

APPENDIX A

Leighton Linslade

Wider Town Centre Spatial Framework

Final Report

31/07/2025

Quality information

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Introduction

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1. Introduction

This report sets out a spatial framework and guidance for the wider Leighton Linlade town centre area, linked to the Leighton Linlade Neighbourhood Development Plan, to lead and stimulate its protection, conservation, enhancement, regeneration and sustained vitality.

The framework presented in this report recognises the key longer term trends that town centres must respond to, in order to stay vital.

1.1 Overview

Through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Neighbourhood Planning Programme led by Locality, AECOM was commissioned to provide design guidance to support Leighton Linlade Town Council.

The steering group provided guidance and local knowledge that has greatly informed this framework.

This report presents an overarching vision and a set of objectives for the town. Supporting this are a number of development proposals, as follows:

- Economy, vitality and culture;
- Heritage and distinctiveness;
- Sustainability and climate change; and
- Movement, public realm, green space, connectivity and accessibility.

The framework focuses on the central part of the town, with particular areas identified for new investment and regeneration, and presents potential scenarios and complementary uses for these areas.



Figure 01: Market on the High Street, Leighton Buzzard.



Figure 02: Vicarage and All Saints Church, Leighton Buzzard.

1.2 Purpose of this document

It is intended that this independent technical report is used to inform policies that will influence the planning and design of new development in the central part of Leighton Linlade.

The masterplanning studies are high level and illustrative, prepared to demonstrate how the town centre policy principles that the updated Neighbourhood Plan and Town Council wish to promote could be applied to the Town Centre. No technical studies have been undertaken on topics such as ground conditions, traffic and drainage (although AECOM specialists have inputted into design development). It is expected that full co-design exercises are undertaken by applicants on the sites. This report is just a step in that direction, enabling stakeholders to progress from an informed position.

The report provides an evidence base and high-level spatial framework. It is expected that a detailed evidence and design process including pre-application engagement in accordance with Leighton Linlade

Neighbourhood Plan pre-application protocol is undertaken by applicants on the site.

The report should be read in conjunction with its sister Land South of High Street Spatial Framework Report, and the Leighton Linlade Neighbourhood Plan.

1.3 Preparing the report

The following steps were agreed with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to produce this report, which draws upon policy development and engagement work undertaken by the Group.



The central area was analysed in terms of movement patterns, active travel modes, land use, heritage assets, public realm, and green infrastructure.

Following a workshop with the steering group, a set of objectives for development within the Town Centre were identified (see chapter 3) which informed the spatial framework principles.

The spatial framework is a high-level outline of what could be deliverable, recognising that certain elements of the spatial framework may be subject to negotiation and further refinement.

1.4 Area of study

The study area of this report is the central part of Leighton Linslade. This includes Leighton Buzzard town centre and the centre of neighbouring Linslade. The two are separated by the Grand Union Canal, River Ouzel and the area between these water bodies. Linslade lies west of the Canal, Leighton Buzzard east of the river.

The civil parish of Leighton Linslade is the Neighbourhood Area (NA) for Leighton Linslade Neighbourhood Plan and lies within the unitary authority area of Central Bedfordshire. The town centre is well connected with good vehicular and public transport links. Leighton Buzzard railway station is within Linslade and a 15 minute walk away from Leighton Buzzard High Street. The train line has direct connections to London on the West Midlands trainline with London Euston a 27 minute train journey away.

The A roads, A4146 and A505 wrap around the west and south of the NA and provide connections north to Milton Keynes and

east to Luton, and the major road A5. The main vehicular route through the town centre east-west is formed by the A4012, Leston Road, West Street, Leighton Road, Old Road and Soulbury Road. This road also connects Leighton Buzzard and Linslade over the Grand Union Canal and the River Ouzel. Both the Canal and the River Ouzel pass north-south through the NA and town centre, running parallel to each other. The main vehicular routes north-south are Wing Road and Stoke Road through Linslade, and the A4012 and North Street leading into Church Street through Leighton Buzzard.

Leighton Buzzard town centre serves as the main retail area with retail and other mixed uses concentrated along its High Street. Linslade serves as a secondary centre with some retail offerings, though significantly smaller than Leighton Buzzard town centre and with more of a residential focus.



Figure 03: Sign indicating the entrance to Linslade from Leighton Buzzard.



Figure 04: Bridge over the canal from Linslade to Leighton Buzzard.

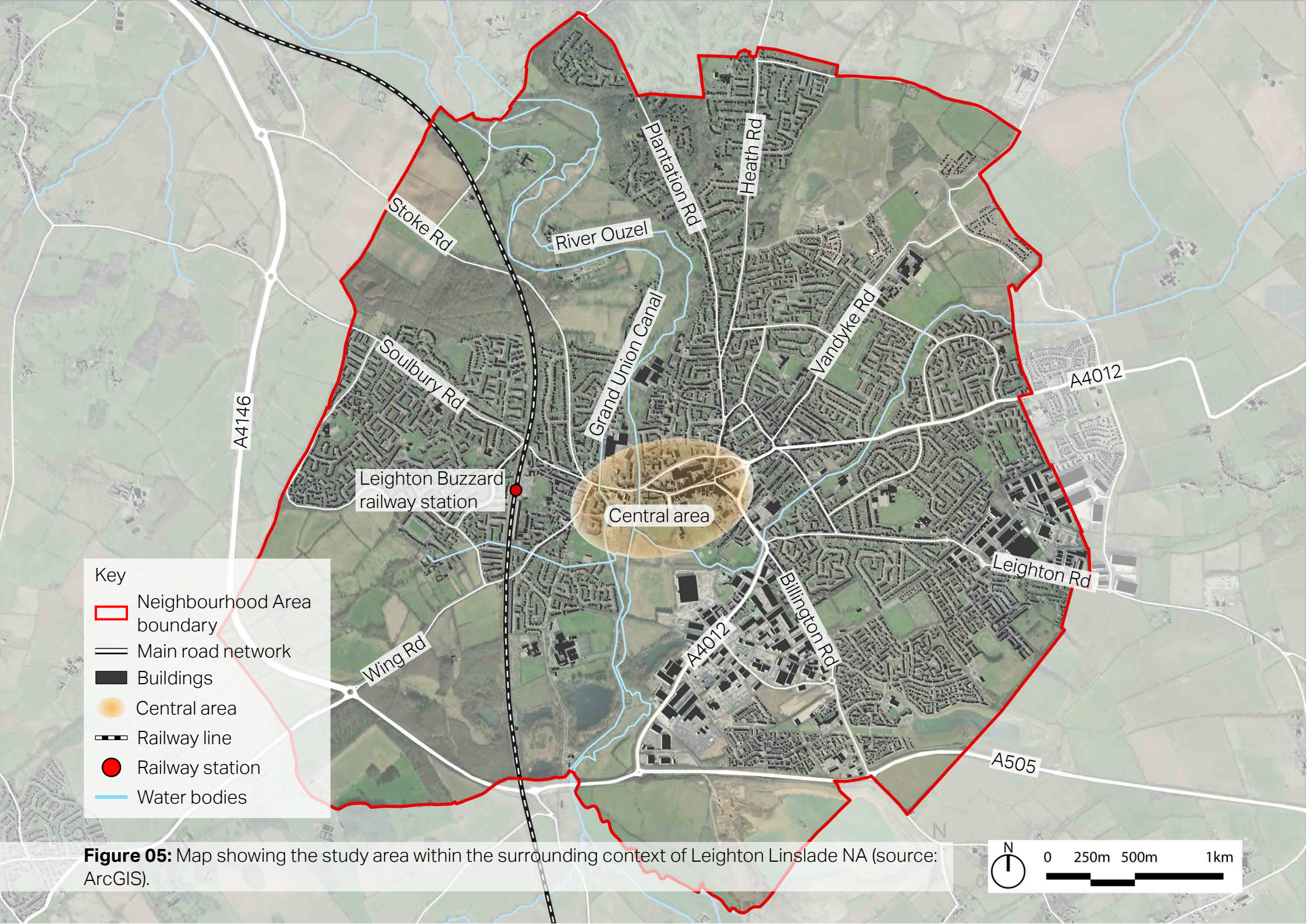




Figure 06: Map showing area of study.

1.5 The changing nature of town centres

Throughout the middle ages and for centuries to follow, Britain's town centres were the established setting for frequent markets and fairs, rendering them epicentres of commerce, entertainment, and face-to-face interaction.

Today, many town centres are on the decline. The retail sector is suffering from rapid change and wholesale shifts in the way that consumers behave and engage with their physical surroundings. The proliferation of e-commerce, online retailing, and the reduction in floorspace required is now widely acknowledged.

However, retail is not the only element of a thriving town centre. Recent research by the Greater London Authority found that 45% of primary high street use was for social reasons, as opposed to retail related. The majority of those surveyed (75%) also identified something other than retail as the best thing about their high street. This

is creating opportunities for new uses to emerge and deliver a different offering

COVID-19 placed the UK under great strain but also reminded us of the value of certain elements of the places in which we live: green spaces and parks, local shops and services and local walks. All of these elements allow us to interact with our family, friends, and local community, which is essential for our overall wellbeing.

Related to this, one of the key elements for a thriving town centre is being able to offer what digital cannot. Town centres must provide social spaces; hives of face-to-face interaction where the focal point is not a distinctive commercial offer, but a cultural one.



Figure 07: Market Cross on Leighton Buzzard High Street.

1.6 Future town centre trends¹

1

Landlords will welcome emerging brands that are experience-driven and connected with the local community. Lease contracts may become shorter and more flexible and demand for local concepts may require changes to credit risk models.

2

Town centres will focus on active travel and will reduce the presence and dominance of private vehicles. Personal ownership of cars will be dramatically reduced. Car fleets will own and operate driverless vehicles.

3

The sharing economy will be commonplace, extending beyond accommodation, transport and workspace.

4

An ageing population will bring with it various land use demands, such as new models of extra care facilities.

5

An acute shift to living and working locally; more people are shopping, working and exercising in their local community - flexible space is key.

6

Flexible lease structures will be more common and some will be automated – with renewals and negotiations carried out via tech. Blockchain registry of leases, land registry, previous tenants etc. will also be in place.

7

Independent stores, and food and beverage operators will become more prevalent. Retail destinations will feature unique offerings curated towards the local catchment. Chains will develop “local” concepts and brand names giving the appearance of independents.

8

Retail will be leisure; the divide will become increasingly blurred with brands addressing the need for experience in their stores. Stores will become as much showrooms as a place to make a purchase with in-store leisure elements integrated.

9

Wellness establishments will grow in number. Fitness centres will become commonplace, and lifestyle stores will become more popular as people look to buy clothes and products to support their healthy-living aspirations.

¹ Source: CBRE (2021) Future Gazing Trends

1.7 Planning policy and guidance

1.7.1 District Planning Policy and Guidance

Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015 to 2035

The current Central Bedfordshire Local Plan covers the period from 2015 to 2035 and was adopted in July 2021. In the Local Plan, Leighton Buzzard is identified as a Principal Town Centre with the principal function to 'provide a range of shops including many national multiple retailers and independent shops. Provides an extensive range of services, facilities and leisure uses and is home to a large number of businesses.' The Local Plan provides specific guidance around town centre development, in particular around ensuring town centre vitality with preferred uses.

The Local Plan suggests that density needs to be responsive to its immediate surroundings. It states that higher densities will be supported within urban locations

and along existing and potential new public transport corridors.

Central Bedfordshire Design Guide August 2023 SPD

The Central Bedfordshire Design Guide SPD (2023) outlines key principles for enhancing and developing town centres. It encourages denser mixed-use developments, particularly at route junctions and within local and town centres, ensuring that building heights are considered in relation to the surrounding context, including rooflines, views, and scale. Typically, town centre developments are expected to range from 2.5 to 4 storeys, with flexibility for half-storey heights to accommodate sustainable features such as solar technologies and heat pumps. Infill developments and larger footprint buildings are also encouraged to contribute to the vibrant, diverse character of town centres. Town centres should include a mix of uses such as residential, retail, commercial, and leisure, and be social spaces that creatively utilise public areas to support a vibrant daytime and night-time economy. Principles for mixed-

use development within town centres focus on ensuring compatibility between different uses, enhancing the area's overall functionality and vibrancy.

Additionally, the Design Guide highlights the importance of creating well-connected and accessible town centres, with an emphasis on integrating cycle route networks that serve key destinations such as schools, shops, transport hubs, and interchanges. Cycling, particularly with the rise of e-bikes, is promoted as a sustainable alternative for local journeys. Town centre sites should be highly sustainable, with direct access to a variety of facilities within easy walking distance and good connections to public transport. Redevelopment in town centre locations can range from small-scale replacements or the re-use of buildings to larger-scale developments, all contributing to a sustainable and accessible urban environment. The Guide also stresses the need for careful consideration of architectural design, encouraging the use of traditional materials and detailed shopfronts to maintain the character and identity of town centres.

Leighton Buzzard Development Briefs: Bridge Meadow, Technical Guidance, 2012

The purpose of this brief was to showcase the development opportunity and set out the Council's development aspirations for the site. The report establishes a set of guiding planning principles that form a framework for the preparation of development proposals and were intended to be used as the basis to determine future planning applications affecting the site. It provides an analysis of the existing area and provides high level outcomes desired for the different parcels that make up the site. It provides design guidance around urban design, layout & integration, scale & massing and others.

However, given it was published in 2012, it is now outdated. Therefore this report offers an updated set of objectives and high level masterplan framework for the site to encourage development of the land. The objectives and high level masterplan in this report draws on some of the ideas supported in the Technical Guidance document.

AECOM

1.7.2 Legislative Changes - Use Class Order

Of relevance to town centres across the UK, during 2020, the government brought in changes to consolidate a number of separate Use Classes under a single 'Commercial, Business and Service' Class E. This update to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (the 'UCO') came into effect in September 2020 and combined shops, restaurants, offices, gyms and nurseries (amongst others) that no longer require planning permission to switch between uses.

These changes intend to make it easier to enable greater utilisation of existing assets and where appropriate, repurposing of buildings in town centres such as Leighton Buzzard. Class E is intended to facilitate diversification and facilitates an enhanced role for town centres as places of work, providing space for services, research and development, creating and making. Shops can change to restaurants, cafes, gyms, offices, health centres and indoor sports facilities. This fits well with a 'mixed-use' neighbourhood approach.

In 2021, an update was made to the related legislation to allow for the change of use of these commercial properties to residential from August 2021 under a fast track 'prior approval' process.

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The background image shows a street scene with a white building featuring a large window decorated with autumn-themed items like pumpkins and leaves. A person is standing near the entrance. To the right, another building is visible, and two more people are walking on the sidewalk. A large green circle is superimposed over the center of the image.

Engagement

02

2. Engagement

Two consultation events were held in 2024. Additionally, a workshop took place between consultants and the Steering Group on 5th November.

2.1 Overview

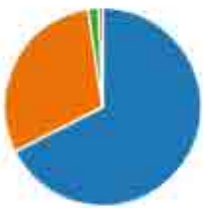
2.1.1 Public engagement in February 2024

The initial engagement activities in February 2024 were held as part of the scoping exercise, which included a survey completed by 296 residents. The key findings relating to this report are illustrated on this and the following pages.

The results show that the majority of respondents rated all the topics/ statements included here as 'important' or 'very important'. These responses have been taken as evidence to support the objectives and spatial framework in this report.

2. Avoiding harm to the natural environment/promoting biodiversity.

Very Important	200
Important	89
Not Important	5
Don't Know	2



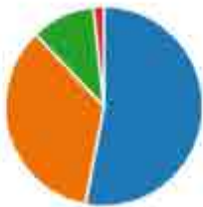
3. Mitigating the effect of climate change/ promoting a low carbon future for the town

Very Important	163
Important	104
Not Important	28
Don't Know	1



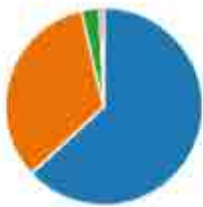
4. Making "Active Travel" easier around the town (walking/cycling/use of public transport.

Very Important	157
Important	103
Not Important	31
Don't Know	5



5. Preserving the heritage and historic buildings in our town.

Very Important	187
Important	98
Not Important	9
Don't Know	2



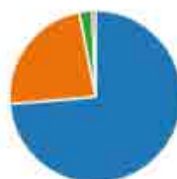
6. Protecting and enhancing our green spaces.

Very Important	234
Important	62
Not Important	0
Don't Know	0



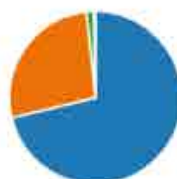
7. Retaining and enhancing our community facilities.

Very Important	218
Important	69
Not Important	7
Don't Know	2



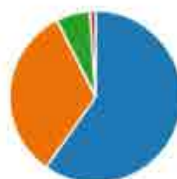
8. Ensuring a vibrant, commercially viable, town centre.

Very Important	211
Important	80
Not Important	4
Don't Know	1



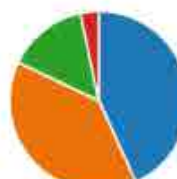
9. Protecting sensitive landscapes/important views.

Very Important	177
Important	97
Not Important	19
Don't Know	3



10. Being able to reduce dependence of the use of the car for short journeys.

Very Important	130
Important	117
Not Important	44
Don't Know	10



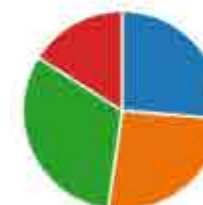
22. How do you think we, as a community, should tackle climate change locally? Tick all that apply.

Encourage all new homes to be ...	195
Protect and enhance open spac...	263
Encourage retrofitting on existin...	175
Plant more trees across the par...	241
Discouraging use of the private ...	152
Managing traffic to reduce emis...	211
Promoting local energy regener...	183



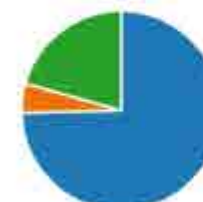
23. There is often a conflict between responding to a call to reduce car dependency due to the environmental impacts and the need for convenience and access to services. What is most important to you when it comes to car use?

I want to reduce my car depend...	133
I want to see the current parkin...	131
I would like to see adequate car ...	160
I would consider an electric car i...	81



24. Do you think that the Neighbourhood Plan should bring forward town centre regeneration for Leighton Buzzard?

Yes	221
No	14
Don't Know	61



2.1.2 Scoping and vision session in March 2024

Additionally, a Steering Group (SG) scoping and visioning session was held in March 2024, in which the following areas were identified as high priorities for participants:

- Regeneration of the town centre;
- Redevelopment of sites, particularly at Land South of High Street and Bridge Meadow;
- Infrastructure improvements, with a focus on community, social, and cultural facilities;
- Optimising brownfield sites for development;
- Provision of homes for young people (starter homes) and the elderly (downsizing options);
- Protection and enhancement of local green spaces;
- Enhancement of cycling and walking infrastructure, particularly around the town centre;

- Preservation of local heritage assets; and
- Establishment of a local design framework.

These focus areas will guide the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, ensuring that it reflects the community's priorities while promoting sustainable growth and development.

2.1.3 The workshop with the Steering Group and AECOM in November 2024

The workshop highlighted several key themes and opportunities for enhancing the central area and the following objectives were identified to inform the spatial framework in this report:

- **High Street:** A focus on creating a healthy High Street and safe, communal spaces was emphasised. Improving greening efforts, implementing low carbon initiatives, and providing pocket parks will contribute to the environmental sustainability of the town.

- **Cultural, social and community:** The central area must be a hub for a wide range of uses beyond purely commercial ones.
- **Canal and connectivity:** Discussion centred around whether Linslade and Leighton Buzzard should remain distinct or seamlessly merge. If brownfield redevelopment opportunities arise along Leighton Road, the spatial framework should explore ways to strengthen the connection between the two areas, balancing cohesion and identity. There is also an opportunity to pedestrianise areas. The canal was identified as a key gateway to both Leighton Buzzard and Linslade. There is potential for redevelopment of the adjacent Bridge Meadow, offering opportunities for a mix of residential, community, and commercial uses.
- **Public realm:** The importance of improving public realm spaces to encourage dwell time and protect economic values was emphasised, with better parking access and connections

for cycling and walking from the station and surrounding residential areas.

- **Heritage preservation and landmarks:** The spatial framework should consider opportunities for landmark buildings and elevated structures at key arrival points or central locations. Redevelopment efforts should focus on preserving the heritage of Leighton Buzzard's core town centre.
- **Retail and commercial zones:** Beyond Bridge Meadow, larger out-of-town retail premises and more commercial areas exist. Approaching Linslade, a range of local shops clustered around Wing Road provide important retail space for local businesses.

Overall, the spatial framework should focus on creating a well-integrated town that balances new development, preservation of heritage, and sustainability, with strong connections between key locations and a vibrant, accessible public realm.

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Wider town centre
context

03

3. Wider town centre context

3.1 Evolution of the town centre

Leighton Buzzard has a rich history as a market town, and described in the Domesday Survey as the richest market in Bedfordshire. The market cross in the town centre was built in 1453. Industry in Leighton Buzzard included the basket making industry which starting around the mid-1700s and Lake Street was the centre for this industry. This industry grew through to the 1800s.

The Grand Junction Canal was dug through Linslade parish and opened at the start of the 1800s and linked London with the Midlands. The London and North Western Railway line opened in 1838 with trains stopping at Linslade on the line between Euston and Manchester. The Wool Fair began in 1840.

The railway and canal in Linslade prompted a new population to grow up around this area – people were reluctant to travel the two miles to St Mary's Church in Leighton Buzzard so a new church, St Barnabas was

built across the meadow from the railway station in the area of New Linslade known as Chelsea. A second LNWR railway line opened in 1848 between Leighton Buzzard and Luton. The Corn Exchange was built in Lake Street in 1862. In 1965 Leighton Buzzard and Linslade amalgamated to form Leighton Linslade Urban Council and by an Act of Parliament Linslade was transferred from Buckinghamshire to Bedfordshire. Leighton Linslade Southern Bypass opened in 1991.

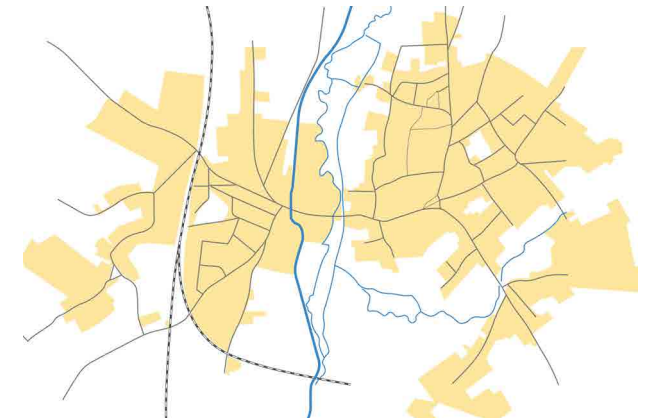
1848.



1887.



1953.



3.2 Wider town centre today

Leighton Buzzard has evolved from a traditional market town to a 21st century modern town centre, with a mix of residential, retail and community uses. The town retains many historic buildings with strong links to its heritage, as well as the market tradition with markets taking place on Tuesdays and Saturdays on the High Street. Recent vacancy data indicates the retail offer remains strong and resilient in the face of challenging conditions.

To the north of the town centre, the Waterborne Walk shopping centre and multistorey car park, have expanded the commercial and retail area. Hockcliffe Street and North Street are also predominantly providing typical town centre uses of land for retail purposes (often with residential on upper floors).

To the west beyond Bridge Street are located larger 'out of town' retail premises in a more industrial setting, then, approaching Linslade a range of local shops clustered around Wing Road also provide valuable

retail space for local businesses. The canal provides a key gateway to Leighton Buzzard to the east and Linslade to the west. Linslade has a much smaller retail offering and lacks a definite town centre.

The two areas of Linslade and Leighton Buzzard are separated by the area between the Canal and River Ouzel, known as Bridge Meadow. The land south of Leighton Road through this area has some businesses, but primarily is derelict, formerly industrial land.

Both Leighton Buzzard and Linslade enjoy green spaces including the churchyard of All Saints Church, Parson's Close recreation ground, Leighton Town sports grounds and Mentmore Road Memorial Park.

Though the High Street has traffic restrictions, there are issues around the town centre with high volumes of traffic, particularly along the main east-west route which bypasses the High Street and connects to Linslade to the west.



Figure 08: Bridge Street leading to Leighton Buzzard High Street.



Figure 09: Old Road, looking west towards Linslade.

3.3 Key issues, challenges and opportunities

Following the engagement results, workshop discussion, and tour of the town centre with the Neighbourhood Plan steering group, as well as desktop research, a number of issues, challenges and opportunities for the town centre have been identified as follows opposite and on the following pages.

Issues:

- Lack of community and social infrastructure in the town centre.
- Landmark buildings/heritage not celebrated.
- Lack of pedestrian connection between the town centre and residential areas.
- Disconnect between Leighton Buzzard and Linslade.
- Unsympathetic development in the town centre detracts from the character and historic built form.
- Unsympathetic shop fronts which detract from the historic character of the High Street.

Challenges:

- How to reduce traffic issues through the town centre.
- Maintain sufficient car parking in the town centre whilst also improving the public realm for pedestrians and promoting active travel.
- Lots of underutilised and some disused buildings on the High Street/ in the town centre, could be used as creative studios and small locally rooted businesses.
- Viability, including challenges funding any cultural and community facilities.
- Underground constraints regarding planting more trees on High Street.
- Integrate the textures, colours and charisma of the town.



Figure 10: Large signage on shop fronts detract from built form character.



Figure 11: Unsympathetic building (left) in the conservation area and adjacent to listed buildings.



Figure 12: Traffic along North Street.



Figure 13: Car parking on Church Square dominates a potentially special space.



Figure 14: Car parking on the High Street dominates the public realm and inhibits pedestrian movement.

Opportunities:

- Repurpose existing spaces for health and wellbeing, community, cultural and heritage uses.
- Enhance waterways of river Ouzel and Grand Union Canal as community and biodiversity assets.
- Create a sustainable travel network to promote active travel and secure investment in traffic management schemes.
- Bring land south of High Street into use.
- Utilise land at Bridge Meadow to provide opportunities for a mix of residential, community and commercial uses across the site.
- Protect and enhance green spaces and promote active travel routes which provide access to these for residents.
- Celebrate the rich heritage of the town centre/conservation areas which have many Listed buildings.



Figure 15: Parson's Close recreation ground.



Figure 16: Land at Bridge Meadow.



Figure 17: Buildings of heritage value with historic materials and architecture along the High Street.



Figure 18: River Ouzel running north south between Leighton Buzzard town centre and Linslade.

**Wider town centre
vision and objectives**

04

4. Wider town centre vision and objectives

4.1 Vision and objectives

Following the meeting in November 2024, AECOM and the steering group came up with a vision for the wider town centre. The objectives out of the vision are presented on the following pages.

Town centre vision:

"A 21st century market town that thrives on the strength of its heritage, community, environment and entrepreneurs/creatives".

The Town Council will support this vision by:



- Promoting a Town Centre where people want to spend time, that promotes local entrepreneurs and small businesses and is anchored by a popular market.



- Supporting the creation of spaces that empower local groups and entrepreneurs that bring our community together, and enable the local services that local people need.



- Improving and incorporating Blue and Green spaces that will provide easy access for residents to enjoy the local countryside and improve health and wellbeing.



- Ensuring that provision of homes in the future all meet the Healthy Homes standards.



- Enabling local enterprises, entrepreneurs and creatives to deliver jobs, culture, community life and contribute to the vitality and viability of the town.

By implementing this vision, the wider town centre of Leighton Linlade will:

- Celebrate and make the most of its special historic character – reusing old buildings and with heritage informing the design of new ones.
- Become a real community hub for a friendly town, serving people from surrounding places too – spaces to come together in.
- Be known for a rich mix of shops, cafes, cultural institutions, and interesting independent businesses.
- Actively nurture creativity with affordable spaces for creative expression.
- Be a greener, more biodiverse town centre than now, linking to the canal, river, parks, and countryside.
- Be easy and pleasant to move around on foot and wheeling, encouraging non-car uses for short trips to reduce congestion and cut pollution, including pedestrianisation measures where these are locally supported.
- Strengthen the heart of Linlade to support the town centre with an identity of its own and places to meet.
- Ensure the backland space between the High Street, Recreation Ground and Church (Land South of the High Street) is reborn as a culture- and community-led mixed use hub, including some low-car housing for all ages, designed to complement its special surroundings.
- Support measures which promote a vibrant evening economy – including cultural events, later opening hours, safe and welcoming public spaces, and a range of food, drink, and leisure options.

Objective 1 High Street: Create a healthy, sustainable high street with safe, communal and green spaces.

- Support local business.
- Promote healthy, safe streets.
- Encourage active travel via healthy streets.
- Implement low-carbon initiatives and promote the use of technologies that support low carbon growth.
- Provide pocket parks to contribute to the environmental sustainability of the town.

Objective 2 Cultural, social and community: Allow space for facilities that support the local community and improve the condition of existing facilities.

- Identify locations for potential new community hubs, cultural spaces, and healthcare facilities, including a new Neighbourhood Health Centre. These hubs could include lively, flexible spaces for a variety of events to add vibrancy to the area.
- Protect and enhance the vitality of Leighton Buzzard town centre.
- Sustain and enhance the diversity and quality of the town centre retail, service and leisure offer and maximise its sustained vitality;
- Explore the potential for cultural facilities in the area around the library and Land South of the High Street.

Objective 3 Canal and connectivity: Use the canal as a key gateway to both Leighton Buzzard and Linslade, strengthen connectivity between the two areas and routes along the canal and river.

- Explore the potential for re-wilding projects along the river.
- Redevelop the adjacent Bridge Meadow to improve the area around the canal and connection between the two town centres.

Objective 4 Active travel and public realm:

Improve the public realm spaces to encourage dwell time.

- Tree planting in the town centre to enhance biodiversity, provide solar shading and improve the character of the town centre.
- Create a town centre with improved pedestrian, cycle, and public transport connectivity with surrounding facilities such as the green spaces and its wider community area.
- Better parking access and connections for cycling and walking from the station and surrounding residential areas.
- Redesign the roads in the town centre to be less vehicle dominated.

Objective 5 Heritage preservation and landmarks:

Preserve the heritage and character of the town centre, promote existing landmarks and consider opportunities for new landmarks at key locations.

- Protect and enhance the appearance and character of the town centre and the conservation area.
- The rich heritage of the town centre should be promoted and utilised to attract visitors and residents alike.
- Opportunities for landmark buildings and elevated structures at key arrival points or central locations.
- Use the town's distinctive built character to set the tone and design approach for new buildings.

Objective 6 Retail and commercial zones:

Use opportunities to develop industrial zones and provide spaces for new uses including space for new businesses.

- Beyond Bridge Meadow, larger out-of-town retail premises and more industrial areas exist. Approaching Linslade, a range of local shops clustered around Wing Road provide important retail space for local businesses.

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**Wider town centre
development principles**

05

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5. Wider town centre development principles

5.1 Economy, vitality and culture

The Leighton Lincolns wider town centre should be a thriving hub that supports local businesses, enhances cultural engagement, and creates a dynamic environment for residents and visitors alike. A successful town centre must be diverse, vibrant, and adaptable to changing consumer habits while celebrating its unique heritage and artistic identity. In order to achieve this, the town centre should:

Support a diverse and sustainable economy

- Support local businesses to cater for the strong community desire for independent shops, markets, and diverse retail offerings to reduce reliance on chain stores;
- Support for a greater variety of independent shops and markets along High Street and Church Square, reducing reliance on national chains. There is a demand for more diverse retail options,

including specialist stores, fresh produce markets, and independent cafés that cater to different demographics, including families, young professionals, and older residents;

- Provide opportunities for flexible workspaces, co-working hubs, and start-up incubator hubs to encourage local enterprise and attract new businesses. These could potentially be within underutilised upper floors of High Street buildings;
- Nurture the evening and night-time economy by fostering a mix of leisure, cultural, and hospitality uses that ensure activity beyond standard retail hours. This may include more restaurants, bars, and cultural venues, particularly around Lake Street, Church Square, and the High Street, to make the central area a vibrant destination in the evening;
- Flexible and pop-up uses as “meanwhile” uses for vacant shops and spaces, such as pop-up stores, art displays, and community-driven activities. This

ensures continuous activity and reduces the number of empty storefronts;

- Improve signage and wayfinding to enhance visitor navigation, making local businesses and key destinations more accessible.

Encourage cultural and community integration

- Capitalise on Leighton Lincolns’s strong artistic culture by exploring the potential for a designated cultural quarter. This could support local artists, performers, and creatives while drawing visitors to the town;
- Develop a cultural hub, potentially located near West Street or Church Square/Land South of High Street, to provide spaces for arts, exhibitions, live performances, and community events;

- The historic market is valued but needs enhancement. Suggestions include improved stall layouts, better promotion, themed markets (e.g. artisan, farmers' markets), and later opening hours to attract more visitors;
- The Grand Union Canal is seen as an underused asset. There is an opportunity to develop more canal-side cafés, heritage experiences, and mooring facilities to attract visitors and boost the local economy;
- Ensure public spaces and landmark buildings are activated for cultural venues, community spaces, and regular events such as festivals, art exhibitions, and live performances creating a lively and engaging atmosphere; and
- Identify opportunities for new cultural and community facilities that align with the vision of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, such as a community arts hub or multi-purpose venue.



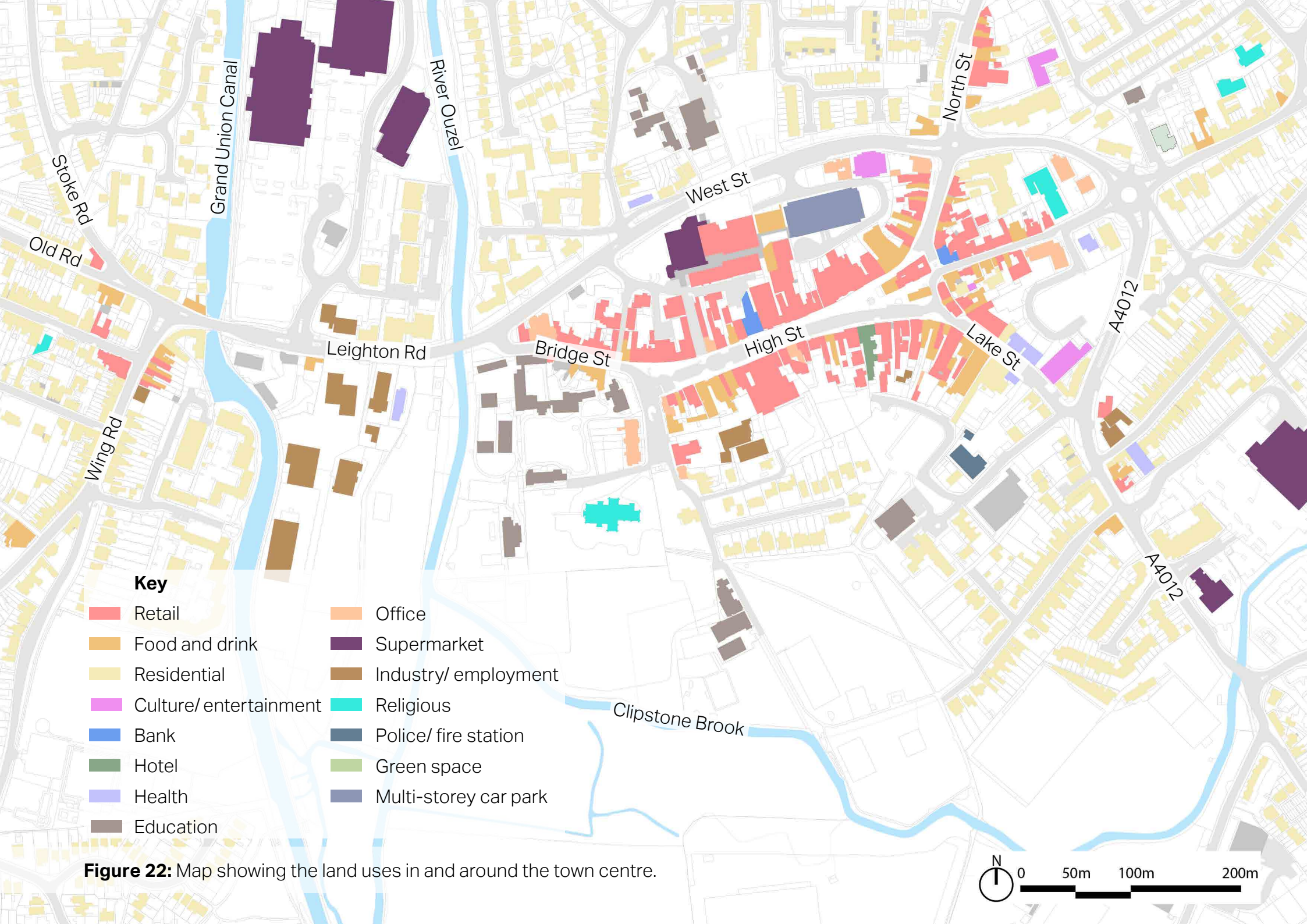
Figure 19: Layered uses with bike shop / cafe / workspace.



Figure 21: Support local businesses to cater for the strong community desire.



Figure 20: Cafe and workspace allowing for connection.



5.2 Heritage and distinctiveness

Leighton Lincolde's rich history and distinctive character should be protected and enhanced to reinforce its unique identity. The town centre's heritage assets, landmark buildings, and historic streetscape contribute significantly to its appeal for residents, businesses, and visitors. Future development should celebrate this history while ensuring the town continues to evolve in a way that respects its past. In order to achieve this, the wider town centre should:

Protect and showcase heritage assets

- Ensure that key historic buildings such as All Saints Church, The Golden Bell, and the former Fire Station are preserved, sensitively restored, and better integrated into public life through lighting, signage, and potential new uses;
- Introduce heritage trails, interactive displays, and public art installations to bring the town's history to life,

particularly around the Market Square and Church Square;

- Support the restoration and adaptive reuse of landmark buildings such as The Golden Bell, The White House, and the former Fire Station, ensuring they contribute to the vitality of the town centre; and
- Conservation Area Improvements: Protect and enhance the Conservation Area, ensuring new development respects existing architectural styles and materials.

Reactivate historic spaces

- Support the adaptive reuse of historic structures for cultural, community, or business purposes, ensuring they remain active and relevant;
- Strengthen Church Square as a key civic and cultural space by improving public realm design, integrating heritage interpretation, and ensuring new development complements the historic character;

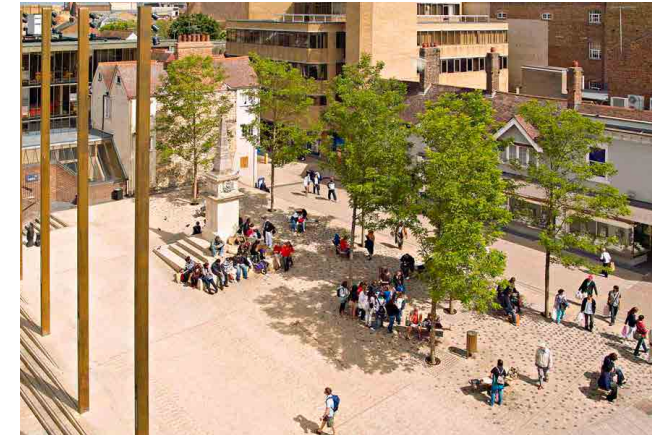
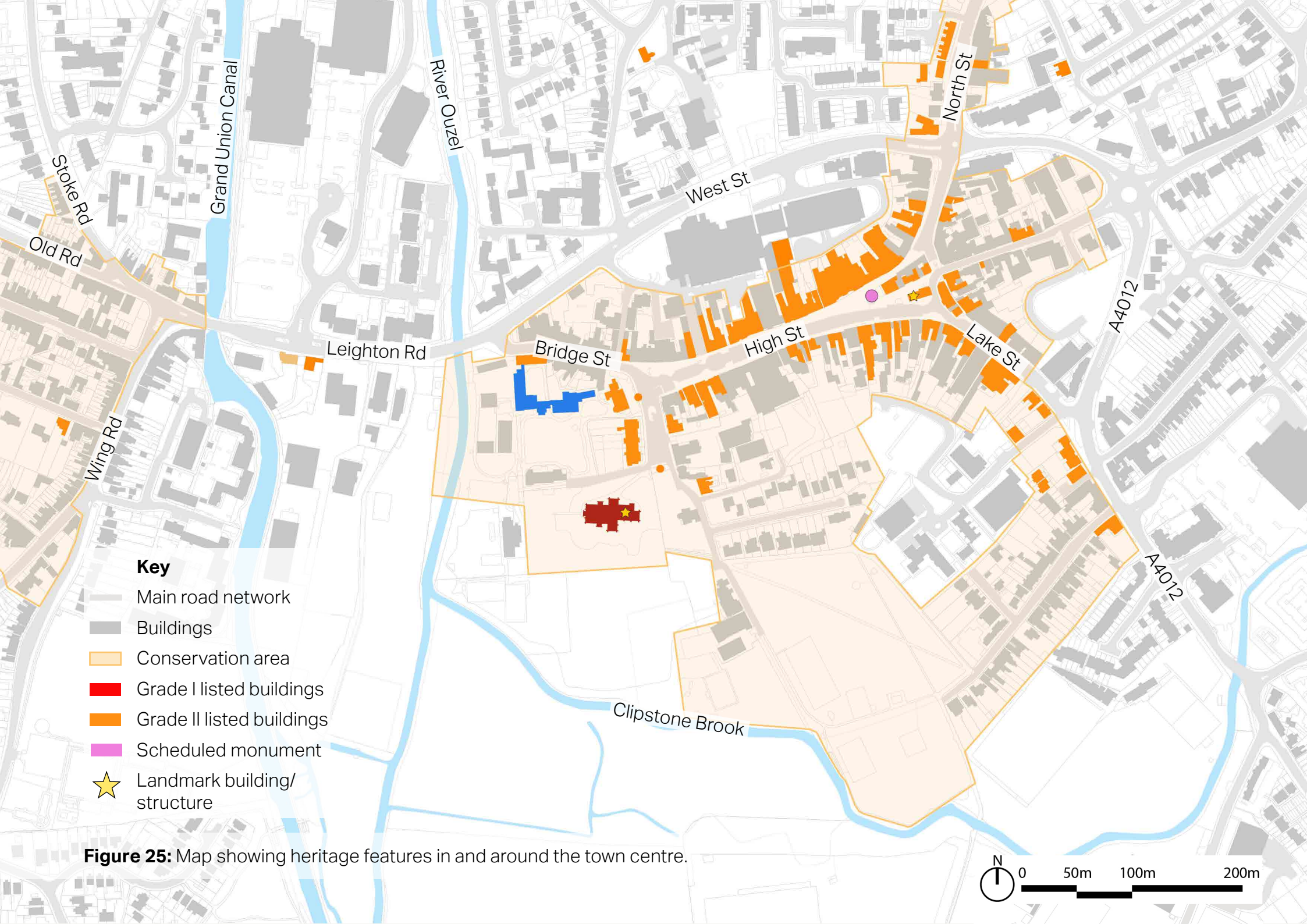


Figure 23: Revitalising the historic square. Example from Bonn Square, Oxford.



Figure 24: Locally distinctive materials.



- Encourage development that prioritises heritage-led placemaking, such as the refurbishment of older buildings rather than demolition; and
- These spaces should be enhanced as vibrant civic hubs, incorporating historic references into their design and function.

Strengthen local character

- Use high-quality materials in paving, street furniture, and lighting to reflect the historic nature of the town, particularly along High Street and Lake Street;
- Encourage the retention and restoration of historic shopfronts, using traditional materials and signage to reinforce the town's identity;
- Highlight the town's industrial and railway history through interpretation panels, public art, and potential collaborations with local heritage organisations; and
- Ensure that new buildings complement the existing townscape, respecting local styles while allowing for contemporary interpretations.



Figure 26: Digital wayfinding can increase accessibility with conventional signage.



Figure 27: Signage totem that locates cultural landmarks.

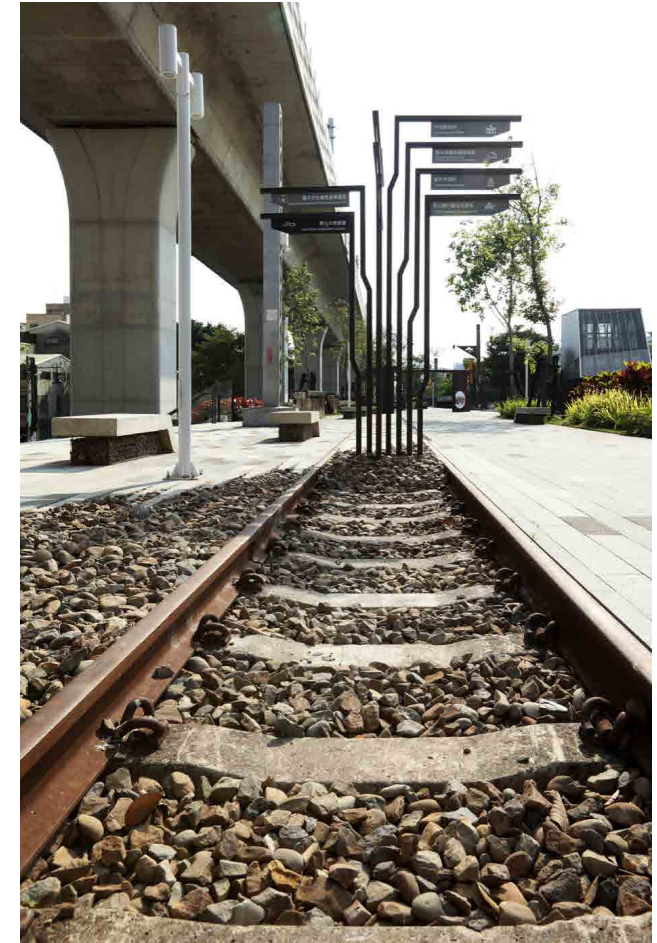


Figure 28: Locally distinctive public art that reflects the town's industrial history.



Figure 29: A vibrant and inclusive market square.



Figure 30: Wide footways and clear crossing points.

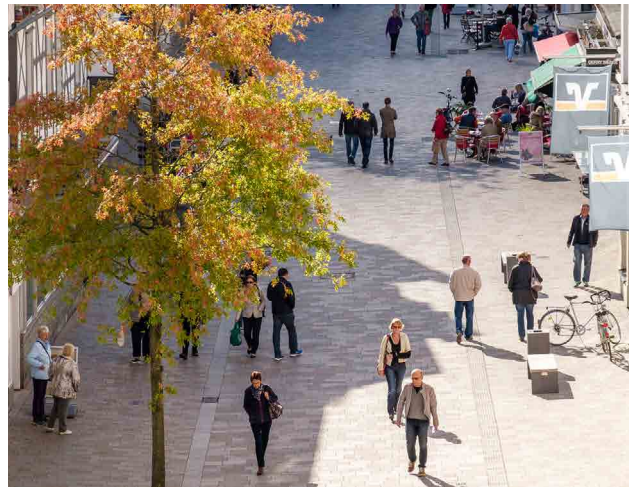


Figure 31: Pedestrian zones using materials within a de-cluttered environment.



Figure 32: Creating access to existing waterways.

BUILT HERITAGE AND MATERIALS

The town's medieval street layout, Victorian era variety, and burgage plot patterns contribute to a distinctive sense of place. New development and refurbishments must respond sensitively to Leighton Linlade's architectural heritage, ensuring that materials, textures, colours, scale, and rhythm respect the town's character. A lack of attention to these details would undermine the town's historic identity. In order to achieve this, the town centre should:

Ensure high-quality, contextual design

- The narrow frontages and varied rooflines of the High Street, inherited from the historic burgage plots, should be reflected in new development to maintain the established rhythm of the streetscape;
- New buildings should follow the pattern of short-span, red-tiled roofs, in keeping with traditional town centre architecture. Long or flat roof spans should be avoided unless justified by historical precedents;

- The medieval origins of the town's street layout should inform development patterns, ensuring that street widths, building lines, and sightlines retain their historical proportions;
- Encourage the use of courtyards and mews-style developments in areas with infill potential, such as Peacock Mews, ensuring that small-scale historic patterns are retained;
- Special attention should be given to prominent locations such as Church Square, Market Square, and the key approach roads (Lake Street, West Street, Hockliffe Street) to ensure that new developments contribute positively to the historic townscape; and
- Active ground floor street frontages help keep a vibrant streetscape. Modern buildings should feature pedestrian friendly frontages that activate the street, reminiscent of the traditional shopfronts and marketplaces that characterize historic town centres.

Materials



Red-blue brick mix



Timber frame



Variety of brick



Variety of brick



Variety of brick



Variety of brick

Material palette reflecting local identity

- Development should favour traditional, high-quality materials, including: red and buff brickwork, matching local historic examples, natural stone accents, where appropriate clay roof tiles, avoiding modern substitutes that do not match the texture or colour of historic materials, timber shopfronts and detailing, maintaining the variety and richness of Victorian-era high street character;
- Natural materials such as stone and timber should be incorporated, especially in doorways, window surrounds, and shopfronts, to reflect the high street's Victorian-era craftsmanship;
- While Leighton Lincolns' High Street features a mix of architectural styles, this variety follows a recognisable framework. New buildings should embrace diversity in detailing while maintaining cohesion in height, scale, and materials;
- New developments can incorporate modern construction methods while using materials that have historical relevance. For example, using modern brickwork that matches the texture and colour of traditional bricks, but with more sustainable or innovative production techniques;
- Modern interpretations of traditional forms can involve simplified, abstracted versions of familiar shapes. For example, a modern building may have clean lines, but its roofline could mimic a traditional pitched roof or a gable end, providing a connection to historical forms; and
- The use of uPVC shopfronts, oversized signage, and poorly proportioned modern interventions should be discouraged, as they detract from the town's historic character.

Materials



Clay roof tiles



Chimney stack



Timber sash window



Stone boundary wall



Traditional doorway

Shopfronts and material palette opportunities

Good design of shopfronts can enhance the appearance of the street scene, providing a more attractive atmosphere for shoppers and visitors, and opportunities for investment.

- The design of shopfronts should be considered as a part of the overall composition of the building and the wider context of the town centre. The design of shop fronts should take into account the rhythm and character of the street such as the width of building, the horizontal or vertical emphasis, the variety of style and the architecture of the building itself. Where the shop front continues to another building, a change in its design may be required;
- Sensitivity to the history and local vernacular in terms of layout, design, materials, and colour palette;
- Any principles for listed or old buildings need to be taken into account and be

commensurate with preserving the building's character and setting;

- The fascia is the most important area of a shop front for advertising the business. Signage within the established proportions and confines of the fascia board should be maintained. Box signs or additional flat boards should be avoided as they create disproportionate depth and height;
- Avoid using visually distinct sources of illumination that result in disproportionate signage, such as internally-illuminated box signs;
- The most appropriate signage at fascia level are individual letters applied or painted directly onto the fascia board;
- In general, the character of the town centre can be enhanced paying particular attention to the colour, scale and detailed design of shopfronts, fascias and hanging signs (for further guidance, refer to Section 5.28 of the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide, August 2023 SPD).

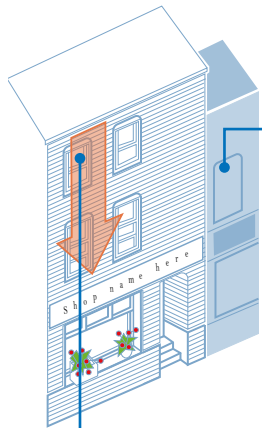


Figure 33: Examples of negative shop fronts, which are not in keeping with the colour palette or local vernacular.



Figure 34: Examples of positive shop fronts.

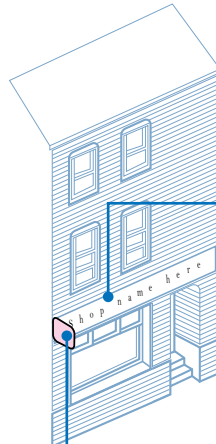
Character & Design



Integrate the shop front with the surrounding streetscape. Consider adjacent buildings and typical details in the area

Incorporate the overall proportion, form, and scale of the building's upper floors into the design of the shop front

Signage



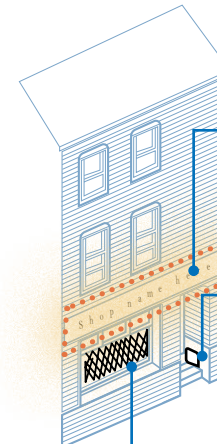
Avoid unnecessary visual clutter

Signage should not be placed on upper floors

Use the fascia as the predominant position for signage

Hanging signs should be in proportion to the building and street and should not dominate pavements

Lighting & Safety



Avoid using internally-illuminated box signs

Conceal alarms from the shop front façade and integrate them in the design

Avoid using external roller shutters and grilles. Favour use of internal open grilles which cover only the glazed part of the shop front

5.3 Sustainability and climate change

Leighton Lincolde town centre must embrace sustainable development to mitigate climate change, enhance biodiversity, and create a town centre that supports low-carbon living. Given its historic market town character, proximity to the Grand Union Canal, and transport connections, the town centre has unique opportunities. In order to integrate green infrastructure and promote sustainable lifestyles, the town centre should:

Promote sustainable and active travel

- Develop a town centre mobility hub at a central location (e.g., near the railway station or the High Street) to encourage public transport use, cycle hire, and e-scooter sharing schemes;
- Enhance pedestrian and cycling routes from residential areas, especially improving connections over the canal from the west. Create safe and attractive walking and cycling links between



Figure 35: Active travel provision (Elephant Park, London).



Figure 36: Safe pedestrian crossing to encourage multi-modal transportation

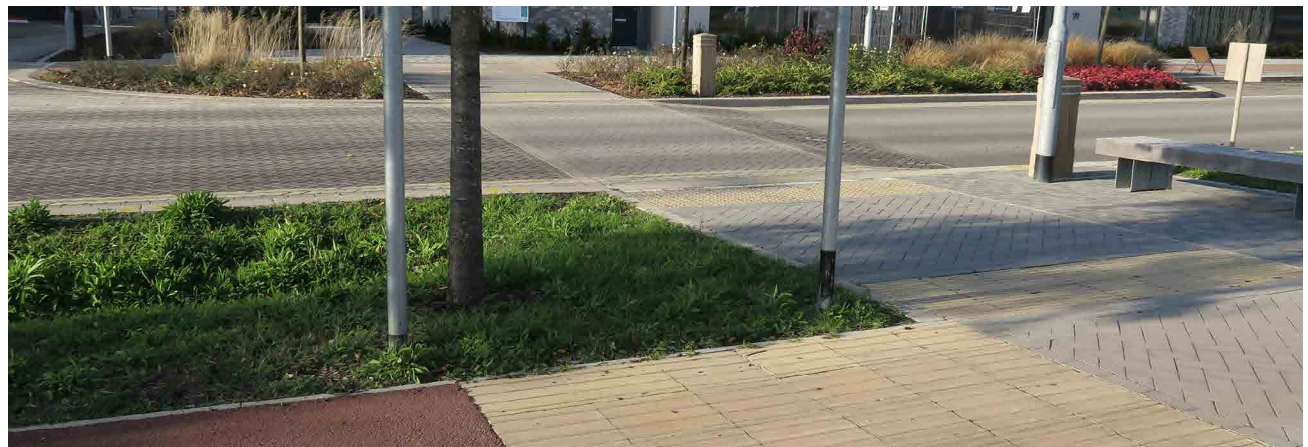


Figure 37: Raised pedestrian crossing on a main road, with contrast paving materials.

the High Street, the railway station, and green spaces like Parsons Close Recreation Ground;

- Introduce more secure cycle parking near Market Square, the High Street, and key transport nodes to encourage cycling; and
- Explore pedestrianisation options for the High Street, reducing vehicle dominance and improving air quality.

Encourage low-carbon and energy-efficient development

- Encourage retrofitting of historic buildings with sustainable technology (e.g., solar panels, heat pumps, and improved insulation) while respecting conservation area guidelines;
- Promote energy-efficient new buildings in the town centre, requiring developments to meet high environmental standards such as Passivhaus or BREEAM certification. Encourage businesses to adopt green energy solutions, such as installing solar

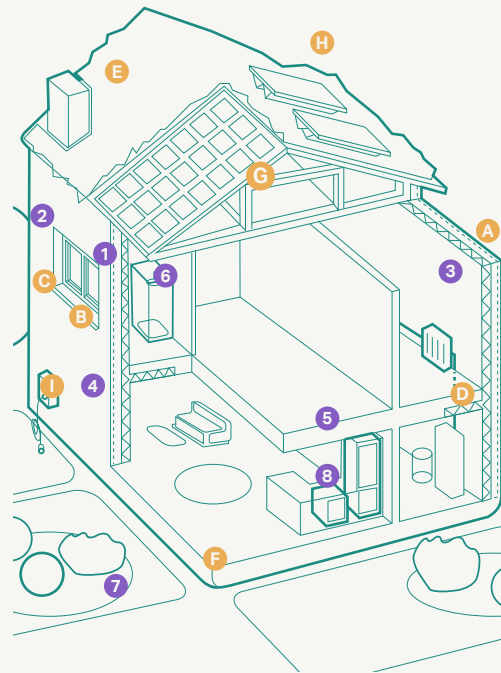


Figure 38: Diagram showing low-carbon homes in both existing and new build conditions.

- 1**  **Insulation** in lofts and walls (cavity and solid)
- 2**  **Double or triple glazing with shading** (e.g. blinds, curtains and trees outside)
- 3**  **Low-carbon heating** with heat pumps or connections to heat network
- 4**  **Draught proofing** of floors, windows and doors
- 5**  **Highly energy-efficient appliances** (A++ or A+++ rating)
- 6**  **Highly water-efficient devices** with low-flow taps, insulated tanks and thermostats
- 7**  **Green space (e.g. gardens and trees)** that help reduce risks and impacts of flooding
- 8**  **Flood resilience and resistance** with removable air back covers, treated wooden floors etc.
- A**  **High levels of airtightness**
- B**  **Triple glazed windows and external shading** especially on south and west faces
- C**  **Low-carbon heating** plus no new homes on the gas grid by 2025
- D**  **More fresh air** with mechanical ventilation, passive systems
- E**  **Water management and cooling** more ambitious water efficiency standards, green roofs, rainwater harvesting
- F**  **Flood resilience and resistance** e.g. raised floors and greening the garden space
- G**  **Construction and site planning** timber frames, active travel etc.
- H**  **Solar panels**
- I**  **Electric car charging point**

panels on large retail and commercial buildings in the town centre; and

- Support local businesses and markets in adopting low-carbon practices, such as reducing plastic waste and promoting locally sourced products.

Strengthen green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements

- Expand tree planting and urban greening, particularly along High Street, Lake Street, and Church Square, to improve air quality, provide shade, and enhance biodiversity;
- Rewild sections of the Grand Union Canal and River Ouzel to improve ecological corridors and support urban wildlife;
- Enhance Parsons Close Recreation Ground as a key green space by incorporating more biodiversity-friendly landscaping, sustainable drainage systems, and community-led planting schemes; and



Figure 39: Raised planters to provide temporary shade.



Figure 40: Sedum roof is simple and easy to introduce.



Figure 41: Raised planter with integrated seating.

- Encourage green roofs and walls on commercial and public buildings, such as the library, civic buildings, and retail units, to enhance insulation and biodiversity.

Promote sustainable drainage systems

- Implement Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in public realm upgrades, especially around Market Square, the High Street, and new development sites, to reduce surface water run-off;
- Explore innovative ways to incorporate SUDS, whilst also enhancing biodiversity. Strategies could include the use of permeable paving to on street parking areas and public spaces, incorporation of rain gardens into public spaces, filter strips and bio-retention systems; and
- Improve resilience to extreme weather by integrating flood-resistant design measures in new and existing buildings, particularly in areas near the River Ouzel and the canal.



Figure 42: Eastcote town centre planted rain gardens.



Figure 43: SuDS mimic the functions of natural drainage. Image: GreenBlue Urban

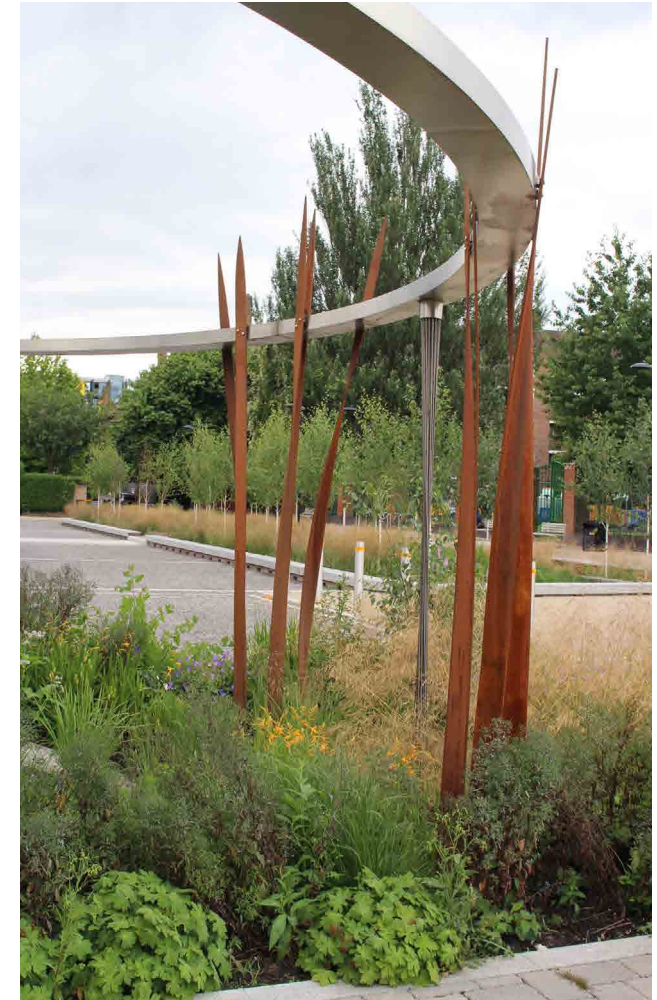


Figure 44: SuDS integrated with sculptures. Example: Bridget Joyce Square, London.

5.4 Movement, public realm, green space, connectivity and accessibility

Leighton Lincolns' wider town centre should be a well-connected, walkable, and inclusive space, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles while improving access to green spaces and enhancing the public realm. Given the town's historic street layout, proximity to the Grand Union Canal, and role as a local shopping and service centre, a place-sensitive approach is essential. In order to create a well-connected environment, the town centre should:

Improve movement and connectivity

- Improve pedestrian links between the town centre and western residential areas, especially across the Grand Union Canal, where better-lit, safer crossings and wayfinding would encourage walking;
- Strengthen walking and cycling routes between Leighton Buzzard railway station and the High Street, creating a direct, well-signposted link that encourages rail users to access the town centre on foot or cycle;
- Reduce traffic dominance along the High Street, exploring options for a more pedestrian-friendly environment, including potential time-limited pedestrianisation or traffic calming measures;
- Create a well-designed mobility hub, potentially near the railway station or an existing car park, integrating bike hire, e-scooters, bus services, and secure cycle parking to promote sustainable transport; and
- Ensure that new development sites integrate with existing walking and cycling networks, particularly in the Church Square and West Street areas, to improve permeability across the town centre.

Strengthen public realm enhancements

- Upgrade alleyways and passageways connecting the High Street to surrounding areas, such as Peacock Mews and the routes leading to Parsons Close Recreation Ground, through better paving, lighting, and active frontages;
- Introduce high-quality street furniture, wayfinding, and greenery along Market Square, Church Square, and the High Street, using a consistent and historically sympathetic design approach;
- Enhance Market Square as a flexible, multi-use space, supporting street markets, community events, and public seating to make it a year-round destination; and
- Improve safety and accessibility in key gathering spaces, ensuring that Church Square, Parsons Close Recreation Ground, and the canal towpaths are well-lit, well-maintained, and fully accessible.

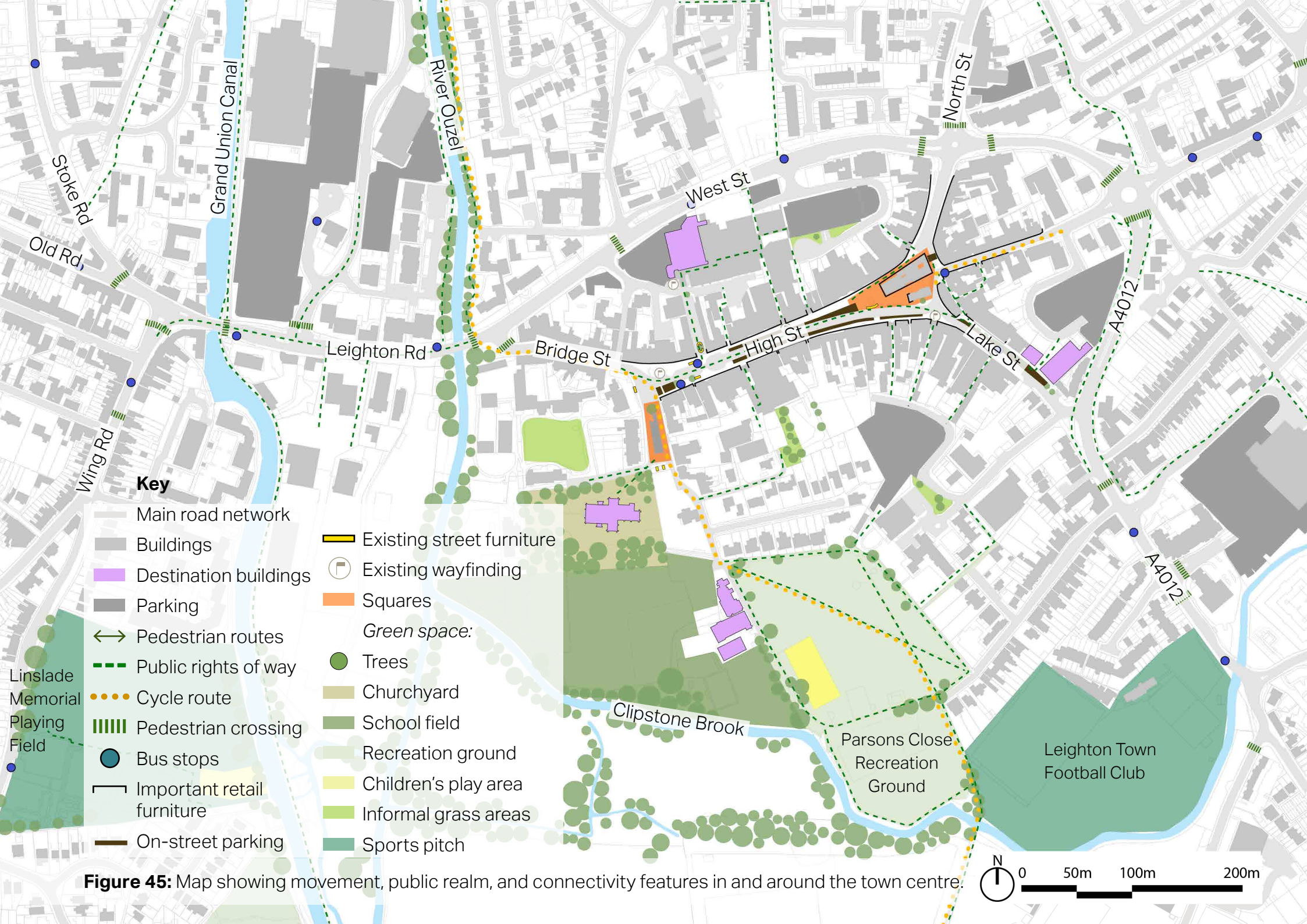


Figure 45: Map showing movement, public realm, and connectivity features in and around the town centre.

Protect and enhance green spaces and biodiversity

- Strengthen the role of Parsons Close Recreation Ground as the town centre's main green space, improving its connection to the High Street and enhancing biodiversity with tree planting, wildflower areas, and natural play features;
- Improve green corridors along the River Ouzel and the Grand Union Canal, integrating new planting, wildlife habitats, and seating areas to enhance the area's natural appeal;
- Increase urban greening along High Street and Market Square, incorporating tree planting, pocket parks, and green roofs on commercial buildings to enhance air quality and visual appeal; and
- Support the creation of micro green spaces in underutilised areas, such as small plazas, street corners, and alleyway entrances, bringing greenery into the heart of the town.



Figure 46: Wildflower meadows and sensory planting. Example: Glassfields, Bristol.



Figure 47: Urban greening along High Street. Example: City Centre, Tilburg.

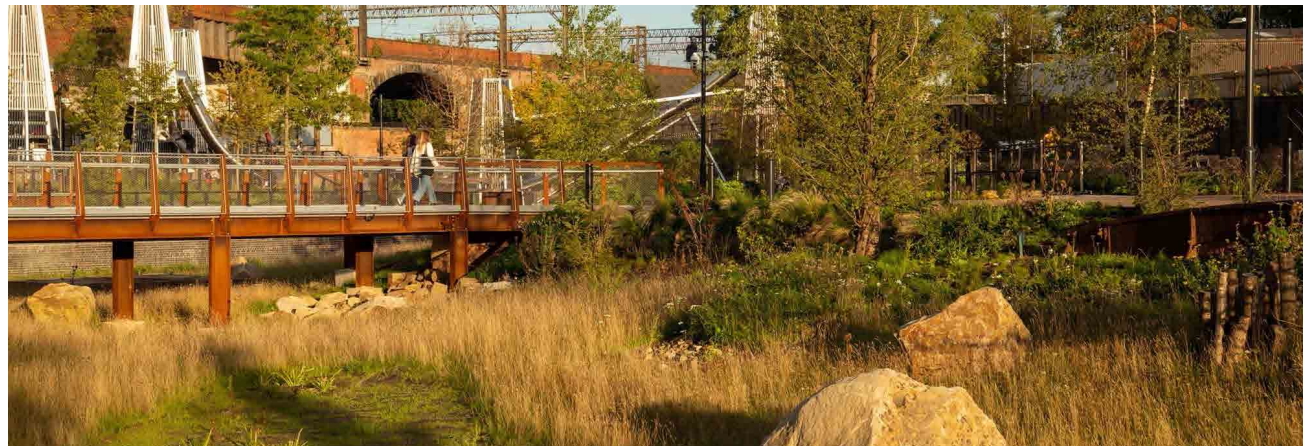


Figure 48: Improve green corridors along the River Ouzel and the Grand Union Canal. Example: Mayfield Park, Manchester.

Create an accessible and inclusive environment

- Ensure all public realm improvements follow inclusive design principles, providing step-free access, clear tactile paving, and accessible seating throughout the town centre;
- Improve access to public transport stops, particularly ensuring bus stops on West Street, Hockliffe Street, and Lake Street are well-placed, sheltered, and accessible for all users;
- Increase safe crossing points on key town centre roads, particularly Lake Street and West Street, where pedestrian movement is currently restricted by traffic; and
- Enhance signage and wayfinding throughout the town centre, with clear, visually accessible maps and markers guiding people to key destinations, including heritage sites, green spaces, and transport links.



Figure 49: Strengthen public realm through active frontages. Example: Sayer Street.



Figure 50: Pedestrian zones help create a versatile and inclusive environment.

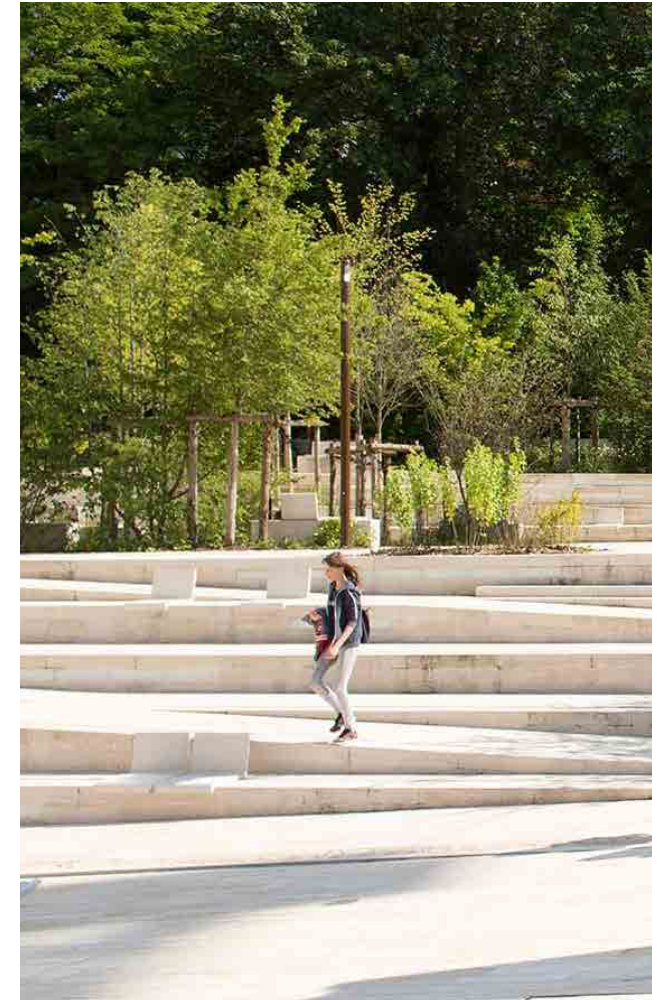


Figure 51: Interventions combining step-free access and accessible seating. Example: Châtenay-Malabry, France.



Wider town centre
framework

06

6. Wider town centre framework

The town centre framework brings together the development principles and the opportunities in the town centre. The overarching framework considers future development within the town centre, informed by the vision and objectives in Section 04.

6.1 Overview

The following pages set out the constraints map and the concept plan for the whole study area. It then goes on to focus on specific clusters. Three clusters for the potential interventions are identified as shown on the opposite plans.

- Cluster One: Leighton Buzzard Town Centre
- Cluster Two: Linslade
- Cluster Three: Bridge Meadow/Canal Quarter

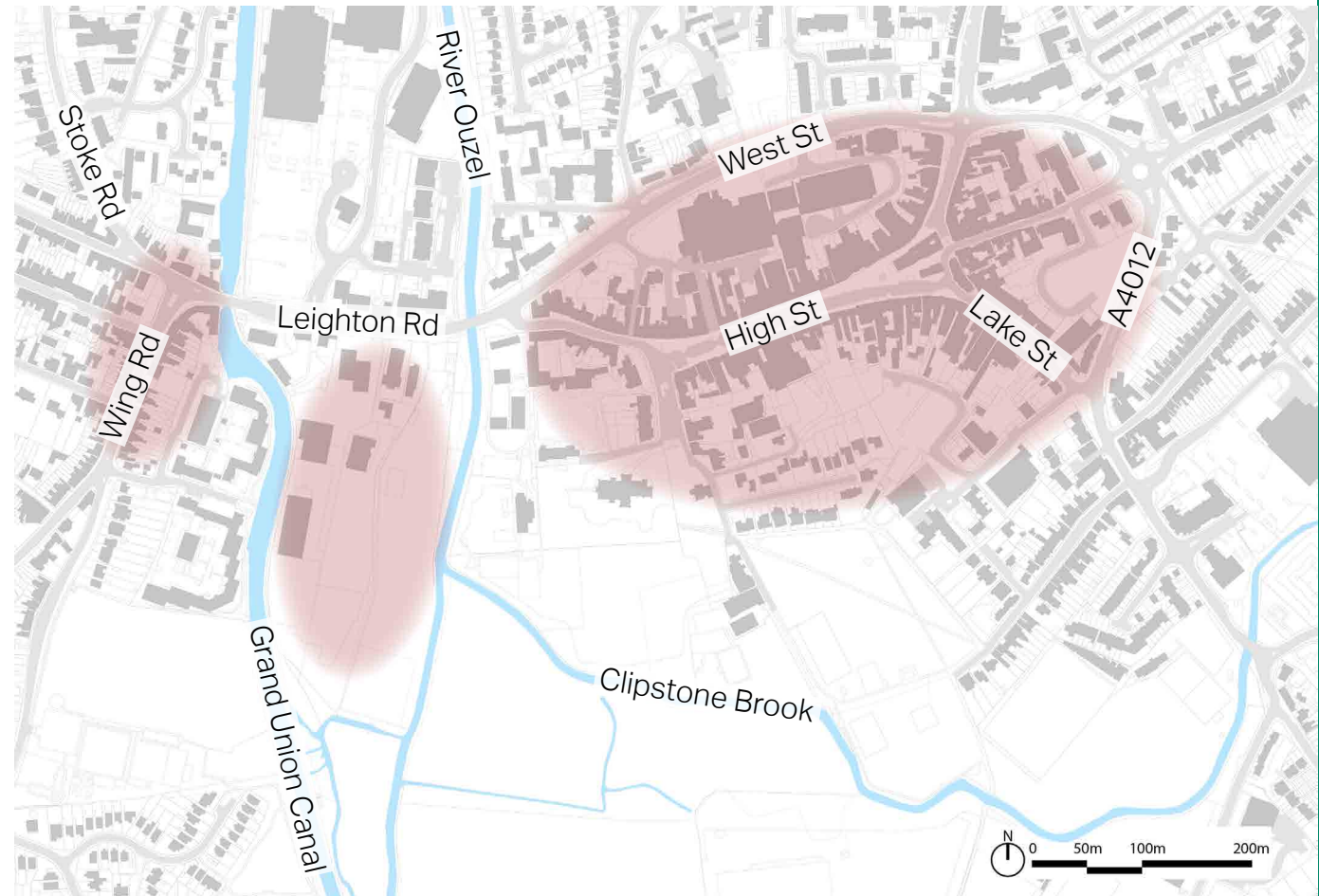


Figure 52: Map showing three clusters

6.2 Constraints plan

There are several constraints in the wider town centre area which will influence any redevelopment. These include:

Flooding - there are significant flood risk areas with flood risk zones 2 and 3 covering parts of the town centre as shown on the map opposite. Areas with high flood risk will not be appropriate for certain development uses. In addition, new development in the town centre should aim to reduce flood risk for example through strategic location of SuDS within green areas to drain water.

Conservation areas - there are two conservation areas, one associated with Leighton Buzzard and one associated with Linslade. Within the conservation area there are development limits to ensure the character is preserved.

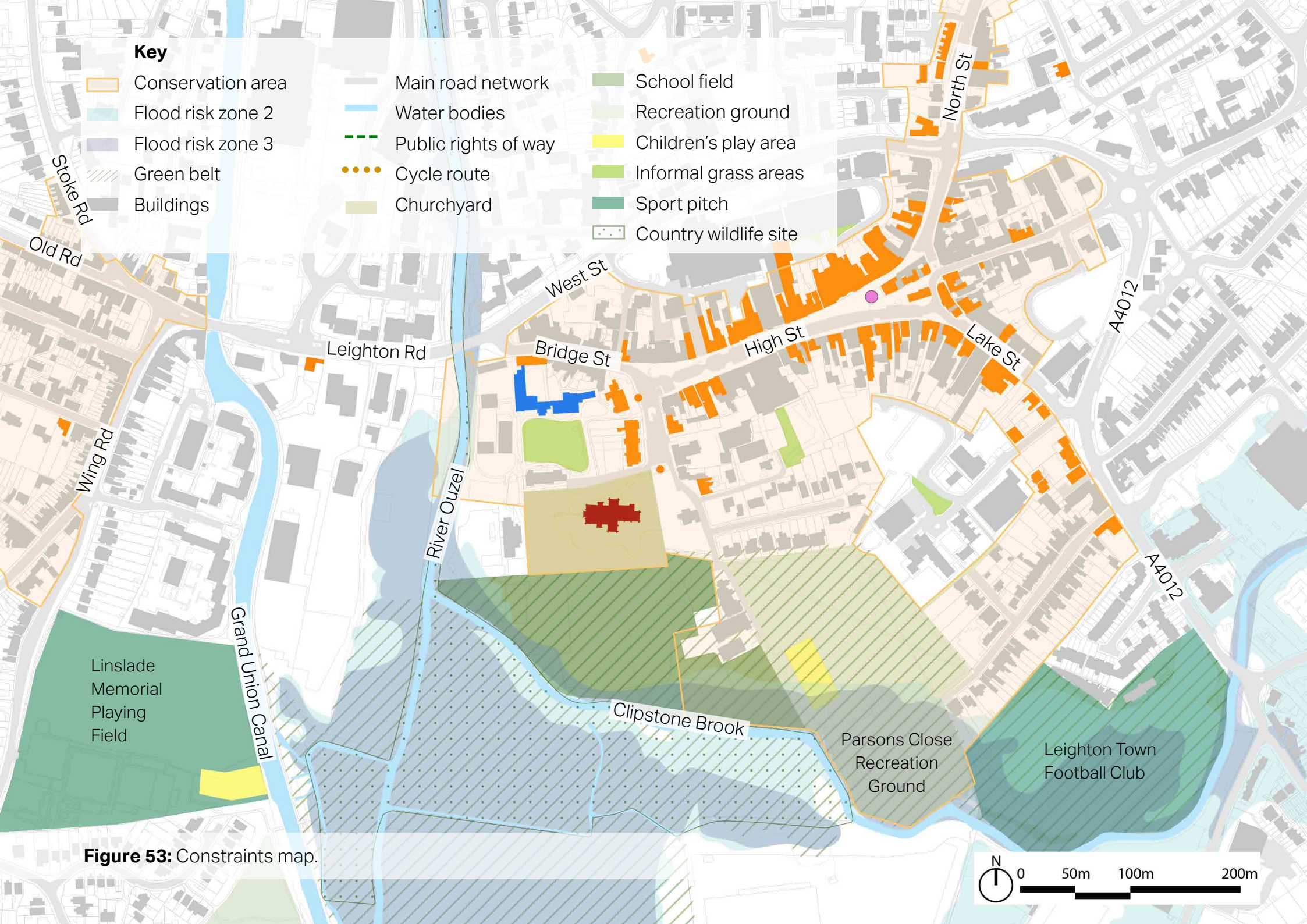
Listed buildings - there are many listed buildings, primarily located within the conservation areas. There are restrictions to development of listed buildings which may include change of use, extensions to

the building, and change of materials. In addition, development in close proximity to listed buildings should be sensitive, for example using sympathetic materials, low heights, small-scale massing, etc.

Green belt - The green belt covers part of the south of the town centre area. There are certain restrictions to development to preserve the green belt.

Green and blue infrastructure - green and blue infrastructure around the town centre must be preserved with any new development. This includes the Canal, River Ouzel, Parson's Close Recreation Ground, Country wildlife site, churchyard of All Saints Church, School field and sports pitches.

Routes - Existing Public rights of way, footpaths and cycle routes must be preserved with any new development.



6.3 Nodes and connections plan

The concept spatial framework outlines how the town centre development principles align together. It focuses on holistic proposals for the town centre, which are based on key infrastructure interventions including the existing movement network and the enhancement of the public realm. Some of the initial ideas are shown on the plan on the following page and include:

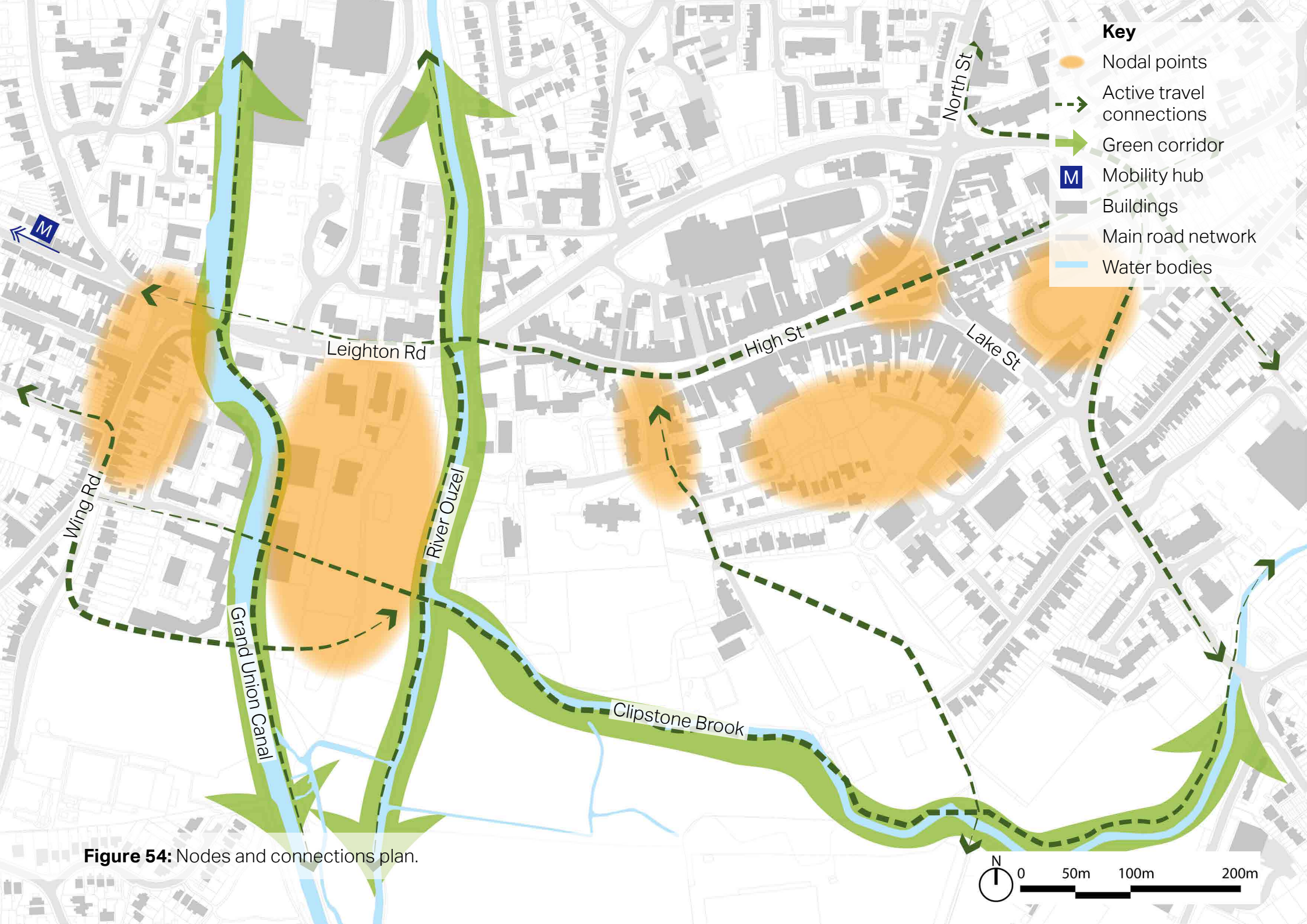
Key improvement areas - including Leighton Buzzard town centre, Bridge Meadow, Church Square, Market Square, area around the library/theatre and Land South of the High Street. Improvements of these areas including public realm, sustainability, heritage, etc. are explored in more depth in the focused clusters section.

Connectivity- revitalising the canal and river edge by enhancing and proposing new footpath connections. Connecting the important locations such as the library, Market, Church Square, Bridge Meadow

and Linslade town centre. Connecting west towards the railway station which can integrate a mobility hub.

Use the green and blue infrastructure

The town centre should integrate the existing green and blue infrastructure, such as the canal, river, and public parks, into its design. This can help create a more sustainable and attractive environment by enhancing the town's ecological value and supporting biodiversity. The development should ensure these spaces are preserved and enhanced, providing opportunities for outdoor activities, relaxation, and social interaction. Additionally, the green spaces can serve as vital corridors for wildlife, improve air quality, and contribute to a more resilient urban landscape, all while promoting a sense of well-being for residents and visitors alike.



6.4 Clusters

The following section is intended to provide the wider town centre with a framework that will shape development over the next 10-20 years. Consequently, some of the opportunities may have the potential to be delivered quickly, whilst other opportunities may take longer to come forward, once land is freed up or other land developed.

The three identified clusters are the key areas within the town centre where change could take place. Each has a different feel, character and therefore potential development focus. The following pages set this out in more detail. The clusters should encourage a flexible and layered approach to development which could include multiple, complementary uses.

6.4.1 Cluster One: Leighton Buzzard Town Centre

Leighton Buzzard Town Centre currently comprises a wide variety of uses, with an emphasis on retail. A significant part of the area is covered by the conservation area. There is a wealth of heritage assets and a twice weekly market on the High Street. The built setting is high quality and historic.

Opportunities in this area include improvement of the existing condition of spaces and buildings as well as a few brownfield sites. The potential interventions are shown at the end of this section.

Objective 1 High Street

The High Street through the town centre is a key road with a concentration of mixed uses, primarily retail and especially important for pedestrians as a place to spend time. The aim is to increase dwell time and improve the pedestrian experience of the High Street, creating a lively, sustainable and safe High Street.

Shop fronts

- Revitalise the High Street by proposing uses for vacant shops which align with Neighbourhood Plan vision and future town trends. This includes spaces for locally rooted businesses and small scale enterprise.
- Improve the design of existing shop fronts as detailed in Chapter 5. Use materials appropriate for the High Street. Shop fronts on listed buildings or those of heritage value should use traditional design and materials to maintain the character. Consider the replacement of existing shop fronts which use inappropriate design or materials to improve the overall character of the High Street.

Green the High Street

- Add planters along the High Street to improve the streetscape. Strategically locate these to accommodate the temporary market stalls which are erected on market days.
- Propose street trees where feasible, taking account of underground utilities and preserving space for the market stalls and the Christmas tree at the junction of the High Street with Bridge Street.
- Add hanging flower boxes along the shop fronts to enhance the visual appeal and soften the streetscape. Ensure these are positioned in a way that complements the surrounding architecture while not obstructing pedestrian flow or market activities.

Pedestrian focused

- Upgrade the surface of the High Street to indicate pedestrian priority with shared surface road.

- Remove street parking and explore opportunities to re-allocate to proposed multi-storey car park, such as at the Library Car Park (subject to technical assessment). Maintain access for buses and emergency vehicles.
- Proposed service route through Land South of High Street site can provide access for back of High Street plots and market storage and reduce traffic on the High Street.
- Incorporate more street furniture to encourage people to spend time on the High Street. Use high quality designs with integrated planting as shown in Chapter 5 and spill-out cafe spaces, especially around Market Square.

Objective 2 Cultural, social and community

Land South of the High Street

- Redevelopment of the Land South of the High Street as explored in the separate spatial framework report. The proposals in this report will have a significant effect on the town centre with opportunities for a community space, workshops for artists, and retail units.

Brownfield sites

- Brownfield sites within the town centre offer opportunities for new facilities including community uses, artist workshops, and retail.



Figure 57: Potential site for redevelopment, 3 Market Court, Hockliffe Street.

Library and theatre

- The library and theatre on Lake Street can also contribute to a town centre cultural hub. The parking at the rear of the building could become a multi-storey car park, subject to further studies.
- Good quality cycle parking adjacent to the building can be implemented to facilitate cycling to this facility.
- Pedestrian routes through to the Land South of the High Street can facilitate connection between this existing facility and any new cultural/community uses within the site.
- Increased parking provided by the multi-storey car park can serve the rear of the existing uses along Lake Street and existing street parking can be reclaimed as pedestrian space. These spaces can be used to further promote the area as a cultural hub through installation of public art.



Figure 55: Current street parking along Lake Street.



Figure 56: Concept image showing planting and public art in place of street parking.

Objective 4 Active travel and public Realm

Wayfinding

- Accessible wayfinding should be implemented to ensure the spaces and facilities are available to everyone. Wayfinding exists in the town centre, however, can be improved through consistency in design and more clearly marked pedestrian routes which clearly show how to get to key parts of the town.

Cycle parking

- Propose new cycle parking at key points to enable cycling as a viable means of travel for people using facilities in the town centre. These are proposed outside Waitrose supermarket, outside the library/theatre, at the entrance to Parson's Close Recreation Ground, and within Land South of the High Street site.

Accessibility

- Propose new pedestrian crossings to link the CBC aspirational travel route, existing footpaths and cycle routes and form a cohesive active travel network.

- Propose service road as in the Land South of the High Street spatial framework to provide opportunities on the High Street.



Figure 58: Current cycle parking at the entrance to the High Street from Bridge Street.



Figure 59: Cycle parking design, <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/cycling/cycle-parking>

Objective 5 Heritage preservation and landmarks

Market Cross area

- Propose planters around the Market Cross to improve the setting and reduce dominance of hard surfacing.
- Propose information boards in this area to celebrate the market cross and heritage of the asset. This can include a map of all the heritage assets in the town centre and the pedestrian routes which link to them.
- Propose new street furniture to encourage increased dwell time and create a space where people can meet.



Figure 60: Current public realm surrounding the Market Cross is dominated by hard-surfacing.



Figure 61: Concept image of public realm around Market Cross with benches, planters, spill-out cafe spaces and information board in front of Market Cross.

Key

-  Buildings
-  Main road network
-  Water bodies

Existing

-  Cycle parking
-  Footpaths
-  Cycle route
-  Parking
-  EV car park
-  Pedestrian crossings
-  Bus stops
-  Shop fronts
-  Street furniture
-  Wayfinding
-  Market Cross

Possible

-  New cycle parking
-  Potential multi-storey car park
-  Aspirational active travel route
-  EV car park
-  Service road
-  Greening along the High Street
-  Public realm improvements to Square
-  New street furniture
-  New wayfinding
-  New pedestrian crossing
-  Opportunity sites for community/ cultural facilities
-  Land South of High Street re-development
-  Public realm upgrade with public art installations



Figure 62: Spatial framework for Cluster 1.

6.4.2 Cluster Two: Linslade

Linslade is located in the west of the study area, on the opposite side of the canal and River Ouzel to Leighton Buzzard town centre. Linslade has a mixture of uses with a small number of cafes, restaurants and take-aways as well as a few businesses. The centre is less defined than Leighton Buzzard and the area has a predominantly residential feel.

Linslade is an important area in terms of connections and active travel given the railway station and the identified mixed-use focus area.

It is important to maintain and improve Linslade's character in its own right, as well as strengthening connections with Leighton Buzzard town centre and make sure these two areas complement each other with the uses and spaces they offer.

Objective 2 Social and community

Local facilities

- Propose uses such as locally rooted businesses, independent shops, cafes, and restaurants in currently vacant or underused sites, including the potential for enabling development around the station car park, to enhance the mix of local facilities, support day-to-day needs, and encourage social interaction. These uses should contribute to a more traditional village character and community-centred environment, creating a welcoming and vibrant heart for residents and visitors alike.
- The area near the canal is an important node and already has several mixed uses. This should be retained and added to where possible.



Figure 64: Funeral Service business on Stoke Road.



Figure 63: Area of Linslade near the Canal with some mixed uses.

Objective 4 Active travel and public realm

Walking and cycling connection

- Propose walking route to Mentmore Road Park and Linslade Garden of Remembrance with wayfinding to clearly mark the route.
- Propose walking routes and new pedestrian bridges over the canal to facilitate connection to Cluster 3 development, as further detailed in the framework for Cluster 3.

Connecting the train station to Leighton Buzzard

- Propose comprehensive wayfinding devices to clearly mark out the route from Leighton Buzzard to the train station. This route goes through Linslade Recreation Ground and past St Barnabas Church.

Mobility hub

- Propose new mobility hub at Leighton Buzzard railway station to include mixed

travel uses. This can include a bus stop, cycle storage and e-bike hire. A mobility hub at the railway station can facilitate onwards active travel and encourage use of the railway over car use.

Railway public realm

- Improve the public realm area at the front of the train station. Propose new street furniture in this area to serve people who are waiting at the station or meeting others at the station. This will provide a more comfortable experience for people.
- Green the road leading out from the railway to create a more pleasant experience for pedestrians and screen the car parks. Plant trees where the pavement is wide enough to accommodate them and use planters where the pavement is narrower or there are constraints.



Figure 65: Linslade Recreation Ground



Figure 66: Diagram showing multimodal hub incorporating e-carsharing, bike hiring and bus stop (Image by Sophia Von Berg via shared-use mobility).

Objective 5 Heritage preservation and landmarks

Conservation area

- Preserve the character of the conservation area by using sympathetic design, building height and materials. The identity of Linslade should be reinforced where possible. Important aspects of the character to preserve and potentially integrate into any new development include:
 - high quality corner buildings and survival of public houses, inns, hotels and lodging houses - these historically served the Victorian hunt visitors to Linslade.
 - carriageways (particularly the decorated arches) between houses.
 - ironstone for flank and boundary walls and a wide variety of bricks.
 - stone kerbs, some stone flagged steps and historic street and footpath surfaces including blue brick

St Barnabas Church

- The area around St Barnabas Church is an important area of heritage with a cluster of listed buildings. The route from the train station to Leighton Buzzard also passes through this area. Wayfinding and information boards can be introduced here to celebrate and draw attention to the heritage.
- Cycle parking is proposed around this area to enable people to cycle to the church and adjacent Linslade Recreation Ground so people easily park their bike while they spend time here.

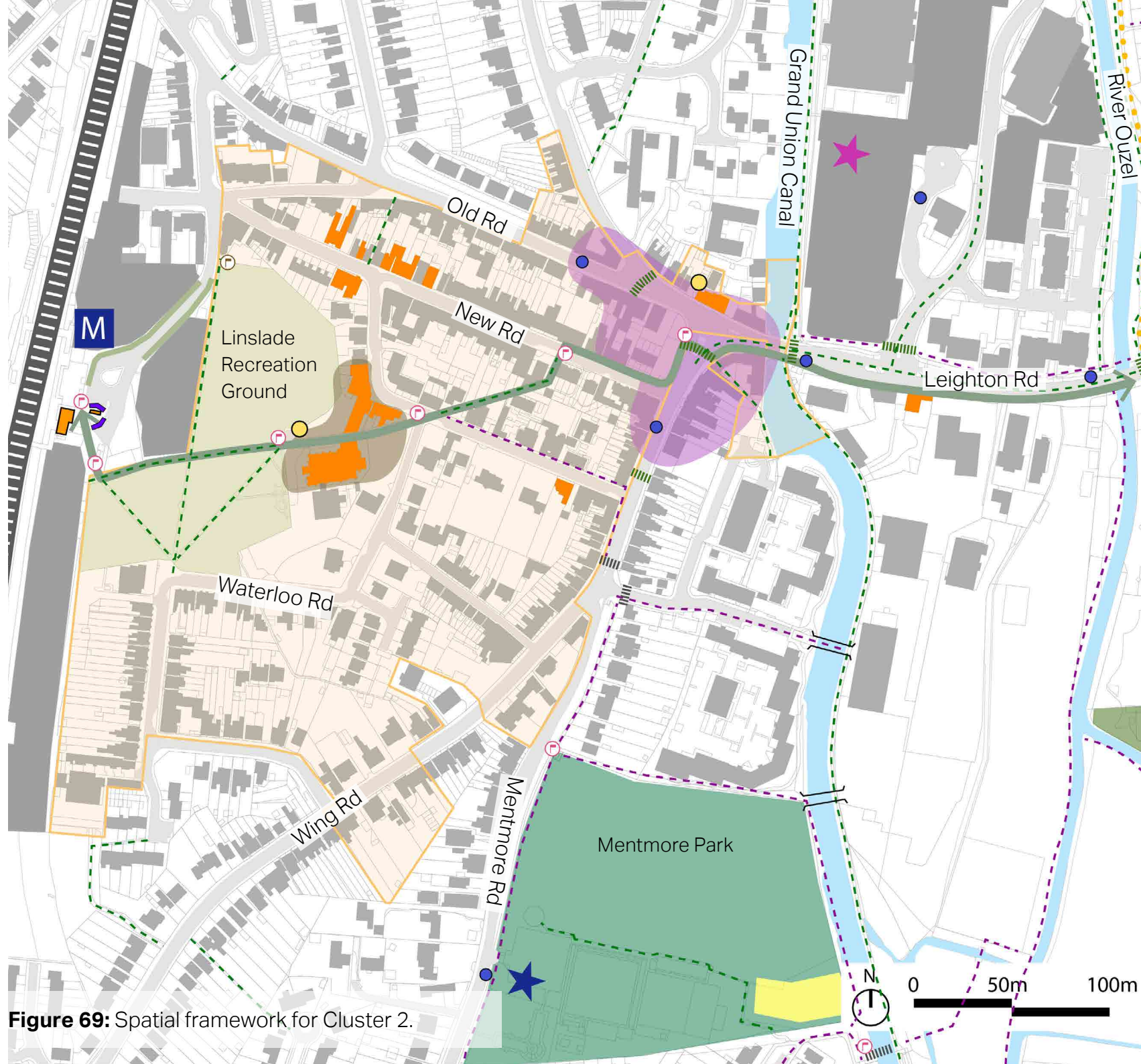


Figure 67: High quality corner building and public house, The Buckingham Arms pub.



Figure 68: Some retained historic blue bricks along a footpath between buildings in Linslade.

Key		Possible	
	Buildings		New cycle parking
	Main road network		Aspirational active travel route
	Water bodies		EV car park
Existing			New wayfinding
	Footpaths		New pedestrian crossing
	Parking		Street furniture
	EV car park		Greening
	Pedestrian crossings		Mixed use focus area
	Bus stops		Heritage focus area
	Wayfinding		Mobility hub
	Route to the train station		Pedestrian bridge
	Cycle parking		
	Conservation area		
	Listed buildings		
	Recreation ground		
	Sports pitch		
	Children's play area		



6.4.3 Cluster Three: Bridge Meadow/ Canal Quarter

Bridge Meadow is located to the west of Leighton Buzzard and between the Grand Canal and the River Ouzel. The site is about 700m to the east of Leighton Buzzard Railway Station. It includes three areas as described below:

Area 1 – Commercial, Retail, and Waterside:
This area features Lombard House, a four-storey office building with car parking, a Victorian paint shop building, and Grade II Listed Grand Union House along Leighton Road. A two-storey brick building and open storage space are located at the rear. The land has several freehold and leasehold interests.

Area 2 – Jewsons and Retail Area:
This area includes buildings along Leighton Road, such as a gym, a Jewsons retail/ trade counter, a petrol station, and a GP surgery in single and two-storey industrial sheds. The rear of the area is occupied by Jewsons, with additional industrial sheds and hardstanding space.

Area 3 – Residential and Storage:
Occupied by travelling showpersons, this land contains mobile homes and storage for fairground vehicles. There are also several sheds, with the southern part overgrown with vegetation.

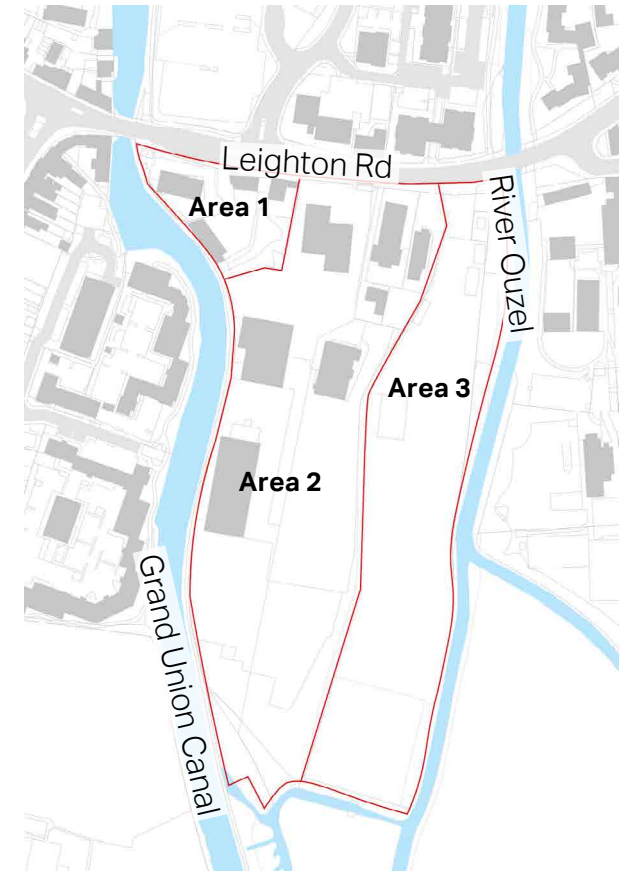


Figure 70: Bridge Meadow areas.

Objective 2 Cultural, social and community

- Propose uses that benefit the local community, including leisure and sports facilities for young people, such as bowling alley, alongside a care home for older people, which could be integrated with a health hub offering additional healthcare services.
- Propose residential development including affordable housing, with properties fronting onto the canal to capitalise on this attractive location. The development should incorporate sustainable design principles, ensuring ecological value is preserved, while promoting a balance of residential and leisure uses to support the local community.

Objective 3 Canal and connectivity

Enhance Green Corridors

- *Revitalise the canal by promoting footpaths and enhancing green corridors, creating connected routes between the canal and surrounding areas.*

Canal-Oriented Projects

- *Propose revitalisation projects such as green spaces and local business spaces along the canal, and introduce community hubs (e.g., cafés), making the canal a focal point for both leisure and commerce.*

Strengthen Linkages

- *Create strong linkages between Leighton Buzzard and Linslade through canal-side improvements, fostering a unified sense of place.*

- *Promote the canal as a gateway for sustainable travel, integrating it with surrounding transport routes, such as Leighton Buzzard Railway Station.*

Objective 4 Active travel and public realm

Gateway Development

- *Propose two well-defined gateways to Leighton Buzzard and one to Linslade to create a strong sense of arrival and connectivity to the wider area.*

Well-Integrated Active Travel Routes

- *Develop a network of active travel routes, including cycleways and pedestrian pathways along both sides of the canal, connecting the site to the town centre.*

Accessibility Improvements

- *Improve accessibility with clear, easy-to-follow wayfinding systems and accessible travel routes to integrate the site with existing infrastructure.*

Cycling Infrastructure

- *Introduce new cycle parking facilities near gateways and along the canal to support active transportation.*

Green Space and Public Realm

- *Plant trees and provide soft landscaping to enhance the public realm, creating inviting spaces for social interaction and relaxation.*

Flood Risk and Green Infrastructure

- *Due to flood risks, the south-east area should be preserved as green infrastructure, complementing the re-wilding of the River Ouzel and offering public open space with active frontages along Leighton Road.*

Objective 5 Heritage preservation and landmarks

Preserve heritage

- *Retain historical buildings, ensuring their integration within any new development while respecting their historical and local context.*

Contextual Design

- *New buildings should respond to and enhance the heritage of the area, with careful consideration of local architectural styles and building forms. An example of the area's built heritage is seen in the retained former entrance to the old canal basin. Building heights should respond sensitively to their context, with new development not exceeding the existing maximum of four storeys.*

Landmark Features

- *Create opportunities for new landmarks at key locations, helping to establish a strong identity for Bridge Meadow, with*

Objective 5 Heritage preservation and landmarks

particular focus on public spaces and high-visibility areas.

Frontage Definition

- *Propose well-defined frontages along Leighton Road, enhancing the visual appeal and connectivity between the canal and the public realm.*



Figure 71: Former entrance to the old canal basin.

Objective 6 Retail and commercial zones

Mixed-Use Development

- *Encourage a mix of uses within the retail and industrial zones, such as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), workshops, and community-oriented spaces that meet local business needs.*

Support for New Businesses

- *Provide flexible spaces for new businesses, offering opportunities for innovation and local entrepreneurship while preserving the area's industrial heritage.*

Create Synergies

- *Develop spaces that blend retail, industry, and community use, enhancing the economic and social fabric of the area.*

Integrated Industrial Zones

- *Develop well-planned commercial zones that balance commercial activities with green infrastructure and active travel routes, ensuring a sustainable and functional environment.*

Key		Possible	
	Buildings		New cycle parking
	Main road network		Aspirational active travel route
	Water bodies		New wayfinding
Existing			Footpaths
	Cycle route		Pedestrian crossings
	EV car park		Mobility hub
	Bus stops		Mixed-use site
	Wayfinding		New residential
	Listed buildings		New access roads
	Recreation ground		Revitalising projects
	Sports pitch		Landmark
	Children's play area		Public realm
	Churchyard		New frontages
	Informal green space		Green corridor
	Gateway		



Figure 72: Spatial framework for Cluster 3.

6.4.4 Overall spatial framework plan

The overall spatial framework plan brings together the proposals for each cluster and shows how these form a cohesive spatial framework for example through the active travel routes and green networks through the whole study area.

Key	
	Buildings
	Main road network
	Water bodies
Existing	
	Footpaths
	Cycle route
	Pedestrian crossings
	EV car park
	Bus stops
	Wayfinding
	Recreation ground
	Sports pitch
	Children's play area
	Churchyard
	Informal green space
	Street furniture
Possible	
	Gateway
	New cycle parking
	Potential multi-storey car park
	Aspirational active travel route
	EV car park
	Service road
	Greening along the High Street
	Public realm improvements to Square
	New street furniture
	New wayfinding
	New pedestrian crossing
	Opportunity sites for community/ cultural facilities
	Land South of High Street re-development
	Public realm upgrade with public art installations
	Mixed use focus area
	Wetland meadow
	New residential
	Mixed-use site
	Mobility hub
	Pedestrian bridge
	New access roads
	Revitalising projects
	Landmark
	Public realm
	New frontages
	Green corridor

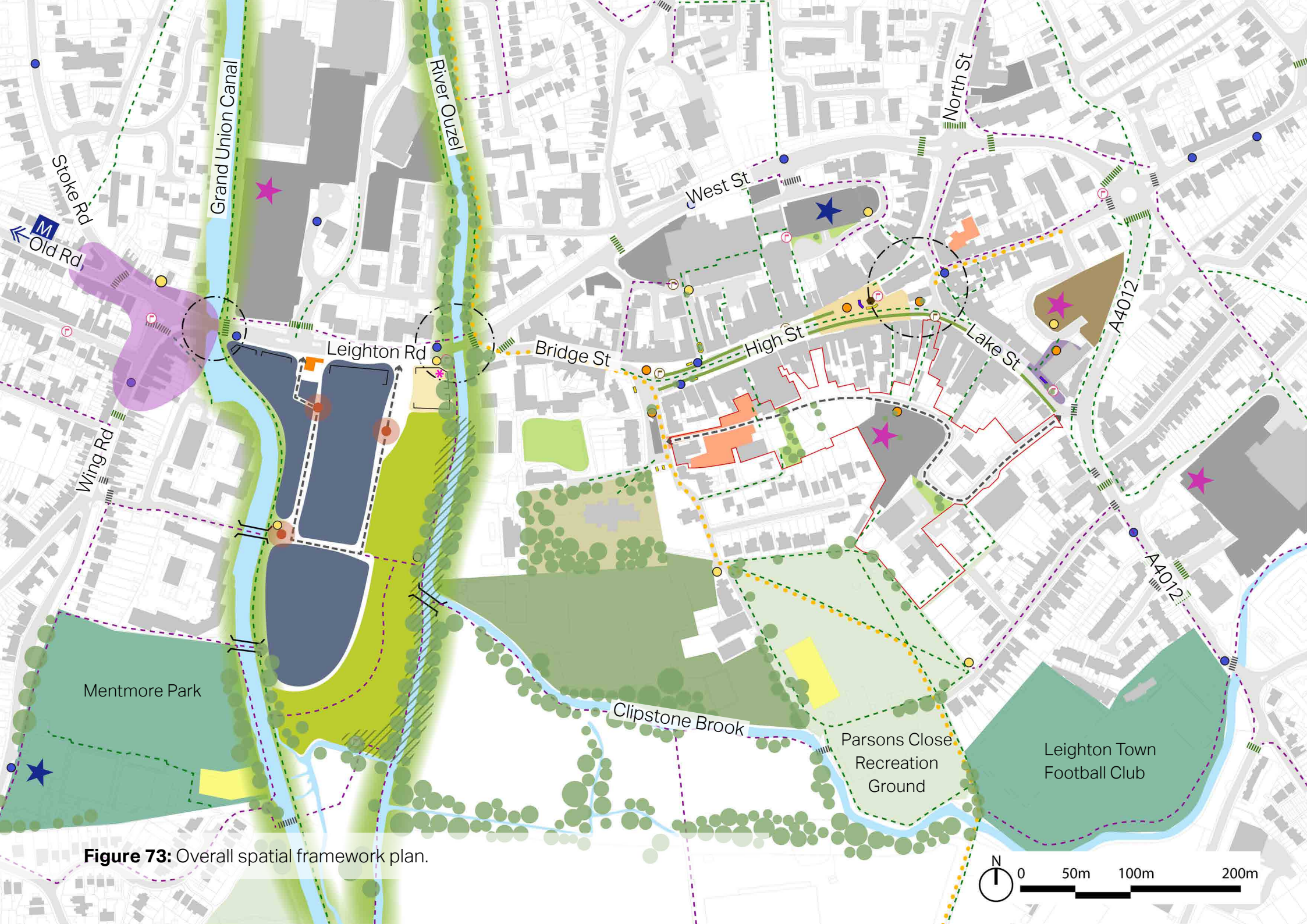


Figure 73: Overall spatial framework plan.



Next Steps

07

7. Next Steps

The Leighton Linslade Town Centre spatial framework will be a valuable tool in securing context-driven, high-quality development. The table opposite identifies those groups who might use the spatial framework and how they might use it.

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 32) emphasises that a proportionate evidence base should inform plans. Based on a ‘positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings’ (see paragraph 15).

Policies should be ‘underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals’ (paragraph 32).

Actors	How they will use the spatial framework principles
Applicants, developers, and landowners	As a guide to community and Local Planning Authority expectations on design, allowing a degree of certainty – they will be expected to follow the Guidelines as planning consent is sought.
Local Planning Authority	As a reference point, embedded in policy, against which to assess planning applications. The spatial framework should be discussed with applicants during any pre-application discussions.
Town Council	As a guide when commenting on planning applications, ensuring that the objectives set out in the spatial framework are complied with.
Community organisations	As a tool to promote community-backed development and to inform comments on planning applications.

The objectives herein constitute place making principles and guidance to help interpret and apply the statutory policies within the Neighbourhood Plan. Good design is not an additional cost to development and good placemaking can result in uplifts in value.

Consequently, it is a key document to which developers, in particular, must make reference. They will be expected to demonstrate how they have responded to the provisions of the spatial framework and, in those instances where they deviate from the spatial framework, they will be required to demonstrate why the proposed changes represent an improved outcome in terms of the delivery of Leighton Lincolns Neighbourhood Plan objectives.

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Appendix

08

8. Appendix

8.1 Overview of planning applications

There have been many planning applications in the town centre area. Many of these revolve around conversion of commercial/office use into residential use, or the redevelopment of brownfield sites into residential development. The following table and map identify some of the main planning applications that have occurred in the past 10 years.

Table 01: Planning applications from past 10 years in town centre

Application reference	Description	Decision	Impact on town centre
CB/14/04104/FULL	Demolition of the existing commercial building and the construction of a 3 ½ storey block of 20 No. self contained flats with associated car & cycle parking and refuse store relating to Phase 3.	Permission granted (2015)	Creation of new housing near an industrial/commercial area. Contribute to the revitalisation of this area north of Bridge Meadow.
CB/16/02301/FULL	The re-arrangement of the existing supermarket carpark and the construction of a 2 ½ storey building containing 10 self contained flats with associated parking and landscaping	Permission granted (2016)	Creation of new housing near an industrial/commercial area. Contribute to the revitalisation of this area north of Bridge Meadow.
CB/15/00615/FULL	Conversion of existing public house to 4 no. 1 bedroom dwellings. Construction of 2 no. flats & 3 no. dwellings, associated vehicle cross over, access road, car parking, bin stores & cycle parking.	Permission granted (2015)	Loss of local public house. Infill housing development, will increase residential provision and create a stronger building line at the street.
CB/22/00281/FULL	Conversion and extension of existing building to form 4 new flats, including partial demolition and construction of 3 new dwellings together with associated works including car parking, bicycle storage and hard landscaping.	Permission granted (2023)	Infill residential development will revitalise brownfield land close to the town centre.
CB/18/00943/FULL	Proposed residential scheme of 34 x 1 and 2 bedroom apartments	Permission granted (2020)	Built – created a higher density residential area near the canal, behind the main road frontage
CB/18/03433/PADO	Notification of Prior Approval for Proposed change of use from B1 (A) Office into C3 Residential to create 30, one bedroom self-contained flats	Permission granted (2018)	No physical change to urban form, increased residential provision in town centre and revitalisation of area by becoming residential area.

Application reference	Description	Decision	Impact on town centre
CB/24/01110/FULL	Conversion of the upper floors into 4 apartments with associated alterations, refuse and cycle stores	Awaiting decision	Revitalisation of existing structure from new residential use. Street frontage would remain unchanged.
CB/21/04075/FULL	Conversion of B1 office use to C3 residential, 8 x 1-bed flats and 1 x 2-bed flat	Permission granted (2021)	No physical change to urban form, increased residential provision in town centre and revitalisation of area by becoming residential area.
CB/24/01869/FULL	Demolition of sorting office and industrial sheds. Erection of a 65 room hotel with associated hard and soft landscaping	Awaiting decision	Revitalisation of brownfield site in town centre. Economic town centre contribution from new hotel.
CB/23/01549/FULL, Appeal 3344861	Erection of 8, one bed dwellings following demolition of office building, conversion of part office to form 1, one bed first floor flat and all ancillary works	Application refused (2024), appeal dismissed (2025)	-
CB/20/04647/FULL	Erection of 3 dwellings with associated parking, access and amenity space; provision of access, demolition of existing garages and provision of car parking garages, replacement open space provision and landscaping	Permission granted (2021)	Revitalisation of disused town centre brownfield site. Revitalisation of area through residential provision and re-provision of landscaping and open space
CB/19/03494/FULL	Demolition of no. 14 A Hockliffe Street and re-construction to form 6 residential flats. Conversion of part of No 14 Hockliffe Street for uses ancillary to the new residential flats and as part of the retail use (No. 14) Proposed new shop front to No. 14	Permission granted (2020)	Increasing residential density of town centre, contributing to revitalisation of area
CB/24/02647/OUT	Outline application: removal of all on site structures and development of up to 66 residential dwellings, a small café/shop with access, parking, landscaped open space and all ancillary works. Reserved matters for Appearance and Landscaping	Application withdrawn (2025)	-

Application reference	Description	Decision	Impact on town centre
CB/23/03117/FULL	Change of use of a HMO (House of Multiple Occupation) scheme with 6 tenants (Use Class C4) to a HMO scheme with 7 tenants (sui generis), units to remain the same.	Permission granted (2024)	Slight increase in residential density
CB/23/01270/FULL	Conversion of the former Public House to 6 no. 1 bedroom flats, conversion of the offices at 2 Bedford Street to 2 no. 2 bedroom flats and construction of a new independent block of 5 no. 1 bedroom flats and 5 no. 2 bedroom flats fronting Lammas Walk all with associated car parking, paths and fences and relocated vehicular access. Demolition of workshop at 2 Bedford Street.	Awaiting decision	Loss of public house, high increase of residential density
CB/21/01851/FULL	Demolition of buildings to the rear. Conversion of the rear ground floor, first floor and loft from retail to residential and construction of a 2 storey residential building to provide a total of 13 residential units and associated cycle and bin storage, along with landscaping of existing courtyard.	Application withdrawn (2023)	-
CB/23/02991/FULL	Refurbishment of existing Class E and Sui Generis units. Part conversion to create 5 Class C3 residential studios / apartments.	Application withdrawn (2023)	-
CB/22/00457/FULL	Demolition of the former telephone exchange and rear part of 46 High Street. Erection of 3, 1 bed mews houses and 2, 1 bed flats. Conversion of first floor of the rear part of 46 High Street to a 1 bed flat.	Application refused (2023)	-

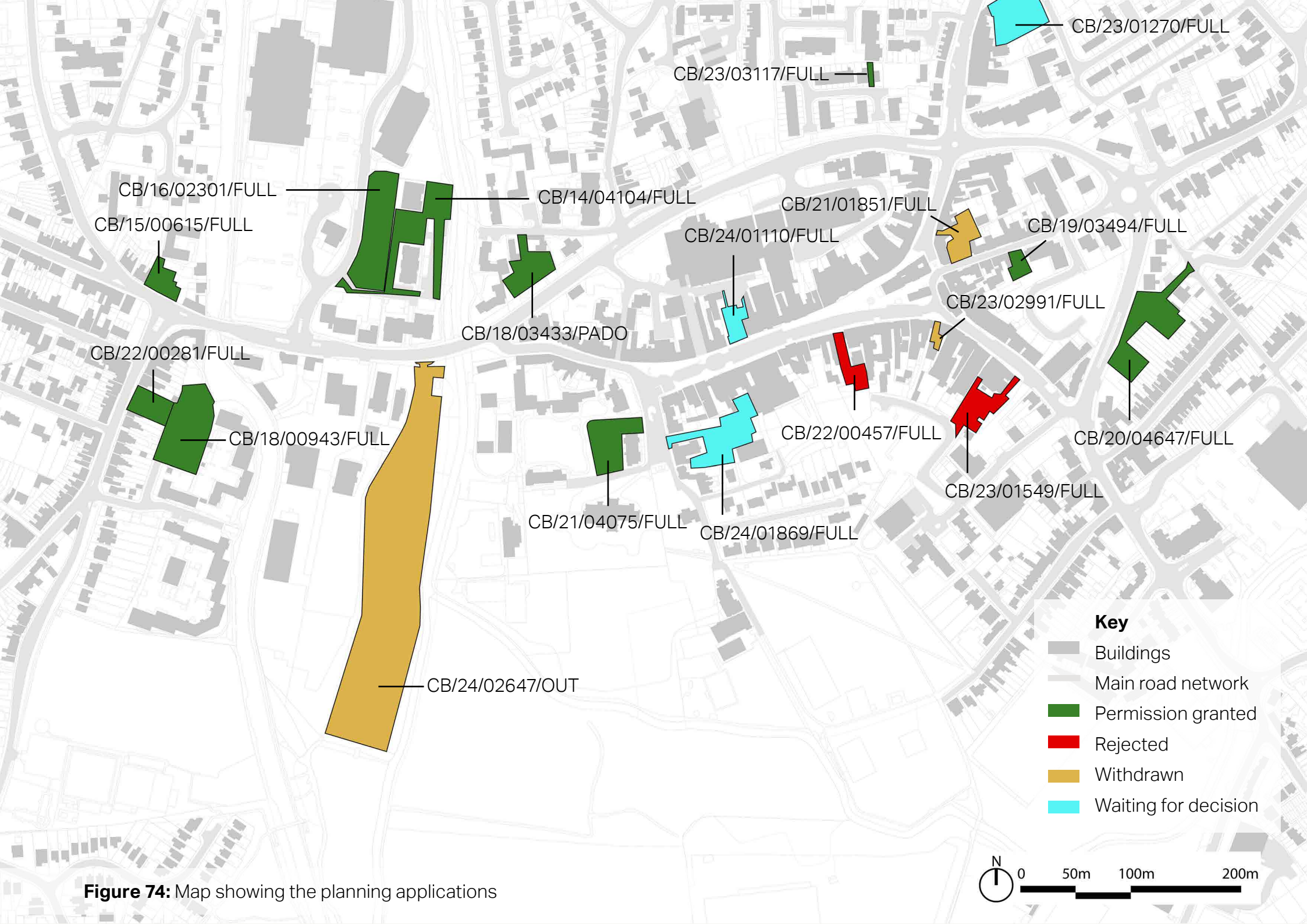


Figure 74: Map showing the planning applications

