

# St Ives Town Centre

## Town Centre East Masterplan Area Study

October 2023



# 1.0 introduction

This report has been initiated by a review of the HDC St Ives Vision Report proposals for the Innovation Quarter on the Cattle Market car park site which concluded that insufficient consideration had been given to integrating the development, or its potential for regenerating the town centre.

The purpose of the Town Centre East masterplan area study is to provide a template for a series of connected improvements that will lead to a better integrated development of the Cattle Market car park site, provide a catalyst for regenerating this part of the town centre, and improve the pedestrian environment.

This is a high level study that is intended to provide design guidance principles that give flexibility for any future redevelopment of the Cattle Market site and its immediate context. It has been used to inform the drafting of the neighbourhood plan policies, particularly policies SI2 & SI3 so that they can be consulted on

with the community and statutory consultees, and it will provide the opportunity for the recommendations of this study to be endorsed through the neighbourhood plan referendum.

The design guidance principles also aim to enhance the historic core, and support the commercial and social vibrancy of the town centre by making it more attractive to all users and more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists in line with Natural England's green infrastructure objectives.

The Masterplan study area is shown in the context of the southern part of the town on the aerial plan (Fig 1 Masterplan Context Aerial). This area of the town is within 800m walking distance of the Cattle Market site and bus station.







## 2.0 scope

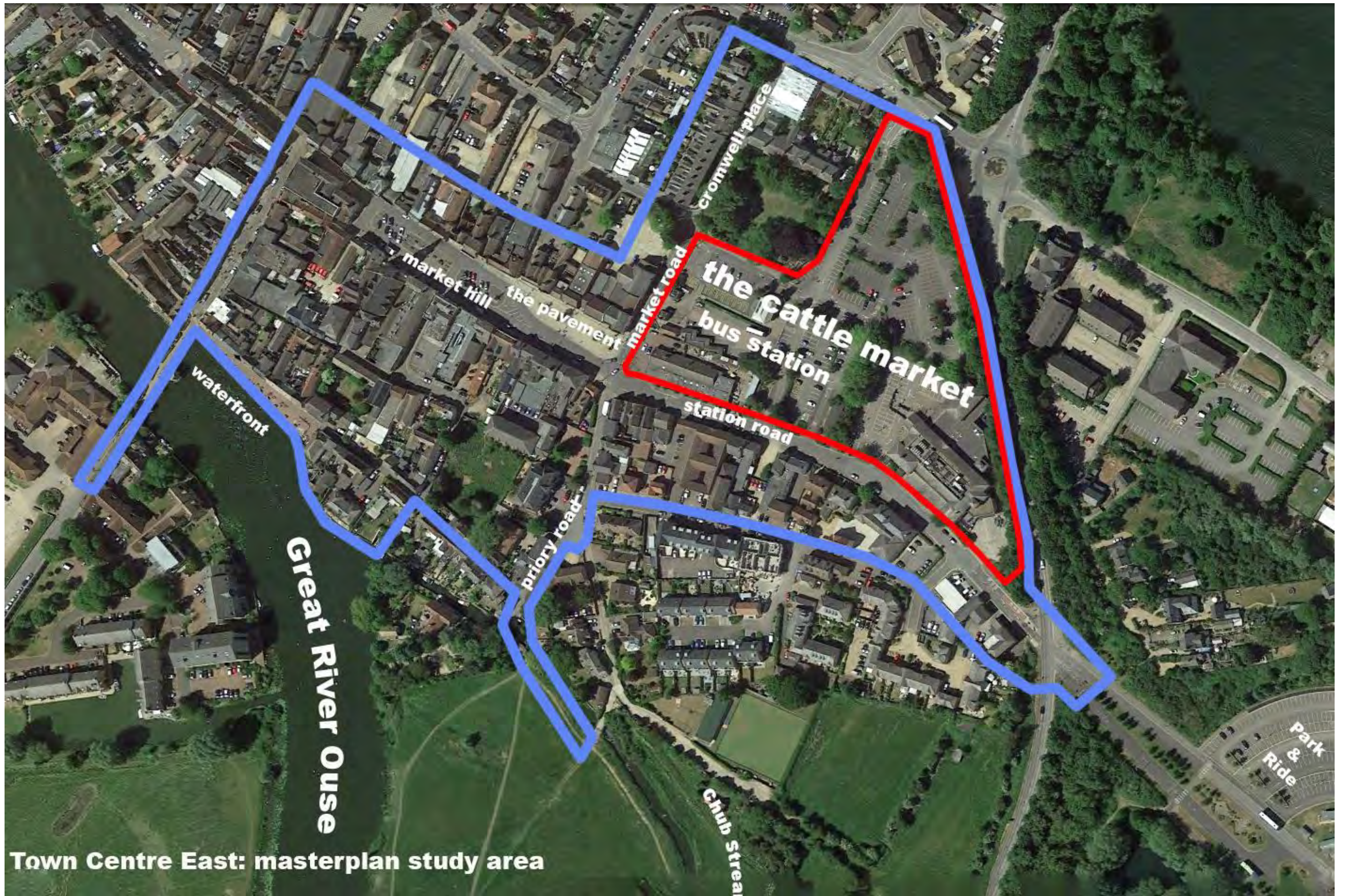
The Masterplan Study Area has been defined for its potential to plan for improvements to the eastern part of the town centre by strengthening connections between The Pavement/Market Hill and Station Road and creating a context for the redevelopment of the Cattle Market site which is outlined in red in Fig 2 Masterplan Study Area. It extends from the Station Road - Harrison Way junction at its eastern end to the Crown Street - The Pavement junction at the western end.

The shop frontages to the north of The Pavement are included in the area for their contribution to the setting and commercial activity of the town centre, as is the block to the south down to the riverfront which links this part of the town centre to the riverfront and to the wider setting via St Ives bridge, and the footpaths to the east off Wellington Street/The Ridings. This area is an important part of the river character of the town and links the town centre into the wider setting and amenities.

To the west of Priory Road, the masterplan area includes the southern part of Station Road which is considered important to the setting of the Cattle Market site and an opportunity for improving the footfall, character and setting of this end of the town centre. The Station Road/Harrison Way junction has been included for its potential as a gateway to the town centre from the St Ives Park & Ride which is 300m to the east and within walking distance.

The Cattle Market site includes the Waitrose store, the car park and bus station, and the Hyperion Auction block fronting onto Station Road as it forms an important part of the Market Hill/Market Road junction. Cromwell Place and the adjacent Cromwell Terrace and associated private gardens have been included as they have open space and heritage value which will be important to protect and preserve, especially from overlooking in the formulation of any proposals for the Cattle Market site.





**Town Centre East: masterplan study area**

Fig. 2 Masterplan Study Area



## 3.0 analysis

Changes in transport have had a significant effect on the eastern part of the town centre. The eastern end of Station Road only became an entrance to the town when the busway opened in 2011. Between Harrison Way opening in the 1970s and the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway opening, Station Road was a dead end terminating at the station.

The bus stop on Station Road was added after the busway opened, previously all buses called at the bus-station which meant buses towards Cambridge on the busway went along the first part of Station Road twice causing much congestion.

Any redevelopment of the Cattle Market Site will need to sort out the flow of buses through the town as it was not clear in the HDC Masterplan report how this would work.



Historic mapping

## 3.0 analysis

A site visit was carried out on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023 covering the masterplan study area and surrounds with the following observations: (Fig 11)

### The Cattle Market

- The majority of the cattle market is predominantly car parking with the bus station located in the south west corner where it has little presence.
- The pedestrian link between the town centre and the Park & Ride is uninviting and poorly connected despite being only a short distance, with Harrison Way forming a barrier (Fig 3).
- The terraces on Cromwell Place (Fig 4) have heritage value and should be protected.
- The green square at the north western corner of the cattle market has amenity and setting value and should be protected.
- The cattle market has a number of mature trees (Fig 5) within the site and along the Harrison Way boundary.
- The back of the Waitrose store and its service area (Fig 6) have a negative impact on the approach into the town centre from the east.
- The Hyperion Auction block (Fig 7) does not provide a positive frontage to Station Road and is of an insufficient scale for the Market Road/Station Road junction.

- The stalls behind the Hyperion Auction building provide an area of interest and activity but they are hidden from Station Road.
- The bus station includes two brick gateway buildings (Fig 8) which are listed structures and a timber maintenance pavilion (the Octagon) which have heritage value.
- Pedestrian/cycle links through the cattle market to Warner Park and the schools to the north are poor.

### Station Road

- The junction of Priory Road/Station Road (Fig 9) has buildings of architectural interest.
- The remainder of the southern side of Station Road is domestic in scale with little in the way of character or activity to attract footfall.
- The cattle market frontage opposite the southern side of Station Road has a negative impact on its setting and pedestrian environment.
- The spire of the Free Church (Fig 10) is a strong landmark feature along Station Road.





Fig. 3 View to Park and Ride from the end of station Road



Fig. 4 Cromwell Place



Fig. 5 Existing trees on Cattle Market



Fig. 6 Service area to Waitrose store





Fig. 7 Hyperion Auction block



Fig. 8 Gateways to bus station



Fig. 9 Priory road/Station Road junction



Fig. 10 Church spire landmark



## 3.0 analysis

### Market Hill /The Pavement

- The scale and width of Market Hill/The Pavement provides a public realm focus (Fig 11) to the town centre, the wider space at the eastern end used for events including a farmers' market (Fig 12).
- The buildings along Market Hill/The Pavement are at a scale that is appropriate to the space and of an architectural character that makes it an attractive space with uses that create an active town centre.
- This space has the spire of the Free Church as a landmark with the War Memorial and Cromwell statue (Fig 13) as features within the space, although they are islands dominated by the roads and parking (Fig 14).
- To junction of Bridge Street/Crown Street along the Broadway provides a boundary between the eastern and western parts of the town centre.
- There are a number of pedestrian connections to the north, however these are not clearly signposted.

### The Quay

- The River Great Ouse forms the southern boundary to the town centre (Fig 15) with the Holt Island Nature Reserve at the western end and the meadows around the St Ives Chub Stream at the eastern end.
- **The river is a key feature of the town's identity** with a strong seasonal character.
- Access to and along the riverside is restricted by existing development.
- At the western end there is an open aspect across the river and floodplain from The Quay (Fig 16) which is accessible from Bridge Street and Free Church Lane.
- Wellington Street (Fig 17) which runs on from the Quay and is also accessible via Chapel Court/Burt Lane is separated from the river by housing along the Chub Stream inlet.
- Beyond this, to the east there is access to the river via footpaths leading off the Ridings and Priory Road across Chub Stream and the floodplain onto the
- From all these vantage points along the riverfront, Harrison Way which crosses the river and meadow floodplain to the east on a viaduct is a visual and physical barrier to connections between the town and the wider setting to the east (Fig 18).





Fig. 11 View west along Market Hill



Fig. 12 The farmers market



Fig. 13 Cromwell statue



Fig. 14 The impacts of parking





Fig. 15 View of The Quay from the London Road Bridge



Fig. 16 View east along The Quay



Fig. 17 Wellington Street



Fig. 18 Harrison Way crossing the floodplain



## 3.0 analysis

### Observations

- There is no sense of arrival on the approach and entrance into the town centre from the east and with Harrison Way forming a barrier between the town centre and the Park and Ride.
- On entering the town centre there is a lack of a sense of arrival or place.
- Station Road lacks the uses and activities to attract high street footfall.
- The cattle market frontage, Waitrose service area and Hyperion Auction block and the car park use have a negative impact on the setting of Station Road.
- The difference in character, uses and sense of place between the Station Road and Market Hill parts of the high street is reinforced by the Station Road/Market Road junction.
- Parking has negative impacts on both Market hill and Station Road impacting the pedestrian environment and limiting the opportunities for active public realm uses and making provision for cyclist and other wheeled users.
- Despite its proximity, the eastern part of the town centre feels disconnected from the river.

- Connectivity between the eastern part of the town centre, the schools and Warner's Park to the north, and the open space green/blue infrastructure amenities to the east is compromised by the planning and availability of routes and infrastructure including Harrison Way.

In summary, the character and function of this part of the town centre changes at Priory Road. The western part along The Pavement/Market Hill which is wide and has architectural features is the more attractive and commercially active part. The eastern part along Station Road, which is narrower, single sided and less architecturally attractive feels like a backwater. This is exacerbated by Station Road being a pedestrian dead end with very limited draws to attract footfall. The car park which serves Waitrose contributes to the inactive frontage along Station Road, and the highways design for the guided bus route at the Harrison Way junction creates an uninviting introduction and termination to the town centre.



# 4.0 design principles

## The vision

The vision for the Town Centre East masterplan is for the cattle market site and Station Road to be a more active part of the town centre creating an attractive entrance to the town from the east, with better access to the river front, the **town's** wider amenities and green infrastructure for residents and visitors.

## Development framework

In response to the vision and the analysis, the following development framework (Fig 19) sets out a series of design principles which should be used to guide development and be a material consideration for any proposals within the Town Centre East masterplan area.

## Design principles

1. Gateway: The east entrance is used by buses from Cambridge along the busway – currently 6 per hour bringing many people into the town. At the eastern end of Station Road a more attractive entrance into the town and town centre should be created which improves the

pedestrian connection and environment from the Park & Ride, and makes the route to the existing pedestrian crossing at Harrison Way more visible. This will make the Park & Ride more convenient for residents and a more attractive entrance to the town centre for visitors.

2. Focus: A new public realm space on the Station Road frontage to be created as part of any redevelopment of the Cattle Market site. This space is to be designed as a focus and destination providing a bookend at the eastern end of the high street from which the western bookend of the church spire is visible. It should be designed as useable public realm for events, activities, meeting and socialising with a combination of hard and soft landscaping.
3. Station Road southside: The new public realm space will also need to create an attractive setting for the redevelopment of the Cattle Market site, and support and encourage footfall uses and activities along Station Road to improve the link into the town centre.







## 4.0 design principles

4. Public Realm improvements: Public realm improvements will be needed to provide a greater sense of continuity and shared identity across The Pavement/Market Hill and Station Road, and to support the concept of an extended high street that strengthens the link to the eastern gateway. These improvements should include:

- o Coordinated hard and soft landscape finishes, street furniture, lighting signage and street furniture.
- o The public realm environment should be designed to be safer, more attractive and convenient for pedestrians, cyclists and all wheeled users to reduce local journeys by car.
- o The management of parking should also be considered as part of the public realm improvements to support commercial activity by increasing the opportunities for sitting out **areas and 'streetlife', and to make the War Memorial and Cromwell Statue more integrated and useful spaces.**

5. The Loop: The public realm improvements should be extended and used to support the creation of a Loop that ties the Waterfront and other local amenities more positively into the high street increasing the function of St Ives as a walkable neighbourhood and making it more accessible and attractive to visitors. This is in line with the principles of **the '15 minute city'** and the development framework plan proposes the Loop (illustrated by the yellow dotted line) extends to:

- o Provide a secondary loop to the north linking **to Warner's Park and around through the Cattle Market site into the new public realm 'Focus' space. This loop should also consider safe routes to schools,**
- o Encourage cycle/pedestrian access from the southern side of the London Road bridge.
- o Connect across Chub Stream to the Meadows, footpaths and riverfront, and into the wider Green/Blue Infrastructure network of the St Ives Green Ring as set out in Policy S18.



# 4.0 design principles

6. The Waterfront: Improving access and connections between the river frontage and the town centre to encourage waterfront uses and activities. Consideration should be given to the extent of the waterfront to the south alongside the meadows that is made publicly accessible and available for activities.

- o Coordinating street furniture, lighting and signage with the public realm improvements to the high street.
- o Integrating the waterfront with neighbourhood plan policies SI8: St Ives Green Infrastructure Network and SI9: Active and Healthy Travel
- o Involving local interest and activity groups including river users in formulating proposals for the waterfront





## 5.0 the cattle market site

The Cattle Market site has a significant impact on this area of the town centre and its redevelopment could be a catalyst for significant change and realising the vision. The Cattle Market site, which includes the Waitrose Store, bus station and Hyperion block is predominantly parking and a key decision for any development will be the amount of parking that needs to be re-provided. This may need to be part of a town wide parking strategy and will need to take account of the Waitrose store, the bus station and the capacity and proximity of the Park & Ride facilities.

In addition to meeting the objectives of Design Principle 2: providing a new public realm space as a focus to the eastern side of the town centre, any proposals for the Cattle Market site should also address the following (Fig 20):

- Designing the public realm space (1) as an active and attractive setting for development and as a destination with a visible presence on Station Road.

- The creation and integration of a gateway (2) at the Station Road/Harrison Way junction that links into the site and is an attractive and easily navigable pedestrian entrance to the town centre.
- The extension of The Pavement set back across the Station Road frontage (3) to reinforce the connection across Market Road and continuity of the High Street with provision for the inclusion/replacement of The Hyperion block and stalls.
- Providing pedestrian/cycle links (4) through the site that make provision for all wheeled users with connections north to the residential area, **Warner's Park and the schools.**
- Protecting the residential amenity, including from overlooking of any new buildings, streetscape and heritage value (5) of the Cromwell Place terraces and garden square.
- A green infrastructure and biodiversity plan for the site linking it into the wider area with the retention of existing trees of value (6) within the site and along the Harrison Way boundary.
- The re use and integration of heritage assets including the gateway buildings (7) along Market Road and the Octagon (8).
- Providing suitable facilities for bus passengers and routing for buses between the busway and adjacent streets







## 6.0 the neighbourhood plan

The Town Centre East Masterplan area is within the core walking zone of St Ives Walking and Cycling Routes. Proposals will need to take account of Neighbourhood Plan Policy SI8 Active and Healthy Travel and make provision for contributing to improving in the pedestrian and cycling opportunities and network (Fig 21).

The Town Centre East Masterplan also has opportunities to link into the Green Infrastructure network proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan Policy SI7 St Ives Green and Blue Infrastructure and illustrated in the Neighbourhood Plan Policy maps with potential to provide additional links into the Nature Network through the Gateway (1), Loop (5), and Waterfront (6), design principles of the Development Framework plan (Fig 19) and the overall Great Ouse Valley Green Infrastructure Priority Area, as per Neighbourhood Plan Policy SI1 A Spatial Plan for the Town.

A number of other policies will also be applicable to schemes coming forward within the Town Centre East Masterplan area including Neighbourhood Plan Policies SI2 A Successful and prosperous town centre, SI5 High quality design, SI6 Building for a healthy life, SI9 Passivhaus buildings, SI10 Urban Greening and Tree Canopy Cover, and SI11 Flood Risk and Water Management.



