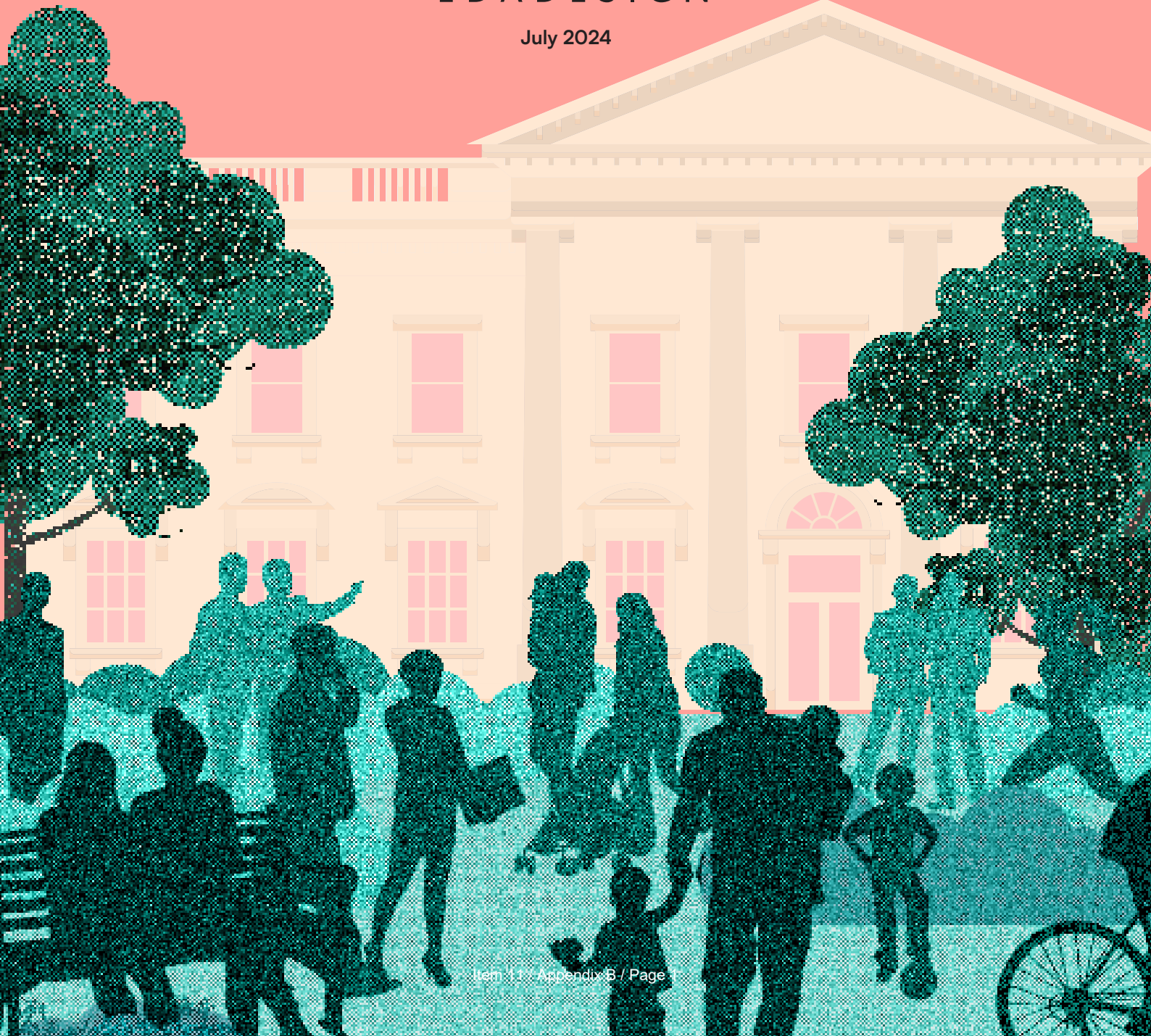


Royal Leamington Spa

July 2024 Workshops and emerging brief for Parade

LD&DESIGN

July 2024



1.0 Introduction

On 15th and 16th July 2024, the project team from Warwickshire County Council Warwick District Council, and Leamington Town Council, LDA Design and Norman Rourke Pryme (NRP) attended and facilitated two workshops at The Royal Pump Rooms to discuss challenges and opportunities for Parade.

The workshops aimed to firstly; develop a comprehensive understanding of how people currently view Parade and what fundamental challenges attendees felt the street space could address. And secondly, to understand what is the level of ambition to deliver against the draft vision? what changes people would like to see? and what magnitude of change is considered acceptable?

← The Town Centre Area

Aligning with the 2024 draft Vision; which at the time of presenting to the groups was titled “The People’s Spa”, the pillars refer to Healthy People. Key to this is empowering more people to participate in shaping the town centre’s future. Parade forms the town’s spine and is also referred to in the vision as potentially one of England’s greatest streets. It is crucial therefore that we involved a wide spread of individuals and groups to feed into how they see this special street changing in the future.

On Monday 15th July we met with Council and County officers from various departments, and on Tuesday 16th July we met with a broad range of stakeholders representing a diverse cross section of interested individuals and groups. Both groups took part in identical workshop formats.

The ultimate outcome following a discussion around challenges and opportunities is the development of a succinct brief for Parade. This will enable the design team to develop options that align with stakeholder feedback and a preferred strategic approach.

The following provides a summary of each workshop related to the challenges and opportunities. These are broadly listed in the order they were mentioned and is verbatim, as much as possible. After identifying specific challenges on Parade, groups previewed the draft 2024 Vision and reviewed world-class precedents for inspiration. Recognising Royal Leamington Spa’s unique context, and alongside the emerging draft vision of “The People’s Spa,” including its pillars and associated goals, attendees were asked to generate aspirational ideas and opportunities for the masterplan study area.

The findings of the workshops are reported in sections 2.0 and 3.0, and drawing on this feedback, section 4.0 drafts a design brief for Parade.

2 Royal Leamington Spa_Parade Brief



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← 15th July Council and
County Council Officers
Workshop

2.0 Identified Challenges

2.1 Monday 15th July 2024 — Council Officer Workshop

The following provides a longlist of specific challenges that were raised in the workshop:

- Fast food delivery bikes cause unsightly obstructions at various points
- Lack of good cycle infrastructure (segregated lanes and cycle stands)
- Vehicular traffic dominates
- Emergency access is essential, currently this is good
- Lack of comfortable seating in good locations with nice things to look at
- Diminished visual amenity
- Noise and air pollution
- Poor seating
- Visual interruptions
- Lack of green infrastructure
- Perceived and actual anti-social behaviour (ASB) / crime
- Vacant shops
- Lack of leisure facilities
- No offer to families
- Lack of events space
- Where is the fun and entertainment?
- Café culture is lacking
- Convenient bus access is important
- Material palette is uncoordinated/poor
- Not very accessible for physically impaired
- Confused wayfinding
- Night-time and day-time uses are not linked
- Struggle to cater for large numbers of people (Lights of Leamington abandoned due to inability to host?)
- Lack of direct routes — grid is useful, but blocks are large and cause obstructions
- Conservation area is a limiting constraint
- The resistance to ‘pedestrianisation’ is halting progress
- What is the actual car parking capacity? Is it enough? Do we need to provide more?
- Delivery/servicing access arrangement currently a problem
- ‘Quit culture’, “we can wait”, seems if it can’t be delivered instantly then we give up (??)
- Nature of road infrastructure encourages Parade as a through route.
- Lots of large vehicles contributing to poor air quality.
- ‘Estate Agent Row’ has become a ‘no-man’s land’.
- Rates limit vibrancy and independents from emerging on Parade
- Too much illegal car parking/stopping
- Independents limited to peripheral streets
- Heavy traffic outside Pump Rooms and at top of Parade
- What happens to Priors? It is not well connected to Parade.
- Covent Garden car park loss is a problem.

4 Royal Leamington Spa_Parade Brief

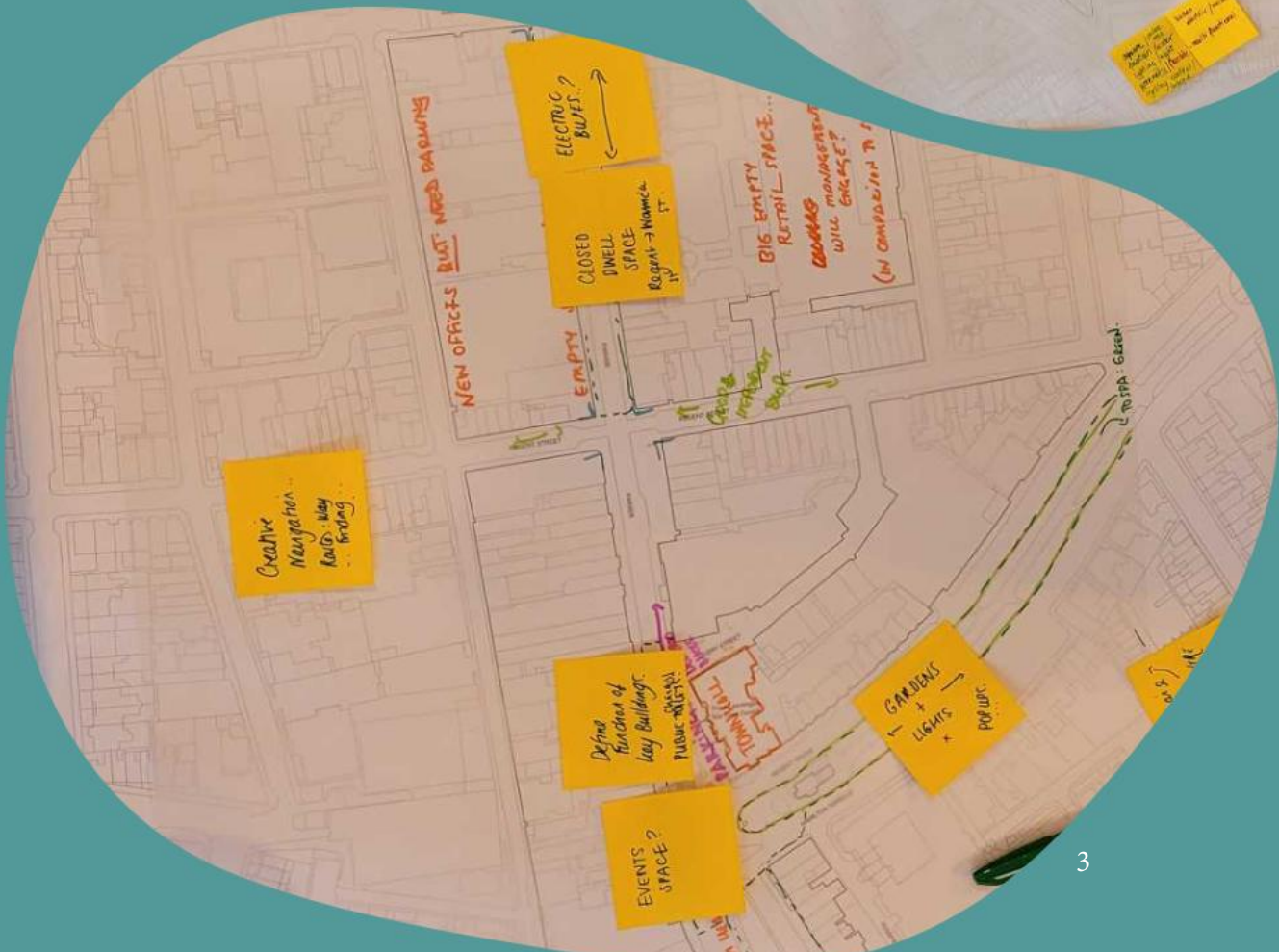


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→ Stakeholder Workshop challenges and sketch ideas



3

2.2 Tuesday 16th July 2024 — Stakeholder Workshop

The following provides a longlist of specific challenges that were raised in the workshop:

- Conflicts between users
- The changing nature of the town centre
- Buses are essential
- Busy traffic blocks pedestrian movement
- HGVs damage surfaces
- Retain essential domestic goods suppliers (such as Tesco)
- Through Traffic causing negative impact
- Lack of Spa identity
- Parade is lacking as a destination
- Attract more people living and working on Parade
- Retain and protect ease of access
- Lacking mix of commerce
- Creative industries not as visible as they should be
- Not a destination more a place to move through
- Congestion impacts bus journey times
- Convenient access to buses is essential
- If relocating traffic off Parade, consider impact to residents on adjacent streets
- Bus stop locations connected to retail useful. E.g. bus stop immediately outside Tesco.
- Emergency access is critical
- Impact of loading on pedestrians
- Parking pushed away from Parade and impacting wider context
- Loading blocking footpaths
- A weak 'destination'
- Lack of greening
- Seating poorly located
- Not great for families and children
- Consider grandparents with grandchildren (mixed generations)
- Lacking in evening/night time economy
- Maintaining servicing from frontage important
- Poor accessibility
- No play opportunities
- Large bus numbers snarl up north section
- Parade is an important link to rail station but lacks legibility
- Beautiful regency frontage neglected
- Poor quality public buildings
- A retail gap in the centre (House of Frazer, Royal Priors)
- Lacking an events space
- Gardens disconnected (Pump Room Gardens separated from Jephson Gardens by busy road)
- Conflict between vehicle users and pedestrians
- Uncoordinated street furniture – design and arrangement.

2.3 Summary of the Key Challenges

The above long list, along with conversations held at the workshops have been synthesised by the project team and key strands that Parade Masterplan will need to address are as follows:

- A clear recognition that vehicular traffic dominates Parade and detracts from the quality of the place. It is particularly busy at the far north and far south of Parade.
- Loading and delivery conflicts with other users, including fast food deliveries, cab drivers and independent couriers etc.
- Convenient bus access is important and should be maintained with minimal disruption to users.
- Seating and places to rest and pause are severely lacking, current seating is infrequent, uncomfortable and poorly positioned.
- Noise and air pollution is an ongoing issue.
- Lack of green infrastructure and green connective devices to link established parks and gardens together along Parade.
- The area lacks a permanent civic space, square or plaza.
- Parade lacks facilities for families, for example opportunities for play.
- Parade is a challenging environment for parents and carers with young children.
- Parade fails to perform the role of a destination.
- Parade lacks a sense of fun and excitement.
- The night-time economy is lacking and there is a poor transition between day and evening uses and activation.
- The distinct lack of the 'Spa' identity.
- Accessibility concerns, stepped access to shops etc.
- Parade feels like a place to move through rather than spend time, Road infrastructure supports 'through' traffic.

1

→ Stakeholder Workshop challenges and sketch ideas



2



3.0 Identified Opportunities

3.1 Monday 15th July 2024 — Council Officer Workshop

The following provides a longlist of specific opportunities that were raised in the workshop:

- Remove all motor vehicles from Parade (Warwick and Regent Street included)
- People first!
- Introduce an irregular, informal route to slow cycling and avoid conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.
- More greening to provide shade and increase comfort levels
- A water feature
- Much more seating both public and private
- Reduce motor vehicular access
- Encourage sustainable modes of transport in particular active travel opportunities
- Increase and support diversity of tenure
- Provide more social and events space, a new square outside the Town Hall
- Define delivery spaces including designated space for fast food bikes/gig economy.
- Allow for essential access (emergency, delivery, maintenance) and buses
- Enforce timed delivery
- Improve the underperforming spaces
- Remove parking on side streets
- Shelter and shade along the length of Parade (big sails?)
- Include feature lighting
- Include drinking fountains — think 'Spa'
- Make Parade pedestrianised! And make connected side streets pedestrian focussed but motor vehicle accessible
- House Of Frazer ground floor an exciting start up space, makers/doers and food and beverage.
- Be bold with conservation area - not limited or constrained.
- Close section between Regent Street and Warwick Street
- A new events space outside Town Hall
- A better use for Regents Grove, include play here.
- Electric buses or trams to introduce planet conscious movement opportunities.
- Link internal building uses with external spaces.

3.2 Tuesday 16th July 2024 — Stakeholder Workshop

The following provides a longlist of specific opportunities that were raised in the workshop:

- Shut Parade to all vehicles
- Provide pause and relaxation points in safe locations, with good things to look at.
- Animate the space with water

- Retain the elegant, Regency identity, this is Royal Leamington Spa's unique selling point.
- Include interesting feature lighting (Lights of Leamington reference)
- Introduce a Town Hall focal square/space/piazza
- Make the Spa a destination
- Business must thrive
- Reduce speed limit along Parade and time deliveries, no private through traffic
- Provide secure cycle parking
- Remove vehicular demarcation (kerbs)
- Make Parade child/family friendly and playable
- Improve the relationship between Royal Priors and Parade
- Make Parade an attractive place to live
- Introduce shared space
- Maintain bus access
- Time deliveries along Parade
- More spill out space, alfresco dining opportunities, café seating
- Introduce Town Hall Square
- Make it green, more trees along Parade
- Play along Parade
- Fountains
- Greener
- Maintain a formal identity
- Develop in phases and make a public square phase 1
- Play elements on Parade
- Creative arts encouraged on Parade — a space is needed for this
- Improving the top section is a priority
- A new focal space outside Town Hall
- Create a Spa feature
- Improve connection between parks at southern end
- Consider if Parade was one way
- Deliveries critical, timing difficult
- Consider a phased approach
- A new town square cantered around Town Hall
- Consider the role of water
- Lighting is important both functional to create a safe place but also feature to highlight assets
- Make green all the way up
- Build in multifunctionality and flexibility
- Avoid user conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists
- Consider user conflicts between pedestrians and buses (especially a problem when buses go electric and are quiet)

3.3 Summary of the key opportunities

All attendees felt passionate about Parade's evolution into one of England's best streets. Key questions included: How should it perform? What is its role? How do we draw out its unique identity? How should it best serve Royal Leamington Spa? Despite diverse opinions, common themes emerged and workshop attendees feedback can be summarised as follows:

- Reduce motor vehicular dominance along Parade to enable positive transformational change to occur and to deliver the vision. Opinions ranged from complete removal of all traffic without exception, to restricting access to privately owned vehicles only. Most appreciated the need to maintain delivery access to shop frontages and all accepted the need for emergency access along the length of Parade.
- Create a permanent civic space for the town to come together. This should be a place for celebration and a focus for occasional markets, performing arts and events. The area near or immediately outside the Town Hall was universally agreed as the best place for a focal space for the town.
- Maintain bus access because public transport plays a vital role in the town and should be encouraged and supported in any future plan. Convenient positioning of bus stops and avoiding impact to bus journey times are important considerations.
- Formal access for cyclists should be provided, and whilst permissible, cycle access along Parade should be discouraged and interventions introduced to slow potential speeds and reduce conflicts.
- Introduce greening opportunities along Parade, to link the existing assets of Royal Pump Room Gardens, Jephson Gardens and Christchurch Gardens. This will improve air quality, provide much needed shade and improve biodiversity.
- Water should play a role in Parade's future; suggestions ranged from playful fountains, a rill or continuous water feature along its length, alongside creative opportunities for water management following heavy rainfall events.
- The Spa identity needs reinforcing and history and narrative of place should be central to the look and feel of the public realm. It was suggested that the layout should be formal in structure, with flexibility to respond to adjacent building uses.
- Parade should integrate good places to sit, rest and pause with nice things to look at.

4.0 Brief

4.0 Project Brief for Parade Masterplan

Through assimilating feedback from workshops, conversations with the project team and other stakeholders, and in line with the 2024 Vision, we have developed a succinct brief for Parade. This highlights the key parameters for developing the emerging Masterplan.

- To explore options for vehicular traffic to be removed from Parade along its length from Hamilton Terrace to Clarendon Avenue, with access only for essential servicing and delivery, emergency services and ongoing maintenance. Through traffic will be directed along other routes avoiding Parade. The timing of service access will be dictated following the results of the ongoing servicing and access survey.
- For the purpose of this piece of work, bus access is re-routed, however bus stops will be located on side streets, as close to Parade as possible.
- A new Town Square is created outside the Town Hall, extending north to Livery Street and south to Hamilton Terrace, becoming a generous focal point for the town to come together.
- Distinctively Spa! The public realm will reinforce the special character and identity of Royal Leamington Spa, through layout, materials and careful detailing.
- The opportunity for a water feature will be explored, such as a fountain plaza, mirror pool, or equivalent, to create a flexible, engaging, and playful feature.
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be integrated in the public realm where possible. For example, rainwater will be captured, slowed and directed to planting areas to increase storage capacity and reduce the maintenance burden of watering.
- Parade should be fun and playable. Specific proposals should attract families and a range of ages, extending dwell time.
- Cycle access along Parade should be permitted. However, cycle speeds should be slowed by avoiding straight, quick routes and other cognitive devices. Secure cycle parking should be conveniently provided.
- Direct and segregated cycle links should be prioritised on parallel and side streets, where possible.
- Greening to be maximised along Parade, including more trees and climate-resilient planting. The planting should withstand more extreme temperatures, heavy rainfall, drought and disease, supporting local biodiversity networks.
- Planting should be sensitive to the historic views, layout and character of Parade.
- Improve and connect to existing spaces to create a coordinated and cohesive public realm.
- Provide regular seating opportunities along the length of Parade, carefully considering location to encourage use, providing social settings, as well as more private and intimate seating arrangements.

- Deliver a fully accessible and easy to use environment, ranging from the general street arrangement to the detailing of furniture.
- Parade must both 'feel' and 'be' safe for all; adhere to 'Secure by Design' principles, as well as the latest guidance relating to design for neurodivergence and designing safe spaces for women and girls. For instance, Parade must provide excellent natural surveillance, good quality lighting (both functional and feature), avoid hiding places and allow for choice in routes to move through.
- The masterplan for Parade must allow for a phased delivery and provide opportunities for both cost sensitive 'quick wins' as well as grand gestures and more transformational change.
- A baseline 'minimal change' option will also be developed to show the extent of improvement possible by upgrading the existing public realm.

The above brief sets key parameters to aid the development of the Masterplan for Parade. It is intended to allow flexibility for optioneering and a framework for participant-backed proposals.

The next step will be for the design team to take this brief and begin to shape masterplan options to share with Officers and Stakeholders for feedback in the Autumn.

