

Newbury Town Centre Masterplan

2022

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We're delighted to present this really exciting and genuinely forward-thinking Vision and Masterplan for Newbury Town Centre, commissioned by the Council from a team led by HemingwayDesign and endorsed by our Executive on 10th February 2022.

There have been many changes to Newbury town centre over the years but throughout that time it's remained a friendly, bustling market town with the market at its very heart. This Masterplan reflects on changes in – among others - shopping habits, working patterns, environmental concerns and most recently the impact of Covid. It is now more necessary than ever before to keep one step ahead of these changes and we welcome the range of exciting proposals set out in the Masterplan to help shape and adapt Newbury town centre to do just that over the short, medium and longer terms.

One of the outstanding features of this work has been the engagement with stakeholders and local residents – over 4,000 responses to the initial public survey led to the development of the Vision, which was endorsed by over 90% of respondents in a subsequent survey. The HemingwayDesign team has worked with business representatives, landowners, community groups, Newbury Town Council and Newbury BID among others to ensure that their ideas and comments have been taken on board. A lot of hard work has gone into this Masterplan by the Council, the design team, residents, businesses and partners and we thank all those involved.

The Newbury Masterplan is one of a number of place-shaping initiatives we're developing in line with our Council Strategy and in support of our Local Plan Review. We want residents and visitors to come into our town centres and enjoy all they have to offer and we want businesses to start up and thrive here. So we're really looking forward to working together with stakeholders, businesses and residents to bring forward these exciting proposals.

Ross Mackinnon, Executive Member for Economic Development



All town centres across the UK are having to respond to the huge change in national shopping and leisure habits, driven originally by out of town shopping, then by the growth in internet shopping and new generations' led more conscious approach to consumption (including a re-discovered desire to prioritise independent businesses) both of the latter accelerated by the impact of Covid-19. The pandemic has also resulted in a fundamental shift in working habits, with large-scale office closures requiring many employees to work from home. The traditional 9-to-5, office-centric work model is rapidly becoming replaced with a hybrid model, giving workers increased flexibility around when and where they work and resulting in less time spent in offices.

All towns and their communities have suffered socially and economically from the enforced closures over the last 18 months and Newbury is no exception. The impacts on the town centre are most visibly demonstrated by the loss of the John Lewis Home and Debenhams stores that anchor the Parkway Centre. However, the loss of these stores, whilst impacting on footfall in the short term, provides an opportunity to revision and revitalise the centre and its relationship with the Canalside and Victoria Park to meet the changing needs of residents, visitors and indeed society in a post Covid-19 future.

As a result, to address these long-term issues, to give confidence to businesses, to the market and the local and regional community, and to take advantage of the funding opportunities available, it is essential that the correct vision is in place to steer the direction of travel for Newbury, and to implement a clear strategy for delivering it.

In October 2020, West Berkshire District Council appointed a multi-disciplinary team of consultants comprising HemingwayDesign, New Masterplanning, GL Hearn and Urban Movement, working in partnership with the community and local stakeholders, to produce a long-term strategy and masterplan to reposition the town centre's commercial, leisure, residential, cultural and public realm offer, to ensure the town centre continues to meet the needs of residents, businesses, workers and visitors both now and for years to come.

It was clear from our first visit to the town, reinforced by the feedback from over 4,000 people, that Newbury has a lot to celebrate, particularly Market Place; Northbrook Street and Newbury's distinct heritage; the parks and recreational space; and the Canal. The people of the town value the independent retail, restaurant and café offer, complemented by Parkway's national retailers. Despite these strengths, nearly 90% of respondents believe that the town centre could be improved, and we have received overwhelming support throughout the development of the vision, which has evolved through close engagement with those with an interest in the town.

The Vision is underpinned by the 'Crossroads' of Newbury, where Bridge Street crosses the Kennet & Avon Canal at the heart of the town centre.



Our aim is to ensure that as Newbury responds to the need for change, it remembers its market town heritage,

and remains a focus for social interaction, economic growth, civic engagement and community activities.

The Vision

Crossroads are a place where routes, and therefore people, come together. Crossroads are why many places exist and were the ‘birthplace’ of many market towns.

In placing the concept of The Crossroads at the heart of the future Vision, our aim is to ensure that as Newbury responds to the need for change, it remembers its market town heritage, and remains a focus for social interaction, economic growth, civic engagement and community activities.

This Vision and overall masterplan is reinforced by a number of fundamental principles based on both national and local priorities for change.

Principle 1: A ‘broader’ town centre

The key structural objective of the masterplan is to expand the perceived extent of Newbury town centre. This may seem counterintuitive given the declining demand for retail, but by broadening the leisure, community and cultural ‘experience’, the town centre can be transformed into a ‘multi-functional’ space, attracting more visitors and increasing dwell time.

Principle 2: Celebrating ‘The Crossroads’

Newbury’s ‘Crossroads’, where the town centre’s north-south route, Northbrook Street/Bartholomew Street, meets its east-west route, the Kennet & Avon Canal, forms an integral part of the masterplan, by putting Bridge Street and the Canal firmly at the heart of the town centre.

Principle 3: A more ‘walkable’ town centre

The masterplan seeks to make the town centre more ‘walkable’ and aims to increase the appeal of the town’s spaces, buildings and key assets by enhancing north-south and east-west permeability by foot.

Principle 4: A more ‘welcoming’ town centre

The masterplan aims to improve the sense of arrival for pedestrians, cyclists, rail and bus users, and motorists, by enhancing arrival spaces at the rail and bus station, improving links from the rail station to the town centre, improving routes for pedestrians and cyclists and enhancing arrival spaces along London Road from Robin Hood roundabout.

Principle 5: A ‘greener’ town centre

The masterplan aims to improve Victoria Park, provide a ‘pocket park’ at the Wharf and improve accessibility to green space along the Canalside, whilst delivering additional open space and ‘greening’ of the town centre to address environmental sustainability and improve community health and well-being.

Principle 6: A more ‘sociable’ town centre

The masterplan proposes additional open space at The Wharf and enhanced leisure and recreation facilities at Victoria Park and along the Canal. The masterplan will also support opportunities for increased spill-out space, particularly for the existing cafés and restaurants on Northbrook Street and in Market Place, as well as behind the Corn Exchange and Museum.

Principle 7: A more ‘cultural’ town centre

The masterplan seeks to improve existing and create additional indoor and outdoor space for arts and cultural activities catered for all ages, particularly by reinforcing the cultural importance of Market Place and creating a cultural and leisure destination at The Wharf.

Principle 8: A more ‘independent’ town centre

The masterplan seeks to promote the heritage of Newbury as an “independent” market town, by supporting the concentration of independent businesses in The Lanes as well as those in Broadway, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street, and recognising that the proposals for the Eagle Quarter, if approved, will provide units catered for small, independent businesses.

Principle 9: A more ‘entrepreneurial’ town centre

The masterplan recognises the importance of delivering new office space and focuses particularly on delivering smaller, fit-for-purpose, flexible office space for small businesses, start-ups and those looking for occasional workspace closer to home.

Principle 10: A more ‘balanced’ town centre community

The masterplan recognises the need to rebalance the significant increase in residential developments delivering apartments within the town centre, by delivering a wider range of housing, including family housing or more innovative residential schemes.

These principles which underpin the masterplan, and which will help to deliver the Vision for the town centre, have informed a range of public realm, infrastructure and development proposals across the key areas of The Wharf; the Canal; Victoria Park & Park Way; Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street and Market Place; The Lanes & Yards; and Broadway, Cheap Street and Bartholomew Street (South).

The proposals are also accompanied by a Meanwhile Use Strategy to support the temporary use of empty buildings or spaces for participative public events, pop up shops, workspaces and markets to bring people together and encourage community cohesion and enterprise. These measures will kickstart the delivery of positive change ahead of the longer-term, more permanent changes proposed as part of the masterplan. Key spaces within Newbury town centre to be used for ‘meanwhile purposes’ include vacant shop units, the Wharf surface car parking, and the former Debenhams buildings.

The Delivery Strategy sets out a variety of ways in which the objectives of the Vision and masterplan can be achieved over time. Although the implementation of some of these proposals is constrained by land ownership and sources of funding, the Delivery Strategy identifies ‘quick wins’ which will help to build momentum and deliver effective, vital change at the start of the process to creating and sustaining a thriving and prosperous future for Newbury. By prioritising these ‘quick wins’ and the wider set of masterplan proposals, Newbury town centre will embody its values, shape perceptions and start to build its own brand that better positions itself as a successful and distinctive modern market town.

Masterplan Summary

Kennet & Avon Canal

The Canal is a defining feature of Newbury town centre. Access and signage along it should be improved for pedestrians and cyclists, green spaces should be enhanced, more leisure activity promoted, particularly space for cafés and restaurants close to the water, and crossing the canal should be easier, particularly between The Wharf and Victoria Park.

Victoria Park & Park Way

Victoria Park should be better connected to the core areas of Northbrook Street and Market Place. Greening of Parkway, changes to the former Debenhams store and a new park cafe in this corner can create a stronger visitor attraction and reinforce the improvements being made by the Town Council.

The Wharf

The Wharf can become a new waterfront leisure, events, and social space. More public seating, accessible green space, improved public toilets and new cafés and restaurants can complement the library and museum creating an enhanced cultural and leisure destination for Newbury.

Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street & Market Place

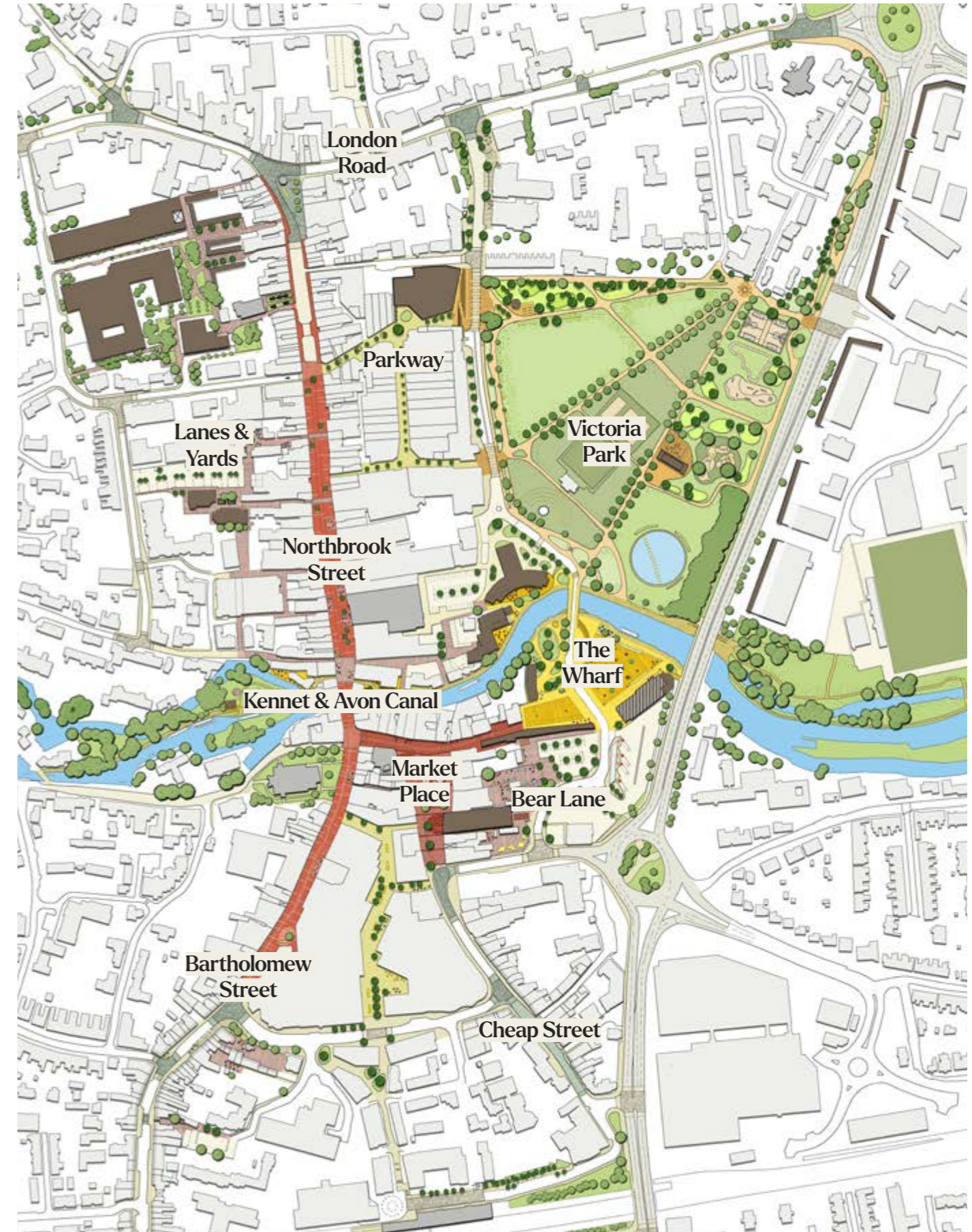
Extending the hours during which traffic is removed from this core area. Creating more space for pedestrians, areas for seating and planting, 'spill-out' space for cafés and restaurants and flexibility for larger events.

Lanes & Yards

Coordinated signage, branding and public realm improvements can help promote Newbury's lanes and yards as distinctive areas for local businesses. Bear Lane has the potential to create a new destination connecting Market Place to The Wharf.

Local Neighbourhoods

Public realm enhancement, shopfront improvement schemes and specialist events can promote the independent character of local neighbourhoods such as London Road/Broadway, Cheap Street and Bartholomew Street (south).



Introduction

1

Some media reports would have us believe that we are witnessing the death of our urban centres and high streets, but this is far from the case.

The UK's town centres have traditionally been places where people live, work, and socialise. However, over the decades they have become home to sprawling shopping centres and as a result, town centre high streets have been overtaken by mainstream retailers. This is sadly often at the expense of the real social importance of town centres - green spaces, generous public realm for social interaction, entertainment, nightlife, leisure, non-retail workplaces and homes.

We believe the future is bright for our town centres, for they are the beating heart of the community. We believe that recent store closures and the number of vacant shops nationwide does not mean town centres are dying, but that consumer behaviours are shifting. The 'offer' from retail needs to match a changing demographic that has a developing taste and understanding about the values of disposable income. It needs to recognise that people are eschewing 'goods' in favour of experiences; something that's reflected in the general market buoyancy of leisure, sports, travel, cafe culture, and events.

No one would argue that online shopping hasn't affected our high streets, or that it won't continue to do so in the future. But this doesn't have to mean the end of busy town centres - it merely emphasises the urgency with which they must adapt.

Humans will always be innately social beings - we will always want to get together, to celebrate, to share experiences. It is time to alter our course - to steer our town centres back to being the heart of our social lives, the places we live, work, and socialise. Retail is a key part of this, but it's not the sole focus. Opportunities to generate social capital must be built into our town centres from the ground up.

Strong social capital often reflects a community in which people are actively involved and their willingness to contribute. A sense of feeling able to influence events, being well informed, having access to key people as well as the intensity of involvement. The role social capital and community play is pivotal for any town centre to maximise its potential and provide the space for people to enjoy, learn and call home. Towns that actively deliver on inclusivity, equality, accessibility through the type of homes it provides, the workplaces, the public spaces and parks are the ones that will make the kind of "noise" that reaches increasingly purposeful generations. The experience that is provided in a town centre can leave long standing perceptions of a town. By creating a town centre that is continuously changing and experimenting through pop-ups, exhibitions, festivals, and markets will leave its mark as being exciting and interesting.



High streets need to be multi-purpose, multi-use, reflective of to the local context and relevant to the way people are now consuming.

It is well documented how COVID-19 has accelerated economic, social, and physical trends the UK high street was already witnessing. As the current pandemic has altered the way people live, work, shop and socialise, now is time town centres must react, and identify ways to maximise on these evolving habits. High streets need to be multi-purpose, multi-use, reflective of to the local context and relevant to the way people are now consuming. We have already seen early signs of this. Towns and councils have transformed streets into spaces where people can socialise, eat, play, and enjoy. Putting social experience above retail and returning town centres back to vibrant multi-dimensional places. Reclaiming streets back from the car is not just attracting people back in town centres but also addresses the need for healthier towns and cities via cleaner air.

The COVID-19 crisis has been described as a dry run for the climate crisis. The pandemic has exposed the fragility of the systems and governance that underpins our societies, acting as a wakeup call to prepare for a future where such challenges are increasingly common. But rather than see these as distinct challenges, we could use this pandemic to set in motion broader changes to reduce carbon in our towns and cities. A more ecological approach to urbanism is key. An approach that reduces emissions and energy use, through the reuse of buildings, reducing car dependence, and by adding biodiversity.

The pandemic has also resulted in a fundamental shift in working habits, with large-scale office closures requiring many employees to work from home. The traditional 9-to-5, office-centric work model is rapidly becoming replaced with a hybrid model, giving workers increased flexibility around when and where they work and resulting in less time spent in offices.

Newbury is no exception to these societal shifts. The impacts on the town centre are most visibly demonstrated by the loss of the John Lewis Home and Debenhams stores that anchor the Parkway Centre. However, the loss of these stores, whilst impacting on footfall in the short term, provides an opportunity to revision and revitalise the centre and its relationship with the Canalside and Victoria Park to meet the changing needs of residents, visitors and indeed society in a post COVID-19 future.



We believe Newbury can grow successfully, but firstly must rediscover its identity as a bustling market town

There is no doubt that Newbury, as a town, has a number of key strengths. The place has a rich and colourful heritage associated with its market town identity, evident by Market Place. The town offers a range of high-quality parks, waterways and historic street patterns and architecture, including the coaching inns on Broadway and London Road, and St Nicolas Church.

Newbury caters for a range of markets, including its weekly and artisan markets, cultural organisations and independent retailers and food and drink operators at a time where national multiples are in decline.

A number of well renowned events are held in the town, helped by the location of Newbury Racecourse to the east of the centre, attracting visitors in their numbers.

The town also offers excellent road and rail connections, with immediate access to the strategic road network via the A339 and A34 and accessibility to London by train in under an hour making Newbury attractive to commuters. Workers can still take advantage of its proximity to key cities, including London, whilst taking advantage of larger properties offering better value for money than the likes of nearby London and Reading.

However, the town centre finds itself at a pivotal point of change, resulting collectively from retail and work pattern shifts, exaggerated by the onset of the pandemic creating a move to more local, consumerism and increased home working; a need to support the creation of a liveable centre to support the town's growing population; and measures to encourage the uptake of more attractive, sustainable

transport modes as alternatives to the private vehicle to help to respond to the climate change emergency.

We believe Newbury can grow successfully, but firstly must rediscover its identity as a bustling market town. Focus should be shifted towards independent retail; creative and community uses; residential and workspace. Fresh investment should be made in the core retail streets and public spaces including Market Place and the Wharf; canals and rivers; parks and cultural and historic buildings. Measures must be taken to address climate change, reducing reliance on the private vehicle and increasing uptake of sustainable modes of travel. Growth in residential development should be planned and designed to create a more diverse and inclusive town. Interventions should seek to make the town centre more relevant and accessible to all its residents and visitors, by catering for all ages.

We understand that a successful masterplan should be developed in collaboration with its local and wider community. This helps to restore civic pride, increase community involvement and ensure the overall vision responds to the needs and desires of those most impacted, which cannot be fully understood solely through site visits and desktop studies.

This masterplan process has incorporated a wide range of consultation and engagement with over 4,000 local residents, stakeholders, business operators, landowners and both the district and local councils to ensure the vision embraces different perspectives to deliver a more diverse, inclusive, robust and meaningful town centre.





We believe this to be Newbury's largest survey undertaken to date, both in terms of completion numbers and the time spent completing the survey, averaging around 25 minutes – proof of the community's enthusiasm to have their views on the town heard.

The process has sought to identify the key issues, challenges and opportunities preventing Newbury from fulfilling its full potential for growth and has worked with the town to embrace opportunities to revitalise the centre and to ensure the Newbury is well-positioned as a forward facing, thriving

destination that can withstand future challenges presented by this continuously-evolving future.

The structure of the following document therefore presents the current condition of Newbury, the aspirations of its community and a long-term vision and master-plan proposals to deliver transformative change based on consensus.

The methodology has been underpinned by a 2-stage approach, split down into four separate stages.

Stages 1A - Launch, Baseline & Key Issues

The purpose of this stage has been to generate a 'whole town' understanding of the project. The team has engaged with local press and media to raise the profile of the project and create a 'buzz', involving the whole town, not just the 'usual crowd'. It has involved a combination of baseline evidence review, desktop information gathering and site visits to provide us with a practical insight of the issues and opportunities. However, engaging with the community has been invaluable to provide us with a robust, meaningful picture of the key priorities and focus areas on which to base the Vision and Masterplan.

Stage 1B - Vision & Evidence Base

The baseline findings of the engagement exercise have then been analysed and a draft Vision has been prepared to respond to the outcomes of Stage 1A. The vision has identified how it responds to the specific needs of local residents and businesses, how it responds to wider trends and challenges and how it enhances the distinctive market town character of Newbury. Having been tested with a number of key stakeholders including West Berkshire District Council and the Newbury Town

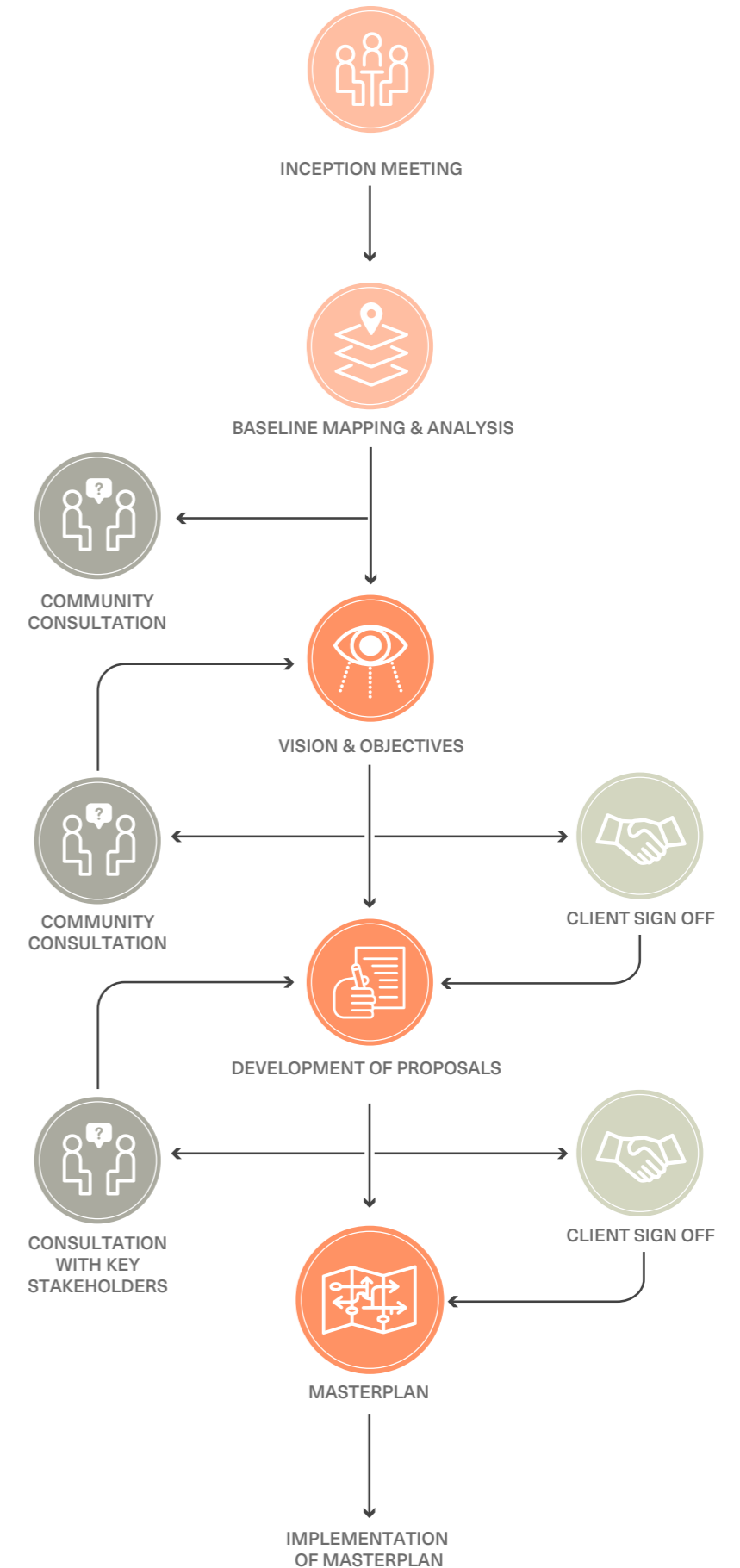
Centre Working Group, the draft Vision has been made publicly available for comment as part of the second round of public consultation and engagement. Analysis of the feedback received has resulted in the vision being further refined ahead of Stage 2.

Stage 2A: Presentation & Refinement of Proposals

A series of deliverable proposals have been designed to achieve the vision objectives. The team have undertaken an iterative and collaborative process to refine each proposal with key stakeholders and to devise 'optimal' proposals, rather than 'preferred' proposals.

Stage 2B: Action plans, Funding & Delivery

The final stage has involved finalising the proposals and confirming the overall Masterplan for the town centre based on the findings from the previous stages and the stakeholder's needs and aspiration shaped through extensive consultation. The final document advises on the short, medium and longer-term actions required to deliver the Vision and identify potential funding sources to deliver the specific proposals.



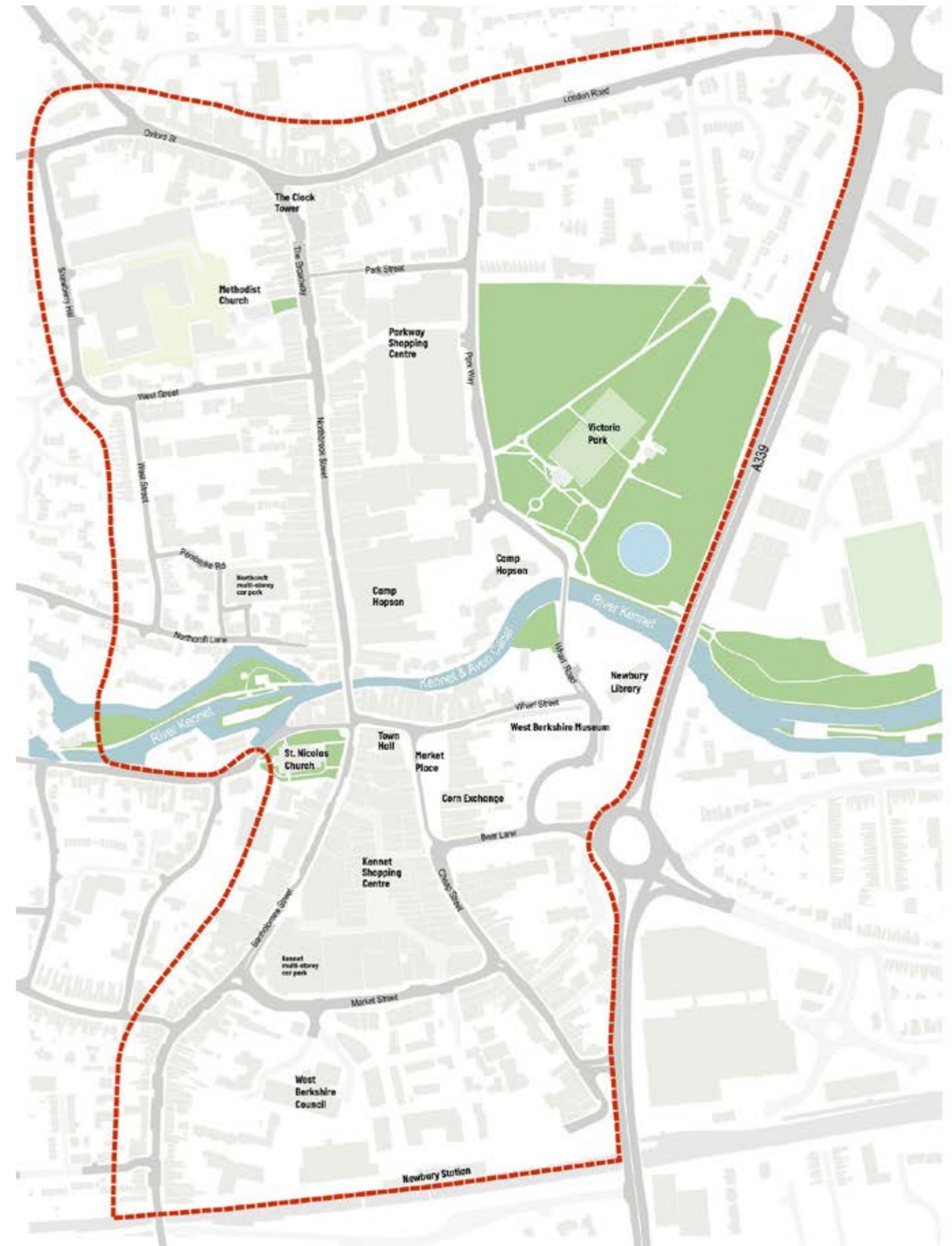
The Study Area focuses on the town centre of Newbury, centred around the 'Crossroads' where Bridge Street crosses the Kennet and Avon Canal. The challenges facing town centre retail have resulted in the decline of high streets across the UK, evident by rising town centre vacancy rates and reduced footfall.

Consequently, over time, town centres' reliance on retail has had a detrimental impact on their functionality. As mentioned in Beyond Retail Taskforce's report 'Beyond retail: Redefining the shape and purpose of town centres', town centres must be rebalanced and repurposed to deliver a range of different and complementary uses, including community, leisure, commercial and residential.

In Newbury, these opportunities to deliver multifunctional uses are not confined to the main retail streets currently perceived as the town centre street network, specifically Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street, Market Place and Cheap

Street. Instead, this masterplan embraces the opportunity to extend this network of streets within the existing geographical limits of the town centre to increase opportunities for social interaction, economic growth and community activities.

The masterplan will seek to improve connections through to The Wharf, the Canal and create better linkages through to Victoria Park, to make the park feel more integrated within the centre, as well as improving accessibility to Newbury's lanes and yards.



The Town Centre Study Area

Evidence nationally shows that the town centres which will 'bounce back' most effectively from the impact of the pandemic are those with strong local identities and connections with their local communities.

An extensive consultation process including two public surveys, receiving a combined total of over 5000 responses, as well as a series of conversations and workshops with local stakeholders, businesses, resident groups, students, and other local organisations, have helped shape this vision and masterplan.

The survey results highlight that those who know Newbury best, those that live, and work in the town are welcoming of change. Out of the 4095 respondents to the initial public survey, only 182 people wished for the town to stay as it is.

Evidence nationally shows that the town centres which will 'bounce back' most effectively from the impact of the pandemic are those with strong local identities and connections with their local communities. 'Multi-functional' centres with a good leisure, community and cultural offer are less heavily reliant on retailing and more resilient to change. Town centre living and a strong employment base is also a key asset.

The evidence locally shows that Newbury has many of these characteristics. Residents value Market Place, Northbrook Street and St Nicholas Church, the canalside, the parks and green spaces. They value Camp Hopson and the independent shops and the range of restaurants and coffee shops, complemented by the national retailers in Parkway and the Vue Cinema.

The public survey highlights that Newbury is valued as a mid-sized market town, with a good range of town centre amenities, and convenient access to both urban centres (London, Reading and Bristol) and rural environments. But it also emphasises several weaknesses in the town centre, and a desire to address them. These weaknesses relate particularly to the make-up and balance of the shopping, cultural and leisure offers, the amount and quality of open / public/ green space, and the lack of facilities for younger people.

What do you think is missing from the town centre?

LIVE MUSIC VENUES
OUTDOOR SEATING LEISURE FACILITIES
 NIGHTLIFE COVERED MARKET
VARIETY ARTISAN SHOPS
 BOWLING YOUNG PEOPLE
GREEN SPACE FREE PARKING
 CYCLE ROUTES GREENERY
 SUSTAINABLE SHOPS FOCAL POINT
ENTERTAINMENT DISTINCTIVENESS
 ELECTRIC CHARGING POINTS
INDEPENDENT SHOPS

What are your favourite places in the town centre?

COFFEE SHOPS NORTHBROOK STREET
 ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH MIO FIORE
 CORN EXCHANGE CANALSIDE
INDEPENDENT SHOPS VUE CINEMA
 LOCK STOCK & BARRELL PARKWAY
RESTAURANTS CAFÉS SUSHI MAKI
 THE CATHERINE WHEEL GREEN SPACE
 HENRY & JOES GOLDWELL PARK
MARKET PLACE COBRIZO LOUNGE
 NORTHCROFT PARK VICTORIA PARK
CAMP HOPSON

Public

Initial online public survey

7th December 2020 – 31st January 2021

4095 responses

Draft Vision Survey

28th June – 31st July 2021

1083 responses

Draft Vision public engagement

22nd July 2021

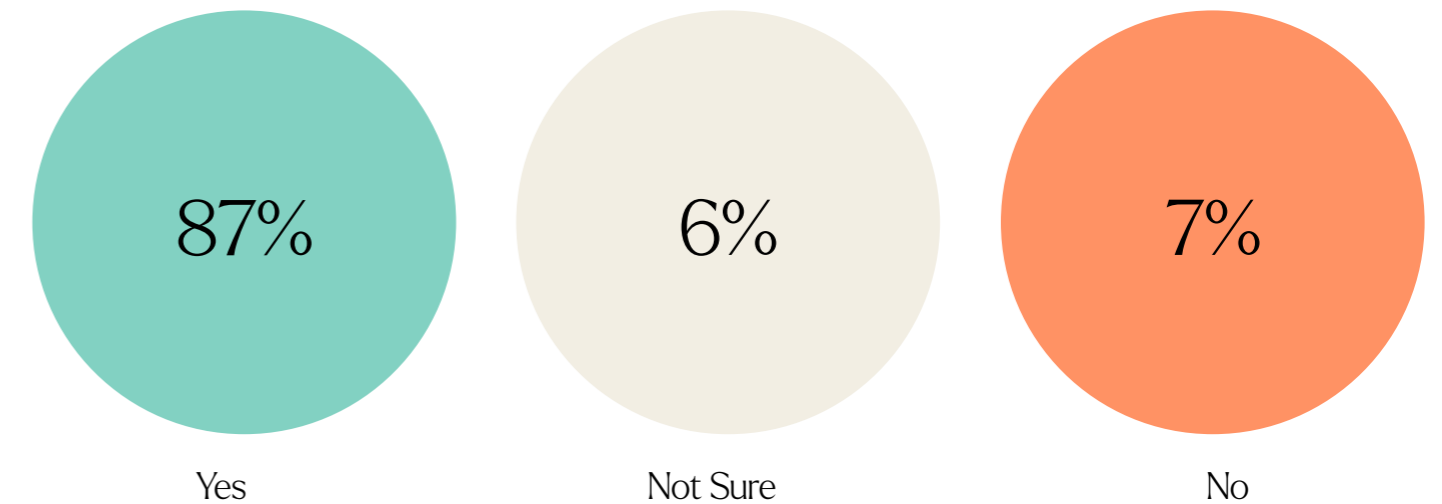


Stakeholder

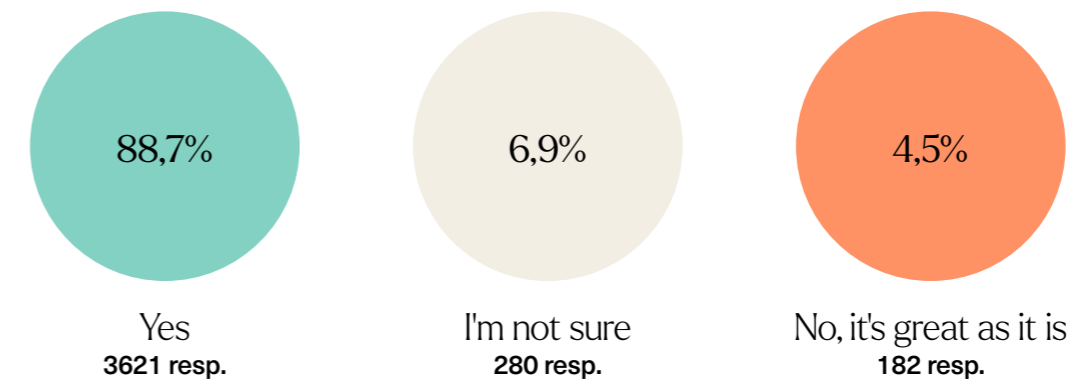
Discussions & workshops with:

Newbury BID / Berkshire Youth / Aberdeen Standard / Greenham Common Trust / Corn Exchange / Watermill Theatre / Newbury City Arts

Do you agree with the key objectives?



Do you think Newbury Town Centre could be better?



Key Messages

- There are a wide variety of favourite places within the town centre, with independents shops and restaurants, cultural venues, and green spaces being favoured over large shopping destinations such as Parkway. This is in line with the national trend for multi-purpose town centres that offer a range of experiences alongside retail.

- Young people are more likely to visit the town during the day to eat and drink, but are less likely to visit for a specific cultural activity. This is likely a result of a lack of cultural activities currently, as their desire for improved cultural space and importantly their desire for more 'spaces for young people to hang out' was nearly 50% compared to 22% of the wider population.

- People living locally use the town centre more in the evening, walk more, visit more often and spend more. People living close to the town centre particularly benefit the evening economy.

- Overall reliance on the car is 66% (people driving or being driven) but for people outside Newbury it is almost 90%. By comparison – for those living in Newbury it is a reasonably even split between driving and walking/cycling. This shows that we can shift local people away from the car – particularly with a big increase in town centre living.

- Young people currently are more likely to visit a few times per month rather than a few times per week, as opposed to the overall response which was equally split between a few times a week, once a week and a few times per month.

- Local residents are more supportive of Northbrook Street being permanently pedestrianised.

- Top 5 priorities include; more local & independent shops, cafés and restaurants, more green space and access to the canal, better spaces for public events and festivals, more street furniture and planting. All this backs up national surveys that show a shift towards an importance of green spaces, al fresco dining and a shift to independent retail.

- Young people have a desire for improved cultural space and for more 'spaces for young people to hang out' – of which 47.5% of U25s highlighted as a priority compared to 22% of wider population.

- U25s top four priorities are spaces for young people to hang out, more independent shops, more green space and access to the canal, and more independent cafés and restaurants.



The vision and masterplan have come out of an inclusive design process, which has engaged all stakeholders of Newbury, to create a common sense of direction that responds directly to the needs and wants of the local community. However, this report has little to no weight in the statutory town planning process. In order to attract weight, the document must be turned into a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD will enable the District Council to apply weight to the objectives and policy guidance within it to successfully implement the vision for Newbury and the placemaking and masterplan proposals, to ensure Newbury serves as a multi-functional centre, well placed to respond to change for years to come. The SPD will also outline principles that must be followed by developers bringing forward proposals within the town centre.

The draft SPD will be subject to a formal six week round of consultation undertaken by West Berkshire District Council prior to adoption. Once adopted, the SPD will set the formal planning framework for the future regeneration and development of the town centre.



Newbury today: Policy and economic overview

2a

Planning Policy

Local planning policy for Newbury is contained within the adopted Development Plan: the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2006 – 2026), adopted in July 2012, alongside the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document, adopted in May 2017, and the saved policies of the Local Plan 1991-2006, amended in 2012 and 2017.

The Council have begun a review of their Local Plan to cover the period up to 2037, and their emerging Draft Plan was published in December 2020. Adoption of the Local Plan Review 2020 – 2037 was scheduled for December 2022, however the process had been delayed due to revisions to national planning policy in July 2021.

The Core Strategy is based on a number of key strategic objectives, including to support housing growth by delivering at least 10,500 homes by 2026 and ensuring the provision of affordable and market housing to meet local needs. The Core Strategy seeks to support economic growth, whilst ensuring that the infrastructure needs (including community services and facilities) of the district are met. Local policy seeks to deliver vibrant town centres that meet a range of shopping needs. The Core Strategy aims to create a strong network of well-connected, multifunctional green spaces and deliver a sustainable transport network, prioritising walking, cycling and public transport in accordance with the district's focus on tackling climate change. Finally, future development must protect, conserve and enhance the local distinctive character, heritage and identity of the district.

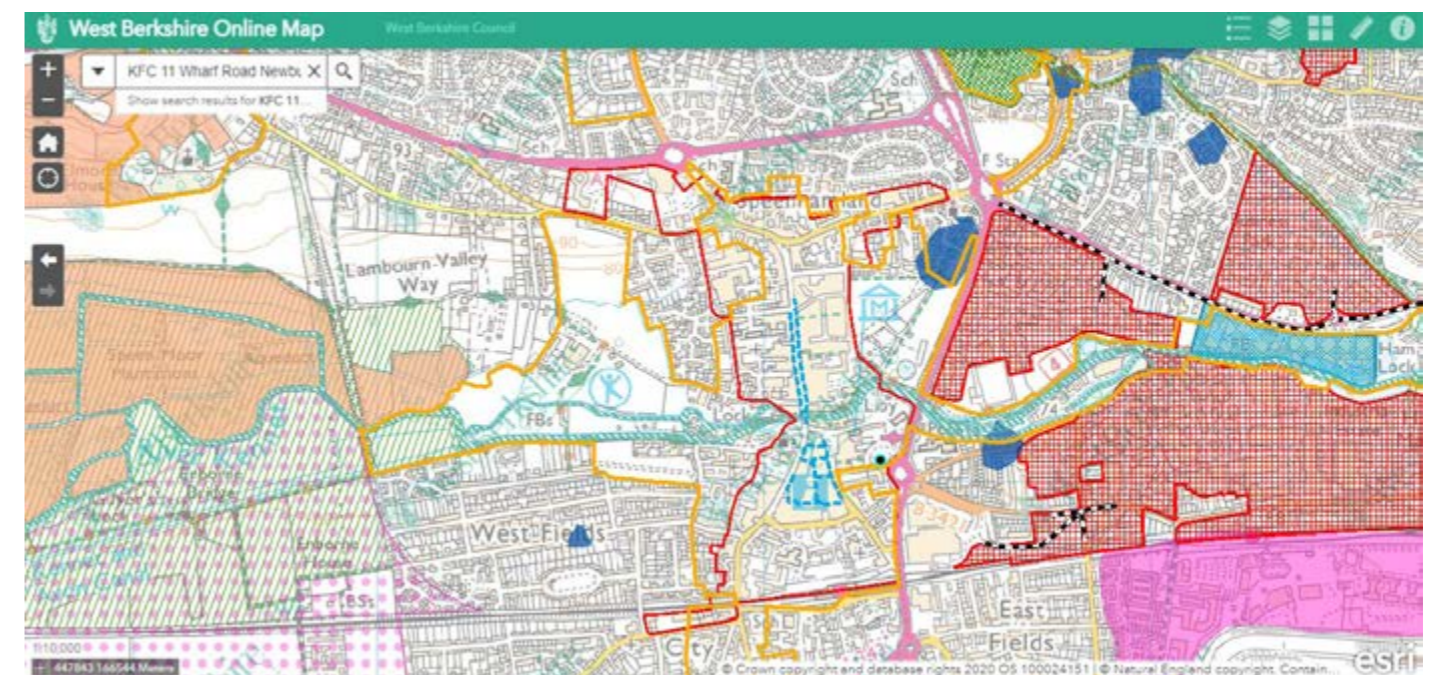
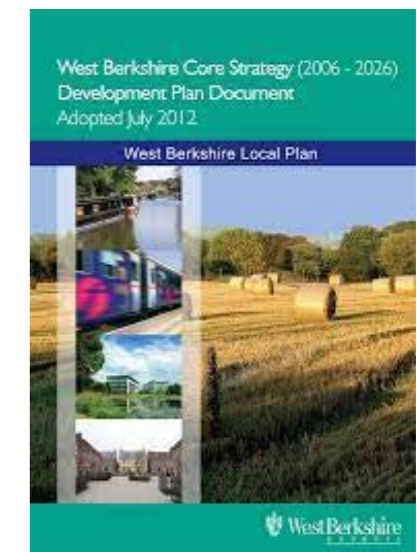
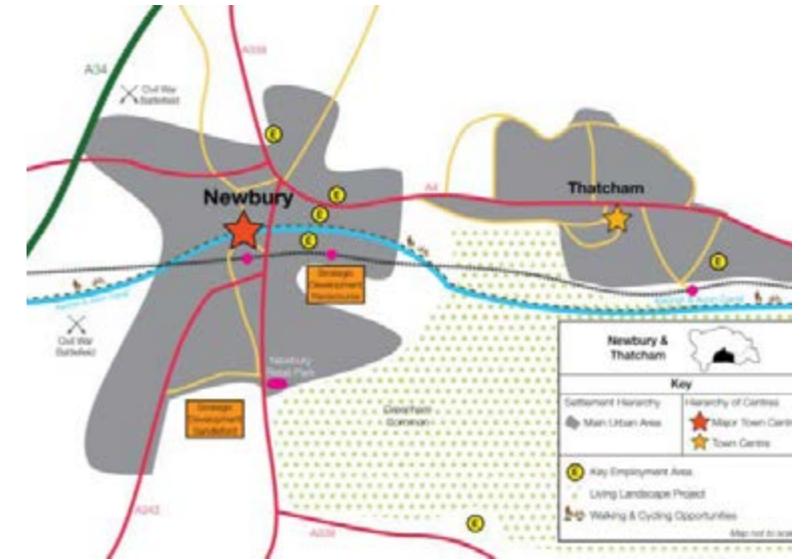
Spatial Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out a clear vision for Newbury:

- Newbury will retain its traditional market town heritage whilst undergoing infrastructure improvements and development and renewal or commercial use and housing, to create a vibrant 21st century centre.

- Newbury will continue to fulfil its key role as the administrative centre and major town centre for the district, with a wide range of retail, employment, leisure and community services and facilities.
- Newbury's accessibility in terms of access to rail and to the strategic road network will mean that it remains a key focus for business investment and development.
- Newbury will build on its existing strengths and historic legacy to reinforce its district identity and differentiate its shopping centre from other town centres in the region.
- Tourism will play a bigger part in the town's economy.
- Open spaces will be better linked to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists within the town and to improve public access to countryside on the fringes of town which will continue to form an important recreational resource.

Specific policy relating to Newbury, particularly the town centre, supports improvements to Victoria Park, including improved linkages through to Northbrook Street to help to enhance the provision of open space in the town centre. The Wharf area will also be enhanced and developed as an extension to the cultural quarter of the Market Place, providing new open space and becoming a focus for cultural activities and outdoor events. The Market Place will continue to be developed as a high quality café and leisure quarter and Market Street developed as an 'urban village', a mixed use but predominantly residential area. Improvements will also be made to the Kennet and Avon Canal to support its landscape and recreational role and to ensure the canal makes a strong, positive contribution to the character and heritage of the town centre.



Housing

The Core Strategy provides guidance on the scale of new housing development to be permitted within Newbury, which is anticipated to be 5,400 new homes over the plan period, particularly where there is significant development potential on previously developed land in the town centre and periphery.

Design

Local planning policy seeks to create safe environments that address crime prevention and promote community safety; ensure environments are accessible to all, whilst giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists; and make efficient use of land whilst respecting the density, character, landscape and biodiversity of the surrounding area. Opportunities to deliver a mix of uses, buildings and landscaping should be considered, and opportunities to display public art will be supported. Historic and cultural assets must be conserved and enhanced and opportunities to display public art will be supported. Development proposals must also consider opportunities to provide, conserve and enhance biodiversity and create linkages between green spaces and wildlife corridors where possible.

Transport and Accessibility

Demand for travel across Newbury will be managed and accessibility to sustainable transport opportunities increased by improving choice to a range of different transport modes. Additionally, measures to improve and manage flows along the A339 and A4 will be supported. Local planning policy also supports the provision of a range of facilities associated with different transport modes, including public transport, walking, cycling and parking

provision, and seeks to promote opportunities for healthy and safe travel, minimise the impact of all forms of travel on the environment and mitigate the impact on the local transport network and strategic road network

Heritage and Historic Environment

Newbury Town Centre is allocated within a Conservation Area, and consequently, any proposals must accord with the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, which is currently being prepared. Opportunities will be taken to support and enhance Newbury's townscape whilst conserving and enhancing the centre's designated and non-designated heritage assets. Existing 'eyesore' buildings may provide redevelopment opportunities and improving the appearance of key gates to the town to enhance Newbury's identity will be supported.

However, regard must be given to the sensitivity of the area to change, ensuring that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and density in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character.

Green Infrastructure

The Core Strategy aims to protect and enhance the District's existing green infrastructure, by providing for high quality and multifunctional open spaces of an appropriate size, whilst enhancing links to the existing green infrastructure network.

Retail and Commercial Uses

Any proposals for the change of use from retail uses to other uses within the primary shopping frontages of Newbury, specifically a portion of Northbrook Street and the area occupied by the Kennet Centre, will not be supported by the Council where they would result in a concentration of non-retail uses that would harm the viability of Newbury's town centre.

In relation to the town's commercial uses, Newbury will be the main focus for business development over the plan period to ensure the vitality of the District's economy is maintained. Additionally, the emerging Local Plan Review states that new office and retail development will be directed to Newbury Town Centre. The Council will also support proposals in town centres which incorporate local community and cultural uses, to support the vibrancy and economic sustainability of these centres.

Flood Risk

Due to the location of the Kennet & Avon Canal, that runs through the centre of Newbury, a large portion of the town centre, whilst benefiting from Flood Defences, is located in Flood Zone 3, particularly north of the Canal and south of London Road.

Demographics

According to the mid-year estimates published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in 2020, 42,083 people live in Newbury. 60% of the population are of working age (between 18 and 64), marginally higher than the regional average for the south east. 19% of Newbury's population is aged 65 and over, up 25% since 2011.

Socio-Economic Overview

- Newbury has a total population of just over 42,000, which has increased by 19% between 2011 and 2020.
- 19% of Newbury's population is aged 65 and over, up 25% since 2011.
- Incomes are relatively high in Newbury, with the total annual household income averaging £51,880.
- The majority of Newbury's population are either in very good or good health (84.4%), which is slightly higher than the regional average for the south east (83.6%).
- Although slightly below the regional average of 74%, levels of economic activity are relatively high in Newbury, with 71.1% of the town's economically active population (aged between 16 and 74) in employment.
- The majority of Newbury's residential properties are owned, equating to 62%.
- The area maintains low levels of deprivation

Economy & Employment

In recent decades, Newbury has seen significant growth in the technology, research and creative sectors, supported by the market town's prime location along the M4 corridor. The 2018 Tech Nation Report identified Newbury as leading Britain's tech boom on the basis of its digital density, 15 times higher than that of London, and consequently the town is becoming the most tech specialised local economy in the UK.

According to an article published by the fDi, a world-leader in investment promotion and economic development solutions, Newbury featured in its European Cities and Regions of the Future 2020/21. Based on its economic potential, human capital and lifestyle, cost effectiveness, connectivity and business friendliness, the town was ranked fifth in the Micro European Cities of the Future and ranked ninth in the Northern European Cities of the Future.

The District's recent Economic Development 2020-2023 also highlights the town's recognition as having more economic potential than any other UK small town. Newbury will be a focus for the district's economic development, helping to create a sustainable environment for both existing and future businesses to prosper.

Since 1985, Newbury has been home to Vodafone's UK headquarters and technology hub for the UK, and across its 5 different business parks, supports a wide variety of businesses including Micro Focus, Newbury Investments, Hitachi, Rebound Technology and Sovereign Housing.

In Newbury, employment sections focused on finance, business services, ICT and administration account for 33.8% of jobs, with the largest subsector, Information and Communication, accounting for 13.5% of total employment.

However, over recent years, Newbury has seen a decline in town centre office stock, a large proportion of which has been lost to office to residential conversion through permitted development rights, and jobs, which have moved to out of town locations. As a result, Newbury's office market is characterised predominantly by more traditional, outdated, non-purpose built office space above existing town centre retail units and out of town centre business parks, offering larger, more modern facilities, including at Newbury Business Park. Since the end of 2018, this has created a Town Centre/Out of Town office take-up split of 13%/87%.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted office working practices for the longer-term, normalising remote working and many companies are now embracing a more 'hybrid' way of working. Employees have developed new expectations around flexibility, working conditions and work-life balance and a hybrid model is now emerging where companies are balancing the efficiencies and benefits gained by remote working with the benefits of social interaction and collaboration created by working with others in an office environment. A large number of organisations are rethinking their working arrangements. Many companies no longer require large city centre offices and are reaping the cost-savings in favour of a more flexible workspace model in more suburban locations.

Research by Workthere shows that the popularity of flexible office spaces in suburban locations outside of city centres is expected to rise as a result of an increased work-life balance and reduced commuting time. Their research points to the fact that town centres with a poor cultural and creative base are less likely to attract these businesses.

It is important that Newbury builds on its cultural momentum, to firstly attract co-work space operators to Newbury, similar to the local operator Myworksport, who have identified a requirement

for up to 20,000sqft of new serviced office space within Newbury town centre, but also attract start-ups, businesses and people looking for occasional workspace closer to home to occupy these spaces.

These operators will benefit from the town's relatively high levels of employment, with 71% of the town's economically active population (aged between 16 and 74) being in employment, only slightly lower than the regional average of 74%.

Housing Market

Newbury benefits from a strong residential market, with average house prices standing at slightly over £400,000, up £50,000 on the District's average. Demand for properties has increased by 15% since July 2020, with the market benefiting from the rise in people moving out of London and other cities within commuting distance of Newbury to take advantage of the increased flexibility of emerging working patterns. When once there was a desire to live close to your place of work, buyers are increasingly looking for larger properties in more suburban locations, combined with more open space and affordability, whilst still benefiting from good transport connections into business districts, making Newbury an attractive location. However, stakeholder feedback from Berkshire Youth highlighted that rising house prices in Newbury are pricing out locals who are increasingly unable to afford properties in the area.

Newbury has a variety of residential streets in the town centre, within close proximity to the main shopping streets. These are typically concentrated with semi-detached and terraced dwellings built in the 18th and 19th century, as well as more recent higher-density apartment buildings. The concentration of flats will continue to increase, proven by the approved new-build and proposed pipeline residential development within the town

centre, including Grainger's 232 dwelling Market Street development currently under construction, the proposed housing as part of Lochailort's Eagle Quarter redevelopment and the London Road Industrial Estate.

The proposed redevelopment of Kennet Centre, if approved, will see residential units delivered above retail, similar to the mixed-use Parkway scheme, completed in 2011, which delivered 147 residential apartments alongside 37 affordable units above the existing shopping centre. The town also benefits from a number of schemes specifically catering for Newbury's older population, including Churchill Retirement Living's Avonbank Lodge on West Street, as well as Eden Retirement Living's Pearl House on Bartholomew Street.

The volume of new-build and pipeline residential developments either proposed or under construction proves the popularity of Newbury for developers, attracted by strong house prices and increasing property demand. The vacant Bayer office premises, which has recently been sold, has prior approval for the building's conversion into 191 flats through permitted development rights. David Wilson Homes also has a strong interest in Newbury, and is currently delivering schemes at Cherry Blossom Meadow, The Chase at Newbury Racecourse and Willows Grange.

Given the scale of development coming forward across the town, it is important that the residential offer within the centre continues to cater for all needs, by delivering a greater diversity of dwelling types and tenures, including affordable units for first-time buyers, to help to create a liveable, thriving and sustainable centre.

Retail, Community and Leisure Market

Newbury boasts a traditional market town heritage and alongside Reading, is the focus for retail and commercial leisure activity within the district. These operators are supported by the Newbury Business Improvement District (BID), which was set up in 2012 by local businesses for local businesses to enable town centre operators to continue to thrive. The BID not only aims to support existing and new businesses but also seeks to increase footfall and engagement with these businesses through positioning and promotion of their 'Visit Newbury' brand, to establish Newbury as a go-to destination for both businesses and visitors.

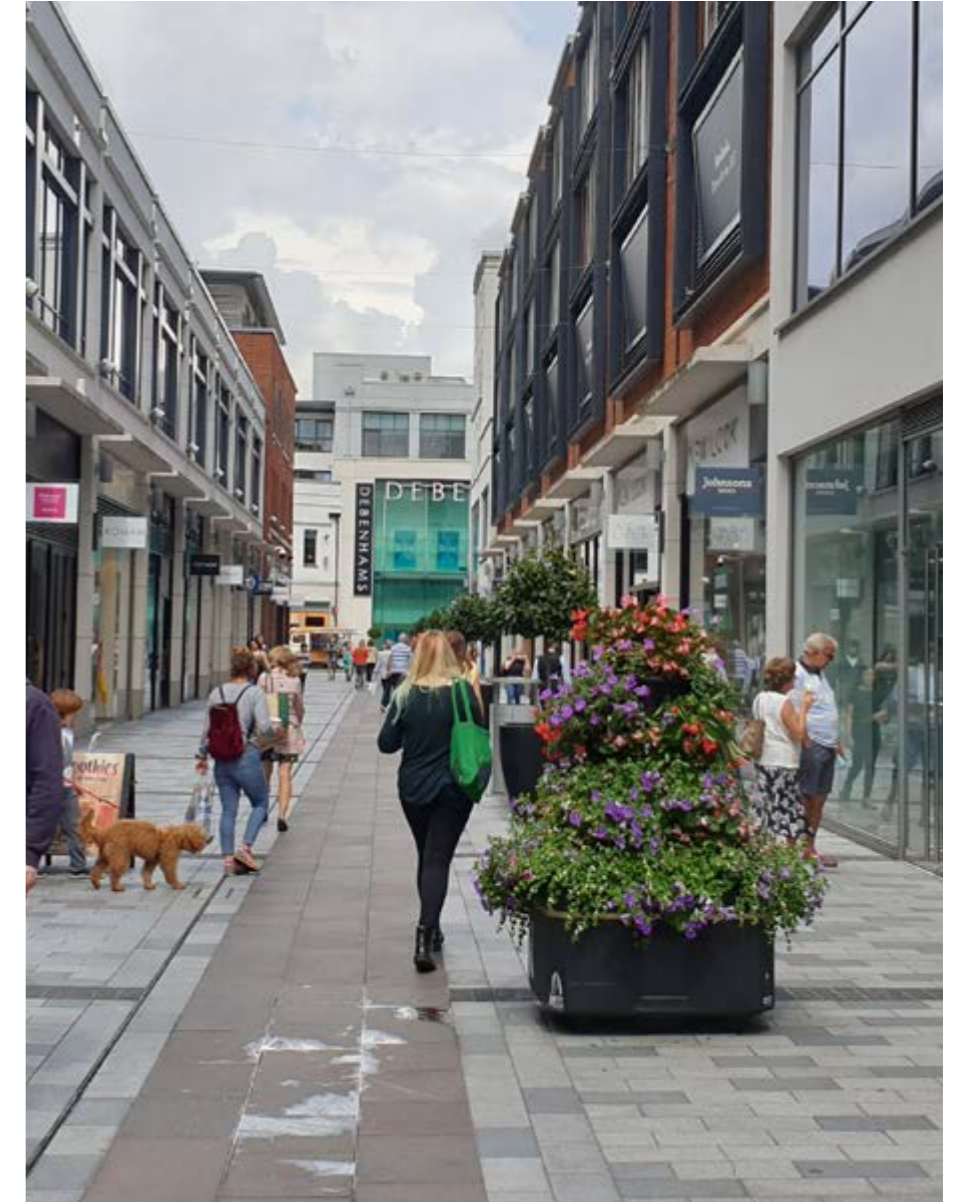
Similar to the whole of the UK, Newbury has seen a decline in national high street chain retailers and restaurants, including Debenhams, John Lewis Home, Bella Italia, ASK and Café Rouge, as shifting consumer preferences heightened by the pandemic move to online purchasing and more ethical, local consumerism supporting local, independent businesses.

Northbrook Street and Parkway, at the northern end of the centre, represent the core area of Newbury's retail offer, and alongside Bridge Street, are allocated as primary shopping frontage within local planning

policy. These areas contain the highest proportion of national retailers, including Hotel Chocolat, Marks and Spencer and H&M.

The Kennet Centre, located at the southern end of the town, provides a second shopping centre facility, however it is older and noticeably more dated than Parkway and provides a lower quality retail offer. However, a planning application is awaiting determination for the redevelopment of the Kennet Centre to be rebranded as the Eagle Quarter. If approved, the scheme will reduce the overall volume of retail floorspace, whilst offering new flexible-use commercial uses of varying sizes to attract a mix of artisan and local operators, supported by flexible terms, to complement the national multiple retail offering more concentrated in the northern end of the town centre.

This independent-focused model has been successfully trialled by the Kennet Centre's Asset Management, Rivington Hark, who have seen the Kennet Centre's occupancy rates increase from around 65% to 95% over the last year, attributable to short term lets offered to local independents until the Centre closes in 2023.



Newbury's market town heritage is evident in the town's regular markets, including the Farmers' Market and Artisan Markets, held in the Market Place. These provide an opportunity for residents and visitors to shop ethically from independent businesses and ensures the long history of the Markets, believed to have been around since Anglo-Saxon times, is retained.

The 2017 West Berkshire retail study identified 47% growth in expenditure in restaurants and cafés, and 46% growth in expenditure on leisure activities in the Newbury area by 2036. The UK's 'experience economy' is on the rise and Newbury must increase its provision of independent food and drink operators, and cultural activities to take full advantage of the economic benefits.

The leisure use provision in the centre notably includes the Corn Exchange Theatre in Market Place and the Vue Cinema in the Kennet Centre. Whilst there are a number of chain restaurants dispersed throughout the town centre, the Newbury BID recognise that greater dining successes now lie within the independent sector, and whilst local operators make up the majority of the food and

drink offering in the town, more financial incentives need to be in place to help these operators establish themselves and support the economic sustainability of the town.

Community uses in the town include the Waterside Centre, and the Museum and Library, both situated in the Wharf adjacent to the Canal. The Waterside Centre has benefited from a recent refurbishment of the building to deliver an outdoor seating area, informal social area and café. The Council have also recently appointed Shared Intelligence to carry out a Libraries Community Needs Assessment for library services across the district to better understand the current use of the facilities, whilst helping to improve and retain these vital community hubs by delivering a high-quality public experience.



Conservation

In early 2021, West Berkshire District Council instructed a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan to be undertaken for Newbury Town Centre, with the purpose of clearly defining the area's special architectural and historical interest; identifying ways to preserve and enhance the area's uniqueness and providing a clear context for future development within the area with respect to heritage matters. The Appraisal is nearing completion but is not yet finalised.

As part of the Appraisal, the Town Centre Conservation Area boundary is proposed to be narrowed to concentrate on the main areas of special architectural and historic interest in the town centre. With regards to the Masterplan area, Newbury Bridge falls within the revised Town Centre Conservation Area boundary, however the Wharf and the canal to the east of the bridge falls within the proposed new Kennet and Avon Canal East Conservation Area and the area to the west of the bridge comprises part of the proposed new Kennet and Avon Canal West Conservation Area.

Public Realm

In terms of issues of direct relevance to the Masterplan, the Conservation Area Appraisal recognises the need to enhance the existing public realm, particularly by improving the town centre wayfinding to better reflect the town's traditional character; retaining surviving historic boundary treatments; and improving pavement surfaces, including repairing traditional characterful surfaces, such as cobbles and sets.

Built form and Extensions

The Appraisal recommends that building extensions are sympathetic to the character and special interest of the Conservation Area and respectful to the character and appearance of the host building. Upward extensions of buildings will be discouraged, particularly where they would have an adverse impact on the heights, character and setting of existing buildings. There will be a presumption against the demolition of buildings that contribute positively to the Conservation Area. Any new development must respect existing building heights, should not be excessively tall or interrupt the overall roofline to restrict visibility to key views. Additionally, schemes should be designed to re-establish historic plot sizes and scale rather than deliver large homogenous blocks and should use carefully chosen materials, forms and features that reflect the traditional character of the area.

Retail Uses

Retaining retail uses within the conservation area boundary will be encouraged wherever possible to support the economic vitality of the centre, and where changes of use are proposed, an assessment of the impact of the use on the character and sustainability of the Conservation Area will be required. However, to make the centre visually more attractive, improvements to the shopfronts of these units are encouraged, but they must respect the character of the buildings, and use traditional materials and colours that are sensitive to adjacent shopfronts. The Appraisal also

recognises that parking creates urban voids, which can be repurposed or enhanced by providing public amenity space, 'greening' measures and planting. Improvements to Victoria Park are also encouraged by increasing planting, trees and access to public spaces.

Relationship to the Masterplan

The findings and recommendations of the Appraisal, although not formally adopted by the Council at this stage, have informed the development of the Masterplan proposals, particularly the opportunity areas identified within the Appraisal, such as improving the sense of arrival to Newbury for pedestrians through public realm improvements; enhancing the town's interface with Victoria Park along Park Way; and promoting the sensitive redevelopment of the Kennet Centre.

Newbury today: Baseline assessments

2b



Newbury has a rich heritage spanning many centuries, transforming from an early Saxon settlement into a town with the right to hold a fair and market during the 11th century. The town has evolved into a successful market town centred during the 13th century around the cloth trade, although this trade had virtually ceased by the 17th century. Newbury became an important coaching centre during the 18th and 19th centuries, due to its location on the old Bath Road and attracting those travelling from London to Bath, whilst also benefiting from its location on two intersecting roads and later the Kennet and Avon Canal.

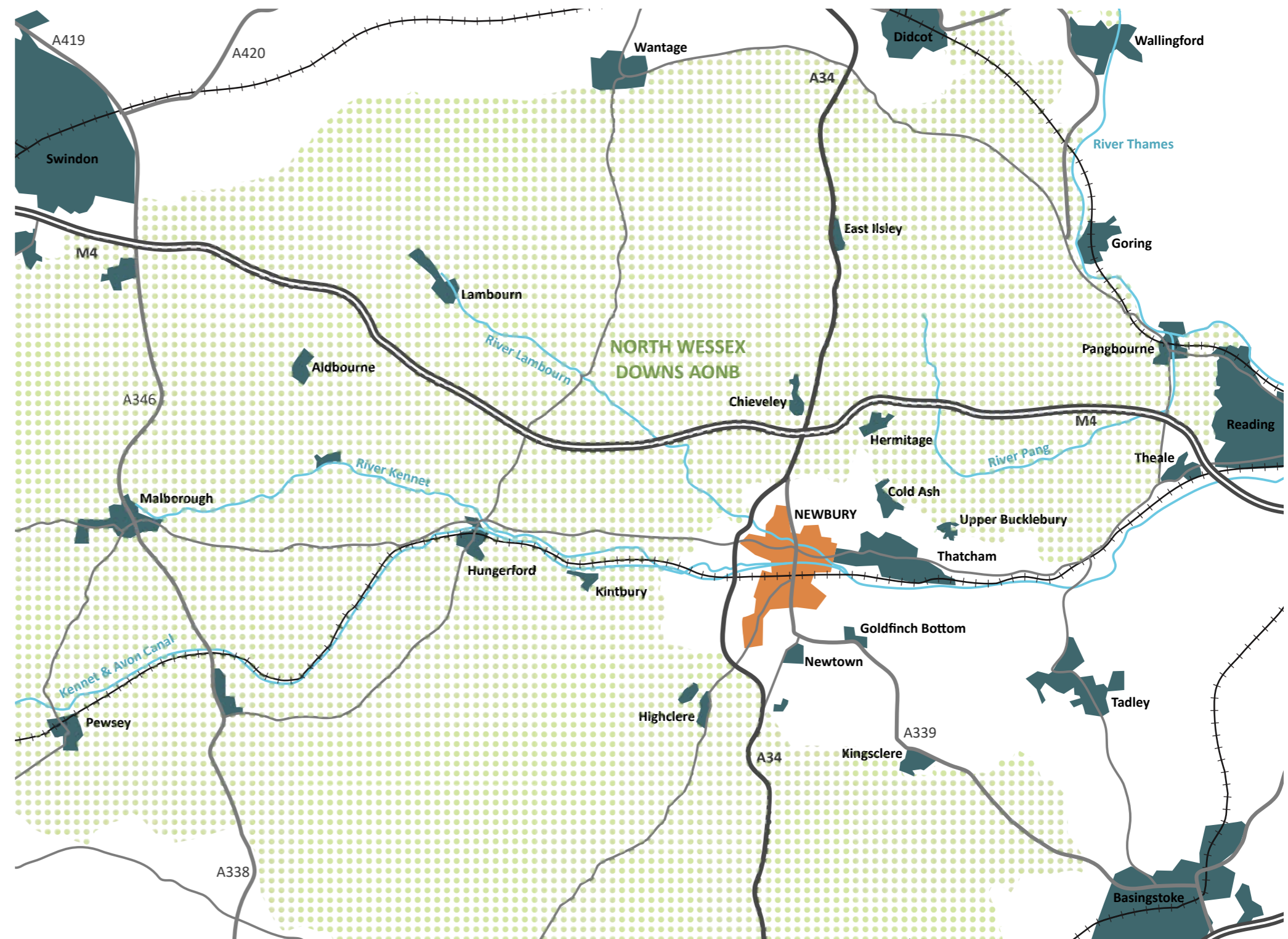
The town benefits from its historical buildings and rich architecture; green spaces and waterways; physical connections; established infrastructure; and a proud community of over 42,000 people. The following section will provide the context to the town, highlighting Newbury's historical past and existing conditions, including the town's urban structure and character, uses, connectivity, and socio-economic profile to help to inform the future direction of travel, whilst taking into account the planning policy context that informs future development within the town centre.



The study area reflects the Town Centre boundary as defined in the Newbury Town Plan and Design Statement. Our report does however have regard to the wider context and the different roles that Newbury town centre serves.

The Vision and masterplan need to recognise the increasing number of people that live within and immediately adjacent to the town centre, and how they are affected by any proposals.

West Berkshire District has a population of around 160,000. Whilst these areas contain local centres, alongside the town centre of Hungerford, the retail studies show that many residents within this wider rural area look to Newbury on a regular basis to meet their shopping, leisure, cultural and service needs. The town centre therefore has to ensure that it remains accessible and relevant to this population.



Newbury town centre has to serve a wider rural catchment, particularly to the west of the town. To the east residents of West Berkshire also have access to larger centres such as Reading and Basingstoke.

Newbury Town Urban Area

Newbury town has a population of 40,000, but for many shopping, leisure and service functions it is also the town centre for Thatcham residents. This gives it a combined population of approximately 70,000. Newbury town centre therefore needs to have regards to any needs of the population of Thatcham which are not being met by Thatcham town centre.

Although historically the major communication routes were east-west (London Road/A4, the canal/river corridor and the railway) the majority of residential growth has been north and south of the town centre. Crossing the barriers created by the railway line and the A4 corridor is therefore a factor in encouraging residents to walk and cycle into the town centre.

Employment has however been concentrated east of the town centre, between the A4 and the railway line/canal. The exception to this is the more recent development of Vodafone, located to maximise accessibility via the A339 and strategic road network.

There is a similar pattern of retail development outside the town centre, with a string of retail parks and supermarkets along the A4/railway line corridor but with the strongest competition coming from Newbury retail park located to the south along the A339 corridor.

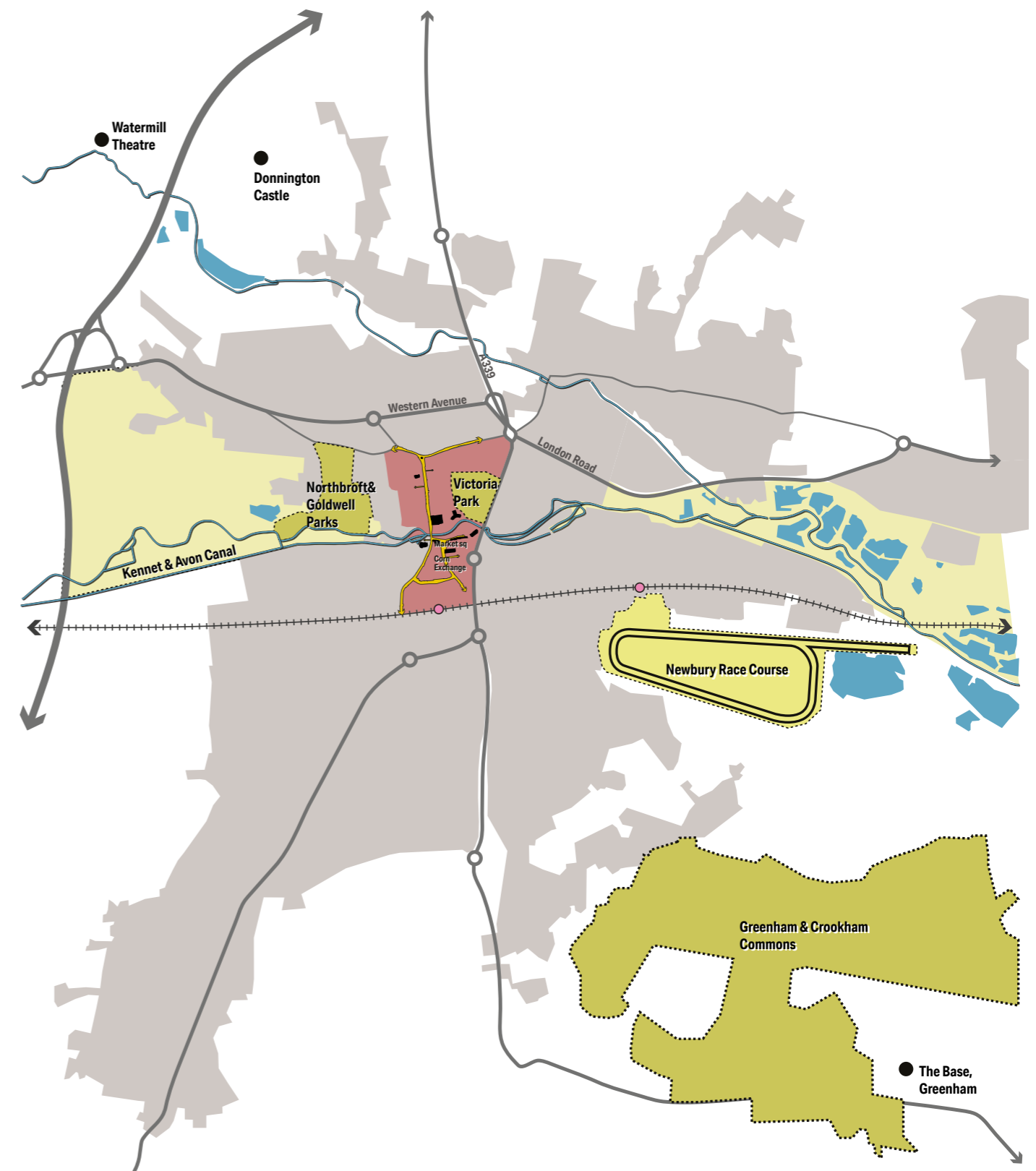


Newbury Townwide Destinations

Newbury town centre has a number of cultural, historic and key town centre attractions including the Corn Exchange, West Berkshire Museum, the Market square including its numerous artisan markets as well as the Canal and Victoria Park.

Outside of the town centre Newbury is also home to a number of venues and destinations that have the ability to attract large numbers of visitors at various times through out the year including Newbury Race Course, Greenham Common, Donnington Castle, the Watermill Theatre as well as the Kennet & Avon Canal and towpath and associated green spaces.

Improving connections, both physically and in terms of programming, and promotion across these sites will help to create a more dynamic Newbury and also help to support town centre businesses such as shops, restaurants and hotels.





1761



1768



1880 - 1881

Historic Growth of Newbury

In Newbury historic east west connections such as the River, London Road, the Canal and Railway have brought growth and prosperity to Newbury while modern infrastructure such as the north/south A339 have perpetuated movement past the town centre and created barriers in particular for pedestrians and cyclists.

Kennet River

Newbury developed around its key crossing of the Kennet River and its role as a market town. Its focus was around the River, St. Nicolas's Church, the market square with the latter two originally joined as one space. Its historic inverted 'Y' shaped street structure shaped early in the towns history provided key routes into and supporting the market space.

London Road

The growth of Bath as a spa town perfectly placed Newbury as a over night stop halfway between London and Bath. Coaching inns opened to service the passing trade pushing the focus north of the river along London Road. Providing another strategic east -west connection.

Canal / Railway

Construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal brought the focus back around the River. Development of the basin and Wharf buildings was undertaken to store bulky good and trade flourished. This was superseded by the development of the railway which sped up the movement of goods and people into Newbury again reinforcing another east-west corridor and a prominent point of arrival into the town centre.

A339

The arrival of the A339 constructed between 1950's - 80's severed Cheap Street and the connection to the Market Place. It also created a corridor which allowed for people to move quickly through Newbury without the need to stop in the town centre and created a barrier along the eastern edge of the town centre. The heritage value inherent in the town centre is recognised by the Conservation Area designation. The Council has commissioned an Appraisal of the Conservation Area and a Management Plan (CAAMP), alongside this Masterplan. The outcomes and implications of the CAAMP are reflected in the Masterplan and have been referred to in more detail earlier in this Report.



1933 - 1934



1967



1982

Key Messages

Victoria Park and the Wharf stand out as the most significant areas of publicly accessible space. Market Place and St Nicolas Church are notable spaces of smaller scale.

Town centre structure

The Nolli plan differentiates between internal spaces (within buildings), private external spaces and the public external spaces. The external (white) areas are the places through which people arrive in the town, through which they move within a town and in which they are encouraged to linger and spend time within the town. They include spaces accessible by foot, bicycle, bus, car or boat. These public spaces, together with the quality of the buildings that surround them, are the areas which shape a visitor's perception of the civic quality of a town.

The basic Nolli plan indicates large areas of external space. The key element which stands out is the scale of space at Victoria Park and the Wharf. The second element is the importance of the east-west corridor created by the canal. These two areas provide the majority of the green space within the study area.

The north-south corridor created by the A339 dominates the plan, but the parallel corridor created by Northbrook Street, Bridge Street and Bartholomew Street is also a very strong feature. Apart from the canal, the only coherent east-west route is provided by London Road/Oxford Road/Oxford Street.



Nolli diagram: A plan showing the relationship between built form and publicly accessible space (including streets) by presenting the former in black and the latter as a white background (or the other way round)

Key Messages

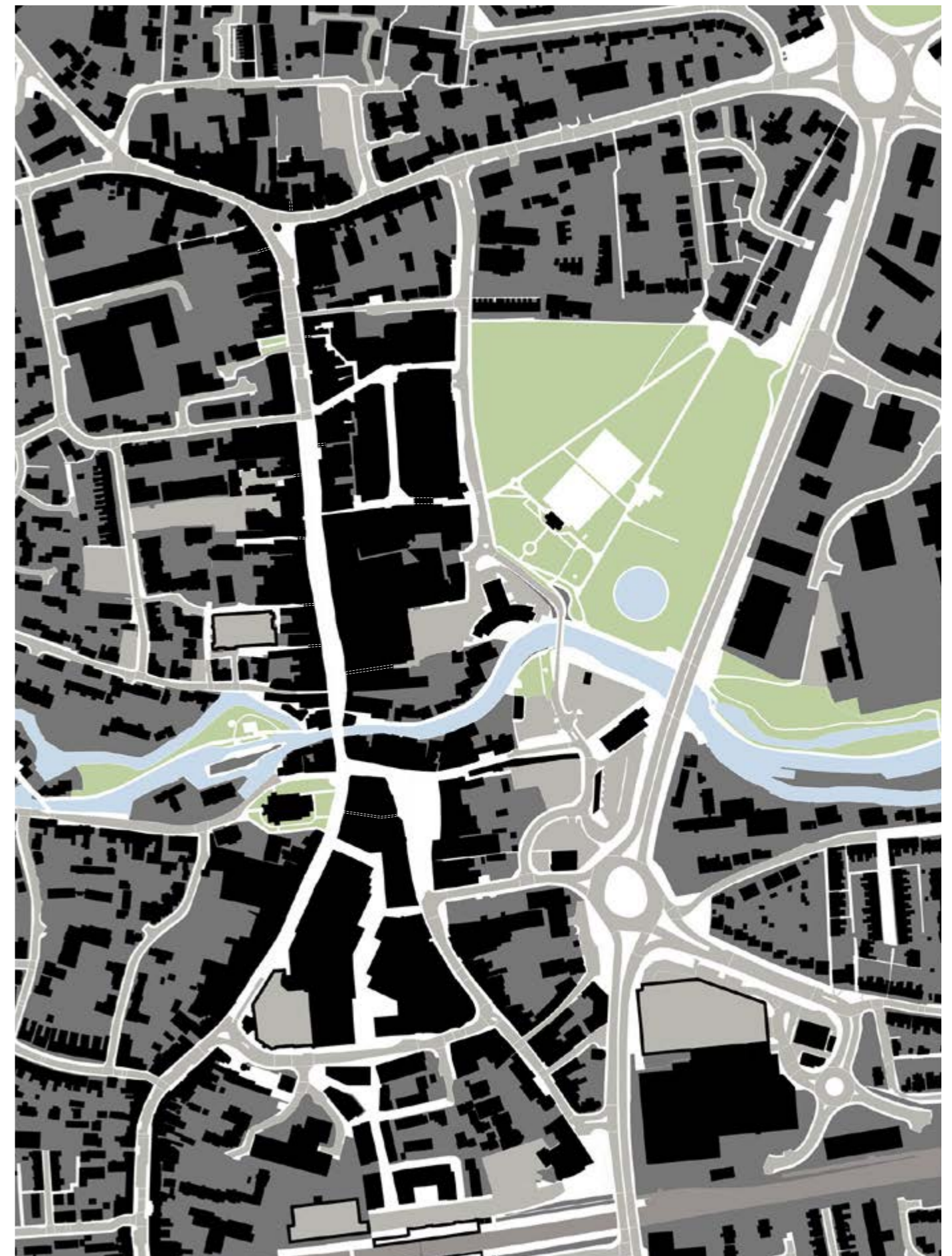
Newbury's public spaces are heavily impacted upon by moving or parked vehicles. Only a small area of the town centre is traffic free during the day.

Newbury Town Urban Area

When the traffic-dominated public areas are added to the Nolli plan, a different message emerges for Newbury. The A339 and the Wharf area no longer appear as attractive public spaces, and reflect the fact that they are dominated by through traffic and parked vehicles.

Although Victoria Park remains as an important green space, the plan shows it is surrounded on three sides by traffic dominated areas.

Apart from the grounds of St Michael's Church, the only other pedestrian friendly areas of significant scale are the core shopping streets. Outside 10am-5pm these areas are reduced to (most of) Market Place, and the privately owned by publicly accessible shopping streets within the Parkway and Kennet Centre (Eagle Quarter) developments.



Key Messages

- Key landmarks such as St. Nicholas and Town Hall towers create positive landmarks for the centre clearly visible from various locations around the town.
- Long linear high street limits views into and out of the space.
- Strong views from the Bridge in both directions
- Museum building is very low in scale and there are strong views towards it from the Wharf area.
- Lack of access to the southern edge of the river and over grown green spaces as well as raised bridges break up views between riverside edges making people less likely to cross the river to explore.



Key Messages

- The historic streets combine to create a common sense of 'Newburyness' but have distinctive characters which can be reinforced.
- The human scale of the town centre streets contrasts with the traffic dominated qualities of the A339.
- The town centre is very walkable, but linear rather than 'compact'.
- As the only 'town centre' crossing of the canal, Bridge Street is a focus and the natural 'crossroads' of Newbury.

Street Network

The character of the town centre is defined predominantly by the core street network of Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street, the canal and Victoria Park.

As the only central street crossing of the canal, and the only shopping street providing views along the water, Bridge Street becomes a natural focal point for visitors in the town centre even though there is limited space to linger. The fact that there is only one crossing point also creates a sense of separation between areas north and south of the bridge.

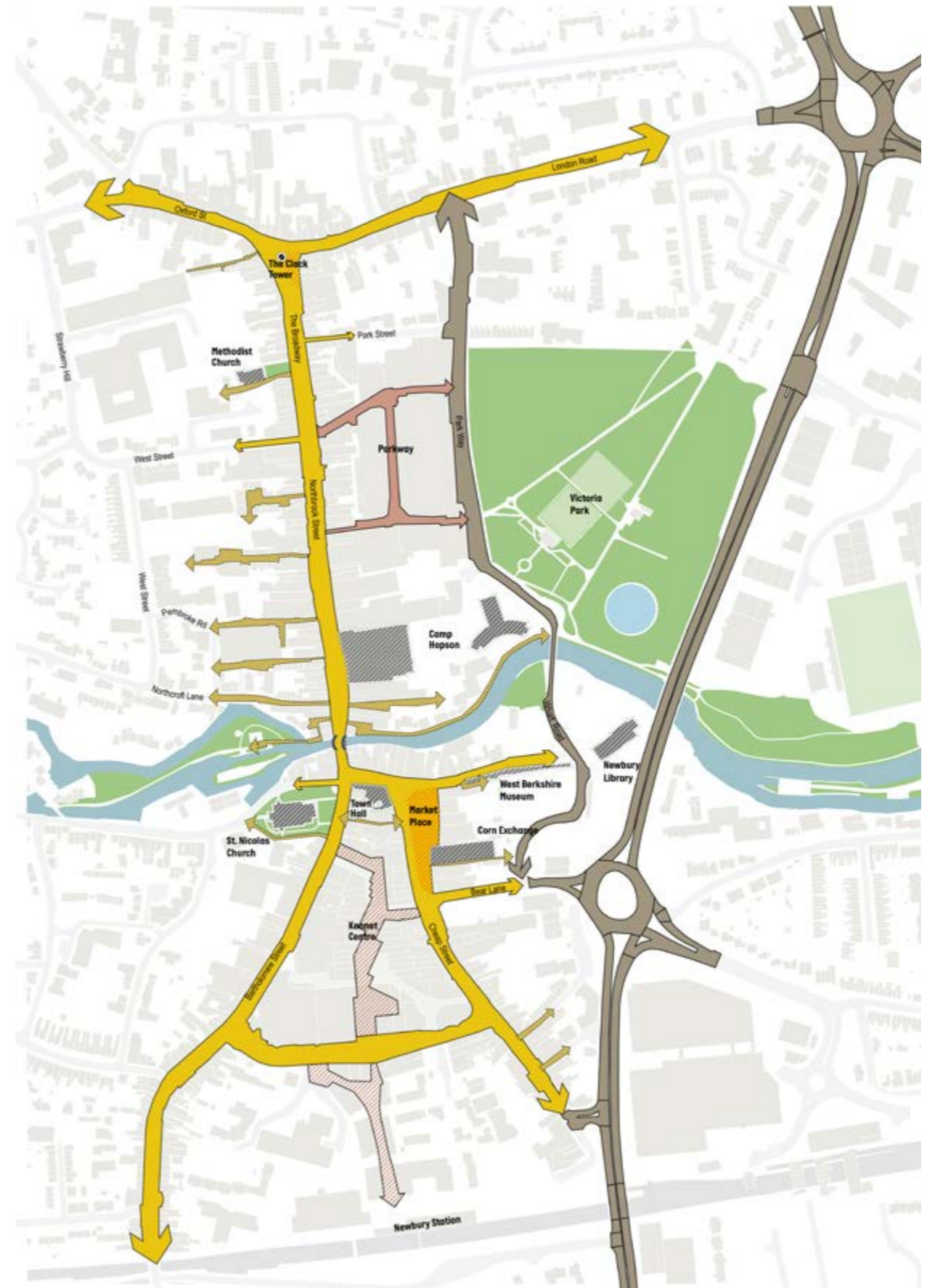
Although much of Northbrook Street is pedestrianised during the day, Market Place is the only significant public space in the town centre. It is an attractive square and a focus for civic and cultural uses, food and drink, markets and other events. The library and museum are important uses to the east of Market Place, but the connections are weak and Market Place as a result can feel on the edge of the town centre.

There is a strong, north-south, linear quality to the town, but with a variety of short lanes leading off the

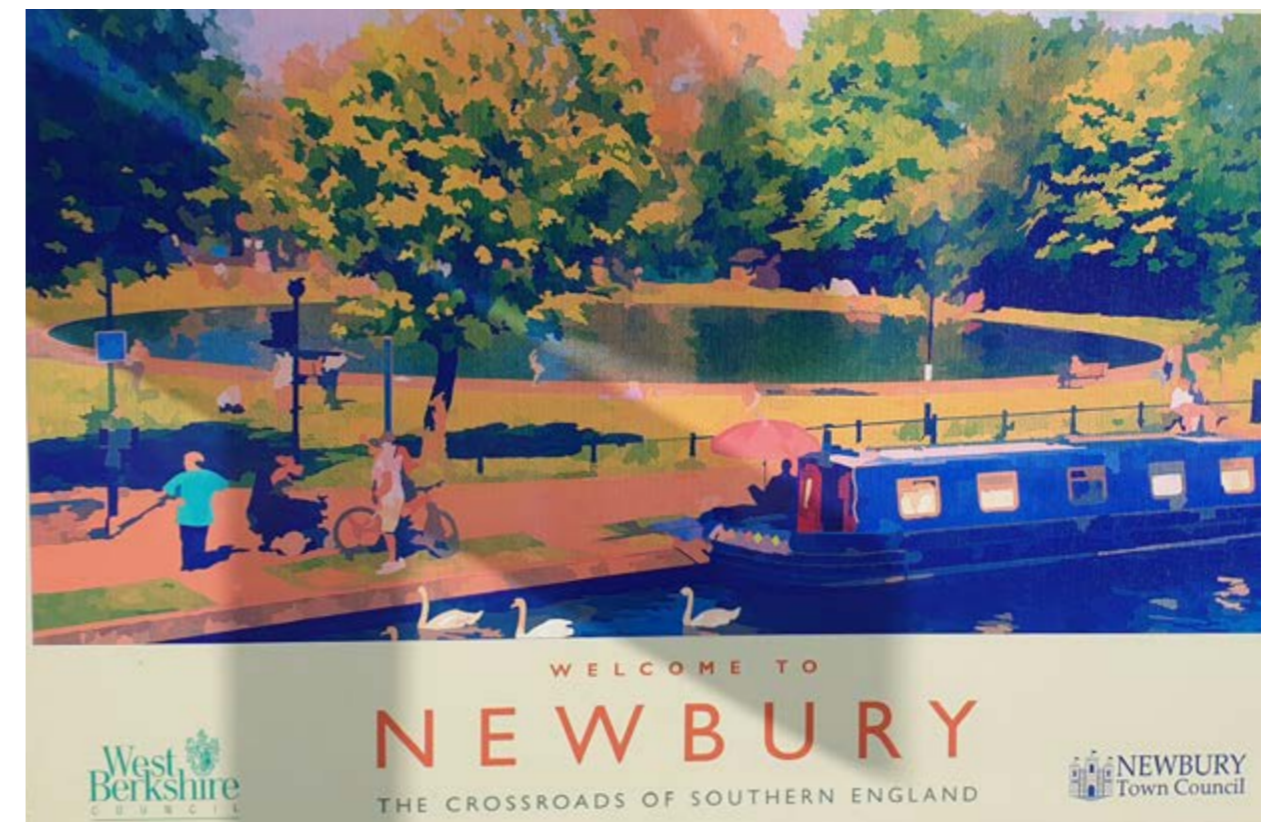
main streets. Some of these lanes are connected to other streets or lead to attractive spaces, but many end in poor quality car parks or service areas.

The Parkway scheme creates a network of pedestrian streets east of Northbrook Street but the connections to Victoria Park remain poor, interrupted by the barrier of Park Way. There are proposals to redevelop the Kennet Centre and create a more open network of streets, connecting to the Market Street redevelopment and the rail station. The principle of the street structure is positive, but could have a potential impact on pedestrian flow in Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street.

"Newbury has two particularly strong character traits: the historic market core and the 'garden suburbs'. The historic market core is reinforced by the historic street pattern, the character of the Market Place and the scale and materials used in the largely 18th and 19th century buildings fronting the Market Place, Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street." - Historic Character Study



The slogan "Newbury – the Crossroads of Southern England" has been devised with the intention to highlight Newbury's role as a town at the centre of innovation and creativity, open to outside influences, while retaining its strengths and character –
Newbury Town Plan





Street Character

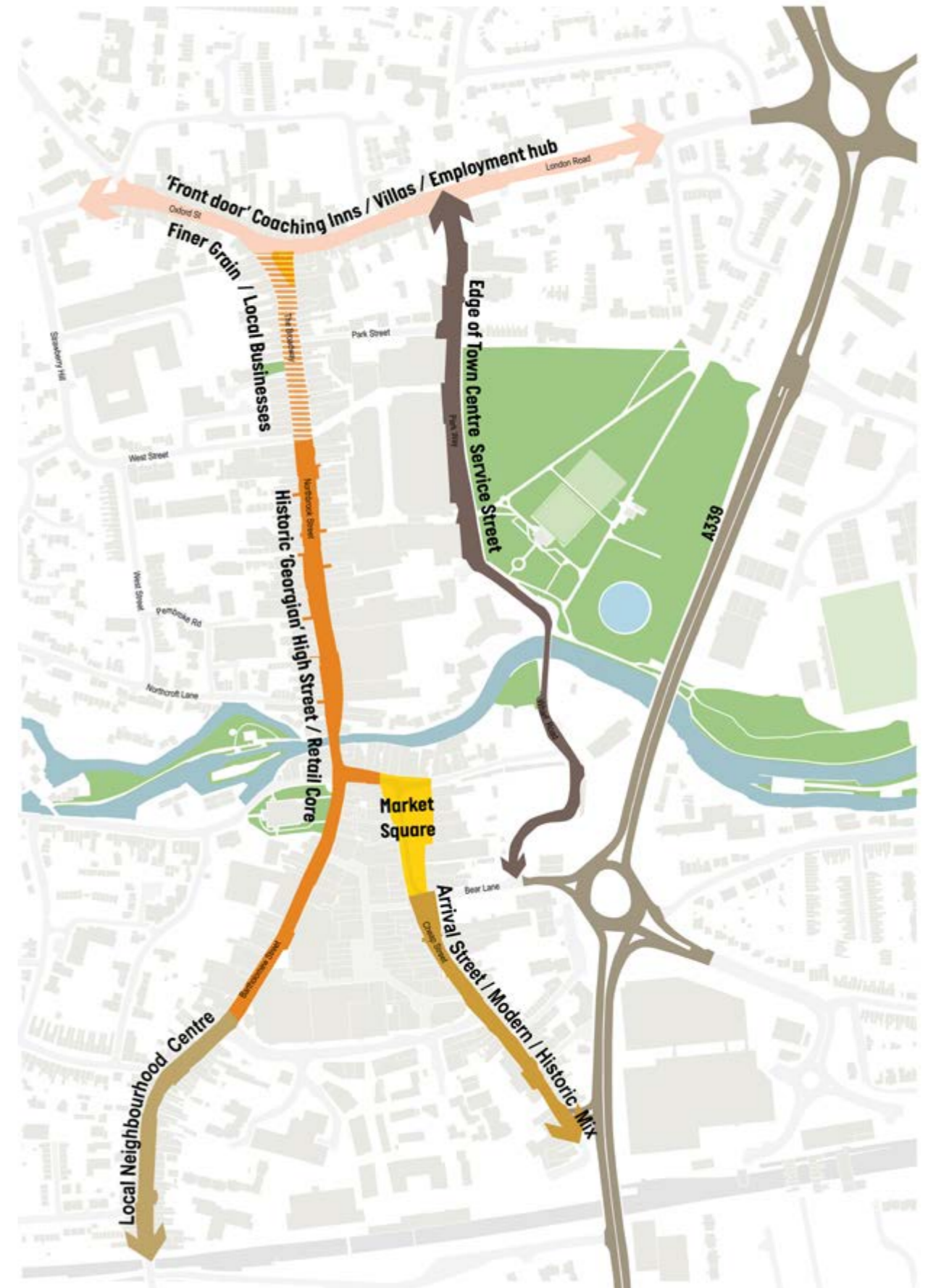
Within the core street network, there are a variety of characters.

At the northern end of the town centre, the 'Broadway' has a distinctive neighbourhood character, but the east-west route of Oxford Street and London Road has a grander character, reflecting its historic role as a coaching route. The quality of the street does however decline as it approaches the A339, and the hotels have an out of town character despite being 2 minutes walk from Northbrook Street or Victoria Park.

Park Way is an important arrival street for residents and visitors, on foot, cycle, car or bus. Connecting London Road to the canal and the Wharf, and running alongside Parkway shopping centre and Victoria Park, it has the potential to be a grand civic

street. Currently however its character is more of a service route, providing access to car parks, service yards and the bus station.

Northbrook Street, Bartholomew St and Cheap street a contain buildings from both the 18th and 19th century. The plot based nature of development is a key characteristic of Newbury. A rich mix of architectural styles create well composed streets despite the mix of architectural periods. Larger building footprints tend to be found in the core area along Northbrook Street and Bartholomew Street. Desirable for national retailers this area has provided the core retail focus for Newbury. Further on the fringe building frontages tighten and the mix of uses broaden along both Bartholomew and Cheap Street which encompass more of a local neighbourhood feel.





Street Character - Town Centre Lanes

There are a number of lanes running east and west from Northbrook Street which add interest and variety along the linear street. Although not all lanes are suitable for visitors to explore the entrances on the street create visual interest and contribute to the character of the town centre.

The most attractive is Weavers Walk with a number of independent businesses, cafés with outside seating and a small enclosed space at its end. It is connected to a surface car park but is not open to the car park. Northcroft Lane is an attractive street and leads to the water but has few uses to attract visitors. Other lanes lead directly to car parks and provide important access routes but limited interest to visitors.

To the east of Northbrook Street, the Parkway scheme has created an attractive network of pedestrianised streets, but of very different character from the Newbury lanes. The streets suffer from the relatively poor connection to Victoria Park. Further opportunities exist to the rear of Camp Hopson where pedestrian routes do exist to the park and the canal, but these are difficult to find and not particularly attractive to use.

South of the canal, the Arcade is an attractive lane connecting Bartholomew Street to Market Place. There are interesting lanes leading east of Market Place, either side of West Berkshire Museum, and alongside the Corn Exchange. Although Wharf Street eventually leads to the canal and the library it is separated from it by the car parking, bus street and associated infrastructure. The presence of commercial waste bins also gives the impression of a service area rather than a visitor destination, and does not encourage exploration of the area.

Key Messages

- Newbury's predominantly north-south street pattern is complemented by a variety of east-west lanes
- Improving the quality and connectedness of these lanes could encourage visitors to explore other areas of the town centre.



"The great asset of Newbury is its present parks, public open spaces, and allotments."
 Newbury Town Plan



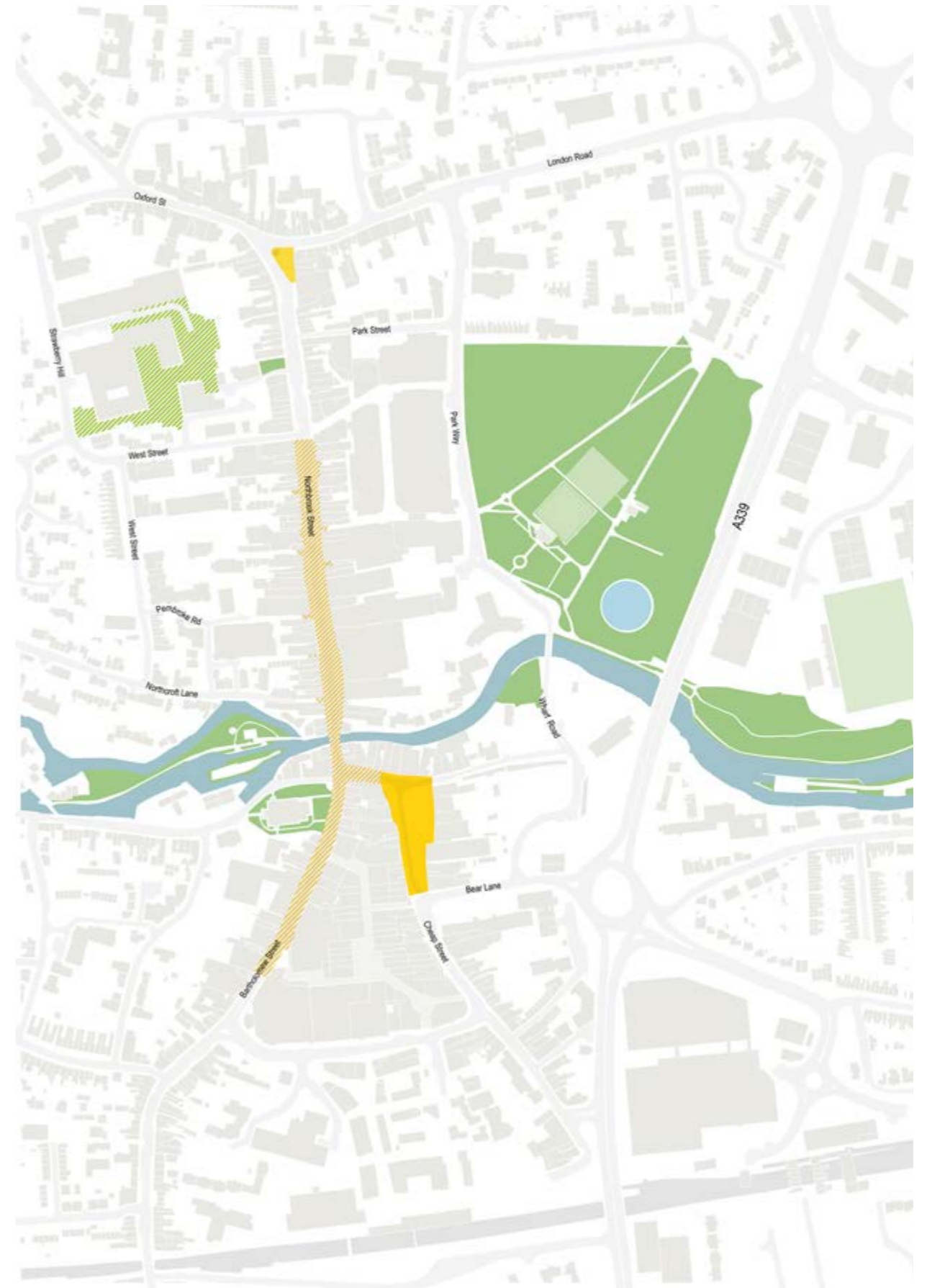
Public Space

The canal is an important accessible area of 'public open space' for Newbury as a whole. Within the town centre, the most important area is the Wharf which provides the main opportunity to relax and enjoy the waterfront.

On the opposite side of the canal, Victoria Park is the most significant green space in the town centre. Northcroft Park is an important recreation and leisure area for Newbury but does not function as a 'town centre park' in the same way. Victoria Park is directly adjacent to the new Parkway scheme, and 2-3 minutes walk from Northbrook Street, Bridge Street or Market Place.

Key Messages

- Victoria Park is a major asset but its pedestrian connections could be improved, particularly from the town centre.
- Market Square is an attractive space, but improving connections to the Wharf and the Canal would help improve its vibrancy
- There is a possible shortage of space for events.





Kennet & Avon Canal

Character

The canal changes character as it passes through the town centre.

West of Bridge Street the canal is rural in character, with open views to countryside. As it approaches the town centre there are strong views to the church and to Bridge Street.

In the core area it has a more urban quality, with buildings close to the water's edge. Views of the water, and along the water, are relatively limited.

As the canal reaches Victoria Park and the Wharf it again becomes more open, but with a 'civic' town centre quality. There are longer distance views to the water and along the water, and recreational use of the water.

East of the A339 the canal has a 'working' quality, with a marina and industrial buildings, alongside sport, allotments and residential use.



Key Messages

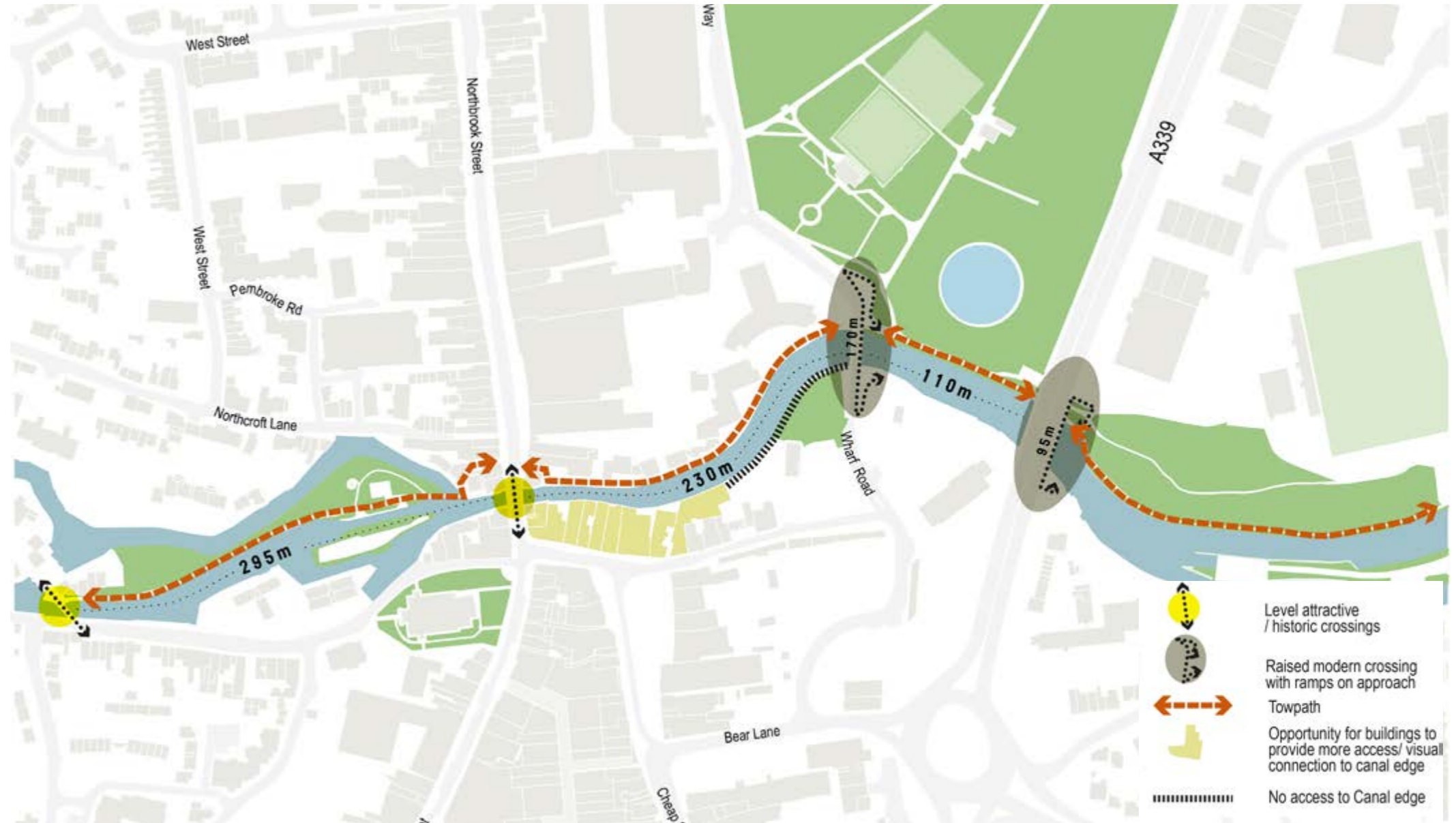
- Access to the water for pedestrians and cyclists needs to be improved in the 'town centre' area of the canal.
- More attractive and convenient crossings for pedestrians would help encourage exploration of the canal corridor.



Canal Access

West of Bridge Street and east of the bus bridge there is reasonably access to the edge of the water, the only exception being the restricted access past the canoe club. In the core town centre area however, access is more limited and more complicated. There is no towpath on the southern edge, and access to the northern edge is gained via a relatively unattractive connection from Bridge Street.

There are three crossing points in the 400m stretch of what can be considered the town centre area of the canal. Accessing these crossings requires pedestrian to take a circuitous route away from the water. All three crossings have only a weak association with the water itself and only Bridge Street provides an attractive environment for pedestrians.



Key Messages

There is a variety of town centre housing within walking distance of the town centre. This is likely to increase significantly with a number of schemes at different stages of development. There may be concern however regarding the percentage of apartments proposed in the town centre and lack of diversity in the housing offer.



Town centre living

Residential uses bring life to the town centre during the evenings and weekends, supporting local businesses and making the town centre feel more secure.

Newbury has a variety of residential streets in close proximity to the main shopping streets, and this will increase with the Market Street development (shown on the plan) currently under construction. The vacant Bayer office premises also have permitted development rights for potential conversion to apartments and there are proposals to provide additional residential through redevelopment of the London Road Industrial Estate.



The Parkway scheme has increased the number of people living on upper floors above ground floor retail, and it is likely that this will increase further with the proposed redevelopment of the Kennet Centre (Eagle Quarter).

The plan does however show a lack of town centre living in the core of the town centre, close to Market Place and along Northbrook Street. The new schemes under construction, with permitted development rights or currently out for consultation are also heavily dominated by apartments.



Key Messages

Newbury has lost some large office employers. There is potential for new office space (and residential) on the London Road industrial estate but for the town centre to benefit from this pedestrian connections need to be improved.



Employment

Town centres with a strong employment base are predicted to recover quicker and stronger from the economic impact of the pandemic.

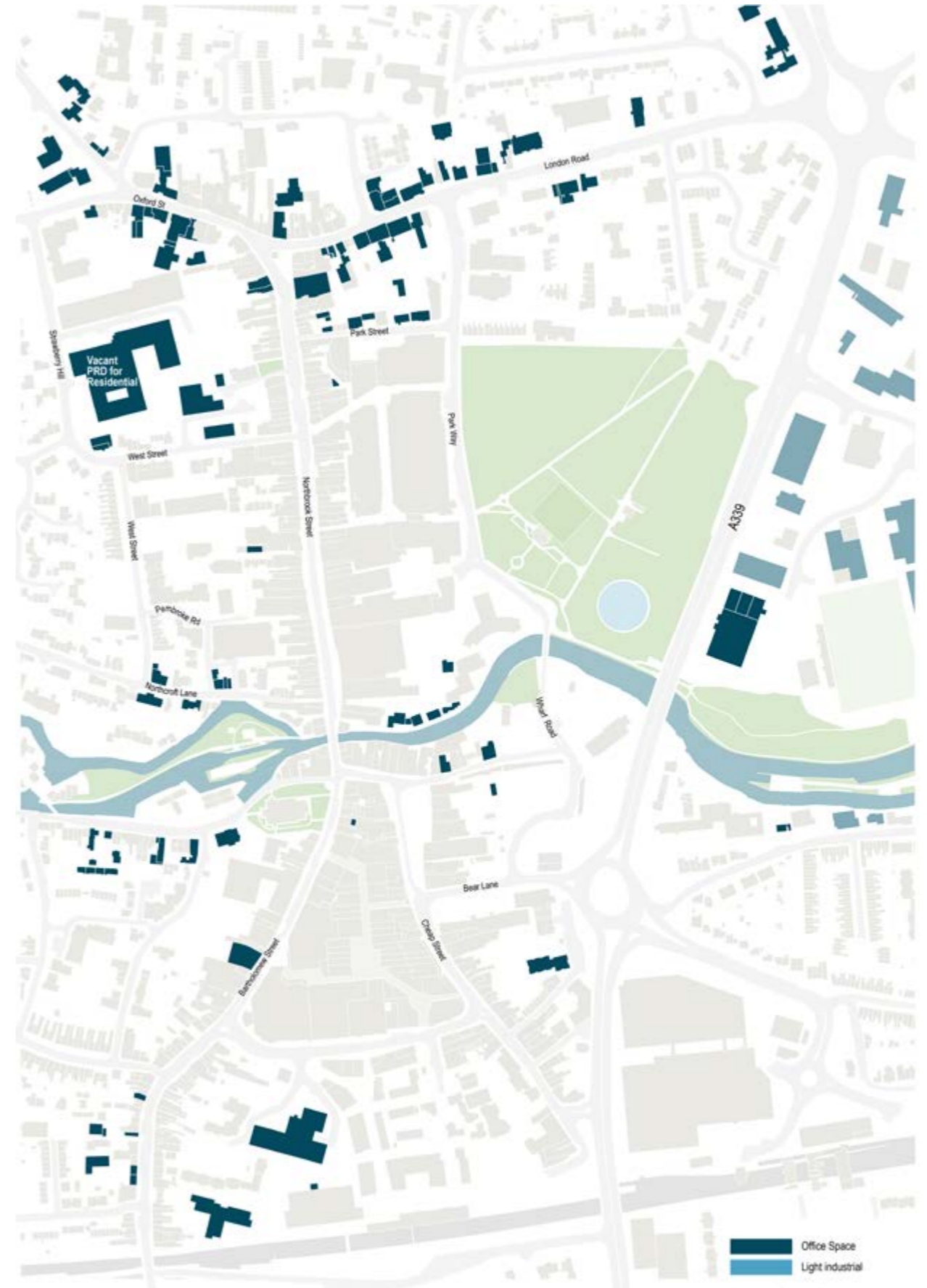
The core areas of employment are shown to the Oxford Road/London Road corridor, the rail station area and the London Road Industrial Estate. There is a relative lack of office or employment space in the core of the town centre. The Council offices are therefore an important ingredient in the town centre employment offer.

The Oxford Road/London Road corridor has a strong 'professional' office character, recognising the quality of some of the historic buildings along

this route, but has lost significant employment in the former Bayer offices.

The London Road Industrial Estate (and areas to the east) are a key employment area for the town, but likely to bring less direct expenditure to the town centre because of the barrier created by the A339.

"Newbury must provide opportunities to new business start-ups, growing businesses requiring new space, and businesses seeking to enter the area. More incubation hubs should be provided for start-up businesses and remote workers." - Newbury Town Plan



Key Messages

- Pedestrianised area of Northbrook St and Parkway heavily dominated by A1 retail. There is greater diversity around Market Place and in secondary retail areas.
- Cultural uses clustered around Market Place & the Wharf but slightly isolated from the town centre.

Retail & Leisure

'Multi-functional' town centres which have a range of attractions and are less reliant on A1 shopping uses are less vulnerable to the changes in shopping patterns which are seeing a reduction in demand for retail space.

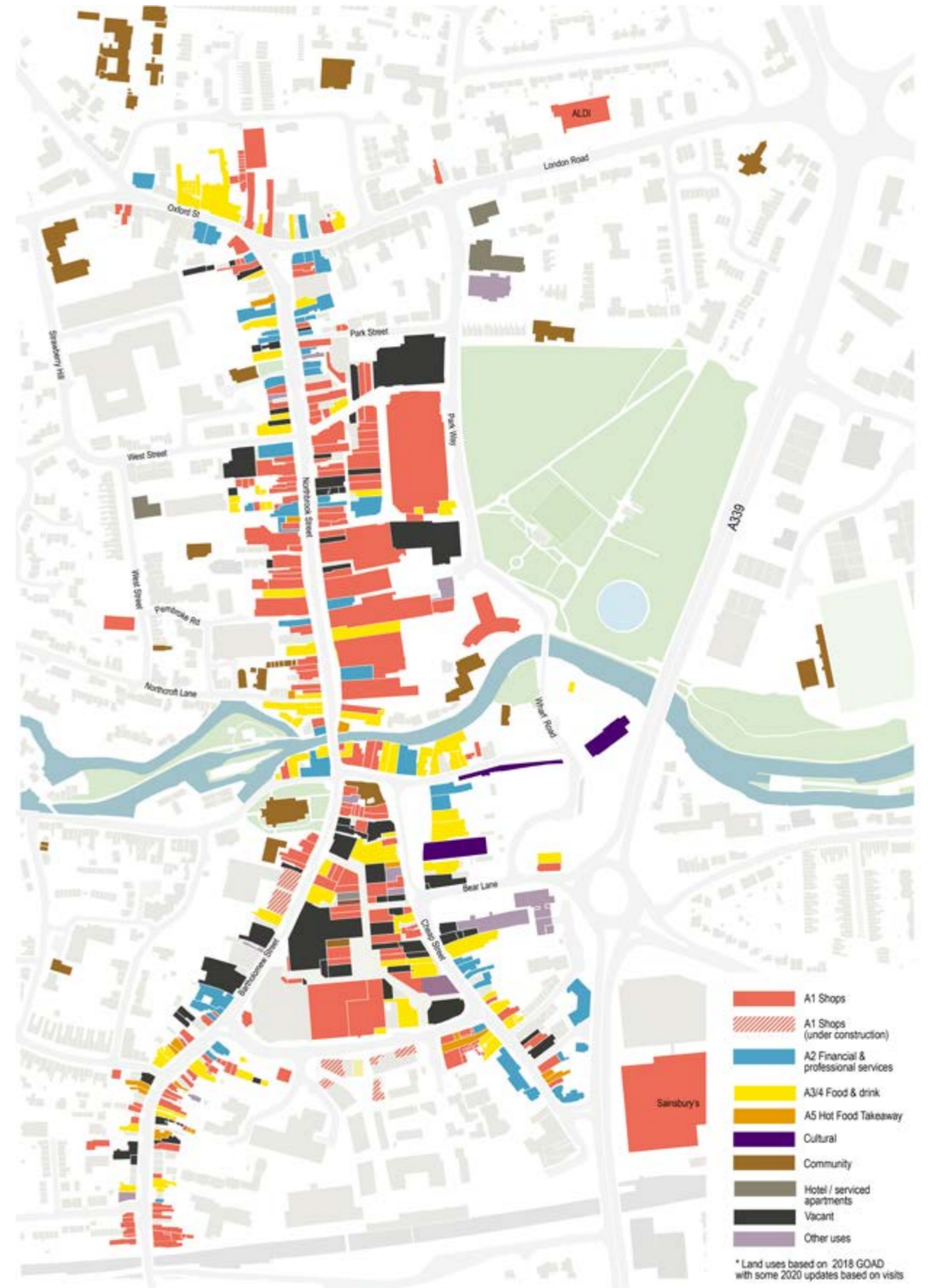
The variety of uses in Newbury town centre shows that it is reasonably 'multi-functional' but there are some clear weaknesses. The core of Northbrook Street and Parkway is heavily dominated by A1 retail (red) and its potential vulnerability has been demonstrated by the recent loss of Debenhams and John Lewis. The Kennet Centre has also been dominated by A1 uses, and at the time of the GOAD survey in 2018 suffered heavily from vacancies. It is notable that the redevelopment proposals significantly reduce the scale of A1 uses and focus on food and drink and independent businesses.

Those areas with the best mix of uses are the more 'peripheral' areas of Broadway/Oxford Street, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street. Market Place also has a high percentage of food and drink

uses (although these have suffered recently with the impact of the pandemic). The small number of cultural uses are also concentrated close to Market Square and the Wharf, including the Corn Exchange, Museum and Library.

There is a mix of community uses in close proximity to the town centre, but an absence of secondary schools or colleges which can bring additional life and expenditure.

"In recent times a clustering effect has made Newbury north of the Canal specialise in shops while south of the Canal specialises in restaurants, bars, and the night-time economy. South of the Canal is the Market Place with its weekly and monthly markets, but other retail outlets are at a footfall disadvantage compared to those north of the Canal, and are limited to specialist shops. The planned development at Market Street and refurbishment of the Kennet Centre should help to redress this imbalance." - Newbury Town Plan



Key Messages

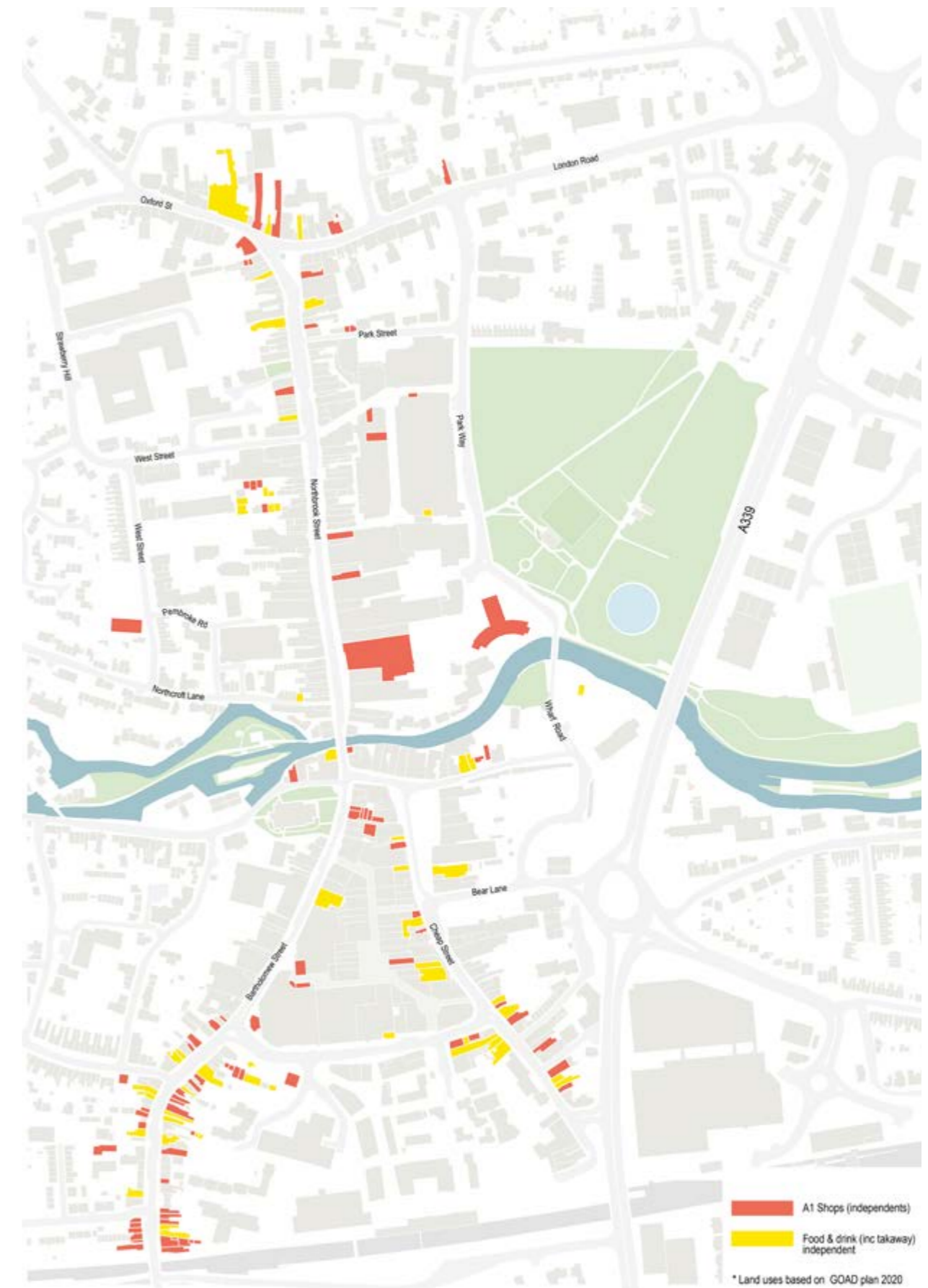
Independent businesses are clustered in the secondary retail areas. There is a lack of independent businesses in the core area, with the notable exception of Camp Hopson.

Independents

Independent businesses bring a stronger sense of identity to a town centre, particularly market towns. They also help make a town centre less vulnerable to decisions made at a national level.

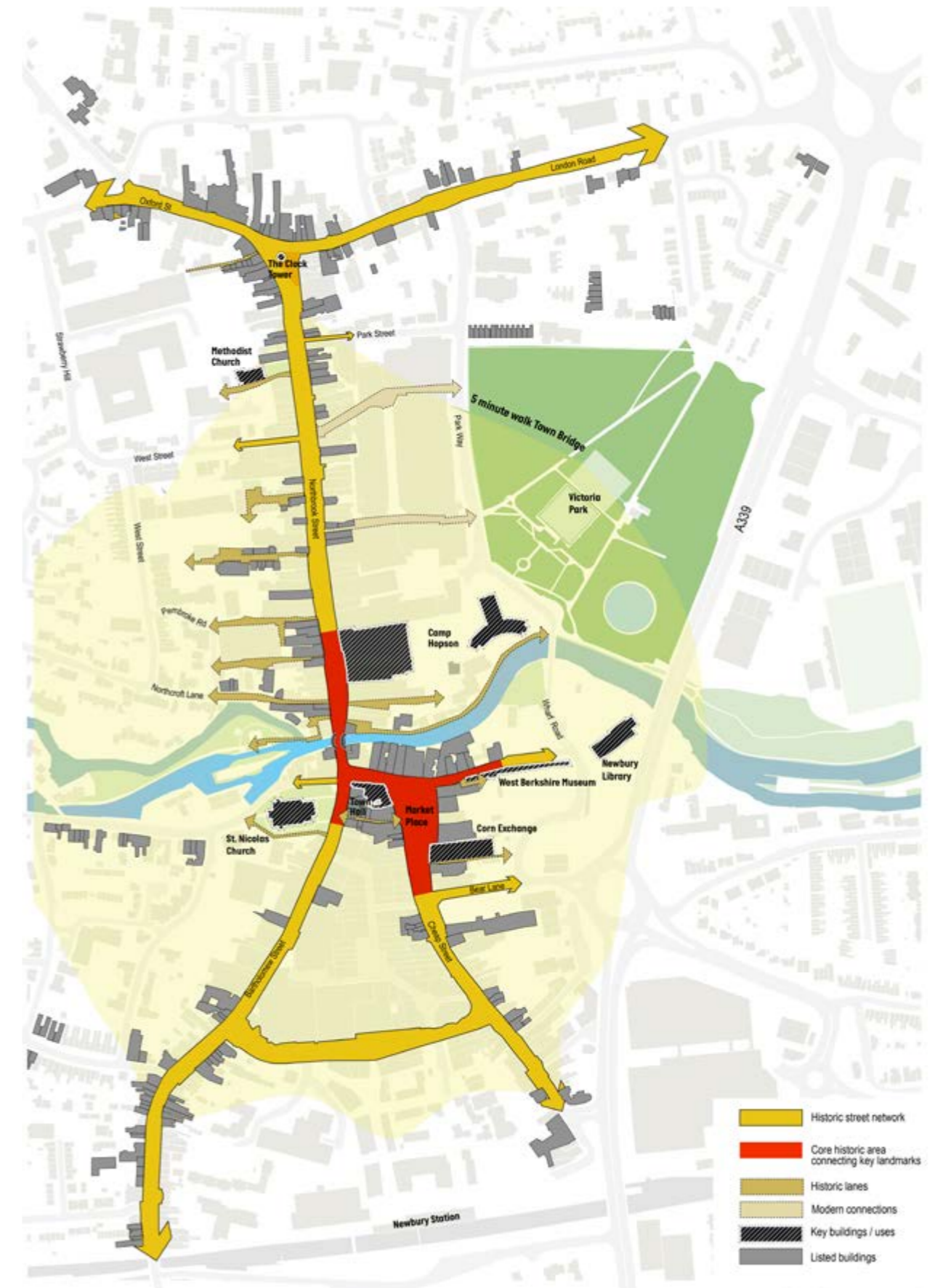
Newbury has a reasonably good mix of independents, but again these are concentrated in the 'peripheral' areas of Broadway/Oxford Street, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street, where rents are cheaper and the unit sizes often smaller.

With the notable exception of Camp Hopson, the central area of Northbrook Street, Parkway, Market Place and the Kennet Centre is dominated by national businesses. The proposed redevelopment of the Kennet Centre states that it will focus on smaller ground floor units to attract independent businesses.



Key Features

- Compact nature of town centre - most key destinations/ features all within a 5 Min walk.
- Strong North - South historic street network. Linear nature of North South route would makes features such as the clock tower feel more connected than the park despite being more than a 5 Min walk away.
- Secondary lanes are a key feature but they often don't link very well to additional uses/ spaces or create circuits
- Areas away from central north south spine are poorly connected. Wharf area and river provide perfect opportunity to create improved / new connections to make destinations such as the library and Victoria park feel more part of the town centre.



The baseline assessment has identified a number of vacant buildings, underutilised sites and areas in need of improvement within the town centre.

The Wharf

This includes the areas of surface car parking to the south of the canal, the Waterside Centre and land to the rear of Camp Hopson to the north of the canal. It includes the existing Camp Hopson building as they have indicated a potential desire to consolidate their retail use and that this may no longer be required. It is considered important that the areas north and south of the canal are considered as a coherent site, even if delivered independently.

Bear Lane

The BT Exchange and adjacent Royal Mail depot area has long been a priority for the town centre. Current discussions still indicate an unwillingness from BT to consider its redevelopment.

The A339

Treatment of the A339 is needed to improve perceptions of the town centre, and to reduce its impact on the Wharf and Victoria Park as well as on the proposed redevelopment of London Road Industrial Estate. Crossing of the A339 for pedestrians and cyclists needs to be improved to support the town centre.

London Road/Park Way

The vacant Debenhams building requires redevelopment or 're-purposing'. This provides an opportunity to enhance connections between

Northbrook Street and Victoria Park. This should be considered comprehensively with the opportunity to improve arrival into the town centre via London Road.

Broadway

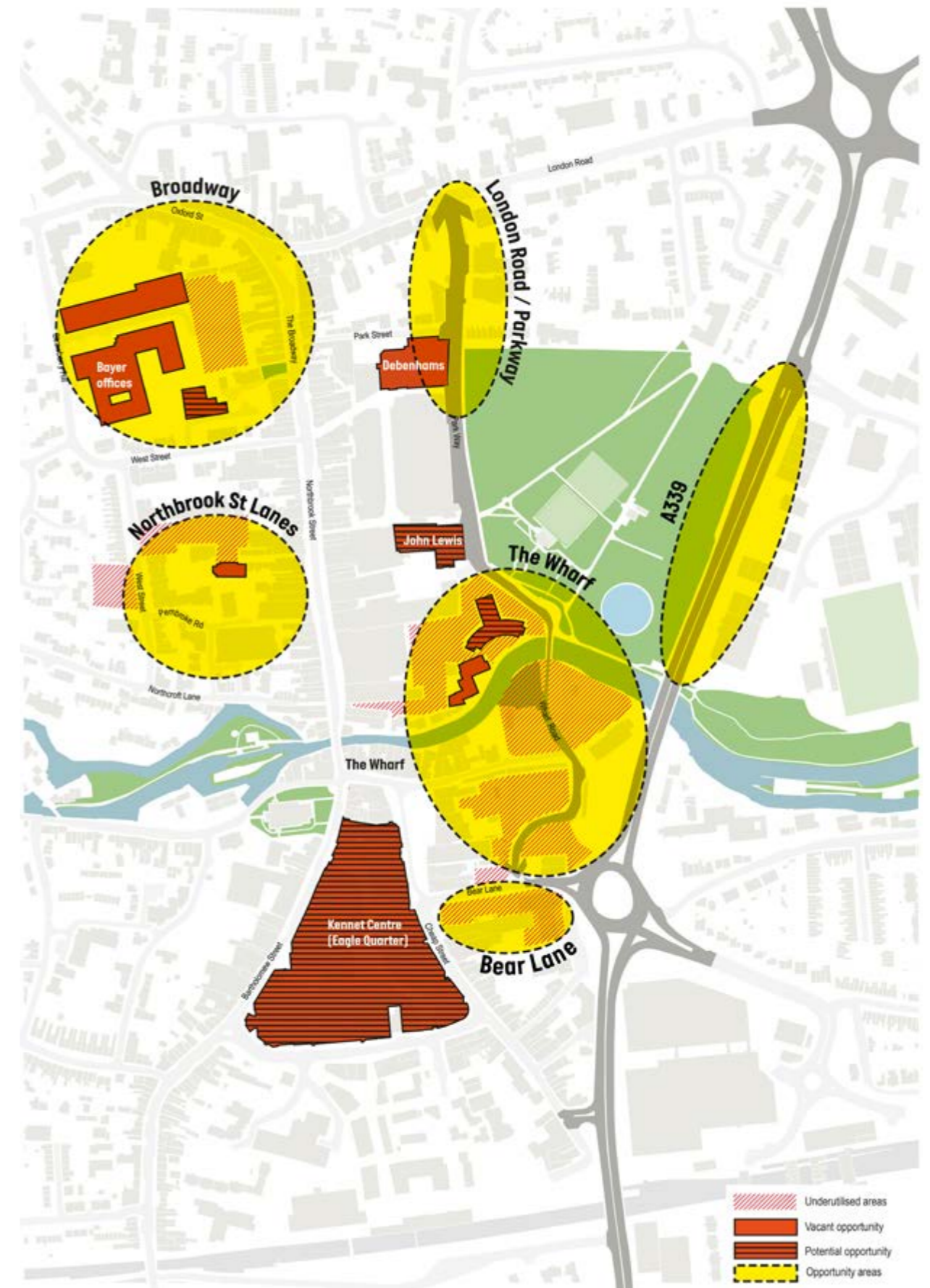
There are vacant buildings and underutilised land to the rear of Broadway, including the Bayer offices and associated car park. There is an opportunity to enhance connections to Broadway and should be considered comprehensively with potential public realm improvements in this area.

Northbrook Street Lanes

There is an opportunity to improve connections from Northbrook Street, via Weavers Walk and other lanes, to residential areas to the west. This could include consideration of the surrounding surface car parks the area around the United Reform Church and Northbrook Multi-storey car park.

Kennet Centre / Eagle Quarter

There are proposals to redevelop this area, as noted in the baseline reports. The principle of the new street structure is to be welcomed but consideration will need to be given to the massing and heights of replacement buildings.



A vision for Newbury

3

Crossroads are a place where routes, and therefore people, come together. Crossroads are why many places exist and were the 'birthplace' of many market towns.

In placing the concept of The Crossroads at the heart of the future Vision our aim is to ensure that as Newbury responds to the need for change, it remembers its market town heritage, and remains a focus for social interaction, economic growth, civic engagement and community activities.

Newbury will continue to be a successful, modern market town by ensuring it is a place that:

- Promotes its heritage and independent identity.
- Is innovative and entrepreneurial, able to respond quickly to economic change.
- Is social and welcoming, where people gather to meet and celebrate.
- Is green in the widest sense, promoting sustainability, biodiversity and healthy living.
- Listens to the needs of its urban and rural community.



Based on its identified strengths, key national trends and local priorities, we believe Newbury town centre should aspire to be:

Inclusive & Welcoming

A town centre that is walkable and easy to navigate. That everyone can access and in which they feel safe and comfortable.

Historic & Progressive

A town centre that protects its distinctive market town identity but recognises the need to adapt and evolve. A place that values its heritage assets and places them at the centre of modern civic and community life.

Social & Cultural

A town centre that encourages social interaction in its streets, spaces and buildings. A place where people want to come to meet friends, relax and have fun.

Independent & Entrepreneurial

A town centre that welcomes innovation. That promotes local, ethical and independent traders. Where start-ups and small businesses can thrive.

Local & Regional

A community focused town centre that provides a high quality of life, that meets the needs of all its residents & those in the rural areas that depend on it.

Green & Healthy

A town centre that puts people and the planet first. That addresses the challenges of physical health, mental health, and the climate emergency.

Masterplan Strategy

4

This section of the report describes the principles which underpin the masterplan, and which will help deliver the objectives identified in the Newbury Vision.

There are 10 principles:

Principle 1: A 'broader' town centre

Principle 2: Celebrating 'The Crossroads'

Principle 3: A more 'walkable' town centre

Principle 4: A more 'welcoming' town centre

Principle 5: A 'greener' town centre

Principle 6: A more 'sociable' town centre

Principle 7: A more 'cultural' town centre

Principle 8: A more 'independent' town centre

Principle 9: A more 'entrepreneurial' town centre

Principle 10: A more 'balanced' town centre community

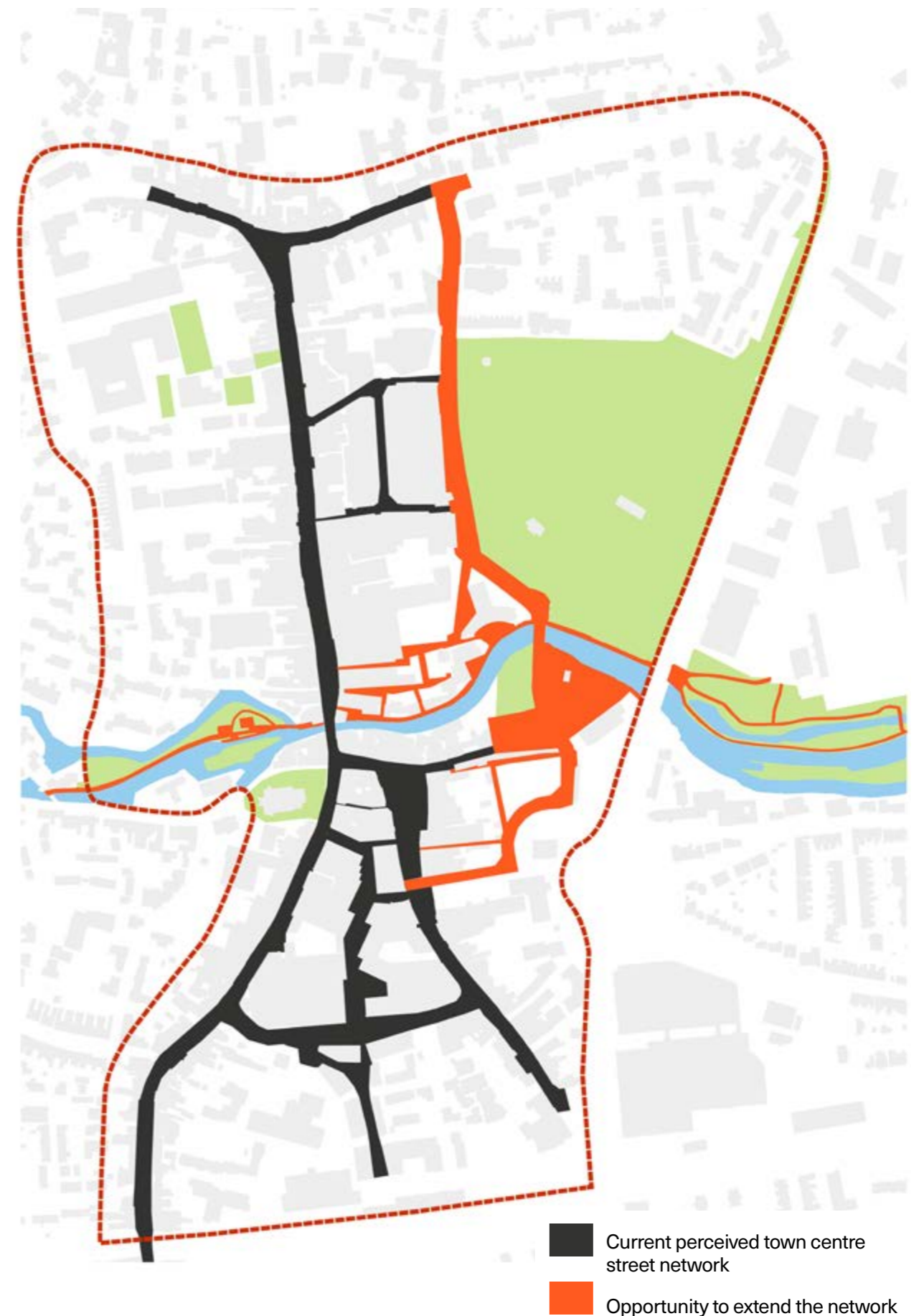
Principle 1: Broadening the town centre

'Broadening' the town centre makes key attractions such as the park and canal feel closer to the shopping streets. Widening the perception of what the town centre offers can encourage more visits and longer visits.

The masterplan for Newbury town centre has been prepared in the context of a national decline in demand for retail floorspace, most visibly demonstrated in the closure of the Debenhams department store. But it is also prepared in the context of Newbury being a relatively prosperous and successful market town that has the opportunity to respond positively to the current social and economic changes.

The key structural objective of the masterplan is to expand the perceived extent of Newbury town centre. This may seem counterintuitive in the face of declining retail demand, but by broadening the leisure, community and cultural 'experience' Newbury can attract more visitors, encourage them to stay longer and use the town centre differently. The key opportunities in this respect are considered to be Victoria Park, Kennet & Avon Canal and the Wharf, alongside the Museum, Library and Waterside Centre.

By making the town centre more 'walkable', and enhancing permeability north-south and east-west, the masterplan can assist Newbury to achieve this by making the most of its existing spaces, buildings and other assets, and with relatively limited need for investment in new floorspace.



Principle 2: Celebrating the 'crossroads'

The 'crossroads' of Northbrook Street and the Canal is key to Newbury's identity. Improving access for pedestrians, removing traffic lights, commercial refuse bins and bollards can help 'celebrate' this historic area.

The masterplan marks the meeting point of Newbury town centre's most important north-south route, Northbrook Street/Bartholomew Street, and its most important east-west route, the Kennet & Avon Canal.

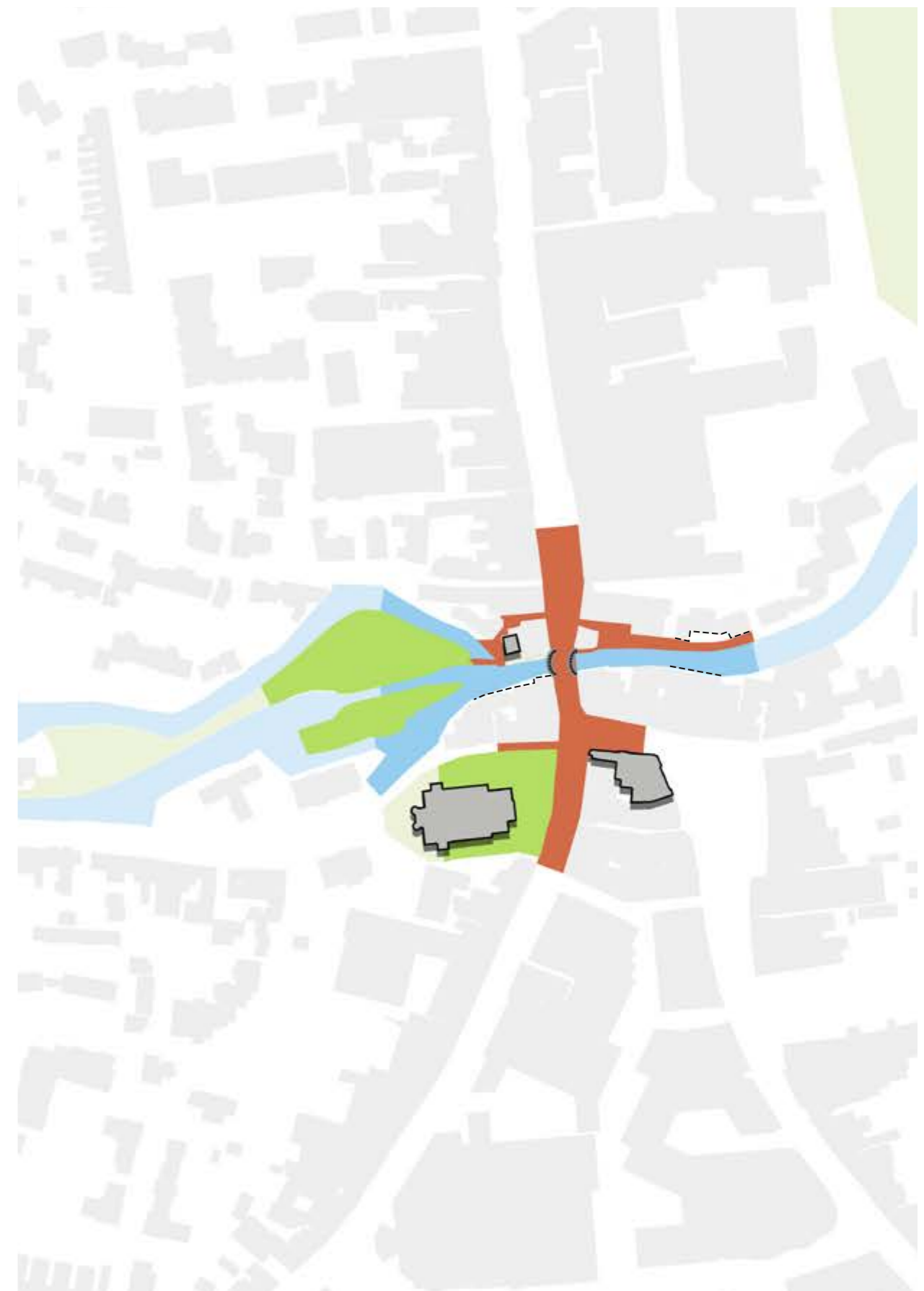
The public realm strategy reinforces the Newbury Crossroads. Reducing traffic on Bridge Street, and making it one-way allows for traffic signals, signage and vehicular 'infrastructure' to be significantly simplified, improving pedestrian enjoyment of the Bridge and improving the setting of St Nicolas Church. Enjoyment of the canal can be enhanced by:

- improving signage and visibility of the lanes which provide access to the canal,
- improving the physical environment of the towpath at those access points,
- improving views from Bridge Street along the canal, and

- improving arrival into Bridge Street from the towpath.

The masterplan places more activity and destinations along the canal, both east and west of Bridge Street. It encourages more pedestrian flow along the towpath and more people to arrive into the town centre via the canal. The masterplan therefore puts Bridge Street and the Canal firmly at the heart of the town centre.

There is currently very limited activity along the towpath. The Waterside Centre will provide opportunities for café/restaurant and leisure activity to front the towpath and the masterplan proposes that this should also be considered as part of the uses for the Camp Hopson building. Further east the proposed extension to the Library should create a new destination at the Wharf. And west of Bridge Street there is potential to promote safe access to the water for small scale recreational uses such as canoeing and paddle boarding.



Principle 3: A more 'walkable' town centre

Surveys show that people who walk to town centres visit more often and spend more than those who drive. Creating a 'walkable' town centre is good for the environment, good for public health and good for the economy.

By making the town centre more 'walkable', and by enhancing permeability north-south and east-west, the masterplan can assist Newbury to 'broaden' its appeal by making the most of its existing spaces, buildings and other assets. This strengthens the historic character of the town centre and reduces the need for investment in new floorspace.

Newbury should be a highly 'walkable' town centre. It has a compact form with many of its core attractions within a potential 5-minute walk from Bridge Street. But there are a number of barriers which deter pedestrians from visiting these areas.

The main barriers to east-west integration are the qualities of Park Way, Wharf Street and the towpath. The main barriers to north-south movement are the limited opportunities to cross the water, with only Bridge Street providing a high quality pedestrian environment.

The public realm strategy therefore includes proposals for:

- improving Park Way as a street for pedestrians and cyclists

- connecting Parkway shopping centre (and Northbrook Street) more effectively to Victoria Park
- improving 'wayfinding' to the towpath from Northbrook Street
- improving pedestrian and cycle crossing of the water.

Removing the traffic from Market Place increases its attractiveness for outdoor eating and drinking and the flexibility for markets and events. The public realm and movement strategy reinforces Market Place as the social and cultural focus of Newbury. The expanded pedestrian network increases the variety of routes into Market Place. The masterplan also increases the concentration of activity east of Market Place. Alongside creating a new events and social space at the Wharf (see below) and improvements to Wharf Street, the masterplan proposes to improve the space to the rear of the Corn Exchange and adjacent public houses. The strategy therefore strengthens footfall into Market Place by increasing the activity around it and improving the pedestrian connections into it.



Principle 4: A more 'welcoming' town centre

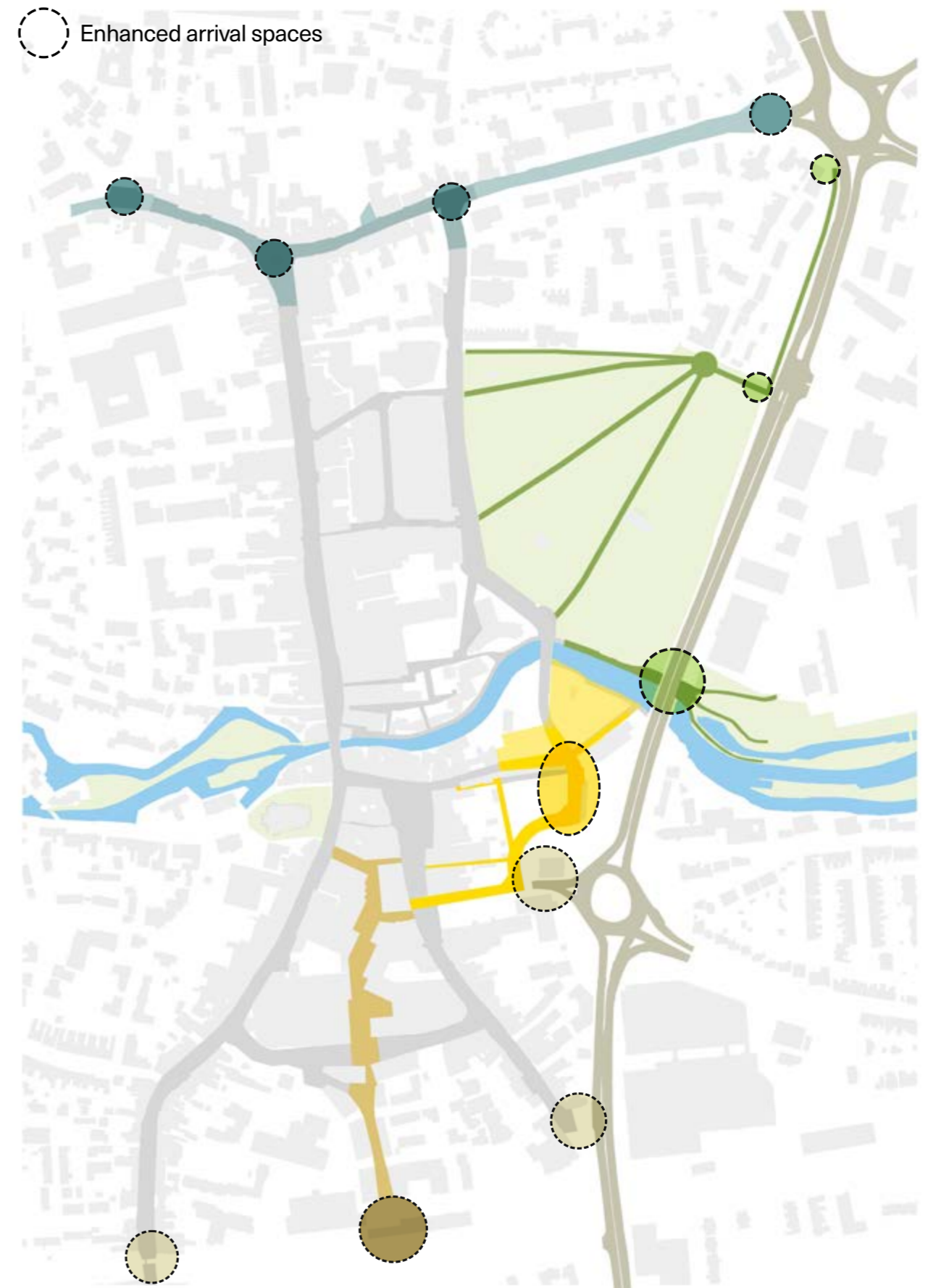
It is important to create a good first impression. Improving arrival at the bus station, rail station, along the canal and for motorists on the A339 can all help encourage more visits to the town centre.

Arrival into the town centre for pedestrians, cyclists, rail passengers, bus passengers and motorists needs improving. This was highlighted in the baseline study and in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The masterplan proposes enhanced arrival spaces at the rail and bus station. The Kennet Centre proposals, together with the Market Street redevelopment, create stronger links from the rail station to the town centre. The masterplan proposals for the Wharf area will help integrate the bus station into the town centre, making it a more pleasant place to wait and to arrive.

The A339 and London Road are key arrival points. Key arrival spaces should be improved along London Road, from Robins Hood roundabout. Routes for pedestrians and cyclists are proposed to be improved across and underneath the A339, with a particular focus on arrival into Victoria Park.

In the longer term, the A339 should feel more like a town centre 'street' than a bypass. The Conservation Area Appraisal highlights the impact of the 'noise, smells and vibration' from the A339 traffic on Victoria Park. Improvements to the A339, including reducing traffic speeds, can help address this and ensure that the future mixed-use community on the London Road Industrial Estate feels part of the town centre.



Principle 5: A 'greener' town centre

The pandemic has accelerated the demand from residents for more green space. Parks are now important destinations which encourage people to visit their town centres, particularly young people and families.

Victoria Park is a large green space close to the town centre but the only other green space of any quality is associated with St Nicolas Church. The masterplan proposes to enhance Victoria Park but also to enhance the small area of green space at the Wharf, immediately west of the American Bridge and opposite the new Waterside Centre. This would then form part of a stronger network of green spaces along the canal, from the marina in the east to Monkey Bridge in the west.

The green space at the Wharf can be made more usable and more attractive as a 'pocket park'. Removing the car parking would enable a larger public space to be created improving the physical setting of the Museum building, and providing spill out space for events and exhibitions. Restructuring the planting would enable views between the Museum and the Waterside Centre, improving the sense of connection north and south of the Canal.

East of the A339 there is a potentially attractive green space along the canal and close to the marina. Redevelopment of the London Road Industrial Estate

provides an opportunity to create a higher quality park for residents and visitors, and to enhance the arrival into the town centre from this direction. This is particularly important in maximising the commercial and community benefits of the new housing and employment proposed.

The canoe club is also located east of the A339 (south of the canal) but discussions with the Canal & River Trust indicate that it would be difficult to increase public leisure use of the canal here or adjacent to the Wharf. The masterplan therefore proposes that consideration be given to increasing informal leisure use of the water at the green space further west, between Bridge Street and Monkey Bridge. This would give paddleboarders or kayakers potential access to a longer and safer stretch of water and would link the town centre more actively with the countryside to the west. If successful it could also encourage visitors to explore as far as Northcroft and Goldwell Parks, which provide important recreational space for residents but do not currently feel part of the town centre.



Principle 5: A 'greener' town centre cont.

The masterplan also identifies opportunities to bring additional planting into the town centre streets and surface car parks. The priority is to provide additional planting along Park Way. A higher quality 'gateway' space at its junction with London Road would create a strong sense of arrival into the town centre, and enhance the environment for the two hotels. More greenery and tree planting along Park Way would create a more appropriate route south to Victoria Park.

The potential exists to bring additional planting (permanent or mobile) into West Street. This would help soften the shopping centre environment, but also help draw visitors from Northbrook Street towards Victoria Park. Any redevelopment or repurposing of the former Debenhams store should take the opportunity to improve the 'green connection' across Park Way to Victoria Park. The potential could be considered for a 'green wall' to improve the appearance of the adjacent car park. If space is created through the redevelopment of Debenhams then consideration could also be given to additional planting along Park Street, linking Park Way to Northbrook Street.

West of Northbrook Street the former Bayer offices site, together with the Council's West Street offices has the potential to create a small 'pocket park' in the town centre. Any potential reuse of the Bayer offices should consider this, together with improved pedestrian links to Northbrook Street and The Broadway via the identified Lanes and to the green space in front of Newbury Methodist Church.

Within Northbrook Street the potential for significant planting is constrained both by the need for vehicular and service access but also by the qualities of the Conservation Area and listed buildings. There are however opportunities for smaller scale, removable planting and parklets along Northbrook Street which can be coordinated with outdoor seating for cafés and restaurants.

Survey Response

45% of survey respondents would like the town centre to have more green spaces

66% would like Victoria Park to be more integrated with the town centre.

"Add more planting and green space to the (town) centre, perhaps incorporated with flexible seating spaces"

"Open up more green space and pedestrianise more of the town centre."

"Integrate the river more. There is wasted space between the white bus bridge and the small northbrook street bridge that could be turned into eating places and shops - and the library car park area towards the river. We have a lovely river and no one would even know it exists"

Principle 6: A more 'sociable' town centre

Increasing the amount of outside space for social and cultural activity should be a priority for Newbury town centre.

Survey Response

"Encourage the use of the canal as a backdrop for eating and socialising."

"Pedestrianise the town centre and utilise the space to create spaces for socialising and play, animating the high street."

The masterplan proposes additional open space at the Wharf and looks to provide improved leisure and recreation facilities at Victoria Park and along the Canal. The new space at the Wharf, in conjunction with Market Place would significantly increase the flexibility of the town centre to host events and activities, as well as being a social space in its own right, increasing access to the water.

The masterplan also recognises the increased demand for outdoor eating and drinking. The focus for this remains Market Place which provides an attractive space and a critical mass of bars and restaurants and acts as a destination for the town centre, but it is considered that there is potential to extend provision into the streets, lanes and waterfront areas around Market Place, and for some additional provision at the Wharf.

Many of the operators on the eastern sides of Market Place rely on space to the rear for outdoor eating

and drinking. The masterplan seeks to support this by creating a series of attractive lanes and small spaces between the rear of the Corn Exchange and the Museum.

There are opportunities to increase spill-out space available to existing cafés and restaurants on Northbrook Street, in conjunction with measures to reduce the amount of traffic using the street in the evenings. Making Northbrook Street one-way for traffic would create potential space for small 'parklets' with bespoke seating and planting. By defining these areas it allows for the layout of market stalls to be coordinated to create attractive seating areas to support street food vendors. This has the potential added advantage of extending the length of the market stalls further north, drawing pedestrians along Northbrook Street towards Broadway and London Road and supporting independent food and drink operators within the Lanes.



Principle 7: A more 'cultural' town centre

Survey Response

Better open space to hold public events and festivals and more cultural space are amongst the top 5 priorities for survey respondents.

"Add space for a variety of events to draw people in."

"Bring lots more variety of activities in the High Street for young and old alike. It needs to be much more lively and the Wharf area needs to be a place people want to go to rather than a place to get from A to B (or the library)."

The masterplan seeks to reinforce the cultural importance of Market Place and create a complementary cultural and leisure destination at the Wharf. The masterplan proposes the removal of car parking at the Wharf to allow for the creation of a new cultural event space for the town.

The new 'cultural' space at the Wharf should be considered to extend north and south of the Canal. The masterplan proposes that opportunities be explored to make better long term cultural use of the Library and create a focus for leisure and cultural activity around the Waterside Centre and Camp Hopson. Improved pedestrian crossings over the canal would create a more integrated cultural hub that also includes event spaces and activities within Victoria Park.

The masterplan seeks to strengthen the connection between Market Place and the Wharf by improving Wharf Lane and creating a series of attractive lanes and small spaces between the rear of the Corn Exchange and the Museum. Removing some parking in this area would create additional spill out space for both these cultural facilities, and potentially provide an opportunity for small scale exhibition or gallery space. This would strengthen links between the Corn Exchange and the Wharf and significantly improve arrival at the bus station.



Principle 8: A more 'independent' town centre

Independent businesses are a key characteristic of market towns, and are a driver for retail growth. They need to be supported and nurtured.

Survey Response

Over two thirds of survey respondents wanted more local and independent shops in Newbury town centre, whilst over 45% would like to see more local, independent cafés and restaurants.

"Encourage independent cafés, shops etc.. through rate drops etc.."

"Lower rents for independent shops so it encourages entrepreneurs to be in the town."

The masterplan seeks to promote the heritage of Newbury as an "independent" market town, and the focus on the Newbury 'Crossroads', The Wharf and the Kennet & Avon Canal will all help to achieve this.

A key part of the strategy is to support the concentration of independent businesses in the Lanes as well as those in Broadway, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street, recognising that the proposals for the Eagle Quarter also propose to increase the space available for small, independent businesses.

The masterplan and public realm strategy look to improve the prominence and the connectivity of local and independent businesses, particularly within the Lanes. This is a combination of public realm improvements, wayfinding and a coordinated 'branding' strategy for these areas. Along Northbrook

Street potential 'loops' are identified whereby the rear of individual Lanes can be connected, creating more interesting pedestrian routes and additional arrival points into the Lanes from car parks or residential areas. This is all designed to encourage exploration of the Lanes, increase pedestrian flow and make them less reliant on the entrances from Northbrook Street. In the shorter term the main entrances can be made more prominent and distinctive, with coordinated signage and treatment of the public realm to mark the Lanes and draw visitors along Northbrook Street.

Outside the 'core area' of Newbury town centre, Broadway/London Road, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street have their own distinct character which the masterplan seeks to support and reinforce through small scale public realm and associated shopfront improvements.



Principle 9: A more 'entrepreneurial' town centre

Research shows that centres with higher levels of skilled employment are more resilient and more successful. Newbury needs to ensure that new employment has good walking connections to the town centre.

Survey Response

"Think outside the box to fill Debenhams and John Lewis - co-working spaces, market stalls etc."

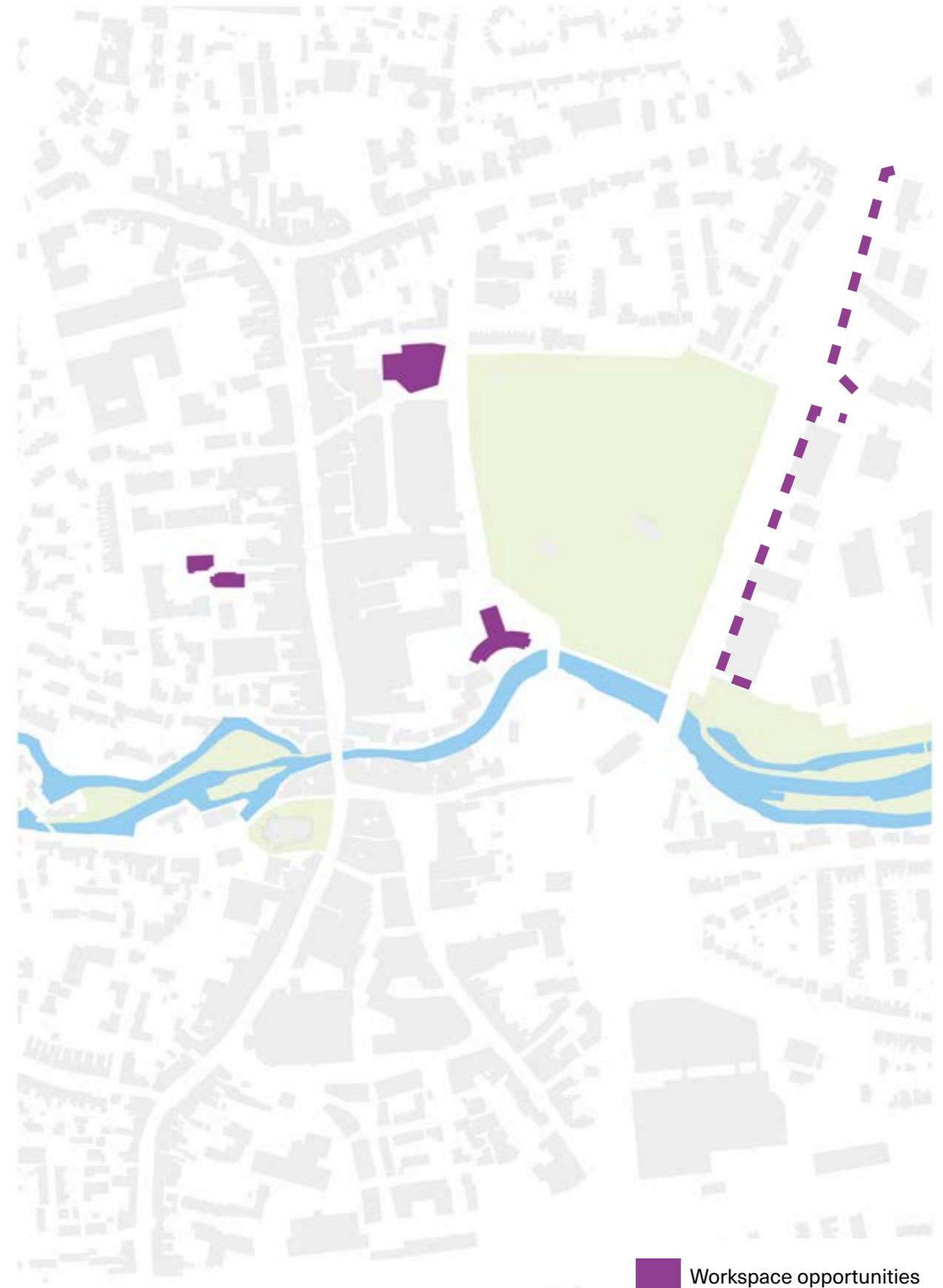
"Newbury needs to embrace the demand for satellite offices and co-working hubs in a post pandemic world. This will reduce the number of people jumping on a train to London or Reading 5 days a week. Keep them in Newbury for 2-3 days a week."

Opportunities for new office space are available through potential conversion/redevelopment of the former Debenhams store and through the proposed redevelopment of the Eagle Quarter. Such space is a vital element of any successful town centre, and should be supported with smaller scale flexible office space for small businesses and start-ups, as well as for the increasing number of people working 'flexibly' at home with reduced levels of commuting to larger cities.

Across the country vacant department stores are being repurposed for a mix of interesting cultural, leisure and community uses, promoting local craftspeople, encouraging start-up businesses or providing space for a range of NHS treatment centres. The Debenhams store is a key location within Newbury town centre and needs to be

'curated' accordingly. It has the potential to 'anchor' the northern end of the town, to reinforce the professional office 'quarter' on London Road as well as supporting the hotels, fitness facilities, pubs and restaurants in that area.

Larger office space is also proposed as part of the London Road Industrial Estate redevelopment. It is important that any such offices present a positive 'face' to the A339, creating a high quality town centre environment. Excellent pedestrian links from these new offices across the A339 are critical in maximising the benefits of these new jobs for town centre businesses.



Workspace opportunities

Principle 10: A more 'balanced' town centre community

Newbury has seen positive growth in the number of people living in the town centre. In the longer term it needs to ensure that this creates a balanced community, and does not become overly reliant on one type of housing.

The recent Parkway development, on-going Market Street development and proposed Eagle Quarter redevelopment bring a significant increase in town centre living. The former Bayer offices also have Permitted Development Rights (PDR) for conversion to residential. All these schemes, alongside the growth in later living apartments, will benefit retail, leisure and cultural activity in the town centre. Provision in the town centre has however focussed very heavily on apartments and there is a need to balance this with a wider range of housing.

There are limited development opportunities within the town centre study area which have the scale to deliver a significant level of family housing or more innovative housing schemes. In the longer term redevelopment of the BT site or relocation of the Civic Offices could provide such a site, or consideration could be given to acquisition and redevelopment of the former Bayer offices.

The major opportunity site lies just outside the town centre boundary and is the London Road Industrial Estate. The masterplan supports the principle of redeveloping this for a mix of employment and residential and in the longer term it is suggested that improvements to the crossing of the A339 that would make it easier for those living and working on the site to walk into the town centre. It is also important that the London Road Industrial Estate strikes the right balance in terms of housing provision in the town centre, complementing the scale of smaller scale apartments already provided.



Public Realm & Movement Strategy

5

Pedestrianised Core

The masterplan creates an improved environment for pedestrians by reducing vehicular access and restricting traffic to one-way working. This will reduce the amount of space required to be kept free for vehicles and create opportunities for planters, seating and parklets to create attractive areas for external eating and drinking. The need to introduce one-way working is critical to this as retaining the existing two-way working, even if vehicular traffic is reduced, will result in no new permanent space available for other uses.

The switch to one-way working would enable the width required to be kept clear on Northbrook Street for the passage of vehicles to be reduced to a single lane (with occasional loading bays) and the traffic signals either side of the bridge of the Kennet to be removed. So, whilst the benefits of removing general traffic from the area will be most obvious between the hours of 5pm and 10am, the significant reduction in traffic flows and the potential to reduce the amount of space that must be kept clear for vehicles will benefit the town centre at all times.

Perhaps most importantly, further engagement is required. Consultation with businesses, residents and market traders is necessary to better understand if and how they might take advantage of the space that could be created and whether these might outweigh people's concerns. It is then recommended that a trial is conducted (using an Experimental Traffic Order), potentially using temporary installations of street furniture and planting to help demonstrate the possible implications of the change.

Lanes & Yards

A coordinated programme of signage and public realm improvements is proposed to mark the entrances to the Lanes & Yards from the main

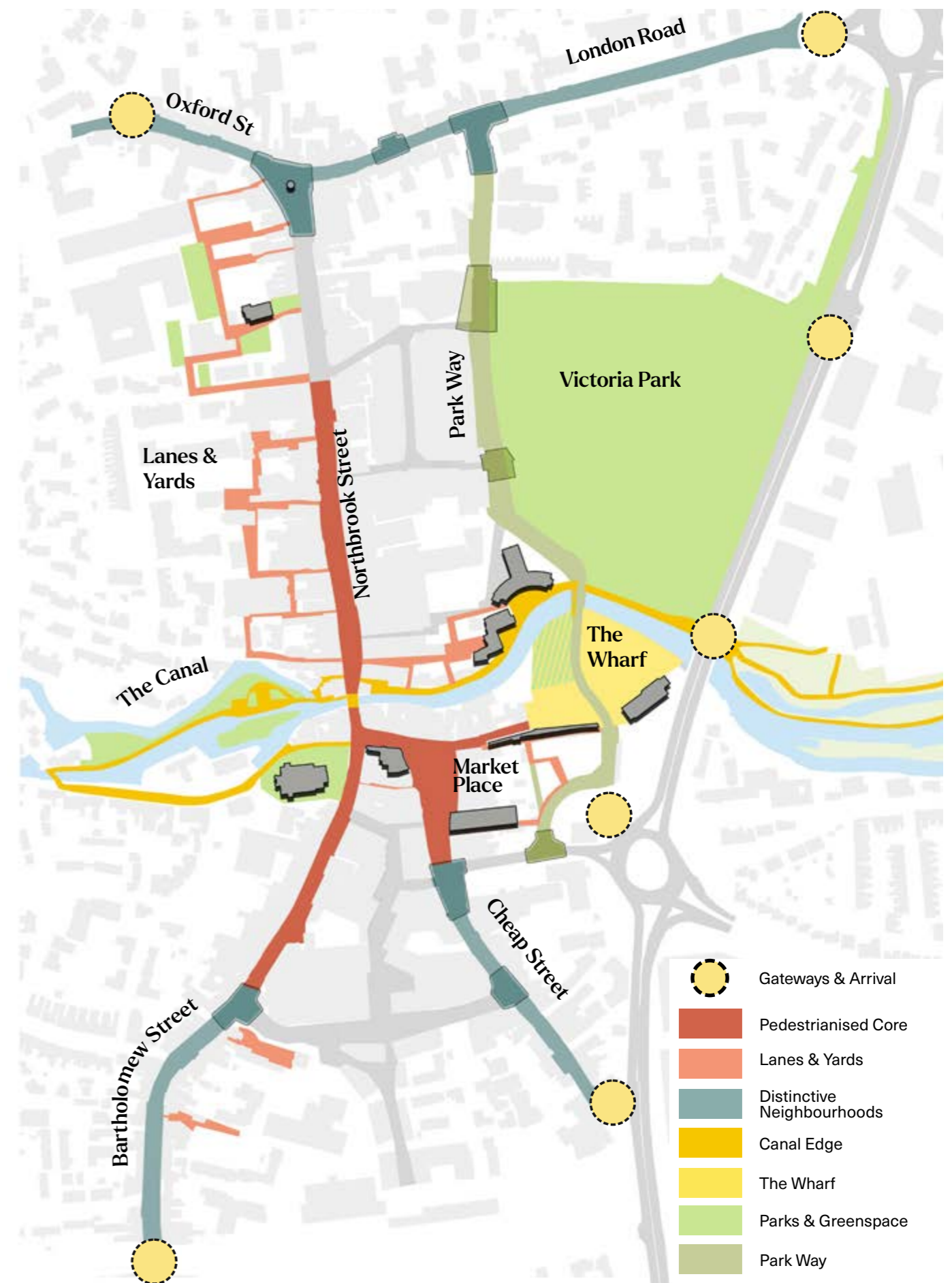
shopping streets across the town centre. Improved paving and signage can also improve the arrival from the 'rear' of the Lanes and improve connections between them.

Distinctive Neighbourhoods

A coordinated Shopfront Improvement Strategy for Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street South can enhance the independent qualities of these shopping areas, improve arrival into the town centre and address some of the concerns of the Conservation Area Appraisal. Improved paving and junction design (at the Market Street areas in particular) can create a more welcoming pedestrian environment and secure better integration with the proposed Eagle Quarter redevelopment.

Along Oxford Street and London Road the public realm strategy proposes a series of improved spaces at the key junctions (particularly with Broadway and Park Way) and to improve the settings of key buildings. This would enhance the coaching inn character and heritage of this important street. It would also bring a stronger civic quality to the entrance into Park Street and create opportunities for outdoor eating and drinking alongside existing hotels, public houses and restaurants. This corridor, particularly where it meets the A339, also presents an opportunity to improve bus journey times and variability by introducing bus priority measures.

Furthermore, there is the potential for the hotels, restaurants and bars around Oxford Street to hold an annual festival by temporarily closing the carriageway to through-traffic between the junctions with Broadway and Oxford Road. Such an event would be likely to help encourage more people to explore the northern extents of the retail core and provide a new cultural dimension to the town's offer.



The Wharf

Removal and relocation of car parking would allow for the creation of a new social space and event space at the Wharf. The space would be comparable in size to the existing event space in Market Place giving more flexibility for Newbury to hold events and markets at the same time. It will create a strong network of spaces from Market Place to the Wharf and Victoria Park.

A new space is also proposed immediately north of the Museum, to enhance its setting and provide a prominent location for external events and seating for the cafe.

Canal Edge

Improved signage to the towpath is proposed, particularly from Bridge Street, and removal of car parking and refuse storage to improve the environment for pedestrians. Small public spaces would create opportunities for cafés along the waterfront, green spaces for visitors to enjoy the canal environment, and opportunities for leisure uses to encourage more active use of the water. Improved crossings of the canal for pedestrians are identified as a priority between Bridge Street and the A339.

Parks & Greenspace

Improvements to Victoria Park are proposed to create a stronger arrival into the Park and to make more productive use of some of the less attractive areas. A series of improvements are proposed to the green spaces along the canal and to smaller pocket parks across the town centre. Increased planting within existing streets and surface car parks should also be part of a wider commitment to greening the town centre wherever possible.

Park Way

Additional planting can create a stronger 'civic' feel to this important street and encourage pedestrians to visit the park. The priority is to improve east-west connections across the street from Parkway shopping centre to Victoria Park.

Gateways & Arrivals

The public realm strategy and the Conservation Area Appraisal highlight the importance of improving arrival into the town centre by all modes. Improvements are proposed to the arrival at the rail and bus stations, and to pedestrian arrival along the canal and across the A339 into the park. Key vehicular arrival points include the railway bridge (Bartholomew Street south), Robin Hood roundabout, and the public car parks, which can be a focus for additional tree planting and greening.

Train Station

With the introduction of two new Cycle Hubs, the possible extension of the Jet Black 1 and Bus routes 1A and 1C to the station and the completion of the Market Street development immediately to the north, better connecting the station to the rest of the town centre, there is a renewed focus on Newbury train station. This is also being complemented by a scheme to redevelop the south side of the station, led by Great Western Railway in partnership with West Berkshire Council and the Local Enterprise Zone. The proposals include the introduction of three business growth units as well changes to improve the customer experience. Where it had once felt slightly outside the town core, it is likely to be far better integrated. However, the public realm on the approaches to the station are relatively poor, with the southern forecourt (the natural arrival

point for those arriving by train from London) providing a particularly underwhelming arrival experience with limited options for interchange.

It is recommended that a detailed review of the station environs is carried out with the aim of increasing the range and attractiveness of travel choices for the town and improving the arrival experience at the station.

A339

Whilst the A339 is unlikely to ever feel like a core part of the town centre, and is part of the reason why it does not formally form part of this masterplan, it should still act as an important gateway. Rather than being just another part of a bypass that connects the M3 with the M4, the section that passes through Newbury should articulate to drivers the presence of the town as well as hint at its heritage and scale. The Council have already made improvements to the Bear Lane junction with more changes planned at the Robin Hood junction. The Masterplan encourages further enhancements to this corridor.

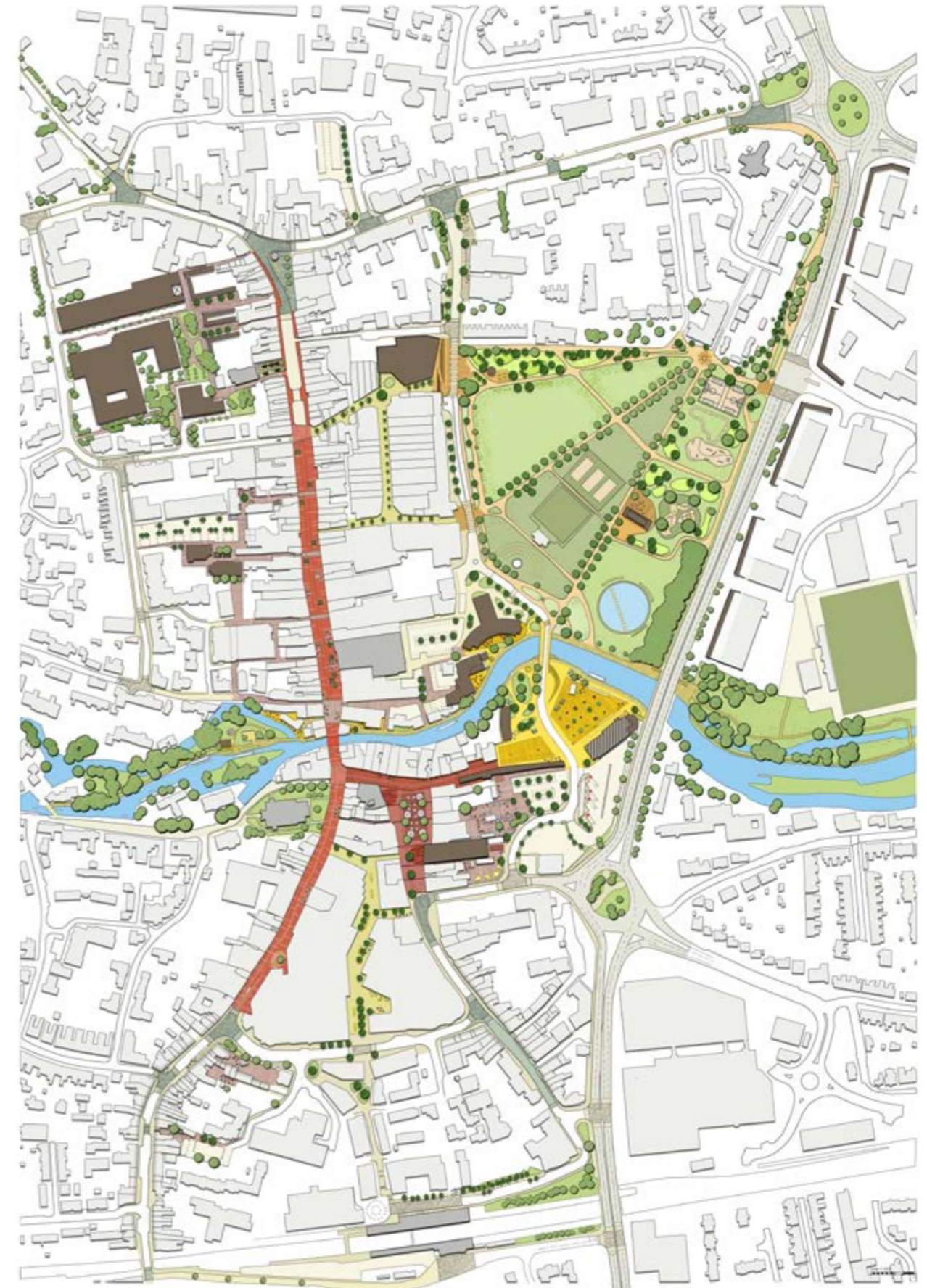
The A339, between its junctions with St. John's Road to the south and the A4 Western Avenue to the north, has the potential to be a grand, tree-lined, civic avenue that, whilst continuing to carry significant volumes of traffic, better knits together the urban fabric to either side. With a number of current and future development sites likely to be progressed in the coming years, there is the opportunity to change the relationship between the town and the A339 with more active frontage and better infrastructure for those on foot or travelling by bicycle.

Spatial Masterplan

6

This section of the report provides more detail on key areas of public realm and masterplan proposals. These concentrate on the following areas:

- The Wharf
- The Canal
- Victoria Park & Park Way
- Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street and Market Place
- The Lanes & Yards
- Broadway, Cheap Street and Bartholomew Street (South)



The Wharf

A new leisure, cultural and social destination at The Wharf should incorporate key assets such as The Museum, The Library, the Waterside Centre and the Camp Hopson building.

The Wharf proposals would help it become a stronger destination for the town centre. It is considered the only opportunity to meet the identified need for additional public space and event space in Newbury town centre. It is also an ideal location for improved cultural and leisure facilities, close to the water and Victoria Park but also close to the Museum and Corn Exchange.

It is therefore proposed that the existing car parking be removed, and that it be kept relatively clear of new buildings, consistent with Conservation Area Appraisal guidance on the historic and cultural sensitivity of the area. Bus access will be retained but consideration may need to be given to relocation of the taxi rank*.

The Wharf would be considered as three distinct areas, partly due to retention of the north-south bus route that bisects the space.

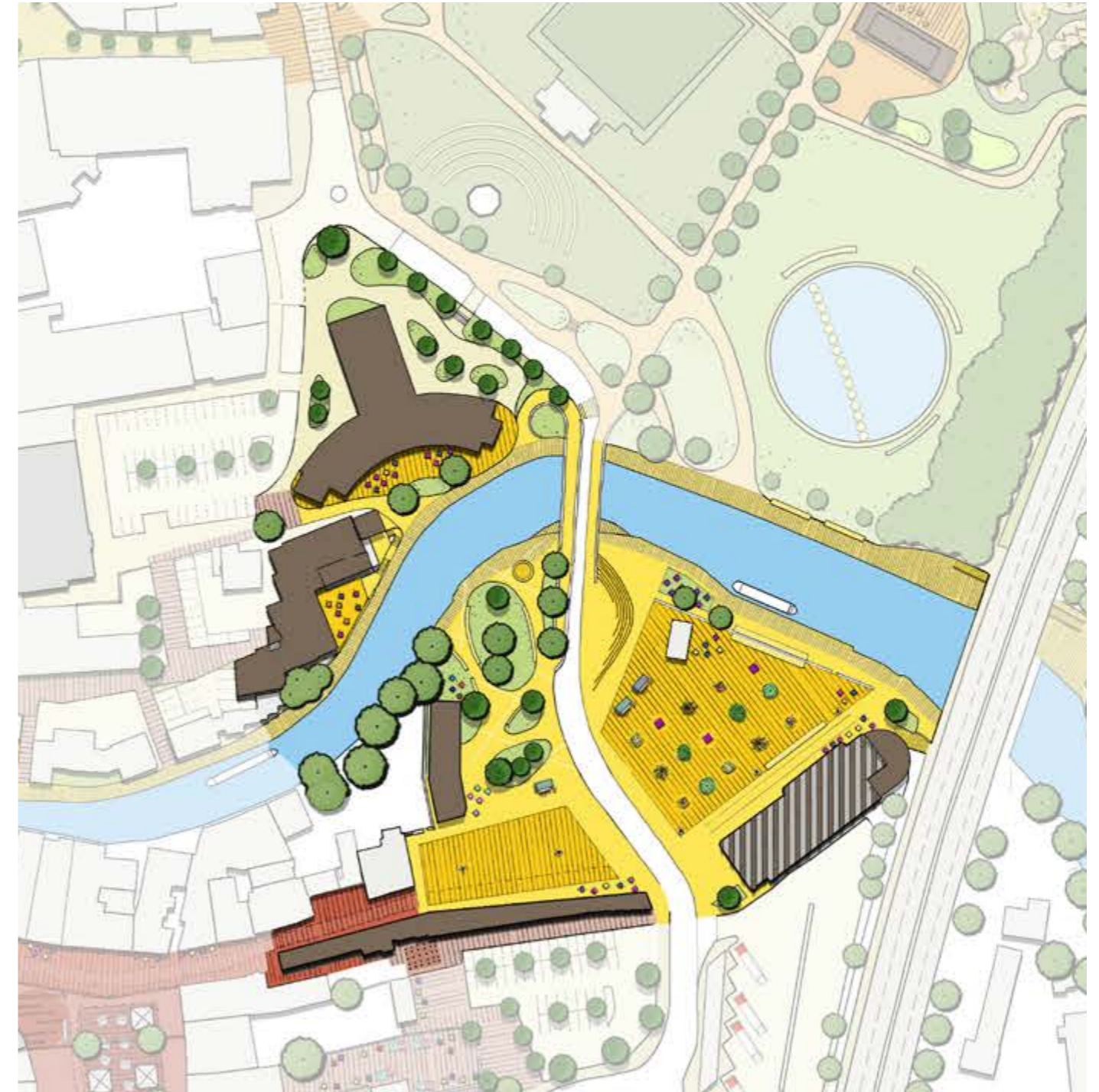
The new event space is to the east, bounded by the American Bridge, the canal and the library. Although the area would be kept largely free of new buildings, to maximise the space available for events, any public space must be enclosed and animated by the uses that surround it. Opportunities for livelier ground floors and spill-out activity into the public realm should be considered for the library. A small extension to the library would also provide the opportunity for additional leisure/café/restaurant facilities along the waterfront.

These buildings would enclose the space to the south-east. To the north the space would remain open to improve the connection with the canal (as recommended in the Conservation Area Appraisal). Space would be available for temporary street traders which can bring a greater sense of enclosure when there are no events proposed.

It is anticipated that Wharf Street would remain clear for emergency access at all times. Reducing overall traffic would however enable space to the north to be available for the Museum to 'spill out' into, whether for events or for its café. The new space would significantly enhance the setting of this important building and the attractive office elevation to the west. It is proposed that the unattractive public toilets be improved with a more appropriate structure that can also function as a piece of 'public art'.

The existing green space alongside the canal can be enhanced as a natural green space for the town. Some thinning of the vegetation and planting along the canal edge may be necessary to achieve visual connection with the outdoor space and activity proposed within the Waterside Centre, giving this important building more prominence and encouraging young people to visit the Wharf.

* relocation of the taxi rank will be subject to detailed feasibility work and appropriate consultation.





Survey Response

The Wharf proposals are amongst what survey respondents feel to be the highest priority for Newbury town centre. Respondents feel that the Wharf area is currently underutilised, and would like to see more made of the museum and library. Better links to Market Place and Northbrook Street, and to ensure that it is kept as a public space for events or just to 'hang out'.

"100% agree with the vision. There's so much more I think Newbury could do with such a picturesque part of the town. With careful planning to accommodate parking for places such as the library, that area could be a really nice place to play, eat and socialise. It could almost be an extension of Victoria Park for families and groups."

"The Wharf's current use as a car park is a missed opportunity to provide an exemplar for good waterside placemaking and we believe that the opportunities mentioned in the Vision could, if carefully designed, achieve this."

"Finding a new purpose for the Wharf that is not just a big, tarmacked parking- this area is a missed opportunity to connect with the park and create a large, dynamic and peaceful 'lung' for the centre of Newbury and doing this will help make Newbury feel 'grounded and centred' and stop it feeling so 'bitty and disconnected'."



Kennet & Avon Canal

Improving access along the length of the canal should be a priority. Creating new destinations at The Waterside Centre/Camp Hopson and The Wharf should be complemented with improvements to green spaces, better signage and removal of parked cars and other obstructions which undermine the quality of the canal.



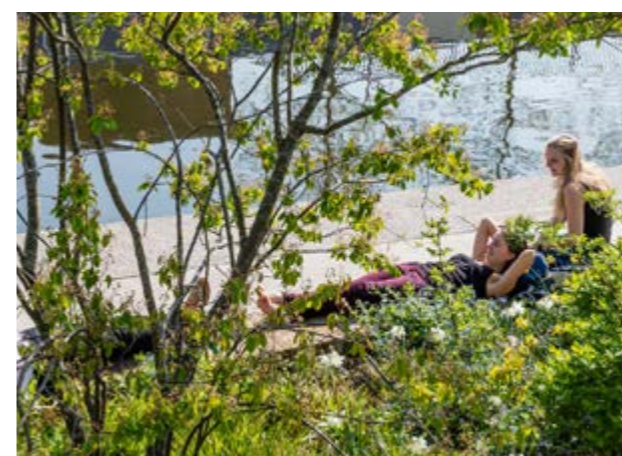
To be a successful destination, and 'broaden' the town centre, the Wharf needs to be better connected to the water and to Victoria Park. The new 'destination' at the Wharf must feel like it extends both sides of the water, incorporating the southern edge of the park, the new Waterside Centre and the Camp Hopson building.

would require investigation of land conditions and require detailed discussions with the Canal & Rivers Trust. The objective however would be to create a strong pedestrian desire line between a new space at The Waterside Centre and a new space north of the Museum, via an enhanced green space south of the canal.

The masterplan identifies improving the pedestrian crossing of the canal in this area as a priority. The delivery of improved crossings would be complex and require more detailed design investigation but the principles are that the designs should be a piece of public art and a visitor 'attraction' in their own right, and that any new crossing seeks to keep pedestrians close to the water.

The second option is that pedestrian improvements are made to the 'American Bridge'. Again this would require more detailed design consideration. Widening the bridge, and increasing the space available to pedestrians, could help to reduce the existing dominance of buses and taxis. On the west side new steps and additional space would strengthen connections between the Wharf and Northbrook Street, via the Waterside Centre. On the eastern side a new pedestrian space could be created, overlooking the Park and the new event space at the Wharf, and improving views from the A339.

Two options are identified. The first option is for a new crossing, connecting the Wharf to the Waterside Centre. This would be a relatively small scale bridge, similar in operation to the existing crossing west of Bridge Street. Any such crossing



1. New bridge connection



2. Improvements to 'American Bridge'



Making it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the canal should be a priority for discussion with the Canal & Rivers Trust. Options near The Wharf could include improvements to the existing bridge or a small scale opening bridge.



Survey Response

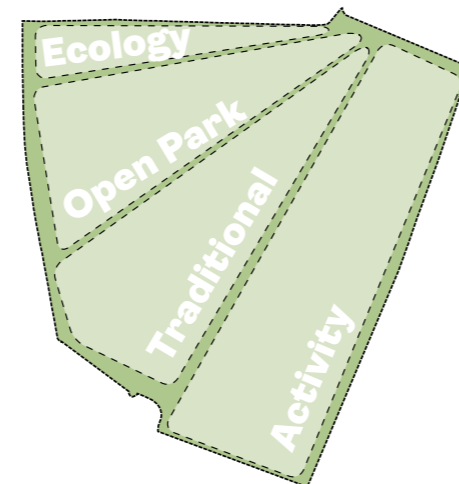
Respondents agree with the need for clearer access points to the waterfront, and improvements to the towpath for pedestrians and cyclists. Promoting an increase in activity overlooking the central section of the canal between Northbrook Street and the Wharf is supported.

Respondents would particularly like to see water-based activities such as paddleboarding and canoeing, as well as more places to sit, eat, drink, and socialise.

"Camp Hopson should do something more positive with the homewares building that makes the most of facing the canal."

Victoria Park & Park Way

Victoria Park is an important facility for the whole community and a 'shop window' advertising the town centre to those passing along the A339.



Zoned location areas

The key objective is to make Victoria Park feel less peripheral and more of a 'town centre destination'. This can be achieved by enhancing the routes through the park and improving links across Park Way to Northbrook Street, and across the canal to the Wharf and Market Place. The key focal point for connecting to Northbrook Street is the (former) Debenhams store. A stronger pedestrian route can be made through the park, with better sight lines into the Parkway shopping centre and an improved pedestrian crossing of Park Way.

The public realm strategy promotes a new public space at the junction of London Road and Park Way. A greener space with additional planting would create a stronger 'civic' feel to Park Way, and a stronger connection to the north-west corner of Victoria Park. It would also enhance the historic character of London Road.

Future uses of the Debenhams store (whether redeveloped or repurposed) should create a livelier use along the ground floor facing the park to bring life to this area, potentially extending across to a small scale café or other attraction in this corner of the park. It is considered that this would complement the existing proposals to enhance the existing café in the centre of the park.

There are also other opportunities to make the park a stronger destination. This could include the creation of four zoned areas to support a more diverse range of uses in the park such as:

1. 'Activity': Improved leisure offer for younger children and teenagers. Area to be supported by increased tree planting
2. 'Traditional': Improvements around band stand to allow for seating to view performances retention of more traditional uses such as tennis, bowls.
3. 'Open park area': Retain open area of grass to hold events and allow for park setting with improved seating
4. 'Ecology zone': Additional tree planting and wildlife friendly planting to edge of park

Finally, improved 'gateways' into Victoria Park from London Road and the A339 would create a stronger sense of having arrived in the town centre, and would have the added benefit of encouraging walking and cycling into Newbury.





Survey Response

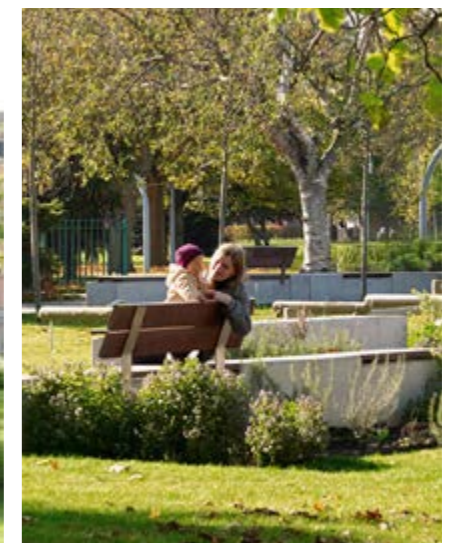
Respondents agree that Park Way currently creates a barrier to the park and would like this to be made more attractive and permeable.

Respondents would like to see the park used more frequently as an events space with space for local bands to perform. Additional comments include for the park to have more facilities such as public toilets, a year-round cafe offer, landscaping to create different zones and wilder areas, and updates to the children's play area.

"(The park) Needs somewhere for the young adults to hang out which is cool, entertaining, and interesting to them."

"Could the park be used for more events e.g., open air concerts during the Spring festival, theatrical/arts events curated by the Corn Exchange. Tie such events in with local retail themed events/evenings to encourage later shopping/dining, and tie in with the Wharf and market square"

"Victoria Park needs to be brought up to modern standards and have more amenities and places to rest and enjoy nature."



Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street and Market Place

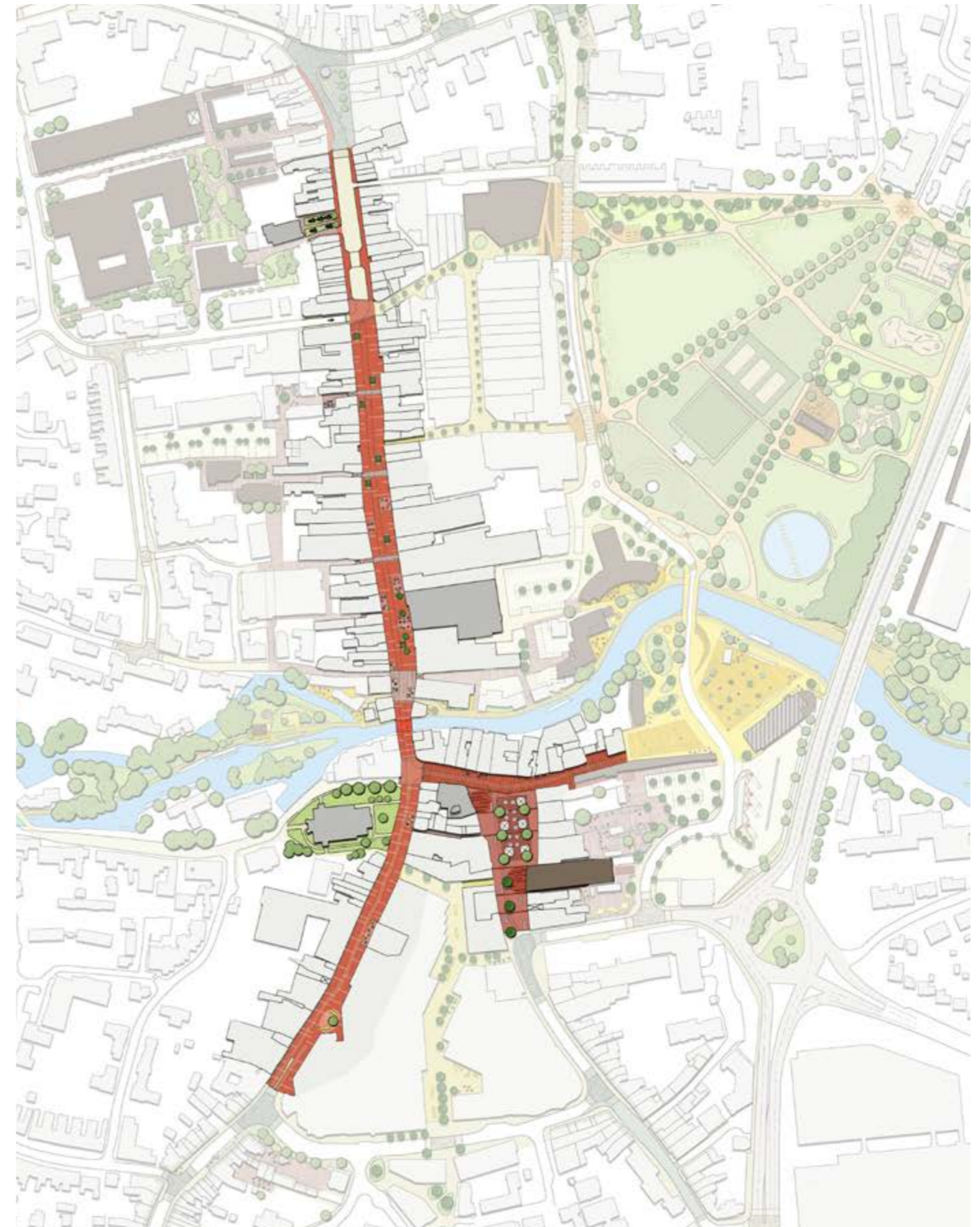
The masterplan proposals retain essential access to this core part of the town but to reduce the amount of space needed by vehicles and extend the times during which this part of the town can be completely car-free.

The public realm strategy is based on the recommendation that traffic be one-way only, which is only made possible by the removal of through traffic. The movement analysis has highlighted the feasibility of limiting the type of vehicles that can access Northbrook Street, Bartholomew Street and Market Place to just those that require local access and servicing. If this measure is implemented, the space required for vehicles could be reduced to a single lane.

The key economic (and social) benefit of this is that it provides additional space, a more attractive physical environment and greater flexibility for spill-out space, markets and events in these areas. The public realm strategy proposes that the demand for such space

be tested on a 'trial' basis, introducing temporary, but high quality, planting and seating ('parklets') along Northbrook Street and Bartholomew Street. The priority locations would be those associated with operators currently promoting outdoor eating and drinking, and those units which are considered potentially suitable for such activity.

The 'spill out' areas and 'parklets' should also be located to avoid hiding or blocking routes to connecting streets, to the Lanes or to the canal towpath. The Lanes should be marked by coordinated paving, signage and lighting to complement the branding/marketing strategy for the Lanes.





Survey Response

Respondents are supportive of the proposals to provide space for cafés and restaurants to spill out, creating alfresco style dining. Many feel it is essential that Northbrook Street is pedestrianised for this to be successful.

Respondents highlighted the importance of retaining Northbrook Street's historic identity.

Respondents support proposals for public realm improvements, providing flexibility for larger and more regular events. Many would like Market Place to become the centre of culture and entertainment in Newbury.

"Pedestrianise the whole street (Northbrook) which will then give space for breakout seating from cafés, pubs etc. Without this the current proposal is pointless as traffic ruins any vibrant feeling the street has."

"Really showcase the coaching inns."

"(Market Place) is a great space which we need to try to use more in the daytime as well as for the evening economy. How can the markets expand, hold additional special themed markets etc.? How can we make it easier for the Corn Exchange or Spring Festival to use this space for events to draw in people who will then use restaurants etc.?"



Lanes and Yards

The masterplan proposals promote Newbury's Lanes and Yards as a distinctive area for local and independent businesses.



Proposals are to promote Newbury's Lanes and Yards as a distinctive area for local and independent businesses, utilising them to attract visitors along Northbrook Street and into Broadway, and improve north-south permeability.

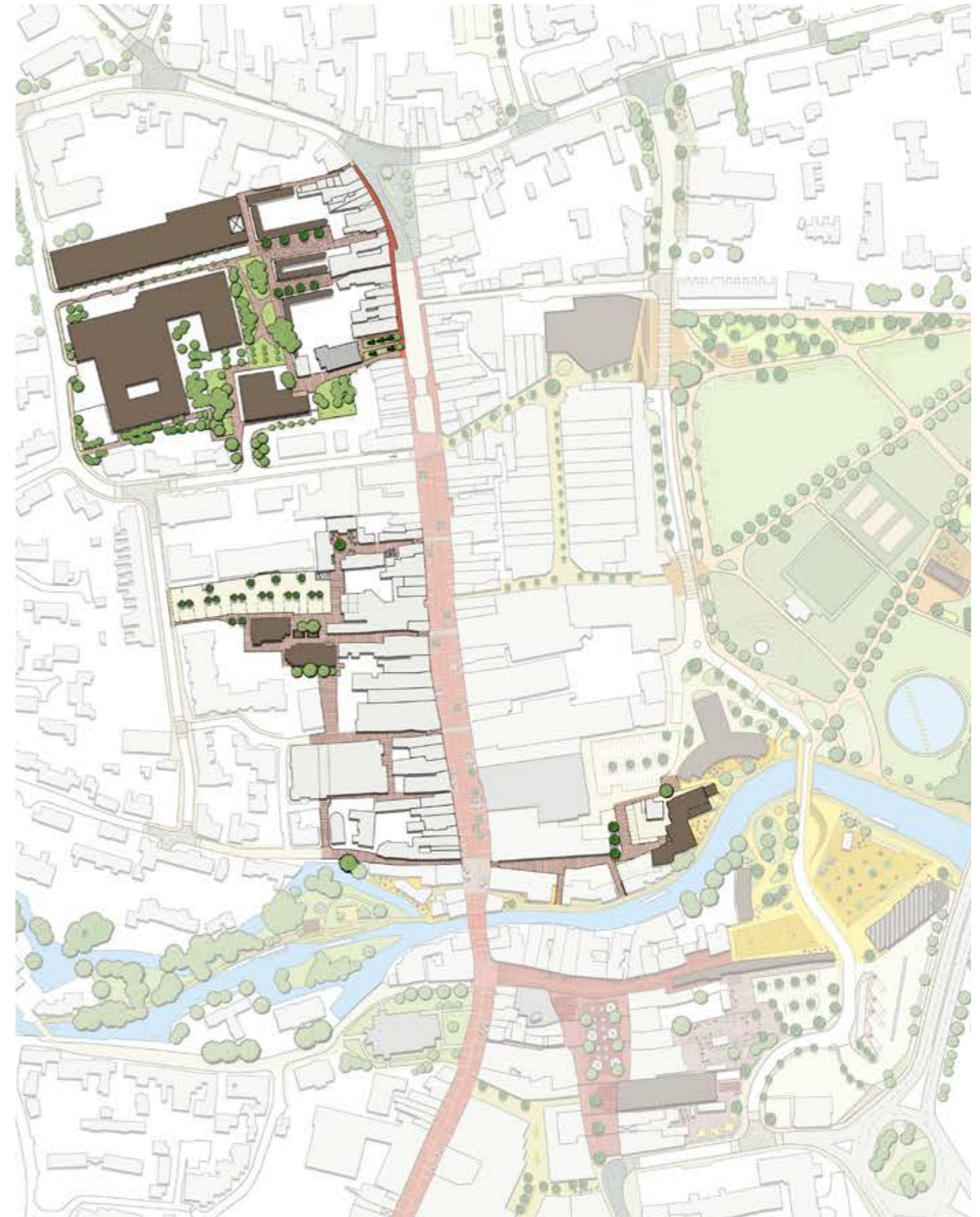
Public realm enhancements including new street furniture, street planting, feature entrances, and wayfinding signage should create points of interest, improving visibility from Northbrook Street, and connections to residential areas and car parks, creating attractive routes for shoppers into the town centre, and increasing footfall along the Lanes. Where possible lanes should connect to each other to create loops, encouraging further exploration.

Reuse of the vacant Cromwell Place School building, to support the local artistic community and start-up businesses, could provide an opportunity to further establish the Lanes and Yards as a creative, independent destination within Newbury town centre.

Survey Response

"Considering the role of Lanes and Yards is an excellent insight to improve the culture and experience of the town centre."

"The problem with some of the Lanes and Yards is that they don't offer a reason to go along them, they are narrow and don't go anywhere. Compare Newbury's lanes with Brighton's for example where the latter provides attractive journeys of exploration and experiences."



Bear Lane

Bear Lane presents an opportunity to create a new sequence of lanes in Newbury, connecting Market Place to the new space at The Wharf, and raising the profile of the Corn Exchange and The Museum.



Arrival from Bear Lane is particularly poor. The Conservation Area Appraisal highlights the detrimental impact of the A339, the Telephone Exchange and the 'retail park' style uses which it has recommended be removed from the Conservation Area. These are longer term objectives and are not addressed within this document. However there are measures which can improve this area, and create a stronger connection between Market Place, Bear Lane, Wharf Street and the Canal.

The masterplan proposals give more prominence to the existing pub gardens and eating areas to the rear of the pubs and restaurants fronting Market Place.

Improving entrances and arrival from this area can also give a more prominent profile to the Corn Exchange and the Museum. A reduction in parking would enable a new series of lanes to be created, linking Wharf Street and the Museum to the Corn Exchange, creating the space for complementary cultural space. In the longer term this would help stimulate higher quality redevelopment proposals for the Telephone Exchange and the retail park. Ideally this should be considered alongside a reconfiguration of the A339 roundabout to remove the subways and further improve crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.



Local Neighbourhoods

The measures for the proposals at the Wharf, and improvements to the majority of the town centre streets have been set out above. In addition, a programme of public realm improvements are also proposed to promote the independent identity and the local 'neighbourhood' character of the important historic streets of Broadway/London Road, Cheap Street and Bartholomew Street (south).



Broadway/ London Road

Broadway/London Road can make more of its 'coaching inn' heritage, emphasising the quality of the pubs and restaurants, improving the setting of its hotels and supporting the smaller scale professional office provision. A coordinated approach should be taken to enhancing arrival from the west (at Oxford Road/Oxford Street mini-roundabout) and from the east (at the London road/A339 junction / Robin Hood roundabout) and enhancing the junctions with Park Way and The Broadway as the two key spaces along the route.

The events strategy suggests potential for occasional closure of Oxford Street to encourage festivals and events which would promote the independent character of the London Road corridor, and promote the food and drink offer in this area.

Public realm improvements can help celebrate the historic 'coaching inn' quality of London Road, and improve arrival into the town centre.



Cheap Street & Bartholomew Street (south)

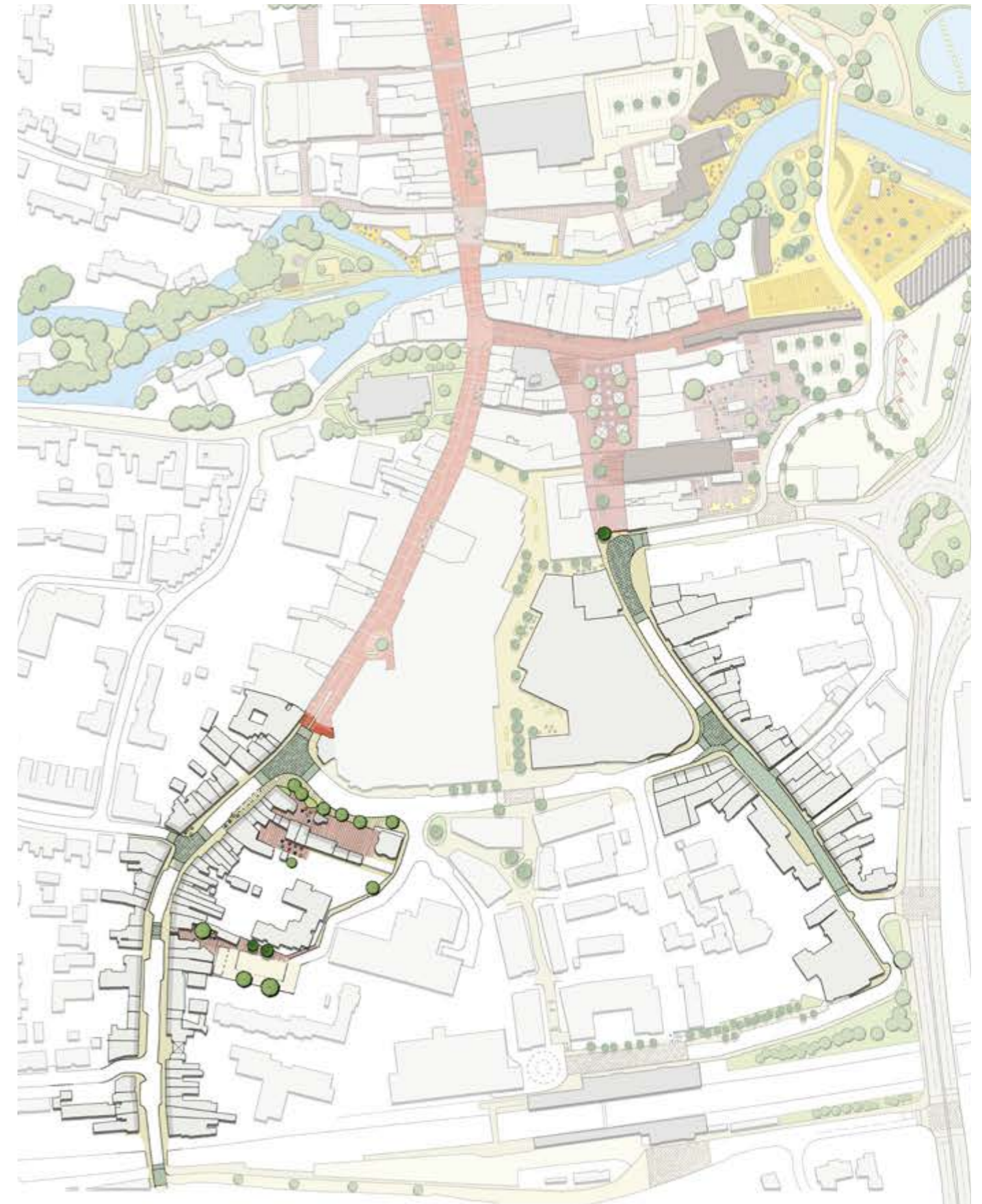
Public realm improvements and coordinated shopfront schemes can help promote the distinctive local identity of Cheap Street and Bartholomew Street.

South of Market Street, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street have a more local character. Bartholomew Street has an attractive, independent local neighbourhood quality supported by the availability of on-street parking and the increasing number of people living and working within easy walking distance. These factors should continue to ensure that this remains a successful local centre, and no strategic masterplanning interventions are considered necessary.

Improvements should be made to the railway bridge which is basic in its design and choice of materials. This would significantly improve arrival into this area from the south. From the north, extension of the paving and 'pedestrian priority' character across the junction with Market Street would help to attract visitors south and promote the qualities of Inch Yard.

The opportunity is also identified for a coordinated shopfront improvement scheme to promote the independent character of the area. This can create a strong sense of community amongst traders and local residents, as well as addressing some of the concerns raised in the Conservation Area Appraisal regarding modern insensitive shopfronts.

Cheap Street has a variety of interesting and attractive buildings, and is less of a 'local centre' than Bartholomew Street. It would benefit from improved streetscape and parking design in a similar manner to Bartholomew Street. The Eagle Quarter proposals should also ensure that care is taken with the public realm to encourage visitors to the leisure facilities to visit the independent pubs and restaurants in Cheap Street.



Brand, Meanwhile & Events Strategy

7

Newbury town centre has a 'brand' already – all places do. That brand is the mental image that people hold about the place – the instant connotations that spring to mind when you hear 'Newbury town centre'.

Just like a commercial brand, places are in competition with each other. Because of this, there's a growing realisation that brand strategy applies to places as much as anything else:

- To influence how places are perceived and positioned to drive positive engagement with target markets
- To generate civic pride through communicating better about your place
- To attract the right mix of people, business, and activity
- To confidently become and be known as the place its own community wants and needs it to be

Newbury town centre impacts on the quality of life of tens of thousands of people – not just in traditional economic terms but modern measurements of life – happiness, health, mental wellbeing and social capital. The town centre vision and masterplan can provide a steer in navigating these vital factors.

This masterplan aims to help position Newbury as a modern market town that “remembers its market town heritage, and remains a focus for social interaction, economic growth, civic engagement and community activities”

Newbury town centre can embody its values, shape perceptions, and start to build its brand by prioritising the actions that emerged from the vision and masterplan project, and developing a series of quick wins to elevate the brand signifiers that its community wants:

- Broadening the shopping offer and focusing on independents
- Improving the leisure offer
- Improving access to and the quality of open space
- Improving the cultural offer
- Creating opportunities for businesses
- Creating a liveable town centre
- Demonstrating purpose and environmental conscience by protecting Newbury's heritage and market town identity

Whilst the marketing tool 'Visit Newbury' has been successfully established, this should not be considered as the 'brand' for Newbury.

Should Newbury choose to go through a full placebrand process at any time in the future, then it is the aims and the outputs of the masterplan that will create actions by which a brand is judged. After all a brand is not a logo but a set of values embodied by its actions.





Case Study: Incredible Edible Todmorden – An unofficial placebrand

Incredible Edible is a local food movement that originated in Todmorden in 2008 when residents of the town were becoming increasingly worried about young people leaving due to a lack of employment opportunity, rising food prices, and climate related events. Residents looked for a way to get people to come together to create a stronger, greener, healthier town and came up with an idea to plant fruit and vegetables in public places throughout the town centre for residents to share.

Incredible Edible Todmorden (IET) now has over 70 sites around the town centre. Raised planters have been sited within the Police Station grounds, and on rail station platforms. Grass verges throughout the town centre have been turned in to herb gardens, and all local schools are involved in food production.

The movement has attracted visitors from around the UK and abroad, and there are now as many as 500 community food growing groups across the world using the Incredible Edible name.

In recent years, and as a direct result of these actions, Todmorden has seen an influx of new residents. The town has become a gastronomic focal point, with the cafe and restaurant economy being a substantial draw. In 2021 Todmorden was voted by The Sunday Times as the best place to live in the North/Northeast.



Events bring colour, serendipity, excitement, diversity, independent retail, eye candy, art, culture, and so many more positive human experiences to town centres. They are vital in bringing the local community together and help to create identity, visitor satisfaction and increased footfall.

A report commissioned by Arts Council England, based on independent research, shows that arts and culture are as important as good schools when people make their decisions about where they live. There is not only tangible value in investment in arts and cultural events, but also huge public demand for it. Of those surveyed, 44% said the local arts scene is an important factor, compared with 43% saying the same about schools. Performances, exhibitions, markets, and festivals can arrest decline and help to make town centres attractive places to visit and socialise. The figures in the report support this, with 68% of people saying that arts and cultural events are very important for fostering community feeling. [Source](#)

Newbury Business Improvement District have established a programme of well attended public events and markets including the monthly Newbury Artisan Market. The masterplan strategy and proposals provide opportunity for this events programme to expand, activating town centre streets and spaces to a greater extent.

The masterplan proposals are to 'unlock' and enhance the Wharf and Victoria Park providing opportunity to animate these spaces more often with public events and festivals.

Furthermore, proposals to reduce traffic in Northbrook Street and Market Place, should enable increased use of these spaces, along with the Lanes and Yards, for market day activities and town centre events.

For these spaces to function successfully as events spaces, they need to be flexible enough to support a wide range of events, markets, and 'pop-up' placemaking activity. Public realm upgrades must consider these uses from the outset, for example by ensuring public seating and planting is positioned to allow adaptable use of the space or is moveable at reasonable cost. Infrastructure that supports the range of events and activities should also be provided e.g. 'pop-up' power sources.

For events to have the best possible impact, it is essential that they are carefully curated, promoted, and continually benchmarked against best practice events from across the country. Every experience that a visitor has at an event, they will associate with their experience of Newbury as a whole.

Case Study: The Frome Independent

The Frome Independent is an award winning, destination street market that 'reclaims' Frome's high street once a month to showcase the best independent craftspeople, designers, makers, food producers and vintage traders in the Southwest region.

The event activates the entire town centre, including core retail streets, public spaces, and surface car parks with live music, DJs, performance, creative workshops, activities, and market stalls.

The initial aim for the market was to bring footfall to Frome's independent businesses. Within a decade the event has grown to be one of the most significant public events in the region's calendar attracting over 80,000 visits each year, not only from the local region but also from larger towns cities such as Bath, Bristol, and London.

Between events The Frome Independent runs 'Night School'. A series of evening sessions, workshops and supper clubs that provide opportunity to learn new skills under the guidance of the Frome Independent traders and local businesses.

The Frome Independent brand is recognisable, and consistent through curation, marketing, promotion, event infrastructure and merchandising. This cohesive brand strategy has enabled the event to gain over twenty-four thousand followers on Instagram.

Whilst the Frome Independent itself is non-profit making business, the event helps generate an estimated £2.5 million in revenue for its traders and Frome's independent retailers and hospitality businesses. The town has frequently been voted 'Best place to live in the Southwest'.





Engaging with Newbury's youth

Public survey analysis indicates that, at present, young people are more likely to visit the town during the day to eat and drink but are less likely to visit for a specific cultural activity. This is likely a result of a lack of cultural events and activities currently, as their desire for improved cultural space and importantly their desire for more 'spaces for young people to hang out' was nearly 50% compared to 22% of the wider population.

It's important that events actively draw in as many of Newbury's young population as possible both in participation and attendance. This can be achieved through thoughtful programming and curation, to careful communication and marketing. To assist with this, events should be as 'free' as possible whilst being economically viable, and 'profitable' for all businesses involved. Selected elements (e.g. workshops, certain performances) can be paid entry, but these should be positioned as optional up-sells as part of a primarily free-to-attend event.

Case Study: The FOLD

In 2020, Deco Publique were commissioned to produce a programme of events and activities that engaged and supported young people to become creatively empowered in their towns. Funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, the programme ran for three consecutive weeks in three locations in the Lake District and North Yorkshire and included a range of activities such as drop in and bookable art workshops, live music sessions, performances, talks and debates, each tailored to be specific to the location.

The event programme included several 'co-design' workshops, where the attendees' discussed ideas for the towns' future, and creative & political ways in which young people could have more say in their town. One outcome of these events is a bold mural in Settle town centre. An idea that came from the young people in the co-design sessions, and where young people gave their input on artist selection, style, colour scheme and words for the mural.



Events rooted in Newbury

For events to create real value in terms of economic impact, civic pride, placemaking and place-marketing, and to ensure these benefits are long-lasting, it is crucial for them to be pertinent, distinctive, and to engage local residents and businesses, as well as being of a calibre to draw in visitors from further afield.

Newbury town centre, at present doesn't have a regionally significant event. Thus, there is opportunity to develop an event that is 'distinctly Newbury'. An event with a narrative that is embedded in Newbury, with connections to the town's history, geography, and communities (residents, businesses, cultural organisations etc.). An event that cannot be found or replicated elsewhere.

The following events are examples that really put places on the map and help to embed brand distinctiveness.



Case study – Ludlow ‘The Food Town’

Ludlow, Shropshire, through its established events and markets has become known as ‘the food town’.

In 1995 members of Ludlow and District Chamber of Trade and Commerce came up with several ideas to help boost the business image of Ludlow and the surrounding area. The main idea was to create a festival, which would both promote the area's small food and drink producers and encourage visitors to explore Ludlow's shops, restaurants, and pubs. The inaugural event was a resounding success, and the event has grown year on year since. Ludlow Food Festival now hosts three events taking place over weekends in spring, summer, and autumn. Combined these events attract over 30,000 visitors to the town.

Case study – First Light Festival, Lowestoft

First Light Festival is a truly unique, 24 hour long multi-arts beach & beach front festival that, as the sun rises, celebrates the UK's 'First Light' of the day as it touches Britain on the seafront of its most easterly town, Lowestoft. The event took place for the very first time over 24 hours of midsummer weekend on 22nd/23rd June 2019 on Lowestoft's South Beach and seafront. With free access and 160 + innovative and engaging events. It is estimated that 30,000 people were in attendance over the course of 24 hours. Its economic impact was considerable, specifically, an investment of £90,000 of business rates retained by East Suffolk Council was converted into between £700-£900k of direct spend at the festival. This is in addition to wider financial benefit to local hotels, restaurants, and bars, which all sold out.



Case Study - Festival Of Making, Blackburn

The National Festival of Making reinforces Blackburn being a “making town “ with the highest proportion of a workforce in manufacturing / making of any town in the UK.

Taking place over two festival days in June, with long-term projects running throughout the year, The National Festival of Making takes over the streets of Blackburn with music, markets, street food, art, performance, tours, talks and above all, an eclectic mix of making experiences for everyone to enjoy.



'Meanwhile use' allows for constant positive change, evolution, and meta-morphosis. They ensure town centres feel exciting, giving residents and visitors the gift of surprise and entertainment.



'Meanwhile use' refers to the short-term use of temporarily empty buildings such as shops and offices, or the temporary use of a space. Meanwhile uses can take place for as little as a few weeks, or for as long as several years, whilst long-term plans for the buildings or spaces are finalised. They allow for constant positive change, evolution, and meta-morphosis. They ensure town centres feel exciting, giving residents and visitors the gift of surprise and entertainment.

Temporary initiatives can include small to large scale participative public events, pop-up shops, workspaces, markets, outdoor activities that bring people together, enable networking, play, and help to create a people centred place that people want to visit again and again.

By allowing disused and underutilised spaces to be used as 'meanwhile hubs', councils can unlock space for the benefit of creative and cultural activity, as well as start-up and scale up entrepreneurs, which in turn facilitates community activity, cohesion and enterprise.

West Berkshire Council, with its pre-existing relationships with local developers and landlords, can be instrumental in enabling spaces to be used for 'meanwhile purposes'. Key spaces within Newbury town centre for meanwhile initiatives include vacant shops, the Wharf surface car parking, former Debenhams building, and disused buildings such as former school on Cromwell Place.



Case Study - Oxford Broad Meadow

During the summer 2021 Oxford City Council transformed Broad Street in to 'Broad Street Meadow' with the aim to "give all of Broad Street back to people in the long-term". The main purpose of Broad Meadow was to promote the safe use of the centre post-COVID-19, to support Oxford's economic recovery and to inform the development of longer-term options for creating better civic spaces on Broad Street and in other parts of Oxford in the future.

Vehicle access was restricted between 08:00 and 21:00 and the temporary outdoor public space saw wildflower meadows, lawns and seating made by local makers.



Case Study - Central Parade, Walthamstow

Delivered in partnership with the London Borough of Waltham Forest, the former council direct centre, left unoccupied for years, is now home to over 20 businesses of different scales and uses, a public bakery/café, incubator retail opportunities for start-ups and desks for freelancers.

Meanwhile Space worked to transform the space into a mixed-use creative hub, with a variety of retail; workspace and studio space, and bakery cafe, initially open for two years, this has since been extended for a further 3 years, whilst the long term future of the site is being decided.



Case Study - Queens Parade, Willesden

Queens Parade opened in March 2012, as an Outer London Fund project, offering local entrepreneurs and start-up businesses, who were given business rate relief by the borough, the chance to occupy and run their own shop on the High Street. After 2 months of opening its doors, Queens Parade was voted by Time Out readers as one of nine best shopping locations in London.



Event & meanwhile opportunities

1 Market day activities

Market activities extending to the Lanes, Yards, Market Place and town centre green spaces, and surface car parks.

2 Market Place event Space

More frequent programme of small medium sized public events in Market Place.

3 Annual / biannual event

See Oxford Street Party proposal (Quick Wins)

4 Victoria Park event space

Opportunity for Victoria Park to host a handful of medium-large scale outdoor events such as music concerts and contemporary summer fêtes.

5 Wharf event space

Monthly, fortnightly, or weekly events at the Wharf could include:

- Street food markets
- Jumble sales
- Pop-up performance (coinciding with Corn Exchange and Market Place events programme)

6 Wharf meanwhile space

Meanwhile opportunities include:

- Pop-up theatre/performance space
- Urban community garden ~ A temporary garden with mobile planters and public seating and children's play opportunities
- Urban play - skate ramps, scooter tracks etc.

7 Former Debenhams Store meanwhile space

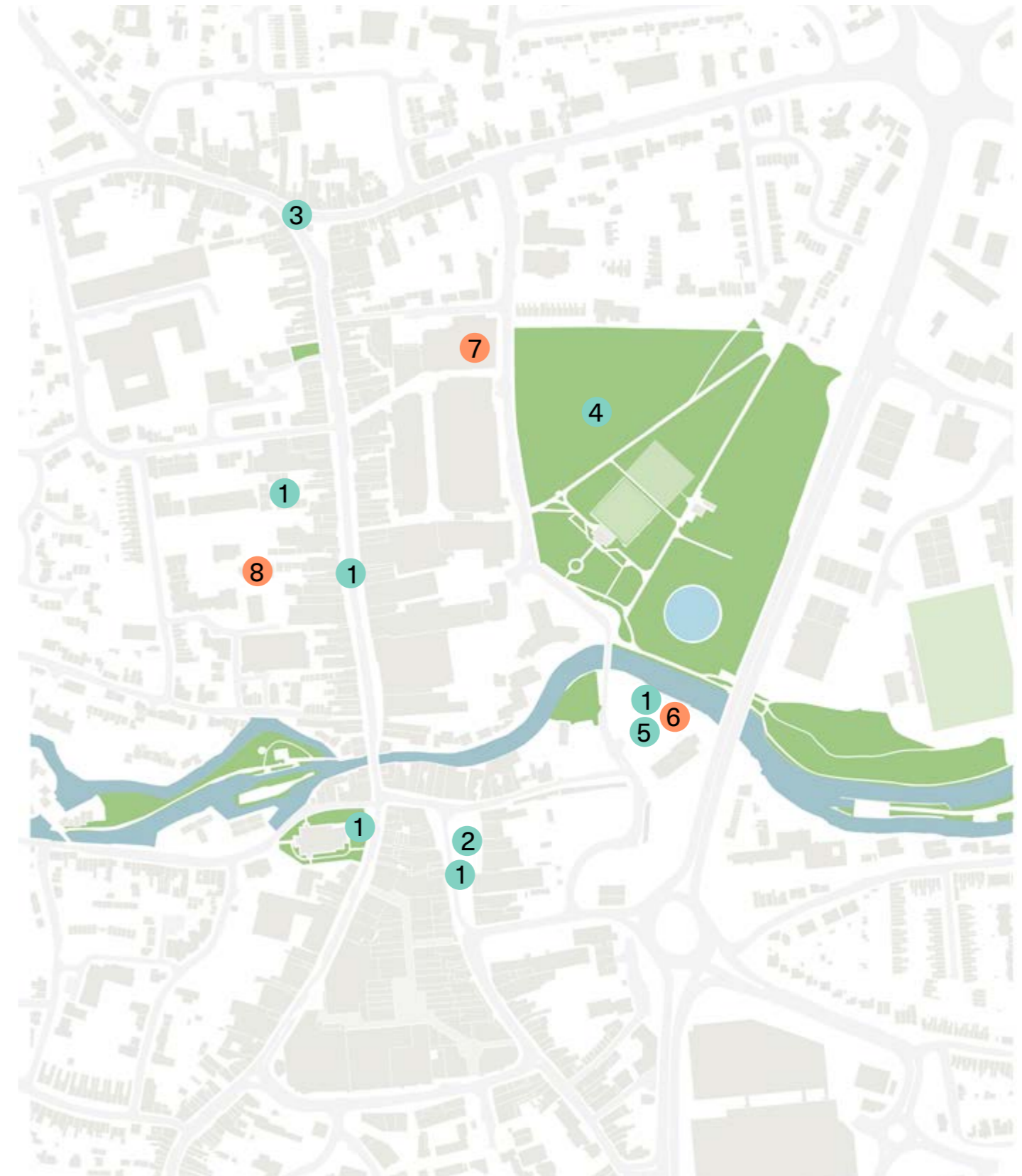
Opportunities include:

- Coworking provision
- Rehearsal rooms
- Makerspace
- Indoor markets

8 Cromwell Place school building meanwhile space

Opportunities include:

- Artist/Creative studios
- Makerspace



● Event

● Meanwhile

The Wharf event & meanwhile options

KEY

Delivery cost

£ £1k-£50k

££ £50k-£100k



Street Food Market
Year Round
£



Pop-up Garden
Year Round
£



Performance Space
Temporary
££



Urban Sports (Skate Park)
Year Round
£



Urban Play
Year Round
££



Outdoor Cinema
Seasonal
££

Quick Wins

Too few masterplans come to fruition soon enough, and many not all. In order for the 'Newbury Town Centre Masterplan' to start to deliver on the desires of the thousands of people who spoke purposefully through the surveys and engagement sessions over the past year we are proposing some 'quick wins'. Quick wins are a relatively low-cost way of easing the masterplan into action and demonstrating the art of the possible. They can act as 'tests' for some of the masterplan principles and are able to create the noise and visibility sometimes needed to attract central government and private sector investment in the town centre.

1. Northbrook & Bartholomew Street Parklets

High Streets across the UK have shown how they can quickly adapt with great examples of pop-up outdoor seating for cafés and restaurants in the form of 'parklets'. Parklets not only provide opportunity for small F&B outlets to grow by increasing seating capacity, but they also animate our streets, add greenery, provide shade, create socialising opportunities, and increase dwell time, reaping rewards for retail and F&B businesses and bringing vibrancy back to high streets.

2. Design-led wayfinding and lighting to the lanes and yards

The masterplan strategy is designed to encourage exploration of The Lanes, supporting the local, independent businesses that occupy them. A design/art/led wayfinding/signage/branding strategy will support this, helping to create a high-quality and attractive environment, that supports independent businesses and community activity.





3. Event Activation – Oxford Street Party

Temporary closure of Oxford Street for one evening (or a Sunday in the run-up to Christmas), enabling the pubs, inns, and restaurants to spill out on to the street, alongside further activations such as a brass band, roasted chestnut, and mulled wine stalls etc. There is opportunity for this to coincide with a late-night shopping event in the town centre.

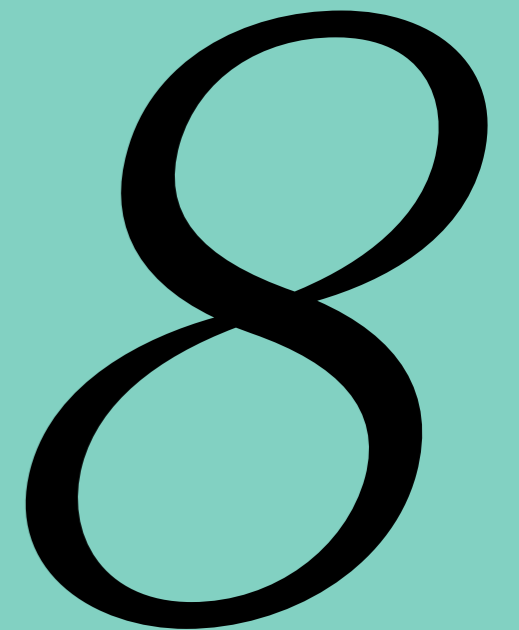
4. Vacant shop strategy

Opportunity to diversify the retail offer in the town centre through making vacant shops available to local, start-up businesses using incubator rent models. Additional uses for vacant town centre spaces could include; community venue, makerspace, rehearsal spaces.

5. Wharf Events Space

Creating a 'meanwhile', flexible events and social space at The Wharf. A place for pop-up events, performances and temporary installations, mobile food traders, with low-cost, but artistically designed seating, planters, etc. encouraging people to sit and linger, and children to play.

Delivering the Vision



Masterplans are of no value unless they can be delivered. Whilst the masterplan provides the blueprint for a set of deliverable proposals across the town centre, grand ideas are no more than that if they cannot be funded.

The following section identifies the strategy for delivering each proposal identified within the masterplan, how each can be delivered and funded, and the timescales for delivering them. Where partners, such as the Town Council, Newbury BID and LSD Promotions are referenced within the strategy, this is subject to their confirmation and agreement.

The delivery strategy includes:

- Priorities and phasing;
 - Delivery Strategy and Mechanisms for Delivery;
 - Policy Interventions; and
 - Next steps
-

West Berkshire District Council recognises the need to deliver change early and as a result, the strategy identifies a number of ‘quick wins’, to be implanted within the next 18 months, to establish early momentum and deliver visible improvements to the town centre, particularly on publicly owned land, which is fundamental to retaining the strong sense of community support and enthusiasm gained throughout the consultation process. The majority of these ‘quick wins’ would be directly delivered by West Berkshire District Council via internal and external funding streams including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106, subject to availability.

The strategy also identifies proposals to be delivered in the short term, in the next 18 months - 3 years; medium term 3 years - 5 years; long term 5 years plus, and identifies appropriate delivery and funding mechanisms for each.

Whilst the strategy provides a recommended programme in terms of early wins, short, medium and long term actions, the phasing plan needs to be fluid and able to adapt to changing priorities and circumstances, available funding and changes to the baseline. The strategy will therefore need regular review and offers the potential to bring forward medium/long term and new projects where required. Furthermore, considering the vital role the masterplan will have in delivering economic growth for Newbury’s town centre, any opportunities to proactively accelerate the provision of proposals identified for the medium to long term should be considered.

<p>Quick Wins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Parklets along Northbrook & Bartholomew Street • Design-led wayfinding and lighting to the Lanes & Yards • Event Activation along Oxford Street • Vacant shop strategy • Partial or full closure of the Wharf car park and the temporary installation of large scale planters and street furniture ahead of a fully designed remodelling of the Wharf • More spill out space for businesses at the northern end of Park Way • Local Neighbourhood improvements
<p>Short Term Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of green space alongside the canal at the Wharf • Support to business owners in Cheap St & Bartholomew St
<p>Medium Term Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of paving and ‘pedestrian priority’ character across the junction with Market Street and Bartholomew Street • Extension of the Library • Enhancing routes through Victoria Park & improving links across Park Way to Northbrook St & across the canal to the Wharf & Market Place • Redevelopment/reuse of Debenhams building for a mixed-use scheme • Improvements to Victoria Park • Pedestrianisation of Northbrook St, Bartholomew Street and Market Place • More prominence to existing pub gardens and eating areas to the rear of pubs and restaurants fronting Market Place. • Emphasising the quality of pubs & restaurants & supporting the small scale office provision at Broadway/London Road. • Improvements to railway bridge • Replacement of the existing toilets at the Wharf with a new structure that incorporates new public toilets
<p>Long Term Proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved canal crossing of the Kennet & Avon Canal • Arrival from Bear Lane

Action	Strategy	Delivery & Funding	Timeframe	Phasing
Create Parklets along Northbrook & Bartholomew Street	Appoint landscape architect / designer to create outdoor spaces for F&B outlets adding greenery & increasing seating capacity.	Direct delivery by WBC. Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources, including CIL and Section 106.	0-18 months	Quick Win
Design-led wayfinding and lighting to The Lanes & Yards	Appoint designer to create design/art led wayfinding, coordinated paving and signage coupled with branding strategy developed by the BID team.	Direct delivery by WBC. Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources, including CIL and Section 106.	0-18 months	Quick Win
Event Activation – Oxford Street Party	Apply for temporary road closure and WBC to work with Town Council to create outdoor spaces for daytime/evening/Christmas event.	WBC and Town Council Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources.	0-18 months	Quick Win
Vacant shop strategy	Create and run advertising campaign to use vacant shops to offer incubator rent model to start ups or use the space for community venues, rehearsal spaces etc.	WBC and Town Council Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources.	0-18 months	Quick Win
Partial or full closure of the Wharf car park and the temporary installation of large scale planters and street furniture ahead of a fully designed remodelling of the Wharf	Appoint designer to produce layout of space to be used as flexible event and social spaces. Review car parking policy and potential relocation of taxi rank.	Direct delivery by WBC. Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources, including CIL and Section 106.	0-18 months	Quick Win
More spill out space for businesses at the northern end of Park Way (this would be in addition to the spaces provided under the Northbrook St programme)	WBC, with the help of the BID Team, to support businesses with licenses and permits. Appointment of a designer may be required to increase spill out space for these businesses	Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106.	0-18 months	Quick Win

Action	Strategy	Delivery & Funding	Timeframe	Phasing
Local Neighbourhood improvements – Broadway/London Road, Cheap Street and Bartholomew Street (south)	Set out a programme of public realm improvements e.g. planting, removal of unnecessary street furniture, to promote the independent identity and character.	WBC direct delivery Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106.	0-18 months	Quick Win
Support to business owners in Cheap St & Bartholomew St	BID team to work with local business owners to agree a coordinated shopfront improvement scheme.	BID and local businesses Pump prime funding to be sought from WBC with match funding from private businesses.	18 months - 3 years	Short Term
Enhancement of green space alongside the canal at the Wharf	Agree and produce programme of works with Canal & River Trust to vegetation to create visual connection with the outdoor space and activity proposed with the Waterside Centre.	To be delivered by WBC & Canal & River Trust Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106.	18 months - 3 years	Short Term
Replacement of the existing toilets at the Wharf to include a cafe or other community use as well as public toilets	Run competition to find designer to create a more attractive toilet structure which can also function as 'public art'.	Delivery by the Town Council with input from WBC Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106	3 years - 5 years	Medium Term
Extension of paving and 'pedestrian priority' character across the junction with Market Street and Bartholomew Street	Scope out works to carry out paving and improvement works, requiring a reorganisation of the junction, to attract visitors and promote the qualities of Inch Yard.	Direct delivery from WBC Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106	3 years - 5 years	Medium Term

Action	Strategy	Delivery & Funding	Timeframe	Phasing
<p>Enhancing routes through Victoria Park & improving links across Park Way to Northbrook Street & across the canal to the Wharf & Market Place</p>	<p>Appoint engineer and landscape architect to produce plan of enhanced routes and planting design.</p>	<p>Direct delivery by WBC. Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>Redevelopment/reuse of Debenhams building for a mixed-use scheme involving pulling back the building lines onto Parkway and West Street to create more public realm and allow the Park to spill over the Parkway.</p>	<p>WBC to agree how this area should be improved and then engage with the building leaseholders or Standard Life Assurance Ltd. the freeholder of the site. However, the building's redevelopment may be constrained by WBC not owning this site.</p>	<p>Private funding by current or future owner.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>Improvements to Victoria Park, including:</p> <p>Eastern zone of the park - more of an 'activity' zone connected by cycle routes;</p> <p>Central zone – different arrangements to the bandstand;</p> <p>North zone – keep open space. More trees and garden type area to the far north of the park;</p> <p>Enhanced fitness / play areas</p> <p>Parkway – car park could have a green wall.</p>	<p>WBC to agree how this area should be improved and then engage with the building leaseholders or Standard Life Assurance Ltd. the freeholder of the site. However, the building's redevelopment may be constrained by WBC not owning this site.</p>	<p>Private funding by current or future owner.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>

Action	Strategy	Delivery & Funding	Timeframe	Phasing
<p>Pedestrianisation¹ of Northbrook St, Bartholomew Street and Market Place</p> <p>¹ Allowances made for servicing, emergency vehicles etc.</p>	<p>Tying in with WBC's wider initiatives to promote alternative modes of transport, review post Covid traffic modelling, assessment of impact of alternative travel initiatives, use of technology to enable cost effective management and full public consultation.</p>	<p>WBC direct delivery</p> <p>Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>More prominence to existing pub gardens and eating areas to the rear of pubs and restaurants fronting Market Place.</p>	<p>Carry out parking review to determine if a reduction in parking could enable a new series of lanes to be created.</p> <p>However, this proposal may be constrained by the different land ownerships to the rear of these pubs and restaurants.</p>	<p>WBC direct delivery</p> <p>Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>Improvements to railway bridge</p>	<p>Engage with Network Rail to determine if an improvement to design and materials would be acceptable.</p>	<p>Network Rail and WBC</p> <p>Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>Extension of the north side of the library to better address the waterside and the A339 at the Wharf</p>	<p>Appoint architect to design extension to provide additional leisure/café/restaurant facilities along the waterfront</p>	<p>Direct delivery by WBC</p> <p>Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>Emphasising the quality of pubs & restaurants & supporting the small scale office provision at Broadway/London Road.</p>	<p>Promotion of local businesses and support to employers to be led by BID Team and Town Council</p>	<p>Direct delivery by WBC</p> <p>Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources.</p>	<p>3 years - 5 years</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>

Action	Strategy	Delivery & Funding	Timeframe	Phasing
<p>Improved canal crossing of the Kennet & Avon Canal</p>	<p>Appoint consultant to determine best place for pedestrian crossing and then appoint designer and engineer to create a crossing that will become a piece of public art and a visitor attraction.</p> <p>Locations to be considered: new crossing connecting the Wharf to the Waterside Centre and improved pedestrian option at the 'American Bridge'.</p>	<p>WBC direct delivery</p> <p>Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources including CIL and Section 106.</p>	<p>5+ years</p>	<p>Longer Term</p>
<p>Arrival from Bear Lane</p>	<p>WBC to agree how they would like to see the Telephone Exchange and the retail park redeveloped along with a reconfiguration of the A339 roundabout.</p> <p>Carry out scoping exercise & engage with business owners.</p>	<p>WBC direct delivery for scoping exercise</p> <p>Funding to be sought from WBC and external sources.</p>	<p>5+ years</p>	<p>Longer Term</p>

We have considered the different funding streams available to WBC to move forward with the proposals in the masterplan. Some may not be relevant to Newbury town centre but we recommend that further investigation into the funding criteria is made.

Public Work Loan Board (PWLB) Borrowing

The terms and arrangements for borrowing are determined by HM Treasury and set out in the Lending Arrangements for PWLB loans with interest rates being determined by HM Treasury. Many local authorities can take out the PWLB loans with major local authorities being responsible for their own financial decision making. They are 'free to finance capital projects by borrowing, provided they can afford to service their debts out of their revenues'. Loans are secured on the revenues of the authority rather than by reference to specific revenues, assets or collateral.

Funding streams - Levelling Up Fund

Announced as part of the 2020 Spending Review to support communities realise the vision of the most impactful infrastructure projects. The fund will support capital investments to local infrastructure having a visible and tangible impact on people and places and supporting economic recovery.

Any bid to this fund will require local MP support and bids can be made under the headings of; Transport, Regeneration and town centre investment and Cultural investment.

Successful bids have been announced for the first round of funding and there will be future opportunities to bid in subsequent rounds. Spending of any funding awarded will have to be by 2024.

Towns Fund

The Towns Fund was launched in 2019 and proposed a partnership between communities, businesses and local leaders. Much of this funding has been allocated and it's unlikely that Newbury would qualify as it was directed towards struggling towns.

Future High Streets Fund

The aim of the fund is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets to drive growth, improve experience and ensure future sustainability. The fund will support local areas to prepare long-term strategies for their high streets and town centres and will provide co-funding with local area projects including:

- investment in physical infrastructure, including improving public and other transport access, improving flow and circulation within a town / city centre, congestion-relieving infrastructure, other investment in physical infrastructure needed to support new housing and workspace development and existing local communities, and the regeneration of heritage high streets; and
- investment in land assembly, including to support the densification of residential and workspace around high street in place of under-used retail units.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

To be launched in 2022 to replace EU Structural Funds. The prospectus advises that this will focus on:

A place-based portion which will target places most in need across the UK, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities. It will support people and communities, opening up new opportunities and spurring regeneration and innovation. It will enable joined-up, holistic investment to support local communities and people; and

A second portion of the Fund will be targeted differently to people most in need through bespoke employment and skills programmes that are tailored to local need. This will support improved employment outcomes for those in and out of work in specific cohorts of people who face labour market barriers.

Details are to be provided later this year and WBC is recommended to review the details when they are announced.

Development of Commercial Strategy

To develop a long term funding stream which is not reliant on government funding, WBC could look to develop its own commercial strategy looking at such activities as: the improvement of internally delivered services; establishing new delivery models along with; diversification through income and trade. This is of course not a short term fix and will require the political will and an understanding of the council's risk appetite to succeed.

Arts Council

Our suggestion to redevelop the existing unattractive toilets at the Wharf to include a cafe or other community use as well as public toilets, which also functions as a work of public art could attract grant from The Arts Council and WBC is recommended to research the criteria around funding applications.

One Public Estate

OPE partnerships are run across the country and have shown the value of working together across the public sector. The masterplan aims to meet two of the three core objectives of creating economic growth and delivering more integrated customer focused services.

Planning Policies

The proposals to increase space to socialise, better spaces for eating and drinking and more ability to be involved in cultural events to support Newbury's tourism sector fall under Policy CS 14 Design Principles and Area Delivery Plan Policy 2 of the Core Strategy as well as the Council's Cultural and Heritage Strategy making sure that Newbury continues to be a place that people want to live, work and visit.

The masterplan proposals seek to consolidate, protect and enhance the important role of retail in the shopping centre at Northbrook Street and Parkway, whilst embracing proposals that support independent retailers within a revitalised Eagle Quarter. However, given the changes in the retail market, the masterplan recognises that creating a 'multi-functional' town centre that supports a range of uses is key to ensuring the future success of the town centre.

Recent Government changes to the Use Class Order, and the introduction of Class E covering commercial, business and service uses reflect these ambitions, by supporting the change of use of retail premises to diversify the offer within the town. These uses must serve to protect the town centre's vitality, in accordance with the Saved Policies of the Local Plan as well as the Core Strategy.

The town's defined primary retail frontage comprises Northbrook Street and Bridge Street (from the junction of Northbrook Street with West Street to the bridge crossing of the canal); and frontages along part of Bartholomew Street and within and around the Kennet Centre, including the northern section of Cheap Street and Market Place. Within this area, the saved policy indicates that planning applications for change of use away from retail will be refused, but these Use Classes Order changes have weakened the effect of this policy. However, any application to change the use of a Listed Building, of which there are a considerable number within the town centre, will require planning permission.

There is the potential for the Council to put in place an Article 4 Direction to require any proposals for a change of use to be sought as part of a planning application. The Government has issued advice to the effect that any such proposals for Article 4 Directions should only be pursued where there is robust evidence to show that they are necessary and justified. The Council are therefore advised to prepare an up-to-date retail analysis of the town centre which may then be used to inform or justify any proposed Article 4 Direction(s) that the Council may wish to impose.

Transport Policies

Transport in all its different forms is also at the heart of the masterplan, be it ensuring that the town presents a more 'welcoming' entrance, potentially amending traffic flow to Northbrook Street or increasing the walkability across the town and encouraging more people to explore Victoria Park which meets the Council's Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan.

As part of our proposals, we have suggested the removal of car parking and this element will form part of an overall car parking review undertaken across the town by the Council. The proposals within the masterplan will in turn need to be assessed against the Local Transport Plan and may influence future iterations of the plan, subject to the outcome of the car parking review.

Economic Delivery

The public realm improvements, strategic branding exercise and the works to The Lanes to increase awareness and interest will all help to encourage a more independent town centre and help to support the Economic Delivery Plan.

The adopted Core Strategy directs new office provision towards town centres. In accordance with this, the vision supports the creation of new serviced office space through conversion of existing buildings and the masterplan identifies the former Debenhams building as a suitable site for a mixed-use scheme, incorporating co-working office space to support start-ups and small businesses.

Changes to permitted development rights have made office spaces vulnerable to change of use. We have seen this with the vacant Bayer offices being granted permission for conversion to flats. The Council should continue to try and resist future conversion of office premises to residential or other uses, to support the town's economy and encourage businesses to set up in Newbury.

It is essential that the momentum generated during the masterplan process continues with the endorsement of the proposals by the Council and key stakeholders as the basis for their delivery.

Delivery should be in accordance with the Phasing Plan, with the identified early wins requiring immediate consideration.

Following the endorsement of the masterplan, the next step actions include:

Quick Wins

- Secure funding and implement the identified Quick Wins
- Preparation of detailed public realm and streetscape design briefs, associated cost estimates and programmes
- Provide support to business owners within the town centre, through the help of Newbury BID
- Implement a Vacant Shop Strategy to reduce retail vacancies in the town centre

Short Term

- Identify available funding and prepare funding applications and bids as appropriate
- Preparation of design guide for shopfront improvements

- Create a Business Case for the larger proposals, including the Wharf
- Undertake a car parking review of the existing parking facilities in Newbury town centre

Medium to Longer Term

- Preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document for Newbury town centre including the masterplan area
- Trial the implementation of the proposed changes to the existing pedestrianisation scheme for the town centre
- Preparation of development briefs, including for the Wharf, Victoria Park and the existing Canal crossing

