

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 These guidelines have been produced to assist prospective developers in submitting proposals for the physical, economic and social regeneration of this part of Huntingdon Town Centre. It sets out ideas for the potential redevelopment of the site, and highlights the potential demand for particular uses of it. It provides an appraisal of the theoretical capacity of the site to accommodate new development, and broad concepts as to how this could be achieved.

1.2 This document follows on from Part 1 of the Planning Brief for this site, dated August 2001, and should be read in conjunction with it. The scope of the Guidelines covers a larger area than Part 1 in that the whole site of the Bus Station, should it become available or appropriate to redevelop, is included for overall consideration of the potential of the street block (see paras 4.6 – 4.8 for more details). The bus station introduces a further ownership interest to the Study Area, although the majority is still in the ownership of the County Council. Every attempt will need to be made to involve the various owners in a redevelopment scheme.

1.3 The Guidelines do not set out to provide a prescriptive basis for the redevelopment of the site. The Guidelines embody work undertaken by Shillam & Smith on behalf of the District Council. Shillam & Smith concentrated upon analysing the site, considering its opportunities in relation to its environs and its meaning for the whole of Huntingdon. This understanding is believed to be essential for a successful redevelopment of the area.



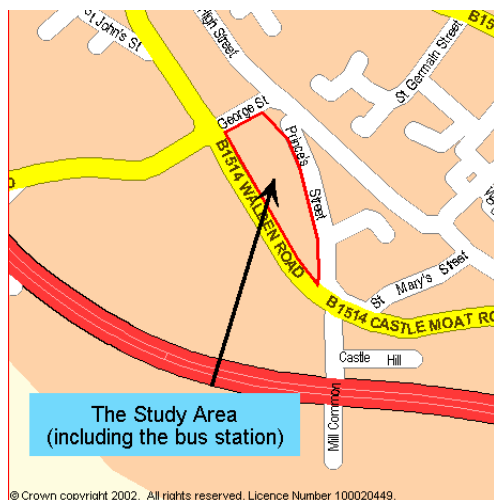
## Background

1.4 Current plans for the town centre focus on enhancing retail provision on the High Street and Chequers Court and adjacent street and malls. Availability of floor areas and quality of the shopping environment are key components of these plans. The report from Hillier Parker<sup>1</sup> states that after the redevelopment of Chequers Court there is unlikely to be additional demand for primary retail space in the town centre.

1.5 The Civic Trust has produced a Vision for the town centre, in which they have identified three main areas. These include this Study Area, together with the area adjacent to Chequers Court and George Street/Ermine Street. Each area has unique characteristics, and separate action plans are therefore being produced for each.

1.6 The west part of the town centre, including the site, is therefore in the position to augment and complement the supply of uses in the town centre. It has the potential to supplement the town's facilities. The centre of Huntingdon lacks speciality shops and cafes, cultural, educational and leisure facilities, and quality hotel accommodation, which would encourage longer-term visits keeping shoppers in the town centre longer and attracting more visitors to Huntingdon. It could also be considered appropriate for elements of residential and office use dependant upon demand.

## Context



1.7 At the moment there are already improvements to the Market Square which will enhance the historic environs of the town. This initiative could be reinforced by the new developments on the Princes Street / George Street site. More could be made of the interaction between facilities

Hillier Parker August 2001



and activities on the eastern borders of the study area. The Market, library and Bus Station lie on a line and at present there is very little made of the spaces between them. Uses such as cafés and small-unit shops along Prince's Street, both sides, would be appropriate. With prime retail activities shifting to the north east of the town centre St. Benedict's Square is becoming more "off centre" and requires a boost. This has been highlighted in the Civic Trust report<sup>2</sup> and their conclusions are supported here. The west end of St. Benedict's Court and All Saints Passage would benefit from a new or improved magnet on or to the west of Prince's Street. The Library could be strengthened, particularly if redeveloped within a new building. The use of libraries in other towns for much more than book lending and research has increased the number of people using them dramatically.

1.8 Other building uses which would attract large numbers would be speciality retail, entertainment, leisure and tourism based users. An intensive teaching/training facility in a new library may also generate large number of visitors, but this doesn't compare with retail for generating the constant stream of people coming and going on foot.

1.9 The area around Market Hill is becoming established as a visitor attraction with its historic setting and connections with Cromwell and the Civil War. There are buildings in the study area which are in many ways ideal recipients of this heritage and tourist opportunity. Walden House, 4 George Street, and Wykeham House could all be used for leisure, entertainment, restaurant, cafes or speciality retail or other purposes to enhance and build upon on the existing tourist attraction. The District Council shares this vision.

1.10 Strengthening the magnets in the north eastern and south eastern corners of the study area would help to draw more people across the town centre along Grammar School Walk, All Saints Passage, St. Benedict's Court and Literary Walk towards the west side of the town centre to the overall benefit of the whole of that part of the centre. It would be important to ensure that this re-balancing of the activity within the town centre would indeed be a balance, and not detrimental to the regeneration agenda for St Germain Walk being promoted by the District Council.

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<sup>2</sup> Huntingdon Town Centre, A vision and Strategy for Growth and Quality CTRU October 2000



## 2.0 THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AIMS

2.1 The strategy is guided by the following aims which consider the site in the broader context of the town centre.

- **To create a coherent quarter of quality befitting an important market town centre**

2.2 The intention is to use the opportunity of re-development to create a coherent quarter, which has a clear design identity of its own, but which complements and adds to the quality of other parts of the town. The most important factor is that development on this site should be considered as a whole and planned comprehensively, rather than piecemeal. It is acknowledged that there may be phasing, particularly given the different ownerships involved, but co-operation will be expected, so that each phase fits into the comprehensive plan.

2.3 Such a prominent site should be able to attract high market interest, especially if it is considered as a whole. There is the potential to provide a critical mass of high quality development here, which will have its own momentum and produce a step-change in the types of accommodation on offer in the Town Centre.

- **Enhance and revitalise the existing character of the site**

2.4 New development should respond to the historic buildings and landscape environment but at the same time it should enhance the identity of the site and by generating new uses and activities contribute to a revitalisation of the area.

- **Contribute to a balanced town centre by complimenting facilities that already exist in the town. The site should offer new facilities and strengthen**



## connections between them

2.5 The prime location of the site, adjacent to the town centre and major routes, offers potential for a wide variety of mixed town centre uses. Because this site is easily visited by public transport, by cycle and on foot it should be able to accommodate facilities which require public access. A wider mix of uses on the site will attract greater diversity of people into the area contributing to the attractions of Huntingdon Town Centre. It is important that the primary pedestrian connections, between this site and the retail core, are improved. The amount and type of retail use should take account of the focus upon St Germain's Walk, and the need to achieve an appropriate balance of uses across the town centre.

- **Improve pedestrian accessibility creating a welcoming, attractive and secure site**

2.6 The possibility and quality of pedestrian permeability to the site and to the town centre through the site, is important to the vitality of the area. Welcoming, attractive and secure pedestrian routes should be encouraged through the site, which should be permeable. Measures, such as including some residential accommodation within the site, should be viewed in the light of the improvement they can bring to security and surveillance particularly at night.

- **Offer attractive transport alternatives for people living, working and visiting the area and minimise car parking provision on site**

2.7 It is an important aim to reduce car dependence in the area offering attractive transport alternatives to future residents, workers and visitors. These alternatives should include retention of a taxi rank and bus stop facilities if the bus station is relocated. Considering many facilities proposed are complementary to the existing facilities in the town centre it would be convenient to make use of the parking facilities already available,



where possible. A development of this scale should be accompanied by a green transport plan.

- **Provide sustainable buildings which in environmental, social and economic terms can continue to flourish**

2.8 We would expect to see buildings designed for low energy systems, for flexibility and for robustness. New buildings should be able to adapt easily to future trends.

- **Provide diversity of accommodation**

2.9 There is an opportunity here to provide a wider diversity of accommodation, by for example offering different types of dwellings or offices than are not available elsewhere within the town. There should be opportunity to design for a mixture of cultural, social and physical needs.

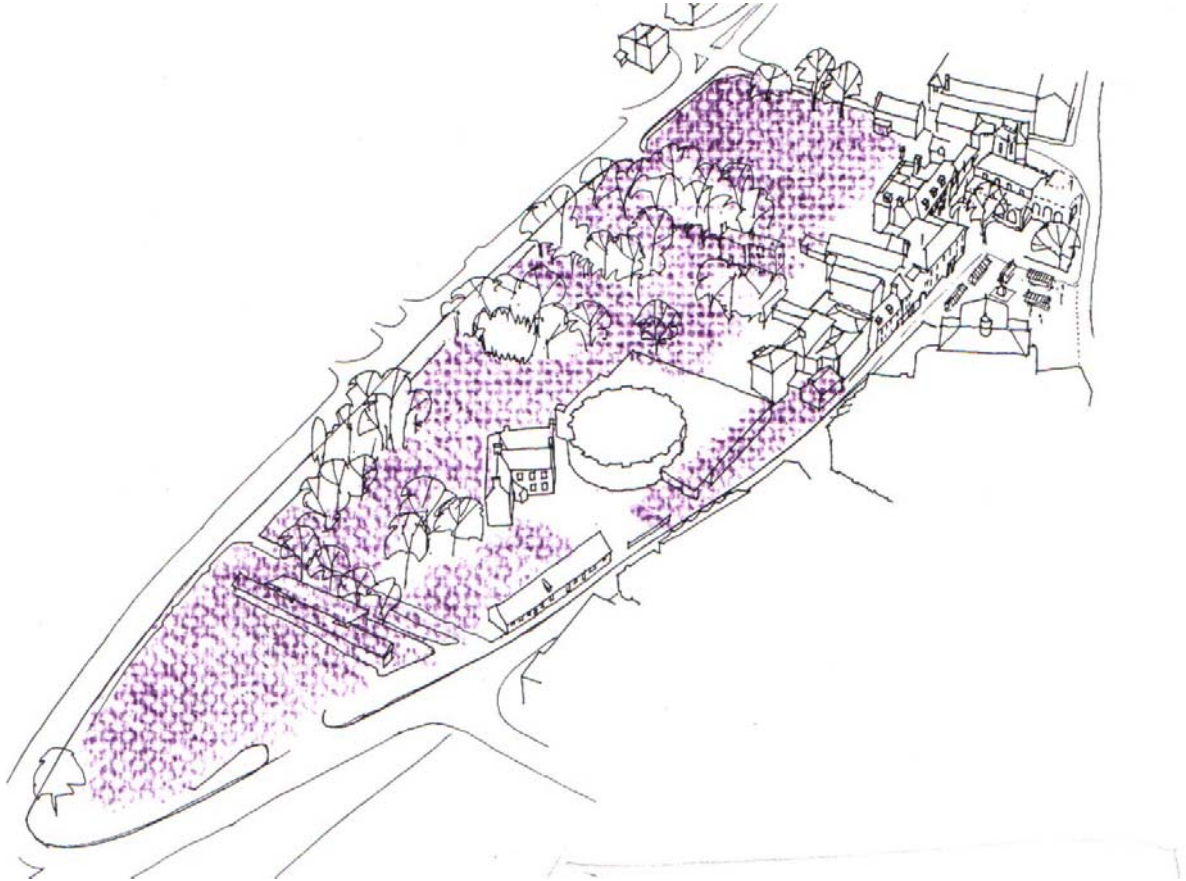
- **Provide leisure and cultural facilities for the town**

2.10 This site is the most suitable to provide wider cultural and tourism facilities to make the town more attractive.



### 3.0 BUILT FORM

#### Indicative Developable Areas



3.1 The existing built and landscape features within the Study Area have qualities of architectural, townscape, economic and aesthetic value which have been assessed for their worth. The removal of all the temporary buildings from the land behind the street frontages will provide opportunities to enhance both the appearance of this part of Huntingdon and its economic viability. There are a large number of trees within the site most of which contribute to the character of the Town Centre and about which there is a presumption of long term retention. With these factors in mind “hard and soft” areas have been identified which give an indication of development potential.

3.2 All Listed Buildings, other attractive buildings are to be retained together with space adjacent to provide suitable settings. All large and significant trees are retained. If the library is retained in the current building this results in a developable area, in three



awkwardly shaped blocks, of about 0.81ha in total. In addition there is a small individual plot of land on Prince's Street.

3.3 If the Library is demolished and relocated within the development and a small number of less prominent trees are removed, a developable area of 1.0ha would be available. This document gives no presumption in favour of removing trees – this will be considered at planning application stage. There are no utility mains within the study area constraining development. All services including, drainage and sewerage are available although capacity levels have yet to be determined and are probably best assessed when proposals are more advanced. As far as amenity/environmental pollution is concerned the only factor of concern is traffic noise and hazard related to Walden Road and to a lesser extent the Bus Station. Traffic is heavy and relatively noisy on Walden Road although the proportion of heavy goods vehicles is not thought to be above average. The one-way character of the road increases its apparent impact.

### **Pedestrian Access**

3.4 Pedestrian “permeability”, good and extensive pedestrian access, is an important asset in Town Centre locations and is becoming increasingly important as the emphasis swings from the car to alternative modes of travel.

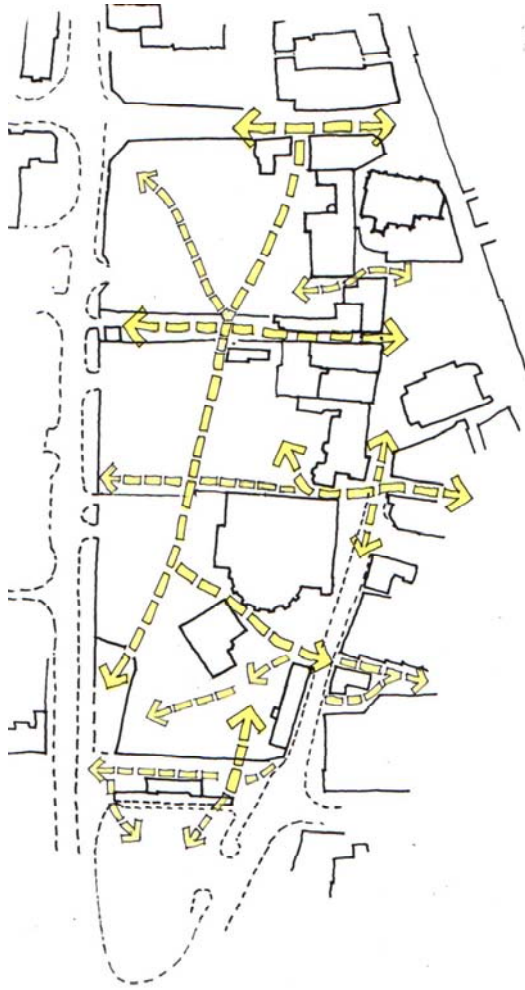
3.5 Pedestrian links should connect the urban environment on the east with the rural on the west as well as increasing north-south connectivity. Block sizes are relatively small in Huntingdon; this scale of development should be respected. The green spine to the west should provide natural permeability allowing people to walk through the park rather than along the road. This will increase accessibility to the site and through the site.

3.6 It is important to bear in mind that Walden Road is one of the primary vehicular entry routes to the town. The railway station also brings pedestrians to this edge of the site. By creating greater permeability and glimpses through towards the historic core, the attractiveness of the town can be enhanced.





3.7 Creating new landmarks on the north and south west corners of the site will help in orientating and attracting people into the area. Access to the Lawrence Court parcel from



Prince's Street is good and there is potential to provide further entrances from The Walk and Walden Road in the south west corner of the plot. The Gazeley House plot has pedestrian access only from Walden Road apart from through the house. There is a gap in the frontage on Prince's Street which could be exploited to give access to the rear.

At Walden House and Wykeham House there is a narrow gap between the two Listed Buildings which would be very useful in providing a link between Market Square and the rear courtyard areas. North to south pedestrian movement through the middle of the site would be valuable and is only prevented by the Falcon Inn parcel which separates Walden from Gazeley House.

A joint scheme with the Falcon Inn owners that includes this as one of the elements should be vigorously pursued.

### **Vehicular Access**

3.8 The developable area has existing vehicular and pedestrian access points all of which, at this stage can be assumed to be available for future use. In considering future arrangements for vehicular and pedestrian access, it will be important to ensure there is no conflict between these modes. Cycle links and any opportunities to enhance links between this Study Area and the rest of the town centre will be considered as part of the Market Town Strategy, taking account of this Brief.



3.9 The Walden parcel has two access points for vehicles and is the only part of the study area with relatively easy access from George Street (west). The existing entrance from George Street may not be suitable for access to the main part of the area if a courtyard format is selected for development of the rear part of Walden House Annexe. An additional entrance only access would be a useful addition to the site just to the west of No. 4 George Street. The existing access/egress from Walden Road should be retained although its exact position could be varied.

3.10 The existing entrance to Gazeley House should be retained as it provides fairly direct access to the rear yards of 5-8 Market Hill, which have a licence from the County Council. This access is close to that of The Falcon and in the interests of traffic safety could be given up if alternative provision could be made from the Lawrence Court or Walden parcels. The latter would necessitate a joint arrangement with the owners of the Falcon Inn.

3.11 The Lawrence Court parcel has one access from Walden Road and one from Prince's Street which are not connected. There is no physical barrier to linking the circulation and parking areas. Access must be provided from Walden Road, either directly in the current position or via the Gazeley House parcel. The removal of vehicular access to Lawrence Court would make a contribution to the Town Centre pedestrian environment especially if the redevelopment of the Lawrence Court parcel improves pedestrian activity in this corner. The link with St. Benedict's Court would also be enhanced.

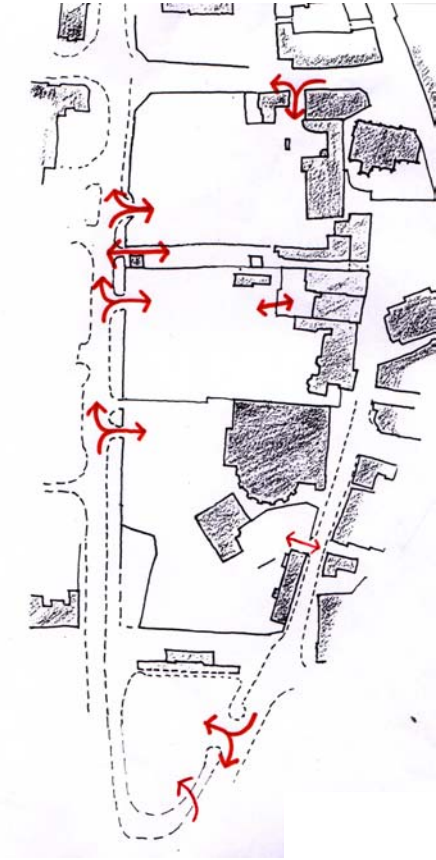
3.12 Access to the bus station site is best provided from Princes Street as existing.

### **Possible Access Arrangements**

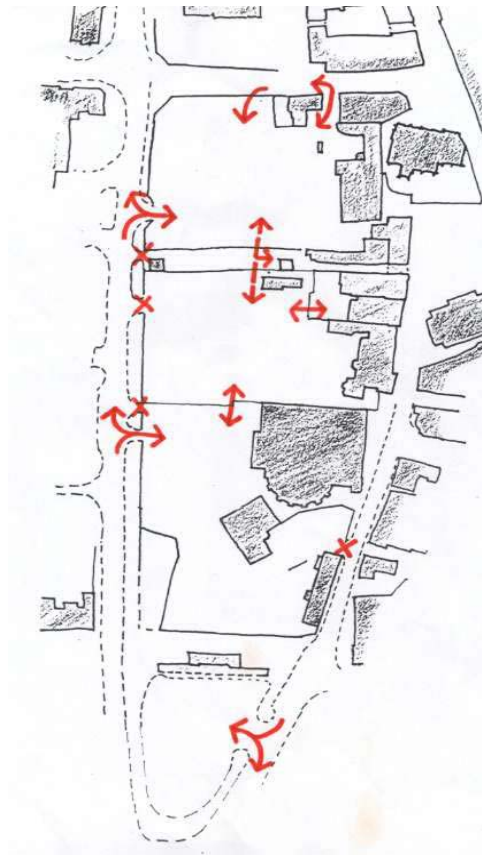
3.13 Two approaches to access provision for vehicles and pedestrian are possible, depending on the agreements reached with adjoining landowners. One approach is to make no change, the other involves reducing connections to the main road network to a minimum and utilising internal link roads. An example of how this might be achieved is shown below. The more comprehensive the redevelopment scheme, the more that can be achieved.



Vehicular Access – no changes



Vehicular Access - changes



### Car Parking

3.14 The provision of car parking will obviously have an impact upon viability. However, an imaginative redevelopment scheme should avoid visual dominance of car parking.

3.15 Every opportunity should be taken to minimise car parking given the town centre location, for example through dual use of spaces. However, there will remain a requirement for some car parking in the redevelopment. This could fall into three categories: public, customer and operational. There is potential for public and customer parking to be combined, for example as it is at Sainsburys. Parking for employees is more appropriately located on the outer side of the inner ring road. Parking within the Study Area should be limited to short term and jointly linked with residential uses.



3.16 The District Council's car parking standards are appended.

#### **4.0 DEVELOPMENT PARAMETERS/OPPORTUNITIES**

4.1 The architectural heritage of the area, the large number of mature trees and the location in the town centre creates a range of constraints and opportunities have been developed into three dimensional guidance which in scale and massing fit the requirements of the Brief.

4.2 The scheme achieves a number of important enhancements;

Increased accessibility

More visitors

More employment

Greater diversity of activities/uses

More evening activity

Better links to surrounding areas

Enhanced townscape

4.3 The visual impact of car parking will be minimised and a series of new courtyards with different functions would be provided. The groups of mature trees are to be brought together to form useable areas of urban park accessible to the courtyards and existing streets.

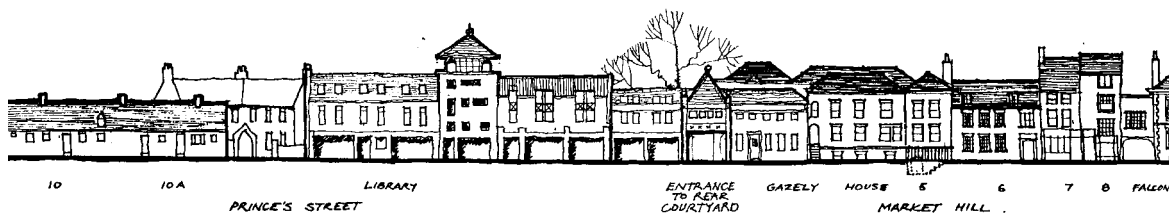
4.4 The frontage buildings to Market Hill are of fine quality, but now that the square has been re-paved more could be done to exploit the potential of this part of the town. Tourism appeal could be tapped by introducing or encouraging new uses in Walden House, its annexe and Wykeham House. The originality of the facades is a vital part of the character of these buildings and it must be assumed that no major changes can be made. This will mean that uses such as restaurant, retail, public house or any activity requiring access for the disabled may encounter problems. Ways of accommodating ramps, and lifts to the street frontage, alternative rear access and linking adjoining buildings need to be explored



in more detail to establish the feasibility of a wider range of uses for the Market Hill buildings. Gazeley House, although Listed, is not of a single period. The 1930s cottage in the

south east corner could potentially be removed to achieve permeability. The gap in the building frontage which could be used to provide pedestrian access to the site and rear of the building which would increase the flexibility in use of Gazeley House and improve the 'permeability' of this part of the Town Centre.

4.5 The library frontage is an unsatisfactory area. The intimate proportions of Prince's Street are lost here through the setting back of the single-storey element of the library. The design of paving and landscaping could be of better quality. A great enhancement to the street scene would be achieved by rebuilding the frontage on the old building line with a three-storey unit including a new entrance to the library. The ground floor could comprise retail units serviced from the street. The upper levels would be ideal for Library uses, or Offices.



4.6 The bus station occupies a large and prominent site which would benefit from radical redevelopment. However, the location here and all the pedestrian activity it generates is a valuable component of this sector of the Town Centre. If the bus station were relocated elsewhere, it would remain important to provide bus stops within the study area. Its relocation elsewhere will follow an extensive study of travel patterns and alternative sites and is unlikely to be activated in the short term. Possible redevelopment of the bus station is to be considered as a medium to long term possibility. This requires further study before a final decision can be taken. The Market Town Strategy currently being undertaken could clearly affect any decision on the future of the bus station at this location as could the



future implications of the Rapid Transport System between Huntingdon and Cambridge.

4.7 The site could accommodate a large building or series of connected structures to provide a “landmark” at this important gateway to the Town Centre. The form, scale and design of the building would have to be carefully handled, and if the achievement of an

appropriate urban form dictates it, the building may need to be constructed at less than 5 storeys. Several uses could be considered appropriate here; residential, offices, hotel and library would all be acceptable in principle. Combinations would be welcomed.

4.8 Should the outcome of the Market Town Strategy be that the bus station should remain in this location there will be the opportunity for it to be remodelled and attractive opportunities would open up as highlighted in the CTRU Vision Report. The idea suggested there of creating a better “gateway” to the town centre is feasible. It could include an improvement to the vehicular approach gateway on Walden Road where it crosses the Walk. A building placed opposite No 2 The Walk (south) would create the desired townscape effect necessitating the loss of a small number of ornamental trees and shrubs. The building could extend eastwards to create a new public square incorporating the east elevation of Lawrence Court, a new library entrance and a remodelled rear elevation of 10/10a Prince’s Street. This “square” could remain open on its south side or enclosed by a rebuilt bus station building which itself may be largely open sided.

4.9 There may be scope here to reduce the land take of the bus station opening up the opportunity to build on the residual land.

4.10 To those passing the site along Walden Road, the general image is created by trees, surface car parks, and rear elevations of both modern and older buildings and flat roofed temporary structures. However, the older buildings tend only to be glimpsed, and more could be done to enhance their contribution in the street scene.

4.11 The removal of most if not all of the temporary offices and some of the poor quality extensions from the former gardens of the four houses will clearly be a positive change, and present a number of opportunities to create interesting urban spaces, of both a “hard” and



“green” characters.

### Trees, Lawns, Courtyards & Urban Spaces

4.12 There are five or six opportunities to create new urban spaces, courtyards of varied size and character, behind the historic frontages.



GREEN SPACE POTENTIAL



COURTYARDS AND URBAN SPACES

4.13 The rear facade of Walden House will be exposed when the old timber scout hut and more modern two-storey office structures are removed. The former arrangements of windows and doors with central steps up from the garden should be re-instated. The west



façade of Walden House will become a positive feature to be enjoyed. Perhaps a small urban garden could be laid out here.

4.14 Just to the north is a small hard surfaced courtyard formed by the Victorian annexe. This could be used as the basis for creating a small enclosed courtyard development with additional single and two-storey buildings on the south and west sides linking the annexe with 4 George Street.

4.15 The rear elevation of Gazeley House is largely intact and represents a lively mix of early and late C19 plain classical architecture. There are some mature trees here and an attractive space could be created by adding 2 or 3 storey buildings on an 'L' shape to the west and south of the house. There is a long blank wall of dull grey brick, which could be covered by new buildings to overall visual benefit. A pedestrian way through to Princes Street should be provided.

4.16 The fine Georgian garden elevation of Lawrence Court should be exploited in creating a meaningful space at the rear of the library. The service yard to the library should be enclosed with a 2m wall and a small single-storey building added to fill a corner at the rear of the library. This assumes that the library remains.

4.17 Should the Library be relocated (see paras 5.4 and 5.18) the site area released could be redeveloped with a building more in keeping with the scale and architectural character of Prince's Street and Lawrence Court. A large ground floor would be provided with 2 or 3 floors above, giving a floor space of about 2,800 sq m. (30,000 sq ft).

4.18 Pedestrian movements from the north towards the library entrance (SE) and to the small amenity garden on Walden Road (SW) should be accommodated. If a frontage block of offices or flats were laid out on Walden Road its rear elevation would complete the definition of a potentially attractive space here. The Yew tree avenue should be retained as an access and the entrance to the library yard offset to block views straight into the garden.

4.19 The new courtyard spaces should be linked by footpaths running from George Street to the Bus Station. East-west links between Walden Road and Prince's Street should be





provided at Falcon Yard, Gazeley House and the Library. This will bring pedestrian activity through the area adding to its potential for a wider range of uses for proposed and existing buildings, and enhancing vitality.

4.20 At the junction of George Street and Walden Road buildings of 2 or 3 storeys on the north east and south east corners of this junction would provide a more appropriate setting for this significant crossroads. The clutter of street furniture; crash barriers etc. could be

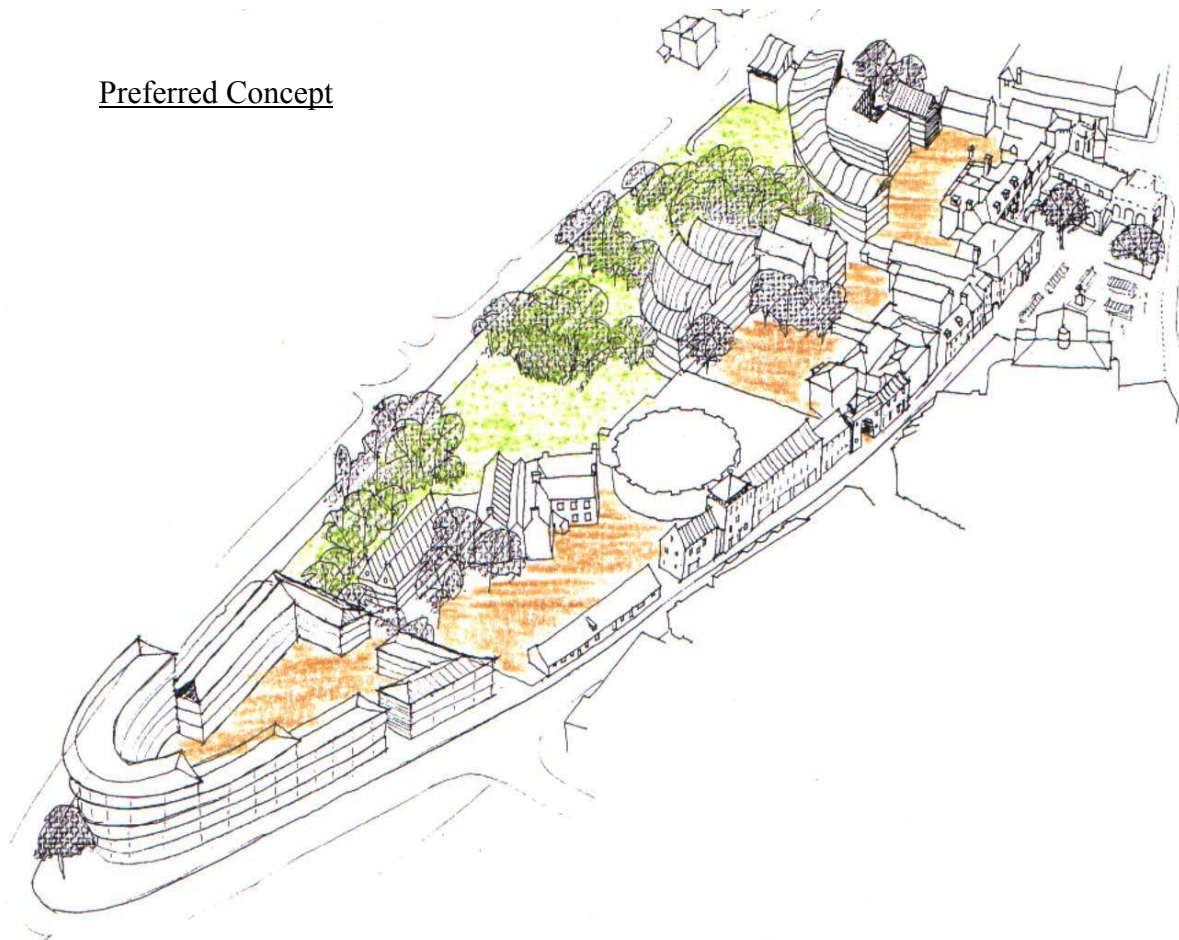
rationalised in creating an urban space of more positive character. A building on the site could be designed to ‘turn the corner’ providing a minor focal point at the apex.

### **Redevelopment Concept**

4.21 The District Council’s preferred redevelopment concept is based upon the principle of retaining the open character to Walden Road, and enhancing the character and appearance of this green edge to the study area. This can be achieved through sensitive treatment of new and improved pedestrian links, and generally careful handling of hard and soft landscaping to create a small urban park. An example of how this form might be achieved is shown below.



### Preferred Concept



4.22 The District Council considers that this parkland approach offers the greatest potential for striking the right balance between maintaining and enhancing the positive aspects of the study area, whilst accommodating new built development.

### **Projected Building Floorspace**

4.23 The parkland concept results in the following building areas:-



Total new buildings	24,200 sq m
Cambridgeshire County Council buildings retained including library	4,300 sq m
Privately owned buildings retained	2,400 sq m
<b>Total area</b>	<b>30,900 sq m.</b>

**Building Areas**

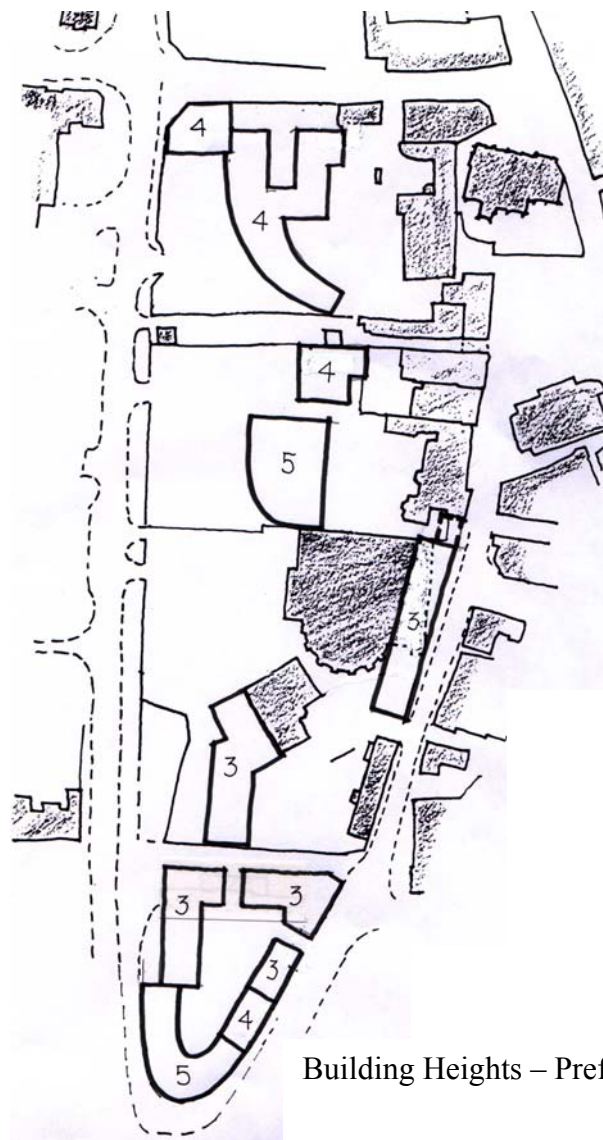
Walden parcel	6,700 sq m
Gazeley House parcel	4,000 sq m
Lawrence Court parcel	4,500 sq m
Bus station site	9,000 sq m
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,200 sq m.</b>

**New Buildings**

4.24 If the library were redeveloped, it would add 1,500 sq m to the total floorspace figure.

### Building Heights

4.25 The building floorspace areas have been calculated on the basis of the number of storeys indicated in the parkland concept.



Building Heights – Preferred Concept



## 5.0 DEMAND AND ACCEPTABLE USES FOR BUILDINGS

5.1 Although the Study Area offers a range of opportunities for enhancement through redevelopment, it is fundamental that this is considered in the context of the likely attractiveness of the redeveloped site to new occupiers. In short, the redevelopment must not only enhance the vitality of the town centre, but it must also be viable.

5.2 The District Council's own commissioned work will help inform the likely demand for additional uses in the town centre. In particular, Hillier Parker have undertaken a retail study of the market towns. The CTRU report itself drew upon a report by Chestertons of May 2000, commissioned by the District Council. Ultimately, market conditions will influence the final mix of land uses.

5.3 The initial comments relating to the demand-side, given here, are based upon the above background studies and knowledge of the local property market.

5.4 For the purposes of this document, it is assumed that the County Council would be relocating all of its existing offices to purpose-designed premises elsewhere in Huntingdon. However, the County Council is committed to the retention of the Public Library within the town centre, be it in its existing form or incorporated within a new building, say at first floor level. The Library apart, however, there is no fundamental requirement to maintain County Council office space on the site.

5.5 The following list represents the potential uses that might be candidates for incorporation within a redevelopment scheme. Comments are provided on each.

### **Retail (A1)**

5.6 The Hillier Parker report identified Huntingdon as being the largest shopping centre in the District and the third largest in Cambridgeshire. It has around 300,000 sq ft of net retail floorspace. However, the town centre has a below average score for vitality. An increase in retail uses within the town centre, particularly on and around Market Hill, can only add to



its vitality and redress this position. Princes Street currently suffers from having no retail users, and consequently a lack of vibrancy. Whilst it forms part of a through route from car parks and the bus station to the town centre, it is part of the route rather than a destination in its own right. The town centre may also be regarded as being a little off-balance, with Sainsburys representing a significant magnet to those using the High Street.

5.7 These characteristics suggest the need for some element of retail floorspace on the Site, probably at its southern end in the approximate position of the Library. This would encourage pedestrians to access Princes Street from High Street. A suitably sized retail provision in this location (small in relation to the total retail provision in the Town Centre), might represent an important draw for pedestrians. The right blend of brand and location is likely to represent a viable proposition to potential developers, if supported by associated improvements in the environment of Princes Street and appropriate complementary uses.

5.8 Specialist retail stores of modest size would benefit in viability from knock-on trade, and could be provided in a combination of new build and re-use of existing buildings such as 10/10a Princes Street. The Chestertons and Hillier Parker reports highlighted the limited range of specialist shops present in the town centre.

5.9 Overall, retail use is likely to be the most viable option for the southern end of the site, but would be likely to entail the removal of the existing library and its replacement, perhaps at first floor above the retail element. Such replacement would clearly not assist the financial viability of the redevelopment, so retention of the library with some visual enhancement remains an option. However, with the right combination of retail uses a redevelopment scheme incorporating a new library may be a real and viable option. Spending within the town centre is projected to increase to support about 7,000 sq m gross retail floorspace by 2011 (based on Hillier Parker estimate of 5,100-5,300 sq m net), and there will be the need to plan for this increase in the Town Centre. A gross retail floorspace of around 1,500 sq metres may be provided within the Study Area.

5.10 Whatever size and type of retail use is introduced, it will be important to ensure that it is not prejudicial to the District Council's strategy for new retailing in Huntingdon, as derived from the Hillier Parker study.



### **Food and Drink (A3)**

5.11 A further element in enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre would be the introduction of additional A3 uses, whose opening times include the evening hours. The Chestertons report indicated a below average representation of A3 uses. The report also recognized that the now enhanced Market Hill represents a good opportunity for the introduction of good quality A3 uses, probably within the ground (and possibly first) floor of Walden House and Wykeham House. Market Hill represents an attractive environment to attract new A3 occupiers.

5.12 There is no doubt that the right brand of A3 use could be viable in this location, although much would depend upon the costs associated with any necessary alteration and maintenance of the Listed Buildings. A3 occupiers could potentially make use of the historical associations of the town and in particular of the Falcon Tavern.

5.13 A pedestrian route from the north western corner of the Study Area has been highlighted as an opportunity. This could link with the existing pedestrian route passing the Falcon Tavern, which should enhance the viability of the Tavern itself.

### **Offices (A2 and B1)**

5.14 Other than the County Council's own use, there are existing office uses within 6, 7 and 8 Market Hill. These would not be part of the redevelopment, but do nonetheless confirm that office use would be potentially viable in the Study Area. Office uses falling within Class A2 are provided principally to visiting members of the public. They therefore generate a need for such characteristics as shop fronts. Whilst there may be scope to accommodate some A2 uses as new build, the Listed status of the buildings fronting Princes Street and Market Hill represents a clear limitation. Nonetheless, there would be a demand for A2 uses were they to be accommodated.



5.15 It is likely that office uses would be principally limited to Use Class B1, probably within Gazely House and the upper floors of Wykeham House and Walden House. The presence of office workers would help to offset any net loss in workers within the town centre as a result of the relocation of the County Council offices.

5.16 It is likely that small suites of B1 offices would be the most viable in this location, again subject to the constraints on alteration represented by the Listed Buildings. Small office suites, perhaps specialising in property or legal services would be an appropriate use, although others related to speciality/quality retailing and tourism/leisure could be considered.

### **Hotels (C1)**

5.17 The introduction of a hotel use at the site is a possibility that should be considered, but viability will be a key factor.

### **Leisure (D2)**

5.18 As already indicated, the public library is to remain in the town centre, possibly in a different form if a suitable ground floor use can be achieved. In addition, there is the potential to introduce other small-scale leisure uses, such as a private gymnasium/fitness club. There is limited choice of such uses within Huntingdon town centre at present, as the Chestertons report also found, and it is felt that there would be potential occupiers for such a use within the Study Area. It would be well located relative to existing and proposed places of work, and occupy a good strategic position relative to the railway station and bus station.

5.19 A fitness club could potentially be located at first or second floor above any new retail development.

### **Residential (C3)**

5.20 There is the potential for the Study Area to provide for high density residential development. In light of Government guidance in PPG3, there is likely to be great interest





from developers in high density residential development in this location. This is particularly so given its proximity to the railway station. An element of affordable dwellings would be a requirement, but the precise percentage and nature of the provision will be a matter for negotiation with Huntingdonshire District Council.

5.21 There is no reason to think that residential development would not be viable.

### **Summary of Acceptable Uses and Floorspace**

5.22 These uses are considered acceptable in principle in any redevelopment and refurbishment scheme:

Offices (B1 Use & A2)	No upper limit on floorspace is necessary, but at least 4,500 sq m should be provided.
Residential (C3)	To be provided in a mix of new build and conversions. Around 200 units should be achievable.
Library	Use to be retained. If in a new building should be approx. 2,000 sq m.
Retail (A1)	Around 1,500 sq m.
Food & Drink (A3)	No upper limit but at least 3 or 4 outlets should be included.
Hotel/Conference Centre/Leisure	No specific requirements.
Arts Centre/Gallery	No specific requirements.



## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 In conclusion these planning guidelines seek to achieve a scheme that is in harmony with its environs. They provide for an adequate amount of development by allowing high densities in certain areas whilst protecting green areas and providing pleasant courtyards that add to the attractiveness of Princes Street and serve to draw people through the scheme.

6.2 The scheme will only be able to realise its potential if all parties work together to achieve agreed common objectives. These should include maximising value in the development itself and in the value to Huntingdon of the resulting scheme. The enhancement, through redevelopment of this site will be one of the crucial elements in the continued health and vitality of Huntingdon town centre.

6.3 The site needs a magnet to draw more people across the town centre from the main retail core to the east of the High Street. Some additional retail, including speciality types is part of the solution for the success of this area in the long term. However, retail development of too large a scale may unduly compete with other shopping developments already in the pipeline, or existing shops which at the moment require support for their continuing vitality. It is crucially important to the town centre to have the High Street, Chequer's Court and St Benedict's Court consolidated as a quality shopping area.

6.4 Office employment, educational, cultural, entertainment and leisure facilities with some retail are potential uses considering the demand and actual facilities already available in the town centre. These facilities are more viable if employment opportunities remain and residential areas are created. More people living and working in the area will help to



support local facilities and services.

6.5 Huntingdon Town Centre may be in some danger of becoming a “single-use” part of the town. There are pressures to reduce the quantity of office space in the town centre and for business to relocate to the outskirts. This trend should be resisted to ensure the continuing vitality of the town centre.

6.6 Hotel use and other uses, where viable, would be welcomed.

As part of the Market Town Strategy, a traffic model has been created which will test the implications of the redevelopment of the Study Area on the town centre road network. Future detailed proposals for the site will be assessed against this model.

6.8 In architectural terms the site offers opportunities for landmark buildings, especially at the northern and southern edges. Both these positions would provide a focus and a point of reference for visitors to the town centre.

6.9 The quality of development would allow for a profitable and marketable project. Its excellent location offers the opportunity to produce a high density mixed use scheme in a development of high design quality.

**John Martin & Associates**

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