

Runcorn Old Town **Vision**



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01 Introduction

Context

Runcorn is located within the Borough of Halton, to the south of the River Mersey. In the last five years, over £1bn has been invested and thousands of new jobs have been created in the borough. It is strategically located in the economic triangle formed by Liverpool, Manchester and Chester, connecting its population with retail, cultural and leisure activities, a diverse range of employment opportunities and major international airports.

The soon to be completed Mersey Gateway Bridge project will further boost the economic transformation and growth being seen in the area, improving linkages to the rest of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and across the North West.

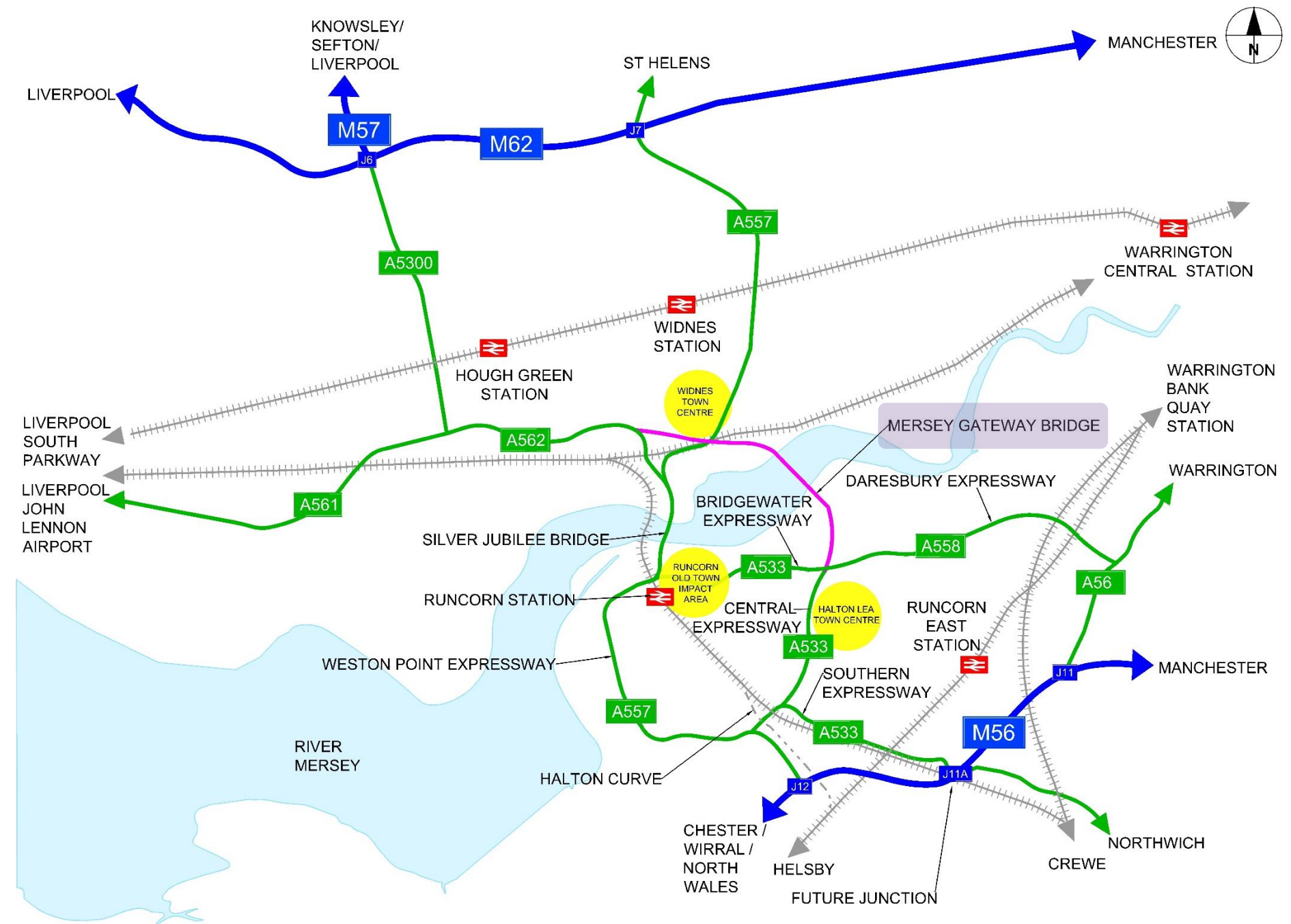
The *Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus 2017-2027* sets out the plan to maximise the benefits of the new crossing across eight key impact areas within Halton, one of which is Runcorn Old Town. Over 80% of traffic that currently uses the Silver Jubilee Bridge is expected to transfer to the new bridge, providing a headline opportunity to redefine and enhance both the function of the bridge and the heart of Runcorn.

Scope and Purpose

This document sets out ambitions and priorities to shape Runcorn Old Town's future. It illustrates the interconnectivity between key opportunity sites, demonstrating that Runcorn Old Town's offer is significantly greater than the sum of its parts. The Vision's ambitions will be delivered through a range of exciting opportunities and projects which will boost the attractiveness of our area as a place to live, work and visit. The aims and objectives are to:

- 1 **Build a stronger town centre**, through consolidation of the retail core and attraction of quality commercial investment at key sites
- 2 **Realise the potential of Runcorn Mainline Station**, through the creation of a Station Quarter and opening up the road network
- 3 **Improve linkage, accessibility and movement** between development opportunity sites and throughout the area as a whole
- 4 **Utilise its assets**, such as the waterways, culture and heritage
- 5 **Grow the residential offer** to provide a choice of quality homes to meet local needs and increase footfall in the town centre

Figure 1.1 Runcorn Context



The opening of the Mersey Gateway Bridge in Autumn 2017 presents a major opportunity for Runcorn. This document identifies and presents these opportunities, and take inspiration from other successful benchmark schemes in order to create a new vision for the Old Town.

02 Runcorn Old Town Impact Area

Old Town Context

The *Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy* (2016) outlines the strategy for the LCR to realise its ambitions for economic growth over the next 25 years. To maximise the impact of investment and opportunities within the lifetime of the Growth Strategy, a number of key growth sectors in which the City Region has considerable national and global competitive advantage are outlined. Most relevant to Runcorn Old Town Impact Area are the Visitor Economy and Financial & Professional Services sectors and the opportunities within the Old Town to provide new retail, leisure and mixed use opportunities as well as high quality housing and landscape areas. Delivery of these opportunities will enhance quality of place within Runcorn Old Town, attracting new residents, workers and visitors, establishing the Old Town's position as a first-class location within the City Region.

Character Areas

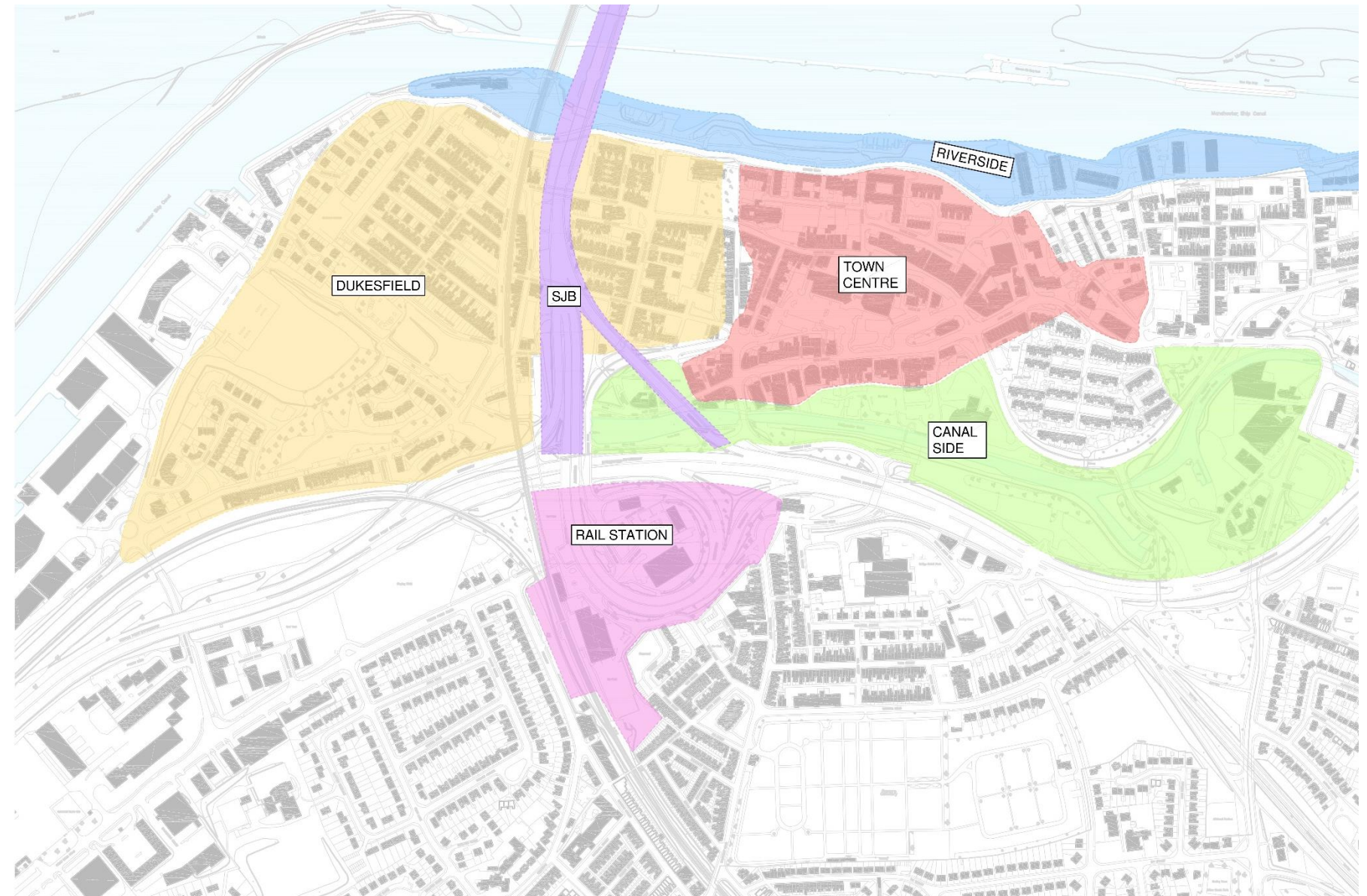
As indicated in the adjacent figure, the Runcorn Old Town Impact Area can be split into a number of key character areas, each with unique assets and opportunities.

Town Centre

Runcorn Old Town Centre is the smallest of three centres within Halton Borough, alongside Widnes and Halton Lea. The town centre broadly encompasses the area between Regent Street, Church Street and High Street. There is a strong independent offer within the centre, allowing it to perform a complementary role within the Halton Borough retail hierarchy. It has a Co-op food store and library at the heart of the retail core and also boasts the award-winning Brindley Arts Centre, providing a cultural focus for the centre.

Recent investment in the town centre includes the redevelopment of the former Crosville site for a new town centre car park, Marston's Public House and Restaurant and a drive-through Costa Coffee. Delivery of the new car park is crucial to wider regeneration in the town, enabling other priority sites which are currently being used for this purpose to come forward for redevelopment. There are some key opportunity sites within the core retail area that can help attract further investment and strengthen the retail core.

Figure 2.1 Character Areas



Silver Jubilee Bridge

The Grade II listed SJB is an iconic structure and one of the largest steel arch bridges in the world. Anticipated falls in traffic levels on the bridge associated with the opening of the Mersey Gateway presents opportunities to reconfigure the bridge deck and de-link the SJB highway approaches. The vision is for the bridge to become a sustainable transport corridor, becoming more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists as well as a major destination and tourist attraction in its own right.

Dukesfield

The Dukesfield area of Runcorn includes established residential areas to the west of the Silver Jubilee Bridge in addition to a major opportunity site, the former Riverside College Runcorn Campus. This site has outline planning permission for over one hundred new homes, delivery of which will help to grow the residential catchment in Runcorn. There are also exciting new opportunities for a Green Infrastructure walking and cycling 'loop' to be established that connects the town centre with Dukesfield and the riverside, along with opportunities to improve connectivity.

Rail Station

Runcorn Station is located to the south west of the town and is a major asset for the area, affording the town excellent regional and national connectivity through its position on the Liverpool branch of the West Coast Mainline. It benefits from high frequency and direct services to both London and Birmingham and for this reason, its catchment area extends into the districts of the Liverpool City Region, parts of Warrington and Cheshire and North Wales. The station is also a well-established, popular and convenient commuter station into Liverpool Lime Street.

Despite the excellent connectivity from the station, more must be done to link the station with Runcorn Old Town to improve the viability and attractiveness of the town to residents, visitors and investors. De-linking of the SJB approaches has the potential to release redundant highway for redevelopment and enable a new Station Quarter with exciting new commercial and residential opportunities to be developed. This will help establish the station as a destination within its own right and improved linkages to the Old Town and the Bridgewater Canal can be explored.

Riverside

The Manchester Ship Canal and River Mersey immediately north of the town add to Runcorn's attractive waterside setting. The Deck development has also helped to rejuvenate the town by introducing new residential populations and creating an attractive riverside residential corridor. New opportunities exist to expand the successful development and bring more homes to the riverside.

Canal Side

The Bridgewater Canal borders the Old Town to the south of the High Street. Work is ongoing to create the Bridgewater Way, a 65km leisure route for walkers and cyclists along the Bridgewater Canal between Runcorn and Leigh. The route will attract visitors to the area and support sustainable travel movements between Runcorn and Sci-Tech Daresbury. There are opportunities to provide high quality mixed use developments which integrate the canal and the High Street, with attractive new homes and commercial and retail units. There is also a local aspiration to re-open the flight of locks on the Bridgewater Canal in Runcorn Old Town between Top Locks and the Manchester Ship Canal.



Bridgewater Canal ▲▲

The Deck, Manchester Ship Canal
& Silver Jubilee Bridge ►

03 Our Big Opportunity: De-linking

The Mersey Gateway

The Mersey Gateway Bridge will open in Autumn 2017, providing a fit-for-purpose, new six lane bridge over the River Mersey between Runcorn and Widnes

Once open, it is expected that around **80% of the traffic that currently uses the Silver Jubilee Bridge will transfer to the new Mersey Gateway**. This provides us with a unique opportunity to redefine the function of the SJB and revise road infrastructure in Runcorn.



The Silver Jubilee Bridge

The reduction in traffic flow over the SJB will enable the existing deck layout, and its associated approaches, to be reconfigured to reflect its status as a local link. As highlighted within the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan, a **Silver Jubilee Sustainable Transport Corridor** with enhanced facilities for walking, cycling and public transport is proposed.

Reducing the number of carriageways on the SJB from four to two lanes could help establish the bridge as a popular route for pedestrians and cyclists, with potential for new links to both the Bridgewater Way in Runcorn as well as the Trans Pennine Trail in Widnes.

Reconfiguration of the SJB (also known as 'de-linking') will not only provide enhanced active travel infrastructure for cross-river journeys, it also provides an opportunity to capitalise on the SJB as a leisure asset, maximising the potential for upstream views of the River Mersey. There are two preferred options for de-linking of the bridge:

Option 2b

Option 2b proposes the removal of the western approach and the A533 Queensway 'Trumpet Loop'. The Runcorn Approach Viaduct (the eastern off-slip) would be retained and opened to two-way traffic, with a new roundabout provided to maintain access to the Bridgewater Expressway from the SJB and enable access to the Old Town. To provide access to the station, a new direct link would be provided from the roundabout. **Forecast benefits of delivering Option 2b include:**

- Enhanced profile for the SJB relating to the removal of the existing structures and the reduction in traffic using the bridge.
- Land to the south of the expressway will be opened up, providing an opportunity to improve links between Runcorn Station and the Old Town as well as enabling a Station Quarter development to come forward. It would also release land for a new transport interchange should the bus station be relocated to this area.
- Access to the station is improved for all users and future expansion of the Bridgewater Canal could still be achieved in future.

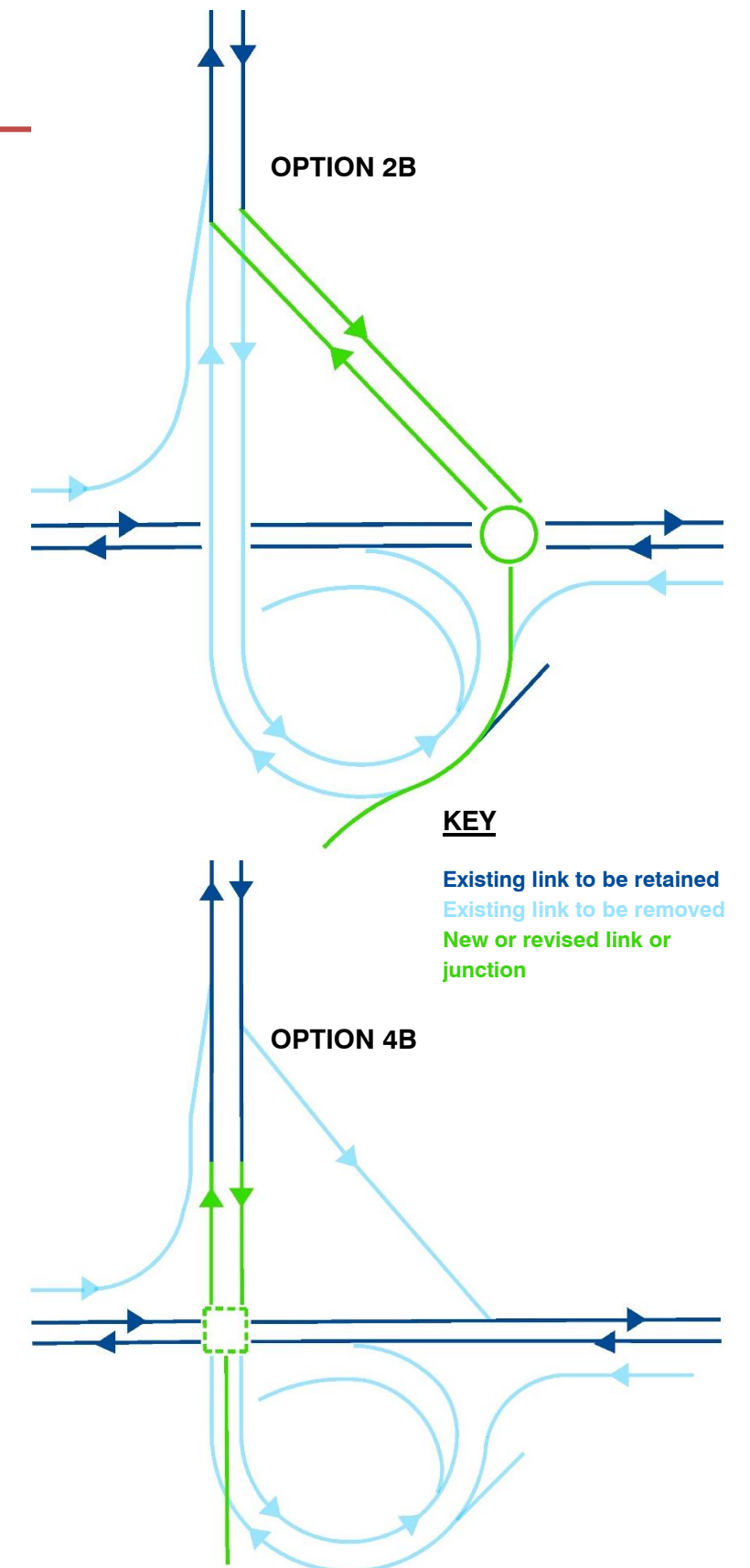
Option 4b

Option 4b comprises the removal of the SJB western approach and the Runcorn Approach Viaduct (the eastern off-slip) as well as the 'Trumpet Loop'. A new link would be provided directly from the SJB to the Weston Point/Bridgewater Expressway, where an at grade signalised junction would be introduced. A new direct link would be provided to the station from this junction. **Forecast benefits of delivering Option 4b include:**

- Enhanced profile for the SJB relating to the removal of the existing structures and the reduction in traffic using the bridge.
- Land to the south of the expressway will be opened up for development, improving links between Runcorn Station and the Old Town as well as enabling a Station Quarter development to come forward. A new transport interchange could also be developed.
- Introduction of the new signalised junction and at-grade crossing points will provide direct access to the station for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

Next Steps

SJB de-linking is still at feasibility stage, with further work required to firm up proposals and agree the best way forward. Further design work and cost analysis is currently ongoing for the two preferred options.



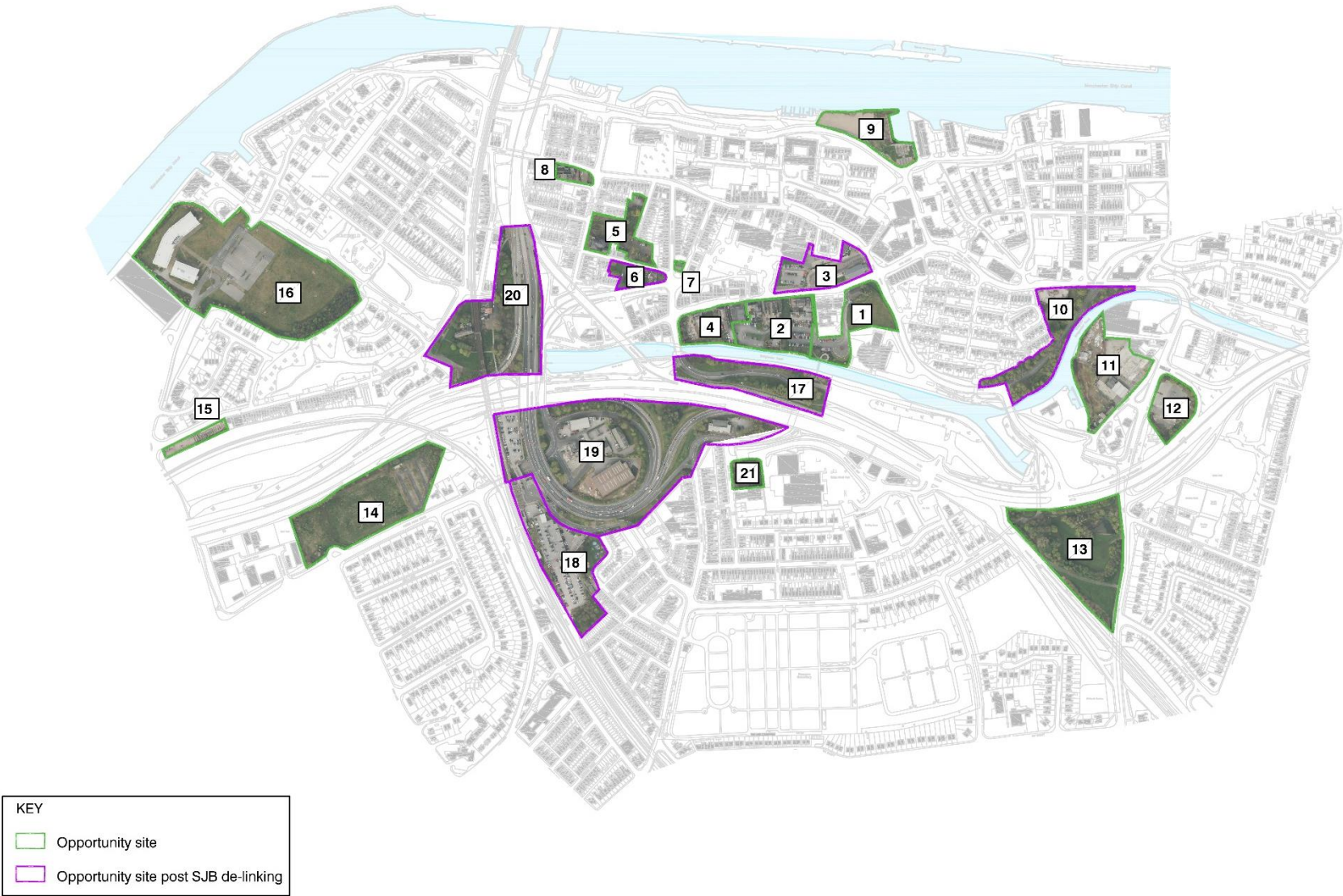
04 Opportunity Sites

The Sites

There are a number of opportunity sites within the Runcorn Old Town Impact Area. These opportunities range from major vacant sites including the site of the former Riverside College Runcorn Campus which are ready to come forward in the next few years, to smaller sites with established uses which should be redeveloped in the longer term. A total of 21 opportunity sites have been identified, with their potential land uses and sizes outlined in the adjacent figure and in the table that follows. It should also be noted that the development plots with purple outlines in the figure will only be developed post SJB de-linking.

Site No.	Site Name	Proposed Use	Approx. Area (sq m)	Delivery
1	Brindley Green & Access	Strengthening the Retail Core	6,944	Public Sector Led
2	Canalside	Residential	8,090	Public Sector Led/Partnership
3	Former Direct Link, Bus Station & Temporary Car Park	Strengthening the Retail Core	6,554	Public Sector Led
4	Former La Scala	Residential	4,788	Private Sector Led/Partnership
5	Egerton Street North	Residential	5,312	Private Sector Led following Disposal
6	Egerton Street South	Residential	2,042	Public Sector Led
7	Former Masonic PH	Residential	179	Private Sector Led
8	Lord Street	Residential	1,591	Private Sector Led
9	Land adjacent to The Deck	Residential	5,672	Private Sector Led
10	Bridge Street and Busway	Residential	10,485	Public Sector or Private Sector Led
11	Victoria Road	Residential	11,507	Private Sector Led
12	Heath Road	Residential	5,063	Private Sector Led
13	Big Pool	Residential	23,153	Private Sector Led
14	Picow Farm Road	Residential	19,067	Private Sector Led following Disposal
15	Percival Lane	Residential	1,476	Private Sector Led
16	Former Riverside College (Runcorn Campus) site	Residential	41,436	Private Sector Led
17	Land at Greenway Road	Strengthening the Retail Core	10,839	Public Sector Led
18	Runcorn Station	New Station Quarter	11,558	Private Sector Led
19	Trumpet Loop	New Station Quarter	44,509	Public Sector Led
20	Land under Queensway	Residential	23,421	Public Sector Led
21	Okell Street	Residential	1,742	Private Sector Led

Figure 4.1 Opportunity Site Locations



OPPORTUNITY SITES: DESTINATION RUNCORN: NEW STATION QUARTER

Runcorn Train Station is a major asset for Runcorn Old Town, situated on the strategically important West Coast Mainline. It is very well used, especially for business and leisure trips, because of the frequency and speed of journeys to Liverpool, London and Birmingham. Both the Halton Curve and HS2 are expected to further enhance the status and patronage of the station in coming years.

The vision for the area around Runcorn Train Station is to:

- **Create a New Gateway to Runcorn**
First impressions count, they set the tone or initial perception of a place. This key gateway should no longer be grey and dull, but memorable for the right reasons. This is Runcorn's opportunity to stand out from the crowd.
- **Develop a HS2 Hub Fit for Purpose**
Passenger numbers are forecast to substantially increase over the next 20-years here. This should be a high quality arrival and departure point, with excellent station facilities, including the potential for ancillary retail, eateries and spaces to enjoy whilst waiting. Simplification of the highway network will also increase the ease and speed of access.
- **Improve Links to the Old Town**
Whilst this is less than a 10-minute walk, currently these links are convoluted and confusing. More direct, legible and welcoming links will significantly strengthen both areas.
- **Release High-Quality Development Land**
Oriented around a major transport hub, with fast links to three major cities, there is excellent potential for hotel, residential, commercial, and potentially retail and leisure.

Figure 4.2 Station Quarter

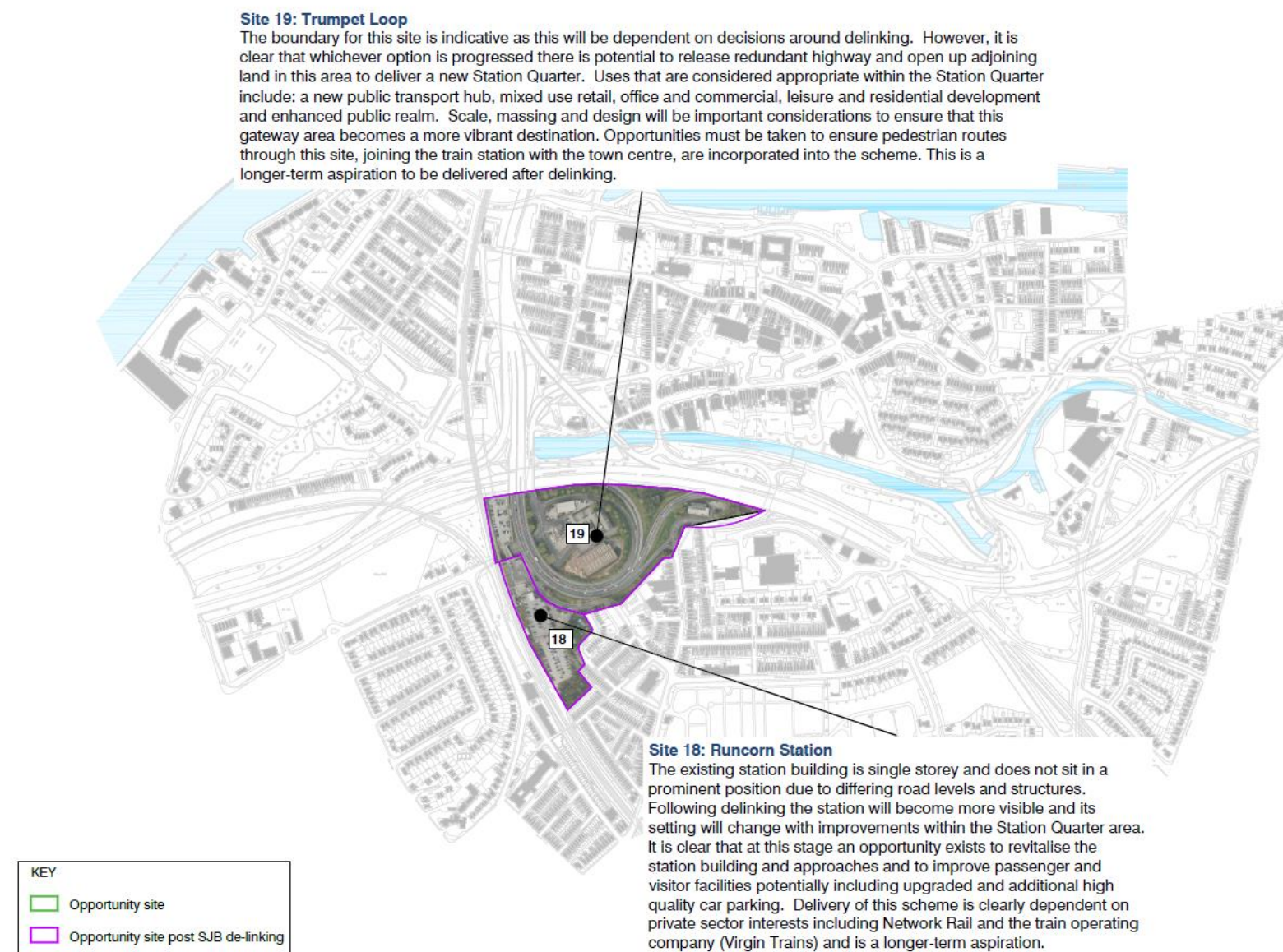


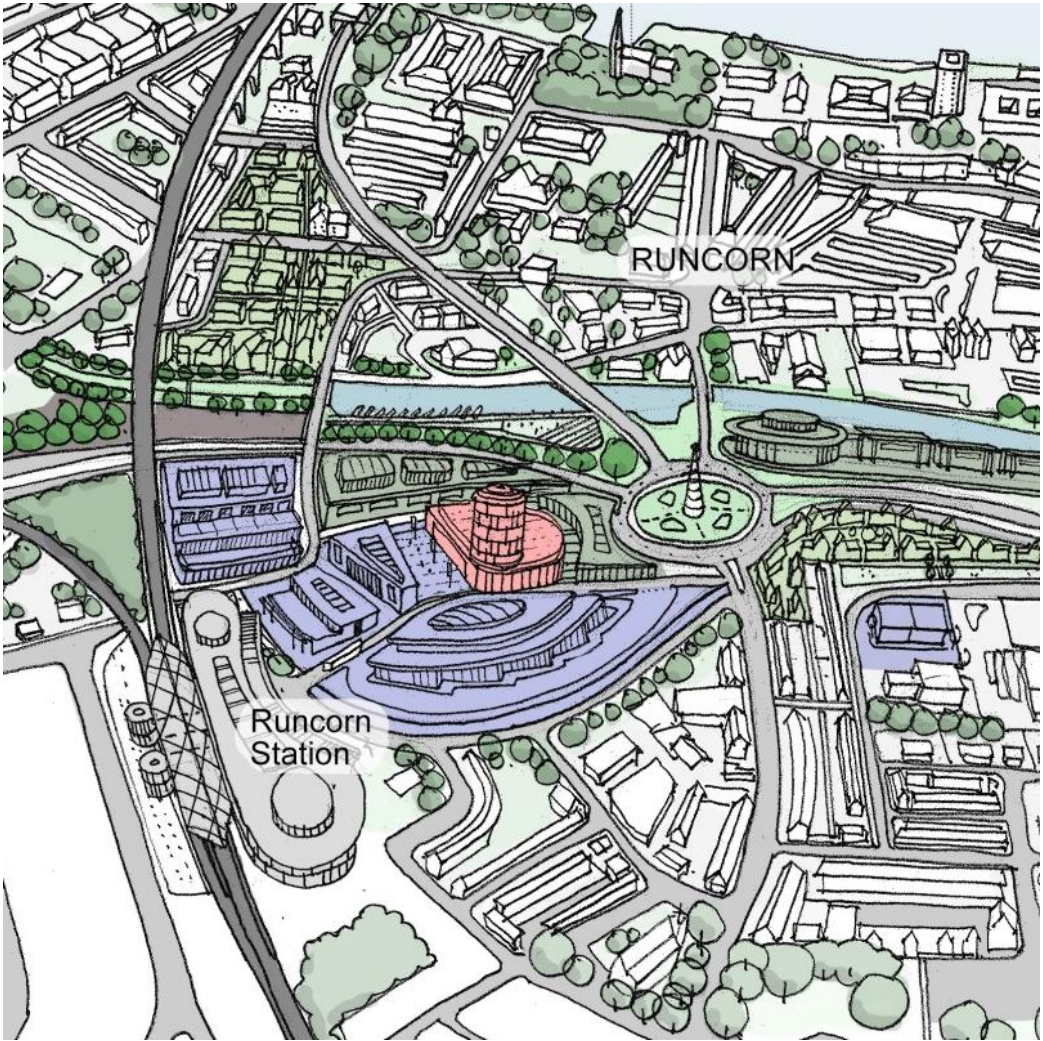
Figure 4.3 Station Quarter design

The adjacent figures indicate a potential future for the Runcorn Station Quarter depending on whether de-linking Option 2B or 4B is taken forward.

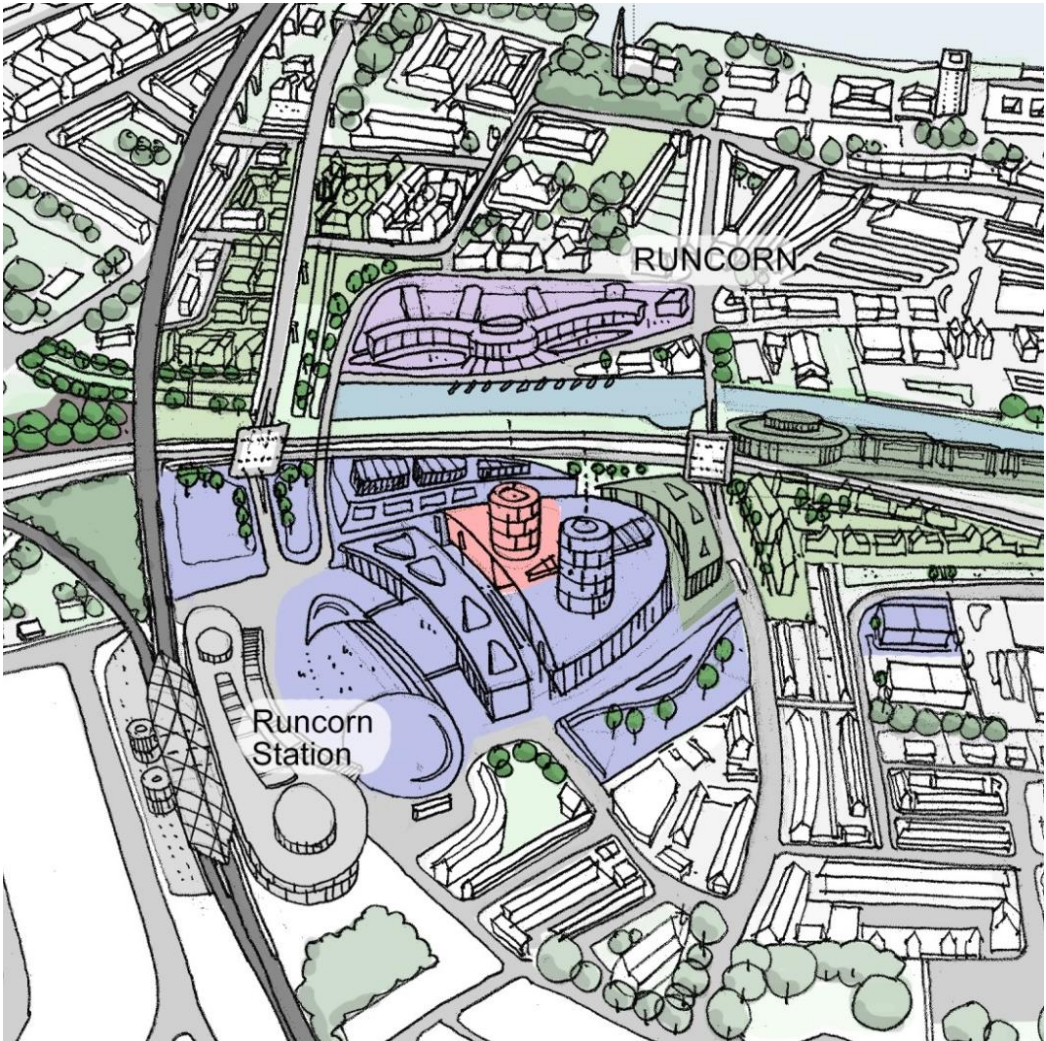
Under **Option 2B**, the Runcorn Approach Viaduct is retained and opened to two-way flows and access between the Old Town, Station Quarter and the SJB is supported by a new roundabout to the east of the station. The new Station Quarter development would be focused upon the area of land currently encompassed by the Queensway Trumpet Loop.

Under **Option 4B**, a new link is provided directly from the SJB to the Weston Point/Bridgewater Expressway and the removal of the Runcorn Approach Viaduct would enable a larger area of development to be opened up to the north of the Bridgewater Canal.

Option 2B



Option 4B



Illustrations for indicative purposes only © Mott MacDonald & IBI



Mixed Use Development, Epsom Station © Network Rail



Rail-Oriented Commercial Development, Blackpool UK © Muse



Superkilen Park, Copenhagen DK © Iwan Baan



Hotel, Oslo NO © Design Hotels

DEVELOPMENT SITES: STRENGTHENING THE RETAIL CORE

The Vision for the town centre is to strengthen and consolidate the retail core, building on the strength of the Brindley and creating a place that works for residents, workers and visitors, thereby helping to boost the centre's vitality and viability.

It is clear that the development of the former Crosville bus depot site has helped to unlock the wider regeneration of Runcorn Old Town. The scheme has delivered a much needed family public house and restaurant along with a drive through Costa coffee shop to this prominent canal front site and has opened up the area providing views into the town centre from the Expressway. It has also improved pedestrian linkages from the Bridge Retail Park through the site to the Brindley and delivered a purpose built public car park in easy reach of the town centre to enable the release of other opportunity sites along the canal that are currently being used for this purpose. This development is a game-changer for the town centre and will hopefully act as a catalyst for further investment in the area.



Figure 4.4 Retail Core Overview

Site 3: Former Direct Link, Bus Station and Temporary Car Park

This opportunity site is located within the retail core and will best meet needs to deliver a retail-led scheme within the town centre. The focus should be on delivering new retail floorspace (Class A1), but other town centre uses including family orientated leisure may also be acceptable.

Connectivity should be a major consideration on this site and it is important that any scheme delivers integrated pedestrian linkages to key areas within the town centre, encouraging movement. It must be recognised that this is a gateway site for anyone approaching the town centre from Leiria Way and so quality design will be essential to ensuring that visitors leave with good first impressions. Consideration must be given to the potential reinstatement of retail frontages to High Street and Church Street and also to the whether some or all of the temporary car parking area could be integrated within a wider scheme. There are also opportunities to extend the retail frontage at Granville Street down to High Street, creating a more desirable link.

The redevelopment of this site will be dependent on decisions around de-linking as it is essential that discussions around the accommodation of key bus routes takes place before the bus station can be released as an opportunity site. Routing will be clearly dependent on the final road layouts.

Site 17: Land at Greenway Road

The boundary for this site is indicative as this will be dependent on decisions around delinking. However, if Greenway Road does become redundant then it is believed that this area of land will be best suited to providing additional town centre car parking to extend provision at the former Crosville bus depot site. This is a longer-term opportunity. Clearly this site is well placed to achieve this with pedestrian routes to the town centre via Doctor's Bridge (at the junction of Devonshire Place and High Street) and the over the spiral footbridge to the Brindley.

KEY

Opportunity site

Opportunity site post SJB de-linking

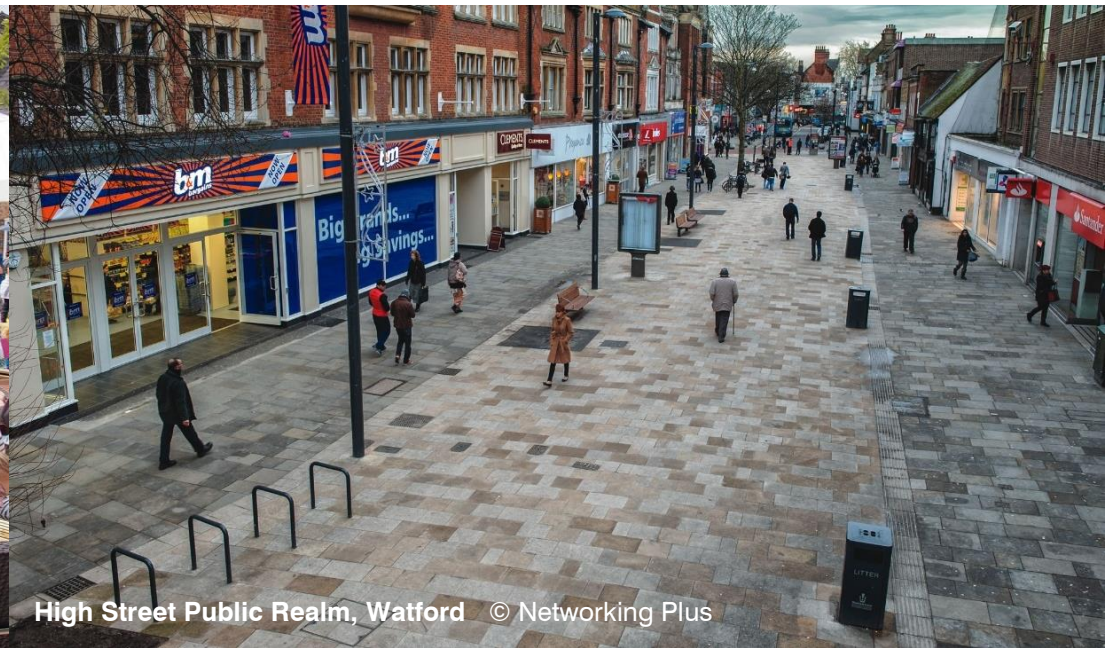
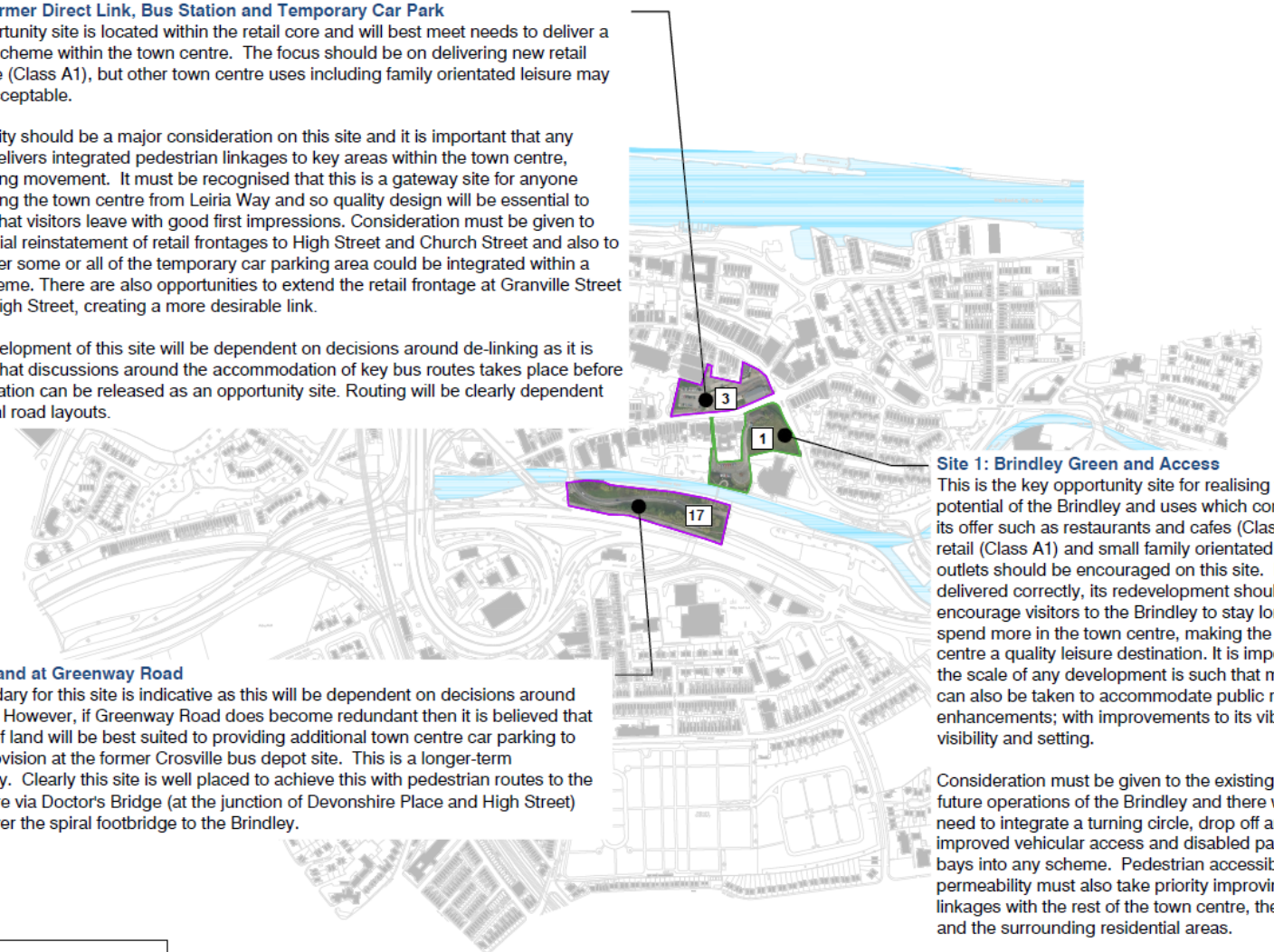


Figure 4.5 A future for Runcorn Old Town Centre



DEVELOPMENT SITES: GROWING THE RESIDENTIAL CATCHMENT

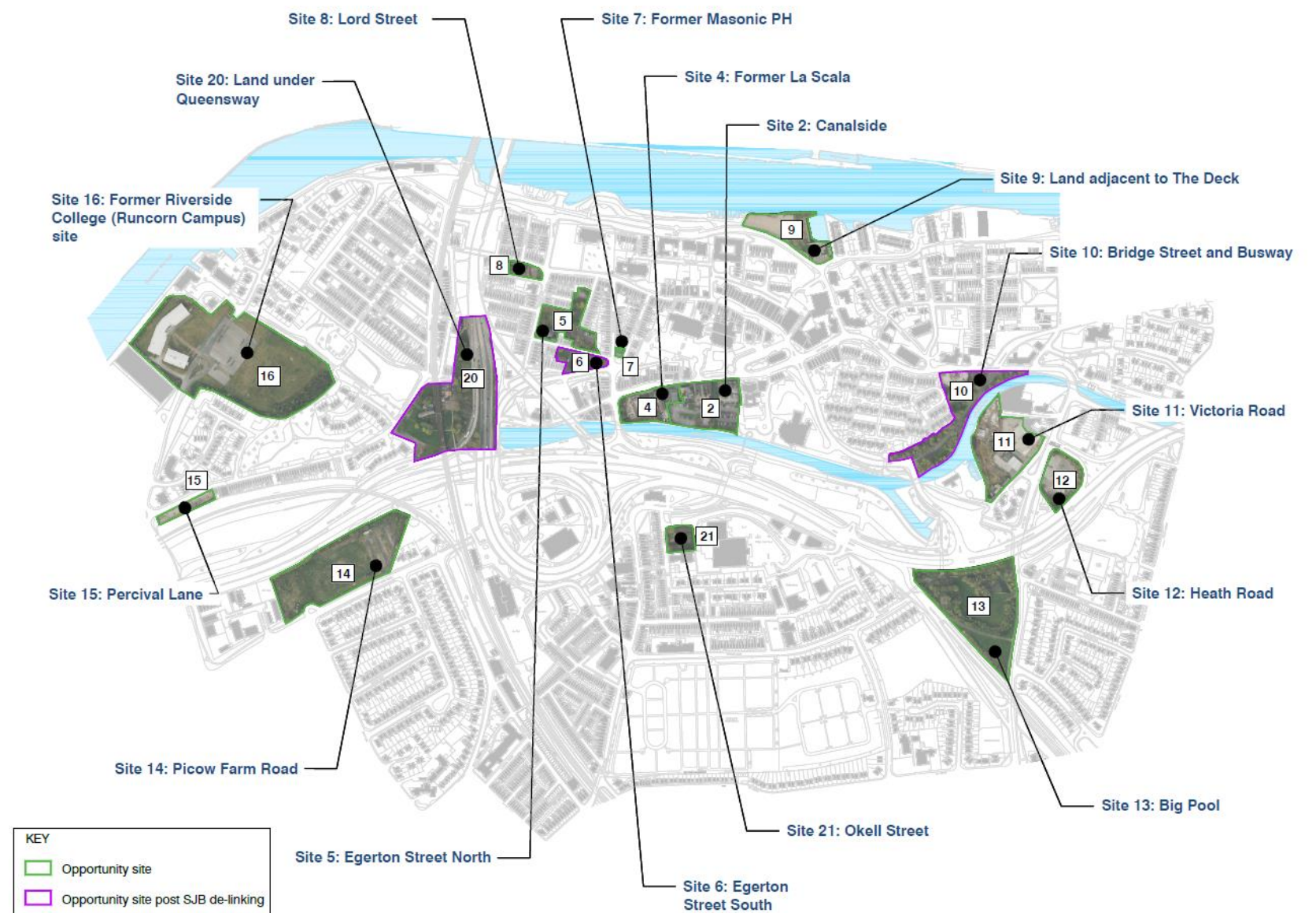
The Vision seeks the delivery of quality living spaces that the area can be proud of, meeting local needs as well as helping to attract new people into the area. This part of Runcorn has a lot to offer, being only a short walk from Runcorn train station and the town centre and having excellent road links.

There has already been some fairly recent investment in the area with the large residential development around Old Coach Road and the waterside apartment development at Mersey Road, known locally as 'The Deck'.

There are also a number of opportunity sites within the area that benefit from planning permission for new residential developments or conversions including the former Riverside College (Runcorn Campus) site which benefits from outline planning permission for up to 120 homes. With delinking it is believed that over 600 new homes could be accommodated in Runcorn Old Town Impact Area, from spacious family houses, to ultra-modern waterside apartments.

Great strides have been taken locally to improve the quality of housing stock in Murdishaw and Castlefields including Juniper Grove and Bridgewater Gardens developments – now Runcorn Old Town needs the same. Delivery of quality residential development on the identified brownfield sites in this area, along with improvements to the retail offer, environment, pedestrian linkages and road network could be the impetus needed to kick-start wider urban renewal.

Figure 4.6 Residential Offer



We are aiming to deliver a number of high quality homes including those with attractive waterfront settings...



Site 2: Canalside - An opportunity exists to provide a quality residential-led mixed use development at the heart of the town centre which integrates with the adjoining canal and provides an attractive frontage to High Street. Potential for ground floor retail (Class A1), restaurant and café (Class A3) uses to the lower floor particularly where the site adjoins the Brindley. Scale and massing will be important consideration for the site and a high-density scheme, well designed to take advantages of the varying levels across the site would be considered appropriate. Due to its proximity to Site 4 'Former La Scala' it will be essential to ensure that a joined-up approach is taken to access, car parking and potential off-site highway works and there may be merits in delivering the two sites as a single scheme.

Site 4: Former La Scala – An opportunity exists to provide a quality residential development which integrates with the adjoining canal and provides an attractive frontage to High Street. Doctor's Bridge is likely to remain one of the two key routes into the town centre following delinking and consequently it will remain a key 'gateway' site. Design and massing will, therefore, be important considerations for the development of this site. Due to its proximity to Site 2 'Canalside' it will be essential to ensure that a joined-up approach is taken to access, car parking and potential off-site highway works and there may be merits in delivering the two sites as a single scheme.

Site 5: Egerton Street North – This is a comprehensive restoration and redevelopment package, which includes the Grade II listed former Carnegie Library building and the Waterloo Building with additional development land in a residential setting. The site provides an opportunity to deliver a quality residential-led scheme, with uses including sheltered accommodation or extra-care living also considered appropriate in this highly accessible location.

Site 6: Egerton Street South – An opportunity for residential infilling on land opposite the former Carnegie Library building. Although the site does present itself as a residential development opportunity, this is a longer-term aspiration which should be explored after decisions have been made around the potential removal of duplicate links from Devonshire Place to Waterloo Bridge following delinking.

Site 7: Former Masonic PH – This building is at a prominent entry point to the town centre and is currently in a poor state of repair. There is an opportunity for a residential led conversion of this vacant property to both deliver new homes to meet local needs and bring this derelict property back into use. The site benefits from full planning permission for 3 no. 2 bedroom apartments with ground floor retail.

Site 8: Lord Street - An opportunity for residential infilling and conversion of the existing vacant public house building to continue the residential frontage along Lord Street. The site benefits from planning permission for the change of use of the public house into two Houses in Multiple Occupation, and three additional terraced properties.

Site 9: Land adjacent to The Deck – An opportunity exists for a prominent development of modern water-side apartments overlooking the Manchester Ship Canal/ River Mersey. Scale, massing and design will be important considerations to ensure its integration with the 'Deck' development adjoining.

Site 10: Bridge Street and Busway – An opportunity exists for a quality residential development with frontage to Bridge Street and could also incorporate the busway as a scheme of sensitively designed canal side homes if this is deemed surplus to requirements. This is something that will need to be explored following decisions around de-linking. Bus routes will need to continue to serve High Street and Runcorn Station and routing will be dependent on the final road layouts.

Site 11: Victoria Road – An opportunity exists to provide an attractive development of quality family homes to meet local needs, taking advantage of its canal setting.

Site 12: Heath Road – An opportunity exists to provide a development of quality family homes to meet local needs.

Site 13: Big Pool – An opportunity exists to provide a development of quality family homes to meet local needs. The boundary of this site may be substantially smaller than shown and it is unclear how much of the site will be suitable for further development without further investigations.

Site 14: Picow Farm Road – An opportunity exists to provide a development of quality family homes to meet local needs. Outline planning permission exists for a development of up to 62 homes on this site.

Site 15: Percival Lane – An opportunity exists to provide a development of quality family homes to continue the residential frontage along Percival Lane. The site benefits from full planning permission for 16 town houses.

Site 16: Former Riverside College (Runcorn Campus) site – An opportunity exists to provide a development of quality family homes adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal/ River Mersey. Outline planning permission exists for a development of up to 120 homes on this site. There is opportunity to improve accessibility in this area by providing access from Old Coach Road through to Runcorn Docks Road.

Site 20: Land under Queensway – The boundary for this site is indicative as this will be dependent on decisions around delinking. However, it is clear that delinking will release additional land in this locality and it is believed that this land will be best suited to providing a choice of quality homes to meet local needs. This is a longer-term opportunity. There are some small infill plots in this area, particularly around Hankey Street, but it would be premature to deliver these in the short-medium term.

Site 21: Okell Street – This is a small residential opportunity site with frontage to Okell Street.

...in addition to mixed use residential schemes that will improve our retail offer and increase housing provision in highly accessible locations.



05 Supporting Schemes

Public Realm

Quality public realm is vital if we are to be successful in creating environments that people want to live, work and invest in. There is also a wealth of research that suggests high-quality public realm can add significant value to local economies, businesses, and house prices. Public realm upgrades both support existing investment and provoke new.

There are several ways we can improve public realm; from widening pavements or changing road surfaces, to creating public squares or shared spaces.

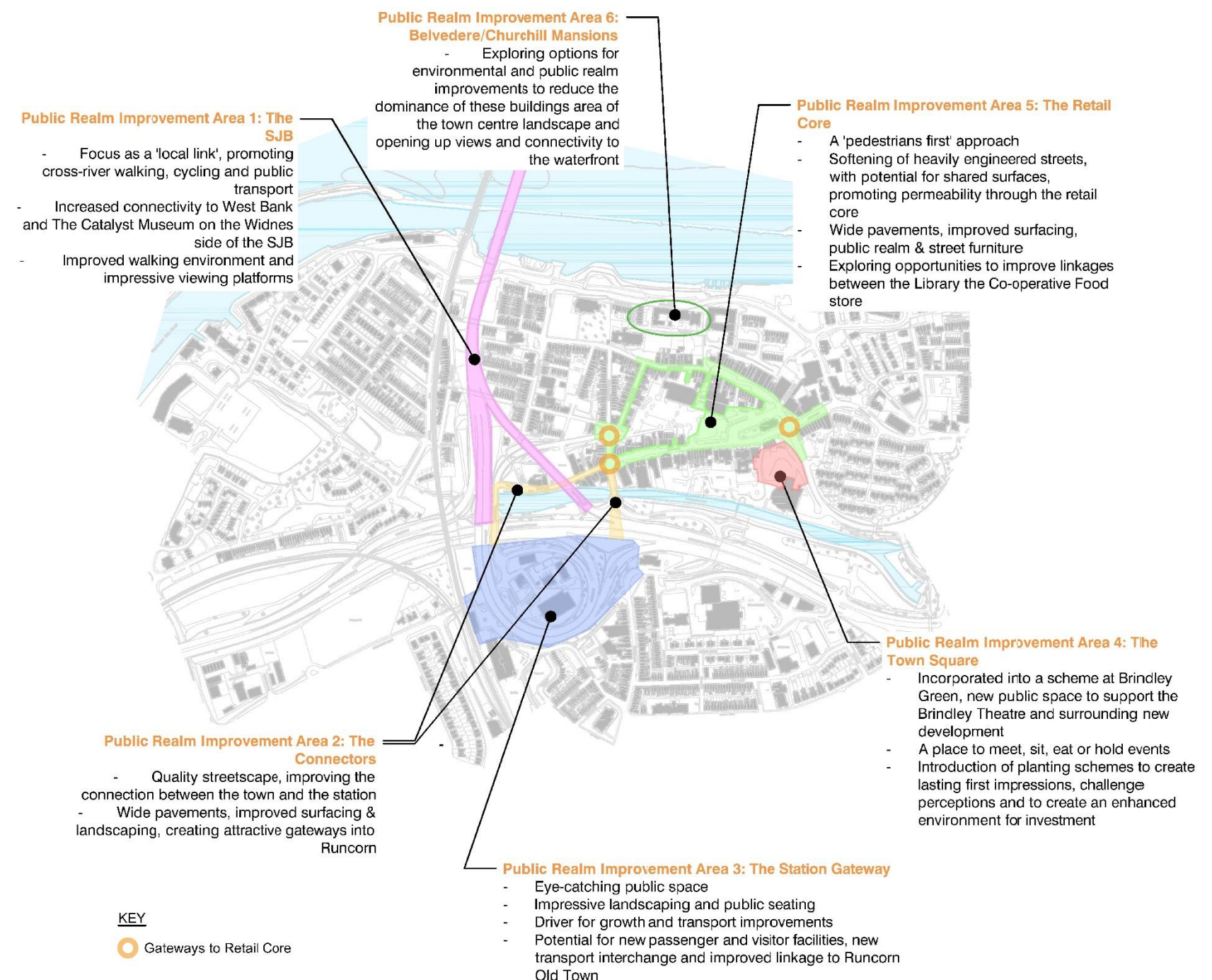
We have identified five key Public Realm Improvement Areas:

- 1 The SJB
- 2 The Connectors
- 3 The Station Gateway
- 4 The Town Square
- 5 The Retail Core
- 6 Belvedere/Churchill Mansions

Examples of the potential style each improvement area could adopt are set out on the following page.



Figure 5.1 Public Realm





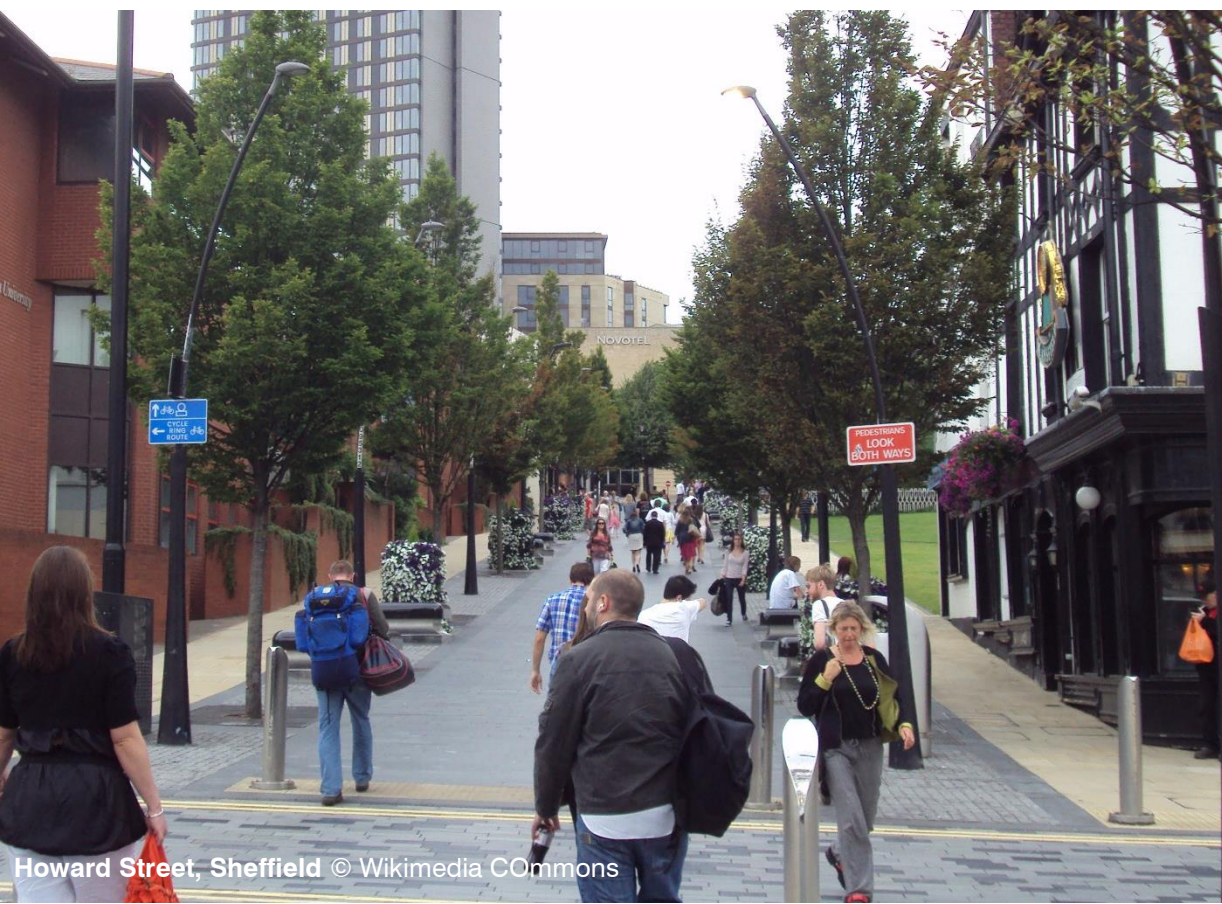
San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, USA © SF Gate

▲ Area 1: The SJB

It is known that more than 350 one-way trips are completed each day on the bridge already. Therefore, the reallocation of traffic away from the SJB provides a major opportunity to provide a high-quality fast and direct cycleway between Runcorn and Widnes, linking to the Trans-Pennine Trail on the northern side of the River Mersey.

▼ Area 2: The Connectors

The links between the town centre and the railway station are presently poor. Providing more direct, legible and well-designed routes between the two will strengthen and reconnect these assets.



Howard Street, Sheffield © Wikimedia Commons

► Area 3: The Station Gateway

For many, the area around the railway station is the first (or only) impression of Runcorn. First impressions count, and change here could be transformational for Runcorn's image. New public space here should be eye catching and distinguished – Runcorn needs a 'wow factor'.



Superkilen, Copenhagen DK© Dezeen

► Area 4: The Town Square

The Brindley Theatre is clearly a real asset to Runcorn Old Town, and with quality development sites nearby there is space for a new public square. This space should be intimate and characterful, with quality paving, seating and planting. Food and drink outlets would add vitality to the space, which could also be used for public events too.



Goose Green, Altrincham © Planit IE

► Area 5: The Retail Core

Good public realm is essential to maintaining a healthy High Street, and particularly supporting local businesses. There are a number of areas throughout the Retail Core where we think the dominance of traffic could be reduced, and there are real opportunities to positively refresh the urban environment of this important area.



Hill Street, Newry © Hartecast

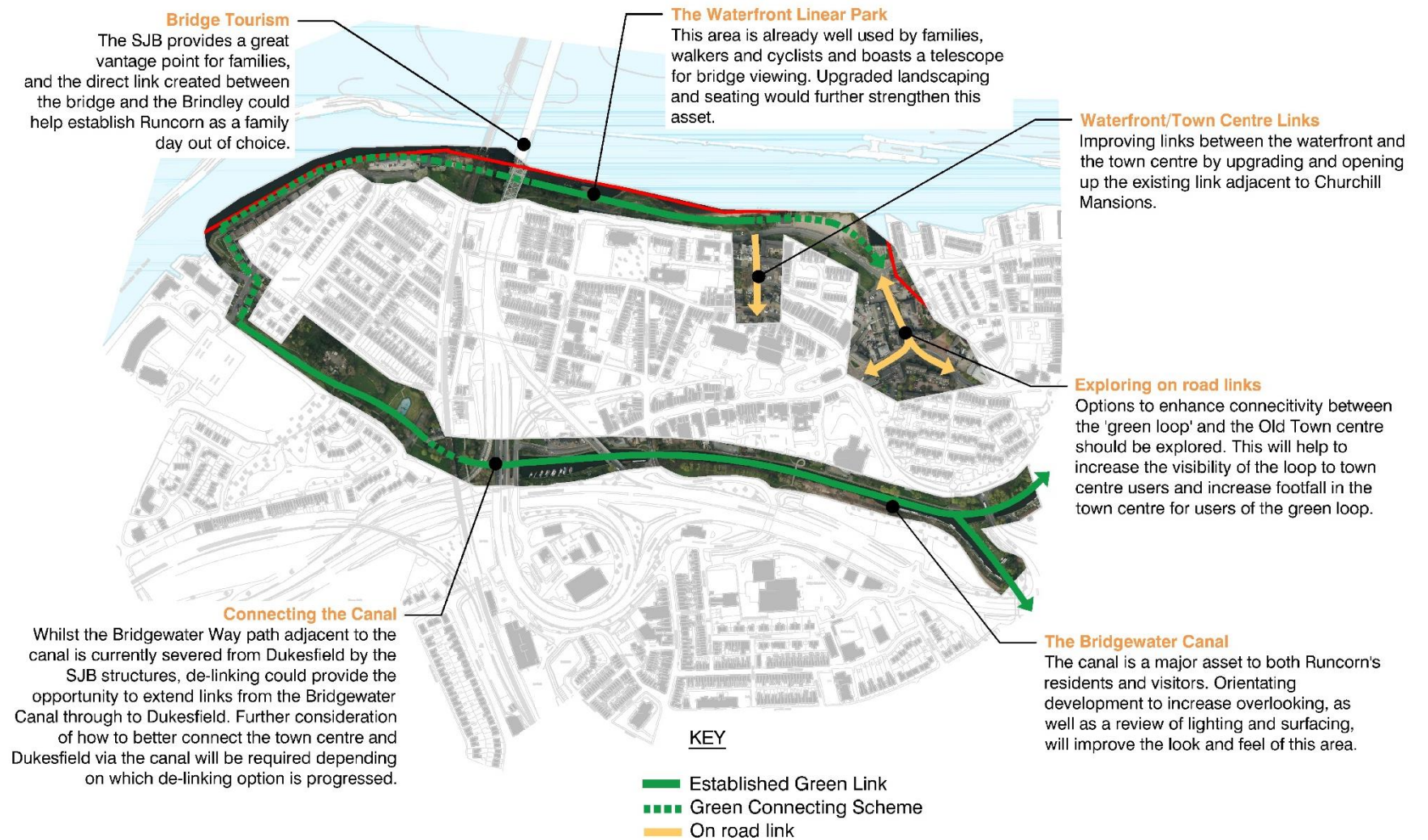
Green Infrastructure & Tourism

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a phrase used to describe all green and blue spaces in and around our towns and cities. It plays an incredibly important role in the social, economic, and environmental health of places. It adds value to the quality of the urban environment, as well as natural water management, clean air and tourism and recreation.

Whilst some of these spaces already exist, there are clear opportunities to strengthen the role of GI in Runcorn and to link this to wider aspirations around the Mid-Mersey Estuary Park. In particular, a 'green loop' that encompasses the town centre and Dukesfield has been identified. The green loop is currently in varying conditions; with some areas established (but perhaps requiring upgrade) and others not presently well utilised for GI. The introduction of flowers and bulbs in spring can go an enormous way to brightening up the area, creating a great space for our residents and workers as well as helping to attract more visitors to our town.



Figure 5.2 Green Infrastructure



The Visitor Economy is identified as a key growth sector in the LCR Growth Strategy, identifying a need to continue to establish the LCR as an internationally renowned thriving and vibrant destination for business and leisure visitors with global connectivity, enhancing the attractiveness of the area as a place to study, live, work and invest.

The de-linking of the SJB offers an opportunity to improve local links with Widnes, making destinations such as the Catalyst and Spike Island more accessible. The transformation of the bridge into a leisure facility, paired with the enhancement of the Manchester Ship Canal Waterfront (which is already well used by walkers and cyclists), has the potential to provide a truly unique tourist experience, making it a focal point along the River Mersey.

The ‘green loop’ would allow tourists to explore at their own leisure, and experience the numerous nature reserves/wildlife sites that are on offer in Runcorn. In regards to tourism, Runcorn already has a lot to offer...

Family Day Out

The Brindley is rated #1 of things to do in Runcorn on TripAdvisor and boasts their ‘Certificate of Excellence’. The award-winning theatre is the main centre for arts and entertainment in Halton and hosts a wide variety of shows covering all genres.

The Catalyst Museum is an interactive science centre and museum devoted to chemistry, located on the other side of the SJB, in Widnes. With an aim to make science exciting and accessible to people of all ages and abilities, the Catalyst provides an action-packed family attraction with an educational focus. It offers three award-winning galleries to explore, and a rooftop observatory with stunning views encompassing the Welsh hills and the Pennines.

Natural Tourism

Wetlands and Local Wildlife Sites a variety of sites offer unique flora and fauna, including Astmoor Saltmarsh and Swamp, Haystack Lodge, Haddocks Wood, Norton Priory and Priory Meadows. Additionally, the Mersey Estuary is listed as a Ramsar Convention wetland – a wetland of international importance.

Wigg Island is a Local Nature Reserve located between the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal. The park is a popular bird watching spot, and sports a rich variety of native wildflowers. The Wigg Island Environmental Trail provides visitors with in-depth information about the local ecology.

Runcorn Hill Park Nature Reserve comprises a wide variety of landscape characters, including a 19th century quarry with 1920s landscape valleys, early 20th century formal gardens, open playing fields, oak-birch woodland and a locally important area of lowland heath. Facilities at the park include a bandstand, putting green, bowling green, boating lake, tennis courts and a network of footpaths and bridleways.

Pickering Pasture is a Green Flag Award winning Local Nature Reserve, with acres of wild flower meadows and a magnificent view across the upper Mersey Estuary. The area provides a place to enjoy picnics and watch the abundant wildlife., along with surface paths along the waterfront.

Diversifying Our Offer

A Bridge Viewing Deck: The de-linking of the SJB provides an opportunity for us to do something different. It would provide visitors with a unique opportunity to experience Runcorn like never before. Taking inspiration from London’s Tower Bridge, a viewing deck would transform the SJB into a focal point, and allow panoramic views of the Liverpool City Region, the River Mersey, and the Mersey Gateway Bridge – something that is not replicated anywhere else in the North West. In addition to this, it would also present the perfect vantage point for views of Runcorn’s green infrastructure, in particular, the Mid-Mersey Estuary Park.



The Brindley © ents24



Wigg Island



Silver Jubilee Bridge

Access & Movement: Connecting the Old Town

Whilst the Expressway, SJB and soon to be completed Mersey Gateway afford Runcorn Old Town strong strategic connectivity, there are several local issues associated with access and movement. These issues vary from localised congestion to major pedestrian severance. The objective approach to tackling these issues and unlocking the Old Town is set out below.

1 DEALING WITH TRAFFIC HOTSPOTS

A number of 'problem junctions' and traffic hotspots exist in the town centre including at Devonshire Place and along the High Street towards Leiria Way. Review of junction layouts and new car parking to the south of the canal will help alleviate these issues.

2 REMOVING DUPLICATE LINKS

Both Station Road and the High Street link into the Waterloo Bridge. Removal of one of these duplicate links offers opportunities to reduce the number of arms that feed problem junctions, reconnect historical road layouts (Waterloo Road, Egerton Street etc.) and potentially release parcels of development land.

3 RECONNECTING DUKESFIELD

Existing and proposed residential areas are currently severed from the town centre by the SJB approaches. Removing this severance and providing new walking and cycling routes as part of the GI route will substantially improve the amenity of these areas.

4 LINKING TO THE STATION QUARTER

The 'Trumpet Loop' in-particular creates a major barrier to movement between the station and the Old Town. Removing this severance, improving sightlines and natural wayfinding will connect the redeveloped Station Quarter to the retail core of the Old Town.

5 REMOVING SUBWAYS

Consideration should be given to replacing subways with at-grade crossings which could help improve personal safety (or perceptions of) and increase the attractiveness of walking and cycling routes between the town centre, residential areas and Bridge Retail Park.

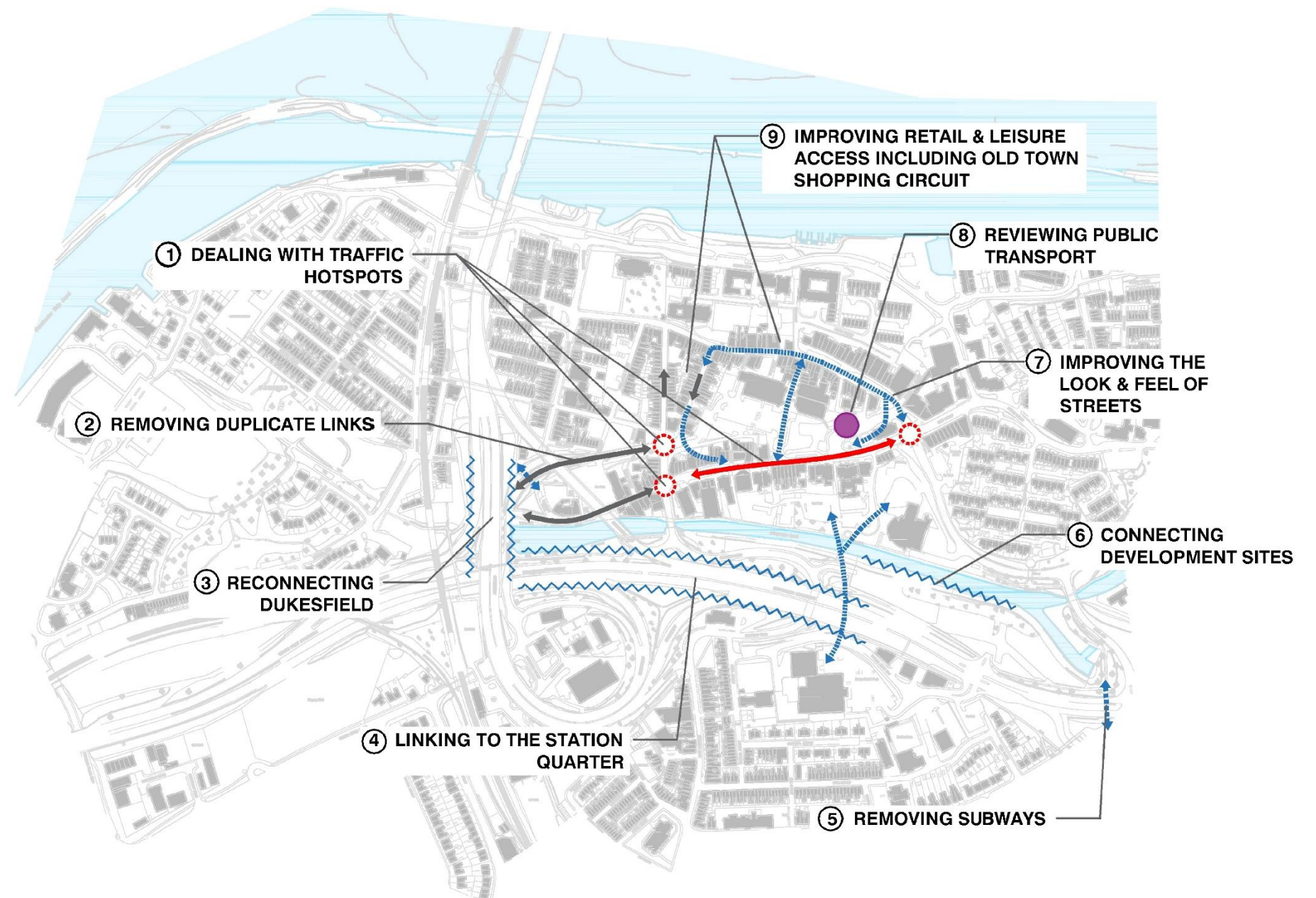
6 CONNECTING DEVELOPMENT SITES

New development should be well linked into the surrounding urban fabric including upgraded footways and crossings.

7 IMPROVING THE LOOK AND FEEL OF STREETS

There is room for review of streetscene in the town centre, particularly in reducing the heavily engineered look of some junctions. This could include the removal of guard-railing or more aesthetically pleasing solutions, such as shared surfaces in some locations.

Figure 5.3 Transport & Connectivity - Issues



8 REVIEWING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The existing bus station has been identified as a key retail opportunity site within the town centre. In order to release this site for development, a review of bus routing will need to take place, which should also consider if the busways will be required for routing purposes. It is essential that key bus services still serve the town centre and although it is believed that this can be achieved through the provision of laybys onto High Street, a fresh review will be needed in the context of de-linking including plans to provide a public transport hub at Runcorn Station.

9 IMPROVING RETAIL & LEISURE ACCESS INCLUDING OLD TOWN SHOPPING CIRCUIT

Access to retail and leisure areas should be direct and easily understandable. Improvements to on-foot routing between the Bridge Retail Park and the town centre including the Brindley and Brindley Green site should be explored alongside a new 'Shopping Circuit' around High Street, Church Street, Granville Street and Regent Street, with upgrading surfacing and crossings to connect shoppers with town centre parking. Improvements to vehicular routing could be made by prioritising access over egress, such as reviewing one-way systems, in order to reduce the confusion and anxiety associated with driving into the town centre.

Access & Movement: The De-Linking Options

Each of the outlined SJB de-linking options consider the objectives set out in ‘Unlocking the Old Town’ – but particularly in the interaction of movement with the SJB, Expressway and Station Quarter. The text below sets out how the primary demands for movement in the area will function under each option.

Option 2b >

A new major gateway to Runcorn is formed around a roundabout, located at the bottom of a two-way eastern slip.

Through traffic: the new roundabout will tie the SJB, Expressway and Greenway Road into one junction.

Town Centre traffic: the new roundabout will also connect in to Devonshire Place. This simplified arrangement will significantly boost accessibility into the Retail Core by car. There is also potential for an easy access car park adjacent to the Crosville site, to help reduce queuing and congestion on High Street.

Station Quarter traffic: a new link will connect to Greenway Road, south of the roundabout.

Pedestrian movement: improved sightlines, reduced severance and at-grade crossing facilities will significantly enhance pedestrian movement.

Option 4b >

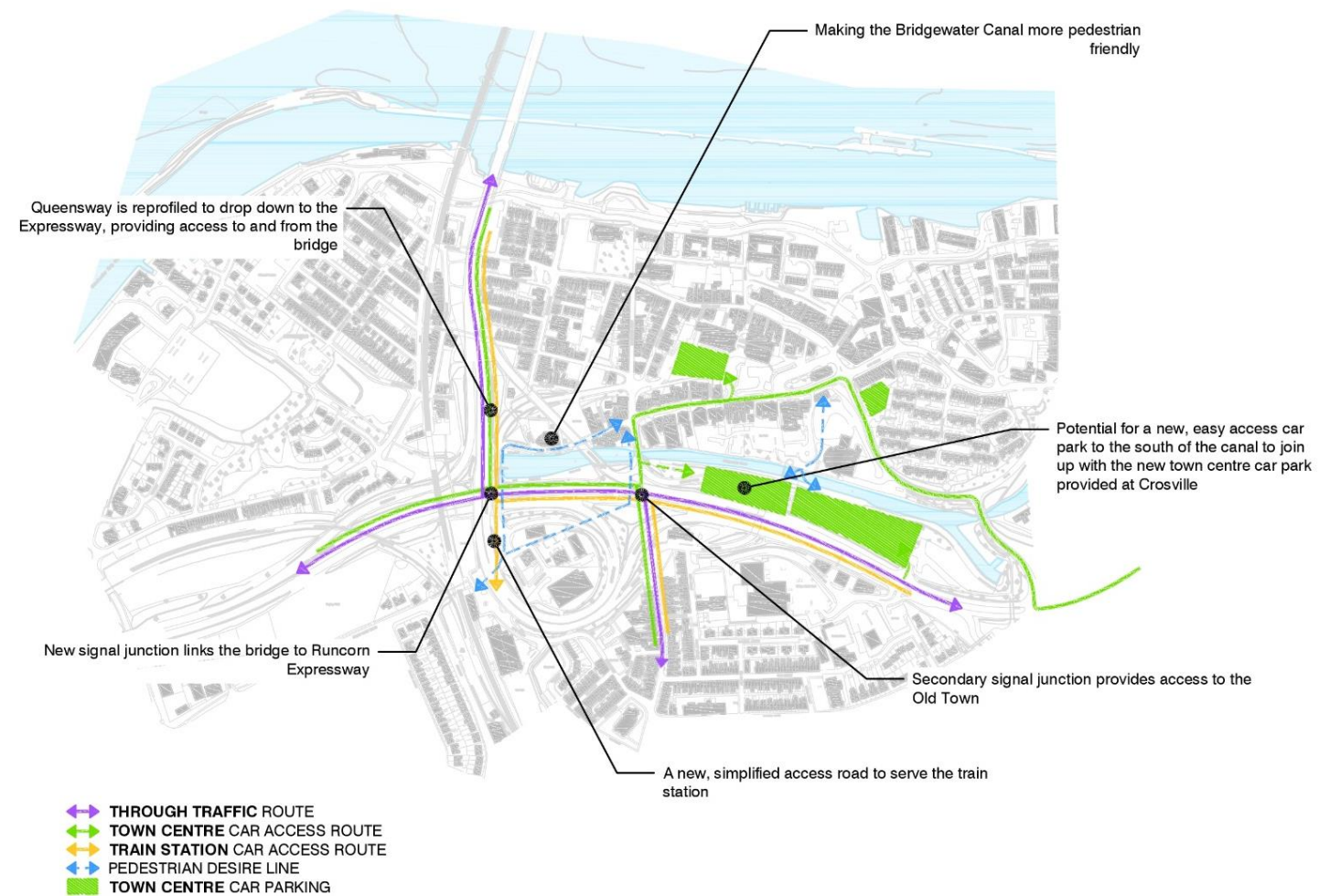
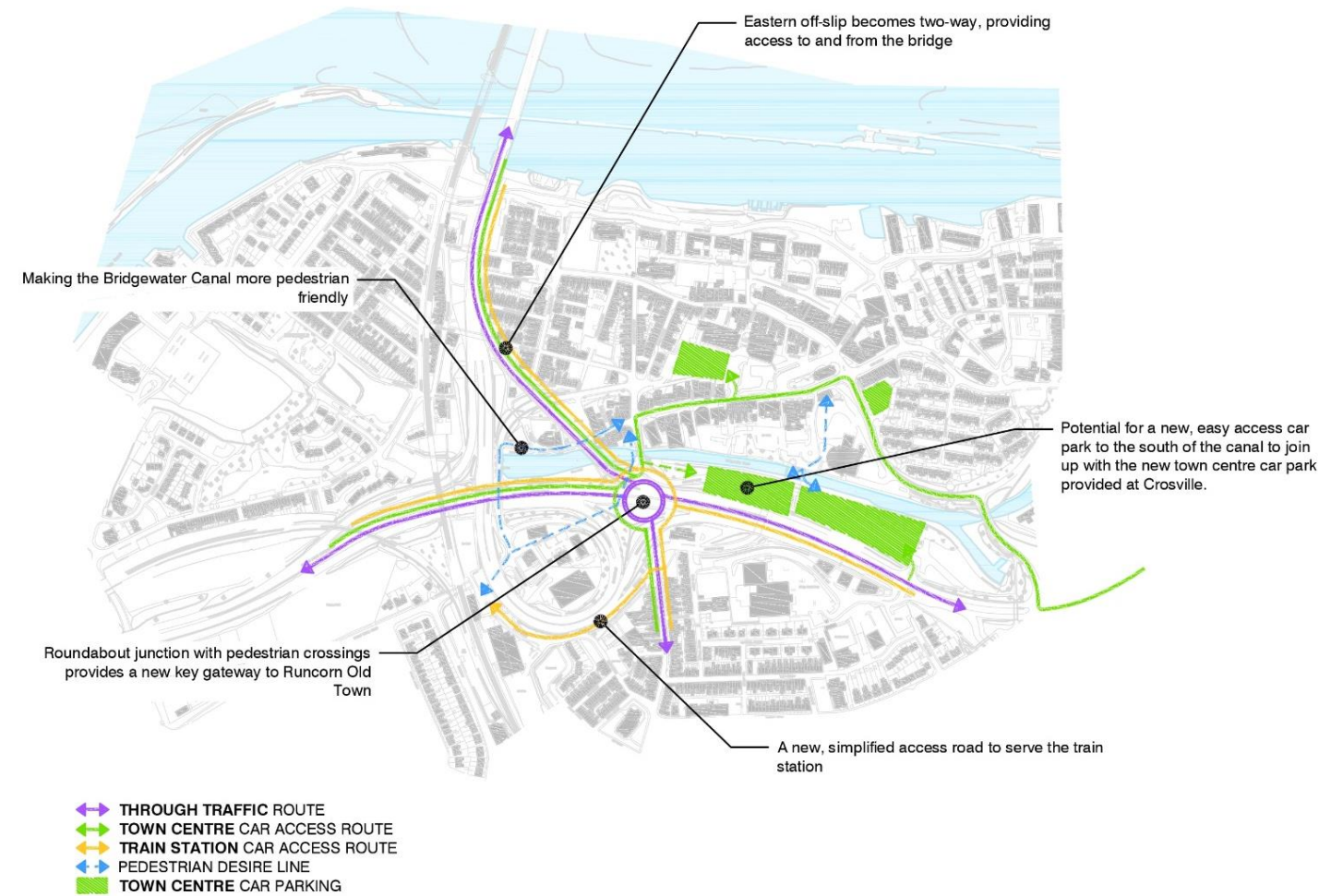
Two new signalised junctions are located on the Expressway. The larger (western) junction serves a re-graded Queensway, providing access to the SJB. The secondary (eastern) junction links to Devonshire Place and Doctors Bridge, north of Greenway Road.

Through traffic: the SJB will tie-in to the Expressway at the new western junction catering for east/west movement, whilst Greenway Road provides movement from areas to the south.

Town Centre traffic: the new eastern junction will connect in to Devonshire Place. This simplified arrangement will significantly boost accessibility into the Retail Core by car. Again, there is also potential for an easy access car park adjacent to the junction, to help reduce queuing and congestion on High Street.

Station Quarter traffic: a new link will connect directly to the western junction for both the Expressway and SJB.

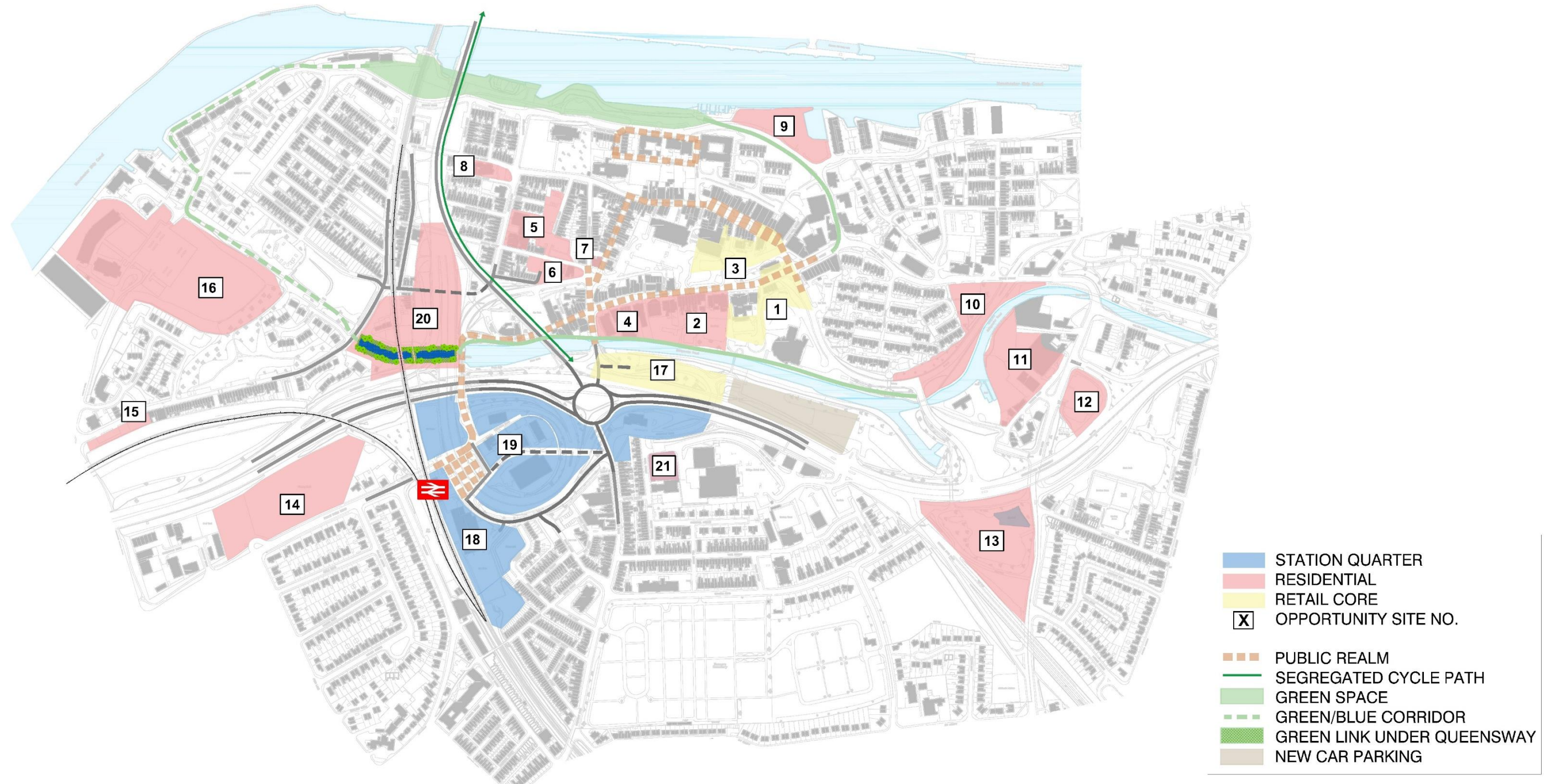
Pedestrian movement: again; improved sightlines and at-grade crossing facilities associated with the new signalised junction will significantly enhance pedestrian movement.



06 Masterplan Options

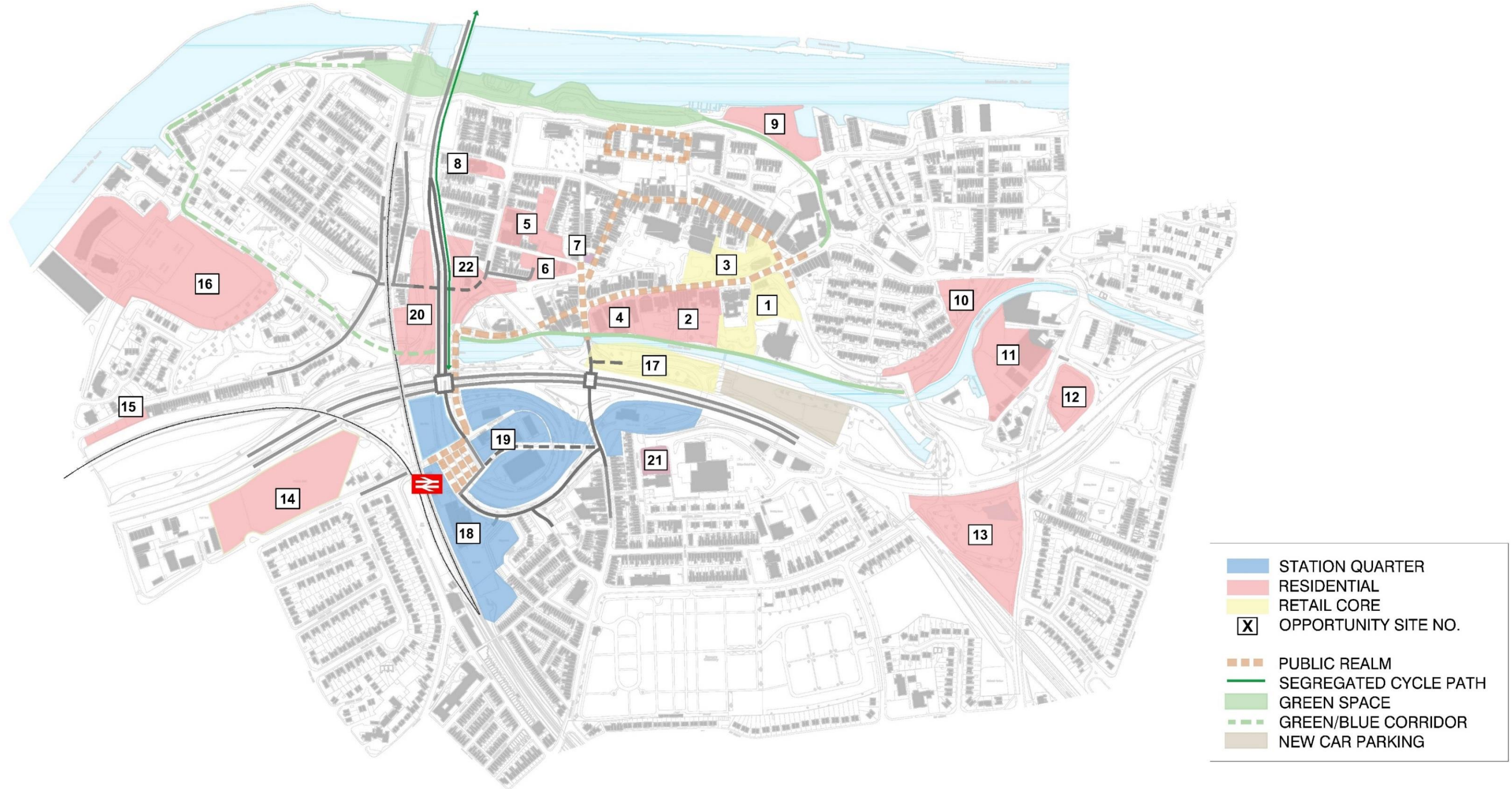
Runcorn Old Town Masterplan: Option 2B

The below figure combines each of the separate vision themes covered throughout this document as a single masterplan image for Runcorn Old Town, under de-linking Option 2B.



Runcorn Old Town Masterplan: Option 4B

The below figure combines each of the separate vision themes covered throughout this document as a single masterplan image for Runcorn Old Town, under de-linking Option 4B.



07 Delivery

This is an ambitious 20-year Vision for the Runcorn Old Town Impact Area and one which it is hoped will meet the needs and aspirations of residents, workers and visitors, providing opportunities to grow the residential catchment, strengthen and consolidate the retail core, and provide a new ‘gateway’ station quarter.

Although many of the opportunity sites identified are in private ownership, and the Council will have little control over their delivery, any investment that seeks to deliver the aspirations of the Vision will be supported wherever possible.

Council resources and investment will, in the short term, be directed to key transformational and place-shaping projects in order to stimulate uplift in land values, market conditions and general confidence in and perceptions of the area.

The Council’s priorities for delivery will, therefore, be as follows:

Delinking (Page 4)

Two preferred delinking options have been identified and feasibility work is on-going around design, phasing and funding. Whichever option is progressed, delinking will serve to simplify the road network and remove imposing and dominant structures within the residential area of Dukesfield which also act as a physical barrier between key destinations within the Runcorn Old Town impact area as a whole. It is a ‘game-changer’ for the area and also key to the delivery of the Station Quarter.

The Station Quarter (Pages 6-7)

A station-led regeneration project which takes advantage of the removal of road infrastructure on the Runcorn side of the Silver Jubilee Bridge surrounding Runcorn Station (delinking) to deliver a fully integrated public transport hub, uses including modern office, hotel, commercial and ancillary retail space, simplified vehicular access, improved connectivity between the station, the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods and major investment in quality public realm. This gateway opportunity will be pivotal to the transformation of the area as a whole, helping to create positive lasting first impressions.

The Brindley (Pages 8-9 & 12)

A public realm and connectivity project which builds on the strength and offer of The Brindley to redefine Runcorn Old Town Centre as a key leisure and tourism destination, encouraging increased footfall throughout the town centre, increasing dwell time and growing confidence in the area as a whole. The proposals will include extensive high quality public realm outside of the Brindley opening up views, improving linkages to other parts of the town centre and facilitating effective integration with the Bridgewater canal and other key development opportunity sites. The space created will enable a managed programme of events in Runcorn to be facilitated linked to operations at The Brindley. Opportunities should also be considered to integrate retail, food and drink and family orientated leisure into the scheme where this is complementary to the offer of the Brindley.



Moving forward, the Council is looking to engage with landowners, key stakeholders and developers about the Runcorn Old Town Vision, with the aim of securing private sector investment and to explore options around delivery and funding.

For further information about opportunities within the Runcorn Old Town Impact Area:

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