



EXMOUTH PLACEMAKING PLAN FOR THE TOWN CENTRE AND THE SEAFRONT

DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS

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1.0 Introduction

This Placemaking Plan for Exmouth (also referred to as EPP) aims to deliver a coherent shared vision for Exmouth Town and Seafront. The Placemaking Plan will provide a strategic direction for the transformation of the place through placemaking opportunities for key character areas that will contribute positively to the future socio-economic sustainability of the town. These will include investment opportunities associated with developing and improving areas and opportunities for investment in the public realm and infrastructure.

As part of the Placemaking Plan and to guide the future developments within the town, a set of Development Briefs are included in this document to inform future development and other interventions associated with the placemaking plan that will deliver benefits of increased civic pride, and attractiveness to the local community, visitors, and investors.

The Placemaking Plan will provide the principal policy guide and plan for achieving a vision for sustainable Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront for a period of up to ten years. The Placemaking Plan is designed to be used by the Council and its stakeholders to deliver against the council's and stakeholders' key aims.

The Placemaking Plan identifies several interventions, of which, the short term interventions that suggest physical and spatial reorganisation are considered for the development briefs. Listed are the ones that are included in this document:

- **Queen's Drive:** A physical intervention to strengthen the experience at Queen's Drive Space as a family hub by unlocking the events space at the rear, and reconfiguring the interface to integrate the events space.
- **Tower Street Church:** Redesigning the public realm to be pedestrian priority shared spaces.
- **Beach Gardens Car Park:** Transformation into a public space for temporary activities and cultural programming.
- **Pier Head Car Park:** Creating a new public space for enjoyment of the seafront, creating a destination.
- **Station Gateway:** Reorganisation of the station area to create an arrival public space and improved leisure and culture facility.



Figure 01: Exmouth Placemaking Plans and Development Brief Sites

2.0 Queen's Drive Space

Context

The Queen's Drive Space (QDS) is an events, recreation, and entertainment space with facilities for all age groups. Since its refurbishment in the last few years, the space has become a popular destination along the seafront. Integral to the cluster of entertainment and sports-related activities, Queen's Drive Space offers an experience that changes seasonally.

QDS is owned and managed by the East Devon County Council. The Jurassic Theme activation is consistent with the rest of the town centre spaces.

The focus of this intervention is the extension to the rear of the QDS to create a new events space that seamlessly connects with the existing space. To extend the space, the huts/ bar will be reorganised within the existing public area to create an entrance and establish a visual connection.

Site Development Objectives

The vision and objective for this site is to enhance the experience, its use and adaptability as a recreation and entertainment place.

- Create an inclusive events space to the north of the QDS.
- Space for public art, seating and lighting.
- Innovative use of lighting to create an attractive ambience along the seafront.
- High quality materials to be consistent with the existing QDS public realm.
- Seamless connection between the seafront, the space and the events area.
- Provide events infrastructure, sheltered seating, bins, CCTV, storage facilities, etc.

Site Development Guidelines

Uses and Activities

The newly created events space will be fully equipped with facilities to showcase various events - cultural, art, performance, sports and similar. A sheltered pavilion seating is proposed to the northern edge that enables use and enjoyment during rainy or sunny days. Creation of this events space will add approximately 3200 sqm to the existing QDS.

Landscaping and Materiality

The paving materials should be consistent with the existing QDS public realm. The pavilion seating should be innovative and iconic using marine grade materials that are durable, easy to maintain, and sustainable. The design and material vocabulary could be inspired from the play area.

Access and Movement

The access to the events space is created through QDS, where the level difference is mitigated via steps / ramp

that will seamlessly connect the two spaces. The zone to the east of the Bar is re-organised by relocating the two retail huts towards the western part of the space, thereby opening up the view into the events space.

A vehicular access is provided to the east of the play area that allows drop / pick of the events equipments.

Conclusion

The extension to Queen's Drive Space provides an opportunity to enhance the vitality along the seafront. This brief is intended for procuring a landscape architect / designer to enable design and construction. In addition to the design development, it is expected that a maintenance schedule, material and furniture procurement schedule and operational management schedule for the space are provided by the designer & contractor.



Figure 02: Queens Drive Space Site Context

1. Queens Drive Public Space
2. Play Area
3. Events Space
4. Ocean Exmouth



Figure 03: Queens Drive Space Site Vision

3.0 Beach Gardens

Context

The Beach Gardens Car Park is a fairly used car park by the visitors to the seafront and The Pavilion. Currently owned and operated by East Devon District Council, the space caters to 26 car parking spaces and is approximately 1000 sqm in area. The adjacent green spaces are used for recreation and events, such as the setting up of the Ferris Wheel and the Summer Fair during tourist season.

With the Beach Gardens green spaces being a hub of activity, it's time to consider a shift in use of the car park too. The sheltered seating areas along the edges offer a pleasant retreat, and the central space, currently a car park, could be transformed to reduce the dominance of cars in Exmouth, thereby enhancing the seafront experience.

Site Development Objectives

The objectives for the site are as follows:

- Create a public space that allows events and adaptable activities, including recreation.
- Space for public art, seating and lighting.
- Provide events infrastructure.
- Provide seating and potentially a creative shelter / pavilion.
- Include cycle infrastructure to allow cyclists to visit the space.
- Provide a play area that can be used by all age groups.
- Explore potential for a playful water feature.
- Create an integrated landscape and events space.

Site Development Guidelines

Uses and Activities

The transformation of the Beach Gardens Car park into a public space should be understood in the context of the vision for the Placemaking Plan. It is envisioned that the character area is set to undergo significant transformations focusing on sport, arts, culture, and recreation. The Pavilion is a key cultural and entertainment destination. The Beach Gardens Car Park will be re purposed to offer high-quality public space, complementing the Esplanade as a hub for arts, sports, and culture.

This site will be revitalised to cater to all age groups, providing facilities and activities that enhance the community's quality of life. The new public space as a high-quality areas, will be an inviting and lively space. The redesigned Beach Gardens will be an adaptable space for events, which will determine the layout the organisation of street furniture.

Landscaping and Materiality

Material used for the new public space should be consistent with the paving, lighting, and street furniture vocabulary used along the seafront.

Access and Movement

The existing car parking within the space will be relocated and accommodated within the on-street car park in the vicinity. Primarily as a pedestrian space, it will be seamlessly connected with the walking and cycling space along the seafront.

Conclusion

Unlocking of this site is subject to relocation of the parking spaces. Whereby the rationale should prioritise the overall vitality and activation of the seafront over parking numbers.



Figure 04: Beach Gardens Car Park Site Context

1. Beach Gardens Car Park
2. Exmouth Pavilion & Cafe
3. The Octagon

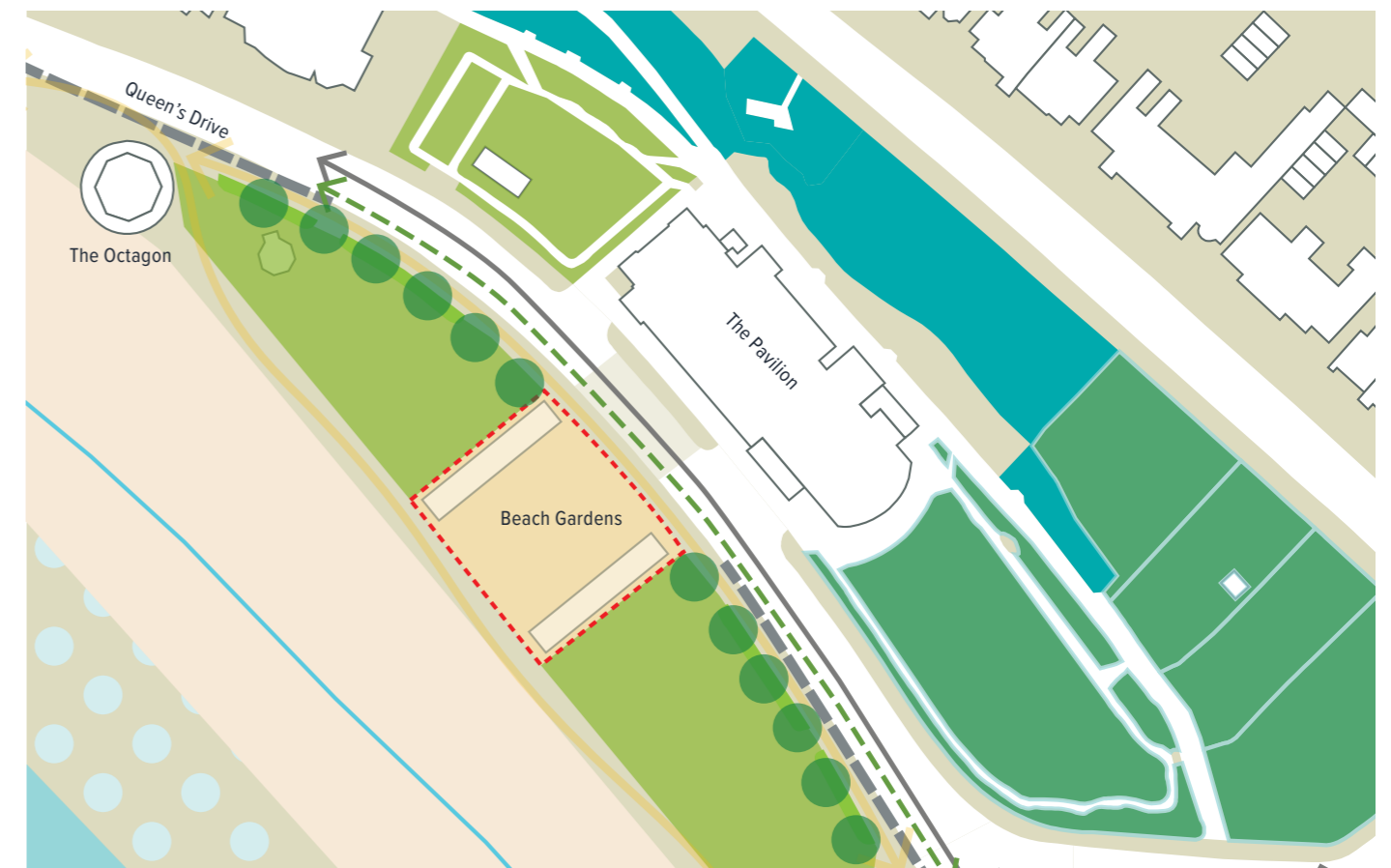


Figure 05: Beach Gardens Vision

4.0 Pier Head

Context

The Pier Head, a unique space to the south of the Marina, currently serves as a car park with approximately 70 spaces. It's also a bustling meeting point for boat rides, managed and operated by several private operators.

This expansive area, with its stunning views of the sea and the estuary, offers a distinctive spatial relationship between the Marina and the seafront, making it a site of immense potential for transformation.

Along the western edge is the ferry terminal, which uses the north-west corner of the site for storage and ancillary uses. The garages to the northern edge, an integral part of the residential development, will be retained with full access, ensuring the security and convenience of the residents.

The Pier Head, spanning approximately 2200 sqm, is not just a site for transformation into a versatile public space. It's a crucial arrival and gateway into Exmouth, welcoming visitors via ferries.

Site Development Objectives

The design objectives for this space are in line with the overall vision of the Placemaking Plan that aims to create high quality place, improved connectivity, and better relationship between the station gateway, town centre and the seafront. This space is critical in achieving the vision. As such, it's not just a space that demands a high-quality environment, but a space that can significantly enhance the sense of arrival for all, making it a key element of our proposal.

The design objectives include:

- Create an arrival space to Exmouth with all necessary infrastructure.
- Provide events infrastructure, such as pop-up electrical points.
- Design an iconic pavilion that also acts as a seating / waiting area.

Site Development Guidelines

Uses and Activities

Pier Head public space will play a dual role, as a recreational space but also an arrival space by ferries. Uncluttered environment with appropriate infrastructure like seating, pavilion, and lighting will create a transition area for the passengers alighting/ boarding the ferries. The access to the garages will need to be demarcated to limit the use of the space by the vehicles. Innovative and ambient lighting is recommended to create a space that will allow enjoying natural light quality during dawn and dusk.

Landscape and Materiality

High quality and marine grade materials are recommended in the public realm. An iconic pavilion should be designed using materials and styles that reflect the maritime heritage of Exmouth.

Access and Movement

The car parking spaces removed from Pier Head should be accommodated / consolidated in alternative parking areas in Exmouth. The access to the garages is retained, however, should be demarcated to maintain safe and pedestrian oriented environment. Pier Head is already an destination for tourists on boarding the ferries or boat rides, however, legibility of the newly transformed space should be encouraged via improved signages.



Figure 06: Pier Head Car Park Site Context

- 1. Pier Head Car Park
- 2. Marina



Figure 07: Pier Head Vision

5.0 Station Gateway

Context

The site is a approximately 19700 sqm in area and located to the west of Exmouth Town Centre. Currently, the site used as a railway station building, retail, surface car park, leisure centre and a office / commercial use by the Great Western Railway Staff Association (GWRSA). Accessed from Imperial Road and The Royal Avenue, the car park offers 240 spaces and free motorcycle parking. The site also offers a public toilet facility adjacent to the station building.

The leisure centre as art of the East Devon County Council leisure facilities is now operated and managed by a Community Benefit Society offering several facilities within the centre.

The GWRSA building situated to the west of the leisure centre is a low rise building used as a social club.

The car park existing level which is below the estuary levels pose a challenge for water drainage and consists of an attenuation tank to the western end that requires regular maintenance.

The Levelling Up gateway project proposal forms a context to this development brief.



Figure 8: Station Gateway Area Site Context

1. Exmouth Railway Station
2. Marks & Spencer Store
3. Exmouth Leisure Centre
4. Great Western Railway Staff Association
5. Imperial Road Car Park

Site Development Objectives

This development brief is a set of high level principles to shape the future development of the site. The brief sets a vision for the redevelopment of the site and includes site specific placemaking principles. The development objectives are based on the aspirations and views of the community gathered at the two workshops conducted as part of the Placemaking Plan.

Several opportunities were identified by the community for the Estuary and the Gateway area:

- Potential for a park and ride outside of the town to reduce dominance of cars within the town
- Improved facilities such as public toilets, cycle infrastructure - cycle lanes and cycle hire, improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity providing continuity
- Better signage and tourist information
- Reduce presence of campervans and motorhomes within the town centre and the estuary
- Improvements to the estuary area with better connections and better landscaping.
- Publicly owned land that requires commercial investment from both private and public partnerships.
- The area can become a focal point for the entry to Exmouth.

These opportunities and community aspirations are reflected into development objectives that enable spatial organisation of the space around the station. The development objectives are defined as follows:

- Create an attractive new place which fosters the growth of a strong community and good quality of life by providing leisure infrastructure and facilities where people can meet and appreciate the views across the Estuary.
- Create an appropriate built form which integrates into the surrounding area and encourages active lifestyles by providing safe attractive new public spaces and direct links to local facilities and active travel routes;
- Respond to the character and appearance of the adjoining town centre and safeguard the views across towards the Estuary
- Respond to the challenge of climate change by prioritising walking and cycling routes, integrating SUDs as part of the overall development strategy and incorporating means to reduce energy use and provide low carbon energy and heat choices.
- Encourage active travel through the provision of cycle and footpaths and provide connections to the town centre and the seafront.
- It is important that the scale of the built form respects the surrounding area and that the height of any development responds positively to the dominant urban grain of the wider area.
- Meet the current needs of the community and enhance the capacity of the site.

Site Development Guidelines

Uses and Activities

Increase the capacity of the site through new and enhanced existing uses reorganised to release land for a new public space. The core objective of the placemaking plan is to improve use of underutilised areas and enhance the experiential quality of spaces by introducing new land uses or clustering the activities and strengthening relationships. Creation of a new public space within this site is the focus, through which the relationship between the town centre, estuary, Imperial Recreation Ground and the railway station is strengthened.

The following land uses are recommended to create an appealing and acceptable mix:

- Public space
- Retail - remains as existing
- Car parking with enhanced capacity in a new built
- New Leisure Centre with enhanced facilities (swimming pool, courts, gym, changing rooms, etc.)
- New Theatre to enhance cultural activities
- Bus stops reconfigured
- GWRSA club
- Tourist information centre
- Play areas

High Quality Development

The strategic location at the station gateway, the development will be of high quality architecture that will be iconic following from the success of the Sideshore, but sympathetic to the context.

High quality building and facade materials will be inspired from its Maritime heritage and proximity to the seafront. Materials will be marine grade and suitable for exposure to marine environment along the estuary and the seafront.

Because this development will be highly visible, the principal façades should be attractive, dynamic and well proportioned, and the treatment of the massing, scale, layout and elevations will need to be very sensitively developed.

The development should aim to be designed based on net zero carbon building principles that will maximise energy efficiency by encouraging innovative use of materials and systems.

Height, Massing and Scale

Currently, the site is underutilised with large areas of surface car park. To release the land for a public space, the existing and enhanced activities will need to be consolidated on one part of the site. The activities consolidated in a building will allow a state-of-the-art facility to be created and an arrival public space in between the station and the new building.

The building will be visible on arrival at the station and by road via Imperial Road, hence the height, scale and massing need to be in harmony with the immediate context. The site to the west of the new building is a recreation and sports ground, which means the building will be visible from all 4 sides.

The building is not expected to be over 3 storeys to accommodate all the new uses. Using innovative materials and fenestrations will soften the presence and scale of the building. Inherently, as the building is used for car parking and a leisure centre, it will necessitate a larger footprint and hence scale.

Views of the building will need to be thoroughly evaluated. As part of the scheme design process a detailed computer generated massing model should be prepared.

The facade adjacent to the Imperial Road and the new public space should be designed innovatively to create a strong seamless relationship between inside and outside of the building. Creative use of vertical greening and facade design should be encouraged to sensitively mask the plant and equipment rooms.

Setbacks and Relationship to the Street and Public Space

Along Imperial Road the set back should be sufficient to allow wider pavements, tree planting, bus and cycle infrastructure. The façades at the ground level could be active frontages to create a pedestrian friendly environment. The quality of public realm should be consistent with the new public space to the east of the building, creating continuity.

The setback from The Royal Avenue should be wider to allow views of the Estuary and the Imperial Recreation Ground. The vehicular access to the car park will be from The Royal Avenue.

The facade along the new public space should be active and contributing to the activation of the space. The interface with the public space and the link with the Estuary is the critical success factor for this development.

Access and Movement

Pedestrian movement: The arrival public space is a pedestrianised space with a tourist information kiosk. The pedestrian desire line towards the Estuary, and the town centre are not impacted by this development. The public space is meant to create a pause point to allow decision making and contribute to intuitive navigation.

Vehicular: It is a design objective of the development that the existing Imperial Road Car Park is replaced within the development as a multi-storey building. The junction between The Royal Avenue and Imperial Road should be reconfigured to an efficient footprint. The Royal Avenue that serves the rear of the Station is likely to remain.

The access to the new multi-storey car park will be from the eastern or the southern end of the building.

Public Open Space

The integration of a public space within the scheme is key to its success. An important characteristic of this space will be the views it offers of the Estuary. There will be a balance between hard and soft landscaping offering an adaptable space for events.

Conclusion

This site presents a superb opportunity for a development to add to the life, vitality, interest and enjoyment of Exmouth. The site demands a high quality, imaginative and sympathetic design response. The brief is intended to be part of the procurement of an architect / masterplanner. The smoothest route to a top quality development will be to continue the dialogue throughout the design process. This will be particularly important in the early, concept stages of the design.



Figure 9: Station Gateway Area Site Opportunities

The Station Gateway Vision

The primary goal in The Gateway area is to enhance the arrival experience into Exmouth. A key to achieving this by reorganisation of the space, by consolidating the leisure centre, Great Western Railway Staff Association (GWRSA) facility, and the surface car park on the Imperial Road Car Park site. This consolidation will allow a new state-of-the-art leisure centre with improved facilities and infrastructure and a multi-storey car park, which will not only facilitate increased parking capacity but also contribute to the efficient management and reduction of traffic in the vicinity.

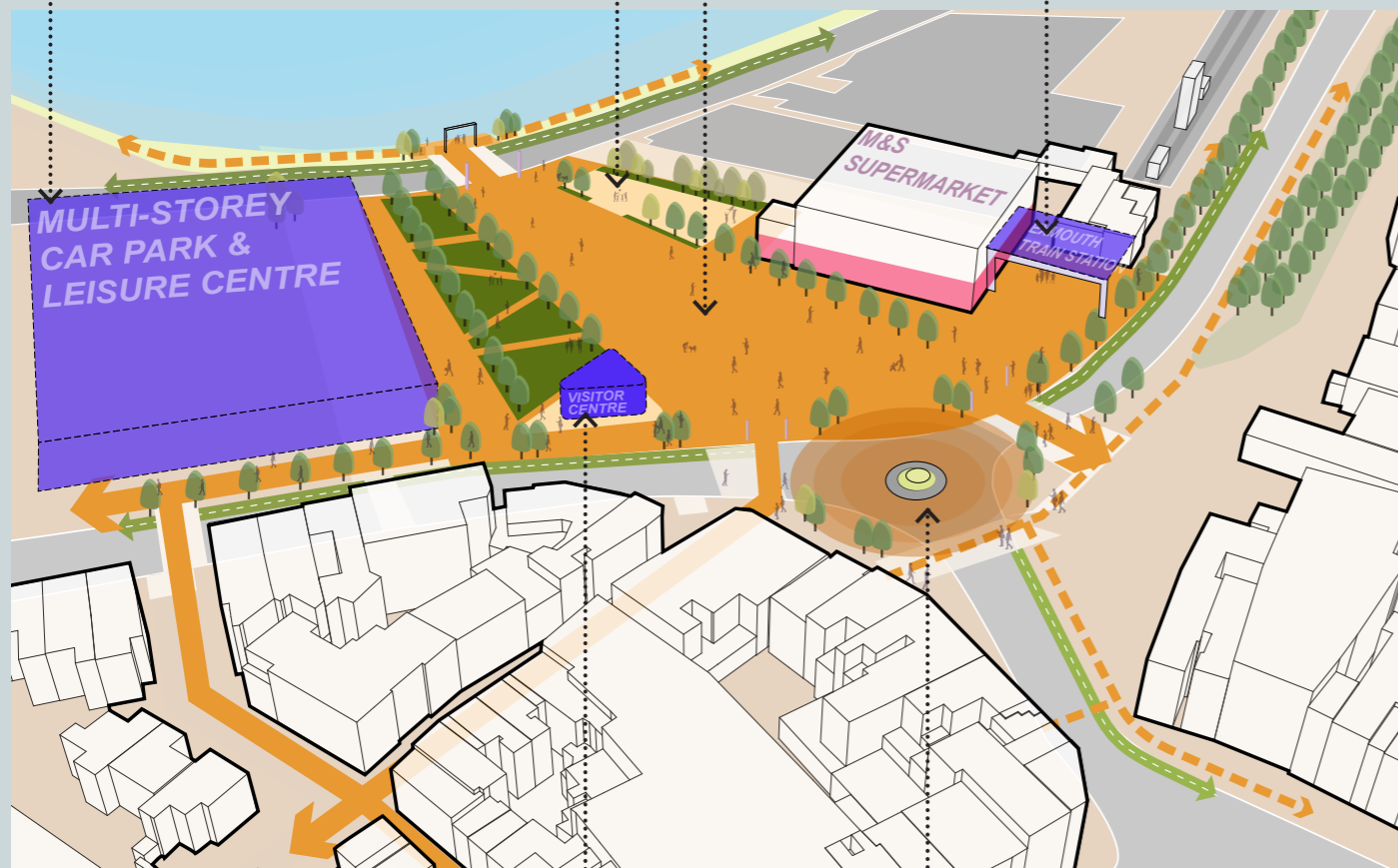
This move will release the land currently occupied by the leisure centre to create a new public square to serve as an inviting and welcoming entrance to Exmouth. It will also offer breathtaking views of the estuary, allowing visitors and residents to appreciate this natural asset. The square's design may incorporate a visitors' centre, a playground, and well-manicured green spaces, enhancing the overall aesthetic and functionality of the area.

A new leisure centre and GWRSA facility with a multi-storey car park to act as a local park and ride / walk, an transport hub that will consolidate on-street car parking from the vicinity.

A well designed children's play area encouraging use of the space by all age groups and families.

A public space providing views across the Estuary and towards the town centre. Will be designed as an iconic and an adaptable space that could be transformed as an events space.

Extended station forecourt to create a sense of arrival and a decision making point.



A new visitor centre also acting as a placemaking component, an iconic and sculptural design of the centre will become a landmark.

An improved junction designed with sensitive and pedestrian friendly materials that denotes a gateway and a node. The function as a roundabout will be retained.

Figure 10: Vision for Station Gateway



