

Appendix A
Baseline Study
High Town SPD
Nov 2007



This SPD was adopted on the 29 November 2007 by the Joint Committee of Luton Borough Council and South Bedfordshire District Council

This document can be made available in other formats. If you require a copy in large print, on table on tape or in a language other than English, please tel. 01582 547331 Fax: 01582 546971 or email: regeneration@luton.gov.uk

The Team



Building Design Partnership were leading the team and are providing urban design and urban planning input to the study.



MVA were responsible for providing advice on traffic, transport, parking and movement.



Strategic Planning Advice in conjunction with CB Richard Ellis were responsible for providing advice on economics and land use.



The **Regeneration Service** in consultation with other Council Departments were responsible for the adoption process and final production of the document.

This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. All rights reserved. Licence No 100023935



Contents

01 High Town in Context	1
02 Physical Resources	5
03 Transport, Access and Movement	14
04 Land Use Recommendations	17
05 Opportunities and Constraints	19
06 Community Involvement	20

Figures

1 Regional Context	1
2 Local Context Plan	1
3 Site Boundary	2
4 Vacant Land and Buildings	5
5 Land in Council Ownership	5
6 Landmarks	7
7 Figure Ground Analysis	8
8 Walkability	9
9 Natural Environment	10
10 Historic Environment	11
11 Positive and Negative Edges	12
12 Character Areas	13
13 Vehicle Access	15
14 Parking and Servicing	16
15 Opportunities	19
16 Constraints	19
17 Community Ideas Summary	21
18 Land Use/Urban Design Option 1	22
19 Land Use/Urban Design Option 2	23

01 High Town in Context...

This section sets out the key contextual issues considered in the development of the SPD. The main topics explored are regional context, including transport, development trends and growth as well as a summary of key planning guidance from national, regional and local government. A summary of the socio-economic profile of the High Town area compared with Luton and England generally is also provided to establish the setting for the analysis.

1.1 Regional context

Luton is recognised as a key growth area in the East of England and a priority area for economic regeneration. Located approximately 30 miles from London the area is expected to be the focus for significant economic and housing growth in coming years which will be supported by existing and improved transport links to London, the region and internationally with Luton Airport.

Luton has excellent transport links including proximity to the M1, excellent rail links including a 25-minute rail journey to London via Midland Mainline, and improving international links, with continued expansion of the airport.

Luton is at the heart of a growing region; the Government has identified a requirement for more than 160,000 new homes in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-region by 2021, within which Luton is a key growth area. Regional policy highlights the role that Luton could play in improving economic performance, providing housing and realising development that is sustainable.

High Town is strategically located at the fringe of the Town Centre and is expected to be subject to increasing pressure for redevelopment. The Town Centre itself has a strategic vision in place to integrate the development of the Power Court retail complex, refurbishment of the railway and bus stations and public realm improvements.

Figure 1: Regional Context
Luton is strategically placed at the heart of a growing region, with excellent transport links

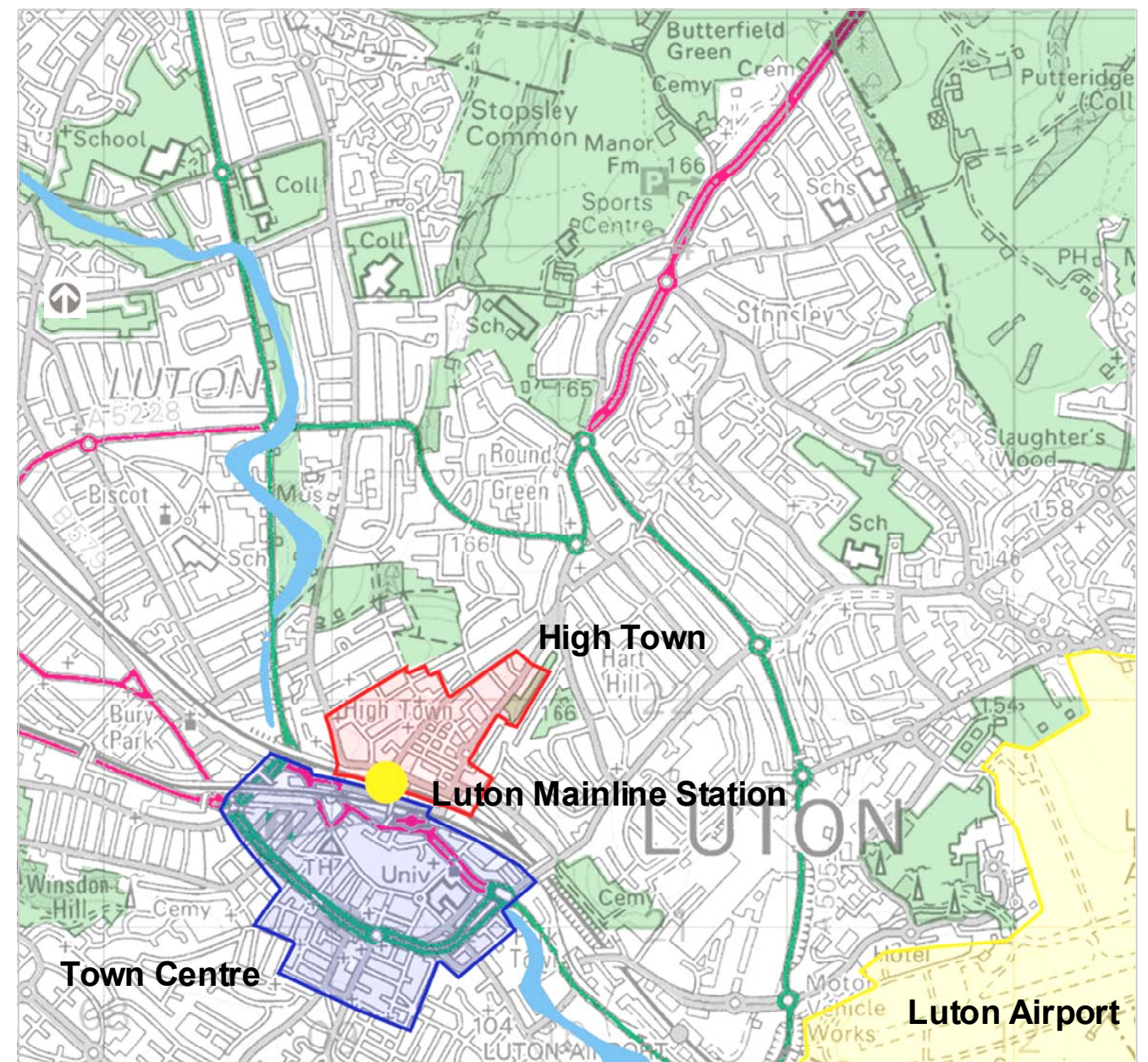


Figure 2: Local Context Plan
High Town is connected with regional open spaces through Peoples Park and is adjacent to the main line railway station.

This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

1.2 The study area

As shown in Figure 4, the study area includes the High Town Conservation Area, the employment land to the east of High Town Road, the potential sites for the NOAH Centre and the access route to Luton railway station and the Town Centre.

1.3 Building on work done to date

The SPD builds upon the considerable amount of work and community consultation completed to date. Section 07 provides more background. The High Town Neighbourhood Renewal Plan produced in 2005, identified four key issues:

- The low grade appearance of High Town Road;
- Community facilities;
- Facilities for the young;
- Physical enhancement.

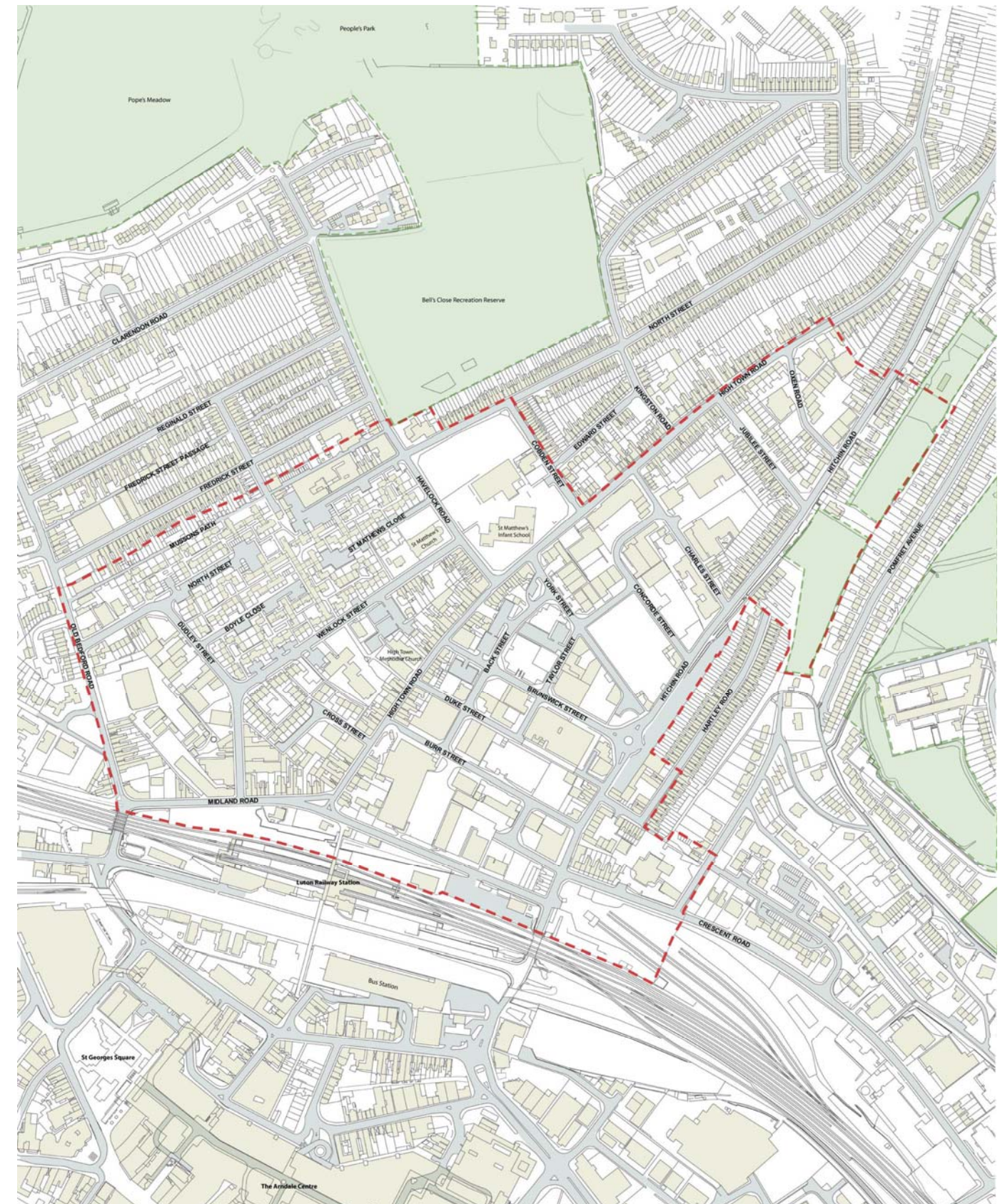
The Luton Town Centre Development Framework (2004) produced by David Lock Associates identifies a number of priority projects in the Luton Gateway which could assist the regeneration of High Town, including:

- Develop a new transport interchange;
- Reconnect nearby residential communities;
- Enhance pedestrian links between High Town and the Town Centre;
- Create an impressive and welcoming gateway to Luton

Phase 2 of the Gateway Link (inner ring road) is proposed to be a single carriageway which will run to the north of the railway line from Old Bedford Road to Hitchin Road and continue to Crawley Green Road along an improved Crescent Road. This is intended to significantly improve the movement of traffic around the northern edge of the town centre and reduce traffic along Midland Road.

Figure 3: Site Boundary

High Town is a varied if compact area containing housing, industry and open space



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

1.4 Historic development

High Town has a varied and colourful past that can be used to inform decisions about the future character of the area. The establishment of High Town began early in Luton's history, with Ordnance Survey plans showing houses in the area by 1834. Early influences in High Town were the Primitive Methodists, who came to the area in 1838. By 1851 the area was growing at a faster pace than the rest of Luton, with many High Town settlers migrating from the rural areas of north Hertfordshire. The hat making industry was already showing a significant effect on employment in High Town with 88% of females and 21% of males engaged in the industry at the time.

The arrival of the Luton Dunstable and Welwyn, and Midland railways in the late 1850s linked Luton to the surrounding region and London. However, the railways simultaneously cut High Town off from Luton's town centre. The "People's Park" was purchased with money donated as compensation for buildings and land lost by the railway construction. This was to have a significant effect on High Town by restricting its development northwards, but also providing a large open space for recreational purposes.

Migrants flowed into the area right up until the 1930s when the industry could be said to be in its prime, however following this period there were significant changes in the urban fabric of the area. As proposed in the 1952 Plan, much of the property between High Town and Hitchin Roads was demolished as it was almost a hundred years old and felt to be unfit for human habitation. Space was thereby provided for local businesses to expand, and to this day the area remains predominantly in industrial and employment uses. The 1952 Plan also proposed the widening of the whole length of High Town Road, requiring the

demolition of all properties on one side of the road.

The area between Wenlock and Boyle Streets was reserved for residential redevelopment in the 1970s, as can be seen in the style of housing in The Paths estate. Also during the 1970s a dual carriageway Inner Ring Road through the area was strongly opposed before being abandoned in 1976.

In 1978 the Town Council designated High Town Road as a Conservation Area, providing a level of protection for the collection of historic buildings which define the heart of the area today.

The railway links and the hat making industry have remained strong influences on High Town, both linking it to the outside world and allowing supporting services to develop. Today the area contains an interesting mix of uses, including a wide variety of housing styles including Victorian terraces right up to the 1970s 'Radburn' layout of The Paths estate. Manufacturing and industrial producers (and the businesses that serve them) remain, and also a retail sector providing a range of ethnic goods which reflect the diverse nature of the population.



Historic photographs of High Town

1.5 Socio-economic context

The key trends and characteristics of the study area are outlined below. A detailed socio-economic analysis entitled "Luton High Town Economic, Social and Land use recommendations Draft Report (2005)" was undertaken by Strategic Planning Advice (SPA) in association with BDP, a summary of which is provided in Section 5.

Luton Borough Council has a population approaching 185,000. The Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis conurbation is identified as a Priority Area for Economic Regeneration under current Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9). This seeks to promote physical and economic regeneration, commercial activity and to redress the infrastructure deficit that has accrued over recent years.

It is planned to accommodate significant numbers of new homes and jobs in Luton in the period up to 2021. Key employment opportunities exist in the southern part of the town. In conjunction with the strengthening of the regional role of the town centre, there are significant opportunities on offer.

In recent decades the population of Luton has significantly risen, yet town centre development has failed to respond to this population increase. Subsequently, the pressures that have been placed on the area have resulted in an inefficient and unsustainable urban centre. Despite its growth Luton also contains areas with significant deprivation and social exclusion, including High Town.

Local Business Survey

Some 200 businesses operate within the High Town Action Area, of which about 30% are in the wholesale and retail trade, with specialised stores and the maintenance and repair of motor vehicles being predominant. Approximately 20% of businesses are involved in manufacturing, with printing and related service activities, general engineering and hat manufacture comprising the majority. The hotels and restaurants sector accounts for 20% of businesses. Evidence gained through local consultation and observations revealed that the High Town Action Area retains representative of the hat making industry, and of high value-added engineering industry, while also containing significant amounts of industrial services, printing, and vehicle servicing and rentals. Local retail outlets have an ethnically diverse flavour, with Lithuanian, Polish, and African food and goods all available (SPA, December, 2004). There is also a variety of specialist retail shops selling non-food goods present in the area. Consumer services, including hairdressing, dry cleaning, estate agents, accountants and tailoring services are all present, while public and community services including the New Opportunities and Horizons (NOAH), St Matthews Primary School, and Barnfield College are also present.



Fig 6 High Town - a diverse business community
Examples of the businesses currently operating in the area.

02 Physical Resources...

This section sets out the physical and the spatial attributes of the study area. The main purpose of this section is to analyse the urban fabric of the area including linkages, landmarks, views and vistas and pedestrian environment.

2.1 Vacant land and buildings

The baseline phase of producing this document involved the identification of land and buildings considered to be vacant or available for sale/lease. A survey of properties was undertaken during the analysis phase to update research undertaken by the Borough Council is shown on Figure 7.



2.2 Land in council ownership

A review of land in Council ownership was undertaken in the analysis phase revealing that a large quantity of land in the study area is Council owned. Some of the land is subject to long term lease and several dwellings in The Paths estate and on Wenlock Street have been purchased under the right to buy. This information is shown on Figure 8.





Vacant land on Back Street

Key for vacant land and building diagram:

-  Study area boundary
-  Vacant sites or buildings

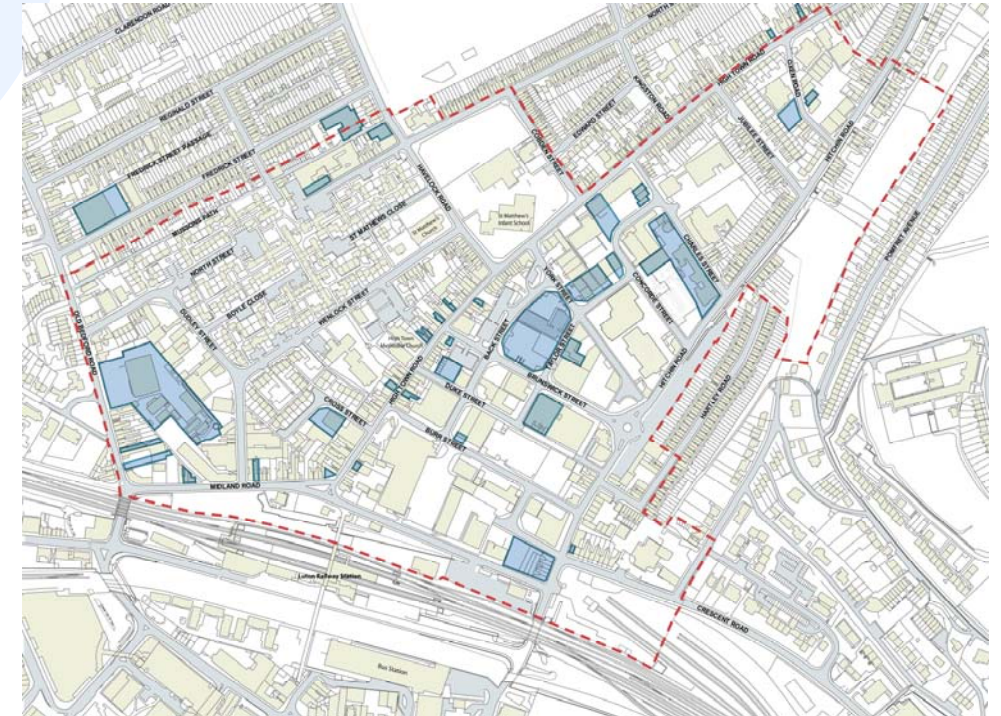
Key for land in council ownership diagram:

-  Land in council ownership
-  Land in council leasehold



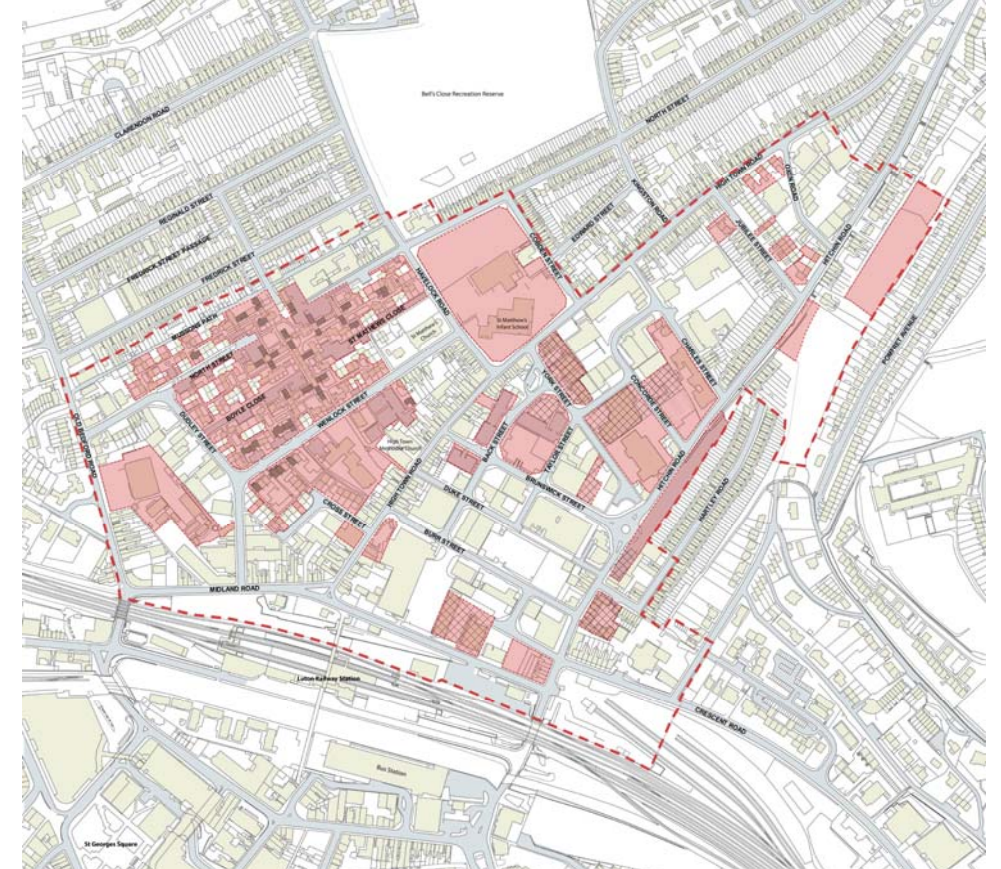
Vacant building on High Town Road

Fig 4: Vacant Land and Buildings



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

Fig 5: Land in Council Ownership



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

2.4 Pedestrian environment

An analysis of the key landmarks, views and vistas was undertaken to assess how easy or difficult it is for pedestrians to understand/navigate around High Town

Landmarks

High Town Road occupies a ridge, with the Methodist Church being the most prominent landmark building within the area. Not only is the church highly visible from High Town Road, due to its prominent tower and elevated position, there are views from Hitchin Road; most notably from the junction with Duke Street. It is also visible from sections of Wenlock Street, especially the pathway to the rear of the church.

St Matthews Church acts as a landmark from the northern end of Wenlock Street and along Havelock Road. Milliners Court can be seen from most points in the area.

An escarpment forms the eastern boundary of the study area and forms a definite green edge as it contains many mature trees that terminate views from the northern end of the High Town and Hitchin Road.

Gateways

The southern gateways into the area are dominated by the railway bridge and heavily trafficked roads. The junctions of Midland Road with Old Bedford Road and Hitchin Road are designed with the car in mind rather than pedestrians as there are steep changes in level, poor lighting and difficult crossing points.

Routes

High Town Road forms the key focus for the area as it is both the entry point from the south and the heart of the community in terms of retailing and community facilities. It is the principle pedestrian route from north to south. Other key routes include Havelock Road, which is a well used and tree-lined road linking Bells Close Recreation Reserve to High Town Road. The path to the rear of the Methodist Church forms an important link between High Town Road and The Paths estate. Midland Road, Old Bedford Road and Hitchin Road are also important routes bordering the study area.

Nodes

The key node is the southern end of High Town Road where the station bridge meets Midland Road. This is where the highest footfall was observed, even though the bridge is not a particularly welcoming or attractive route for pedestrians. The junction of Brunswick Street and Hitchin Road is also a key node, both for traffic and pedestrians.

2.5 Views and gateways

Views include those along and toward High Town Road, views over green space or land and from some locations toward the Town Centre, gateways exist at main junctions and points of entry.



Views from Hitchin Road toward High Town Road often terminate in prominent buildings



View up Duke Street to the Methodist church is obstructed by enclosed storage yard



Gateway at corner of Midland Road/High Town Road (looking North) marks entry to the area



Northern Gateway at the corner of Hitchin Road and High Town Road.



Southern Gateway



Gateway at corner of Brunswick Street and Hitchin Road marks a main entry from the east

2.6 Landmarks

Three main landmarks aid navigation: The Methodist Church, St Matthews Church and the green escarpment between Pomfret Avenue and Hitchin Road.



The Methodist Church tower is a key landmark in the centre of High Town Road



St Matthews Church is a more local landmark which is seen here from Wenlock Street



The church tower provides an orientation point visible from many places in the area



The tree land between Pomfret Avenue and Hitchin Road provides a green backdrop



The Methodist Church from the west is an important landmark indicating High Town Road



The tree lined streets to the west also provide a green backdrop for the area

Key





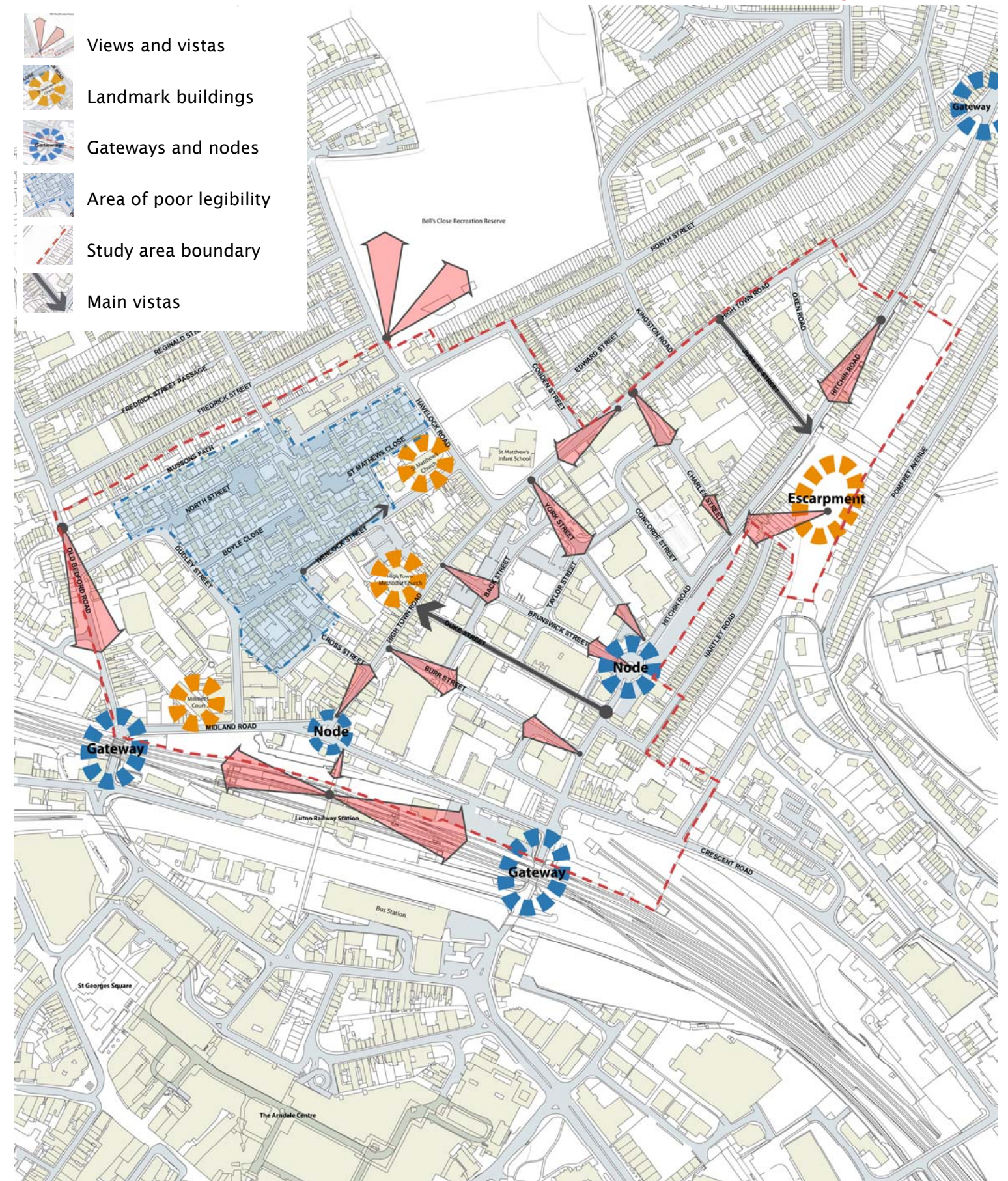
-  Views and vistas
-  Landmark buildings
-  Gateways and nodes
-  Area of poor legibility
-  Study area boundary
-  Main vistas

Fig 6: Landmarks



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

2.7 Walkability

The High Town area is compact, and although situated on a slope, most destinations are located within a 5 to 10 minute walk of High Town Road or the footbridge to the Town Centre. Some other key features are identified below:

- High Town Road provides a convenient and direct link to the Town Centre and Luton Station for residents in the High Town 'core' and surrounding areas.
- There are low car ownership levels in the area, perhaps a reflection of income, lack of residential parking and proximity to the town centre.
- There is a lack of pedestrian crossing facilities on some of the busier roads in the area, including Havelock Road.
- Car parks that service shops and services on High Town Road are spread along the length of the road and located usually within 50m of shop entries
- The layout of streets and blocks in the area promotes convenient north south movement, the arrangement of blocks does not provide clear or direct east / west routes, particularly between open spaces.
- St Matthew's Primary School generates significant pedestrian movements at opening/closing time.
- Facilities for the mobility-impaired are generally poor.

2.8 Barriers

The main barrier to movement in the High Town area is the railway line which separates High Town from the Town Centre. To a lesser extent the major roads in the area act as barriers to movement including Old Bedford Road and Hitchin Road.

There are only three access points across the railway line and where access is provided it tends to be of

poor quality by a tunnel, a lengthy bridge or underpass which are undesirable environmental solutions to movement.

The industrial areas are a barrier to pedestrian movement, as the pedestrian routes through these areas are generally of poor quality and the environment is not welcoming.

2.9 Figure ground analysis

A figure ground was prepared to analyse the connectivity of public places in the study area. In the illustration the white areas are open to public access, the light grey areas are private land or restricted access and the dark grey areas are building footprints.

Figure 11 emphasizes a number of the characteristics of the study area, including:

- Lack of direct links between open spaces
- Barriers that limit convenient east to west movement
- Strong links from outlying areas to High Town Road
- That there are only three key links from High Town and surrounds to the Town Centre
- The over provision of routes within The Paths area

Fig 7: Figure Ground Analysis



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935



Access to town centre on Old Bedford Road is a poor pedestrian environment



Footbridge between High Town and town centre is functional but lacks character and amenity



Gateway on Old Bedford Road is dominated by vehicles with narrow footpaths



Footpaths on High Town Road are narrow and often interrupted by service vehicles



High Town Road provides a direct link to the town centre for surrounding areas



Pedestrian route to High Town Road at rear of Methodist church is direct and attractive

Key for walkability diagram:





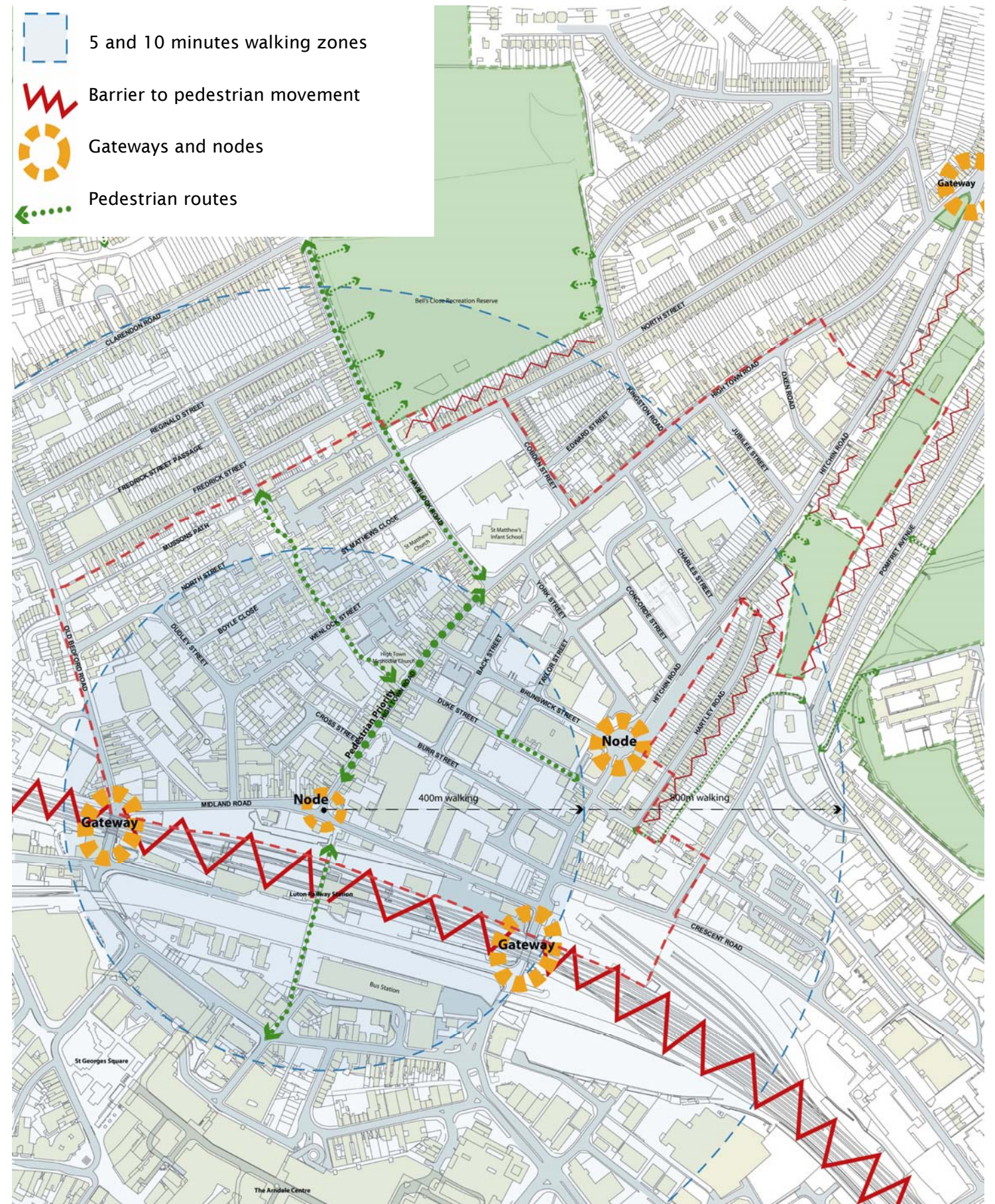
-  5 and 10 minutes walking zones
-  Barrier to pedestrian movement
-  Gateways and nodes
-  Pedestrian routes

Fig 8: Walkability



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

Fig 9: Natural Environment

2.10 Natural environment

There are a number of environmental assets within the area; these are:

- Significant open space areas are adjacent to the study area and within easy walking distance of most dwellings in the area.
- The area has strong links with the significant open spaces adjoining the area, although links to the River Lea are poor as it is largely culverted through High Town.
- The adjoining Bells Close Recreation Ground and Popes Meadow are flat open areas that allow active recreation and are well used.
- There are several wooded areas including Peoples Park and the areas between Hitchin Road and Pomfret Avenue.
- The retention of these wooded areas in such close proximity to the Town Centre are important.
- The High Town Road area and adjoining employment land are largely devoid of trees and lack even small areas of open space.
- Some streets in the area are lined with mature street trees. These include Crescent Road, Midland Road, and Havelock Road, which add to the green back drop to the area.
- The residential areas to the south east of the study area are well treed and contribute to greening the setting of the study area



Cities Revealed © aerial photography copyright The GeoInformation Group, 2002 and Crown Copyright © All Rights reserved



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

2.11 Historic environment

There are a number of historic and high quality buildings in High Town, some of which have been acknowledged with national or local listings. These are important in the context of Luton, as many examples of historic architecture have been lost. The main historic characteristics in the area are:

- The historic retail spine within the High Town Road Conservation Area
- Other buildings of note outside the Conservation Area, including St Matthews Church and an historic public house.
- Other buildings of historic value through their connection with the hat industry.



The locally-listed Railway Tavern forms part of the historic gateway to the Conservation Area

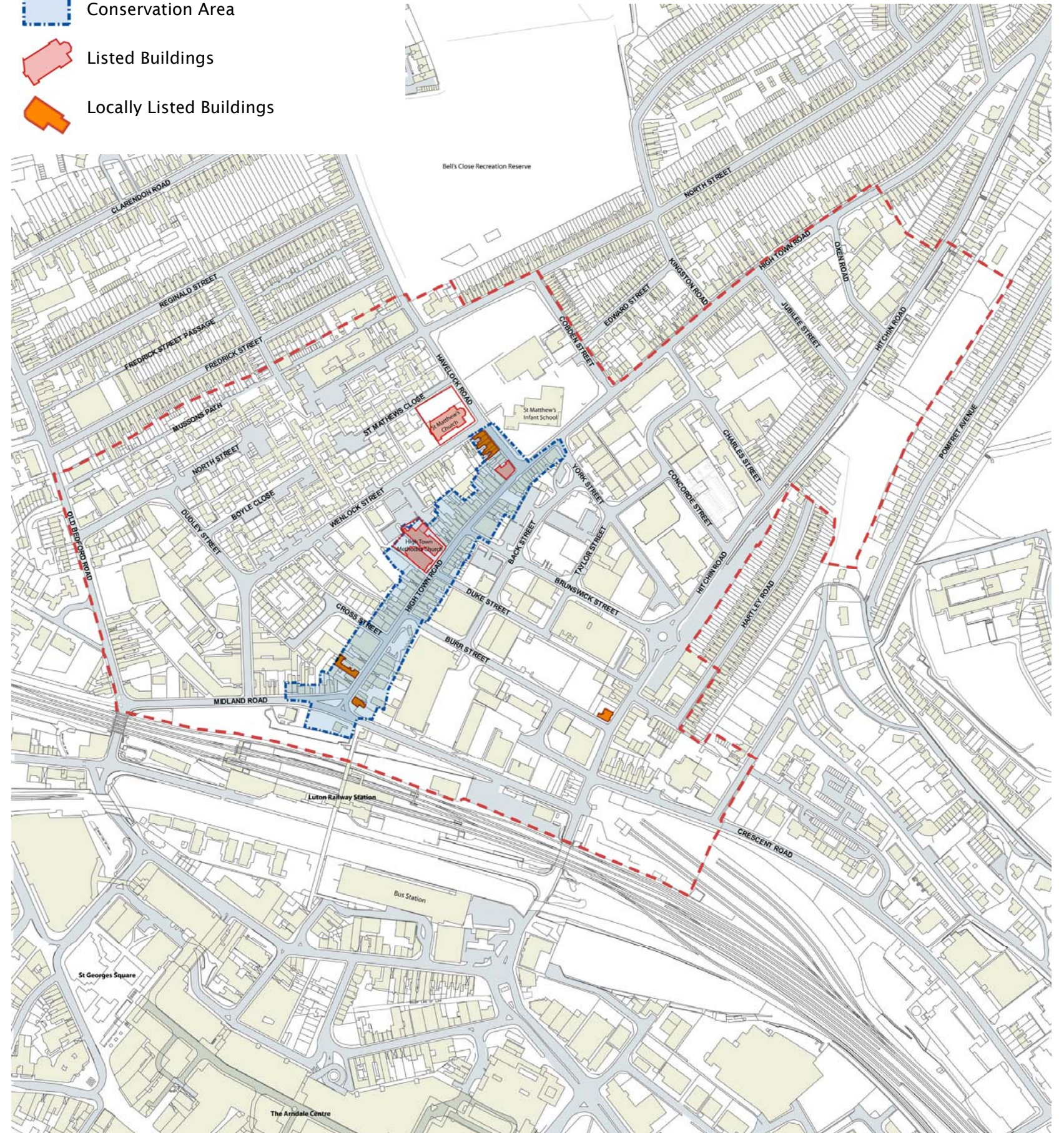


The Methodist Church is both a key landmark and a key community facility

Key for historic environment diagram:

-  Conservation Area
-  Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings

Fig 10: Historic Environment



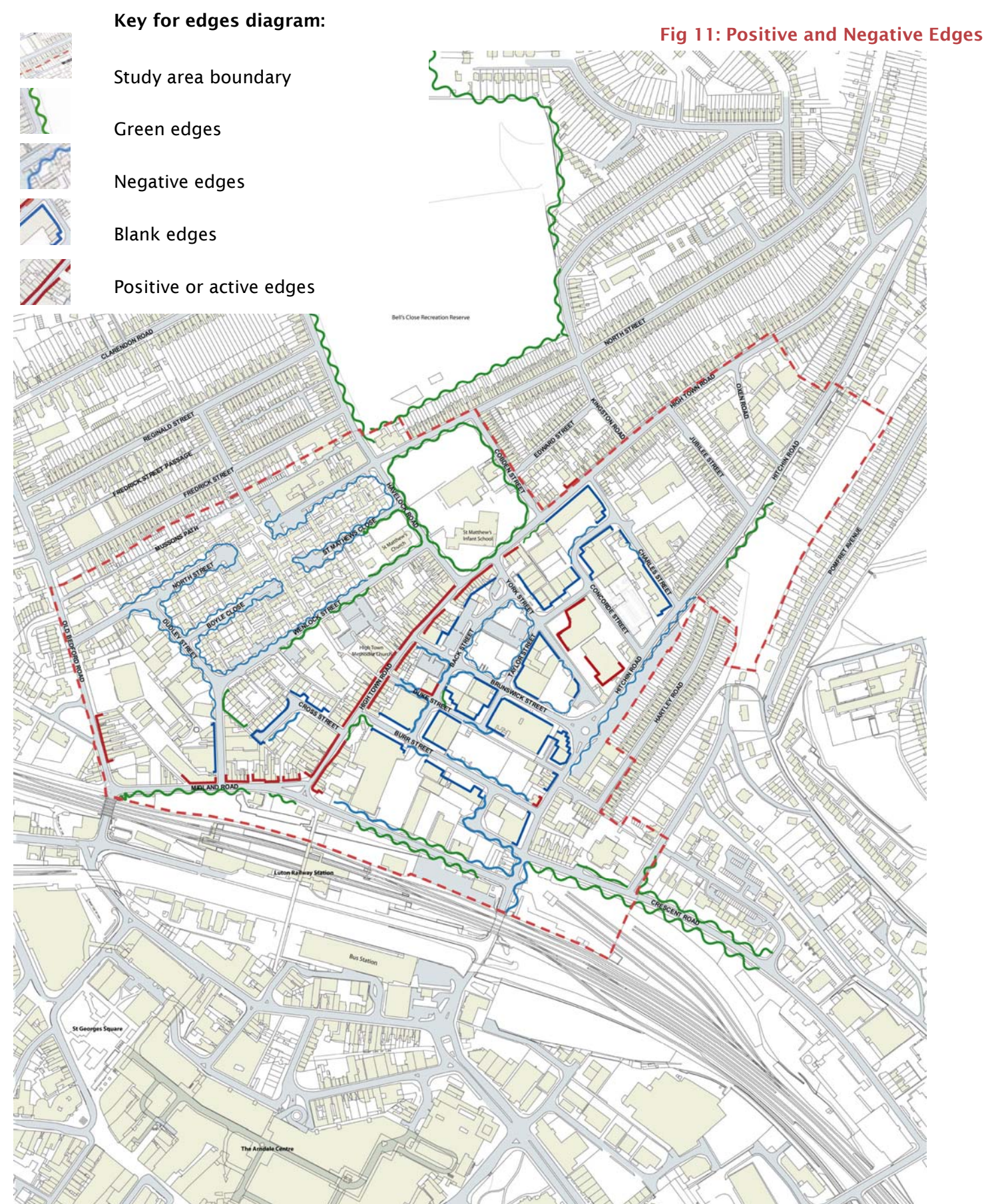
This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

2.12 Positive and negative edges

An evaluation of the quality of edges and spaces throughout High Town was undertaken. The edges of the public realm were considered to be either positive, negative, green spatial or negative spatial, as described below.

- A positive edge is an edge which has active uses at ground level and contributes to the level of activity and surveillance in the public realm.
- A negative edge presents a blank façade or inactive frontage to the public realm and contributes little, or potentially diminishes its quality.
- A negative spatial edge is an edge considered to lack definition, or fail to provide an appropriate level of definition between the public and private realm, or potentially provide limited enclosure to the street.
- A green spatial edge is an edge that although potentially inactive, provides a soft green and positive edge to the public realm and contributes to amenity and interest.

The live/work paths areas are narrow active places where pedestrian and vehicle traffic mix



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935



High Town Road has positive edges which are well defined and active



Negative spatial edges on Dudley Street and in other industrial / employment areas



Negative edge at rear of residential properties on Cross Street



The Paths estate - Radburn style housing



Green spatial edge of St Matthews School breaks continuity of edges on High Town Road



Bells Close Recreation Reserve provides an attractive green edge to Havelock Road

2.13 Character areas

High Town is made up of a number of discrete land use and character areas. As shown on Fig 16 key areas are:

- The historic core of the area along High Town Road which is predominantly shop units
- Employment and industrial land to the east of High Town Road with a lower quality street environment
- The live/work zones focused on Mussons Path and Frederick Street Passage
- Radburn Housing area with over provision of routes and fragmented green spaces
- Larger and higher quality Victorian residential surrounding the High Town core which provides family housing
- Community use areas including the school, Churches and nursing home
- Green spaces with flat open and wooded areas
- Some areas with a mix of land uses and building types

Key for character areas diagram:

-  Study area boundary
-  Retail centres
-  The railway station and its environs
-  Bedford Road gateway area
-  Low quality employment land
-  The Paths estate
-  Generally 2 storey terraced residential area
-  Green amenity space
-  Tree dominated landscape
-  Community uses
-  Small scale employment land

Fig 12: High Town - Character Areas
The distribution of employment, residential and retail within the area.



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

03 Transport, Access & Movement...

This section sets out an appraisal of the transport, parking and movement issues affecting the study area. Themes explored include parking arrangements, servicing of the retail core, vehicle access and public transport.

3.1 General Location

Being close to the Town Centre, the High Town area benefits from the proximity to the central area facilities (eg rail and bus stations) as well as the services passing through or close to High Town en route to the Town Centre. However, these advantages are offset by the high degree of severance between High Town and the Town Centre caused by the railway together with traffic along the arterial routes which pass through or close to High Town. As a result, the High Town area appears remote and difficult to access from the town centre.

This problem is exacerbated by the form of the Town Centre. The Mall Arndale and other retail areas are focused towards the pedestrianised George Street such that linkage to High Town is via the 'rear' of the Mall Arndale, across the heavily trafficked Guildford Street and along narrow footways and poor quality footbridges or underpasses.

Although the key movements to/from High Town will always be orientated towards the Town Centre, it is important not to ignore connectivity with other nearby communities. The area is bounded by Hitchin Road and Old Bedford Road with High Town Road passing through the centre. Whilst each of these roads carries a reasonable level of traffic they are not overly congested and alternative routes (New Bedford Road, Crawley Green Road and the A505 East Luton Corridor) are available for through traffic and larger vehicles. Similarly, whilst Midland Road provides an east-west link both Guildford Street and Stockingstone Road currently offer suitable alternatives.

3.2 Prospective Changes to High Town

There are a number of projects which if implemented will have a significant impact on High Town and connectivity with surrounding areas.

Luton Town Centre Transport Scheme

- New Bus interchange located slightly closer to High Town with much improved facilities
- Completion of the Gateway Link (inner ring road) northern section, removing all through traffic from Midland Road
- Closure of Guildford Street to through traffic
- Significantly improved pedestrian facilities and streetscape between the rail station and the Arndale Centre obviating the need to cross any busy roads.
- Pedestrian crossing facilities will be incorporated within the improved junctions with Midland Road at Old Bedford Road and Hitchin Road

Luton-Dunstable Busway

- The busway will provide improved services east towards the airport and west towards Dunstable
- The pedestrian underpass on Old Bedford Road will be removed together with the disused rail bridge and replaced by at grade crossings.

Power Court

- Improved pedestrian routes along Church Street and across St Marys Road

Railway Station Refurbishment

- Improved footbridges across the railway
- Segregation between rail passengers and other users
- Improved station facilities

Whilst all of the aforementioned changes will produce a positive benefit for High Town, the most important will be

the completion of the Gateway Link (inner ring road). This is planned as a single carriageway link between Old Bedford Road and Hitchin Road running parallel to Midland Road alongside the rail line extending to Crawley Green Road along an improved Crescent Road. All through traffic will be removed from Midland Road and diverted onto the new road, thus traffic will pass below the existing footbridge that links Midland Road with the station. The removal of through traffic offers a number of options to improve the streetscape and pedestrian environment along Midland Road in particular the relatively large open space surrounding the Midland Road/High Town Road junction.

3.3 Vehicle access

An appraisal of the movement network for High Town identified the following characteristics.

- High Town is located between Hitchin Road and Old Bedford Road which provide convenient access to the Town Centre and result in relatively low levels of traffic passing through the study area
- A number of one way streets in the area, including part of High Town Road, exist. These arrangements are considered to make navigating around High Town difficult.
- There is a perception of rat running occurring on some roads in the area, in particular, Dudley Street and Havelock Road. This problem is linked with current junction arrangements which prevent right turns from Midland Road into Old Bedford Road. A new junction and turning arrangement form part of the Gateway Link (inner ring road) proposal and will resolve these issues.

The junctions of Midland Road with Old Bedford Road and Hitchin Road have been identified as problem intersections. New junctions and turning arrangements form part of the Gateway Link (inner ring road) proposal and will resolve these issues

- Severance is caused by the levels of traffic using Midland Road. The proposed Gateway Link (inner ring road) will significantly reduce traffic along this route and minimise severance.
- The area to the west of Havelock Road—including Clarendon Road/Reginald Street/Fredrick Street—has problems of rat-running and excessive on-street parking.
- The 20mph speed limit on Havelock Road is not always observed.

3.4 Public Transport

The area has excellent links with mainline rail services. The area is served by a limited number of bus routes connecting to the Town Centre and the wider town, particularly in the evening and at weekends.

3.5 Pedestrian and Cycle Access

There are a number of pleasant routes through or bordering the area. However, these are relatively short and often discontinuous.

Recent pavement works along High Town Road have improved the pedestrian environment but there remain a number of roads with strong frontage activity but limited footway widths.

The pedestrian crossing of Midland Road by the station footbridge is the most heavily used in the area. The Gateway Link (inner ring road) proposals will enable the crossing to be greatly improved or this section of Midland Road to be potentially pedestrianised.

There are very limited cycle facilities in the area and a shortage of defined routes, priority measures or secure parking stands.

Key for vehicle access diagram:

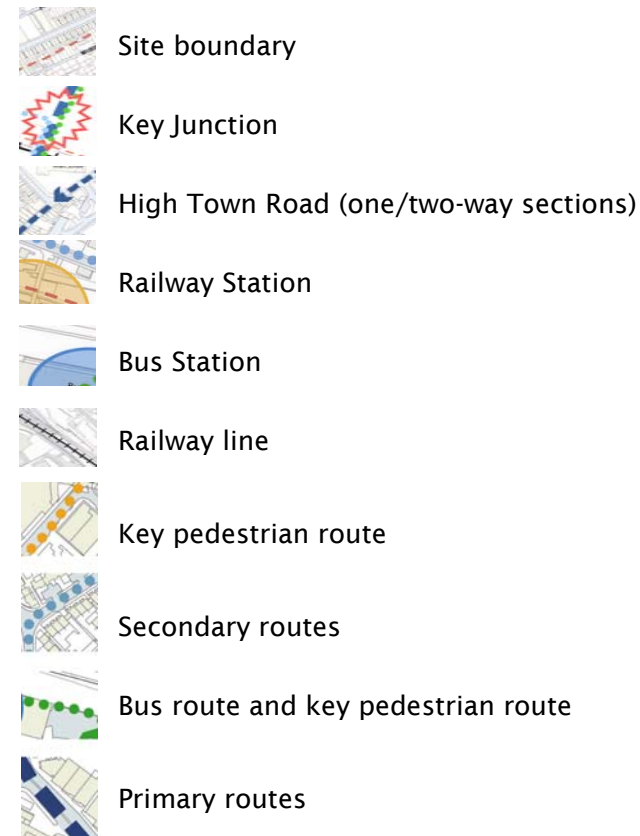


Fig 13: Vehicle Access



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

Fig 14: Parking and Servicing

3.6 Parking

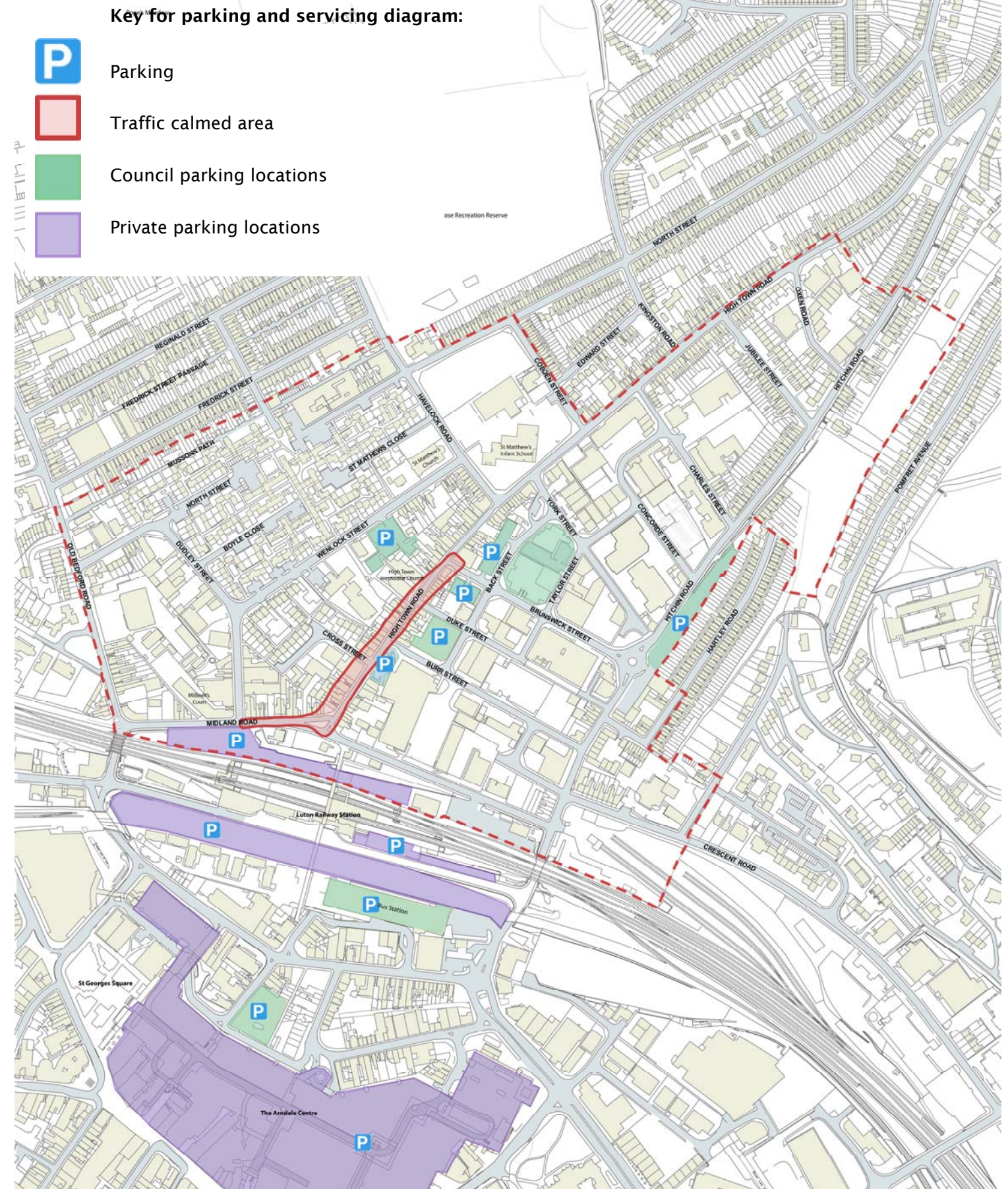
An analysis of car parking location, numbers and distribution was carried out. It revealed the following:

- Car parking areas are located in close proximity to the High Town Road shopping area
- The existing number of car parking spaces should be sufficient to meet the need generated by shops and other services offered in the locality
- Although sufficient long stay commuter parking is provided by existing multi-level car parks located in the Town Centre and adjacent to the railway station the proximity of the High Town to Luton rail station results in some pressure for long term parking from commuters.
- Existing short stay parking is currently used by some for longer stay parking resulting in a perceived shortage of conveniently located short stay parking
- Anecdotal evidence identifies that some parking areas are underutilised, including the Wenlock Street car park behind the Methodist Church and the Back Street parking areas

3.7 Servicing

An analysis of servicing arrangements for shops and tenancies along High Town Road identified the following:

- Most shops along High Town Road rely solely on front servicing
- Scope currently does not exist for access to the rear of shop units and many of the buildings are unable to be serviced from the rear
- High Town Road is a narrow carriageway and the concentration of servicing from this road results in obstructions of vehicle and pedestrian traffic



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

04 Land Use Recommendations...

4.1 Economic and Social Characteristics

The land use, social and economic characteristics of High Town point to significant opportunities that are available to facilitate future development, and also some constraints:

High Town in the Sub-Region

At the sub-regional scale there is likely to be a role for High Town to contribute to the early requirements for additional housing and employment. It could also be an interesting destination of character for the many newcomers expected in the region.

High Town in Luton

High Town is probably the most accessible residential location in Luton. The town centre facilities of entertainment, shopping, education, public services and jobs are within walking distance. The equally accessible transport interchanges give ready access to wider Luton, regional and national destinations.

Socio-Economic Profile

Both the High Town Ward and the SPD area contain an interestingly varied population, not only the Asian and African minority groups which are found elsewhere in Luton but also a long established Irish community and a newer and growing Eastern European population. Many of the latter are drawn to Luton University but find suitable accommodation in High Town. The student population in both areas is high. The ward contains higher proportions of professional and managerial groups, but these are less well represented in the SPD area. This is of interest for the spending power of higher earners that could be attracted to local shops and services. Unemployment and deprivation are however significantly higher than in Luton generally.

Role of High Town in the Luton Housing Market

High Town is one of the cheaper areas of Luton. Furthermore it is the only area with a significantly transitional role: many people move here temporarily, for example whilst studying or whilst establishing themselves in Luton. This role is reflected in the tenure patterns in High Town: low proportions of owner occupiers and high proportions of privately rented housing in both ward and SPD area and a low percentage of social rented housing in the ward.

Typical buyers of housing in High Town are first time buyers, young couples, investors (buy to rent), commuters moving from London, and those without cars. Typical tenants include students, benefit recipients and those on low incomes.

The area offers opportunities to provide new family housing for social rent through redevelopment of outmoded industrial and commercial sites. Balanced, sustainable communities can be created by providing a mix of sizes and tenure as dwellings for social rent, private sale and intermediate tenures. Intentions have been announced from the Central Government of an expansion in the supply of affordable housing with an emphasis on developing brownfield sites. High Town offers excellent opportunities to further these objectives.

A Community that Walks

The interest of High Town as a sustainable community is demonstrated by the travel to work habits of residents: high proportions traveling on foot and by train, high proportions traveling short distances, and relatively few dependent on cars. Car ownership rates are correspondingly low.

The Local Economy

The economy of the area is remarkably diverse, with employers ranging from high tech engineering and specialist hat manufacture, through building supplies and storage, to a wide array of consumer services. This choice of jobs and opportunities for employment is very attractive for new households and young people starting careers.

Consultation with Business

For the industrial firms there is often no particular reason for them being in High Town as opposed to elsewhere in Luton and there are disadvantages such as the feeling of insecurity especially later in the day for more vulnerable staff. Accessibility to the town centre and the region is rated highly, but local parking and access/orientation can be problematic for firms. Several firms occupy substantial sites but provide relatively little employment. Many of the industrial firms do not feel to be part of the High Town (Road) community or that the High Town Action Trust has offered them much improvement.

For the retailing, catering and other consumer service firms, many would have preferred a Town Centre location but affordable premises were not available. As in the housing market High Town seems to play a valuable entry role for small businesses. It is seen as important that customers and suppliers can orientate themselves easily and passing trade is an important source of custom for most businesses. The ability to park near the shops and services is important for traders, especially in attracting customers. The businesses surveyed believe that local car parks should not be available for people traveling to Luton Town Centre or train station.

The single most important improvement for local traders would be an increase in the accessible catchment population. There is also concern about security and the related image problem of High Town.

The History of High Town

High Town has a very exciting and well documented history and some of its historic roles have a real relevance for the future of the area:

- It has always had a reception or transitional role.
- It was the heart of the hat industry.
- Integrated living and working go back a long way in High Town; the workshops on some of the Walks bear witness to this.
- It has always been an area of strongly mixed uses.
- Caring institutions have been important, for example the local churches and community facilities.

4.2 Conclusions

To facilitate the economic and social well-being of High Town, the preferred uses is residential (subject to continuing strong retail and export industrial uses) This shall include:

- Housing for sale
- Housing for private rental (including student housing)
- Social rented housing
- Affordable housing of intermediate tenures
- Export industrial especially higher value-added activities
- A reduction in land-intensive, low-employment generating industrial uses

High Town in the wider community

High Town could respond to the identified needs of the sub-regional and Luton communities through its capacity to:

- Meet identified sub-regional need for housing & jobs;
- Promote sustainable development: reduce the need to travel, within High Town & to the Town Centre;
- Increase the local population to improve the viability of local services;
- Build on renewed interest in shop premises to create an interesting destination of sub-regional quality, including specialist and ethnic retailers;
- Retain high value-added export-based industries;
- Expanding local arts and cultural activities;
- Investigate possibilities for the relocation of land extensive activities such as surface car parking, storage and vehicle rental;
- Improve the physical & cultural links with Hat Factory area; improve the bridge.

4.3 Land Use Recommendations

Residential use should be maximised subject to the retention of strong retail, service and export industrial sectors. New housing should be closely related to High Town Road in order to maximise the benefits to the local traders. Residential development should be housing for sale to encourage those who succeed to remain in High Town, housing for private rental to cater for the identified need for transitional housing, and social rented housing.

Priority in industrial land use should be for higher value added activities, which make best use of this highly central and accessible location; correspondingly there

may be scope to help lower intensity uses to relocate and thereby release land for residential development.

The retail and service activities on High Town Road should be retained with intensification on site allowed where required. Attention needs to be given to the provision of efficient access, parking and servicing. There should be provision for arts and welfare activities as part of the mixed use, inclusive community that High Town can become.

In order to assess the broad scale of land use change that may be appropriate to a sustainable future for High Town, it is necessary to refer back to the Local Plan objectives for up to 2011, towards which quantifiable progress may be possible:

- Reducing unemployment by retaining, strengthening and adding to employment opportunities.
- Promoting public transport, cycling and walking and reducing the need to travel by car.
- Maintaining the viability of shopping areas.
- Meeting local housing needs including the need for affordable and lifetime housing.

Firstly to reduce unemployment in High Town Ward to the rate prevailing in England as a whole.

Secondly to increase the percentage of residents in the SPD area travelling less than two kilometres to work through the creation of additional housing within High Town.

05 Opportunities and Constraints...

Fig 15: Opportunities



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

5.1 Opportunities

- Gateway Link (inner ring road) will reduce severance from Town Centre and rat running and improved pedestrian facilities at junctions.
- Historic streetscape of High Town Road, specifically views to the Methodist Church
- Substantial open spaces such as Peoples Park and the green ridge adjacent to Hitchin Road
- Tree lined routes such as Midland Road and Havelock Road
- Rich and diverse community
- Local employment
- High quality residential
- Community facilities, retail and services
- Excellent linkages to Town Centre and regional transport
- Some vacant sites/buildings to the west of High Town Road
- Obsolete , outmoded industrial, commercial premises and cleared sites in the whole area

Fig 16: Constraints

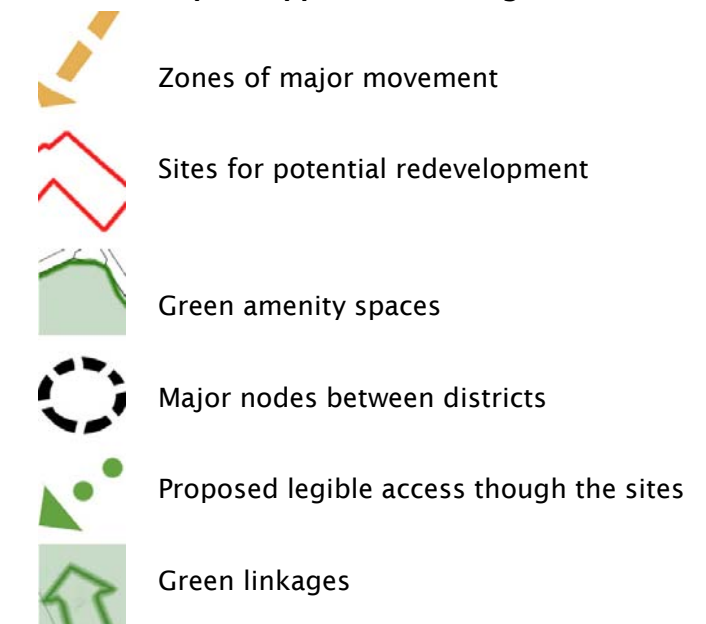


This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or database right 2005. Licence No 100023935

5.2 Constraints

- Perception of safety within The Paths housing estate
- Lack of public spaces on High Town Road
- Distribution of open space and poor linkages between them
- Poor quality industrial environment
- Lack of readily developable land
- Vacancies in shops and industrial units
- Crime and antisocial behaviour
- Need to retain high quality industrial uses

Key for opportunities diagram:



Key for constraints diagram:



06 Community Involvement



Visioning workshop

A workshop was held to confirm issues and opportunities for the study area and to confirm stakeholder aspirations and ideas for the future of High Town.

6.1 Consultation undertaken

A series of consultation events were arranged to engage stakeholders, organisations working in the area, local businesses, residents groups and decision makers:

- November 2004 to January 2005 – Targeted Interviews with key stakeholders
- December 8 2004 – Walk in session, to introduce the community to the project
- January 11 2005 – Stakeholder Issues and Visioning Workshop, to confirm issues and opportunities
- February 23 2005 – Land Use and Urban Design Options Workshop, to determine which elements

6.2 Main issues

The key themes that emerged from the consultation are summarised below:

- Increase trade by generating curiosity and interest in High Town through improving the specialist retail offer, promoting “café culture” and increasing the catchment population;
- Improve the physical environment of High Town Road;
- Resolve often conflicting uses such as employment and residential;
- Improve the management of car parking, servicing and street cleansing;
- Reduce crime and the fear of crime, particularly in The Paths estate;
- Increase the resident population of the area, especially family and affordable housing;
- Relocate land inefficient employment uses and encourage high quality export-related industries;
- Promote a green network of interlinked open spaces.

Place

“Destination High Town”: High Town Road as a Retail Destination

- “Generate curiosity” and improve visual links and signage
- Establish a specialist retail niche, as a distinct ‘offer’ from the Arndale and Power Court outlets
- Increase exposure for High Town Road shops by increasing catchment population “More residential = more people = improved shops”
- Increase variety of shops on High Town Road
- Promote mixed use, such as living above the shop
- Establish an “anchor” to confirm the viability of High Town Road; use either car park site or part of school site

Historic Environment

- Re-use older/attractive buildings where appropriate

Safety and Security

- Improve safety and security in The Paths estate
- Reduce fear of crime
- Measures to address antisocial behaviour:
 - Prostitution
 - Drugs
 - Drinking

Sense of Place

- Improve sense of place based on physical and cultural history of the area (a ‘village’ feel)
- Promote high quality “café culture” – link to specialist shops and culture of the area
- Improve quality and amenity of High Town Road
- Improve pedestrian environment on High Town Road – pedestrianise? Shared surfaces?
- Public art strategy
- Rationalise open space and movement in The Paths estate

Uses

Residential development

- More affordable housing
- Increase exposure for High Town Road shops by increasing catchment population “More residential = more people = improved shops”
- Provide traditional types of housing and family housing
- Reduce potential conflicts between land uses - particularly live/work areas - may affect viable employment land
- Use sustainable and adaptable building designs
- Will land value and use impact upon affordable housing provision?

Open Space

- New green spaces should be high quality
- Green Network – broader links to River Lea valley and Hitchin Road green ridge
- Rationalise open space within The Paths estate

Employment Uses

- Employment land should be consolidated to focus upon high quality/high employment/export related – moving away from ‘land inefficient’ uses such as vehicle storage – mixed use opportunity
- Improve amenity of employment area
- Reduce potential conflicts between land uses - particularly live/work areas – may affect viable employment land

Community Uses

- Maximise flexibility of use in community buildings and land including St Matthews School
- New Church Hall at St Matthews: Old Bedford Road church becomes vacant – possible re-use?
- NOAH building should be appropriately designed to achieve design excellence
- Increase leisure offer – particularly for youth

Movement

Pedestrians and Cycles

- Improve cycle and pedestrian routes
- Improve signage
- Improve pedestrian environment on High Town Road
- Improve pedestrian links to Town Centre and High Town “hinterland”
- Rationalise movement within The Paths estate
- Create “loops and links”, connecting destinations within High Town and Town Centre

Public Transport

- Make best use of link to London and limit negative impacts upon the area
- Improve access to public transport, bus route along High Town Road
- Promote Park and Ride through High Town

Traffic Management

- Minimise potential severance effect of the proposed Gateway Link (inner ring road) extension: potential to reduce awareness of High Town
- Reduce severance caused by Midland Road
- Address problem intersections: Old Bedford Road/ Midland Road and Hitchin Road/ Midland Road
- Address rat-running through High Town
- Minimise use of High Town Road and residential streets by heavy traffic

Car Parking and Servicing

- Manage car parking: long/short stay,
- Reduce vandalism in car parks
- Reduced car parking problems associated with Houses in Multiple Occupation, new flatted development and conversions to office/business use
- Manage car parking to remove obstructed views at some junctions
- Improve street cleansing
- Establish facilities to improve servicing on High Town Road: to the rear of shops and on car park land

Fig 17: Community Ideas

The visioning workshop focused on identifying ideas for the area. This plan summarises the ideas of stakeholders attending the event

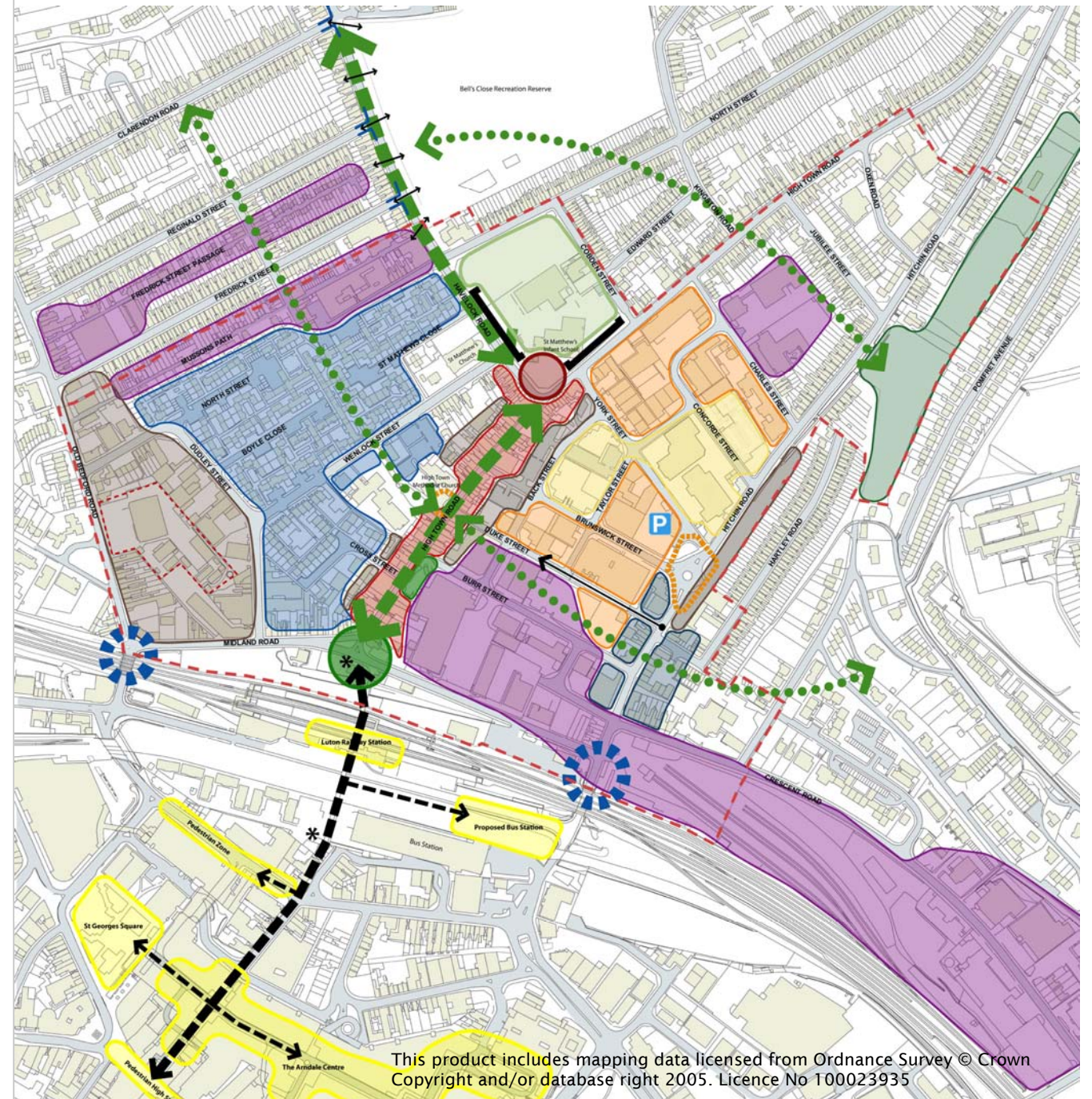


Fig 22 Land Use/Urban Design Option 1

Proposed Option 1—Destination: High Town

7.3 Urban Design and Land Use Options

At the final workshop, two options were presented to stakeholders with the aim of arriving at a preferred option. The following figures provide details of these options. Following feedback a preferred option has been drawn up, and is a combination of elements from both plans. This is presented in Section 10: Masterplan.

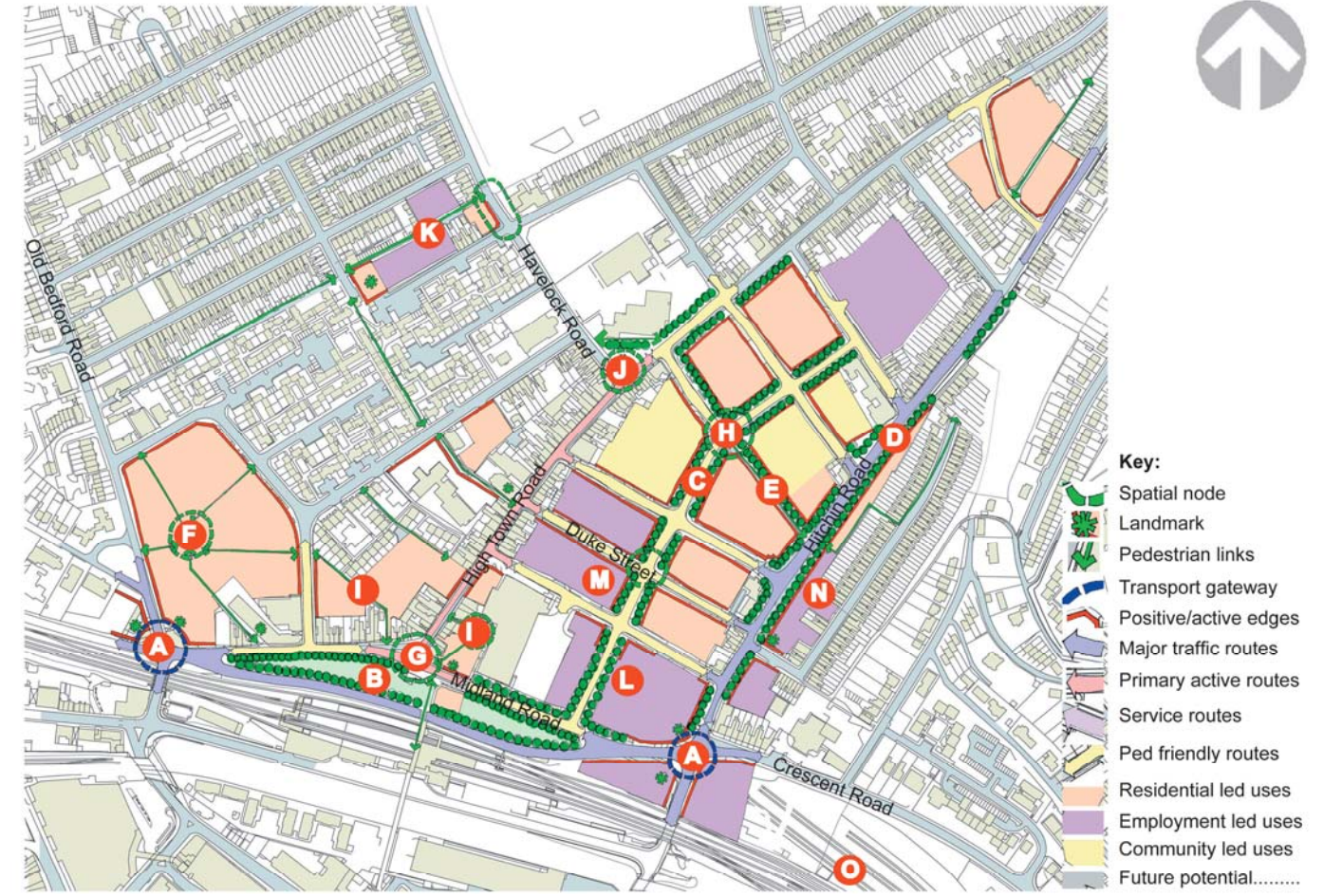


This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or data-base right 2005. Licence No 100023935

Movement	Place	Use
A The two junctions form high intensity gateways into High Town and connect into the new link road	G Bedford Road block forms a circus around the junction	L These blocks provide the opportunity to explore the live/work nature of the area with residential led mixed use developments
B Midland Road, High Town Road and Duke Street become low traffic, high pedestrian intensity thoroughfares	H Bedford Road block opens with a small public space internally with visual and physical linkages to the Luton Grace Fellowship	M These sites form the major employment base in the area with a mix of offices (to street edges) and a variety of other commercial offers
C A new route has been opened through the Bedfore Road block to increase the active frontages	I The High Town Road/Midland Road junction is an important public space with a landmark development along the desire line from the station	N Mixed use residential led developments with employment uses to Hitchin Road
D Hitchin Road is a major traffic route lined with active edges which increase in height and density southwards	J This junction is an active node with views to the Methodist Church and lined with active frontages and replacing Brunswick Street as the primary route from Hitchin Road to High Town Road	O A community led mixed use corridor runs along the desire line between major amenity spaces
E York Street has been realigned to create the major east-west linkage, improve legibility and encourage movement between the green amenity spaces	K High Town Road/Midland Road junction is intensively developed with a living bridge in the longer term	P Reinstate residential development to the northern edges of High Town
F A visual and physical linkage has been opened through the Radburn Estate		Q A future retail led corridor along miland Road linking the Town Centre with High Town

Proposed Option 2—Green Town: High Town

Fig 18: Land Use/Urban Design Option 2



This product includes mapping data licensed from Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and/or data-base right 2005. Licence No 100023935

Movement	Place	Use
<p>A The major junctions form built up, yet lower density gateways into High Town, thus expressing the area as something different</p> <p>B Midland Road celebrates its boulevard Nature and introduces a linear park with views over Luton</p> <p>C Taylor Street is a dominant connecting route in the reconfiguration of the block sizes in the area</p> <p>D Hitchin Road becomes a major street in the network of green routes with taller buildings set back from the edge of the street</p> <p>E A major pedestrian route links the major green amenity spaces</p> <p>NB Bus services run down High Town Road from the north and stopping at the footbridge before turning into the town centre</p>	<p>F The Bedford Road block is a large area for redevelopment with potential for internal commercial development</p> <p>G The junction becomes a less intensive space yet one encouraging high quality environment and encouraging exploration through High Town</p> <p>H A major public space linked to community facilities and green routes with the potential for a weekend market</p> <p>I A series of public spaces links Midland Road with High Town with different experiences</p> <p>J Havelock Road/Midland Road junction is an open space highlighting the end of the intensive retail experience and encourages east-west movement along the green routes</p> <p>K Mussons Path is redeveloped in part as a contemporary interpretation of the Milliners live/work typology</p>	<p>L Employment/commercial uses are concentrated in the south-eastern areas</p> <p>M With the enhancement of the environment along Taylor Street any new businesses attracted into the area will be encouraged to be 'clean' uses</p> <p>N The eastern edge of Hitchin Road is developed with small scale employment uses with residential above</p> <p>O The old railway land adjacent to the ring road route forms the ideal location for the 'dirtier' employment uses (i.e. distribution/manufacturing) away from public intensive places</p>

Also available:

Main document: HIGH TOWN SPD

Appendix B: PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This information can be made available in other formats. If you require a copy in large print, on tape or in a language other than English, please phone

01582 547331.

এই তথ্য অন্যান্য সংস্করণেও সরবরাহ করা যেতে পারে। আপনি যদি বড় হরফে ছাপা, টেপ-এ রেকর্ড করা অথবা বাংলা ভাষায় অনুবাদ করা কপি চান, তাহলে এই নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করবেন (টেলিফোন) **01582 547331**.....
(মিনিকম/টেক্সটফোন)

ਆ ਮਾહਿਤੀ ਵਿਗਾਨੀ ਅਵਸਥਾ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੜ੍ਹਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੱਡੇ ਟੈਕਸਟ ਪਰ ਵੇਰਵੇ ਵਾਲੀ ਅਥਵਾ ਗੂੜ੍ਹਾਤੀ ਆਖਾਮਾਂ ਯੋਗਿਨੀ ਡੀਯ ਟੀ, ਫੁੱਧਾ ਟੈਲਿਫੋਨ ਨੰਬਰ: **01582 547331**.....
(ਮਿਨਿਕੋਮ/ਟੈਕਸਟ ਫੋਨ)

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦੂਜੇ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ ਜੇਕਰ ਅਗਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ ਤੇ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ : ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ **01582 547331**.....
ਮਿਨਿਕੋਮ / ਟੈਕਸਟ ਫੋਨ

یہ معلومات آپ کو کمپیوٹر پر دوسری ساختوں اور مجموعی ڈیزائنوں کی صورت میں دستیاب ہو سکتی ہیں۔ اگر آپ کو اس کی کاپی بڑے حروف میں، یا آواز کی صورت میں اُرڈوزبان میں درکار ہے، تو براہ کرم اس فون نمبر **01582 547331**..... پر رابطہ کریں۔



Regeneration Service

Tel : 01582 547331

Fax: 01582 546971

Email: regeneration@luton.gov.uk