



DONCASTER CITY CENTRE FROM TODAY TO 2050

DONCASTER CITY CENTRE STRATEGY

"Our Vision for a
Safe, Prosperous
and Vibrant City"



City of
Doncaster
Council

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Foreword



Ros Jones CBE
Mayor of Doncaster

Doncaster is a place of places – the largest metropolitan borough in the country – a collection of towns, villages, and communities that covers a wide geographical area, but it is also close knit and has common goals. The city status conferred on us in 2022 reflects this. It is for Doncaster as a whole, and it applies to us all, from Thorne to Mexborough and all points in-between.

As a new city, the time is right for us to re-evaluate our city centre. In particular, how it needs to develop to ensure it is successful and supports all of Doncaster's residents and businesses, both now and in the future.

The city centre strategy builds on recent delivery activity and our existing strengths and heritage. It is informed by consultation with residents from across the city. We have heard what people are saying, and we will act upon it, in particular our shared priority to improve safety and security.

The strategy sets a strong ambition for the city centre, but it is rooted in reality. It provides a framework for change over the longer term, as well as immediate interventions to respond to the concerns of our residents and businesses.

At the heart of the strategy is a strong, achievable ambition to develop the city centre into a vibrant, attractive, safe, useful place for all, with a strong economy providing services and experiences that the whole of Doncaster can use, take part in, and enjoy - a place where people can live, thrive, and flourish.



Tariq Shah OBE
Chair of the Doncaster City Centre Board

I was born in Doncaster, and I am a passionate advocate for it as a thriving place to live, work and do business.

I have overseen the development of this strategy and have made the case throughout that we should honestly assess where we are as a place, and where we aspire to be. That means celebrating Doncaster's many strengths while also acknowledging the challenges we must address. First and foremost, it means putting people and businesses at the heart of our plans, and I am pleased to say that this strategy does exactly that – offering a clear and practical roadmap for the future.

City centres across the UK have faced significant disruption in recent years and Doncaster is no exception. The reality is that we are unlikely to go back to a 'traditional' city centre model so we must embrace new and innovative ways of doing things. As a businessman, I am always looking for ways to turn challenges into opportunities and I am encouraged that this strategy does not simply highlight issues – it presents real, actionable solutions.

Doncaster has achieved a great deal in recent years, and the results are all around us. We have done this by staying focused on a single, unifying goal: to make Doncaster the best it can be for residents of all ages and backgrounds.

This strategy is our blueprint for what comes next. The future is full of opportunity!

Section 1: Introduction

Our city centre is a place of huge importance to Doncaster and its residents. It is a hub of retail, services and employment, one of heritage and character, and it holds strong memories for thousands of people of many generations.

Doncaster has seen a renewed optimism in recent years through the achievement of city status in 2022 and several major developments. However, like towns and cities across the UK, it has also experienced unprecedented disruption, including longer term changes in the way people work, shop and travel, which were accelerated by the Covid 19 pandemic. These opportunities and challenges, along with the progress made over the last 10 years, provide a catalyst to review the current standing of the city centre and look forward with new determination.

This strategy provides a framework for the next phase of development, setting out a new vision for the city centre and the key activity which will underpin delivery. It is not a detailed list of projects, but instead establishes a strategic direction, describing our ambition for how the city centre can adapt, grow and thrive. This foundation, alongside ongoing public engagement, will inform the development of new investments, individual interventions and service delivery.

Doncaster city centre will be central to the fortunes of the whole city and the strategy has been developed following extensive feedback from residents, businesses and other stakeholders. We want the people of Doncaster to continue shaping the future of the city centre and be active participants in its success – whether that be using it on a regular basis, living or trading there, or getting involved in community activities. The city centre must connect with all communities and create opportunities and benefits for people and businesses across our many towns, villages and neighbourhoods. Everyone has a role to play, and everyone can contribute to its success.

To achieve this, the city centre must capitalise on its strengths and assets. It is a significant employment location, an important ‘shop-window’ for investment and has large parcels of land available for potential development. It is the most accessible location for people and visitors from both within and outside the city, and it remains the most important site in Doncaster for retail, hospitality, services, arts, leisure, and culture. In addition, the city centre is an increasingly important residential community, particularly given its connectivity to other towns and cities, and employment sites across Doncaster.

However, the future of the city centre is not just about bricks and mortar. We are fully aware of the importance of issues including safety and security, accessibility, cleanliness, events and animation, and community activity. Most importantly, the city centre should be alive, with a ‘buzz’ and vibrancy created by people and enterprise. These issues will be at the forefront of our approach moving forward.

© Ben Harrison Photography: Cover Image, DGLAM, city centre public art event.

© Bond Bryan for City of Doncaster Council: Gateway One development

© James Mulkeen: Right Up Our Street, Festival of Light

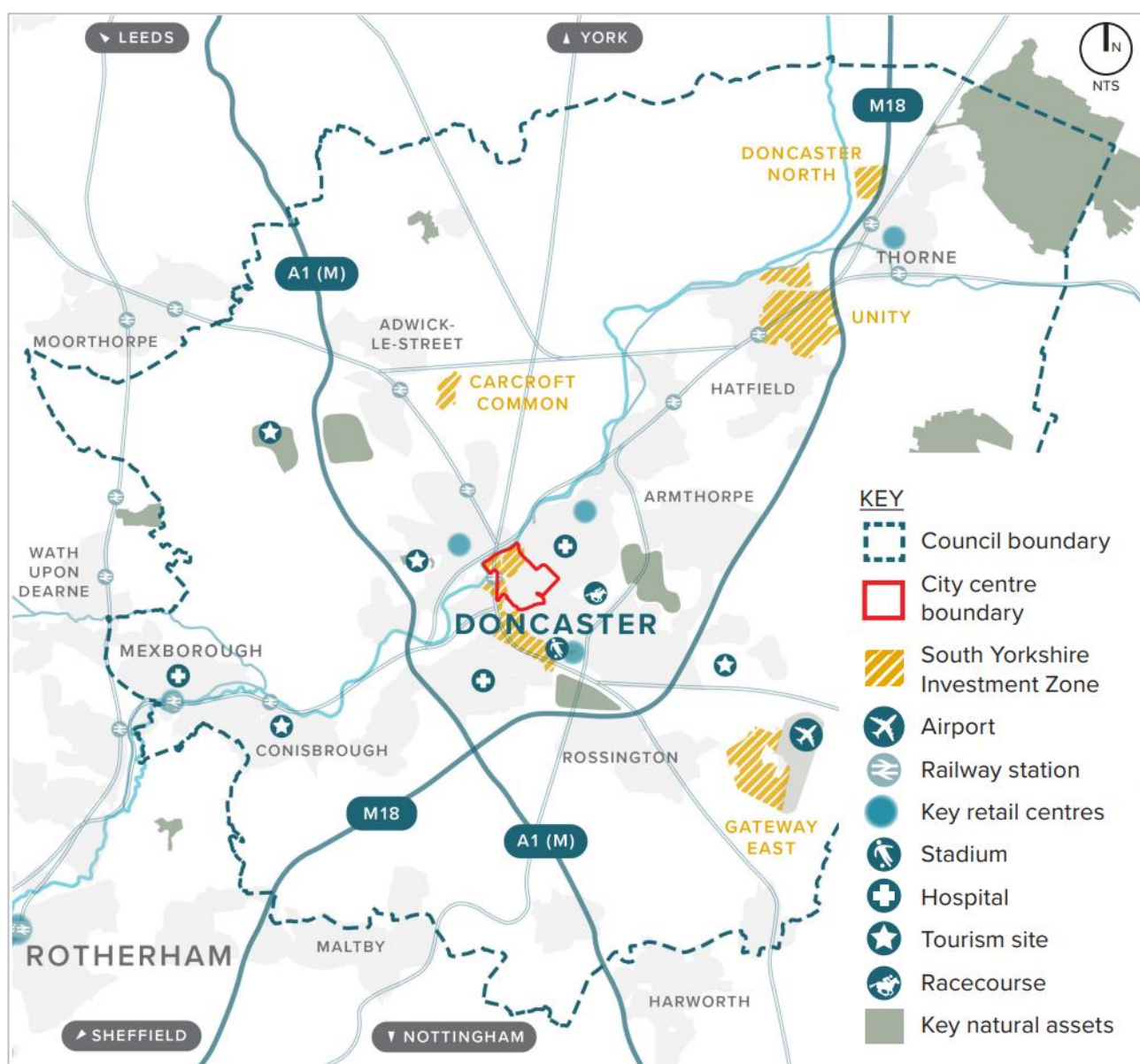


Defining the City Centre

Doncaster has key locational advantages that can bring economic and social benefits, providing a strong foundation for economic development and the setting for a great quality of life. The city encompasses all communities across Doncaster, from Mexborough and Conisbrough in the west, to Thorne and Moorends in the east; and from Askern and Norton in the north to Bawtry and Tickhill in the south.

The challenge for the city centre is how to maximise the benefits from these advantages and restore its status as the 'beating heart' of the city - the first choice for investment, retail and cultural destinations. The city centre has a crucial role in bringing the population together, providing services and opportunities that cannot be found in local communities.

For this document, the city centre is defined by the area used in the 2016 Urban Centre Masterplan. The boundary defines a core area of focus but is not intended as a hard limit to proposals or the influence of this plan. The area is bounded to the north by the River Don and includes Doncaster Minster and Doncaster College. It stretches to Town Field and Elmfield Park to the east. The railway and Trafford Way form the western boundary and the southern boundary is marked by Carr House Road.



The city's locational advantages.

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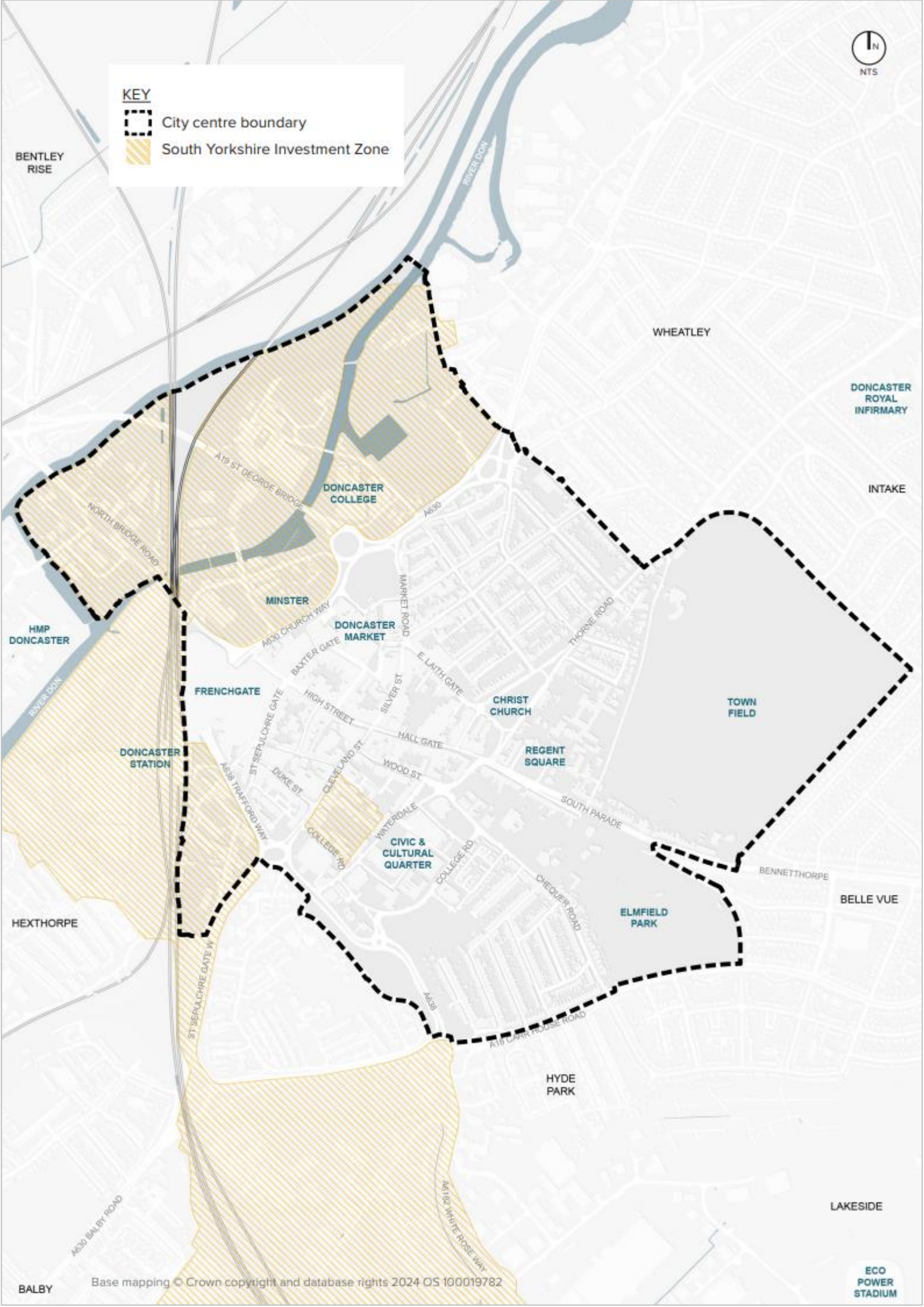
KEY



City centre boundary



South Yorkshire Investment Zone



The Evolution of Doncaster City Centre

Doncaster's geographical location has made it an important centre in the north of England for centuries. Indeed, our city centre has been growing and evolving ever since the Romans first built a fort on the banks of the River Don some 2,000 years ago. The city centre we see today has of course changed beyond all recognition since these early settlements. Only fragments of our Roman history remain, and the built environment has gone through various iterations reflecting periods of wider social and economic change. However, its core function – as a place to live, trade and visit - has continued in different forms through the generations.

Following the breakdown of Roman rule in the 5th century, the Saxons established a settlement on the site of the Roman fort. They gave Doncaster its modern name, 'Don Cæstre' ('cæstre' being the Saxon word for Fort). By the time of the Norman Conquest of 1066 Doncaster had probably developed the nucleus of a town and the Norman church of St Mary Magdalene was likely the original parish church of Doncaster, built in the present-day Market Place in around 1130. Subsequently, Doncaster matured into a busy town. King Richard I granted it national recognition with a Royal Charter in 1193, but the town suffered a disastrous fire in 1204 and had to be rebuilt.

In the 13th century, Franciscan Friars (Grey Friars) established themselves on an island formed by the rivers Cheswold and Don, at the bottom of Frenchgate. It was at this friary where Richard of York's body would rest overnight as part of his funeral cortege, following his death in the War of the Roses. The Grey Friars presence is reflected today in place names around the river and Doncaster Minster.

In around 1346 the first White Friars arrived and within a few years a Carmelite Priory was established. Today, most visitors to the High Street are unaware they are passing the site of the priory, which was active for the better part of two hundred years before it fell, like so many others, around the 1530s. Its plot more-or-less had its entrance gate opposite the current west end of Scot Lane. Today, Priory Walk and Priory Place mark the original priory site.

Doncaster town centre layout in the first half of the 20th century. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.



Relying on donations, the Carmelite Priory would almost certainly have benefited from the fact that the Great North Road was immediately outside their gateway. Kings and their entourage, merchants of all kinds, soldiers of various armies and common travellers alike had all passed by its gates. Royal visitors included Henry IV in 1399, Edward IV in 1470 and in Tudor times, Henry VII, as a newly-crowned monarch. Indeed, the road is probably the biggest single influence on the city, creating Doncaster's position as a key staging post between London, York and Edinburgh, and shaping future development.

The town centre experienced significant expansion during the Georgian period, when Doncaster also became a prominent centre of horseracing, bringing visitors from far and wide. Development through this period can be seen among many of the city centre buildings today, most notably the Mansion House on the High Street. Some prominent buildings of the time such as the Royal Opera House (1775) were later demolished as other developments took root, in this case coinciding with construction of the new Grand Theatre in 1899.

Immediately following the Georgian period, the railways brought another era of change to Doncaster. From the 1840s the town became a major point on the new railway system and by 1853, the Works, or the Plant as it is more commonly known, was maintaining locomotives, wagons and carriages. This brought an influx of workers and visitors to the town centre and the period saw further development, including prominent buildings such as the Corn Exchange and Doncaster Minster.

Following the wars, the 1960s saw a wave of modern development which fundamentally altered the structure of the city centre. Low quality housing and other town centre buildings were cleared and replaced with a new orbital road, modern high rise flats and popular shopping precincts. In 1962, Church Way was opened linking North Bridge and Frenchgate to Wheatley Hall Road and its light industries. It had been preceded by the removal of a sizable slice of the Minster churchyard and the demolition of the former National School nearby. The plan to widen Church Way had its origins in the County Borough of Doncaster Development Plan of 1954, which would ultimately result in the demolition of the Central Library, the Children's Library (formerly Doncaster Grammar School), and large parts of St George Gate and Frenchgate.

From the 1980s to the millennium, much regeneration in Doncaster took place around, rather than in, the town centre. However, a new phase of renewal started in the early years of the 21st century, with the extension of the Frenchgate centre, the creation of a new transport interchange to replace the town's two bus stations and a new College. This was followed by the new Civic Office, Sir Nigel Gresley Square and Cast theatre on the old college site, along with the first modern city centre housing development at College Road.

Plans for the Arndale Centre. Arndale Property Trust, "Arndale in Partnership with Local Authorities," 1966, RIBA, 711.552.1(41/42)//ARN.



DONCASTER

In 1959 Arndale bought the site of the historic Angel & Royal Hotel from Hammonds United Breweries Ltd. with 95 feet of frontage to Frenchgate and 40 feet to St. Sepulchre Gate. Patiently and with determination the site was extended to a size which merited special attention.

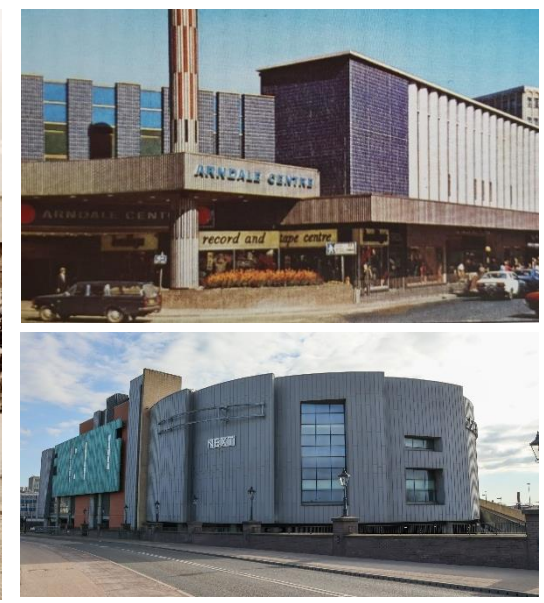
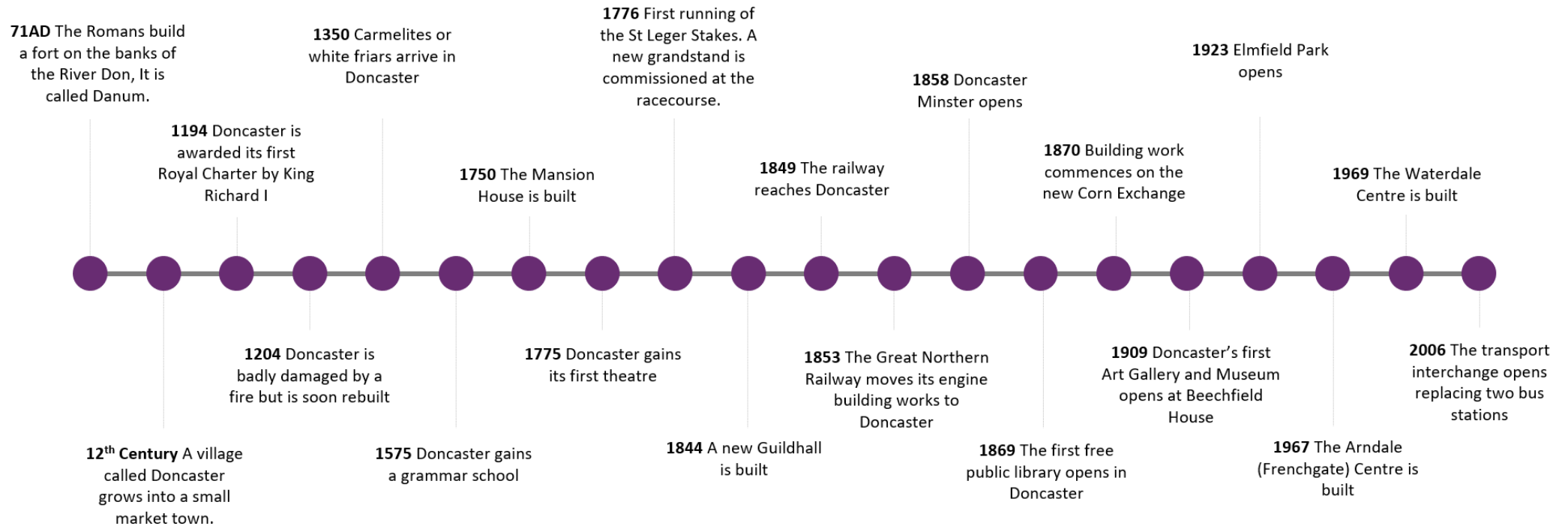
The Doncaster Town Council has since contributed in every possible way in helping to bring this scheme to fruition.

The result is a development which is perfectly integrated into the overall town centre planning.

The new Arndale Centre will be connected by subway under the new Inner Ring Road to the proposed new Bus Station serving the northern suburbs, with a multi-deck car park above for 750 cars. This will be linked at high level with the Arndale roof car park.

Doncaster City Centre: A timeline

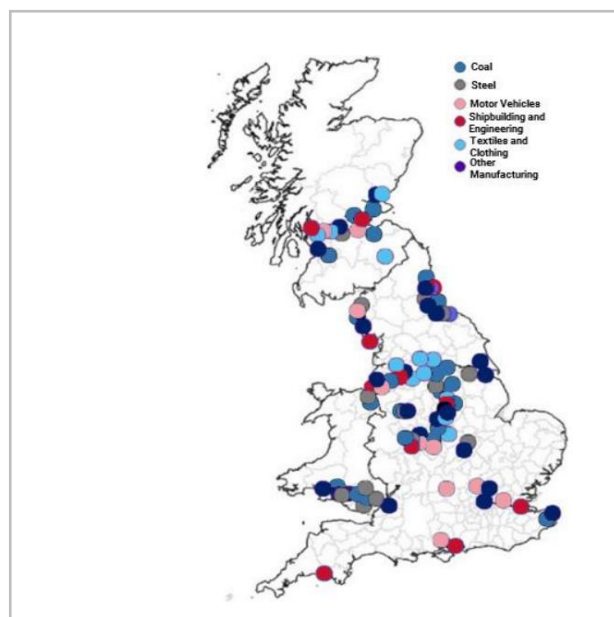
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Modern Challenges for UK Town and City Centres

As we have seen, major changes in Doncaster city centre are not new. They are a natural outcome of social and economic development and technological innovations. In recent years, a number of new social and economic challenges have arisen, driven by global change and other factors. Alongside the rapid advancement of digital technologies, these changes have altered town and city centres across the UK, and influenced how they are likely to function in the future.

In stark contrast to the 18th and 19th century, since the 1970s the UK has seen a fast and broad deindustrialisation compared to other developed countries, with a lasting impact in the North, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the Midlands in particular. Globalisation has played a role in offshoring activities to other parts of the world, with evolving consumption patterns changing consumer demand for goods. This led to significant job losses in places like Doncaster where major industries have been reduced to a fraction of their former size or disappeared entirely. These changes had a profound effect, with long lasting implications including disproportionate levels of deprivation and crime, and poorer public health. The result is visible in many towns across the United Kingdom including diminished high streets, run-down town centres, anti-social behaviour, and a lack of good jobs.¹



Major industrial job losses across Britain since the early 1980s.
Source Sheffield Hallam University / Long Term Plan for Towns

More recently, the 2008 Global Financial Crisis led to the deepest recession experienced by major advanced economies since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Recovery from the crisis has been slow. Its scale also influenced national policy decisions in the UK, including austerity measures which resulted in major cuts to welfare benefits and public services, ranging from policing to health and early intervention services, and reducing the capacity to carry out day to day operations. Many commentators have associated these policies, directly and indirectly, with social impacts including an increase in poverty, rough sleeping, homelessness, and the proliferation of food banks². Some of these financial and social issues remain visible in town and city centres today.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic left its own social and economic legacy including very high levels of public spending and a large increase in government debt³^[4]. During and following the pandemic, compounded by global events including the war in Ukraine, rising inflation impacted investment and created a cost of living crisis in the UK, reducing disposable income. In addition, the disruptive effect of the pandemic resulted in a rapid increase in the number of people working from home, changed shopping habits, and impacted demand for services like public transport, affecting businesses and the property market in many town and city centres.

¹ HM Government: [Long Term Plan for Towns](#)

² UN General Assembly: [Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights](#)

³ House of Commons Library: [Public spending during the Covid-19 pandemic](#)

⁴ HM Government: [Autumn Statement 2022](#)



Wheatley Centre Shopping Park and Lakeside Village: The popularity of out-of-town retail has impacted city centres.

Other social trends and national policies have also affected town and city centres. From the 1990s, the growth and popularity of out of town retail centres had a significant impact on the composition and vibrancy of the traditional high street, moving a significant amount of footfall and trade away from town centres.

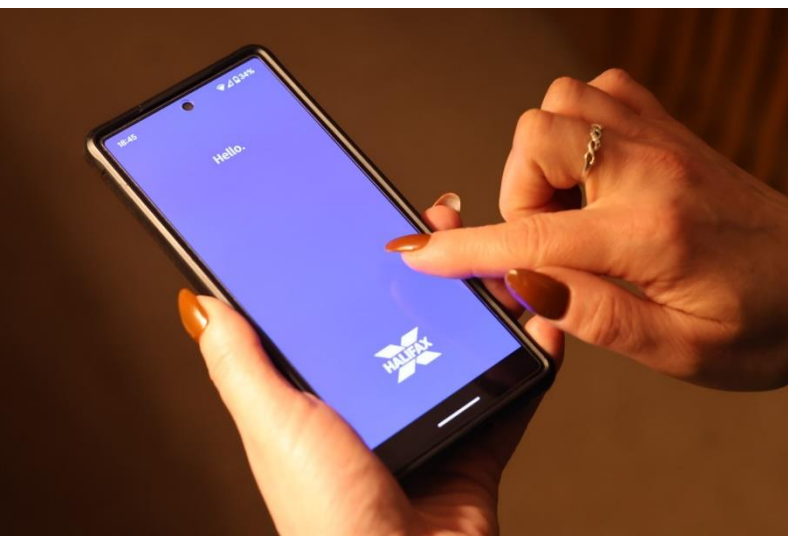
At the same time large out of town supermarkets began to predominate, while diversifying their own offer to include goods as varied as fashion, electronics, homeware and garden furniture. New office development has seen some traditional town centre based occupations, such as solicitors and accountants, take workers away from town and city centres with modern offices built on less complex brownfield sites proving attractive to many businesses.

During this period, technological change has been vast. The development of the internet, computing and mobile technologies has seen a huge shift to online and on-demand services. Sectors such as banking that were once the preserve of the High Street no longer have the same need for face-to-face interactions, with some newer banks having no physical presence at all. Other examples of High Street businesses and services affected range from the Post Office to estate agents and even taxi services.

Perhaps most significantly, these new technologies combined with the rise of home delivery services have transformed the nature of retail. Town and city centres which were once the bedrock of the retail industry have seen shopping behaviours change fundamentally, as online stores offer a variety of goods, prices and convenience that is hard to replicate. Some major retailers (e.g. Debenhams) have moved almost entirely online while other household names like Woolworths and BHS have disappeared altogether.

Collectively, these factors have had a dramatic impact on town and city centres. Many face the resulting challenge of retail spaces and other buildings that are surplus to requirements or no longer fit for purpose, along with a reduction in footfall from workers and visitors, who can now choose to spend their retail and leisure time in many different ways.

Online shopping, services and doorstep delivery has radically impacted traditional High Streets



The Role and Future of Doncaster City Centre

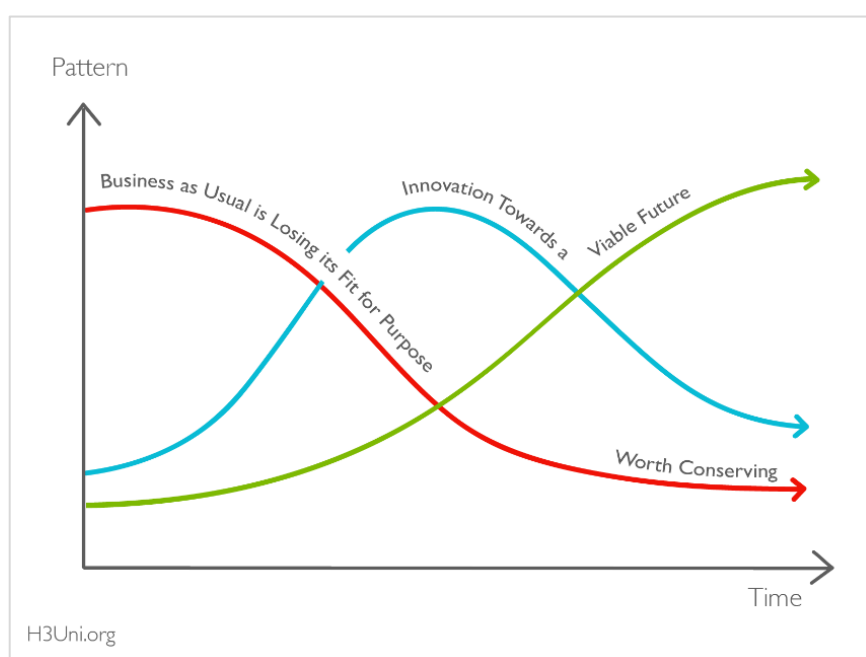
While the challenge facing Doncaster and other town and city centres may seem sizeable, it should not be daunting. Indeed, Doncaster has held up relatively well to many of these pressures.

Recognising the changing nature of town and city centres and the need for a new strategic approach, in 2016 the Doncaster Urban Centre Masterplan was developed. It identified that while Doncaster as a borough had secured critical investment and grown successfully in the preceding years, issues included:

- An over reliance on lower value and consumer driven sectors for Doncaster-based jobs, a persistent productivity gap and the need for continued diversification to make the economy more resilient.
- There had been major developments in areas surrounding the town centre and across the borough, but a marked decline in economic activity in Doncaster town centre, including the loss of 1,700 retail & wholesale jobs in the town centre between 2009 and 2014.
- The quality and range of assets across the Borough, but particularly in the town centre, needed to be enhanced to improve Doncaster's offer, sustain and grow a high-quality labour supply, and retain and attract younger people. It identified qualitative deficiencies in the 'look and feel' of the town centre as the heart of the Borough.
- The town centre was 'over-shopped' with relatively low numbers of people living and working there. The town centre was not maximising its clear connectivity advantages, despite having the potential to play a stronger role as a regional business hub. In particular it lacked modern residential development and high quality office accommodation.

The masterplan also recognised the mutual dependency of Doncaster's urban centre and the network of our communities across the borough, and the importance of internal and external connectivity. The work set a new trajectory to respond to the challenges, including our objective to become a city and ensure that the city centre plays a full role in the future of Doncaster and the wellbeing of residents. It provided a coherent policy to support diversification of town centre functions, and a plan to bring forward sites for development.

This strategy seeks to build on the 2016 work and its core findings, while recognising that the landscape has changed since this time – and will change again. Our objective is to continue the transition to a sustainable future for the city centre which builds on existing strengths and preserves our best assets. More than ever, the city centre must move away from its over-reliance on retail and towards a more balanced offer, including a greater presence of housing, business, face-to-face services and leisure experiences that attract visitors from within and outside the city. It must also retain some flexibility to adapt to future changes. Key to this transition will be the phasing and prioritisation of development, with a strong focus on activities that anchor and catalyse change, while conserving the heritage and character of the city centre.



Section 2. Project Delivery Since 2016

Following the production of the Urban Centre Masterplan, a large number of projects have been successfully delivered, which have transformed many parts of the city centre.

The pace and scale of development that has already taken place is a major achievement in such a short space of time, particularly given the constraints caused by the COVID pandemic, and subsequent inflationary cost increases.

Capital Investments

In excess of 50 major capital projects or significant interventions that have been delivered to improve the city centre or are currently underway.

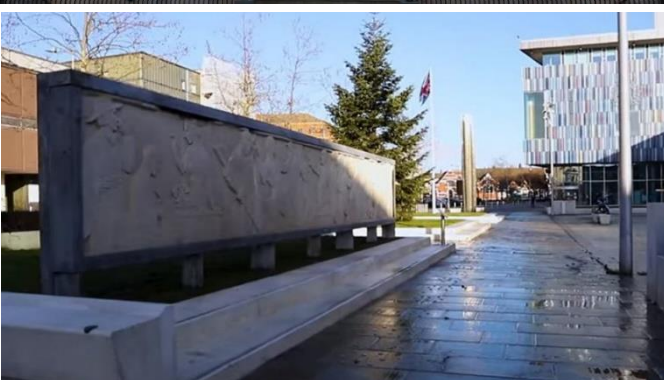
The major changes across different areas within the city centre are summarised below. These projects form the foundations for future development of the city centre.



Doncaster UTC, opened in 2020

Doncaster City Gateway Scheme, opened in 2021





Quality Streets, Public Art and Heritage Buildings

An extensive Quality Streets programme has been rolled out across the city centre, dramatically improving the streetscape and enhancing the experience for visitors.

Upgrades have included widening and re-paving footpaths with high quality materials, planting new trees and creating landscaped areas, road remodelling and resurfacing, installing at-level crossing areas, cycle lanes, new bus shelters and information boards.

Key streets completed since 2016 include:

- Hall Gate
- Wood Street
- Silver Street
- Duke Street
- Cleveland Street (partial)
- St Sepulchre Gate (partial)
- South Parade
- Printing Office Street

In addition, targeted public realm, pavement and road improvements have been delivered in areas including St Sepulchre Gate, Nether Hall Road and Greyfriars Road. The alleyway connecting Wood Street and Hall Gate has been improved with new paving, lighting and art work.

The new Mining Statue along with associated public realm improvements were installed on Printing Office Street and the much loved Gaumont frieze was saved and mounted as a piece of public art in Sir Nigel Gresley Square.

Other new street art includes the new 'Futures Past and Present' mural opposite the railway station. Public art commemorating Doncaster's railway and horseracing heritage is also a key feature of the new railway station public square.

Doncaster's historic Grade I Listed Mansion House and the associated Grade II Priory Place building saw significant renovations, with Priory Place replacing the old Register Office as a new venue for affordable civic wedding ceremonies.

The mining statue '[A Rich Seam](#)', Hall Gate and St Sepulchre Gate street upgrades, Mansion House façade renovation and the Gaumont frieze, now installed in Sir Nigel Gresley Square.



Savoy cinema and restaurant units, opened in 2021

Civic and Cultural Quarter (CCQ)

The Civic and Cultural Quarter has dramatically changed over the last 15 years, starting with the opening of the Civic Office, Cast Theatre and Sir Nigel Gresley Square. Major new developments since 2016 have included the iconic Danum Gallery, Library and Museum (incorporating the former Girls' High School building), a six screen cinema and restaurant units, the University Technical College (UTC), and a public car park on College Road. The former central library has been demolished, with new paving upgrades along Kingsgate in Waterdale significantly enhancing the environment for businesses and improving a key pedestrian access route to the CCQ.

City Gateway / Railway Station Area

One of the most significant projects completed since 2016 is the major regeneration of the railway station and surrounding area. This has transformed a key gateway and route into the city centre for rail users and visitors to Doncaster. Development in this area focused on the transformation of the forecourt to create a welcoming and attractive public square, with provision of new dedicated taxi facilities including a covered walkway and digital information board. The derelict sorting office was demolished and replaced with a new station car park. Development of the area also included an improved single phase pedestrian crossing and highways improvements for pedestrians and motorists.

Development has not been restricted to the area outside the railway station. Significant station enhancements and ongoing investment has been delivered by LNER and its partners. This includes a new external glass canopy on the Grade II Listed station building, along with the reinstatement of heritage signing, building illumination, improved lighting and renovations in the ticket hall, digital information boards, the opening of The Draftsman Alehouse on Platform 3 and development of a popular new secure cycle hub.

The next phase of development in this area is already underway. Construction of the flagship Gateway One office development commences in 2025 and is intended to house a new digital tech hub, bringing more business activity, employees and visitors into the city centre.

Doncaster Markets and Sunny Bar Area

Doncaster Market is a crucial anchor and key destination in the city centre. Development since 2016 has focused on the restoration and repurposing of the underused heritage buildings which are so fundamental to the historic market: the Grade II* Listed Corn Exchange and the Grade II Listed Wool Market.

The Wool Market has been successfully transformed into a new leisure facility incorporating international eateries, events and live music, and an entertainment zone, proving hugely popular since its re-opening in 2019.

This project also included removal of the dilapidated Irish Middle Market, which was replaced with an extension of the market car park, complemented by new paving and seating areas.

Renovation of the iconic Corn Exchange was completed in 2024, including repairs to the roof as well as heritage restoration to the windows and stonework. The works have seen removal of the non-original mezzanine, providing a flexible, open space which will be able to host a diverse range of events from shows to pop up markets.

A range of new features have also been added including a new staircase, LED feature lighting, improved heating, new accessible toilets, brand-new gallery flooring and ten new retail units. The Corn Exchange is due to open fully in Spring 2025.



Doncaster Wool Market and Corn Exchange regeneration projects.





Enhancements at Elmfield Park



Bennetthorpe and the City Centre Parks

In addition to the Quality Streets upgrade on South Parade, major enhancements have also taken place to improve the area surrounding the Grade II Listed war memorial on Bennetthorpe, which hosts the annual Remembrance Sunday event, including remodelling the road junction, installing new paving and planting, and improving pedestrian crossing facilities.

As the key city centre green spaces, and vital community facilities for city centre residents, Elmfield Park and Town Field have seen significant upgrades. At Elmfield, this includes restoration of the heritage entrance gates, improvements to the Rose Garden including installation of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) memorial statue, a new play area and upgraded sports courts, new and upgraded footpaths, planting schemes and solar lighting. Following relocation of Council services, the former register office and the Grade II Listed Elmfield House have been renovated to create new homes and a new residential development has been completed on the former depot site.

At Town Field, improvements have included new tree planting, pavement resurfacing, a new footpath improving access to Hall Cross School, solar lighting and waste bins, and naturalisation of parkland along with new parks signage and interpretation panels. Both Town Fields and Elmfield Park have achieved the Green Flag Award and hosted a range of city events, including Doncaster Pride and UK Pride, the Tour de Yorkshire, Kite Festival and Armed Forces Day.

Waterfront

Doncaster Waterfront is a significant city centre brownfield site, which offers major regeneration potential. However, due to its size and former industrial uses, development is complicated. Since 2016, the focus of work has been on preparations to enable future development. On the area adjacent to Doncaster College, land acquisition and assembly has already been completed and site remediation work is underway to remove pollution and create an interim greenspace in advance of potential development.

Improvement work was undertaken on Greyfriars Bridge including strengthening and heightening it in order to support development of the Friars Gate area. This enabled construction of the new £14m Mallard House offices by Network Rail, providing for almost 600 employees to be based at the city centre facility.

New traffic signalling has been installed at Holmes Market to improve vehicle flow on Church Way and the pathway from the interchange to Doncaster College has been improved, enhancing the route for students, staff and visitors.

Urban Centre Masterplan Actions

Collectively, these projects and investments significantly surpass the expectations of the 2016 Urban Centre Masterplan (UCMP), particularly when considering the prevailing economic conditions during this time period.

The UCMP Implementation Plan set out a range of proposed actions over three time periods: Short: Years 0-5 (2016-2021); Medium: Years 6-15 (2022-2031); Long: Years 15+ (2032 onwards). Of the 29 projects and actions identified, 21 have been completed or are currently in progress. Three are no longer applicable due to changes in national government policy. A further action (provision of a city centre wide open wi-fi network) was explored by the Council but not taken forward. Several medium term projects have also progressed or been completed.

Projects and Actions: Years 0-5 (2016-2021)					
Area for Change/Theme	Complete	In Progress	No Longer Applicable	Not Yet Progressed	Total
City Gateway	3				3
Civic / Business District	3				3
Enterprise Marketplace	2			1	3
Innovation Quarter			1		1
Minster Canalside	2	2		1	5
Parklands	1	1			2
Retail Core	2				2
Waterfront	2		2	2	6
Doncaster Smart City	1		1		2
City Transport Network	2				2
Grand Total	18	3	4	4	29

Just four originally proposed actions have yet to be significantly progressed/completed. They are:

- **Marina use as canal boat basin with the heritage building brought forward for associated use.** To bring forward this project, in practical terms it is first necessary to complete land acquisition, remediation and enable site access. This work is currently underway. Future development of the site including this project proposal will be considered once the current project has been completed.
- **Finish the redevelopment (already started) of the former Arts College on Church View.** The building is in use, including hosting community activity, and owned by Doncaster Central Development Trust.
- **Pedestrian crossing over Church Way to connect the Marketplace to Minster Canalside and to Waterfront.** A pedestrian crossing already exists in this area. The UCMP envisaged an improved crossing associated with further development of Doncaster Market and the Minster area. At present, a new crossing is not urgently required but will be considered as part of the next phase of development.
- **New / improved pedestrian crossing across Church Way to Waterfront.** A pedestrian crossing already exists in this area. The UCMP envisaged an improved crossing in the Dockin Hill Road area to connect the existing community with Doncaster College and new waterfront development. At present, a new crossing is not urgently required but will be considered as part of the next phase of development.



City Centre Officers and volunteers from the Doncaster Street Pastors charity.

Key Service Delivery Initiatives

Throughout this period, day to day public services have continued with a number of teams collaborating to service the city centre needs and working with the voluntary and private sectors, including Street Pastors, Door Supervisors, the CASED network, businesses, licensee's and market traders. In addition to these activities, some specific new programmes and interventions were developed to address new issues in the city centre.

Complex Lives Alliance (Starting Point)

In the 2010s Doncaster, like many places in the UK, saw rising challenges related to homelessness and rough sleeping, mostly centred on Doncaster Town Centre. This led to growing concerns from the public, business and public services about the wellbeing of individuals as well as feelings of safety in the city centre. Clear issues included people with poor physical and mental health, the use of synthetic cannabinoids (AKA Spice), and the prevalence of begging and anti-social behaviour.

In autumn of 2016, Doncaster Council and the Team Doncaster Strategic Partnership developed a new, whole system operating model, reflecting the complexity of the challenge and the need for an integrated response across all public services, working with the voluntary sector. This was underpinned by evidence from people with lived experience of being locked, often long term, into a cycle of rough sleeping, addiction, offending behaviour, poor physical and mental health and vulnerability - often underpinned by childhood trauma.

The product of this work was the development of a new approach - the award winning Doncaster Complex Lives Alliance. The new model incorporated services from the Council, NHS, St Leger Homes and other supported housing providers, NACRO, National Probation Service, South Yorkshire Police and DWP. It works closely with a range of community, voluntary and faith groups.

City Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)

In 2017 the Council introduced a PSPO to help public services reduce persistent anti-social behaviour in the city centre. The aim of the PSPO is to deter anti-social behaviour while at the same time encouraging vulnerable members of the community to access help and support. While not a solution in and of itself, the current order provides some additional powers to tackle anti-social behaviour which causes harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance, including: Begging and loitering; Drinking alcohol in public areas; Taking drugs or other banned substances; Urination and defecation in public; Tampering with parking equipment; and, no return within 24 hours if asked to leave.

Section 3: Strategic Context

The development and delivery of clear plans for the city centre over the last 10 years has created significant momentum. This strategy presents an opportunity to review progress while also recognising other changes that have taken place during this time, to set the direction for new investment and activities. In doing so, it is important to recognise that despite the clear progress made, there remain significant challenges and sites in the city centre that must be addressed. The wider policy context also needs to be considered.

The City Centre Today

Housing and Population

Post war housing clearance resulted in a depopulated town centre in Doncaster. However, over the last 10 years, private sector investment has delivered a significant increase in the number of residential units in the city centre. This increase in residential units is most welcome, although the units have tended to be dominated by office conversions. This has some associated issues due to the nature of these buildings. For example, a Doncaster Council study in 2020 found that of 755 new residential units over the previous 10 years, 46% were office conversions but fewer than half of these conversions conformed to minimum space standards and only 3% had appropriate access to outdoor amenity space.

The core city centre is now home to around 6,000 residents, or 1.9% of the total Doncaster population (Census 2021). According to the census, it has a much higher proportion of working age residents than Doncaster overall, with a much lower share of children and older people. It also has a slightly higher proportion of male residents. A higher proportion of people are in employment and working full-time; they are more likely to work in lower skilled occupations, in particular in the Transport and Storage, and retail sectors. More than half of city centre households have no car or van, compared to less than a quarter across the wider city. Residents are much less likely to work from home and more likely to travel to work on foot, by bicycle or using public transport, as well as in taxis and in car shares.⁵

The city centre has a more diverse resident community than Doncaster with regard to ethnicity, although White British remains the largest individual group by a significant margin. People in the city centre are more likely to express a religious belief. The largest groups are Christian (49% of residents) and Muslim (13%). 29% of residents say they have no religion.

Reflecting the population demographics, the city centre has a much higher proportion of one person households and a much lower proportion of single family households. It has a significantly higher share of terraced properties and converted or shared houses and other buildings. One and two bedroom homes dominate, but overcrowding is higher in the city centre than elsewhere in the city. Housing tenure is much more heavily weighted towards private sector rentals (67%), compared to the wider city (19%). A key challenge for Doncaster City Centre is the development of a more diverse balance of residential units, including homes for families and older people, which will also need a robust network of supporting community facilities including access to greenspace.

⁵ Note: 2021 Census Travel to work statistics were impacted by Covid-19 restrictions and should be considered in this context.



KEY

Masterplan area boundary

River corridors

Conservation areas

Listed buildings

Public green spaces

Retail core

Civic and cultural core

Railway Station

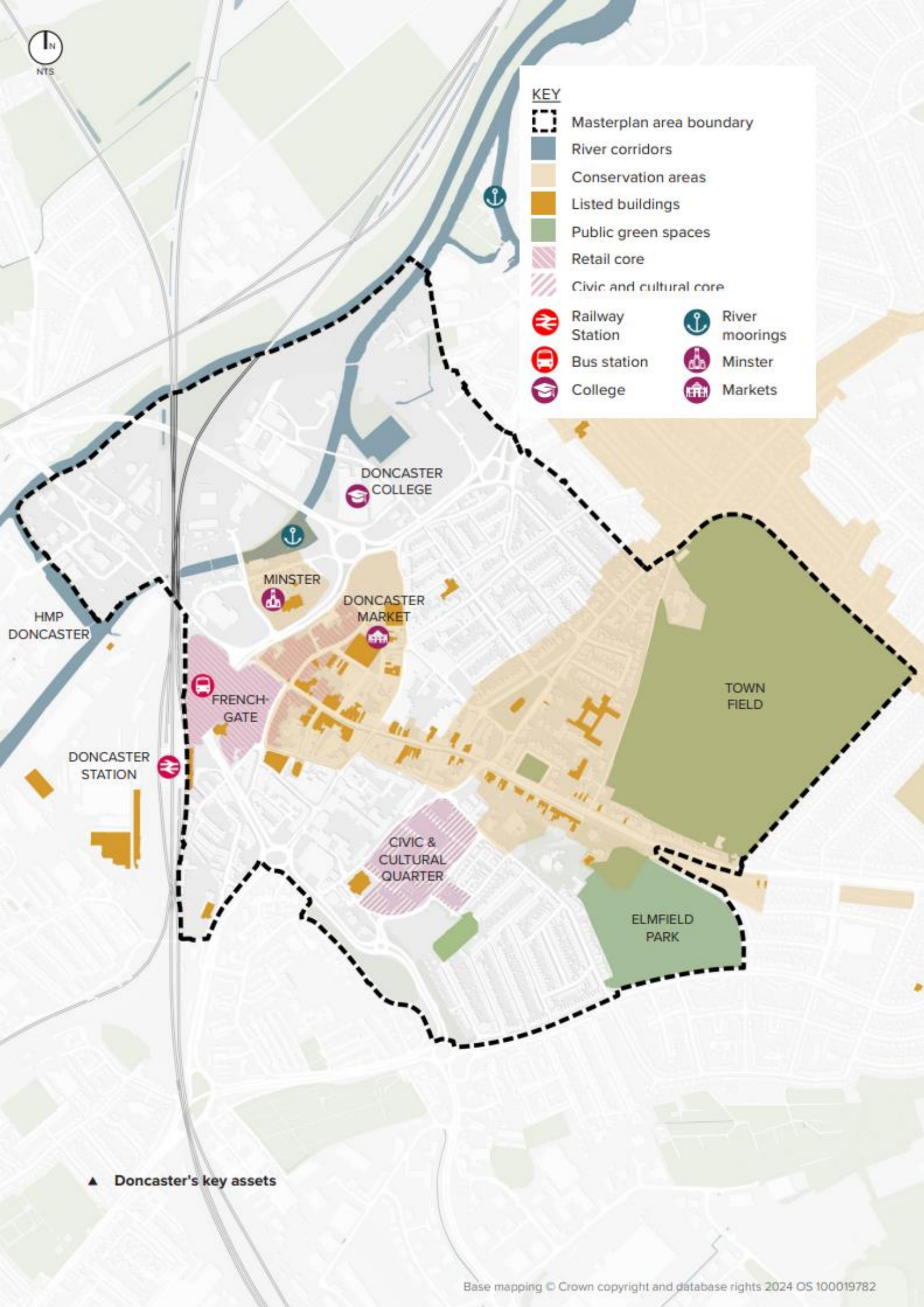
Bus station

College

River moorings

Minster

Markets



▲ Doncaster's key assets

Land use in the city centre

The city still has an active retail core around Frenchgate, St Sepulchre Gate, Baxter Gate and High Street, but beyond this area there are large numbers of vacant units. As of the end of 2024, the void rate is estimated to be around 18%. Out-of-town retail areas including Lakeside, Wheatley Hall Road and York Road continue to be a challenge to city centre vitality but could be better connected to sell Doncaster as a whole offer, from local business to national chains.

The night time economy is concentrated around Silver Street and into Nether Hall Road and Copley Road, with a diversified offer at the nearby Wool Market. Office space is spread across the centre, often on upper floors above retail and service units, but there is no Grade A office accommodation and there remains no clear 'business district', although construction of the new Gateway One building is due to commence in 2025.

The Civic & Cultural Quarter provides several high quality cultural and leisure facilities but feels poorly connected to the station and the retail core. The UTC and College both sit on the fringes and are not currently well integrated with other parts of the city centre.

At present, residential accommodation is mostly located in the neighbourhoods east and south of the retail core, with a small number of residential conversions particularly around the Waterdale area. The Doncaster Housing Strategy Update 2020 to 2025 recognises that increasing housing can help to support the city centre.





Doncaster's rich built heritage: Corn Exchange, St Sepulchre Gate, Clock Corner, Doncaster Minster and Sunny Bar.

Heritage and townscape

Doncaster's heritage is evident within the city centre, with many listed buildings and extensive swathes falling within conservation areas. This includes seven Conservation Areas, which fall wholly or partially within the City Centre, two Grade I listed buildings (Mansion House, Doncaster Minster), two Grade II* listed buildings (Corn Exchange, Christ Church); and around 100 Grade II listed buildings. Much of the historic street pattern remains, apart from where it was removed to create the Waterdale Centre and Trafford Way / Church Way.

However, one Conservation Area is considered to be 'At Risk' (St Georges) and four are 'Vulnerable'. One Grade II building (St James Pool and Health Club) is considered to be 'At Extreme Risk', although this the subject of current work and a proposed development. Four Grade II buildings are 'At Risk' and around ten are 'Vulnerable'. In addition, there are many other buildings and shopfronts that would benefit from investment, with their current condition impacting from the streetscape.

The Minster is a significant landmark in the city but is also classed as a 'Building at Risk'. It sits isolated from the retail areas a short distance away. Doncaster has retained a relatively low-rise skyline with few taller buildings in the centre, allowing the attractive church towers and spires to stay prominent. There is a potential tension between heritage and new development, but fortunately the key opportunity sites are more distant from the historic core, giving good scope for intensification and an opportunity to restore the urban structure.

Buildings in the city centre typically front onto the street contributing to levels of activity and passive surveillance but there is lack of frontage to the major Trafford Way / Church Way corridor.

The living heritage of Doncaster's markets has undergone recent evolution through the transformation of the Wool Market and refurbishment of the Corn Exchange. The market and surrounding area would still benefit from additional investment and a further focus is required for it to fully achieve its potential and create a thriving modern market and small enterprise offer. This means building on the traditional and current strengths of the market to meet the varied needs of residents, with an enticing offer and a diverse range of stalls. The foundation for future success will be the existing market traders, who should be promoted and

Heritage buildings in a poor state of repair: Grand Theatre, Pillar House & Denison House.



supported, and who would also benefit from an increase the overall number of stallholders and an enhanced market that attracts additional footfall and new customers.

There are several vacant sites where buildings have been demolished and not replaced. Some of these are small gap sites, but some are much larger plots. In particular, the Waterdale site consists of a large vacant area and several buildings with poor townscape quality, although it offers a significant development opportunity.

Footfall and Spend

Similar to many town and city centres, pedestrian levels have dropped since pre-COVID levels and, although they have an increased since the imposition of covid restrictions, a downward trend continues overall. Footfall is also imbalanced across the centre, with a concentration in the retail core and around the markets, but lower levels at Waterdale and around the Minster. Some streets feel very quiet as a result. Market days (Tuesday, Friday and Saturday) remain the most popular days, with Saturday the busiest day of the week.

Footfall behaviours and land use characteristics are also reflected in the spending profile in the city centre. Debit card data suggests around half of spending is on fashion, food and drink. December is the busiest month due to the effect of Christmas spending, with January and February quieter periods. Otherwise, spending is reasonably consistent through the rest of the year. Just under a quarter of spending (22%) is made by people who visit Doncaster from outside the city boundary, demonstrating that the city centre is still able to attract visitors from surrounding areas and across the country.

Safety and Security

There have been a wide range of activities and enhancements to support a safer city centre in the daytime and night time both through service delivery and the built environment. However, despite the initiatives developed since 2016, significant public concerns remain over safety and security, and the perceived effectiveness of interventions to date. Although overall recorded crime has been reducing in central Doncaster, crime including shoplifting does remain a substantial issue, while anti-social behaviour and public order incidents are present and visible in the city centre. It is a key issue for local people and businesses.

Movement and access

The city centre is generally well-connected by public transport, with short walking distances to the rail and bus stations. However, there is limited public transport connectivity to some areas within the city centre, such as the market and waterfront, which can impact people with mobility issues.

There is good access for vehicles but high levels of traffic, including visitors, deliveries and through-travel, can be a barrier to pedestrian movement. Vehicle access is possible through most city streets, providing access to car parks, for drop-off/pick-up, and for deliveries and servicing. Trafford Way and Church Way cause significant severance issues, cutting the centre off from the railway station, Doncaster Minster, Doncaster College and riverside areas.

The 2018 Parking Strategy identified that the city centre has an ample supply of parking, spread across the city centre in a series of small, often low-quality sites with limited security. This provision will need to be

considered as part of future development of the city centre as several current car parking areas are also potential development plots. Parking will be a key consideration in any future development projects.

Central areas are highly permeable by pedestrians, with many informal routes through 'back land' sites, however this has diluted footfall and reduces the potential for passing trade on key streets. Pedestrian accessibility could be improved if more seating is added across the city centre. Some important pedestrian routes, such as that between the bus station and Doncaster College are quite low quality, although short term improvements have been implemented to improve safety.

There is an opportunity to expand on the recent improvements to cycle infrastructure which were implemented in line with the 2021 government Transport Decarbonisation Plan⁶. The Doncaster terrain is relatively flat, meaning there is potential to increase walking and cycling journeys, though accessibility is a key concern for many. Secure cycle storage is limited and could be improved to encourage greater use of the existing cycle infrastructure by visitors. Similarly, many recent residential developments lack dedicated cycle storage. There is the potential to provide on-street secure cycle storage to support these residents, who are less likely to have access to a car or van. A wider focus on designing an active environment that goes beyond dedicated infrastructure would support communities and benefit the city centre.

Car parking on the former Gaumont cinema site gap site.



⁶ [Transport decarbonisation plan - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan)

Public realm and activity

The Quality Streets programme has seen the upgrade of several streets in the city centre but there is a need for more places to stop, sit, rest and enjoy the surroundings. This limits the ability for some older or disabled people to travel around the city centre. The area around the Corn Exchange and markets has strong potential to be a major civic public space for the city, able to host events or other activities, though the space needs to find a clearer identity and encourage greater dwell time. The square also requires stronger protection from potential hostile vehicles in accordance with 'Martyn's Law'.

The city centre is lacking spaces that offer good amenity for young people, limiting the potential to benefit from the large number of students that are in the area during the week. There is also significant scope to make the city centre more child-friendly, bringing elements of play and animation into the streets and spaces and providing valuable free-to-use activities for families.

Green and blue infrastructure

In 2013, the Doncaster Green Space Audit found that the Town Centre was deficient in four out of five measured Public Open Space (POS) types: Informal Green Space; Public Parks; Woodlands & Nature Conservation Areas; Allotments. While some of these types of greenspace may not be expected within a city centre, it is still important that adequate and good quality green spaces are available to city centre residents and other users. This is particularly true as the city centre population grows, with many current homes not having access to private or shared gardens.

The existing parks, Elmfield Park and Town Field, are considerable assets for the city but they are not particularly well connected to the retail core. Overall, the heart of the city would benefit from greening at all scales, adding to biodiversity and public amenity. The larger development sites and areas of change have great potential to include new green features. This should be a key consideration of new development.

The city centre also has a considerable length of waterside, but this is mostly inaccessible, hidden behind building plots and vacant sites. There is a considerable opportunity to learn from how other cities have used their rivers and canals to drive regeneration and transformation. Nevertheless, the river poses an ever-growing threat from flooding, which will need to be managed. Water management needs to be considered in broad terms, including through creation of sustainable drainage features.

The River Don passes through the city centre but is mostly inaccessible.



Local and Regional Policy Context

In 2020, Team Doncaster⁷ agreed Doncaster Delivering Together, an overarching strategy to promote the well-being of Doncaster's residents and communities. It aims to address the challenges Doncaster faces and improve the lives of local people. Well-being is a broad concept that encapsulates all facets of life and everyday activity. The Doncaster Wellbeing Wheel shows our six goals, the long-term 'beacons in the distance' that we will work towards. Together the goals contribute to one overall mission - Thriving People, Places and Planet. To achieve our goals the Team Doncaster partnership has listened to the views of local residents, businesses, community groups and organisations and agreed eight priority areas for action.



Doncaster Wellbeing Wheel and 'The Great 8' priorities.

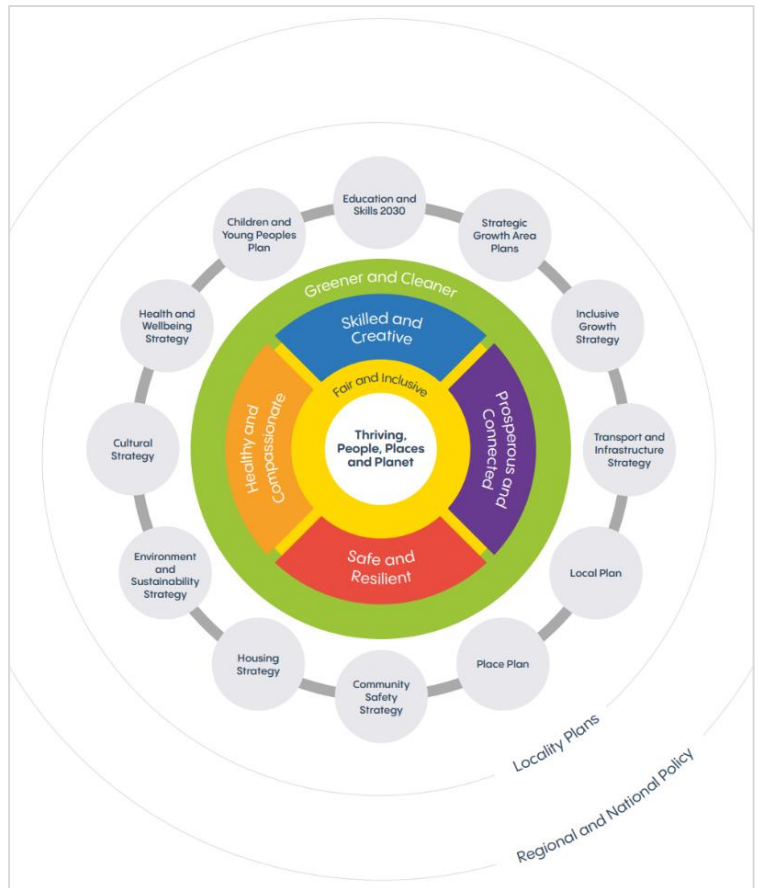
Greener and Cleaner	All residents, communities and organisations working together to protect and enhance the local and global environment to improve wellbeing
Fair and Inclusive	A borough with reduced inequalities and improved access to social and economic opportunities for all.
Prosperous and Connected	A stronger, greener and fairer economy that provides good, well-paid jobs and is supported by improved transport and active travel infrastructure, and access to good broadband.
Safe and Resilient	Residents feel safe and communities are more resilient to challenges and emergencies
Healthy and Compassionate	A compassionate borough where collectively everyone is supported to add life to years and years to life.
Skilled and Creative	Residents have improved skills and a creative culture supports wellbeing, business success and solutions to the borough's challenges.

⁷ Team Doncaster is a strategic partnership of organisations and individuals that spans the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

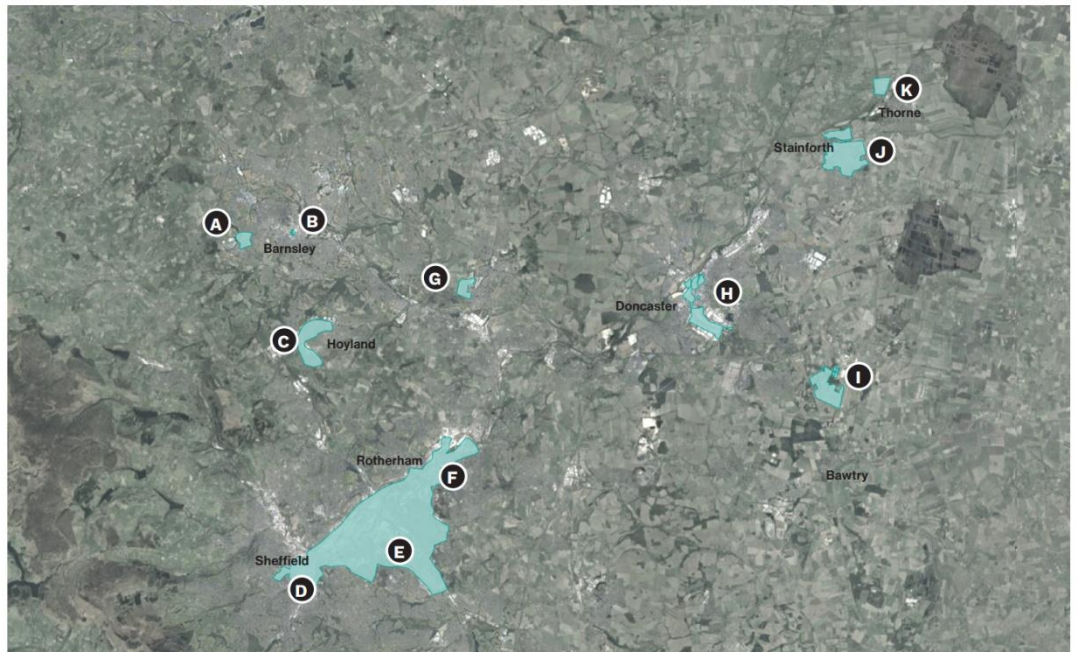
To achieve these goals, Doncaster Delivering Together is underpinned by a set of core strategies covering issues including the economy, education and skills, health and wellbeing, community safety and the environment. The Doncaster Local Plan, sets out how the city will grow and develop, identifying where new jobs, homes and services will be located.

The city centre will have a role to play in delivering many of these plans. It is therefore important that our city centre vision and delivery activity aligns with these strategies and complements our other investments and ambitions.

In particular, the city centre will be key to realising our economic ambitions. It has the potential to act as a focus for enterprise growth, a home to knowledge-based sectors and an important image-maker. This can help to diversify and grow our economy, complementing other employment sites in the city such as GatewayEast/Doncaster Sheffield Airport and Unity. Development of the city centre will have benefits beyond Doncaster, and it is supported in the South Yorkshire MCA regional economic plans⁸. These plans aim to assist the re-structuring of town and city centre economies, helping to re-populate and re-purpose our urban cores so that they act as a magnet for people, businesses and growth. As such, the city centre has also been identified as an Opportunity Site within the South Yorkshire Investment Zone.



- A M1 J37
- B THE SEAM
- C M1 J36
- D SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE
- E THE INNOVATION DISTRICT, SOUTH YORKSHIRE
- F ROTHERHAM TOWN CENTRE
- G GOLDTHORPE
- H DONCASTER CITY CENTRE
- I GATEWAY EAST
- J UNITY
- K DONCASTER NORTH



South Yorkshire Investment Zone Sites

⁸ <http://www.southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk>

National Drivers for Change

“Doncaster has a proud industrial heritage of rail, steel and coal, and extraordinary potential for industries of the future, from hydrogen to artificial intelligence.”

Sir Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Following the 2024 General Election, a key national priority is the construction of new homes, with demanding targets set by government for Local Authorities.

Doncaster Council has already set its own an extended target for housing in the Doncaster Local Plan, which was adopted in September 2021, and the city has an excellent recent record of housing delivery. Since 2021, an average of 1,291 homes per year have been added to the local housing supply. Nonetheless, the government target of 1,198 new homes per year will require a significant number of new sites to be allocated for housing in the coming years. The city centre is likely to have an important role in meeting these targets, with further work required to understand the capacity of city centre sites to deliver new homes.

This new housing requirement is part of the Government’s Plan for Change. Local areas will have an important role in delivering this national mission-led approach, which includes:

- Kick starting economic growth and delivering higher living standards in every part of the United Kingdom
- Building an NHS that is fit for the future, where people have access to health and care when they need it. A priority will be to provide the right care, in the right place, at the right time, which may not be in a hospital setting.
- Safer Streets, with an increase public confidence in policing and in the criminal justice system. This includes a focus on visible policing, safer town centres and cracking down on anti-social behaviour, shop theft and street theft.

Both locally and nationally there is a unified commitment to achieving net zero and tackling the threats presented by climate change. This remains an integral consideration in future activity and development.



PLAN FOR CHANGE

Milestones for mission-led government

5 December 2024

CP 1210

The government’s ‘Plan for Change’ is a key national driver.

Other emerging opportunities and challenges

Funding opportunities

Building on past successful applications for funding from Central Government, there are new opportunities for place-based regeneration funding to unlock investment into Doncaster, including the forthcoming Long Term Plan for Towns and Community Regeneration Partnership programmes. These programmes can supplement other local, regional and external funding sources to provide a pipeline of activity to deliver the city centre strategy.

South Yorkshire Investment Zone

The Investment Zone is estimated to help leverage more than £1.2bn of private funding and help support more than 8,000 jobs by 2030. The Doncaster City Centre Corridor opportunity site, one of eight in the region allocated for business expansion and supply chain development, includes the Waterfront, Waterdale and City Gateway sites.

Emerging proposals

Several sites within the city centre are currently of interest to property developers, with the potential to deliver a significant catalyst for wider investment and enhancement. This includes sites at Waterdale, The Colonnades, and Waterfront. The City Gateway site is part of an on-going scheme to deliver a high quality, sustainable office building aimed at the technology sector with an extension to the Station Square.

Training and skills

With thousands of Doncaster College students and a further 700 students at the University Technical College, the city centre has a great opportunity to take advantage of these regular visitors to increase vitality. Greater links between the education and business communities, a key element of our education and skills strategy, can help establish relationships with learners and ensure that people do not feel they have to leave Doncaster to succeed.

Perceptions regarding the offer, safety and security, quality of experience

The Big City Conversation has clearly shown that public perceptions are influencing how, when and where people use the city centre, with personal safety a key concern. There is a significant challenge to address these perceptions and past negative experiences to create a city centre to be proud of. Work is also needed to further showcase the city's offer.

Changing nature of retail/vacant units

Like most town and city centres across the country, Doncaster city centre continues to lose retailers leaving vacant units and reducing the incentives for people to visit. This has included major retailers, with Marks and Spencer the latest to signal its intent to leave Doncaster city centre in the summer 2025, as it has already done in many other towns and cities.

Land ownership

Several key sites within the city centre are within private ownership, reducing the public sector's potential to influence redevelopment and enhancement. Further work may be required to assemble and prepare sites to ensure high-quality and coherent development.

Section 4: The Big City Conversation

The city centre belongs to all of us in Doncaster. As such, it is vital that the city centre strategy reflects the views, wishes and concerns of local residents and businesses. To ensure these views are captured a new public engagement programme called 'The Big City Conversation' commenced in 2024, building on several consultation exercises over recent years.

The Big City Conversation aims to ensure that the experiences and priorities of local people and businesses inform future developments and interventions in the city centre. Importantly, the Big City Conversation is intended to be an ongoing discussion rather than a one-off exercise. It will provide information so that people are aware of new plans and offer feedback mechanisms, so that the local community can continue to shape the future of the city centre as far as possible.

From our own experiences as local people, public representatives, service deliverers, and through our ongoing interactions with other residents and businesses, we already know about several issues in the city centre that people in Doncaster have raised as concerns.

To better understand these views and get a broader picture of the city centre, initially, we asked residents, businesses and visitors to share their thoughts and opinions on the city centre as it is today, via an online survey. Then we went into communities to continue the conversation and find out what residents wanted to see from the city centre in the future.

With over **5,821** online responses, and **2,301** conversations conducted in **211** different community settings across the whole of the city, we were able to gain a good understanding of the issues that affect people and influence their use – or non-use – of the city centre. 30% of these conversations were with children and young people and 20% of conversations with people from underserved communities. This greater understanding has not only helped shape this strategy, but resulted in a focused work plan which will tackle the most pressing issues immediately.



What People Told Us

We asked: How often do you go to the city centre?

35% of respondents to our online survey said they visited the city centre every week, and 28% once a month or more. 19% visit three times per year or less, while 1% of respondents said they never go to the city centre.

We asked: When was the last time you went to the city centre?

54% of respondents said they had been to the city centre in the last week. However, 3% had not been to the city centre in the last six months and another 3% have not visited the city centre for more than a year.

We asked: Why do you go to the city centre?

Shopping (61% of respondents) and Food/Drink (47%) were the most common reasons cited for visiting the city centre. Doncaster Market was an important destination. A significant number of respondents highlighted public transport access via the Railway and Bus Stations.

We asked: What should be the highest priority immediate actions in the city centre?

Almost half (49%) of respondents said improving safety and security should be the priority for immediate action. This was the most important factor across all age groups.

We asked about the importance and quality of current city centre features.

65% of respondents said the quality and variety of the shopping and retail offer is a very important issue but only 11% rate it either 'good' or 'very good'. More than half of respondents gave it a negative rating.

What people want from their city centre in the future

Area	Key Themes and Issues	Overview
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shops • Frenchgate Centre • Market • History of the city • Infrastructure • Lakeside • Referring to other cities or shopping centres 	Residents speak highly of the food and drink services and that they are key reason they visit the city centre. Residents appreciate retail options that are not met in their communities but want to see an improved retail offer including independent traders. Overall, residents want to see a more diverse and sustainable retail and food offer in the city centre. For young people more varied and quality shops that offer value for money are important. They want to have fun when shopping and see more shops that target them. They like being able to walk around and get to everything.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green space • Seating areas • Child-friendly • Appearance 	Residents shared a clear voice about increasing the green spaces in the city centre. They said it would help generate a feeling of pride and improve the experience of being in the city centre. Having clean and well looked after outdoor spaces would help make it more child and family friendly. The importance of green space, being outside and the city being a vibrant place was clear among children and young people, with repeated comments about green spaces. There were multiple references to water as a central point/feature. It was clear that the environment, recycling and the climate are very importance issues to them.
Community Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Social Behaviour • Drug & Alcohol Misuse • Homelessness • Crime • Safety 	Safety and security is a strong priority. Residents want to feel safe in all areas of the city centre. They want to support the homeless with compassion. There is a clear voice from underserved and vulnerable groups that feeling safe, in the day and night-time, is a key driver to them accessing the city centre. Young people also raised the importance of everyone feeling safe and felt a more visible presence of services and trusted adults would help. There were multiple references to sensory spaces and 'places of calm'. Young people spoke repeatedly about the homeless and how they want them to be cared for.
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nightlife • Child/family-friendly • Low-cost/Free • Heritage 	Residents enjoy the festivals, events and other assets. It is a priority for many that future entertainment is family friendly and affordable. They want to celebrate Doncaster's history and buildings through culture and arts. For young people sports and green space is a priority. Many young people visit the city centre to use the entertainment venues and want areas where children can come together and play.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport links • Disabled access • Seating areas • Parking • Walking 	Residents highly value public transport links and they have aspirations for connectivity across the city to improve. Young people want better access for public transport to help reduce traffic within the city centre. People like the layout and the pedestrian areas. More seating and public toilets was important to all age groups. Car parking is recognised as an issue but there are mixed views about it with both positive and negative comments.

Residents' priorities for action

Views on safety and security

Public safety was by far the most important single issue for immediate action. Overall, more than half of respondents said that they felt either 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' when visiting the city centre. This is true of all age groups except those aged 65 years and over.

The less recently people had visited the city centre, the more likely they were to feel unsafe there. 73% of people who have not visited the city centre for more than a year said they felt 'very or somewhat unsafe' compared to 45% of people who had visited in the last week. Similarly, the less frequently people visit the city centre, the more likely there are to say they feel unsafe there.

When asked, 78% of people who had not been to the city centre for more than a year said that feelings of safety and security impacts their decision whether or not to visit. Of the different behaviours asked about, respondents felt that the two most significant issues were begging and anti-social or intimidating behaviour by adults.

When asked what would make people feel safer when they visited the city centre, by far the most common response was an increase in visible patrols and enforcement, in particular more policing. The second most common answer was tackling begging and addressing rough sleeping/homelessness. Other common unprompted issues that people said would make them feel safer relate to:

- Tackling drug and alcohol use in the city centre
- Addressing empty/unused spaces; and
- Addressing the presence/behaviour of large groups/gangs of people

People also commented that a busier city centre with more people generally would increase their feelings of safety.

Cleanliness and the look and feel of the city centre

Beyond safety and security, cleanliness and the overall look/feel of the city centre were extremely important to respondents but currently rate poorly, along with the provision of public toilets.

The protection and use of heritage buildings in the city centre is also very important to residents.

Built Environment/Amenity	Importance	Quality		
	Extremely Important	Rated Good or Very Good	Rated Fair	Rated Poor or Very Poor
City Centre Cleanliness	87%	9%	34%	56%
General 'look and feel' of the City Centre	81%	5%	25%	68%
Protection/Use of Heritage Buildings	65%	15%	35%	39%

Business Sentiment

Our businesses are the vital drivers of Doncaster's economy, and they have a major stake in the future success of the city centre. Acting on the experiences, perspectives and expertise of both city centre businesses and those across the wider city, is vital if we are to achieve a vibrant and successful city centre.

In many regards, business sentiment about the city centre closely reflects the views and experiences described by residents. The 2024 South Yorkshire Town and City Centre Survey identified cleanliness and safety as top business priorities for improving the region's urban cores. 52% of South Yorkshire businesses see their city centre as being important to fulfilling their own ambitions, while 82% see it as being important to attracting new investors into the region.

In Summer 2024, Doncaster Chamber of Commerce, which counts more than 800 businesses as members, launched 'Doncaster 35', its own manifesto for the future of the city based on extensive consultation with the local business community. As part of this work, the Chamber found that businesses perceive a lack of vibrancy in the city centre, with concerns about personal safety and anti-social behaviour. They consider a declining retail offer with vacant units and too many areas in physical decline as a major obstacle to the city's growth and development, impacting Doncaster's image and its ability to attract investment and talent.

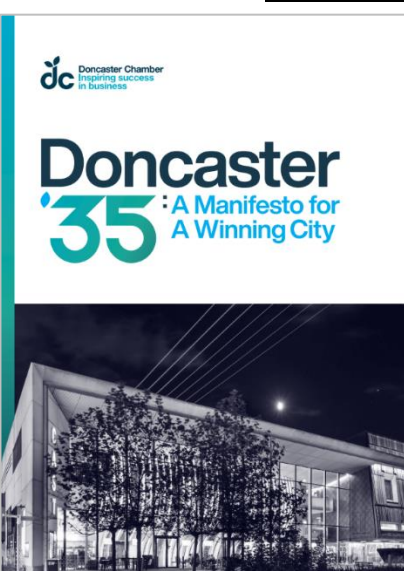
These concerns are balanced by a strong sense of opportunity. Businesses want to be proud of their city and the city centre, and an inclusive regeneration plan that reflects the changing ways people interact with urban cores. The Chamber consultation identified three top city centre priorities over the next ten years:

1. Creating a safe, clean and accessible city centre
2. Updating the offer for businesses, residents and visitors
3. Innovating in the use of green spaces and the built environment

The proposals note that when streets are regenerated to boost walking, there is a corresponding impact on footfall, turnover, property values and rental yields. It advocates for greater innovation and where necessary, an appetite for taking calculated risks such as acquiring and re-developing vacant buildings to bring them to market. They are clear that a more liveable city is necessary to attract and retain talent, which is key to business success, and that a network of large and small high quality green spaces are needed to support the wellbeing of the increased city centre population, while also hosting activities.

There is also a strong desire that the public sector and business community should collaborate to organise more and bigger events and festivals that attract visitors and showcase Doncaster's cultural offerings, and to secure investment in new venues to host more high-profile events in music, culture, and the arts.

Doncaster Chamber's [Doncaster '35](#) manifesto and 'What's Next?' business conference.



Section 5. Our Vision

Taking all of these issues into account, our new City Centre Vision has been developed to reflect the views and experiences of local residents, businesses and other stakeholders, and the evolution of town and city centres, recognising the current strengths and weaknesses of Doncaster city centre.

The Vision is described at a several levels:

- **Vision Statement:** A short statement of intent describing what we want to achieve over the coming years.
- **Principles:** The key characteristics that will underpin our approach.
- **Core Ambitions:** Our main aims for the city centre. They will also inform how we organise our activity and monitor the city centre.
- **Key Objectives:** Each ambition has a set of more specific objectives which will drive our projects and interventions.

Vision Statement

The vision statement reflects our central priorities:

**A safe, prosperous, vibrant and inclusive city centre
that builds on our heritage and is fit for the future**

Safe: Residents and businesses have told us that – first and foremost - the city centre must be, and feel like, a safe environment for everyone. This is the cornerstone of an attractive, welcoming and successful city centre.

Prosperous: At the heart of every thriving city centre is a dynamic and diverse business community, which provides opportunities that enable people to prosper socially and economically. The city centre must be a desirable centre of commerce and in-demand location for new enterprises and investment.

Vibrant: Evolving retail habits, new technologies and wider economic trends have led to a change in High Streets across the UK. Doncaster city centre must adapt to these challenges and be busy, vibrant and full of life. It should be a hive of activity with a diverse offering - seven days a week, during the daytime and into the evening, including through the presence of a larger residential community.

Inclusive: The city centre must be appealing and accessible to all of Doncaster's residents as well as visitors to our city, both through its offer and experience, and as a place of diversity and community cohesion.

Fit for the future: The city centre must reflect Doncaster's proud heritage and we must build on our strengths, but it is also essential to look to the future, take advantage of new technologies, and be flexible enough to adapt to opportunities as trends change and time moves on.

Principles

The vision sets the high-level aspirations that show the type of place that Doncaster wishes, and needs, to be to ensure future success. The following six principles identify the key characteristics that should guide our approach to the delivery of proposals, interventions and changes in the city centre.

Distinctively Doncaster is the key theme, underpinning all change and ambitions

Distinctively Doncaster

Reflecting the city's heritage and culture to maintain a memorable and valued destination and home. Change and development must recognise, respect and reflect the features, landmarks and characteristics that define the city and make Doncaster special, including the built heritage and the well-loved markets. The riverside will be restored as a green and blue ribbon connecting the centre to the wider city and providing an aspirational setting for new development, including a step-change in city centre living. The city centre will be both locally cherished and known more widely on the national and even international stage.

Open for business

A clear message that Doncaster is open for business. We want to support entrepreneurial activity in the city centre and an enterprise culture at all scales.

The city centre will provide the space, infrastructure, people, environment and a support network that enables new and existing businesses to prosper and encourages investment in the city centre. This will also help to foster long term resilience and sustainability.

Quality places

Well-designed buildings, streets, spaces and homes that include accessibility, amenity and safety for all.

High-quality design should be the default for new development sites and enhancements to existing streets and spaces. The city centre can be a place to be proud of and which is attractive to residents, visitors, potential investors and developers.

Climate responsive

Making Doncaster resilient to future climate and energy challenges.

Taking a positive approach to global climate threats can ensure the long-term resilience of the city centre while improving quality of life, visitor experience and the context for investment. This means pro-actively responding to key issues including flooding, energy supply, carbon emissions, rising temperatures and other implications of climate change.

Community centred

Fostering social value and widening participation in the city centre.

Doncaster's people should be central to shaping the future of the city centre. Change of all kinds will be informed by public engagement and ongoing participation in activities and should have inclusive benefits for the local population.

Forward thinking

Looking to the future while recognising the past.

The city centre must be fit for modern times. We will set clear standards and be bold in our ambition, while balancing aspiration and deliverability. New development should be designed with future needs and opportunities in mind. We will seek to exploit new technologies and digital solutions to improve efficiency and increase the liveability and sustainability of the city centre.

Core Ambitions and Key Objectives







The six core ambitions are our main aims for the city centre.

They will be the basis for organising our activity, monitoring progress, focusing potential interventions used to create positive change in the city centre, and guiding decision-making around investment, promotion and activities.

Each ambition has a set of key objectives. These are not firm proposals but describe the direction of travel for future plans and proposals across the city centre area.



Doncaster Mansion House

Core Ambition	Summary	Key Objectives
A flourishing city centre that is safe and welcoming to all 	<p>The city centre should be a place for everyone; no-one should feel deterred from visiting it. This means creating a city centre that is more inclusive, accessible and welcoming to all, reconnecting local people with the city centre and attracting new audiences. It should provide a pleasant experience. First and foremost, it should feel safe, and it should be clean, attractive, vibrant and be more family friendly.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing a better experience for residents and visitors 2. Creating a more inclusive city centre 3. Reconnecting people with their city centre and attracting new audiences
A successful and resilient city centre economy 	<p>A successful city centre economy is fundamental to the vitality and sustainability of the city centre. That means developing an environment where businesses of all sizes and at all stages can succeed, supporting independent traders and reducing reliance on a small number of retailers and employers. It means encouraging a variety of business sectors to locate in the city centre to supplement a strong retail offer, including a thriving market, and enabling complementary activities such as greater information sharing and more opportunities for mutually beneficial collaborations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Supporting enterprises at all stages and sizes 5. Supporting specialist and unique business clusters 6. Providing effective business support services
A living heart to the city 	<p>The city centre should provide more homes for our growing population and be a desirable place to live. This means creating a larger and stronger residential community in Doncaster city centre by developing a wider range of housing options, including new family homes and older people's housing alongside purpose-built apartment living. As in our other communities, the city centre must provide what its residents need on a daily basis, such as schools, healthcare, retail, community activity and volunteering opportunities, digital connectivity and access to nearby outdoor spaces.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. A broad and high-quality housing offer 8. Community facilities to support urban living 9. Fostering a strong and resilient residential community
A thriving hub of leisure, culture, heritage and services. 	<p>The city centre should offer access to arts and cultural experiences that are not always available in our local communities, including in music, art, film, theatre, and through exhibitions, events and street entertainment, supported by the public, private and voluntary sectors. The city centre will have a diverse food and drink offer, leisure activities and a vibrant evening economy. It will also be an essential, accessible centre of public services and institutions, providing vital services and opportunities for people across the whole city.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Offering quality experiences for all through art, culture, heritage, faith and leisure opportunities 11. Providing accessible services for the whole city 12. Supporting events and animation of the city centre
A green and inviting city centre 	<p>The city centre should have high quality, attractive and safe public spaces with a strong emphasis on landscaping that softens the streetscape and supports our environmental ambitions. This means creating new and improved public spaces, addressing vacant sites, making the most of our canal and riverside, and enhancing access to our existing parks. It involves planting more trees, enhancing biodiversity, and fostering sustainable development solutions to create a greener and more welcoming environment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Greening the city centre and improving access to greenspace 14. Creating new spaces and enhancing existing public spaces 15. Transforming vacant sites and empty buildings
A well-connected city centre 	<p>Access to, and across, the city centre should be easy. This includes clear, safe routes for pedestrians, cyclists and people using mobility aids, with appropriate facilities including seating and secure storage. It means good quality parking provision and appropriate vehicle access for traders, operators, visitors and residents. High quality public transport services are essential. They should help residents get into the city centre from our towns and villages and provide strong links within the city centre, as well as other key destinations such as the retail parks, racecourse and hospital.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Better public transport 17. Improving walking and cycling access 18. Supporting vehicle access

A Flourishing City Centre that is Safe and Welcoming to All

1. Providing a better experience for residents and visitors

A flourishing city centre must provide a good experience for residents and visitors. First and foremost, that means ensuring the city centre feels safe and secure. It should also be clean, attractive and provide a greater range of destinations and public spaces.

At the moment, many people only visit the city centre for one purpose, whether as local residents using the retail and community functions, students visiting the UTC or college, or city centre workers visiting their workplace. Often, they do not take advantage of the wider range of activities available. The city centre offer should attract people to stay there longer or come to visit for multiple reasons. Tackling the issues that deter people from spending more time in the area or travelling more widely across the city centre is critical. This will also improve competitiveness and reduce the need, or desire, for people to travel to other city centres or major retail centres. That includes improving the overall offer of the city centre and supplementing it, through initiatives such as clear wayfinding to help people navigate the city centre, or accreditation schemes to give people confidence about the standards being achieved in the city centre.

2. Creating a more inclusive city centre

The city centre should be a place for everyone. In particular it must be more child and family friendly, and an inviting destination for younger and older people. It should be accessible and welcoming to people whatever their age or gender - or financial means - including people with disabilities, people of different ethnic groups and nationalities, and irrespective of a person's sexual orientation or religious belief. This means addressing both visible and invisible barriers that may deter people from visiting the city centre, for example by dealing with physical accessibility issues or other forms of discrimination, including through partnership working with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector. The city centre will continue to be a focal point where Doncaster, its residents and its communities are recognised in positive and pro-active ways. This will include larger annual events such as Doncaster Pride, smaller scale activities like the regular Veteran's Café, local exhibitions and public art installations like the new mining statue and the Futures Past and Present mural.

Free play event in Sir Nigel Gresley Square.





Doncaster Pride

3. Reconnecting people with their city centre and attracting new audiences

The city centre belongs to everyone in Doncaster. Although the city remains a popular destination, many Doncaster residents no longer visit the city centre, choosing other locations to meet their daily needs and spend their leisure time. By improving the overall offer and experience from the moment of arrival, we want to reconnect local people and families with their city centre, as well as bringing more visitors here from outside Doncaster.

As well as our work to increase and diversify activity in the city centre, driving greater footfall, we will focus on promoting the city centre to people who may not already be visiting it, building on the current Tourist Information Centre and Visit Doncaster offer (www.visitdoncaster.com). This includes residents from the outer areas of the city, people from neighbouring towns and cities, and tourists, capitalising on popular tourism assets across the city and around the city centre.

Accessibility in Chester

Chester was the first city in the UK to win the European Access City Award. Despite being a historic city with a network of city walls, narrow alleyways and first floor retail known as The Rows, the city has been able to be fully accessible through ramps, lifts and escalators.

Supporting the physical accessibility measures is a strong support network to improve legibility and independence. This includes ensuring all buses and taxis are fully wheelchair accessible, providing access information for disabled people, and providing 'Ability Angels' shopping companions.

A Successful and Resilient City Centre Economy

4. Supporting enterprise at all stages and sizes

To increase the vitality and sustainability of the city centre economy, it is essential that the city centre supports businesses of all scales and at all stages of their development.

To achieve this, the city centre must provide the range of units and infrastructure required to support businesses of all sizes, from the ground up, ensuring Doncaster has a flourishing enterprise heart and does not rely on a few major employers or retailers for success. This includes providing options for start-ups, independents and relocations within the city centre as businesses grow and change.

This may involve, for example, rethinking vacant retail buildings that have large footprints and could be hard to find single occupiers for, and providing adaptable and flexible spaces for a range of activities and occupiers. It will mean an important role for our markets, which has already been a successful starting point for a number of local businesses. It is likely to require new developments which improve the availability of quality accommodation. Access to high-speed digital connectivity is also vital. This objective will be supported by our other core ambitions in order to provide an all-round environment that gives businesses confidence to locate and invest in the city centre.



The Avenue, Bournemouth

Former shopping centre refurbished to support independent traders.

© Mott MacDonald

5. Supporting specialist and unique business clusters

In addition to providing the fundamentals needed to encourage different businesses to locate in the city centre, there is an opportunity to support specialist and unique business clusters. This will help to reinforce the identity of Doncaster city centre and could include existing businesses and unique locations, for example Doncaster Market or the international food offer around Nether Hall Road, helping them to prosper and providing a stronger draw for people outside the city. This also includes exploring opportunities to nurture existing and emerging strengths in the Doncaster economy, for instance the digital and tech sector, or logistics and rail sectors. Interventions to support this objective will need to be carefully considered and must not undermine existing business ecosystems. This could be as simple as promotional activity and wayfinding, or it could be on a larger scale, for example through public realm improvements or new employment spaces.

6. Providing effective business support services

Supporting business and enterprise goes beyond bricks and mortar. Businesses can benefit from stronger relationships with public services, interaction with business associations and better access to information.

That means working with partners and setting up mechanisms to provide businesses with information and engagement that can help them thrive in the long term, including sharing intelligence on footfall, visitors and allowing ongoing feedback and joint action on key issues.

This may include, for example, business engagement forums, initiatives to tackle retail crime or projects to explore the potential for business led partnerships such as Improvement Districts.



Doncaster Market: Supporting our unique business clusters and existing traders will be a priority.

Stockton Enterprise Arcade

The Stockton-on-Tees Enterprise Arcade provides small-scale safe, flexible and affordable incubation and start-up space for up to 12 independent businesses at a time, making use of a long-term vacant building on the main high street.

Businesses have a low-risk opportunity to test the market and become established before making the move to their own units.

Established by the local council, units have a low weekly rent inclusive of all costs and with access to specialist advice on a day-to-day basis



© Mott MacDonald

A Living Heart to the City

7. A broad and high-quality housing offer

Creating a much larger residential community in the city centre will be central to ensuring that it is a vibrant and sustainable place all year round.

In recent decades there have been low numbers of people living in the centre of Doncaster compared to many other successful towns and cities. A welcome development over recent years has been the significant increase in the number of residential units in the city centre. However, much of this development has been small scale in nature, often focused on the conversion of offices and retail space into small apartment units. To create a larger and more diverse residential community in the city centre, we need a wider range of housing options that meet the needs of more people. This should include family housing and older people's housing alongside purpose-built apartment living.

8. Community facilities to support urban living

The city centre should be a desirable place to live. A high quality housing supply, combined with a strong leisure offer and excellent transport links, can help to make the city centre an attractive and popular choice.

However, if we are to significantly grow the residential community, the city centre must provide what its residents need on a daily basis, for example schools, doctors, dentists, retail services and food stores. It is vital that residents also have access to nearby outdoor spaces, whether private, shared or public. A key element of our ambition to create a living heart to the city is meeting these needs and ensuring that local amenities are available to city centre residents.

College Road infill housing development.



9. Fostering a strong and resilient residential community

As well as access to good housing and local amenities, what really makes a community is the people who live there.

Strong communities are often characterised by good relationships between residents of all ages and backgrounds, people coming together voluntarily to work towards shared causes, and people having a sense of responsibility to, and ownership of, their community. It is particularly important that people feel secure and are happy where they live.

To help foster strong communities and enable people to self-organise, it is important that they have access to community spaces, activities and information, and positive relationships with public services and local institutions. Where absent, these places, activities and relationships should be supported alongside major new residential developments.

Broad Marsh regeneration masterplan, Nottingham

Proposals have recently been unveiled for the ambitious transformation of Nottingham's Broad Marsh shopping centre into a new mixed-used city quarter.

The masterplan integrates over 1000 new homes, and over 20,000sqm of office, commercial and leisure floorspace and including an NHS Community Diagnostic Centre.

The development includes a range of new streets and public spaces, including elements for play, movement and rest and with an emphasis of greening at street-level, on building facades and through rooftop spaces.



A Thriving Hub of Leisure, Culture, Heritage and Services

10. Offering quality experiences for all through access to art, culture, heritage and leisure opportunities

Access to high quality art, culture, heritage, faith and leisure opportunities can have a huge impact on quality of life, particularly the health and well-being of communities and individuals. Culture also has a positive impact on the economy in terms of tourism, inward investment and fund-raising.

Our Culture Strategy describes our intention to ensure that these opportunities are available to everyone. Many of these activities will take place in local communities across the city, but inevitably the city centre will need to play an important role, particularly for larger scale activities and as the home to major leisure and culture assets such as DGLAM, Cast theatre, Savoy cinema and The Point.

11. Providing accessible services for the whole city

The city centre is the single most accessible location for residents across Doncaster. It should be an important destination for everyone, providing a range of opportunities and services that cannot be delivered in every community. As well as being the city's civic centre, this includes hosting Further Education and Higher Education institutions, specialist health services, and functions relating, for instance, to the criminal justice system including the Courts & Tribunals Service.

Putting key public services in the city centre has several advantages. Most importantly, it means that they are in easy reach of most local people. In turn, this drives footfall with all of the associated benefits. We are already seeing the advantage, for example, of new education facilities which bring students and young people into the city centre.

Where possible, we will seek to locate more key services within the city centre so that they are as accessible as possible, for example through Health on the High Street initiatives, and we will strive to bring new institutions to Doncaster to increase opportunities for people and businesses.



Health On The High Street

Health On The High Street is a national policy initiative to provide health-based services within town and local centres, reducing pressure on hospitals, reusing vacant sites and increasing footfall to high streets.

Services are provided where people already visit, avoiding need for dedicated trips to hospital sites. For example, a new Community Diagnostic Centre is being delivered in Stockton-on-Tees on the site of the redeveloped shopping centre, providing a range of diagnostic checks, scans and tests.

The Flying Scotsman Health Centre. There is potential for more health services to be located in the city centre.

12. Supporting events and animation of the city centre

We want our city centre streets to be busy, colourful and vibrant, creating an environment that is interesting and enjoyable for both residents and visitors. Events like the Festival of Light, DN One Live, Christmas light switch-on and markets, Doncaster Food Festival, and Doncaster Steampunk Spectacular, already help to support the city centre while bringing Doncaster residents together. Meanwhile, smaller scale animation of spaces, and street entertainment, can really help to bring a buzz to the city centre.

To ensure there is activity all year means enhancing our annual calendar of events and creating a supportive environment for people and groups to deliver activities in the city centre, with better use of streets, spaces and underused land. It will require a close and effective working relationship between the public, private and voluntary sectors. A positive approach to this can support new ideas and interventions, which can also be trialled and tested in the short term before permanent roll-out. In order to hold events, investment in infrastructure may first be required to ensure spaces are safe and suitable. The range of events on offer should appeal to varied audiences. In particular there is an important role for events and play activities to make children and families feel welcome in the city centre, and to encourage new generations of residents to use the city centre and create a positive relationship with it.

The Festival of Light produced by community arts project [Right Up Our Street](#).



A Green and Inviting City Centre

13. Greening the city centre and improving access to greenspace

To create a pleasant and welcoming streetscape, it's essential to integrate natural features into both existing streets and new developments. These elements not only enhance the aesthetic appeal but also provide shade, improve air quality, and support local wildlife. Without these natural features, the environment can become harsh and unappealing.

There are significant opportunities to create a greener city centre, improving the appearance and amenity of streets and spaces, increasing biodiversity and access to nature. These features play an important role to improve climate resilience. For example, the presence of trees helps to keep the city streets cooler in summer, while practical measures such as 'green-roofs' and sustainable drainage systems can help to manage rainwater and reduce surface water flood risk. The city centre generally lacks greenspace and where it exists, for example at Elmfield Park and Town Field, it is on the periphery with access routes and entrances that are not always clear. There is an opportunity to improve these routes and encourage greater use and connectivity with the city centre parks.

14. Creating new spaces and enhancing existing public spaces.

In addition to improving the existing streetscape, the city centre can benefit from the creation of new public spaces and the enhancement of some existing spaces. This means identifying opportunities within major development sites, such as Waterfront and Waterdale, for the creation of significant new public spaces, while some existing public spaces could be significantly enhanced, or even transformed. In particular the canal and riverside areas are severely underused. The environment surrounding some major assets such as Doncaster Minster and Doncaster Market, also have the potential to be improved. Existing streets could benefit from small scale interventions and public realm improvements including, for example, interactive public art and play trails. Well designed and public realm and lighting should enhance feelings of safety.

Greening city centre spaces on Cleveland Street.



15. Transforming vacant sites and empty buildings

Vacant sites and empty or derelict buildings can have a significant detrimental impact on the city centre, especially where they are prominent or concentrated in number. They detract from the general streetscape, can lead to low footfall in an area, and often attract anti-social behaviour. This can make an area feel less safe, yet these sites and buildings are potentially valuable assets that could support new employment or housing opportunities.

We want to reduce the impact of vacant sites and buildings in the city centre. Equally, there are many buildings which are occupied but in a poor state of repair and would benefit from new investment. Where possible, it is important that action is taken to protect these properties and/or bring them back into use, particularly where they have laid empty for a long time. However, it is also important to recognise that often, this will not be a quick or straight forward task. With most city centre buildings and sites being in private ownership, we must acknowledge that some problems will not be easily fixed.

Making positive meanwhile use of vacant and underused sites, particularly where there is a development viability challenge, is also a valuable solution. This could mean, for example, working with property owners to create a temporary greenspace or event space, or improving the exterior of a building to improve the look and feel of an area. Creating these meanwhile spaces even has the potential to attract more people in to the city centre who then use other services.

'Of Soil and Water' temporary natural swimming pond, Kings Cross

'Of Soil and Water: The King's Cross Pond Club' was a public art project that occupied a temporary site within the King's Cross redevelopment. Commissioned by King's Cross Central Partnership, it created a small biodiverse habitat around a swimming pond filtered by natural processes and providing habitat and rainwater management functions. The site has since been developed as a permanent green space, Lewis Cubitt Park, providing amenity to surrounding residential and commercial development.



© Andrew H, CC BY 2.0 via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

A Well Connected City Centre

16. Better public transport

High quality public transport services are vital. They provide an essential means of travel for people who do not have a car, enabling access to employment, services, social and leisure opportunities. In addition, they provide people who do have a car with choice, offering a sustainable alternative to private transport.

Doncaster city centre is fortunate to be generally well-connected in terms of road and rail infrastructure. However, bus and train services do not always meet expectations. Providing quality services that are easy to use with clear customer information, and promoting public transport options, is therefore important.

This includes helping people get in to the city centre from the outer towns and villages, and also providing strong links between the city centre and other key destinations such as the retail parks, racecourse and hospital. Within the city centre, public transport links, or equivalent connectivity, should help people travel between key locations such as the Interchange and Doncaster Market.

17. Improving walking and cycling access

Getting around the city centre should be made as easy as possible. This includes ensuring clear, safe routes for pedestrians, cyclists and people using mobility aids, with appropriate facilities including seating, resting places and secure storage.

It also means, for example, exploring solutions to severance caused by major highway routes alongside smaller-scale issues of accessibility and route legibility within the centre and to key destinations such as the city's parks.

Public transport and active travel routes are important to help people get to and around the city centre.



18. Supporting vehicle access

Improving public transport and active travel infrastructure does not mean that cars and vans are unwelcome in the city centre. As the city centre develops, it will be important to protect appropriate vehicle access for traders, operators, visitors and residents. Some parking provision is currently located on former and future development plots. As new developments take shape, sufficient parking provision should be maintained to meet the needs of the city centre. These parking facilities should be safe and secure. Over time, more electric vehicle charging points are also likely to be required to meet the growing number of electric vehicles.

Cardiff Mobility Buggy Service

Several cities have introduced micro-mobility services within their centres to help visitors travel around, using various cycle and electric buggies and rickshaws.

Cardiff has a free Mobility Buggy service which provides a bookable service to assist people travelling longer distances within the city centre. The service also carries a defibrillator providing mobile support for health emergencies and because the vehicle can hold up to three passengers friends/family can join.



Source: [Visit Cardiff](#) / Age Friendly Cardiff

Castle Car Park, Newcastle Under Lyme

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has developed a modern multi-storey car park to improve town centre parking and kick start regeneration.

The modern car park is safe, well-lit and will be open 24/7. It includes 39 electric vehicle charging points, automated main doors, energy-efficient lighting, disability spaces and lifts and ramps to enable accessibility. The panels on the side of the new car park have holes in the shape of a castle, in honour of the town's heritage. It will enable an existing car park site to be redeveloped into a contemporary urban neighbourhood.

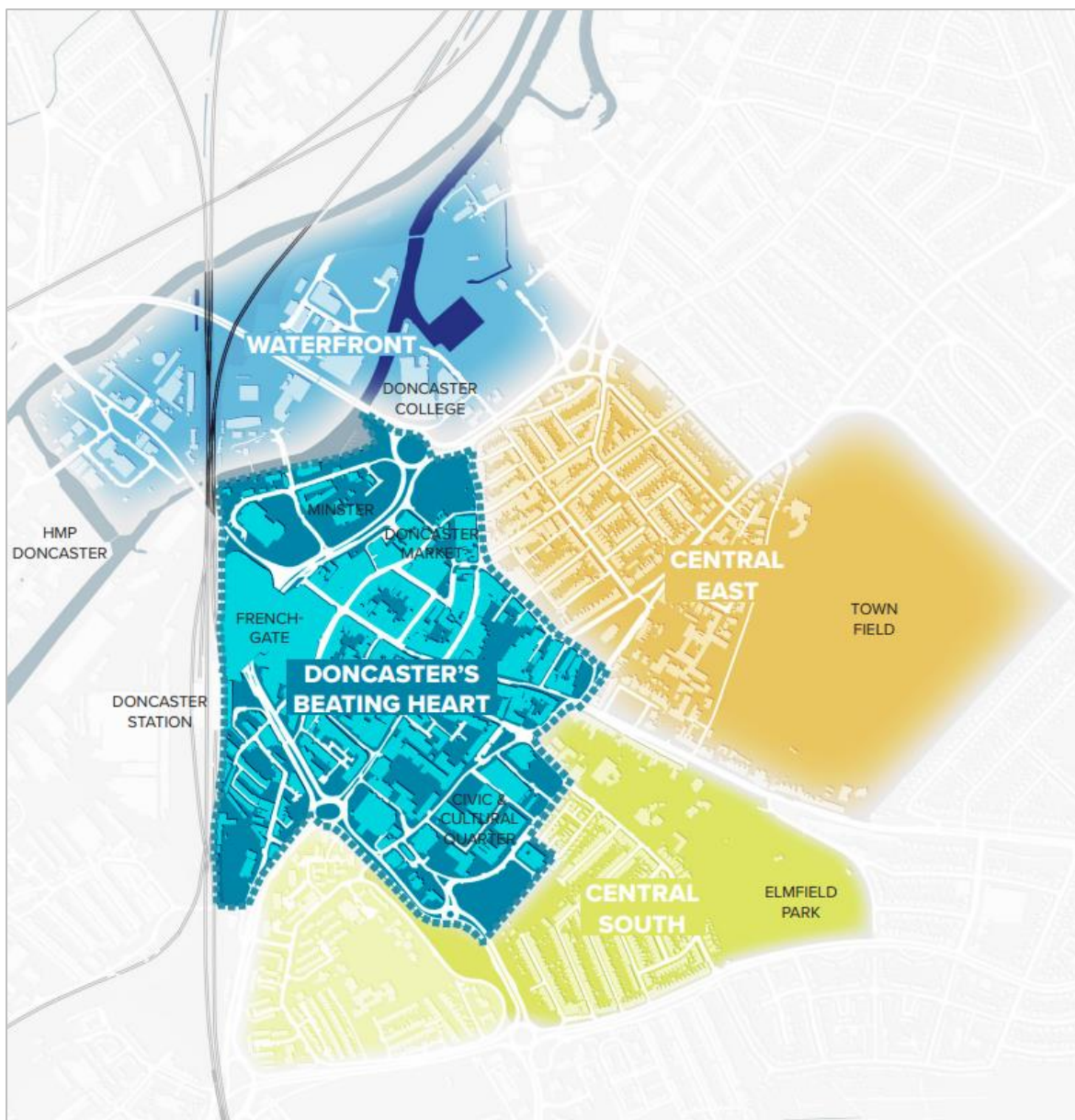


Source: [Morgan Sindall Construction](#)

Section 5: Areas for Change

Building on the Urban Centre Masterplan 2016, four Areas for Change have initially been identified based around broad principles of the type of change, development and interventions that could be appropriate. The boundaries are not rigid, but these broad areas will help to focus the development of investment plans and supporting activities. They are:

- **Doncaster's Beating Heart** represents the retail, business, civic and cultural core of the city centre - the focus area and first choice for investment, development and activity.
- **Waterfront** represents a major regeneration opportunity for the city and has great potential to deliver a step-change in what the city has to offer.
- **Central East** is a mostly residential area to the east of the Heart, stretching out to Town Field, with potential for more moderate enhancements to quality of living environment.
- **Central South** takes in Elmfield Park and the neighbourhoods to the south of the Heart. There is opportunity to improve the quality of the residential environment to tackle existing issues of deprivation.



Opportunity Sites

While the 'Beating Heart' represents the area that most people would recognise as the city centre, the other three areas set the wider context for surrounding opportunity sites and the transition between the Beating Heart and the wider suburban areas.

Within the Areas for Change, are Opportunity Sites, which identify key locations for potential future development, regeneration and investment, each with a clear land use or activity focus.

Opportunity Sites will need to be approached as a whole area, which may comprise of multiple projects, and should be considered in relation to their wider role in the city centre. This does not mean that they will be the only place where development takes place. Other important smaller sites and individual buildings may also be the focus of projects or activity.

Enhanced public realm and improved connectivity draws all areas and sites together across the city centre and into the wider city.



Gap sites like this one at Waterdale present opportunities for new development.



Doncaster's Beating Heart

The 'Beating Heart' is the main retail, business and leisure focus of the city: the area that visitors are most likely to interact with and which represents what people are likely to think of as the 'city centre'.

This area needs to be the focus for investment and interventions within the city centre and the first-choice for most new development. Establishing a strong and vibrant heart to the city centre is vital. It can help to generate a 'buzz' that generates further demand and investment in peripheral areas.

Within the 'Beating Heart', three core areas of regeneration and investment focus have previously been identified, with the connections between these areas also being critical.



A significant amount of development has already taken place in the Civic & Cultural Quarter, with further projects in the pipeline. Similarly, key regeneration projects have been completed at the Wool Market, Corn Exchange and Railway Station. However, there remains scope for further developments and enhancements in these areas. Links between these key destinations, and out towards the Minster and Waterfront, should be strengthened through public realm and wayfinding enhancement and focused redevelopment.

Within this area are eight key opportunity sites.



KEY

- Masterplan area boundary
- Beating Heart Area for Change
- Opportunity site

Doncaster's Beating Heart: Key Issues

- Increase feelings of safety and security
- Increase of city centre living and business activities.
- Activities to support the retail and service economy in the city centre.
- Support and enhancement of Doncaster Market as a key city centre destination, building on its existing strengths and market traders.
- Continued support for development of the Civic & Cultural Quarter and City Gateway areas.
- Maximising the benefits of key heritage buildings and assets, including Doncaster Minster and the surrounding area
- Address long term site and unit vacancy, particularly in large and prominent buildings and areas such as Waterdale and The Colonnades.
- Improved public realm that guides people between key destinations, provides improved access, and delivers a high-quality setting for the city centre's buildings and infrastructure.
- Improved connectivity across major highway corridors, in particular Trafford Way and Church Way.

Retail Core

The retail core, concentrated around the Frenchgate Centre, should remain the first choice location for the retail and service economy in the both the city centre and the city as a whole. The focus for this area is expected to be less about redevelopment and more around service delivery, including safety and cleanliness, working with stakeholders to support existing buildings, spaces and activities. Key moves for this area include addressing existing and emerging vacancies including larger retail units and longer term empty properties.

There is potential to further enhance the public realm through planting, public art, seating and lighting, encouraging longer dwell time from visitors. Beyond this core area, the areas around High Street, Cleveland Street and Printing Office Street areas have a key role as a secondary retail and service area, which could include a higher level of office and residential space. This area could also become a location for temporary and pop-up activities and events, drawing visitors beyond the immediate retail destinations.

Enhancements to the public realm can facilitate movement around the Beating Heart area, connecting retail, employment and leisure destinations.

Market Place

Doncaster Market is a key asset and an important city centre destination. The market and the wider Market Place area is a key priority and should be further enhanced to support existing traders and the recent refurbishment of the Corn Exchange and Wool Market. The Market Place itself has the potential to provide a high-quality space that is adaptable to meet the wider needs of the population including a wider range of events and activities that support the ongoing future and success of the markets.

In addition to focusing on the successful management, promotion and growth of the market, key issues for consideration include: measures to manage vehicle access to the site and ensure a safe

environment, servicing arrangements, development of the 27 Market Place gap site, enhancement or refurbishment of the Bowers Fold area, market stall provision, improvements to shop fronts and market place buildings, and general public realm enhancements.

Minster Waterfront

The Minster area is currently disconnected from the retail areas but is a key part of the historic city centre. It presents an opportunity for an improved gateway to the city centre with potential to open up to the riverside. It also provides an important link between the Interchange and Doncaster College and the wider Waterfront area.

There is potential for significant redevelopment and regeneration across this Opportunity Site to provide stronger frontage to the road and river corridors, and a much better experience for people using the area. The Minster grounds have the potential to be enhanced to provide a stronger setting for this historic asset and offer greater amenity as a valuable green space. Pedestrian routes can be strengthened, particularly between the bus station, retail core and college, with improvements to accessibility and legibility.

Waterdale

There is a major opportunity for residential and commercial development on the vacant site at Waterdale, linking the civic & cultural quarter back into the rest of the city's heart.

This could include a mix of new development and refurbishment, incorporating adjacent sites. New development should repair the urban fabric by defining clear streets and movement routes with active frontage at the ground floor level including retail and commercial units. There is the potential for a significant new public space to complement Sir Nigel Gresley Square.

City Gateway

The City Gateway area around Doncaster Railway Station is a key point of arrival in the city for many people. New development should be complementary to, and build on, the 'Doncaster Gateway One' development, a sustainable office hub due to be open in 2027. The scheme will include high-quality office space and public realm that enhances the city centre's western approach.

This could include infill development on vacant and underused sites and car parks, strengthening street frontage and providing greater passive surveillance. The key pedestrian route along St Sepulchre Gate West could be enhanced, improving connectivity to Hexthorpe.

Spring Gardens

While this area is still used as a movement route, it has largely become a back land site offering little surveillance. This area has the potential to be enhanced with infill development fronting onto Trafford Way / Cleveland Street, refurbishment or replacement of vacant and out-dated buildings, and a revised parking and servicing area. Pedestrians could be diverted onto Duke Street, increasing footfall to support local traders.

College Road

Centring on College Road, this area includes several emerging and proposed schemes including the renovation of St James Baths and residential accommodation on the Copley House site. There is great potential to widen this regeneration to improve the southern edge of the city centre and the transition into residential areas. Consideration could include exploring the potential to remodel College Road and its junction onto Council House roundabout, area-wide public realm and travel enhancements, and opportunities for development of the sites north of Council House Roundabout. New development in this area should complement the existing residential and civic uses.

Hall Gate

This area has potential for redevelopment to address the significant gap sites, notably the former Gaumont cinema site, and sites along Hall Gate and within the centre of the block. Development could be commercial-focused and either complement, or diversify, the existing nighttime economy.

Parking behind the key streets has the potential to be remodelled and upgraded. King Street also has the potential to be enhanced to improve the setting of the Doncaster Little Theatre along with pedestrian route upgrades along East Laith Gate.

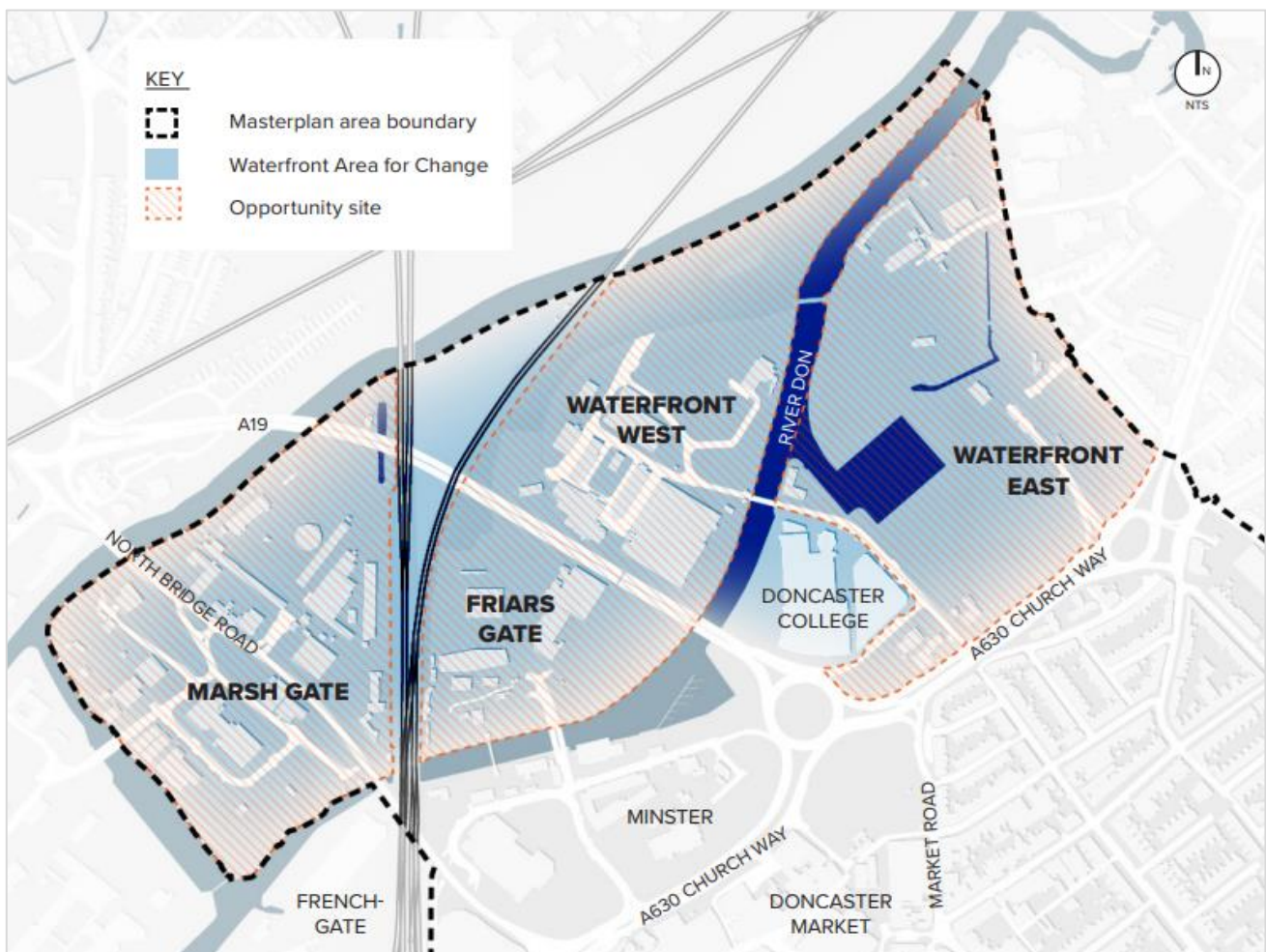
The market and the wider Market Place area is a key priority.



Waterfront

Waterfront will be a key location for regeneration of the city centre. It includes very large areas of brownfield and industrial land, representing a major development opportunity for Doncaster with huge potential to deliver a step-change in what the city has to offer.

In many towns and cities, waterfront development has played a transformational role in the growth of urban centre living, business, and leisure activity, enhancing the image and vibrancy of the place. Doncaster's waterfront sites can fulfil a similar role. They could be relatively flexible to accommodate emerging opportunities but would benefit from a strong vision to ensure high-quality development meets the wider needs of the city and complements rather than challenges the viability of the Beating Heart area.



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Waterfront: Key Issues

- Mixed-used living, working and leisure (subject to resolving existing issues of viability and technical challenges including flooding).
- Restoring the prominence of the riverside as a public destination and movement route.
- Connecting the area more strongly to the city centre, linking across Church Way

Waterfront East

This site has been earmarked as a major opportunity for mixed-used development or as a bespoke single-use site, with initial enabling works already funded. The site has the potential to provide a wide range of housing, including family housing and higher density apartments, alongside commercial or leisure development. Development should provide a strong frontage to the riverside with a high quality public realm treatment and access to the water, as well as a positive relationship to Church Way.

Marsh Gate

Marsh Gate has substantial scope for redevelopment, strengthening the link between the city centre and Bentley, and making a more successful transition between city centre-scale and suburban-scale development. Particularly to the west of North Bridge Road, there is potential for regeneration through schemes such as a residential-led mixed-use development with a significant riverside frontage that could be opened-up and transformed as a public asset. Active travel infrastructure can connect onto North Bridge Road and into the city centre.

Waterfront West & Friars Gate

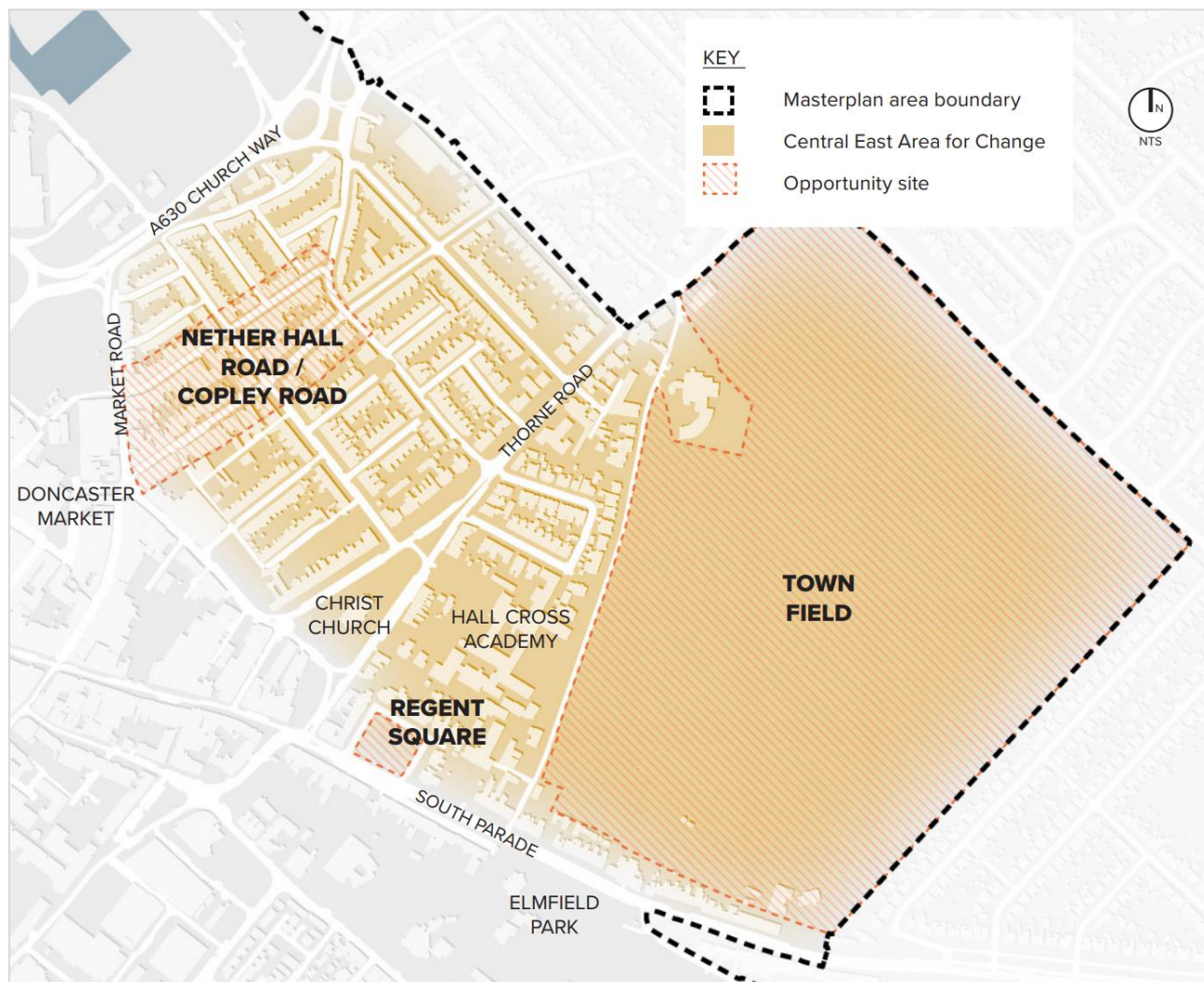
These areas, either side of the A19 flyover, have strong potential for redevelopment that can either act as an extension for the mixed-use development at Waterfront East and Marsh Gate or as stand-alone development(s), taking advantage of the relatively disconnected sites. Any development should optimise use of the waterfront, providing frontage, public space and access along this valuable city centre feature.



Bath riverside, a waterside housing development on a major brownfield site. © Mott MacDonald

Central East

Central East lies to the east of the Beating Heart and is mostly housing alongside the city's main green spaces – Town Field and Elmfield Park – and the specialist local centre at Nether Hall Road and Copley Road. This area falls along the routes out to the Royal Infirmary and racecourse and plays an important role in the approach to the city.



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Central East: Key Issues

- Improve connections and wayfinding to existing green spaces from the city centre and residential areas.
- Supporting local centres and independent traders, in particular the Nether Hall Road / Copley Road area.

The focus in this area is likely to be on enhancing existing assets and amenities rather than on significant new development.

The key opportunity sites are:

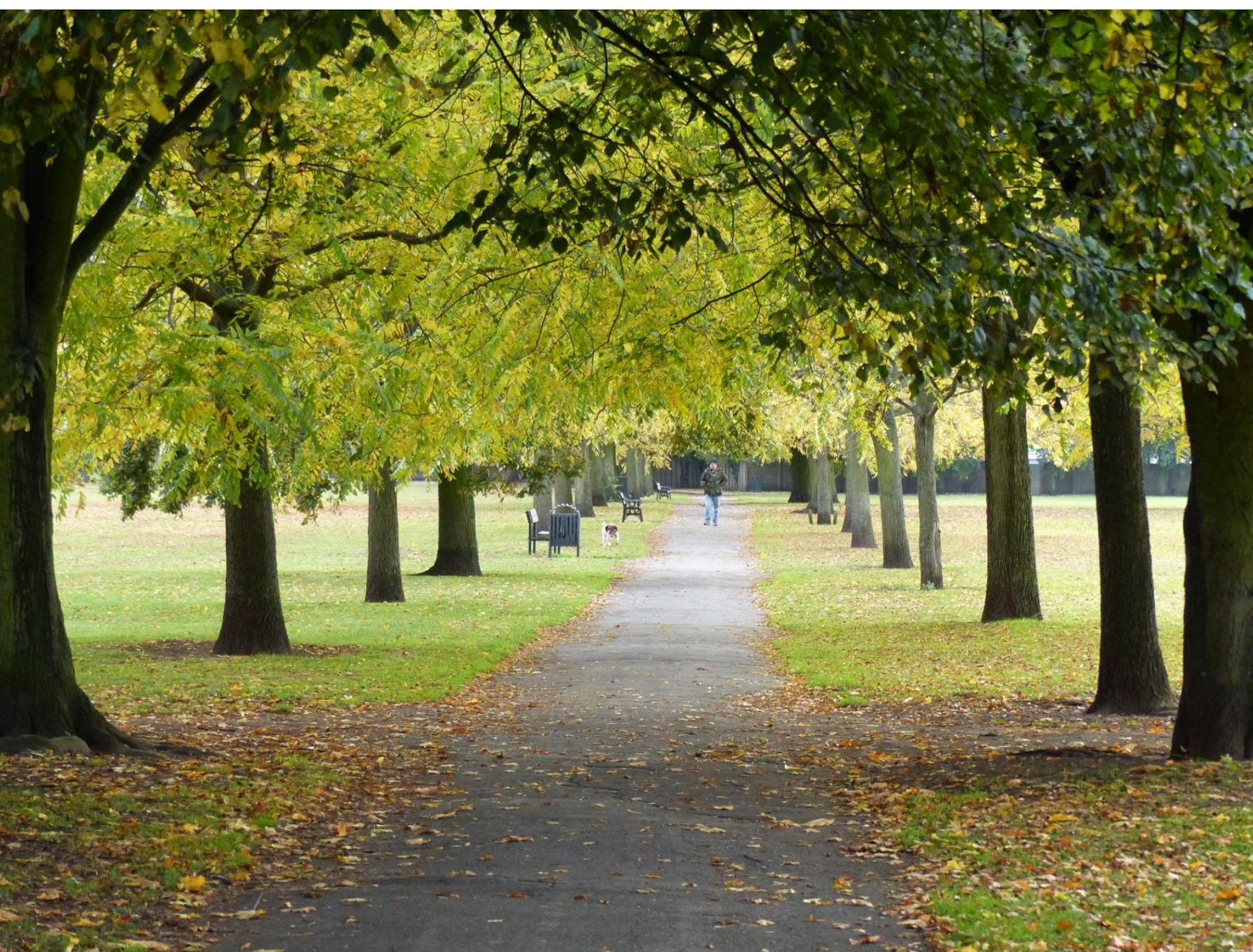
Nether Hall Road / Copley Road

There is potential to support local businesses by providing a stronger environment around the local centre, balancing amenity for both traders and visitors. Connections into the Beating Heart could be enhanced with public realm enhancements making stronger gateways to signal this area as a vibrant and busy destination.

Park Enhancements: Town Fields / Regent Square

Public realm enhancements could be made to signal the entrances and routes onto and through Town Field and Regent Square, allowing these assets to play a greater role in the city as destinations as well as commuter routes. Interventions to improve safety and security in the parks could be included, in particular by encouraging more use of the parks throughout the day.

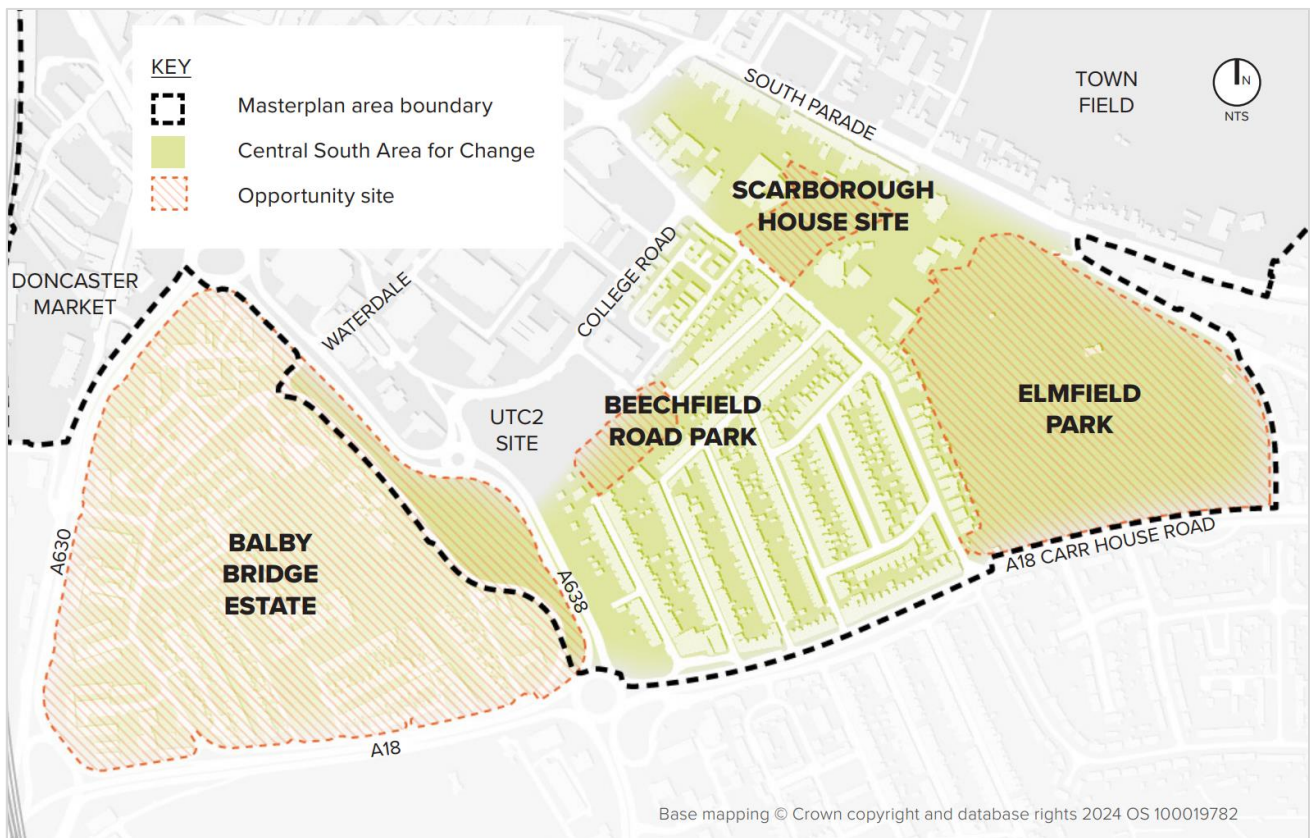
Further enhancement work can help to increase the use of Town Field, a vital green space for city centre residents.



Central South

Central South includes the housing communities south and west of the Civic Centre. It includes some areas with high levels of deprivation.

The key opportunities here relate to improving the long-term suitability of the existing housing stock while enhancing the surrounding open space and community facilities, improving the environment for residents. Appropriate regeneration of these areas could also help to strengthen the city centre economy through the presence of a diverse housing offer and resident base.



Central South: Key Issues

- Improving the existing housing stock and mix of social infrastructure.
- Improve connections and wayfinding to existing green spaces from the city centre and residential areas.
- Improving the quality of streets and spaces. This includes reviewing the car-dominated environment along major highway routes and addressing severance issues, to connect residential areas back into the city centre and to other neighbourhoods.

The opportunities in this area are likely to focus on a mix of small-scale enhancement schemes while exploring the potential for more significant longer term regeneration interventions.

The key opportunity sites are:

Scarborough House Site

The site of the former Scarborough House has potential for development in keeping with the surrounding area, for example as a location for public services, culture or commercial development.

Park Enhancements: Elmfield Park / Beechfield Road Park

Public realm enhancements could be made to signal the presence and accessibility of Elmfield Park and Beechfield Road Park, allowing these assets to play a greater role in the city. Interventions to improve safety and security to the parks could be included, in particular by encouraging more use of the parks throughout the day and improving visibility from the street.

Balby Bridge Estate Enhancements

The Balby Bridge estate lies immediately adjacent to the Beating Heart city centre area. It was not considered as part of the original Urban Centre Masterplan but is notable for its very close proximity to the city centre and its relative isolation from other communities; it is surrounded on all three sides by major dual carriageways and other land uses including railway sites and Hyde Park Cemetery. As such, there is value in considering it as an important city centre community.

The area does have strong potential for estate renewal and infill development, which could diversify the housing stock and provide an enhanced residential environment through a dedicated street-based masterplan. However, further work would be required to consider the feasibility, implications and views of progressing such a project. There is also potential to make stronger use of public open space in this area as a community and biodiversity asset.

The former Scarborough House site on Chequer Road has potential for development.



Public realm & connectivity

Holding all the Areas for Change and Core Ambitions together is the city's public realm, providing the space for movement, activity, and life. The 'Big Moves' to explore in order to improve the city centre's setting are:

Strengthening green & blue networks Greening streets and improving the networks between existing green spaces and waterways. This could include tree and shrub planting, wildflower seeding, water features and rainwater planters, aiming for options that are low/no maintenance where appropriate.

Restoring the river corridor Creating a strong new public space and green corridor along the extensive river frontages, providing walking and cycling connections, activating the marina area, and giving people access to the water.

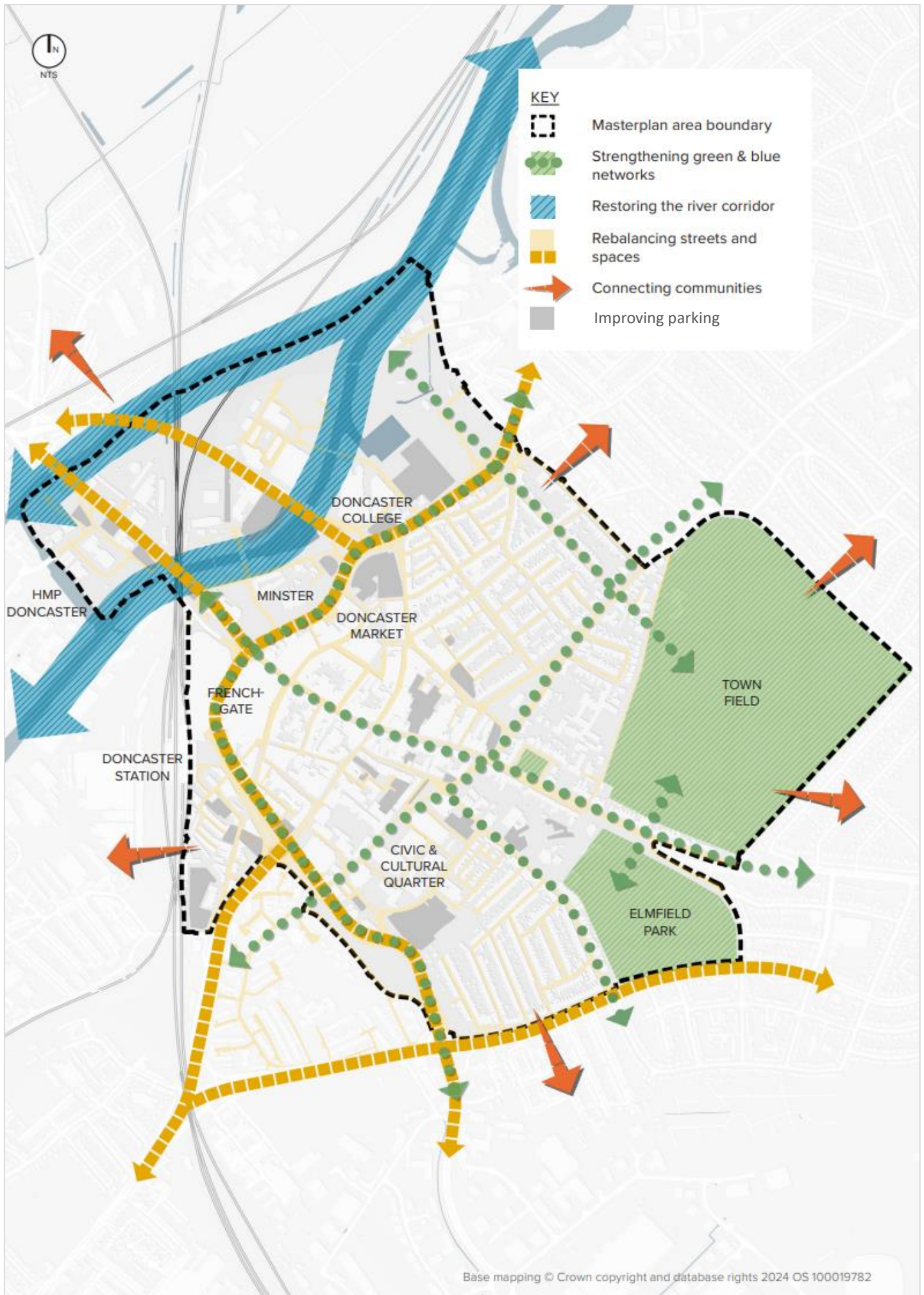
Rebalancing streets and spaces Making more space for pedestrians and creating more 'people-first' spaces that attract people to spend more time, including improving connectivity across Trafford Way and Church Way, and between other key parts of the city.

Improving parking Looking for opportunities to improve off-street parking provision and at the same time release land for new developments, which includes new public spaces and green spaces that improve the appearance of the city. Increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points.

Connecting communities Improving legibility and continuity of walking and cycling routes between the city centre, neighbourhoods and wider destinations, including the racecourse, hospital, and outer retail and employment areas.

The Greater Icknield area to the west of Birmingham city centre is being redeveloped and transformed from brownfield industrial land to residential-led regeneration. The scheme creates a new waterside quarter of terraced houses, mid-rise villa apartment and commercial units. within a loop of the canal network with a significant amount of new canal side public realm and active frontage. © Mott MacDonald





Section 7: Service Delivery Model

In Doncaster there is a strong history of public services working in partnership alongside communities and businesses.

Over the last decade of challenging financial times, many Local Authorities and public services have withdrawn from neighbourhood working approaches. In Doncaster, we have resisted this as far as possible, recognising that it is by working locally that can we properly respond to the lived experiences of our people in their communities.

This has also been driven, in part, because we understand significance of Doncaster's large geographic footprint, and our social and industrial heritage. Our proud city is a place of many places - distinct towns, villages and neighbourhoods that people and families over generations, and newcomers to Doncaster, call home. Organising our plans and service delivery in a way that reflects these place-based realities, conditions and dynamics is a key consideration.

Team Doncaster partners are continuing to develop our approach to work at a local level, building on existing strengths and community relationships, and learning from our experiences gained through, for example:

- Historic programmes such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Objective One
- The development of neighbourhood working service delivery models including, since 2018, our 'Localities' approach.
- the Complex Lives Alliance, an award-winning example of how Team Doncaster has moved successfully toward a new and sustained way of working on complex issues, with some of our most vulnerable people in a neighbourhood (City Centre) context.
- the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and major Doncaster flood events in 2007 and 2019
- community based partnership initiatives such as Community Libraries, which enabled local libraries to remain open despite budget cuts through public services working together with local volunteers.

Doncaster's communities have helped to maintain the presence of local libraries.



- New approaches to service provision, such as the shift in Adult Social Care towards supporting people to stay in their homes and communities for as long as possible, delivering both better outcomes for individuals and better use of public funds.

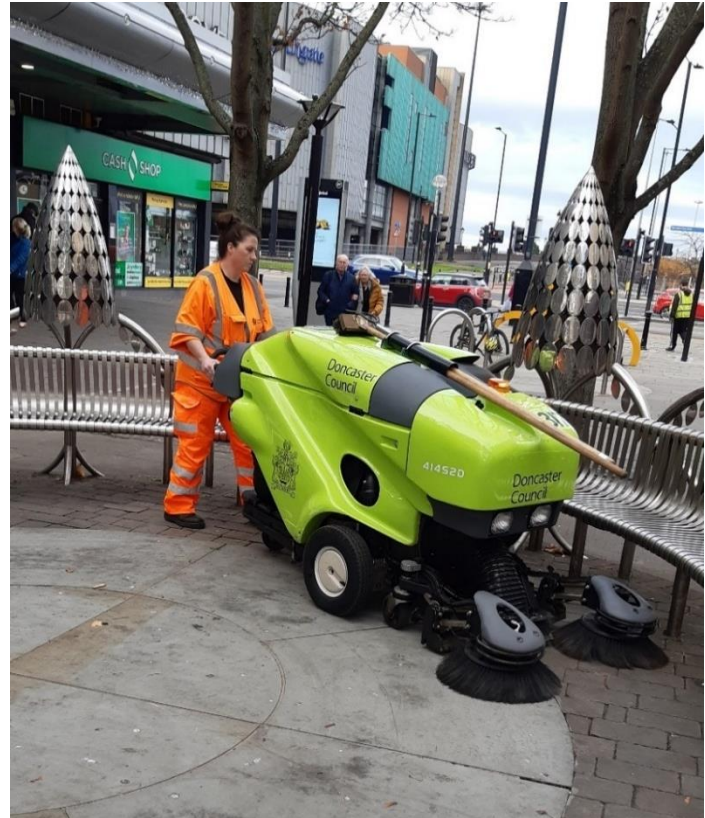
The 'Thrive' programme is an evolution of our area-based service delivery model. It will be developed and mobilised through 2025, providing a fresh focus on neighbourhood renewal with a strong prevention and community-centred approach.

As part of this approach, we are developing our Local Partnership Delivery Teams in each of the five localities across Doncaster: City Centre, North, South, East and Central.

These Local Partnership Delivery Teams will bring agencies and key community stakeholders together to plan and drive tactics, and delivery, tailored to the strengths and needs of individual communities.

As well as delivering services directly, the teams will be central to the development of an increasingly strong relationship between partner organisations, the voluntary sector, and with local residents and communities.

City of Doncaster Council services.



Ahmadiyya Muslim Association holding a community clean-up in the city centre, arranged in partnership with Doncaster Council.



The Delivery Teams will align with five key Team Doncaster priorities:

- **Your Neighbourhood:** Creating safer, stronger, cleaner greener communities where everyone belongs
- **Your Family:** Creating child and family friendly communities
- **Your Health & Wellbeing:** Building opportunities for healthy, happier and longer lives for all
- **Your Skills and Work:** Developing people's skills to thrive in life and work
- **Your Environment:** Tackling climate change at local level



By its nature, the city centre provides some unique service delivery issues, which require a bespoke approach and appropriate resourcing. As we mobilise the Thrive model, it will help us to quickly identify and respond to issues as they arise, while also taking a longer term strategic approach to service delivery, partnership working and community engagement.

Local Partnership Delivery Teams will bring together agencies and key community stakeholders.



Section 8: Implementation Plan

At the time of developing the city centre strategy, several key regeneration programmes have been announced by government which will support its delivery. In particular, Doncaster city centre will benefit from two significant funding programmes: the Long-Term Plan for Towns and the Doncaster Community Regeneration Partnership. Full details of these programmes are not yet available, however, collectively they are expected to deliver approximately £40m of new funding from 2026/27, with plans to be developed in partnership with government during 2025/26.

Over the next 12 months we will therefore gain a much clearer picture of external funding resources, as well as potential anchor developments in the city centre. Consequently, to maintain a pragmatic and practical approach to delivery, this implementation plan is divided into three sections:

- **Immediate Interventions**
- **12 Month Action Plan (2025/26)**
- **Future Activities**

At this stage, the primary focus of the action plan will be delivering immediate changes to improve the city centre along with key interventions for the forthcoming year to achieve further enhancements. In parallel, we will develop the detailed plans which are necessary to secure the next phase of city centre investment. At the end of Year 1, the strategy will be reviewed, and the action plan will be updated to reflect the work that has been undertaken and set out our priorities for years 2-5, and beyond.

Immediate Interventions

During the development of this strategy a number of urgent interventions and priority actions were identified, reflecting the views of residents and other stakeholders.

In order to make an impact as soon as possible, £1m of additional Council funding was allocated by the Mayor and Cabinet to immediately commence activity in the city centre, ahead of the strategy publication.

Immediate interventions have included additional city centre officers and an enhanced events programme.



The interventions already underway are:

1. Installation of new and/or upgraded CCTV cameras and a new public address system at key locations across the city centre to deter anti-social behaviour, tackle crime and support enforcement activity
2. Procurement of dedicated new city centre street cleansing equipment including a street sweeper vehicle, a narrow caged electric utility vehicle with jet wash, mobile jet washers, chewing gum removal machine and smart bins.
3. Recruitment of:
 - Three additional full time and one part time Street Scene officers to improve cleanliness in the city centre
 - Eight additional Neighbourhood Response Team Officers to respond to anti-social behaviour across the city and in the city centre
 - Five additional City Centre Engagement Officers, providing high visibility patrols, engagement activity, assistance in enforcement initiatives and prevention of anti-social behaviour, support for city centre events and responses to incidents and accidents.
 - Three new Enforcement Officer posts focused on enforcement and prosecution relating to anti-social behaviour, illegal tobacco sales and street trading.
4. Formation of a new City Centre Events group, which includes City of Doncaster Council, Frenchgate Centre, Doncaster Racecourse, Market Asset Management (MAM), DARTS, CAST, Right Up Our Street, Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust and a selection of retailers and pub owners.
5. Additional events and enhanced co-ordination of activities to make the city centre a more vibrant and attractive place and increase footfall, complementing existing activity such as Leger Week and Right Up Our Street's popular Festival of Light, including:
 - 'Summer Sunset Memories', a new branding of September activities that included the DN1 Live Festival, Leger week, Heritage Open Days and additional activities including Free Play in Sir Nigel Gresley Square.
 - Elmer's Art Trail - the Elephant Sculptures in place across the city from November until January
 - Re-opening of the renovated Corn Exchange with a programme of public events scheduled from November including a Winter Market, Christmas workshops and theatre shows.
 - The 'City Of Lights' event incorporating the Christmas Light Switch On.
 - A range of seasonal events and activities as part of the Frost Festival, including various meetings with Father Christmas, Christmas Cabins at Clock Corner, and a finale event in Sir Nigel Gresley Square.
6. Launch of the Safer City web pages to provide members of the public with advice and information, encourage reporting of incidents and links to associated job opportunities (www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/safer-city)

12 Month Action Plan (2025/26)

In addition to existing day-to-day service delivery and partnership activities, over the next 12 months we will deliver a range of enhanced services and new projects. At the same time, we will undertake the essential planning work required to create the foundations for the next phase of investment in the city centre, including embedding new partnership and governance arrangements to oversee and monitor project delivery.

City Centre Projects and Enhanced Service Delivery

7. Embed new partnership resources including additional staff and new equipment to improve safety and security, and cleanliness in the city centre including an uplift in enforcement activity to tackle individuals committing acts of anti-social behaviour.
8. Develop a City Centre Local Partnership Delivery Team, to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of services, strengthen relationships with the community, and work with individuals that most require it to provide support at an early stage.
9. In partnership with South Yorkshire Police, explore expansion of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme, or equivalent measures, to provide more partnership staff with powers to address issues such as street drinking, begging and anti-social behaviour.
10. Deliver and promote an enhanced annual calendar of city centre events and activities to encourage more people to visit the city centre and support city centre businesses, including the development of a new events policy.
11. Commence the on-site delivery and construction of major city centre development projects:
 - a. Gateway One
 - b. Waterfront remediation and new temporary greenspace
12. Deliver new investment to deliver further enhancements and encourage greater use of Town Field, in line with the Future Parks programme and building on the improvements already undertaken.
13. Explore and progress new public and private sector partnership investments and commercial agreements for the development of key city centre Opportunity Sites.

Strategic Planning and Development

14. Develop a new city centre masterplan - building on the vision set out in this strategy, the 2016 urban centre masterplan, delivery to date and current market intelligence and evidence. It will test our proposed approach to Areas for Change and include more detailed spatial development proposals for the city centre to drive forward the city centre strategy, identifying key projects and new housing sites, and setting out priorities for delivery over the short, medium and long term.
15. Deliver a new Markets Enhancement Strategy, working with market traders, residents, the market management team and other stakeholders to produce a strategy for the next phase of investment, development and operation of Doncaster Market and the wider markets area.
16. Explore and progress the provision and potential relocation of more public services and institutions into the city centre, in particular the Health on the High Street model, to improve access for residents and drive footfall.

17. Produce detailed project proposals for new capital investment and development funded through the Community Regeneration Partnership and Long Term Plan for Towns programmes.
18. With the city centre business community, review and explore the potential to progress beneficial partnership schemes including, for example, the development of:
 - a. A Business or Community Improvement District
 - b. Accreditation Schemes
 - c. A City Centre App or equivalent initiative to promote events, news, loyalty perks etc
19. Work with local and regional partners to explore public transport and connectivity improvements both to and within the city centre. In particular, we will explore the potential for improved public transport links, or equivalent connectivity solutions, between key destinations within the city centre including the transport interchange and Doncaster market.

Data, Information Sharing, Governance and Performance Monitoring

20. Undertake a review of existing city centre data sources, analysis and information sharing agreements, including opportunities to improve intelligence gathering and develop new mechanisms for tracking the opinions and perceptions of residents.
21. Develop a dashboard of city centre information which can be shared with the city centre business community and reported publicly
22. Implement quarterly performance monitoring and enhanced governance arrangements to oversee delivery of the city centre strategy, city centre masterplan and associated funding programmes.
23. Implement a communications programme to inform and engage with the public and stakeholders regarding city centre projects and activity.

Future Activity

Following the planning activity which will take place over the next 12 months, future activity will focus on the transition of the city centre from its current composition to a new, more sustainable future. This is expected to focus on:

- Service delivery and partnership activity to maintain a safe, clean, vibrant and attractive city centre
- The development of new purpose built housing in the city centre and transition of the city centre into a larger residential community
- The development of accommodation, infrastructure and services to support an increase in entrepreneurial activity and commercial investment in the city centre
- Enhancement of the city centre as a key destination, through the increased provision of high quality leisure and culture experiences, public services and presence of other institutions
- Retention and support for key city centre anchor assets, in particular maintaining a vibrant and sustainable retail core

More detail of this future activity, including priority projects for Years 2-5, will be set out when the action plan is refreshed at the end of Year 1.

Our approach to implementing this long term change will be informed by the following activities:

A city centre built on existing strengths and assets.

- **Celebrating our existing assets.** Focusing first on the city centre's beating heart; its existing assets, heritage buildings and unique features such as the historic market and Minster.
- **Building on key strengths.** Concentrating on Doncaster's current strengths as the starting point for future development and investment in the city centre.

A city centre of new places to live in, work in and visit.

- **Setting the ambition for key sites.** Clarifying the city's ambitions for key 'Opportunity Sites' including setting expectations for land use, building design and typology, streets and access, public realm and activation.
- **Actions to bring sites forward.** Land assembly, enabling works and establishing partnerships. Exploiting opportunities for 'meanwhile' use to enhance the city centre where site development is not a priority, will take significant time to deliver, and/or the current state detracts from the wider city centre appeal.

Targeted interventions to support business, enterprise and community, and secure new investment.

- **Strategic support activity.** Targeted activity to complement and encourage thriving voluntary and commercial sectors, working with existing city centre stakeholders to identify appropriate interventions.
- **Securing new investment.** Developing the right relationships, infrastructure and support packages to attract and incentivise new businesses, organisations, institutions and investment in the city centre and its offer.

A step-change in city centre promotion and management

- **Partnership Working.** Ensuring the Council works with a wide range of public and private sector partners to tackle key issues and continue to shape the future direction of travel for the city centre.
- **Promoting 'One Doncaster'.** Developing a coherent and promotable city offer that includes the city centre, wider city and elsewhere in the borough, ensuring that all areas can mutually benefit from council and third-party investment.

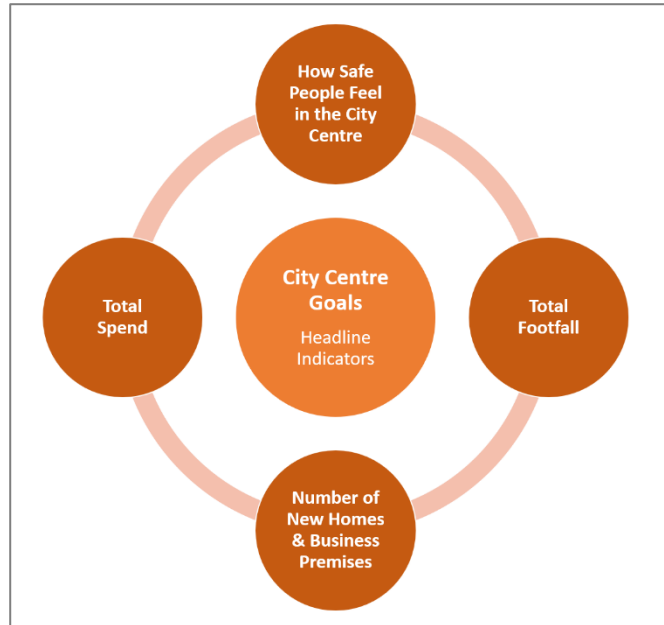
Section 9: Monitoring and Governance Arrangements

In order to focus our activity and monitor progress, we will concentrate our attention on improving a small number of headline performance measures, which can act as proxy indicators for the priority goals identified in this strategy:

- A Safe City Centre
- A Prosperous City Centre
- A Vibrant City Centre

In particular, we will seek to:

1. Increase feelings of safety and security in the city centre
2. Increase the number of people using the city centre (total footfall)
3. Increase the day-to-day economic activity taking place in the city centre (total spend)
4. Increase investment and development in the city centre (net number of new homes and business premises)



All activity undertaken should align with and seek to deliver our core ambitions and key objectives, and ultimately make a positive impact these headline indicators.

To support decision making, assist with timely interventions and monitor the overall health of the city centre, we will also maintain a broader range of indicators which will regularly be reported to the City Centre Board, with a focus on outcomes for local people and businesses.

Doncaster City Centre Board

To oversee delivery of the strategy and associated projects and programmes, the Doncaster Town Board has been adapted to become the new Doncaster City Centre Board.

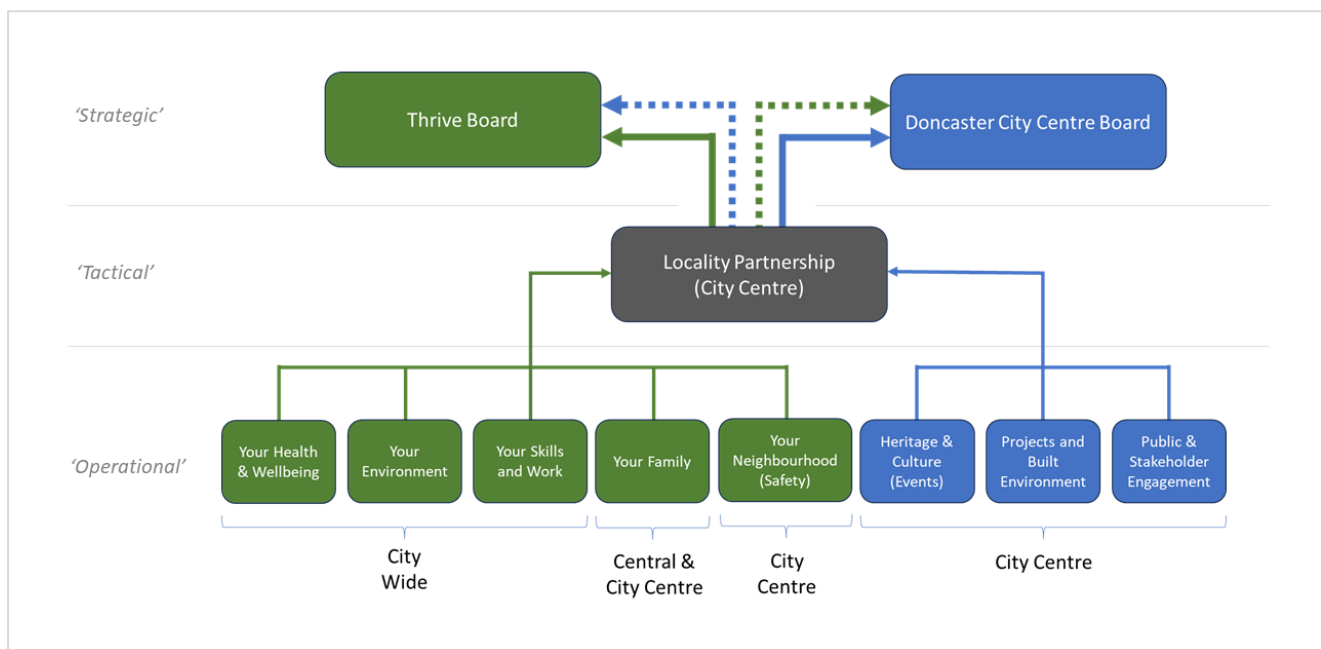
The City Centre Board is a partnership board comprising of representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors, elected members and the MP for Doncaster Central. It will have oversight of, and make contributions to, the development and implementation of all relevant city centre regeneration programmes. It will seek to ensure that new activity is coherent and aligned to our overarching plan, through an effective and transparent decision-making process. In addition, the Board will have an ambassadorial role, supporting the promotion of Doncaster as a place to invest, visit and do business.

To manage the various workstreams, relevant sub-groups will be developed as required with appropriate membership to drive forward individual programmes. Initially, it is proposed that three specific workstreams comprise of:

- Heritage and Culture, focusing on the co-ordination and delivery of an annual events programme in the city centre
- Projects and the Built Environment, to create and oversee a co-ordinated pipeline of capital investment and new development
- Public & Stakeholder Engagement, to ensure effective ongoing communication and partnership working with city centre businesses, Doncaster residents and other stakeholders

The Town Deal sub-group will continue its current role, overseeing delivery of the Doncaster Town Deal projects. The 'Your Neighbourhood' workstream will include a clear focus on Safety and Security in the city centre.

The City Centre Board will not be directly responsible for service-related elements of the new City Centre Strategy, which will be the responsibility of the Thrive partnership, but it will engage with and share information other relevant governance boards, forums and partners. The relationship between the City Centre Board and the Thrive programme is shown below.



Details of the City Centre Board and its meetings will be maintained on a public website in order to maintain transparency. The Board is an advisory body and as such, any formal project approvals and other relevant decisions will be taken in line with the governance processes of the relevant accountable bodies.

Review and Ongoing Engagement

The strategy implementation plan will be subject to an annual review by the City Centre Board and the strategy itself will be periodically updated to reflect delivery progress and any other relevant factors, with the timescale and process to be determined by the City Centre Board. Reviews of the strategy will include stakeholder engagement and be informed by the ongoing 'Big City Conversation' programme.

Further Information

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#DoncasterDeliveringTogether #DDT #DoncasterIsGreat

