

CAMPUS MASTERPLAN

ISSUE 01 - 02.06.2020



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1. INTRODUCTION



1.1 INTRODUCTION

A CAMPUS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Birmingham is undergoing a period of unprecedented and transformational change. We have a critical role to play in the economic and spatial development of the Knowledge Quarter, the city and the wider region. This Campus Masterplan will illustrate how our vision has evolved to serve our beneficiaries and set the parameters for a connected, flexible and inviting place; a destination in a thriving city.

This masterplan document is the next step towards delivering our Campus Vision.

The development and delivery of Aston University's strategy gives us the opportunity to communicate clearly our ambition, objectives and priorities; state what is most important to us and, to identify our points of distinction.

This strategy is structured around the beneficiaries of Aston University, who are the parties external to the University and we will continue to offer support to our beneficiaries because their future success is critical to us.

Our beneficiaries are:

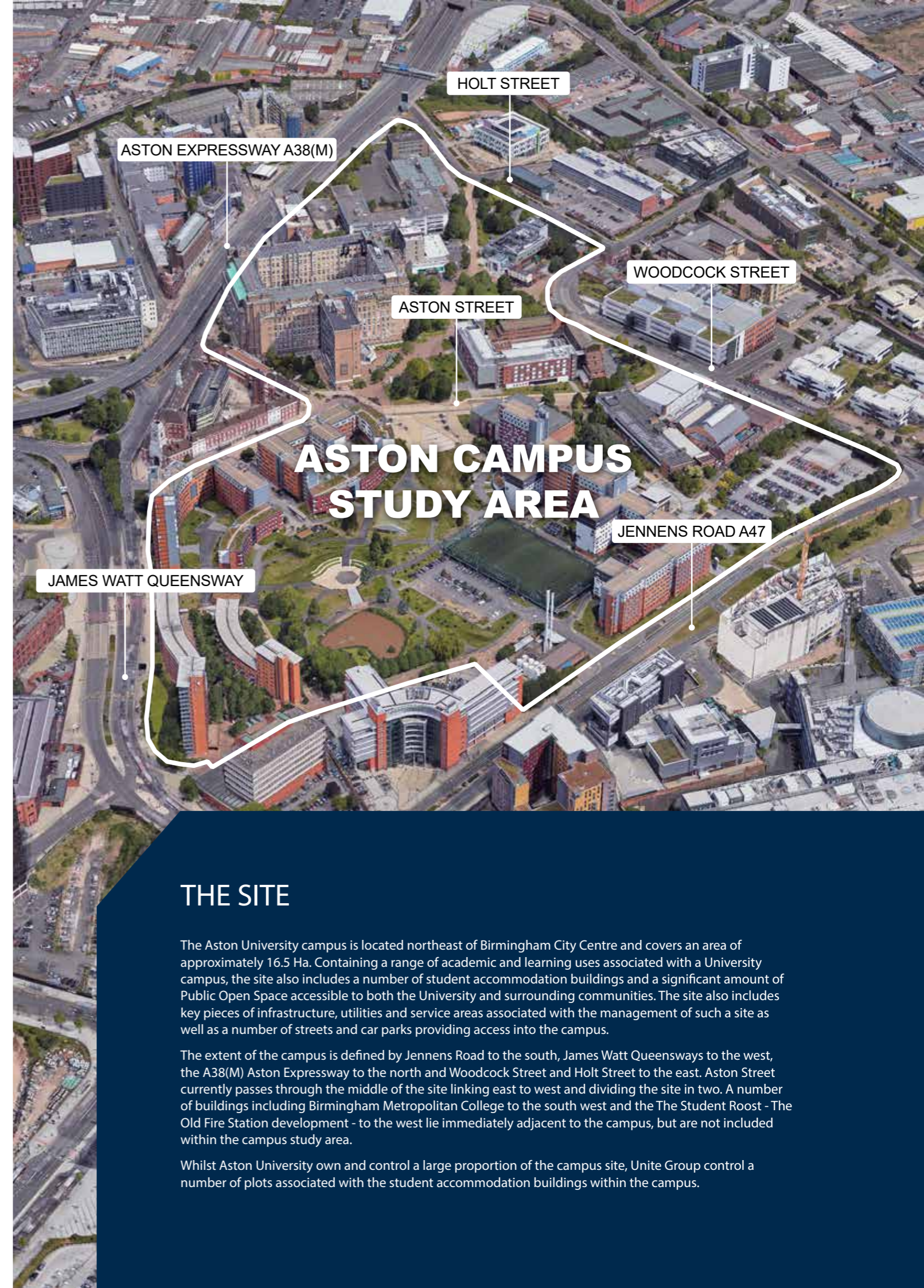
- our students, who progress to be our graduates and alumni.
- external organisations (businesses, public entities, the not-for-profit sector and the professions) who employ our students and engage with us on research and educational programmes.
- Birmingham and the West Midlands region, and wider society whom we serve as a public university, with a strong sense of place.

Our Campus Vision is ambitious. It will see us create a campus that offers an outstanding experience for our staff and students, bring improvements to surrounding communities and to the people of Birmingham and the West Midlands.

The Campus Vision reflects on our strong sector position as a University with high rates of graduate employability, excellent relationships with business and local industry, high quality research that is accessible for business and has a positive impact on society. Our prominent alumni are influential across major sectors locally, nationally and internationally.

Aston University's proud workforce is committed to the values of higher education.

- Aston University - key themes influencing the University and how we should develop in the future.
- The Context - appraising key opportunities and obstacles.
- The Vision - what we aim to achieve through the redevelopment of the campus.
- Strategic steps - a discussion regarding high-level principles that inform the Campus Masterplan.
- Next steps - associated with the delivery of the Campus Masterplan and time frames.



THE SITE

The Aston University campus is located northeast of Birmingham City Centre and covers an area of approximately 16.5 Ha. Containing a range of academic and learning uses associated with a University campus, the site also includes a number of student accommodation buildings and a significant amount of Public Open Space accessible to both the University and surrounding communities. The site also includes key pieces of infrastructure, utilities and service areas associated with the management of such a site as well as a number of streets and car parks providing access into the campus.

The extent of the campus is defined by Jennens Road to the south, James Watt Queensways to the west, the A38(M) Aston Expressway to the north and Woodcock Street and Holt Street to the east. Aston Street currently passes through the middle of the site linking east to west and dividing the site in two. A number of buildings including Birmingham Metropolitan College to the south west and the The Student Roost - The Old Fire Station development - to the west lie immediately adjacent to the campus, but are not included within the campus study area.

Whilst Aston University own and control a large proportion of the campus site, Unite Group control a number of plots associated with the student accommodation buildings within the campus.

1.2 OUR VISION

Aston University and the Aston campus exist primarily to meet the needs of our key beneficiaries:

OUR STUDENTS

who become our graduates and alumni.

BUSINESS AND THE PROFESSIONS

who employ our students, and also engage with us directly on research and educational programmes.

THE REGION AND SOCIETY

of Birmingham and the West Midlands whom we serve as a public University.

The campus is visibly part of a vibrant city and is welcoming and engaging for visitors from the wider community we serve. The University campus reflects the engagement of a civic institution with the wider community across Birmingham. It occupies a strategic site; connecting and complementing adjacent developments to enhance the cityscape and sense of place. The environment is well-designed to encourage active use; public art and cultural activities are curated in a connected set of public spaces.

The well-defined gateways to the campus are welcoming and designed to attract and guide beneficiaries, visitors and the community to their ultimate destination be that department, library, event, service or amenity. Access to the campus is increasingly user-friendly and sustainable encouraging visitors to make use of public transport options and to walk and cycle whenever possible.

Our buildings are flexible and designed to reflect evolving teaching and research activities. Not all our buildings are located at the Aston Triangle but all our sites and buildings share a distinctive, welcoming and flexible character and are actively engaged with our neighbours and with adjacent facilities.

Part of the campus will create opportunities for a mixed-use development including residential accommodation and there will be footfall and activities throughout the day to create a vibrant, safe and successful community.

We will not build or support developments which do not deliver or endorse this Vision.

OUR PRINCIPLES

A number of key principles underpin the Vision. These will form the foundations on which the masterplan is developed. We expect the masterplanning process to draw lessons from the best examples of campus design nationally and internationally:

- The campus is for collaboration
- Fit for digital purpose
- Will support innovation in delivery
- Containing flexible spaces
- An oasis in the city
- Land is Aston's endowment

OUR CONCEPTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This is a vision which will create a legacy for decades to come. In order to strike a balance between short-term priorities and longer-term aspirations and ambitions, a masterplanning process will explore the following concepts and opportunities.

1. A Destination Campus

The University and its community will benefit from enhancements to the campus which encourage people to dwell in and around the site during the day. This concept is referred to as the 'sticky campus' - internal and external spaces are designed in such a way that people who visit for one purpose stay because of the amenities, ambience, character and quality of the environment.

2. A safe, secure and welcoming environment

Safety and security of all campus users is paramount – it is important to recognise that the masterplan needs to promote active use throughout the day and to prevent unwanted behaviours and inappropriate use of spaces. This is a characteristic which all users value but it is increasingly important in a globally, and digitally connected world to recognise that reputations and perceptions can be formed from relatively modest incidents. The University seeks to be a place where students and staff from across the world will wish to live, work and study.

3. A Knowledge Quarter

The campus is an asset for the city and the proximity of multiple institutions presents an opportunity to create a Knowledge Quarter. The key questions will include the degree to which the concept of the Knowledge Quarter is greater than the sum of its parts.

4. Spheres of influence

The University needs to consider its place within the wider developments in and around HS2, Eastside and the Gun Quarter. The potential impact of University-related developments will become increasingly significant to the overall vibrancy of this section of the city and provide a much stronger physical connection to the campus.

OUR EMERGING THEMES

The following themes will be further explored in the masterplan:

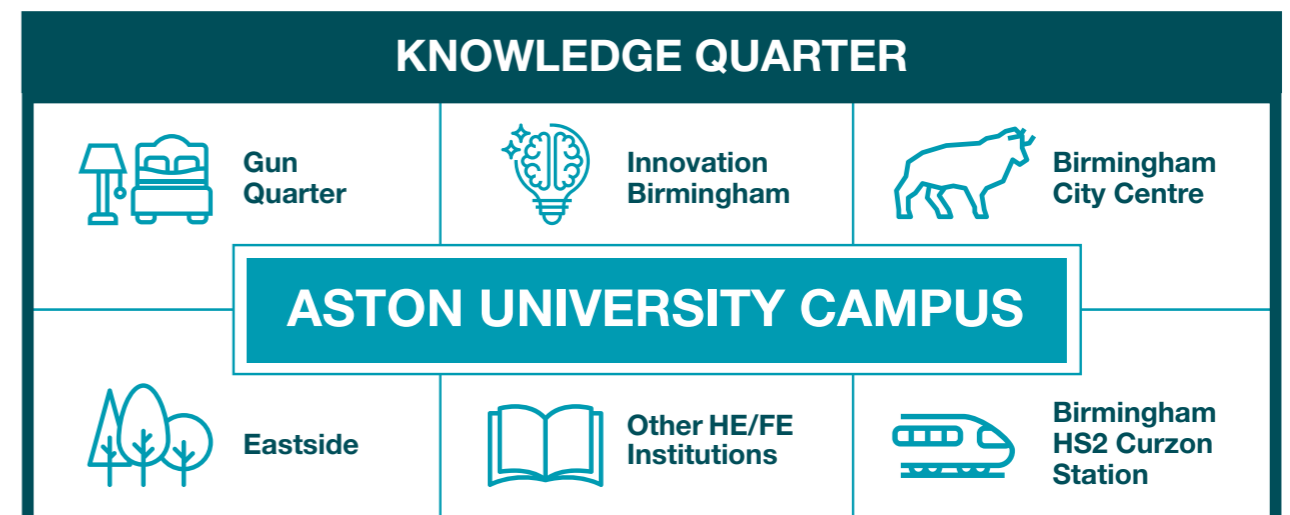
- Access and permeability
- Sustainable transportation
- Environment and public realm
- A smart campus: fit for digital purpose
- A Living Lab

The Living Lab embraces the use of technology and its practical impact. It spans across the needs of beneficiaries, creates the potential for synergy across academic and commercial endeavours and promotes the campus as a venue for collaboration and a flexible environment to promote creativity, enterprise and innovation in all forms

EMBRACING OUR CONTEXT

In order to maximise the potential of the campus and to meet the needs of our beneficiaries, this vision needs to be sensitive and responsive to the wider aspirations of the surrounding city.

Benefitting from its close proximity to Birmingham city centre and hosting a number of educational, science and innovation establishments, the area around the University campus will evolve to become the Knowledge Quarter. This will continue with the arrival of the Birmingham HS2 Curzon Station.



1.3 OUR UNIVERSITY

Aston is a successful institution. The University received an overall satisfaction score of 84% (National Student Survey 2019) placing Aston above the sector average for the sixth consecutive year and ahead of many institutions.

The University is proud to have received the highest possible accolade in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) with the Gold Award reflecting the outstanding outcomes and high proportion of our students who progress into highly skilled employment and further study.

- For Business and Management, Aston graduates earn £11,100 more than the sector average five years after graduation (Longitudinal Education Outcomes 2019).
- For Computing, Aston graduates earn £7,200 more than the sector average five years after graduation (Longitudinal Education Outcomes 2019).
- For Technology, Aston graduates earn £11,700 more than the sector average three years after graduation (Longitudinal Education Outcomes 2019).
- For Subjects Allied to Medicine, Aston graduates earn £6,600 more than the sector average three years after graduation (Longitudinal Education Outcomes 2019).
- Our research performance is equally important; 78% of research submitted evaluated as 'world leading' or 'internationally recognised' (REF 2014)

Our focus is on economic growth, productivity and addressing skills gaps. This is critical to the development of the estate as the University needs to be externally focused and orientated. The need for progressive higher education experiences shaped and focused in this way has arguably never been greater.

However, Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) face a significant challenge from the combined effects of growing competitive pressures and a potentially more challenging funding regime. With an ever more value conscious student population, it is also vital that we recognise the link between these factors and the quality of both the experience we offer and the estate which supports our teaching and research.

Over the next 30 years we expect to see a continuation of emerging changes. Degree Apprenticeships will alter the balance of our student body and change both the numbers of students and the time they spend on campus. Our research activities and engagement with business and industry will become more prominent and more collaborative. Our campus will need to evolve to reflect new, less traditional forms of delivery, namely with increased distance learning and online interactions.

We see our campus as a resource for bringing together its users for increasingly high-quality collaboration and interaction. The campus must be fit for digital futures and a resource for those working remotely to engage with colleagues on campus in a seamless manner. We intend to actively use the land, which has been endowed to us and look for innovative delivery solutions with partner businesses and organisations.



OUR CAMPUS

By 2023 the student population will increase as we diversify our programmes and our student profile will alter accordingly. We anticipate modest increases in on-campus delivery of programmes, however our estate must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate changing needs should delivery methods alter in the future. Over the next five years we need to set the direction for change in the Estate to reflect the changing size and shape of the University. In setting this direction, it is vitally important that the University is not land-locked and its ability to contribute to the city constrained by shortages of land.

Aston currently has a total estate size of c107,000 sqm. This includes the new Students' Union Building and the demolition of the old Students' Union Building. However, the former BIAD building is excluded from this figure as are the Woodcock Sports Centre and a variety of commercial spaces across campus.

Our priorities are to re-shape our working and teaching space for staff and in some areas, specialist resources to promote greater flexibility, sharing of resources and access for our beneficiaries. To that end, our investments will form a strong interconnected and interdependent programme over the next 15 years and beyond.

The Aston Estate has benefited from significant investment over the last decade but, while much of the estate is of a suitable condition, several of our buildings are not entirely sustainable assets. The Main Building, Aston Business School, European Biofuel Research Institute, Library and Woodcock Sports Centre along with the New Students' Union Building are all envisaged to remain long-term features of the campus. The remaining buildings, particularly Vision Sciences, North Wing and South Wing and the BIAD building are expected to be replaced within the life of the proposed Campus Masterplan. The Old Students' Union building is scheduled for demolition. It is a goal of the Estates Strategy to remove several of these buildings within the next decade.

Re-shaping the campus to demolish these buildings is critical to ensuring that we can re-shape our spaces to better meet the needs of our beneficiaries and to create a more sustainable campus.

-  Site boundary
-  Building(s) to be retained / improved
-  Building(s) to be demolished
-  Building(s) to be reviewed as part of Masterplan
-  Building(s) outside of Aston University Ownership



OUR PRINCIPLES

Having started to identify what will be needed out of the campus in the coming years, we have also been engaging with key stakeholders within the University – including our executive board and our schools – to discuss how the campus should be shaped in the future to respond to the University's changing needs.

From these discussions, a number of key principles, opportunities and themes have become apparent. These will be key in shaping our vision for the campus and have formed the foundations of the emerging Campus Masterplan.

The campus is for collaboration

The Aston campus is primarily to bring together staff, students and beneficiaries for increasingly high-quality collaboration and interaction. The campus is designed to encourage people to engage and work together; to dwell on or near to campus throughout the day and enjoy the amenities and facilities in both University buildings and adjacent businesses/venues. We perceive these interactions on a very wide spectrum which includes encouraging greater business involvement and strengthening long-term relationships with our alumni. Technologies will enable those off-campus to connect and collaborate with people on campus.

Fit for digital purpose

Individual needs and routine services are met and mediated through a range of technologies, apps and other innovative solutions. Transactional enquiries and services have been eliminated by streamlined digital workflows; more personalised approaches and customisation become possible through digital solutions. Staff, students and beneficiaries are served by cloud-hosted and secure systems which help to make the best of their time and facilitate more collaborative interactions when on campus. Virtual and augmented realities allow students and staff working remotely to engage with colleagues on campus in a seamless manner.

The production of academic content is facilitated by broadcast quality facilities including studios and learning spaces which enable high production values to match the high academic standards of the University.

Land is an endowment which needs to be actively used

The campus is capable of supporting a greater volume of activity than is currently envisaged. The potential exists for the University to modernise and develop its academic estate and to release capacity for additional mixed use private developments. The apex of the Aston Triangle is a prime location for imaginative development.

Innovation in delivery

The University is open to the possibility that development partners may be instrumental in bringing elements of the Campus Masterplan to fruition.

Flexible spaces

Increasingly, the University will seek to create flexible and versatile spaces to support learning and research and to encourage greater collaboration with partner businesses and organisations.

An oasis in the city

Aston's campus is an important green asset which needs to be both protected and extended. Our Green Heart is a valued amenity within an increasingly dense urban environment and opportunities to create focal, high quality spaces with strong landscaping exist both at the heart of the campus and north of the Main Building.

OUR CONCEPTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The University recognises that the full benefit of the Campus Masterplan may not become apparent for decades. In order to strike a balance between short-term priorities and longer-term aspirations and ambitions, the Campus Masterplanning process will explore the following concepts and opportunities.

A Knowledge Quarter

The campus is an asset for the city and the proximity of multiple institutions presents an opportunity to create a Knowledge Quarter. Such a development will need detailed exploration to determine the extent to which this will emerge organically based on thinking and investments made to date and already in the pipeline. Conceivably, it will take more concerted efforts to determine where there is synergy between proposals on adjacent plots and to create a shared ambition to act collectively to bring specific proposals together. The key questions will include the degree to which the concept of the Knowledge Quarter is greater than the sums of its parts.

Spheres of influence

The University needs to consider its place within the wider developments in an around Eastside and the Gun Quarter. HS2 and developments at Masshouse are important factors but there is also potential synergy between plans for the Science Park to the North East and regeneration of the Gun Quarter to the North West of the campus. The land available at the apex of the Aston Triangle and the long-term planning to reduce traffic flows into the city could combine to create a very significant development opportunity if considered as part of a zone running from the canal into the Gun Quarter.

The University is also working to extend its activities into the city centre. Aston Downtown is conceived as a facility in the Central Business District (CBD) orientated around student projects, training, professional development and clinical/patient-focused activities. Apart from creating a facility for the city, this concept has the potential to strengthen direct physical links and indirect non-physical connections between the University and the city centre. The routes from the city centre and the CBD towards the campus along Steelhouse Lane and Corporation Street become very significant as does the use of materials, colours and features to strengthening visual cues and perceptions of the University. The potential impact of University-related developments could become increasingly significant to the overall vibrancy of this section of the city and provide a much stronger physical connection to the campus.

A destination campus

It is very clear that the University and the Community would benefit from enhancements to the campus which encourage people to dwell in and around the site during the day. This concept is often referred to as the 'sticky campus' - spaces internal and external are activated in such a way that people who visit for one purpose stay because of the amenities, ambience, character and quality of the environment. We see the potential to create a more engaging, vibrant and activated campus in several ways including:

- More active frontages to create a stronger relationship between the outside and the inside. We expect our buildings will be secure but increasingly sight lines and visibility of activity can be promoted. Vibrant public spaces will need to be complemented by a relationship to our buildings which is welcoming and reflects the range of activities taking place inside.
- Use of a curated programme of arts and cultural events to enliven the campus and extend use throughout the full day and into weekends. In this context the heart space on campus may become a very significant focal point for both static art installations, topical, peripatetic pieces and various events and pop-up activities. The aspiration should be to create spaces which are not entirely at the mercy of the elements and to promote year around activities wherever possible.
- Enhancement of sports provision should be considered carefully. There are already strong positive examples to draw upon and the University is keen to ensure that health and well-being is promoted not least through creating more opportunities for sporting and fitness activities.
- First and foremost, Aston is an academic campus but there is also considerable potential for much greater use of the land particularly to the north of the site. A critical challenge for the Campus Masterplan is to examine opportunities to bring life and activity to this portion of the site and to do so in ways that are complementary with the long-term needs of the University.

A safe, secure and welcoming environment

Safety and security of all campus users is paramount – it is important to recognise that part of the Campus Masterplan needs to promote active use throughout the day and to prevent unwanted behaviours and inappropriate use of spaces. This is a characteristic which all users value but it is increasingly important in a globally, and digitally connected world to recognise that reputations and perceptions can be formed from relatively modest incidents. The University seeks to be a place where students and staff from across the world will wish to live, work and study.

The advent of HS2 presents significant opportunities to connect with a wider pool of international talent. However, none of these benefits will be realisable if the basics of safety and security are overlooked. The campus needs to be secure by design, to be active and to promote an overall sense of well-being and safety. As a city centre campus, social issues should be anticipated, and consideration given to the inter-relationship between policy approaches and practical steps. The latter may include not only design characteristics, but the approachability of staff and the location of key services.

The campus could benefit from greater focus on the Plaza outside the Main Building. This in turn may require that Aston Street is no longer used as a thoroughfare and this whole zone is re-orientated to provide a high quality public realm and heart space for the campus.

Active frontages on the Main Building, Aston Business School and the Library would greatly enhance the overall quality and vibrancy of this environment. The proximity of the campus to the canalside is not currently obvious but there are potential routes and connections which should be explored.

The following issues have also been considered carefully:

- Character and status of buildings – stance on potential listing and conservation issues.
- The campus should not come to be seen as fulfilling a void in the provision of green space which other landowners and developers could meet. It is important to recognise that the campus is primarily an academic resource but is also home to our students for up to four years.
- Opportunities to co-locate with technology companies including potentially providing or facilitating speculative developments.

Taken together, these concepts and opportunities provide the agenda for the Campus Masterplanning process. The goal of the Campus Masterplan and the investments the University will make and encourage to be made by others is to achieve the best campus for the needs of its students, staff and other beneficiaries.

OUR EMERGING THEMES

Access and permeability

Addressing gateways into the campus and their inter-relationships with Eastside and other surrounding developments including HS2, Innovation Birmingham and Birmingham city centre. There is also a need to increase permeability by addressing existing barriers to movement including Jennens Road, A38(M) and James Watt Queensway to increase the University's sphere of influence to other areas including the Gun Quarter and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Sustainable transportation

The need for the Campus Masterplan to respond to major transport changes in Birmingham and the impact these will have on the campus, namely:

- The need to respond to the proposed introduction of new Sprint/Metro routes to encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport and reduce reliance on cars without impacting on peoples ability to access the campus.
- A review of car parking proposals for the campus and the associated changes that will be needed to reduce reliance on cars in the long-term, and the impact this will have on the Campus Masterplan.

Environment and landscaping

The need to ensure the scale and form of buildings and spaces within any forthcoming Campus Masterplan are suitable, respond to issues of climate change, and respond to their context.

- Ensuring development within the campus is of a city scale and to understand and respond to the impact tall building proposals around the campus could have.
- Ensure the campus contains high-quality public green spaces, more usable green spaces, improved planting (including trees), less surface concrete and more and improved lighting.
- Take into consideration the impact of noise and air quality as a factor in the Campus Masterplan.
- Ensure hard landscaping does not block routes – the campus should be legible and navigable for pedestrians with outdoor spaces to encourage active use.

A smart campus: fit for digital purpose

The University is open to the possibilities which technology can create to enhance the experience of all campus user groups and to improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of its estate.

In particular, the campus should accommodate:

- New and better resources to improve the production of academic content with high production values.
- Virtual and augmented reality solutions to connect remote working staff and students with their colleagues and peers on campus in a seamless manner.

Digital solutions will encourage transactional, routine tasks to be managed by individuals on-line via apps and effective application of AI, freeing up the time of staff and students for higher quality interactions.

The emerging Campus Masterplan should therefore enable:

- New and emerging technologies.
- Smart materials built into the fabric of the campus.
- Software and systems to assist users of the campus and to provide services.

A Living Lab

The Campus Masterplan is a rare opportunity to test and apply new ideas and emerging technologies in an active research environment. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship can be encouraged by the use of specific projects and investments to create opportunities to test commercial ideas and to learn vital lessons in a rigorous manner. The campus could provide opportunities across a spectrum from smart home/smart city technology trials to innovation labs and collaborative working spaces. These spaces could complement the desire for more active frontages, promoting pop-up activities and encouraging active use of the campus. While the interior designs will focus on challenging conventional thinking, such initiatives could also promote the overall sense of the campus as a safe, active and secure space. The vibrancy and energy created could be very significant in generating activity throughout the day and into the evening.

Specific institutes and departments may have a pivotal role to play in designing and promoting specific projects which seek to test smart technologies or to issues of sustainability eg. energy and water use. However, the Living Lab concept should be explored in its widest sense to include synergies across departments; for every element of science and technology there is a social science and policy perspective to be examined and considered. This may also extend to a sense of bridging between academic and commercial activities. For example, by encouraging the development of innovation spaces which are both actively used by key beneficiaries but also promoted via Conference Aston for wider commercial uses.

The Living Lab concept is a capstone to a great deal of our current thinking. It embraces the use of technology and its practical impact, it spans across the needs of beneficiaries, it creates the potential for synergy across academic and commercial endeavours; and it promotes the campus as a venue for collaboration and a flexible environment to promote creativity, enterprise and innovation in all forms.



THE MAIN BUILDING AND PLAZA
CURRENTLY BISECTED BY ASTON STREET

2. CONTEXT



VIEW LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE MAIN BUILDING

2.1 POLICY CONTEXT

FITTING IN WITHIN OUR CONTEXT

Birmingham City Centre is undergoing significant change and transformation and the Aston University campus is expected to play an integral and significant part in this. In this context, it is recognised that the Campus Vision and Campus Masterplan need to be 'alive to' and aligned with the changes in the surrounding environment, and that it should be capable of responding positively to this evolution.

Key development projects associated with the adoption of the Birmingham Curzon HS2 Masterplan, the emerging strategies for Moor Street Station, the Birmingham Knowledge Quarter and Gun Quarter are all expected to positively re-map the city's residential and commercial demographic. This will also provide a catalyst to new transport and access links, including the Sprint and Metro lines.

The Birmingham Transport Plan 2031 was released in January 2020. It describes what the city needs to do to capitalise on the recent and planned investment and also what the city needs to do differently to meet the demands of the future.

The plan includes a series of principles to guide future transport investment; they are designed to:

- Reduce transport's damaging impact on the environment, supporting;
- Birmingham's commitment to becoming a carbon neutral city by 2030.
- Eliminate road danger particularly in residential areas.
- Connect people with new job and training opportunities.
- Reconnect communities by prioritising people over cars.
- Revitalise the city centre and local centres.

The masterplan embodies a commitment to collaboration and engagement with Birmingham City Council (BCC) and other key partners to enable the Vision to be realised and for the opportunities for external beneficiaries to be fully maximised.

PLANNING POLICY

The Campus Masterplan has been prepared within the context of the adopted Birmingham Development Plan (2017) which sets out a spatial vision and strategy to enable sustainable growth, in the city up to 2031.

This Development Plan gives explicit support to:

- The development and expansion of Aston University, recognising its role as a world class learning environment and strengthening Birmingham's role as a learning city (TP36).
- New, well-designed mixed-use development in the Eastside area including technology, residential, learning and leisure activities and for the new HS2 Station to be fully integrated with surrounding areas to create a world class arrival experience (GA1).
- Promoting Birmingham as an international city, supporting development, investment and other initiatives that raise its profile and strengthen its position nationally and internationally (PG2).

The 'Big City Plan' (2011) is also a key reference as this sets out the city council's aims for the city centre, for the period up to 2031. It confirms the strong education and learning base in the city and the fact that the University presence generates significant opportunities for new service and knowledge based industries. The Development Plan prioritises the need to support existing education assets like Aston, to achieve better connectivity, foster innovation and skills, achieve cultural and economic diversity and to create a high quality of place – underpinned by the need for long-term and integrated partnerships.

The Campus Masterplan has also been produced with an understanding of The West Midlands Design Charter. the 12 principles align well with our own aspirations for creative design and 'spirit of place'.

A summary of the pertinent planning policies which sit in addition to or supplementary to the Development Plan are referenced on the adjacent page.

BIG CITY PLAN

The Big City Plan is a non-statutory planning framework for Birmingham city centre. The key principles of the masterplan are reaffirmed in the Birmingham Core Strategy.

The Big City Plan divided the city centre into a number of quarters. Eastside, the area to the east of the city centre and containing the Aston University campus was identified as a key area for regeneration with a focus on investment in learning, technology and science.

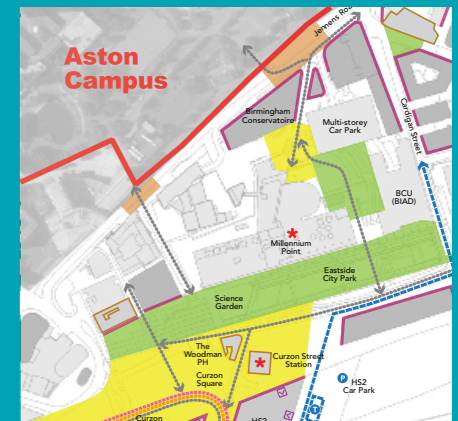
Key to this vision was the downgrading of key vehicle routes to encourage greater levels of pedestrian connectivity and permeability between Eastside and the city centre.



CURZON HS2 MASTERPLAN

The Curzon HS2 Masterplan is a response to the once in a lifetime opportunity presented by the arrival of the new HS2 Station in Birmingham City Centre. Covering the area immediately around the proposed station, the masterplan – adopted by BCC as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – aims to fully maximise the development potential offered by the construction of a new station as a new transportation hub whilst also helping to support the delivery of the wider Eastside vision.

The Aston University campus is located immediately to the north of the masterplan area and stands to benefit from improved pedestrian connectivity between the campus and the HS2 station.



HIGH PLACES SPD

In response to the growing trend in tall buildings, the High Places SPD was developed to manage and control the location and design of tall buildings in Birmingham. It sets key design principles which should be adhered to with any tall building proposal. The document also identifies an area within the city centre – known as the Central Ridge Zone – where tall buildings will be encouraged by the council. The south western section of the University campus is located within the Central Ridge Zone allowing for the opportunity for building above 12 storeys. Whilst still valid, this policy has been relaxed in recent years with some tall buildings being allowed outside the Central Ridge Zone. However, the key design principles it contains have still been enforced.



2.2 PHYSICAL CONTEXT

A CHANGING CONTEXT

Whilst the areas surrounding the campus are benefitting from a number of planning policies and masterplans to help influence and shape their development over coming generations, there are also a number of developments currently being delivered which are likely to change the character of the area in the short term.

The Campus Masterplan therefore needs to be mindful and proactive in responding to the changing character of the wider Eastside as it continues to evolve as a growing focus for investment and becomes a new vibrant quarter of the city centre.

A list of the pertinent developments within the wider Eastside and their status are listed and mapped below:

1. Lancaster Circus (Under Construction)

24 storey student accommodation block containing 1,023 student bed spaces. Due for completion Summer 2020.

2. Lancaster Street (Approved)

Lancaster Street, 24 storey, 602 bed student accommodation scheme approved

3. Enterprise Wharf (Planning)

Planning application submitted for 11 storey office building. Construction due to commence Summer 2020.

4. Eastside Rooms (Under Construction)

Mixed-used development consisting of office space, new hotel and convention facilities up to 8 storeys. Due for completion Spring 2020.

5. Glasswater Locks (Approved)

Planning application approved for residential-led development consisting of 753 residential units in buildings up to 37 storeys. Construction due to commence Summer 2020.

6. STEAMhouse Phase 2 (Approved)

Planning approval for office-led and educational development in 5 storey building.

7. Cardigan Street (Planning)

Outline planning approval for office-led and educational development in 8 storey building.

8. HS2 Curzon Street Station (Planning)

Location of new HS2 Terminal Station in Birmingham City Centre. Enabling works underway.

9. One East Side (Approved)

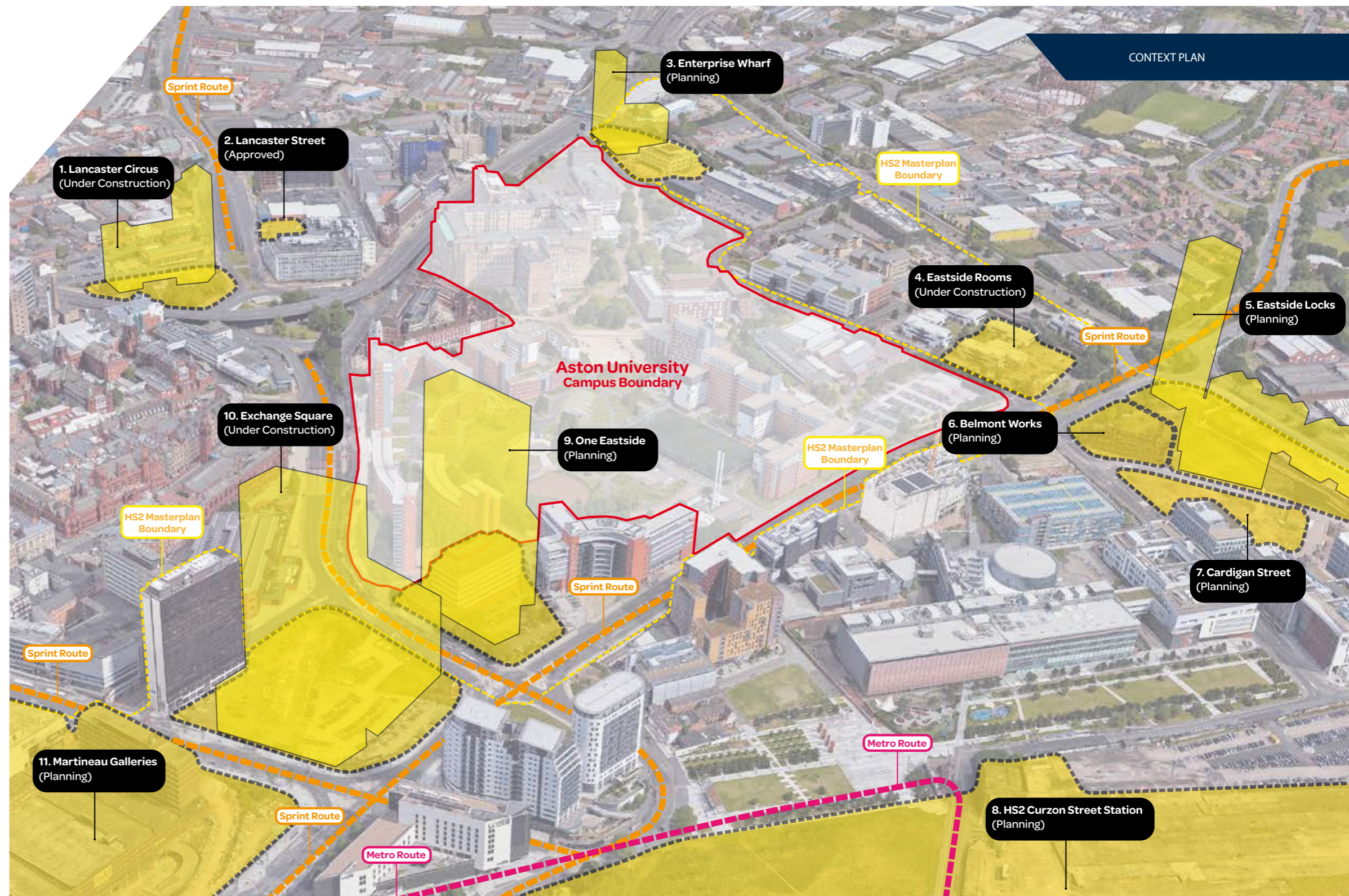
Application approved for residential-led development of two towers between 15-51 storeys and containing approx. 667 build to rent apartments. Enabling works underway.

10. Exchange Square (Under Construction and Planning)

Phase 1 (9-27 storeys) on northern side of the site is completed. 603 build to rent residential apartments (Allegro). Phase 2- planning approval for an 8-16 storey premier inn and a 32-36 storey building with 375 apartments

11. Martineau Galleries (Approval)

Outline planning permission January 2020. A mixed use development of circa 235,000 sq m of office, retail, hotel, food and beverage and a series of building heights up to 35 storeys



2.3 TRANSPORT CONTEXT

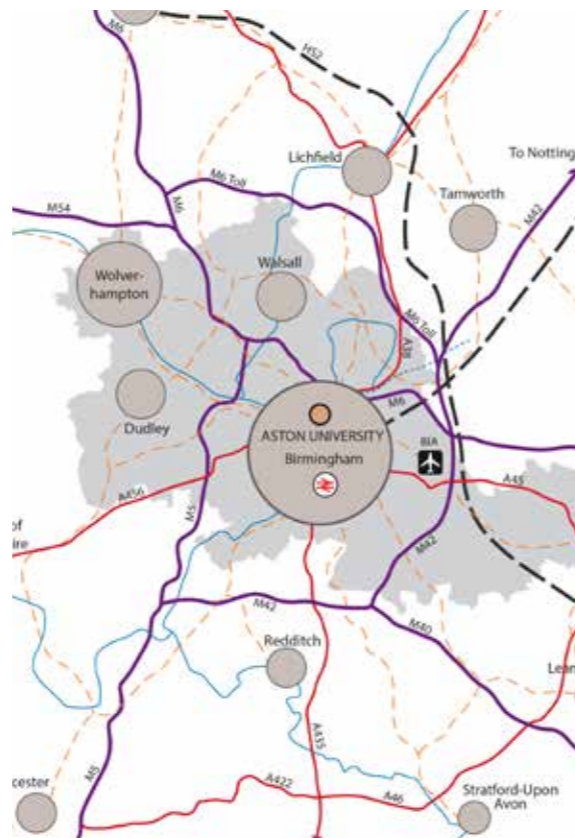
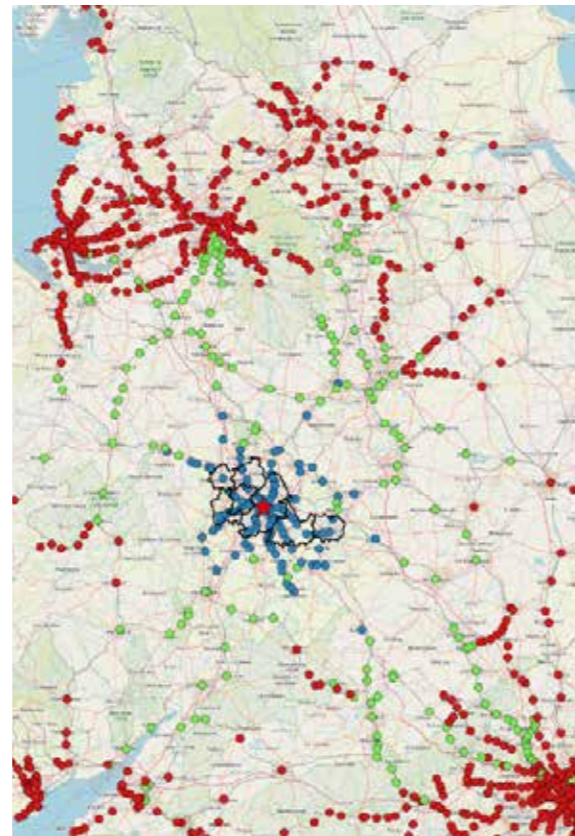
STRATEGIC TRANSPORT CONTEXT

Aston University is located within Birmingham city centre. Birmingham sits at the heart of the UK's existing strategic road and rail network giving direct connections to most UK cities. Birmingham Airport also provides direct connections by air to key UK and international cities as illustrated in the diagram below right.

To give some idea of how easy it is to access Aston University from the rest of the UK, the adjacent diagram (top right) illustrates existing travel time by rail to Birmingham from other UK rail stations. Aston University is at the centre of the diagram and the travel times are as follows:

- Blue Dots - 0-1 hours travel time to Aston
- Green Dots - 1-2 hours travel time to Aston
- Red Dots - 2-3 hours travel time to Aston

The delivery of HS2 will strengthen these rail connections and provide new and quicker high speed intercity connections between the northern cities, Birmingham and London.



CITY TRANSPORT CONTEXT

Aston University is easily accessible by sustainable, shared and active modes of transport.

The new HS2 station will be located approximately 400 meters from the site, and will offer a high speed rail service across the UK, connecting Birmingham with key destinations across the North and South of the country. Some of the planned services will connect Birmingham with London in approximately 49 minutes, and equally, the journey time from Birmingham to Manchester will be approximately 41 minutes.

A large number of bus stops are located within a short distance of the site. The closest bus stops from the site are Aston University (CR1/CR2) and Aston University (WS2) with services covering the wider region of Birmingham.

In addition to this, the new Sprint Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Network, consisting of up to seven new routes will stop immediately adjacent to the campus. The network is expected to be built in time for the 2022

Commonwealth Games and will provide essential links to the wider transport network, serving the Birmingham city centre and Birmingham International.

All of Birmingham's main train stations are located within a short distance of the site, offering regular high-speed connections with the wider region and nationally. Both Snow Hill and Moor Street stations are located within approximately 800 metres, (ten minutes' walking distance) of the site with New Street Station a further five minute walk away.

A range of walking and cycle routes pass through the site, linking the Aston University campus with the surrounding areas.

The wealth of options regarding sustainable forms of transport within easy reach of the campus demonstrates the strength of the site's location for future sustainable development. Redevelopment and intensification of the site in a way that promotes these sustainable credentials and discourages use of private cars should therefore be encouraged as part of any forthcoming masterplan.

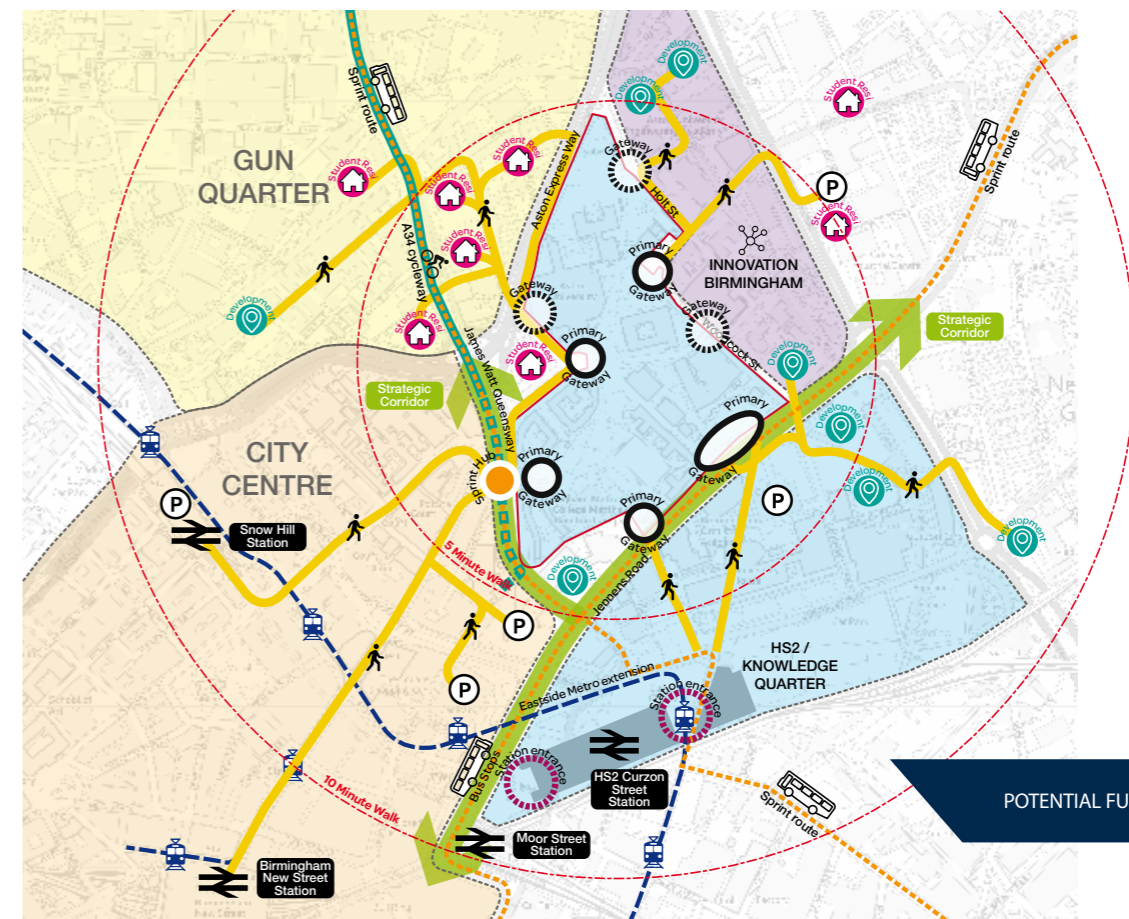
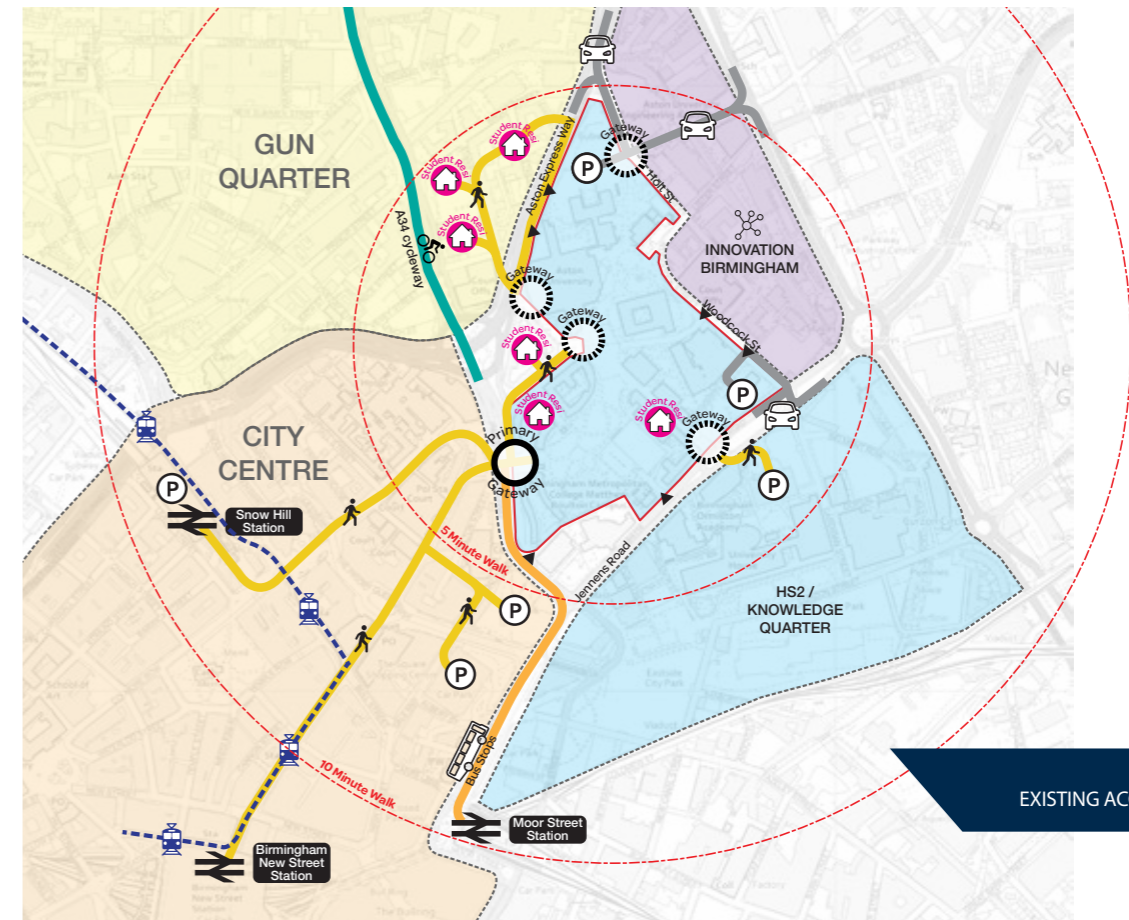


AT THE HEART OF A CONNECTED CITY

The existing access context diagram (top image on the adjacent page) illustrates the factors which influence the access to and from the campus. The diagram includes the location and walking distance to the nearest train stations, the Metro line, A34 Cycleway, and surrounding student accommodation locations. The primary and secondary gateways into the campus are also illustrated.

The potential future access context diagram (bottom image on the adjacent page) illustrates how various infrastructure and development investment may impact the access to the campus. The Curzon Street Station to the south provides the opportunity for an improved pedestrian gateway along Jennens Road. The potential Sprint route along Jennens Road (and any associated improvement works) will further transform the southern campus access. The Metro extension into Curzon Street creates further sustainable travel options into and out of the campus.

Emerging development proposals surrounding the site have been identified as they have the potential to generate increased foot fall into and through the campus. The quality of these connections need to be considered in particular the connections to the student residential proposals to the north west of the campus.



TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Aston University's Transport Strategy responds to:

1. A set of overarching drivers for change including climate change.
2. A set of policy and spatial changes and investments proposed in the city centre, including the implementation of the clean air zone.
3. The specific requirements of the University including addressing the future of the car parks.

The impacts of the drivers for change and policy and spatial changes are described in the transport strategy but in summary it can be anticipated that:

- There will be increasing restrictions on access to the city centre by private car and a strong focus on mode shift towards using walking cycling and public transport to access the city centre.

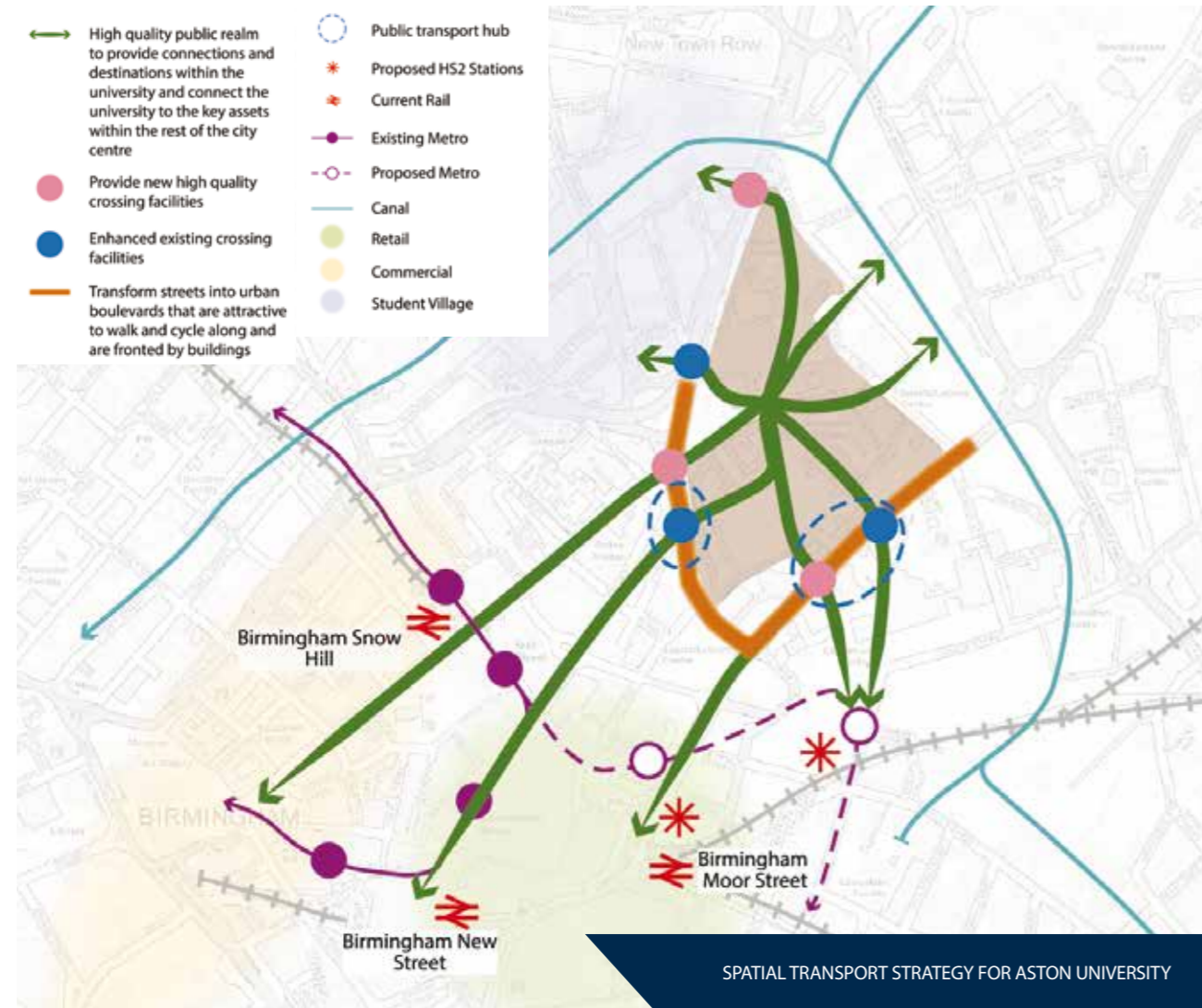
- There is an increasing focus on transforming the city centre so that its liveable and walkable.
- There will be significant investment in mass transit, cycling and public realm within the city centre.
- Rail connections to other cities in the United Kingdom will continue to be improved.

The University also wishes to transform its campus and improve the connections between it and the wider city centre.

For the University and the wider city it is important that this is done in a coordinated way with the emerging plans for public realm, cycling and mass transit investments.

The transport strategy therefore addresses what the University can do and also what it needs others to do.

On the opposite page the high level spatial transport strategy for Aston University is articulated within four key stands.



THE FOUR KEY STRANDS OF THE TRANSPORT

Making the shift	Building it in	Changing the context	Brave new world
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a branded communication plan and marketing campaign to promote the use of walking, cycling and public transport to access the University. • Provide a programme of incentives to travel to the university on foot, by bike or public transport. • Working with transport operators, authorities and suppliers to provide discounted public transport tickets and equipment for walking and cycling. • Salary sacrifice scheme for staff to help pay for season tickets, travel cards, bicycles and other equipment/clothing for walking and cycling. • The development of a parking permit policy to support the delivery of minimal car parking on campus. • Establish staff and student sounding boards to support delivery of the transport strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increased provision of seating. • The provision of improved wayfinding. • The expansion of cycle parking and its provision at building entrances. • The delivery of a high quality public realm 'core' through the campus that is beautiful, safe and accessible. • The delivery of a high quality cycle network through the campus that is suitable for all ages and abilities. • The delivery of a cycle 'hub' for cycle repair, cycle parking/storage, and in future hire. • The increased provision of showers, changing facilities and lockers, including in all new/refurbished buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish formal joint working arrangements with BCC, TfWM and Transport Operators. • Transform Jennens Road and James Watt Queensway into Urban boulevards that are attractive for walking and cycling and easy to cross. • Development of two transport interchange 'hubs' adjacent to the University. • Connect A38 and A34 'blue' cycle routes past the University. • Develop a high quality, safe, accessible city centre public realm between the University, the rail stations and other key destinations. • Develop safe and accessible crossing facilities across the A38. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop agile working facilities. • Develop virtual learning environments. • Develop the 'Aston App' to provide enhanced travel information and collect data about travel behaviour and issues. • Provide relevant data that is collected about transport and movement in an 'open data' format. • Expand the availability of real time public transport information on campus. • Explore opportunities for trialling innovations in mobility/transport developed by the University or others.

KEY

- Short term (light green circle)
- Medium term (medium green circle)
- Long term (dark green circle)
- Delivered/Led by the University (blue square)
- Delivered/Led by TWM/BCC (dark blue square)

2.4 HERITAGE CONTEXT

HISTORIC INFLUENCE

The historic map below published between the 1930s -1950s, shows the built form of the site in the last century. Significant changes have occurred over the years in response to the post-industrialisation era and the areas changing role during that time.

The use of land within the site consisted of a mix of residential dwellings, industrial uses and public facilities. As can be seen from the plan, the area was also defined by Aston Street – a large crescent street moving from the city centre to the north – and Gosta Green, a historic market square at the junction of Aston Street and a number of smaller streets which acted as a local heart to the wider area.

Today, the majority of these streets and buildings have been lost and replaced with the modern University campus we see today. A small number of buildings remain on-campus and nearby including the 'Sack of Potatoes' Pub, the Public Baths which now form part of the University's Woodcock Sports Centre, and the historic façade of the University's EBRI Building which used to be a cinema. The Grade II listed Fire Station along Aston Street also remains having recently been converted into student accommodation.

Whilst the majority of the historic fabric of the area has been lost, the legacy of this fabric remains, namely in the form of underground sewers and utilities which still remain in situ. Any forthcoming Campus Masterplan will therefore need to be sensitive to this context, and where possible, seek to respond to and reference the areas historic context.



HERITAGE

There are a number of existing buildings and structures within the campus which could be considered to be of some heritage interest.

Therefore, we will ensure that emerging proposals for the campus respect and enhance the buildings with such interest. Below are summarised some of the existing buildings or structures to consider within the site:

- Extensions to the Main Building: the proposed removal of extensions from the 1960s and 1980s to the Main Building would improve its general appearance. No heritage concerns are therefore anticipated with their proposed removal.
- Former Student Union: we understand this building has been partially demolished to the rear and has planning permission to be demolished (ref: 2017/03662/PA).
- Aston Stones: They are currently located in potential development plots identified within the emerging vision. We would recommend that these structures are retained and relocated elsewhere within the campus.
- Tipping Triangles Fountain: this structure is located within a potential development plot. We would recommend that the structure is retained and relocated elsewhere within the campus.
- Drinking Fountain and Shelter: Should this site be put forward for development, we would recommend that the structure is retained and relocated elsewhere within the campus.

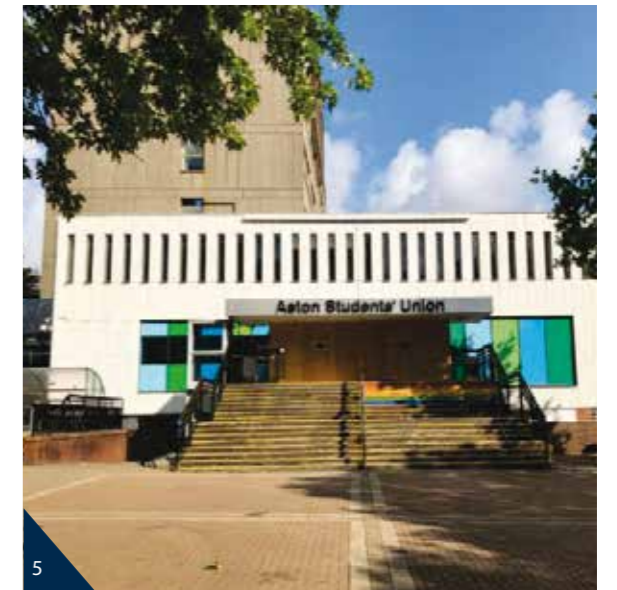
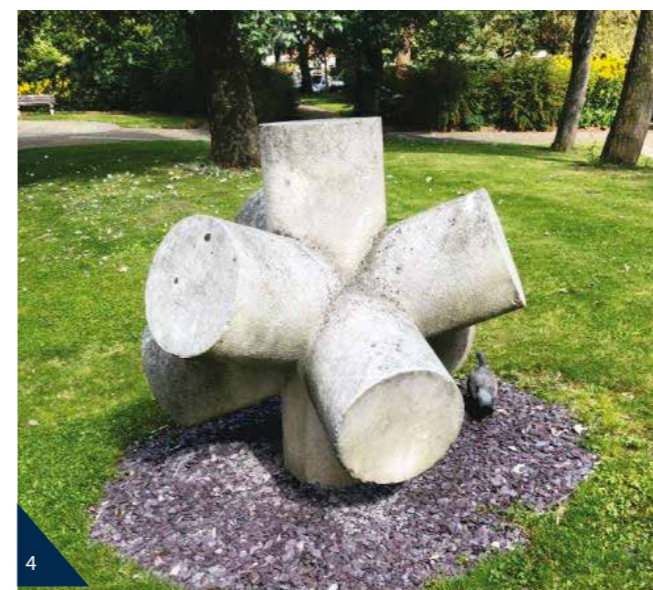
Designated heritage assets

There is also a designated heritage asset within and the boundary of the Aston University campus:

- Aston University Sports Centre (Grade II listed): an example of an Edwardian civic building and public bathhouse by the architect Arthur McKewan, located within the south eastern part of the campus. Its setting is principally defined by modern development associated with the industrial estate to the north and Aston University to the south.

Development could be pursued subject to a responsive design that steps down towards the Grade II listed Woodcocks Sports Centre.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Main Building | 4. Aston Stones Sculpture |
| 2. Tipping Triangles Fountain | 5. Former Student Union |
| 3. Drinking Fountain and Shelter | |



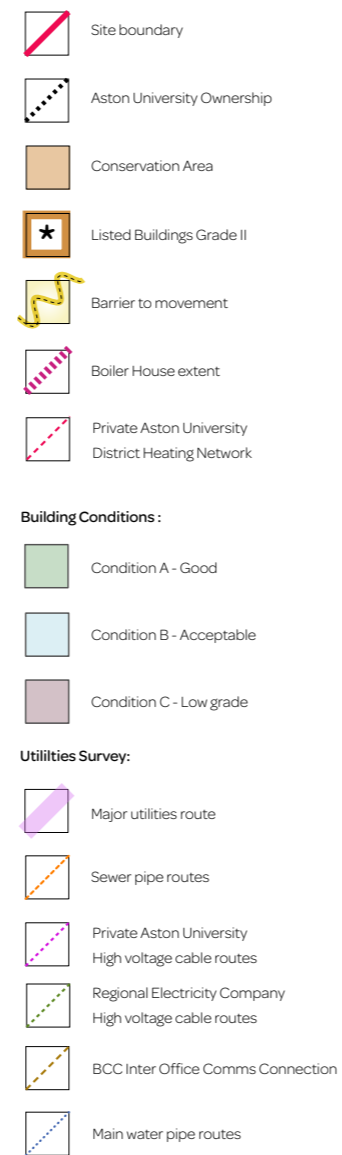
2.5 CONSTRAINTS

A detailed study of the site needs to be undertaken to understand how to approach and address any spatial constraints. Any above/below ground utilities which may limit or inhibit development in any parts of the site need to be identified to ensure development is focused in the right areas.

Whilst detailed appraisal works are yet to be completed, a desk-based audit of known constraints has been undertaken, and a number of elements that the Campus Masterplan needs to respond to have been identified, summarised as follows:

- The Steelhouse Conservation Area abuts the western edge of the Campus Masterplan area. Future development should therefore respond sensitively to the character of the conservation area and adjacent listed buildings located in the surrounding area, namely the 'Old Fire Station' and the Woodcock Sports Centre, both of which are Grade II listed.
- An evaluation of the existing buildings within the campus has been made, and classifies each according to its condition, in regard to appearance and quality. A number of buildings have been identified as low grade/poor quality buildings which will likely require upgrade or replacement in the near future. The rest of the buildings are under the category of "acceptable or good", in this case no action is anticipated in the near future.
- A number of existing utilities cross the site as a legacy of the area's historic road pattern. Whilst it will be viable to move/relocate smaller or more modern utilities (including phone or internet cables), it is less likely to be viable to move larger or historic utilities including strategic or high voltage underground cables or historic sewers. Development will need to respond suitably to any utilities which therefore need to remain in-situ.
- The study area covers an area recognised as the University campus. Whilst Aston University own or control a vast majority of the site, a number of student residential buildings within the site are owned by a third party. Any forthcoming Campus Masterplan will need to be sensitive in this regard.
- The southern boundary of the site along Jennens Road represents a key opportunity to improve connectivity to the south. However, a large boiler house which serves the campus and wider District Heating Network is also located along the boundary and will need to remain in-situ. Opportunities to improve connectivity along this boundary whilst retaining the boiler house in-situ therefore need to be explored.

Other technical information associated with statutory validation criteria associated with developments of this type will be undertaken and considered as part of any forthcoming application.



2.6 CAMPUS ANALYSIS

Following the assessment of the wider context and campus constraints the next section analyses the existing campus in terms of access, movement, landscape and environment. The purpose of this analysis is to identify aspects of the campus to be retained and enhanced and elements where there is an opportunity to improve the existing context.

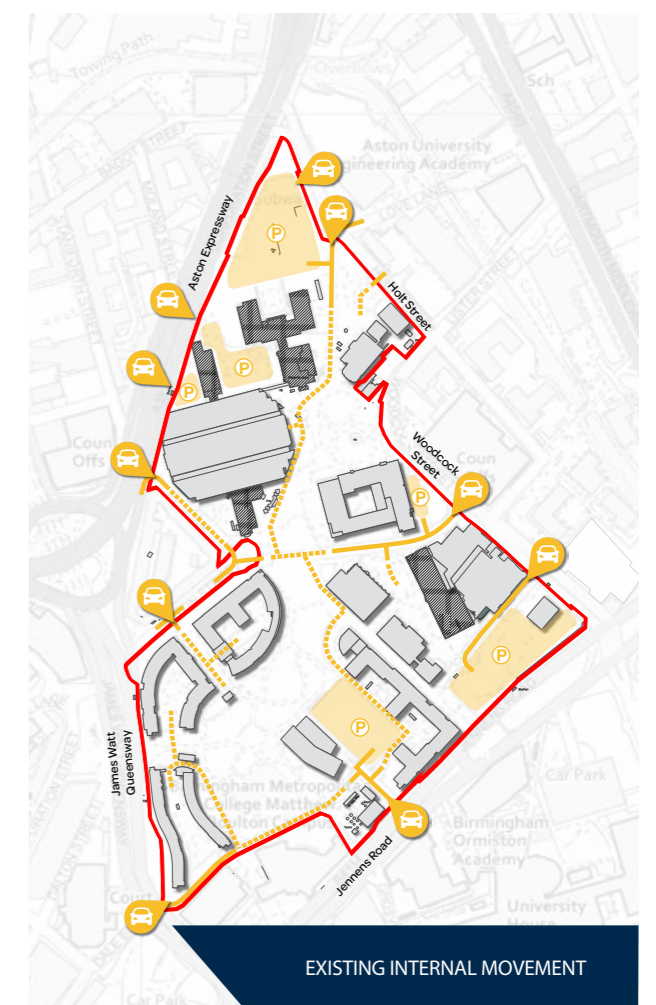
ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

The Pedestrian/Cycle Route plan on the right hand page (top) illustrates the existing internal movement across the campus. It identifies the three key public spaces that form the central spine through the heart of the campus. These key spaces denote one of the primary movement routes through the campus for pedestrians and cyclists. This route should be retained and enhanced as part of the Campus Masterplan.


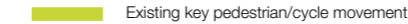


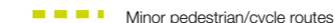




Vehicle routes into and across the campus are also identified on the Existing Internal Movement plan on the adjacent page (bottom image). There is vehicle access to the northern car park via Holt Street, and two further car parks to the south accessed via Jennens Road and Woodcock Street. The consolidation and reduction of car parking across the campus should be considered as part of this Campus Masterplan, to create a pedestrian friendly environment and allow us to achieve our sustainable objectives and targets.



PEDESTRIAN/CYCLE ROUTES



EXISTING INTERNAL MOVEMENT

-  Pedestrian/cycle access points
-  Existing key pedestrian/cycle movement
-  Potential key pedestrian/cycle routes
-  Pedestrian/cycle nodes of activity
-  Minor pedestrian/cycle routes
-  Vehicular access points
-  Vehicular movement
-  Restricted vehicular movement
-  Car parking

To achieve fewer car movements across the campus several routes across the site could be pedestrianised. Potter Street and Aston Street could prioritise the movement of pedestrians and cyclists, improving the safety and environmental quality of the campus.

The Pedestrian/Cycle Route plan illustrates the primary movement of pedestrians and cyclists across the campus. Alongside existing movement routes the plan identifies potential future routes (dotted lines). One of the new routes could connect the new gateway along Jennens Road with the campus heart, with the development of the Curzon Street Station this could become a primary pedestrian entrance from the south.



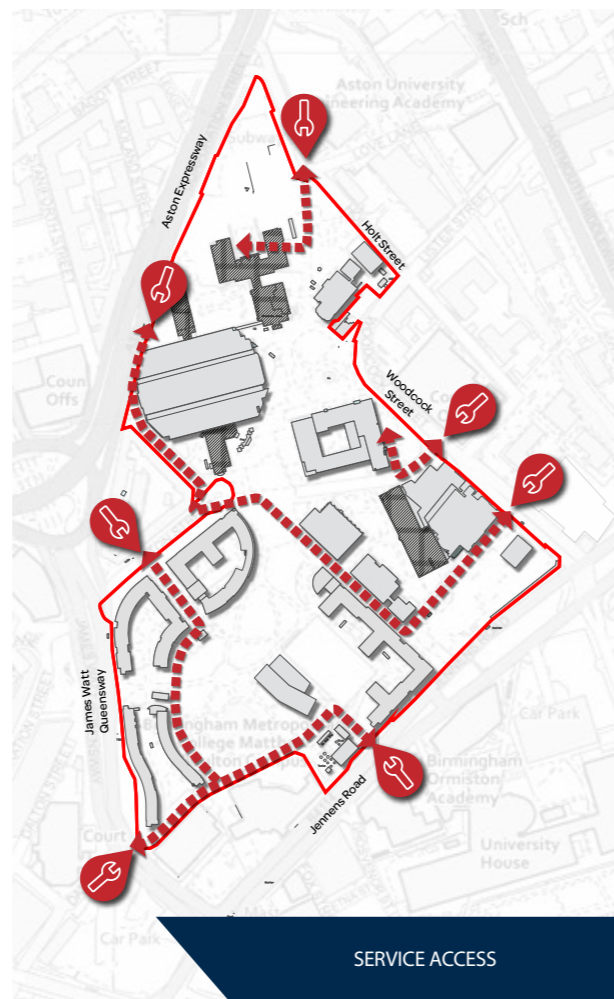
GATEWAY TO POTTER STREET



LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT

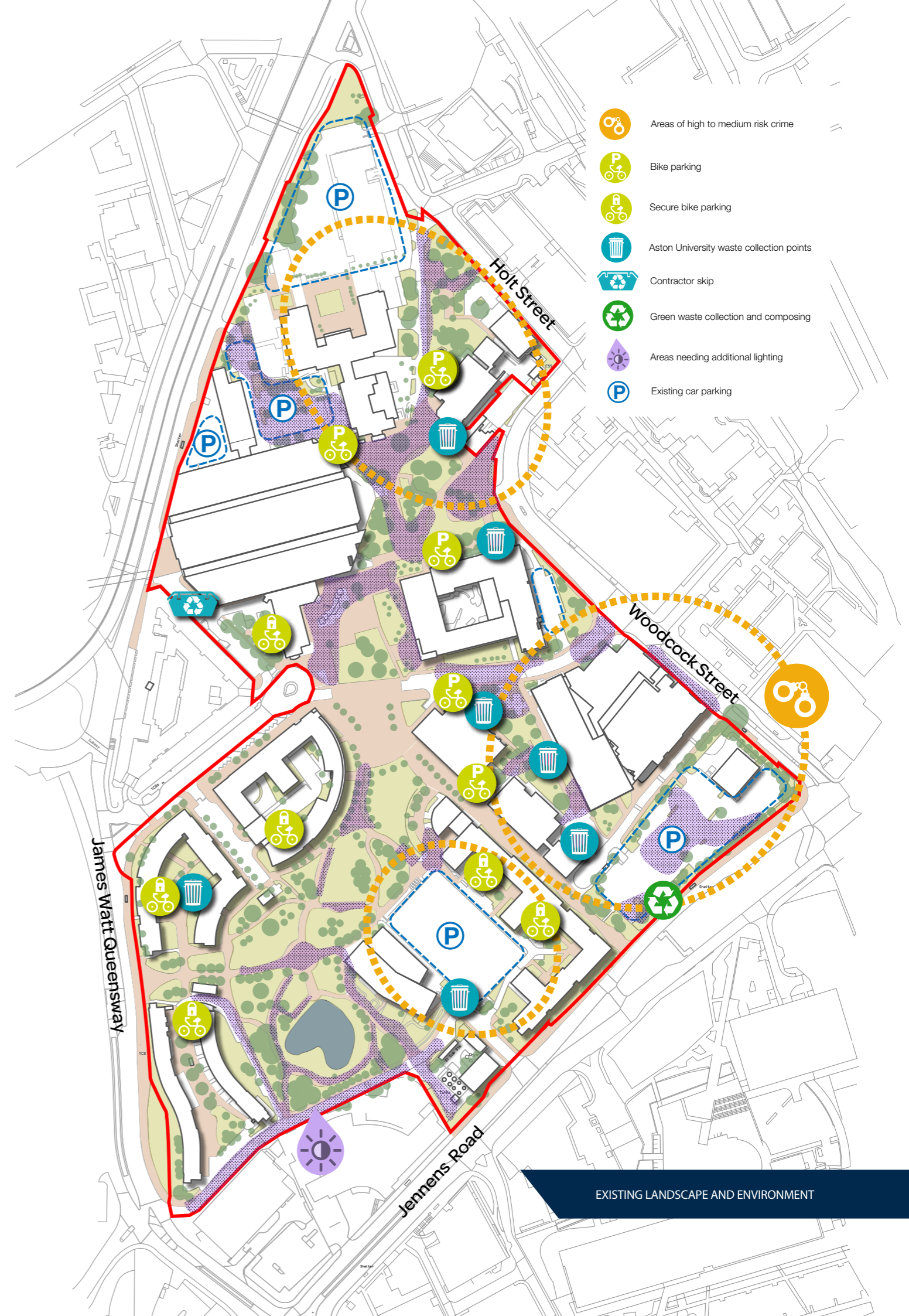
The plan of the right hand page illustrates an analysis of the existing environmental quality of the campus. It includes the existing areas of green space and public realm, refuse points and cycle parking areas. It also includes an assessment of areas across the campus where night time lighting levels are low.

Refuse and cycle storage points are scattered across the campus, as part of this masterplan exercise there is an opportunity to consolidate both the refuse areas and cycle storage. Innovative solutions could be explored to consolidate the service areas and therefore minimise the movement of refuse vehicles across campus. Furthermore this could create the opportunity for a multi-purpose cycle facility.

Areas of poor quality evening lighting are shaded on the Existing Landscape and Environment plan on the adjacent page. This creates the opportunity for an improved lighting scheme as part of the Campus Masterplan development. Some of the areas of poor lighting correspond to areas of higher crime risk. Redevelopment of areas such as the Woodcock Street car park and the northern apex of the site, creates the opportunity for improved lighting, activity, overlooking and safety.



-  Existing service access points
-  Existing service routes



3. MASTERPLAN



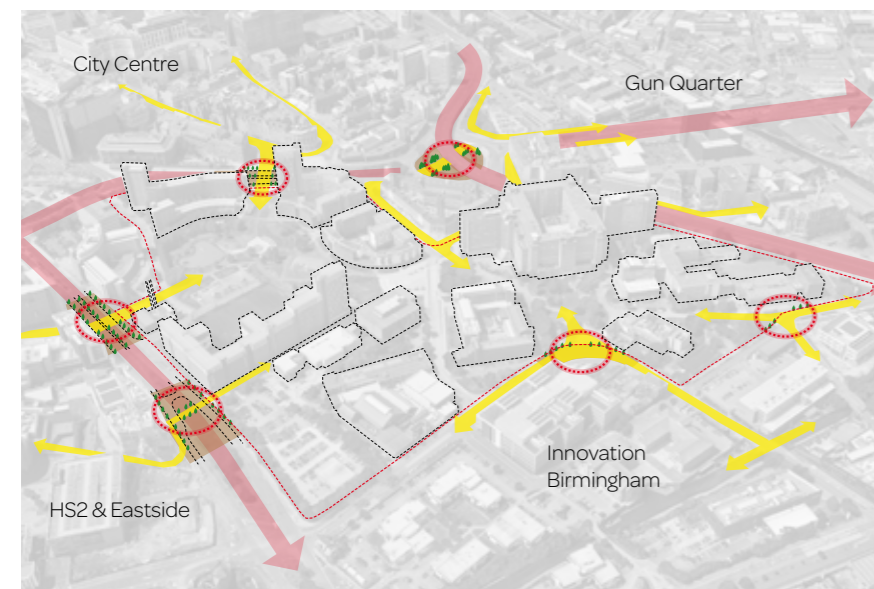
3.1 DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Having established the vision which will drive the future masterplan and the key constraints and opportunities it will need to consider, this section of the Campus Masterplan will identify a number of high-level design principles known as 'Strategic Steps'.

Each step is set out sequentially to demonstrate how the Campus Masterplan can be realised in a spatial form that responds to the city context.

The 'Strategic Steps' that will be discussed here are as follows:

- 1.0 Breaking down barriers
- 2.0 Creating an axis
- 3.0 Recreating the urban block
- 4.0 Presence and visibility
- 5.0 An active destination



The campus is severed on three sides by major strategic highway infrastructure which inhibits pedestrian permeability to the wider Eastside and Knowledge Quarter to the south, city centre core to the west and the residential student community of the Gun Quarter to the north. These roads provide an unpleasant and often unsafe pedestrian environment and severely inhibit the campus's ability to integrate with surrounding communities. Opportunities should be explored to break down these obstacles wherever possible.

STEP 1.0 - BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS



There are a sequence of special public spaces and routes throughout the campus encouraging pedestrian and cycle movement and providing key view corridors through the site.

Through the uncoordinated delivery of University buildings over time, the legibility of the campus has become confused and a clear hierarchy of routes through the campus have become eroded making navigation difficult for people who are unfamiliar with the campus.

Creating a campus that is easy to visually navigate encourages increased footfall and helps to support the delivery of a number of clear, active and safe routes.

STEP 2.0 - CREATING AN AXIS



As illustrated on the historic map, the campus was formerly a series of urban blocks within an irregular grid. As the campus has evolved this legible grid of urban blocks has been replaced with a series of buildings set within surface car park areas creating an unpleasant environment at ground level.

The proposition here is simple. By recreating the urban perimeter block structure, a clearer definition between public fronts and (semi) private backs is created, improving legibility throughout the campus. This logical structure creates activity and animation to the perimeter streets.

STEP 3.0 - RECREATING THE URBAN BLOCK



There is an opportunity to utilise the strategic location of the campus to create landmark structures at key nodes across the site. The new buildings could contain a mix of uses to draw a wide variety of people to the campus. The northern tip of the campus has a prominent setting adjacent to the A38(M) and close to the Dartmouth Circus. This is a prime location for a building of quality and scale at a key gateway into the city from the north. Similarly at the eastern edge of the site at the junction of the A47 and Woodcock Street there is an opportunity for a new building to address this key junction and acknowledge the sites location with the Birmingham Central Ridge Zone.

STEP 4.0 - PRESENCE AND VISIBILITY



The University campus could have a much greater role in the city. The existing open spaces are enjoyed by staff and students however, they are less well used by local residents, professionals and visitors to the city. This move is directly aligned with the Aston Strategy to connect the campus with the region and wider society, placing the University at the heart of Birmingham's cultural identity.

The campus could host events, complementary to our vision and values; creating activity 24/7 and re-imagining the campus as a city destination. The University could further contribute to civic life through food markets, arts or music festivals, outdoor leisure and family events or simply as part of the city walking tours.

STEP 5.0 - AN ACTIVE DESTINATION

3.2 ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

The adjacent Campus Masterplan is an illustrative interpretation of how the five key development principles could combine to deliver the University's vision for the campus. In order to understand how the Campus Masterplan responds to the University's vision and the key development principles, it will be discussed within the following five component elements:

Access and Movement

The University campus will form an integral part of the wider Knowledge Quarter, Eastside and City Centre. To achieve this, it will utilise new and existing transport connections in order to re-integrate into the surrounding urban fabric. Maximising opportunities to encourage sustainable transport choices, the campus will provide a safe, pedestrian/cycle friendly environment accessible to all.

Scale and Massing

The surrounding city context continues to evolve, with several new buildings of scale planned over the next few years. Any new development within the campus will need to respond appropriately to the surrounding context outside the campus and also sensitively address the built environment and public spaces within the campus.

Landscape and Environment

At the heart of this masterplan is the desire to create a welcoming and engaging place, a campus where students, staff and the wider community feel safe and choose to spend time; a 'sticky campus'. The quality of the public space, both hard and soft, is intrinsic to achieving this ambition.

Activity and Animation

Defined by its neighbourhoods and mix of uses, the University campus will be a vibrant destination used and enjoyed by all of those who study, work and live within the city. A place and space for all to enjoy from sunrise to sunset, a mix of uses will provide a active and engaging hub capable of attracting people and businesses alike. The campus could be animated with further pieces of public art and lighting installations.

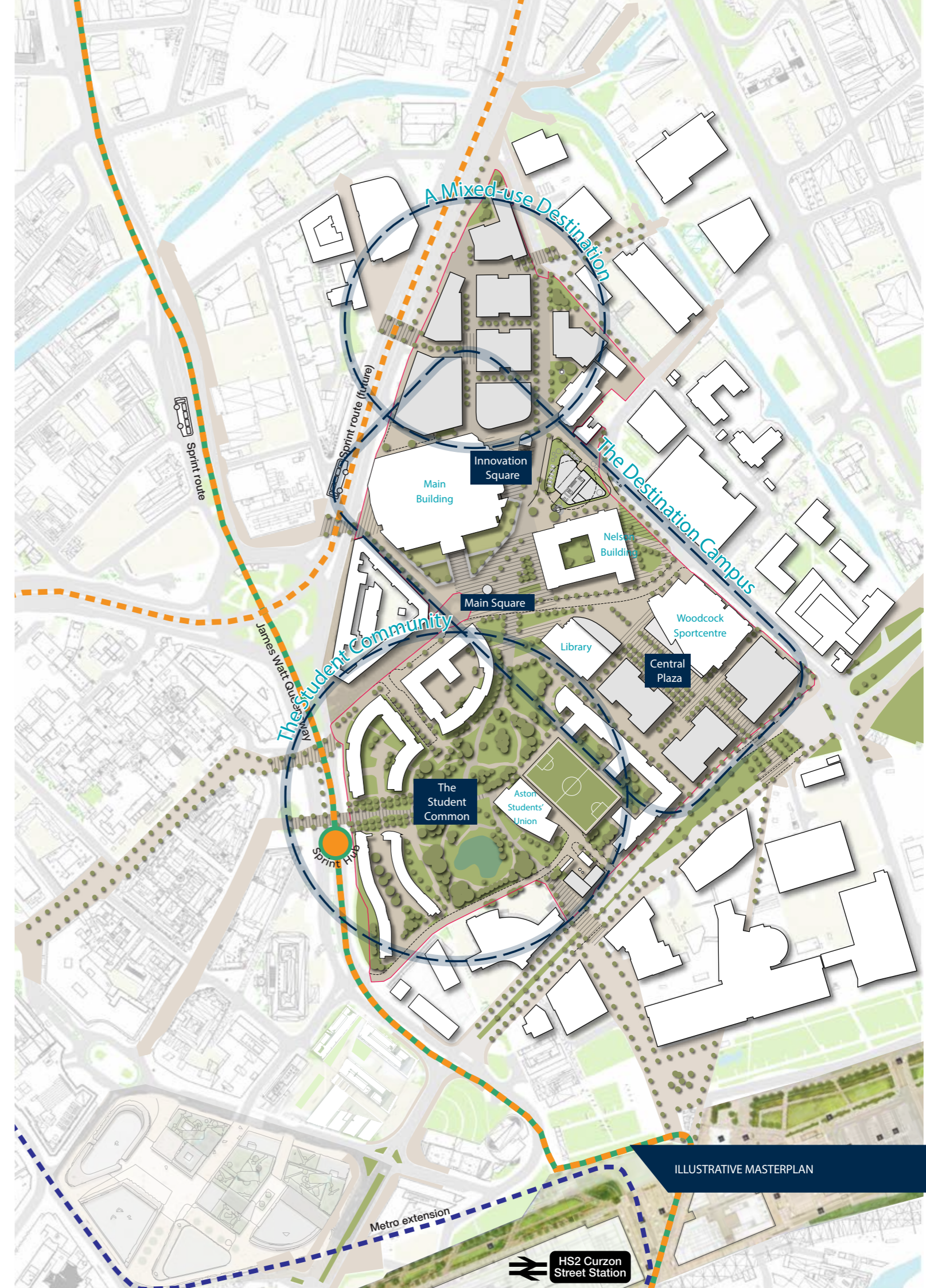
Sustainability

Aston have committed to working towards a sustainable future for the University. Through this masterplan Aston University seek to encourage a modal shift towards sustainable modes of travel, reducing carbon emissions on a journey to create a sustainable campus.

Supplementing development with the latest innovations in technology and communications, the University campus will place sustainability at the forefront from delivery to operation.

Together the five elements will, alongside the big moves, create a sustainable, green and inclusive campus. The delivery of these principles will ensure that the University campus becomes an exemplar development with a distinctive sense of place and identity.

Within this framework we are currently exploring the location for the University's Business School and Languages and Social Sciences (ABS/LSS). This significant investment for Aston will be the catalyst for the Campus Masterplan; a building of outstanding quality, setting the benchmark for future development.



3.3 MASTERPLAN ELEMENTS

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

Aston University will play an active role as an economic driver for the Knowledge Quarter, Eastside, the city centre and the wider West Midlands. The University campus therefore needs to be accessible to all, including the general public as well as those using the University.

To achieve this, the Campus Masterplan needs to utilise new and existing transport connections and route corridors in order to re-integrate into the surrounding urban fabric. Maximising opportunities to encourage sustainable transport choices, the campus will provide a safe, pedestrian/cycle friendly environment accessible to all.

The delivery of a network of key public spaces connected through a legible hierarchy of pedestrian/cycle friendly routes will play a central role in providing a safe, permeable and attractive campus for people to use, pass through, linger and enjoy.

The existing campus benefits from a number of key high quality spaces, including the Green Heart and a lake running through the centre of the student village, and a number of small formal spaces, the largest of which is located at the entrance to the Main Building. The campus also has a verdant character containing large areas of established trees. These attributes are however, under utilised. Poor legibility across the campus means it is not easy for those unfamiliar with the campus to easily navigate through it, often resulting in the spaces feeling disconnected.

The Campus Masterplan seeks to provide a legible, clear and easy to use network of spaces spread across the entire campus. In addition to the upgrading of existing routes and spaces, new spaces will be created at key gateways and nodal points combining to provide greater permeability across the campus.

Key interventions envisaged within the Campus Masterplan include:

Key Elements:

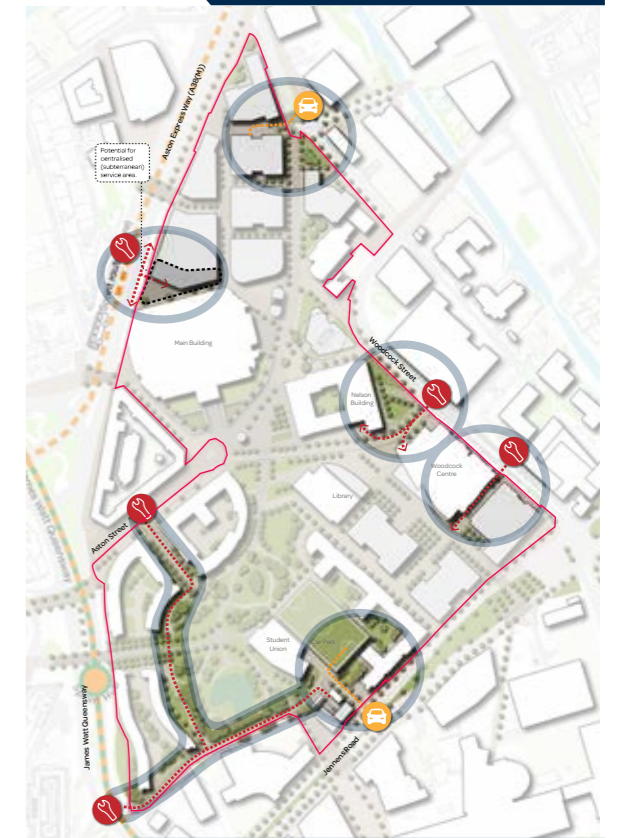
- Creating a new pedestrian friendly frontage along Jennens Road – Currently defined by wide vehicle carriageways and narrow footways, the Campus Masterplan envisages the creation of a new pedestrian/cycle friendly boulevard. The Campus Masterplan will therefore seek to open up a new access point along Jennens Road into the campus, a new campus gateway with priority given to pedestrians and cyclists. This will create a new frontage to the campus allowing it to fully integrate into the wider Eastside whilst responding to the proposed HS2 station.
- Delivery of a new Central Plaza within the heart of the Destination Campus – In order to create a new and attractive route through the heart of the Destination Campus linking the Main Building with Jennens Road and Eastside/HS2 beyond, the Campus Masterplan envisages the creation of a new Central Plaza. Representing the central point within the Destination Campus and a resting point between these two destinations, the plaza will be an active and attractive place to linger and enjoy.
- The upgrading of existing routes and spaces and reduction of vehicle movements – Many of the routes within and around the campus are commonly shared between private vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists. However, on many routes, spaces for private vehicle access and parking dominate the environment. The Campus Masterplan envisages the upgrading of key routes into and around the campus including Aston Street, Potter Street and Coleshill Street through the use of high quality materials and tree planting to prioritise pedestrians.

Potter Street and Aston Street could be pedestrianised further improving the environment. The proposals illustrate reduced car parking, with limited spaces provided to the northern apex and the existing facility under the football pitch.

- Consolidated servicing - Servicing could be consolidated across the campus as illustrated in the Vehicle/Service Movement Plan on the adjacent page. Innovations could include a subterranean facility to the rear of the main building. This intervention would remove service vehicles and refuse infrastructure from the public space.
- Citywide Connections - The internal improvements to access and movement should facilitate and encourage further public realm improvements and connections outside the campus boundary. Working with stakeholder partners, connections to Curzon Street to the south, New Street and Moor Street to the south east and east and the canal network to the northwest should be improved to further integrate the campus within the city.



PEDESTRIAN/CYCLE MOVEMENT



VEHICULAR / SERVICE MOVEMENT

The adjacent Pedestrian/Cycle Movement Plan identifies the central green spine running through the site connecting the campus through a sequence of public spaces. A secondary route has been created to connect Jennens Road with the heart of the campus.

Removing cars from Aston Street and Potter Street will further improve the quality of the public realm.

The Vehicular/Service Movement Plan below illustrates the proposed consolidation of service and vehicular access points. This will help to create a safe, secure and welcoming environment.

SCALE AND MASSING

The campus contains a number of assets and attributes which need to be recognised in the scale and massing of future buildings. The Green Heart is a valuable asset to be protected, the scale of new buildings needs to consider potential overshadowing of this central feature. The Woodcock Centre and Central Fire Station Building are both Grade II listed, any development in close proximity needs to be sensitive to this context.

The campus also fronts onto the Aston Express Way and Jennens Road, is located on the edge of Birmingham City Centre and a short distance away from the proposed HS2 Station. The Campus Masterplan should therefore respond to this context in building scale and massing.

The Aston Express Way and Jennens Road frontages present major opportunities to provide striking gateways into the city centre. The Jennens Road frontage also provides the opportunity to improve the visibility of the campus from Eastside and the proposed HS2 Curzon street Station. The Campus Masterplan design has been shaped to create a 'bowl' or 'valley' across the central axis; thus protecting the site's green assets whilst increasing building scale to the periphery of the campus.

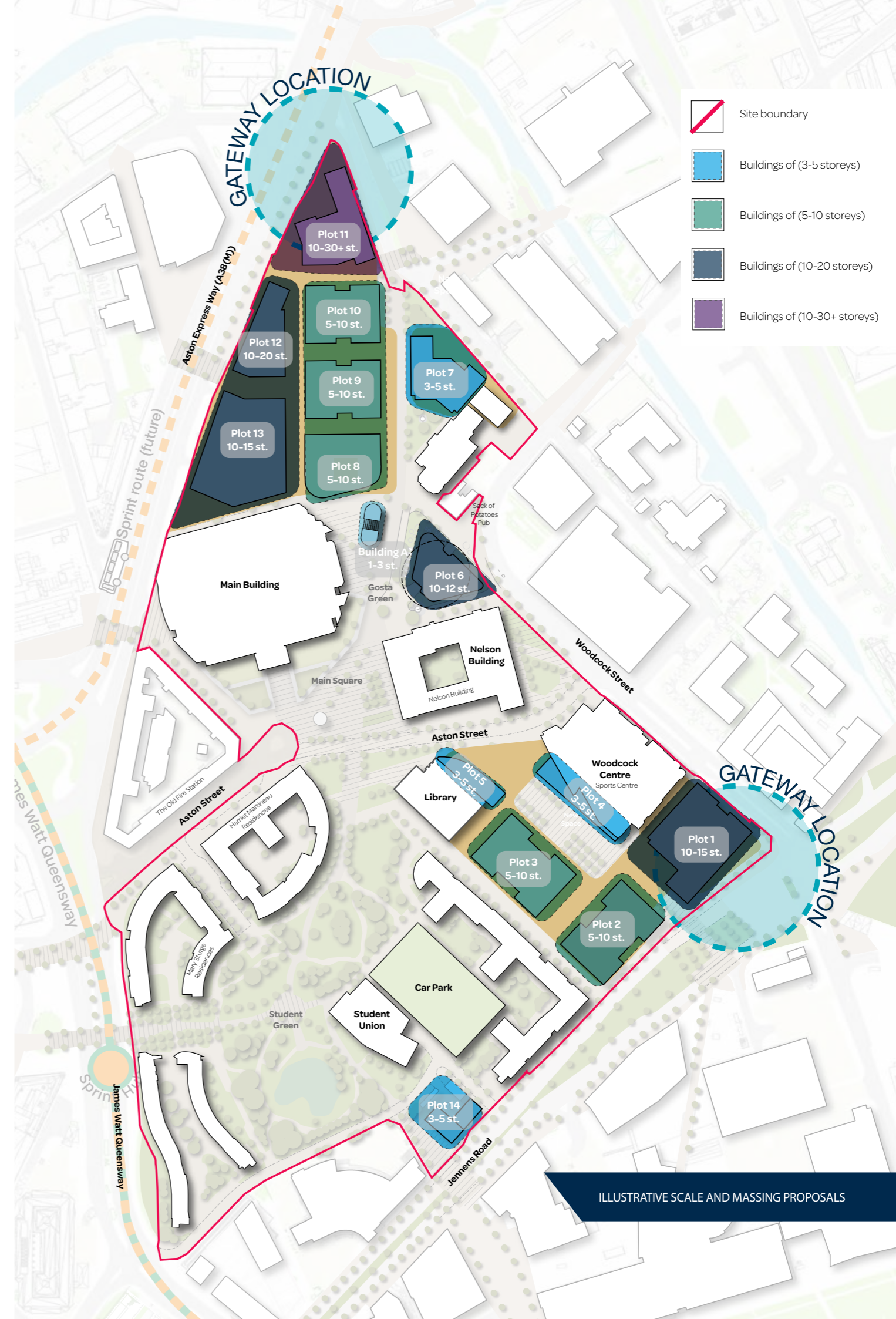
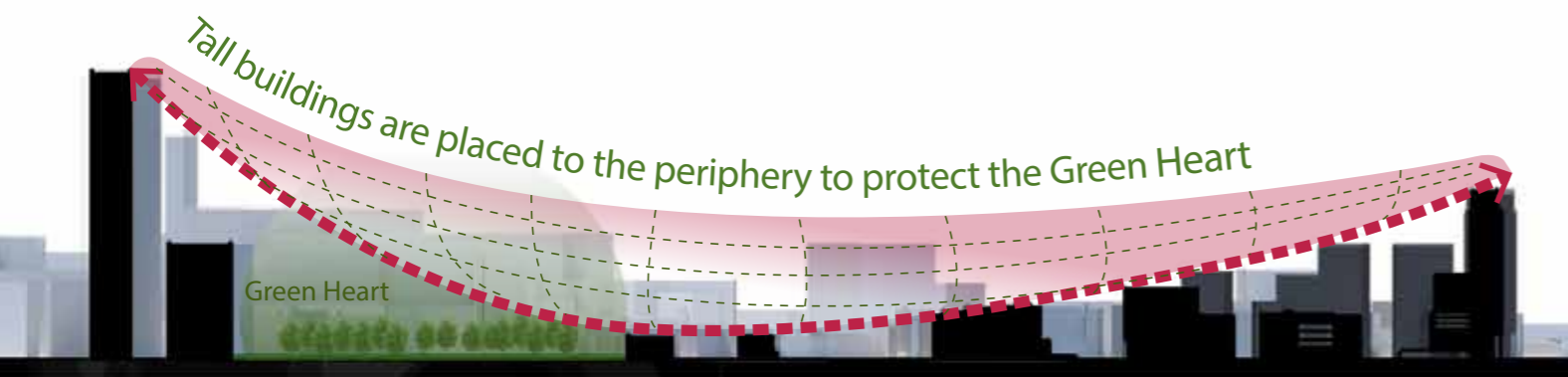
This is illustrated below in the Valley Concept drawing.

The Campus Masterplan envisages the construction of buildings up to c35 storeys in these areas.

Proposed building scales are reduced near to and around many of the open spaces throughout the campus to ensure they remain light, open and enjoyable for people to use.

With increased scale at the periphery of the campus the impact of overshadowing should be limited within the heart of the campus' public spaces.

Development and building scales are also limited near heritage assets with efforts being made to ensure new development does not negatively impact on the character and setting of any listed buildings or conservation areas.

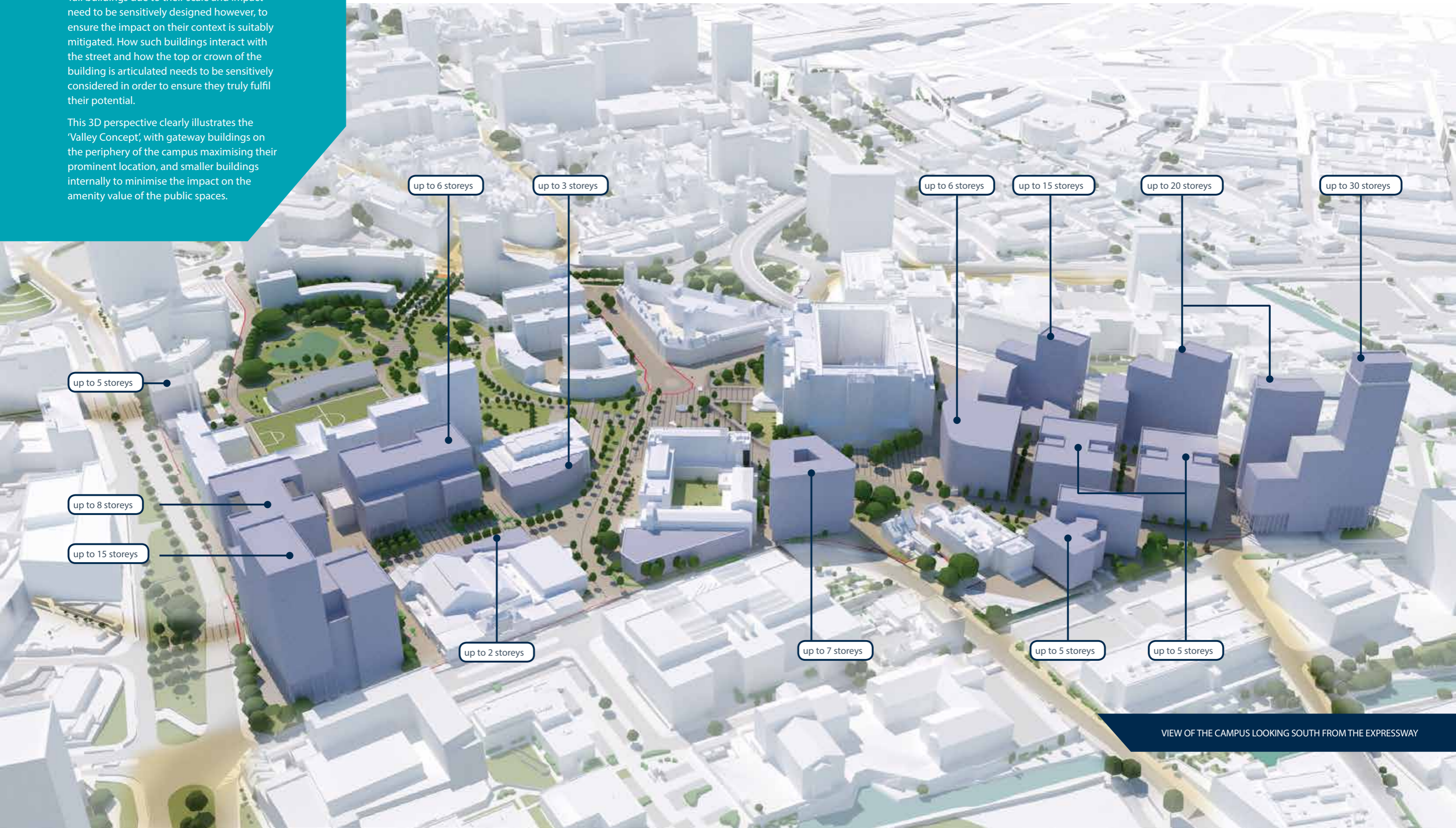


Gateways and tall buildings

At key locations along the Aston Express Way and Jennens Road, the Campus Masterplan encourages increased scale. Taller buildings in this location can provide a dynamic focal point in the city centre skyline and can help provide strategic gateways to improve local legibility.

Tall buildings due to their scale and impact need to be sensitively designed however, to ensure the impact on their context is suitably mitigated. How such buildings interact with the street and how the top or crown of the building is articulated needs to be sensitively considered in order to ensure they truly fulfil their potential.

This 3D perspective clearly illustrates the 'Valley Concept', with gateway buildings on the periphery of the campus maximising their prominent location, and smaller buildings internally to minimise the impact on the amenity value of the public spaces.



VIEW OF THE CAMPUS LOOKING SOUTH FROM THE EXPRESSWAY

LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT

The environmental strategy within the Campus Masterplan is simple, we seek to retain and enhance our assets to create an active, safe, connected city space, a place where people choose to spend time.

1. Retain and enhance existing landscape features

We are proud of our Green Heart, it is an oasis in the city. The proposed landscape strategy will ensure the enhancement of existing key spaces which are part of the public realm and 'green' network.



2. Establish a legible landscape framework

This diagram highlights the key areas of intervention, distinguishing between hardscape and green spaces.

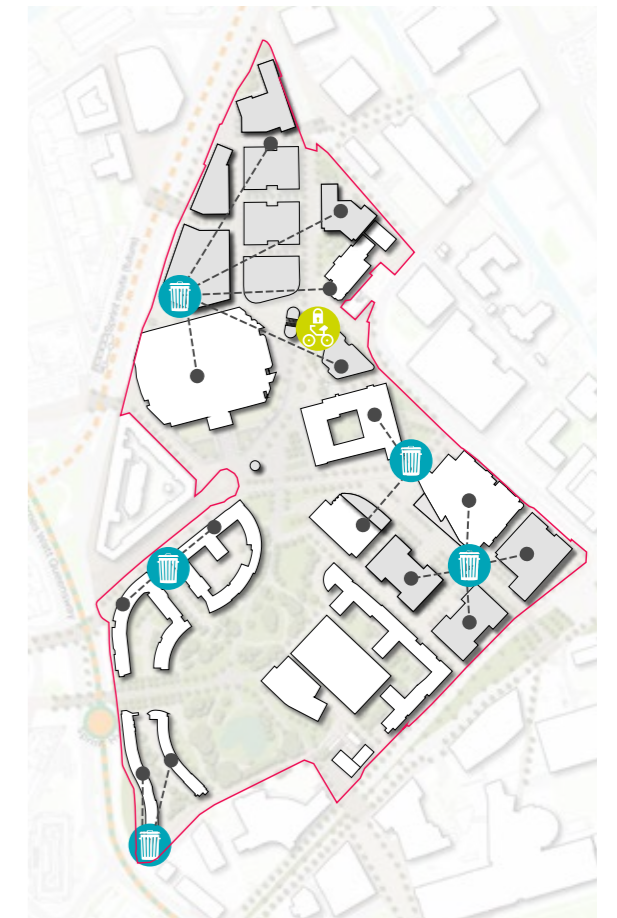
It illustrates key existing connections and also where public realm enhancement will demark and improve connections between the heart of the campus and new gateways into the site.



3. Centralise public services

The consolidation of waste facilities across the campus will reduce vehicle movements across the campus. There is also the potential for an innovative subterranean facility to the north of the main building, which would remove waste infrastructure above ground, without compromising potential development land in the northern apex. This consolidation will also improve both the performance and sustainability of waste management.

A centralised 'Cycle Hub' could become a focal point in the campus. With the potential for secure cycle parking, cafe and workshop.



4. Enhance the campus way-finding and public art

Complementing the logical landscape framework, improved way finding and public art pieces will further animate the public space whilst aiding legibility and movement.



Landscape framework

Drawing the principles together the illustrative landscape framework on the right hand page and the supplementary images below articulate how the campus could be animated day and night. Public realm improvements, innovative lighting solutions and public art combine to create a memorable place.

This plans illustrates some of the design principles established in the previous pages, related to access, movement and gateways.



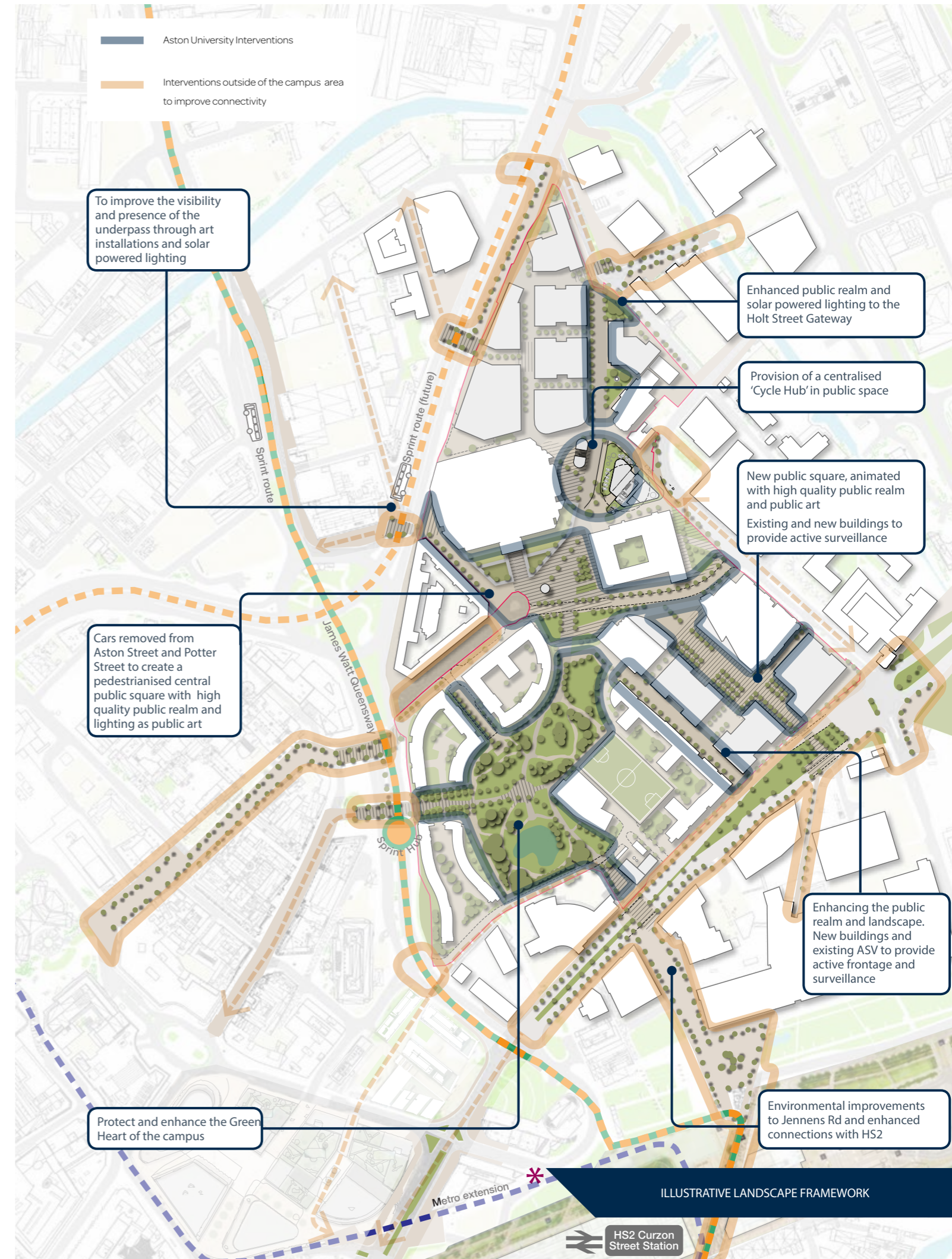
1. Lighting as art used at key gateways and public spaces.
2. Integration of lighting and landscape improvements.
3. Pedestrian priority in public spaces.



4. Public realm to include opportunities to dwell to reinforce the 'sticky campus' concept.
5. Innovative lighting and public realm design to animate underpasses.

The key design principles are:

- To break-down the movement barriers through the creation and enhancement of gateways into the site.
- To create a legible and coherent axis across the site.
- To improve legibility through the implementation of smart way-finding panels and public art landmarks, whilst improving safety and surveillance through the inclusion of additional lighting elements.
- To create an active and animated 24 hour destination.



Character and appearance

The character of the University campus and its context is diverse and varied. To the west, the campus abuts the Steelhouse Lane Conservation Area and the Gun Quarter, both exhibiting clearly defined characters and vernaculars. To the east, the character is more diverse and less consistent. Historic grid streets run along the canal corridor whilst this industrial heritage has been lost in other parts through previous developments and highway construction.

This diversity in building styles and character is also evident within the campus, namely due to the different ages and building styles evident across the university.

The Campus Masterplan seeks to promote the development of new buildings which reflect the highest qualities in design and architecture, harness the latest technologies with regard to building innovation, whilst also being sensitive to the areas character and heritage. This will result in a campus which is sustainable in meeting the needs of current and future users, but that is also specific to Aston University and the city.

Innovation in design and construction will be encouraged to ensure a truly exemplar development. The use of natural materials will be encouraged as will those which embrace the local vernacular. Buildings should also be designed to ensure a positive interaction with public areas to help improve legibility and encourage activity along adjacent streets and spaces.

The use of perimeter blocks should be encouraged to give clear distinction between public and private spaces. Continuous active frontages (doors, windows and clear glazing) will face onto existing and new streets and public spaces, generating activity and natural surveillance that promotes public safety. The placing of services areas, refuse areas and parking should also be carefully considered and where possible integrated within the building footprint and away from publicly accessible areas to avoid a negative impact on public realm.

The images to the right illustrate case studies where these aspirations have been achieved.



1. Spaces to be shared by pedestrians and cyclists.
2. Create a hierarchy of formal and informal public spaces where staff and students can interact with city workers and residents.
3. Create safe and attractive public spaces for use throughout the day and night.

Activity and animation

Defined by its neighbourhoods and mix of uses, the University campus will be a vibrant destination used and enjoyed by all of those who study, work and live in Birmingham.

Whilst education and innovation are at the heart of the University campus. For Aston to become a vibrant destination within the Knowledge Quarter, Eastside and wider city centre the campus could contribute further to the cultural attraction of the city by hosting events or festivals on site. Whether sporting, culinary, seasonal or music a series of annual events could transform the campus, building on the 'sticky campus' concept.

The images to the right and below, articulate how this activity and animation could be achieved.



4. Create the opportunity to facilitate temporary shops, markets, cafes and food stalls.
5. Cultural and music events to reinforce the University's role as a destination in the city.

THE STUDENT COMMUNITY

A residential student community set around a naturalised lake and student common. Activated by ground floor uses and events within the public realm, the student community will be a relaxing and enjoyable setting for users to pass through, engage and dwell.

A MIXED-USE DESTINATION

An animated and active gateway into the city centre, the mixed-use destination will provide an anchor drawing people into and through the campus. A place for people to work, live and play, this dynamic neighbourhood will help to promote the campus as a key city destination.

HS2 Station



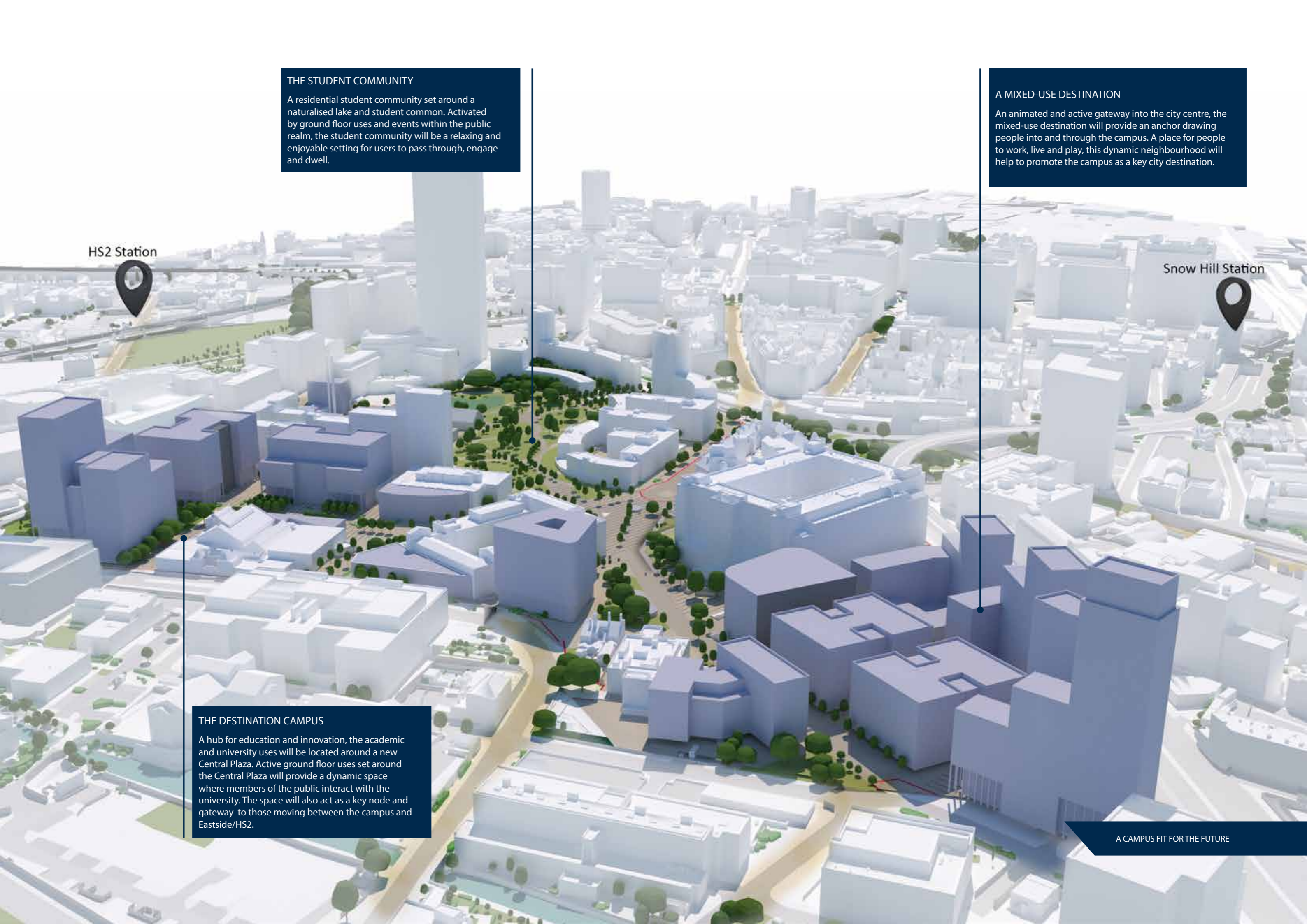
Snow Hill Station



THE DESTINATION CAMPUS

A hub for education and innovation, the academic and university uses will be located around a new Central Plaza. Active ground floor uses set around the Central Plaza will provide a dynamic space where members of the public interact with the university. The space will also act as a key node and gateway to those moving between the campus and Eastside/HS2.

A CAMPUS FIT FOR THE FUTURE



SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability strategy for this Campus Masterplan is set within the context of a suite of documents prepared by Aston demonstrating the University's commitment to building a sustainable future for the campus.

Aston have prepared a medium term sustainability strategy: Sustainability Strategy 2020-2024; alongside guidelines to influence development on campus: Adaptation and Climate Change at Aston (June 2019) and detailed construction guidelines to embed our sustainability aspirations into the fabric of the campus: Sustainable Construction Specification (June 2019).

In addition, we are aware of the city's Route to Zero (R20) project to become net zero carbon by 2030, this vision is very much aligned with our own strategy. As a key stakeholder in the city we are committed to collaborating with and supporting BCC in achieving this aspiration and we are already making significant changes to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to future climate changes.

From 2010-2015 all new buildings were constructed to BREEAM Excellent, the Unite ASV buildings were constructed with green and brown roofs (as illustrated in the image below). Insulation has also been upgraded throughout most refurbished buildings.

As a member of Birmingham's District Energy Company (BDEC), our 'Combined Heat and Power (CHP)' district heating provides services to the majority of the campus, the Unite ASV accommodation and also a number of third parties across the city. The generated electricity makes up 60-70% of the site's consumption.

Through the Campus Masterplan we have an opportunity to connect new buildings to the district heating network, further strengthening the heat resilience of the campus and the wider city. The Sustainable Construction Specification will form part of the design brief for the new ABS/LSS building, setting the benchmark for environmental quality.

We would also seek to include other environmental innovations where possible from improved natural lighting to biophilic design - drawing the natural environment into the heart of new buildings.



GREEN AND BROWN ROOFS ON THE ASV BUILDINGS

Sustainable transport

In previous chapters we have outlined our aspiration to reduce the reliance on cars for staff, students and other beneficiaries. This is in line with BCC's intention to create a clean air zone. We will continue to work closely with BCC to improve access to sustainable forms of transport. To include:

- Access to safe and pleasant walking and cycling networks, including the canal network.
- Access to the extended tram network.
- Improved public realm connections to the extensive rail network.
- Improved access and connections to the extended bus network, including the Sprint route.
- Encouraging our staff and students to embrace green technologies such as low emission vehicles, electric vehicles, and work with BCC to improve access to EV charge points.

Within this Campus Masterplan we have suggested several interventions which would help to deliver our sustainable aspirations.

1. Cycle hub - Central cycle hub with workshop and cafe to encourage cycling.
2. Consolidated service area - with the additional potential for a sub-terranean service network to serve the campus.
3. Pedestrian/cycle network - potential to improve the sustainable movement network throughout the site. Enhancing the natural 'green' environment and quality of the public realm will encourage more sustainable travel.
4. Solar powered lighting - where possible we would encourage the use of sustainable power generation for any new light installations across the campus.



1



2



3

1. Potential for further EV charging points
2. Facilitate better connections with the city's beautiful canal network
3. Explore the potential for innovative waste disposal systems

3.4 LOOK AND FEEL

This image provides an illustrative indication of the positive impact of the Campus Masterplan proposals.

This image is looking to the west from the junction of Woodcock Street and Jennens Road. A new gateway to the south of the campus provides animation and activity to Jennens Road. Public realm and landscape improvements to Jennens Road strengthen the connection to Curzon Street to the south and create a high quality pedestrian environment.



4. CONCLUSIONS/ NEXT STEPS



CONCLUSIONS

This Campus Masterplan document clearly sets out our ambitious vision for the campus. It is a vision which is firmly routed in supporting our three beneficiaries:

- our students, who progress to be our graduates and alumni.
- external organisations (businesses, public entities, the not-for-profit sector and the professions) who employ our students and engage with us on research and educational programmes.
- Birmingham and the West Midlands region, and wider society whom we serve as a public university, with a strong sense of place.

The success of this Campus Masterplan will therefore be tested and measured through the quality of our consultation and the level of engagement and support we can achieve from our beneficiaries.

We therefore plan to consult with all three groups over the coming months including planning and highway officers from BCC, and representatives from TfWM to ensure our vision complements the city's sustainable travel aspirations.

Delivery

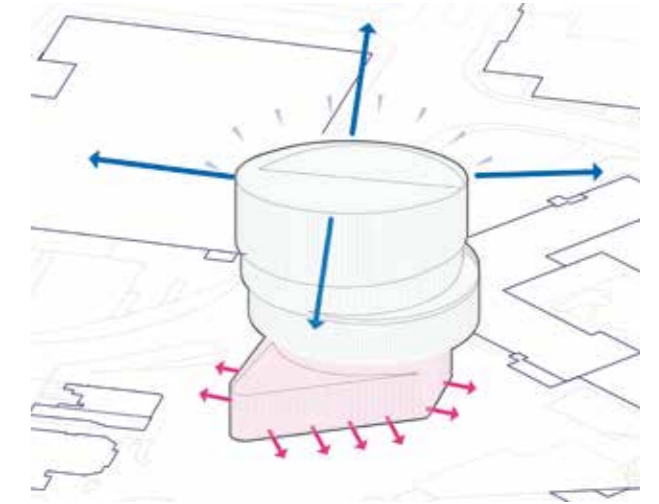
The development of our Campus Masterplan has helped to shape the brief for the first building to be delivered on site; the Aston Business School and Languages and Social Sciences building. This landmark building is a significant investment for Aston and will be the catalyst for the Campus Vision. We expect the building to be constructed and occupied by September 2023.

Through a national competition of leading architectural practices we have selected a preferred bidder to work with us on this exciting and transformative project. The building will create the conditions for co-creation, an innovative and contemporary building that will encourage and embrace new ways of working.

The ABS/LSS building will be composed of inviting and flexible spaces where staff and students will want to stay all day. It will also create a positive relationship with the city, encouraging collaborations with local businesses.

A destination of distinction.

We are excited at the opportunities this Campus Masterplan creates for Aston and the city and look forward to working collaboratively to deliver our ambitious vision.



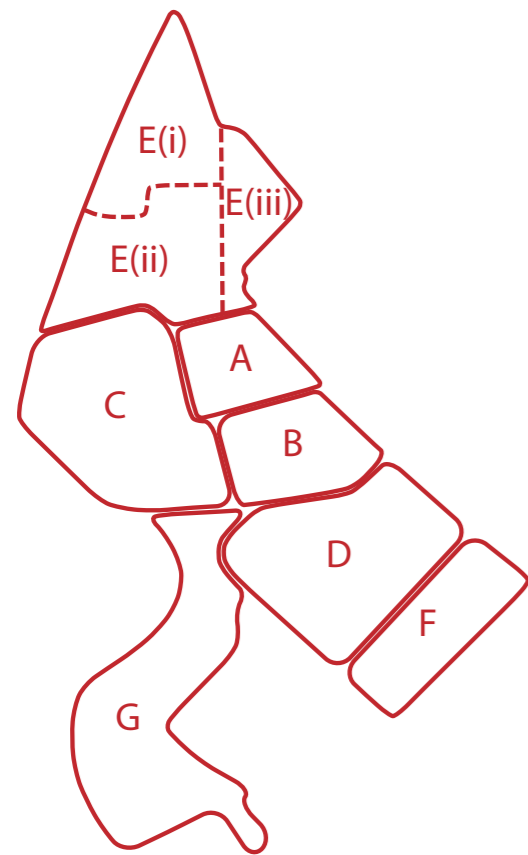
ILLUSTRATIVE CONCEPT SKETCHES FOR THE ABS/LSS BUILDING. PROVIDED BY HAWKINS BROWN

NEXT STEPS

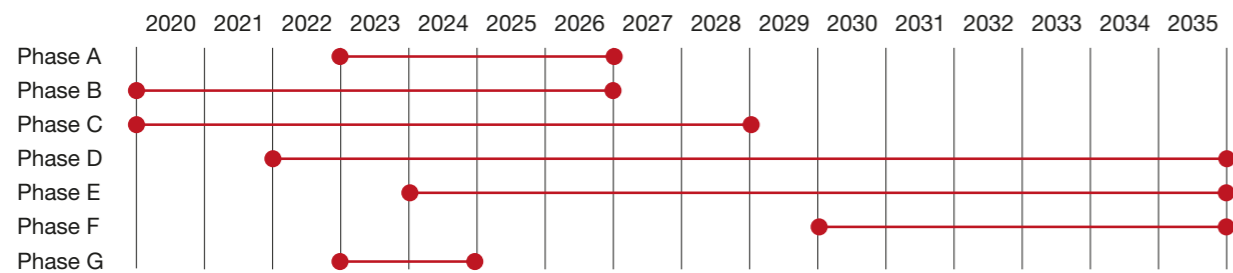
Delivery Plan

We have started to explore how the Campus Masterplan can be delivered over the next 15 years. The adjacent plan illustrates the various stages of development, including building projects, internal and external public realm projects, demolition and refurbishment schemes. The plan should be read alongside the Schedule of Works key (to the right). Below we have included a simple illustration of the Development Phases and a Development Programme to articulate how we plan to realise the vision for the campus.

Development Phases

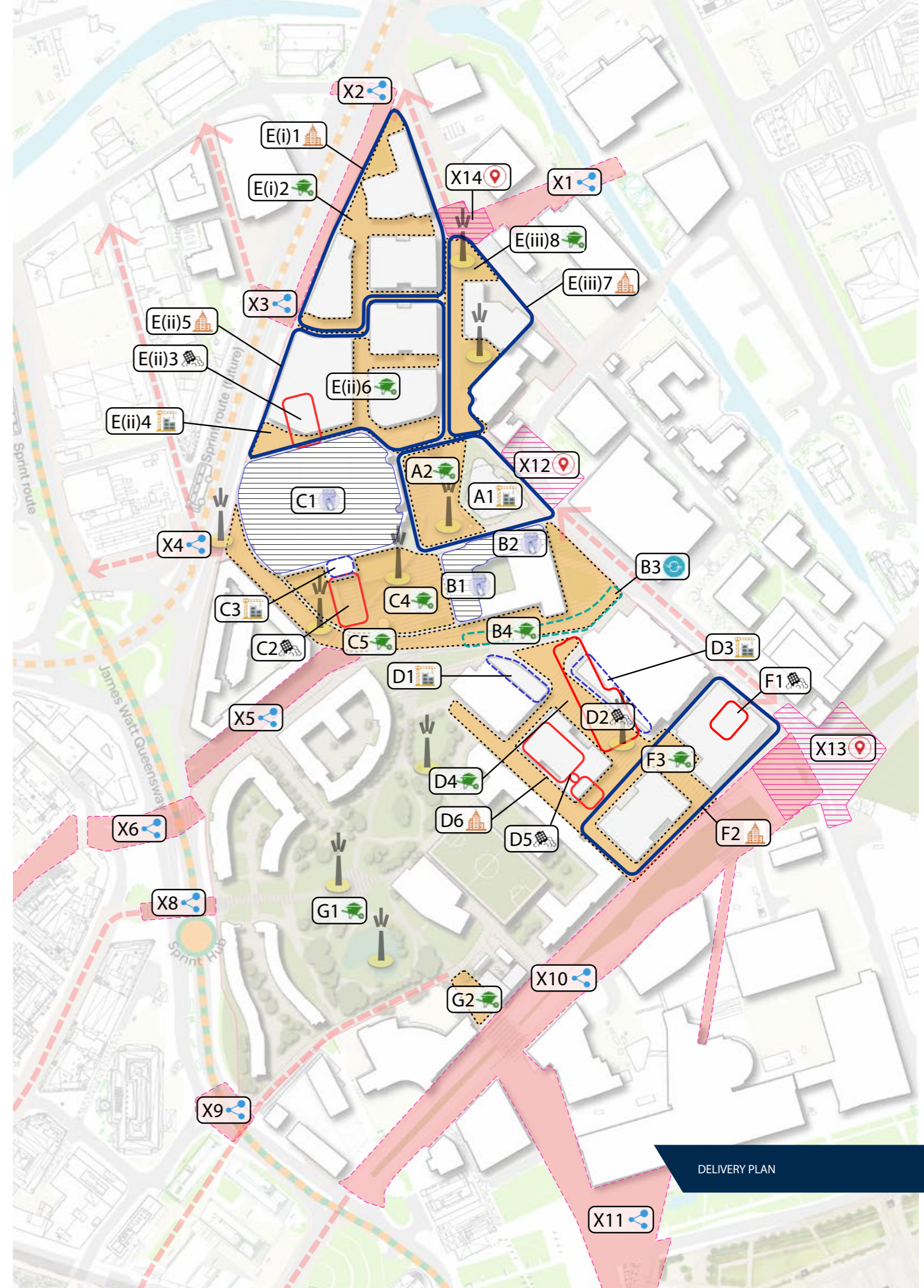


Development Programme



Schedule of Works

Development works	A1 C3 D1 D3 D6 E(i)1 E(ii)4 E(ii)5 E(iii)7 F2
<i>D1- Library extension works</i>	
Urban/landscape improvements	A2 B4 C4 C5 D4 E(i)2 E(ii)6 E(iii)8 F3 G1 G2
<i>E(iii)6 - to include consolidated services</i>	
External public realm improvements (to be delivered by other parties)	X1 X2 X3 X4 X5 X6 X7 X8 X9 X10 X11 X12 X13 X14
Refurbishment projects	B1 B2 C1
Proposition for future public realm improvements	→
Road to be stopped up here from July 2020	✳
Landmarks: Public art, wayfinding, improved lighting, animation and activity	↓
Areas currently outside of Aston University's ownership	⬜
Buildings to be demolished (timescale to be confirmed)	⬜
External works (to be delivered by other parties)	⬜
Key junctions/public spaces to be improved by others	⬜
Extensions	⬜
Reburbishment projects	⬜





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