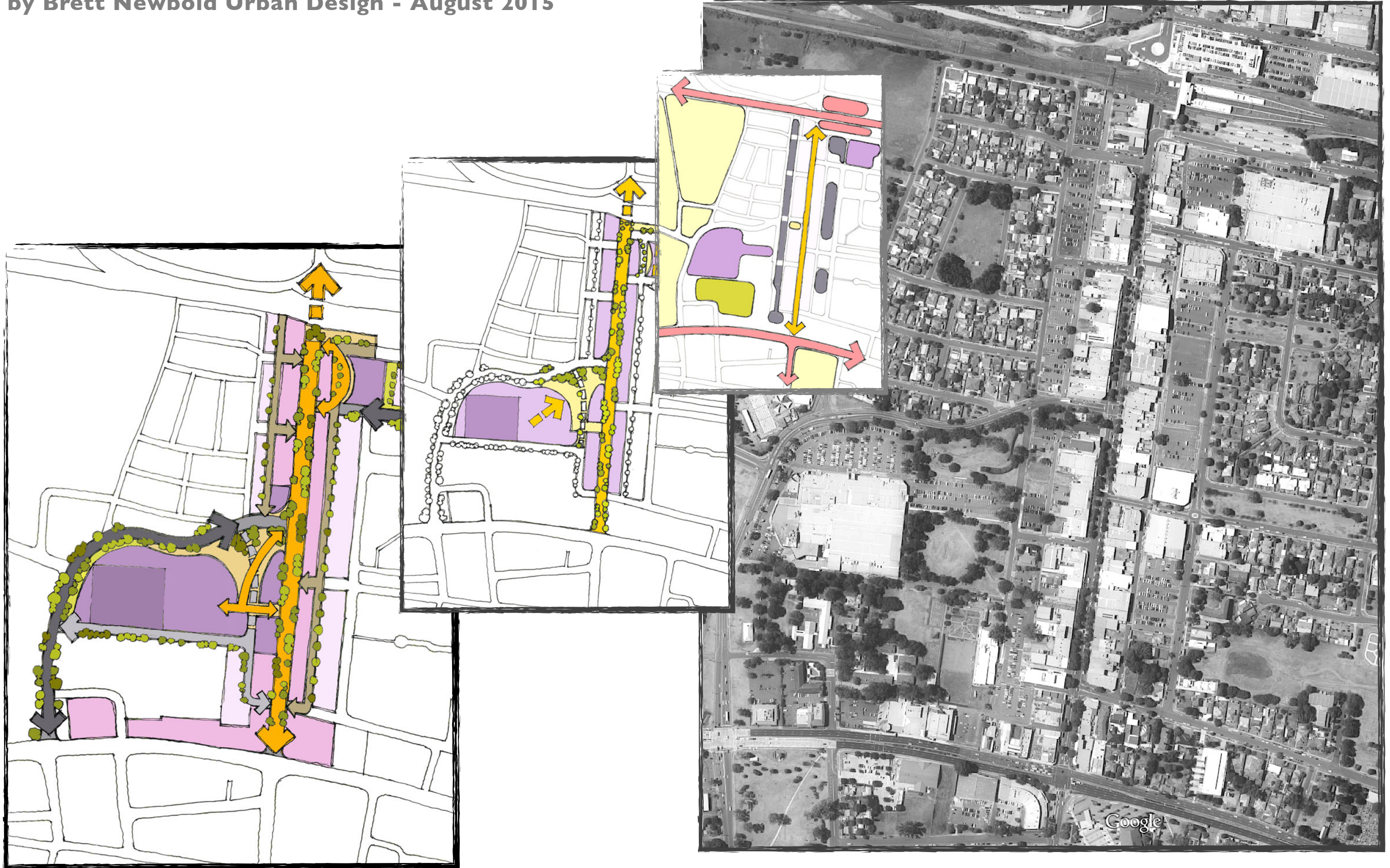


A draft *Concept Plan* for the St Marys Town Centre

prepared for Penrith City Council

by Brett Newbold Urban Design - August 2015



A draft *Concept Plan* for the St Marys Town Centre

This draft *Concept Plan* for the St Marys Town Centre has been prepared for Penrith City Council.

The draft *Concept Plan* has five strategic objectives:

- 1 Improve existing levels of pedestrian activity and social interaction within the St Marys Town Centre.
- 2 Encourage higher levels of retailing and business activities, and share those activities across the whole of the town centre.
- 3 Identify the most-effective configuration for public lands and streets that would promote highest-possible levels of pedestrian and business activities, and recommend general directions for the detailed design of public places.
- 4 Nominate directions for future development that would promote high levels of pedestrian activity in public places, as well as contributing to the improvement of local retailing and business services.
- 5 Recommend directions for updating and co-ordination of Penrith City Council's current strategies and policies which apply to the town centre.

The draft *Concept Plan* is one of several documents which supports public exhibition of a Planning Proposal for the Reclassification of Certain Public Land in the St Marys Town Centre.



The draft *Concept Plan* has been guided by detailed research in relation to the following:

- i Penrith City Council's existing policies and strategies:
 - *St Marys Town Centre Strategy* (2006),
 - *Penrith LEP 2010*,
 - *Penrith DCP 2014* (part E15).
- ii Emerging types of development within the town centre:
 - Recent development applications for mixed retail / residential developments and for residential flats,
 - Redevelopment concepts for the town centre's two existing shopping centres: Station Plaza and St Marys Village.
- iii Recent studies and strategies which have been commissioned by the Council:
 - *Streetscape Improvement Plan for Queen Street* (Spackman Mossop Michaels et al: November 2013),
 - *Traffic and Parking Study* (GHD December 2013),
 - *St Marys Village Economic Impact Assessment* (SGS December 2013),
 - *St Marys Village Strategic Flood Assessment* (Cardno September 2014).
- iv Metropolitan trends:
 - Building developments in town centres,
 - Retail and business activity within traditional "mainstreet" town centres.

Contents of this document

The draft *Concept Plan* is summarised on page three of this document.

The draft *Concept Plan* was guided by a detailed examination of the St Marys Town Centre and surrounding lands.

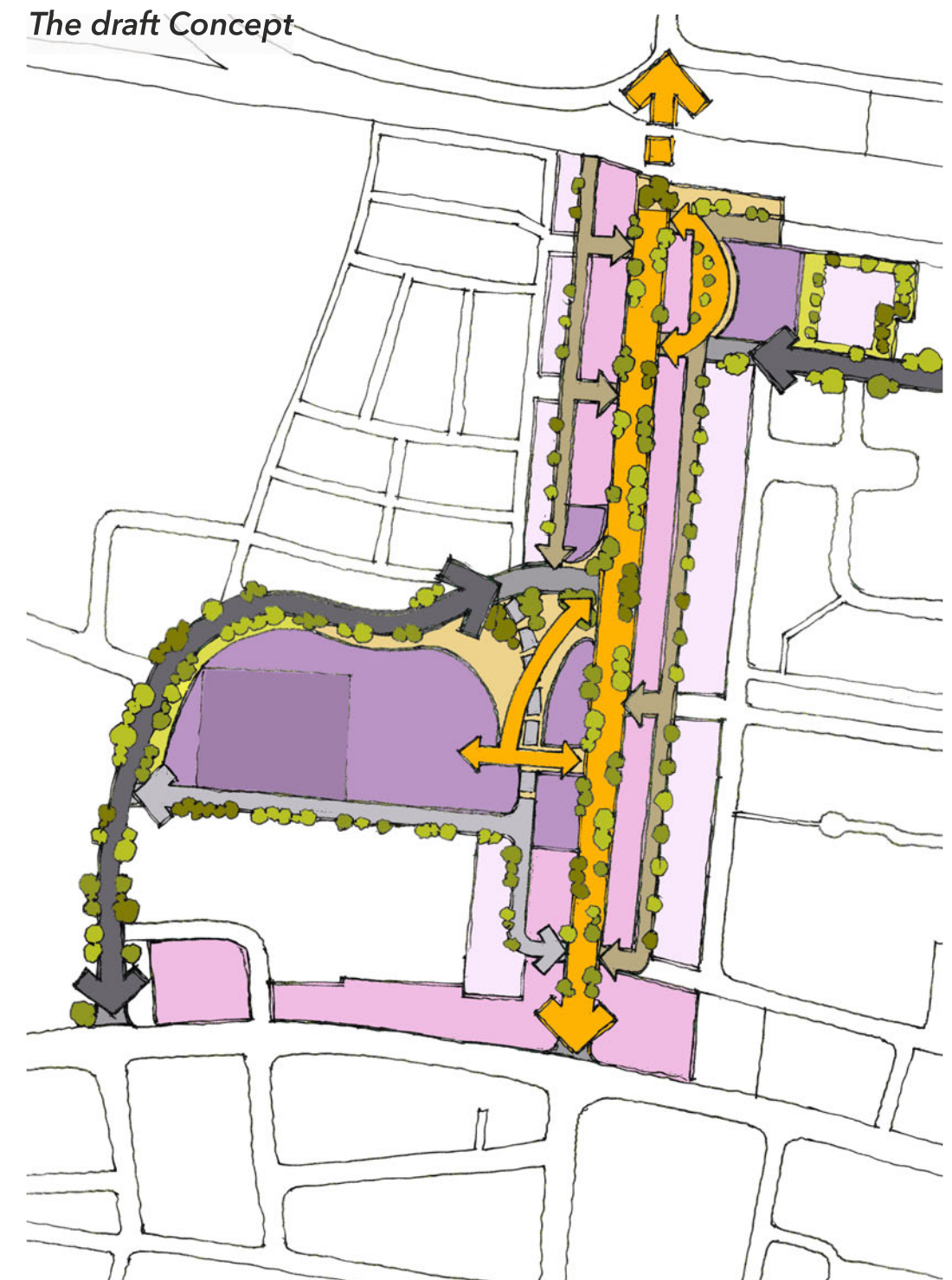
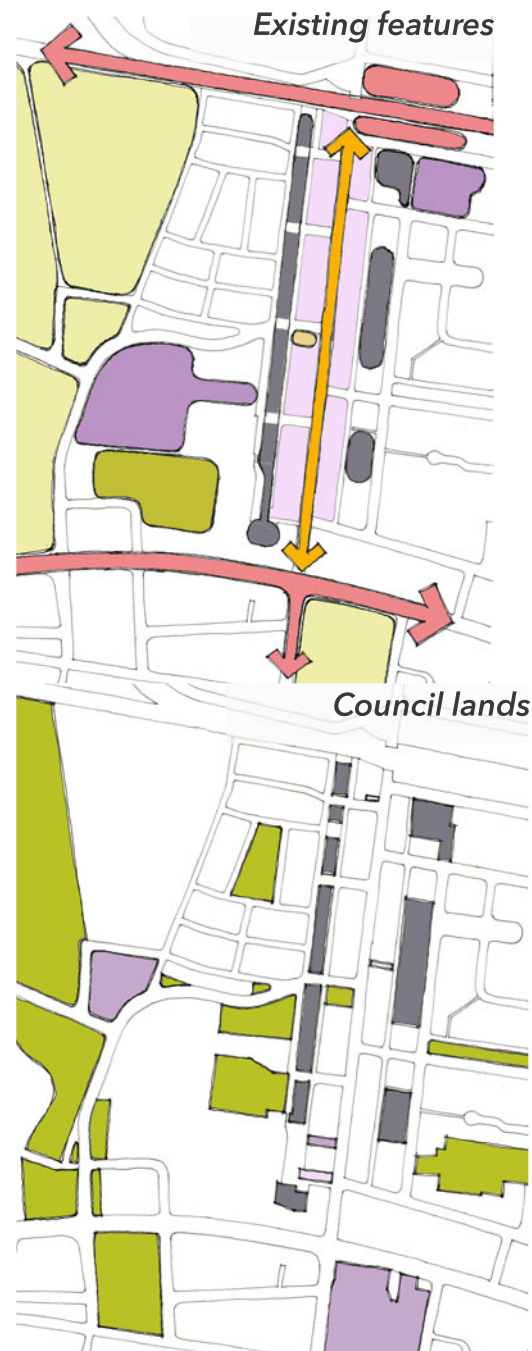
Pages four and five of this document describe essential elements of the existing town centre.

Those essential elements relate to features of the town centre's current layout which have a significant influence upon pedestrian movements and business activities:

- The Queen Street "spine",
- The two shopping centre developments,
- Schools and community facilities,
- Pedestrian "desire lines",
- Primary access routes for vehicles.

Details of the draft *Concept Plan* are explained on pages six to twelve:

- Queen Street as a focal point,
- A new town square and plazas,
- Complementary development,
- Access for pedestrians and vehicles.



The draft Concept Plan

The draft Concept Plan has seven key elements:

- 1 Consolidate the role of Queen Street as this town centre’s “mainstreet” and in order to establish a foundation for improved levels of pedestrian and business activity throughout the centre.
- 2 Provide new and improved public places to create focal points for pedestrian activity and community gatherings, and to establish significant catalysts for improved local retailing and business services.
- 3 Encourage redevelopments that complement the desired quality of streets and public places, with a focus upon building designs that maximise pedestrian activity through streets and public places.
- 4 Revitalise laneways and cross streets in order to direct pedestrian activity toward Queen Street as well as to ensure that all streets are safe and attractive for pedestrians.
- 5 Create greenways along the town centre’s major access routes by new landscaping.
- 6 Provide new vehicle access to major developments in order to protect character and pedestrian amenity of Queen Street and the revitalised laneways.
- 7 Review and update Council’s current strategies and policies for the St Marys Town Centre in order to better-reflect contemporary needs and emerging trends, as well as to guide desirable improvements that would stimulate community interaction and business activities.



- 1 Consolidate the role of Queen Street
- 2 Provide new and improved public places
- 3 Encourage complementary development
 - Sites that adjoin significant public places
 - Main street properties
 - Residential backdrops
- 4 Revitalise laneways and cross streets
- 5 Major access via “greenways”
- 6 New vehicle access

Background: 01 - The current town centre

Successive studies have confirmed three fundamental requirements for town centres:

- A variety of desirable destinations,
- A convenient and safe pedestrian network between all of the centre's destinations,
- Public places which are safe and attractive.

Current features of the St Marys Town Centre date from the 1950's. Queen Street was the focal point of this traditional "mainstreet" town centre:

Extending for more than 800m, Queen Street is flanked by shop-buildings and an attractive but ageing avenue of trees that create a unique shady setting during the summer months.

Due to its dead-end at the railway, Queen Street is largely protected from through-traffic, and by comparison with most main streets, is uniquely suited to high levels of pedestrian activity.

However, these qualities have not prevented the town centre's decline over recent decades:

Successive strategies and studies have confirmed that development and retail trends favour shopping centre developments - which compromise activity along Queen Street.

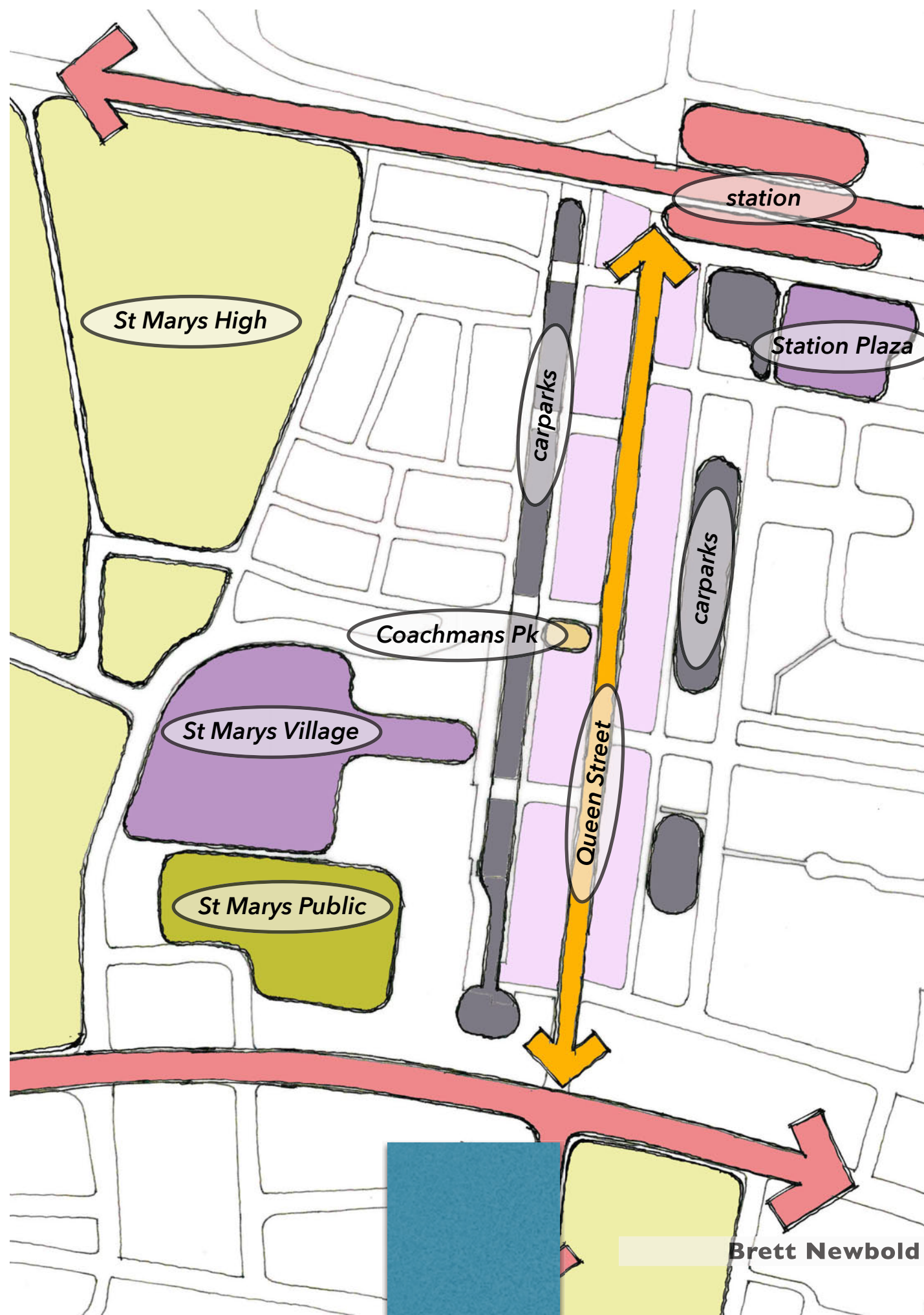
Currently, a significant proportion of buildings along this street are dilapidated or vacant.

Similar to many town centres, St Marys comprises an aggregation of shops, businesses and community facilities:

The adjoining map shows the town centre's key destinations which attract significant numbers of visitors - and illustrates their concentration along the town centre's western edge.

Unlike other town centres, most of these destinations appear to operate in isolation from the mainstreet.

Limited pedestrian traffic between peripheral destinations and Queen Street has a direct affect upon current mainstreet activity.



A number of features contribute to isolation of the town centre's major destinations from Queen Street:

Service entries to mainstreet buildings together with carparks and under-utilised parks create visual and physical "barriers" along laneways that are located behind Queen Street.

Shopping centres and community facilities are located between 250m and 400m from Queen Street.

Pedestrian paths from those destinations to Queen Street are neither direct nor convenient, often are unattractive, and generally feel unsafe.

The absence of dwellings along pedestrian paths affects perceptions of public safety: there is insufficient "informal" surveillance of public places in and around this town centre.

Plans for redevelopment of the two shopping centres have distinct potential to accelerate the fragmentation of activities in this town centre:

Council has commissioned an economic study which confirmed that shopping centre developments have a tendency to "capture" rather than to "share" pedestrian activity.

However, with appropriate planning, the redevelopments of major sites in this town centre have significant potential to direct pedestrian activity back toward Queen Street:

The two shopping centre developments could attract visitors from surrounding destinations such as schools, community facilities and the commuter interchange.

In future, complementary redevelopment of the station and footbridge could encourage pedestrian traffic from the substantial employment precinct which is located north of the railway.

Background: 02 - Council properties

A significant number of Council-owned properties are located in the St Marys Town Centre or within close proximity to the town centre:

- 1 Coachman's Park together with one small commercial property in Queen Street.
- 2 The library and one commercial development in Queen Street near Carinya Lane.
- 3 Outdoor carparks which are located behind Queen Street along the laneways and Carinya Avenue.
- 4 Kokoda and Lang Parks which are located along the town centre's western perimeter.
- 5 Ripples Aquatic Centre in Charles Hackett Drive.
- 6 Playing fields and open spaces along South Creek.
- 7 The St Marys Community Centre on the southern side of the Great Western Highway.
- 8 Numerous local parks and reserves: Astley Park, Bennett Park, Jack Jewry Reserve, Ross Place and Victoria Park.
- 9 Verges and undeveloped properties along Charles Hackett Drive.

Many of these properties operate as destinations which attract significant numbers of visitors:

- Ripples and the playing fields,
- The library and community services buildings along West Lane,
- The St Marys Community Centre,
- Outdoor carparks which are used by commuters.



However, it appears that these destination facilities make limited contribution to town centre activities and, in some cases, contribute to the fragmentation of activity:

- Major destinations such as Ripples and playing fields are located 400m or more from Queen Street.
- The Community Centre is separated from the town centre by a busy intersection.
- Outdoor carparks generate peak arrivals and departures, but do not contribute to daytime activity within the town centre.
- The carparks together with Lang and Kokoda Parks contribute to “barriers” which discourage pedestrian access to Queen Street from destinations such as the St Marys Village shopping centre and schools along the town centre's western edge.

Nevertheless, the reconfiguration of certain Council properties could make a significant contribution to revitalisation of the town centre:

- Effective pedestrian paths to Queen Street could be accommodated, and
- New or expanded public places and community facilities could be provided, and
- Land swaps with major development sites could contribute to a more-effective layout for the town centre, and
- New landscaping could be accommodated as a signature element of the town centre's revitalisation, and
- Creative redevelopment could maintain existing public facilities together with improvements such as a permanent residential population that would contribute to activity and surveillance within the town centre.

The Draft Concept: 01 - Queen Street

Viable mainstreet town centres depend upon the continuity of shopfronts and the exposure of those shopfronts to high levels of traffic - primarily pedestrians but also vehicles.

Increased pedestrian traffic along Queen Street is perhaps the most-significant pre-requisite for revitalisation of the St Marys Town Centre:

Without pedestrian traffic, business activity along Queen Street will decline, and the St Marys Town Centre will become a disaggregated collection of destinations surrounding a mainstreet which will become increasingly dilapidated and unsafe.

Consequently, the core objective for all elements of this draft *Concept Plan* is to increase pedestrian activity along Queen Street.

There are several strategies which would contribute to increased pedestrian activity along Queen Street:

- 1 Landscape improvements along Queen Street that create a safe and attractive setting for business activity:
Implementation of Penrith City Council's Streetscape Improvement Plan for Queen Street (November 2013) would demonstrate the Council's commitment to revitalisation of the town centre, and would provide a catalyst for redevelopment of town centre properties.
- 2 Creation of new and improved public places in highly-visible locations along Queen Street:
A new Town Square should be designed to accommodate community gatherings, and to complement landscape character of the Queen Street improvements.
Secondary town plazas should link Queen Street to major redevelopments and the railway station.



- 3 Development controls and guidelines in relation to lower storeys of future buildings:
Primary objectives for controls would be to ensure near-continuous pedestrian and business activities along all streets and surrounding all significant public plazas.
Complementary objectives would ensure that larger developments distribute pedestrian traffic throughout the town centre as a whole.
- 4 Co-operative redevelopment of certain Council lands and station infrastructure:
Firstly, to eliminate "barriers" which currently discourage pedestrian traffic between surrounding destinations and Queen Street.
Secondly, to contribute to a more-effective layout for this town centre in order to deliver optimum community benefits through sustained business growth within the town centre.
- 5 The revitalisation of laneways and cross streets to create safe and attractive paths for pedestrian traffic:
In order to encourage pedestrian traffic between surrounding destinations and Queen Street.
- 6 Appropriate management of vehicle traffic in order to maintain pedestrian-friendly settings along Queen Street as well as along the revitalised cross-streets and laneways:
Primarily, by promoting a pedestrian-friendly setting in the core area of Queen Street between Charles Hackett Drive and King Street.
Secondly, by providing for the shared use of revitalised laneways by pedestrians and light delivery vehicles.

The Draft Concept: 02 - town plazas

Significant benefits for town centres are achieved by public plazas that accommodate community gatherings or that encourage the “distribution” of pedestrian traffic from destinations such as major shopping centres.

Three important facts need to be recognised in relation to the creation of new public places:

Firstly, publicly-accessible places in town centres deliver community benefits - irrespective of whether they are located upon public land or private property.

Secondly, contemporary shopping centres provide a variety of publicly-accessible places such as outdoor forecourts and plazas which have direct links to town centre streets.

Finally, new public places which deliver the highest possible community benefits may be achieved by effective collaboration between local government and private landowners.

Within the St Marys Town Centre, at least three locations would be suitable for new or expanded public places:

- 1 A centrally-located Town Square at the corner of Queen Street and Charles Hackett Drive:
Potentially, a T-shaped series of spaces which include extension of Coachman's Park westwards along Charles Hackett Drive and southwards along West Lane.
- 2 At the northern end of East Lane opposite the station and commuter interchange:
Potentially, a crescent-shaped forecourt associated with future redevelopment of Station Plaza facing East Lane.
- 3 At the northern end of Queen Street next to the footbridge:
The existing courtyard at the northern end of Queen Street together with the bus interchange could be combined, and could be complemented by a new plaza at the northern end of the footbridge.



The creation of new plazas in the St Marys Town Centre would make major contributions to this centre's revitalisation:

The Town Square and East Lane forecourt would eliminate current “barriers” which discourage pedestrian traffic between Queen Street and surrounding destinations.

The central Town Square would create a civic focal point for the town centre, as well as accommodating a variety of community gatherings and, perhaps most-importantly, by drawing pedestrian traffic back to the heart of Queen Street from the St Marys Village shopping centre (which would contribute directly to viability of the town centre).

The East Lane forecourt has potential to draw pedestrian traffic from a redeveloped Station Plaza shopping centre back to central and northern ends of Queen Street.

The footbridge plazas would create a civic gateway at the northern end of Queen Street, as well as encouraging additional pedestrian traffic from the neighbouring employment precinct and the bus interchange.

Creation of the Town Square and East Lane Plazas depend upon the reconfiguration of existing public and private land holdings:

The Central Plaza which is illustrated would occupy portions of Carinya Avenue, West Lane and Lang Park, and potentially could extend across the eastern end of the St Marys Village carpark and Crana Street.

The East Lane Plaza which is recommended would occupy portions of the existing public carpark and three small commercial properties which are located along the northern side of Phillip Street.

The Draft Concept: 02 - the Town Square

Opportunities to create a centrally-located Town Square have been identified by the detailed investigation of:

- Public land holdings,
- Contemporary development practices for town centre sites, and options for the redevelopment of private properties,
- Technical studies in relation to traffic, economic impacts and flooding which the Council has commissioned.

The Town Square which is illustrated represents one viable solution that incorporates the following features:

- A prominent location at the heart of Queen Street (adjoining the intersection with Charles Hackett Drive).
- A series of four adjacent plaza spaces facing West Lane which would be realigned, but which would remain open to low speed traffic (shopper drop-off, taxis plus residents and light deliveries to mainstreet properties).
- The primary town square which faces the main intersection would be suitable for a variety of community events and casual recreation, and has dimensions of approximately 75m by 35m.
- To the west, a tapering space would be suitable for performances and could accommodate a permanent stage, and has a maximum width of approximately 45m and a depth of 65m.
- To the south, a forecourt to the St Marys Village redevelopment has dimensions of 70m by 25m, and would provide the primary pedestrian path between the redeveloped centre and Queen Street.
- Facing Queen Street to the south, Crana Street could remain open to low speed traffic or, subject to redevelopment of flanking properties, could be landscaped as a second pedestrian route from the shopping centre redevelopment.



Creation of a Town Square demands careful co-ordination with the redevelopment of surrounding properties:

- The Town Square adjoins potential redevelopment sites - for example mainstreet properties next to Coachman's Park - as well as properties where redevelopment is being planned: the St Marys Village shopping centre.
- Plaza spaces within the Town Square require dimensions which are sufficient to accommodate outdoor activities, and should be shaped to accommodate pedestrian desire lines between Queen Street and major developments which are located nearby.
- Plaza spaces may require negotiated give-and-take" exchanges of public and private lands in order to achieve most-effective dimensions and configurations.

Creation of an effective Town Square requires a complementary configuration and design for surrounding developments:

- The orientation of major building entrances should discharge pedestrian traffic along the more-significant "desire lines".
- Ground floor frontages around the Town Square should accommodate facilities which would generate very high levels of pedestrian activity - such as cafes or community facilities, and should incorporate near-continuous windows that display indoor activity.
- A proportion of first storey frontages that surround the Town Square also should accommodate facilities which display intensive indoor activity such as libraries or cinema lobbies.
- Service areas, blank walls and basement ramps should not occupy a substantial proportion of any frontage which faces the Town Square.

The Draft Concept: 03 - complementary development

Within the St Marys Town Centre, three categories of future development are likely and desirable:

- 1 Redevelopment of major sites which include the two shopping centres and properties which surround the future Town Square:
These sites should incorporate a wide variety of activities that include retail, recreation such as cafes and cinemas, business services, community uses such as libraries, childcare and shop-front services, and apartments.
- 2 Mixed use redevelopment mainstreet properties along Queen Street:
Most likely to accommodate a mix of retail and business services together with apartments.
- 3 Redevelopment of outdoor carparks along the lanes and Carinya Avenue:
Should maintain existing public parking as well as including new apartments.

General requirements apply to the redevelopment of major sites and mainstreet properties:

- Ground floor and lower storey facades should reveal indoor activity during the daytime and evening to encourage pedestrian traffic as well as to contribute to public safety.
- Facing primary frontages such as Queen Street and backdrops to plazas or major access roads, facades should not expose "big box" tenants, incorporate extended blank walls, or include substantial driveways and service areas.
- Surrounding Queen Street and a future Town Square, building forms and facades should be stepped or articulated in order to minimise overshadowing and to achieve pedestrian-friendly backdrops.



Additional requirements are relevant to redevelopment of the shopping centres and sites which surround a future Town Square:

- Shopping centre buildings should be reoriented and extended toward Queen Street in order to stimulate highest-possible levels of pedestrian traffic throughout the town centre.
- Building forms of the lower storeys should be shaped in response to pedestrian desire lines and should provide sight lines toward major entrances and destinations.

Further requirements for the redevelopment of mainstreet properties include:

- Provide deep soil setbacks from laneways to accommodate a row of canopy trees and contribute to progressive revitalisation of the town centre's laneways.
- Ensure that a proportion of each laneway frontage includes active uses.
- Encourage a variety of publicly-accessible pedestrian links between Queen Street and laneways.

Opportunities for the redevelopment of open air car parks along the laneways should provide for:

- A permanent residential population in order to promote informal surveillance at the town centre's fringes, as well as a transition between the town centre and surrounding residential areas.
- Retention of existing public parking spaces, which should be located near ground level in a manner which is safe and visually-accessible from streets or lanes.

The Draft Concept: 03 - complementary development around the Town Square

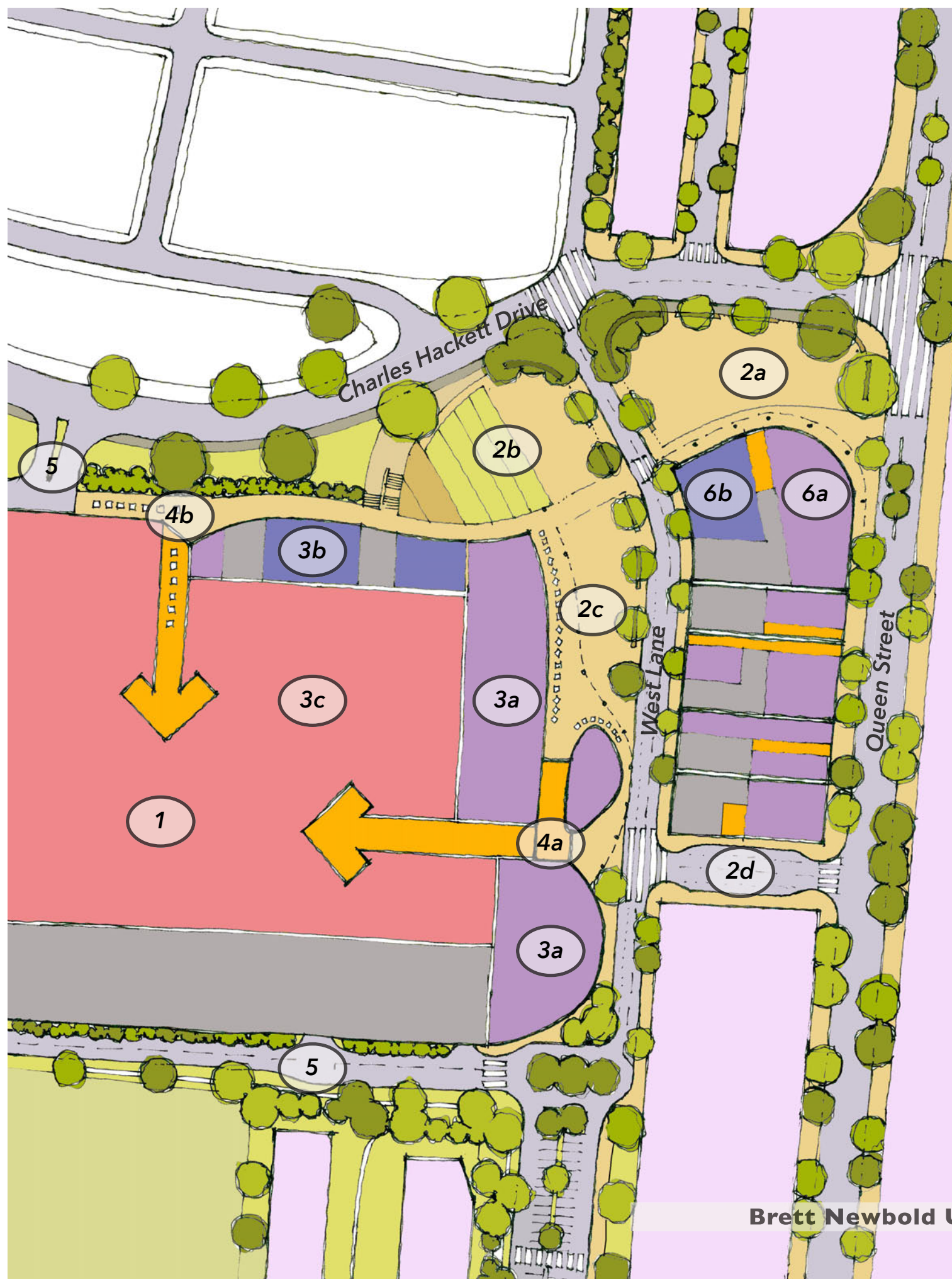
At present, the St Marys Village shopping centre is the town centre's major commercial destination.

Substantial redevelopment and extension of St Marys Village is being planned.

Economic impact analysis has confirmed that redevelopment of St Marys Village could contribute to revitalisation of the town centre as a whole - provided that redevelopment is designed to distribute pedestrian traffic throughout the town centre.

This illustration depicts the eastern end of a potential redevelopment, and represents one viable solution which incorporates the following features:

- 1 The existing building is extended toward Queen Street and has a shape which responds to pedestrian "desire lines":
Extension would significantly reduce pedestrian paths between Queen Street and the existing building from 250m to approximately 50m, and would eliminate current barriers that discourage pedestrians (open car parks and underutilised parks without casual surveillance).
Pedestrian desire lines extend primarily toward the future Town Square and the heart of Queen Street and, secondly, along Crana Street.
- 2 The extended building has a size and shape which complement a future Town Square:
Building forms retain a series of publicly-accessible outdoor areas which would extend the existing Coachman's Park (2a - 2d).
The primary mall entrance provides a direct pedestrian link to the Town Square (2a, 2c).



- 3 The extended building has a perimeter which encourages maximum pedestrian activity within the Town Square:
A continuous band of ground level shops provide an active backdrop to the Town Square and the revitalised West Lane, and would be complemented by upper storey activity such as cafes or cinema lobbies (3a).
In locations where retail uses would not be viable, community activities such as child care centres present an active backdrop to the Town Square and Charles Hackett Drive, and encourage pedestrian traffic to a secondary mall entrance (3b, 4b).
"Big box" tenants such as supermarkets are screened behind active uses, and are not visible from the Plaza.
- 4 The extended building has mall entrances which direct pedestrian traffic toward the Town Square and Queen Street:
The main entrance (4a) is at the eastern end of the building, and faces the Forecourt (2c) as well as Crana Street (2d).
A secondary entrance (4b) faces the Western Plaza (2b) and Charles Hackett Drive, and provides convenient access to potential community facilities (3b).
- 5 Vehicle access is located away from pedestrian routes:
Delivery access and shopper parking would be via Charles Hackett Drive and a new service road.
- 6 Adjoining St Marys Village and the Town Square, redevelopment of mainstreet properties would complement pedestrian activity in the central town square:
The ground and first floors could accommodate a mix of retail (6a) and community uses such as a library (6b) which generate daytime and evening activity.

The Draft Concept: 03 - complementary redevelopment of Station Plaza

At present, the Station Plaza shopping centre is a significant destination within the town centre.

Substantial redevelopment and extension of Station Plaza is being planned.

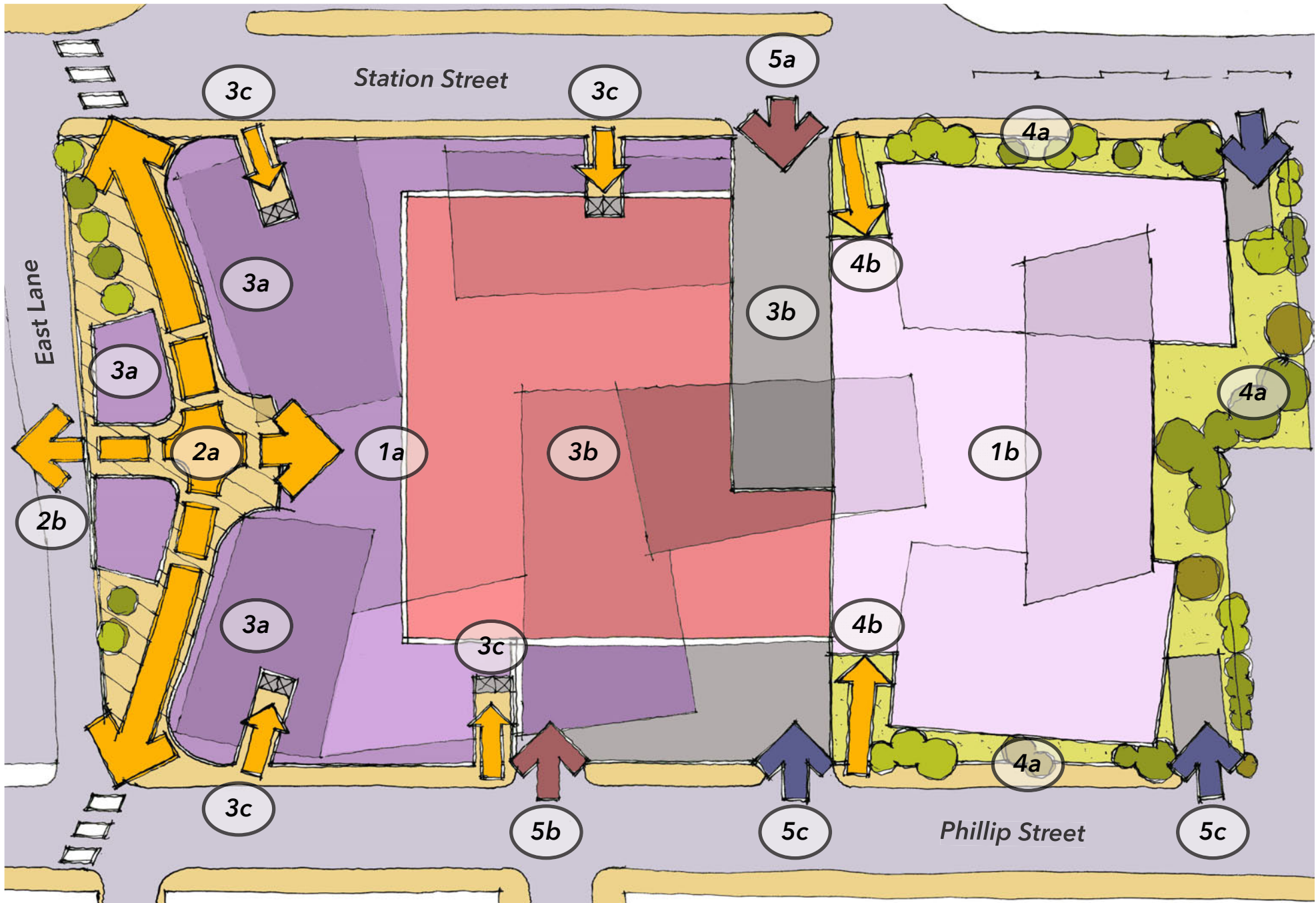
Economic impact analysis has confirmed that redevelopment of Station Plaza could contribute to revitalisation of the town centre as a whole - provided that redevelopment is designed to distribute pedestrian traffic throughout the town centre.

This illustration depicts a potential redevelopment, and represents one viable solution which incorporates the following features:

- 1
- There are retail and residential components:

Size of the retail component (1a) is similar to the current shopping centre, but includes a large supermarket of 3,500m².

The residential component (1b) is concentrated at the eastern end, but also extends above retail (shown as darker-toned shapes).



- 2
- The retail component is oriented toward Queen Street and responds to pedestrian "desire lines":

The retail component is shifted 100m closer to Queen Street.

Primary access to shops is via a ramped forecourt which faces East Lane, and which provides convenient diagonal links to Queen Street (2a).

An additional point of access could be achieved via a mainstreet property (2b).

- 3
- Layout of the retail component maximises pedestrian activity:

A continuous band of ground level shops provide an active backdrop to the entry forecourt, and would be visible from Queen Street (3a).

The supermarket and delivery dock are located away from Queen Street, and are screened behind active uses (3b).

There are street lobbies for apartments which are located above retail (3c).

- 4
- Layout of the residential component contributes to amenity of the town centre and pedestrian activity:

Street frontages and the eastern boundary have deep soil setbacks which are landscaped and which provide buffers to neighbours (4a).

Pedestrian entrances from the street are oriented toward Queen Street (4b).

5
- Vehicle access minimises disruption to pedestrian routes and limits impacts in relation to amenity of residential surroundings:

Delivery access (5a) is via Station Street, and would be co-ordinated with the bus interchange.

Separate car parks for shoppers (5b) and residents (5c) are entered from Phillip Street, and would be co-ordinated with existing cross streets.

The Draft Concept: 04 - access for pedestrians and vehicles

The viability and attractiveness of town centres depend upon an appropriate network of vehicle access and pedestrian paths.

Recommendations which are provided by the draft Concept Plan respond to a recent traffic study which was commissioned by the Council and to planning concepts which have been prepared for redevelopment of the town shopping centres.

However, detailed recommendations by the draft Concept Plan require further technical evaluation.

Effective operation of the St Marys Town Centre will depend upon sorting and management of traffic in order to protect pedestrian activity:

- 1 Existing centre access and by-pass routes should be retained, and should be enhanced by avenue landscaping:

Charles Hackett Drive and Phillip Street.

- 2 Pedestrian focal points should be protected by limiting heavy traffic together with complementary landscape design and traffic management:

The future Town Square,

Footbridge Plazas and the entrance court to future redevelopment of the Station Plaza shopping centre,

The central portion of Queen Street between King Street and Charles Hackett Drive.

- 3 New roads should be provided to service major redevelopments:

In conjunction with redevelopment of St Marys Village: access along the southern boundary to shopper carparks, and

Easterly extension of the service road to Queen Street via the Carinya Avenue carpark and Carinya Lane which should be widened to accommodate two way traffic, and

Northerly extension of the service road via the realignment of West Avenue to meet Charles Hackett Drive opposite Carinya Avenue.



- 4 Existing laneways should be upgraded to create pedestrian-friendly streets that accommodate small scale service access:

East and West Lanes, together with the Carinya Avenue carpark, should be widened and landscaped in conjunction with surrounding developments.

Upgraded laneways should accommodate low speed traffic and separate pedestrian paths.

Northwards of Crana Street, West Lane should be a low speed shared zone which adjoins the future Town Square, as well as accommodating service access to mainstreet properties, shopper drop-offs and a taxi zone.

Effective management of traffic and pedestrians should be co-ordinated with landscaping and urban design solutions for streets and major public places:

Landscaping of all areas should complement the Streetscape Improvement Plan for Queen Street.

Landscaping along the major access routes should be concentrated upon public lands and along the frontages of major development sites.

Detailed landscaping and urban design of plaza areas should incorporate co-ordinated design solutions for pedestrian crossings and traffic barriers.

Landscaping of laneways should be achieved by development controls that apply to mainstreet properties and public carparks.