



Achieving the transformation

2

Phase one: 0 to 5 years



Figure 2.1: Phase One plan

The scale of transformation in Dunstable could be dramatic. The masterplan sets out a series of interventions that should bring the town's offer into the 21st century. This change will not happen overnight but are expected to include improvements to Court Drive, opening of the Luton Dunstable Busway and opening of the A5 – M1 Link Road. Careful planning is required, along with detailed design and further consultation. The plans set out here are indicative, to illustrate how the redevelopment of the town centre might come forward. It shows potential timescales when proposals could be delivered. For more details, please refer to Chapter 5.

The first stage of the masterplan development is likely to focus on those sites that can more easily be brought forward for development. These sites will serve to kick start the regeneration of the town, acting as a catalyst for wider redevelopment in later phases.

These sites could include key 'early wins' for the town, including the new medical centre, mixed-use



High Street North could be improved in Phase Two to improve pedestrian experience

redevelopment of the Post Office site and Regent Street Car Park and the opportunity to bring forward housing for older people on part of Ashton Square Car Park. Bringing forward these developments will be a clear signal of intent, both to the town's residents, but also investors. Selling Dunstable's potential will be vital in building momentum for change.

Central Bedfordshire College is performing in the top 25% of Colleges nationally based upon success rates. This is reflected in the Colleges increased popularity with student numbers and has shown an increase of 20% in the last year alone. In order to match the College's ambitions, a number of capital actions are planned over the next five years. The first of these is the development of a Higher Education Centre located in Dunstable Town Centre at the Grove Complex. This 1,000 sq m facility, which opened in November 2010, houses courses that the College offer at Levels four and five i.e. HNCs and Foundation Degrees.

The College will be undertaking a £10 million pound refit of its existing Dunstable Campus which will meet the needs of future generations of learners.



The ex-Magistrate Court could be redeveloped to become a Health Centre

Phase two: 5 to 10 years



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Figure 2.2: Phase Two plan

The main development in this phase would be the de-trunking of the A5, which would allow for improvements to the pedestrian experience on the High Street*. Construction of the Woodside Connection would help to remove traffic from the town. Improvements to Matthew Street Car Park could also come forward at this time.

This opportunity for Dunstable would have a major impact on the centre and illustrate the scale of aspiration for the town centre.

Housing for older people next to Priory House Gardens could also be brought forward, providing the Health Centre is vacated and services moved to the proposed Medical Centre. This development should bring additional activity and interest to an already attractive area.

* Detailed designs for the A5 High Street are being developed by Central Bedfordshire Council. This masterplan sets out the key principles, which will form the basis for improvements.

Phase three: 10 to 15 years



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Figure 2.3: Phase Three plan

This should be the key stage towards achieving Dunstable's vision. While significant planning and detailed design and viability work will need to be undertaken during the first two phases, this third stage of development could be when the town's redeveloped retail offer comes forward. This includes the redirecting of Court Drive, the extension of ASDA and the provision of the car parks.

Once these changes have come forward, the final piece of the regeneration jigsaw could see the redevelopment of the area currently occupied by Wilkinson's, Farm Foods and St. Mary's Gate Car Park as a residential-led neighbourhood, including new green spaces and retail.

The removal of major retailers from this area could only realistically happen once the new consolidated retail provision and associated car parking has been provided as part of the redevelopment of the Quadrant Shopping Centre area.



Redevelopment of the Quadrant Shopping Centre should transform Dunstable

The Quadrant Shopping Centre has been marketed for sale since Summer 2010 and whilst interest in its acquisition has been shown, the shopping centre is still within the current ownership. If there is a change in the ownership of the shopping centre, it may be possible that the new owners may wish to carry out redevelopment/refurbishment proposals considerably sooner than those timescales identified in this masterplan document (i.e. Phase 3, 10-15 years).

Overview of the key proposed changes

The function of new buildings

Creating the right mix of uses will be critical in creating a vibrant and active centre. While Dunstable may not be able to compete in terms of scale of offer with some of its neighbours, the balance of its offer will be a key determinant of its success, both for residents and visitors.

- The Luton and Central Bedfordshire Retail Capacity study showed that if planned growth was achieved, there would be insufficient 'comparison retail' in the town centre.
- Over time the retail offer should be consolidated along the High Street and the area between Church Street, Court Drive and High Street North and South. The importance of retaining existing independent traders is acknowledged and all businesses would have equal opportunity to relocate within the town centre should they wish to do so.
- Additional car parking is likely to be required to deliver the quantum of development to achieve the vital step change in Dunstable's offer. This could take the form of surface, underground or multi storey parking.
- If the levels of retail capacity are to be achieved there is a need to acquire all the residential properties along Dorchester Close
- There is potentially a further need to acquire a property on Kingscroft Avenue to enable access to the proposed car park. A green landscape buffer would help to mitigate the impact of new development on the Kingscroft Avenue residential properties.
- As discussed earlier, to achieve the retail capacity within this masterplan, it is recommended that the town centre boundary is increased to take in the area of Dorchester Close via the Site Allocation DPD.

- Improving the health of the town centre is a priority. As such, the primary focus for retail expansion is the town centre. A good vibrant out of town offer, at the White Lion Retail Park, is beneficial for all, but only alongside a healthy town centre; and not at its expense.
- Out of town centre retail developments, at this stage, could negatively affect the centre by drawing retailers and trade away. The masterplan proposes to bring forward development in the centre as the main priority.
- A new medical centre would be provided on the site of the ex-Magistrate's Court and Ambulance Station.
- A relocated new library in a prominent location is proposed above new retail development opposite Grove House Gardens.
- High quality residential development helps to respond to housing need and enliven the town centre across the day and evening. Wherever possible, less apartments and more family houses with gardens are shown as this is an identified area of demand. Apartments are shown only where sites do not allow for houses, such as on floors above certain new shops.
- Refurbishment/redevelopment of Central Bedfordshire College Dunstable Campus to meet the needs of future generations of students and create a significant new focus for the town centre.
- Two housing blocks for older people are also proposed to meet identified housing need.
- Notwithstanding a film facility at the Grove Theatre, there is no dedicated multiplex cinema in the town and therefore a facility is proposed along the new retail street as a medium to long term opportunity.

Based on market analysis specified office space is not deemed appropriate within the town centre. However, there are a number of sites where the most appropriate type of activity, which could include provision for offices, is dependent on the economic market at the time of development, these are identified as 'Flexible-use'.



The library could be redeveloped as part of a new retail scheme



Improved facilities and larger units should help attract retailers

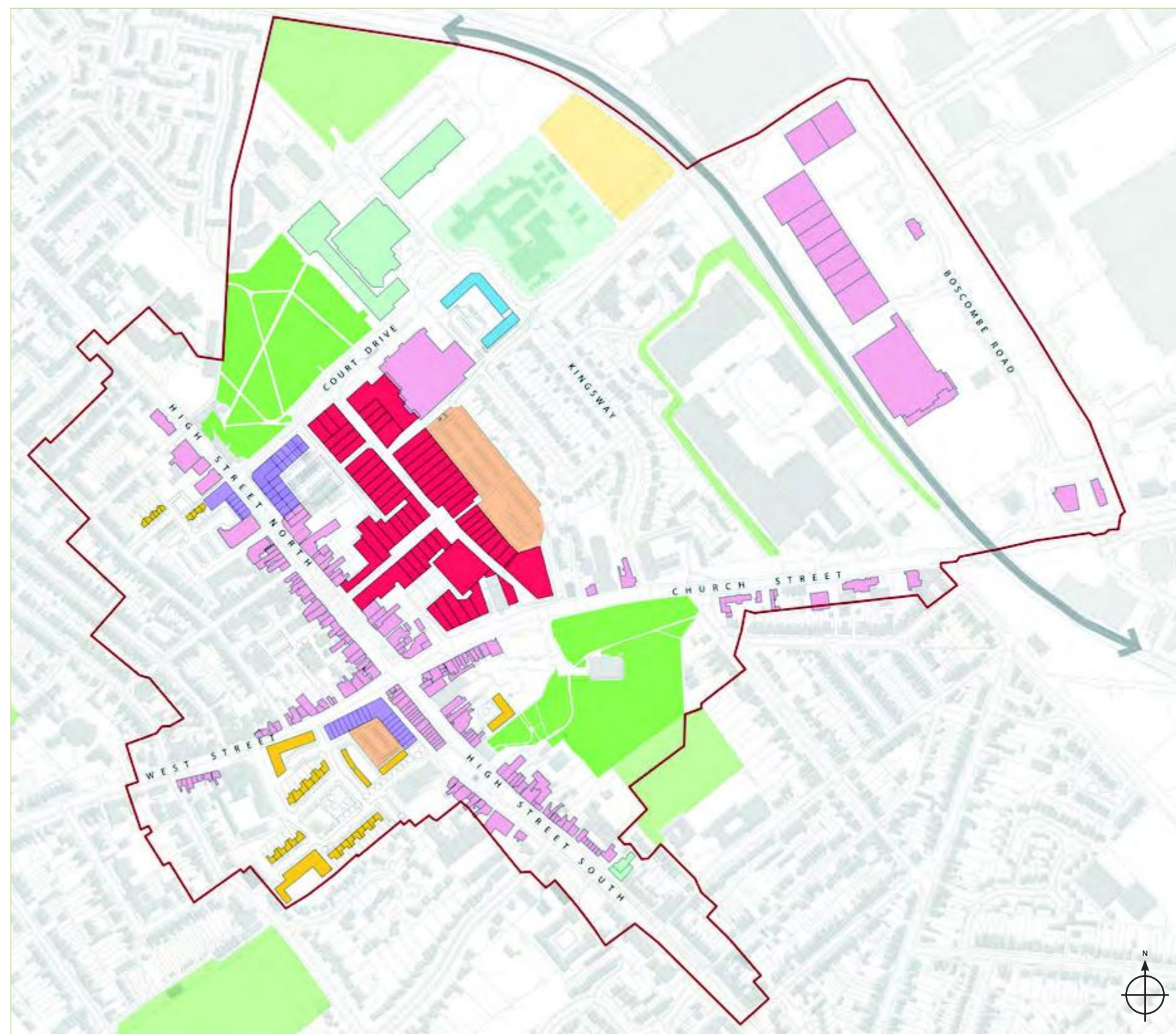


Figure 2.4: Ground floor land uses



Figure 2.5: Upper floor land uses



Creating an interesting and attractive town centre

The masterplan must recognise the town's valued heritage as a key asset in future regeneration, and must be informed by key messages from the Conservation Area Appraisal (see Appendix B)

Currently, the arrival experience by road from all directions (but Luton in particular) is uninspiring. The built form does not work with the area's existing assets, instead it hides them away. Transforming the town centre as shown below and in Figure 2.6 should help to encourage people into and around the area and exploit its existing positive features:

- Mark the entranceways to Dunstable town centre from each of the four major roads with a significant gateway feature, whether it be public art, signage or a landmark development.
- Focus on creating a number of key views and vistas so that there is a clear and continuous series of markers that lead from one feature of the town centre to the next.
- Improvements to streetscape at the crossroads, which is the historic centre of Dunstable
- Create a pedestrian-friendly route around the historic areas of Priory Church, Ashton Square/Middle Row and West Street Baptist Chapel
- Streetscape enhancements from Grove House Gardens through the 'new town' area to the 'old town' area, via a central street with clear views to the west front of Priory Church. This gives the opportunity for a well designed link between the two principal historic green spaces and will help to integrate the Grove Theatre with the rest of the town centre.
- Line major pedestrian and vehicular routes with high quality and active frontages.
- Improvements to the setting of key historic buildings, such as Priory Church, Dunstable Baptist Church (St. Mary's Gate) and Middle Row.
- Improvements to shop fronts along High Street North and South to help restore their historic character

- High quality architectural design will be vital to making the town centre more attractive and interesting, and should contribute towards Dunstable's vision and complement its historic character.
- Design a series of landmark features into new buildings and spaces to attract visitors around the full extent of the town centre.
- Establish a town 'Heritage Trail', with appropriate directional and information signage, incorporating surviving paths and passageways of the medieval town (e.g. Church Walk)

The movement of traffic

Central to the transport strategy supporting the masterplan preferred option is improvements to the A5 High Street, which proposes a series of improvements north of the town centre crossroads.

Currently, the A5 through the centre of Dunstable is an all purpose 'trunk route'. However, the expected completion of the A5-M1 link north of Dunstable/Houghton Regis in late 2016 will provide an opportunity to de-trunk the section between J9 of the M1 and the A5-M1. This will provide Central Bedfordshire Council with an opportunity to introduce suitable traffic controls including appropriate restrictions on HGV movements throughout the centre of Dunstable.

The transport strategy also proposes to realign and extend Court Drive to provide a junction with the A5 (N) to replace the junction with Queensway to the south, with increased capacity on the Court Drive approach to help ease queuing and congestion on this arm which is apparent at the existing junction. Central Bedfordshire Council has commissioned its own team of consultants to design a highway scheme for the A5 in Dunstable once it is de-trunked, and the implications of these proposals in relation to the masterplan will need to be considered to ensure there is a convergence of thinking between shared spaces and the Local Transport Plan (LTP3).

The A5 / Court Drive junction would provide the vehicle route to the relocated ASDA customer car park accessed from a new junction with Kingsway, and this proposal also includes measures to restrict through traffic using local routes such as Kingsway and Kingscroft Avenue.

The A505 Church Street under the railway bridge is currently a bottleneck and proposals to widen this section to four lanes will help ease congestion, extending from the A505 Church Street / Boscombe Road gyratory system at the White Lion Retail Park to the entrance of the Dukeminster Estate.

The transport strategy proposes a major concentration of car parking in the northeast of the town centre to serve the enhanced retail offer, with the reconfiguration of this section of the A505 Church Street to provide access to off-street car parking and the new servicing area for the new retail development. The car parking schedule is discussed in the following chapter.



Aldi site could be long-term option to create new gateway to the town



Improving the setting of existing heritage assets will be key

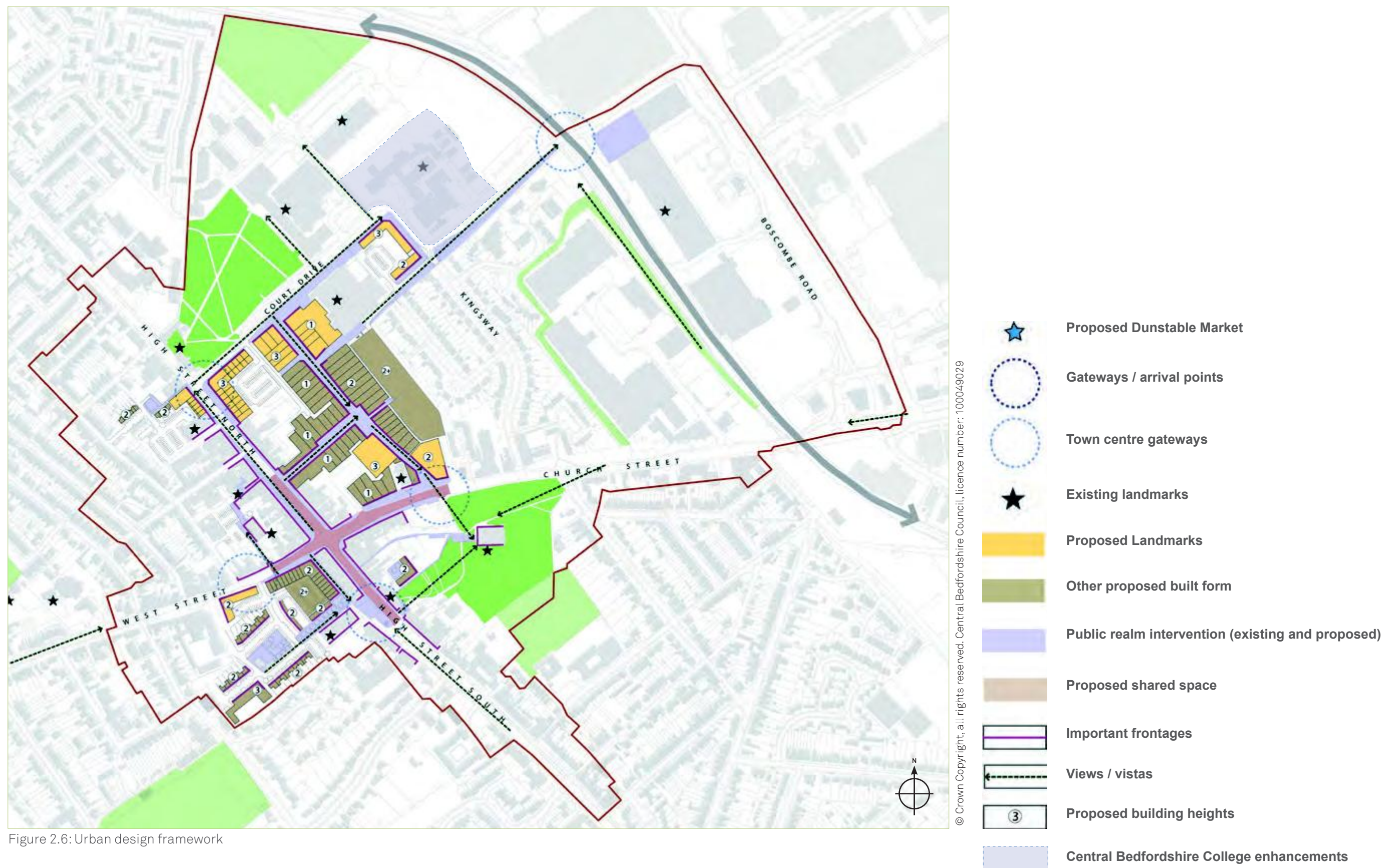


Figure 2.6: Urban design framework

Strategic transport interventions

There are a number of planned / proposed strategic transport interventions in South Bedfordshire and Luton that will affect Dunstable Town Centre. These include the A5-M1 Link, the Woodside Connection, the M1 Junction 10 to 13 Improvements, the potential 'de-trunking' of the A5, the Luton Dunstable Busway and proposed Freight Strategy.

Whilst some of the transport and movement proposals set out in the masterplan options are not contingent on the implementation of these external transport improvements, others will be hard to reach without them. The scale of the public realm improvements planned will be particularly limited if they do not come forward, as longer-term improvements require the reduced congestion that these schemes should bring.

A5-M1 Link Road

The Secretary of State has encouraged regular meetings to take place between the Department for Transport, Highways Agency, Central Bedfordshire Council and Developer in a partnership arrangement to assist funding the scheme.

Subject to the statutory process and agreements that are to be in place by summer 2011 then a Public Inquiry will take place in November 2011.

The expected construction start date is likely to be 2014 with completion in 2016.

Woodside Connection

A preferred option has been adopted by the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Planning and Transportation Committee following consultation on route options in 2009. The route is between Porz Avenue at its junction with Poynters Road and a proposed junction 11a on the M1. The scheme is dependant on the construction of the Highway Agency A5-M1 Link Road for the new M1 junction.

The scheme is being developed by Central Bedfordshire Council with a potential start of works date in 2016/17. The scheme will:

- Serve the proposed development to the north of Houghton Regis,
- Enable the removal of inappropriate HGV's trips from the town centre
- Reduce congestion in the town centre
- Improve air and noise quality in the town centre

M1 Junction 10 to 13 Improvements

On the 15th January 2009 the Secretary of State announced that the M1 Junctions 10 to 13 scheme would be taken forward as a Hard Shoulder Running Scheme. This is a motorway improvement scheme that is being put in place between Luton and Milton Keynes. Works have started and the scheme is due for completion in early 2013.

De-trunking of the A5

The A5 trunk road through Dunstable is currently managed by the Highway Agency. Once the A5-M1 Link road has been built, the Highway Agency is expected to de-trunk the A5 through Dunstable and hand over responsibility to the local highways authority – Central Bedfordshire Council.

The de-trunking of the A5 could potentially take place within 12 months of the opening of the A5-M1 Link Road. This will provide CBC with the opportunity to implement more appropriate measures for a town centre type environment rather than the current one focused at a strategic road network. With the opening of the Link Road traffic on the A5 will be reduced providing the designers with opportunities for more pedestrian focused measures without significantly impacting on passing trade from traffic. These could include widened pavements / more open environment, relocation and design of pedestrian crossing points, better phasing of pedestrian / traffic crossing movements and improvements to air quality.

Luton Dunstable Busway

The Luton Dunstable Busway has a dedicated route between Houghton Regis, Dunstable (including the town centre via bus lanes), Luton town centre, Luton Railway Station and onto Luton Parkway Station and London Luton Airport.

The scheme provides a fast, frequent and dependable high quality bus service linking residential, commercial and educational locations. The Busway has specifically adapted buses that run both in their own guided track and on public roads with access points along route allowing bus operators to optimise routes for journey times and reliability. The Busway is a committed scheme with funding, work on-site has already started and there is a target opening date of early 2013.

The plans in this masterplan show the off carriageway route, which runs to the North East of the town centre. The on road element will run along the same routes as the existing bus and serve the same bus stops, with some lane improvements.

Attached journey times below are based on expected in vehicle journey times when the busway opens:

- Dunstable TC to Luton TC-16 mins
- Dunstable TC to Luton Airport-23 mins
- Dunstable TC to Houghton Regis TC-9 mins

Furthermore, approximately 115 bus stops in the areas of Dunstable and Houghton are to be served by buses using the busway and will be upgraded with level boarding at stops and real time passenger information.

Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan (referred to as the LTP) is an important tool in helping to deliver the priorities contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy. Transport is a means to an end and the LTP for Central Bedfordshire will help assist in providing the capacity for economic growth, cater for an increase in demand to travel, help improve the health and well being of the population, increase access

to education, employment and other local services, and address general quality of life issues.

The LTP for Central Bedfordshire will be in place in April 2011 and will cover the 15 year period up until March 2026 and provide a framework for investment in transport locally.

The Plan is structured around the reasons people travel, ‘journey purposes’, to reinforce the concept that transport is a means to an end, and ensure a targeted and integrated approach. The structure of the LTP is set out in Figure 1.

Vision & Objectives

The vision of the LTP is to ensure Central Bedfordshire is:

‘Globally connected, delivering sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all by creating an integrated transport system that is safe, sustainable and accessible’.

A series of 10 objectives, and associated targets and indicators against which progress towards their achievement can be ascertained are also included within the Plan. The objectives seek to:

- Increase the ease of access to employment by sustainable modes.
- Reduce the impact of commuting trips on local communities.
- Increase the number of children travelling to school by sustainable modes of transport.
- Improve access to healthcare provision by the core health service (hospitals and GPs).
- Ensure access to food stores and other local services particularly in local and district centres.
- Enable access to a range of leisure, cultural and tourism facilities for residents and visitors.
- Enable the efficient and reliable transportation of freight.
- Encourage the movement of freight by sustainable modes.

- Minimise the negative impacts of freight trips on local communities.
- Reduce the risk of people being killed or seriously injured.

Priorities

Within these themes, the LTP also establishes a series of priority areas focusing upon:

Journeys to work

- Maximising the number of sustainable short trips
- The ease of interchange between services
- Reducing the volume of through traffic
- Addressing carbon dioxide emissions
- Improving road safety

Travel to schools

- Improving the walking and cycling environment
- Prioritising supported travel for pupils
- Raising awareness of active travel
- Securing modal shift within new developments

Access to healthcare

- Enabling access to healthcare services
- Reducing physical restrictions to access
- Promoting the links between travel and health
- Working in partnership with the NHS

Access to food stores and local services

- Support the delivery of town centre masterplans
- Promote access to online Council services
- Location of development in accessible location

Access to leisure, culture and tourism

- Improve access to the countryside
- Improve access to leisure centres
- Improve access to town centres at evening and weekends

Transportation of freight

- Manage carbon dioxide emissions
- Tackle air pollution
- Address noise and vibration issues
- Improve road safety
- Mitigate other physical effects of freight movements
- Improve accessibility by non-road modes
- Direct growth into accessible locations

These themes and related priorities will form the basis to the direction of investment in new transport schemes.

The LTP is based upon an area based approach to investment as opposed to a scheme led approach. Such an approach ensures that priority areas can be targeted for investment where need is greatest, and that the most appropriate interventions are delivered in each location. It also enables a more co-ordinated approach to the implementation of different types of scheme at a local level.

On this basis a series of Local Area Transport Plans (LATPs) have been produced. These detail the key issues and schemes to be delivered over the course of the LTP in specific areas.

Dunstable & Houghton Regis Local Area Transport Plan

The Dunstable & Houghton Regis LATP has been produced within the context of the wider Local Transport Plan 3, and the strategic approaches identified through which to address issues relating to specific journey purposes.

The Implementation programme has been developed in order to achieve a more sustainable future, a healthier environment and vibrant town centres encouraging

economic growth for Dunstable, Houghton Regis and the surrounding villages.

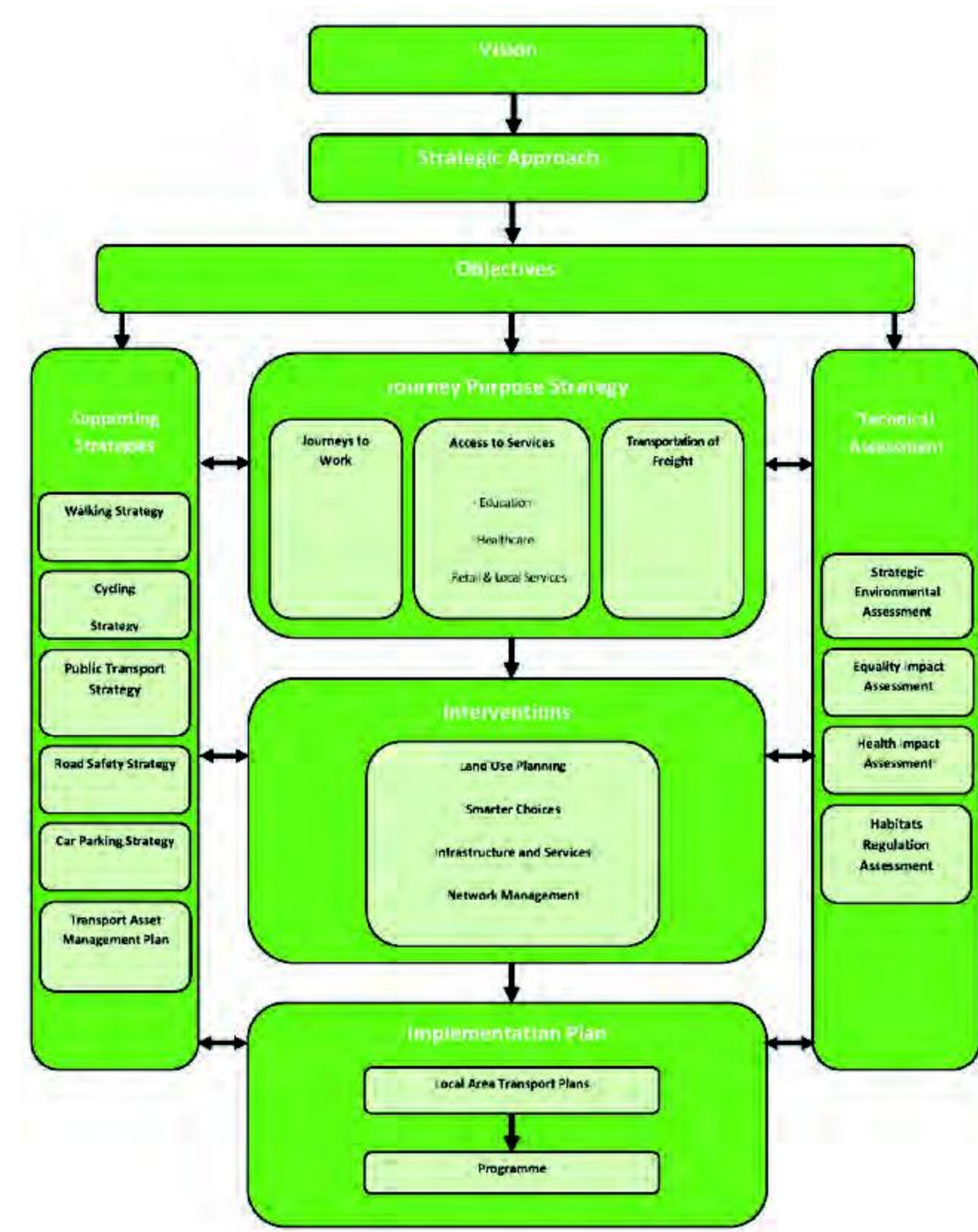
Because Dunstable and Houghton Regis cover quite large conurbations, in order to deliver a comprehensive package of measures and to enable effective partnership working Dunstable and Houghton Regis have been segmented into the following scheme zones:

- West of Dunstable
- Eastern Dunstable
- Houghton Regis
- Dunstable Town Centre (Masterplan)
- Rural Surround
- Dunstable Generic schemes

A programme of works has been developed to cover all of the areas and was formulated following extensive local consultation and integration with other projects such as the guided busway and the master plan. Each scheme for each area has been designed to reflect the particular needs of those communities and initiatives at Dunstable and Houghton Regis include the following:

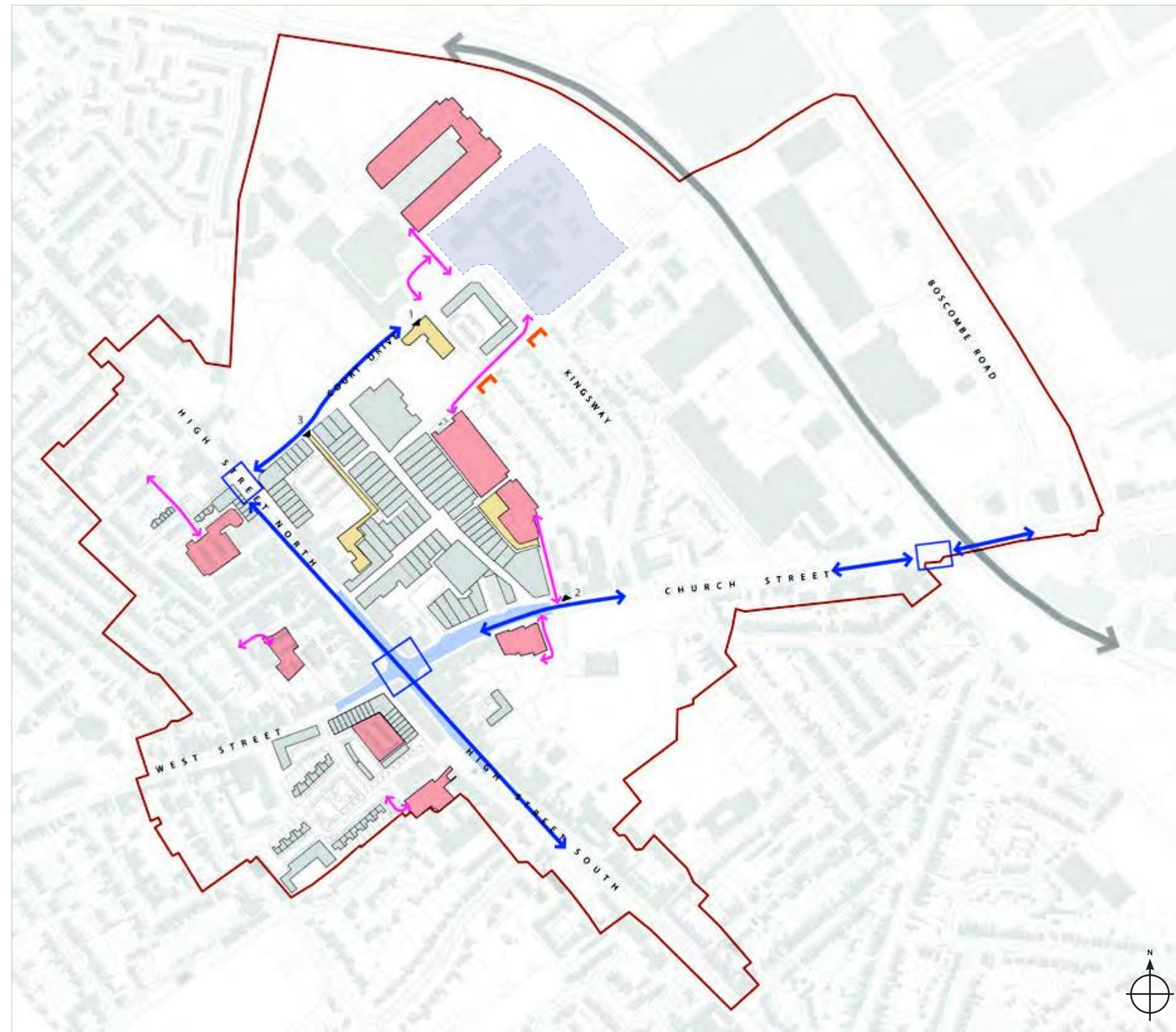
- Introduction of shared space (local centres, town centres)
- 20mph zones (residential areas)
- Lorry / HGV bans (residential area)
- Bus stop and information enhancements
- Cycling and pedestrian access improvements to town centres, employment areas and the Dunstable & Luton hospital
- Road Safety measures to enable safe crossing facilities for children

The schemes will predominantly be delivered between 2011-2014 with the exception of Dunstable town centre which will be developed in tandem with the Masterplan.





Junction entry improvements would make crossing the road safer for pedestrians



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-  **Town centre public car parking**
-  **Main servicing areas/ access points**
 - 1. ASDA servicing access point
 - 2. New ASDA servicing access point
 - 3. New Court Drive servicing access point
-  **Potential shared space/gateway features at the crossroads and on approaches**
-  **Potential junction improvement**
-  **Potential highway improvement**
-  **Town centre public car park access/egress arrangements**
-  **Access only from A505 Church Street**

Figure 2.7: Vehicular Movement

The design of streets and spaces

The streets and public spaces (known collectively as public realm) will need to play a key part in making the town feel more attractive and encourage people to visit and more businesses to set up in the town. Historic street features should be carefully preserved and be a focus for localised enhancement. Surface treatments and soft landscaping should bring added interest and enjoyment for people using the town centre and provide a basis to attract new retailers to the town.

- The de-trunking of the A5, potentially allowing for improvements such as shared space and significant improvements to pedestrian and cycle connections through the town. Establishment of a circular pedestrian loop, including improved public realm, that links the new retail development with major heritage assets such as Priory Church of St. Peter, Methodist Church and Baptist Church. Route to be defined through items of street furniture installed in a consistent style, such as paving, lighting, waste bins and benches.
- Maypole Yard and Matthew Street car park realigned to create new public space and access.
- New central pedestrian shopping street created that physically and visually connects Grove House Gardens and Priory Gardens to the main retail area.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle links from White Lion Retail Park to town centre along Court Drive
- Improved public spaces provided: along a new retail street in the retail core; facing Priory Church of St Peter; at Ashton Square (High Street South); and around the Baptist Chapel.
- Priory Gardens and Grove House Gardens are major assets to the town centre. These spaces should be enhanced and managed to maximise their environmental benefits and their use as public green space.
- Opportunity to assess feasibility for **shared space** at the crossroads and on approaches should de-trunking of A5 go ahead, to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

What is shared space?

Shared space aims to break down the traditional segregation of vehicles, pedestrians and other road users, typically by replacing some kerbs and signals with more integrated surfaces.

This in effect blurs the lines between road user priorities. It creates doubt in the minds of drivers who in turn reduce their speed as a result of the prevalence of pedestrians and other road users. It increases pedestrian priority whilst maintaining access for vehicles.

Case studies elsewhere show they can create safe and attractive environments. Specific measures help more vulnerable users, such as blind or elderly residents. Testing and consultation will be required as schemes come forward.



The Luton Dunstable Busway could help provide a gateway entrance to the town centre as it crosses Church Street



New development should complement the historic context of Dunstable town centre



Improving High Street North would enhance connectivity



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- Existing green areas
- Proposed new pedestrian corridor
- New/ improved public realm/ footpath
- Potential shared space/ gateway features at the crossroads and on approaches
- Shared surface in residential area
- Proposed pedestrian circuit
- Significant trees/landscaping, proposed and existing

Figure 2.8: Public Realm Strategy

Walking and cycling through the town

Sustainable modes of transport are explained below. These will be vital to the success of the town centre as it moves forward. Dunstable's scale, green space and proximity to the countryside represent key assets that will help make its offer unique.

- At the heart of the masterplan's emerging preferred transport strategy is improving pedestrian circulation through direct and legible routes linking key town centre attractions including Grove Park and Priory Gardens, as well as better quality pedestrian routes to car parks.
- The town centre would be characterised by high quality public realm with consistent street furniture and signage, better positioned crossing facilities around the northeast quadrant that link and draw together the heritage assets and town centre facilities, with an emphasis on removing existing stagger crossings where feasible.
- The proposed highway improvements in the town centre on the A5, A505 and B489 corridors will facilitate the widening of footways and gateway features on the roads into the town centre and will improve conditions for cyclists and help create a safer interaction between vehicles and pedestrians.
- New crossings will improve connections across the High Street. Improvements to the pedestrian environment / access along Court Drive and College Drive, which currently provides access to the White Lion Retail Park from Kingsway, will enhance the links between the town centre and the proposed Luton Dunstable Busway stop to serve the retail park, situated on the segregated off-carriageway route immediately to the south of College Drive.
- The proposed realignment of Court Drive will ease the pathway for buses along this route, whilst bus lanes along the A505 (eastbound) will improve priority and journey times for the Luton Dunstable Busway services through the town centre. Bus lanes should also be accessible for cyclists to enhance the quality of the journey through the town centre.

- Provision of new footways / cycle paths adjacent to the segregated off-carriageway sections of the Luton Dunstable Busway will provide new routes for pedestrians and cyclists to access Dunstable from its hinterland, and combined with other measures such as access to bus lanes, the provision of new crossings, traffic calming on the A5, A505 and B489 corridors and more cycle parking in the right locations will improve the town centre experience for cyclists.

Town Centre Crossroads Pedestrian Crossing Strategy

Based on initial consultation with the two Highway Authorities (Central Bedfordshire Council and the Highways Agency), various short and long terms options for improvements to the town centre junction have been identified.

Following de-trunking of the A5 Central Bedfordshire Council, as the highway authority, are currently considering changes to the existing junction to facilitate shared space and will be in keeping with the process for the new Local Transport Plan (LTP3).



Walking across the town centre should be made easier



Cycle routes within and beyond the centre should be improved & promoted



An example showing how the Luton Dunstable Busway could look

Source: Local Transport Today - Bus Rapid Transit UK

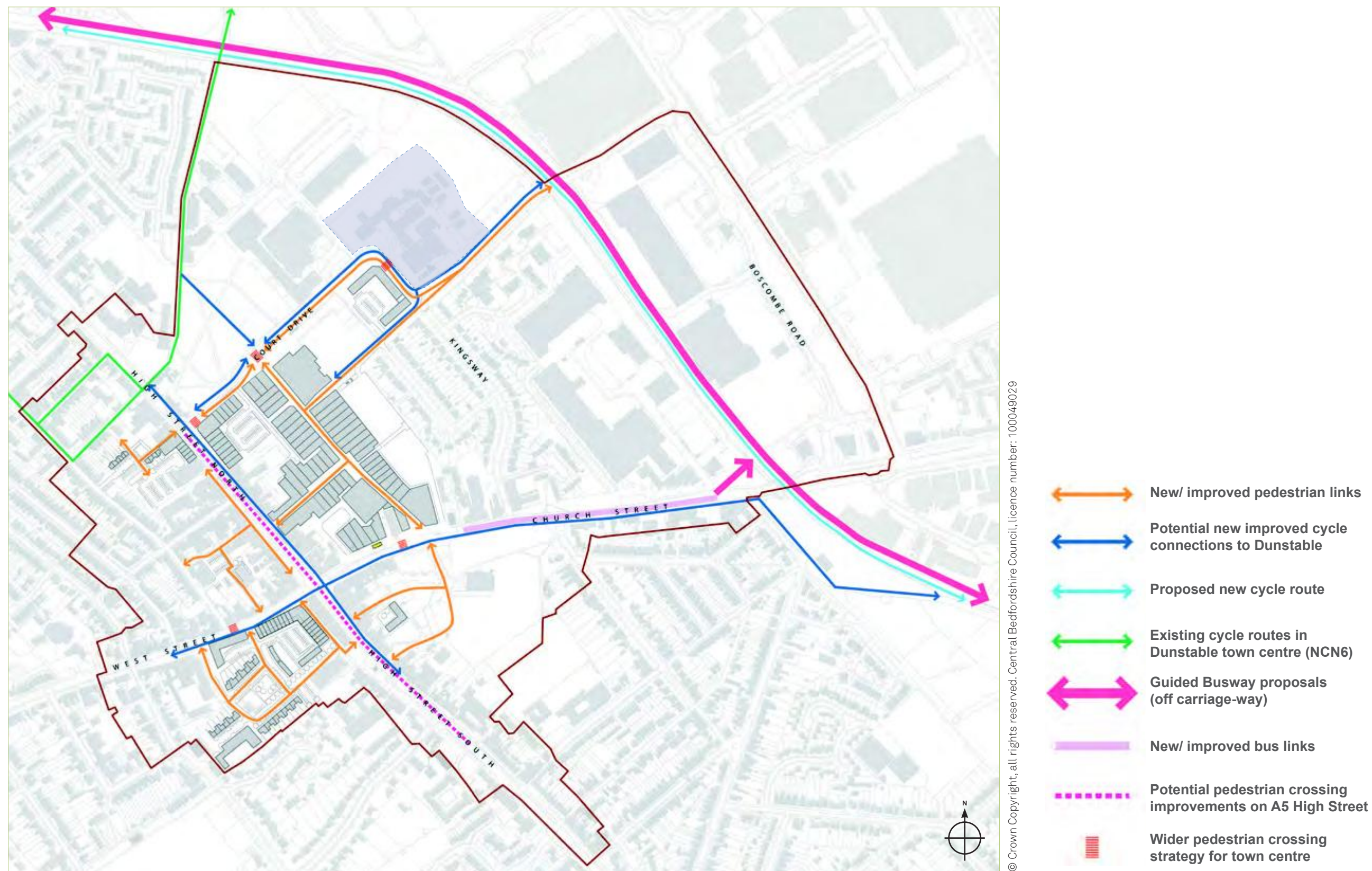


Figure 2.9: Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

