Kendal River Corridor

Vision and Objectives

March 2022

> **Cumbria County Council**

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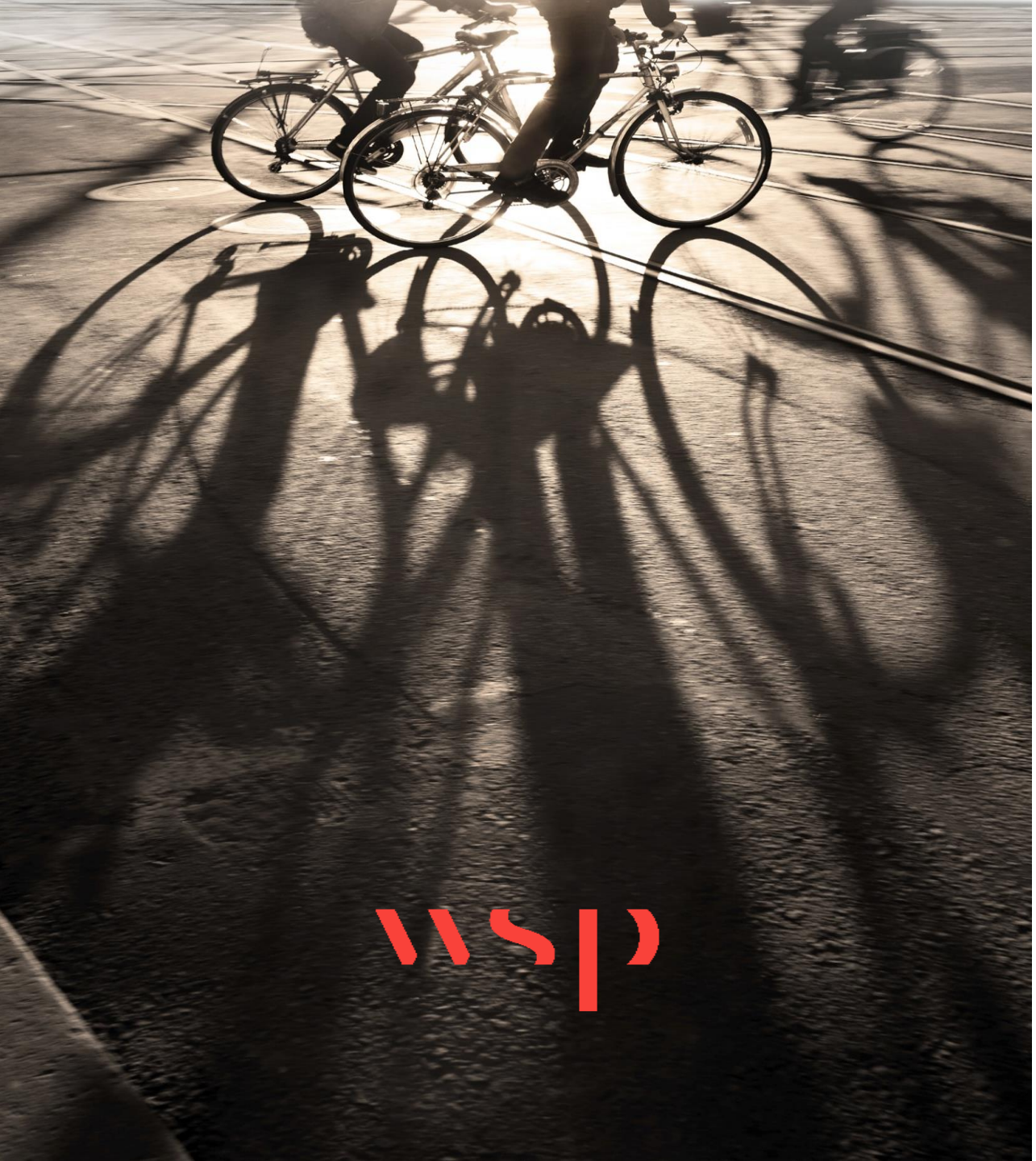

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Introduction

Overview

WSP have been commissioned by Cumbria County Council (CCC) to develop a 'Vision' document relating to a shared desire held by the Kendal River Corridor (KRC) Working Group to create and enhance the cycling and walking infrastructure in the vicinity of the River Kent within the town of Kendal.

The need for this project is partially driven by the Environment Agency's (EA) proposed flood risk management scheme which is due to start construction in 2021. There is therefore an immediate need to create this overarching vision for active travel around the river corridor in order to synergise with these proposals.

This Kendal River Corridor Study (KRCS) seeks to propose interventions which align with a stated vision and objectives, identifying opportunities for inclusion within the EA's design, but also acknowledging constraints that will require different phased solutions for construction or implementation.

KRC Working Group

The KRC Working Group consists of a range of stakeholders across the three tiers of local government, including Kendal Town Council (KTC), South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) and CCC, together with the EA. Other key stakeholders are United Utilities (UU), Network Rail, the Woodland Trust and one private landowner.

Kendal and its Transport Network

Kendal is the largest settlement in the District of South Lakeland, with a population of circa 30,000 people. The town is a vital service centre for much of southeast Cumbria, as well as neighbouring Lancashire and North Yorkshire.

The town includes significant trip generators such as Kendal College, two secondary schools with a large catchment area and eight primary schools, South Lakeland District Council headquarters and Cumbria County Council County Hall, large industrial and trading estates to the north of the town and retail interspersed throughout the urban area.

Kendal's highway network and capacity are focussed on a small number of constrained A-class roads running through the town carrying large volumes of traffic throughout the day, managed by a complex one-way system.

Kendal suffers from significant congestion at various times of the day, and the existing network could be considered unconducive to active travel – particularly when considering trying to encourage those who don't walk or cycle for any purpose at all.

Aspirations

There is a long term aspiration for significant new highway infrastructure (currently referred to as the Kendal Northern Access Route) which is envisaged to connect Plumgarths roundabout on the A591 to Shap Road and the Mintsfeet Industrial Estate. This could have a very significant change on traffic flows in the town, enabling sweeping changes and creating better infrastructure for active modes.

The River Kent bisects the town, providing a flat corridor running in a north to south alignment, while the hills rise up to either side. Kendal Town Council has a long standing ambition to improve this corridor to facilitate walking, running and cycling for all trip purposes and to enhance enjoyment of the natural environment. The corridor forms a central section of the 'Kendal X' - an aspirational cycle network in the town partially delivered through the Shap Road and Burton Road corridors - and offers connectivity to the National Cycle Network at various points, as well as the Lancaster Canal towpath. This connectivity helps bring together the 'blue' (water) and 'green' (natural) spaces in the town and provide links to these features in the wider rural area.

The River Corridor is therefore seen as having significant potential to engender active travel for all trip purposes, whether leisure or commuting, as part of a longer trip or a small one. While important at any time, ensuring people can access high quality outdoor space and move by active modes is a critical part of the national recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

This potential can only be unlocked by the provision of the right infrastructure for the right purpose.

Flood Risk Management Scheme

Flood Risk

Kendal has a long history of flooding. On the 5th-6th December 2015 Storm Desmond directly affected 2,276 properties and businesses, with the majority of these located in the Mintsfeet and Sandylands areas of Kendal.

The area of Mintsfeet was adversely impacted because the water levels of the river exceeded the height of the current defences and flowed over the flood defences. In Sandylands, the flooding occurred from Stock Beck due to the capacity of the underground culverted watercourse system being exceeded and the Stock Beck Flood Storage Basin (FSB) being overtopped.

Flood Investigation Report

The EA have produced a Flood Investigation Report regarding the flooding during Storm Desmond. The report outlines recommendations and actions that various organisations and authorities can do to minimise the risk or impact in affected areas. It can be used by communities and agencies as the basis for developing future plans to help make areas more resilient to flooding in the future.

A total of 23 actions have been recommended in the report, with one of the key actions being for the EA to undertake a review of the existing modelling data to ensure that the flooding mechanisms that occurred in Kendal are fully understood. This information has been used to inform the EA investment plans for new flood defences and an improved flood warning service in Kendal.

EA Flood Risk Management Scheme

The EA have been working closely with Cumbria County Council, South Lakeland District Council, United Utilities and other key partners to better understand the flood issues that affect the areas within the River Kent catchment, and have developed a preferred Flood Risk Management Scheme.

There are 3 phases of the Flood Risk Management Scheme, with an expected construction cost of approximately £72 million. The planning application for Phase 1 was approved unanimously by the SLDC Planning Committee in March 2019. A contractor was appointed in July 2019 and is working on the detailed design of the scheme.

Phase 1 of the Flood Risk Management Scheme through Kendal town includes the following interventions:

- Proposed new flood defences extend from Kentrigg on the River Kent to Mint Bridge on the River Mint and will protect the North Kendal industrial areas, the centre of Kendal and Helsington Mills;
- Construction of approximately 6km of linear flood defences using a combination of walls and embankments, including flood gates. Some footpaths or roads will be raised and certain lengths of existing walls will be improved. The height of the linear flood defences will typically range from 0.3m to 1.5m. They will vary in height throughout the town and will not be continuous as the defences will tie in to existing high ground in some locations;
- A new pumping station located at Gooseholme on the Stock Beck outfall will pump water from Stock Beck, reducing the flood risk from the drainage system;
- 5 hectares of habitat and recreational space will be improved at Beezon Fields and Jubilee Fields;
- 3km of footpath improvements will enable partner projects potentially including improved river crossings and active travel routes to be developed. Improvements to riverside recreational space will meet the latest standard for accessibility; and
- The installation of 14 new flood gates will maintain access to the riverside. Over 3,666 new trees will be planted including 70 trees over 5m high and 280 trees over 4m high to help mitigate for the loss of 545 existing trees.

The EA's Flood Risk Management Scheme offers a real opportunity to improve the riverside corridor for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists, given the constraints and opportunities of the flood defence proposals.

Kendal River Corridor Vision and Objectives

Vision and Objectives

The Kendal River Corridor Study and the associated interventions are vision led; a vision is proposed at the outset of the study, and the interventions are designed to bring this vision to life.

A number of associated objectives are also presented in order to provide measurable and achievable goals.

Vision:

"To create an asset that allows people to enjoy and spend time in the natural and heritage features of the river corridor while providing an attractive route for active travel"

Objectives:

- *To provide a safe and secure route that encourages active travel users of all ages and abilities;*
- *To create an inclusive environment which is accessible and welcoming for all users;*
- *To provide an attractive spine for a Kendal active travel network that demonstrates the scale of ambition in the town; and*
- *To ensure the route is part of a connected and planned network, allowing all users to access the river corridor.*

Developing the Vision

Evidence-Led Assessment

Developing a cohesive intervention plan to achieve the Vision for the KRC requires the development of a robust, evidence-led approach.

A detailed evidence review of existing and future conditions has been undertaken, to understand the constraints and opportunities within the area.

The Baseline Review is a crucial stage in the process and has a direct influence over the outputs of the study.

The KRC Working Group provided a large amount of data from the outset to process and inform the study, including:

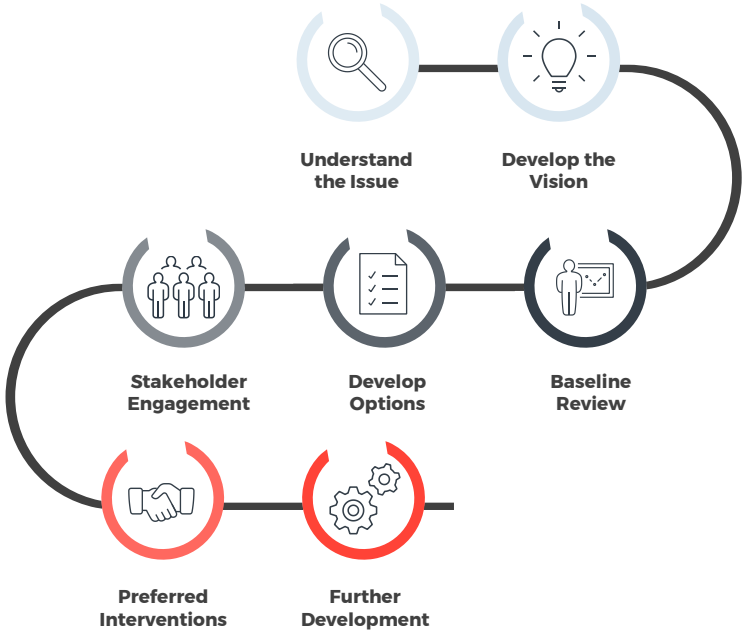
- The latest digital and physical mapping which includes existing and planned cycling and walking infrastructure, with associated links to the EA's flood defence proposals and funding sources;
- Minutes from previous KRC Working Group Meetings;
- The EA's current plans and proposals, based on the extant planning permission; and
- The EA's phasing plan/construction programme

The KRC evidence base incorporates engagement with key stakeholders to take account of local knowledge and points of view.

To produce an informed baseline the project team undertook a range of additional data collection and stakeholder consultation exercises, including:

- **Site Visit**: A site visit was undertaken in order to better appreciate the river corridor at ground level as an active travel user.
- **Workshops**: Two Working Group workshops took place with key stakeholders to gain their input on the challenges and opportunities related to active travel along the river corridor, as well as receive their feedback regarding the presented baseline and emerging vision for the KRC.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**: As well as the Working Group workshops, the project team have liaised with key stakeholders from the EA and United Utilities. These meetings also provided an opportunity to understand the current situation and aspirations for the river corridor that may impact and influence the proposed network.

The culmination of this background data analysis is an evidence base that supports and informs development of the KRC, helping to define network connections and emerging priorities.



Implementing the Vision (1)

Designing for People and Purpose

The KRC spans through the entirety of Kendal from north to south, stretching from the urban heart of the town to the rural fringes at either extent. Different sections have markedly different characteristics passing through parks and open spaces, residential areas, industrial estates, schools, and retail uses, both on and off highway. Over the course of its length, the route is likely to carry users of various types undertaking journeys for very different purposes, including commuting, leisure, shopping, etc.

The river corridor has therefore been divided into character areas which aid analysis and assessment. The character areas can be broadly divided at Dockray Hall Footbridge and Romney Bridge.

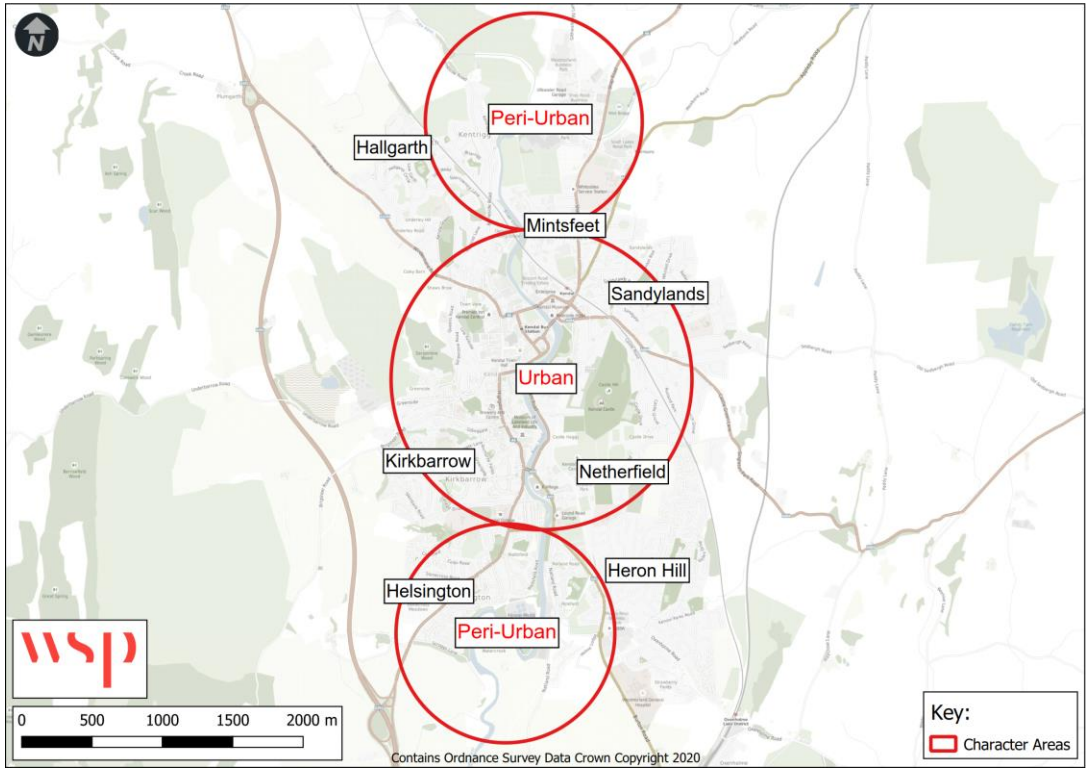
These areas have been further broken down into four sections – Northern, Town Centre, Kendal Castle and Southern Sections – with the Northern Section and Southern sections displaying characteristics in keeping with their peri-urban locations, while the Town Centre and Kendal Castle sections are firmly located in the urban area, with corresponding characteristics.

Due to the changing characteristics along the river corridor, it is not considered appropriate to assess the route's existing condition against one single guidance document, nor to presume the entire route should meet a single specific standard.

Instead, the route has been separated into distinct sections based on a number of key features:

- Character;
- User Type;
- Designation;
- Purpose;
- Guidance; and
- Characteristics.

The table of interventions included within the accompanying Technical Report present the results of this analysis on a section by section basis. It should be noted that this exercise of classifying sections of the route against a set of features is considered to be a 'thinking and sorting tool' and should not be seen as necessarily defining outcomes at this stage.



Implementing the Vision (2)

Concept Design Process

These key characteristics were then used to consider what kind of infrastructure should be provided in each area in order to meet relevant standards and anticipated demand, and how close the existing infrastructure aligns with the desired standards for walking and cycling provision.

Using data obtained through stakeholder engagement and the site visit, a baseline assessment was undertaken to determine how closely each distinct section of the route matched the appropriate design requirements.

Through the baseline data analysis and site visit, it was noted that currently there is very limited cycling infrastructure within the study area, and while this may have been constructed in accordance with the relevant standards at the time, this does not generally meet the very latest standards.

The concept proposals put forward in this Vision document are based on a range of guidance and best practice documents.

Chief among these documents are the recently published *Local Transport Note 1/20*, and *Gear Change* - the UK Government's new national strategy for cycling.

A New Way of Designing

Gear Change is the Government's vision to see a step-change in levels of walking and cycling in England. The strategy details how the Government intends to invest £2 billion on increasing the numbers of people walking and cycling. This includes the creation of a new body – Active Travel England – which will act as a commissioning body and inspectorate for active travel schemes, led by a national cycling and walking commissioner.

A core focus of the strategy is on improving safety for all by building high quality cycle infrastructure, the lack of which is a significant barrier to more people choosing to walk or cycle for the everyday journeys. The strategy overtly highlights the need to dramatically improve the quality of cycling infrastructure on England's roads to achieve the substantial increase in cycling.

The document presents 'Key design principles', many of which are a significant change in approach included in previous guidance or indeed current practice.

These principles are codified in LTN 1/20, which presents more detailed guidance on infrastructure requirements for planners, designers, and engineers.

Implementing the Vision (3)

Identifying Improvements

A long list of interventions was developed, taking into account the existing provision, key characteristics, and the latest relevant guidance documents. These were presented and discussed in turn with the KRC Working Group.

Due to funding and timeframe constraints, not all the proposed interventions could be taken forward for further development. Agreement was reached on which proposed interventions or recommendations should be further pursued and included within the KRC Study proposals. The agreed table of interventions is included within the accompanying Technical Report.

The concept designs presented overleaf graphically illustrate these interventions on a spatial level. These demonstrate how the proposals create a cohesive network, linking A to B, and contributing to wider connections facilitating both longer distance routes and shorter everyday journeys.

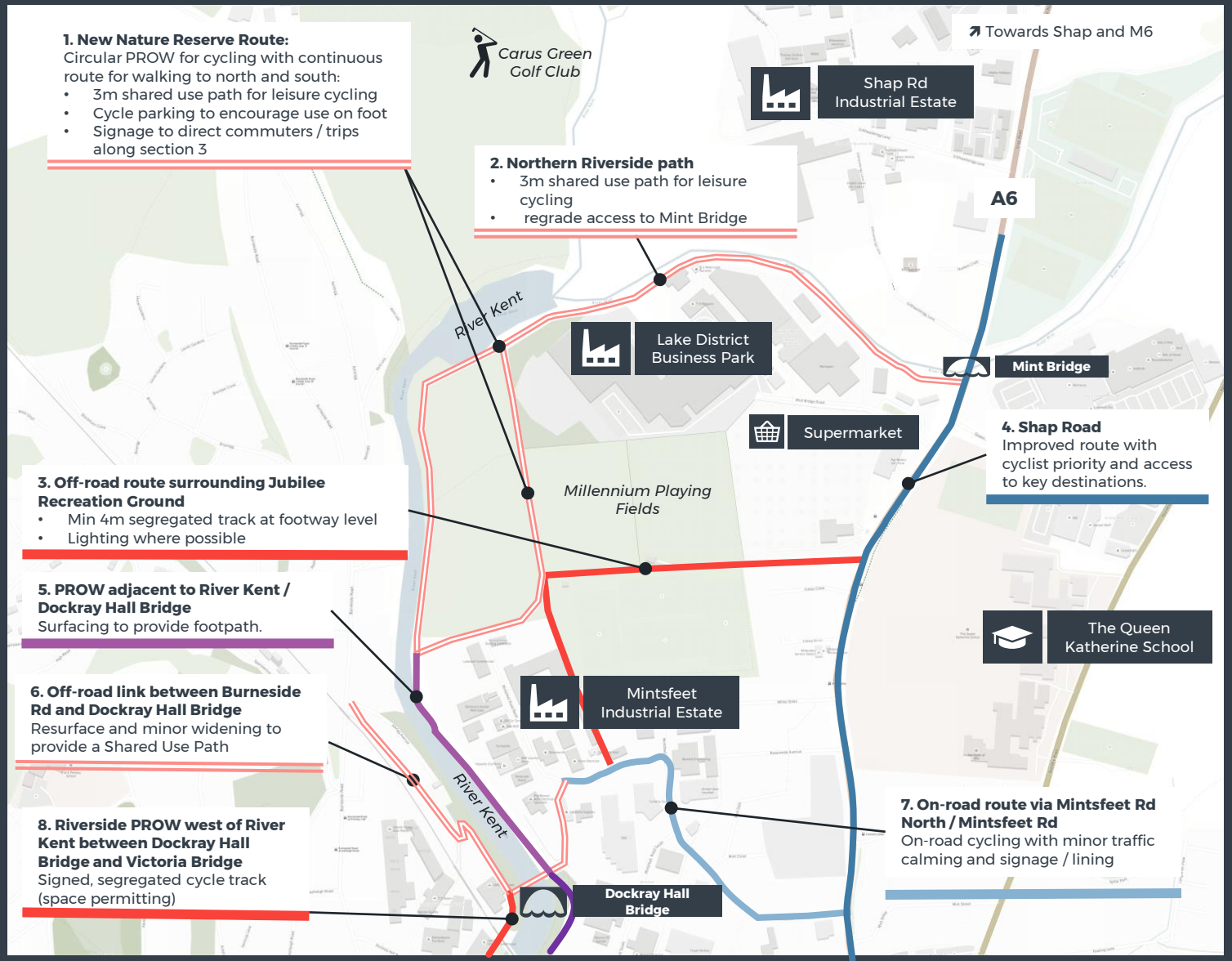
The designs also present the interventions by type, allowing the reader to easily determine what kind of proposals are being put forward in each area.

It should be noted that as concepts, these proposals are at a very early stage of design, with significantly more assessment and detail required to ensure these routes can come forward as envisaged.

Implementing the Vision - Identifying Interventions

Kendal River Corridor

Northern Section

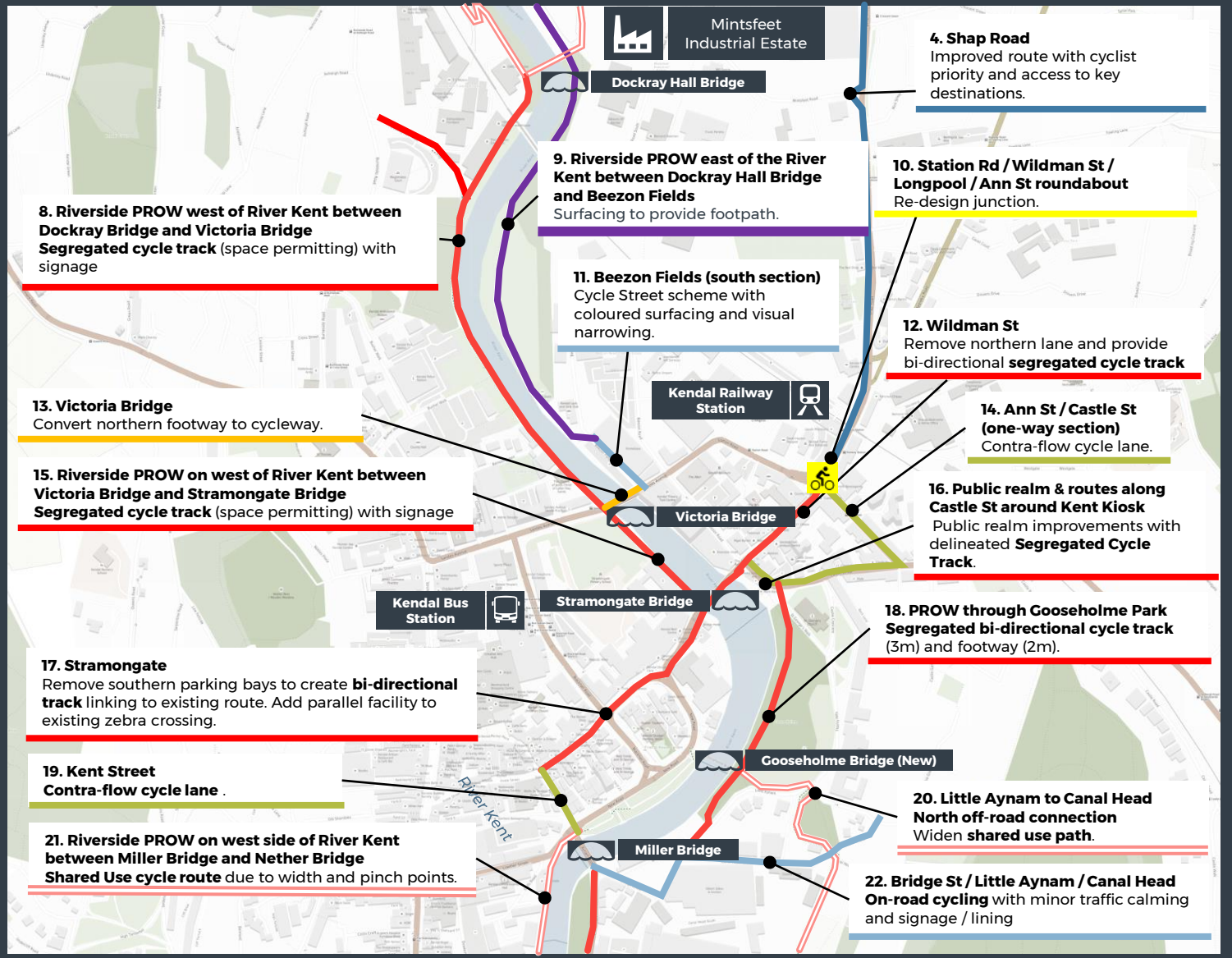


- Segregated Cycle Track
- Shared-use Paths for pedestrians and cyclists
- Low-traffic Cycle Streets
- Improved Existing Cycle Routes
- Improved Footpaths for pedestrians

Implementing the Vision - Identifying Interventions

Kendal River Corridor

Town Centre Section

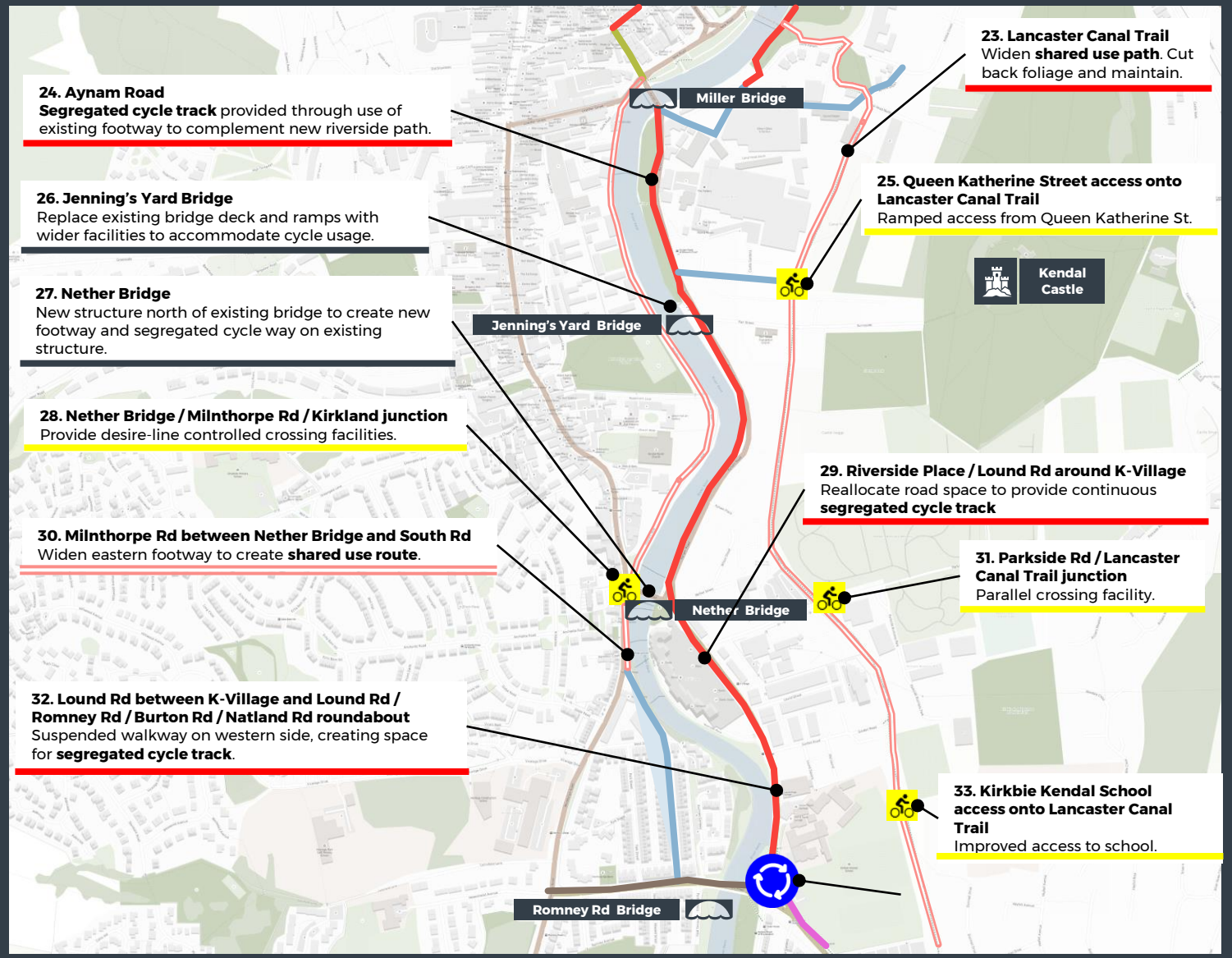


- Segregated Cycle Track
- Shared-use Paths for pedestrians and cyclists
- Low-traffic Cycle Streets
- Improved Existing Cycle Routes
- Contra-flow cycle lane
- Traffic Management Order
- Improved Footpaths for pedestrians

Implementing the Vision - Identifying Interventions

Kendal River Corridor

Kendal Castle Section

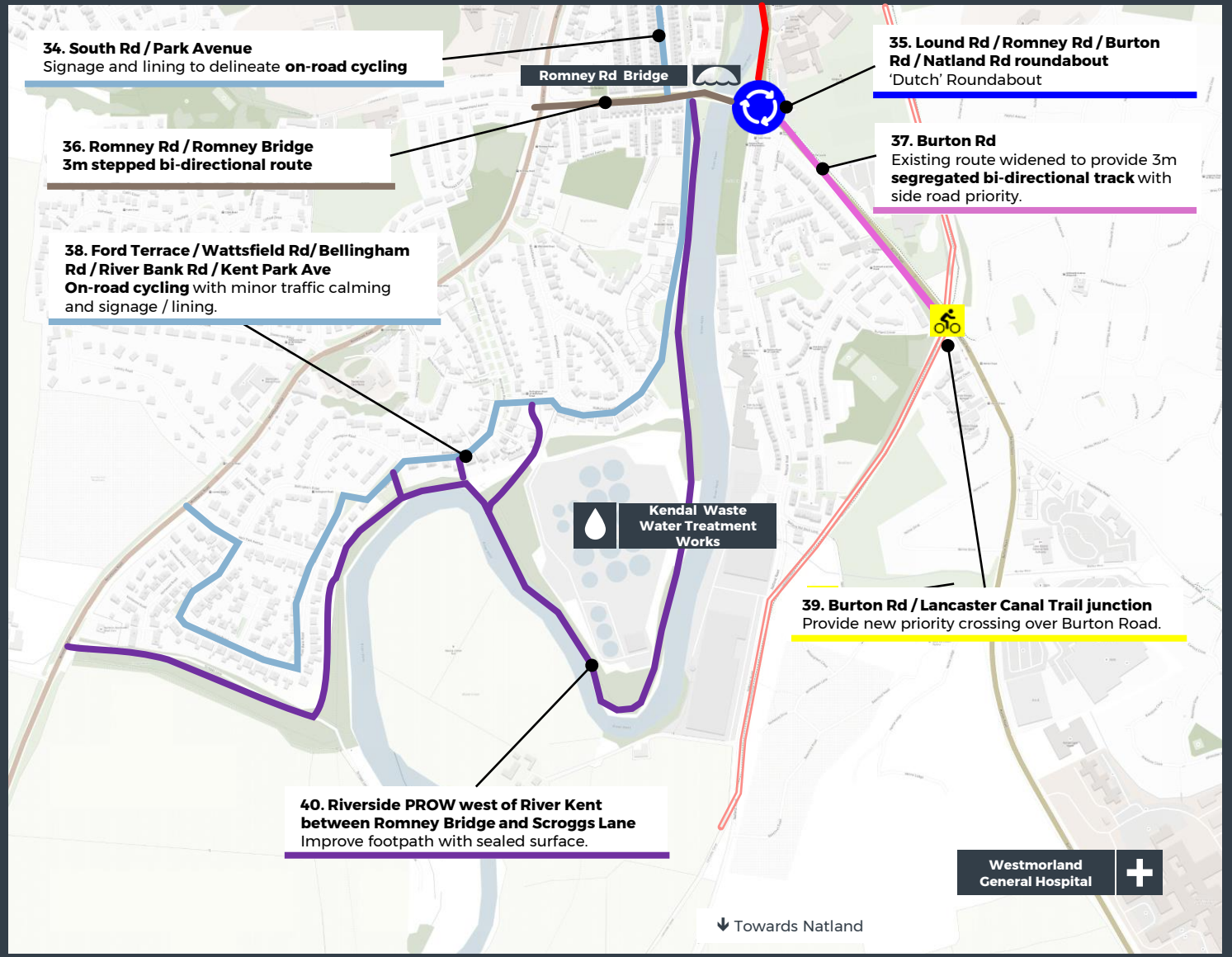


- Segregated Cycle Track
- Shared-use Paths for pedestrians and cyclists
- Low-traffic Cycle Streets
- Segregated bi-directional cycle track
- Bi-directional cycle track
- Contra-flow cycle lane

Implementing the Vision - Identifying Interventions

Kendal River Corridor

Southern Section



- Segregated Cycle Track
- Improved Footpaths for pedestrians
- Low-traffic Cycle Streets
- Segregated bi-directional cycle track
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