



Yeovil

PLACE REVIEW

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1.0 Introduction

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Place Review

This report is presented as a supplement to the Economic Appraisal being prepared by Ekosgen for Yeovil.

Previously, BDP have been involved in providing development proposals for specific sites with the town centre namely the Cattle Market site and the possible extension to Quedam which would link with the shopping centre adjacent.

Our support for the Economic Appraisal takes the form of a high level over-view of existing sites and opportunities which have been drawn to our attention by Yeovil Vision. It is not within our remit to undertake a full appraisal of all the existing schemes and development options nor to propose redevelopment suggestions or sketch schemes for individual sites but rather to suggest a framework of priorities around which future development might be structured in order to relate to the financial drivers highlighted by the economic appraisal.

Our initial thoughts are presented here which take the form of a summary of the walking tour undertaken with Yeovil Vision on 8th March 2010, supplemented by relevant sections of the current UDF most of which is still relevant. This is included as a way of identifying what Yeovil Vision see as their priorities around the town and how these priorities have shifted since the last issue of the UDF in December 2005.

BDP. March 2010





2.0 Key Opportunities

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2.0 Key Opportunities

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Our initial meeting with Yeovil Vision and walking tour identified around 12 potential project sites around the town centre.

1. Maltravers House
2. Petters House car park
3. Princess Street Phase 2
4. Cattle Market site
5. Quedam extension
6. Bus Station
7. Earle Street & Wyndham Street sites
8. Newton Road car park
9. Newton Road Creamery
10. Key Market House site
11. Foundary site (currently being developed)
12. Mill Lane Trading Estate & car park



2.0 Key Opportunities

Many of these sites have been subject to previous development and / or economic appraisals over the last few years. Many of these studies were made available in hard copy at the meeting with the current UDF being sent on CD at a later date. The UDF is due to be up-dated and it is the hope of Yeovil Vision that the Economic Appraisal for Yeovil now to be carried out by Ekosgen and BDP will make a direct contribution to the new UDF.

The documents made available were:

- 1 Yeovil Bus Station - Feasibility Study Report, Dec 2009
- 2 Market Street Area - Development Brief, June 2007
- 3 Market Street Public Realm - Outline Proposals, July 2009
- 4 Reckleford Boulevard - Outline Proposals Dec 2009
- 5 Town Centre Shopper Report, Nov 2008

Initial discussions with officers (Kim Close, Martin Woods) during the walking tour revealed the following observations:

1. Maltravers house

Currently under occupied and poor quality 1960s office building and carpark. Potential for redevelopment or refurbishment. Alder King have carried out a study into the feasibility of refurbishment so we understand. The conclusions are not known.



Maltravers House

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2. Petters House Car park

Natural topography of site would allow the development of a decked car park over this site. Possibility of up-grading the Octagon Theatre into a larger conference facility. There are currently no quality hotels in Yeovil to support this however.



Petters House Car park



3. Princess Street Phase 2

Princess Street is in need of traffic calming measures along Park Road in order to slow down traffic coming off Queensway. This area has also been subject to grant-aided improvements to shop-fronts. Also located here are Nos. 54 & 56, now home to Battens solicitors. These fine 18th century houses are in good repair and greatly enhance this end of Princess Street. The pedestrian under-pass, however is subject to vandalism and measures must be taken in the future to enhance what is a major pedestrian link to Yeovil District Hospital.



No. 54 Princess Street



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The hospital is disconnected from the town by Queensway which presents a very effective barrier to the north and west of the town which has long been recognized as a problem. The studies which have been commissioned into creating a Boulevard of the ring-road seek to address this severance.

It is hoped that, through physical enhancement of pedestrian links the Court Ash car park will become the favoured destination of those visiting the hospital which will enhance Council revenue and bring more visitors into the town centre.



Pedestrian sub-way to Hospital



To Court Ash carpark

4. Cattle Market

The Cattle Market site has been subject to various proposals over recent years. The latest, by BDP was submitted in June 2007. A complex site of strategic importance to the town and highly visible from the ring road. The study investigated a number of different schemes with varying degrees of residential and retail mix. It has rightly been identified as an ideal location for a new mixed use, residential town centre development and will allow the following:

- Opportunity for “gateway” buildings of significant height
- Creation of an urban residential neighbourhood
- Maximising open space and views out to the town centre
- Creation of new retail units on Market Street
- Increased pedestrian permeability
- Simple pedestrian link to the Quedam Centre extension



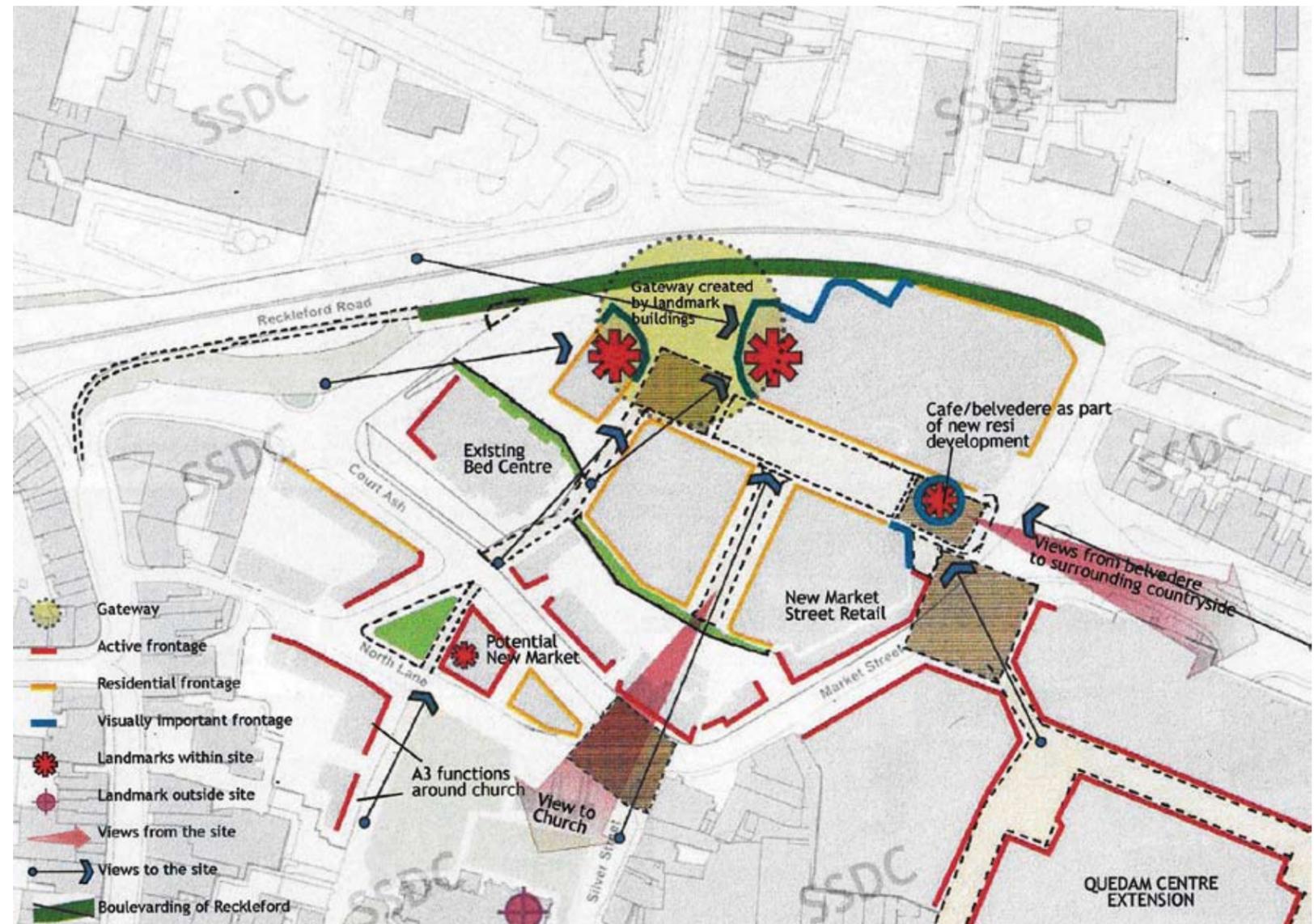
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The concept design proposed the following:

- Creating a Gateway to the site framed by two landmark buildings of between 6 to 9 stories together with a public square.
- Providing a new residential neighbourhood using the natural topography to suggest a “hill town”.
- Exploiting open space and natural views which are available from the site to reinforce movement to and from the town centre.
- Provision of new retail within Market Street with retail frontages on both sides of the street.
- Reinforcing pedestrian routes through the site area to the Quedam Centre and to the town centre via Court Ash.
- Enhancement of Rockleford - building contributing to an active street frontage with the possibility that it become a boulevard with streetscape treatment and tree planting.
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5. The Quedam Centre extension

This Quedam extension extends the existing open retail development of Vicarage Walk and would also connect with the proposed Cattle Market site. The development would cover the area from Market Street to the bus station and allow an internal loop of additional retail space within the Vicarage Walk scheme as well as a corner connection with the Cattle Market development.

6. Bus Station site

The Bus Station site too, has been subject to various studies and investigations. It is approached through the Glover's Walk retail scheme which is "low offer". The bus station itself does very little to enhance the visitor experience (see photo) and is largely typical of many such termini developed during the 1960s and 1970s.

The document: Yeovil Bus Station Feasibility Study (Studio Real, December 2004) Reviews potential alternative sites including a re-configured bus station in the current location. The document concludes that three options are worth further investigation: Options 1, 5a & 5C

OPTION 1



OPTION 5A



OPTION 5C



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7. Earle Street & Wyndham Street sites

These sites are included here as they appear on a marked-up plan of the town which was passed to BDP by Chereen Smith the Regeneration and Renewal Officer. The sites are referred to in the current UDF:

Central Road, Lower Middle, Wyndham and Earle Streets Site Brief

The site lies within the town centre and the East End Regeneration Area. The site brief outlines the following opportunities for the site:

- Infill development and new built frontage to maintain and enhance the existing character of the Earle Street, Wyndham Street and Middle Street frontages
- A central shared amenity space
- Retention of the Elephant and Castle Hotel; a key corner-stone building
- Possible vehicular access from Central Road

The site was not visited during our walking tour.



8. Newton Road car park

From the UDF:

5.2.3 Newton Road Car Park / Coldharbour Lane Site Brief

The Newton Road / Coldharbour Lane site lies within the town centre and the East End Regeneration Area. The site brief outlines the following opportunities for the site:

- Mixed use development in the town centre
- Conservation and enhancement of the character of the surrounding built form
- Development not to consist of a 'signature building'
- Loading bay to Newton Road



9. Newton Road Creamery

See photo to right. Designated for residential conversion

Newton Road Creamery



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10. Key Markets House site

From the UDF:

5.2.5 Key Market House and Surrounding Area Site Brief

The site is located in the heart of Yeovil's retail core. The brief aspires to promote a high quality mixed use and live/work development which demonstrates an appreciation of the following principles:

- Frontage onto Middle Street and Old Station Road, recognising the scale and mass of surrounding buildings
- Design which complements the design features of the surrounding buildings
- Recognition of public views into the site
- Incorporation of the existing Liberal Club building
- A layout which seeks to integrate with adjoining uses
- Meaningful, well landscaped amenity space
- Conformity with the principles set out in the annex to PPG3 "Better Places to Live by Design"



11. Foundry site

From the UDF:

5.2.2 Foundry House / Mill Lane Supplementary Planning Guidance Foundry House is a 0.48 hectare site in the sole ownership of SSDC which lies in a strategically important location between the town centre and Country Park and adjacent to the Yeo Leisure Complex. The Foundry House / Mill Lane SPG document outlines the following opportunities on the site:

- Potential for a civic focus on the site related to the 'Waterfront' area and Yeo Leisure Complex
- Gateway to the Country Park
- Mixed use development
- Significant regeneration potential in adjoining sites.

The site is currently being prepared for the first stage of development. A number of eco-homes is planned which will achieve very high standards of sustainability (Code 6 under the Code for Sustainable Homes).



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12. Mill Lane Trading Estate & car park

From the UDF:

Former Box Factory

A 0.5 ha site which is owned by SSDC and is currently being used as surface car parking. The site is adjacent to the Stars Lane car park and, taken together, the sites have considerable potential for decked car parking and mixed use development.

The site has, in the past been seen as being suitable for a food store (Waitrose). At present there are (we believe) no parties interested in developing this site.



3.0 Analysis

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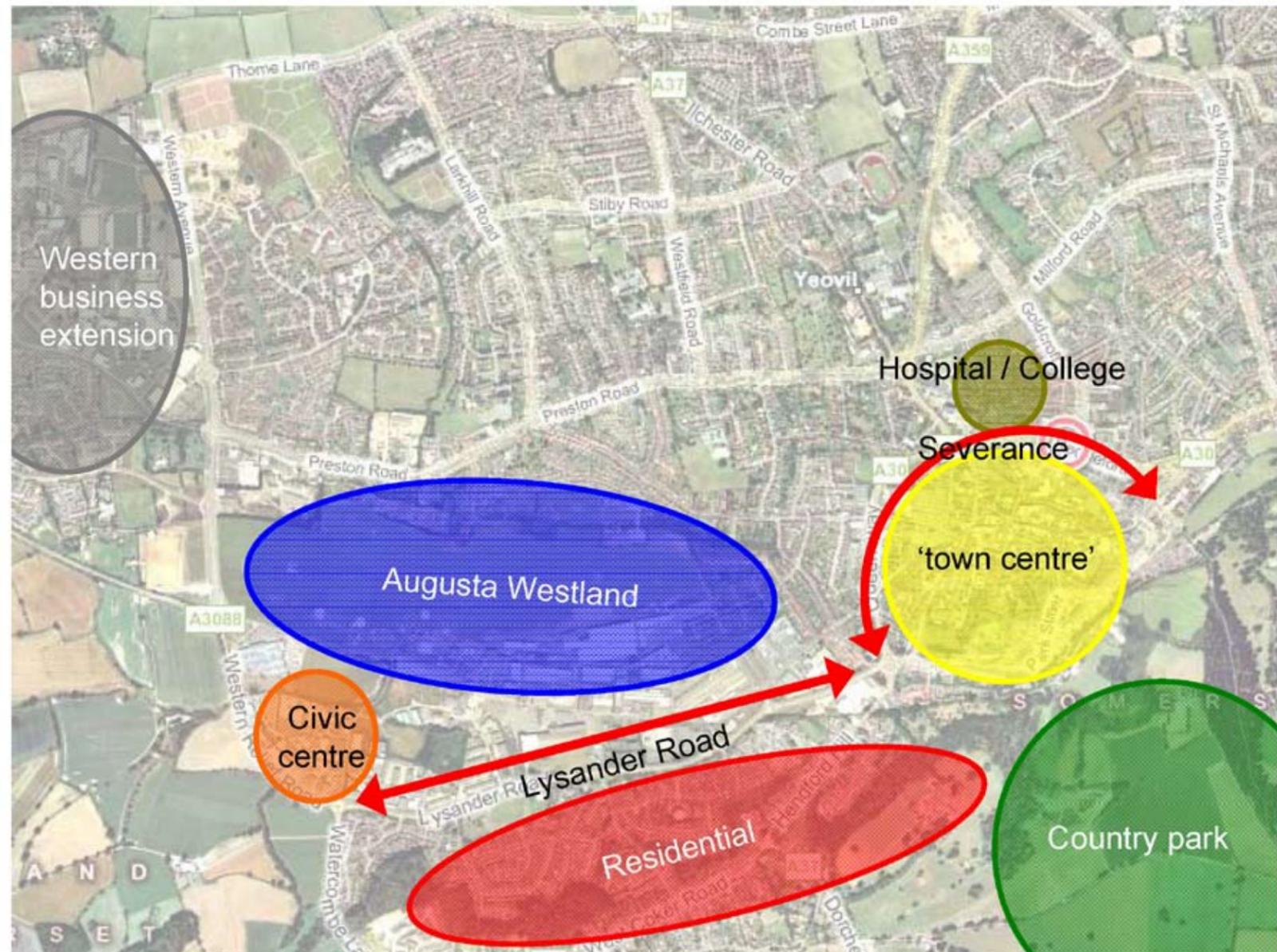
The wider environs

The historic town centre of Yeovil is today just one part of what makes up the town of Yeovil. As the diagram shows, the town centre functions of Yeovil are now spread across quite a wide geographic area. The Civic Offices for example, sit towards the western end of the town centre, connected to the historic town centre by Lysander Road. The nature of the local economy, with a high degree of specialised engineering and manufacturing, necessarily gives rise to large scale industrial operations and the relatively unique feature of a large airfield area in close proximity to the town centre.

Nevertheless, much of the office based employment growth - in addition to the relocation of the civic offices out of town - has taken place within these more industrial areas away from the town centre. This includes, for example the offices of Yarlington Homes and other professional firms. These have contributed to the creation the 'Western Extension' which is separated from the town centre by the Augusta Westland airfield and complex. As a result, the town functions are now quite disparate and the role of the historic core is limited to retail, some leisure and some residual civic functions (courts and council one-stop shop).

For the short to medium term at least, the core town functions will remain somewhat disparate, making linked trips to Yeovil more difficult than in a compact town centre where all the key functions are concentrated in one, 'walkable' centre. Therefore there are two critical factors to the future success of the historic core:

- Firstly it is vital that the residual functions, notably retail and leisure, better meet local need and are able to stem and reverse leakage of spend from the Yeovil catchment area. According to recent retail capacity studies there is scope for significant increases in the retail floorspace in the town, whilst in the leisure sector, recent investments demonstrate that there is a market for more and better leisure and recreation in the town.



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- Secondly, it is vital that connectivity is maintained and enhanced; for the time being at least, the success of Yeovil town centre will depend on the ease of moving between the different destinations within the town centre environs, including the historic core, the western extension, Lysdander Road and the council offices, the hospital and college and the railway station for example. Whilst the aspiration must remain to achieve a modal shift away from private car use to more sustainable modes of transport including buses and cycling, for the short term at least, car based use will remain very important.

In the longer term, we would want to see office based employment increase in the town centre, to further drive footfall and animation. The council has already developed a successful innovation centre though this is in an edge of town location. However, for appropriate businesses, the next step could be a move to town centre office space.

Based on the above assessment, we consider that the following themes should be prioritised in the town centre strategy:

Shopping in Yeovil

Retail remains a core function of the historic town centre and it is vital that the future success of the sector is assured. Retail capacity assessments have demonstrated that there is a need for additional floorspace in Yeovil town centre and whilst the impression is that there is a reasonable presence of 'high street' brands, it is clear that additional floorspace is required.

Our initial appraisal has identified three potential sites, all of which have been looked at to some degree previously. These are:

- Cattle market - a large site with a prominent frontage to the road bypassing the town centre. An earlier study concluded that an element of retail could be accommodated here as part of a mixed use, residential led scheme. However, establishing good connections to the existing retail areas is difficult and the location is somewhat removed from the core shopping areas.

- Quedam centre extension - The Quedam centre is the main shopping centre in Yeovil and there is potential to extend the centre to the north. The centre is well located with respect to the bus station but an extension would further shift the centre of gravity of shopping to the north, away from the existing 'high street' retailing.
- South Street/Middle Street - There are a number of sites including council owned car parks that could be redeveloped for additional retail floorspace. This may have the advantage of reinforcing the existing retail loop. However, we are not aware that any schemes have been developed or proposed for these sites to date so the interest of the market in these locations is not proven.

We recommend that both the Quedam and South Street / Middle Street options are explored further.

In addition to the main retail project, we have also suggested a 'retail incubator' project. This works in the same way as any business incubator project, with a private or public sector provider of retail space on easy terms with back up business and training support. This would be aimed at local, independent business.

Hotel

In addition to shopping, a core function of the historic town centre must be as a destination for visitors, including accommodation options. Visitors are likely to include business custom, related to Augusta Westland, their suppliers and related industries and clients, holiday makers en-route to the southwest of England and the weekend break market. No longer is it essential to have high profile road side sites, as much trade is booked on line where brand, price and broad location are more important than visibility. Moreover, to generate a positive experience and repeat custom, it is important that hotels should be located in attractive parts of the town centre. Some small hotels are already available but we feel there is still a significant opportunity for a branded hotel in Yeovil town centre.

We have identified three possible sites:

- 'Somerfield site', opposite the new leisure complex - combining a pleasant immediate townscape, and close to attractions including the cinema/leisure complex and the country park.
- Maltravers House - Or another site in or around the car park. A central location close to the theatre / future conference centre with the prospect of a future aspect over a new civic space as the car park is redeveloped
- Cattle market - Offering a 'traditional' site with a high profile frontage to the main road passing the town centre and also convenient for the hospital, so of possible value to NHS business.

Our initial preference is for the Somerfield site, to consolidate a visitor offer in this part of the town centre. This would we hope stimulate the development of further restaurants and cafes with a broad appeal to visitors and families daytime and evening.

Workplace

We have referred to the need to attract office based employment use back into the town centre. Given the relocation of the council offices out of the town centre and the more recent development of offices for Yarlinton Homes and other professional and creative services in the Western Extension area, it is not obvious where occupiers will be drawn from in the short term. We have suggested that office based business that needs 'move-on' accommodation from the Innovation Centre should be able to access office accommodation in the town centre. To date we have only suggested one option:

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- Maltravers house - refurbish building, part of which may be let as 'move-on' accommodation from the Innovation Centre.

Residential

We have included town centre living as a priority for Yeovil town centre in the short term, though we would caution against simply identifying residential as a solution where there is no short term opportunity for commercial development. In the context of significant housing growth it is prudent to retain development capacity for future commercial development to support the demands of an increasing catchment. However, there are clear opportunities to increase activity and animation for the town centre through selective residential led schemes.

We have considered a number of schemes and would support two short term opportunities:

- The eco- village - extending into the town centre from the south
- The cattle market site - The possibility of looking at part of the site for accommodation related to the hospital e.g. key worker housing

Transport and movement

We have commented above on the need for ensuring a high degree of connectivity between the various attractions and destinations in Yeovil and its environs. This leads us to two fairly simple conclusions:

- Car parking - Car parking capacity needs to be maintained through car parking could be consolidated into key locations that best serve the retail loop and main leisure areas for example. The pricing strategy also needs to be reviewed to ensure that town centre users are encouraged to make linked visits with a high degree of convenience. In other words pricing should allow for sufficient dwell time in the town centre to combine shopping with leisure for example.
- Bus station - We have reviewed the options study previously produced for the bus station and would suggest that no radical alteration is required, though the public realm and the linkage to the town centre should both be enhanced.

