



PART B: EXPLAINING THE DETAIL

Key areas of change

4

Three Masterplan Character Areas

The masterplan proposes an indicative development scheme for Dunstable town centre. Further work in terms of viability, detailed design and testing is required and this should take place as individual proposals come forward. To this end, the scheme set out in the masterplan is for illustrative purposes. It should be underlined that proposals that come forward for the town centre will need to be market-led and be viable within the existing challenging economic situation. Dunstable town centre is in a fragile state at the moment and proposals coming forward will need to be considered on their merit and how they deliver against the vision, objectives and principles, while also providing security for its long-term sustainability and a step change in the quality of the town's buildings, open space and public realm.

3 character areas are identified within the town. These are:

A new retail, health, leisure and education core: the current Quadrant Shopping Centre and neighbouring land

This area brings forward interventions that will put Dunstable on the map for its modern and accessible retail, leisure and education offer.

A residential-led neighbourhood: Priory Church to St Mary's Gate

The focus in this area will be on residential development and public realm improvements to celebrate the town's heritage.

A traditional High Street: High Street North to Edward Street

This character area is based around improvements to High Street North and the public realm, as well as new retail development to support its traditional smaller scale retail offer.



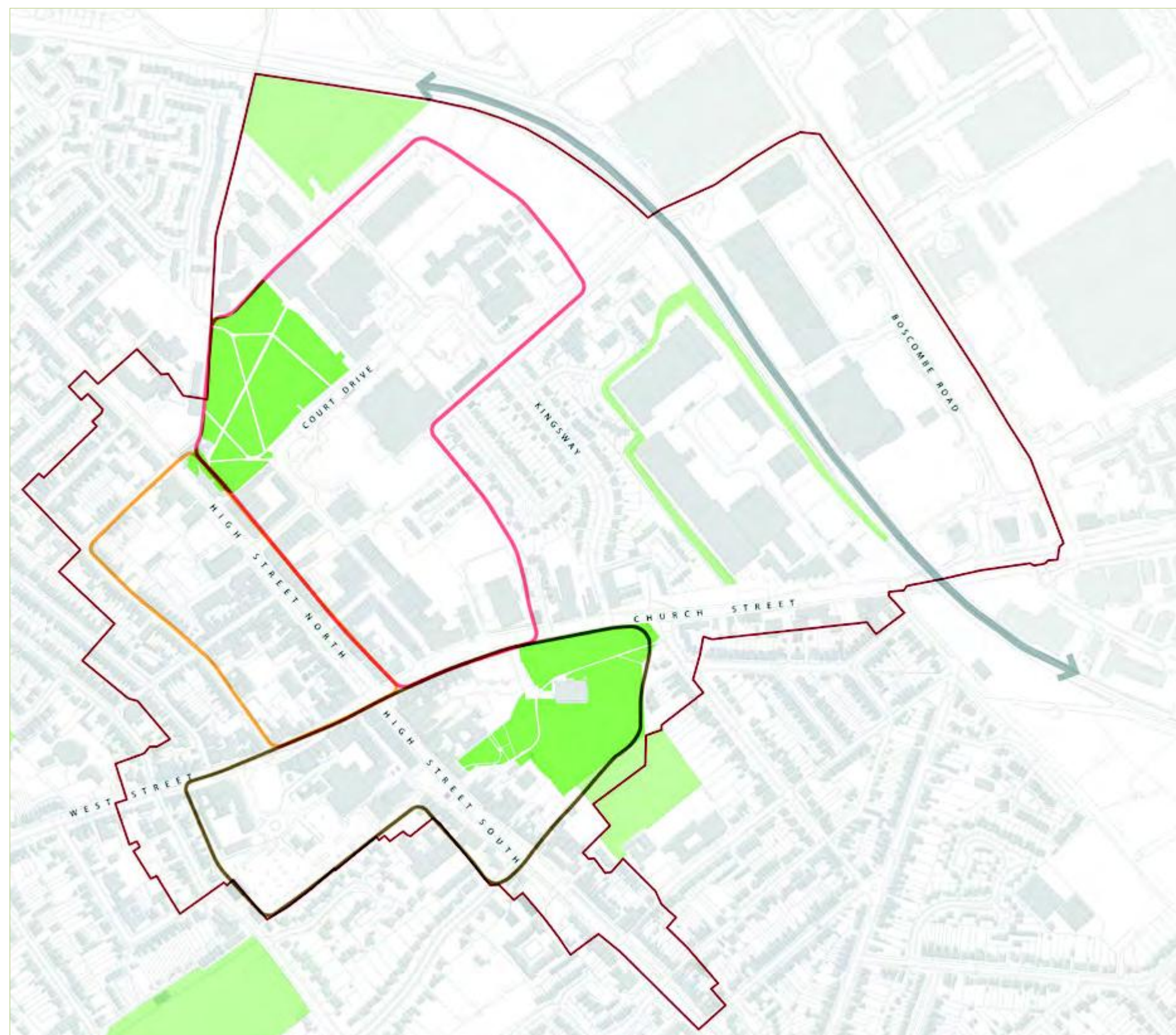
A modern consolidated retail offer



Residential development in the heart of the town



A renewed High Street for Dunstable



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-  **A new retail, health, leisure and education core:**
The current Quadrant shopping centre and surrounding land
-  **A residential-led neighbourhood:**
Priory Church to st. Mary's Gate
-  **A traditional High Street:**
High Street North to Edward Street
-  **Masterplan study area**

Figure 4.1: Character Areas

A new retail, health, leisure and education core: the current Quadrant Shopping Centre and neighbouring land

What are the different uses and activities?

This area would become the consolidated retail, health, leisure and education core, with complementary uses to bring added activity throughout the day and evening. The masterplan indicates that there is scope within this area for:

- Around 31,250 sq.m gross of newly developed retail space, including a new Medium Size Unit with potential for small department store
- New retail units to be larger than the current offer, with more prime frontage for each unit
- Around 3,600 sq.m for an extension of ASDA to become an anchor store to new retail development and help create a new shopping street
- Retention of similar overall levels of convenience retail
- Around 1,250 sq. m for a new library building as part of new retail development. The current library is likely to require substantial refurbishment in the near future and the Council propose to provide for a new and modern facility
- Opportunity for a 2,200sq.m multiplex cinema (depending on demand)
- New car parking to provide capacity for ASDA customers and the wider town centre. The car parking could be provided at surface level, underground or decked depending on the eventual development proposals that come forward
- The potential requirement to acquire all properties on Dorchester Close to facilitate the delivery of the new shopping centre and integrate it within the town centre.
- Approximately 6,000 sq.m Medical Centre in the town centre

- Additional development along remodelled Court Drive and High Street North to include 3000sqm flexible space with active frontages at ground floor and around 30 residential apartments above.
- Central Bedfordshire College will be undertaking a £10 million pound refit of its existing Dunstable Campus which will meet the needs of future generations of learners.
- Long-term Aldi supermarket is included as part of the redevelopment proposals to maximise the benefit of pedestrian connections and uplift in the quality of the physical environment. However, the store could be retained with access to the proposed car park still possible.

How will proposals make the town centre more attractive and interesting?

A number of key urban design principles support the masterplan proposals in this area. These are:

- With the exception of the Medical Centre and college, all development in this character area should be brought forward with active frontages on the ground floor.
- Ensuring that the opportunities for a new library and cinema at upper levels above new retail units should be brought forward as landmark developments.
- If possible, bringing new retail development forward so that it wraps Priory House at the ground floor, improving its interface with the surrounding area.
- Ensuring safe and attractive pedestrian/cycle routes between Grove House and Priory Gardens, White Lion Retail Park and the retail core, Central Bedfordshire College and High Street North.
- Improving legibility of these key routes by establishing strong vistas, by picking out landmark buildings and features along each of these routes through the development of landscape and built form.
- Careful scaling and massing of the proposed Medical Centre to ensure it integrates with adjacent residential area.



A new retail offer should act as a catalyst, attracting more retailers and shoppers



Promoting key views and integrating old and new

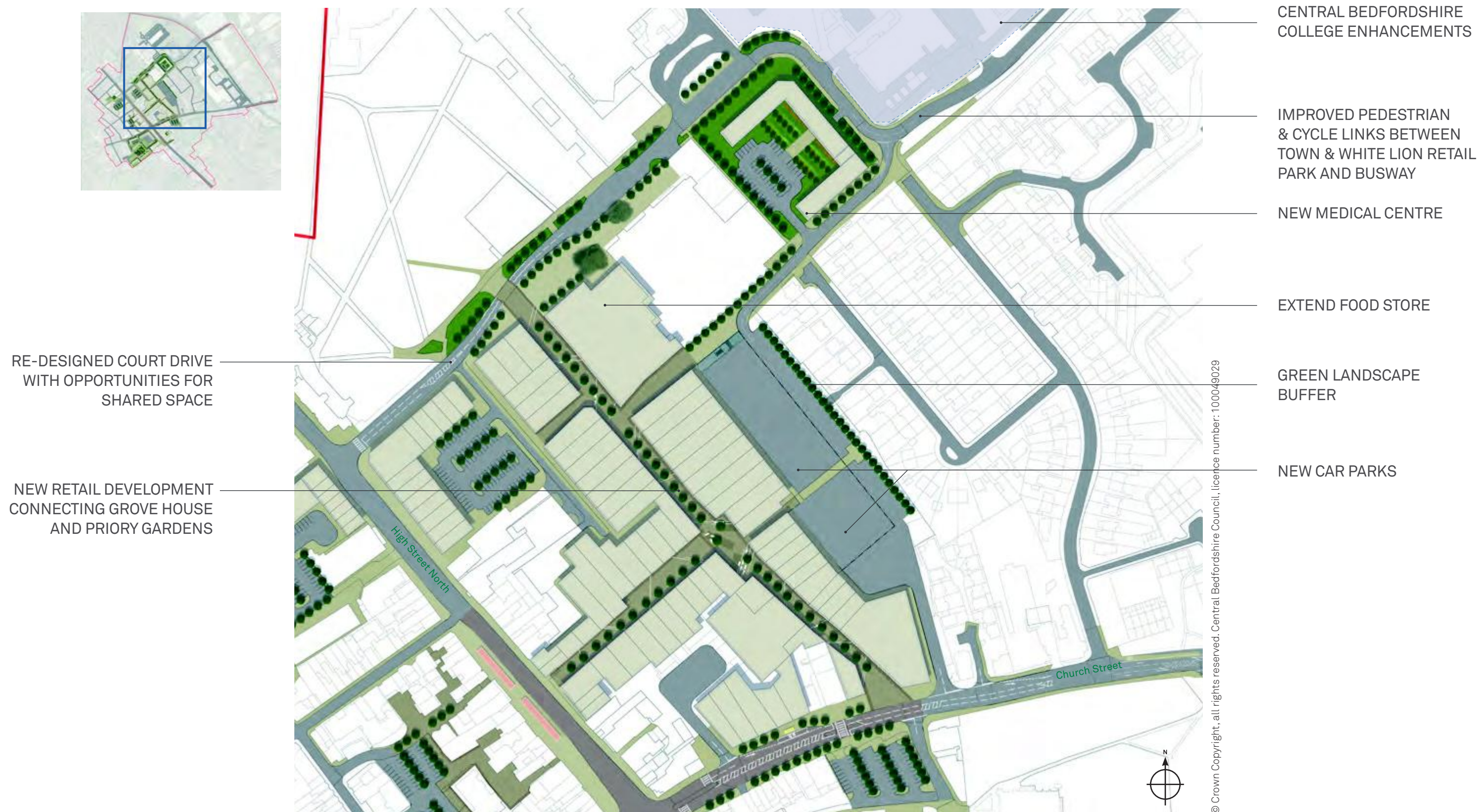


Figure 4.2: Illustrative masterplan - A new retail, health, leisure and education core: the current Quadrant Shopping Centre and neighbouring land

- Landscape screening of new vehicular access route from the junction of Court Drive and Kingsway, including consideration of land acquisition (depending on outcome of a more detailed design assessment, should a scheme come forward).
- ASDA is a key attractor to the town centre and the proposed extension will allow the store to provide a new 'high-street style' frontage on the shopping street. The masterplan also proposes improvements to the rest of the town centre to help it attract those who shop at ASDA to also visit other shops.
 - According to NEMS Market Research undertaken at the ASDA store in 2008, of the 228 interviews using a questionnaire, 77% are already purchasing non-food items when they visit the store. Furthermore, 84% of these shoppers still combine their trip to ASDA with a visit to Dunstable town centre. As any scheme moves forward then further testing will be required, although this is a useful indicator of recent shopper behaviour in Dunstable.
- Landscape screening and contextually appropriate design of new car parks along rear gardens of south side of Kingscroft Avenue to improve visual appearance of car parks and provide noise attenuation. Measures that achieve these requirements should include:
 - A landscaped buffer between car parks and adjacent residential privately-owned land
 - Screening of vertical faces directed to residential houses with vegetated 'green walls'
 - If a multi storey car park option were to come forward, this should be no higher than ground floor plus two decks (3 floors), and be set back from the site boundary adjoining the residential properties on Kingscroft Avenue, with a landscape buffer
 - Detailed architectural design of car parks should be sensitive to the historic nature of Dunstable town centre

What will the streets and open spaces be like?

The masterplan proposes key new routes within this area to better connect the whole town centre. The main principles enshrined within the masterplan are:

- New modern retail shopping street linking Grove House and Priory Gardens, designed to complement historic and smaller scale retail experience along High Street North.
- Maximising soft landscaping, including trees and planting, through the retail core, providing a continuous green corridor between Grove House and Priory Gardens.
- New public square within the heart of the retail core.
- Remodelled Court Drive to connect directly to High Street North, replacing current connection along Vernon Drive and Queensway.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle route, directly linking White Lion Retail Park, the proposed new Guided Busway stop, the Medical Centre, the new retail core and surrounding area.
- Retention of important trees between Court Drive and ASDA.

How do proposals improve Dunstable's connectivity?

The detailed proposed changes in relation to transport and movement are listed below:

- Improvements to High Street North are being undertaken directly by Central Bedfordshire Council and their appointed consultants. It is recommended that the scheme includes proposals to:
 - Remove the central island and guard railing;
 - Calm traffic in the town centre to reduce vehicle speeds and create a safer interaction with pedestrians, and measures could include gateway features on the roads into the town centre in the form of raised approaches and / or surface treatment.
- Relocation of two existing crossing facilities on Court Drive and the A5 (N) around the current Quadrant Shopping Centre to align with the new pedestrian routes.

- Realign and extend Court Drive to provide a new junction with the A5 (N) to give consideration towards shared spaces. Changes to surfaces will need to be appropriate for disabled and older users. An appropriate junction should be provided to facilitate pedestrian movements on all arms and replace the existing 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.
- Concentration of car parking in the northeast quadrant to serve the enhanced retail offer. This would comprise of car parks serving the new retail development and the existing ASDA store. A new access junction from the A505 Church Street would provide access to the new off-street car parking and the new servicing area for the Quadrant Shopping Centre. A new priority T-junction with Court Drive and Kingsway, which would include the reconfiguration of the local streets to restrict through traffic using Kingsway and Kingscroft Avenue, would also provide access to the new off-street car parking and the proposed new medical centre. If the proposed off-street parking were to be decked, there may be the need to incorporate a travelator linking the upper floors with the ASDA store. A new pedestrian route in the middle of the car parks would lead into the central square of the Quadrant Shopping Centre.
- The masterplan proposes a general shift in the proportion of parking spaces towards the north-eastern quadrant in the town centre. Public car parking spaces will also be available across all other quadrants to allow visitors to park in a variety of places, including Church Close car park, Matthew Street car park and part of Ashton Square car park. A new, smaller car park would be provided in the south-west wrapped by retail and other development. Public car parking spaces would also be re-provided as part of the proposed Regent Street car park and Royal Mail sorting office site redevelopment.
- The majority of consultation respondents agreed that the current rate of car parking compared with the amount of retail floorspace is appropriate and, due to the nature of the streets in the town centre and car park availability, it is not deemed appropriate to provide on-street public car parking. However, this does not preclude additional on-street parking in the masterplan area in future subject to further analysis from the Council.

- Improvements to the pedestrian environment / access along Court Drive and the existing link road, which currently provides access to the White Lion Retail Park from Kingsway. There would also be a new pedestrian route in between the ASDA store and the proposed customer car park, which starts from the proposed access junction with Kingsway and leads into the new retail development.
- Relocation of bus stops on the A5 (N) to provide a better relationship with the proposed central crossing facility on the High Street with buses stopping in the carriageway. These bus stops should contain Real Time Bus Information to improve the service for passengers.



Green walls would transform the exterior of the car parks, if a multi storey option were to come forward



Figure 4.3: Indicative sketch view of life along the new retail street with strong views to the Church

A residential-led neighbourhood: Priory Church to St Mary's Gate

What are the different uses and activities?

The masterplan identifies this area for long term and incremental transformation towards a more residential focused neighbourhood with strong links to local heritage and smaller retail units. The masterplan indicates that there is scope within this area for:

- Long-term proposals to redevelop the area including the current Wilkinsons/Farm Foods building and St Marys Gate Car Park as a residential-led scheme consisting of approximately 60 residential units, comprising family oriented town houses, maisonettes and apartments. Retail units will be smaller than in the north-east quadrant to better celebrate the heritage of Middle Row.
- Where feasible, developments should boost local biodiversity value through measures including green walls and roofs, sustainable urban drainage systems, and bird and bat boxes.
- Approximately a further 30 apartments along West Street
- Opportunity for improvements to the Town Square to revamp the town market, with potential for the relocation of the market to High Street North (only possible if this section of road is de-trunked) in the long-term
- Opportunity for approximately 30 housing for older people units within the new residential neighbourhood, located on Ashton Gate Car Park, next to Bull Pond Lane as an early phase development.
- Opportunity for approximately 15 housing for older people units (based on 2 floors of development) to be brought forward on the site currently occupied by the Health Centre next to Priory Gardens (subject to a new Medical Centre on the Ambulance Station and ex-Magistrate's Court site).
- A shop front improvement scheme should be considered to help existing retailers improve shop front signage along the High Street.

- Car parking associated with the new developments will largely be on-street along with a car park for the maisonettes and retail units. This small car park would be wrapped by new development and not visible from Middle Row.
- The existing car park off High Street South will be retained.
- These car parking proposals seek to re-provide public car parking in a more efficient manner to facilitate a new residential neighbourhood. It should be viewed as an indicative solution to the provision of adequate public car parking to support the town centre, while also providing space for family homes. However, other solutions could come forward that support these goals, such as those set out in Appendix E. The key principle should be to ensure that any future development provides for an adequate level of public car parking in a manner suited to the historic context, while supporting wider town centre masterplan objectives.

How will proposals make the town centre more attractive and interesting?

A number of key urban design principles support the masterplan proposals in this area. These are:

- Sensitive design of development along Middle Row and on the site of the current Health Centre to ensure scale (including building height), massing and façades work to improve the setting of these important heritage areas.
- Residential accommodation should seek to maximise family housing in this area. Housing for older people should also be incorporated carefully into this area within clearly identifiable sub areas, making sure it is separated from family housing and not interspersed.
- Residential development around Dunstable Baptist Church is proposed to include a new open space, from which it would be possible to relax and view the church. Partial enclosure of the area should create a focus for the church in the centre. Key views from Middle Row should be protected and promoted through streetscape and lighting improvements.



A family friendly residential neighbourhood to support housing need



The Priory Church – part of Dunstable's unique heritage



Figure 4.4: Illustrative masterplan - A residential-led neighbourhood: Priory Church to St Mary's Gate

What will the streets and open spaces be like?

The streets and open spaces in this area will need to be informed by the proposed uses, as well as ensuring they support the overall town centre strategy. The key principles are:

- Development footprints should come forward in a way that allows for pedestrian and cycle routes through the site to link in with the town centre-wide movement strategy
- A new green square/park is suggested to complement both the listed church building and the surrounding proposed residential development.
- Where residential town houses and apartments are proposed, shared surfaces and children's play should be considered to help foster a family friendly feel to the area
- The housing for older people units should be brought forward with associated designated private green space
- Church Walk will have improved access to Priory Church and Church Close car park through improved hard landscaping and public realm from High Street South

How do proposals improve Dunstable's connectivity?

This area will cease to have such a significant town centre parking function. The detailed proposed changes in relation to transport and movement are listed below:

- Reconfiguration of the A505 Church Street. The proposals narrow the A505 road corridor by shortening the existing bus lane to facilitate a relocated straight crossing. This crossing would align with the north-south pedestrian route through the new retail development and footway widening. The former section of bus lane becomes the bus stop lay by. The proposals provide access to off-street car parking and the new servicing area for the new retail development.
- Improved pedestrian crossing facilities on the A5 to the south of the town centre crossroads to improve east-west connections between the two southern quadrants, with better pedestrian routes through Priory Gardens to the bus stop lay by at The Square and the proposed new residential led mixed use scheme.
- New residential led mixed use scheme in the southwest quadrant with new access, streetscape and public realm design to befit the character of the area, endorsing the principles of Manual for Streets 2 (MfS2) to minimise vehicle priority, with parking accommodated in courtyards, garages and on-street provision.



Improved links across High Street South will improve connectivity



Wherever possible town houses should be developed



Figure 4.5: Before and after image of new residential neighbourhood and public square

A traditional High Street: High Street North to Edward Street

What are the different uses and activities?

The masterplan proposes development in this area that works with the existing pattern of development, identifying ways to maximise the area's potential and to complement larger scale redevelopment elsewhere. The masterplan indicates that there is scope within this area for:

- The relocation of the town market along High Street North. The location of the market will depend on capacity modelling work being undertaken as part of wider work in relation to the de-trunking of the A5. In the meantime, consideration of a revamped Town Square for the market should be given.
- 500 sq. m of flexible-use floorspace and approximately 20 residential apartments above, on the Post Office site along High Street North and Regent Street.
- The acquisition of the youth facility to the rear of the post office building refocusing town centre youth activities elsewhere. The Town Council has recently refurbished The Place youth facility (76 High Street North) to make it more attractive to young people, which forms part of a longer aspiration to completely redevelop the whole of The Place site for youth facilities, as set out in the Town Council's Corporate Plan 2010-2013.
- Approximately 10 family town houses on the site of the Regent Street Car Park and Post Office car park. Where feasible, housing should boost local biodiversity value through measures including green walls and roofs, sustainable urban drainage systems, and bird and bat boxes.

- New surface car park to jointly accommodate parking for the recently opened conference facility at 51 High Street North (site of former Cubes Nightclub). When no event is on this could serve as a public car park. This car park should only cover the site of the existing youth facility if a suitable alternative location is found for the youth centre nearby, such as that identified above.
- Improved surface car park at Matthew Street Eleanor Cross to allow for better connections and new public space.

How will proposals make the town centre more attractive and interesting?

Much of the proposed intervention in this area is focused on public realm (see next sub heading). However, there are some area specific urban design principles that should be adhered to. These are:

- The proposed retail development along High Street North should have active frontages
- A shop front improvement scheme should be considered to help existing retailers improve signage along the High Street
- Improvements to the streets through Eleanor Cross shopping centre



A new location for the market could provide retailers with a boost



Shared surfaces will rebalance the town centre towards the pedestrian



Figure 4.6: A traditional High Street: High Street North to Edward Street

* Detailed designs for the A5 High Street are being developed directly by Central Bedfordshire Council and their appointed consultants.

What will the streets and open spaces be like?

Proposals for the A5 will be developed directly by Central Bedfordshire Council and their appointed consultants. Whilst no detailed proposals are therefore put forward, the Masterplan proposes the following principles:

- Narrowing of High Street road corridor and removing the central island.
- Widening of footways to allow for improved shopping and pedestrian experience and opportunity for street market.
- Improved pedestrian crossing facilities.
- Opportunity to consider shared surface treatment at crossroads and on approaches to improve pedestrian environment.
- The quality of the public realm will be improved at Matthew Street car park with better connections through to Church Street and Eleanor Cross shopping centre, creating a new public square.

How do proposals improve Dunstable's connectivity?

The proposed changes in relation to transport and movement are listed below:

- Maypole Yard and Matthew Street car park realigned to create new public space and access.
- New surface car park as part of a proposed conference centre development to be accessed from Regent Street, with the opportunity for the car park to operate as dual use facility (public / private).
- New mixed use scheme on the site of the Regent Street car park with access, streetscape and public realm design endorsing the principles of Manual for Streets 2 (MfS2) to minimise vehicle priority, with residential on-street and off-street parking to serve the units. The proposed crossing facilities at the A5 (N) / Court Drive junction and new routes into the area from the High Street will improve east-west pedestrian connections to the key town centre attractions and retail core in the northeast quadrant.



New retail development should suit to the heritage of Dunstable town centre



Shop front improvement schemes will be a key part in improving existing offer



Improved crossings should make life much easier for pedestrians



Figure 4.7: Before and after image of High Street North

Other development sites in or adjacent to the town centre

Dukeminster Trading Estate

Dukeminster Trading Estate is located within the study area boundary and to the north of Church Street, adjacent to the proposed Guided Bus Way. There are two main elements to the existing site – B1 offices at the southern end fronting Church Street and a range of B8 storage and distribution units to the rear.

There is a planning permission on the site. It sets out the part redevelopment of the trading estate for up to a maximum of 85 residential dwellings per hectare, with associated parking. The application applies this density across the site, resulting in a theoretical capacity of 458 dwellings. A total of 2.7ha of open space is proposed, including a central amenity area, children's play areas, private gardens and other incidental amenity open spaces. Also proposed is a maximum of 300m² of shops (class A1 floorspace) and up to 520m² of non-residential institutions (class D1 floorspace), such as a clinic, crèche or training centre for example. The B1 offices fronting onto Church Road would be retained.

It should be noted that a planning application to extend the time limit for implementing the existing permission was refused permission in March this year. In addition, a detailed application for the same site in respect of the erection of 231 dwellings, a 300m² retail shop and a 513m² children's nursery is currently under consideration.

There is an opportunity to consider this site for comprehensive redevelopment. However, an element of the sites original employment function would need to be retained in some form.

Central Bedfordshire College Land

Central Bedfordshire College plan to release the eastern-most part of Dunstable Campus, the current location of the car park and open space, for new housing. Full planning permission has been granted for 123 dwellings on the site. Access to the site will be via one entrance and exit road and it is proposed that the development would be gated, allowing access to residents only.

An application has recently been submitted to extend the time limit for the implementation of outline planning permission previously granted in September 2005 for 'Part demolition, alterations and extensions to existing college, including provision of amenity space and 192 parking spaces, and construction of residential development with associated parking, landscaping and public open space.



Dukeminster Trading Estate



Central Bedfordshire College

White Lion Retail Park and Sainsbury's

The White Lion Retail Park is an important asset to Dunstable. To maximise its ability to attract people to the town and ensure more of them make joint trips to the town centre as well, it is vital to ensure access between the town centre, proposed Guided Busway stop and White Lion Retail Park is simple and inviting. Therefore improvements to the quality of the public realm along the Town Centre Link Road are proposed within the masterplan, as identified in Figure 2.10.

All new retail development proposals in this masterplan are located within the town centre boundary as defined in the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review. Given the town centre's current fragility, the considerable existing capacity within the town centre, and the thrust of government policy overall it is considered that the focus for development should remain within the town centre and the existing town centre boundary should not be significantly extended.

Land to the northwest of White Lion Retail Park

Outline planning permission has been granted to develop 24 residential units with access, car parking and associated green space on 0.44 hectares of redundant former set-aside land at the northwest corner of the White Lion Retail Park. The units would be 2-bed apartments built in a 4-storey apartment block. This development should add to the activity and mix of uses in the area, which will become more central to the town centre when the Guided Busway stop is developed.



White Lion Retail Park



Sainsbury's

