

masterplan

featherstone central area

draft executive summary
august 2007



GILLESPIES

1.0 Introduction

DTZ and its partners - Gillespies Architects and White Young Green (WYG) Transport Engineers, were appointed by Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (WMDC) to develop a masterplan for the central area of Featherstone. This built upon the Yorkshire Forward sponsored 5 Towns Strategic Development Framework, which identified key areas of activity and proposals for interventions in the town to act as a springboard for regeneration and renaissance in the longer term.

2.0 Vision

The masterplan sets out a series of recommendations to support and develop the retail area, bring out the town's assets, tackle run down areas and maximise investment. The overall vision for Featherstone is that, by 2021 it will be:

“A distinct, thriving town, which provides a good quality retail, residential employment and leisure offer, serving the existing community and attracting new residents”

To support this vision, we also developed specific aims to quantify what the town would offer following the proposals which would create:

3.0 Approach

Our approach recognises the need to focus resources (both time and money) on 'key areas of change' rather than diluting effort and energy on too many proposals, and to avoid the delivery of projects becoming drawn out and delayed.

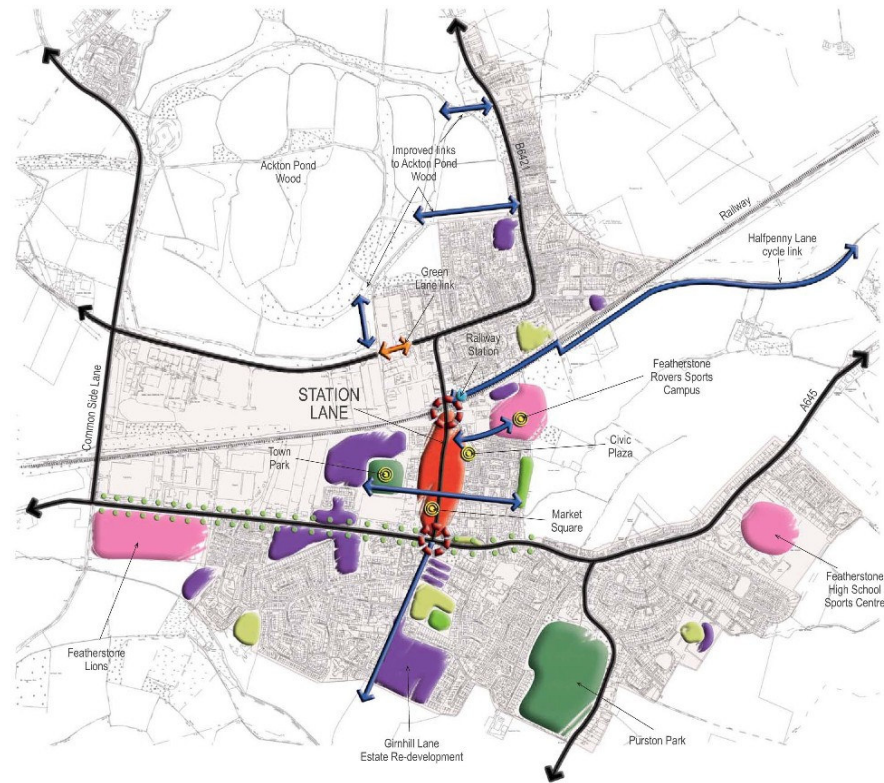
Accordingly, our baseline research, consultation exercises, and policy review focussed in detail on six key themes:

1. Townscape and character
2. Socio economic profile
3. Housing
4. Town centre and retail
5. Transport and movement
6. Leisure and community.

Analysis by theme is set out in detail in the masterplan stage one and final reports, which this summary accompanies. The baseline analysis led to the development of interventions based on five key principles, these are to create:

1. A 'pop to' Town Centre on Station Lane with an improved retail and civic hub creating a series of destinations
2. A distinct, high quality character and identity for Featherstone
3. Managed steady growth, focusing on infill sites before expanding the footprint of the town,
4. Quality gateways, corridors and connectivity, which emphasise the Town Centre.
5. A quality network of upgraded open space, sports facilities and showcase allotments.

The detailed interventions to which fit with the principles are now described in more detail and shown in the town centre diagram over:



The 'pop to' Town Centre on Station Lane

- Town Centre
- Town Centre Destinations
- Town Centre Gateways

Infill housing development to allow growth and upgrade the open space network

- Potential Infill Housing Development
- Major Parks
- Local Open Space
- Showcase Allotments
- Sports Focus (The Triangle of Provision)

Improved Access & Links

- Green Lane Link
- Improved Pedestrian & Cycle Links
- Major Roads
- Railway
- Featherstone Gateway Enhancement

4.0 Development Principles

Principle One – Creating a ‘pop to’ Town Centre on Station Lane

The retail/central area of Featherstone is struggling and the situation is worsening since the closure of Kwik Save Supermarket. There are signs of physical decline, particularly around the precinct and supermarket sites, and there is also evidence of owners changing retail units to residential uses. This is resulting in a broken retail offer which is detracting from the vibrancy of the place, particularly without the anchor of a supermarket.

Aims of intervention:

- Create a gateway to Featherstone
- Reinvent the town centre as a ‘pop to’ place for local residents and surrounding areas
- Create a retail, culture, community, sports and leisure hub

The specific interventions focus on:

- A. Station Lane Environmental Improvements
- B. Reduce congestion and organise Station Lane
- C. A new retail focus
- D. Creating a series of destinations along Station Lane
- E. Quality links with the wider area

Proposals

A. Station Lane environmental improvements.

The improvements will focus on three main areas:

1. Quality Gateways
2. Quality public realm and
3. Tackling congestion and making traffic improvements

1. Quality Gateways:

The gateways are currently poorly defined and do not announce approach or arrival into the town centre, which undersells the retail potential.

The first intervention proposed is therefore to improve town centre gateways to promote a sense of place and arrival at a main destination. This will be done by:

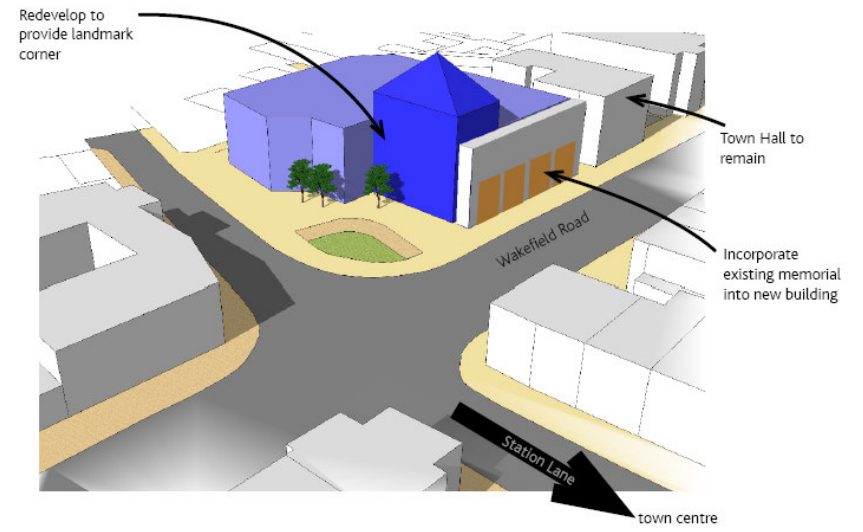
- Creating a distinctive boulevard and improved boundaries/building frontages along the Wakefield Road approach, supported by new high quality development (see principle 1)
- Improving signage into the town centre to highlight entry and give advance warning of the retail location
- Improving the railway station environment
- Marking the Wakefield Road/Station Lane junction through a landmark feature, retaining and incorporating the existing memorial and town hall building.

Figure 4.1 Possible Interventions – Option 1 Wakefield Road



Option 1. Wakefield Road Gateway

Figure 4.2 Possible Interventions – Option 2 Wakefield Road Gateway



Option 2. Wakefield Road Gateway

2. Quality Public Realm:

The public realm along Station Lane is currently tired and detracts from the existing retail offer. In addition the environment is not user friendly, or inviting.

The masterplan proposes a step change in quality as a setting for investment that creates a functional street for pedestrians and vehicles by:

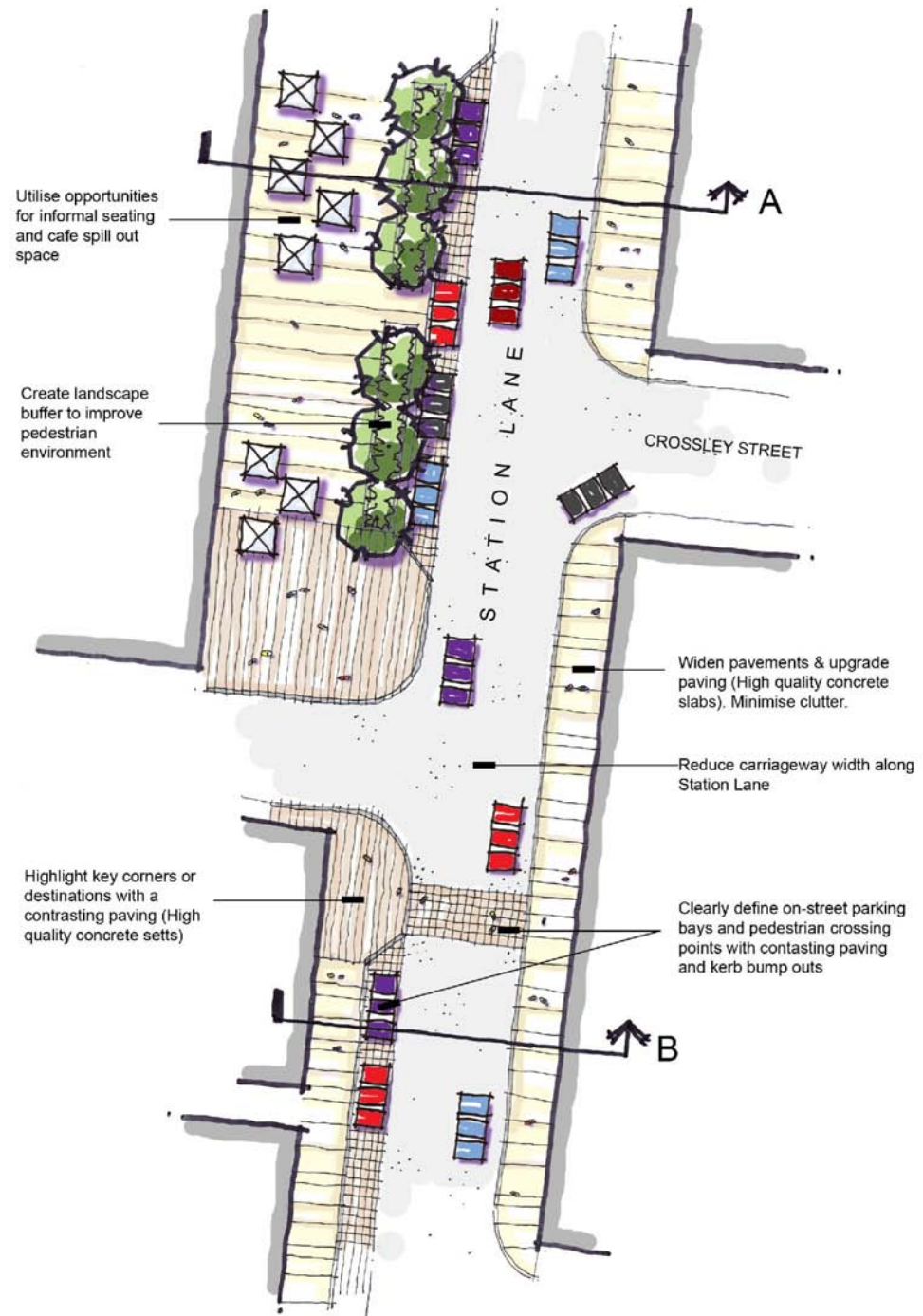
- Upgrade paving, lighting and furniture to create clutter free pavements
- Introduce kerb bump outs to define on-street parking and widen the pavement
- Improve pedestrian crossing points
- Reduce the carriageway width
- Emphasise key destinations along Station Lane such as the precinct, the Chesney Centre and sporting facilities.

A diagram showing the proposed layout along Station Lane is shown on the following page.

Design Examples



Figure 4.3 Plan showing intervention proposals and how Station Lane might work once improvements are complete



3. Reduce Congestion & Organise Station Lane:

Station Lane is vehicle dominated, poorly organised and congested at peak times, which is compounded by the level crossing barrier and on-street parking.

Whilst no single intervention can overcome all of these challenges, a number of ideas are proposed that, in tandem, can provide improvement. These are:

1. Implement the Green Lane link to attempt to divert some unnecessary heavy goods and commercial vehicles away from Station Lane (described in Principle 1)
2. Introduce a vehicle weight restriction and strategic signage on Station lane to maximize the effectiveness of the Green Lane link
3. Organise and rationalise on-street parking to allow passing trade for retailers
4. Improve access and environment of existing car parks and explore opportunities associated with masterplan proposals, such as the Civic Plaza
5. Introduce way-finding signage to improve the efficiency of movement onto and along Station Lane, where appropriate.

C. A New Retail Focus:

Retailing has steadily declined along Station Lane with businesses closing in favour of residential uses, creating a pepper pot effect. It is widely acknowledged that Featherstone is lacking an anchor food store which is more pressing since the recent closure of the Kwik Save store.

Therefore the proposed approach is three fold:

1. Deliver a quality anchor supermarket as part of a major refurbishment/redevelopment of The precinct/Kwik Save site.
2. Consolidate and improve Station Lane's retail offer focusing initially on the southern end of the street. Improve shop fronts and the variety of offer, maintaining the independent/specialist retail emphasis. WMDC's 'Wakefield Shop Front Guide' provides design guidance for shop fronts.
3. In the long term, consider expanding retail back along Station Lane should the consolidation strategy create a strong platform.

Station Lane lacks a positive evening economy and cultural opportunities. In addition to improving the area, more evening activity along Station Lane will hopefully be developed such as more cafes/restaurants/family friendly pubs. This will discourage negative and anti-social evening uses, which have been highlighted as a significant issue.

D. A series of destinations along Station Lane

In order to deliver solutions to a number of the issues raised through consultation and analysis particularly to support the retail focus, the masterplan proposes four destinations along Station Lane:

Destination 1 - Market Square














Destination 2 - Town Park

Destination 3 - Civic Plaza

Destination 4 - Sports Campus

The following pages develop these ideas and put forward design principles to set parameters for future detailed proposals. Figure 4.4 highlights the location of each of the main destinations.

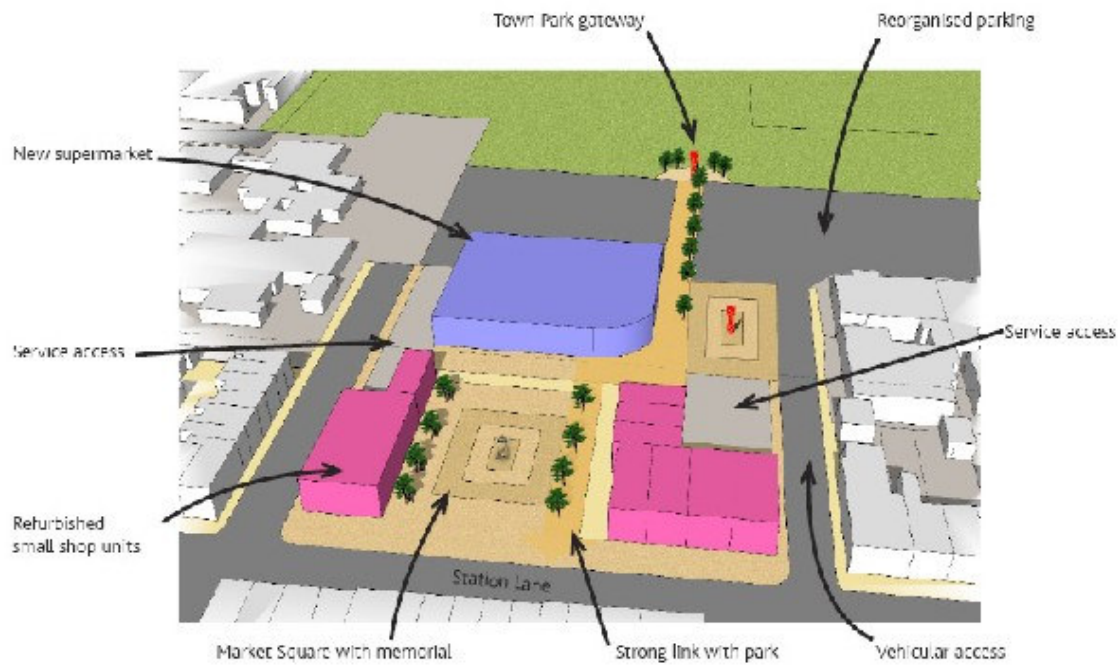
KEY:

	STATION LANE UPGRADE (parking, crossings, signage, trees)		POTENTIAL INFILL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
	PARKING & ROADWAY UPGRADE		GREENSPACE ENHANCEMENT
	PUBLIC REALM / PUBLIC SPACE UPGRADE		SHOWCASE ALLOTMENTS
	RETAIL EMPHASIS / SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENTS		GIRNHILL LANE UPGRADE
	PUBLIC ART / HISTORY TRAIL		PEDESTRIAN/VEHICULAR ROUTE
	CURRENT DEVELOPMENT		PEDESTRIAN ROUTE
			FEATHERSTONE GATEWAY ENHANCEMENT



Design Ideas/Examples

Market Square



Market Square

Destination 2: Town Park

The existing open space to the west of Station Lane lacks a formal use and is hidden away, leading to anti social uses, which impact on both businesses and nearby residents. Links with the Town Centre are poor and the open space acts as a barrier in its current form. Purston Park is Featherstone's premier park and is located in the south east corner of the town, however, the north of Featherstone is currently lacking a high quality park to balance provision.



Development Principles

- Transform a negative open space into a formal park
- A 'high use' park with safe links to Station Lane and adjacent housing
- Provides trails, play, and youth facilities, (formal sports to be focused on existing 'triangle' of provision)
- Accommodate and improve the junior School's open space requirements
- Supported by new housing development (passive policed, community ownership)
- Flexibility to be used for town events

Design Ideas/ Examples





Quality links with the wider area

Station Lane is in a central location, however various barriers exist including the railway and Wakefield/Pontefract Road. In addition, the environment immediately adjacent to Station Lane does not promote access such as the 'stacks' open space to its west.

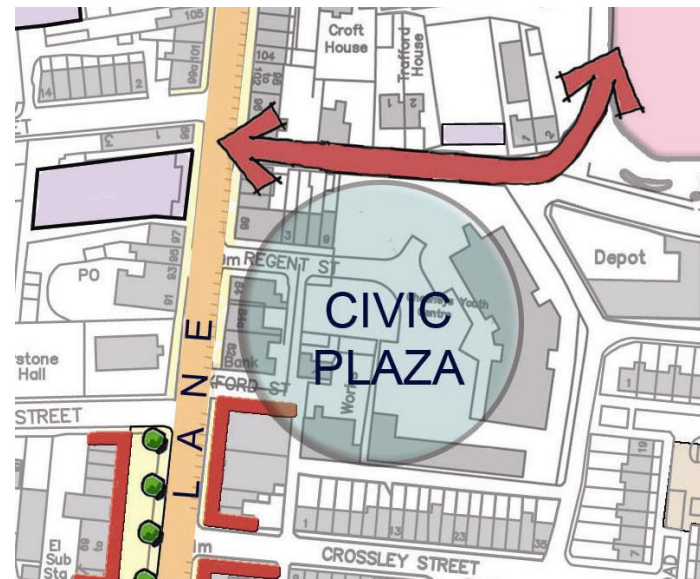
Station Lane must become better connected to local residential areas in order to become the preferred 'pop to' place for the population.

- Quality, well designed pedestrian and cycle routes linking to residential areas and the wider network
- Signposted routes
- A quality route along Girnhill Lane linking the flagship residential redevelopment and Station Lane (described in Principle 1)

Destination 3: Civic Plaza

The Chesney's Centre is a high quality community resource located off Station Lane, however, visibility and access are poor from Station Lane and parking provision has proved insufficient. Ad-hoc uses of adjacent buildings detract from the centre. The success of the associated incubator units is also hampered by a lack of access, expansion space and parking.

The Chesney's Centre is a focal point for activity, however, the centre concerns were raised by the resident's needs and stakeholders during consultation around management, opening times and uses.

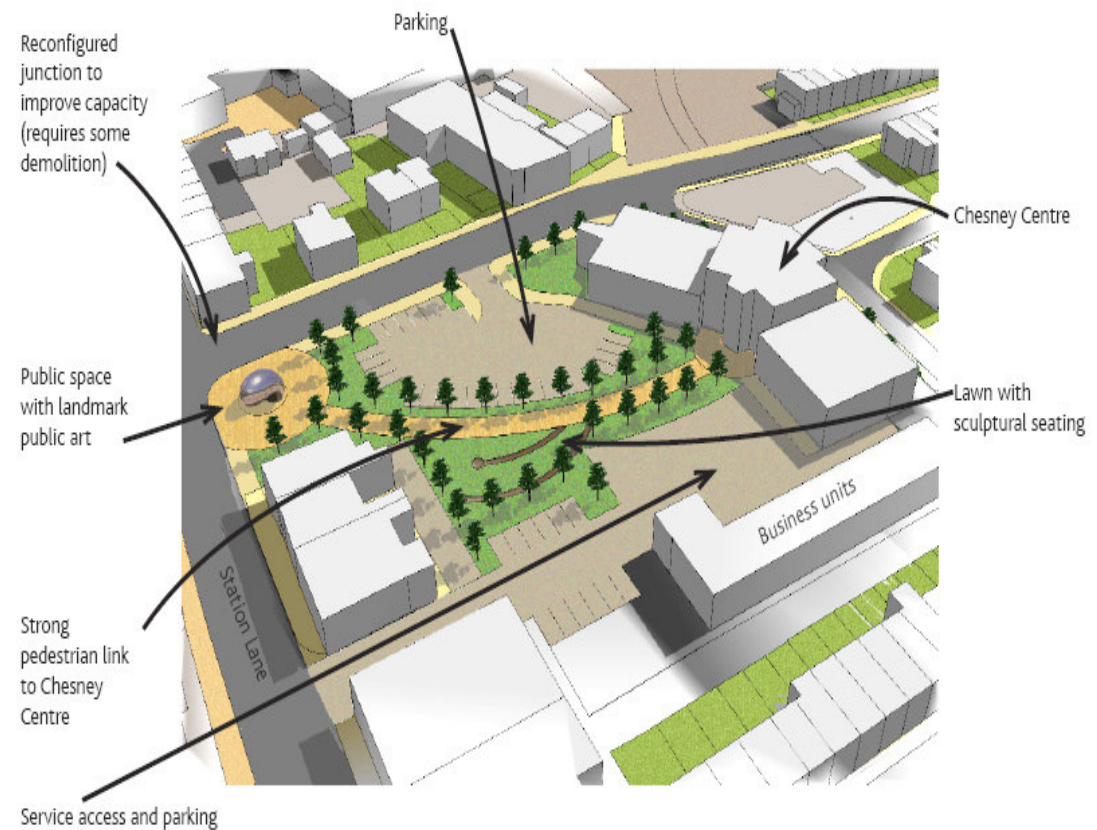


Development Principles:

- The Chesney's Centre at the heart of what could be a new Civic Plaza for Featherstone. This area needs to be identified as a community focal point to link in with the Sports Campus (sharing assets and facilities)
- The Civic Plaza could be used as a cultural destination with high quality public realm.

- Destination to be developed in the later years of masterplan delivery.
- With environmental improvements this area could be more user friendly, well designed pedestrian and vehicular access and additional parking
- Bring Chesney's into the Town Centre and improve profile of Incubator units
- There is a potential to upgrade the Post Office Road junction to increase capacity of route into the plaza Sports Campus. However, this could require some demolition to provide some space to improve the Chesney's setting and Deliver good access, improved parking and a community space. The detail of this proposal in particular will require further development and consultation over the 15-20 life of the masterplan
- Create a 'Homezone' in the residential area of Post Office road to delineate between public and private uses and parking.

Figure 4.7 Possible layout and Access for Civic Plaza



Civic Plaza



Destination 4: Sports Campus

As well as being the home for Featherstone Rovers, the rugby ground provides for a mix of uses such as educational facilities and various after school clubs as well as a bar/function room and children's play facilities. Some of the facilities, particularly in terms of training areas are in need of investment to bring them up to date and to make best use of the grounds and surrounding areas. The club own the site, training ground and some of the surrounding area, currently designated as green belt.

The area around the ground also includes other facilities including a cricket ground, football pitches bowling green.

The cricket ground and associated sports pitches in particular are in need of intervention. The main issues are with access and maintenance. The pitches are often vandalised due to the secluded location and a focus for anti social behaviour.

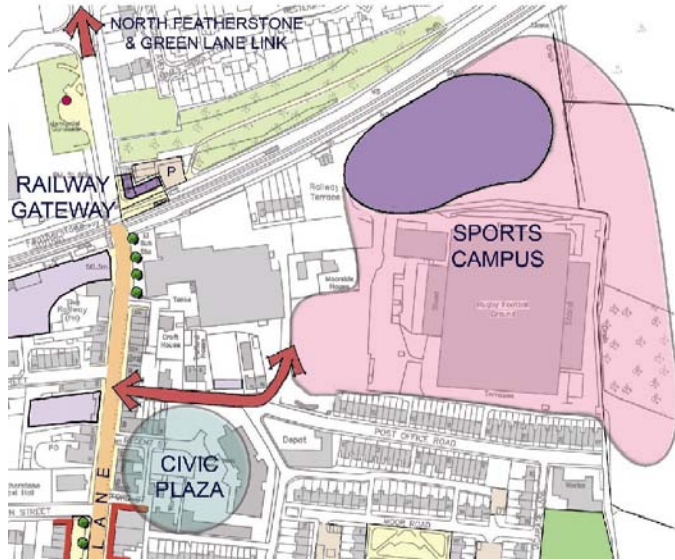
There have been on going discussions with WMDC, Featherstone Rovers and the users of the sports pitches around the option of moving the pitches to a more overlooked and secure location, closer to the Rover's ground. WMDC's Sport and Recreation Department have confirmed this and recognise the current maintenance burden and the

unsustainable nature of these as stand alone facilities in their current location.



As an important part of the town as a community and sporting facility it is essential to support this area to develop and safeguard sporting assets. A potential development site which would allow investment in the area's facilities is located to the north of the ground.

To allow future development of the land to the north of the Rovers ground, an access road would have to be provided including major physical enhancements to the Station Lane/Post Office Road junction.



Development Principles:

- Upgrade access from Station Lane
- Highway improvements and intensification of use should be considerate of nearby residential areas – possible ‘Homezone’ type treatment of residential end of Post Office Road. To delineate between community and residential uses and prevent parking overspill from the Civic Plaza and sports campus
- Improved access along Post Office Road and improved parking for the community and sporting facilities
- Attractive parking and entry, which interacts with the Civic Plaza/Chesney’s Centre
- New and upgraded sports/community facilities including moving the cricket, football and bowls clubs closer to the rugby ground
- Incorporate residential development to support improvements, taking into consideration the constraints of the greenbelt. Options include development on existing training pitch, which can be relocated onto the greenbelt, or using the existing car park for residential development and the land to the north of the pitch for car parking. This will need to be developed in more detail with the Rugby Club adjacent landowners/occupiers, and WMDC.

Principle 2 - A distinct, high quality character for Featherstone

Featherstone has all the ingredients for success: a Town Centre, excellent strategic links, open space, community facilities, yet it fails to deliver in terms of quality. Development over the years has been ad-hoc often leaving the community with missed opportunities, such as the Chesney Centre's poor integration with its surroundings and the general lack of landmark buildings.

Aims:

- To be forward thinking while respecting Featherstone's strong heritage
- To continue Featherstone's journey. Moving on from the mining town, creating a distinct and high quality character and identity to promote Featherstone
- Rediscovering Featherstone as a great place to live

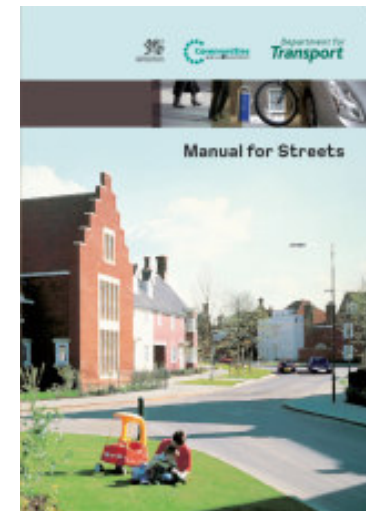
Proposals:

The masterplan places **quality** as the element that should set Featherstone apart through:

- Raising the bar in terms of planning and delivering quality well integrated schemes

- Public spaces should truly celebrate Featherstone through high quality design
- Advertising its many assets through quality signage, good connectivity and above all a user friendly experience
- Featherstone has lost many of its mining era landmark buildings. New development should meet the challenge to provide future landmarks within the 5 Towns context and protect those remaining.

New housing should exceed best practice and innovative layouts should be used to maximize the potential of infill sites, following the Department for Transport's new Manual for Streets as a guide.



Principle 3 - Managed steady growth, focusing on infill sites before expanding

To support Featherstone's role in the future, a wider of housing by type, tenure and size will need to be provided. There are currently lower than average levels of home ownership in the town and a high amount of terraced housing. We see new housing development as predominantly being on infill sites, to help to knit together the existing urban fabric.

In addition, Featherstone is bounded by land in the greenbelt and this boundary is unlikely to change over the LDF plan period. However, in order to provide capital investment for the masterplan proposals and provide a greater housing choice and residential mix in the town, some housing infill development will be required and the masterplan identifies a number of possible sites.

Aims:

- To expand Featherstone's population in a steady manner to support the town's future
- To work towards fixing Featherstone's existing townscape and urban form before expanding outwards
- To provide a wider range of quality housing which will retain and attract residents

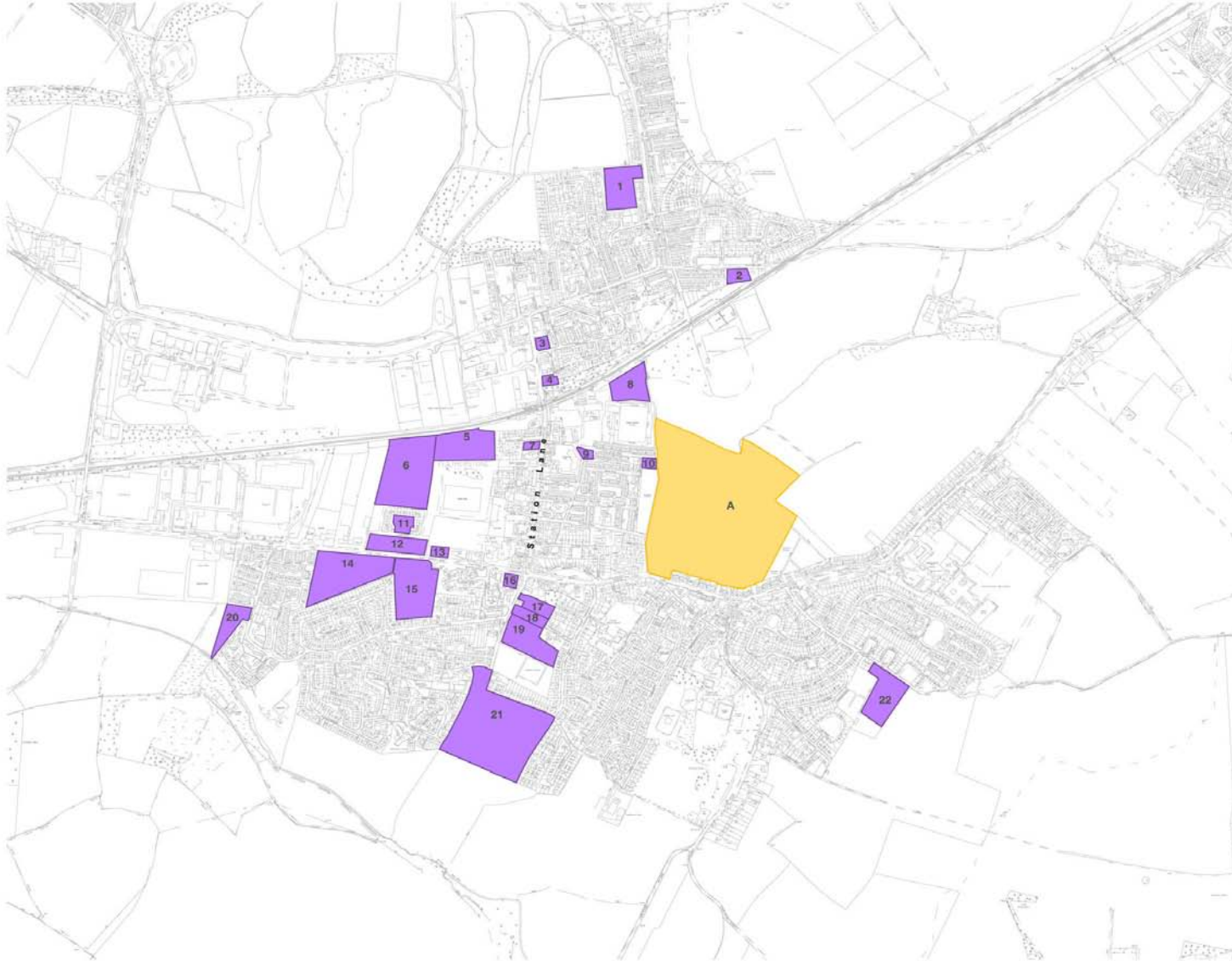
- Encourage high quality development, which is well connected with the surrounding area and proposals
- Include high quality local open space as an integral element of new development.

Proposals:

The approach is to maximise residential infill opportunities as an engine for wider regeneration, to offer a wider housing choice to existing residents and also to attract new households to the town.

The following plan shows sites which could potentially support residential development over the 20-year masterplan period. In tandem with Principle 5, infill development is also specifically proposed in area to support a comprehensive network of open space. Some of the sites have existing planning permissions and some are longer-term aspirations/development opportunities. Assuming densities at 40 dwellings per hectare, these sites could potentially deliver around 800 dwellings in total over the plan period.

Site , marked in yellow on the plan, is currently a protected Area of search in the UDP and is likely to remain as such over the LDF plan period.



KEY:

1. Infill development opportunities:

Total: 21 Hectares
 830 units (40 units per hectare)
 1750 people (2.1 people per unit)

2. Potential expansion into green belt:

Minor expansion:
A: 15 Hectares
 (Protected Area of Search)
 600 units (40 units per hectare)
 1250 people (2.1 people per unit)

Note: Number of potential units and resulting population is approximate



Client		Wakefield Metropolitan District Council	
Project		Featherstone Masterplan	
Title		Key Sites Plan	
Sheet Size		A3 (297mm x 420mm)	
Rev	8	Drawn	LD
Design	SH	Scale	1:25000
Client	WM	Author	NTS @ A3
April	19		

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Principle 4 - Gateways, Corridors and Connectivity

Featherstone is well located and connected to the strategic road network and other towns and cities, however, there are issues particularly with connectivity in to and around areas, particularly around the main shopping street on Station Lane.

Featherstone's entry gateways and corridors are generally poorly defined and fail to positively advertise the town or the town centre. One of the areas of focus for the masterplan is to improve the approach and entryways to its distinctiveness and attractiveness to residents and visitors.

Aims

Interventions under this principle aim to:

- Ensure Featherstone's identity is protected and that its role as a distinct place is clear. The gateways should particularly announce arrival to the town centre/retail area.
- The gateways and corridors should support and encourage investment in the town as a destination.

Proposals

A. Taking key approaches into Featherstone

Linking the entrances to the town centre are the main corridors into the town. The interventions proposed focus on four main approaches:

1. Wakefield Road to Station Lane
2. Pontefract Road to Station Lane
3. Girnhill Lane to Station Lane
4. Along Station Lane (see detail in Principle 4)

Taking these in turn, the proposal for the approaches to the south of Station Lane, (along Wakefield Road/Pontefract Road between Huntwick Lane/Commonside Lane and the Junction Hotel) is to create a grand boulevard effect, to include cycle lanes and visual clues to highlight the approach to the town centre. Particularly along the western approach, where land uses are more commercial, there could be some screening of existing buildings, using a cohesive approach to boundaries such as planting, walls or fences. Improvements to street furniture and lighting will be more the focus on the eastern approach, since the area is more residential in nature. Wakefield Road's junction with Station Lane lacks a clue announcing arrival in the Town Centre and therefore this key corner should receive a landmark (described in Principle 4).

The treatment of the approach to Station Lane from the redeveloped Girnhill Lane estate is an important element of the masterplan as it supports both investment in the town centre and in the estate. Improvements will focus on upgrading paving, lighting and street furniture to create clutter free pavements and also support investment either side of Girnhill Lane.

B. The Green Lane Link



There is currently a gap in Green Lane which limits the routes for commercial vehicles accessing the industrial estate and which is contributing to congestion on Station Lane. WMDC have undertaken some early modelling work on making this relatively short connection. We see this as an early intervention and the work

involves realigning the new carriageway with the existing section of Green Lane, reconstruction of the existing road and works to Green Lane/Station Lane junction, including new signals.

C. Half Penny Lane Cycle Link

The formal continuation of Halfpenny Lane is proposed to the east provides an unmarked off road path that connects Featherstone and Pontefract for both cyclists and pedestrians.



Cycle path example

Principle 5 - A quality network of upgraded open space, sports facilities and showcase allotments

Issues:

Featherstone has an extensive internal landscape structure, making open space accessible to the majority of residents. However, the quality and coverage of open space varies. Purston Park is a major asset as is Featherstone's external landscape setting including Nostell Park and Ackton Pond Wood.

Featherstone also has a reputation for sporting excellence and a range of facilities forming a 'triangle of provision', encompassing Featherstone Rovers, Featherstone Lion's and the Featherstone High School Sports Centre.

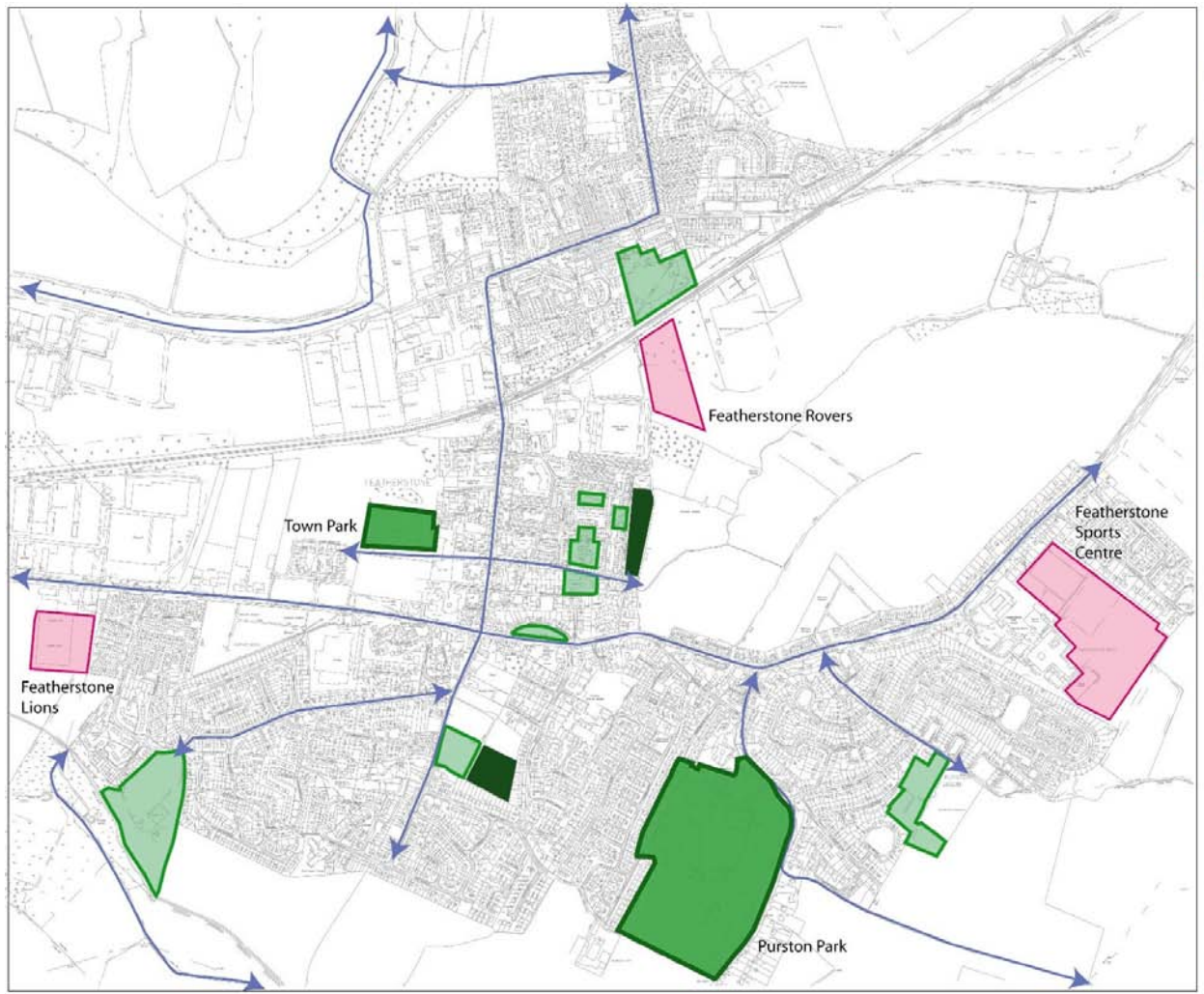
Allotments are located throughout Featherstone with a number in poor condition. They are an important resource but their appearance creates a negative impression in several areas of the town.

Aims:

- Consolidate and invest in a well linked network of high quality open space linked to residential areas
- Cater for a variety of functions including formal sports, play, informal recreation and trails/habitat creation
- Tie in with the SDF's Five Towns Forest concept

Proposals:

The masterplan aims to provide an accessible network of good quality open spaces. This links with WMDC's current open space strategy, which promotes quality and accessibility and aims for every house to be within a two minute walk of provision. In addition, the open space strategy strongly supports community involvement in open spaces and current WMDC initiatives including 'community woodlands' and 'showcase allotments'. In addition to the physical interventions proposed, it is also vital that ongoing investment be made in the maintenance of open space sporting facilities and allotments. Physical improvement proposals are set out on the plan on the following page.



- KEY**
- Existing open space network -see baseline plan
 - Local open space upgrade
 - Major park upgrade
 - Create showcase allotments
 - Sports field improvements
 - ↕ Key cycle/ pedestrian links

OPEN SPACE & LINKS STRATEGY

5.0 Financial Appraisal

Broad financial appraisals have been carried out and they demonstrate that value can be created by the schemes proposed once the sites have been assembled. However, the value created does not fully cover the cost of delivery of the civic facilities and public realm improvements. It is clear therefore that public sector funding is also required to assist in the assembly of sites within the study area and some gap funding is required to deliver the civic facilities, public realm improvements and highways alterations.

The appraisals have not taken S106 contributions into consideration or the provision of affordable housing and as such, additional funding may be required to cover these costs. Most importantly, the appraisals do not take account of land assembly and CPO costs, which will increase the funding requirement further.

We recognise that everything will not be undertaken at once. Phasing of activity will be required and actions and the timescales for their implementation will be required. WMDC will develop an implementation strategy from the proposals set out here, based on available sites and funding.

6.0 Conclusion

This is an exciting time for Featherstone and its residents, with this masterplan acting as a catalyst to investment in the town for current and future generations. The proposals put forward provide a coherent programme of improvements for the next 15 to 20 years.

Regeneration proposals need community and stakeholder support and the consultation events undertaken provide encouragement that this masterplan tackles the issues most important to you. The next stage is to deliver the recommendations. This will require planning status, a development partner(s) and further guidance to ensure that design and material detailing is at the heart of new developments.

Taken together, all this will realise the vision of Featherstone as:

“A distinct, thriving town, which provides a good quality retail, residential employment and leisure offer, serving the existing community and attracting new residents.”