Staines-upon-Thames Town Centre Development Framework

Prepared on behalf of SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Section 1.0
Introduction

What is the Staines-upon-Thames Town Centre Development Framework?

1.1 Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC) has appointed a team of urban design and planning specialists, led by David Lock Associates (DLA), alongside Latcham, providing movement and access inputs, to prepare a Development Framework for Staines-upon-Thames town centre. The purpose of the Development Framework is to articulate clear guidance for the transformation and regeneration of the centre of Staines-upon-Thames.

1.2 Staines-upon-Thames has been identified by SBC as having an opportunity to grow and develop into a thriving and vibrant town centre, building on its existing successful high street and its enviable riverside location. The Development Framework has been drafted to identify some of the issues currently facing the town centre, and articulate opportunities for change, improvements and development, that will collectively deliver a successful and attractive town centre environment.

1.3 The Development Framework identifies key development and opportunities for improvements to public realm throughout the town centre, alongside design guidance to ensure that any change is managed effectively and results in positive improvements to the townscape and preserves the historic environment and unique character of the riverside in particular.

1.4 The town centre Development Framework study area boundary is shown overleaf.

Figure 1: Staines-upon-Thames Development Framework Boundary

Planning Policy Context

1.5 The Development Framework has been prepared to build upon and provide more detailed guidance on the emerging Spelthorne Local Plan's policy for Staines-upon-Thames and is intended to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), alongside the Local Plan, thereby forming part of the statutory planning policy framework for Spelthorne.

1.6 It has been prepared in parallel with the emerging Local Plan, to ensure it aligns with the wider growth strategy for the Borough, and in particular the agreed balance between Staines-upon-Thames as a focus for growth, and the limited release of green belt sites for development, which in combination will address the agreed level of housing need.

1.7 Local Plan policy SP1 details the policy position for Staines-upon-Thames, recognising it as a key focus for housing, employment, and retail growth in the Borough. The Development Framework SPD will sit beneath and provide guidance to help implement policy SP1.

Policy SP1: Staines-upon-Thames

Strategy

1. Recognising its size, location and significant opportunity for further regeneration, Staines-upon-Thames will be a key focus for housing, employment and retail development in the Borough. The guidance for how the town grows sustainably and coherently will be provided within a new Staines Development Framework (the Framework) to deliver development to meet need.

Infrastructure

2. Growth of the town will be dependent on enhanced infrastructure, particularly to capitalise on the proximity to Heathrow Airport. The Council will support proposals that facilitate new and improved public and sustainable transport links, education facilities, healthcare services, and social and community uses in accessible locations, working with infrastructure providers to identify projects for funding.

Retail and Leisure

3. New development should support the position of Staines at the top of the retail and leisure hierarchy within the Borough. Proposals that contribute to culture, the arts and access to the River Thames will be considered favourably in accordance with the Framework.

4. Mixed-use development that has the potential to introduce new community and healthcare uses to the centre will be encouraged which increase foot-fall and contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre.

Character

5. The Staines Conservation Area (shown on the Policies Map) will be preserved and enhanced. New development in Staines is likely to be high density in suitable locations within the town centre to maximise efficient use of land but will be expected to achieve high quality design in accordance with the Framework. Proposals will be supported that protect and enhance the local character of the area.

6. The Staines Development Framework sets out more sensitive character areas where height and density limits will apply to new buildings. Development proposals in the relevant zones will be expected to comply with these limits unless, in exceptional cases, there is robust justification for a deviation that weighs heavily in favour of granting permission. This could include a higher proportion of affordable housing than required by policy, exemplary design or significant benefits to the community.

Opportunities

7. Southern Rail Access to Heathrow that includes a station at Staines, and Southern Light Rail as the Council's preferred solution, is considered essential for the town to maximise access to the airport, regardless of any expansion proposals.

8. Any proposed tall buildings will be designed to reflect the redefined character of Staines and the design is to be of high standard, guided by principles in the Framework. There are opportunities to improve existing local leisure facilities and the evening economy.

9. There are opportunities for attractive riverside development and public realm enhancement. Improved access will be encouraged in order to maximise the asset that is the River Thames-side location.

10. Renewable and low carbon energy solutions will be expected to be incorporated in all new development, including opportunities for combined heat and power (CHP) and district heat networks.

Sustainability Appraisal Indicators

	1. Homes	2. Health	3. Flooding		4. Soil	5. Pollution	6. Biodiversity	7. Heritage	8. Open space/ Landscape	9. Transport	10. Economy	11. Climate Change	12. Water	
Short Term	+	+	0		+	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	?
Medium Term	++	+	0		+	+	0	+	0	+	+	0	0	?
Long Term	++	+	0	?	++	++	0	++	+	++	++	+	0	?

Reasoned Justification

Staines-upon-Thames is the main town centre within Spelthorne and therefore sits top of the centre hierarchy in the Borough. In this role, Staines is required to support a variety of uses, including shops, offices, leisure and entertainment facilities. It is therefore necessary to consider how to ensure Staines continues to perform its function as part of the Framework. Through this, Staines has the opportunity to grow and develop into a thriving town that can take advantage of its close proximity to Heathrow Airport and proposed new public transport schemes are likely to enhance its connectivity further. Identified as a 'Step up Town' by the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership, Staines is already on the map and its growth is sustainable and meets the needs for residents, businesses and visitors. For this reason, the Staines Development Framework will deliver an ambitious and viable vision for the transformation and regeneration of the whole town. The Framework will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to guide decision-making, supporting the Local Plan and this policy.

As well as accommodating growth, Staines also has significant character through the Staines Conservation Area and the proximity to and views of the river. There is therefore an expectation that any new development which affects the setting of the Conservation Area or the river will respect the character and enhance this.

The growth of Staines will allow opportunities to improve public realm and pedestrian linkages through the town centre. This will also provide opportunity to take advantage of the river and the footpath network through the Thames Path where possible. Utilising this asset is therefore a key strand of enhancing Staines and justifies its inclusion as part of the policy.

Mixed-use development within Staines town centre will reduce the need to travel and provide homes close to transport hubs. Mixed-use development presents opportunities to make good use of community combined heat and power, as the different types of use spread demand for heat and power over the day, evening and night. The buildings are likely to be in close proximity and reduce the cost of developing the heat network. Leisure and retail facilities can provide a base demand to help the efficiency of the system. Taller buildings will require piling for deep foundations which may provide opportunities for ground source heat.

Monitoring Indicators

Indicator	Target	Data Source
Amount of floorspace for main town centre uses	N/A	Planning applications and appeals
Number of dwellings completed each year within Staines	N/A	Planning applications and appeals

Key Evidence

- Staines Development Framework (forthcoming)
- Retail and Town Centre Study 2018
- Enterprise M3 LEP

Sustainability Appraisal Alternative Options

Alternative Option 1: Don't include a policy specific to Staines. Let the market decide the quantity and location of development.	Reject alternative. This would offer no control over development and could negatively impact character and the settlement hierarchy.
Alternative Option 2: Include a policy that specifically outlines how development should be accommodated in Staines. Direct growth to the most appropriate areas, prioritising those near employment and transport links. Consider the hierarchy of settlements to inform growth patterns.	Preferred approach. Having localised policies in the Plan is considered to ensure that each area of the Borough accommodates an appropriate amount of growth and each area can be planned for effectively across the plan period.

Core Strategy 2009 policies to be replaced

- Policy TC1: Staines Town Centre

1.8 The national policy context for growth, sustainable development and town centre regeneration is established in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). In particular, paragraph 86 requires planning policies to support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management, and adaptation. The NPPF encourages the allocation of a range of town centre sites to meet local need for retail, leisure, office and other town centre uses, as well as recognising the important role residential development has in ensuring the vitality of centres.

1.9 Other elements of the NPPF that are directly applicable to the planning of Staines-upon-Thames are the requirement to make the most effective use of land and achieve appropriate densities, taking into account the availability of infrastructure, the desirability to maintain character and importance of securing high quality design. The government's ambition to achieve well designed places has been strengthened in the most recent changes to the NPPF, which advocates the provision of local frameworks for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design, all of which align with the aspirations of the Staines-upon-Thames Development Framework.

The Wider Context

1.10 The Development Framework provides a positive and proactive set of guidance to inform future development in the town centre. It is important to note however, that certain factors within the wider context, fall out with the control of the Development Framework, but will also influence the town centre's future. These include the following:

- Wider traffic circulation – Staines-upon-Thames town centre is located in very close proximity to the strategic road network, in particular the M25 and M3. Any changes to this network could have direct impacts on traffic movements into and through the town centre with significant consequences for placemaking as a result.
- As with many other town centres, particularly in high areas of housing need in the south-east, central development sites in Staines-upon-Thames have been under considerable market pressure and some are, or have been, the subject of planning applications or appeals. The outcome of these applications is beyond the control of this Development Framework, although they of course provide context for it.

Purpose Of The Development Framework

- The level and quality of provision of public transport into and through Staines-upon-Thames town centre is a key factor in its future success as a sustainable and thriving centre. The Development Framework has no direct control over this provision now or in the future, yet many elements of the framework are dependent upon a well functioning, efficient public transport service. For example, a gradual reduction in car parking is reliant upon the increased availability and likelihood of using public transport as an alternative to the car.
- Since the Development Framework was commissioned in 2019, we have experienced the Covid-19 pandemic. This has had far reaching consequences for the way people live, work, shop, travel and socialise, which in turn have direct consequences on the future of town centres. Chapter 2 of this report considers how these structural changes have influenced Staines-upon-Thames and decisions on how to plan for its future.

1.11 The Development Framework will fulfil a number of roles as follows:

- **Destination –** the Development Framework will articulate to members of the public SBC's intention for the town centre as a whole and what sort of place it will become.
- **Key projects and opportunities –** the Development Framework will identify key projects and opportunities for intervention in the town centre within the context of its wider ambitions. This will indicate to potential developers where and what type of investment might be supported. It will also give elected Members a clear basis for decision making and understanding of the future of the town centre
- **Development Management –** whilst the Development Framework cannot introduce new planning policies into the Development Plan, as an SPD and once adopted, it will be a material consideration in decision making. As such, relevant planning applications submitted within Staines-upon-Thames town centre will be assessed against the guidance in this document and will need to demonstrate compliance with it.
- **Guidance –** the Development Framework provides clear guidance on what is expected from new development, so that developers and others can quickly understand key design requirements for each opportunity area and ensure they are delivered as part of scheme designs.
- **Wider policy –** the Development Framework will evidence ambition for interventions and policy beyond its own remit and will act as a stimulus for the production of policy by wider partners such as Surrey County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Preparation of the Development Framework

1.12 The Development Framework has been produced in a series of defined stages as follows:

Stage	Timetable
Analysis and Review Report	August 2020
Objectives and Options Report	April 2021
Public Consultation on Objectives and Options	May - June 2021
Staines-upon-Thames Development Framework Task Group Sessions	Autumn/ Winter 2021
Drafting the Development Framework	Early 2022
Public Consultation on Framework	Summer 2022
Finalisation of Framework	Late 2022
Adoption as SBC policy as Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	2023

1.13 **Analysis and Review:** To fully understand the issues affecting Staines Town Centre, and thereby inform the development of the masterplan, a review of existing information, documents and policies has been undertaken together with an urban design analysis of the town centre. The review and analysis has focused on four main areas:

- Background documents comprising existing studies, appraisals, policies and plans (the 'evidence base' for the town centre);
- The physical character and function of the town centre focusing on its strengths, weaknesses and historic growth;
- Access and movement around the town centre; and
- The property market in Staines.

1.14 **Objectives and Options:** this stage summarises the results of the first key stage of the preparation of the Development Framework and prepared the way for the first phase of public consultation. It focused on the high level issues drawn from local evidence and identified objectives to address issues and achieve ambitions.

1.15 **Public Consultation:** The Objectives and Options paper was consulted upon in Spring 2021, alongside a comprehensive questionnaire to understand the public's views on the issues and objectives identified. It received a high level of interest and response, with feedback directly informing the draft Development Framework.

1.16 **Task Group Sessions:** production of this Development Framework has been undertaken in parallel with a series of themed Task Group sessions on key topics such as movement and access, public realm and densities/massing. At each stage, issues have been discussed with Members on the Task Group and agreement reached on the majority of matters, allowing the Development Framework to progress.

1.17 **Draft Development Framework:** a draft document was produced, drawing together all the work from earlier stages into a comprehensive strategy.

1.18 **Development Framework consultation:** The draft was subject to a formal six week public consultation, alongside the emerging Local Plan. This was accompanied by numerous public events and publicity.

1.19 **Final Development Framework:** following the consultation, responses were collated and analysed, with consideration given as to how the draft Development Framework might need to be revised to produce this final document.

Structure of the Report

1.20 The Development Framework is structured as follows:

Chapter 2: Town Centre Today – a profile of the town centre as it is now, key issues, challenges and opportunities

Chapter 3: Objectives and Consultation – the key issues and objectives which shape the Development Framework, and how they have been consulted upon

Chapter 4: Big Ideas – the 6 big Development Framework 'ideas'

Chapter 5: Development Framework Strategies – a review of the structure of the town, guidance on massing and density, movement and access and public realm priorities

Chapter 6: Design for Urban Living – principles to inform the development of new homes in the town centre

Chapter 7: Development Opportunities – identifying key sites within the town centre, and setting out principles for successful development

Chapter 8: Delivery – setting out how the town can achieve the ambitions in this framework

Section 2.0
The Town Centre Today

Introduction

2.1 Staines-upon-Thames is a vibrant, riverside, market town and is the principal town centre in Spelthorne. It is well positioned with excellent road links to Heathrow Airport, Central London and the rest of Surrey. It has rail links to central London, Reading and Windsor, although it lacks a direct rail link to Heathrow.

2.2 Whilst the largest town in Spelthorne, Staines Upon Thames is not a major destination town centre, and serves primarily a local mixed convenience and everyday function for its immediate and extended surrounding catchment. It does not have the critical mass of retailing and service uses found in Kingston, Guildford and to a slightly lesser extent Woking, all of which draw from its customer base. It is not a "day out shopping" but more somewhere that people go regularly to fulfil their day to day needs, and at this it succeeds well.

2.3 This Development Framework for Staines Upon Thames town centre considers the pressures on and issues facing the town. It sets out key principles to determine how best to manage its growth and evolution over the Local Plan period, in a way that ensures sustainability, ongoing vitality and how it can be adapted as a place where people live (and want to live) as well as work and transact business and commerce.

Context

2.5 Preparing for the growth of Staines Upon Thames town centre is taking place during a period of unprecedented speed of change for town centres nationally. From March 2020 until late February 2022 restrictions were placed on the way people lived in the UK in response to the need to protect health wellbeing and the capacity of public services during the COVID 19 pandemic. These restrictions have accelerated some trends and established others which have a direct impact on how town centres are now used, and what people demand of them going forward.

2.6 Traditionally our town centres have been driven by retailing, and the need for people to access goods and services. During the pandemic restrictions the already established trend towards shopping electronically grew dramatically [stats to go in here] as people were for periods not allowed to shop in the traditional way. As restrictions were lifted, the online shopping habit remained, and people sought more local centres for the shopping and socialising they want to do more traditionally. Where possible people now look for locations open to the fresh air, which has further established the decline already being felt by now outdated shopping centres. With such structural changes taking place in retailing, many bigger name shops have gone out of business, or have consolidated their representation in only key destination towns. It is the shopping centres in which many of these occupiers were represented that have experienced the brunt of this.

2.7 The growth of on-line shopping has penetrated all age groups but is more firmly established and represents a higher proportion of spend for younger age groups. Over time, this will further reinforce this trend. The counter to this is the development of services and experiences that can be provided in town centres – the "what Amazon Can't Do" – together with the growth of speciality, artisan retailing that provides a unique offer not readily accessible via the internet.

2.8 Counter intuitively, the smaller towns more focussed on local needs, in particular those with a high quality public realm and visually interesting environment have flourished as restrictions have been lifted Staines upon Thames town centre has not been immune from the challenges, but as a centre serving a local catchment, with an attractive high street and river frontage it is well placed to benefit from the shift to a different focus based on a more unique local offer and character.

2.9 The pandemic has also led to a shift in working patterns. Arising from periods of enforced working at home for those that could, and a realisation that this can be cost effective with no diminution in productivity, a trend for hybrid working which is expected to sustain for the long term has emerged. This is changing the times at which people access the town centre, the reasons they go, and the quality of place they want to find when they get there. Together with the growth in social media and the desire to share being seen in nice places, this is reinforcing the need for towns to be attractive as well as functional.

2.10 Underlying all of this is a growing awareness of climate change, and the need to take action both personally and collectively to reduce our carbon footprint. Sustainability is now at the forefront of policy and decision making across all spheres of activity. This is determining the priority for new homes to be in connected places, and for people to access services and recreation locally, and where possible without using a car. It is also establishing the wider value of a green environment, in every sense of the word, in its ability to contribute to stemming global warming, cleaning the air, creating a positive environment and promoting health and wellbeing for those with access to it.

2.11 It is in this wider context that the future development and growth of Staines upon Thames has been considered, and this is reflected in the issues, objectives and consultation responses that have shaped the development framework.

2.12 This chapter summarises the key issues, outlook and priorities for change, and challenges for the future for Staines upon Thames Town centre, as set out in the Analysis and Review Paper, and Objectives and Options report. From this were derived six overriding objectives that underpin the Framework, which were consulted on in May 2021.

2.13 Consultation feedback has been woven through the resulting Ideas and priorities set out in the rest of the Framework, and this chapter provides an overview of the process.

Town Centre Strengths and Weaknesses

2.14 The town centre has a busy and bustling retail heart along its historic High Street, with pedestrianised streets connecting the attached Two Rivers Retail Park and Elmsleigh shopping centre. These are well-used, although experiencing the structural change in retail floorspace needs that is common to all UK town centres.

2.15 Away from the main heart, the town centre contains the attractive Conservation Area along Church Street, with a traditional riverside village character. Other historic assets include the Oast House (although this is currently disused), and the Old Town Hall and Market Square area.

2.16 The River Thames is the town's outstanding natural asset, although it is underused and poorly connected into the rest of the town centre. There are some green spaces, notably Memorial Gardens, and some connections to wider open spaces such as Lammas Land and Staines Moor to the north.

2.17 The town centre is also well-connected by rail to central and west London, and by bus to surrounding towns and suburbs, with a bus station providing interchange opportunities between routes. The quality of public transport provision and walking and cycling infrastructure is comparatively poor, especially when compared to locations in nearby parts of London, due to the dominance of vehicle traffic in the town centre.

2.18 Many of the town's weaknesses are related to vehicle movement, and the infrastructure and built environment resulting from it. The major A308 dual carriageway carves through the town, dividing the core from the River Thames, and creating a poor quality, polluted environment in the heart of the town centre. Buildings along this route, especially around the Tothill and Elmsleigh areas, turn their back on the street making it an unattractive place to be. The Market Square is cut off from the High Street, causing it to be poorly used, even though it is the main route down to the river.

2.19 This severance of the town from its river means the main riverfront park, Memorial Gardens, lacks activity and has few attractors, making it underused.

2.20 The rivers Thames, Wraysbury and Colne reduce permeability into the town centre and constrict access points, causing conflicts and pinch points. Railway lines further isolate the town centre, reducing and constraining access points, especially for pedestrians and cyclists.

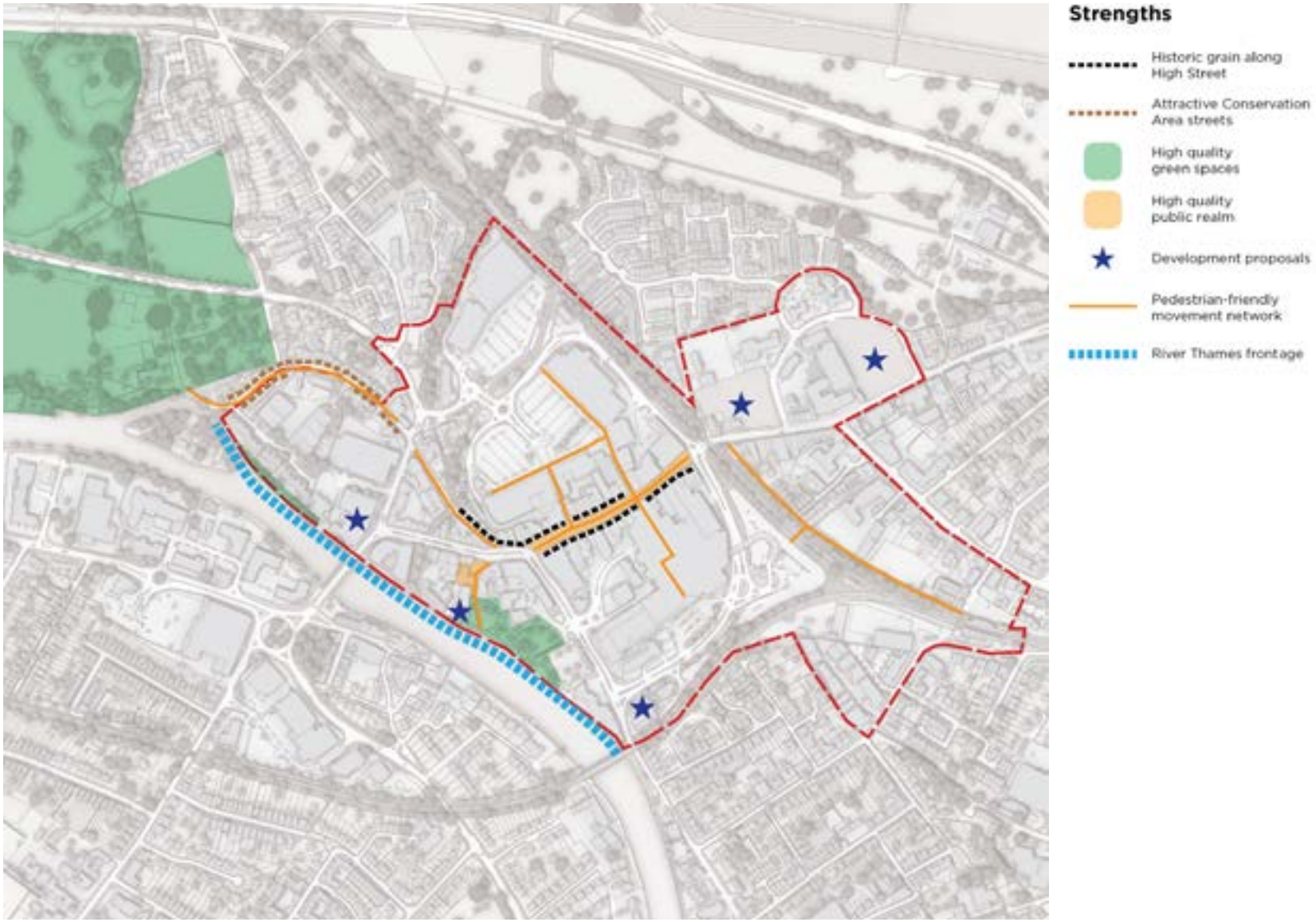


Figure 2: Town centre strengths

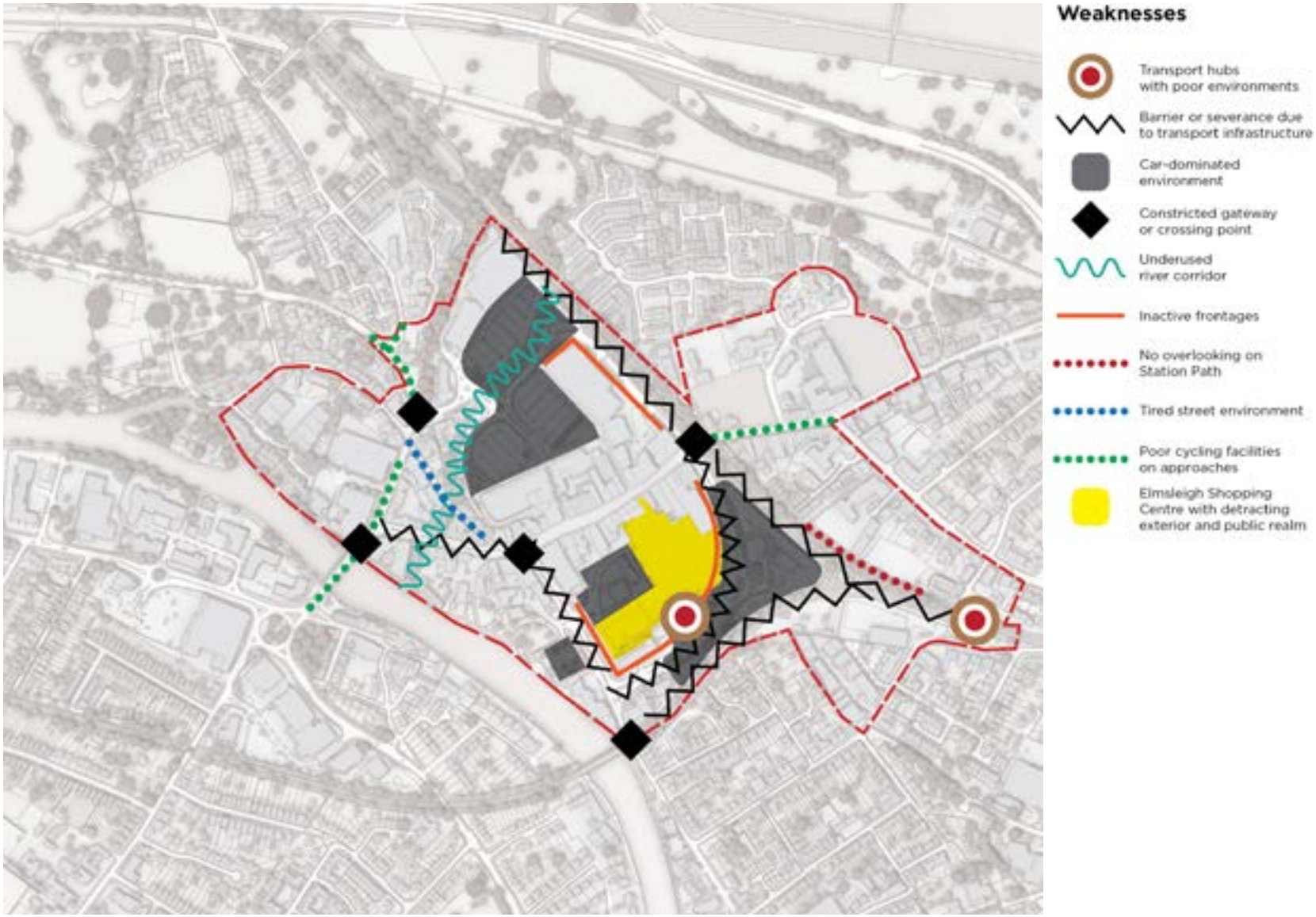


Figure 3: Town centre weaknesses

Key Issues

2.21 A number of town centre 'headline issues' have been identified through the review and analysis of the evidence base. These can be grouped into six headline issues that the Framework will consider. They comprise:

1. Delivering market and genuinely affordable homes;
2. Supporting innovation and commercial activity;
3. Providing a mix of uses and community facilities in the town centre;
4. Enhancing the visitor economy;
5. Built form, public realm and open space; and
6. Movement and access.

Delivering market and genuinely affordable homes

2.22 Providing local housing keeps people within the Borough, which in turn helps to support local shops and businesses. Residential uses are often incorporated into town and city centres to improve the night-time economy and create a vibrant centre.

2.23 There is significant pressure on housing affordability in Spelthorne. There is a shortage of affordable homes, key worker accommodation and private rented properties. The provision of market and truly affordable homes is imperative in attracting and retaining residents in the Borough, and subsequently sustaining a vibrant and thriving town centre and local economy.

Supporting innovation and commercial activity

2.24 Staines-upon-Thames has a strong and growing representation of SMEs and start-up businesses. These businesses boost the local economy and create local jobs, which helps to minimise out-commuting and increase local spending power.

2.25 There is an opportunity to better support these businesses, which could be achieved through establishing new flexible floorspace, incubator units and serviced offices. The emerging Spelthorne Local Plan policy for Staines (SP1) seeks to direct B1a and B1b uses to Staines Town Centre.

Providing a mix of uses and community facilities in the town centre

2.26 It is important to recognise the changing patterns in how people use and interact with their town centres. The maintenance of a variety of suitable uses will promote the vitality and viability of the centre, both for residents and visitors alike.

2.27 Staines Town Centre currently performs a strong comparison goods role in the Borough. However, with the replacement of Waitrose by M&S Simply Food, the convenience goods offer could benefit from diversification and expansion. The Council's local policies seek to ensure that Staines-upon-Thames remains the preferred location for main town centre uses, and the Council's extensive landholding provides an opportunity to improve and strengthen the town centre offer.

2.28 At the same time, it is important to recognise and adapt to the structural shift in the way town centres are used. The growth in online retailing, accelerated by the COID 19 pandemic,

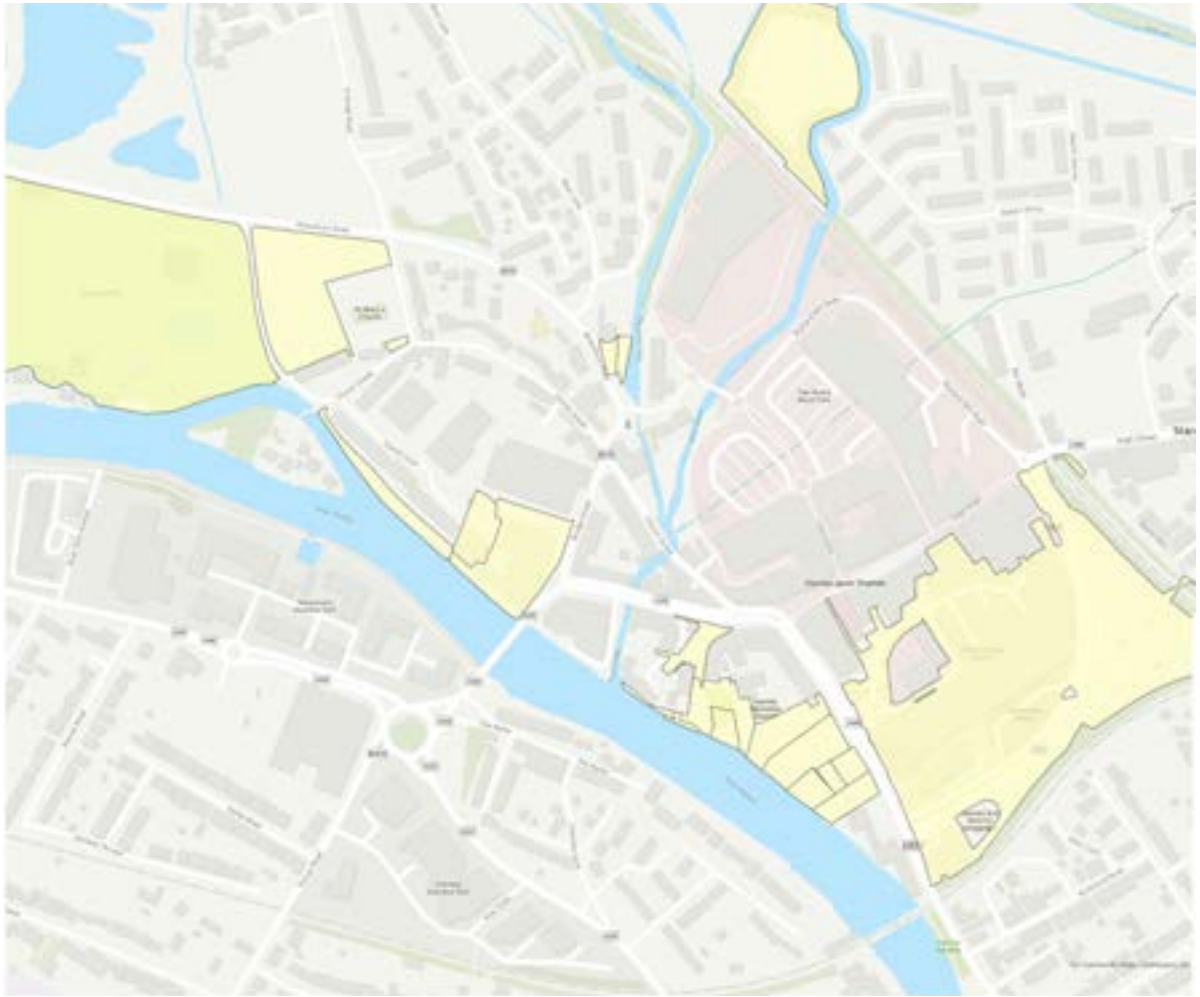


Figure 4: Land ownership in Staines-upon-Thames - SBC ownership in light yellow

has demonstrated the need to move away from reliance on retail as the only meaningful attraction in town centres. Leisure uses and restaurants are now key in increasing dwell time and attracting visitors from a wider catchment area. An enticing and enjoyable environment with space for a range of activities and events is also a determining factor.

2.29 Residential provision within town centres is a powerful tool in improving the night-time economy, vibrancy and vitality of the town centre. Mixed-use schemes also reduce the need to travel and encourage sustainable modes of travel through close proximity to transport hubs.

2.30 Critically, to support a diverse town centre community, a range of supporting services and facilities must also be provided. This will need to include schools and childcare facilities, appropriate health services, leisure and recreation, community and social care provision, as well as amenity space. These community infrastructure requirements will be an essential part of ensuring Staines-upon-Thames grows in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Enhancing the visitor economy

2.31 Staines Town Centre benefits from a natural asset in its River Thames frontage. There is a clear opportunity to improve the use and attraction of the riverside as a destination through leisure and tourism activities and enhancements to the public realm. To support this, improved links and better access need to be provided to facilitate and encourage usage by residents and visitors alike.

2.32 The existing retail mix, Vue cinema, restaurants and bars provide an important leisure offer, in addition to annual local events such as Staines-upon-Thames Day. The Staines-upon-Thames BID also has a calendar of events ranging from comedy nights to outdoor cinema screenings by the waterfront. The Spelthorne Visitor Economy Strategy highlights the need to build on this offer and further raise the profile of Staines-upon-Thames.

Built form, public realm & open space

2.33 The scale and grain of new proposals should integrate with the historic pattern and scale of the High Street and associated popular core areas.

2.34 The River Thames frontage needs to be better integrated into the rest of the town centre through physical connections and improvements to the built form facing the river.

2.35 The town centre is currently ringed by transport infrastructure; the highways element of this infrastructure can be reduced in scale and transformed into a more urban character street to reduce the severance and create an improved pedestrian experience. Entrances and gateways need to reflect the quality and attractiveness of the core town centre, making walking and cycling journeys pleasant and enjoyable.

2.36 Staines-upon-Thames is rich with natural and historic assets, and it is important to respect, preserve and enhance their significance. New development should be sympathetic to the Conservation Area, views to and across the river and the character of the town.

Movement and Access

Breaking Down Barriers

2.37 Barriers to free movement across the town centre need to be broken down or removed. The framework can do this by identifying the key barriers that are human in scale. They can be found across the network of streets and spaces in the town centre.

2.38 The biggest barriers are formed by the numerous urban roads. In particular, the barrier of the A308 needs to be tackled. Currently the form of the road layout in Thames Street and Clarence Street effectively divides the town from the River Thames. Key severance points make it difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to get around town, affecting the experience of these users. New links and routes will need to be identified to alleviate these issues, and to better connect with existing pedestrian priority streets and cycle facilities.

Public Transport Provision

2.39 Public transport services and facilities need to expand in order to enable and support more sustainable growth patterns. Public transport already plays an important role in getting people to the town centre and this role needs to increase in the future to enable growth and achieve the right balance of sustainable travel.

2.40 Parts of the bus route network are overcomplicated and need to be simplified in order to encourage higher frequency services. The current bus routing is excessively complex within the town centre and doesn't cover the whole town centre, excluding or limiting provision in Two Rivers especially.

2.41 The bus network overall is of a low quality, generally dominated by low frequency bus services, making bus an unattractive option for the infrequent user. New interchange areas need to be identified and existing interchanges need to be drastically improved and better integrated with the street environment.

2.42 The existing Staines bus station is functional and well used, but its physical environment is poor. It is important to improve the bus station and wider bus infrastructure as a catalyst for encouraging the use of sustainable travel modes by both residents and visitors alike.

2.43 Staines Station also has a poor physical environment, providing a negative first impression of the town centre. This busy interchange requires intervention to meet the needs of its users and improve the perception and important first impressions of the town. Pedestrian connections from the station to the town centre also require improvement.

Walking

2.44 Planning and designing for increased footfall should be central to any strategy and this must start with expanding the evidence base which at the moment is non-existent. The approach of improving urban environmental quality will attract and encourage more people into the town.

2.45 People attract people, but not enough is known currently about the patterns of pedestrian movement and activities that take place. More research is required to help develop the Local Plan. This is especially important when you consider footfall and a bigger residential population is going to increase pedestrian and cycle flows.

Traffic and the Road Network

2.46 Peak hour congestion in key locations in the town centre still needs to be tackled within a wider policy of providing alternative more sustainable travel choices.

2.47 The road network has sufficient highway capacity to accommodate today's movement of vehicle flows. But traffic congestion issues do exist today in some places at key junctions, especially at key gateways and corridors into town.

2.48 Whilst the overall strategy should be to restrict highway capacity growth there are opportunities for rebalancing by adding and removing road capacity.

2.49 It is not valid, desirable or achievable to dramatically increase highway capacity. Instead an integrated design approach is needed. Add capacity in some areas and remove in other places.

2.50 The planned shift to public transport, cycling and walking will create opportunities to take out highway capacity. These should be grabbed where benefits are to improve quality in public realm.

Public Car Parking

2.51 Staines-upon-Thames has a number of poor quality public car parks that are deteriorating or are in the wrong locations or on sites better suited to other purposes need to be redeveloped.

2.52 The town centre needs an appropriate balance of public car parking, taking into account present-day needs and a longer-term sustainable transport future. Overall there are circa 3050 car parking spaces publicly available in the town centre, see table.

2.53 A total of 2085 is Council owned and circa 965 is associated with the Two Rivers retail area. In addition to these off-street facilities the town is served with on-street parking and private non-residential (i.e., office) parking.

2.54 Public parking facilities like Tothill and Bridge Street are not well used and spare capacity exists across the town, although well-located facilities, like Elmsleigh surface have been operating at or near capacity during peak times. The plan shows sites identified for possible redevelopment.

Character Areas

2.55 Staines-upon-Thames town centre includes a wide range of different character areas , which work together to produce a varied and successful place. This section analyses each part of the town centre to understand its current character and use, and its contribution to the whole.

2.56 Eight character areas have been identified within the town centre (as shown in Figure 5). Each has a prevailing physical character as well as a predominant use or mix of uses, and each contributes in a different way to the function and form of Staines-upon-Thames. Some areas, which contribute less to the overall sense of place in the town, have suggested design strategies to integrate them further and help define their character better.

2.57 Each character area is supported by a detailed characterisation, which should be considered and taken account of by developments within these areas. The full characterisation, including materials, typical heights, scales and other details, is contained within Appendix A.

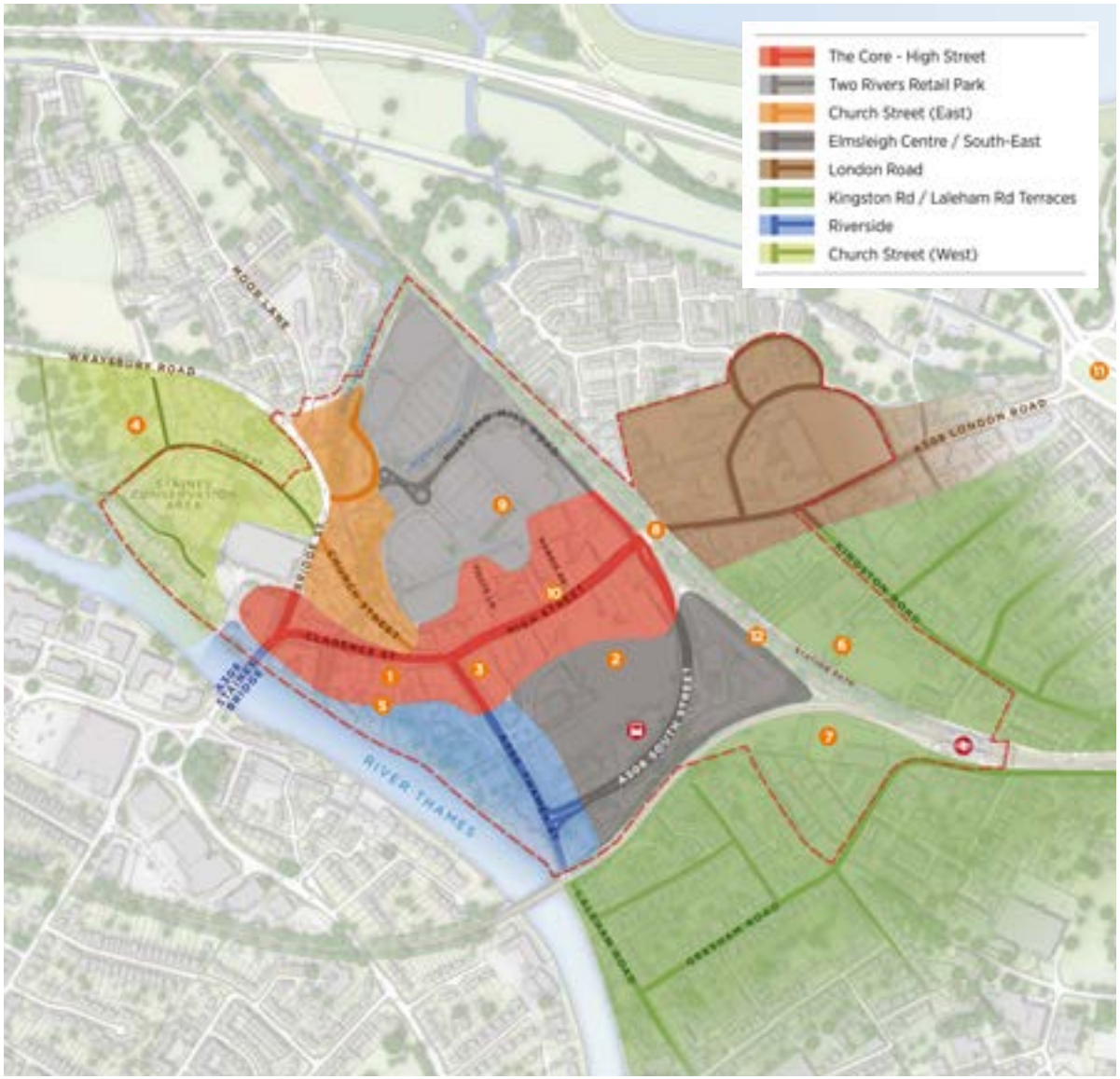


Figure 5: Town Centre Character Areas

The Core – High Street

2.58 The heart of Staines-upon-Thames is a vibrant and successful High Street. This grew up on the historic Roman road crossing Staines bridge leading towards London. It is primarily a retailing street, with high activity levels, on-street uses such as the market and local events and is at the heart of the identity of the town.

2.59 Further towards the bridge, the High Street's bustle and core retail/service function diminishes, with Clarence St (the current A308), a noisy and vehicle-dominated road, primarily functioning as a traffic artery. The physical built form is similar, with a mix of low to mid-rise buildings, but the on-street character changes.

Figure 6: High Street

Positive

- Attractive heart of town
- Human scale
- Good mix of uses

Negative

- Thames St vehicle-dominated
- Lack of Green Infrastructure on Thames St
- Poor links to river

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- Preserve character through grain, massing, mix of uses
- Reduction in vehicle domination of Thames St
- Preserve views from core area to minimise visibility of taller buildings

Riverside

2.60 The River Thames, and the bridge across it, is the primary reason for the existence of Staines-upon-Thames, and is a much valued asset.

2.61 Historically, the town 'turned its back' on the river, primarily seeing it as a location for industry and other marginal uses, and it has only been in the latter stages of the 20th century that its value as a leisure and recreation asset has been recognised, with the creation of Memorial Gardens and the Thames Path national long-distance footpath running through the town.

2.62 As a result, the Thames frontage has a mix of characters, spaces and development along it, but it is now primarily for leisure use.

Figure 7: River Front

Positive

- Access to water
- Green infrastructure

Negative

- Poor Thames St frontage
- Few links to town centre
- Car parking uses space and detracts from character

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- Improve Thames St frontage to match scale and nature of space
- Reduce vehicle domination of Thames St
- Improve links to 'Core'
- Enhance spaces and connectivity

Kingston Road & Laleham Road Terraces

Note: This area mostly does not form a part of the town centre area, however it does border an area of industrial units which may be subject to redevelopment, so understanding its character is important to inform future development.

2.63 To the north-east of the town centre, on the other side of the Staines-Windsor railway line embankment, lies an area of primarily Victorian and Edwardian terraces and semi-detached residential homes, laid out on a rectangular grid of streets running perpendicular to Kingston Road. Community and commercial uses, along with apartments, are located on Kingston Road.

Figure 8: Kingston Road & Laleham Road Terraces

Station Path and Oast House

2.64 To the southeast of the town centre lies an area similar in character, primarily residential and with Victorian and Edwardian terraces and semi-detached homes laid out on parallel streets.

2.65 This area has a strong and attractive character on the residential streets, but a more disordered and less attractive character along Kingston Road and Laleham Road. Around the railway station at the eastern end, built form is more modern.

Laleham Road area

Positive

- Attractive, coherent residential environment
- Some green infrastructure
- Oast House is a distinctive historic asset

Negative

- Main streets lack a coherent approach to frontages and building lines
- Dominance of car parks
- Poor pedestrian experience

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- Densification and stronger frontages on main streets
- Better overlooking and frontage on Station Path
- Clearer wayfinding from station to town

Church Street (West)

2.66 This area is at the heart of the protected Staines Conservation Area, with a curving main street running away from the retail core towards St. Mary's Church and Church Island. It has a quiet and secluded character, with residential uses dominating, and along Church Street has strong and attractive townscape, with buildings of appropriate scale, detailing and mix to provide a varied and intimate 'village-like' feel. A final green 'moment' where Church St meets the Thames, and the Lammas Land recreation ground completes the transition from bustling town centre to green open space.

2.67 Away from Church St, more modern industrial buildings are tucked away from the street, and a modern office development and semi-disused surface car park bordering the area detract from the overall character of the area.

2.68 This area falls within the Conservation Area designation and as such will be subject to the statutory protections afforded by its designation.

Figure 10: Church Street (west) area

Positive

- Attractive residential environment
- Clear character
- Green end near river

Negative

- Some detracting 20th century development

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- Preserve character through grain, massing, mix of uses
- Preserve views from street to minimise visibility of taller buildings

Church Street (East)

2.69 The eastern half of the Staines Conservation Area, to the north of Clarence Street, presents a different character and is the transition from 'village' to town centre core. Taller and more closely packed buildings create a more urban street environment on Church St, with secondary commercial uses. To the north, development becomes more broken up with service yards, backs of buildings and disjointed frontages facing onto main streets.

2.70 This area is woven through with the Rivers Colne and Wraysbury, both of which are bordered by significant green infrastructure but have little public access and are only experienced at occasional moments when crossing them.

2.71 This area falls within the Conservation Area designation and as such will be subject to the statutory protections afforded by its designation.

Figure 11: Church Street (east)

Positive

- Fine grain urban fabric at town centre end
- Water and green infrastructure running throughout

Negative

- Little access to water and green infrastructure
- Disjointed environment at western end
- Backs and service entrances at western end

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- New development should have frontages facing the street and with a more consistent building line to create a more coherent street scene
- Integrate water and green infrastructure to make distinct character

Two Rivers Retail Park

2.72 To the north-west of the core of the historic town centre sits the Two Rivers Retail Park, which occupies land previously used for the linoleum industry. The area is dominated by a large surface car park and associated highway infrastructure and edged by modern retail and leisure units. The retail park integrates well with the core High Street and strengthens the overall town centre offer.

2.73 Running through and along the edge of the area are the two rivers Wraysbury and Colne. The Wraysbury is surrounded by a strong green and treed corridor and footpath, but is difficult to access, and the Colne is open with grass banks but little in the way of public realm and public usage.

Figure 12: Two Rivers Retail Park

Positive

- Busy and active
- Clear pedestrian links linking to streets and core High Street

Negative

- Does not use rivers or green infrastructure
- No urban enclosure
- Poor townscape quality
- Dominance of parking

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- Infill development to form strong frontage to water
- Landscape strategy to make rivers active and part of town

London Road

2.74 On the north-eastern side of the railway tracks, under the Iron Bridge, is an extension of the High Street. Its relative inaccessibility to the rest of the town centre means it has some secondary and local retail and service uses, as well as being a focus for a number of larger high-density residential schemes, with associated ground floor retail uses.

2.75 London Road is an important gateway location for the town. The current streetscape is dominated by vehicles and has little softening green infrastructure. New development is of a much larger scale than existing buildings, and is concentrated on one side of the street, leading to a disjointed street scene.

Figure 13: London Road

Positive

- Active frontages
- Concentration of town centre living

Negative

- Vehicle-dominated street scene
- Tired traditional building stock
- Little green infrastructure

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- Reduction in vehicle domination of London Road
- General increase in heights for infill development to form coherent street
- Additional street green infrastructure

Elmsleigh Centre/ South-East

2.76 To the south-east of the High Street lies an area dominated by the Elmsleigh shopping centre, South Street and the Tothill Car Park, and associated buildings. The street environment is vehicle-dominated, aimed at moving cars through the town centre on large dual carriageways, with buildings mostly presenting service entrances or blank back façades to the street. The area has a very coarse grain of built form and has little in common with the rest of the town centre. The most active street is the route through the covered Elmsleigh shopping centre.

2.77 This part of the town centre is an important gateway for public transport users, arriving by rail or bus, and for those walking or cycling, as the majority of homes in Staines-upon-Thames located within walking or cycling distance of the town centre are located to the south-east.

2.78 The south-western edge of this area fronts onto Memorial Gardens and the River Thames, and presents a disjointed and unattractive façade of the Tothill car park, service accesses and undistinguished buildings. Overall it detracts from the character of the town centre and, when combined with the Thame Street dual carriageway, underuses the town's key asset in the river frontage.

Figure 14: Streets around Elmsleigh Centre

Positive

- Gateway - public transport, vehicles and rail

Negative

- Incoherent, poor quality environment, no clear streets, no active frontages
- Little green infrastructure
- Vehicle dominated
- Inefficient land use
- Detracts from rest of town centre and riverside

Overall Urban Design Strategies

- Redevelopment to create new streets and spaces for people
- Edges at lower heights, interior has potential to host taller buildings
- Reduction in vehicle domination

Section 3.0
Objectives & Consultation

Statement of Intent

3.1 Underpinning the Development Framework and its objectives is a suggested Statement of Intent, which is intended to guide thinking for all proposed interventions within the town centre.

The Development Framework for Staines-upon-Thames Town Centre will support and enable sustainable and inclusive growth that benefits the whole community and enhances the attractiveness of the town centre as a place to live, work and spend time in, now and into the future.

3.2 On 14 October 2020, Spelthorne Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency. Surrey County Council has also declared a Climate Emergency. The Development Framework will align with Spelthorne Borough Council's ambitions and aspirations, supporting the Council in its goal to mitigate climate change. This includes achieving a target of carbon neutrality.

Identified Objectives

3.3 Six key framework objectives have been identified to guide the implementation of the Development Framework. These arise from the Analysis and Review paper, and the identified issues set out by targeted stakeholder consultation.

3.4 The objectives have been developed from an understanding of the issues affecting the town centre. Many are complementary, with the most successful initiatives supporting several objectives at once.

3.5 The six objectives comprise:

- **Objective 1:** Accommodating Sustainable and Inclusive Growth while protecting the existing valued built environment and green spaces
- **Objective 2:** Diversifying and strengthening a Resilient and Inclusive Town Centre Offer through promoting a mix of uses, including residential development
- **Objective 3:** Providing People-Friendly Streets and Spaces to create a safe and connected public realm
- **Objective 4:** Improving Sustainable Access for all Modes
- **Objective 5:** Protecting and Enhancing the Riverside and integrating it with the wider open space network
- **Objective 6:** Promoting health and wellbeing through access to Usable and Attractive Recreation Facilities

Objective 1: Sustainable & Inclusive Growth

3.6 Staines-upon-Thames is an attractive, successful riverside town in Surrey, within easy commuting distance to London and other major employment locations in the vicinity. As such it is facing particular pressures on housing availability, as well as other pressures resulting from a successful economy and popular location. The main purpose of planning in such circumstances is to mitigate the negative impacts of such success while ensuring the town experiences continued good fortunes that result in a high quality of life for residents, protection of the local environment and continued good economic prospects.

3.7 The council's declaration of a climate emergency reinforces the need to think about delivering a step change in development style and quality to underpin the growth that is likely to be necessary. This should aim to protect what makes the town special and attractive, including its townscape and green spaces.

3.8 As well as environmentally sustainable growth, consideration of inclusive growth for all, maximising opportunities for affordable homes, quality local facilities and supporting infrastructure and accessible mobility for local residents, has been identified as a key issue in the town centre.

Objective 2: Resilient & Inclusive Town Centre Offer

3.9 Founded due to its connections to the river and as a bridging point, Staines-upon-Thames town centre is an extremely accessible location and a natural choice for the location of a wide mix of facilities.

3.10 Living in such well-connected locations, with a mix of day-to-day uses in walking distance and sustainable public transport options for journeys further afield results in lower average carbon emissions per person, when compared to living further away or in the countryside.

3.11 In the current period of significant uncertainty for retailers and other businesses due to the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring the town centre is diversified and resilient to ongoing change will underpin continued success. This could involve allocating promoting a wider variety of land uses and flexible forms of development within the town centre and considering the extent to which residential development can contribute to successful placemaking.

Objective 3: People-Friendly Streets & Spaces

3.12 Whatever the mode of travel chosen to get to the town centre, everyone becomes a pedestrian for the final bit of their journey. This means that everyone can benefit from improved, people-friendly streets and spaces that connect together to allow free and pleasant movement through the town centre.

3.13 Staines-upon-Thames has some excellent spaces and places for people, including an attractive High Street and river frontage, but they are poorly linked together, and don't connect well to surrounding neighbourhoods and common access points such as the footpaths, railway station, bus station or car parks.

3.14 Attractive and people-friendly spaces can be catalysts for renewal and regeneration, and create places and streets that people can enjoy, linger in and, studies suggest, spend more money in supporting local businesses.

Objective 4:
Sustainable Access for all Modes

3.15 Staines-upon-Thames is a compact town, and due to its position as the main town in the borough, it is at the heart of a wider catchment area. Good access by all is key to its continued success. Enhancing access by all modes of travel, while limiting conflict points, will ensure a genuine choice for people in how they get to and around the town centre.

3.16 The success of the framework will be measured, in part, on what transport improvements are made to enhance town centre mobility and inclusive access for all people. A better future will mean resolving, or at least reducing, the negative effects resulting from sub-optimal access arrangements.

3.17 The challenges and opportunities go beyond tackling traffic congestion and pinch points, important as they are. It's the results of congestion, like poor air quality, road noise and people's physical and mental health which needs tangible resolutions.

3.18 The COVID-19 pandemic has seen significant change in people's travelling habits, whether this be for work or leisure. Whereas in the past much transport planning was focused on peak-hour movements, there is now a challenge in ensuring that Staines-upon-Thames is accessible throughout the day and offers quality local connections for active travel.

3.19 As a sector, transport is the largest single contributor to carbon emissions in the UK. Modal shift from private vehicles to sustainable modes offers significant opportunity to reduce these emissions. It also offers better air quality, reductions in traffic noise, improvements to street safety and freeing of the extensive land used for traffic circulation for other, more productive alternatives. At present much of Staines-upon-Thames town centre is given over to significant highways such as the A308, or large surface car parks. SBC's declaration of a Climate Emergency makes it vital that the Development Framework aids in the process of transitioning transport in and to the town centre to more sustainable modes.

Objective 5: Protecting and Enhancing the Riverside

3.20 The River Thames and its frontage is undoubtedly the town centre's most significant asset, and forms a distinctive part of its character. It places Staines-upon-Thames in a small and exclusive club of attractive riverside towns stretching from Oxfordshire to London's outer boroughs. The Thames Path that runs through the town centre presents a wide range of different characters from green woodland through to the formal town gardens.

3.21 The river frontage faces southwest, ensuring that it is sunny in the evening for most of the year. This makes it ideal for leisure and events uses.

3.22 At present the river feels disconnected from the rest of the town centre, cut off by the A308 dual carriageway, and overlooked in parts by the servicing access for the Elmsleigh Centre and Tothill car park. Creating better links with the rest of the town centre for pedestrians could overcome this mental and physical barrier.

3.23 Due to its attractiveness, the river faces pressures for development, especially for residential uses. This could have an effect on its character over the long term and impact on public accessibility to the riverside, which may be detrimental if design and scale of development is not considered carefully.

3.24 Flood risk along the river frontage, as modelled through SBC's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and any future flood modelling work, must also be considered and taken into account in any decisions about whether or where development might be located. Biodiversity objectives and opportunities to support Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans should be considered.

Objective 6: Usable and Attractive Recreation Facilities

3.25 The COVID-19 pandemic has refocused attention on the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle, and the role of the local environment in enabling people to live such a lifestyle. Staines-upon-Thames has a range of outdoor spaces in and around the town centre but limited areas of green space and natural environments.

3.26 As well as great sporting and recreation facilities, daily activities can contribute to being active and healthy, especially getting around by walking or cycling to destinations such as work, shops, schools or leisure.

3.27 Research has shown that access to natural space, trees or planted areas can improve both physical and mental health, as well as improving local air quality and offering more pleasant microclimates so that people can get outdoors for more of the year. The town centre has limited green spaces and planting at the moment, but there are areas of potential, and surrounding spaces such as Lammas Land and Staines Moor are nearby and could have better links.

3.28 Increased tree cover, green space and landscaping within the public realm can also contribute to urban cooling, reducing the 'heat island' effect and could make the town centre more pleasant and enjoyable during hot summers.

Consultation Process

3.29 In May 2021, these Objectives and issues to be addressed in the Framework underwent a public consultation process, where Spelthorne residents were invited to give their views on the future of the town centre.

3.30 The public consultation's primary purpose was to gather and assess local aspirations for Staines-upon-Thames. A variety of local aspirations and objections were evident in the responses received.

Local Aspirations and Support

3.31 All in all, local residents expressed support for the six objectives put forward subject to some adjustments to reflect their own aspirations for the town centre.

3.32 Traffic, access, and parking in and around the town centre are significant concerns for the Development Framework to address and/or resolve. Aspirations included better access (and parking) for vehicles, disabled and the elderly, as well as safe, dedicated and well-maintained cycle- and walk-ways, to bring people to shops and facilities in the town centre and riverfront. Wider aspirations are for enhanced public transport, and better access to London and Heathrow – thought to be best-achieved by including Staines-upon-Thames within TfL Zone 6 (with Oyster card ticketing) and a direct light rail link respectively.

3.33 Residents would also like to improve the traffic flow in the town centre, including around certain junctions and on the bridge across the Thames. Cycle infrastructure provision is of local significance, particularly in areas like the wider town centre and Laleham/ Staines Road. Residents would also like the public realm to include more seating, bins, public toilets and areas of shading.

3.34 Local residents would also like to make best use of and enhance the riverfront, not only through better connectivity with the town centre, but by also creating a suitable mix of uses beyond just housing along the riverside and towpath (e.g. restaurants/cafés, event spaces, green spaces, children play areas). This is to enable the community to reclaim the river, and for Staines-upon-Thames to be truly 'upon-Thames'.

3.35 As for the town centre itself, residents expressed their concern for the permanent closure of many shops, especially during the pandemic. Suggestions to address this range from providing incentives for small independent businesses to 'bringing back' chain stores like Debenhams or M&S, with the aim of ensuring quality and choice in the available town centre shops. Residents would also like to see local landmarks (e.g. Debenhams, Oast House, Elmsleigh Centre, Town Hall) being refurbished or repurposed for the future, to address community priorities.

3.36 Another aspiration for the town centre is for there to be varied leisure and cultural facilities, such as an arts centre, museum, theatre, sports facilities, and activities for young people. This is to make the town centre a more vibrant and attractive place to be and, in part, to address anti-social behaviour without inviting more severe police intervention. Some also want these facilities to host events celebrating local heritage, like the 'Birth of a Town' historical walk for example.

Local Concerns

3.37 A significant number of respondents are concerned about high-rise development in the town centre, albeit there are notable variations in views on what constitutes 'high-rise' and what might or might not be appropriate for Staines Upon Thames. Concerns particularly relate to impacts on the riverfront character or residential amenity on either side of the river. This is due to the belief that high-rises limit the amount of light, create wind tunnels, are unsympathetic to the town centre's historic nature and produce an unappealing 'blocky' skyline. Some residents would therefore prefer there to be no or limited housing development but if need be, they would prefer the housing to be low-rise, terraced and, where possible, within existing brownfield buildings and sites (e.g. Debenhams, old BUPA building).

3.38 There is also a perception that, as it stands, local infrastructure (transport, facilities, services) is at full capacity and cannot support further housing. For this reason, some residents believe that existing office stock should be converted for residential use, and the necessary infrastructure delivered, prior to any new housing development. The intention is to avoid unsustainable overdevelopment and overpopulation in the town centre and responds to a wider concern that new housing will be marketed towards external investors and London commuters, not current local residents and families.

3.39 A significant number of respondents support car-free developments in principle but are concerned that this could have knock-on effects on nearby residential areas and lack of trust that 'good' public transport links (convenient, efficient, cheap) can be provided. This ties into wider concerns about the impact of development proposals on the traffic network, and how pedestrianisation of road space might exacerbate the existing perception of poor traffic flow and congestion.

3.40 Climate change also plays a pivotal role with residents who would like to see proposals that contribute to better air quality, more green spaces, and better environmental management (flood risk, CO2 emissions, etc.). Nature conservation, here, is significant but so is mitigating any adverse impacts of future development and/or providing a net gain in green spaces and biodiversity, among others. Residents would like to see these matters addressed in further detail in the Development Framework.

Engagement with Elected Members

3.41 The initial public consultation process is a vital part of formulating an effective response and set of proposals for the town centre. Following detailed analysis of consultation responses, the team developing the Framework has worked closely with elected members of Spelthorne Borough Council through the Staines Development Task Group (SDTG). Regular themed meetings were held where the consultant and officer team:

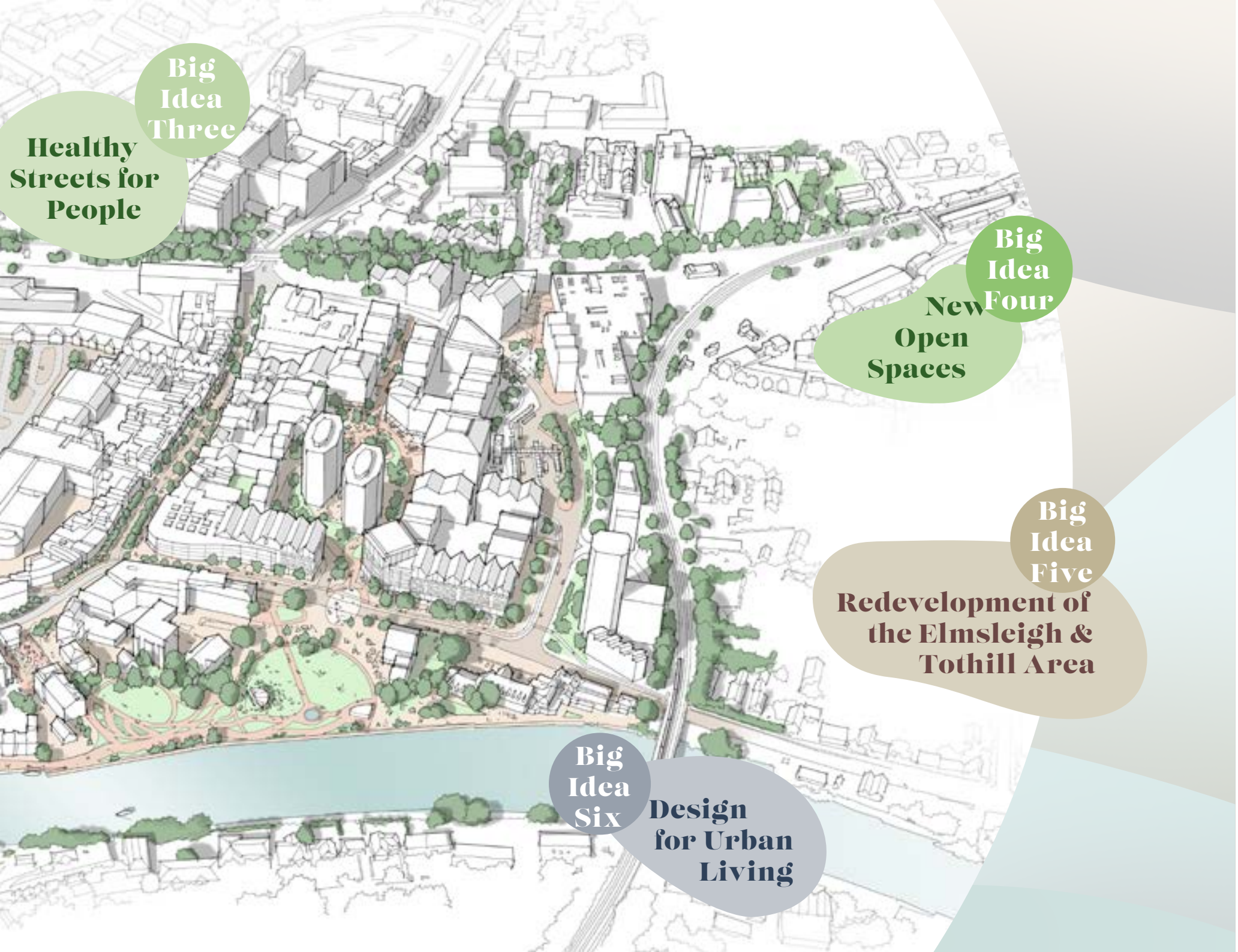
- Set out a summary of the consultation responses and feedback
- Provided further background on key issues being considered
- Presented draft proposals and potential approaches for inclusion in the Development Framework
- Discussed and debated these in detail with councillors represented on the SDG
- Responded to concerns, feedback and aspirations from elected members on the draft proposals, updating them for the Framework

3.42 This process has further embedded local knowledge and aspiration into the Framework and has been a leading example of local involvement in such a process.

3.43 Throughout the Framework, all sections are headlined with a summary of public consultation feedback responses on the topic, to demonstrate how proposals respond directly to local views and feedback.

Section 4.0
The Big Ideas

4.1 The Development Framework sets out six big ideas to ensure that Staines-upon-Thames can move into the future and successfully become more liveable, more sustainable and can provide more of what local people need and want. By building on its assets such as the River Thames, and grasping big new opportunities for change through planned growth, the town centre can ensure it will be successful into a changeable future. These 'big ideas' are woven through all the Development Framework's strategies and implementation priorities.


Big Idea Three
Healthy Streets for People
Big Idea Four
New Open Spaces
Big Idea Five
Redevelopment of the Elmsleigh & Tothill Area
Big Idea Six
Design for Urban Living

Big Idea One: Connecting to the Rivers

4.2 The River Thames is a huge asset to Staines-upon-Thames, but when compared to other towns in the area, is underused and poorly connected to the rest of the town. The Development Framework sets out a number of ways to make it a true destination and hub for Staines Upon Thames. These include the potential for new community facilities within an extended Memorial Gardens, an improved street environment on Clarence Street and Thames Street, improved crossings between the High Street and river, new connections through development sites to link locations in the town to the river, and the use of new development in the town to face towards the river to provide a more active and secure environment in Memorial Gardens.

4.3 The Rivers Colne and Wraysbury also run through the town centre, and offer the potential to create different river environments for leisure and recreation. As well as new connections making them more accessible, there is an opportunity to make better use of the River Colne and undertake a river restoration project, providing new habitats, improving biodiversity and access to nature, as well as managing floodwater more naturally and providing a different type of open space within the town centre. The River Wraysbury can be better connected to the rest of the town centre, providing access to wider green spaces and networks outside of the town.

Big Idea Two: Development that Respects Character

4.4 The Development Framework sets out where and how new development could come forward within the town centre. Central to this is understanding what needs to be protected to ensure the distinct character of Staines-upon-Thames is retained and enhanced, while ensuring that new homes, facilities, jobs and public spaces can be delivered successfully. The Framework also sets out areas of redefined character, where the present built form does not make a contribution to the overall town centre, but improvement could be delivered through well-designed development which follows the townscape and design principles set out.

4.5 A new 'zoning' plan makes this clear, providing guidance on the appropriate heights of future buildings in particularly sensitive parts of the town centre, protecting the riverfront, and also highlighting locations where higher-density developments, complying with clear design principles, would be best located.

Big Idea Three: Healthy Streets for People

4.6 Too many streets in Staines-upon-Thames are dominated by vehicle traffic, with over two-thirds simply passing through the town centre en-route to somewhere else. Major roads cut the High Street off from the riverfront and Old Market Square. For a future where the town centre is more liveable, sustainable and attractive, now is the time to begin the process of changing this, and transforming the streets of Staines into places where people feel comfortable walking, cycling and using outside space for more activities. Improvements to air quality, reductions in noise from vehicles and other environmental quality improvements will improve public health and place quality.

4.7 The Development Framework sets out an aspiration for transformation of the A308 (Thames Street / South Street) corridor through the town centre, demonstrating how its space may be better configured to support walking, cycling, planting and street trees and space for street activities such as cafes and events. This aspiration needs to be taken forward in collaboration with Surrey County Council, supporting the policies of Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

4.8 Away from the main vehicle routes, there are opportunities to provide new and higher quality street connections through areas identified as suitable for redevelopment such as at Two Rivers North and the Elmsleigh Centre / Tothill car park, creating a network of people-friendly streets that connect key locations in the town centre to the river Thames, Colne and Wraysbury. Greening of the public realm will provide benefits for people and wildlife.

4.9 The Framework also sets out approaches to providing better walking and cycling access at key gateways and pinch points into the town centre such as Iron Bridge, and how traffic flow might be managed in the future.

Big Idea Four: New Open Spaces

4.10 Staines-upon-Thames currently lacks a variety of open spaces in the town centre. To support an increase in town centre living, and create new destination spaces for activities and leisure, the Development Framework sets out the opportunity for a variety of new publicly accessible open spaces, each of different character and intended use, to complement existing provision. These could include green urban squares, riverfront plazas, event space and natural spaces based around the River Colne, creating new areas for informal sports, meeting places, leisure activities, events and street life.

4.11 Improved facilities at Memorial Gardens through redevelopment of the Riverside Car Park, turning most of the site into high quality open space with new café or community facilities facing onto the park and river, would be an early priority. Coupled with future public realm improvements on Thames St and a redevelopment at the Elmsleigh Centre, this could reactivate and reconnect the whole south-eastern quarter of the town centre.

Big Idea Five: Redevelopment of the Elmsleigh & Tothill Area

4.12 Town centres are changing, with the traditional dominance of retail receding in importance and a resurgence in a mix of activity based uses, including community, civic, leisure and residential, all competing for space in successful centres. Whilst a relatively strong centre, Staines-upon-Thames is experiencing the structural changes to the way in which people use town centres, including a fall in demand for larger retail spaces pressure for new homes and local aspirations for a wider variety of uses and facilities to support a thriving, growing town.

4.13 The Elmsleigh Centre is a successful shopping centre but is of a monolithic design based on national multiple retailer representation in typically large units that is increasingly showing signs of obsolescence across many town centres. The area surrounding it, including the surface car parks, South Street, Tothill car park and the service roads visible to the river, do not make a positive contribution to the quality and character of Staines-upon-Thames. Phased redevelopment of this area, to provide new streets, open spaces, homes, flexible facilities and commercial/retail space in a new town centre neighbourhood would make a huge contribution to revitalising this part of town and supporting the sustainability of the town centre into the future.

4.14 Spelthorne Borough Council, as landowners, have a unique opportunity to comprehensively plan for phased redevelopment, keeping what works, and replacing what doesn't, while prioritising local aspirations for affordable housing, community spaces, new facilities and quality open spaces that contribute to the overall experience of the town centre and benefit of Spelthorne's residents.

4.15 The Framework sets out the key parameters, principles and implementation approaches to achieving this long-term goal, and is intended as guidance as to what could be achieved through new, well-designed development.

Big Idea Six: Design for Urban Living

4.16 The town centre has been identified by the Local Plan as having the potential to accommodate thousands of new homes in a sustainably-connected location, with most facilities on the doorstep, and with easy access to a variety of open spaces. New residents can provide new vitality and footfall to support a diverse mix of town centre businesses, contributing to ensuring the town centre can continue to cater for its wider catchment.

4.17 The Development Framework sets out a series of design principles to ensure that residential schemes deliver great places to live, contribute to the wider town, and avoid creating new problems for new and existing residents. These are grouped into three themes: People-Friendly Streets, Attractive, Long-Lasting Buildings, and Quality Homes for All.

Section 5.0 Development Framework Strategies

Overview

5.1 Informed by the analysis, public consultation process and wider influences on the town centre set out in the previous chapters, this chapter sets out the framework of strategies for future development in the town centre of Staines-upon-Thames.

5.2 This chapter is intended as a practical and useful document for a wide range of users, working together towards a common goal of a successful, attractive and resilient town centre for Staines upon Thames.

5.3 The development framework is structured through a series of themes, working from the broadest town centre wide scale down to site-level considerations:

- **Townscape:** identifying townscape improvement priorities, and identifying appropriate design principles for key locations that have the potential, through redefining their character, to increase their contribution to the quality of the town centre
- **Density and Heights:** identifying appropriate locations and forms for development that have the potential to contribute overall to the framework objectives and the town centre as a whole
- **Movement and Access:** hierarchy of routes for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, along with interventions to improve access and movement for all modes
- **Public realm & green/ blue networks:** identifying multifunctional networks of biodiversity and open space within the town centre that can be connected and enhanced, and priority opportunities for improvements in the public realm to create a better-connected, more cohesive and more attractive town centre

5.4 This structure ensures that considerations at the broadest scales are followed through to site and street-level.

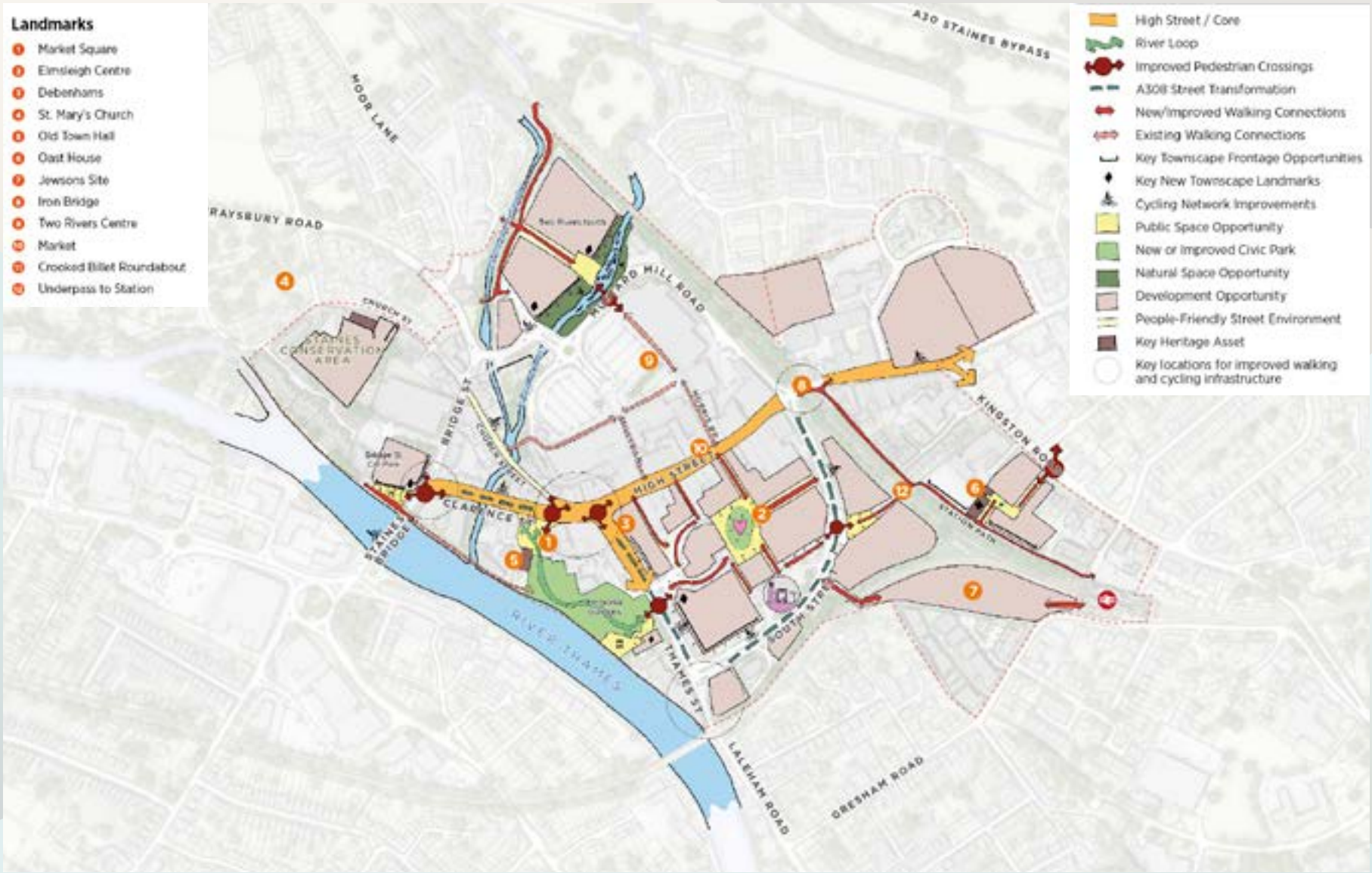


Figure 15: Development Framework key strategies and opportunities

Townscape

Consultation Priorities

- Staines is locally valued as a retail and service centre
- Appreciation of Staines' character as a historic town on the River Thames
- The town needs to make better use of the riverfront
- Demand for a variety of leisure and cultural uses including events and recognition of local heritage

Creating a Sustainable Place

- Detailed assessment of existing place helps understand where new development can be most sustainably located

Main Proposals

- Urban design priorities for new developments across the town centre to contribute to a more cohesive place
- Set of design principles for key locations within the town centre to ensure new development contributes to overall townscape

5.5 Staines-upon-Thames has a valued and distinct character on the River Thames, with a historic High Street at its heart. It is important to preserve what makes the town centre distinctive and attractive, while ensuring that new development and growth can be accommodated in the best locations, improving overall quality of place.

5.6 The detailed understanding of the town centre's existing character set out in the Town Centre Today chapter sets out approaches for each area to create a more cohesive town centre that works in unison. Taken together with where there is potential for improvement, this underpins recommendations on appropriate locations for higher density development and appropriate building heights within the town centre.

Townscape Approach

Townscape is commonly defined in urban design as the art of giving visual coherence and organisation to the 'jumble' of buildings, streets and space that make up the urban environment. It attempts to understand how we perceive and interpret urban spaces, and considers how we experience spaces as we move through them. Overall, it attempts to characterise the richness and quality of the built environment, and how it can be successfully tied together.

The approach to understanding what contributes and what detracts from a coherent, attractive town centre has been used to assess Staines-upon-Thames for key locations, frontages, views and areas where new development could improve the overall townscape of the town centre, and to define principles for new development.

Townscape Design Principles

5.7 As identified in the assessment of Character Areas, Staines-upon-Thames has areas of strong and attractive townscape, which contribute to the distinctiveness of the town as a place to live, work and enjoy leisure activities. Many of these have also been identified as valued and cherished by residents, as part of the first phase of public consultation.

5.8 However, some parts of the town centre do not currently live up to these standards, and overall detract from the attractiveness and people's enjoyment of the town centre. With appropriate high quality development, these parts of the town centre could be improved and make a better contribution to quality and distinctiveness of place.

5.9 This section sets out the key characteristics of those valued areas, as well as identifying priority areas for improvement through new public realm or development.

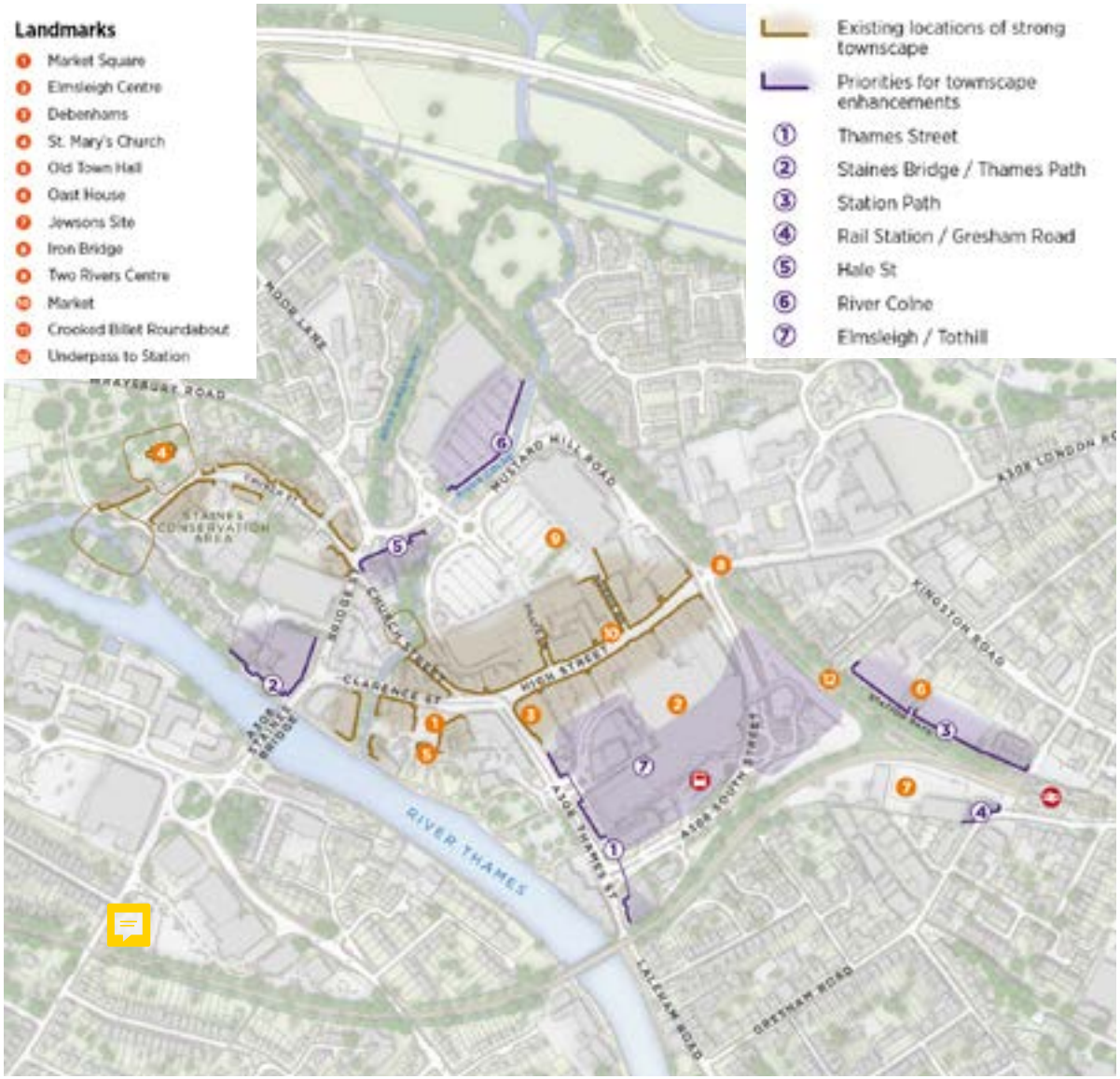


Figure 16: Existing townscape and priority locations

5.10 Areas in Staines-upon-Thames which contribute strongly to the overall townscape have the following features in common:

- A fine grain of buildings, generally between 6 - 15m in width
- Generally straight streets but with enough curvature to prevent complete visibility from end-to-end
- Variation of heights within a range that is scaled for the street
- Use of a small range of materials, varied along a street in line with the fine grain
- A clear hierarchy of streets related to widths and scale/grain of built form
- Ground floors which engage with the street through active retail/leisure/ service spaces or regular front doors and different material treatments

5.11 In general, the streets of the town centre lack a variety of public spaces created by changes in street width, or those defined by planting and trees – streets are very linear and lack small spaces and squares. One notable exception is the Market Square and the area around the Old Town Hall, which has such spaces but due to the A308 dual carriageway is cut off from much of the town centre and is underused. The dual carriageways cut off areas of quality townscape frontages from each other and diminishes their overall collective value.

5.12 A number of areas in the town centre have been identified as not contributing positively to the townscape quality, and in some cases actively detract from its quality of place (shown numbered on the plan at Figure 16). Development fronting or within these areas should observe the principles set out below to create a positive contribution to the overall quality of the town centre.

1 – Thames Street

Current Situation

- Broken frontage with multi storey car park entrance and servicing to back of High Street very visible from river
- Poor view from High St/Clarence St/Church St junction with little indication it fronts onto river
- Does not connect with or complement river or Memorial Gardens
- Scale and grain of buildings is highly variable and unrelated to each other
- No usable space for outdoor activities
- Vehicle-dominated street with barriers and highway-related clutter

Design Principles

- Active frontage with commercial or community ground floor uses
- Articulation of frontages facing the river using balconies
- Widening of pavement and reduction in vehicle space of Thames St to provide space for planting and street trees
- More consistent scale and grain of buildings
- Formal arrangement of street trees
- Gable end roofscape facing towards river
- Screened vista towards Thameside House/South St corner building
- Variety and interest at all viewing distances (e.g. use of bricks and brick detailing close up, out to articulated façade and balconies from distance)

Before

After

2 – Staines Bridge / Thames Path

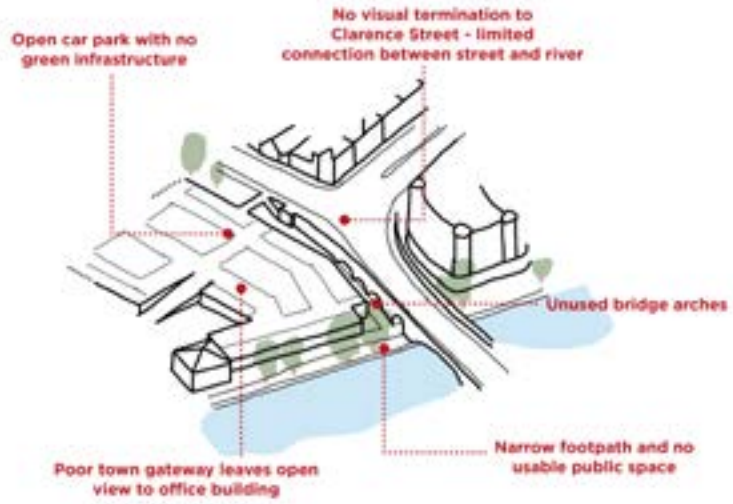
Current Situation

- Low-rise semi-derelict decked parking leaves backs of buildings and office block highly visible from key gateway and provides poor gateway to town centre
- No effective visual termination of Clarence St with little indication that river frontage lies at the end of it
- Narrow footpath along Thames does not provide public space for activities or leisure and makes little contribution to overall Thames frontage, and no occupiable space

Design Principles

- Distinctive building providing end point of Clarence St
- Use of street trees to screen vista at end of Clarence St
- Angle arrangement of frontage from Clarence St to open onto Thames riverfront
- Continuous active frontage along Bridge St round to Thames frontage
- Minimised heights along river frontage
- Gable end roofscape facing towards river
- Public open space stepping down from Clarence St / Bridge St to Thames Path with effective use of levels to provide occupiable space

Before



After

3 – Station Path

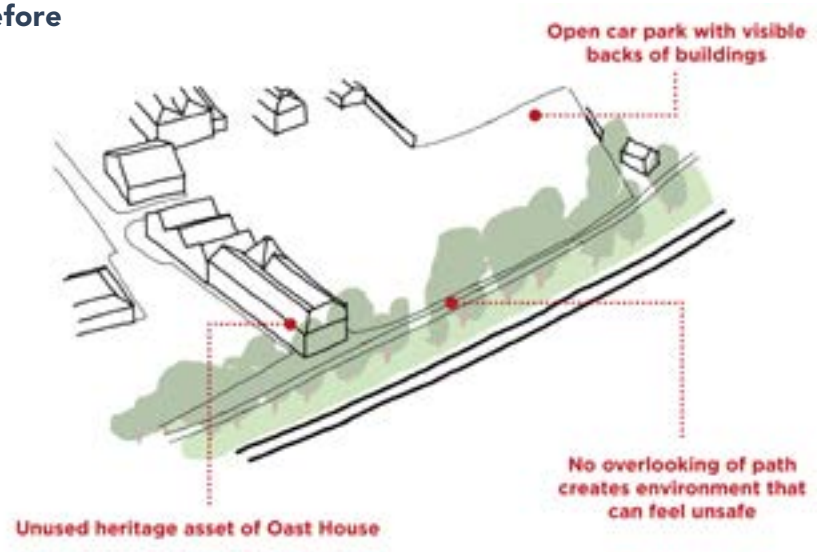
Current Situation

- Attractive tree-lined path but with significant gaps in overlooking on northern edge creating a potentially unsafe environment when path is not busy or at night
- Poor legibility entering the path from the station to make it clear where the route to the town centre is for visitors
- Unclear visual connection through the underpass towards the bus station

Design Principles

- Development to fill in gaps in northern edge which currently have no overlooking
- Retention of north-south routes to path, with corner buildings providing landmarks and overlooking along path
- Use of green infrastructure to screen vistas of taller buildings

Before



After

4 – Rail Station / Gresham Road

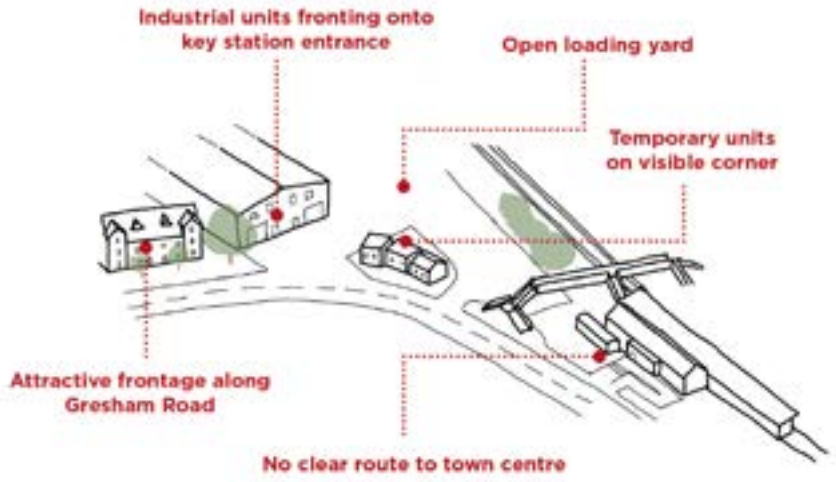
Current Situation

- Industrial units fronting onto entrance/ exit of station

Design Principles

- Gateway frontage with views into development
- Active frontage on corner with retail or café facilities adjacent to station
- Overlooking of station entrance
- Setback of building line to create public realm and waiting space

Before



After

3 – Hale St

Current Situation

- Disjointed development with mix of service entrances, car parks, frontages and small patches of grass
- Highways-dominated space with very constrained pedestrian movement space
- Development does not reflect quality of built form to the immediate west along Church St

Design Principles

- Infill development to face street
- Set back development to enhance public realm space
- Change in materials of road and removal of street clutter to improve pedestrian connectivity through area

Before

After

6 – River Colne

Current Situation

- Open car park with limited green infrastructure
- Low-rise retail units
- Little public use or accessibility of riverside

Design Principles

- Active frontage with commercial or community ground floor uses concentrated at bridge crossing point
- Articulation of frontages facing the river using balconies
- Distinctive roofscape facing river and rest of town centre
- Changes in building line to create public realm at key connection points
- Use of street trees to create green, screened edge, opening at key connection towards town centre
- Deflected vista visible from across bridge to indicate onward green connection to Wraysbury and Staines Moor
- Landscaped linear park along river frontage with changes in levels and occupiable space

Before

After

7 – Elmsleigh / Tothill

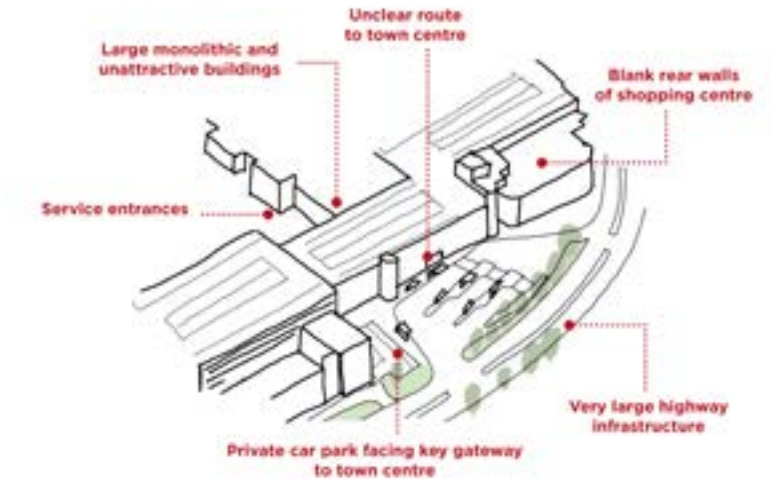
Current Situation

- Unattractive shopping centre buildings
- No clear definition of space with unclear fronts and backs
- Harsh materials and poor articulation of building façades
- Lack of overlooking of streets and no connection of building to streets
- Large areas set aside for surface parking and highways infrastructure

Design Principles

- Network of streets with finer-grain buildings
- Variation of heights within range to create interest and street legibility
- Occupiable space, activated public realm and a hierarchy of spaces connected to a new street network
- Fine grain active ground floor frontage
- Defensible recessed space in front of residential circulation entrances
- Clear definition of public, private and communal/shared residents' spaces through built form
- Use of planting and street trees to soften street environment, lessen impact of taller buildings and create occupiable spaces within public realm

Before



After

Development Density and Height – A Zoning Approach

Consultation Priorities

- Concern about taller buildings, particularly at the riverfront, although variations in perception of what constitutes "high-rise" development
- Attachment to important and defining buildings with ambitions for them to be repurposed for mixed use: Debenhams, Oast House and Elmsleigh Centre

Creating A Sustainable Place

- Concentrating new development in the most sustainable locations within the town centre
- Ensuring a suitable mix of uses to serve residents within easy walking distance
- Ensuring new developments have appropriate open space and create new connections through the town centre

Main Proposals

- Riverside Protection Zone to manage development directly adjacent to the River Thames
- Variations in appropriate heights to reflect character and areas of most of most sensitivity and local value
- Areas identified where medium, medium-high and higher density developments can be concentrated, in line with Development Framework design principles and strategies

5.13 Delivery of new homes and supporting uses is a vital priority of the Local Plan. Staines-upon-Thames town centre is the most sustainable location in the borough to site new homes, with existing facilities and sustainable transport options already in place.

5.14 Balanced against this is a desire to protect what makes the Staines Upon Thames distinct and attractive to current residents and visitors, as well as making sure that any new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure and actively contributes to the quality of the town.

5.15 The Development Framework provides guidance on appropriate zones for different levels of building height and density that enables:

- Space for new homes in the most sustainable locations
- Protection for key views, streets and valued landmarks

5.16 This approach to identifying the potential for redevelopment has been directly informed by the townscape approach in the previous section, identifying what parts of the town centre could be improved with new, well-designed development. It has also been informed by a review of the existing Character Areas and potential for change and improvement, as well as a review of local impacts and surroundings such as railway lines. This approach has been agreed in consultation with Members of the Staines Development Task Group as part of the consultation process outlined previously. An annotated set of diagrams explaining the design considerations that define the zones is provided on the following pages.

5.17 Supporting this zoned approach are design principles for the successful development of key sites and the town centre as a whole, to ensure that infrastructure, public realm and new facilities are delivered in tandem with new homes. These are set out in this and following chapters of the Framework.

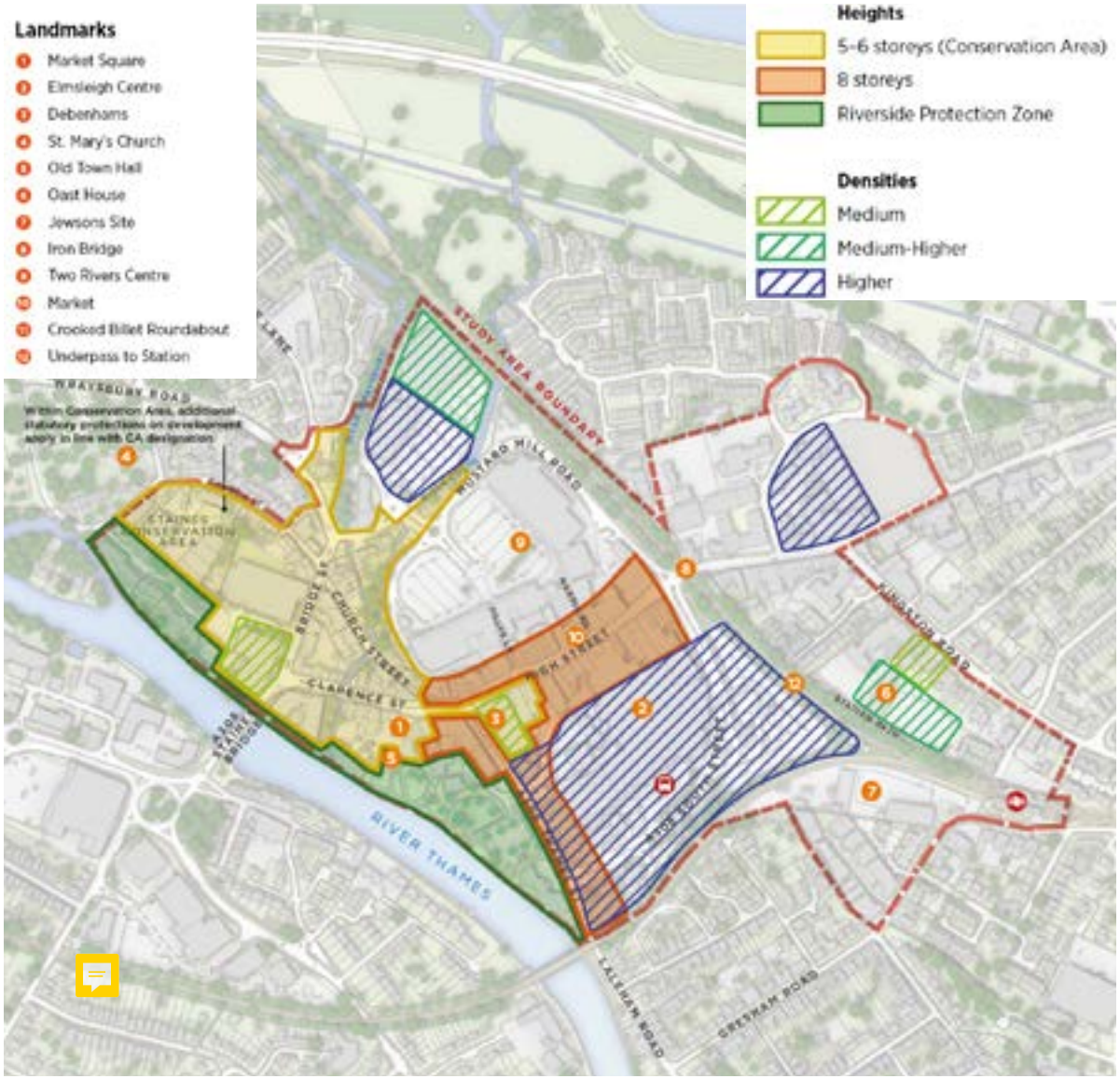


Figure 17: Heights and densities zoning plan

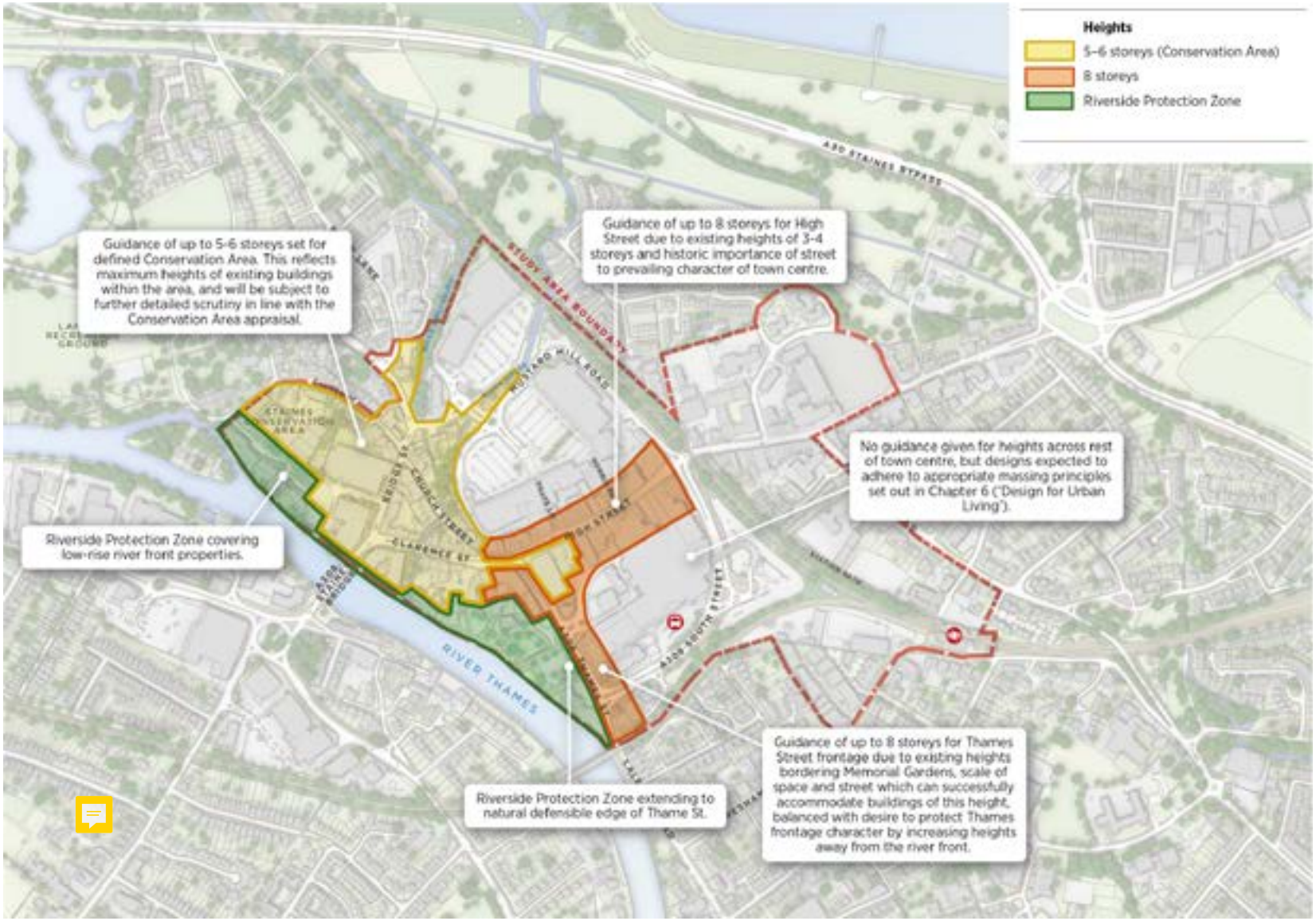


Figure 17a: Annotated rationale for heights guidance

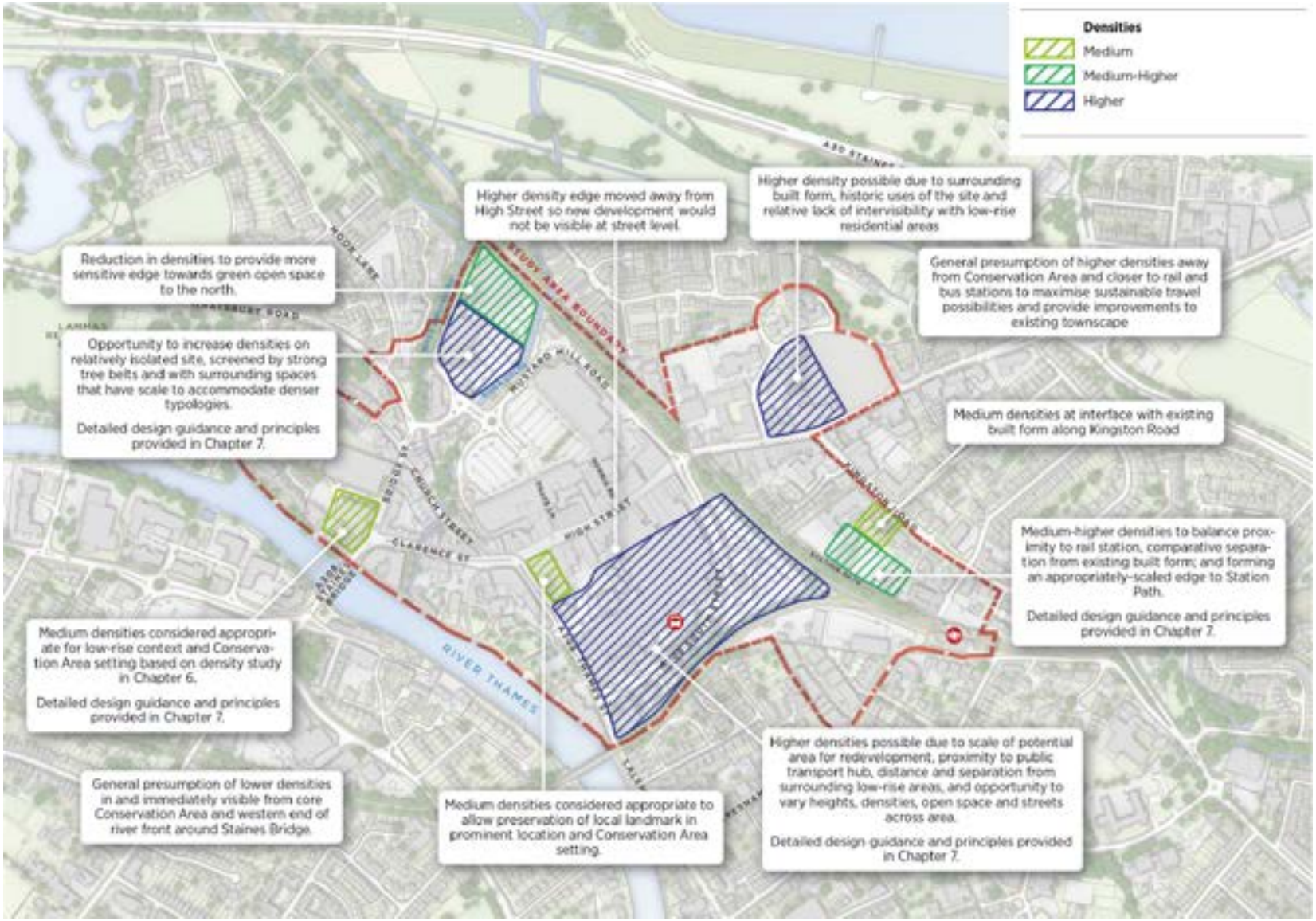


Figure 17b: Annotated rationale for densities guidance

5.18 A Riverside Protection Zone is identified along the immediate frontage of the River Thames in order to preserve and enhance the character and accessibility of this area. Within this zone development should be restricted to preserve the character of the riverfront and to ensure the quality of public open space for the whole town to use. Development in this area would only be permitted if of exceptional design quality (as confirmed by an external Design Review Panel), and if it contributed towards the objectives of the Riverside Protection Zone: preservation of character and improved quality and amenity of the public open space, such as by providing community facility space, or active commercial uses that contribute to the enjoyment of the riverside. Consideration of wildlife corridors along the river and restoration of habitats could also improve the quality of place and biodiversity.

5.19 Building Height guidance is as follows:

- The Staines Conservation Area (recently updated), up to 5-6 storeys, to preserve the distinctive character of this area and views from the core area along Church Street
- The High Street, up to 8 storeys, to preserve the prevailing character of this key and valued location within the town
- Thames Street, up to 8 storeys, to ensure the open space available on the river frontage is appropriate to the existing character and provides a transition down to the High Street and further into the town centre

5.20 The entire town centre is further covered by a 45m height limit (approximately 15 storeys), required for Heathrow Airport safeguarding.

5.21 Density zones show areas which have been identified where sustainable development at different densities (measured in dwellings per hectare, dph), would be most successfully accommodated in the town centre.

5.22 Areas suitable for medium-density developments (with guidance of average densities up to 175dph) are located at:

- Bridge Street car park
- Oast House, immediately adjacent to Kingston Road
- Former Debenhams building

5.23 Each of these medium-density sites is selected due to their potential for sustainable development being balanced against preserving the character of their immediate surroundings, as identified earlier in this chapter.

5.24 Areas suitable for medium-high density developments (with guidance of average densities up to 250dph) are located at:

- The northern end of Two Rivers North, to provide a transition to the open space further north
- Oast House adjacent to Station Path, to ensure appropriate development in this character area and context whilst still delivering homes on a highly sustainable site.

5.25 Areas suitable for higher density development (with guidance of average densities up to 350dph) are located at:

- The southern half of Two Rivers North
- The area surrounding the Elmsleigh Centre and Tothill car parks
- The buildersbuilder's yard, Laleham Road, to the immediate west of the rail station
- Birch House, London Road

5.26 Each of these sites offers the opportunity for higher density development, in highly sustainable locations, with comparatively limited impact on surrounding lower-rise areas and more sensitive and valued areas. When developed taking account of the design principles and strategies set out in the Framework, they could contribute positively to the overall function and quality of the town centre.

5.27 Sites located outside of these areas must take account of design principles and strategies set out within the Development Framework, as well as the prevailing character of the local area as defined earlier in this chapter.

5.28 Densities given are guidance and an overall approach, and much will depend on how successfully detailed designs implement the principles set out in the Design for Urban Living chapter, as well as implementing appropriate space standards.

Movement and Access

Consultation Priorities

- Improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists, ideally through segregated routes
- Perception that current infrastructure is at maximum capacity, with concern about traffic flow due to development and changes to roads
- Better quality public transport with better station facilities needed
- Need for better air quality and to address climate change

Creating A Sustainable Place

- Prioritising sustainable modes of travel entering and travelling to the town centre
- Creating space for walking and cycling at entrance gateway pinch points such as Iron Bridge
- Improvements to the quality of the bus station
- Potential redesign of streets to discourage through traffic
- Ensuring the town centre has an appropriate balance of car parking, considering present-day needs and a longer-term sustainable transport future

Main Proposals

- Improvements to town centre gateways for walking and cycling, connecting key corridors into and through the town centre for sustainable modes
- Potential for improvements and changes to the bus station to create better waiting and interchange facilities
- Capping of public car parking numbers at present-day levels, with reprovision and consolidation options for sites subject to development proposals
- Future options across all modes set out for further study

5.29 The principles for movement and access are encapsulated in the transport strategy diagram above. The diagram will act as a foundation/structure/ layers for the development of a robust transport strategy and transport action and implementation plans. With an overall strategy approach to:

- Be strategic in nature and set out a high-level vision for the town centre,
- Fit with planning, development and public realm plans for the town centre,
- Align with the Local Plan transport evidence and infrastructure delivery plans,
- Integrate with the wider Spelthorne area and sub-region projects and studies,
- Act as a spatial movement framework in which to develop projects that are capable of supporting sustainable urban transport growth,
- Inform future studies and integrate with development and public realm projects.

5.30 The framework strategy provides the direction for generating and assessing proposed options and for developing preferred solutions.

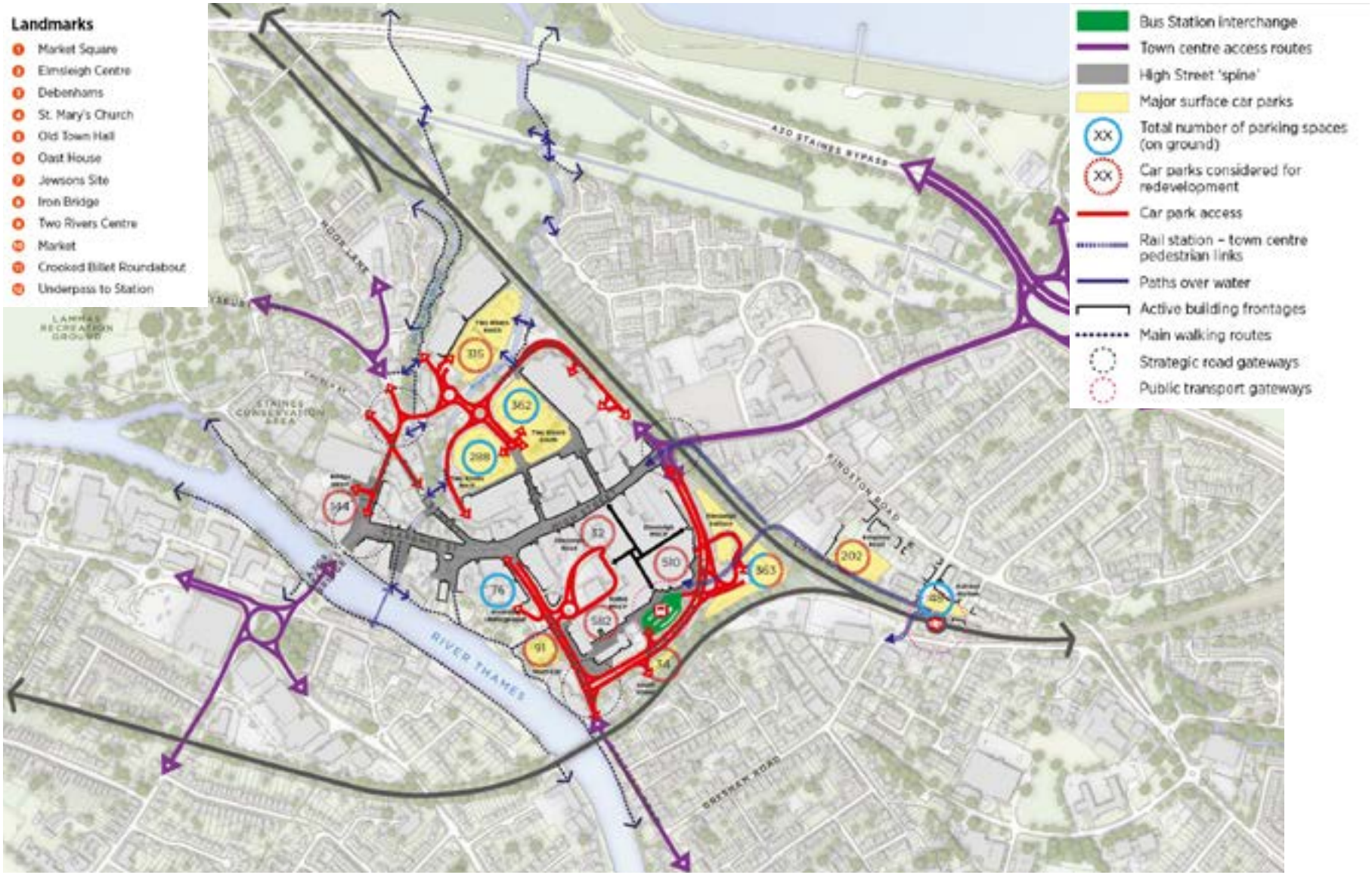


Figure 18: Transport Strategy diagram

Gateways into the Town Centre

5.31 Gateways to the town function as both places and movement networks. These gateways are located on all the movement systems -road -rail and river ways. There are strategic road gateways on the four key radials that enter the town at Iron Bridge; Laleham Road; Staines Bridge and Wraysbury Road. The railway station, bus station and River Thames are key gateways in the framework.

5.32 Gateways on the road corridor have different physical place characteristics that animate and express things to people, whether its historical significance, active street frontages or the relationship to riverside landscape settings. Each gateway has its own identity and role to accommodate people walking, using bikes, travelling on buses, cars and in HGV's/vans.

5.33 The road network has a theoretical and actual capacity to accommodate traffic. Alongside capacity is demand and actual demand is variable and significantly changes over time. The demand for movement is multi-modal in nature. It includes walking, cycling, bus users, electric micro-systems, HGV's, vans, etc. There are technical models and tools available to measure the scale and complexity of movement. These are needed to evaluate baselines and future transport options.

5.34 Understanding the capacity and managing the demand for movement on the road network is essential for the next steps for regenerating the town centre. There is a competition for street space and this is likely to remain, in the medium term, short of future lock-downs.

5.35 The County Council undertook surveys to understand baseline traffic flows (pre-pandemic). This indicated over 30,400 vehicles in the town centre over a 12-hour period. The County together with Spelthorne Council have been examining options for taking some of the pressure off the key radials like London Road. This involves investigating options for enhancements at key gateways.

Generating future options

5.36 Making predictions for the future should involve the consideration of a range of options. A future with little or no cars coming into the town seems unlikely. The principle is for any future transport schemes for the gateways to enhance place and movement functions. It's bigger than accommodating more or less traffic flow – it requires clear rationale on desired outcomes - before generating any design for road changes in the town centre.

5.37 Iron Bridge has been considered, increasing capacity with new tunnels either side of the bridge to provide for walking and cycling. Other options have considered making better use of the existing space between the bridge abutments in the shorter term. Some of the shorter term options are being implemented. It may be appropriate for longer term options for the Iron Bridge e.g. tunnelling, to be considered in the future, if they meet with the principles in the Development Framework.

5.38 Staines Bridge is another pinch point on a key artery that feeds the town centre. In this location the basic principle is to either widen or maintain the existing bridge and provide additional capacity for walking and cycling with another bridge. Linking options to the roundabout (Thorpe Road/Chertsey Lane/The Causeway/ Staines Bridge) in Runnymede should be part of the proposals.

5.39 Laleham Road is physically restricted by the railway bridge and riverside edge. There are limited options for increasing capacity on this corridor, although options are being considered to manage demand and provide alternatives. One such option is being developed for enhancements to walking and cycling facilities through a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

5.40 Wraysbury Road is also a location where physical major capacity or widening works are challenging, due to the setting of listed buildings and the arrangement of existing properties alongside the road corridor and key junctions. The approach for Wraysbury Road will be to look wider and investigate options outside the main pinch points. This means Hale Street, Church Street and Mustard Mill Road along with the existing circulation and access arrangements for the various Two Rivers car parks.

Railway Station Gateway

5.41 Staines Railway Station is a major gateway to the city and needs to be upgraded in order to realise its proper and full potential. It has seen a number of small scale improvements over recent years, but in many respects the station presents a poor first impression of the town.

5.42 The station interchange is poorly integrated and needs to be fundamentally re-planned to provide an interchange hub and act as the gateway. The station and tracks form a barrier to north-south movement and the integration of the station area with neighbouring districts. Station related improvements should consider the potential to make provision for improved north-south movement over the rail tracks, beyond existing pedestrian links.

Bus Station/Multi-modal Interchange

5.43 The town centre is the heart of a public transport hub connecting surrounding towns, villages and local neighbourhoods. The bus station serves the town centre, the Staines-upon-Thames area and wider sub-region, see the strategic transport hub diagram.

5.44 The basic principle is to take the bus station and add the concept of quality places and interchange. Quality places is about seating, cover, facilities and information. An interchange is a purpose-built facility where journeys start, end or change direction. Often, they take place at the railway station, bus station or along the street at a bus stop. Bigger towns and cities often have additional interchange zones. These are wider areas encompassing one or more interchange facilities creating a multi modal hub - connected streets and public spaces.

5.45 There are short term options that can enhance the existing bus station. But medium to long term the plan should be to strengthen and enhance bus interchange in three main ways:

- Act as sub-regional hub: Be a centre for wider public transport movement and accommodate growth through more frequent and better bus services;
- Encouraging interchange between sustainable travel modes;
- Consider opportunities for flexibility with future MRT systems.

Location and Type of Bus Station/ Interchange

5.46 A set of strategic options are available for considering the location of the Bus Station. In principle there are 3 possible options for the location:

1. Reconfigure the bus facility, but keep it in the current location;
2. close the bus facility and move it to another location; or
3. adapt the facility keeping it in its current location and to also seek additional provision in one or more other additional locations.

5.47 The first two options are for a new bus station/interchange hub that can act as a central hub to consolidate bus movements and the third option has the potential to distribute interchanges through the town, while perhaps still having a main area with other zones.

It is noted that Transport for London (TfL), a key service provider, prefer a consolidated facility for operational ease and to provide a clear and central facility for passengers.

5.48 In examining the type of facility required it is necessary to consider what the requirements are for bus layover and to what extent the facility will continue to be a terminus hub.

5.49 Broadly there are 3 possible options for the type of facility:

- Bus station with bays and enclosed passenger facilities;
- Bus interchange with islands and quality passenger facilities;
- On-street interchange zones (simple layout forms); or a variety of options.

5.50 The bus interchange should also include other movement functions, i.e. cycle hubs alongside quality place facilities and services, including toilets, real-time passenger information (RTI), and improved shelter.

Public Car Parking

5.51 The development framework acknowledges that some town centre public parking will need to be rationalised over the coming years.

5.52 Some sites have been identified for possible redevelopment and a number of options have been considered as to where to locate new car parks, and in principle which ones seem likely to be closed in the medium to longer term, set out in Figure 18.

5.53 The framework understands that any closure of an existing public car park is driven by several factors. Its utilisation, structural condition, broad commercial income, possible redevelopment potential value, as well as the role they play in the wider transport system.

5.54 The future for public car parking is unlikely to be a one size fits all solution. Technology is changing rapidly with shared use, connected vehicles and other systems all likely to reduce need to use and perhaps own a personal transport system. Park & Ride forms part of a wider transport strategy for Spelthorne and is an option to examine and evaluate how sustainable transport will be delivered alongside the Local Plan. Commonly, Park & Ride facilities have hundreds of spaces for customers to park. People have direct, high frequency, high capacity bus routes to the centre of town. The concept of micro Park & Ride relates to smaller facilities and options for demand responsive transport. The idea is to locate a number of smaller sites on a given movement corridor as part of new developments outside town centre limits.

5.55 For the new car parking that is provided with any redevelopment it will need management systems that can allow public and private parking use to be combined into one managed facility.

5.56 The approach advocated in the framework is capping public car parking at present-day levels. This means not providing any more public parking in the town than approx. 3050 spaces. Any future policy should examine a phased reduction in public provision as public transport, walking and cycling capacity and facilities increase and the development land uses change over time. Although the population of Staines will rise, residents will be concentrated in the town centre where they do not need public parking to access services, and the increase in population can be balanced by improvements to other access modes.

5.57 This change will be market led with re-provision and consolidation options for sites subject to development proposals. Future retail parking needs are changing as is the demands for dedicated car parking for new town centre housing schemes. The challenge is one of urban design and transport planning - the need to combine car clubs with behaviour change and physical change. There will be a need for shared-use and a mix of shorter and longer stay options for any future car parking and on-street drop areas for services and connected systems. Parking also needs to consider cycling and micro systems, like electric scooters, etc.

5.58 Spelthorne Borough commissioned the Staines Town Centre Parking Report, 1 July 2020 which was prepared to help evidence future parking provision at suitable sites in the future.

5.59 The conclusion from the study was that 'whilst the existing SBC standards are minimum standards for residential development, they allow for a reduction in parking for development in the town centres, subject to the relevant factors'… outlined in the report.

5.60 'The policy would therefore support a reduced parking provision in the town centre due to the distance to and frequency of bus and train services, and the range of facilities located here'. The study came to a similar conclusion in reaction to SCC's policy 'which would allow for a reduction in residential parking and even nil provision in support of demand management and making the most efficient use of the land.'

Residential Parking Standards

5.61 The recently commissioned car parking study for the town centre have identified various vehicle parking policy levels across Surrey and in similar town centres in the local region. The study examined recently submitted planning applications in the town centre which gave a range of parking spaces per unit between 0.44 to 1.0 space, although some smaller sites have been car-free developments.

5.62 What seems to be clear is that the amount of space dedicated to car parking in the development is limited to the actual capacity of a site to accommodate car parking and the capacity of the road network to take additional traffic from any given development.

5.63 The development of parking standards is likely to require further understanding of the distribution of off-street parking and the location of Private Non-Residential spaces.

5.64 The study notes 'comparing the accessibility of Staines Town Centre using the Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) accessibility measures used in London, it would have a 'PTAL' score, of '4 – good' with a maximum of 0.5 spaces per dwelling permitted under the London Plan.

5.65 Allowing a parking provision of some 0.7 spaces per dwelling within the town centre would appear to be consistent with 2011 census car ownership data. There is potential to reduce this level of provision, possibly to 0.5 per unit, depending on the site characteristics and more data on similar developments.

5.66 However, achieving a ratio of 0.5 spaces per dwelling (or lower) is likely to require further town centre wide interventions (infrastructure and / or policies) to deliver a 'step-change' in car ownership and travel behaviour.'

Further Studies

5.67 To support the implementation of the Development Framework, a range of supporting Transport Studies and Strategies will need to be developed. These will particularlu look at the feasibility of interventions to reduce through traffic in the town centre and transform the quality of streets, as well as cycling prioritisation measures and other aspects of the Framework.

Public Realm & Green/Blue Networks

Consultation Priorities

- Safe and dedicated cycling and walking facilities
- More seating, bins, public toilets and areas of shading
- Varied leisure and cultural facilities and spaces
- Mitigate effects of development
- Better air quality, reduce emissions, increase green spaces and biodiversity

Creating A Sustainable Place

- Prioritised and dedicated walking and cycling routes throughout the town centre
- Street trees and planting to provide access to nature, biodiversity gain opportunities and natural surface water management
- Providing green open spaces within the town centre
- Improving climate change resilience within the public realm

Main Proposals

- A revitalised and extended Memorial Gardens with new facilities
- Transforming the A308 to a more healthy, people-friendly street
- Improved cycling connections across the town centre, through street transformations and new development sites
- A variety of new green spaces, from natural greens to more formal squares and gardens delivered as part of development sites

5.68 The town centre has a limited number of public spaces, with a well-used High Street. Other parts of the town centre however are underused and are often car-dominated. There are attractive spaces within and around the town centre, but many are poorly-integrated with the active core. The aim is to join up the public spaces and routes through and within the town centre, create a variety of new public spaces for different uses, and ensure the town centre can host events and remain at the heart of civic life, as well as creating a great environment in which to live for new and existing residents.

5.69 The public realm should also address future challenges arising from growth and climate change. An increase in residential population requires more (and more varied) outdoor spaces, as well as better provision for walking and cycling to support sustainability. The design of the spaces and routes should aim to minimise potential for conflict between modes of travel/movement, and use of the public spaces. New spaces should aim for a microclimate that is usable year-round.

5.70 The challenges presented by climate change are becoming apparent. Severe weather events are likely to become more frequent, meaning consideration for extreme heat and extreme rainfall must form part of public space design, ensuring that spaces are usable as much as possible. The change in climate (amongst other factors) also affects biodiversity, so rich new habitats within street environments should be created to provide as much space for nature as possible.

Existing Green and Blue Infrastructure

5.71 Green infrastructure is the network of green space and other green features such as trees and planting, which can improve quality of life and provide environmental benefits for people in Staines upon Thames. Blue infrastructure is similar, but for water such as rivers, ponds and drainage features. In town centres, green and blue infrastructure is best integrated into the public realm to maximise public benefits.

5.72 Much of the existing green infrastructure and green places within the town centre are inaccessible (e.g. the River Colne) or poorly connected (e.g. the River Wraysbury), and do not generate as many benefits for the public as they could, such as access to natural environments, recreational exercise routes or as spaces for relaxation.

5.73 The River Thames and rivers Colne and Wraysbury are the primary blue infrastructure running through and along the edge of the town centre. They are superb natural assets and much valued by residents and respondents to the consultation, but there is considerable potential to improve access to, and amenity associated with them.

5.74 The River Thames forms part of the two Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Spelthorne (TV03 and TV04). The River Thames is also a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).

5.75 To the northwest of Staines-upon-Thames is located the Colne Valley Regional Park, with a mixture of recreational opportunities based around the River Colne. Increasing connections to the regional park from the town centre would provide an additional recreational draw and ensure more access to open space for new and existing residents.

Priorities

5.73 Priorities for public realm in Staines-upon-Thames are:

1. Enrich green and blue networks
2. Connect to the rivers
3. Extending the High Street's Character
4. Reclaim space and use it well
5. Enable sustainable movement
6. A variety of green spaces for people and events
7. Create a climate change resilient place

Figure 19: Existing green infrastructure networks

1) Enriched Green and Blue Networks

5.76 Green and blue infrastructure should be useful and confer benefits on the environment and people. Overall benefits can include:

- Provision of a variety of spaces for residents and other town centre uses
- Improved street-level microclimate, especially on hot or sunny days
- Increased resilience high rainfall events, by slowing runoff
- Improved air quality along busy streets
- Visual softening of urban environment and taller buildings
- Creating natural habitats and supporting biodiversity within streets and the town centre, using native species where feasible
- Improved mental health and quality of life for people derived from easy access to natural spaces

5.77 Staines-upon-Thames town centre currently has limited existing green infrastructure, with some street trees and planting along the High Street and a limited variety of types of green space and green networks. The existing blue and green infrastructure in the town centre is disjointed in places and not as publicly accessible as it could be. Connecting existing green and blue places and routes with new links and spaces will maximise the benefits outlined above.

5.78 Within the Staines Upon Thames town centre, types of publicly-accessible green infrastructure that should be created and considered include:

- Public/civic parks
- Pocket parks/street parks
- Riverbank paths – both managed and more natural
- Natural spaces / micro-habitats
- Tree-lined and planted streets

5.79 Within mixed-use and residential developments, other types of green infrastructure that should be included in proposals include:

- Green roofs on buildings
- Internal shared gardens for residents
- Planted boundaries and areas of accessible public realm

5.80 Sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) should be integrated with all types of public realm, green space and new developments where possible. Suitable approaches within town centres include:

- Street swales (shallow drainage channels) and planted areas within the public realm
- Rills (narrow open surface water channels) within streets
- Under-street cellular storage systems and tree pits for all new planting in hard surfaced environments
- Permeable paving within car parks
- Green roofs and walls on buildings

5.81 These principles underpin the remaining public realm priorities, where opportunities to weave in green and blue networks of different types have been considered and maximised.

2) Connect to the rivers

5.82 The core of the town centre is currently poorly connected to the River Thames, with the A308 dual carriageway of Clarence Street and Thames Street presenting a major physical and visual barrier.

5.83 The rivers Colne and Wraysbury are also similarly inaccessible or poorly connected, dominated by the Two Rivers North car park and retail units.

5.84 The first public realm priority is to ensure connections to the rivers are clear, accessible and prioritised for pedestrians. This requires:

- Ensuring new development opens up highlighted connections where they do not currently exist, such as at Two Rivers North
- Improved crossings, particular along the A308 dual carriageway
- Clearer wayfinding, particularly to the Colne Valley Regional Park

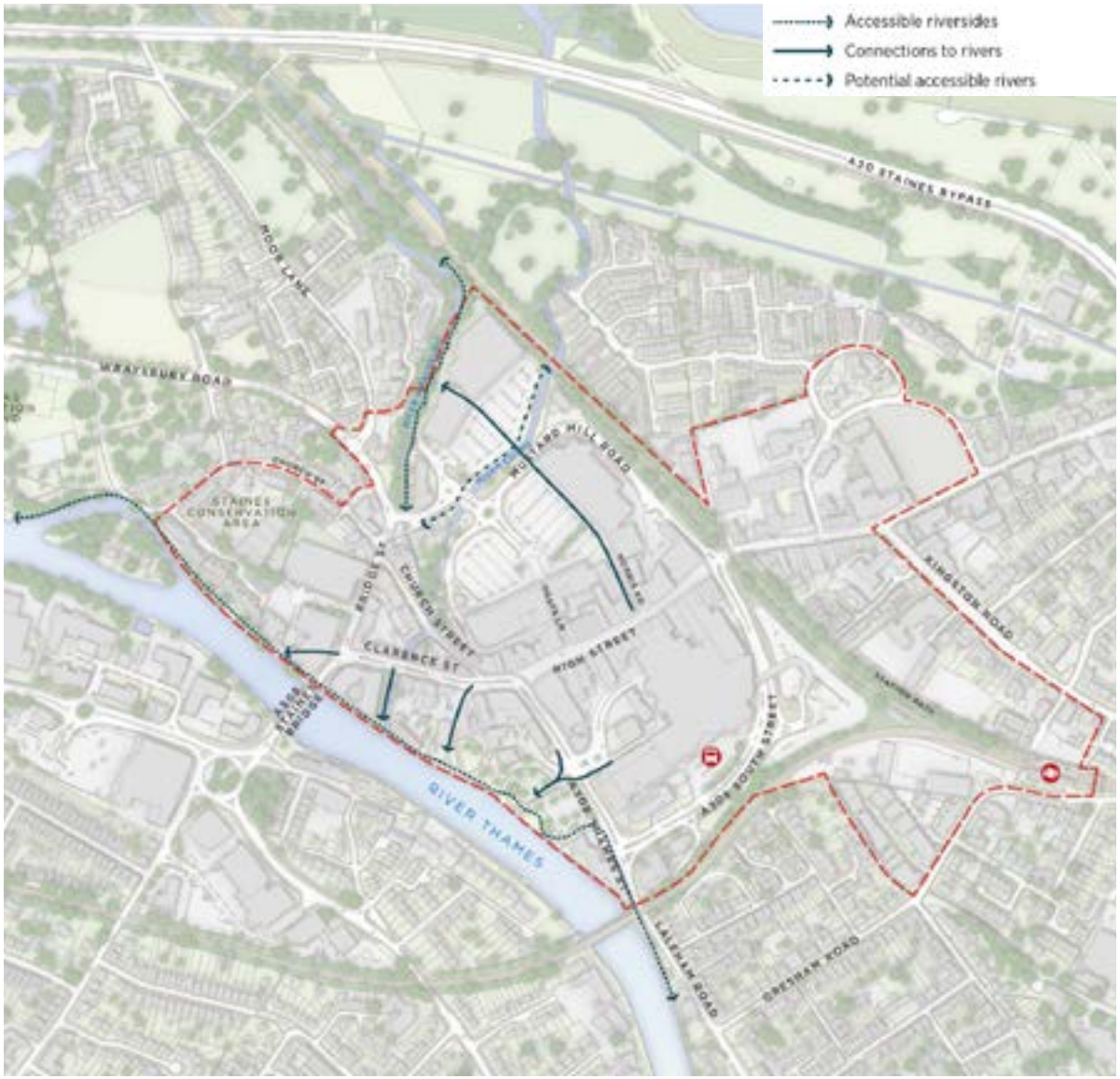


Figure 20: New and improved connections to the rivers

3) Extending the High Street's Character

5.85 The High Street is the historic heart of the town and its best-connected street. Its use is likely to grow in the coming years as more people live in the town centre.

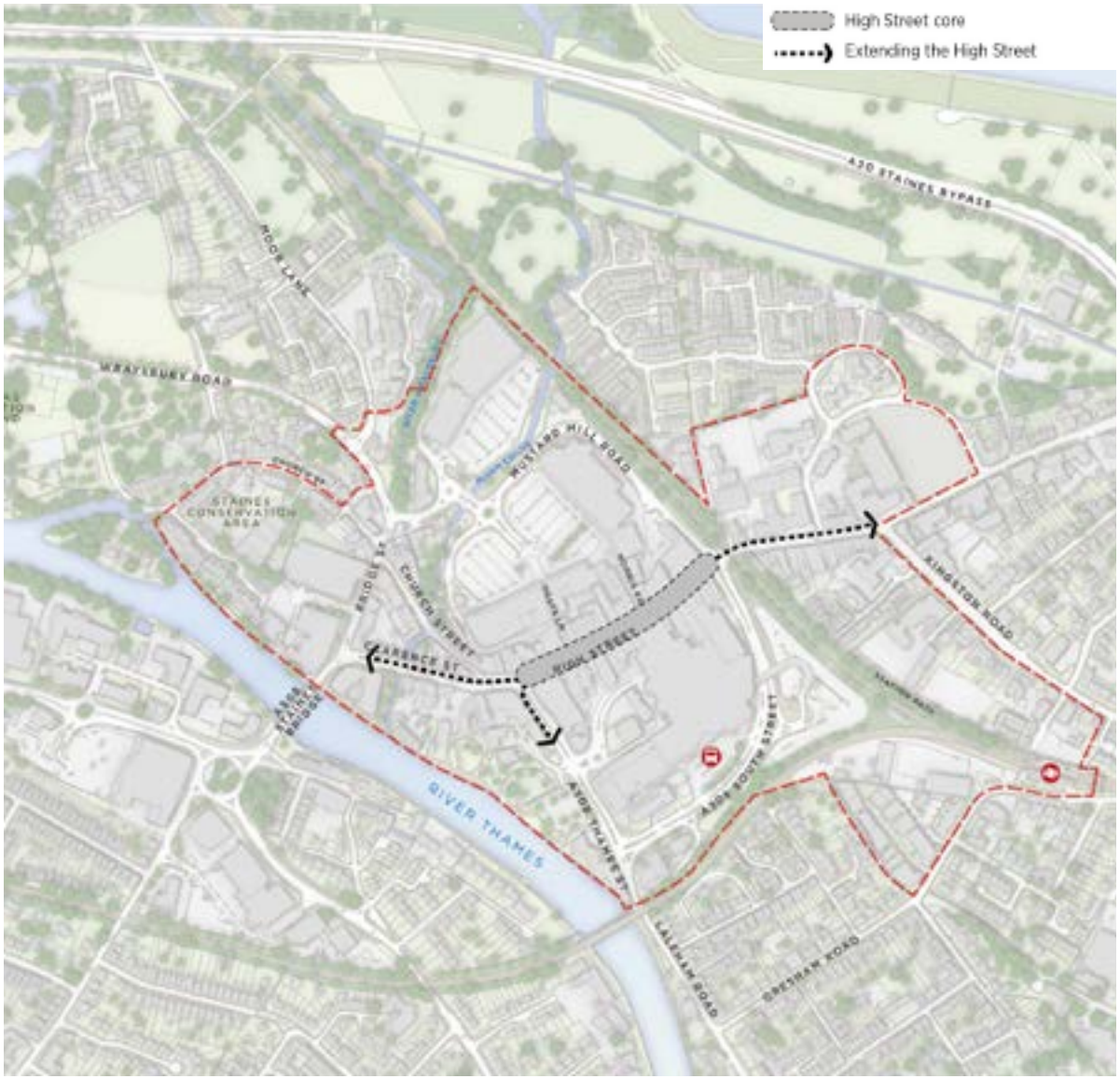


Figure 21: 'Extending' the High Street's Character

5.86 This section sets out an approach to extending the environment and character of the High Street to its adjoining streets and diversifying commercial uses in areas that will experience a growth in footfall and demand for different activities arising from the growth in population. It does not necessarily mean an extension of retail premises along the street, but suggests that more flexible and active ground floor commercial uses (as encompassed by the new Class E designation) can be accommodated, and their activity can enhance the overall street environment outside. Taken together with public realm, walking and cycling enhancements, the character of the High Street can be extended whilst simultaneously accommodating all of all the diverse new uses that town centres are likely to host, especially with a significant residential population.

5.87 The existing core High Street is pedestrianised and functions well. However at each end there are significant barriers to movement, both physical and perceived. To address this and extend the character of the High Street outwards, the following should be considered:

- Reduction in street clutter at each end of the High Street
- Improvements to Iron Bridge to enable easier pedestrian and cycling movement
- Reductions in vehicle space along Clarence Street, Thames Street and the High Street towards Kingston Road
- Improved crossings at each end of the pedestrianised High Street
- Ensuring that new developments along the 'extended' High Street incorporate active ground floors that can accommodate a variety of commercial uses

4) Reclaim space for pedestrians

5.88 The A308 dual carriageway along South Street, Thames Street and Clarence Street is a physical barrier to movement between the town centre and the river Thames, and is an unattractive place for people to be. Much of its length has inactive frontages or accesses to car parks, and is dominated by functional highways requirements, rather than being an attractive street.

5.89 At present this is a main through-route for traffic passing through Staines-upon-Thames. Traffic surveys confirm that approximately 2/3 of the vehicles entering Staines-upon-Thames are passing through and do not stop in the town centre, with many taking this route.

5.90 In addition, for much of the day the A308 provides considerably more capacity than is needed. At peak times, some junctions are congested and the dual carriageway provides queueing space for cars travelling through.

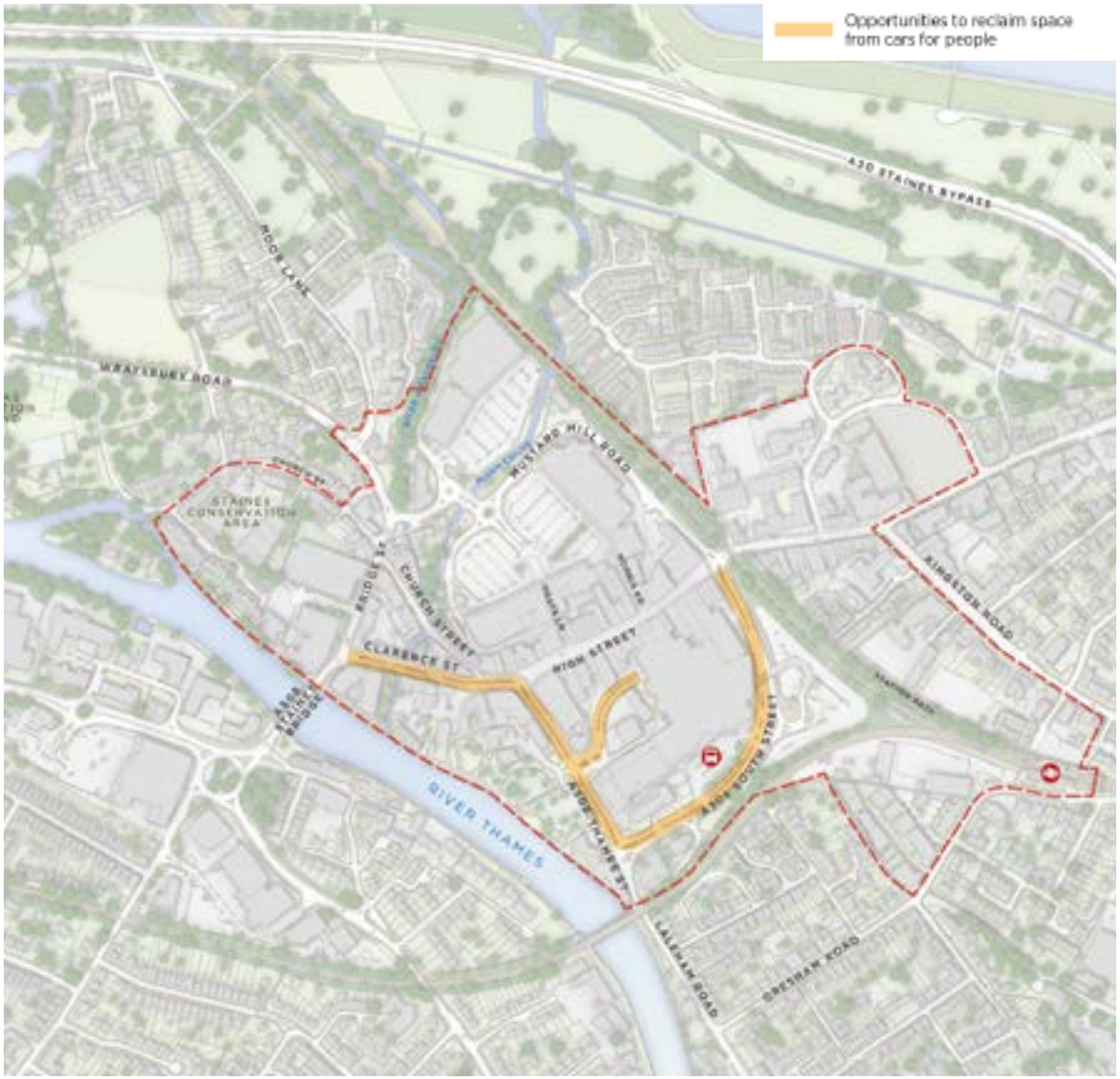


Figure 22: Streets for vehicle space reconfiguration

Figure 23: Example of public space with pedestrian crossing over major road, unified by materials and public realm treatment – Aachen Bahnhofplatz

5.91 There is considerable opportunity to redesign the A308 corridor to reduce space for vehicles and provide more space for walking, cycling, public transport and people. Such work would have to be undertaken in close collaboration with Surrey County Council and would be subject to further feasibility and technical studies. These interventions would turn a vehicle dominated road into a multi-modal street through the town centre.

5.92 The principle of designing a street for the a desirable level of traffic, rather than trying to accommodate traffic (and then attracting additional traffic that fills up extra capacity), is a more modern approach to transport planning and has been successful across the UK and internationally.

5.93 The Framework sets out ambitions for the transformation of streets and discouragement of through traffic, and detailed changes would be subject to further feasibility studies to determine their potential impact on the wider highway network.

Figure 24: Illustrative concept of improved crossing and public realm at High Street/Thames St junction

5.94 Reducing space for vehicles must be accompanied by positive placemaking measures. These should be aimed at turning what is currently a high-traffic road into a people-friendly street, with space for:

- Dedicated protected cycleways
- Continuous footways
- 'Spill out' space for cafes and other businesses to use on the pavement
- Bus stops and bus priority measures where applicable
- Green infrastructure such as street trees, hedges for separation, planted areas or swales
- Other flexible street space that can be used for businesses, events or civic space

5.95 Much improved crossings are also essential along the route, particularly at the bottom of the High Street, near Memorial Gardens, and near the bus station where there is a pedestrian route to the railway station from the town centre.

Inclusive consideration of the wide variety of users of the public realm, including those with limited mobility, sight, hearing or other physical disabilities, as well as those with learning difficulties and neurodiverse conditions is vital. By designing streets and facilities for the widest variety of users the streets can be improved for all.

Figure 25: Potential street configuration precedent example - flexible space, protected footways, cycleways and green infrastructure, with continuous crossings on side roads

Clear delineation of cycling routes reduces conflicts between pedestrians, vehicles and cyclists and makes the public realm more legible for everyone. Consistent use of coloured tarmac (e.g light pink) for dedicated cycleways is a tried-and-tested approach which the Framework advocates.

5.96 The road corridor varies in width, but is typically 20-24m along Clarence St, 25-35m along Thames St, and wider still on South Street where there is no defined building line forming a clear width. Within this corridor a wide variety of configuration options exist, to suit the changing character and uses along the street. An indicative section showing how Thames St might be configured is shown in Figure 26, and an illustrative view in Figure 27.

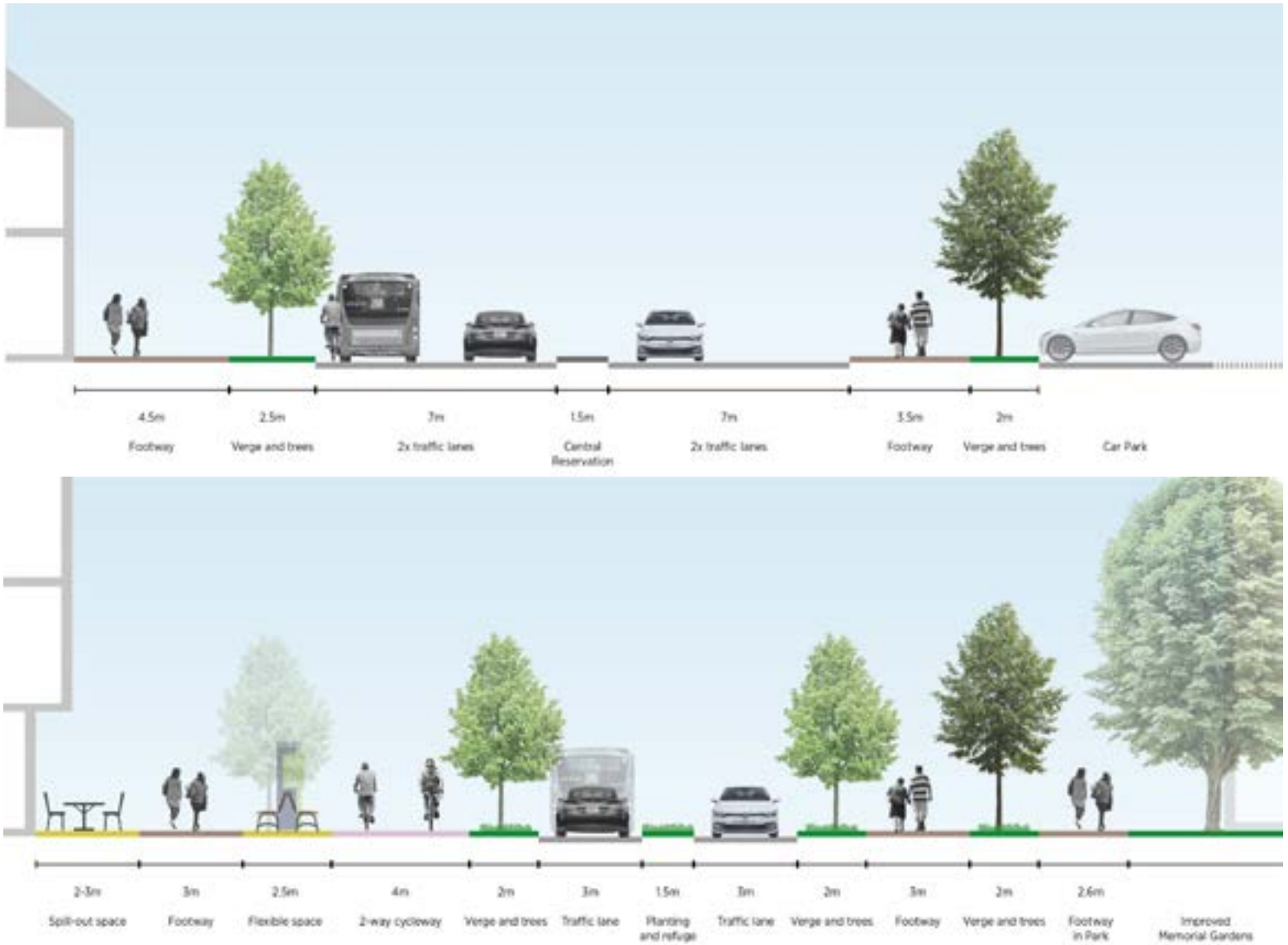


Figure 26: Sections showing before and after potential configuration of Thames St

A Transformed Thames Street

An illustration of how applying principles of Healthy Streets to Thames St, overlooking Memorial Gardens might look.

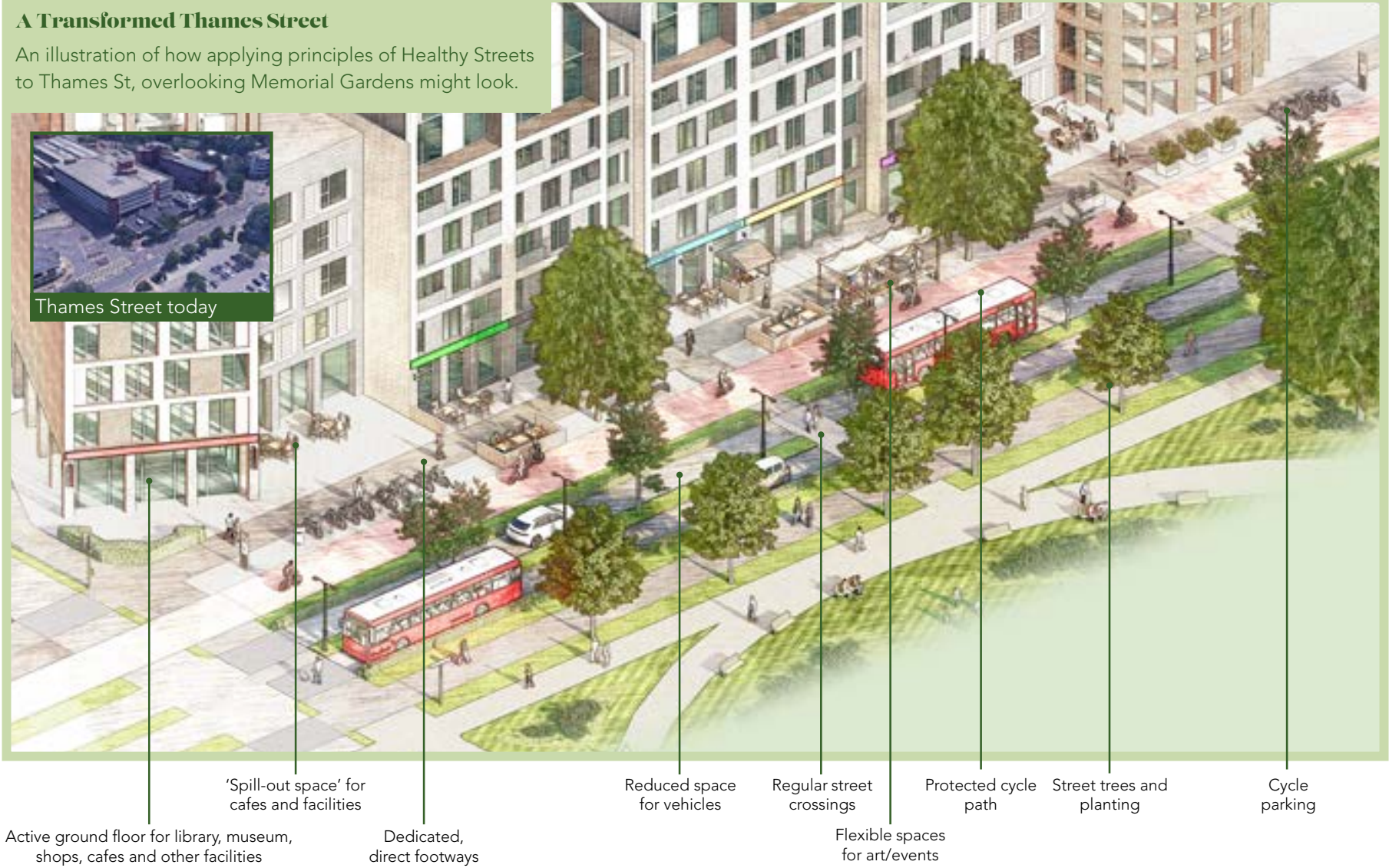


Figure 27: Options for reconfiguration of Thames St

Case Study: Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow

Sauchiehall Street in central Glasgow used to be a vehicle-dominated main vehicle artery through the centre of the city. Following a city centre masterplanning exercise, a street transformation was undertaken as part of 'The Avenues' programme. Space was reallocated from vehicles to create dedicated cycling space, continuous footways and flexible space for local businesses and people to use.

Sauchiehall Street Avenue now features a fully segregated two way cycle track; continuous flush footway and cycle crossings at side roads; large semi-mature deciduous trees; seats; permeable paving; improved access to buses and taxis; and a 20mph speed limit. The footways have been repaved in traditional Caithness stone and de-cluttered, as most of the street furniture has been located in the verge. This created more room for pedestrians and licensed tables and chairs, already encouraging new businesses into the area.

3) Enable sustainable movement

5.97 This priority ensures that the public realm provides safe, continuous connections for active travel movement within the town centre, connected to wider networks.

5.98 Two joined-up networks are outlined below and shown on Figure 28:

- Walking: continuous connections between the railway station, bus station, High Street, Two Rivers and the Rivers Thames, Colne and Wraysbury, and beyond (blue lines on plan).
- Cycling: continuous protected cycleways through the town centre connecting the primary cycling corridors identified by the emerging Spelthorne Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) (orange lines on plan).

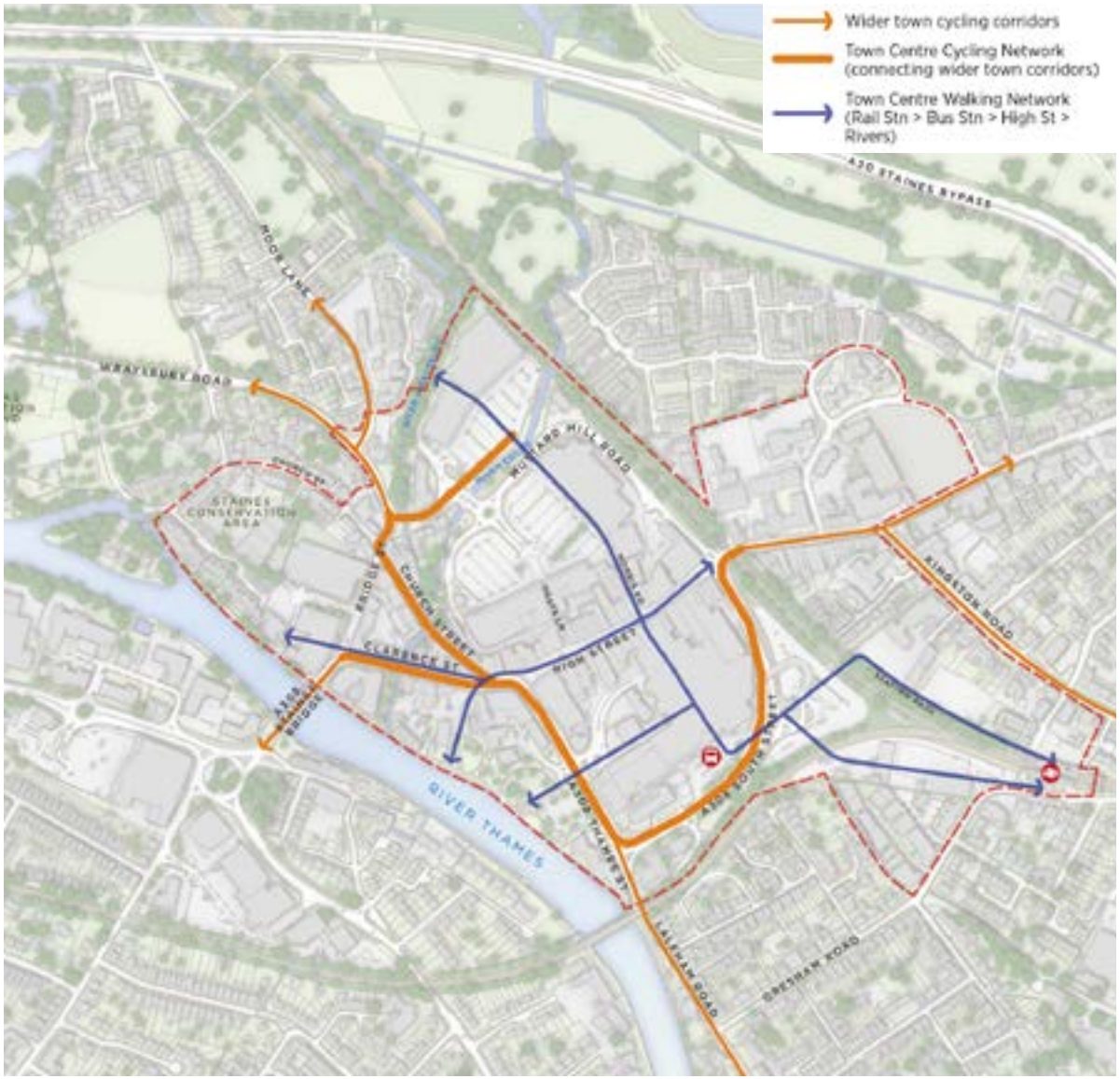


Figure 28: Sustainable movement networks

Walking Network

5.99 The current primary southeast-northwest walking route between the bus station and Two Rivers, intersecting with the High Street, should be extended and improved, to connect to wider destinations and bring pedestrian routes down to key access points on the River Thames.

5.100 To deliver this network requires new connections between the core of a redeveloped Elmsleigh Centre and Memorial Gardens, and across a redeveloped Two Rivers North towards the River Wraysbury. It should also safeguard and explore the option of a new pedestrian footbridge between the bus station and the potential redevelopment of the builders' yard on Gresham Road.

5.101 Improvements along the network are also required:

- Improved pedestrian crossings where the network crosses major roads
- Simplified public realm and reduced barriers in places such as at the bottom of the High Street
- Improved quality of connections as the network passes under the railway lines, at Iron Bridge, and at the end of Clarence Street dropping down to the Thames Path

Cycling Network

5.102 The emerging Spelthorne Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has identified a series of corridors along main roads into the town centre where better cycling provision could introduced. To support this and provide connectivity into and across the town centre for cycling journeys, the Development Framework sets out the key cycling corridors within the town centre.

5.103 The streets and routes highlighted as part of this cross-town network have the potential to accommodate protected cycling infrastructure with some space reallocated from vehicles. Opportunities include:

- Clarence St/Thames St/South St: vehicle space reallocation as part of comprehensive reconfiguration of A308
- Church Street: reduced-traffic shared space environment or removal of most on-street parking to create cycleway
- Hale St/Two Rivers: reallocation of vehicle space, reconfiguration of junctions and taking priority network through redevelopment of Two Rivers North

6) A variety of green spaces for people and events

5.104 The town centre currently lacks a variety of open spaces and routes with a 'green' character. The only significant location is at Memorial Gardens, a formally laid out civic space adjacent to the river. At present it lacks passive surveillance through overlooking from buildings, and is not as well used as it could be.

5.105 The Framework sets out four new locations for high quality open space in the town centre that can complement what is currently available, providing a wider variety of characters and spaces. Each is spaced within short walking distance of the core High Street, and is connected by new or improved routes set out elsewhere in the Framework.

All spaces should make use of appropriate green infrastructure, including street trees, planting beds, biodiverse planting areas and wildflowers to define the spaces. Providing a more diverse range of habitats and including features such as bee boxes can provide a haven for wildlife in urban areas.

Figure 29: New green spaces and streets

5.106 The new spaces are as follows (refer to numbers on Figure 29):

Elmsleigh (1):

located at the heart of a potential comprehensive redevelopment of the Elmsleigh Centre, this would be a new urban square with planting and green infrastructure at its heart. The square would be an intersection between retail and residential uses and would be well-connected to the High Street, bus and rail stations, and the River Thames through new pedestrian-priority 'greened' streets.

Two Rivers North (2):

as part of any redevelopment of this site, a green space with a significant natural component, based around the River Colne, is an opportunity. This could take the form of a linear natural park along the river integrated with a river restoration project to restore the river to a more natural state.

Bridge Street Car Park (3):

redevelopment of this site creates an opportunity for a lively riverfront space as part of a mixed-use development including homes, with active uses and potential redevelopment of the arches under Staines Bridge to provide additional space for commercial activity. The prevailing southwest aspect, river frontage and drop in levels from the main road mean that this could be an attractive place to develop an evening economy offering, complementing and bolstering neighbouring similar uses. Use of planting and trees can create shade and comfort and improve visual amenity.

Riverside Car Park (4):

using part of this car park to extend Memorial Gardens could create a flexible space of a suitable scale to host events. By developing part of the car park to provide active ground floor uses such as a café, arts centre or community use, with homes overlooking from above, a new usable space, more opportunities for children's play, and a green destination within the town centre could be created.

Improvements to Memorial Gardens

5.107 Memorial Gardens is the current main location for green space in the town centre. It suffers from a lack of overlooking and passive surveillance, leading to a perceived lack of safety, especially in the evening. It also has poor accessibility from most of the town centre, either being accessed from Thames Street, or via the Market Square, another underused public space cut off by the dual carriageway and physical barriers to movement.

5.108 Memorial Gardens should be at the heart of town centre life, and as such will be the focus of programming and activation of the space with events (large and small) and regular use by community groups. The activation of space through effective programming should be encouraged for all public spaces in the town centre.

5.109 Opportunities to enable physical activity within and around the gardens should be taken, including walking trails, children's play opportunities and outdoor gym equipment. Sport England's Active Design principles provide further guidance on creating spaces that enable regular physical activity in the built environmnent.

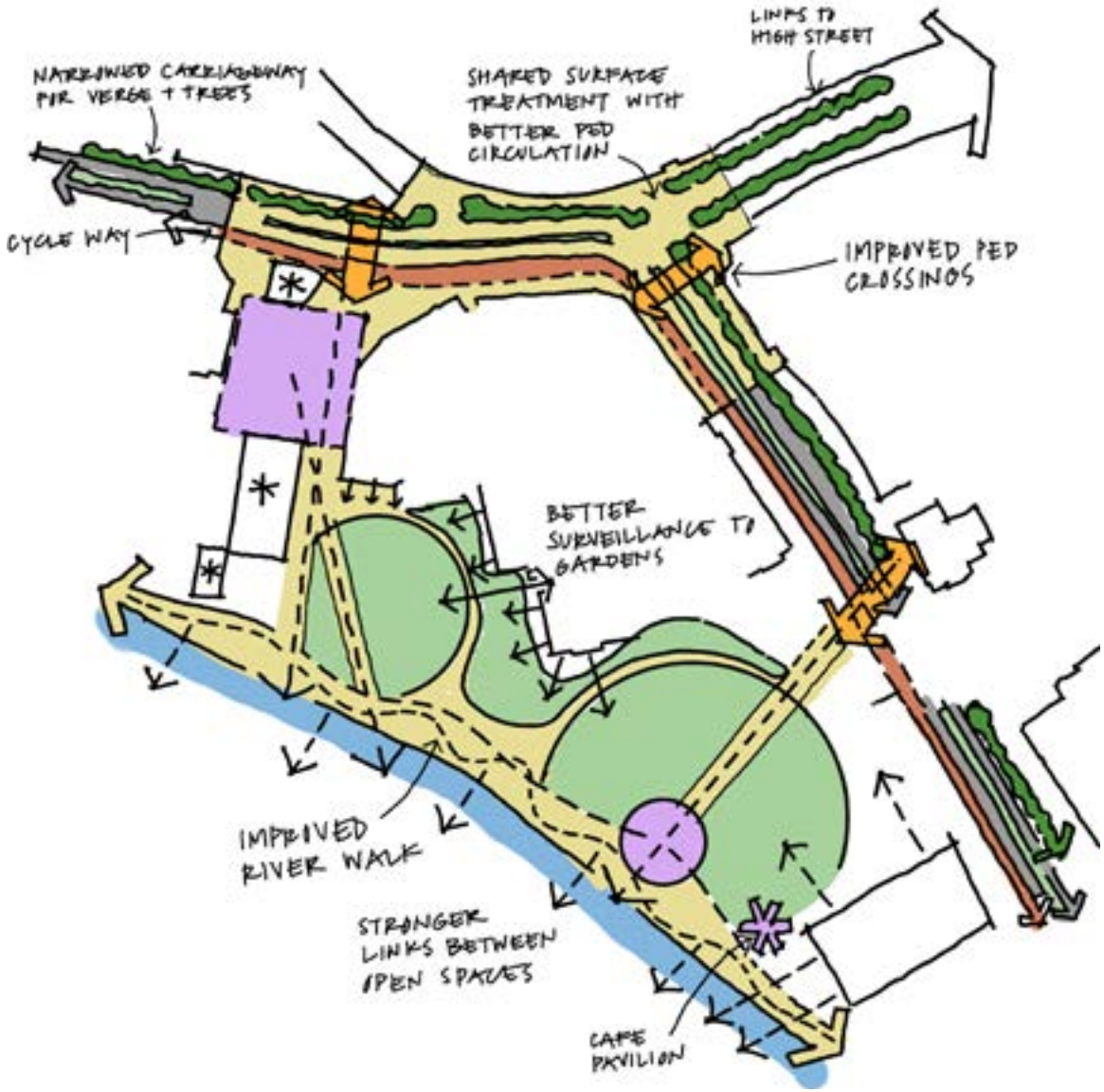


Figure 30: Concept diagram showing key principles between High Street and Memorial Gardens

Figure 31: Illustrative plan showing potential public realm approach at Memorial Gardens and High Street junction

5.110 Making Memorial Gardens a true destination in the town centre, able to host events and activity throughout the day and evening, requires a multi-pronged approach:

- Removal of physical and perceived barriers at the bottom of the High Street connecting to Market Square
- Reactivate the Market Square
- Extend the High St character and pedestrian-friendliness along Clarence St and Thames St
- Introduce trees and planting
- Improved facilities within the gardens, for children's play, leisure and events
- Some development to provide overlooking at both ends of the Gardens
- Development of the Thames Street Frontage to provide surveillance

5.111 A concept and illustrative study for how this might be implemented is shown below in Figures 30 and 31.

Case Study: Twickenham Riverside

Developed by Richmond Council, this prominent riverfront site will revilatiseand extend public open space, leisure, retail, office and residential uses, and connect the River Thames into the town centre through an improved street connection. The upper levels of the two main buildings will consist of apartments ranging from studios to large 3-bedroom flats, with 50% of them being affordable. The residential has been designed to optimise daylight, natural ventilation, and river views. A new café in the Gardens, overlooking the play area, and a new pub at the end of the square will create destination points for residents and visitors.

Case Study: Kingston Riverside

Based around Riverside Walk and very close to Kingston Bridge, Kingston Riverside is a mixed-use development with activated public space with green infrastructure on the River Thames. It is integrated wth the Market Place and main hub of the town centre through passageways with activated frontages, and continuous pedestrian connections through to Cllarence St, the main retail street. Above ground floor commercial uses is residential apartments, many with river views.

The future parameters for the whole riverside in Kingston is governed by a supplementary planning document (SPD) that sets out an overall vision, key development parameters, and essential infrastructure for delivery.

Case Study: Richmond Riverside

This historic riverside area exemplifies the positive interrelationship between the River Thames, high quality built form, including active uses at ground floor level, and useable public open space. These intersect at the Richmond Riverside to create an attractive, lively and overlooked space much valued by residents and visitors, that makes best use of the river frontage location and attracts people to the river.

7. Climate Change Resilience

5.112 Public realm design has a significant role to play in ensuring that as extreme weather events increase due to climate change, public spaces remain usable and able to mitigate the worst of the effects.

Effect	Town Centre Response
Increased frequency and severity of heavy rainfall events	Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to be integrated throughout public realm and new developments to absorb and slow surface water runoff – different systems suitable for different locations
	Green roofs for new developments
	Increase in green open space area and frequency of green spaces in town centre to absorb water
Increased frequency and severity of heatwave events	Additional planting and street trees to provide shade and cooler microclimate at street level
	Increase in green open space area and frequency of green spaces in town centre to provide shade, recreation and cooling
	Incorporate shading into building design, for example arcades
	Improve accessibility to cooler, shaded green open spaces

Table 1: Climate change resilience strategies

Case Study: Quaggy River Restoration

QWAG river clean up in Confluence Place, May 2021. Photo credit: Paul de Zylva / QWAG

The River Quaggy, flowing through SE London to Lewisham was a heavily managed, channelised and culverted river, that regularly flooded during high rainfall events. Encouraged by a local community group (Quaggy Waterways Action Group, QWAG), the Environment Agency has undertaken a number of schemes to re-naturalise the river and allow it to flood into green spaces, as well as improve habitats along the bank and open it up where it was culverted, to reduce flood events and provide downstream protection.

The scheme has been extremely successful and continues today. As well as flood alleviation, the river is now more biodiverse, more attractive and is a valuable resource for local communities.

Priorities

5.108 Based on the strategies set out in this section, nine priority sites for intervention are identified in Figure 32.

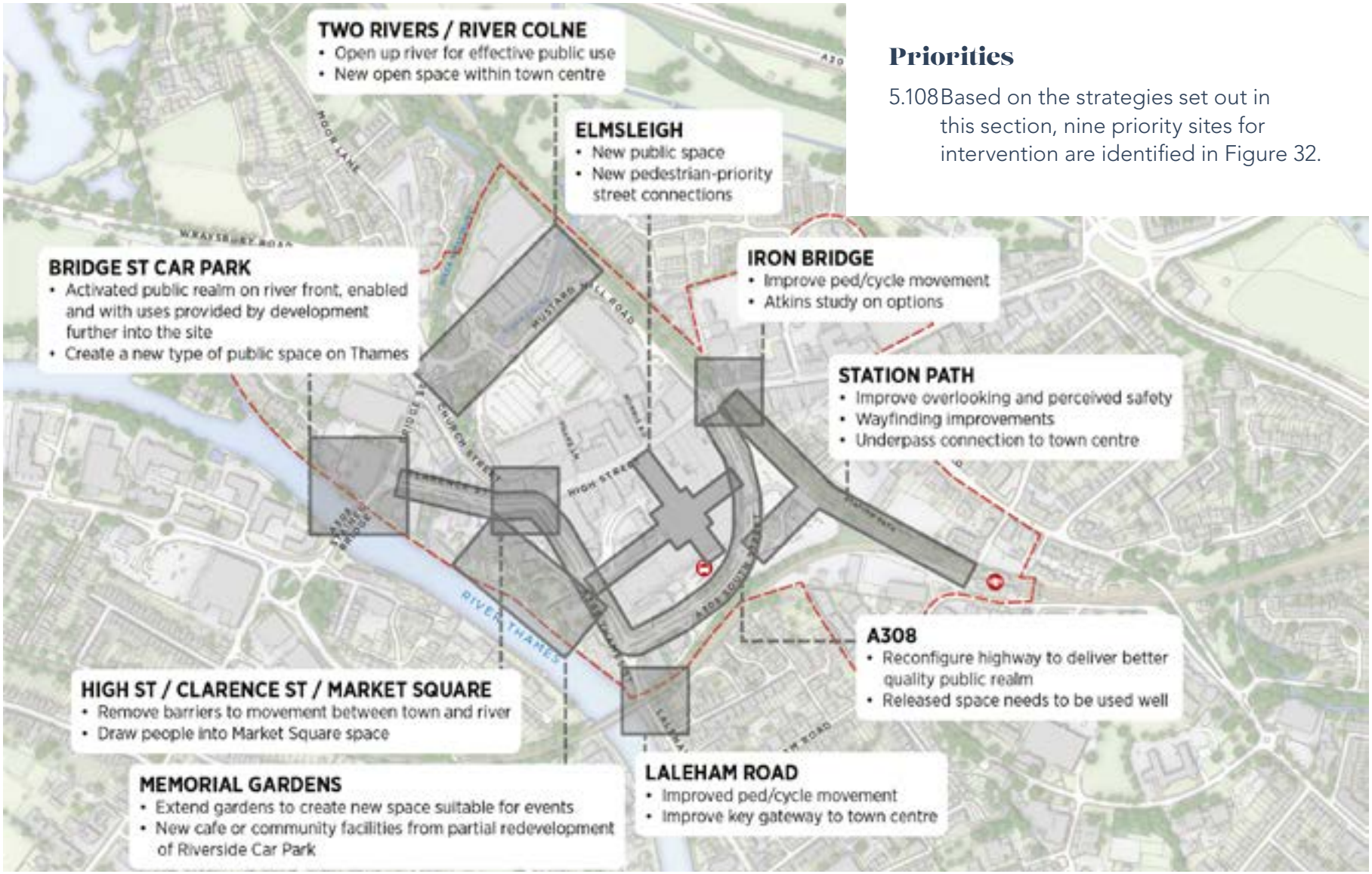


Figure 32: Public realm intervention priorities

Location	Objectives	Relevant Public Realm Strategies	Next Steps
Two Rivers North / River Colne	Open up river for effective public use Create new natural open space within town centre Active public space at river crossing point River restoration project	1. Enriching green and blue networks 2. Connect to the rivers 5. Enable sustainable movement 6. Activate a variety of green spaces for people and events 7. Create a climate change resilient place	Consider as part of Two Rivers North development site Explore project as part of Water Resources South East (WRSE) Regional Plan priorities
Iron Bridge	Improve ped/cycle movement	3. Extend the High Street 5. Enable sustainable movement	Options developed through Atkins study for SCC Pursue as part of wider Transport Study
Station Path	Improve overlooking and perceived safety Wayfinding improvements Improve quality of and overlooking of underpass connection to town centre	5. Enable sustainable movement	Consider as part of Oast House development site
Laleham Road	Improved ped/cycle movement Improve key gateway to town centre	2. Connect to the rivers 4. Reclaim space and use it well 5. Enable sustainable movement	Spelthorne Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
High St/ Clarence St/ Market Sq	Remove barriers to movement between town and river Draw people into Market Square space and on to Memorial Gardens	1. Enriching green and blue networks 2. Connect to the rivers 3. Extend the High Street 4. Reclaim space and use it well 5. Enable sustainable movement 6. Activate a variety of green spaces for people and events 7. Create a climate change resilient place	Spelthorne LCWIP Pursue as part of wider Transport Study First priority stage of A308 corridor transformation

Table 2: Public realm priorities, strategies and next steps

Memorial Gardens	Extend gardens into old Riverside Car Park to create space suitable for holding events Improve passive surveillance and uses of garden with partial development of Riverside Car Park	1. Enriching green and blue networks 2. Connect to the rivers 6. Activate a variety of green spaces for people and events	Consider as part of Riverside Car Park development site
A308 Corridor	Reconfigure highway to deliver better-quality public realm Reduce barriers to movement Incorporate green infrastructure into street	1. Enriching green and blue networks 2. Connect to the rivers 3. Extend the High Street 4. Reclaim space and use it well 5. Enable sustainable movement 7. Create a climate change resilient place	Consider as part of Elmsleigh/ Tothill development site Consider as part of Riverside Car Park development site Spelthorne LCWIP Pursue as part of wider Transport Study
Elmsleigh	New public open space within redeveloped Elmsleigh Centre New pedestrian-priority streets connecting High Street to bus station, and South St to riverfront, intersecting at public open space	1. Enriching green and blue networks 2. Connect to the rivers 5. Enable sustainable movement 6. Activate a variety of green spaces for people and events 7. Create a climate change resilient place	Consider as part of Elmsleigh/ Tothill development site Spelthorne LCWIP
Bridge St Car Park	Activated public realm on river front, enabled and with uses provided by development further into the site Create a new type of public space on Thames	1. Enriching green and blue networks 2. Connect to the rivers 3. Extend the High Street 4. Reclaim space and use it well 5. Enable sustainable movement 6. Activate a variety of green spaces for people and events 7. Create a climate change resilient place	Consider as part of Bridge St car park development site

Section 6.0
Design for Urban Living

Consultation Priorities

- Concern over high rise buildings and change in character of town centre
- Need for quality, affordable homes
- More leisure and cultural facilities within new developments
- Environmental sustainability needs to be prioritised

Creating a Sustainable Place

- Design principles for buildings with low or zero-carbon footprints
- Ensuring new developments prioritise walking, cycling and active streets with local facilities over car parking and car traffic
- Design principles to ensure buildings are long-lasting and of high quality, to minimise future replacement needs and reduced the embodied carbon of new construction

Main Proposals

- Design principles to ensure new developments in Staines-upon-Thames town centre create People-Friendly Streets, Attractive and Long-Lasting Buildings, and Great Homes for All

Introduction

6.1 Many town centres across the UK are experiencing a return of and growth in residential populations. Town centres have traditionally had residents, attracted by the excellent connectivity and proximity to facilities, but during the second half of the 20th Century many UK town centres became used for shopping and employment only.

6.2 Having residents in town centres can be positive for many reasons. Firstly, they provide an additional catchment population within walking distance to support local shops and services, bolstering variety and vitality. Second, they provide for activity at hours of the day and times of the week that are quiet for shopping and employment uses. Finally, they provide the basis for a local evening economy, supporting bars, restaurants and other leisure uses that also serve the wider town and borough.

6.3 Residents in town centres are also less likely to own a car, or to use a car for day-to-day journeys due to the expanded choice of sustainable transport options, and proximity of most facilities and even employment.

6.4 Having increased vitality in a town centre encourages and enables investment in both private services (shops, leisure etc), as well as public goods, such as the public realm, open space and public services.

6.5 For all the above reasons the growth in town centre populations has been supported by national planning policy for many years.

6.6 However with these opportunities comes challenges. These revolve around ensuring that people can live in close proximity whilst maintaining enough space, good amenity, access to light, protection from noise, and with secure facilities for bins, bikes and cars. Past generations shunned dense urban living due to a perception that it was overcrowded. With modern design, infrastructure and construction techniques, many of these concerns can be overcome.

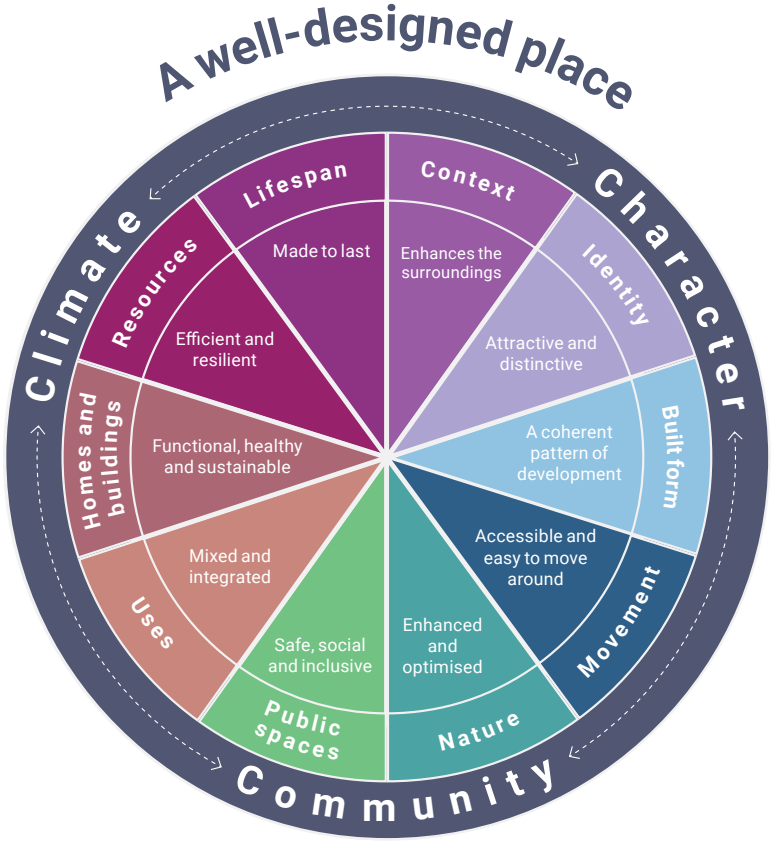
The National Design Guide

6.7 In 2019 the National Design Guide (NDG) was published, setting out the 10 characteristics for good design in the built environment, and it is a part of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.8 Well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical character. The ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of community. They work to positively address environmental issues affecting climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.9 The National Design Guide encourages local planning authorities to adapt its themes for the local context, setting a framework for judging what good design looks like in a local area. Over the following pages, the Development Framework sets out what this means for all high quality new development in Staines-upon-Thames town centre.

6.10 The 10 characteristics can be most successfully realised through an effective design process, which studies the existing area for design influences and parameters, before developing options and assessing them for optimal, balanced solutions. Early and frequent engagement with Spelthorne Borough Council through the pre-application process is encouraged to discuss design issues, and innovative and inclusive public and stakeholder engagement is recommended to produce better design solutions.



The 10 Characteristics of well-designed places, from the National Design Guide

Context

Context is the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings.

The town's existing character should be reflected in the mass, form and rhythm of new development so that the result is contemporary in style, connected to its attractive riverfront and town centre context.

Designs should recognise the changing way we live and the importance of addressing future challenges such as climate change, as well as the economic and social context of Staines-upon-Thames and the need to ensure homes, facilities and healthy, high quality modern places for all.

Identity

The identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, streets and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.

Designs should recognise and respect historically important buildings within the town and design spaces/buildings that relate well to the existing layout, scale, massing and grain, following the townscape principles set out in the Framework.

Designs should develop the connectivity between transport hubs, high street, conservation area and riverfront, ensuring an attractive and interesting place to visit which leaves a lasting positive memory that befits the town's character, heritage and natural landscape. Standard solutions are unlikely to be acceptable, as they are unlikely to create a distinctive identity or make good use of a particular site.

Built Form

Built Form is the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place.

It is important that designs respect the general pattern and consider the impact on the scale and grain of the street. New buildings should consider and relate to the predominant scale and mass of adjacent property and marked differences without a graduation within the same street may lead to a loss of unity and coherence.

Buildings with a significantly larger scale or bulk than their surroundings require special consideration and should comply with the principles set out in this chapter, particularly in sensitive locations close to the River Thames, conservation areas and High Street.

Movement

Patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. They also form a crucial component of urban character. Their success is measured by how they contribute to the quality and character of the place, not only how well they function.

Development in the town centre should provide new, exciting, inclusive and safe spaces and routes that connect the transport hubs, High Street, conservation area and rivers. Such routes are essential to enhance the identity and vibrancy of the town, and should provide people with a means of getting about by a choice of modes, as well as spaces for sitting, relaxing and meeting in the public realm.

Nature

Nature contributes to the quality of a place, and to people's quality of life, and it is a critical component of well-designed places. Natural features are integrated into well-designed development. They include natural and designed landscapes, high quality public open spaces, street trees, and other trees, grass, planting and water.

New developments within Staines-Upon-Thames should be sympathetic, forward-looking and respond imaginatively to the unique setting that Staines-Upon-Thames provides with its natural setting on the River Thames and tributaries.

Buildings should minimize adverse microclimatic effects on the public realm and should ensure light reaches the street and surrounding buildings. The need to retain sightlines to the rivers in order to develop public access to riverfront areas are important and designs should recognise the unique characteristics and importance of these areas.

Uses

Sustainable places include a mix of uses that support everyday activities, including to live, work and play.

It is important to bring diversity to the town centre and a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs. Staines-Upon-Thames needs a mixture of housing that genuinely meets local needs, which includes households at all stages of life, as part of a balanced approach across the borough. Proposals should consider innovative forms of housing provision, including extra care accommodation, homes for young people and housing typologies suitable for families.

As well as homes, the co-location of day-to-day uses and higher-order facilities within the town centre should be prioritised and accommodated as a fundamental part of mixed-use development in the town centre. Consideration of leisure, cultural, civic, community and retail space should be demonstrated at an early stage of design.

Public Spaces

The quality of the spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. Public spaces are streets, squares, and other spaces that are open to all. They are the setting for most movement. The design of a public space encompasses its siting and integration into the wider network of routes as well as its various elements.

There is a need to have welcoming and attractive public spaces that promote inclusivity, children's play, physical activity, interactivity and enhance public safety. Spaces that draw people to them, through the town and on towards the rivers, helping support the vitality of the town.

Homes and Buildings

Well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them.

Dwellings need to reflect diversity in size and type to support a wide range of residents. Buildings should also be a reflection of the aspirations of the town. Whether you drive through, pass by as a rail passenger or walk through as a pedestrian, the buildings should complement the experience and be a statement showcasing Staines-Upon-Thames as an ambitious, interesting and attractive place to live, work and visit.

Resources

Well-designed places and buildings conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change by being energy efficient and minimising carbon emissions to meet net zero by 2050. It identifies measures to achieve mitigation, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimising embodied energy; and adaptation to anticipated events, such as rising temperatures and the increasing risk of flooding.

Staines-Upon-Thames has an opportunity to be an exemplar on sustainability through new development and transformations to the public realm. Development should demonstrate a comprehensive and integrated approach to how they are building for a sustainable future.

The environmental impact of demolition and construction is considerable, and early design consideration needs to be focussed on identifying, reusing and adapting existing assets and buildings.

Lifespan

Well-designed places sustain their beauty over the long term. They add to the quality of life of their users and as a result, people are more likely to care for them over their lifespan. They have an emphasis on quality and simplicity.

New developments and places should use high-quality, contextually relevant materials that ensure Staines-upon-Thames will remain a great place for years to come. Consideration of maintenance and how a place will look and function in the decades to come is an essential part of quality design in the town centre.

Effective consultation and co-design of new places can help residents be involved in their design. Innovative and inclusive stakeholder engagement is encouraged, aiming to bring in under-represented groups that are typically not represented in the planning system.

Urban Living Principles

6.11 The remainder of this chapter sets out in more detail how new residential-led developments in the town centre can be designed to ensure that:

- Residents have high quality homes that can last into the future
- The town centre benefits from attractive, well-designed development
- New facilities and infrastructure are enabled by development

6.12 Nine specific design principles for urban living are set out in this chapter. Each has a short, explanatory title, sets out an underlying aim, gives a precedent example of where it has been successfully implemented, sets out what would be expected in designs, and provides pointers to supporting studies, standards or other guidance.

6.13 This chapter's design principles are to be used following a principle of 'Comply or Justify'. Deviation from the principles set out will only be permitted with robust and evidence-based justification for doing so. In such cases, developers and their design teams must demonstrate that their proposals will deliver the very highest quality design that aligns with the aims of each design principle. Proposals that do not comply with these principles and fail to provide compelling justification, including evidence and options analysis, will be refused.

6.14 The nine principles are:

People-Friendly Streets

1. Active ground floor, connecting to usable public realm
2. Comfortable street environment with overshadowing and microclimate issues mitigated through design

Attractive, Long-Lasting Buildings

3. Environmental sustainability and build quality as fundamental design parameters
4. Heights responding to street scale
5. Regular vertical articulation for a fine grain of buildings
6. Attractive and varied roofscape with a variety of heights
7. Use of attractive, long-lasting, contextual materials

Quality Homes for All

8. Generous private and shared amenity space for all dwellings
9. A mix of unit types and sizes

People-Friendly Streets

1. Active Ground Floor, Connecting to Usable Public Realm

6.15 Aim: To generate a sense of safety, activity and vibrancy in the urban realm by ensuring on-street activity is visible and is strengthened by passive surveillance from homes and businesses.

6.16 Designs should demonstrate:

- Active frontages to all streets, with entrances and windows or active ground floor uses located to enable overlooking of the street. Where buildings cannot achieve an active frontage for justifiable reasons, buildings on the opposite side of the street should enable natural surveillance
- Building typologies that address corners effectively, offering good overlooking on both sides
- Activity inside buildings containing commercial or retail uses at ground floor that is visible from the public realm
- Opportunities for social interaction and meeting, sitting and business 'spill-out' space in the public realm.
- Where new streets are created, a rich variety of streets, lanes, parks, mews, squares and civic spaces to enhance urban diversity and allow for a range of uses, and pedestrian links to nearby open spaces
- Main streets should have a consistent building line and strong continuity of built form
- Communal entrances to apartment buildings should be directly from the street
- Service lanes and yards which are integral to the layout of the block and sufficiently discreet to avoid a negative impact on neighbourhood amenity. Hours of servicing may be limited by planning condition.
- Discreet accommodation of commercial bins, service equipment and service entrances so that they do not dominate the streetscape or compromise the principle of active frontages and overlooked streets.

Figure 33: MacBean Street, Greenwich, London – integration of public realm and activated streets with buildings through open and active ground floors (Fathom Architects)

2. Comfortable Street Environment with overshadowing & microclimate issues mitigated through design

6.17 Aim: To design comfortable outdoor spaces that protect against excessive sun, re-radiated heat and do not create cold, windy or gusty environments, in order to significantly extend the usable period of outdoor public spaces and ensure that such spaces are comfortable for all users.

6.18 Designs should demonstrate:

- Public spaces that use solar exposure for warmth and are protected against cold winter winds, demonstrated through computer modelling
- Public spaces and streets that provide adequate shade in the summer and do not overheat through re-radiated heat from buildings, including under projected climate change scenarios.
- Building frontages with retractable canopies or other means of providing shade, where they are exposed to the summer sun, to maximise usable outdoor space
- A planting strategy which optimises the use of locally distinctive tree and plant species, and delivers benefits for shade, drainage, air quality and biodiversity
- Use of green infrastructure to mitigate the Urban Heat Island Effect and in creating shade.

Figure 34: Waterside, Belfast – use of computer-aided design of built form to create public spaces that mitigate wind and rain to extend the usable outdoor season (Henning Larsen)

Attractive, Long-Lasting Buildings

3. Environmental sustainability and build quality as fundamental design parameters

6.19 Aim: Resilience to, and contributions towards reducing the effects of, climate change should inform every stage of the design and development process, with an emphasis on capturing opportunities for habitat creation, water conservation and green energy production.

6.20 Designs should demonstrate:

- Re-use of existing buildings where feasible, even through the re-use of frame, cores and foundations with skin replacement, to reduce the impact of embodied carbon in construction.
- Route toward achieving zero-carbon homes. This may be achieved through certification such as Passivhaus or appropriate carbon offsetting.
- Convenient bicycle storage at all dwellings, with apartment buildings having ground-floor, secure storage areas, and all houses having secure cycle parking space with convenient access, to a level of provision which meets Local authority standards.
- Cycle stands near retail or community facilities, and at public transport stops and benefiting from natural surveillance
- SuDS infrastructure to provide multiple benefits, aiming to incorporate the management of water quantity, improvements in

Figure 35: South Gardens, Elephant & Castle, London – Climate-positive masterplan, with ultra-energy efficient PassivHaus construction using cross-laminated timber for some buildings in a conservation setting. (MacCreanor Lavington)

water quality, amenity provision and increased biodiversity, including a consideration of biodiversity net gain.

- Minimal reliance on drainage solutions requiring extensive and ongoing maintenance. Ensure SuDs and soft landscape maintenance plans are co beneficial in order toto minimise both current and future risk of SuDS failing due to lack of maintenance.
- Maximum rainwater and grey water recycling has been incorporated in homes and the public realm.
- Building orientation and internal layouts designed to maximise solar gain, and dual-aspect dwellings with good passive ventilation.
- Reducing the development's use of resources across its life cycle, including during the construction phase
- Use of green roofs and inclusion of photovoltaic panels where possible.

4. Heights responding to street scale

6.21 Aim: To ensure the legibility, structure and function of a place is reflected though a hierarchy of scale in built form, streets and spaces, from primary streets and civic squares down to quiet residential streets and pocket parks.

6.22 Designs should demonstrate:

- A clear spatial hierarchy reflecting the street character, including the design, height, bulk, massing and configuration of buildings, the width and capacity of streets, the scale and function of spaces and the landscape character.
- Streets and public spaces which are enclosed and of dimensions informed by successful street case studies, drawn from locally and further afield
- Preservation of key views to the rivers

Figure 36: Great Kneighton, Cambridge – range of street types and scales with clear townscape markers and nodes created by varying building height (Proctor and Matthews)

3. Regular vertical articulation for a fine grain of buildings

6.23 Aim: To reflect the townscape of Staines-upon-Thames with a fine grain of buildings, providing interest and visual variety along streets.

6.24 Designs should demonstrate:

- Regular vertical articulation of building facades to meaningfully break up the bulk of larger buildings with visual changes.
- Use of townscape features such as deflection, projection and recession of buildings, to create interest along streets.
- . Variety and interest at all viewing distances (e.g. use of bricks and brick detailing close up, out to articulated façade and balconies from distance)
- Deliberate placement of townscape markers, and the careful integration of any landscape and historic features, at key nodes.
- Retail and commercial streets and spaces with a high frequency of building entrances.
- A clear and illustrated response to the Townscape design principles set out in the Development Framework, maximising all opportunities to implement them where sites form key street frontages or architectural set pieces.

Figure 37: Portobello Square, London – regular ground-floor entrances and vertical articulation combine to make an attractive, fine-grain street (PRP)

6. Attractive & varied roofscape with a variety of heights

6.25 Aim: To create a memorable place with an interesting and enjoyable views, using high quality, varied roofscapes which are responsive to local patterns and traditions.

6.26 Designs should demonstrate:

- A roof-scape and silhouette which shows variety, responds to the spatial hierarchy and is based on local precedent, with a predominance of traditionally gabled or tilted roof forms
- Use of setbacks and screening, or incorporation within roofs, to reduce the visibility of plant and service equipment.
- An attractive variation in heights responding to an overall hierarchy related to streets, corners and key nodes.

Figure 38: Laindon Place, Basildon – varied roofscape and changing heights create a more visually interesting and distinctive neighbourhood centre (Pollard Thomas Edwards)

7. Use of attractive, long-lasting, contextual materials

6.27 Aim: To enhance civic pride, improve the appearance of Staines-upon-Thames over the long-term, reduce maintenance requirements and the need for new embodied carbon in reconstruction using high quality, long-lasting materials.

6.28 Designs should demonstrate:

- Use of materials that are high quality, long lasting and low in maintenance and sustainable, as well as responding to local character and contextual materials
- Street surface materials that reduce visual dominance of carriageways, and clearly delineate use of space such as parking, footpaths, crossings, edges and spaces to meet or rest
- Choice of planting that minimises long-term maintenance requirements
- Spaces and use of street furniture that facilitate long-term upkeep

Figure 39: Accordia, Cambridge – use of high-quality bricks and materials has created a development that stands the test of time (Fielden Clegg Bradley)

Quality Homes for All

8. Generous private and shared amenity space for all dwellings

6.29 Aim: To enable residents of areas of higher and lower density alike to enjoy high quality private space and access to the outdoors at home, to promote personal space, contact with nature, and respite from busy lifestyles.

6.30 Designs should demonstrate:

- Internal layouts to cater for contemporary living preferences including integrated kitchen/ family rooms, home-working space, dedicated utility spaces and good levels of storage.
- A range of outdoor amenity space that is appropriate to the typology and density, relates directly to the living environment, offers extended seasonal use and play opportunities.
- Opportunities for people to interact with and relax in nature through seating and planting proposals
- Importance given to entrances and provision of adequate threshold space to dwellings, both on the street and within apartment stairwells.
- Arrangement of dwellings and amenity spaces to carefully consider privacy.
- Generous fenestration and opportunities for large areas of glazing, where it suits the typology, should be maximised to allow for naturally well-lit homes and a seamless connection between living and external amenity spaces. Glazing to all habitable rooms should be not less than 20% of the internal floor area of the room.
- Innovative solutions for waste where tracking for waste disposal vehicles to all homes would compromise the intended character of a space or street. These may include underground waste systems.

Figure 40: City Park West, Chelmsford – generous public open space within the heart of the town centre (Pollard Thomas Edwards)

9. A mix of unit types and sizes

6.31 Aim: To deliver homes that meet the changing needs and demographics of society and contribute to socially mixed and integrated neighbourhoods.

Figure 41: Chobham Manor, Olympic Park, London – wide mix of different housing types, including mews, terraces, multi-generational homes, duplexes, maisonettes and apartments (PRP)

6.32 Designs should demonstrate:

- Homes should cater to contemporary household types, including single person households as well as small and large families, sharers, older people and downsizers.
- Dwellings of adequate size to support a lifetime use. This may be achieved by meeting the national minimum space standards and exceeding them for family-sized dwellings.
- Inclusion of specialist accommodation types, such as elderly or sheltered accommodation, to give the opportunity for a wider mix of people in town centres.
- Building sizes and shapes that enable alternative uses in the future, ideally right-angled and with suitable minimum frontage widths.
- Building typologies that permit uses to be changed over time, such as incorporating convertible ground floors on main streets.

Examples at Different Densities

6.33 To illustrate how the principles can be successfully applied, two illustrative examples are detailed on the following pages, showing how each of the nine design principles could be taken forward within typical development sites within Staines-upon-Thames town centre.

6.34 Two densities are set out, to support the zoning approach of the Development Framework:

- Medium Density, with an example at 175 dwellings per hectare (dph)
- Higher Density, with an example at 300dph

Medium Density – 175dph on a 70x70m block (0.49ha)

6.35 A medium density has been indicated as suitable for some sites where a compromise exists between its sustainable location and ensuring that the overall character and townscape of the town centre is respected.

Figure 42: 175dph density study overview

Figure 43: 175dph density study - Streets

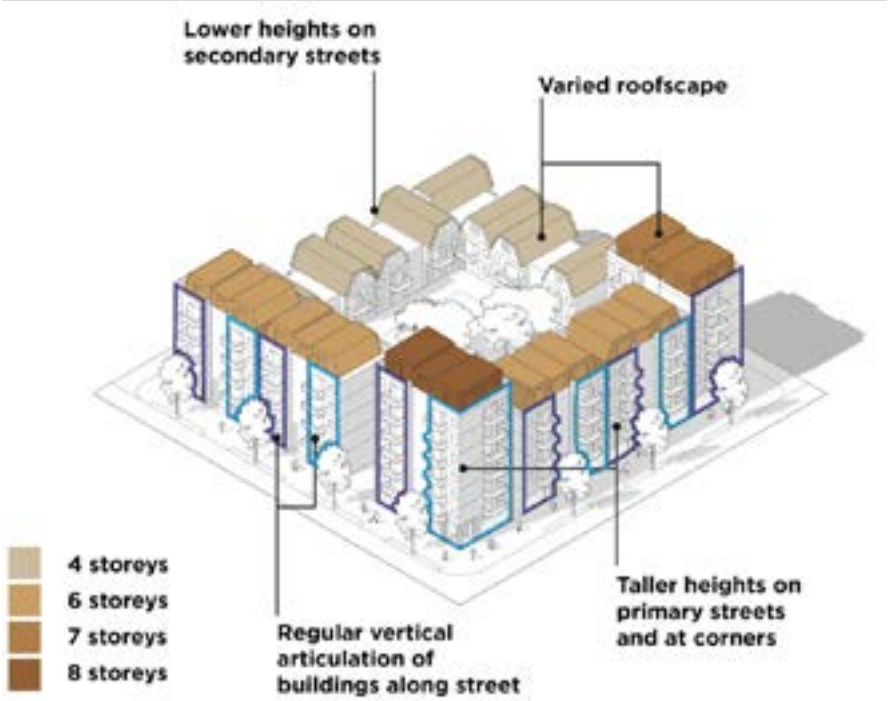


Figure 44: 175dph density study - Buildings

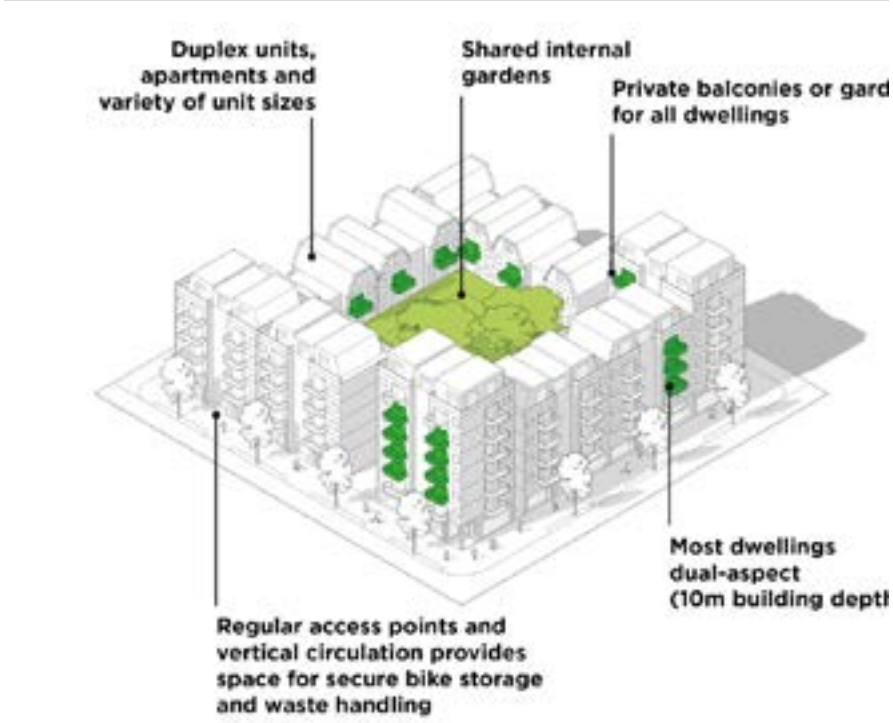


Figure 45: 175dph density study - Homes

Higher Density – 300dph on a 90x90m block (0.81ha)

6.36 A density of up to 350dph is set out in the Development Framework as being suitable for a number of the most sustainable sites within the town centre that offer the opportunity for comprehensive, co-ordinated development. In addition, a medium-high density of 250dph is set out in some locations. This study illustrates how a density of 300dph, between the two figures, may be undertaken. The principles are broadly applicable to both densities with appropriate adjustments of heights and other design parameters.

Figure 46: 300dph density study overview

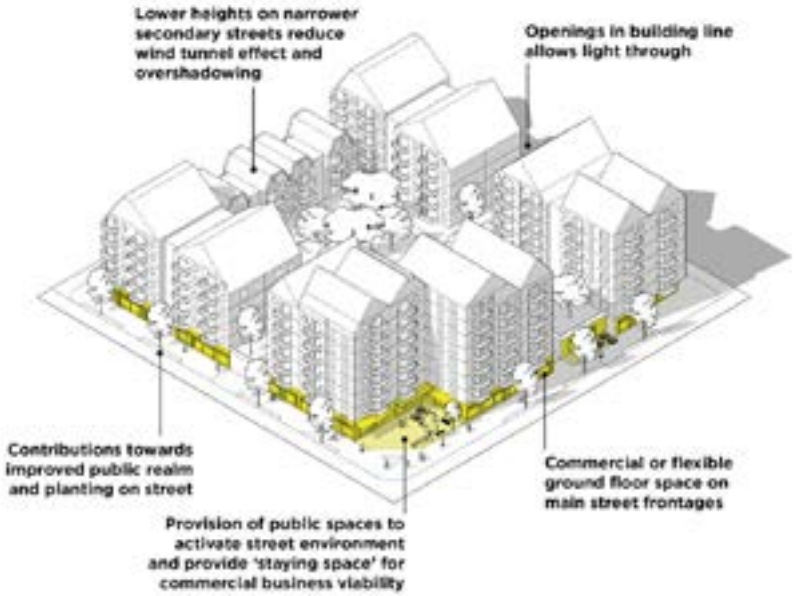


Figure 47: 300dph density study - Streets

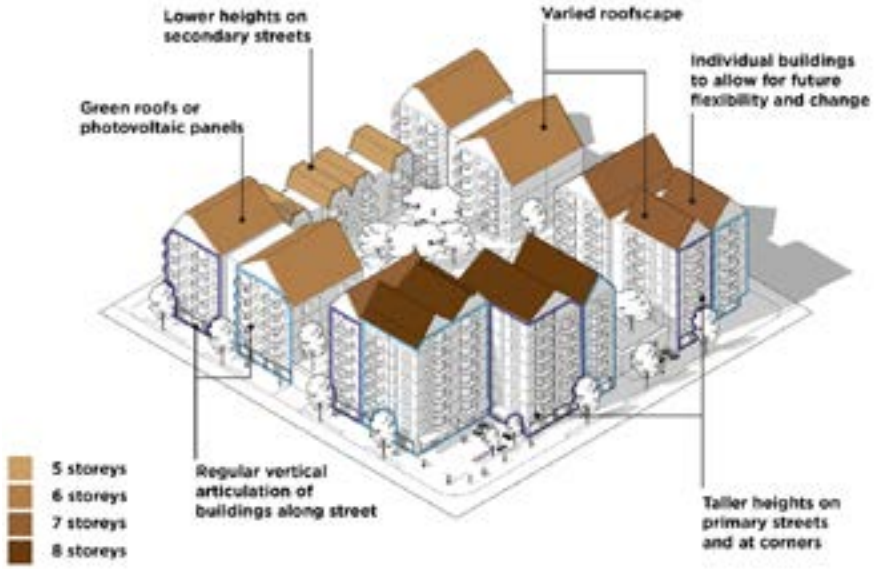


Figure 48: 300dph density study - Buildings

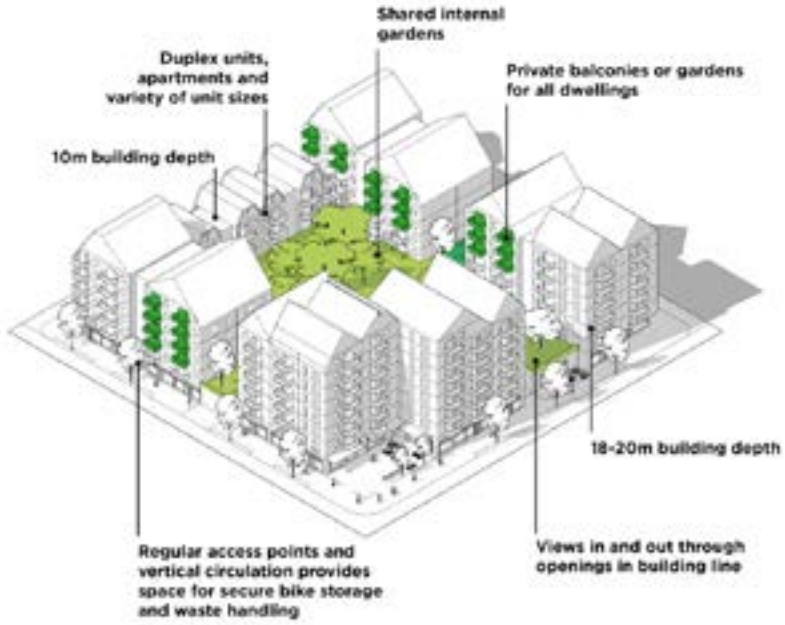


Figure 49: 300dph density study - Homes

Section 7.0
Development Opportunities

Consultation Priorities

- Ambition to include more community facilities within development sites
- Concern over high rise buildings and change in character of town centre
- Enhanced public transport
- Improved public realm
- Better use of the riverfront, more mix of uses
- Retain choice of retail, encourage independents
- More leisure and cultural facilities
- Environmental sustainability needs to be prioritised

Creating a Sustainable Place

- Locating new homes in the most sustainable locations
- Looking to reuse existing buildings to reduce embodied carbon
- Ensuring flexibility in new buildings so future changes do not require new buildings
- Ensuring new walkable streets are provided within large developments
- Providing green open spaces within development locations
- Improving climate change resilience

Main Proposals

- Integration of development sites with wider public realm priorities, including A308 transformation, connections to the rivers, and a rejuvenated and expanded Memorial Gardens
- Masterplanned redevelopment over time of the Elmsleigh Centre, Tothill Car Park and surroundings to create an attractive new mixed-use quarter that connects to the river, provides more flexible streets, spaces and buildings for the town centre, and creates new homes and facilities
- Redevelopment of Two Rivers North to provide new homes, retail space and connections to the rivers, along with the opportunity to create a new re-naturalised linear park based around the River Colne

7.1 A number of key development opportunities are located within the town centre, some of which are already being promoted for or benefiting from consent for mixed-use, residential-led redevelopments, and others not yet having been brought forward for development. These sites, and the associated development contributions towards wider infrastructure, are an essential part of delivering the aims and aspirations of the Development Framework. This section sets out the key parameters and principles for development in these areas, taken from the wider strategies and principles set out in this framework document.

7.2 This section will concentrate on larger sites where a masterplanning approach is likely to realise greater potential, and enable phased redevelopment. A masterplanning approach allows a long-term vision to be achieved through incremental development, with each individual element benefiting from certainty over future parameters and required infrastructure that they need to contribute to.

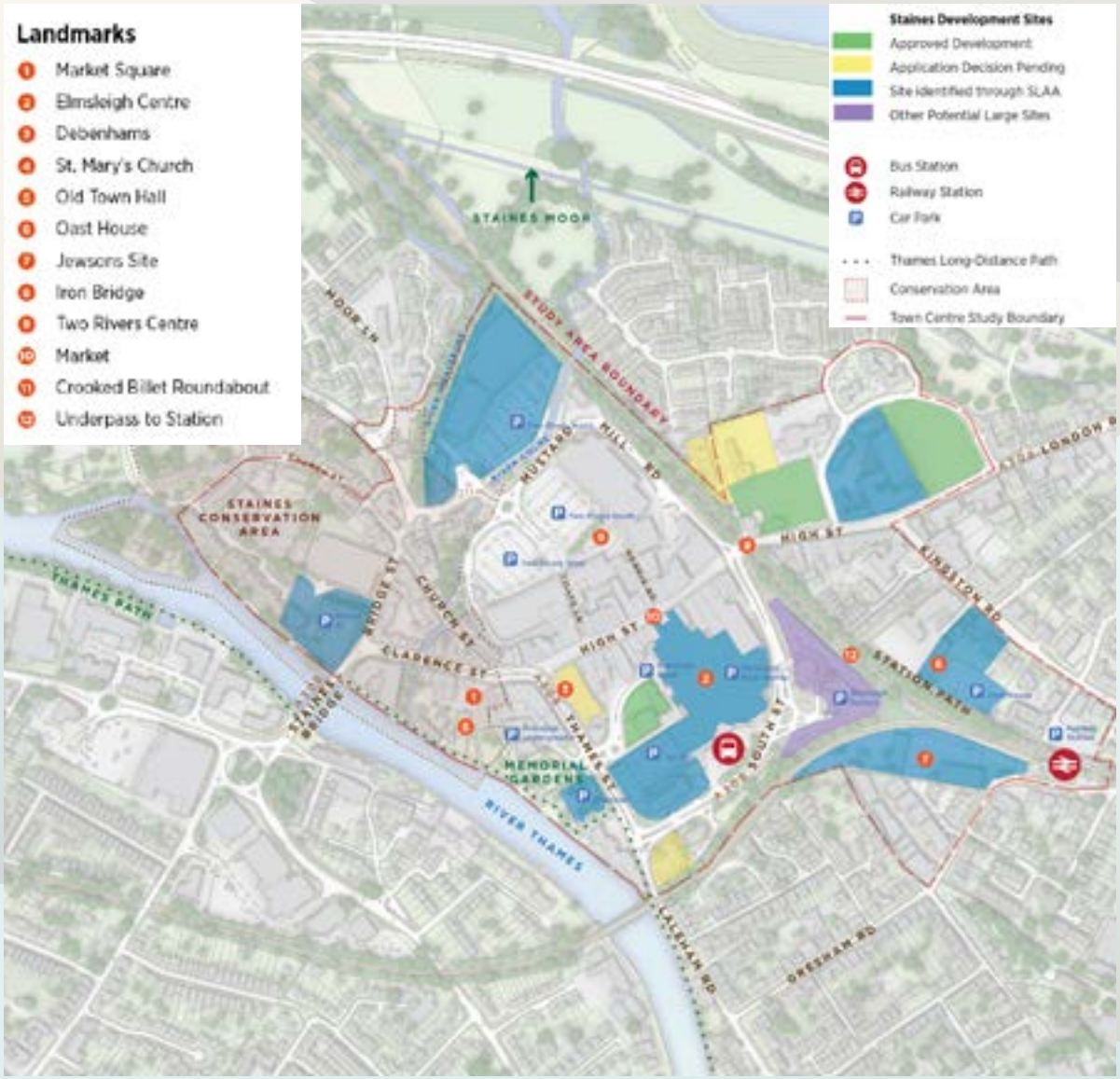


Figure 50: Development sites in Staines-upon-Thames town centre

Elmsleigh Centre / Tothill Car Park Area (South-Eastern Area)

7.3 The major opportunity for redevelopment in Staines-upon-Thames town centre is the area in the south-east of the town centre, between the railway lines and the High Street and River Thames. The site currently hosts the Elmsleigh shopping centre and associated surface and multi-storey car parks. It also contains the Tothill Car Park and access, and the Friends Walk complex of shops and facilities.

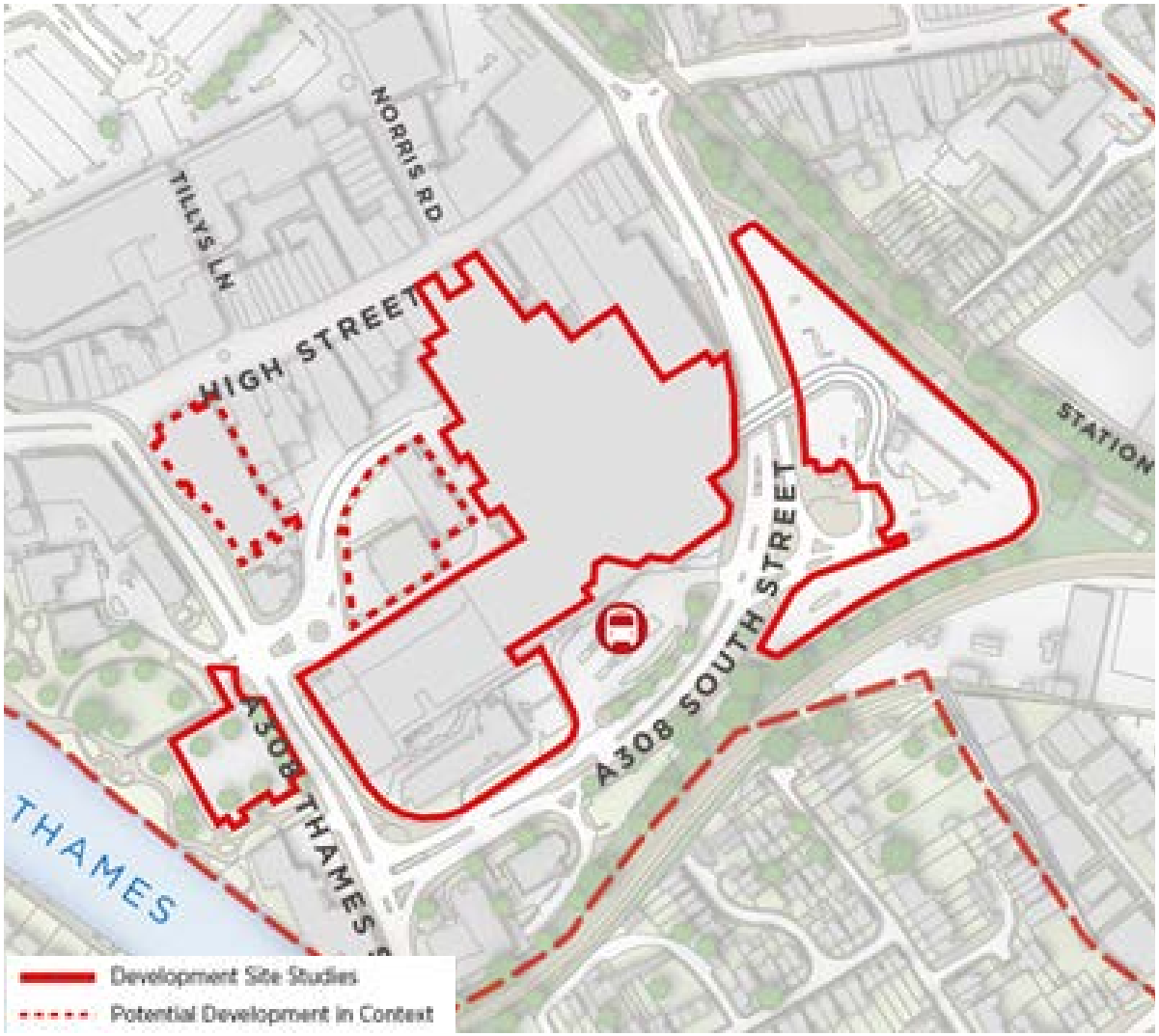


Figure 51: Elmsleigh Development Area site boundaries

7.4 This site presents a unique opportunity for a council-led development of a new town centre neighbourhood, integrated retail, service, leisure, community uses, commercial and public facilities underpinned by residential use. Comprehensive land ownership and wider public objectives could combine to create an example of modern, sustainable town centre development that delivers benefits for both existing and new residents. Many of the interconnected priorities outlined in this Framework can be realised on this site.

7.5 The existing Elmsleigh Centre is popular and well-used, but the nature of retail in town centres is changing, and along with it, the nature of traditional monolithic shopping centres. A phased redevelopment offers the opportunity to create new streets, public open spaces, and more flexible buildings that can be adapted in the future as needs continue to change.

Figure 52: Land ownership around Elmsleigh Centre

7.6 SBC owns the freehold interest in the majority of land in this area. A number of individual sites and potential development phases make up the overall area considered here. They include:

- Elmsleigh Centre
- Tothill Car Park
- Elmsleigh surface car park
- Riverside car park
- Surrounding land owned by SBC which could be brought into any future masterplanned development
- Through route between the bus station and the High Street, and a pedestrian route under the railway from Station Path to the bus station

7.7 Masterplanning these sites together provides co-ordination between independent developments. This gives design teams guidance on future vision, direction and what is important, and maximises the overall potential of this large site.

Concept and Opportunity

7.8 The age of large primarily single use shopping centres is coming to an end. Modern town centres need to be agile, flexible and adaptable for the long-term, and instead of an inward-facing monolithic building, the opportunity exists to create new streets, spaces and individual buildings instead, turned to face outwards to surrounding streets. Key components include:

- A broad mix of uses, with flexible, active ground floors and buildings sized to be adaptable to different uses over time
- A residential population to support retail, commercial and leisure uses and a wider variety of services
- A green 'heart' and green link to the river
- Tying together transport gateways, the High Street and the riverside

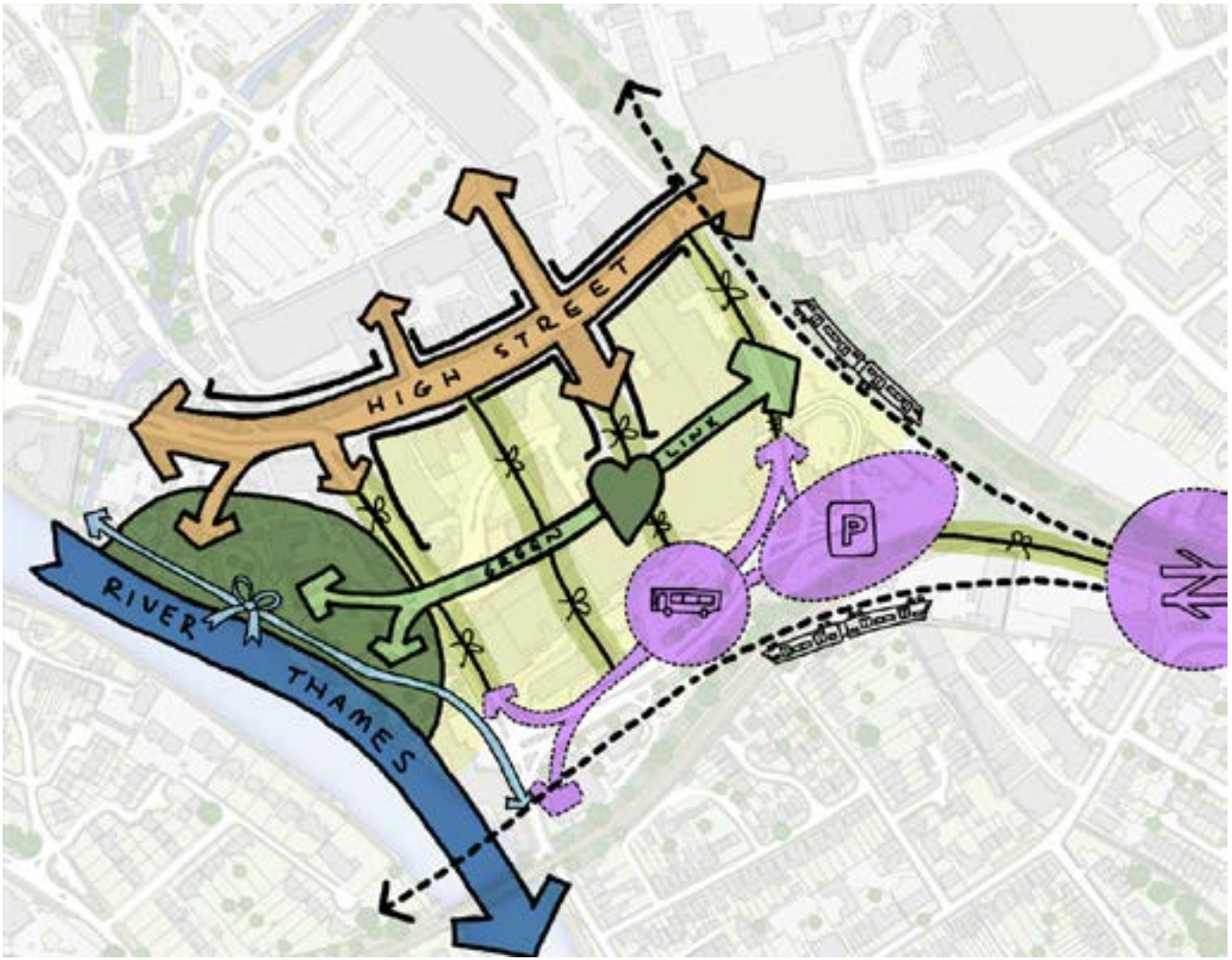


Figure 53: SE Area concept

Design Principles

7.9 Key design principles for the site and immediate surroundings are set out in Figure 53 below. This takes forward the wider framework of townscape principles, character area priorities, and public realm strategies that intersect with the site.

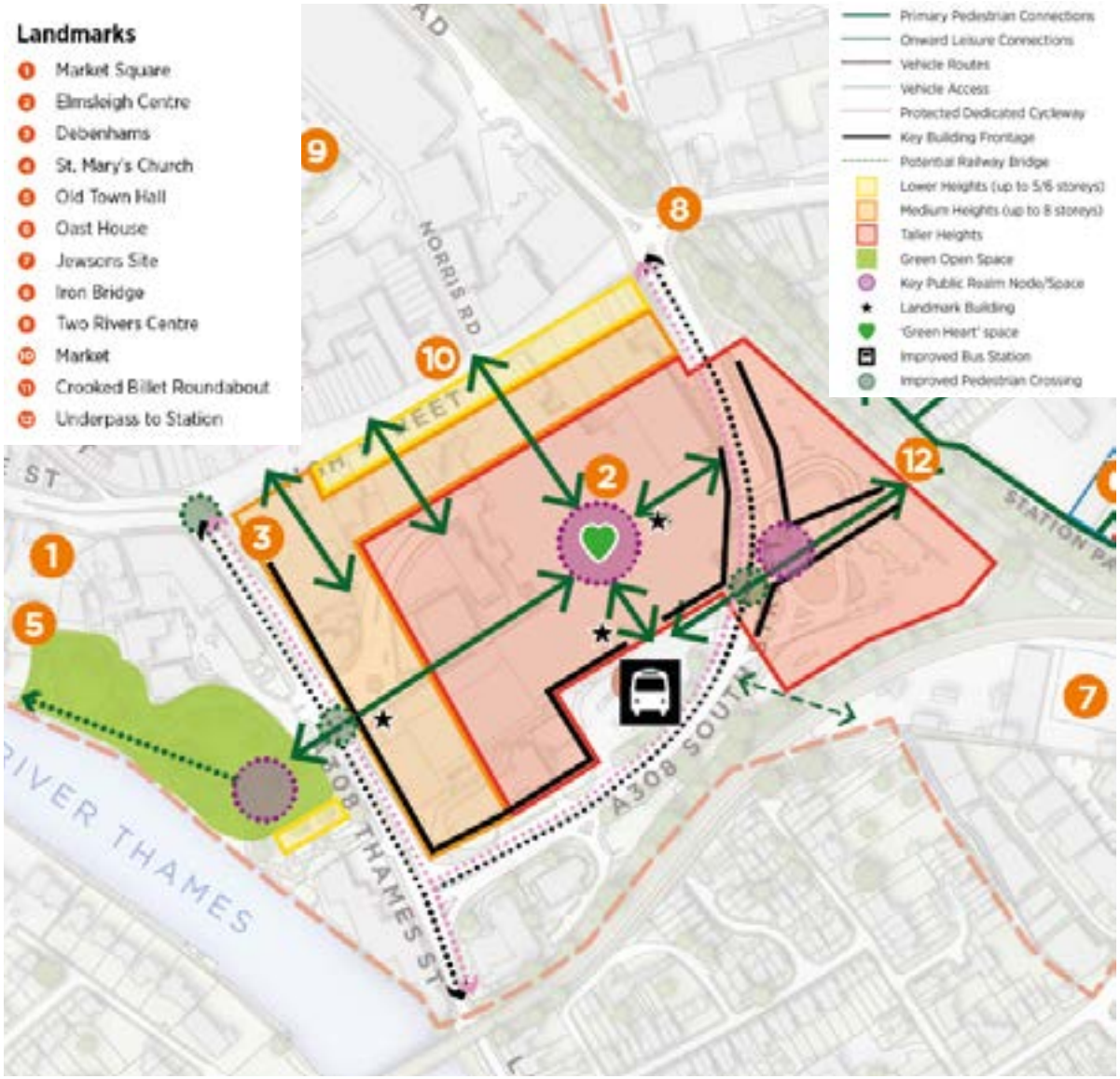


Figure 54: SE Quarter principles plan

7.10 Development principles for the site are:

- A mix of commercial space, including retail, leisure, office and other flexible commercial space, primarilayprimarily on the ground floor addressing streets
- A mix of residential dwellings, primarily apartments, duplexes and other higher-density typologies
- Space for community facilities, such as a library, museum, community centre and other flexible community space
- Specialist residential accommodation such as sheltered accommodation, extra care accommodation and retirement living should be considered
- A new public open space (a 'green heart') at the centre of the development where internal streets intersect
- An extension of Memorial Gardens onto the site of the Riverside Car Park, to provide improved public open space suitable for hosting events, overlooked by new development and new facilities facing the gardens
- Outward-facing development, addressing surrounding streets
- New walkable streets connecting key external and internal destinations such as the bus station, the High Street, the river front and Memorial Gardens, and the railway station.
- Improved pedestrian crossings and street environment along Thames Street and South Street
- Delivery of protected, dedicated cycleways along the sustainable movement networks set out in the Framework
- Consolidation or re-provision of existing public car parking to retain current provision, with the potential for future reductions and conversion to other uses as and when a shift to more sustainable modes of travel occurs.
- Consideration towards adaptive re-use of existing buildings where physically and financially workable, to avoid embodied carbon of new construction
- Improvements to the quality of the bus station, and connections to the railway station
- Sensitive scaling down of built form to meet the High Street's existing character
- High quality, activated frontage along Thames Street facing the riverfront
- Preservation or opening up of key views to the river front where possible

Illustrative Vision

7.11 An illustrative plan (Figures 54 to 57) shows the potential for the area under a co-ordinated, masterplanned approach, following and implementing the above principles and parameters, as well as the wider framework priorities. This is one scenario and would be subject to detailed design, and would likely be developed in phases. Due to the favourable existing structure of the centre, re-use of existing buildings, or frames and foundations of existing buildings, could be prioritised as noted in the following Implementation section.

7.12 The illustrative plan takes into account the design principles and example density studies set out in the previous chapter, 'Design for Urban Living'. These principles and studies aim to deliver high quality design, homes and placemaking in new higher-density developments within Staines Upon Thames town centre.

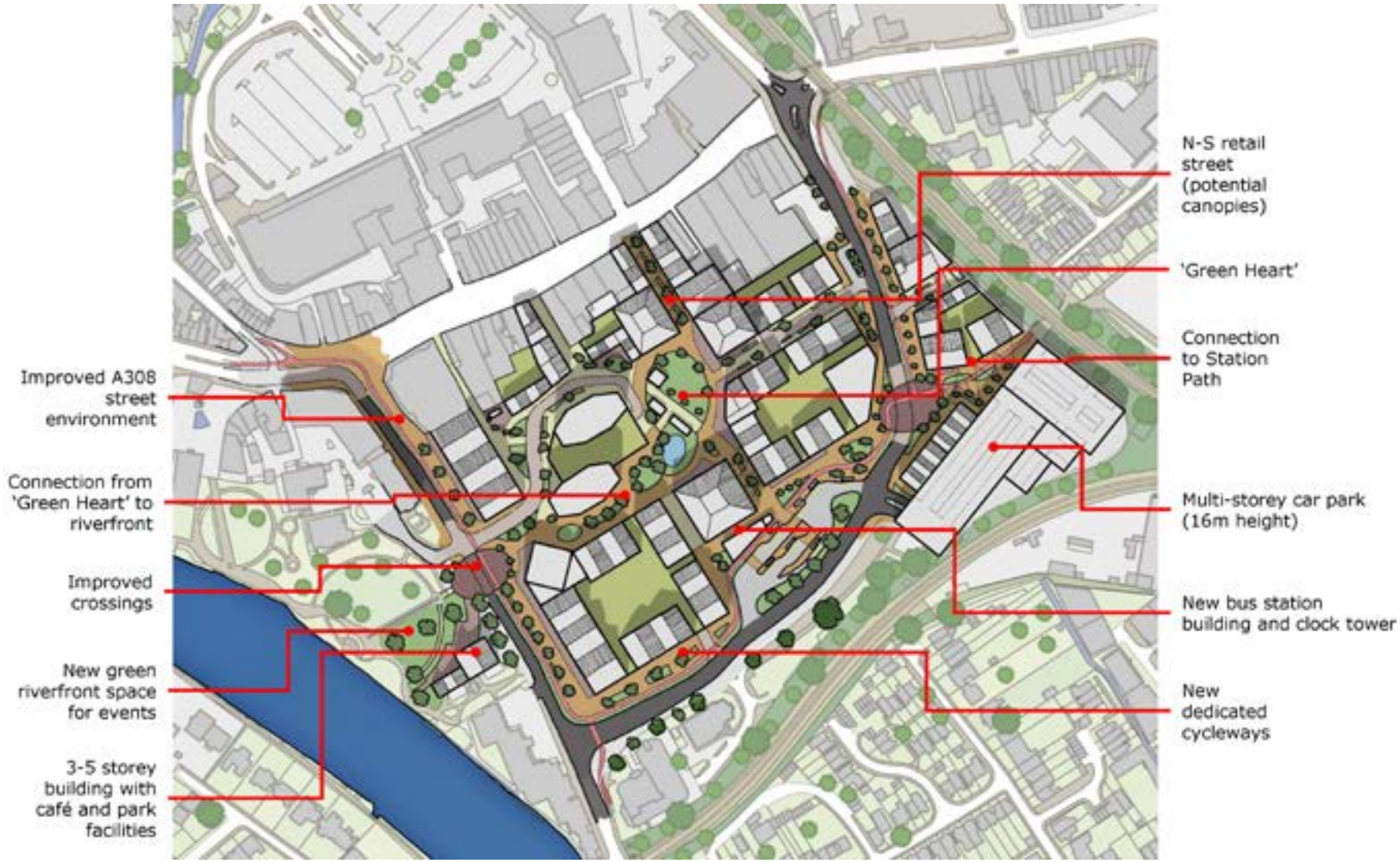


Figure 55: SE Area Illustrative Plan

Figure 56: SE Area Illustrative Model

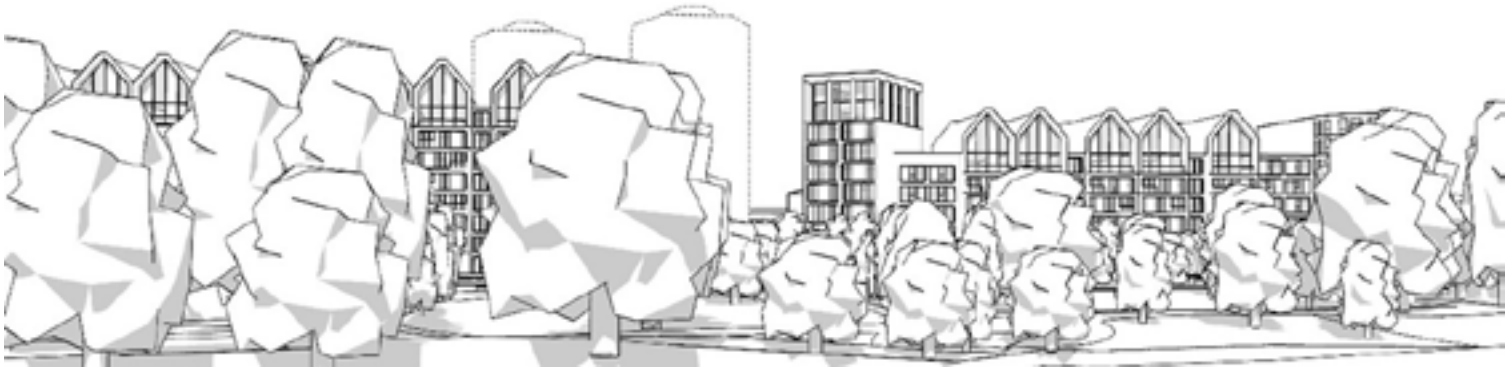


Figure 57: SE Area Illustrative View from River Thames

Figure 58: SE Area illustrative view from Memorial Gardens

Implementation

7.13 The site is currently in a range of existing uses including car parking, a shopping centre, offices and community uses. Whilst in public freehold ownership, it is recognised that there will be a range of leasehold interests that will need to be acquired or re-accommodated to secure vacant possession of parts and ultimately all the developable area. This process will take time and will involve detailed consideration of the physical as well as tenure structure of the existing buildings to identify parcels that can be brought forward to enable planned phased delivery.

7.14 The easiest parts of the site to bring forward are the areas of surface car parking to the south and east of South Street, however parts of this area are also intrinsically linked to the Elmsleigh Development and Tothill car park via the access ramp. Parts of the surface car parking may be prioritised for early development to help pump prime the work required to bring forward the more physically constrained areas of the site and to enable phased site assembly.

7.15 The Elmsleigh Shopping Centre whilst a single entity of monolithic design is internally divided into 4 discrete shopping areas, separated by pedestrian malls. This layout may help facilitate redevelopment in phases, with that part of the centre incorporating the Elmsleigh multi storey car park, to the south of Main Square and East Mall, potentially offering the facility to be separated from the remainder. It is also possible for Communications House to come forward as a discrete phase, and the Friends Walk/Tothill Car park element to form another phase. This anticipates overall a delivery strategy that sees development being implemented broadly from south to north. Actual delivery will be the subject of a detailed phasing strategy, which will establish how remaining existing development will interface with the new at each stage.

7.16 Part of the process of implementation will be to explore the potential for re-use of existing structures. This will establish whether a suitable form and quality of development can be implemented through the retention and adaptation of existing buildings, or elements of buildings, to benefit from embodied carbon and improve sustainability. This will be balanced against any potential impact on viability and deliverability, and on the extent to which this facilitates or limits the ability for the redevelopment to deliver the key objectives set out in the Development Framework.

Two Rivers North

7.17 The northern end of the Two Rivers retail park is currently being promoted for redevelopment by its owners, for a residential-led scheme. The site currently hosts several 'big-box' retailers and associated parking to serve them. With a general decline in the value of retail uses arising from changes in the way people shop, it is anticipated that large retail sites such as this in and close to town centres are likely to consolidate and bring forward underused land for development over time.

7.18 The site is surrounded by the rivers Wraysbury and Colne. The River Colne in particular is a highly-engineered river, running fast and unnaturally through the town and with inaccessible and unusable grass banks on either side. To the north and west, mature trees and planting surround and screen the site, along the railway and river corridors. As with the Elmsleigh site, this site is under single freehold ownership.

Figure 59: Two Rivers North site

Concept and Opportunity

7.19 The site is surrounded by rivers and green infrastructure, which are currently underused or of poor quality. Development should improve the quality of these spaces and routes.

7.20 New routes across the site should connect it to the surrounding area, reducing its current 'edge' location and integrating it into the town. By opening up and making better use of the River Colne as a linear park, amenity for new and existing residents can be provided and development can deliver new benefits for all. The potential to enhance biodiversity along the river through river restoration schemes should also be explored through feasibility studies with partners, including the Environment Agency. Consideration of the current weir and fish pass will be needed.

7.21 Urban residential-led development on the site offers an opportunity to make more efficient use of the land, with new streets and spaces that provide walkable connections and space for flexible retail, leisure and other commercial ground-floor uses.

Figure 60: Two Rivers North concept diagram

Principles

7.22 Key principles for the site and immediate surroundings are set out in Figure 60 below. This takes forward the wider framework of townscape principles, character area strategies, and public realm strategies that intersect with the site.

7.23 Development principles for the site are:

- A mix of commercial space on the ground floor addressing key streets and public realm
- A mix of residential dwellings, primarily apartments, duplexes and other higher-density typologies
- Potential flexible space for community facilities as part of an active ground floor
- A new public open space at the gateway of the development adjacent to the River Colne
- A network of internal streets, with pedestrians prioritised and vehicle access on an internal spine away from the rivers
- A new pedestrian connection between Two Rivers/Norris Road and the River Wraysbury, running SE-NW through the site
- A linear public open space with a restored and re-naturalised River Colne providing new biodiverse habitats in the town centre
- Preservation or opening up of key views to the rivers where possible
- Improved pedestrian crossings and street environment along Thames Street and South Street
- Delivery of protected, dedicated cycleways along the sustainable movement networks set out in the Framework
- Sensitive scaling down of built form to meet the green edge of the River Wraysbury and adjoining homes
- Sensitive scaling down of built form to meet the existing buildings along Hale Street
- High quality, activated frontage along the new linear park on the River Colne, facing the town centre

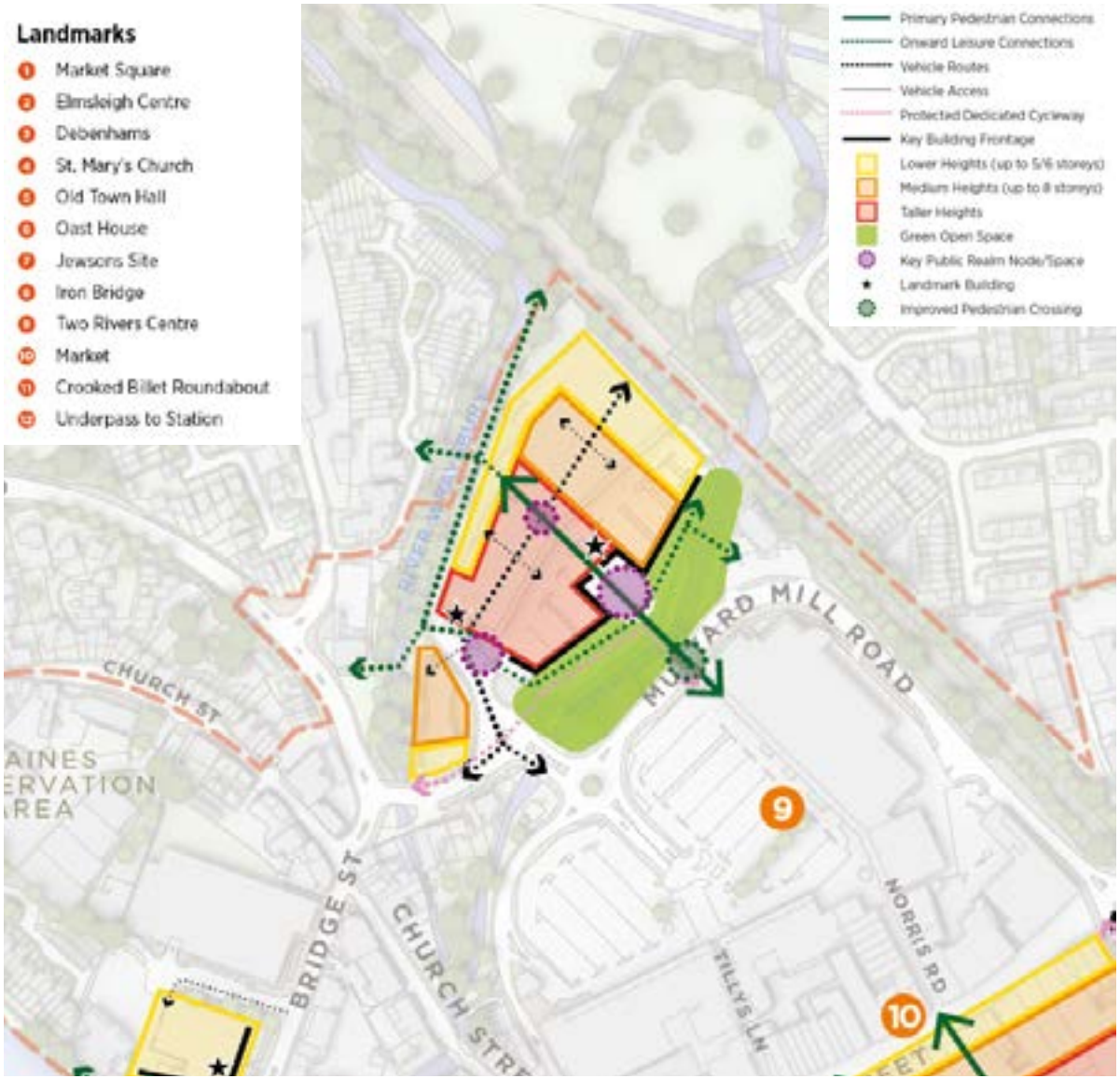


Figure 61: Two Rivers North principles plan

Illustrative Vision

7.24 An illustrative plan (Figures 61 to 62) shows the potential for the area under a co-ordinated, masterplanned approach, following and implementing the above principles and parameters, as well as the wider framework strategies. This will be subject to detailed design in due course, and is likely to be developed in phases.

7.25 The illustrative plan takes into account the design principles and example density studies set out in the following chapter, 'Design for Urban Living'. These principles and studies aim to deliver high quality design, homes and placemaking in new higher-density developments within the town centre.

Implementation

7.26 Implementation will be led by the private sector landowner/developer and will require vacant possession of the site to be secured. This will involve the loss of retail floorspace in this location, which may either relocate within Staines Upon Thames if suitable

Figure 62: Two Rivers North illustrative plan

accommodation is available, or be lost to the town centre. Such change of use from retail to primarily residential use is becoming more common as the structure of retail changes and the extent to which people shop online rather than via bricks and mortar outlets increases. This reflects the resultant fall in retail values compared to residential development values. This however poses its own challenges to overall deliverability as the existing use value of the site will be that generated by its retail and car parking use, and will be comparatively higher than that which would apply to undeveloped land.

7.27 It is expected that any site promoted for residential development by a private owner will comply with policy requirements and provide for its share of affordable housing and supporting local infrastructure. It is also expected that such development will provide the wider identified on and immediately off site associated improvements to public realm and will address any necessary highways works required as a result of the change of use.

Figure 63: Two Rivers North illustrative massing model

Bridge Street Car Park

7.28 This site is in a prominent location next to Staines Bridge and is a key gateway into the town centre. It is currently occupied by a partly-used decked car park.

7.29 The site offers an opportunity to create an active destination space next to the Thames, integrating an improved Clarence Street with the River Thames and the Thames Path.

7.30 Opportunities exist to reimagine the archways underneath Staines Bridge as flexible commercial space for cafes, workshops, local businesses and cultural space.

7.31 Key design principles for the site and immediate surroundings are set out in Figure 63 below. This takes forward the wider framework of townscape principles, character area strategies, and public realm strategies that intersect with the site.

7.32 Development principles for the site are:

- A mix of active commercial space on the ground floor addressing the river
- An active frontage at first floor addressing Clarence Street and Bridge Street
- A mix of residential dwellings, primarily apartments, duplexes and other higher-density typologies
- A new public open space on the riverfront, connected to an improved pedestrian crossing at the Clarence St traffic lights
- Delivery of protected, dedicated cycleways along the sustainable movement networks set out in the Framework
- A landmark building following the Townscape principles set out in the Framework to terminate Clarence St and provide a distinctive entrance to the town from the south

Figure 64: Bridge St Car Park principles plan

Oast House / Kingston Road Car Park

7.33 The Oast House is a valued local landmark but has stood empty for a number of years. The adjacent Kingston Road Car Park is a surface car park, opening onto Station Path.

7.34 Preserving and imaginatively refurbishing the Oast House offers a superb opportunity to create a cultural and arts centre within Staines-upon-Thames, creating an important new facility which the town currently lacks.

7.35 Key design principles for the site and immediate surroundings are set out in Figure 64 below. This takes forward the wider framework of townscape principles, character area strategies, and public realm strategies that intersect with the site.

7.36 Development principles for the site are:

- Re-use of the Oast House as a distinctive centrepiece of the development, containing space for community facilities, such as an arts or cultural centre
- A mix of residential dwellings, primarily apartments, duplexes and other higher-density typologies, but also houses at boundaries with existing residential areas
- Potential flexible space for community facilities as part of an active ground floor
- A new public open space at the heart of the development
- A pedestrian connection between Station Path and Kingston Road, through the public open space
- Buildings fronting onto Station Path to provide passive surveillance and improved security along this key pedestrian route
- Sensitive scaling down of built form to adjoining homes

Figure 65: Oast House principles plan

Section 8.0
Delivery

Introduction

8.1 Delivery of the Development Framework is intended to take place over the Local Plan Period, i.e. the next 15 years. It is therefore essential that the proposals are able to evolve and adapt whilst remaining true to the core principles set out in this guidance. The Framework is not a blueprint, and is not intended to dictate strict development styles. It sets out the parameters and requirements for development that aim to ensure it will reflect the local context as it evolves, in a way that will determine a successful and sustainable outcome. It anticipates that there will be changes to the planning regulatory regime, market conditions, technical performance requirements for development and local attitudes, demands and behaviours over time.

8.2 In terms of deliverability, the Development Framework for Staines Upon Thames is starting from a strong position, as many of the larger development opportunities identified within it are in public sector ownership or control, or in single ownership where the landowner has already identified the prospect for redevelopment, as shown at Figure 4. This lack of fragmentation enables key development opportunities to be promoted without the need for lengthy, costly and uncertain site assembly. Extensive public ownership will also ensure that the development secured over time balances the commercial imperative with the wider needs of the community, environment and both Staines and Spelthorne residents. This degree of control will reinforce the role of the Development Framework in securing a balanced and sustainable future for Staines Upon Thames, incorporating an appropriate mix of commercial, residential, cultural and community facilities over the plan period, and delivering the identified improvements in public realm.

8.3 In terms of taking the lead on direct delivery, and the elements of public realm that are expected to be supported by development, the position for the key development sites that are not currently the subject of active applications can be summarised as follows:

Key development opportunities	Delivery lead	Related public realm projects	Key funding sources
Elmsleigh/ Tothill including Thameside House	Public sector, ownership controlled by SBC and SCC	Works to A 308 corridor, bus station improvements, New Streets and public open space within development, Connections between bus station and High Street, Contributions to re-provision of car parking	S.106, Transport related Funding streams, works delivered as part of development implementation.
Riverside Car Park	Public sector, ownership controlled by SBC	Improvements to Memorial Gardens, activation of space, improved linkages across the A308	CIL/S.106, works delivered as part of development implementation.
Jewson's site	Private sector, single ownership	Improved linkage between town centre and station	CIL/S 106
Oast House	Public sector, ownership controlled by SBC	Improvements to Station Path	CIL/S.106
Two Rivers North	Private sector, single ownership	Opening up of River Colne for public use and river restoration, new natural open space within the development, improved linkages with wider areas of natural open space	CIL/S.106, works delivered as part of development implementation.
Birch House/ London Road/ Fairfield Avenue	Private Sector, single ownership	Improvements to London Road corridor, Improvements to Iron Bridge, Extension of High Street	CIL/S.106, Transport related Funding streams, works delivered as part of development implementation.
Bridge Street Car Park	Public Private partnership – SBC/private sector	Improvements to High Street, Clarence St./ Market Square area. Contributions to replacement car parking. Improvements to river frontage and access to river adjacent to Staines Bridge.	CIL/S.106, works delivered as part of development implementation.

The proposals for environmental enhancement and public realm improvement are largely contained within or directly associated with specific development sites, or are within existing publicly owned or highways related land.

8.4 The town centre generally performs its role successfully, and looks to have weathered the recent challenges exacerbated by COVID 19 well. It is not therefore starting from a low base, but will be in a position to build on its performance to meet the needs arising from a new and growing resident population. This new population will reinforce the commercial performance of the changing mix of town centre uses over the plan period. The Development Framework recognises the structural changes affecting the types of commercial uses represented in town centres, and includes the flexibility for these to be developed and to remain dynamic to changes in demand going forward. The mix of uses for developments in and around the core town centre accommodate both changes of use, for example from shopping centre use in the case of the Elmsleigh Centre to mixed use, to reflect the national trend for shrinkage in retail floorspace in town centres. The framework also accommodates the opportunity for new ground floor commercial space to meet the changing needs of a growing town centre population. Such space is now generally contained in a single commercial use class "E", which allows flexibility between retail, office, other commercial and commercial leisure type uses that will serve the needs of the town going forward.

8.5 The delivery of the Development Framework in inextricably linked to its commercial and financial profile. The viability of the Local Plan as a whole is being tested. To date, this work identifies that the development of previously developed land (as opposed to greenfield sites) as is typically found in town centres can present an inconsistent range of cost and uncertainty which challenges the ease of delivery. This is largely due to the fact that developed land is likely to have a higher existing use value than undeveloped land, and so a higher land value hurdle to address from the outset. This is recognised by commercial operators in the development market. The clear evidence of development activity in Staines upon Thames town centre, and the active private promotion of land for development, indicates that regardless of this position, developers are keen and willing to bring sites forward. To underpin the deliverability of such sites, the Development Framework has sought to reflect and maintain the quantum of development identified for the key sites in the local plan.

8.6 The delivery of the wider social, environmental and community related infrastructure identified in the Development Framework will be delivered by a mixture of means. Primary sources will include the collection of the mandatory Community Infrastructure Levy from development as it comes forward. This will be underpinned by the use of planning agreements to secure delivery of specific site related or site generated infrastructure needs. Wider infrastructure requirements, where possible, can also be supported through active pursual of any available and appropriate public sector funding streams.

8.7 With regard to car parking, the Development Framework highlights that there are a number of opportunities for the way in which car parking can be delivered. Starting with car parking serving the developments, it is anticipated that this will be provided as part of the development proposals, and may be at surface level, under a podium/ undercroft or by way of a combination of solutions. The Development Framework does not seek to be prescriptive as this will be a matter for design for each development parcel. Where development involves the loss of existing public car parking, it is anticipated that this will be re-provided. Again, exactly how/where will be determined at the detailed design stage, but the Development Framework identifies the potential, if appropriate, for this to be accommodated (in part or in total) on part of the land currently used as surface level car parking to the north and east of South Street (Elmsleigh Surface Car Park). As the redevelopment of major opportunities such as the Elmsleigh/Tothill sites is likely to come forward incrementally, it is anticipated that the replacement car parking may also come forward in phases, with interim provision possibly being provided by way of lightweight decking. This will enable the need for reprovision and the options for the final overall supply to be kept under review during the plan period, and to reflect any changes in demand that might take place.

Transport Delivery

8.8 The transport framework can be used to shape future projects and provide clarity for public and private proposals. The principle is for future projects in a framework that guides and helps to provide clarity and flexibility in the approach to delivery.

8.9 In respect to transport delivery, there is unlikely to be a big bang of change. That's because the whole system is made of parts and each part is complex and expensive to change. The recommendation is to focus on key areas that will give the maximum of public benefits.

8.10 Big bang infrastructure change is rarely successful in town centres. Incremental is good with a way to show how each step is a step in the right direction. There are opportunities for early delivery of non-contentious transport enhancements alongside longer-term promotion and planning opportunities.

Future Proofing for Emerging Technologies

8.11 New mobility systems for the transport of people and goods is seeing radical change. Technological change is happening across scales and this change necessitates a need for future-proofing of new infrastructure and in time, the reconfiguring of existing systems to support these new technologies.

8.12 These new technologies are likely to include connected vehicles and systems; vehicle automation (including driverless cars); significant shifts to electric vehicles and increases in shared use, like mobility as a service. It will also mean zero emission buses and freight and logistics hubs for servicing.

8.13 Getting strategic transport right in the town centre means seeking to accommodate emerging technologies which facilitate the sharing of cars and parking, transport on demand, electric vehicles, charging infrastructure connected/autonomous vehicles, digital platforms, micro-mobility to name a few beneficial technologies.

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