



Stourbridge Town Centre - Public Consultation

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January 2024

A chance for you to help shape proposals for the **future of Stourbridge Town Centre**

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Introduction - A chance for you to help shape proposals for the future of **Stourbridge Town Centre**

Dudley Council has been undertaking an assessment of **Stourbridge Town Centre** with a focus on exploring opportunities to make the town more welcoming by enhancing **pedestrian** and **cycle** connections to and through the town to help **increase footfall, economic activity** and respond to **climate change**.

In terms of funding, the Council has secured an indicative allocation of **£3m** from the West Midlands **City Regions Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)** which is to support the delivery of a sustainable connectivity package for Stourbridge Town Centre.

The funding is subject to the approval of a business case for submission to the WMCA. To inform the contents of the business case, the Council has identified three main areas of opportunity in the Town Centre which are as follows:

Gateways, Streets and Spaces - *highlighted on the plan overleaf.*

Gateways

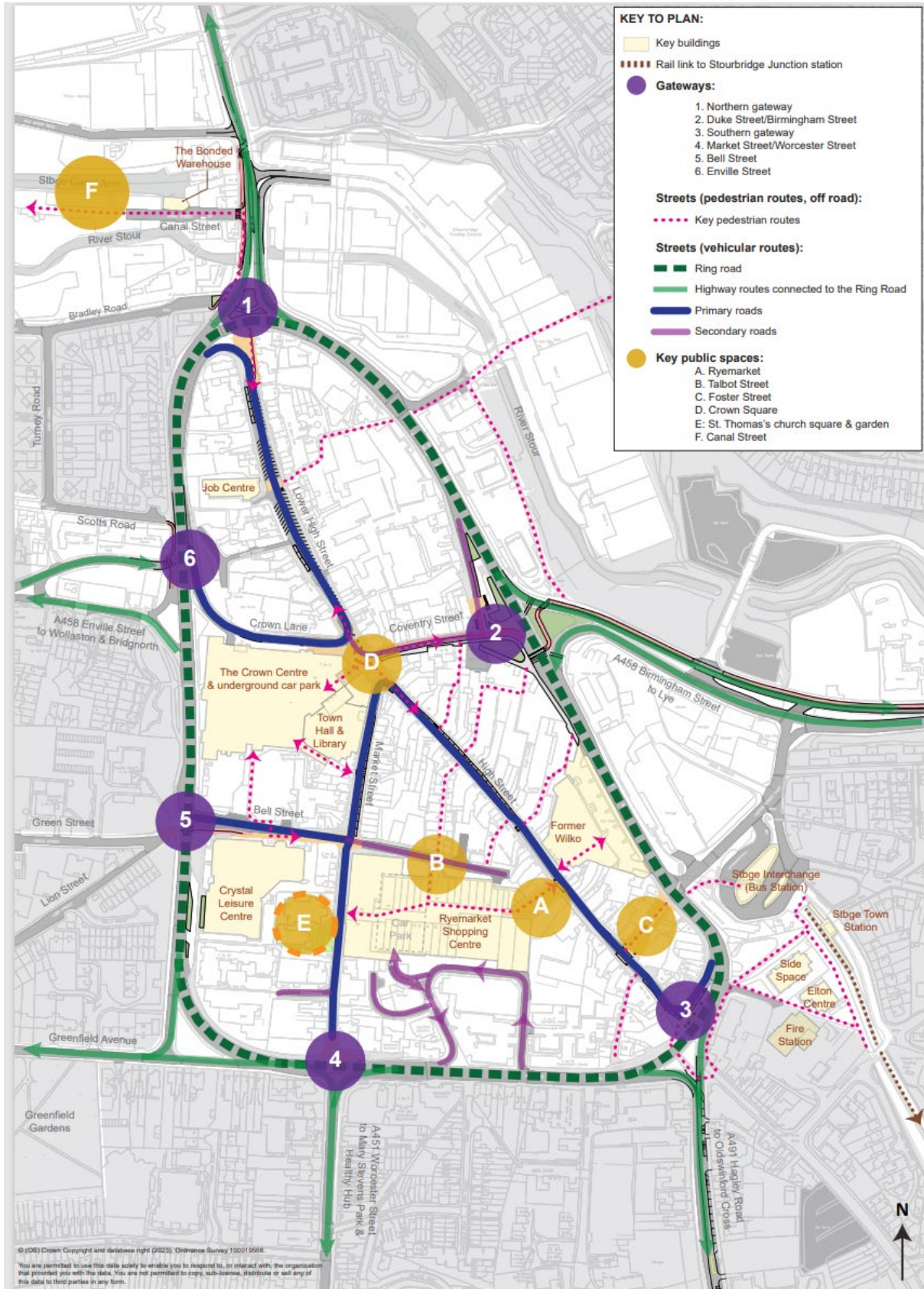
The existing gateways into the Town Centre are underwhelming and have the potential to be enhanced to provide a more welcoming entrance and to improve legibility and accessibility. There are a number of opportunities to improve connections across the ring road which currently can act as a barrier to walking and cycling into the town.

Streets

Vehicles dominate the town centre with limited pedestrian and cycle connections and crossings that are difficult to use. The pedestrian and cycle experience could be improved to create a better connected and more cohesive Town Centre and public realm

Spaces

Stourbridge benefits from a number of outdoor public spaces which support a range of functions i.e. meeting area, socialising, rest. Some of these spaces work well such as St Thomas's Church square, whereas others such as Ryemarket and Foster Street have become outdated and in need of enhancement to offer the expected High Street experience required for today and the future.



KEY TO PLAN:

- Key buildings
- Rail link to Stourbridge Junction station
- Gateways:**
 1. Northern gateway
 2. Duke Street/Birmingham Street
 3. Southern gateway
 4. Market Street/Worcester Street
 5. Bell Street
 6. Envile Street
- Streets (pedestrian routes, off road):**
 - Key pedestrian routes
- Streets (vehicular routes):**
 - Ring road
 - Highway routes connected to the Ring Road
 - Primary roads
 - Secondary roads
- Key public spaces:**
 - A. Ryemarket
 - B. Talbot Street
 - C. Foster Street
 - D. Crown Square
 - E. St. Thomas's church square & garden
 - F. Canal Street

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As part of this assessment the following **Strengths**, **Weakness**, **Opportunities** and **Threats** (SWOT) were identified for Stourbridge Town Centre

Strengths

- A high quality town rich in heritage
- High quality architecture which provides positive street frontage and reflects the historic nature of the town
- Good mix of land uses with high occupancy rates creating a vibrant High Street
- Diverse population with a strong mix of different user groups
- Good night time economy
- Interesting network of historic routes and passages
- Good public transport links due to close proximity of Bus Station and Train Station
- Proactive business community and residents who volunteer to support Stourbridge in Bloom and other community-led projects.
- Proximity of the town to the canal and associated tourism and leisure opportunities

Weakness

- Lack of cycling infrastructure such as designated cycle paths and cycle storage
- A number of key routes with access/pedestrian movement issues (i.e. narrow pavements, underpasses)
- Various barriers to pedestrian movement such as the ring road and lack of crossing points within the town centre
- Outdated public spaces such as Ryemarket and Foster Street

- Unappealing gateways/ entrances into the town centre (High Street, Lower High Street, Market Street)
- Cluttered street scene, outdated street furniture/ material palette and poor signage
- Poor pedestrian/cycle links to surrounding areas (national cycle routes, canal path network, local parks)
- Very little greenspace, town centre dominated by built form and hard landscape.
- Few street trees in the town centre in sustainable locations.

Opportunities

- Use the town's rich heritage and character to influence public realm enhancements and showcase those buildings of high quality.
- Many of the residents of Stourbridge are within a 15-20 minute cycle ride of the town centre, therefore it is important to improve the cycling network through the town centre where possible.
- Improve links to wider areas such as national cycle routes, parks, canal network.
- Enhance existing gateways to create a welcoming entrance into the town centre, also helping improve legibility and wayfinding.
- Reduce existing barriers to movement by providing alternative solutions (i.e. additional road crossings at level).
- Provide tree planting and areas of soft landscaping to soften the urban environment and help reduce air pollution, surface water flooding.

Threats

- Competition from out-of-town and online retail.
- Reduced patronage of the high street.
- Environmentally and socially responsive to a changing demographic; elderly, youth and young families.
- Competition from other nearby town centres and Merry Hill shopping centre.
- The need to respond to climate change.

This assessment has helped develop the following goals and a framework of proposed design interventions for Stourbridge:

Our Goals

1. A welcoming and inclusive environment, accessible to everyone, with enhanced **gateways** into the town and improved **streets** and public **spaces** that will help 'connect communities'
2. A safe environment with ease of movement giving people the confidence to move around the town safely at well-defined crossing points with improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists
3. A healthy environment that supports people's wellbeing, communities coming together and the need to respond to climate change
4. An attractive environment that can be enjoyed and appreciated by visitors, enhancing the quality of the town's appearance, rich heritage and character
5. Economic benefit for local people and businesses, as a result of the above changes and improved connections to residential areas outside the Ring Road and to the Stourbridge Interchange

With the goals listed above in mind, the Council would like to put forward the following proposals:

The Proposals

- Improvement of the six main **gateways** into the town to create more welcoming entrances to the town
- Improvement of the **streets** in the town with the removal of barriers to movement with the introduction of new pedestrian crossing points that are, where possible, 'at level' with a material change to contrast clearly with the road surface.
- Improvement of the cycling network through the town centre (where possible given existing space constraints) in order to improve links to wider areas such as national cycle routes, parks, canal networks and residential areas.
- Introduction of a 20mph zone in the High Street to make it safer for pedestrians and additional provision of Blue Badge parking to improve access for those with mobility issues.
- Planting of new street trees and soft landscaping (turf, shrubs and flowers) to improve the environment and help reduce air pollution and surface water flooding.
- Improvement of the currently outdated public **spaces** in the town so they are more inviting and encourage social interaction and better pedestrian access: *Ryemarket, Talbot Street, and Foster Street.*

Some of these improvements have already started

Thanks to funding from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and thanks to support from the local community, preparation work is already underway by Dudley Council on public art improvements to the '**Northern Gateway**' of the town. The '*Stourbridge Public Art Parapet Project*' will see the historic bridge over the river Stour celebrated with decorative lettering and artwork. Work on-site will commence in 2024.

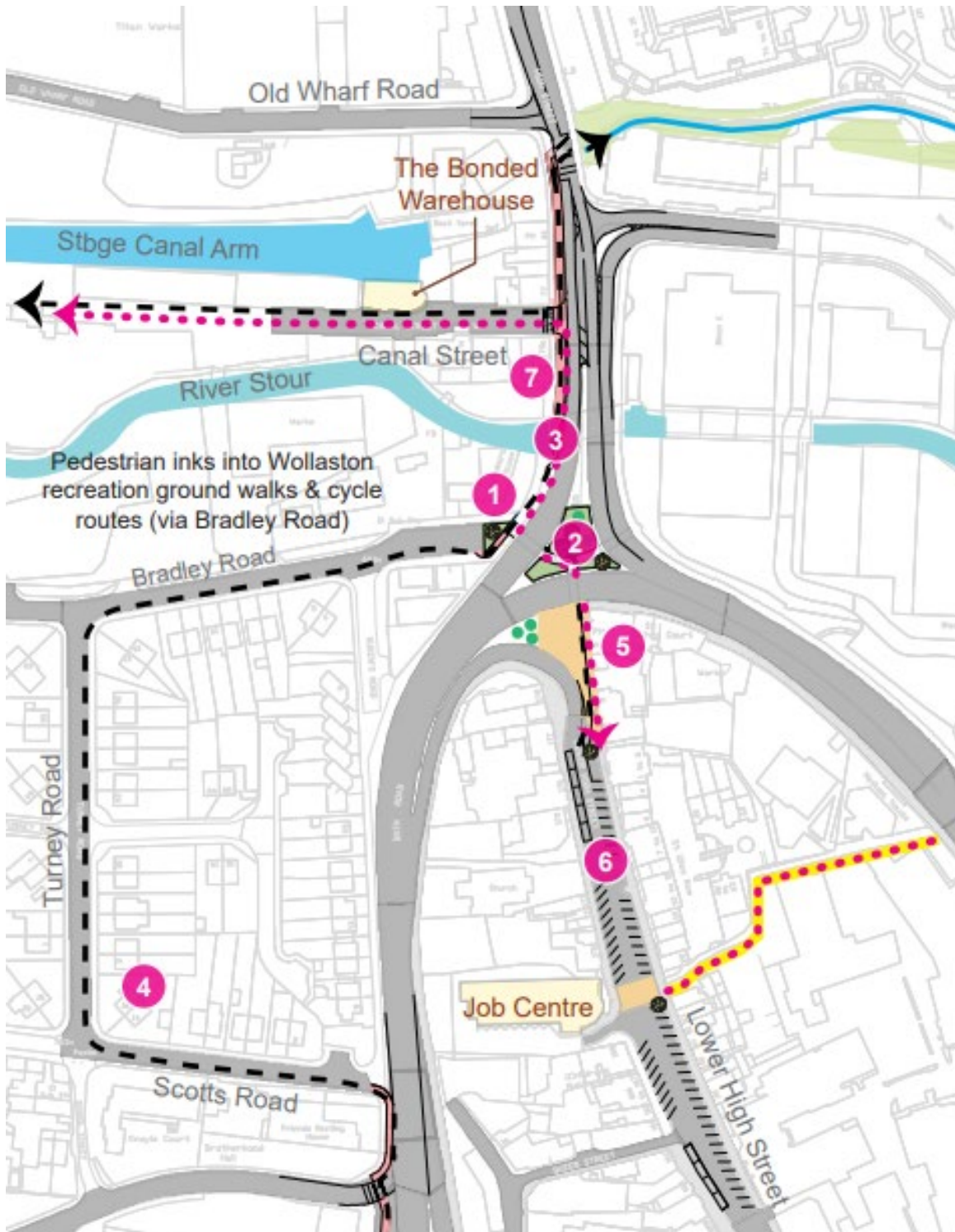
Other positive improvements to be delivered in 2024 includes the introduction of a **Changing Places Toilet** which will be located in Stourbridge Town Hall. Once installed, Stourbridge Town Centre will be able to offer disabled people greater access to the town. The funding for this was secured by Dudley Council from the Department of Levelling Up.

Other improvements proposed are shown as follows:

DESIGN FEATURES: (1) New segregated cycle routes (2) New surface level crossing across the ring road, signalisation of Birmingham Street/ring road junction to provide safe pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities and remove vehicle merge conflicts (3) Provide more welcoming **gateways** into the town centre with improved landscaping and surface materials. (4) Introduction of Pedestrian crossing points which are 'at level', in contrasting materials to the surroundings with build outs to accommodate a street tree in key locations in the High Street (e.g to Foster Street, Ryemarket and to historic passageways such as Victoria Passage) to reduce traffic speeds and support safer pedestrian movement (5) All roads within the ring road to be 20mph to support safe pedestrian and cycle movements (6) New cycle way in Scotts Road and Turney Road to provide a northern cycle connection from the centre of the town via Crown Lane towards the Bonded Warehouse and Stourbridge Canal arm and onwards to Sustrans NCN 54 (7) Upgrade existing pedestrian crossing (across the ring road) to cycle friendly Toucan crossing and provide two-way cycle link into the town centre.

Gateway proposals

1. **Northern Gateway (Lower High Street/Bradley Road/'Hole in the Road')** – In addition to the bridge parapet proposals described above, there are a number of other ways in which this important gateway can be enhanced.



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) Provide a more welcoming entrance into the town centre with introduction of landscaping/planters, enhanced surface materials and wall decoration on ring road walls, especially at the Bradley Road subway entrance and at the Lower High Street subway entrance (2) Improved subway lighting and the introduction of CCTV (similar to what has been installed in Foster Street) in order that people feel safer using the subway and moving through the 'hole in the road' (3) In the dead space currently taken up by pedestrian deterrent paving, a new segregated cycle path to be installed connecting to Sustrans NCN 54 (4) New cycle way in Scotts Road and Turney Road to provide a northern cycle connection from the centre of the town via Crown Lane towards the Bonded Warehouse and Stourbridge Canal arm and onwards to Sustrans NCN 54 (5) All roads within the ring road, including Lower High Street to be 20mph (6) Lower High Street to retain existing on-street short stay parking provision. (7) Introduce Wayfinding (e.g. Finger posts) to encourage links to the canal and enhance the visitor and tourism economy. *(Note: item 7 is not specifically shown on this plan).*

Current pedestrian deterrent paving:



Image of a typical cycle lane to replace the deterrent paving:



Current Bradley Road subway entrance

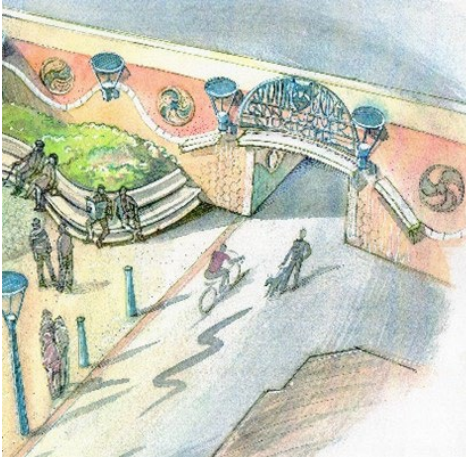


'Hole in the Road' with blank panels and current Lower High Street subway entrance

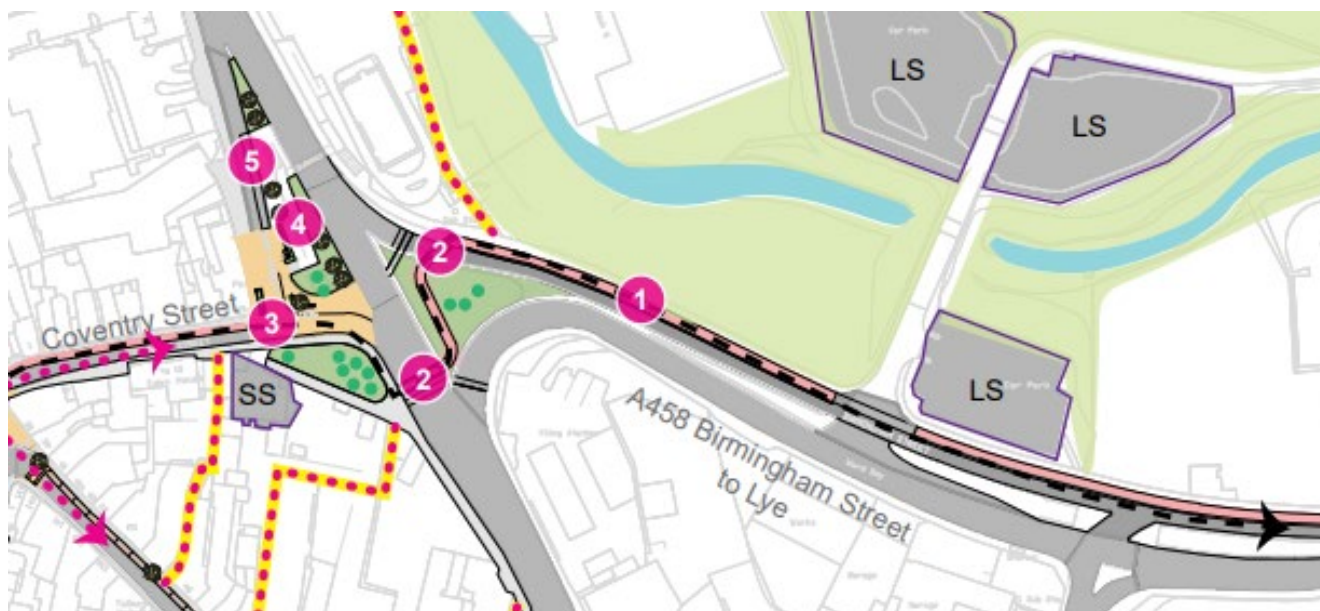


Images of planters & trees, artwork and lighting to make the subway entrances more welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists





2. Duke Street/Birmingham Street Gateway



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) New segregated cycle route along Birmingham Street linking the town centre to Stambermill, Stour Valley, Lye and surrounding areas to the east, and linking in with the new cycle way to the north of the town (2) New surface level crossing across the ring road, signalisation of Birmingham Street/ring road junction to provide safe pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities and remove vehicle merge conflicts (3) Provide a more welcoming entrance into the town centre from the east with improved landscaping and surface materials especially to Coventry Street and Duke Street and install seating (4) Retain the subway but to soften its approach and reduce CO2 levels introduce sustainable drainage features (rain gardens) thereby reducing the dominance of the existing hard materials (mainly tarmac). (5) Retain the existing short stay parking provision

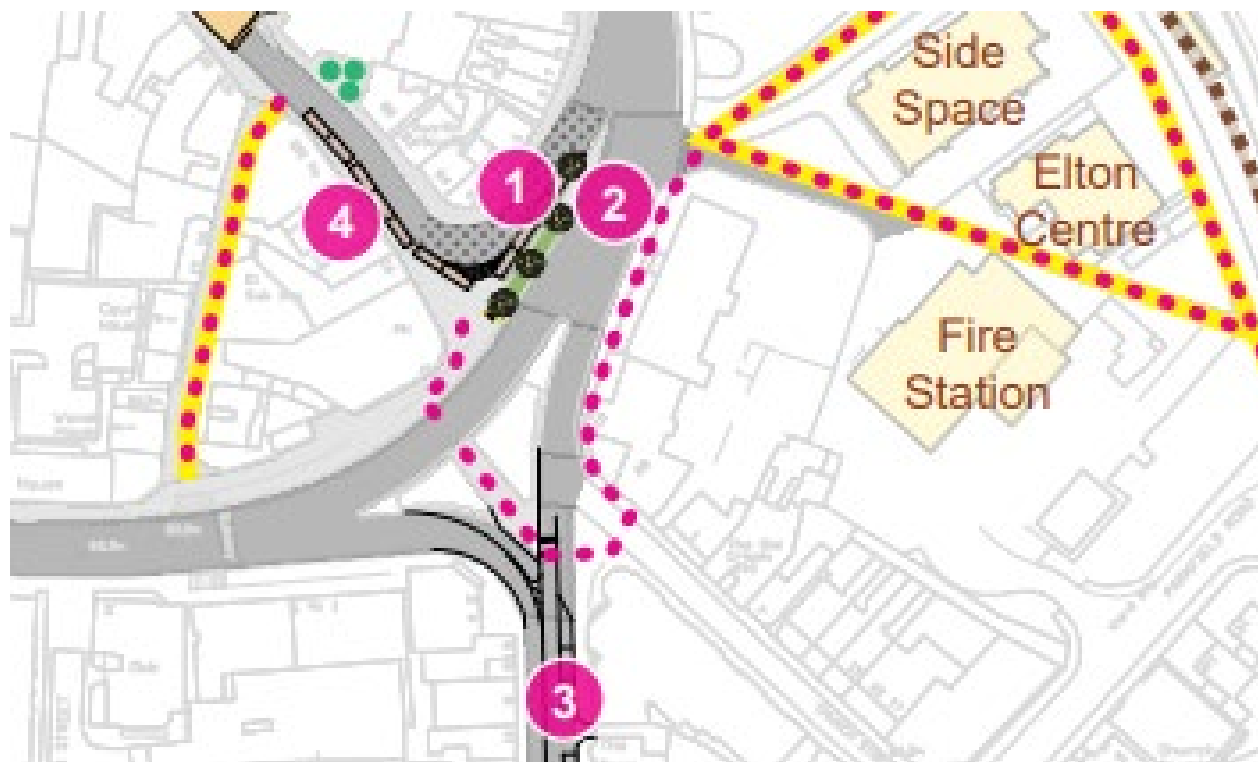
Current exit from the subway dominated by hard landscaping



Images of verge planting/rain gardens



3. Southern Gateway (Upper High Street)



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) New surface treatments to the road and pavements to create a sense of arrival to the High Street and to slow traffic (2) New area of planting/seating to soften the approach, reduce the dominance of hard materials and help improve biodiversity and reduce CO2 levels (3) Explore the opportunity to improve cycle access to High Street and review on-street parking provision on Hagley Road (4) Define the parking bays

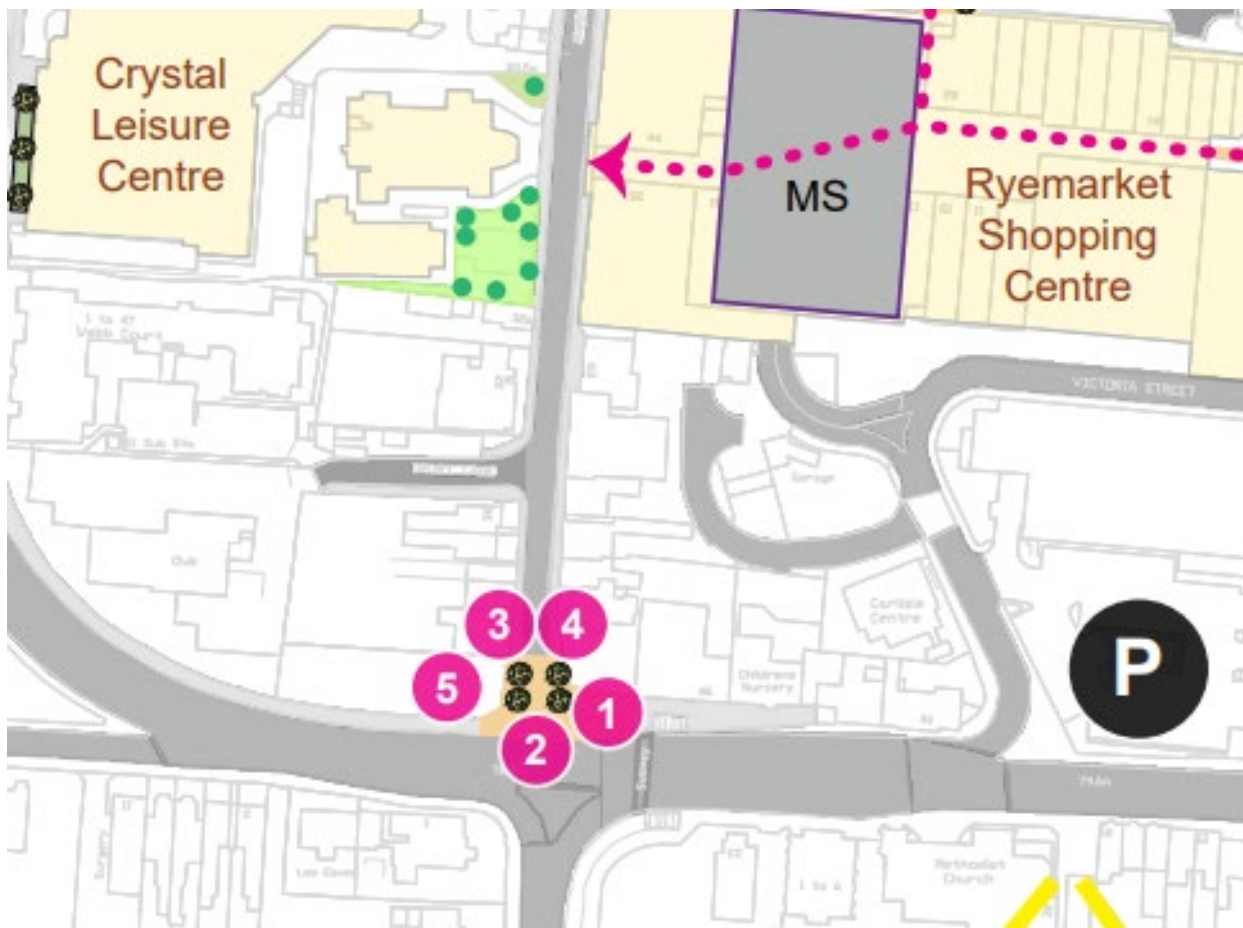
Current gateway:



Image of a road and parking bays in enhanced materials and build outs to accommodate street trees



4. Market Street/Worcester Street Gateway



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) New surface treatments (paving materials) to enhance the sense of arrival to the Market Street/Worcester Street Gateway (2) New area of Tree planting to soften the approach, reduce the dominance of hard materials, help reduce CO2 levels. (3) Introduce Wayfinding (e.g. Finger posts) to encourage links to Mary Stevens Park (4) Improved cycle stands (5) Enforce bringing the vacant building/site at the end of Market Street back into use.

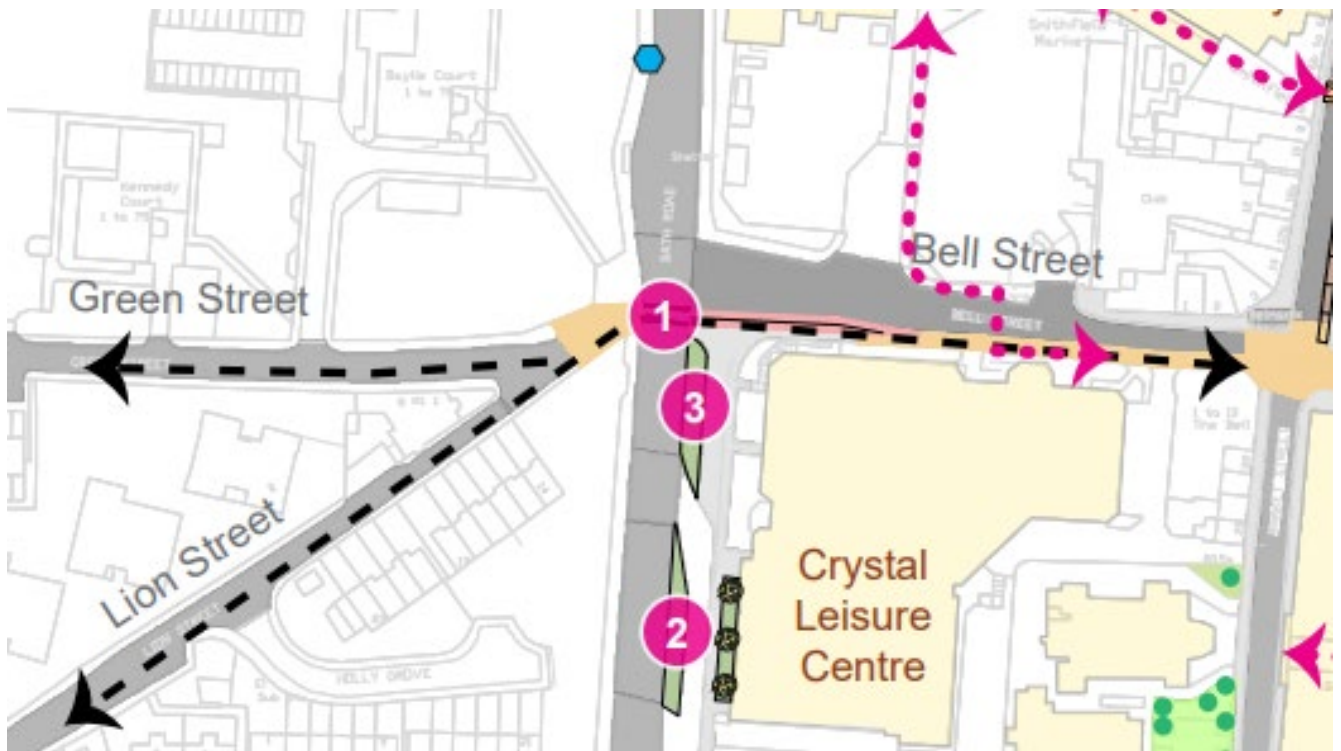
Current gateway:



Images of planters and trees to brighten the area



5. Bell Street Gateway



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) Upgrade existing pedestrian crossing (across the ring road) to cycle friendly Toucan crossing and provide two-way cycle link into the town centre thereby providing cycle and pedestrian links into the Old Quarter and onto walks at Greenfield Gardens and Mary Stevens Park (2) **Leisure Centre Western façade:** potential for rain garden and tree planting (3) Reduce the large expanse of hard landscaping with soft landscaping.

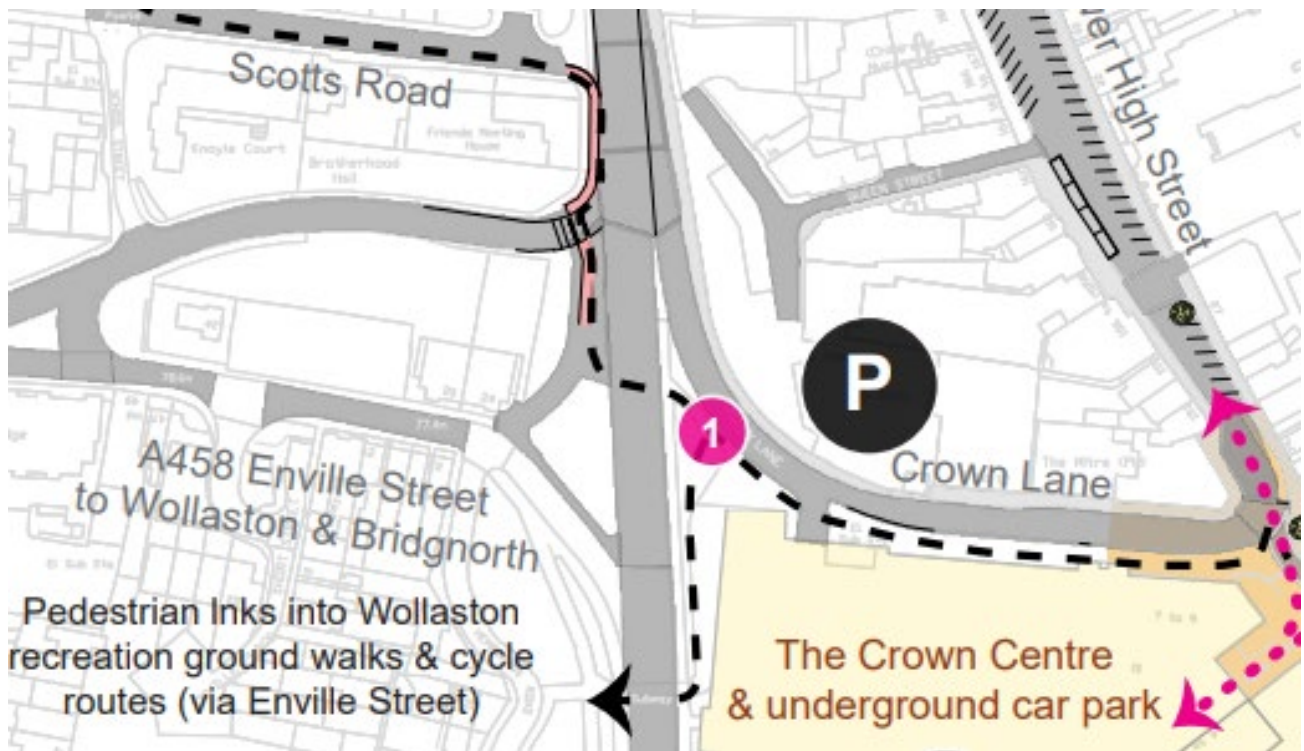
Current Gateway



Image of rain gardens to reduce hard landscaping



6. Enville Street Gateway



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) New cycle way connecting the town centre via Crown Lane with onward links westwards and northwards.

See Gateway 1 (Northern Gateway) above for the Scotts Road proposals.

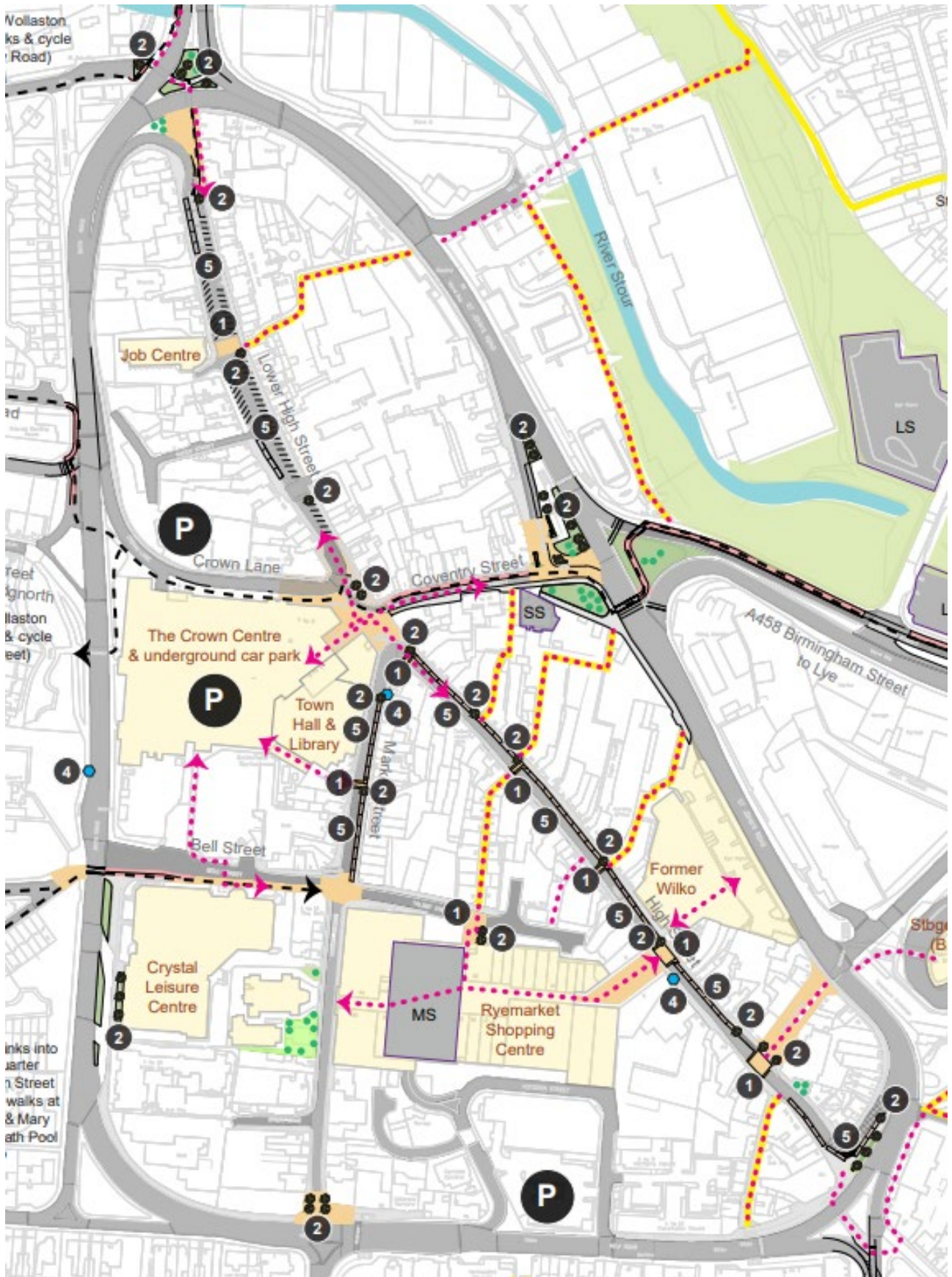
Current view of Crown Lane



Image of cycleway in a town centre location



Streets proposals



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) Introduction of raised crossing point for pedestrians with build outs in key locations (e.g to Foster Street, Ryemarket and to historic passageways such as Victoria Passage) to reduce traffic speeds and support safer pedestrian movement (2) Introduction of new street trees in the new build out spaces to help reduce CO2 levels and help regulate the climate along with reintroduction of greenspaces where feasible (3) Increase of the existing Blue badge provision within the town centre to ensure improved accessibility (4) Retention of the existing bus stop locations (5) Retention of the existing short stay parking provision (6) All roads within the ring road to be 20mph to support safe pedestrian and cycle movements (7) Re-paving of existing pavements and parking bays (8) Improved cycle infrastructure e.g cycle stands and public bike pump.



Public Bike Pump

The Bike Pump is a heavy duty product designed to be installed anywhere giving cyclists a free facility to pump up deflated tyres.

(Note: items 6, 7 & 8 are not specifically shown on this plan).

Current view of High Street (Victoria Street Passage):



Proposed 'at level' pedestrian crossing points and new street tree at Victoria Passage

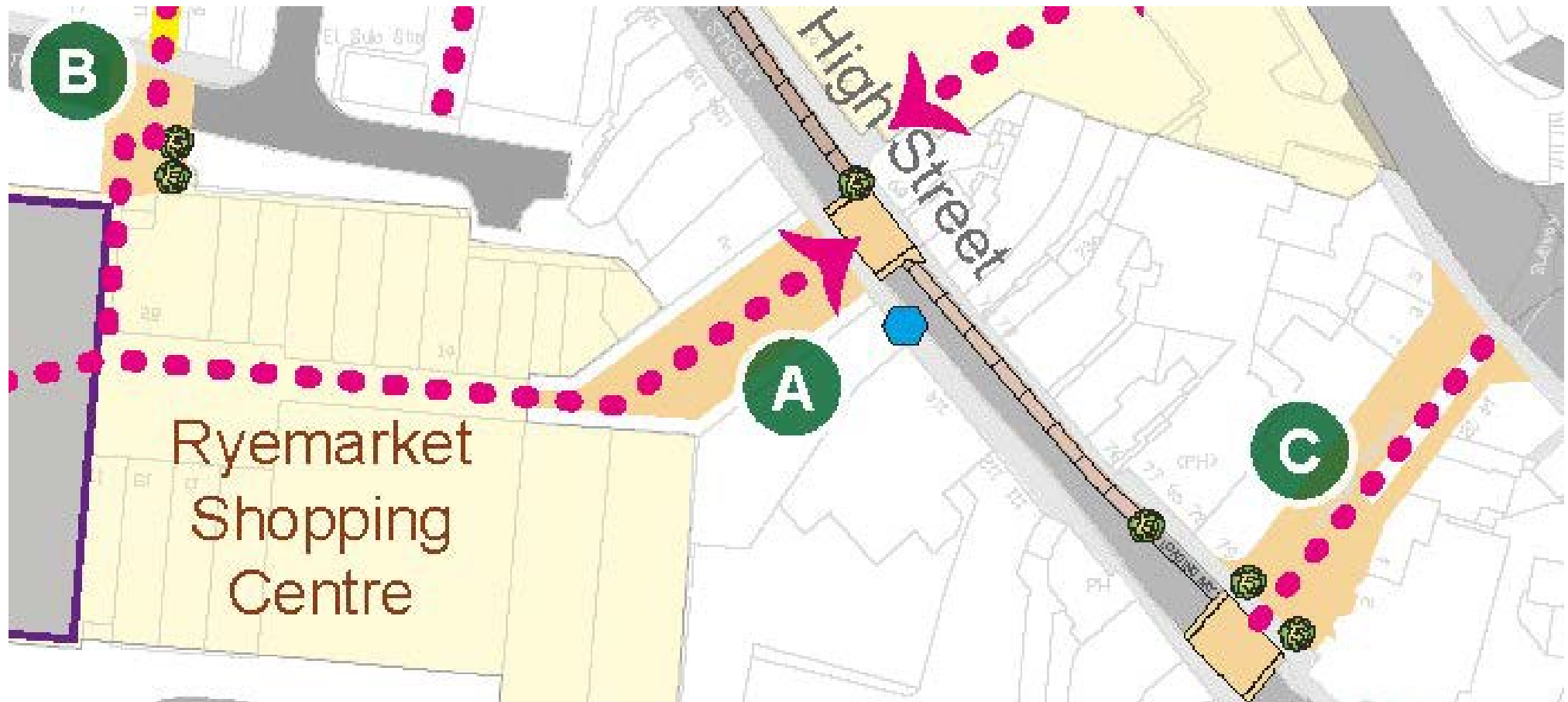


Image of an 'at level' uncontrolled pedestrian crossing point in a contrasting colour with street tree defining the end of a parking bay

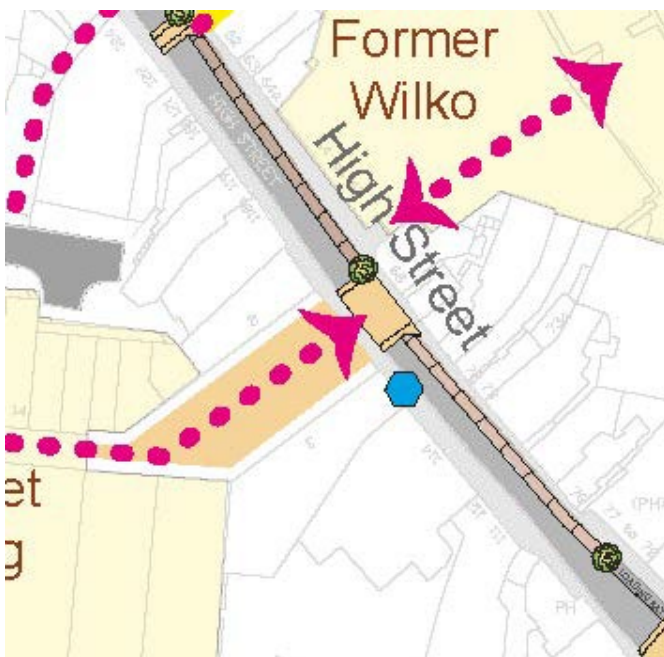


Spaces proposals

In addition to making improvements to the gateways and streets, there are also a number of proposed enhancements that could be made to three main public spaces in the town, **(A) Ryemarket**, **(B) Talbot Street** and **(C) Foster Street**.



A. **Ryemarket Public Space** – Although associated with the Ryemarket Shopping Centre, the space is a key area of public realm within the town centre. It contains the former water feature (which is no longer operational and taking up a lot of space at the key entrance point) and is dominated by awkwardly positioned planters and tired/ outdated paving. The town centre study has identified a potential approach to improving this space to attract greater use, higher footfall and encourage investment in the adjacent shop units and businesses.



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) Removal of existing clutter, redundant street furniture, fountain and dated planters in order to create a flexible space that can be used for social events (linking in with the surrounding units .e.g cinema, restaurant, café) as well as providing an area for social interaction and rest (2) Introduction of raised crossing point across the High Street to link the space to the High Street and make it safer for pedestrians. (3) Remove dated paving and replace with new contemporary material that complements the surrounding town centre (4) Potential for new area of planting/seating to soften the entrance to the space and reduce the dominance of the hard landscaping

Current view of existing poorly defined crossing point to Ryemarket public space



Image of an 'at level' crossing point in contrasting materials with build out at the end of the parking bays



Current views of existing Rye Market public space



Image of hard and soft landscaping, seating and lighting/art enhancements



B. Talbot Street Public space – Footfall studies of the town has identified that a large volume of people use the pedestrian link between the Ryemarket and Victoria Passage but the appearance of the area is very poor.



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) Create a more welcoming and safer space for pedestrians coming into and out of Victoria Passage and the Ryemarket by demolishing the redundant toilets/storage structure, installing decorative lighting and laying new paving materials and planting of tree (hard and soft landscaping) (2) Install a new raised crossing across Talbot Street creating an accessible link from Victoria Passage to the Ryemarket

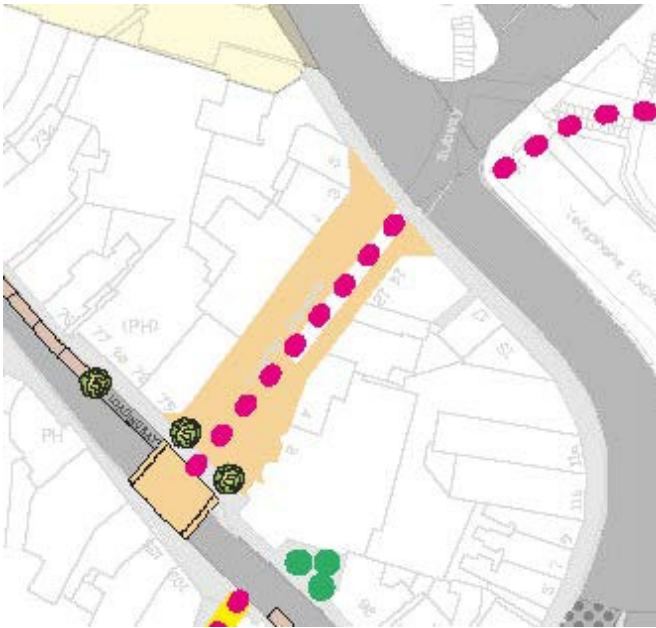
Current view of Talbot Street entrance



Visual of a more welcoming entrance with an 'at level' crossing to Victoria Passage



C. Foster Street Public space – This is a key public space but it has very outdated and uninspiring and currently not very welcoming.



DESIGN FEATURES: (1) Create a more welcoming entrance into the town (via the subway) from the bus station
(2) Potential for new areas of planting/seating to improve the appearance and reduce the dominance of hard landscaping.
(3) Introduction of raised table crossing point across the High Street to link the space to the High Street and make it safer for pedestrians.

Current view of Foster Street:



Image of ways of improving its appearance:





It's time to let us know what you think

We would like local people to get involved in shaping the proposals so we would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete the short questionnaire, which is enclosed separately.

If returning by post, please use the FREEPOST envelope provided.

Alternatively please visit www.regeneratingdudley.org.uk to complete the questionnaire online.

Hard copies can also be dropped off to reception staff at **Stourbridge Library**, where you will find the proposals on display from Wednesday 17th January to Wednesday 14th February 2024.

On the dates listed below the display will be staffed and you are invited to come along to find out more and ask any questions you may have.

Wednesday 24th January – 10am - 1pm

Tuesday 30th January - 1pm - 4pm

Saturday 3rd February – 10am - 1pm

Thursday 8th February – 1pm - 4pm

This consultation runs from Wednesday 17th January to Wednesday 14th February 2024.

