

Leighton Buzzard Development Briefs: Land South of the High Street

for Central Bedfordshire Council



think place



March 2012

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Foreword

This document was adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council
as Technical Guidance for Development Management
Purposes on 27 March 2012



Introduction

1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council has endorsed the Luton and South Bedfordshire Core Strategy which plans to deliver significant development in the period 2011-2026. This is to include the delivery of around 5,000 new homes within the urban areas of Leighton Linslade, Dunstable and Houghton Regis; urban extensions to the east of Leighton-Linslade (2,500 new homes) and to the north of Houghton Regis (5,150 new homes); and around 600 new homes in the district's rural areas. At the time of writing (September 2011), six planning applications have been submitted for a total of circa 2,640 homes at East of Leighton Buzzard.

1.2 These new homes will increase the resident population of Leighton Buzzard and its surrounding villages significantly over the next 15 years. In order to ensure that this housing growth results in the creation of successful sustainable communities, the Council is also planning for new jobs, infrastructure, schools, social/health services, shops, services, and leisure facilities to meet the needs of the growing population, and this includes the improvement / enhancement of Leighton Buzzard town centre.

1.3 Key to the revitalisation of the town centre is the redevelopment of the land lying to the south of the High Street, as outlined in red in Figure 1.1, right. This brief has been prepared in parallel to the development brief for the Bridge Meadow site lying west of the town centre.



FIG. 1.1 South of the High Street Site

1.4 The site offers the opportunity to create a sustainable extension to the town centre shopping area which enhances the retail offer and the centre's competitiveness, while preserving the town centre's existing high quality character, reinforcing its distinctiveness and enhancing the town's historic character and environment.

Purpose of the Brief

1.5 The purpose of this brief is to showcase this development opportunity and to set out a written statement of the Council's development aspirations for the site. It establishes a package of guiding planning principles that form a framework for the preparation of development proposals, and will be used as the basis to determine future planning applications affecting the site (alongside the Development Plan and other considerations).

Community and Stakeholder Involvement

1.6 This development brief has been prepared following public and stakeholder consultation on the initial development proposals and options in February 2011. There was subsequent public consultation on the draft brief in November 2011.

1.7 These consultation exercises were undertaken in parallel to similar consultations on proposal for the Bridge Meadow site.

1.8 On both occasions, members of the public were able to visit the centre and review display boards setting out the initial proposals for the sites. Members of the public were encouraged to fill in questionnaires which aimed to capture the local community's views and preferences regarding the options and proposals being consulted on.

1.9 The feedback received through consultation has influenced the proposals set out in this document, alongside further technical work. Full details of the responses can be found in the separate Consultation Statements.

Scope of the Development Brief

1.10 This brief is structured as follows:

- Section 2 describes the site and the town centre within which it is located;
- Section 3 provides an overview of the planning policy context that underpins the proposals;
- Section 4 outlines the Council's overarching Vision and objectives for the site;
- Section 5 proposes suitable land uses;
- Section 6 sets out urban design principles;
- Section 7 considers landscaping;
- Section 8 outlines the proposed access and movement arrangements; and
- Section 9 sets out proposed delivery arrangements.

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for Central Bedfordshire Council

2. The Site and Leighton Buzzard Town Centre



The Site

Size

2.1 The site extends to approximately 2.65 hectares (6.55 acres).

Location

2.2 The site lies within Leighton Buzzard Town Centre to the south of the High Street. Leighton Buzzard is located in Bedfordshire, approximately 23km (14 miles) south of Milton Keynes, 12km (8 miles) west of Dunstable, and 70km (44 miles) north of London.

2.3 Leighton Buzzard railway station is located approximately 1km (0.6 miles) to the west (London Midland services to London Euston in 34 minutes and Milton Keynes in 9 minutes). The M1 (Junction 11) is approximately 16km (10 miles) to the east.



FIG. 2.1 Context plan

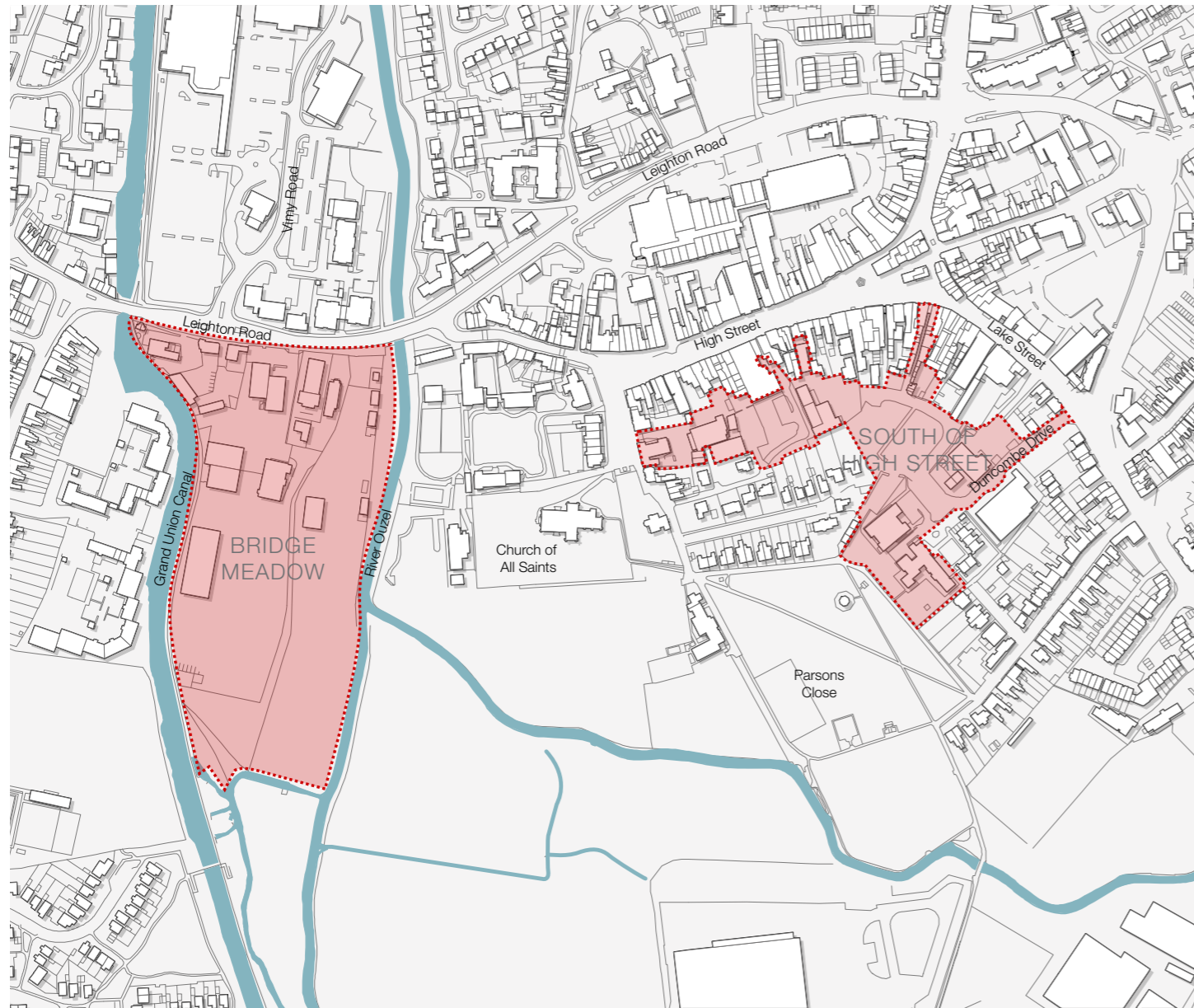


FIG. 2.2 Sites location plan



FIG. 2.3 Aerial Photograph

Existing Development and Land Ownerships

2.4 The site is previously developed and accommodates a range of uses and buildings, as follows (refer to Figure 2.4):

Area 1 – Westlands Care Home and Day Centre (0.62 ha)

This area accommodates a three storey elderly persons care home (currently operated by BUPA) and a single storey elderly persons day centre which also provides rehabilitation services for people recently discharged from hospital. Both buildings were built in the post-war period and are nearing the end of their economic life. CBC hold the freehold to this land.

Area 2 – Duncombe Drive and Surface Car Park (0.71 ha)

This area comprises Duncombe Drive which is the main access road onto the site from Lake Street and the surface car park which comprises circa 140 parking spaces. This land is owned by CBC.

Area 3 – Fire Station (0.17 ha)

This area accommodates Leighton Buzzard Fire Station and associated yard area. It is owned by the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service.

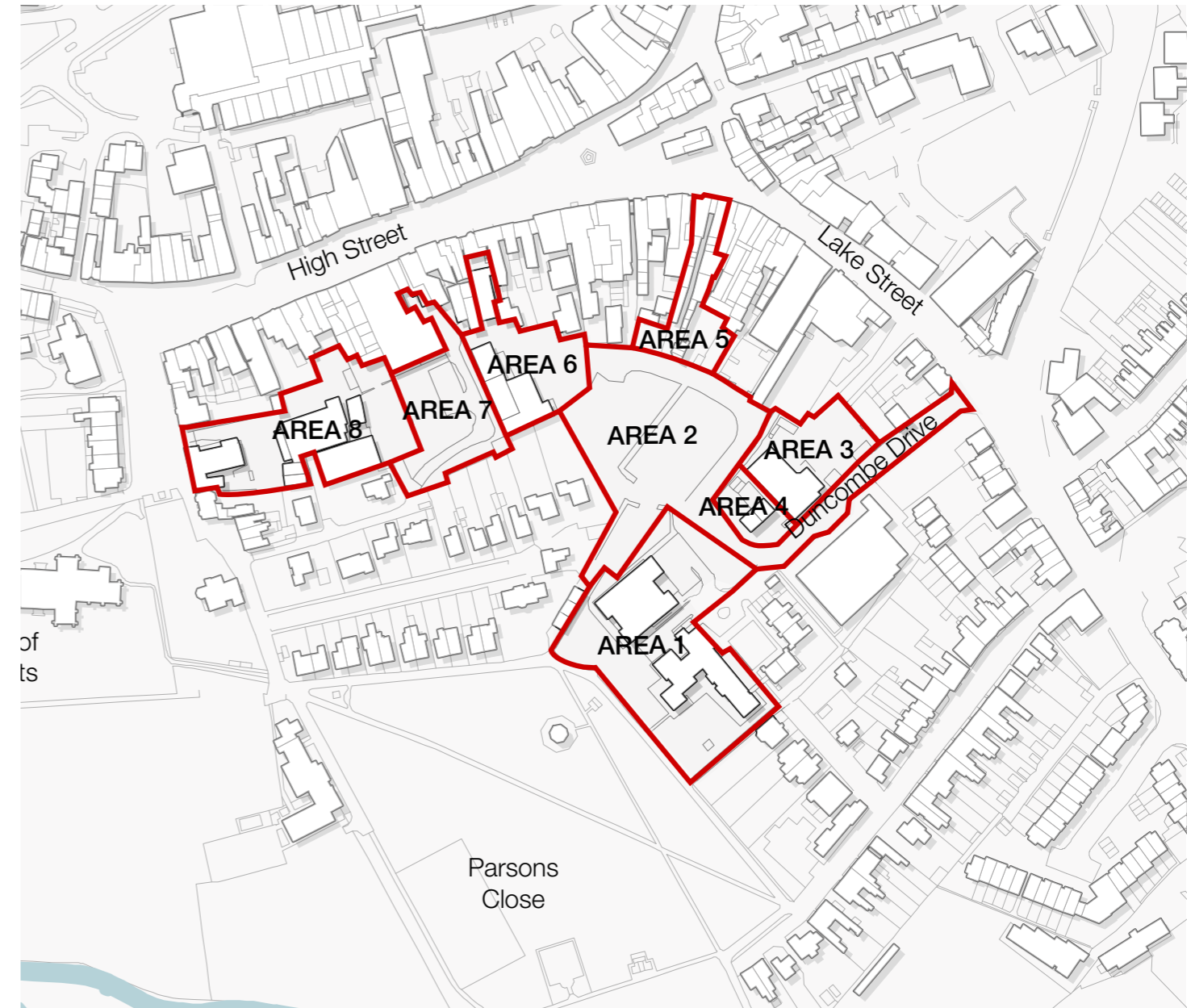


FIG. 2.4 Existing development areas

Area 4 – Private Homes (0.07 ha)

This area accommodates two post-war semi detached privately owned dwellings.

Area 5 – Bell Alley (0.16 ha)

This area comprises buildings fronting onto High Street plus small shop units and other ad-hoc structures to the rear that front onto Bell Alley, a pedestrian-only alleyway. Bell Alley is in a mix of ownerships. There is a Listed Building at the High Street end.

Area 6 – Disused Former Cattle Market Site (0.23 ha)

This area comprises three derelict former industrial sheds and associated land which was formerly used as a Cattle Market. The site is currently disused and is understood to be in private ownership.

Area 7 – Disused Land to Rear of High Street (0.25 ha)

This area comprises a cleared previously developed site with areas of hard standing and vegetation which is currently disused. The site is understood to be in private ownership.

Area 8 – Post Office, Disused Sorting Office and Industrial Buildings (0.42 ha)

This area comprises the existing Post Office building and the land at the rear, which accommodates a disused sorting office and associated light industrial sheds.



FIG. 2.5 Duncombe drive



FIG. 2.6 Service access to the Litten Tree pub from Duncombe drive

Neighbouring Development

2.5 The site is bound to the north by the rear of properties fronting the High Street which are mainly in retail use at ground floor level (with a mix of uses on upper floors). Some of which benefit from rear servicing and car parking. A number of these buildings are Listed and much of the town centre is within the Leighton Buzzard Conservation Area.

2.6 The southern boundary is bound by the rear gardens of mature houses fronting Church Avenue and Parsons Close, a Victorian park with views extending across the river plain. A mixed housing area (with associated amenity space) and BT telephone exchange lies to the east of the site. To the west of the site lies Church Square with All Saints Church beyond.

Access

2.7 Vehicle access to the eastern part of the site is via Duncombe Drive which connects into Lake Street. Vehicle access to the western part of the site is achieved from Church Square. There is currently no east-west through route through the site. A series of alleyways provide pedestrian access between the site and the High Street and the park to the south.

Physical

2.8 The site slopes gently to the south. We are not aware of any significant physical or environmental constraints to development on the site, other than the surrounding development and heritage assets.



FIG. 2.7 Bell Alley looking towards the car park in the site



FIG. 2.8 Telecoms building adjacent to the site on Duncombe Drive



FIG. 2.9 In the site looking past cottages to Parson's Close



FIG. 2.10 Town centre car park in the site with Church Spire in the background

Leighton Buzzard Town Centre

Role in Hierarchy

2.9 Leighton Buzzard sits within a hierarchy of centres as illustrated in Figure 2.11 below:



FIG. 2.11 Town centres hierarchy
(Source: Draft Luton and South Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy)

Composition

2.10 Leighton Buzzard is a traditional market town centre with the main shopping area focussed along the High Street and surrounding streets (including Lake Street, Hockcliffe Street, and North Street) plus the Waterborne Walk Shopping Centre (to the north of the High Street).

2.11 The Council's Retail Study (2009) notes that the centre has limited representation of key multiple retailers but a high proportion of independent operators. Multiple comparison retailers present include WH Smith, Argos, Boots, Peacocks as well as a number of smaller clothing and footwear national brands, although the study identifies an under-provision of clothing and footwear stores. Multiple operators are concentrated within the Waterborne Walk centre which contains the town centre's only concentration of larger modern retail units. The Waterborne Walk centre was originally constructed in 1973 and is anchored by a Waitrose. There is also an Iceland store on the High Street. These stores compete with Morrisons and Tesco superstores located in out of centre locations.

2.12 The town centre leisure offer includes a theatre and a number of restaurants and cafés, but is dominated by a 'wet-led' pub/bar offer.

Vitality and Viability Indicators

2.13 According to GOAD Experian data from February 2011, Leighton Buzzard's retail vacancy rate is below the UK average. Despite the low vacancy rate, the retail offer in the town is very much geared towards the economy end of the market. This contradicts the relative affluence of the local area, yet reflects the dominant role of competing centres (such as Milton Keynes). Retailers cite a lack of quality available stock of sufficient size as being major reasons for their absence from Leighton Buzzard.

2.14 Leighton Buzzard town centre is an attractive environment due to the diversity and quality of its historic buildings and high quality public realm. There are approximately 105 Listed Buildings within an 800 metre radius of the High Street. The variety in the built environment creates an interesting street scene and the well-preserved High Street is pedestrian friendly. The narrow streets/alleys leading off from the main High Street add character to the town and offer a good opportunity to create active linkages between different parts of the town.

2.15 The high quality built environment is a valuable asset to the town which can be a major attraction for retailers and shoppers, but paradoxically has also contributed to preventing key retailers locating there as a result of the corresponding lack of larger, high quality space which meets the needs of modern retailers. However, the shopping experience in the town is enhanced and diversified by Leighton Buzzard Market which trades around the Market Cross in the centre of the town.

Accessibility:

Car

2.16 Vehicle access to the town centre from the surrounding residential areas is via Hockliffe Road, Billington Road, North Street and Leighton Road which feed into the wider A/B road network. The A5 is approximately 5km (3 miles) to the east of the town centre and connects the town to Milton Keynes approximately 23km (14 miles) to the north and Dunstable approximately 12km (8 miles) to the south and Aylesbury approximately 15 km (9.3 miles) to the south west. Dunstable is located approximately 10 km (6.2 miles) to the east and is accessible via the A505 from Leighton Buzzard. There are plans to construct an A5-M1 link road which will connect the A5 north of Dunstable to join the M1 at a new Junction (J11A) south of Chalton. This is due to open in 2016 – 2017.

2.17 There are four public car parks in the town centre in addition to the out of centre car parks located at Tesco and Aldi, as detailed in Table 2.12 below:

Location	Type	No. of Spaces
West Street (Waterborne Walk shopping centre)	Multi-storey	266
Hockliffe Street	Surface	126
Baker Street	Surface	42
Duncombe Drive (within the site)	Surface	140

(Source: parkopedia.com)

FIG. 2.12 Town centre car parks

Train

2.18 Leighton Buzzard has a train station on the Linslade side of the town approximately 1 km (0.6 miles) to the west of the town centre, providing local connections to stations including Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Hemel Hempstead and Watford as well as more strategic destinations including London Euston and Birmingham New Street. Services to London Euston take from 34 minutes with 15 minute frequency at peak times, while Milton Keynes is 9-12 minutes away with 10 to 15 minute frequency at peak times.

Bus

2.19 The town centre is served by 13 regular bus routes which provide services to the surrounding suburbs and towns including Aylesbury, Milton Keynes, Dunstable and Luton. Town centre bus stops are concentrated on the High Street and Hockliffe Street with services radiating along the town’s main arterial road network.

Pedestrians and Cyclists

2.20 The High Street is subject to through traffic controls which creates a pedestrian/cycle friendly environment with adequate cycle and pedestrian crossing facilities evident throughout the town centre. A number of pedestrian-only alleys permeate into town centre blocks which significantly improve pedestrian connectivity, although some of these have been stopped up over time.

Character

2.21 The centre sits at the heart of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade (which effectively form one town). The town centre follows a traditional market town street layout with the main shopping area focussed along the linear High Street with historic development patterns (including burgage plots) which remain largely intact. This historic context is supplemented by more modern developments such as Waterborne Walk which follow more modern layouts.

2.22 The built form along the High Street (and surrounding streets) is dominated by attractive historic buildings dating back as early as the 13th century. This includes All Saints Church, an early English parish church dating from 1277 which boasts a 190 ft spire, medieval ironwork and some intriguing graffiti dating from the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries. The quantity, quality and layering of the town centre’s historic assets creates a rich townscape, that is recognised in the listing of several individual buildings (predominantly Grade II) and the Scheduled Ancient Monument status of the Market Cross.

2.23 Many of these historic buildings have been adapted over the centuries and there are numerous Medieval fragments of buildings retained behind more recent Georgian and Victorian facades. There are also a small number of intact pre-Georgian buildings.

2.24 Much of the town centre is designated as a Conservation Area and the urban pattern is characterised by narrow, deep plots, with alleyways running through to service spaces behind the buildings; a legacy of the coaching inn tradition. The market cross (Grade II*) listed and the buildings behind it works with the topography to provide a visual anchor at the top of the High Street. The development of the old Fire Station into a restaurant is both sensitive and successful and demonstrates an appropriate response to the historic context. Peacock Mews, to the north also demonstrates how boutique shopping can be successfully integrated into historic alleyways, with courtyards along its length. There have been some unsympathetic demolitions and insertions on both sides of the High Street which in many cases detract from the generally attractive character.

2.25 The public realm in Leighton Buzzard town centre is generally of high quality with diverse and well maintained paving styles, public seating and some planting. This, combined with the historic character of the town, means that the shopping experience in the town centre is pleasant.



FIG. 2.13 High Street looking towards Market Cross



FIG. 2.14 Chain retailers on the High Street



FIG. 2.15 Formerly Mary Norton's House at the foot of the High Street



FIG. 2.16 The old Post Office, formerly a school

Urban Design context: Historic Assets

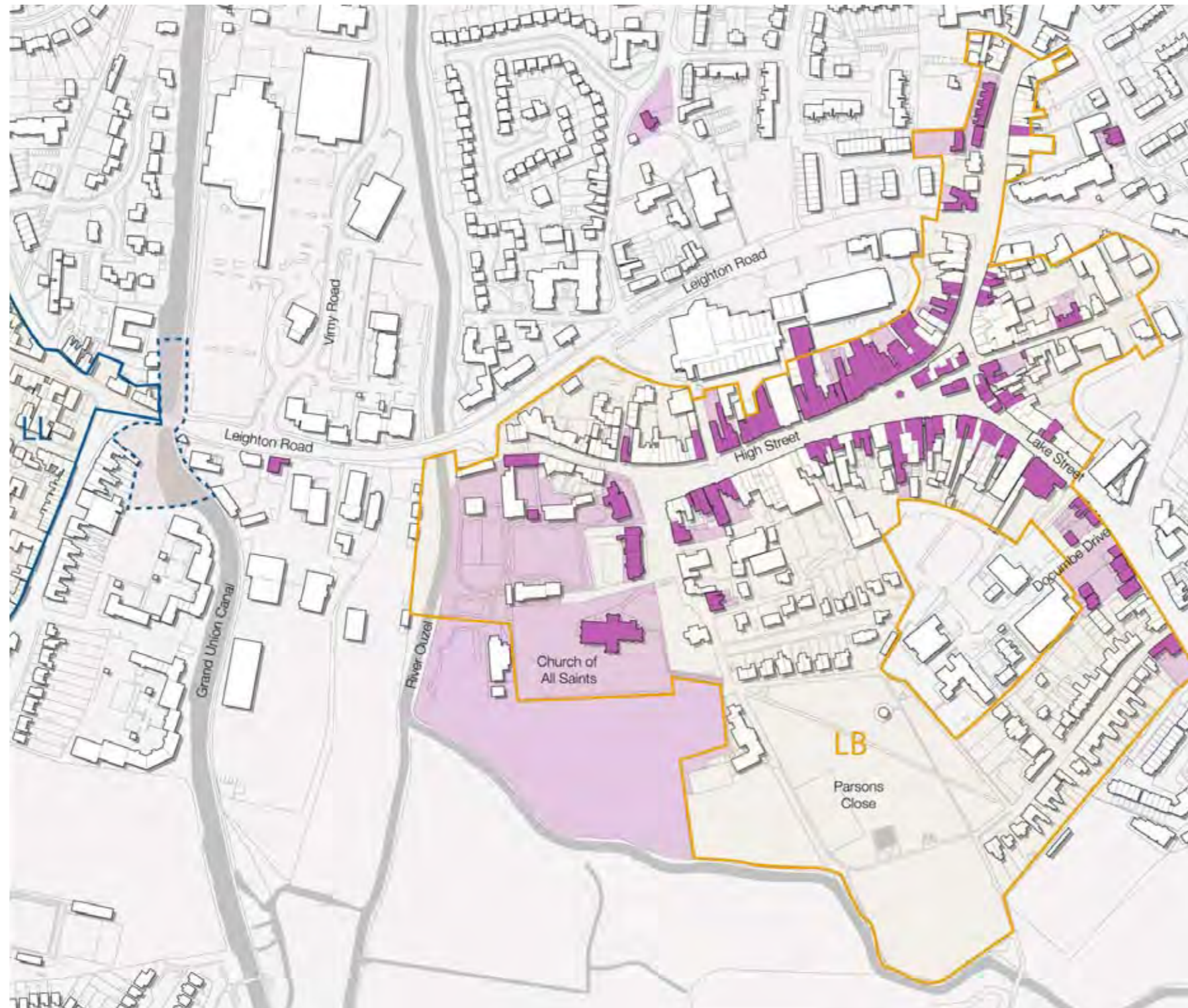


FIG. 2.17 Plan showing listed buildings and conservation areas, taken from the Baseline report

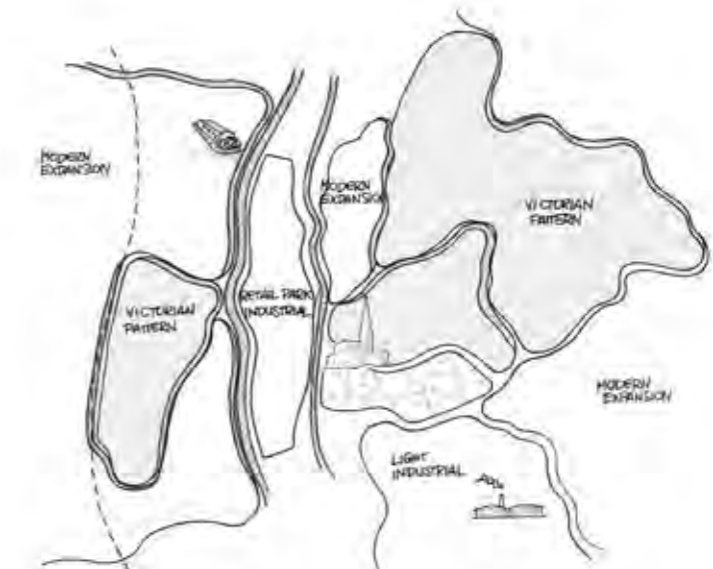


FIG. 2.18 Sketch showing the distribution of historic patterns of development in Leighton Buzzard, taken from the Baseline report

Key

- Listed buildings
- Curtilages of listed buildings
- Leighton Buzzard Conservation Area
- Linslade Conservation Area
- Linslade recent extension Conservation Area

Urban Design context: Linkages and integration



FIG. 2.19 Existing linkages between Leighton Linslade and the High Street and its surroundings, taken from the Baseline report

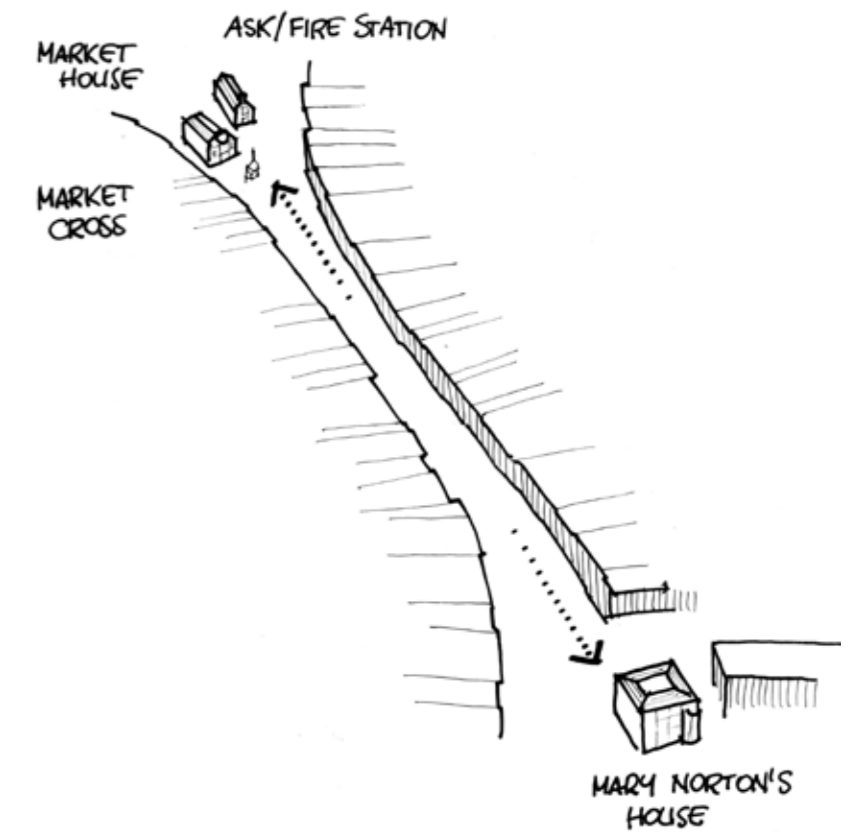


FIG. 2.20 Sketch section showing the strong form of the High Street, with historic anchors, taken from the Baseline report

Key

- Playground
- Square
- High Street
- Primary movement
- Secondary movement
- Formal / Informal footpath

Urban Design context: Scale and Massing



FIG. 2.21 Figured-ground drawing highlighting the different development patterns in Leighton Buzzard, taken from the Baseline report

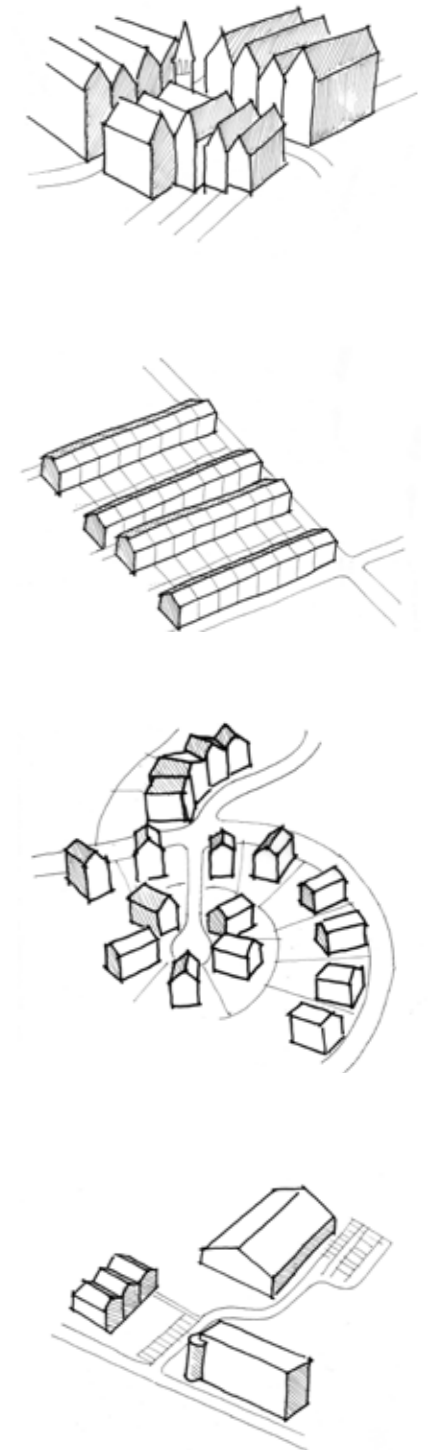


FIG. 2.22 Sketches of the typical development patterns of each era, from top: Medieval; Victorian; 20th Century residential; Light Industrial; taken from the Baseline report



Planning Policy Framework

3.1 Figure 3.1, right provides an overview of the planning policy framework affecting the site:

3.2 The joint Core Strategy and all relevant documentation were submitted for Examination on the 8th March 2011 and an Exploratory Meeting was held on the 18th May 2011. Following the Exploratory Meeting and the agreement of the proposals to amend and take forward the Core Strategy by the Joint Committee on 24 June 2011, the appointed Inspector formally agreed to a six month deferral of the Examination process.

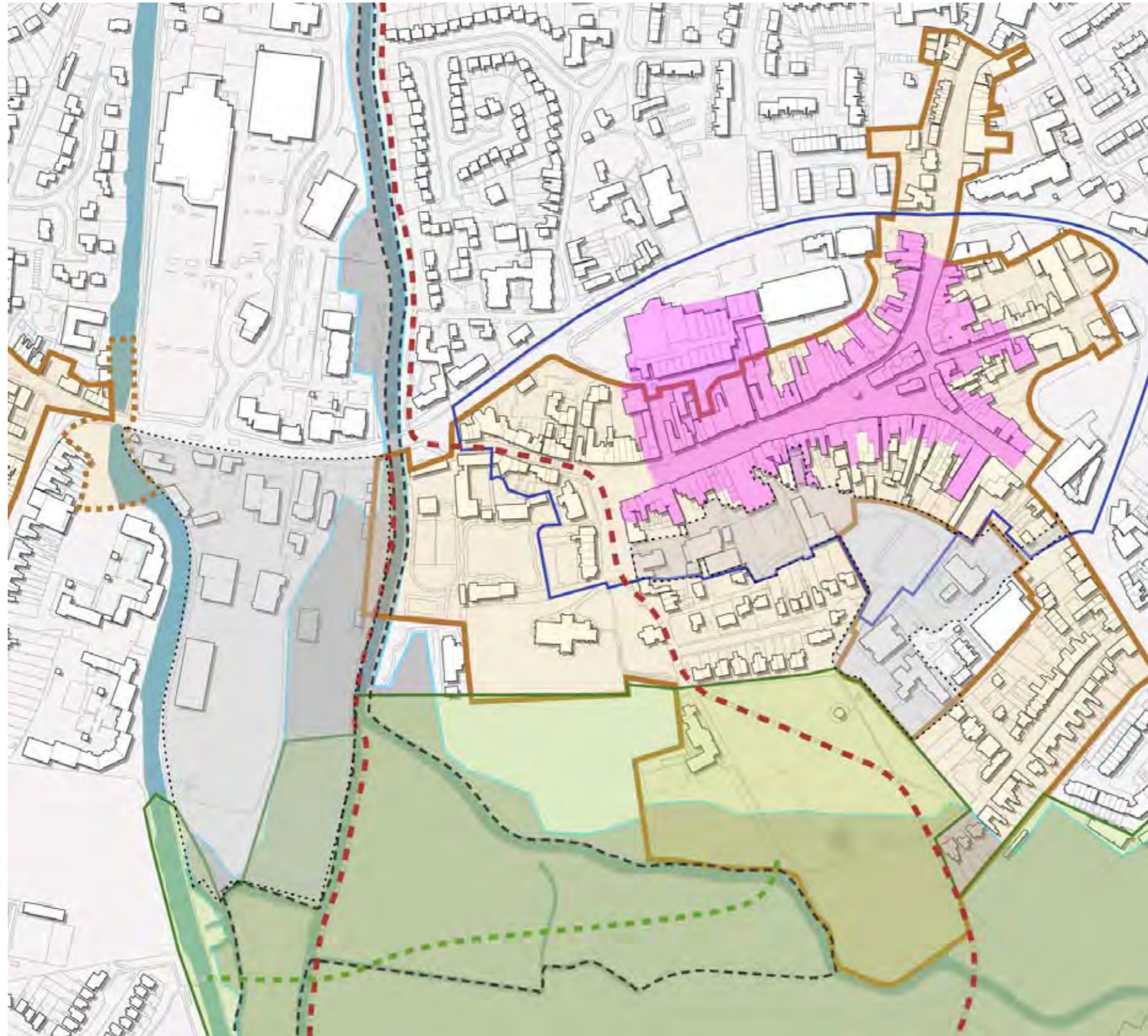
3.3 However, following a decision by Luton Borough Council not to support part of the Core Strategy, the Joint Committee on 29th July 2011 resolved to seek its withdrawal. The withdrawal was confirmed by the Secretary of State in a letter dated 7th September 2011.

3.4 Nevertheless, Central Bedfordshire Council remains fully supportive of the proposals contained within the joint Core Strategy and on 23rd August 2011 the Council's Executive resolved to endorse as guidance for Development Management purposes the Core Strategy and its underlying evidence base and technical studies.

3.5 On 27th May 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the Government's intention to rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies. The Localism Act 2011 grants the Government the legislative powers to remove the East of England RSS. However, it has yet to do so and so the RSS will remain part of the statutory development plan affecting the sites until it is abolished (although material consideration will be given to the Government's intentions, particularly where conflicts arise with local policy).



FIG. 3.1 Planning Policy Framework



Policy Designations

3.6 Figure 3.2, left, illustrates the policy designations affecting the site and surrounding area.

Key

- Site boundaries
- Recent extension Conservation area
- Conservation area
- Main shopping area
- Town centre
- Town centre regeneration site
- Greenbelt
- Cycle route
- Proposed Ouzel Valley route
- County wildlife site
- Indicative floodplain

FIG 3.2 Planning Policy Designations from the Baseline report (information derived from Local Plan)

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for Central Bedfordshire Council

4. Vision and Objectives



Vision and Objectives

4.1 The draft Core Strategy sets an overarching vision for Leighton Linslade, as follows.

‘The Quality of Leighton-Linslade’s town centre will be enhanced, building upon its strong and vibrant market town character. It will have improved employment opportunities, community facilities and green infrastructure provision with an environment that allows efficient and pleasant routes for movement through the area’

4.2 With this as the context for the development brief, the Council’s Vision and Objectives for the South of High Street site is set out on the right.

4.3 An overarching framework plan is provided at Figure 4.2 (overleaf), which underpins the more detailed guidance on land uses, urban design, landscaping, and access set out in subsequent sections.

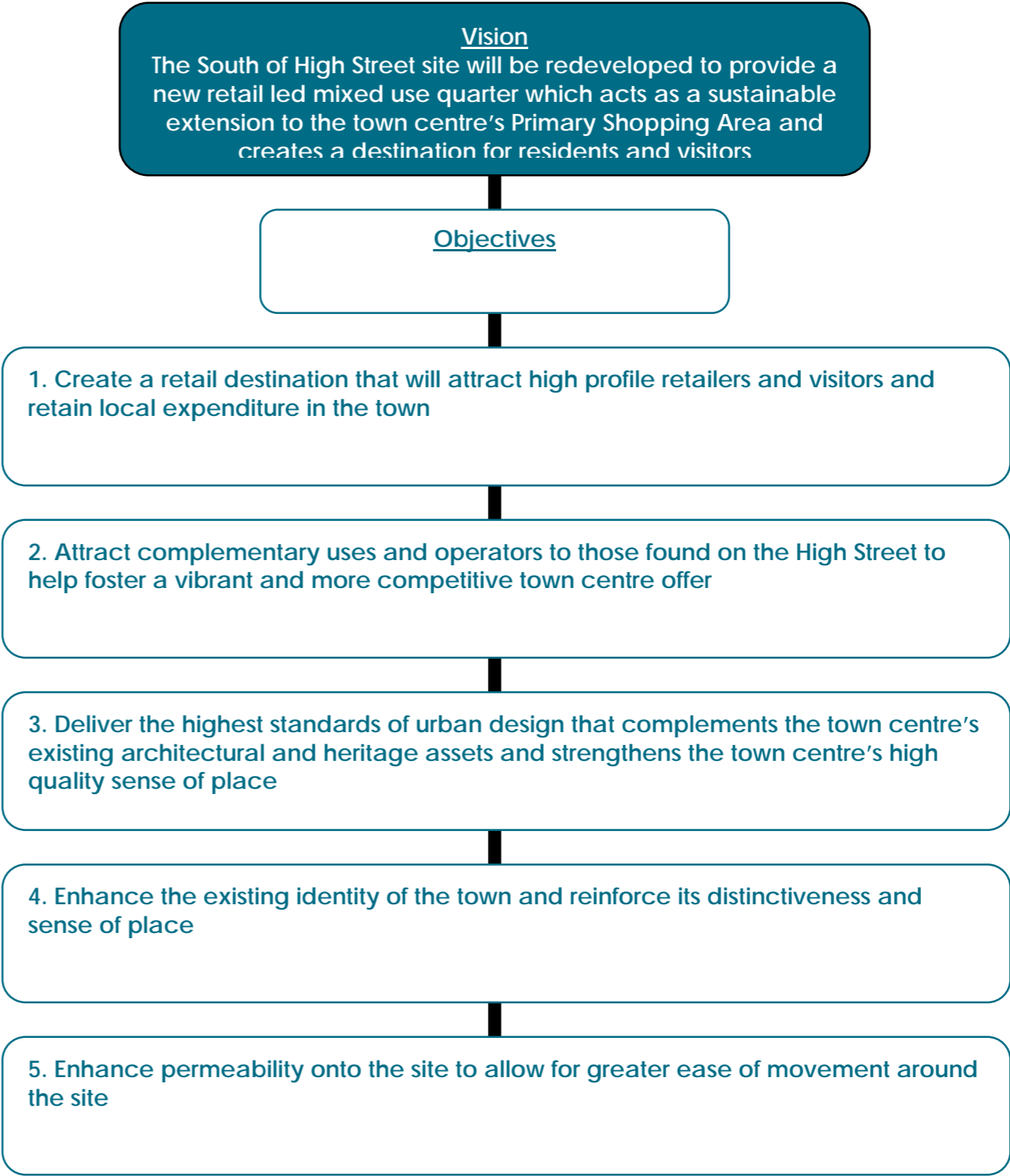


FIG 4.1 Vision and objectives for the South of the High Street site

Indicative Overarching Framework Plan



Key

- development brief boundary
- principal access
- secondary access
- ... principal street
- ... primary pedestrian route
- ... secondary pedestrian route
- ★ public space
- - - development parcel

FIG. 4.2

Illustrative exemplar images



FIG. 4.3 The Lanes, Brighton



FIG. 4.4 St. Martin's walk mixed-use precinct, off the High Street in Dorking



FIG. 4.5 Duke of York Square, London



FIG. 4.6 Shopping centre, Windsor

Illustrative exemplar images

Squares and courts



FIG. 4.7 Jubilee Square, Brighton



FIG. 4.8 Duke of York Square, London



FIG. 4.9 Lion and Lamb Yard, Farnham



FIG. 4.10 Gilet Square, London



Land Uses

5.1 This brief proposes to create a new retail quarter for the town centre which is supported by ancillary uses including car parking, residential and leisure uses. The development principles set out below divide the site into a series of complementary land use parcels which should underpin the preparation of development proposals:

Parcel A: Retail Quarter

5.2 This area should provide an extension to the town centre’s Primary Shopping Area where the following land uses are supported:

- Retail (Use Class A1). Retail floorspace should be arranged so as to form a continuous / seamless extension to the town centre’s existing Primary Shopping Area and retail circuit. Retail development should address the quantitative and qualitative development needs identified in the Council’s 2009 Retail Study (or any subsequent future updates) and should include a significant amount of new comparison goods retail floorspace including larger format stores. New convenience goods floorspace (in the form of a new small supermarket) is also supported as a potential anchor store. The amount of new floorspace should be commensurate to the size of the centre and should avoid significant adverse impacts on the vitality and viability of the existing town centre Primary Shopping Area.*

*The Council’s 2009 Retail Study concludes that there is capacity to support an additional 2,500sqm of convenience goods retail floorspace and 6,900sqm of comparison goods retail floorspace in the period to 2016 (the comparison goods capacity figure rises to 12,400sqm by 2021). A revision to this retail study is currently being produced.

- Car parking. This should be of an appropriate scale to serve the needs of the development plus wider town centre needs, and should be informed by a wider town centre parking needs assessment. Suitable locations are shown on the plan at Figure 5.2.
- Food and drink uses (Use Class A3).
- Ancillary A2 (professional and financial services), B1 offices, cultural, community, further education and leisure uses will be permitted within this area provided they do not prejudice the development of a continuous, seamless extension of the Primary Shopping Area. As part of a comprehensive mixed use development of the site as a whole, residential uses (C2 and C3) may be appropriate, primarily at first floor level, or in a distinct area adjacent to existing residential development, outside the extended Primary Shopping Area. Piecemeal residential development will not be permitted
- The Council will work with the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire Service to investigate the potential for the future use of its site, including the potential to relocate the fire station off-site or opportunities for co-location of uses including parking.

Parcel B: Residential Quarter

5.3 The following land uses are supported:

- Housing (Use Class C3)
- Residential care home (Use Class C2)
- Town centre car park

Parcel C: Mixed Use Quarter

5.4 This area should accommodate a secondary mixed use area where the following mix of land uses will be supported:

- Retail (Use Class A1)
- Food and drink (Use Class A3)
- Civic, community and leisure uses (Use Classes D1 and D2)
- Housing (Use Class C3)
- Residential care home (Use Class C2)
- The existing post office should be retained.

Indicative Land Use Framework Plan



Key

- development brief boundary
- principal access
- secondary access
- principal street
- primary pedestrian route
- secondary pedestrian route
- building to be retained
- ★ public space
- * fire station potentially retained

PARCELS (uses below, see draft development briefs for full details) (existing buildings shown below parcels for reference)

- A** retail (A1) with ancillary uses: other retail and food and drink (A2,A3,A4,A5) / town centre car parking / civic, cultural, community and leisure uses / residential (C3) / education use / offices / retention of fire station if necessary
- B** residential care (C2) / residential (C3) / town centre car park
- C** retail (A1) restaurants and cafes (A3) / civic, community and leisure uses / residential care (C2) / residential (C3)

FIG. 5.1

Some potential alternative locations for multi-storey car parks



FIG. 5.2



FIG. 5.3 Multi-storey car park in Leipzig, Germany



FIG. 5.4 Multi-storey car park in Miami, USA

Illustrative exemplar images

Mixed-use developments



FIG. 5.5 Princesshay quarter, Exeter



FIG. 5.6 Lyric Square, Hammersmith, London



FIG. 5.7 St Martin's Walk, Dorking



FIG. 5.8 Princesshay quarter, Exeter



Urban Design

6.1 The Council seeks the highest standards of urban design which should complement the town centre's existing high quality character and local distinctiveness.

Layout and Integration

6.2 The layout of the development should provide an attractive and successfully integrated extension to the Primary Shopping Area via a series of new linked streets and spaces, which should reflect the following:

- A new street (or 'lane') running east-west through the site should be provided. The lane should be treated as a street, with active and effective frontages to ensure definition and legibility and to provide an elevation to the rear of the buildings fronting the High Street. It should be designed using shared space principles to encourage and prioritise pedestrian movement and should include public spaces or courtyards along its length. These courtyards should provide smaller focus-points for new and reinforced north-south connections through to the High Street.

- In order to successfully integrate the new development with the Primary Shopping Area, pedestrian linkages to the High Street require strengthening in order to achieve a continuous active retail circuit through the town centre. This should include:

- Provision of a new north-south link towards the western end of the site with active frontages (the framework plans show an indicative location for this)

- Significant enhancement to Bell Alley to include the provision of active commercial frontages along its length – this will need to be sensitive to the Listed Buildings

- Enhancement of secondary alleys

- Some form of anchor store is anticipated to the south/east of the site which should act as a key footfall driver to draw pedestrians south of the High Street and should front onto a public square.

- The existing pedestrian route from the High Street through to Parson's Close should be retained (or re-provided along a similar route) in order to enhance connectivity between the park and the town centre.

- Additional co-ordinated signage to improve legibility.

Scale and Massing

- The shape of the site allows for buildings suitable to accommodate larger format retail units throughout. The eastern part of the site offers the opportunity to accommodate bulkier buildings such as a larger anchor retail store and / or a multi-storey car parking structure.

- Surrounding building heights are typically 2-3 storeys (the church spire remains the dominant taller building in the town centre). The depth and slope of the site presents the opportunity for slightly taller buildings in the central and eastern parts of the site, providing that important views and surrounding residential amenity are carefully considered. The scale and massing of new buildings should gradually mediate from the historic form and grain of the High Street southwards.

- The scale and massing of new development should be designed so that the amenity of nearby residents is protected.

Character, Appearance and Historic Assets

- Development should ensure that existing Listed buildings, the scheduled ancient monument, non designated heritage assets and the wider Conservation Area and their settings are preserved and enhanced. However, it is accepted that in order to achieve the most effective form of development, the setting of some Listed Buildings on the High Street may be affected, although this should be managed as sensitively as possible.
- The existing High Street frontage and façade should remain intact as far as is practicable, with the exception of the limited demolition of undesignated buildings of limited architectural merit which do not make a positive contribution to the character and setting of the Conservation Area. This is necessary to enable successful integration of the site with the Primary Shopping Area.
- The layout of development should respond to the historic pattern of burgage plots as far as is practicable. The Council recognises that this plot layout may not be practical (having regard to occupier requirements and the potential requirement for larger building floorplates), however architectural design solutions should be incorporated to achieve coherence with the site's burgage plot heritage. Key to the success of this approach will be sensitively designed roofscapes and architectural detailing to new external facades and shopfronts.

- Block layout should allow for larger stores as appropriate with opportunities taken for new development to mediate between the long, thin plots of the High Street and the larger, squarer plots that are likely to be required for new, commercial development.
- Active frontages, front doors and effective frontages should be carefully considered to support legibility, passive surveillance and accessibility throughout the public realm. Blank walls and unattractive facades (including those associated with multi-storey car parks) should be avoided (via the provision of active frontages, green walls or other attractive solutions).
- Development should seek to complement the existing architectural forms in the town, which are varied and lend the town its sense of place. Buildings should be articulated to achieve the principles of legibility outlined above.

Sustainable Design and Construction

- The development should be designed to use less energy by adopting sustainable design and construction standards. It should also seek to supply energy efficiently by incorporating decentralised energy generation technologies and a site-wide heating/cooling network where feasible. Renewable energy sources should be used wherever practicable.

- Development should be adaptable to the effects of a changing climate by designing in natural shading, water efficiency technologies and infrastructure, and measures for sustainable drainage as well as green/brown roofs to reduce water runoff rates. Sustainable development principles should apply to both new-build and refurbishment works.

Digital Infrastructure

- The Council believes that new developments should be served by a high quality digital infrastructure, ensuring local residents and business are able to access the latest online services. The Council wishes to see the necessary on-site infrastructure put in place at the time of construction, to ensure connectivity to superfast broadband services. This means that the development will seek to put in place an appropriate network to deliver services. Detailed proposals will need to consider the necessary conduits / ducting to be incorporated into the development and consideration for relevant telecommunications infrastructure, including exchanges and or cabinets, to ensure accessing / maintenance requirements and minimal environmental / visual impact in line with the adopted Central Bedfordshire Local Broadband Plan

Indicative Urban Design Framework Plan



Key

- development brief boundary
- principal access
- secondary access
- ... principal street
- - - primary pedestrian route
- - - secondary pedestrian route
- active / effective street frontage to define streets, routes and public spaces whilst retaining service accesses
- building to be retained
- * fire station potentially retained
- ★ public space
- development parcel
- sensitive redevelopment of historic alley required to strengthen link with the High Street whilst respecting the historic pattern
- sensitive frontage required to Parson's close

FIG. 6.1

Illustrative images

Alleyways



FIG. 6.2 Entrance to Lion and Lamb Yard, Farnham



FIG. 6.3 Bell Alley, Leighton Buzzard



FIG. 6.4 Peacock Mews, Leighton Buzzard



FIG. 6.5 Sketch southern elevation of the High Street, showing historic townscape, with occasional insensitive insertions



FIG. 6.6 Composite photo of the same elevation

Illustrative exemplar images

Scale and massing

Credits

FIG. 6.8 Hawkins Brown Architects

FIG. 6.11 Google images



FIG. 6.7 St Martin's Walk, Dorking



FIG. 6.8 Gilet Square, London



FIG. 6.9 Lion and Lamb Yard, Farnham



FIG. 6.10 Duke of York Square, London



FIG.6.11 Jubilee Street, Brighton

Illustrative exemplar images

Shared surfaces



FIG. 6.12 Shared surface, Brighton



FIG. 6.13 Mill Street, Bideford



FIG. 6.14 Shared surface, Norwich

Credits
FIG. 6.12 Gehl Architects
FIG. 6.13 Google images

Illustrative exemplar images:

Mews and Courtyards



FIG. 6.15 Peacock Mews, Leighton Buzzard



FIG. 6.16 The High Street Mews, Leighton Buzzard



FIG. 6.17 Whitecross Street, London



FIG. 6.18 Poundbury



FIG. 6.19 Barringtons, Leighton Buzzard

Illustrative images

Historic landmarks and settings



FIG. 6.20 Houses overlooking Parson's Close



FIG. 6.21 Grade I listed Market Cross



FIG. 6.22 Church Square



FIG. 6.23 All Saints Church



FIG. 6.24 The old Post Office building (formerly a school)

Illustrative exemplar images

Sustainable design and construction



FIG. 6.25 Green walls



FIG. 6.26 Solar panels



FIG. 6.27 Green / brown roofs

Illustrative sketches



FIG. 6.28 Illustrative vision for how alleyways could be integrated with continuous, new retail and mixed-use development



FIG. 6.29 Sketch perspective of potential new development



FIG. 6.30 Sketch perspective of potential for Bell Alley

Illustrative sketches



FIG. 6.31 Illustrative vision for how frontage to Parson's Close could be developed



FIG. 6.32 Sketch perspective from Parson's Close

Illustrative sketches



FIG. 6.33 Illustrative vision for how squares and courts could be developed

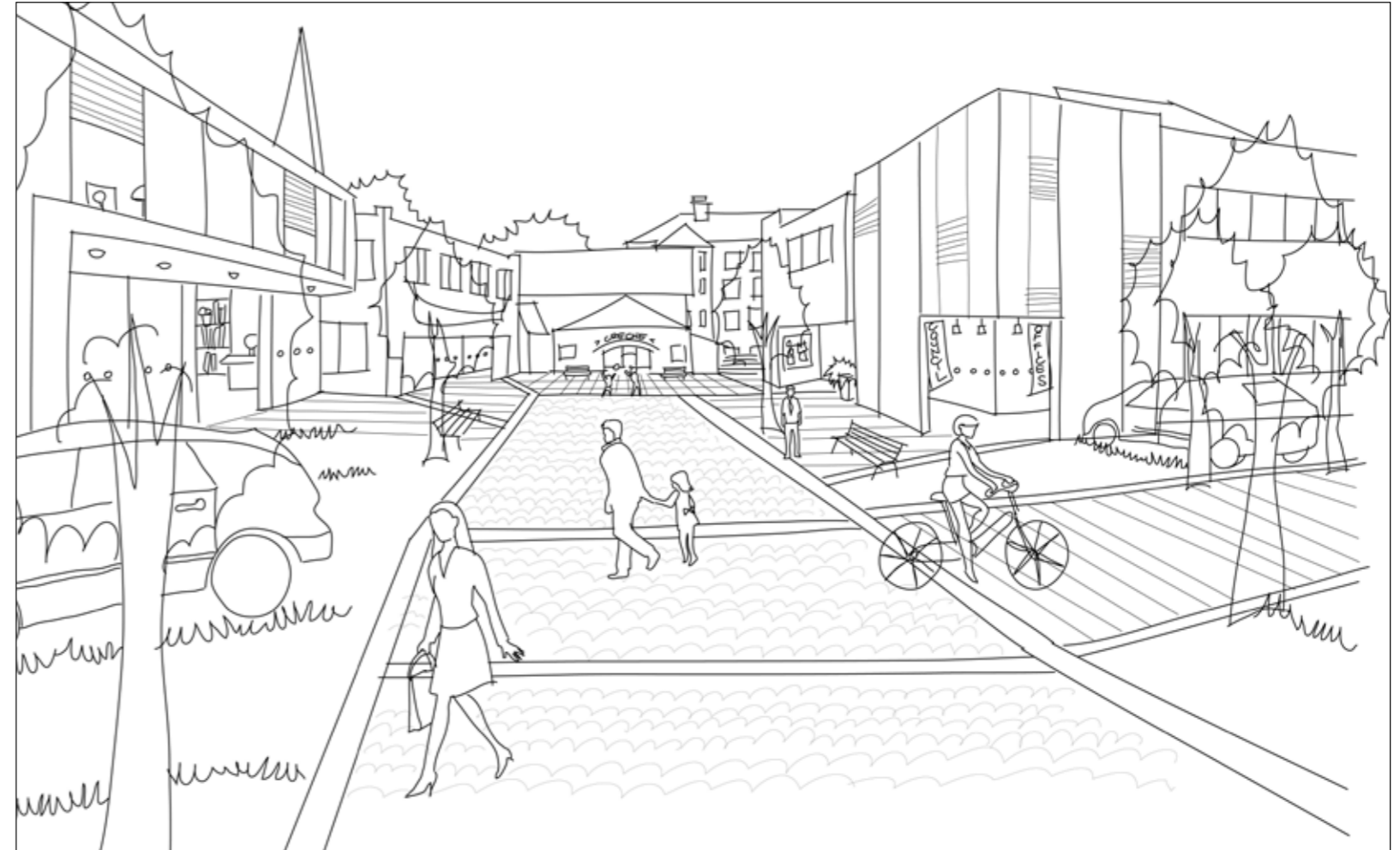


FIG. 6.34 Sketch perspective



FIG. 6.35 Sketch perspective



Landscape

7.1 The topography, landscape and form of the wider town centre work together to generate the high quality sense of place and should be carefully considered in the planning of any development. Development proposals should reflect the following principles:

- The treatment of the public realm within the site has an important role to play in integrating new development with the existing Primary Shopping Area (and other surrounding areas) through complementary surface materials, building materials, and street furniture. Choice of materials and street furniture should be considered holistically and within the wider context, to complement the existing and to support the activities provided by the development.
- Streetscaping and tree planting should be provided throughout the development, which should complement the existing High Street.
- The existing pattern of alleyways and private rear courtyards provides a unique character that can be enhanced with new public spaces and pedestrian-friendly routes.
- Street furniture and wayfinding should be combined and minimised (where possible) a measure which can be facilitated through legible and accessible landscape design.
- Lighting should be carefully considered to provide a safe and pleasant environment at all times of day.
- Legibility and accessibility are key to the success of the public realm and the streets and spaces should be designed together with the buildings that front onto them to achieve these objectives.

Indicative Landscape Framework Plan



Key

- development brief boundary
- principal access
- secondary access
- principal street with pedestrian-friendly landscaping
- primary pedestrian route with alleyway character
- secondary pedestrian route
- active / effective street frontage to define public spaces
- public space
- fire station potentially retained
- development parcel
- sensitive redevelopment of historic alley required to strengthen link with the High Street whilst respecting the historic pattern
- sensitive frontage required to Parson's Close eg. residential front gardens or planted buffer

PUBLIC SPACES

- P1: new main public square, with active frontages
- P2: new public space or courtyard with active frontages
- P3: new public space or courtyard with active frontages
- P4: new public space or courtyard with active frontages

FIG. 7.1

Illustrative exemplar images

Hard landscaping and street furniture



FIG. 7.2 Tower Bridge Road, London



FIG. 7.3 Cambridge Botanic Gardens



FIG. 7.4 Tower Bridge Road, London



FIG. 7.5 Old Street, London



Access and Movement

8.1 A key component of the framework is to create a permeable network of streets (or lanes), that enable pedestrians to move freely within the site. This permeable network is a feature of the oldest parts of the town centre and should be encouraged in all new proposals, helping to encourage walking and cycling as part of any development proposals and reducing dependence on the car.

8.2 Development proposals should be in line with the following principles:

- The site should be opened up via a new network of streets and spaces including a new street running approximately east-west across the site (indicative route shown in Figure 8.1). This street should be linked to the existing highway network at either end, with the most likely connections illustrated as being via Duncombe Drive to the east and with Church Square to the west (piecemeal development proposals within the site that prevent the creation of a through route will be unacceptable).
- The east-west route should be pedestrian friendly and as such should be designed using shared space principles to operate as a predominantly pedestrian space, with low vehicle speeds. The need to close this street to vehicular traffic during particular periods of the day should be reviewed as part of vehicular trip generation of any proposals.
- Street widths should vary along their length, and whilst separate footways would normally be provided, the carriageway surface should be designed to encourage its shared use by pedestrians if vehicle flows dictate. To keep traffic speeds low, the uninterrupted length of this route between junctions or events should be kept to around 60 metres. The aim should be to design in a naturally traffic calmed environment, rather than introduce additional hard speed control measures such as speed humps. The 'events' could include the creation of squares and courtyards, providing a horizontal shift in the street, changes in vehicle priority, informal crossings and the provision of planting in and around the highway.
- Changes in the road width and priority should be incorporated to help manage the amount and speed of traffic, and indicate the relative importance of the street within the road hierarchy.
- Drivers should be discouraged from using the east-west route other than for access to properties in this area, however, it is important to ensure that street widths are sufficient to allow essential service access where required. When setting the street hierarchy and appropriate street widths, guidance should be sought from Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2.
- Pedestrian permeability in this area should be increased through the provision of additional north to south pedestrian connections wherever possible, by enhancing

the existing alleyways and introducing new routes (where appropriate) and stitching these into the new network of streets and spaces. Areas of public space could provide smaller focus-points for these new north-south connections to link into the enhanced high street and proposed east-west route. These added pedestrian links could enable retail and leisure circuit routes and further encourage walking as a primary mode of transport within the town.

Servicing

- The site offers the potential to accommodate larger format retail units including the potential for a small supermarket or other anchor store. Vehicle servicing for a supermarket is an important consideration, and may differ from the servicing strategy for the remainder of the site, given the likelihood of large, frequent movements. For the anchor store servicing should be positioned off-street, not require reversing within public spaces, and be located to protect neighbouring residential amenity and the visual impact on public spaces.
- For the remainder of the site, wherever possible a soft servicing design could be utilised, to minimise the impact upon the network and retain the pedestrian friendly ethos throughout the site. Instead of designated service bays this type of design could encourage on-street service bays, either integrated into the east-west route or within shared public squares - designed around the location and orientation of the buildings. Access to these bays,

depending upon the numbers predicted by a planning application, may be limited to access hours outside of peak pedestrian movements.

Parking

- The development of the site should both re-provide the existing level of car parking located within the Duncombe Drive car park and a level of car parking suitable for the increased land-uses provided, as well as ensuring that enough spaces are provided to accommodate the vehicles of Market Traders. The additional number of car parking spaces would require review both in terms of adequacy for increased demand, but also in controlling additional car based trips following an increase in the towns accessibility by foot and cycle. As part of a planning application for additional town centre retail facilities, a study of existing town centre car park capacities and locations should be provided in conjunction with a retail impact study. All provision of parking spaces should be undertaken with the Central Bedfordshire parking standards in consideration.

- The most appropriate location for the main car park, which could be multi-storey, is considered to be at the eastern end of the site, accessed from Duncombe Drive. This would likely have the smallest effect on the existing town centre, and on the proposed east-west route, broadly being the location of an existing town centre car park. The Council will work with the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire Service to investigate the potential for the future use of its site, including opportunities for co-location of uses.

- Disabled car parking should be provided in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire parking standards. Consideration should be given to the location of these bays so as to provide convenient access throughout the town centre for the mobility impaired. Therefore these spaces could be provided through a combination of dedicated bays within any car park provided, or through the use of on-street bays designed within the landscaping on the east-west route.

- The provision of Car Club bays and car charging points should be investigated in discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council and locations where these could be introduced identified.

- Cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire standards. On-street bays should be provided convenient to the facilities proposed and positioned so as to be in secure overlooked locations.

Traffic Impact

8.3 The Council is aware that these proposals will have an impact on traffic levels in the area. Further work has therefore been undertaken by WSP on behalf of the Council to assess this impact, both in terms of any additional traffic attracted by the new development, and any reduction in traffic caused by the retention of trade in Leighton Buzzard which might normally leak to neighbouring towns.

8.4 The main conclusions of this study are below. In

clarification, 'comparison retail' refers to goods which are typically compared with one another by consumers in terms of quality and price e.g. clothing, household appliances and furniture & furnishings. 'Convenience retail' refers to goods such as food, drink and newspapers.

- Some 90% of comparison retail trips would be from existing residents, with the remaining 10% being from new residents.

- At peak times on a Friday, some 60% of car trips to comparison retail uses would be linked to a trip with another purpose. On a Saturday, the equivalent figure would be 50%.

- On an average day, of the trips estimated to travel to Milton Keynes some 300 - 350 would be drawn back to Leighton Buzzard. This would save an average of 6,000 to 7,000 vehicle kilometres per day, equivalent to some 350-400 tonnes of carbon per year.

- In the Friday PM peak, increases from retail uses are likely to be immaterial. On a Saturday, increases may be in the region of 5% to 8% at peak times. However the actual increase in traffic does not take traffic levels up to those of the existing weekday PM peak. Therefore, no material increase above existing PM peak traffic levels would be expected either on a weekday or Saturday.

- Employment trips could be controlled by limiting private non-residential car parking in the town centre

(subject to commercial considerations) and the Travel Plan which will be included in any planning consent. Employment trips have the greatest potential for effect on town centre highway capacity and a parking / sustainability strategy will be required as part of town centre detailed development proposals.

- Leisure trips are discretionary and can be managed through the particular type of leisure uses selected and the degree to which these would complement other uses on the site.
- The impact of existing retail trips into the town centre can be managed through the relocation of car parks, to provide convenient car parking on all main approaches to the centre.
- Wider town sustainability strategies (such as improved bus services) could also reduce traffic in the town centre.

Indicative Access and Movement Framework Plan



Key

- development brief boundary
- principal vehicular access
- secondary access
- - - primary vehicular route with pedestrian priority measures
- - - primary pedestrian route
- - - secondary pedestrian route
- ★ public space
- - - development parcel
- /// sensitive redevelopment of historic alley required to strengthen link with the High Street whilst respecting the historic pattern

FIG. 8.1



Land Assembly

9.1 A comprehensive approach will be required to the delivery of the site to ensure a high quality of design and successful integration with the Primary Shopping Area.

9.2 Accordingly, the preferred option will be to assemble a single development site. However, the Council will accept the phased delivery of the development in line with the development parcels shown on the framework plans, as long as the development principles outlined in this brief are met and it can be demonstrated that phased development would not prejudice the comprehensive development of the whole site in due course.

9.3 Principal landowners have been consulted in the preparation of this draft brief and have expressed a general willingness to bring their land forward for redevelopment, subject to viability considerations. The ideal scenario will be to assemble the site via private treaty, however the Council's compulsory purchase (CPO) powers may be necessary to complete site assembly.

Development Viability

9.4 The development brief has been prepared in the period 2010-11 during which time the UK was recovering from one of the deepest recessions since the 1930's. These recessionary conditions have been accompanied by a collapse in residential and commercial property values in

some parts of the UK, together with rationing of developer and mortgage finance. These conditions mean that viability is a serious challenge at the current point in time in all but the most exceptional of locations/schemes.

9.5 This brief has been informed by high level appraisals and commercial advice, including soft market testing with developers and retailers. This has concluded that the proposals set out in this brief are likely to be attractive to the market and viable in the short to medium term.

Implementation

9.6 The Council recognises that major town centre developments have significant lead-in times and that their delivery is dependant on favourable economic conditions. Accordingly the Council anticipates that the development will come forward over the next 5 to 10 years or more.

9.7 The Council considers it inappropriate to apply rigid phasing or sequencing requirements to the delivery of the development. The development should come forward in a comprehensive manner – the Council will accept a phased delivery as long as proposals are able to demonstrate that they will not give rise to any adverse planning impacts.

9.8 Private sector developers will be responsible for delivering the development alongside existing landowners and the Council (as both landowner and Local Planning Authority). The Council will work with existing occupiers

to find appropriate alternative accommodation where appropriate.

Planning Application Requirements

9.9 Planning applications should be supported by the following package of documents:

- Design and Access Statement
- PPS4 Statement (town centre uses)
- PPS5 Statement (heritage assets)
- Environmental Statement (if determined to be EIA development)
- Transport Assessment and Green Travel Plan
- Sustainability/Energy Strategy
- Other supporting documentation (as necessary).