

STOWMARKET CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AND WAYFINDING



March 2023

Counterculturellp.com
idk-o.com

This report is for the private and confidential use of the clients for whom the report is undertaken and should not be reproduced in whole or in part or relied upon by third parties for any use whatsoever without the express written authority of IDK-O LLP and Counterculture LLP

© IDK-O LLP and Counterculture LLP



Report commissioned by

**Babergh District Council
Mid Suffolk District**

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk



Counterculturellp

Manchester
Counterculture Partnership LLP
Unit 115, Ducie House, Ducie Street,
Manchester M1 2JW

London
Counterculture Partnership LLP,
33 Swan Street, London SE1 1DF

counterculturellp.com
contact@counterculturellp.com

IDK

IDK-O LLP

London
21 Iliffe Yard,
SE17 3QA, London

Paris
1A5, 55 BLVD de la Villette,
75010, Paris

idk-o.com
info@idk-o.com

CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY			7. DESIGN PACKAGES	
1.1. Summary	7		7.1. The Station	54
1.2. How to use this document	8		7.2. Station to Town	58
1.3. Who and What is it for?	9		7.3. Market Square	62
2. SETTING THE SCENE			7.4. High Street (Ipswich & Bury Street)	66
2.1. Stowmarket Action Plan Manifesto	11		7.5. Churchyard	72
2.2. Babergh & Mid-Suffolk Given Brief Summary	11		7.6. The Recreation Ground	76
2.3. Placemaking, Wayfinding, Why?	13		7.7. Car Parks	80
2.4. Summary outcomes from consultation and auditing	15		7.8. Green & Blue Infrastructure	84
3. THE STOWMARKET DESTINATION VISION AND BRAND			7.9. Outer and Inner Gateways	90
3.1. Stowmarket Brand Hierarchy	19		8. INTERVENTIONS	
3.2. A Strong Place Brand	19		8.1. Mobile Information Kiosk	96
3.3. 2023 Stowmarket Destination Vision (Draft)	19		8.2. Information Board	97
3.4. Stowmarket Place Brand Platform	20		8.3. Finger post	98
3.5. Consumer Insight for Stowmarket	20		8.4. Temporary "A-board" sign	99
3.6. Brand Concept and Identity	20		8.5. Hanging sign(s)	100
3.7. Brand Activation Plan	21		8.6. Vehicle gateway	101
4. HOLISTIC STRATEGY			8.7. Road based sign	102
4.1. Strategic Priorities and recommendations	25		8.8. Facade sign painting	103
4.2. Operations and Delivery Community interest organisation "Uncover Stowmarket"	31		8.9. Facade artwork	104
4.3. Investment Plan	33		8.10. Artwork plinth	105
4.4. Time: Now, Near, Far	34		8.11. Planting schemes	106
4.5. Summary of quick wins	36		8.12. Street furniture	107
4.6. Place-based events project calendar	40		8.13. Lighting - place creators	108
5. DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES			8.14. Festoon lighting	110
5.1. Design Strategy	43		8.15. Pedestrianisation and built in landscaping schemes	111
6. PLACEMAKING PACKAGES & INTERVENTIONS			8.16. Building improvement schemes	112
6.1. Placemaking Packages	47		9. CONCLUSIONS	115
6.2. Packages Versus Interventions	48		10. APPENDICES	
6.3. Approach to Intervention costings	49		10.1. List of consultees	118
6.4. Matrix of Interventions & Packages	50		10.2. Activities calendar	122
			10.3. Logic model	124
			10.4. Uncover Stowmarket corporate body options	126
			10.5. Potential funding opportunities	128
			10.6. Phase 1 consultation feedback	134
			10.7. Phase 1 wayfinding audit	144
			10.8. Phase 1 SWOT analysis	156

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. SUMMARY

To be completed after report sign off



1.2.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document is separated into ten sections, each of which are interconnected.

Section 2 - Setting the Scene

Sets the context for the project and provides some theoretical background to our approach. It will be useful for anyone looking to understand how the project came about and the background theory to Place and Destination Branding, Placemaking and Wayfinding.

Section 3 - The Stowmarket Destination Vision and Brand

Explores a foundation for the brand vision for Stowmarket and sets the foundation for how Stowmarket should present itself and what it should aim for internally.

Section 4 - Holistic Strategy

Provides a Holistic Strategy for implementing the Branding and Place work through operational models that align with the Council strategic priorities. It also includes a high level investment plan. Also included is our perceived “quick wins” for Stowmarket - things that could be implemented quickly and cheaply to show quick impact. We have also provided an example events calendar that looks to frame and celebrate the remarkable initiatives of Stowmarket as a whole and how these might begin to work together across new and potential future public venues.

Section 5 - Design Opportunities

Provides a summary of the design opportunities in Stowmarket for the Placemaking and Wayfinding work. It explains the design strategy and a way of thinking about delivering projects through time.

Section 6 - Placemaking Packages & Interventions

Explores the Placemaking and Wayfinding packages and interventions across Stowmarket and how they relate to one another and the Council Core Priorities.

Section 7 - Design Packages

Shows the Placemaking and Wayfinding packages in greater detail. Each package is defined by place and provides an overview of how the design strategy could be incorporated through the town centre and surrounding areas.

Section 8 - Interventions

Describes each of the Wayfinding / Placemaking interventions in greater detail. These are not “designs” per se - but the basis of briefs for design, arts and fabrication partners to develop and build from.

Section 9 - Conclusions

Provides a conclusion for the document and suggests key next steps.

Section 10 - Appendices

The appendices include all information that we feel is relevant for the purposes of diving deeper into background content and supporting information. (refer to contents pages)

1.3.

WHO AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

An actionable primer

The document is intended to provide steps to delivering on the Brand and Place based work through a structured partnership involving local organisations, businesses and the Local Authority.

An advocacy tool

Sections can be used as an advocacy tool to show the potential of certain places to engender buy-in from partners and funders.

A briefing pack

Sections 5-8 can be used at the basis of a briefing back for designers / artists / makers to refine and implement.

Historic photo of the River Gipping. Photo credit: Stowmarket Local History Group



2. SETTING THE SCENE

2.1.

STOWMARKET ACTION PLAN MANIFESTO

It was learned through consultation in Stowmarket with people at all levels, from locals to Council partners that “another consultancy report” is not going to solve any of the issues that the town faces. Therefore, we have designed this document to be an “Action Plan” - the aim is for it to be a tool by which initiatives within the town can begin and how they might be implemented.

The wish to “get on and deliver things now” is critical and shows a great deal of energy and intent, however, without a joined up approach, the work risks being abortive, unsuccessful or even wasteful. Therefore, we feel it is critical to provide sections 2-4 in this document, which provide strategic and delivery oversight alongside sections 5-7 which provide detail on where place-based initiatives might appear.

As a whole the Action Plan has the potential to be an effective advocacy and delivery tool - but, in spite of there being the will on the ground to deliver the work, the higher level insights and actions are also critical to ensure long lasting effectiveness.

2.2.

BABERGH & MID-SUFFOLK GIVEN BRIEF SUMMARY

In October 2022 Counterculture Partners and IDK were appointed as consultants to build upon the work undertaken in the development of the Stow Vision. The objective being to support Stowmarket to establish itself as a key cultural destination in Suffolk. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council is keen to understand the potential for the town to become an essential tourist attraction with a well communicated visitor offer and identity that can support economic growth and provide a gateway to the wider region.

This Placemaking and Creative Wayfinding strategy project runs parallel to the development of a Cultural, Heritage and Visitor Economy Strategy for Babergh and Mid Suffolk. We have worked closely with our colleagues at CT Consults to ensure the proposals for improved placemaking and wayfinding are aligned with the developing vision and priorities for culture, heritage and tourism in the region.

The team has worked alongside the council and key stakeholders to review the town's identity, placemaking activity, and current wayfinding schemes. This report comprises insights from desk-based research and stakeholder and two phases of community engagement. The first phase involved online interviews, three on site focus groups, site visits to key assets and a tour to review accessibility of way finding routes. In phase two we attended a Culture Group session, hosted a community workshop and worked with young people at two drop in sessions at The Mix, to test our findings and refine the design strategy. A full list of stakeholders is found in Appendix 10.1.

“Suffolk is rich in diverse landscape heritage. Mid Suffolk is ‘Heartland’, Stowmarket ‘Heart of Heartland’ – we want a beating heartland.” —Local Resident

2.3.

PLACEMAKING, WAYFINDING, WHY?

Stowmarket is read at different speeds and distances – from a driver passing on the ring road to a pedestrian leaving the car park.

Per Mollerup and Edo Smitshuijzen establish useful models of thought to frame our approach on how places are met, understood and navigated. Distinguished are place showing and way showing.

Farthest out, on the A14 there are people passing by at 50mph who have no prior knowledge of the town, at these orbital gateways an invitational seed could be sewn. The concept of progressive disclosure suggests ‘not to provide too much information too early’, but it is at these gateways that the first salutations should be made and in our digital age, these gateways may exist in the digital realm too: an online platform or communications architecture that celebrates what Stowmarket has to offer.

Coming nearer, a driver using Gipping Way is close, but still has no sight lines to the High Street. Additionally, their routine may never encourage them inward to explore. But, key junctions here have dwell time so are an opportunity to persuade a little detour, either now, or some other day when there is a bit more time.

To those making their first visit, it is essential that these gateways direct people towards the most useful car park - critical places of phase change in the town from the speed of the road to the speed of the pavement. These car parks could be renamed to orient the user towards their use and their programming conceived of in a holistic way and potentially be the sites to explore new uses, as dependency on single occupancy vehicles starts to wane.

The same is true for those newer residents of the town, living to the east of the rail line – to some of whom Stowmarket is a well-connected place to live, but who have little connection, knowledge or care for its centre. To these people, the Station becomes a critical persuasive node where experiences beyond the solely routine could be discovered.

There are unofficial signs in Stowmarket too – ‘the visual voice of the people’, which gives an idea of what is on offer; Stow Stories, the Fox Yard Studio, Great Gables, Stowmarket Eco Future Group, the Pickarel Project, to name but a few are making their impression on the landscape of the town already. A wayfinding and place-based strategy should seek to incorporate these voices, link them up, and support to their amplification and include often silenced voices too – such as the younger and older people in the town.

Today, many of townscape characteristics are remembered by the visitor through “extended intelligences” our digital devices. We defer memories of place to repositories other than our minds - curating our memories in chats, location shares, map checks and phone snaps. Therefore, the more the physical environment of Stowmarket and its offer can be readily recorded and decoded digitally, the greater its potential to be navigated effectively, remembered well and returned to again and again.



To this end we want to design for a phased transparency – to work with communicative potential of the town itself and ‘allowing for evidence of other people’s actions; Sight lines such as Bury Street up Crowe Street and environmental cues such as the church bells. Using or creating landmarks help sequential inference in navigation, this could for example be through an Art Trail of exhibits out of the Food Museum and into the city, or arts projects on existing building Gable Ends and the intervention of community initiatives such as the proposed community pocket park at the gateway to the high street’s southern end. Landmarks are easy to talk about; building improvement schemes should support more directional based approaches to showing the way.

Wayfinding tiers down from directional, through instructional to identification, there is then also descriptive signage. In terms of approaching that communication content it can be evaluated by its legibility (technical), comprehensibility (semantic) and persuasiveness (effectiveness). We think this could be achieved through the introduction of a single new signage type that appears often throughout the town to support the existing finger posts.

From what we have learned, Stowmarket has so much on offer and placemaking and wayfinding should act as a connecting layer to frame and celebrate its existing (and emergent) assets. One should seek to achieve ‘a readable environment supported by the least number of signs that are necessary, but not fewer’. We are motivated by the design approach of making existing things work for us and to work with existing communities to bring about change - which was an approach that consultees also favoured. Stowmarket has St Peters and St Mary’s spire, which should be used in the intuitive behaviour of aiming. “Head for the spire and you will find the centre of town”, coupled with a consistent and well-drawn map is perhaps all that a visitor may need – but on their journey we can offer up moments of surprise and delight too – to Uncover Stowmarket in layers of discovery, encouraging repeated visits through a sense that there is always something new to find.

“Stowmarket should become the hub for surrounding villages. People would visit more if there was better transport, a better retail offer and it was more attractive”
—Onehouse resident

2.4.

SUMMARY OUTCOMES FROM CONSULTATION AND AUDITING

Infrastructure and Assets

Stowmarket is expanding, both in residential and commercial terms and with these changes new amenities are also coming to the town. All of this peripheral activity, from SHELF to the northwest and Gateway 14 to the south, poses a risk to the centre of the Town moving, or losing its importance. This waning importance is evidenced by decline on the ground and a lack of coherence in identity.

But that needn’t be the case if the town centre is reconceived as the heart of an impressive amenity network and a link between all of the new initiatives. Furthermore, there is a great deal on offer in Stowmarket town centre – it just needs to be framed effectively, used well, taken pride-in locally and well communicated to those further afield.

Stowmarket’s Townscape, albeit under pressure from expansion, possesses a network of captivating, if under loved, public spaces, landmarks and landscapes. There is a great deal of potential in Stowmarket to compete in place-terms with neighbouring towns such as Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich. A full audit of the town’s physical infrastructure and assets can be found in the interim report [see Appendix 10.7].

What People Told Us

In consultation people overwhelmingly agreed that Stowmarket is a friendly place that enjoys an abundance of green space, a great sense of community, strong cultural and community hubs that have the potential to be organisations of national significance (Food Museum and John Peel Centre), and a popular events programme run by both the town council and its flagship organisations. Yet, it was noted that this wealth of activity and talent is not always visible, and there is a perception that Stowmarket is tired and run down. It lacks destination marketing and a joined-up approach to communicating what it has to offer to both residents and visitors alike. Despite excellent networks such as the Vision Board and Culture Group, people tend to operate in silos rather than collaboratively or strategically, as is often the case when organisations are stretched for capacity and funding.

Whilst the town centre is faring well in terms of occupancy compared to other towns (perhaps due to its affordable and independent offer) many feel there is room for improvement and greater variety. Early research found that the market has real potential but needs more thought around its programming.

A common topic of conversation was the lack of accommodation for the tourist and the friend or family visitor market. Research also highlighted the importance of wayfinding and placemaking initiatives at key connectors or gateways such as car parks to improve the sense of welcome and signposting of key destinations.



During phase 2 consultation workshops, a series of games were devised to co-author and co-edit the locations and selections of placemaking and wayfinding interventions that would be most appropriate.



Engagement sessions with Young People revealed they are not using the town centre. Those aged 13-15 tend to gravitate away from the town centre and towards the Rugby and Recreation Grounds, and those aged 16-19 reported that they shop and go out in Ipswich. Whilst family audiences are catered for, we noted a lack of cultural programme and talent development opportunities for young adults in Stowmarket.

Testing the Design Strategy

Consultees that took part in Phase 2 workshops to test initial ideas agreed that the existing placemaking activity in Stowmarket needed better advertising and promotion, and that larger events such as the Food and Drink festival could be expanded to include Bury Street and Red Gables. It was noted that the Food Museum needed better signposting given the number of events held there. Ideas for new events to showcase Stowmarket and attract residents and visitors included winter art trails, summer open air cinema, sculpture trails and connective lighting schemes. Young people were particularly interested in street art projects and planting / gardening activities to support biodiversity. Supporting wayfinding through banners, flags and painting routes on pavements were not popular with all groups consulted, and there was concern about maintenance of strategic large scale planting projects.

The design strategy that emerged from research identified the need for a phased approach to:

1. Grow the visitor experience by first prioritising resident groups and the local community
2. Enhance the public realm by prioritising affordable projects that easily engage the community and signal change yet form critical components of more ambitious long-term plans.

Our plans have been explored through three interconnected strands of action. These strands of action concern three approaches to time and permanence, all of which are critical in creating civic pride and a sense of place within Stowmarket:

“Things That Are Said”

How could Stowmarket speak to its residents and visitors and through which channels?

“Things That Happen”

How could the public realm be animated and used, and how could projects be delivered?

“Things That Remain”

How could the public realm be improved, its places more easily found?



3. THE STOWMARKET DESTINATION VISION AND BRAND

3.1.

STOWMARKET BRAND HIERARCHY

Being able to build and develop the Stowmarket place brand overtime will be key to its success and there are many quick wins that can enable this process to be started with a clear ambition and visible manifestations. This will be manifest in the way various groups communicate and indeed work with each other on such things as events. Over time and once key areas are highlighted and bedded in, a hierarchy of sub brands could be established such “Market Square”.

3.2.

A STRONG PLACE BRAND

A place brand is important for Stowmarket for several reasons:

Differentiation: A well-defined place brand will help Stowmarket to differentiate itself from other towns in the region. A strong brand will help to create a unique identity and personality, making Stowmarket stand out as a distinctive destination, which can attract more visitors, residents, and businesses.

Economic benefits: A strong place brand can have a positive impact on the local economy by attracting new investment, encouraging tourism, and boosting local businesses. For example, a strong place brand can increase the number of visitors to Stowmarket, which can generate revenue for local shops, restaurants, and hotels.

Civic/Community pride: A strong place brand can foster a sense of pride and identity among the local community. By creating a positive image of Stowmarket, a strong place brand can help to enhance the town’s reputation and encourage local residents to take an active role in promoting their town.

Increased visibility: A strong place brand can increase Stowmarket’s visibility and awareness among potential visitors, businesses, and investors. By promoting its unique provenance, personality, features and attractions physically and digitally Stowmarket can increase its appeal to a wider audience, which can help to drive economic growth and development

3.3.

2023 STOWMARKET DESTINATION VISION (DRAFT)

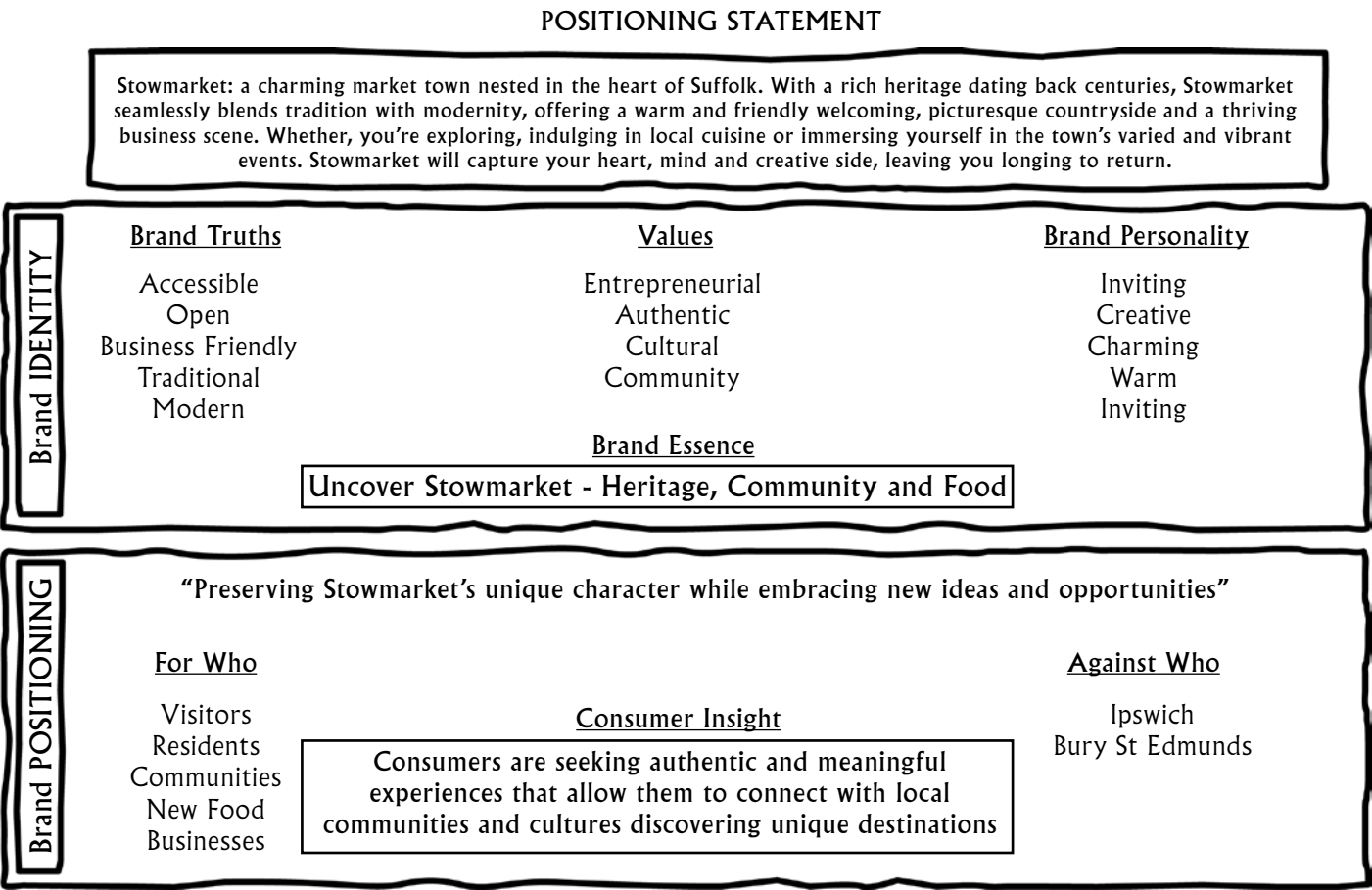
A destination vision is aspirational. It is the statement of where you want to be in the future. A great vision looks ahead, is purposefully ambitious and realistically stretchy.

A vision statement is an inspirational statement of an idealistic emotional future, how you want people to feel and how you actualise some existential impact on the world. It can act as a filter to decision making.

Stowmarket Draft Vision

“By 2033 Stowmarket is widely recognised as the creative heart of Suffolk. It is known for being friendly, vibrant and welcoming. Its people and businesses are connected through a strong sense of community pride where everyone pulls together to make Stowmarket a special place for residents, businesses and visitors. It constantly wins awards for being a great place to live work and visit”.

3.4. STOWMARKET PLACE BRAND PLATFORM



3.5. CONSUMER INSIGHT FOR STOWMARKET

“Consumers are seeking authentic and meaningful experiences that allow them to connect with local communities and cultures and discover new and unique destinations that offer a sense of discovery and exploration. They want to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life and immerse themselves in places that have a rich history and heritage, and that offer a warm and welcoming community spirit. At the same time, they are looking for destinations that offer a blend of tradition and modernity, where they can experience the best of both worlds and create their own unforgettable memories. Stowmarket’s authentic and genuine character, rich heritage, and warm and friendly community, combined with its commitment to innovation and sustainability, makes it an ideal destination for those seeking an immersive and meaningful experience.”

3.6. BRAND CONCEPT AND IDENTITY

We have, for illustrative purposes, created a place brand platform and identity called “Uncover Stowmarket”. This is to demonstrate how the brand can be embedded in the “muscle” of Stowmarket and be the

connector that gels all things Stowmarket under one consumer facing umbrella.

The approach has been to create a food style branding device – a quality mark. The heritage of food production, the national Food Museum, a popular Food and Drink Festival and Christmas Fayre, market square and burgeoning independents on the high street provide foundations from which the town could develop a strong unique selling point for its food offer over time. The brand / logo could sit on all collateral related to promoting Stowmarket internally and externally.

The name “Uncover Stowmarket” has emerged from our time in Stowmarket talking at length with businesses, community groups / organisations and residents. It plays to the feeling that it is only when you begin to peel back the layers that one truly uncovers the rich history of making and production, warm personality and sense of community that exists in Stowmarket. Other naming options that could be explored by the Vision Board & Delivery Group include:

- Discover
- Reveal
- Unearth
- Explore



Opposite is a sketch of how the Brand Identity might work as a “stamp” or “seal” that can be used in a variety of ways, as indicated on conceptual images throughout this document.

3.7.

BRAND ACTIVATION PLAN

“Now” - to promote and connect those who live and work in Stowmarket, through a strong place brand focused on the centre of the Town.

“Near/Far” - To promote Stowmarket as a unique and attractive destination for tourists and visitors and increase the number of visitors to the town.

Driving tourism through a destination brand campaign should be a longer-term strategy due to the need to develop the existing infrastructure in the town and bring the town's key stakeholders – its residents – on the journey. Destination marketing is reliant on a strong place brand, and we propose developing a platform that facilitates joining up all that’s great in Stowmarket and is driven by organised groups and the community.

The current lack of a joined-up communication strategy is a key element that emerged from this commission. Despite groups such as the Vision Board and Delivery Group and the Culture Group who collaborate on projects such as the imminent ‘Jubilant!’, programming and communications tend to happen at an organisational/ individual level and in silos.

We would propose setting up a microsite on the Town Council domain under the “Uncover Stowmarket” Place Brand (this will need to be designed and visualised).

“Near” the microsite would be a very simple taxonomy which include:

1. Events/What’s on – evolving the “clash calendar” to be a central repository for all the great and diverse range of events that take place in Stowmarket. New events that build on connecting would come under the proposed brand device. Developing the vibrant ecosystem of makers whether that be food or artisan could be joined up under “Uncover Stowmarket”
2. AR Walking Tour – to take on the “Uncover Stowmarket” challenge.
3. Love Walking App – to incorporate the “Uncover Stowmarket” brand and logo.
4. Shopping Evenings – “Uncover” retailer one never knew existed through preview nights, tastings etc.
5. We envisage that the “Uncover Stowmarket” would live digitally as well as across the key physical interventions proposed to create that sense of welcome across the town. We have included visuals of how the identity can be incorporated into suggested street signage.

The microsite could be created cost effectively and relatively quickly but would need to be done properly considering assets such as photography etc.

The microsite would enhance the “What is Said” element highlighted through this commission and would be managed by the Vision Group.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Now

- Businesses, community organisations and groups, event planners
- Local residents who are looking for new activities and events in the area
- Family and friends of local residents

Near/Far

- Families and couples who enjoy exploring small towns with an independent food offer and historical sites
- Travelers who are interested in exploring lesser-known destinations with a strong culinary and cultural offer

KEY MESSAGES

Stowmarket is a hidden gem with a rich history and unique character and great place to live and work.

Stowmarket offers a wide range of activities and events for all ages and interests.

Stowmarket is a friendly and welcoming town that values community and culture.

3.7.3.

TACTICS

We are proposing that a brand identity is developed for “Uncover Stowmarket” that reflects the town’s unique character and history and plays to the concept that there are a lot of exciting things happening if you just peel away the surface layer.

Develop the microsite and social media channels dedicated to promoting Stowmarket as a destination, highlighting local attractions, events, and businesses under the “Uncover” umbrella.

We understand that the District Council has invested in the Love Walking App – it is important to look at ways that the “Uncover” brand could be incorporated.

Join up the events already in play that showcase the town’s history and culture.

Encourage local businesses to join up to a loyalty program for residents attracting special discounts to events, talks and workshops, shopping evenings, wine and cheese and packages to visitors who stay in Stowmarket. Such a scheme could incentivise repeat visits to Stowmarket and encourage positive word-of-mouth.

Develop promotional materials, such as brochures, maps, and posters, that highlight Stowmarket’s unique attractions and events.

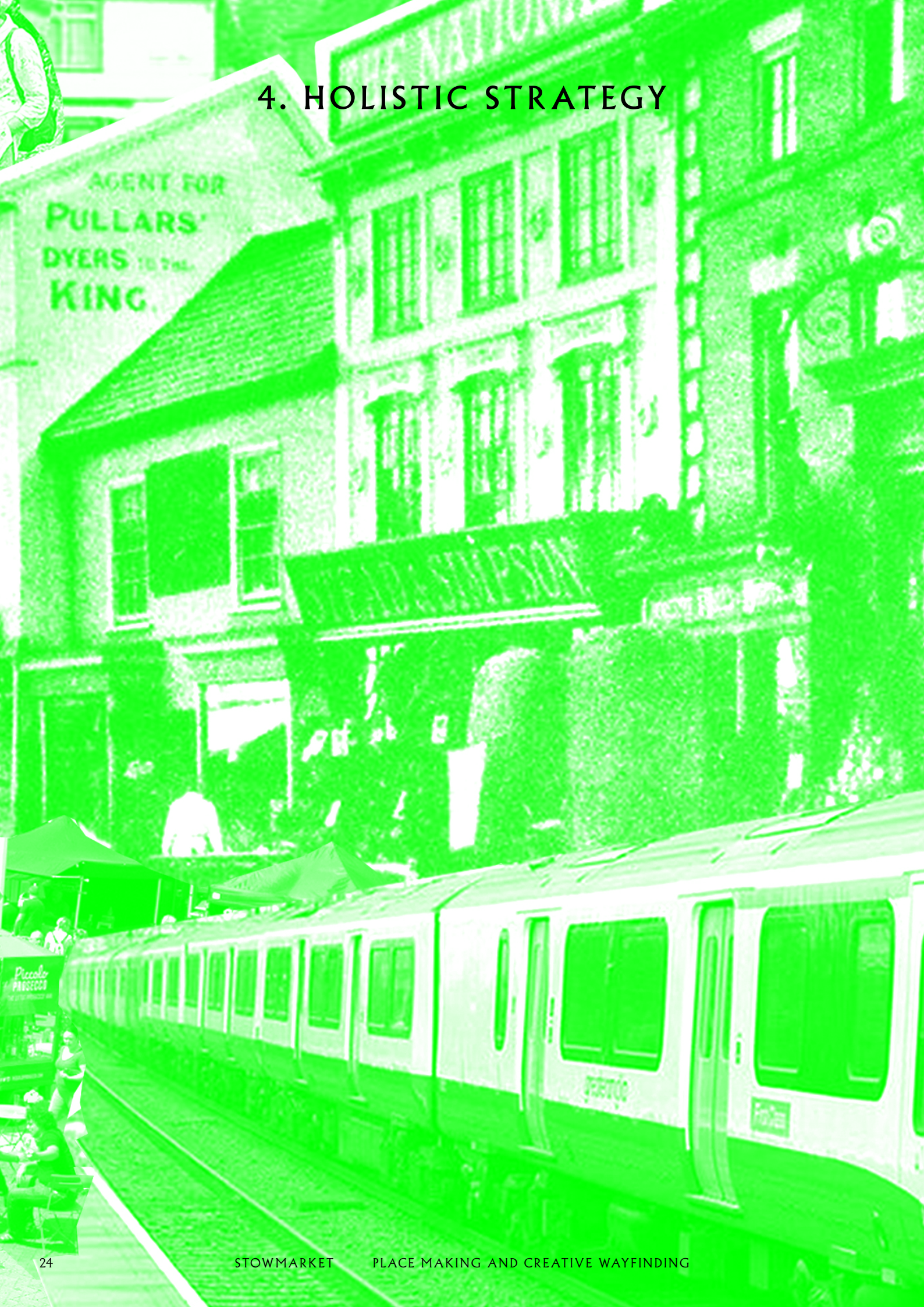
Proactively collaborate with local media outlets to launch “Uncover” and generate coverage and stories about Stowmarket and its attractions.

Engage with visitors and residents through social media, email newsletters, and other digital channels to promote events and activities, and gather feedback.

See Appendix 10.2 for an Example of a quarterly UNCOVER Campaign Activation Plan.

3.7.1.

3.7.2.



4. HOLISTIC STRATEGY

4.1.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Stowmarket Vision for Prosperity highlights the importance of innovation and creativity given the impact that investment in these areas can have on employment opportunities, creative sector growth, increased tourism and business activity, improved civic pride and community cohesion. The Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking Programme is an activation of this work and should deliver this vision.

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council describes an ambition to be:

1. A place for innovation, enterprise, and creativity.
2. The strategic Gateway to Suffolk - a connected town.
3. A strong and proud community - successful through working together.
4. A great place to live, work, learn, visit, and experience.
5. Transform the perceptions of Stowmarket.

Stowmarket Town Council is also supportive of this vision, evidenced by its significant support of the Regal Cinema Development Project among other initiatives. We have aligned recommendations for the delivery of The Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking Programme to the Stowmarket Vision and the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council Economic Recovery Plan, a strategy released in 2022 that works across national government, the Local Enterprise Partnership, neighbouring Councils and Business Associations, to share expertise, learning and resources to help build confidence, attract investment and support future business resilience and growth. Its key themes are:

1. Connected and Sustainable
2. Innovative and Creative
3. Skilled and Successful Places for Growth

See Appendix 10.3 for a Logic Model that aligns our suggested wayfinding and placemaking activity with these above priorities and demonstrates the desired medium- and long-term outcomes that would result from this programme of work.

“I love Stowmarket. I think it has a very good, small town, community feel.”
—Local resident

4.1.1. PRIORITY 1: INNOVATION AND CREATIVE

Activity	Recommendation
1. Strategic delivery of co-produced initiatives that enable residents to better and more fully experience their local area	<p>A Take a holistic approach to programming, ensuring larger visiting events impact local producers and community groups as well as visitors and businesses. See Fig 1.</p> <p>B. Engage diverse communities across Stowmarket and neighbouring parishes through in real life (IRL) and digital programmes to develop or contribute to events.</p> <p>C. Events and activities to support inclusion and diversity and appeal to a broad audience base. See Fig 2.</p> <p>D. Programme more events to attract residents to the town centre & increase dwell time at key gateways.</p> <p>E. Involve Stowmarket's grass roots and community organisations in the design and delivery of existing and new events e.g. heritage open day weekend.</p> <p>F. Conduct a full access audit of all events and placemaking activity</p> <p>G. Engage wider local partners (education, health and business) in the delivery of Stowmarket placemaking initiatives.</p> <p>H. Partnership agreements between delivery partners that detail roles, responsibilities, co-investment and ensure maximum impact.</p> <p>I. Programming mechanisms to be transparent. Include open call opportunities for local artists and suppliers.</p> <p>J. Employ a set of principles/criteria for programming and assessing applications.</p> <p>K. Organisations to work in partnership with local and regional organisations to procure services and infrastructure to combat the costs of inflation and environmental impact.</p> <p>L. Develop a pool of knowledgeable and enthusiastic volunteers & volunteer ambassadors who can work in a series of visitor facing environments.</p> <p>M. Deliver events with 'Late Nights' to encourage businesses and venues to open late for residents and visitors in Stowmarket</p>
2. Business start-up & support schemes, especially linked to Food & Beverage offer & Evening Economy	<p>A. Support for local F&B retailers via rate reductions to support growth in this key area.</p> <p>B. Seed funding used for young people & community groups to start their own events.</p> <p>C. Potential for F&B pop ups at station and in town centre</p> <p>D. Review Stowmarket market and consider themed markets that highlight the town's heritage in food production and making.</p>

Activity	Recommendation
3. Capacity building for culture & heritage orgs to support growth & ambition	<p>A. District Council to increase core/capital investment into the development and capacity of key venues and events (particularly Food Museum and John Peel Centre), in order to support quality and ambition and improve visitor experience.</p> <p>B. District Council to seed fund community events and projects.</p> <p>C. Local venues and groups to work with leading regional/national partners to build capacity in large scale project delivery, and support talent development programmes, artist residencies and community projects.</p> <p>D. Offer support to the local sector e.g., ACE funding workshops, networking events etc.</p>

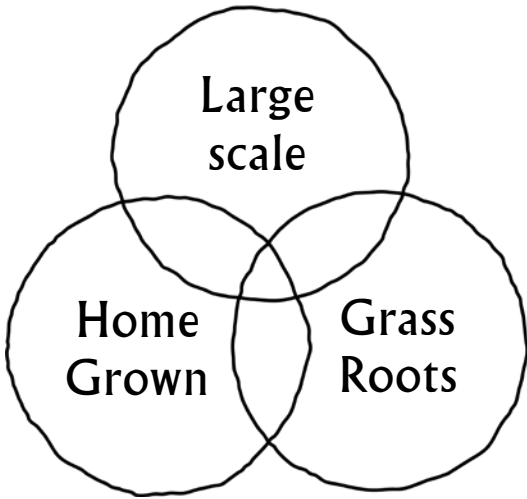


Fig 1



Fig 2

Relevant Place Making Packages



The Church Yard (7.5) is an example of an event space that could be used more in the town

Package(s)	Note	Section
Station, Market Square, High Street, Churchyard	Can be used as event spaces now and in the future through creative initiatives	7.1 7.3 7.4 7.5
All	With introduction of new and consistent signage through town co-produced events can be more easily communicated to residents and visitors	7.1 - 7.9

4.1.2. PRIORITY 2: CONNECTED & SUSTAINABLE

Activity	Recommendation
1. Develop clear governance and leadership for the Stowmarket Vision and delivery of the Creative Wayfinding & Placemaking Programme	<p>A. Use the existing structures of Vision Board and its Delivery Group to implement the Stowmarket Vision and Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking programme.</p> <p>B. Register the Vision Board as a separate entity.</p> <p>C. Broaden membership of delivery group to include businesses and Community networks at Red Gables.</p> <p>D. Employ a Co-ordinator/ Manager to manage the workplan, co-ordinate meetings and fundraise for programmed activities.</p> <p>E. Co-ordinator/ Manager to be line managed by local partner and member of the Delivery Group e.g., Modece Architects</p>
2. Flagship events and activities that support place brand and profile and highlight natural resources	<p>A. Refine the Stowmarket Place and Destination Brand</p> <p>B. Build upon the highly successful projects (Food & Drink festival, Christmas Fayre etc) that show off the town’s built and natural assets and development a specialism in this area e.g. Heart of Suffolk Makers & Producers Festivals (currently in Shared Prosperity Fund Plan), Open Air Summer Film Screenings etc.</p> <p>C. Use existing projects and trails (including those on Love Exploring App) to profile Stowmarket’s natural environment using its woodlands, parks, waterways and rivers to create resident and visitor journeys</p> <p>D. Programme events and activities at key gateways to support welcome and signposting</p>
3. Communication platform established	<p>A. Develop a central consumer facing hub for “Uncover Stowmarket” via the Town Council Website</p> <p>B. Consider developing a new microsite within that domain with a specific taxonomy relating to promoting Stowmarket.</p> <p>C. Make use of existing platforms such as the Love Exploring App and The Virtual High Street and integrate the Uncover Stowmarket brand ident where possible.</p> <p>D. Co-ordinator/ Manager mentioned in Priority 2, Activity 1, D to coordinate activity and update site.</p>

Activity	Recommendation
4. Support Audience development initiatives across Vision Delivery Group	<p>A. Facilitate a strategic approach to audience development in the town and wider area e.g., joint audience priorities and targets, reciprocal marketing.</p> <p>B. Use events in the public realm that have high attendance to signpost events at venues and community hubs.</p> <p>C. Share ticketing and audience data across delivery group organisations through opt-in options (within GDPR)</p> <p>D. Ticket free events to collect data.</p> <p>E. Continue distribution of packs about Stowmarket to new housing estates. Packs to include annual events calendar.</p> <p>F. Consider developing a resident loyalty card scheme with discounts for culture hubs and advance notice of Late-Night events.</p>
5. Inward Investment	<p>A. Co-ordinator/ Co-ordinator/ Manager and District Council to raise funds for activities through Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery, Other government funds and trusts and foundations (see headline investment plan).</p> <p>B. Design a programme that is attractive to commercial supporters and gather accurate data about audience demographics and reach.</p> <p>C. Consider raising funds in partnership with Culture Group organisations and others to support match funding.</p> <p>D. Build case for support and evidence economic impact via Joined-up approach to data collection, monitoring and evaluation (above).</p>

Relevant Place Making Packages



Through consultation and workshops we know that cross-sector collaboration is there, all it requires is resourcing and strategy to be effectively oriented.

Package(s)	Note	Section
Station, Market Square, High Street, Churchyard	Can be used as event spaces now and in the future through creative initiatives	7.1 7.3 7.4 7.5
Car Parks, Orbital Gateways, Green and Blue Infrastructure	The packages that concern the connectivity of the town should be used to herald and celebrate events and singage connect to online initiatives	7.7, 7.8 7.9

4.1.3. PRIORITY 3: SUCCESSFUL & SKILLED

Activity	Recommendation
1. Activities to support training provision and career pathways	A. Provide opportunities for on the ground learning, work experience placements and formal apprenticeships in event delivery. B. Consider developing a rolling placement scheme with The Mix, local schools and colleges and cultural organisations and local businesses. C. Design reciprocal talent development opportunities and exchanges with national partners.
2. Well supported volunteering opportunities for local people	A. Offer volunteering opportunities across a diverse range of events and stakeholders. B. Partner with other local organisations to effectively resource a pool of volunteers and signpost other volunteering opportunities. C. Ensure clear volunteer role descriptions, safeguarding policies and line management in place. D. Advertise opportunities through diverse channels and ensure access provision.
3. Procurement processes that encourage suppliers to support capacity building amongst home grown organisations and networks	A. Contract suppliers and artists to offer mentoring / talks to young people or local artists as part of procurement process i.e. performers at John Peel Centre deliver a talk at The Mix.



The Recreation Ground is a key opportunity area to intensify activities with young people at a focal point close to the centre of town

Relevant Place Making Packages

Package(s)	Note	Section
The Recreation Ground	Can be used as a central location to more proactively engage young people	7.6
The High Street and other sites earmarked for creative schemes	Where strategic artistic interventions have been highlighted, community schemes can be developed to provide access to skills and learning opportunities	7.4, 7.2
The Station	Can become a second centre in the town, bringing activities and business development opportunities to wider communities	7.1

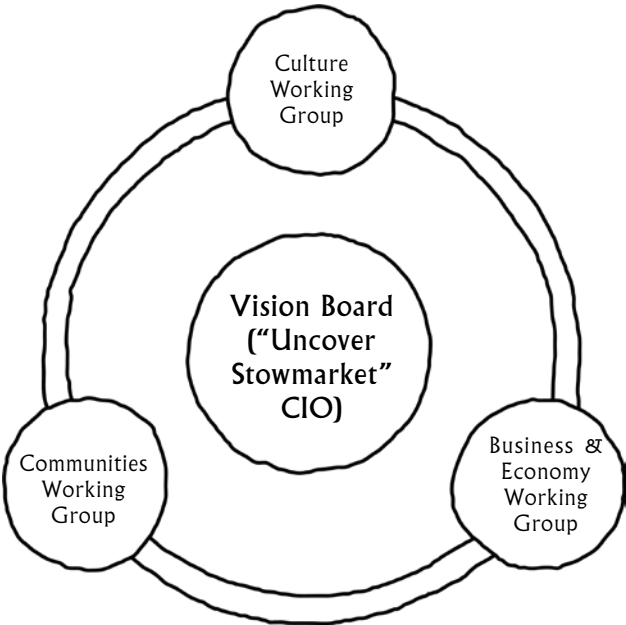
4.2. OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY

COMMUNITY INTEREST ORGANISATION “UNCOVER STOWMARKET”

Based on our extensive experience of working with Local Authorities and cultural organisations on the delivery of place-based strategies we highly recommend that Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking activity is led by cultural and community groups in Stowmarket rather than the District or Town Council. Both Councils have a critical role to play and will be vital in supporting delivery, but plans are most effective when owned by local stakeholders to encourage the growth of the local ecology.

The significant work undertaken on the Stowmarket Vision to date has included the development of a Vision Board and Delivery Group; two intersectoral groups that act similarly to an Arts Council Cultural Compact or Place Partnership. We highly recommend reviewing the membership of the two groups to ensure that of each includes decision makers and delivery organisations across Local Authority, Education, Culture, Community and Health.

Rather than operate as a network that meets regularly, it is our view that a new entity should be established to ensure effective governance and delivery and to fundraise independently of the organisations represented in the Board and Delivery Group. It is our opinion that no one organisation in the town has the capacity to deliver this programme of work as their own business plans and fundraising pipeline will understandably need to take priority. We suggest that the members of the Vision Board become the Board of Directors, with 3 intersecting sub-groups focusing on delivery. The entity should employ a Co-ordinator/ Manager to co-ordinate activity for the Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking activity. This entity could also play a key role in the delivery of the Babergh & Mid Suffolk Culture, Visitor and Heritage Strategy in Stowmarket.



A coalition approach is needed to deliver on the promise of the Stowmarket Vision in the new proposed form as “Uncover Stowmarket”

4.2.1. COORDINATION OF “UNCOVER STOWMARKET”

Independent resource to drive forward the ambitions for the Stowmarket Vision will be essential to support capacity and the ability to raise income without conflict of interest i.e., it would be challenging if coordinating placemaking activity sat with an existing organisation within the group due to the need to deliver their own business plan and fundraising strategy.

Below we note key functions that you may wish to consider in the role of Uncover Stowmarket Manager:

Producing

- Lead across all areas of activity including Programming, Production, Community Participation
- Lead on income generation across all income streams for festivals and events and place making activity
- Lead on coordinating activity across the town and parishes
- Work closely with the Board and Working Groups to identify existing and potential audiences and gather data for audience development planning
- Work with B&MS Council and Town Council communications team to promote events
- Lead on evaluation of way finding and place making activity
- Responsible for Health and Safety, Safeguarding and compliance and ensuring relevant policies and action plans are in place

Event management

- Work in partnership to deliver events across the town with a focus on engaging communities
- Supporting the development of events such as Heart of Suffolk Producers and Makers Festival
- Co-ordinating volunteers and supporting professional development
- Identify opportunities and support income generation for events
- Provide event information to Town Council communications team and update microsite
- Recruit and line manage freelance event staff
- Gather data for evaluation and supporting with reporting to funders
- Adhere to policies and action plans to deliver safe and sustainable events

Audience Development

- Build and execute high level marketing and audience development strategies from development to launch, and support District & Town council communications teams to deliver creative marketing campaigns for visitor attractions and festivals and events
- Identify and expand new opportunities for marketing channels that drive audience growth and engagement
- Develop and manage partnerships to reach new and existing audiences
- Work with local partners to promote activity and create audience journeys across the town’s cultural offer
- Develop an evaluation and monitoring framework across the Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking programme
- Work with The Audience Agency to collect quantitative and qualitative data

4.3. INVESTMENT PLAN

Babergh & Mid Suffolk Council has allocated confirmed Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funding to deliver creative wayfinding and placemaking activity over three years between 2022-25:

Area	Y1 (22-23)	Y2 (23-24)	Y3 (24-25)	Total
Love Exploring app	£24,000	-	-	£24,000
Stowmarket Creative Way finding and Place making interventions	-	£25,000	£25,000	£50,000
Events & Festivals Coordination post (From April 2023)	-	£21,500	£43,000	£64,000
Heart of Suffolk Makers and Producers festival	-	£20,000	£30,000	£50,000
Total	£24,000	£66,500	£98,000	£188,500

See Appendix 10.5 for funds that could finance elements of the Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking programme to match the funding available from SPF above.

An ambitious programme capable of improving the public realm and resident offer and putting Stowmarket on the visitor map will require significant match fundraising in partnership with the local sector. The District Council is unable to attract funding from Trusts and Foundations, so it is worth exploring joint fundraising bids for flagship events with lead partners who are charities or setting up a new entity to deliver this work, or to have a longer-term ambition to register as a charity. We highly recommend investing in a Co-ordinator/ Manager who can fundraise centrally for Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking Projects, and exploring whether this could be resourced through SPF funds for Events and Festivals Coordination.

4.4.

TIME : NOW, NEAR, FAR

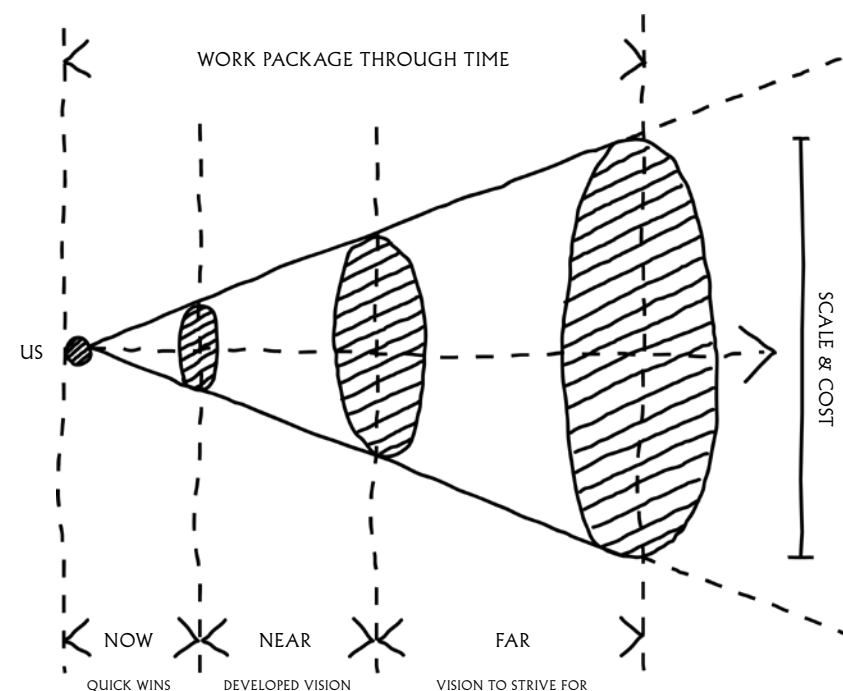
Throughout this document you will see references to three timescales: **NOW**, **NEAR** and **FAR**.

If **FAR** is the vision for which Stowmarket should strive, then **NEAR** and **NOW** are steppingstones to get to that vision. Only having a vision can create apathy as there is no roadmap to follow and a destination that feels too far off. And only thinking in the present can lead to siloed working and a lack of collective direction towards a goal. Therefore, **NOW, NEAR, FAR** provides a framework of thinking, seeing, doing and movement forwards.

For example, we are proposing in Package 7.1 that the Station becomes a pedestrianised “Welcome Mat” for the town of Stowmarket. This is a radical change from a car-choked and dangerous environment that visitors and locals must encounter every day – a reality that hampers the beauty and potential of the place and sets a poor tone of welcome to those that arrive. But behind the cars, and beyond the tarmac is an architecturally and spatially remarkable place. A pedestrianised Stowmarket station forecourt is the **FAR** vision for this package, so how do we get there? **NOW** could include painting the bridge and erecting some more effective information signage, **NEAR** could be building improvement schemes to Stowmarket Taxis and the testing of a food truck programme for commuters and visitors and even trialling pedestrianisation on specific days. The successes of these schemes could be assessed and measured and become critical evidence for the ultimate **FAR** aim of creating the pedestrianised welcome mat for Stowmarket Station.

We believe all three of these elements are required if a strategy can truly stand up to a long term, viable and ambitious future for Stowmarket's places and spaces in the **NOW, NEAR**, and the **FAR** future.

The NOW, NEAR, FAR approach looks to develop place incrementally through time focussing first on quick wins, then through fundraising, advocacy and collaboration moving towards the larger NEAR and FAR visions. The approach allows for all interventions, through time, to complement each other and for work to be joined up and progressive.



Stowmarket possess a rich heritage, and a promising future, the Now, Near, Far approach provides a framework to realise this

4.5.

SUMMARY OF QUICK WINS

Stakeholders have made it clear that people in Stowmarket need to see action as a result of this most recent consultation. Some of our recommended initiatives would be relatively simply to get off the ground and build on the work of existing projects and groups, others would be affordable and very visible initiatives that signal change in the town. We outline activities that could take place within the next 3-6 months below.

4.5.1.

“THINGS THAT ARE SAID” - STOWMARKET COMMUNICATION

Showcase all town events on the town council website

Developing a place brand and associated assets could take between 6 months to a year and would be easier to deliver once a new entity is established to deliver the Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking activity. In the interim period we highly recommend that the town council's website is used to publicise and link to all events delivered by the Culture Group and others in addition to those delivered directly by the council.

4.5.2.

“THINGS THAT HAPPEN” - STOWMARKET EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Human resource to drive the creative wayfinding and placemaking programme forward

We understand that setting up the Vision Board as a separate entity [see recommendation P2.1.A] may take some time. We believe that in the first instance resource needs to be allocated to coordination of the programme to ensure that momentum can be built. There is a priority around fundraising to match the £25,000 allocated for public realm interventions in 2023/24. This role could sit within an active organisation within the town, for example (Modece Architects) until the operating model is formalised and could potentially be funded by Shared Prosperity Funding.

Broaden the membership of the Vision Board and Delivery Group

To ensure that the programme connects effectively with key sectors we think it is important to review the membership of the above groups and ensure a balance of local authority, culture, local business, community groups, health and education across both. We recommend considering how to include young people/ youth voice.

Pull together the core events diary for the town

We are aware that the Culture Group work together on event planning and hold a 'clash diary' but we recommend that the Vision Delivery Group keeps a central diary for all town events, that also considers national and local anniversaries in the future to allow for sufficient planning and fundraising.

Review the weekly markets

Numerous consultees were excited about the possibilities posed by an improved or themed programme of markets. We recommend reviewing the current offer and trialling a monthly Farmer's market.

Celebrate its hidden gems and history

Heritage Open Days are effective ways of encouraging people to access heritage on their doorstep and they are renowned for appealing to broad audiences and being relatively low cost. We highly recommend prioritising a Stowmarket Open Doors Event which plays to the friendly, community vibe and would be a great way to begin to work with residents in telling the town's stories.

Historic Photo showing Annual Carnival in the Market Place.
Photo Credit: Stowmarket Local History Group Facebook



4.5.3.

“THINGS THAT REMAIN” - INTERVENTIONS IN THE PUBLIC REALM

1. Artistic upgrades to walls throughout town [see intervention 8.9 & intervention 8.8]

Our research has indicated a number of potential places in the town where locally rooted arts initiatives could be used to also create a sense of place. Various gable ends could be used to herald key town gateways, but also act as co-produced art projects. These are:

- **The gable end adjacent to Stow Framing on Gipping Way**
This could be a sign painted commission, ushering the driver and the walker alike from the station or from Gipping way up Station Road West and towards the town centre.
- **The Alley way up to The Old Fox Yard**
This under used space could be a location to promote art activities along its boundary wall – perhaps a rolling set of youth-oriented commissions managed by an organisation like The Old Fox Yard, coupled with an improved lighting scheme could turn the perceptions of a “back alley” into a place of outdoor vibrancy and creativity.
- **The Gable End at the end of the high street adjacent to Stricklands Road**
As an antecedent to the potential of a pocket part in this under used piece of land, the Gable end at the junction of Ipswich Street and Stricklands Road could be adorned with a mural that explores biodiversity, perhaps lead by the Stowmarket Eco Future Group in collaboration with young people coordinated by The Mix.

2. Station Welcome

The station is a significantly undervalued resource. It is both a gateway to the visitor, but also a bridge to underserved communities to the east. A series of test programmes should be explored around the station that bring the offer of the centre of town to the commuter and the visitor.

The vision for the station is ultimately for a pedestrian “Welcome Mat” for the town to be the focus, that creates a new square, but how might incremental steps be taken towards this ambitious vision?

The station food bridge could be painted to herald a welcome to those arriving by train and a series of test events could be run to sow the seeds of the future vision – food and drinks trucks could run in the summer and the closed off pocket space space could be opened as a pedestrian friendly area to dwell.

3. Repeater core signs through town and minor upgrade to existing finger posts

The existing fingerposts are well located, but they need an update. We propose that they are updated in a manner that allows for future updates to be easily actioned. Fingerposts are much more effective when communicating walking time (e.g., minutes), rather than walking distance. [see intervention 8.3]

[intervention 8.2]

4. Town Wide Information Boards

The next quick win would be to commission the town wide information board scheme (intervention 8.2), it is advised that this commission (along with intervention 8.3 and 8.6) are delivered as a single design brief to ensure consistency across the town. A new bespoke signage scheme will require funds to be directed and these might not all come at once.

Areas where this sign would have maximum impact would be:

- The Station [package 7.1] - this is the area where the most visitors could be oriented.
- The Market Square [package 7.3] - this area will herald change most obviously to locals
- In Car parks [package 7.7] - these signs will ensure that these critical gateway moments are effectively signed having the biggest impact to most arriving visitors.

5. Mobile Information Point

We believe that a mobile information point could be commissioned and run at key parts of the town. This would contain information about future Stowmarket initiatives and events. It can be parked in strategic locations to engage specific visitors at specific times and then be moved to their locations where it might be more useful. The mobile information point will be a useful way of bringing the centre of the Stow to its new peripheries, such at the housing estates and Gateway 14. It can be parked and left empty to provide passive information, like a kiosk, but at moments, be manned to conduct focussed consultations and to measure impact in specific locations or even to serve a brew and to engage the community in conversation about the town.

6. Provide spaces to dwell

Consultation indicated that for such a small town, there are few outdoor spaces for the pedestrian to dwell and occupy the street. Bringing back dwelling places to sit show care for the local community and that the public realm is in a state of change. Intervention [8.12] shows how this could be achieved using more bespoke or off the peg elements, and new seating could be a way of engaging local craftspeople and artists. Additionally, intervention [8.15] Landscape Improvement could be used to enact larger changes given the will, such as landscape improvement schemes oriented at the pedestrian with spaces to stop, to sit and to enjoy the town.

Key locations where this could be achieved:

- The Station disused walled garden [see package 7.1]
- St Peters & St Marys Church yard [see package 7.5]
- Outside of the Food Museum [see package 7.7]
- Market Square [see package 7.3]
- Key Locations on the high street, such as in front of the United Reformed Church [see package 7.4]

[intervention 8.1]

[interventions 8.2 & 8.15]

[package 7.2]

[package 7.5]

[package 7.4]

[package 7.1]

[intervention 8.3]

4.6. PLACE-BASED EVENTS PROJECT CALENDAR

The below table shows existing and proposed events that could be hosted across a range of venues in the town. Joined up planning and communications will be critical to deliver an ambitious events programme as per below.

Bold = Suggested Events
Non bold = Existing Events

		HOLISITIC STRATEGY																
		Multiple	Station Forecourt	Bury Street	St Peter's and St Mary's Church	Market Square	United Reform Church	New Pocket Park	Car Parks	The Recreation Ground	The Food Museum & Grounds	John Peel Centre	The Old Fox Yard	The Regal	The Mix	The Library	Red Gables	Stowmarket Community Centre
Town Wide	Sto Friday Lates – late night shopping and food tasting sessions with live music on the last Friday of the month		●	●	●	●							●					
	Regular themed markets. Focus on local and artisan.					●												
	Heritage trails and walks using Love Exploring App from key gateways	●	●						●									
Festivals	Remembrance Day	●				●												
	Stowmarket Open Doors Festival (Heritage Open Day event across weekend)	●																
	Light Festival in key areas of public realm – Starts with Diwali and leads to Christmas Light Switch On (November)	●																
	SPF funded Producers & Makers Festival										●							
	Stowmarket Food & Drink Festival (June)		●	●		●	●						●		●			
	Primadonna Festival										●							
	Skulduggery in Stowmarket, Crime Festival															●		
	Street food stalls and pop up markets. Live Music sessions.		●			●							●					
	Stowmarket Carnival (including Pet and Dog Show)									●								
	Stow Fiesta									●								
	Storytelling Festival										●							
	Rolling visual art commissions in public realm for CYP, Community Groups. Gable ends, town centre shop windows etc.	●						●		●								
Visual Arts	Sculpture Trails	●				●			●		●		●					
	Temporary co-curated exhibition space									●								
	Open Air Film Screenings				●					●								
Art & Culture	Culture Group Collaborations (e.g. Jubilant - June)	●																
	Music, talks, screenings and performing arts											●		●				
	Community gardening & planting projects e.g. Community Tree Planting Day				●		●	●	●	●	●						●	●
Community (Environment, Health & Wellbeing)	Classes and groups for adults and CYP, parent & baby sessions.										●	●	●		●		●	●
	Regular Wellbeing Projects including Cake, Cancer & Coffee and Gardening groups.																●	
Sport	Park Run & Races									●								



5. DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

5.1.

DESIGN STRATEGY

Our six strategic design pillars were derived from desk and field research. They were used to refine the approach to the packages and the interventions.

All of the design pillars are interlinked and share themes and have been used to refine the approach to the design Packages and Interventions.

After devising a large suite of Interventions, in our second phase consultation, we developed a series of consultative workshops to co-curate the final designs included within this document.

These pillars will be delivered upon through three stands of action concerning three approaches to time and permanence:

- Things That Are Said
- Things That Happen
- Things That Remain

THINGS THAT ARE SAID : COMMUNICATION

THINGS THAT HAPPEN : EVENTS

UNIFY CENTRAL STOWMARKET	SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL	AN INFORMATIVE WELCOME
AN ACCESSIBLE GREEN & BLUE NETWORK	BUILD BRIDGES TO COMMUNITIES	CELEBRATE HIDDEN HERITAGE AND INNOVATIVE FUTURES

THINGS THAT REMAIN: INTERVENTIONS



Unify Central Stowmarket

This might seem an obvious insight, but it should become the focus of a place making strategy. Stowmarket's centre is lacking unity – there are amenities and institutions at its fringes that are not being served in the same manner as its centre, in place or landscape terms. Designed approaches should look to bring the full length of the High Street together through both light touch and more ambitious ideas.

Support Sustainable Travel

Stowmarket has the potential to be very walkable and easily traversed by bicycle. However, its key cycling and walking routes are hampered by a town that is somewhat been mired by car dependency and dated traffic planning. Schemes should look to reset the balance and act as a suite of interventions that make sustainable journeys more enjoyable and thus more likely to be taken. Whilst significant changes to transport infrastructure are somewhat out of scope here, creative wayfinding and placemaking initiatives can, frame and support places along key journeys – the first step to making them more enjoyable and practical.

An Informative Welcome

A key area of focus will be the development of ideas that look to celebrate, frame and inform what is already there. There are a great many community, commercial and cultural happenings in Stowmarket, but these are not joined up and very much under celebrated. Key areas will be identified where informative welcomes can be made that help visitor and resident alike get the most from their town or their day out.

An Accessible Green and Blue Network

The remarkable green network that exists in Stowmarket will be intensified and joined up more effectively through the identification of placemaking opportunities, landscape interpretation and wayfinding. A strong green network has the opportunity to change habits and encourage repeat visits.

Build Bridges to Local Communities

Opportunities will be identified to ensure that the potential impact of the project reaches those communities who currently do not use Stowmarket, despite their proximity to the town centre, including those who feel shut out by initiatives that focus on Stowmarket alone. The approach will be reciprocal in nature – aiming to bring those communities to Stowmarket, but also bring a taste of Stowmarket to those communities too.

Celebrate Hidden Heritage

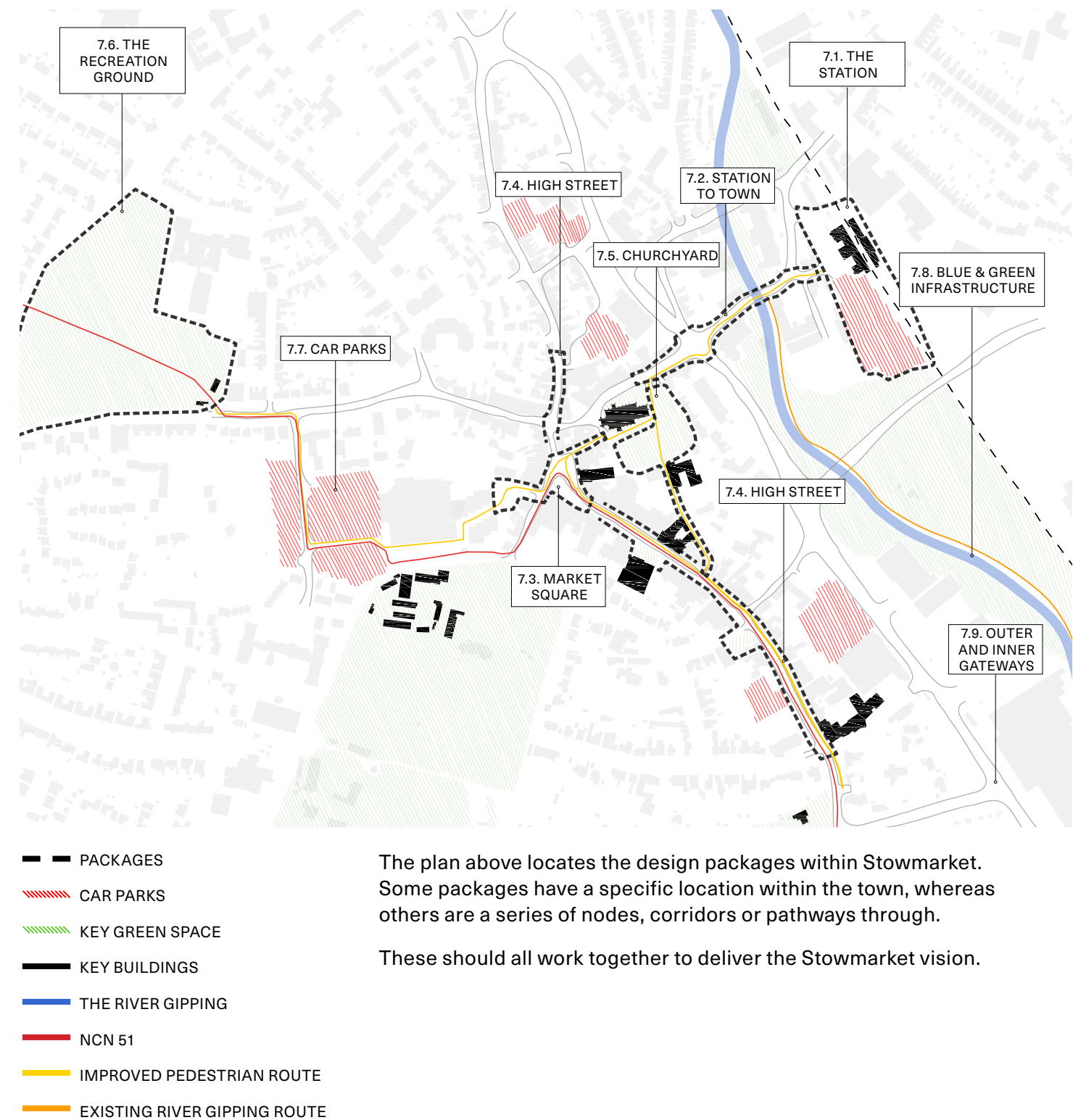
Stowmarket has a wonderful history, and there is quite the consensus that it does not celebrate what it has. The heritage value of the town will be well framed and amplified through placemaking, communications and wayfinding. This will be done in a progressive manner that positions Stowmarket as a place that dynamically shifts and boldly engages with the changing times. The past, present and futures of Stowmarket are all places where heritage can reside.

6. PLACEMAKING PACKAGES & INTERVENTIONS



6.1.

PLACEMAKING PACKAGES



6.2.

PACKAGES VERSUS INTERVENTIONS

Complementary **Interventions** (such as a bench or a lighting scheme, see section 8) are grouped together by context to form a **Package** (which are all explored in section 7. The packages will perform for people at different times in different ways – be that a first-time visitor using a particular sign, or a local resident appreciating new relationships formed through the refreshed market, learning something new about their town.

Each package presents a strategy, they exist as logical project scopes for design briefs with selected partners. We are keen to support an approach that leverages local heritage, local talent and local supply chains towards their delivery; e.g. Facade artworks informed by engagement with young people, signage with heritage societies and procurement feeding the local trade and economy.

To this end, the **Interventions**, although visualised in this document to give a sense of what we describe, are very much sketches. They should be developed further through focussed procurement either by the local authority or the Uncover Stowmarket corporate entity.

Cherry Tree Road on Victory in Europe Day, 1945. Photo credit: Stowmarket Local History Group Facebook



6.3.

APPROACH TO INTERVENTION COSTINGS

In the following chapter, interventions have been grouped into cost and time scale ranges.

These ranges are as follows

£	=	< £5000 to implement
££	=	£5000 – £10,000 to implement
£££	=	£10,000 – £50,000 to implement
££££	=	£50,000 and over to implement

6.3.1.

ACTION PLAN TIME / COST TABLES

Below is an example summary action plan from the Station package, showing how to read it to get a sense of time horizons and costings for the various proposed interventions.

EACH INTERVENTION IS NUMBERED IN A DRAWING		GROUPED INTO TIME RANGES (SEE 4.4)			INTERVENTION BRIEF (CHAPTER 8)	
#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
1	Bridge Welcome Sign		£		1	8.8
2	Information Board	££			1	8.2
3	Building Improvement Schemes		£££		2	8.16
4	Station Garden		££		1	8.11
5	Facade Sign		£		2	8.8
6	Information Point (Mobile)	££			1	8.1
7	Food Trucks	£			1	
8	Place Creator		£££		4	8.13
9	Landscape Improvement			££££	1	8.15
10	New Pick up / Drop off Point			££££	1	8.15
11	New Car Park Entrance			£££	1	8.6
12	Street Furniture	£			10<	8.12

SIMPLE SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

COST RANGE PER INTERVENTION (SEE 6.3)

QUANTITY OF INTERVENTIONS BASED ON DRAWING

6.4. MATRIX OF INTERVENTIONS & PACKAGES

The below table shows the scope of placemaking packages that have been explored through Stowmarket.

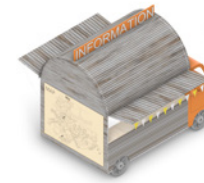
Each package contains a series of Interventions (see right).

Cost ranges have been indicated for each intervention (see 6.3)

At this stage, the interventions should be seen as place holder concepts to facilitate a more detailed briefing process with the designer(s) and maker(s) employed to develop and complete their design.

Code	Name	1. THE STATION	2. STATION TO TOWN	3. MARKET SQUARE	4. HIGH STREET	5. CHURCHYARD	6. THE RECREATION GROUND	7. CAR PARKS	8. GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE	9. OUTER & INNER GATEWAYS	Price range / unit
8.1	Information Kiosk	●									££
8.2	Information Board	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		££
8.3	Finger Post	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		£
8.4	A-Board Sign	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			£
8.5	Hanging Sign			●	●						£
8.5	Hanging Light			●	●						£
8.6	Vehicle Gateway	●			●			●			£££
8.7	Road Based Sign							●		●	££
8.8	Facade—Sign Paint	●	●								££
8.9	Facade—Artwork				●						££
8.10	Artwork Plinth		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		££
8.11	Planting Scheme				●						£££
8.12	Street Furniture	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		£
8.13	Place Creator Lights	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			£££
8.14	Festoon Lighting	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		£
8.15	Landscape Improvement	●	●								££££
8.16	Building Improvement	●	●		●		●				£££

8.1



8.2



8.3



8.4



8.5



8.5



8.6



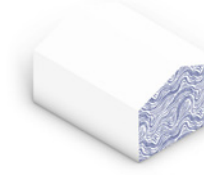
8.7



8.8



8.9



8.10



8.11



8.12



8.12



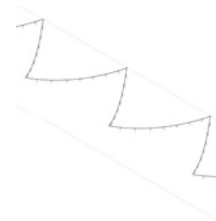
8.12



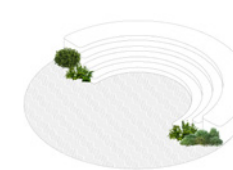
8.13



8.14



8.15



8.16



7. DESIGN PACKAGES



- 7.1 THE STATION
- 7.2 STATION TO TOWN
- 7.3 MARKET SQUARE
- 7.4 HIGH STREET
- 7.5 CHURCHYARD
- 7.6 THE RECREATION GROUND
- 7.7 CAR PARKS
- 7.8 BLUE & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
- 7.9 OUTER AND INNER GATEWAYS

7.1. THE STATION



Delivery & Funding

- Partners:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - Greater Anglia (LE)
 - Local Businesses

- Funders:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - CIL/Section 106

The Train Station carries huge potential for its role in residents’ and visitors’ routines along with its hierarchy in a town’s physical landscape. Stowmarket Station has a fantastic footprint and a remarkable architectural setting to introduce Stowmarket’s identity and welcome people. But it has to help visitors more in intuitively orienting themselves between it and key destinations. We believe that Stowmarket Station along with its reworked forecourt should be the welcome mat for the town.

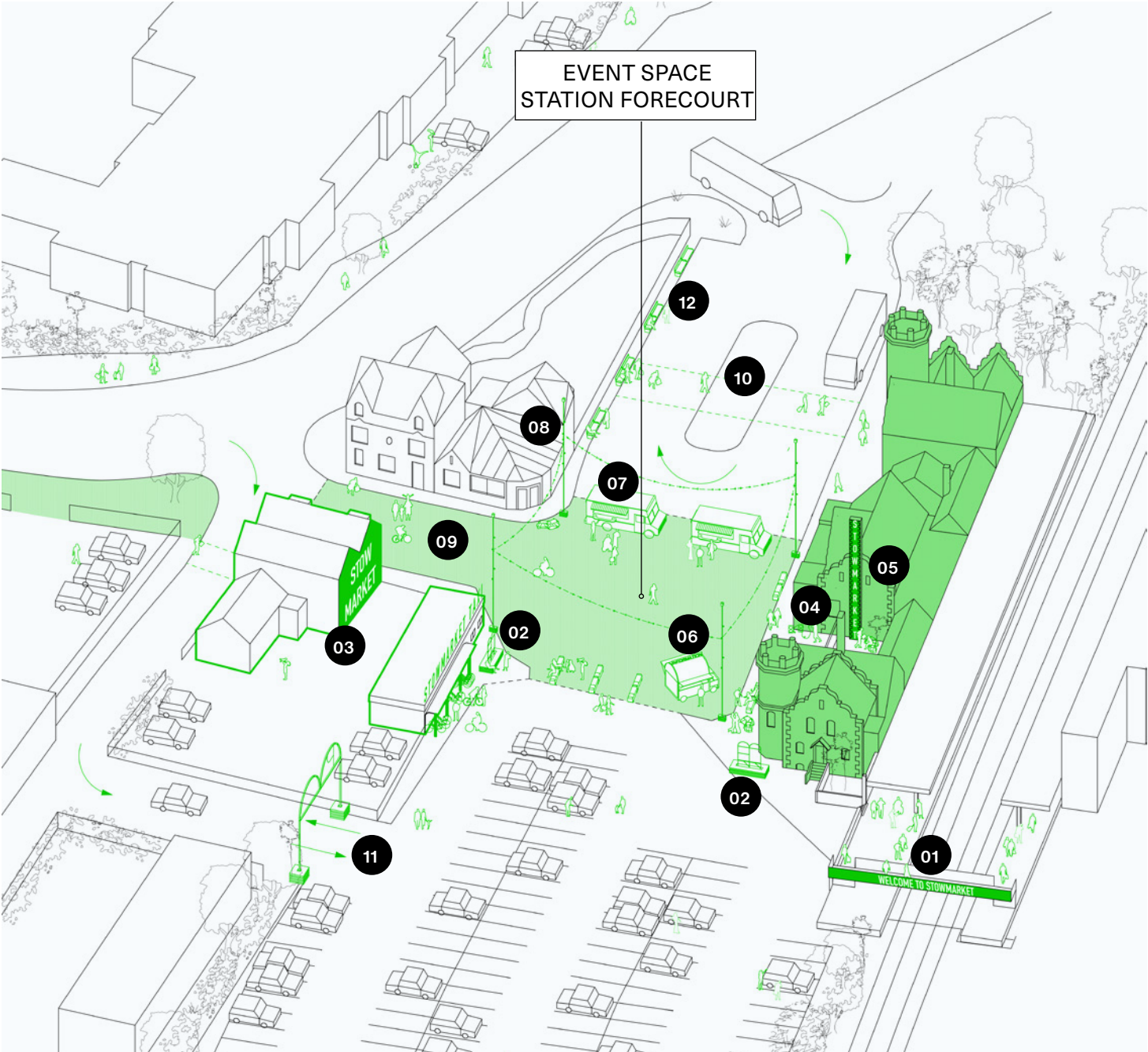
In terms of identity, we look to present Stowmarket in a confident manner, sensitive to its industrial roots and the station architecture: this manifests as mural artworks that adorn the bridge and southern tower with the name “Stowmarket” or the salutation “Welcome to Stowmarket; the heart of Suffolk”.

In appealing to residents and visitors, we proposed pop-up activations in the near future such as a food offering and an information point. Ultimately this would lead to pedestrianising parts of the station forecourt to create a more complete station square with seating and spaces to dwell.

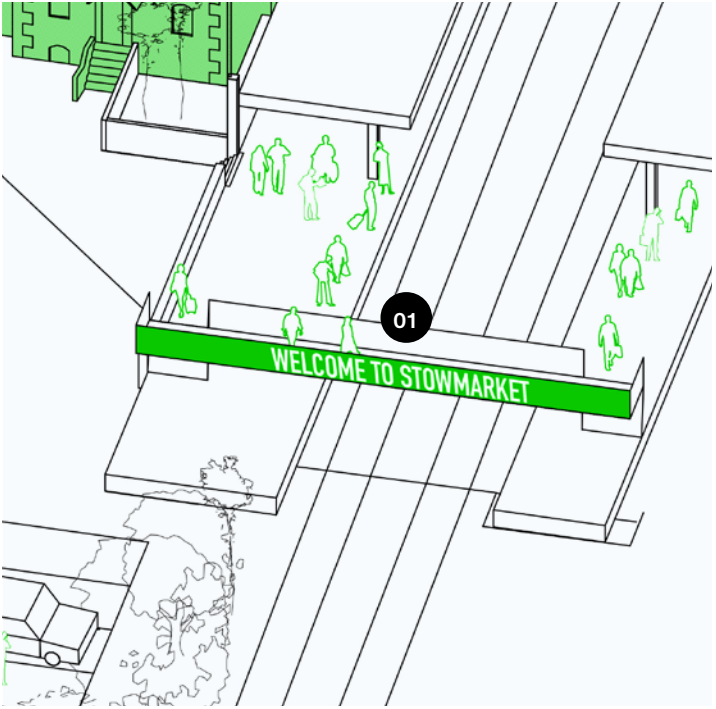
As this is a place where many people come together, the ultimate ambition to pedestrianise the forecourt also puts its safety at the heart of the scheme. Bus and pickup / drop off become separate to the long stay car park. Through this approach commuters and visitors alike can arrive in a place orient themselves and take in the surroundings without risk of contact with vehicle traffic.

There is a strong line of sight from the brow of Station Road West to the Station and the distance is not far, we look to use lighting to maximise that, and St Peter’s spire as a key orientation when heading into town. What is introduced should perform both in the light and dark; morning and evening. Beautifying the westward view of the old Ivy House, the Stowmarket Taxis building the and nursery school island should be considered as they hold potential in achieving the place-potential of the Station.

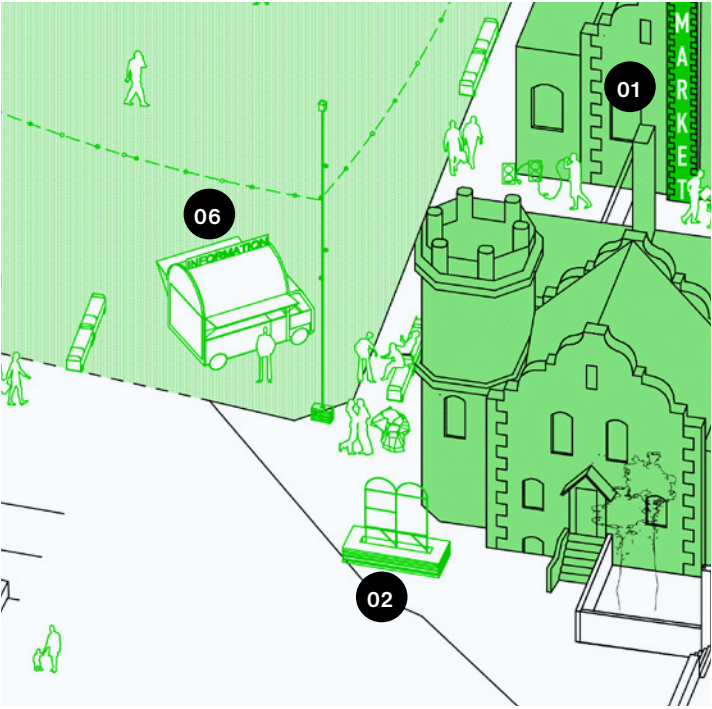
“I moved here 13 years ago and I wish I’d moved 13 years before that. It’s a very nice place to live - people are friendly, people walk past you and say hello.”
—Local Resident



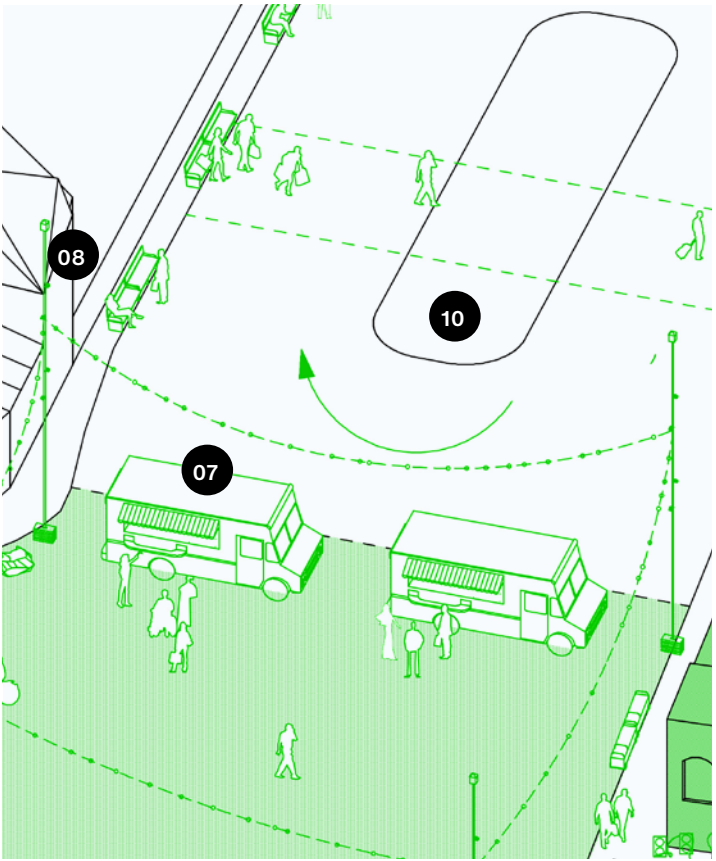
#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
1	Bridge Welcome Sign		£		1	8.8
2	Information Board	££			1	8.2
3	Building Improvement Schemes		£££		2	8.16
4	Station Garden		££		1	8.11
5	Facade Sign		£		2	8.8
6	Information Point (Mobile)	££			1	8.1
7	Food Trucks	£			1	
8	Place Creator		£££		4	8.13
9	Landscape Improvement			££££	1	8.15
10	New Pick up / Drop off Point			££££	1	8.15
11	New Car Park Entrance			£££	1	8.6
12	Street Furniture	£			10<	8.12



A quick win - painting the Station bridge, heralding a new welcome to Stowmarket.



In the preliminary NOW phases of the project, improved information signage (02) and the mobile information point (06) could welcome the visitor and provide information to the commuter.



In the NEAR future an improved lighting scheme (08) could frame a new square - creating a welcome mat for the town. Food Trucks (07) could be placed in strategic locations to provide a food offering to travellers and bring some of the Food Culture of Stowmarket to its eastern edge.

The ultimate FAR ambition would be to pedestrianise the central part of the station forecourt, separating buses and drop off (10) from the long stay car park creating a new town square, a safer space for the nursery and a new outdoor events space for the town, framing and improving the setting of its remarkable architecture.



7.2. STATION TO TOWN

Delivery & Funding

- Partners:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - Local Businesses

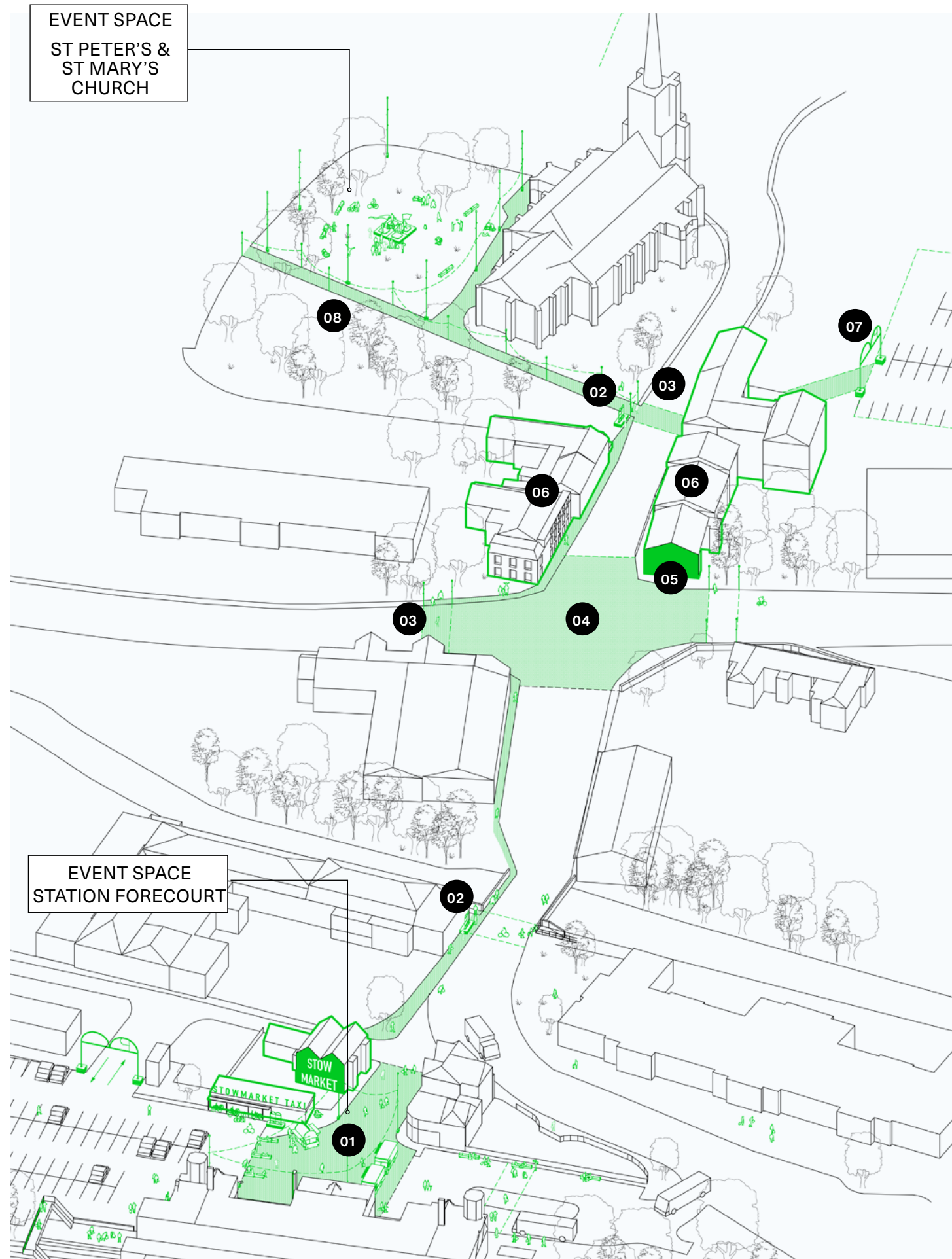
- Funders:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - CIL/Section 106

Leaving the station westward along Station Road East, aiming for the Church Spire, crossing over Gipping Way then to Station Road West, up the brow and hill and through or round to the Market Square is a short walk which should be made intuitive for visitors reaching Stowmarket’s centre. The route is linear, so we can use subtle design to maximise the transparency of what can work for us and provide confidence to the visitor to keep moving forward up the hill.

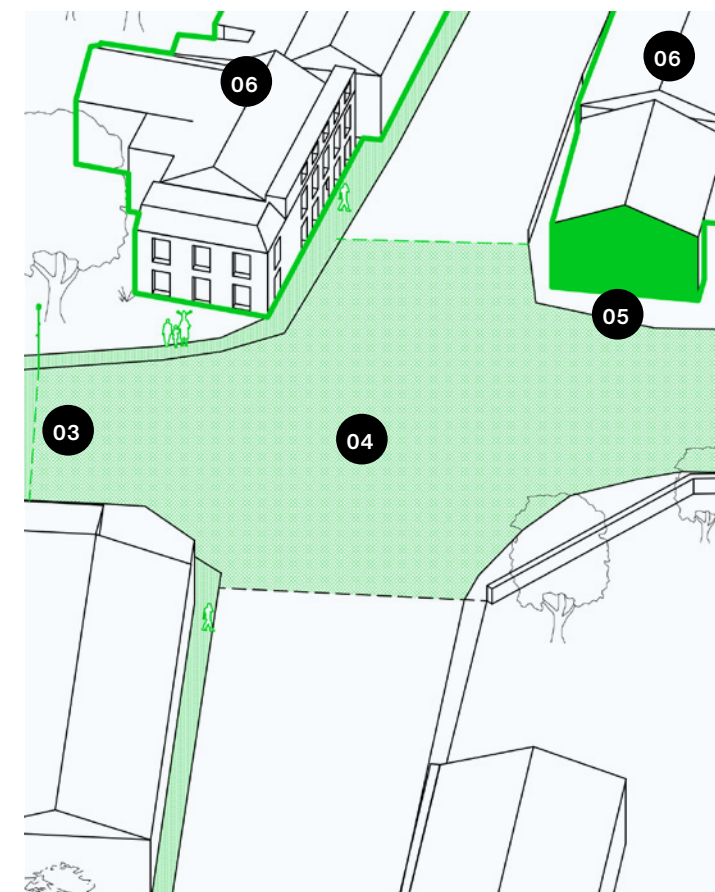
At the Station visitors are welcomed by the Mobile Information Kiosk (8.1) and Information Board (8.2). The Information Board outlines the landscape of Stowmarket and what is on offer during that week or month. It also includes place-based community messaging functions and links to the online Stowmarket content via QR code. We feel a simple direction, such as “head for the spire and you won’t go far wrong” might be enough in complement to existing finger posts already installed. For visitors who aren’t familiar with where they are heading, some degree of communicating progress along the route would be useful and we have suggested additional signage on the way. Where the River Gipping is crossed, an information sign (8.2) provides comfort that the walker is still on the right track. But also tells them of the remarkable blue and green infrastructure that abounds in and around the town.

A painted wayfinding intervention to the Station Road East crossroads on the Gable End of Stow Framing (8.8) will provide a critical update and confidence boost to those new to the town that they are heading in the right direction whilst being true to our ambition to make existing landmarks work for us and speaking to the consultees desires to not overly clutter the public realm with more signage than is necessary.

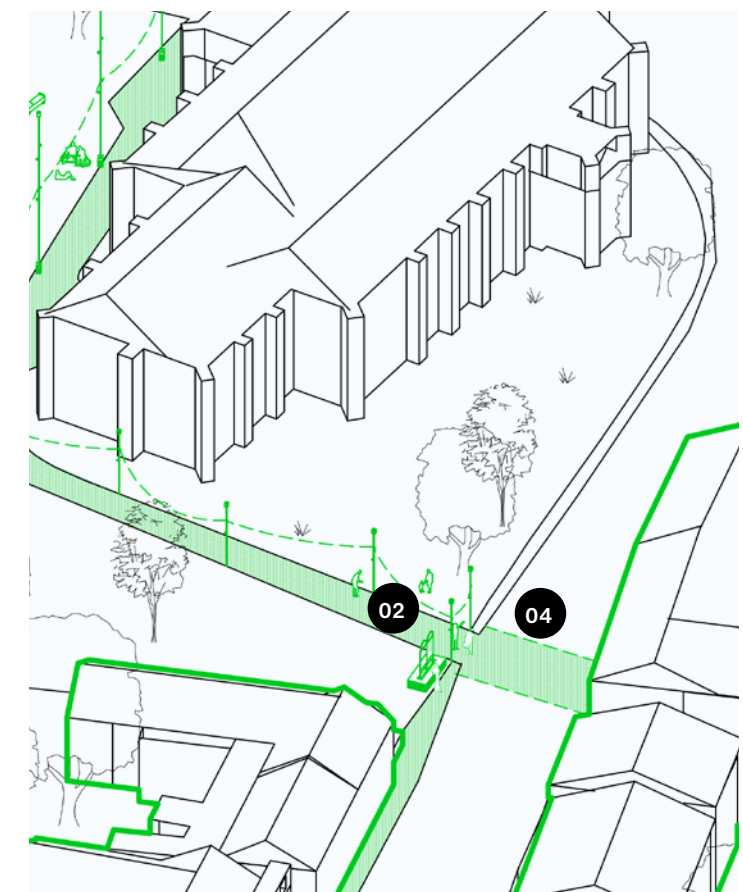
We feel that the crossroads of Gipping Way and Station Road East and West should be earmarked for significant improvement to prioritise pedestrian movement towards the town centre and that the buildings and shops on Station Road West to Market Square should be earmarked for future building improvement schemes. The package ends where the Churchyard begins, here the walker is greeted by another information board welcoming them to the first key green space in Stowmarket [see package 7.5].



#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
1	Station — see package 7.1					
2	Information Board	££			2	8.2
3	Crossing Improvement		£££		2	8.15
4	Junction Improvement			£££	2	8.15
5	Facade Artwork	£			1	8.9
6	Building Improvement Schemes			£££	1	8.16
7	Union Street Car Park Entrance		£££		1	8.6
8	Churchyard — see package 7.5					



The main obstacle to the visitors headed to the town centre from the station is the Gipping Way junction (04) this should be earmarked for improvement. In the NOW future the Stow Framing Gable end (05) could be painted to provide a vibrant welcome to those arriving at the junction. in the NEAR future, building improvement schemes should be implemented along station road west (06) framing the journey into town.



On arriving at the Churchyard (package 7.5) the walker is greeted with a final information sign (02), beckoning them through the yard towards either the alley or Buttermarket. An improved crossing (04) at this point would also serve visitors arriving from the Union Street Car Park too.

7.3. MARKET SQUARE



Delivery & Funding

- Partners:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - Local Businesses
 - John Peel Centre

- Funders:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - CIL/Section 106
 - Potential for artistic elements to be part of wider application to Arts Council England Projects Grants

Stowmarket is not large and Market Square sits right at its heart. From the market there are views to other key open spaces: the High Street, St Peter's churchyard and the Food Museum.

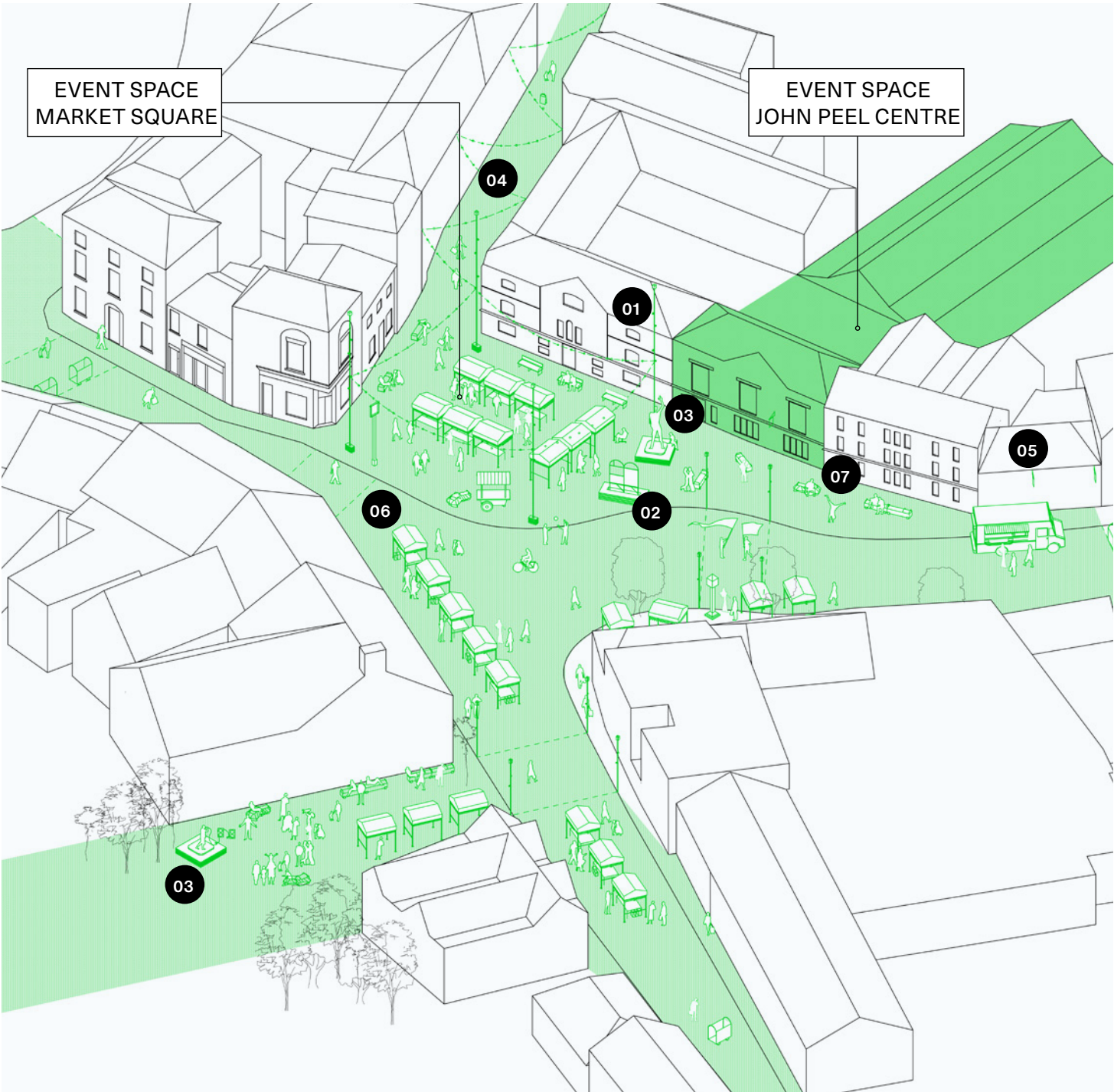
The Market has the potential to be the heart of Stowmarket — it's in the name, it's part of its history and we believe it is central to its future too. Our proposal spans timeframes and seeks to facilitate organic growth by building on existing infrastructure and market vernacular. Consultation identified the desire and opportunity for a space which was flexible: open to alternative activities to a Market, and in its downtime still activate interactions for the people of Stowmarket - be that through seating or public artworks.

In terms of active events, pedestrianisation of the Market Square, and through Wilkes Way to The Meadow Shopping Centre, would have huge benefit if a balance with managed essential access can be made. A more creatively ambitious layout for the market would differentiate the experience and complement a refreshed market offer, supporting Stowmarket's move towards more themed 'markets' that are less regular - say monthly over a seasonal rotation that will attract visitors from further afield. Removal of the bollards and planned pedestrianisation during new monthly markets would re-set the hierarchy back from the car towards the pedestrian and the mark stall holder.

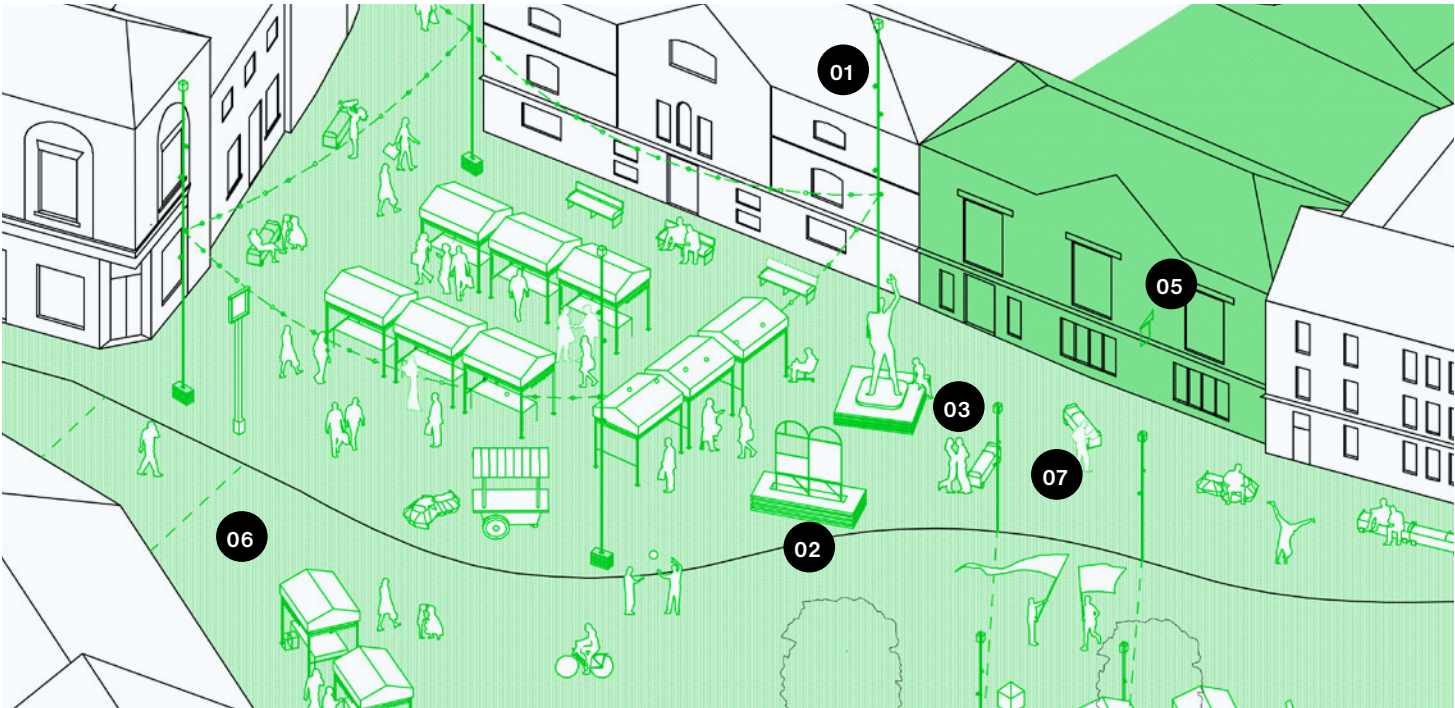
This future is framed by the proposed introduction of a multi-use infrastructure in the Market Square that provides lighting and seating, but also can serve as armatures for seasonal lighting, festival staging and temporary canopies throughout the Market Square events calendar and providing the means for venues like the John Peel Centre to spill out into the town and activate Stowmarket's heart with music and a creative flare.

The Old Fox Yard events represent a new direction for part of Stowmarket's experience and offering, we would suggest the interventions for the market are timeless, we have proposed a unified hanging signage scheme that could also improve the lighting at night, but without adding too much additional clutter to the public realm. The visual language subtly references Stowmarket history whilst functionally they connect with ubiquitous wrought iron metalwork visible throughout the area.

“We want more variation in town, a growing market, mixture of shops and a clean area, with flags, flowers and people that we can be proud of.” —Local resident



#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
1	Place Creator		£££		4	8.13
2	Information Board	££			1	8.2
3	Sculpture Trail		££		2	8.10
4	Lighting Scheme	£			60m	8.14
5	Signage Scheme	££			10+	8.5
6	Landscape Improvement		££		1	8.15
7	Street Furniture	£			5+	8.12



The market square could be framed as a key event space in the town. Place creators (01) can be used in many adaptable configurations. Unnecessary bollards are removed (06) to create a freer flowing public realm, an information board (02) tells what's on offer that month and repeats the map of the town. A common shop sign scheme (05) provides a consistent aesthetic to businesses along the high street. On quieter days, the sculpture (03) and the street furniture (07) remain, providing the place for residents to sit and to meet and to appreciate the beautiful town centre.



Sculpture from local artists could form a trail from Great Gables to the Food Museum (03). Wilkes Way should be considered a part of the Market Square events and initiatives.



7.4. HIGH STREET (IPSWICH & BURY STREET)

Delivery & Funding

- Partners:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - Local Businesses
 - The Old Fox Yard
 - Modece Architects

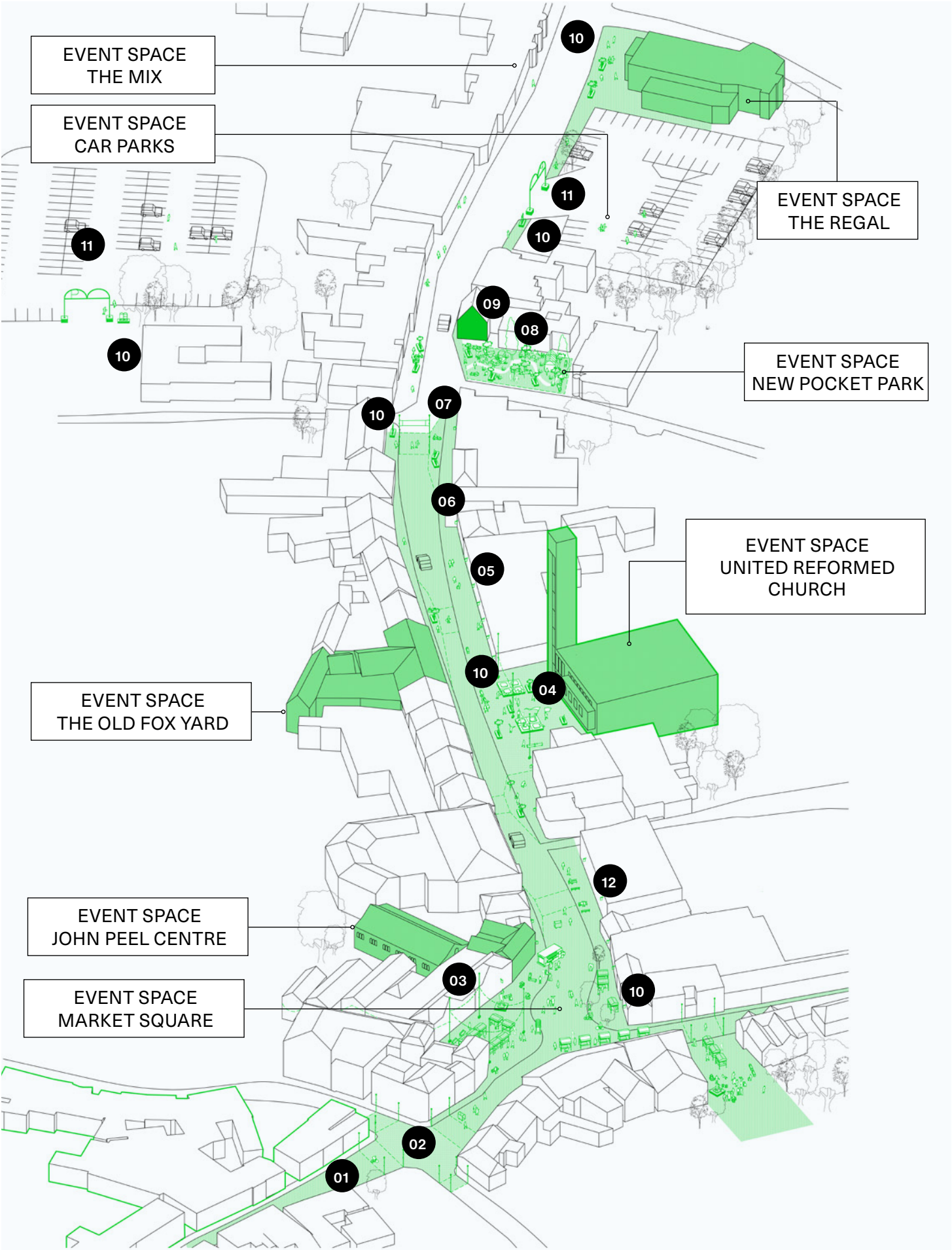
- Funders:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - CIL/Section 106
 - Potential for artistic elements to be part of wider application to Arts Council England Projects Grants

Stowmarket's core High Street is a manageable size and provides a range of hospitality and retail opportunities. It is critical that Bury Street is better integrated with the High Street, and its independent retailers served effectively too. This means resolving the challenge of the Ipswich Street / Station Road intersection that presently creates a barrier - this should be the subject of a robust transport assessment before any physical placemaking interventions can really serve Bury streets businesses better. However, the buildings that form this junction could be signed to show that there is more to be found on Bury Street along with a building improvement scheme to the buildings that lie to the Northeast, potentially with some building based signage. A place creator could also be located at the entrance to Bury Street to highlight the independent shops on offer and that there is more to be found there - the Uncover Stowmarket stamp would be effective here.

Interventions could be made to not only home central Ipswich Street as a place, but also bring the extensions of the town centre together. Interventions would seek to unify as well as activate, drawing on its potential for bright weekend interactions and an evening's saunter between and around it's corners.

A High Street is the backbone through a community so interventions want to help it to be busy. It is arguable that forbidding traffic totally along Ipswich Street would risk isolating it entirely; yet consultation highlights that traffic which is felt to interrupt a flow between the corners of Stowmarket's town centre. We believe that further augmentation of the street could make the car slow down, make it less desirable and more human focussed (and also an opportunity to introduce biodiversity in the process). The long term ambition should be to remove bollards, which are an annoyance and proven to be an impractical form of pedestrian / vehicle management towards the introduction of a more meandering traffic calming scheme where the driver has to navigate widenings to the pavement which will be planted, provide places for seating and cycle parking - adding street life back to the high street through dwelling places and the introduction of managed biodiversity sites.

Regular events on the High Street will lead to its frequent closure and pedestrianisation - leading to a sense that pedestrianisation here is the norm. In the short term we seek to maximise awareness, dwelling and interaction on a high street that has the potential to be one of the best in the region.



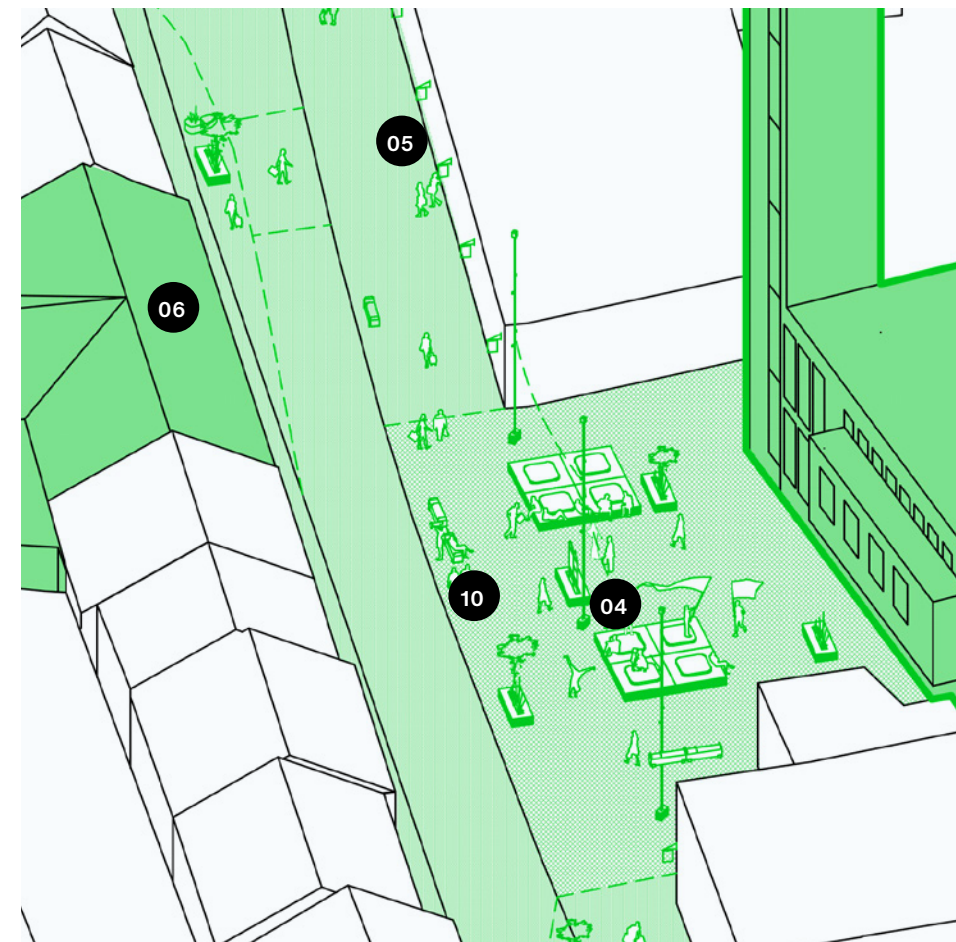
#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
1	Bury Street should be considered part of the highstreet	£				–
2	Junction Improvement		££		1	8.15
3	Market — see package 7.3					
4	United Reform Church Forecourt improvement			££££	1	8.15
5	Highstreet Signage Scheme	££			10+	8.5
6	Landscape Improvement, footway widening		££		5+	8.15
7	Place Creator		£££		4	8.13
8	Pocket Park		££		1	8.11
9	Facade Artwork	£			1	8.9
10	Information Board	££			3	8.2
11	Car Park Entrance		£££		2	8.6
12	Street Furniture	£			10<	8.12



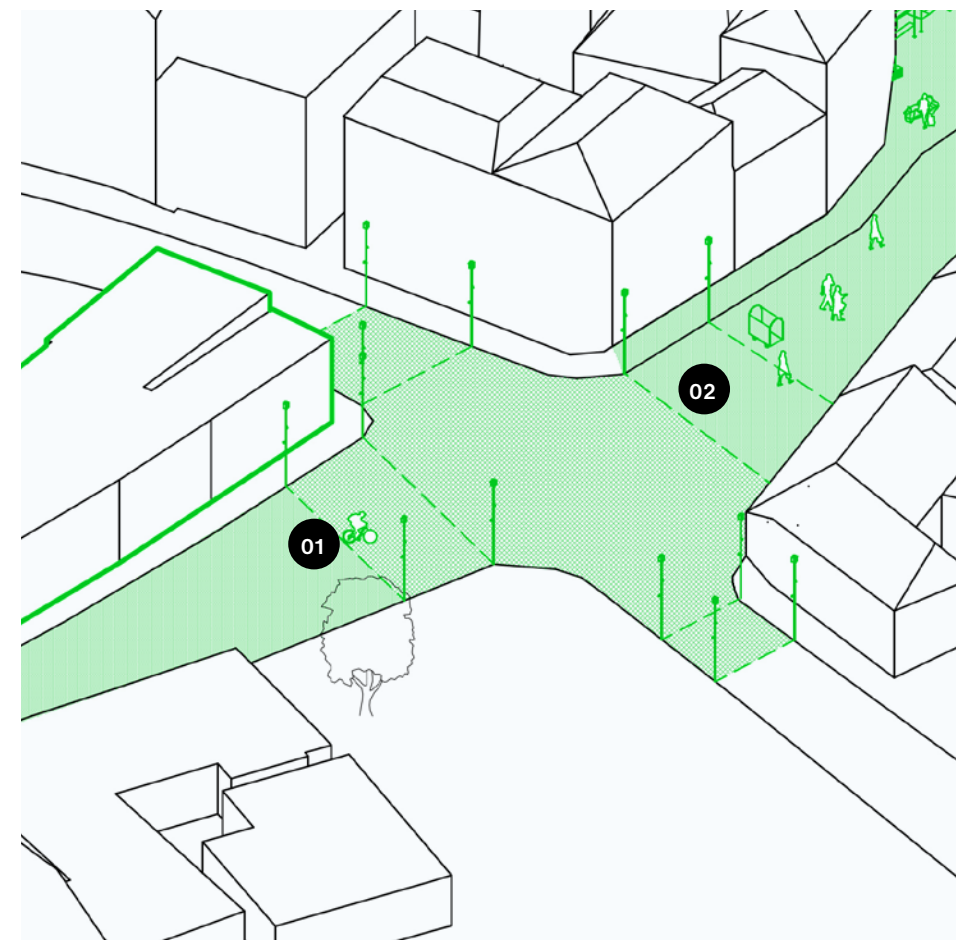
The Market Square provides a key focal point at the end of the Ipswich street



To continue a sense of activity down the high street a community garden (08) is proposed, developed in collaboration with local community groups. This might be preceded by an ecologically inspired artwork on the gable wall (09). A key gateway provides a welcome to visitors (10) with changeable signage, to herald the events that are on that week.



The United Reformed Church forms the centre of the High Street and could be brought into the town more its forecourt could become a key middle dwelling space in the area (04) working in conjunction with The Old Fox Yard (06). This change could be started with the provision of a more generous seating scheme and information sign in this area (10).



Bury Street (01) must not be forgotten in changes to the High Street. The junction at its southern end should be improved (02) to preference the flow of people north south.



7.5. CHURCHYARD

Delivery & Funding

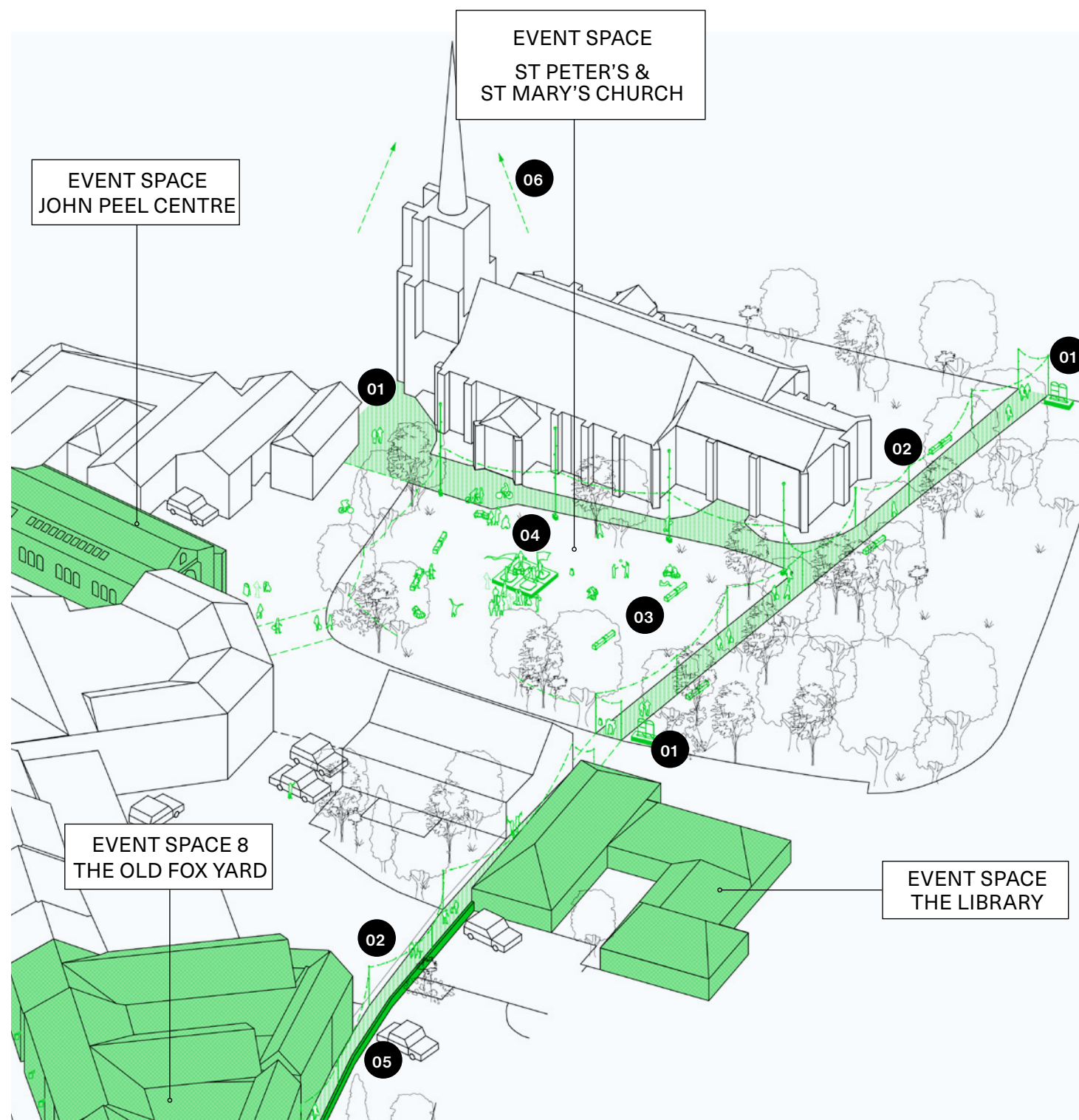
Partners:
- Town Council
- District Council
- Local Businesses
- John Peel Centre
- Stowmarket Library
- St Peter's & St Mary's Church

Funders:
- Town Council
- District Council
- CIL/Section 106
- Potential for artistic elements to be part of wider application to Arts Council England Projects Grants

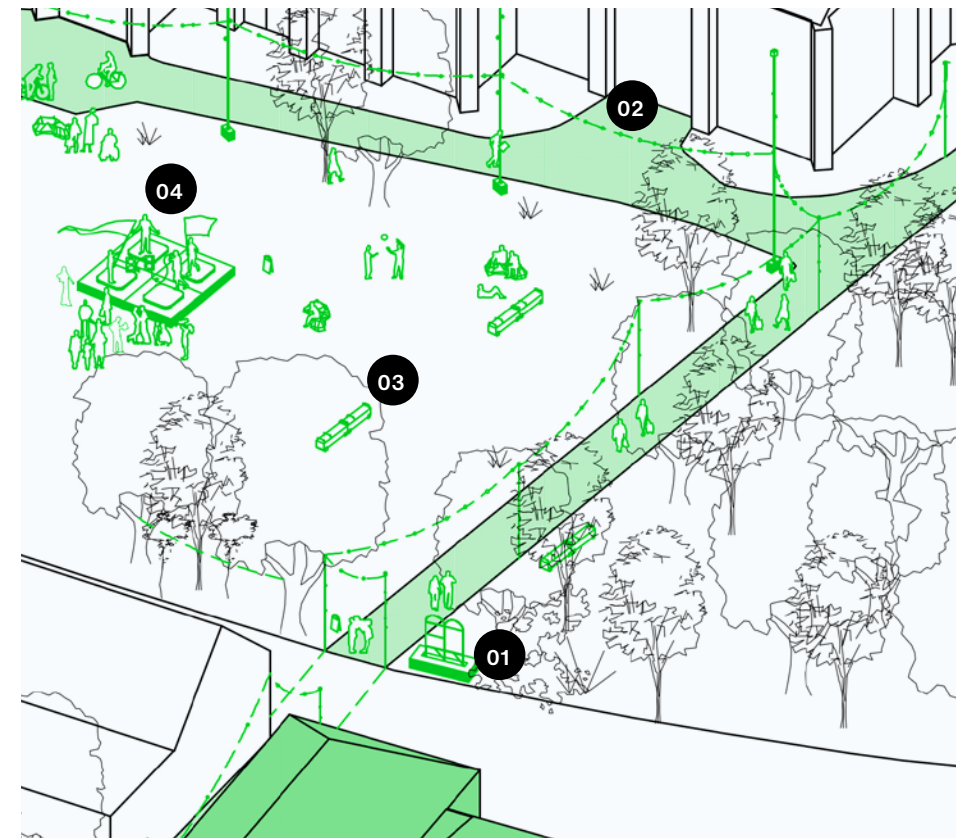
Using what exists, or what people are naturally inclined to do, and making that work better or be more apparent is the best way we can empower Stowmarket towards a sustainable future of its own making. The alleyway between St. Peter's and St. Mary's past The Old Fox Yard to the Council Office on Ipswich Street is a short distance that helps those in the know cut from one local pocket to another. In our intention to draw these pockets together it offers an essential thread between similar activities in the Churchyard, the Library and John Peel Centre with The Old Fox Yard and further to The Regal and The Mix. Further north it continues straight through the Churchyard to Station Road.

For people to use this route they want to trust where it goes and that it is safe. We propose a lighting scheme that draws through the Churchyard and along the Alleyway, trying to pull the Alleyway out into the open. We would propose that an art scheme, perhaps a collaboration with a youth group and The Old Fox Yard provides a mural along this alleyway to further brighten its presence and make it feel like a place that is important and well attended to.

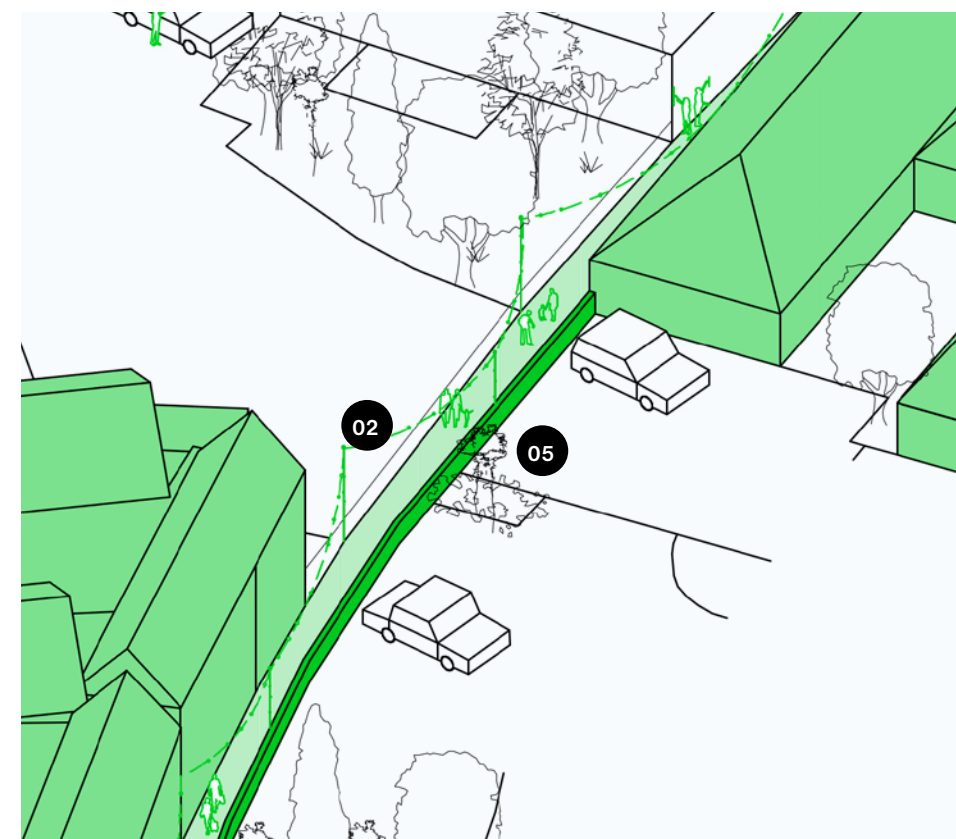
We propose that the Churchyard is a potential venue for a Stowmarket events programme and could be activated in concert with the Market Place at specific times. To this end, it should be easier to occupy and dwell in, therefore more seating and information signage should be located in this area too.



#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
1	Information Board	££			3	8.2
2	Lighting Scheme	£			110m	8.14
3	Street Furniture	£			10<	8.12
4	Stage		££		4	8.10
5	Art Wall		££		1	8.9
6	Spire Lighting		£		1	8.14



The two principle routes through the churchyard are adorned with an improved festoon lighting scheme (02) and framed at their ends by the information boards (01). The centre becomes a focal point for seasonal events (04) and more seating is provided for residents and visitors to enjoy this part of the town (03).



The alleyway that runs past The Old Fox Yard, to the east of the high street is an important route in the town. Its lighting scheme is improved (02) and its boundary wall becomes a community mural wall, an outdoor gallery of local art schemes, run by community groups (05).



7.6. THE RECREATION GROUND

Delivery & Funding

Partners:

- Town Council
- District Council
- Local Businesses

Funders:

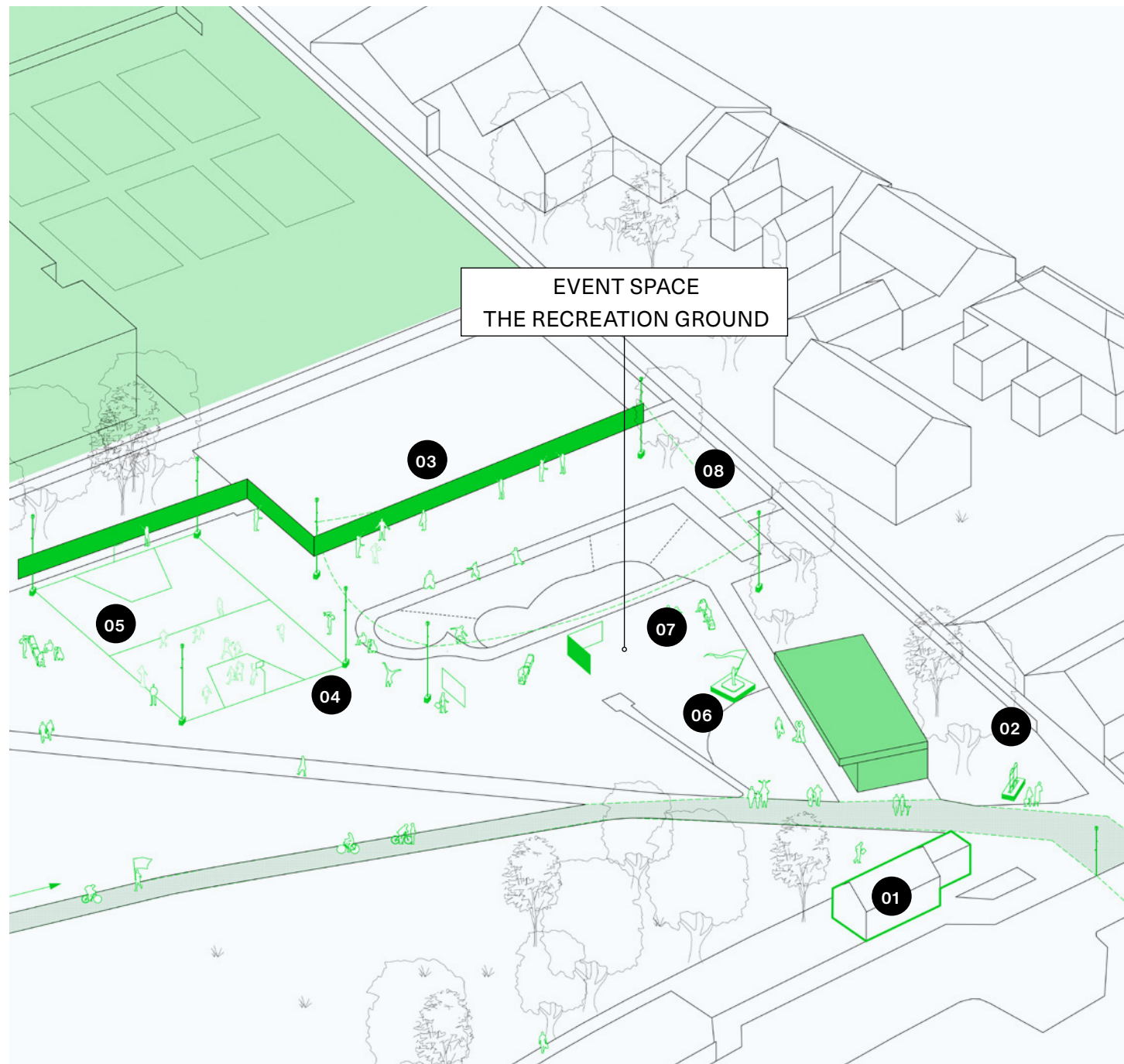
- Town Council
- District Council
- CIL/Section 106
- Potential for artistic elements to be part of wider application to Arts Council England Projects Grants

Consultation with younger people in Stowmarket highlighted the Recreation ground as a critical central place where their activities are focussed. It is the part of town, closest to the centre where young people are presently finding their place. It possesses potential for encouraging young people into the centre through the provision of information on signage boards that speak to them - music events at the John Peel Centre, youth programmes at The Mix, the Food Museum or Great Gables. Fundamentally, however, it should be shored up as a place for them to express themselves in a safe environment.

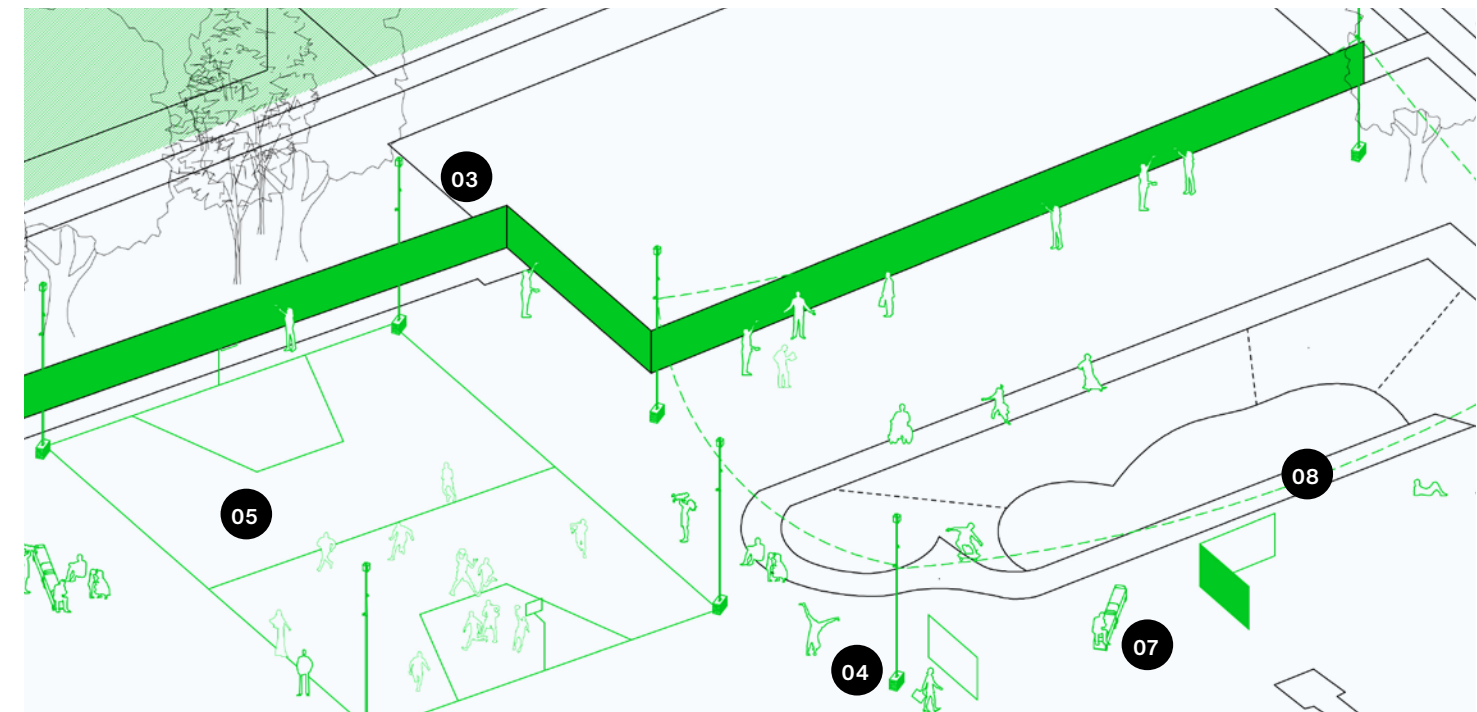
The Recreation Ground is a Gateway to the town centre for those arriving by bike on the National Cycle Network Route 51. We believe that placemaking efforts should be focussed at its south eastern fringe, where a series of amenities and spaces already exist, namely the cafe and the skate park.

Other youth-focussed initiatives should be located at this site. Optimisation and improvement of the WC building presents potential for an arts programme activation or perhaps for this building to become a secondary information point. We are inspired by the work of the Stowmarket Eco Future Group and their mural adornment of the site hoarding for the coming housing. We propose that a memory of this activity is preserved through the introduction of a series of walls that form a porous boundary and acoustic buffer between the skatepark and the new housing - elements for practising parkour and for the expression of artistic activities such as mural making and graffiti.

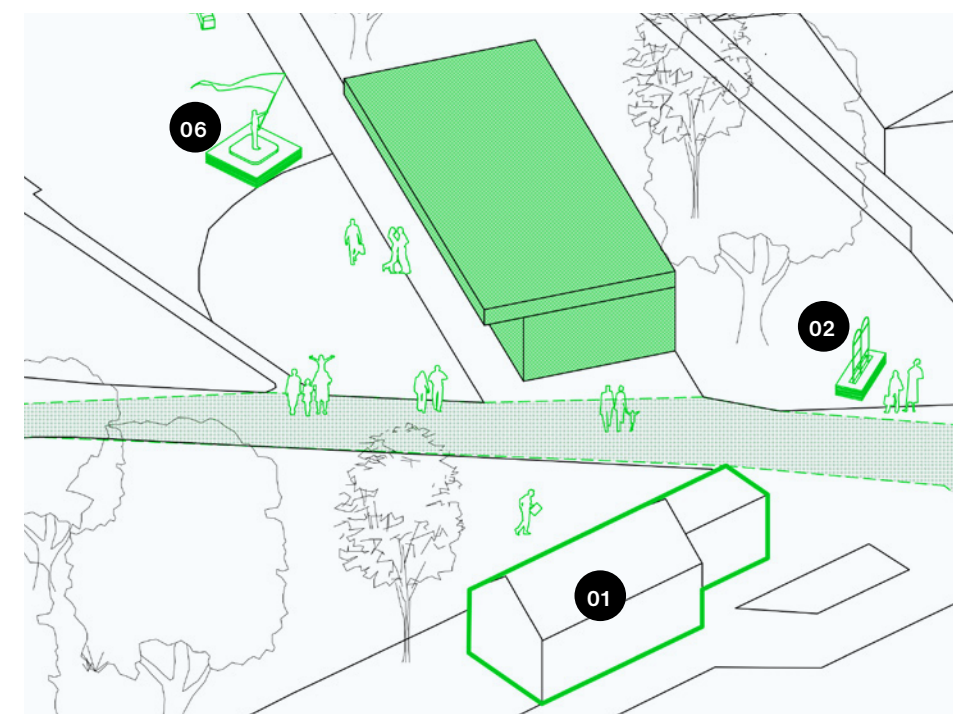
The Rec is a large open space, we propose to intensify its use at this southern end, introducing a ball court and a focussed lighting scheme. The typical Information Board forms a subtle gateway to this area. Finborough Road passes to the southern fringe, the next right is a critical right turn for the food museum car park - here a bespoke food museum sign should be located to salute both those arriving by car and by bike.



#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
2	Information Board	££			1	8.2
3	Art Wall		££		1	
4	Place Creator	£		£££	8	8.13
5	Landscaping Improvement			£££	1	8.15
6	Sculpture Trail	££			1	8.10
7	Street Furniture	£			10<	8.12
8	Lighting Scheme	£			130m	8.14



The eastern part of the recreation ground is intensified to form a youth focussed community hub. Art is expressed through a permanent mural wall (03) providing an acoustic buffer between the rec. and the new housing to the north. A ball court (05) complements the existing skate park. An improved lighting scheme enables use and activity all year around (04)



The information board (02) forms a welcome to visitors and residents arriving by bicycle the WC building is reoriented through a co-created programme to provide resources to young people (01)



7.7. CAR PARKS

Delivery & Funding

- Partners:
- Town Council
 - Local Businesses
 - Food Musuem
 - ASDA
 - The Regal Cinema
 - United Reform Church
 - Red Gables

- Funders:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - CIL/Section 106

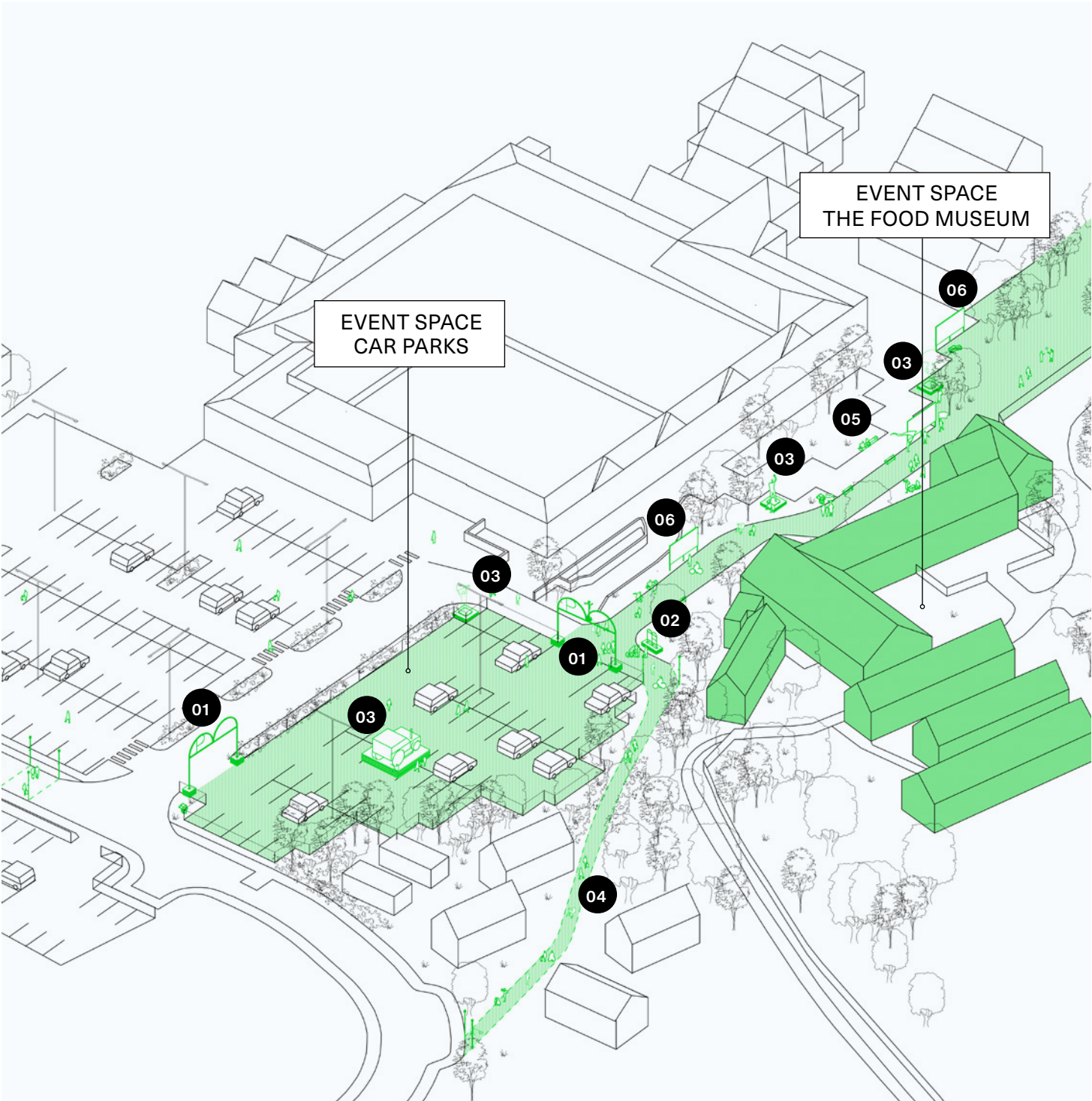
The many Stowmarket car parks are an important transition point between people’s journey into Stowmarket and continuing on by foot on arrival. It is likely that people will follow the instructions of a map on their smartphone; we cannot change that. Some car park users will know exactly how to get to their destination and may only need a reminder of the best route, for some it will be their first visit; but for all – interventions will seek to offer a welcoming and reassuring dialogue through wayfinding and placemaking.

In a context where people follow the recommendations of their smartphone map, the opportunity is to present an in-date Stowmarket voice with superior local know-how regarding what is on, where it is and how best to get there. We wish to appeal to people’s inherent ways of navigation. We propose overhauling typical Car Park Pay Points introducing a simple wayfinding language that then guides people on and into Stowmarket and renames the Car Parks to be more suitable to the venues and destinations they serve.

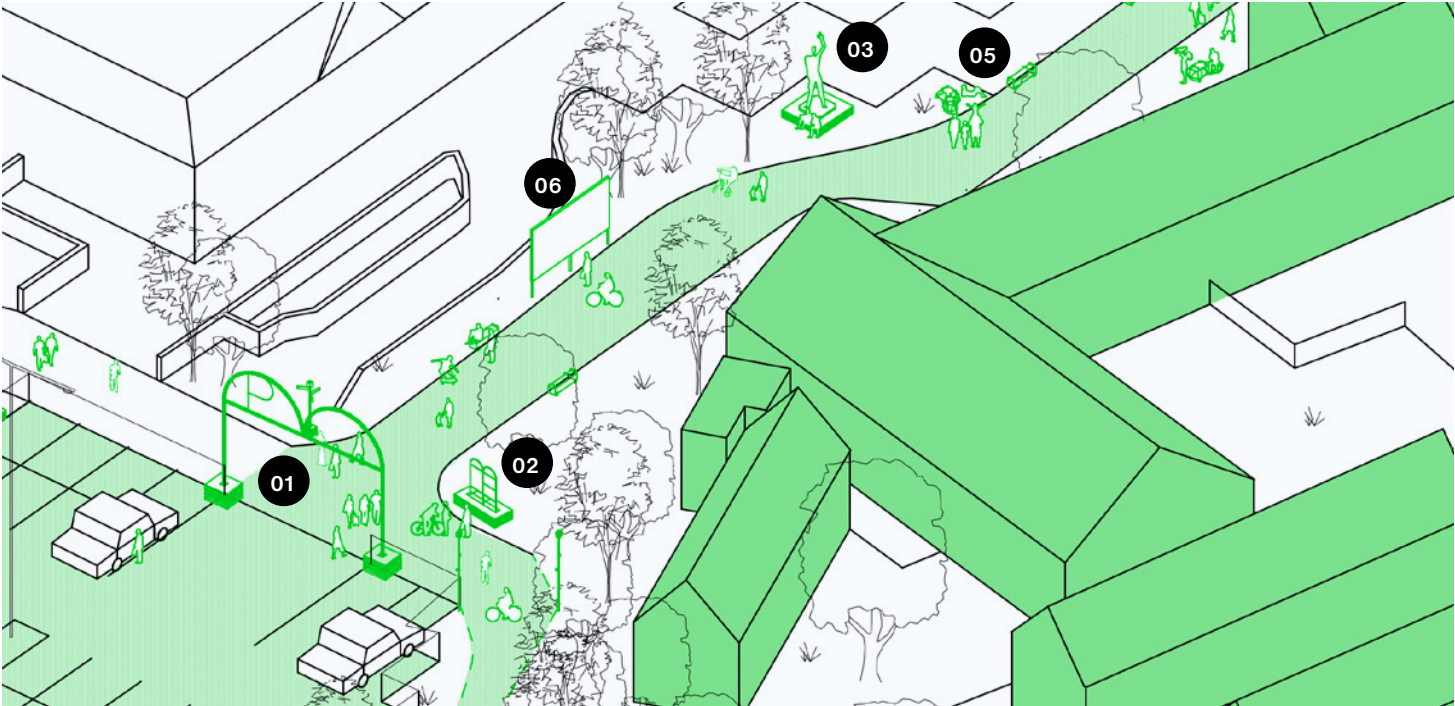
Signage will Identify, help navigate or orientate, and provide information. Appealing to people’s expectation for guidance. The visual language will be engaging and confident. The materialy be timeless and a framework for future augmentation. To appeal to a range of audiences the visual communication should present Stowmarket’s inclusive personality. In terms of content, it should give instruction that are easy to retain and the means by which to maintain orientation on that route. Legibility will be delivered not only through font size and contrast but through editing of information to what is deemed necessary to include. Particular note should be given to where level access is best achieved.

To align with the intention of timelessness and flexibility any bespoke signage frames would still be defined by industry standard sizes and fixings. In hand with an overarching Stowmarket visual identity, it is wise to accommodate in-the-moment local communication regards events, for that to feel at home rather than an unwelcome interruption.

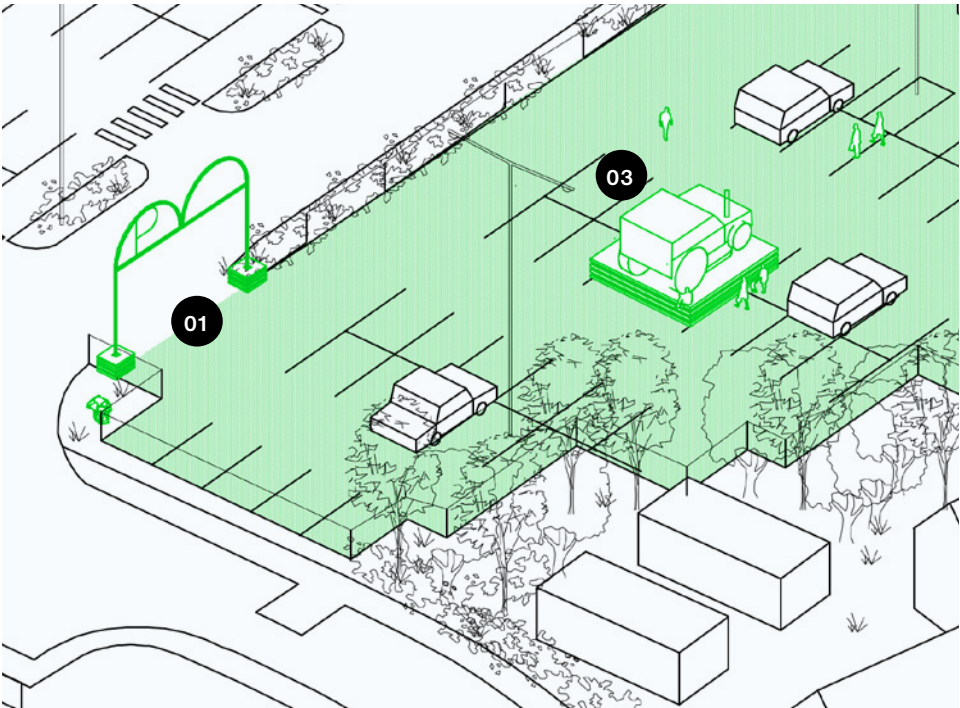
Shown on the pages that follow is a radical “FAR” vision for the Food Museum Car Park – however the intentions contained within this intervention can be applied to all central carparks in Stowmarket to provide a cohesive suite. A thorough car parking strategy review is advised as an extension of this work.



#	Description	Now	Near	Far	Quantity	Intervention code
1	Car Park Entrance		£££		2	8.6
2	Information Board	££			1	8.2
3	Sculpture Trail	££			4	8.10
4	Landscape Improvement			£££	1	8.15
5	Street Furniture	£			10<	8.12
6	Road Based Sign		££		3	8.7



Car Parks all receive a common entrance portal (01), welcoming the traveller. These portals become new gateways to the town. An information sign (02) is also paired with the portal providing immediate information as the driver changes mode and needs new information about what and do do and where to go next. At the Food Museum car park a sculpture (03) and billboard sign scheme celebrate what is on and bring the museum into the public realm.



Car parks, although seemingly banal will be key places to consider the future of the public realm, as car dependency falls, how might these spaces be re-conceived as multi-use spaces that punctuate the urban grain?



7.8. GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE: THE RIVER GIPPING AND OTHER ROUTES

Delivery & Funding

- Partners:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - River Gipping Trust
 - Pickerel Project
 - The Mix
 - Local schools
 - Red Gables
 - Canal & River Trust

- Funders:
- Town Council
 - District Council
 - CIL/Section 106
 - Canal & River Trust
 - Potential for artistic & heritage elements to be part of wider applications to Arts Council England Projects Grants and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Stowmarket has a remarkable network of blue and green infrastructure that lies very close to its centre. It possesses the potential to be a critical asset to the town for both the promotion of sustainable forms of travel and improving local access to nature, but also as a complementary draw for visitors from further afield visiting the Food Museum or perhaps traversing the National Cycle Route 51.

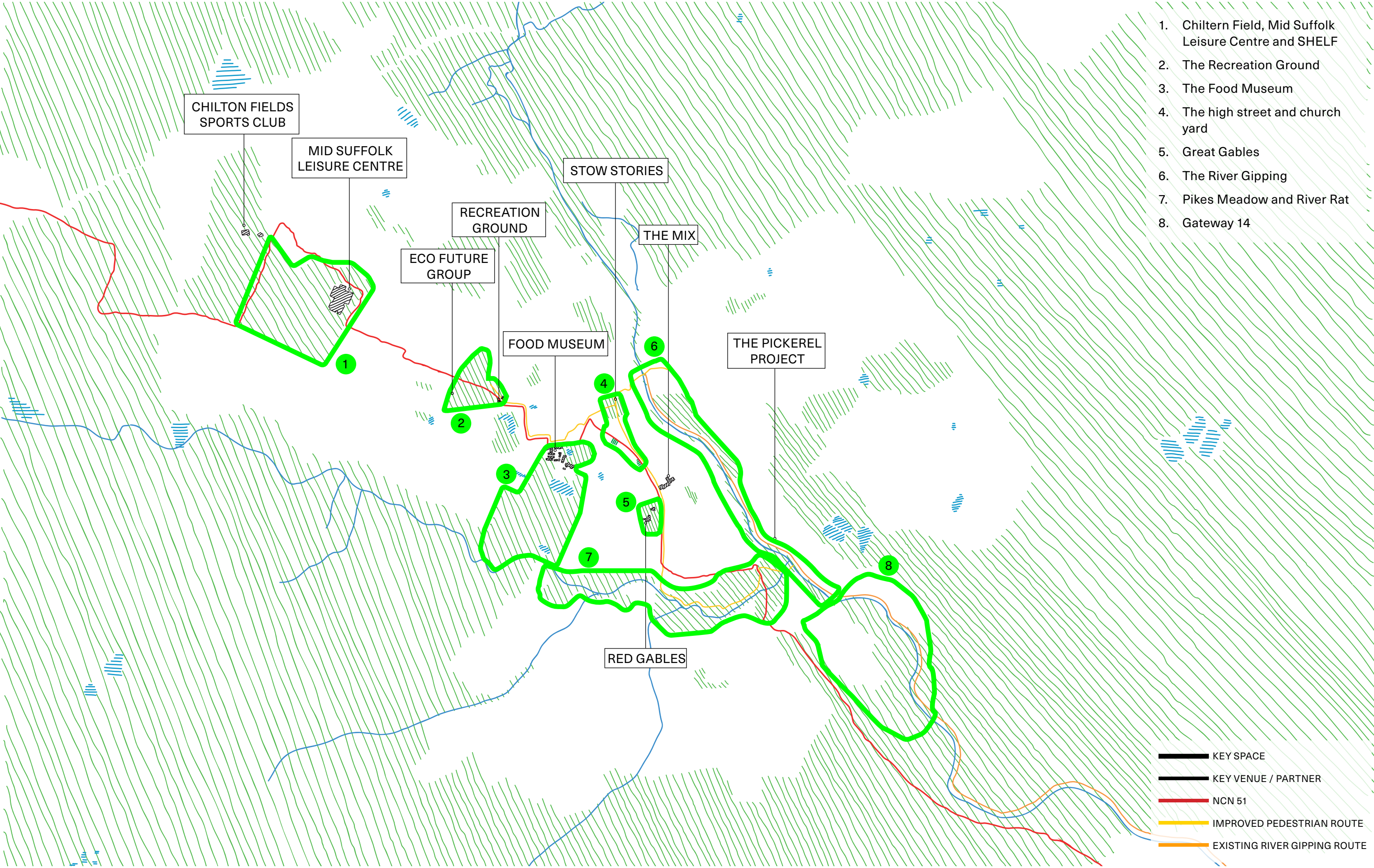
There are a number of existing initiatives in Stowmarket that should be supported so that they can continue their important work in ensuring that these assets are continually developed in the right direction.

The River Gipping, through the work of organisations such as the Pickerel Project, is being proven to be a critical piece of local accessible infrastructure for walking - it was noted from consultation that elements of the route were intimidating to the lone walker. Continued upkeep to its banks and providing greater means of access along its length will serve to improve this. We have proposed signage along its route to provide information about the initiative and encourage the visitor to explore further in the knowledge that they are going the right way. This work might be done in collaboration with the Gateway 14 Project, where the River Gipping Path could provide a green, safe and quiet route from the station to the new free port development to the south, encouraging sustainable forms of travel and access to this ecologically ambitious business park development.

The drawing we have provided overleaf shows the opportunity to create a near-contiguous green trail around the town, connected through by a more biodiverse High Street and the Market Square. The route could be signed through a simple walker focussed signage scheme and perhaps illustrated as per the work of Stow Stories - critically, the routes described on the Love Exploring app should be advertised on the information signage around the town and the green and blue networks that encircle and intertwine through Stowmarket should be celebrated and shown, such that those who are less interested in the most direct route, but perhaps the prettiest or the most enjoyable can find their way too.

As uncovered through our research work, there are a great deal of institutions in the town who could serve its greener future effectively - either through community schemes related to growing or access to nature or through continued advocacy and campaigning for a greener and more accessible future. These organisations, many of which are grass roots or volunteer lead, should be supported, celebrated and encouraged through the Uncover Stowmarket initiative.

The map on this page shows the remarkable density of green space within the town, key routes, visitor journeys and existing organisations that could support a regenerative ecologically just future for Stowmarket



The images on this page show the key green spaces within the Town that should be connected through wayfinding and trail making



1 Photo credit: John Fielding, Flickr



2



3



4



5 Photo credit: Suffolk FC website



6



7

- 1. Chilton Field, Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and SHELF
- 2. The Recreation Ground
- 3. The Food Museum
- 4. The high street and church yard
- 5. Great Gables
- 6. The River Gipping
- 7. Pikes Meadow and River Rat



14. Navigation Approach, Gipping Way Junction



7.9. OUTER AND INNER GATEWAYS

Delivery & Funding

Partners:

- Town Council
- District Council

Funders:

- Town Council
- District Council
- CIL/Section 106

There are four principal ways the visitor (whether new or regular) will access Stowmarket - by car, by train, by bus or by bike.

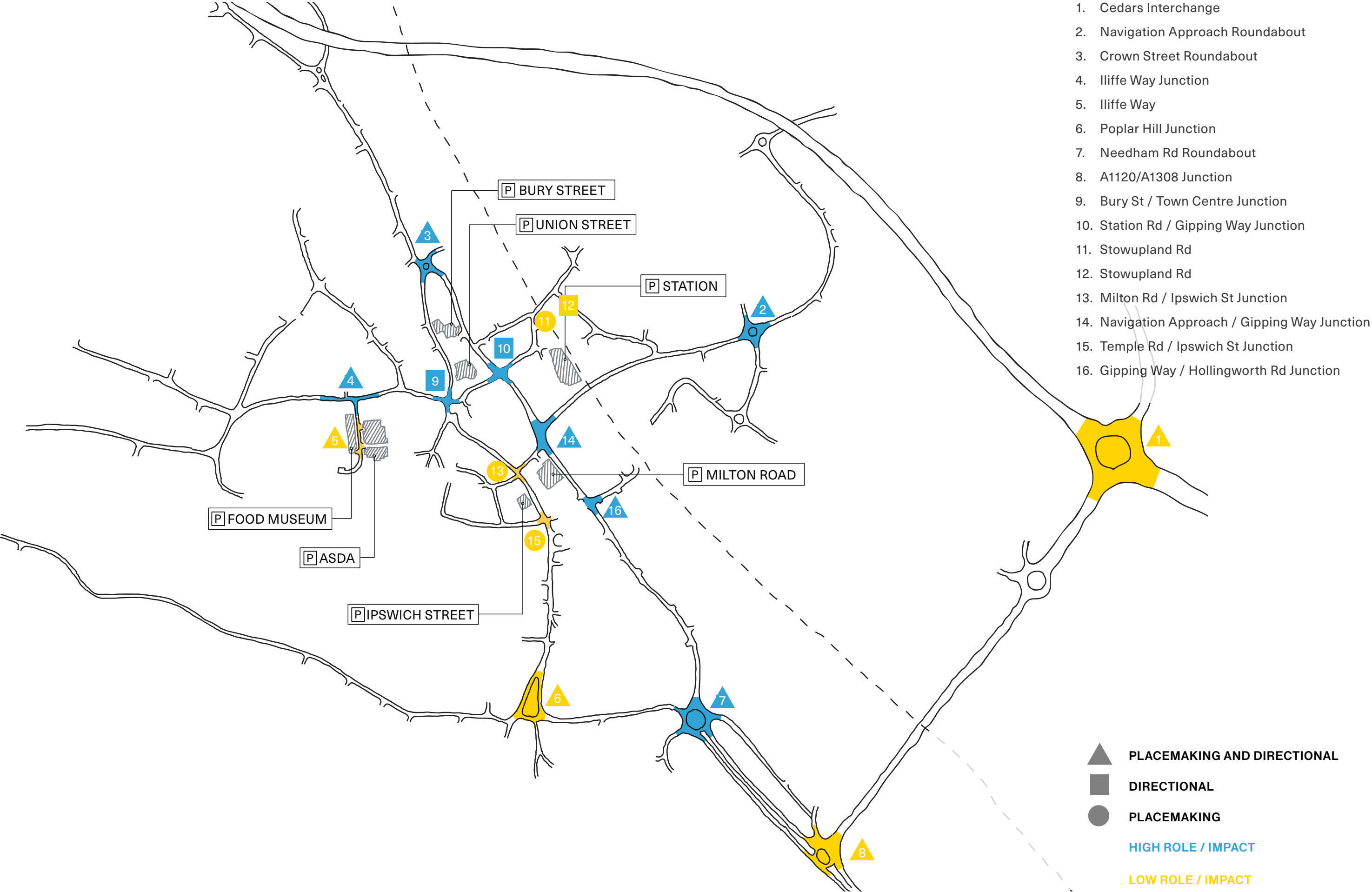
We have identified the priority locations within the town (at two levels of perceived impact) where those moving at the pace of a vehicle should be communicated towards. Junctions become critical locations to show and to celebrate what is on offer at Stowmarket to the traveller who might pass by the town every day without considering what is at its centre. The most effective means of doing this at the periphery of the town would be an update to the existing billboard scheme, but commissioned through a cohesive design strategy under the Uncover Stowmarket brand.

We also advise that existing pieces of town architecture are used through sign painting to herald a welcome to the town and a suggestion of what it has to offer. Junctions are also key moments where impressions of place are built and it was understood from engagement that many of them are letting the town down in terms of first impressions. The Station Road / Gipping Way junction (10 overleaf) and the Crown Street roundabout (3 overleaf) are key examples where a sense of arrival at a vibrant, exciting and plentiful place should be made.

Then there are moments of transfer from one mode of transport to another, from the car to the pavement, from the train to the platform and so on. Therefore, car parks and the station become critical gateways to extend a welcome to the visitor and the regular alike.

We advise a comprehensive update to the carpark naming strategy and a time-based assessment of the current parking provision. From consultation, it was found that some of the car parks are not effectively servicing key destinations. For example the Regal Cinema’s most adjacent parking facility does not cater for longer stays (problematic when watching a film) and the Food Museum’s car park is simply in the wrong place for an accessible and enjoyable welcome to one of the town’s most important cultural institutions [see package 7.7].

The map on this page shows the key road intersections and car parks where signage and placemaking would have the greatest impact, based on our audit.

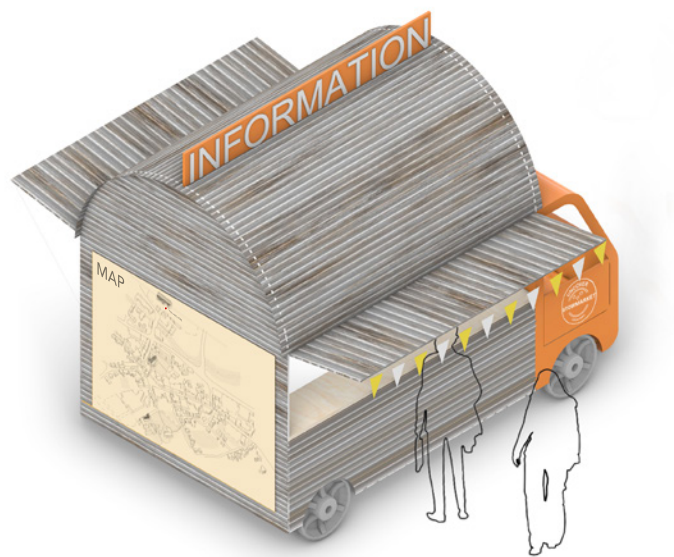




8. INTERVENTIONS

- 8.1. MOBILE INFORMATION KIOSK
- 8.2. INFORMATION BOARD
- 8.3. FINGER POST
- 8.4. TEMPORARY 'A-BOARD' SIGN
- 8.5. HANGING SIGN(S)
- 8.6. VEHICLE GATEWAY
- 8.7. ROAD BASED SIGN
- 8.8. FACADE SIGN PAINTING
- 8.9. FACADE ARTWORK
- 8.10. ARTWORK PLINTH
- 8.11. PLANTING SCHEMES
- 8.12. STREET FURNITURE
- 8.13. LIGHTING - PLACE CREATORS
- 8.14. FESTOON LIGHTING
- 8.15. PEDESTRIAN AND BUILT IN LANDSCAPING SCHEMES
- 8.16. BUILDING IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

8.1. MOBILE INFORMATION KIOSK



From Research



Potential location for Mobile Information Kiosk, Stowmarket Station



Potential location for Mobile Information Kiosk, Market Square

What
The mobile information point serves as a roving placemaking element. It can be positioned in key locations throughout the day or week. If parked and left it can provide passive wayfinding information and provide information about local initiatives. However, at critical moments it can be staffed in order to act as an engagement and research tool. Its ability to move means that areas can be activated throughout the calendar year.

Why
Stowmarket is an expanding town and there is a sense that its periphery is losing touch with its centre. Engagement has shown that there have been useful schemes to engage communities in outer parishes and developments. The mobile Info point has the opportunity to bring the centre to the edge and encourage those who might not know what is on offer at the heart of the town to uncover it for themselves

Where
Fixed position when static, station would be a suitable dock as it is the primary gateway for many visitors. It might pop up during market days to provide information or find itself on the rec to engage young people about their town. Could be driven to key locations and institutions such as the market, church yard, Food Museum, John Peel Centre, United Reform Church to animate town experience

How
The adaptation of a milk float or similar small mobile vehicle would be enough. The vehicle should have an interior element, similar to a food truck that can be used to store information, but also potentially to provide refreshment during consultations or serve a listening booth.

Who
Designed by a design team in conjunction with interventions 8.2 - 8.6 and then fabricated locally by a selected partner.

Managed and operated by the town council or the Uncover Stowmarket group, but with the potential to be lent out to other organisations as required.

8.2. INFORMATION BOARD



From Research



Existing Stowmarket Community Notice Board



Existing Notice Board on Church Walk

What
Medium to large scale information Board
Serving as key information points for visitors, displaying town maps and communicating local events
Acts as community communication devices, allowing local communities to share relevant information on notice boards
Would be designed to accommodate for easy information update
Information sign base could also function as seating to encourage dwelling
The sign has three key elements : 1) A clear and well-illustrated map of Stowmarket that is common to all locations, 2) An updatable section that describes upcoming town-wide events 3) a site-specific area that can be updated to provide information regarding the immediate vicinity and community happenings.

Why
Stowmarket is occupied by a vast range of institutions who offer activities which are not always discovered, even by local residents
Information sign would act as a tool to uncover these “gems” of Stowmarket
Provide places for local businesses and organisations to advertise
They provide a more amplified information experience to the existing finger posts.

Where
Locations: Station, River Gipping Bridge, The Church Yard, In Car Parks, on Ipswich Street (adjacent to the United Reformed Church), the Food Museum, John Peel Centre, United Reform Church.

How
Central by local authority, designed by wayfinding designers
Map Illustrations by local illustrator
Fabricated by local fabricator

Who
Structure and graphic information maintained and controlled by local council
Information updated by local council and/or key partners and community members
Notice board open for wider community use

8.3. FINGER POST



From Research



Existing Stowmarket finger posts



What
New finger posts to supplement the existing as required. Although the focus of this strategy has not been on finger posts, they are still useful supplementary devices.
Designed in coherence with other wayfinding interventions and communicating walking time rather than walking distance.
Designed in a manner that is easy to update.

Why
To work in concert with the information boards [intervention 8.2]

Where
Key locations throughout the town

How
Designed by wayfinding designer
Made by local fabricator

Who
Managed by the local authority

8.4. TEMPORARY “A-BOARD” SIGN



From Research



Existing Stowmarket A-board signs of independent businesses along High Street



What
Collapsible A-board signs to act as temporary signs at critical times such as market days
A supplementary device to provide temporary signage at critical moments during the events calendar for the town

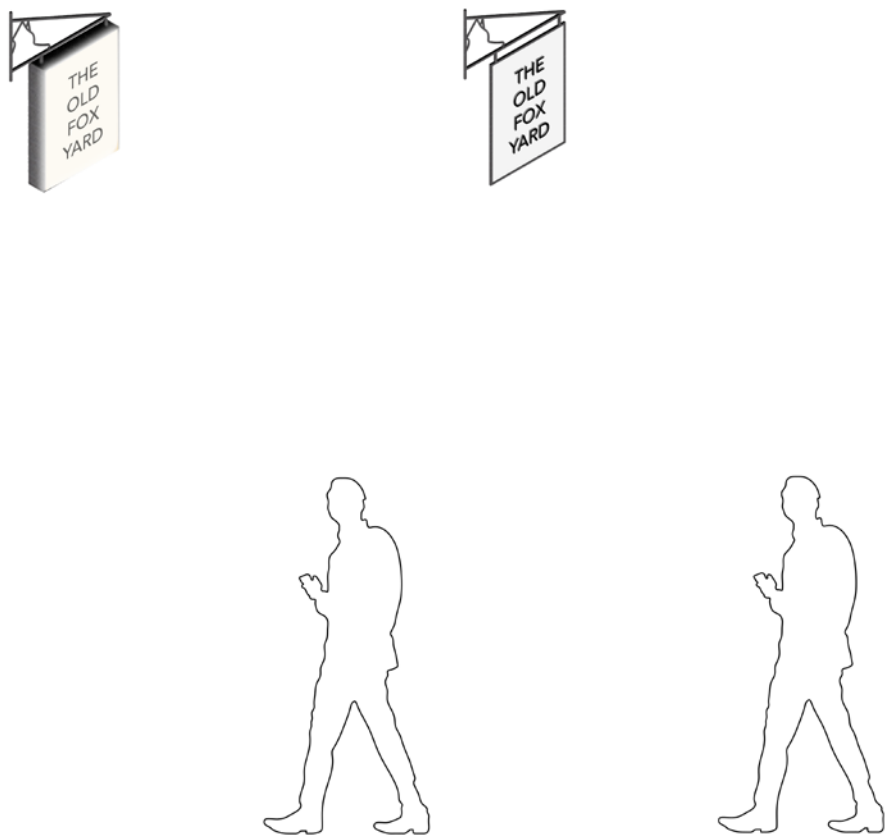
Why
Act as placemaking assets on event days and critical moments
Additional wayfinding on event days

Where
Likely to be in use in identified event locations, such as the market square and the churchyard [packages 7.3 and 7.5]

How
Designed under the Uncover Stowmarket brand and free, by wayfinding designer with graphic design elements provided by various institutions in the town such as the food museum or the John Peel Centre
Manufactured by local fabricators and easily updated with poster content.

Who
Managed by local host institution

8.5. HANGING SIGN(S)



From Research



Existing hanging signs of independent businesses along High Street.



What
Signs to be hung outside shops and businesses along the high street/bury street
Each will have a customised motif reflecting on the business using a consistent technique to unify the high street
Can also be illuminated to serve the dual function of providing lighting as well as signage, to prevent additional unnecessary elements proliferating the public realm

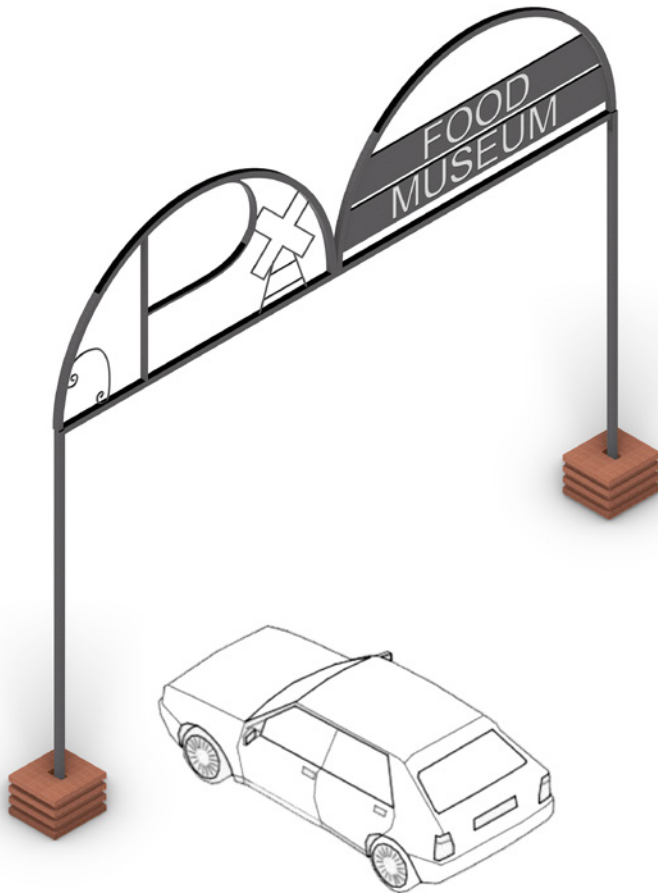
Why
Unify the high street and deliver a cohesive identity
Beautify the town and enhance reputation

Where
Ipswich Street, Bury Street, Buttermarket

How
Central design motif with means of adaptation for business operator branding.
Designed by single organisation in consultation with local businesses
Made by local fabricator

Who
Project managed by local authority and maintained by business operators.

8.6. VEHICLE GATEWAY



From Research



Below: Example of potential location for vehicle gateway, current Food Museum car park entrance.



What
Large scale gateways for each car park
Each will be customised to the institution the car park belongs to, through a consistent technique

Why
Clearly define each car park and support visitor orientation
Create an inviting entrance and sense of arrival for visitors and residents

Where
Key Car parks throughout town
Installed at entrance of car parks

How
Designed through a central procurement mechanism and installed by the local authority

Who
Managed and maintained by the local authority

8.7. ROAD BASED SIGN



From Research



Existing billboard signage, Food Museum



Potential junction for road based signage, Gipping Way / Hollingsworth Road

What
Large billboard-style signage aimed at vehicle users at critical gateway
Content would point visitors to the town and include Stowmarket offers

Why
Widely communicate Stowmarket events and offers outside of the town and increase footfall
Communicate to those who pass the town regularly but who might not be aware of its offer.

Where
Key orbital gateways identified in and around Stowmarket (see package 7.9)

How
Billboard content commissioned under the Uncover Stowmarket brand and communications strategy
Printed locally

Who
Managed and updated by Uncover Stowmarket organisation

8.8. FACADE SIGN PAINTING



From Research



Example of potential facade for painted signage, Stow Framing.



Potential blank surface for painted signage, Stowmarket Station footbridge.

What
Utilising empty facades throughout town to paint large scale signage heralding welcomes to Stowmarket

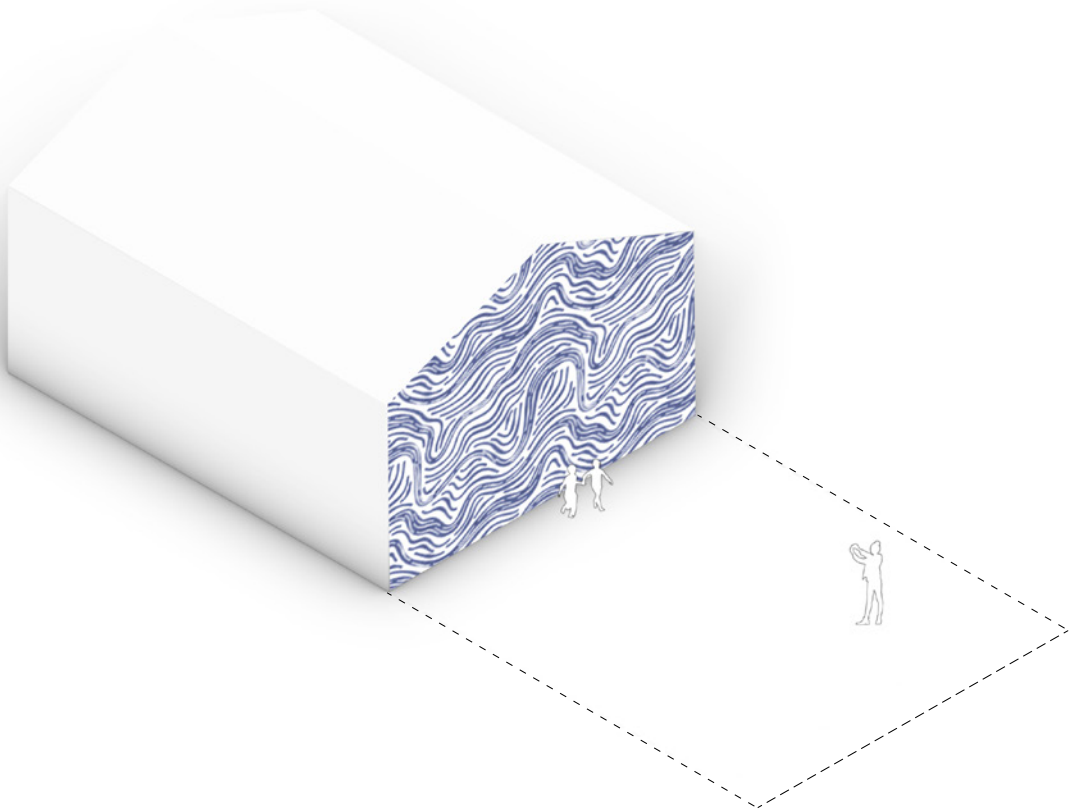
Why
Creative and vibrant form of wayfinding for both pedestrian path and road users
Revive unoccupied buildings and surfaces

Where
Identified empty facades, for example the gable end of Store Framing on critical station road junction

How
Funding can be provided through arts schemes and implemented by local groups, with building owner buy in.

Who
Youth groups (via the mix)
Local artists
Local schools
Coalition of business, Uncover Stowmarket and the Local Authority.

8.9. FACADE ARTWORK



From Research



Existing artwork on building surfaces, Pallet Bar.



Example of potential facade for painted artwork, 76A Ipswich Street.

- What**
Utilising empty facades throughout town to paint large scale artwork
- Why**
Create vibrant atmosphere and memorable visitor experience
New form of town attraction that the town can be proud of
- Where**
Empty facades, for example the gable end by identified potential community garden space
- How**
Funding can be provided through arts schemes and implemented by local groups, with building owner buy in.
Artist commission
Community initiative
- Who**
Local artists
Youth (via The Mix)
Local schools

8.10. ARTWORK PLINTH



From Research



Example of potential area for artwork display on plinth, Wilkes Way

- What**
Robust piece of infrastructure to display sculptures and artwork reflecting on the town's culture, such as sculptures from the Food Museum's collection
Could also be used as a platform to host events and activities such as live music performances
- Why**
Celebrate the arts culture and creativity of Stowmarket
Sculpture trail to lead visitors from one end to the other (e.g. station to food museum)
- Where**
Key locations throughout town
Spaces where gathering is appropriate
- How**
Key locations identified in collaboration with placemaking designer and local arts organisations.
Artworks provided or commissioned through competitions
Can work on a rolling programme or become more permanent
- Who**
Local artists



From Research



Example of potential area for planting scheme, United Reformed Church car park



Example for potential area for planting scheme, Stricklands Road

What

Strategic planting scheme to enhance greenery throughout the town
Opportunities for pocket parks in deserted spaces, for example the space in front of Our Lady's Roman Catholic Church on Stricklands Road

Why

Beautify the town with greenery
Enhance biodiversity and air quality
Develop town centre as place to connect surrounding rich green infrastructure around Stowmarket
Encourage sustainable modes of transport by creating pleasant cycle and pedestrian routes
Provide a space for community gardening activities

Where

Identified unoccupied spaces for Pocket Parks such as the space in front of Our Lady's Roman Catholic Church on Stricklands Road
Small-medium scale planting strategically
Small-medium scale planting could be integrated into wayfinding interventions such as the information sign and artwork plinth

How

Through existing community projects run by organisations such as Red Gables

Who

Ecologist
Eco Future Group
Youth involvement via The Mix
The River Gipping Trust



From Research



Existing street benches, Ipswich street.



What

New seating to complement existing street furniture
Design of these benches could incorporate more natural approach, harmonising the town experience with surrounding green and blue infrastructure around town
Suggestion of three examples, two of natural and robust concept relating to greenery and river and one general which could be an existing product

Why

Add character to town and promote positively memorable town experience for visitors
Equipment to encourage dwelling

Where

Strategically placed throughout the town

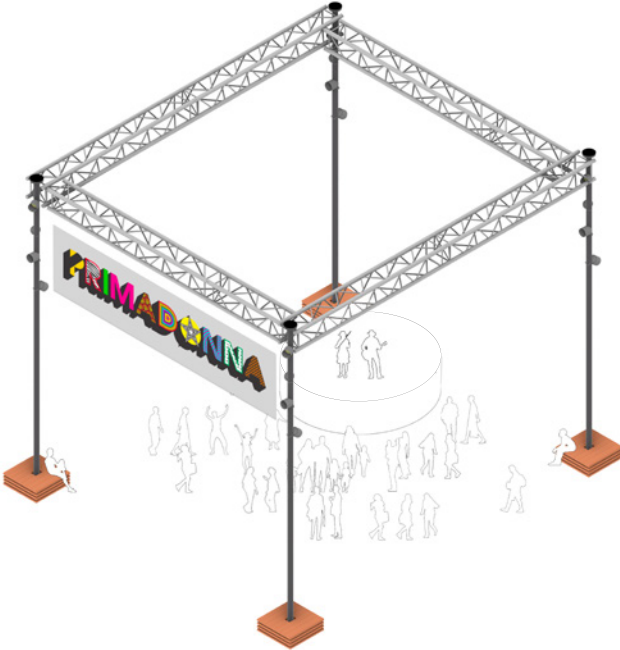
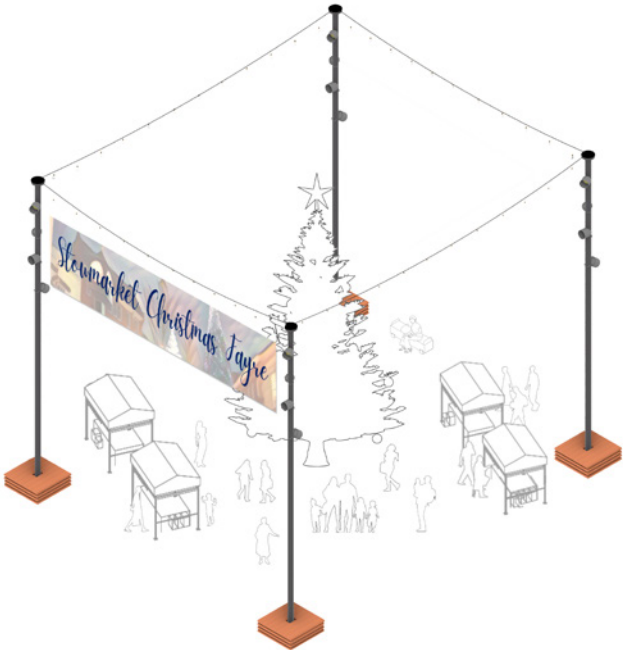
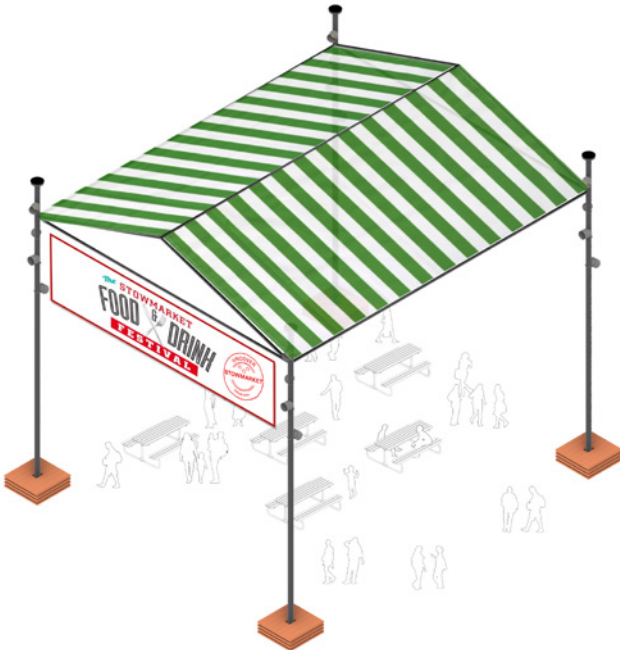
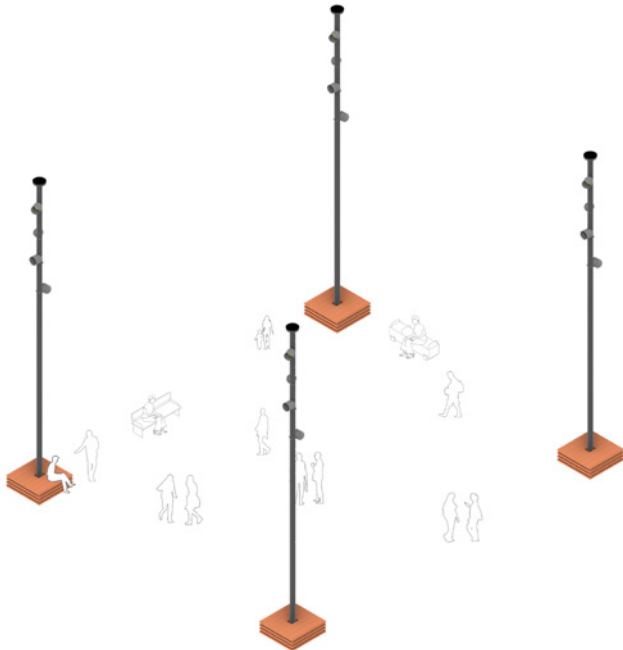
How

Consultation via Vision Group re locations and local makers and artisans, procured by local authority.

Who

Local fabricators
Local council

8.13. LIGHTING - PLACE CREATORS



From Research



Existing street lamps



Example of potential area for spot light poles to be installed as place creators, Market Square

What
Large scale spot light poles which function as street lights as well as infrastructure for place creation
Poles could incorporate multiple spotlights which could be flexibly adjusted in height and angle
Individually, these poles would present themselves as robust placemaking street lamps, potentially with the base functioning as seating
As a set, these poles could form a multifunctional infrastructure which caters for a range of activities. For example, they could support stage rigging systems to transform a space into an outdoor concert venue, hosting events such as the Primadonna festival.

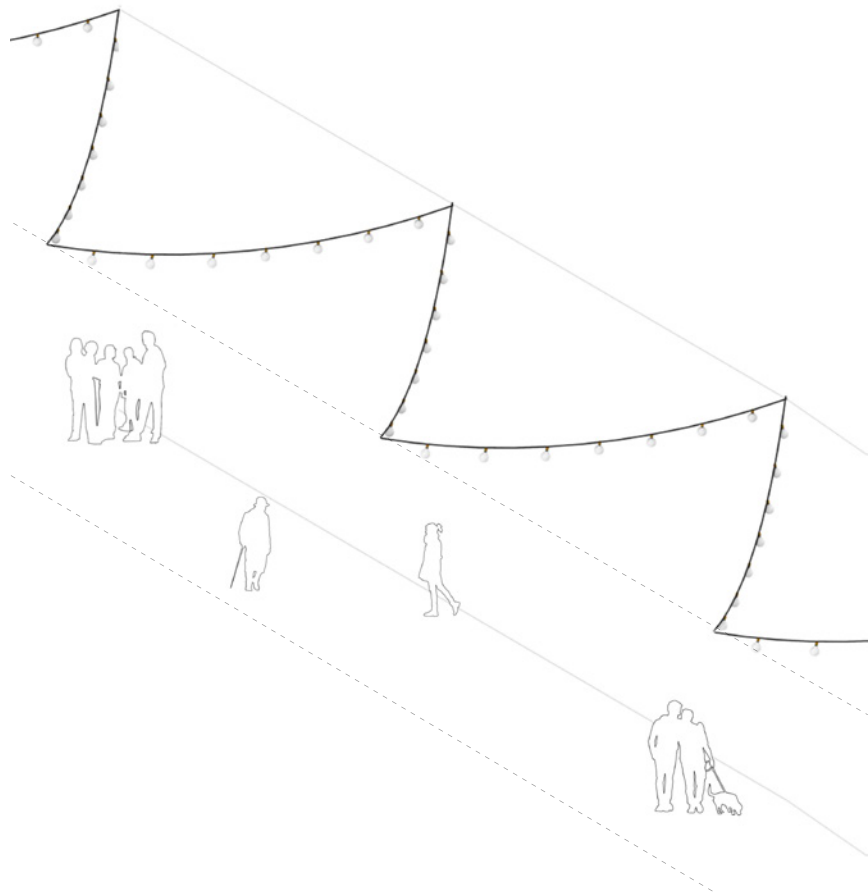
Why
Provide sufficient light to ensure sense of security for residents and visitors at night time
Brighten up the town to enhance night time economy
Generous height of these poles could aid navigation through town from afar as well as supporting orientation

Where
Key open spaces suitable for events and dwelling, most appropriately the market square. Other ideal spaces include the station court and recreation ground.

How
Designed in collaboration with a lighting supplier and wayfinding designer to ensure ancillary functions can be accommodated

Who
Managed and maintained by the local authority

8.14. FESTOON LIGHTING



From Research



Existing festoon lighting, The Old Fox Yard



Potential area for festoon lighting, Buttermarket

What
Overhead festoon lighting extended across narrow streets
Could be used in conjunction with the pole lighting infrastructure in key areas

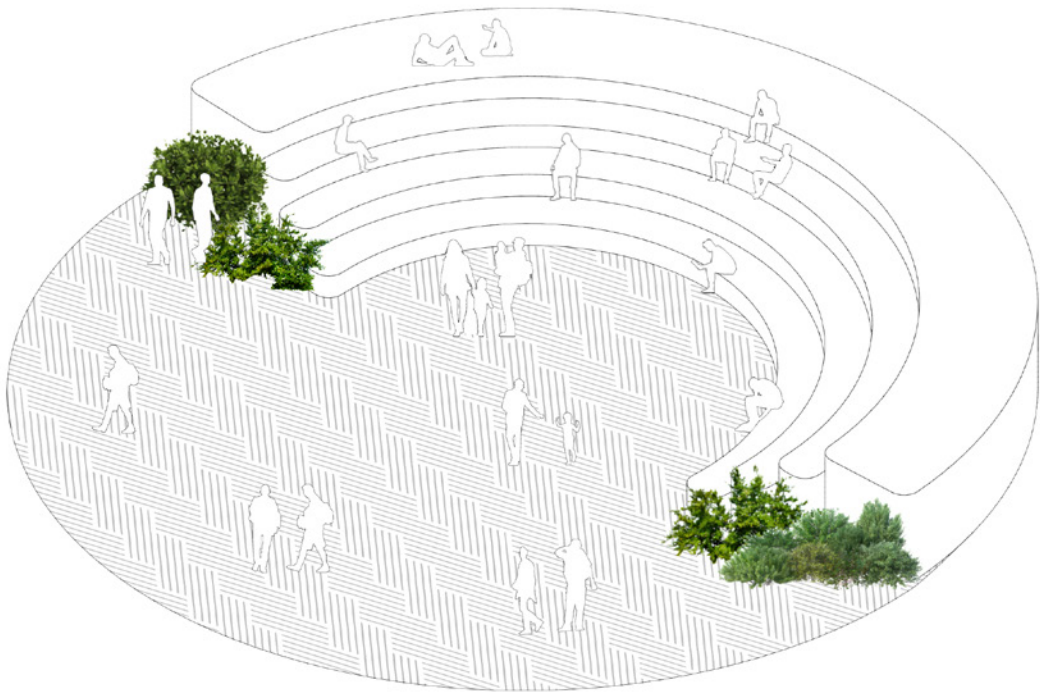
Why
Create ambience for leisure and visitor activities at a low cost with simple maintenance.
Highlight hidden routes such as the churchyard and back alley behind The Old Fox Yard (package 7.5)
Boost evening economy by making high street and key areas atmospheric and safe

Where
Identified narrow streets and alleys, most suitably locations described in package 7.5
Other key spaces such as the market square, recreation ground and station and Buttermarket

How
Specified by wayfinding designer and procured by Local Authority

Who
Managed and maintained by Local Authority

8.15. PEDESTRIANISATION AND BUILT IN LANDSCAPING SCHEMES



From Research



Potential area for landscaping improvement, Stowmarket Station



What
Pedestrianisation of certain areas, such as the station forecourt
Intensification of other areas, such as Market Square and area in front of the United Reformed Church

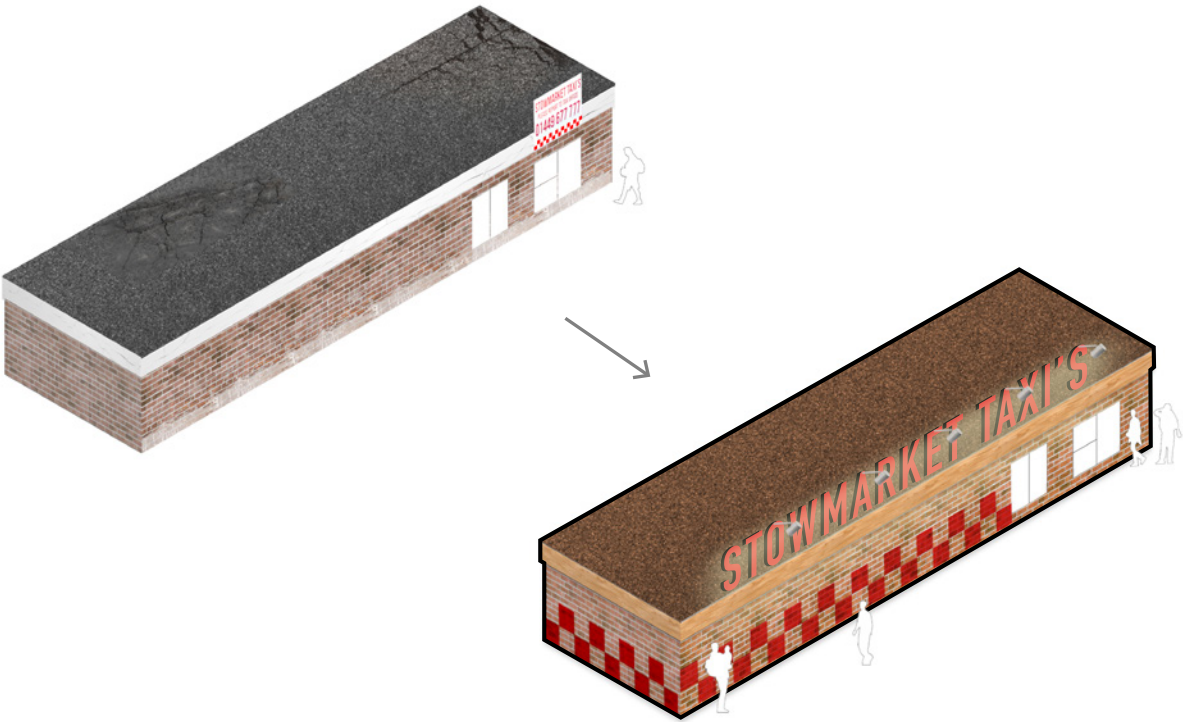
Why
Promote sustainable transport and a more active promotion of dwell time in the public realm.
Create positive and safe moment of arrival
Encourage more events to take place by providing additional safe and open spaces, contributing to improved economy
Increase dwelling time in town center for visitors and residents

Where
Station forecourt
Key areas along the high street and market square
In Front of the United Reformed Church

How
Specific designed procured through placemaking designer / landscape designer
Installed by landscape contractor

Who
Managed and implemented by the local authority

8.16. BUILDING IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES



From Research



Potential building for Building Improvement, Prentice Road



Potential buildings for Building Improvement, Station Road W

What
Restoration of selected buildings and giving new/improved life to old buildings
Earmarking empty units for meanwhile initiatives such as art events and displays.

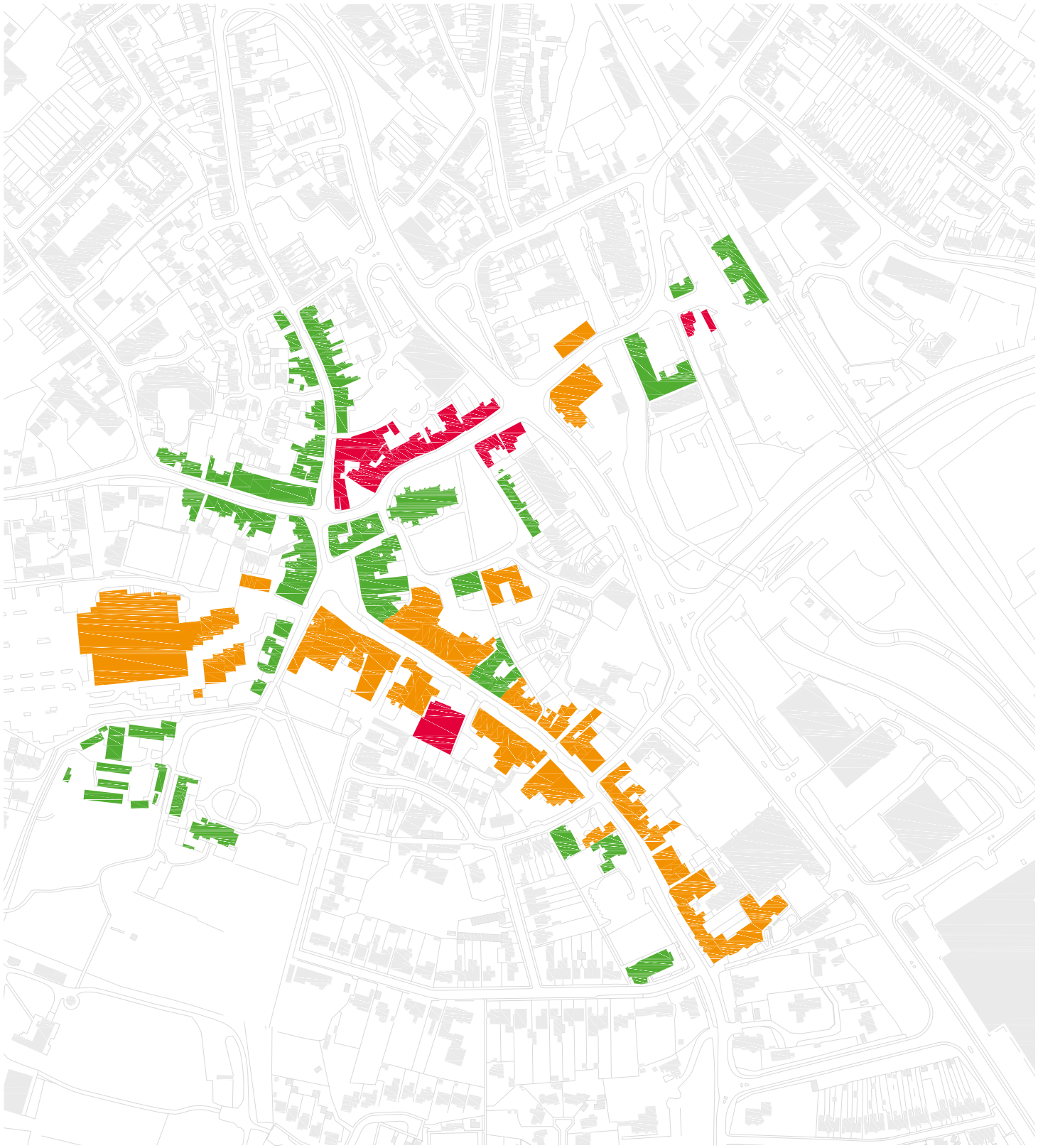
Why
Supporting businesses significant to the overall experience of Stowmarket
Providing vacant buildings another life and empowering them as strong assets of the town
Further presenting Stowmarket as a place the local communities can be proud of

Where
Around the Station (package 7.1)
Along Station Road West (package 7.2)
Along the High Street up to Bury Street (package 7.4)

See package 7.9 for a plan identifying key building improvement scheme locations

How
Applying to be part of a townscape improvement scheme, BID or heritage action zone
Bespoke initiatives can also be created locally through the Local Authority or Uncover Stowmarket body

Who
Coalition of business and local authority interest.
Managed and implemented by the local authority with contribution from businesses



The plan above shows the key buildings that form the key routes in central Stowmarket, with a traffic light system concerning improvement and enhancement

- High townscape value : protect and maintain
- Potential townscape value in need of improvement
- Median townscape value : consider enhancement



9. CONCLUSION

CONCLUSIONS

Since we began talking to people in Autumn 2022 it has been clear that Stowmarket has a significant offer in terms of cultural and community assets, built heritage and natural environment, but that much goes under the radar. As with many places across the UK, the perception seems to be that Stowmarket is worse than it actually is. There is definite need for continued capital investment in some of its mainstay venues and attractions to achieve their potential and reach, but in the short-term we believe that a joined-up approach to communication and marketing, and improvements to the connecting key parts of the town, will be key to challenging existing perceptions. Moreover, inviting residents and young people to engage with activating the Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking programme will support civic pride and strengthen the sense of community that Stowmarket is known for.

People in Stowmarket need to see action and visible signs that change is afoot. A resident first approach, and engaging communities in the parishes surrounding the town, will be critical to growing civic pride, thriving communities, and recruiting the greatest of advocates for Stowmarket's visitor offer in the longer term.

This report is essentially a series of recommendation and actions, but of these we recommend that the following steps are prioritised:

- **Share the vision and potential interventions as widely as possible.**
- **Review the membership of the Vision Group to ensure all decision makers are involved moving forward.**
- **Agree on the brand and identity of Stowmarket.**
- **Embed priorities from this report in the Stow Vision.**
- **Develop a new organisation that can deliver the programme independently with the people of Stowmarket.**

“Organisations need to work together more on shared objectives. It sometimes feels everyone is pulling in different directions. Lots of great things happening but not always joined up.” — Local Resident

10. APPENDIX

- 10.1. LIST OF CONSULTEES
- 10.2. ACTIVITY CALENDAR
- 10.3. LOGIC MODEL
- 10.4. UNCOVER STOWMARKET CORPORATE
BODY OPTIONS
- 10.5. POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- 10.6. PHASE 1 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK
- 10.7. PHASE 1 WAYFINDING AUDIT
- 10.8. PHASE 1 SWOT ANALYSIS

1. One-to-one interviews

Name	Organisation	Position
David Blackburn	Stowmarket Town Council	Town Clerk
Chloe Brett	Food Museum	Visitor Services & Marketing Co-ordinator / Manager
Colin Tapscott	Stowmarket Chamber of Commerce	Chairperson
Holly Brett	BMSDC	Corporate Co-ordinator / Manager and Gateway 14
Ian Crissell	Onehouse Parish	Councillor
Darren Dordoy	Food Museum and Stowmarket Local History Group	
Katherine Davies	BMSDC	Sustainable Travel Officer
Malcolm Goodwin	The Mix	CEO
David Marsh	The Regal Cinema	Town Council Arts and Events Co-ordinator / Manager
Sharri McGarry	Eco Future Group	
Kate Parnum	BMSDC	Regeneration Co-ordinator / Manager and SHELF Project Lead
Ursula Scott	Suffolk Libraries	Library Co-ordinator / Manager
Judith Thompson	Rattlesden River Network and Stow Stories	
John Warren	River Gipping Trust	
Sarah Wilkin	John Peel Centre	CEO
Karl Daniels	Stowmarket Town Council	Community and Partnerships Manager
Annie Harrison	Stowmarket Town Council	Communities Engagement Co-ordinator

2. Two on site forums at John Peel Centre for Community groups and Stowmarket Society on 16th November 2022

3. One public consultation at John Peel Centre on 17th November 2022

4. Vox pops:

- Market Stall Owners
- Market Goers
- High Street Business Owners and Employees

10.1.2.

PHASE 1: INITIAL RESEARCH AND SCOPING

1. Presentation at Stowmarket’s Culture Group Meeting at the Food Museum on Thursday 26th January. Organisations represented included The Food Museum, Stowmarket Library, Modece Architects, The Mix, The Regal Cinema, Red Gables and Stowmarket Town Council.
2. Session for Community Groups on site at Red Gables on Thursday 26th January 2023: Organisations represented included Fox Yard & Modece Architects, Disability Forum, Red Gables, and Communities Together East Anglia.
3. Two sessions on site at The Mix for youth groups during drop-in sessions for Yr 9 – Yr 11 and 16years+, Thursday 26th January 2023.
4. One online presentation to Councillors on Friday 27th January 2023. In attendance Paul Ekpenyong (Cllr) and Keith Welham (Cllr).

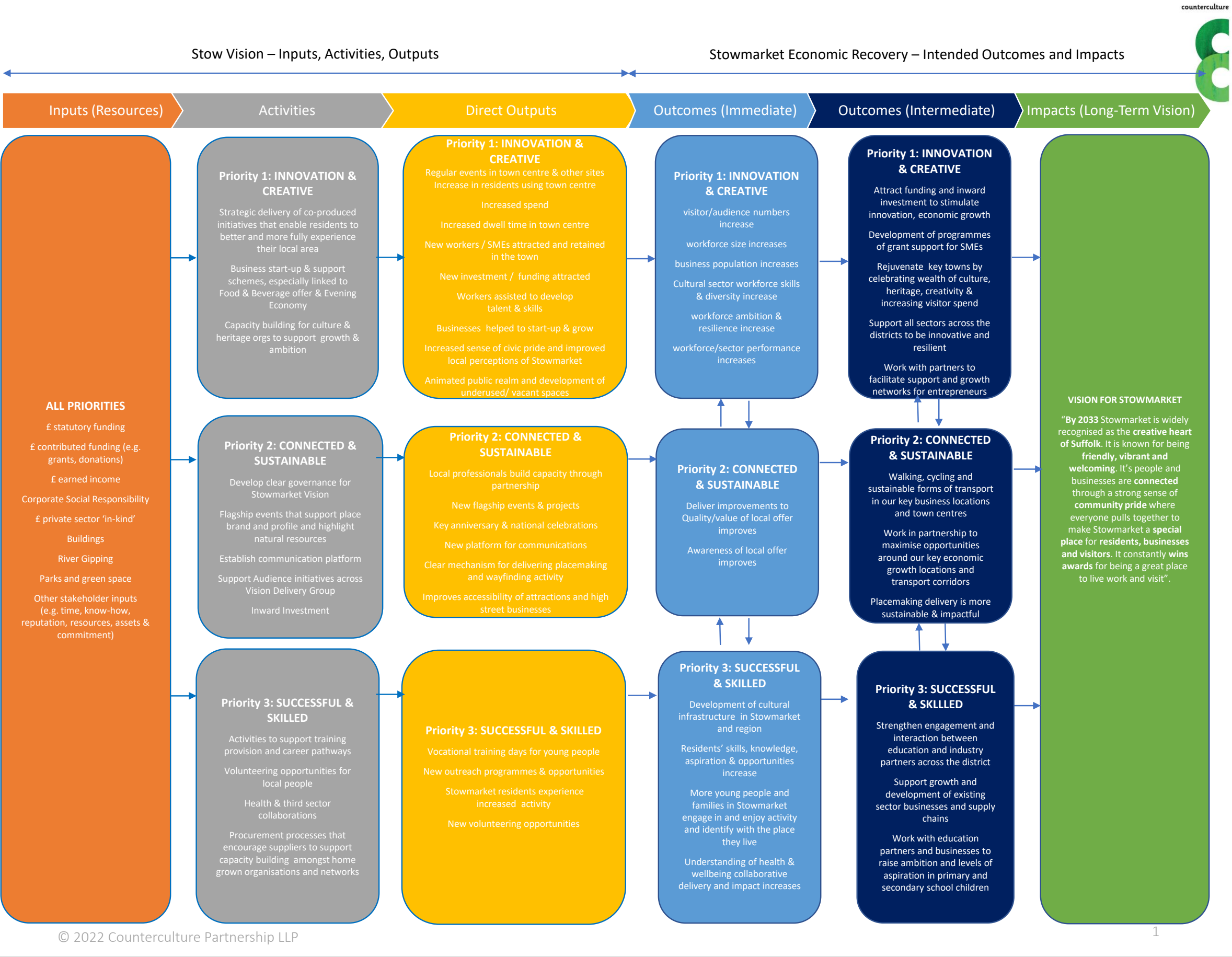
10.2. ACTIVITY PLAN



EXAMPLE Uncover Stowmarket FULL COMMUNICATIONS Activation Calender Q1 23/24

Q1

Platform	Content Type	Week Day/Time	03-Apr WK 1	10-Apr 2	17-Apr 3	24-Apr 4	01-May 5	08-May 6	15-May 7	22-May 8	29-May 9	05-Jun 10	12-Jun 11	19-Jun 12	26-Jun 13
National Days		Leader	Autism Awareness Day International Children's Book Day Easter	National Scrabble Day World Art Day National Haiku Poetry day	National Tea Day National Creativity & Innovation Day St Georges Day World Book Day	International Sculpture Day	May Day International Harry Potter Day Star Wars Day African World Heritage Day Cinco de Mayo	King Charles Coronation Fair Trade day	International Day of Families International Day of Light World Bee Day World Baking Day		Spring Bank Holiday National Creativity Day	World Environment Day D- Day National Best Friends Day Global Wellness Day	National Fudge Day Fathers Day	Summer Solstice National Writing Day	National Bingo Day National Camera Day
Facebook	Blog Post Curated Content Evergreen Blog Live Video Promotion	World Art Day	Trail World Art Day	Poetry Day									Stow Stories		
Insta/Insta Stories	Story Original Image Curated Content	TBC	Tease World Art Day	World Art Day	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	Stow Stories	TBC
Twitter	Blog Post Chat Evergreen Blog Post Video	Thursday 12pm	NEWS	World Art Day	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS	NEWS
LinkedIn	Blog Post Evergreen Blog Video Curated Content	Friday	TBC	TBC			TBC		TBC		TBC	TBC			TBC
Uncover Stowmarket Microsite	HPTO	Friday	Where to go in Stowmarket for World Art											Stow Stories celebrating World	



10.4.

UNCOVER STOWMARKET CORPORATE BODY
OPTIONS

Entity	Advantages	Disadvantages
Company Limited By Guarantee - Not-for-profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CLG's provide protection from personal liability in most circumstances• Not for Profit status satisfies a number of funders (including ACE)• Lighter touch reporting, regulatory and accounting requirements than a charity, therefore some reduced costs• Not bound by definitions of what is considered 'charitable' by the charity commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-charitable status rules out some charitable trusts and foundations as possible funders• CLG is not eligible for the corporation tax and business rate reliefs afforded to charities• No gift aid or other incentives for individuals to support you
Community Interest Company (CIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CIC provides protection from personal liability in most circumstances• Not bound by definitions of what is considered 'charitable' by the charity commission• Suitable structure for organisations that provide a clear benefit to the community or a section of it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulated by Company law – must file information to both companies house and the CIC regulator• Non- charitable status rules out some trusts and foundations as possible funders.• CIC is not eligible for the corporation tax and business rates reliefs afforded to charities• No gift aid or other incentives for individuals to support you• Not a commonly used structure

Entity	Advantages	Disadvantages
Limited Company & Registered Charity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Info held on public record - transparency attractive to lenders and funders• Perception – people more likely to offer time, energy and money to a registered charity• Many grant makers and funders only give to registered charities• Some organisations offer free/ discounted advice to charities• Charities receive a range of tax and rates reliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporting to Charity Commission can be an administrative burden and increased cost• Still need to report to Companies House• Founder directors can struggle with loss of control• Uncover Stowmarket may want to deliver activities beyond charitable purpose or public benefit
Charitable Incorporated Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only one regulator – charity commission• No incorporation or filing fees• Charity accounting regime simpler than Companies Act• Perception – people likely to offer more, time, funding, energy to a registered charity• Many grant makers only fund charities• Free/ discounted advice and equipment available to charities• Range of tax and rate reliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CIO does not exist until registered at the Commission (which can take time)• Setting up bank account and registering with HMRC cannot happen before it exists so can cause further delay• Uncover Stowmarket may want to deliver activities beyond charitable purpose or public benefit

10.5. POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Below we highlight the funds that could finance elements of the Creative Wayfinding and Placemaking programme to match the funding available from SPF above:

Source	Name	Description	Notes
UK Government	Shared Prosperity Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Annual fund of £1.5bn launching in 2022 to replace European Structural Funds.Two funding elements: place-based for most in need areaws in the UK (e.g., ex industrial areas) focused on regeneration and innovation; second, for people most in need through bespoke employment and skills programmes that address local need.	Currently funding programme.
UK Government	Levelling Up Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supports regeneration through local infrastructure with high social impact. First round of funding themes were transport, regeneration/ town centres and cultural and heritage assets.Future of this funding is unclear.	Infrastructure, community, placemaking, regeneration
UK Government	UK Community Ownership Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Running until 2024/25, it provides communities with funding to take ownership over assets and amenities at risk of loss.Bids are up to £250k, must be match-funded and can only be made by community groups, organisations or assets.	Community, culture at risk, infrastructure
UK Government	UK Infrastructure Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial assistance and advisory services (development and delivery) for local authorities and private sector infrastructure projects that support government objectives on climate change and regional economic growth. Focused on development and delivery.	Infrastructure, sustainability

Source	Name	Description	Notes
UK Government	Plan for Jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Government employment support programme, including £7m funding to employers in England for apprenticeships.	Employment, skills, business
UK Government	Stronger Towns Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fund from 2019-2026, targeted at regeneration of town centres and to create new jobs, improve local skills and boost economic activity.Typically involves creating a town board, and subsequent town investment plan with project proposals for direct grant funding.	Regeneration, levelling up, infrastructure, employment and skills, placemaking
Property Development & Planning	Section 106 & Community Infrastructure Levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 106 funding is paid by developers and is used on community infrastructure projects. Funding differs from area to area and can only be used on capital projects.The Community Infrastructure Levy (the 'levy') is a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new development in their area. It is an important tool for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area.	Is there potential for such charges to fund community focused public realm development given Gateway14, housing development, and potential projects such as SHELF?
National Lottery	National Lottery Heritage Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Heritage fund with streams including community heritage; landscapes, parks and nature; places of worship; and areas, building and monuments.£1.2bn fund between 2019-2024, awarding between £3,000 and £5m per project.	Heritage, community, environment, infrastructure

Source	Name	Description	Notes
ACE	National Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular funding to organisations and in return helps deliver ACE's 10-year strategy 'Let's Create'. Currently provides core funding to 828 arts and culture organisations across England within its National Portfolio 2018-22. Potential for Stowmarket organisations to apply in 2025 for 2026-2029 portfolio 	Organisational development, programming
ACE	National Lottery Project Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting individual practitioners and cultural organisations with cultural and creative projects. Grants range from £1,000 to £100,000. Projects can be for cultural activity, or for organisational development, sector support etc. 	Organisation development, programming, individuals / entrepreneurs
ACE	Cultural Development Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding activity: Capital investment in transformative place-based creative and cultural initiatives. Total fund: £30.2 million for 2022/23 Grant range: Between £2 million and £5 million. Applicants can apply for capital (asset) activity with a limited proportion of resource activity (project activity). 	Unclear as to whether there'll be a next round, but new projects will be announced shortly and may be some potential interesting partnerships in the region.

Source	Name	Description	Notes
ACE	Creative People and Places & Priority Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative People and Places is a funding programme which focuses on parts of the country where involvement in creativity and culture is significantly below the national average. In recognition that historically ACE investment in some areas of England has been too low, they've set out lists of Levelling Up for Culture Places and Priority Places that have access to specific funding. 	Stowmarket to consider partnerships with organisations in the Fenland and Forest Heath Market Place Creative People & Places. Project partners include: Babylon ARTS (Lead), RSPB, Anglia Ruskin University, the Association of Suffolk Museums, Cambridgeshire ACRE, Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds. Neighbouring Fenland & Great Yarmouth identified as Priority Places.
ACE	Developing Your Creative Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund for individual artists or creative practitioners of between £2,000 and £10,000, who want to take time for creative development, to build networks and produce new work. 	Individuals / entrepreneurs, creative development.
ACE	Thriving Communities Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New national support programme for voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups, supporting communities impacted by COVID-19 in England, working alongside social prescribing link workers. The fund will help share learning, gain new ideas, access funding and develop partnerships across sectors. 	Organisational development, community participation, programming

Source	Name	Description	Notes	Source	Name	Description	Notes
Partner	Canal & River Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Memorandum of Understanding (Jul 2021 – Jul 2026) between C&RT and ACE recognises the vital role of creative practitioners and cultural organisations in the nation's recovery. Along prioritised waterway corridors, the Trust will work with professional artists, amateurs and voluntary arts groups to inspire thousands of people, the young in particular, to cocreate within their communities. Areas facing socio-economic disadvantage, disconnected from creative hubs and opportunities, will be prioritised with thousands of local people connected to their canal by talented local artists. The partnership aims to transform places, develop audiences, improve wellbeing and make life better by water. 		Partner	Without Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Founded in 2007, Without Walls Consortium Ltd (WW) is a consortium of festivals and arts organisations, involved in and dedicated to the development and touring of ambitious outdoor works by UK artists, reaching large audiences, many new to the arts. It enables partners to programme world class outdoor art and supports audience development 	
				Partner/ sponsorship	National & local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for local advertising on the repeater boards, mobile information point, and Love Exploring App Potential to work with event sponsors for flagship events such as Producers and Makers Festival. 	
Partner	Forestry Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forestry Commission England works with others to keep the Public Forest Estate as a special place for wildlife, for people to enjoy and businesses to thrive. Forestry Commission England is the largest provider of outdoor recreation in England with an estimated 70 million visits to the Public Forest Estate last year. Forests contribute significantly to the quality of life for people in rural and urban communities alike, enhancing the local environment and biodiversity, and helping to mitigate the impact of a changing climate, assisting in reducing air pollution and providing important health and learning benefits. 					

10.6. PHASE 1 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

4 ORGANISATIONS, PLACES AND SPACES

A mapping exercise revealed a significant level of creative and cultural activity within Stowmarket.

There is good infrastructure for cultural and place making activity; an arts venue - The John Peel Centre, a national museum - the Food Museum, which is also an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, Fox Yard creative Quarter, The Regal cinema, The Mix youth hub, Red Gables, churches and community halls, and a very well managed library service. In addition to venues and their activity, there is a popular events programme run by the Town Council, a bi-weekly market, multiple green spaces and waterways. Numerous creative classes and amateur groups for the community and young people operate from its venues and community centres, and there is a healthy amateur performance sector including Stowmarket Operatics and Dramatic Society, The Debenham Players and Oskar Foxtrot. There is considerable resource, skill, and capacity within the town, and a Culture Group comprising key stakeholders from the culture sector meets regularly.

Whilst our research and consultation highlighted a significant cultural offer for residents and visitors, and considerable skill in delivery, it was noted that activity is rarely programmed strategically or communicated effectively, both internally and externally. Stakeholders reported that instances where the Culture Group has come together e.g. projects such as Jubilant, enable greater scale and ambition, and are well received by audiences.



The stakeholders shown are connected by various cross sectoral networks such as the Stowmarket Vision Board, as well as those such as the Culture Group. We are interested in exploring how such networks can help to deliver the Place Making and Creative Wayfinding programme and will look at operating models in the next phase of this work. Consultation has revealed a gap around networks for businesses such as a Business Improvement District or network for independent retailers.

A circle that is not filled with a colour represents a consultee we are yet to reach, but intent to engage in the next stage of work.



Consultees overwhelmingly agreed that Stowmarket is a friendly place with a great sense of community, strong cultural and community hubs, and a popular events programme run by both the town council and its flagship organisations. Yet, it was noted that this wealth of activity and talent is not always visible to residents let alone visitors, and that there is a perception that Stowmarket is tired and run down. Despite excellent networks such as the Vision Board and Culture Group, people tend to operate in silos rather than collaboratively or strategically, as is often the case when organisations are stretched for capacity and funding.

Whilst it is felt that the town centre is faring well in terms of occupancy compared to other towns (perhaps due to its affordable and independent offer) many feel there is room for improvement and greater variety within the retail and market offer. This sentiment is also echoed by the respondents of the What's Next For Stowmarket? With 70% of survey respondents claiming not use the bi-weekly market regularly. Consultation suggests a need for programming or theming with a

Having said that, many interviewees noted the new offer springing up from new independents such as Bonitas, Langhams and Little Pig Bakery, and suggested that more incubator schemes and business rate initiatives might attract new businesses.

Several consultees noted the strength of Stowmarket's heritage offer and highlighted past and current projects and events, but it was generally felt that its significant history went under the radar and that more could be done to tell the town's stories.



7.2 WORKSHOP 1 RED GABLES

- 7.2.1 [1.1] Purcell Road: Green space on Purcell Road is being rewilded

7.2.2 [1.2] Chiltern Fields: Should be better connected to other green spaces

7.2.3 [1.3] Recreation Ground: Hub for annual carnival and family fun days

7.2.4 [1.4] Hillcroft House Care home: Red Gables volunteers sing in local care homes

7.2.5 [1.5] Stowmarket Community Hub: Run volunteer opportunities and planting schemes

7.2.6 [1.6] River Gipping Path: Used by dog walkers and fruit pickers. There is regular littler picking and feeling that it is well taken care of

7.2.7 [1.7] Church Yard: Commonly used at lunch times. Church is seen as a local landmark

7.2.8 [1.8] Food Museum Entrance: Unused entrance will be open during Xmas market

7.2.9 [1.9] Key problem area: Feeling that the Post Office is the end of the High St dividing Red Gables, The Regal and The Mix from the rest of the town. There needs to be more cohesion along the High St and a signifier that those organisations are there. Feeling that it is partly to do with the location of the car parks which do not take people past these locations.

7.2.10 [1.10] Food Museum: Amazing green space with allotments. Should be better connected to other green spaces in town.
- 7.2.11 [1.11] Red Gables: Lack of volunteers. Building leaking heat. Have utilised all council grants available. There is potential to utilise the land at the front of the building.

7.2.12 [1.12] Biodiversity Wetland: Being developed by Food Museum

7.2.13 [1.13] Pikes Meadow: Flood plain so not suitable for building. Location of annual Duck race. Provides green space for residents south. Has good play equipment for children

7.2.14 [1.14] Gateway 14: Plans for large biodiversity space

7.2.15 [1.15] New developments: Lots of people are upset with the mass of new housing. These communities are not using the town centre

7.2.16 [1.16] Stowmarket boundary: Keeps getting moved outwards

7.2.17 [1.17] Barrier to Stowmarket: The railway line and Gipping Way Rd act as a barrier to the town for people living to the East

7.2.18 [1.18] There is a lack of green spaces and maintaining and protecting these should be a priority. Existing green spaces should be better connected.



Milton Road South Junction - Deemed as a Key Problem Area





7

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

7.3 WORKSHOP 2

STOWMARKET SOCIETY

7.3.1 [1.1] Greens Meadow: Connect existing footpath through to Greens Meadow

7.3.2 [1.2] Market Square: should be experienced as a culmination of the town

7.3.3 [1.3] Church Yard: Priority for SM Society. Graveyard is maintained by council, but garden is neglected and needs someone to maintain.

7.3.4 [1.4] High Street: buildings are poorly maintained. Frontages around UFC are unsightly and should be brought forward into the heart of the town.

7.3.5 [1.5] River Gipping: Pickerel Project exists to enhance river valleys by litter picking, improving accessibility and increasing biodiversity

7.3.6 [1.6] Access to river: Enable cyclists to access river and use as cycle route

7.3.7 [1.7] Connections to River: Would like to see connections to the river

7.3.8 [1.8] GW14: Unlikely that people will walk into town from GW14

7.3.9 Town trail: Created by Stowmarket Society for town council



The United Reform Church



St Peter's and St Mary's Churchyard

STOWMARKET

IDK / COUNTERCULTURE

41

- 7.4.1

[1.1] Food Museum: Many locals don't use the Food Museum or realise what's there. People were upset when it changed its name. They don't offer a reduced fee / free entry to local residents which could help connect people to the space. Having a national museum is a huge asset and tourist pull
- 7.4.2

[1.2] John Peel Centre: Many locals don't know about it. It is the link between industry and culture in Stowmarket
- 7.4.3

[1.3] The Library: Is an award-winning library with a large offer and community gardens
- 7.4.4

[1.4] The Regal: Not enough people know about it or it's renovation
- 7.4.5

[1.5] The Mix: Many people don't know about it or what's on offer
- 7.4.6

[1.6] Red Gables: Feeling that there is an incredible community programme at Red Gables
- 7.4.7

[2.1] Cycle lane Bury St: People abuse the one-way system on bikes. A cycle lane should be introduced
- 7.4.8

[2.2] High Street: Desire to increase number of stall holders and the market's offer of local produce and locally made products. Shops beyond Ipswich St should be promoted. Shops don't stay empty for long but there could be more independent shops. Feeling that there are too many barbers, cafés and charity shops. The paving needs replacing. Desire for better evening economy, more diverse food offer and a place to hang out for all ages.
- 7.4.9

[2.3] Train Station: There is no mark of arrival and town attractions are poorly signed. The station car park is very dangerous with no pedestrian route through
- 7.4.10

[2.4] New Estates: Residents of new developments such as Stowupland don't go to Stowmarket, have no connection to it and don't know what's happening in the town. The selling point of this area is that they don't need Stowmarket. They should be better connected to Stowmarket. They do attend some popular events such as the Christmas Fair, but Stowmarket should provide a more consistent offer.
- 7.4.11

[2.5] United Reform Church: Considered an eyesore and under-used space
- 7.4.12

[2.6] Cycle Route 51: Dangerous route through Asda car park and cyclists are a danger to pedestrians on footpath around The Food Museum.
- 7.4.13

[3.1] Key institution The Walnut Pub
- 7.4.14

[3.2] Key institution Royal William Pub
- 7.4.15

[3.3] Key institution Bonitas Wholefoods
- 7.4.16

[3.4] Key institution Royal British Legion
- 7.4.17

[3.5] Langhams: Cafe which also runs a wine night on Friday nights
- 7.4.18

[3.6] Fox Yard: Pallet bar hosts Food Trucks to serve food, e.g., - Petit Pancakes. Yard is vibrant in the summer with music and outdoor seating. Feeling that it is expensive and therefore does not attract younger visitors.
- 7.4.19

[3.7] Key institution Our Lady's Roman Catholic Church
- 7.4.20

[3.8] Red Gables: Amazing range of community activities
- 7.4.21

[4.1] The Library: an excellent community space that offers a wide range of events. Feeling that the community gardens are amazing as a result of the Stitching Stowe project carried out last year
- 7.4.22

[4.2] The Food Museum
- 7.4.23

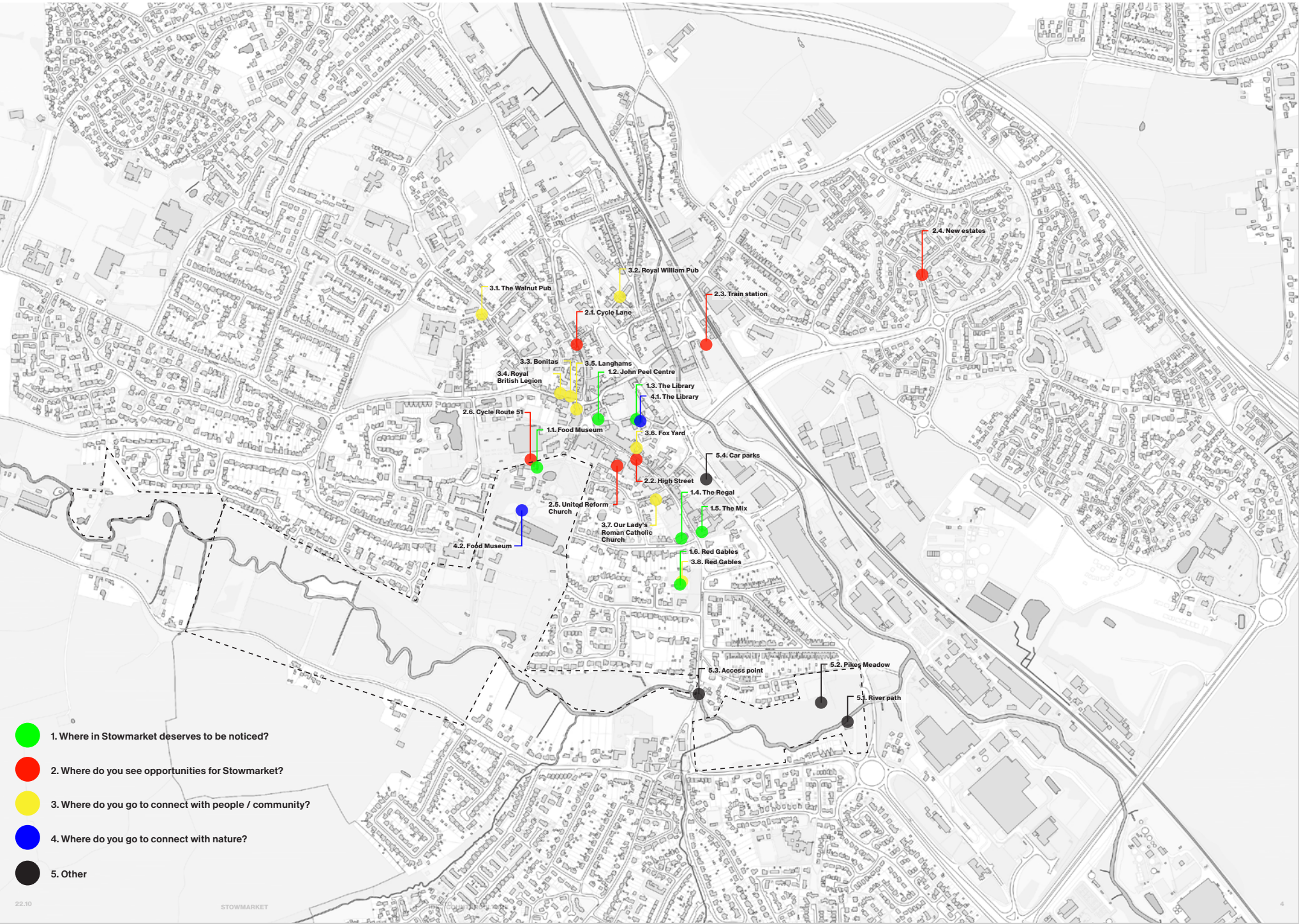
[5.1] River Path: Non-navigable. Cannot reach Rattlesden via path
- 7.4.24

[5.2] Pikes Meadow: Undevelopable land
- 7.4.25

[5.3] Access Point: Only route into Stowmarket for cyclist, pedestrians and cars. Busy and unsafe
- 7.4.26

[5.4] Car Parks: Many felt Stowmarket offered good affordable parking, others compared it to towns such as Diss where people receive 2 hours free parking and felt parking initiatives could attract more visitors.
- 7.4.27

The group felt that whilst there was a strong offer for children and families, young adults were often overlooked and there was not a strong offer for 16–25-year-olds within the town.



10.7. PHASE 1 WAYFINDING AUDIT

6 EXISTING WAYFINDING AUDIT

The condition of Stowmarket's wayfinding was audited according to the brief through a series of planned journeys that were documented photographically and mapped. This on-the-ground research was then cross referenced through the consultation exercise.

Key journeys were analysed and are included in subsequent sub sections:

- Train station to the Market Place and key cultural destinations
- Car Parks to key destinations
- Gateways at the edge of the town centre
- Existing trails and walks

Detailed analysis is included with the associated mapping, images and the pertinent Stakeholder insights per area included with each section.

Synthesis is included at the end of the section.

“The more I tell people I’m working in Stowmarket, the more they say to me ‘*have you tried this or that?*’. It surprises me how much there is here that I didn’t know about”
—Local worker



Finger Posts in the Town Centre

6.1 TRAIN STATION TO MARKET PLACE AND KEY CULTURAL DESTINATIONS

Stakeholder Insights:

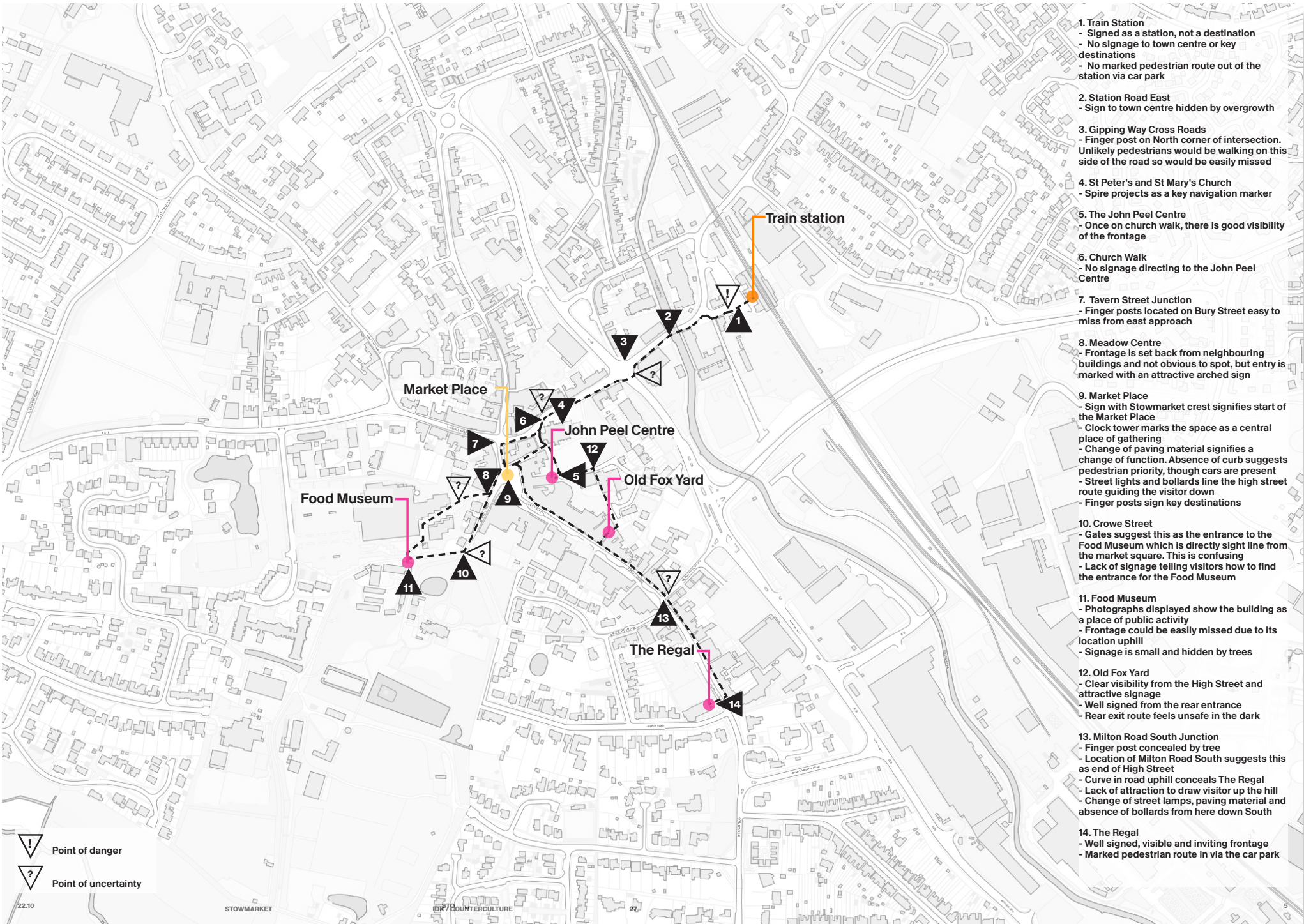
- Poor signposting and wayfinding, especially from the station
- No sense of arrival or welcome at the station
- No clear tourist information centre or destination marketing
- There is no communication of Stowmarket's offer in station waiting rooms and platforms
- Station car park is dangerous to pedestrians
- Many people do not know the John Peel Centre or Food Museum are there
- St Peter's and St Mary's Church is seen as a local landmark
- Potential to use the station forecourt for pop up markets or food stalls to increase dwell time and create a sense of welcome



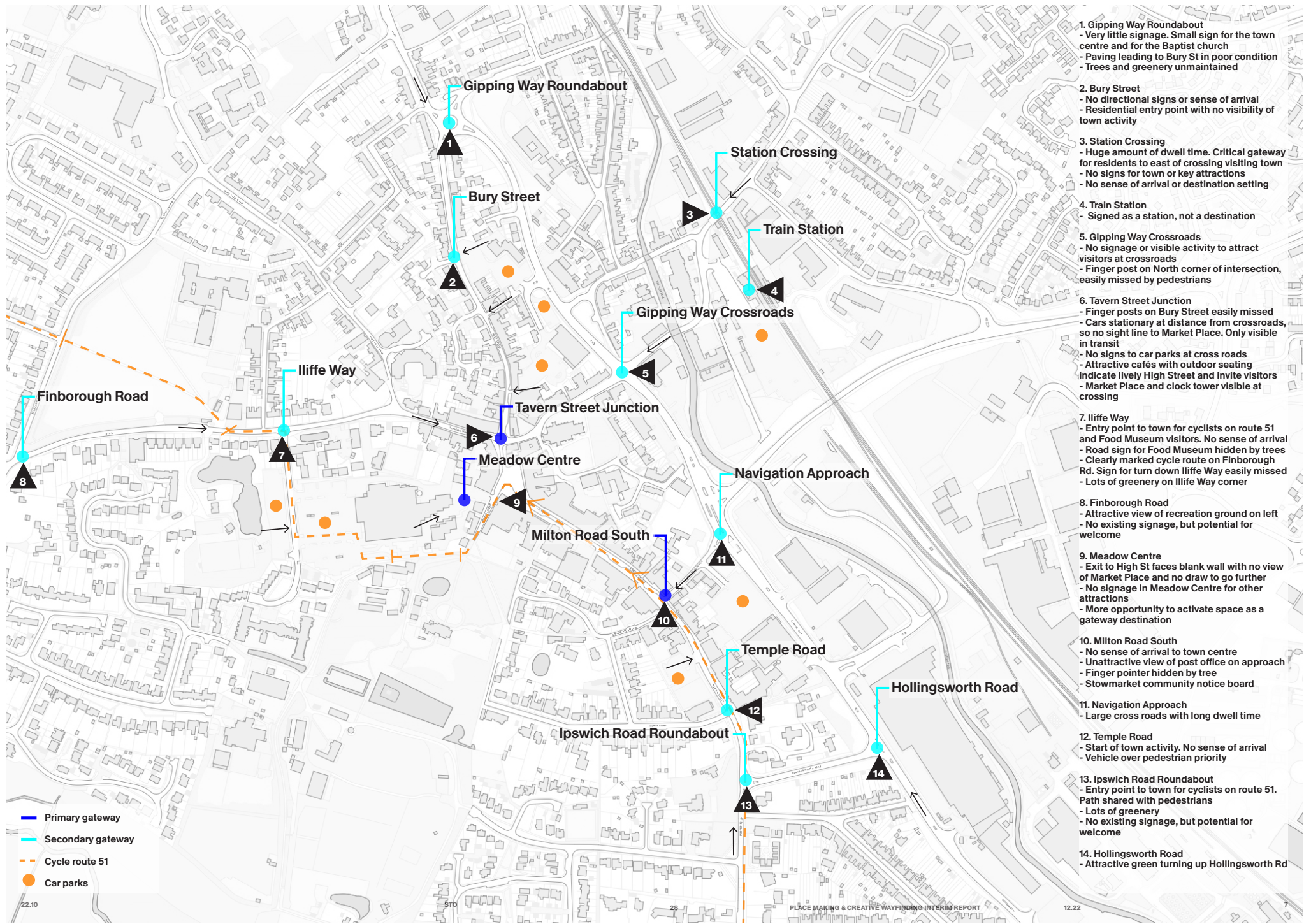
1. Train Station 3. Gipping Way Cross Roads 6. St Peter's & St Mary's Church



9. Market Place 10. Crowe Street 12. Old Fox Yard (rear exit via alley)



1. Train Station
 - Signed as a station, not a destination
 - No signage to town centre or key destinations
 - No marked pedestrian route out of the station via car park
2. Station Road East
 - Sign to town centre hidden by overgrowth
3. Gipping Way Cross Roads
 - Finger post on North corner of intersection. Unlikely pedestrians would be walking on this side of the road so would be easily missed
4. St Peter's and St Mary's Church
 - Spire projects as a key navigation marker
5. The John Peel Centre
 - Once on church walk, there is good visibility of the frontage
6. Church Walk
 - No signage directing to the John Peel Centre
7. Tavern Street Junction
 - Finger posts located on Bury Street easy to miss from east approach
8. Meadow Centre
 - Frontage is set back from neighbouring buildings and not obvious to spot, but entry is marked with an attractive arched sign
9. Market Place
 - Sign with Stowmarket crest signifies start of the Market Place
 - Clock tower marks the space as a central place of gathering
 - Change of paving material signifies a change of function. Absence of curb suggests pedestrian priority, though cars are present
 - Street lights and bollards line the high street route guiding the visitor down
 - Finger posts sign key destinations
10. Crowe Street
 - Gates suggest this as the entrance to the Food Museum which is directly sight line from the market square. This is confusing
 - Lack of signage telling visitors how to find the entrance for the Food Museum
11. Food Museum
 - Photographs displayed show the building as a place of public activity
 - Frontage could be easily missed due to its location uphill
 - Signage is small and hidden by trees
12. Old Fox Yard
 - Clear visibility from the High Street and attractive signage
 - Well signed from the rear entrance
 - Rear exit route feels unsafe in the dark
13. Milton Road South Junction
 - Finger post concealed by tree
 - Location of Milton Road South suggests this as end of High Street
 - Curve in road uphill conceals The Regal
 - Lack of attraction to draw visitor up the hill
 - Change of street lamps, paving material and absence of bollards from here down South
14. The Regal
 - Well signed, visible and inviting frontage
 - Marked pedestrian route in via the car park



6

EXISTING WAYFINDING AUDIT

6.2 GATEWAYS AT THE EDGE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

Stakeholder Insights:

- No sense of arrival or welcome at the station
- Make cycling routes safe and create better walking routes that encourage people to use cars less
- Draw people to and from the railway station
- Many people do not know the John Peel Centre or Food Museum are there
- St Peter's and St Mary's Church is seen as a local landmark
- There is a good amount of car parks
- Parking is bad and needs to be more connected
- Car parking fees are a deterrent for people coming to Stowmarket
- Visitors struggle to find the Food Museum and often arrive feeling annoyed because of a poor visitor journey. It needs more signage from the car park (Iliffe Way)



1. Gipping Way Roundabout



5. Gipping Way Crossroads



6. Tavern Street Junction



7. Iliffe Way



9. Meadow Centre



13. Ipswich Road Roundabout

STOWMARKET

IDK / COUNTERCULTURE

29

6.3 EXISTING TRAILS AND WALKS

- Stakeholder Insights:
- Pedestrians find it dangerous to walk around the boundary of the Food Museum because there is no designated cycle lane
 - Cyclists on Route 51 have to cycle through the Asda car park which isn't safe and are also told to dismount around the Food Museum. It's messy and people are confused about where they can and can't cycle
 - Make cycling routes safe and create better walking routes that encourage people to use cars less
 - The Sustainable Transport Officer is working to improve cycle infrastructure and providing segregated space for cyclists
 - The River Gipping could be a beautiful addition with clearance of the footpath at minimal expense. It could also be a major access link for pedestrians and cyclists
 - River Gipping Path is used by dog walkers and fruit pickers. There is regular littler picking and feeling that it is well taken care of

- The two rivers are the reason Stowmarket exists and little is made of them
- Landscape and history gives Stowmarket its sense of place
- Green Growth has to be a priority and more should be made of the green and blue routes
- Create historical and ecological trails through the town
- Green space on Purcell Road is being rewilded
- Chiltern Fields should be better connected to other green spaces
- GW14 will have huge amounts of planting & biodiversity. Making GW14 a destination where not just people who work there go (ie you could go there to walk your dog)
- North Field Wood is another nature walking site in Onehouse that could be connected



2. Start of the River Gipping Valley Path



2. Start of the River Gipping Valley Path



5. Cycle Route 51, Car Park



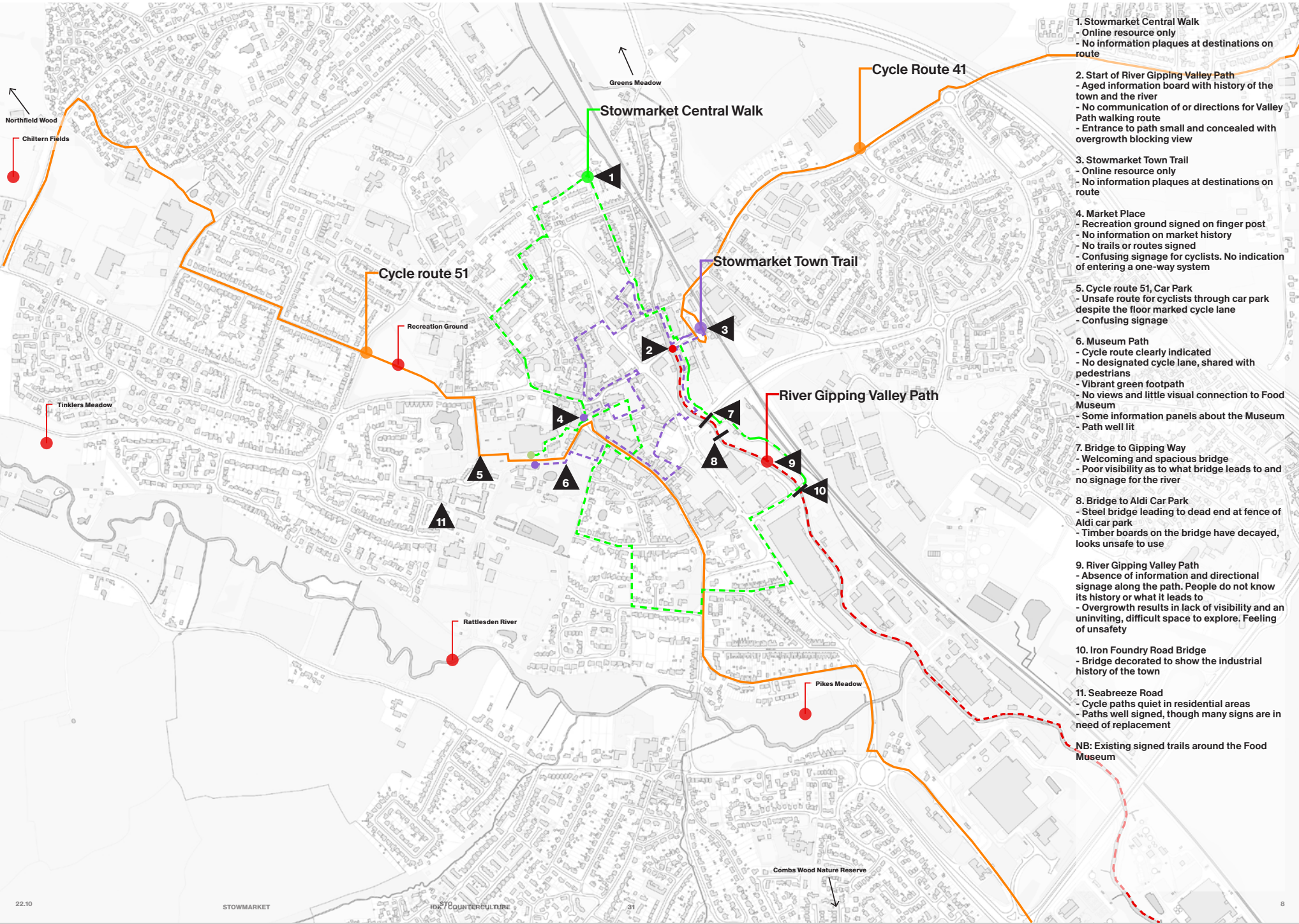
6. Museum path



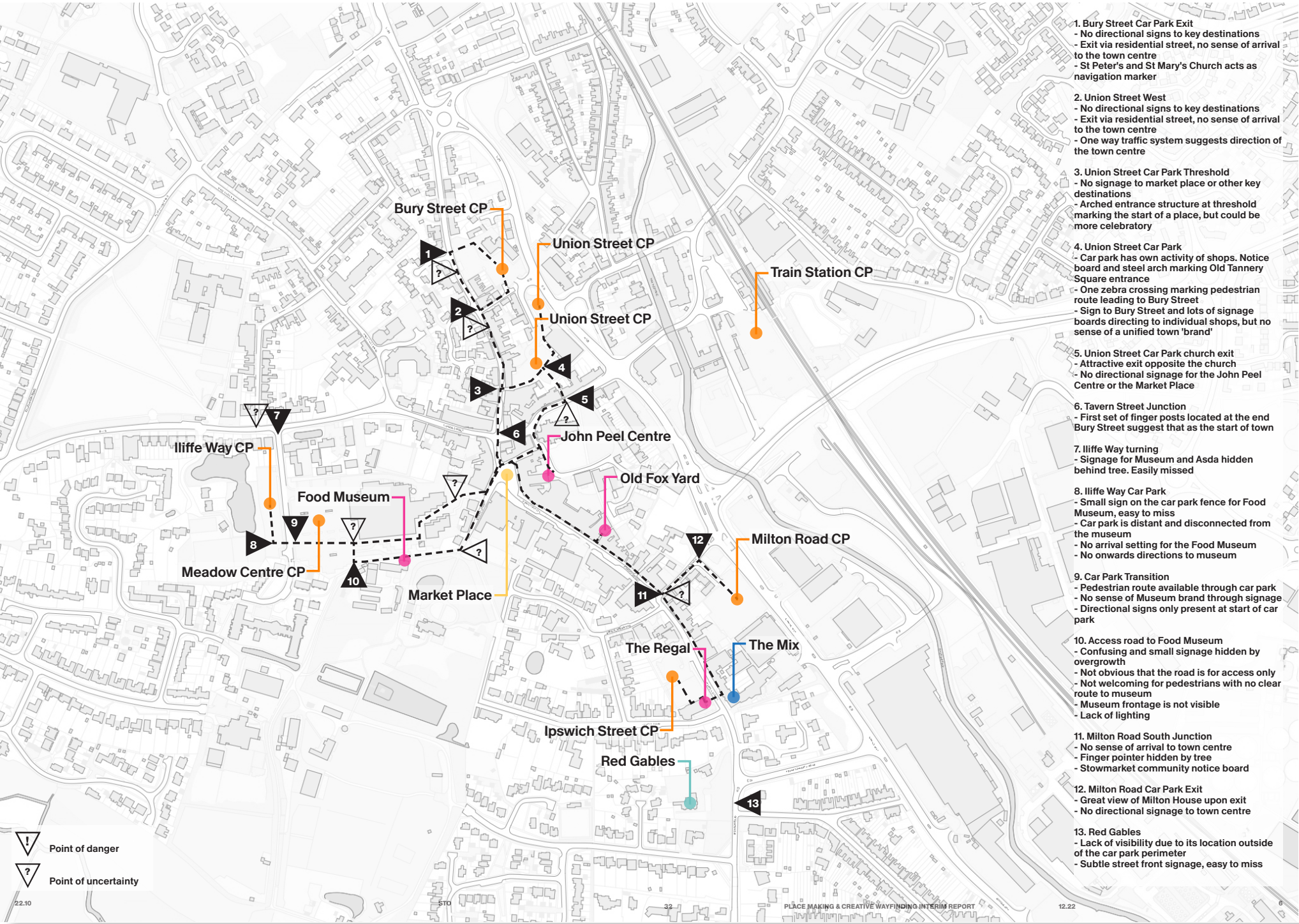
10. Iron Foundry Road Bridge



11. Seabreeze Road



1. Stowmarket Central Walk
 - Online resource only
 - No information plaques at destinations on route
 2. Start of River Gipping Valley Path
 - Aged information board with history of the town and the river
 - No communication of or directions for Valley Path walking route
 - Entrance to path small and concealed with overgrowth blocking view
 3. Stowmarket Town Trail
 - Online resource only
 - No information plaques at destinations on route
 4. Market Place
 - Recreation ground signed on finger post
 - No information on market history
 - No trails or routes signed
 - Confusing signage for cyclists. No indication of entering a one-way system
 5. Cycle route 51, Car Park
 - Unsafe route for cyclists through car park despite the floor marked cycle lane
 - Confusing signage
 6. Museum Path
 - Cycle route clearly indicated
 - No designated cycle lane, shared with pedestrians
 - Vibrant green footpath
 - No views and little visual connection to Food Museum
 - Some information panels about the Museum
 - Path well lit
 7. Bridge to Gipping Way
 - Welcoming and spacious bridge
 - Poor visibility as to what bridge leads to and no signage for the river
 8. Bridge to Aldi Car Park
 - Steel bridge leading to dead end at fence of Aldi car park
 - Timber boards on the bridge have decayed, looks unsafe to use
 9. River Gipping Valley Path
 - Absence of information and directional signage along the path. People do not know its history or what it leads to
 - Overgrowth results in lack of visibility and an uninviting, difficult space to explore. Feeling of unsafety
 10. Iron Foundry Road Bridge
 - Bridge decorated to show the industrial history of the town
 11. Seabreeze Road
 - Cycle paths quiet in residential areas
 - Paths well signed, though many signs are in need of replacement
- NB: Existing signed trails around the Food Museum

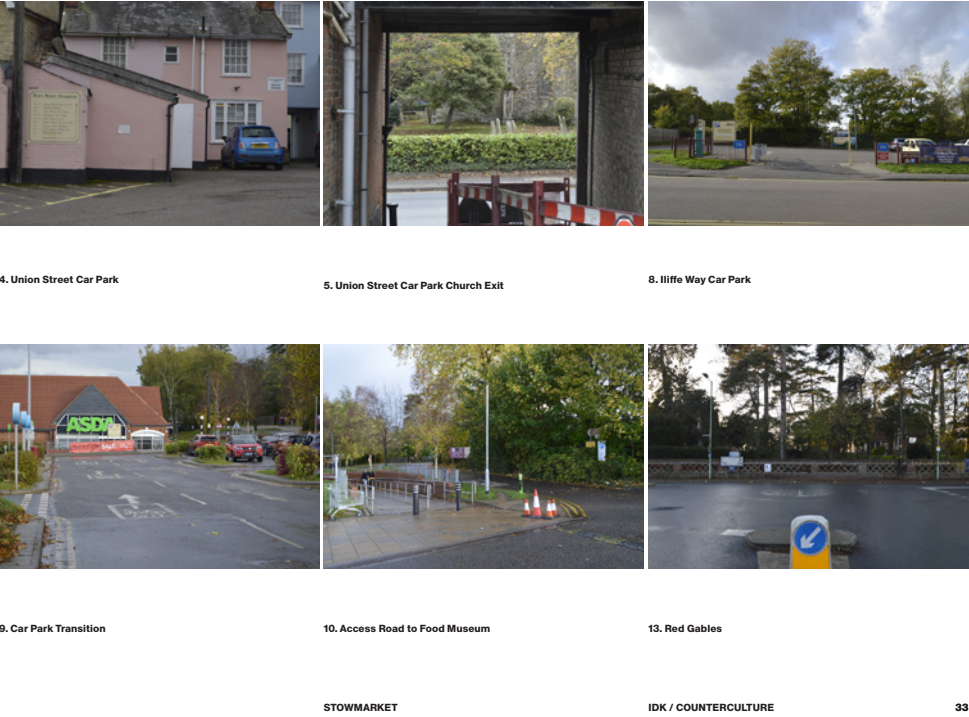


- 1. Bury Street Car Park Exit
 - No directional signs to key destinations
 - Exit via residential street, no sense of arrival to the town centre
 - St Peter's and St Mary's Church acts as navigation marker
- 2. Union Street West
 - No directional signs to key destinations
 - Exit via residential street, no sense of arrival to the town centre
 - One way traffic system suggests direction of the town centre
- 3. Union Street Car Park Threshold
 - No signage to market place or other key destinations
 - Arched entrance structure at threshold marking the start of a place, but could be more celebratory
- 4. Union Street Car Park
 - Car park has own activity of shops. Notice board and steel arch marking Old Tannery Square entrance
 - One zebra crossing marking pedestrian route leading to Bury Street
 - Sign to Bury Street and lots of signage boards directing to individual shops, but no sense of a unified town 'brand'
- 5. Union Street Car Park church exit
 - Attractive exit opposite the church
 - No directional signage for the John Peel Centre or the Market Place
- 6. Tavern Street Junction
 - First set of finger posts located at the end Bury Street suggest that as the start of town
- 7. Iliffe Way turning
 - Signage for Museum and Asda hidden behind tree. Easily missed
- 8. Iliffe Way Car Park
 - Small sign on the car park fence for Food Museum, easy to miss
 - Car park is distant and disconnected from the museum
 - No arrival setting for the Food Museum
 - No onwards directions to museum
- 9. Car Park Transition
 - Pedestrian route available through car park
 - No sense of Museum brand through signage
 - Directional signs only present at start of car park
- 10. Access road to Food Museum
 - Confusing and small signage hidden by overgrowth
 - Not obvious that the road is for access only
 - Not welcoming for pedestrians with no clear route to museum
 - Museum frontage is not visible
 - Lack of lighting
- 11. Milton Road South Junction
 - No sense of arrival to town centre
 - Finger pointer hidden by tree
 - Stowmarket community notice board
- 12. Milton Road Car Park Exit
 - Great view of Milton House upon exit
 - No directional signage to town centre
- 13. Red Gables
 - Lack of visibility due to its location outside of the car park perimeter
 - Subtle street front signage, easy to miss

EXISTING WAYFINDING AUDIT

CAR PARKS TO KEY DESTINATIONS

- Many people do not know the John Peel Centre or Food Museum are there
- St Peter's and St Mary's Church is seen as a local landmark
- There is a good amount of car parks
- Parking is bad and needs to be more connected
- Car parking fees are a deterrent for people coming to Stowmarket
- Visitors struggle to find the Food Museum and often arrive feeling annoyed because of a poor visitor journey; it needs more signage from the car park (Iliffe Way)



6.5 SYNTHESIS

- No sense of arrival from key places, particularly the Station, Car parks, the level crossing and key road junctions
- The car parks are very underused and show enormous potential for welcome, orientation and information sharing
- Some wonderful architectural moments that could be better framed
- Maintenance of planting would frame what is there
- Finger post signage could do with a significant overhaul, in terms of keeping it up to date and using time-based indicators rather than distance.
- Signage is inconsistent
- Some signed routes are dangerous to the visitor, whilst safer and more interesting ones are not called out
- Some areas of Stowmarket possess urgent need for overhaul as they are fundamentally unsafe and critically endanger its image (such as the Station forecourt)
- Key institutions are poorly signed or not signed at all
- There is no consistent visitor information
- There are no 'brown' heritage signposts for Stowmarket
- Trails and walks exist via organisations such as The Stowmarket Society and projects in development such as Stow Stories but they are not widely communicated

6.6 ACTIONS

- Create information points that celebrate the offer to those on foot or changing travel mode (e.g., from car to foot, train to foot etc)
- Improve and simplify directional signage to information points and ensure that these are adaptable and will not date quickly - signage to local landmarks and key public spaces.
- Speak boldly to the car driver, either passing the town centre to the east or coming in from the west
- Frame place through larger signage that enhances and celebrates the offer to the town.
- Create strategic interventions into the public realm that makes key routes safer and easier to navigate and make safer routes the primary navigations from key areas.
- Overcome perceived barriers in the town through highlighting where the "bridges" between cut-off areas are.
- Better communicate the existing trails and walks and support emerging projects, such as Stow Stories, to tell new stories about Stowmarket.



Crowe Street Approach to the Food Museum's Closed Entrance

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Friendly and great sense of community- Highstreet is faring well in terms of occupancy compared to other towns due to its affordable and independent offer.- Fantastic travel links by car and rail- An active and progressive town council.- Good, affordable car parking- Cultural and Community hubs with strong offer in easy reach (Food museum, John Peel Centre, Regal Cinema, The Mix, Red Gables, Library)- Town Centre is compact and accessible- Town Council events programme- Culture Group meet to inform each other of activity and have partnered combined activities e.g., Jubilant- Progressive green initiatives such as re-wilding verges- New independent shops emerging despite Covid e.g., Langhams, Bonitas, Little Pig Bakery- Great range of events and place Making activity but not joined up or visible- River Gipping, green spaces and strong natural heritage offer but a bit under the radar- Strong history of commerce, food production, manufacturing and grain- Gateway 14 will provide employment offer that neighbouring towns do not have	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of eating places- Lack of known brands and shops (e.g., Primark)/ too many charity shops and cafes- Independent shops not made visible- Upmarket food offer in retail is limited- Poor signposting and wayfinding, especially from station- Poor communication between community groups to create a coherent strategy for initiatives across the town.- No destination marketing offer for the region- No hotel/ accommodation offer for visitors- Poor welcome to Stowmarket on arrival- Lack of public transport between housing estates and town centre and villages- Too many simultaneous road work projects- Perceived increase in anti-social behaviour in town- Independent businesses and organisations in competition for funding- Sport is under-represented and lack of facilities- Shortage of community halls with accessible facilities- No tourist information centre or destination marketing for Stowmarket- Natural environment needs profiling- Market is under-used, and traders are going elsewhere- Not clear where the beginning, middle and end of the town centre is- The town is becoming a commuting town - people aren't spending money here- The town is not accessible - narrow pavements for buggies / wheelchairs, no space for cycle lanes- The town is disconnected- Lack of clarity around what Stowmarket's offer is and why people should go there- Residents want more doctors and dentists (but is a national issue)- Residents feel like they are the last ones to be thought about- There are lots of pinch points on pavements making it difficult for pedestrians in Stowmarket- Roads and pavements are narrow and unmaintained making it unsafe for cyclists in the town- Amount of weeds and general upkeep / refuse collection. District council responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- John Peel Centre expanding on to the market square will animate empty building and profile venue. Potential to sign post other hubs from JPC.- Connecting green spaces and river corridors and developing leisure routes and new cycle paths- Re-thinking retail focus of town centre, with alternative offer e.g., healthcare and wellbeing- Profiling independent shopping offer- Potential for CIL funding with development of Gateway 14.- Green initiatives such as re-wilding verges- Potential for more canopy cover- Encourage residents from new estates into the town through marketing and events- Further exploiting the heritage through projects like Stow Stories, naming of roads etc- Schemes for new independent businesses and retail incubators, development of clusters (either physically or by highlighting Bury Road, Fox Yard etc)- Potential for culture group to be more strategic and to open up to other partners e.g. business, health and education (a delivery group of the Vision Board)- Potential for market to reflect positioning of Stowmarket around food and heritage- Potential to elevate and align existing place shaping activity and events with an events strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cost of living- Fuel crisis impacting the running of community buildings- Lack of funding- Political challenges due to hung council- Failure to prioritise green growth- Failure to expand infrastructure and services to meet population growth



Counterculturellp

Manchester
Counterculture Partnership LLP
Unit 115, Ducie House, Ducie Street,
Manchester M1 2JW

London
Counterculture Partnership LLP,
33 Swan Street, London SE1 1DF

counterculturellp.com
contact@counterculturellp.com

IDK-O LLP

London
21 Iliffe Yard,
SE17 3QA, London

Paris
1A5, 55 BLVD de la Villette,
75010, Paris

idk-o.com
info@idk-o.com

This report is for the private and confidential use of the clients for whom the report is undertaken and should not be reproduced in whole or in part or relied upon by third parties for any use whatsoever without the express written authority of IDK-O LLP and Counterculture LLP

© IDK-O LLP and Counterculture LLP