

# Gort • Town Centre First & Public Realm Improvement Plan

## Project Overview



PROJECT BOUNDARY

### Town Centre First

represents a new approach to the development of our towns where local communities and local businesses can be central to re-imagining their own towns and planning their own futures.

### Public Realm

is defined as all outdoor areas in the town which are accessible to the public and will include the layout of the roads, pedestrian spaces, crossing points, parking, lighting, signage, street furniture, vegetation, art and more.

## What we are doing

Galway County Council has appointed BDP to prepare the Town Centre First and Public Realm Improvement Plan for Gort Town Centre. The decision making process will be informed by the Town Centre First Plan. This plan will be issued as part of the collaborative, information/data gathering process for the drafting of the Gort Local Area Plan, the Gort Traffic Management Plan, the Local Transport Plan, and the Walking and Cycling Strategy. The Gort Public Realm Improvement Project shall, by design, encourage visitors to explore the town by highlighting what it has to offer. The spaces developed should encourage social interaction, visitor dwell time, and be pleasant and enjoyable areas to spend time in.

## Program and Process

### January 2023

Site visits, engaging community, stakeholders and understanding Gort

### March 2023

First ideas, testing options, agreeing general strategy and vision

### June 2023

Formulating a draft Public Realm Improvement Plan design

### August/Sept. 2023

Completion and publication of the Town Centre First Plan

## What Happens Next

Autumn 2023 to Summer 2024 - Detailed Design for the Gort Public Realm Plan followed by a funding application.

Autumn 2024 - Go to tender to appoint a Contractor

January 2025 - Commence on site with an anticipated duration of 18 months



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## What You Told Us

The consultation for the project took place in a variety of forms, each with their own added benefits in order to insure the project was well informed before progressing into the design phase. Each have helped bring awareness to the project and helped people to gain an understanding of its ambition, possibilities, intentions, and scope.

This included the following:

- Consultation Survey (January to February 2023)
- Public Engagement Day (Thursday 12th January 2023)
- Town Team Workshop (Wednesday 8th February 2023)
- Local community school workshop (Wednesday 8th February 2023)
- Numerous additional meetings with stakeholders and the town team (January to April 2023)



Upon completing the consultation process we were able to derive the below conclusions and project objectives to take forward into creating a design for the Town Centre First and Public Realm Improvement Plan.

01

Create a new multifunctional public space in town centre

02

Reduce vehicle speed and improve pedestrian comfort, safety and movement

03

More planting and street trees in the town centre

04

Introduce public off-street car parking

05

Improve footpaths and crossings pints for all users

06

Extend the river walk and create a new riverside park

07

Ensure amenities are developed, accessible and well connected to the town centre.

08

Create a space for young people

09

More art and culture in town centre

10

Address derelict buildings and vacant sites within the town centre

### Key Takeaways:

#### What do you like most about Gort Town Centre?

- Architecture
- River walk
- Heritage
- Town square
- Wide streets
- Cafes and eateries
- The community

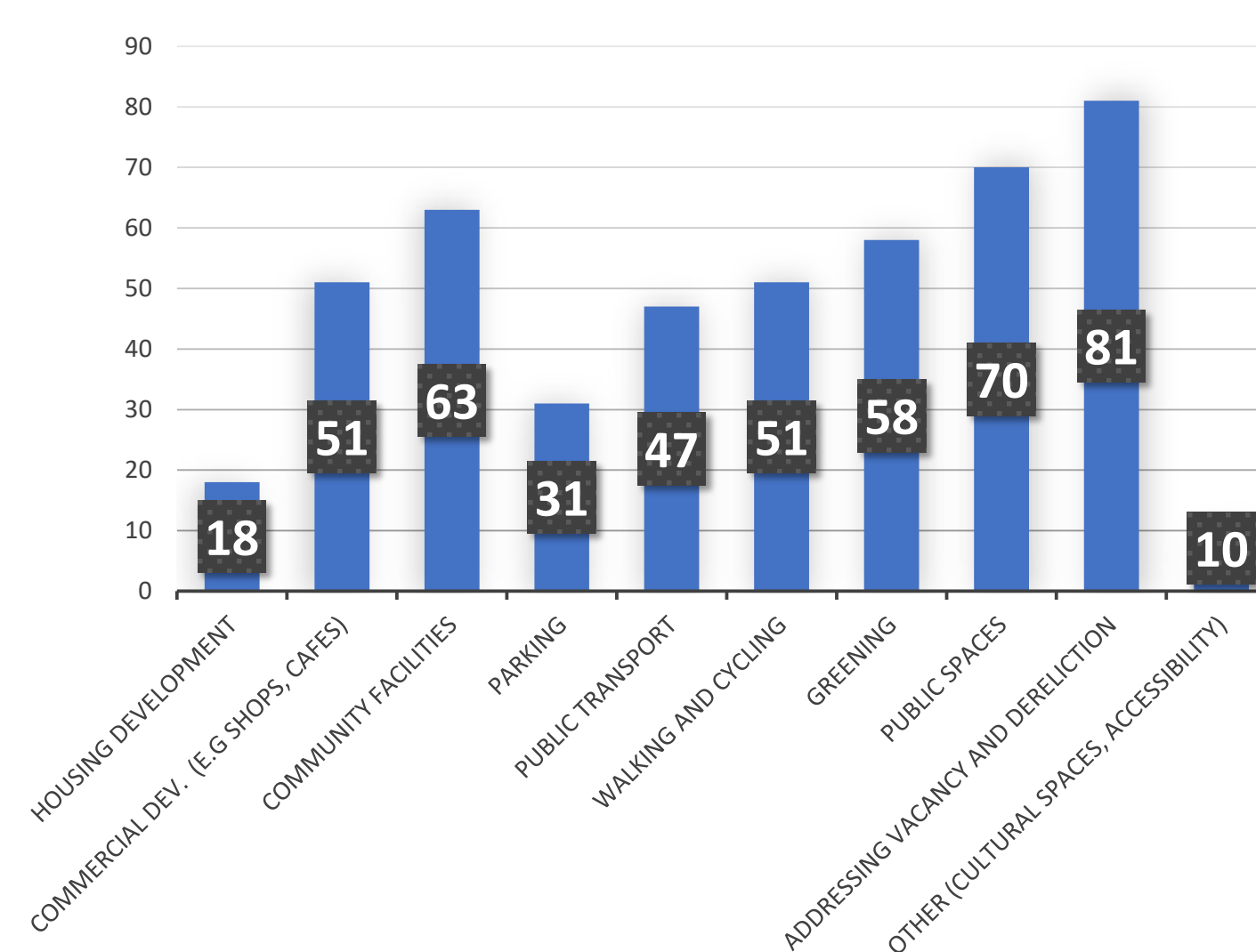
#### What do you dislike most about Gort Town Centre?

- Traffic / cars
- Parking
- Dis-repaired and Vacant Buildings
- Bad Footpaths
- Lack of Trees and Greenery
- Lack of Seating
- Dangerous crossings

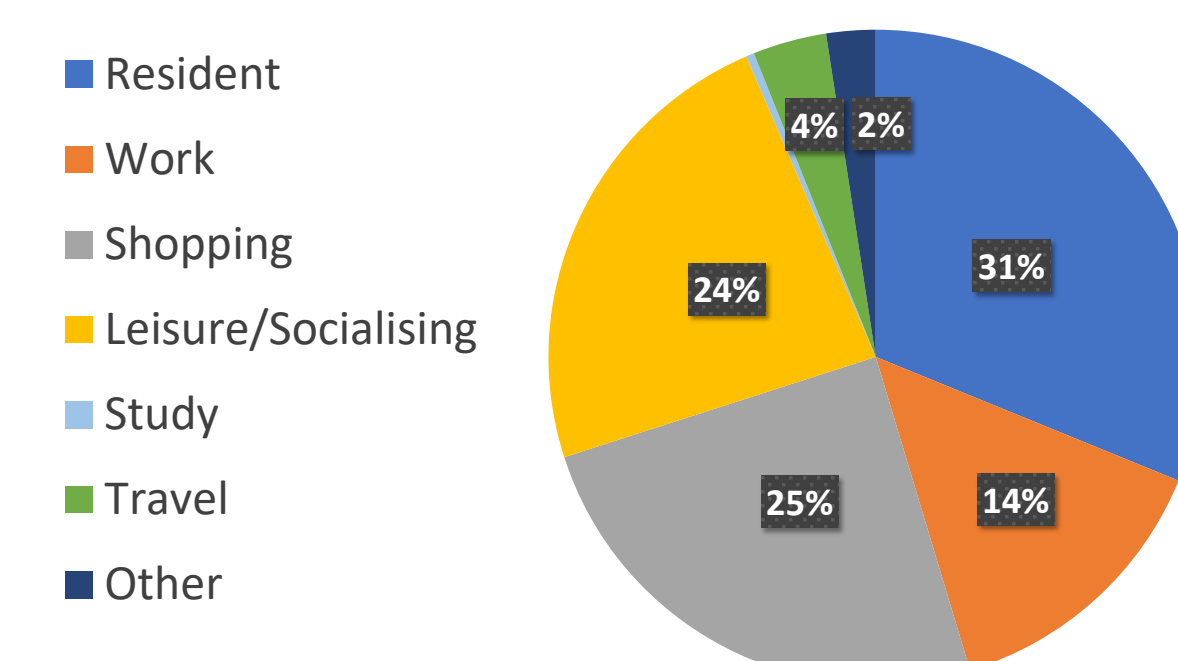
#### How do you think the public realm can be improved?

- More Trees and Greenery
- Improved paths
- Spaces to socialise
- Less traffic
- More Seating
- Public art and Lighting
- Pedestrian-friendly Public space

#### Top priorities:



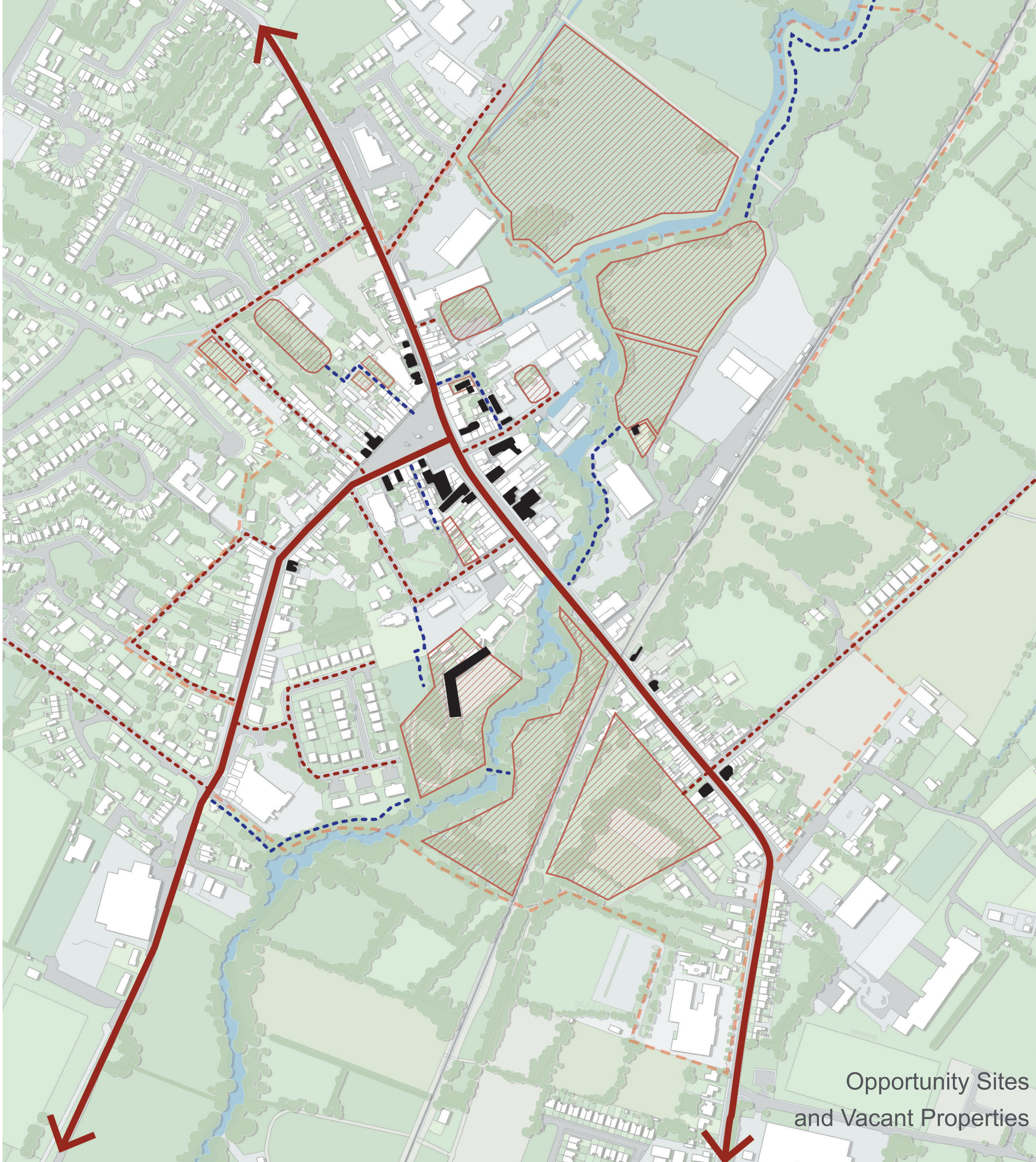
#### Main reasons for visiting the town centre:





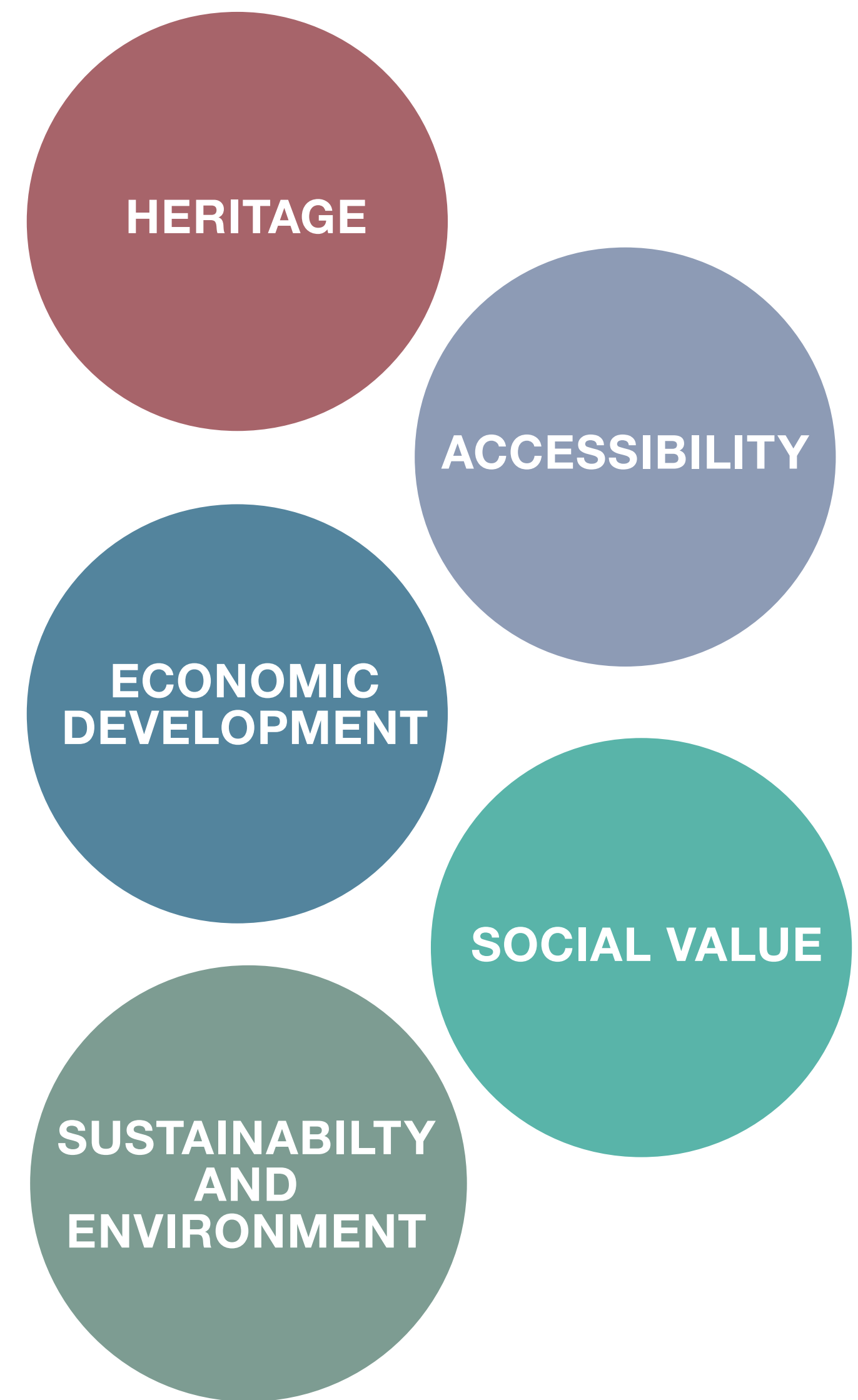
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## Town Centre First



### Project Objectives and Actions

The projects defined as part of the Gort Town Centre First Plan must respond to each of the following considerations:



From the consultation and engagement process, the following projects were identified:

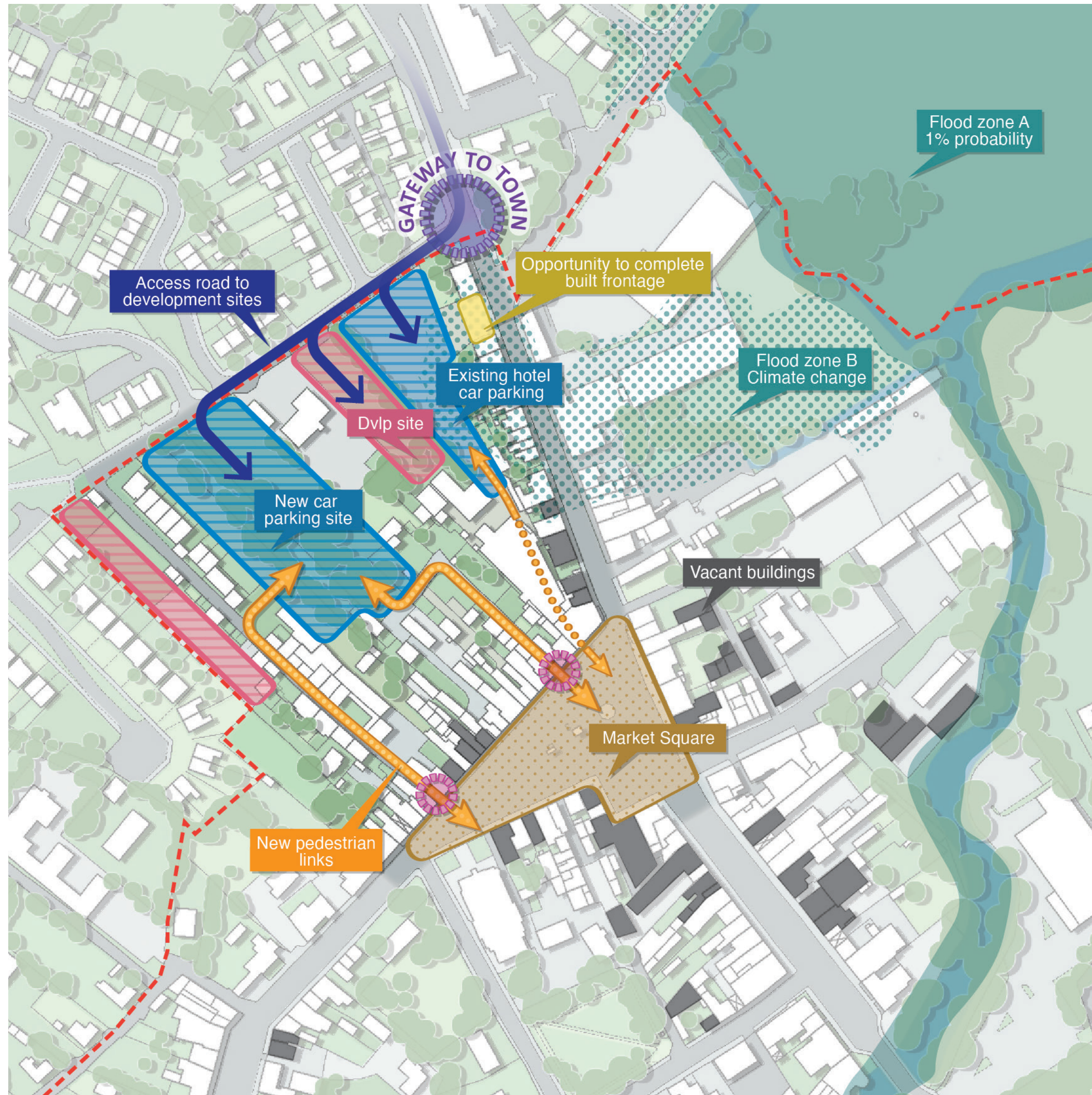
PUBLIC REALM	RECREATIONAL GREEN SPACE	VACANT SITES	DERELICT BUILDING	RE-DEFINE USE OF LANEWAYS IN TOWN CENTRE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More street trees and greenery in town</li> <li>• More comfortable public space with more seating and lighting in town centre</li> <li>• Re-define use of town square</li> <li>• More pedestrian friendly</li> <li>• Improve facilities for markets in town square</li> <li>• More art and culture in town</li> <li>• Improve wayfinding and signage through the town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend river walk and create riverside park</li> <li>• Playground facilities in town</li> <li>• More sport facilities in town</li> <li>• Sheltered seating areas</li> <li>• Space for young people</li> <li>• Community garden</li> <li>• Walking trails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide off street parking</li> <li>• Utilise use of vacant sites along river</li> <li>• Utilise back lands in town centre</li> <li>• Activate use of laneways for pedestrians throughout the town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve building facades in town centre to enhance their overall presentation in the town</li> <li>• Improve signage on buildings</li> <li>• Find ways to reuse the vacant buildings in out town centre</li> <li>• Identify any missing amenities which are needed in the town centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance character of each laneway</li> <li>• Improve gateways into laneways</li> <li>• Identify potential sites adjacent to laneways for development</li> <li>• Improve wayfinding and signage in the laneways</li> <li>• Consider more art projects/murals in the laneways</li> </ul>



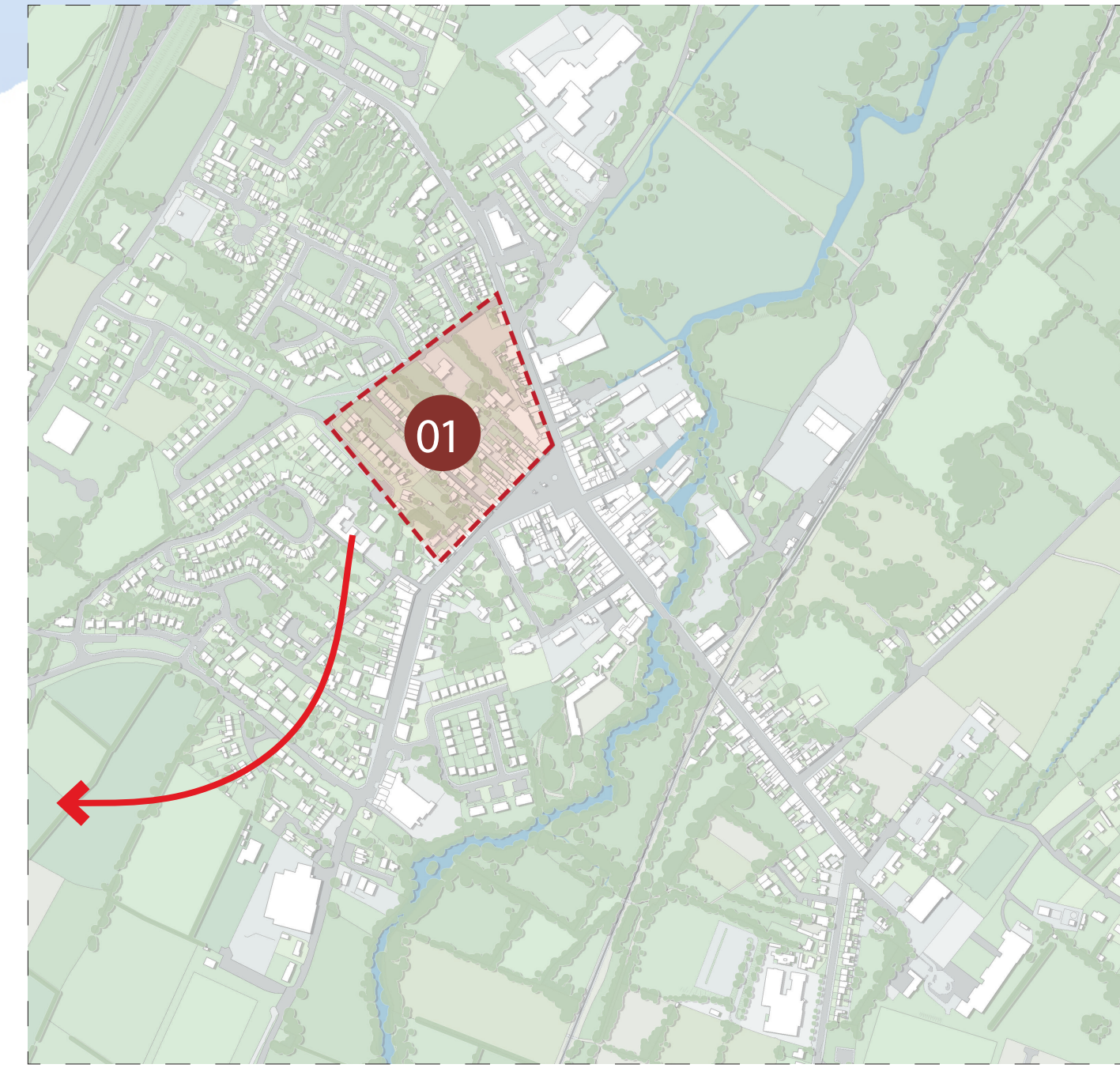
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## Town Centre First

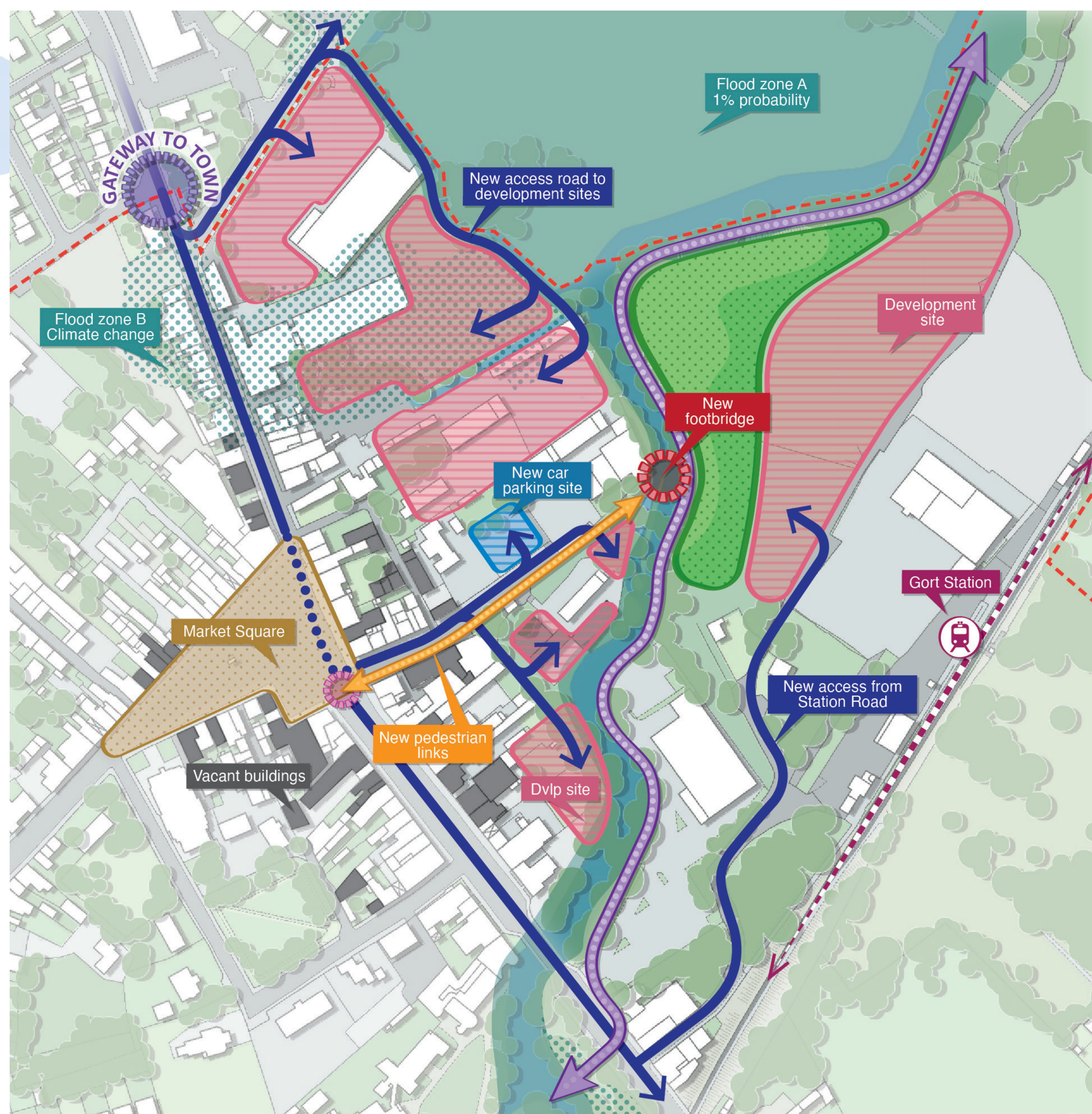
The following plans show how Gort town centre could be improved in line with the derived objectives and identified projects.



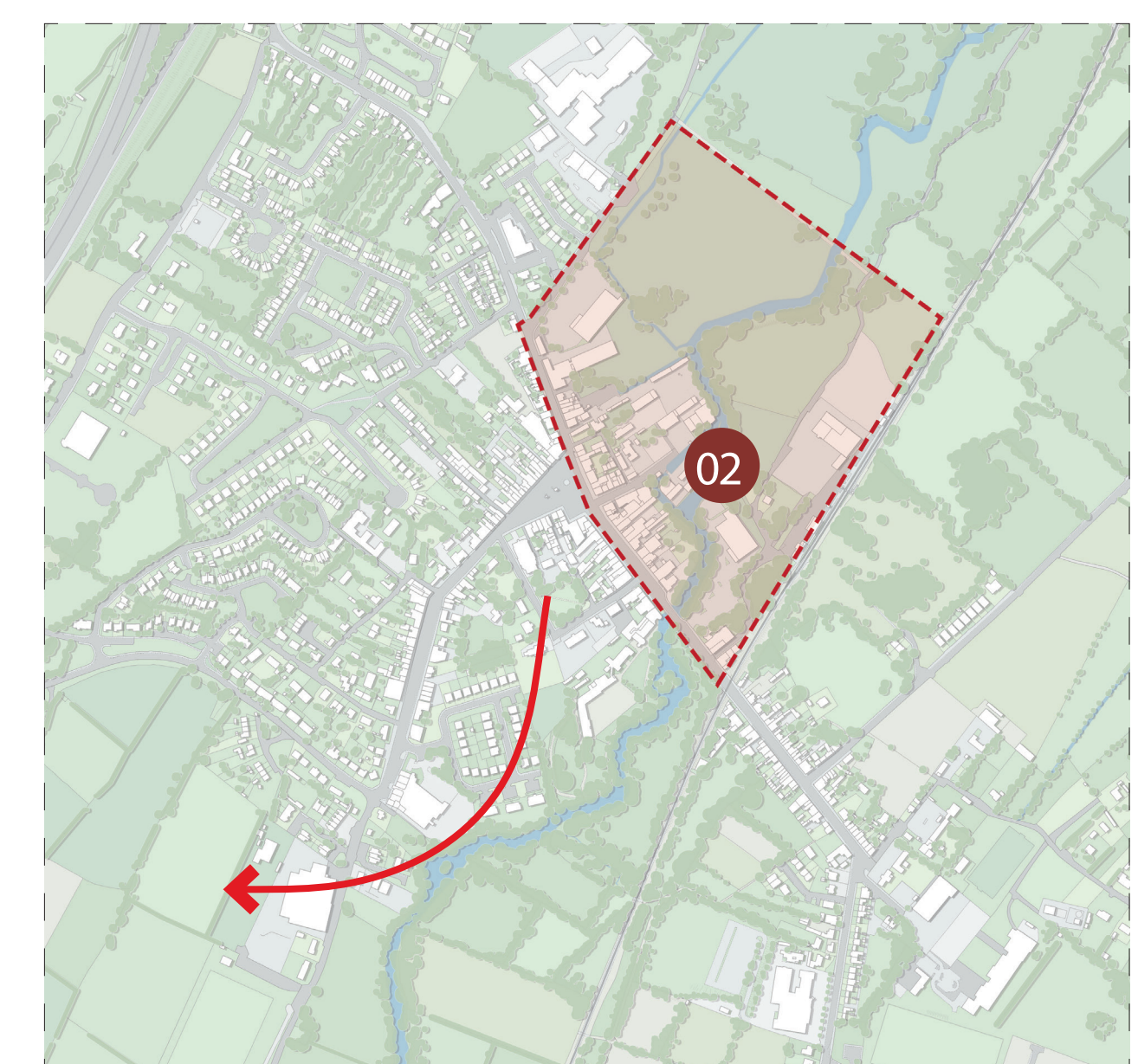
Area 1: Development Strategy Plan



- Introduce off-street car parking
- Ensure connection between off street car park and market square through use of pedestrian lane-ways
- Identify opportunity sites within back-lands



Area 2: Development Strategy Plan



- Identify opportunity sites within town centre back-lands
- Create alternative vehicle access route for back-land sites, re-directing large vehicle traffic off the core town centre streets
- Introduce footbridge to connect river walk and town centre



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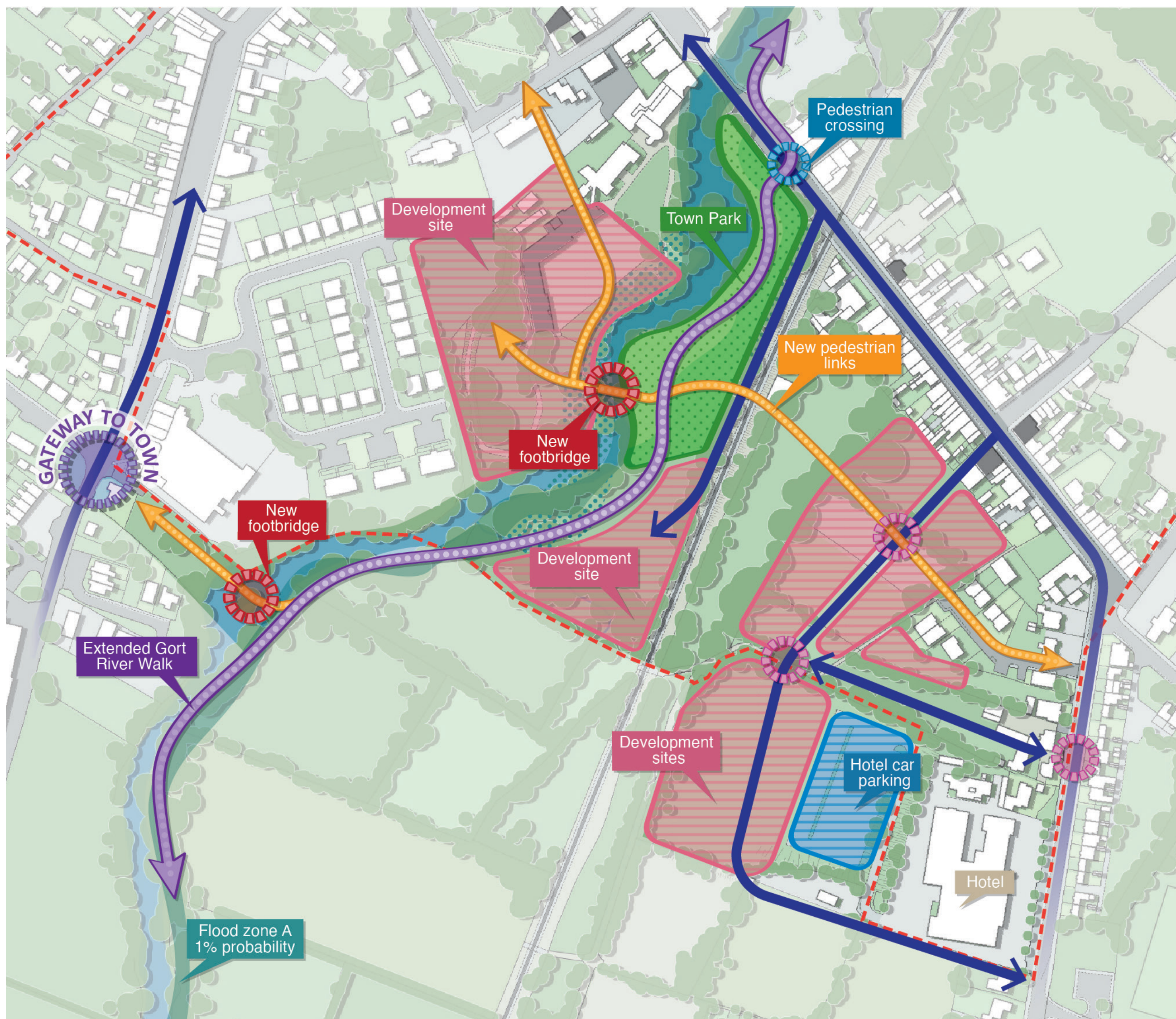


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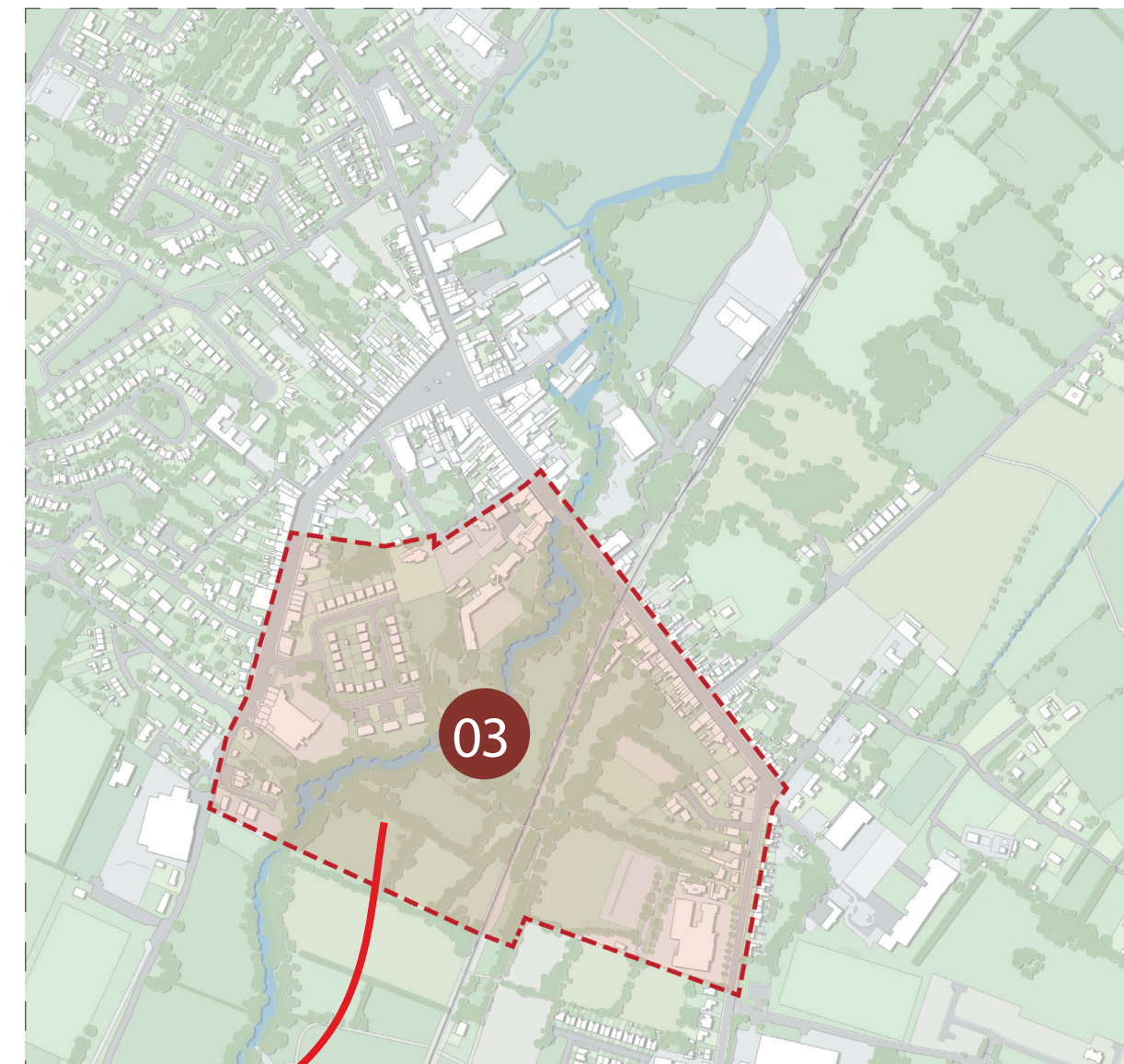


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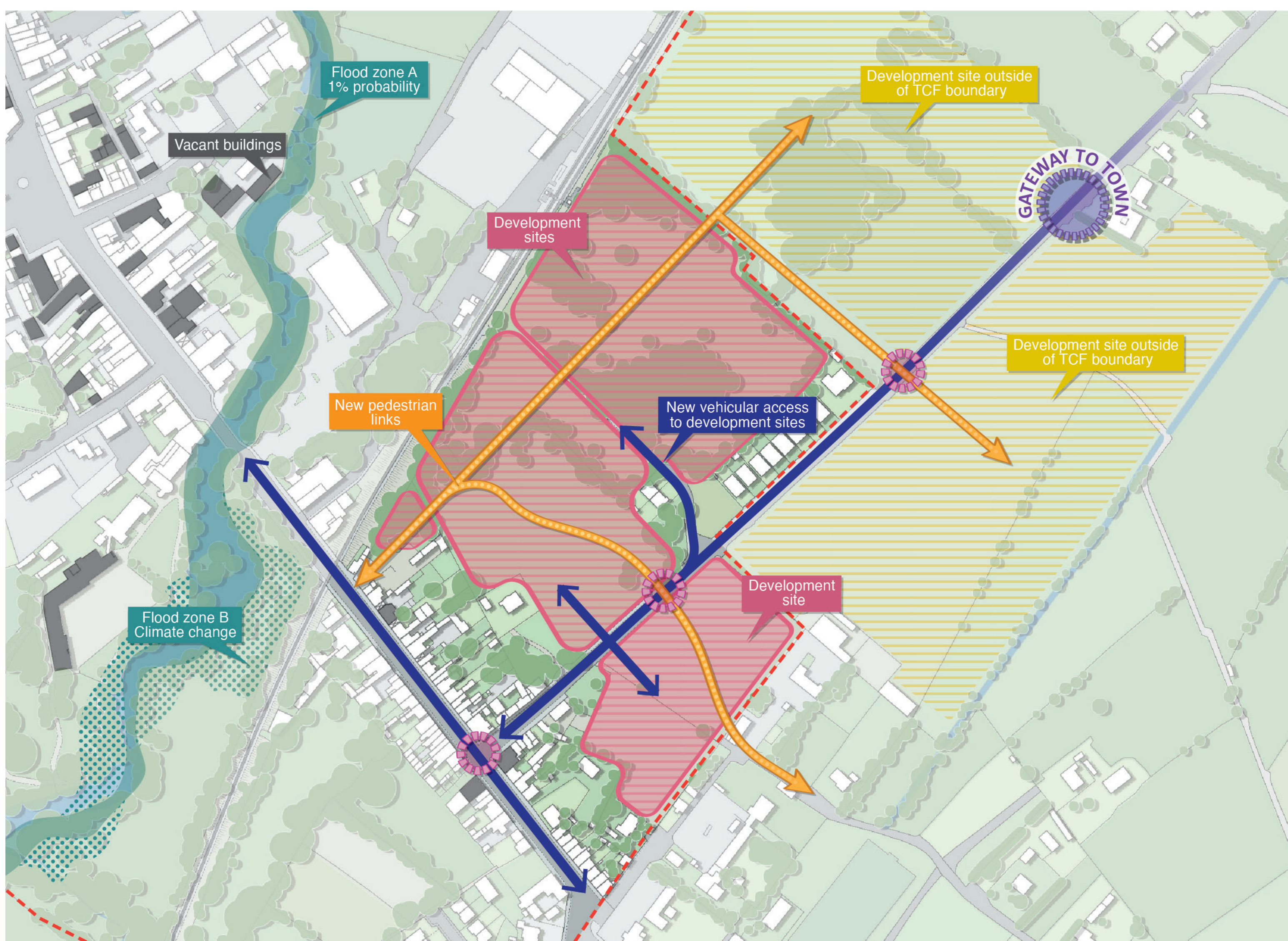
## Town Centre First



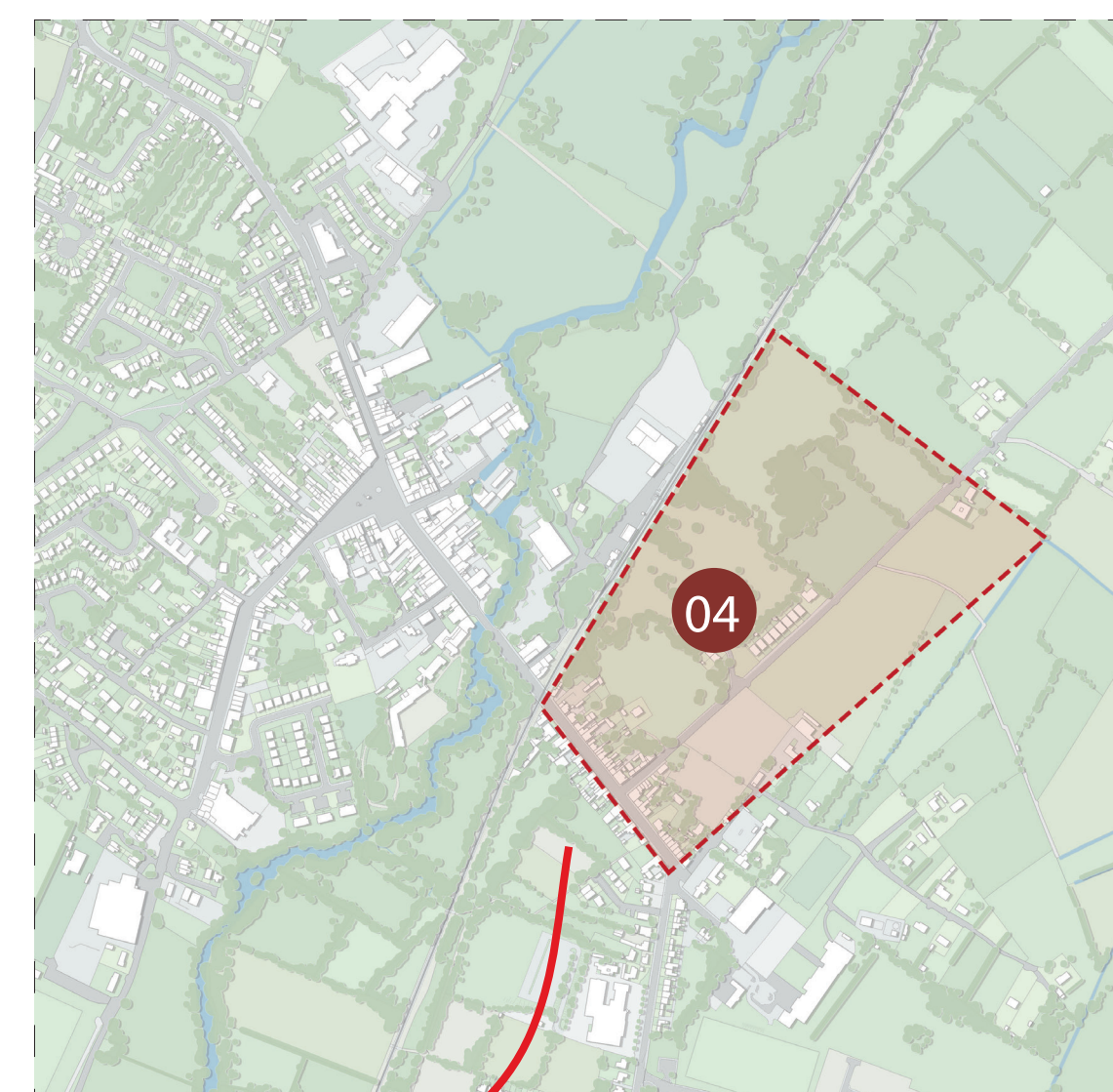
Area 3: Development Strategy Plan



- Create a new town park with further opportunities to access to the river
- Create an extension of riverside walk with pedestrian links to town centre
- Consider new access routes to allow development of backland areas



Area 4: Development Strategy Plan



- Identify opportunity sites within town centre back-lands
- Link development of opportunity sites to Gort LAP Plan
- Improve circulation connections with backland areas





## Public Realm Proposal



- 01 New layout for Market Square
- 02 Flexible use space with opportunity for a temporary canopy
- 03 Aspirational pedestrian link from Market Square to Canon Quinn Park
- 04 Enhanced Canon Quinn Park
- 05 New public realm on Queen St
- 06 Pedestrian link to new proposed car park off Market Square
- 07 New proposed off-street car park
- 08 New public realm on Barrack St
- 09 New Barrack St off-street car park
- 10 New public realm on Church St
- 11 New public realm on Bridge St
- 12 New Town Park with recreational facilities
- 13 Aspirational pedestrian link from Gort river Walk to Town Park
- 14 Aspirational bridge from Gort River Walk to Barrack St



# Gort • Town Centre First & Public Realm Improvement Plan

## Public Realm Plan



- 01 Flexible open space for events, markets, etc.
- 02 Garden space with small pocket spaces, new tree planting, ornamental planting and seating
- 03 One way 3.5m wide access road
- 04 Forecourts for outdoor terraces/seating and shop displays
- 05 Drop-off area with on-street parking
- 06 Flexible use space: off-street parking or covered event space
- 07 Signalised junction
- 08 New pedestrian crossings
- 09 Aspirational pedestrian link to Canon Quinn Park
- 10 Pedestrian link to new proposed off-street car park
- 11 New trees and planting throughout the square
- 12 Sullivan's Hotel 'belvedere'

### Market Square:



Artists impression of the new layout for Market Square



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## Public Realm Plan



### Georges Street:

- 01 Tightened carriageway to 6.4m
- 02 Parallel parking bays both sides of the street
- 03 Green separators between parking pockets to break continuous parking
- 04 New pedestrian crossing
- 05 Forecourts along facades for terraces, shop displays, planting, pots, etc.
- 06 Flexible planting strip separating the road from the pedestrian area
- 07 New street trees
- 08 Repaved drives



### Bridge Street:

- 01 Relocated bus stops on each side of the bridge
- 02 Tightened carriageway to 6.4m
- 03 Rationalised on-street parking
- 04 New pedestrian crossing
- 05 Entrances to Town Park
- 06 Aspirational continuation of Gort River Walk to connect it to Town Park
- 07 New Town Park



### Canon Quinn Park:

- 01 New entrance space, accessible to wheelchairs and prams
- 02 Relocated mill stones at entrances
- 03 Activity pocket - Outdoor gym equipment
- 04 Activity pocket - Playground including natural play, boulders, stepping logs, etc.
- 05 Activity pocket - Informal modular seating / hang out area for teenagers
- 06 Plinth or small stage for events in the park, possibly with cover
- 07 Amphitheatre for events in the park
- 08 Resurfaced and wider footpaths
- 09 Biodiverse and low maintenance buffer planting
- 10 New tree planting
- 11 New aspirational pedestrian link from Market Square to Canon Quinn Park
- 12 Possible new access to Canon Quinn Park from pedestrian link





# Gort • Town Centre First & Public Realm Improvement Plan

## Public Realm Plan



ARTISTS IMPRESSION OF CANON QUINN PARK



ARTISTS IMPRESSION OF CANON QUINN PARK



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## Public Realm Plan



BRIDGE STREET



ARTISTS IMPRESSION OF BRIDGE STREET



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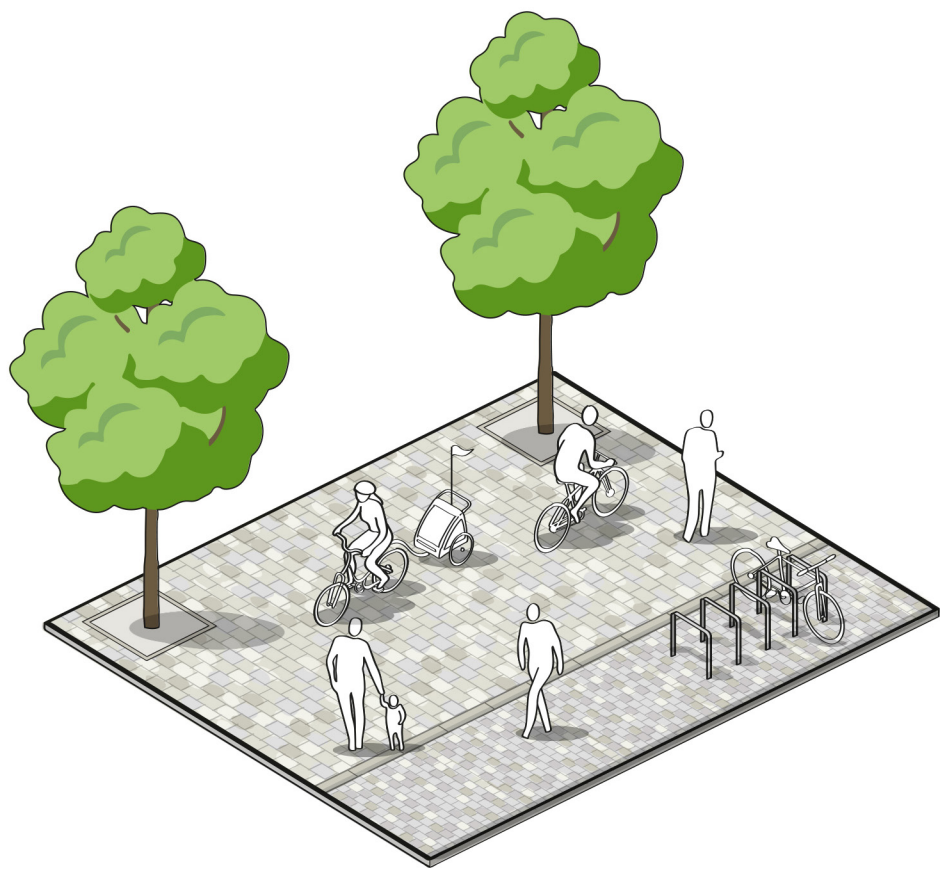


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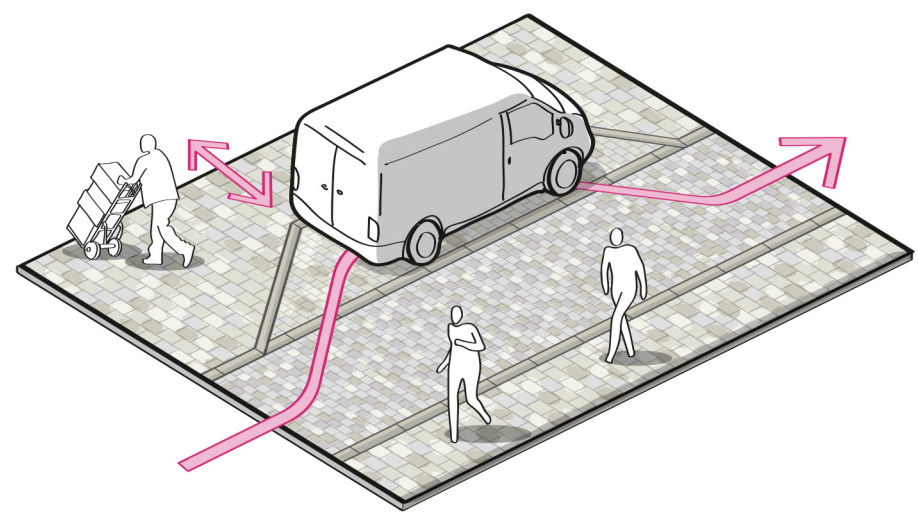
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## 01 CYCLING



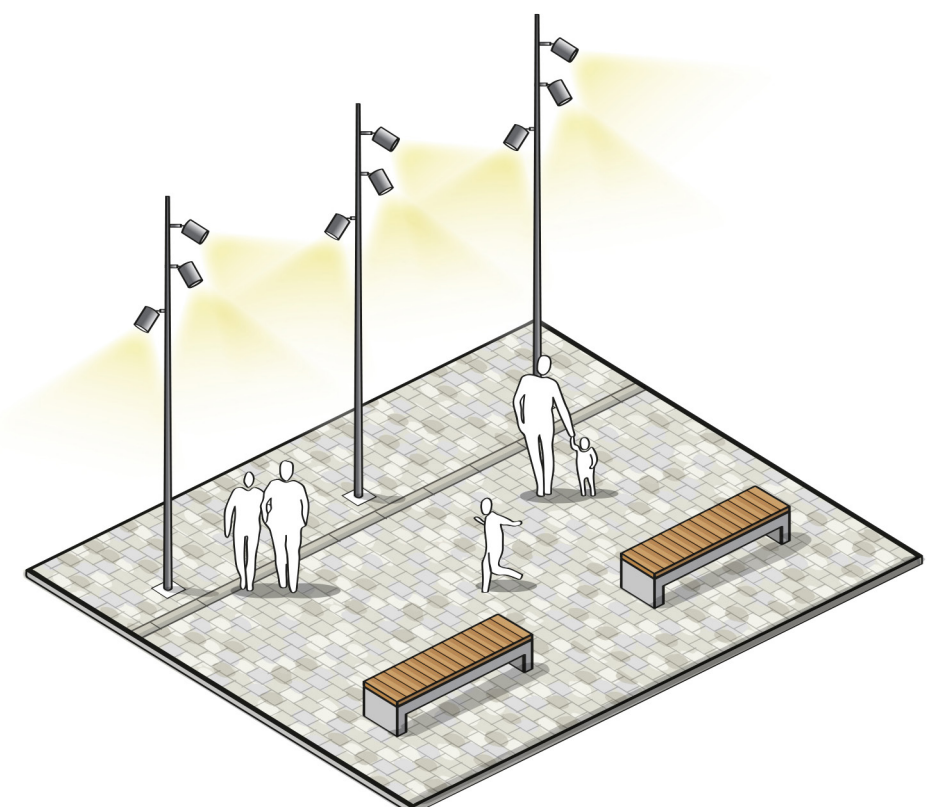
To include segregated cycle lanes would mean on-street parking would be significantly reduced or completely removed along major roads in the town. Therefore, proposing cycle lanes is infeasible. However, the measures proposed to reduce traffic speed will make it safer for cyclists. Cycle stands are to be incorporated into the town centre at appropriate locations.

## 02 SERVICING / LOADING



Provide accessible loading bays in required locations for shop and business.

## 03 LIGHTING



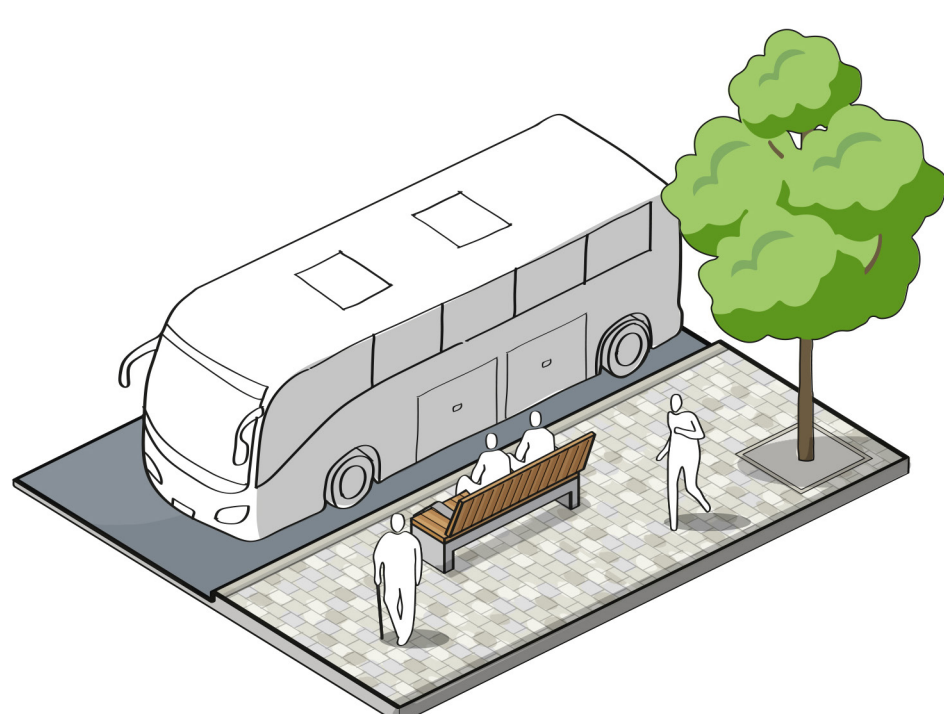
Provide new improved lighting infrastructure in the town centre that meets current design standards. Opportunity areas for feature lighting and Christmas lights will be identified to enhance dark and under-utilised spaces. All lighting proposed will be appropriate to the existing setting.

## 04 EVENTS



Design spaces in the town to facilitate public events in various forms. These spaces include the market square and the secondary flexible events space with optional canopy shelter. Pedestrianised laneways and their adjacent opportunity sites may also facilitate smaller events.

## 05 TRANSPORT



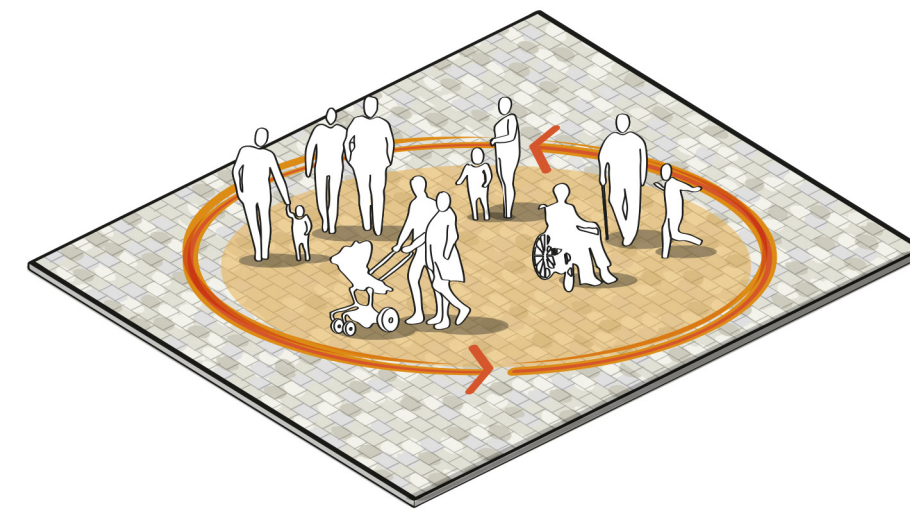
Transport in the town will be enhanced to allow for a better relationship between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. The existing bus stop will be relocated closer to the train station.

## 06 PLAY AND RECREATION



More play and recreation spaces will be introduced as part of the proposals. Canon Quinn Park will see the introduction of new designated and informal play areas.

## 07 UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY



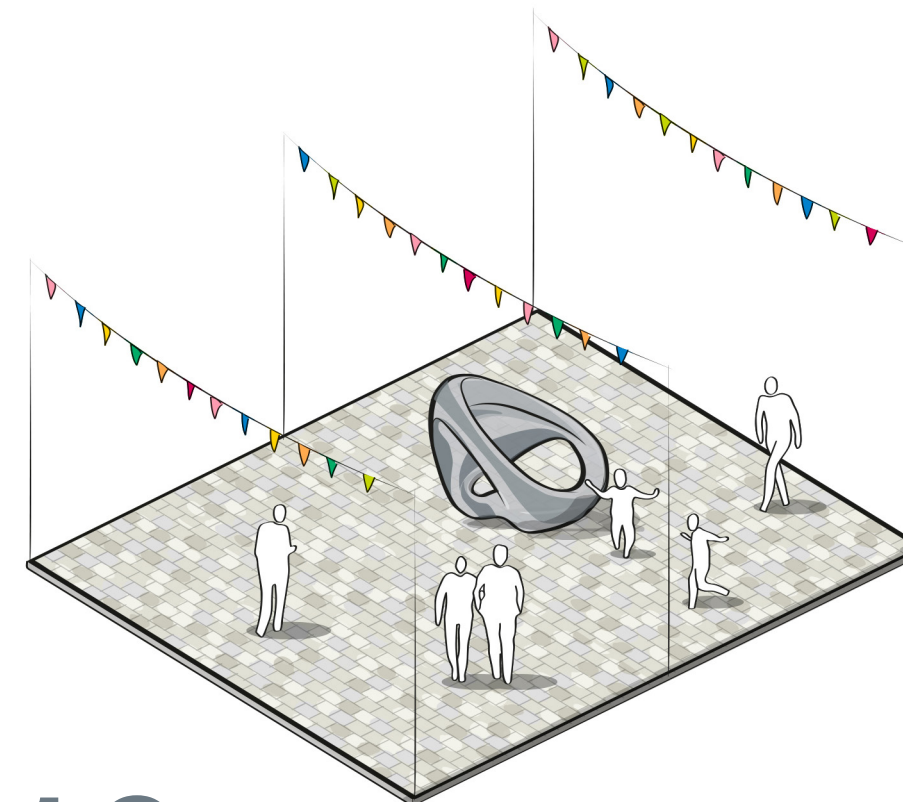
Creating a public realm that provides a universal design. The enhancement scheme will provide a more comfortable public realm that serves the needs of all users and abilities. There will be wider footpaths and safer crossing points throughout.

## 08 VEGETATION / BIODIVERSITY



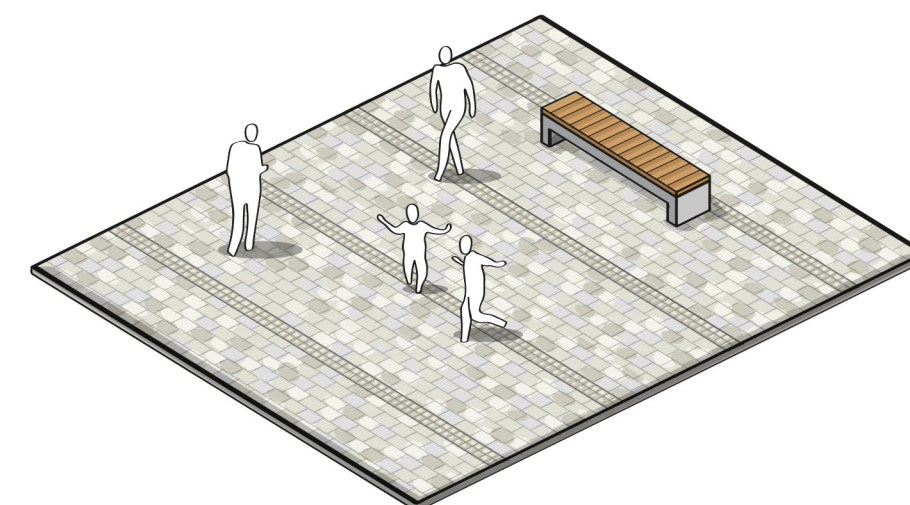
Introduce street trees and vegetation throughout the town centre. This will improve the local biodiversity and build upon the existing Gort Area Biodiversity Plan 2021-2024.

## 09 ART / CULTURE



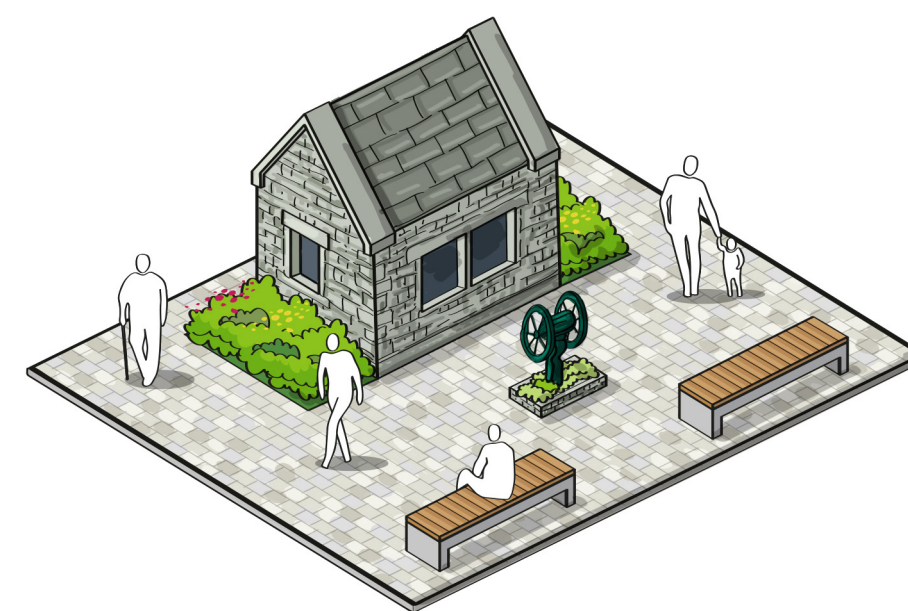
Create a town which celebrates art and culture by providing opportunities for new art pieces and spaces for cultural activities to thrive.

## 10 PAVING



Propose a cohesive paving material palette to compliment the town centre facades and the new public realm design.

## 11 CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE



The public realm enhancements will look to conserve, complement, enhance, or reinstate heritage within the town centre.

## 12 WATER MANAGEMENT



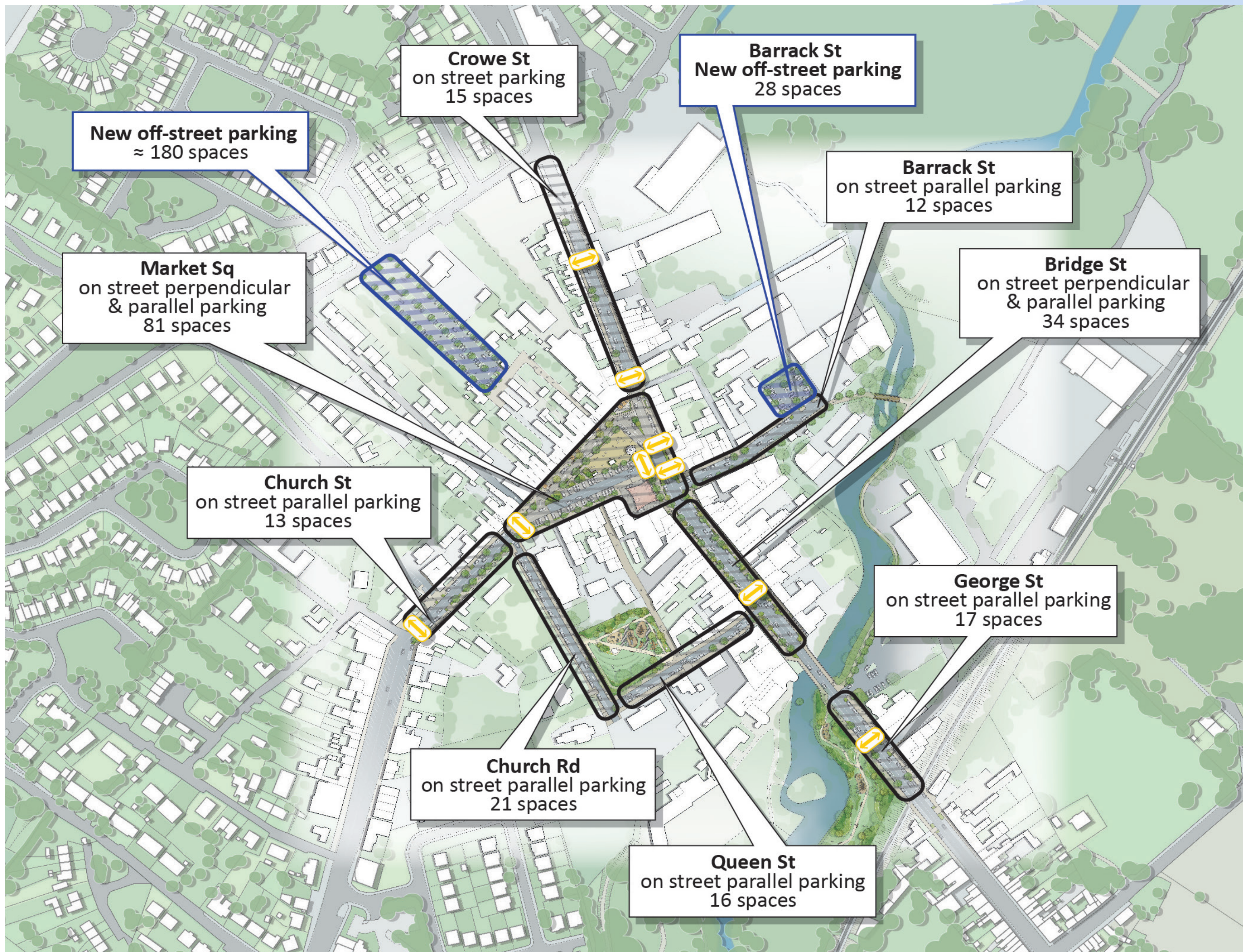
Create sustainable urban drainage system, with the introduction of rain gardens along streets.





# Gort • Town Centre First & Public Realm Improvement Plan

## Public Realm Plan



Gort town centre is dominated by vehicles, both in terms of roads and parking.

In line with the aspirations of the public engagement process the balance between vehicles and pedestrians needs to be addressed. In order to introduce a new pedestrian space and reduce vehicle dominance, the parking layout needs to be reconsidered.

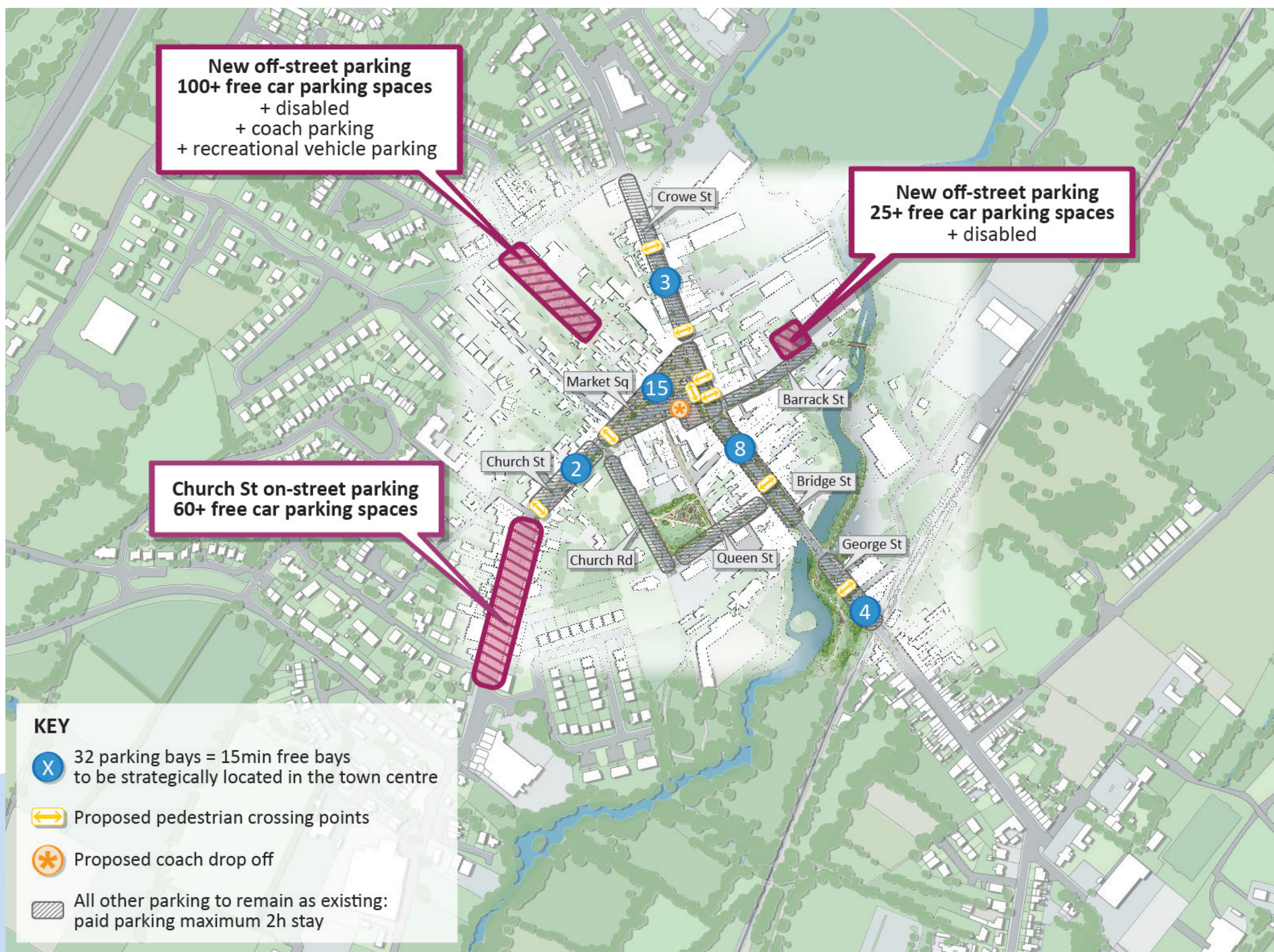
There are three types of parking needs identified:

- User 1: 15 minutes
- User 2: Under 2 hours
- User 3: Over 2 hours

The current situation:

- A large proportion of the vehicles parked within the square are there for more than 2 hours
- A large proportion of cars parked are not paying for parking
- There are no off-street car parks
- The above results in low footfall and swell time spent in town centre.

### Proposed Parking Strategy:



The proposed parking strategy seeks to address the current situation and provide a much enhanced parking provision where different users park in the appropriate locations. The diagram below summarises the suggested changes:

- Introduction of free 15 minute on street parking bays at strategic locations to be agreed.
- Introduce new free off-street parking for long stay users (over 2 hours)
- Locate both loading bays and disabled bays in appropriate locations
- Provide a coach drop off location in the square along with off-street coach parking.
- Provide off-street Recreational Vehicle parking





# Gort • Town Centre First & Public Realm Improvement Plan

## Wayfinding and Signage

Wayfinding is the tool we use to successfully interpret and navigate through an area or space. It is made up not just of signs, but also built forms, routes, the natural environment and of course human behaviour. To improve connectivity and town presentation, the plan proposes the following:



### 01 Welcome Arrival

The M18 junction: There could be a large 'welcome' element at the edges of the town; in particular at the start of the A458 main road from the motorway junction. This would announce Gort as destination and give awareness to the town's rich artistic components that awaits the visitor around the area. Example of possible arrival signage shown to the left.

### 02 Colourful Buildings at the Square

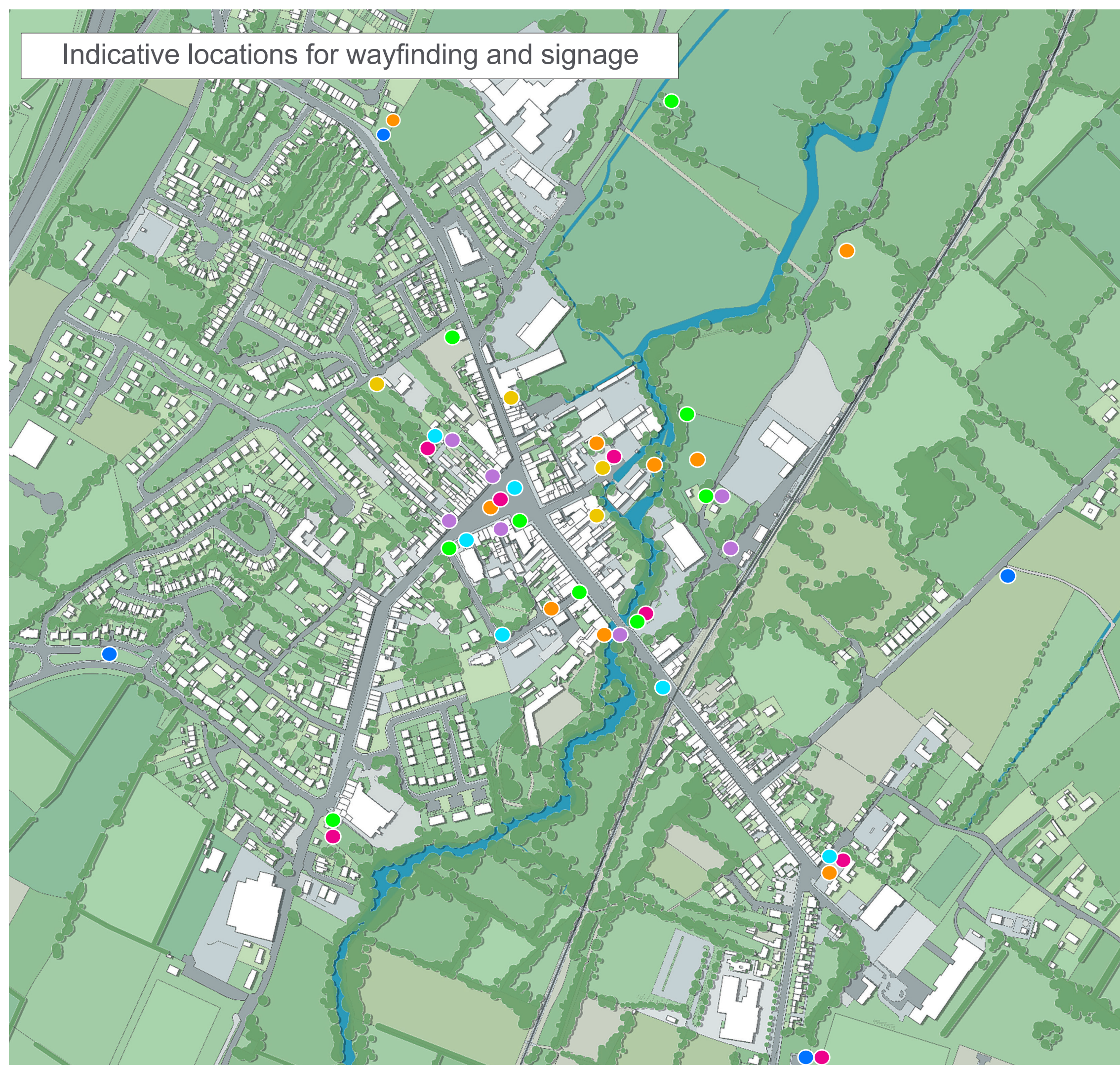
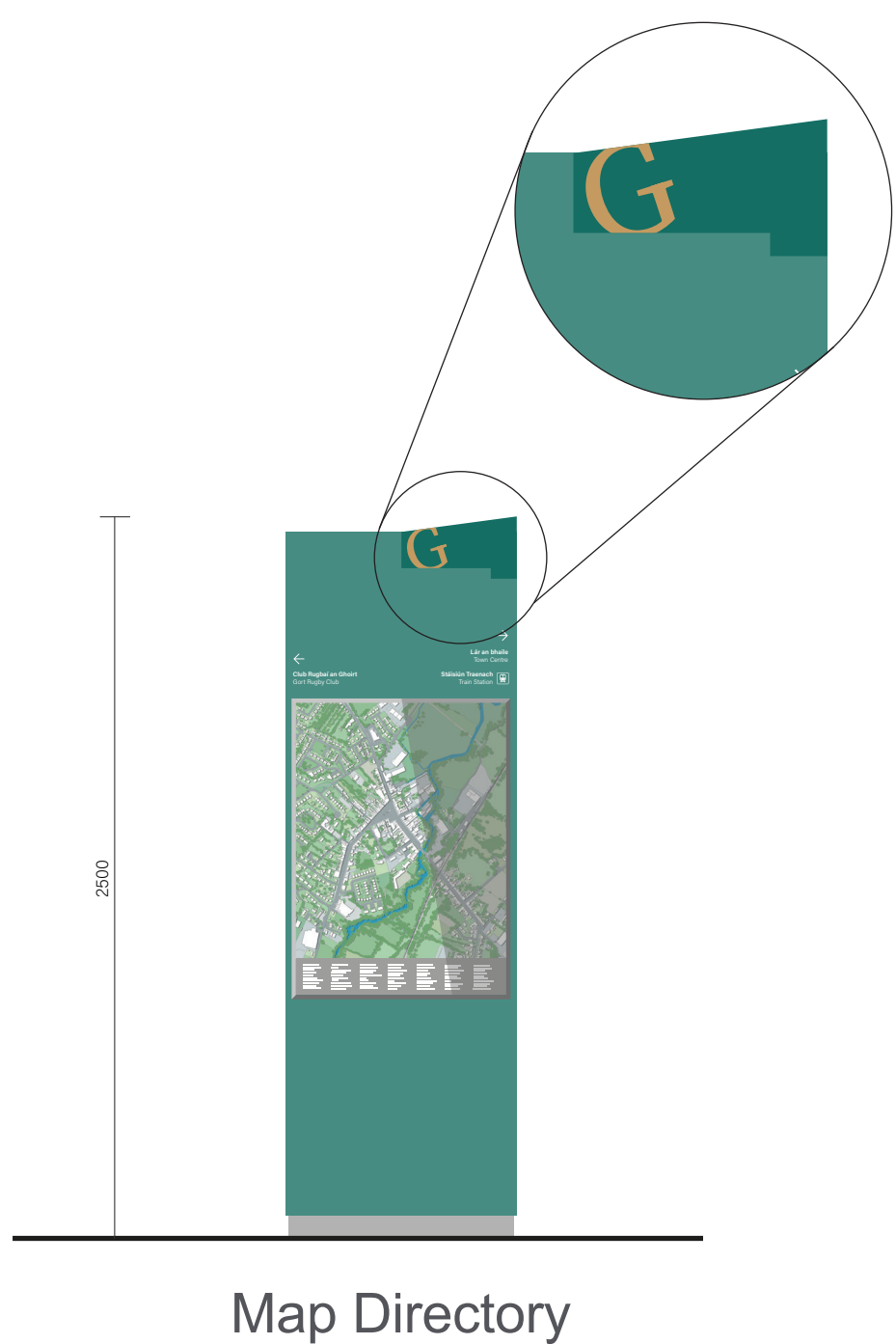


The Market Square: The main square in Gort is surrounded by buildings on all sides, and there is a predominant use of grey materials like stone, concrete, pebble dash and slate which creates a harsh, unwelcoming environment. Encouraging owners to paint their buildings a variety of bright colour would give an aesthetic lift, and create a pleasant, well-maintained destination.

### 03 The TownTrail

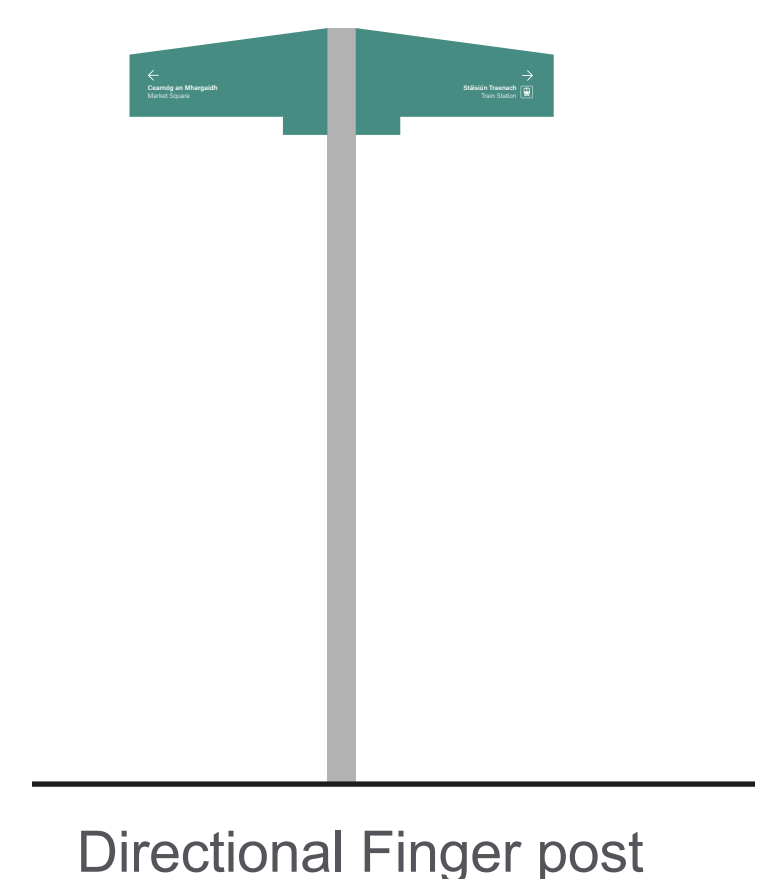


The heritage trail is to be incorporated into the wayfinding design to create a heritage trail in Gort town centre:

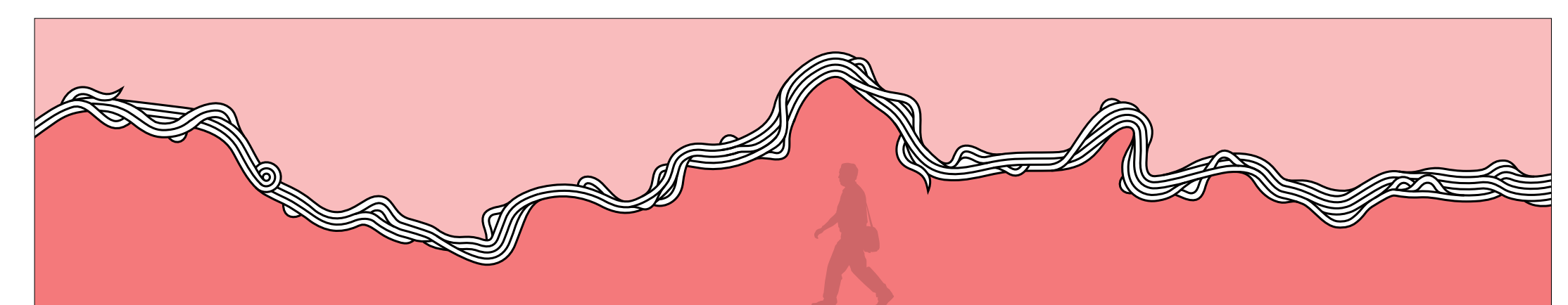


#### Family of Signage

- Arrival/Identification
- Intuitive Directional
- Directory/Map
- Totem Directional
- Finger post Directional
- Art/Sculpture
- Car Park Identification



### 04 Intuitive Directional



#### Proposed directional: Gort River graphic artwork

Walkways from the Town Square to proposed new car parks and the park. With the proposed addition of new car parking, the narrow walkways leading off the Square offer an opportunity to create and install bright, enhancing super graphics that intuitively lead visitors from the car park to the shops, without the need for any signage.