A number of development opportunities exist throughout the Town Centre. However, three key development opportunities will be critical to the overall success of the Masterplan:

- Devonshire Square and Granby Street Car Park
- Former General Hospital and Aumberry Gap
- Loughborough Eastern Gateway

These sites have been considered as development opportunities for a number of years and are identified within the Borough Council's adopted Local Plan. Development briefs have been prepared for the first two of these sites in conjunction with the Masterplan and have been adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents so that they will carry greater weight as material considerations in the determination of planning applications. The briefs will provide more detailed guidance on how these two important parts of the Town Centre should be developed in line with relevant planning and design policies and offer an indicative but flexible vision of future development form.

The Loughborough Eastern Gateway site has reached a more detailed stage and the Council is developing a scheme in partnership with its selected developer William Davis and Network Rail.

Devonshire Square and Granby Street Car Park

The site is located within the southernmost part of the Town Centre’s retail core. It has an area of about 1.35 hectares. Queens Park adjoins the site’s western boundary and the other site boundaries are Brown’s Lane to the south, Ward’s End and Devonshire Square to the east, and Granby Street to the north. The town’s twice weekly and specialist street markets extend into Devonshire Square, fronting the site. Devonshire Square is named after the Devonshire Militia who drilled there when they were stationed in Loughborough to quell the Luddite Riots in the early nineteenth century. It is one of the series of linked public spaces that are of great significance to Loughborough’s history, form and character.
The Masterplan and Development Brief recognise the importance of achieving an integrated, planned approach to the redevelopment of this key Town Centre opportunity site to:

- Ensure that any new development takes proper account of all relevant policies of the adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan and acknowledges other guidance set out in the Council’s adopted SPD and SPG;
- Ensure that any new development pays due regard to the site context and features, planning objectives for the area and existing amenities; whilst optimising site potential and development quality;
- Inform investment decisions, and land disposals and acquisitions by clarifying development constraints;
- Stimulate interest among owners, developers and prospective occupiers so as to bring the land forward for development;
- Encourage co-operation between owners;
- Ease the planning process for potential applicants by anticipating issues and offering greater certainty;
- Provide guidance to Council officers and Members to assist in the determination of planning applications.

The Council’s vision for this site is:

“A development of urban design and architectural excellence that will transform an existing discordant building and extensive surface car parking areas into a vital part of the Town Centre offering a varied mix of uses, distinctive architecture and an innovative approach to the treatment of the public realm and the Wood Brook and with a harmonious relationship with Queens Park.”

Of great importance will be the effect of development on Queen’s Park, which is a much cherished feature of the town.

The Council’s vision for the park is set out in its Green Flag Management Plan:

“To preserve and enhance the beauty and heritage of the park. To improve the facilities and accessibility of the park ensuring that it continues to serve the needs of the local community, the wider population across the borough and encourages greater numbers of visitors to the town.”
In addition to the general guidance in the Masterplan, the principal planning and design objectives for the development site are:

- Well planned development following an urban design strategy based on a clear structure of routes, public spaces, active frontages and new built form,

- A coherent, distinctive and attractive development, which responds to the positive characteristics of its surroundings, creates ‘active’ frontages and relates sensitively to its neighbours. The excellent standard of urban design and architecture may be achieved through traditional or modern design approaches.

- A varied mix of uses that reflect the site’s Core Area location, augments the leisure/cultural uses in the vicinity, includes a significant residential element, and retains a strong retail presence fronting Devonshire Square

- Development that enhances key frontages to Queens Park, Devonshire Square and Granby Street and the ‘gateway’ John Storer House site.

- Development that adds to the quality and quantity of public space, including improved linkages between Queen’s Park and the Town Centre, and makes a positive feature of the Wood Brook

- The need for the new built development to complement the public realm improvements identified for Bedford Square, New Street, Wards End, Devonshire Square and Granby Street;
• The recognition that the John Storer House site is identified as being part of a key gateway to the Town Centre, which is suitable for a landmark development. Any development affecting this important and exceptionally well-used community facility will need to ensure the future of John Storer House either within its existing site or on an appropriate site nearby.

• Development that follows the principles of Sustainable Construction and Design, has minimal impact upon the environment, has low or zero carbon emissions in its operation and avoids any increase in flood risk to the Town Centre.

Planning constraints that affect the site include the following issues which will need to be addressed in any development:

• Potential flood risk identified by the Environment Agency;

• The southern part and western edge of the site are affected by the Queen’s Park Conservation Area;

• The following buildings, which are immediately adjacent to the site, are included on the Council’s local list of buildings of historic or architectural interest and should be retained:
  - 18 Devonshire Square;
  - ‘The Mart’, Devonshire Square; and
  - Former mill building, Devonshire Lane.
7. Key Development Sites

Former General Hospital and Aumberry Gap

The site is located within the easternmost part of the Town Centre and directly adjacent to the A6 that bisects the Town Centre. The total area is approximately 2.8 hectares and its boundaries are the proposed Inner Relief Road to the east and south, Baxter Gate to the north and Leicester Road / High Street to the west. A number of small adjacent sites are included but the key elements are the opportunity sites of Aumberry Gap and the former General Hospital Site (Leicestershire Primary Care Trust ownership) identified in the Local Plan. A small part of the eastern edge of the area for development, from Baxter Gate to Barrow Street, is affected by the proposed IRR route.

The now redundant General Hospital on Baxter Gate was built in 1862 and was extended in the first part of the twentieth century. Further buildings were subsequently added to the complex. By the 1920s Victorian industrial premises off Pinfold Gate had been demolished. The open space created by the demolition, in combination with the private gardens, created a significant open area in the centre of the development block. This open area has been used as a car park in recent times. The Aumberry Gap site, with the exception of a public house on the Leicester Road frontage, is within a single private ownership but with multiple tenancies. The site is currently being used as mixed industrial and commercial with some residential at first floor level, although a number of buildings are now vacant and in a serious state of dilapidation. Other parts of the development area are in multiple private ownerships and tenancies.
The Masterplan and Development Brief recognise the importance of achieving an integrated, planned approach to the redevelopment of this key Town Centre opportunity site to:

- Ensure that any new development takes proper account of all relevant policies of the adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan and acknowledges the guidance set out in the Council’s SPD and SPG.

- Ensure that any new development pays due regard to the site context and features, planning objectives for the wider area and existing amenities. This includes ensuring that development will not have an adverse impact on the implementation of the IRR and that it will make an appropriate contribution towards the proposed road.

- Facilitate phased site development, whilst optimising the area’s potential and the quality of the development.

- Inform investment decisions, and land disposals and acquisitions by clarifying development constraints.

- Stimulate interest among owners, developers and prospective occupiers so as to bring the land forward for development.

- Encourage co-operation between owners.

- Ease the planning process for potential applicants by anticipating issues and offering greater certainty.

- Provide guidance to Council officers and Members to assist in the determination of planning applications.

The Council’s vision is:

“A development of high quality, which will transform an existing blighted area, containing a significant number of vacant buildings and extensive surface parking and servicing areas, into a positive part of the Town Centre offering a mix of uses, distinctive architecture, respect for heritage assets and excellence in the treatment of the public realm.”
In addition to the general guidance set out in the Masterplan, the principal planning and design objectives for the area are:

- Well planned and phased development, which makes efficient use of brownfield land and follows an urban design strategy based on a clear structure of routes, public spaces, active frontages, new built form and reuse of buildings of heritage value,

- A coherent, distinctive and attractive development which responds to the positive characteristics, significant buildings and heritage value of its surroundings, which includes the Church Gate Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings, and relates sensitively to its neighbours.

- A mix of uses across the site that reflects its location at the heart of the Town Centre and will contribute to regeneration including retail, leisure or commercial uses at ground floor level and residential or office uses above. The site is recognised as having potential to provide for student housing.

- High quality, active frontages to all principal faces of the development, including onto the proposed Inner Relief Road and the new strategic pedestrian route;

- The achievement of buildings of landmark quality for sites on Leicester Road and Baxter Gate identified as being within key gateways to the Town Centre.

- The provision of a strategic, multi-storey car park within the development area.
7. Key Development Sites

• Development that adds to the quality and quantity of public space, including improved linkages between the area, other parts of the Town Centre and adjacent residential suburbs. This will include the creation of a new linear open space through the development area linking the new Magistrates Court and strategic car park with the High Street and Baxter Gate.

• Development that follows the principles of Sustainable Construction and Design, has minimal impact upon the environment, has low or zero carbon emissions in its operation and avoids any increase in flood risk to the Town Centre.
Loughborough Eastern Gateway

Although relatively remote from the Town Centre, the area around Loughborough Station is a key element in the character and image of the town as a key arrival point. Movement between the Town Centre and the station is a key component in terms of accessibility, and physical links and interchange facilities are important considerations.

In recognition of this, the Council has identified the area around Loughborough Station as the “Eastern Gateway” which is its principal urban regeneration project. The area forms a gateway to the town from the east and through arrival at the station and its redevelopment and improvement are vital to the regeneration of the area. It is envisaged that substantial environmental improvements can be made to this part of the town through redeveloping the railway sidings and adjacent land.

The site is located adjacent to Loughborough Railway Station, which is on the Midland main line from St Pancras. It is flanked by the A60 Nottingham Road to the south, Meadow Lane to the north and the terraced streets and houses of Burder Street, Ratcliffe Road and Glebe Street to the west. The site is identified on Plan. It comprises approximately 4.6 hectares of land, much of it derelict former railway sidings. The area of land for redevelopment runs parallel to the railway, with sidings immediately adjacent to the station currently unused.

Loughborough Railway Station and the adjacent facilities have had little by way of significant investment to improve the infrastructure and access arrangements. Access is from Nottingham Road via a traffic-controlled junction, the phasing of which provides only a very short sequence for egress. During peak periods this leads to backing up and congestion at the station.

The Council’s Vision for this area is:

“To improve the environmental conditions of local residents in the busy streets adjacent to Loughborough Railway Station by comprehensively redeveloping the redundant land next to the station which will provide a new link road between Meadow Lane and Nottingham Road, new car parking and transport interchange facilities at the station, development opportunities for job creation and a strong gateway to the Town”.

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Working together with its partners the Council aims to:

- Provide a new link road between Meadow Lane and Nottingham Road, allowing the existing residential streets to be closed to through traffic.

- Make provision for improvements to the transport interchange at the Railway Station for Buses, Taxis, Cyclists and Pedestrians, together with additional car parking as part of a safe, convenient and attractive public space.

- Develop high quality architectural solutions which are a contribution to the area as a gateway to the town and which accord with the Local Plan, relevant Supplementary Planning Documents and Masterplan design guidance.

- Secure the successful physical integration of new development with the recently completed Sidings Park and Ark Business Centre.

The objective is to secure a development proposal, which contributes to the transformation and enhancement of the area. The range of uses identified in the Local Plan is diverse and allows flexibility. In all instances it is important that the final design solution achieves a high quality urban design and a mixed use, which contributes positively to the regeneration of the eastern side of Loughborough.

Loughborough station is a listed building and it therefore follows that any proposals need to be sympathetic to the character and style of the property and the surrounding area.

The link road proposal has obtained planning permission. The design and alignment are based on detailed discussion and consultation with Leicestershire County Council.

The highway network in the vicinity of the station is extensively used and forms part of a key road link from Loughborough to Nottingham. Any development proposals must therefore reflect the importance of the route and its location at the heart of a travel interchange.

Proposals for the area adjacent to Burder Street will need to be carefully planned bearing in mind the proximity of the adjacent residential area. Similarly proposals for residential development adjacent to the railway will need to incorporate appropriate noise attenuation measures.

Access and egress to the station will be improved for all modes of transport. Particular attention will be paid to:

- Pedestrian access arrangements
- Cycling provision
- Bus and coach transfer
- Bus lane facilities
- Taxi facilities
- Car parking
- Environmental improvements