



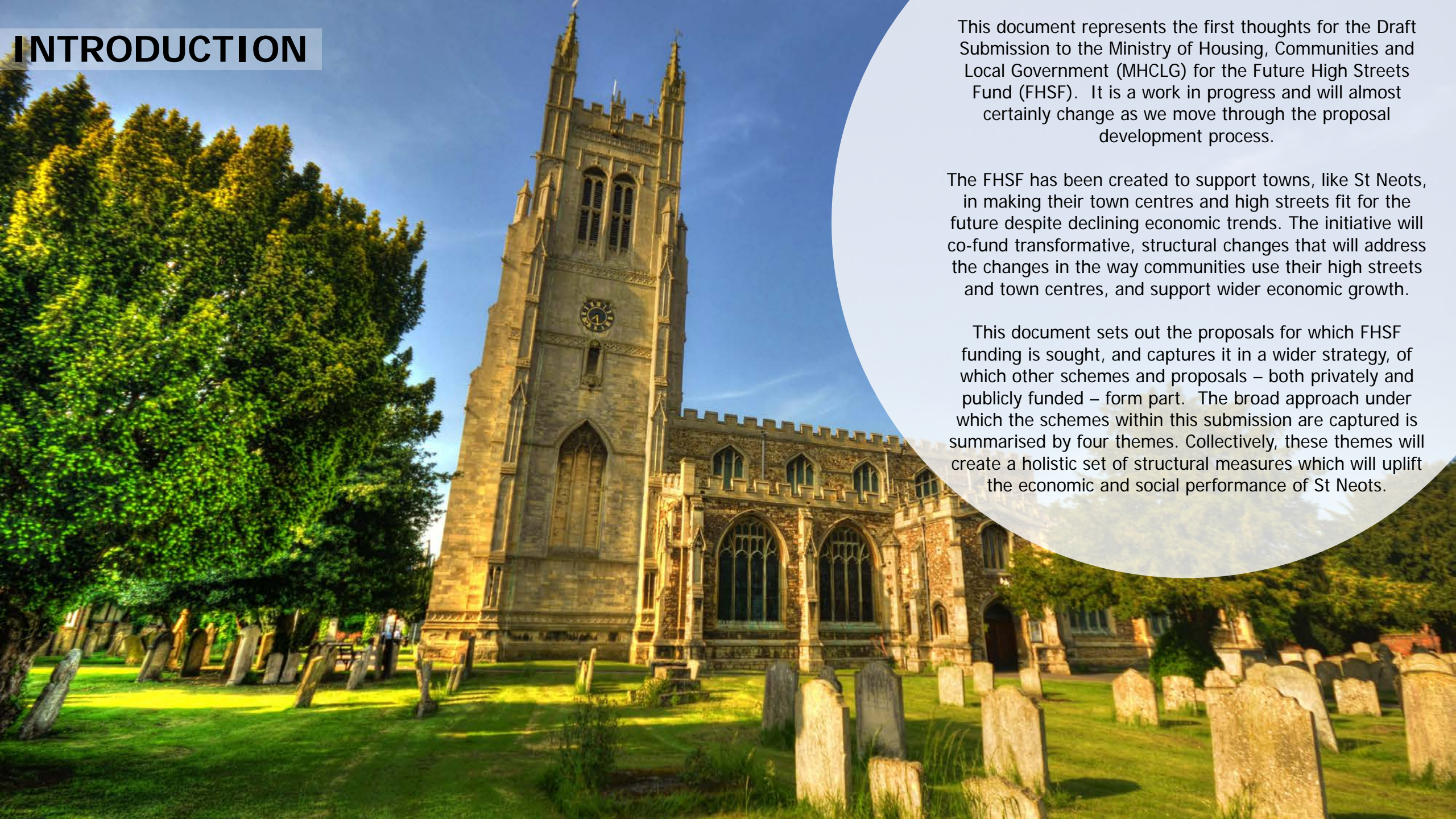
# St. Neots

Future High Street Fund Proposals

Information contained in this presentation is only indicative at this stage



# INTRODUCTION



This document represents the first thoughts for the Draft Submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF). It is a work in progress and will almost certainly change as we move through the proposal development process.

The FHSF has been created to support towns, like St Neots, in making their town centres and high streets fit for the future despite declining economic trends. The initiative will co-fund transformative, structural changes that will address the changes in the way communities use their high streets and town centres, and support wider economic growth.

This document sets out the proposals for which FHSF funding is sought, and captures it in a wider strategy, of which other schemes and proposals – both privately and publicly funded – form part. The broad approach under which the schemes within this submission are captured is summarised by four themes. Collectively, these themes will create a holistic set of structural measures which will uplift the economic and social performance of St Neots.



**THEMES**



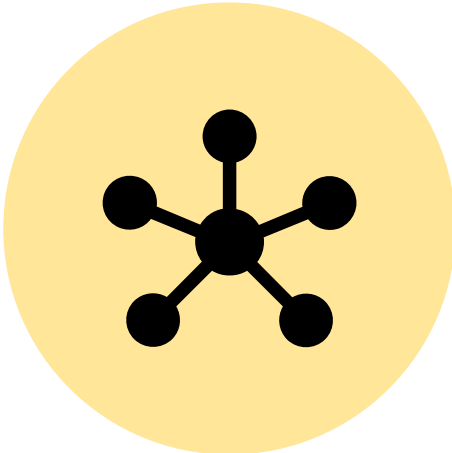
STRENGTHEN



ATTRACT



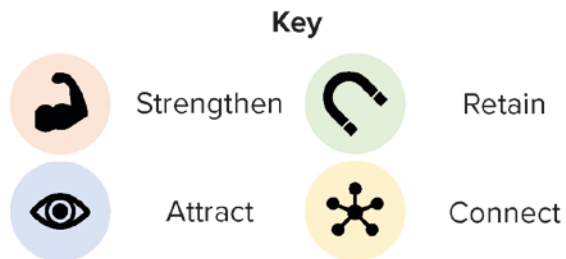
RETAIN











CONNECT

The strategic themes have influenced a long-list of design options that together can profoundly support the future growth of St Neots Town Centre. These options span across the four themes ensuring the objectives of the project can be achieved. The table lists the options and highlights which themes they connect to. The report will begin to explore these options providing a narrative for each and examples of best practice that designs could emulate.

As part of the initial optioneering review several further ideas have been considered but it is felt at this stage these do not hold as high a priority. The details of these other options and the rationale for not proceeding is covered at the end of this document.



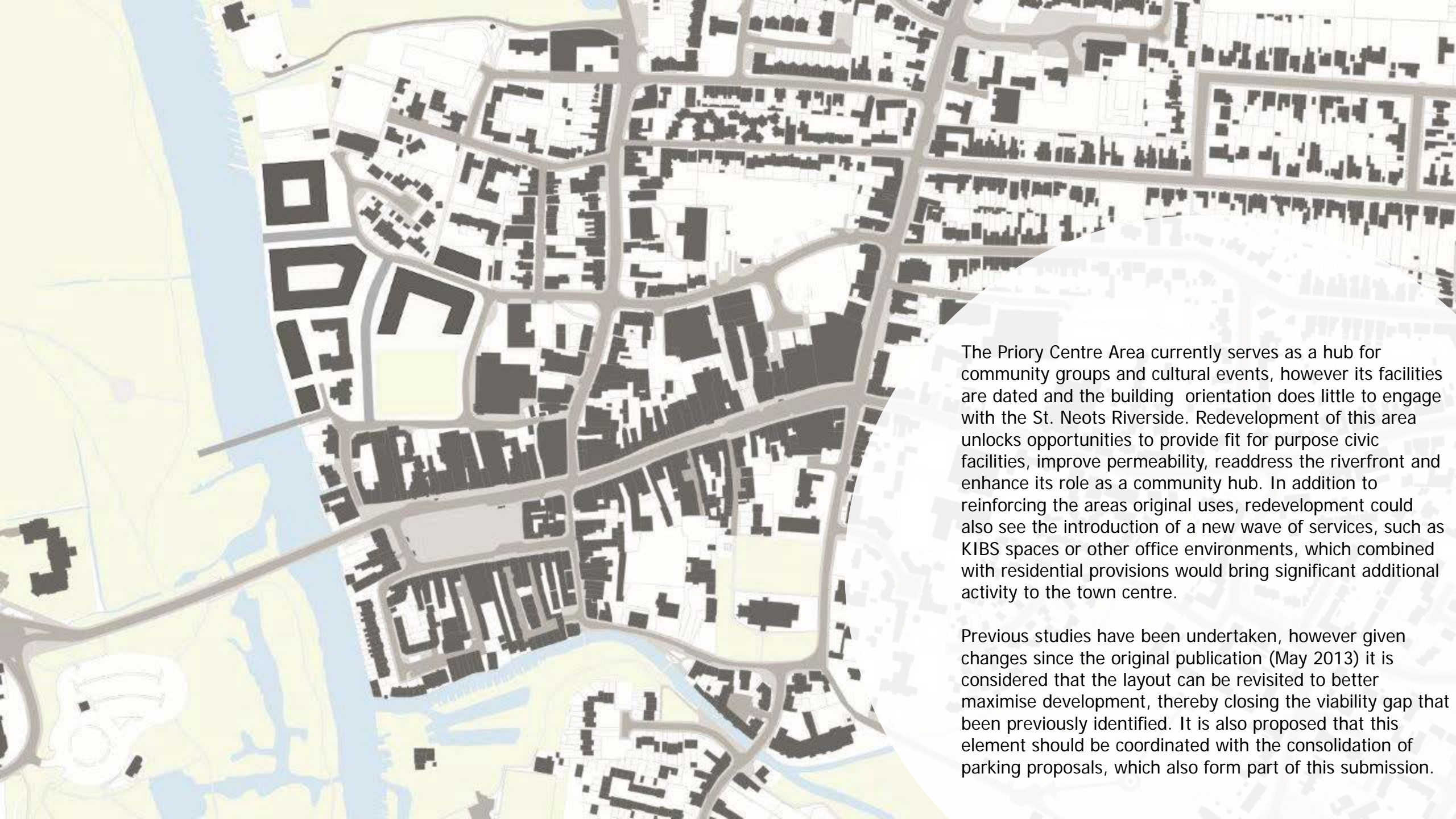
<b>Prory Quarter Redevelopment</b>	  
<b>Rationalising Parking Assets</b>	
<b>High Street Improvements</b>	
<b>Market Square Improvements</b>	
<b>Regeneration of the Falcon</b>	 
<b>Waterfront Route</b>	 
<b>Shop Front Improvements</b>	
<b>Pedestrian Improvements to St Neots Road Bridge</b>	



PRIORY CENTRE

Redeveloping the Priory Quarter





The Priory Centre Area currently serves as a hub for community groups and cultural events, however its facilities are dated and the building orientation does little to engage with the St. Neots Riverside. Redevelopment of this area unlocks opportunities to provide fit for purpose civic facilities, improve permeability, readdress the riverfront and enhance its role as a community hub. In addition to reinforcing the areas original uses, redevelopment could also see the introduction of a new wave of services, such as KIBS spaces or other office environments, which combined with residential provisions would bring significant additional activity to the town centre.

Previous studies have been undertaken, however given changes since the original publication (May 2013) it is considered that the layout can be revisited to better maximise development, thereby closing the viability gap that been previously identified. It is also proposed that this element should be coordinated with the consolidation of parking proposals, which also form part of this submission.

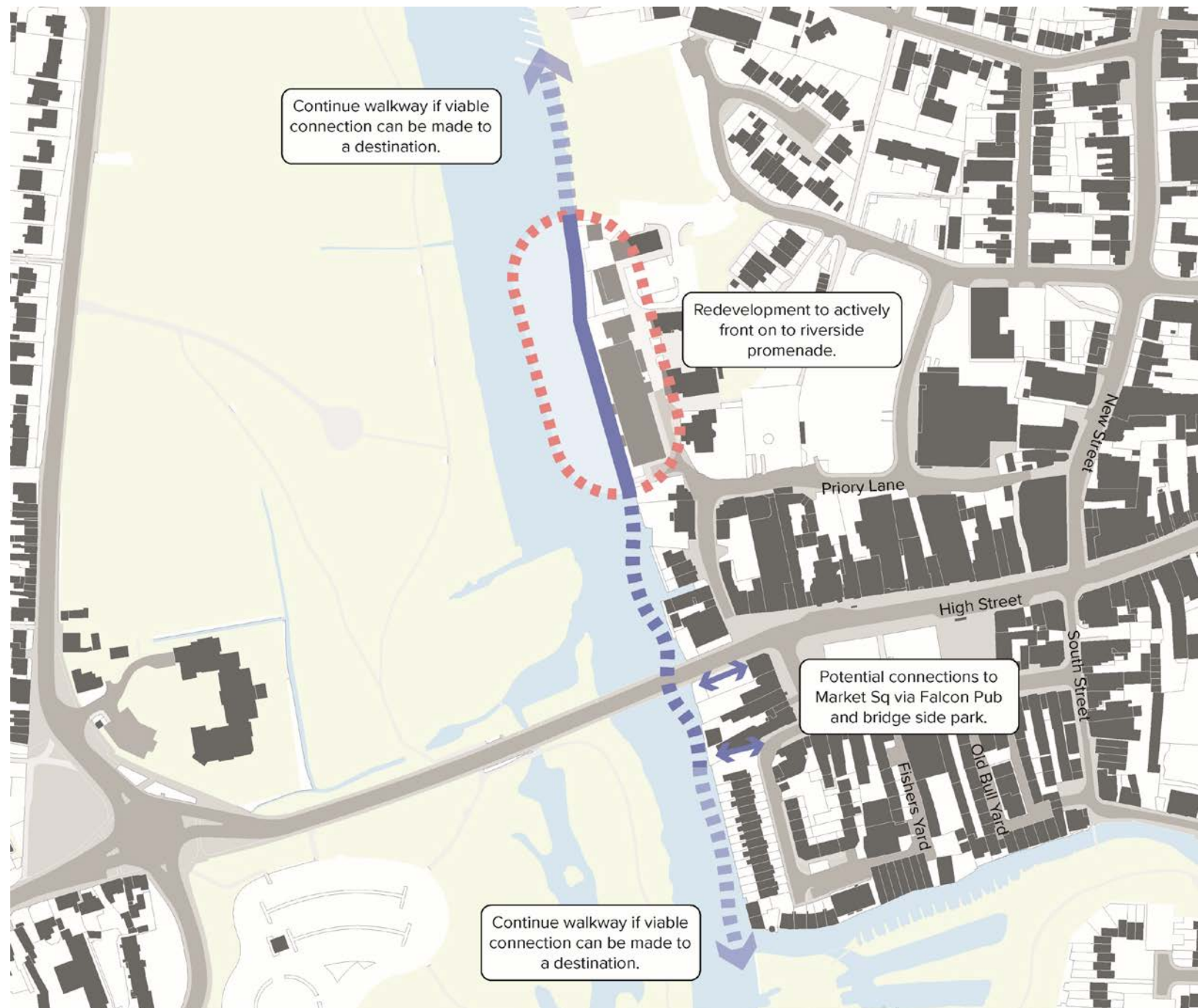




# Waterfront Route



Despite its proximity to the town centre, the River Great Ouse is an under-utilised asset. While the Regatta Meadow on the western bank is a highly valuable green space, access to the eastern bank is extremely limited, and non-existent in the area directly adjacent to the town centre. The FHSF provides an opportunity to open up the eastern bank of the River Great Ouse as an asset for residents of St Neots and visitors.



*The route illustrated is indicative, and would require further consultation prior to confirmation.*





# Rationalising Parking Assets





The town centre currently includes multiple surface car parks, each of which has a negative impact on traffic generation and on the structure of the town. A number of these car parks could be consolidated by using a multi-storey car park, thereby releasing the others for development. If the correct sites are chosen, the Market Square can be returned to a public space and additional town centre population or business can be accommodated. The corresponding knock-on benefits and the development sites can bring better usage, enclosure, natural surveillance and activation, all of which are critical in creating a successful place.





# Market Square Improvements



Currently the historic market square in St Neots is utilised for parking on all days except for market days. The presence of car parking and the correlated vehicular traffic around the square prevents it from being fully used and hinders the surrounding buildings from interacting with it.

A small portion of the square is reserved as a public space. The cafes edging the car free space spill out onto the square, demonstrating a desire and need for outdoor space. If the remainder of the square is transformed back into a market square, all the surrounding buildings would have the opportunity to interact with and reactivate the space. It can serve as the central public space within the town where events can be held, people can gather, relax, and socialise.





# PRECEDENT IMAGES



Strøget, Copenhagen

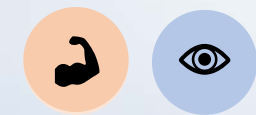


Market Place Abingdon on Thames



Malton, Yorkshire





TO LET  
RETAIL / RESTAURANT  
BAR / OPPORTUNITY  
BUSINESS  
AVAILABLE  
PHOTO VIEWING / Information

Restricted  
2t  
At any time  
No loading  
at any time

# Regeneration of the Falcon



With its prominent location, the successful regeneration of the former Falcon Pub building could act as a key anchor for the rejuvenation of the Market Square. Several potential uses have been considered for the building, these include;

- A hotel – There is a lack of high-quality hotel provision within the town centre. The prominent location within a thriving Market Square could suit a boutique hotel, which utilises the property's historic character. At ground floor level, a restaurant / bar could spill out on to the Market Square. Similarly, the rear of the property could engage with the waterfront.
- An Inn / Restaurant – Similar to the previous option but focused more on providing a high-quality restaurant / bar experience with a secondary business in letting rooms.



Grazing Goat, London – Hotel and Restaurant



- Community hub – The property could be developed as a community hub providing social and educational opportunities for local residents.
- Mixed use (ground floor commercial with residential above) – Further expanding residential accommodation within the town will help to build a patronage for a night time economy. In any residential redevelopment the ground floor should be retained for commercial usage, such as a café or restaurant.

Further consultation is required to ascertain local demands for the building both in terms of public amenity or market demand. It is fundamental that whatever the future usage of the building, that at ground floor level the property actively engages with Market Square.



Music Room, Lancaster



Nashville, Tennessee





# Improving the High Street



Currently the High Street in St. Neots feels dominated by vehicles. Guard railing at every junction and the constant flow of traffic hinders pedestrian desire lines. The footways are of comfortable width for the majority of the high street but at times they are cluttered and lack amenities such as seating and landscaping. Paving is relatively consistent, but needs upkeep and possible updating.





# PRECEDENT IMAGES



Eastgate Street Chester



Park Lane Poynton





Available Now -  
Pavilion Chambers

A beautiful development of newly converted one and two-bed flats with  
modern apartments in the centre of St. Helens. Finished to a high  
quality throughout with fully fitted kitchen including appliances

To arrange a viewing call OpenArch on 01223 664 200

OpenArch  
Real Estate Ltd

WOOD GREEN  
The Animals Charity

SHOP

WOOD GREEN  
The Animals Charity

Barnardo's | store

PHONE REPAIRS  
IPAD & TABLET REPAIRS  
LAPTOP REPAIRS  
ACCESSORIES & UNLOCKING

HELLOZ PHONE SHOP

# Shop Front Improvements



The quality of shopfronts in St. Neots contribute to the character, community identity and vitality of the area. Whilst there are currently a select number of shop frontages that enhance the High Street environment, many have either fallen in to a state of disrepair, or feature signage that does not compliment the existing buildings. Some frontages along the High Street would require varying amounts of works, from sign replacement and fresh paint, to structural repair.



Frontage is not sympathetic to the character of the building. Bright colours detract from the historical aesthetic.



Some facades have blended seamlessly into the existing architecture of the buildings, such as Fat Face, Waterstones, Il Girasole and the Corner House.



The ascetically pleasing design and upkeep of Il Girasole's façade compliments the historic character of the building.





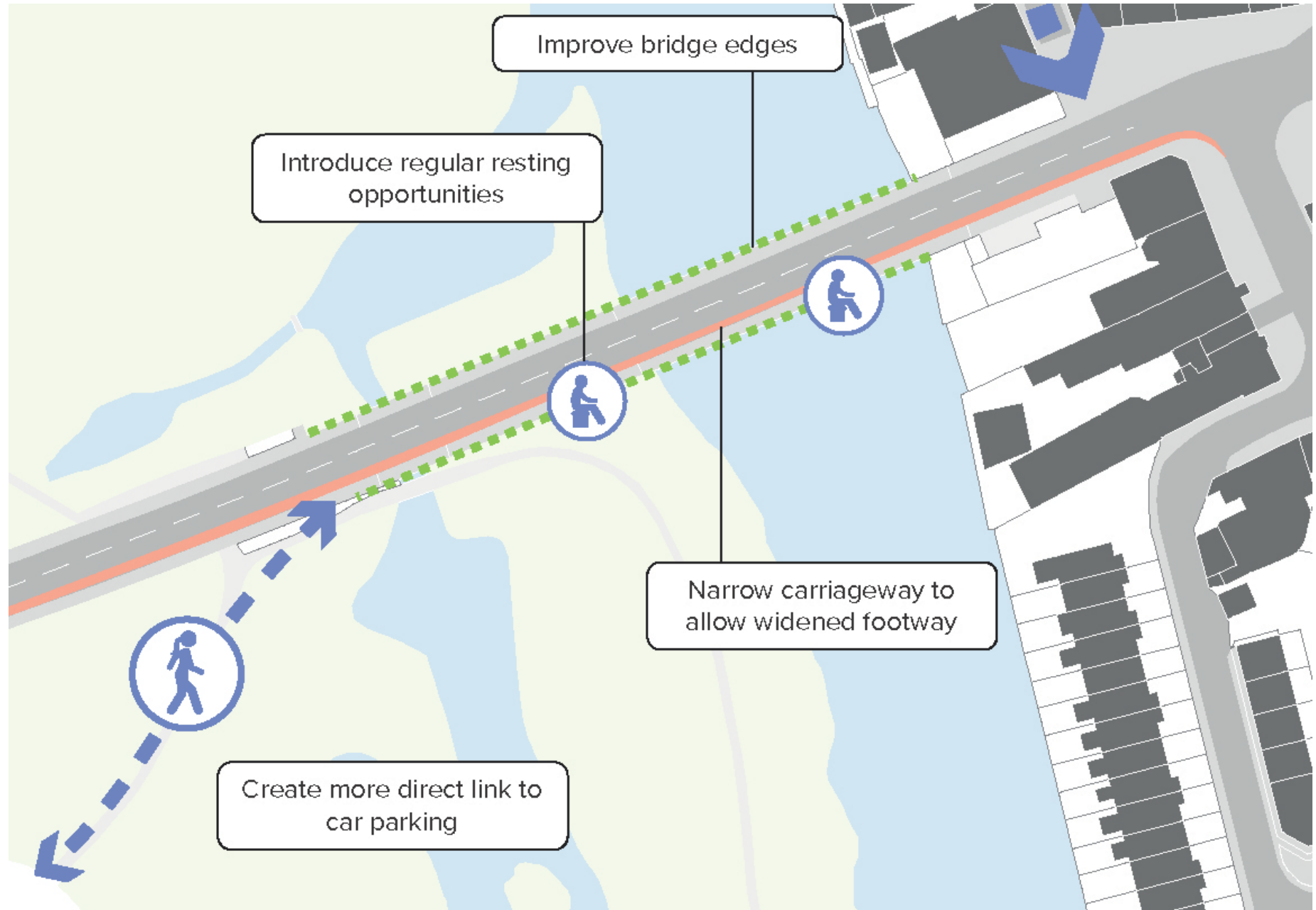
High Street Bridge – Pedestrian Improvements



As the only existing crossing point across the River Great Ouse within the vicinity of the town centre, St Neots Road Bridge is pivotal to multiple modes of transport. The most underserved of these modes are pedestrians and cyclists.

For pedestrians the route is long and relatively un-inspiring due to the levels of vehicular traffic. This is despite the excellent vistas along the River Great Ouse.

Furthermore, the bridge links the town centre with one of St Neots' largest carparks (the Riverside car park). The indirect connection to the town centre and quality of pedestrian experience would appear to deter some users from parking in the Riverside car park. Improving pedestrian and cyclist experience across St Neots Road bridge will strengthen sustainable modes of travel between western St Neots and the town centre.







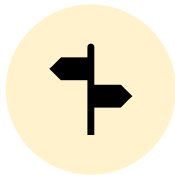
Additional Options Considered



As part of the initial optioneering review several ideas have been considered but it is felt at this stage these do not hold as high a priority. These ideas are listed below alongside the rationale for not proceeding with them at this stage.



**Little Paxton Bridges;** This forms an important link from St Neots to the north. However, it currently falls outside the study area of this project. This may be considered through the St. Neots Transport Study currently being undertaken by Steer.



**Wayfinding;** It is recognised that wayfinding could provide benefits to St Neots, particularly along key routes. Due to the scale of the town centre it is recommended that only fingerposts are installed as wayfinding signage, this could include reference to ancient routes.



**Pedestrian routes;** Improvements to the pedestrian environment will be seen through interventions such as the High Street and St. Neots Road Bridge improvements. These will significantly improve the pedestrian experience within the town centre and at key access points. Wider improvements to pedestrian linkages sit beyond the study area of this project.





**Houseboats and punting;** The creation of the riverside walk will open opportunities for further activities along the River Great Ouse. It is deemed that whilst the river side improvements may support houseboating and punting on the river, this cannot be funded as part of the scope.



**Smart Projects;** There is potential for connecting traffic lights to optimise traffic movements and pedestrian crossing times along the High Street. Additionally, real time parking display boards could advise drivers of the nearest available parking spaces, thus reducing the number of abortive journeys between car parks.



**Restricting through traffic;** Creating a gyratory in the town centre down Priory Lane won't reduce the number of cars passing through the town. More value can be gained by supporting sustainable transport and rationalising the existing parking assets. Wider efforts to remove through traffic are beyond the scope of this project however are being considered as part of the St. Neots Transport Study currently being undertaken by Steer.



**Supporting Museum, Culture, Art and Heritage;** Where possible, the incorporation of culture and arts has been integrated in to the proposed schemes, for example, through the regeneration of The Falcon, and proposed uses within the Priority Quarter redevelopment. Further discussions will be held with relevant stakeholders moving forward. Other proposals, such as the development of programme of events, fall outside the scope of the project.