

# BISHOP'S STORTFORD TOWN CENTRE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

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# 01



# INTRODUCTION



## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners was commissioned in March 2016 to prepare the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework on behalf of East Herts Council. The team for the project includes Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, providing specialist retail and commercial property and delivery advice, and Phil Jones Associates, specialists in movement and transport.

The purpose of this report is to help set a vision and strategy for the development of Bishop's Stortford. The study will take account of the town's current and future economic role, and set out proposals for movement and design projects that will improve the town centre. It will support the preparation of the emerging East Herts District Plan and co-ordinate with the Neighbourhood Plans. It will be used in conjunction with other studies to support the preparation of more detailed Development Briefs for key sites in the town centre and be used as guidance to help determine planning applications, and to shape the direction of travel for the town centre. It is intended that the Framework will be adopted by East Herts Council as a Supplementary Planning Document in due course.

The plan has been informed by engagement with key stakeholders and landowners and was consulted on for a period of 6 weeks commencing on 26 October 2016. This document has been updated as a result of the feedback and comments collected.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES

The framework has regard to the extensive consultation undertaken as part of this project, including the views collected during events and those given on the project website. Consultation undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plans for the town centre has also been considered. These views, alongside a broader assessment of wider planning objectives and key technical constraints, have helped to shape the identification of six key placemaking objectives which are as follows;

1. Create a more attractive pedestrian environment by setting out clear plans to re-connect the town to its riverside, reduce traffic dominance and create a sequence of appealing streets and spaces that complement the town's historic character.
2. Promote a holistic parking and movement strategy which balances town centre placemaking aspirations with the movement needs of businesses, residents and visitors.
3. Define a framework for the managed growth of retail in the town centre, improving circuits of activity, identifying opportunities to rejuvenate parts of the town centre and balancing larger spaces for national retailers with opportunities for independent shops.

## 1.3 STRUCTURE

4. Identify opportunities for flexible and adaptable employment space and ensure that existing employment uses in the town make best use of their sites to best support the town's economy.
5. Establish an integrated cultural offer for the town centre that operates successfully in conjunction with the town's restaurants, pubs and cafes.
6. Identify opportunities for residential development in the town centre to support the regeneration of key sites and promote more sustainable living.

The draft planning framework adopts the following structure as set out below:

**Chapter 1 - Introduction:** The introduction describes the background to the report and provides a summary of the key themes identified in the planning framework.

**Chapter 2 - Bishop's Stortford Today:** The second chapter provides an assessment of the town as it currently stands, explaining the economic, movement and townscape context for the project.

**Chapter 3 - Public consultation:** This chapter explains how consultation feedback has informed the development of the placemaking themes for the planning framework.

**Chapter 4 - Framework Themes:** This chapter sets out the placemaking themes that will help to guide proposals in the framework, outlining focused areas of improvement for the town centre.

**Chapters 5 - 8 Placemaking:** These sections set out draft planning and design guidance and principles for the three key areas of the town centre where change will occur; Old River Lane, the Mill site and central town centre riverside, the station area and sites along South Street. These proposals are illustrated through a series of indicative sketch plans and artist impressions.

**Chapter 9 - Delivery:** The final chapter of the report focuses on delivery and viability. This includes commentary on the key issues and opportunities for each site and the potential phasing approach.

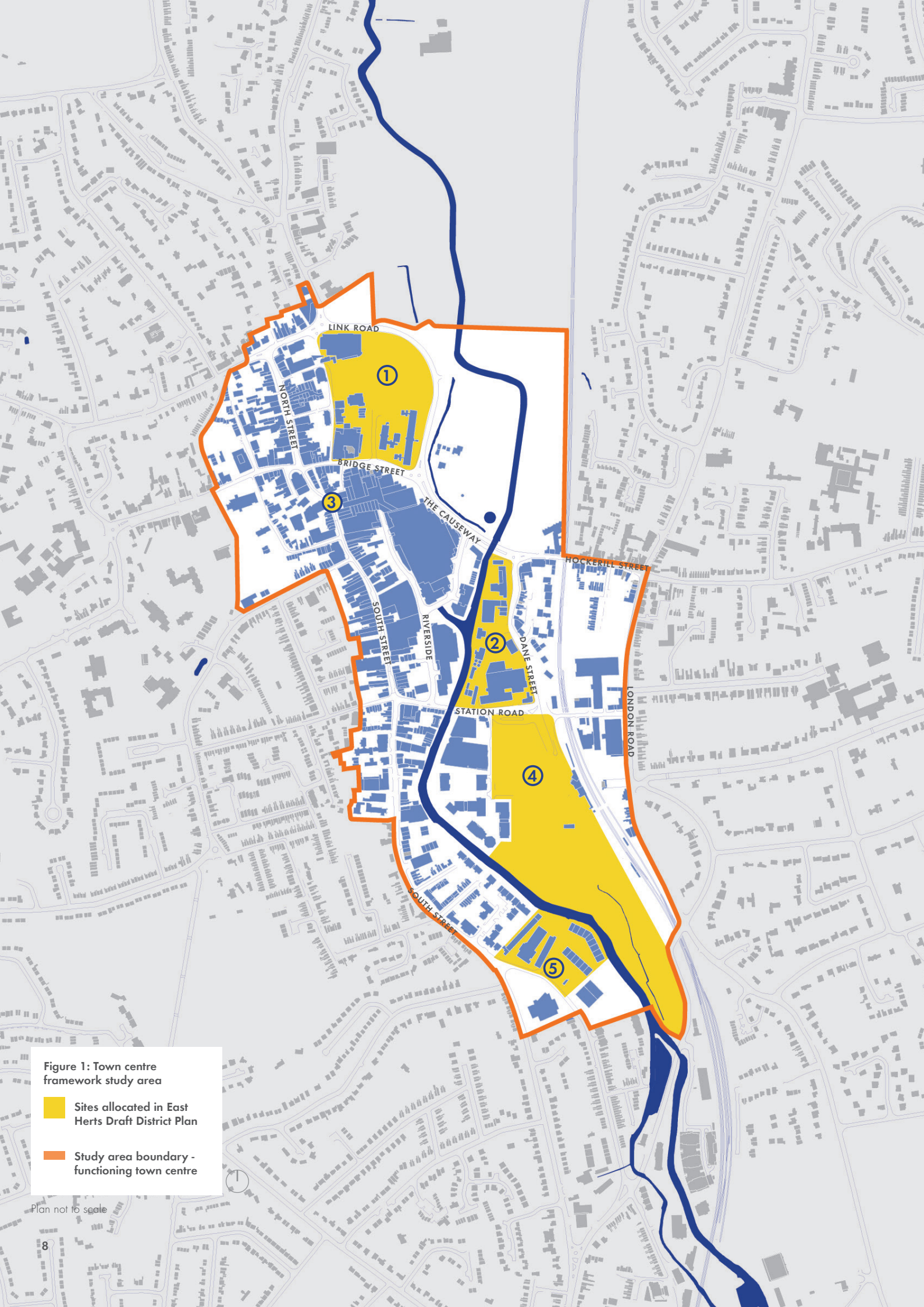


Figure 1: Town centre framework study area

■ Sites allocated in East Herts Draft District Plan

■ Study area boundary - functioning town centre

Plan not to scale



## 1.4 STUDY AREA

The study area boundary defines a varied area which contains the functioning town centre which has a number of unique attributes and issues. The boundary incorporates a range of important locations including the following:

① **OLD RIVER LANE AND CASTLE GARDENS**  
This area has been identified as having potential for a significant amount of change to revitalise this part of the town centre and improve the relationship with the Castle Gardens and through historic lanes to North Street.

② **MILL SITE AND NORTHERN RIVER CORRIDOR**  
This area is defined by its relationship with the River Stort, and takes in the eastern side of South Street and improvements to Dane Street.

### HISTORIC TOWN CENTRE

③ The historic heart of Bishop's Stortford has an attractive and varied character. The planning framework should seek to protect and enhance this character whilst ensuring that development opportunities such as at Old River Lane and along South Street will deliver well-integrated and sensitive new buildings and spaces.

④ **STATION AREA**  
The station is a major gateway to Bishop's Stortford with plans being progressed for new development options. The area has also been identified as offering one of the best opportunities to provide new employment space in the town centre given the proximity to the station which provides quick access to London, Cambridge and Europe via Stansted. The site should also contribute to enhancing the town's relationship with the River Stort.

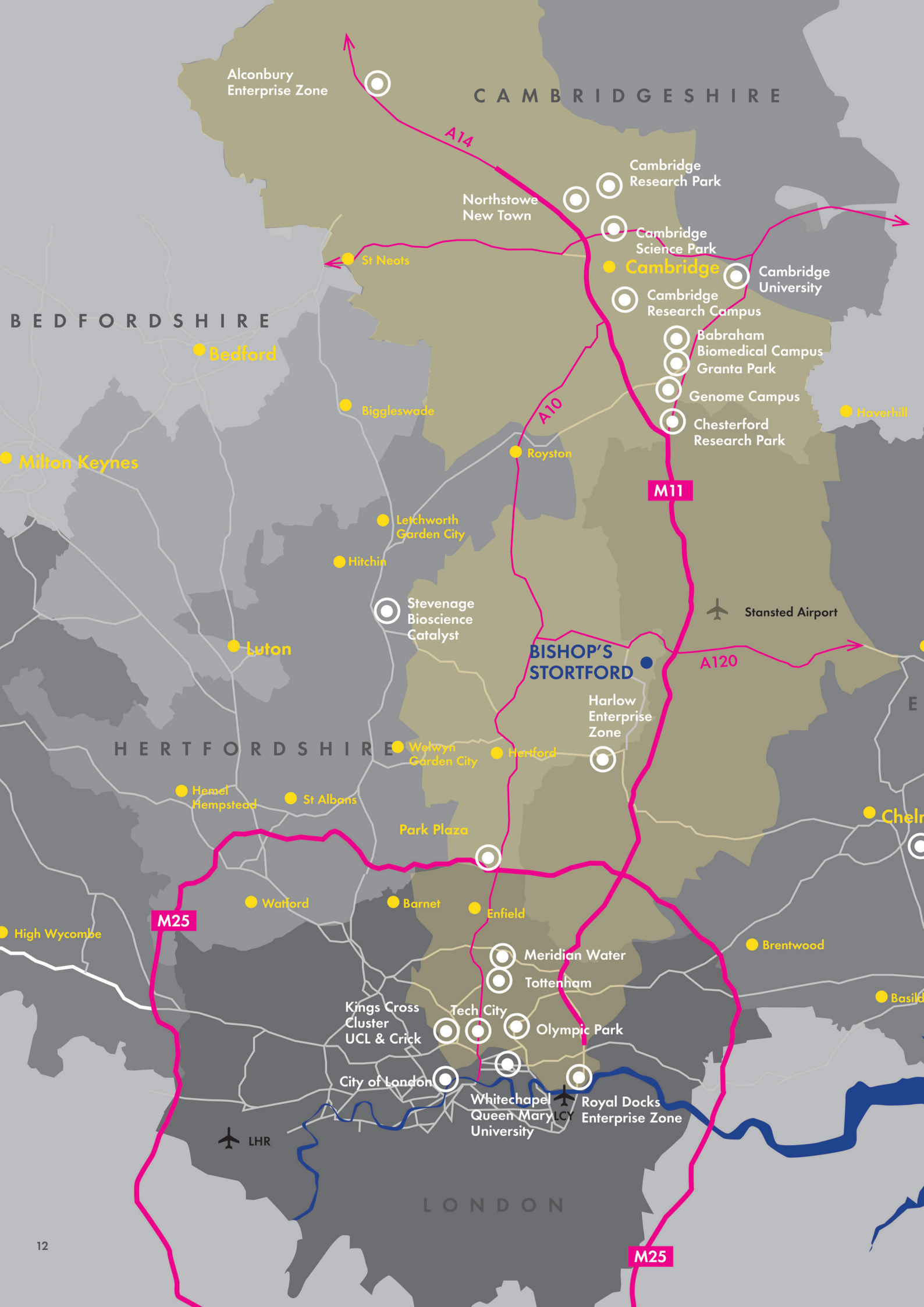
⑤ **SOUTHERN RIVER CORRIDOR**  
A series of sites have been identified for the southern river corridor, along South Street and Southmill Road. The planning framework also considers options for the Rhodes Theatre which is a key asset for the town.

# 02



# BISHOP'S STORTFORD TODAY





Alconbury Enterprise Zone

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridge Research Park

Northstowe New Town

Cambridge Science Park

Cambridge

Cambridge University

Cambridge Research Campus

Babraham Biomedical Campus  
Granta Park

Genome Campus

Chesterford Research Park

Haverhill

M11

Stansted Airport

BISHOP'S STORTFORD

Harlow Enterprise Zone

A120

HERTFORDSHIRE

Welwyn Garden City

Hertford

Hemel Hempstead

St Albans

Park Plaza

Chelmsford

M25

Watford

Barnet

Enfield

Brentwood

Meridian Water

Tottenham

Kings Cross Cluster  
UCL & Crick

Tech City

Olympic Park

Basildon

City of London

Whitechapel  
Queen Mary  
University

Royal Docks  
Enterprise Zone

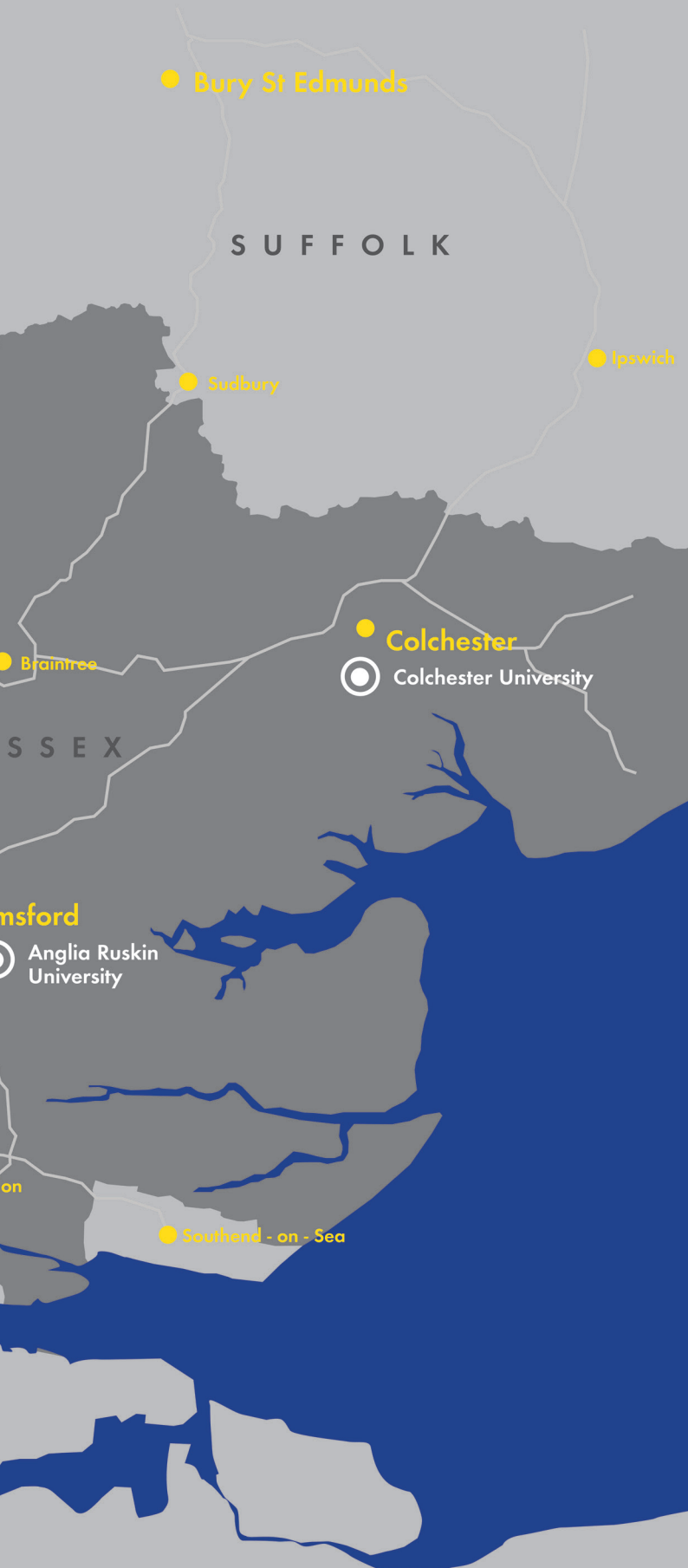
LHR

LONDON

M25

Figure 2

London Stansted Cambridge Growth Corridor



## 2.1 STRATEGIC POSITION

Bishop's Stortford benefits from an attractive historic town centre, set in a beautiful rural landscape with very high quality road, rail and airport links. These advantages have been reflected in the growth of an affluent population commuting both to London and Cambridge. The town benefits from its positioning within the London/Stansted/Cambridge Growth Corridor which covers the area north from the Royal Docks, Kings Cross, and the Olympic Park, north, through the Lee Valley, the M11, A1 and A10 road, to Stevenage, Harlow and Stansted, and through to Cambridge and Peterborough.

This corridor has great importance for the future growth of the UK economy and also Bishop's Stortford's with a vision for the area including investment in transport infrastructure and new business space development focused upon tech and bio-medical industries (LSCC Growth Commission report, July 2016). Key to Bishop's Stortford will be the planned expansion of Stansted Airport which will help to support a resilient job economy for the town centre. East Herts and Uttlesford Councils should factor a potential growth of 3,000 jobs to 2026 as a result of growth of the airport and the town centre is well placed to accommodate this growth due to its proximity and strategic connections (Town wide employment study, 2013 EHC). The planning framework will help to accommodate this development potential and help define proposals that will deliver transformative growth for the town centre.

## 2.2 LOOKING BACK



The town and castle mound as viewed from Hockerill in 1821 shows the importance of topography in the town



View of the Mills and river looking north from station bridge (early 1800's). The existing Mill site has always been used for industry

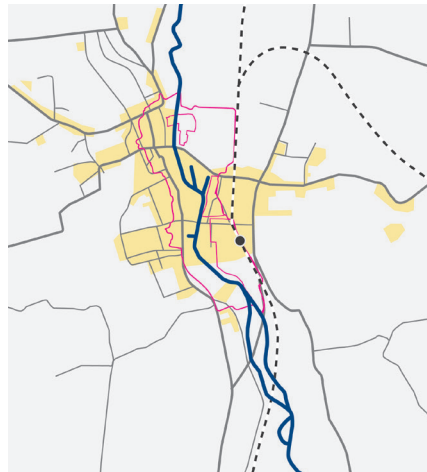


The rear of the Corn Exchange in the late 19th century, built in 1828. Significant alterations have occurred since



1695

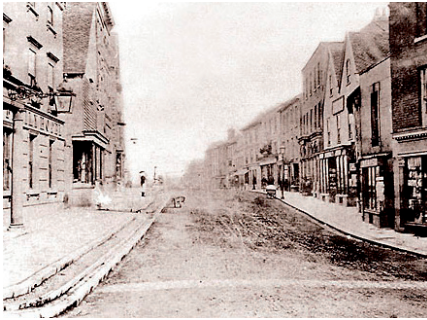
1884



- The origins of the town can be traced back to the Roman occupation with some evidence of a settlement next to the river.
- Waytemore Castle was built in the 11th century by William I to protect the Bishop of London holdings but it was in ruins by 1549.
- A market was established by 1228 and part of the street and plot pattern set out at this time survives today.

- By 1744 road improvements had resulted in many coaching inns and stables in the town centre as stop off on the London to Cambridge road.
- In 1769 the Stort was canalised (the Stort Navigation) linking the town to the River Lea at Roydon, Essex. By now the town was a well established Market Town.
- The Great Eastern Railway opened in 1842, to the east of town centre.

All historic images from Bishop's Stortford Museum



The kerb design from North Street in 1881 has been retained, but the street is now dominated by parked vehicles



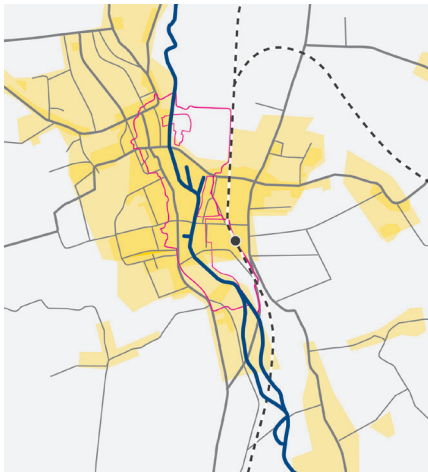
Bridge Street above in 1909 remains relatively intact in the photo below



South Street in the early 1900s shows that many of the buildings here have been redeveloped



## 1896



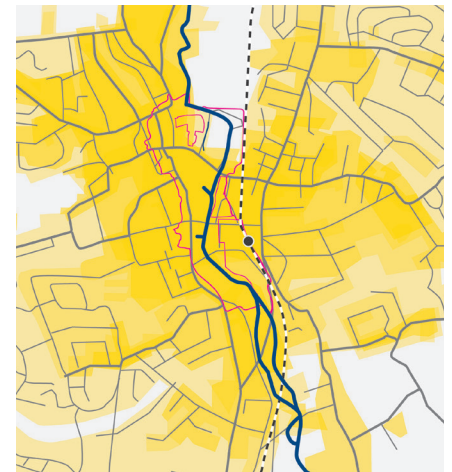
- Trade was growing rapidly and the town was exporting grain and malt by barge to the London breweries.
- The population of the town was growing fast and by 1901 exceeded 7,000.

## 1960



- By the mid 1900's the town was attracting London commuters, travelling by train.
- Stansted airport opened as an RAF airfield in 1943 and was used during the war, opening for commercial operations in 1966.

## TODAY



- The M11 opened in the 1970s improving the road links in the area and the A120 bypass was opened in the 1970s, influencing the shape of the development of the suburbs of the town.

## 2.2 LOOKING BACK

### HISTORIC CHARACTER

The centre of Bishop's Stortford is defined by its historical evolution and distinctive setting in rural countryside. These built and natural assets are a legacy the town has that must be protected and enhanced.

Most of the town centre is covered by the conservation area which includes a significant number of listed and locally listed buildings. The adjacent plan highlighted the locations of the statutory and non-statutory assets. Many buildings in the town centre on streets such as North Street, Windhill and Potter Street contribute positively to an attractive townscape.

There are a number of important landmarks in the town centre including the Water Lane United Reformed Church, the castle mound, the market hall and most notably Saint Michael's Church on Windhill which are visible from many points in and around the town centre. Views to the churches and out to Castle Gardens should be considered as new development comes forward in the town centre.

The river has also helped shaped the type and concentration of character in the town centre, with a coherent and strikingly different identity to the wharf and industrial heritage along the rivers edge to that of the market town aesthetic in the core town centre.





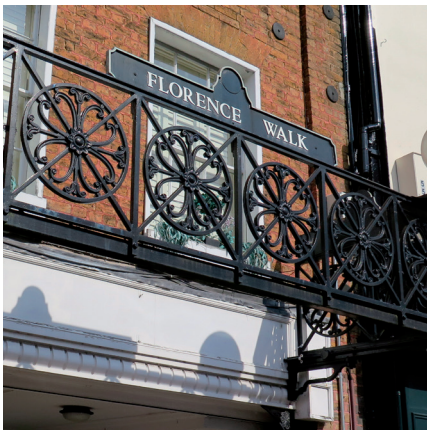


**Figure 3: Bishop's Stortford town centre historic character**

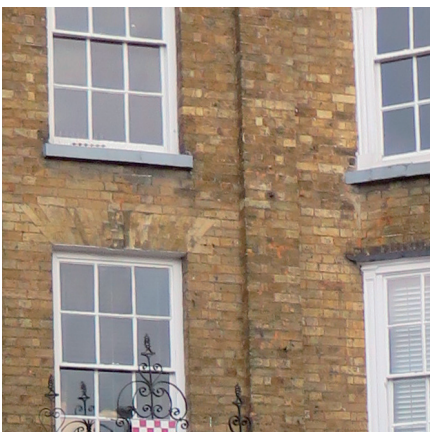
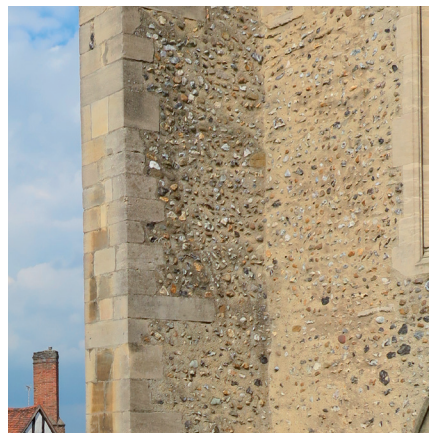
- Conservation area
  - Archaeological value
  - listed buildings
  - Unlisted buildings to be protected from demolition as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal
  - Study area
- Plan not to scale

## 2.2 LOOKING BACK

### MATERIALS AND COLOURS



The palette of materials, textures, colours and design features all help to contribute to the aesthetic and character of the town centre. The palette below highlights the variety of features and materials in the town centre and the dominance of the warm yellow and cream tones of some of the older brick work.



## ELEVATION STUDY - NORTH STREET

### C16 or earlier

Timber-framed remodelled late C19. Former George Hotel. Slate roof, stucco.

### semi-private courtyard

### C17 or earlier

Plain tile roof. Former stables of George Hotel. Early C20 shopfront.

### Mid C19

Brick and render. Former offices of Bishop's Stortford Urban District Council.

### Mid C19

Italianate brick, now rendered. Ex London County Banking Co. Modern shopfront.

### C19

Former chemists shop. Brick with stone dressings, gable fronted.

### c1800

Plain tile roof. Regency bow window to 1st floor w. sashes, cornice and flute mullions.

### C18

Regency bow to shopfront and cast iron arcade at shopfront.

### Early C19

Former Pearsons Dept Store. Originally 2 properties incl. White Lion PH.

### Sworders Yard



North Street North Side

### C19

Largely rebuilt. Former wheelwrights. Weather boarded, artificial slate roof. C20 shopfront.

### C19

Originally 2 properties. Slate roof, modern windows and render.

### 1900 or earlier

Quatrefoil stone moulding, corbelled brick cornice, modern roof.

### Mid C19

Rendered, single sash window at 1st floor.

### Mid/ late Victorian

Rendered classical ornament including figure wocklad capitals.

### Barret Lane

### Mid/ Late Victorian

Brick classical ornament.

### Early C19

Yellow stock brick, slate roof. Triple hung sashes. Victorian shopfront to L, early C20 shopfront to R.

### c1800

Later bow window. Early C20 shopfront, rendered and colour washed.

### Early C19 as earlier C17?

Timber frame. Florence walk shopping arcade.

### Florence Walk

### Early C19

Formerly two houses. Brick and render. C20 shopfront.

### Late Victorian (dated 1888)

Moulded red brick decoration. Steep plain tile roof w. pedimented dormer.

### 1971, JA Elliots Builders

Lloyds Bank. Double height panels with tall croun roof and narrow windows.



North Street South Side

All of the key streets in the town centre have been reviewed in detail and the dates and features of each building recorded. This has helped to build up a picture of the high quality historic fabric present in the town centre.

**C18 w earlier core**  
Former coaching Inn The Chequers Hotel.  
Yellow brick, symmetrical facade w. full height bays.

**c1780**  
Frontage on earlier core? Palladian pediment, steep tile roof.

**C17/ C18**  
Possibly timber frame. Tile roof, colour washed facade. Formerly Searing Motorcycles

*White Horse Court*

**C16**  
Timber-framed. Pargeotted facade with Victorian gable bargeboards. Former White Horse Inn.

**C19**  
Yellow stockbrick. Modern shopfront.

**late C20 rebuild**  
Yellow stockbrick.

**Mid C19**  
Yellow stockbrick, slate roof, later shopfronts.

**C16**  
Plain tile roof, jettied timber frame, rendered. Victorian bargeboards. Half Moon Inn.



*Water Lane*

**c1987**  
Former C18 farm house. 3 storeys. Ren-der, tile roof behind parapet.

**Early C19**  
Formerly 2 houses? Slate roof, stucco.

**c1800**  
Yellow stock brick with stucco. Italianate. Late C19 shopfront. Formerly Boardmans Bookshop.

**C17?**  
Timber frame? Tile roof, rough cast and colour washed.

**late Victorian**  
Barlays Bank. Moulded tile detail incl. egg and dart string course, cornice and chimney. Original bank frontage at ground floor?

**Early C19**  
Red brick w. recessed round headed panels and iron wash in parapet. Modern shopfront.

**C19**  
Three storey, yellow stock bricks, columned shopfront.



# ELEVATION STUDY - SOUTH STREET / POTTER STREET



**Semi-private passage**

**Late C19**  
2 storeys, pitched slate roof, modern shopfront.

**Early C19**  
2 storeys, slate roof, sash windows, modern shopfront.

**Early C19**  
3 storeys, steep tile roof, windows and shopfront.

**Mid/Late C20 rebuild**  
Red brick, flat arches, modern shopfront.

**C20**  
Single storey, entrance to Methodist Church.

**1903**  
Edwardian Gothic Methodist church. Red brick with sandstone dressing.

**Early C20 altered**  
2 storeys, red brick.

**Late C20**  
Tesco, imitation Victorian. Yellow brick with banded red brick detail.

**Nails Lane**

**Late C19**  
3 storeys and attic. Yellow stock brick with red dressing. Former Temperance Hall.

**Early C20**  
Queen Anne revival. Mansard roof and dormers. Modern shopfront.

**C19**  
Gable to st, 2 bay windows, modern shopfront.

**Early C20**  
Albion house, red and yellow brick, paired oriel windows. Modern shopfront.

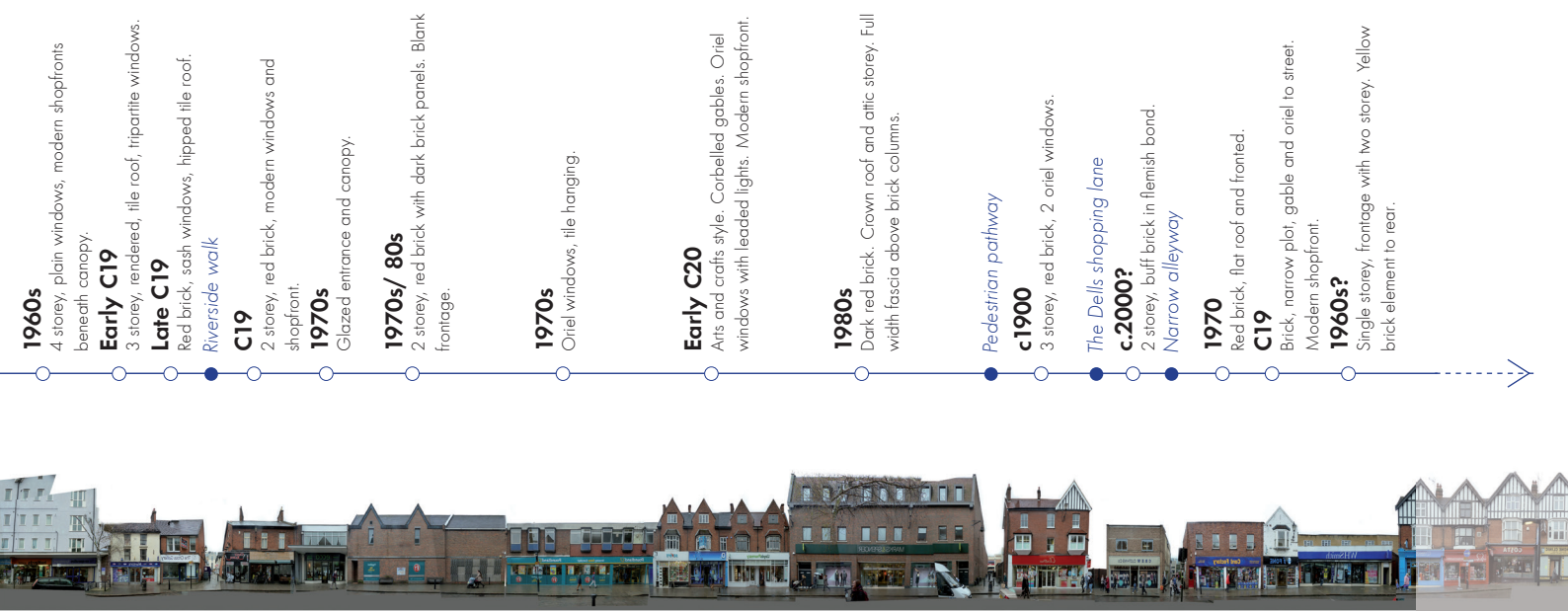
**Mid C20**  
Single storey, flat roof, yellow bricks. Site of former fire station.

**1920s/ 30s**  
3 storey, commercial development. Classical detail and brick basketwork panels. Some original Crittal windows.

**Late C20 rebuild**

**Early C20**  
Edwardian 3 storeys, red brick, central oriel. Pebbledash in eaves

**Late C19**  
Red brick, sash windows, modern shopfront.



**1960s**  
4 storey, plain windows, modern shopfronts beneath canopy.

**Early C19**  
3 storey, rendered, tile roof, tripartite windows.

**Late C19**  
Red brick, sash windows, hipped tile roof.

**Riverside walk**

**C19**  
2 storey, red brick, modern windows and shopfront.

**1970s**  
Glazed entrance and canopy.

**1970s/ 80s**  
2 storey, red brick with dark brick panels. Blank frontage.

**1970s**  
Oriel windows, tile hanging.

**Early C20**  
Arts and crafts style. Corbelled gables. Oriel windows with leaded lights. Modern shopfront.

**1980s**  
Dark red brick. Crown roof and attic storey. Full width fascia above brick columns.

**Pedestrian pathway**

**c1900**  
3 storey, red brick, 2 oriel windows.

**The Dells shopping lane**

**c.2000?**  
2 storey, buff brick in Flemish bond.

**Narrow alleyway**

**1970**  
Red brick, flat roof and fronted.

**C19**  
Brick, narrow plot, gable and oriel to street. Modern shopfront.

**1960s?**  
Single storey, frontage with two storey. Yellow brick element to rear.



- Mid C20**  
Precast concrete panels. Set back from street.
- Apton road*
- Mid C19**  
Red brick, 3 storey, sash windows, modern shopfront.
- Late C20**  
Red brick, oriel windows, pilasters, modern shopfront.
- Mid C19**  
Red brick, oriel windows, pilasters, modern shopfront.
- Late C20**  
3 storeys, flat roof, precast concrete panels with frontage
- 1902**  
Edwardian. Neo-Tudor mock timber frame and herringbone brick panels. Dormers above.
- Semi-private carpark*
- Market square*
- 1828**  
Grade II listed Greek revival style three storey building, former Corn Exchange



- Late C19**  
Arts and Crafts influence. Red brick, mock timber-frame, canted oriel windows. Traditional shopfront
- 1930s?**  
Single storey shops. Flat roofs, sculpted parapets.
- 1970s**  
Single storey shopfronts with taller element set back. Double width shopfront.
- 1970s, Jackson Sq**  
Red brick, two storey, flat roof.
- 2006/7 Jackson Sq Entrance**  
*Jackson square*
- Devails Lanl*
- Mid C19**  
Italianate, stucco, 3 storey. Plain tile roof.
- Late C19**  
2 storey. Red brick.
- Late C19**  
3 storey, red brick, moulded string course. Sash windows. C20 shopfront.
- c1800**  
2 storey, modillioned cornice, sash windows. C20 shopfronts.
- Early C20**  
Red brick with rusticated Portland stone at ground floor.

## 2.3 URBAN DESIGN AND TRANSPORT CONSIDERATIONS

### PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

The busiest pedestrian route runs north to south between the train station, along South Street and Potters Street towards North Street and Waitrose at the north of the town centre. The pedestrian environment along the main shopping streets - South Street and Potter Street - are particularly constrained by vehicular traffic given the relatively narrow road width.

Other lanes lead off this main spine, some of which are well used. Key routes to improve include paths across to the train station, lanes off the main spine linking to the riverside and routes across to Castle Gardens from Old River Lane.



View of South Street



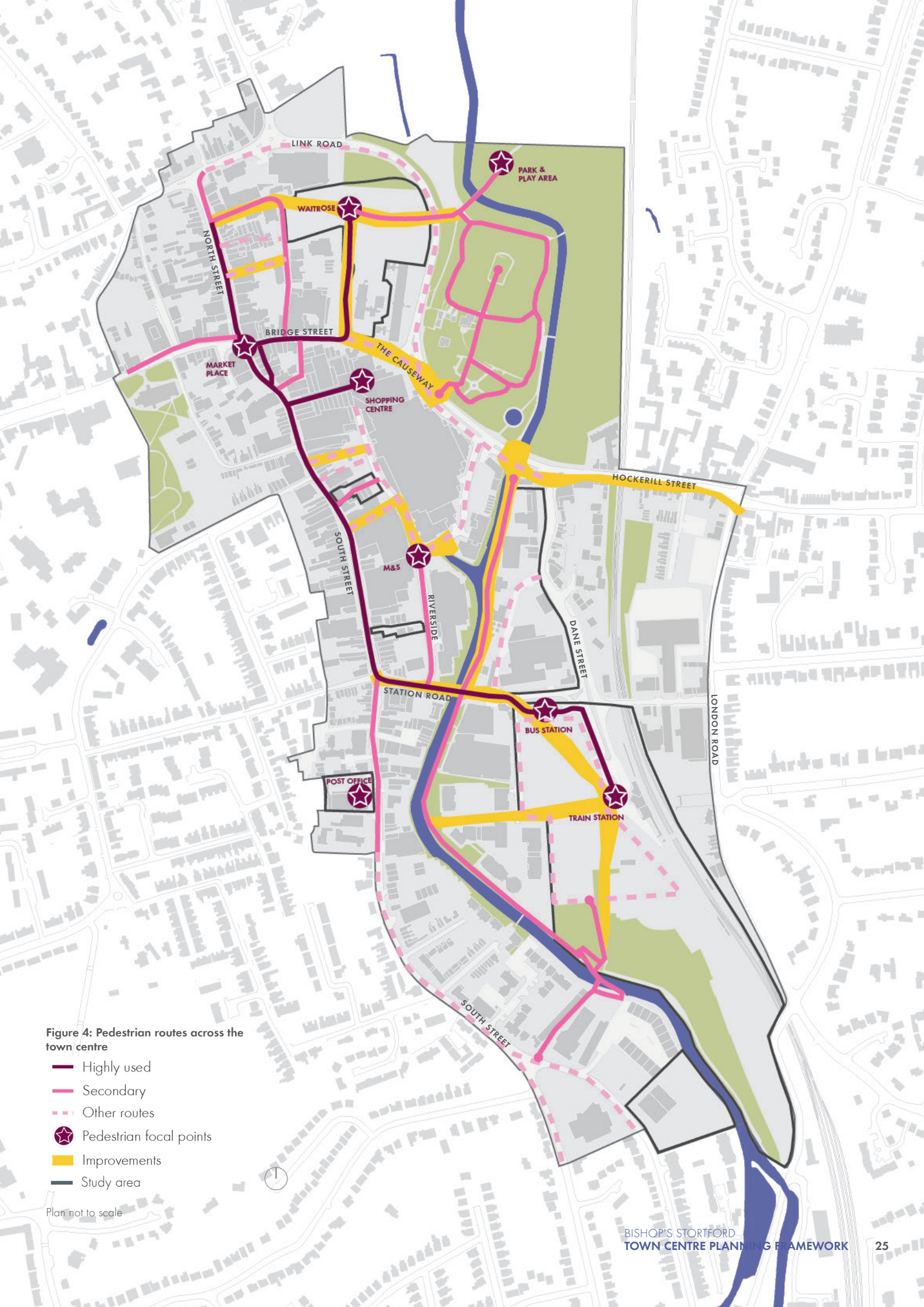
Palmers Lane is typical of some of the attractive historic lanes and alleyways in the town centre



Figure 4: Pedestrian routes across the town centre

- Highly used
- Secondary
- - - Other routes
- ★ Pedestrian focal points
- Improvements
- Study area

Plan not to scale



## RIVERSIDE DYNAMICS

The riverside is an underused asset in the town centre in terms of its function as part of the pedestrian circuit and its potential to enhance the quality of the town centre environment with natural spaces and active uses. One key issue is the extent to which existing buildings along the riverside have little or no interaction with the riverside, presenting fences and blank walls to the towpath. There are key opportunities at the Mill site and near the cinema to improve access and frontage to the riverside. Many plans and projects identified in the Stort Waterspace Strategy (2007) and by the Stort Waterway Partnership such as public realm improvements have been delivered or are underway.

Flooding from the River Stort will also need to be taken into account and any proposals will need to adhere to guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework. More detailed flood modelling work will need to be taken forward in the town centre to determine the suitability of sites.













**View of the river from The Causeway with blank fences creating an unattractive frontage to the river side**

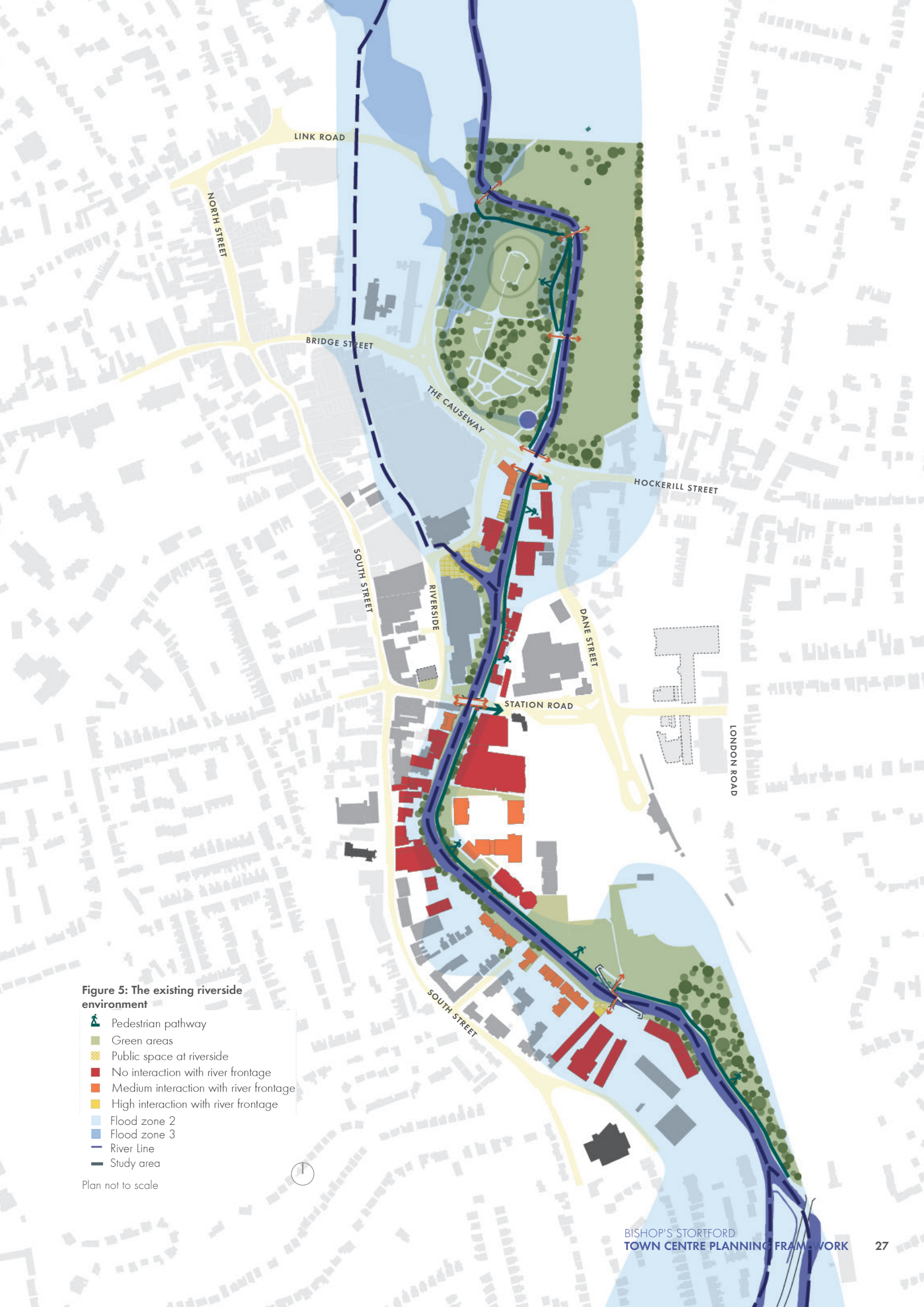


**Attractive buildings that have a positive relationship with the riverside**

**Figure 5: The existing riverside environment**

-  Pedestrian pathway
-  Green areas
-  Public space at riverside
-  No interaction with river frontage
-  Medium interaction with river frontage
-  High interaction with river frontage
-  Flood zone 2
-  Flood zone 3
-  River Line
-  Study area

Plan not to scale



## VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

The impact of traffic on the local community in Bishop's Stortford is a key issue. The erosion of pedestrian space, and the consequent reduction in pedestrian movement and informal activity within towns has serious implications for the economic and social viability of town centres. Without informal connections and gathering places, urban life can retreat indoors and turn away from streets and public spaces. This in turn erodes the distinctive qualities of place and sense of community on which long term investment and confidence in Bishop's Stortford depends.

The quality of the town's architecture and public spaces is being increasingly eroded by traffic pressure. The future success of Bishop's Stortford partly depends on its unique street qualities and urban fabric. Yet, Bishop's Stortford is experiencing town centre development and significant edge of settlement housing growth and extensive local discussions have confirmed traffic as a key issue.

### Street Network Hierarchy

The street network in the centre of Bishop's Stortford is disjointed due to the presence of the West Anglia Main Line and the River Stort, both of which run north-south through the town centre. Within the town centre area lies the convergence of two main traffic routes – the east-west A1250 and the north-south A1060. These main routes follow historically constrained streets such as Hockerill Street and London Road.

The main north-south route (B1383 and London Road through Hockerill) is supplemented by the parallel South Street / South Road, with through traffic directed along Riverside and Adderley Road within the centre itself.

Within the town centre, the streets network comprises a series of minor roads, laid out in a typical historic tight irregular grid, which provides multiple north-south routes and one crossing over the railway close to the railway station itself. The network in the town centre is characterised by one-way streets, with only one opportunity for southbound travel via Dane Street. The one-way loop of Dane Street and Station Road carries relatively fast moving traffic across two lanes.

### Link and Place Analysis

The concept of 'Link and Place Analysis' recognises the two equally important functions of streets: as movement conduits, and as destinations in their own right. Streets are classified based upon both their place and link statuses. For example, a city boulevard would have a high status as both a place and link, whilst a city bypass would have a low status as a place albeit with a high status as a link.

Link Road and The Causeway: These streets form part of the A1250 and therefore have high link status as they facilitate cross-town movement. The streets also have medium place status with destinations such as Castle Gardens



Figure 6: Existing transport context

- █ Primary
- █ Secondary
- - - Servicing/lanes
- Public car park
- Bus stop

Plan not to scale

and Jackson Square. Therefore, we find a friction between the need for movement and the erosion of the value of place along these roads.

North Street, Potter Street, South Street and Bridge Street: Whilst forming part of the northbound B1529 (with the exception of Bridge Street), these streets have moderate/high link status, as although through traffic is directed along alternate routes, many people do not use them. The place status is high on North Street and Potter Street, with important buildings and focal points such as the Corn Exchange; and moderate on South Street and Bridge Street.

Station Road, Dane Street, Riverside and Adderley Road: Whilst catering for greater volumes of traffic than North Street, Potter Street and South Street, the link status of these streets is also moderate as they do not form part of the A-road network. The place status of these streets ranges from moderate (northern end of Dane Street, eastern end of Station Road, and northern end of Riverside), with a variety of destinations such as a cinema and bars /cafes; to low (the remainder of these streets).

## **Rail & Bus Access**

Bus access to the town centre is convenient, with routes stopping along South Street and Riverside, as well as at the Bus Interchange on Station Road, although facilities at the Interchange are minimal. Bus services are frequent, with routes 508, 509 and 510 combining to create an up to 10-minute frequency towards Stansted Airport and Harlow via the town centre and Bus Interchange. This route runs 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

The Bus Interchange is well located for connecting with rail services however the walking route to the rail station is poor, lacking with basic facilities such as dropped kerbs at crossing points. Pedestrian access to the rail station is poor, with a lack of coherent pedestrian routes due to complicated junctions and level differences with Dane Street and the railway bridge. Cyclists currently use the carriageway albeit without cycle lanes.

The existing station gateway has a high link status however a low place status. Successful station gateways generally combine high link and place statuses to create a station quarter as a destination and a conduit for travel. Rail services are good, with four services per hour to London Liverpool Street in one direction, and either Stansted Airport or Cambridge in the other.

## Car Parking

There are concerns regarding the capacity of car parking in the town centre. The vast majority of car parking is controlled by East Hertfordshire District Council, including that within the Jackson Square shopping centre. This provides a rare opportunity to manage demand and locate parking appropriately as many car parks in similar towns are privately controlled. Lorry parking in the town centre is limited and causes damage to public realm.

Currently, the main car parks are located along the A1250 Link Road and The Causeway, with smaller car parks to the south and west of the town centre. Some smaller car parks are privately controlled, such as those serving the railway station and Waitrose. The train station has a large car park operated by Network Rail.

## Cycling

Most historic town centres, like Bishop's Stortford, lend themselves to internal mobility on foot or by cycle as they evolved on a walkable street pattern that seeks to reduce point-to-point distances as far as possible: i.e. a tight grid. However, in more recent times the street pattern in Bishop's Stortford has been broken by the Jackson Square shopping centre with a block size that is significantly larger than its surroundings. This scale of urban form presents a local curtain of severance within the town centre. This is easily overcome by pedestrians as they can simply walk through the building, but this option is not available to cyclists without dismounting. Notwithstanding,

pedestrians are also severed during times when the building is closed to the public.

The introduction of modern traffic has seen some streets converted to one-way working, or new streets created to form a gyratory system, and this significantly extends cycle journeys or disrupts them entirely if cyclists are pushed onto busier roads where they may feel less comfortable and thus choose to not cycle at all. Fear of motor traffic is known to be the most significant factor in leading people to avoid cycling even if they are willing to make use of the mode for short journeys.

Bishop's Stortford town centre can be made a favourable environment for cycling if these limiting factors are understood, and set against the wider context of severance and network constraints.

Whilst the town centre can be made reasonably "cycleable" by respecting and revitalising the historic street patterns, and reopening roads to two-way cycling, understanding the relative importance of routes within the town centre requires an appreciation of the wider context of the town. This is because a cycleable town centre will only be fit-for-purpose if it can also be easily reached on a cycle. Therefore, to understand how best to appraise the internal street network in the town centre, the framework also appreciates the approach routes from the hinterland and how these can be best integrated in to the town centre for cycling journeys.

## 2.4 ECONOMIC/ COMMERCIAL POSITION

### Retail and Leisure

Bishop's Stortford town centre, is one of the main shopping and commercial centres within East Herts District. The town centre performs a number of roles including food and grocery shopping, comparison shopping, non-retail services, leisure, entertainment, community facilities and an employment centre.

The current annual retail turnover of Bishop's Stortford in 2016 is estimated to be over £380 million. Bishop's Stortford town centre is ranked 224th in the UK, below Cambridge (26th), Chelmsford (67th), Stevenage (157th) and Harlow (193rd), but above Braintree (297th) and Hertford (394th). Bishop's Stortford town centre has nearly 300 retail/service businesses and the mix of uses is broadly similar to the national average.

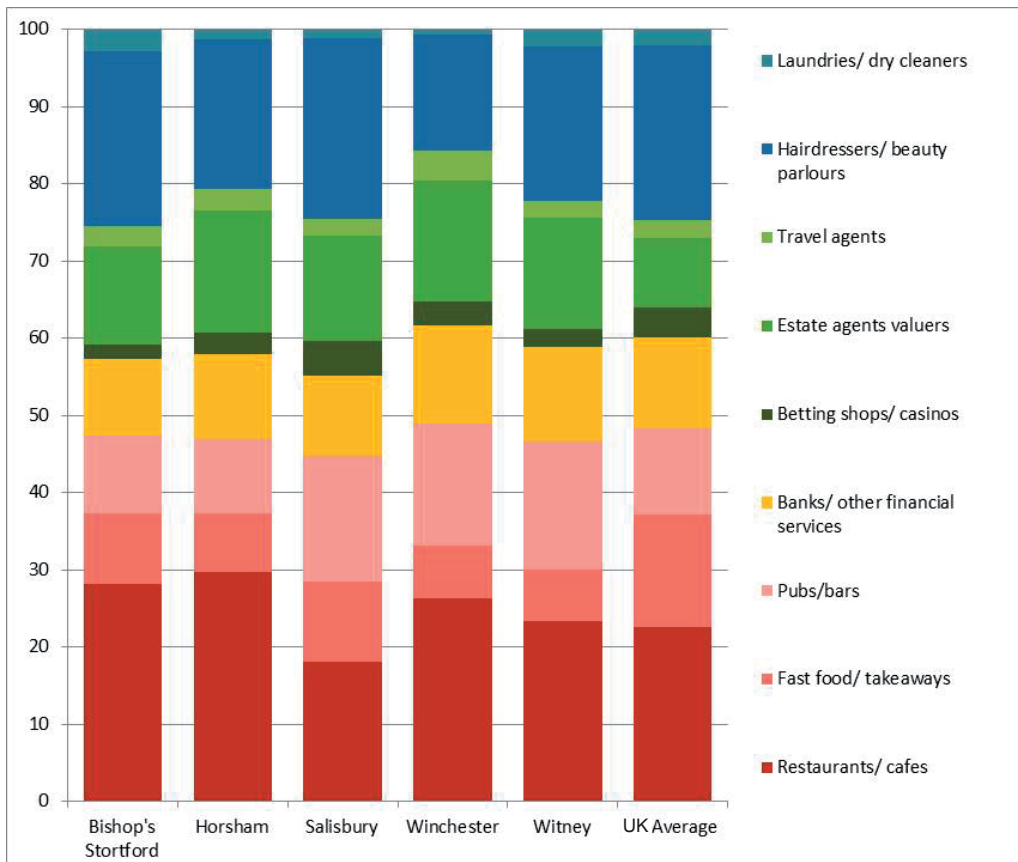
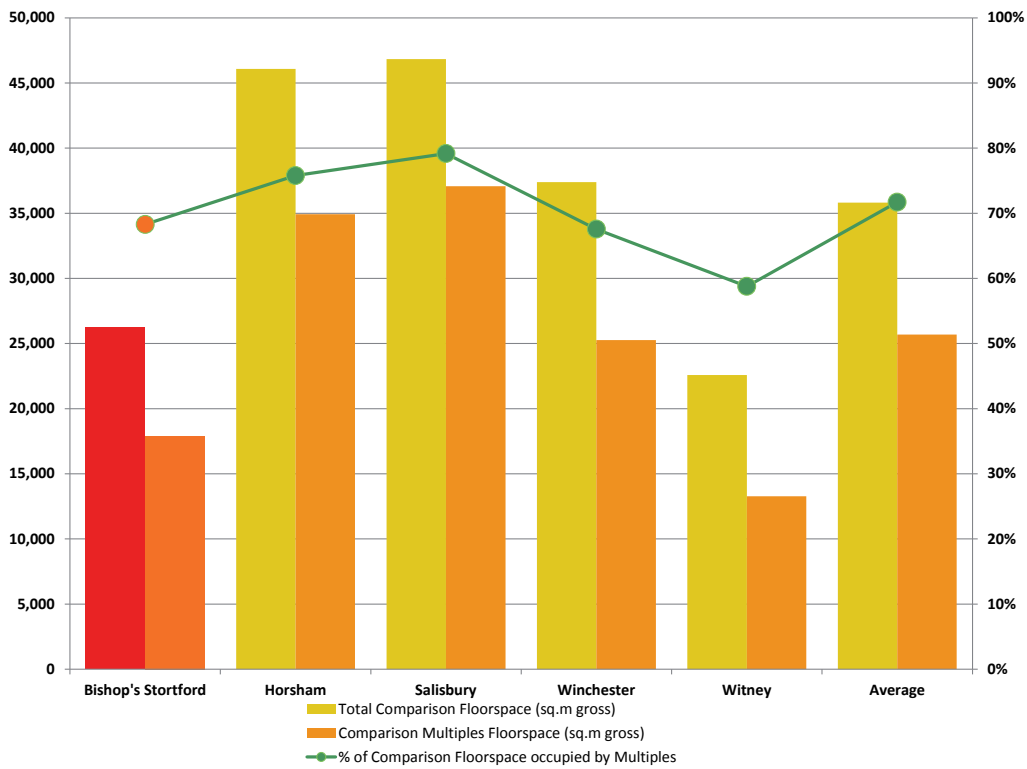
Bishop's Stortford provides a good balance of retail and non-retail services and this diversity is a key strength. Bishop's Stortford has an excellent provision of food and grocery shopping facilities and a reasonable range and choice of comparison shopping. The centre has a good provision of non-retail services and the evening economy/restaurant sector has improved recently. The economic analysis indicates that Bishop's Stortford is currently trading healthily compared with the national picture.

The town centre has a higher proportion of comparison shops, but the number of shops has fallen in recent years, with Pearson's Department Store, some national multiples and popular long and established independent traders



Figure 7: Indicative land use across the town centre





A comparative analysis with other similar and some other larger more aspirational centres helps in understanding how Bishop's Stortford is performing in terms of the mix of uses, floorspace and national multiples. This can help to understand any gaps or inconsistencies in Bishop's Stortford's offer.

notable losses. The number of vacant units has increased, but the vacancy rate remains broadly in line with the national average. Most vacant units are small and there is a limited supply of medium to large (250 sq.m or more) shop units available.

Despite these recent trends Bishop's Stortford has retained a good selection of comparison shops, with a reasonable choice of clothing and footwear shops. There is a mix of budget/ discount and quality/higher value shopping, which suggests the town centre has a broad customer base, but most of the shops are mid-market rather than high end. There is potential to improve and diversify Bishop's Stortford's fashion offer and to enhance the centre's market position from "middle" to "upper middle". Bishop's Stortford has a reasonably strong food and beverage offer compared with its competitors, but is only marginally above the national average.

The results of the East Hertfordshire Household Survey (June 2013) and the public consultation outlined later in this report suggest there is potential for Bishop's Stortford to increase its attraction if a better range and choice of shops are provided, along with better car parking provision.

## **Offices**

Bishop's Stortford is an important centre of employment, accommodating about 15,000 workplace jobs across all sectors of the economy. The town centre is the main concentration of

office space (B1a) in the town, with over half (57% or 21,260 sq.m) of office space located within the town centre boundary. The most significant cluster of office space is located to the north west of the town centre area. There is limited office space east of the river, and the area near the train station is an opportunity.

Bishop's Stortford's existing office employment locations are relatively small and cater primarily for local occupiers. The presence of larger businesses operating at the national/ international level is limited. Bishop's Stortford's employment locations are not considered to be 'strategic' at a sub regional or regional level. However vacancy levels are low within the town and there is evidence of demand from smaller local occupiers.

Bishop's Stortford caters mainly for small and medium sized business local to the area, and the town is unlikely to attract large employers due to the size of the local labour market, which is not comparable with larger regional centres. A large proportion of the town's office supply is dated, lacking amenities and adequate car parking. Smaller, older units within the historic town centre are particularly difficult to let successfully unless at very low rents (which can be attractive to small businesses). This out-dated supply does not meet occupier requirements for modern, open plan floorspace with good accessibility by road and rail.

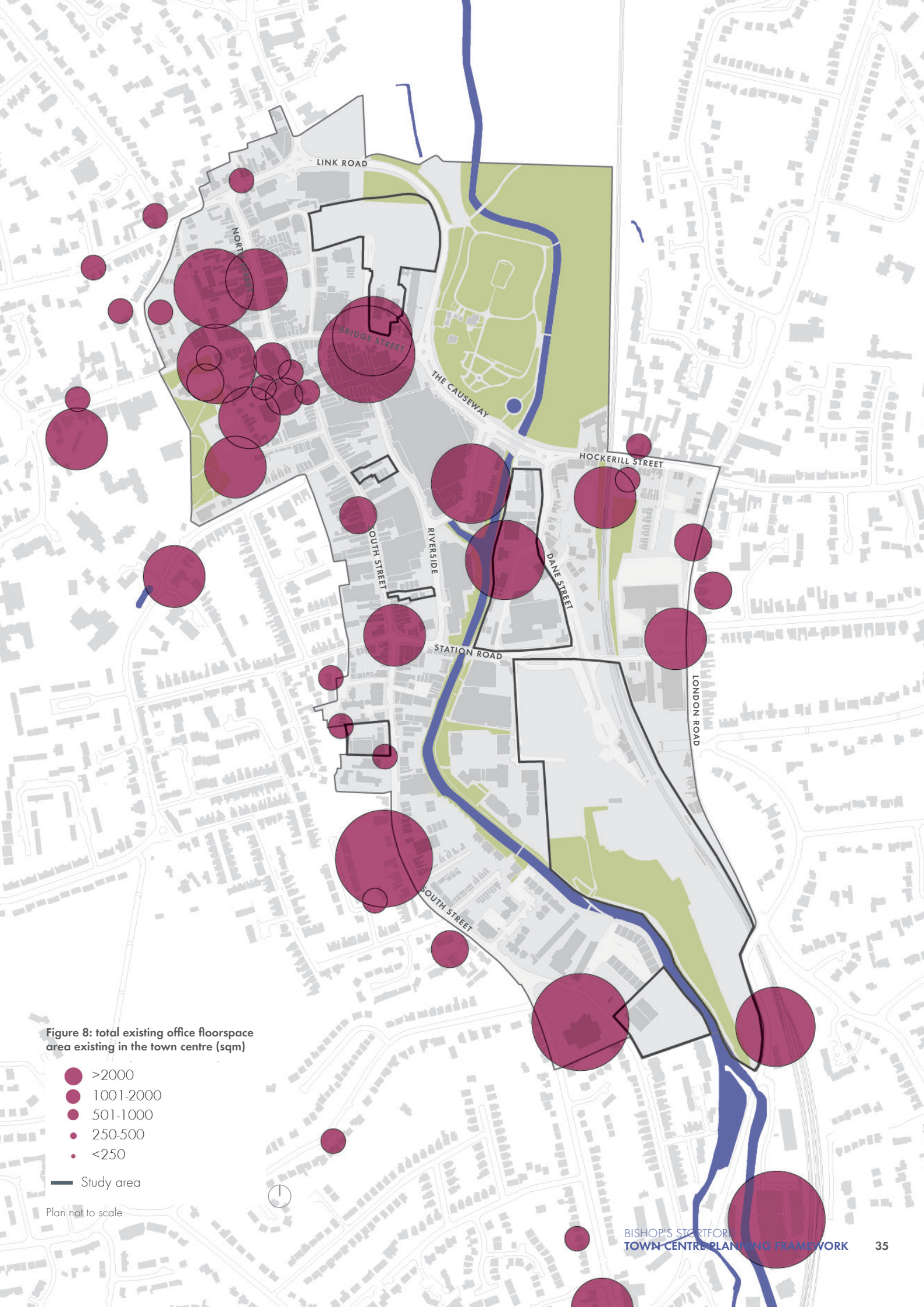


Figure 8: total existing office floorspace area existing in the town centre (sqm)

- >2000
- 1001-2000
- 501-1000
- 250-500
- <250

— Study area

Plan not to scale

03



# PUBLIC CONSULTATION



## 3.1 WHAT YOU TOLD US

The planning framework for Bishop's Stortford has been informed by engagement with residents and community groups to understand current issues and aspirations for the future of the town.

As well as reviewing the valuable and extensive engagement that was completed as part of the Neighbourhood Plans for the town centre, this framework has been informed by views collected in the following ways:

- **At a pop-up event in the town centre on market day;**
- **Meetings with landowners and key stakeholders;**
- **Via a project website asking people for their ideas for the town;**
- **During a formal consultation period of 6 weeks during the winter of 2016;**
- **Staffed exhibitions in the town centre during the consultation period; and**
- **A Council website and questionnaire asking people for their views on the draft framework.**

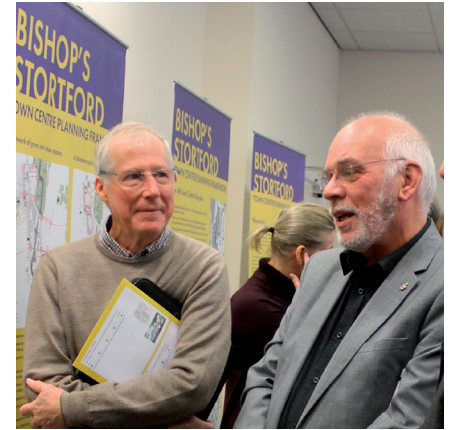
The market stall took place as part of the food market held in the town centre on 19 May 2016. This gave visitors to the market and residents the opportunity to put forward their views and respond to a number of key questions. A project website provided an additional way for people to engage with the project and put forward their views. A map feature enabled residents and visitors to leave geographically specific

comments and visitors were asked to rate how best the town centre could be improved.

Community groups, the Neighbourhood Plan Teams and residents associations have contributed to the planning framework through dedicated meetings and ongoing projects and ideas have been taken into account and included in this framework.

The formal consultation period took place for six weeks commencing on 26 October 2016. Members of the consultant and council team regularly staffed the pop-up exhibition which was on display in Jackson Square, the Rhodes Centre and the Council offices throughout the consultation period. The document was also formally launched at an event for key local stakeholders and residents who had contributed at consultation events during the preparation of the plan. The document and questionnaire were available online to view and respond to on the Council's website. Hundreds of people viewed and engaged with the exhibition while it was on display in Jackson Square and around 70 people submitted detailed comments on the plans. Officers also visited local schools to speak to young people about their ideas for the town centre.

The responses and comments received have helped shape this document and the principles and sites included. A separate consultation report provides a summary of the responses which were submitted and the updates which were made to this document.



Photographs taken during consultation events for the Planning Framework

04





# FRAMEWORK THEMES

We have identified eight themes for the Bishop's Stortford Planning Framework to help deliver the vision for the town centre. In each case there are several key projects which relate to ideas suggested during the public consultation.

## 4.1 REVEALING AND CELEBRATING THE RIVER STORT

The River Stort is Bishop's Stortford's hidden asset. As key sites come forward and the road network including the river crossings are remodelled, multiple opportunities for new development and public spaces along the river will be created. A shared and widened pedestrian and cycle towpath is promoted along the eastern bank with a continuous necklace of public spaces and activity to enhance the riverside in the centre of town. Improvements to access to the towpath and new links to the riverside should also be provided. A series of key projects include:

- ① A new bridge from Adderley Road to the Mill site will open up a new route from the train station to the town centre. The viability of other new crossings connecting South Street to the Goods Yard should be explored.
- ② A widened bridge at Station Bridge will provide a safe and attractive new route for pedestrians while enhancing access to the towpath. Connections to the towpath and the continuity of the riverside route at the Causeway should be improved.
- ③ Redevelop Poundland on the eastern side of South Street to provide a direct connection to the river from the high street and a new cluster of activity in this location.
- ④ New uses that bring activity to the river at key frontages including at the Mill site, the cinema and Southmills. Pop-up activity, food stalls and space for start-up businesses will be supported to help animate the riverside.

- ⑤ Widen the tow-path on the eastern bank of the river as a shared route for pedestrians and cycles along the length of the Stort within commuting distance to the town centre and explore the provision of enhanced public mooring facilities. Connectivity to Sworder's Field should be enhanced.
- ⑥ Explore opportunities to create connections to the riverside on the western bank. Where new sites come forward promote public access to the riverside.



New canal side spaces were created at Kings Cross, enhancing the relationship with the waterways



New riverside activity at Kingston Upon Thames



Figure 9: Revealing and celebrating the River Stort

**Riverside**

- Pedestrian pathway
- Cyclist pathway
- Green areas
- Public space at riverside

**Connections**

- Bridges existing
- Bridges proposed
- Pedestrian crossings
- Links to the riverside
- Main roads

**Activity**

- Private frontages: residential, employment
- Public frontages: cafes, shops
- Key sites for events

Plan not to scale



## 4.2 ESTABLISHING A CLEAR PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE NETWORK IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Any new development should contribute to creating great streets and public spaces that help to form a legible and attractive pedestrian network in the town centre. In order to achieve this, new buildings should have shop fronts and other uses facing the street rather than presenting blank walls to any public route. In the town centre, streets should be designed so that pedestrians and cyclists have priority. The riverside should be brought into the structure of routes in the town centre, raising the quality of routes along and across the river. A number of junctions are also highlighted on the adjacent plan where crossings and routes for pedestrians need to be improved. Outside of the town centre, walking and cycling routes from existing and new residential neighbourhoods into the town centre and on key routes around schools should be improved. A series of key route improvements will be focused along the following paths:

- 1 Old River Lane: A new structure of routes providing clear connections between North Street and Castle Gardens.
- 2 The Goods Yard and Station Road: A simplified and attractive station gateway area with a new public space and clear pedestrian route into the town centre. Safer pedestrian routes across the railway line at London Road and at Station Road should be explored. Routes should also be improved between the station and the Rhodes Centre.

- 3 South Street/Potter Street: Explore the potential for timed closure of this key street to improve the quality of the environment and reduce the impact of vehicle emissions on the high street. A number of the existing lanes off the high street could be enhanced with better quality public realm to enhance the environment and support the existing businesses.
- 4 Strengthen the connection from South Street to the riverside and across to Dane Street.
- 5 The Causeway to Hockerill: better pedestrian crossings and wider pavements to improve the environment along this route.
- 6 The Riverside: The riverside will be better used as part of the structure of routes in the town centre, connecting to the station and Old River Lane, as well as a part of wider connections to Sawbridgeworth and Stansted.



East Street in Horsham, West Sussex is open to vehicles during the evenings but has a lively pedestrianised environment during the day

Figure 10: Establishing a clear pedestrian network in the town centre

- Opportunity sites
- River Stort
  
- Public buildings**
- Churches
- Leisure and cultural
- Schools
  
- Connections**
- Bridges
- Pedestrian crossings
- Links to the riverside
- Key junctions to improve
- Improved, new riverside routes
- Improved pedestrian routes
- Potential timed closure

Plan not to scale



The act of laid-back utility cycling, such as that which can be seen on the continent or in places like Oxford or Norwich, can be a calming, and civilising influence that enhances the liveability and pleasantness of a town centre. Towns and cities that have integrated cycling in the development of their highway networks, such as Cambridge and Brighton, currently enjoy higher or increasing rates of cycling than other comparable towns and cities, and with a more equal balance of gender and age segmentation.

The ability to cycle around a town easily can influence modal choice such that local trips are not made by car, freeing up highway and parking capacity for those people coming from further afield who do not have such a choice. Bishop's Stortford is well placed to deliver a comprehensive cycle network given that most existing and proposed developments are within a radius of 2.5km/30 minute cycle time. Sustrans are currently working with the Town Council to develop a cycling strategy for the wider town and surrounding area.

The town centre would benefit from more and high quality cycle parking. This is best achieved in small groups, which are in public spaces and thus well overlooked and street lit. Locations such as South Street, Potter St and North Street would benefit from further cycle parking along with the Old River Lane and Jackson Square retail areas.

The framework strategy for cycling in the town centre recommends the following;

- 1 The introduction of contraflow cycling on existing one-way streets. This is largely possible by simply amending regulatory signs and the concomitant Traffic Orders. Contraflow cycling can be a useful tool of allowing cycles

to take a much shorter route than the motor vehicle equivalent. Road space will need to be reallocated in favour of creating space for cyclists, carefully considering the design in some area of the town centre where roads are narrow. A southbound contra-flow cycle lane could be built on the current carriageway. However, this might require a review of kerbside loading and pedestrian crossings and may require some carriageway widening.

- 2 The Stort Valley represents an almost ready-made greenway cycling corridor from the north. There should be an aspiration to widen the path along the western bank to promote this as a shared walking and cycling route.

- 3 The street hierarchy proposes to downgrade part of Station Road upon completion of the Goods Yard Link Road, and this provides an excellent opportunity to act as a funnel for cycle routes to and from the east of the town. Station Road, which bridges the railway, can be easily linked via a short section of shared use footway along London Road to Warwick Road. Careful crossing of London Road would need to be designed.

- 4 South Road would also form the principal cycle corridor to the south. An additional southern corridor could make use of Southmill Road and Twyford Road as quiet routes to connect to the employment sites south of the town. This route may even offer longer-distance commuting potential, i.e. Sawbridgeworth to Bishops Stortford (7km) or even Bishops Stortford to Harlow Mill (12km), and onwards towards the Lee Valley Regional Park.

- 5 Proposals for the core network propose the main cycling routes are generally away from the busier highway corridors.



Figure 11: Establishing a clear cycle network in the town centre

- Off road/protected
- ..... On road quiet route

Plan not to scale

## 4.3 RATIONALISING VEHICULAR MOVEMENT IN THE TOWN CENTRE

The predominant objective of the movement framework will be to establish a permeable, convenient, and connected network of walking routes to and across the town centre, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of car access. Given the town's rural hinterland, car access to the town centre is important and should be recognised and accommodated as an important and necessary mode of transport. The supply of short stay car parking in the town centre will be increased in line with demand, as a result of housing growth. Other travel options will also be provided to give town centre users a alternative to car travel.

Bishop's Stortford is currently served by twelve town centre car parks providing circa 2,300 spaces which are split between the short-stay and long-stay markets. The vast majority of car parks are surface level only, representing an inefficient use of land in the constrained town centre; only one car park is multi-storey – Jackson Square. Around 570 spaces are located at the railway station, with a further 280 at Grange Paddocks, which is around 10 minutes' walk from the northern fringe of the town centre.

Parking surveys undertaken in 2015 found that the town centre car parks can reach around 90% occupancy on Saturdays. This level of demand is predicted to be exceeded in the coming years with the regeneration of the town centre and developments to the north and south of the town. Whilst some spare capacity exists in the town

on Saturdays, this is generally located at Grange Paddocks or the railway station and therefore does not provide for short-stay needs.

A Parking Demand Study was commissioned by East Hertfordshire Council in 2015. The study found that by 2021, parking demand would exceed supply by around 280 spaces on a weekday and circa 265 spaces on a Saturday. This would be further exacerbated by future development in the town to 2026. The opportunity arises to provide additional public car parking through forthcoming development in the town centre.

The Old River Lane site is well-located for car parking, being adjacent to the key route of the A1250 Link Road. The site could provide a multi-storey car park which could both provide for future parking demand, and free-up existing land occupied by surface car parks for development. The transport impacts of a new multi-storey car park would need to be carefully mitigated, both in terms of managing traffic flow, and in maintaining pedestrian and cyclist permeability.

The framework seeks to reduce the current severance created by the A1250 and the two-lane one-way roads such as Dane Street and Station Road. Street design will encourage and facilitate pedestrian movement, utilising features such as median strips, courtesy crossings, and (where appropriate) direct formal crossings.





**Figure 12: rationalising vehicular movement in the town centre**

- Restricted zone
- - - New road link
- Change to two way traffic
- Existing roads
- P New multi storey car parks

Plan not to scale

The framework also seeks to improve the streets for sustainable transport modes including bus and cycle use. A new station square will enhance the interchange between train and bus. Planning permissions for new development outside the town centre have included a requirement for travel plans to encourage people to travel by bus, cycle or walk into the town centre. There will also be financial support from developers for Smarter Choices, which is a campaign to encourage the use of sustainable means of travel.

A key part of the strategy is also to reduce the impact of vehicular traffic on the historic streets in the town centre, reducing the amount of circulating traffic affecting air quality and levels of congestion in the town centre. New technologies can also help to ease congestion and manage parking issues which should be explored and taken account of in the town centre including car clubs, electronic signage to indicate empty bays, pay-on-exit car parking and in the longer term, driverless vehicles.

Key proposals include;

- ① Removing the one-way systems on Dane Street, Station Road and Riverside in order to create a more permeable network and reduce the speed of traffic in the town centre. The existing one-way system creates a poor town centre environment and complicates routes in the town centre.
- ② A significant change to traffic movements in Bishop's Stortford would occur with the creation of a new north-south link road through the Goods Yard site, connecting to Dane Street and B1383 London Road for all vehicles. This new piece of highway has the potential to relieve the Hockerill Cross junction, a focus for congestion and pedestrian/cycle severance. A new highway connection may also offer scope to reduce traffic movements along Potter Street in the very core of the historic town centre. The design of any new link road will need to be carefully designed to mitigate the effect of through traffic on the new station square.
- ③ A new short-stay multi-storey car park to serve the town centre should be provided at the train station that could be accessed via the new link road from London Road, removing circulating traffic from the town centre.
- ④ A new multi-storey car park to the north of Old River Lane would increase car parking capacity in the town centre and serve the central shopping area. It is proposed to create a new signal controlled junction on Link Road, serving the new multi storey car park and facilitating pedestrian and cycle crossing movements at a point which currently experiences severance due to the lack of crossing facilities. A new access to The Causeway car park, directly off the A1250 Link Road, would reduce traffic movements along Bridge Street and through Old River Lane.

⑤ South Street/Potter Street: Explore the potential for timed closure of this key street to improve the quality of the environment and reduce the impact of vehicle emissions and HGVs and service vehicles on the high street.

⑥ The Hockerill junction currently forms an important traffic junction to the east of the town. The historic junction comprises a traffic signal arrangement, with some stop lines set well back from the junction for vehicle tracking requirements. Currently there are no formal pedestrian facilities, meaning people need to wait for gaps in traffic to cross. This creates problems for the old and young or those with mobility or slight problems. The junction would benefit from formal pedestrian facilities being provided as part of the traffic signal staging. This would provide a safer and more direct crossing and improve walkability for this part of town. Importantly, this will require a slight reduction in traffic capacity at the junction, meaning that other complementary measures will be required to ensure the full workability of the proposal.

Transport modelling is now underway to test proposals put forward in the framework.

## 4.4 PROTECTING AND ENHANCING BISHOP'S STORTFORD HISTORIC CHARACTER

The historic street pattern of Bishop's Stortford, with its main retail street with intimate lanes and alleyways hidden behind, is one of the town's defining features. New development needs to capture the essence of this character and complement the historic grain of the town centre, repairing areas where historic character has been lost. Key elements of this strategy should be;

- ① Maintain local and townwide views to key landmarks such as St Michael's Church and protect and enhance the historic buildings at Hockerill.
- ② Enhance the setting of Water Lane United Reformed Church and the Corn Exchange through 'special' public realm treatment.
- ③ Set parameters for the scale, massing and materiality of new buildings within new townscape guidance areas:

### ③a Riverside /industrial heritage

Material palette - Use of brick or wooden board is encouraged.

Scale and massing - Explore opportunities for form and massing that reflects the existing maltings and warehouse buildings in the area. Generally development should be 3 - 4 storeys, with some opportunities for taller elements in appropriate locations.

Features - Larger openings are encouraged at the ground floor to help provide activity to the riverside. Pedestrian permeability to the riverside is a priority.

### ③b Historic town centre

Material palette - The material palette should have variety and texture, reflecting the existing mix in the town centre, and the colour palette (see page 18-19).

Scale and massing - Development should be fine grain and low rise, stepping up to four storeys at a maximum.

Features - Opportunities for new pedestrian connections should be sought to reflect the character of the older lanes.



The Arc in Bury St Edmunds is an example of new retail development that takes cues from the surrounding historic fabric and is at an appropriate scale given its context



Figure 13: protecting and enhancing Bishop's Stortford's historic character

**Heritage**

- Conservation area
- Archaeology
- Listed building
- Unlisted buildings to be protected from demolition as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal

**Landmarks and views**

- Landmarks
- Long views to Church
- Selected important views to be protected
- Selected important views to be enhanced
- Townscape guidance areas

Plan not to scale

## 4.5 A NETWORK OF GREEN AND URBAN SPACES

New development in the town centre will provide the opportunity to create a series of new public spaces for Bishop's Stortford. These range from formal squares next to historic buildings, semi natural green spaces near the river and open green spaces connecting out to the countryside. New spaces should be framed by active uses and be accessed via a network of easy and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes and provide opportunities to enhance landscaping and tree planting in the town centre. New and improved public spaces should include:

- ① A formal and high quality landscaped space should be designed adjacent to the United Reformed Church to be used to enhance the connection through Florence Walk and provide a space for cafe tables and chairs. Water Lane should be an access only shared space route.
- ② Market Square and South Street/Potter Street should be enhanced by exploring the idea of timed closure to traffic.
- ③ A new space will be formed between new buildings, creating a space for the landing of the new bridge from Adderley Road and forming a new connection to South Street. This space should be activated by shops or restaurants on the ground floor, adding to the cluster of cafes and Wetherspoons already operating on the western bank of the river. Riverside/Adderley Road will also contribute to this space and will have a widened pedestrian crossing, tree planting and wider pavements to enhance the ease of walking to the riverside.
- ④ The setting of the cinema on the riverside should be improved with better access to the towpath and alterations to the building facade to provide activity to this stretch of the riverside.
- ⑤ Development at the Goods Yard should provide a Station Square with a new public space that simplifies this area immediately outside the station building.
- ⑥ Development at the Goods Yard should provide new semi-natural, publicly accessible, spaces on the riverside.
- ⑦ The existing car parking at the maltings buildings at Southmill Road (Millars 1/2/3) should be rationalised and a new space should be created, linking to the terrace at the Rivermill. A new public short-stay car park at the station will help to provide car parking for this area of the town centre.
- ⑧ The towpath along the River Stort should continue to be enhanced as a link outward to country walks and nature reserves. The potential for a shared cycle route should be explored.
- ⑨ Investment in Castle Gardens through a Lottery Bid to provide new sports facilities, gardens, play facilities, access to the castle, cafes and toilets.



Figure 14: a network of green and urban spaces

**Public buildings**

- Churches
- Leisure and cultural
- Schools

**Green spaces**

- Public parks
- Riverside route
- Public realm improvements

**Connections**

- Links between green areas
- Key crossroads to improve
- Improved pedestrian routes

Plan not to scale

## 4.6 A DISTINCTIVE AND QUALITY RETAIL OFFER

The East Herts Retail and Town Centres Study (November 2013) quantified the need for retail and leisure development in Bishop's Stortford and other towns in the District. This comprehensive evidence based study adopted empirical research including household shopper survey results (1,000 respondents). The findings of the 2013 study have been fully updated based on the latest population and expenditure forecasts obtained from reliable and robust sources. In line with the findings of this updated assessment, Bishop's Stortford's catchment area potential is expected to grow significantly, and will be comparable with the benchmark centres in terms of population, levels of affluence and available expenditure.

The updated retail capacity assessment suggests the town centre should seek to accommodate around 5,000 sq.m gross of Class A1 to A5 floorspace by 2021 and a further 5,000 sq.m gross between 2021 and 2026, of which up to 20% could be food and beverage floorspace. The study takes into account the effects of online shopping habits and changing retail trends. Only an element of this floorspace projection (about 3,500 sq.m) could be accommodated in existing vacant units, suggesting development opportunities need to be identified and that there is scope for both new retail and restaurant development in the town centre.

The strategy seeks to deliver town centre redevelopment opportunities including more retail floorspace, to boost Bishop's Stortford's retail offer and to allow it to compete effectively with other centres. The challenge for Bishop's Stortford will be to capitalise on future growth by securing investment while enhancing and supporting the independent and specialist retailers that help to make Bishop's Stortford unique.

There will be continued scope for Bishop's Stortford to diversify, for example the evening economy, leisure and entertainment, but comparison goods retail will still be the driver of growth. The retail offer within Bishop's Stortford is predominantly mid-market and does not match comparable towns in terms of choice and quality. There are a number of key comparison goods retailers and restaurant chains absent from Bishop's Stortford. These operators need to be attracted to Bishop's Stortford. Development opportunities will need to provide modern units of the right size, capable of attracting key retailer/restaurant operators missing in Bishop's Stortford. There may be opportunities to reconfigure existing premises to create larger units, more attractive to modern retailers.

Key locations for new retail development in the town centre include:

- ① Large new shops at Old River Lane connecting into the network of Lanes to North Street. The opportunities at Old River Lane will need to be balanced by improvements to the rest of the town centre.
- ② A development of smaller shops on South Street connecting to Adderley Road and the riverside and across to the Mill site and Dane Street.
- ③ New restaurants at the cinema and a small amount of retail at a redeveloped station square.
- ④ A cluster of restaurants and activity along the riverside at the maltings buildings (Millars 1/2/3) on Southmill Road.





Figure 15: a distinctive and quality retail offer

**Shopping frontages**

- Existing frontages
- New frontages
- Improved retail circuit
- Improved or new public realm
- Focus of independent shops and cafes

Plan not to scale

### Investing in the existing high street

The significant opportunity for new retail development at Old River Lane will need to be balanced by improvements to the rest of the town centre to support the existing high street. This includes supporting the larger shops and national multiples in Jackson Square and on Potter Street but vitally the independent clusters of businesses along South Street and within the lanes and alleys that lead off it. These clusters of shops and cafes help to make Bishop's Stortford unique and provide an alternative and interesting environment in the town centre.

Interventions in the existing retail area of the town centre should include:

- ① A development of smaller shops on South Street connecting to Adderley Road and the riverside and across to the mill site and Dane Street will help to provide modern new units on South Street. This will also open up South Street to the riverside, enhancing the quality of the public realm.
- ② Planned improvements to Jackson Square shopping centre including new units providing frontage to Potter Street and reconfigured units inside the shopping centre.
- ③ Redevelopment of Anchor Street Leisure Centre and the Mill site will also help to provide a draw to the southern part of the town centre, generating footfall along South Street.

④ The timed closure of South Street would improve the quality of the shopping environment, reduce air pollution and enhance space for the market. The timed closure of the street should be combined with investment in the public realm to modernise and enhance the quality and continuity of street surfacing. North Street can continue to be closed to traffic occasionally for street markets.

⑤ A programme of shop front improvements would help to enhance and strengthen the historic fabric along South Street and Potters Street. The listed and locally listed buildings in this area are currently overshadowed in some places by oversized fascia boards and unco-ordinated colour palettes of existing shop fronts. This type of improvement should also take place at key shopping parades on the edge of the town centre, such as at Hockerill.

Business Stortford, the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council should continue to provide opportunities for local independent businesses to network and support each other. This will allow the continued organisation of events and fairs that encourage footfall in the high street.



Shop front improvements in Whitechapel have helped to strengthen the continuity and impact of the built heritage on the streetscape



Figure 16: the existing high street

- Retail frontage
  - ⋯ Potential shop front improvement
  - Listed building
  - Locally listed buildings
  - Negative townscape impact
  - ▨ Improved or new public realm
  - ▨ Timed street closure
  - - - Alleys and lanes
- Plan not to scale

## 4.7 A NEW CULTURE AND LEISURE OFFER

The diversity of uses in town centres makes an important contribution to their vitality and how they compete with other places. Bishop's Stortford should offer residents and visitors a diversity of choice, a range of activities and an individual experience that encourages people to spend time in the town centre rather than just shop there. A better range of activities for young people in the town centre is a key priority including improved sports facilities, improvements to parks and open spaces, music events and evening activities.

The culture and leisure strategy is linked to the strategy to 'reveal the River Stort', developing a series of leisure and culture destinations in the town centre linked by a high quality riverside environment.

- 1 A key part of this strategy includes considering future options for the Rhodes Arts Centre. The facilities at the Rhodes Arts Centre need improving and there is a desire for a more flexible performance arts space including a concert venue for the town. A concert venue could be provided within the existing Rhodes centre, or at a new location in the town centre, or within one of the proposed new schools. The existing Rhodes site should be improved, in the context of improvements to the wider area with better car parking provided via better connections to the station area and public realm enhancements. Further work on Old River Lane will continue to test if a new arts centre could be accommodated within this site. If the arts centre was relocated, the Rhodes museum would stay in the existing location, in the building he was born in.

Other elements of the strategy to improve the culture and leisure offer in the town centre include:

- 2 The creation of an evening quarter at Southmill Road, centred around a new public space on the riverside.
- 3 Re-modelling the Empire Cinema and redeveloping the gym to harness the riverside location with new buildings with restaurants on the ground floor that face the riverside.
- 4 A new evening cluster of activity at the Mill site including new leisure uses, shops and restaurants providing activity to a new pedestrian route to Dane Street.
- 5 Redevelopment of the Old River Lane area to provide new shops, cafes, community facilities and public spaces for events.
- 6 The continued curation of events and activities across the town centre such as food markets, fairs and festivals, while supporting the existing market on Potter Street.
- 7 Investment in Castle Gardens through a Lottery Bid to provide new sports facilities, gardens, play facilities, access to the castle, cafes and toilets.
- 8 The planned redevelopment of the Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre to provide improved swimming, gym and sports facilities.

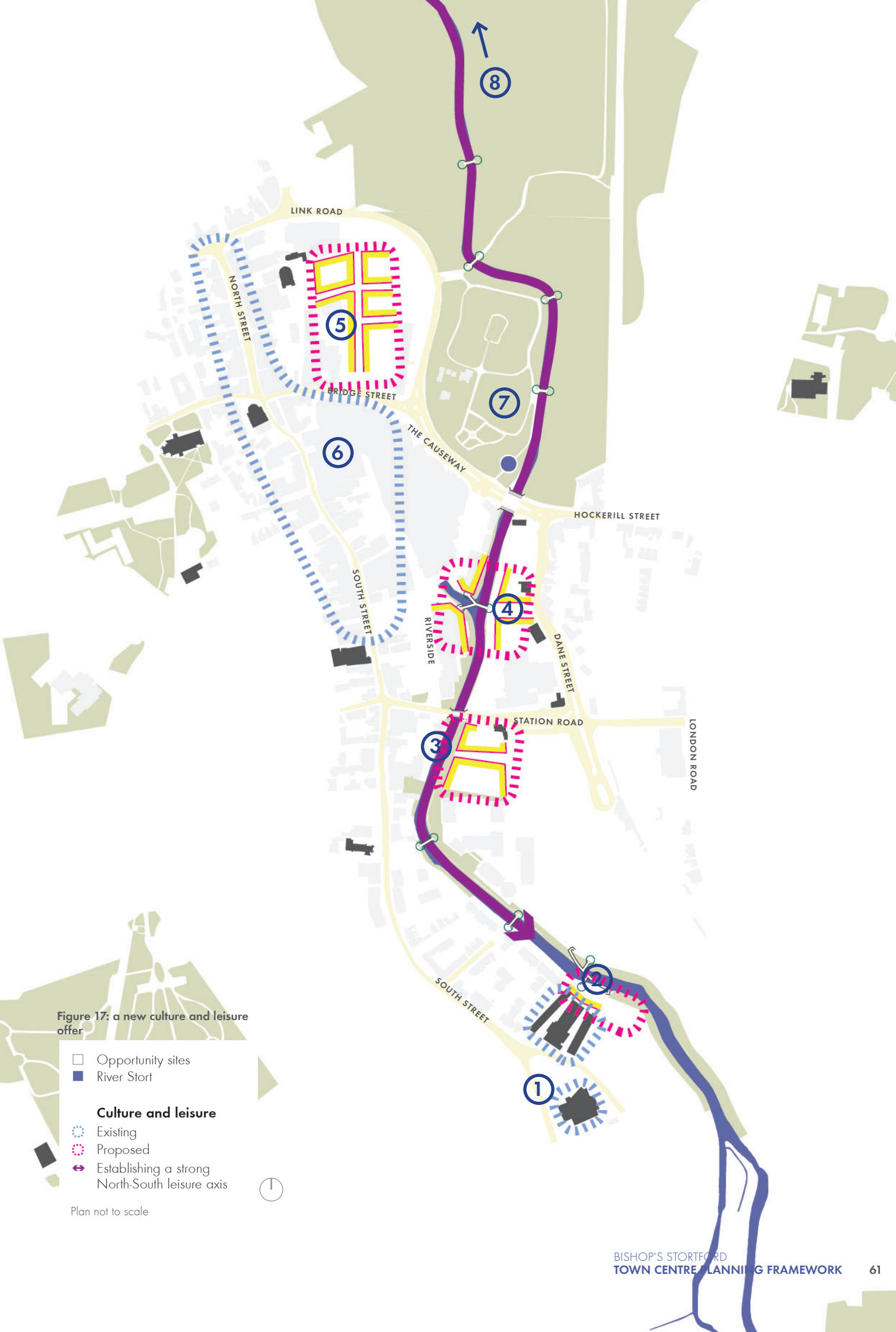


Figure 17: a new culture and leisure offer

- Opportunity sites
- River Start
- Culture and leisure**
- ⊙ Existing
- ⊙ Proposed
- ↔ Establishing a strong North-South leisure axis

Plan not to scale

## 4.8 THE TOWN CENTRE AS A PLACE FOR BUSINESS

The proximity of Bishop's Stortford to Stansted and its linkages to the wider London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor where significant growth is planned means that the town has the potential to gain a greater share of business activity in the future. This could include some national and regional firms looking to establish a local base, or satellite functions for occupiers based in central London. The area around the train station provides an exciting opportunity to deliver suitable high quality office space.

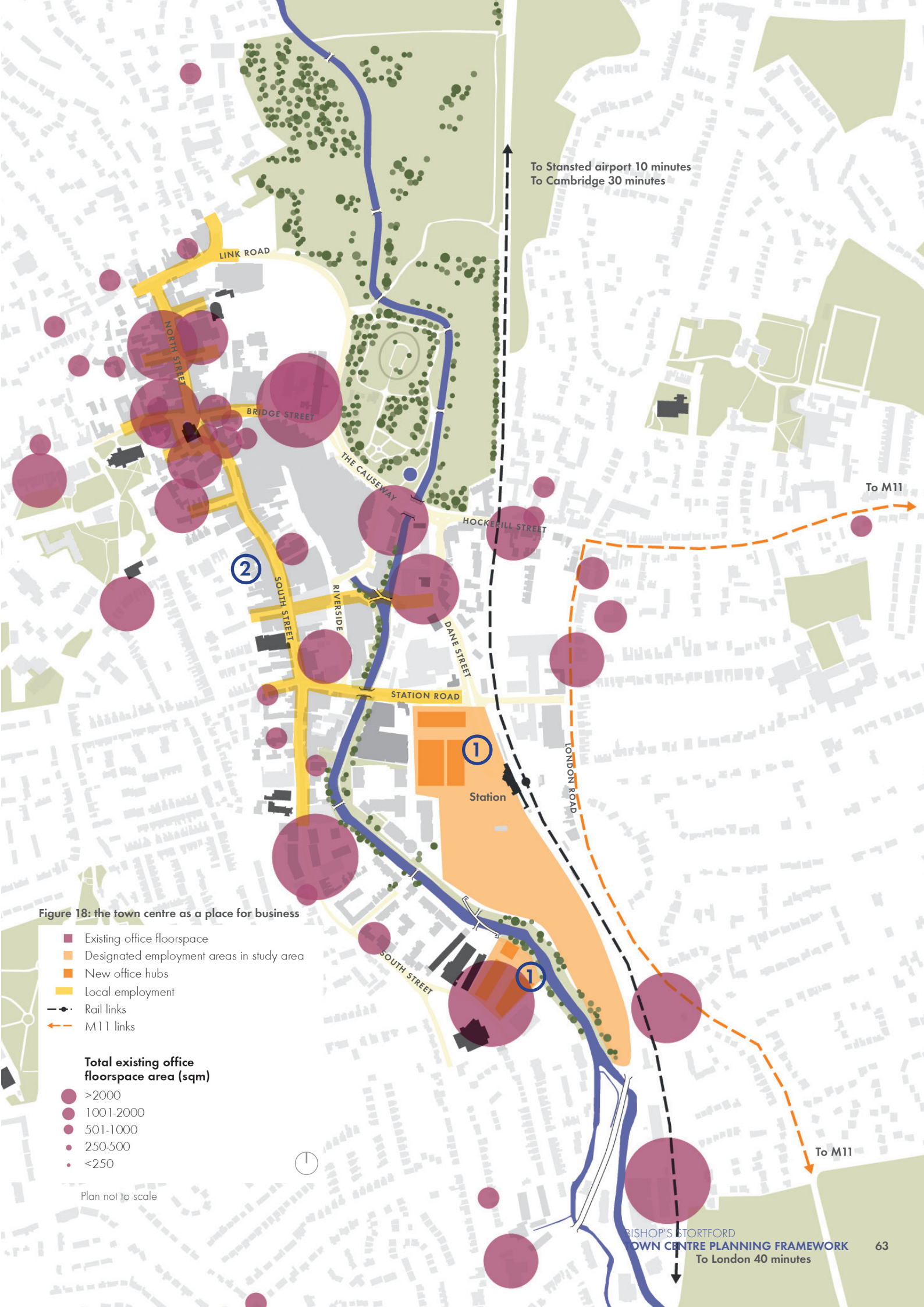
It is likely that some office occupiers will specifically want to be located in the town centre, taking advantage of access to amenities, shops, services and pedestrian access to the station. These positive attributes should be maximised. This is distinct from those occupiers who may seek to locate on one of the proposed new strategic business park sites on the edge of the town where there is less congestion, quicker access to the M11 and greater availability of parking.

The vacant and underused sites within the town centre provide opportunities for mixed use development that can enhance the character and quality of the town centre. Increasing office employment will help to enhance the retail and leisure functions of the town centre. The Council should therefore be proactive in seeking to promote the development of new office space in Bishop's Stortford town centre, allowing for new modern accommodation to come forward as some older out-dated space is redeveloped for other uses. This is particularly the case given the introduction of Permitted Development Rights which allows for the conversion of office

to residential premises, and may gradually erode space over time.

The strategy should seek stability in the overall stock of floorspace within the town centre, recognising that a future increase in space could help the town to achieve a greater market share of office-based activity than the recent past. The overall scale of requirements is likely to be modest, but opportunities to establish new office hubs within the town centre should be explored which can act as a focus to develop flexible modern premises (e.g. 500 – 2,000 sq.m floorplates). This will help to grow and retain existing office-based businesses within the town centre, but also potentially attract new firms to Bishop's Stortford that can contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre economy. Key proposals include:

- ① New office hubs in the town centre at the Goods Yards adjacent to the train station and on Southmill Road as part of mixed use redevelopments of these key sites. These sites could provide space for the growth of local businesses and as space to attract new employers.
- ② The support of existing independent businesses in the town centre through the protection of small business spaces in the high street and adjacent lanes. Examples such as Parndon Mill in Halow or The Maltings in Sawbridgeworth are positive examples of creative workspaces which could be implemented in the town centre. The Chamber of Commerce provides an important network to co-ordinate marketing and raise the profile of existing employers.



To Stansted airport 10 minutes  
To Cambridge 30 minutes

To M11

To M11

BISHOP'S CLEEVE  
TOWN CENTRE PLANNING FRAMEWORK  
To London 40 minutes

Figure 18: the town centre as a place for business

- Existing office floorspace
  - Designated employment areas in study area
  - New office hubs
  - Local employment
  - Rail links
  - M11 links
- Total existing office floorspace area (sqm)**
- >2000
  - 1001-2000
  - 501-1000
  - 250-500
  - <250

Plan not to scale

05





# PLACEMAKING



## 5 TOWN WIDE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Planning Framework for Bishop's Stortford Town Centre is designed as a flexible plan that provides a clear structure and guidance as proposals come forward, without being prescriptive.

The strategy for Bishop's Stortford balances the need to promote change in certain areas of the town centre, where large development sites have been identified while protecting the fine grain historic centre in others. Under-utilised areas can be better connected into the core town centre and provide new areas for uses to strengthen the viability and vitality of the town centre. The relationship between these areas will need to be carefully managed in order to strengthen and promote the existing character of the town.

This section identifies a framework plan for each area, including a brief introduction to the site, identification of key opportunities and constraints which have helped to inform a series of key principles and uses that the site should deliver. An artist's impression and illustrative sketch help to illustrate the vision and spatial principles for the area.

Guidance is proposed for the following geographical areas, focused around key sites allocated in the Draft District Plan:

- Old River Lane
- Mill site and central riverside
- Station and southern riverside

The proposals for each site includes an existing site plan which highlights key constraints such as flood zones and listed buildings which could be affected by proposals.

The opportunities plan identifies the key urban design principles for the site including key routes, public spaces and frontages. The illustrative sketch suggests specific uses. However, the underlying street and block form follows the historic grain of the town. This is adaptable over time and so can accommodate a range of alternative uses. The process of finalising the Draft District Plan will assist in defining and designating preferred uses.

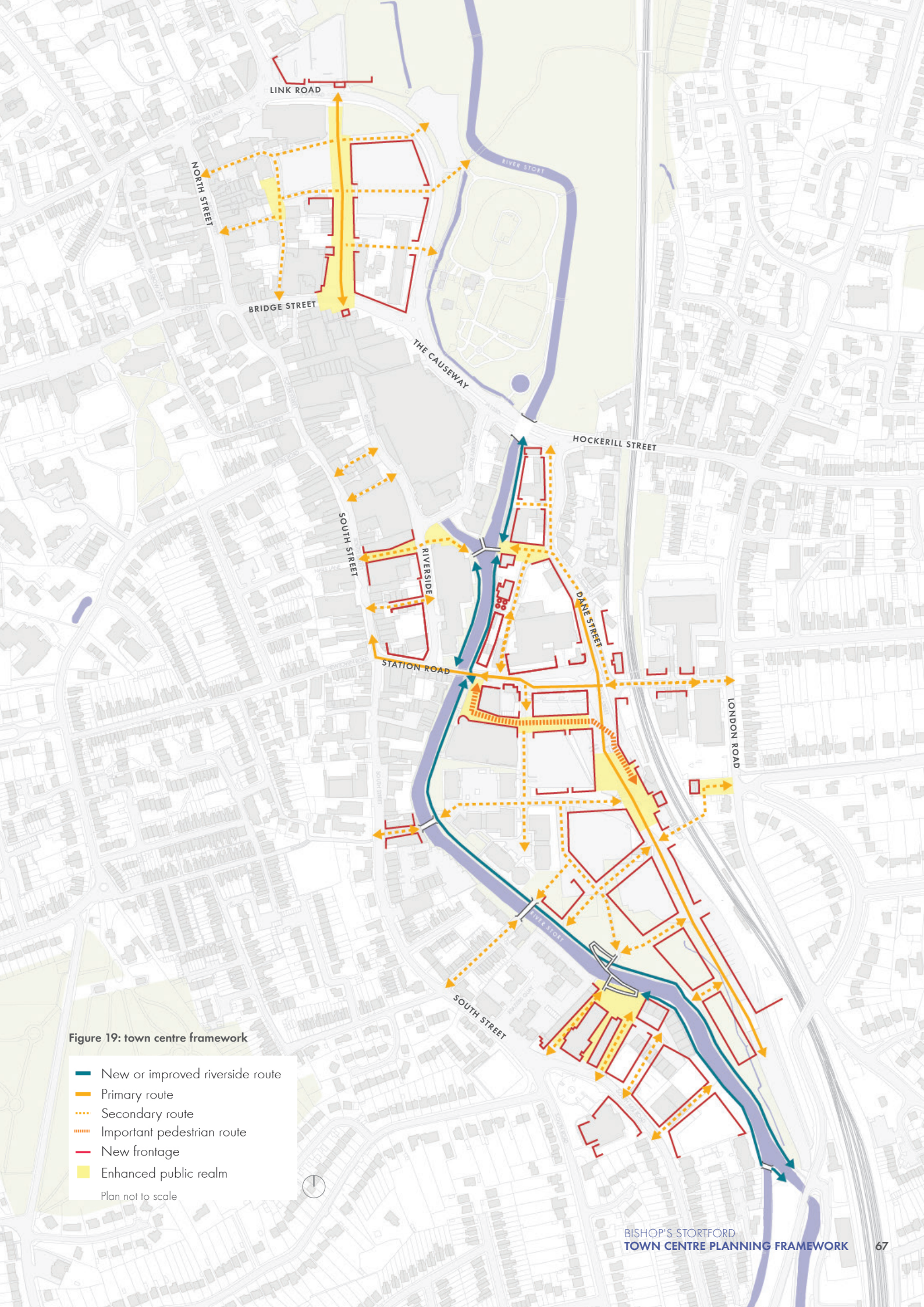
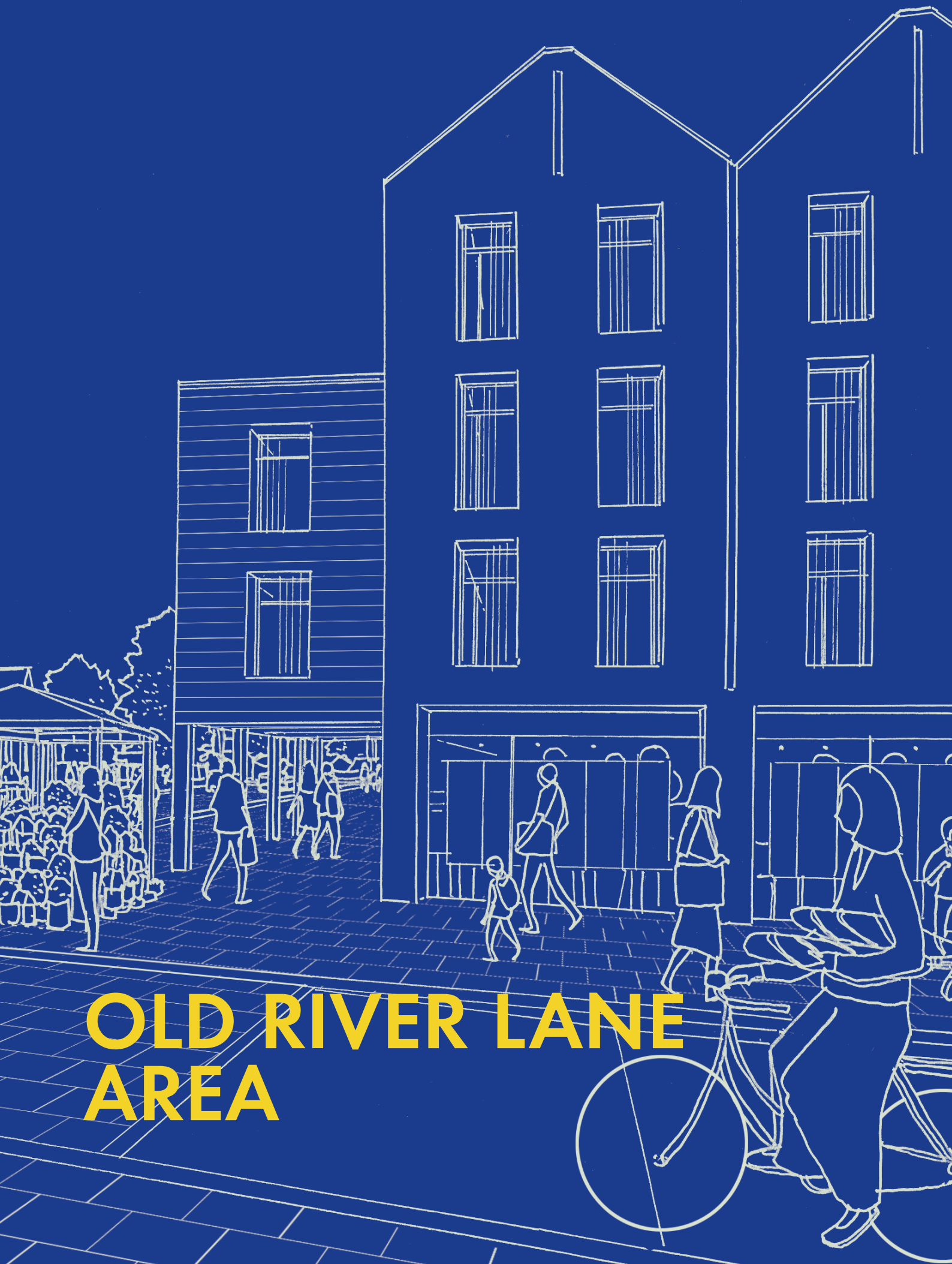


Figure 19: town centre framework

- New or improved riverside route
  - Primary route
  - ⋯ Secondary route
  - Important pedestrian route
  - New frontage
  - Enhanced public realm
- Plan not to scale

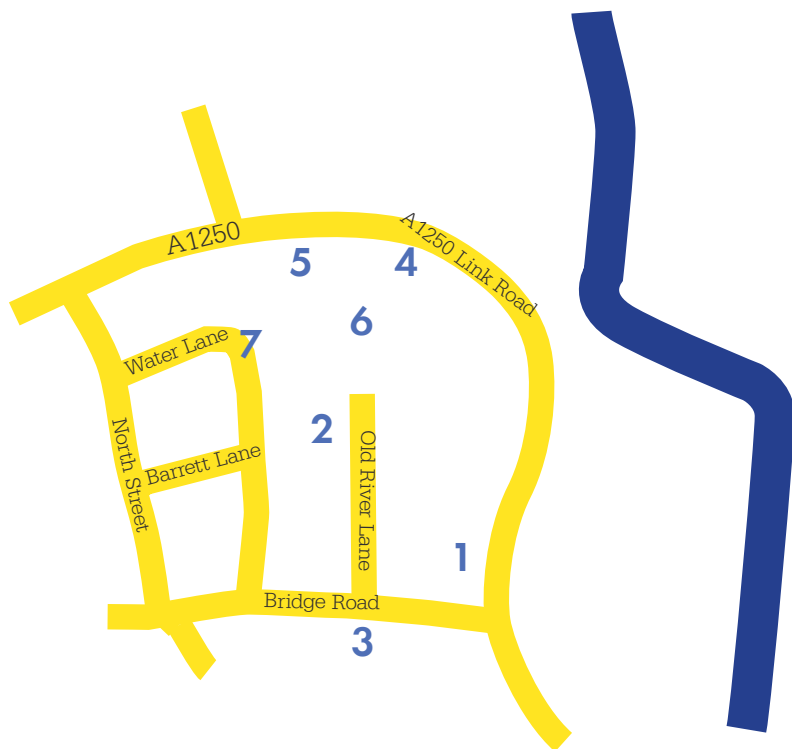


06



# OLD RIVER LANE AREA

## 6.1 CONTEXT



The Old River Lane area is located between North Street, Bridge Street and Link Road and represents a major opportunity to reconfigure the retail, community and leisure provision in the town centre. The site is allocated in the Draft East Herts District Plan.

The area has always been on the edge of the historic town centre, used for farming, part of the area as a cattle market and as service areas and car parking during the town's history. A series of historic lanes connects the area to North Street as well as Florence Walk - a small shopping centre housing a series of independent shops and cafes.

The western edge of the site needs to be carefully considered given the many listed and locally listed buildings in this area including the United Reformed Church and Coopers historic malt house building.

The site includes Waitrose and its existing car parking and the two large red brick office buildings on Bridge Street. The rest of the site is a Council owned and managed surface car park.

This framework has taken in the edge of Castle Gardens and the car parks to the north of Link Road in order to better consider the connections across to the park. Link Road itself is currently a low quality part of the town centre, a dual-carriageway that has limited pedestrian crossing points and has limited built frontage which encourages cars to travel faster. On the east side of Link Road sits Castle Gardens and views to the mound are visible from within the site.



3  
View up Bridge Street



1  
East Herts Council building



2  
United Reformed Church Hall



4  
Triangular open space by car park



5  
Waitrose



6  
Waitrose car park and castle mound



7  
View to United Reformed Church

## 6.2 CONSTRAINTS

A series of constraints have been identified for the site including:

- A small part of the north-eastern edge of the site is within flood zone 3. Most of the site is within flood zone 2.
- The site has a very attractive historic edge with a prevailing height of one to three storeys.
- Views from within the site to St Michael's Church and the Castle Mound and open green spaces should be retained and enhanced.
- Waitrose own a lease on the portion of car parking to the south of their store, limiting the development potential of this part of the site.
- The sweeping shape of Link Road presents a low quality environment.
- The triangle of trees and green space towards the northern edge of the site should be protected.

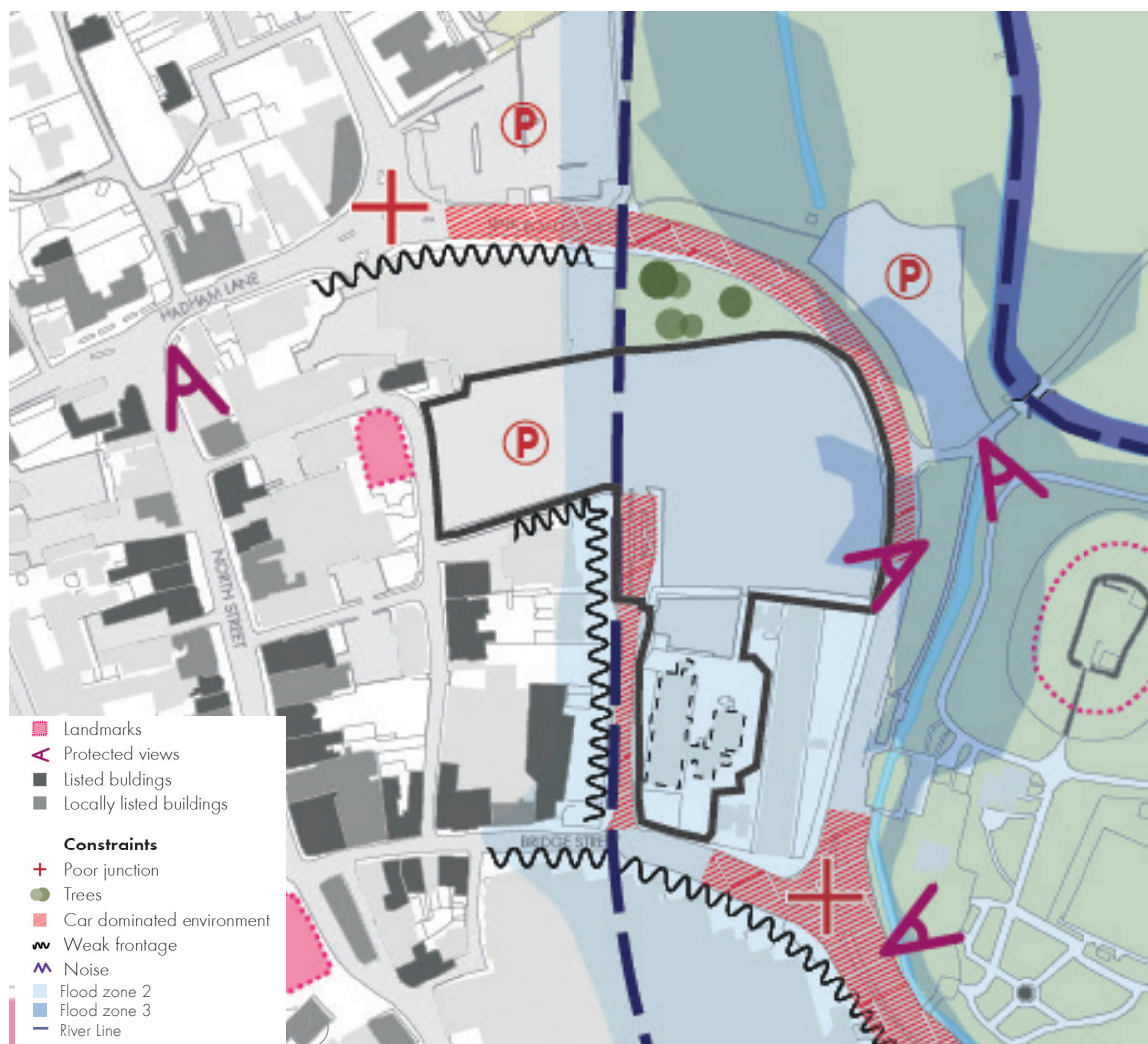


Figure 20: Old River Lane constraints (indicative only)



## 6.3 OPPORTUNITIES

The following framework plan illustrates a set of key opportunities for Old River Lane:

- Extend the retail heart of the town centre and connect the site to North Street via a series of links that reflect the historic character of the existing lanes.
- Centre new development along a pedestrian-focused north/south route from Bridge Street to a new multi-storey car park to the north of Waitrose. The car park should be carefully designed to take account of the adjacent locally listed former school.
- Promote a design that respects and enhances the historic grain, material palette and massing of the town centre and key assets such as the United Reformed Church, Coopers building, listed and locally listed buildings and views to St Michael's Church. Views to St Michael's Church from Castle Gardens will be an important consideration in the design of building heights and massing.
- Strengthen pedestrian connections from the town centre to Castle Gardens.
- Deliver new high quality public spaces within the development. Consider the use of water features in the design of the new spaces to reference the former route of the Stort.
- Reduce vehicular movement through the site while increasing car parking in the area.

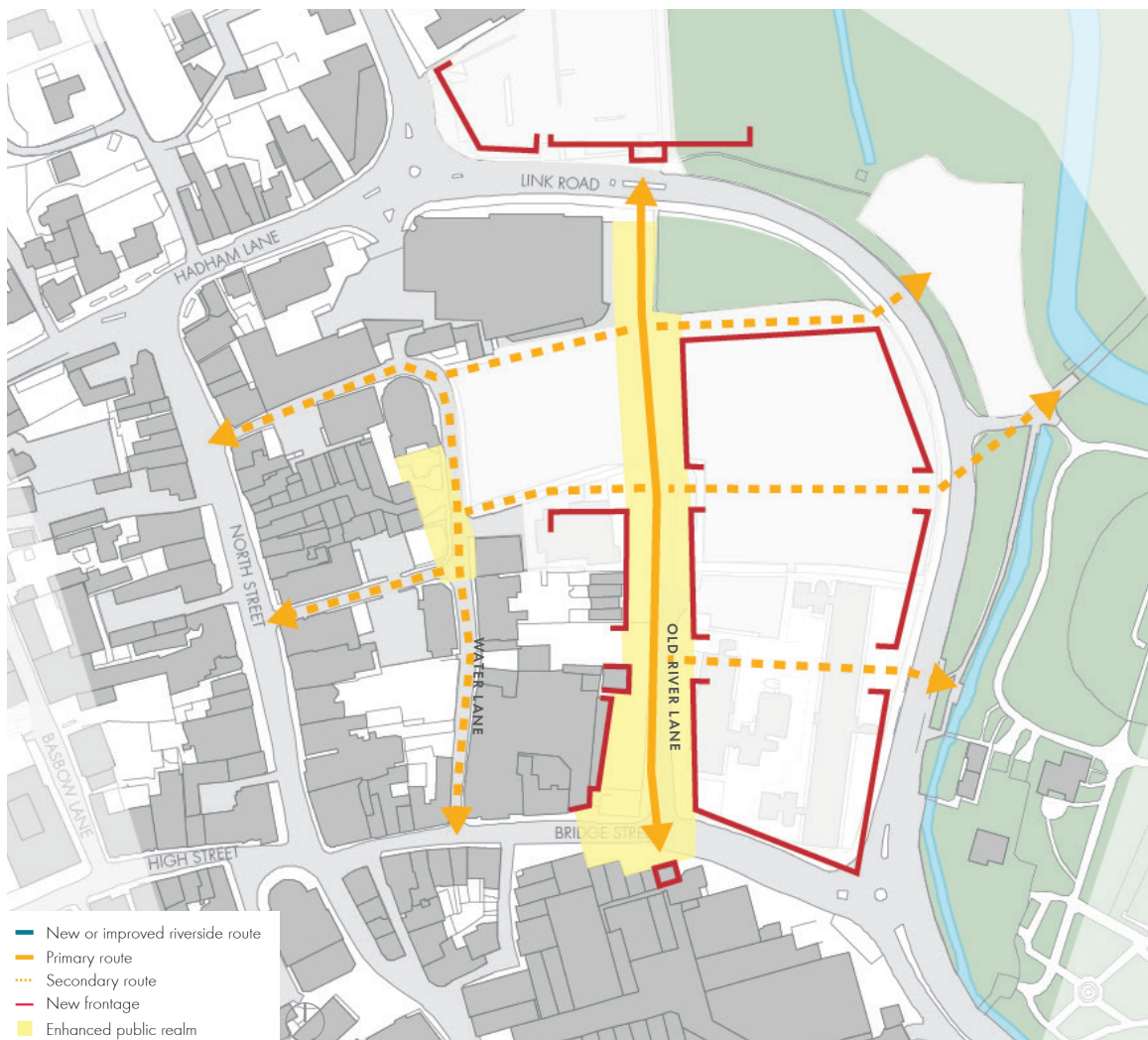


Figure 21: Old River Lane opportunities (indicative only)



Existing view



Figure 22: Old River Lane  
artist's impression

The carriageway space has been reduced in order to widen pavements for pedestrians. Only a small service route is proposed into Old River Lane from Bridge Street, with vehicles now accessing the site from the north.

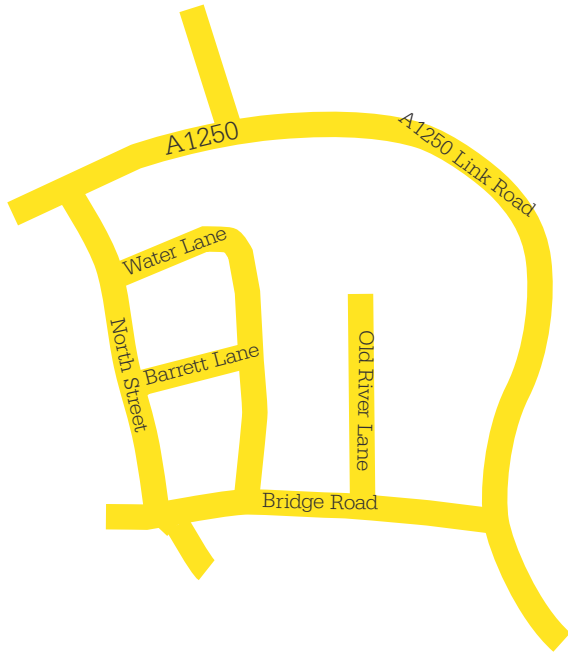
The space outside Coopers is made more attractive, integrating it into the street scene with the potential for seating or cafe space



New retail, leisure or community spaces on the ground floors of new buildings with new homes above

New development replacing the existing office buildings reflecting the style and grain of existing buildings

## 6.4 KEY PRINCIPLES



The illustrative plans for the Old River Lane area show how the proposed pattern of streets and blocks can translate into buildings. These can accommodate a range of uses and it is expected that the Old River Lane frontage will have new shops, restaurants, community uses and other businesses. The rest of the buildings are likely to include a mix of residential development and office space.

As some or all of the existing Council car parks will be built on, new replacement parking is

proposed. Option 1 proposes this to the north of the Link Road, in a new multi-storey car park accessed directly from Link Road. The relationship between the Northgate Youth Centre and any new Multi-storey car park must be carefully designed so any impact is mitigated on this building that makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. Alternatively, car parking could be accommodated within one of the new blocks in Old River Lane, east of Waitrose (shown as option 2 on the plan on p77).

The more attractive character of the road presents an opportunity for Coopers to re-plan their existing outdoor retail space, integrating it into the street scene alongside the attractive building. There is also space for potential public service or community uses on the western side of Old River Lane on the site of the existing United Reformed Church Hall.

The plans are designed to allow for the development to be phased, allowing early elements to be built whilst the existing Charringtons House Offices remain open.



Figure 23 - Option A illustrates the ground floor plan of the development, showing large retail units along Old River Lane with new homes in the blocks towards Castle Gardens



Figure 24 - Option B shows a less comprehensive redevelopment option, with the Water Lane Church Hall retained. One of the larger blocks to the north could come forward as part of a later development phase.

Figure 25 - Option A roof plan shows the redeveloped Old River Lane area with a new multi-storey car park and shops linking to North Street



## 6.5 TRANSPORT PROPOSALS



A variety of network and street changes are proposed to the Old River Lane area in order to reduce the effects of traffic and increase the quality of the public realm and townscape in the core town centre area. The greatest change to traffic flows will result from the proposed ban of motorised vehicle movements along South Street/Potter Street during daytime hours. The proposed multi storey car park to the north of Link Road would also remove traffic from the town centre.

The network changes would be supported by a variety of modifications to existing streets and junctions, as well as the creation of new junctions and streets. It is proposed to create a new signal controlled junction on Link Road, serving the new multi storey car park and facilitating pedestrian and cycle crossing movements at a point which currently experiences severance due to the lack of crossing facilities. The signal controlled junction would also create a new link to the Old River Lane area, enhancing the north-south route which once formed a tributary of the River Stort. There is also the potential for an east-west axis from Water Lane (from Old River Lane as a minimum) to Link Road which would aid internal cyclist and pedestrian permeability.

Improvements to pedestrian crossing movements are also proposed at the mini roundabout junction of Link Road and Northgate End, as well as at the Link Road car park access. The improvements at the car park access would be complemented by a new shared space street on the current desire line eastwards from Old

River Lane towards Castle Gardens and the Stort Valley.

Junction improvements are proposed at three further locations to signify the core town area and reduce the emphasis from motorised vehicles towards pedestrians and cyclists - Hadham Road / North Street; Link Road / Bridge Street; and Bridge Street / Old River Lane. These junction improvements could be in the form of 'walkable roundel junctions' which are a form of low speed mini roundabout marked informally with materials as opposed to road markings. The junction should be designed to maximise walkability, with high quality pedestrian courtesy crossings on the approach to each arm. All or some of the junction and crossing may be tabled to allow a flush or low profile kerb.

Finally, streetscape improvements are proposed along Bridge Street and Old River Lane. These improvements include footway widening through carriageway reduction, and associated landscaping and public realm works. This is achievable as the importance of Bridge Street and Old River Lane as links will be reduced through the access works on Link Road.



Public realm in Preston using materials as opposed to road markings to designate junctions

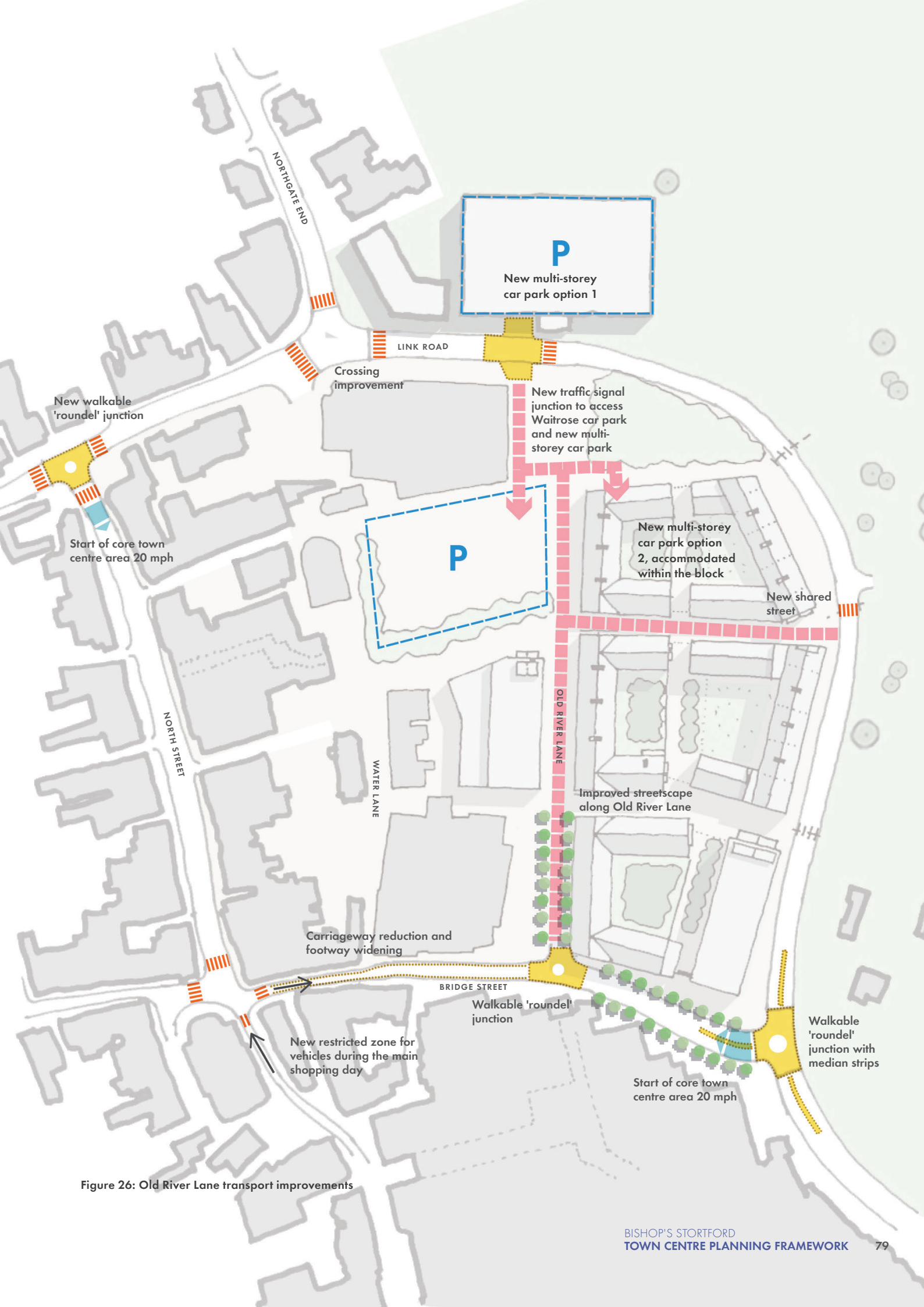
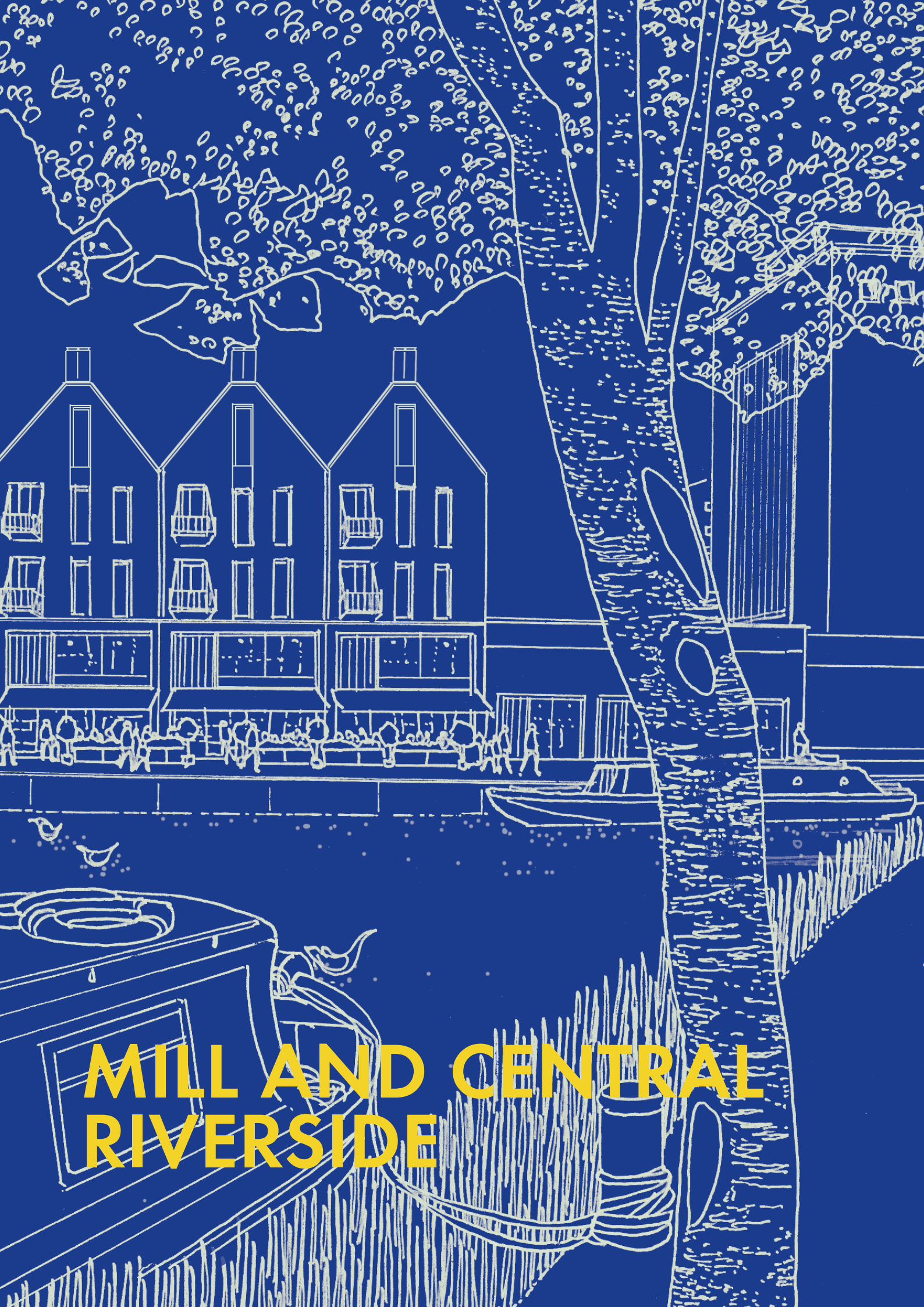


Figure 26: Old River Lane transport improvements



07





# MILL AND CENTRAL RIVERSIDE

## 7.1 CONTEXT



This area of the town centre presents a major opportunity to strengthen the town's relationship with the River Stort and improve the pedestrian permeability in the town centre. The site area includes the portion of land on the eastern bank of the river between the Registry office and Bridge Street. This includes Allinsons flour mill. This area is allocated in the Draft East Herts District Plan.

This part of the town centre currently has a low level of footfall and presents poor frontage to the edge of the River Stort with fencing or blank walls. Although the Mill buildings have been established on this site for a long time, the current facility, although industrial in nature has interesting grain towers which dominate the views along the river. Dane Street has a poor quality environment, given the fast flowing traffic around the one-way system. There are a number of vacant listed and locally listed buildings along this frontage which should be enhanced and brought back into use.

Proposals for this area will also focus on the western bank of the river and connections through to South Street. Riverside and Adderley Road currently have a poor quality context due to the service yard environment and bulk of new development. Some of the shop and cafe units adjacent to the river are struggling due to the lack of connection to the main high street.



1 Flour Mill from Dane Street



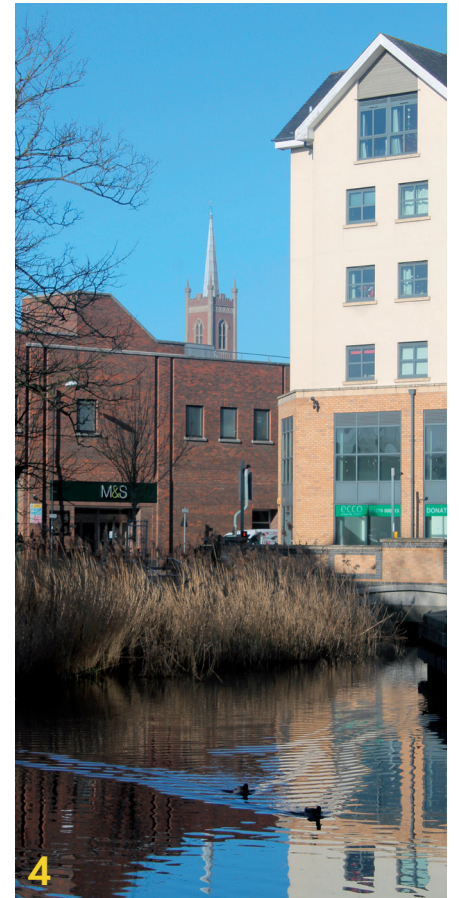
2 Dane St corner



5 View south along Dane Street



3 Allinson Flour Mill



4 View to west bank of the river



6 View from the Causeway (bridge)



7 The Fountain bar

## 7.2 CONSTRAINTS

A series of constraints have been identified for the site including:

- The sites numbered 1 on the plan are narrow and both sites 1 and 2 have difficult vehicular access.
- The barrier of Jackson Square and limited connections from South Street result in low footfall. Dane Street also has a poor quality pedestrian environment.
- There is limited pedestrian permeability through the area. The river and railway line have constrained east/west connections.
- The Allinsons Mill is operational and an important local employer. However, the town centre may not be the most appropriate location for such a use in the longer term. A phased development of this site may be appropriate.



Figure 27: Mill and central riverside constraints (indicative only)

## 7.3 OPPORTUNITIES

The following framework plan illustrates a set of key opportunities for the Mill and central riverside;

- The opportunity to open up the riverside and promote development that reflects the riverside character, taking references from maltings and warehouse buildings.
- A new pedestrian crossing and connection to Dane Street from South Street through new public spaces on both banks of the river.
- A widened tow-path with the potential to be used as a cycle route.
- Options for the mill including supporting the mill in the town centre while exploring opportunities for a more active town centre facing element including food related retail which could extend to concepts such as a flour shop or baking school.
- Delivering enhanced mooring provision and boating facilities.
- Improving and enhance the setting of historic and listed buildings such as the Registry Office and other fragments along Dane Street.

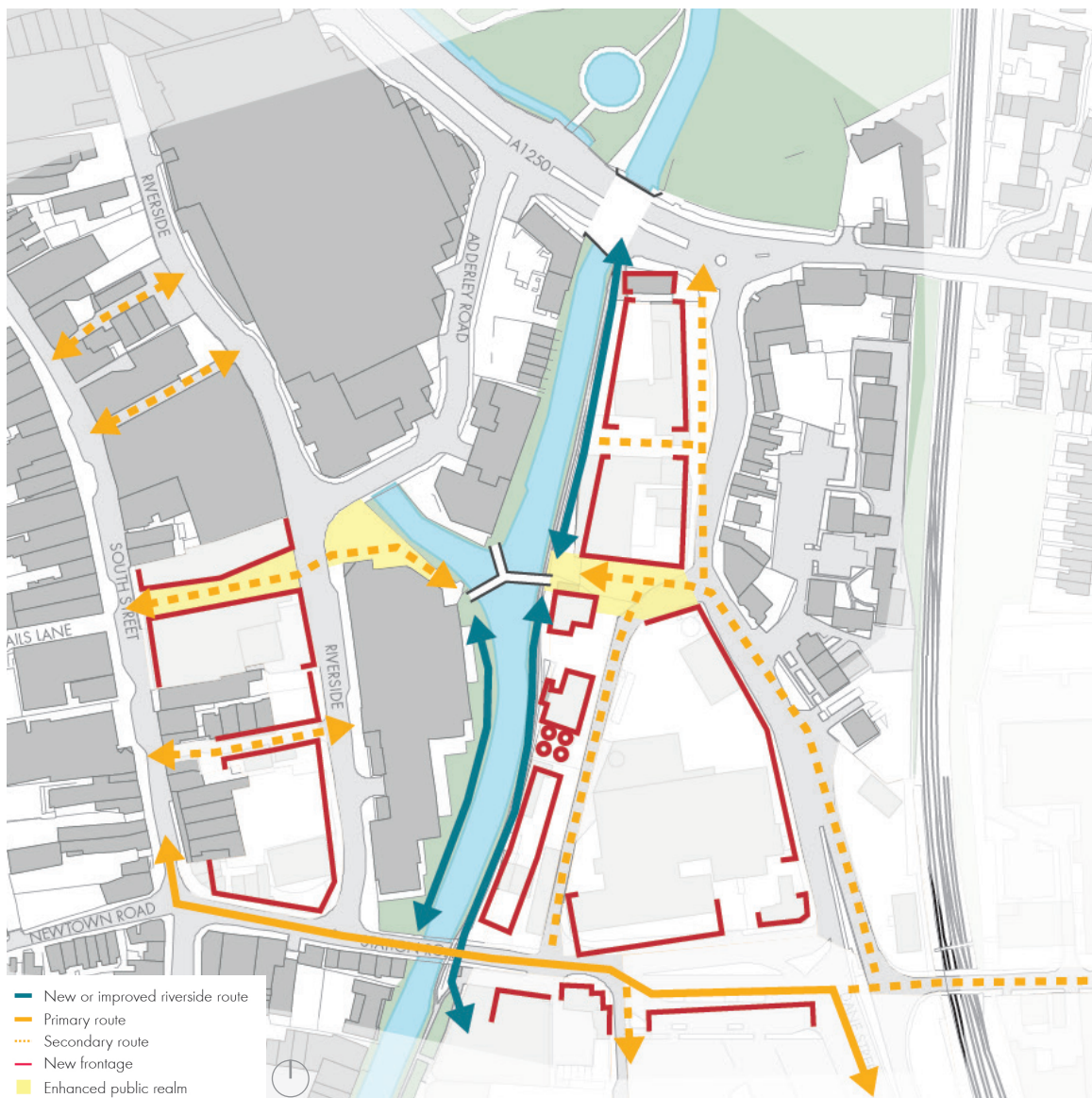


Figure 28: Mill and central riverside opportunities (indicative only)



Figure 29: Mill and central riverside artist's impression

A new pedestrian bridge linking Adderley Road to Dane Street

New development along the riverside with retail or leisure uses at ground floor, adding to the existing cluster of bars and cafes on the west bank of the River Stort



The mill is retained but public-facing uses should be incorporated such as a baking school or flour shop

Seek opportunities to open up the riverside path on the western bank

## 7.4 KEY PRINCIPLES



The Mill site offers the opportunity to transform the eastern side of the river with extensive elements of new development. The proposed street pattern builds on the existing streets, ensuring that Allinsons Mill can either remain in situ (option A) or be redeveloped (option B) whilst retaining the integrity of the plan. The overall site has the potential to provide ground floor mixed uses, residential and office space. Opportunities should be explored for a more active town centre facing element including food related retail which could extend to concepts such as a flour shop, baking school or microbrewery to encourage creative businesses and tourism in the town centre.

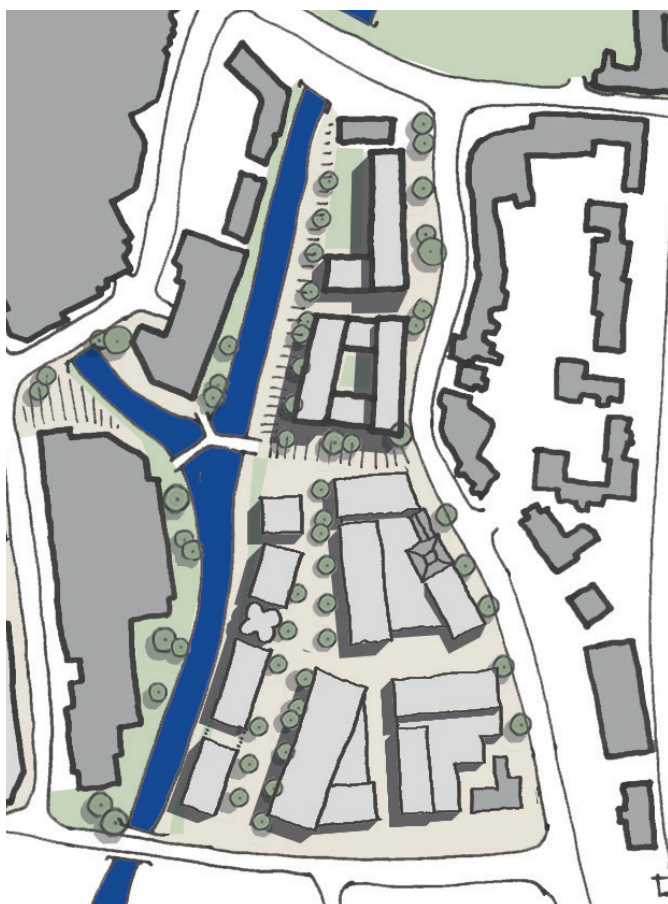


Figure 30 - Option B shows the Mill site redeveloped

A further big part of the opportunity for the area is to better connect the southern part of the town centre to the river-side and on to the station. The recent development on the western bank of the Stort creates a potential connection which could be completed if other links are improved. The redevelopment of the Poundland site would open up a new link and public space, whilst the proposals to re-plan the traffic flows around the town centre will help to reduce the barrier of Riverside, helping to link through to a new bridge. Alternative staff car parking and storage would need to be identified for Allinsons in order to maintain operational efficiency and to allow the aspiration for this part of the site to be redeveloped to deliver this new connection to the station.

The historical industrial riverside context establishes particular character traits which new development should seek to reflect. This allows for forms and rooflines that reflect the traditional wharf and mill heritage in the area, suggesting a particularly strong relationship with the waterfront. Historic buildings along Dane Street will also be enhanced and refurbished, with their setting improved by new development and public realm proposals.



Figure 31 - Option A shows the Mill retained as a working employment site in the town centre, but with a public facing bakery or cookery school.



Location of historic timber yard crane

New homes with some retail, restaurant or leisure space

Proposed retail or restaurant with homes above

The Allinsons Mill

## 7.4 TRANSPORT PROPOSALS

In order to reduce the impact of traffic along The Causeway and Hockerill Street, whilst noting that these streets will continue to form the key vehicular route in the town centre, it is proposed to carry out link improvements with complementary works to junctions.

The improvements will typically provide central medians, along the wider sections of carriageway, which can be planted with trees or other forms of landscaping. The medians will also assist with informal pedestrian crossing movements, however formal crossings will be provided due to the traffic volumes along these routes.

To signify the start of the core town centre area, it is proposed to convert the junction of The Causeway and Dane Street to a walkable roundel which will reduce traffic speeds and aid crossing movements, including connecting Dane Street to a new cycle link via Sworder's Field towards the north. At the Hockerill Cross junction, formal pedestrian crossings will be installed, which could be accompanied by the banning of certain turning movements in order to reduce delay to traffic.



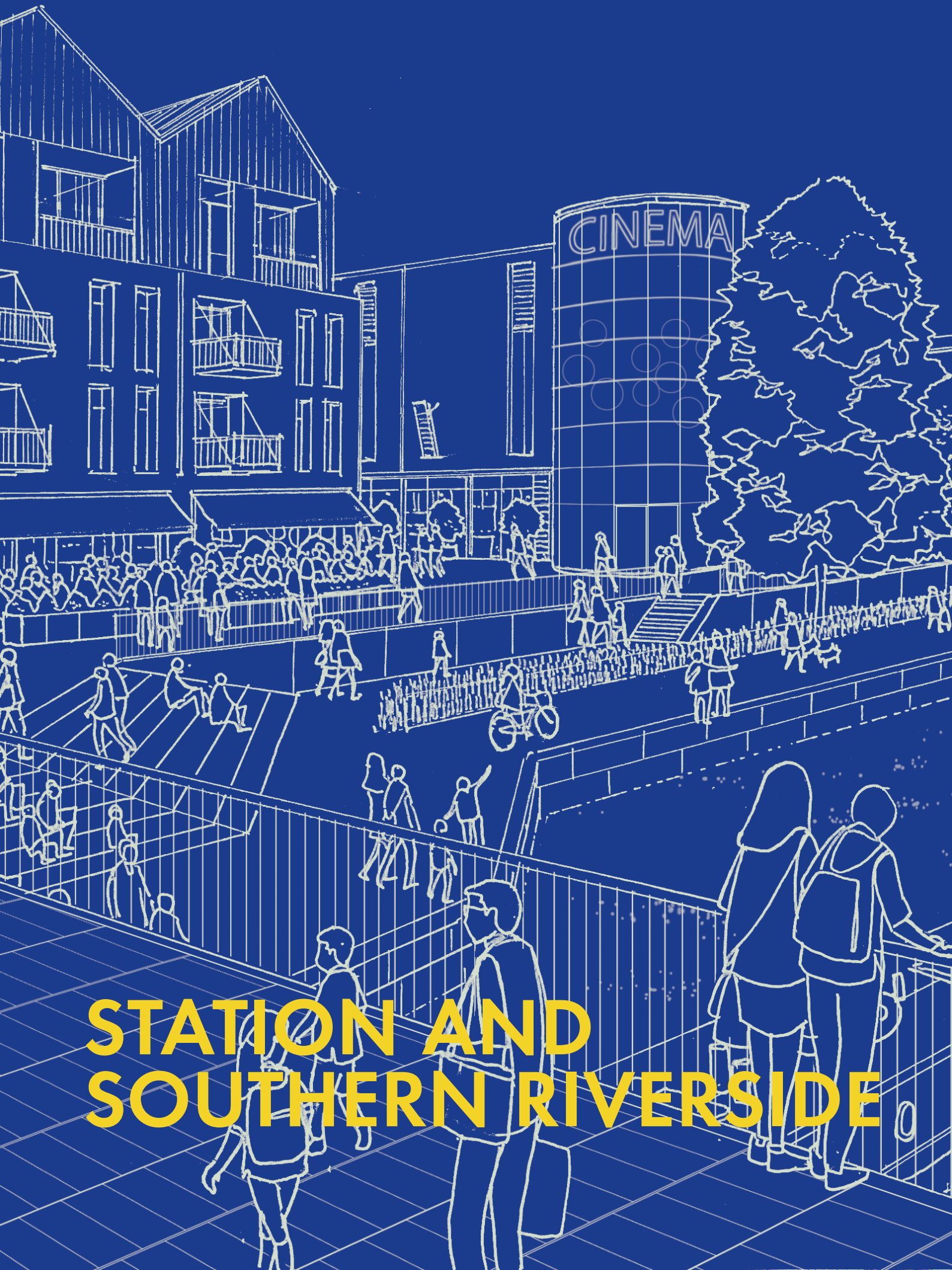
Figure 31: Mill and central riverside transport improvements

-  Junction improvements
-  New crossing
-  New shared street
-  New pedestrian/cycle route
-  One way street
-  Start of 20mph zone
-  Planting and improved streetscape
-  Car parks



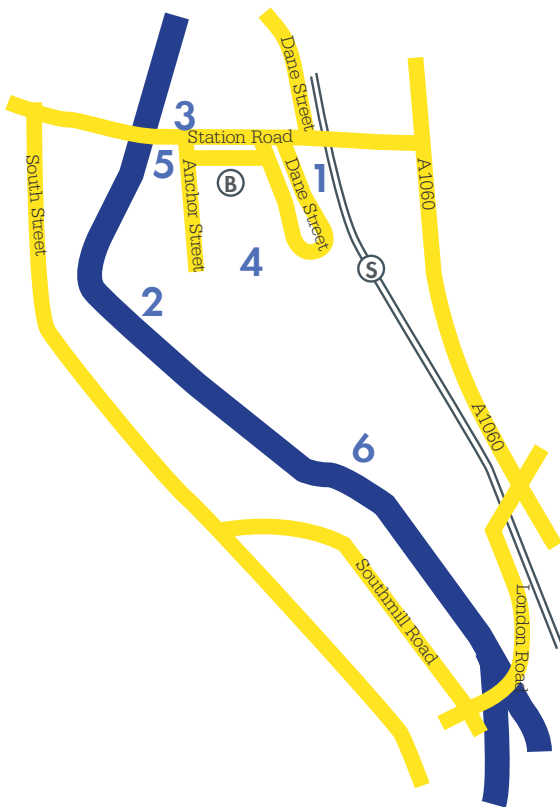


08



# STATION AND SOUTHERN RIVERSIDE

## 8.1 CONTEXT



The Goods Yard site occupies a strategic position between the train station and the town centre and currently presents a very poor arrival experience for the gateway to Bishop's Stortford. A sea of surface level car parking greets visitors to the town with a convoluted and complicated walking route across a taxi rank, pick-up area and bus station to the town centre. This area next to the train station is allocated in the Draft East Herts District Plan.

This site presents a major opportunity to improve the arrival experience in the town centre, enhance a large portion of the riverside and bring vibrancy and activity into this important, but neglected part of Bishop's Stortford.

The existing pedestrian route from the station to the main high street is an important area for improvement, across the narrow Station Road

Bridge. The Empire Cinema and Anchor Street Leisure Centre are low quality structures that present inactive frontage to the riverside.

South Street runs parallel with the River Stort but on the western bank. The Rhodes Arts Centre is located towards the southern end of the study area, at the junction with Southmill Road. A pedestrianised bridge helps to connect this area towards the train station.



1 View outside train station towards the Mill



2 View from station car park



3 Station Road



4 Station car park



5 The Rose & Crown



6 View from the bridge

## 8.2 CONSTRAINTS

A series of constraints have been identified about the site including:

- The railway edge forms a noise barrier and impermeable edge along the eastern side of the site.
- The site is difficult to access due a series of constrained junctions and level changes to the east.
- The operational Mill presents a blank wall to the north of the area.
- The existing buildings are of mixed quality with some larger and low quality shed structures.
- There is relatively low environmental quality along South Street and a lack of connectivity over the river.

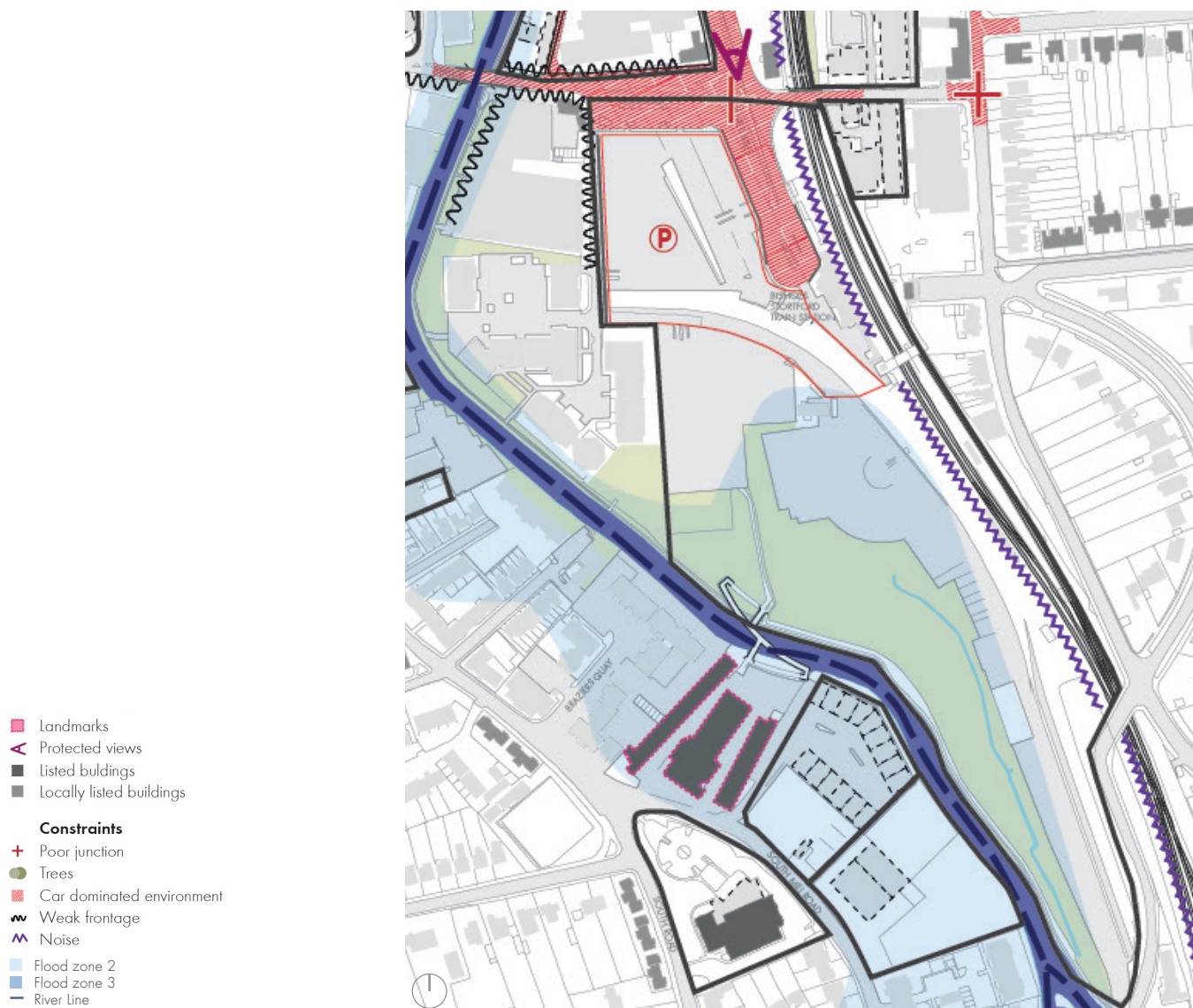


Figure 32: station and southern riverside constraints (indicative only)



## 8.3 OPPORTUNITIES

The following framework plan illustrates a set of key opportunities for the station area and southern riverside:

- Improve the arrival experience and create a legible arrival experience by designing a clear pedestrian route into the town centre.
- Remodel the Anchor Street Leisure Park and improve the riverside frontage and connection to the station.
- Reduce congestion issues in the wider town centre with a new road link through the site connecting to London Road.
- Improve connections to the east of railway line for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Strengthen pedestrian connections across the river with new and better crossing points, linking to an improved pedestrian environment on South Street.
- Create a cluster of employment uses at the northern end of the site.
- New car parking is needed to serve the town centre as well the train station.

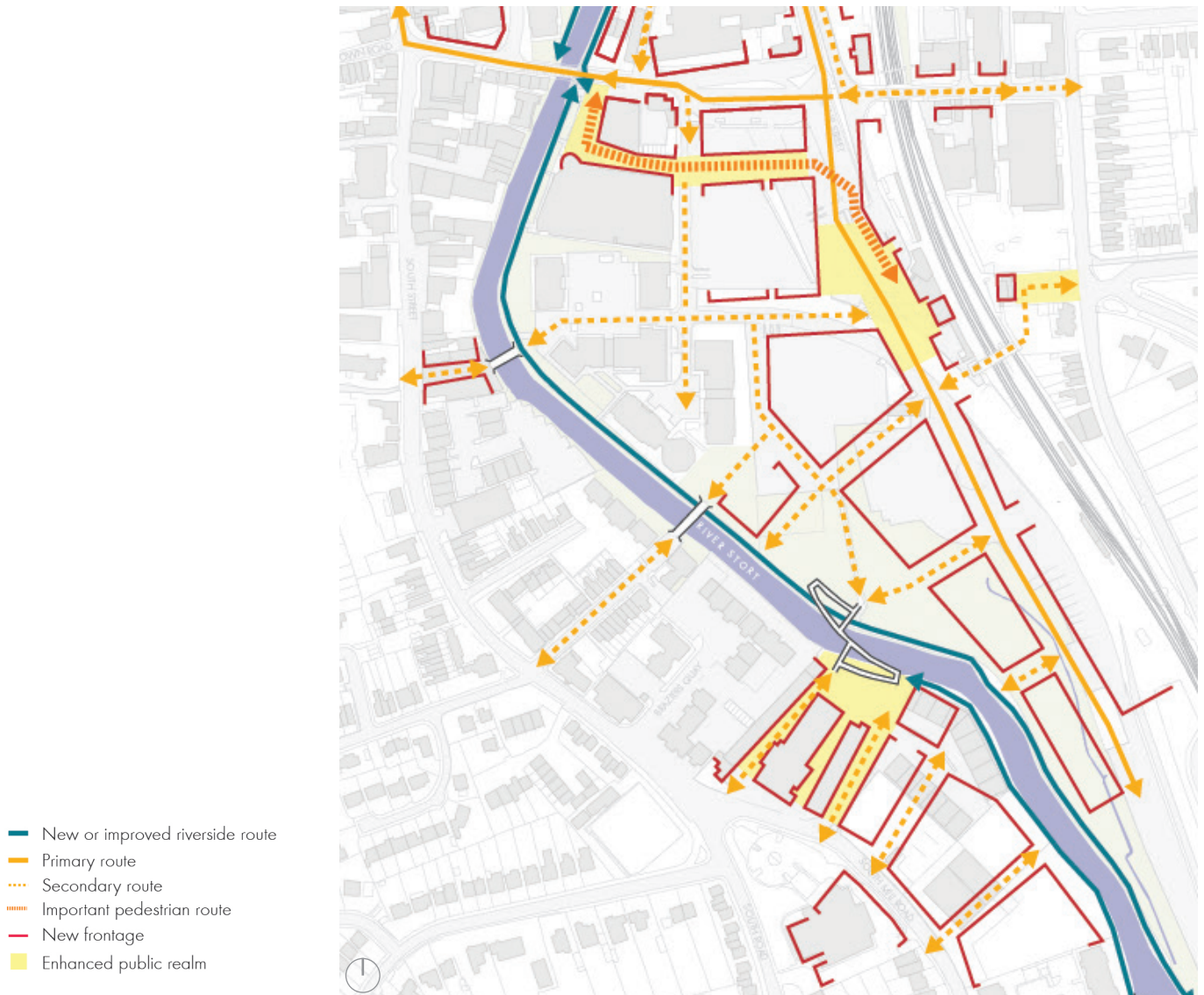


Figure 33: station and southern riverside opportunities (indicative only)



Existing view

Figure 33: station and southern riverside artist's impression

A widened area for pedestrians along Bridge Street that also provides direct access to the riverside and route to the station

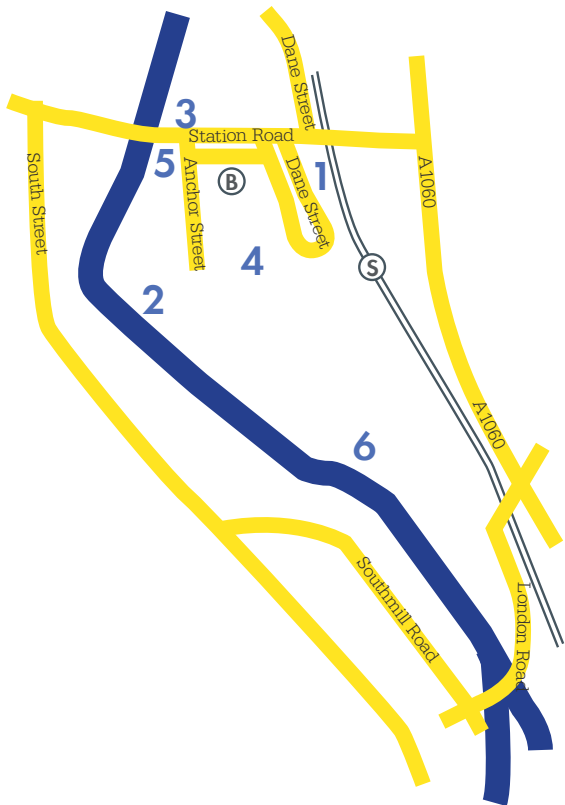
New development along the riverside with restaurants at ground floor with leisure and residential above



The riverside is easily accessible via a cascade of steps leading down to a wide towpath along the Stort

The front of the cinema is remodelled to form a new entrance on the riverside

## 8.4 KEY PRINCIPLES



The station and southern riverside area represents an unusually large area for such a central location in an historic town and the opportunity to introduce a new urban structure. This in turn means that there is the potential to look at the town-wide opportunity this could present to re-plan transport connections at a wider scale – a unique opportunity.

The proposed approach establishes a strong, legible spine through the development, potentially allowing a north-south vehicle route, either for buses and cycles or for all vehicles as part of a wider re-planning of traffic movement. This gives the station a more legible street frontage and allows for wider improvements in station accessibility. Re-provision of the station car parking is indicated in multi-storey car parks in two locations, including backing onto the railway tracks to screen the new development and a short-stay car park to serve the town centre adjacent to Anchor Street. New riverside development is focused on improving public access to the riverside, maximising use of the towpath and improving linkages around the southern part of the town.



The proposed block structure is designed to be flexible, with the expectation that offices, hotels and other commercial uses can be delivered around the station with residential development closer to the river frontages. The proposed new routes also create improved connections through to the town centre and to the southern riverside area and the bridge. At Southmill a new area of activity is created through the redevelopment of the Southmill Trading Estate for new employment space, homes and leisure uses and the enhancement of public realm around the historic malthouses.

South Street will be enhanced as a walking and cycling route and new sites will improve the quality of the street, improving the consistency of the public realm and built quality. Future redevelopment sites include the Post Office which could provide a site for new homes in the town centre. If the site is redeveloped, the post office use should be retained in the town centre.

Figure 34 - Option B shows the Rhodes centre retained

Figure 35 - Option A shows the redevelopment of the Goods Yards area for mixed use development. This sketch shows the Rhodes Centre redeveloped for residential use and a new theatre space elsewhere in the town centre



## 8.5 TRANSPORT PROPOSALS



A significant change to traffic movements in Bishop's Stortford would occur with the creation of a new north-south link road through the Goods Yard site, connecting to Dane Street and the B1383 London Road. This new piece of highway has the potential to relieve the Hockerill Cross junction, a focus for congestion and pedestrian/cycle severance. A new highway connection may also offer scope to reduce traffic movements along Potter Street in the very core of the historic town centre. Notwithstanding this, a variety of other improvements are proposed, which are not dependent on the new link road.

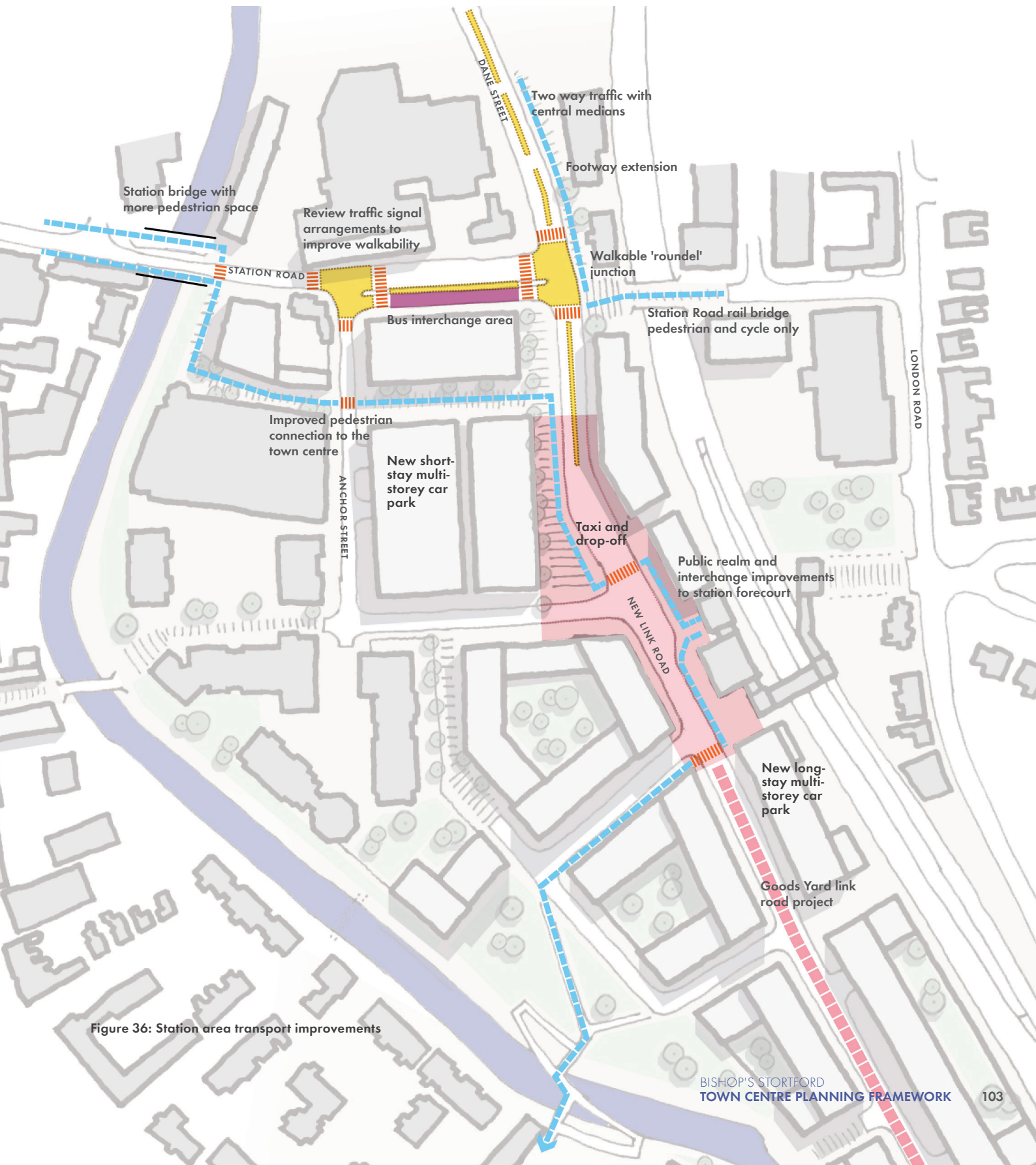
Dane Street would operate two-way with the new link road in place, to connect The Causeway to London Road via the station forecourt. Much of Dane Street has sufficient space to create wider footways with separate cycle tracks or lanes. This will help reduce the dominance of motor traffic in this part of the town centre, and improve links between the station and the north of the town centre on foot and by cycle.

A review of the overall junction arrangement between Dane Street and Station Road will be undertaken, accounting for the level differences as a result of the railway bridge. The formation of the new link road could allow the eastern

portion of Station Road, which crosses the railway line, to be downgraded to a pedestrian and cycle only link in order to provide a high quality access between the town centre and the residential areas to the east.

The railway station forecourt will be redesigned to provide a higher quality public realm and more convenient interchange with other modes of travel. In particular, walking routes towards the town centre and bus interchange will be improved. Bus stops will be accommodated on-street and taxi and drop-off bays will be incorporated into the design of the street outside the station.

Towards the west, the existing junction of Station Road and Anchor Street must be reviewed in order to improve pedestrian crossings over the River Stort. A new footbridge or widened pavements across the river is proposed in order to improve the pedestrian and cycling route into the town centre via South Street. The existing bridge over the river is an historic structure which is constrained in width. An extension of this bridge or widening of the pavements would improve this important route to the train station and access to the path along the riverside.



Station bridge with more pedestrian space

Review traffic signal arrangements to improve walkability

Two way traffic with central medians

Footway extension

Walkable 'roundel' junction

STATION ROAD

Bus interchange area

Station Road rail bridge pedestrian and cycle only

Improved pedestrian connection to the town centre

New short-stay multi-storey car park

ANCHOR STREET

Taxi and drop-off

Public realm and interchange improvements to station forecourt

NEW LINK ROAD

New long-stay multi-storey car park

Goods Yard link road project

LONDON ROAD

Figure 36: Station area transport improvements

09





# DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION



## 9.0 DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of the Town Centre Planning Framework is to help inform the long-term direction of Bishop's Stortford town centre. The Framework identifies a number of specific development sites where there is scope to make better use of under-utilised areas and how these can be embedded within the structure of the town to strengthen its existing character and commercial role.

These illustrative schemes provide ideas and options for how the development potential of these sites might be maximised, but also have regard to the eight over-arching themes that have been identified to help deliver the vision for an improved Bishop's Stortford town centre more widely.

A number of factors will be relevant to future delivery and implementation as set out below.

### 1. Planning policy framework

The Council is in the process of preparing a new District Plan for the period to 2031, with consultation on Preferred Options taking place in 2014 and progression towards Examination stage expected in 2016.

The new District Plan should seek to embody the principles set out in this Framework as far as practicable, in particular the proposals for the opportunity sites. When adopted this Planning Framework will provide guidance in determining planning applications, but it is not intended to

be prescriptive. It provides an important part of the evidence base for the new District Plan and therefore site owners and developers should have regard to it when promoting proposals.

For some sites, particularly those in multiple ownerships or requiring phasing of a number of elements, development briefs should be prepared to provide more detailed guidance to complement District Plan policies once adopted. In particular a masterplan for the Old River Lane area, a key Council owned site, setting out how the vision for the site outlined in this planning framework should be progressed. This document will set out more detail in terms of land use, phasing, car park provision and delivery. The future preparation of these development briefs should be signposted within the new District Plan.

The Bishop's Stortford Town Council is also undertaking neighbourhood planning work. A Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads wards in the northern part of the town centre was prepared in 2015, and a Neighbourhood Plan is now in draft form for All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley Parish which incorporates the southern part of the town centre. Meetings with the Town Council and Neighbourhood Plan team have enabled, as far as practicable, the strategic ambitions for the town centre set out within this document to be aligned with the emerging Neighbourhood Plans.

## 2. Viability considerations

The deliverability of new development is partly influenced by its viability which demonstrates the profitability of a scheme on a commercial developer basis. Viability is determined by a number of factors including the mix of uses, market conditions (current and expectation of future movements), location, design and development yield, planning policy and associated obligations.

A broad viability analysis has been undertaken of the proposal schemes having regard to benchmark values obtained from the Valuation Office Agency and standard assumptions about demolition and build costs. These indicate that under current market conditions, and in common with many other locations, a buoyant residential market is a key viability driver for mixed use development. Commercial values in Bishop's Stortford are relatively lower, but ground floor retail values are also viable in prime locations. Furthermore, there can be an expectation of future growth in values if higher quality retail and office accommodation can be brought forward that is more in line with market requirements. This will improve the viability position of individual developments when profiled over a longer return period.

Cross-subsidy between uses may be required to assist with delivery of less viable elements, particularly in earlier phases of development, alongside other types of intervention such as

flexibility on policy requirements and obligations where these can be justified. Gradual market improvement arising from completion of earlier schemes which could have a catalytic effect on the town centre, should assist in improving viability to a level where development is profitable and deliverable over a 10 year timeframe. The Council could also investigate some public funding sources to help with gap funding or on a loan basis to assist with the costs of associated infrastructure needs (e.g. transport and public realm improvements) or to support particular catalytic developments that may have short-term viability challenges.

A further consideration will also be that developer landowners who retain a long-term operational interest in a particular site will not necessarily approach development viability on a purely short-term commercial basis, and this applies to a number of sites in Bishop's Stortford. This might provide greater flexibility for how schemes can be progressed and a longer-term view of securing a viable return. This will require positive engagement and dialogue between the Council and landowners to understand how particular business needs can be accommodated.

### **3. Phasing and other interventions**

A broad phasing profile for when sites might be delivered has been identified. The shorter term (0-5 years) opportunities include those which either have planning permission or are subject to current pre-application interest or live applications. Other short term opportunities could comprise sites within relatively limited constraints and those within the Council's direct ownership. Medium term (5-10 years) opportunities are generally those that require some site assembly and relocation of existing uses that would need to be negotiated. Longer-term options (10 years plus) include sites where more significant existing operational needs to be considered and planned for in liaison with landowners. Ongoing landowner engagement for key sites such as Allinsons and Poundland will support the phased process of change along South Street and along the river corridor.

Notwithstanding the broad phasing of development opportunities indicated (which will be subject to change over time), there is also the more immediate opportunity to deliver a series of small-scale but important projects that can be delivered including the potential for timed closure of South Street, shop front improvements and improvements to the towpath and Stort corridor.

### **4. Transport assessment**

The Framework identifies a number of broad options with regard to improving existing transport and movement arrangements around the Town Centre in support of future development. It is recommended that a detailed transport study for the town centre testing proposals set out within this Planning framework be commissioned.

This detailed modelling work should test the impact of a new link road through the Goods Yard, timed closure of South Street, changes to the one-way system in the town centre and the impact of a new car park at Old River Lane. A related piece of work should review how cycling in the area can be encouraged, connecting the proposed enhancements in the town centre to the housing sites and existing neighbourhoods on the edge of town.

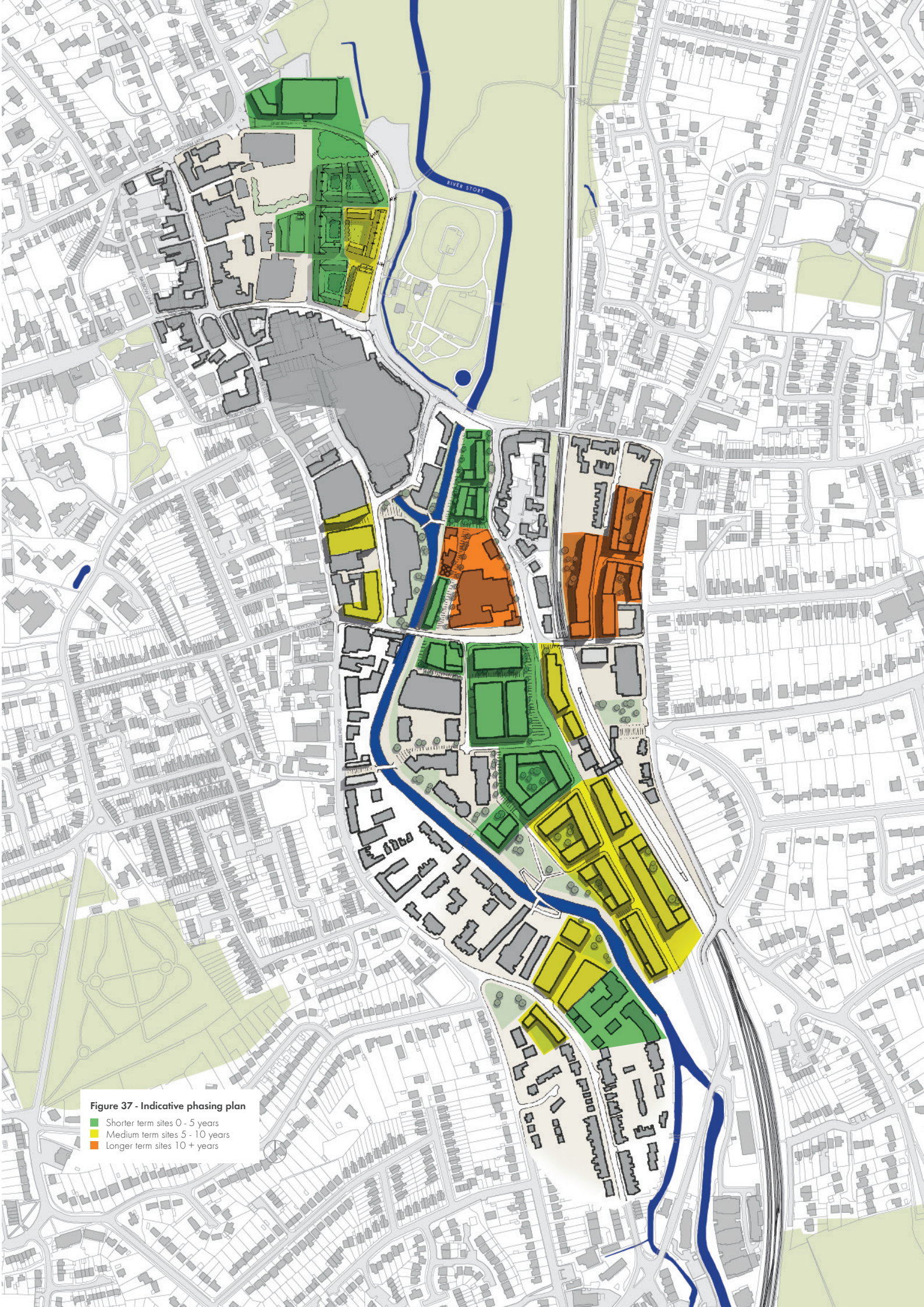


Figure 37 - Indicative phasing plan

- Shorter term sites 0 - 5 years
- Medium term sites 5 - 10 years
- Longer term sites 10 + years



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Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners accepts no responsibility for comments made by members of the community which have been reflected in this report.





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