

# THE **ACTIVITIES** **HANDBOOK**



# 5

# 5.1 Animating the Spaces

## 5.1.1 How to use 'the spaces handbook'

This document indicates the potential public and semi-public spaces available to Swaffham that could be managed in different ways to create a multitude of experiences across the year.

This handbook focusses on the temporary changes or quick wins that can be delivered relatively quickly to activate Swaffham's core spaces through activities, events and performances amongst other inspiring functions often inspired by the heritage of Swaffham.

The handbook will culminate in a list of projects. These projects can also be used to define and apply for funding streams that may become available to Swaffham.

### The Masterplan Spaces

- Intimate activity spaces
- Large activity spaces
- Linear activity spaces

## 5.1.2 Handbook concept- A palette of spatial experiences

The idea of this handbook is to use these spaces flexibly, rearranging or closing car parking when necessary and introducing temporary structures and furniture to enhance whatever experience is planned.

This concept is an extension of the way the market space already functions; changing from car park to market and back as required. Applying similar management principles to more spaces can optimise the potential of all Swaffham's spaces.

Many of these spaces are currently designed specifically for cars with paving used to delineate a rigid, and unsympathetic arrangement of car spaces with limited pedestrian or shared space.

Changing the emphasis, without removing the ability to park as usual for the majority of the time, would make a considerable difference to the look and feel of the town. Rebalancing priorities will create more welcoming spaces and prioritise the comfort of the most vulnerable town users.

### SPACES WITHIN THE HSHAZ

- 1 PEDLAR'S CAR PARK
- 2 THE SHAMBES
- 3 THE MEMORIAL AND CORNHALL
- 4 THE MARKET PLACE
- 5 THE AUCTION
- 6 THE TOWN POND

### PRIVATE SPACES OR SPACES TO CONNECT OUTSIDE OF THE HSHAZ

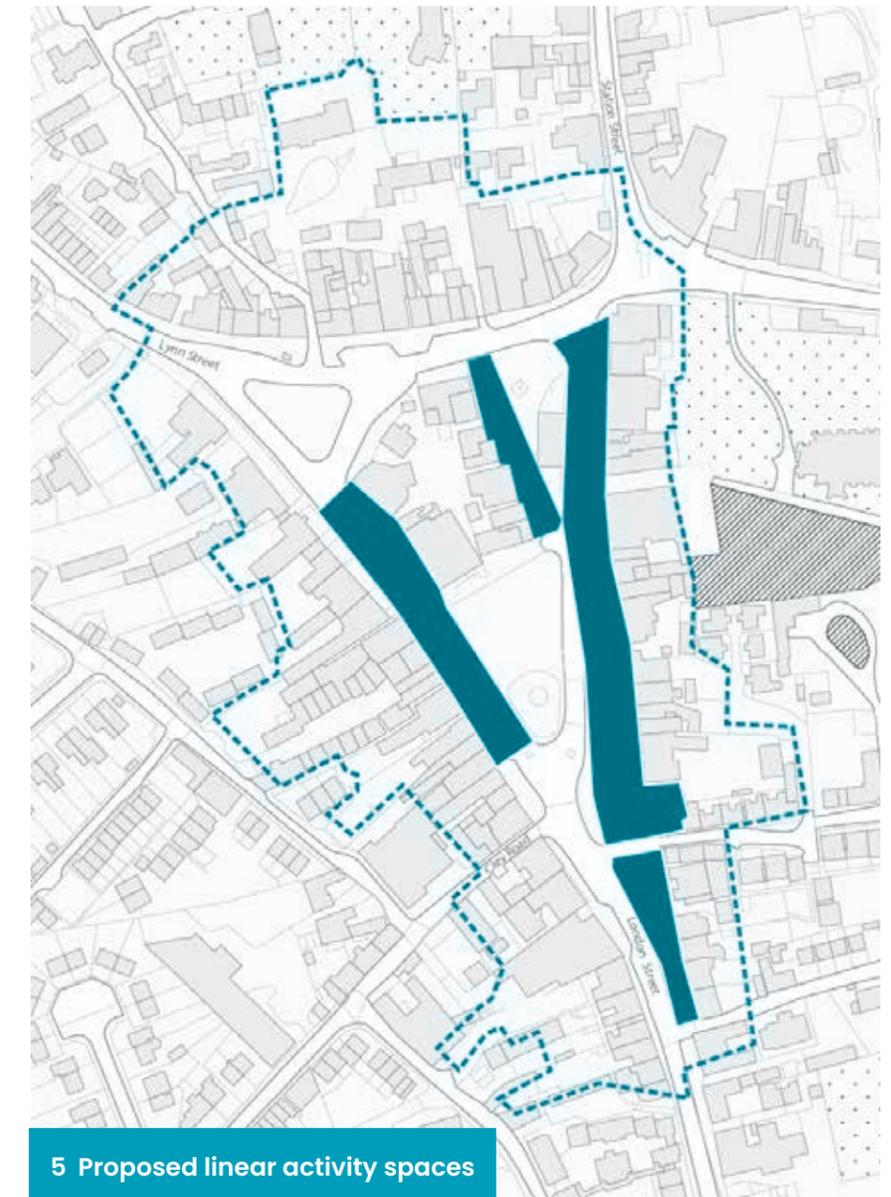
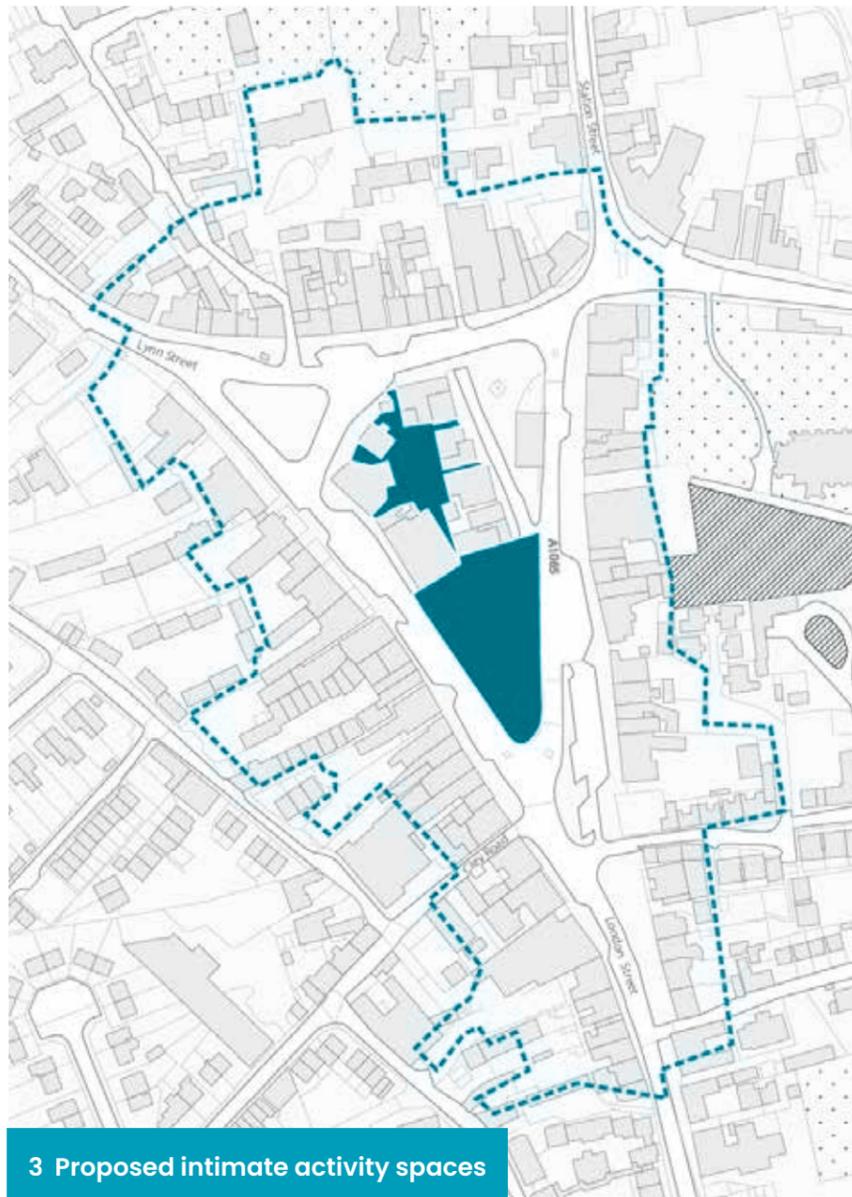
- 7 LYNN ROAD ENTRANCE
- 8 STRATTONS HOTEL
- 9 CAMPINGLAND
- 10 ANTINGHAMS
- 11 PLOWRIGHT PLACE



## 5.2 Re-balanced public realm space allocation

The balance of space in the public realm can be shifted and become sufficiently flexible to expand and contract to accommodate different levels of activity. The below diagrams describe how some of the spaces might be changed temporarily to accommodate seasonal activities, or how some spaces can be changed permanently to become fixed public realm assets for the town

- 1 Existing space given to motor vehicles
- 2 Existing space given to pedestrians
- 3 Proposed intimate activity spaces
- 4 Proposed large activity spaces
- 5 Proposed linear activity spaces



# 5.3 Intimate activity space: The Shambles

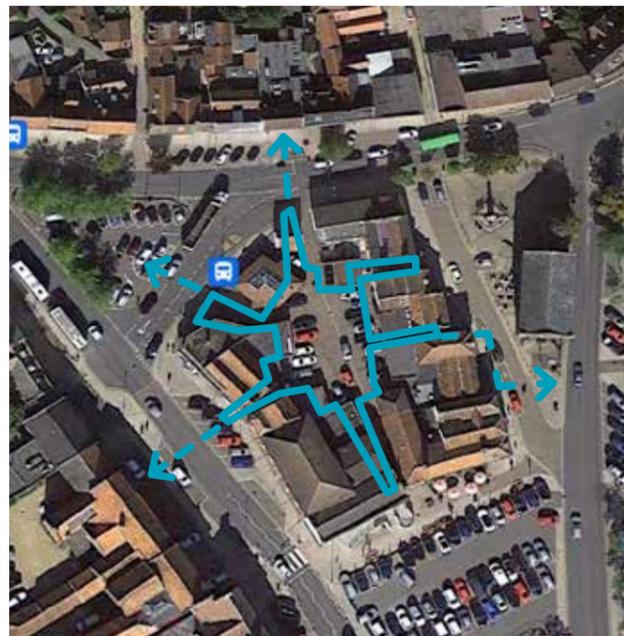
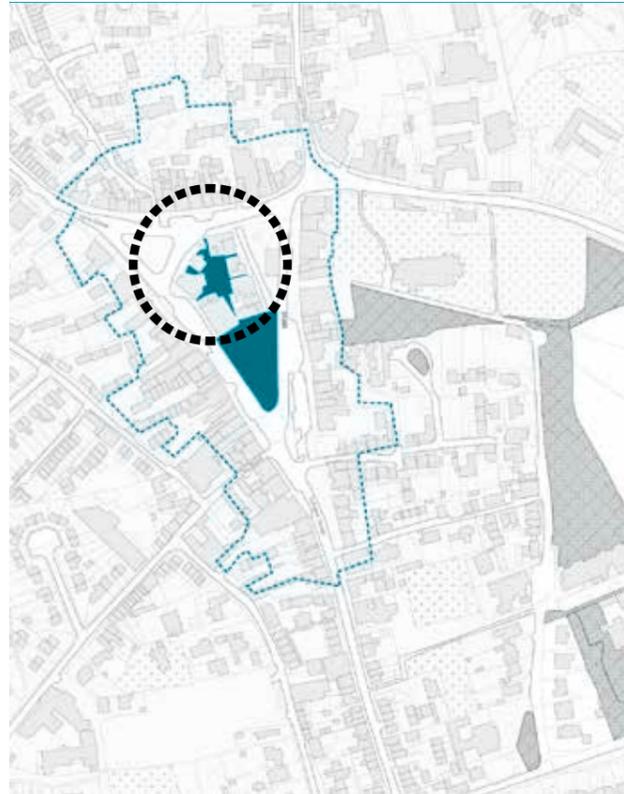
## 5.3.1 Activating the space

The Shambles marks the point where Swaffham's market began to formalise and temporary stalls gave way to permanent structures. Its intimate scale and informal, organic form, defined by haphazard brick buildings, provide an important visual and sensory counterpoint to the larger, busier spaces and polite architectural expression around it.

Offering opportunities for shelter, respite and shade, The Shambles feels secret, quiet and enclosed, yet it is highly connected via numerous narrow passageways. It is full of potential as a flexible space for temporary installations, performance, outdoor dining and art, provided the cars can be relocated.

## 5.3.2 Ideas for animation and enhancement

- Avoid over-sanitising the space; retain the patina of age and visible re-purposing of the surrounding buildings
- Experiment with temporary installations, sculptures, stages and backdrops, moveable furniture etc.
- Encourage exploration and discovery by enhancing the glimpses into the space - strategic placement of lighting, art, surface treatment, threshold design etc.
- Provide a secure and overlooked area to store the moveable and pop up furniture
- Introduce the infrastructure for pop up facilities such as external electricity points etc.
- Hold pilot events to test the use of the space and temporary removal of parking, examples include an outdoor supper club with temporary awnings or an outdoor film screening.



Existing situation (aerial from Google Earth)



Blank walls offer opportunities to create urban stage sets and backdrops with living walls, murals, lighting and historical information



The contained space is a perfect home for temporary urban props such as moveable play equipment, planters, seating and stages

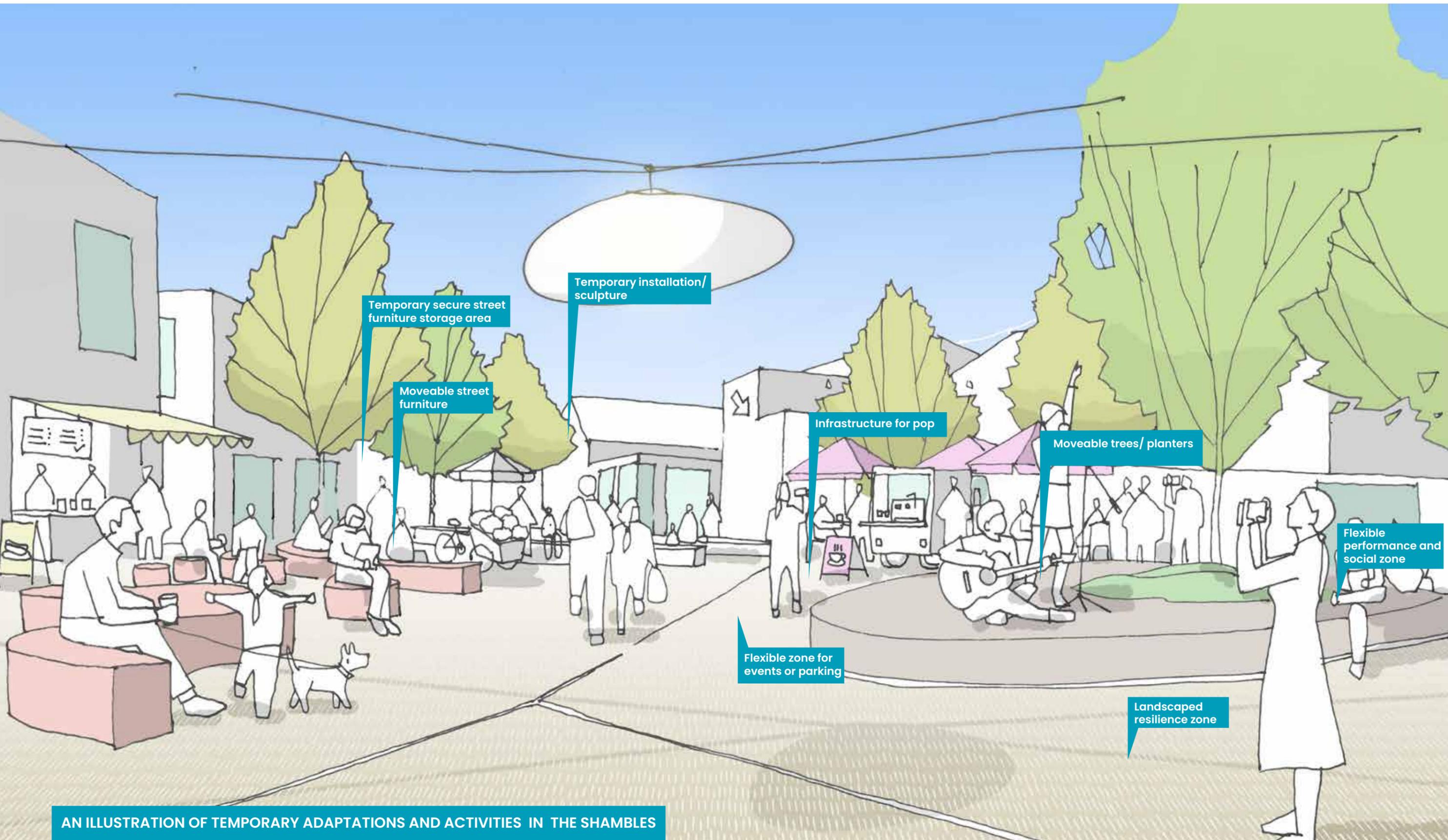


Walking/cycling gateway - waiting / social space adjacent to bus stops

Outdoor theatre pop-up - Theatre in the Round



The smaller scale of the space is ideal for events such as street feasts, spoken word performances, acoustic music, art installations etc..



AN ILLUSTRATION OF TEMPORARY ADAPTATIONS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE SHAMBLES

# 5.4 Intimate activity space: The Buttercross

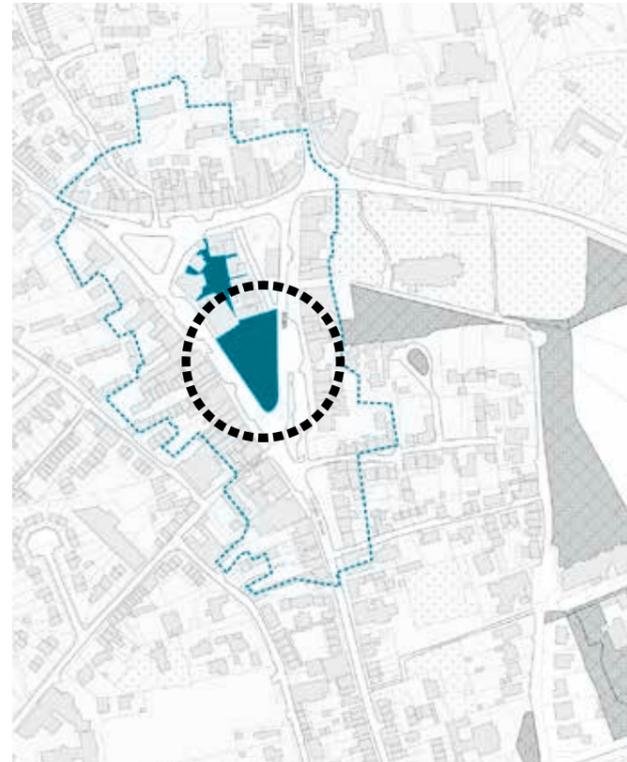
## 5.4.1 Activating the space

### The Buttercross

The Buttercross is really a space within a space; the covered space of the elegant, historic structure sitting within a wider, paved curtilage. It is Swaffham's most striking landmark but it appears to function more as a monument than as a usable piece of town. Recent enhancements to its setting included tree planting, paving and seating.

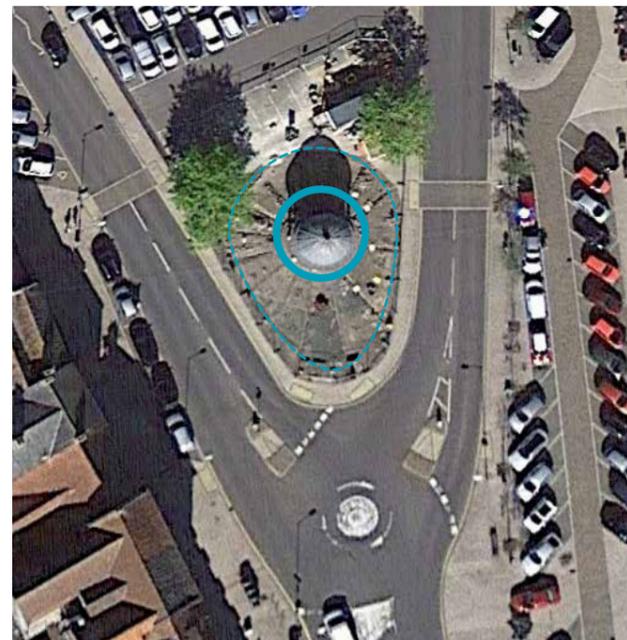
During the engagement exercise we often heard it referred to as "the bandstand", however its location is quite exposed and noisy, and the structure doesn't seem to provide the right acoustic environment. A helpful next step would be to explore what technical considerations that would enable this structure to be used more, taking into account its listed status and surrounding environmental conditions.

It would be fantastic if this landmark could sometimes be brought into use so that people can interact with the whole space.



## 5.4.2 Ideas for animation and enhancement

- Introduce more greenery and softer surfaces - trees, large scale planters or planting beds designed as part of a wider greening scheme
- Engage an acoustics expert to explore what can be done to improve the sound for small and medium events in and around the Buttercross structure.
- Consider commissioning bespoke "blinds" that can be used to temporarily enclose all or part of the structure to make it more flexible in use as well as exhibiting it as a piece of art.
- Curate a programme of events that takes advantage of the small scale and "in-the-round" format e.G., Music or spoken word performances, art installations, specialist lectures, etc.
- Consider letting the surrounding hard space for outdoor community activities at agreed times of the day
- Consider installing temporary seasonal equipment such as deckchairs, sandpits, water features etc. to encourage more use of the cobbled area around the pavilion



Existing situation - the Buttercross and its hardscape setting (aerial taken from Google Earth)

## Historic Use



## Historic Interpretation and Space Enhancement



Introduce temporary planting and areas of softer surfacing to help absorb pollution and noise, create a variety of sensory experience and encourage people to stay longer in the space (Image source: Merchant Square twitter)



Improve the visual appeal of the market, and increase the space available for stalls, by requiring associated vehicles to park off-site during trading hours



The Buttercross is a natural stage, and the whole space around it is large enough to host more flamboyant performances



Introduce fun seasonal activities making the most of a large, sunny space. (Image: Suffolk Village Info, Bury St Edmunds Whitsun beach)

# 5.5 Large activity space: The Corn Hall and Memorial

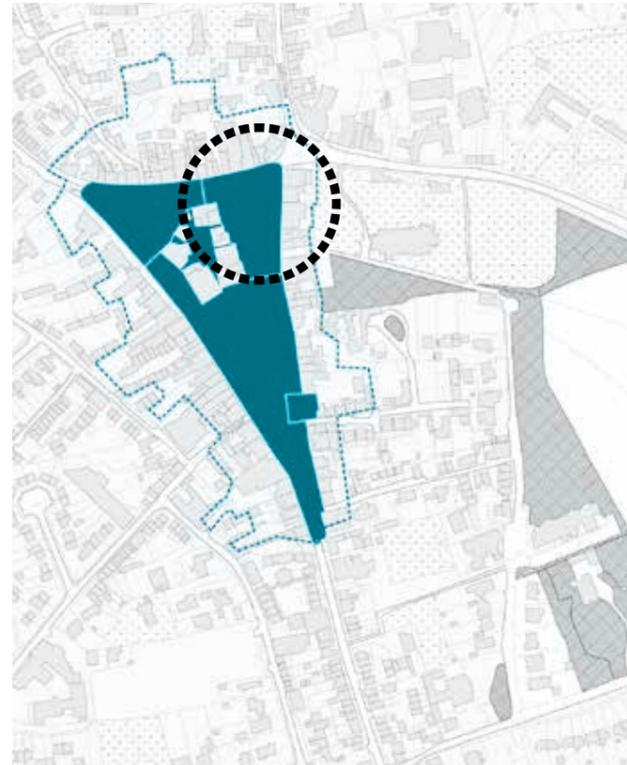
## 5.5.1 Activating the space

The Corn Hall is integral to Swaffham's market activity and narratives with multiple alleys through to the Shambles, its wider community and through to the Church. This whole area is interwoven within the civic life, exchange and pageantry of the town, however its public realm is dis-jointed and dominated by vehicular routes and traffic barriers.

The design interventions aim to re-choreograph its public realm, to create a setting for its architecture, with a spacious vibrant and adaptable character, as a venue in Swaffham's civic and cultural life.

## 5.5.2 Ideas for animation and enhancement

- Incorporate seating and shade, reposition benches and provide opportunities to pause and reflect on the war memorial
- Provide areas for communal herb and kitchen gardens within moveable planters to form social activities and dwell space
- Pilot the road closure here to experience the widened public realm for flexible uses such as an expanded market offering, sensitive performance and gathering



Existing situation showing the Corn Hall and War Memorial hemmed in between roads

## Historic Use



The role of the Memorial as a formal community space is integral to the Town Centre

## Historic Interpretation and Space Enhancement



Pavement and planting, space to stroll and meet



Civic space, adaptable for art and performance, with buildings as a backdrop



A constantly changing sculptural installation brings fun and dynamism to a small urban space. Rows of benches that can be rotated by users to face any way they like.



Tree-lighting and evening atmosphere for events

# 5.6 Large public spaces: The Market Place

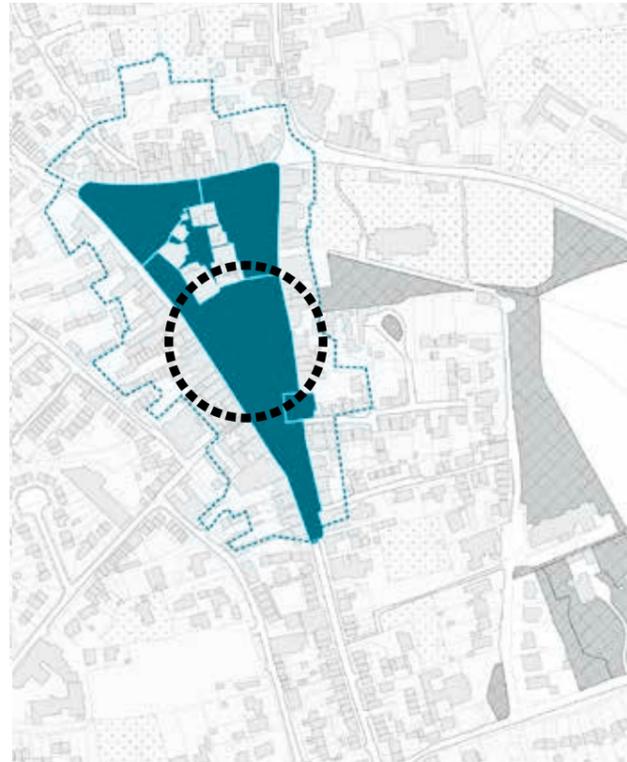
## 5.6.1 Activating the space

### THE MARKET PLACE

The main Market Place is the heart of the town and the reason for its being. It comes to life on Saturdays when it hosts the popular weekend market. During the remainder of the week it functions as a free, short stay car park.

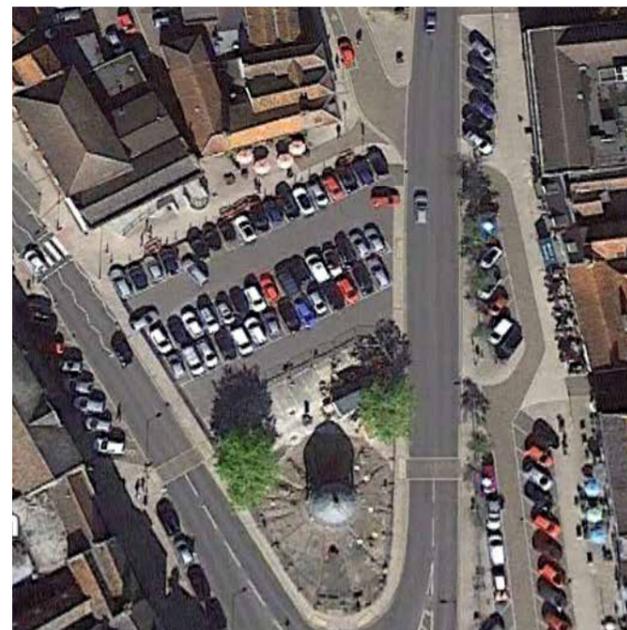
The buildings overlooking the space feel disconnected from it, even those that aren't separated by roads have been separated by unattractive ramps and temporary plastic additions that obscure the pretty façades.

At the Christmas market we observed a number of large market vehicles parked on-site for the duration. These blocked views across the space and detracted from the attractive, pedestrian friendly atmosphere.



## 5.6.2 Ideas for animation and enhancement

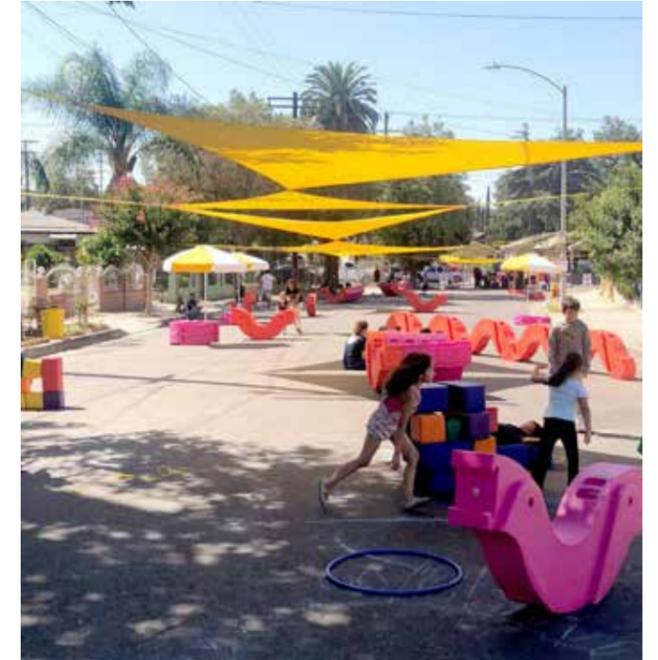
- Remove market vehicles from the market square except for loading/unloading. Large lorries and vans obscure the views to stalls and detract from the overall look and feel. From anecdotal conversations, this occurred in the past. Designated parking for the vehicles can be located off-site in Theatre Street car park
- Rationalise the equipment associated with parking to reduce its visual impact and keep visual and physical clutter to a minimum
- Improve the interface between the Assembly Rooms and cafe and the market space. Remove the temporary additions and create a positive relationship between the entrances and the outdoor seating
- Ensure the lighting design is an integral part of the spatial design. Light the trees and structures to add drama and atmosphere to the space



Existing situation showing the disconnect between the buildings and the space and the dominance of car parking



Recapture the spirit of historic Swaffham with organised dancing in the market space



Allow children to occupy the space sometimes - introduce movable play equipment and colourful awnings to encourage young families into the town on special days



Provide a palette of materials and colours for the market and al fresco areas that surround the market area.

### 5.6.3 The Market Place Illustrated



Reduce visual clutter currently located in the car park

Market vehicles removed so that market is better showcased

Test different types of uses, events performances and shows

Extended alfresco area with pop up planters and a unified alfresco furniture

THE MARKET PLACE

# 5.7 Large public spaces: Pedlar's Car Park

## 5.7.1 Activating the space

### PEDLAR'S CAR PARK

This triangular car park area to the north of The Shambles is home to the Pedlar of Swaffham sign and an historic founding stone. It is surrounded on all sides by wide roads. It is bordered by mature trees on the north and west sides which provide an attractive green backdrop on arrival into Swaffham.

The south side of the space is cut off from the Shambles and wider market spaces by a three-lane tarmac street that accommodates bus stops, loading and general traffic. The street feels overly wide and out of scale with the market town.

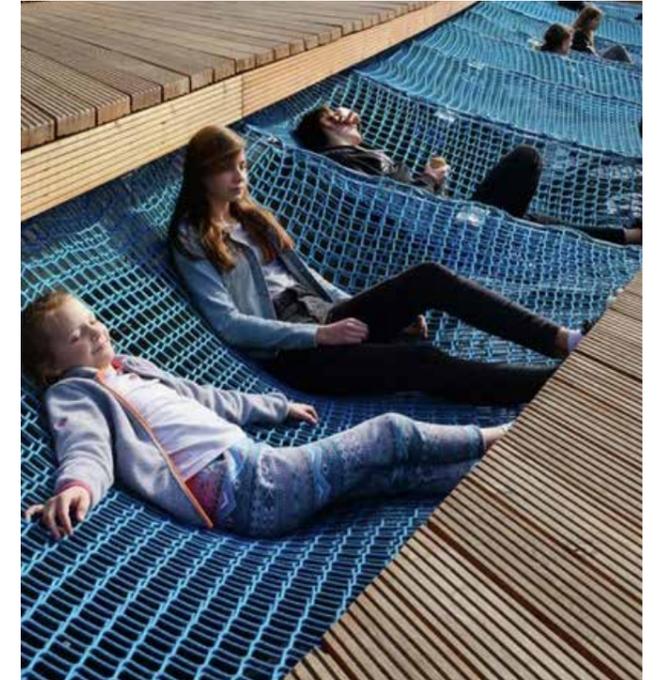
A review of the traffic movements around this junction with a view to reconnecting the space via crossings or surface treatments would be welcome. Reduction in the amount of black-top to reduce emphasis on the cars would help to reduce the severance and tie the space into the wider townscape.

## 5.7.2 Ideas for animation and enhancement

- Investigate opportunities to use the space for other activities on occasion e.g. Small stage, teen shelter related to the cafe, green space.
- Enhance the ambience of the area and utilise the reduced black top tarmac.
- Develop opportunities for informal recreation, public art and seating in the triangle space, through the co-design process.



Existing situation showing the disconnect between the usable space (car park) defined by vehicle movements and the perceived space defined by the buildings



Connect the Pedlar's car park to The Shambles by reducing the visual dominance of the tarmac, introducing pedestrian priority and insert more urban green space



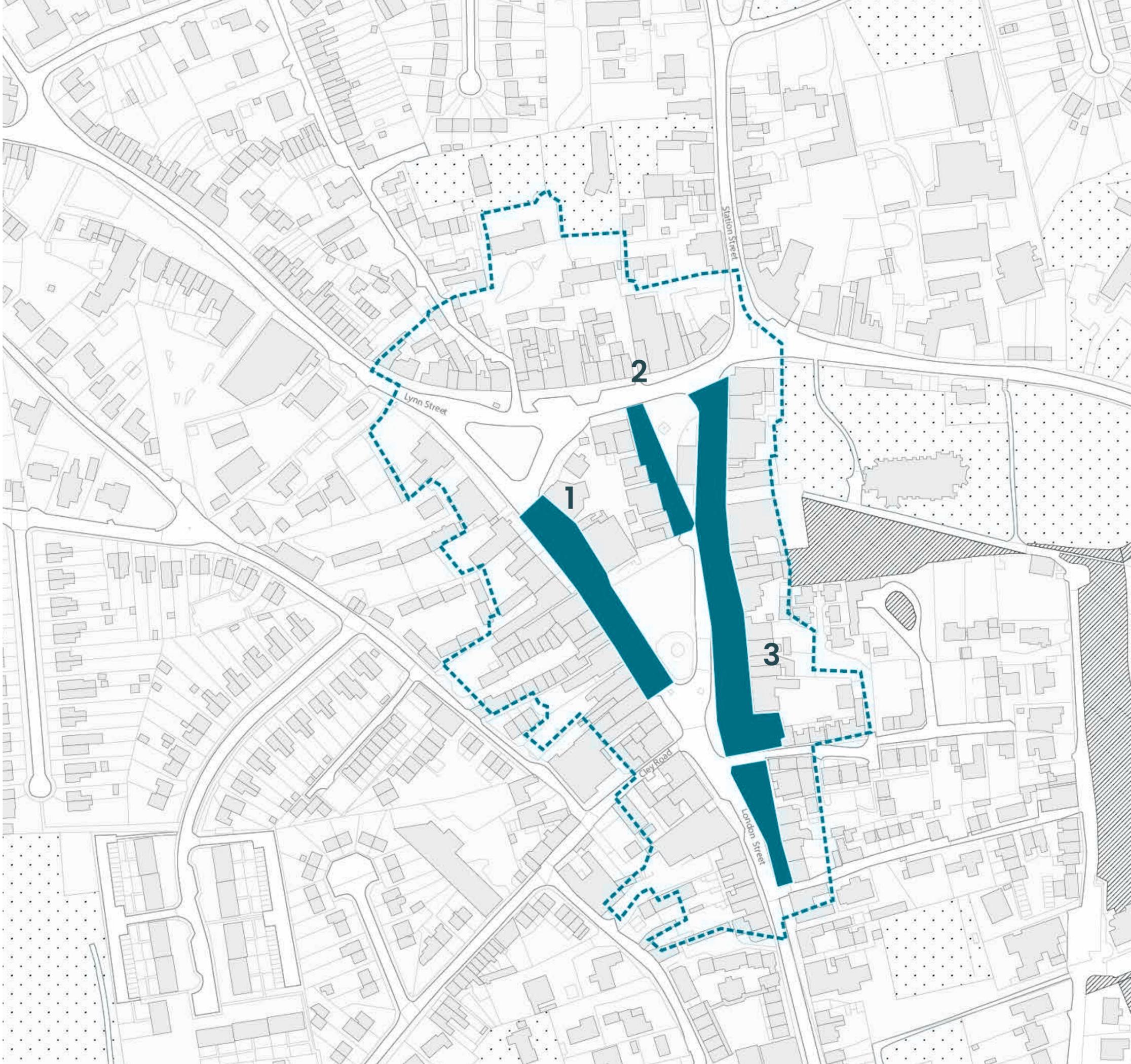
New edges around the car park could make waiting for the bus more comfortable and fun.

# 5.8 Linear spaces

## 5.8.1 Linear spaces

The following pages describe the opportunities for the linear public spaces. The areas within the HSHAZ are as listed below

- 1 Market Place West
- 2 Memorial corridor
- 3 Market Place East

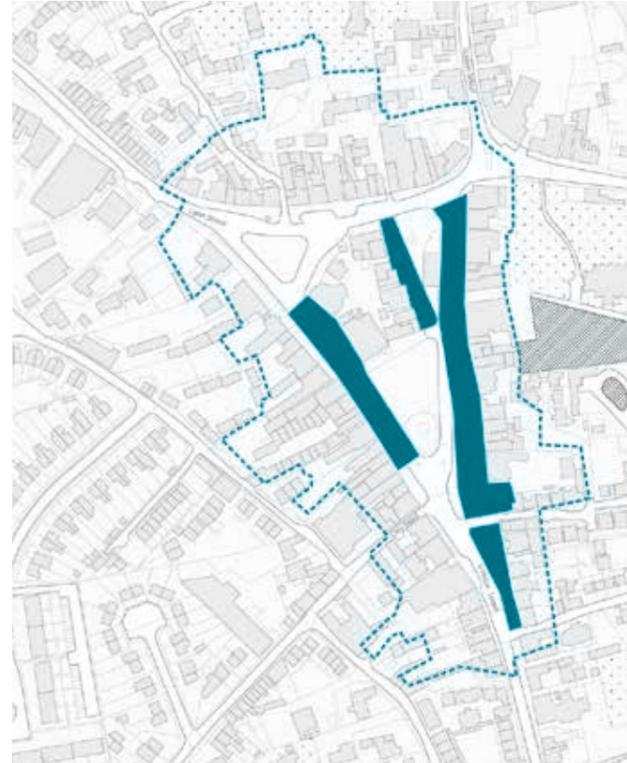


### 5.8.2 Active and passive spaces for engaging in public life

Swaffham's static spaces are connected by several linear spaces that have a number of sometimes conflicting functions. Their primary function should be to accommodate pedestrians moving through the town, browsing, shopping, stopping to chat to and maybe sit and watch the world go by.

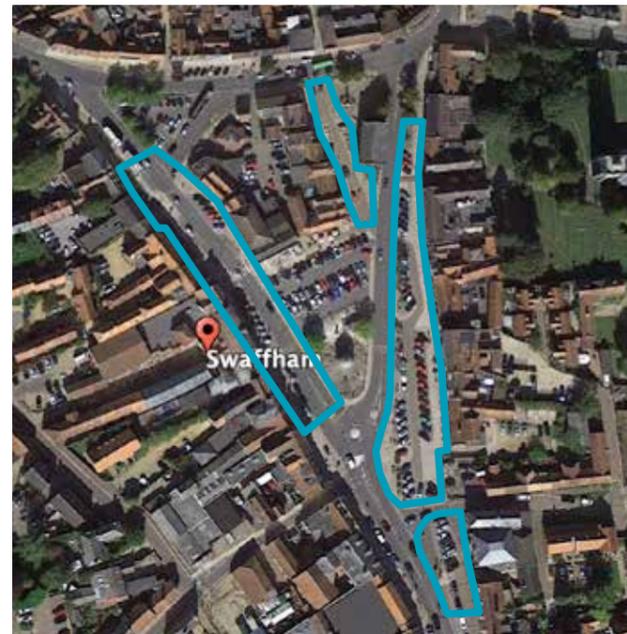
At the moment, large areas of these linear spaces are given over to car parking. This is problematic because of the way it is designed to emphasise the car spaces, implying vehicles take precedence over pedestrians when in fact, the surfaces are intended to be shared.

A rebalancing needs to occur so that the space can operate more flexibly and car movements are not allowed to dominate. In the long term, removing the precisely drawn car space demarcations in favour of something more low key would help. This, coupled with recent changes to the Highway Code to favour pedestrian movements over cars should bring about a shift in attitude.



### 5.8.3 Ideas for animation and enhancement

- Long term - remove the tightly drawn car space demarcation to allow more flexible use of the spaces
- Introduce flexible parking management to enable reconfiguration for special occasions
- Retain the al-fresco dining spaces that were introduced during covid and consider extending these
- Introduce moveable street furniture that people can personalise to their use of the space
- Introduce festoon lighting or other decorative linear lighting forms designed to light activities rather than car spaces.
- Encourage shops to consider their doorstep zone to enhance the visual appeal of the pavement



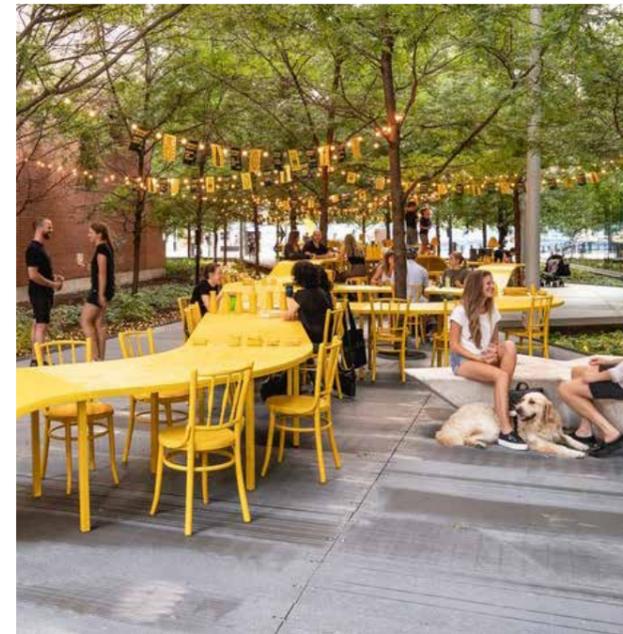
Existing situation showing linear spaces that encourage movement and travel through the town.



Reclaiming some space from cars to introduce greenery and seating areas softens the appearance of the hard spaces and creates an attractive setting for outdoor dining



A cohesive and consistent approach to "doorstep activities" is needed so that they add to the town's appeal. Design quality, style, colour and materials should be controlled to avoid detracting from the historic architecture



Linear dining and art installations can make the most of the wider pavement space bringing colour, interest and activity



# 5.9 The Activity Project List

## 5.9.1 Recommended Project List

The list below is a key non-exhaustive list of projects connected with improving and activating Swaffham's spaces which directly aligns with the key Masterplan principles, strategies and objectives

ACTIVITIES	ENCOURAGE NEW WAYS OF USING THE TOWN AND ITS HINTERLAND THAT RELATE TO HISTORIC TRADITIONS OF PERFORMANCE, PRODUCTION AND INNOVATION	
<b>STREAMLINED PROCESS</b>	To simplify the process for hosting activities within the public realm	Create a one-stop booking form that collates all the necessary permission requests, insurances, notice periods and information requirements etc.. in one place to make it easy to organize and host events in Swaffham's public spaces.
<b>PLACE MANAGEMENT-TOWN CENTRE MANAGER</b>	To help to focus attention on animating Swaffham's existing spaces, provide an accessible point of contact and Council liaison for businesses and interest groups, and champion Swaffham as an area worthy of investment.	Creation of a Town Centre Co-ordinator and Events Manager. This could be a part-time position, or which could be shared with Breckland and/ or the the Town Council. In the first year, we anticipate that the Council could work with the community to identify, facilitate and implement community-building event pilot projects that will bring additional activity and life to Swaffham. The resulting annual calendar of activities should ultimately evolve into an ongoing animation strategy that could be co-owned by the community and the Council and driven predominantly by the community itself.
<b>SWAFFHAM COMMUNITY VISION PANEL</b>	To help refine and deliver the vision for Swaffham	It could encompass Breckland Council, Town Council, The Cultural Consortium, businesses and interest groups with links to Norfolk County Council to work towards and develop the logistics of delivering the vision for Swaffham
<b>MOVEABLE/ POP-UP STAGE</b>	To create a recognisable feature as a focus for performances	A Swaffham branded stage set-up that can be used throughout the year as a focus for events and activities.
<b>MOVEABLE PLANTERS</b>	To define temporary spaces and provide additional colour and texture in the main town spaces	Ideally commission bespoke planters that do not have an "anywheresville" look but are recognizably for Swaffham. These need to have a strong visual impact and also provide flexibility to carve smaller spaces out of larger ones for specific events. A mix of large and medium sizes, unusual shapes and materials will help to create a unique sense of place.
<b>AL-FRESCO DINING</b>	To create a cohesive approach to outdoor dining spaces with high quality of design and construction	Coloured awnings, festoon lighting etc.. should be controlled so that it has a cohesive look and contributes to the overall aesthetic of the town. This could be included in the design code.
<b>PLAY</b>	To encourage more children and families to visit the town	Introduce opportunities for play into some of the spaces. This could be in the form of play fountains near the pond or have sculptural qualities that contribute to the townscape. (NB: This is not about creating a playground, rather it is about providing opportunities to interact with the townscape in fun and interesting ways.)
<b>DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION</b>	To encourage people to explore and engage	Create a series of walks or trails, possibly linked to the various historic lanes (Shoemakers Lane, Spinners Lane etc..) that combine history, nature and exercise. Commission illustrated maps (linked to the brand) that capitalize on the many footpaths and tracks around the town to attract ramblers.
<b>TREASURE HUNT</b>	To make more of the Pedlar legend and introduce an annual event that can become a tradition	Consider creating an annual Pedlar of Swaffham event that encourages residents and visitors to explore the town and learn more about its history by unravelling clues.



Example Auction Activity in Swaffham

