

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT & GROWTH EXECUTIVE ADVISORY PANEL 31 August 2022

Report Title	Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan	
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List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks to inform Members of the content of the Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan; and to initiate discussions ahead of the Masterplan's presentation to Executive for approval on how the Council can promote a way forward to deliver improvements to the station and investment in the surrounding area.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In 2019, the Northamptonshire Property Partnership, which included Kettering Borough Council, was successful in an application to secure up to £115,000 of capacity funding from One Public Estate Phase 7. This was to prepare a joint Services & Assets Delivery Plan which would establish detailed options for the delivery of housing sites, commercial floor space, and the provision of car parking to serve Kettering railway station. This is referred to as the Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan.
- 2.2 Western Williamson +Partners were appointed as consultants to lead on the development of the document, and formed a Project Board to work alongside it to ensure that key partners were aligned. The Board included representatives from the Council, Network Rail, East Midlands Railway and Northamptonshire County Council Highways.
- 2.3 Early pieces of work involved identifying constraints and opportunities with the site. One such issue was around conflict that occurs at the station entrance with

pedestrians/cyclists, drop-off and pick up, taxis and car parking traffic all trying to use the same space. It was also identified there was opportunity for significant improvements to the immediate environment and enhancing the business potential of the area, including the prospect of a western access to the station platforms and improving accessibility across the line for pedestrians and cyclists, not just those using the rail service.

- 2.4 During the development of the Masterplan, the Covid-19 pandemic influenced the parameters of the project, significantly reducing the numbers of commuters using the services provided and raising doubts as to whether they would return with the same frequency or at all. This clearly also had implications for car parking requirements, which is land hungry. A reduced requirement could open more land up for potential development opportunities.
- 2.5 A phased strategy was agreed, with five interlinked strands to it. This involved a change to the parking strategy and a new interchange/plaza on the eastern site of the station as phase 1, before creating a new access and car parking on the western side of the station, further development of open space for housing, and environmental improvements associated with the Slade Brook.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Members note and endorse the content of this report and the Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan; and agree comments which will be forwarded to Executive for consideration in the Masterplan's approval and agreeing ways to bring projects forward.

Reason for Recommendation:

- 3.2 To introduce to Members the Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan and agrees ways for taking its findings into investment and redevelopment opportunities for the area.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 In March 2019 Kettering Borough Council, and partners making up the Northamptonshire Property Partnership, were successful in securing £115,000 of capacity funding from One Public Estate Phase 7 to prepare a joint Services & Assets Delivery Plan which would establish detailed options for the delivery of housing sites, commercial floor space, and the provision of car parking to serve Kettering railway station. The award included a sustainability grant of £25,000 which had to be returned before the end of the spend period, leaving £90,000 for investment in the project. The One Public Estate programme is a joint initiative between the Cabinet Office, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Local Government Association. The period of the project was 24 months (starting in June 2019) with multiple partners involved including Network Rail, East Midlands Railway and Northamptonshire County Council.
- 4.2 The purpose of the project was to formulate a Station Quarter Delivery Plan that sets out development principles for housing sites, commercial floorspace, and the provision of car parking to serve the railway station. The Plan was also to design and layout improved access and public realm for a new station forecourt,

including a multimodal interchange area and a potential second entrance to the station from the land to the west, opening up this land as a potential redevelopment opportunity with direct links to access the railway station and the rail network.

- 4.3 This report provides images captured from the Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan. The Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan has been added to the Kettering Area pages of North Northamptonshire Council's website at the following link: [Kettering Station Quarter Report \(December 2021\) - Draft | North Northamptonshire Council - Kettering Area](#)
- 4.4 Weston Williamson +Partners were successful in their tender submission, bringing with them a vast amount of experience in design of railway station schemes. The first task was to identify the extent of the area of focus, which is provided in the aerial map below.

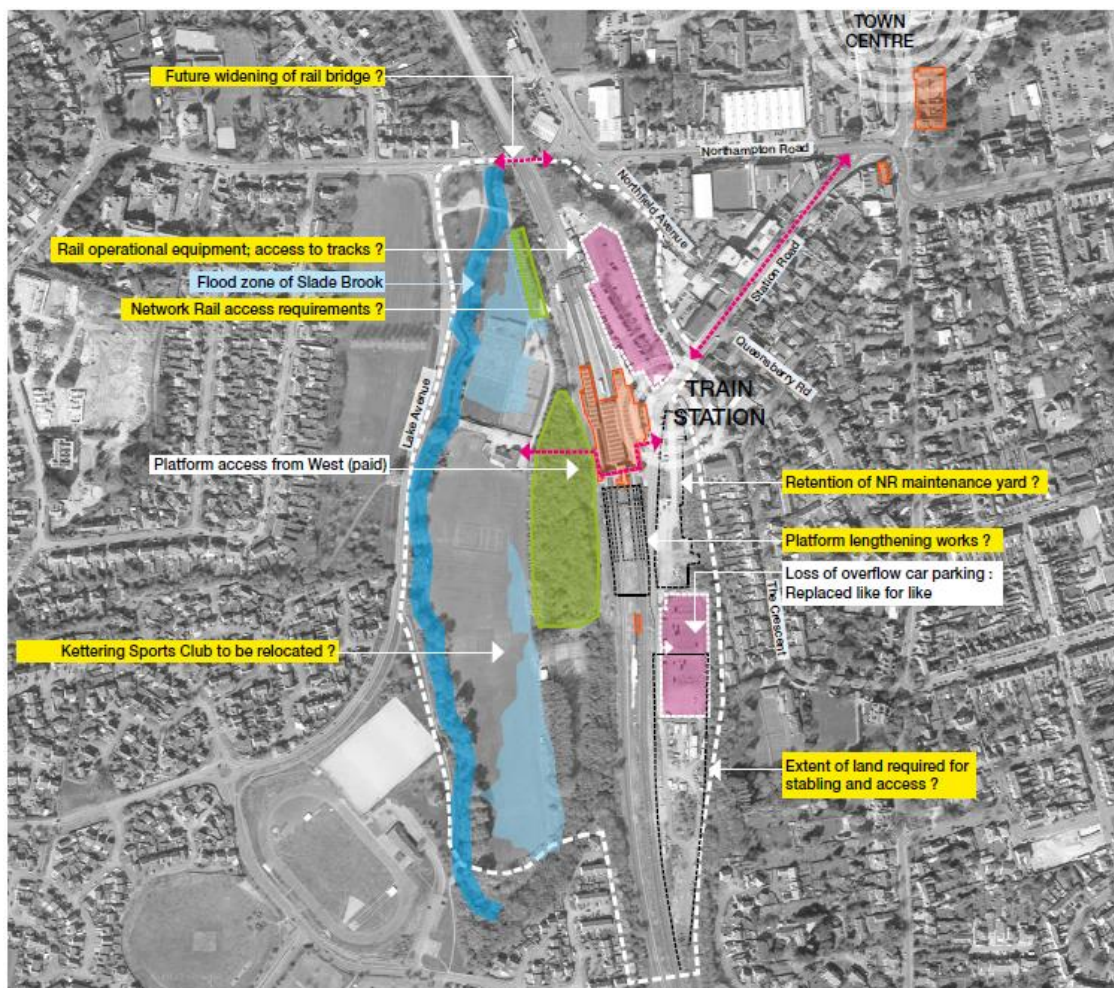


Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan: Area for Consideration

- 4.5 Whilst the study was progressing, East Midlands Railway (the train operator) had its own contractual commitments to meet, including delivery of an additional 200 car parking spaces and 70 cycle parking spaces. In addition, Network Rail had identified land to the south of the station to construct a stabling facility to be used for the maintenance of the electric trains operating on the line.
- 4.6 The study area is mainly in public ownership, with Network Rail owning a major part of the land to the east of the station and railway line, and the Council owning the open space to the west of the station, on either side of Lake Avenue. The Kettering Sports Club owns recreational land to the south of the Council's land.



- 4.7 In terms of methodology, a key objective of the commission was to engage with all key stakeholders, this included the Council, Network Rail, East Midlands Railway, and the Northamptonshire County Council Highways team; Stagecoach as bus service provider was also involved at times.
- 4.8 The group, led by Weston Williamson +Partners initially undertook a baseline assessment to identify constraints and opportunities associated with the delivery of additional car parking facilities and a potential western entrance to the platforms. An initial stakeholder workshop followed which mapped out the group's requirements and aspirations and helped to start drafting options regarding potential car parking locations and intermodal layouts around the station. The point here being that additional car parking at the station was a prerequisite, but space was needing to be found to accommodate improvements to the station entrance for its users, in creating a more attractive environment and setting.



Constraints & opportunities

Site Analysis

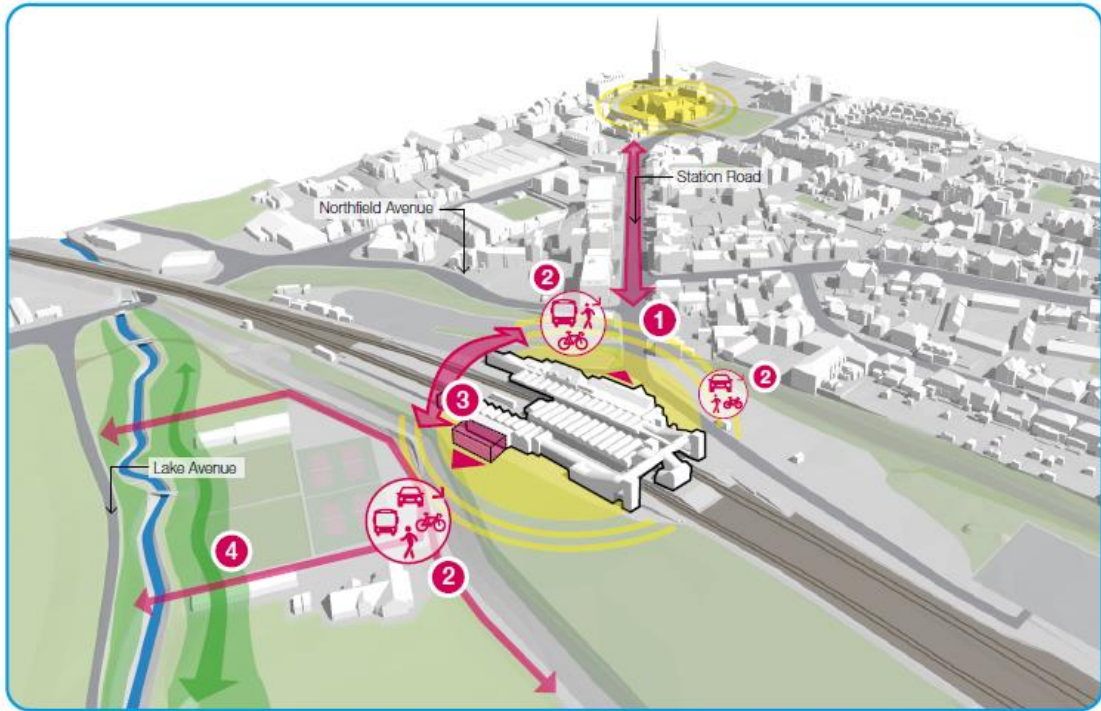
- 4.9 Kettering Station is a short walk from the town centre, although on exiting the station its location isn't that clear or visible. The immediate station environment consists of surface car parks, vacant land, and conflict between the different types of users using the space. It also doesn't allow for direct bus access, the nearest bus stop being in Northfield Avenue. There are quite severe level

changes with properties in The Crescent sitting on higher ground, with a drop to the Station and railway line, and then a further drop in levels down an embankment to the open space/recreational land and Lake Avenue.

- 4.10 The railway corridor running north/south creates a physical barrier between East and West Kettering. The links over or under the railway line are not all of high quality. One of note is in Northampton Road, which is a narrow, low arched bridge for use by vehicles and pedestrians. The arch means taller vehicles need to wait to use the centre of the road, contributing to delays and at times queues. The narrow pavements are also particularly unattractive for pedestrians and cyclists, compounded by the Slade Brook running beneath it which means that at times of heavy rain, water gathers making it almost impassable with vehicles creating bow waves over the footpaths.
- 4.11 The physical constraints to development also include issues of flood risk, the listed station building, and operational components including access points, substation, stabling works and the Maintenance Delivery Unit (now complete). The embankment and level changes is another constraint, but also opportunity, and the green corridor and leisure opportunities also present constraints to be mitigated.

Aspirations and Vision

- 4.12 The Station Quarter was recognised as having real potential for playing more of a strategic role within Kettering as it connects different parts of the town, and is the point of convergence of some key routes. In addition, an improvement in the frequency of the rail service offered from Kettering station enhances the status of the area and town as a destination for travelling both south towards London St. Pancras and to the towns and cities in the north.
- 4.13 The Masterplan proposal is built around 4 key concepts, these being
- A Quality Gateway to Kettering: Improvement to the links to the town centre, the urban realm and the future of the station.
 - Delivering a well-integrated transport hub: creation of a station forecourt and reconfiguration of the station car parks and intermodal connections.
 - Providing accessibility and permeability across the railway: potential extension of the existing station footbridge, opening of a new entrance on the western side and improvement of routes and wayfinding around the Station Quarter.
 - Potential for releasing public land and enhancing the green corridor: sustainable ways of moving and living encouraged throughout.
- 4.14 A concept masterplan was drawn up, providing a long-term vision designed around two hubs: the Eastern and Western Gateways.



Eastern and Western Gateways

- 4.15 **In the East** – the link to the town centre is enhanced by improvements made to Station Road and way finding; the station benefits from a generous forecourt dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists; buses can serve the station through a new intermodal loop off Northfield Avenue; two development plots are released on the former north car park, these plots will be available for some commercial and community uses at ground floor level and residential above.



Early masterplan development identifying character areas, improved connectivity and potential development plots

- New bus route
- New pedestrian and cycle routes (nature trail)
- Active frontages (community or commercial uses)
- Main vehicular route

- 4.16 **In the West** – another loop road off Lake Avenue serves the new station hub; the station sits on the embankment accessed via a set of steps and landscaped ramp overlooking new development. The intermodal area is at the lower level on the edge of a generous pedestrian plaza which becomes the heart of the community with commercial and community uses and a higher density of development (3-5 storeys); a mix of townhouses, detached and semi-detached houses are arranged around local public spaces and community uses.
- 4.17 Slade Brook is aligned and naturalised to maximise the development parcel and help with the flood mitigation strategy.
- 4.18 A stakeholder Workshop was undertaken on 27th February 2020 with transport, planning, health, housing, leisure, senior managers and local residents involved. The feedback in general was very supportive of the concept and prospects for the Station Quarter area going forward.

Covid-19 Pandemic

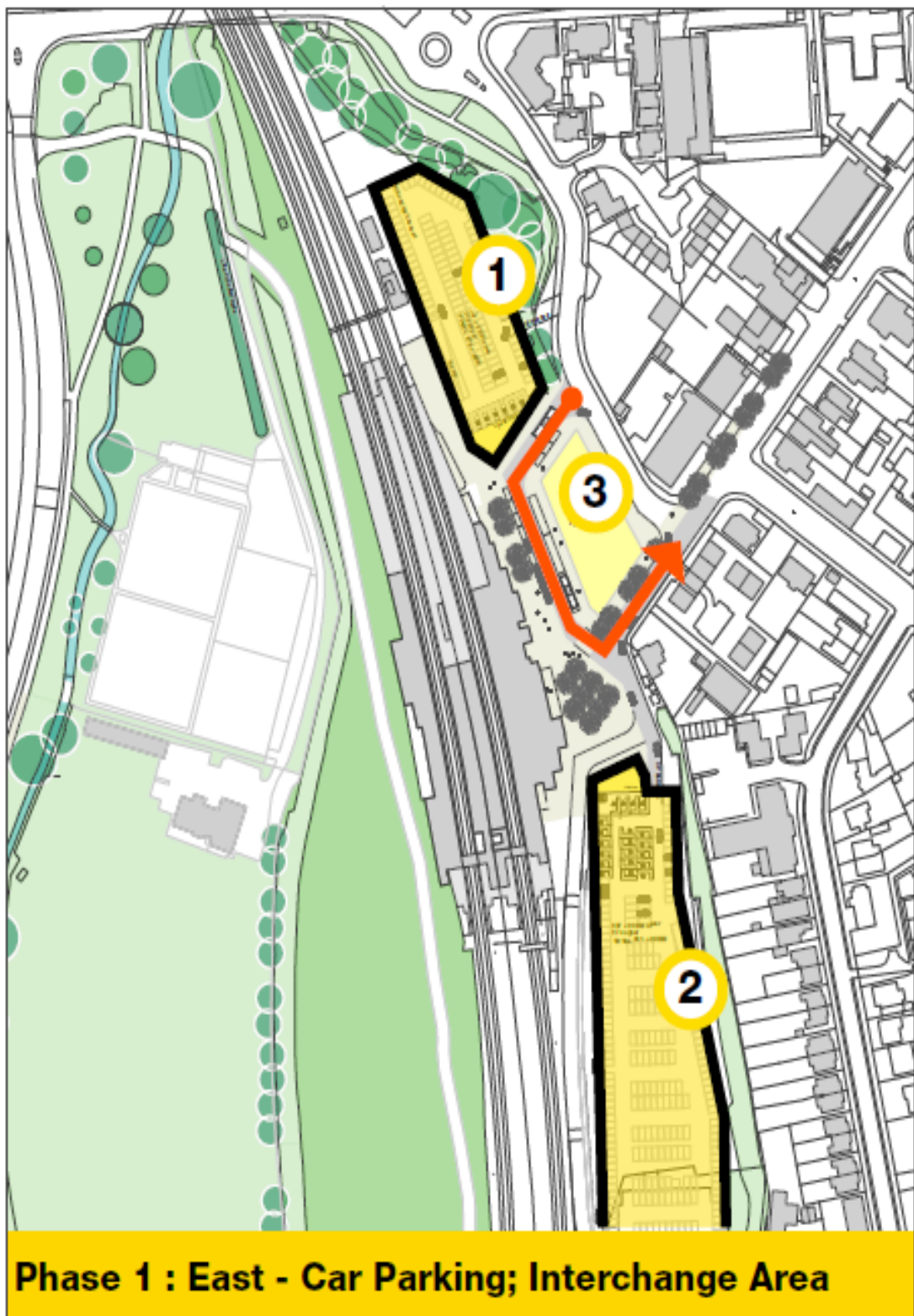
- 4.19 Shortly after the town centre consultation, with the Masterplan in its final stages before completion and approval, the Covid-19 pandemic struck and the country went into lockdown. The project team continued to meet virtually, but it became evident quite quickly there was a strong potential that travel habits, commuting in particular, would likely change as a result, and that this may be on a more permanent basis. Given this, the team sought to forecast the change, and the impacts this would have on the Station Quarter Masterplan and Business Case.
- 4.20 The conclusions soon after the lifting of lockdown was that patronage on the railways had changed and could fluctuate for a period to come. Commuter traffic had fallen away significantly, with people reducing their commute by train in favour of working from home. However, there had been significant growth in leisure travel, in more recent months increasing passenger numbers nearer to pre-pandemic levels.

Phasing Strategy

- 4.21 A potential phasing and delivery strategy was developed in order to address the requirements and aspirations of all stakeholders involved. The timeframes in the first instance were indicative only, as the phasing strategy will be dependent on the availability of funding.

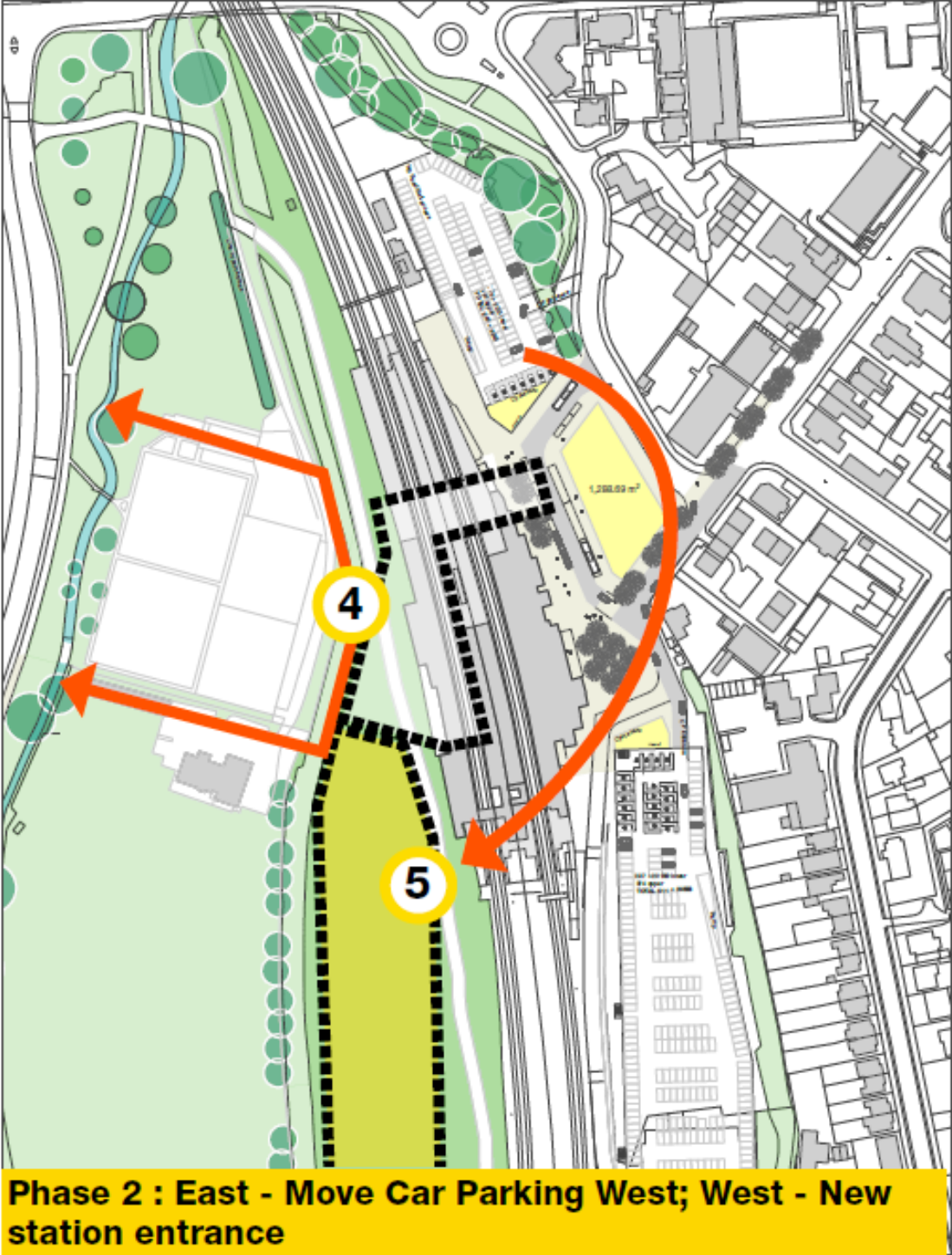
4.22 Phase 1: East – Car parking; interchange area

1. Car Park North reduced to 150 spaces
2. Car Park South redesigned and extended to accommodate extra spaces from CP North
3. New loop road (intermodal + new development plot) and pedestrian friendly station forecourt



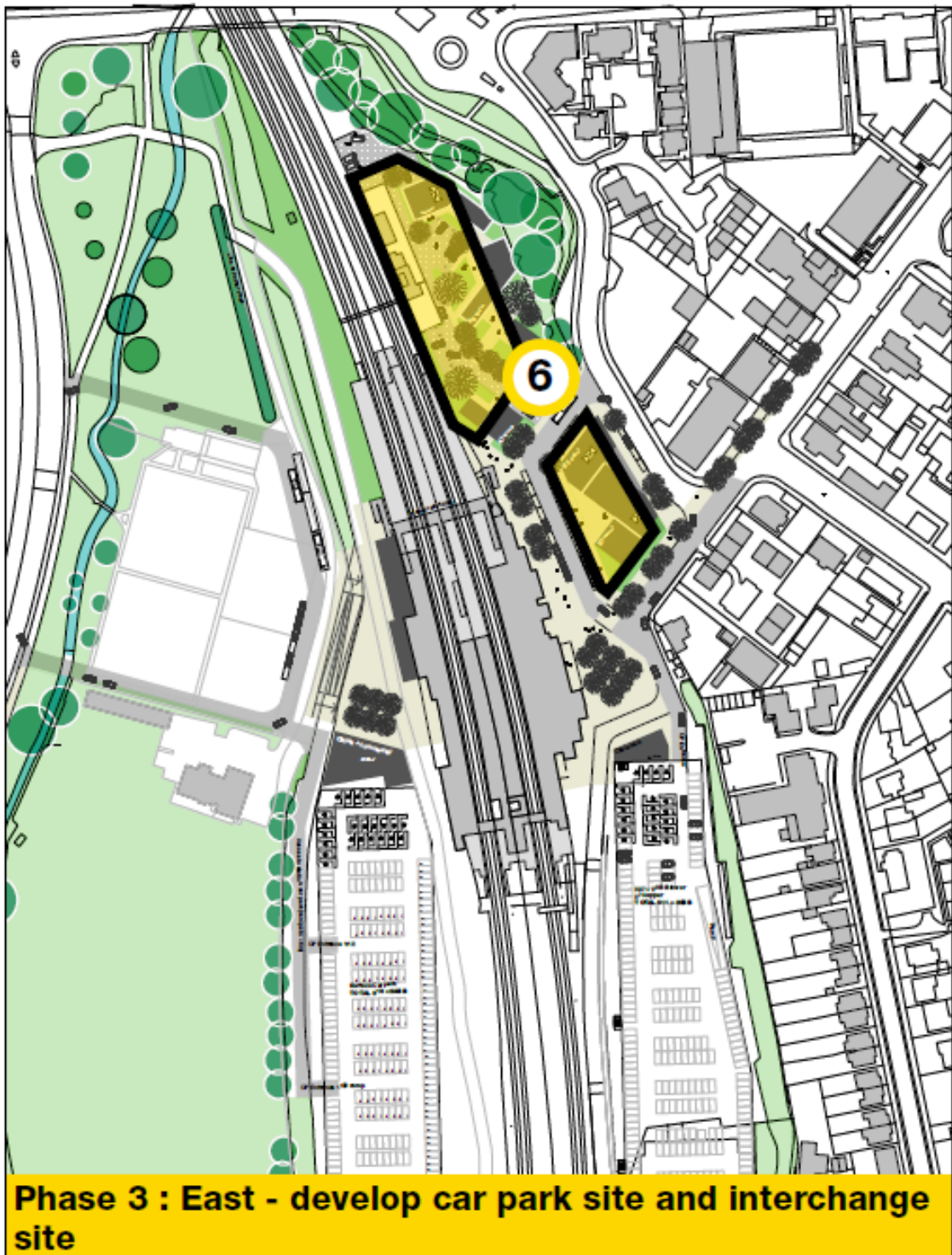
4.23 Phase 2: East – Move car parking west: West – New station entrance

- 4. New entrance West and intermodal loop west of the tracks
- 5. Car Park North relocated to the western side of the tracks



4.24 Phase 3: East – Develop car park site and interchange

6. New development plots unlocked to the East



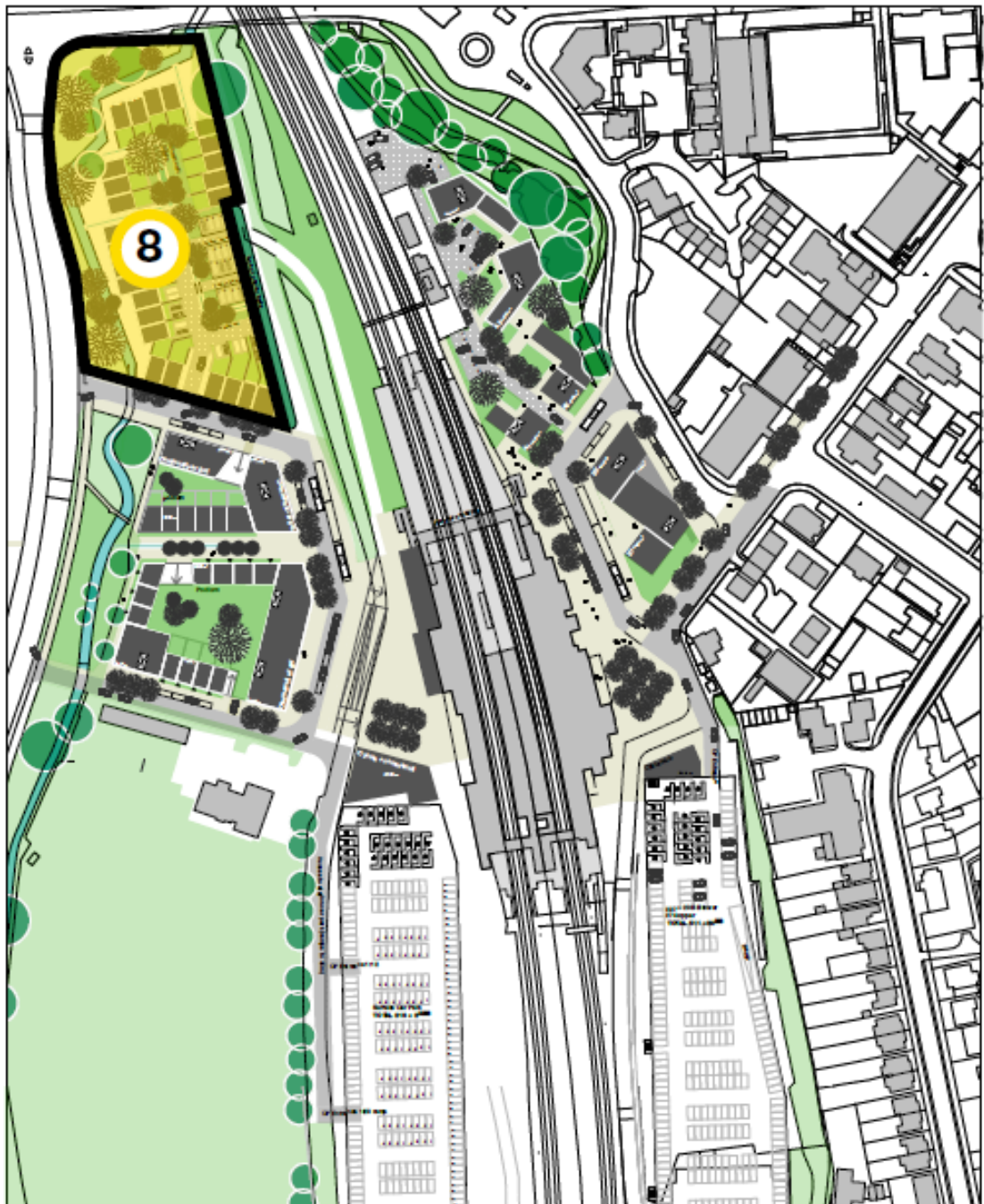
5.25 Phase 4: West – Loop road development

7. New development plots unlocked to the West on public land (flood mitigation measures required)



5.26 **Phase 5: West – Residential north**

8. Slade Brook realigned to unlock additional development plots to the West on publicly owned land (flood mitigation measures required)



Phase 5 : West - Residential north

5.27 A viability appraisal has been undertaken based on the conclusions contained within the Masterplan. This reports the development of housing and commercial units would result in excess of an £11m deficit, meaning the development would be unviable. Factors contributing towards this include high costs associated with flood risk measures and reduced land available for development; brook realignment, bridges and other infrastructure; and a weak market for apartments/flats in Kettering (reducing the density possible from the scheme). The assumptions used are that the scheme would deliver 95 private dwellings and 4 commercial units. For the scheme to be deliverable, there's a clear need for interventions and changes for the phases to be delivered in full. The consultants have indicated that circumstances can and will change over time, forecasting that the scheme has potential for improvements in its viability by 2028-29.

Next Steps

- 5.28 **Stakeholder engagement** – on-going stakeholder engagement to ensure alignment of priorities & delivery timescale. Public engagement for phase 1 could be undertaken so when a funding opportunity arises the project has an impetus and is already adopted in principle by the local community. Members of the Kettering Station Quarter Project Board haven't met for over a year, so it will be worthwhile to re-engage and work collaboratively to progress investment ideas for the Station Quarter, following the principles set out in the Masterplan.
- 5.29 **Priority projects** – work up the detail for early phase priority projects to the east to improve onward travel and station facilities. This can be in the form of a potential future double deck of the EMR new car parking facility (south car park) which would unlock opportunities for redevelopment of part of the north Car Park site. It could also be around investing in the station environment in terms of supporting uses or use of building space.
- 5.30 **Flood risk** – progress conversations with the Environment Agency to establish flood mitigation solutions for the Slade Brook, and potential funding opportunities to improve flood resilience, and as a result the viability of development at the site.
- 5.31 **Post Covid update** – A requirement of East Midlands Railway's franchise agreement was the provision of an additional 200 car parking spaces to serve the station. If this requirement has changed as a result of reduced need following Covid-19, then this has the potential for freeing up more land at the station for development, which could also enhance scheme viability. Enquiries should be made of both with Network Rail and East Midlands Railway to establish this as a scenario.
- 5.32 **Link to other strategies** – Initiatives, proposals and opportunities are always emerging or being developed which could develop or benefit the project areas highlighted through the Masterplan and this report. It is important that these are matched up with the Masterplan, and mutually supportive projects developed. An example of this is the preparation of the Kettering Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The delivery of specific elements of this, as it relates to the Station Quarter, is likely to lead to investment and improvements for cyclists and pedestrians using the railway station.

- 5.33 **Funding potential** – Kettering station’s designation as a hub station, meaning it provides services for passengers using both the Inter-city and Commuter services, means it has an increased passenger potential serving North Northamptonshire residents and visitors, and as such growth potential making it an attractive location for those needing to commute, and for business. In addition, Kettering is identified as a Priority 1 settlement in the Government’s Levelling Up Fund Index. Furthermore, parts of Kettering are recognised as the most deprived wards nationally.
- 5.34 As such, investment in the area could enhance key deficits, and improve the area from an economic recovery and growth perspective, as well as providing improved transport connectivity and the regeneration of land in a highly sustainable location. Two Government funds with potential for investment in delivering on the projects making up phases of the Masterplan include the Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund.
- 5.35 The views of Members are sought on the “Next Steps” available to the Council in proceeding with development of the area at the railway station, using the Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan as the basis.

6 Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources, Financial & Transformational

- 6.1.1 The majority of the Kettering Station Quarter Masterplan was funded through One Public Estate, a small contribution of £3,600 was required from the Council’s Planning Policy budget to enable a refund of a £25,000 sustainability grant. The Planning Policy and Economic Development teams will work with the Council’s partners in progressing the ambitions within the Masterplan.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 No comment on the legal implications of the content of this report has been made at this stage.

6.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

- 6.3.1 Investment in the Station Quarter would be beneficial for many reasons of policy, including meeting the requirements of the following Development Plan policies and those contained in the Council’s Corporate Plan.
- 6.3.2 There are numerous planning policies of relevance contained within the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy including: Policy 2 – *Historic Environment*; Policy 4 – *Biodiversity and Geodiversity*; Policy 5 – *Water Environment, Resources and Flood Risk Management*; Policy 7 – *Community Services and Facilities*; Policy 8 – *North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles*; Policy 10 – *Provision of Infrastructure*; Policy 12 – *Town Centre and Town Centre Uses*; Policy 16 – *Connecting the Network of Settlements*; Policy 17 – *North Northamptonshire’s Strategic Connections*; Policy 19 – *The Delivery of Green Infrastructure*.
- 6.3.3 The Masterplan also goes about delivering on the vision for the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan, and the 8 quarters contained within it, one of which is

of course the Station Quarter. Of particular note is Policy 9 – *Public Transport*, which provides a focus on the Station Quarter Interchange and public realm enhancements.

- 6.3.4 In terms of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities, the Masterplan will: create *Safe and Thriving Places* served by good transport links; and deliver a *Greener, Sustainable Environment* taking active steps to promote more sustainable, active travel and enhance the natural environment and ecology.

6.4 Risk

- 6.4.1 There are no significant risks associated with endorsing this Masterplan. However, it's worth noting that travel habits, commuting in particular, have changed since the pandemic, and it remains unclear in terms of forecasting how the rail network will be used in the future, or the space needed around the station to accommodate car parking. In addition, fragility in the economy at the moment will bring with it uncertainty and risk.
- 6.4.2 Partners will continue to work proactively in monitoring the situation and working collaboratively to find ways of reducing risk and increasing the prospects for delivering on projects, following the strategy set by the Masterplan.

6.5 Consultation

- 6.5.1 A Stakeholder Workshop was undertaken on 27th February 2020 with transport, planning, health, housing, leisure, senior managers and local residents involved. The feedback was positive, with attendees very supportive of the concept and prospects for the Station Quarter area. It is acknowledged that involvement was quite limited, so it would be worthwhile undertaking more focussed engagement on specific projects as details of the specific projects emerge.

6.6 Consideration by Scrutiny

- 6.6.1 This report has not been considered by Scrutiny.

6.7 Climate Impact

- 6.7.1 Investment in the Station Quarter area will make it a more attractive environment to use, for travel, to live, work or to visit. It's benefit as an interchange will encourage increased journeys using public transport and active travel. In addition, investment in removing the open culverted Slade Brook in favour of its naturalising will reduce flood risk and enhance the area wildlife, providing important habitats. The area will become more resilient to climate change.

6.8 Equality Implications

- 6.8.1 An Equalities Screening Assessment has been completed. There are no negative equality impacts identified.

6.9 Community Impact

6.9.1 The Masterplan sets out a design-led approach to a mixed range of uses that will deliver improvements to the eastern entrance to the station, creating an improved multi-modal transport interchange and making provision for a new access to the station from the west. It also plans for the efficient use of land for car parking, reallocating surplus land for enhanced public realm development potential supporting the community. In addition, the Masterplan designs homes for a new community, enhancing the Slade Brook and reducing flood risk whilst creating an improved wildlife habitat. The loss of recreational space would need to be replaced elsewhere, or other land intensified for leisure use.

7 Background Papers

7.1 None