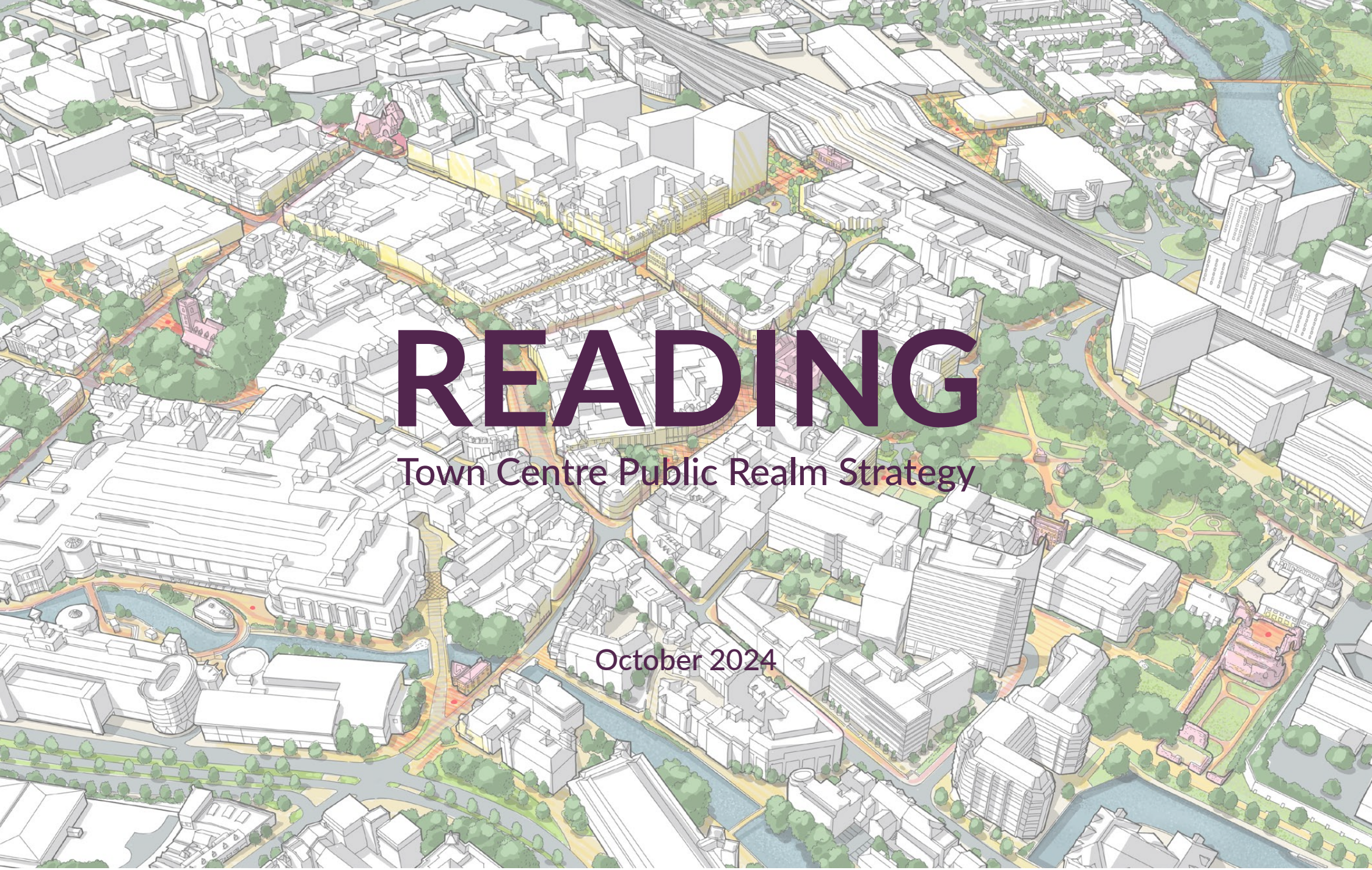


READING

Town Centre Public Realm Strategy

October 2024

BDP. urban flow movement people places dwg.

Reading Borough Council

Contents

1.1 Executive Summary

The Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy sets forth a comprehensive vision aimed at transforming the town's public spaces into pleasant, accessible, and sustainable environments that can support the town's growing population and economic development. Key elements of this strategy focus on improving the quality, cohesion, and usability of the public realm while fostering a sense of identity, cultural vibrancy, and sustainability.

This strategy is crucial for the future of Reading because it addresses the growing demands of a rapidly developing town while preserving its historical and cultural identity. The quality of the public realm plays a vital role in the creation of a place with an enhanced sense of place, where people will choose to spend their time. By enhancing public spaces, improving accessibility, and integrating sustainability, the strategy ensures that Reading remains a vibrant, attractive, and liveable town for both residents and visitors. With projected population growth, the plan provides a framework for creating a more walkable, cyclist-friendly, and inclusive urban environment, while promoting green infrastructure to combat climate change. It also supports economic growth by fostering a strong sense of place and community, making Reading a desirable destination for business, culture, and tourism.

The strategy identifies several challenges, including a lack of consistency in public space design, vehicular dominance, and underutilised green spaces. Many areas suffer from clutter and inconsistent street furniture, which detracts from the town's heritage assets and makes navigation difficult for pedestrians. To address these issues, the strategy proposes a unified design approach to create clear, attractive, and comfortable streetscapes.

The document emphasises the importance of green and blue infrastructure, proposing the incorporation of more trees, biodiverse planting, and better access to riverways, particularly the Thames and the River Kennet. This is aligned with Reading's broader ambition to be a carbon-neutral town by 2030. It also highlights the value of heritage and placemaking in enhancing the town's identity, while balancing new developments with conservation.

10 key objectives include:

- Unifying the Public Realm Design
- Improving Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure
- Enhancing Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Promoting a Sustainable and Inclusive Town Centre
- Addressing Vehicular Dominance
- Highlighting Reading's Heritage
- Activating Public Spaces
- Decluttering the Streets
- Integrating High-Quality Materials
- Encouraging Temporary and Flexible Uses

The strategy concludes with worked examples of a number of priority areas and an emerging action plan which identifies physical public realm projects, enabling projects and studies to help prepare for the future.


THE
THREE GUINEAS
FULLERS
Reading
TAXIS

02

Introduction

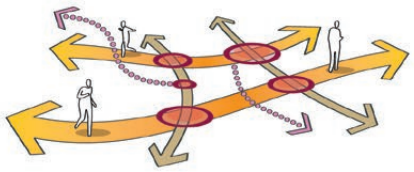
2.1 Purpose of the Guide

This Public Realm Strategy seeks to achieve the ultimate goal of setting out a clear, consistent and usable set of principles, to allow high quality and appropriate development of the public realm in Reading, with the aim of achieving an attractive, memorable and vibrant town centre.

This document is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), meaning that it supplements and expands upon higher level planning policies. A SPD should therefore be linked to a policy in a development plan. This SPD supplements policy CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading) in the Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted on 4th November 2019. Policy CR3 requires that proposals for new development make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area.

The recommendations within this document are to be implemented through both public and private development projects, including Reading Council's own work. It should also encourage private landowners to ensure that improvements are consistent with the strategy, whether or not they will need Council approval. The overall aim is that this guide is highly usable and adoptable and leads to real positive and cohesive change.

These guidelines will inform the design and assessment process for future development and maintenance, demonstrate a commitment to best practice and provide a consistent approach to planning and design, whilst ensuring consistency in quality and aesthetics.



Establish a legible hierarchy of streets & spaces and associated attributes

Set out what the public realm's appearance & feel should be

Identify the poor and missing links and set out how these can improved

Enhance the existing heritage without competing and distracting from it

What should the Public Realm Strategy do for Reading town centre?

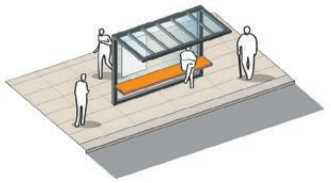
Set out design principles & guidelines for construction sites

Promote green & blue infrastructure as an essential component of the streetscape

Establish principles to enhance access & amenity value of the riverways

Set out good practice principles on decluttering & unification of furniture

Promote meanwhile uses to bring life to the streetscape before change



Demonstrate how bus shelters can be better integrated in the public realm

2.2 Reading Town Centre

Reading town centre's current and future development presents opportunities to uplift the urban landscape to foster a strong, distinctive identity, directing investment and renewal towards a revitalized public realm and a culturally successful town.

Based on the whole urban area, Reading is the largest town in England. It sits within the heart of the South East and Thames Valley and has one of the UK's highest economic activity rates with great connections to London and has benefited from the arrival of the Elizabeth Line. It is a significant medieval centre with a rich heritage and local cultural life, a world-renowned university and it is ideally located on the Thames and Kennet River banks.

Reading has a growing residential population and its increasing demands for space create challenges and opportunities alike. The projected growth in Reading plans an increase of over 14,000 homes and 30,000 people by 2050. This means the town centre needs to adapt itself into a walkable, liveable and hard-working set of spaces to live for long term and new residents.

This renewed identity focused on culture, diversity, and sustainability will help support local businesses and attract families and other user groups to spend more time in the town centre.

For this vision to become reality, the public realm's quality, robustness and attractivity needs to be lifted to meet best practice standards and set out a positive framework where Reading can achieve its potential.









2.3 Policy & Strategies Context

This document builds upon a strong backbone of town wide and area specific strategic studies, frameworks and proposals. A rigorous review of these previous documents has been carried out to ensure a joined up and consistent approach to the forward development of the public realm strategy.

The need for improvement and guided transformation has long been recognised in Reading, this is reflected by the large number of studies undertaken over the last 15 years. From architectural conservation to planned regeneration, this guideline aims at bringing together the main considerations, findings and guiding principles established in previous studies, to set out a clear strategy for the evolution of the public realm.

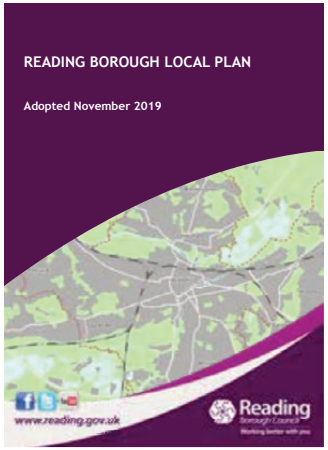
The documents reviewed include, but are not limited to:

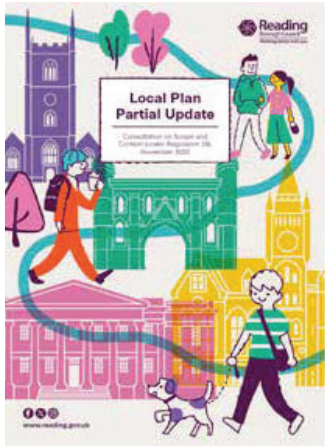
- The Reading Borough Local Plan adopted (2019)
- Reading Local Plan Partial Update (2019)
- Outline Development Framework The Site of Reading Prison (2015)
- Minster Court Area Outline Development Framework (2018)
- Local Cycling Infrastructure Plan 2020 to 2030 (2019)
- Readings Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015 to 2030
- Reading City Centre Framework (2008)
- Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (2024)
- Reading High Street Heritage Action Zone Research Report (2023)
- Reading Historic Area Assessment (2023)
- Reading Borough Council Tree strategy (2021)
- Russell Street Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal (2020)
- Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal
- Saint Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)
- Design Guide for Shop fronts. Supplementary Planning Document (2022)
- Choose Reading. Town Centre Strategy 2021 to 2050 (Draft 2021)
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2020 to 2030 (2019)
- Bus Improvement Plan 2012-26 (2021)

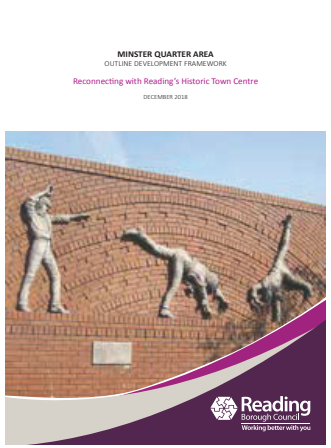
Consultation events, both public and with Reading Borough Council teams, were previously carried out and reflected in the reviewed documents. Some key findings that relate to the public realm have been summarised below:

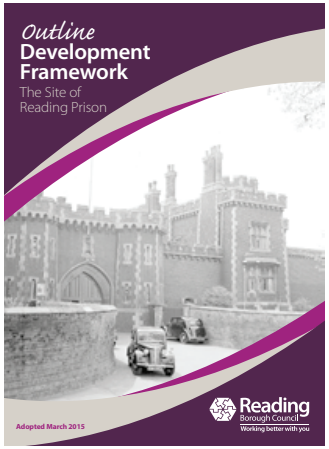
- Lack of planting & green
- Flooding issues
- Refuse & litter problem
- Car dominance
- Lack of crossings
- Universal access issues
- More seats needed
- Bus & bus stops dominance
- Poor paving condition
- Heritage not celebrated
- More space for events needed

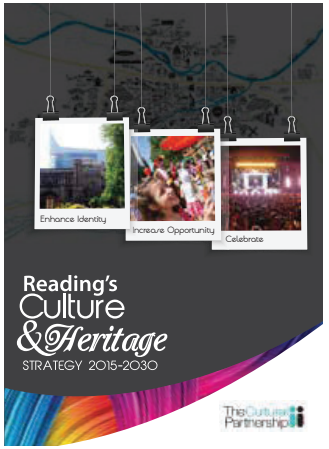
2.3 Policy & Strategies Context

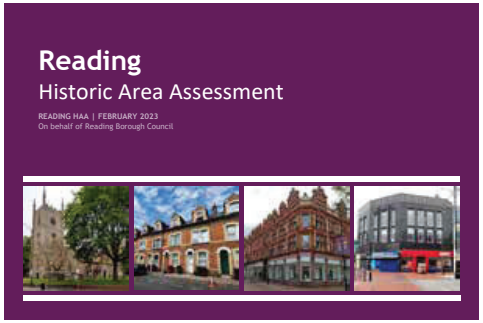


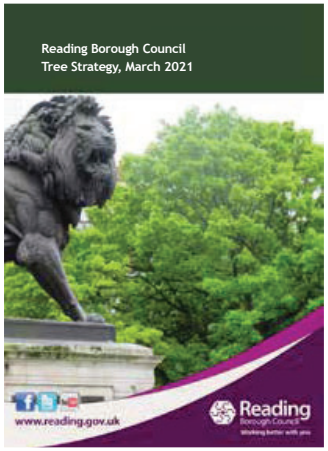


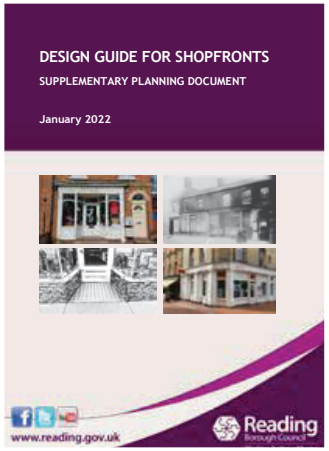












2.4 What Makes a Good Public Realm

Public realm is more than just the physical environment, its about place-making, identity, movement, community and management. When these components are all present and balanced, it becomes a successful place where people want to spend their time.

The quality of the public realm plays a vital role in the creation of a place with an enhanced sense of identity, where people will choose to spend their time. It gives great scope for public art, community based activities, temporary interventions / events, 'greening' the town with landscaping and the inclusion of creative lighting schemes.

The public realm also provides the ideal canvas for highlighting built heritage. A good quality, well considered public realm plays a major role in a positive user experience that will encourage return visits to a town. Movement strategies also play a pivotal role in the success of a place. When the right balance is struck a successful, well maintained and functional town can be achieved.

Great public realm is achieved when a wide range of social, environmental, economical and functional gains are facilitated for the town. Placemaking creates enriched, memorable and viable town centres where businesses can thrive and visitors wish to linger and enjoy the town.

Under policy CR3 of the Local Plan, major developments are expected to provide new public space or to contribute towards improvement in the public realm. It is therefore expected that this Strategy will in part be implemented through works in the public realm by developers or in some cases financial contributions. Major developments will be expected to contribute towards the enhancement of the surrounding public realm, including undertaking or funding works outside their own site boundary wherever there are opportunities to do so. In some cases, financial contributions will also be pooled towards wider town centre public realm improvements, but this will not be in place of essential improvements to the areas surrounding development sites.

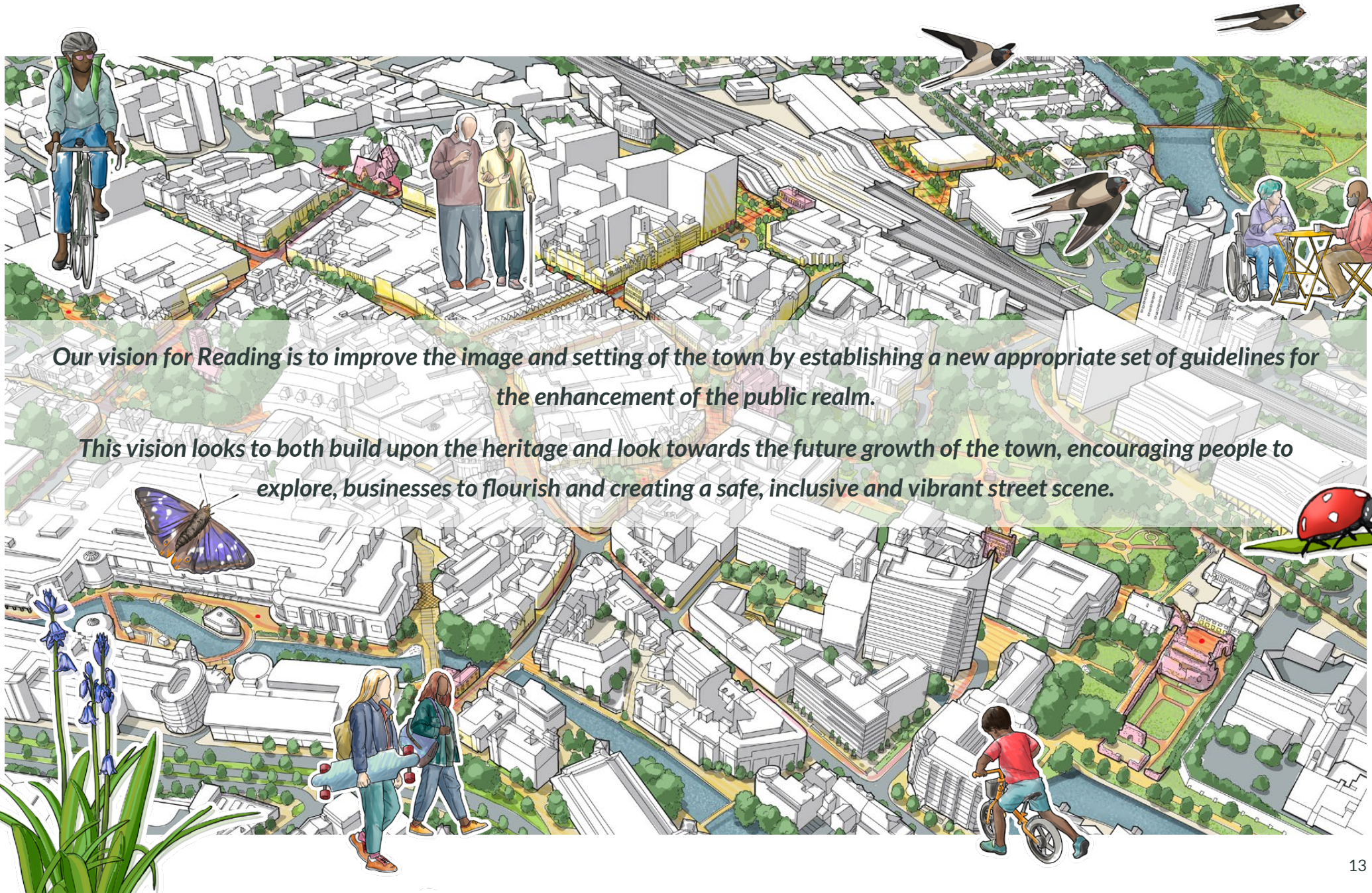
Supports community cohesion
Makes space more accessible for all users
Creates spaces where people want to be & meet
Improves wellbeing through exercise
Produces a heightened satisfaction for users
Assists in the interpretation of heritage

Attractive to investment & development
Invests to save & reduce maintenance
People stay longer & help vitality
Encourages inward investment
Impact on property value
Increases tourism & day visits

Reduces air pollution
Enhances the identity of a place
Brings nature & biodiversity to the town
Protects, conserves and enhances heritage
Helps with rain water management & attenuation
Contributes to positive image & perception

Supports public art
Encourages walking & cycling
Improves orientation & wayfinding
Inclusive for all users, universal design
Helps rationalising movement& transport
Creates outdoor spaces for retail & leisure

2.5 Vision for Reading's Public Realm



Our vision for Reading is to improve the image and setting of the town by establishing a new appropriate set of guidelines for the enhancement of the public realm.

This vision looks to both build upon the heritage and look towards the future growth of the town, encouraging people to explore, businesses to flourish and creating a safe, inclusive and vibrant street scene.

2.6 Guiding Principles

The public spaces and streets of Reading should be geared towards people and focus on providing a clear, attractive and comfortable streetscape for its inhabitants and visitors. All future improvement to the public realm should take account of these principles.

01

Vibrant streets

Create vibrant, engaging streetscapes for all users that allow for everyday use as well as street activation, temporary events, public art, outdoor dining, performance and markets.

02

Universality & Inclusivity

Ensure all spaces are inclusive by design and allow all users including people with disabilities, neurodiverse or visually impaired, to safely navigate the public realm.

03

Sustainable Movement

Encourage carbon neutral transportation by creating safe pedestrian and cycle routes, reclaiming road space, providing cycle parking, and promoting public transport. Make Reading a pleasantly walkable and cyclable town.

04

Ensure consistency in design

Use an appropriate palette of high quality, discreet paving throughout the town centre, as well as coordinated street furniture and elements.

05

Improve streetscape legibility

A clear, legible and functional public realm will be provided through the simplification and coordination of street components, the decluttering of unnecessary streetscape elements and the implementation of a comprehensive wayfinding strategy.

06

Ensure consistency in design

Support the restoration of key architectural and artistic features in the town centre, whilst celebrating Reading's heritage through streetscape intervention and public art.

07

Green & Sustainable

Maximise urban greening, encourage tree planting and support biodiversity and SUDs wherever practicable.

08

Safe public environment

Enhance public lighting by making it proportionate and consistent, including on secondary and remote pedestrian and cycle only links, along with the creation of clear and open sight lines to increase visibility throughout the town centre.

09

Create memorable spaces where people want to be

Allow dwelling on the street and activate the use of public spaces by people. Define the character and key attributes of feature spaces through design, allowing flexibility and diversity of usage. Enhance outdoor play and leisure provision throughout the town, catering for all users, including teenagers and adults.

10

Maintenance and construction action plan

Create a robust action plan for the management of hoarding and temporary fencing during construction. Develop a detailed maintenance plan for all elements and spaces of the public realm.


savers
savers
ruby

03

Town Centre Appraisal

3.1 Current Issues & Concerns

The public realm in Reading is diverse, as can be expected in a large historic town that has lived through many periods of growth and expansion. Public and private spaces, streets, lanes and squares are now interwoven to create a rich and complex urban landscape. However, some recurring issues run through the town centre and are identifed here.

Lack of consistency and coherence - There is a wide variety of paving materials, street furniture or wayfinding signs used throughout the town centre. Whilst some of these may bring interest to the public realm, the result in most areas is a lack of cohesive approach that is detrimental to the overall legibility and quality of the town centre.

The invisible heritage - Reading's heritage is one of its best assets, yet few visitors and residents may think of Reading as a heritage town. It is too often rendered invisible by clutter, hard to locate or set in uninviting spaces.

Lack of quality and robustness in material - With the exception of some historical streets in the Abbey Quarter and some private developments, the majority of the public realm uses mid to low quality surfacing materials.

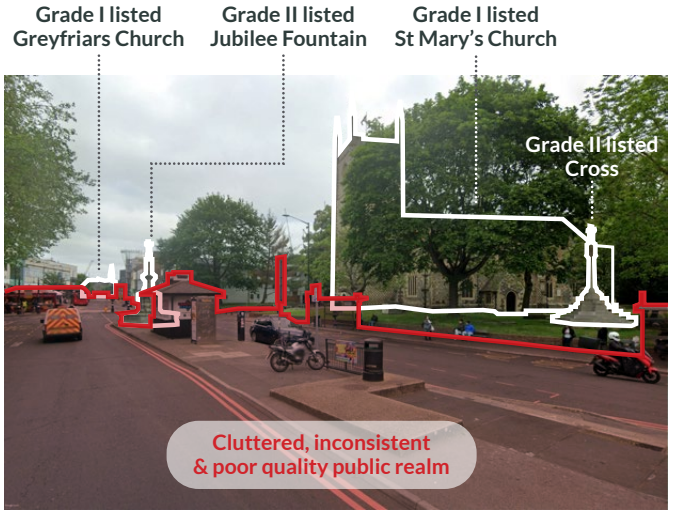
Vehicular dominance - In many streets and spaces, vehicular traffic movement negatively impacts the quality of the public realm through traffic, speed, noise and on-street parking.

Clutter - Key streets and spaces, including at the very core of the town, are cluttered by a variety of objects and signs that detract from the heritage and make the town hard to navigate. A simplification and rationalisation of the public realm will help put an accent on the existing town's assets.

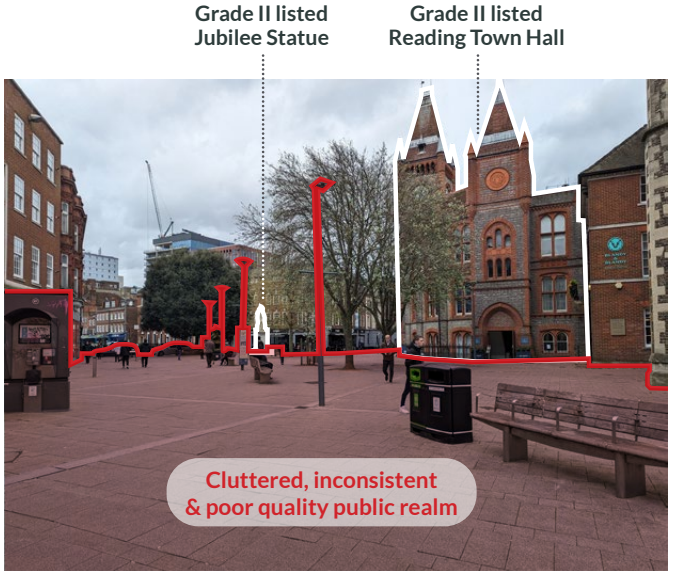
Lack of green - Biodiversity, raingardens, planting beds and vegetation are sorely lacking throughout the town centre. Lots of spaces and hidden corners could be reclaimed for green to turn Reading into a leader in green infrastructure. The introduction of planting and trees could help soften, integrate and reconnect heavily engineered roads, whilst working towards achieving the carbon neutral target of 2030 as set out in the Local Plan.

Hidden rivers- The River Kennet, canals and Thames run through or close to the town centre, forming a network of pedestrian and cycle paths that give direct access to valuable natural areas. This is a unique asset, however, access to the riverwalks are hard to find and the riverpaths lack consistency and openess. Some waterways, in particular the Holy Brook, are literally hidden in culverts.

Lack of street activation - The town centre lacks quality pocket spaces for people to meet and dwell, active spaces conducive to play and wonder for children and adults alike. These are not limited to formal play options but can include street art, murals, sculptures or playful lighting at nighttime.



Clutter competing with heritage on St Mary's Butts



Clutter competing with heritage on Town Hall Square

3.1 Current Issues & Concerns

The below is a visual summary of some of the recurring challenges encountered throughout the town centre.

Clutter throughout the town centre





Wide variety of street furniture



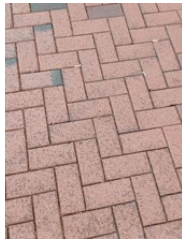
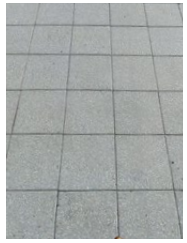


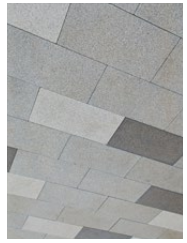
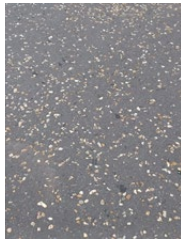
Wide variety of wayfinding and signs






Wide variety of surfacing types

3.2 Strategic Typology

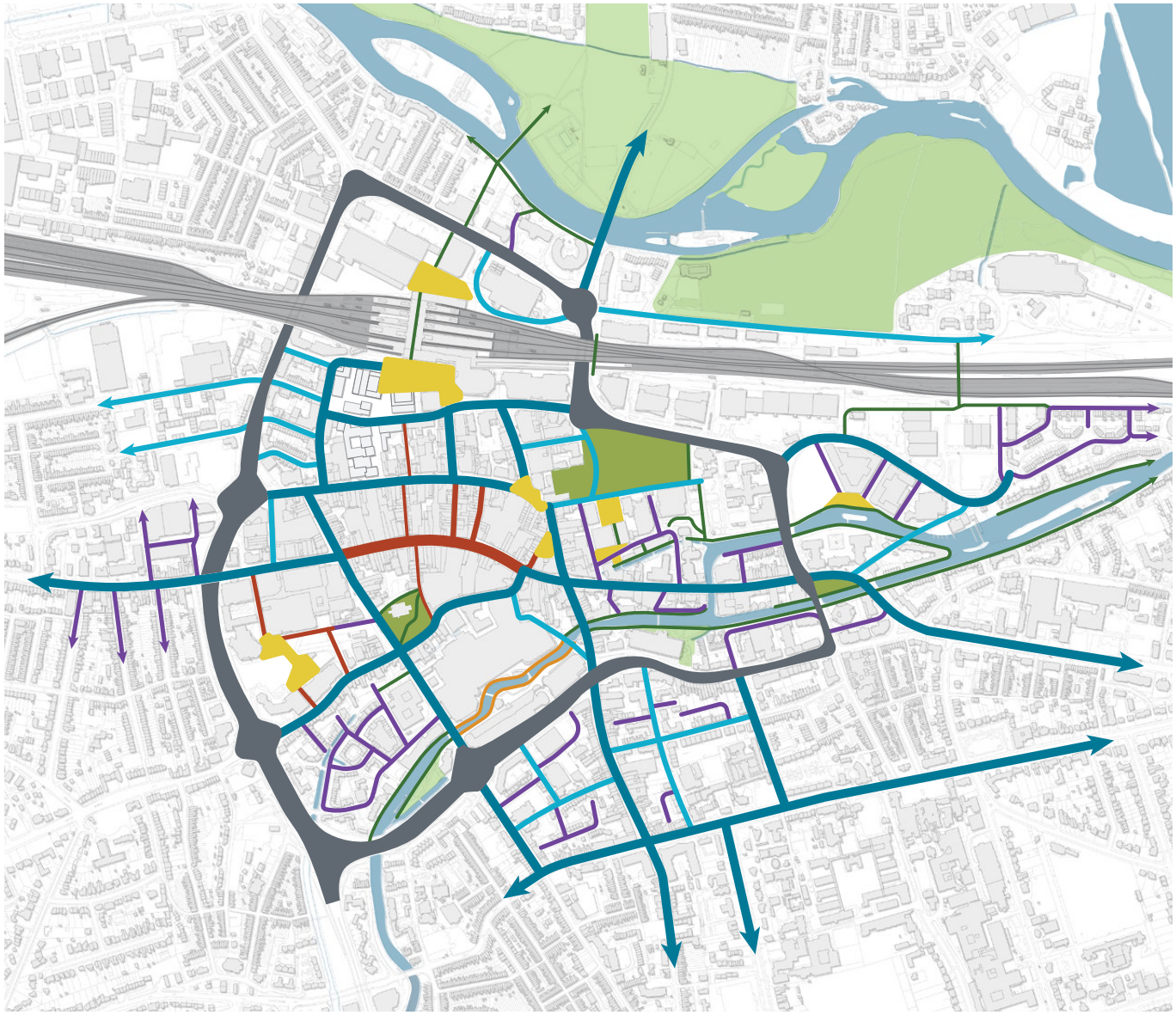
This strategic typology groups streets and spaces in categories based on their common characteristics such as street width, public realm appearance, traffic patterns, pedestrian footfall and surrounding building uses.

The town centre has a comprehensive and rich network of street and spaces, ranging from pedestrian narrow lanes to large, heavily trafficked strategic roads.

Establishing a clear typology brings a comprehensive understanding of the existing condition and structure of the town centre and is an important step to identify strengths and weaknesses in the public realm. It also helps define the different spaces and street types to then establish adapted design and intervention guidelines.

This typology is the base of the street audit, a descriptive catalogue of the current condition of the streets and spaces in the town centre.

- Pedestrian priority streets, lanes and passages
- IDR
- Primary and strategic roads
- Secondary streets
- Tertiary and residential streets
- Public and civic spaces
- Green spaces
- Footpaths, pedestrian links and riverpaths
- Pedestrian link through the Oracle



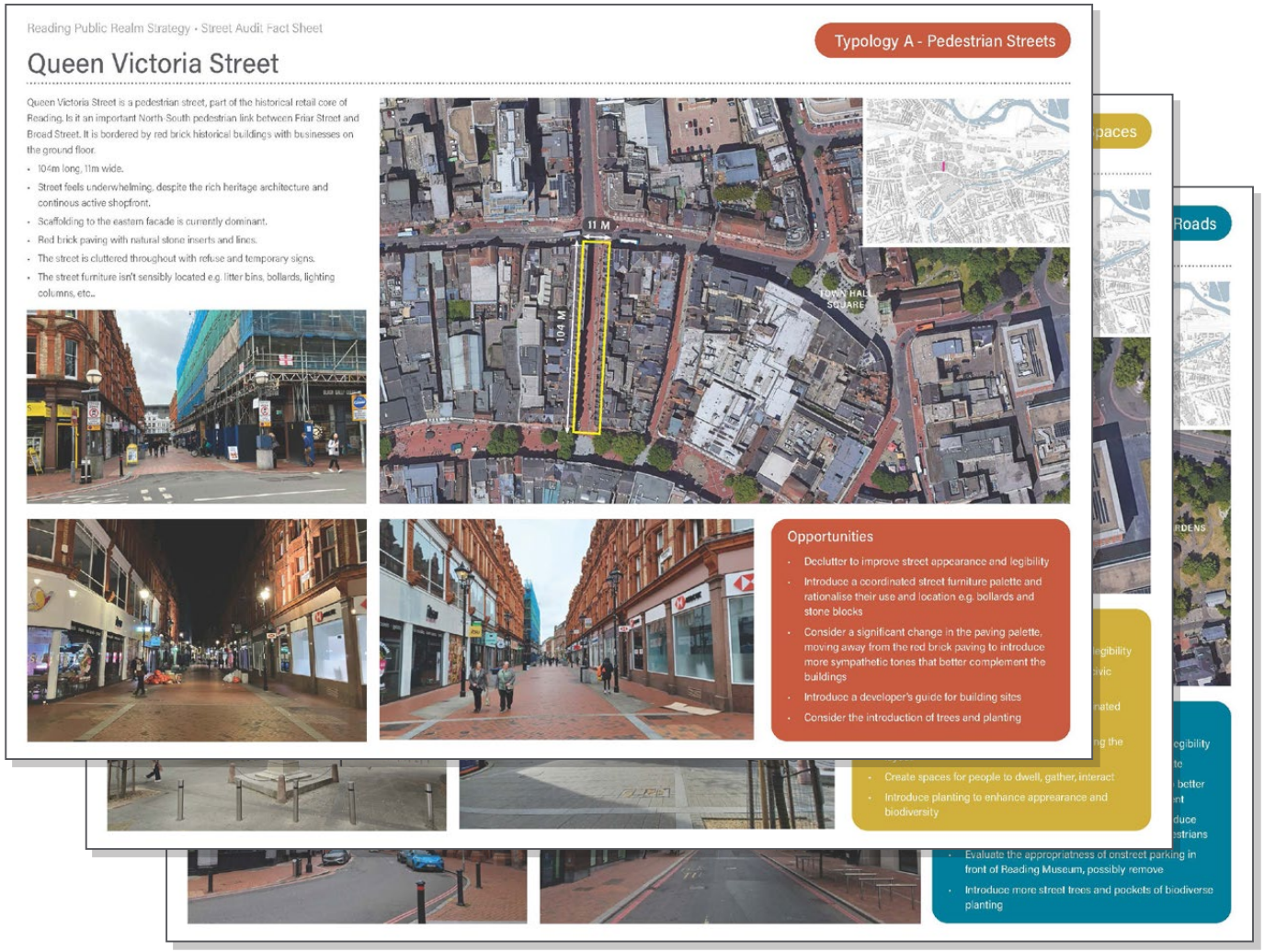
3.3 Street Audit Overview

As part of the baseline analysis and study of the town centre necessary to the production of the Public Realm Strategy, a street audit was undertaken. The aim of the street audit is to understand Reading, how the streets and spaces function and perform, what works well or needs improvement.

The audit is centered on the physical analysis of the streets and spaces within the town centre. This includes physical components such as materials, street furniture, general dimensions, architecture, presence or not of heritage buildings and landmarks, traffic, footfall and use (retail, residential, mixed-uses, office, etc). It also considers the potential of the space and the usage for events, activities and movement. A fact sheet has been created for each street, space or street type.

The street audit and strategic typology have been elaborated jointly, the fact finding study necessary to conduct the street audit feeding into the typology. The typology is presented as a colour coded plan where streets and spaces have been grouped under 9 categories. The street audit uses the same colour code to bring a granular understanding of the issues and opportunities of each street and of the town centre as a whole.

Please refer to Reading Town Centre Street Audit as a complementary document to this guideline.

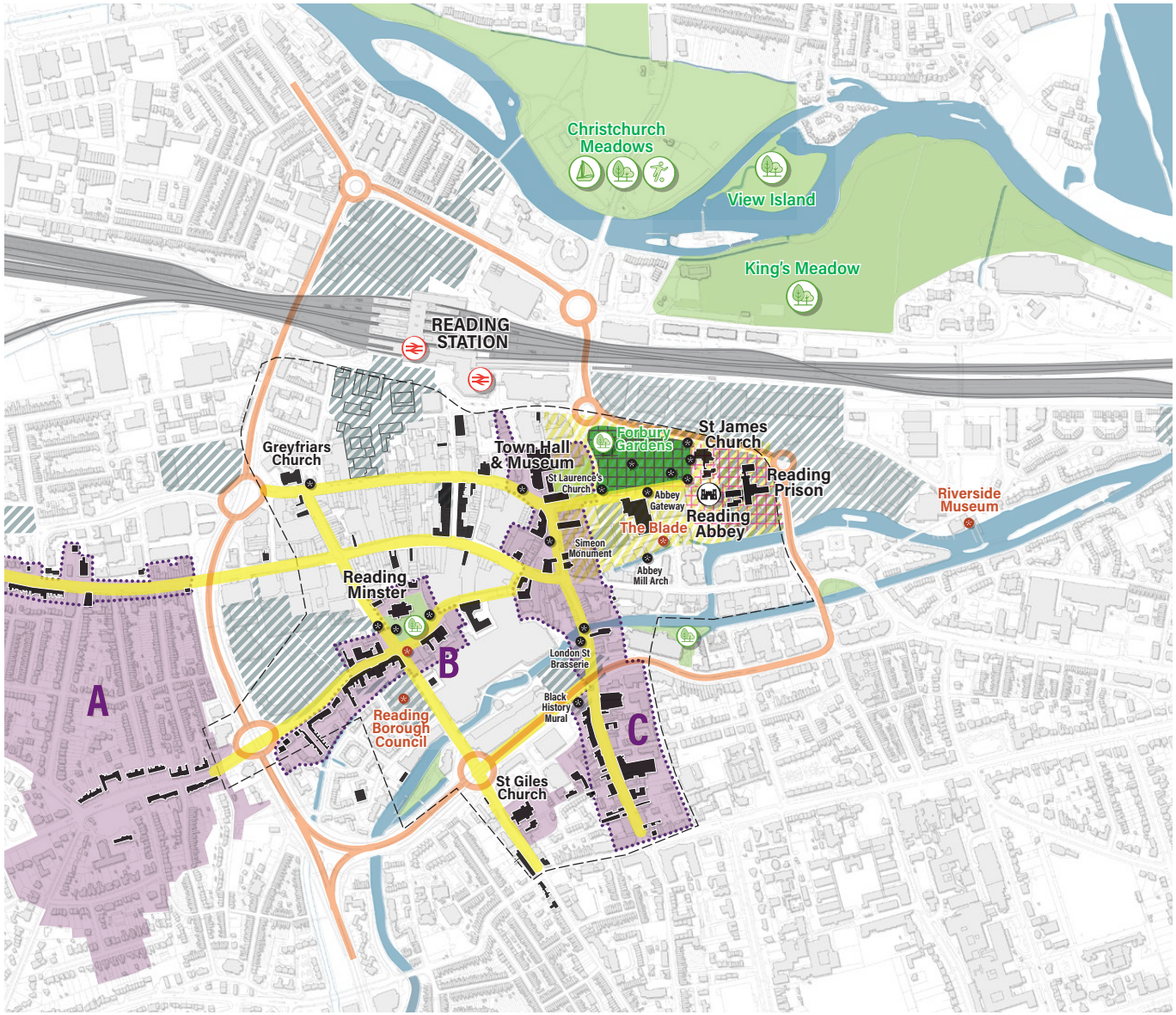


3.4 Heritage and Conservation

Reading is an ancient town of Anglo-Saxon foundation that has lived and thrived through time. Its rich heritage is a testimony to this history and it is present at every corner in the town centre.

Reading town centre counts three Conservation Areas, many Grade I and II listed buildings, a registered park with Forbury Gardens and scheduled monuments area at the Abbey, Prison site and High Bridge on Duke St. New developments and improvements to the public realm should be highly contextual and considerate to Reading's heritage, to build on the town's strengths by revealing and promoting its existing value and assets.

- Listed buildings (within strategy area)
- Listed monuments (within strategy area)
- Other landmarks (within strategy area)
- Registered parks & gardens
- Scheduled monuments
- Conservation Areas (within strategy area):
  - **A** Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road CA
  - **B** St Mary's Butts & Castle Street CA
  - **C** Market Place & London Street CA
- High Street Heritage Action zones
- Medieval abbey precinct
- Principal medieval roads
- Extent of medieval town
- IDR
- Development sites

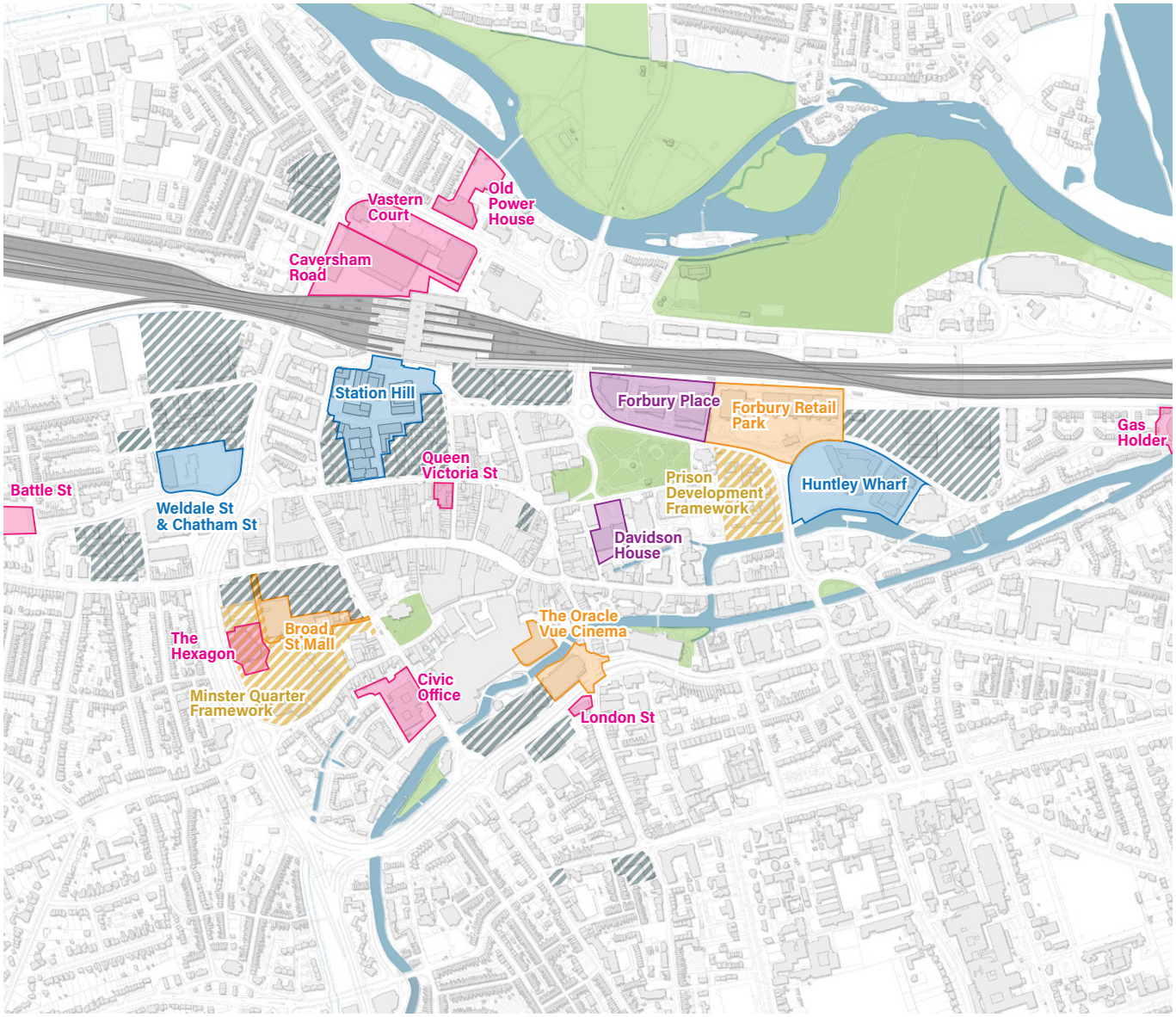


3.5 Development Sites

Reading is a fast evolving town. The 2019 to 2036 Local Plan assigns almost half of the borough's housing need to the central area of Reading, along with 71,000 sqm of new office and 27,000 of new retail. The high number development sites with on-going planning applications is a testimony to the town's social and economic appeal and dynamism.

The growth in the town centre is already tangible with many developments including residential, office and mixed-use schemes having been delivered or about to be completed on site, such as Forbury Place, Chatham Street or Huntley Wharf. The most significant area of change lies around the new station with Station Hill, which will become the main gateway into the town centre for commuters and visitors arriving by train.

Many more tranformations are to come with planning permissions having been granted for significant development north of the railway, around Vastern Court, and with two important frameworks for Minster Quarter and the Prison development. This fast-paced transformation across the town centre calls for a clear strategy that sets out how the public realm should be coherently preserved and enhanced to accompany change and help deliver Reading's full potential.



- Development under construction
- Planning permission granted
- Planning application submitted
- Recently completed with public realm
- Existing framework for redevelopment
- Sites identified for development or change in Local Plan

3.6 Character Areas

One of the key characteristics of successful urban space is a sense of identity and unique character. Reading has undergone countless transformations, periods of growth and expansions. These have shaped areas, quarters and neighbourhoods that are distinctive from one another.

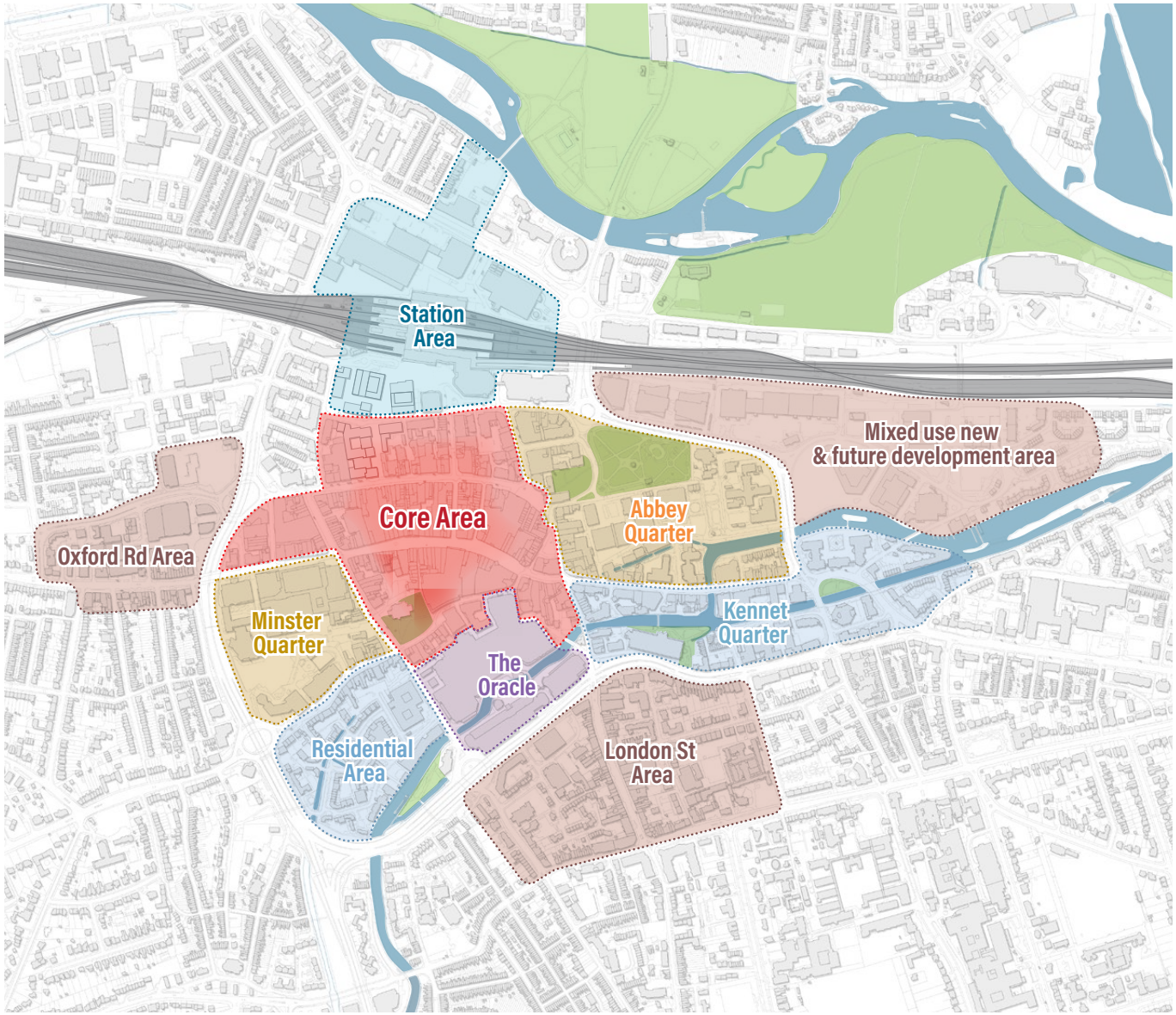
The town centre is currently divided into a number of areas of distinct character and identity. These areas have been defined based on the assessment of the built form, the urban fabric, the location of key links but also the uses and activities, the feel and identity that characterise an urban area or a neighbourhood.

The core area, Abbey Quarter and adjacent residential areas along the River Kennet tend to be well defined and dynamic, present a mix of uses, retain the original urban structure of the town centre and count more characterful streets at human scale than some outer areas of the town centre.

Oxford Road and London Street areas have distinctive identity and work well as independant and complementary quarters to the town centre, however, the IDR severs them from the core of the town. Some streets to the north of Oxford Road present significant opportunities for redevelopment.

Areas adjacent to the railway corridor present a less defined urban grain formed of larger blocks, less linkage at pedestrian scale and therefore a less attractive character. However, ongoing and future developments in these areas will seek to reconnect them to the core of the town and deliver attractive urban spaces.

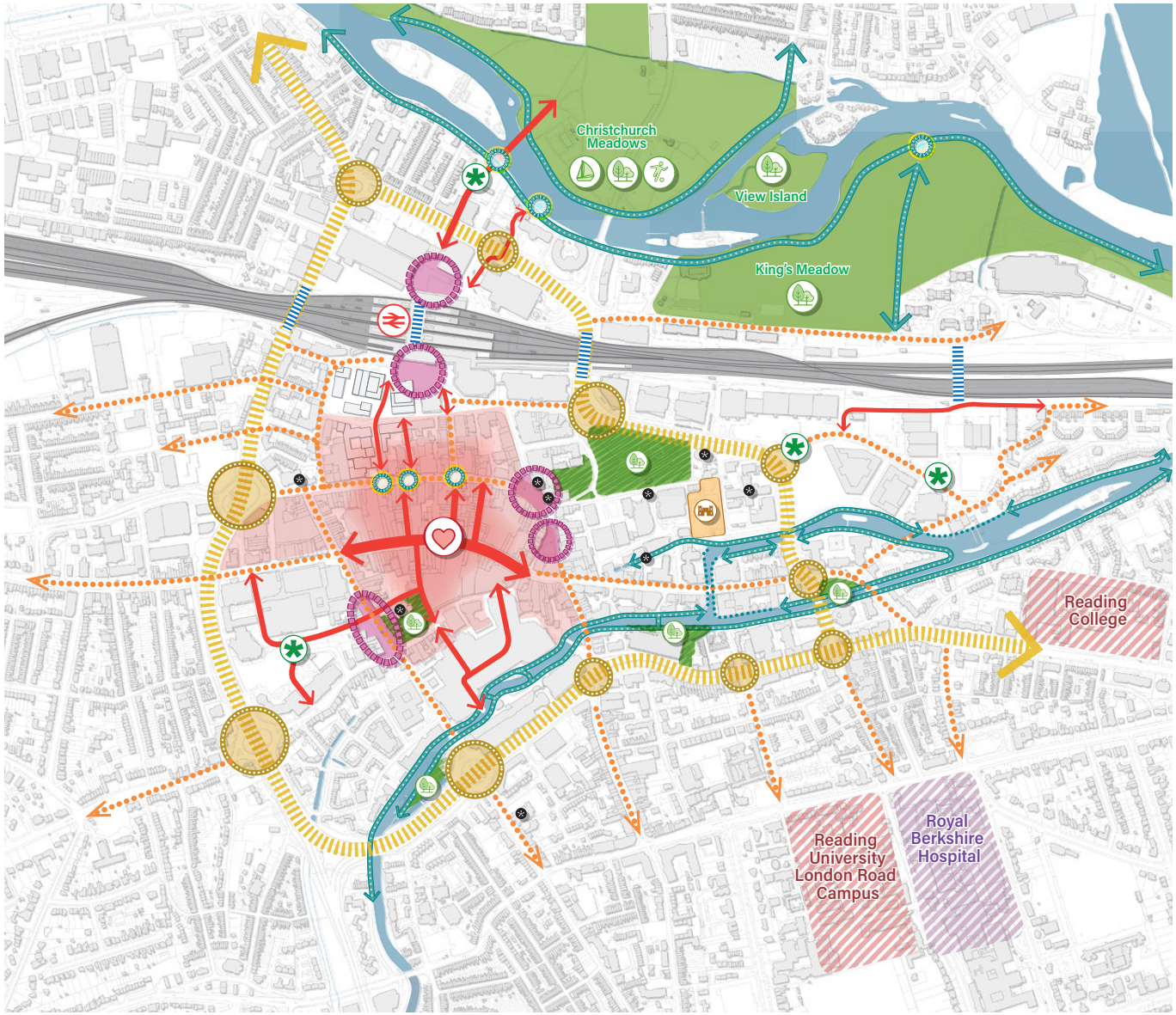
New developments and public realm enhancement projects should seek to reinforce the positive character and identity of an area, whilst aiming to remediate identified challenges.



3.7 Aspirational Town Centre Structure

This diagram presents an aspirational layout for the town centre, with extended pedestrian and cycle networks, good linkages, quality civic and green spaces and good access to the rivers Thames and Kennet.

- Key primary pedestrian and cycle only network through the core of the town centre. These links should be preserved, enhanced and extended
- Enhanced secondary and tertiary links to extend the reach of the town centre and encourage walking and cycling to overcome the severance generated by the IDR
- Existing and future public and civic spaces. These should be inviting, allow gatherings and events and be at the heart of the town's life
- Transformed IDR through the introduction of green infrastructure, SuDs and carriageway width reduction where possible
- Enhanced nodes to allow better pedestrian & cycle connectivity
- Sub nodes / decision making points for pedestrians
- New areas of open space (as identified in Local Plan)
- Enhanced and safe underpasses for pedestrians & cyclists
- Continuous long distance cycle and pedestrian routes
- Enhanced urban green spaces to include community amenity spaces, good linkage and biodiverse planting
- Extensive green space with clear and inviting pedestrian access from the town centre
- Key town centre landmarks

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04

Pedestrian, Wheelers & Cycle Framework

4.1 Existing Movement Hierarchy

Reading town centre has a comprehensive current movement and transport hierarchy. The bus and road networks, whilst highly successful assets, create both challenges and opportunities for the future growth and development of the town.

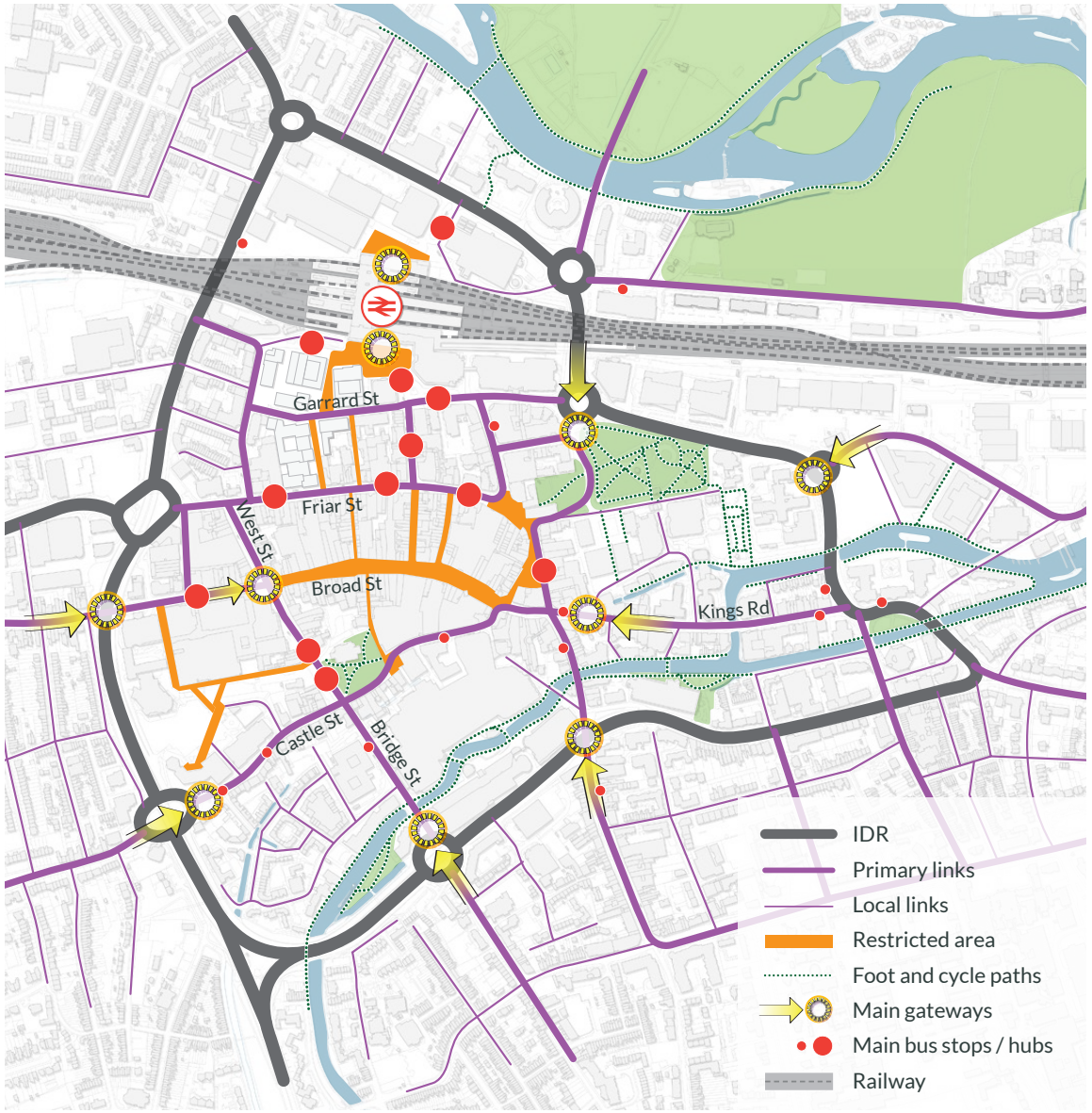
The Inner Distribution Route (IDR) is an important strategic movement corridor that helps to keep traffic out of the town centre core. However, due to its nature it severs access from surrounding neighbourhoods and creates a barrier to walking, wheeling and cycling.

There are several important primary links within the town centre which perform key roles including access for emergency services, deliveries and servicing, buses, taxis and disabled drivers. These include Bridge Street, St Mary's Butts, Kings Road and Friar Street.

Local links include small routes and passages giving access to residential blocks and back of buildings servicing. These are largely one-way with restricted access.

General traffic is largely prohibited within the town centre core, albeit there is significant movement of delivery vehicles. Reading's excellent accessibility by buses is a key reason why this can be achieved, and the excellent accessibility by bus is essential to Reading's continued success. However, in some locations significant bus movement negatively affects the public realm and makes it difficult to navigate for other user groups such as pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists. The challenge will be retaining the high level of bus accessibility to the town centre but achieving a better balance with other users in some spaces.

There are several off-road tracks and river paths that cross the town centre and have the potential to become fantastic greenways; however these are often fragmented, feel unsafe during the hours of darkness and are not fully accessible to all.



4.2 Overarching Challenges & Opportunities

Legible, well-connected active travel networks and accessible public transport are key to a functional and successful town centre. The adjacent diagram identifies the main challenges that Reading currently faces and the main opportunities upon which the town centre's sustainable regeneration can be built.

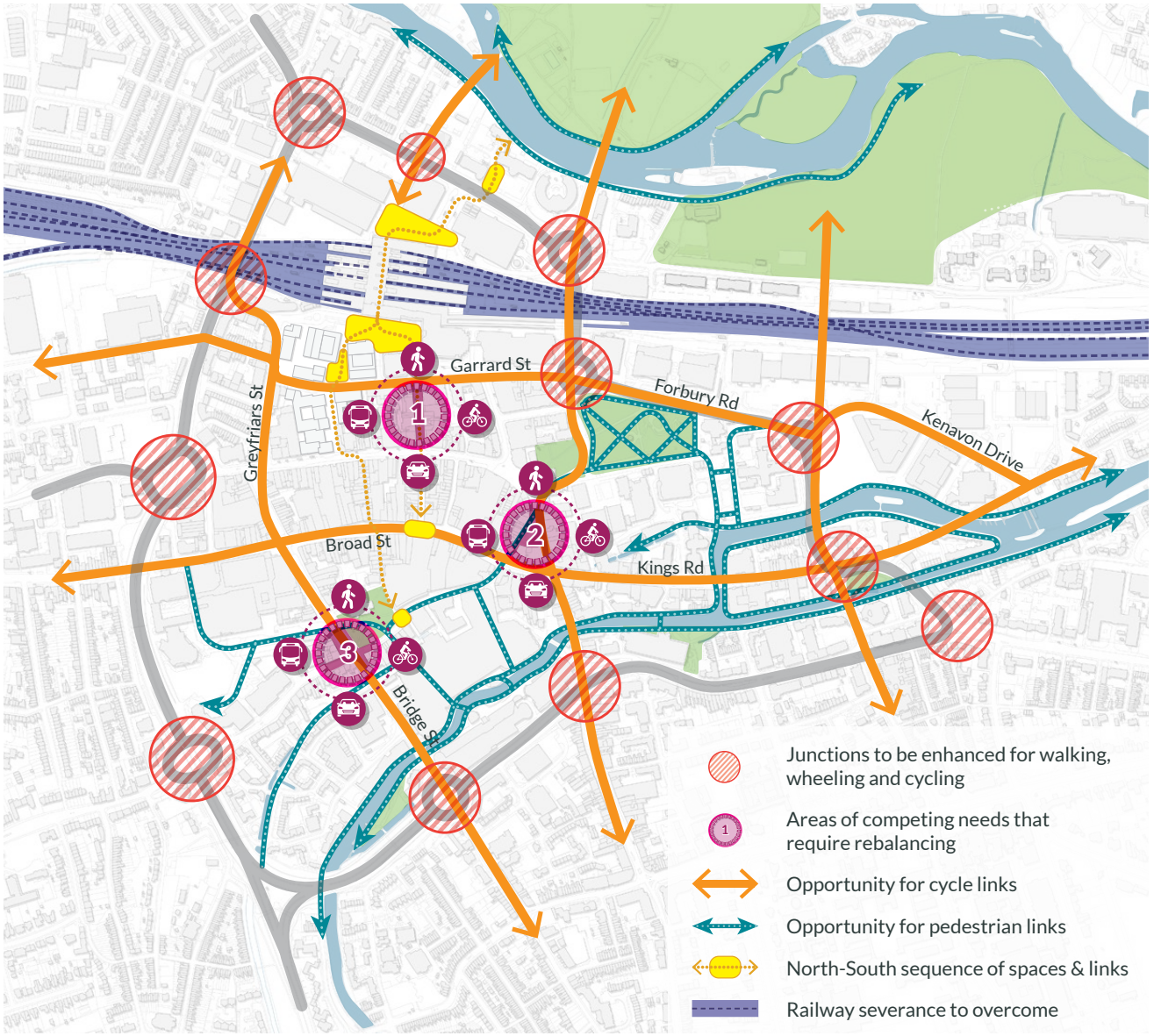
Junctions not designed for people - Major junctions on the IDR generate issues in terms of pedestrian and cyclist connectivity, road safety, wayfinding and gateways between neighbourhoods and the town centre.

Areas of competing needs for movement & place - Station Road (1), Market Place (2) and St Mary's Butts (3) are locations where the balance between movement and placemaking is significantly skewed. Cyclists, pedestrians, wheelers, buses, delivery vehicles and taxis compete for space in a historical setting, negatively impacting the visitor experience, safety and functionality.

Need for cycle routes on desire lines - Continuous links for safe cyclist passage should be sought, including through the pedestrianised zone, with the appropriate infrastructure.

Joining the dots - There is a need to improve safety, route continuity and wayfinding along the off-road pedestrian and cycle network to unlock the potential connections to the wider surroundings of Reading, in particular along the rivers and within adjoining neighbourhoods.

Creating a strong north-south sequence - Opportunity to connect key destinations with a strong pedestrian friendly link from Christchurch Meadows to the Oracle through Station Hill/Station Road and Union St/Chain St/Minster Churchyard.



4.3 'Healthy Streets' Criteria Plan

A 'Healthy Streets' approach to street design aims to improve air quality, reduce congestion and help make town's and cities' diverse communities greener, healthier and more attractive places to live, work, play and do business.

A Red-Amber-Green (RAG) Healthy Streets assessment was undertaken across the study area, where red is 'poor', yellow is 'average', and green is 'good'. The assessment reviews 10 key street indicators which are summarised in the diagram overpage and includes an assessment of:

- People from all walks of life
- Ease of crossing
- Shade and shelter
- Places to stop and rest
- Not too noisy
- People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport
- People feel safe
- Things to see and do
- People feel relaxed
- Clean air

This diagram can be summarised with the following main messages:

- The town centre benefits from some quality streets and spaces that support healthier and more attractive places for people to spend time. These key areas include:
- The newly built **Reading Station environment** (3 & 9).
- The historic area around the **Abbey and Forbury. Gardens** (13).
- **Blagrave Street / Town Hall Square** (16).
- The pedestrianised areas on **Broad Street and Queen Victoria Street** (21/26).
- **The Kennet Side** (24).
- **The Oracle** (38).
- However, there are many problematic areas, where highway infrastructure, high volumes of buses and street clutter impact negatively on people and the environment. These include by place:
- **Station Road** (15) where extensive bus stops, narrow footways and the space between buildings impact on the quality of the environment, navigation and safety.
- **Market Place** (22) is an historic space that is greatly impacted by the amount of clutter and competing needs for buses, deliveries, cycle access and enjoyment of the square.
- **West Street** (25) is a significant corridor which creates a north-south link via St Mary's Butt and Bridge Street. Currently it is an uninviting street environment for all users and does not enhance the setting of the Grade I Greyfriars Church.
- **St Mary's Butts** (33) is a historic street with impressive buildings and monuments, however the environment is significantly impacted by competing needs of buses, taxis, deliveries and servicing, accesses, disabled parking and cycle access.
- **Bridge Street** (37) and the **junction with Mill Lane** (44) are an extension of **St Mary's Butt** where currently general movement is prioritised over local walking, wheeling and cycling access and enjoyment.
- **Duke Street** (28) is a narrow, historic street that crosses the River Kennet. The footways are narrow and it is dominated by buses, impacting on road safety and the quality of this historic and riverside environment.
- The junction with **Mill Lane** (39) is poor with regards to crossings and a 'gateway' to the town centre from the south.

Identified Transport and Movement Improvements by Mode:

Traffic Management and Road Safety

Create a calmer, place-making led environment which enables, where possible, a self-enforcing traffic

4.3 ‘Healthy Streets’ Criteria Plan

management system, reduces clutter and significantly reduces the highway infrastructure that is required.

Buses

Reading has a comprehensive and well used bus network which is to be commended. There is however opportunity to reduce the impacts of buses on the town centre by reviewing where carriageway widths can be reduced and where bus stops can be placed to align with improved pedestrian circulation.

Cycling

Enable the safe and convenient passage of cycling in the town centre including improvements to routes, junctions and signage, and ensuring measures are introduced that enable desire lines to be permitted.

Introduce secure cycle parking at key locations through the town centre.

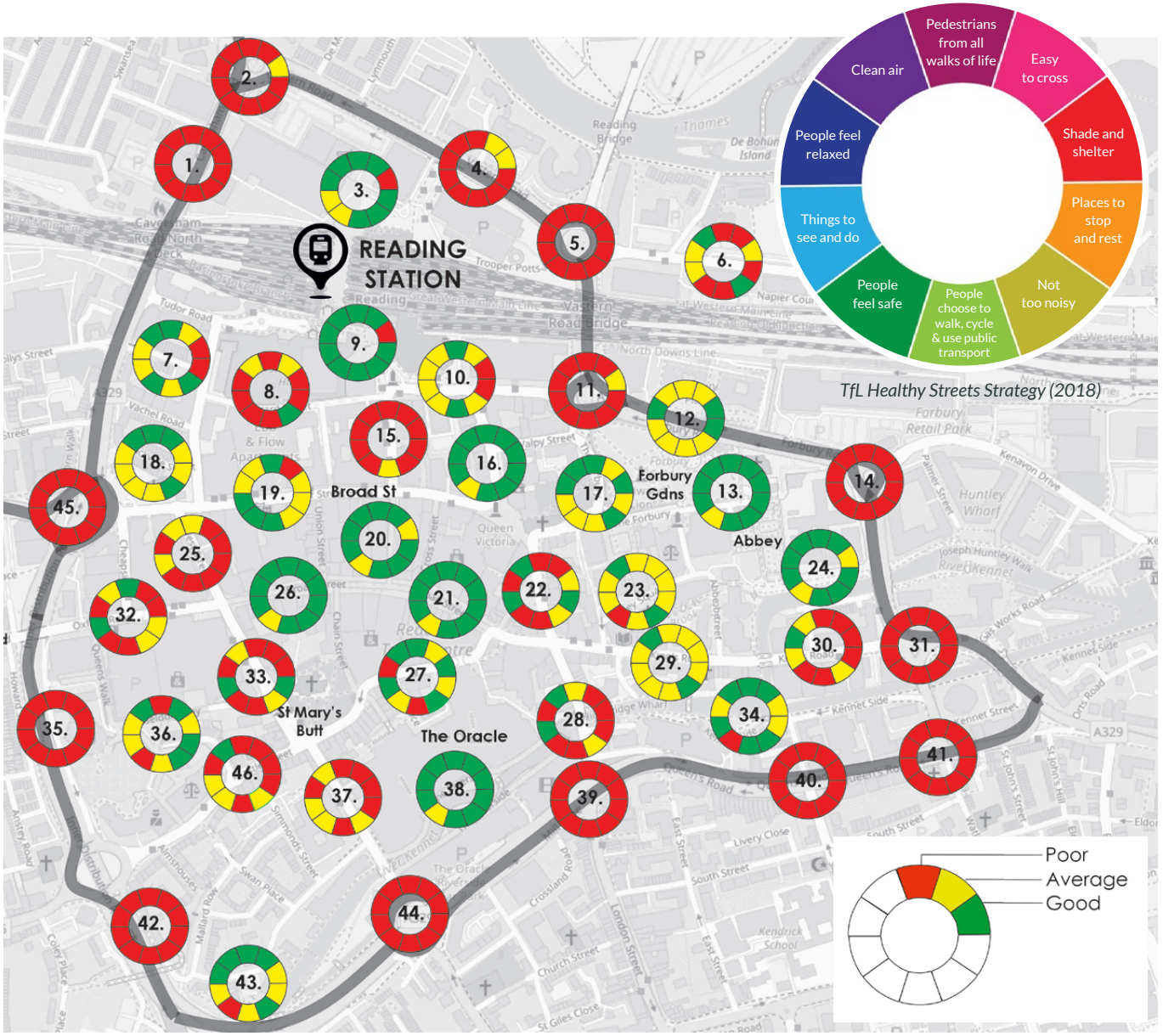
Manage micro-mobility, particularly food delivery bikes and their movement through the town centre.

Walking

Create a clutter-free, safe, legible and enjoyable network of streets and spaces that enable access for all, including seating and signage where appropriate.

Personal Security

The aim should be to activate intimidating, uninteresting and uninviting streets and spaces. Where possible, natural surveillance should be a fundamental principle.



TfL Healthy Streets Strategy (2018)

4.4 Overall Recommended Improvements

Building on Reading's quality transport system, there is an opportunity to enhance walking and cycling connectivity and create healthy streets for people. The following recommendations have been identified to support this opportunity:

IDR permeability - Improve permeability of pedestrians and cyclists from the surrounding neighbourhoods across the IDR to the town centre including improved junctions and crossings.

Rebalancing Movement and Placemaking - Create calmer, more inviting and attractive places, as well as addressing poor air quality and road safety.

Unlocking safe and convenient cycle routes - Address severance and poor road safety for cyclists. Greater priority and associated infrastructure throughout the town centre and the IDR to improve cycling in line with LTN 1/20.

Personal safety and security - Improve personal safety and security on key routes including along the river Kennet and other secluded locations.

Accessibility and legibility - Address accessibility and legibility ensuring that streets and spaces are designed to accommodate all types of users.

Futureproofing new links as part of redevelopment - New developments to improve sight lines, access and permeability throughout the town centre.

Cycle parking and micro-mobility - Improve access to secure cycle parking. Micro-mobility, scooter and e-bike hire should all be carefully considered.

Identified Transport and Movement Improvements by Mode:

Traffic Management and Road Safety - Create a calmer, place-making led environment which enables, where possible, a self-enforcing traffic management system, reduces clutter and significantly reduces the highway infrastructure that is required.

Buses - Reduce the impacts of buses on the town centre by reviewing where carriageway widths can be reduced and where bus stops can be placed to align with improved pedestrian circulation.

Cycling - Enable the safe and convenient passage of cycling in the town centre including improvements to routes, junctions and signage, and ensuring measures are introduced that enable desire lines to be permitted.

Walking & Wheeling - Create a clutter-free, safe, legible and enjoyable network of streets and spaces that enable access for all, including seating and signage where appropriate.

Personal Security - The aim should be to activate intimidating, uninteresting and uninviting streets and spaces. Where possible, natural surveillance should be a fundamental principle.

These are the Reading town centre transport strategy vision and objectives

Resolving public transport conflicts by putting pedestrians first and all other road users as 'guests' in the town centre

Promoting healthy and active lifestyles by linking up to the countryside on the edge of town & waterside areas

Achieving growth in cycle patronage and sustainable mode shift

Contributing to liveable Reading, through green streets, 'play on the way' and 'arrival in green'

Creating a connected network of primary streets and spaces, providing the town with a green loop

Introduce low carbon bus fleet and associated public realm improvements

Enabling and encouraging walking and cycling across the borough

Creating an emphasis on gateways and arrival spaces as part of a comprehensive public realm network

Re-imagining the IDR and breaking the 'collar' effect

Reducing through traffic within the town and improve air quality. Support the uptake of low carbon transport modes

4.5 Bus Stop Improvements

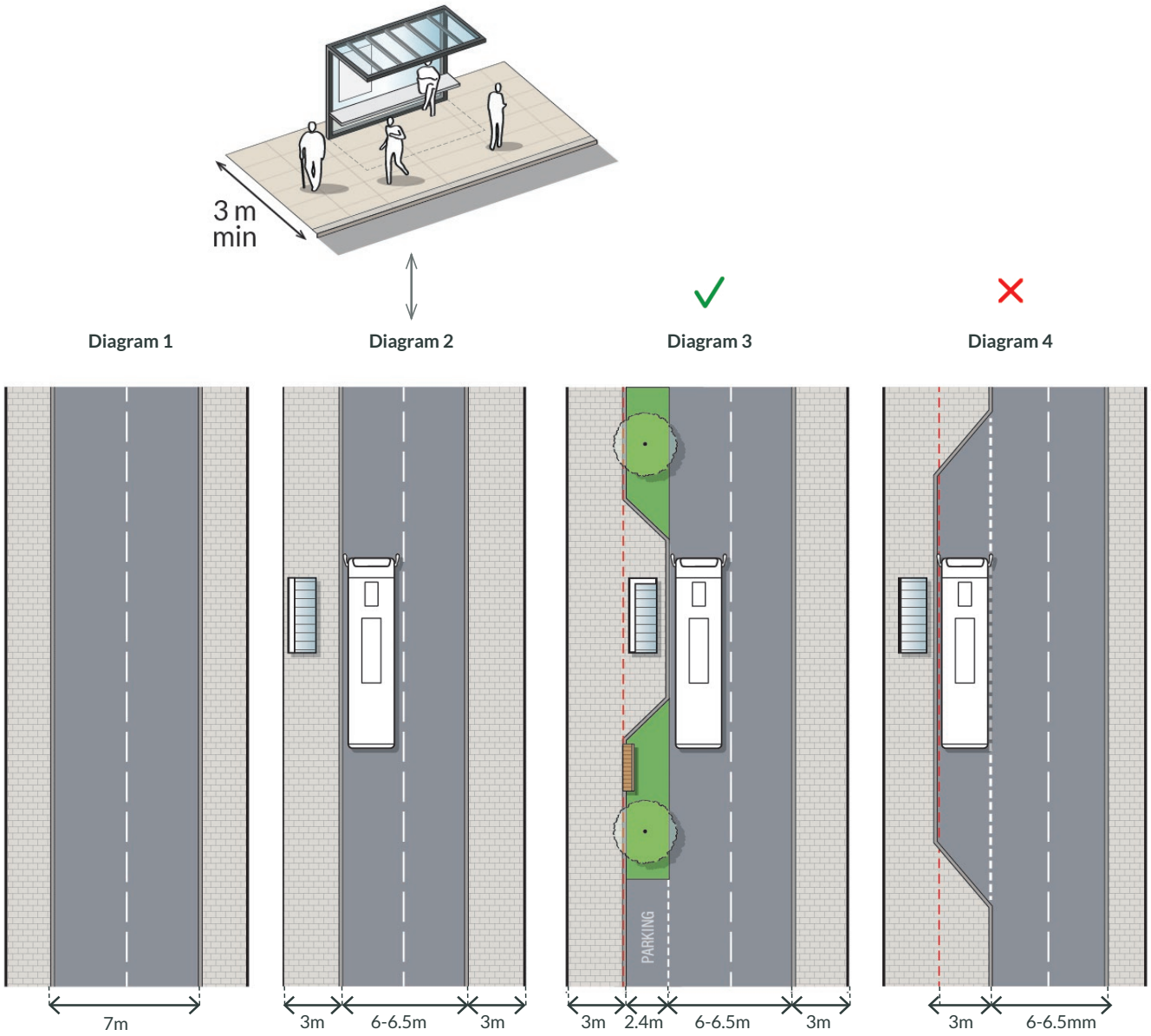
A series of bus stop improvements should be implemented across the town centre to enhance pedestrian comfort, aid movement, enable the much needed introduction of greening, and increase biodiversity and urban drainage.

Diagram 1 - Typical existing Reading street with a 7m wide road. This layout enables vehicles to speed and dominate the street. Bus shelters, located on the remaining narrow footpath, block pedestrian movement.

Diagram 2 - This shows a scenario where the carriageway width is reduced, allowing for wider footpaths. The bus shelter is located at the rear of the footpath, which is ideally over 3m wide and allows free flowing pedestrian movement. Buses stop on the road.

Diagram 3 - This shows an ideal scenario where if the street width allows, a build-out for the bus shelter is introduced. The carriageway width is reduced and the footpath width is maintained past the bus stop. Greening, is introduced both sides of the bus build-out and shelter and buses stop on the road. In this location, the bus shelter can be semi-enclosed. This solution will need to be used carefully, as where services are frequent it can lead to buses being stacked and unable to pass one another, which increases their impact on the public realm and can negatively affect the perception of buses.

Diagram 4 - Shows a scenario which is not desirable within the town centre. Laybys should be avoided in urban areas as they create narrow footways, poor pedestrian circulation and impact significantly bus accessibility.



4.6 Enabling Town Centre Cycling

Cycling has the opportunity to play a leading role in creating a sustainable and green town centre, helping to better connect neighbouring communities and supporting healthy and safe streets and places.

Designing appropriately for cycling is paramount to make the town liveable and adaptable. As part of design and development, schemes that come forward should:

- Ensure a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces which welcome safe cycling. The identified streets and spaces should be easy to navigate by all types of cyclists within the context of the local environment.
- Create streets and spaces which rebalance and prioritise the needs of pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists over other motorised vehicles, whilst retaining the current bus provisions.
- Enable street environments that do not require user or movement segregation and related infrastructure and are self-enforcing, supporting a more positive, calmer and welcoming place for pedestrians and cyclists alike.
- Ensure that where cycle infrastructure is required, it is designed with pedestrians and placemaking in mind. It should be sympathetic to the surrounding context, whilst not unduly impact upon pedestrians.

This section explores the pros, cons and considerations needed for appropriately designing streets for all in currently pedestrianised zones.

'No cycling' - Significantly impacts the access of responsible cyclists who want to shop and use the facilities in Reading, whilst potentially creating an enforcement issue as it would likely be ignored. However, a benefit of prohibiting cyclists is that pedestrians do not have to contend with them. Alternative routes are often less direct, longer, can involve negotiating major junctions and requiring dismounting and present additional risk from general motorised traffic movement. The diverse journey patterns of cyclists in the town centre requires safety to be improved throughout the road network to create a network of cycle-friendly streets rather than being focused in one location.

Unrestricted Cycling - Delivery bikes and vans currently impact on the pedestrian zones. Irresponsibly ridden electric delivery bikes on Broad Street create an intimidating space for pedestrians. Whilst the pedestrian zones within the town centre are signed and restricted, the spaces are not currently enforced and the rules are ignored.

A Flexible Street - Managed cycling - Considerate cyclists adapt their speed to suit pedestrian density and dismount if required. Conflicts are minimised by cyclists taking strategic avoiding action.
During busy periods, when shops and cafes are open, cyclists are likely to divert to other locations. However, during out-of-hours, cyclists could utilise the pedestrianised spaces to allow important access to the town centre and station, and deter antisocial behaviour.

There is a need to manage and enforce the use of pedestrian zones for electric bikes and vans, particularly the increase in food deliveries. This may be achieved to some extent by modifying the origin and nature of those trips and better management.

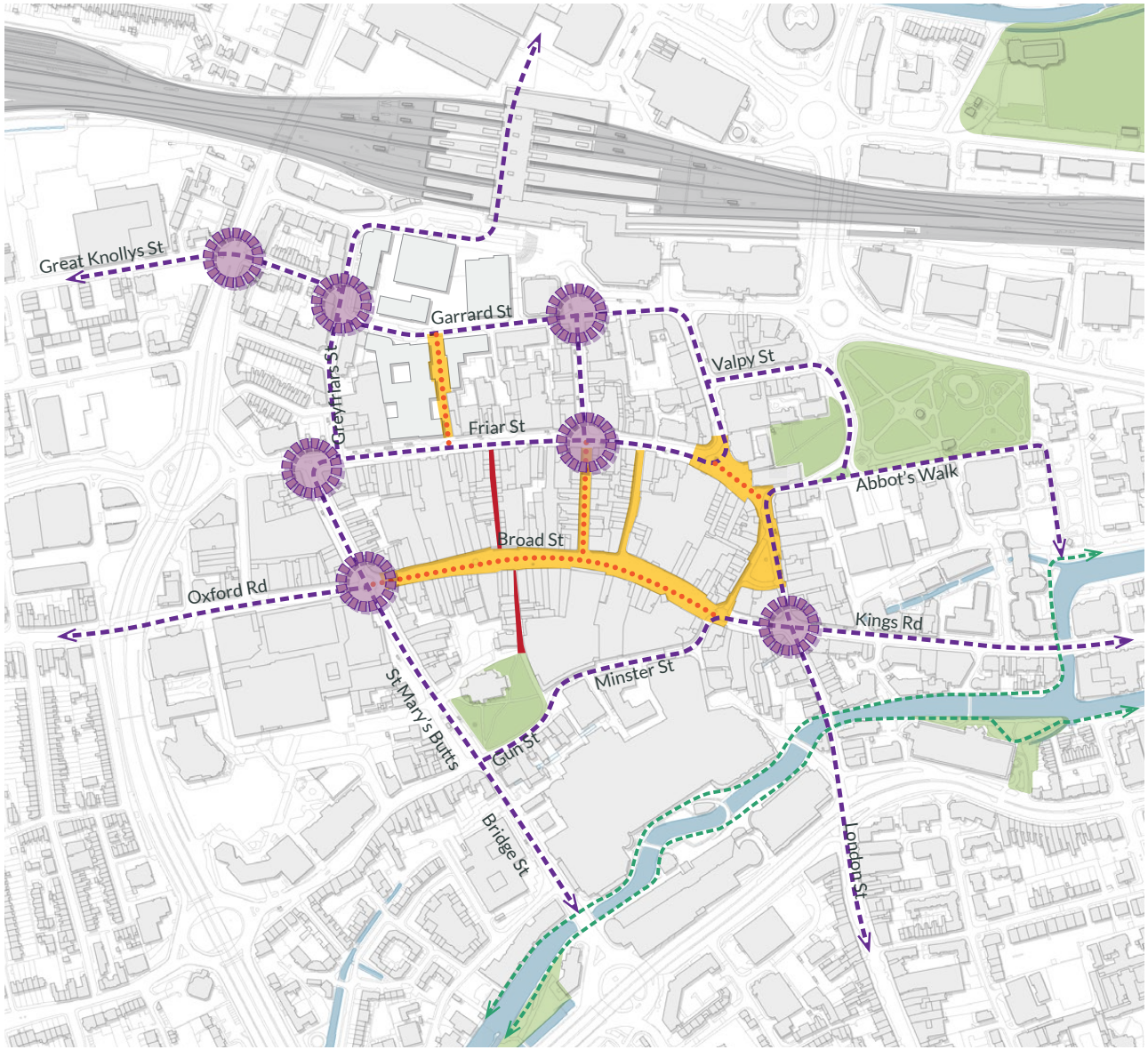
Where cycle flows are likely to be relatively high, the surface treatment and placing of street furniture and retail 'A' boards can have a significant influence on cycle movement. A sensitively designed movement corridor could potentially aid movement provision, with pedestrians tending to walk along the street frontages and cyclists focused along the centre of the street.

4.6 Enabling Town Centre Cycling

Consideration should be given to providing safe and convenient routes for cyclists to move around the town centre.

A number of north-south and east-west routes are required to enable greater cycling permeability through the town centre. However, key routes are currently missing for safe cyclist passage including access through the core pedestrianised area and Broad Street. This diagram sets out the key routes where cycling should be improved. The proposed routes consider those identified within the LTP4, LCWIP, other previous studies and site audits. The identified routes aim to improve permeability, safety and accessibility to cycling within the town centre and wider connections. These proposals are largely designed around the existing bus operations. In the longer term, significant cycling improvements beyond those proposed here would rely on a reconsideration of movement of vehicles in the centre, including buses

- Key routes that should be strengthened for cycling. This can be done by reducing vehicular dominance, introducing traffic calming measures such as carriageway tightening, introducing 'cycling first' routes with low speed limits or by creating segregated cycle lanes where space allows.
- Key routes that should allow managed cycling.
- Streets which should be designed with flexibility for different movements at different times.
- Important junctions that require re-designing for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Key pedestrian and cycling shared routes to be improved, this includes surfacing, wayfinding and continuity.
- Lanes where no cycling should be permitted.



4.7 Broad Street Layout

Broad street is the main pedestrian street in the town centre. It is a wide, historical street with a multitude of shops and traders and a very heavy footfall during shopping hours. It is the heart of Reading and an important east-west connection linking the town centre to its surrounding neighbourhoods, making it an attractive desire line for cyclists.

There is an over provision and proliferation of street furniture, kiosks or large areas of cycle parking leading to a cluttered and confusing environment. This causes conflicts between cyclist, pedestrians and wheelers. There is no clear zone that is easily navigable for visitors.

Currently, cycling is permitted on the eastern half of Broad Street, but prohibited on the western half, creating a confusing situation for cyclists. Delivery vehicles and dial-a-ride buses also access the area through the day, further exacerbating the confused environment.

The paving colour also causes difficulties, especially for users with visual impairments, by creating a mono pallet or red paving against red buildings, making visual navigation confusing.

The adjacent diagrams show various aspects that currently exist on Broad Street including existing tree location, street furniture and paving patterns and colours.

Diagram 1

Diagram 2

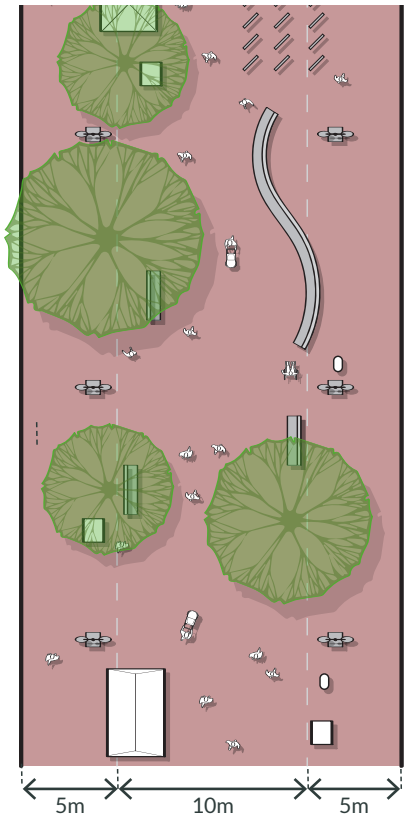
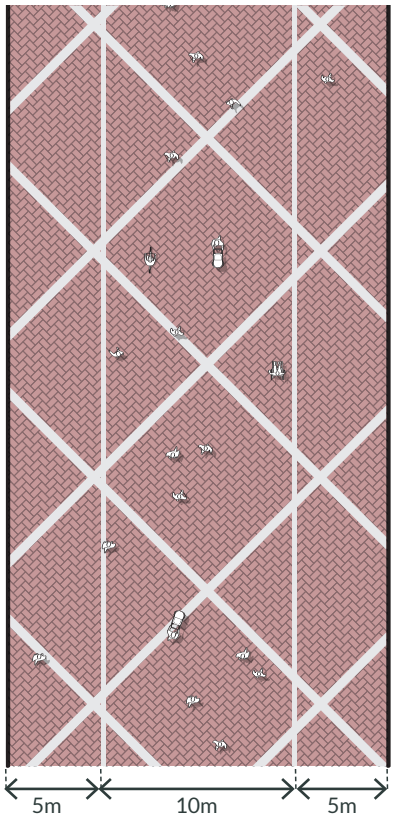
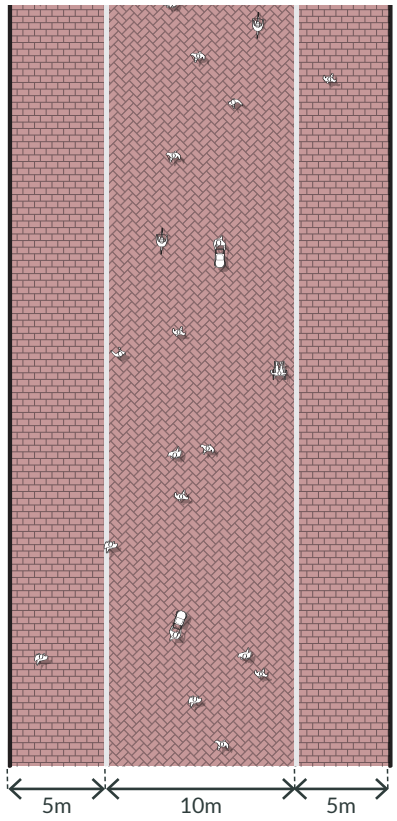


Diagram 3





4.7 Broad Street Layout

Managed cycling and public realm renewal should be considered in conjunction so that cycling can be 'designed in' positively as part of a set of comprehensive proposals for Broad Street. This would enhance the public realm appearance, general movement and enable considerate cycling at off-peak times.

Cycling should be permitted on the whole length of Broad Street to help creating a comprehensive cycling network throughout the centre and connecting neighbourhoods. However, cycling should be managed by design to avoid conflicts with pedestrians, including considering how pedestrians will safely move across the street and movement of delivery cyclists to premises or side streets.

The adjacent diagrams show 3 scenarios that include cycling on Broad Street in different ways. The 3 scenarios show the same level of decluttering and street furniture rationalisation. None of them suggest the creation of a segregated cycling lane, but rather, they explore different degrees of managed cycling by design.

Gateways to Broad Street should be carefully treated to highlight the sharing of the space and reduce conflict. Gateway treatments should avoid the excessive use of bollards, signs and lines.

The development of a plan or business 'Code of Conduct' which sets out when, how and who can utilise the pedestrianised area is paramount. The plan should set out measures to mitigate the impacts of delivery bikes and vehicles, and reduce the dominance of delivery routes from the central pedestrian areas.

Diagram 1

10m central flexible zone for pedestrians and cyclists to share. The proportions are the same as the existing layout. Clear zones run between facades and trees for retail access. Little cycle management is possible in the central flexible zone.

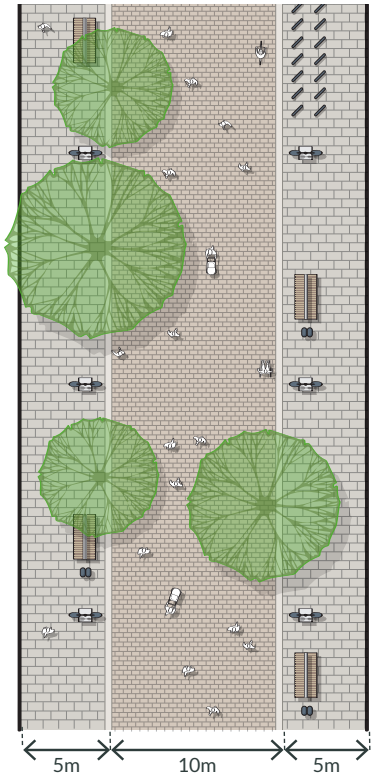


Diagram 2

No movement corridors or clear zones are indicated using surfacing, the paving pattern carries across the street continuously. Street furniture location is rationalised but this scenario presents the least management for cyclists.

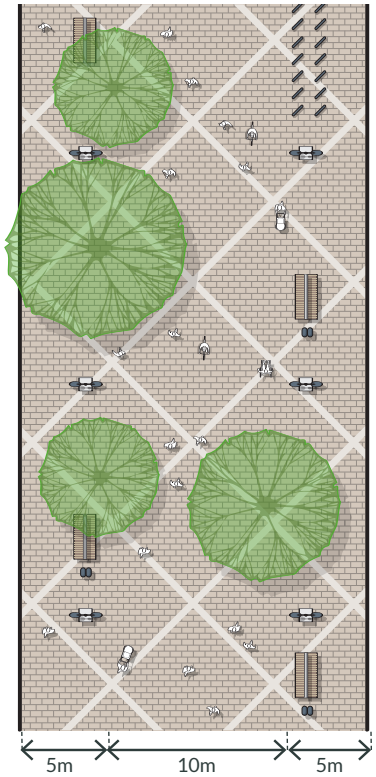
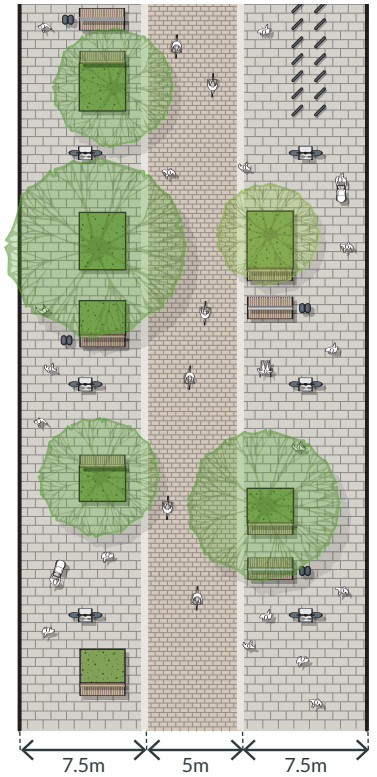


Diagram 3 (recommended)

Creation of a 5m movement corridor down the centre of the street. Furniture location and surfacing aim to encourage cyclists to use this route, whilst the bulk of the pedestrian flows can move along the facades and planting / seating areas.



05

Design Manual

5.1 Design Manual Introduction

This design manual describes all of the components which contribute to the overall public realm. It is intended to be a guide which helps steer in making design, material and style decisions for future projects and enhancement works.

The manual is sub divided into a number of sub headings including paving, vegetation, street furniture and lighting. The descriptions of each are accompanied by diagrams, sketches and visuals which aim at clearly identifying the appropriate use of the material or component.

This guidance is further demonstrated in the worked examples in chapter 6&7, which show the principles in practice over a range of specific projects. These worked examples are to help visualise the potential redesign of key areas and inclusion of the components included in the manual. Surveys and a full design process will still need to be commissioned to determine the actual designs.

The recommendations within this document are intended to guide both public and private development projects. The overall aim is that this guide is highly usable, adoptable and leads to positive and cohesive change.

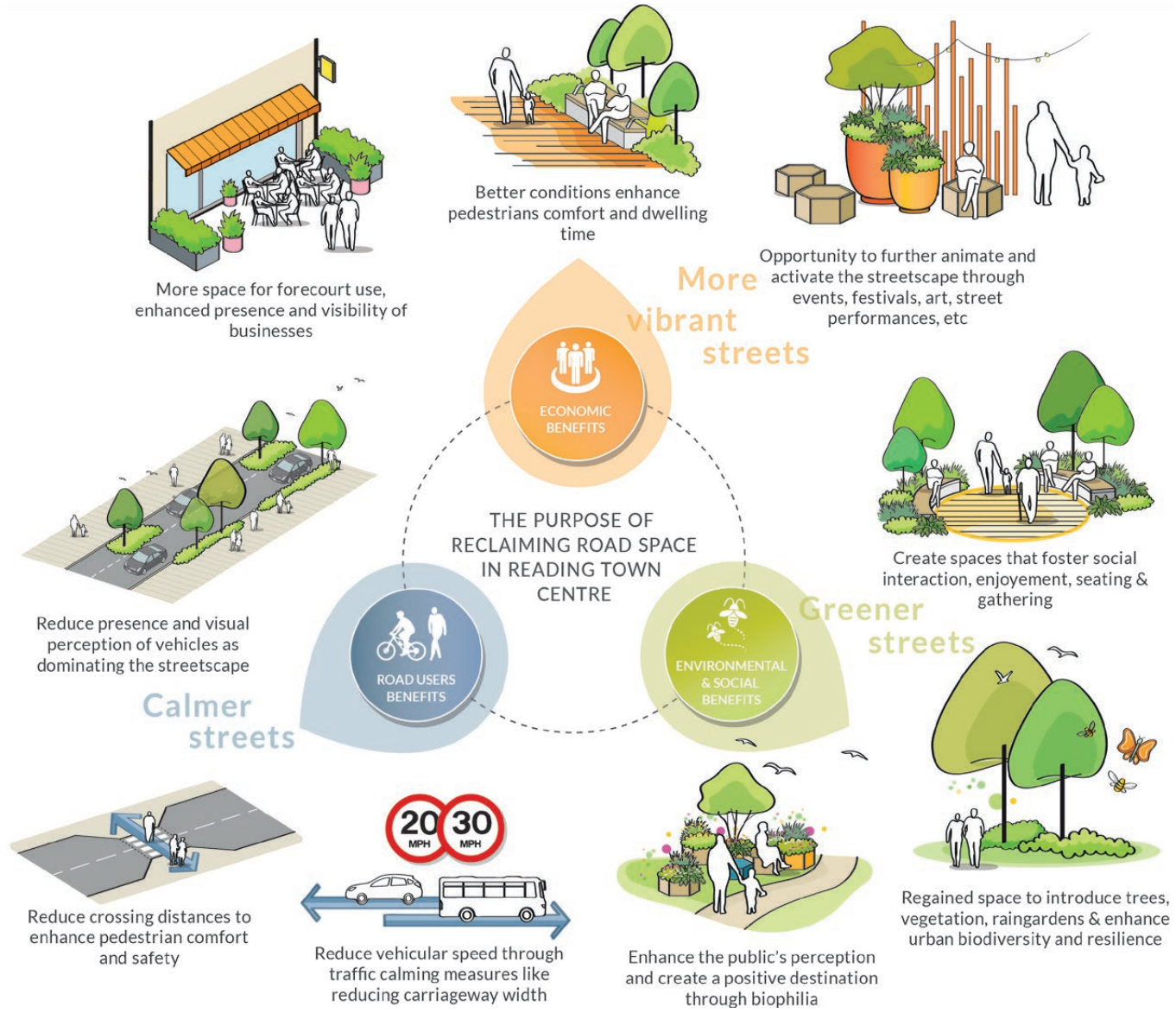
5.2 Purpose of Reclaiming Road Space

An important ambition for Reading town centre is to redress the balance between vehicles and pedestrians. This can be achieved by reclaiming road space, reducing road widths and introducing more comfortable and visually pleasing environments.

Reclaiming road space has huge social, safety and ecological impacts, making more equitable streets. Greener streets have a profound impact. Schemes such as introducing rain gardens, green verges and improved planting, as well as narrowing road widths have a multitude of benefits. Greener streets are more sustainably resilient to climate change and create a reduced sense of vehicular dominance. There is also the added advantage of improved road safety, where road widths are narrowed and planting introduced, It tangibly redresses the balance between vehicles and pedestrians.

Reducing road and crossing widths makes places more comfortable, whilst naturally encouraging motorists to reduce speeds. In addition encouraging activation of spaces makes more inviting and usable places. These improvements have far ranging impacts on a sense of community and in turn encourage lingering and increased footfall, driving spending.

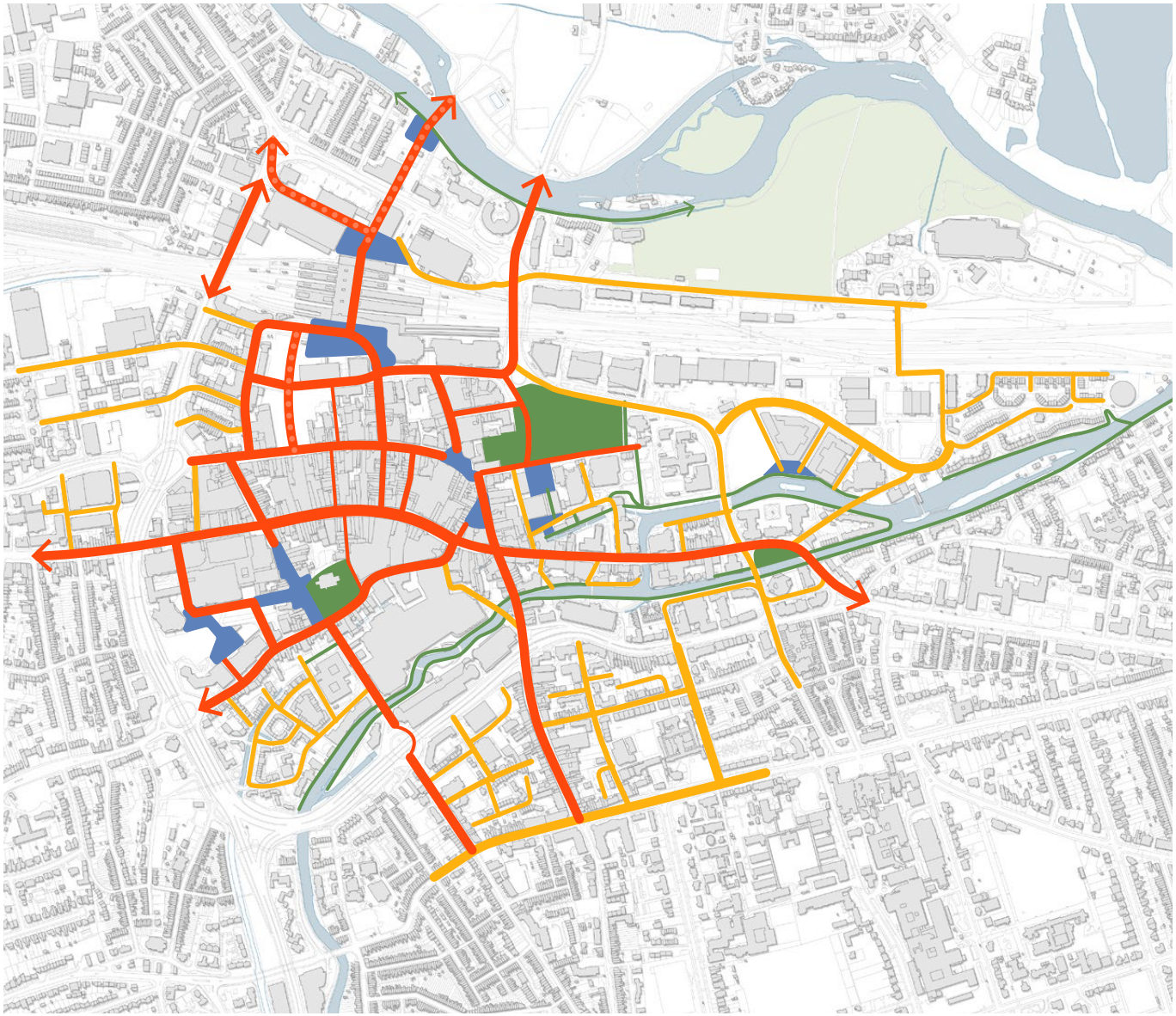
Spaces are created that allow opportunities for social gatherings; art, performance, meanwhile use and other key community engagements, that all form the important social glue to bring together a place and elevate it from something good, to something great.



5.3 Paving | General Principles

The existing paving in Reading town centre offers room for improvement. All paving should be of high quality, sustainable and suitable to withstand the function of the area.

Durability, lifespan, maintenance and visual appearance should all be considered when specifications are being determined. The town centre has a wealth of excellent heritage buildings and the majority of these are built in an attractive red brick. The existing paving around these heritage buildings is currently often laid in a red block paving which competes visually with the buildings. A refreshed paving strategy could not only complement, but really accentuate these important heritage assets. The appropriate tactile paving should be used throughout the town centre to aid visually impaired users in line with current guidance.



Primary streets - Core town centre area including pedestrian streets, lanes, major axis and historical streets

Future primary streets - Important new routes being created as part of development sites

Secondary streets - Mostly residential streets and axis connecting to the town centre

Parks & Riverside Walks- Foot and cycle paths along the river Kennet and canals as well as within green spaces and parks

Squares - All pedestrian gateways, squares and spaces with a flexible use

5.3 Paving | Field Mix - Primary Streets

In key areas of the town centre, granite or similar natural stone paving should be introduced. Whilst these do come at a slightly higher price per unit, once consideration is given to the cost of laying and the greatly improved longevity of the material, in addition to the vastly improved visual quality, this is considered the most sustainable and suitable solution for the long term and should be applied to all primary streets within the town centre.

A mix of fine picked and flamed Granite using light grey, mid grey, pink and buff should be used. Recommended paving sizes are 150mm x 300mm and 300 x 400mm laid on a rigid concrete base. Paving units should be nominally 60mm thick relative to their usage and to optimise value.

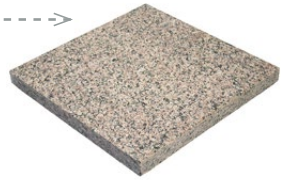
Where natural stone is being used in vehicle areas, thicker setts should be used. The small unit slabs / setts allow ease of laying and will make achieving levels and tying in to thresholds and crossing points easier, without the need for triangular cuts, which should be avoided.

All paving falls are to be compliant with Building Regulations and universal design standards. Drainage units, manhole covers and other components in the paving should be flush with surrounding areas. They should be integrated within the design to avoid trip hazards. Paving infill covers are not required. However there should be a maximum 10mm gap around covers to adjacent paving.

As granite is mostly sourced from abroad, with necessary lead times, consideration should be given to ordering extra and setting aside a store of replacement paving units and setts, thus allowing repairs to be carried out in a timely manner with the right materials.

Finish - Fine picked
Colour - Light Grey
Material - Granite
% of mix - 40%

Finish - Fine picked
Colour - Pink
Material - Granite
% of mix - 15%



Finish - Fine picked
Colour - Buff
Material - Granite
% of mix - 15%

Finish - Fine picked
Colour - Dark Grey
Material - Granite
% of mix - 30%

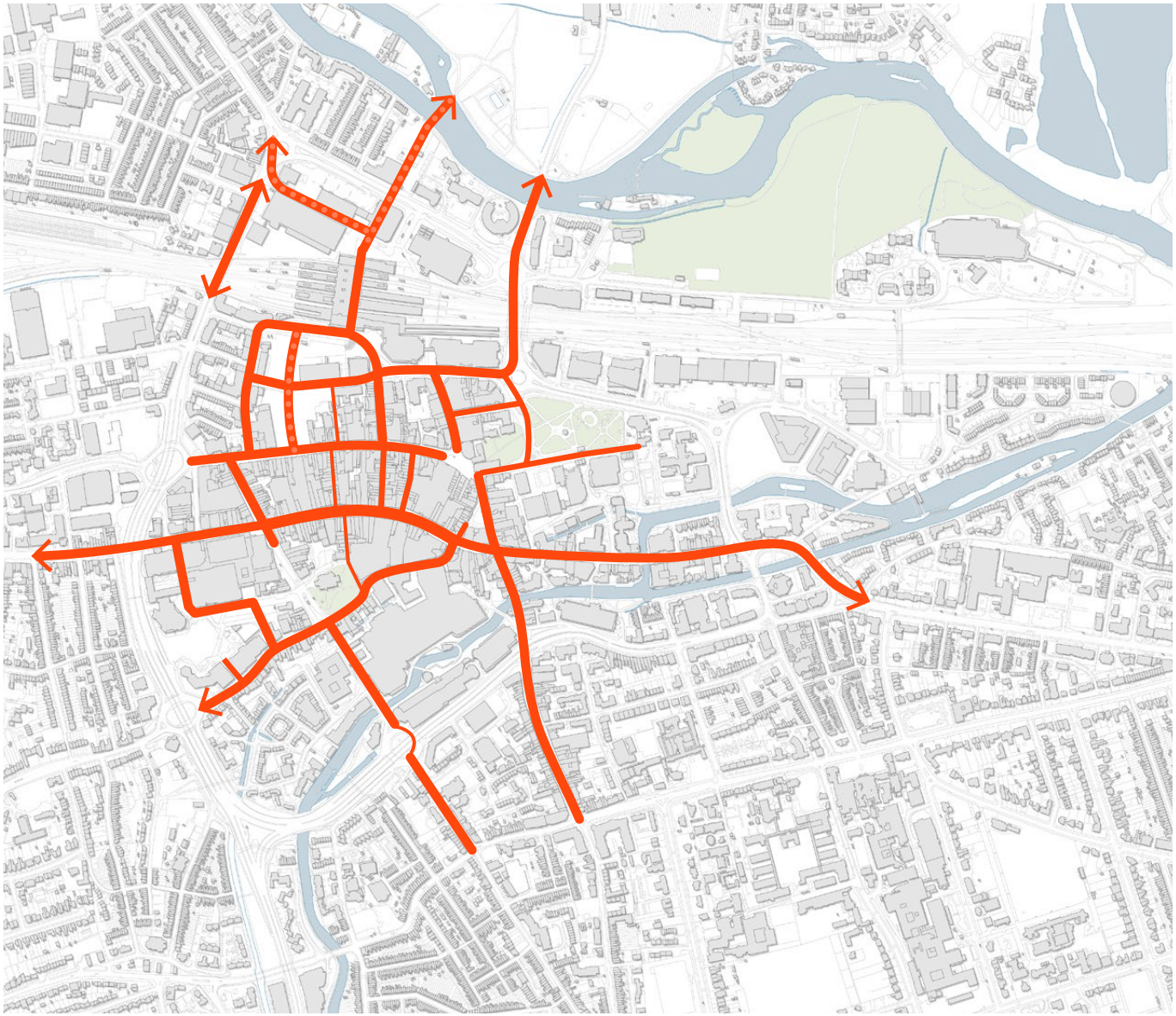
5.3 Paving | Typology 1 | Primary Streets

Reading should strive for a better quality of natural paving in key areas such as the primary streets. Introducing a granite field paving in a neutral pallet, in a mix of sizes and colours will elevate the town.

The paving should speak quietly, giving a high quality impression, whilst not competing with, or detracting from, the heritage façades. The proposed "field mix" should be used on all primary streets to provide a lighter, more neutral stone than what exists today. The choice of natural stone is made for the following reasons:

- Appropriate to the heritage of the area.
- Durability - when laid on a concrete base, it will achieve a long lifespan with minimal maintenance.
- Stone products appreciate in value with natural weathering.
- Depending on colour and source, the material cost difference to concrete/ pre manufactured products is minimal.
- If a subtle variation of colour and texture are used as suggested, the stone will age gracefully and stains or reinstated areas will be barely visible, aiding future maintenance.

There are sections of primary streets where heritage or natural stone paving is in place, for instance in the Abbey Quarter, these should be retained and enhanced.

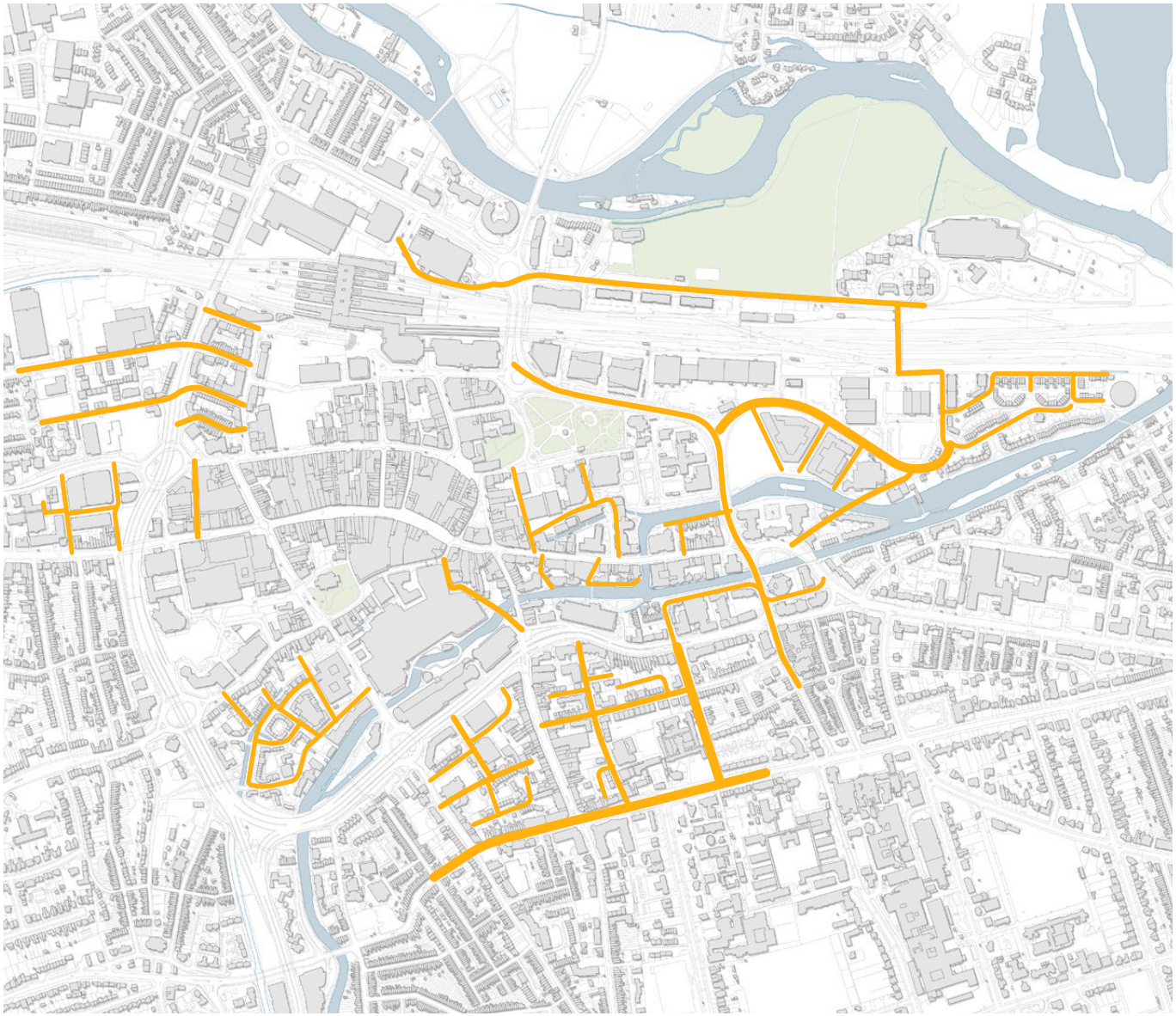


5.3 Paving | Typology 2 | Secondary Streets

Generally asphalt footpaths should be used on secondary streets. The exception is where streets are adjacent or within a heritage asset, where consideration should then be given to the use of appropriate stone setts and slabs.

Concrete slabs should be avoided as they give a piecemeal appearance and are prone to cracking from vehicle overrun/loading. They should be replaced with the single asphalt surface material, which will bring better visual coherence.

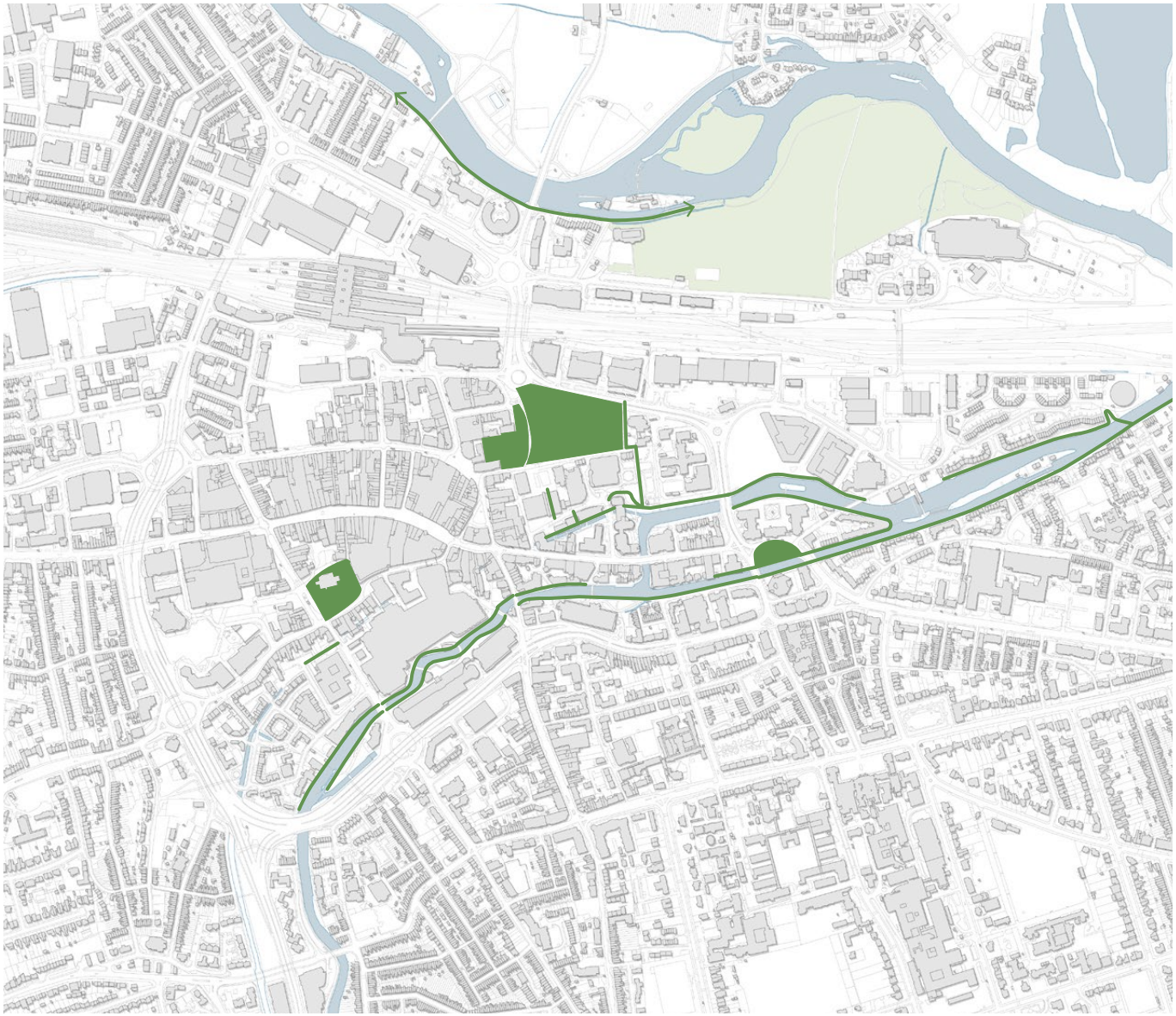
Where streets have new residential developments which are of a higher built density, consideration should be given to introducing a natural stone material to help lift the quality of the public realm. Asphalt wouldn't be appropriate in this scenario and a higher quality of paving should be introduced. Where appropriate, areas of permeable paving should be considered in these areas.



5.3 Paving | Typology 3 | Parks & Riverside Walks

Resin Bound gravel should be introduced in a neutral buff colour in areas such as on footpaths adjacent to the river and within parks.

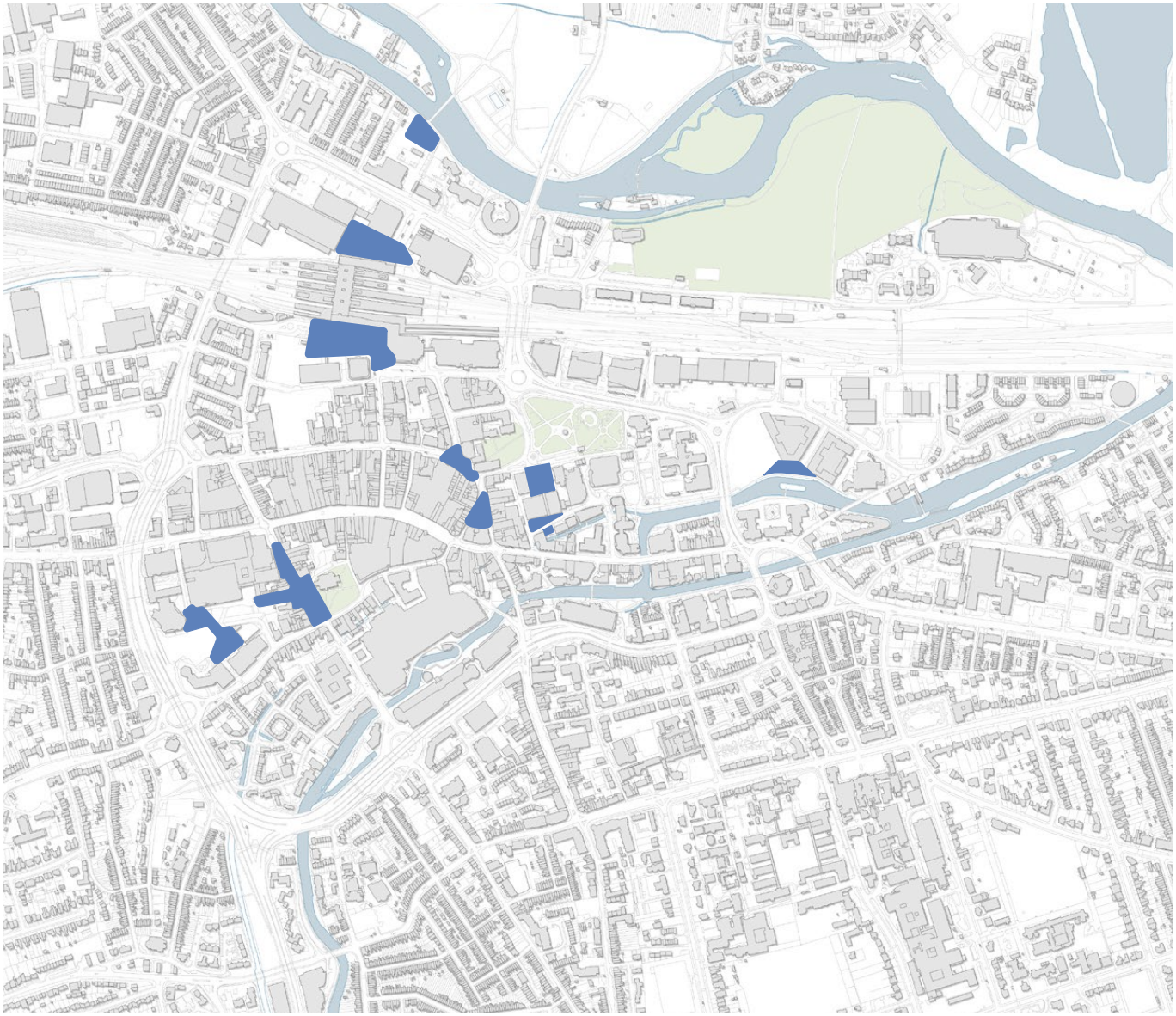
The use of the resin bound material will elevate these areas making them more inviting and improving wayfinding and legibility. A resin bound material is robust with no loose particles, making it appropriate for walking and cycling in an urban environment. Where appropriate this application should be fully permeable with a suitable corresponding sub base.



5.3 Paving | Typology 4 | Squares

A more contrasting paving typology in key areas such as squares should be introduced. This can be used to create a sense of place and arrival and highlight key event or community spaces.

These special areas should be carefully designed by Landscape Architects who can advise on the most appropriate mixture of paving and other elements to complement the setting. The design proposals should be based on the assessment of a variety of factors, including heritage enhancement, current and future uses and the council's aspirations for the space. Key spaces such as these add much opportunity for defined place making in the urban realm.



5.4 Vegetation

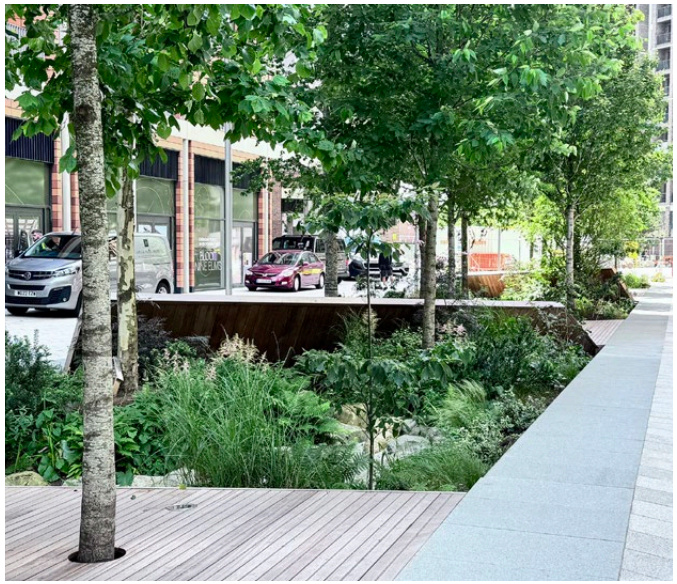
There are a number of types of vegetation that should be used within the public realm at Reading town centre. These include shrubs, ground cover, perennial planting, bulbs, lawns, tiered / hanging planters, verges and wild flower areas.

It s important to establish a robust and usable set of principles that can be rolled out across the town centre. Each of the following planting types presents its own scale, characteristics and benefits. With regards to trees the Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy should be referred to. The green links identfied in the local plan also provide a context to location.

The key planting principles in this guide provide a rich, appropriate and comprehensive vegetation strategy for the town centre. Planting is one of the key ways to ensure sustainability.

Biodiversity and climate resilience must be prioritised. In this day and age of ever more extreme and changing weather, we are having to adapt and understand how we specify plants more carefully. This has fed directly into the recommended species. These are plants that require less maintenance, relatively low watering, offer pest resilience and that are attractive to valuable pollinators.

Where appropriate edible planting should be condsidered which will help lead to a greater public engagment and ownership of public spaces.



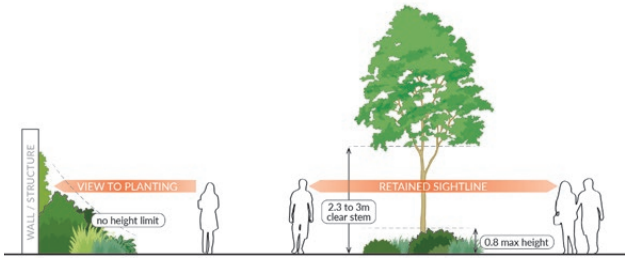
5.4 Vegetation | General Principles

The following principles should be applied:

- **Right tree, right place, right tree pit** - Tree and Plant selection should always be carefully considered. Scale, climate, daylight, orientation, form, durability, sight lines, resilience and maintenance. These all play very important factors in a plants overall success. Large canopy species should also be considered where appropriate in accordance with the tree strategy.
- **Native species** - Native or naturalised or non-native with wildlife value trees should be used. Native plant species should be supplimented with non native to provide further pollinators, biodiversity and visual amenity benefits.
- **Planting by design** - The location and layout of planting within the town centre should always be "designed into schemes" so the best opportunities for the introduction of planting and trees are identified and carried out in a planned fashion.
- **Visibility & sightlines** - The overall height of plants must be planned to avoid blocking views and creating safety issues. Plants should generally be less than 600mm high and trees should have a minimum clear stem of 2.3-3m, unless in a park or against a wall, except adjacent to heritage assets. CCTV viewing lines need to be considered when placing planting.

Trees and planting in raised planting boxes should be avoided.

- **Green perception** - Mix of evergreen shrubs and perennial planting should always be used, introducing a variety of good performers that add greenery and structure all year round. Choose reliable performers that produce interest, colour and delight.



1 - Trees

2 - Multi-stem trees

3 - Shrubs

4 - Perennials & Bulbs

5 - Groundcover

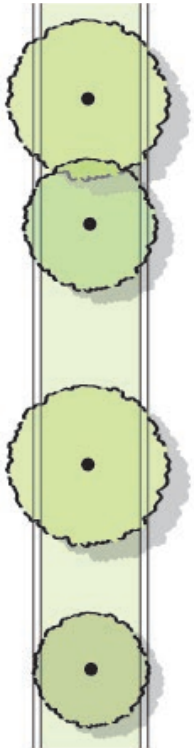
5.4 Vegetation | Types

Ground Cover

Ground Cover brings harmony and resilience. In certain location preferable to larger shrubs, so as not to block visibility across spaces. Ground cover is also encouraged around the base of street trees, where footpath widths permit, in the place of semi permeable bound surfaces. When used appropriately amongst shrubs and around trees, ground cover can also often reduce the need for weed control and when combined with appropriate mulch, can reduce the overall need for watering by reducing evaporation and drying of soil.

Bulbs

Bulb planting should be included as an additional, relatively low cost layer to new planting schemes. Bulbs that are hardy, resilient, good performers year on year should be chosen. Bulbs will also often perform well in areas that other plants may struggle, such as dry deep shade. Bulbs bring a real sense of delight early in the season with their emergence signalling the arrival of spring, often well before many other flowering perennials. They also take up very little space within the soil meaning that they can be under-planted below shrubs and perennials They are a really key asset to pollinators and are a key consideration in increasing biodiversity within urban areas.



1 - Trees

Trees to be typically planted at the centre of the planting bed. Randomly spaced to adapt to urban environment

2 - Shrubs

Srubs to be planted at the centre of the planting bed to maximise the perception of green / vegetation

3 - Perennials & bulbs

Perennials and bulbs to be planting to the edge of the planting bed to create an inviting environment adjacent to footpaths

4 - Groundcover

Groundcover to be planted to the edge of the planting bed as a filler to maximise the perception of green / vegetation

5.4 Vegetation | Types

Perennials bring seasonal interest, promote biodiversity and soften hard spaces. Their use should always be considered along pedestrian streets and within developments, parks and more defined spaces. They should be planted in combination with bulbs, ground cover and shrubs. A density of 5 x 3L pots per m² in town centres and 2 x 3 litre per m² in parks and residential streets should be used. Low maintenance and native species mixes where appropriate should be specified. It is recommended to use a mix of 30% evergreen 70% perennial to ensure year round interest.

Grass

Grass areas in town centres add valuable interest and enable the softening of spaces for a minimal maintenance and cost. Grass areas are good family amenities and can also facilitate special events such as outdoor festivals, cinema, performances, etc. In some instances grass can be seeded, to keep installation costs low. In very high use areas, fibre reinforced turf may be appropriate to build in extra resilience. The soil build up below turf is a very important consideration, percolation / soil tests can be very useful to help allow the choice of the right grass specification. For example in heavy clay areas a turf resilient to damp may be required. Whereas in sandy areas, with very free draining soil a drought resilient turf may be more appropriate.

Hanging baskets / Tiered planters

Shrub Planting

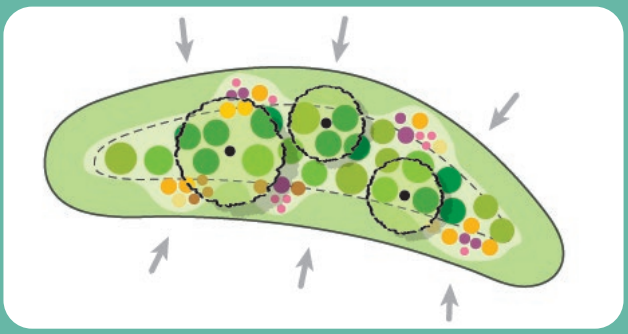
Shrub planting makes a good boundary and screening treatment and should be used to define front gardens, entrances and defensible areas, as well as within mixed borders in park settings and squares. Shrubs are the backbone of many urban planting schemes and should be located so not to hinder access, doorways or forecourt space for shops and businesses. Regular maintenance is essential for the shrub planting to retain its desired shape and height. Pest and climate resilient species are important considerations. Evergreen shrubs that provide year round interest and structure should be used.

A benefit of shrubs is their ability to deliver valuable scent and flowers, often early in the season, when perennials are yet to bloom. They can also be a very valuable early source of nectar for pollinators. Shrubs will bring a mixture of different leaf textures, overall size, flowers and scent. Shrubs should be introduced at a minimum size of 2-5 litre pots, at a spacing of 2-5 per m², This will need to be individually assessed dependent on setting and it is essential that a regular watering regime is undertake for a long period after planting, particularly during dry weather and in summer months. New planting should take place within planting seasons (November - March).

Perennial planting

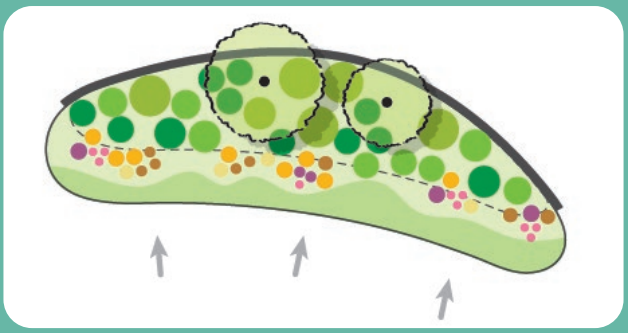
Scenario 01 - Free standing planting area

Planting can be seen from all sides. Lower species should be located around the perimeter of the planting bed, whilst larger shrubs and trees are in the centre. The typical planting style should be random / naturalistic to allow easy plant replacement.



Scenario 02 - Planting area along wall or boundary

Planting can only be seen from one side. Larger shrubs and trees should be planted at the back, with no height limit, whilst lower perennials and bulbs sit at the front.



5.4 Vegetation | Types

Natural wildflower and meadows should be introduced within park and verge settings as much as possible. Even small areas for wildlife can have much visual appeal, be very popular with the public and add tangibly, valuable, biodiversity assets for wildlife.

These areas do require some maintenance, with weeding, annual cutting, raking and re seeding, but if the right mix of annual and perennial seeds are introduced, these areas can perform well year on year. They can also reduce time and cost spent mowing lawns.

We would recommend that the wild flower mixes are carefully chosen. Generally wild flowers tend to thrive in less fertile soil so it is important to take into consideration the existing soil type. It is also important to survey existing grass areas to determine the species mix to help identify what will thrive in the area.

Some remediation may be required to achieve optimum soil / planting conditions. Where new wild flower areas are introduced, a wild flower specialist should be consulted to advise on exact soil specification and seed mixes.

Soil and percolation testing are advantageous. Other important things to be considered include the overall height of the mix and whether the wild flowers are annuals or perennials. A clear process should be followed to confirm and establish the right mix for each given site.

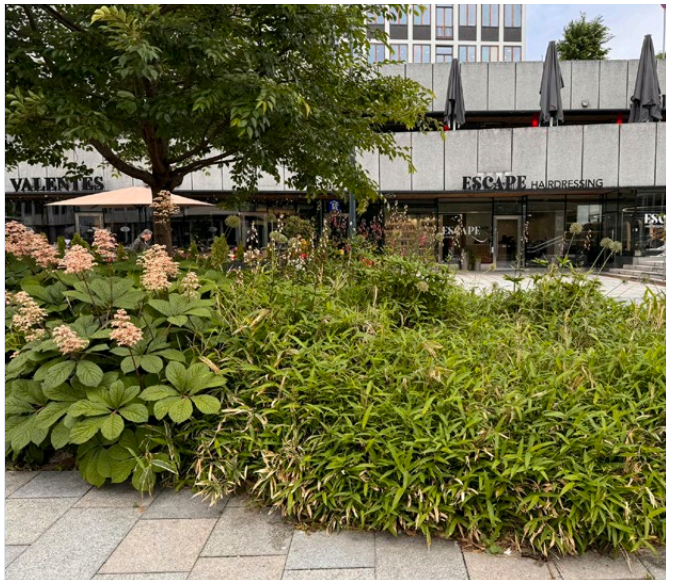
Temporary displays, hanging baskets and window boxes need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. They can help soften the visual appearance to a street where there is no planting within the ground.

Where attached to buildings, such additions are acceptable provided that they are well maintained and appropriate to the building facade. Although it should be noted that they tend to have a high water/maintenance requirement, so aren't a very sustainable choice. If used they should be placed above shop sign level.

Hanging baskets should generally be avoided on columns and railings within spaces as they add to visual clutter and are costly and time consuming to water.

Stand-alone planters should also be avoided, where at all possible, as they add visual clutter to the streetscape. There may be a few exceptions, but overall designated planting areas should be designed into schemes, to give longevity, rather than stand alone planters added at a later date.

Wildflowers / Meadows



5.4 Vegetation | Types

5.4 Vegetation | Typical Species | Ground-cover, Shrubs & Bulbs

Ground-cover

The adjacent shows a selection of robust, yet attractive ground-cover plants that will provide a rich carpet of year round interest, complementing taller evergreen and perennial planting. A mixture of Evergreen species should be used, that ensures seasonal variety and adds the occasional element of surprise and delight.

Shrubs

It is vital to use a robust series of large shrubs and grasses. These will add valuable height and interest. In addition scent has been carefully considered with a number of the shrubs, including, for example, the Sarcococca Confusa, that provides welcome heavy scent early in the year, signalling the start of spring.

Bulbs

It is key to add a mixture of bulbs Some typical species are shown, it is important that bulbs are planted at the correct time of year, for the majority of the bulbs, this is autumn, but some are spring planted. Bulbs that come back each year should be used, rather than annuals, but still it is worth considering some succession planting/ dividing each year, thus ensuring that a good supply of colour and interest is ongoing.

Ground-cover

Hedera helix 'Green Ripple'
Evergreen. H x W = 0.1m x 4m
Flowers: August - November

Vinca minor 'Gertrude Jekyll
Evergreen H x W = 0.1m x 0.5m
Flowers: April - Sept

Liriope muscari
Evergreen H x W = 0.3m x 0.45m
Flowers: August - November

Ajuga reptans Atropurpurea
Evergreen H x W = 0.15 x 1.0m
Flowers: April - June

Asarum europaeum
Evergreen H x W = 0.15m x 0.3m
Flowers: March - April

Shrubs

Skimmia × confusa 'Kew Green'
Evergreen H x W = 1.0m x 1.5m
Flowers: Feb to May

Sarcococca Confusa
Evergreen H x W = 2.0m x 1.0m
Flowers: Dec to March

Viburnum Tinus
Evergreen H x W = 3.0m x 3.0m
Flowers: Jan - April

Pittosporum Tobira
Evergreen H x W = 0.8 x 0.8m
Flowers: May to June

Pittosporum 'Tom Thumb
Evergreen H x W = 0.6m x 1.0m
Flowers: May to June

Bulbs

Mixed Crocus
Bulb
Flowers: Feb to May

Galanthus nivalis
Bulb
Flowers: Jan to March

Muscari Neglectum
Bulb
Flowers: March to April

Narcissus Pastoral
Bulb
Flowers: March to April

Allium Sphaerocephalon
Bulb
Flowers: July - Aug

5.4 Vegetation | Typical Species | Perennials

Perennials

It is important to introduce a mix of native and ornamental species. The proposed species will provide valuable interest within borders. Using a mixture of evergreens and perennials to work alongside the other proposed planting and proposed ground-cover, bulbs and wildflowers is key.

It is important to ensure year-round interest, allowing for a mixture of colour, texture and scent that will provide excitement, delight and surprise throughout the year right through from January until December.

Plants that are relatively low maintenance and are good reliable performers year on year are shown here.

Perennials

Hakonechloa Macra
Evergreen H x W = 0.4m x 0.35m
Flowers: March - April

Deschampsia cespitosa
Evergreen H x W = 0.75m x 0.75m

Pennisetum villosum
Perennial H x W = 0.6m x 0.6m

Echinacea Green Jewel
Perennial H x W = 0.5m x 0.5m
Flowers: June - Sep

Echinacea Summer Cocktail
Perennial H x W = 0.5m x 0.5m
Flowers: June - Sep

Anemone × Hybrida Jobert
Perennial H x W = 1.5m x 1.5m
Flowers: August - Oct

Verbena Bonariensis
Perennial H x W = 2.0m x 0.5m
Flowers: June - Oct

Geranium sanguineum
Perennial H x W = 0.3 m x 0.5m
Flowers: June - Oct

Perovskia 'Blue Spire'
Deciduous H x W = 1m x 1.2m
Flowers: Aug-Oct

Geum Totally Tangerine
Perennial H x W = 0.9m x 0.5m
Flowers: June - Oct

Crocosmia Lucifer
Perennial H x W = 1.0 m x 0.5m
Flowers: July - Sep

Scabiosa Perfecta White Flutter
Perennial H x W = 0.9m x 0.5m
Flowers: June - Sep

Sanguisorba officionalis red thunder aponica
Perennial H x W = 1.2m x 0.6m
Flowers: June - Oct

Astrantia Venice
Perenniel H x W = 0.9m x 0.3m
Flowers: June -Sep

Astrantia Buckland
Perennial H x W = 0.9m x 0.3m
Flowers: June -Sep

5.4 Vegetation | Verges

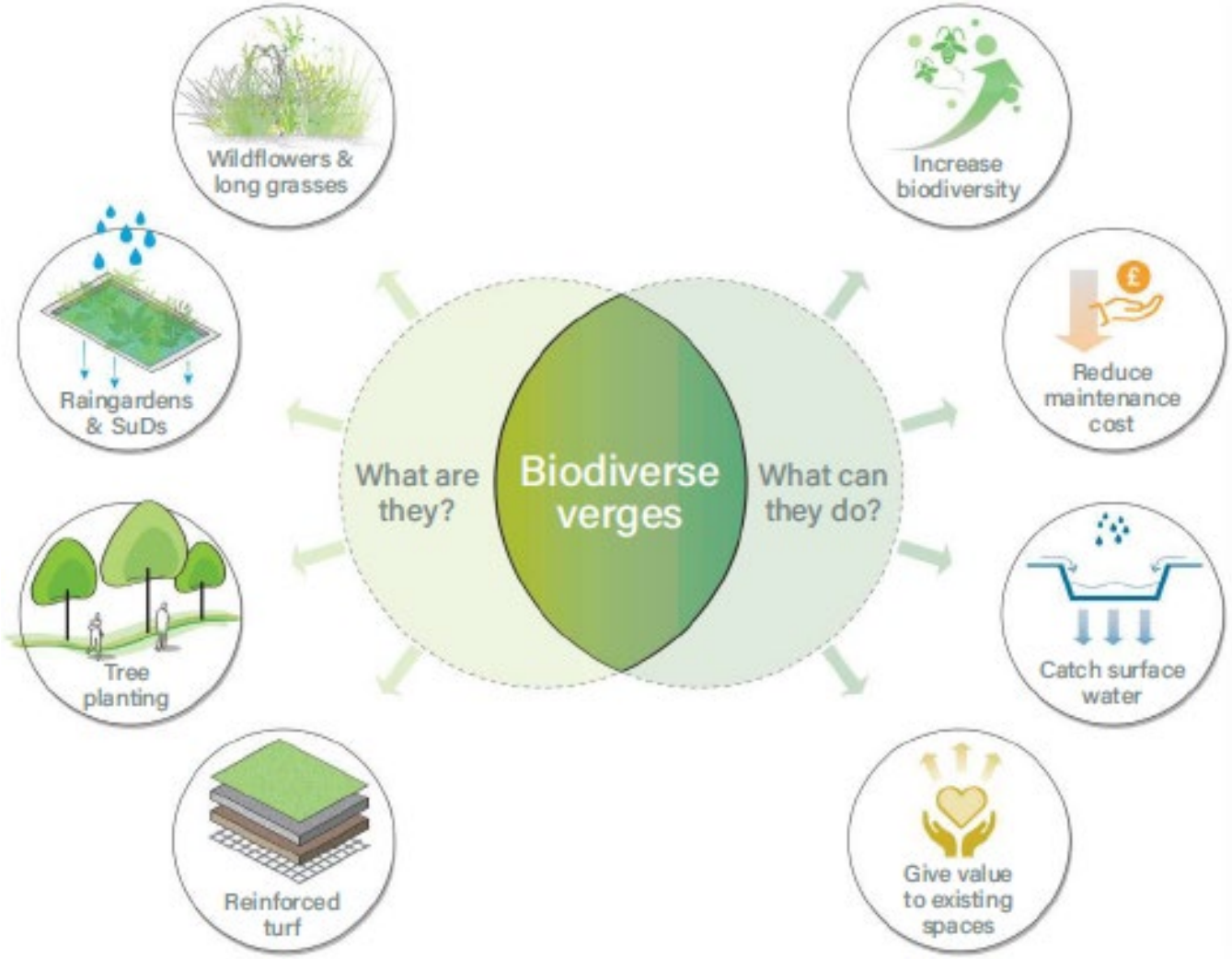
Verges sit between the carriageway and the pedestrian footpath and offer a great opportunity for introducing vegetation and biodiversity; a place for nature and wildlife with added benefits.

Currently the majority of Reading's verges are generally monoculture grass or paved. The diagram to the right sets out what they could be and how they can contribute to a greener future.

Green Verges

The strategy is to reclaim verges, remove hard paving where possible and introduce trees and other planting combined with SuDS. Verges offer much opportunity to add interest and biodiversity and in many cases overall maintenance can be reduced, by replacing maintenance heavy cut grass in favour of wildflowers and more naturalised green edges to streets.

The current issues with the grass verges are their lack of biodiversity, their high mowing regime and maintenance cost and the poor state of some sections due to vehicular run over.



5.4 Vegetation | Verges

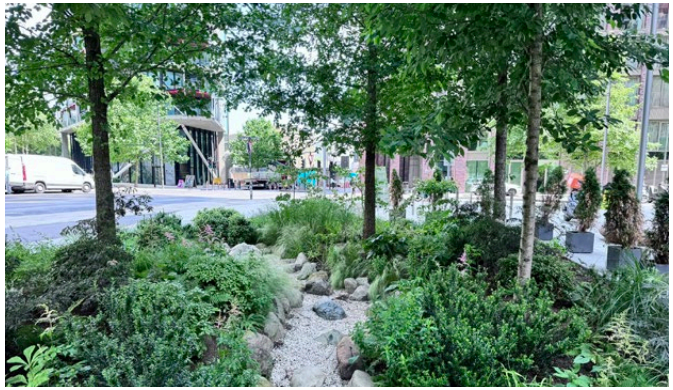
The following should be implemented:

- Tree planting: should be introduced along the central line of verges, where feasible to do so. The spacing between trees can be irregular to match the available space.
- Reinforced turf: Install sections of reinforced turf where vehicular run-over is likely to occur, typically at the entrance of driveways on residential streets.
- Meadow grass diversification: The aim is to transform verges to become species rich with a target of 50% to be achieved over a programmed duration. The minimum required verge width to implement is 1.2m. Where space allows a narrow mowed strip can be maintained directly adjacent to the carriageway.
- Rain gardens: Rain gardens that collect water runoff from the carriageway and footpaths should be introduced where appropriate. The minimum required verge width to implement rain gardens is 2-3m.

Even small areas of green infrastructure can contribute to improved streets. Trees and vegetation can occupy less than 10% of the hard surfacing, but still will contribute considerably in canopy cover, control water run off and increase biodiversity with all of the associated benefits.

Plants should be selected for their low growing, and spreading nature. These characteristics reduce the maintenance requirements as the average maximum height is 30cm and the spreading nature provides good ground cover to mitigate weeds. Plants for verges should be selected for their flowering and sensory values. Whether this is through touch, smell or sight, a pocket rain garden offers opportunity for both added biodiversity as well as visual enjoyment for all passers by.

All plant mixes should have a selection of evergreen and flowering species, variety should be provided to ensure seasonal interest and plants should be approved by the RHS for their pollinator values. It should be noted each planting mix should be reviewed on a site by site basis. It is important to manage expectations regarding flowering at all times, which could vary due to weather conditions and climate change. That is natural and an expected process as the vegetation will change over seasons.



5.5 Tree Planting

For successful tree planting, it is critically important to choose the right tree for the right place and correct installation is paramount.

There are a number of factors to consider, which include; competition for space beneath the streets with utilities, the proposed usage and character of the public realm, suitability for an urban environment, visual characteristics, resilience and adaptability to climate change. Retention of existing trees, especially mature trees also needs to be carefully considered and conditions of trees continued to be monitored by RBC.

Planting

Appropriate installation is paramount for the success of tree planting. The size of the planted tree should be selected based on its location and the available maintenance - between Heavy Standard and Semi-mature. The necessary ground preparation must be undertaken, and access must be given to the young tree to an adequate type and volume of nutrient rich, moist, aerated and well drained growing substrate. Adequate above-ground protection should also be provided. Growing medium and volume are critical to the longevity and success of any tree or plant.

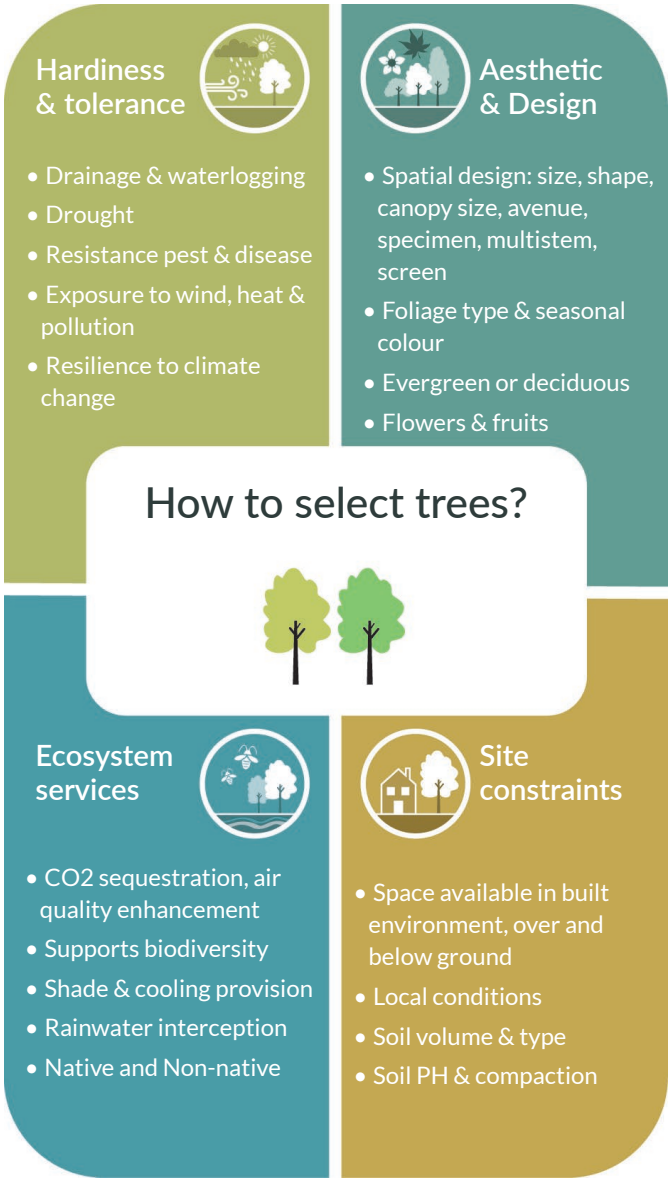
It is important to achieve the largest possible tree pit volume, however working around utilities can often be challenging and thus the target tree pit volume should be a minimum of 5-8m^3. Where this is not achievable root cells or urban tree soil should be considered, trees will thrive better if allowed better access to quality soil. All tree pits should have new, high quality soil specified, underground guying (where appropriate), aeration and irrigation points should also be included.

In urban street settings, where possible, trees should have open tree pits with soil and planting at the base, allowing for proper percolation of water. Where this is not achievable metal tree grilles or permeable resin bonded material may be acceptable, but should be assessed on a case by case basis.

Excavation

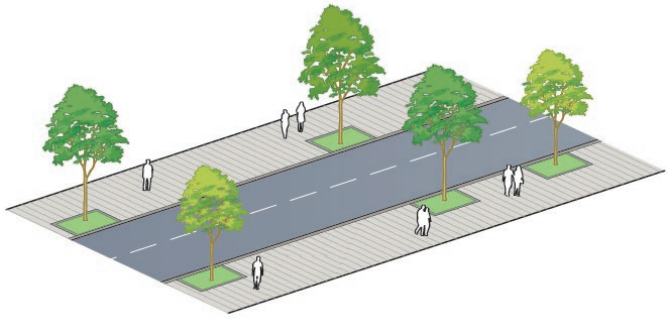
Typical pit excavation to be generally 750mm, however the excavation depth may need to be increased to install a drainage layer. This depends on percolation test results. The tree pit dimensions can be influenced by many factors such as tree species and soil and environment conditions. The build up of the base of the tree pit is also important to create a level base for the root-ball.

When utilities are in close proximity, install root barriers to protect adjacent utilities from future root growth. It is difficult to plant trees in straight lines to form traditional avenues in the modern street. Underground services makes this near impossible, so instead it can be more successful planting trees in naturalised clusters, based on results of surveys and trial holes. Introducing a mixture of species is important, whilst aiming for a gentler visual style, which ultimately becomes more appealing.

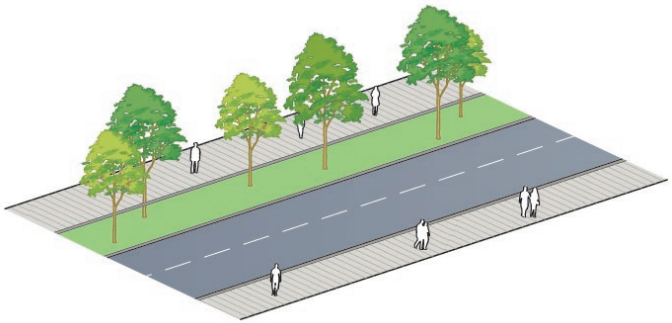


5.5 Tree Planting

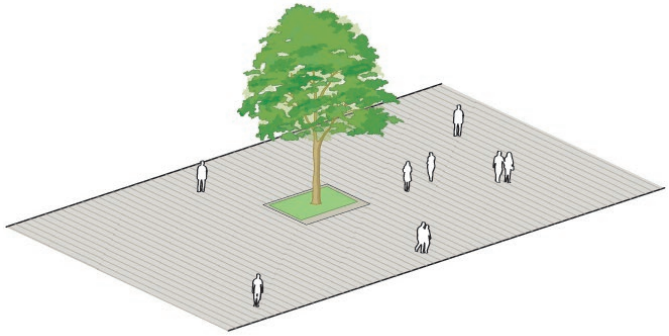
The diagrams below show typical options of how trees should be located within an urban environment. These scenarios can apply to streets with or without vehicular traffic, squares and spaces and any space where there is an opportunity to introduce trees.



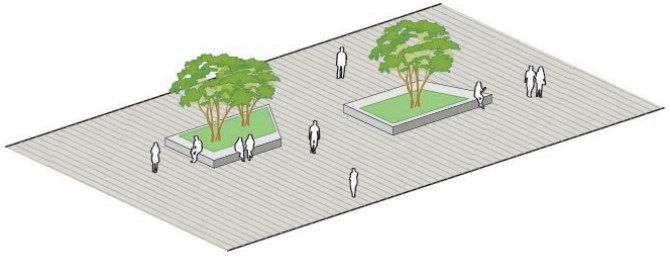
01 Along a street - Given the nature of street layout, utilities, access requirements and many other factors, trees do not need to be opposite or regularly spaced. Wherever possible, tree pits will have planting at their base.



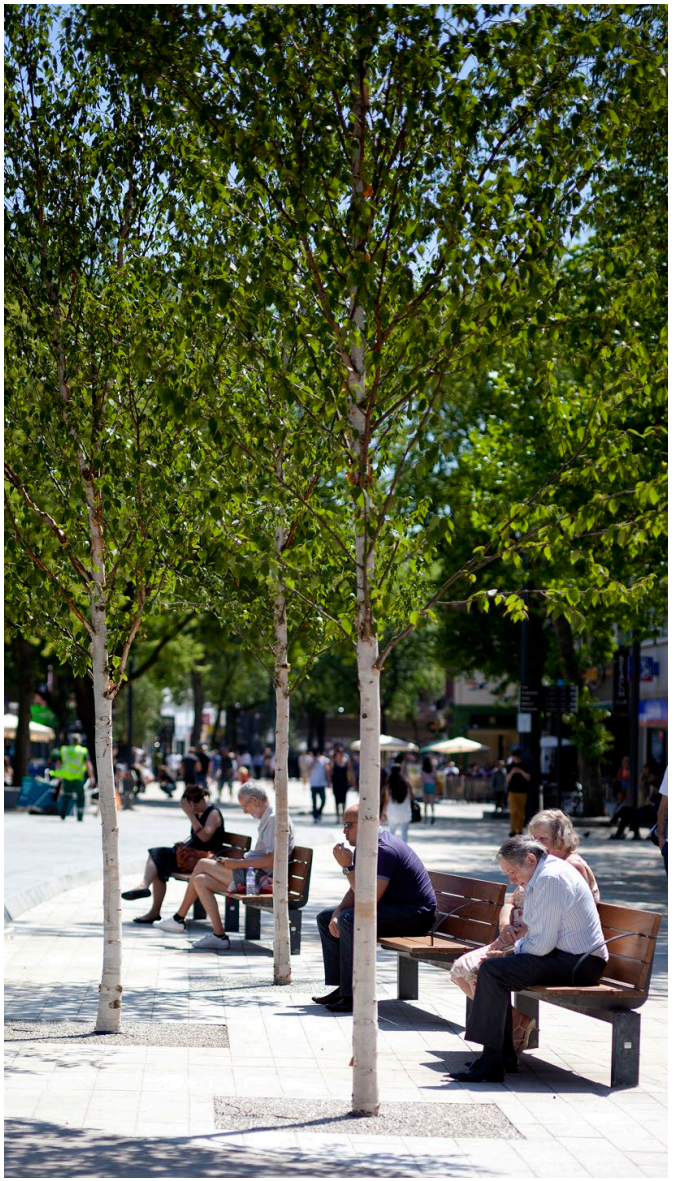
02 In green verges - Where possible, trees should be planted in existing verges, or where verges are created by narrowing the carriageway. Regular spacing is not necessary to build in flexibility.



03 Stand alone specimen - Singular trees can be located on squares, spaces and other key location in the town centre to add interest, scale and vegetation proportionate to the space. Tree pits should always be flush to the street.



04 In raised planters - Smaller trees, such as multi-stems, can be placed in raised planters with integrated seating where space allows. This can be a good way to introduce trees where excavation possibilities are limited.



5.5 Tree Planting

Location and design

Carefully identify the right location for tree planting and then determine what attributes the selected tree must have. Overground and underground services, sight lines, interaction with road and foot-ways all needs careful consideration. Care should be taken not to mask views onto shop fronts, key buildings or significant sight lines to heritage assets. Physical protection in the form of a vertical metal tree guard should be considered where there is a risk of damage to the tree.

Post planting care

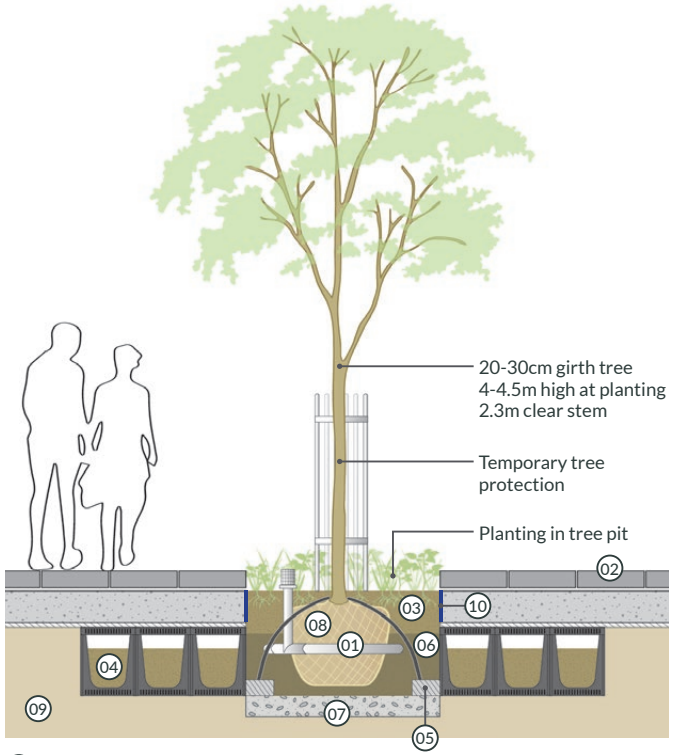
Once planted and secured in place, watering and weed control are essential. Formative pruning, often undertaken in nursery prior to dispatching the tree to site, should continue after planting.

Regular maintenance of both existing and new trees is paramount to their success, that includes crown lifting, pruning and removal of deadwood and regular arboricultural inspections.

Where semi mature trees are planted within streets, underground guying should be used. When smaller trees are specificed these should be secured with double stakes and ties. Where trees are planted within parkland settings overground stakes and a smaller size of tree is more suitable and economical.

Tree pit detail 1

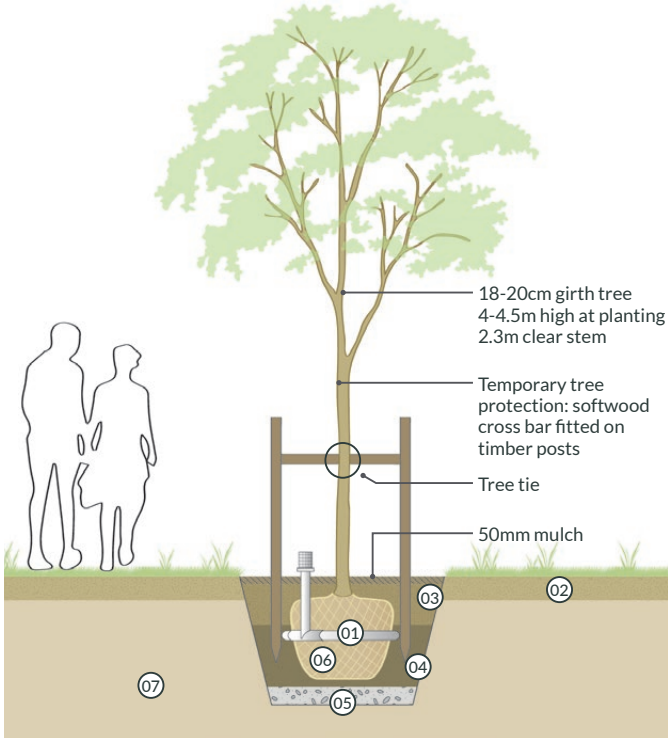
Typical tree pit with root cell system



01 Irrigation and aeration system
02 Paved surfacing
03 300mm minimum clean topsoil
04 Tree root cell system
05 Underground anchoring system
06 450mm minimum clean subsoil
07 150mm drainage layer minimum
08 Tree root-ball
09 Existing ground
10 Root barrier if adjacent utilities

Tree pit detail 2

Typical tree pit in soft surfacing



01 Irrigation and aeration system
02 Existing topsoil
03 300mm minimum reused clean topsoil
04 450mm minimum reused clean subsoil
05 Drainage layer with geotextile to be laid upon depending on percolation test results
06 Tree root-ball
07 Existing ground

5.5 Tree Planting | Typical Species

When considering trees, placement is vital. A range of trees appropriate for street scenes should be used and these should be predominantly narrow with an upright habit.

The RBC Tree Strategy should be referred to prior to specifying any trees. The trees featured on this page are a selection of species that could be appropriate, but should not limit the selection. Diversification must be considered with regards to family, genus and species.

Feature trees, and those with large canopies, that will add visual interest and focal points and colour throughout the year should also be used. In addition multi-stems are a very important part of many schemes.

The growth nature of the trees, both above and below ground should also be considered when siting next to heritage assets.

UK suppliers with appropriate certifications should be used wherever possible, to ensure pests and diseases are reduced.

Further guidance and resources are available online to help with the tree species selection process. Such as Tree and Design Action Group (TDAG), Woodland Trust, RHS and Hilliers tree guides.

Street trees


Acer campestre Elegant


Carpinus betulus Frans Fontaine


Pyrus cal Chanticleer


Ilex Nellie

Feature trees


Acer Platinoides Crimson King


Liquidambar styraciflua


Ginkgo Biloba


Corylus-colurna

Multi-stem trees


Acer Ginalla


Corylus avellana Geant De Halle


Betula Pendula


Cercis-siliquastrum


Cercidiphyllum-Japonicum

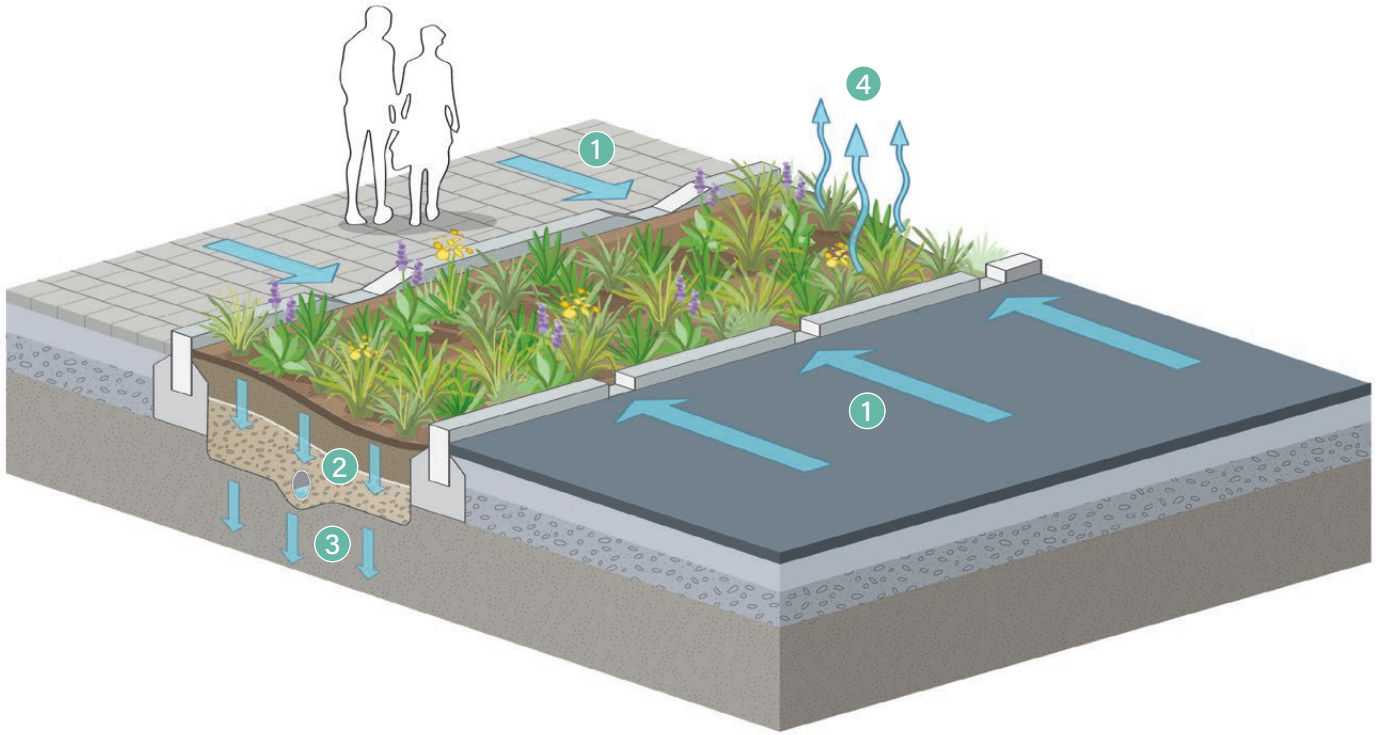
5.6 Rain Gardens

A rain garden is a planted depression that allows rainwater and runoff from impervious areas such as roads, parking and walkways to be filtered, stored on site, and then percolate through the natural ground.

Rain gardens act as living sponges, they are a key element of sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) which can play a large part in shaping new sustainable urban landscapes.

SuDS tree pit designs should also be considered where appropriate.

The adjacent diagram shows the principle of the rain garden. They aim to relieve the pressure on traditional gullies and drainage systems and at the same time rain water is cleansed and supports planting, that in turn supports biodiversity.



1. Rainwater runs off hard surfaces (road and footpath) into the rain garden. Notches in kerbline act as inlets and let the water flow in
2. Water filters through the soil and drainage/gravel layer. It is attenuated and temporarily stored in the rain garden.
3. Water infiltrates into the ground where ground conditions allow. Alternatively or as a complementary measure, the rain garden may have an overflow connected to the stormwater system.
4. Water evaporates into the air from the soil or plants.

5.6 Rain Gardens

The implementation of rain gardens in the town centre should be sought wherever practicable. General guideline when implementing rain gardens are:

- Ensure they are suitably located - along the lower side of the street or space, so rain water can enter along a length, rather than just at the lowest spot.
- Ensure the ground quality and condition allow efficient water storage on site, ground condition surveys are recommended.
- Ensure the storage capacity of the rain garden has been correctly assessed, the installation of an overflow system is recommended in urban environments. Efficient water storage on site, ground condition surveys are recommended.

The planting mix includes a range of species to ensure year-round interest with ornamental grasses, herbaceous perennials and shrubs that will provide variation in structure, colour, evergreen cover and biodiversity benefits.

These should consider the likely moisture levels that the plants will be exposed to based on the design of the rain garden - the lower sections are moist, the higher sections typically dry. The species shown are typical plants suited to each zone.

Moist zones


Sarcococca hookeriana var. humilis


Carex Divulsa


Persicaria Bistorta affinis ‘Darjeeling Red


Geum Totally Tangerine


Euphorbia amygdaloides var. robbiae

Mesic zones


Nandina domestica Gulf Stream


Skimmia japonica Rubella


Molinia Overdam


Deschampsia Cespitosa Goldtau


Hebe rakaiensis

Dry zones


Hypericum x dummeri ‘Peter Dummer’


Spiraea japonica ‘Goldmound


bergenia silberlicht


alchemilla mollis


Liriope Muscari

5.7 Green Verges Along Carriageway

Green verges are an ever increasingly important part of a town centre's green infrastructure. They offer valuable rainwater attenuation, increase biodiversity and air quality, can include trees for shadowing and vastly improve the look and feel of streets.

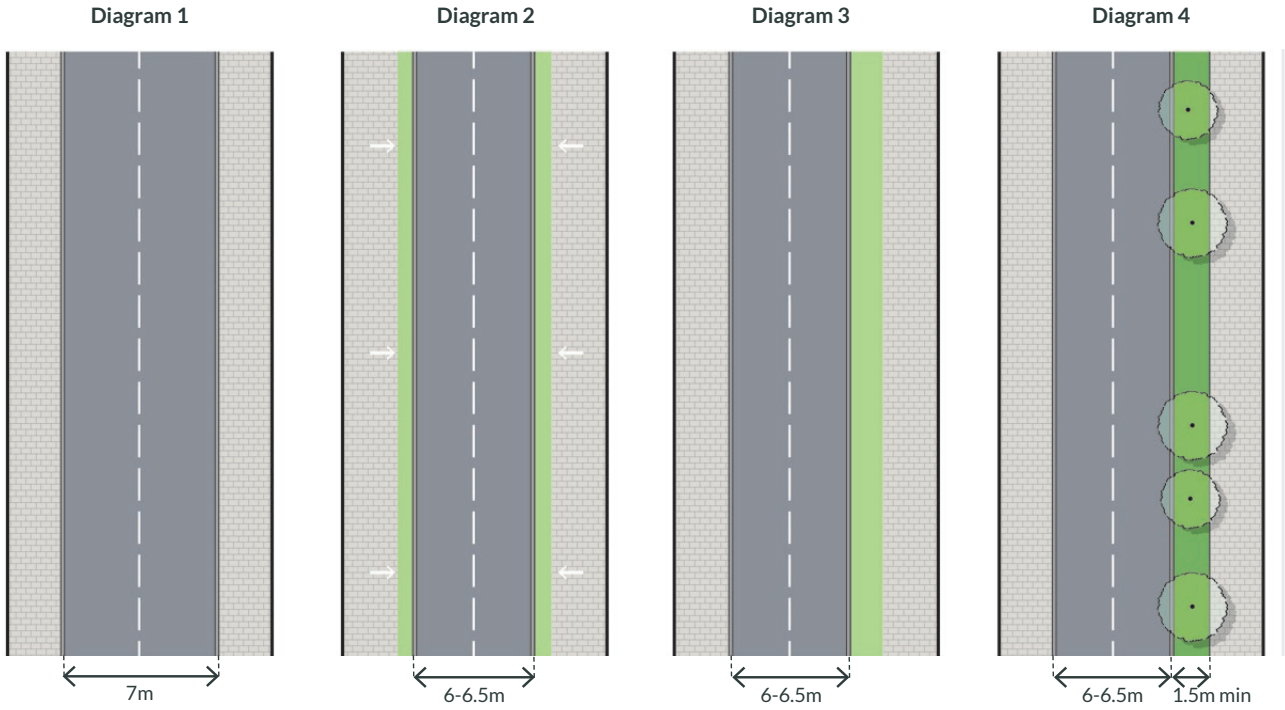
Diagram 1 - Shows an existing typical Reading street with an asphalt carriageway and predominantly hard paved footpaths.

Diagram 2 - Shows a reduced carriageway width of 6-6.5m to enable the introduction of green verges. Generally speaking, footpath width should be 2m as a minimum. Where appropriate and where space allows, a green verge can be introduced on both sides of the carriageway.

Diagram 3 - Shows reclaimed space grouped to one side of the carriageway to maximise its effectiveness and visual impact. Footfall and street type should be carefully assessed on a case by case basis before considering the introduction of the correct type of green verges.

Diagram 4 - Shows how the reclaimed space can be used to create green verges and introduce trees. Appropriate and regular breaks should be designed in the green verges to allow informal pedestrian movement and crossing where appropriate.

The greening of central islands, traffic islands and any other currently underused hard standing areas associated with roadways should also be considered. The opportunities to add green verges are likely to be greatest on more peripheral streets, and outside the core of the centre where there is already significant competition for highway space. The presence of utilities will also need to be carefully considered



5.8 Parking and Integrated Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure can be successfully integrated on most types of streets. Footway width, on-street parking provision and underground utilities should always be considered and understood to find the best suited way to integrate trees and planting. Greening will enhance the sense of place and achieve a tangible improvement in visual appeal, air quality, stormwater management and biodiversity.

On-street parking in the core of the centre should be avoided unless it is essential. These guidelines are therefore most likely to be applied on some of the more peripheral streets or in locations where parking is essential, e.g. for people with disabilities.

Diagram 1 - Shows an existing typical Reading street with continuous on-street parking both sides.

Diagram 2 - Illustrates trees set within the footpath. This scenario is suitable where on-street parking must be retained. Footpaths should ideally be 3m wide so that trees don't impact on pedestrian circulation. Trees do not need to be placed at regular internals, but can be located around underground utilities and sight lines in more naturalistic clusters, where appropriate.

Diagram 3 - Shows trees set on the edge of the footpath in green verges. Continuous on-street parking is retained. This can be a good option where there is light footfall with wide footpaths but where parking volume cannot be reduced.

Diagram 4 - Trees set in pockets of planting (min 2-2.4m) on a flexible strip with on-street parking. This is a good option where parking volume can be slightly reduced.

Diagram 5 - Trees are set in larger pockets of planting. This a good option where parking can be reduced and biodiversity and urban drainage prioritised.

Diagram 1

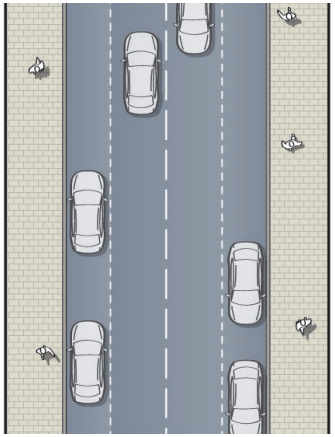


Diagram2

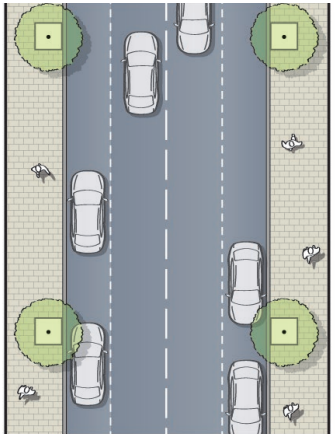


Diagram 3

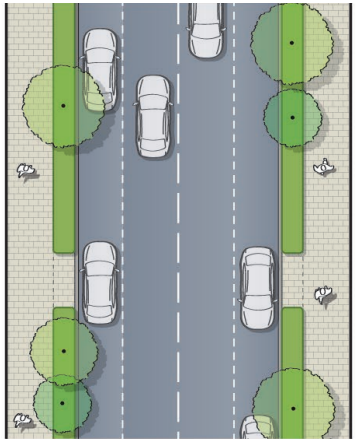


Diagram 4

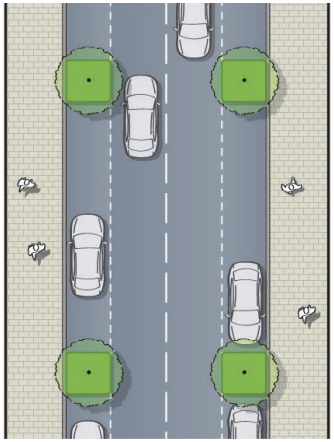
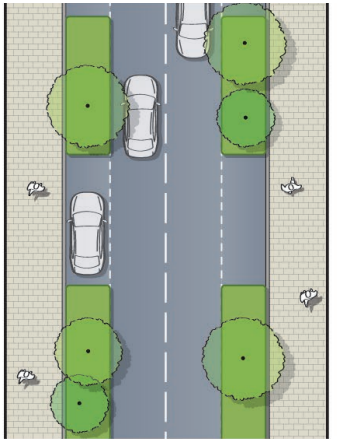


Diagram 5



5.9 Street Furniture

To achieve consistency across Reading Town Centre, street furniture and elements must be selected carefully and installed correctly. The furniture and elements used in the town centre are to create a coordinated palette of simple, elegant forms, using steel and timber as the primary materials. Furniture is to be robust, affordable and economical to maintain.

The general arrangement of elements within the public realm have a significant impact on the way spaces are perceived and used.

- Street furniture must be positioned in a rational way to ensure easy pedestrian movement, create uncluttered spaces and respond to the function of the space.
- Excessive use of street furniture should be avoided and used only where it is needed.
- Street furniture should generally be set back a minimum of 600mm from the kerb face (900mm minimum for cycle stands) to prevent damage caused by vehicles.
- A minimum 2m wide footway clear zone must be maintained for unhindered pedestrian movement.
- The positioning of street furniture should be consistent along the street and preferably throughout the town centre, so that obstructions can be more readily anticipated by people with visual impairments.
- Bollards, street lights, seating and signs are to be root mounted. Bins are to be free standing with an internal ballast.
- The colour of the steel components should be consistent and neutral. A dark grey RAL 7016 or similar should be used.
- All timber components should be consistent and a light colour or preferably allowed to naturally age. The use of tropical hard woods should be avoided, instead Oak or treated plantation grown timber should be used. Recycled material alternatives could be considered if they achieve the same visual appearance and quality.
- In key spaces there is always an opportunity to do something contrasting and colourful, these need to be carefully considered and designed by a landscape architect.
- Existing heritage street furniture should be retained as appropriate.
- All other components of street furniture including feeder pillars should be placed in coordnation with the street layout and painted in RAL 7016.

Seating

- Seating should be provided in places where people are likely to want to sit along the street, and in clusters where people congregate, such as squares. This includes a variety of spaces including; in the sun, in the shade, in groups, alone, close to activity or in a quiet area. They should also be placed at regular intervals for disabled or elderly people.
- In spaces where people congregate, a range of seating should be provided to allow people to sit, perch or lounge. A mix of seats with backrests and armrests and flat benches should be designed into the space. In such areas the seating should be designed to deter rough sleeping.

Litter bins

- Litter bins should be located frequently in areas of high demand and adjacent to seating areas. It is recommended that bins are offset at a minimum of 2m from seats.
- As appropriate at specific locations there should be 2 bins - one in dark grey, RAL 7016, for general rubbish, the second in pale green, RAL 6021, for recycling.
- They should be robust with an inner metal liner, 100-120 litres in size. They should be neutral in design and avoid any markings or banding.

Bollards

- The use of bollards should be avoided wherever possible, and only used to direct traffic where there is no kerb upstand.
- Existing disparate bollards throughout the town centre should be removed in their majority, to avoid visual clutter.

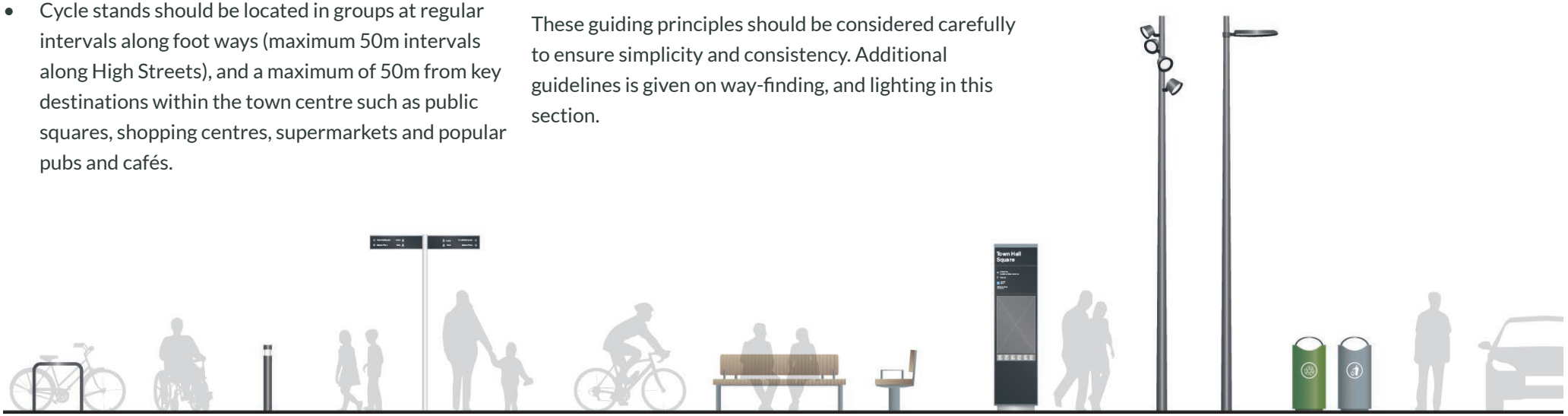
5.9 Street Furniture

- When the use of bollards cannot be avoided, they should be 1.1m high, slender and coordinated with the other pieces of street furniture. They should have a non scratch paint finish in colour RAL 7016 or similar coordinated with other components of street furniture.

Cycle stands

- It is vital to introduce a range of types of cycle stands at differing widths to allow for; standard bicycles, cargo / delivery bicycles, Dutch bicycles, and bicycles with trailers etc.
- Latest versions of London Cycling Design Standards (LCDS) by TFL should be used to help guide installation decisions.
- Cycle stands should be located in groups at regular intervals along foot ways (maximum 50m intervals along High Streets), and a maximum of 50m from key destinations within the town centre such as public squares, shopping centres, supermarkets and popular pubs and cafés.
- Stands should be located where there is good lighting and natural/CCTV surveillance to prevent theft.
- The layout of stands should ensure that parked cycles will not obstruct the footway clear zone.
- Cycle stands should be set 1200mm apart (1000mm minimum) with larger spacing for larger bicycle types.
- They should have a simple slender design, such as a Sheffield stand. They should have a non scratch paint finish in colour RAL 7016 or similar coordinated with other components of street furniture.
- The number of stands provided within the town centre should correlate with demand: over-supply should be avoided as well as under-provision

These guiding principles should be considered carefully to ensure simplicity and consistency. Additional guidelines is given on way-finding, and lighting in this section.



Cycle stand | Bollard | Finger post | Bench | Monolith | Lighting columns | Bins

5.10 Lighting | Objectives

Lighting is a vital component of any successful town centre and can greatly elevate a place by creating safe, inviting and enjoyable spaces.

Clever lighting strategies ensure that sense of place is not lost in the urban night by highlighting terminating vistas, key buildings and features, and providing a consistent level of lighting throughout the public realm, for users to be comfortable in their ability to navigate the town centre at night time. Such illumination techniques should also ensure that Reading's distinctive historic character and charm is maintained at dusk and night time.

Safe

Lighting must provide a safe environment for visitors to Reading town centre. This includes ensuring Lux levels are achieved, lights are well placed and spaced, high quality and robust fittings are used and lighting is regularly checked and maintained.

Inviting

Places for people should be inviting. Techniques such as colour variation, adjusting colour temperature and layering of light, all create a rich, diverse, visual environment. Warm colours are generally encouraged for heritage and town centre environments. Lighting should always promote accessibility, highlighting level changes, and be DDA compliant.

Enjoyable

The concept of joy within a town centre scheme is important to placemaking. Lighting encourages social interaction, benefits night time economy and makes memorable places. Colour, texture. Shadows, patterns, projections and feature lighting should all be integrated.

Lighting level

There are a range of different classifications based on the nature of the road and its usage by vehicles and pedestrians. Generally busy urban areas are designed to C2 - C4 when there is vehicle traffic and P2 when primarily pedestrian.

Each street needs to be assessed based on the guidance provided in the British Standards as there are many different types of streets within Reading.

This will ensure a safe environment during darkness. A warm white colour temperature of not more than 3000K should be used throughout. This could be reduced to 2700 in heritage areas and may need to be reduced further in areas where there are trees, bat activity and along waterways with biodiversity value.

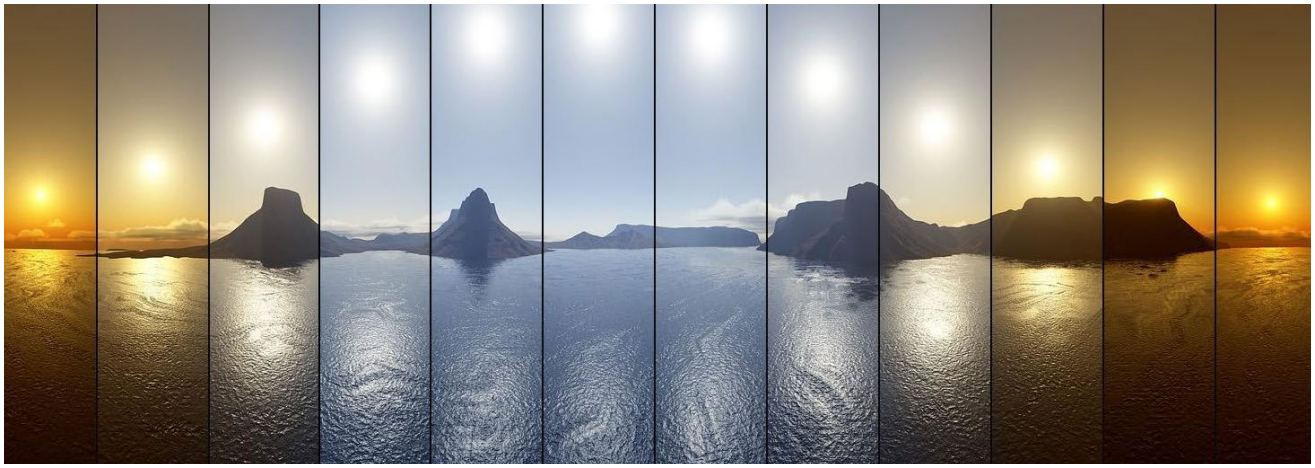
Light and visual pollution

Care must be taken to position lights so as not to produce any light pollution and avoid over-lighting streets and spaces. Electrical feeder pillars should always be located at the edge of spaces or against buildings.

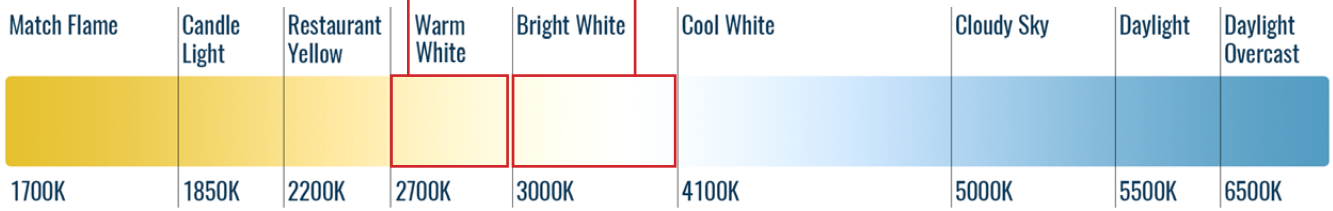
Consideration should be given to:

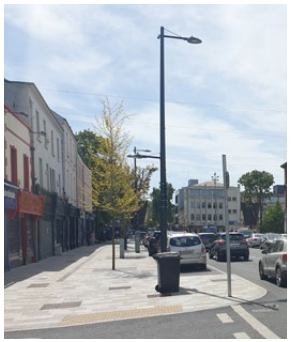
- Activities by bats and other environmental factors
- Use of controlled downward facing lights only
- Avoidance of in ground lights where people walk to aid visually impaired
- Integrating and supporting festive lighting through commando sockets
- Avoidance of disturbance to heritge assets
- Security and safety
- LED's must be used to minimise energy consumption
- CCTV and Wi-Fi inclusion
- In ground power units for markets and events spaces should be integrated with ample capacity for supplying larger scale events in the future

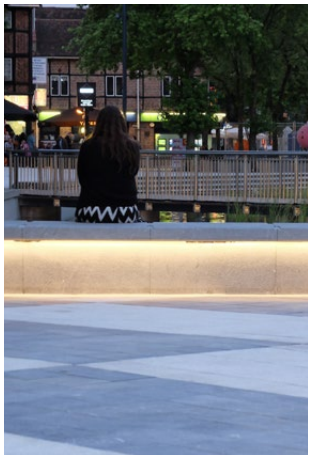
5.10 Lighting | Considerations

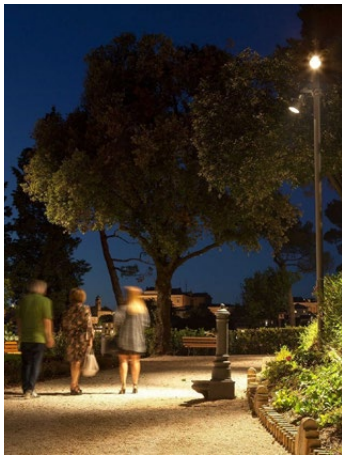


Colour temperature of white light has a profound effect on the feel of a space and should be considered at specification stage. Cooler lights are generally associated with daytime, alertness, efficiency. Warmer lights have a more relaxing, welcoming and intimate perception and are much better suited to leisure spaces at night.









5.10 Lighting Columns

Light columns should be simple, practical, elegant and adaptable. The more elegant and simple a column is, the more it will stand the test of time. A minimal design that becomes relatively invisible to the eye during the daytime should be used.

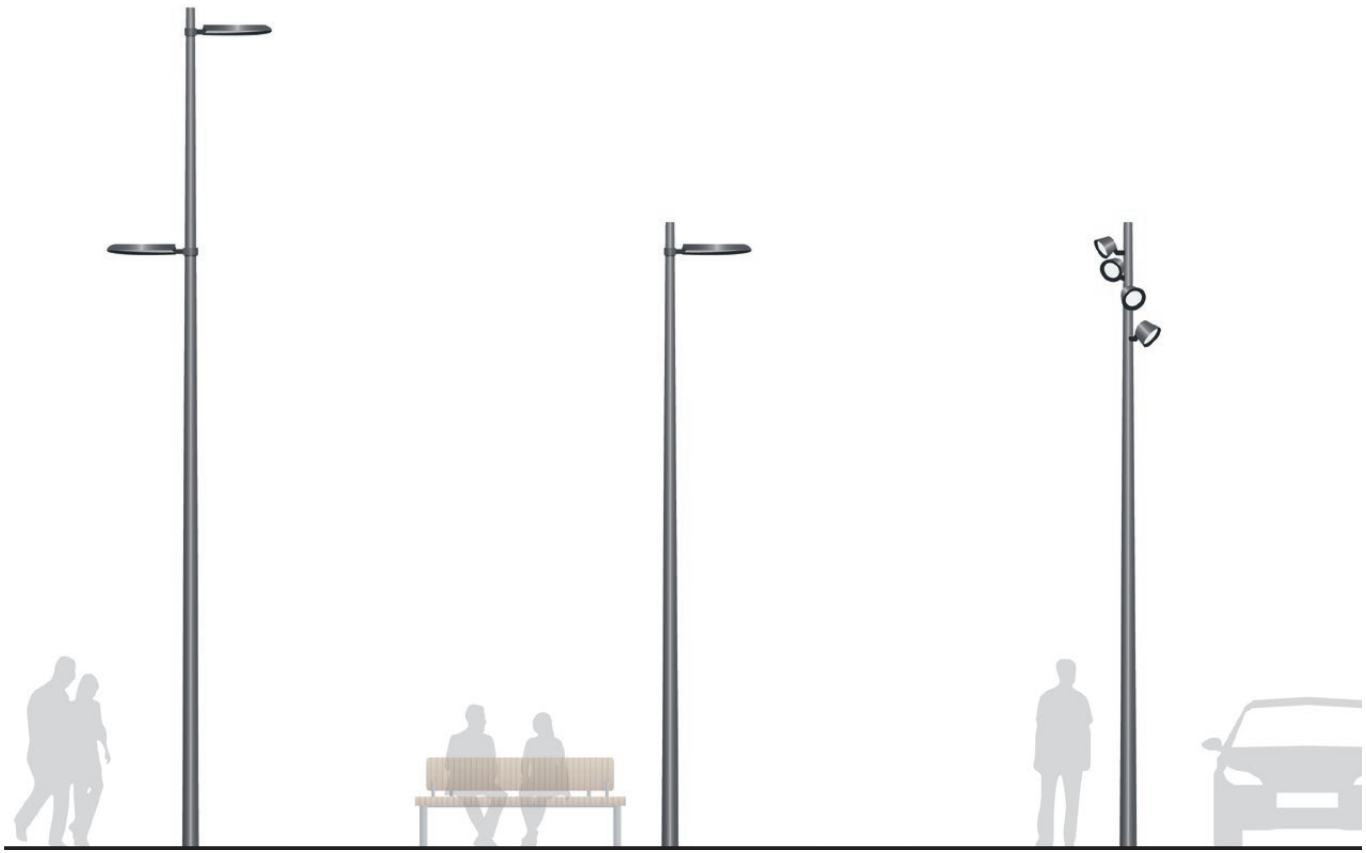
The illustrations to the right show a suitable style to be used, with a single or tapered width from the base and perpendicular light fittings. Heavy bases, stepped based and decorative tops of columns should be avoided. Consistency and simplicity are key to achieving a successful town centre lighting scheme.

Column 1 - Suitable for main vehicle streets and arterial roads; 8m high columns with 1 or 2 luminaires. On arterial roads consider brackets for banners to advertise events. Also consider Christmas lighting brackets on central streets.

Column 2 - Suitable for residential and pedestrian streets. 4-6m columns. Single pole with luminaire. Also consider Christmas lighting brackets on central streets.

Column 3 - 6m tapered or cylindrical column. With adjustable spotlights as required to best illuminate footpaths, spaces and heritage assets.

Key areas offer an opportunity to introduce individual and special lighting columns. Taller columns in varying materials and styles may be appropriate for squares, with capacity for projectors and more light fittings.



Typical Lighting Column 1
8m tapered or cylindrical column
1 or 2 single pole luminaires
Street lighting optics

Typical Lighting Column 2
4-6m tapered or cylindrical column
Single pole-top luminaire
Street lighting optics

Typical Lighting Column 3
6m tapered or cylindrical column
Adjustable spotlights
Wide / medium / narrow light distribution, as required for space / footpath / monument accent

5.10 Feature Lighting

Feature lighting should be an integral part of the design of schemes within the town centre creating a sense of delight in those visiting.

A number of different components should be introduced to highlight and maximise heritage assets, each considered on a case by case basis. Reading offers many opportunities for feature lighting of monuments, statues and characterful architecture. These improve the night time environment as well as the legibility and memorability of the town centre. Feature lighting should also elevate furniture and facilitate events spaces.

Feature lighting type 1 - Catenary lighting should be used to give a special feel to lanes and narrower town centre streets and frame event spaces.

Feature lighting type 2 - Non intrusive spotlights. To create a sense of arrival and highlight special squares and events spaces. Lighting of trees, key art, monuments and heritage façades should also be integral to new lighting schemes.

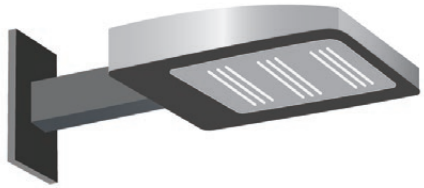
Feature lighting type 3 - In lanes, wall mounted lighting heads should be used instead of columns. Whilst these can require complex agreements, they greatly contribute to improving narrow spaces by de-cluttering and adding valuable circulation space.

Feature lighting type 4 - On squares and feature spaces, the introduction of recessed lighting to furniture should be considered. This adds ambience and enhancement to key spaces.

To achieve a considerate and proportionate lighting strategy, an appropriate balance should be sought between lighting accent and standard lighting levels.

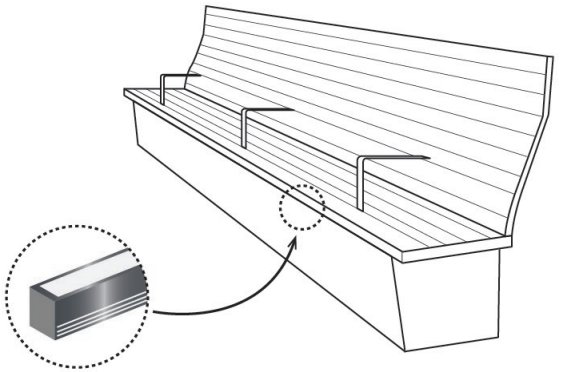
Lighting columns and features should be positioned in a considerate way, to avoid visual clutter and allow clear views to the town landmarks.

Feature Lighting Type 1
Catenary lighting



Feature Lighting Type 3
Wall mounted luminaire to narrow streets and lanes

Feature Lighting Type 2
Spotlights



Feature Lighting Type 4
Wall mounted luminaire to narrow streets and lanes

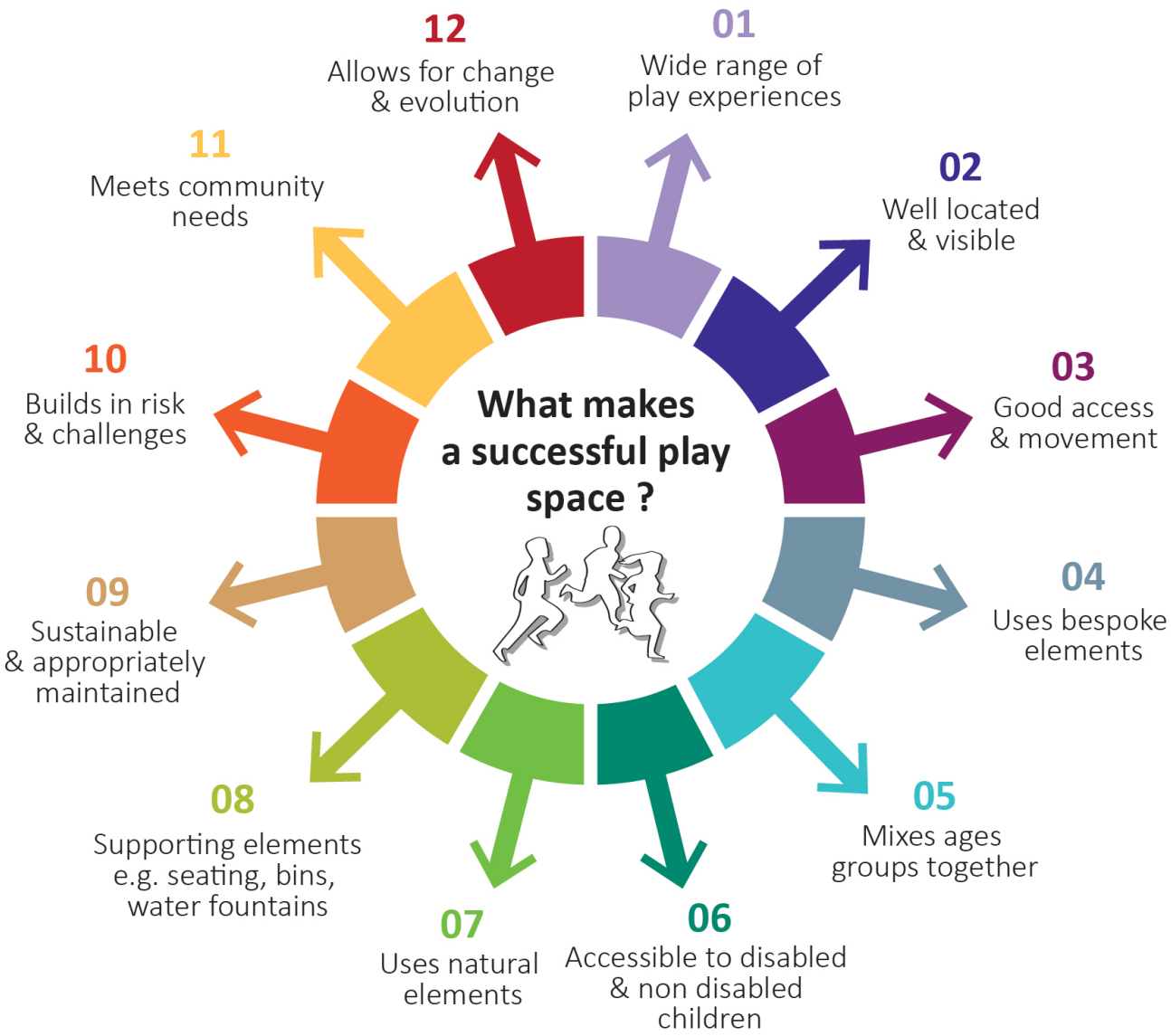
5.11 Play Provision

Play is key in elevating, enlivening and adding excitement to a town centre. Play has transformational qualities and creates memorable places for all the family. It can be a key contributor in making memories and enhancing peoples positive experience of an area.

The play provision within Reading's town centre should include a variety of play experiences. Traditional play equipment such as swings or climbing frames are essential to a comprehensive play strategy, but shouldn't be the only type of play offered. Where the context is suitable, natural play should be introduced. This can include tumbled logs, boulders, stepping stones or dry river beds. Spaces that induce play are also essential, and these can be located anywhere in the public realm, creating playful spaces that bring interest to the streetscape. These can be landforms, vertical poles, sculptures, art interventions, floor markings...

There are many aspects to consider when designing a play space and it is recommended that a qualified Landscape Architect is appointed to carry out the design proposals. The main considerations include location, safety, natural surveillance, style, materials, colour palette and possible theme of the chosen play equipment.

Different user groups with varying levels of physical, mental and visual ability should be considered, along with robustness, durability, sourcing and maintenance of the play equipment.

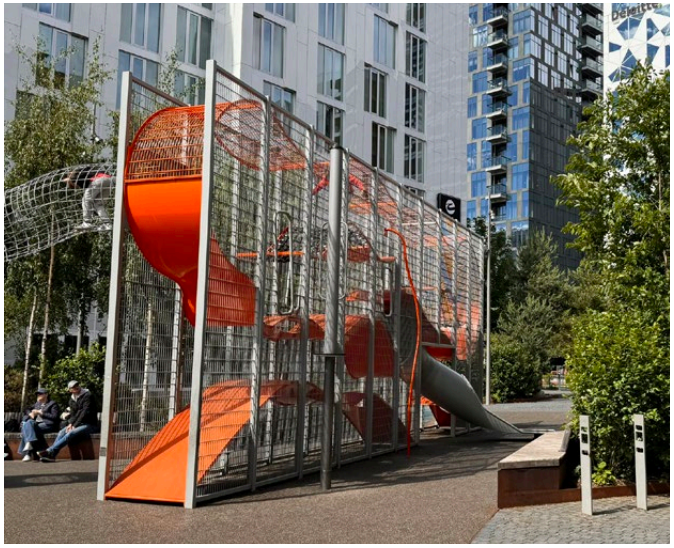


5.11 Play Provision

A successful play strategy should include formalised playgrounds within green spaces, along with pocket play spaces within high streets and squares and playful elements dotted within the streetscape. Play areas should spark a little joy in visitors of all ages and encourage engagement and activation.

- **Formalised place spaces -** Key areas for playgrounds should be identified and accessible, usable, safe and delightful. Play schemes should be designed in collaboration with experienced playground designers. Natural play and planting should be integrated with more formal play structures.
- **Pocket play spaces -** These can be small play areas that catch people by surprise and really add an element of excitement to spaces, causing people to pause, play and enjoy the town centre, in turn activating formally under utilised areas. These can be temporary or permanent.
- **Playful elements -** Consideration should also be given to rolling out a series of interlinked playful elements within the town centre. These could be items within a street scape or square that delight both adults and children alike.

Mixed use games areas should be integrated within or adjacent to play spaces where possible, to encourage sports activity and community engagement. In the same manner, recreational equipment for adults such as outdoor gym equipment, tennis table, teqball or chess tables can be located nearby play areas to create community hubs and promote time spent outdoors. The overall design of play spaces should allow easy access for parents and carers, as well as areas that include seating and shade for social recreation whilst the children play.



5.12 Wayfinding & Signage

Wayfinding and signage are a vital ingredient in an overall high quality public realm, ensuring visitors to the town centre can easily navigate the town centre, access information, locate amenities and key cultural and heritage buildings.

A consistent and clear set of way-finding principles should be set out to ensure the best user experience for visitors to Reading town centre.

Clarity - Users need information at certain points along a journey in order to effectively make decisions. This information can aid orientation, list services, give directions or confirm a location, and must always be communicated clearly and concisely.

Consistency - Signage should follow a consistent format. Although a variety of sign shapes and sizes is likely to be used, they should all follow the same rules when it comes to colour palette, typography, layout and messaging, to ensure a continuous visual language instantly recognisable from a distance.

Accessibility - one of the fundamentals of successful signage is a system that works for all users. Visitors with physical impairments or other health issues must be considered, incorporating Braille, tactile trails, audio assistance, step-free routes and the use of technology.

Three key types of signage within the public realm are important. These need to be well considered as part of an overall strategy in terms of their appearance, content and location, to help achieve a unified approach. This will have a considerable positive effect on complementing the public realm, by visually and physically de-cluttering spaces and enhancing the user experience.

Directional - As part of a city centre wide way-finding strategy. Directional signage should be a coordinated family of simple, elegant and unified forms including maps at key arrival points, monoliths at decision points and finger posts to aid orientation. We would highly recommend that a single family of related elements be designed for consistency and then rolled out across the town in a unified way.

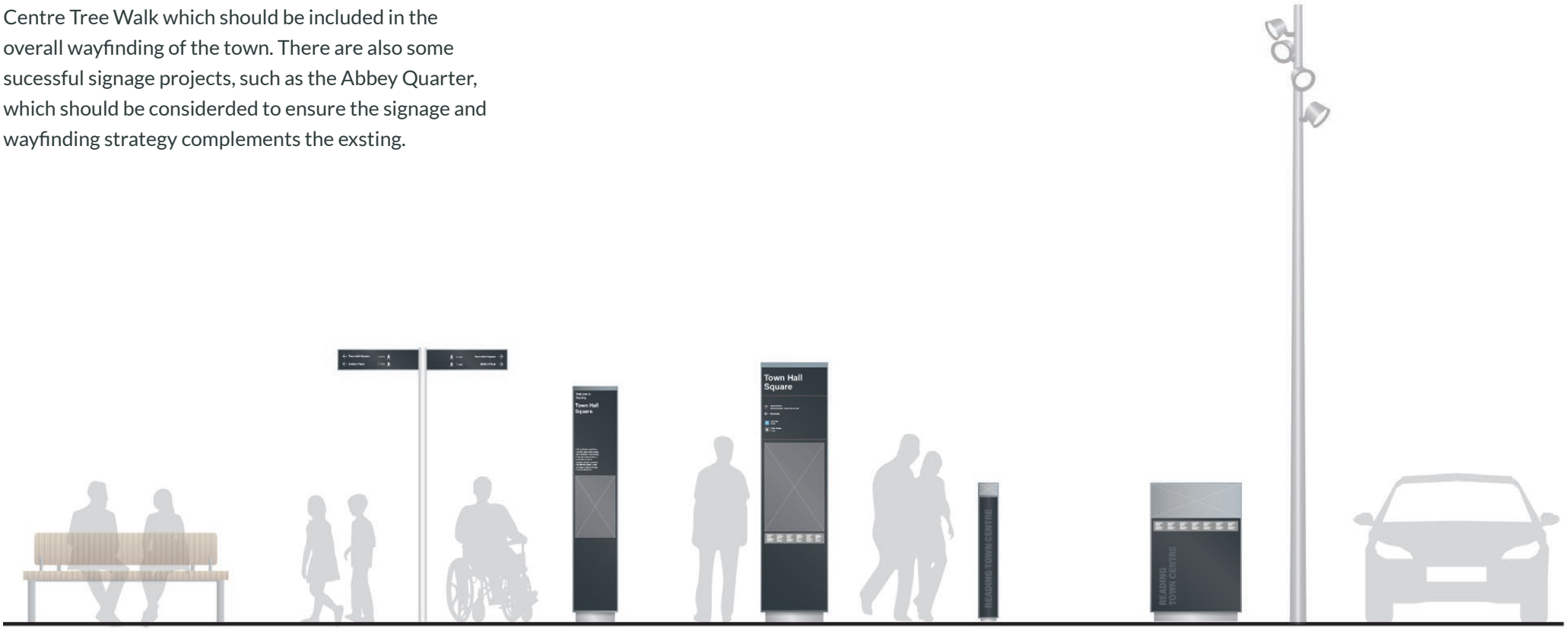
Interpretational -Graphical signs or plaques should be positioned next to buildings and points of interest that have a historic, cultural or architectural importance. Key cultural organisations such as theatres, museums or local historical societies within the town may wish to contribute to a historic or cultural trail. This can be an opportunity to strengthen and deepen a sense of place within the town as well as engage the local community. The interpretation signs must be located not to block the view of the point of interest, instead located at a point which complements the setting as a whole.

Vehicular - Statutory road signs should be kept to a minimum and rationalised wherever possible to avoid clutter. An audit of existing vehicular signage often identifies a great opportunity for de-cluttering and rationalising, improving legibility.

5.12 Wayfinding & Signage

Signage should be coordinated wherever possible with light columns, bollards and street furniture. All signage should be durable and adaptable allowing maps and names to be updated as the town grows and changes over the years.

There are a number of existing walks such as the Town Centre Tree Walk which should be included in the overall wayfinding of the town. There are also some sucessful signage projects, such as the Abbey Quarter, which should be considerded to ensure the signage and wayfinding strategy complements the exsting.



Sign Type 1
Pedestrian Directional Finger Post

Sign Type 2
Minilith Destination Arrival

Sign Type 3
Monolith Directory Totem

Sign Type 4
Interpretation & Signage Sign

Sign Type 5
Interpretation & Signage Board

5.13 Public Art & Animation

Public art offers a fantastic opportunity to breathe life into Reading and elevate and engage the community. There are a number of ways in which public art can be introduced to Reading. These must respect the exiting heritage components and strategically place contemporary items.

Monuments

Current locations and surrounds to existing monuments should be reviewed to remove clutter and visual competition.

Murals

These should be encouraged on blank walls either as a temporary or permanent installation. These need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with a general rule of one mural visible from any vantage point, so as not to be overwhelming. The colour schemes should be considered relative to adjacent building facades.

Inlaid details can be incorporated within paving at entrances to the narrow lanes.

Contemporary art

New pieces could be commissioned as part of public realm enhancement projects. These can be objects within a space, integrated into the design of the street furniture, lighting, landscape, wayfinding and play to help create a sense of place and identity.

Art and performance can be used as a highly successful means to launch and celebrate newly completed public realm and events spaces. Collaboration with artists and the local community as part of the design of public realm schemes will provide identity and originality within the town.

A public realm arts program could include:

- Retaining a key person within the local authority to oversee all arts activities/commissioning in a coordinated way.
- Writing a detailed set of guidance that identifies opportunity areas and lays out a clear process for funding, commissioning, promoting and delivering a varied and rich arts program.
- Working with local artists, arts groups, museums, galleries, students and performers to engage the local community.
- A successful approach should include temporary arts such as performances, semi permanent installations as well as longer term installations such as sculptures.

Functional necessities such as public safety, access, maintenance and power supply should be considered as part of the strategy and the design of each piece.

5.14 Street Activation

Street activation can take a number of forms and can provide an attractive, coordinated and inviting external environment through enhanced public streets and spaces, which enable and encourage people to safely and comfortably dine, enjoy and spend time in the public realm, and allow businesses to flourish.

There are many ways in which this can take place, below are an initial suggestion which can become possible through a well organised public realm.

Outdoor Dining

Outdoor dining should be actively encouraged, with forecourts for dining clearly identified and a set of clear design principles for table and barrier layouts laid out. Planters of various types can also be used to define areas and add vitality to streets where restaurants and cafés feature.

Markets and Street traders

Care needs to be taken on the position of any stalls so not to impede movement or views along the street. All regular traders should be positioned to help the animation of certain streets and in particular blank facades. Visiting stalls can be placed “as an event” within the main streets.

Planned & spontaneous events

Through the reorganisation of the public realm, including the position of street furniture, spaces can be created for events. These should be identified and managed to promote activities and events as often as possible. The town should consider an annual seasonal programme and identify how these help to animate the streets and spaces.

With all of these activities care will need to be taken to accommodate movements and street functions, such as servicing, delivery and emergency services vehicular access arrangements.

The combination of different street activation and animation will bring benefits to the town which include:

- **Enhanced placemaking and identity -** Creation of attractive and vibrant places to live, work, visit, spend time and invest in. Promotion of external additions facilitating a greater sense of identity for an area.
- **Additional footfall -** This will help retain a sustainable town centre including the promotion of walking and cycling, interventions that respond to current needs and are also adaptable.
- **Well-being & biophilic design -** Creation of relaxing spaces that promote public safety and mindfulness, where people are able to socialise safely and confidently, and feel connected to the natural environment.

5.15 Meanwhile Uses

Meanwhile use enables the creation of better places and the testing of ideas and coming together of communities, whilst a more long term development is established. Vibrant interim uses will benefit existing shops, as well as the wider town centre, through increased footfall, bringing life back to the high street and making better use of resources overall.

Meanwhile use greatly increases the level of awareness of an areas to prospective tenants or owners, particularly if it provides a home for an eye-catching landscape or play project and encourages legacy planning for an areas future. Meanwhile use also improves community engagement and increases the prospect of future landscape and commercial uses in adjacent residential units. These can take a wide number of forms including:

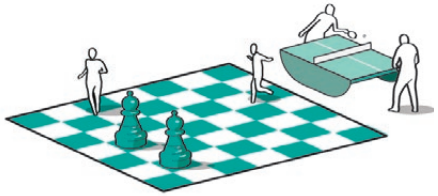
Activities:

- Art installations
- Sports spaces / events
- Food festivals / pop up restaurants / Markets
- Mini festivals and community get together's
- Performance spaces / outdoor cinema

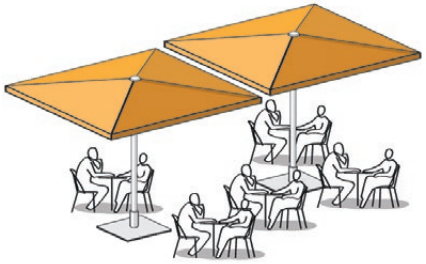
Physical changes:

- Community gardens
- Temporary pocket parks / Nature gardens
- Temporary play areas / play streets

01
Performance & event space

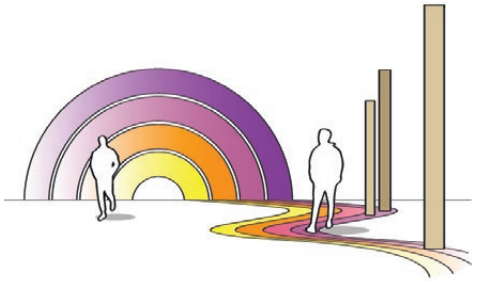


02
Multi-user games & community use

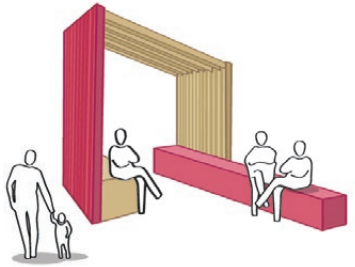


03
Outdoor dining

04
Green oasis & ephemeral garden



05
Art, floor markings & murals



06
Social seating & dwelling

5.15 Meanwhile Uses

One area that offers great potential for a meanwhile use is Queens Walk. The area is due to change in time as part of the larger development area of Minster Quarter Framework.

This area could be used as a pilot project to test different pop up activities which will help make it feel like a more inviting space, along with help the businesses which are currently in the area.

The sketch to the right is an example of what can be done on a low budget for a set design life.

01 Traders and stalls against blank facades

02 Murals / colour on the facades

03 Seating opportunities

04 Outdoor dining

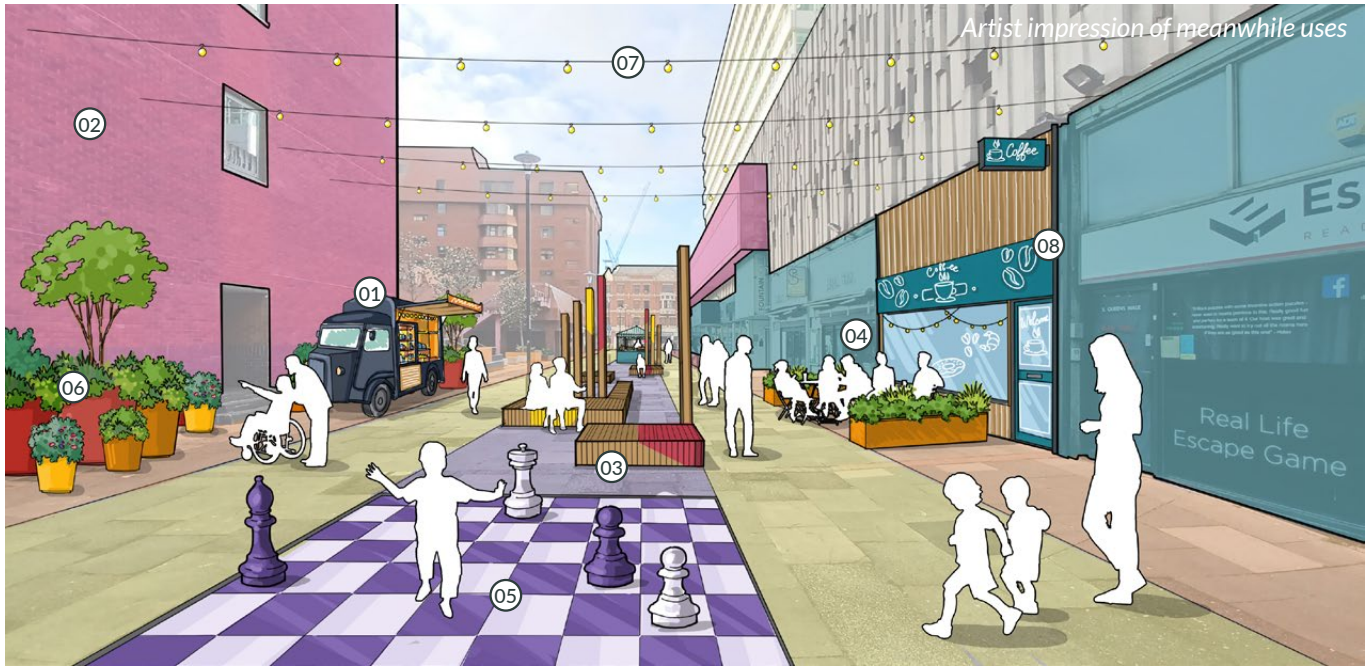
05 Integration of play element or community amenities such as oversize board games, table tennis, teqball or other

06 Planting in pots and vegetation to soften dead facades, blank walls and add seasonality and interest

07 Catenary lighting across the space to bring a human scale and ambient lighting at night time

08 Graphics and signage

Queens Walk - Existing



Artist impression of meanwhile uses

5.16 Hoarding & Construction Site

Reading has lots of proposed new developments in the town centre over the coming years, the building process and interface between the sites and the public realm are important to help maintain an animated town centre.

Construction sites can either have a detrimental effect on the visual appearance of a town centre, or can be key contributors to an overall sense of a positively developing town centre . They offer great benefits and artistic opportunities. It is recommended to develop a detailed hoarding strategy for the town centre which all construction sites need to follow.

A set of guidelines would include;

- Location, limitation and best practice guidelines for hoarding lines to avoid hidden corners, help businesses and contribute to the character and image of the town as a whole.
- A graphics template which would include options for the visual appearance of the hoarding to include imagery, information about the development, communications, marketing and necessary safety signage.

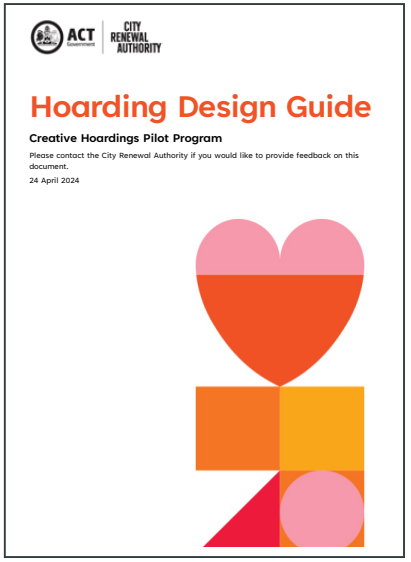
A hoarding strategy brings an opportunity to work with local artists, schools and art students to develop artistic wraps to showcase local talents. These types of projects can help provide a sense of a dynamic, community and caring image for the town and could greatly reduce the sense of frustration from locals at ongoing construction.

A part of the strategy could contain a section for when public realm projects are being undertaken. These are often more disruptive and change on a frequent basis. This part of the strategy could include:

- An agreed barrier style for public realm projects (generally these are not solid screens).
- A complementary graphic to the hoarding of development sites and a template of the visual appearance.
- Public relations and awareness before and during the scheme - keeping the public informed.
- Progress and programme - the public are always keen to know what is going on.
- Health & Safety information, along with contact details.
- Promotion for adjacent businesses who's visibility and access may be temporarily reduced.

Example of pre-designed hoardings made available to private developers
© Christchurch City Council

Hoarding Design Guide setting up the Creative Hoardings Pilot Program for ACT - 2024
© ACT City Renewal Authority



5.17 Maintenance | General Principles

The correct level of resources, funding provision, skills and equipment must be in place to maintain a high quality public realm as suggested in this strategy.

Maintenance and management of the public realm needs to consider the following:

- Responsibilities – who is responsible for maintaining and replacing particular elements in the public realm?
- Procedures, specification and schedules for carrying out maintenance – what documents establish maintenance routines, areas, time frames, etc?
- Management of public realm including events and activities – who is responsible for ensuring the smooth and coordinated running of the public realm?
- Funding for management and maintenance – what funding is available and is it sufficient?

Responsibilities

Given the change proposed in materials, green infrastructure and street components; and to ensure all groups are aware of what they are managing and maintaining; and that no items are overlooked, it would be advisable to establish an asset register. The register would be a detailed list of the assets, who owns them, who is responsible for the maintenance, who undertakes repairs, replacement, maintenance standards and frequency and who pays for it.

In order to ensure a coordinated and successful town centre it is suggested that existing collaborations are built upon between the Council and the BIDS team. There needs to be a clear structure for all street scene management which looks across all activities in the streets including:

- Street cleansing.
- Enforcement and licensing.
- Street market / retail management.
- Events programme and management.
- Promotion, marketing and publicity.
- Street furniture and way-finding.
- Informing the public - engaging and consultation.

This approach aims to ensure a successful relation between all parties and a vibrant town centre with a positive relationship with local businesses and to inspire those who make decisions to elevate the standards set by the public realm.

Funding

Changes have been proposed in this strategy to lift the quality of the public realm, the choices of components will be good quality and robust, however, they will still need ongoing funding to maintain them. An enhanced town centre brings more people, more footfall and more expectation for the upkeep of the area. This ultimately requires a heightened level of maintenance and management.

The level of funding required must be considered under the following headings taking into consideration the described components for the public realm:

- Management costs
- Annual labour
- Annual running costs
- Annual replacement cost
- Annual new equipment cost

5.17 Maintenance | Good Practice

When considering physical maintenance for the town centre, it is important to look at materiality. Detailed maintenance schedules should be carefully drawn up for each area, material and item and the corresponding teams appropriately trained.

Set out below are outline guides for the main components specified in this strategy.

Stone Paving

- Stone paving offers a high quality finish and very long lifespan, The maintenance team should have the appropriate training and equipment for re-laying any areas which are taken up. There also needs to be agreements in place with utility providers to ensure they reinstate any street openings.
- A stock of the specified stone at the appropriate sizes should be maintained. As there are no premises to allow for this stock the council should enter into an agreement with a stone supplied so that they can maintain the specified stone type as a stock item.
- Heavy stains should be regularly removed.
- Sealant will help to reduce staining on the surface of natural stone providing there is a regular cleaning regime. In this case it would be a light regular jet wash. It is important that jet washing is done in a sympathetic way, and only removing the surface dirt and stains, vigorous jet washing should be avoided.

Bins

- All bins should be regularly jet washed inside and out to maintain hygiene. And a detailed emptying schedule should be implemented taking into account busy periods and events.

Street Furniture and elements

- Should be regularly cleaned. Where timber Street furniture is in place, the team will need to be mindful to do a light jet wash rather than a deep jet wash to avoid removing sealant/varnish on the timber.
- All vertical surfaces should be regularly cleaned, eg where low seating walls are used the vertical faces should be regularly cleaned at the same time as adjacent paving.
- All legs of benches, poles and columns (including lighting) should also be regularly cleaned
- Any graffiti should be removed, including stickers, immediately and the maintenance should have touch up paint to cover up any marks in metal work.

Vegetation

- There needs to be a regular inspection of all vegetation types across the town centre. Weeds should be removed on a regular basis and mulch topped up to maintain a cared for appearance.
- Any dead or damaged plants should be removed and replaced as soon as possible. A review of why the plants have died and what is thriving in the area should take place to ensure the replacement will be successful.
- Each different type of vegetation will require a maintenance regime - typically this includes cutting back and pruning two times a year.
- For vegetation to thrive it needs to be watered and fed for at least the first two growing seasons. Watering bags for trees should be specified. Where contractors are commissioned to carry out planting, consider a 24 month maintenance package where regular maintenance and any replacements are carried out throughout that period (not at the end), so that at handover the council inherits established vegetation.
- Given our changing climatic conditions the council need to review the need for watering during dry months as part of the regular inspection. (This includes established planted areas).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06

Specific Projects

6.1 Introduction & Overview of Projects

A number of areas have been determined that best demonstrate how the public realm can be enhanced following the guidelines set out in this strategy.

These areas should be viewed as examples of what can be achieved and the principles set out should also be applied to other corresponding and similar streets and spaces.

As shown on the adjacent plan there are 5 specific projects and 5 area guidelines illustrated within chapter 6 & 7.

The specific projects are also considered key areas where change will bring the best impact and value for Reading Town Centre.

The diagrams, plans and sketches should be considered as guidance and subject to a full design led process where surveys, studies, assessments, engagement and design development look to resolve the existing issues and aim to achieve the desired vision. They are provided to help illustrate the aspirations of the public realm strategy.

The area guidelines in chapter 7 clearly set out the existing issues and a process as set out above should seek to address these and meet the objectives and proposals of each type of area.

6.1 Introduction & Overview of Projects

Specific projects presented in Chapter 6

1 • St Mary's Butts

2 • Market Place & Town Hall Sq

3 • Queen Rd & London St Junction

4 • Station Road

5 • Green Space on River Kennet

Other Area Guidelines presented in Chapter 7

6 • Troopers Potts & IDR Junction

7 •Oxford Road

8 • Queen Victoria Street

9 • The Forbury

10 • Chain Street

6.2 St Mary's Butts

Existing Issues

St Mary's Butts is a historical thoroughfare that forms the interface between the core area of the town centre and Minster Quarter that will be subject to extensive regeneration in the coming years. St Mary's Butts has significant architectural heritage, a high footfall and a key green space with the church grounds. However, it is currently dominated by carriageway, deliveries, servicing, taxis and bus movement, including one of the town centre's busiest bus stop. It is cluttered and some areas of the public realm are worn out. The area generally lacks purpose and structure. The environment is also not conducive to safe, convenient or pleasurable cycling on what is an important north-south desire line.

(01) Narrow, congested or cluttered footpaths create an unpleasant place for people

(02) Wide carriageway enabling vehicle dominance and creating a challenging environment for people to move around

(03) Space used for poorly laid out market and street trading. Asphalt surfacing in state of disrepair

(04) Monument rendered invisible by car parking and clutter

(05) Clutter: bollards, signs, bins, redundant kerblines, kiosks

(06) Central island with surfacing in poor condition and used for informal parking

(07) Lack of linkage with churchyard / poor interface

(08) Lack of 'sense of place' in front of Reading Minster, heritage not celebrated

(09) Large underused paved space with no purpose or structure

(10) Existing bus stops are in high demand resulting in pedestrian and bus congestion at peak times of the day

6.2 St Mary's Butts

Vision & Schematic Proposal

The key objective for St Mary's Butts is to create a positive and clutter free public space, where the architectural heritage is valued, where walking and cycling is enjoyable and vehicular movement is managed.

(01) Carriageway width reduced to 3.5m each way, 7m total width

(02) 2.3m wide areas for deliveries located on pads on the footpath

(03) Regained public realm with opportunity for:

- Garden space with tree planting / vegetation
- Flexible open space for gathering / informal events
- Informal play / activity & animation
- Enhanced setting of Gade I listed Reading Minster
- A rationalised combination of all the above

(04) Designated pedestrian crossings

(05) Introduction of seating

(06) Celebration of heritage with a clean, attractive gateway with interpretation of the heritage assets

(07) Encourage the use of forecourts for outdoor dining and street activation

(08) Prime, pivotal new public space spreading both sides of the road and at the junction with Hosier St with key vistas, heritage becoming key focal points and positive interface with future development

(09) Carriageway moved to the west of Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain, allowing to regain pedestrian public realm to the east, interfacing with Reading Minster churchyard

(10) Buses to stop on road rather than in dedicated lanes

(11) Reorganised street market locations. The market's layout and stall dimensions should be amended to become a complementary feature to the new public realm layout.

6.2 St Mary's Butts

Illustrative Layout

The introduction of a coordinated palette of paving, furniture, lighting and planting will help reinstore and celebrate St Mary's Butts as a historic and green space within the town centre. The newly reclaimed pedestrian spaces offer opportunities for street events and animation, the inclusion of street art and pocket play spaces, as well as outdoor dining. The space is more welcoming for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelers. As part of the enhancements, views to the various churches should be framed and celebrated through interpretation.

6.2 St Mary's Butts

Artist impression of Market Place

6.3 Market Place & Town Hall Square

Existing Issues

Market Place and Towh Hall Square are key historical and heritage spaces at the heart of the town centre. They lie close together and form a node of civic spaces at the interface between Friar St, Broad St and the Forbury Gardens. Both count with significant monuments and heritage buildings, the grade II listed Town Hall being the most prominent. Currently, the spaces lack linkage, legibility and structure, they are cluttered and don't offer much opportunities to dwell.

01 Narrow, congested and/or cluttered footpaths that result unpleasant for pedestrians

02 Lack of cycle link through Town Hall Square to connect Friar St to the Forbury

03 Further congestion on the footpath due to bus stops, negative road interface

04 Monuments rendered invisible by clutter, roads passing them by and lack of spatial structure around them

05 Street clutter on Market Place and Town Hall Square, bollards and chain, lack of rationale in the space layout

06 Different surfacing types and kerblines that give too much presence and importance to the carriageway. The square is fragmented and doesn't read as one, resulting in lots of underused space

07 Lack of linkage and visual connection between Market Place and Town Hall Square, when they should form a key pedestrian node at the heart of the Town Centre

08 Heritage facade onto the space not celebrated

09 Lack of sense of arrival onto Town Hall Square

10 Loading bay and bus stop facing one another, making the carriageway wide and dominant

6.3 Market Place & Town Hall Square

Vision & Schematic Proposal

Decluttering, simplifying the layout and reducing vehicular dominance along Market Place will help reveal the heritage and architectural value of these two key spaces. The vision is to create attractive and usable spaces for people to sit, dwell, take in the view but also for events and markets and to celebrate these two spaces as civic destinations.

01 Create a sense of arrival, a positive gateway from Friar St to the West, Blagrave Street to the North and King St/Broad St to the South. Opportunity to introduce tree planting on Friar St.

02 Create a cycle link through Town Hall Square

03 Create a strong pedestrian link between the spaces, with a wide and comfortable footpath

04 Celebrate heritage monuments and listed buidlings, creating focal points and removing clutter

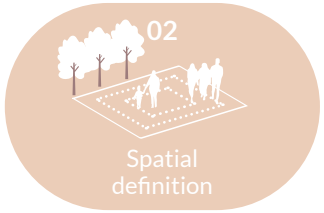
05 Create a central flexible open space on Town Hall Square and Market Place: clutter free, framed by new planting areas, existing trees and well located street furniture

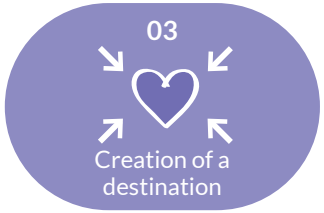
06 Introduce outdoor dining, street activation, planting and seating to assist businesses and encourage people to dwell, looking onto the flexible open space

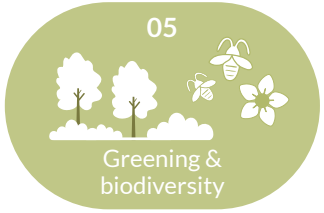
07 Unify the paving on Market Place to create a real pedestrian priority space with limited and controlled delivery access

08 Reduce the carriageway width to the minimum necessary for buses to safely move through the space at slow pace, e.g. 3.5m wide. Retain 3m wide bus layby. Footpath width is increased both sides of the street to enhance the link between the 2 spaces

09 New designated pedestrian crossing on raised tables, creating comfortable and safe crossing points







6.3 Market Place & Town Hall Square

Illustrative Layout

The introduction of natural stone, high quality and durable paving on both spaces and on the link between them will strengthen the sense of place and historical setting, whilst celebrating Reading's heritage. The complementary renewed and coordinated furniture, lighting, paving signage and planting palette will help deliver memorable and enjoyable spaces where people are happy to dwell, go out for dinner. The rationalised and simplified layout makes space for street animation and local events.

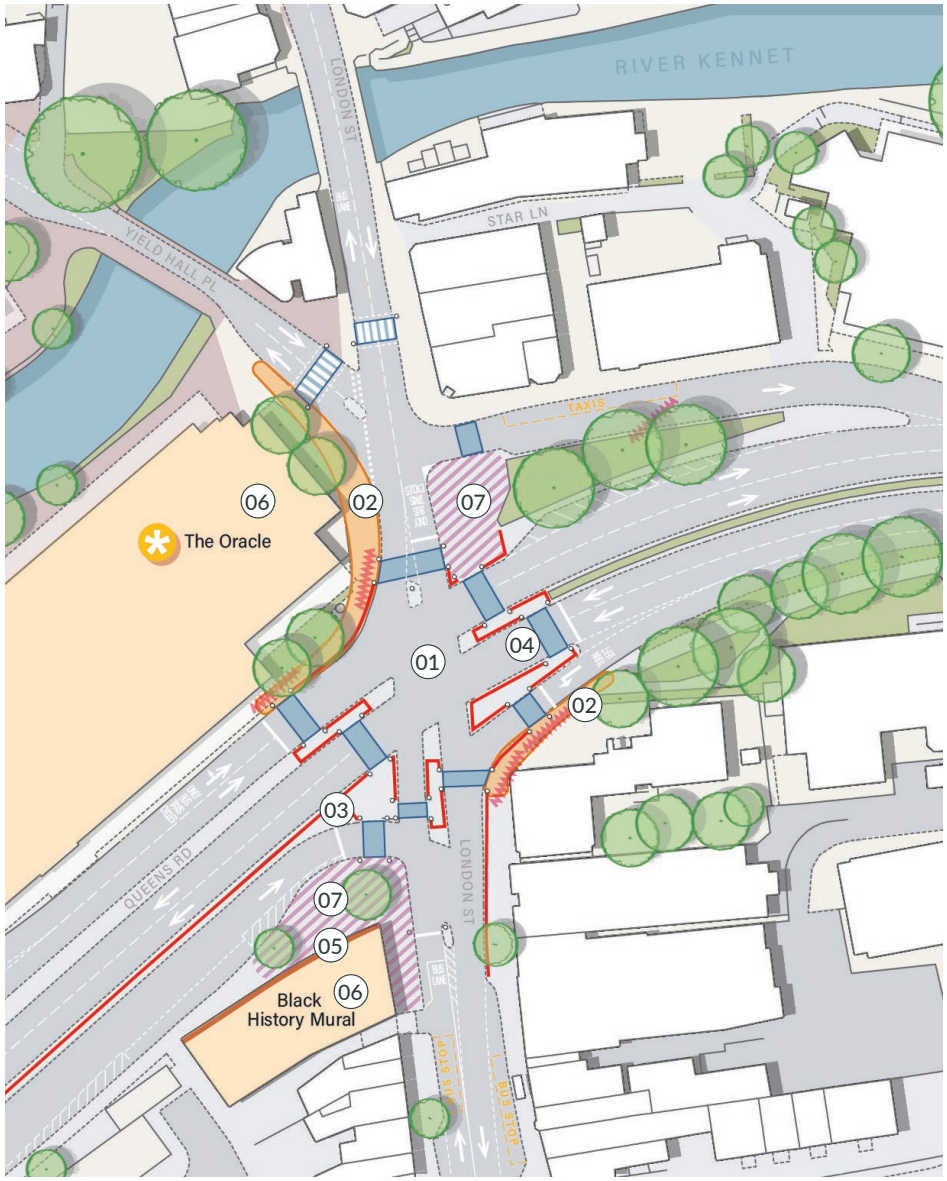
6.3 Market Place & Town Hall Square

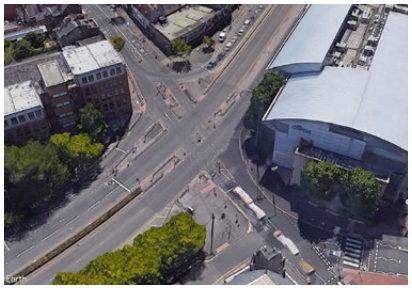
Artist impression of Market Place

6.4 Queens Road & London Street Junction

Existing Issues

The junction between Queens Road and London Street is an important part of the IDR network, where major East-West and North-South axis meet. The North-South link along London St is an important one into the town centre that currently doesn't provide adequately for walking and cycling. This is a point where the severance of links generated by the IDR is felt strongly. The connection with the River Kennet is lost and this part of the town centre doesn't offer a positive or pleasant setting for future developments. This junction can be greatly improved for all users by rebalancing vehicular space.





(01) Generally hostile, unpleasant environment due to the junction scale, difficulty to navigate as a pedestrian or cyclist, clutter, vehicular speed and dominance

(02) Narrow footpaths that result unpleasant for pedestrians, North-South link severed by the roadway

(03) Aesthetically unpleasant handrails, clutter that impeeds natural pedestrian movement, innapropriate for a town centre

(04) Multiple stage staggered crossings, low pedestrian comfort, long crossing distances forcing vulnerable pedestrians to cross in two goes

(05) Lack of celebration of the Black History Mural and wider historic environment on London Street, very poor context

(06) Unwelcoming environment for future developments both sides of Queens Road

(07) Underused hard surfaced space, no purpose or structure

6.4 Queens Road & London Street Junction

Vision & Schematic Proposal

The key objective at this location is to strengthen the North-South link for walking and cycling to support sustainable and active travel from the south to the town centre and reduce the significant severance caused by the IDR to communities in this area.

01 Increase footpath width along the Oracle future redevelopment site to give more space to pedestrians

02 Carriageway reduced to one lane westbound on Queens road

03 Realign all pedestrian crossing to achieve 1 or 2 stages crossing points. Consider implementing sufficient green light time for vulnerable users to cross safely and comfortably.

04 Remove left turn lanes both sides of the junction, to reduce carriageway, increase footpaths width, give more space to pedestrians and public realm enhancement schemes, as well as shorten crossing distance.

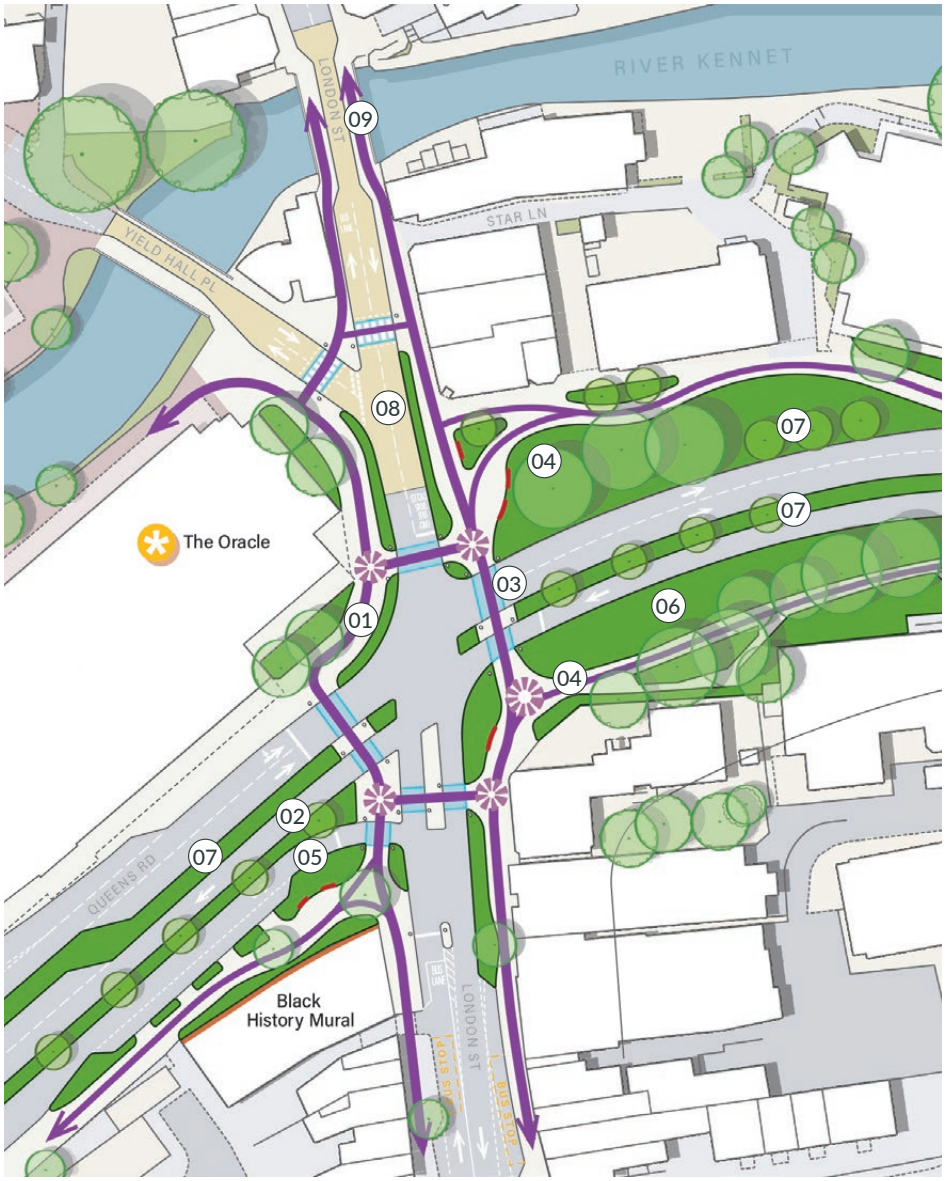
05 Tighten existing lane to gain valuable public realm space in front of the Black History Mural, including interpretation, whilst retaining the parking spaces

06 Introduce green verges along pedestrian footpaths and in central medians

07 Introduce tree planting in central median and verges where distance to carriageway allows to do so

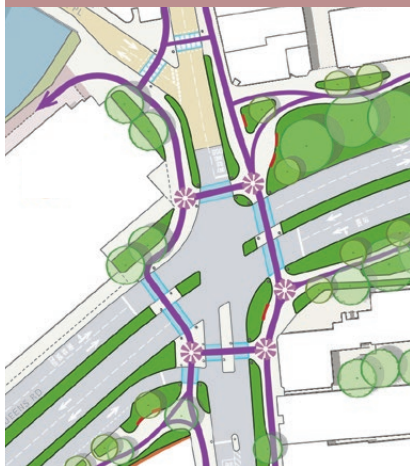
08 Create a positive 'apron' across the carriageway using a different surfacing to celebrate the gateway into the town centre, slow vehicles down and increase pedestrian comfort, Enhance National Cycle Route 4 as it crosses from Star Lane to the Oracle Riverside

09 Reduce carriageway width to one lane on the bridge to give more space to pedestrians at this key gateway to the town centre



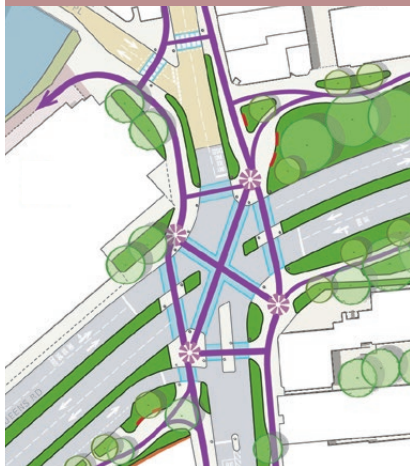
Variation 01

No westbound lane reduction, only left turn lanes are removed



Variation 01

'Super crossings' are created to allow direct pedestrian movement

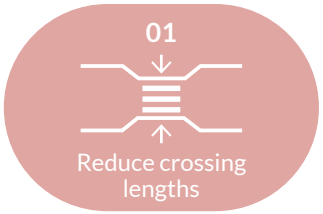


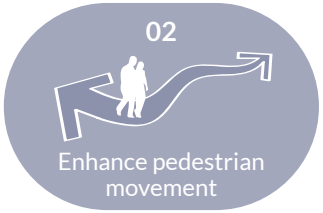
6.4 Queens Road & London Street Junction

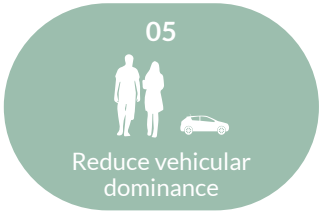
Illustrative Layout

Another significant goal of the proposal is to celebrate the river, historic setting and heritage assets, whilst establishing a public realm framework that will work together with the future developments in the area to deliver a greener and calmer environment for pedestrians. Improving road safety and access for all and reducing the impacts of vehicle noise and pollution are key measures that will participate to the creation of a positive gateway to the core area of the town centre.

Rain gardens on a busy road, London
© Meristem Design







6.4 Queens Road & London Street Junction

Artist impression of the junction

6.5 Station Road

Existing Issues

Station Road is an essential gateway linking the town centre to Reading Station, it is one of the most significant pedestrian links in Reading. It is currently cluttered, congested and dominated by buses, making it hard for people to navigate.

01 Narrow, congested and cluttered footways

02 Hostile and busy junctions

03 'Bus walls' create an intimidating place for people

Vision & Schematic Proposal

The main goal is to enhance the appearance and pedestrian comfort at this significant location by decluttering the footways, enhancing the crossings and introducing a new, robust and consistent paving palette that will unify the streetscape. Street art in the form of murals on blank facades and highly legible signage are also key to enhancing Station Road. Changes to existing bus operations, which will require further studies, would enable the scheme to reach its full potential.

01 New junction layout to the north and south of Station Rd that include a 4m wide one-way pinch point. This enhances the pedestrian crossing and comfort and slows vehicles down

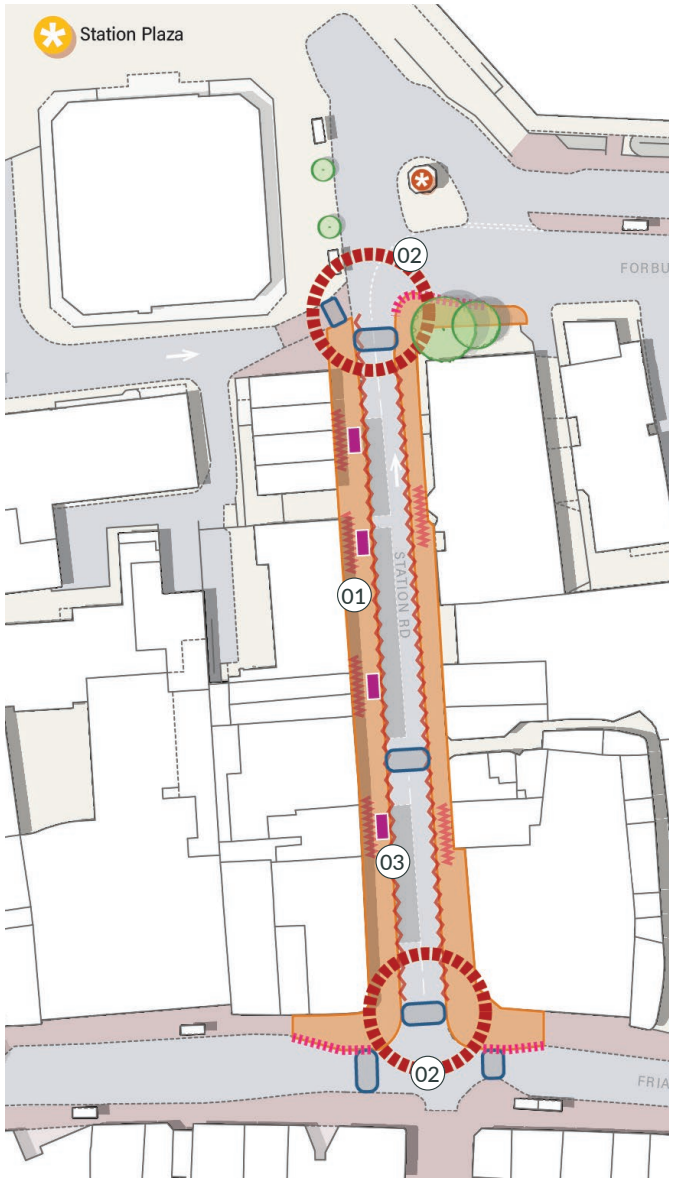
02 4m wide one-way lane also instated at the central crossing point to break down the continous row of bus stops and enhance the crossing

03 Pocket spaces that give some breathing space to pedestrians in this area of high footfall

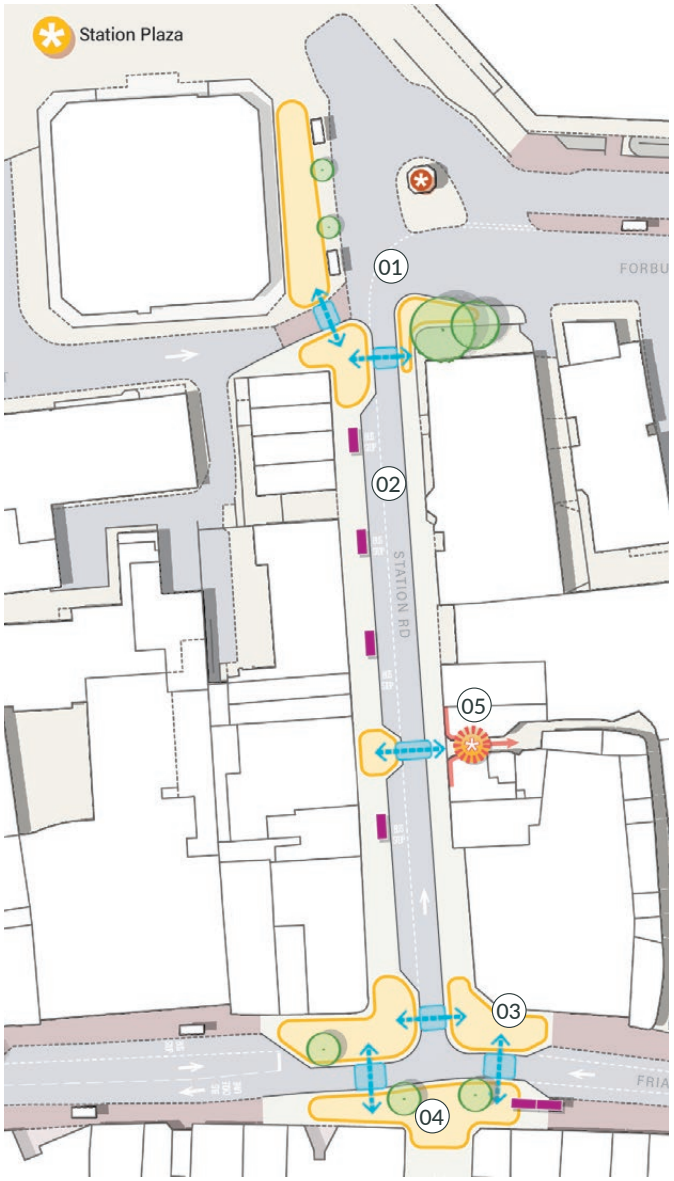
04 Opportunity to introduce street trees

05 Highlighted entrance into Grade II listed Harrie Arcade with enhanced pedestrian crossing and signage

Existing Issues



Vision & Schematic Proposal



6.5 Station Road

Illustrative Layout

6.6 Green Space on River Kennet

Existing Issues

This open and green area on the River Kennet is a rare and valuable space in the town centre, that offers many opportunities. It currently has mature trees, a brook and great views to the river. Many people cycle and walk through this space as they commute, but the space itself is currently overgrown and underused. It offers no amenities to the community and very little opportunities to dwell.

(01) 3 different types of footpaths: pedestrian only, cycling only and shared. Lack of rationale.

(02) Paths in poor condition, overgrown planting

(03) Mature trees set in asphalt and in the middle of the pedestrian path, rendering it narrow / uncomfortable

(04) Various types and abundant handrails creating clutter

(05) Redundant kerblines and poor quality surfacing throughout

(06) Overgrown and poorly maintained green areas, no purpose or amenity value

(07) Overgrown and obstructing vegetation, no view to the brook, uninviting edge to the pedestrian footpath

(08) Narrow footpath

6.6 Green Space on River Kennet

Vision & Schematic Proposal

The main objective is to create an attractive and usable amenity green space by the river, connected to the river walk. The proposal is an example of how the river walk can be enhanced, whilst integrating activities, walking and encouraging cycling. This new pocket park can offer much needed access to green space and play opportunities to the local community.

(01) Simplified movement with a wide shared cycles / pedestrians path (orange) and a pedestrian only path (blue)

(02) Strenghtened arrival / orientation points with signage

(03) Flexible pocket hardstand space with play opportunity, seating around the space and opportunity to have a coffee van or similar to encourage passive surveillance and ownership

(04) Central amenity green space with lawn to sit down, dwell, have lunch and enjoy the river setting

(05) Informal playful trail/paths through the green space

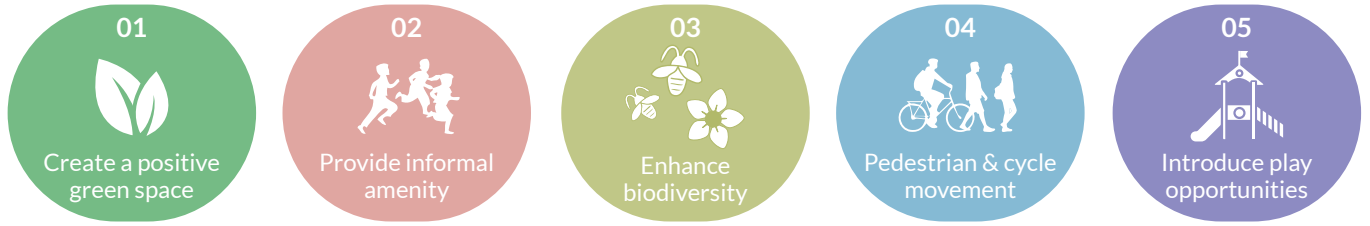
(06) Meadow and boundary planting with no barrier and views to the brook

(07) Planting with seating facing the space bordering secondary amenity lawns

(08) Existing mature trees set in green areas with set back pedestrian path and seating below

(09) Rationalised movement, removal of redundant handrails and extended planted area

(10) Enhanced setting and visual access to the brook



6.6 Green Space on River Kennet

Illustrative Layout

The introduction of seating, informal play, possibly feature lighting will help deliver a quality recreational green space and encourage dwelling. Native and biodiverse planting beds will bring interest and seasonality to the space, whilst framing the open lawn. This approach could be extended to consolidate a larger quiet green park to the waters edges by including sections of the river walk to the North of the river.

6.6 Green Space on River Kennet

Artist impression of the pocket park

07

Other Area Guidelines

7.1 Troopers Potts Way & IDR Junction

Existing Condition & Issues

This junction is currently a key pedestrian and cycle route between Station Hill and the recreation grounds of Christchurch Meadows and the area of Caversham. This location is used as an example of the type of improvements which can be made, the IDR is generally wide and cars and buses speed along what feels and looks like an urban motorway. Coming from the station, the Thames is invisible. This space is hostile, uncomfortable and hard to navigate for pedestrians.

Objectives & Proposal

The proposal looks at using green infrastructure to soften the IDR and enhance the visual appearance. A robust planting palette should be used, introducing a mix of native and mostly evergreen species that will greatly enhance the biodiversity of the area. The green verges and medians, complemented with tree planting, can also accomodate rain gardens.

This proposal purposefully doesn't look at reducing the number of lanes on the IDR, but rather illustrates how the simple addition of green infrastructure can enhance the appearance of the IDR. For lane reduction and IDR modification, refer to Queens Rd and London St junction in the previous chapter.

01 Kerlines along the IDR and road widths remain the same.

02 Minimum 1.5m wide green verges and median are introduced. This is only possible without reducing the roadway widths because of the existing oversized and pedestrian footpaths.

03 Tree planting in small clusters is introduced.

7.2 Oxford Road

Existing Condition & Issues

Oxford Road is a main East-West artery, it is a bustling key axis bordered by many local businesses and community buildings. It crosses over the IDR and connects directly into Broad St, making it a key link into the town centre of Reading. It currently feels disconnected from the town centre and doesn't feel like a high street. It is traffic dominated, cluttered, lacks green infrastructure and doesn't offer a pleasant or comfortable setting for people to walk or cycle.

Objectives & Proposal

The proposal looks at a typical location which enhances the public realm, pedestrian and cycle link on Oxford Road, whilst introducing green infrastructure. This approach should be considered for the length of Oxford Road, including the IDR bridge

01 Reduced width and realigned carriageway to increase footpath widths both sides of the road

02 Rationalised on-street parking or delivery bays to reduce the vehicular dominance whilst retaining a functional layout

03 Tightened junctions between smaller perpendicular streets and Oxford Rd to reduce crossing distances and enhance pedestrian comfort

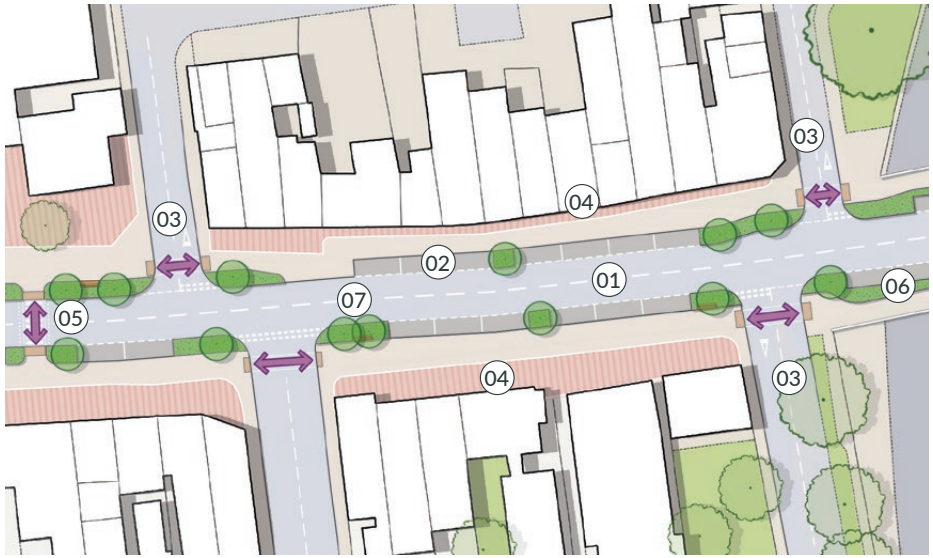
04 Retained forecourt areas for local businesses, community uses

05 Formalised crossing facilities approximately every 100-150m

06 Introduction of planting beds between the carriageway and the pedestrian footpaths where road width allows and to break down long stretches of on-street parking and at junctions. These can be rain gardens when located at low points of the streetscape and include benches where appropriate

07 New tree planting

Diagram of proposed layout



Existing photos

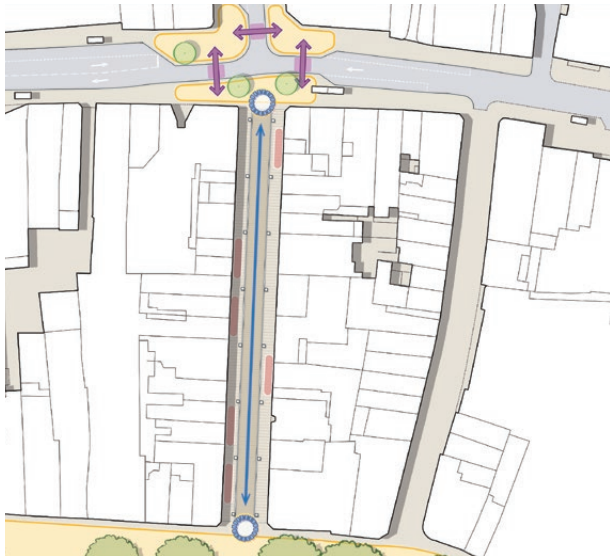
Artist impression of proposed layout

7.3 Queen Victoria Street

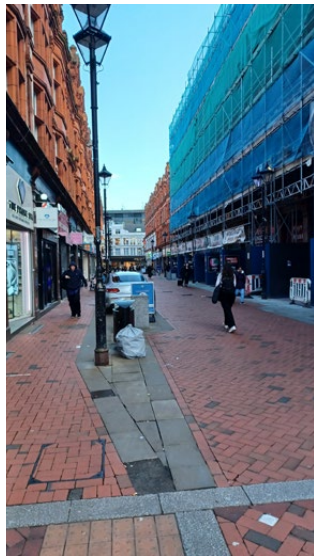
Existing Condition & Issues

Queen Victoria Street is an important and historical pedestrian street at the heart of the town core that connects the station, Station Rd and Friar St with Broad St. It is an important pedestrian link. It counts with impressive red brick heritage architecture and many businesses. The public realm doesn't adequately reflect the importance of this street: The red paving mutes the visual significance of the architecture, the street is cluttered, lacks structure and the businesses suffer from the detrimental effects of long-term scaffoldings.

Diagram of proposed layout



Existing photos



Objectives & Proposal

The proposal look at simplifying the layout of the street, decluttering it and introducing a robust and simple natural stone paving palette to create a clean slate where the architecture, the users and businesses can start populate, animate and take ownership of the streetscape.

(01) Small standard paving units as described in the design manual

(02) Large standard paving as described in the design manual

(03) Opportunity for outdoor dining and forecourt use, providing these do not exceed a 2m wide space against the shop front

- Introduction of a simple and robust natural stone paving palette that creates a setting that highlights the architecture rather than competing with it
- Decluttered and neat streetscape. The reinstatement of the cleaned grey granite square blocks can be considered if deemed necessary to control illegal parking / traffic

Artist impression of proposed layout

7.4 The Forbury

Existing Condition & Issues

The section of the Forbury that runs between Town Hall Square and Forbury Gardens is an important pedestrian link to the Abbey Quarter. It presents a pleasant environment with the proximity St Laurence's Church and grounds. Currently, the public realm doesn't respond to the historical character of the architecture and prime location at the heart of the town centre. The paving and road surfacing are in poor state, the footpaths are cluttered with mismatched street furniture and the red brick colour doesn't complement the existing heritage.

Objectives & Proposal

The proposal looks at enhancing the visual appearance of the street through decluttering and the introduction of a new palette of natural stone paving. Valuable space is reclaimed to the carriageway and road infrastructure to include biodiverse planting beds and tree planting. Pedestrian crossings are realigned to allow fluid pedestrian movements. These improvements also provide an opportunity to improve pedestrian wayfinding towards the Abbey.

01 Reduced width and realigned carriageway to introduce green verge

02 New shorter crossing points, some of which could be formalised zebra crossings

03 Underused traffic island transformed into a pocket gardens with a footpath directly aligned on the Forbury Gardens entrance

Diagram of proposed layout

Artist impression of proposed layout

Existing photos

Urban greening and rain gardens
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7.5 Chain Street

Existing Condition & Issues

Chain Street is a pedestrian lane that runs North-South and connects Broad Street to the grounds of Reading Minster and St Mary's Butts. It is characterful, narrow bordered by a mix of local businesses, residential buildings and large retail units. It is well used by pedestrians as a cut through.

Objectives & Proposal

The proposal aims at building on the strengths and character of this lane to transform it into an attractive pedestrian link where public art and street animation create an enjoyable and memorable experience for the local communities and visitors alike. The building facades including heritage assets should be restored, revealed and celebrated.

01 Consistent, high quality natural stone paving throughout

02 Clear entry points highlighted by signage, murals / art interventions or bespoke feature paving elements

03 Introduction of murals on blank facades: can be part of a collaboration with local artists or art courses

04 Planting pots of varied sizes to animate the lane where the width allows. The pots should be placed in small random clusters and can be brightly coloured to bring further interest

05 Catenary lighting or bunting to further animate the street

06 Decluttering: removal of obstacles, bollards and use of wall-mounted luminaires wherever possible on narrow streets

07 A-boards should be avoided where they impede pedestrian movement, The use of quality wall-mounted business signs and shop window animation should be encouraged

Diagram of proposed layout

Existing photos

Artist impression of proposed layout

08

Emerging Action Plan

8.1 Emerging Action Plan

The actions within the public realm strategy are intended to set out the next steps for enhancing the public realm in addition to considering the future ambitions of the town. Some of the proposed actions may be able to be progressed in the short term, others may take years to achieve. The public realm strategy is intended to have validity and relevance for up to 15 years. The proposed actions are as follows.

Physical public realm projects

01 Major Public Realm Enhancement Schemes

Key selected areas which will have a significant impact through enhancement and change. Within each, the first steps would be set out to enable these to proceed to a project, including undertaking surveys, understanding of funding requirements and other considerations. These include:

- St Mary's Butts
- Market Place & Town Hall Square
- Queen Road & London Street Junction
- Station Road & Friar Street Junction
- Queen Victoria Street
- Green Space on River Kennet

02 Public Realm Enhancement

Targeted interventions to existing streets and spaces which are additions or reorganisation of the existing.

- Oxford Road parking & green infrastructure
- Link to the Forbury Gardens
- Chain Street enhancements
- Others?

03 Pilot Project for Green Infrastructure

Following on from the feasibility study (action 05), identify a suitable street, a public space and a verge, and proceed with projects to introduce a variety of new green infrastructure types as pilot schemes.

04 Meanwhile Use Strategy and Pilot Project

Queens Walk has been identified as a good example of a street which will likely change in the future, however, will stay as existing for a number of years. Identify a fund and carry out a design for a meanwhile use project on this street.

8.1 Emerging Action Plan

Enabling Studies for Public Realm Projects

05 Feasibility Study for Green Infrastructure

Based on the principles set out in this guide, carry out surveys of potential areas and map out the integration, extent and nature of green infrastructure on streets.

06 Forecourt Use & Outdoor Dining Guidelines

Prepare a controlled set of guidelines which include spatial requirements, access, licencing and character for shops and businesses to benefit from the use of the space directly outside their building.

07 Detailed Specification for Paving

Given the recommended step change in paving materials in the core streets of Reading, produce a council approved specification for the use and application of materials in the town centre, to include materials and construction buildups relevant to their use and location.

08 Public Art Strategy Including Murals

Produce a public art strategy for the town centre which identifies locations for art, including murals on blank facades, as well as a clear and coordinated implementation and creation process.

09 Hoarding Design Guidelines

Given the quantum of new development in the town centre over the coming years, develop a coordinated visual guideline for the use, position and animation of hoardings.

10 Signage, Wayfinding & Interpretation Strategy

Building on the heritage of the town and recent interventions, produce a coordinated strategy to be implemented as the public realm is enhanced. This will include style, character, location and content.

11 Town Centre Private Car Access Review

Commencing with a rationalisation of access restrictions on signage, carry out a feasibility study to further reduce private car access in the town centre to assist public transport and the reduction of carriageway widths and vehicular space.

12 Kerbside Usage Review

Assess existing on-street usage, including public car parking, blue badge holders, loading, deliveries, bus stops and taxi bays. This review should include where existing on-street provisions could be relocated to suitable off street / adjoining street locations to provide more space for pedestrians and cyclists.

Preparing for the future

13 Union Street Masterplan, Redevelopment & Enhancement

With the Station Hill project progressing at pace, it is envisaged that many people arriving into Reading from the train station may choose to use this route which then arrives at Friar Street with the most obvious connection to Broad Street via Union Street. This area needs significant attention to make it an attractive and pleasant part of the town centre. Its role in the town centre, land ownership and character all need to be carefully reconsidered.

14 Long Term Bus Movement Strategy

With continued growth and increased density of the town centre, carry out a feasibility study to review future solutions and improvements to the bus network including better use of the IDR and edge of town facilities.

15 Asset Register and Maintenance Regime

Re-visit all of the material components of the town centre, including the proposed palettes moving forward, and ensure ownership and maintenance of all are understood and accounted for.

BDP. urban flow movement people places dwg.

Reading Borough Council