan is likely to broadly complete the currently known key development opportunities. The last five years of the 20 year vision is likely to revolve around managing the success that the development opportunities will bring to enhancing the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre, yet at the same time ensuring a balance is achieved by conserving the historical qualities of the 'built and spatial' environment and being able to interpret and manage the heritage assets for residents and visitors.
- 8.81 The evolution of a successful town centre management structure and the maturing of the partnership between the public and private stakeholders will be important to ensure that the town centre is sustainable and successful centre to live, work and visit which also achieves a balance between the needs of Christchurch's residents and the visitors that are attracted by its quality environment and heritage features.



**KEY**

- Short Term
- Medium Term
- Long Term
- Ongoing



**The Delivery Plan**

**6. Magistrates Court**  
 Mix of uses residential led set around a public square with good links into Bargates

Car Parking  
 Possible bus waiting area

**1. High Street**  
 Pedestrian priority streetscape refurbishment providing visual framework for the Monday Market

**7. The Lanes - a new place to explore**  
 Mix of small independent retail units with residential units above

Concentration of community facilities, Library, Drutt Hall and local Police Office  
 Focused around Drutt Gardens

**4. Drutt Gardens - a new meeting place**  
 Creation of mixed use development opportunities

manage gardens as a wooded garden in the town centre

improve pedestrian links between the historic core and Bargates

**8. Wick Lane (Post Office / Arcade Site)**  
 Extend and enhance retail, food, drink, leisure and entertainment offer

Residential units above  
 Improve pedestrian linkages from High Street/Wick Lane into Drutt Gardens

**5. Barrack Road/Fountain Way**  
 Investigate improvements to Fountain roundabout

Investigate creation of a pedestrian friendly place with new pedestrian access into Saxon Square/High Street

Strengthen links between Bargates and the retail core

Improve urban frontages to the Magistrates Court, Pioneer and Saxon Square

**10. Pioneer Car Park - arriving in Christchurch**

New residential frontage to Mill Stream to improve the A35 'Gateway' into the town centre

**9. Saxon Square**  
 Improve retail offer and introduce residential units above

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**12. Bridge Street/Stony Lane South - a new civic & leisure quarter**  
 New community, civic and employment development opportunity

High quality river frontage residential development

Enhance indoor/outdoor leisure facilities

Develop youth related facilities

**13. River Frontage Linkages**  
 Improve pedestrian linkages in and around the River Avon waterfront

Develop an east-west leisure access across the town centre

**2. Castle Street/Church Street**  
 Creation of 'pedestrian friendly' space at the junction of High Street & Castle Street

Public realm improvements in Church Street

**3. The Castle 'Gateway' - introducing Christchurch**  
 New gateway between retail/business and visitor areas of the town centre

Venue for historical re-enactments and events

**11. Kings Arms Hotel**  
 Refurbished historic hotel

Maximise relationship to Mill Stream and Ducking Stool

New 'pedestrian friendly' place in front of the Kings Arms Hotel

