

ILLUSTRATIVE PLACE 8

Change over time

How can low-cost, non-permanent changes to our places make places more active, and become the basis for lasting change? By a process of 'test and learn', underused, inactive spaces in our towns and cities can be identified for 'meanwhile uses' to test interventions and build a case for more permanent investment in the future.

The process of change

EXISTING UNDERUSED SPACES

Many spaces in our towns and cities are underused, such as spaces surrounded by highway infrastructure, future development sites being used as car parks or empty retail units. These spaces could do much more to support physical activity and vibrant town centres.

ITERATION

A continuous process of testing, improvement, programming changes, collaboration amongst stakeholders and active management of spaces continues to find improvements to ensure spaces continue to be used by all groups.

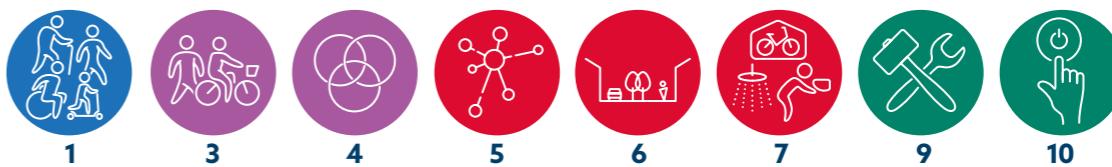
STAGE 1: TEST & LEARN

Temporary 'meanwhile' uses, sports, activities and events occupy the spaces for short periods of time, perhaps as part of a wider programme of events within the local area. Changes are inexpensive and non-permanent (e.g. areas coned off), to test whether the use of the space is successful.

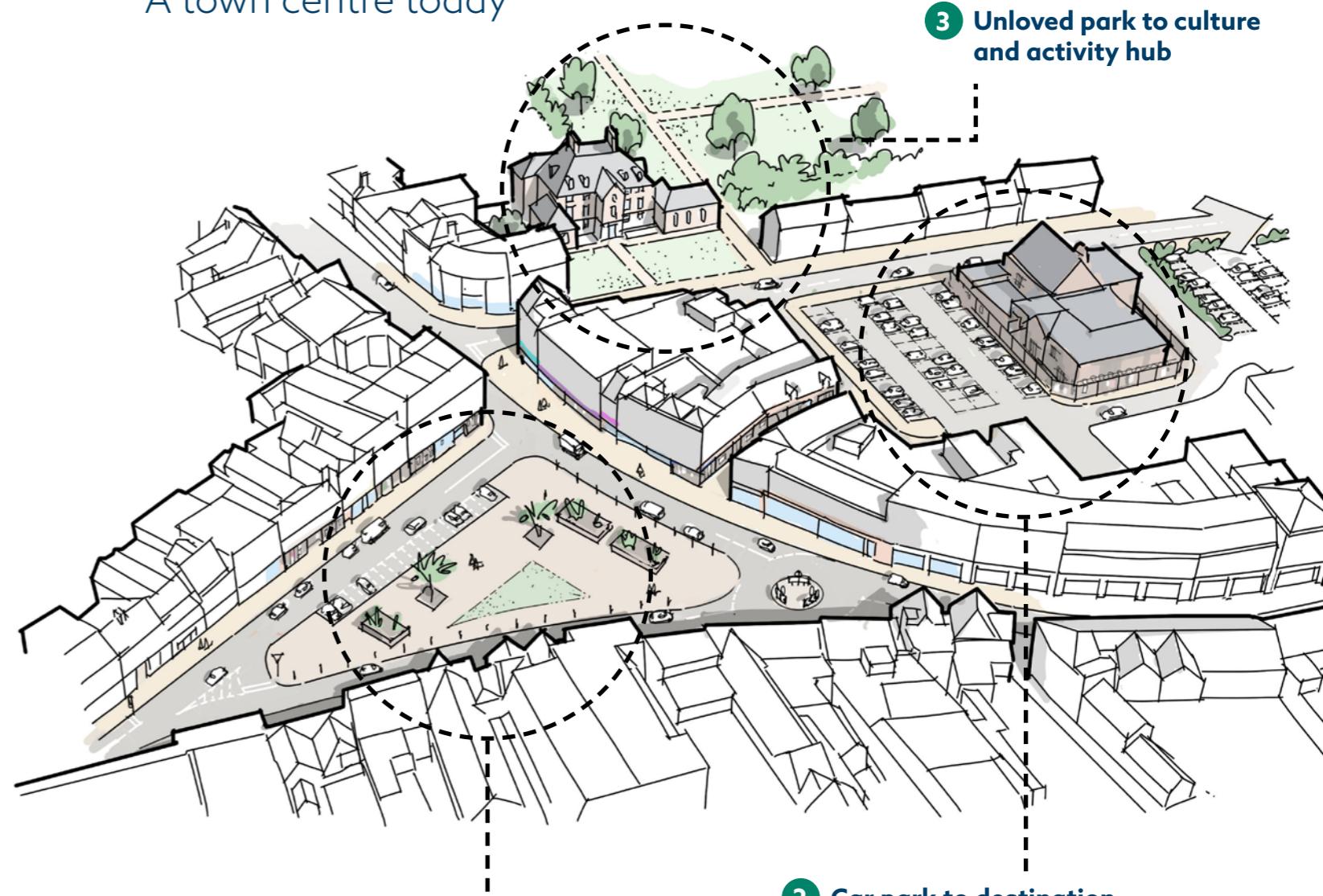
The most successful interventions (both for physical activity levels and wider impact) can be formalised or re-run in the future with more investment and confidence of success. Wider confidence in the town starts to translate into investment in surrounding buildings and uses.

Momentum builds around making changes to spaces permanent, with investment cases being supported by data and success. Formerly inactive spaces now support regular events, active travel and opportunities for encouraging play, sport and exercise.

ACTIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:

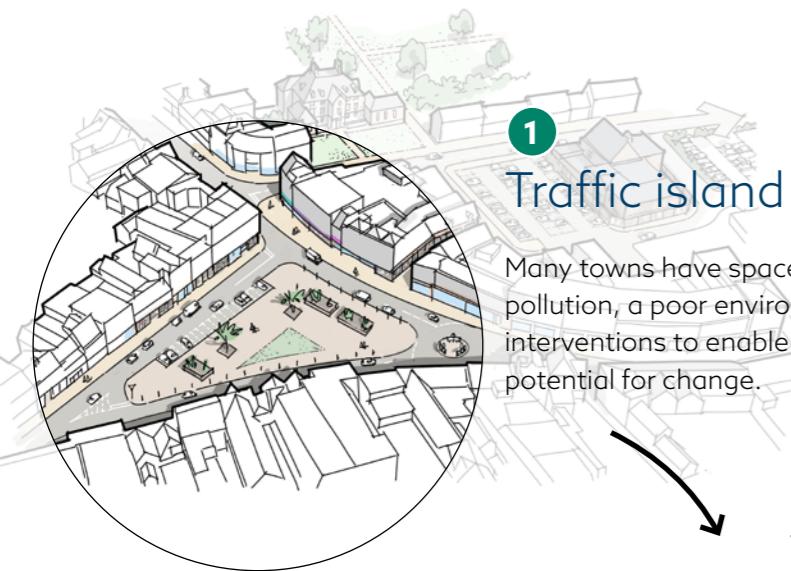


A town centre today



1 Traffic island to public square

Three areas are highlighted on the illustrative town centre above, chosen to demonstrate different approaches to transforming underused or highways dominated spaces into places that support physical activity and enliven the town they are a part of.

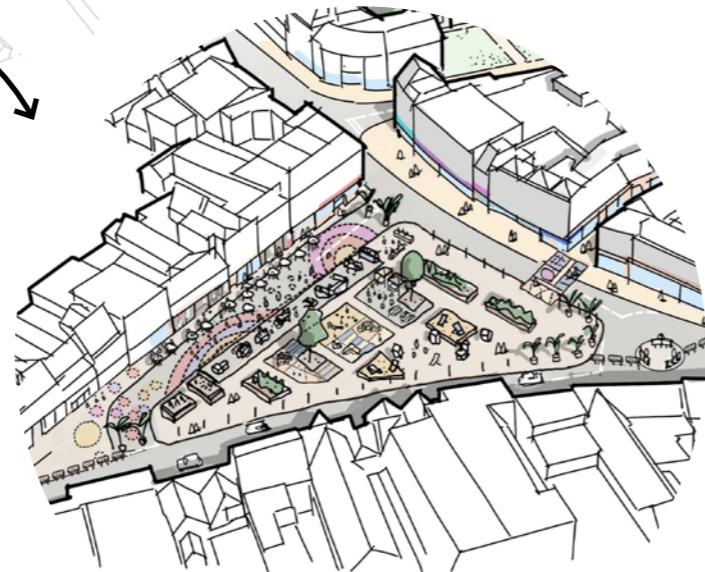


1 Traffic island to public square

Many towns have spaces filled with highway infrastructure, creating air pollution, a poor environment and discouraging active travel. Temporary interventions to enable events or seasonal use can demonstrate their potential for change.

STAGE 1: TEST & LEARN

Using traffic cones, paint, temporary planters and street furniture with temporary road closures, a temporary summer town festival space can be created to establish and test the potential for change, and the effect on the wider movement network.



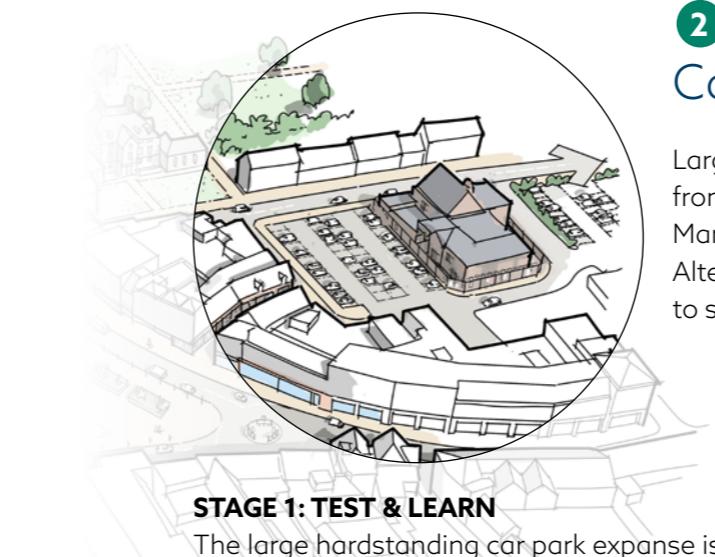
STAGE 2: WHAT WORKED?

A successful test encourages further use of the space. With a regular programme of closures, the case for closing one side of the traffic island is made to enable a permanent space for events. New crossings can connect the site to projects 2 and 3 as they happen.



STAGE 3: LONG-TERM CHANGES

The additional space created by the closure of one side of the space encourages investment in empty surrounding units, and they start to be able to activate the space. Now established as part of the town's public realm, further investment in landscape, seating, materials and pavilions is supported, encouraging regular use of the space for activity.

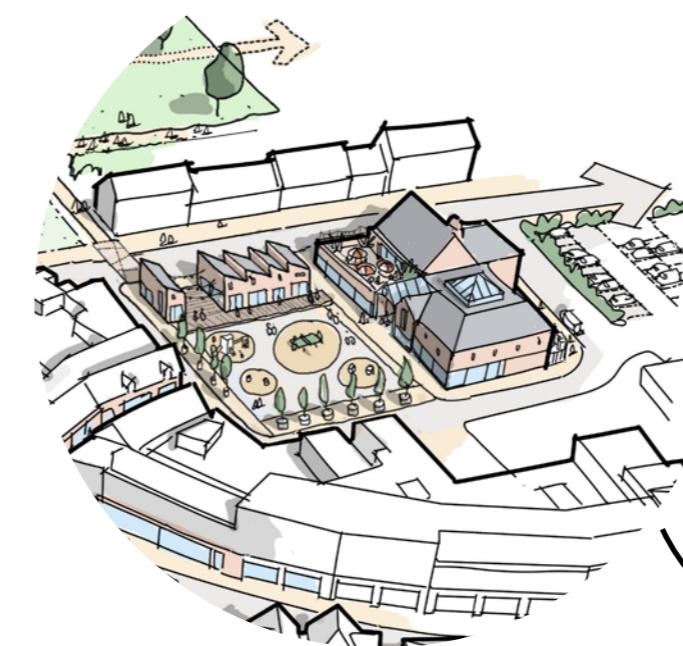
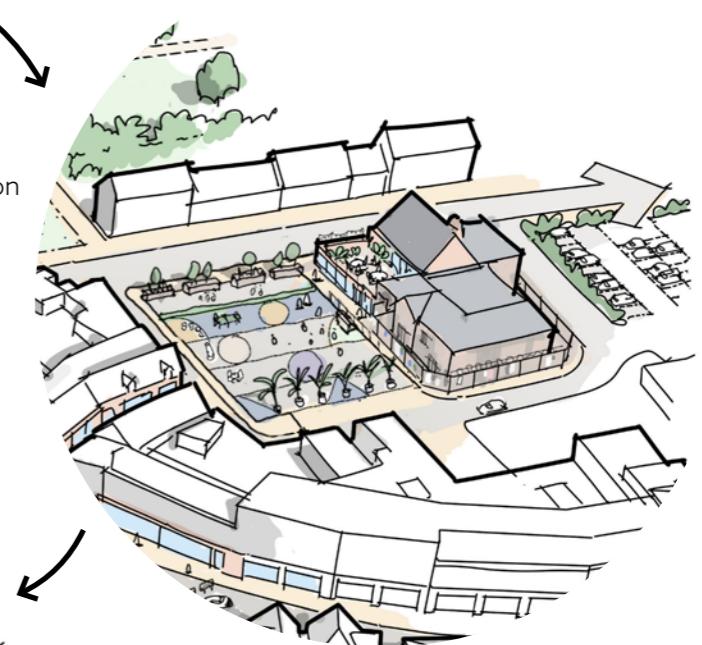


2 Car park to destination

Large areas of surface parking in town centres can take up space, detract from the local environment and discourage active travel to town centres. Many are identified for future development and hold cars as a 'default use'. Alternative meanwhile uses can test and confirm the potential of a space to support physical activity.

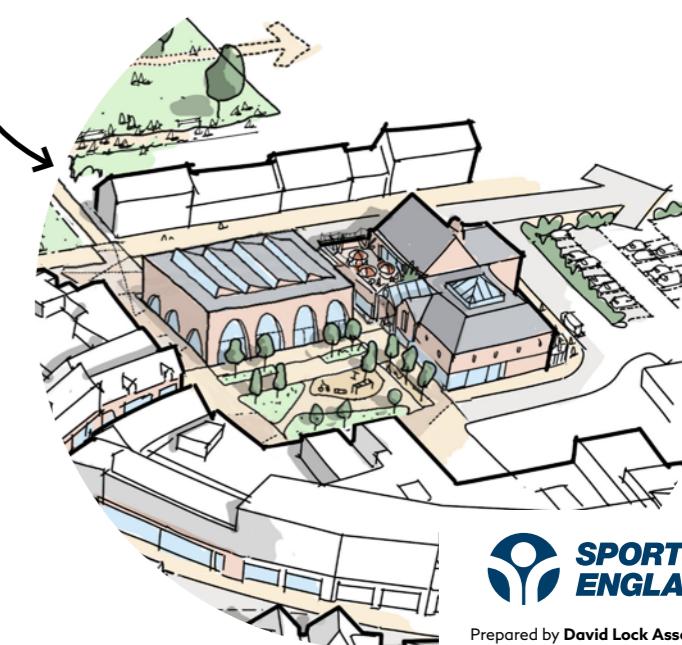
STAGE 1: TEST & LEARN

The large hardstanding car park expanse is closed on Sundays to enable a temporary sports and exercise space to be established weekly during the summer. Community engagement starts to ask about local views of the best use of the space.



STAGE 2: WHAT WORKED?

Temporary retail and leisure business units are established next to the now-regular summer park for recreation and activity. The neighbouring pub is re-opened due to the extra trade. Improved public realm links to projects 2 and 3 can be made as they happen.



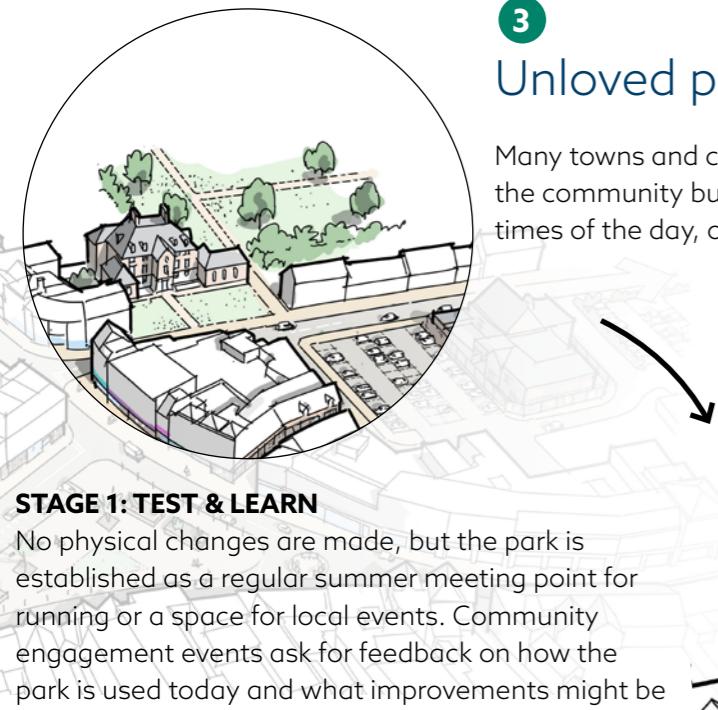
STAGE 3: LONG-TERM CHANGES

A need for a permanent new community space and urban park is established in this location, and investment is sought to build a new facility which can host a variety of activities for all. Further investment in the surrounding public realm supports this change, provides permanent space for physical activity and connects to active travel networks.

3

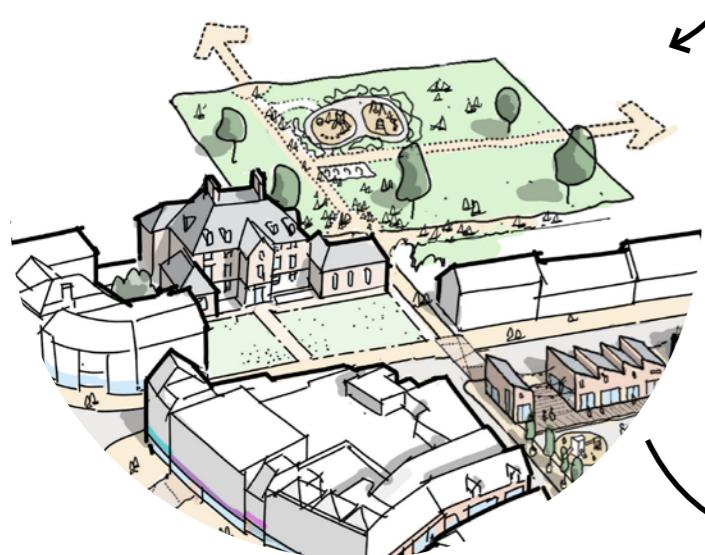
Unloved park to culture and activity hub

Many towns and cities have large green open spaces that are valued by the community but may lack investment. They may feel unsafe at certain times of the day, or not be used to their full potential.



STAGE 1: TEST & LEARN

No physical changes are made, but the park is established as a regular summer meeting point for running or a space for local events. Community engagement events ask for feedback on how the park is used today and what improvements might be needed in the future.



STAGE 2: WHAT WORKED?

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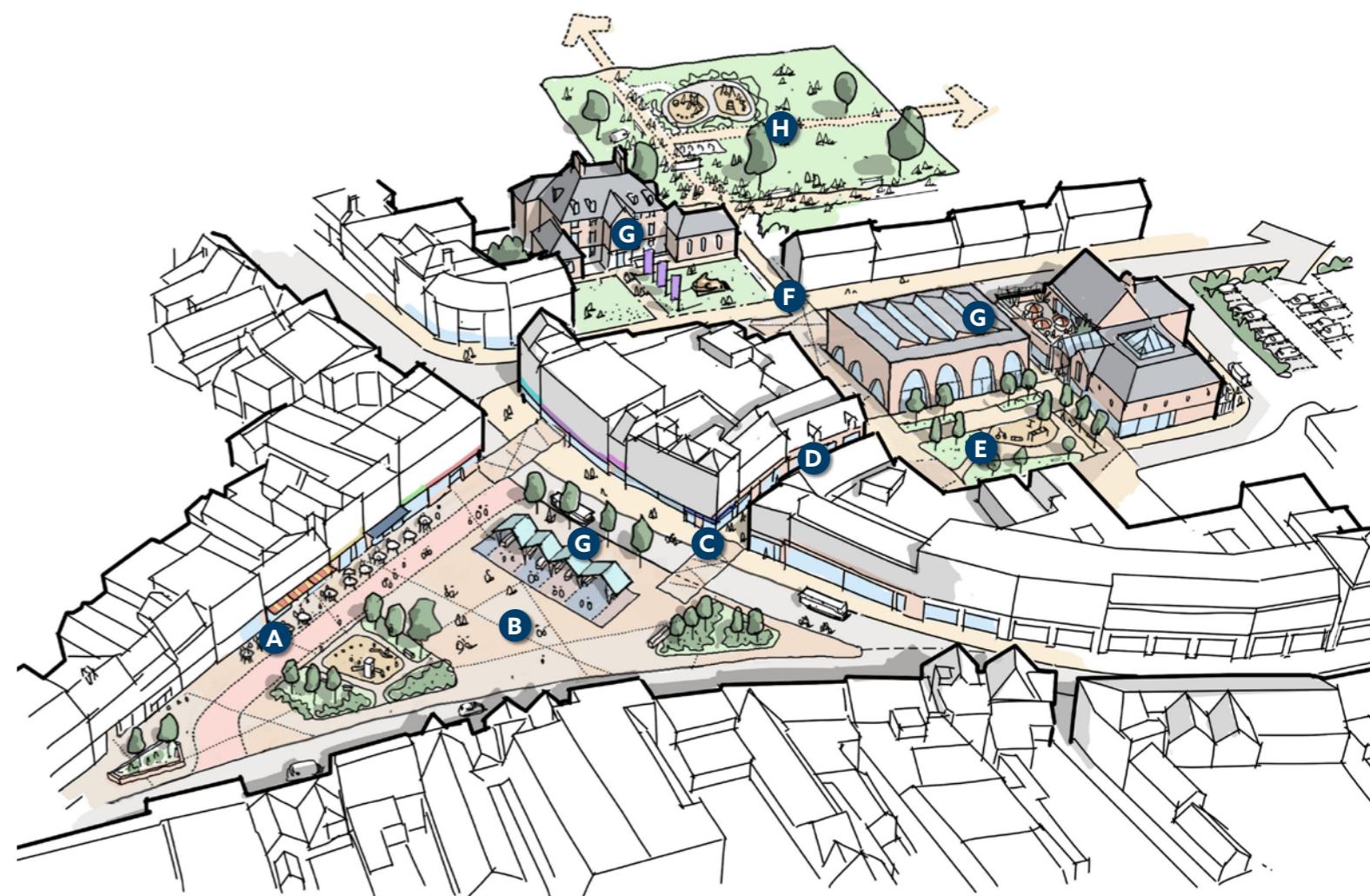
More regular use and established community views mean investment in seating, signage, maintenance, lighting and a new play area can be justified, further widening the appeal of the park to the community.

A now well-used park with an established community need encourages investment in an adjacent heritage building to establish or re-invest in a town museum or a multi-purpose community building, creating a further reason to visit the park as a destination. The park and museum are connected to an emerging active travel network, and provide supporting activity infrastructure such as water refill, toilets, seating/meeting areas and information about the area.



A transformed town centre

Over time and a series of incremental changes, backed by a test and learn approach, a series of projects have joined up to create a more active town centre with opportunity for physical activity, sport and a wide range of other uses.



Key Design Interventions Over Time

- A** Spill-out space for re-opened retail units activates the public realm
- B** Redistribution of highway space allows for events space and a new square for the town
- C** New street crossings connect to pedestrian desire lines to/from public spaces
- D** Connecting streets between independent projects become well-used and improved
- E** More green infrastructure and natural environments within town centre
- F** A series of public realm projects provide a wider active travel network with supporting cycle parking
- G** New uses are established off the back of initial temporary interventions, including cafes, retail spaces, museum/community multi-use hub
- H** Improved park that supports a range of physical activity opportunities such as walking, running, childrens play, outdoor classes, events and informal sport