

Public Realm Design Guide for Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire

A Companion Guide to Wyre Forest District Design Quality Supplementary Planning Guidance
November 2006



Controlled Document

Taylor Young Document No:		3053/Finished Report	
Status:	Finished Report	Copy No:	
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Contents

1.0 Introduction & Consultation Statement	2	3.0 Conceptual framework	26	6.0 Implementation	60	Contact details:	60
2.0 Baseline Study	4	3.1 Character Areas	26	6.1 Priority Projects	60	Wyre Forest District Council	60
2.1 Planning, Transport and Economic Regeneration Context	4	3.2 Town Centre Core Proposals	29	6.2 Funding	60	Forward planning section	60
2.2 Urban Design Audit	6	3.3 The Canal Basins Proposals	30	6.3 General Implementation Issues	61	Planning, Health & Environment division	61
2.3 Movement and Linkages Audit	15	3.4 Rivers Severn and Stour Proposals	31			Duke House	
2.4 Public Realm and Open Space Audit	19	3.5 Gilgal Proposals	33	Appendices		Clensmore Street	
2.5 Stourport Public Realm Initial Consultation - Key Issues	23	3.6 Cross Cutting Area Themes	33	A Planning and Regeneration Context – Document Review		Kidderminster	
2.6 Summary of Baseline Study	24	3.7 Outline Design Proposals for main Town Centre Core Streets	33	B Town Trail		Worcs	
		3.8 Outline Design Concepts for the Severn Meadows and the Rivers Severn and Stour	35	C Minutes of Initial Consultation Workshops		DY10 2JX	
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4.0 Lighting Strategy	45						
4.1 Outline Lighting Strategy	45	4.2A Character Areas	45			Taylor Young	
4.2 Bridge Lighting	45	4.2B Town Centre Core - Activity & Townscape	45			Chadsworth House	
4.3 Landmark Lighting	47	4.2C The Basins & River Severn- Activity & Townscape	47			Wilmslow Road	
4.4 Accent Points	47	4.2D Riverside - Activity & Townscape	47			Handforth	
4.5 Pedestrian Routes	47	4.2E Gilgal - Activity & Townscape	47			Cheshire	
4.6 Lighting on Street Furniture	47	2.3A Movement & Linkages	47			SK9 3HP	
		2.4A Open Space Analysis	49			urban@tayloryoung.co.uk	
		3.1A Character Areas & Streets	49				
5.0 Design Codes	49	3.1B Paths & Open Space	49				
5.1 Street Furniture	49	3.4A River Stour Section	49				
5.2 Surfacing	49	3.4B Severn Meadows Park	49				
5.3 Lighting	49	3.6A Wider Context - Open Spaces and Linkages	49				
5.4 Artwork	49	3.7A Severn Bridge	49				
5.5 Soft Landscape	50	3.7B Bridge Street	50				

1.0 Introduction & Consultation

Background

In July 2004, Wyre Forest District Council adopted a suite of design guides that underline the Council's commitment to achieving quality design across the district. The 'Design Quality-Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)' includes advice and on achieving good standards of design. Specific guides within the SPG include a district wide design guide, residential design guide and town centre design guides. This document is available to view on the District Council's website.

Given the scale of change envisaged in Stourport, this Public Realm Design Guide for Stourport provides more guidance to support the Design Quality SPG and in particular the 'design guidance for Stourport-on-Severn Town Centre.' The projects include Advantage West Midlands's Market Town Initiative being driven by 'Stourport Forward Ltd', regeneration of the canal basins and derelict land to the east with multi agency support.

It is envisaged that the guide will be used by a number of groups to provide a joined-up approach to the design of public space. It will also be used by the District Council as a development control tool to ensure that new developments complement the overall strategy. This document underpins a number of provisions in the emerging "Supplementary Planning Document: Planning Obligations". Please contact the forward planning team (see contact details in the contents section) for the latest information.

Introducing the document

The object of this document is to provide design guidance for the implementation of public realm improvements within key areas of the town. Primary aspects of the document are to:

- **Determine an overall conceptual framework for the creation of a re-established public realm;**

- **Determine a suite of materials to develop the theme whilst meeting with functional, financial and life cycle requirements;**
- **Recommend a suite of furnishings including seating, bollards, litter bins;**
- **Recommend an outline lighting strategy**

Good design can help to create successful places where people choose to live, work, play and invest. Many towns and cities, both in the UK and internationally, have recognised the benefits of improving the pedestrian environment as well as their 'image', if they are to attract the investment and visitors they desire. It is hoped that implementing the Public Realm Design Guidance contained within this document will form a key foundation for the promotion of a successful and vibrant town centre.

The structure of the report is as follows:

- **Section 2 sets out a summary of the baseline study including a review of the planning, transport and regeneration context, an urban design audit and a summary of the consultation workshops. The results of this are distilled into a series of objectives from which specific proposals can be developed.**
- **Section 3 defines the conceptual framework as Functions, Themes and Proposals with reference to the four character areas identified. It sets out proposals that relate to all character areas as cross-cutting themes and discusses schematic outline designs for major streets and junctions in the Town Centre Core area and the Rivers Severn and Stour.**
- **Section 4 contains an outline lighting strategy with specific reference to Building Lighting and Bridge Lighting.**
- **Section 5 discusses Design Codes which relate to Street Furniture, Surfacing, Artwork, Soft Landscape and Bridge**

Design before defining palettes for each of the character areas.

- **Section 6 discusses the prioritization, funding and implementation of the proposals**
- **Appendix A reviews existing policies, guidance and documentation which is summarized in Section 2**
- **Appendix B details the existing Town Trail which identifies many of the important aspect of Stourport and introduces the concept of planned walks around the town.**
- **Appendix C contains the minutes of each of the consultation meetings which are summarized in Section 2.**
- **Appendix D sets out some approximate project costs**

The study was led by Taylor Young (Urban design & Landscape Architecture) with support from: Eaton Waygood Associates (Public Art & Interpretation) and Harvey & Co. (Quantity Surveyors)

The study was funded through a partnership of Stourport Forward Market Towns Initiative (funded by Advantage West Midlands and Wyre Forest District Council).

Consultation Statement

In line with good practice this design guide involved extensive consultation. From a series of initial ideas workshops with key local stakeholders (Appendix C) to a formal 6 week period of public consultation (13th July and the 25th August 2006). This involved a series of three road shows throughout the town and resulted in 55 comments being submitted that were broadly supportive these resulted in a number of improvements to the document. The District Council gave full consideration to all comments received and the document was adopted on 15th November 2006. For more information about the consultation process please contact the Forward Planning Section (see contact details in the contents section).



2.0

Baseline Study

2. Baseline Study

2.1 Planning, Transport and Economic Regeneration Context

The Planning and Regeneration context is established through a thorough document review (Appendix A) which is summarised in the following three sub-sections under the headings Planning, Transport and Regeneration.

Planning

Stourport is going through a period of change with new demand for development coming at an opportune time to regenerate disused industrial and underused commercial areas along with improvements to the quality of the townscape. The tourism market which Stourport has benefited from is changing and Stourport is in a good position to respond to the new demands from tourists interested in a quieter, more naturalistic tourism founded on its strong industrial heritage.

British Waterways have obtained significant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to reinvigorate the canal basins area and Lichfield Basin is currently being reinstated as part of a housing development, (discussed below under the regeneration sub-section). There is a lot of interest in development on the Carpets of Worth Site and at Cheapside, and the framework for a new development linkage between the basins and Bridge Street has been produced. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Design Quality sets out design principles for Stourport town centre and Supplementary Planning Guidance is also available in the form of the Severn Road Development Brief (2001) and the Lichfield Basin Design Guide (2001).

Transport

Stourport has severe traffic problems especially at peak times, but also throughout the day. There is a continuous flow around the one-way system which significantly detracts from the

pedestrian environment. Recent studies have indicated it is unlikely that a full relief road, including a new river crossing, is viable in the short to medium term. The town needs to improve its streetscape within the scope of the existing system and manage any partial delivery of elements of the relief road route within the context of the full scheme being a long-term aspiration.

The Draft of Transportation and Development Control Guide 2005 issued by Worcestershire County Highways Department is currently being consulted upon. The guide advises on layout, surfacing, street lighting and furniture and soft landscape and includes construction detailing which are set out as recommended standards that should not be regarded as prescriptive. The highway Authority will consider alternative proposals where it can be demonstrated they satisfy the principles of the “standards”. This includes:

- **Developments with more individuality**
- **Developments that reflect the local character and environment**
- **Developments that provide high quality local services and reduce the necessity to travel**
- **Developments that provide an attractive environment in which to live**

The guide sets out a hierarchy for design of a movement network:

- **Walking**
- **Cycling**
- **Public Transport**
- **Private Car**

Worcestershire County Council has outlined some progressive proposals in the Local Transport Plan (2006-11) for Evesham’s busy High Street to create a better pedestrian environment. These proposals are based on some of the latest thinking in this

country stemming from projects in Holland and Germany which encourage motorist and pedestrians to engage on a personal level so promoting a more understanding and courteous relationship. This is achieved by re-creating a traditional street environment that is defined by built elements and the urban realm, and less dominated by highway infrastructure. The proposals for Evesham will increase the perception of pedestrians’ rights on the carriageway by creating uncertainty in the minds of motorists which requires them to engage with and respond to their surroundings rather than relying on signage and highway infrastructure to tell them how to behave. The concept of the Courtesy Crossing (see Plate 2.1A) is introduced to create regular crossing points on a busy High Street. Motorists become more aware of pedestrians and their speed becomes a function of the environment they find themselves in rather than that determined by signs.

The Wyre Forest District Council Cycle Strategy aims to increase the number of cyclists and promote safety on the roads. A particular success has been the route along the canal to Kidderminster. Improvements to the cycle network are identified including links to Bewdley and improved facilities within Stourport. The local community is being engaged through the Safer Routes to School scheme and businesses are being encouraged to produce travel plans for their employees.

Stourport is a difficult town to negotiate for pedestrians, made all the more difficult for anyone whose mobility is impaired. Traffic, steep gradients due to topography and the historic environment of the canals and their basins are all obstructions to movement. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 sets out requirements and responsibilities. All new infrastructure will have to comply with DDA requirements, these can be discussed with the Wyre Forest District Council Access Officer.

2. Baseline Study

Economic Regeneration

Stourport Forward Market Towns Initiative is funded by Advantage West Midlands, and focuses on delivering and facilitating specific regeneration projects in the town. Through targeted direct action they are, step-by-step, improving important elements of the town.

The Canal Basin project is a major redevelopment of this historic setting that is due to start in Spring 2006 with over £3 million funding, it includes:

- Restoration of the historic warehouses, cottages and other structures around the basins;
- Restoration and improvement works to the locks, basin walls and basins;
- Landscaping works;
- Access improvements;
- Environmental improvements and nature conservation; and
- Community involvement and arts projects.

Sandy Lane Industrial Estate is set for a renaissance with £660k funding proposed for security and environmental improvements to create a high quality working environment that encourages more businesses into the area. The industrial estate is on the banks of the Severn to the southeast of Stourport and is an important local employment area.



Plate 2.1A
The Canal Basins

2. Baseline Study

2.2 Urban Design Audit

The urban design audit describes the town's essential elements and how they form definable character areas. These character areas relate to the existing conservation areas set out in the Local Plan and are useful to tailor the conceptual framework and design codes such that they can specifically relate to different parts of the town and reinforce the character of these areas.

Character Areas

The Town Centre can be divided into four main character areas as shown in Figure 2.1:

- **Town Centre Core;**
- **The Canal Basins;**
- **Rivers Severn and Stour; and**
- **Gilgal.**

There is the potential to promote a sub- area within the Canal Basin Character Area, as shown on the adjacent figure, but this will be the subject of further consultation.

The main characteristics of each area are described under the headings Activity and Townscape.

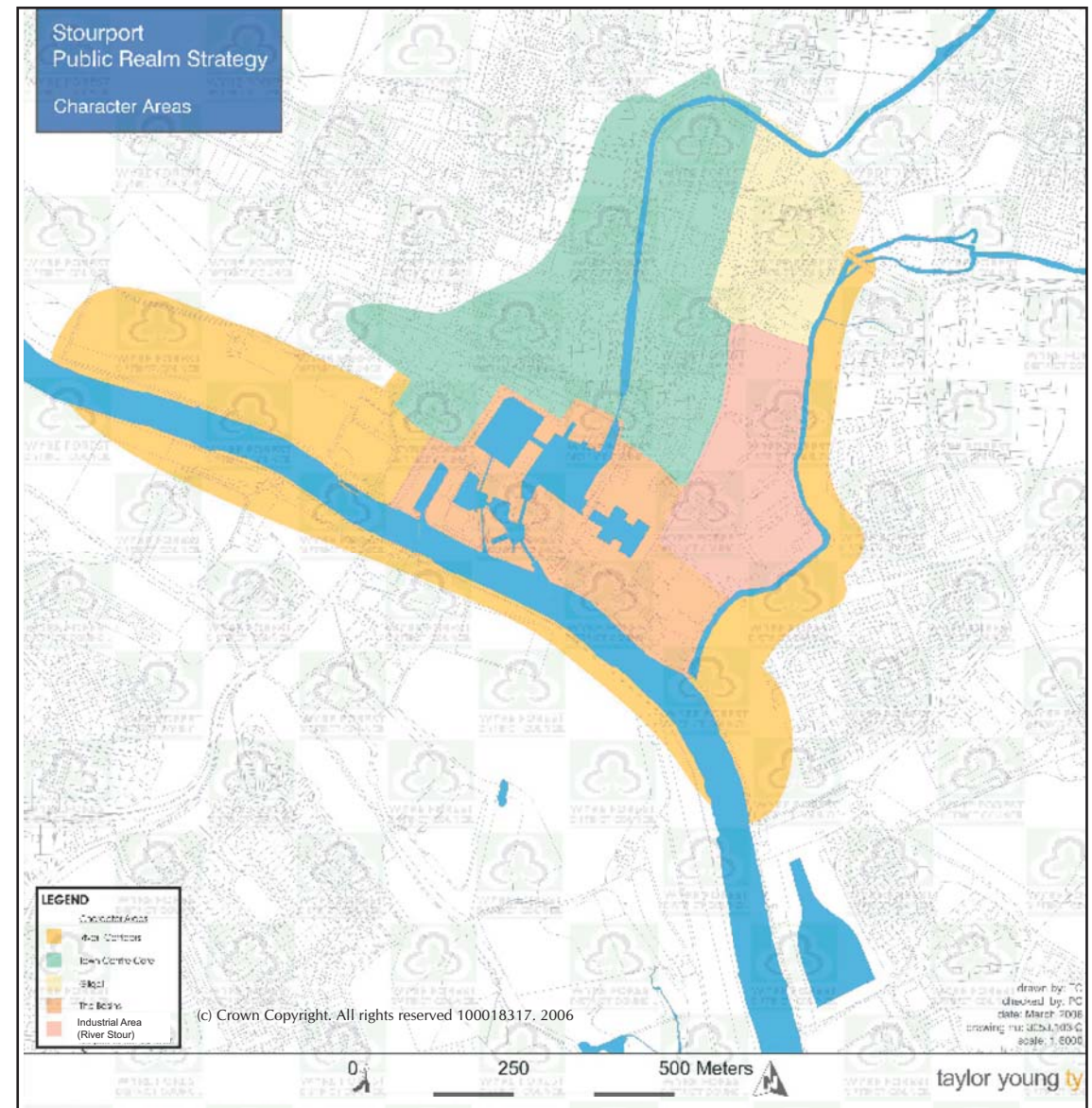


Figure 2.2A Character Areas

2. Baseline Study

Town Centre Core

Activity

- A coherent and reasonably complete Georgian townscape apart from the Vale Road area;
- Busy retail and commercial uses centred on High Street, including York Street, New Street, Bridge Street and Lombard Street, with some residential above;
- Residential character to the east with significant redevelopment opportunity to eastern boundary; and
- Vale Road is included in the Town Centre Core area although its present character is different to the rest of the town centre. In terms of public realm, the aspiration for this area is to improve its quality in line with the rest of the Town Centre Core through new development and by mitigating the dominance of the major roadway.



Plate 2.2A



Plate 2.2C

Townscape

- Townscape silhouette visible from the Severn bridge;
- Denser character to the west, mostly straight terraced blocks at back of footway, many of these were built as fine residences;
- Lower density to the east, including detached and semi detached forms with set back frontages;
- Georgian character, a mix of original and sympathetic later buildings;
- Red-orange and red-brown brick tones along with white/cream renders;
- Mix of blue coped boundary walls and sandstone; and
- Disparate development along Vale Road more in keeping with an out-of-town retail park.



Plate 2.2B



Plate 2.2D

Wyre Forest District Council: Stourport Pride Public Realm Design Guide

[illegible]

2. Baseline Study

The Canal Basins

Activity

- Canal basin related uses such as canal boat moorings and boat repair; and
- Industrial uses to south east of area

Townscape

- Character of buildings around the basins are concerned with the construction, repair and handling of water vessels;
- Clock warehouse is a key landmark and point of reference in the town centre, the imposing Tontine is another important landmark feature;
- Industrial heritage area to the south east and along the west bank of the Stour includes warehouses and former vinegar works; and
- Reddish-orange to reddish-brown brick tones (engineering blues to some boundary walls).



Plate 2.2E



Plate 2.2F



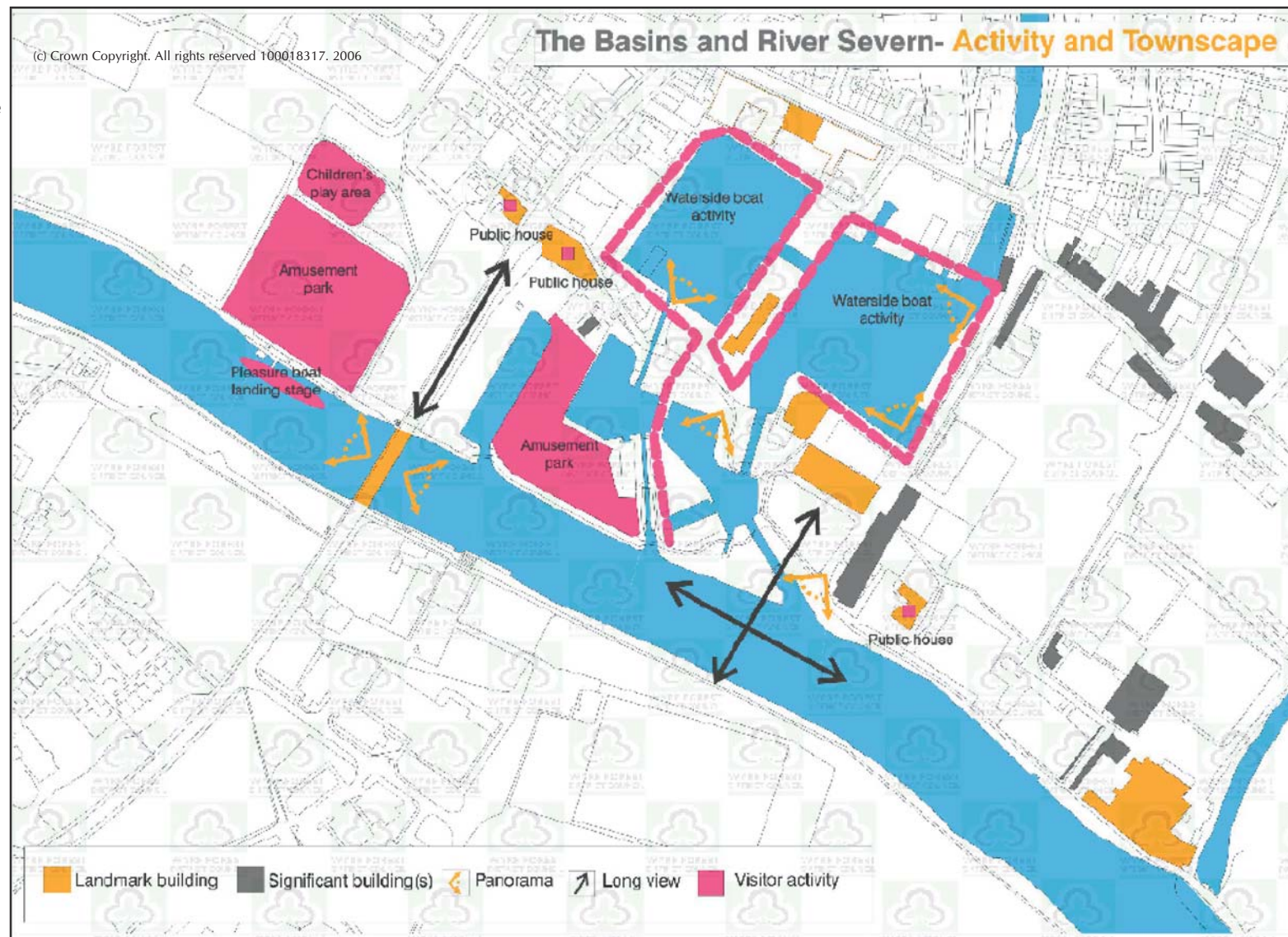
Plate 2.2G



Plate 2.2H

2. Baseline Study

Figure 2.2B
The Basins and River Severn -
Activity & Townscape



2. Baseline Study

Rivers Severn and Stour

Activity

- Formal recreational and leisure uses to the Severn Riverside Meadows north of the Severn road bridge including children's play area, amusement park, car parking and pleasure boat landing;
- Informal recreation on the Severn to the south of the Stour confluence and along the Stour; and
- Public footpaths on either side of the Severn for the length of the study area.

Townscape

- Few built elements due partly to the floodplain location; and
- The Severn Bridge is the dominant built element, an historic iron bridge constructed from brick abutments.



Plate 2.2I



Plate 2.2K



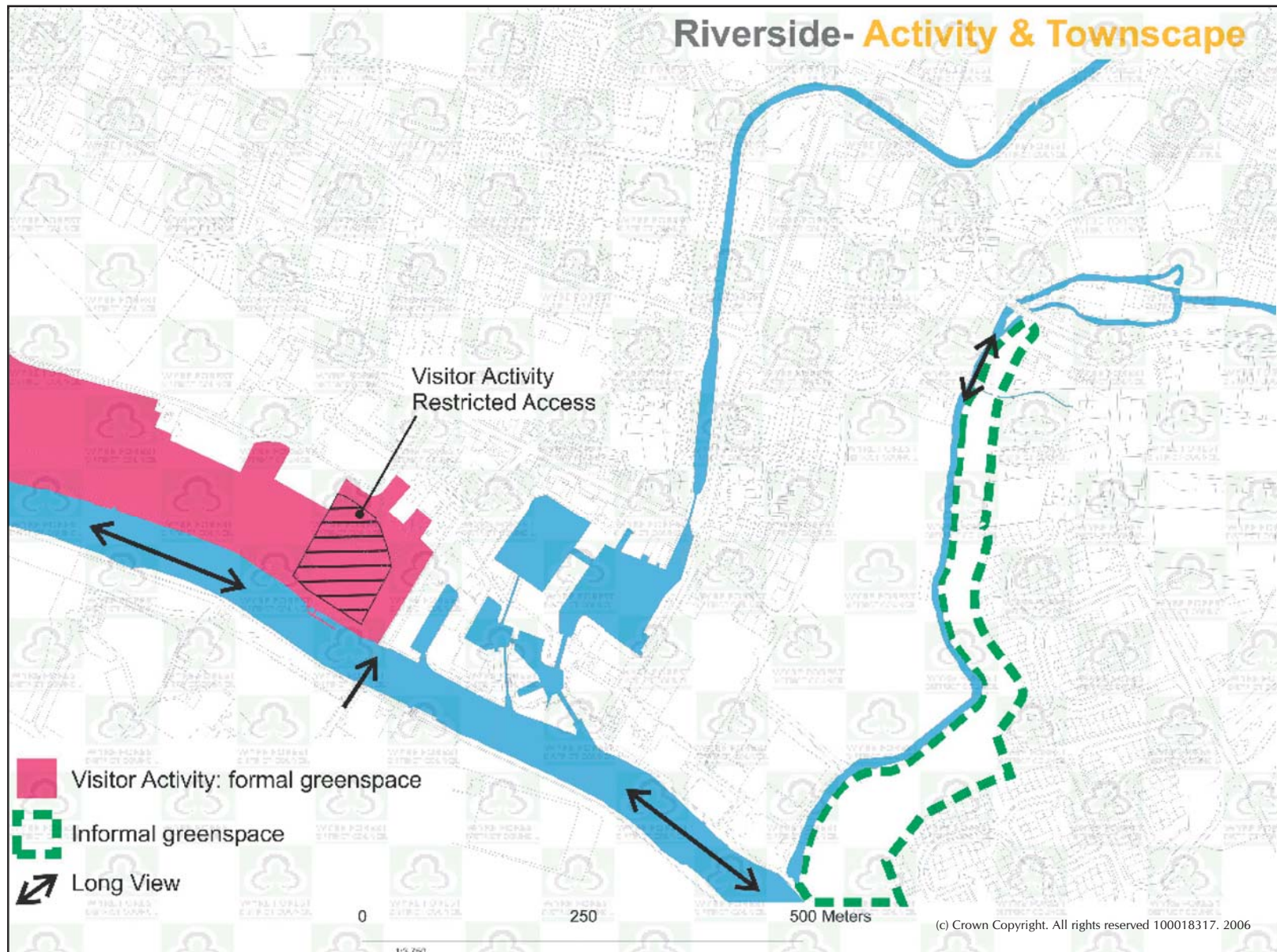
Plate 2.2J



Plate 2.2L

2. Baseline Study

Figure 2.2D
Riverside -
Activity & Townscape



2. Baseline Study

Gilgal

Activity

- Primarily residential character;
- Commercial uses to Vale Road; and
- Works and industrial buildings to the south, some incongruous within the historic setting.

Townscape

- Historic settlement predating the canals set around a small hillside, Mitton Street and Gilgal form a semi-circle around its base;
- Strong sense of enclosure to Gilgal, buildings align with the curvature of streets and substantial red sandstone wall ;
- Mix of larger Georgian houses and older terraced cottages;
- The Steps public house forms a strong landmark from Worcester Road;
- Poor townscape around Vale Road through insensitive development; and
- Red orange brick tones, black and white timber framed frontage and red sandstone boundary walls.



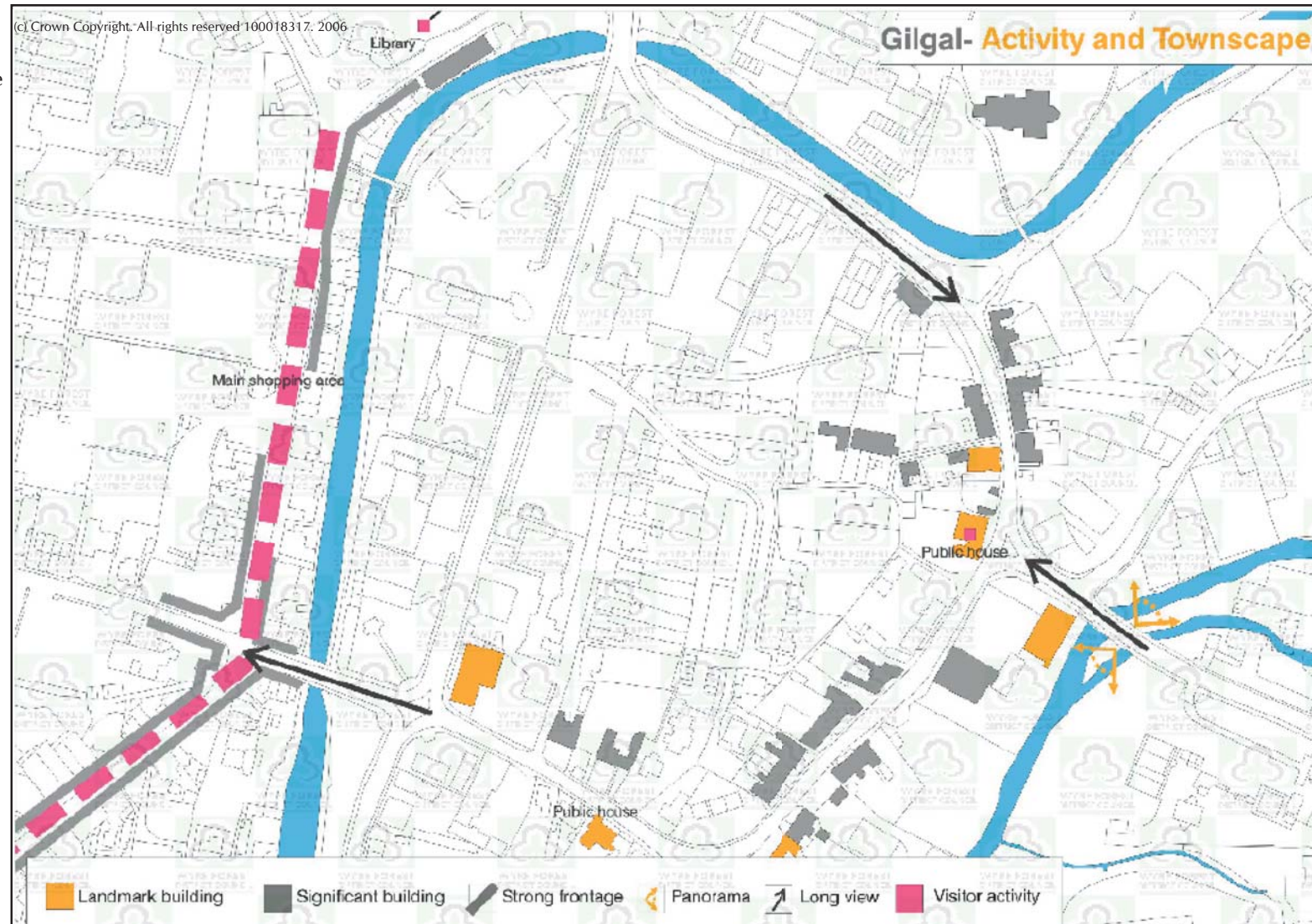
Plate 2.2M



Plate 2.2N

2. Baseline Study

Figure 2.2E
Gilgal -
Activity & Townscape



2. Baseline Study

2.3 Movement and Linkages Audit

Movement and Linkages are summarised in Figure 2.3a discussed under the following headings:

- Gateways
- Street Analysis
- Pedestrian Routes

Gateways

There are two types of gateway identified:

- Town Centre
- Edge-of-town

Three town centre gateways are identified at crossing points over water:

- River Severn (Southern Gateway)
- River Stour (Eastern Gateway)
- Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal (Northern Gateway)

There may be potential for a south eastern gateway in conjunction with a new bridge over the Stour linking through the Carpets of Worth site. This is discussed further in the conceptual framework.

Three Edge-of-town gateway areas are identified as follows:

- The Minster Road at Kingsway (Northern Gateway)
- Bewdley Road at Burlish Farm (Western Gateway)
- The Severn Bridge (Southern Gateway as Southern Town Centre Gateway)

The gateways are described briefly below:

River Severn Bridge Southern Town Centre Gateway and Southern edge-of-town gateway

- Dramatic entrance with strong sense of arrival
- Panoramic views across the Severn
- Long views of characterful townscape and roofscape
- Unattractive leisure uses to eastern bank



Plate 2.3A

River Stour Eastern Town Centre Gateway

- Views of flowing water and the river embankments
- Public House forms a prominent landmark
- Sense of historic character affected by unsympathetic development and uses



Plate 2.3B

Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Northern Town Centre Gateway

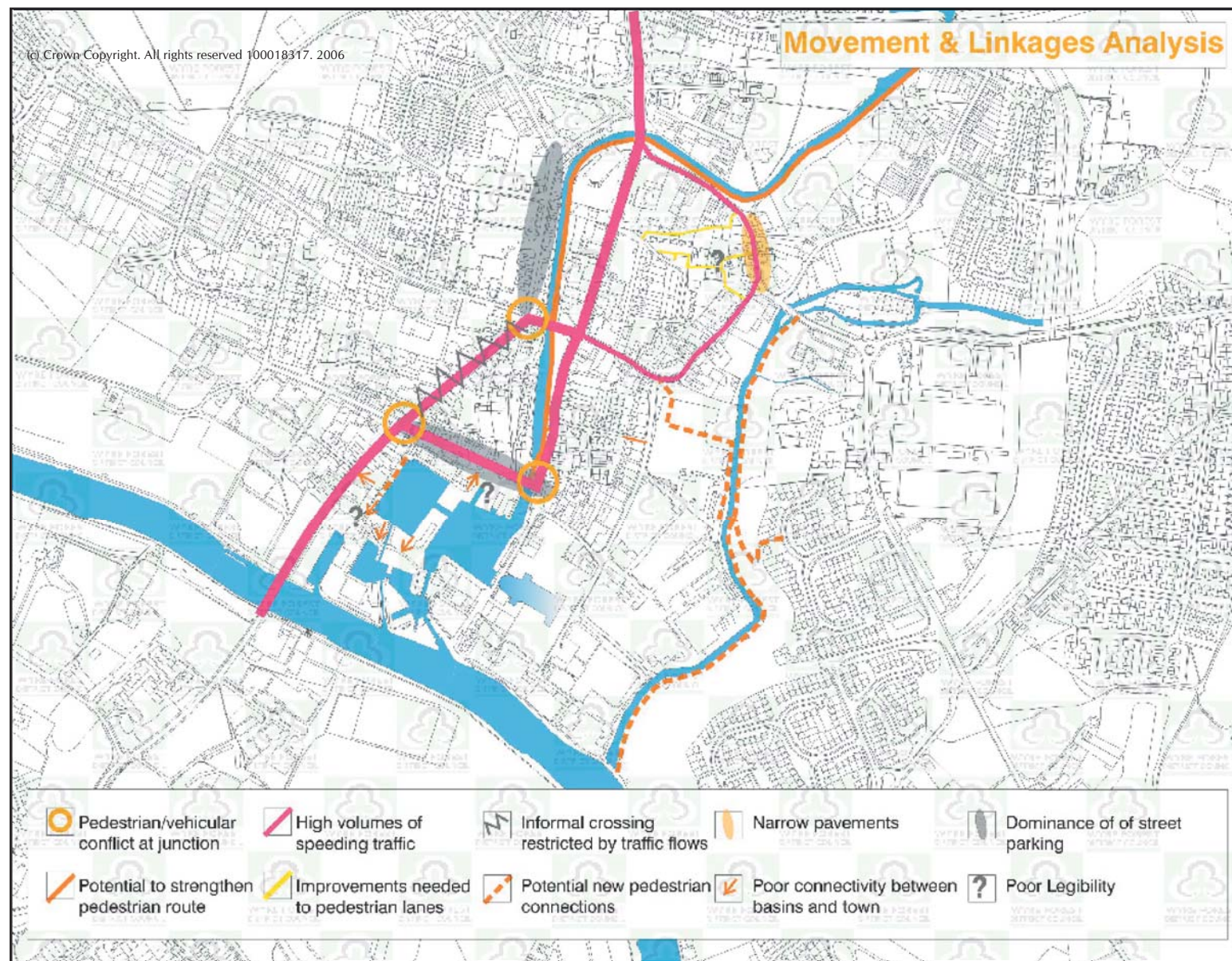
- Engineered towards the needs of traffic, dominated by the road junction
- Lacks a sense of place or arrival to this Georgian town
- Areas of public realm poorly defined
- Canal-side is hidden



Plate 2.3C

2. Baseline Study

Figure 2.3A
Movement and
Linkages Analysis



2. Baseline Study

The Minster Road at Kingsway (Northern edge-of-town Gateway)

- A dramatic pine tree avenue takes visitors from the industrial estates on the edge of Kidderminster to the edge of Stourport
- The built edge of the town is well defined at the Kingsway and St John's Road junction, though this differs from the town's official boundary which is at the Kidderminster end of the avenue

Bewdley Road at Burlish Farm (Western edge-of-town Gateway)

- Clearly defined edge-of-town but a low-key entrance which does not help describe the town

Street Analysis



Plate 2.3D

Stourport's streets often appear congested, even out of normal peak periods. The one-way system promotes a steady flow of traffic which can make it difficult for pedestrians to cross and there are specific bottle-necks as discussed below.

- Pedestrian/vehicular conflicts at main junctions, particularly Bridge Street and Lombard Street from High Street



Plate 2.3E



Plate 2.3F

- High volumes of traffic disrupt the quality, experience and social dimension of town centre streets
- High Street, Bridge Street and Lombard Street have high numbers of pedestrian users

- Informal crossing by pedestrian impaired by constant, steady flows of traffic
- Formal pedestrian crossings insufficient to serve pedestrian demand
- High traffic speeds and weaving traffic movements make High Street, Gilgal and Vale Road unattractive to pedestrians and cyclists
- Poor and unsafe pedestrian environment on the Severn Bridge and to the lower end of Gilgal due to very narrow or non-existent pavements
- Parking and Servicing on High Street cause congestion
- On street parking impairs pedestrian movement on Lombard Street
- Major traffic congestion at peak periods backs up through the system from the High Street / Bridge Street junction and the Worcester Road Roundabout
- Minor congestion outside peak periods often caused by inappropriate parking on the High Street



Plate 2.3G

2. Baseline Study

Pedestrian Routes

There is an almost hidden network of alleyways in Stourport's built-up area, this links to paths along the Severn and the Canal.

- Canalside towpath forms strategic north-south pedestrian route
- Parkes Passage is an important and attractive link between the town and the canal
- Potential to improve routes along the Severn
- Potential for River Stour route and new pedestrian connections from the east
- Water basins feel divorced from the town centre (Bridge Street)
- Poor legibility to the water basins area
- Network of footpaths west of Gilgal and east/west of High Street form important connections
- Opportunity to create canalside-riverside circuit prejudiced by poor environment to lower end of Gilgal

Town Trail

A heritage based town trail has been developed, this is reproduced in Appendix B. The Town Trail identifies many of the important aspect of Stourport and introduces the concept of planned walks around the town. There is the opportunity to extend this concept to a series of walks of different lengths and for different interest groups.



Plate 2.3H



Plate 2.3I



Plate 2.3J



Plate 2.3K

2. Baseline Study

2.4 Public Realm and Open Space Audit

The open space analysis plan shown in Figure 2.4a is analysed under the previously identified character areas. Lighting is discussed separately.

Town Centre Core (Plate 2.4A_D)

- The Town Centre Core has no central open space that might create a focal area for the town
- Villeneuve-le-Roi Gardens and War Memorial Gardens are significant soft open spaces but are detached from town centre activity and form little more than a passing visual function
- The Staffs and Worcester Canal running from north to south is a significant linear open space within the town
- Visual focal points at top and bottom of High Street formed by the juxtaposition of curved frontages, are unfortunately dominated by traffic and signage
- The High Street public realm has been upgraded improving its character but the rest of the roads in the Town Centre Core have standard highway treatments (tarmac and concrete kerbs) which detract from the built environment and promote dominance of the motor vehicle in the street
- Vale Road has the appearance of an urban motorway and this encourages high traffic speeds
- Private car park area behind premises by the canal to the southeast of the High St/Lombard St junction lacks a quality landscape treatment
- Wesleyan Chapel and gardens being renovated
- Canalside opens up long framed vistas and attractive views from adjoining properties, however, it is hidden from bridge viewing points due to parapet walls



Plate 2.4A



Plate 2.4B



Plate 2.4C



Plate 2.4D

2. Baseline Study

The Basins (Plate 2.4E)

- The basins are a major open space in the Town, though access to them is awkward and limited due to operational requirements and surrounding built elements
- The top level of the basins is predominantly hard and the lower level around the locks is softer and green.
- The Cheapside area is historically part of the basins creating an element of typical traditional industrial canalside character on the banks of the Stour
- Historic use of brick, wood, sandstone and iron are celebrated in the British Waterways plan for the area and can be seen throughout the basins
- The topography creates fabulous views over the basins and riverside and also back towards the town
- Lichfield basin is currently being reopened which will extend the open water space, and the associated housing will reinforce the built forms in the area
- The listed sandstone wall around the Lichfield basin site is a feature of the area
- Streets and alleys in the area are generally narrow with building rising straight up from the back of the footpath similar in character to some of the canal-side buildings



Plate 2.4E



Plate 2.4F

- The River Severn Meadows to the west of the Severn Road Bridge are dominated by fencing and unattractive boundary treatment with compartmentalised formal play features some of which are publicly accessible and some with restricted public access
- Built elements are in the form of low quality kiosks
- The meadows lack character and quality despite their excellent setting, there is clearly no design for this public park, new elements seem to have been introduced in an ad-hoc manner
- North of the formal play areas stretches an amenity grass area similar to many town park settings, this is punctuated by a recently constructed bandstand
- The western edge of the meadows is terminated by a strong block of wet woodland
- The long northern boundary of the meadows is dominated by car parking on tarmac and reinforced grass
- Pathways though the meadows are formal, the riverside path is lined with a good avenue of mature trees

- The public play facilities are of a high quality, but their layout lacks coherence
- Playland occupies a major central part of the park, the quality of this facility is poor and ongoing investment is clearly limited
- Giant litter bins and poor quality street furniture are a feature of the area
- The meadows to the east of the Stour and along this stretch of the Severn downstream of the Stour confluence are predominantly open grassland which seems to have little ecological value, paths through this area are not surfaced
- The northern part of Stour meadows towards the Worcester Road becomes more wooded in character
- The path along the Severn down to the marina is constrained and tree lined as it passes the Sandy Lane industrial estate.



Plate 2.4G

2. Baseline Study



Plate 2.4H



Plate 2.4I



Plate 2.4J

Gilgal (Plate2.4J)

- Eastern gateway crossing the Stour is a vehicular dominated junction
- Enclosed footpaths and pedestrian lanes have an intimate quality
- River Stour and canalside are well vegetated giving them a green feel
- The sandstone wall along the canal edge is a feature of the area

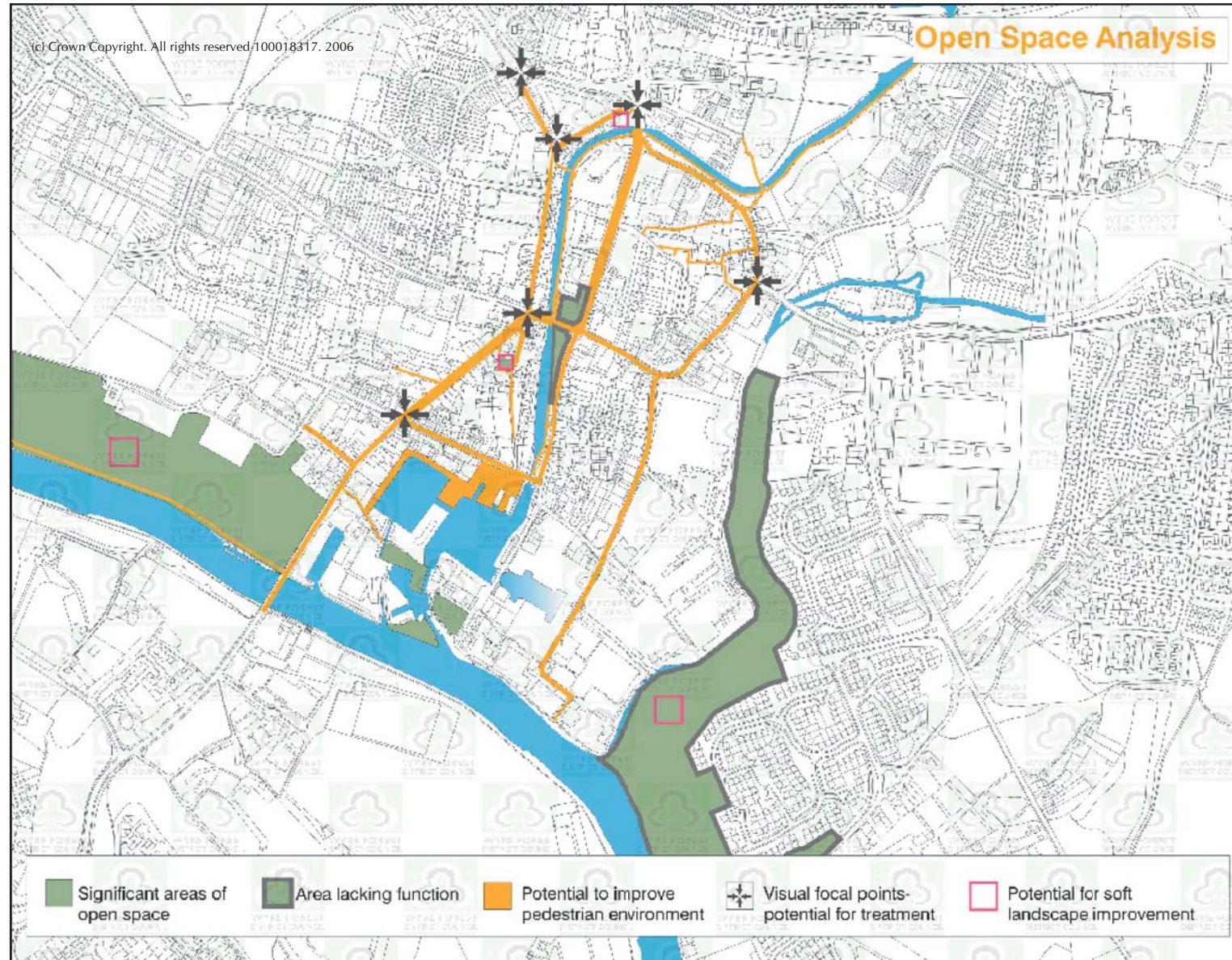
Lighting

- High Street has low quality building mounted lights
- The Severn Bridge has copper topped heritage reproduction street lighting
- Otherwise unsympathetic standard street lamps
- Surviving traditional lamp posts to west side of Lion Hill

- Poor lighting (often none) to canalside, south eastern part of town and pedestrian lanes west of Gilgal create unwelcoming and potentially dangerous environment
- Lighting along the riverside meadows is restricted to reduce anti-social behaviour

2. Baseline Study

Figure 2.4A
Open Space Analysis



2. Baseline Study

2.5 Stourport Public Realm Initial Consultation - Key Issues

Key issues from the initial consultation workshops are summarised below.

Transportation

- High traffic volumes will continue for the foreseeable future to the detriment of the pedestrian environment
- Illegal car parking lacks enforcement, a particular problem on the High Street. The District Council is considering decriminalising parking so they have control over enforcement but there is a cost issue to manage this
- Access to some car parks is difficult and heavy tourist use of riverside locations adds to congestion problems
- Public Transport provision has improved but bus stops could be enhanced
- Water based transport has the potential to be promoted

Approaches

- Approaches to the town lack clarity/sense of arrival
- Two types of gateway have been identified: edge-of-town gateways and town centre gateways

Pedestrian Movement and Linkages

- High traffic volumes are a hazard for pedestrians and there are too few formal crossings
- Paths along the river and through the canal basins are not welcoming to use at night
- Paths around the town are not obviously connected making it difficult to undertake round-walks

Landmarks and features

- There are a number of landmark buildings and higher quality groups throughout the town which contribute positively to the urban scene

Tourism

- Tourism in summer has a major impact upon the town often to the detriment of residents
- Visitor spend is low, however, and over centred on the Riverside Meadows and Bridge Street
- Lack of awareness of basins
- Public toilets are located in a position which does not suit residents/town centre
- Tourist information centre required
- Current tourist offer is founded on lower quality end of the market

Public Realm

- Lacks consistency in terms of quality and treatment

Open Space

- Lack of connection between basin and river
- Quality open spaces, both naturalised and formal, exist within easy reach of the town centre but are under used
- There are proposals for a skatepark on the Severn Meadows adjacent to the road bridge

Events/Public Art

- The town has a regular events programme but faces competition from others in the area
- Conflicts arise between existing stall holders and provision for events

- There are no public art strategies/programmes specifically for Stourport with the exception of the basins

2. Baseline Study

2.6 Summary of Baseline Study

This section summarises the baseline study which leads into a series of objectives under which proposals identified within the Conceptual Framework can be classified.

Planning, Transport and Regeneration Context

Stourport is in a cycle of regeneration with a number of significant mixed use developments proposed on disused industrial land near the Canal Basins and along the Stour, the renovation of the Canal Basins is likely to encourage further investment in the town. New developments must augment the existing character and townscape to repair the historic environment.

The severe traffic problems experienced in Stourport not only affect motorists, but impact adversely on the urban environment, pedestrians and cyclists. The relief road will not be forthcoming in the short or medium term to alleviate this. Worcestershire County Council have established principles for improving the urban environment for Evesham High Street which may equally be applied to Stourport.

Urban Design Audit

Stourport's attractive and intact Georgian Centre is poorly connected to its fantastic canal and riverside water environment. The traditional visitor attractions on the Severn Meadows are looking tired and investment in the historic canal basins offers the opportunity for the Town to rediscover this hidden asset. The Gilgal area which houses the original hamlet pre-dating the canals is presently lost in the overly-developed road system and requires a reinforcement of its character.

Four Character Areas are identified relating to the existing conservation areas. The study will examine how the public realm design guidance can both reinforce and tie together these distinct parts of the town.

Movement and Linkages Audit

Gateways to the town and to the town centre are identified as elements that require further emphasis. The town centre gateways generally relate to water crossing points. The effect of vehicular flows and congestion is significant on the urban environment and significantly denigrates pedestrians and cyclists whose safety is subsequently put at risk. The pedestrian alleys through the town and pathways along the river require upgrading and provide an opportunity for improved accessibility.

Public Realm and Open Space Audit

The town is unusual in having no formal civic space but this is compensated for with a range of excellent canal and riverside spaces. However, access to these needs to be improved and the quality could be enhanced to create a stunning asset for residents and tourists.

Consultation Workshops

The consultation workshops informed and reinforced the findings of the preceding audits and document review. Additionally, the role of tourism in the Town was explored. The current situation was examined, the key issues being: the offer to tourists; the lack of financial input to the town from visitors; and the impact on residents' amenity of large visitor numbers at peak times. The potential of the Town was explored in relation to renovation works to the canal basin and the rise in the heritage and environmental tourism markets.

Objectives

The results of the baseline study can be distilled into the following over-arching objectives within which specific proposals can be developed:

- **Development (DEV) - new development must reinforce the character of the area in which it lies**
- **Urban Environment (UENV) - the urban and pedestrian environment must be improved by mitigating the impact**

of vehicular flows and congestion through streetscape works

- **Gateways (GATE) - gateways to the town and to the town centre need greater definition**
- **Water Environment (WENV) - Improve access to the rivers and canal, exploiting further this under-used asset.**