



A MASTERPLAN FOR **BASINGSTOKE** TOWN CENTRE

JUNE 2022

Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners





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1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Masterplan for Basingstoke has been prepared by Allies and Morrison for Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. It forms part of a larger body of work including a Vision study prepared by Hemingway Design, viability work led by JLL, a parking study prepared by WSP and a cultural study prepared by Counter Culture.

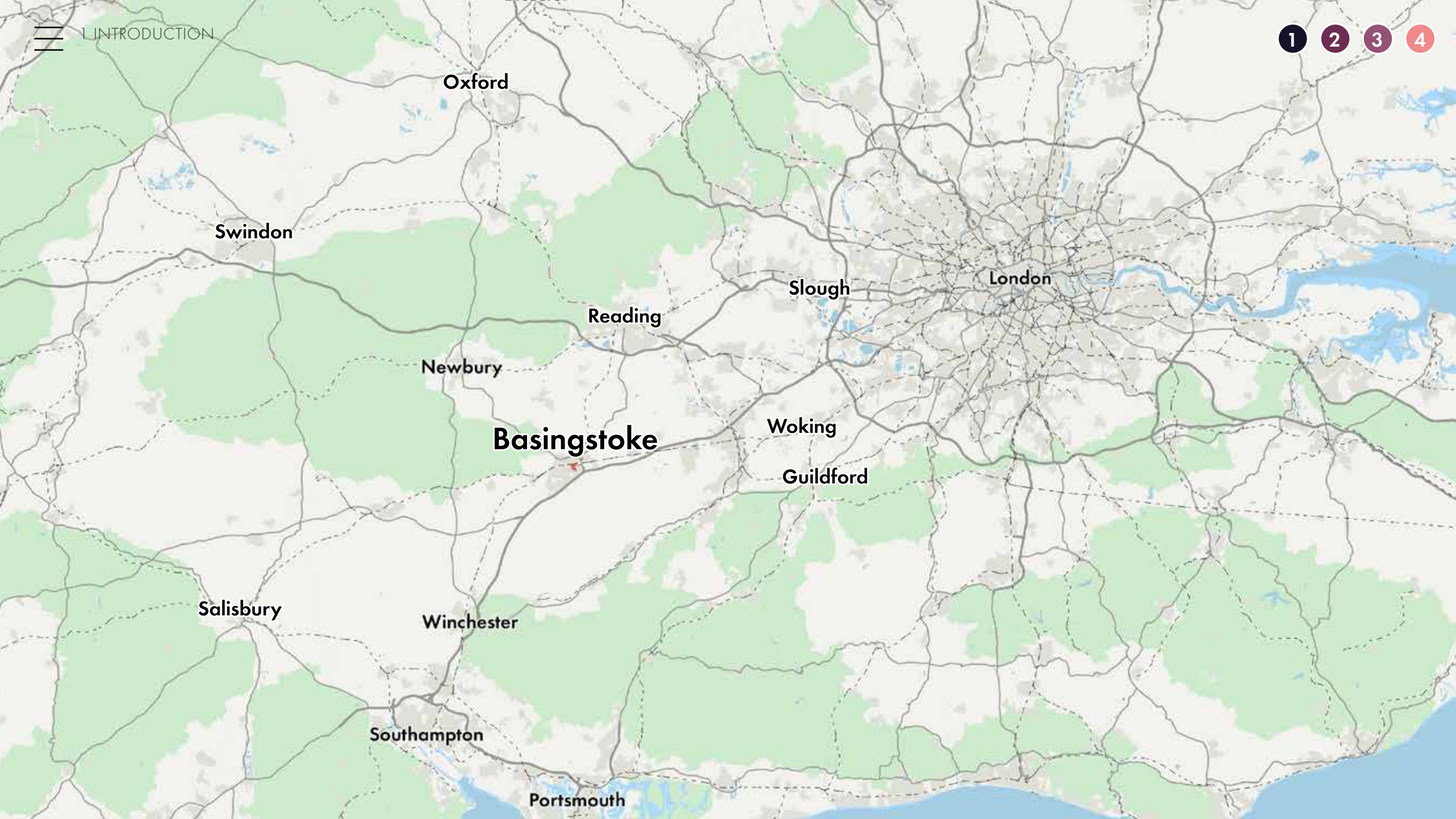
The aim of this collected work is to set the future direction for the town centre over the coming decades. It will help the Council to shape policy and lead projects for its areas of ownership, as well as help to guide and coordinate projects by many different landowners.

This study has been produced through a pivotal period. The role and nature of town centres has been changing significantly with the contraction in High Street retail; the accelerating pressures of climate change are forcing us to think again about our buildings, spaces and lifestyles; and the COVID pandemic has changed people's working patterns as well as our homes and green spaces.

This is also a pivotal moment to respond to the challenge of climate change, taking the opportunity to make the town centre more sustainable and resilient, and also help to influence how the wider town can operate more sustainably.

Extensive public consultation has already shaped the initial Vision for the future of the town centre and this report is drafted to report and reflect feedback on the masterplan consultation which took place in the autumn of 2021 and is supplemented by stakeholder meetings and a detailed baseline technical research.





Oxford

Swindon

Reading

Slough

London

Newbury

Woking

Basingstoke

Guildford

Salisbury

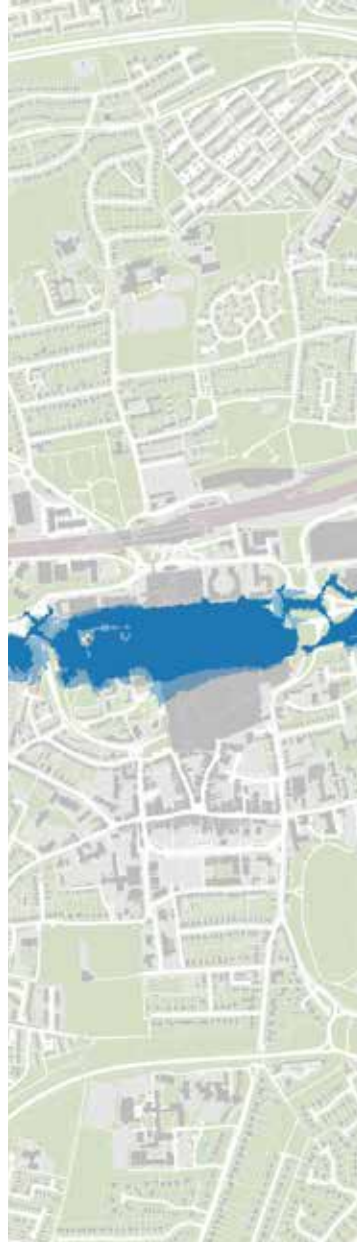
Winchester

Southampton

Portsmouth

Baseline summary

The following pages summarise the findings from the baseline analysis undertaken during the initial stages of the project. The analysis and findings have helped to underpin a number of decisions taken during the design development of the masterplan. The baseline analysis covers the following themes: environmental, history and heritage, public realm and spaces, transport and movement.

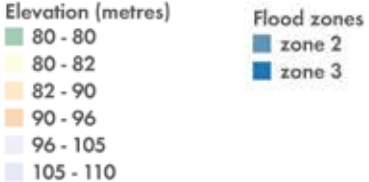
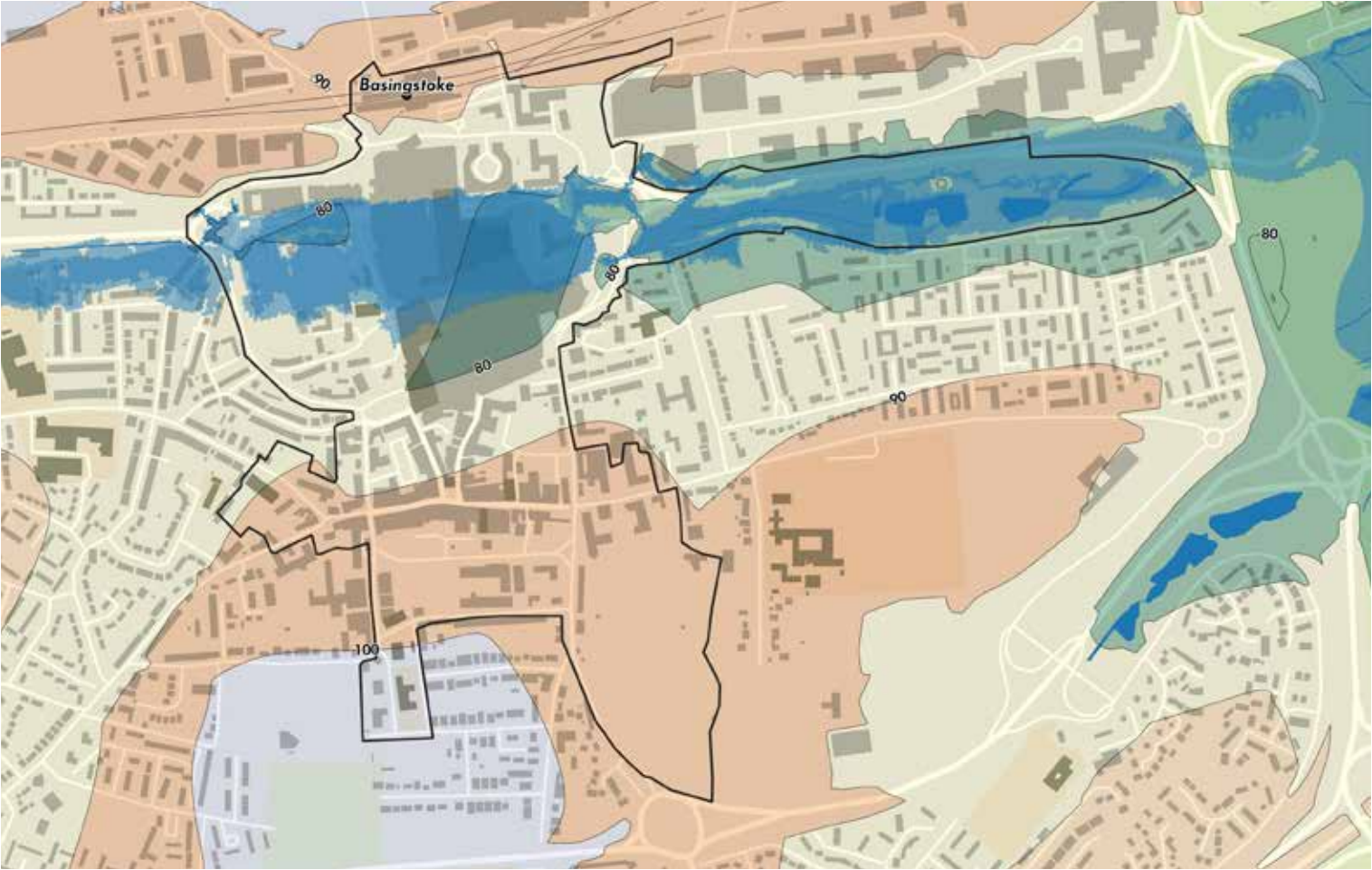


Topography and flooding

Basingstoke town centre sits within a valley with the most elevated areas within the study boundary being the train station to the north and the Top of the Town and New Road to the south. The River Loddon, the course of which can be identified from the flood risk area, rises in Basingstoke to the west of the town centre and runs in a culvert for the first mile, emerging in Eastrop Park.

Basingstoke’s valley topography offers opportunities for views and vistas across and within the town. Currently, the Malls provide a level crossing from the station to the Top of the Town, but in doing so, disconnects the town from its natural terrain. The town’s elevated areas also offer potential for longer views out to the surrounding countryside.

The town’s existing flood risk areas follow the route of Churchill Way and culverted River Loddon, and impact some uses south of the road and Eastrop Park. Flood risk may have use implications between Churchill Way and Cross Street. There is, however, potential for daylighting the river and flood mitigation through green space investments along the river corridor.

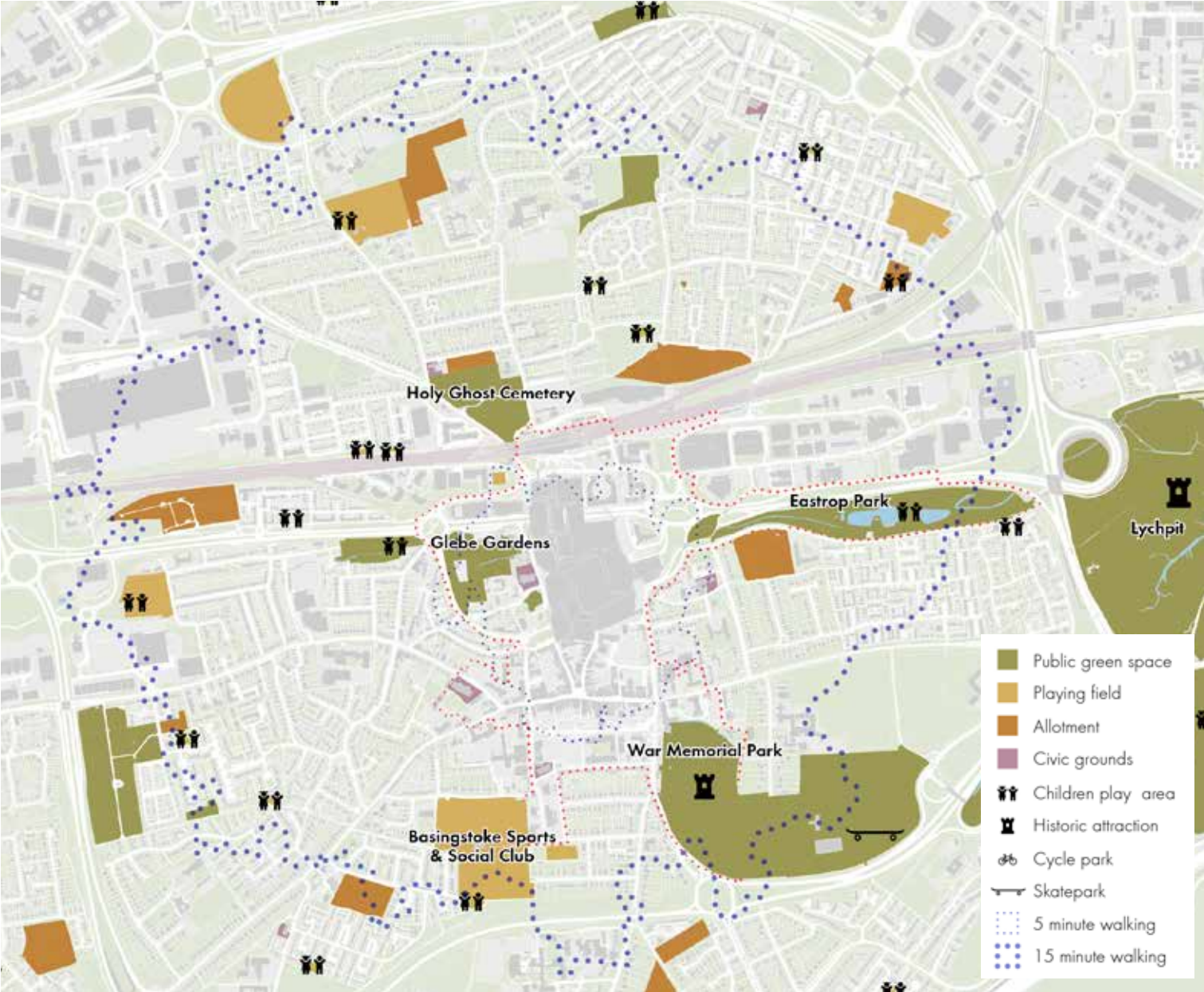


Access to green spaces

Access to green space is fundamental to wellbeing. This plan shows green spaces within and beyond Basingstoke Town Centre, as well as walking distances from the town centre in order to demonstrate how accessible these spaces are on foot. The plan demonstrates that there are very few publicly accessible green spaces within a 5 minute walk of the centre, with Glebe Gardens being the most accessible. With the shopping malls dominating much of the town centre, there leaves very few opportunities for green spaces, or any form of planting.

A few additional green spaces are accessible within a 10 minute walk of the town centre, including Eastrop Park, Holy Ghost Cemetery. However there a number of barriers to getting to these spaces on foot, namely the railway line and heavy road infrastructure, particularly around Eastrop Park. In addition, the quality of routes, legibility and connections to green spaces tends to be poor, with no obvious walking link between them.

Opportunities exist to open up routes between Glebe Gardens and Eastrop Park to create a series of green spaces and enhance biodiversity.



Green infrastructure

Basingstoke's parks and green spaces are attractive and generally well-maintained, offering places for walking, exercise, play, and activities. However, as noted previously, many of these green spaces can be hard to get to on foot, with road and rail infrastructure providing a barrier to movement, in addition to poor routes and connections.

As the photos from the town centre demonstrate, there is a real deficit of greenery and soft surfaces within the town centre. There is a lot of hard surfacing in and around the town, and sometimes the use of art installations in lieu of planting. Street trees are limited, and planters struggle to offset the extensive hard surfacing within the public realm.

People tend to dwell in the spaces where there is mature or considered planting and landscaping, such as at the Church Street Entrance (with an attractive outlook onto St Michael's Church), Festival Place amphitheatre and Station approach

Key future moves should seek to introduce more areas of considered green spaces and the introduction of incidental play in the town centre.

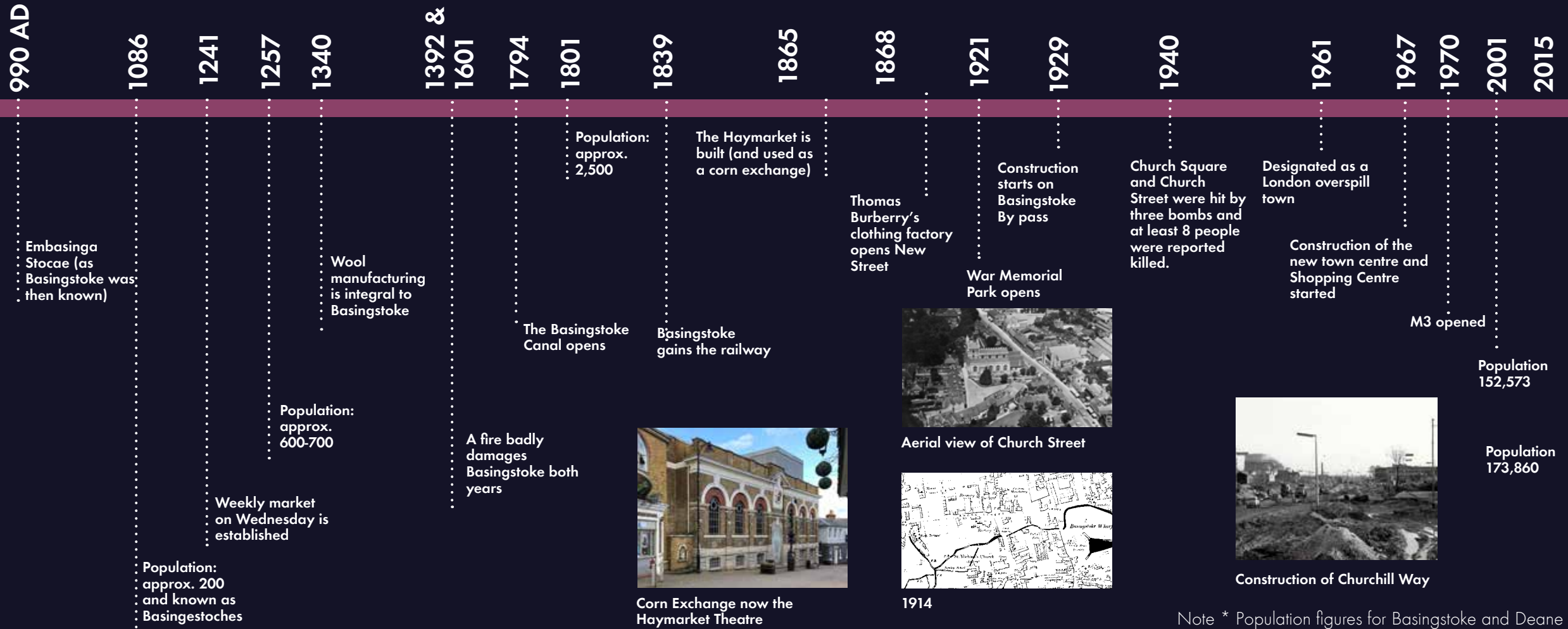


Basingstoke's key green spaces 1.War Memorial Park, 2.Glebe Gardens, 3.Festival Square amphitheatre, 4.Eastrop Park, 5.Holy Ghost Cemetery, 6.Festival Square link



Town centre spaces and greening 1.Market Square, 2.Church Street, 3.Festival Square, 4.Seal Road/Wote Street, 5.Festival Square, 6.Potters Walk, 7.Station Approach

Basingstoke timeline



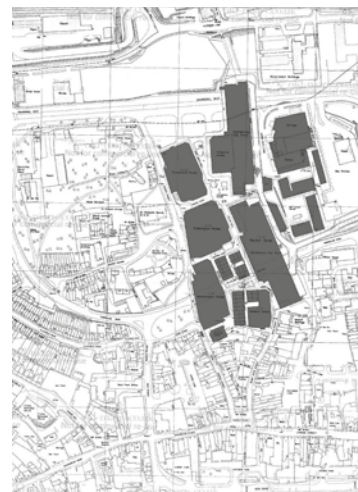
Note * Population figures for Basingstoke and Deane

History of the shopping centres

Basingstoke started as an attractive market town with clearly defined streets, the River Loddon flowing through and a canal basin to the east of the main town centre streets which converged to create Market Place. Over time, further road and rail infrastructure was introduced but many of the historic streets remained intact.

However, the town was transformed following the post-war period when it was designated as an overspill town. With an increasing population, car usage and the development of the shopping centres – now The Malls and Festival Place – the town centre developed as an area which favoured car and commerce.

The result is a town of multiple parts - the remaining historic market town streets of Top of the Town, the internal-facing malls, and the more recently established office-focused Basing View.



Conservation areas and heritage assets

Basingstoke has four conservation areas (CA): Basingstoke Town, Brookvale West, Fairfields and South View, each with a distinct character. Basingstoke Town is the main CA to fall within the study boundary, with some of the Fairfields CA being taken in to the south of the town centre.

Basingstoke has an impressive built heritage, with a particularly fine selection of listed buildings based within the original streets at the Top of the Town. The setting of Basingstoke’s heritage assets has at points been impacted by modern developments, such as the shopping centres and some of the taller office and residential buildings which have blocked views and provide an incongruous backdrop to the original townscape of Top of the Town.

Some of the town’s most significant listed buildings are shown in the photos here, including the Grade I Listed St Michael’s Church, Grade II* Listed London Street Cottages, and the striking elevation of the Grade II Listed United Reformed Church, also on London Street.



London St Cottages - Grade II* Listed



St Michael's Church - Grade I Listed



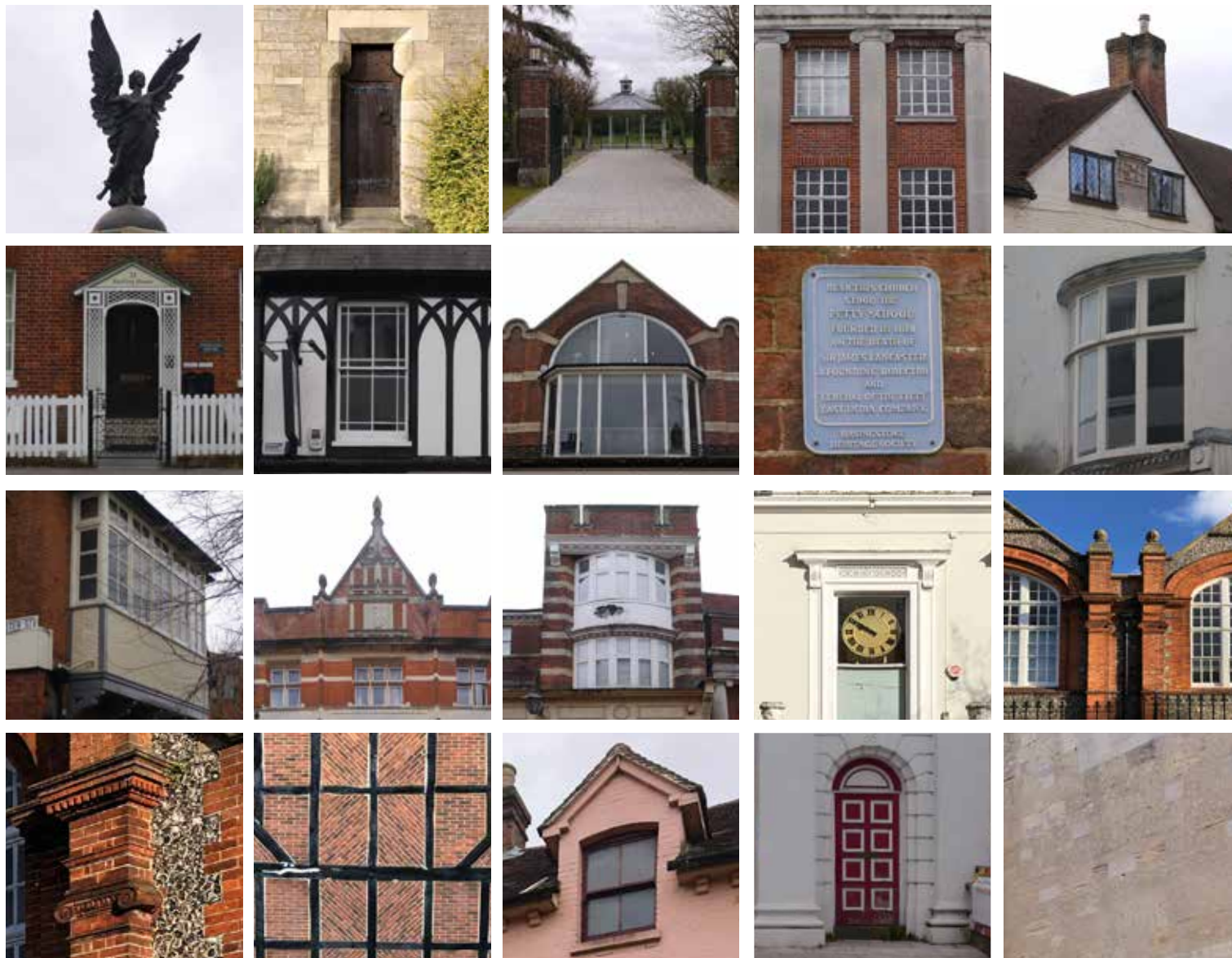
United Reformed Church - Grade II Listed

Material and detail

Basingstoke has a rich palette of materials, colours, details and features within its public realm. The greatest variety, and most attractive of these, can be seen in the historic buildings within the Top of the Town. Many of the early buildings in this part of Basingstoke were constructed using local materials and include timber frames, wattle and daub infill, and low flint base walls. Later buildings from the C18th and C19th are often re-fronted in brick or mathematical tiles. C19th buildings are more eclectic and varied and often have a white rendered classical façade or ornate brickwork. Diverse, interesting and ornate fenestration is a key theme throughout buildings within and around the Top of the Town.

Key materials, colours and features:

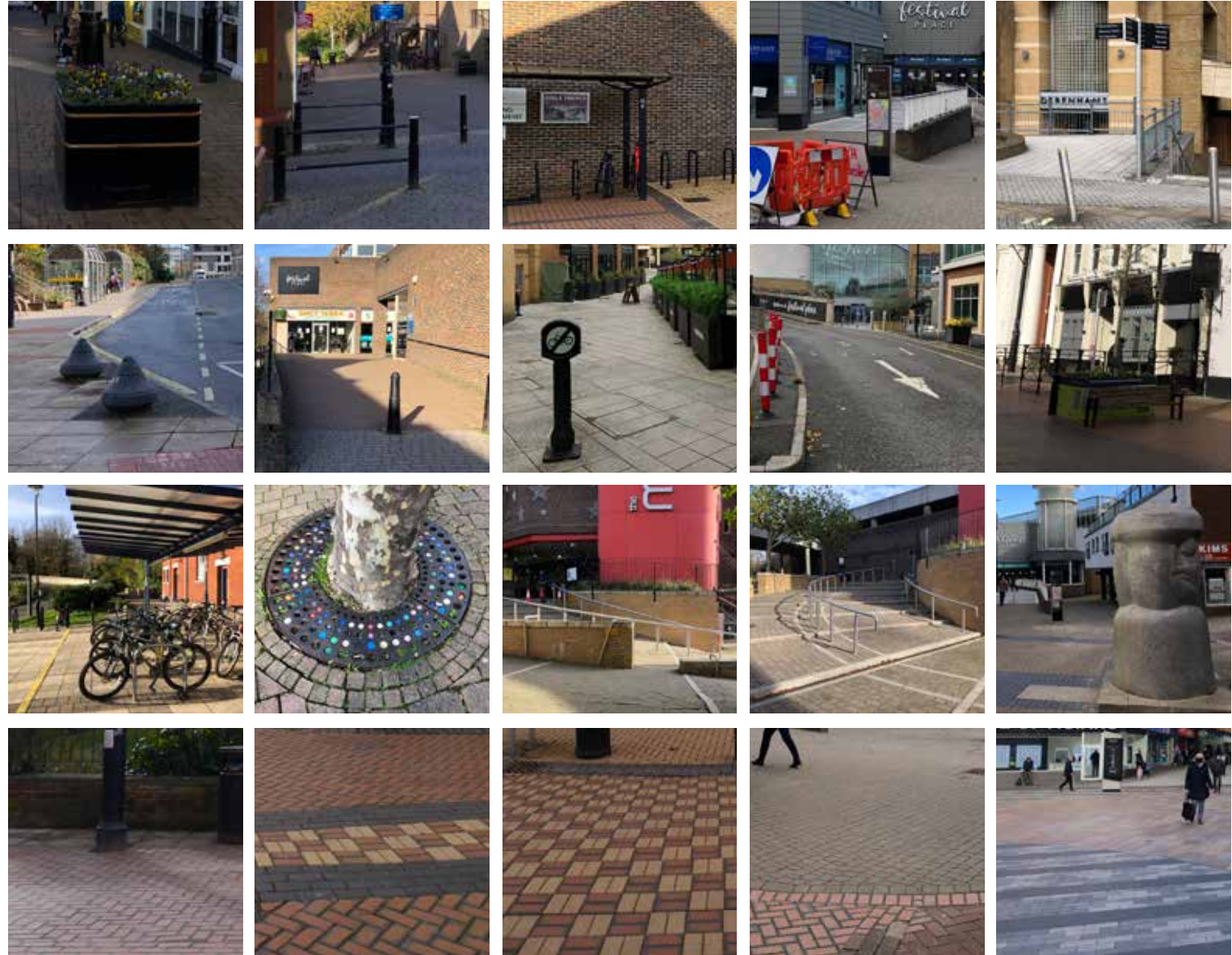
- red brick, mathematical tiles, Flemish brick bond; polychrome brickwork
- white render, use of stucco with moulded details; and
- use of stone dressings and details.



Public realm character

Basingstoke's public realm reflects the incongruous character of the areas the town is comprised of. There is wide mix of surface types around the town centre, varying in quality and including brick paving, paving sets, granite sets, concrete paving, stone paving, tarmac and polished floors within the shopping centres. Surfacing is mainly in brick red, shades of grey, and sandy yellow tones with the natural stone surfaces providing varied and mottled tones. The public realm in general is dominated by the tall walls surrounding the internal-facing malls, creating large swathes of vertical hard surfaces as a backdrop to street activity.

Other key features within the external public realm which reflect the vehicle dominance and sometimes hostile pedestrian environment include bollards and barriers creating defensive spaces and street clutter. Street furniture varies across the town with bollards, planters, bike stands having no consistent style. Overall the public realm lacks continuity and connectivity, leaving inaccessible areas and poor street environment and lack of hierarchy.



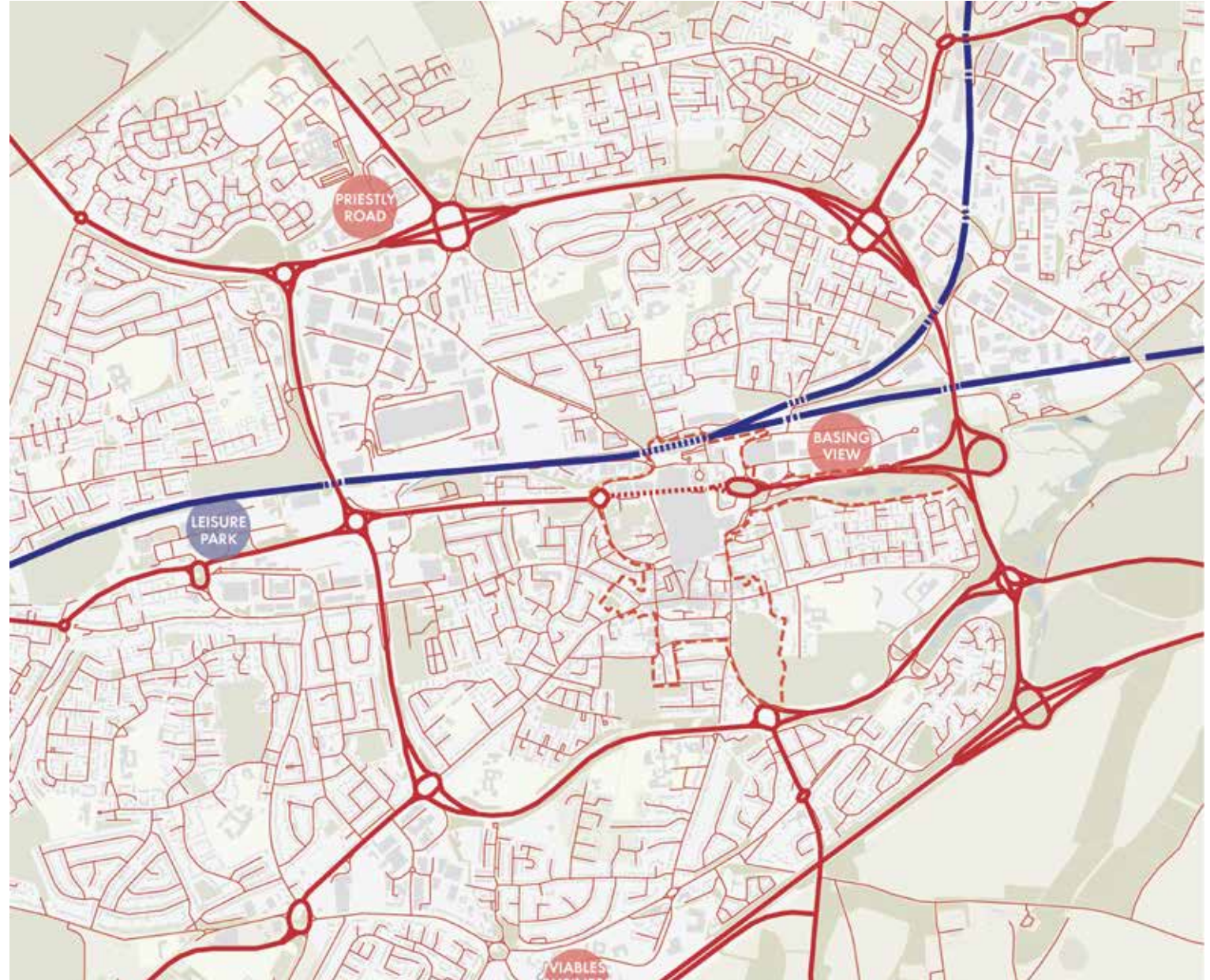
Movement and road network

Basingstoke is very well served by road infrastructure, making it very easy to move around the town by car. However, this has a detrimental impact on pedestrians and cyclists for whom moving around the town can be difficult and dangerous at times.

The Ringway which surrounds Basingstoke Town Centre feeds road traffic onto local roads which lead to the centre where the majority of public surface and multistorey car parks are situated. The Ringway provides a significant barrier to pedestrian movement from Basingstoke's neighbourhoods to the town centre, forcing pedestrians to navigate busy roads with few crossings, or use subways which can feel unsafe.

Churchill Way East also provides a significant barrier to north/south pedestrian movement with very few pedestrian crossings and an unpleasant pedestrian environment exacerbated by no active frontages along the pavements.

Roundabouts are a key feature of Basingstoke's road network, adding to the heavy road infrastructure and creating unsafe environments for cyclists and forcing pedestrians into subways.



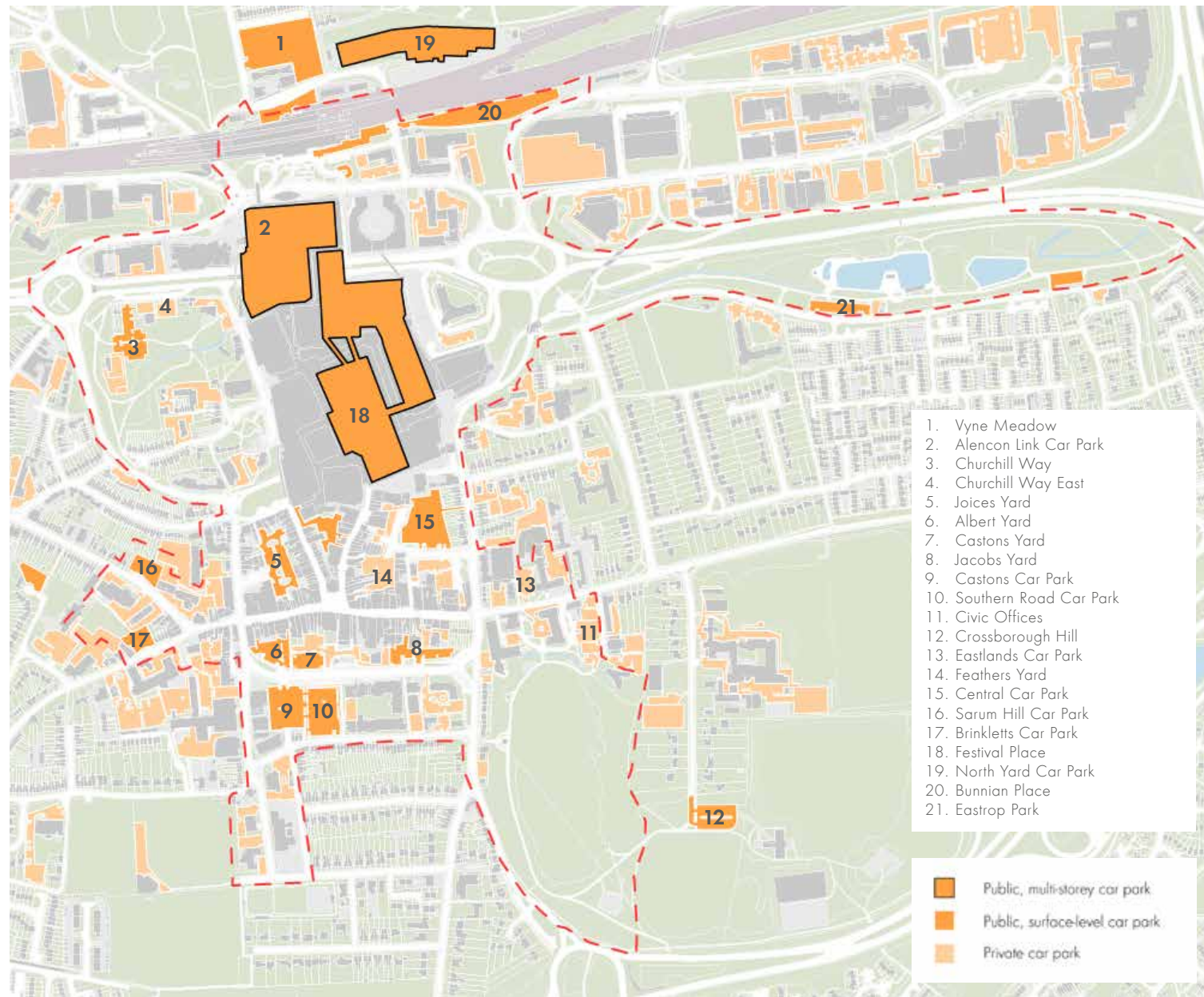
Parking

This plan shows the significant amount of parking available in the town centre. The public multistorey car parks incorporated into The Malls and Festival Place make the experience of using the town centre as easy as possible for car owners, allowing people to drive directly into The Malls, discouraging footfall in other areas of the town.

There are a number of public surface car parks along New Road, helping to serve the nearby Premier Inn and shops and businesses off Winchester Street and London Street. The quantity of these creates a difficult and unpleasant pedestrian environment, with little street activity and overlooking. A process of consolidation would help to release some car parks for other uses to promote activity, create an improved pedestrian environment and encourage more people to use the Top of the Town. The car parks are owned by the borough council, Festival Place and South West Railway; providing an opportunity to restructure the town's car parks.

The train station also holds a large quantity of Basingstoke's public parking and appears to be well used. By making Basingstoke a town which is easy to get into and around by other more sustainable forms of transport, council owned parking around the station could be reduced over time and other uses found for these spaces.

WSP have been commissioned to prepare a separate parking strategy for the town centre.



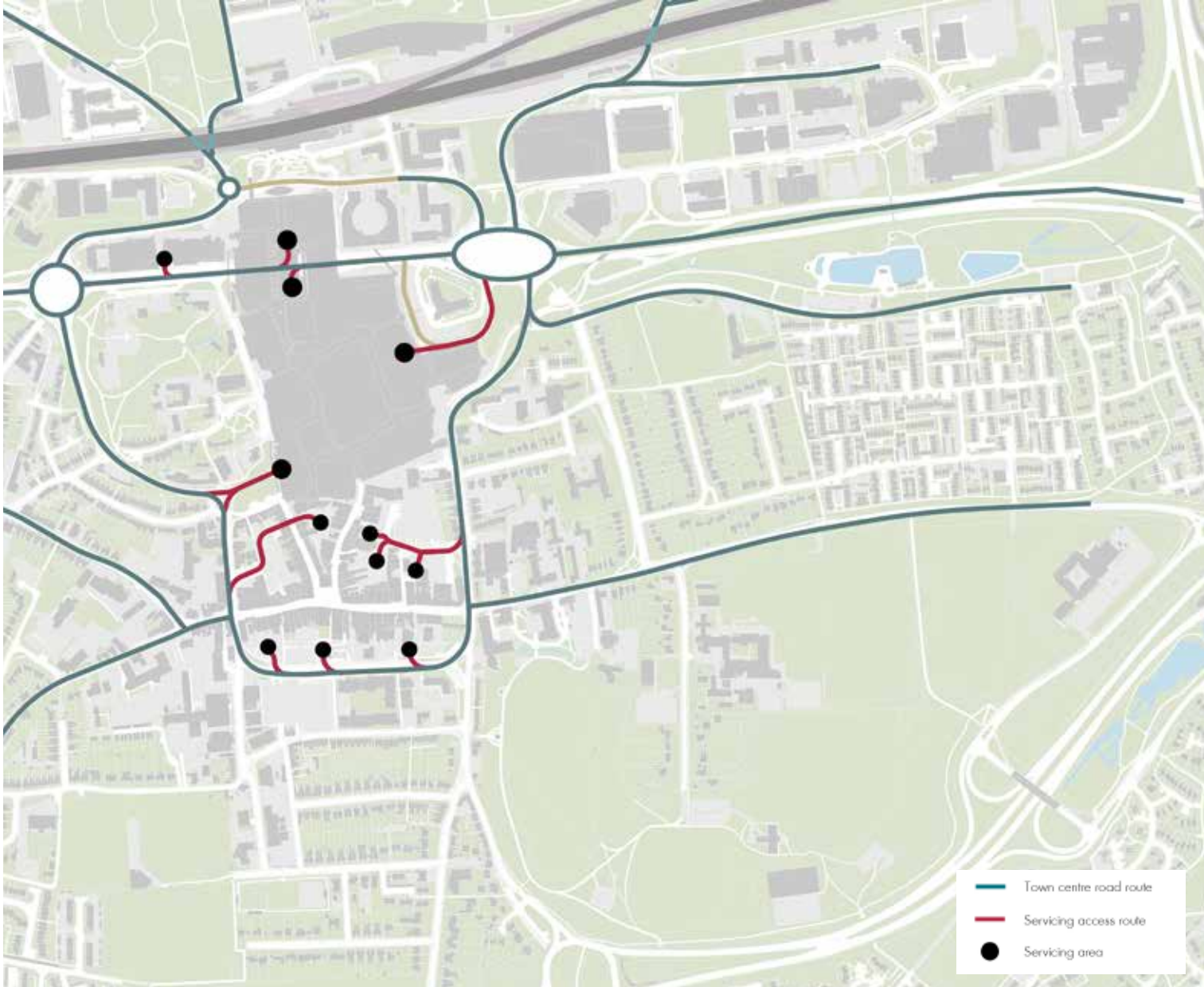
Servicing

The Malls and Festival Place are serviced from almost all corners, which aids in creating an impermeable concrete ring around the town centre.

Servicing requirements for smaller units on Church Street, Wote Street and London/Winchester Street have resulted in further swathes of concrete patchwork, creating vehicle dominated expanses, distancing the surrounding streets from the town centre and creating poor and illegible pedestrian environments.

The servicing route to the 'inner' Church Street and Wote Street shops is complicated and difficult to navigate.

Servicing to Festival Place via Eastrop Roundabout closes a complete loop of tarmac around the Seven Capital building. This cements this island of a structure in its place and makes it difficult and unnatural to reach anywhere other than Festival Place by foot from the bus station.



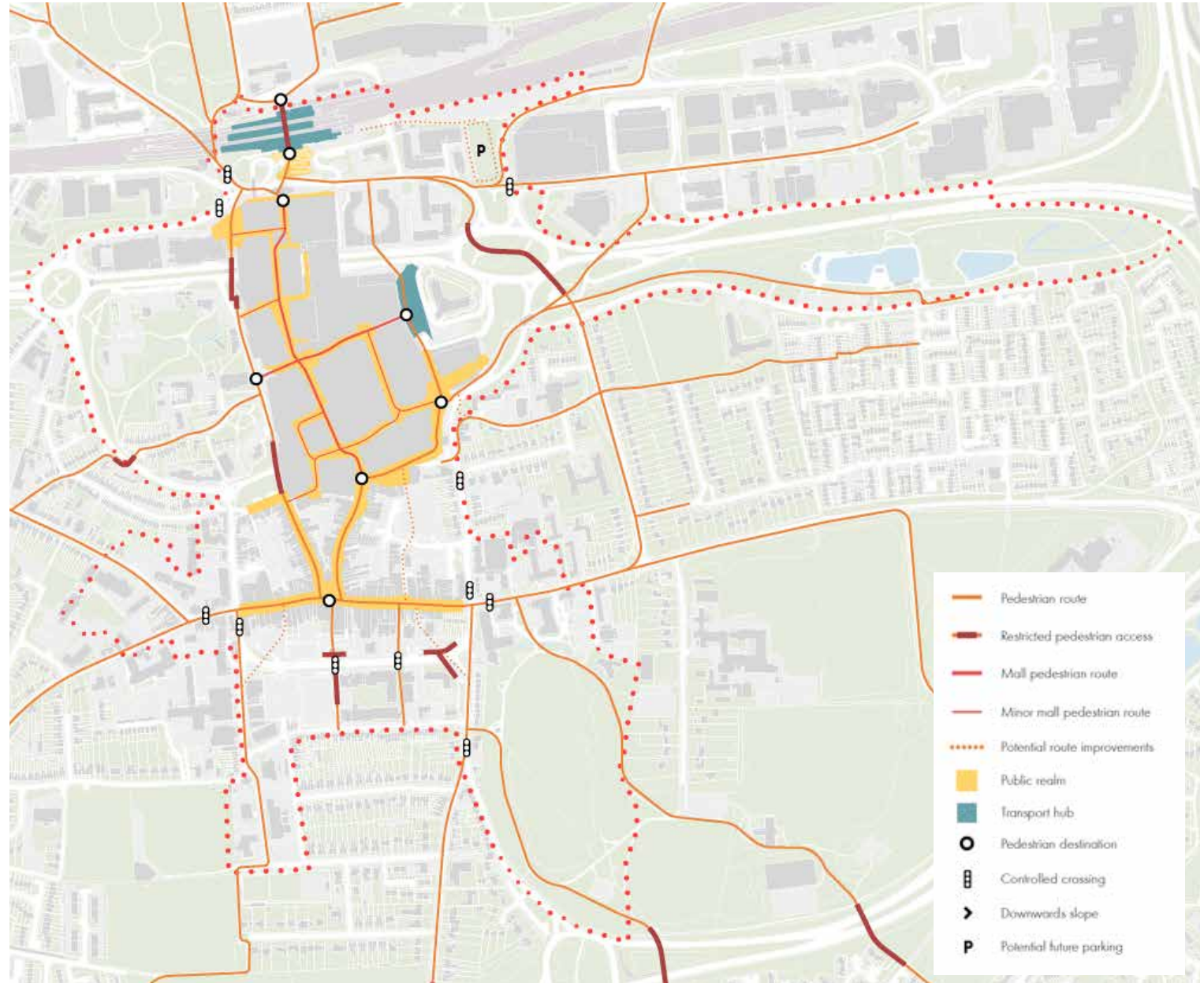
Pedestrian movement

For most pedestrians, using the internal mall of Festival Place and The Malls will be the most intuitive way of getting across town.

Most pedestrian destinations are located very near to, or a short walk away from the mall, often making the trip through it a necessity. When the mall is closed, this trips are considerably more difficult.

Level changes and bottlenecks are necessary when traversing major infrastructure. This is most notable at Eastrop Roundabout, on Church Street and via the railway. As mentioned previously, this can be off-putting for some members of the public, who may chose to use a different method of transport into the town.

The Top of the Town has an encouraging amount of pedestrian-only town-centre public space, making it easy to navigate around and move through. Of course, the internal malls also provide an extensive amount of pedestrian-only space inside and around its periphery, particularly around Wote Street and Festival Place Square.



Barriers to pedestrian movement

The internal malls of Festival Place and The Malls are the most significant barrier to pedestrian movement in the town centre. Tight spaces can create bottlenecks, especially at rush hour, when hasty commuters are confronted by idling shoppers. At night time, the mall closes and becomes a huge blockage for pedestrian movement, with routes around it being potentially off-putting for some - the long walk in the shadow of the Great Wall of Basingstoke with its bridges, or the Eastrop underpasses can be intimidating places.

New Road's wide, paved expanses and fast one-way vehicle travel creates an unnerving proposition for some to embark across. Again, the underpasses here are a poor alternative for some.

Large, immediate level changes at some mall entrances break up any existing continuity of street pattern and are poor in terms of accessibility.

Entrances to the mall car parks take up a lot of land. The entrance to Festival Place at Eastrop Roundabout cuts off an important potential connection between the restaurants, bars and cinema in Festival Square and neighbouring homes.



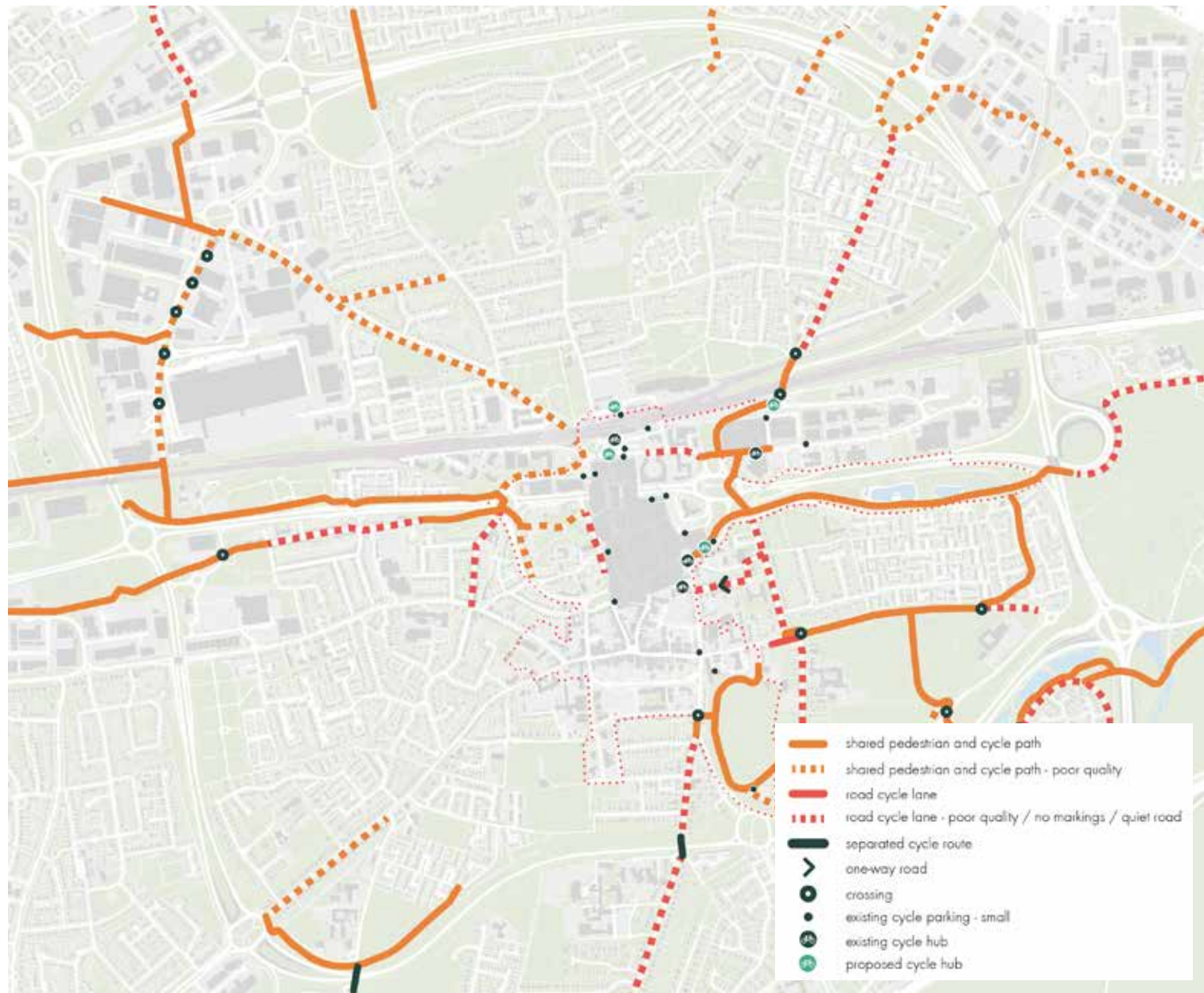
Cycling

Cycle routes in Basingstoke town centre tend to lack continuity, resulting in with poor connectivity of routes across the town, creating a challenging environment for cyclists. The lack of formal bike lanes, combined with one-way roads, the barrier of the Shopping Centre and changes in level all create barriers to the cycle network, making it hard for cyclists to navigate around the town centre comfortably and safely, and deterring those who would want to use this as a mode of transport.

Cycling to the train station is, however, popular, and increased cycle parking provision is to be provided to the north of the station. The cycle stands currently in place to the south of the station and adjacent to the Anvil are popular with commuters.

It is noted that cycle parking provision across the town centre is limited or poorly situated, and this should be considered further in future moves.

Improvements to cycle and walking infrastructure should align with the objectives set out in Hampshire County Council and BDBC's forthcoming Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan, which sets out a recommended approach to planning networks of walking zones and cycling routes that connect places that people want to get to, whether for work, education, shopping or for other reasons.

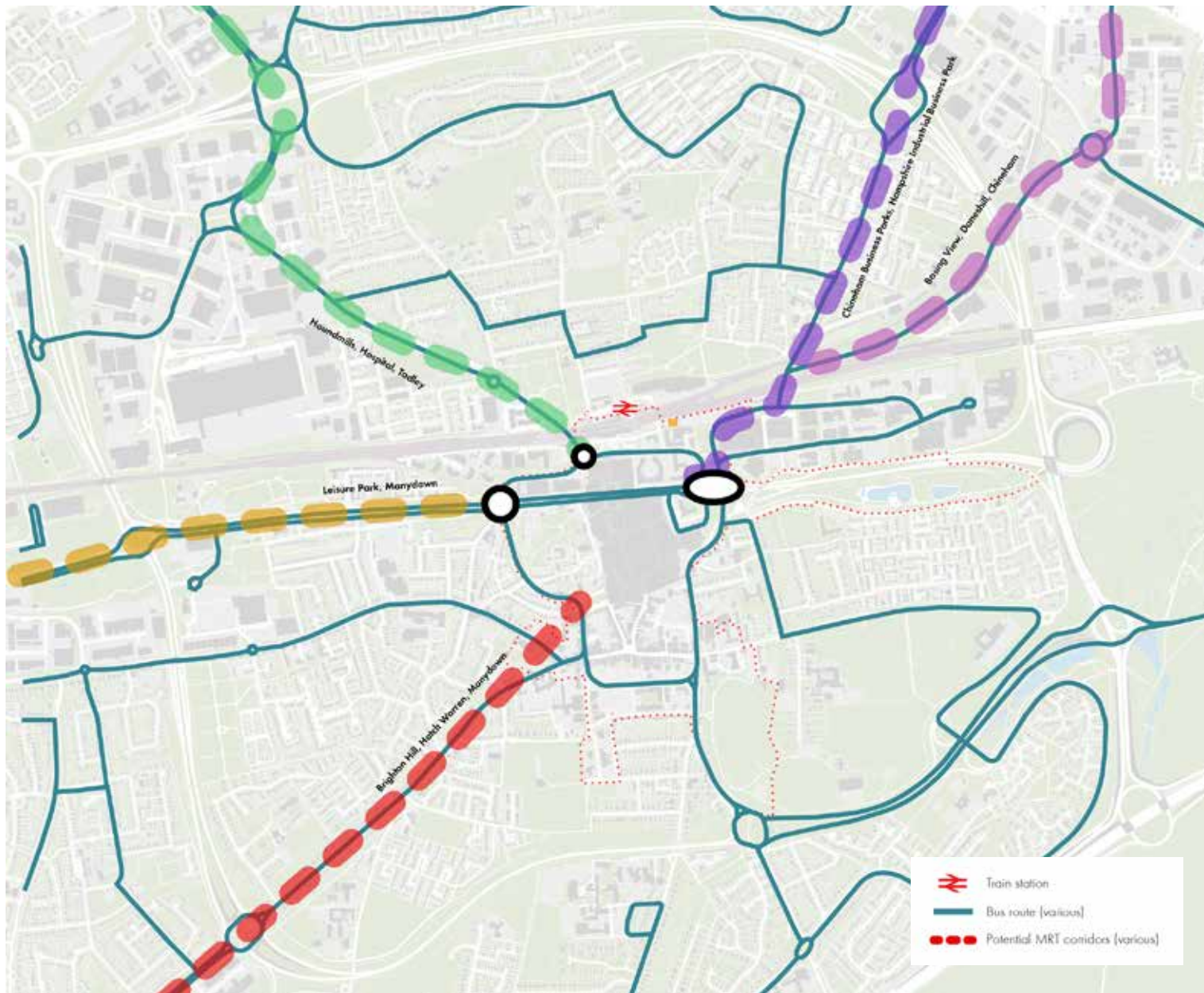


Rail, Buses and Mass Rapid Transit

Basingstoke has very good rail connections, with direct trains to and from London Waterloo taking approximately 45 minutes, journeys to and from Reading taking between 17 and 30 minutes, 50 minutes to and from Oxford, 30-40 minutes to Southampton, and an hour to and from Portsmouth.

Existing bus journeys to town centre locations in Basingstoke are often indirect, being fed around the one way system of New Road in order to get to destinations on the other side of the town centre. Existing bus routes primarily exist around the edges of neighbourhoods, potentially creating longer walking times to bus stops. Given that car infrastructure is so good in Basingstoke, bus journey times are typically 2 to 3 times longer than the car, making it less appealing for residents with cars. However, one in five households in Basingstoke do not have access to a car, so improving public transport is vital.

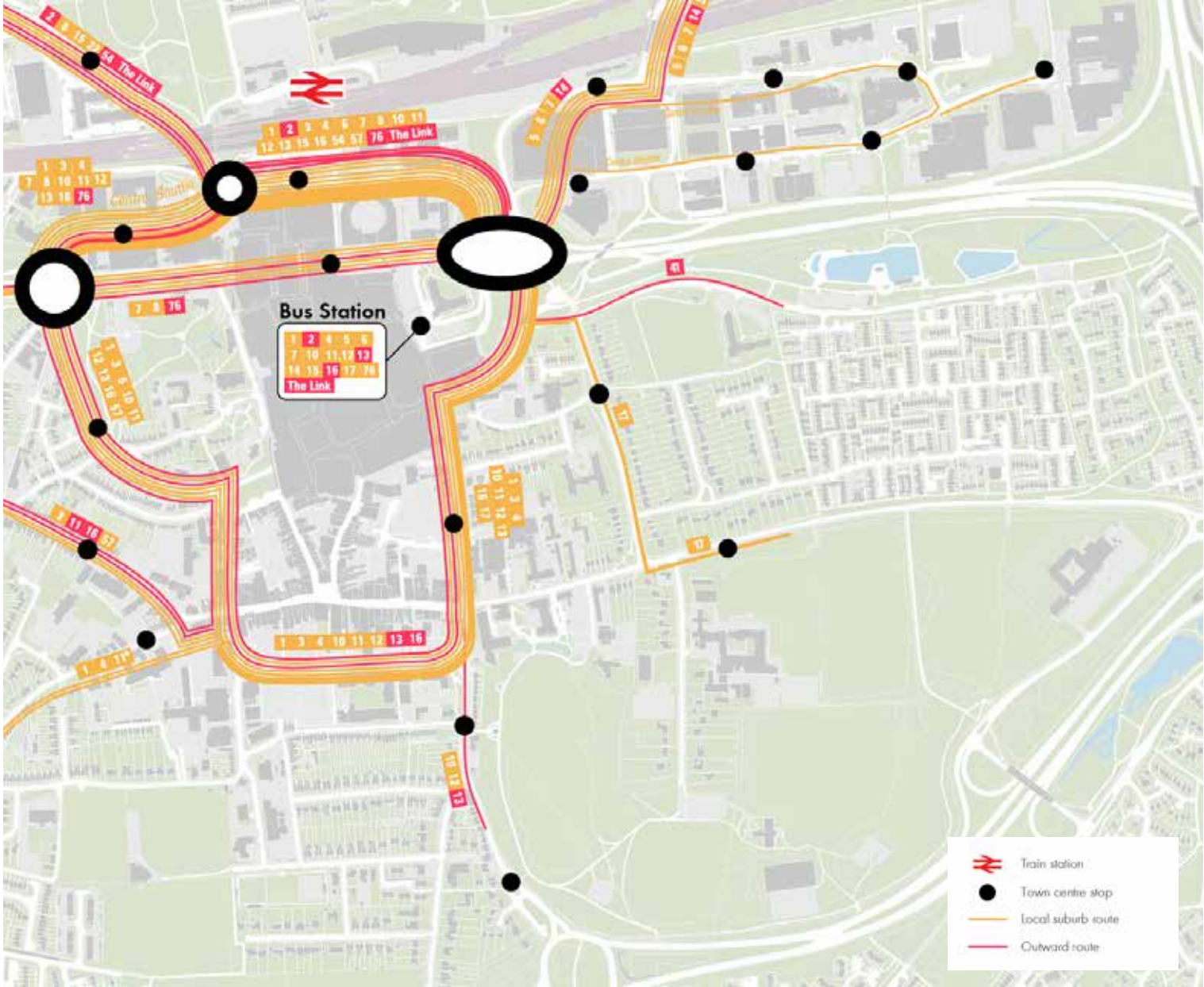
The Basingstoke Transport Strategy, developed jointly by Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has proposed a Mass Rapid Transit network for Basingstoke. The MRT will use priority measures to enable fast services from Basingstoke's neighbourhoods to key locations, with other features creating a more integrated system and making public transport easier, faster and more appealing for residents.



Rail, Buses and Mass Rapid Transit

This plan shows the specific buses and routes which serve the town centre. Most routes are fed into Alencon Link or the one way system of New Road from local roads which serve the neighbourhoods surrounding the town centre. Most routes serve the inner and outer suburbs of Basingstoke, including Chineham, Brighton Hill and Winklebury. Some go further afield to other major Hampshire and Berkshire towns, such as Newbury, Tadley and Andover.

The routing system can make it unintuitive for local passengers. It can be inefficient to use the bus for short-haul trips around the town centre - especially when travelling to the train station. Trips that would take five minutes on an empty road may take upwards of 15 minutes, making it less desirable as an option. This is particularly true of buses using the existing bus station next to Festival Place, which incur delays by routing via Eastrop roundabout.





2 MASTERPLAN VISION

Hemingway Vision

The first round of public and stakeholder engagement was held in February and March 2021 to understand what residents, visitors, businesses and councillors would like to see for the future of the area.

The top suggestions on how to improve the town centre included more independent shops, independent cafés and restaurants, more cultural space and better open space to hold events and festivals.

HemingwayDesign used this feedback to shape a draft vision which aims to ensure the town centre is inclusive and diverse with people at its heart through five key principles.

A town centre that works for people in terms of 6Ps – people, place, purpose, prosperity, progressive and participatory.

People: A place that puts people at the centre of all its decision making.

Place: Diverse; distinctive; multifunctional; cultural; designed for its residents, workforce and visitors wellbeing; recognised as the focal point of the town and has a distinct identity.

Prosperous: Entrepreneurial; economically vibrant; committed to building skills and life long learning; supportive of start ups, scale ups and a green economy.

Progressive: Where you can test your ideas; where sustainable ideas can flourish; where public led experimentation is welcomed and celebrated. A place that is stridently evolving.

Purposeful: Always puts sustainability, ethics, responsible businesses, social inclusion, health, wellbeing and PEOPLE first.

Participatory: A place where its citizens have a real say and are always listened to. A town centre that has a wealth of activities and opportunities for all.



Masterplan principles

Four important strands have been developed to support the Vision for Basingstoke and set out how the ideas in the Vision can be translated into spatial projects.

These draw on the unique characteristics and strengths of Basingstoke, respond to the challenges presented by climate change and set out ways in which the town centre can adapt and change over time to best serve the needs of Basingstoke.

A further breakout of each of these masterplan principles is set out in the following pages.

a green town centre

- promoting health and wellbeing
- supporting biodiversity
- providing climate change resilience

a resilient town

- able to adapt to changing trends
- a critical mass of people to support activities
- community and culture as well as commerce

a compact town

- easier to walk and cycle for short trips
- a healthier population
- a cleaner and more attractive centre

a unique future

- a distinctive hybrid of historic and new
- a place for creativity and innovation
- equipped for future challenges

a green town centre



A green town centre

Basingstoke has contrasting characteristics with green leafy suburbs and generous parks surrounding a town centre which is dominated by large buildings, hard surfaces and a distinct lack of greenery.

Helping to meet the borough's challenging climate change targets and encouraging a healthier lifestyle by making the town centre more walkable and cycle-friendly.

Right: A plan of central Basingstoke highlighting the contrast between the green parks and the lack of greenery in the core town centre



A green town centre

In addition to the existing green spaces such as Eastrop Park and War Memorial Park, the vision is to create a 'greener' feel by creating new pockets of green spaces as well as new planting throughout to improve the area's biodiversity.

Right: An illustrative plan highlighting the concept of establishing green links across the town and introducing green spaces of a range of sizes and character wherever possible in the town centre



A green town centre

This page sets out examples of the types and character of new green spaces, pocket parks and street planting could take.

The examples vary from formal green squares and landscaped, functional green spaces to more informal parks with opportunities for play, street trees and planting, balconies, potted gardens, rain gardens and growing opportunities.

Green spaces can be used for a range of activities, whether it be for relaxation, to promote biodiversity and encourage nature, for formal or informal play, activities and sports, or as venues for events.



Howard Park, Letchworth



Duncan Terrace, Islington



Pancras Square, Kings Cross





a compact town

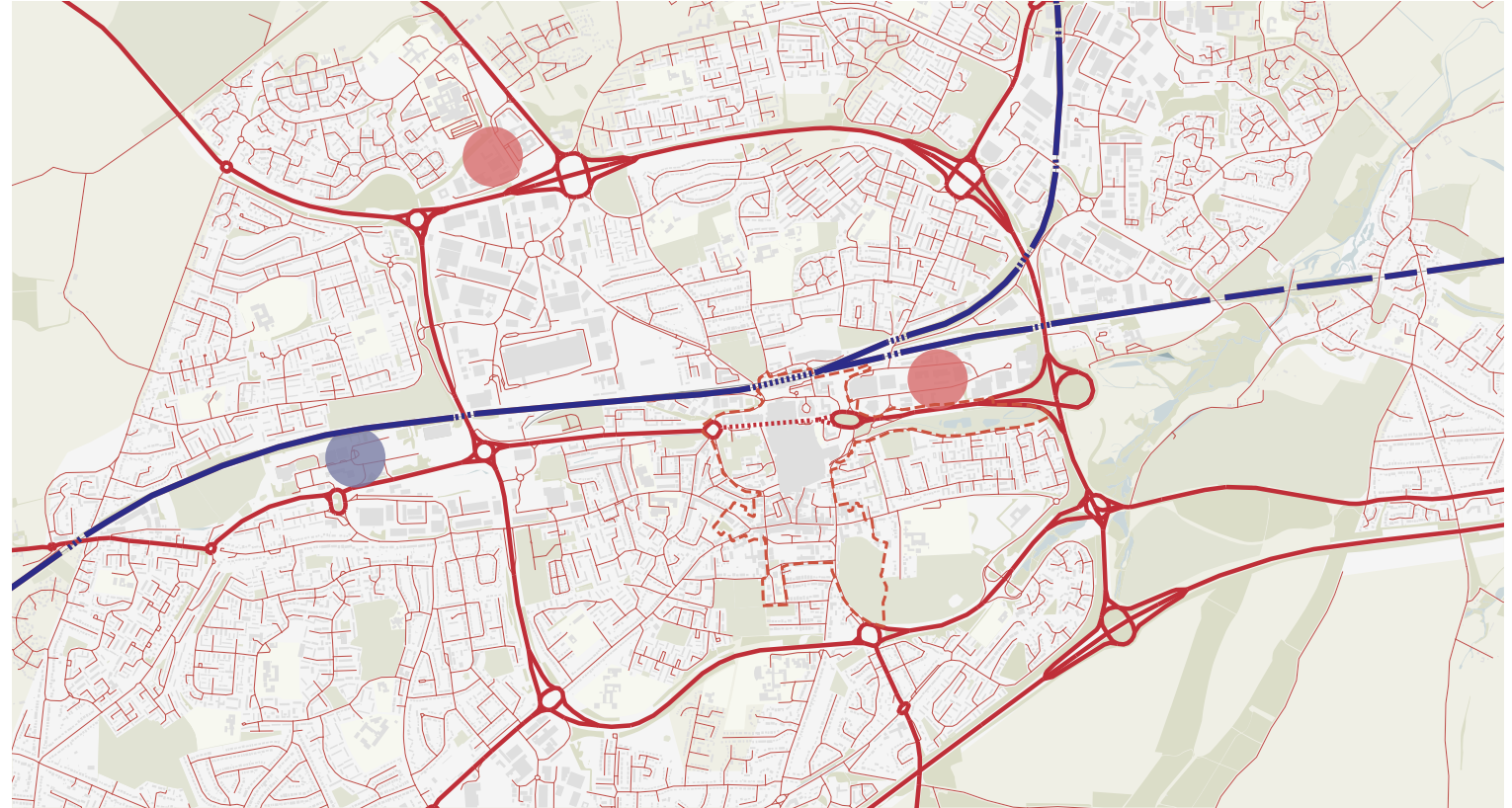
The existing road network makes almost every journey easy by car, but in doing so it impacts the pedestrian experience resulting in long walkways bridging busy roads, underpasses and inconsistent pavements.

The potential for reducing car use for short trips across and through the town centre could make it a nicer place to be and support healthy choices. More walking and cycling for short trips would also improve the air quality within the town centre and reduce the demand for parking.

The aspirations for transport and movement set out in this report are supported by the aims of Basingstoke's Transport Strategy to improve travel options for all by providing a choice of sustainable transport options. In turn, making the town a more attractive and healthier place to live, work and visit.

The ideas for changes to the road network will be tested through more detailed studies working together with Hampshire County Council as the highways authority.

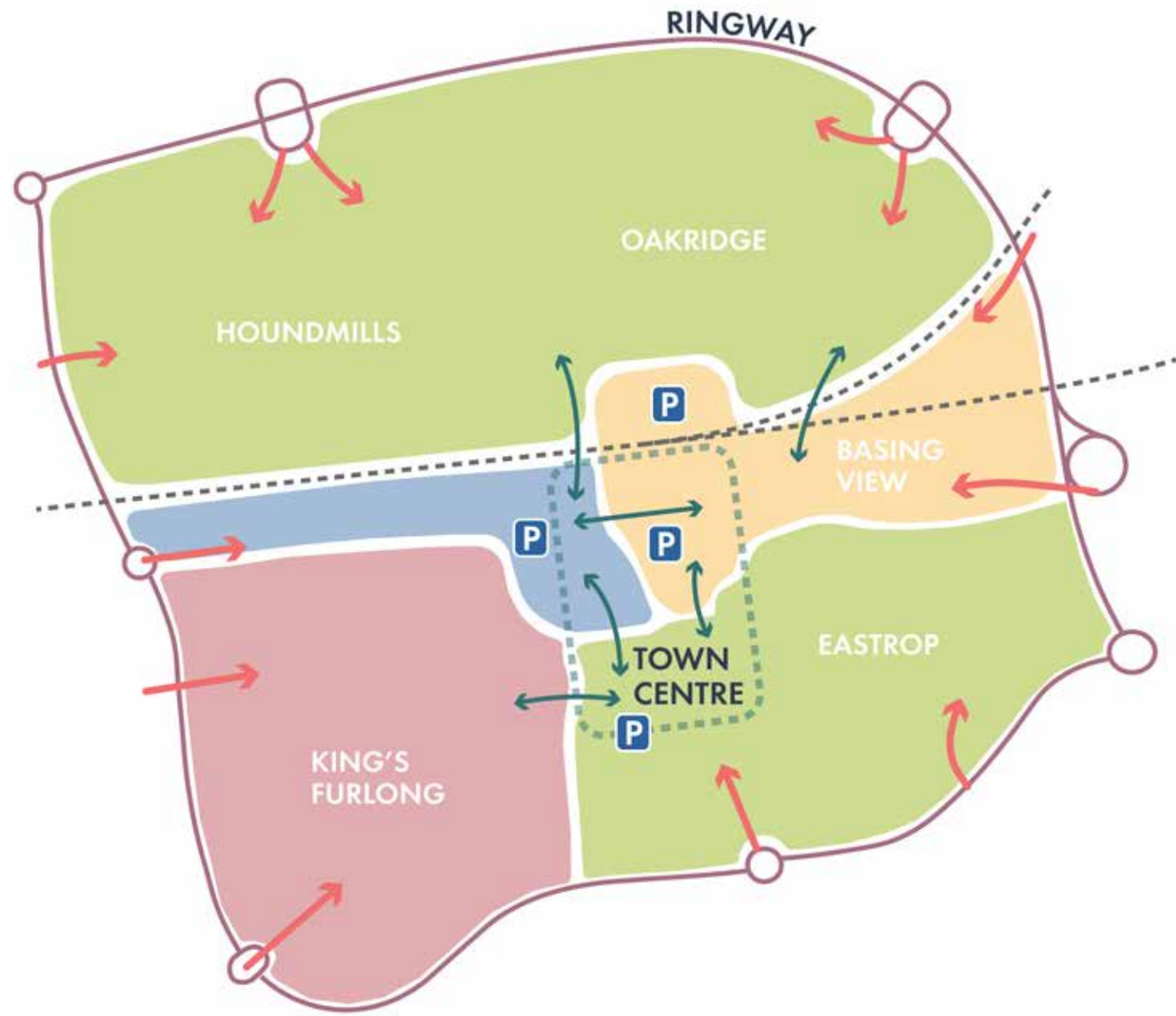
Right: The existing road network in Basingstoke town centre



A compact town

The masterplan suggests the introduction of a series of traffic zones within the ring road. Buses, pedestrians and cyclists will still be able to make direct and easy connections, but the zones will see traffic using the ring road to travel from one zone to another rather than cut through the town centre.

We know that private car use will continue to be a significant way that people travel to the town centre, particularly from surrounding countryside and villages. People will still be able to drive to Basingstoke and park to work, shop and meet.



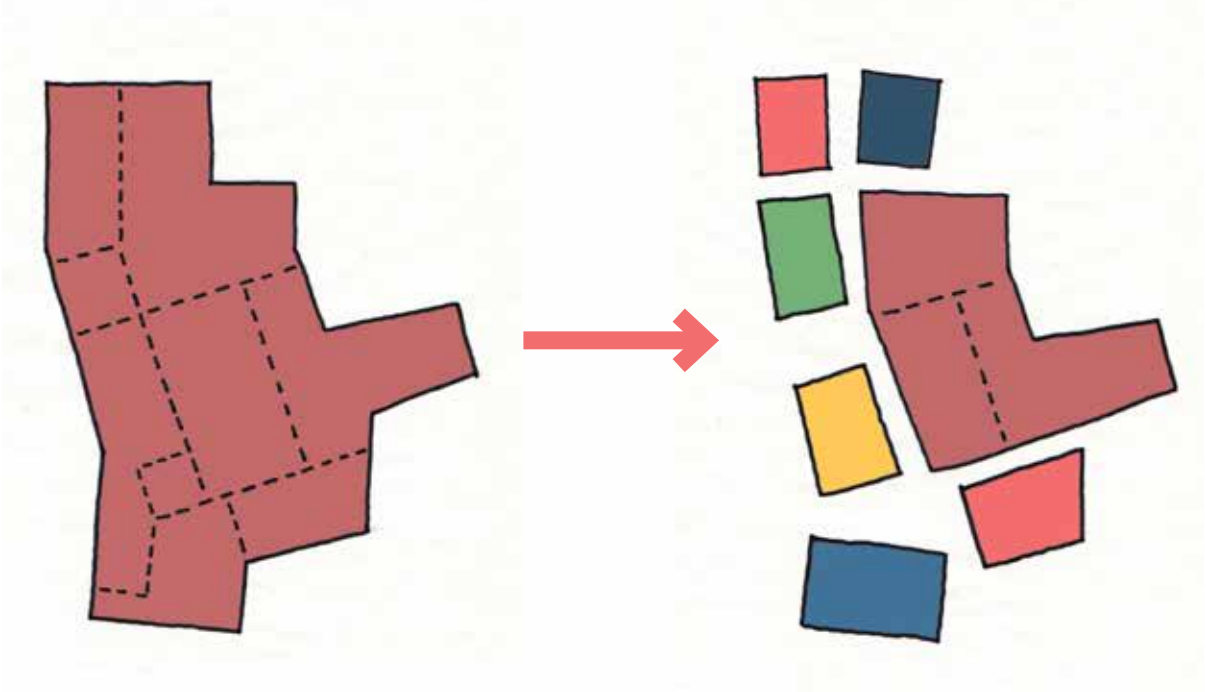
Right: A concept plan showing how a series of zones could be established within Basingstoke's Ringway to help discourage car use for short trips and enable better sustainable travel.



a resilient town

A resilient town

To ensure the town centre is a vibrant hub during the day and night, the area needs to create opportunities for a range of different uses. Reimagining the current town centre to include more traditional streets and other areas will mean that Basingstoke is not so reliant on the success of retail and can open up space for community and cultural uses, workspace, education and new homes.



The existing shopping centre is inward-facing and inflexible and doesn't provide the good street connections that Basingstoke needs.

Gradually adapting and changing the edges of the existing complex could help to create streets which work well, and create new buildings which are capable of a much wider range of use.



a unique future

A unique future

Integrating and embracing the different aspects of Basingstoke's character to create a dynamic hybrid and delivering places where the uses are not tightly planned or programmed, allowing people to contribute their own creativity and enterprise. New ways to create space for enterprise and town life which draw on the lessons and character of the historic town are needed to help draw together the rather separate aspects of the shopping centres, Basing View and the wider town.

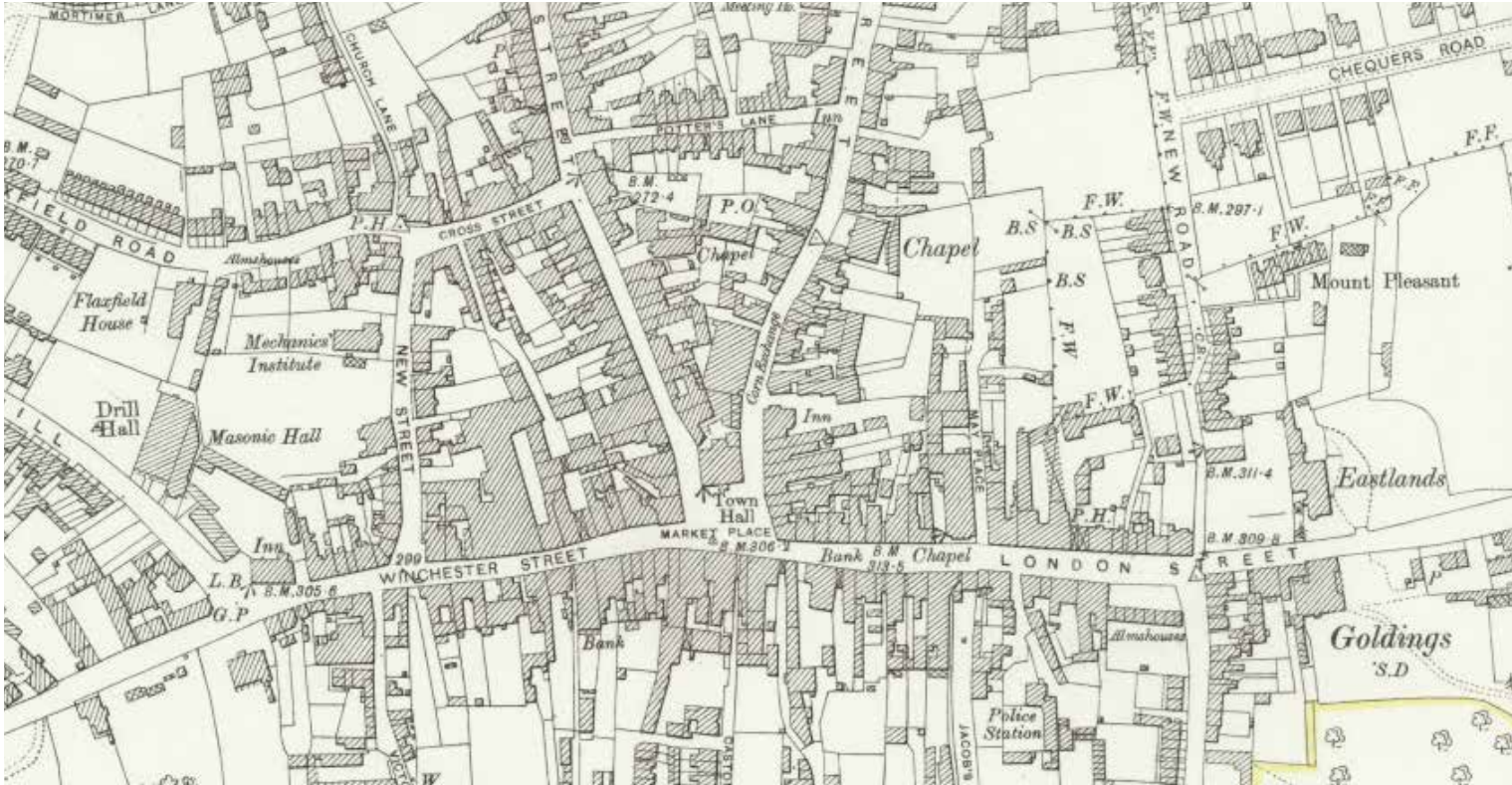
Basingstoke has many of the important ingredients of a great town, but unless they are integrated and allowed to co-exist in the manner of a proper town Basingstoke will not reach its full potential.



A unique future

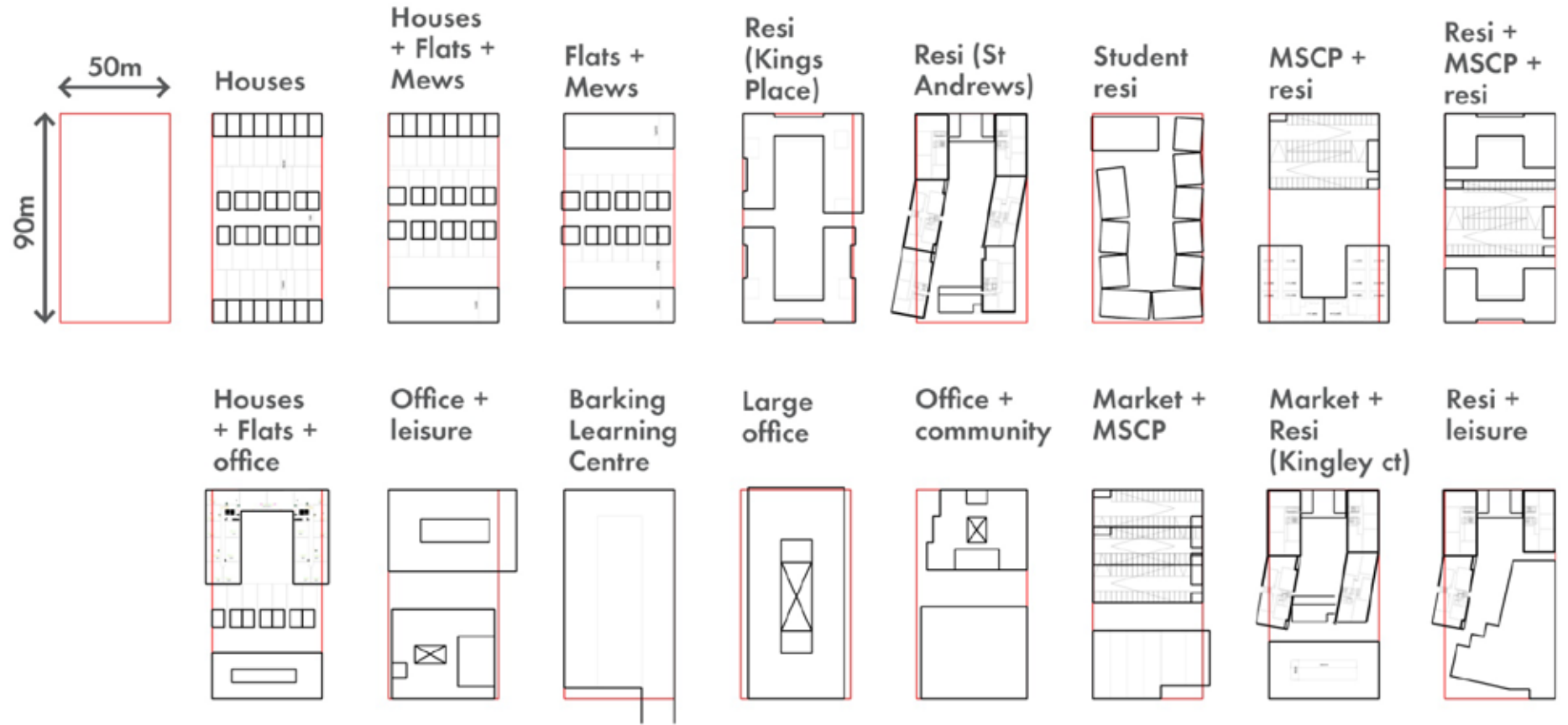
Historic towns and cities all over the UK and around the World are based on streets and urban blocks - groups of buildings that frame the streets and together enclose space for yards, gardens and service areas. This pattern has proved flexible and adaptable over centuries, but has been a lesson ignored by big post-war structures such as the shopping centres.

We can learn from Basingstoke's historic character to plan new streets and urban blocks which restore this flexibility and help Basingstoke to adapt and renew more easily over time.



A unique future

Our testing of a typical block shows that it can accommodate everything from terraced homes and mews houses through to large scale office buildings, public buildings or parking structures, all within a similar footprint and the same street pattern.



Basingstoke concept masterplan



-  The Malls re-imagined to create better streets and spaces and allow a wider range of uses
-  Festival Place
-  Eastrop Roundabout area re-imagined, creating much stronger integration between Basing View and the core Town Centre
-  Basing View remains an important office location but with an increased diversity of other uses
-  An improved public transport interchange serving the town and the railway station
-  Opportunities to improve existing streets and spaces by adding infill development providing frontage
-  Basingstoke railway station
-  Theatre / Venue
-  Place of worship
-  Retail core
- Civic buildings
- Parks

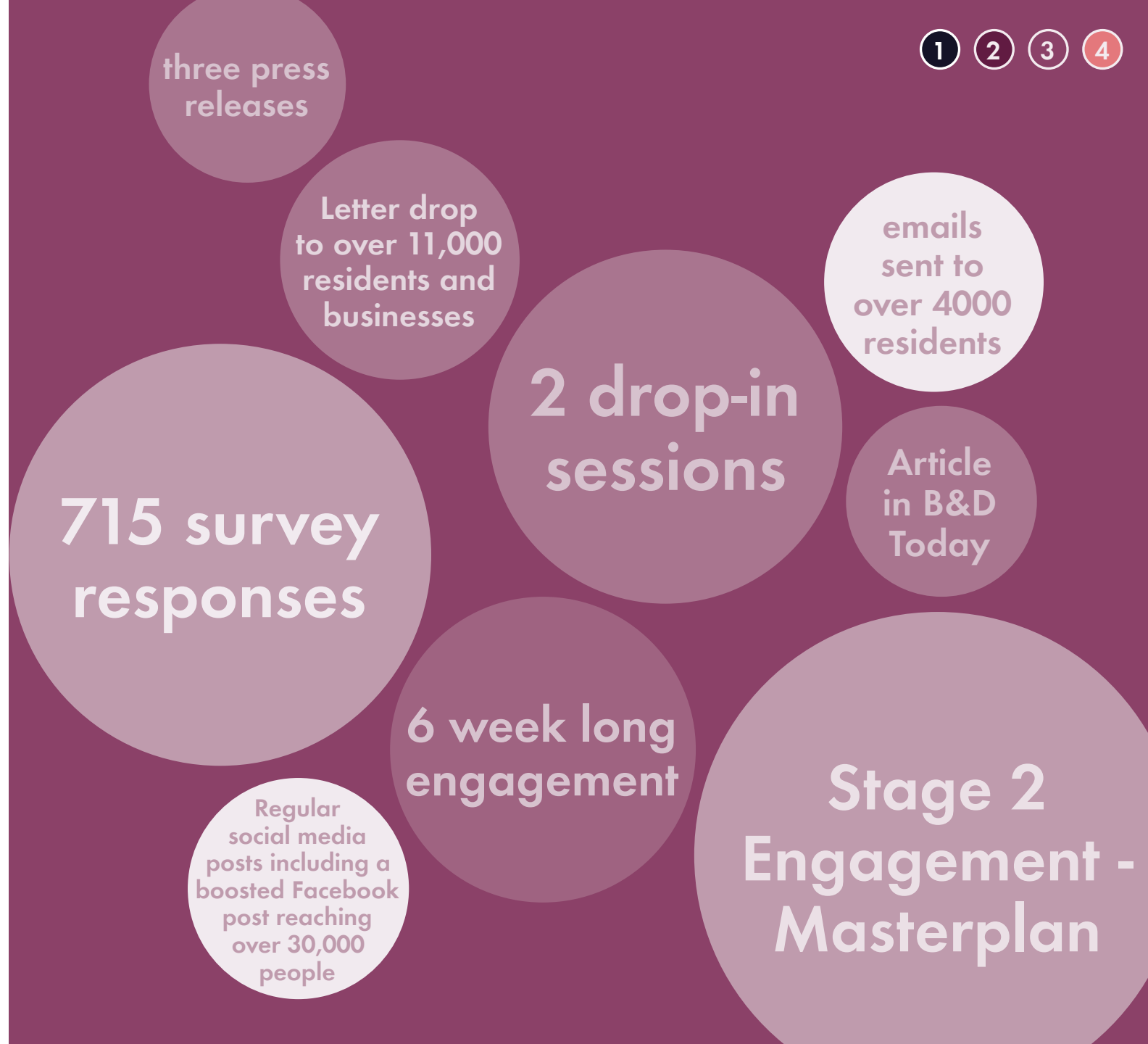


3 ENGAGEMENT

Draft masterplan consultation

In February and March 2021, residents, visitors, businesses and councillors were invited to their thoughts, feelings, and ideas of what they would like to see for the future of Basingstoke town centre through the Talk Basingstoke Survey. The feedback provided informed and shaped the draft vision, created by Hemingway Design, and began to shape the masterplan to bring this to life.

In October and November 2021, another round of engagement gave residents, businesses and organisations the chance to share their views on the draft vision and masterplan during a public consultation which lasted for six weeks. The engagement was widely publicised and the materials were available to view on the dedicated website, alongside a survey. 715 people responded to the survey, with some clear messages coming through from their responses. The following pages provide a summary of the consultation feedback. A variety of graphs and charts have been created to give a visual understanding of respondents' thoughts on Basingstoke town centre. Quotes from the public have also been included.



Online survey

Overall, the emerging masterplan proposals received a positive response. The online survey collected 715 responses.

The masterplan principles were all considered important but there was scepticism over their delivery. This scepticism was partly because of past masterplans and partly due to lack of detail provided in the plans.

things considered most important:

- Ease of access to town centre facilities
- A green town centre
- Arts and cultural activities
- Enhancement and protection of public spaces and historic buildings
- More independent shops

“A cleaner environment, better air quality and feeling safe at night”

things considered least important:

- Housing of all types, particularly located within the town centre
- Games, play and associated leisure activities, including the provision of space for such activities

“Green spaces and cultural activities!”

Who responded

The adjacent tables provide an overview of who responded to the emerging masterplan proposals via the online survey.

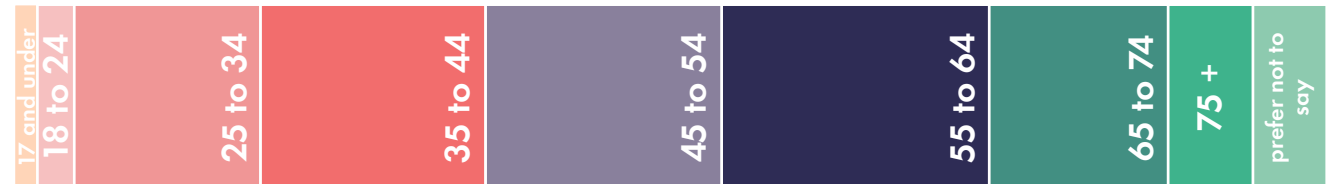
Respondents were equally split between male and female, with 5%, preferring not to say. The majority of respondents ranged from ages 25 to 75; the majority in the 55 to 64 bracket. Aside from individual respondents, there were also those who commented on behalf of an organisation, community association or group (11), town or parish council (1), a business in the borough (5) or as a borough councillor (2).

The following page provides a chart which reflects the varying ethnic groups which responded to the survey. The majority of respondents were of white ethnicity, however, there were a small number of responses from black, asian and other ethnic groups.

gender

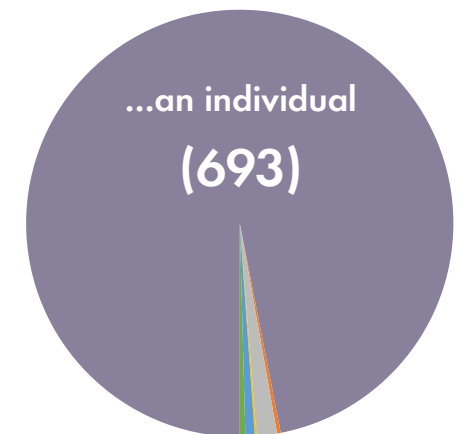


age



responding as

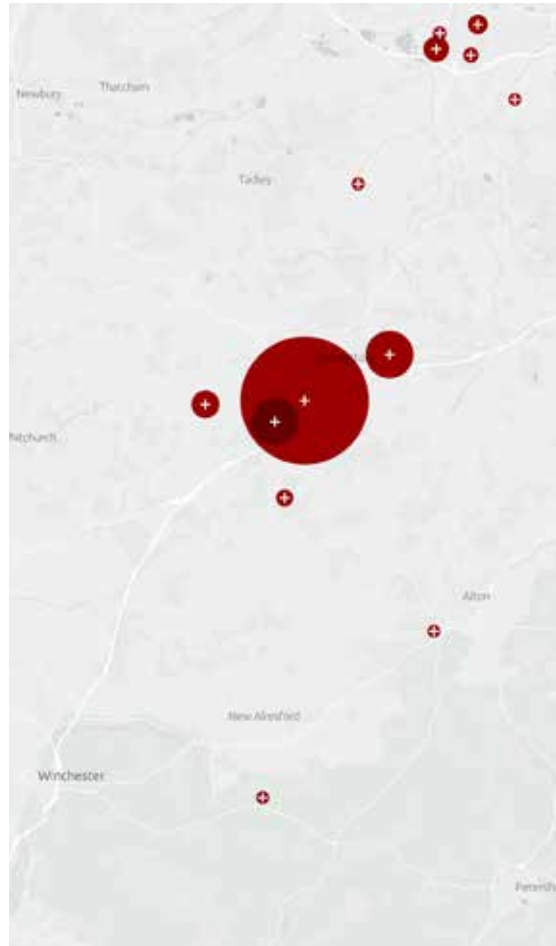
- as an individual (693)
- as a borough councillor (2)
- on behalf of an organisation, community association or group (11)
- on behalf of a town or parish council (1)
- on behalf of a business in the borough (5)
- other (3)



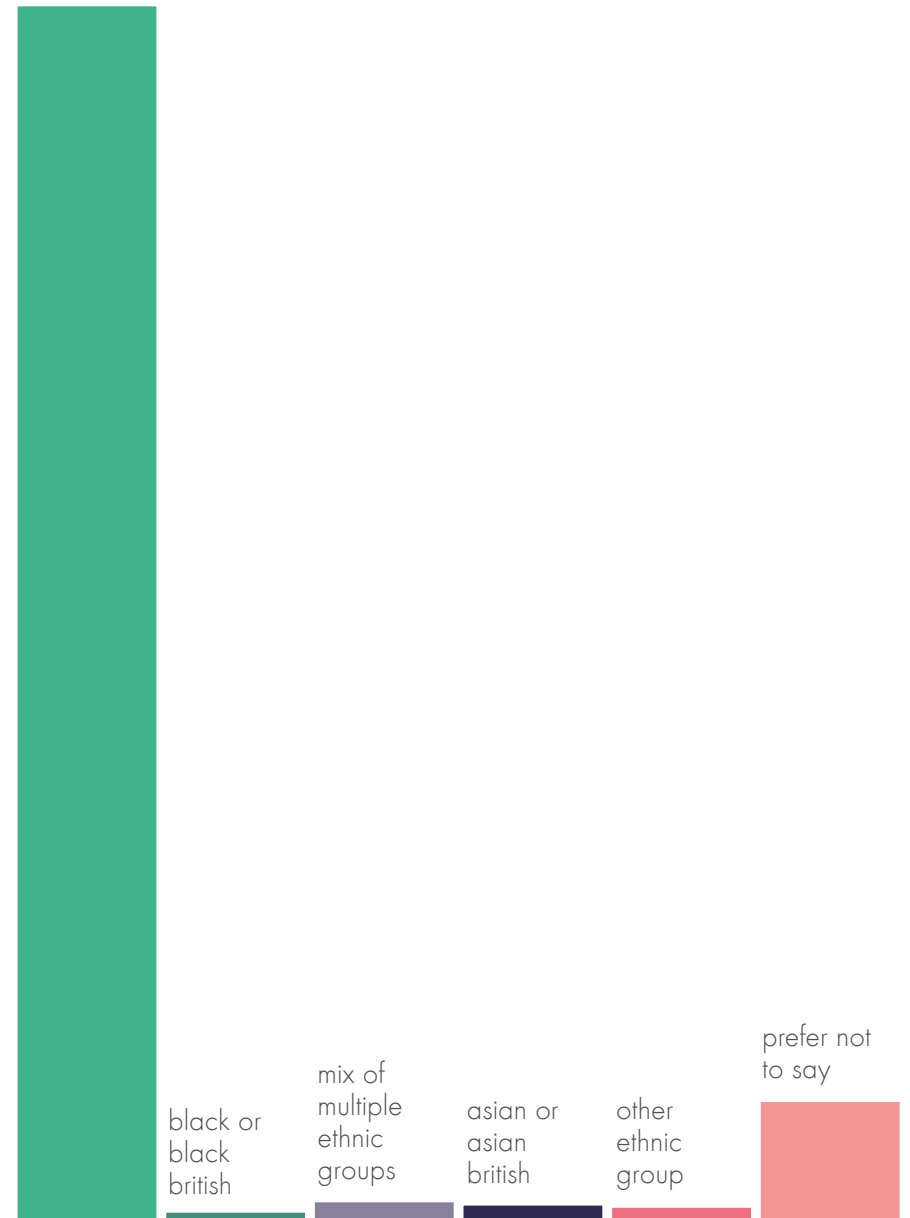
Location

Most of those who responded to the survey are based in neighbourhoods within and surrounding the town centre.

A large proportion of these people come from neighbourhoods to the south-west of the town centre and Old Basing. A smaller but noticeable amount of responses came from people based in Reading. A handful of responses came from other settlements in the wider Hampshire area.



white



Ethnic group

Consultation feedback

Town centre improvements

Question 1 highlighted that the majority of respondents to the Talk Basingstoke Survey said **the town centre could be improved** and asked **how important each of the following improvements are to them.**

Respondents felt that almost all of the improvements listed were important, with almost all improvements being selected as extremely or very important by 50% of respondents.

Here we have listed the improvements which were considered most important (65%+ selected extremely important or very important) and those considered less important (less than 65% selected extremely important or very important).

most important (65%+):

1. Historic buildings and public spaces (542)
2. Public spaces, streets, squares, and open space (525)
3. Integration of historic with newer developments (491)
4. Better walking and cycling routes (486)
5. A greater variety of uses (464)
6. More green space (460)
7. Public spaces for people to meet and socialise (453)

less important (less than 65%):

8. Improvements to public transport provision (416)
9. Public spaces to hold events and festivals (362)
10. Public play spaces for all age groups (340)

Delivering a greater variety of uses

Question 2 noted that the people who responded to the last survey said that they wanted to see a **greater variety of uses in the town centre** - the question went on to list some of these uses and asked respondents **which were most and least important to them**.

Respondents felt that having more local and independent shops was extremely important in terms of town centre uses, with more green space and landscape improvements, and more space for health and NHS services also considered as important town centre uses.

The majority believed having more homes within the town centre to be least important, with almost an equally large number of respondents feeling that more office space for companies was least important. 177 respondents felt having more spaces for community use was either slightly important or not important.

most important

(number)= extremely important + very important

1. More local and independent shops (604)
2. More green space and landscape improvements (507)
3. More space for health and NHS services (434)

least important

(number)= slightly important + not important

1. More homes (464)
2. More office space for companies (440)
3. More spaces for community use (177)

Making the town centre a great place to live

Question 3 asked respondents what importance would they give to a set of factors, **to make Basingstoke town centre a great place to live.**

Respondents felt that ease of access to amenities, such as shops and leisure facilities, was extremely important in making the town centre a great place to live. Focusing more on movement, respondents felt that ease of access to the town centre and station by foot and bus were also key.

Survey results indicated that a range of housing options, such as renting and home ownership were least important. Second to this came a range of housing mixes such as flats, houses and older living accommodation, followed closely by private external recreation space.

A strong theme emerges here with connectivity and access considered of great importance, and housing and related aspects considered as least important to making the town centre a great place to live.

most important

(number)= extremely important + very important

ease of access

- 1...to amenities, such as shops and leisure facilities (582)
- 2...to/from town centre and station on foot (567)
- 3...to/from town centre and station by bus (492)

least important

(number)= slightly important + not important

- 1.A range of housing options, such as renting and home ownership (285)
- 2.A range of housing mixes such as flats, houses and older living (280)
- 3.Private external recreational space, such as balcony (279)

Making the town centre a great place to live

Respondents were offered an opportunity to provide a written response to the question of any other **improvements that would attract them to live in Basingstoke town centre**. For initial ease of understanding, we have translated responses into a word map. Key words, for example, focus on people, housing, space and access. A further analysis of these comments is being undertaken to pull out key messages.



“A greater priority towards active travel options; low traffic neighbourhoods, less on-street parking, safe cycle paths to and from different areas of the town.”

“We have enough flats, we don’t need a town centre for people to live... we need a town centre for people to go to.”

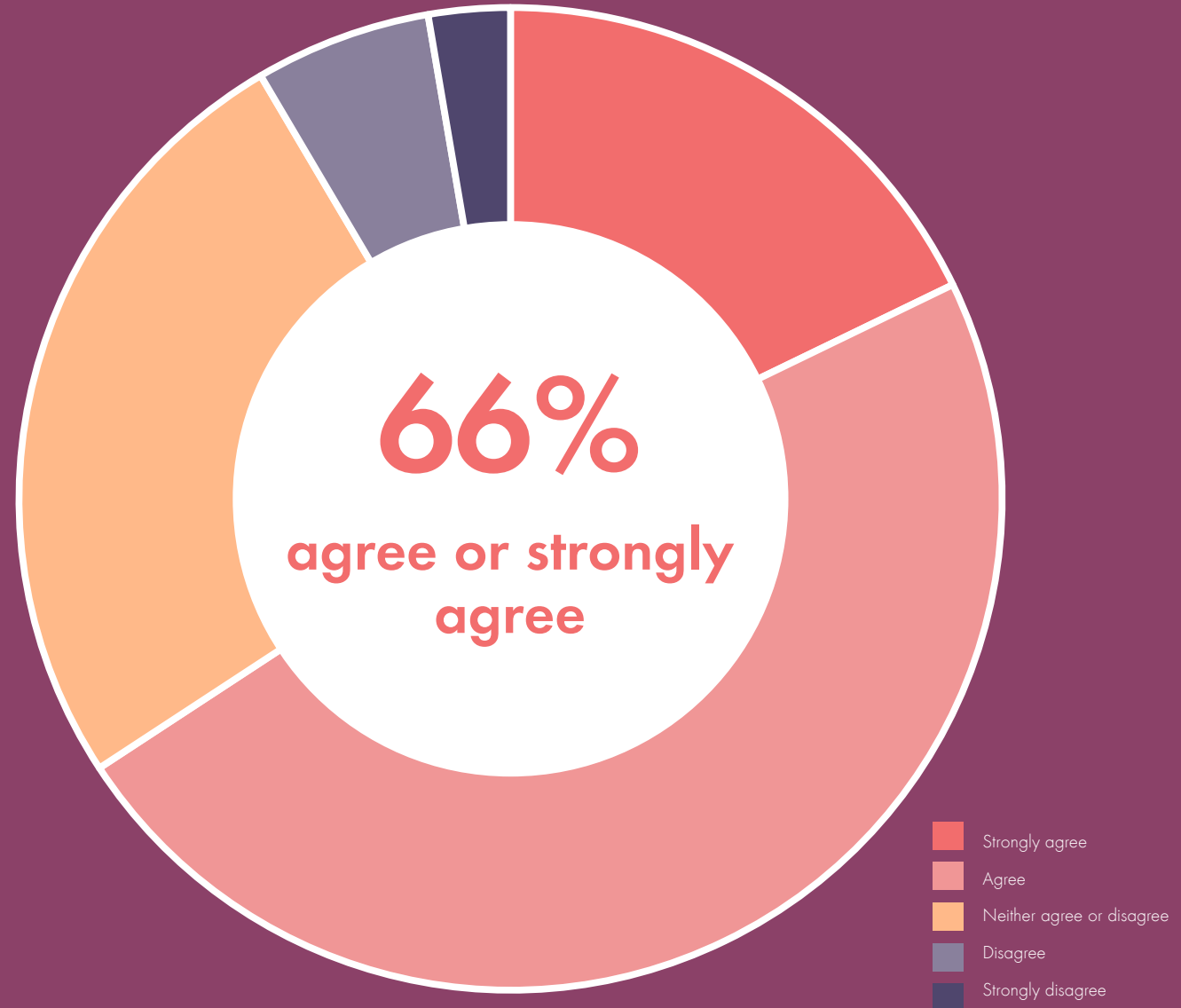
“Better cycling provision - i.e. not have cycle lanes end in the middle of nowhere.”

Draft vision

Question 4 focused on the draft vision and its five key principles. Respondents were asked **to what extent do you agree or disagree with the draft vision principles**, with the majority noting that they agree. 66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the vision. Quite a large percentage of respondents, 26%, neither agreed or disagreed.

“Please make it happen. Basingstoke is a great place and it deserves an image that isn’t based on roundabouts, retail chains and groups of teenagers with nothing to do.”

“Vision is good and positive but must achieve quick wins to get public on board.”



Masterplan principles

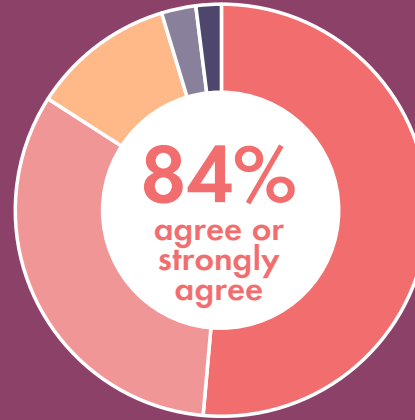
The survey asked respondents **to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the principles set out to underpin the masterplan.** Overwhelmingly, the masterplan principles received strong agreement across the board.

The principle with the greatest number marked strongly agree, is for 'a green town centre'. This reflects respondents desire for a more sustainable, environmentally and socially conscious place. Although a positive response, people seem to feel most sceptical of the principle for 'a unique future'.

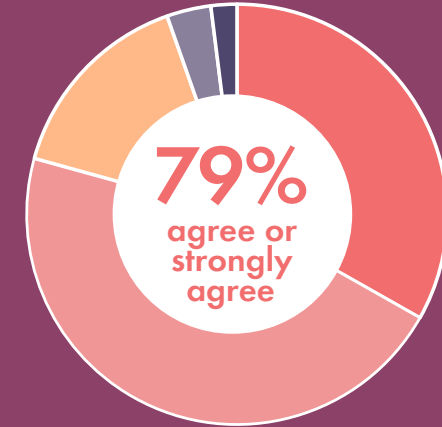
"It's such a pain to use public transport, that needs to be improved first. The convenience of public transport and the cost needs to be radically improved."

"It is essential to make the town more sustainable as we transition to a lower carbon economy"

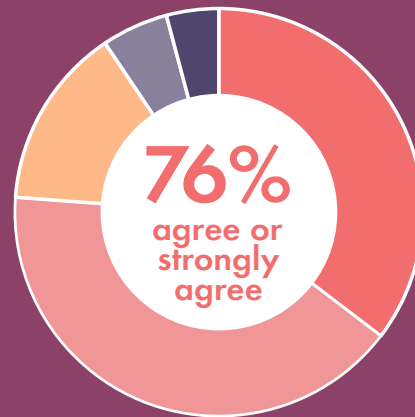
a green town centre



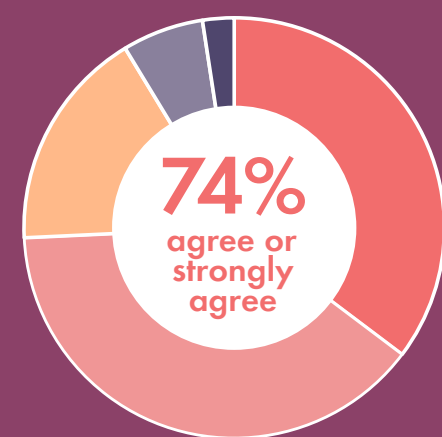
a resilient town



a compact town



a unique future



Masterplan principles - delivery

The survey also asked respondents **to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the concept masterplan would achieve the principles** of 'a green town centre' and 'a resilient town centre'.

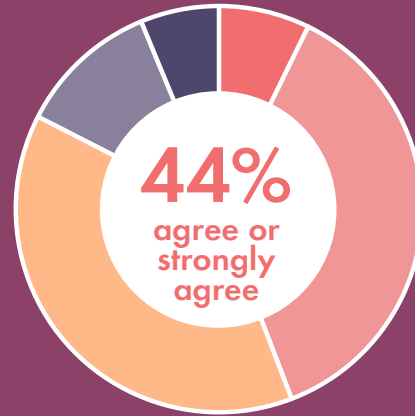
Interestingly, the responses to this question were slightly more hesitant, possibly reflecting a cynicism around delivery in general, or a lack of detail provided in the materials to demonstrate how the principles would be delivered or implemented. The next stage of engagement, will provide more information regarding this, which should help to assuage people's doubts.

A more in-depth set of questions were asked relating to particular moves proposed in the masterplan under the principles of a compact town and a unique feature - these are covered in more detail in the next pages.

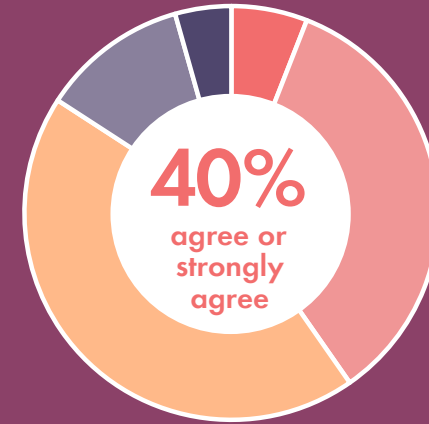
"... there is no detail about the actions that might be taken to achieve those. This detail is critical to the masterplan if it is to give citizens confidence that it will achieve its vision."

"Need less words and more plans."

a green town centre



a resilient town



a compact town



a unique future



A compact town - proposed moves

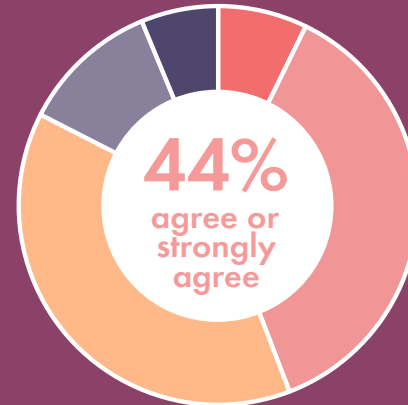
Question 8 of the online survey examined **to what extent do respondents agree or disagree that the concept masterplan is going to improve accessibility to public transport.** In total, 44% of respondents selected that they agree or strongly agree. However, almost the same amount again (37%) neither agreed or disagreed that the concept masterplan would improve accessibility. A small proportion, 16%, of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Giving respondents a method to improving movement within the town centre, question 9 asked **to what extent do you agree or disagree with introducing traffic zones to make the town centre easier for walking and cycling.** Overall, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to introduce traffic zones to make the town centre easier for walking and cycling - an encouraging response.

a compact town

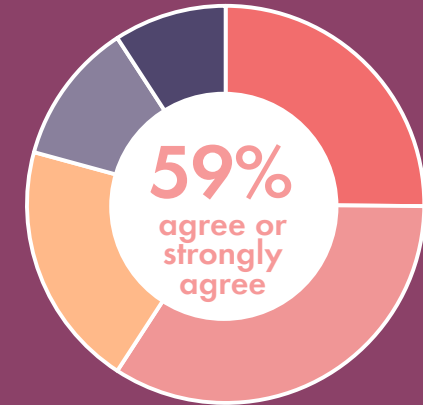
Q8

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the concept masterplan is going to improve accessibility to public transport?



Q9

To what extent do you agree or disagree with introducing traffic zones to make the town centre easier for walking and cycling?



Leisure activities

Question 13 asked respondents **what leisure activities they would like to see in the town centre in the future?** This page sets out some of the answers received from respondents, alongside a word cloud which demonstrates the frequency of key words mentioned in the responses. Words which appear frequently indicate a strong desire for a market or markets - with associated words such as craft and food also appearing frequently. There also appears to be a frequent mention of leisure, activities and classes - words which may be associated with these which appear in the cloud include cooking, sports, bowling, golf, swimming, pool and ice rink. A strong theme of arts and culture appears in the word cloud too.



"A good market with plenty of varying stalls would entice folks into town as it did previously."

"The return of a central football ground for Basingstoke Town FC..."

"Keep the current theatres and support them, do not add competing activities to the already existing leisure park.."

"A permanent indoor market?"

"Open air theatre/cinema showing family films or programming produced by local studios/artists, courts for badminton, tennis, 5-aside, basket ball, for hire."

Leisure activities

Question 14 asked respondents about **leisure facilities and their contribution to the success of the town centre and were provided options in order to identify what they felt was important or not important.**

Respondents felt that live music venues, a science centre, and an independent or art house cinema were extremely important - indicating a strong sense that arts, culture and education are important to a successful town centre.

Survey results indicated that gaming centres, life-size game zones and virtual reality experiences were least important to improving the town centre. This reveals a strong theme of 'games as leisure' facilities considered least important to a successful town centre.

most important

(number)= extremely important + very important

1. Live music venues (499)
2. A science centre (467)
3. Independent / art house cinema (401)

least important

(number)= slightly important + not important

1. Gaming centre (355)
2. Life-size game zones (345)
3. Virtual reality experiences (323)

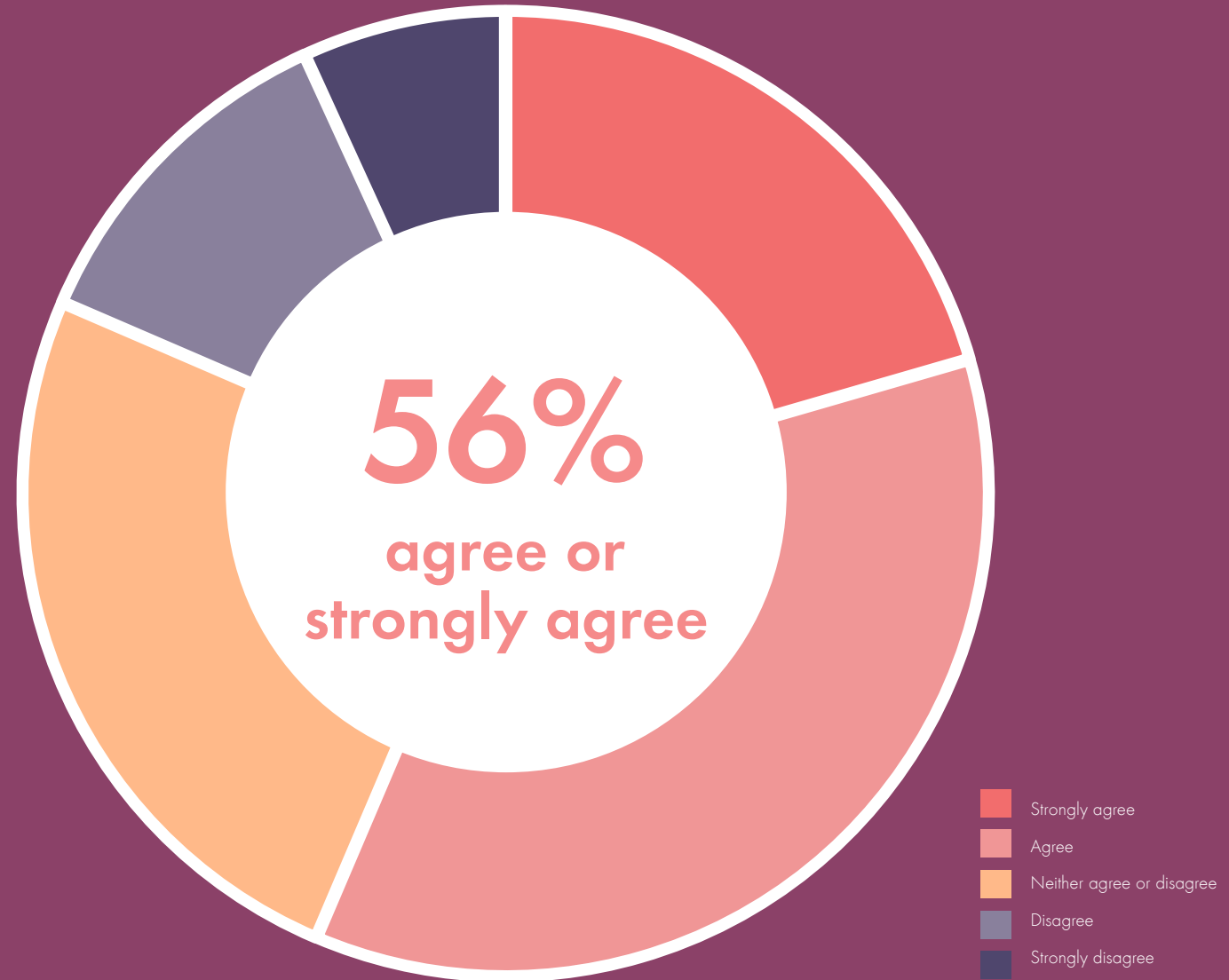
Other possible improvements

Question 15 addressed **possible improvements to the town centre which could enhance the area for the public** and highlighted some of the ideas being put forward to improve the Top of the Town, include making New Road a two-way street to allow for more walking, cycling and buses, providing multi-storey car parking and making better use of the car parks to provide development opportunities to support the revitalisation of the area and create a series of new green spaces. It went to ask **to what extent do you agree or disagree with these ideas and others included in the town centre concept masterplan?**

Overall, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the ideas set out. A notable proportion of people neither agreed or disagreed.

“Making New road a two way street would be a good idea”

“There is currently a pedestrian area in the centre but all the different shops are shutting and the same kind of shops are open there is not enough diversity of shops to encourage people”



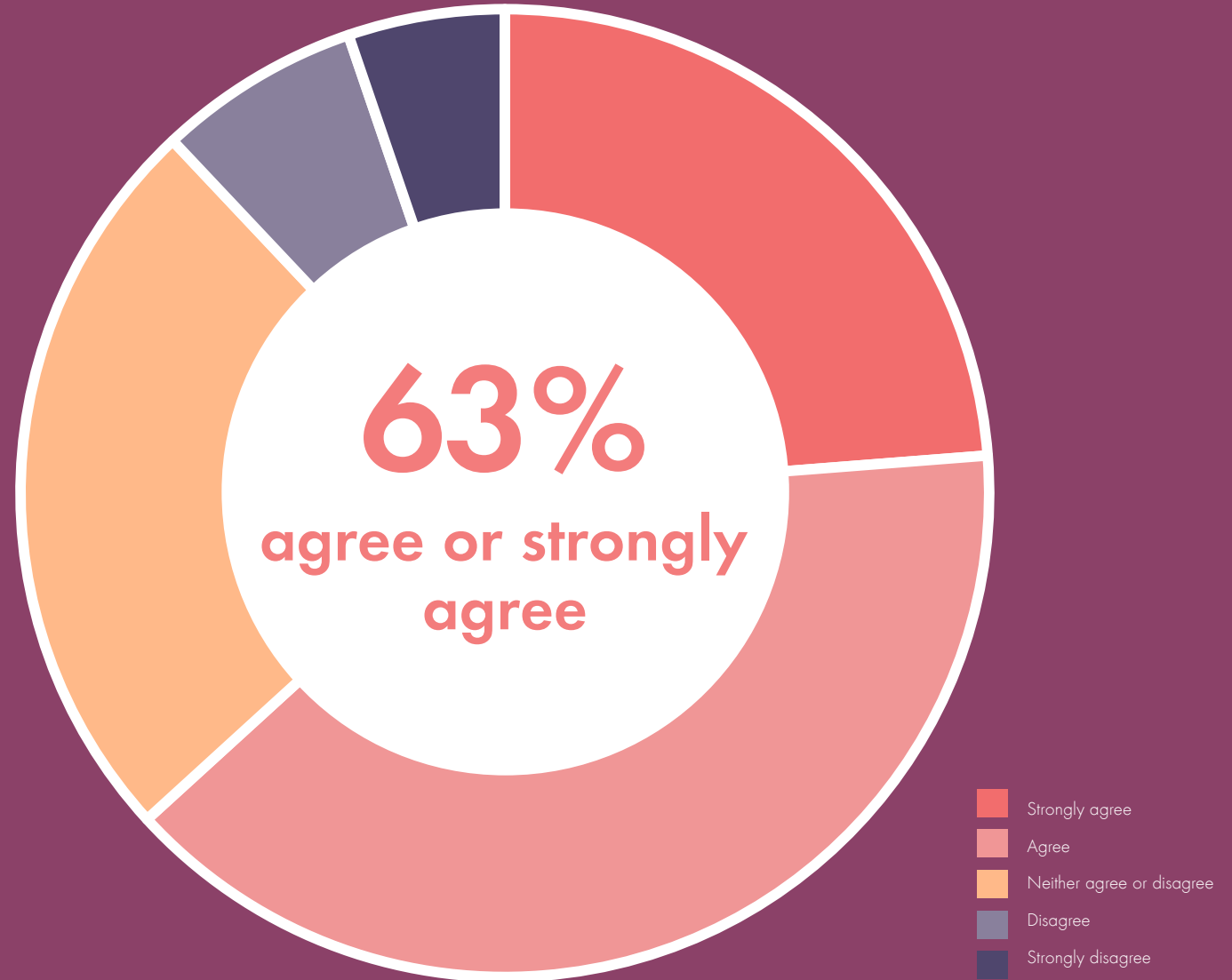
Short and long-term improvements

Question 16 addressed the **range of potential improvements to other areas in the town centre** set out in the concept masterplan, including short-term proposals which include changes to the existing layout on Church Street to create new green spaces, and longer-term options which include reimagining The Malls and Churchill Way to create a new bus interchange, improving walking and cycling opportunities and arrival by bus, opening up streets and new spaces and introducing a wider range of uses for this space. It went to ask **to what extent do you agree or disagree with the short and long-term improvements proposed in the town centre concept masterplan?**

A strong majority (63%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the short and long-term improvements identified in the concept masterplan.

“The plan for Churchill Way looks great but as stated earlier is highly ambitious and I question its affordability...”

“Looked very inviting, as currently feels separated and uninviting to walk this way. Much better use of space to open it up and include it into the town.”





4 FRAMEWORK

Basingstoke now

The existing Basingstoke town centre presents a number of challenges for a sustainable future. It's current form favours cars, with roads and car parks dominating much of the town centre creating a difficult environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

The town's previous reliance on retail as a predominant use is demonstrated by the dominance of The Malls and Festival Place on the town's structure and layout. Recent town centre trends have shown a shift away from traditional retail, with purpose-built shopping centres gradually becoming empty or redundant.

The insular nature of the shopping centres and lack of integration with surrounding parts of the town centre has resulted in the gradual decline of the town's former high streets in the Top of the Town, and a town centre of disparate parts. Although Basingstoke town centre is compact and walkable, a combination of heavy road infrastructure, poor walking routes and connections and buildings with large footprints has resulted in a complex and illegible place, with Basing View feeling completely detached from the rest of the town centre.

Right: The existing town centre



A new framework

This illustrative plan for the centre of Basingstoke demonstrates the change that is possible and which is needed in order to address the opportunities and challenges which are presented. It is based on the established principles of normal streets and perimeter urban blocks, which both repair and reconnect with the historic town and which also provide the flexibility needed to accommodate a range or different uses and to remain adaptable over time.

A further important aspect of this gradual transition is the return of buildings and front doors to the natural ground level, engaging with the streets and spaces around rather than being elevated above service areas, creating inward-facing structures with few entrances.

It is reasonable to expect that some significant elements of Festival Place will continue to be a significant part of the town centre, but that this careful and gradual repair work will overcome the challenges and complexities of the post-war development and re-establish Basingstoke as a connected and attractive town centre.

Right: An illustrative framework which shows how Basingstoke town centre could adapt and change over time.



Character areas

Basingstoke is currently a town of disparate parts, with Top of the Town feeling detached from Basing View, and the Malls and Festival Place forming large, inward facing entities which generally interact poorly with other parts of the town centre.

The masterplan seeks to integrate these parts by creating an attractive and connected town centre comprised of streets and walkable connections. Although the proposed masterplan will help to unify the town centre, the proposed framework of streets and spaces results in a strategic split of how the character of the town centre should evolve. This page helps to define those character areas, and sets out potential function, uses, scale and massing of future development in these areas. It should be noted that, above all, any new development should be of a high architectural quality and townscape to assist in the creation of attractive streets and spaces.

Station Area

This is the gateway into Basingstoke, and an important moment in establishing a positive perception of the town. Given its location next to the town's well connected train station, this area will primarily be suitable for commercial office and employment use. This will help to extend the predominant use of Basing View, integrating it better with the rest of the town. Given the existing context of Basing View and the modern character it has established, as well as the topography of the station area which sits at the top of the



valley, a range of heights could be considered suitable here, with new buildings having an overall ‘modern’ character. In order to enhance wayfinding and legibility from the station to other parts of the town, direct visual links through new development blocks towards Churchill Way, and beyond, should be established. All new development should be street-based and permeable, with active uses situated at ground level where possible. Attractive well-lit public realm should be provided throughout, providing spaces to sit and relax. Other suitable uses for this area could include healthcare, education or homes. Uses which complement the Anvil Theatre, such as other cultural or food and beverage, should also be considered within the area around the theatre.

Festival Place

Festival Place will continue to be the focus of large retail chains, particularly within the existing Festival Place buildings. The periphery of the existing Festival Place could be suitable for a range of other complementary uses, including shops, businesses and workspace at ground floor, with homes or offices above. The public realm should provide attractive, tree-lined walking routes with spaces to sit and rest. Building heights should be modest (3 - 5 storeys), mediating between the taller buildings around the station and Basing View, and the more sensitive and smaller scale character of the Top of the Town and Church Street.

Church Street

Church Street plays an important civic role in the town centre, and should maintain its community focus to support the existing uses in the area. The return to a legible network of streets and

conventional urban blocks provides the opportunity for a range of new uses in this part of the town including shops, businesses and workspace at ground floor and homes or offices above. The existing leafy green character created by Glebe Gardens and the Church should be extended into the public realm, with the potential for a larger green space or square with a civic focus, suitable for activities and events. New development should be of a very high quality, and respond to the scale, massing and quality of the existing listed buildings in this part of the town, including St Michael’s Church.

Top of the Town

One of the few remaining historic areas of the original market town, Top of the Town reflects its medieval heritage with a much finer urban grain than the rest of the town, smaller scale historic buildings, intimate streetscene and pedestrianised network of streets and civic spaces. The Top of the Town’s unique character and smaller scale should support a network of independent shops, cafes, restaurants, bars and businesses. The Top of the Town represents opportunities for street seating and dining, supported by enhanced greening and lighting opportunities which encourage activity during the day and in the evening. The offer should be distinct from that of Festival Place, encouraging new and independent businesses which will help provide activity and interest, while respecting the historic context and character of this part of town. The scale and quality of new development should reflect the existing small scale of the area and the attractive historic context.

Movement

A key principle of the masterplan approach is understanding the value of conventional streets and the way in which that can provide good connections for walking and cycling through and around the town. At the moment, too many routes are isolated, complicated and include unwelcoming features such as underpasses. The attractiveness of streets is that they are easy to understand and navigate, and that having shops, homes and workplaces opening onto them helps them to feel safer for everyone to use.

The creation of a more traditional network of streets and spaces will result in a fundamental change and improvement to the image and identity of the town centre. In establishing this structure, this will help to inform future decisions on the siting and appearance of the streets, development blocks and the architecture of individual buildings in order to create a much higher quality local environment.

As well as making short trips more attractive for walking, good streets should also make short cycle trips much more possible, including routes which connect through and beyond the core town centre to the railway station, workplaces, colleges and schools.

Hampshire County Council and BDBC's forthcoming Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan reflects these aspirations, and will provide further guidance for planning networks of walking zones and cycling routes that connect places that people want to get to.



Streets and spaces

Most of the streets in the town centre should be expected to serve several functions. Access will sometimes be required for servicing or emergencies or to reach individual properties. However, beyond this, vehicles should generally have limited access and streets will be designed to favour walking and cycling.

Streets where pedestrians are the dominant users may effectively be treated as a shared surface by many people. However, maintaining a clear delineation to show where vehicles should go and where cyclists are permitted to go will help to provide clarity.

Removing the gyratory system and introducing the wider traffic management strategy will help to reconnect the core of the town centre to its immediate surroundings and will allow space for more generous provision for walking and cycling, as well as better infrastructure for bus passengers.



Streets and spaces

Case-studies from Bath (below) and Walthamstow (right) showing how shared streets can maintain clarity and safety for access but prioritise walking and cycling.



The treatment of this shared surface in Bath helps provide clarity to street users



A high street in Walthamstow has been transformed into an attractive, walkable and cyclable route through public realm improvements⁶⁴

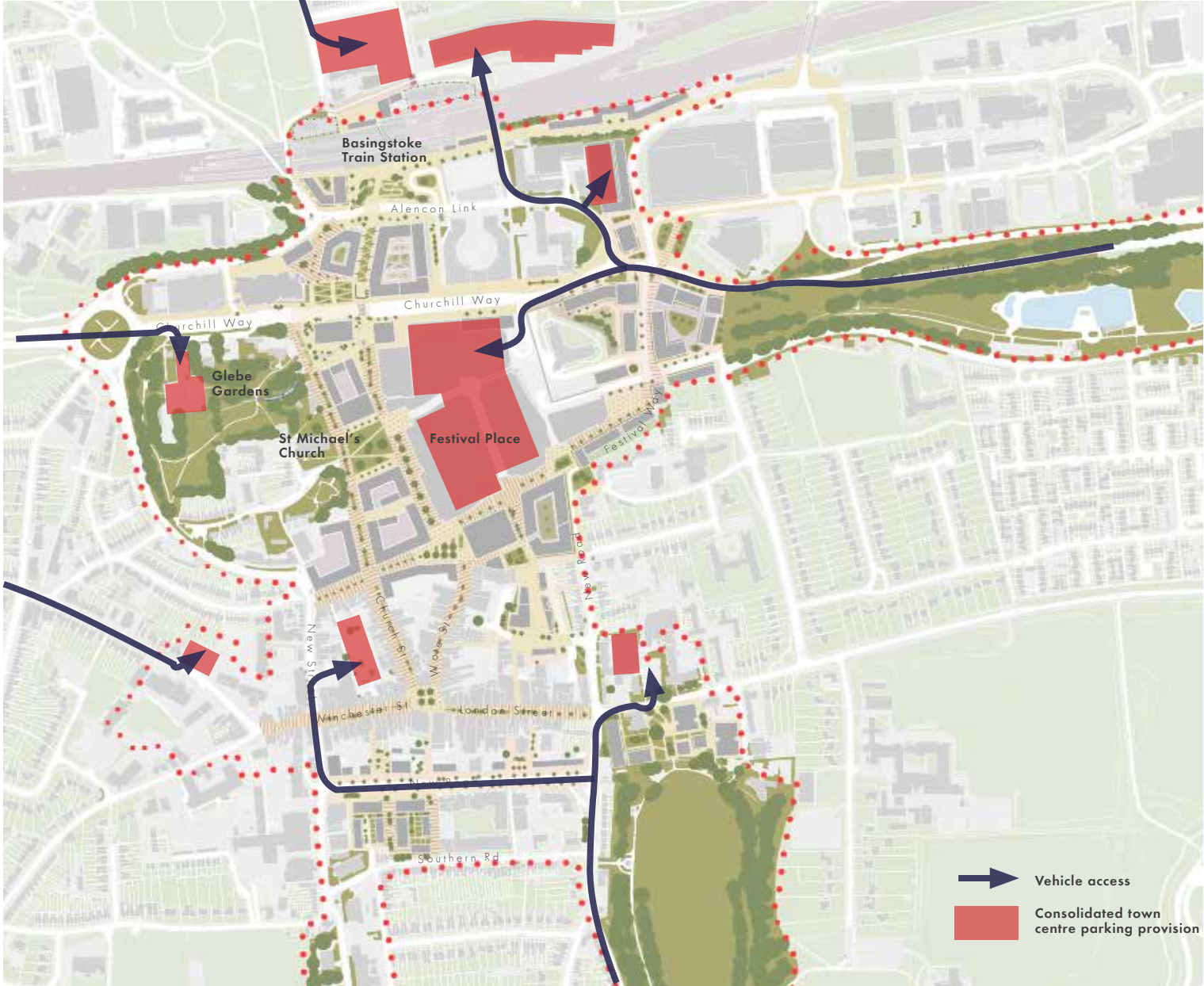
Town Centre parking

Town centre parking will remain an important facility for Basingstoke. It is recognised that for many people travelling into the town from the wider catchment area, the car is likely to remain their preferred mode of travel, and it is therefore important that car parking remains for those that need it and where no alternatives are available.

It is expected that existing car parks, including Festival Place will form the bulk of future provision, but a gradual reduction in surface parking is expected to plan for sustainable infill development. Consistent with the traffic zones, no car park will be accessible from more than one direction, avoiding the potential for them to be used as cut-throughs.

The overall parking strategy is supported by the improvements to walking and cycling provision, reducing the need for parking to support short trips. Improvements to the links to the station car park north of the tracks enable use by town centre visitors rather than just commuters. Dedicated residential parking provision for new homes is expected to be to a low volume, and supported by car clubs or the opportunity to rent a parking space if needed.

BDBC has appointed WSP to develop a Town Centre Car Parking strategy which will help to inform future changes to town centre parking.

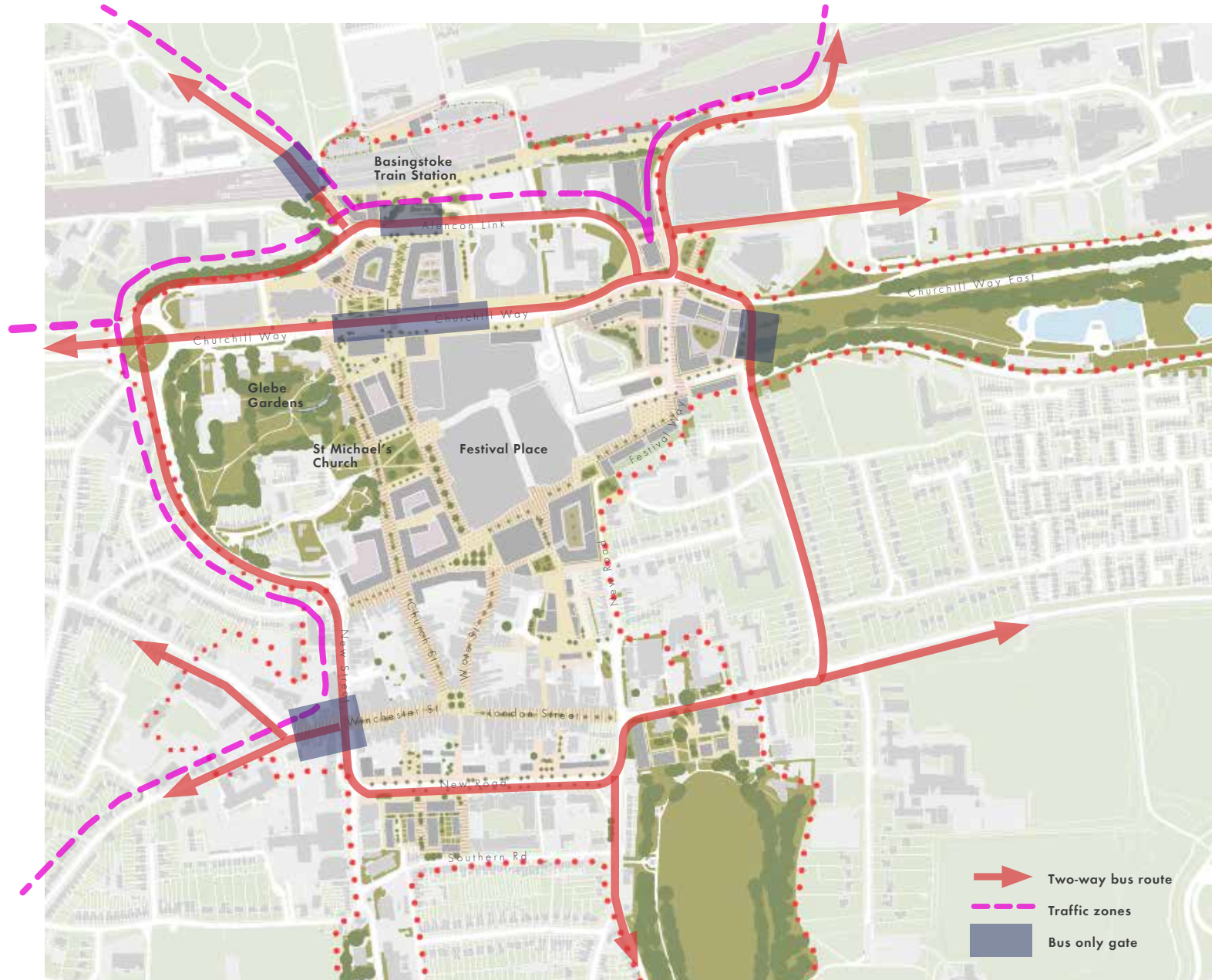


Bus routes

Buses play an important part in the future sustainable travel options around Basingstoke. The proposed changes to the street network and the removal of the gyratory will mean that buses are able to run two-way, particularly through the Top of the Town and avoid longer-than-necessary journeys around the gyratory system.

The long-term aim of redeveloping the Malls site is intended to transform Churchill Way, creating an east-west bus-only corridor through the centre of the town with good links to the shops and the station and able to accommodate the planer MRT routes. Alencon Link can also continue to provide an important bus facility and may play an important role during the phasing of development works.

With two-way working established and improved street character, New Road can play a more important role for bus stops which serve the Top of the Town. Bus-only gates at key locations around the town will give buses the ability to take direct and dedicated routes, with priority over general traffic.



Town centre living

Town centre living is an important part of the future of Basingstoke - it is a very sustainable way to live, uses brownfield sites which reduce greenfield development and it supports the vitality of the town centre with a critical mass of people within the immediate area.

Some of the streets in the historic parts of Basingstoke already demonstrate how good town scale density can be achieved in a comfortable way, based around good streets.

The key characteristics of these buildings can be incorporated into new homes in and around the town centre - terraced homes and low to mid-rise blocks with a mix of maisonettes and flats can create good streets and provide an attractive place for families as well as providing smaller homes.

A key principle of new town centre living is that schemes should expect to be low car, ideally with car clubs rather than private dedicated parking. Basingstoke already offers plenty of opportunity for homes with parking and living in the town centre should offer a genuinely different choice.

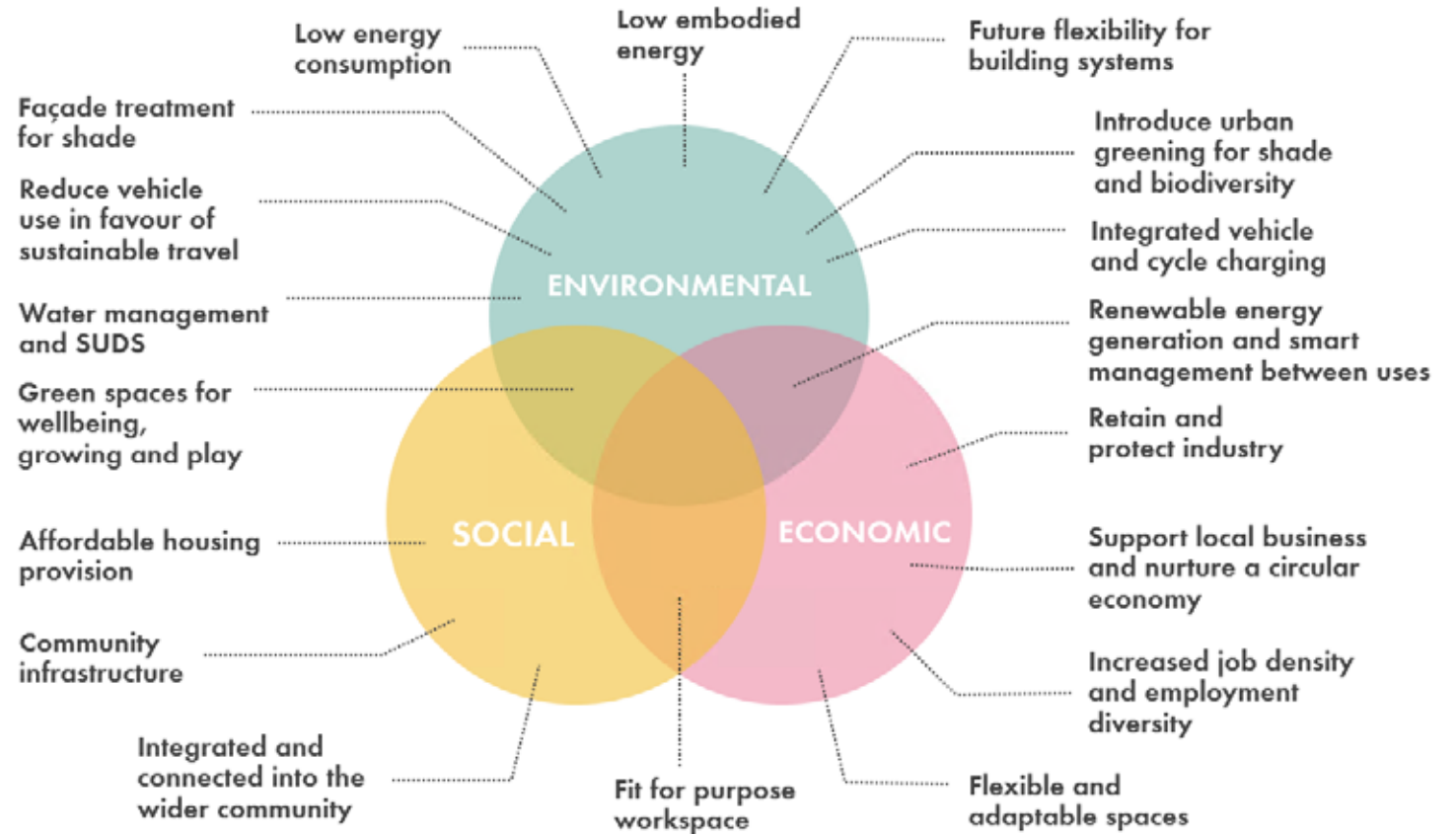
Right: Examples of high quality town centre family houses and apartments at a range of densities



Sustainability and climate change adaptation

The approach to sustainability and mitigating the effects of climate change on Basingstoke town centre is not something which can be treated as a choice or a bolt-on additional element. It is something which should drive all the key decisions around the way in which changes to the town centre are planned and implemented.

As well as being about the reduction of energy and the responsible use of resources, sustainability should also be about social and economic resilience, using diversity and adaptability as key factors for change that benefits not just a small number of buildings in the the centre of Basingstoke, but has much mnore wide-reaching benefits for the whole of the town.





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Allies and Morrison

85 Southwark Street

London SE1 0HX

telephone +44 20 7921 0100

web alliesandmorrison.com

email studio@alliesandmorrison.com