

## 4.1 KEY SITE STRATEGY - BIRCHERLEY GREEN

4.1.14 Bircherley Green is the most important development opportunity site in the town centre. It has the most potential to improve the retail/leisure offer and open up the riverfront. It is essential that any proposals brought forward on the site maximise the potential of the site and also satisfy public opinion. We have therefore created a set of urban design principles and a Framework Plan that address both of these elements (Figure 4.1).

4.1.15 As public opinion on the best option for the site was split, the Framework Plan has been further developed to offer a hybrid of the best components of each of the three options to respond to the elements the public supported in each one, as well as other emerging issues, namely:

- Set back of all buildings along the river's edge and creation of a useable public space, as shown in Option 1.
- Creating active frontages along the river (all options).
- Improving visual connections from Railway Street to the river (all options).
- Respecting the scale and historic context of neighbouring buildings (e.g. Lombard House) (all options).
- Restricting vehicles to Bircherley Street (all options).
- Support for the potential development of a foodstore (Option 1) or the leisure/mixed use option (Option 2).
- Need for new retail units to maintain flexibility to allow combining into larger or anchor unit (added to framework).
- Retention of the bus station – Bircherley Green represents the best and only town centre location capable of providing a central bus station (all options).
- Retention of pedestrian link through the centre of the development (added to framework).

- Retention of office facilities (added to framework).
- Potential for purpose built town centre healthcare facility (i.e. doctors' surgery) (added to framework).
- Potential to deliver the refurbishment option (Option 3) which would be least disruptive to the town.
- Restriction of building heights - allowing a maximum of 5 storeys only in the less sensitive central location (Added to framework).

4.1.16 The council will use the framework to guide the future development on this important site. It has been designed to be flexible enough to support a number of development options whilst linking strategically into the wider strategy for the town.

### Urban Design Principles

#### Frontages and heights

- Proposals must create a frontage to the riverside.
- Frontages along Railway Street should follow the existing building line and be 3 to 4 storeys in height.
- Frontages along Bircherley Green should be positioned perpendicular to the river to strengthen the visual link between Railway Street and the water.
- The frontage along Bircherley Street should be 4 storeys in height, be attractively designed and provide some level of casual surveillance over the bus station.
- Any development adjacent to Lombard House should be limited to 2 storeys to respect the setting of the listed building and be set back 8m from the water.
- Development closer to Bull Plain should be restricted to between 3 and 4 storeys to respect the historic context in this area.
- Development in the centre of the site can be between 4 and 5 storeys in height.
- Development in the centre of the site can be up to 4 storeys in height.

#### Links and Transport

- Proposals must maintain the physical link between Railway Street and the River Lea - this should remain a pedestrian environment restricted to essential service vehicles only.
- Proposals must retain and improve the physical and visual link between the bus station, Bircherley Green and Bull Plain (including maintaining the link to the museum).
- A single united bus station should remain on Bircherley Street providing no less than the current level of provision and have covered and indoor waiting areas and toilet facilities.
- Proposals must provide adequate parking to cater for wider town centre as well as new development – ideally this should be located below ground (where possible) and accessed from the vehicular route on Bircherley Street.
- Improved attractive pedestrian route from the bus station to Railway Street.
- Attractive pedestrian route through development.



- Spaces and Landscaping**
- Routes along Bircherley Street (including the bus station) and Bircherley Green should be attractively landscaped to draw people towards the river.
  - Proposals must create usable public open space with attractively designed hard and soft landscaping.
  - The focal point for new development should be where key pedestrian links converge at the River/Bircherley Green.
  - Architecture should be used to create focal points at key positions to draw people into the town and towards the river.
- Uses**
- New development must provide a broad mix of town centre uses, including a cluster of new retail units between 1000 and 4000sqft each (with flexibility to combine into larger or anchor unit), food and beverage uses, retention of the bus station and office provision and potential provision of a healthcare facility.

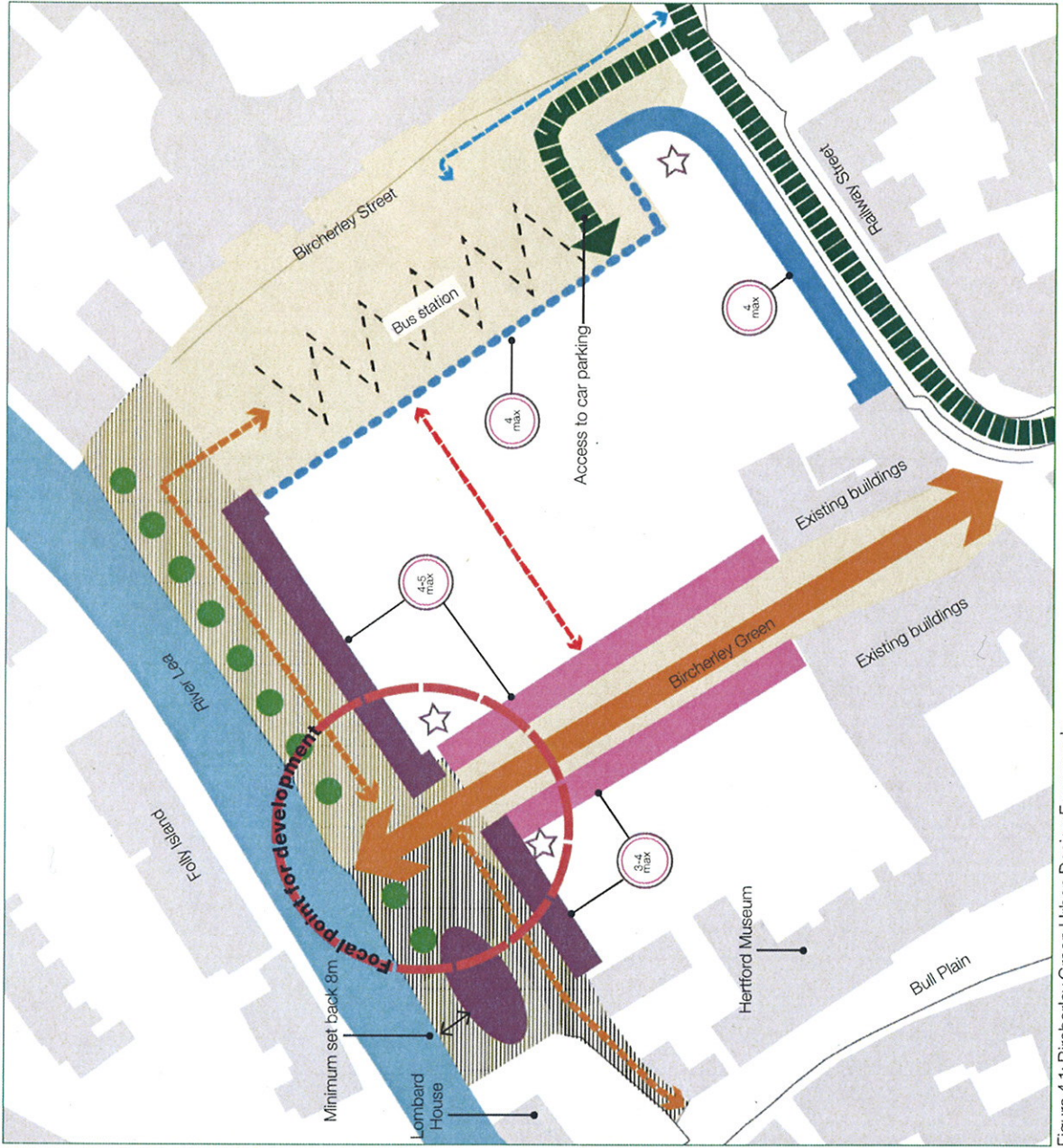


Figure 4.1: Bircherley Green Urban Design Framework

**Please note:** This Framework drawing provides an outline concept illustrating the key principles and approach for the development of the site.