

SECTION THREE

GRANTHAM

Both regional (East Midlands) and sub-regional (Lincolnshire) planning and economic development strategies recognise Grantham as functioning as a sub-regional centre. Similarly, these strategies recognise that Grantham is under-performing in that role and is capable of a much enhanced role. There is no specific set of national or regional indicators that identify the attributes of a vibrant sub-regional centre. However, steps have been undertaken locally to provide some qualitative criteria.

The Grantham Town Centre Management Partnership comprises 23 members. This includes 6 SKDC representatives. The Partnership is chaired by Nick Woodhead, Editor of the Grantham Journal. Other private sector representatives include Jackie Smith (Springfield Park), John Painter (George Centre), Martin Isaacs (Downtown), Phil Taylor (FSB), Gill Reid (Grantham College), Patrick Hunt (Grantham & District Tourism Action Group, together with representatives of the Grantham Business Club.

Recruitment is presently underway for a Grantham Town Centre Manager, funded jointly by SKDC, Lincolnshire Enterprise and the private sector.

The Grantham Business Club is an organisation representing retail and business interests in the town centre, and is Chaired by Robert Nuttall of Woolworths. It has been established with financial support from the TCMP. The Club has some 65 members, and organises regular monthly meetings. It is very much representative of the retail community in the town centre and their participation in the TCMP is to be welcomed. Indeed, it is a commendable model that is worthy of replication in some of the other towns in the district where there is no organised trader representation.

The TCMP has two established sub-groups; Environment and Tourism, who report back and make recommendations to the main TCMP. The TCMP meets roughly every 2 months.

At its inception, the TCMP commissioned a Grantham Town Centre Healthcheck¹ (a recognised tool to establish the strengths and weaknesses of a town centre), which then led to the preparation of the Grantham Town Centre Masterplan².

Whilst the Masterplan is to be commended for presenting a series of aspirational projects (Retail Core development opportunity, Market Place pedestrianisation, St Peter's Hill Green, St Wulframs Gateway), what is lacking in the document is any coherent delivery plans. Moreover, key assumptions (such as the implementation of the Inner Relief Road extension past the railway station) have not materialised, and additional key issues have come to the fore (eg. car parking, Canal basin). The ODPM have defined masterplans as plans '*which set out proposals for buildings, spaces, movement strategy and land use in three dimensions and match these proposals to a delivery strategy*'. The Commission for Architecture and the Built

¹ DTZ Pieda: Grantham Town Centre Health Check 2001

² DTZ Pieda: Grantham Town Centre Masterplan 2002

Environment (CABE; formerly the Royal Fine Art Commission) state that for a Masterplan to be complete it must be supported by financial, economic and social policy documents and delivery mechanisms. Without these the spatial plan has little meaning or likelihood of effective implementation.

In view of the foregoing, there is merit in reviewing and rolling forward the Masterplan. This review should follow a robust methodology, which includes appropriate public engagement, and consultation with key stakeholders. Masterplans, by their nature are aspirational documents. Nevertheless, they must be based upon realistic assumptions and ultimately be deliverable. In the context of Grantham, where there are significant strategic land-holdings (eg. SKDC, Morrisons, Buckmister Trust and local investors). The full engagement with major stakeholders appears fundamental to the success of any future plan. Key stakeholder involvement in the TCMP would be beneficial in this regard.

As has been described in the preceding section, it is important that any masterplan review is preceded by the definition of clear priorities for the town centre by the partnership.

Lincolnshire County Council is shortly to commission a major transportation study of Grantham. That study will inevitably feed into, and draw from the parallel activity relating to any review of the masterplan. It is important therefore that these two exercises are progressed in tandem to draw mutual benefit from each other.

Following completion of a review of the Masterplan, it is to be hoped that the vision and ambitions contained within the plan can be incorporated within an Action Area Plan for the Town Centre; a Local Development Document that the District Council is committed to preparing as part of its Local Development Framework. Whilst ideally the two activities could occur concurrently, the urgency of the Masterplan review will necessarily dictate that one exercise will follow the other.

With the emergence of the town centre priority and the ambition to enhance Grantham's sub-regional role, it is beneficial to extend the Masterplan to embrace activities outside of the recognised town centre area that could contribute to an enhanced sub-regional role. This would include for example the Grantham Canal basin site, and the possibility of some form of park and ride / railhead facility at Gonerby Moor. However, these are significant projects in themselves, which demand detailed separate investigation (see below). Discussions have taken place with Lincolnshire Enterprise and it is anticipated that some funding may be forthcoming to support a masterplan review and roll forward, as well as funding for more specific project evaluations.

Cabinet at their meeting of 11th October 2004 approved a Checklist of Grantham as a Sub-Regional Centre (See Appendix 3). This checklist should be utilised to inform the masterplan review. Initial comments upon the un-met criteria, are set out in the Appendix. The District Council has established a Local Performance Indicator targeted towards the satisfaction of the un-met criteria on this checklist. Appendix 3 outlines, in broad terms when it is considered each of the unmet criteria will be satisfied.

Other local performance indicators relate to new retail units and to vacant retail units. Performance against these indicators is not so easily targetable by specific individual measures, but would generally be expected as a response to overall improvements in the town centre environment.

It also seems likely, from emerging ODPM research³ that the Government's State of the Cities Report, to be published later this year, through the use of a Town and Cities Indicators Database, will provide a comprehensive assessment of urban conditions, and analyse urban trends and drivers of change (see anticipated indicators at Appendix 4). This database, which seems likely to include towns the size of Grantham, will provide a useful tool for monitoring and evaluating urban change in the town. The preliminary research findings, utilising a shift-share⁴ categorisation of recent employment change, identifies Grantham in the lowest shift-share category as a "Challenged Urban Area" (see Appendix 4).

Grantham Canal Basin

The land encompassing the former Grantham Canal basin has been recognised as a substantial tract of under-utilised, largely brownfield land offering significant redevelopment and regeneration opportunities.

The site which is approximately 22 hectares (54.3 acres) in area is identified in plan form at Appendix Five attached to this report. It is broadly defined by Dysart Road to the north, Earlesfield Lane to the south, Alexandra Road, Harlaxton Road, and the East Coast Main Line to the east, and Hodder Close and Derwent Road to the west. The Grantham Canal as a water body, presently stops at Earlesfield Lane. North of Earlesfield Lane, the canal formerly continued for a further 500m, terminating at a canal basin adjacent to Old Wharf Road. This section of the canal was filled in approximately 40 years ago. Access to the navigable sections of the Grantham Canal west of the A1 is prevented by a 350m length of culvert running between Swingbridge Road (adjacent the Marriott Hotel) and the A1.

The site contains a mixture of employment-based uses, together with the District Council depot and CCTV control room, the County Council civic amenity site, and commercial uses on Harlaxton Road (builders merchants and petrol filling station), and Dysart Road (bowling alley and childrens' indoor play area). Large parts of the site are either vacant, derelict or relatively underused.

The site represents a significant regeneration opportunity. Not only does the site represent an opportunity to contribute to the Town Centre development priority, and other planning and economic development aims (including the regeneration of brownfield sites), but it also sits squarely with the economic regeneration aims of other bodies such as the sub-regional strategic partnership (Lincolnshire Enterprise) and the Regional Development Agency (emda). British Waterways, in their vision document for the future shape of the waterway network, 'Waterways 2025', have

³ ODPM Research Summary No.17 (2004): Developing a Town and City Indicators Database

⁴ Shift share analysis is essentially a means of breaking down an area's total employment change into components representing a set of influences; the national employment trend, employment trends by industry and the relative mix of industries in an area, and a 'residual' representing the effect of other location-specific factors upon employment change.

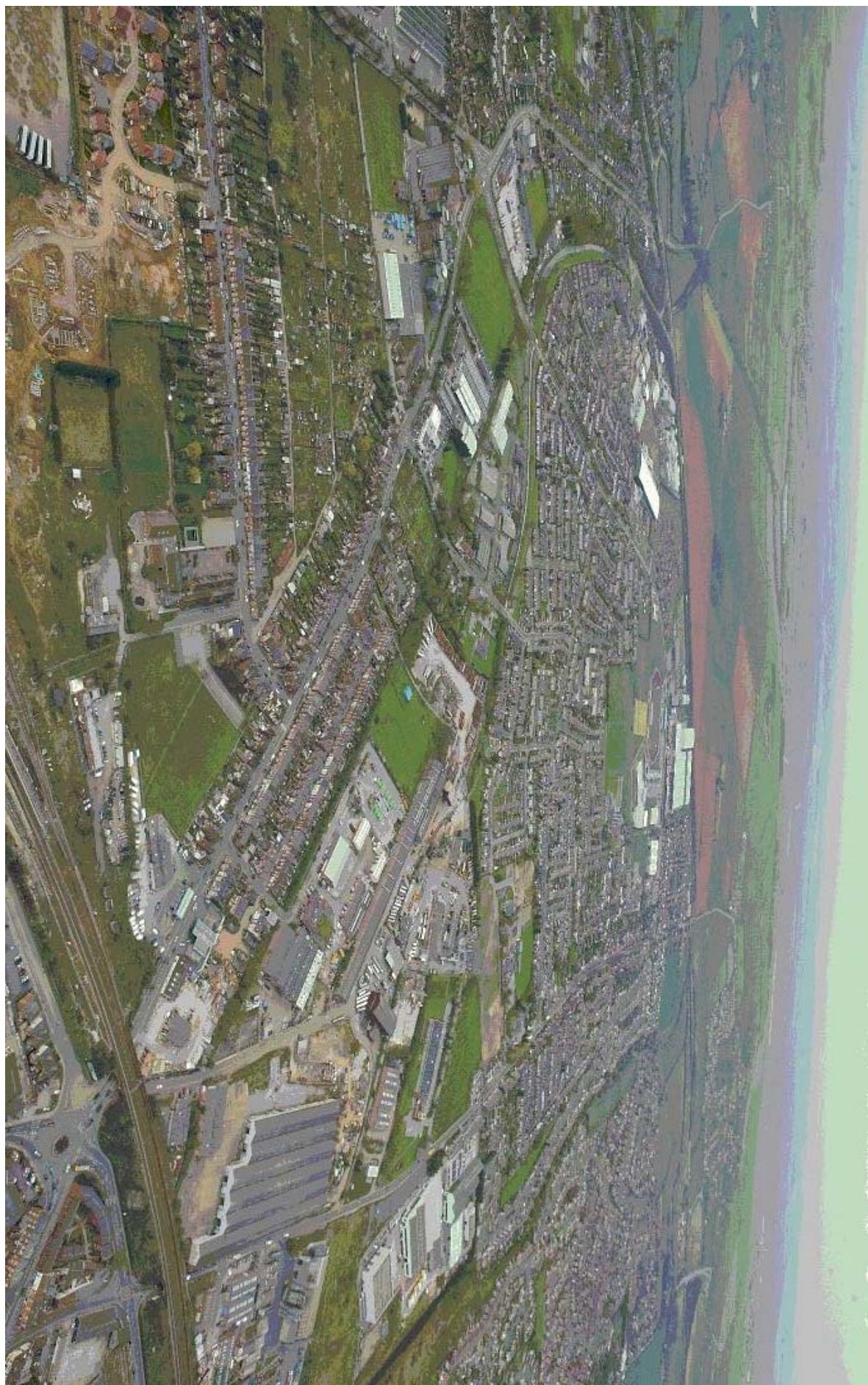


Figure 3.1 Aerial view of Grantham Canal Basin site looking west towards A1

identified 18 major canal restoration projects that they would wish to support and which they see as realisable by 2025. Grantham Canal is one of nine Priority B projects. Re-creation of the former canal basin within the site as part of any broader mixed use regeneration could potentially dovetail in with broader aspirations to restore the whole canal. The project is ideally one that would benefit from a multi-agency, public/private partnership approach, and one, which must be seen as being able to potentially draw significant funding from external sources.



Figure 3.2 Grantham Canal Basin circa 1900

The site, would appear to be suitable for a mixed use development, focussed around a restored canal basin. This would include residential and employment uses, and possibly other leisure and speciality retail type uses. The potential also exists to explore the potential for the location of a Science Discovery Centre as a development centre-piece and attraction⁵.

Whilst, the redevelopment of the site with a focal water-feature based upon a restored canal basin is likely to be feasible as a free-standing development, the greater potential exists to view the project as an initial phase of the broader canal restoration. There are recognised physical barriers to restoration that would need to be overcome; Earlesfield Lane, Trent Road, and the A1. It is considered expedient to consider these matters as part of any preliminary review of the viability of developing the basin site, possibly in connection with a previously mooted concept of a marina-focused employment allocation on Harlaxton Road west of the A1.

The first step, in promoting the regeneration of the area is to carry out a preliminary assessment of the viability of the redevelopment of the area, and the establishment of broad development parameters; accessibility, development mix, contamination, and engineering, as well as external funding opportunities. This initial work could thereafter inform the development of a masterplan for the site and a site development brief for planning purposes. It is considered that a feasibility project of this nature could attract funding from Lincolnshire Enterprise, and possibly emda, as well as

⁵ See report of ABL Consulting; Science Discovery Centre for Grantham: Outline Feasibility Study and Cabinet resolution 7th March 2005 (Report: DCS17;Minute No: CO.111)

from other potential partners. This first stage of the project would require full engagement with all potential partner organisations, and full consultation with landowners.

Adopting a format similar to that employed at Bourne (in relation to the Core Area site), there would thereafter follow a marketing exercise whereby prospective developers tendered proposals for the site, which, through a selection process would ultimately yield a single preferred developer. A partnership agreement would thereafter follow, with the potential for the use of CPO powers being incorporated into any such agreement. Discussions are also taking place with emda and Lincolnshire Enterprise about alternative delivery vehicles.

The District Council endorse the principle of promoting the regeneration of this area; and to commit appropriate resources (supplemented by contributions from external bodies) to an initial feasibility study of the re-development of the site, as described above, incorporating an overall masterplan and site development brief.

Rather than concentrating specifically upon the canal basin area, it is considered that there may be merit in broadening the study to explore the development and economic development potential of the canal more generally. Clear development opportunities exist at other points along the canal (eg. to the west of the A1 on Harlaxton Road), that could potentially serve both economic development and leisure / tourism interests.

Given the broad range of interested parties with canal related interests, joint funding opportunities should be explored for any feasibility study. Year 2005/2006 budgetary provision has been made for an SKDC contribution to the project. Discussions are taking place with the various canal related interests, including the Grantham Canal Partnership who may be in a position to support a study.

In summary, the study aims should be to;

- (a) To develop feasible, viable options for land usage of the Grantham Canal Basin site, taking account of economic regeneration and planning issues.
- (b) To carry out a detailed site assessment to identify any potential site specific issues and their impact upon the feasibility of any identified land use options
- (c) To identify the technical issues relating to the re-opening of the Canal Basin to navigable standards between the A1 and the canal, together with broad cost estimates
- (d) To consider accessibility issues, by all transport modes and explore means by which the Canal Basin site can be more fully integrated with Grantham Town Centre
- (e) To identify broader development and leisure / commercial opportunities relating to the Grantham Canal, including the potential for a commercial / employment development adjacent to the A1
- (f) To investigate the potential to accommodate within the canal basin site a Science Discovery Centre, the subject of an earlier feasibility study in relation to Conduit Lane, Grantham, and the extent to which this may be deliverable as part of any overall development package

(g) To identify preferred mechanisms / strategy for the delivery of the canal basin site.

The desired outputs from any studies are;

- (i) demonstration of the viability of the re-development of the site, and an optimal mix of uses
- (ii) a masterplan for the development of the site, identifying a broad distribution of uses, infrastructure and public realm
- (iii) a site development brief for the site suitable for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document

Other major projects

Other major projects that were contained within the Grantham Town Centre Masterplan, and which are the subject of ongoing investigation / evaluation are sites at **St Catherine's Road, Conduit Lane, East Street, Watergate and Greenwoods Row**. Steps are presently being taken to bring forward the pedestrianisation of the **Market Place**, a key element of the Town Centre Masterplan. Longer term public realm projects that will be investigated during the Plan period will be the so called **St Wulfram's Gateway** area; a key location in the heart of the conservation area, and the **railway station approaches**; both pedestrian and vehicular, which have significant potential for environmental enhancement as a key Gateway to the town centre.



Figure 3.3 Artists impression; Grantham Market Place pedestrianisation (from Grantham Town Centre Masterplan)

St Catherine's Road

The St Catherine's Road area, running from adjacent to the Tollemache Inn eastwards to the junction of Welham Street was identified in the First Deposit Draft Local Plan (January 2002) as an Opportunity Area with redevelopment potential for leisure and related commercial uses. The area has similarly been identified in the

Grantham Town Centre Masterplan. The Draft Local Plan described the site (which included Welham Street car park) as follows:-

"This is an area of about 1 hectare located on the eastern side of the town centre behind the District Council offices on St Peter's Hill and extending eastward up to the River Witham."

The site is flanked by St Catherine's Road, to which it has a 140 metre frontage, and mixed commercial and residential properties on Avenue Road. Both of these roads provide important routes into the town centre from the east, and are connected by Welham Street which runs parallel to the river.

The area contains one of the town's largest public parks, a small two-screen cinema and an OAP meeting hall. Apart from a very narrow strip of land between Welham Street and the river, which contains a disused commercial building formerly occupied by a tyre fitting business, all of the site is owned by the District Council.

The site has the potential for a high quality re-development aimed at consolidating and enhancing civic, cultural and leisure uses in this part of the town centre. These could include a new multi-screen cinema, bowling alley, fitness pool, hotel, exhibition space, restaurants and other leisure / community facilities.

Any scheme should make provision for the retention and improvement of public car parking. The loss of such facilities, would not only result in a possible shortfall of town centre spaces overall but would tend to increase penetration of the central area by car-borne visitors approaching from this side of the urban area. Advantage could be taken of the sloping nature of the site to secure multi-level provision.

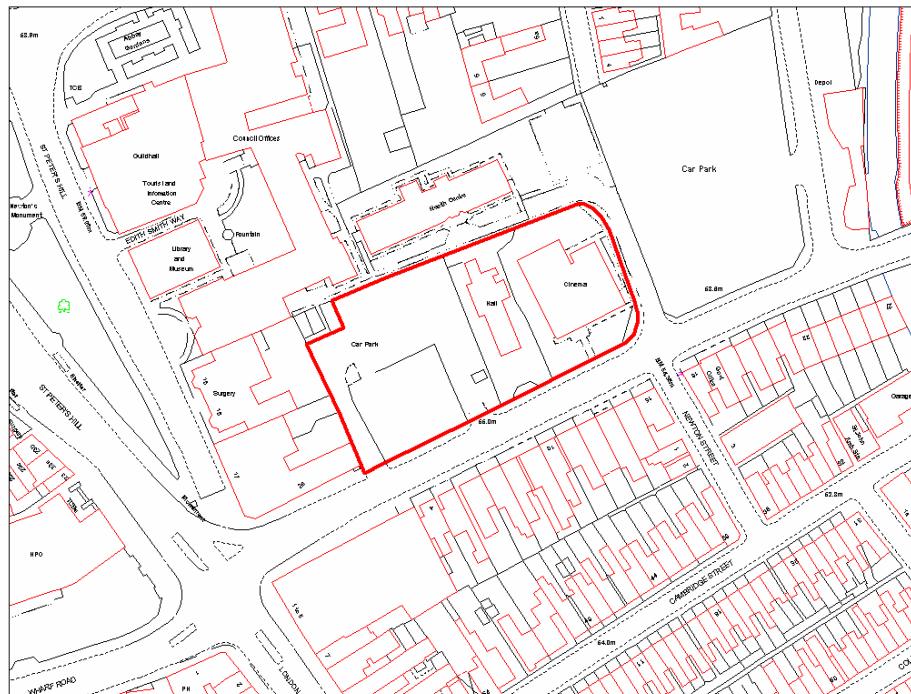


Figure 4.4 St Catherine's Road opportunity area

The development potential of this area has long been recognised, both by the District Council, and by the private sector. The land adjoining the river, is now the subject of a detailed planning consent for residential development. The feasibility of redeveloping Welham Street car park as a multi-storey facility is presently being evaluated in conjunction with the redevelopment of the East Street site for housing

purposes⁶. It is proposed that subject to the assembly of the site, a planning brief be prepared, with a view to the subsequent marketing of the site for leisure related development purposes.

Conduit Lane

The Conduit Lane Car Park has been identified both in the Town Centre Masterplan and the First Deposit Draft Local Plan as an opportunity area for redevelopment. The Opportunity Area included not only the Conduit Lane car park, the adjoining toilets and market store, but also substantial tracts of land to the west of Westgate, including the Cattle Market. The feasibility of developing Conduit Lane car park as a Science Discovery Centre has been the subject of detailed evaluation⁷, which concluded that such a development was not a feasible proposition on this particular site.

The re-development potential of the site nevertheless remains. The site is strategically located between the Asda superstore and the retail core, and with the opening of the Cattle Market retail development, there will be increased footfall along Greyfriars to access that development. The site as such offers the potential to provide a continuity of retail frontage between these three areas, and also to provide additional residential accommodation in the town centre area. The potential also exists to create a new public convenience facility by the inclusion of the existing building and the adjoining Market Store.

The development potential of the site will be evaluated during the Plan period, including the development of an appropriate planning brief, with a view to the subsequent marketing of the site for a mixed-use redevelopment.

East Street / Watergate

The future of these two town centre sites is presently the subject of a detailed evaluation of car parking in the town centre, which also includes technical evaluation of the decking potential of Welham Street. That each of these two sites has redevelopment potential is widely recognised. However, it is also recognised that their future is subject to more detailed deliberation in relation to the town centre parking situation. At this juncture this Action Plan is unable to be specific about the outcome of that separate car parking review, suffice to say that the preferred car parking solution that emerges will give rise to development opportunities on one of both of these sites. It is proposed that, arising from the outcome of the car parking review, appropriate measures be taken to develop a suitable planning framework for the delivery of any identified surplus site, prior to disposal.

⁶ Cabinet 11th April 2005. Report DCS14: Grantham Town Centre – Watergate East Street Car Parks

⁷ See report of ABL Consulting; Science Discovery Centre for Grantham: Outline Feasibility Study and Cabinet resolution 7th March 2005 (Report: DCS17;Minute No: CO.111)

Greenwoods Row

A central feature of the Town Centre Masterplan was the recognition of the retail development potential of a core area of the town, focussed upon Greenwoods Row. This was similarly recognised in the First Deposit Local Plan. The Local Plan stated;

“This is an area of about 1.6hectares in the heart of the main town centre shopping area. Existing uses on the site comprise the Greenwoods Row car park and rear service yards to retail and commercial properties on High Street, Guildhall Street and Welby Street.

This key town centre location has the potential to offer, by the way of redevelopment and refurbished premises, to include a major anchor store and other units to accommodate national and independent retailers.

The site represents a significant redevelopment opportunity incorporating properties on High Street and linked to the Isaac Newton Centre and George Centre.”

It is important that this key element of the Masterplan is retained and investigated as part of any Masterplan review. Whilst the site as defined in the Local Plan is in multiple ownership, a key land-owner is Wm Morrisons, and their participation in determining the future of the site is fundamental. Whilst the site as defined in the Local Plan is quite specific, it must be recognised that there is potential to enlarge the scope of the investigations to include a broader area of land. During the Plan period it is proposed to investigate the feasibility of this core area redevelopment in conjunction with principal landowners. The future strategy to be pursued will be very much contingent upon the outcome of these initial studies. Should the viability and need for the development be proven, the District Council ultimately has recourse to compulsory purchase powers to secure the availability of the site.

Rail halt at Gonerby Moor

The Economic & Cultural DSP is currently giving consideration to the potential for a rail halt at Gonerby Moor, on the Grantham-Skegness rail line, occasioned by the construction of the Allington Chord. Whilst conceptually such a halt could serve as a park and ride facility for the town centre, the initial reaction of the Strategic Rail Authority is that the frequency of the service on the Grantham-Skegness line is not conducive to park and ride. Nevertheless, it is considered that there is merit in evaluating the potential for a halt. Potentially, the rail halt could serve not only as a park and ride facility (and as such contribute to the overall supply of car parking in the town), but as a ‘parkway’ type station providing connectivity with main line services at Grantham. One might also anticipate that a rail halt at Gonerby Moor would serve as a destination station for the retail facilities there, from Grantham and beyond.

The recently established Community Rail Partnership for the Grantham-Skegness railway line⁸ would seem to be the ideal forum to advance this project. Lincolnshire County Council, have also been asked to carry out some demand forecasting for the rail halt (the first stage in the evaluation of new station proposals), as part of the overall Grantham Transportation Study described earlier in this chapter.

⁸ NKD: May 2005: Community Rail Partnership. Report PLA.496

Tourism as an economic regeneration tool in Grantham

Whilst tourism overall has been recognised as a low-priority (Z) service, it is similarly recognised that tourism activity can play a significant role in the economic regeneration of town centres, a point identified in the recent tourism strategy report⁹, described more fully in Section 2. Grantham's present tourism offer is limited; confined mainly to a business tourism destination, and a centre for day visitors, mainly for shopping. However, it is recognised that the development and enhancement of the town centre retail offer will support the further development of the town as a tourism destination.

Within the Tourism Intervention Appraisal, the following key priorities and opportunities were identified for developing Grantham's visitor economy. The table below also illustrates how these priorities can be addressed. As this table illustrates, the issues / priorities are largely based around improving the overall town centre offer. The issues are to a very large extent being addressed, or are capable of being addressed through current initiatives, the Masterplan review, and closer working with the business community. It is considered that these priorities can be addressed through existing agreed budgets.

Developing Grantham's visitor economy		
	Priority / Opportunity	Action
1	Improving the town's retail and catering offer, particularly in terms of the independent sector	Issues that are able to be addressed as part of any Masterplan review
2	The development of flagship attractions / destinations in the town, such as the proposed Isaac Newton attraction and the development of the Grantham Canal Basin	Issues that are able to be addressed as part of any Masterplan review and through the Canal Basin feasibility study.
3	Improved public toilet provision	Public convenience provision approved by Cabinet ¹⁰
4	Improved pedestrian links	To be addressed through Masterplan review
5	Improving the public realm and street scene	Projects in progress. Market Place pedestrianisation proposals in hand ¹¹ . Cabinet have approved a Street Scene Action Plan ¹²
6	Addressing anti-social behaviour in the town centre	Cabinet have approved an Anti social Behaviour and Enforcement Policy ¹³ and this is in the course of implementation
7	Coach parking	To be considered as part of the Masterplan review

⁹ ACK Tourism: South Kesteven Tourism Intervention Appraisal. November 2004

¹⁰ Cabinet 7th March 2005. Provision of public conveniences: Grantham. Report DCS.15

¹¹ NKD.10th May 2005. Report PLA.495: Grantham Market Place pedestrianisation

¹² Cabinet 10th January 2005: Street Scene Action Plan. Report DCS.20

¹³ Cabinet 4th April 2005: South Kesteven District Council Anti Social Behaviour and Enforcement Policy. Report DCS.20

8	The development of events in the town centre	To be developed in conjunction with the TCMP, and the Grantham Business Club
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ACTIONS:

- 10. That subject to TCMP approval, implement a comprehensive review and roll-forward of the Grantham Town Centre Masterplan, that will inform and underpin the subsequent preparation of a Grantham Town Centre Action Area Plan**
- 11. Subject to TCMP approval, appointment of consultants to carry out, in consultation with partner organisations, a feasibility study of the Grantham Canal Basin site, leading to the preparation of a masterplan for the site and the development of appropriate supplementary planning guidance.**
- 12. Subject to land assembly, a planning brief be prepared for the St Catherine's Road area, with a view to bringing the land forward for a leisure focussed redevelopment**
- 13. Develop a planning brief for the Conduit Lane site with a view to bringing the land forward for a mixed use (Retail / residential) redevelopment#**
- 14. Subject to the conclusions and outcomes of the car parking review in Grantham, prepare planning brief(s) for surplus site(s) arising from review, with a view to subsequent disposal.**
- 15. In conjunction with principal landowners, review the feasibility and viability of a Grantham core area retail development, based around Greenwoods Row. In the event of proven viability, need & demand, develop appropriate planning guidelines and development strategy for the site**
- 16. In conjunction with the local highway authority, initiate design process for Grantham Market Place pedestrianisation, with a view to implementation at the earliest opportunity**
- 17. Initiate design studies in relation to public realm areas at St Wulfram's Gateway and Railway Station approaches**
- 18. Investigate the potential of a rail halt at Gonerby Moor**
- 19. Implement outstanding actions from the Sub-Regional Checklist for Grantham**
- 20. Implement action points to develop the visitor economy of Grantham**