

LEEDS
OUR SPACES
STRATEGY

CITY CENTRE

Our Spaces Strategy embodies our vision for the creation of vibrant, inclusive and world-class city centre public realm.

Our ambition is that through this strategy our public realm will become the city's greatest cultural asset.





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In collaboration with:



FOREWORD

Our city centre is changing rapidly and the Our Spaces Strategy is vital to support the Council and stakeholders in transforming the quality and quantity of the city's public realm.

The Our Spaces Strategy is much more than a public realm-focussed project however.

It is a call to action to ensure that the creation of green infrastructure is at the forefront of all new development proposals being brought forward. In doing so it supports our ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030; to improve the lives of our citizens by improving air quality, providing spaces to relax and safe places to walk and cycle; and improve the environment for our wildlife by increasing biodiversity.

It is a catalyst for sustainable regeneration, inclusive growth and city resilience.

It takes account of the changing needs of the city centre, recognising that more people will be living there in the future, and their requirements, from the youngest children to the oldest people, need to be considered in our spaces.

It is a route map to ensure that the delivery of new and improved public realm meets our vision for the creation of world-class, inclusive and vibrant spaces that can improve the health and well-being of our city centre and all the people who use it. In so doing we will transform the fabric of our city centre and create a place that feels as good as it looks.

To support our vision and ambitions above we have identified seven principles to act as a benchmark for the design of our spaces – Our Principles. We will apply these as we develop proposals, design schemes and review developments. Through our vision for a strong economy and compassionate city, both the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Our Spaces Strategy set out a 'people first' approach, where the benefits and outcomes of the creation of public realm can directly improve the lives, health and well-being of the citizens of Leeds.

The importance of the Our Spaces Strategy and the role that high-quality public realm plays will assist in positioning Leeds as the 'Best City' now and for the future.





01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leeds is a diverse and vibrant city that is looking to the future as an economic centre and capital of the Northern Powerhouse and Leeds City Region.

Central to this positioning is the drive to create world-class, vibrant and inclusive public realm across Leeds, which responds positively to the city's diverse population, cultural richness and the effects of climate change. Our spaces are often people's first encounter with the city. They are our 'front door' to visitors, businesses and residents, and ensuring we design, deliver improvements and maintain our spaces to the highest standards possible, is essential to our city's profile locally, nationally and internationally.

Our spaces are the streets and places between buildings. They are a continually interconnected series of spaces within, across and on the edge of the city centre including streets, squares, parks, cycleways and the waterfront. Our spaces positively support commerce, reflect our culture, promote our heritage and provide opportunities for relaxation, events and social interaction. They speak of place and community.



Woodhouse Gardens © Tracey Welch Photography



Pop-up and Play, Victoria Gardens © DLA Design



Woodhouse Moor Park Run © Tracey Welch Photography



Morag Myerscough pedestrian crossing Crown Point Road

WHAT WILL THE OUR SPACES STRATEGY DO?

Through the production of this strategy we have set out the value we as a city give to our spaces. Through its implementation the Our Spaces Strategy will:

- set out our vision and ambition for the creation of green space within the city centre
- apply the Our Spaces Principles as a benchmarking tool against which the quality of public realm schemes can be considered
- assess the ability of individual public realm schemes to overcome the challenges identified within the strategy and ensure these are fully integrated with the wider public realm vision and ambition
- reflect upon the current public realm offer in the city centre and identify opportunities to improve it.

In addition to directly addressing the quality of the city's public space, the strategy will also help to achieve some of the city's other targets. These include the city's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030 in response to the climate emergency; plans to double bus patronage as part of the Leeds Public Transport Improvement Programme; City Connect 2, the continuation of the city's cycle superhighway; the Inclusive Growth Strategy; Leeds' Health and Wellbeing Strategy and ensuring that Leeds is a child-friendly and age-friendly city.

In 2017 Leeds adopted its first ever Culture Strategy (2017-2030). Alongside a city-wide cultural celebration and events in 2023, our spaces have a crucial role in supporting the successful delivery of the Culture Strategy.



Our city is undergoing a once-in-a-generation level of change. Our city's transport agenda will see High Speed Rail arrive in Leeds in 2033 and a new Leeds Integrated Station fit for a city of Leeds' national and international standing. Redevelopment of Armley Gyratory, the M621 and the Leeds Public Transport Improvement Programme will all play a role in redefining Leeds city centre and provide opportunities to create new city-centre spaces through the release and re-allocation of highway space. The South Bank regeneration proposals will double the size of the city centre, providing 8,000 new homes and 35,000 new jobs, new educational establishments and a new City Park. Along with developing proposals for Quarry Hill, the West End, New Dock, the Innovation District and many others, there is the potential to repurpose, create and improve our spaces to improve the look and feel of a dynamic and growing city centre.

Like all cities Leeds is affected by climate emergency. A recent local climate impact profile for Leeds identified that the most common severe weather events in the city include strong winds and flooding of the River Aire. The Met Office has projected that UK summer temperatures could regularly reach 38.5°C by the 2040s". Heatwaves can lead to increased ill health and mortality as well as increases in air pollution, damage to biodiversity, a decrease in productivity and an increase in demand for water, energy and public services. It is imperative that Leeds delivers through Our Spaces, measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change through greening and tree planting, uses sustainable urban drainage systems such as rain gardens and planting schemes to make the city more resilient, and becomes an environmental benefactor by addressing species extinction through increased biodiversity.

The importance and value of having the Our Spaces Strategy cannot be overstated. It will allow Leeds to set out its vision for how the city centre can look moving forward and offer a healthy city where we put people first.





02

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Leeds sits at the heart of the UK's Northern Powerhouse, at the centre of one of the strongest and most resilient economies in Europe and within one of the most beautiful regions in the world. Leeds truly is a special place to be. Built on a heritage as a financial sector, a leading manufacturing base and healthcare innovator, Leeds has seen growth of over 40% across all business sectors in the last decade alone.

Leeds is a growing city with a population estimated at 799,600 (ONS 2016), an increase of around 48,100 since the 2011 census. Over this time, our city has experienced a rapid transformation, with urban regeneration accompanied by a flourishing cultural scene, thriving entertainment and nightlife and an unrivalled retail offer, alongside a growing independent food and drink reputation. All of this is set within a city centre with a stunning built heritage, with more listed buildings than any other English city outside of London.

With over 220 ethnic groups representing approximately 18.8% of the total population, Leeds has the greatest national diversity in the UK outside of London. The city positively embraces its diverse and rich heritage. We put children and young people at the heart of what we do, supporting them through their education, sporting and musical ambitions and ensuring that we are developing and creating a city for them and future generations.



Dancers outside Victoria Gate © Giles Rocholl



Trinity Kitchen © Hannah Webster for Visit Leeds



The Arlun © Sarah Zagni

Leeds is a special place to be within the region that inspired Hepworth, Hockney and Moore. There is a unique quality to Yorkshire and Leeds. Just a short journey from the city takes you into the moorland, mountains and rivers of the North Yorkshire Moors, the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District. The reputation of the city and its offer to businesses, residents and visitors has raised its profile above and beyond expectations. In the summer of 2017, Lonely Planet voted Leeds one of the top five European cities to visit, and was followed shortly by The Times, who listed Leeds as the number one cultural place to live in the UK.

Building on this phenomenal foundation, we intend to transform how our city looks and feels, through the adoption of the Our Spaces Strategy alongside the widespread redevelopment of our public spaces and the creation of new cultural facilities. We will also continue to engage with our residents and businesses to create a place that can balance a strong economy with a compassionate city, embrace being a child-friendly city and set this at the heart of everything we do.

The Our Spaces Strategy study area is defined by the extent of the Leeds Core Strategy City Centre Map.



1.1 LEEDS: OUR CITY

As one of the most diverse economies of all the UK's main employment centres, Leeds has seen the fastest rate of private-sector jobs growth of any UK city. It also has the highest ratio of private to public-sector jobs of all the UK's Core Cities, with 77% of its workforce working in the private-sector. Leeds has the third-largest jobs total by local authority area, with 480,000 in employment and self-employment at the beginning of 2015. Leeds is home to over 119,000 companies generating 5% of England's total economic output of £64.6 billion, and the country's fourth-largest urban economy. It is also ranked as a gamma world city by the Globalization and World Cities Research Network. Leeds is also served by four universities, and has the fourth largest student population in the country.

Today, Leeds has become the UK's largest legal and financial centre outside London, with the financial and insurance services industry worth £13 billion to the city's economy. This accounts for 38% of total output with more than 30 national and international banks located in the city, including an office of the Bank of England. Leeds is also the UK's third-largest manufacturing centre: with around 1,800 firms and 39,000 employees, Leeds manufacturing firms account for 8.8% of total employment in the city and are worth over £7 billion to the local economy.

Leeds is one of the few cities to have its own opera and ballet companies (Opera North and Northern Ballet) as well as the City Varieties Music Hall (Grade II* listed) and the award-winning Leeds Playhouse. The Royal Armouries, Henry Moore Institute and Thackray Medical Museum are some of the international cultural brands making up our impressive list of 17 museums and 27 galleries, including Leeds Art Gallery, sitting alongside home-grown favourites such as The Tetley, Sunny Bank Mills, Left Bank and Gallery Munroe House.



The extensive retail area of Leeds is identified as the principal regional shopping centre for the whole of the Yorkshire and the Humber region with a catchment of 5.5 million people spending £1.93 billion annually. There are a number of indoor shopping centres in the centre of the city, including the Merrion Centre, St John's Centre, The Core, the Victoria Quarter, The Light, the Corn Exchange and the recently delivered Trinity Leeds (£350m) and Victoria Gate (£150m). In total there are well over 1,000 retail stores, with a combined floorspace of 3.66 million square feet (340,000 m²).

The principal retail areas are Briggate, with many well-known high street stores, including Harvey Nichols, and Victoria Gate with John Lewis and Partners. These are complemented by Victoria Quarter with its high-end luxury retailers and impressive architecture. Home to 70 stores such as Louis Vuitton, Vivienne Westwood, Paul Smith and Diesel contained within two iron-wrought Victorian arcades formed by arcading Queen Victoria Street and boasts the largest expanse of stained glass roof in Britain. Trinity on the western side of Briggate brings a mix of high street favourites and higher-end brands.

Leeds displays a large variety of built landmarks. These include Leeds Town Hall, the Corn Exchange and Leeds City Museum by the architect Cuthbert Brodrick. The two iconic white buildings on the Leeds skyline are the Parkinson building of University of Leeds and the Civic Hall, with golden owls adorning the tops of the latter's twin spires. Armley Mills, Tower Works, with its campanile-inspired towers, and the Egyptian-style Temple Works hark back to the city's industrial past. In 2013 the first direct arena was built, Europe's first purpose-built state-of-the-art 'super theatre'. Notable churches in the city centre are Leeds Minster (formerly Leeds Parish Church), St John's Church (built in 1634, Grade I listed) and Leeds Cathedral. Notable non-conformist chapels include the Salem Chapel, which dates back to 1791 and can claim to have been the birthplace of Leeds United Football Club in 1919.



Victoria Gate © Giles Rocholl



Victoria Quarter © Giles Rocholl



Leeds Town Hall © Carl Milner for Visit Leeds

1.2 LEEDS: OUR PEOPLE

Leeds is changing rapidly and will look and feel vastly different by 2030. There are 799,600 people living in Leeds and it is estimated that the population will grow to 838,000 by 2030. Of the current population, over 220 ethnic groups are represented. There are 170 languages spoken, the most common other than English are Polish (6,717 people), Urdu (4,989 people) and Punjabi (4,537 people).

With such a large and diverse population, it is no surprise that Leeds' cultural offer is world class. It includes a number of large organisations that have been generations in the making. Leeds College of Music gave Europe its first jazz qualification and celebrated turning 50 in 2016, with Phoenix Dance blowing out the candles on 35 years the same year. Leeds West Indian Carnival, Europe's oldest carnival, celebrated 50 years in 2017, alongside 40 years of the Henry Moore Institute. By 2023 Leeds Grand Theatre will be 140 years old, Opera North will turn 40, Northern Ballet will celebrate 50 years, Leeds Playhouse will turn 30 and the Northern Film School will hit half a century.

Our city has also continually created space for new voices to add to this vibrant tapestry. The Tetley has just turned three after repurposing the city's iconic brewery, Transform Festival has flown the Leeds Playhouse nest and has just completed its second year as an independent festival, and Leeds Indie Food Festival has just completed its fourth year celebrating the city's growing independent food and drink culture. Not only does this vast range of organisations present remarkable shows, the majority also run extensive engagement programmes benefiting millions of people every year. Organisations such as Duke Studios, East Street Arts and FutureLabs are creating space for individual artists, designers, illustrators and producers, helping their creativity and businesses to thrive.



Leeds West Indian Carnival © M Spadafora



Leeds Indie Food Festival © Tom Joy



Northern Ballet © Guy Farrow

The city is also home to some of the region's best known sporting achievements; from world-class Test Cricket at Yorkshire County Cricket Club's Headingley home, to their neighbours Leeds Rhinos and Leeds United at Elland Road. More recently the city has taken sport to the streets with the hosting of the Tour de France Grand Départ in 2014, city-wide celebrations for the Rugby World Cup in 2015 and successfully becoming the new home for the UK leg of the World Triathlon Series from 2016 onwards. It is this unique cocktail of ingredients that make our city an exciting place to build a life, create, work, learn skills, and grow a business.



Headingley Stadium © Alex Whitehead SWpix



Leeds Rhinos



World Triathlon Grandstand Millennium Square

1.3 OUR SPACES

Our Spaces are our natural health service, our city's green lungs that provide environments where we can all lead safe, happy, healthy and active lives. They are continually interconnected spaces such as streets, squares, parks, cycleways and the waterfront.

Leeds City Council manages over 4,000 hectares of green space encompassing parks, woodland, nature reserves and allotments across the city. These include Roundhay Park (Grade II listed 'Registered Park & Garden'), which has over 1 million visitors annually. The park has more than 700 acres of parkland, lakes, woodland and gardens.

Other parks in the city include: Middleton Park, Temple Newsam, Woodhouse Moor, Meanwood Park, Beckett Park, Bramley Fall Park, Horsforth Hall Park, Potternewton Park, Golden Acre Park, East End Park, Cross Flatts Park, and Western Flatts Park. There are many smaller parks and open spaces scattered around the city, which made Leeds one of the greenest cities in the United Kingdom in a 2017 survey.

In the city centre, spaces are a unique mix of old and new, where no two spaces are the same. They include formal Georgian squares, such as Park Square, Queen Square and Hanover Square, informal parks such as St John's churchyard, Penny Pocket Park, Lovell Park and Woodhouse Moor, and event spaces such as Millennium Square and Victoria Gardens. There are also new and improved spaces such as Sovereign Square, Playhouse Gardens and Woodhouse Gardens (Clay Pit Lane).



Temple Newsam © LCC



The Tetley © Tom Joy



Temple Newsam © Sarah Zagni

Of the 19 green spaces, parks or formal civic spaces within Leeds city centre, all but the new green space outside The Tetley are situated to the north of the River Aire. In aiming to address this, the Council have adopted the South Bank Supplementary Planning Document. This identifies proposals for a new City Park and improved connections to other spaces, including a footbridge for pedestrians and cyclists over the River Aire.

Our existing city centre spaces have an important role to play as part of the Our Spaces Strategy. The opportunity to explore how these existing spaces can better support biodiversity and our ambition to reduce the impact on climate change through tree planting is under review. The outcome of this will be captured as part of a programme of landscape proposals for the more direct use of these spaces for mitigation of these issues.



Sovereign Square © Carl Milner

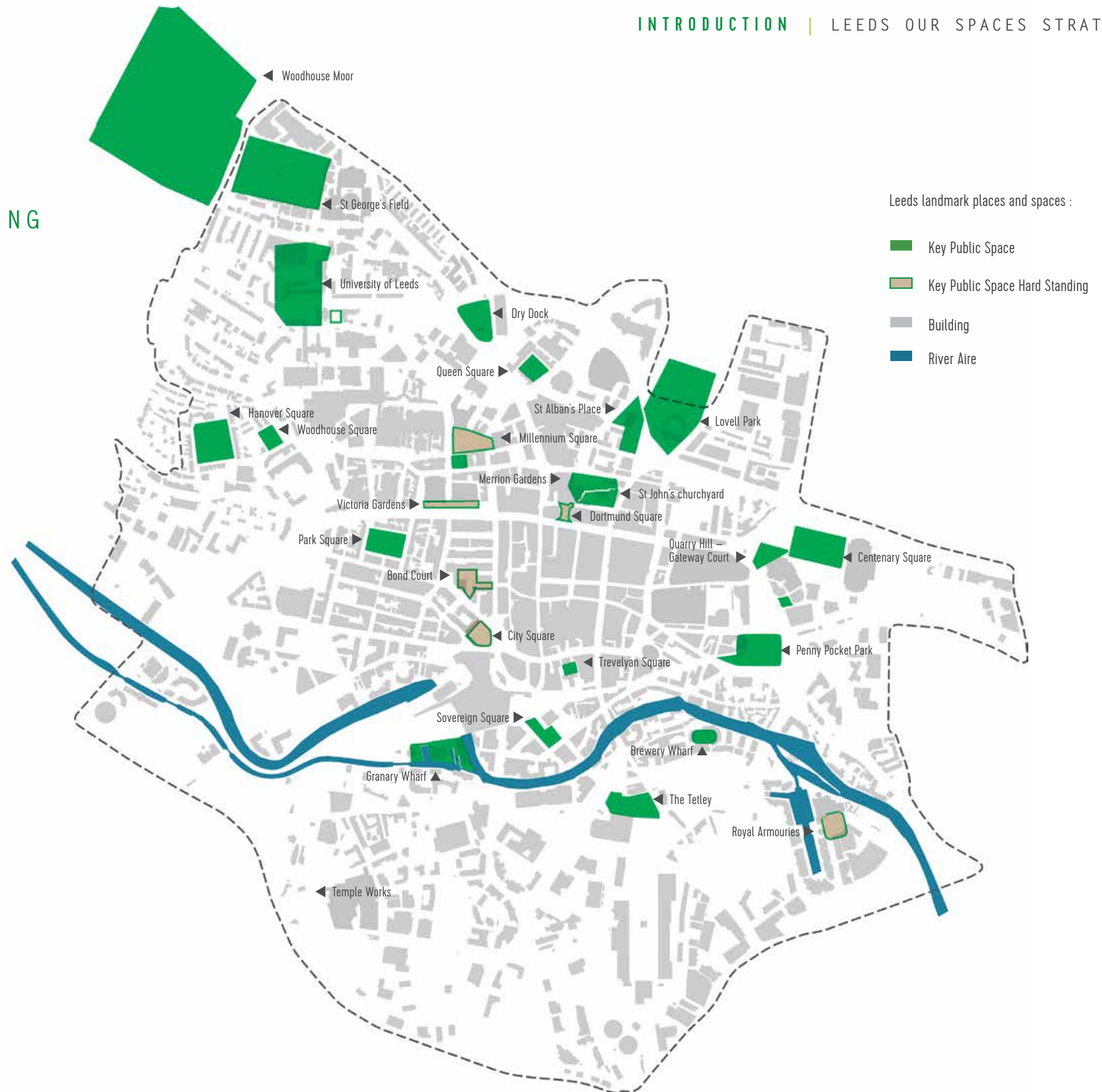


Clay Pit Lane



Park Square

1.4 OUR EXISTING SPACES



1.5 EXISTING GREEN SPACES



1.6 TACTICAL URBANISM

The animation of public realm or tactical urbanism is defined as the 'deliberate', usually temporary employment of festivals, events, art installations, programmed activities or pop-up leisure activities to transform, enliven and alter public spaces and stage public life.

Over the last few years Leeds has explored the potential for all 'space in between buildings' to be considered in the development of a city-centre-wide programme of tactical and temporary animation.

These have included pop-up parks at Cookridge Street and the Town Hall, the closure of Greek Street to facilitate the delivery of a new pedestrian area of the city centre to support local businesses and the night-time economy, and parklets at Call Lane and Sheaf Street.

The Park Here and Play event held at Victoria Gardens, an initiative with DLA Architecture Ltd and Playbox, is fast becoming an annual child-friendly event in the city centre, such has been its popularity. For two weeks in the summer, the space is filled with fun play and craft activities and is attended by almost 5,000 visitors each year.



1.7 WHY USE TACTICAL INTERVENTIONS?

The use of tactical interventions is a fast-paced, flexible, low-cost way of creating moments filled with surprise, awe, fun and inspiration. It creates positive activity and vitality and provides meaning and value, enriching people's emotions and engagement.

There are many ways we can enrich and enliven our existing spaces such as art installations, street furniture, pop-up spaces, musical performances, exercise classes, etc. As part of the ongoing development of the Our Spaces Strategy, we will be further exploring opportunities to bring a wider annual programme to the streets and spaces in Leeds city centre.



City beach



Vicar Lane © Simon Dewhurst



Albion Place



Queen Square © Tracey W



City Square © LCC

1.8 THE BENEFITS OF GOOD PUBLIC REALM

Good quality natural landscapes in urban areas positively deliver economic, social and environmental outcomes to the benefit of our cities and their people. They provide spaces for events, relaxation, and exercise, walking and cycling. They are also home to millions of insects, plants and animals. The benefits of all our green and blue infrastructure are complex and varied.

There are direct environmental benefits such as:

- improved air quality through trees, shrubs, grass and water, which all help to capture carbon dioxide and other pollutants in the air
- reduced heat island effects from buildings by trees deflecting, shading and absorbing sunlight
- reduced risk of flooding through surface water run-off absorption by plant roots and soil and through sustainable urban drainage schemes including rain gardens that store water beneath ground
- increased biodiversity through the provision of a wide range of native and non-native plant species including trees, shrubs and wildflowers.



53%

increase in residential values due to new public realm in retail district, Place du Marche Saint-Honore, Paris

also

166%

increase in retail values



35%

increase in footfall in the Sheffield city centre and a net increase in spending of £4.2m after public realm improvements

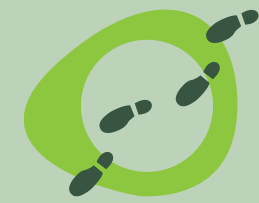
(Genecon, 2010)



13,000

children a year would be saved from death or injury by accommodating pedestrians and enforcing reduced speed limits across the country's residential areas

(Living Streets 2001)



55%

increase in pedestrian flow following redesigned public square and market in Israel Square, Copenhagen



35%

reduction in air pollution resulting from the restoration of a city centre stream, with new habitats and improved public space at Cheonggyecheon River Park, South Korea



17.5%

increase in retail rents against 7.4% decline across the city from Liverpool One – new retail development supported by significant public realm investment



29.01 MILLION

tourists welcomed to Leeds in 2017 an increase of 6.3% from 2016.



1

large tree can supply a day's supply of oxygen for four people.

The impacts on mental well-being, social networks and sustainable communities are providing the strongest emerging evidence of the benefit of green space to public health. 'People who live in areas that have a higher proportion of green space have improved mental health' (Public Health England – Inquiry into Public Parks undertaken by the Select Committee on Communities and Local Government). 'Healthy places make people feel comfortable and at ease, increasing social interaction, reducing anti-social behaviour, isolation and stress. They are restorative, uplifting and healing for both physical and mental health conditions' – Landscape Institute position statement on Public Health and Landscape: Creating Healthy Places. There is a renewed interest in how nature can be used effectively to treat mental health and assist the ongoing care and management of conditions such as dementia.

These potential physical and mental health benefits are essential outcomes that need to be put at the forefront of our minds when we are considering the ongoing development and growth of our city. This is particularly pertinent at a time when we are facing significant challenges around global warming and the climate emergency and species extinction that we are facing as a consequence of ongoing greenhouse gas emissions.

Consideration, delivery and realisation of the benefits that green and blue infrastructure creation bring is an integral part of the development proposals being brought forward, and must be considered as a necessity for the city now and into the future.



Merrion Gardens © Tracey Welch Photography



Leeds Waterfront Festival © Raj Passy



Woodhouse Moor © Tracey Welch Photography



Cookridge Street Pop-up Park



03

OUR CHALLENGES

3.0 OUR CHALLENGES

Leeds is justly proud of its achievements and reputation for progress and innovation. However, amongst the variety of world-class and award-winning assets that the city offers, it also has some challenges that need to be overcome in relation to its spaces, if it is to meet its vision for the creation of world-class, vibrant, inclusive public realm. Given the city's exciting opportunities that are being developed around South Bank, HS2, transport proposals and the Housing Infrastructure fund, now is the chance to increase and improve our spaces to deliver on our vision and ambition for our public realm to become the city's greatest cultural asset.

The Our Spaces Strategy explores a series of key themes that represent the broad challenges we will look to overcome concerning the quality and quantity of our public realm. These include:

1. The Identity of Leeds – How does Leeds present itself?
2. The Experience of Leeds – How does it feel to be in the city?
3. Crossing Leeds – What is it like to cross roads and rivers?
4. Leeds in Green and Blue – Is Leeds a Green City with the River at its heart?
5. A Resilient Leeds – Is Leeds a city ready to address climate change and air quality?
6. A Growing Leeds – How is Leeds expanding?



3.1 THE IDENTITY OF LEEDS

The identity of the city is broken up into individual areas or zones, yet these often lack character and distinctiveness.

Challenges

1. The transport hubs in Leeds such as the rail and bus station do not offer a sense of arrival or welcome into the city centre.
2. Key landmark buildings such as the Corn Exchange, Town Hall, Tetley's Brewery and Tower Works have poor quality spaces as their setting which do not celebrate the heritage of the locality and the city centre.
3. The city centre boundary is made up of infrastructure barriers such as the M621 motorway and ring road which serve to disconnect the city centre from communities just beyond the city rim, home to some of the most deprived areas in the city of Leeds.
4. The River Aire runs through the core of the city centre, yet divides the city into northern and southern halves.
5. The design of principal streets, such as the Loop Road and The Headrow, assist in dividing rather than connecting a number of character areas throughout Leeds, including the Innovation District, Civic Quarter and the central Retail and Leisure Core, creating a sense of severance and disconnection.





THE IDENTITY OF LEEDS

1. City Square
2. The Corn Exchange
3. Inner Ring Road
4. River Aire
5. The Headrow



3.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF LEEDS

Leeds is a vibrant, attractive city with lots to see and do. It has a walkable city centre, with the true nature of its architecture and spaces best experienced on foot or bicycles. Yet areas of the city centre do not cater enough for people seeking space to relax, shop, exercise, cycle and play, with vehicle movement feeling prioritised.

Challenges

1. When arriving in Leeds, navigation from key arrival points can be challenging, with a perception that moving around the city centre to key destinations takes a long time, leading to increased use of the car and taxis into and around the city centre.
2. Many of the pedestrianised streets provide a good quality experience for pedestrians, but the areas are lacking in good quality seating and grassed areas with shade, where families can sit and have a sandwich or a drink, have access to toilets and where children can play.
3. The city centre is perceived as an expensive day out with many cultural and leisure activities on offer but at a price, and whilst there are many free activities available in the city centre to visitors and residents, the opportunity to engage with them is not necessarily taken up.
4. Leeds is a city where 53.6% of commuters still drive to work, describing itself as the 'motorway city of the North' in the 1970s, with many other principal streets such as Park Row, Infirmary Street and The Headrow being key arrival points. Yet these are transport-focussed links and not primarily designed for people.
5. Landmark areas such as City Square, the Corn Exchange, Quarry Hill, South Bank and Victoria Square, are negatively affected by the presence of traffic and associated noise levels and air pollution.





THE EXPERIENCE OF LEEDS

1. City Square
2. Briggate
3. Leeds Art Gallery
4. Sheepscar
5. St Peter's Street

3.3 CROSSING LEEDS

Physical barriers such as the River Aire and the railway pass through Leeds city centre providing connections to the wider city region and the rest of the UK. In addition, several transport corridors come in to Leeds city centre, encouraging people to use these to pass through the city centre instead of using alternative road infrastructure. To people on foot or cyclists, these can often be difficult to cross or create barriers to the flow of movement within Leeds.

Challenges

1. Bridges over the River Aire offer unique views of the city and opportunity to experience the river. However, the experience of crossing some bridges, including along Crown Point Road and Neville Street is influenced by traffic and noise.
2. A number of viaduct underpasses, including at Kirkgate and Call Lane, have narrow footways passing beneath them, with uninviting entry and exit points dominated by car parking and street furniture such as guard rails and traffic signage.
3. Large scale advertisement boards are attached to the side walls of some viaduct underpasses, which detract from the visual characteristics and identity of the viaduct.
4. Pedestrian crossings within the city often have large quantities of street furniture associated with vehicle infrastructure and restrictive measures such as guard rails, sign posts and signals.





CROSSING LEEDS

1. Neville Street bridge
2. Call Lane
3. Cross York Street
4. Corn Exchange

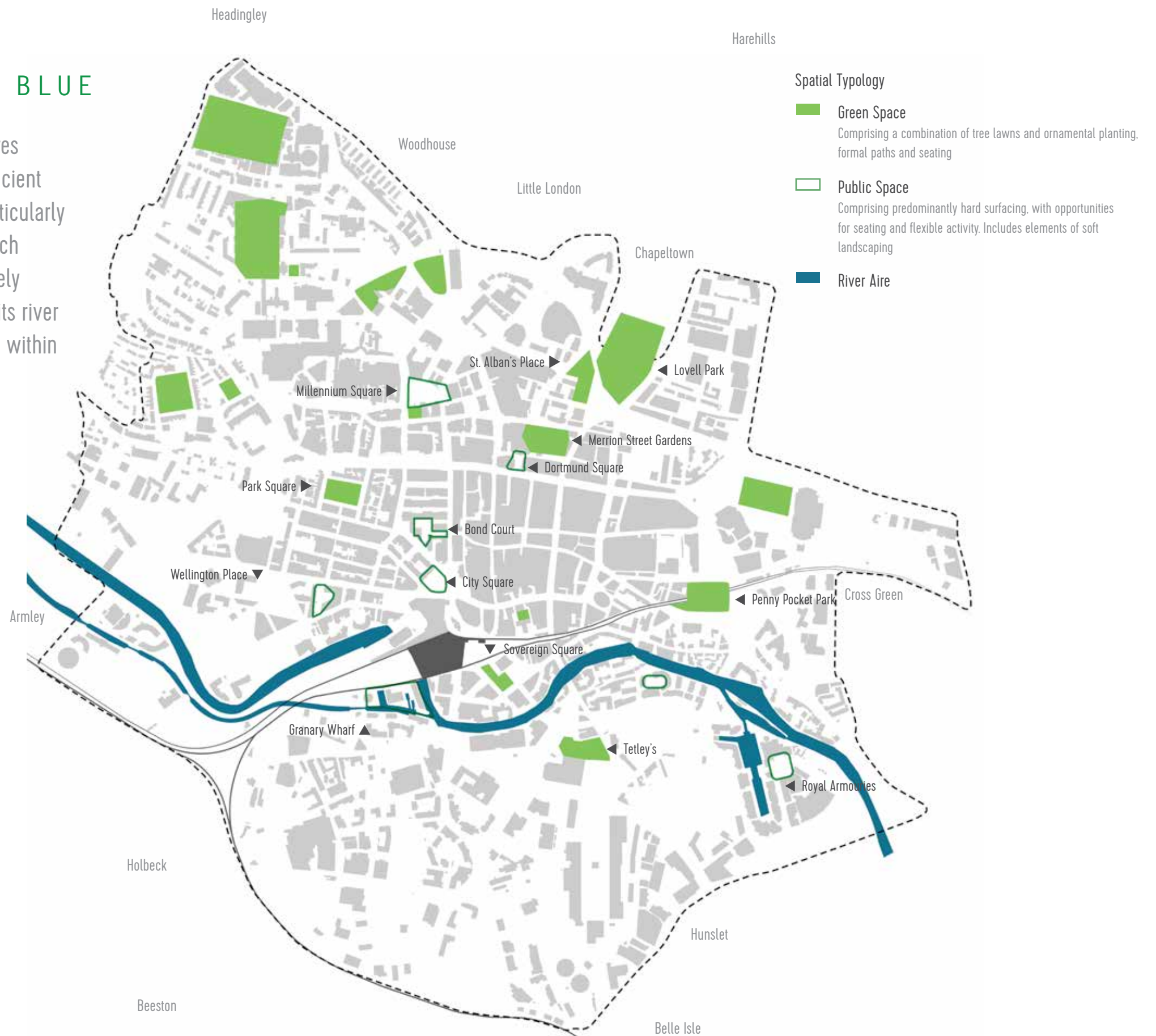


2.4 LEEDS IN GREEN AND BLUE

Leeds city centre offers a variety of parks and squares with seating, public art and cafés yet there is insufficient provision of green spaces within the city centre, particularly south of the river, which are poorly connected to each other and which in some cases people are completely unaware of. Leeds also does not take advantage of its river side location, and access to landscaping and nature within the city is limited and dispersed.

Challenges

1. Leeds city centre includes a relatively low quantity and quality of green spaces in relation to the size of the city centre, the vast majority of which are situated to the north of the river. Overall there is a notable lack of nature in the city centre such as birds, bees and butterflies and limited biodiversity corridors between the city centre and surrounding communities.
2. The city offers limited variety of green space typologies, primarily comprising lawns, trees or planting and some pathways and seating. There is little provision for children's play, physical activity, relaxation and habitat diversity.
3. Leeds has only 6% tree cover within the city centre, which is significantly less than the European average of 23%.
4. The banks of the River Aire provide limited and infrequent opportunities to positively engage with the waterfront.
5. Large sections of the River Aire are culverted within the city and offer limited opportunities for biodiversity.





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© Tom Joy



2

LEEDS IN GREEN AND BLUE

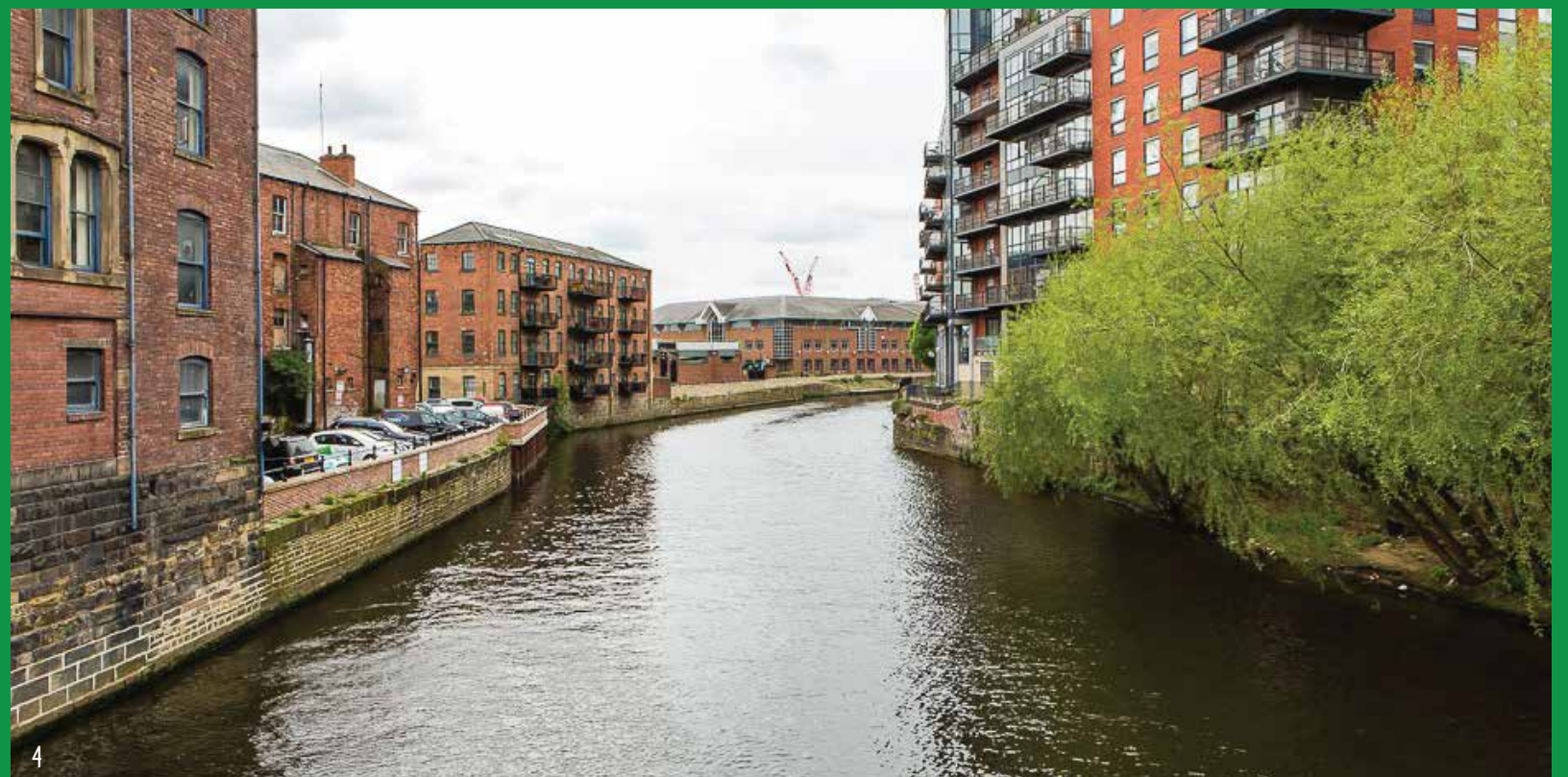
1. Millennium Square
2. Hanover Square
3. Dortmund Square
4. River Aire
5. River at New Dock



5



3



4

3.5 A RESILIENT LEEDS

Leeds has declared a climate emergency. To that end there is a commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. Leeds over the last 10 years in particular, as a result of development, has seen the tree canopy cover in the city centre reduce. This is a challenge for the city centre because of the role green infrastructure plays in absorbing carbon and harmful particulate matter, surface water management and in reducing the urban heat island effect.

Challenges

1. Air quality in Leeds city centre is poor in areas that have a lot of traffic – Neville Street is identified as the second most polluted street outside of London.
2. The city centre is dominated by hard surfaces with limited natural drainage. The provision of green infrastructure in the city centre is challenging due to the below-ground services that exist under many sites, roads and footpaths, which cannot be planted over, requiring diversion of services or, more likely, tree planting is removed.
3. Tree pits in the city centre generally are built too small with an insufficient soil supply to successfully establish the tree to its natural lifecycle.
4. Maintenance and establishment of street trees requires additional revenue to ensure trees successfully grow beyond the early planting seasons.
5. Tree pits, when they are interconnected, have the ability to act as 'rain gardens', but these are rarely used as part of a resilient/healthy-street approach.





A RESILIENT LEEDS

1. Neville Street
2. Tree pits
3. Trees on The Headrow
4. Maintenance
5. Rain garden at Sovereign Square

3.6 A GROWING LEEDS

Leeds is constantly evolving and expanding, particularly within South Bank, potentially delivering up to 8,000 new homes, providing more opportunities for people to live, work and learn within Leeds.

Challenges

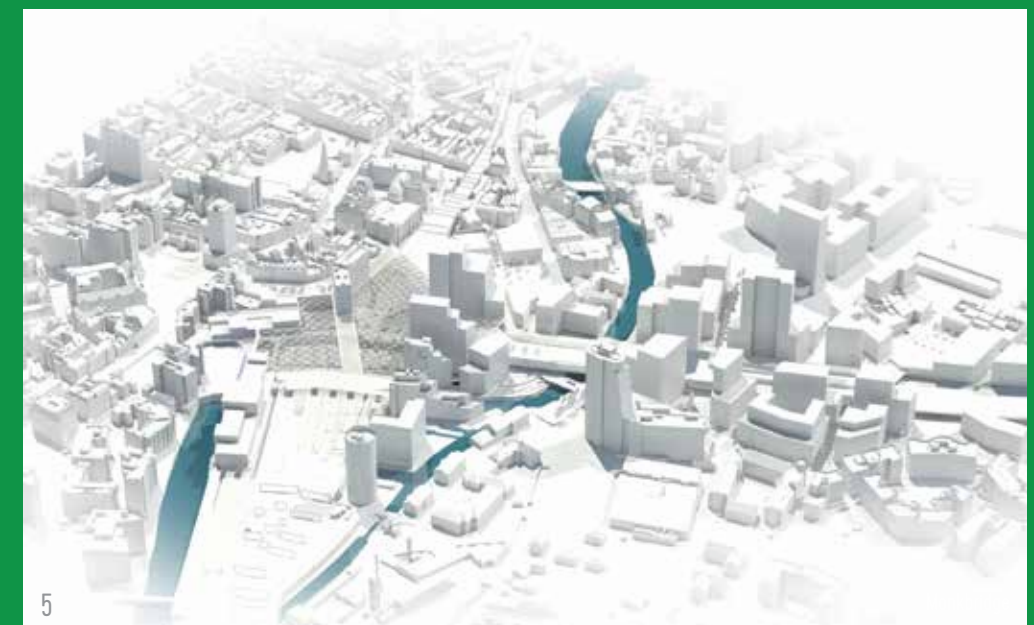
1. South Bank is to undergo extensive regeneration as part of the South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework and is to include the Integrated Station Masterplan and many development sites such as Tower Works, Marshalls Mill, Globe Road and Dandarra.
2. The connectivity between the city centre and neighbouring communities needs strengthening to support better access to jobs and skills and leisure opportunities. Ensuring that proposed development areas on South Bank are well connected to the city core for pedestrians and cyclists is important to their future success.
3. Other key development areas – West End including Monkbridge and Otter Island, East Side including SoYo and Marsh Lane, as well as other locations such as the MEPC development on Wellington Place, offer the opportunity to provide good quality infrastructure that is designed with people in mind and create a new sense of community from a city centre perspective.
4. All new development will need to be designed to minimise highway infrastructure requirements and provide good-quality, well-designed spaces/frontages to be well integrated within their locality and well connected to the wider city.
5. The HS2 connection segregates South Bank into two areas and ensuring interconnectivity between these areas is created in an innovative and safe way is crucial.





A GROWING LEEDS

1. Globe Road
2. River Aire from Sovereign Square
3. Quarry Hill – Gateway Court
4. Climate Innovation District
5. HS2



04

OUR PRINCIPLES

4.0 OUR PRINCIPLES

Our Principles have been developed to aim to overcome the various challenges that the city faces at present in relation to its spaces and the more holistic role they will need to play in the future for the health and well-being of Leeds.

The principles are ambitious but present a realistic picture of what Leeds will look like as a world-class city. Leeds will be a substantially greener and better-connected city that is more accessible to more people, creates an environment to thrive and is recognisable as a unique place to be.

The principles have been developed in consultation with Leeds City Council and the Quality Spaces and Places Forum of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce.





PEOPLE FIRST

Our spaces will be designed for people. They will be comfortable, stimulating, relaxing and safe

Through our 'People First' principle, we will:

1. create public spaces that are stimulating and comfortable for everyone and offer well-integrated and welcoming opportunities for relaxation
2. design streets as public spaces which are easy to navigate, enjoyable to move through for pedestrians and cyclists and which create a canvas for public life, with places to meet, eat, drink, work and play
3. provide more seating opportunities within appropriately scaled, hospitable and visible environments, with attractive views and interesting things to see such as planting, integrated public art or simply people walking by
4. reduce and rationalise street clutter, to ease movement for pedestrians and cyclists, and more effectively integrate signage and furniture into the street setting and aesthetic
5. consider the range, location and offer of free events within the city centre to encourage all to come and visit and feel that the city centre is for all citizens.





THIS IS LEEDS

Our spaces will celebrate Leeds' built and natural assets, from the edges of the River Aire to the magnificent architecture of the city centre

Through our 'This is Leeds' principle, we will:

1. reveal and celebrate the rich history, cultural significance and broad demographic of Leeds within the design of public spaces and streets to reinforce the city's identity
2. provide exceptional public spaces and settings around landmark buildings, such as the Corn Exchange, Town Hall and the former Leeds General Post office
3. positively set the tone for Leeds as people arrive by train or bus, focusing on streets forming the 'Public Transport Box', including Park Row, The Headrow, Vicar Lane / New Market Street and Boar Lane
4. provide more opportunities for activity next to the river and promote engagement with the waterfront, celebrating Leeds as a city with a river at its heart
5. reconfigure streets to increase the area available to pedestrians and cyclists to positively contribute to a sense of place, provide a more comfortable experience from a people perspective and form an integrated part of the public realm environment.





EVERYONE WELCOME

Our spaces will be inclusive, designed for all ages and abilities and reflect Leeds' diverse communities

Through our 'Everyone Welcome' principle, we will:

1. create a legible, accessible and comfortable city for everyone – the needs of the elderly, those with a disability and families with young children will be integrated into the design of the public spaces
2. integrate more opportunities for play and playfulness, cycling and physical activity throughout Leeds, with incidental 'moments' that engage people and allow them to interact with the public realm to the benefit of their mental and physical health and wellbeing and assist in meeting our Child Friendly Leeds ambition
3. provide more attractive places to stop and rest within public spaces and principal streets such as The Headrow, Park Row, Boar Lane and Woodhouse Lane
4. Engage in meaningful dialogue with representatives of Leeds' diverse communities who can contribute to the design of public spaces in the city.





BETTER CONNECTED

Our spaces will be highly connected, considering pedestrians first, clearly legible and easy to navigate

Through our 'Better Connected' principle, we will:

1. create high-quality public realm that permeates the River Aire, railway viaducts and central road infrastructure throughout Leeds, making journeys across the city and from South Bank more enjoyable and safe for pedestrians and cyclists
2. foster an environment which promotes movement between the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods. Reinforce local character and wayfinding, with river crossings and viaduct underpasses that provide clearly recognisable gateway elements within the city
3. ensure the experience of transitioning through viaduct underpasses is positive for pedestrians and cyclists, with attractive approaches to encourage onwards movement
4. integrate cycle routes, such as those proposed as part of the City Connect scheme, as an attractive part of the street hierarchy and aesthetic
5. transform the River Aire into a new linear pedestrian and cyclist corridor through the city, comprising a series of linked public spaces, such as the future City Park
6. offer greater pedestrian and cyclist priority, with pedestrian crossings within the city forming an integrated part of the public realm environment
7. clearly connect to future city developments such as City Park, Quarry Hill and emerging residential neighbourhoods with high-quality pedestrian and cyclist routes.





GREENER FUTURE

Our spaces will be resilient to climate change, with green environments cooling the air, sustainably managing surface water and absorbing carbon

Through our 'Greener Future' principle, we will:

1. integrate diverse planting into the city's principal streets and public spaces, where appropriate, to improve the urban microclimate, utilising topography for sustainable water management,
2. create a series of 'Urban Sponges' that capture and slowly discharge rainwater before it is released into the sewer system
3. embrace nature and consider the needs of wildlife as residents of the city. Provide a diverse range of flora and fauna to deliver biodiversity net gains whilst facilitating the creation of green corridors across the city.
4. reintroduce new habitats to sections of the River Aire as it passes through the city, increasing biodiversity, whilst also providing more widespread opportunities to engage with the waterside for pleasure and physical activity
5. clearly integrate 'active transit' opportunities, including walking and cycling, into the design of principal streets and afford them greater priority within the street-use hierarchy.





BRING IT TO LIFE

Our spaces will be places for cultural activity, from small interactions to major events

Through our 'Bring it to Life' principle, we will:

1. create street environments and spaces that foster a street culture, allowing people to participate in public life
2. transform key city locations, including City Square, Dortmund Square, Victoria Square and the Corn Exchange, along with principal streets such as The Headrow and Boar Lane, into places that offer increased opportunities for a variety of programmable and incidental public activities
3. form a network of interconnected public spaces rather than a series of assets, offering a greater variety of uses, including play, physical activity, temporary installations and access to nature
4. provide new opportunities to engage with the waterfront and experience Leeds as a 'city by the river'.



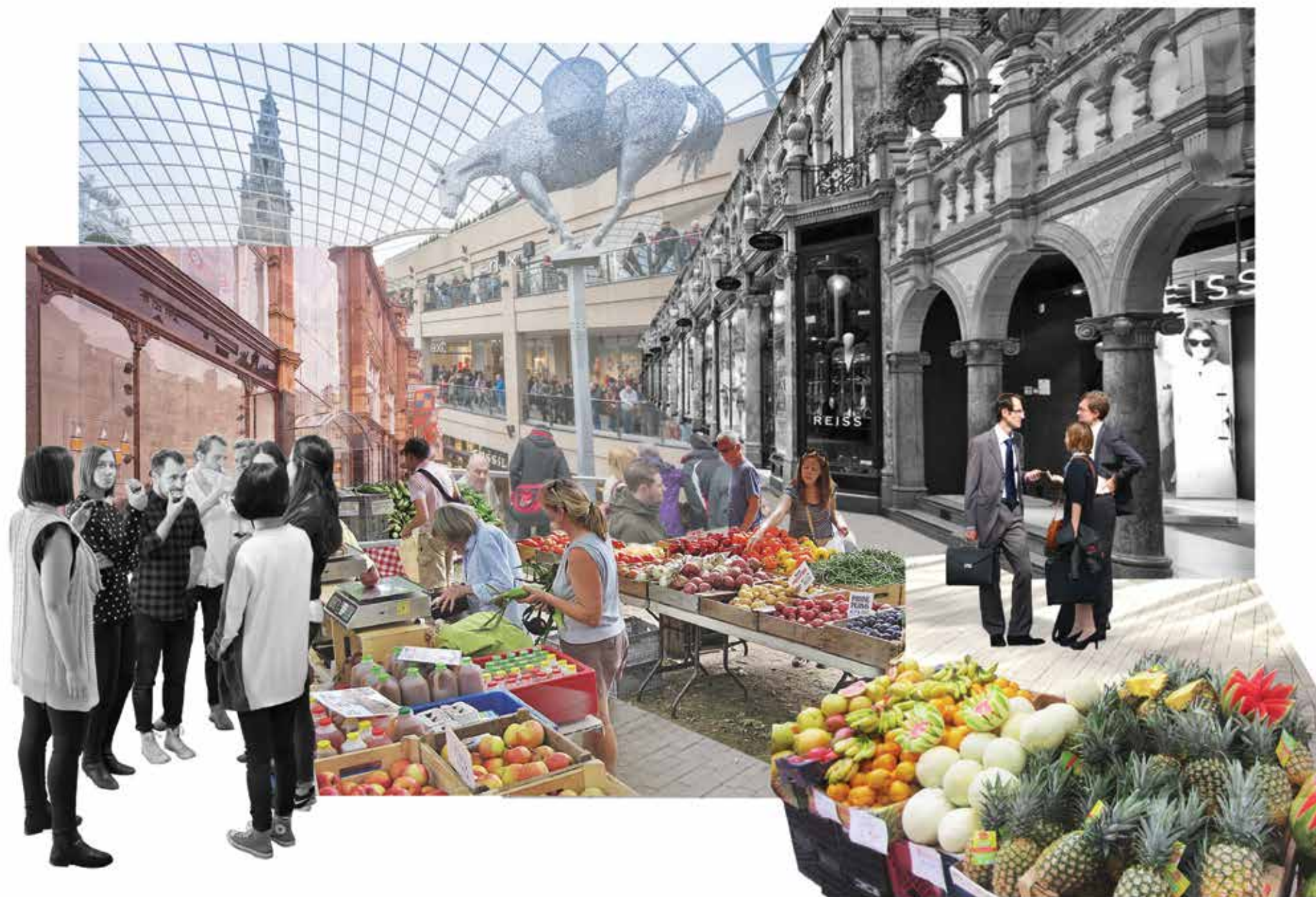


ECONOMIC SENSE

Our spaces will be valuable economic infrastructure that supports businesses and provides a canvas for new investment

Through our 'Economic Sense' principle, we will:

1. ensure that Leeds is a vibrant, green and attractive city to live, work, visit and invest in, where people can enjoy opportunities to shop, socialise, attend events, participate in physical activity and visit attractions
2. support cultural programmes and activities designed for the needs of a vibrant and engaging city centre, ensuring the delivery of a variety of event 'spaces' and associated infrastructure
3. ensure that we support the development of public realm by both developers and the Council in a way that positively supports inclusive growth, promotes businesses and provides a setting to attract new investment into the city centre
4. attract visitors, families and event organisers into the city centre to access a wide range of events and activities through the animation of our spaces, programmable events, sporting activities and promotions.





05

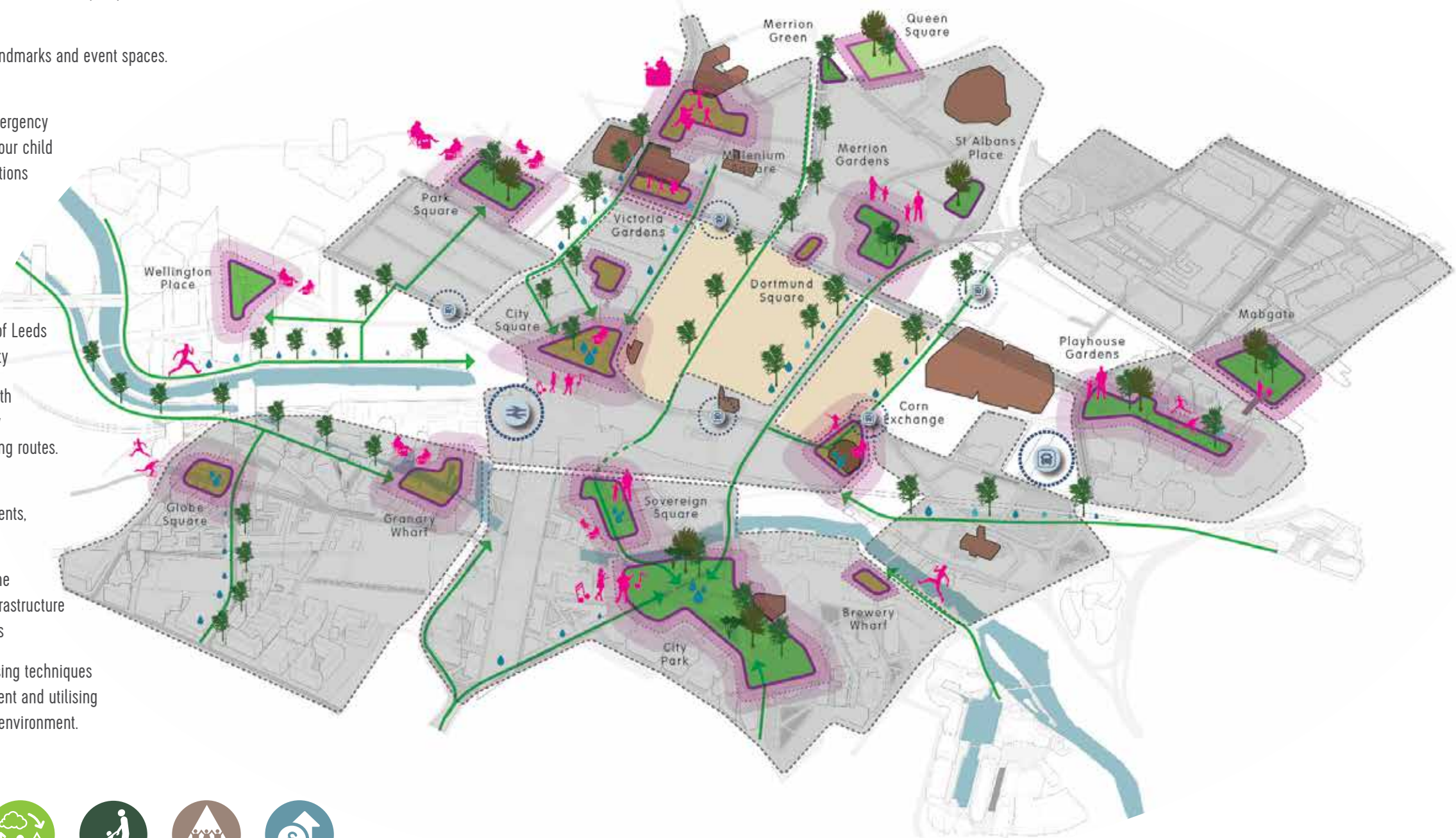
TRANSFORMING OUR CITY

5.0 APPLYING OUR PRINCIPLES

Our Principles are broad and ambitious guidelines, which aim to set a course for how we will transform our spaces in years to come. This strategy considers how our principles could be applied and how public realm across Leeds may evolve in relation to our principles. It defines a number of intervention areas which will allow the delivery of public realm to be coherent and coordinated.

The plan shows the city centre's key arrival points, landmarks and event spaces. In applying our principles to these locations, we will:

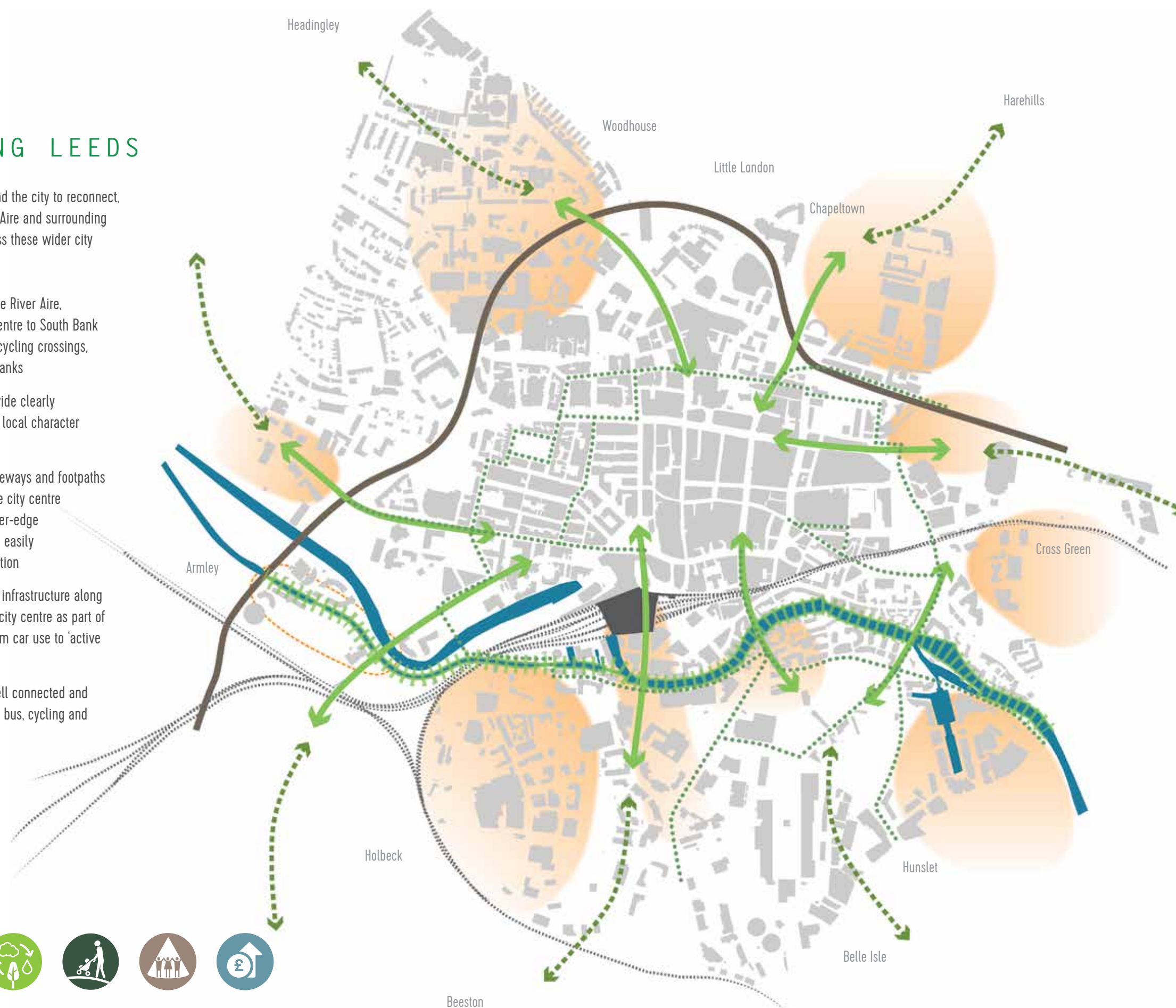
- assist in delivering responses to the climate emergency and species extinction agendas whilst meeting our child friendly, age friendly and inclusive growth ambitions
- create public spaces that are of a high quality, legible and accessible for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly where people arrive in the city and around important landmark buildings
- celebrate the rich history, culture and diversity of Leeds within public space to reinforce the city's identity
- support active transit through improved links with surrounding neighbourhoods and across the city centre via attractive and safe walking and cycling routes.
- design streets and spaces to foster a sense of community, allowing people to participate in events, activities, play, physical activity and nature
- ensure that the design of our spaces supports the requirements of a digital SMART city and the infrastructure for programmable, pop-up and temporary events
- contribute to the resilience of the city centre using techniques such as landscape led surface water management and utilising green and blue infrastructure to cool the urban environment.



5.1 RECONNECTING LEEDS

The plan identifies key areas of the city centre and the city to reconnect, including the north and south banks of the River Aire and surrounding communities. In applying our principles to address these wider city connections, we will:

- stitch the city centre back together along the River Aire, reconnecting the northern part of the city centre to South Bank with attractive and inviting pedestrian and cycling crossings, bridges and public spaces along the river banks
- ensure bridge and viaduct connections provide clearly recognisable gateway elements, reinforcing local character and wayfinding
- improve linkages through green space, cycleways and footpaths to connect neighbouring communities to the city centre and vice versa, to support people in the outer-edge communities to access the city centre more easily and sustainably for jobs, training and education
- promote the provision of cycle and walking infrastructure along clearly defined routes into and through the city centre as part of the street hierarchy, to encourage a shift from car use to 'active transit' modes
- ensure any peripheral developments are well connected and sustainable from a travel point of view with bus, cycling and walking connections.



5.2 SETTING OUR BENCHMARK

The quality of public realm relates to the physical and psychological comfort it offers people. It also reflects aesthetic enjoyment from public art, architecture and history, a sense of belonging and civic pride.

A diverse range of optional activities such as physical activity and quiet relaxation take place in high quality environments. In ensuring that we deliver inclusive, vibrant and world-class public realm we need to ensure that we embed an integrated, sustained and visionary approach to urban design focussed on public realm. Using this approach we will increase economic performance, increase activity and occupation, increase cycling and walking activity and create a more liveable city centre.

Jan Gehl says that whilst people will only do what they need to in poor quality public spaces, an additional 'wide range of optional activities' will occur in high quality spaces 'because place and situation now invite people to stop, eat, play etc.'

Gehl 2001.

Using renowned international, national, local and regional exemplar public realm examples as benchmarks, alongside our principles, we will be guided by quality and good practice to ensure that our spaces become instantly recognisable and play a part in shaping the vision for other towns and cities' public realm as well as our own.



PEOPLE FIRST



© HafenCity Hamburg GmbH/Thomas Hampel



THIS IS LEEDS



Celebrating the amazing facade of Hull Minster, Hull © Neil Nicklin



EVERYONE WELCOME



Attractive place for people of all ages, Trinity Square, Hull © Neil Nicklin



Brygge harbour, Copenhagen © Henning Thomsen



Peace Gardens and Town Hall, Sheffield © Shutterstock.com



Exciting multi-layered space, Darling Harbour, Sydney © Land Lease



BETTER CONNECTED



GREENER FUTURE



BRING IT TO LIFE



ECONOMIC SENSE



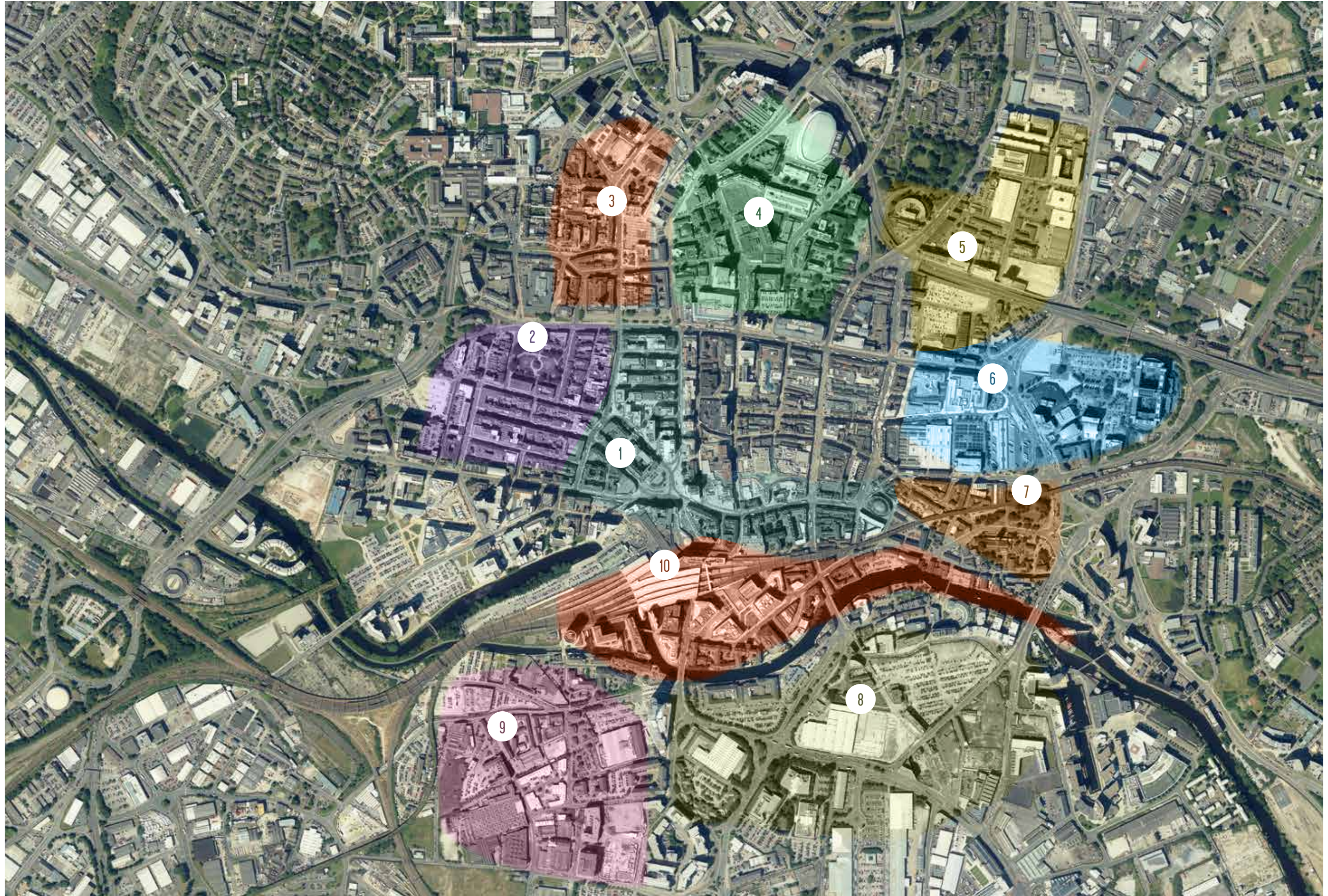
5.3 KEY INTERVENTIONS

A number of key intervention areas have been identified which provide opportunities to introduce our principles to specific streets, public spaces and highway infrastructure across Leeds.

The intervention areas are separated into distinct parts of the city with their own unique characteristics, use and function. Individually, each area has the potential to integrate a range of city principles, applying these to the future design of the areas to transform them into more inclusive, vibrant, world-class public realm.

- 1 Train Station Arrival
- 2 Western Business District
- 3 Civic Heart
- 4 Arena Quarter
- 5 Mabgate
- 6 Cultural Quarter
- 7 Kirkgate and The Calls
- 8 South Bank: City
- 9 South Bank West: Holbeck
- 10 City Riverside

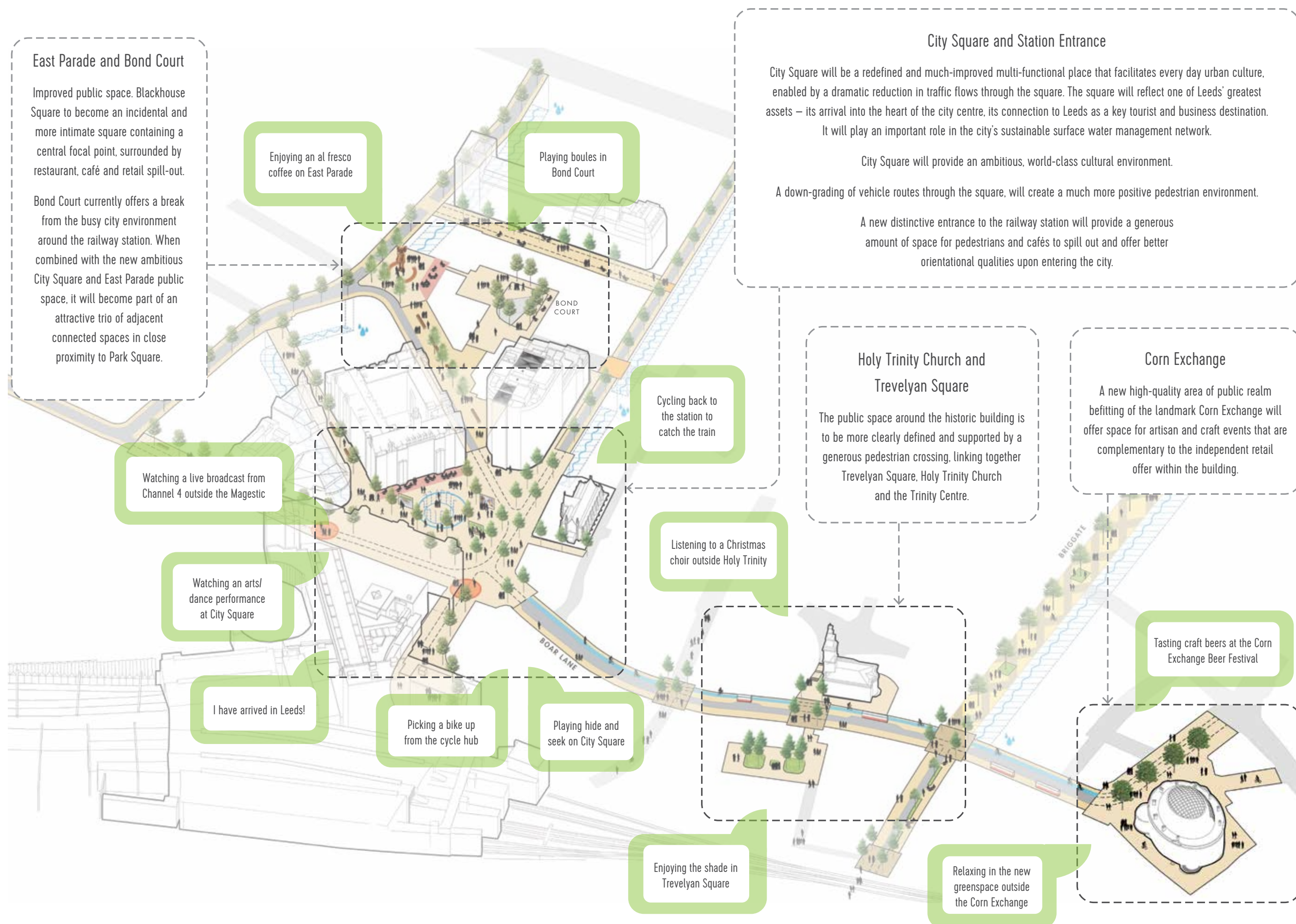




1 TRAIN STATION ARRIVAL

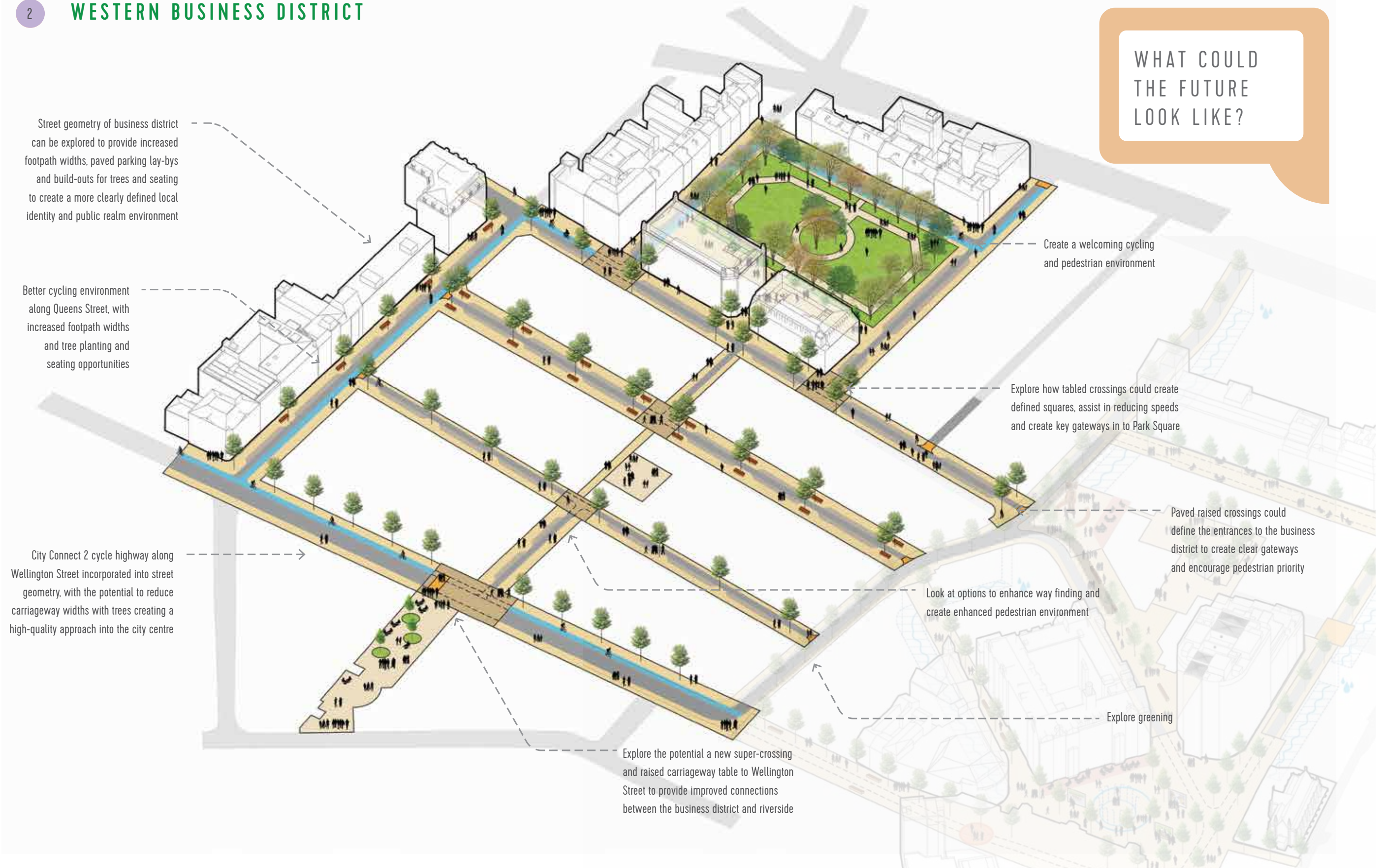


WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?



2 WESTERN BUSINESS DISTRICT

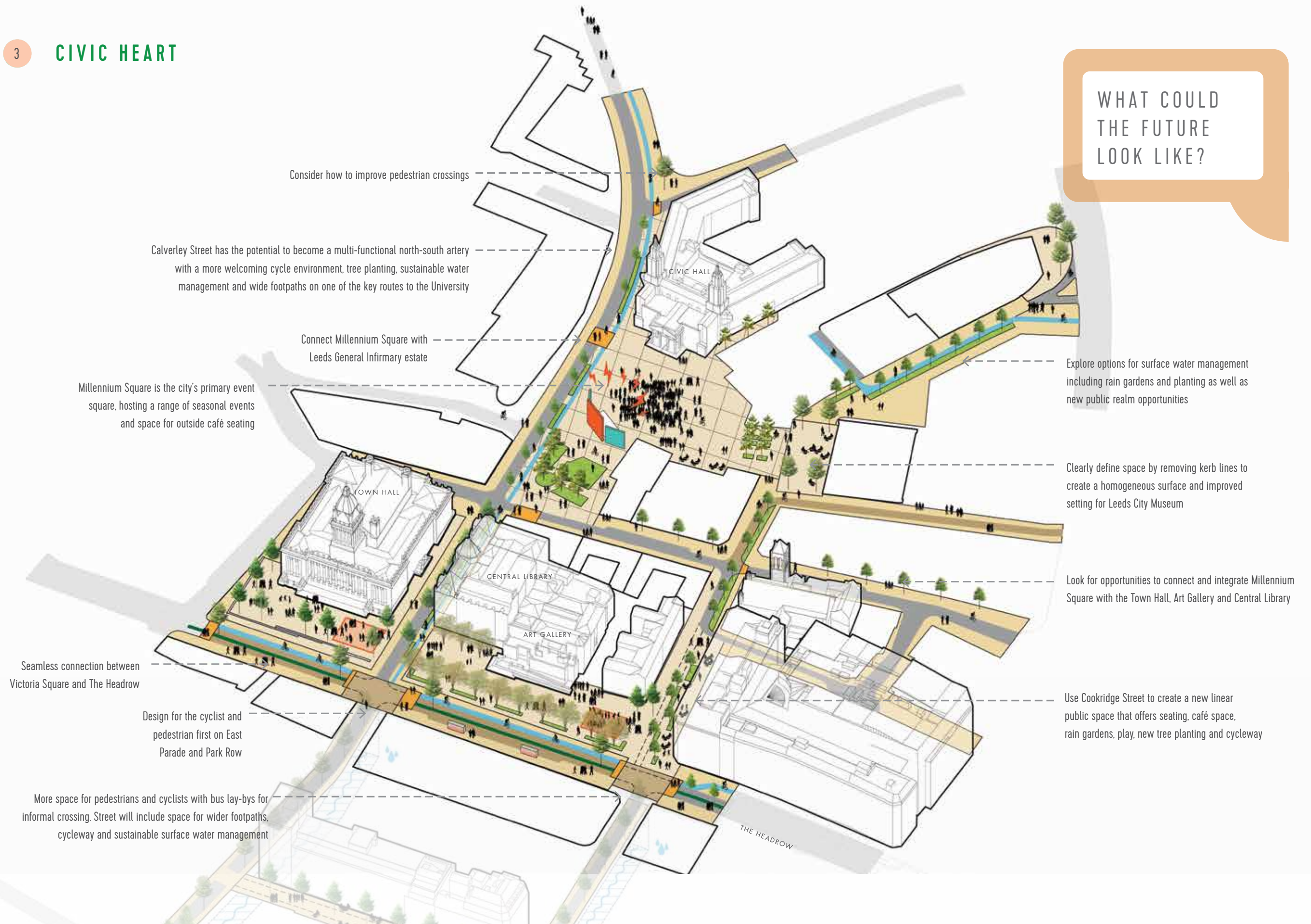
WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?





3 CIVIC HEART

WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?



Victoria Gardens

Victoria Square has potential to become a new landmark public space that provides a more appropriate and attractive setting to some of the city's most iconic buildings, including the Town Hall and Art Gallery.

There is opportunity to extend the character of the square across the Headrow, transforming the existing conventional highway arrangement into an integrated part of the public realm and promoting a truly civic environment at the heart of Leeds.

Millennium Square

Millennium Square is the city's primary event space that is capable of hosting a variety of programmed events from sport and play to civic receptions and seasonal activity such as the beach and the Christmas market.

The square also provides space for bars, restaurants and cafés to spill out and activate the edges, creating a city environment used in different ways throughout the day.

Cycling up to the university for a lecture

Watching the Ashes test at Headingley on the large screen in Millennium Square

Off to see Rory the Tiger at Leeds Museum – kids are excited

Standing outside the Town Hall on a sightseeing tour of Leeds

Resting and enjoying the water feature in Mandela Gardens

Sitting on the steps of the Leeds City Museum people watching

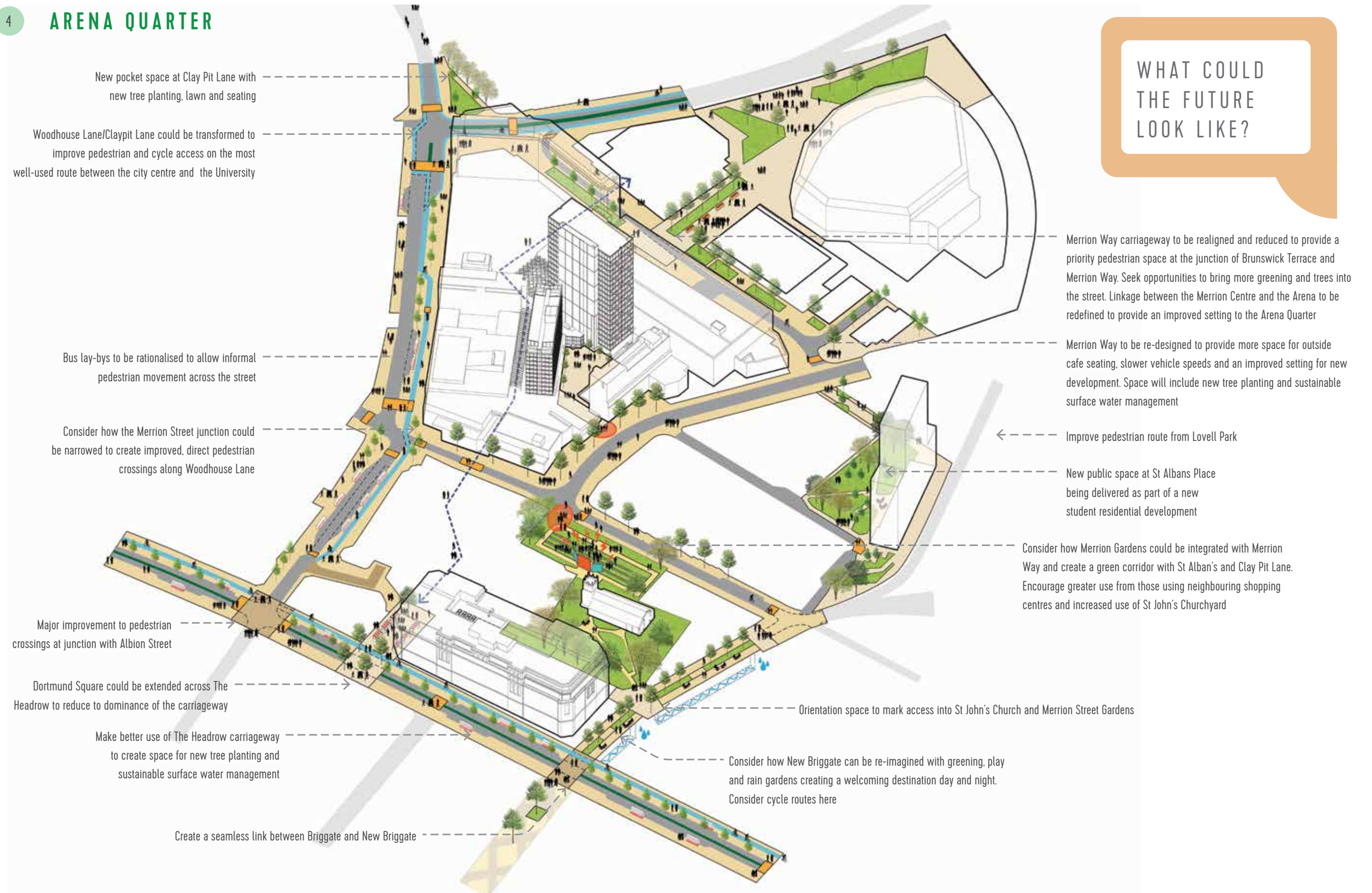
Sipping a cocktail overlooking Millennium Square

Having lunch outside the Radisson

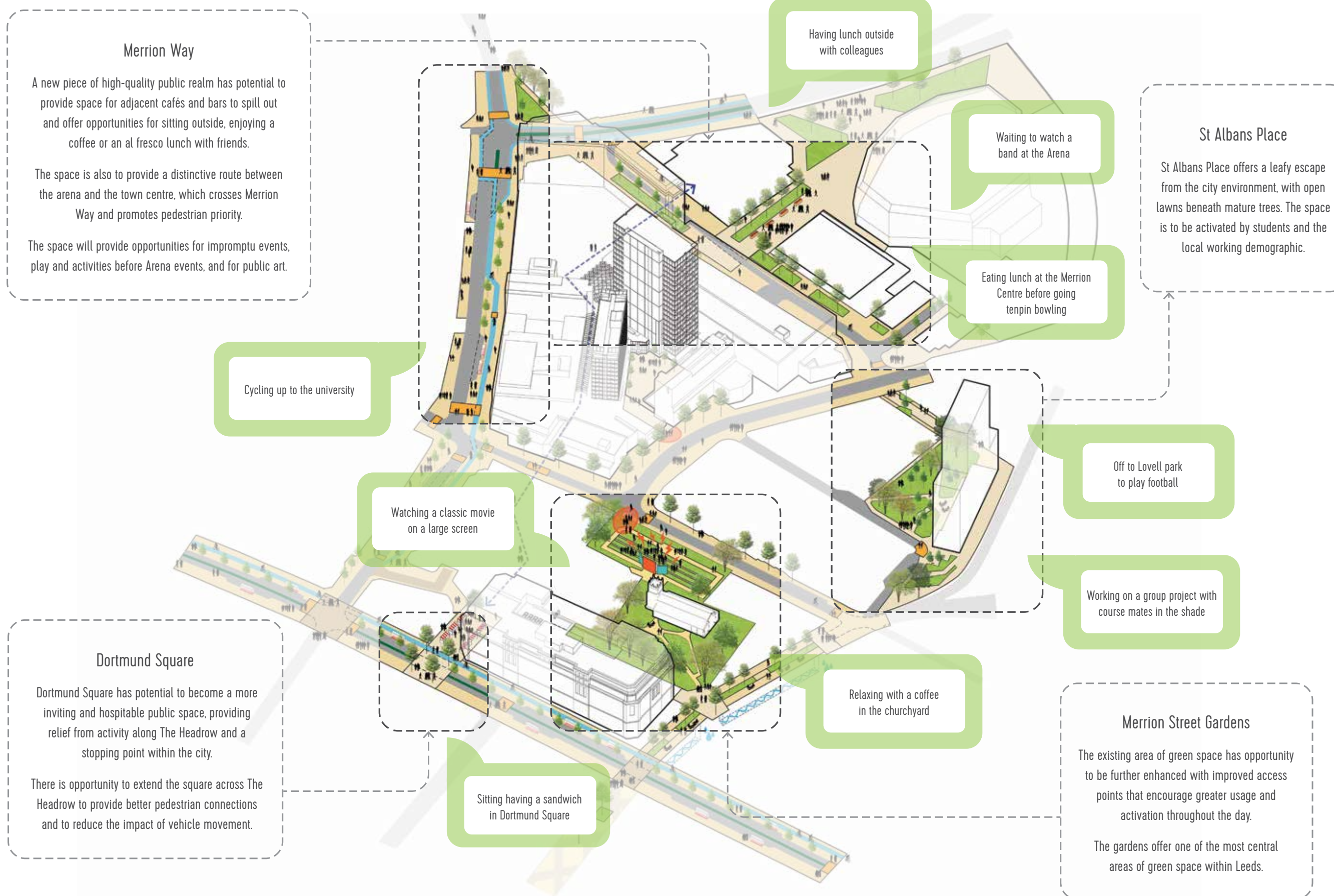
Enjoying an interactive installation outside the Art Gallery

Playing and using the outside pop up library in Victoria Gardens

4 ARENA QUARTER

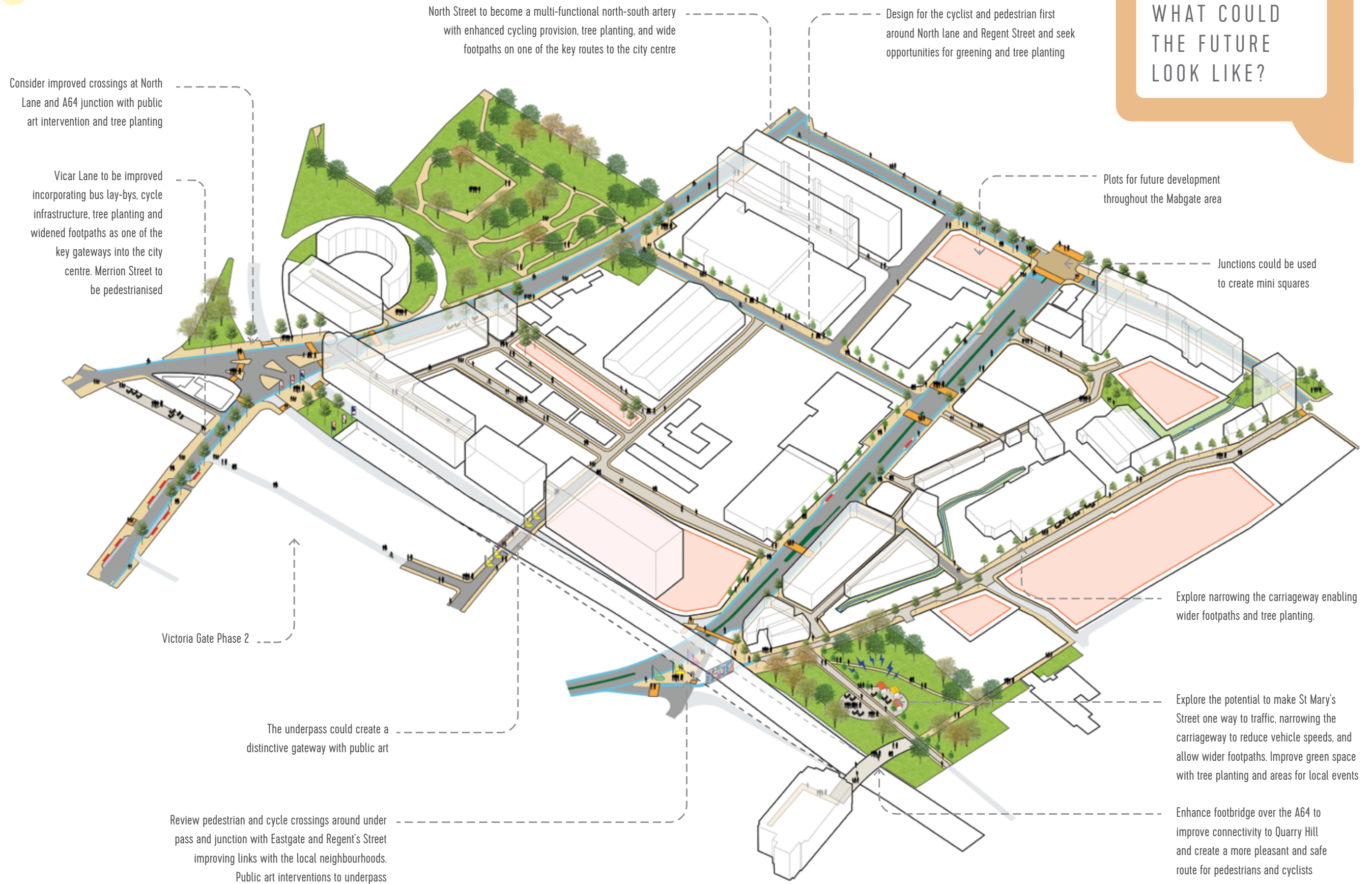


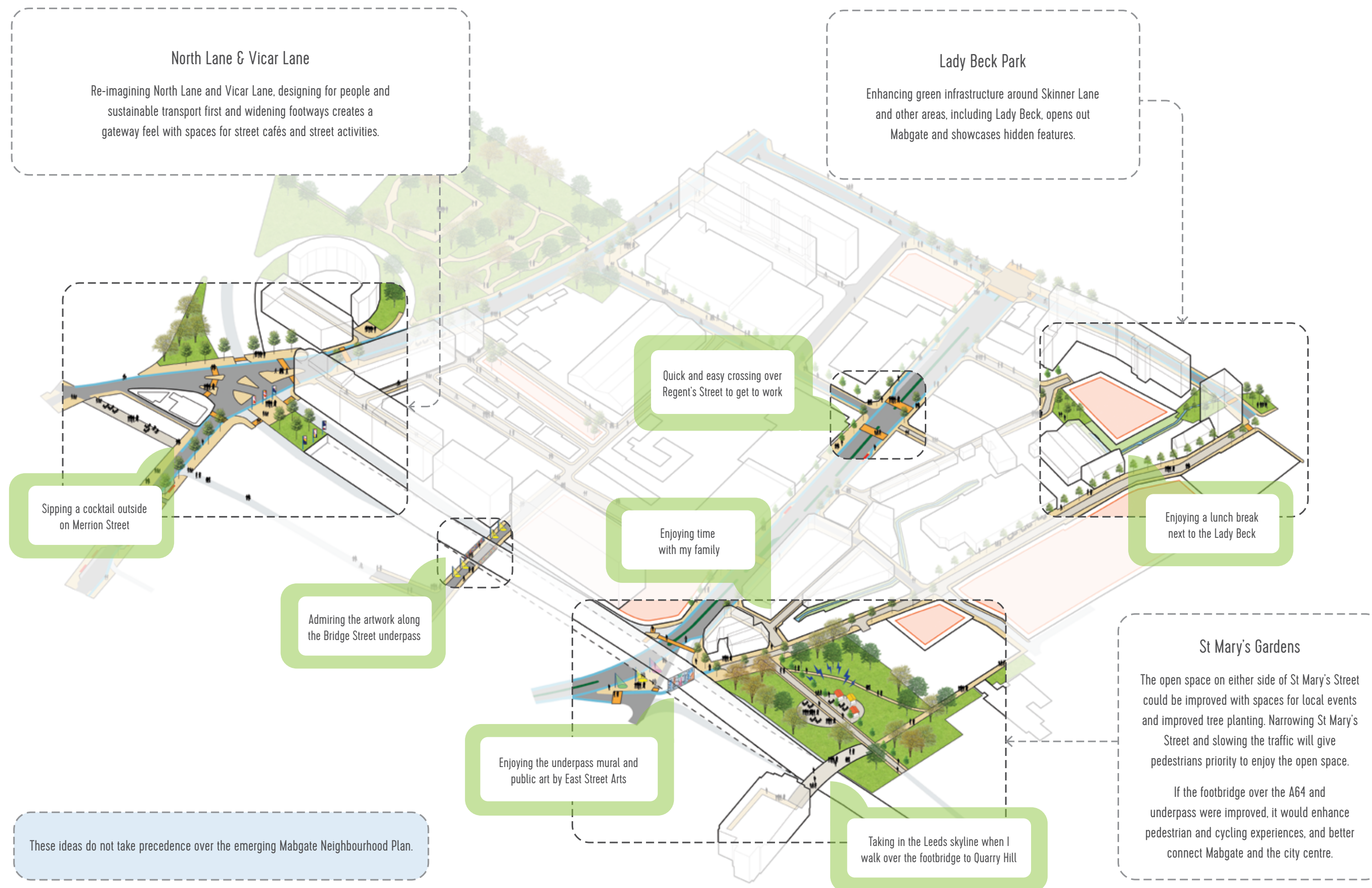
WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?



5 MABGATE

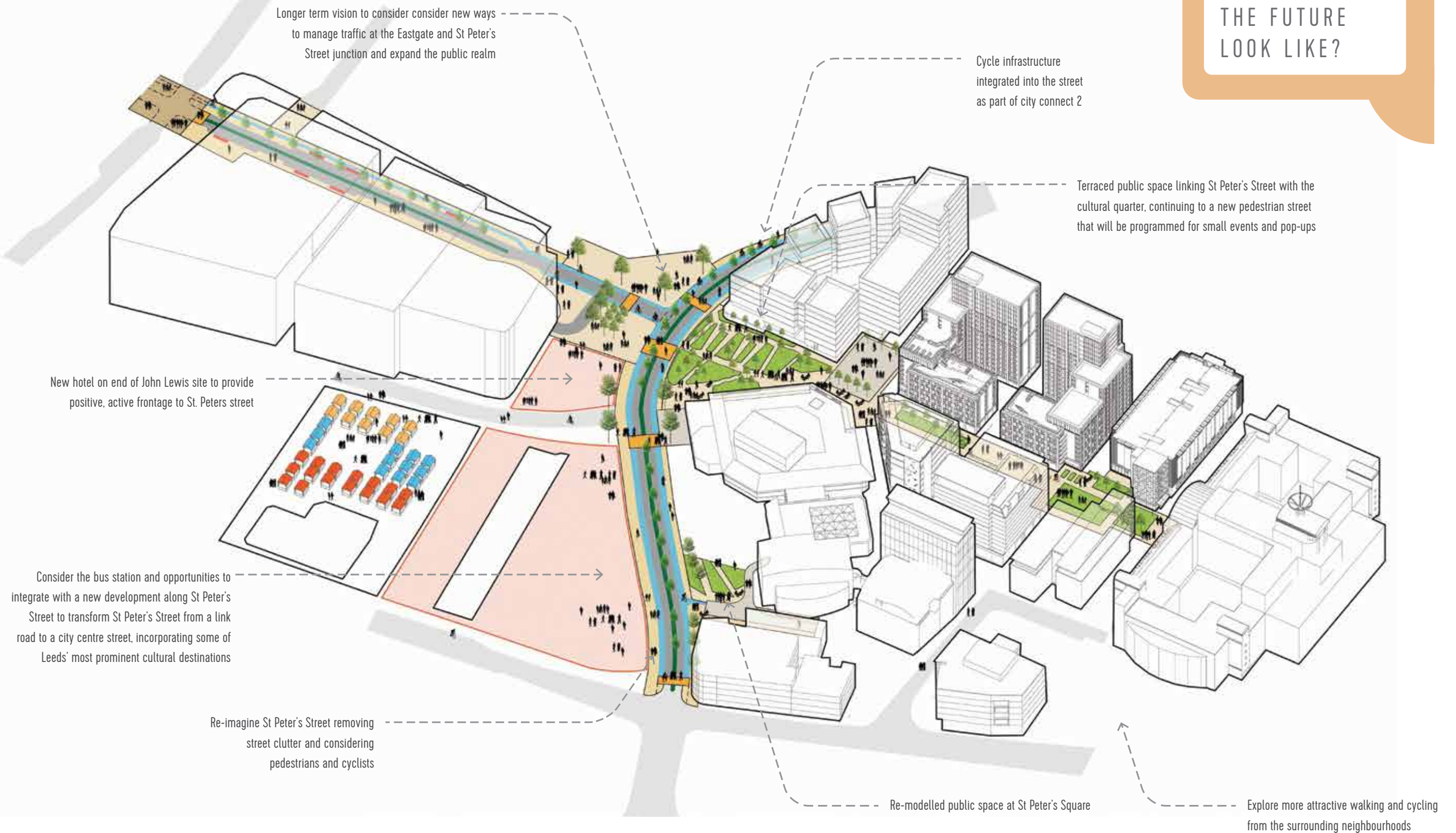
WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?





6 CULTURAL QUARTER

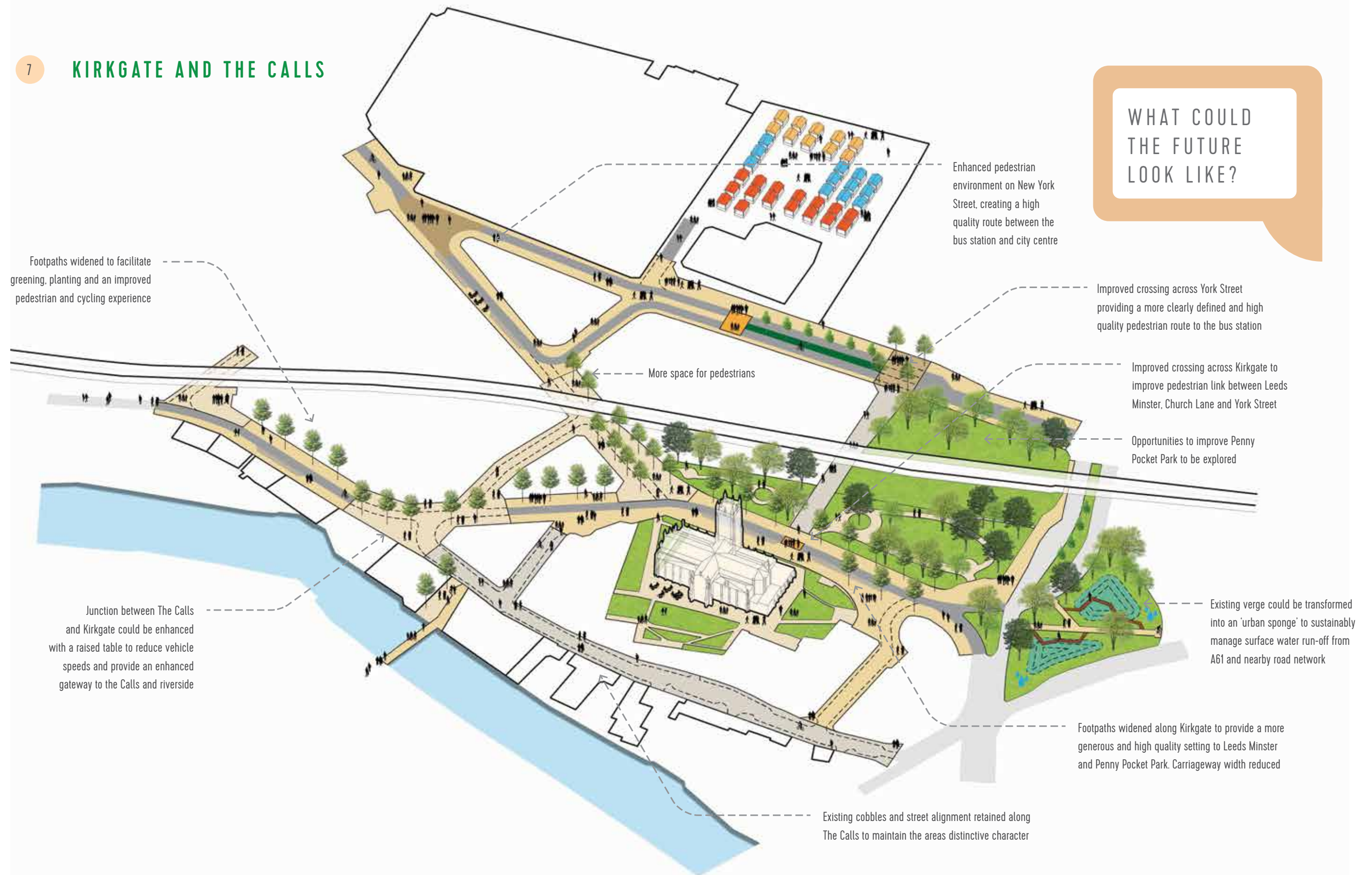
WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?





7 KIRKGATE AND THE CALLS

WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?





A61 Urban Sponge

Large grassed areas can be used as an area of sustainable water management, integrating landscaped SUDS that capture and attenuate water from the adjacent road network.

The space will also provide an attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists travelling to and from the city centre, containing a greater variety of plants and trees.

Taking a lunch time stroll to the river

The busy roads don't feel as imposing as they did

Kirkgate

Public realm improvements to encourage reduced vehicle speeds along the Inner Loop road and create a more attractive pedestrian experience.

Eating my tasty treats I bought at Kirkgate market

On a day trip walking to the Royal Armouries

This place makes my walk to work much more pleasant!

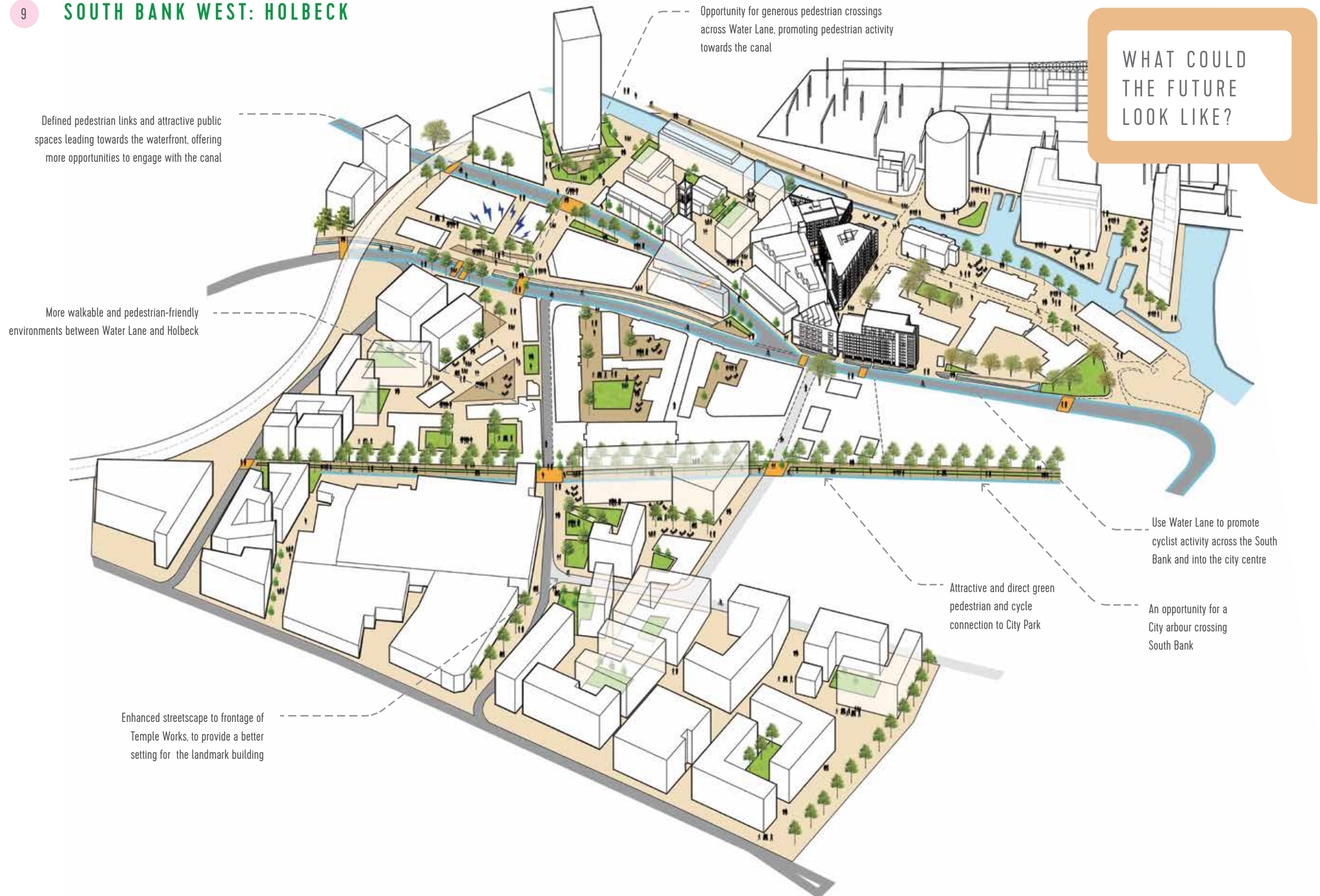
8 SOUTH BANK: CITY

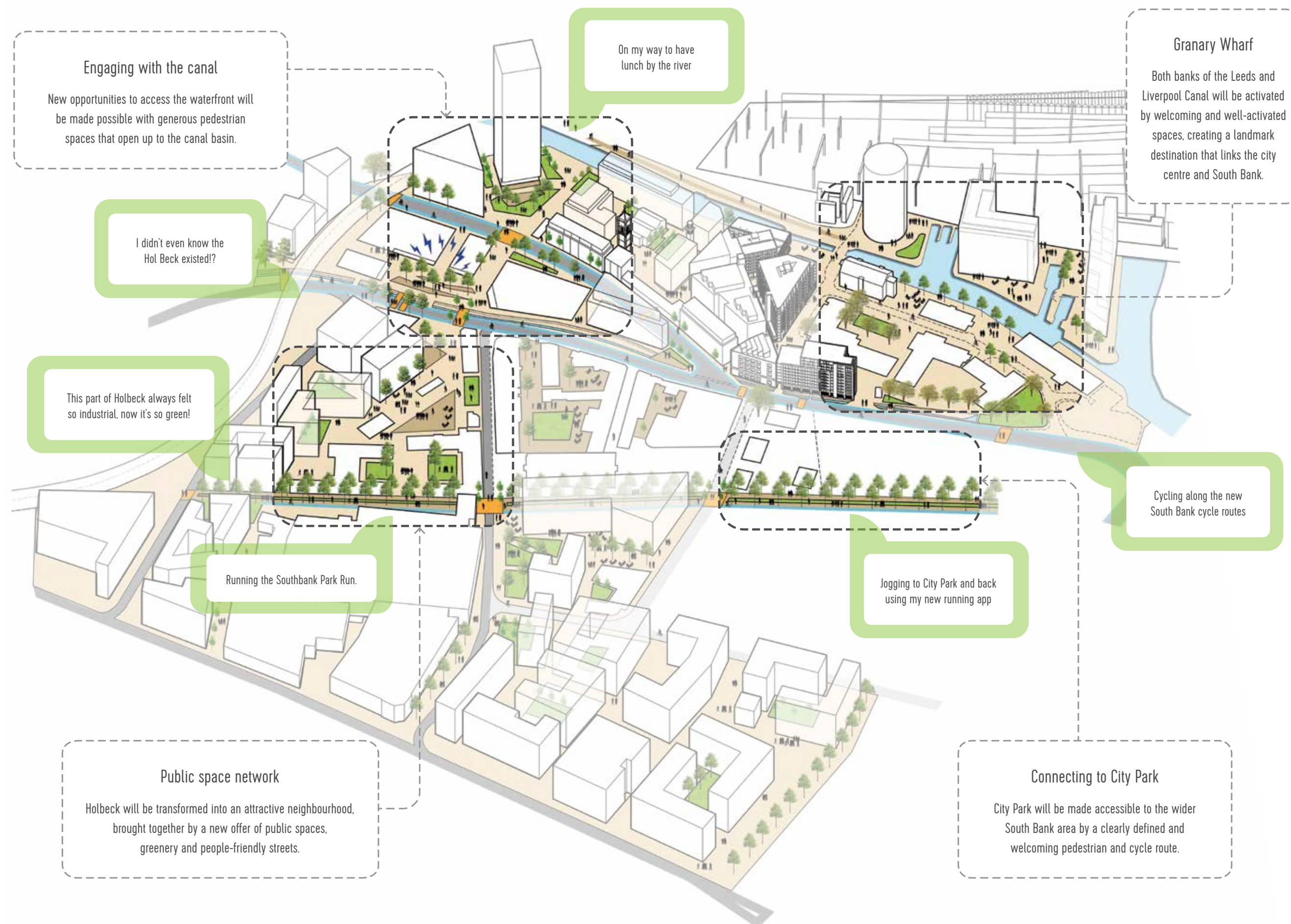
WHAT COULD
THE FUTURE
LOOK LIKE?





9 SOUTH BANK WEST: HOLBECK





Engaging with the canal

New opportunities to access the waterfront will be made possible with generous pedestrian spaces that open up to the canal basin.

On my way to have lunch by the river

Granary Wharf

Both banks of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal will be activated by welcoming and well-activated spaces, creating a landmark destination that links the city centre and South Bank.

I didn't even know the Hol Beck existed!?

This part of Holbeck always felt so industrial, now it's so green!

Cycling along the new South Bank cycle routes

Running the Southbank Park Run.

Jogging to City Park and back using my new running app

Public space network

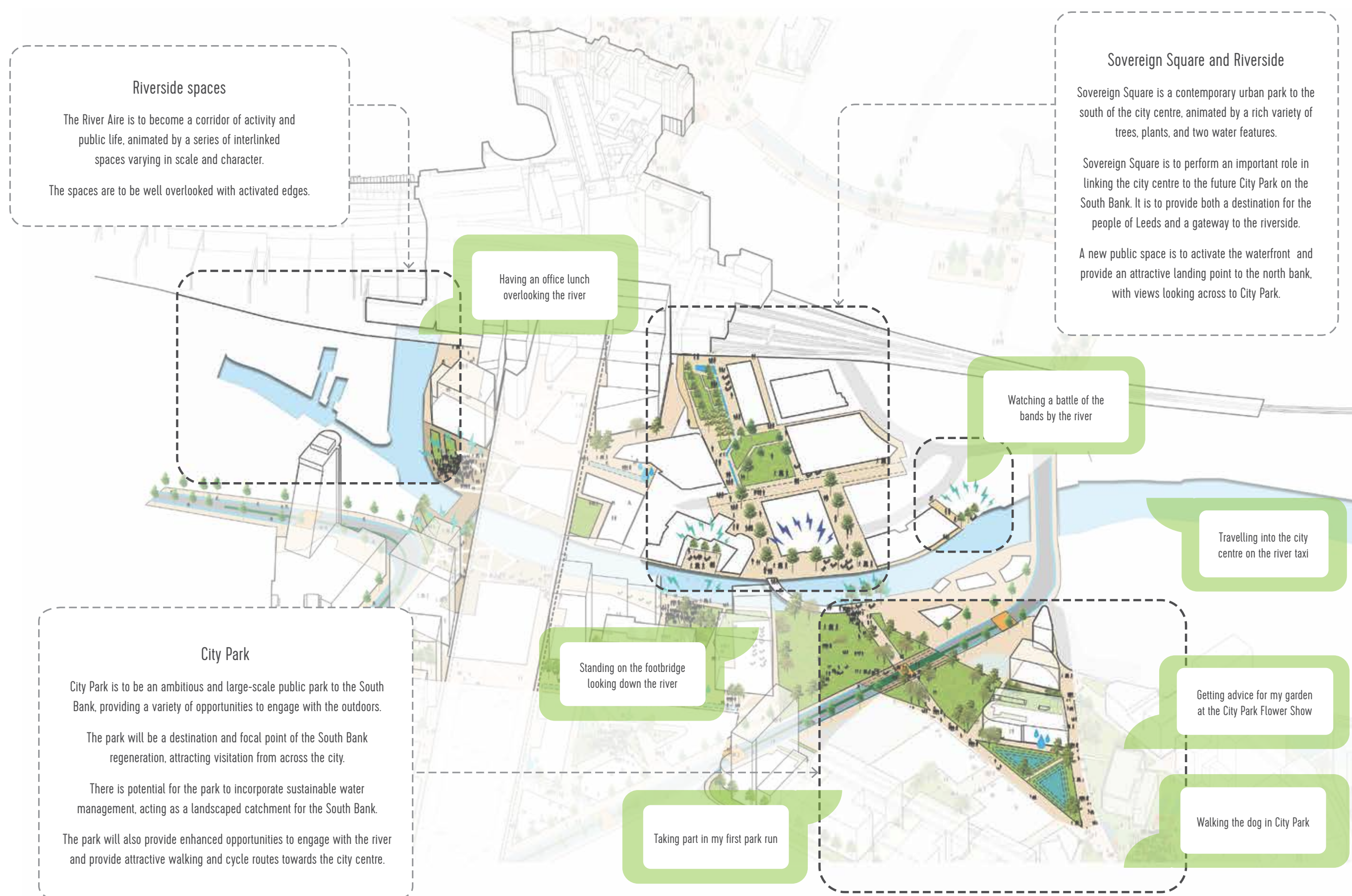
Holbeck will be transformed into an attractive neighbourhood, brought together by a new offer of public spaces, greenery and people-friendly streets.

Connecting to City Park

City Park will be made accessible to the wider South Bank area by a clearly defined and welcoming pedestrian and cycle route.

10 CITY RIVERSIDE





PUBLIC REALM

- 1 City Square
- 2 Sovereign Square Footbridge
- 3 Meadow Lane
- 4 City Park
- 5 Quarry Hill
- 6 Victoria Gate Phase 2
- 7 Belgrave Square
- 8 Merrion Way
- 9 Mabgate
- 10 Town Hall / Victoria Gardens
- 11 Innovation District
- 12 Lisbon Street
- 13 Monkbridge
- 14 CEG South Bank
- 15 Tower Works
- 16 Waterfront
- 17 Dandarra Site
- 18 Mustard Wharf
- 19 X One
- 20 Arbour – South Bank
- 21 Temple Works

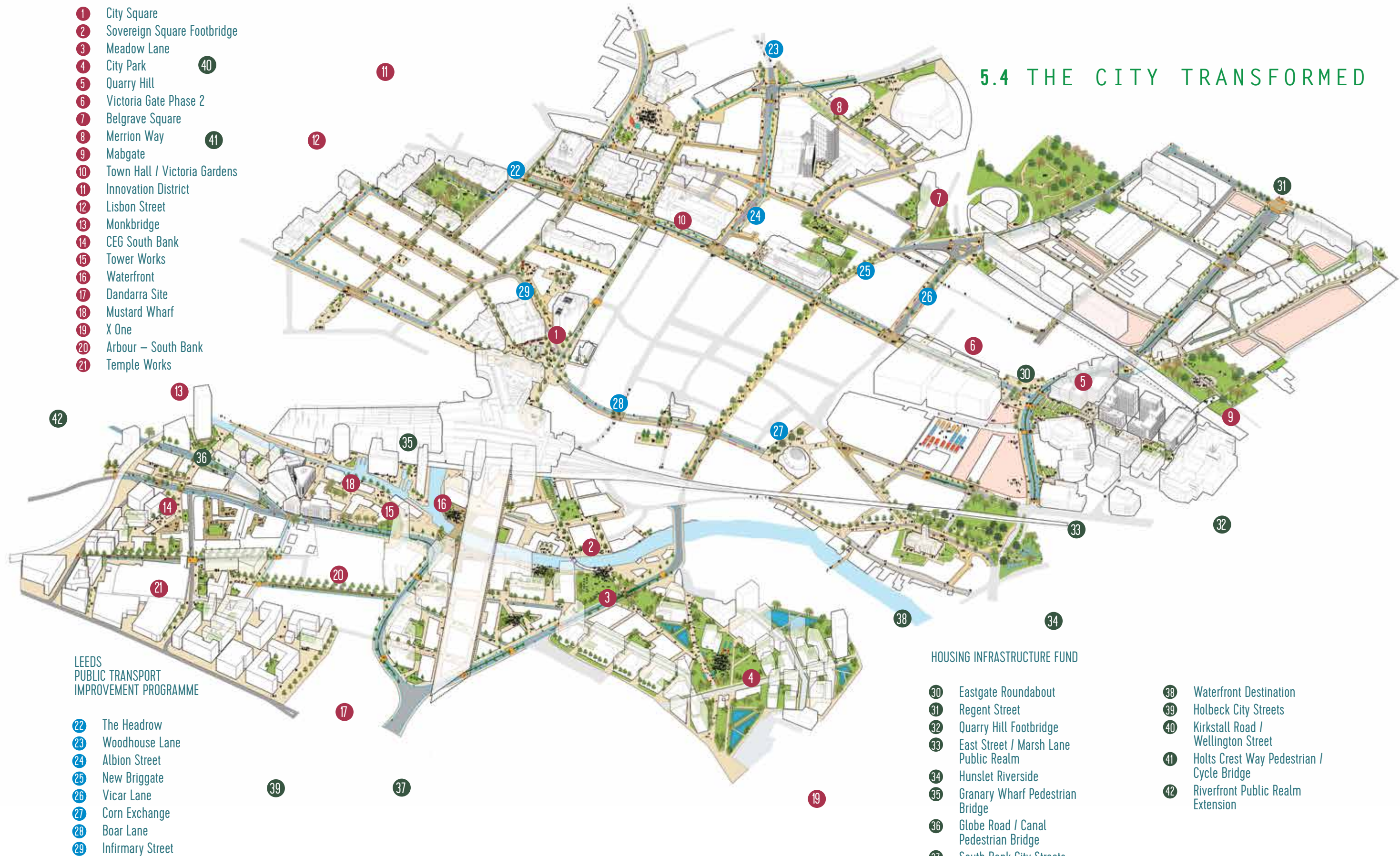
LEEDS
PUBLIC TRANSPORT
IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

- 22 The Headrow
- 23 Woodhouse Lane
- 24 Albion Street
- 25 New Briggate
- 26 Vicar Lane
- 27 Corn Exchange
- 28 Boar Lane
- 29 Infirmary Street

5.4 THE CITY TRANSFORMED

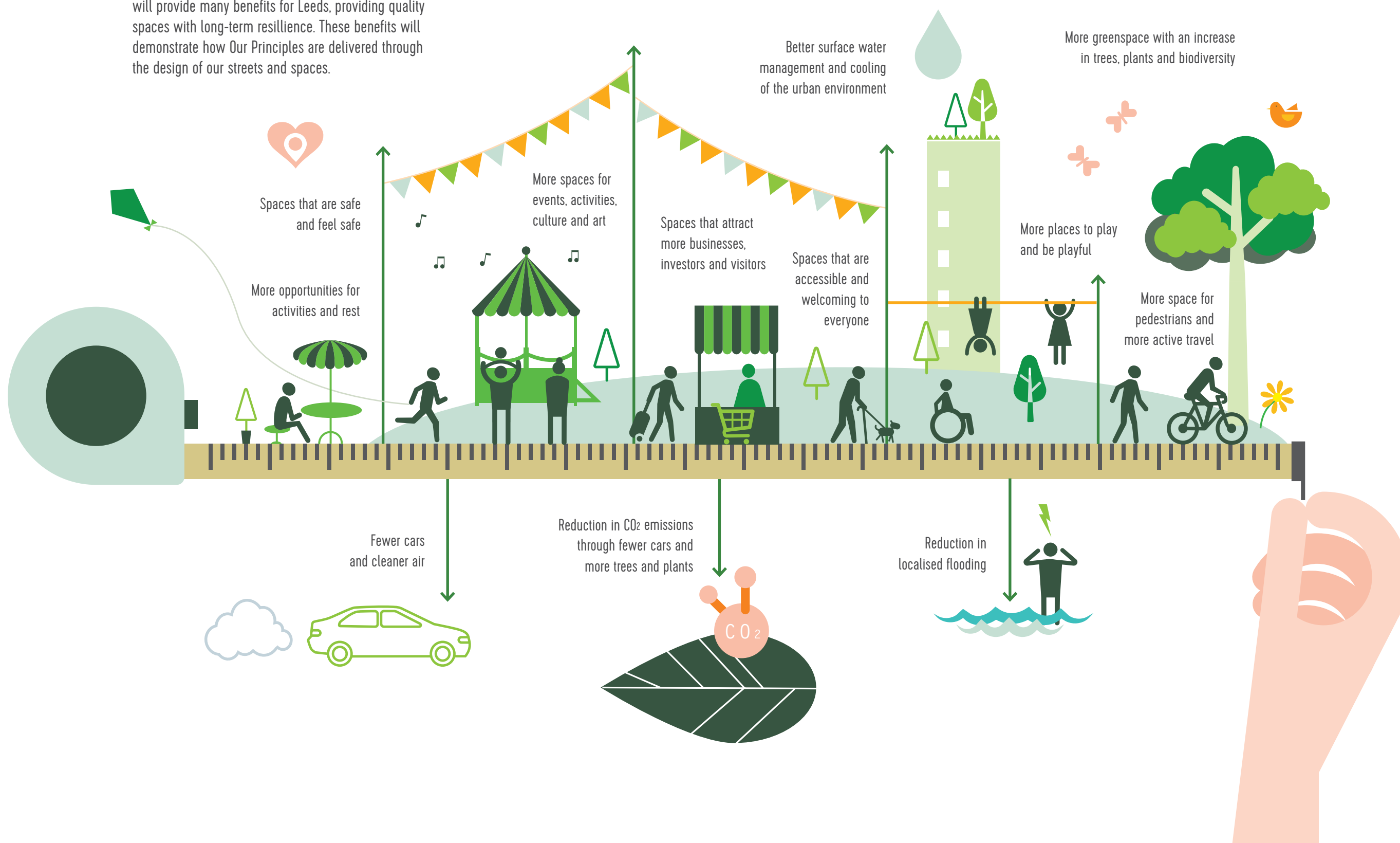
HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

- 30 Eastgate Roundabout
- 31 Regent Street
- 32 Quarry Hill Footbridge
- 33 East Street / Marsh Lane Public Realm
- 34 Hunslet Riverside
- 35 Granary Wharf Pedestrian Bridge
- 36 Globe Road / Canal Pedestrian Bridge
- 37 South Bank City Streets
- 38 Waterfront Destination
- 39 Holbeck City Streets
- 40 Kirkstall Road / Wellington Street
- 41 Holts Crest Way Pedestrian / Cycle Bridge
- 42 Riverfront Public Realm Extension



5.5 HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

Creating new and repurposing existing public realm will provide many benefits for Leeds, providing quality spaces with long-term resilience. These benefits will demonstrate how Our Principles are delivered through the design of our streets and spaces.





06

CONCLUSION

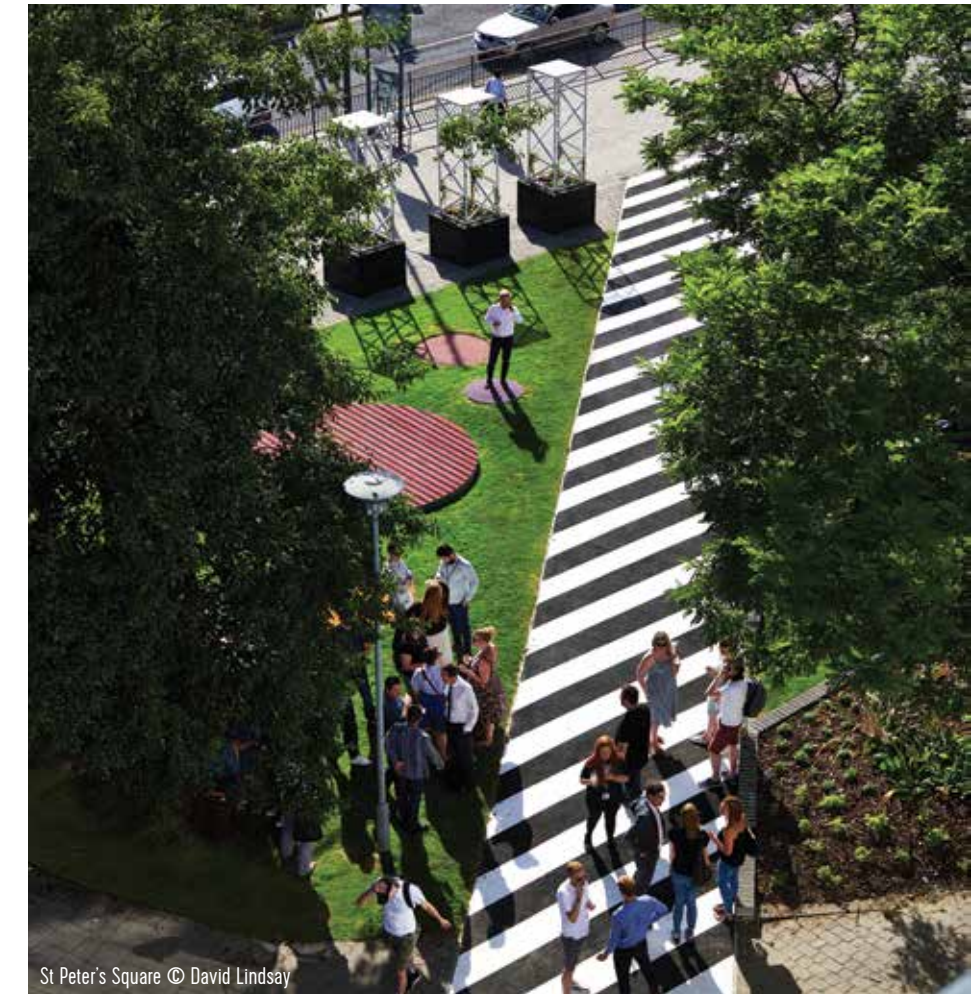
6.0 CONCLUSION

Leeds is an exciting city to live, work and visit. It is a thriving city with a strong and proud heritage, but it is also a city that will develop dramatically over the next 15 years.

Significant growth is planned across the city, with the redevelopment of the city's train station, introduction of high speed rail and redevelopment of South Bank alongside many other major sites. The Our Spaces Strategy creates an overarching vision for Leeds' streets and spaces and sets out the role they will play in the future of the city. It considers the diverse areas around the city centre, including South Bank and the River Aire, as important and interlinked contributors in making Leeds an enjoyable and enticing place to live, work and visit.

The overarching principles will guide public-sector investment moving forward and provide a framework within which private-sector investment can flourish. The strategy seeks to inspire people, provide a forum for discussion and change the way public space and highways are designed.

Leeds' public realm will be inclusive, hospitable, engaging and sustainable. Streets and spaces will be designed for people, enabling a greater range of activities and creating environments where they choose to stay for longer. Leeds' public realm will celebrate the city's built and natural assets and become a place where culture – from big events to everyday street culture – can happen.



THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Our Spaces strategy, from collaborators to the people of Leeds, you have provided us with invaluable feedback and ideas. Please continue to follow the Our Spaces journey at www.leedsourspaces.co.uk where you will find information on our live projects and future proposals.







L E E D S

OUR SPACES