

Luton Town Centre Masterplan Framework



Luton 2020 - 2040
A place to thrive

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Luton

LUTON

CREATING A VISION
DELIVERING CHANGE



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Foreword



Cllr Sian Timoney
Portfolio holder responsible for
Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

Over the last couple of years we've been engaging with communities and businesses to 'reimagine' Luton town centre. It is clear people want a more modern and up to date space, a more attractive and safe place – somewhere people want to visit and want to stay and spend time. Quite frankly there are parts that are bleak and dreary and we aspire for something better.

Agreeing a new Town Centre Masterplan is a huge milestone and 'Luton Creating a vision – delivering a change' now brings to life the future ideas and plans for the town centre. It guides how the town centre will change in the short, medium and long term into an area we are proud to call our own and a welcoming place for everyone to enjoy. It will also see benefits economically as new developments and investment in the town centre will support new jobs and opportunities which is vital to our recovery from the pandemic and is part of our Luton 2040 vision of a town to thrive, where no-one has to live in poverty.

Working with communities, businesses, planners, developers and investors, we will work to transform our town centre into an area you have told us you want. One that best serves the community, which is clean and green with more open space. A safe place where families and friends want to spend time with places to meet, eat, drink and socialise.

The journey is already underway and there's been significant developments over the last few years. We have the new cultural quarter in our Hat District area, we have held spectacular events which celebrate our communities and public art for people to enjoy.

But these steps were just the beginning and over the three stages we will improve public spaces, take care of our heritage and provide new and affordable activities. Initially we will adapt and bring back in use heritage buildings and spaces, we will go on to reconnect the centre to open up and link the whole town centre back together with attractive streets and connect the wider area so outside neighbourhoods can easily access the town. We will make it more than just a retail centre so it's a hub for business and employment, leisure and entertainment, culture, community and health.

In the short term we have some exciting projects such as the opening up of the river Lea, work to Bute Street, public art works, heritage trail, and creating cleaner and greener streets. There will be more improved public spaces with leisure and culture and the further opening and development of the River Lea.

We won't be stopping there and in the longer term we will be looking to secure investment for much larger more transformational developments such as the Mall and Power Court. And we want to bring people along on this journey and will again engage for views, ideas and feedback so we can make sure we work towards a town centre that we are all proud of and one we all deserve.

INTRODUCTION



1 Introduction

A new vision for Luton Town Centre

- 1.1 Luton town centre is at an important juncture in its story. Deciding on its future direction and path necessitates a position with good perspective. The most successful and enduring town centre frameworks and masterplans are informed by a wide frame of reference - one that fully appreciates the challenges of the now, but that also look back to appreciate the nuances of the town's history and has an objective eye on the future.
- 1.2 During a year like no other, local people have come together to help steer a vision and framework for Luton town centre. The result is a masterplan which will transform Luton into a resilient and vibrant town centre which every resident can be truly proud of. Rooted in a real understanding of its strengths and its issues, this masterplan treads a well considered path towards meaningful sustainability.

Scope

- 1.3 This masterplan focuses on the town centre, primarily on the area enclosed by the ring road. Its purpose is to provide a clear framework for decision making - steering investment priorities, setting parameters for development and design and providing the basis for landowners and investors to confidently progress plans.
- 1.4 The masterplan is unapologetic in its level of ambition - for too long Luton has accepted a lower quality threshold than it deserves. The masterplan is also pragmatic - recognising that to affect real change a series of steps will be needed to shift the perception of the town centre and build up confidence. As such the masterplan includes both physical proposals for



View to east from Luton railway station (towards Power Court)



View south into the town centre from Luton railway station (with Hat District in foreground and Arndale House and The Mall in the background)



View to north west from Luton railway station (showing the busway and interchange)

sites and delivery strategies for how to ensure they and the wider non-development interventions actually happen on the ground.

Masterplan status

- 1.5 The masterplan is based on an extensive evidence base and lively community engagement. Many stakeholders and representatives have given their time generously and are eager to see the agreed masterplan delivered. The masterplan acts as a key document, setting a strategy to achieve parts of Luton Council's 2040 corporate vision.
- 1.6 This document will be corporately adopted as Council policy, and as such will direct funding and investment decisions immediately. The masterplan is a 15 year vision and therefore stretches beyond existing planning policy. The Local Plan review will use this document as part of its evidence base to renew and update town centre policies. However, this document now provides an update to the existing policy LLP3 and is therefore a material consideration with regard to planning proposals and decisions in the town centre.



Figure 1.1: Plan showing the core study area for the masterplan and the wider zone of interest and analysis

"It is an important river in the story of the town"



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Ordnance Survey 100023935

"A river runs through the town centre but you wouldn't even know"



Town centre strengths

"Luton is incredibly well connected - there is an opportunity to do something extraordinary"



"The market really represents the diversity of the community."



"The University has had a really positive impact on the town, delivering on a vision that some doubted a decade ago."



HAT FACTORY ARTS CENTRE

Youthscape



"Luton is the highest performing urban area for schooling in the country"



"Luton has a great history and lots of historic fabric. It's just not valued enough and is left to deteriorate or be demolished. Need to prioritise bringing these assets back into use."

"What we need to do is use and show off the buildings of heritage."

"Engaged, driven and passionate stakeholders."



2 VISION



LUTON'S VISION

EVOLVING THE UNIQUE ASPECTS OF LUTON

Taking its lead from the **diversity, resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of Luton's communities**, and celebrating its rich heritage, the emerging vision of the town centre will reinstate itself as a **focal point for community and commercial life in the town**. The centre will be the focus for a consolidated retail offer with an increased emphasis on independents, alongside the big operators that draw people to the centre. It will be a focus for community services, with doctor surgeries, education and community facilities catering for existing Luton residents and an increased town centre population.

Through an accessible mix of spaces and activities, **the town centre will welcome all residents, visitors, businesses and investors into a clean and green environment. Changes will support health and well-being and actively address the climate and biodiversity emergency.** A string of well connected green spaces and improved streets through the town centre will provide moments for play and relaxation - spaces which are safe to enjoy and family friendly.

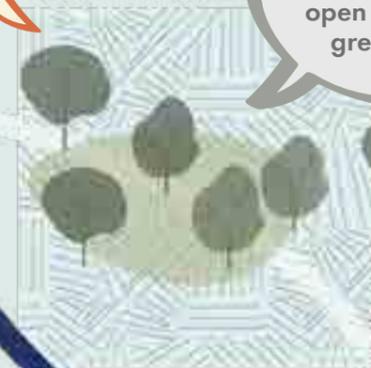
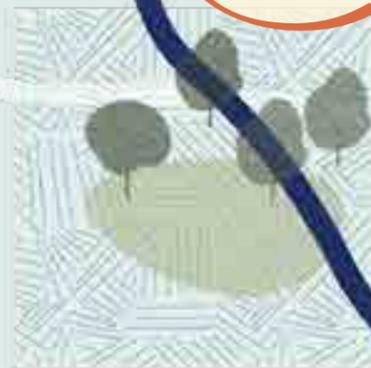
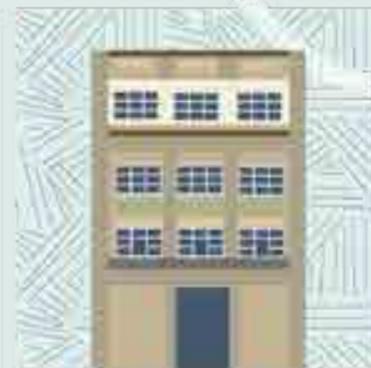
Creativity and local young talent will be nurtured and given a platform to shape the character of the town centre. Stronger partnerships between the university and local organisations will support a new generation of Luton-made businesses to start, grow and thrive, **empowering Luton's entrepreneurs, delivering genuine jobs and opportunities and helping towards a sustainable economic future for the town.**

A welcoming and safe place for all to enjoy

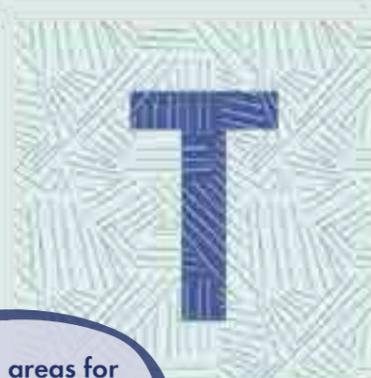


Attractive, clean, a space to linger.

Less of a concrete jungle and more open spaces and green areas.



Outside areas for flexible dining and green spaces where people can enjoy being outside.



MEETS NEEDS



A town centre focused on serving its local community in the best way possible

- 2.1 The town centre as it stands today successfully meets the needs of some of Luton's residents, providing a mix of retail and leisure uses that cater to core parts of its catchment. However, the population of Luton is demographically, socially, ethnically and economically diverse and it is clear that both the activities and users of the town centre do not fully reflect this.
- 2.2 In the future the town centre will be a much better reflection of the communities it serves and welcome them with the facilities they need. It will need to continue to do what it does well but also build on some of the emerging activity in the town centre to create a much better alignment between residents and activity.
- 2.3 However, the masterplan cannot be prescriptive in the uses but will create a framework that allows the town centre to respond to future demands and trends as they evolve.

Continues to do what it does well now



Hat District cafes and workspaces, bottom left: Luton's market



Luton's local businesses

Builds on 'green shoots' of creativity, tech and entrepreneurialism



Humber Street, Hull



Responsive and adaptable to demand, now and in the future



Cork, Ireland



Street market in Montreal



Hounslow Town Primary School

Adds other activities over time



Kids play at Coaldrops, King's Cross



DIVERSIFIED

A town centre which embraces the need for big change and adapts well to future challenges

- 2.4 As a direct lead from better aligning the centre to the needs of all Luton residents the offer of the town centre will evolve. The retail, leisure and cultural offering should cater to all residents needs and blend everyday and 'one off' shopping and consumer activities.
- 2.5 Critically it should also provide space for the communities themselves to express themselves and engage in the town centre in modern community facilities. A much enhanced evening economy and cultural offer will attract new visitors and shift perceptions of the town, creating that welcoming environment for all.
- 2.6 Unusually for a town of its size and location Luton lacks a town centre business offer, with most businesses located out of the urban area. This is starting to change, with a number of start-ups and SMEs finding space in and around the town – in the future this new economy should be much more central to the character of the town centre in the future. This will greatly enhance the resilience of the centre by introducing greater daytime population and spend opportunities.

People and living



New eco-district in Nantes,



White Bear Lane, Hounslow



Mercato Metropolitan, London

Retail - independent and social



Humber Street, Hull



Humber Street, Hull

Workers and businesses

Culture and dining



Art exhibition in Montreal



Flat Iron Square, London



Hackney outdoor dining



Outdoor event in Porto



Edinburgh Fringe Festival

Community amenities



Canopy Market, King's Cross



Granary Square, King's Cross

CONNECTED



A town centre which is well connected to its residents, heritage and modern living

- 2.7 To be relevant to and used by residents the town centre has to be much better connected both physically and emotionally to them and its past.
- 2.8 The built and economic heritage of Luton needs to be celebrated and used as key tool for improving the image and perception of the town centre. Re-use of built assets can engage residents much more with their shared history and given them a greater sense of ownership of the town centre.
- 2.9 Physically the town centre will benefit from much better accessibility. High quality pedestrian and cycles connections will welcome residents from neighboring areas into the centre, whilst an improved station will be a much more fitting gateway for visitors.
- 2.10 Digital connectivity will also be critical, allowing the town centre to blend the online and real world business and retail activity. Town wide wireless connectivity and high speed fibre will make Luton an attractive location for future business activity.



Wider pavements, cycle lanes and traffic calming measures have helped to make Waltham Forest more connected on foot and bike

To its communities



Photos from around Luton



Luton's neighbourhoods



Mini holland scheme, London



Waltham Forest, London

To its heritage



George Street historic fabric



The Hat Factory



20th century architecture



Bristol is Open initiative - digital tech at the heart of solutions to city problems. Collaboration between Council, university and other partners.

Assets across the town centre



Former hat industry buildings

Digitally enabled



CLEAN & GREEN

A healthy town centre with great green spaces and inviting public spaces which are enjoyable to spend time in

- 2.11 The physical environment within the town centre can be alienating and create perceptions of poor safety. This is exacerbated by the wider environmental conditions – with air pollution a particular negative contributor to the uncomfortable feeling in the centre.
- 2.12 Through a reprioritisation of transport movements and the creation of new green spaces, coupled with a softening of the public realm and the introduction of new planting the town centre will be a much more inviting place to visit.
- 2.13 Open spaces will introduce opportunities to play and experience nature, whilst also improving air quality and biodiversity – through a clear sense of purpose and more active use they will also be (and feel) much more safe and welcoming.
- 2.14 Beyond transforming the quality of the public realm, there is a strong commitment to minimising carbon, and resource use generally, through all built interventions. High environmental benchmarks will be expected of all new development as part of the town's commitment to addressing the climate and biodiversity emergency.

New / green open space



New eco-district in Nantes



Granary Square, King's Cross



Waltham Forest

Improved safety



Kings Cross, London

Sustainable



Union Street, Southwark



Waltham Forest

Purpose for public spaces



Adventure playground, Watford



Event at Granary Square by Regent's Canal



Granary Square, Kings Cross



Temporary outdoor seating in Montreal

PRIORITIES



2.15 The Priorities Framework assists in the option selection process in the production of the masterplan. It provides a robust evidence-based way of assessing the masterplan options against the agreed priorities that underpin the vision. Whilst it is a robust tool that has been used to guide final masterplan, the masterplan has also been informed by ongoing review of the evidence base, stakeholder and community engagement as well as ongoing engagement with officers at Luton Council.

2.16 The masterplan team, in conjunction with the client team devised six priorities, each supported by an objective to form the basis of the framework. These priorities are aligned with Luton Council’s corporate objectives and are set out in the table below.

2.17 In addition to the priorities the framework sets the following overarching principles, which guide each priority within the framework:

- **Flexible** – the masterplan must be able to accommodate changes and the unexpected,

it should not rigidly set out an end state and a single path to getting there;

- **Smart** – the masterplan should embrace technology and be open to new inventions, but not embed specific technologies that might limit the town centre’s ability to respond to future trends; and
- **Resilient** – the masterplan must encourage changes and interventions that are sustainable steps and can support greater self-sufficiency and progress.

2.18 Each priority and objective is supported by a series of specific questions, which were assessed by the project team on a qualitative and where there is robust evidence, a quantitative basis.

2.19 The options assessed were the short, medium and long-term options for the four key areas in the masterplan, as set out in the below:

1. Area 1 - St George’s Bridge - Short Term
2. Area 1 - St George’s Bridge - Medium Term
3. Area 1 - St George’s Bridge - Long Term
4. Area 2 - Hat District & Station - Short Term
5. Area 2 - Hat District & Station - Medium Term
6. Area 2 - Hat District & Station - Long Term
7. Area 3 - Eastern Area - Short Term
8. Area 3 - Eastern Area - Medium Term
9. Area 4 - George St & South - Short Term
10. Area 4 - George St & South - Medium Term
11. Area 4 - George St & South - Long Term

2.20 The questions were assessed for option using the scoring method:

- 2 = Significant positive contribution to objective (does the maximum that can be achieved by the masterplan);
- 1 = Positive contribution (will help make

the town centre perform better against the objective);

- 0 = Neutral or no impact;
- 1 = Negative contribution (will make the town centre perform worse against the objective); and
- -2 = Significant negative contribution to objective (will undermine this objective and potentially harm other efforts).

2.21 The scores for each option were undertaken collectively by the masterplan team and reviewed with the client team. The scores resulted in an overall score and ranking for each option within the masterplan. These rankings were used on an area-by-area basis to demonstrate which option delivered best delivered against the priorities and objectives.

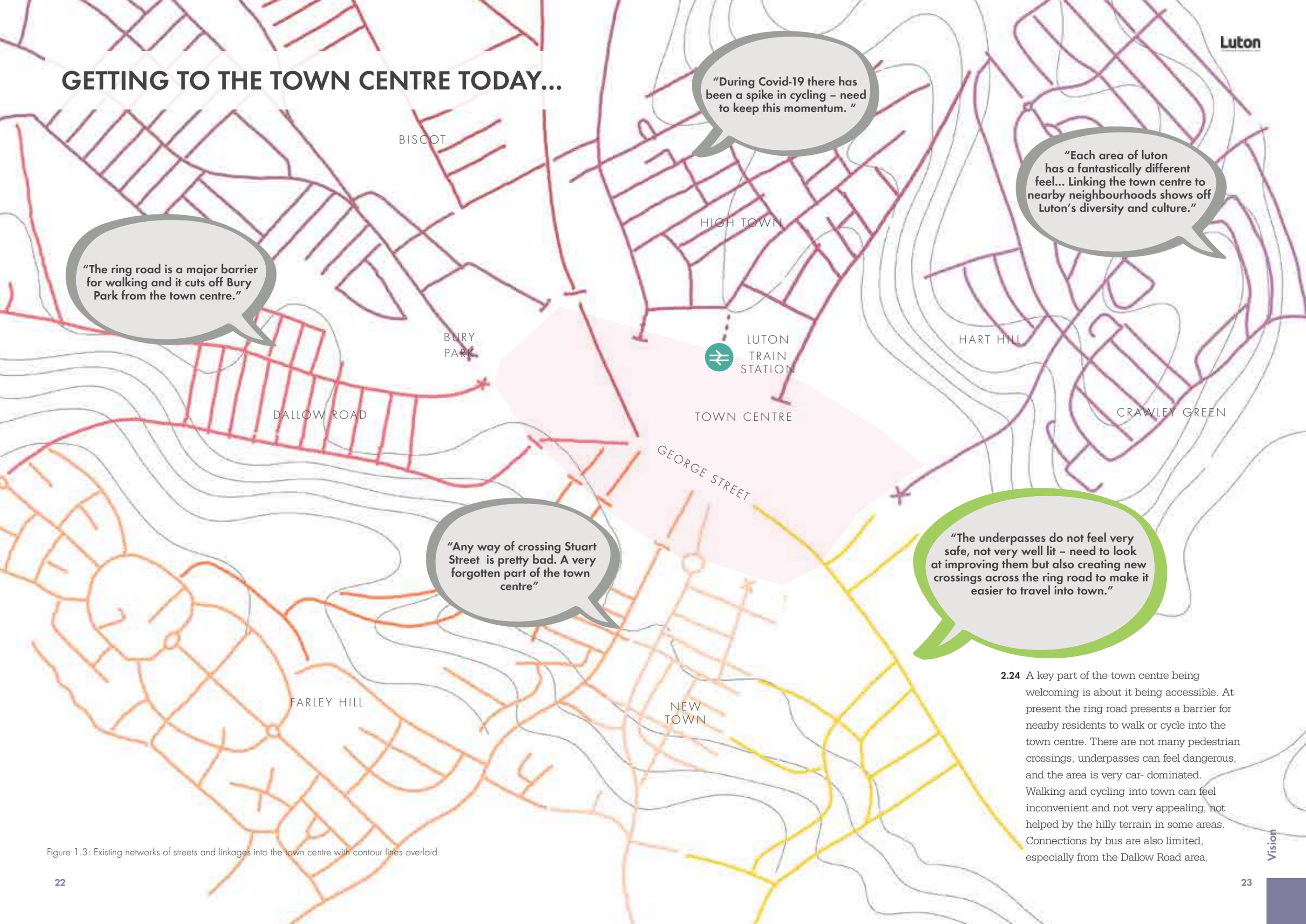
2.22 The results of this assessment have been used to guide the Luton Town Centre Masterplan, alongside continual review of the evidence base, stakeholder and community engagement as well as ongoing engagement with officers from Luton Council.

2.23 Overall, the assessment demonstrated that the short-term options for each area score the lowest. Medium-term options score equal to or better than the long-term options. This assessment demonstrates that significant intervention is required within Luton to deliver against the priorities and objectives for the masterplan, however, delivering all the interventions does not deliver better against the priorities and objectives and in some cases may weaken their delivery.

Figure 1.2: Priorities and objectives for the masterplan

Priority	Objective
Economic Diversity	Achieve greater town centre resilience by accommodating a greater mix of uses, enhancing the range of businesses within the town centre, whilst retaining existing businesses, and growing the resident population.
Affordable and Inviting	To ensure the masterplan works for, and actively welcomes, the local population, particularly those on low incomes.
Authentic and Characterful	To ensure the masterplan makes the best use of Luton’s existing heritage, assets and built resources.
Sustainably Accessible	To develop a transport, access and movement system, streets and spaces, that promote a step-change in active and sustainable living and healthy lifestyles that are fully supportive of wider environmental objectives.
Greener and Healthier	To significantly improve the environment experienced in the town centre and its resilience to climate change.

GETTING TO THE TOWN CENTRE TODAY...



"The ring road is a major barrier for walking and it cuts off Bury Park from the town centre."

"During Covid-19 there has been a spike in cycling - need to keep this momentum."

"Each area of Luton has a fantastically different feel... Linking the town centre to nearby neighbourhoods shows off Luton's diversity and culture."

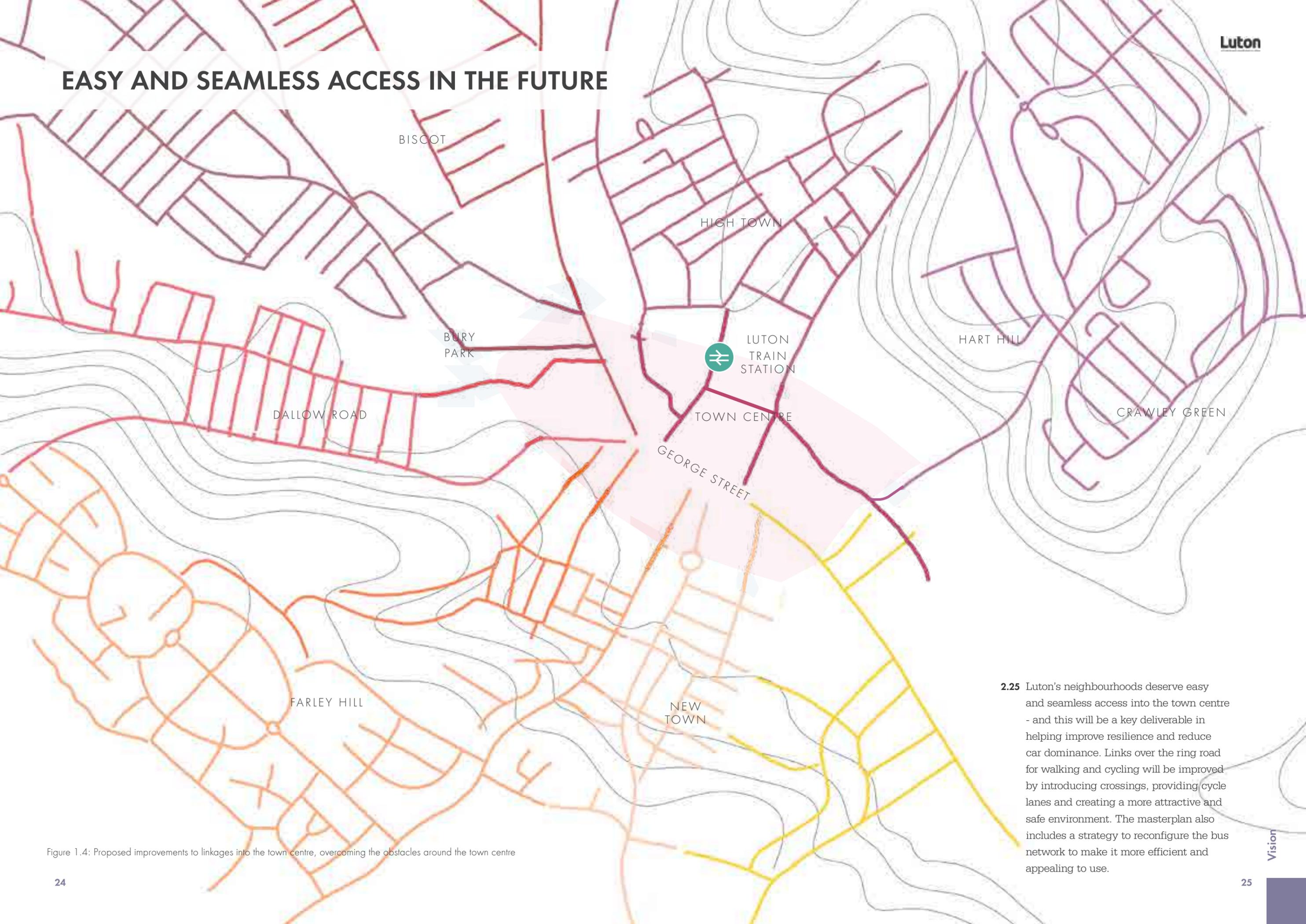
"Any way of crossing Stuart Street is pretty bad. A very forgotten part of the town centre"

"The underpasses do not feel very safe, not very well lit - need to look at improving them but also creating new crossings across the ring road to make it easier to travel into town."

2.24 A key part of the town centre being welcoming is about it being accessible. At present the ring road presents a barrier for nearby residents to walk or cycle into the town centre. There are not many pedestrian crossings, underpasses can feel dangerous, and the area is very car-dominated. Walking and cycling into town can feel inconvenient and not very appealing, not helped by the hilly terrain in some areas. Connections by bus are also limited, especially from the Dallow Road area.

Figure 1.3: Existing networks of streets and linkages into the town centre with contour lines overlaid

EASY AND SEAMLESS ACCESS IN THE FUTURE



2.25 Luton's neighbourhoods deserve easy and seamless access into the town centre - and this will be a key deliverable in helping improve resilience and reduce car dominance. Links over the ring road for walking and cycling will be improved by introducing crossings, providing cycle lanes and creating a more attractive and safe environment. The masterplan also includes a strategy to reconfigure the bus network to make it more efficient and appealing to use.

Figure 1.4: Proposed improvements to linkages into the town centre, overcoming the obstacles around the town centre



3 KEY MOVES

Overarching strategy

- 3.1** The masterplan for the town centre is based around five key moves. The intention is that each of these moves makes a fundamental shift to how the town centre operates, directly addressing the key issues and priorities identified by local people and analysis. Combined, these five key moves will transform the town centre into a welcoming and vibrant centre for all.
- 3.2** These five moves are largely physical interventions that will build in substantially greater resilience, enabling the centre to adapt to and embrace current and future economic, cultural and social changes.
- 3.3** These key moves have underpinned how the masterplan has developed, steering site opportunities, directing focus on certain areas and resolving the mix of uses across the centre:
1. Upcycle what already exists
 2. Re-stitch the centre
 3. Knit the centre back into town
 4. Introduce a greater range of activities
 5. Open up the River Lea
- 3.4** A set of overarching frameworks provides the development, public realm and movement strategies for the town centre. These are set out at the end of this chapter and then returned to in each of the Areas of Change sections later in the document to provide area-specific detail.

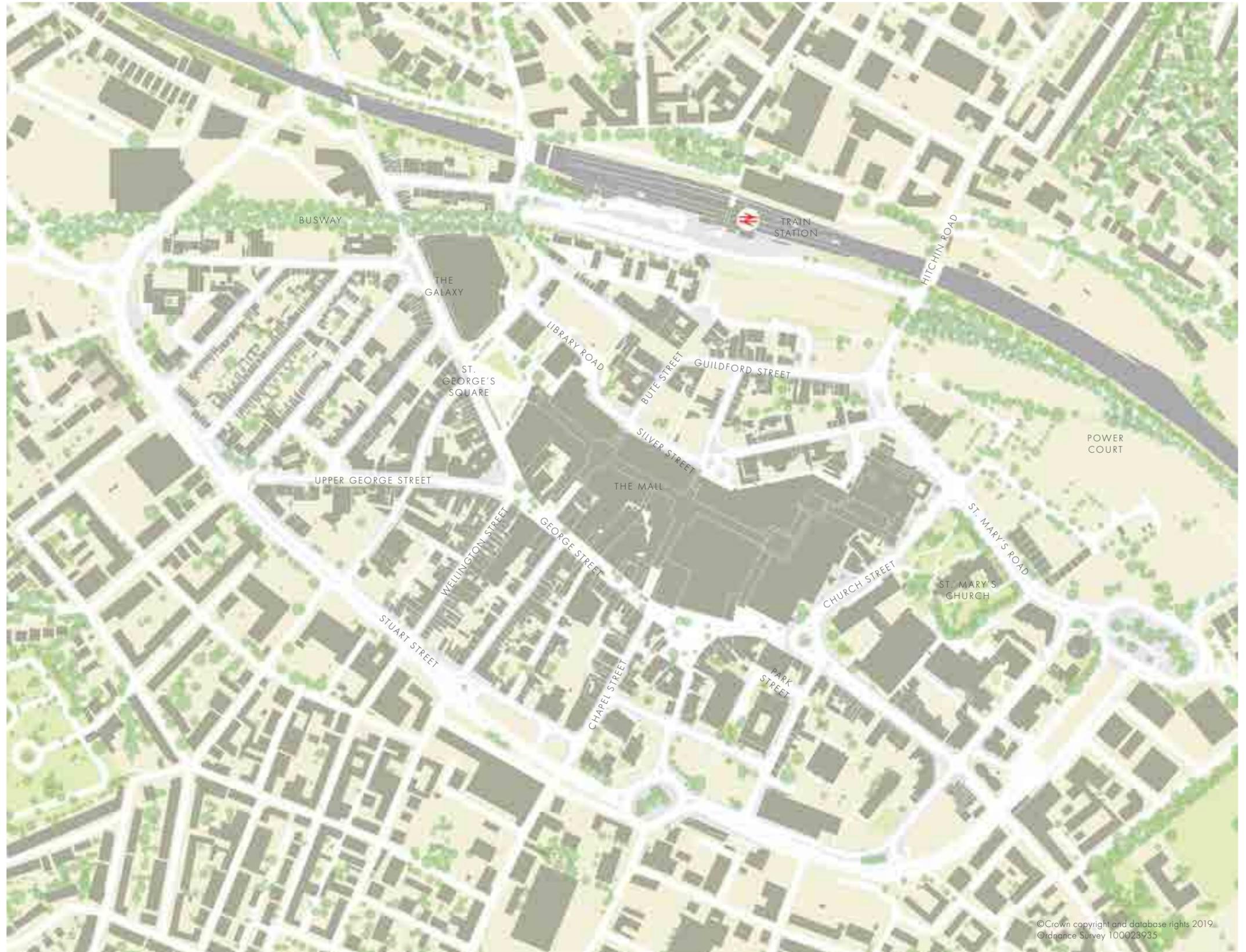


Figure 1.5: Luton town centre - existing

Move 1. Upcycle what already exists



The Culture Trust Luton has been trailblazing the refurbishment and re-use of historic hat factories in the town centre. Their four projects illustrate the impact refurbishment can have and the diversity of uses these buildings can accommodate.

3.5 First and foremost, the approach to change in the town centre must recognise what we already have and make best use of it. Focusing on those assets that are underused - buildings which are vacant or not fully occupied, spaces which don't have a clear role or are undervalued - will ensure a much more sustainable and bespoke approach. This will involve finding new uses and investment for existing historic buildings, as well as thinking imaginatively about buildings that might not be considered historic gems, more the everyday heritage, where adaptation or intensification could reveal untapped potential. It will also involve reviewing the leftover spaces between buildings, the odd spaces at the end of the

street, and the surface car parking in the centre. Some spaces could be the focus for public realm and greenery investment whilst others represent future sites for development.

3.6 In every case, refurbishment and re-use should be considered first, even if after assessment there are stronger arguments for redevelopment. Refurbishment represents a far more sustainable approach by improving a building's energy performance and therefore reducing its operational carbon, whilst keeping its embodied carbon in use. Circular economy principles must underpin each decision in the town centre, including the re-use of materials on sites which do result in redevelopment.

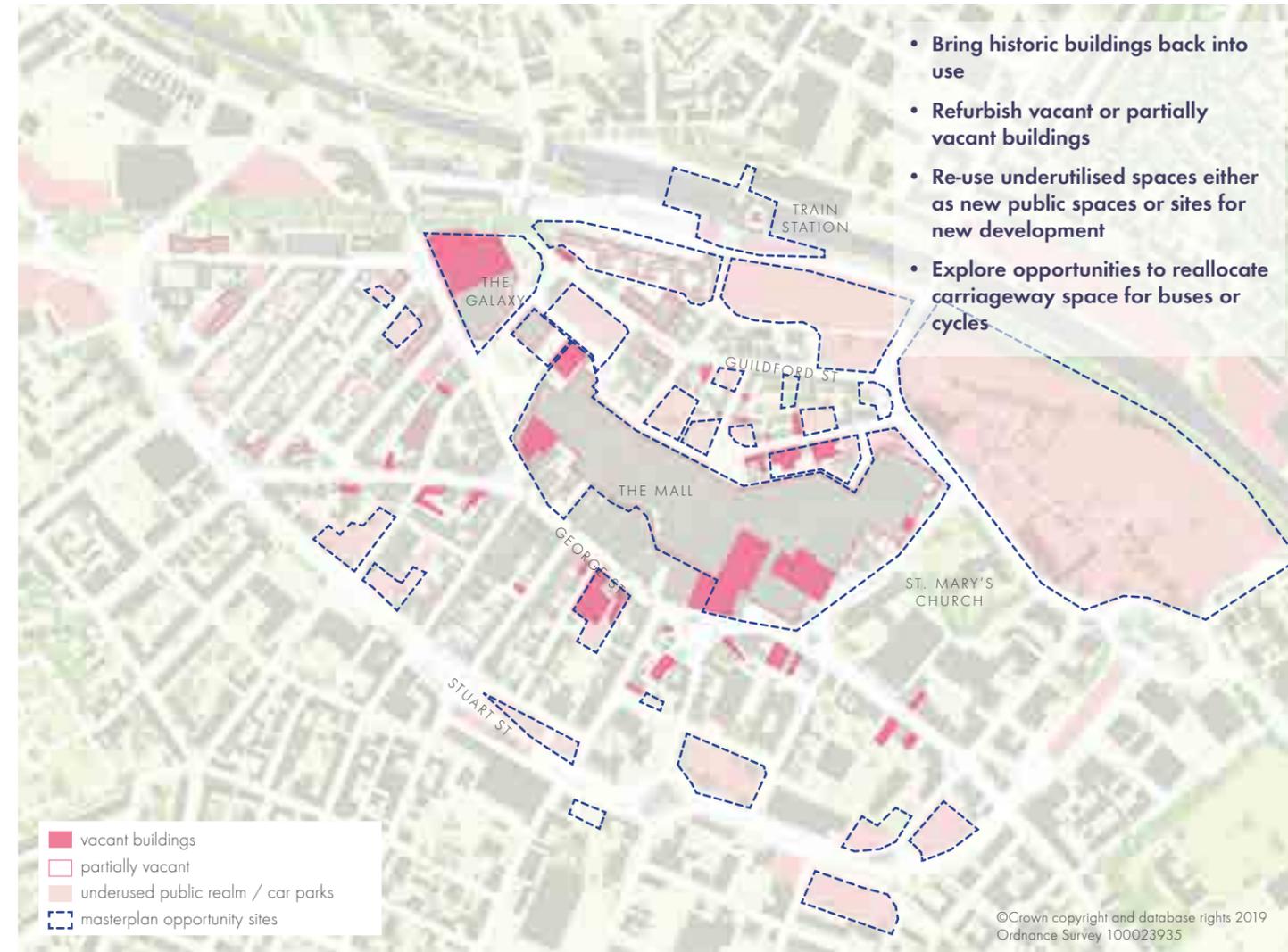


Figure 1.6: Underused assets in the town centre

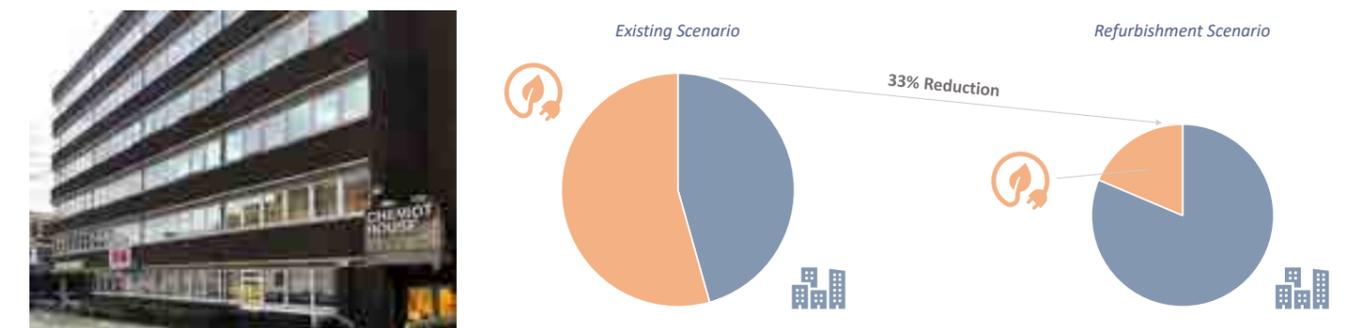


Figure 1.7: Everyday heritage buildings such as Cheviot House represent important opportunities for a circular economy approach where refurbishment and re-use can lead to an overall reduction in carbon

Move 2. Re-stitch the centre



At the heart of the town centre the street structure has been masked by layers of change but is still there underneath, ready to be celebrated again

Left: 1885
Middle: 1937
Right: 2021

- 3.7 The second move is all about re-connecting pieces in the core of the town centre. Over many years and layers of change, parts of the town centre have become disconnected, either through the loss of streets or poor quality routes which are unattractive to use.
- 3.8 This includes right in the heart of the town centre, re-instating historic connections like Bute Street which once connected the station and George Street as a single street. It also means transforming connections in the east and west of the core town centre where routes that have been lost or underplayed. For example, creating a much stronger street connection between St George's Square and Guildford Street, and between Park Street and the Hat District.
- 3.9 The intention is to open up and link the whole town centre back together with really attractive streets. Thereby enabling easy movement between places like the Hat District and George Street, St. George's Square and the station, or Power Court and George Street.
- 3.10 To achieve this re-stitching of the core some big changes will be needed. Most significantly, The Mall will be reconfigured and partially redeveloped to support new street links across the shopping centre.



Re-instating Bute Street: Opening up the route to the elements with double layer retail and a new entrance into a retained central section of The Mall

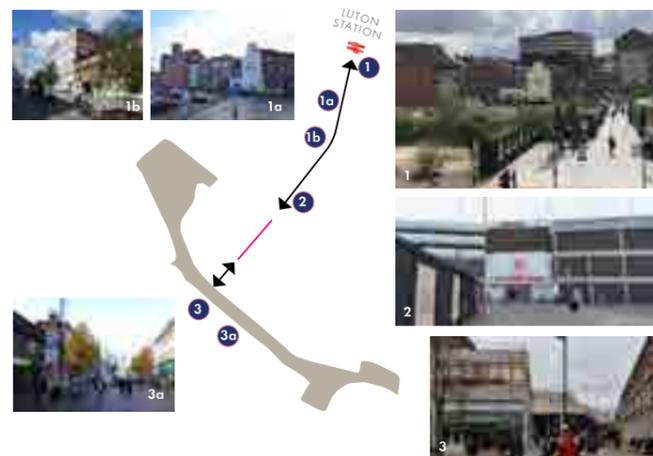


Figure 1.8: Bute Street link from the station to George Street (existing)

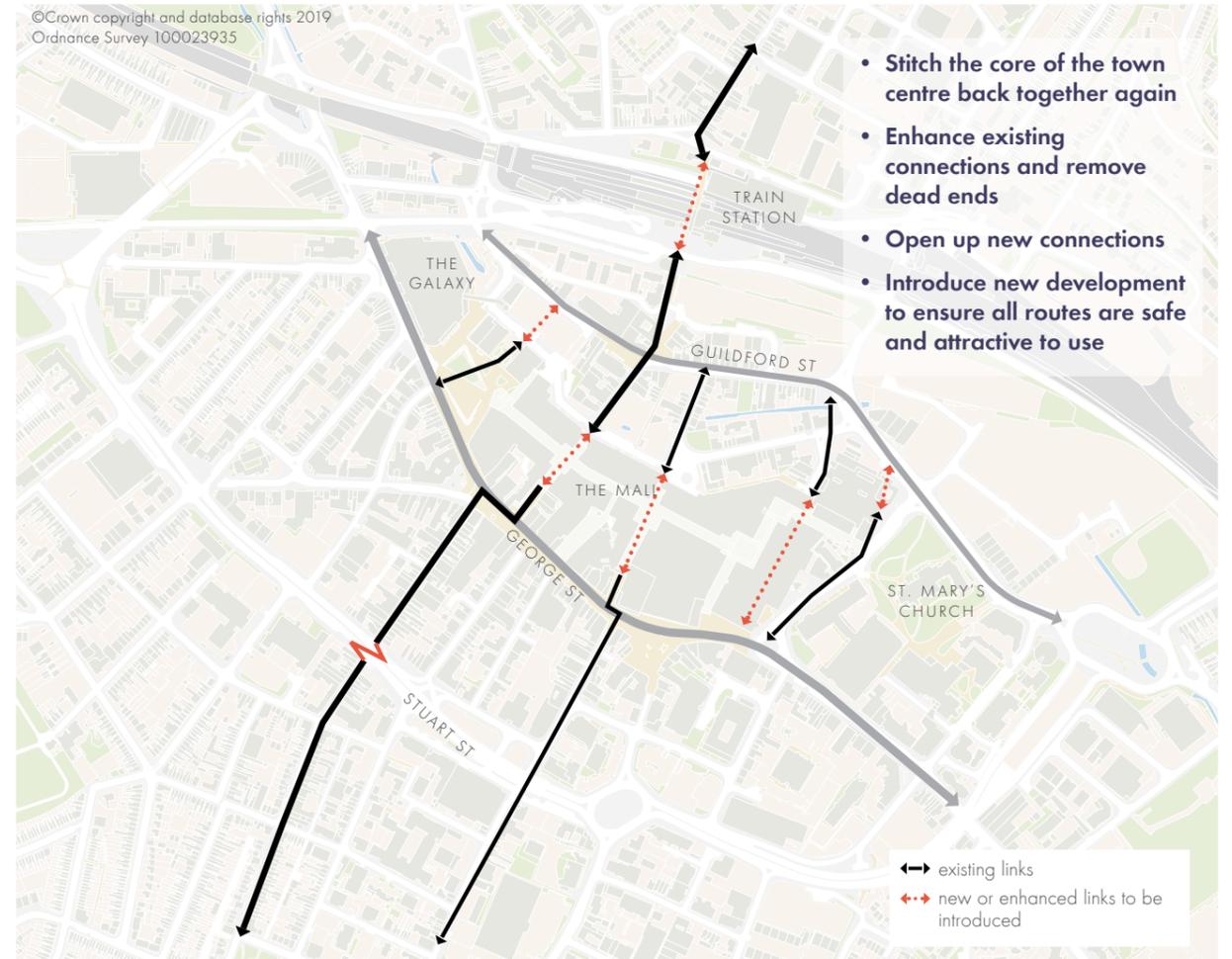


Figure 1.9: Opportunities to reintroduce and create new linkages within the core of the town centre



Opportunities to re-introduce lost connections: Luton in 1929 with orange overlay indicating current extent of The Mall which much of this area was demolished to make way for. (Aerial imagery ©Historic England)

87%
consultees supported this key move

Move 3: Knit the centre back into the town



A step change in prioritising the pedestrian and cycle network in places like Birmingham and Hereford (right) has been achieved through a series of interventions over time including major new crossings and reappropriating carriageway space



(Images ©Modus Operandi and Birmingham City Council)

3.11 The third key move is about connections at a wider scale. Luton town centre has a significant population living very close to the town centre in neighbourhoods like Bury Park, Dallow Road, High Town, Farley Hill and Crawley Green. However, in most instances there are many obstacles to enabling these residents to walk or cycle easily into the town centre. This needs to change so that these neighbourhoods can seamlessly access the town centre and see it as their local centre.

3.12 The ring road is the primary obstacle, and so the masterplan has identified a series of opportunities to overcome this interruption. In some places, this will be about investing in the routes that pass underneath or over the ring road, making them attractive and safe connections. In other locations, an at grade crossing needs to be introduced to re-connect two halves of a street. The emphasis should be on making the connection as easy and seamless as possible, giving ample space for pedestrians and cyclists.



Figure 1.11: Map of the interruptions to existing routes into the town centre from surrounding neighbourhoods and the priority locations for enhancement



Figure 1.10: Example opportunities to create continuous and attractive links into the town centre - at grade crossing at Wellington Street and enhanced street environment along Chapel Street underneath Stuart Street

Move 4: Introduce a greater range of activities



Precedents (l-r): Pop-up children's library in Auckland, indoor food market and community programme at Mercato Metropolitano in South London, and Old Department Store refashioned as workspace in Brixton.

- 3.13 The town centre needs to re-find its role as 'the heart of the community'. This means being more than a retail centre. A diversification of uses in the town centre is required to include a wide range of functions and services including business and employment, leisure and entertainment, culture, community and health.
- 3.14 The town's offer needs to be matched to the existing and future community needs. The shopping offer is changing with the realignment of the wider retail market and needs to be appropriate for the needs of the Luton town-wide community. But more widely, the town centre needs to be the place local people come to access leisure and community services and functions as well - including health centres, community centres, education, as well as cultural venues and destinations.
- 3.15 The extent and amount of shops will be reduced, focusing on what is needed to fulfill

residents' aspirations. This reduced shopping offer will sit within a mix of other commercial, cultural and community uses that keeps the centre vibrant and viable.

- 3.16 The town centre will also better embrace local entrepreneurs. Vacant shop units, new pop-up spaces and retro-fitted workspaces will be directed toward local people wishing to set up businesses. The town centre will be a test-bed for new ventures, giving them the space and support to experiment and flourish.
- 3.17 The town centre will also become a place to live. This will require investment in high quality housing, amenity spaces and new public spaces in order to shift the perception of the town centre and make it a desirable place to live. Increasing the extent of residential neighbourhoods in the centre will be important in delivering an uplift in the daytime population which will help support the viability of all the other uses.

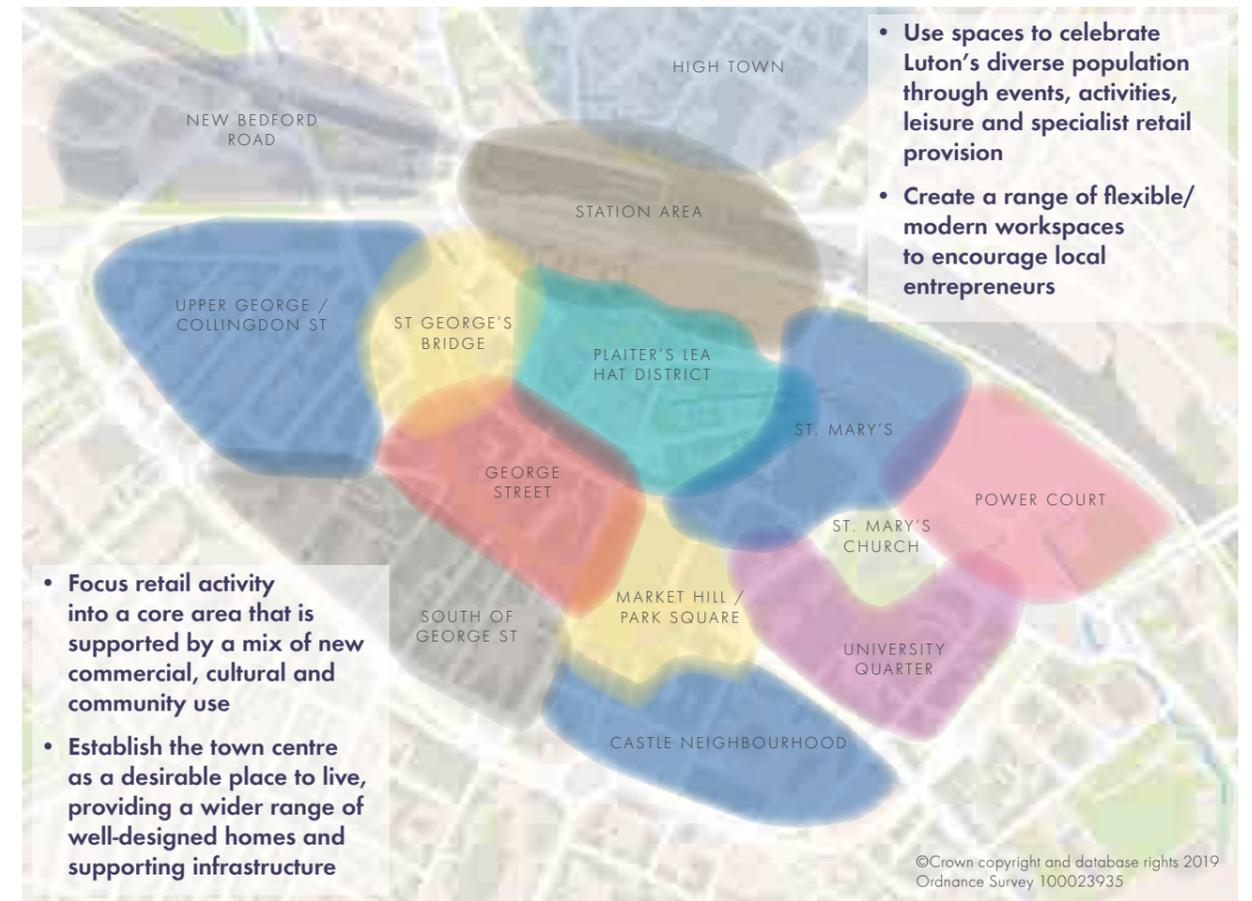


Figure 1.12: Town centre character areas and their key land uses in the future

- St George's Bridge** - evening/night-time economy, culture/ events, food and drink, daytime leisure/playspace, retail and medium density residential
- George Street** - civic, retail, community and culture
- Market Hill / Park Square** - café/informal dining, convenience retail, specialist retail, market, events, family leisure/playspace
- Plaiter's Lea Hat District** - creative workspace, studios, live-work, culture and evening economy
- University quarter** - education and supporting uses
- Power Court** - stadium, events/leisure, ancillary food and drink/ retail, community uses and higher density residential
- Station area** - commercial office, ancillary retail, higher density residential, health/community services
- South of George St** - family housing and professional / community services
- St. Mary's** - SME /co-working office space, office, community / health, ancillary retail, higher density residential and leisure
- Upper George / Collingdon St** - family housing and professional / community services
- Castle neighbourhood** - family housing, urban logistics and workshop space
- New Bedford Road** - family housing and urban logistics



St Andrew's courtyard housing scheme in Bromley-by-Bow has successfully introduced high quality, high density homes



Investment in public spaces to cater for a wider array of attractions underpins the success of new development in King's Cross



Small scale interventions support shopper confidence in Libourne, France

83%
consultees supported this key move

Move 5: Open up the River Lea



The Porter Brook is a small stream that runs through Sheffield city centre and has been deculverted in sections to create waterside spaces and improvements to the ecology of the stream.

Images © Don Catchment Rivers Trust



Figure 1.13: Plan showing key moments along the River Lea

- 3.18** The final key move is to open up the River Lea. Throughout consultation there has been a strong and consistent support that this should be central to the rejuvenation of the town centre. Re-introducing the river as a key asset in the town centre and making it part of the attraction of the centre is a priority.
- 3.19** Currently there are very few moments in the town centre where one can glimpse the river, but many sites where daylighting the river is a tangible opportunity. There is a need to be pragmatic - it will not be possible to open up every section, and the spaces created need to be designed to support the nature of this chalk stream. But establishing a string of waterside spaces that over time provide a thread of new and green spaces is more than feasible.
- 3.20** A green corridor will be created along the route of the river, at times diverting off the route in order to create a continuous walking route. This green corridor will support important objectives on climate change adaptation, improving air quality and sustainable drainage, helping to make the town centre much more resilient in the future.
- 3.21** Alongside this a series of other green corridors will be extended into the town centre and a major tree planting initiative introduced to support significant greening across the centre.

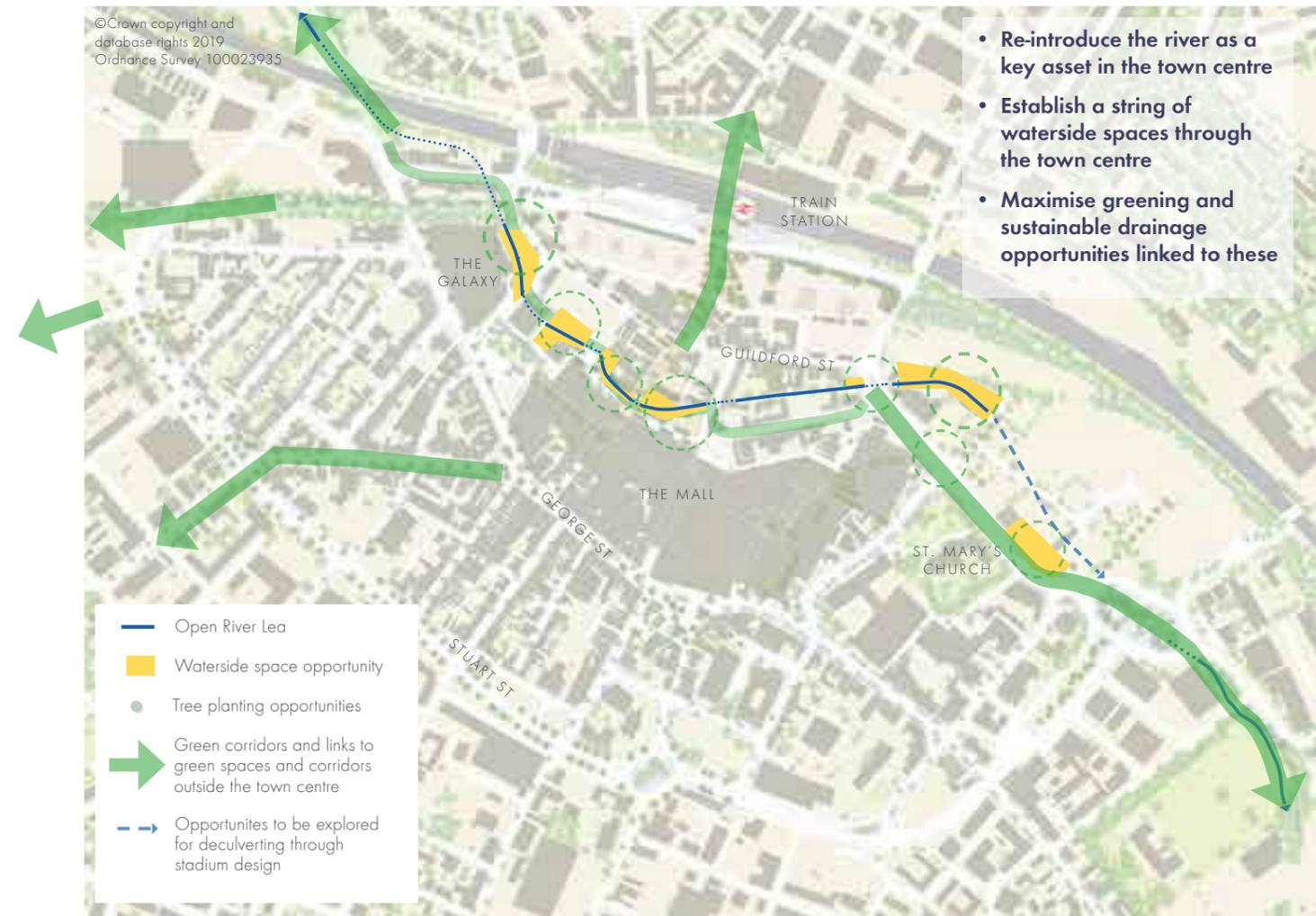


Figure 1.14: A string of waterside spaces will be open up along the River Lea forming a strong new green corridor running throughout the town centre

- Re-introduce the river as a key asset in the town centre
- Establish a string of waterside spaces through the town centre
- Maximise greening and sustainable drainage opportunities linked to these



River Lea at The Moor, Hat District and Manor Road Park

93%
consultees supported this key move

Movement framework

High-level strategy

3.22 At the highest level, the transport, movement and parking strategy will be driven by the strategic ambitions of; enhancing the wellbeing of our population and achieving net zero carbon by 2040 (both Luton 2040 core targets). The movement framework for the town centre is set in the context of Luton Council's Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) which seeks to encourage more active travel and public transport in order to improve public health. The masterplan and supporting movement, public realm and development frameworks aim to provide further detail on how the Council's core targets and ITP objectives could be delivered, including improving air quality, health and wellbeing and the environment generally.

3.23 To meet the ambitious targets set out in Luton's Core Strategy and ITP, there needs to be a profound shift towards prioritising and supporting more sustainable modes of

transport. The aim of the movement framework is to transform Luton from a vehicle-dominated, polluted, inaccessible town centre to one which is fully accessible to all its communities by walking, cycling and public transport. The ambition is for Luton to lead the way in sustainable living, healthy lifestyles and support a public transport system that is cutting edge and dynamic.

A Phased Approach

3.24 A phased approach to change will help ensure the achievement of the overall masterplan vision and objectives, with local communities and businesses able to adjust whilst projects and supporting development is planned, consulted upon, and delivered. The transport, movement and parking framework for change will be targeted specifically to enable and support the wider masterplan development and public realm framework objectives. This phased approach is summarised below.

- Phase 1: Review, trial and test
- Phase 2: Supporting the shift
- Phase 3: Re-imagined Luton – a 21st Century movement environment

Principles for Change

1. A phased shift from highly trafficked and engineered roads to sustainable streets and spaces that prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport
2. The creation of sustainable, convenient and fully inclusive transport choices (walking, cycling, buses and rail) in the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods
3. The creation of a modern, legible, reliable and zero-emission public transport network
4. The introduction of a parking and delivery system centred on sustainability, prioritising low / zero emission vehicles and disabled access



Cycle lanes, planting and more space given to pedestrians (Example from Waltham Forest)

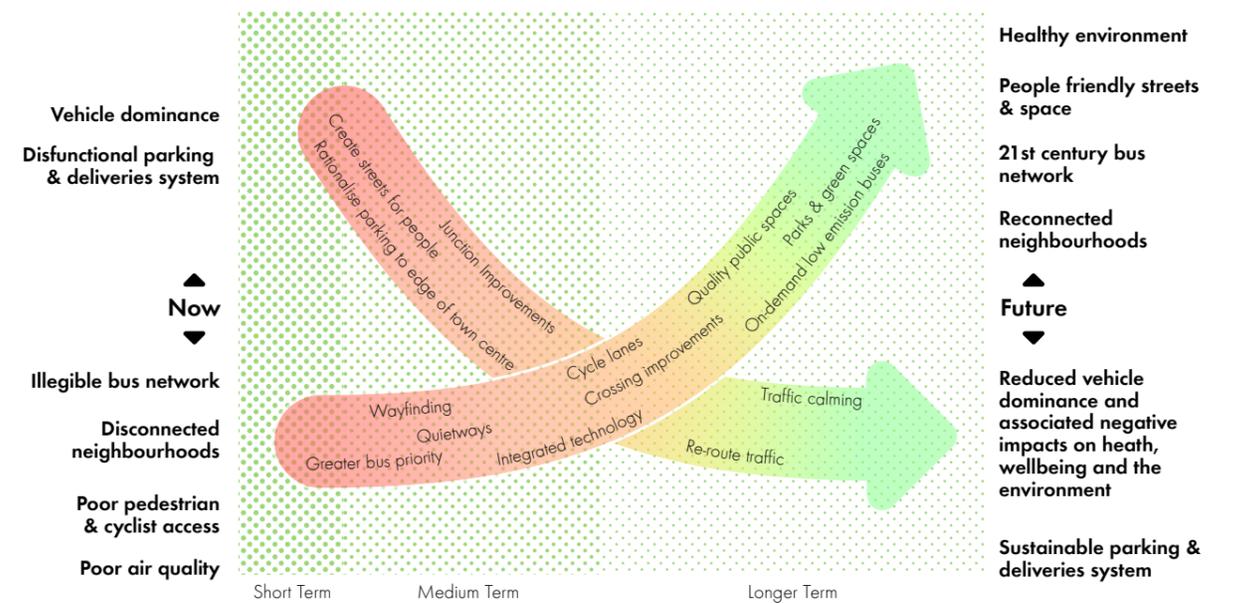


Figure 1.15: Diagram illustrating the step by step phased approach to sustainable modal shift in the town centre

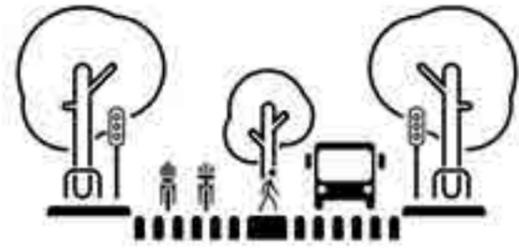
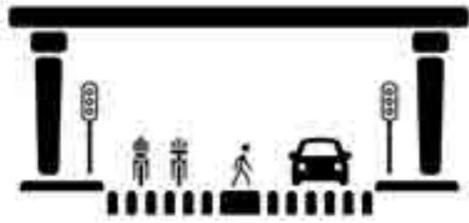
Phase 1: Review, trial and test

3.25 Working with the community and other important stakeholders, this is the phase where the masterplan proposals are discussed and developed further. Some proposals may be trialled and tested such as changes to traffic management, bus services and the public realm with amendments made in response to the trial outcomes.

3.26 Some lower cost / risk projects could be implemented, including neighbourhood pedestrian and cyclist route improvements, wayfinding, signing and lighting improvements. Others may include on-street visitor information as well as localised pedestrian crossing, public realm and cycle parking measures. Innovative and sustainable modes of transport such as e-bikes, e-cargo bikes and on-demand buses. may be trialled for local community and business delivery use.



Temporary road interventions



Phase 2: Supporting the shift

3.27 This phase takes the tests and trials from phase one forward to permanent interventions. The nature of streets and spaces are re-considered, with a much greater shift towards the re-prioritisation of movement and placemaking needs within the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods. This requires the planned relocation of some movement functions out of the town centre.

3.28 This phase also sees the more challenging projects being implemented including junction improvements, additional pedestrian crossings, bus lanes and cycle lanes can be introduced to support greater uptake of more active and sustainable transport modes. As this mode shift progresses then parking provision for development moves further to car-lite and car-free with car parking to the town centre periphery enabling greater public realm and green space to be provided. The car parking changes will be accompanied by further improvements to walking, cycling, bus routes and services and rail station integration.



Permanent cyclist and pedestrian interventions

Phase 3: Re-imagined Luton – a 21st Century movement environment

3.29 With the people-focussed movement and placemaking principles established and initial measures trialled, tested and proven, this phase sees more significant changes to infrastructure, deepening the emphasis on local access over strategic movement, through substantial changes to the road network. One such project could be the replacement of the viaduct and supporting highway infrastructure to surface level and direct pedestrian, cyclist and bus access from local neighbourhoods.

3.30 Other roads are re-imagined and activated to create more streets and spaces for people. Bus routes will be improved to enable a fully accessible, legible and reliable bus services incorporating leading-edge technology. Low emission and on-demand 'hopper' buses will provide greater local coverage improving access for all and benefiting the local environment and air quality. Multi-modal transport hubs will be introduced around the town centre, where people can sit, wait for a bus, access the internet and local travel and visitor information. These hubs will also include air quality and movement monitoring stations with cycle hire stations in close proximity.



Cycle hire and charging stations

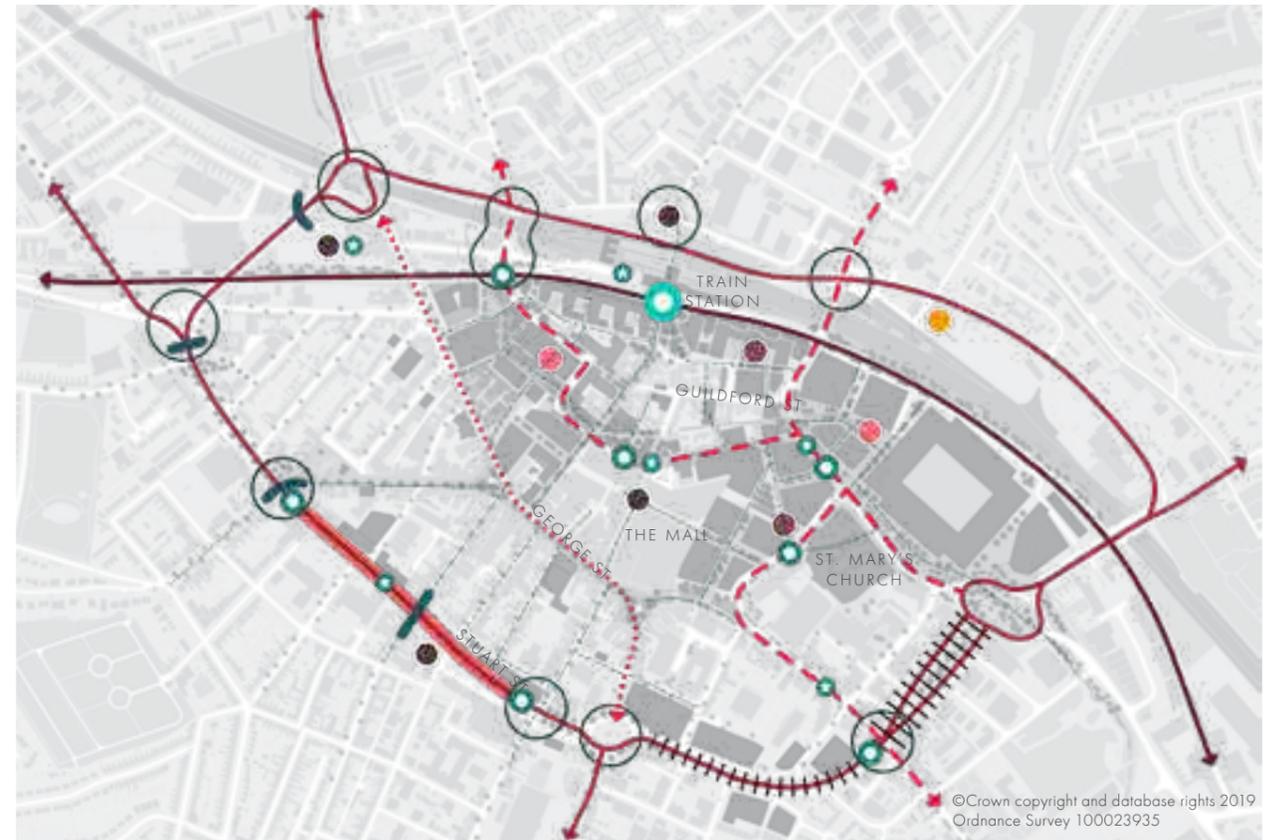


Figure 1.16: Movement framework plan



Public realm framework

- 3.31** The general theme for public realm in the town centre is for significant greening. Driving this objective are multiple factors, not least the demand for enhanced quality of environment, the need to adapt to climate change, and the importance of addressing air quality.
- 3.32** The public realm framework seeks to fundamentally shift the image of the town centre. Using the existing assets of key public spaces, the strong underlying street structure and the hidden River Lea, the strategy is to establish a distinct character to the town centre and establish new destinations for residents, workers and visitors.

Tree planting - creating an urban forest

- 3.33** At its most basic level this will see significant new tree planting throughout the centre. Within the next 10 years most streets will see new trees and planting to support attractive and comfortable environments in the face of climate change. Such an initiative represents relatively small intervention, but one with a lasting impact on the character of streets as well as local air quality.

Green corridors

- 3.34** Along specific corridors in and through the town centre there will be more generous greening. These corridors will include significant planting, public spaces, sustainable drainage features and generous provision for walking and, where appropriate, cycling. Sites adjacent to these corridors will be expected to contribute towards the vision for these corridors.

Waterside environments

- 3.35** The key move of opening up the River Lea translates into a series of waterside spaces throughout the town centre. Each of these spaces will be delivered alongside adjacent site development, and over time will create a string of linked spaces that provide completely new environments in the town centre. These spaces will need to include a mix of terraces, access and planting to suit particular site constraints and opportunities. Habitat creation will be encouraged wherever possible both within the river and on the banks.

New and improved spaces

- 3.36** A series of key public spaces in the town centre will be delivered. In the main these are existing spaces that will see investment and enhancement to widen their role and attraction and make them high quality beacons of light in the town centre. There will also be new spaces introduced at key locations such as Bute Street Triangle and at the heart of Power Court.
- 3.37** The purposeful improvement of public spaces is fundamental to the masterplan and will underpin future development and investment in the town centre. Funding the transformation of spaces upfront in the short term, will pay real dividends in the medium and long term through shifting perceptions and building confidence in the town centre as a desirable place to invest.

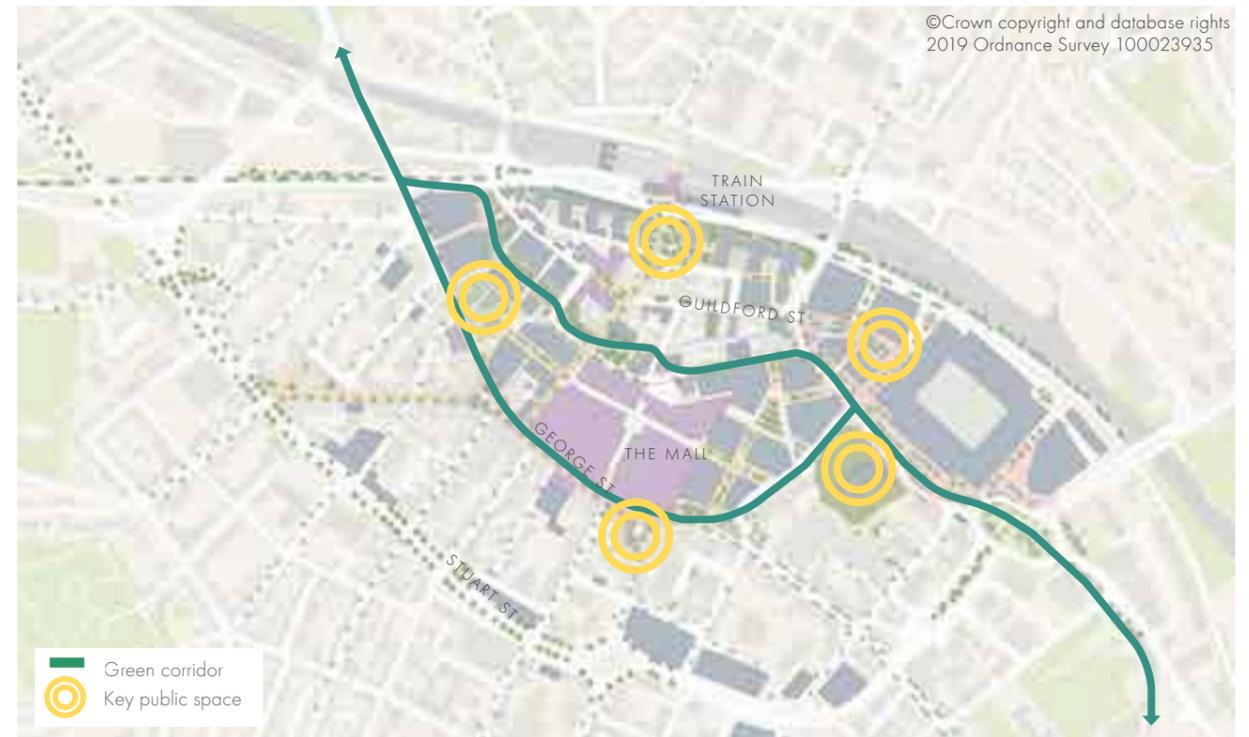


Figure 1.17: Green corridors running through the town centre link a series of key public spaces



Bute Triangle: a new space at the gateway into the town centre from the station. It will be an urban garden square whilst facilitating important pedestrian links on either side. Precedent: Pancras Square, King's Cross (Image © John Sturrock)



Market Hill / Park Square: opportunity to reimagine these linked spaces. At Market Hill there would be great opportunities to explore artist-led enhancement and the introduction of play using the level change. Precedent: Southbank installation



St. George's Square: this square will continue to be an important space for events, markets and celebrations, but over time the vision should be to accommodate planting and greenery in alongside this role. Precedent: BBC White City (Image © Gillespies/John Sturrock)



Power Court Square: a major new waterside space at the heart of the Power Court scheme will function as an important public square for the community as well as an approach to the new stadium. Precedent: King's Cross Central (Image © Townshend)



St. Mary's Churchyard: this space is already the most significant green space in the town centre. Opportunities to support greater use of the space through minor sensitive adjustments to paths and edges should be explored. Precedent: St John at Hackney Churchyard Gardens (Image © Ewan Munro)



Open Lea Silver Street scheme: early deliverable in the public realm strategy will create a brand new waterside space adjacent to a deculverted section of the river.

Development framework

Approach to development

3.38 The development strategy in the town centre requires site owners and investors to firstly look to re-use and adapt existing assets. Figure 3.12 highlights many of the currently underused assets and the opportunity sites identified as part of the masterplan.

3.39 When it is proved not feasible to adapt or re-use a structure, then and only then, should redevelopment be considered. Figure 3.13 sets out the masterplan development framework indicating the block structure and grain for new development.

3.40 There are many opportunities for intensification. Some sites like Power Court are already well progressed with outline permission in place. Others are now

encouraged to come forward in line with the masterplan structure. On all sites a balance must be achieved between intensification and enhancing the resilience of the site and area within which it sits. This will require making ample and meaningful contributions to green infrastructure. Each site will be expected to contribute towards the transformation of streets and public realm - through supporting sustainable drainage, delivering new tree

coverage and providing new green spaces - whether public or private. This will include on site deliverables as well as wider contributions where appropriate.

3.41 A high design quality benchmark is required for all sites and applications must demonstrate this. Major applications and proposals for key sites will be reviewed by the Design Review Panel to ensure high quality design.

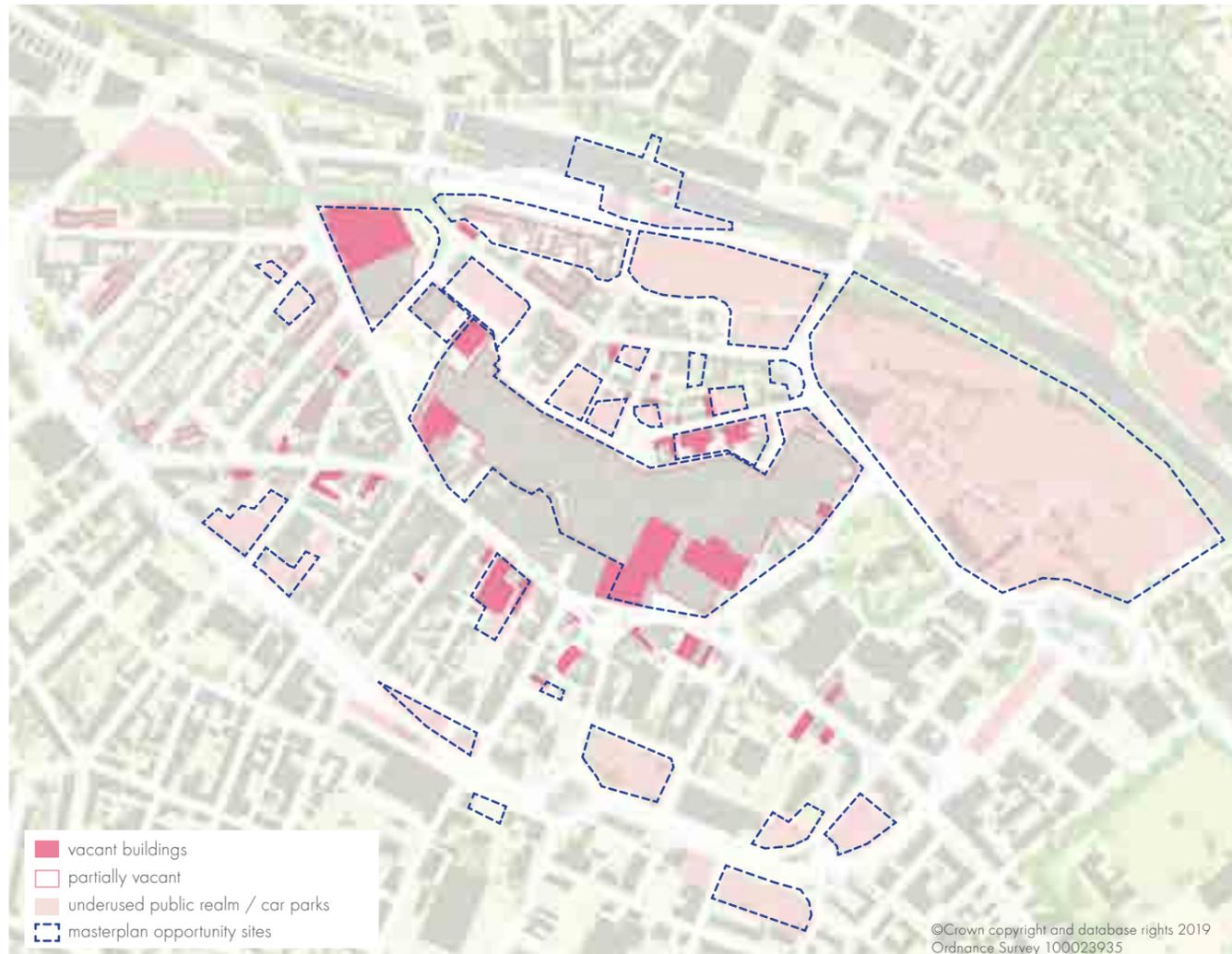


Figure 1.18: Opportunity sites for re-use, refurbishment and redevelopment



Figure 1.19: Masterplan development framework



Diversification of land uses and activities will include the encouragement of community uses, restaurants and cafes, workspace and high quality town centre living

Land uses

- 3.42** A diversification of land uses will be encouraged in the core of the town centre, branching away from solely retail at ground floor. In line with the Key Move 4 plan (Figure 3.8) each zone of the town centre will have an emphasis on a certain mix of uses.
- 3.43** Ground floor uses will include a wider range of active uses, including community services/ uses, workspace, cultural destinations, leisure and meanwhile uses. In some locations, outside the core area of George Street, St. George's Square and Church Street, residential uses may come down to ground floor. These instances will need to be carefully considered and are only appropriate on quieter streets.
- 3.44** At upper floors, a range of uses will also be encouraged and will include workspace, community uses as well as residential. Where evening economy uses are encouraged (such as St. George's Square, Hat District and Market Hill) there needs to be careful planning and separation of residential homes to ensure the presence of homes does not jeopardise the growing evening economy.
- 3.45** The footprints of existing buildings will, in many cases, dictate the best land uses for the adaptation of existing buildings. But Figure 3.8 provides a clear indication of the land use preferences in each part of the town centre. Residential development must be largely in new purpose-built development in order secure the highest quality homes with the appropriate quality of amenity spaces to attract a range of residents.
- 3.46** New development must be sustainable and resource efficient - both in its construction/ adaptation and in its operation. Luton Council has committed to addressing the climate emergency and expects all developments to maximise their individual contribution to this priority. Design quality must be high and every new building must be designed and developed to stand for well over 100 years.

Scale of development

- 3.47** Luton has a great natural urban grain to support medium to high densities. The scale of development should be mid-rise (5 to 8 storeys) allowing for some uplift from existing densities whilst respecting the character of the town. Where site sensitivities such as Conservation Areas and proximity to listed buildings are absent, the prevailing height of schemes must still be below 10 storeys. Although there will be some limited opportunities to exceed this

where an exceptional case can be proved. Such exceptions would need to make a clear case for height relating to the contribution of the building, exceptional design quality and sensitive consideration of existing townscape and assets. Figure 3.17 outlines the mid-rise assumption across the town centre area and the potential locations where additional height could be considered, subject to cases being made and the delivery of exceptional design quality.



Figure 1.20: Development scale strategy and potential locations for additional height where exceptional cases can be proved

Building typologies

3.48 The intention is to provide a diversity of accommodation in the town centre. In terms of housing, there should be a variety of typologies delivered from townhouses/mews houses through to flats around communal courtyards. This diversity is needed to accommodate local housing needs and establish the town

centre as a desirable place to live - whether that be young professionals, couples, families or retirees. The emphasis should be on high quality town centre living with good private and communal outdoor space provision for all homes.

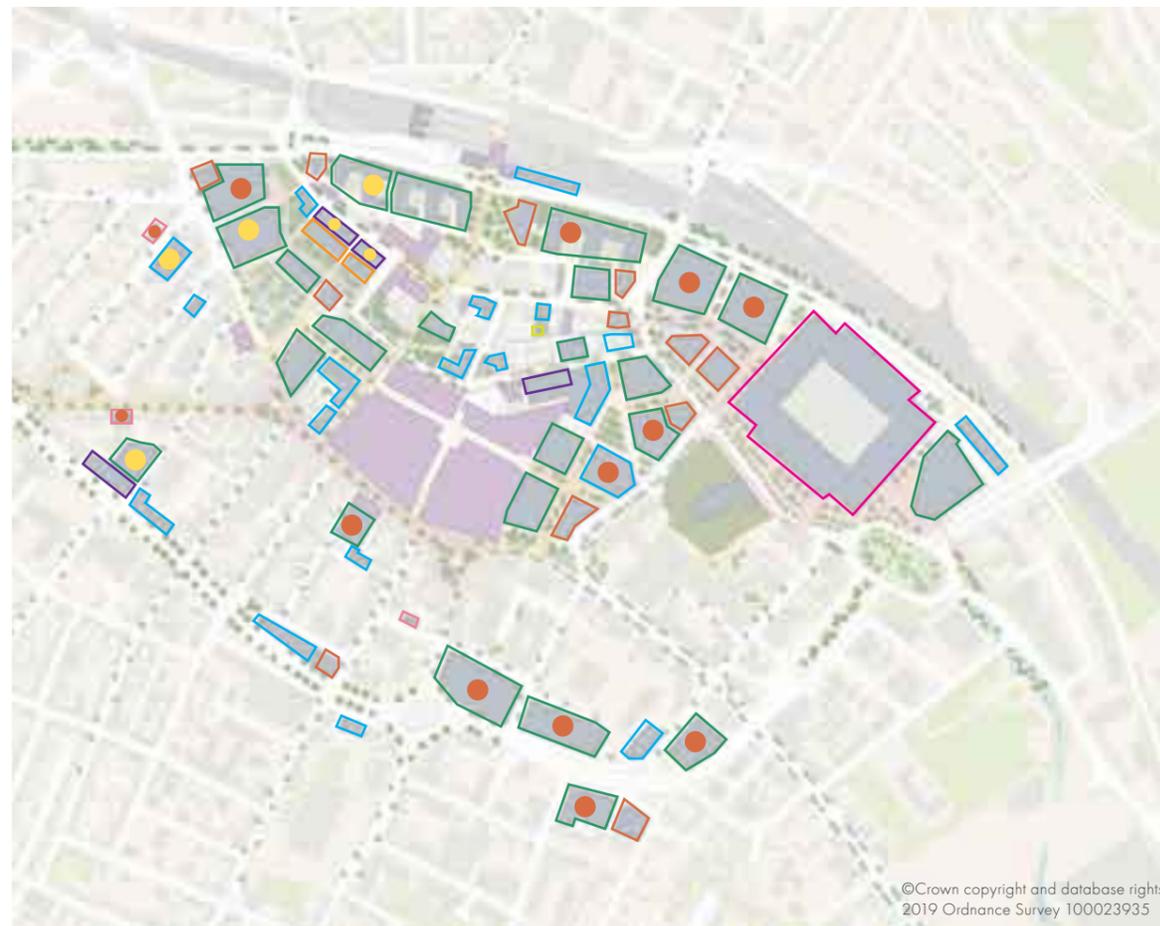


Figure 1.21: Development scale strategy and potential locations for additional height where exceptional cases can be proved

3.49 There is a particular need for family housing. At an absolute minimum this means 2bed 4 person units, but ideally should be about providing 3bed 4person units and larger. All sites should look to deliver against housing needs, but Figure 3.18 illustrates some of the sites that will be key in delivering family or later living housing.

- | Typologies: | Key sites for: |
|---|--|
| ■ Stadium | ● Older persons / later living housing |
| ■ Courtyard block | ● Larger family housing (3bed 4person +) |
| ■ Linear block | |
| ■ Point block | |
| ■ Mansion block | |
| ■ Terrace / Townhouse | |
| ■ Stacked maisonettes | |
| ■ Mews | |





4 DELIVERY STRATEGY

Delivering real change

- 4.1 The town centre masterplan establishes the need for, and focus of, change in the town centre offer to ensure it remains a relevant and vibrant centre than meets the needs of Luton residents.
- 4.2 In thinking about the delivery of the aspirations of the masterplan it is important to recognise that, firstly there is no set 'end point' to change that needs to be reached – it is the process itself that will deliver benefits for both residents and businesses and these should be experienced at every step. Secondly, change will not be delivered solely through physical interventions. The nature of the town centre means that intervention and activity need to be coordinated across domains and stakeholders and incorporate promotion and branding, events, public space and management regimes.

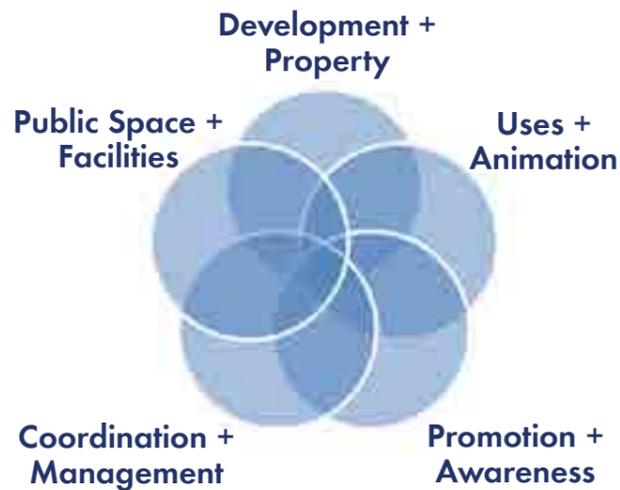


Figure 1.22: The phased delivery strategy for the masterplan reflects 5 key areas of activity and intervention

The Delivery Challenge

- 4.3 Luton town centre has the fundamentals in place to deliver a much improved environment and offer to residents and businesses alike, however the realisation of that potential is not guaranteed or straightforward to achieve.
- 4.4 As considered throughout this masterplan there are a number of both strategic and locally specific barriers to success for Luton that will need to be overcome if the town centre vision is to be realised.
- 4.5 For various reasons (some justified, some not) the town centre has suffered from an issue of perception, both from residents and businesses/investors. Ultimately this has discouraged some residents from using the town centre and limited private sector investment flowing into the town centre. As a consequence the town centre has not attracted the range nor quality of uses and development that might otherwise be expected in a centre of its size and with such strong connectivity.
- 4.6 From a development delivery perspective this presents a particular challenge by limiting current values which, when combined with the complexity of sites in the town centre and the value still placed on existing uses, makes viability challenging and therefore limits the ability to deliver higher quality or integrate significant other beneficial elements such as affordable housing, community space etc.

- 4.7 Overcoming this challenge and unlocking delivery requires a coordinated and patient approach to town centre change, one which enables interventions at a range of scales and of different types so that, in aggregate they both shift perceptions and support the delivery of higher quality development.

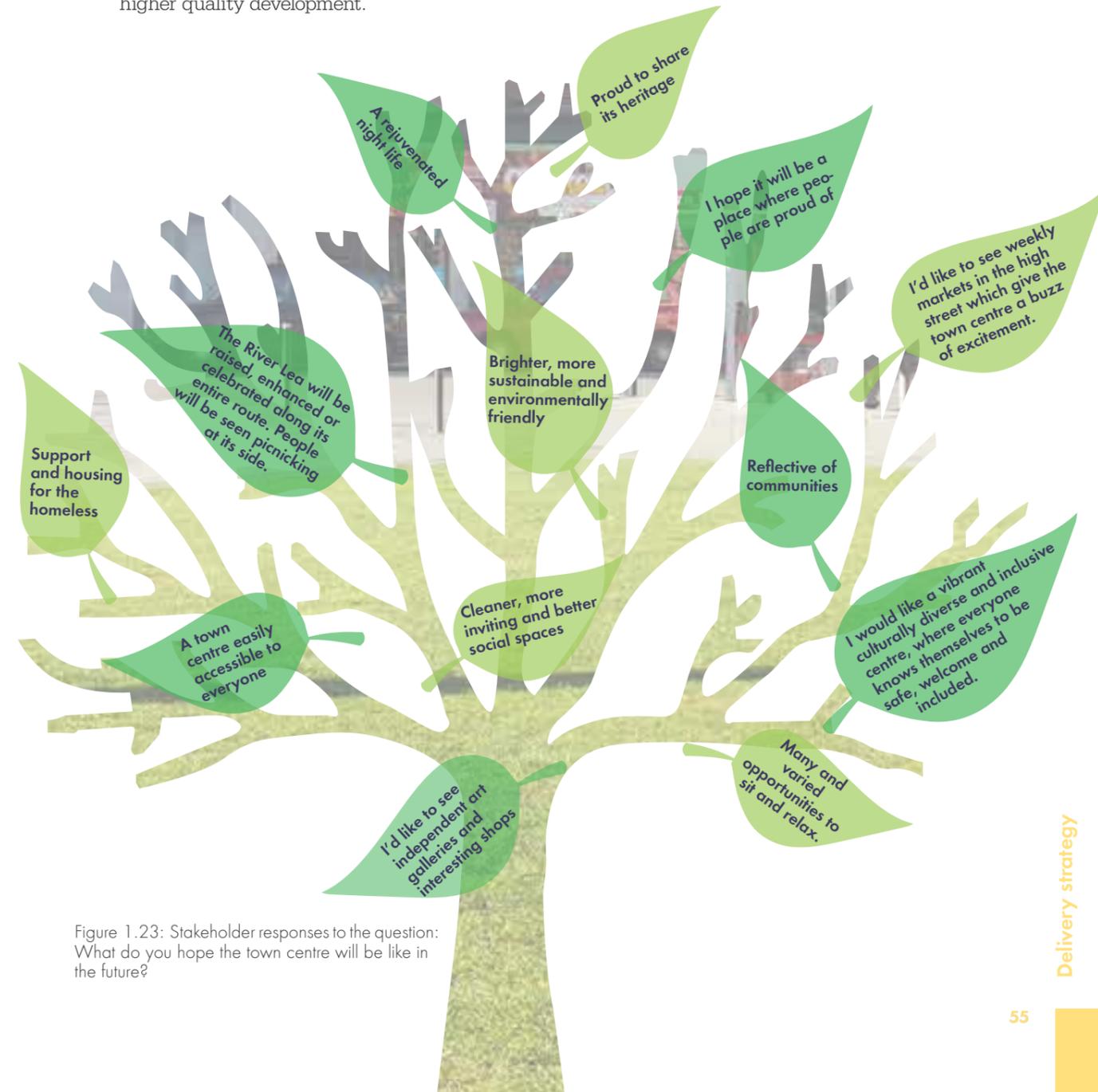


Figure 1.23: Stakeholder responses to the question: What do you hope the town centre will be like in the future?

Coordinating and Catalysing Change

- 4.8 This masterplan provides a framework for the coordinated approach to change that Luton needs to make it more welcoming to all residents and all raise underlying market confidence to unlock a range of development opportunities, it recognises these will be delivered over time but at each stage will need to ensure they deliver improvements then and also lay the foundations for future stages.
- 4.9 Given this need for staged delivery the masterplan's production marks the start of a process of change that requires all stakeholders to work together to achieve. This will require the Council to take an active role in leading the regeneration process through the use of its own assets, leveraging funding opportunities as they come forward and acting as the choreographer for a range of physical and non-physical projects that will come forward.
- 4.10 Services across the Council will need to be aligned and committed to the masterplan's strategy, from community safety through to environmental health core service provision should be focussed on creating wider benefits for the town centre and, in turn, residents. The 'one council' approach to the town centre will allow a wide range of existing budget expenditure and future funding streams to be coordinated and potentially combined to help support delivery – achieving greater impact than a single budget on its own.
- 4.11 However the Council cannot achieve the scale and nature of change proposed without the support and commitment of all the stakeholders

who have been involved in the preparation of the masterplan. Key partners in the delivery of the masterplan will include:

- **Luton BID** – as the conduit to town centre businesses and custodian of town centre promotion, events and management it is vital the BID remain at the heart of the delivery process, aligning promotion and communications messaging to support the regeneration process.
- **Culture Trust Luton** – as both asset owner and convener of creative activity in the town centre the Culture Trust will continue to help shift the common perception of Luton. It will be central to growing the creative business base, revitalising the Hat District supporting the events and cultural programme.
- **University of Bedfordshire** – the student population will be a key user of the town centre in the future and can contribute to its vibrancy through involvement in a range of events and activities. The University itself will be critical for encouraging greater business activity and working with businesses to help them grow, with potential to support new SME space.
- **Community Groups** – Luton's communities are diverse and the town centre should better reflect this in the future, integrating community activity through the events programme, new community spaces and better representation in decision making will make the town centre more inclusive and allow groups to become champions of the town centre in their communities.
- **Landowners + Developers** – Fundamentally the success of the masterplan relies on sites coming forward for development, so landowners are integral to future success. However, success will not be achieved unless

developments deliver the range of spaces and facilities new and existing residents are seeking and also raise the overall quality and character of the town centre. The planning process will support sites coming forward and the masterplan framework will be a material consideration which will guide future development.

- **Network Rail** – the Station is a key asset for the town centre and needs to be a high quality entrance point to the town centre. Agreed plans begin to improve on the current station, but NR will be critical in ensuring this is the first step towards a much better gateway to Luton.
- 4.12 These partners form a core group at this point in time, however as Luton evolves it is likely other partners will come to the fore to act as direct delivery agencies, funders/ investors, business and community organisers, creative and cultural catalysts, promotion and management or transport providers (for example).
- 4.13 Whilst these 'professional' stakeholders will be responsible for delivering the masterplan, the masterplan process itself has helped open up the town centre debate to a much wider resident and business audience. It is vital that, as progress is made both are kept close to the process and able to help shape and inform future interventions.

An Informed Strategy Over Time

- 4.14 The approach to delivery has been informed by a number of workstreams undertaken as part of the masterplan.

4.15 Engagement with landowners and developers has been an integral element, understanding what aspirations are for sites within the town centre, what the barriers to delivery may be and what implications these have for the timing of delivery. As far as possible or are known at this point, these timings are reflected in the masterplan phasing.

4.16 To support this high level viability testing has been undertaken, both for relevant development typologies to inform the masterplan approach and also of the masterplan itself. This has helped highlight where particular challenges exist and where there needs to be wider improvements to help support these sites come forward.

4.17 A key focus has also been on understanding resident and business concerns about the town centre and developing approaches to addressing these – particularly where they impact on people's willingness to use the town centre. Where feasible these have been prioritised in the early stages in order to encourage much greater use of the town centre but a wider range of people.

4.18 The availability of funding has also informed the approach, particularly where it could be accessed to deliver interventions that would not otherwise have an obvious delivery route (for example as part of a site development proposal) and can have a major impact on the quality of the centre before larger development projects deliver.

Action on the ground in the short term



Figure 1.24: Short term interventions

Short term

- 4.19** Over the first five years of the plan the principal focus should be on supporting the recovery of the centre post-pandemic and laying the foundations for larger scale change that will come in the future. Central to this stage of Luton's evolution is to bring forward projects and activities that address some of the fundamental challenges the town centre faces through focused interventions that, collectively, create a significant positive impact both on the perception and lived experience of the town centre.
- 4.20** Given the timescales some of the key moves in the short term will be focussed on projects that are already in progress and ensuring the benefit of these is felt more broadly across the town centre. Where development is planned to come forward other allied investment opportunities have been identified to support these and improve relationships with the wider town centre.
- 4.21** Alongside the physical developments opportunities to introduce new activities and uses into the town centre are critical in order to attract a wider range of people to come and spend time in Luton. Through re-use and meanwhile approaches there is the potential

to offer new spaces for independent retail, new food and beverage/leisure activity and community facilities.

- 4.22** Through focussed interventions in the public realm the perception and real experience of safety in the town centre will be improved, coupled with creating more enjoyable spaces to spend time, host events and improving the overall environment of the town centre. A critical element will be introduce more 'free to use' facilities including children's play space to make the town centre more welcoming to families. Alongside the delivery of early public realm improvements, there will also be further modelling, testing and trialling to support the development of medium to long term movement interventions.
- 4.23** In the short term the programming of the town centre will be equally important to any physical or use changes. Residents have to feel confident in using the centre and know that it provides an offer that is relevant to them. The Council, BID and other partners will be critical in this promotional approach, linking clear positive communications with a set programme of events. These events should leverage existing activities (such as a the carnival)

and tie into wider community celebrations to increase inclusivity.

- 4.24** In bringing more people to the centre there has to be a welcoming, clean and high quality experience waiting for them to encourage return trips. This will require coordination of the street scene management, a clear strategy for vacant premises, community safety support and transport providers to ensure a positive new first impression is created.
- 4.25** Much of the focus in the short term will be on creating the condition for future delivery and will therefore rely heavily on 'patient' investment. It will require the Council to use it's full range of powers and levers to make this happen, by bending its existing activities towards the masterplan vision, access external funding opportunities and using its own assets in new ways that respond to the wider sense of value they can create. With a number of land and property assets in the town centre the Council can (and should) set the standard for the private sector to follow but also carefully sequence the delivery of its sites to ensure it also benefits from longer term improvements in value in order to see a financial return on investment alongside wider social, economic and environmental value it creates.

- 4.26** Key moves are considered in more detail in the area specific analysis, however in summary these include in the short term:

Development + Property

- The ABC Cinema
- Power Court (including Stadium)
- Luton Station improvements
- Hat District building refurbishment

Uses + Animation

- Meanwhile re-use of Library Road Car Park
- Revitalisation of the market, with potential to utilise Market Hill
- Repurposing retail units to provide new space for leisure, community and independent retail
- A coordinated and planned events programme that enlivens spaces and diversifies the core town centre offer
- The new home for Luton Town Football Club will be complete and host its first matches, with matchday and other visitors being drawn to the town centre
- Within the Hat District additional creative workspace will be provided to encourage more artistic endeavour

Public Space + Facilities

- Station Gateway open space at Bute Street and improvements to connect to Power Court ready for stadium opening
- First phase of the Open Lea project along Bute Street/Silver Street
- Market Hill refurbishment to introduce play space
- St Georges Square upgrades to create more usable spaces
- Church Street landscaping to create improved connections to Power Court
- George Street soft landscaping to connect Market hill and St George's Square improvements and provide better setting for ABC site
- At grade crossing for Wellington Street/Stuart Street to better connect to wider area
- Begin to improve the framing of St George's Square through shop front improvements to Manchester Street properties
- Carefully plan, undertake and monitor trials and experiments of potential longer term placemaking projects e.g. road / lane closures, temporary repurposing of streets, spaces and car parks.

Promotion + Awareness

- Develop a forward plan for communications and promotion that links to key businesses, events, development milestones and other 'good news' stories
- Introduce new and revolving public art across the town centre, engaging with students, local artists and community groups

Coordination + Management

- Continue town centre marketing group and grow membership to other businesses/agencies as they come to the town centre
- Creation of town centre taskforce across regulatory and maintenance services to maintain cleanliness and safety with a critical objective of 'fast response' to reported problems

- 4.27** In parallel to the direct interventions and changes should be laying the foundations for the future, this should include the background feasibility testing for specific projects as well as securing the necessary consents and permissions needed to unlock the next stage of delivery.



Early meanwhile uses on Library Road car park

Medium term



- Proposed new block structure
- Proposed new temporary development
- Proposed retrofit / enhancements
- Retained buildings
- River Lea

Figure 1.25: Interventions complete by the end of the medium term

Medium term

- 4.28** In the medium term a much bigger range of development opportunities will come forward, benefitting from the already improved town centre proposition that will help boost investor and developer confidence and help overcome viability challenges where sites are more complex to develop.
- 4.29** The core development focus will remain in areas where initial impressions of the town centre can be significantly improved, continuing to enhance the overall perception of Luton for visitors and residents. Points of arrival will be key, with new development creating improved gateways to the town from the station and via the eastern end of the Mall.
- 4.30** Additional public realm interventions will further support the improved perception and experience of quality in the town centre, as well as encouraging more sustainable modes of accessibility by residents living outside the town centre. The focus will be to the east of Church Street and along Stuart Street to address the 'car dominance' in these areas to better integrate the developments happening outside the ring road with the town centre – a critical delivery consideration in raising the overall usage of the town centre.

- 4.31** As new development delivers new space opportunities potential for a new cultural anchor for the town centre and also modern office/workspace a range of new business activities will be attracted. The delivery of new workspace will need to be managed carefully in order to prove demand and 'de-risk' space delivery. In the early part of this phase repurposing of existing assets will support the proof of concept, with the opportunity for a new workspace operational vehicle to be created to manage space on behalf of private landlords.
- 4.32** An increase and diversification of the residential population in the town centre will support a broader range of activities and help support more cultural and leisure activity, as well as workspace as residents seek to work closer to home. This will also drive additional provision of social and community infrastructure in the town centre, that will be accommodated both in existing and new spaces.
- 4.33** In this stage the balance of delivery responsibility falls onto the private sector partners given they will be bringing their assets forward and develop long term management regimes. The Council will remain a critical point of coordination as well as bringing its own assets forward.

- 4.34** Key moves are considered in more detail in the area specific analysis, however in summary these include in the medium term:

Development + Property

- Around the station Bute Street Car Park and part of Lea Halls will be redeveloped to provide a mix of housing, workspace and community facilities
- The meanwhile uses on Library Road Car Park will be relocated to a new permanent home and the site brought forward to provide new mixed use development
- As the occupier profile changes the eastern part of the Mall will be redeveloped, improving the integration between Power Court, the University and the town centre
- Small sites within the Hat District will be developed, providing more artist workspace and a differentiated residential offer to provide afford live-work opportunities.
- Further development will complete Power Court

Uses + Animation

- Significant new residential development will introduce a new population to the town centre in both flats and urban house typologies
- Building on the meanwhile spaces in the short term, new office/workspace will be delivered to increase the business base and daytime population of the town centre
- A new cultural anchor will replace the existing theatre and offer a new venue for performances and exhibitions
- Additional leisure and community facilities will be provided within Bute St, Library Road and the Eastern Mall

Public Space + Facilities

- Further improvements to Station Road / Busway will fully integrate Power Court and sites beyond to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists
- The greening of Stuart St and the Chapel Viaduct will encourage sustainable modes of access to the town centre and improve overall perceptions.
- The second phase of the Open Lea project will open the river up along Library Road and create a new riverside park
- The refurbishment of the central part of the Mall will improve connections between Bute Street and George Street as well as improve the overall user experience

Promotion + Awareness

- The ongoing promotion campaign should begin to anticipate new developments, promoting opportunities for new businesses to locate in the town centre
- As new uses are confirmed they should be a core part of the promotion activity – building awareness before they open to support their success

Coordination + Management

- More innovative ways of encouraging activity in the town centre will be considered, such as creating 'de-regulated' zones where businesses have more freedom to experiment with operational approaches.
- A new workspace operational model will be tested to support the coordinated management of new and repurposed space across the town centre, creating a more sustainable income based approach and helping manage risk for landlords



Medium term closure of Library Road and adjacent mixed use development

Long term

RECOMMENDED FOR FUTURE MASTERPLANNING (INC. KENILWORTH ROAD STADIUM REPURPOSING / REDEVELOPMENT REVIEW)

RECOMMENDED FOR FUTURE MASTERPLANNING

- Proposed new block structure
- Proposed retrofit / enhancements
- Retained buildings
- River Lea

TRAIN STATION

GUILDFORD ST

THE MALL

GEORGE ST

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

STUART ST

Figure 1.26: Interventions complete by the end of the long term

Long term

- 4.35** As we reach the longer term phase the market context for Luton will have been fundamentally improved, allowing the most complex sites to be tackled as values have improved and spaces having already been created for the decanting of key uses that need to remain in the town centre.
- 4.36** The long term approach also makes some educated predictions about future market changes and how this may affect the need/desire to redevelop sites. Clearly this is uncertain, so the long term approach will need to be kept under review to understand whether sites can come forward earlier, or whether they will come forward at all.
- 4.37** In the longer term we would anticipate a series of sites to come forward and a number of public realm interventions to 'complete' providing the town centre with a rich mix of buildings, green/open spaces and diverse activities.
- 4.38** In the long term delivery will principally be the responsibility of stakeholders beyond the Council itself.
- 4.39** Key moves are considered in more detail in the area specific analysis, however in summary potentially these could include in the long term:

Development + Property

- As the retail landscape changes there will be opportunities to reimagine the Western Mall, which with improved values can become a viable opportunity.
- Similarly, the Galaxy Centre could be viably redeveloped to enhance
- The framing of St George's Square will be completed via the redevelopment of the Library / Thistle Hotel sites for mixed use development

Uses + Animation

- Re-provision of retail, leisure and food and beverage offers within the Mall and Galaxy Centre
- New residential space will be delivered at Lea Halls and around St George's Square

Public Space + Facilities

- This phase could include completion of the open Lea project through the Galaxy site
- Introduction of 'on demand' bus service along George Street



Long term delivery of series of development sites adjacent to waterside spaces

Key areas of change

4.40 The following chapters set out the masterplan strategy for each of the four key areas of change:

1. West - St. George's Bridge
2. North - Station and Hat District
3. East - Church Street
4. South - George Street



Figure 1.27: Key areas of change



Public squares
St. George's Square



Prominent landmarks
Town Hall



Pedestrianised high street
High Street



Infrastructure
Ring road and car parks



Historic and active side streets
George Street West



Changing levels
Market Hill



Green spaces
St Mary's Church garden



Secondary centres
High Town Road



Transport interchange
Luton train station



Cultural Quarter
Guildford Street, Hat District



Large-scale shopping mall
The Mall



University Quarter
University of Bedfordshire, Park Street / Vicarage Street



5 ST GEORGE'S BRIDGE



St. George's Square will continue to be an important square for events and activity. Future investment will support greater vibrancy around the square edges and introduce increased greenery over time.



Library Road car park is a key early opportunity for change in this area.



Historic landmark buildings such as the Town Hall will be celebrated, their use expanded and their settings enhanced.

Changing role

- 5.1 The western end of the town centre is focused around St. George's Square, and this space provides a fantastic hub around which activities can be intensified. A key aim for this area is to re-invigorate St. George's Square and make it the vibrant town centre space it has the potential to be.
- 5.2 To do this there will be significant intensification of activities and development across the area - creating both new edges to the square and new streetscape one block back from the square. This new development and the existing public realm will be used to introduce more active uses, family friendly destinations, all alongside new homes.

GREENER AND CLEANER

adding more green spaces, trees, flowers and park areas

IMPROVING THE NIGHTLIFE

activities for young people and families - safe nighttime socialising

OPENING UP THE RIVER LEA...

...so it's a new attraction with open spaces and parks along it

- 5.3 One of the barriers to this part of the town centre succeeding in the past has been its separation from other areas of the centre. Therefore an important intervention will be opening up new street connections so that this area becomes the glue between different parts of the centre. This will mean that getting from George Street or St. George's Square to Guildford Street and the station is easy, via an attractive and safe route.

What local people said...

"The night time economy is not as diverse as it should be to appeal to a cross section of the town. People won't come out, if they don't feel safe"

"Library Road car park and back end of the Mall looks awful. Investment is needed to improve appearance and uses in that area.."

I'd like to see the River Lea raised, enhanced or celebrated along its entire route, with people picnicking at its side.

Outside areas for flexible dining and green spaces where people can enjoy being outside.

I don't think we should work around The Mall and embed it in the revitalization but look further forwards and see what can be done with the building to break it down a little, get some space back and not rely on it when comes to the connections between the station and the town centre as the plan suggests.

Open air markets, especially themed markets like those that take place in Dunstable.

"New leisure destination - it is going to take a lot of work and investment to make an environment that is successful and attractive. This part of town is extremely important."



Figure 1.28: View looking west along Library Road shows the complete transformation of this part of the town centre along the River Lea



Existing view looking north west along Library Road

Development and design strategy



New street-based retail



Evening economy



Residential-led mixed use

- 5.4 Historically this area had a finer grain of development with a strong street grid with streets such as Bridge Street, Bute Street and the now lost Williamson Street providing the connections and structure. The river used to run through street blocks, creating characterful environments off the streets.
- 5.5 There is a real opportunity to use existing assets better and to consider more significant redevelopment particularly of some of the larger grain pieces. Breaking down some of large floorplates that limit the ease with which people can move across this area is a key objective. The western part of The Mall and the Galaxy Centre are two important opportunities in this vein.
- 5.6 As with the rest of the town centre, the emphasis will be on mid rise development in this area. Strong edges will be established to St. George's Square, through a mix of refurbishment of existing buildings and redevelopment. There could be an opportunity for height given the scale of the square, but only where it would not overshadow the square itself.
- 5.7 Along the river development will be mid rise, but with particular attention to heights and massing to ensure the riverside spaces have good sunlight and daylight. Active uses including food and drink, leisure and community uses will line the waterside spaces, with residential above these in the medium and long term. To the north, redevelopment of the Galaxy Centre in the long term would create a new residential-led neighbourhood with homes set around generous communal courtyards including a mix of houses and flats. There could be a case for some additional height on New Bedford Road adjacent to the busway at the entrance to the town centre.

- 5.8 The redevelopment of the western end of The Mall will create a new mixed use environment of street-based retail on high quality pedestrian streets with residential at upper floors. The new Bute Street will be lined with active uses at ground floor on both sides, with a strong new entrance up to the first floor of the refurbished central mall on the south side.
- 5.9 Daytime leisure and evening economy uses will be important activities in this area. They will edge St George's Square and will also spill out into the waterside spaces to the north. To kick start this activity a new temporary destination on Library Road car park including street food market / food hall, children's library and shared workspace will be developed in the short term.
- 5.10 In the wider area, further opportunities for infill development will be encouraged where high quality residential typologies can be delivered including mews housing and stacked maisonettes.
- 5.11 Throughout most of the area there will be a presumption towards non-resi uses at ground, and primarily residential above.



Figure 1.29: Masterplan development framework

- Proposed new block structure
- Proposed retrofit / enhancements
- Retained buildings
- River Lea

KEY POINTS

- **Early temporary new destination on Library Road**
- **Redevelopment of sites along the river route creating whole new environment for residential homes**
- **Redevelopment of the western end of The Mall creating street-based retail and high density homes**
- **Mixed use mid rise development to support vibrancy and footfall**



Continued and extended programme of events and activities in St George's Square post-Covid restrictions (Image © Capital and Regional)

Movement and public realm

5.12 The key movement and public realm interventions for the the St. George's Bridge area are:

1. **Strengthened network of new and improved pedestrian streets**, including creating new routes from George Street and St. George's Square to Guildford Street and the train station ie. Bute Street, Bridge Street and a new street linking through the Library Road car park site.
2. **Opening up the River Lea with a string of high quality waterside spaces** and walking routes alongside it.
3. **Investment in St. George's Square to support its key role as a town centre square** and its evolution to a greener events space..
4. **Promote increased use of the busway with a secondary transport hub at the intersection of Mill Street and the busway**, including bus, cycle and wayfinding provision.
5. **Relocation and improvements to bus stop waiting facilities** on New Bedford Road
6. **Reconfigure car parking** including the removal of Library Road car park and potential for increased capacity at Crawley Road car park where needed.
7. **Exploration of scope for a hopper bus to enhance access to George Street in the long term.**



New and improved pedestrian streets



Opening up the River Lea with new green spaces



Investment in St. George's Square



Promote busway

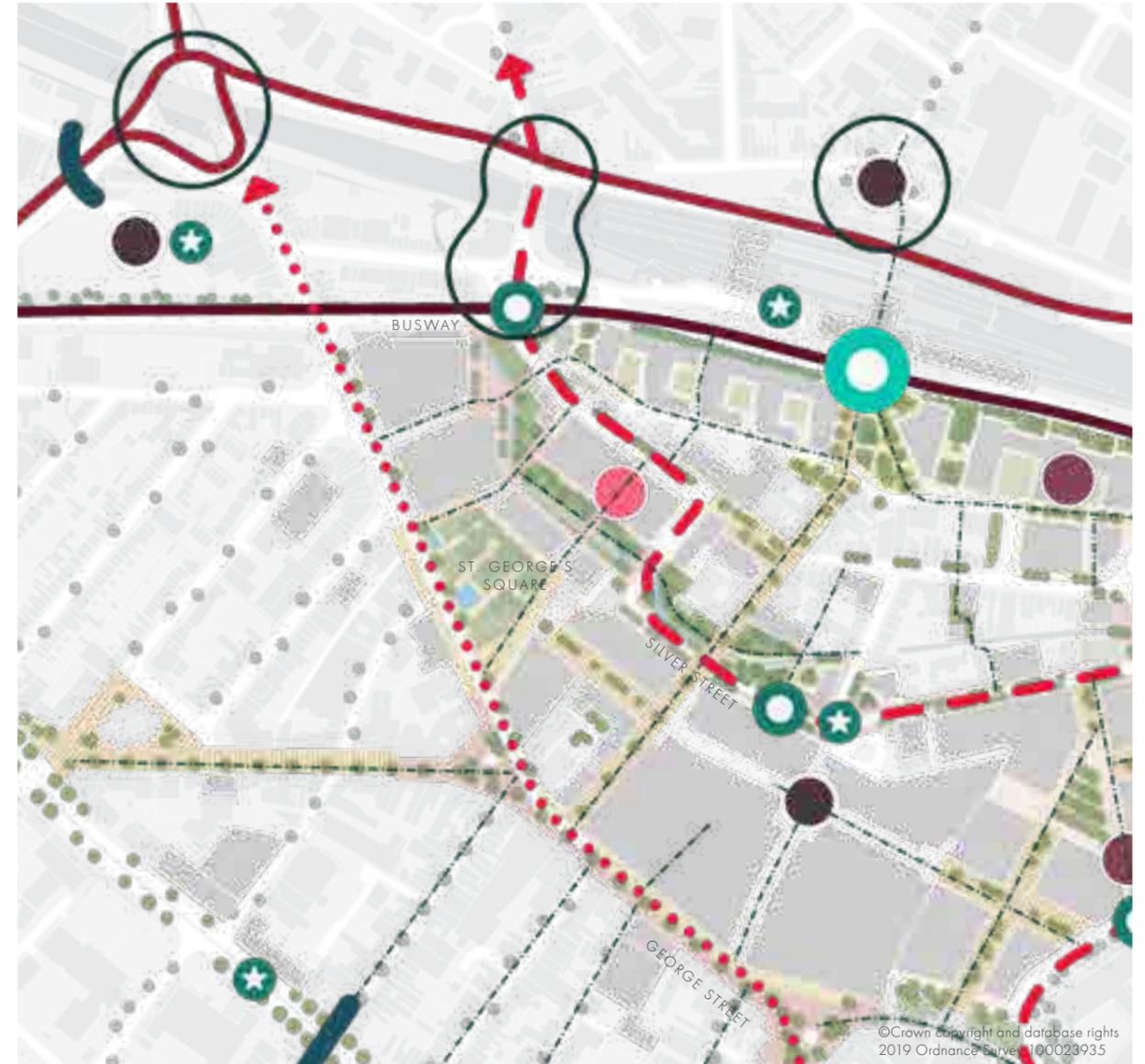


Figure 1.30: Movement strategy for the St George's Bridge area



Phasing and delivery

- 5.13 This area will represent an important location for interventions in the immediate and short term. In particular the creation of a new temporary destination on Library Road car park will be an early deliverable and will help to build confidence and draw people back into the town centre through improving the leisure offer and linking the Hat District with St George's Square in a more permeable, safe and attractive manner.
- 5.14 In addition, investments in St George's Square to enhance its use and establish a strong programme of events will also attract people into the town centre. Local people are keen to see greater use of the square for markets and childrens' play as well a series of well publicised events.
- 5.15 In the medium term, the closure of Library Road will kick start the creation of new parks and spaces that in the long term will become a string of waterside spaces.
- 5.16 The most significant changes happen in the long term phase, but could be brought forward earlier if circumstances allow. The redevelopment of the western end of The Mall will shift the focus to street-based retail and town centre living in this part of the town centre.

Short term (0-5 years)

Creation of a new temporary destination on Library Road car park including street food market / food hall, children's library and shared workspace



Medium term (5-10 years)

Temporary market/food hall reprovided elsewhere in town centre in a permanent facility

Two mixed use developments with residential above brought forward on market site

Closure of Library Road and creation of park space



Long term (10+ years)

Library Theatre and Thistle Hotel buildings replaced with mixed use development with residential above creating enhanced frontage to St. George's Square

River Lea opened up entirely through this area creating new waterside space on former Library Road





STATION AND HAT DISTRICT



The Hat District is home to some fantastic organisations, including the youth charity Youthscape, as well as a growing number of creative and cultural businesses.

Changing role



Luton train station is a priority for enhancement.



The Hat Factory arts centre was recently refurbished and hosts a cafe, live music, contemporary dance, theatre, film and workshops.

6.1 The area takes in the station, Plaiter's Lea and the Hat District and includes Station Road to the north, Guildford Street as the central spine, and Silver Street / John Street to the south where it meets the northside of the Mall. The area is rich in historic assets and is home to many old buildings and streets, as well as Luton's hidden gem: the River Lea. There are a growing number of community, cultural and creative businesses moving in, and its position next to the train station gives a heightened sense of opportunity as it grows into its new identity and role.

6.2 The ideas for the Station and Hat District area build on the extensive work of the Culture Trust to promote and protect Luton's hat industry buildings and to establish the area as a vibrant cultural quarter with a mix of



uses and activities. The area will include new workspace, restaurants and bars, cultural facilities, retail and a range of housing tenures and types. New activities will help to support the historic fabric of the Hat District through bringing vacant buildings back into use and attracting investment to restore old buildings and enhance the public realm. High quality infill development will help to strengthen the area's historic character and identity.

- 6.3** An exciting part of the strategy for this area is to reveal the River Lea, much of which is currently culverted beneath Luton's streets. The river is a valuable asset for the area and the town centre more widely. Opening up the river and introducing new green spaces along it will give a new role to the Hat District as a place to dwell, socialise and relax, as well as bring wider environmental benefits to the town through trees, planting and sustainable drainage.
- 6.4** Finally and crucially, the area will play an increasingly important role as a connector between a transformed station, the town centre and Power Court, with clear, direct, safe and attractive routes by foot and bike.

What local people said...

Opening up the River Lea is really positive and will make a huge difference to the town.

I'd like to see a complete overhaul of the Station to make it more accessible, welcoming and user friendly

Heritage is key - it's what makes Luton distinctive. The more that can be done to make it unique the better.

How do we incorporate high quality family housing in a vibrant cultural quarter?

Some spaces in the Hat District are calmer where people can come and dwell and engage with history, creativity and culture



Figure 1.31: Artist's impression showing the Station Road area in the medium term



Existing view looking west along Station Road



Children's play integrated within a pocket park on Northbank Road, Ealing, London



Planting and widened pavements in Dalston, London

Development and design strategy



Residential-led mixed use



Community uses



Repurposing of existing buildings into cultural/creative workspace



Temporary activities

- 6.5 The station is a key priority for transformation. Upgrades in the short-term should focus on providing an accessible platform bridge and lifts. Later phases will see a complete station upgrade with a new station entrance and ticket office to the west. The aspiration is that the existing footbridge will become a dedicated public route separate to the station, allowing an easier route into town and providing a much better experience in the train station itself.
- 6.6 Station Road provides the most accessible and sustainable location for development in the town centre. Temporary activities like street markets and other meanwhile uses will be introduced at the western end of the Bute Street car park to support the link south down to George Street. The Bute Street car park site will be entirely redeveloped with high-quality housing around courtyards, and commercial and community uses at ground floor. A new green space will be created on the western wedge at the gateway to the town centre.
- 6.7 In the long term there is potential for further high density development immediately around the station, as well as the complete redevelopment of Lea Halls with new homes, workspace and community services. The eastern end of the Lea Halls site will be redeveloped first to strengthen the connection from the station to the town centre.
- 6.8 There is a general focus on the refurbishment or retrofitting of existing buildings along Guildford Street, Bute Street, John Street and Cheapside. This includes refurbishing key buildings to bring them back into use like units on Lea Halls (in the short-term), the School of Art and Design, and Cheviot House on Guildford Street.



Figure 1.32: Masterplan strategy for the Station and Hat District area

- 6.9 There is potential for some sensitive, high quality infill development within the conservation area. The southeastern end of Bute Street car park on Guildford Street would be suitable for commercial uses or housing. Further infill development opportunities include the car park on the corner of Cheapside and Guildford Street and other sites along Guildford Street and John Street.
- 6.10 The River Lea will be opened up in stages. The first stage will be to reveal the river on the corner of Bute Street and Silver Street with the creation of a new park. This will be supported by new development on the northside fronting the park and Bute Street. The next section to be opened will be on the corner of Cheapside and Silver Street, with the provision of a new route through. Library Road will be transformed as part of the proposals for the river and park and will become a key pedestrian route.
- 6.11 Building heights across the area should have a mid rise emphasis, between five and eight storeys. Emphasising the views across the Hat District requires careful massing, and heights will also need to be limited in sensitive locations adjacent to historic buildings. There are opportunities for greater height (c. 10 storeys) as pop-up blocks along Station Road and then a taller element at the station itself.

KEY POINTS

- Transformation of the station
- Redevelopment of Bute Street car park with high-quality homes, courtyards, commercial and community uses
- Refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings
- Opening up the River Lea with new pocket parks
- Mid-rise development with taller elements along Station Road

Movement and public realm



New and improved pedestrian streets



Opening up the River Lea with new green spaces



New urban garden square at gateway into the town centre from the station

6.12 The key movement and public realm principles for the Station Road and Hat District area are:

1. **Station upgrade** including fully accessible platforms, new platform bridge and ticket hall.
2. **Potential for a network of new and improved pedestrian streets**, including enhancing key routes from the train station to the town centre and to Power Court, ie. Bute Street, Station Road and Guildford Street. Planting, trees and SUDs (Sustainable Urban Drainage systems) will help create attractive and healthy people-focused streets.
3. **Creation of a new urban garden square at the gateway into the town centre from the station.** This will help to facilitate important pedestrian links on either side along Bute Street and diagonally to Guildford Street from Station Road.
4. **Opening up the River Lea with a string of high quality pocket parks** and walking routes alongside it.
5. **Promoting increased use of busway and interchange.**
6. **Creating a local bus loop** to serve this area.
7. **Reconfiguring car parking.** Bute Street car park would be removed in the short to medium term option. Potential for a future car park on Crescent Road which could be part of a series of edge of centre car parks in the longer term. The Central car park would remain.

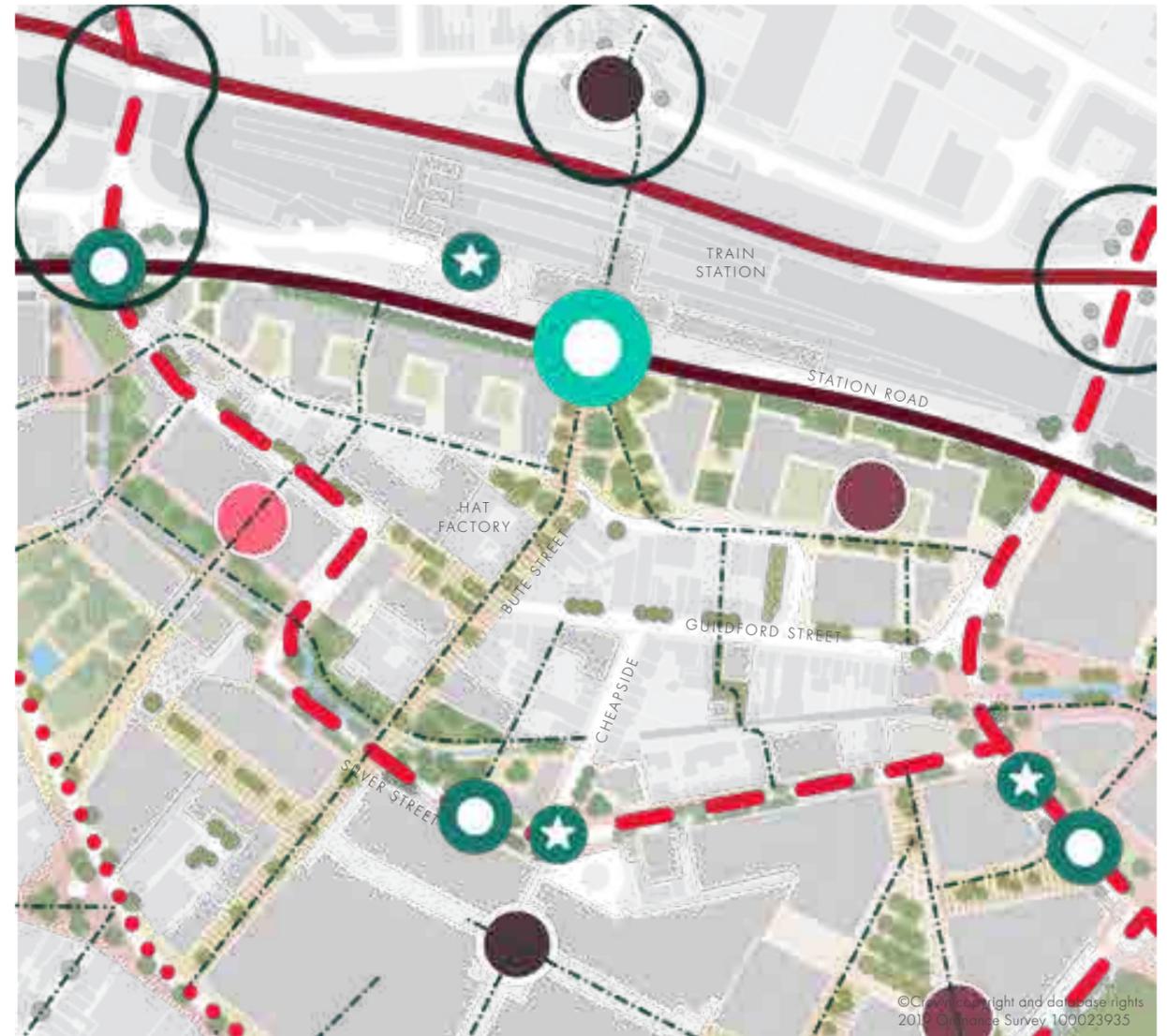


Figure 1.33: Movement strategy for the Station and Hat District area

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| | Junction improvements to support walking and cycling and bus priority | | Luton Station interchange hub |
| | Enhanced walking route into town centre | | Cycle stations e.g. hire, e-cargo, stands and repair (approximate location shown) |
| | Enhance and promote the existing busway | | Existing car park to be repurposed in short term |
| | Strengthen existing and create new strategic orbital bus and cycle routes | | Existing car park to be repurposed in medium term |
| | Local bus and cycle routes | | Existing car park to be retained / extended / improved |
| | Multi-modal hub inc. bus facilities, cycle hire, wifi and visitor info (approximate location shown) | | |

Phasing and delivery

- 6.13** An important priority in this area which has been emphasised by local people is the overhaul of the railway station. An early intervention is therefore to bring forward planned access improvements to the station. A phased approach aspires to see the completion of the station upgrade with new ticket office and entrance in the medium term.
- 6.14** Bute Street Triangle will be a focus for public realm investment and new activities. In the immediate term this space should be released for meanwhile active uses or installations. Whilst this activity is supporting the existing pedestrian link down to the Hat District, designs for a new urban garden square should be developed which will come to fruition alongside the redevelopment of the wider Bute Street car park site.
- 6.15** The ongoing refurbishment and re-use of buildings throughout the Hat District is to be encouraged in the short-medium term. The Culture Trust Luton has been a leading light in this regard and their future programme of work is to be supported and promoted. More widely the energy and skills of the many artists and creative workers in the area should continue to be harnessed and supported. Opportunities to deliver low cost workspace and workshops (as well as housing) in both this area and adjacent areas should be prioritised to ensure this important community are able to set down long term roots.
- 6.16** The investments in the short term will help set the stage for the redevelopment of key sites like Bute Street car park and Lea Halls in the medium term.

Short term

Station upgrade to include a new accessible platform bridge and lifts

Temporary activities on the western end of Bute Street car park site to support the connection down from the station while designs for urban garden square developed



Mid term

Complete station upgrade with new station entrance and ticket office to the west

Existing footbridge becomes a dedicated public route separate to the station

Redevelopment of Bute Street car park, including commercial and community uses at ground floor and high-quality housing around courtyards above and redevelopment of the eastern end of Lea Halls site



Long term

Further high density development immediately around the station

Complete redevelopment of sites next to the station with new homes, workspace and community services





7 CHURCH STREET AND EAST



The university has invested a lot into its buildings and spaces and plays a key role for the area



There are a few high quality historic buildings that should be protected and incorporated into future development proposals



A view from the Mall over Church Street towards St. Mary's Church. A key principle for this area is to improve the setting of the Grade I Listed church.

Changing role

- 7.1 The Church Street and East area includes the eastern end of The Mall, Power Court, St Mary's Church and the university. This area is expected to see the greatest transformation and will significantly alter the town centre offer and experience.
- 7.2 The area will be reinvigorated and reconnected back into the town centre. It will play a key role in contributing to the vibrancy and nature of the town centre and will have a mixed-use offer, including the provision of the stadium and a significant amount of new homes for town centre living.
- 7.3 There is a real opportunity for the area to have a much greener character with the River Lea running through it and opportunities to improve walking and cycling.

GREENER AND CLEANER

adding more green spaces, trees, flowers and park areas

OPENING UP THE RIVER LEA...

...so it's a new attraction with open spaces and parks along it

TAKING CARE OF HERITAGE

bringing old buildings back to life

- 7.4 The area includes the Grade I Listed St Mary's. Its setting will be enhanced through public realm improvements along Church Street and St Mary's Road and sensitive new development at Power Court and the eastern end of the Mall that sits well in its context and celebrates and complements the character of the church.

What local people said...

Please get the Luton Town FC stadium built at Power Court

Open up the River Lea completely and respect mother nature, adding far more green spaces, trees, and park areas.

We need to improve the setting of the church and connections into it - St Mary's Church shouldn't be forgotten or hidden away.

Accessibility, public realm and phasing is important for ensuring high quality in this area

Accessibility, public realm and phasing is important for ensuring high quality in this area

Linking strongly with the university is important



Figure 1.34: Artist's impression of Church Street in the future, looking south from the junction at George Street with the university on the right



Existing view looking south along Church Street



Generous planting at Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm



Green cycle friendly environment at Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm



Water feature, planting and integrating level differences at University of British Columbia, Vancouver



Pedestrian bridge over water Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm

Development and design strategy



Residential-led mixed use



Active uses



Street-based mixed use development

- 7.5 The substantial change planned for the eastern end of the town centre requires a strong design vision. However, here just as much as in the rest of the town centre, development should be context-led. Taking its cue from the historic fine grain of development that once characterised this formerly residential area, opportunities to create high quality streets and enhanced settings for heritage assets including St. Mary's Church and the River Lea should be maximised.
- 7.6 The introduction of the planned Luton Town Football stadium will mark an important moment, and will introduce new purpose to this part of the town centre. The development that comes alongside must ensure the stadium is knitted into the rest of the town centre through high quality mixed use buildings and well proportioned spaces and streets.
- 7.7 A key piece which will enable this area to re-connect with the core of the centre is the redevelopment of the eastern end of the Mall. This will be a major shift and will introduce a series of pedestrian streets lined with active uses at ground floor and residential development above.
- 7.8 The quality of residential development in this area will be crucial as it will set the tone for the rest of the town centre and help shift the image of the centre as a desirable place to live. Homes must be generous in their internal and external space.
- 7.9 This area will be mid-rise in the main, but there is scope for some taller elements on Power Court up to 16 storeys in line with existing planning permission.



Figure 1.35: Masterplan development framework for the Church Street and eastern area

- Proposed new block structure
- Proposed retrofit / enhancements
- Retained buildings
- River Lea

KEY POINTS

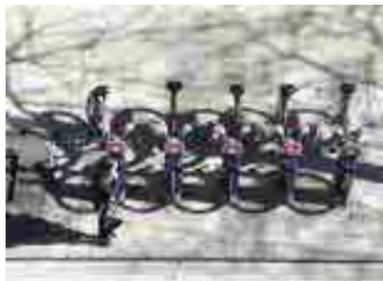
- Street-based mixed use development across the area
- Creation of high density new residential neighbourhood focused around the existing assets of the church and River Lea
- Mid rise emphasis, but with more scope for taller elements where they are sensitively located and designed



New and improved pedestrian streets



A series of waterside spaces



Multi-modal transport hubs including cycle hire



Green corridor street

Movement and public realm

7.10 The key movement and public realm principles for the Church Street and Eastern area are:

1. **Transformation of Church Street and St Mary's Road into green streets with greater pedestrian and cycle space.** Public realm improvements would look to increase space for pedestrians and cyclists, improve junctions and pedestrian crossings, reduce street clutter and introduce traffic calming measures. Generous planting, landscape design and sustainable drainage interventions will support a high quality corridor along St. Mary's Road. More space would be given over for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and taxis on Church Street.
2. **A series of waterside spaces** that transform the environment in this part of town through deculverting sections of the River Lea and designing new spaces around them. The route of the River Lea and the sections to be deculverted will be agreed with the Environment Agency.
3. **Promote increased use of busway and interchange,** with strong connections to the interchange and increased space for walking and cycling along the busway route where possible.
4. **Establish a multi-modal transport hub on Church Street next to Power Court.** This would come forward as part of proposals to remove roundabouts on Church Street and create a mobility as a service bus connection on John Street, Silver Street and Guildford Street.
5. **Simplify and improve bus stop facilities along Church Street.**



Figure 1.36: Movement strategy for Church Street and the eastern area

6. **Reconfigure car parking.** The Market car park would be removed in the medium term and the Central car park would remain. There is potential for a further car park on Crescent Road which could be part of a series of edge-of-centre car parks in the longer term. A car park at Crescent Road could also include a last mile delivery and bus standing facility.

- Junction improvements to support walking and cycling and bus priority
- Enhanced walking route into town centre
- Enhance and promote the existing busway
- Strengthen existing and create new strategic orbital bus and cycle routes
- Local bus and cycle routes
- Potential longer term removal of viaduct
- Cycle stations e.g. hire, e-cargo, stands and repair (approximate location shown)
- Multi-modal hub inc. bus facilities, cycle hire, wifi and visitor info (approximate location shown)
- Luton Station interchange hub
- Potential location for last mile delivery hub, bus standing and car parking where required
- Existing car park to be repurposed in short term
- Existing car park to be repurposed in medium term
- Existing car park to be retained and improved

Phasing and delivery

- 7.11** The largest site in this area, Power Court, is already well progressed with outline planning permission and detailed designs under discussion. The landowner is expecting to bring forward the western portion of the site and the new stadium in the next 5 years and this will have a transformative impact. Key to the success of this transformation will be changing the environment of St. Mary's Road and Church Street to ensure this no longer forms a barrier to movement, and that rather it is a highly attractive green corridor promoting walking and cycling to the site and into the town centre.
- 7.12** Following the delivery of Power Court, the medium term will see the western side of Church Street completely redeveloped. Market traders from Luton Market will have been decanted and relocated to more central locations either as part of the Library Road car park development or into entrepreneurial space on George Street. Shops in the eastern portion of the Mall will be decanted into a refurbished central Mall, enabling the deconstruction of the eastern third of The Mall. The redevelopment will deliver a set of buildings based around open streets and including some retail, but also a wider set of uses at ground floor which can much better relate to the University and Power Court development.
- 7.13** Further public realm improvements in the wider area will accompany the changes in the medium term including a new Park Square leading into a revitalised Market Hill space.

Short term

Western end of Power Court site developed with mixed use development around new waterside square

St. Mary's Road transformed to pedestrian/cycle friendly street with generous green infrastructure along green corridor into the town centre

Power Court stadium constructed establishing a new destination in this part of the town centre



Medium term

Church Street transformed to create more space for

pedestrians and cyclists, as well as better provision for buses and taxis

Redevelopment of eastern end of the mall to create new town centre neighbourhood and provide new eastern entrance to mall

Final piece of Power Court site delivered at eastern end





The Mall provides much of the frontage along the northside of George Street

Changing role



Looking west along George Street from Market Hill area



View south along Wellington Street

- 8.1 The area is focused on George Street and its streets to the south including King Street, Wellington Street and Cardigan Street. The area also takes in Stuart Street.
- 8.2 George Street is the historic heart of Luton and remains the focus for town life, however there is a great need for it to be reinvigorated. Its centre of gravity has moved around over time - historically Market Hill was the focus, but today depending on the day it can be the Mall or further west near St George's Square. Reinstating a focus at Market Hill and encouraging greater activity along the entire length of George Street is a priority for this area. George Street's role has also shifted over the years, from being at the heart of Luton's hat making industry to a primary retail high street, and now supporting a mix of uses. In the

GREENER AND CLEANER

adding more green spaces, trees, flowers and park areas

IMPROVING THE NIGHTLIFE

activities for young people and families - safe nighttime socialising

TAKING CARE OF HERITAGE

bringing old buildings back to life

future retail will be focused in a smaller core area, supported by complementary activities including civic, community, cultural and retail uses.

- 8.3 The High Street and its surrounding roads retain some fantastic historic buildings and there are opportunities to refurbish and repurpose these as part of improvements in this area. Public realm enhancements will help to create an attractive and safe environment that people want to visit and spend time in.
- 8.4 The streets to the south of George Street will support safe and attractive walking and cycling routes for residents in nearby neighbourhoods to access their town centre. A key part of this will be to address barriers at the ring road, improving junctions for walking and cycling and introducing more frequent crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 8.5 The area includes some of Luton's oldest streets, and the area has remained resilient to a great amount of change. A key part of the strategy is ensuring the area continues to evolve to support the needs of local and new residents, whilst also complementing the varied uses and activities in other parts of town and strengthening connections to them through a network of pedestrian friendly streets.

What local people said...

- It would be great to plan some fun events at Market Hill or to use it as a place for theatre
- Focusing on the movement away from brick and mortar retail and creating an appealing alternative town centre to be proud of
- George Street should be the place for restaurants and cafes - it's already pedestrianised with space to sit outside
- We need to prioritise making inviting spaces for parents and children
- I like seeing the ABC cinema there and support it being repurposed



Figure 1.37: Artist's impression looking east along George Street



Existing view looking west along Station Road

Development and design strategy



Hornsey Town Hall ©Google
Active new uses for historic buildings



Mews / maisonettes



Courtyard residential-led development

8.6 The development and design strategy for this area focuses on the refurbishment of key George Street buildings and the central part of the Mall, supporting shifting land uses along George Street, and infill development along Stuart Street to help transform the route into a more pedestrian friendly boulevard.

8.7 The refurbishment of the central portion of the Mall will help to strengthen the retail role of this part of the town centre, complement activities on George Street and improve connections across town. Refurbishment will include:

- the creation of new Mall entrances at the eastern and western ends, facilitating easy access to first floor level
- refurbishment of George Street entrance to the Mall
- opportunity to rework the northern facade of the Mall on Silver Street to make a more active and attractive edge
- re-use of vacant units as entrepreneurial spaces, community services and workspace
- adjustment of servicing arrangements to allow the central mall to be serviced without relying on the Melson Street service entrance and the Library Road service exit (likely to use the access point from St John Street next to the multi storey entrance)

8.8 There is also potential for the former ABC cinema site to be brought forward with refurbishment of the historic frontage/sensitive replacement and redevelopment of the rear of the site as a high density residential-led mixed use development. The strategy recognises the ABC cinema as a key part of Luton's 20th century heritage which should be celebrated.

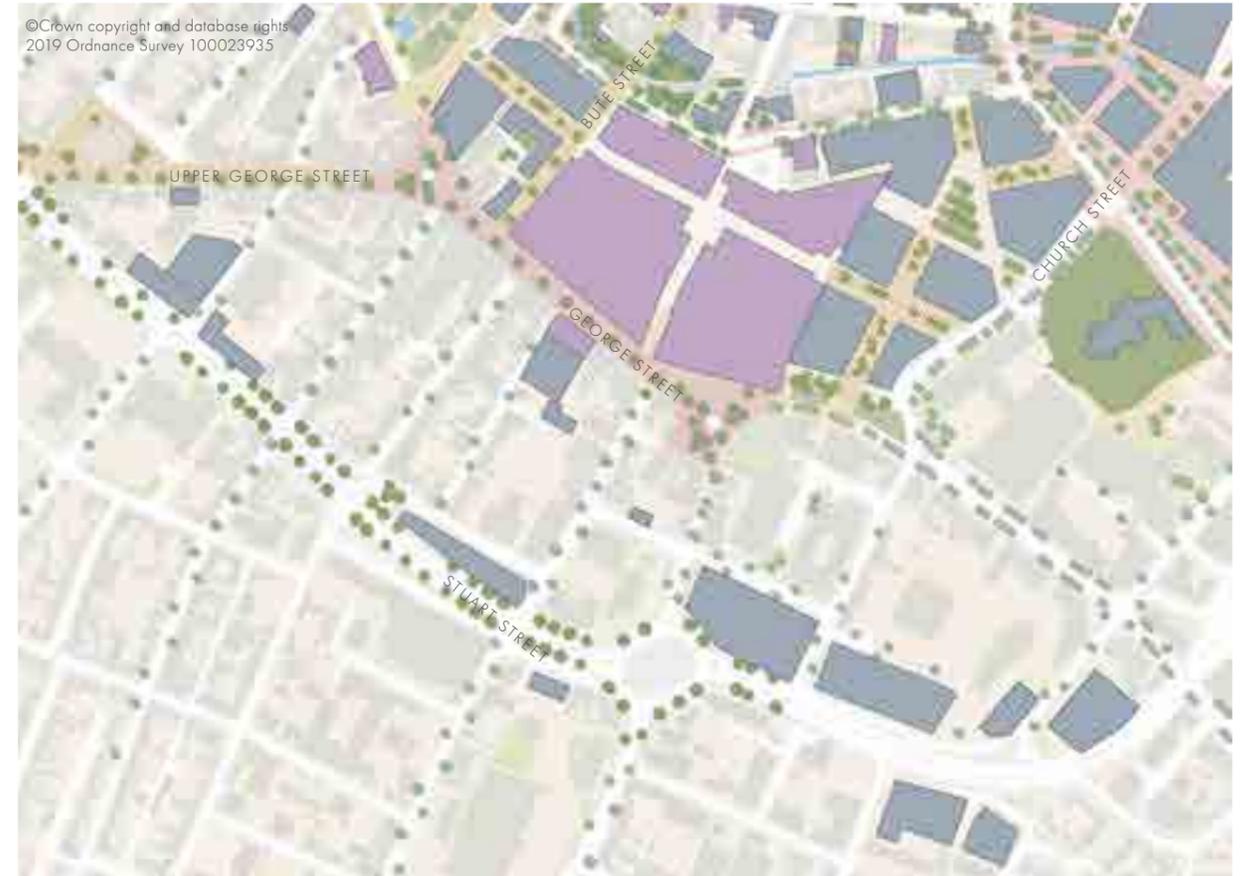


Figure 1.38: Masterplan strategy for George Street and South

8.9 Other improvements along George Street should help to support shifting land uses. Shop front improvement schemes and bringing in new uses will help to achieve this.

8.10 Infill development along streets south of George Street including Stuart Street will help to provide homes and other uses, as well as strengthen and evolve the character of the area. The space around Chapel Street has the potential to be redeveloped for mixed use.

8.11 New development will be mid-rise throughout the town centre. Sites in this area will be between four and eight storeys, and must be sensitive to lower rise and heritage context through much of the area.

KEY POINTS

- Refurbishment of the central part of the Mall, including new entrances and reuse of vacant units
- Refurbishment of ABC cinema
- Infill development along Stuart Street and streets south of George Street
- Supporting shifting land uses along George Street
- Core focus of the strategy is on public realm and movement improvements (see next page)



New and improved walking and cycling provision



Southbank Installation



Street in Montreal
Transforming George Street



Crossing Hereford ring road
Dealing with the barrier of the ring road

Movement and public realm

8.12 The key movement and public realm interventions for George Street and South are:

1. **New and improved pedestrian crossings** will provide much easier access from south of Stuart Street into the town centre. At-grade crossings over the ring road should be introduced at priority locations, which include at the Wellington Street and Cardiff Road junctions. This will require managing vehicle capacity. Crossings should be accompanied by public realm enhancements to a series of streets to improve links between George Street and Stuart street.
2. **Transform George Street** - this includes significant greening ie. reintroducing trees and planting, and exploring opportunities for artist-led enhancement and the introduction of play using the level change around Market Hill / Park Square.
3. **Stuart Street pedestrian, cyclist, bus and public realm improvements** - this includes using the ring road to help simplify and improve the bus network.
4. **Improvements to Chapel Street underpass**
This is an important connection from a number of neighbourhoods to the south. The space next to it could be used for temporary activities or meanwhile uses in the short term.
5. **Explore scope to introduce a mobility service bus along George Street in the long term** - this could be a small on-demand bus and would help to enhance connections and accessibility in the town and support the long term viability and vibrancy of George Street.
6. **Reconfiguring car parking** - the Central car park and Regent Street car park would remain in all scenarios. The Market car park would be removed in the medium term.



Figure 1.39: Movement and public realm strategy for George Street and South

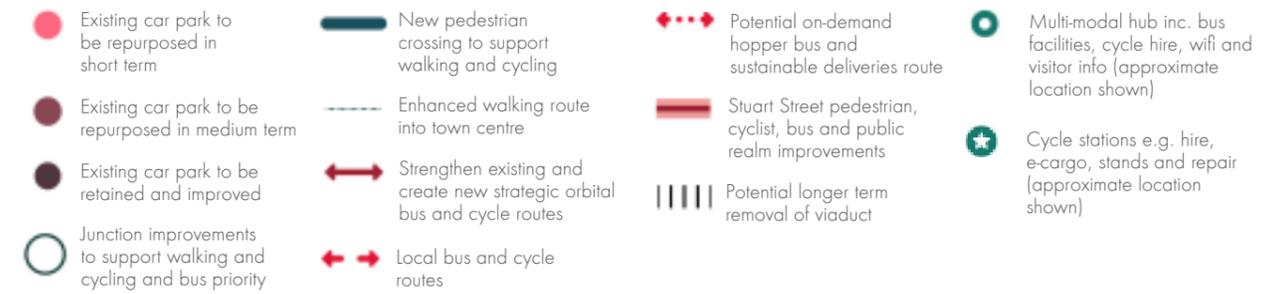


Figure 1.40: Sketch showing long term vision for transformation of public realm on Stuart Street

Phasing and delivery

- 8.13** There are two priorities for early interventions in this area.
- 8.14** The first is focused on George Street itself. Enhancing the activities on George Street and lifting the experience of the street is key. This will include prioritising some key buildings to see them come back into use through imaginative proposals for entrepreneurial space - whether that be new forms of retail/ market space, workspace or adapting spaces to become community uses such as health centres. An early win will be the ABC Cinema site.
- 8.15** The second priority is improving access to George Street from neighbourhoods from the south. Public realm interventions will be prioritised to support easier crossing of Stuart Street, enabling George Street to be fed much more easily by footfall from the south. These interventions will be largely public sector-led, but could be supported by development sites adjacent to Stuart Street.
- 8.16** In the medium term the emphasis on George Street will continue with further diversification of uses and general environmental upgrades to the street scene. Away from George Street a number of infill opportunities can start to come forward. These will help to increase the residential population in this area, offering a range of housing typologies to appeal to a good range of new residents.

Short term (0-5 years)

Former ABC cinema site is brought forward with refurbishment of the historic frontage and redevelopment of the rear of the site as a high density mixed use development



Medium term (5-10 years)

Improvements to George to support shifting land uses - e.g. supporting shop front improvements, and bringing in new uses

Refurbishment of underused or vacant buildings for entrepreneurial space, community use or at upper levels for residential use

Enhanced entrance to central core Mall



Long term (10+ years)

Scope to introduce a small on-demand bus along George Street to support enhanced connections and accessibility in the town and support long term viability and vibrancy of George Street

Bute Street established as a street level link between Silver Street and George Street, with western end of Mall redeveloped as street-based retail and mixed use



Town centre south



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