

/ Supplementary Planning Document /
/ Adopted /



SPD BIGGLESWADE TOWN CENTRE ADOPTED STRATEGY & MASTERPLAN

/ CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL /

/ July 2011 /

Central
Bedfordshire

Biggleswade is a successful market town. It has maintained good performance and activity in the recent period of economic recession with lower than average drops in residential values and commercial activity. There are signs of recovery in the market place and there is an opportunity for the town centre to take advantage and move forward.

The town and its population are expanding which provides a larger catchment for inward investment **supporting the opportunities for growth in the town centre** and the activities which take place there.

Biggleswade town has been successful in creating **a place where families and skilled people choose to live.** There is a higher than average number of skilled and professional people in the town and a good mix of young and old. Whilst many people work outside of the town their leisure and shopping activities remain predominantly in the locality.

The town centre is well connected via rail (London approximately 1 hour) and road (A1) providing excellent links to the local and wider area. With accessible and low cost car parking facilities alongside good public transport facilities, **the town centre is accessible to all.** Maintaining and improving these facilities can furthermore enhance the quality of the place and the experiences of its visitors.

The town centre has a high proportion of independent retailers and successful weekly markets which provide choice and diversity in shopping. **The town centre shopping experience is unique.** Improvements in the type and quality of retailers in the town centre will further improve this diversity.

There is identified demand for occupiers in Biggleswade from operators in food and drink, clothing and household goods. If the conditions can be set correctly and the type and layout of development refined to meet current needs then **this demand will only further increase.**

The physical nature of the town centre is predominantly high quality with a mix of interesting and historic buildings, set in areas of high quality public realm. **As the town centre expands there are opportunities to extend and reinforce this unique character.** With this firm foundation, opportunities for creativity exist to build on the historic character of the town centre whilst ensuring it is fit for the 21st century.



Central Bedfordshire Council

Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands
Shefford
Bedfordshire
SG17 5TQ
T: 0300 300 8000

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THE STRATEGY & MASTERPLAN

Part A

/ Introduction

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/ Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan

01 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of document

1.1.1 This document is fundamentally about three things:

- / Understanding what makes Biggleswade town centre unique and special.
- / Setting out a vision of where Biggleswade town centre could be in the next 15-20 years.
- / Providing a strategy to realise this vision with a plan for the short, medium and long term

1.1.2 The document has been produced by Central Bedfordshire Council working closely with the community and partners including Biggleswade Town Council, Chamber of Trade and Biggleswade Town Plan Steering Group.

1.1.3 Public Engagement has been a key part of the process and the document takes into account the thoughts and ideas of the local community in Biggleswade.

1.1.4 The Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan has two main objectives:

- / To provide a masterplan and strategy which will assist in bringing forward and guiding change within the town centre.
- / To be used as part of the statutory planning framework as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

1.2 Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan

1.2.1 It is intended that this document will be used by a range of stakeholders who are responsible for bringing forward change within the town centre including Central Bedfordshire Council, Biggleswade Town Council, Landowners, Developers and members of the local community. It can be used in a number of ways to:

- / Identify physical and environmental issues and solutions.
- / Understand land ownership issues.
- / Identify and prioritise existing funding for specific

projects.

- / Explore opportunities for future funding and delivery mechanisms.
- / Assess the risk associated with development within the town centre.
- / Develop future maintenance and management programmes.
- / To guide and support community projects.
- / To identify requirements for planning applications

1.2.2 It is important to emphasise that the Masterplan is a vehicle to guide and promote renewal, redevelopment and improvement of the town centre. It is not a blueprint.

1.2.3 It aims to guide developers and public sector organisations as to what the Council would like to see happen in the town centre. It needs to set out important guiding principles but there must be flexibility to enable market led solutions to come forward and be considered. The proposals included in the masterplan are illustrative only. As most of the town centre is in private ownership, the nature and timing of actual proposals will be largely private sector led.



1.3 Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

1.3.1 This SPD is to be used to provide detail of planning policies contained within the development plan. How the SPD will do this is shown on Figure 1. The SPD will be used alongside other Central Bedfordshire (north) Local Development Framework (LDF) documents to make planning decisions. Figure 2 shows the study area for the masterplan and the designated town centre boundary as defined by policies CS12 and DM7 of the Core Strategy Central Bedfordshire (North).

1.3.2 The SPD boundary set through the Central Bedfordshire (north) LDF Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted April 2011) policy TC1, which, alongside the Core Strategy, provides the statutory development plan basis for the SPD.

1.3.3 The SPD will primarily supplement Core Strategy policy CS12 (Town Centres and Retailing), Development Management policy DM7 (Development in Town Centres) and Site Allocations policy TC1 (Biggleswade Town Centre). See Figure 1.

1.4 Structure

1.4.1 This SPD draws upon guidance and examples of best practice from the Homes and Communities and the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment CABE 2004; and English Partnerships' Urban Design Compendium 1 and 2).

1.4.2 The delivery strategy is also based on the guidance provided by the RICS, Delivery Strategies for Masterplans and Area Action Plans (July 2008). Accordingly, the masterplan includes the following elements:

- / Background information which gathers and analyses background information as a precursor to the formulation of the masterplan.
- / A vision which identifies the over-arching aim of the masterplan and strategic objectives for the town centre over the next 15 to 20 years.
- / A Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan which embodies the environmental, social and economic objective in physical and land use proposals.
- / The delivery strategy which underpins the preferred option setting out what needs to be done and when, in order to optimise achievement and minimise risk.

Figure 01 / Diagram showing position of Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy & Masterplan SPD within the Central Bedfordshire Planning Framework

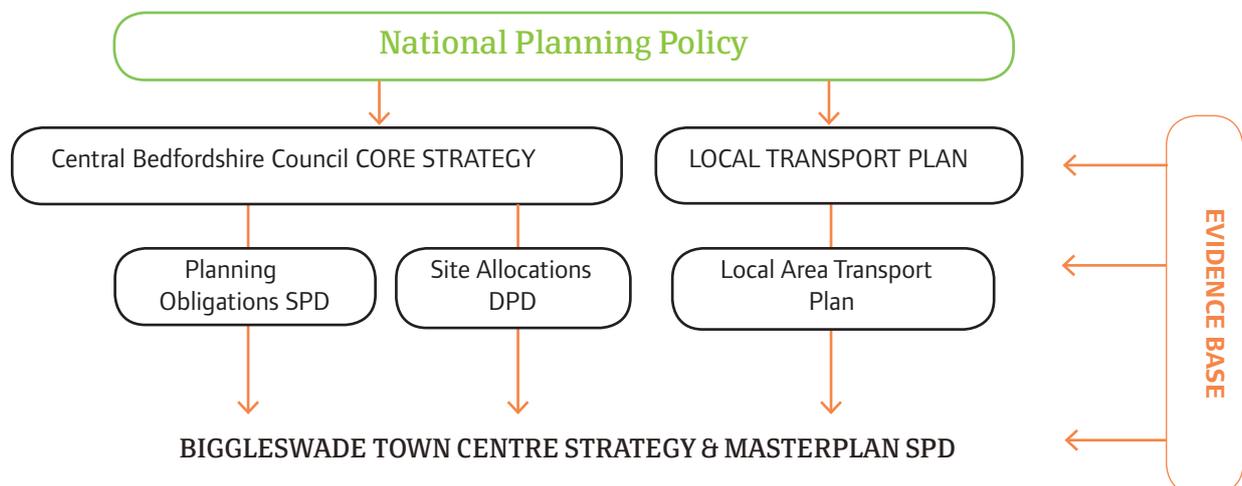
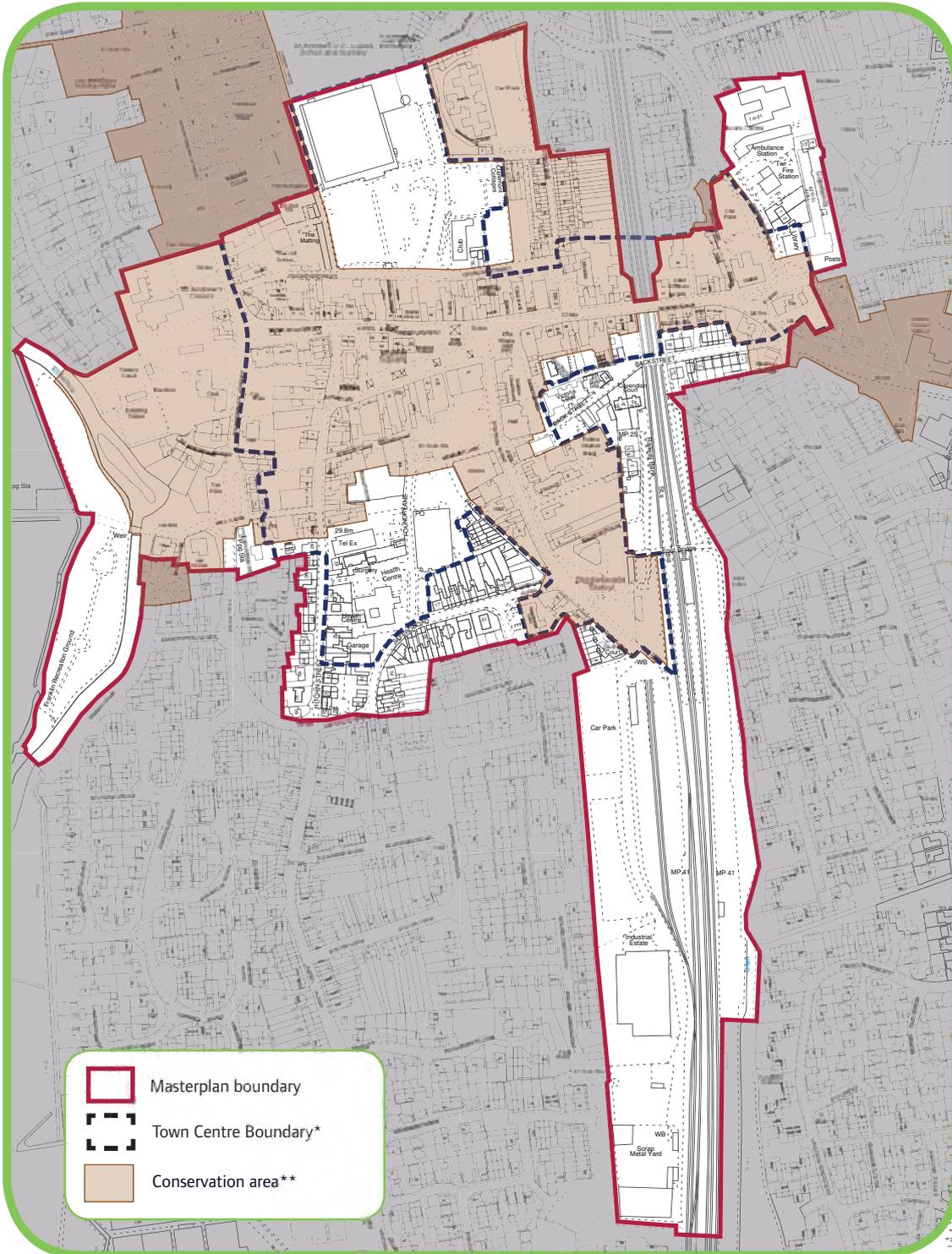


Figure 02 / Town Centre Strategy & Masterplan boundary



* Town Centre boundary as defined by the Central Bedfordshire Council Core Strategy Policy CS12. Also Site Allocations DPD (adopted April 2011) Masterplan boundary.

** Primary Core Strategy and Development Management Heritage policies CS15/ DM13.

02 Engagement

2.1 Overall Approach

2.1.1 The overall approach to engagement throughout the development of the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan has been based upon an ongoing dialogue with the local community and other key stakeholders. This has taken place over a 24 month period since the inception of the process and has been delivered through a range of activities and events.

2.1.2 Three public engagement events were held in the town centre to involve the community in the visioning and development of the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan.

2.1.3 The first consultation event was a visioning exercise in July 2009 and was designed to introduce the project and gain insight into the issues affecting local residents, businesses and community service providers. The consultation included a range of activities over two days including a workshop for council officers responsible for community services in Biggleswade, a workshop for invited local stakeholders including local interest groups, services providers such as the NHS and police services, local business owners and a public exhibition for local residents. All of these events included information about the issues currently facing Biggleswade, and asking attendees to confirm or suggest areas where improvements needed to be made including initial ideas for projects and initiatives which could be included in the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan.

2.1.4 The second public engagement event which took place in July 2010 was held to present a series of initial masterplan options. By making a range of options available, and encouraging the 'mix & match' of ideas it was possible to create a final masterplan which better reflected the aspirations and priorities of the community. The consultation included a public exhibition, on-line information and questionnaire, and additional street surveys.

2.1.5 A third public consultation event was held in February 2011 to outline the final draft SPD for statutory public consultation (formal consultation).

2.1.6 The findings and feedback from the events have been taken into account in shaping the final Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan. Details of specific feedback are set out in the statements of community involvement which are available from the Council.

2.1.7 At the start of the engagement process, people of the town were asked what they liked and didn't like, school children were asked to draw ideas and we spoke with a range of people who live in and use the town. The illustrations at Figure 04 were drawn by pupils at local schools as part of the first consultation event.

2.1.8 The characteristics which people thought were unique and special about Biggleswade included both its feel as a market town and the activities which take place there, through to its accessibility and facilities. Some of the recurring themes were, Biggleswade carnival, the outdoor café and the cafe culture, the Saturday market and Franklins Recreation Ground.

2.1.9 In conclusion it was evident that the local community was generally proud of the town and welcomed the ideas of further growth and investment to add greater diversity and facilities for existing and future generations.

Figure 03 / Photographs taken from one of the public engagement events



2.1.10 The development of the Town Centre Strategy & Masterplan utilised a number of ways to engage with the community and key stakeholders.

2.1.11 Website/ Email: A project website and direct email address have been available throughout the project allowing residents and members of the public to keep up to date with activities, make comments and suggestions, and also participate in consultation events on-line. Newsletters have been sent out to stakeholders throughout the process.

2.1.12 Partnership Group: Set up by Central Bedfordshire Council, the Partnership was designed to ensure that local people were involved throughout the process. Members included locally elected representatives from Central Bedfordshire Council and Biggleswade Town Council, plus representatives from Biggleswade Chamber of Trade and Biggleswade Town Plan Group.

2.1.13 Council Officers: Set up by Central Bedfordshire Council, the officer group included a core group representing economic growth, planning, and transport, with wider input from other specialist areas of the council including education, cultural services, sports and leisure, property management, social services, customer services, business and enterprise, green infrastructure, cycling, and rural communities.

2.1.14 Landowners: Landowners have been engaged in the development of the Town Centre Strategy & Masterplan through individual dialogue. They will continue to be involved in the delivery process and their role is identified in Part B of this document relating to the delivery of the masterplan and strategy.

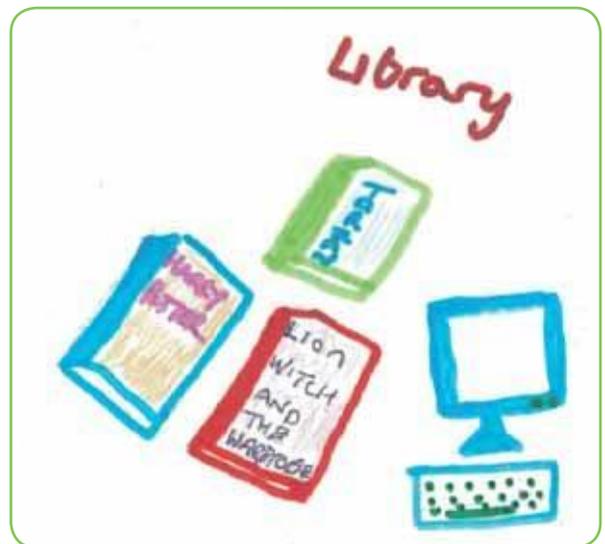
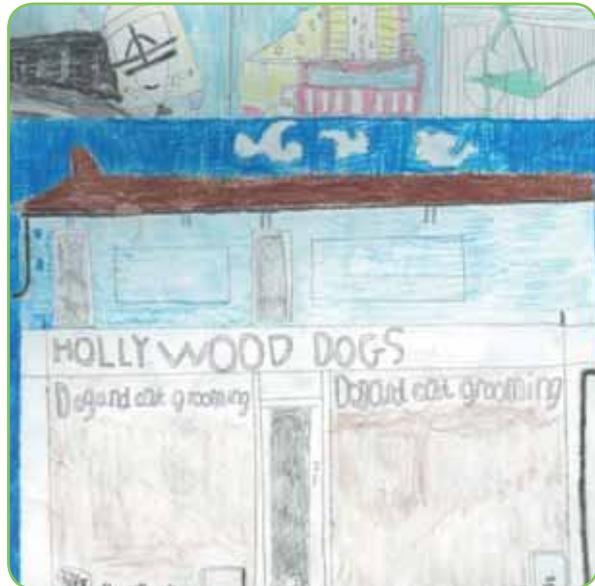
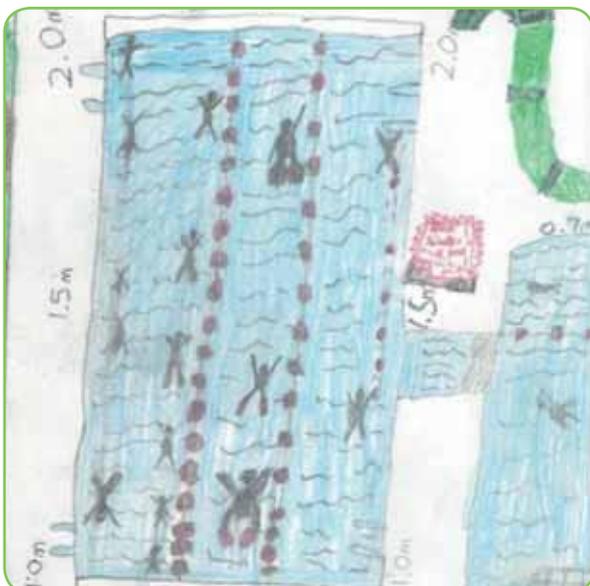
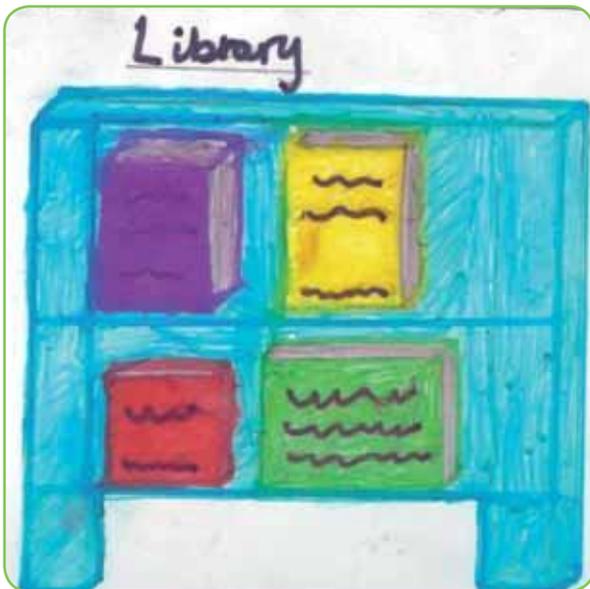


Figure 04 / Extracts from drawings prepared by school children showing what they thought was good about Biggleswade and they thought should be provided in the masterplan



03 Background

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section of the report provides the background to the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan. The section shows how the town centre performs in key areas and shows the constraints and opportunities which are relevant to the town centre, currently and in the future.

3.1.2 The background analysis also considers the potential for growth in the town centre and includes a review of key elements including, the physical and environmental characteristics, the buildings, spaces between them, planning policy, economic conditions and transport conditions.

3.1.3 The Baseline data is also available in the separate Baseline Report (February 2011). Please note that this data is based on reporting of 2009/10.

3.2 A growing market town

3.2.1 With a significant new housing development coming forward to the east of the town over the next 10 years Biggleswade is a growing town. Within this period the population of the town is expected to grow by over 40% to in excess of 23,000. This substantial increase in population provides the opportunity for growth and a more successful, more vibrant and diverse town centre.

3.2.2 Census data shows that Biggleswade has a greater than average proportion of managerial occupations and professional positions with a higher than average income. These are 26.2% as opposed to the national average of 21.7%. As the town grows it is likely that this will further increase due to the type of the new housing being delivered including a large proportion of family homes. If the focus of this profile and associated income can be captured within the town centre it will provide for a more successful economy.

3.2.3 It is clear that there is an opportunity to maintain Biggleswade town centre's distinctiveness whilst improving its economic performance within the local area and region.

3.3 Biggleswade - A place to...

3.3.1 Shop

3.3.1.1 Biggleswade is the third largest centre in Central Bedfordshire currently providing 24,000 sqm of retail floor space (gross).

3.3.1.2 The retail catchment of the town will increase significantly through growth to the east of the town (6,000 new population) and the proposed increase in growth of neighbouring settlements which fall within its wider catchment.

3.3.1.3 Biggleswade currently has a total of 190 retail units (Source: Estates Gazette Interactive Town Report August 2010) of which approximately 140 are within the town centre area. The service sector represents 40% of units, with comparison retailing representing 37% of units. Compared to the national average (46%) for comparison shopping in town centres of similar type, there are opportunities for Biggleswade to improve and increase its comparison shopping. This will make Biggleswade a better destination for shopping and attract further inward investment.

3.3.1.4 Evidence shows current increases in sales for both clothing and household goods *1. This further supports the potential for growth in the comparison shopping sector for Biggleswade.

3.3.1.5 The Estates Gazette Town Report (2010) identifies that there are current operator requirements for a number of shops including clothing, restaurants and cafes, and sports shops in the town centre. These requirements have remained through the recent economic downturn and illustrate the desire of national operators to expand into centres such as Biggleswade.

3.3.1.6 The profile of shopping currently available in the town centre is defined in the current Estates Gazette Town Summary Report (2009/10 base) as follows:

/ Up market Shops*2	0%
/ Mid market Shops*3	56%
/ Down market Shops*4	44%
/ Anchors	0
/ Premier	2
/ Other multiples	51
/ Independent retailers	125

3.3.1.7 There is clearly a strong emphasis on independent retailers, which are likely to make up the majority of the mid market shopping offer. Correspondingly, the multiples including charity shops and discount clothing and food stores make up a high proportion of the down market shopping offer. In order to improve the quality of shopping there is clearly an opportunity for additional mid market multiples to work alongside the independent retailers to further improve the mid market shopping offer with the potential of growth into the upmarket shopping in the long term.

*1 Source: Savills Shopping centre and high street (June 2010)

*2 Note: Upmarket shops are defined as those that provide luxury goods with a limited range.

*3 Note: Mid market shops are those which provide a mix of value and quality and aim to provide for a broad range of users. This type of shop often provides a wide range of products.

*4 Note: Down market shops are defined as those appealing or catering to lower-income consumers. They are generally widely affordable and use price as a key factor in the sale of goods or services. These often include charity shops and shops offering a range of products for a single price.

3.3.1.10 The separate London Road retail park to the south of the town centre provides further scope for improvement of the broader Biggleswade offer. To maximise the retail potential for the town centre it will be important that any changes to London Road retail park complement the town centre by providing a balance of appropriate uses that do not directly compete with it.



3.3.1.11 The Mid Bedfordshire Retail Study (Sept 2007, White Young Green) and Baseline Report identifies that retailers and service providers are the core of the town centre offer in Biggleswade, and that this should remain the priority in the future. However a number of other key issues are identified which will have an impact on the capacity for improvement and growth:

- / The limited size of existing retail units.
- / Configuration of the river, road and rail networks around the town centre, combined with the dense nature of the residential units surrounding it.
- / Restricted servicing arrangements for heavy goods vehicles.
- / The lack of opportunities for national multiples to locate to 'Prime Pitch' units (The Market Square) and a lack of desire to take on secondary or peripheral locations.

3.3.1.12 There are opportunities to improve the quantity and size of retail floorspace within the prime shopping areas with good servicing and access.

3.3.1.13 Evidence in The Mid Bedfordshire Retail Study would suggest that in the short term there is likely to be capacity within the existing floorspace levels to meet growth in expenditure until at least 2015. However, there are a number of short term opportunities available to reconfigure the layout and mix of retail unit types with a view to enhancing and increasing the retail provision in the town centre. The realisation of these opportunities may assist in bringing forward some of the more long term aspirations for the town centre.

3.3.1.14 In this medium to long term period, the evidence base demonstrates that within the northern part of Central Bedfordshire there will be capacity to expand comparison retailing. Given Biggleswade's size and position in the market it is highly likely that Biggleswade town centre will provide an attractive location for this increased capacity.

3.3.1.15 Taking a conservative estimate of 50% of the total retail capacity of northern Central Bedfordshire being brought forward in Biggleswade to 2021, this would suggest that there is demand for upwards of up to 5,000 sqm (net) of comparison floor space. Whilst it is recognised that there is potential for some of this capacity to be absorbed outside of the town centre it will be important for the Town Centre Strategy & Masterplan to provide for a significant proportion to be delivered in the town centre.

3.3.2 Play

3.3.2.1 From a review of the existing uses in the town centre it is clear that the Biggleswade evening economy is currently based around traditional public houses with a significant proportion of people choosing to visit centres outside Biggleswade for other leisure pursuits such as art, film and theatre.

3.3.2.2 Whilst restaurants are an existing and important component of the evening economy in Biggleswade evidence does indicate that again many people are choosing to travel elsewhere for the greater range and choice of restaurant they require.

3.3.2.3 The opportunity for the town centre is to recapture this outward spend by increasing the strength of its offer in restaurants and small scale commercial leisure or the arts.

3.3.2.4 To capture this opportunity it will be important to identify areas/sites capable of being developed or redeveloped/ reconfigured with contemporary retail

units with appropriate floorspace, storage and servicing to meet current occupier demands.

3.3.2.5 As highlighted in the shopping section above, the profile of people in Biggleswade and their capacity to spend would suggest that the income is available to be captured.

3.3.3 Work

3.3.3.1 Employment in Biggleswade itself is focused primarily upon retailing and services located in the town centre, and industrial/ commercial uses located to the south of the town. At the time of this study approximately 59% of working residents commute out of the town centre to work, many to London and other larger centres. These people have made a distinct choice to live in Biggleswade for its quality of place and environment as opposed to the larger centres.

3.3.3.2 The existing office space in Biggleswade available within the town centre is currently limited to small scale units. The evidence suggests that there was at the time of the study only a small market for office accommodation in Biggleswade. This is partly due to the 'Catch 22' situation of there being limited demand because the available accommodation supply is limited and with lower levels of accommodation available there are lower levels of demand.

3.3.3.3 The office accommodation stock however is well used and occupancy levels are high. It therefore appears that an opportunity does exist to attract more investment into this market. With Biggleswade's overall attractiveness, good communication and transport links there is an opportunity to capture some of the business that is potentially lost, for example through lack of facilities, to nearby areas such as Cambridge and Stevenage.

3.3.3.4 Enhancements to the town centre and its range of activities and facilities will contribute considerably to creating opportunities for the town to become a more attractive investment for small and medium scale office development. New office developments attracted to Biggleswade will in turn impact back on the town centre, creating a reciprocal and positive cycle, increasing footfall and the economic performance of the town centre across all sectors.

3.3.3.5 To capture the opportunity it will be critical to identify areas/ sites capable of being developed or redeveloped/ reconfigured with modern employment space which has appropriate floorspace, storage and servicing to meet current occupier demands.



3.3.3.6 There may also be opportunities to engage incentive based schemes such as reduced rents or rent free periods for specific types of users. A targeted marketing campaign towards the type of high quality businesses which are appropriate to the Biggleswade demographic will assist in attracting more employment to the town centre.

3.3.3.7 The demographic profile of people in Biggleswade, well educated and professional, further supports opportunities for the growth of new businesses in the knowledge economies.



3.3.4 Live

3.3.4.1 The vast majority (87%) of dwellings in Biggleswade are houses, fitting with the older and family orientated population. Whilst house prices have fallen in the recent market downturn, they have generally fared better than the national averages, in particular in the terraced and semi detached housing markets.

3.3.4.2 There are currently only a limited number of residents living within the defined town centre, primarily in residential properties on Saffron Road and Station Road, and in properties above or to the rear of retail/ commercial premises. However there are many properties primarily on the southern boundary around the River Ivel, Hitchin Street South and St Andrews Street which do have a close association with the town centre.

3.3.4.3 Looking forward to 2018 and beyond it is predicted that there will be higher than average numbers of people in the 55+ age bracket. People in this age group often look for opportunities to downsize and also live closer to services and facilities. In choosing where to live, the environmental qualities and amenity issues will need to be attractive and these will need to be enhanced to improve the potential offer. The type of accommodation may include sheltered accommodation and smaller houses and apartments more suited to those over the age of 55. This will lead to opportunities to bring forward development which will allow for both young and older generations to remain in Biggleswade in a vibrant and successful town centre.

3.3.4.4 Residential development has a role to play in ensuring the long term future of the town centre. It will add vibrancy, increase security, and assist in supporting the evening economy. In addition residential development can provide the financial backbone to ensure scheme viability, and could potentially offer long term opportunities to deliver additional retail/ commercial space through mixed use development.

3.3.5 Visit

3.3.5.1 Biggleswade currently does not maximise its opportunities as a visitor destination, despite the quality of its physical environment, strong independent retail sector, visitor attractions or links to the countryside.

3.3.5.2 Interest from operators suggests that the town would be a suitable location for an expanded hotel accommodation offer due to its location on the A1 highway.

3.3.5.3 As part of the strategy for inward investment the town centre can exploit this demand by improving existing facilities and services which would appeal to visitors from outside the immediate district in the short to medium term. In the long term, provision of a new hotel or other forms of accommodation within the town centre itself should be sought as a priority.

3.3.5.4 Wayfinding/signage and tourist information would also assist, as would improved linkages to the proposed Biggleswade Green Wheel, developed as part of the Green Infrastructure Plan.



3.3.6 A well connected place

3.3.6.1 Biggleswade town centre is well connected to the local and wider area with train links to London and Peterborough, good bus links, location on the A1 giving easy access from the road network, and a flat landscape making walking and cycling easy.

3.3.6.2 Within a short drive time of Biggleswade there are a number of significant centres including St Neots (18 mins), Letchworth (19 mins), Bedford (23 mins) and Hitchin (23 mins). Luton, Cambridge and Milton Keynes are within 45 mins drive time.

3.3.6.3 The town centre itself currently is the hub of these connections but can sometimes become congested. This is due to a number of factors:

- / the physical constriction from the layout of the town between the river and the railway line which can cause vehicular congestion;
- / lack of direct linkage between public transport services specifically bus and rail;
- / a public realm which has become cluttered and unfriendly to cyclists and pedestrians; and
- / a lack of effective management of car parking in order to facilitate access.

3.3.6.4 Delivery of the objectives outlined in the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan will provide an opportunity to improve traffic flow in the town centre through both physical and management interventions to ensure long term connectivity into, within and through Biggleswade town centre. It can also ensure appropriate parking and servicing to support its growth. Opportunities also exist to enhance public transport and cycling as an alternative and more sustainable method of movement to reduce reliance on the car.

3.3.6.5 There is also an opportunity to make it easier to walk to and around the town centre, which is relatively compact; walking time from the station to the market for example is less than two minutes.

3.3.7 A town centre with character

3.3.7.1 Analysis of the physical character of Biggleswade town centre clearly illustrates that the town centre is of historical interest and generally a high quality environment. There are a number of Listed Buildings and much of the masterplan area lies within a designated Conservation Area (see Figure 02).

3.3.7.2 There is however scope to enhance certain parts of the town centre further to secure the town centre as a quality place for people to spend time.

3.3.8 A centre for public services

3.3.8.1 Biggleswade is identified within the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy (November 2009) as a Major Service Centre, with a service provision role not only for its own residents, but also surrounding smaller centres.

3.3.8.2 The town centre already provides a hub for the provision of public services. This includes customer service and information provision from Central Bedfordshire Council and the Town Council as well as healthcare and library services.

3.3.8.3 The incorporation of such facilities alongside retail, banking and other specialist customer facing services provides for a town centre that is vibrant and attractive to prospective new businesses as well as residents, shoppers and other visitors.

3.3.8.4 The masterplan should therefore, where possible, identify opportunities for the provision of improved facilities where appropriate and a broader range of public services in the town centre to both retain easy access for all users (including those without access to a private car) and to enable the town centre to benefit from the increased footfall created by these facilities.

3.3.8.6 The location of such facilities should be carefully considered to ensure that the primary shopping function of the town centre is safeguarded and enhanced by their provision within the town centre.



3.4 Current and future town centre regeneration issues

3.4.1 The preparation of this Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan has been undertaken against the backdrop of unprecedented financial change which has in turn had a huge impact on the development industry. The speed of the change and the depth of the fall and resulting recession in 2009 were precipitated by unique circumstances within the banking sector which have no precedent within previous periods of financial instability in the UK.

3.4.2 Biggleswade town centre has however weathered the financial storm particularly well, with shop closures and vacancy rates remaining relatively low. Whilst Biggleswade was undoubtedly affected by the recession by the closure of national operators such as Woolworths, the vacant units, unlike many other towns and cities, were quickly taken up by other retailers.

3.4.3 Biggleswade therefore has a very solid economic base from which to build and broaden its economy into the future as the wider national economy recovers.

3.4.5 The strengths of the town centre, such as its high quality public spaces, growing residential population, large independent sector and historic setting provide it with key assets that if used effectively can aid measures to address some of the weaker elements of the town centre. These weaker elements can be summarised as:

- / The lack of available suitable space for larger retail operators focused on fashion and non bulky comparison goods
- / Presence of several derelict and under-utilised sites on the edges of the historic centre
- / Limited mid to late evening economy
- / Leakage of comparison shopping spend to nearby competing centres
- / The balance of quality shopping facilities with the lower end of the market currently more dominant
- / The size of the town centre and its range of shops and facilities to attract a longer stay and increased spend

3.4.6 By ensuring that an over arching Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan is in place that is deliverable and focused on addressing such weaknesses, then Biggleswade can begin to position itself more effectively in the market in areas where it can compete and prosper.



3.4.7 The UK Economy

3.4.7.1 The UK's longest and deepest recession came to an end in the final three months of 2009. Growth since this time, however, has continued to be weak in both the UK and other developed western economies.

3.4.7.2 With the economic recovery likely to remain exceptionally fragile in the short to medium term both investor and consumer confidence is at historically low points.

3.4.7.3 This new economic environment will clearly have an impact on new development within our town centres. The delivery of regeneration schemes in the next three to five years will be extremely challenging particularly in secondary centres such as Biggleswade. Public sectors cuts or efficiency savings in this period have the potential to exacerbate this situation. Potential exists for a disproportionate impact on the housing markets populated by high numbers of low earning public sector employees.

3.4.7.4 In implementation and delivery Central Bedfordshire will need to co-ordinate targeted key actions to assist with stimulating economic growth. It may be for example that the town may need to rebrand itself, for example as a destination for niche or specialist shopping.

3.4.8 Residential

3.4.8.1 In respect of the residential sector, economic data suggests that in the short term the mainstream housing market currently faces the prospect of a period of low/zero growth or small price falls. Beyond this immediate period, however, the trajectory of house prices is expected to be upward due to the underlying inflationary pressures created by an under supply of homes in high demand areas such as Biggleswade. The relative stability of housing prices in Biggleswade as compared to other areas reinforces the view that Biggleswade is a popular and highly desirable location to live in. This was a view that was strongly supported by the feedback received at the masterplan consultation events.

3.4.8.2 In the short term, with slow growth in the economy and housing market, there will be challenges in generating investment for the regeneration of the town centre. However there is a strong commitment by the Council to ensuring future growth of the town is balanced with further investment into the town centre. Where the council is able to it will work with all partners from the public and private sectors to bring forward proposals which sustain and provide enhancement and growth in the town centre.

3.4.9 Commercial

3.4.9.1 Biggleswade town centre is relatively well placed to provide growth in commercial development due to its accessibility and availability of development sites.

3.4.9.2 With the recent change in Government there has been much focus on how public sector austerity

will hit some regions more than others. The ongoing budget cuts being undertaken by the Government will no doubt have an effect on the ability of the public sector to deliver regeneration and services within or close to the town centre. The town centre however is not overly dominated by public sector services and as such will be more reliant on the private sector to bring forward employment opportunities.

3.4.9.3 The masterplan has recognised the sustainable regeneration benefits of a balanced mix of uses and has identified a range of potential sites which could accommodate office development of a range of scales and formats, including bespoke offices to smaller mixed use development including flexible office space.

3.4.9.4 The provision of high quality office space, with appropriate parking facilities within the town centre will assist in the creation of new jobs for people in the town as well as support inward commuting, both of which will support the local economy and raise the profile of Biggleswade.



3.4.10 Retail

3.4.10.1 With unemployment, at least in certain regions of the UK not predicted to fall very fast over the next few years, job, income and house price uncertainty will all weigh heavily on consumer confidence and spending. In part because of this, it is clear that consumer confidence is going to vary significantly at a local level depending on that area's level of dependence on the public sector. Biggleswade has managed to trade relatively well in the downturn and Estates Gazette Town Survey has identified a continued demand from national operators through this period. With a relatively low dependency on the public sector for employment, consumer confidence in the town should be less affected than other areas. These factors should assist in helping Biggleswade to attract the investment necessary to deliver the improvements outlined within the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan.

3.4.10.2 The current issues in the wider retail market can be summarised as follows (Source: Savills, Shopping Centre and High Street Bulletin 2010):

- / Consumer confidence is likely to remain weak and volatile until the full impacts of tax rises and spending cuts have been absorbed. The decision of the Government to phase cuts over the next four years will assist in minimising this impact.
- / The occupational market remains polarised between prime and non-prime locations, with steady retailer demand for the former.
- / Whilst Biggleswade may not have capacity to compete against some of the larger centres in the area, the masterplan will identify opportunities to improve both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of shopping in the town centre to respond to more local shopping and leisure requirements.

- / Investor demand for shopping centres and high street shops has slackened slightly over the last quarter. There is still competition for the best assets in the best locations. The historic character and accessibility of Biggleswade and its town centre make it a very good location for retail investment.
- / There is a demand for large format retail units in accessible locations.
- / There may also be opportunities in responding to this demand to reconfigure existing retail centres, such as Biggleswade Town Centre to provide a complementary role to edge of centre or out of town shopping.



3.5 Conclusions

3.5.1 At the time of writing it is clear that in the short term commercial lending and development will only take place in areas which can offer certainty and stability. They will be focused in areas which continue to perform well and where risk is minimised.

3.5.2 The review of the regeneration issues affecting Biggleswade highlight that by comparison to many other similar market towns it has a number of assets which define the opportunities for investment and growth. In conclusion these are as follows:

- / The Council is supportive of improvement and growth of the town centre and recognises the issues affecting its potential for regeneration. The production of the Town Centre Strategy & Masterplan shows its commitment moving forward.
- / The town and its centre is well located for easy access by road and rail which provides the opportunity for greater footfall in the town centre to support commercial and retail growth.
- / The economic profile of the town indicates a higher level of social class (AB) which has a greater income that could be spent in the town centre if the shops and facilities can respond to the demands of this profile. This will include opportunities for a higher quality range of shops, restaurants and activities in the town centre. There is an identified shortfall in comparison shopping in the town centre as opposed to services compared to other similar towns and hence has scope to accommodate growth in this area.
- / There is an identified demand for more mid market multiples in the town centre alongside the mid market independent shops to provide a higher quality town centre.
- / There are identified requirements for retail space within the town centre from a range of operators. If the building conditions and lease arrangements can be met then these can support the growth and improvement of the town centre in the short term.
- / Despite the market conditions there has still been growth in clothing and household goods, both of which there are identified opportunities for additional provision in the town centre.
- / The town centre itself is an attractive environment providing a unique sense of place within which to shop, live and spend time. The historic character is a real asset in supporting the role of shopping and dining as part of a visitor experience.
- / The short term economic stability of Biggleswade is fairly robust at present due to its lack of exposure to public sector cuts compared to other locations nationally.



04 Vision

4.1 The vision

The vision for the Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan is:

'Biggleswade town centre will be a confident, distinctive and sustainable destination'



Figure 05 / Vision of Biggleswade town centre



4.2 Strategic objectives

4.2.1 To achieve the vision a number of objectives have been agreed through both consultation with key stakeholders and engagement with the local community.

4.2.2 These objectives have been categorised into four groups, living and working, playing, environment and moving. This approach has been taken to assist in clarifying the way in which people use the town centre and how they can be measured.

4.2.3 Appendix A provides a series of local development principles which build on the policies contained within the Core Strategy and respond to these strategic objectives.

4.2.4 When preparing and submitting planning proposals and in making planning decisions these Local Development Principles will be a material consideration as they form part of the Local Development Framework.

4.2.5 Living & Working

- / Biggleswade will be the destination of choice for everyday shopping and local services for its residents and those of the surrounding villages.
- / Biggleswade will become a vibrant centre known for niche shopping which combined with its leisure and cultural offer will provide a base from which more visitors choose to explore the Bedfordshire area.
- / The redevelopment of key sites within the town centre will improve the quality and quantity of facilities including shopping, restaurants, community facilities and car parking.
- / The town centre economy will be focused around convenience and fashion/ comparison retail and service provision which complements the bulky comparison goods offer available on the edge of the town.



4.2.6 Playing

- / Local people of all ages will feel included in the life of the town through the provision of more inclusive community and leisure facilities. Residents will enjoy good standards of health and access from the town into the wider countryside will encourage outdoor recreation.
- / The town will be a safe and friendly place to live, and the town centre will be a desirable place to socialise by all age groups. The town will define itself as an 'Event Location', known as a destination for local leisure, cultural and arts activities throughout the year, and as a location of seasonal events, building on its successful Market and Carnival.
- / It will be the destination of choice for both local residents and those looking for an alternative to large town centres due to its ease of access and character quality, and will fully exploit the 'visitor economy' with a greater percentage of retail spend directly supporting the local economy.



4.2.7 Environment

- / Biggleswade will preserve and develop its unique character to create a unique visitor destination utilising key buildings, the public realm and the spaces in the town centre to complement its retail and services offer. This will focus predominantly around the Market Square, High Street and Hitchin Street as the core area of activity in the town centre.
- / The town centre will comprise a range of flexible buildings and spaces which can adapt and respond to the existing and future markets. Change in the built environment will provide positive enhancements and will be seen as an opportunity.
- / The town centre will promote sustainable lifestyle and design choices, through visibly promoting recycling, sustainable buildings, renewable energy and attractive sustainable transport opportunities, including linking into the wider town and countryside including the Ivel Valley.

4.2.8 Moving

- / Biggleswade town centre will be the transport hub for the local area. Sustainable transport solutions will be promoted through a joined up approach to movement allowing easy use access to public transport options.
- / Walking and cycling will be encouraged as a way for residents to access the town centre.
- / Car parks will be sustained and better managed to promote easy access and economic vitality and their management will improve their efficiency.
- / Biggleswade will be a place where residents and visitors are able to move around easily in an environment which is safe and attractive.

4.3 Overarching principles

4.3.1 Design

4.3.1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to delivering high quality new development throughout the district including Biggleswade Town Centre. The Core Strategy highlights that:

“Raising the design quality of new buildings, developments and the public realm of streets, parks and open spaces is essential to the future quality of life for residents. It is particularly important that local character is reinforced by locally distinctive new development.”

4.3.1.2 Core Strategy Policy DM3 sets out the key requirements for new development in the district.

Policy DM3: High Quality Development

All proposals for new development, including extensions will:

- / be appropriate in scale and design to their setting
- / contribute positively to creating a sense of place and respect local distinctiveness through design and use of materials
- / use land efficiently
- / use energy efficiently
- / respect the amenity of surrounding properties
- / enhance community safety
- / comply with the current guidance on noise, waste management, vibration, odour, water, light and airborne pollution
- / incorporate appropriate access and linkages, including provision for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport
- / provide adequate areas for parking and servicing
- / provide hard and soft landscaping appropriate in scale and design to the development and its setting
- / incorporate public art in line with the thresholds determined by the Planning Obligations Strategy
- / ensure that public buildings are accessible for all,

and comply with current guidance on accessibility to other buildings

- / respect and complement the context and setting of all historically sensitive sites particularly those that are designated

4.3.1.3 In relation to the town centre area there are a number of specific design objectives:

- / Biggleswade Town Centre Conservation Area will be preserved and enhanced, including through a number of specific enhancement measures in this strategy. There will be a presumption in favour of retention of buildings and features of historic or architectural interest.
- / All new buildings should provide a clear interface between the private and public realms including, where appropriate semi public/ private spaces to provide activity to the street such as sitting out areas, canopies etc.
- / All new spaces and routes within the town centre should be well lit, overlooked and secure.
- / All building and landscape materials should be drawn from a limited palette with variety in design and detail used to define character.
- / Shopfront designs and shop signage should preserve the character of the town centre. The loss of original shop front designs will be resisted and the removal of inappropriate shop fronts and signs and restoration of original shop fronts will be encouraged.
- / Buildings and spaces must be designed to allow for easy maintenance and management.
- / Design solutions should provide flexibility to allow for change in response to future markets and alternative uses.
- / Within Biggleswade town centre the fine grain approach towards development should be retained to retain its historical integrity. Large scale buildings

and developments should be at a human scale and avoid large mass buildings. Buildings should not be greater than 3 storeys in height in the town centre area.

4.3.1.4 Appendix A includes Local Development Principles relating to Design & Heritage.

4.3.2 Community Safety

4.3.2.1 A key objective of the regeneration of the town centre area is to create a safe and welcoming environment. It is essential to encourage people to feel secure and reduce opportunities for crime.

4.3.2.2 The public realm should be well defined, with buildings fronting onto the streets providing overlooking. Front doors and windows should animate the street frontages with minimal blank facades.

4.3.2.3 Spaces and routes should be attractive to pedestrians to encourage a human presence in the town centre. Mixing the uses in the town centre, particularly at ground floor level will also assist in adding vitality at different times of the day and night.

4.3.2.4 Landscape and building design should not provide opportunities to screen or hide potential assailants or illegal activities.

4.3.2.5 The design of places which are well lit for pedestrians, with particular care given to vehicle/pedestrian conflict points will assist in making the town centre safer and unthreatening, but care will be needed to avoid unnecessary light pollution.

4.3.3 Shared Space

4.3.3.1 Within the core town centre area, including Market Square, Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane area and Hitchin Street, opportunities for improving the town centre environment for all users should be encouraged.

4.3.3.2 One such way in which this could be achieved is through the use of 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.

4.3.3.3 Case studies elsewhere show shared space 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 and when schemes come forward. In the short term a pilot scheme could be developed in Hitchin Street (between Market Square and Mill Street section) which if successful could be extended further. In Biggleswade town centre there are several areas that could benefit from this concept. These include not only Hitchin Street but also the Market Square and the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas.

05 Transportation strategy

5.1 The transportation strategy reflects the Biggleswade and Sandy Local Area Transport Plan which sets out a series of local initiatives that will assist in the delivery of the masterplan. This section sets out the relevant background to the transportation strategy together with proposals for car parking, public transport, walking and cycling.



5.2 Biggleswade Local Area Transport Plan

5.2.1 The Biggleswade and Sandy Local Area Transport Plan (LATP) forms part of the Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for Central Bedfordshire and provides a framework for investment in transport in the period between April 2011 and March 2026. It is the primary means through which improvements to the Biggleswade transportation network and the wider area can be made.

5.2.2 The Local Area Transport Plan is informed by a series of 'journey purpose themes' which set out the high level, strategic approach to addressing travel behaviour in Central Bedfordshire, and supporting strategies focusing on specific issues in relation to walking, cycling, parking, public transport provision and road safety within the LTP3 framework. The LATP is also informed by local 'strategies' including not only this document but also the Biggleswade Town Plan.

5.2.3 As the LATP encompasses a far broader area than just the town centre, it is an essential tool through which significant town centre issues that originate outside of the town centre boundary can be addressed. This includes considerations such as the routing of freight traffic for example, as well as significant infrastructure improvements.

5.2.4 In the long term it is important that town centre transport issues are appropriately considered by such broader strategic plans. In the case of the Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan, the key outcomes that will be focused on will include:

- / Reducing congestion and the impact of freight transport and A1 vehicular movements on the town centre transport network
- / Increasing public transport provision and usage for connections to and from other towns and villages
- / Enhancing passenger facilities and the provision of disabled access at Biggleswade Railway Station

5.2.5 Consequently, for those considering the broader view of the Biggleswade transport network then this document should be read in conjunction with the latest version of the LTP3 and the Biggleswade and Sandy Local Area Transport Plan which it incorporates.

5.3 Walking

5.3.1 The principal walking routes in the town centre are along the main part of the High Street, Hitchin Street and the Market Place. There are also a number of key connecting routes which lead to the station area, car parks and other areas of activity. These routes include Station Road, Mill Lane, Abbots Walk, Palace Street, Saffron Road, Chapel Fields and the link between the Market Square and Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area adjacent to the New Inn Public House on the Market Square.

5.3.2 Biggleswade including the town centre is relatively flat and with the compact nature of the town centre and good public transport links to connect to the wider area, walking should be encouraged where possible.

5.3.3 There are a number of initiatives proposed as part of the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan which will assist in promoting walking.

- / Improvements to public realm to improve the physical environment of the town centre
- / Improved lighting to pedestrian areas
- / Transport management to promote improved use of public transport to get into the town centre
- / Improved signage and information for pedestrians
- / Potential for shared space within Hitchin Street and town centre to provide level surfaces and also give priority to pedestrians over vehicles
- / Create activity within the town centre at street level and at all times of the day to provide passive surveillance to the public areas

5.4 Cycling

5.4.1 Biggleswade has a long history in cycling being the home of Dan Albone the inventor of the Ivel Safety Cycle and winner of many cycle races in the late 19th century. With its flat terrain Biggleswade is an ideal town to be explored by bicycle.

5.4.2 In 2009 Central Bedfordshire Council commissioned Sustrans to develop a comprehensive cycling network design for all towns and villages within the authority area including Biggleswade. In preparing the Biggleswade network design, the study adopted a consistent philosophy of identifying possible links between the trip generators and took account of future development areas, new infrastructure including additions to the cycle network and changes to the local cycle strategy.

5.4.3 The following initiatives are included in a range of projects identified through the masterplan to support the delivery of the local cycle strategy.

5.4.4 Junction Improvements

Where possible, opportunities will be taken to improve provision for cyclists as part of planned junction improvements in the town centre.

5.4.5 Wayfinding & Signage

The masterplan includes a recommendation for improved signage and wayfinding which should include information specifically for cyclists including the location of major cycle parking facilities and key cycle routes such as NCN 12.

5.4.6 Extended and Improved Cycle Parking

5.4.6.1 The Public Realm Materials Palette (Appendix B) promotes the provision of cycle parking within all public spaces and as a requirement for all new development. The Public Realm Materials Palette indicates the cycle parking furniture which should be used to create a joined up approach across the town centre. This includes a recommendation for the retention of some existing large decorative cycle stands to ensure consistency and increase the amount of parking available without having a negative impact on the visual amenity of the public realm.

5.4.6.2 In addition to quality basic parking facilities the masterplan also identifies Biggleswade Train Station and the Market Square as key locations for highly visible, secure, long term cycle parking suitable for use by commuters and those employed in the town centre.

5.4.7 Accessing the town centre

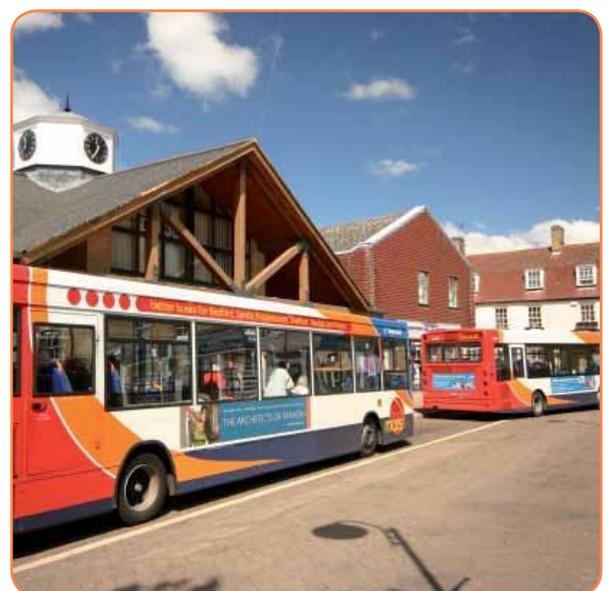
5.4.7.1 Opportunities to improve access to the town centre for cyclists will be taken where possible.

5.5 Public Transport

5.5.1 The town centre is well served by public transport at present, although there is an opportunity to create greater connectivity between modes including rail and bus services.

5.5.2 A simple re-routing of the buses with a terminus at the station together with provision of better information and facilities for the users of public transport should improve access to the town centre, and reduce the number of regular car journeys. Improvements will also support the continued commuting requirements of the town both inwards and outwards.

5.5.3 It will be important that bus stops/ pickups are provided within the town centre area for accessibility reasons.



5.5.4 Bus routing - Transport Hub

5.5.4.1 The strategy proposes the re-routing of bus services which currently pass through the Market Square, to include Biggleswade Station in the future, via Station Road. This will allow commuters easy access to the station by bus, reducing the need to drive and park within Biggleswade when commuting. It will also allow residents who wish to travel outside of Biggleswade easy access to the train station, avoiding the need to be dropped off at the station by car or to make long stay parking arrangements. Finally it will provide better facilities for the elderly and disabled to access the station directly rather than from the Market Square.

5.5.4.2 In order to facilitate the enhanced bus route it will be necessary to provide an area to accommodate waiting buses at the Transport Interchange rather than around Century House (as per the existing arrangement) and allowing buses to pick up from stops in the town centre area. There will be a number of benefits arising from the removal of bus waiting requirements in the Market Square including improving Century House and its environs, making it available for alternative uses. It will also assist in improving pedestrian safety in the Market Square and on the High Street.

5.5.5 Bus Improvements

5.5.5.1 In addition to the rerouting of the bus service, provision of improved bus timetable information at all town centre bus stops should be prioritised. In the medium to the longer term this could be further enhanced by real time bus information. Both activities will assist in making public transport a more attractive alternative to the private car.

5.5.5.2 The re-routing of buses requires a range of alterations to the public realm which include:

- / The provision of a turning circle, bus stands and shelters within the station concourse as part of the Transport Interchange proposals, to facilitate

passenger drop off/ pick up and bus waiting/ layovers. This is proposed by Key Area 6 in the long term. A short term solution to provide bus turning at the station is also proposed.

- / Provision of appropriate bus stop to service the town centre area.
- / Provision of real time bus information as part of improvements to public transport

5.6 Car Parking

5.6.1 The principal aim of the car parking strategy is to provide car parking in the town centre in a way which supports the vitality of the area and making it accessible to all.

5.6.2 This section of the document identifies the key issues affecting car parking in the town centre and proposes positive responses for each type of parking user in the town centre.

5.6.3 The car parking strategy aims to maintain a balance of on street and dedicated off street public parking spaces within the town centre. This approach aims to maximise the parking capacity and allow for greater provision during the peak times by making on street car parking restricted during weekdays and Saturdays. This will assist in meeting the shopping and leisure demands of the town centre.

5.6.4 The strategy supports the purchase of car parks by local authorities as appropriate and the creation of an overall management approach across all car parks in the town centre in conjunction with the Town Council.

5.6.5 The priorities and objectives outlined in the SPD are intended to be used as a basis for the Biggleswade section of the broader Central Bedfordshire Parking Strategy which is presently being developed.

5.6.6 Key issues affecting parking within the town centre

There are a number of key issues which currently affect car parking in the town centre:

- / A combination of free, unrestricted length and limited penalties across the majority of centre of town leads to a 'first in stays' approach to parking by employees and commuters. These spaces are generally used for long stay purposes which reduce the total capacity of the town centre to provide short stay spaces close to the principal shopping areas.
- / Unpenalised parking on residential streets leads to use by commuters, which overlap with residential requirements (there is a small element of resident only parking now implemented on Saffron Road). This causes conflict with residential users and the problems are often shifted around the town centre rather than managed.
- / Long stay car parks are generally not well lit, poorly surfaced, and not laid out to optimise parking provision, predominately due to land ownership issues.
- / There is a lack or prioritisation of central parking for shoppers/ visitors which leads to circulation of traffic 'looking for a space', causing congestion in the town centre. This can also put off users of the town centre from returning.
- / Lack of central ownership and management of town centre car parks has led to uncertainty about the quality and capacity of future parking provision
- / The majority of car parks available within Biggleswade town centre are in private ownership. Because of this there is a significant risk in the long term that public car parking provision could be lost to development or other uses.
- / Central Bedfordshire Council working with Biggleswade Town Council should seek to identify ways in which security of car parking provision can be improved. This will involve making full use of all the tools at our disposal, including the planning system and potential long term acquisition of key sites (funding permitting).

5.6.7 Key Priorities

In securing improved car parking in the town centre the following priorities have been identified:

- / To reduce commuter and long stay (employee) parking on residential streets and in spaces in the central area
- / To address demand for unrestricted long-stay (employee) parking in the town centre generally in managed car parks
- / To improve quality, safety and accessibility of long-stay off-street parking areas in edge of centre locations to ensure they are fit for use
- / To ensure adequate parking provision for residents at all times
- / To ensure provision (turnover) of short/ medium stay shopper/ visitor parking in the central core area
- / To safeguard existing levels of car parking provision
- / To encourage the provision of more car parking to improve the town's viability
- / Prioritise use of new innovative technologies such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) in management and monitoring of car parking spaces and turnover.

Figure o6/ Proposed types of car parking zones within the town centre

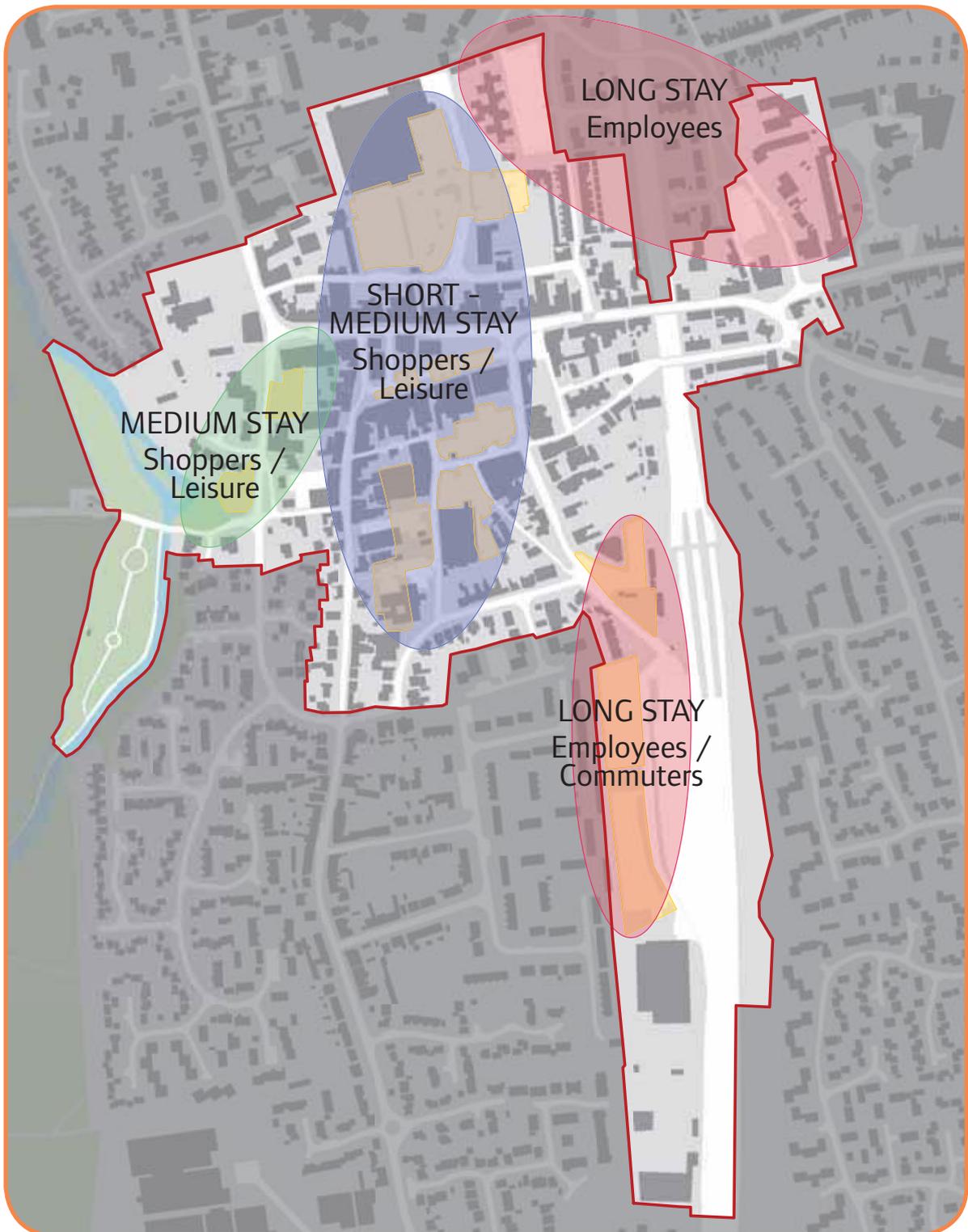
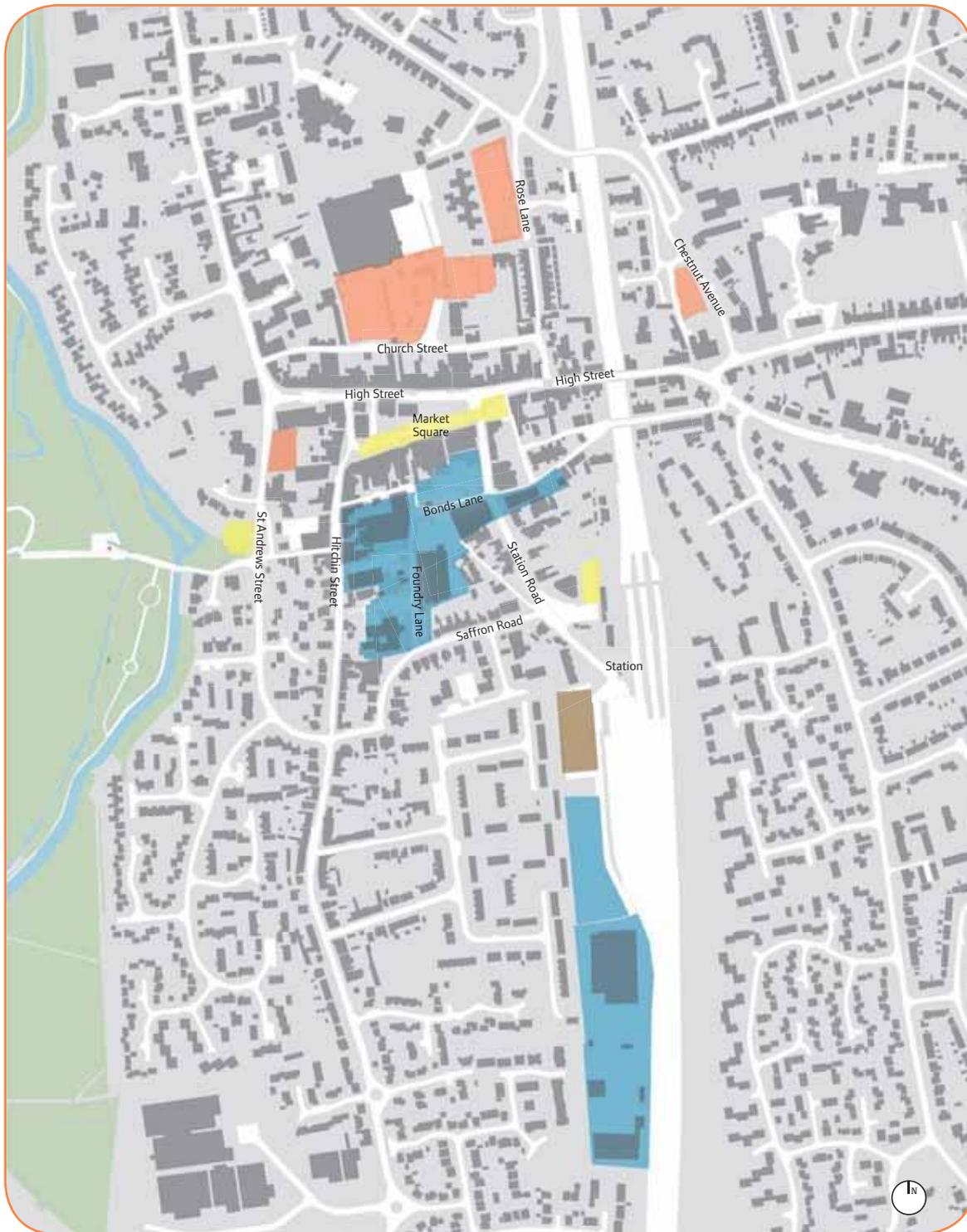


Figure 07/ Existing and potential future car parking locations



-  Existing car parking site
-  Parking incorporated into new development
-  Parking with public realm improvements
-  New decked car park on existing surface car park

5.6.8 Car parking strategy

5.6.8.1 The car parking strategy is shown on Figures 6 and 7 and aims to manage and provide for the following car parking users.

5.6.8.2 Short Stay - Shoppers

- / An extension of resident-only areas: This will provide on-street car parking for residents of the town centre using a permit basis to discourage informal use by commuters and office workers. In addition residential streets will also provide short stay (2 hrs) free parking for non-residents between 9am and 4pm on weekdays to provide additional shopper/ visitor spaces.
- / Continued use of double yellow lines to prevent parking and loading in restricted areas to ensure traffic circulation is not compromised.
- / Greater enforcement of unauthorised car parking.

5.6.8.3 Medium Stay - Shoppers and Leisure Users

- / Provision of medium-stay parking (up to 4 hrs) near the town centre for longer visits. This parking could be free of charge initially, but in future there could be a moderate charge for longer stays if considered appropriate.
- / Improvement to car parking facilities adjacent to the River Ivel.

5.6.8.4 Long Stay - Employees and Leisure Users

- / Improvements to informal long-stay parking on Rose Lane to provide parking for those working in the town centre, with moderate charges for stays over 2 hrs. Rose Lane car park could continue to provide free parking for residents/ shoppers/ leisure users in the evenings and at weekends. Length of stay (weekdays) restricted to 8.5 hrs to deter use by commuters.

5.6.8.5 Extra Stay – Commuters

- / Focus on provision of the currently under-used Network Rail Car Park, and removal of on-street parking opportunities in residential streets in the town centre through time restrictions and use of

penalties.

- / Long term opportunity to deck the existing Railway Car Park to provide additional secure commuter and shopper parking.
- / Rationalisation of car parking provision at Biggleswade Rail Station.

5.6.8.6 Additional Town Centre Car Parking Facilities

- / The provision of a significant new town centre car park (surface or decked) to support growth in the town centre. This provision will include new and improved car parking areas in the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area, Hitchin Street and Franklins Recreation Ground area. The provision of car parking will be combined with other retail led mixed use development.
- / No parking spaces should be removed without an equivalent replacement elsewhere in the town centre being made available.

5.6.8.7 Other Opportunities

- / Provision of free 20 min drop off/ pick up bays at the train station to maintain a continued availability of car parking provision.
- / Improved provision of secure cycle parking in key locations to encourage cycling as a way of accessing the centre and station for residents.
- / Improved connection between bus and train services making public transport a more attractive option for commuters.
- / Improvement to road signage to direct drivers to the most appropriate car parking location.

06 The Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan

6.1 Comprehensive and co-ordinated development

6.1.1 This Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan provides an overall framework with which to enhance Biggleswade town centre so that it is able to meet the needs of those who visit, work and live here both now and in the future.

6.1.2 The town centre in its present form is a historic and attractive place that is economically successful. It has a strong independent retailer and services sector and good quality public spaces with good transport links. However, Biggleswade is undergoing significant population growth and careful planning is required if this growth is to provide opportunities instead of greater pressure on local facilities and infrastructure.

6.1.3 This masterplan has been developed with the twin objectives of maximising the opportunities of this growth in a co-ordinated fashion whilst ensuring all that is good about Biggleswade is safeguarded.

6.1.4 The implementation of this Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan will enable a better town centre more able to meet the needs of those who use it. It will help to strengthen the Biggleswade offer and facilitate an increased role as a destination for shopping, leisure and business activity.

6.1.5 The opportunities identified by this masterplan provide guidance as to how Biggleswade could be improved in a comprehensive fashion. This information can be used by the local community, businesses and other stakeholders or investors to help bring about change and improvement in a co-ordinated way.

6.1.6 By taking a comprehensive approach to development, a greater critical mass can be generated which can unlock new facilities or improvements that would not be achievable in isolation. This principle of co-ordinating such improvements or development therefore underpins our entire approach to improving Biggleswade town centre.

6.1.7 The Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan provides the technical guidance and solutions for

the improvement and regeneration of the town centre. This is the framework that seeks to ensure that individual projects work together to provide the comprehensive approach to development that we desire.

6.1.8 This section sets out the approach to the key areas within the town centre, demonstrating the cumulative impact of short, medium and long term projects in both the public realm and the built form. In addition it also sets out the delivery requirements for identified key sites where new buildings or development offer opportunities to improve the physical, commercial, and community offer of the town centre.

6.2 The illustrative Town Centre Masterplan

6.2.1 It is important to emphasise that the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan is a vehicle to guide and promote renewal, redevelopment and improvement of the town centre. It is not a blueprint. It aims to guide developers and public sector organisations as to what the Council would like to see happen in the town centre. It needs to set out important guiding principles but there must be flexibility to enable market led solutions to come forward and be considered. The proposals included in the masterplan are illustrative only. As most of the town centre is in private ownership, the nature and timing of actual proposals will be largely private sector led.

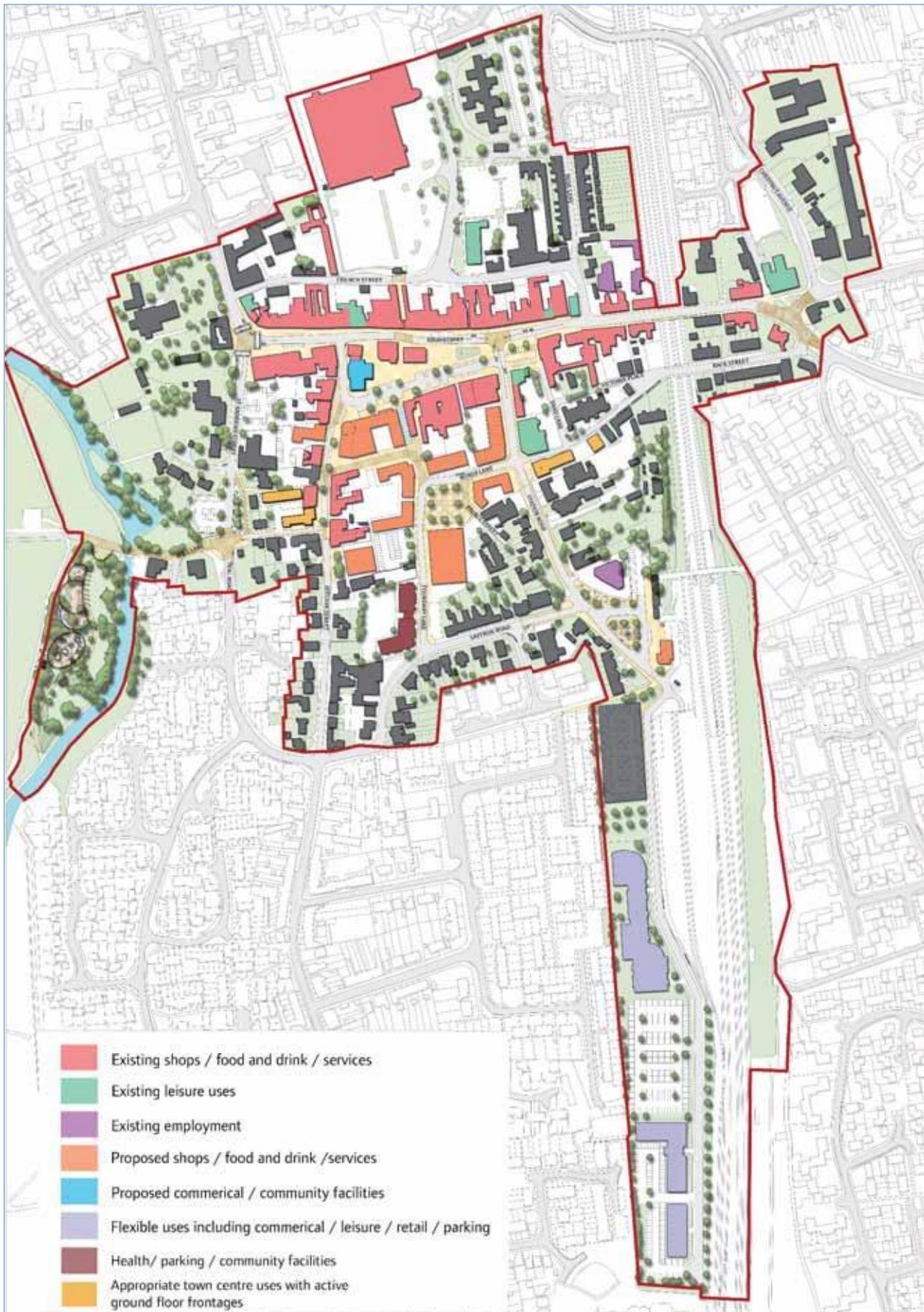
6.2.2 The masterplan is a spatial plan which identifies areas of land and individual sites within the town centre. It has two primary roles in this process:

1. To help identify the potential of the area and a number of sites for development.
2. To guide the three dimensional form of the place in response to the physical character, economic, environmental and social dynamics.

6.2.3 The masterplan for the town centre provides the opportunity to deliver the following key elements:

/ A comprehensive long term approach to the

Figure 08 / Illustrative Town Centre Masterplan



Note: Figure 8 is indicative.

development of the town centre by focusing delivery on key character areas which can be brought forward in a phased manner.

- / A responsive approach to development taking into account current and future market conditions.
- / A mix of uses including housing, retail, commercial and leisure delivered by the redevelopment of a number of key sites in the town centre.
- / Potential for up to circa 19,400 sqm net gain of floor space (town centre uses), which could comprise leisure or retail which will meet the current and future demands for the growth of the town in addition to increasing the number of people visiting the town centre.
- / A high quality public realm and built form which complements the attractive character of the historic centre.
- / Embedding sustainable transport provision within the town centre and improving the ability to interchange between different modes of travel.
- / Sufficient car parking to accommodate future growth and ensure that it supports the vitality of the town and allows access for all at all times.

6.3 Key opportunity areas

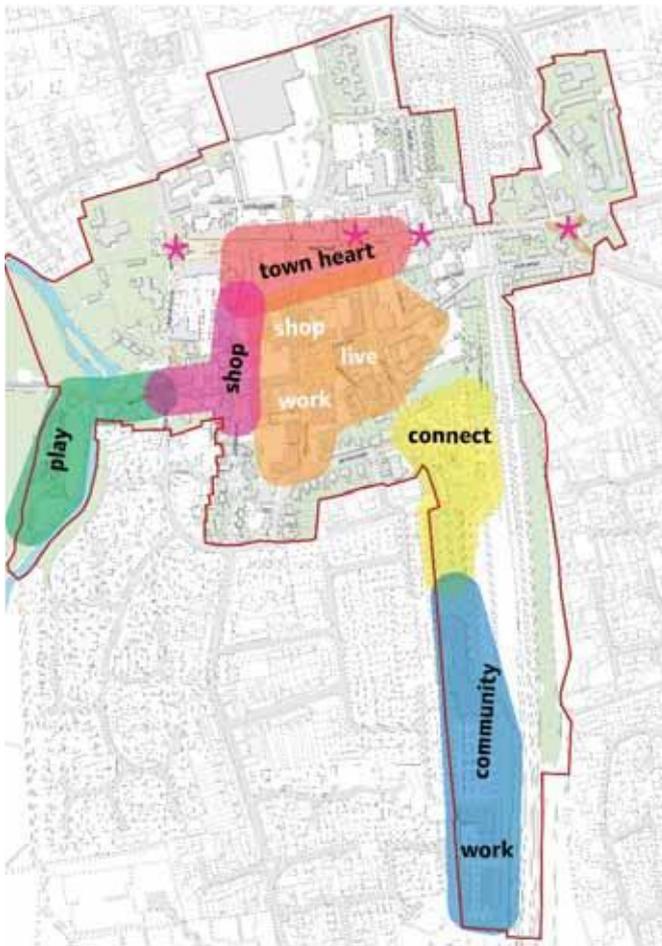
6.3.1 The masterplan has been broken down into seven key areas which focus on the regeneration of individual parts of the town centre. This approach has been taken to break the comprehensive masterplan down into deliverable projects and is shown on Figure 09.

6.3.2 The components, including site development, public realm improvements and transport management, have been developed to provide a co-ordinated response for each key area, whilst contributing to the delivery of the whole masterplan.

6.3.3 They have been designed to allow each key area to come forward independently yet remain consistent with the overall masterplan aims. Some projects relate to more than one key area and it will be important that in the delivery process proposals do not prejudice the delivery of the overall masterplan.

6.3.4 In addition to the key areas set out opposite, a number of key sites have been identified to assist in bringing forward regeneration. These are described later in this section.

Figure 09/ Key opportunity areas



Key area 1: Market Square

Potential for improving the physical environment with potential for redevelopment of individual sites to reinforce the core town centre area.

Key area 2: High Street Junctions



Improvement to four principal road junctions in the High Street to create an improved environment for pedestrians and create gateways into the town centre.

Key area 3: Hitchin Street

Improve the physical appearance and vitality of Hitchin Street as part of the growing town centre and to provide good links to Franklins Recreation Ground from the Market Square.

Key area 4: Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas

Regenerate the area to provide a mix of uses including potential for car parking, shops, residential, commercial, food and drink and healthcare uses.

Key area 5: Franklins Recreation Ground/ River Ivel

Improvements to the recreation ground to the west of the town centre including enhancing the pedestrian links along Mill Lane and the crossing of Teal Road.

Key area 6: Biggleswade Transport Interchange

Enhance the station area to create a new transport interchange with a new bus link, car parking and some additional active uses.

Key area 7: Land South of Biggleswade Rail Station

Regeneration of the land to the south of the station to provide a mix of community, commercial and retail warehousing.

6.4 Key development sites

6.4.1 Within each of the key areas a number of key development sites have been identified which can combine to provide the comprehensive development of the town centre.

6.4.2 A summary of the key sites addressed by the masterplan and their potential uses is provided at Figure 10.

6.4.3 Figure 10 also identifies the capacity to deliver up to circa 9,000 sqm of retail within the town centre based on the net increases proposed and re-configuration of existing sites.

6.4.4 Those key sites identified as having potential to bring forward mixed uses provide the opportunity to deliver up to circa 19,400 sqm (9,400 sqm excluding the land south of the station) of new development floorspace (net gain). Based on utilisation of the ground floors for retail uses, this would provide a potential net increase of town centre uses through re-configuration and redevelopment.

6.4.5 Note: As the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) cannot allocate sites, a series of non statutory designations are proposed in the SPD document. The potential uses identified in this table are indicative but will be referred to as a material consideration when assessing planning proposals.

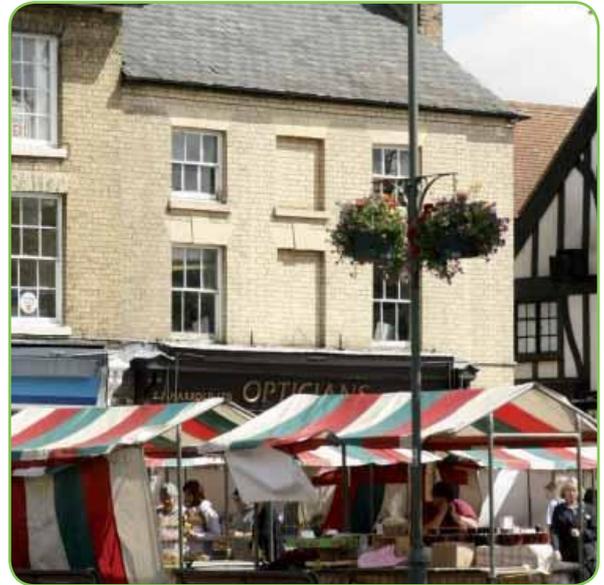


Figure 10/ Table showing key sites

Site	Name	Potential uses	Height/ storeys	Indicative floor area/ sqm* (net increase of town centre uses space)
KS01	Century House	Community/ retail/ commercial/ food and drink	2	300
KS02	Market Square/ Hitchin Street site	Retail	2/3	3,500
KS03	Hitchin Street Area 1	Retail + residential/ commercial/ food and drink	2/2.5	600
KS04	Hitchin Street Area 2	Retail + residential/ commercial/ food and drink	2/2.5	1,000 (200)
KS05	Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area 1 (Aldi North)	Retail + parking + residential/ commercial/ food and drink	2/3	3,000 (3,000)
KS06	Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area 2 (Aldi South)	Retail + parking + residential/ commercial	2/3	2,500
KS07	Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area 3 (Station Road)	Mix of community, retail, leisure and parking	2/3	800 (800)
KS08	Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area 4 (Old Drill Hall and Restaurant)	Retail + parking + residential/ commercial/ food and drink	2/3	3,000 (3,000)
KS09	Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area 5 (Telephone Exchange)	Retail + parking + residential/ commercial/ food and drink	2	1,000 (1,000)
KS10	Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area 6 (Healthcare Centre)	Commercial, healthcare, car parking	2/2.5	2,000
KS11	Station Road/ Bonds Lane (Royal Mail Site)	Appropriate town centre uses with active ground floor frontages	2/2.5	1,000 (1,000)
KS12	Franklins Recreation Ground/ River Ivel	Recreation	-	-
KS13	Station Area 1 (Transport interchange)	Retail + residential/ commercial/ food and drink	2/3	1,000 (400)
KS14	Station Area 2 (Transport interchange)	Decked level car parking	2	5,000 (100 spaces)
KS15	Land South of the Station	Community/ commercial/ retail warehousing/ other	2	10,000 (10,000)
		TOTAL	-	29,700 (19,400)

*Indicative floor areas based on illustrative masterplan

6.5 Key Area 1 Market Square

6.5.1 To reinforce the success and vitality of the market square a number of opportunities have been identified. These are shown on the masterplan drawing and comprise the following:

1. As and when further improvements are required to the Market Square they should ideally implement the principle of 'shared space', where public realm improvements introduce equal priority for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. The use of a high quality design and unifying surface materials in any improvements will be key to creating a successful public place. The scheme would also need to reduce the visual clutter of street furniture and signage, whilst allowing greater flexibility for events and markets to take place (Appendix B).
2. The redevelopment or re-use of Century House (KS01) to increase the range of leisure and community uses in the Market Square. Removal of the bus loop around Century House. This will allow for improvements to the market square and make it a better environment for pedestrians.
3. Provision of replacement or retention of existing bus stops in an accessible location within the town centre area as part of a new bus route which will include the station as a new transport interchange to improve connectivity of public transport.
4. Redevelopment of a key site at the south western corner of the Market Square (KS02). This site provides the opportunity to provide a new retail store, either an anchor store or series of modern units which provide flexible floorspace for either retail or leisure, food and drink uses. There may also be opportunities for commercial and residential uses on upper floors. This site can provide enhanced links through to the Bonds Lane and Hitchin Street areas connecting the future regeneration areas of the town centre.
5. Review of the Market Square and High Street using the principles of Shared Space to improve the relationship between pedestrians and vehicles.
6. Surfacing improvements to the existing car parking area to the north of the White Hart which will

provide a better continuity of spaces in the town centre and also provide additional flexibility of the use of this space during events.

7. Safeguarding the operation and expansion of the Markets, including retention of appropriate storage facilities.

6.5.2 Suggested Overall Time frame: Short – medium term

6.5.3 Delivery and phasing: The redevelopment/ re-use of Century House is dependent on the removal of the bus loop. Public realm improvements should be tied to the redevelopment or re-use of Century House and site KS02 to assist in facilitating the comprehensive enhancements to the Market Square. Development of KS02 and public realm improvements should also have regard to the development of the Hitchin Street and Bonds Lane/Foundry Lane key areas.

6.5.4 Appropriate Facilitators: Central Bedfordshire Council, Biggleswade Town Council, Private Developers/ Landowners

Figure 11/ Key Area 1: Market Square - Development Framework plan

KS Key development site

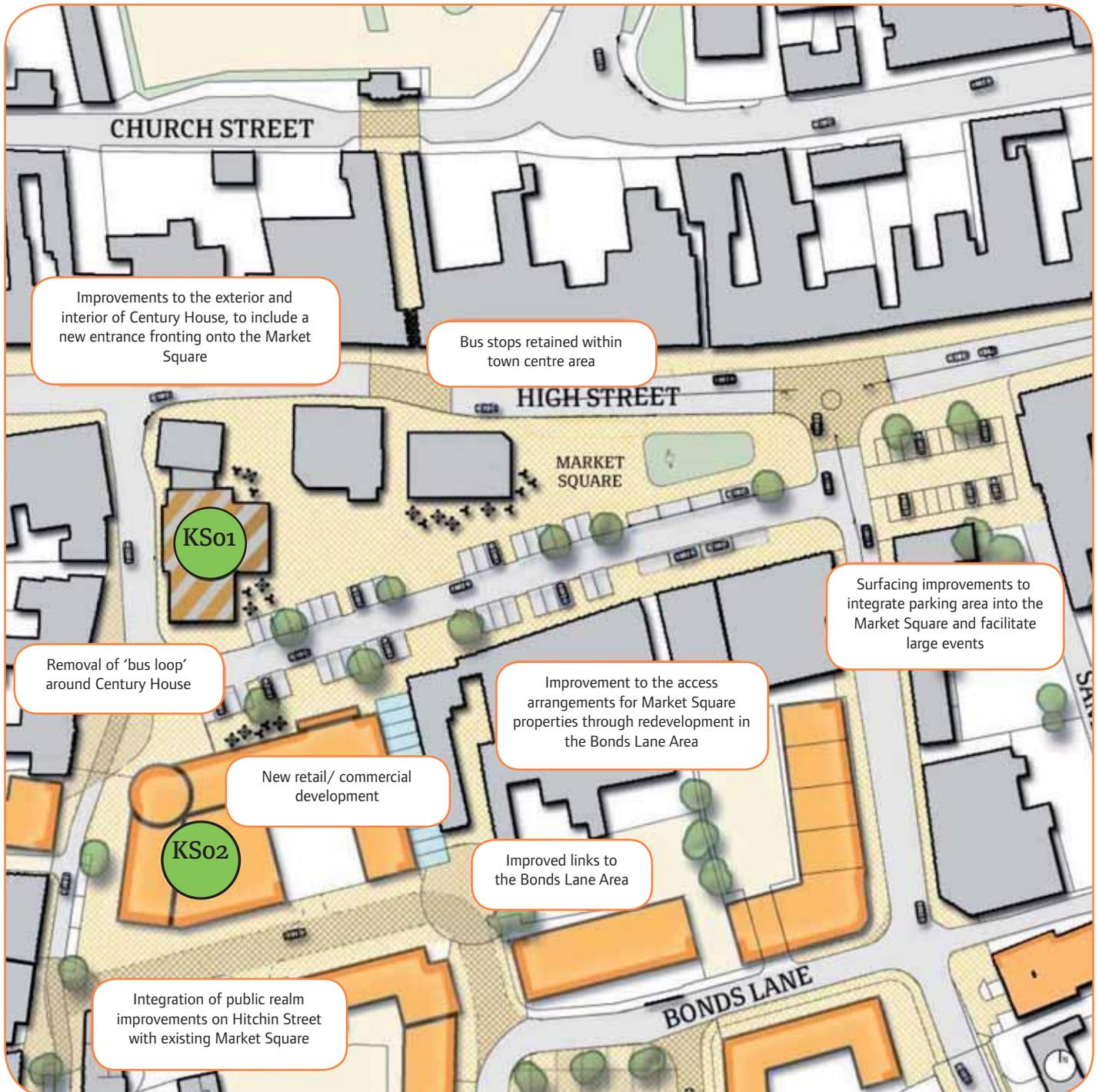


Figure 12/ Photograph showing how the junction between High Street and Station Road is dominated by vehicles with physical barriers preventing ease of movement for pedestrians



6.6 Key Area 2

High Street Junctions

6.6.1 Key Area 2 provides the opportunity to enhance the key entrances or gateways into the town centre area from the east and west. These provide the opportunity to highlight the entrance to the town centre and assist in defining it as a distinct part of the town. They also provide the opportunity to create a more pedestrian friendly environment.

6.6.2 Four key junctions have been identified for improvements as follows:

1. Shortmead Street/ St Andrews Street/ High Street: Public realm and traffic flow improvements.
2. Station Road/ High Street: Public realm and traffic flow improvements.
3. The Baulk/ London Road/ High Street: Public realm, traffic flow and cycle routing improvements.
4. Rose Lane/ High Street: Junction signal phasing improvement.

6.6.3 The junction improvements will need to have regard to challenges created by Biggleswade's unique layout including:

- / the High Street being the main dual direction crossing of the railway line on the eastern boundary of the town centre for general traffic and the emergency services;
- / the volume of traffic turning off the High Street to access ASDA to the north;
- / the volume of general traffic and HGVs turning off the High Street to access the station and the sidings to the south, and industrial areas to the south of the town;
- / the buses which move along the High Street; and
- / the volume of traffic which uses London Road/ High Street/ Shortmead Street when the A1 is blocked.

6.6.4 It will be important to ensure that any improvement works are implemented in such a way as to minimise disruption to traffic and reduce delays for those using the town centre such as shoppers and businesses based there.

6.6.5 The design of the junctions and of the town centre overall should take account of the principles of shared space and should ensure that there are no pedestrian barriers or raised tables or cushions and that the use of bollards is minimised.

6.6.6 Suggested Time frame: Immediate – short term

6.6.7 Delivery and phasing: The delivery of the junction improvements can take place independently although it will be necessary to have regard to the public realm and public transport improvements identified in the Market Square (Key site 1) and the strategy.

6.6.8 Appropriate Facilitators: Central Bedfordshire Council in liaison with Biggleswade Town Council and the Chamber of Trade.

6.7 Key Area 3 Hitchin Street

6.7.1 The masterplan envisages a number of projects which will reinforce this area as part of the town centre.

1. Potential for the development of two key sites on the western side of Hitchin Street. This can increase the quality and range of shopping, food and drink uses with potential for commercial and residential uses on upper floors.
2. Public realm improvements which will improve the environmental quality of the area and, connect the Market Square to Bonds Lane and Mill Lane and Franklins Recreation Ground.
3. Within Hitchin Street there is an opportunity to implement the principle of 'shared space', where public realm improvements introduce equal priority for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. These spaces will incorporate public realm improvements.

6.7.2 Suggested Time frame: Short to medium term

6.7.3 Delivery and phasing: The development of sites KS03 and KS04 have the ability to come forward independently but should have regard to the comprehensive public realm strategy for Hitchin Street.

6.7.4 Phasing for the public realm improvements should have regard to the redevelopment of the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas (Key Area 4) and the Market Place, in particular site KS02.

6.7.5 Longer term there is an opportunity to create an improved road link from Hitchin Street through to Bonds Lane and Station Road thus facilitating potential additional improvements to traffic management in this area. Any such link would need to be linked to a major redevelopment of this area in order to be financially viable.

6.7.6 At the same time there is an opportunity to explore the introduction of two way traffic flow on Hitchin Street south of Mill Lane to improve access to the proposed development at the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas (Key Area 4).

6.7.7 Anglian Water has indicated that the sewage system on Hitchin Street may require enhancements over the plan period. Central Bedfordshire Council will consider this and other utility requirements when implementing public realm improvements in this area so as to ensure minimum disruption to businesses and more effective use of resources.

6.7.8 Appropriate Facilitators: Central Bedfordshire Council and Biggleswade Town Council, private developers/ landowners.

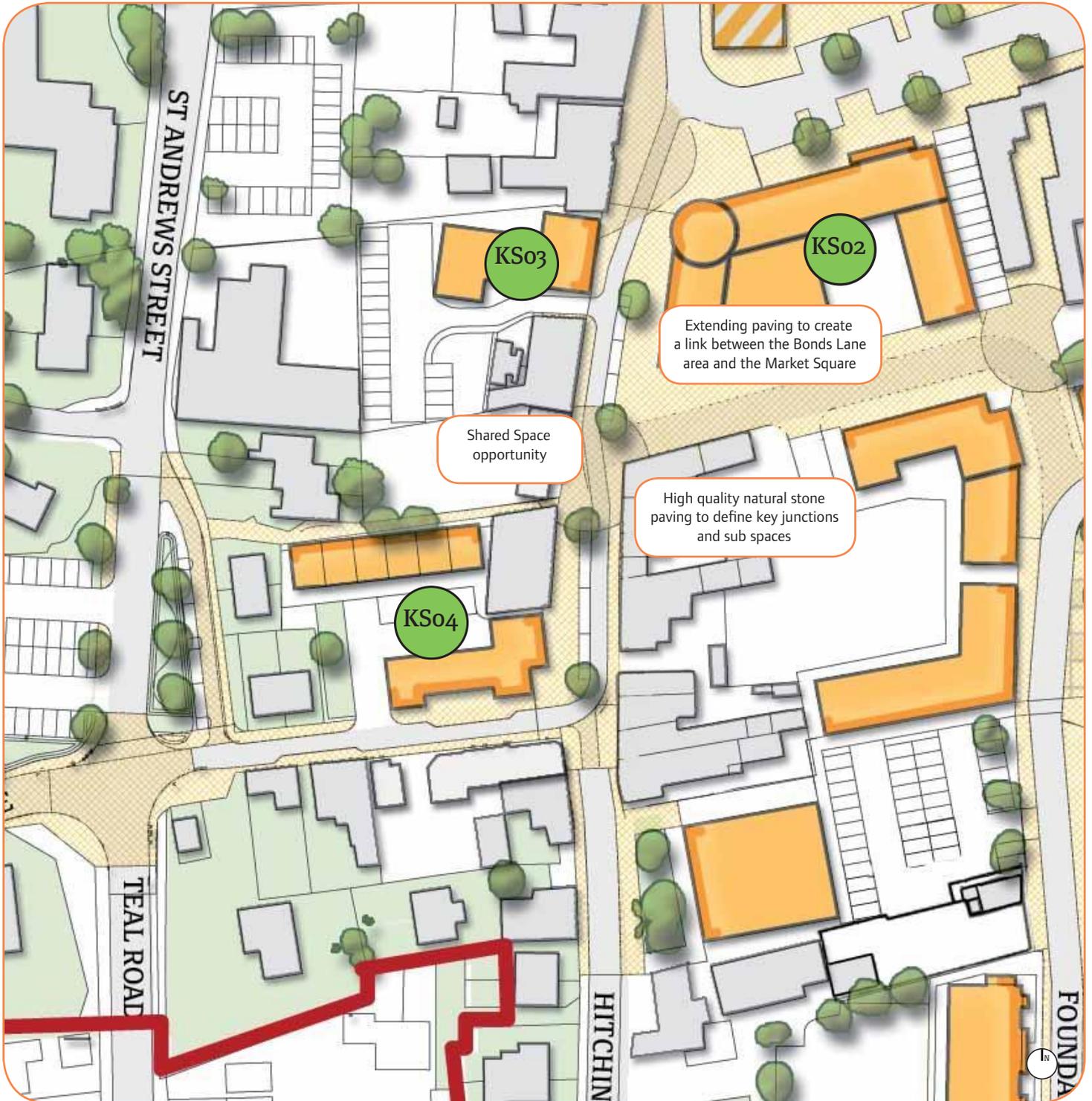
Figure 13/ Artist's impression of Hitchin Street/ Bonds Lane area



Illustrative sketch only - may not represent what is ultimately delivered

Figure 14/ Key Area 3: Hitchin Street

KS Key development site



6.8 Key Area 4

Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas

6.8.1 The Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas are a prime opportunity to expand the retail offer of the town centre. It will be vital that there is a co-ordinated approach to development in this area to ensure aspects such as parking, access and public realm are delivered and maintained.

6.8.2 The area has the ability to provide a well connected extension to the town centre with a range of uses and a new public space. There is potential for up to circa 4,200 sqm of retail and commercial/ leisure uses through the development of five key sites with residential and office accommodation on upper floors.

6.8.3 Appropriate levels of car parking provision will be required as part of the regeneration of this area. The inclusion of a decked car park would provide large scale parking provision for the town centre as a whole. This reprovision could free up existing surface car parks for redevelopment. The replacement car parking could be provided on a number of sites within the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas.

6.8.4 There may also be opportunities within the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas to bring forward community uses provided that this can be accommodated alongside retail and car parking.

6.8.5 The option of retaining and possibly extending the existing health centre has been included in the town centre masterplan. Other options exist outside of the town centre for providing new healthcare facilities. Decisions about where new facilities should be located however are outside of the scope of this masterplan.

The key opportunities for Bonds Lane are:

1. To provide a high quality environment with a group of well designed buildings and spaces which work together to maximise the opportunity of this area
2. To successfully connect to Hitchin Street and the Market Square and so as to function with the town centre as a whole
3. To maximise the retail and food and drink uses at ground floor in this area to create active uses
4. To provide additional or replacement car parking provision for the town centre

5. Any comprehensive development proposals should consider the option of creating an improved link road from Hitchin Street to Station Road thus helping to facilitate wider traffic management improvements in the town centre.

6.8.6 Suggested Time frame: Short/ medium and long term

6.8.7 Delivery and Phasing: Development within the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas can come forward in a number of permutations. The principal objectives will be to secure a continuity of parking and access to the area at all times.

6.8.8 The Council would like to work with developers/ investors to investigate more detailed proposals to enable redevelopment of the area in a comprehensive and co-ordinated way. It is acknowledged that the delivery of Key Sites 5/6 will assist with 'unlocking' the development potential of the Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane areas. This will require either a reconfiguration of the existing site uses associated with Key Sites 5 and 6, or relocation of these uses to an alternative and appropriate location elsewhere.

6.8.9 The development of Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane areas should have regard to the Market Square including site KS02 and Hitchin Street as key areas to ensure a co-ordinated approach to growth and improvement in the town centre area.

6.8.10 There may be opportunities in the short to medium term to provide public realm and environmental improvements to support activity in the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas.

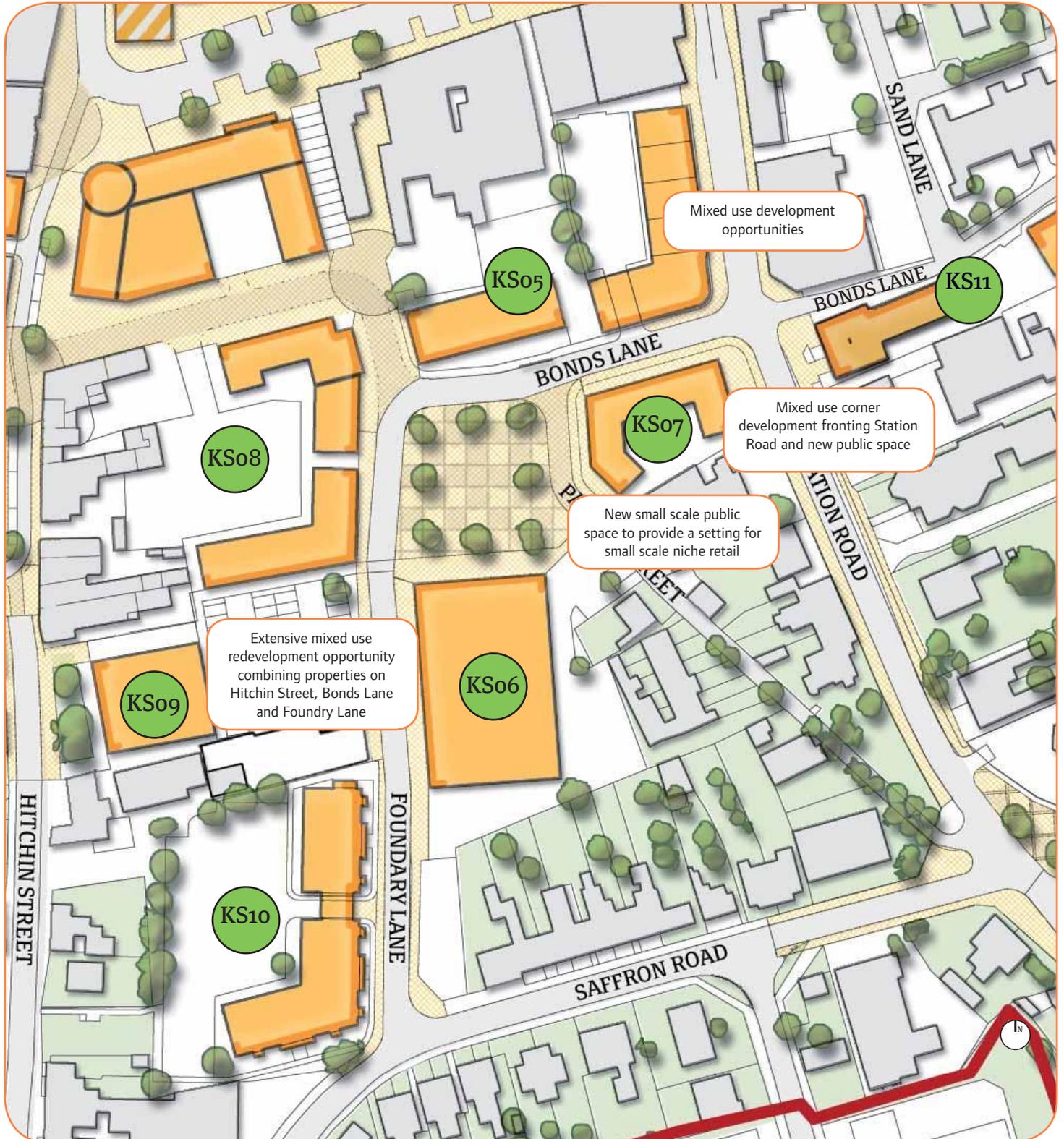
6.8.11 Parking provision should not be removed without its replacement being first provided.

6.8.12 The development of Key Site 11 will require a suitable site for the relocation of Royal Mail within the Biggleswade area.

6.8.13 Appropriate Facilitators: Landowners, Private Developers, Central Bedfordshire Council, Biggleswade Town Council

Figure 15/ Key Area 4: Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane area

KS Key development site



6.9 Key Area 5

Franklins Recreation Ground/ River Ivel

6.9.1 The masterplan highlights the opportunity for improvement and enhancement to the existing recreational and leisure facilities at Franklins Recreation Ground to cater for a greater range of users and to facilitate increased usage throughout the year.

6.9.2 There is an opportunity to integrate the area with the longer term strategies to implement a 'Green Wheel' as outlined by the Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan.

6.9.3 Franklins Recreation Ground is owned and managed by Biggleswade Town Council. Improvements to this facility will be led by the Town Council with the support where appropriate of Central Bedfordshire Council.

6.9.4 Key priorities to address as part of the masterplan and ongoing operation of the facility include:

1. Security and lighting.
2. Enhanced parking provision and facilities on Teal Road for users of the recreation ground and the town centre.
3. Signage opportunities to and from the Market Square to promote the use of the park and to promote the town's facilities to users of Kingfisher Way.
4. Improvements to the pedestrian crossing and physical environment at the junction between Mill Lane and Teal Road, including minimising impact of vehicular access adjacent to the park via Mill Lane.
5. Improved provision of play equipment and facilities at Franklins Recreation Ground.

6.9.5 Suggested Time frame: Short to medium term

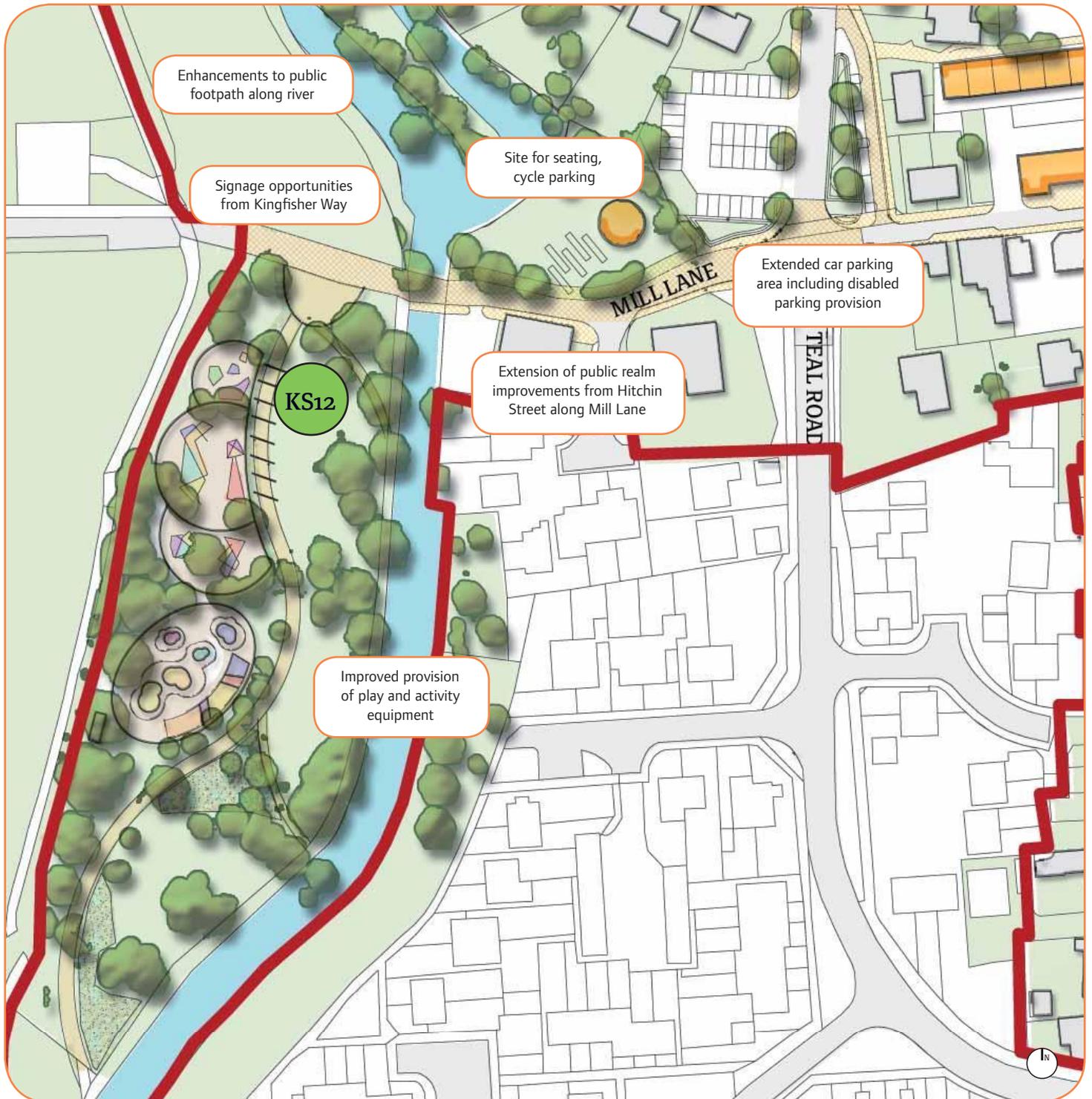
6.9.6 Delivery and Phasing: This will be planned in conjunction with the Town Council and various land owners.

6.9.7 Appropriate Facilitators: Biggleswade Town Council, Central Bedfordshire Council.



Figure 16 / Key Area 5: Franklins Recreation Ground/ River Ivel

KS Key development site



6.10 Key Area 6 Transport Interchange

6.10.1 Key Area 6 provides the opportunity to create an integrated public transport interchange at Biggleswade Station which will co-ordinate train, bus, cycle and pedestrian facilities.

6.10.2 As a key gateway to the town centre a new high quality public space can assist in the sense of arrival to the town. Pedestrian access to the interchange is available via a footbridge and a network of footpaths.

6.10.3 There may also be opportunities in the long term for a decked car parking area south of the interchange which will support the town centre as well as increased use of the rail.

6.10.4 Installation of disabled access via lifts at Biggleswade Rail Station should be sought at the earliest opportunity.

6.10.5 Information and signage relating to the town centre can also be improved focused on the existing signage. Priority will be given to improving existing information, however, improvements in the future may include the addition of real-time bus information.

6.10.6 Suggested Time frame: Short/ Medium/ Long term

6.10.7 Delivery and phasing: The delivery of this project will be dependant on the landowner's objectives. The ability for the station area to facilitate bus stops and turning will assist in the delivery of other objectives of the masterplan, in particular those in the Market Square and should be encouraged in the short term.

6.10.8 The interchange can be developed in two phases if required to allow the provision of bus, taxi and cycle facilities to begin operation prior to the development of associated public realm improvements and additional commercial development.

- / Phase One would include the creation of a basic concourse area providing bus stops, incorporating the existing taxi waiting area and parking. Costs would be limited and revised service routing would allow improvements to the Market Square to take place in the interim.
- / Phase Two would include the creation of a high quality public concourse including bus shelters, seating, other enhancements and a small commercial development to accommodate services associated with public transport such as cafe, taxi office and commercial offices.

6.10.9 Appropriate Facilitators: Central Bedfordshire Council, Network Rail, Train Operating Company, bus operators.



Illustrative sketch only - may not represent what is ultimately delivered

Figure 17 / Artist's impression of transport interchange

Figure 18 / Key Area 6: Transport Interchange

KS Key development site



6.11 Key Area 7

Land South of Biggleswade Rail Station

6.11.1 The land south of the station provides the opportunity to deliver a range of larger footprint buildings on land which can only be accessed from the town centre.

6.11.2 This area could provide a number of different commercial uses. The site may be a suitable location for larger footprint leisure uses such as a cinema or bowling alley, being adjacent to public transport and the wider town centre.

6.11.3 In order to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre, appropriate small scale leisure uses should be encouraged toward the Market Square, Hitchin Street, Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane areas of the town centre and not to land to the south of the railway site. This site may instead be more suitable for bulky goods retailing.

6.11.4 The area benefits from good links to the station and potential for large scale buildings with dedicated car parking.

6.11.5 Development proposals should explore opportunities to create pedestrian and cycle linkages into neighbouring residential streets which would act to improve access to the proposed transport interchange ('KS13')

6.11.6 Suggested Time frame: Short - Long Term

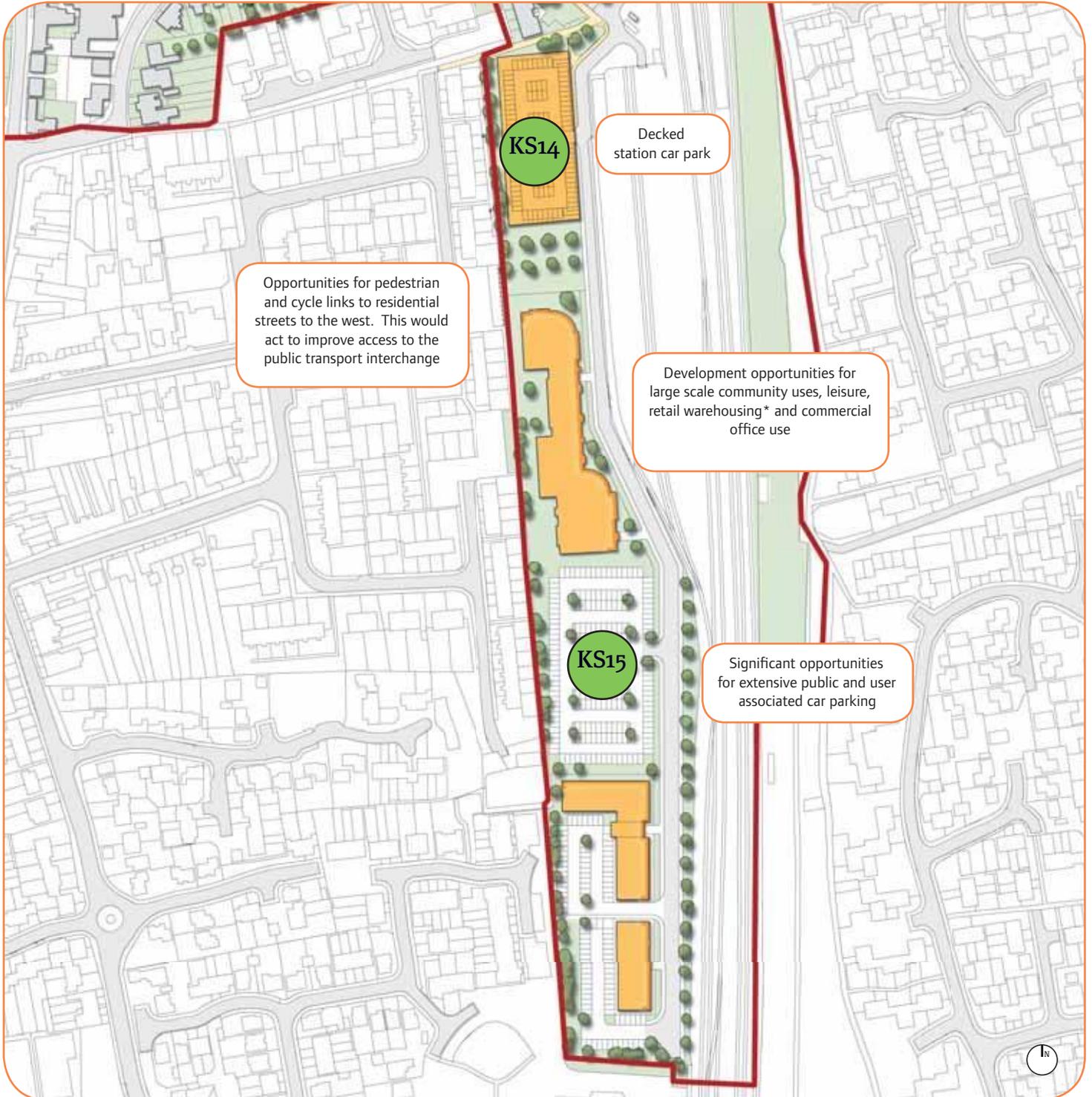
6.11.7 Delivery and Phasing: Subject to the landowner's operational requirements the land south of the station could come forward in any phase of the masterplan. Regard should be had to the provision of car parking to meet the requirements of long term parking for the town centre as well as for new development. Improvements to Station Road may also be required together with cycle and pedestrian connections to the existing residential area to the west.

6.11.8 Appropriate Facilitators: Private Specialist Developers/ Landowner, Central Bedfordshire Council.



Figure 19 / Key Area 7: Land South of the Station

KS Key development site



ENABLING THE STRATEGY &
MASTERPLAN

Part B

/ Delivery

07 Delivery

7.1 The Strategy

7.1.1 As the vast majority of land suggested for redevelopment or re-use as part of this masterplan is in private ownership, the timing and eventual shape of any new development will largely be dependant on private sector investors and existing landowners.

7.1.2 In recognition of this fact the role of Central Bedfordshire Council in relation to bringing forward these new developments will be focused on promoting the opportunities presented by the masterplan to such investors. As interest is identified, Central Bedfordshire Council, as the planning and highways authority, will be able to work closely with landowners and investors in developing and influencing their proposals and eventually enabling delivery.

7.1.3 Underpinning the pivotal task of promoting development will be a range of projects identified as part of this masterplan which are in the control or influence of Central Bedfordshire Council and its partner authority Biggleswade Town Council. These include improvements to the public realm, public transport facilities, management of car parking and the re-use of Century House, one of the more prominent buildings in the historic Market Square.



7.1.4 Management and delivery structure

7.1.4.1 In terms of the delivery structure of this Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan, Figure 20 outlines the basic functions and relationships necessary to deliver the improvements proposed.

7.1.4.2 Underpinning the long term delivery of the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan are a range of projects split into three time periods, short term (0 to 5 years), medium term (5 to 10 years) and long term (10 + years). These have been designed to enable fulfilment of the masterplan vision and cut across the strategy themes of Living and Working, Playing, Environment and Moving.

7.1.4.3 On a project by project basis the Council will liaise with key stakeholders and partners concerning the specific tasks or outcomes required to deliver the objectives of the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan. This will again be structure via the strategy themes as outlined.

7.1.4.4 The Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan will be coordinated by Central Bedfordshire Council but with strong representation from the Town Council.

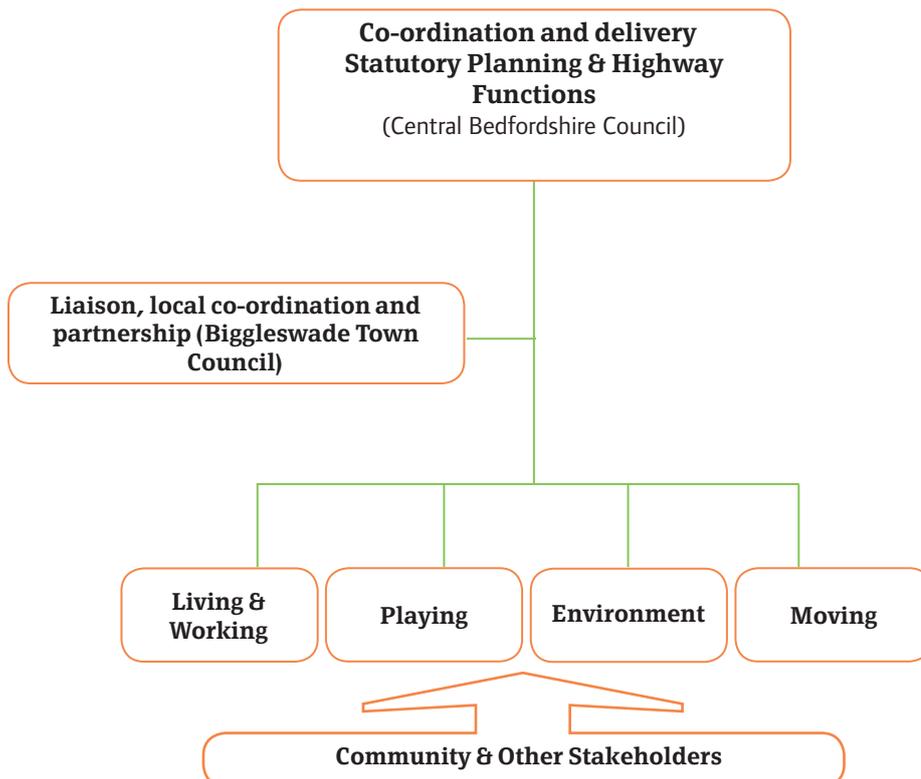
7.1.4.5 The lead for delivery of individual projects or themes will vary and may be split across several different organisations or sectors.

7.1.4.6 Key organisations likely to be involved will include:

- / Central Bedfordshire Council
- / Biggleswade Town Council
- / Network Rail and the Train Operating Company
- / Bus Operators
- / The Chamber of Trade
- / NHS Bedfordshire, GP led practice based commissioning groups
- / Landowners, developers and investors

7.1.4.7 The timing of the key projects and actions is shown by the implementation diagram on page 66.

Figure 20 / Management and delivery structure



7.1.5 Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan

7.1.5.1 The Town Council may wish to provide a wider Neighbourhood Plan for the whole of Biggleswade once the Localism Bill has been enacted. This would be an opportunity to consider wider issues for the town as a whole but for which it is expected that the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan could provide the key context to this future Neighbourhood Plan.

7.1.6 Biggleswade Town Plan

7.1.6.1 The Town Plan is a separate plan for the entire Town that has been developed by members of the local community. The production of the Town Plan has helped to inform the evidence base behind the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan. A continuing relationship between these two plans and other locally driven community or neighbourhood plans will be an important element in co-ordinating the delivery of improvements to Biggleswade town centre.

7.1.7 Project management and funding

7.1.7.1 Whilst funds are extremely limited in the present economic climate and will remain so for the foreseeable future, there are a number of funding sources that can be utilised to enable delivery of these schemes. These include:

7.1.7.2 **Section 106 Contributions** - these contributions are secured as part of the grant of planning permission, and are specifically related to the development and site impacts.

7.1.7.3 **Section 278 Contributions** - these are highway contributions towards works which are required as part of the grant of planning permission. This can include items such as junction improvements and public realm enhancements.

7.1.7.4 In the short to medium term Central Bedfordshire Council will prepare a CIL charging schedule which outlines various charges applicable on the grant of planning permission. This will likely be once the Core Strategy (South) is adopted. CIL is

a charge over development used to fund identified infrastructure projects across Central Bedfordshire and will replace many of the provisions of Section 106. A proportion of CIL generated across Central Bedfordshire will be directed to the local community and may be used to provide infrastructure required to deliver the Masterplan and identified key actions and projects.



7.1.8 Local Transport Plan 3

7.1.8.1 As part of the Central Bedfordshire wide Local Transport Plan 3, a Local Area Transport Plan (LATP) has been prepared for Biggleswade and Sandy. This LATP provides the primary mechanism for identification of transport based priorities and projects including funding. Consequently it is essential that the priorities of the LATP and the masterplan are reflected in both documents, both in the short term and longer term.

7.1.8.2 As new sources of funding are identified over the 20 year lifetime of this plan, the status of this document as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) means it is much more likely that these new streams of funding can be attracted to Biggleswade town centre. The above list should not be considered the only external sources of funding (excluding private sector) available during the lifetime of the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan



Figure 21 / Illustrative sketch showing shared space principles for Bonds Lane area



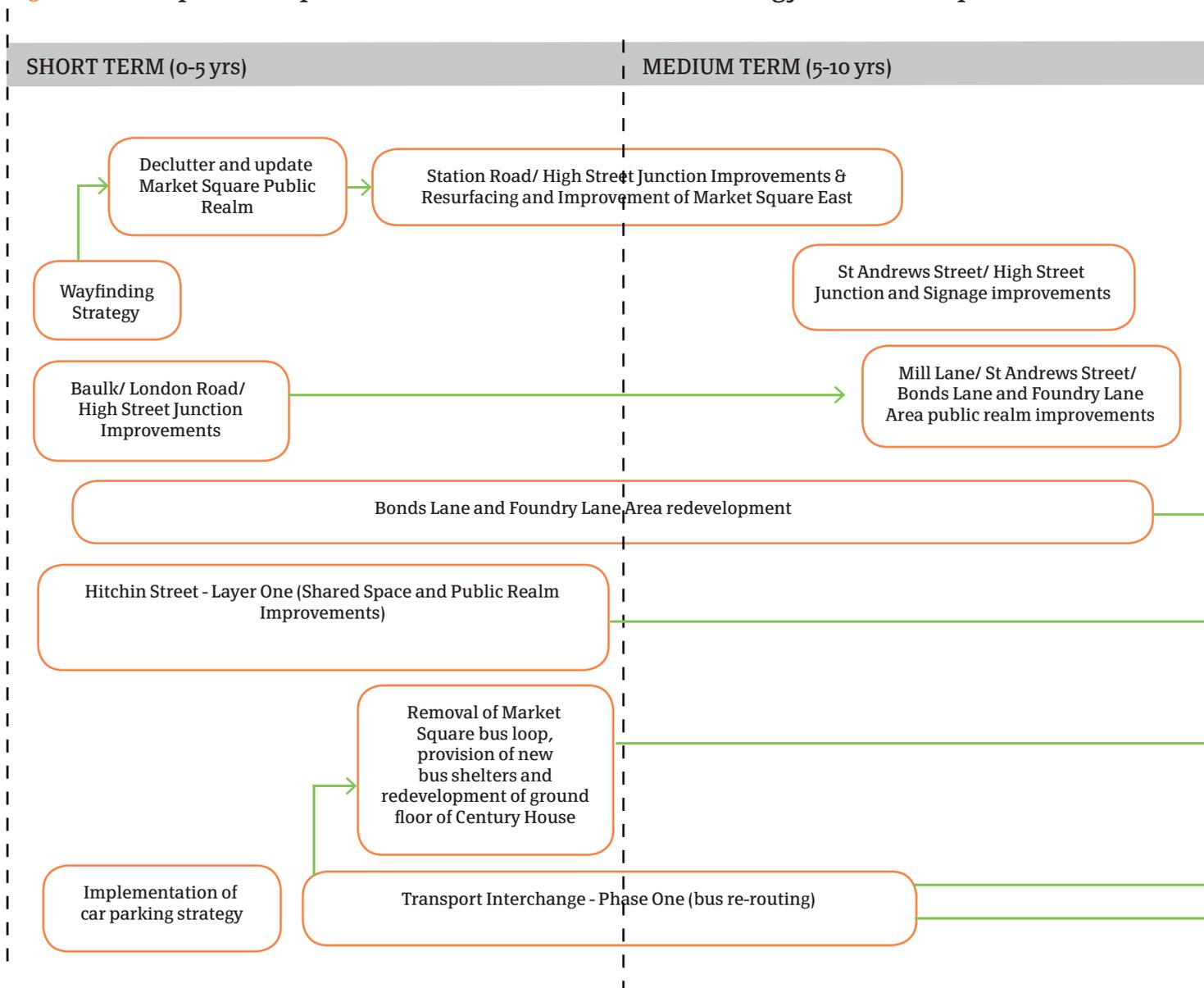
Illustrative sketch only - may not represent what is ultimately delivered

7.2 Implementation

7.2.1 The delivery of the masterplan will occur in three broad phases:

- / Short term (0-5 years)
- / Medium term (5-10 years)
- / Long term (10 years +)

Figure 22 / Proposed implementation of Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan

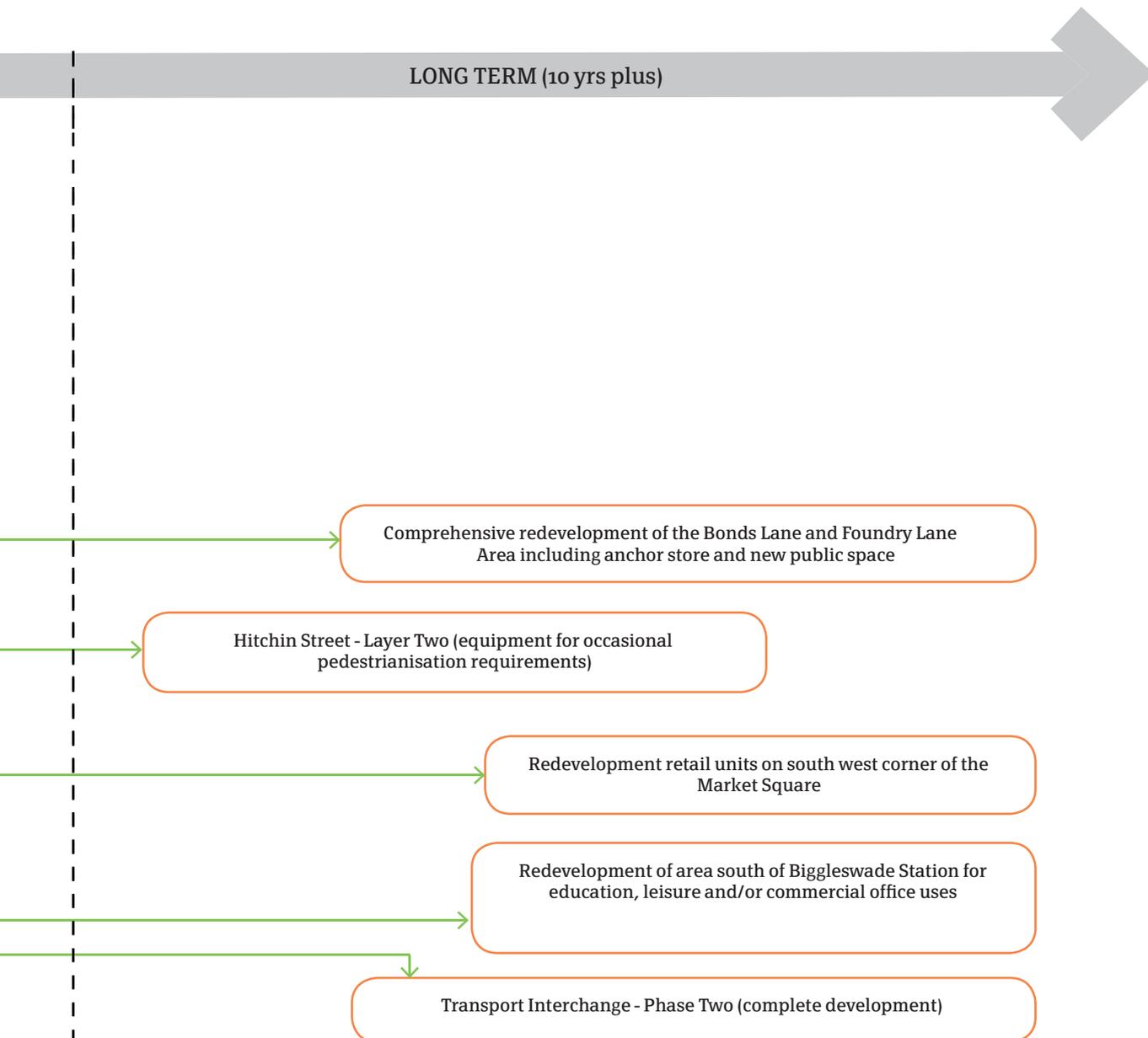


7.3 Bringing forward the masterplan

7.3.1 The timescales provided below are indicative only. Where it is possible to deliver improvements at earlier stages the Council and its partners will endeavour to do this. In terms of implementation the following initiatives should be prioritised where possible for delivery in the short term:

- / Biggleswade Transport Interchange
- / Reuse of Century House and decluttering of key areas including Market Square

- / Way finding strategy
- / High Street Junctions
- / Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area redevelopment
- / Hitchin Street public realm enhancements
- / Implementation of car parking strategy
- / Liasion with Healthcare providers
- / Facilities at Franklins Recreation Ground



7.4 Planning Obligations

7.4.1 The Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan SPD should be read alongside the Planning Obligations Strategy SPD (November 2009 update). This Strategy is based on securing planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

7.4.2 There may be significant changes in the infrastructure elements of the masterplan and to recognise such issues planning obligations must be considered in the wider context of regeneration and mitigating the impacts of new developments in the town centre.

7.4.3 Paragraph 9.2 of the Planning Obligations SPD states that:

“The Council has not adopted a ‘blanket approach’ to the application of planning obligations. All obligations will be assessed on a site-by-site basis. Where there is a need, standard charges will apply. In the case of large and/or complex developments it is expected that obligations will be tailored to the particular scheme. This could include a brownfield site where there is a need for considerable remediation.”



7.4.4 The Planning Obligations SPD outlines that contributions will be sought for a range of items. Those which are of the most relevance to Biggleswade include:

Sustainable Transport

- / General Highways Improvements
- / Walking and Cycling
- / Public Transport/ Sustainable Transport

Environmental Impacts

- / Historic Environment Leisure

Leisure Recreation, Open Space and Green Infrastructure

- / Recreational Open Space Community Facilities and Services
- / Youth Services Public Realm and Community Safety

7.4.5 Commercial development as well as residential development will be expected to contribute to the process. Commercial development will create additional impacts to be mitigated such as on transport and the public realm.

7.4.6 In addition contributions may be sought for public realm in general, for example towards paving/ seating to help deliver the proposed improvements for areas such as Market Square, Bonds Lane and Hitchin Street.

7.4.7 Appendix A outlines the relevant Local Development Principles.

7.4.8 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

7.4.8.1 As stated, in the short to medium term Central Bedfordshire Council will prepare a CIL charging schedule which outlines various charges applicable on the grant of planning permission. This will likely be once the Core Strategy (South) is adopted. CIL is a charge over development used to fund identified infrastructure projects across Central Bedfordshire and will replace many of the provisions of Section 106. A proportion of CIL generated across Central Bedfordshire will be directed to the local community and may be used to provide infrastructure required to deliver the Masterplan and identified key actions and projects.

7.4.8.2 In securing a Planning Obligation regard must be had of CIL Regulation 122, which states:

“A planning obligation may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission if the obligation is:

- a. necessary to make to the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b. directly related to the development; and
- c. fairly and reasonably related to the scale and kind to the development”

7.5 Review

7.5.1 The Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan SPD will be reviewed as required as part of the wider Central Bedfordshire LDF.

7.5.2 Annual Review will also input to general LDF Annual Monitoring Reports.



Core planning policies & local
development principles

Appendix A

- / Core planning policies
- / Local development principles

Core planning policies

The core planning policies for the development of Biggleswade Town Centre based on and linked to the Core Strategy/ Development Management Policies CS12 and DM7 (Adopted November 2009) and also Site Allocations Policy TC1 (Adopted April 2011)

Policy CS12: Town Centres and Retailing

The Council will support and encourage new retail and service provision that provides for more sustainable communities.

In Major Service Centres, town centre boundaries will be established, within which new retail and service provision should be focused. Development will be assessed against the sequential approach in PPS6. [...]

Policy DM7: Development in Town Centres

The Council will support and encourage additional convenience and comparison retail provision and other uses such as cultural, leisure and entertainment facilities inside the designated town centre boundaries in Biggleswade, Sandy, Ampt Hill and Flitwick. All new retail and service development, including extensions to, or the redevelopment of existing edge of centres and out of centres stores over 200 square metres, including mezzanines, will be assessed against the criteria set out in PPS6.

The Council will seek to retain existing retail uses within town centre boundaries. Permission will only be granted for changes of use away from retail (A1) to A2, A3, A4 and A5 at ground floor level if there is no realistic prospect of the property being utilised for retail purposes (evidence of marketing will be required) and the proposed use would enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Proposals for residential development at ground floor level within town centres will only be approved if it can be demonstrated that there is no need for the premises to be used for other town centre related uses.

Policy TC1 : Town Centre Biggleswade

The Council aims to support and encourage a vibrant and lively town centre in the Major Service Centre of Biggleswade. [...] The study area for the SPD is identified on the Proposals Map.

Local development principles

Set out below is a series of local development principles to guide development and investment decisions.

Living and working

Retail

- LW - A The Retail Boundary is defined on the LDF Proposals Map and by policies CS12, DM7 and policy TC1. Retail will be appropriate on the following streets/ areas:
- Market Place
 - High Street
 - Hitchin Street
 - Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane Area
 - Station Road
 - Shortmead Street
- LW - B All retail development should seek to improve the range of unit types and sizes within the town centre to facilitate growth through provision of suitable accommodation for multiples whilst also supporting the set up and growth of small businesses.
- LW - C The town centre should be the preferred location for convenience goods/ services (A1/ A2) non-bulky comparison goods retailing (A1) (eg clothing and telecommunications) and leisure based retailing such as cafes and restaurants (A3) and professional services.
- LW - D New development within the town centre should have regard to ensuring that the town centre retains, expands and improves the quality of its independent and specialist retailers, particularly those promoting local

goods or services.

LW - E Development to accommodate large bulky goods retailing (A1) with trading floors of 500 sqm and above, and appropriate storage, servicing and car parking should be focused away from the town centre, for example in the London Road Retail Park area and possibly the land south of Biggleswade Rail Station (town centre site KS15). New 'out of town' development should be justified against the Impact/ Sequential tests of PPS4, with opportunities explored to mitigate the impacts of such development via retail offer/ transport improvements to the town centre.

LW - F Large scale (500 sqm and above trading floors) retail units (A1) outside the town centre should not be permitted to sub divide into units of less than 500 sqm per unit in order to promote non-bulky comparison goods retailing (those not requiring direct customer car access) in the town centre.

LW - G Development capable of accommodating larger retail units (A1) with a trading floor of up to 500 sqm, plus appropriate storage and servicing space should be focused on the Market Place, High Street and if suitable sites are available, the Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane area.

LW - H Smaller and more flexible units (A1, A2, A3, A4 & B1) up to 120 sqm with appropriate storage and servicing space should be focused on Hitchin Street, Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane area and Station Road.

LW - I Additional Hot Food Take Away (A5) premises should only be permitted where applications show a high quality of shop front design and include suitable measures to maintain a high quality public realm and reduce night time disturbance.

LW - J Any further provision of supermarket or large-

scale discount food retailing (convenience A1) within the town centre (over and above the present total floorspace) may be considered to be both an over provision of convenience retailing based on the limited land available. Such proposals would need to demonstrate impacts as per the requirements of PPS4.

LW - K Creative retail relocation solutions may be considered when a net gain of overall A1 retail floorspace in the town centre can be achieved. This will only be considered for cases where the proposed relocation is clearly linked in planning terms by the submission of a dual planning application.

LW - L Hitchin Street should be reconnected to the main shopping area (High Street and Market Place) through the prioritisation of public realm improvements, in order to increase footfall and create opportunities to use outdoor space.

LW - M Town centre businesses, particularly cafe's/ restaurants/ public houses (A3/A4) will be encouraged to use the public realm outside their properties to add vibrancy and activity to the street scene. This should be done within the parameters set out in the Public Realm Design Guide (Delivery - Section 6).

Employment

LW - N When assessing the potential positive impacts of a proposed development, regard should always be given to the number of jobs created based on the definition in PPS4.

LW - O Provision of offices (B1) and live/work units (C3/B1) will be supported, principally as secondary development as part of wider mixed use schemes, but also as independent projects where viability can be proven, and the location is suitable, and not to the detriment of the town centre's core function of providing

commercial and professional facilities.

LW - P Employment opportunities which can encourage graduates to return and/or settle in the area should be encouraged.

LW - Q Land at Baystrait House on Station Road is safeguarded for employment by policy E1 (Adopted Site allocations DPD).

Hotel/ Visitor Accommodation

LW - R The town centre should seek to improve the quality of its visitor accommodation (C1), in line with the recommendations of the Central Bedfordshire Hotel and Visitor Accommodation Futures Report (June 2009), focusing on the provision of bespoke accommodation.

LW - S The development and improvement of new or existing accommodation providers (Stratton House and The Crown Hotel) in the town centre should be prioritised over the provision of new facilities 'out of town'.

Community Services

LW - T The town centre should remain the preferred location for the provision of existing community services, and public services provision, with preference being given to sites located closest to public transport facilities.

Residential Development

LW - U Large scale residential (C3) development is not considered appropriate for town centre development sites due to the pressures on ensuring adequate development sites for essential services and businesses, and the existing consent for large scale residential development at Land East of Biggleswade.

LW - V Small scale residential provision may be included within mixed use schemes, where it is not the principal usage, on-plot parking meets all requirements, there is adequate provision for bin and cycle storage, and it meets high design and sustainability standards.

LW - W New development proposals should not be single storey where opportunities for residential on first or second floor present themselves in design terms.

Relevant planning policy links

- / **CS1:** Development Strategy
- / **CS12/ DM7:** Development in Town Centres (& Retailing)
- / **CS11** Rural Economy & Tourism
- / **TC1:** Biggleswade Town Centre
- / **E1:** Employment, Baystrait House, Station Road

Playing

Evening Economy

- PL - A Projects which promote a vibrant and inclusive night time economy, aimed at those living within the town and surrounding villages, will be encouraged, particularly those promoting cultural and leisure activities which are not primarily dependent on alcohol sales.
- PL - B Provision of cafe/ restaurant/ bar (A3/ A4) uses should be focused on the Market Place, Hitchin Street North and Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane area.
- PL - C New development should wherever possible be aimed at a range of user groups, eg family friendly restaurants, and should focus on trading throughout the day.
- PL - D Licensing restrictions should be encouraged in new public house (A4) uses which are solely drinking establishments. Use of outdoor pavement space should only be permitted if seating and tables are provided and in accordance with the relevant licensing laws and local regulations. Standing tables and smoking only areas are discouraged on public spaces and on street. Noise levels must be appropriately managed. (See Delivery - Section 6 - Public Realm Design Code).

Family and Outdoor Leisure

- PL - E Projects which improve the range of leisure and recreational facilities for all age groups will be actively encouraged.
- PL - F The town centre and its environs should be promoted as an attractive stopover destination for walkers/ cyclists using the key networks that pass on the edge of the town along the Kingfisher Way and National Cycle Route 12, through the use of signage and public realm features (See Delivery - Section 7- Site Specific Solutions).

Provision of New Leisure Facilities

- PL - G Proposals which encourage the continued use and re-use of existing buildings designed for leisure use (D2) will be supported, ie Georges Hall and the Station Road Bingo Hall.
- PL - H The location of new large footprint (1,000 sqm plus) leisure facilities will be encouraged on land south of Biggleswade Station (KS15).

Cultural and Community Facilities

- PL - I Existing buildings with a community/ cultural/ leisure facility use or original function should wherever possible be retained or re-established as such. These buildings include St Andrews Rooms, Flutters Bingo and Georges Hall.
- PL - J The provision of meeting facilities for young people within the town centre could be considered.

Activities and Events

- PL - K The weekly market will continue to be supported, with an emphasis placed on developing a reputation for a 'high quality' market experience based on both products and appearance.
- PL - L The use of both Market Square and Franklins Recreation Ground for irregular and annual events should continue to be encouraged.
- PL - M The use of both the Market Place and Franklins Recreation Ground for irregular and annual events should be encouraged; these could include seasonal celebrations, cultural events, exhibitions and concerts, and local group activities.

Relevant planning policy links

- / **CS3:** Healthy & Sustainable Communities
- / **CS11:** Rural Economy & Tourism
- / **DM4:** Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes

Environment

Public Open Space

- EN-A Franklins Recreation Ground and the River Ivel on Mill Lane should be the key green space for the town centre, and priority should be given to improving links to it from the Market Square and facilitating its ability to host both everyday use and one-off events.
- EN-B The Market Square should be the key hard landscaped space for the town centre and priority should be given to improving links to it from both Franklins Recreation Ground/ River Ivel and Biggleswade Railway Station.
- EN-C Given the constrained nature of the centre it is not felt that any further significant areas of public open space are required within the town centre. However the provision of smaller 'pocket' spaces and use of ancillary areas such as verges and traffic islands may be appropriate, both within the public realm and as part of individual development projects.
- EN-D Recycling within the public realm will be encouraged with the provision of recycling facilities in public locations
- EN-E A collaborative and highly visible approach to developing recycling and other green initiatives between residents, business owners, and the local authorities will be encouraged.

Sustainable Development

- EN-F All developments within the town centre should be able to demonstrate that their design specifically includes features to reduce environmental impact and be energy efficient. This should include both new build and conversion projects.
- EN-G All new buildings (commercial, residential and community uses) will be encouraged to exceed the sustainability and energy standards required by Building Regulations. Specifically developments within Biggleswade should provide appropriate facilities to allow users to recycle waste, encourage walking and cycling, and reduce their energy usage.
- EN-H All developments should seek to sustainably address water drainage and not increase the pressure on the existing drainage and where appropriate given the Town Centre location propose the use of SuDs or equivalent techniques. Connection to the mains sewer system is sequentially least preferred National Planning Policy within PPS25 should be referred, and planning proposals on sites in excess of 1 hectare should be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. Investigation may be required of waste water capacity prior to advancing development proposals.

Design and Heritage

- EN-I New development should respect the historic character of the Conservation Area, being of an appropriate scale and massing and not exceeding three storeys. The appearance should reflect or respond to the Biggleswade historic context. The interface with the public realm and an overall high quality design approach is strongly encouraged as is adherence with the broad indicative masterplan framework. The Design & Access Statement submitted with development proposals should demonstrate this.

EN-J Any demolition within a Conservation Area will require Conservation Area Consent via the submission of planning proposals. The overall impact on the context of the site and surrounds will need careful consideration with regard to the other principles outlined in the SPD.

EN-K Reference should be made and regard had of Manual for Streets 2 and English Heritage Guidance – Streets for all.

Relevant planning policy links

- / **CS3:** Healthy & Sustainable Communities
- / **CS11:** Rural Economy & Tourism
- / **DM4:** Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes

Moving

Delivering the vision – a strategic approach

The masterplan vision states that Biggleswade town centre will be the transport hub for the local area. To achieve this, an integrated approach to transport will be adopted including both public and private transport, cycling and walking.

The Local Area Transport Plan will be the key tool in setting out the transport requirements for the town. To support this document the following principles should be taken into account.

Traffic Management and Routing

TR - A Hitchin Street/ Mill Lane/ Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane area Street Development Zone (KS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14).

This area should receive an individual public realm treatment incorporating the development of a shared space capable of occasional closure for events. This will aid traffic management through the centre and improve the pedestrian experience, and contribute to reaching other public realm and retailing targets (see appropriate strategic objectives relating to retailing on Hitchin Street).

TR - B High Street

The High Street and its entry junctions should receive a series of individual treatments incorporating improved traffic flow and the removal of pedestrian barriers. The High Street 20mph speed limit should be enforced. Consideration will be given to the removal of existing speed tables on the High Street and their replacement with alternative measures such as shared space that are more attractive to cyclists but still calm traffic speeds.

Roads and Traffic Management

TR - C The overall approach to all routes within the town centre should focus on reducing barriers for all types of movement. This is based on vehicular speeds being naturally reduced by the constrained road layout, proximity of significant numbers of pedestrians, and cycling on the main carriageway.

Co-ordination of Public Transport Services

TR - D Future development of bus service management strategies should include access to the Station (see Strategic Objectives relating to Transport Interchange) for the majority of services, via the High Street.

TR - E A Transport Interchange facility should be developed encompassing the Biggleswade Train Station and its forecourt to include co-ordinated facilities for accessing trains, buses and taxis, and facilitating walking, cycling and pick up/ drop off, whilst also creating an 'entrance' to the town. (See Delivery - Section 6 - Site Specific Solutions).

TR - F The removal of the bus loop around Century House will enable a range of improvements. This may include including increasing the public space available for pedestrians, the Biggleswade town market and other events.

Walking and Cycling Strategy

TR - G All maintenance and new works within the public realm should prioritise the needs of pedestrians, focusing on the removal of barriers, rationalisation of signage poles and street furniture. (See Appendix B - Public Realm Code and Materials Palette)

TR - H All maintenance and new works within the public realm should include improving the cyclists' experience of the town centre, including the removal of traffic humps, the inclusion of cycle boxes on junctions where appropriate and access to secure, appropriately

located cycle parking. (See Appendix B Public Realm Design Code).

TR - I All new development within the town centre should provide or have access to existing secure cycle parking provision.

TR - J All highway works should seek to facilitate the integration of cycle routes within junctions and roadways wherever possible, with particular priority being given to connection to long distance cycle routes passing through the town, wherever possible.

TR - K New developments within the town centre should contribute towards improving the public realm.

Car Parking Strategy

TR - L Car parking is recognised as a key element of the overall approach to the management of transport in the town centre.

TR - M All town centre parking (on and off street) should be managed, maintained and policed in a co-ordinated way.

TR - N The use of 'resident only' parking permits with associated limited daytime usage should be considered where appropriate within the town centre, particularly focusing on residential streets adjacent to Biggleswade train station.

TR - O Length of stay should be based on proximity to the centre, with long stay and commuter parking on the edge of the centre, and central spaces used for higher turnover groups such as shoppers and community services users.

TR - P No parking spaces should be removed without an equivalent replacement elsewhere in the town centre.

Relevant planning policy links

- / **CS4:** Linking Communities – Accessibility & Transport
- / **DM9:** Providing a Range of Transport
- / See also the Planning Obligations SPD (Reviewed 2009) and Section 9

General

Planning Obligations

G-A Development proposals should have regard to the Planning Obligations SPD and emerging CIL framework. Commercial development as well as residential development will be expected to contribute in the form of planning obligations directed toward:

- Sustainable Transport
- Environmental Impacts
- Leisure Recreation, Open Space and Green Infrastructure
- Public Realm in the Town Centre'





Public Realm Design Code & Materials Palette

Appendix B

- / Public realm design code
- / Public realm design principles
- / Furniture and materials palette
- / Lighting

Public Realm Design Code

There are a number of issues with the public realm within Biggleswade which if addressed could produce significant benefits for the town centre. The Public Realm Design Code will therefore provide a guide for both developers and public organisations to guide and co-ordinate improvement and development in the public realm to ensure consistency and get the best possible results for the town centre as a whole.

Current Issues

- / Poor pedestrian access. Small pavement widths exacerbated by the number and placement of pedestrian barriers.
- / Poor quality of pavement surfaces in some locations, and lack of co-ordination of materials and street furniture.
- / Overall excess of street furniture (particularly light and signage poles) leading to clutter.
- / Lack of provision of bins in some locations leading to littering.
- / Lack of trees on routes away from the Market Place.

Public Realm within the town centre has been defined as falling into one of two categories.

High Priority Areas

- / High Street/ Shortmead Street/ St Andrews Street Junction
- / High Street/ Station Road Junction and Market Place East
- / High Street/ The Baulk/ London Road Junction
- / Transport Interchange
- / Hitchin Street North/ Mill Lane/ Bonds Lane/ Foundry Lane area

Priority Areas

- / Station Road/ Bonds Lane East (Station Road junction)
- / Market Square



Figure 23 / Public realm priority areas diagram

-  Town centre boundary
-  High priority areas
-  Priority areas
-  Market Square priority area



Public Realm Design Principles

Public realm can be defined as the public space between buildings, including streets, pavements, squares and gardens. Key public realm design principles for the town are:

- / To enhance local distinctiveness and identity through the conservation and enhancement of existing features and creation of new ones.
- / To create coherence and unity, with street furniture, paving and lighting based on a simple, unified palette of materials.
- / To prioritise the pedestrian, ensuring that the town centre is easy and safe to navigate.
- / To co-ordinate transport features seamlessly into the public realm.
- / To create a high quality public realm that complements the built environment.
- / To utilise robust, sustainable materials, ensuring that designs have minimum environmental or social impact.

Achieving the Design Principles

To help achieve the principles set out above, the following design guidelines are recommended:

Accessibility

- / The design of access within the public realm should comply with Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which gives disabled people a 'ring of access' to goods, facilities, services and premises. Guidance is provided in:
 - BS8300 (2001) Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice
 - Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure (Department for Transport, 2005)
 - Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Services (Department for Transport, 2005)
 - BS5489 (2003) Code of Practice for Road Lighting

- / Clutter should be minimised, to enhance pedestrian movement. This includes:

- The removal of pedestrian barriers and bollards
- Signage to be combined on a single pole or lighting column wherever possible, particularly where pavements are necessarily narrow

- / Features such as street trees, poles and furniture should not be included to the detriment of pavement width in areas where the pavement is less than 1.5m in width.
- / Cycle parking (except in feature locations) should be discrete, and should not be included to the detriment of pavement width in areas where the pavement is less than 1.5m in width.
- / Bus stops and shelters should be appropriate in size to their location and function on the bus route, and large shelters should not be included to the detriment of pavement width in areas where the pavement is less than 1.5m.

Visual Quality

- / All street furniture in a given area should be of a unified style and colour. The existing green painted furniture should be repainted with gloss black.
- / Paving materials should complement each other to create a unified look (tumbled concrete blocks and flags are used in the Market Place currently).
- / Litter bins should be provided adjacent to units with A5 (Take Away Hot Food) uses and areas of seating.

Wayfinding

- / Additional signage/ features to aid wayfinding to significant destinations (specifically the Market Square, Station Interchange and Franklins Recreation Ground) should be encouraged.

A Sustainable Environment

- / Street trees should be included wherever possible, to 'green' the town centre and may be used to create chicanes to slow traffic as required.
- / Paving materials and street furniture should be sourced to have minimum impact in terms of their manufacturing and delivery processes.
- / Paving materials and street furniture should be specified to have a relatively long life expectancy and low management/maintenance requirements.
- / Designs should encourage pedestrian and cycle movement around the town and facilitate the use of public transport.

Furniture and Materials Palette

It is clear that a large number of the proposals within the Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan will require changes to the public realm. To support these works, a clear set of guiding principles have been developed. These are:

- / To create a clear palette of street furniture and materials which is functional, attractive, cost effective and easy to maintain.
- / To create a palette of street furniture and materials which can be easily co-ordinated with feature items.
- / To create a palette of street furniture and materials which deals with Biggleswade's specific needs (example: combining lighting, signage and bins on one pole to reduce street clutter in areas of narrow pavements).

Final decisions on the range of street furniture and materials chosen will have to be made on the basis of:

- / construction and maintenance requirements
- / cost
- / long term availability

Street Furniture

A basic palette of street furniture items has been developed by the design team, in conjunction with the Maintenance and Highways teams at Central Bedfordshire Council. This generally reflects the existing heritage approach, but provides some accent elements for key spaces. This could include:

- / Specialist signage for travel/ visitor information in key locations
- / Feature seating for key locations
- / Lighting as an art feature

Figure 24 / The existing surface materials found within Biggleswade



Granite Setts (eg Mill Lane)



Rectangular concrete slabs, granite kerbs (eg Station Road)



Marshalls Saxon square 'Marigold' slabs (eg Market Square)



Marshalls Tegula block paving in various colours (eg Market Square)

Surface Materials

Surfacing materials form the backdrop to street furniture and choices must be made on the same basis as street furniture, regarding construction and maintenance requirements, cost and long term availability. In addition consideration must be given to the existing works which have been implemented in the Market Place which is the only area of significant co-ordinated surfacing in the town centre, and opportunities for extension and improvement of this scheme.

A basic palette has been developed which uses and develops from this scheme. Whilst a manufacturer has been specified, alternative similar products may be agreed.

Pavements - Marshalls Saxon rectangular slabs (Natural) or similar

This provides a low cost alternative to natural stone. A traditional rectangular shape is more appropriate to the historic context of Biggleswade than the existing 'Marigold' square slabs, and over time the latter should be phased out. Where there is the possibility of vehicular over-run, by delivery lorries for example, slabs should be mesh-reinforced and laid on a solid bed.

Shared surface spaces - Marshalls Tegular Concrete Blocks (Pennant Grey with accent areas of Red/ Charcoal) or similar

These blocks are currently used within the Market Place, providing an attractive and low cost alternative to granite setts. These tumbled concrete blocks are widely used within historic environments. A variety of sett sizes can be used to create a subtle pattern.

Shared surface/ feature pedestrian spaces - Dexapave

Exposed aggregate asphalt provides a more robust alternative to bound gravel, making it more suitable for areas of vehicular use. The aggregate can be specified to be locally sourced, thus enhancing local

distinctiveness and minimising environmental impact; a buff coloured aggregate is recommended.

High quality feature pedestrian spaces - Marshalls 'York Stone Paving'

A diamond-sawn finish is recommended, giving an attractive fine texture with a richness in colour. Flags should be 550mm - 650mm long and 450mm wide, reflecting traditional proportions. Slabs for pedestrian areas can be 50mm thick, however it is recommended that 75mm is the minimum, to allow for vehicular over-run.

High quality feature pedestrian spaces - Resin bonded Gravel (eg Addagrip/ Golden gravel)

This attractive surfacing has the appearance of gravel, whilst providing a smooth surface that retains the aggregate in situ, unlike loose gravel paths. Due to their relatively high cost and lack of robustness, such surfaces should not be used extensively or in areas of vehicular use. This is also recommended for street tree surrounds (see Street Tree Treatment).

Kerbs - Marshalls Conservation Kerbs

These granite aggregate kerbs have the appearance of traditional granite kerbs and will complement the historic character of Biggleswade.

Figure 25/ The surface materials palette



Marshall's Silver Grey Conservation Kerb (granite aggregate)



Marshall's Natural Saxon 450 x 600mm rectangular slabs



Addgrip resin bonded gravel for pedestrian feature areas only



Marshall's Scoutmoor York Stone (diamond sawn) for pedestrian only feature areas



Dexapave - exposed aggregate asphalt for vehicular and pedestrian areas



Retention of existing granite setts and kerbs



Continued use of Marshall's Tegula for shared surface and pedestrian areas - Pennant Grey, with accent areas of Red/Charcoal

Utilities

All utility covers within the main streets should have recess tray covers inset with the appropriate surface materials to provide visual continuity. Service covers should be aligned with the direction of the surface material.

Seating

Effective seating in public spaces is critical to ensuring usage. With a range of streets and spaces requiring seating, a palette of seating has been recommended which includes both a standard seat for general use, and examples of appropriate styles of bespoke seating for key public spaces.

In commonly used pedestrian areas and transport interchanges, seats should be provided at regular intervals, especially at bus stops. Seats should be placed adjacent to but not obstructing the pedestrian route. They should be positioned in areas of high natural surveillance, however consideration should be given to the security implications for adjacent properties.

Seating should benefit from attractive outlooks and be provided in both sunny and shady areas. Space should be provided next to seats for wheelchairs.

/ Standard Seating - Broxap Lakeside Cast Iron Framed Seat. All ironwork should be painted in gloss black, and wooden slats should be retained in a natural coloured finish. Arm rests must be retained to prevent rough sleeping and skateboarding, and facilitate the elderly and disabled when standing up.

Figure 26 / Potential seating designs



Standard Seating - Broxap Lakeside Cast Iron Framed Seat

Figure 27 / Potential litter and recycling bin designs



Recycling Bin (separated waste)



Standard Bin



Recycling Bin



Standard Bin



Recycling Bin

Litter and Recycling Bins

The provision of adequate and well placed litter and recycling facilities is essential to maintaining a tidy and attractive town centre and encouraging recycling. With a range of streets and spaces requiring bins, a palette of bins has been recommended which includes both standard bins for general use, feature bins for use in bespoke spaces (with associated bollards) and recycling bins to be provided in key spaces.

- / **Standard Bins** - Bins should be coloured black (painted or supplied as such).
- / **Standard Bins** - To be used in locations where pavement space is limited, in combination with signage and lighting poles.
- / **Recycling Bins** - Central Bedfordshire Council is keen to increase the recycling provisions within town centres. They should be provided in key locations in and around the town centre.

Cycle Racks

The town centre currently has a series of bespoke cycle racks, focussed around the Market Place. These are designed to reflect the historic Ivel Cycle Works and should be retained and replicated if necessary.

Bollards

All unnecessary bollards should be removed as part of a general 'de-cluttering' of the public realm. As with provision of seating and bins a standard bollard is identified for use across the town centre.

/ Standard Bollard - 'Crown Top'

Painted black and silver, in line with the existing bollards. Bollards should be repainted on a regular basis.

Figure 28 / Potential cycle rack and bollard designs

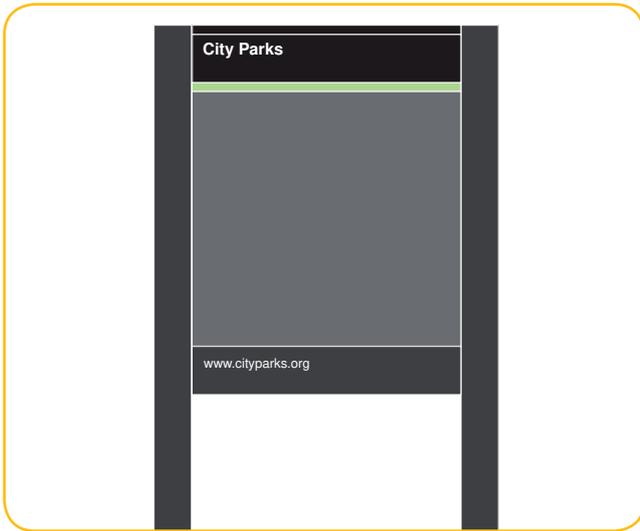


Existing decorative cycle racks



Standard Bollard - 'Crown Top' bollards

Figure 29 / Potential signage and bus shelter designs



Discovery Information Signage (Black & Oak)



Woodhouse Geo Fingerpost (Black)

Signage

Current signage is limited to cast iron finger posts focussed around the Market Square. A holistic approach should be taken to wayfinding throughout the town centre. Mapping should be provided at key arrival points such as car parks, the railway station/ interchange and finger posts provided at key junctions on routes. The town would benefit from additional signage to guide visitors between the following destinations:

- / Biggleswade Common
- / The River Ivel and Franklins Recreation Ground
- / The Market Place
- / The Railway Station/ Transport Interchange

A contemporary style that still respects the historic environment will be adopted and includes finger posts which can be used in all locations and mapping which should be provided in key locations.

- / **Standard Signage - Woodhouse Geo Fingerpost (black post).** To be located on key junctions and within key spaces
- / **Mapping Signage - Discovery Information Signage (Black & Oak).** To be located in key spaces to provide wayfinding and visitor information

Bus Shelters

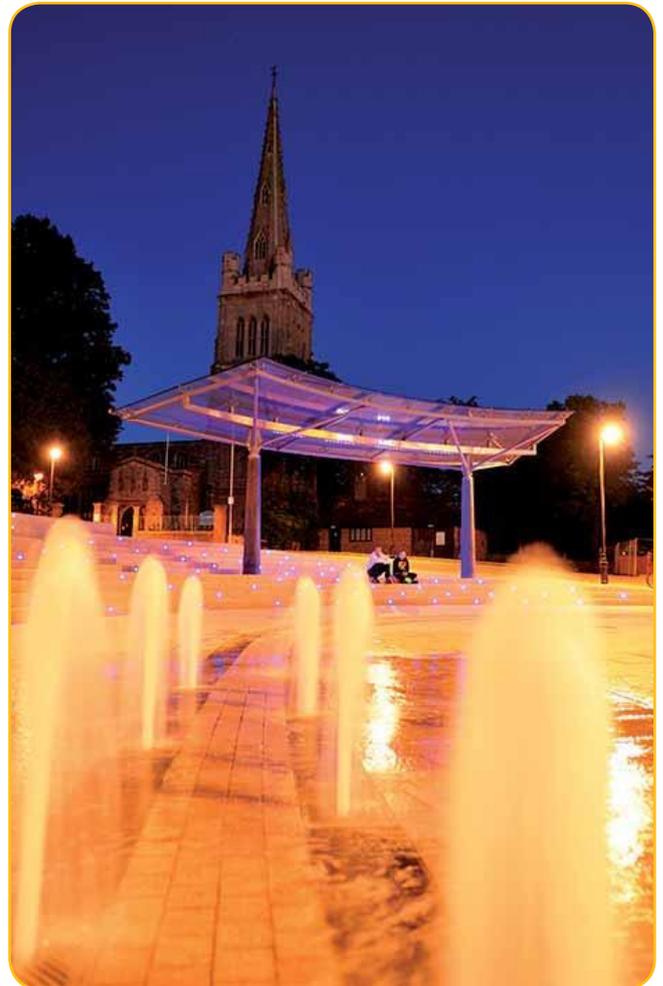
With the creation of the new Transport Interchange at the Railway Station, new bus stops will be required. These should be sensitively located to minimise obstruction to pavements and to maintain visibility of shop fronts.

Lighting

The existing lighting within the town centre is to be maintained as it fits with the overall historic character of the town. However all existing lighting columns should be painted black to match existing and proposed street furniture.

- / **Standard Light Fixture - DW Windsor Strand A painted black.** If the existing lighting is considered to have sufficient life expectancy, the brackets and/or columns (Arc Plain - Top Entry bracket) may be replaced in due course with the Scroll Traditional Top Entry bracket to reduce overall height.
- / **Feature Lighting (standing).** The use of contemporary feature lighting within bespoke pedestrian spaces is recommended and preferred styles are Woodhouse Geo Lightstacks and Urbis Light Tubes
- / **Feature Lighting (architectural).** The addition of lighting to new buildings or existing buildings of architectural merit within feature spaces or routes is recommended.
- / **Feature Lighting (floor level).** Floor level lighting should be incorporated into bespoke schemes, particularly in combination with seating, water features and planting/ street trees.

Figure 30 / Potential lighting designs



Feature lighting at Kettering, including LEDs within water jets, canopy and steps. (Photograph by Tony Courtney of Image Machine Photography). Design by Savills urban design.



Woodhouse Geo Lightstacks



Urbis Lighttube



Existing DW Windsor lamp columns, lanterns and brackets



Figure 31 / Architectural feature lighting diagram

-  Town centre boundary
-  Architectural feature lighting
-  Route feature lighting
-  Public space feature lighting

