ST ALBANS Civic Centre Opportunity Sites
Design Charrette Report on emerging concept plans
November 2016
Landowner Client: CCOS Development Partnership (St Albans City and District Council | Community Services, Police & Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust, Boutlbee LND)
Community Client: Look! St Albans
By Angela Koch, Lead Design Charrette Facilitator, ImaginePlaces
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This summary report is prepared by Angela Koch of ImaginePlaces, lead facilitator for the St Albans City Centre Opportunity Sites Design Charrette. The report is based on outputs from a four day long collaborative design process, hosted by Look! St Albans and commissioned by the CCOS Development Partnership (St Albans City and District Council|Community Services team, Ian Potter from the Police & Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, Diane Brent and Hannes De Bruin from Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust and Sean Dempsey and Phil Corrigan from Boultbee LND).

Please note this report is optimised for digital viewing only. October 2016
1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT
This report provides a more detailed narrative of the two design concepts that emerged from the three-part, public Design Charrette which looked at the City Centre Opportunity Sites (CCOS), St Albans in September 2016.

The design charrette is part of the CCOS Development Partnership’s overall approach to developing a Civic Quarter Masterplan. The process also considered anticipated improvements and changes to the neighbouring ‘Waltingo’ shopping centre.

The report does not offer new analysis or propositions. It merely attempts to capture in more detail the narratives which were published in ‘Debriefing Documents Parts 1 & 2 and Part 3’, on Look! St Albans website: www.lookstalbans.org, September 2016.

The narratives describe the two landscape-led concept plans. The concept plans have been given the following working titles:

- S Ryder Pavilion; and
- S Ryder Promenade.

This is inspired by the former use of lands as gardens and a famous son of St Albans: Samuel Ryder who made his fortune in horticulture. “A keen gardener, Samuel realised that there was a market for selling seeds by post especially to the working classes. St.Albans then had realised that there was a market for selling seeds by post especially to the working classes. St.Albans then had

1.2 AGENDA & PARTICIPATION
In July 2016, the CCOS Development Partnership asked Look! St Albans to host a design charrette and commissioned ImaginePlaces to facilitate the process. A design charrette as conducted by ImaginePlaces and hosted by Look! St Albans consisted of three consecutive parts:

- a design briefing session (scene setting) held on Friday 9th September; and
- full day design workshops held over Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September; and
- a concluding results and feedback session held on Friday 16 September.

All sessions were public sessions with an open door policy. Look! St Albans promoted and hosted this design charrette. A team of volunteers managed and coordinated the venue. All sessions were public sessions with an open door policy.

1.3 DESIGN FACILITATOR TEAM
ImaginePlaces invited and briefed five senior facilitators with recognised technical experience in architecture, landscape design, urban design, city planning and transport and traffic engineering to work alongside the design charrette participants.

The full facilitator team involved:

- Angela Koch, Lead Facilitator, ImaginePlaces
- Kevin Murray, Kevin Murray Associates
- Charles Gardner, Matrix Partnership
- Richard Lavington, Maccreeanor Lavington Architects
- John Daley, Urban Movement

During the charrette process, further support in terms of construction costs and sales value estimates, 3D modelling and filming services was provided by:

- Alastair Woodgate, Rumball Sedgwick
- Andrew Sheldon, Seldon Peever Studio
- Donato Cinicolo, d3:art

1.4 LIMITATIONS
A design charrette is a fast paced process with the ability to develop a focus on design ideas and concepts from a range of perspectives and work through complexities collectively. Unearthing and then addressing detailed technical questions during a charrette without having the necessary detailed studies to hand, highlights some of the limitations. Working with highly experienced facilitators with considerable technical expertise and a broad range of technical overviews is obviously permitting some of the limitations, however, design charrette design concepts need to be further tested through detailed technical studies.

The CCOS Development Partnership has put this design charrette process at the centre of the masterplanning approach and planning application development to CCOS. This is underpinned in a Landowner’s Vision Statement outlining ambitions, constraints and challenges, and is in part based on Planning Brief work carried out in 2012. Good masterplans pave the way for individual plans to be brought forward over time while each contributing to the overall ambition set and illustrated by the masterplan.

Both the S Ryder concept plans, and indeed individual projects, developed during the design charrette are expected to now help frame and shape important development plans. This will include commissioning technical studies and further details while ensuring all parts of the phased implementation is done in a coherent manner - amplifying social, environmental and economic benefits flowing from a coordinated approach. Both concept plans deal with constraints, opportunities and characteristics of the locality. They respond to the vision and objectives as set out in the CCOS Planning Brief, 2012. A key difference between Planning Brief and concept plans is related to the retention of the Alban Arena, the Council offices and as it appears the Bricket Road car park structure in the emerging concept plans as opposed to wholesale redevelopment.

VISION AS STATED IN THE PLANNING BRIEF SPD, 2012 |

"To extend City Centre functionality into the site through the creation of a high quality distinctive redevelopment which is informed by its historic surroundings. The robust and sustainable mixed use development should transform the site and its surroundings and become a catalyst for the renaissance of St Albans."

OBJECTIVES AS STATED IN THE PLANNING BRIEF SPD, 2012 |

The Council has drawn the following objectives from planning policies, the vision and contextual analysis to guide new development:

- Create a vibrant mixed use quarter of the City that adds value to the existing City Centre offer;
- Protect and enhance historic buildings and spaces;
- Improve design quality, responding to St Albans’ character and identity and;
- Establish a robust and attractive public realm;
- Improve access to and connectivity of the site with the surrounding townscape to encourage walking, cycling and public transport;
- Create a long lasting sustainable development;
- Sensitive integrate parking and servicing into the site;
- Integrate existing green spaces to optimize usage and supplement with appropriate new landscaping.
VISION STATEMENT FROM DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
(WORKING DRAFT 1.4, PUBLISHED 9TH SEPTEMBER 2016)

There is strong strategic planning policy support for the right kind of change and investment. This is underpinned by the 2012 CCOS Planning Brief SPD well as the Look! St Albans Draft Design Codes (2013). As key local landowners, we understand our responsibility in supporting St Albans city centre as a whole and its role as the major town centre for over 140,000 people in the district.

For far too long citizens and landowners have made do with too many of the issues in buildings, public spaces, layout and landscaping of the civic centre sites. This part of our city is just not making a great enough contribution to our city. This to the detriment of citizens, visitors, employers, employees, landowners and the environment.

In late 2015, we formed a Civic Centre Opportunity Sites Development Partnership to approach this complex and considerable challenge together. We do this with fresh momentum and in the hope that through collaborative working with many local stakeholders we can create a shared, ambitious and credible masterplan. The Development Partnership currently brings together: St Albans City and District Council – Community Services, Hertfordshire Constabulary, NHS, Boulbbee LDN (owners of The Maltings)

We see this Civic Centre masterplan as the definitive guide to the making of a much improved city centre experiences for citizens and visitors, a prosperous City economy and revenues to deliver great services in the medium and long term. We believe such a place will derive from a generous increase in beautiful 21st century city centre living, working and learning environments and a much improved cultural offer set in an enjoyable public realm and resourceful approaches to parking.

Our ambition is to deliver this major city centre placemaking initiative in a manner so it leads to a generous place of well build healthy and beautiful homes, workspaces with a mix of complementary retailers activating the street scene and set in a network of productive and diverse urban gardens. This is envisaged to enable us to make a significant contribution to the city and district of St Albans.

KEY MEASURES IN THIS PROGRAMME ARE:

• A step change in public realm quality and city centre experiences: an attractive public route/loop from St Peter’s Street via The Alban Arena, across Victoria Street, through the site currently owned by the Hertfordshire Police to a larger Civic Square linked with St Peter’s Street;
• ‘The New St Albans Arena’: An extension of the Alban Arena including the creation of a 21st century library and learning space, a smaller and bigger stage, cafe/restaurant/bar services, flexible meeting/conference facilities etc.;
• The retention of the current council offices/police services with the aim to improve, perhaps extend the existing buildings;
• A larger new Civic Square framed by the New St Albans Arena, the Council offices, the police and possibly new community health facilities;
• About 500m2 of state of the art Community Health Service facilities at an accessibly location within the site and in ambient environment;
• A new, consolidated and beautiful Civic Square multi-store car park and cycle parking if no other solution can be found;
• Building 40% of the new homes as ‘affordable housing’ including social rented, for keyworkers, shared ownership and starter homes;
• Building 4 to 5 screen cinema (about 500 to 600 seats), a terrace, a outdoor /pop-up roof garden cinema;
• An office building at the currently underused and unattractive service yard;
• A new office building at the currently underused and unattractive service yard;
• A number of new homes set in a generous roof garden, with fantastic views across St Albans and with its own access from a more attractive and used courtyard;
• Additional retail outlets within the current building;
• Improvements to tired façades and the public realm;
• An extended and improved Maltings multi-story car park overall to accommodate the increased demand and making the building a more positive (architectural) feature of the city centre;
• St Albans horticultural and cosmological heritage could play a key theme in this programme.

Supplement #1:
Since the invitations for this Civic Centre charrette went out, the owner of the Maltings, Boulbbee LDN, came to the view that it would be greatly appreciated if the participants of this charrette could spend some of their time and knowledge to the emerging concepts for the investment plan for the Maltings. From the Civic Centre masterplanning point of view, the Maltings investment programme has the potential to enable improvements along Victoria Street and contribute to creating a state of the art learning centre/library right at the civic heart of our City as well as creating a more varied rooftscape. Sean Dempsey of Boulbbee LDN is keen to engage in conversations and ideas on how initial concepts could be improved. We would like to suggest exploring and testing emerging concepts as part of this charrette. The main reason for bringing this to this charrette is the relationship between the delivery on some of our key ambitions for the Civic Civic Centre and the city centre as a whole.

The Maltings Shopping centre is considering a comprehensive programme of alterations and extensions. This includes:
• A 4 to 5 screen cinema (about 500 to 600 seats), a terrace, a outdoor /pop-up roof garden cinema;
• An office building at the currently underused and unattractive service yard;
• A number of new homes set in a generous roof garden, with fantastic views across St Albans and with its own access from a more attractive and used courtyard;
• Additional retail outlets within the current building;
• Improvements to tired façades and the public realm;
• An extended and improved Maltings multi-story car park overall to accommodate the increased demand and making the building a more positive (architectural) feature of the city centre;
• St Albans horticultural and cosmological heritage could play a key theme in this programme.

It’s a complex structure the Maltings, however, and only if there is enough interest in the room tomorrow, we would like to propose something what you could call an ‘informal community design review’ of the emerging concepts. Sean Dempsey of Boulbbee LDN would coordinate a series of informal design concepts through a walkabout and visuals and then invite ideas to improve the current thinking.
2.1 PLACE | CHARACTER

ARTIST'S IMPRESSION: S RYDER PAVILION CONCEPT PLAN
ARTIST'S IMPRESSION | CHARLES GARDNER
S RYDER PROMENADE CONCEPT PLAN
2.1 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE CONCEPT PLANS

As illustrated in the two perspectives of the S Ryder concept plans, both provide a series of new and improved public spaces albeit with differing character and flow of activity and layout. Street scenes are framed by civic and commercial activities, located at street level and roof level of mid-rise buildings and structures. They are set in an abundance of landscaped public, semi public, shared and private spaces, both at street and rooftop level.

Both concepts are landscape-led and envisage the retention of most of the existing trees adding interest, scale and beauty to the revived urban quarter once all new and refitted buildings and spaces are fully occupied. Both concepts include the following key design features:

- A high awareness of sun path and orientation of spaces in this locality and topography e.g. gardens on top of the Bricket Road car park at the corner Civic Close/Bricket Road in both concept plans, rooftop gardens; north south orientation of key routes and in public places;
- Living walls as a means to reinvent the ability of existing structures such as the Bricket Road car park to contribute positively to townscape, arrival experience, air quality, biodiversity and overall amenity;
- Hugely improved pedestrian environment and consideration for step-free access for the less able across the urban quarter;
- Pedestrian and cycling links across to the Maltings with perhaps the possibility to move some bus stop activity towards the Quaker Garden where the Maltings and the new urban quarter connect;
- Mid-rise buildings that can accommodate a range of uses/occupiers over time enabled by generous floor to ceiling heights; particular at street level with 3.5m floor to ceiling heights and regular/numerous step-free access points to buildings. High floor to ceiling heights at ground floor level as well as above national standard upper floors will support adaptable buildings;
- Access for cars is comparable in both concept plans whereby access for auxiliary parking and deliveries to the properties along the eastern side of St Peter’s Street, as well as the requirements of the police, health and Magistrate Court services and blue badge holders are met and are effectively controlled;
- A public lift connecting the basement of the Alban Arena, the Civic Square level, the balconies leading ‘back’ from the Alban Arena and the roof top;
- Include buildings above the transformed Bricket Road car park structure as well as extending the Alban Arena’s storage and loading area;
- Develop parts of the Municipal Gardens including a redesign of the outlying green spaces with perhaps play and simple outdoor gym equipment so that the spaces could be used more widely and better overlooked in the early evening hours;
- Have made provision to retain the original Alban Arena building, the council Offices, the Bricket Road car park structure and Hertfordshire House.

2.1B S RYDER PAVILION CONCEPT PLAN

The S Ryder Pavilion concept plan suggests a clear focus on public, civic and cultural activities in and around the Civic Square.

This design concept includes:

- A Health & Learning Hub as well as a lobby/foyer for the New Albans Arena and café, brought together by creating a glass roofed, light flooded Ryder Pavilion between the current Alban Arena and the Civic Offices;
- A removal of public access to the New Albans Arena at street level, in the rear; creating a service yard for all occupants and the new and extended Arena;
- The use of the Alban Arena roof as a public roof garden with a restaurant and/or bar capitalising on the views and vistas across the city and beyond while addressing the current lack of a pre and post show experience;
- The greening and transformation of the Bricket Road car park by building on top of the current structure with an office with gardens overlooking S Ryder Square (currently Civic Close), contributing to the animation and colonisation of the place;
- A pedestrian route from the Maltings is provided by turning right when reaching S Ryder Square, expanding on Civic Close and envisaged to be framed by small cafés and retailers;
- An agreement with the Magistrate Court, to be brokered, regarding current parking arrangements could facilitate a pedestrian approach (ramp) that levels the different heights in topography which would benefit those less able;
- From this modest but busy square, a tree lined lane (7m) is envisaged across to the western/upper end of the Quaker Memorial Garden, lined by smaller retailers, offices and workspaces that would provide daytime and early evening activities.
The character of the area towards the Maltings is considered less civic and cultural in its mix of uses and facilities. It’s more of a neighbourhood character with smaller cafés, shops and offices at street level and with homes above in the main. The prevailing atmosphere and urban pace in this part of S Ryder Pavilion concept plan is slower with opportunities to rest and observe people on Ryder Square, on Civic Close and in the Quaker Gardens.

It is envisaged that the residential accommodation around a private/residents shared courtyard is attractive to a range of household types including young families and more mature downsizes. The adaptable courtyard building and town houses - typical typologies seen in a range of forms and uses across the city centre - have the potential to provide for a larger number of occupants and sizes of households and commercial units. The buildings offer through higher floor to ceiling heights the opportunity to adapt and be used by a range of uses including office, workspaces, cultural and creative services. Overall, the S Ryder Pavilion concept plan envisages an urban and vibrant civic and cultural square with the Pavilion Garden at its heart. Usable all year around for all and providing a pleasant car free antidote to noisy St Peter’s Street with a good amount of evening activity supported by existing and new cafés, restaurants and bars.

More detail on aspects of the S Ryder Pavilion concept plan is provided in section 2.3 to 2.6.

2.1C S Ryder Promenade concept plan

The S Ryder Promenade concept plan suggests a clear emphasis on a network of well connected public spaces with a new, generous pedestrianised promenade.

The S Ryder Promenade is generous in its sizing and a vibrant place through ground floor level shops, cafés, restaurants, bars, galleries and perhaps offices and services. It has the potential to be a busy route during the day and a buzzing destination for the whole city in the evening with restaurants and bars spilling out onto the promenade.

The Alban Arena, albeit mostly retained in its original designed size, sits at the heart of this otherwise busy urban quarter with activities all around it and highly accessible from all directions. Improvements and activation of the area underneath the Alban Arena balconies will support this pivotal position allowing the network of places and spaces to be well used by day and night. Small stalls/service pods integrated into the fabric of the building could be explored.

The residential accommodation overlooking the tree-lined pedestrianised promenade is perhaps most attractive for those that enjoy city centre living with easy access to services, places to socialise and entertainment. The western block is of significant scale and length. Means of articulating the facade and adding interest ought be explored further in the next iteration of the design concept.

This design concept includes further:
- Linking the Maltings with a new Health & Learning Hub via a generous promenade with adjacent gardens created as part of the greened and transformed Bricket Road car park, the Civic Square and indeed, Hatfield Road;
- A new Health & Learning Garden forms part of the Health & Learning Hub located behind the Alban Arena and along the promenade and Bricket Road;
- The height and scale of the new Health and Learning Hub means that it is visible from St Peter’s Street and Victoria Street;
- The Health & Learning Garden are connected via generous stairs and a beautifully crafted ramp to the promenade level and Civic Square (northern side); and via the extended Alban Arena balconies and the public lift to the Civic Square level (southern side);
- The new Health & Learning Garden is a green and calm place. This is achieved through its landscaping and elevated position above the promenade and no commercial activity such as a café or otherwise on offer.
- A small/medium sized, high-end city hotel, located at the corner of Victoria Street and Bricket Road add to this place character. It provides an opportunity to mark the mid-point between the City train station and the Old Town Hall as well as being the landmark/entrance to the new urban quarter.

More detail on aspects of the S Ryder Promenade concept plan is provided in section 2.2 to 2.6.
The S Ryder Pavilion concept plan is landscape-led and places a particular emphasis on an improved and enlarged pedestrian friendly Civic Square with a glass covered pavilion providing highly usable and adaptable public space. The glass covered light flooded pavilion offers additional all weather public space, and space for the Alban Arena foyer, the Health and Learning Hub, for council events and a café type facility. A key characteristic and perhaps challenge for this concept plan relates to its creation of two private/semi-private courtyards which are not or not longer public through routes; the ‘S Ryder Courtyard’ and a service yard for the Alban Arena, the new offices/workspaces, the Health and Learning Hub and council offices/police services). The sheer number of service yard users is demonstrated through this list, however, the loss of full public access is noteworthy.

**Key Projects Include:**

- As illustrated in the sketched plan below a pedestrian route, shown in sand colours, runs from the Maltings to Civic Square and into St Peter’s Street - creating the desired looped route linking key existing and new destinations;
- An improved Victoria Street environment and Quaker Garden invites the pedestrian into a tree lined lane and leads to S Ryder Square. Orientation is provided by a glimpse of St Peter’s Street and Civic Square to the west, a greened and transformed Bricket Road car park opposite and the Job Centre building to the east. Consideration needs to be given to identified level differences around the S Ryder Square with a particular recognition of the current under-croft parking provision in the Magistrate Courts;
- Controlled vehicle access to the ‘car parking fringe’ behind the properties along St Peter’s Street is maintained;
- Provision of sufficient disabled parking within the transformed Bricket Road car park;
- Connecting the Alban Arena balcony level with terraces on the back of the Alban Arena and the transformed Bricket Road office and car park;
- A lift near the entrance of the Alban Arena from basement to all levels of the building - Alban Arena floor, Civic Square, Alban Arena balconies connected with the transformed Bricket Road car park, Alban Arena 1st floor and new rooftop garden;
- This concept plan considers the loading and delivery needs of the numerous new occupants and creates a semi-private service yard accessed from a widened and much simplified Charter Close route into the service yard. Consequently, there is no public walking route behind the Alban Arena to Hatfield Road maintained in this part of this concept plan;
- The entrance and exit to the transformed Bricket Road car park is located just off Bricket Road, east of the S Ryder Square;
- It is worth noting that in this concept plan the northern end of Bricket Road car park is ‘pulled back’ resulting in a much simplified and straighter alignment of Charter Close. This then creates space for a few new homes. Overall, and currently, this results in a reduction of car parking provision at Bricket Road car park of about 60 to 290 spaces. This could be increased, if considered necessary, by shifting proposed office/mixed use space from level 3 and 4 into parking use and/or exploring the extension of basement car parking under the extended Alban Arena and shared service yard. Cycle parking facilities for residents, visitors and employees are provided within the Bricket Road car park and at a few well positioned places across the urban quarter;
- The pedestrian and cycling route from Hatfield Road passes along improved green spaces which include a children’s play area, an outdoor gym and new homes before turning right to access Civic Square via the Municipal Gardens or Charter Close. In the evenings, the route along Bricket Road to the Maltings is possibly more attractive, although a new terrace of cottages along Charter Close is expected to have a positive impact on the quality of the pedestrian environment during the day and the evening hours. A challenge remains related to the Police Rapid Response unit being located towards the very top end of Charter Close;
- A ‘drop-off’ is envisaged to be located closer to Bricket Road, making the transition from a more car dominated street to a pedestrian friendly environment. Current blue badge holders and other parking demands from the Health and Learning Hub are met through the improved decked and underground car parking capacity in the new Bricket Road car park.

### S Ryder Pavilion Concept Plan | Getting Around

**Public Realm | Getting Around**

- Retained trees
- New or reduced in size trees
- Gardens (street level)
- Children’s play/outdoor gym
- Leisure/Public Gardens in buildings/structures
- Pedestrian Priority Area in Project Area
- Improved pedestrian environment
- Victoria Street/the Maltings
- Parking accessed via Bricket Road
- Green living walls

**S Ryder Pavilion Concept Plan | Getting Around**

- Civic Square
- S Ryder Pavilion
- Victoria Street
- Lane
- S Ryder Square
- Charter Close

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**KOLONAKI STREET | ATHENS**

**WWW.CARFREE.COM/CFT/063.HTML**
2.3.2 S Ryder Promenade Concept Plan | Getting Around

The S Ryder Promenade concept plan suggests a clear emphasis on a network of connected public spaces with a new, generous pedestrianised promenade (between 15 to 25m wide). The promenade provides a pedestrian route and vista from the Maltings exit on Victoria Street to Charter Close, and two routes via Civic Square to St Peter’s Street. A key characteristic, and perhaps challenge for this concept plan, is that most buildings within the site have fronts and backs which are frequented by the public during both the day and evening hours.

Key Projects Include:

- A pedestrian and cycle friendly promenade from/to the Maltings and St Peter’s Street via a much improved route from the transformed Bricket Road car park and Civic Square, the Health and Learning Gardens and facilities and Hatfield Road;
- Victoria Street traffic calming and environmental improvements with the possibility of a new bus stop;
- Vehicle access to the ‘car parking fringe’ behind the properties along St Peter’s Street is maintained and controlled;
- The entrances and exits to the transformed Bricket Road car park remain located where they are currently;
- Sufficient disabled parking is provided within the Bricket Road car park;
- Bricket Road car park capacity is increased by about 140 spaces of decked car parking (basement extension plus three new levels on the northern end);
- The Alban Arena balconies are connected to terraces on the back of the Alban Arena and connect across to the Health and Learning Hub, and Garden, resolving a number of challenging level differences;
- A lift near the entrance of the Alban Arena will operate from the basement to all levels of the building - Alban Arena Roof, Civic Square, Alban Arena balconies connected with transformed Bricket Road car park and across to the Health and Learning Garden on the top level of the extended Bricket Road car park;
- Required private parking and refuse for the Ryder Open Courtyard buildings is provided in a new underground car park accessed and exited via Bricket Road - maintaining an existing right of access route.
- Cycle parking facilities for residents, visitors and employees is provided within the Bricket Road car park and at a few well positioned places across the Civic Quarter.
- The pedestrian route from Hatfield Road passes along improved green spaces, including a children’s play area, before offering a great number of route choices for pedestrians and cyclists.
During the day, St Albans City Centre, particularly along St Peter’s Street, is a very busy place. The newly designed Civic Quarter could take a bigger active role in being a focal point with a more relaxed urban atmosphere. It would become a place where people gather and socialise, enjoy arts and cultural events, visit learning and health centres and all the while enjoying the space, interaction with others and people watching. These social exchanges could be considered the very essence of public life in urban contexts. Landscaping, more specifically exposure to nature, such as sun light, trees, plants, water and wind in the public realm is increasingly recognised as a key ingredient for attractive busy urban centres. Both concept plans are landscape-led and employ landscaping as a means to support interest, beauty, places of relaxation, (bio)-diversity, social interaction, community building, air quality and a variety of different urban green and garden experiences (perhaps even urban productive landscapes) on street and roof levels and in structures and buildings including ‘living walls’.

2.3.1 S Ryder Concept Plans | Landscape

The S Ryder Pavilion concept plan suggests a range of public green spaces and gardens with the Pavilion and the Alban Arena Roof Garden being the largest. These will provide an all year round and an ‘above the rooftop experience’ at the heart of the Civic Quarter.

KEY PROJECTS INCLUDE:
- The retention of many of the current trees and a review of the lime trees on Bricket Road with the possibility to reduce them in size so they can be retained and complemented with new ones, to complete the intention of a lime tree avenue.
- A 50% reduction in the size of the Municipal Gardens and Green to be compensated for with an array of spaces and gardens including S Ryder Pavilion, roof gardens on the Alban Arena, greening of the Bricket Road car park into a living structure, an extended Civic Square, a new S Ryder Square, improved Quaker Gardens and surrounds, improved Victoria Street environments, Bricket Road lime avenue, roof gardens on private buildings, Bricket Road Terrace and a play area/outdoor gym north of Charter Close.

2.3.2 S Ryder Pavilion Concept Plan

The S Ryder Pavilion concept plan suggests a range of public green spaces and gardens with the Pavilion and the Alban Arena Roof Garden being the largest. These will provide an all year round and an ‘above the rooftop experience’ at the heart of the Civic Quarter.
2.3.3 S Ryder Pavilion Concept Plan

The S Ryder Promenade concept plan suggests a central public green space currently called 'The Health Garden' to be built above the current Brick Road car park structure, co-located and maintained by the Health and Learning Hub and well connected with the various site levels as a public resource for all.

Key Projects Include:

- The retention of many of the current trees and a review of the lime trees on Brick Road with the possibility to reduce them in size so they can be retained and complemented with new ones, to complete the intention of a lime tree avenue (not yet shown on the plan opposite);
- The Health Garden is connected via a generous stairs and beautifully crafted ramp to the promenade level and Civic Square (northern side); and via the extended Alban Arena balconies with the new Arena public lift to Civic Square level (southern side);
- The Health Garden is a green and calm place. This is achieved through its landscaping and elevated position above the promenade and has no commercial activity such as a café or otherwise on offer;
- A 40% reduction in the Municipal Gardens and Green to be compensated for with an array of spaces and gardens including the centrally located public Health Gardens, greening of the Brick Road car park to become a living structure, an extended Civic Square, improved Quaker Gardens and surrounds, improved Victoria Street environments, the new S Ryder Promenade, and roof gardens on private buildings.
2.4 Mix of Uses

The S Ryder Pavilion is the focal point of the Civic Quarter underpinned by its seamless transition into Civic Square.

Key Projects Include:

- The S Ryder Pavilion is a light flooded, north-facing glass structure spanning across the space between the Alban Arena, the council offices, police services and Civic Square. It is envisaged to house a range of facilities including a Health and Learning Hub, a café/restaurant, flexible meeting spaces, reception and a large foyer arranged around a central garden;

- The Alban Arena is extended backwards, upwards, downwards and sideways which includes a heightened fly tower, rooftop gardens with a bar and restaurant, a foyer in the Pavilion, an extended storage and loading garage, and a basement stage;

- Between the Alban Arena and the mixed use Bricket Road car park sits a new building for storage, loading and parking with a terrace and possible restaurant and café uses on its flat roof. This facility is expected to benefit from the proximity to the new office/work spaces/retail build on top of the transformed Bricket Road car park;

- The greened and transformed Bricket Road car park provides 240 refurbished and 48 new decked car parking spaces which equates to a loss of about 60 spaces compared to the current provision. If more parking is considered necessary, a proportion of the office use could be shifted to parking uses and further basement parking could be explored as part of the next design stage;

- A substantial new residential courtyard development is located along Victoria Street and Bricket Road. The courtyard is formed by a range of building blocks and with a mix of uses on street level. It includes an extended and transformed Hertfordshire House;

- Additional town houses are located along the new lane leading to S Ryder Square, the Magistrate Court, Civic Square and St Peter’s Street with a mix of uses at ground floor level and offices or residential uses above;

- Underground parking for 125 spaces is provided as part of the S Ryder courtyard development;

- This concept plan identifies the need for about 14,500m² of improved public realm and 1200m² of public roof gardens as well as 1800m² of private and shared roof gardens associated with homes and workplaces;

- Towards the northern edge of the Civic Quarter, two rows of terraced cottages mark the transition from a mix of uses to more domestic, smaller scale development and activities.
2.4.2 S Ryder Promenade Concept Plan

The original campus layout from the 1970s is echoed in this new concept plan in so far that buildings are surrounded by pedestrianised or pedestrian friendly public realm with full access for the public on all sites of the building during the day and night hours. The scale of the public realm, particularly the spacious promenade, should be attractive to larger scale restaurants, bars and cafés. The need to activate the public realm across the urban quarter is a notable characteristic in this concept plan.

Key Projects Include:

- The majority of the new buildings and uses are found along S Ryder Promenade – making it a busy and landscaped urban walking and cycling route/place running parallel to St Peter’s Street.
- Two mixed-use open courtyard buildings along the S Ryder Promenade are envisaged to accommodate a range of small and medium sized retailers, restaurants, bars and cafés at street level, with the possibility of an evening economy focus and with homes above;
- Hertfordshire House is extended, and the building at the corner Victoria Street/Bricket Road is envisaged to be a small to medium sized boutique/high quality city centre hotel. At this key location at a juncture of the Maltings, Civic Quarter, the station and the Old Town Hall (new museum), this development site is a prime opportunity to create a landmark (hotel or other development).
- Underground parking for 125 spaces is provided as part of the S Ryder courtyard development;
- Restaurants, bars and cafés uses are envisaged to spill out into the public realm through-out this vibrant part of the Civic Quarter;
- Along the promenade sits the transformed, mixed use Bricket Road car park with a large public garden co-located with the Health and Learning Hub, an extended car park and some workspaces at the northern end.
- The Health and Learning Hub is of considerable scale and designed as a major new daytime and early evening destination at this prominent position. Owing to its height, there is the opportunity to create a visual link and good level of visibility St Peter’s Street and Civic Square.
- This concept plan identifies the need for about 17,000m² of improved public realm and 1200m² of public roof gardens as well as 1800m² of private and shared roof gardens associated with homes and workplaces.
- In this concept plan, the Alban Arena extends backwards and upwards to include a heightened fly tower, an extended storage and loading garage, and a basement stage;
- The greened and transformed Bricket Road car park provides about 350 refurbished and 140 new decked car parking spaces which equates to a gain of about 140 spaces compared to the current provision. If less parking is considered necessary, a proportion of the parking use could be shifted to other uses;
- Towards the northern edge of the Civic Quarter, one row of terraced cottages marks the transition from a mix of uses to a more domestic, smaller scale development and activities.
The approach to scale, building heights and massing is illustrated in the perspective opposite. The number of floors in new buildings ranges from a maximum of 2.5 floors at the fringe of the Municipal Gardens to up to 6.5 floors at the heart of the new civic and cultural quarter along Civic Close.

- The S Ryder Courtyard buildings show a varied approach to building heights (3.5 to 6.5 floors at 10m, 12.5m and 15m deep floor plates). These height variations are driven by the built context in the vicinity - setbacks from a relatively narrow Victoria Street with the aim to allow as much direct sunlight as possible into the courtyard and residential properties while working with the listed tree in the courtyard which also does provide amenity and a level of privacy;

- The new roof gardens add amenity for the residents and aim to make a positive contribution to the townscape. The visibility of the gardens throughout the seasons, particularly in the higher buildings, aims to correspond with the effort to add interest to the varied rooftops of St Albans' historic centre;

- The town houses (3.5 floors) with gables, fronting onto the lane to the western edge of the site, relate to the listed cottages along Victoria Street and provide for smaller scale retail and commercial activity at street level and potentially in the upper floors;

- The height or form of the S Ryder Pavilion glass structure is not clear yet, however, it can be assumed that a minimum of 3.5 floors (12m+) are to be accommodated so that a generous space can emerge;

- The additional fly tower and bar/restaurant set in the Alban Arena’s roof garden aims to add height to the current roof structure and interest;

- The height of the offices/workspaces above the transformed Bricket Road structure will together reach a maximum to up 4.5 floors with the potential to perhaps add a greater degree of variation in height during the next design development stage;

- Towards the northern edge of the Civic Quarter, this concept plan proposes two rows of terraced cottages of up to 2.5 floors, in keeping with the surrounding residential properties and gardens.
2.5.2 Ryder Promenade Concept Plan | Scale

The approach to scale, building heights and massing is illustrated in the perspective opposite. The number of floors in the new buildings ranges from a maximum of 2.5 floors at the fringe of the Municipal Gardens to up to 6.5 floors for the Health and Learning Hub, with parking underneath in the existing Bricket Road car park structure.

- The transformation of the Bricket Road car park into a mixed use building corresponds with a variation in the number of floors from 2.5 at the Health Garden to 6.5 floors in the Health and Learning Hub, and 5.5 floors in the car park structure to 3.5 floors in the town houses at the northern end of the car park;

- The Samuel Ryder Promenade is of significant scale with over 20 metre width in places and framed by substantial courtyard buildings of 4.5 to 5.5 floors and up to 15m deep;

- The buildings do not have a significant range in scale or height at this point in the concept design process. The articulation of façades will be critical in reducing the possible monolithic nature of the western courtyard building. Along Victoria Street, the difference in scale between the existing context and the new buildings should be addressed in the next stage of design;

- Towards the northern edge of the Civic Quarter, a row of terraced cottages of up to 2.5 floors in height and in keeping with the surrounding residential properties and gardens.
The S Ryder Pavilion concept plan, as presented opposite, accommodates about 20,000m² of new development. This includes:

- A substantial new residential courtyard with a mix of uses on street level with an extended and transformed Hertfordshire House(2e) forming part of it;
- Additional terraced homes located along the new lane leading to S Ryder Square, the Magistrate Court, Civic Square and St Peter’s Street;

Applying an average of 100m² Gross Floor Area (GFA) per home towards the residential component translates into about 125 to 145 homes.

- A smaller Health and Learning Hub (1000m²), in this concept plan it is located in the glassed S Ryder Pavilion between the Alban Arena and the council offices and police services. This hub will include cafés, restaurants and smaller scale retail alongside community services.
- A significant amount of office/workspaces (~3600m²) is also accommodated within this concept plan.
- 240 refurbished and 170 new car parking - decked and underground - with the inclusion of cycle parking, parking for the police, health and learning facilities/library services, new residents and employees and the less able. If more parking is considered necessary, part of the office use could be shifted to parking uses.

The scale and range of public spaces, gardens and routes in this new urban quarter include:

- Improved street level public realm of about 14,500m²;
- A new S Ryder Garden Pavilion;
- A large Civic Square;
- A new S Ryder Square;
- An outdoor terrace between the Alban Arena, the new office development and refurbished Quaker Gardens;
- Over 1800m² of Public Roof Gardens;
- And over 1800m² of private and shared Roof Gardens associated with homes and workplaces.

Quantums for the refurbishment of the Alban Arena (original footprint) have not been specified here. A detailed building survey and definition of project scope is recommended to facilitate progress. The back extension of the Alban Arena (~400m²) is included as is the demolition of the 1980 extension to the front of the building (~350m²).
**S Ryder Promenade Concept Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Block 1</th>
<th>Ryder Promenade West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>1155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>1155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>1155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3465</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Concept Plan | S Ryder Promenade**

**Development Schedule based on drawings and 3D models produced during the CCOS Design Charrette | October 2016**

**Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Block 1</th>
<th>Ryder Promenade West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Floor Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>9660 m²</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mix of Uses</strong></td>
<td>Residential 50% Office/Workspaces 20% Retail/Restaurant/Café 30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.6a S Ryder Promenade Concept Plan Development Quantum

The S Ryder Promenade concept plan, as presented opposite, accommodates about 19,000m² of new development.

This includes:
- An extended and refurbished Hertfordshire House (3a);
- A mid-sized boutique hotel, expected to be of 4 star quality and located at the corner of Victoria Street and Bricket Road;
- A Health and Learning Hub;
- Cafés, restaurants and retail outlets and a small amount of office/workspaces (720m²).

Applying an average of 100m² Gross Floor Area (GFA) per home towards the residential component translates into about 110 to 130 homes.

This concept plan includes about 350 refurbished and 240 new decked and underground car parking. Parking provision does include cycle parking, parking for the police, health and library services, employees and the less able. A key feature of tolerating such scale is tightly connected with transformation of the whole structure into a living structure with green walls and roofs all around.

The scale of the proposed promenade and network of public spaces and routes includes:
- Improved street level public realm of about 17000m²;
- A new public open space of about 1150m², called for now Health Gardens(4a), co-located with the Health and Learning Hub (about 2500m²) along the promenade. It is intended to mitigate the loss of a proportion of the Municipal Gardens;
- And 2400m² of private and shared roof gardens associated with homes, the hotel and workplaces.

Development Quantums for the refurbishment of the Alban Arena (original footprint) have not been specified. A detailed building survey and definition of project scope are recommended to facilitate progress. The back extension of the new Alban Arena (~250m²) is included as is the demolition of the 1980 extension to the front of the building (~350m²).
3.1 Phasing of the CCOS Projects: Considerations

The question of phasing is intrinsically connected to landownership, the ability to create and manage cash-flows, and the operational and legal requirements of current occupiers and lands.

The design charrette did not discuss in detail the specifics of phasing for either of the CCOS concept plans. However, some discussions featured considerations around landownership, design and development delivery process stages, continuity for existing services such as health and police services, as well as the ‘principal order’ of development to enable the financing of the next phase. It was pointed out that the site’s short built history as a campus development and the connection of utilities key characteristics.

The CCOS Planning Brief, 2012, states: ‘In order to optimise the site’s potential, the Council is strongly advocating a comprehensive approach to masterplanning, urban design and phased delivery. It is acknowledged that the privately owned land on the southern section of the site may be redeveloped ahead of the Council owned land to the north. However, the Council firmly believes that a comprehensive development approach is needed which acknowledges this potential, but provides an overall contextual framework for CCOS. This way the detrimental effects of isolated piecemeal development can be avoided’.

From the design charrette process, two concept plans with a range of proposals for individual sites as well as a public realm framework - possibly combined in the next phase of design concept development from both concept plans - have emerged. Those at the Public Open Feedback session gave broad support for the concept plans.

The diagrams oppose attempt to indicate four principle development land parcels with specific characteristics in terms of their landownership, current occupation/use, proposed mix of uses in the concept plans as well as planning and operational constraints and opportunities. In addition, the Maltings precinct is shown in grey and may play a key role in terms of strengthening the civic identity of the Civic Quarter by supporting a possible move of the library and theatre stage, currently located on the upper floor of the Maltings, into the CCOS site. This will free up space in the Maltings with the possibility to accommodate a cinema, offices and auxiliary bars and restaurants and homes.

A site as big and significant as CCOS asks for binding design rules and/or binding agreements between the landowning parties. This commonly is connected with a degree of certainty, order and the creation of a more recognisable coherent place identity.

Uncertainty often adds cost to development and pressure on cash-flow projections. Given the range of public and private landowners involved, it is conceivable that a credible and substantiated masterplan with a detailed enough phasing plan for the whole City Centre Opportunity Site could help to access and mobilise public and private investment and expertise. This could support an increase in private returns and public benefit, flowing from the complex investment decisions that need to be made by many over a prolonged period of time.

Carrying out a number of key technical studies to test and develop the concept plans as well as agreeing a timetable, legal and financial conditions for moving the library service and theatre stage from the Maltings into the CCOS site could form a key next stepping stone and create momentum. The co-location of health and learning services will enable the freeing up of land for redevelopment for the southern part of the site while allowing continuity of service.

Both concepts plans show a significant amount of improved public realm with the expectation to create an identity and amenity for the Civic Quarter as a whole. The aim of creating an attractive pedestrian route/loop signifies the interdependencies of the individual land parcels. The ‘loop’ has the potential to connect an array of city centre experiences generating public, community and commercial benefits. This strengthens the rationale for a coordinated approach if placemaking ambitions and expectations are to be met.

In addition, and in recognition of the city, district and county wide role of the Civic Quarter, it is considered reasonably to seek for instance contributions from Section 106 budgets, Community Infrastructure Levy and transport improvement initiatives via the Quality Network Partnership (QNP) with the County Council to allow some of the public infrastructure to be improved earlier or to higher standards than perhaps otherwise achievable.
4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

4.1.1 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

The Planning Brief, Conservation Area Statements and Draft Design Codes provide very helpful place specific guidance and inspiration.

CCOS Planning Brief, 2012:

Look! St Albans Design Codes, 2013 (Draft):

In the following, we outline key design principles relating to the appearance of the projects. These have emerged strongly from the many conversations during the concept plans development. They are to be considered essential aspects when testing the concept plans, developing the masterplan and preparing planning applications.

**LANDSCAPE-LED PLACEMAKING**

* The soft and hard landscaping and perhaps even productive landscapes are the critical element in the overall approach and will have a significant impact on the look, feel, activities, experiences, biodiversity, air quality, health and wellbeing afforded by the new Civic Quarter. This includes public, semi-public and private spaces.
* The seasonal changing of soft landscapes should provide an interesting and animated street and townscape (street level gardens, walls and roofscape).

**ADAPTABLE & DELIGHTFUL BUILDINGS AND SPACES**

* High floor to ceiling heights at ground floor level as well as above national standard upper floor to ceiling heights will support adaptable buildings and provide a good quality of ambience;
* To create successful buildings and streets mixed-used ground floors of buildings need to be well designed. These spaces - and their interface with the street and yard - need to be highly adaptable and able to accommodate a great range of uses and users over time (e.g. many pillars in the space or level differences between street and shop floor are to be avoided).
* A generous approach to fenestration with abundant natural light in rooms and spaces will increase construction costs but will have a disproportionately positive impact on living conditions and related attractiveness and sales values.

**MATERIALS, DETAIL AND FINISH**

* It is recommended to use the same material palette for all pedestrian and cycle friendly spaces, including the Ryder Pavilion/ Health Garden and perhaps even the proposed roof gardens on the Alban Arena, to support a shared identity between the spaces; This approach could be extended into the Maltings;
* The detail and care expressed in the finish of brickwork, fenestration and public realm is fundamental to the success of placemaking initiatives.

4.1.2 PROGRESSING THE CCOS PLACEMAKING INITIATIVE

**TECHNICAL WORK**

* Consider commissioning technical design feasibility and structural studies concerned with the Bricket Road car park transformation and the Alban Arena extensions;
* Consider commissioning an accurate, baseline study for the public realm, landscaping and utilities for all buildings, structures, trees etc. above and below ground;
* Consider transferring individual concept plan projects in a detailed topographic model to ensure solutions are explored and tested against the level differences at the earliest stage;
* Consider an international architectural competition for the Alban Arena and Pavilion structure with a good design brief including aspired quality and budgets, a public jury, and sitting tightly within the emerging masterplan;

**PLACE QUALITY AMBITIONS & CONSTRUCTION COST PER M2 ASSUMPTIONS**

+ Review construction cost per m2 assumptions with quality ambitions and adapt the financial model before bringing individual applications back to a shorter/ mini charrette process;

**PLANNING APPLICATION CONTENT & DETAIL**

+ Outline and Detailed Planning Applications must provide technical detail, drawings and sufficiently detailed construction samples at each application stage which are treated as planning conditions. This must include landscaping detail, irrigation, sustainable urban drainage systems and daylight exposure studies.

**TEAM AND COMMITMENT TO VISION AND AMBITION**

+ During the planning, design, construction and operational phases engage with professional teams and partners that share your ambition and determination to deliver this significant placemaking initiative;
+ Review concept plans and consider adding detail to the current Development Partnership’s Vision Statement. Publish the statement as part of a continuous approach to good public and partner engagement and communications.
APPENDIX
AGENDA FOR ST ALBANS
CCOS DESIGN CHARRETTE

Public Open Feedback Session | Friday

- 10:00: Registration
- 10:15: Welcoming by Scott St. Alban & development. Presentation
- 10:30: Complete design brief, design team
- 10:45: Introduction to the design charrette
- 11:00: Feedback on early concepts
- 11:30: Lunch break
- 12:00: Design team presentation
- 12:30: Breakout groups for design proposal
- 13:30: Design team presentations
- 14:00: Group discussion
- 14:30: Conclusion

Design Workshop Session | Saturday

- 09:00: Welcome by Scott St. Alban & development, presentation
- 09:30: Design brief, design team
- 10:00: Introduction to the design charrette
- 10:15: Feedback on early concepts
- 10:45: Lunch break
- 11:15: Design team presentation
- 11:45: Breakout groups for design proposal
- 12:45: Design team presentations
- 13:15: Group discussion
- 13:45: Conclusion

Design Workshop Session | Sunday

- 09:00: Welcome by Scott St. Alban & development, presentation
- 09:30: Design brief, design team
- 10:00: Introduction to the design charrette
- 10:15: Feedback on early concepts
- 10:45: Lunch break
- 11:15: Design team presentation
- 11:45: Breakout groups for design proposal
- 12:45: Design team presentations
- 13:15: Group discussion
- 13:45: Conclusion
1.5 SITE LEVELS

Topography and level differences are a key street characteristic of the approach to St Albans City Centre from the east, south and west. Inspiration for design solutions for CCOS might be taken from those streets while facilitating 21st century access requirements.

Here shown to the left and in colour there are the level differences between St Peter’s Street, Upper Marlborough Road, Victoria Street, Hatfield Road. Below a section from Upper Marlborough Road to Waterend Barn. Overleaf, is a picture taken on Civic Close illustrating the three parking levels in Bricket Road car park as well as the Alban Arena floor, balcony and roof level.