JMP

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Lighting Design

marlowes shopping zone improvement strategy

draft

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background

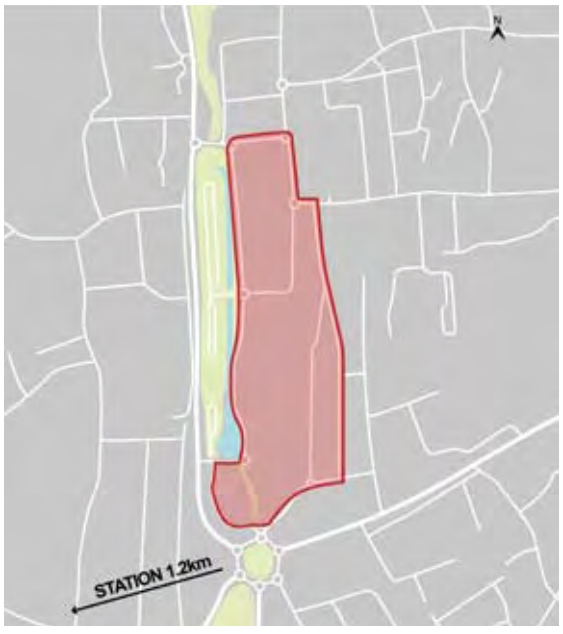
introduction

JMP Consultants Ltd (JMP) has been commissioned by Dacorum Borough Council to develop an Improvement Strategy for the Marlowes Shopping Zone. The intention is for the Strategy to be used to implement effective public realm interventions that will significantly enhance the public realm and streetscape, with the objectives of securing greater footfall and expenditure and adding to the diversity of uses within the Town Centre.

The completion of the Riverside development in 2005 has accellerated the regeneration process, but the strong differences between this recent development and the ageing Marlowes shopping area highlight the need for a determined approach to improving the public realm throughout the area. The proposals developed in this study aim to improve linkages between the developments and the wider area through the use of a coordinated approach to urban design.

The Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy will kick-start the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead town centre, helping to deliver a vision for the town centre to be a memorable place where people will want to live, work, visit and enjoy.

The proposed measures are presented as a series of coordinated actions, focussing on enhancements to the public realm and streetscape, strengthening the evening economy and engaging with the local community in order to foster a sense of pride and ownership in the town centre.



The Vision

Successful town centres are alive during the day, evening and night. They are attractive places where spending and being are in balance. They respect and reinforce the character and identity of the area - its buildings, structures and features. They display flair and imagination in all aspects of design for the day and night.

Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Plan

This Improvement Strategy for the Marlowes Shopping Zone should be built around the following six key objectives:

1. Regenerate the original New Town buildings and the ramped area with a series of design interventions which aim to provide a more integrated 'High Street', together with a core mix of uses to attract vitality to the heart of the town day and night.
2. Employ excellent urban design practice to create a safe and clean pedestrian streetscape and provide coherent connective streetscape design throughout the dtown centre.
3. Improve the core shopping facility to tackle the economic downturn with a programme to enhance vacant shop fronts.
4. Embrace the night time economy with a lighting strategy and work towards the Purple Flag status.
5. Provide a range of innovatively designed activities to engage with all ages and abilities within the local community.
6. Develop a sense of pride and ownership by commissioning a series of local public artworks, projects and creative interventions to raise the profile of the cultural life and heritage of the Borough.

the project

Report Structure

The structure of this report reflects the methodology outlined below and begins with a detailed site analysis based on data collected at the Marlowes Shopping Zone, followed by a distinct set of design approach principles.

The improvement strategy is then graphically presented in two general plans, which identify areas for enhancement which are explained in further detail through a series of individual project particulars for the shopping zone and the wider area.

The report concludes with indicative phasing of interventions and associated costs together with a brief conclusion discussing the proposals.

Project Methodology

The project methodology is broken down into three distinct stages, identified as:

Stage One - Site Analysis and Development of Overall Landscape Master Plan

Stage Two - Public Consultation

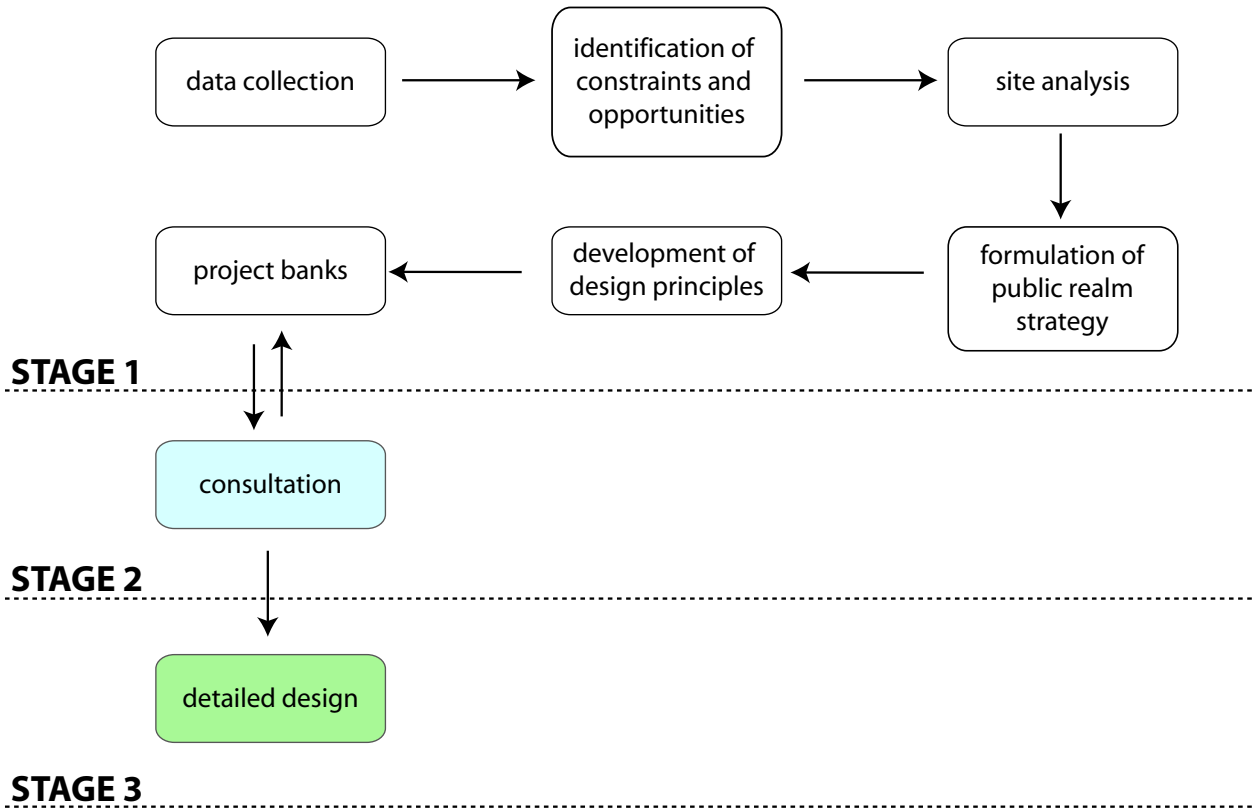
Stage Three - Detailed Design

This report covers the first two steps, these have been carried out in late 2010 and 2011. The following flow chart summarises the key tasks undertaken during stages 1 and 2.

Stage three will take on board the feedback from the previous stages and develop construction drawings for the projects selected by Dacorum as a priority in the immediate term. The plans will be accompanied by a detailed cost plan and all documents required to obtain approvals under planning and building legislation where necessary.

Next Steps

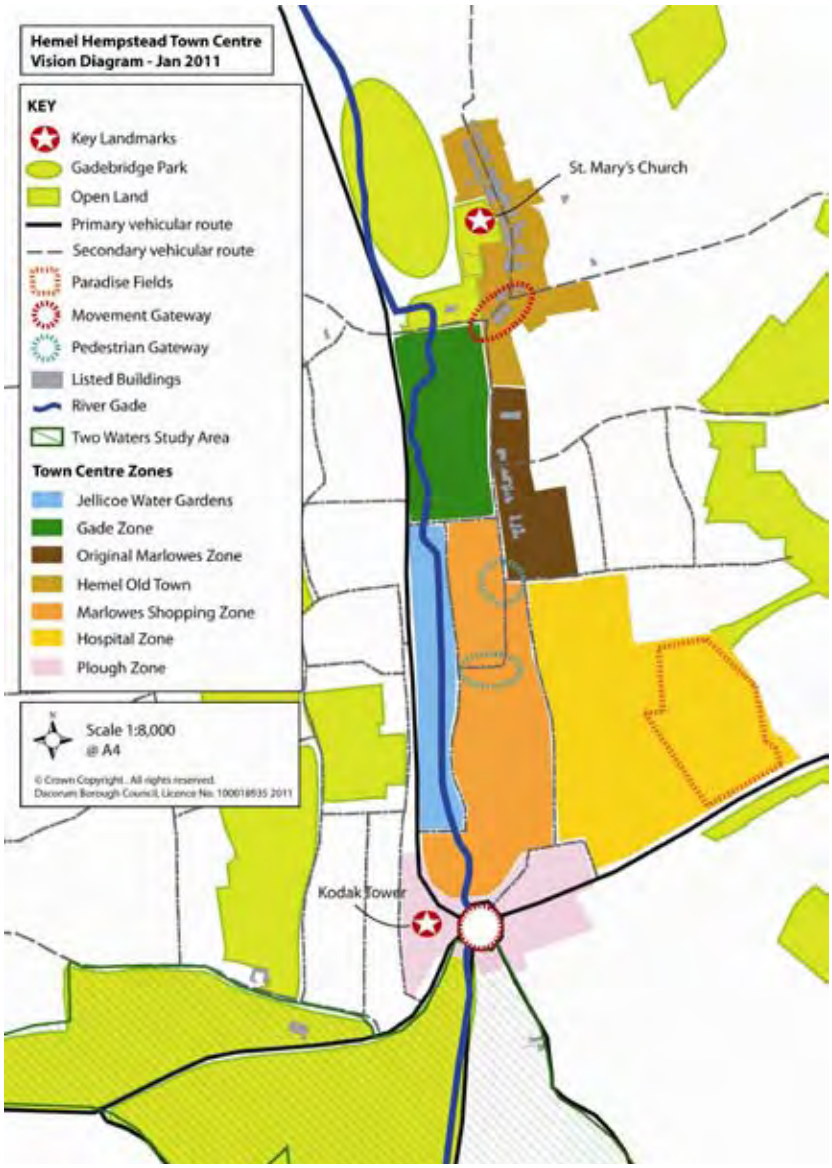
Following on from the public consultation exercise undertaken (included at Appendix A of this report), the preferred options will be taken forward to detailed design which will be developed in the second part of this year.



the study area

The study area covers the extents identified within the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Vision Diagram as the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

The study area extends from Combe Street in the north to the Plough roundabout in the south and encapsulates the primary retail core of Hemel Hempstead. Within this core retail area are the Marlowes Shopping Centre and Riverside which are located in the mid and southern ends of the zone. The study area is bound to the west by Waterhouse Street and the Watergardens and to the east by Wolsey Street and King Harry Street.



policy review

Any vision developed for the Marlowes Shopping Zone needs to take into account the policies guiding development within the local area. A number of policy documents are relevant to the Marlows Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy, the key objectives of which are outlined in this section.

Towards 2021 – The Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy

Dacorum's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) has a number of cross-cutting and more specific themes that relate directly to the Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy.

Public realm interventions should aim to encourage sustainable movement, especially between business and residential areas. At the same time, improvements to the streetscene should help to design out crime, whilst helping to improve the area's image, thereby creating a pleasant business environment and instilling a sense of community pride for the town centre.

Design interventions should seek to promote opportunities for community involvement, both as part of the design process and beyond.

The Marlowes Improvement Strategy will take into account the necessity to encourage movement by foot through improvements to the pedestrian environment and provide measures to improve the streetscene through security enhancements such as better lighting. Innovative public consultation exercises will form an imperative part of the design process.

Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011

The Dacorum Local Plan seeks to strike a reasonable balance between protecting the high quality environment of Dacorum whilst making provision for sustainable development needed to accommodate existing and future needs up until the period 2011.

The Plan identifies the Marlowes Shopping Zone as the primary town centre area, and recognises that the retail offer at Hemel Hempstead forms the Borough's main commercial and transport core.

The Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Strategy section provides a series of objectives, which of primary importance to the Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy includes achieving 'a quality environment for the benefit of those who live, work and shop in the town centre'.

The strategy identifies five zones within the town centre with the Marlowes Shopping Zone forming one of these. The strategy states that the primary retail core of the town remains the area where a quality environment is essential to attract shoppers. It continues to state that the 'present pedestrian environment is excellent, but could be extended to other parts of the town centre, for example, by provision of passive activities and services in the Watergardens which are already on a desire line between the shops and the car parks.' Whilst the statement regarding the pedestrian environments condition is now outdated due to the age of the document, the concept of extending the town centre to include passive activities at the Watergardens remains valid.

Draft Core Strategy (2010)

Dacorum's Draft Core Strategy includes a number of strategic objectives, as well as area-specific policies. Within the Sustainable Development Strategy are aims to conserve and enhance the function and character of the Borough's market towns, villages and countryside, as well as the creation of safe and attractive environments through high quality design. The Core Strategy seeks to strengthen confidence in Hemel Hempstead's role as a sub-regional business and shopping centre.

The Strategy sets out a number of key urban design principles, including: character, defined layout and enclosure, making connections, high quality of public realm, legibility, adaptability, diversity, safe and welcoming, which should all be embedded into design proposals for the town centre.

'Policy CS13: Quality of the Public Realm' dictates that new developments are expected to contribute to the quality of the public realm by:

- providing active frontages and natural surveillance;
- promoting clutter free streets by removing unnecessary signs and utilising multi-purpose street furniture;
- promoting pedestrian friendly, shared spaces in appropriate places;
- incorporating a coherent palette of sustainable surface materials, planting and street furniture;
- including an interactive and stimulating realm with a public art and lighting strategy; and
- incorporating street trees, living walls and soft landscaping.

All of these puiblic realm objectives will be carefully considered and where appropriate incorporated into the Marlowes improvement strategy.

'Policy CS16: Shops and Commerce' states that development proposals that promote a diverse evening economy in the town centres will be supported, provided that their social and environmental impacts are controlled.

Hemel Hempstead Place Strategy

The Hemel Hempstead Place Strategy states that the accessibility of the town centre is one of the town's assets, however there is a need to maintain and improve pedestrian route between adjoining residential areas, car parks and bus stops. The Strategy also recognises that the linearity of the town centre remains a barrier to integration of the Marlowes Shopping Zone with the various other zones and that many of the buildings and the public realm in the town centre are now tired with some requiring significant regeneration.

The Strategy outlines a Vision for Hemel Hempstead town centre as a 'vibrant place where people will want to shop, work, live, learn and visit during the day, evening and night'. It is anticipated that this will be achieved through 'economic regeneration and new housing to maximise footfall, whilst ensuring a distinctive identity based upon its New Town history'. The Vision also states that new development will deliver a legible and attractive physical environment that makes maximum use of its pedestrian connections and environmental and built assets.

The Marlowes Shopping Zone is specifically mentioned as a zone which holds 'signifiant regeneration opportunities with the potential to restore the Market Square and create additional leisure uses and active frontages along the ramped area (at ground level) and Waterhouse Street'. It also states that there are opportunities to 'create a new covered public meeting space along the pedestrianised area, make improvements to building fascias, de-clutter the pedestrian environment and revamp the children's play area'.

'Policy CS33: Hemel Hempstead Town Centre' sets out a number of measures linked to uses, movement and design. The policy seeks to secure an additional anchor store for the town centre, whilst retaining and restoring existing important public spaces. The creation of a new public transport hub could tie in with improvements to pedestrian links along the River Gade and between the Old Town and Riverside. The importance of pedestrian and movement gateways is stressed through a call for considerate building design, coupled with active street frontages. Public artworks currently in mixed states of repair could be refurbished to add character to the area, whilst new developments should build upon these features further. High quality materials, street furniture, artwork and a coordinated design approach could assist in the goals of enhanced movement and public realm experience.

Hemel 2020 – our vision, our future

Hemel 2020 is designed to inspire the development of Hemel Hempstead for the next 50 years. This will be achieved through the specification of regeneration projects and developments that will enhance the town and its inhabitants' quality of life.

The vision seeks to create a town centre environment that provides the right experience for both residents and visitors, creating a sense of destination. This is to be achieved through the deployment and protection of a mix of uses within the town centre, including retail, office, commercial, leisure and residential uses.

The Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy will seek to create a real destination through encouraging the development of a wide range of complementary land uses in order to help improve the town centre's image and offer.

Significant importance has been placed on the town's pedestrian links, and the benefits that these routes bring. As such, the quality of the route between the Riverside development (to the south of the study area) and Gadebridge Park and Hemel Old Town (to the north of the study area) is seen as being paramount; with direct implications for this study. At the same time, improvements to the pedestrian links to/from the Water Gardens should be explored.

The Water Gardens are seen as an underused opportunity, with significant potential for new developments facing onto them, and at the same time drawing them into the town centre environment.

Coupled with these area-specific measures, Hemel 2020 aims to encourage sustainable transport, and in particular it seeks a fresh approach to the town centre's highway network. This new approach should seek to improve connections within and beyond the town centre, particularly north-south along Marlowes to Riverside and east-west between Marlowes and the Water Gardens. These improved connections should form part of a larger network of open spaces and pedestrian links to form green corridors of footpaths and cycle-ways.

The Marlowes Improvement Strategy will seek to enhance sustainable connections both within the Marlowes Shopping Zone and between the town centre and its surroundings through appropriate treatment of the streets/boundaries to enhance their accessibility and connectivity as well as the visual asthetics.

Dacorum Green Space Strategy 2011-2016

The Dacorum Green Space Strategy is a vision and plan to deliver improved public spaces within the Borough with the aim of providing the means to improve the quality of neighbourhoods, to meet community and planning needs, and to deliver wider objectives for Dacorum. The 'green infrastructure' covered by the

document includes the network of protected sites, nature reserves, green spaces, waterways and green linkages that surround and thread through the built environment.

The document, which provides a strategy for the five year period up until 2016, identifies seven settlement areas with Hemel Hempstead - General being included as a section within the study.

A series of priorities were outlined for Hemel Hempstead, which include increasing facilities for outdoor sports, cycling, providing more allotments, nature conservation and providing easy access to the countryside. The following aims are outlined in the consultation summary included within the report which are relevant to the Marlowes Shopping Zone:

- Addressing the quality and availability of facilities for young people, particularly the older age group was a high priority
- The need for more green space, especially in the town centre
- More tree planting and improvements to the town parks

Dacorum Community Play Strategy

Dacorum's Play Strategy seeks to improve play experiences for children and young people living within the Borough. The Strategy has a number of aims, which include the recognition that play occurs in a variety of settings, both natural and facilitated. Risk is an inherent part of play, and designing out risk results in the over-engineering of play spaces and risks a resultant low level of use. The Strategy dictates that community involvement is essential in the planning of successful play spaces.

Within the strategy, Hemel Hempstead is identified as having the greatest deficiency in provision of Static Play equipment, which is ranked fourth in the Strategy's list of Top Wishes. Also amongst the list of wishes is for play equipment with sensory stimulation such as lighting, sound and texture, as well as the adaptation of existing play equipment for those children with special needs.

Play and the provision of suitable play equipment will form a key part of the proposed interventions at the Marlowes through integrating public realm design and landscape with elements of play to create active, multi-use spaces.

Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Strategy

The Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Strategy focuses on making best use of the rivers Bulbourne, Gade and Ver which flow through the Borough and places particular emphasis on highlighting opportunities to planners and developers.

As the River Gade flows to the west of the Marlowes Shopping Zone at the Watergardens and cuts across the Riverside Shopping Centre, this document forms a basis for how improvements can be made to better utilise this key asset to the town.

Identified under the Bulborne and Upper Gade Restoration Strategy are improvements to the River Gade along its course adjacent to and within the Marlowes Shopping Zone. Most importantly to the town centre, the course of the River through the Watergardens has been highlighted as requiring river channel restoration. This is the process where by both banks and channel bed have been modified in the past and there is a need for the the whole channel to be restored to a natural form.

Improvements and restoration to the River Gade in the proximity to the Marlowes Shopping Zone also tie in with the Two Waters scheme located south of the Plough roundabout.

Charette Design Principles

In January 2011 a charette event was held to provide input into the ongoing masterplanning process and provide a basis for stimulating ideas, discussing views and opinions and to develop a momentum that will help sustain the subsequent stages of the process.

A series of design principles were established as a result of the charette exercise and included:

- 'The ingredients of place' - The masterplan should seek to actively manage and promote positive change through careful interventions over time and taking into account aspects such as topography, integration and access;
- 'Series of linked spaces' - The town should comprise a series of linked spaces, or "events", that will help make the town easier in size and shape to walk around which could include large civic spaces, junctions, green spaces and other high quality areas to connect together;
- 'Barriers to movement' - The town centre is relatively inaccessible from the west and south and many people living near to the town centre often drive to other towns for shopping as a result of the poor quality street environment;
- 'Connecting the green edges' - the "green spine" of the Watergardens is one of the town's most prized characteristics and the playing fields/woodlands to the west and green wedges to the east link the town to the open countryside. The greening of four key streets would connect the town to these green edges and make the town centre a more pleasant and legible place;
- 'Pedestrian circuits' - There is a lack of any retail circuits and the long linear nature of town means that the Marlowes Shopping Zone does not

connect to side roads and other secondary retail areas. Positive examples of other towns include both high street big name stores in the centre but independant retailers on adjacent streets. Creating a circuit for Hemel Hempstead may encourage a more varied retail offer; and

- 'Fronts and backs' - The Watergardens suffer from a lack of an active street overlooking their eastern edge as Waterhouse Street comprises many building backs and service yards, leading to a poor quality pedestrian experience in places. However there are redevelopment opportunities along here and design principles for these opportunity sites must work to deliver a positive edge fronting the Watergardens, with active ground floor usage.

These design principles have been considered in the development of this Improvement Strategy and will feed into the Masterplanning process for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

urban form

The urban form of the Marlowes Shopping Zone plays a major role in how the space is used by pedestrians, as well as providing a background to the activities that take place within its public realm. The fabric of the Marlowes is largely characterised by the three major design interventions that have shaped the existing built environment over the last six decades, the original New Town buildings/layout, the Marlowes Shopping Centre environs and the Riverside Shopping Centre. This section will consider both the historical and the existing features of the Marlowes Shopping Zone urban form.

Historical Layout

The Marlowes originally ran, as it does today, north-south from what is now the Old Town towards the junction with Station Road (Plough Roundabout) and was lined by a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached residential and small commercial premises. A number of side streets were formerly served off the Marlowes, with roads such as Bridge Street and Midland Road being evident prior to the New Town, which were generally home to small rows of housing, industries and farmsteads/fields beyond. The northern section of the Marlowes was characterised by larger properties, set far back from the road inside their own land, whilst the southern section featured rows of permeable terraced buildings constructed directly onto the road with a cluster around the site of the existing Marlowes Shopping Centre. The now disused 'Nickey Line' railway, which ran between Harpenden and Hemel Hempstead, crossed the Marlowes over a viaduct at its southern end close to its junction with Station Road.

The town centre environment which is recognisable today is a result of post-war 1940s planning and the decision to construct the first of a series of 'New Towns' as an extension of the existing built form of Hemel Hempstead. The design and layout of the New Town dramatically altered the townscape and urban form of Hemel Hempstead, shifting the town centre south away from the High Street of the 'Old Town', creating a new focus on the Marlowes as the central spine upon which the new retail offer would be situated. The Marlowes was straightened and widened to provide for two-way vehicular traffic and large pedestrian footways, whilst the layout of the surrounding built form altered in order to accommodate a new network of pedestrian and road connections, intersected by courts (such as Bank Court), large multi-storey car parks and bridges over newly created watercourses.

The layout of the new street network and the buildings which surrounded them created an enclosed town centre environment, with the dominant movement encouraged to be north-south along the Marlowes and the adjacent streets which run parallel to it. The layout of the linear blocks, whilst focusing activity onto the Marlowes,

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restricted east-west movement across the street and to the surrounding areas/neighbourhood, leading to the current situation of poor east-west connectivity from the town centre which is limited to a couple of key connections. In addition to this, the original layout for a linear lake/river to the west of the Marlowes, combined with highways on both sides of the lake created a triple barrier effect to pedestrian movement. Leighton Buzzard Road is a particularly strong barrier to movement, with multiple lanes of traffic significantly restricting pedestrian movement.

These barriers, combined with the development of the Marlowes Shopping Centre, a continuous impermeable linear block along a large section of the Marlowes eastern side in the late 1980s, has lead to a situation whereby the planned urban form of Hemel Hempstead has effectively created a north-south pedestrian 'channel', rather than a highly interconnected system of town centre public spaces.

The Marlowes was converted to a pedestrianised space in the early 1990s which resulted in the re-routing of vehicular traffic along the Waterhouse Street/ Leighton Buzzard Road to the west or one of the two parallel service routes which run to the east. Whilst the pedestrianisation of the space enhanced accessibility and encouraged east-west movement across the street, it limited the level of street activity once the area's shops had closed, and the issue of connection to the surrounding areas remained. The introduction of a series of large car parks supported the town's car-orientated focus, and reduced the need for fully formed connections between the town centre and surrounding residential areas, reinforcing the isolation caused by the surrounding roads.

The development of the Riverside Shopping Centre during the 2000's signalled a more modern design ethos with a shift towards creating a more pedestrian focused retail environment where traffic is excluded. The Riverside essentially consists of three large development blocks primarily focused on 'big box' retail units. The layout of these units is structured around an attractive area of greenery on the banks of the River Gade which has been made a central feature of the Riverside Shopping Centre and adds an essential 'softer' element to the public realm. A series of pedestrian bridges effectively link the different areas of the Riverside as well as with the pedestrianised Marlowes. A bridge which has been installed to link the former Kodak building development to the town centre has enhanced the connectivity to the South through helping to remove the barrier formed by Leighton Buzzard Road. A new lighting regime, moving away from standard lighting columns, was also introduced to the Riverside which provides a strong basis for expanding upon into the Marlowes pedestrianised area.

2010

analysis

Street clutter adds character to the streetscape, but disrupts the linearity created by the uniform building line.

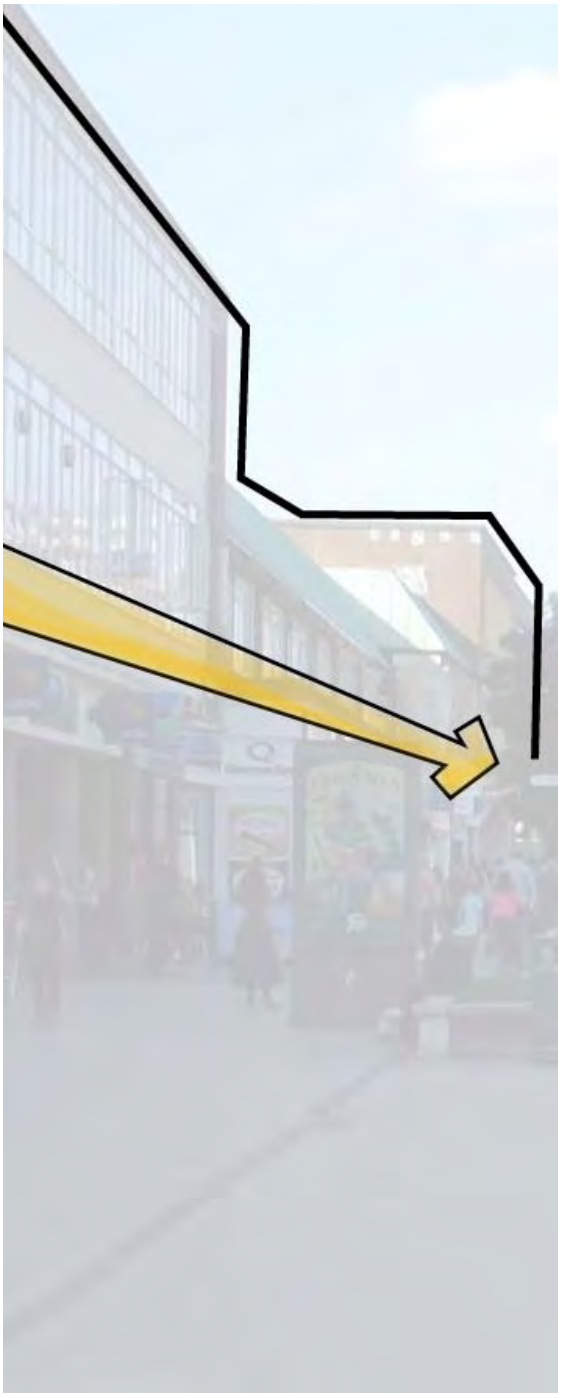
Frontages

Frontages within the Marlowes Shopping Zone vary in appearance, which is dependant not only on market conditions (eg. closed businesses) but also largely on the location within the town centre. The Riverside Shopping Centre at the southern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone is considered an exemplar scheme as it provides excellent frontage onto the street in a modern retail environment, supported by high quality landscaping. Retail facades are clean, bright, inviting and well designed, with retail 'logos' being placed not only at ground level as per a typical retail unit, but up high on the building facades. This appearence is currently superior to much of what exists in the original Marlowes area, and many of these features should be built upon and expanded further north beyond Riverside.

The Marlowes benefits from a relatively coherent and continuous linear building line along both sides of the street, with the majority of premises being occupied, providing a well maintained and active frontage onto the street during retail opening hours. In addition, the scale of frontage onto the Marlowes remains fairly constant, with most retail premises occupying the ground floor and other land uses (or car parking facilities) utilising the upper floors. Currently, some of these upper floor land uses in the Marlowes are unoccupied, which reduces the level of surveillance and aesthetic appeal of the built form and should be promoted for refurbishment and/or temporary art or lighting installations (an economic yet visually appealing alternative) where they are no longer considered lettable.

As a consequence of the prevailing design principles which informed the layout of the Marlowes, it tends to turn its back on its surroundings, choosing to focus entirely on the street front. This has resulted in an intimidating streetscape to the rear, particularly noticeable along Waterhouse Street where the frequent service yard access points disrupts the linearity of the pavement and makes movement difficult for pedestrians. Similarly, King Harry Street operates as a service road, with extremely low levels of activity, resulting in a sense of hostility and redundant space.

Shop front signage along the Marlowes is generally good, particularly the pedestrianised shopping zone north of the Riverside. Whilst the occasional closed business exists in this section of the Marlowes, the quality of shop frontages decreases noticeably the further north one travels beyond Bridge Street, with more closed shops or blank/flyposted or shuttered shop windows. Numerous shops currently advertise the premises by means of vinyled facades that cover emergency exits, rear doors and windows etc, which provides a more lively and enjoyable element to the



streetscape than blank facades.

In addition to this, inconsistent and poorly designed advertising boards protruding from the side of buildings (both open and closed for business) add a further negative impact on the streetscape. Where advertising is considered necessary, it could take the form of coherent signage, like that found on the front aspect of the Shopping Centre or used in historic towns and cities to draw pedestrians along the street.

The impact of closed businesses and inactive frontages on the streetscene is twofold, not only does it detract from the aesthetic qualities of the public realm, but it also reduces the level of activity and surveillance onto the street. This is nowhere more evident than on the side streets, alleys and service routes which connect and run parallel to the Marlowes. These areas are characterised by tall, blank facades with very limited activity (both in terms of vehicles and pedestrians) and poor lighting. The issues here are greater than purely enhancing the shop front facades and encouraging new businesses to move in as per the primary shopping street, as there is almost no frontage of any sort onto these spaces which are purely given over to business servicing and channelling pedestrian movement to car parks. Other elements of the original design such as coloured facades and frontages are now looking tired and dated and therefore also require updating and/or repair.

Responsive Space

The Marlowes Shopping Zone primarily acts as a space for pedestrian movement which supports shopping and leisure activities both within the Marlowes Shopping Zone and the surrounding area. However, whilst the flow of people through the area in order to access these premises is of key importance, the space does not simply operate as a movement corridor, and is in fact flexible and responsive to the various needs of the community.

The use of the space varies depending on the time of the day, day of the week and period of the year. One of the most significant adaptations of the space is the provision of a market in the Marlowes on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The market utilises a large amount of space, providing approximately 30 marquees which completely alters the ambience and purpose of the space and creates a large amount of additional footfall. The market works well in the Marlowes due to the space's generous width (appromxiately 25m) and the fact that it is located in the centre of the primary retail offer, therefore benefitting from the associated passing footfall.

The Marlowes acts as a place for expression, with the space adopting the role of a backdrop to a series of

analysis

Vacant shop fronts damage the rhythm of retail frontages along Marlowes. They create pockets of inactivity that contribute nothing to the streetscape.

public art installations throughout the area. The space is also sufficiently wide to enable the production of small shows and outside live events and these uses should be encouraged further to activate the space during the evening.

Despite the fact that the area is in need of public realm refreshment, it is still well used during the day. However, the gathering and socialising that occupies the space during the day gradually dissipates as businesses along the Marlowes close in the evening, leaving only a few scattered takeaways, restaurants and pubs attracting people into the area at night. The wide expanse of space found along the Marlowes becomes clear, with no focus to take attention away from the weaker aspects of the streetscape. The space itself does not respond well to darkness, with a lack of feature lighting and other elements which could entice people to stay in the evening. There is virtually nothing moving or happening, no traffic, taxis or buses, resulting in a 'dead' street.

Land Uses

As the Marlowes Shopping Zone operates primarily as a retail focused high street environment; the predominant land use along its length is retail and commercial businesses at the ground floor with service bays to the rear. Many of the buildings that front onto the Marlowes directly are between two and four stories in height, and therefore the upper floors are either used as an extension of the ground floor use (although this is rare) or they are used for office or commercial space. Whilst it is obvious that the upper floors of some premises are occupied, there is also a large amount of office space which is underutilised or empty which is made more apparent by advertisement boards attached to the side of the building.

Larger retail units occupying both the ground and upper floors are more prominent at the Riverside Shopping Centre which was designed to house larger stores over numerous levels such as Debenhams.

On the periphery of the Marlowes Shopping Zone there are numerous examples of stand alone office and residential premises within and on the edge of the Marlowes, particularly on Waterhouse Street. Two large hotels (Travel Lodge and Premier Inn) are located on the edge of the Marlowes on Wolsey Street and at the Riverside respectively, which generate a large number of additional pedestrians outisde retail hours.

A large amount of floorspace within the Marlowes Shopping Zone is given to car parking, whether on the roof of buildings such as at Riverside, or part of a multi-storey parking complex which includes retail at the ground floor, for example at Hillfield Road.

Whilst most of the public space is used for pedestrian movement associated with accessing businesses and public transport facilities along the Marlowes, a large area exists on the northern section of the Marlowes which formerly accommodated a covered market. This area is now generally unoccupied, apart from use for informal car parking and a flea market. There is significant potential in this area to create a redeveloped focus for the town centre, with temporary measures implemented in the meantime.

Materials Palette

The palette of materials used at the Marlowes Shopping Zone is fairly consistent throughout, and generally concurs with the two periods of design that exist in the area, that of the New Town and the 1990s redesign of the now pedestrianised precinct. Many of the original New Town buildings and subsequent infill or replacement buildings are of concrete construction, with various facade treatments including metal, plastic, slate and patterned concrete which are worthy of architectural and design merit. Later buildings are generally of brick construction and often featured blank walls and facades onto the street, particularly along alleyways.

The Marlowes Shopping Centre and the Riverside Shopping Centre provide noticeable variation to the recurrent concrete facades within the town centre. The Marlowes Shopping Centre generally utilised a mixture of black glass and stainless steel with bold red illuminated text on the Marlowes facade, whilst Riverside, constructed during the mid 2000's, is of a more modern design utilising a mix of bright, neutral facades and light brick work with detail including extensive 'feature' blocks of colour such as the orange colour panels on the facade fronting the Plough roundabout.

Surface materials throughout the Marlowes also generally consist of concrete slabs and blocks of different colours which were laid during the pedestrianisation of the area in the early 1990s. As with the concrete building facades, their asthetic appeal is now fairly dated and poor maintainance in some locations has led to a neglected appearance. An updated surface materials palette, similar in design to what exists in the Marlowes pedestrianised area, has been adopted at Riverside which ties in with the colour of the building facades of the modern shopping centre.

Surface Materials

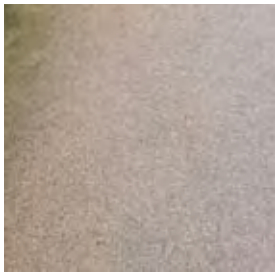
Concrete red coloured bricks arranged in a fishbone pattern

Square concrete paving slabs form majority of footway material in Marlowes Shopping Zone

Tactile paving in grey and red colours used across the Marlowes Shopping Zone

Rows of grey concrete bricks arranged in rows of full and half sized bricks

Smaller square concrete blocks used in Bank Court area



Resin bound surface material as used at Riverside Shopping Centre

Metal plaques are located across the original Marlowes area

Grass and reeds/waterbank planting based around the river at Riverside Shopping Centre

Vertical Elements

Concrete sphere and metal bollards restrict vehicle movement

Semi-permenant planters and on-building floral planters at Bank Court

A mix of stainless steel and green tubular cycle racks

Modern steel bus waiting facilities and older tubular style shelters

Combination of more modern square and older tubular bins

Tubular 1980s/90s theme extended into design of bandstand in the Marlowes Shopping Zone

Pre-cast concrete used for planters,integrated seating steps and fountain bases

Varying designs of green tubular signage/info boards exist across the Marlowes Shopping Zone

Mixture of modern steel lights and older tubular style columns

Modern stainless steel directional finger sign posts at Riverside Shopping Centre

Modern stainless steel benches and refuse bins located within the Riverside Shopping Centre

Modern, functional and adaptable information and direction display boards at the Riverside Shopping Centre

Frontage and Facades

Original brick built new town buildings above commercial premises

Striking rear facade of Riverside Shopping Centre

Buildings with large floor-ceiling glass windows facing onto the Marlowes

Black glass panels along length of Marlowes Shopping Centre facade

Coloured glass and internal walkway area in poor state of repair fronting Marlowes

Pebble-dashed building featuring unusually small windows fronting Marlowes

Natural stone facades with course pebble dash effect on upper floor at Bank Ct

Original mosaic artowork on southern facade of Hillfield Road car park

Metallic finish and red letters on Marlowes Shopping Centre facade

Dark brick/concrete with large continuous sections of blank facade

Modern facade of the Riverside Shopping Centre utilising a mix of glass, metal, stone and prefabricated surfaces

Copper clad roof on common brick constructed building

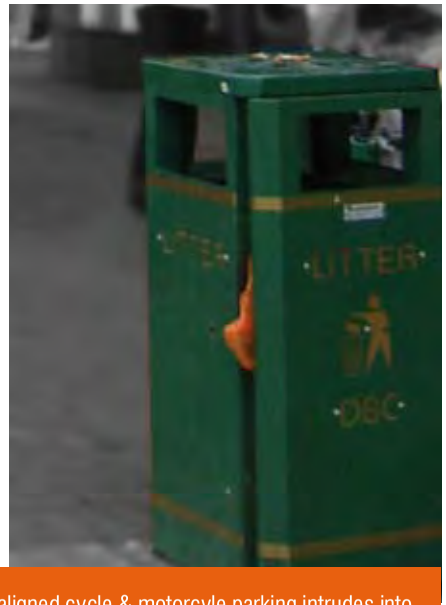
The pedestrian area of the Marlowes Shopping Zone is the core of the shopping area. It is endowed with generous space, long views and active frontages on both sides. However these qualities are often weakened by the layout, scale and type of street furniture.

different heights of street furniture items create visual clutter despite their arrangements in clusters

alignment of the street furniture does not make the best use of space, creates obstacles to pedestrian circulation and wastes precious space

later additions even when placed in the right positions are often inconsistent in scale and style

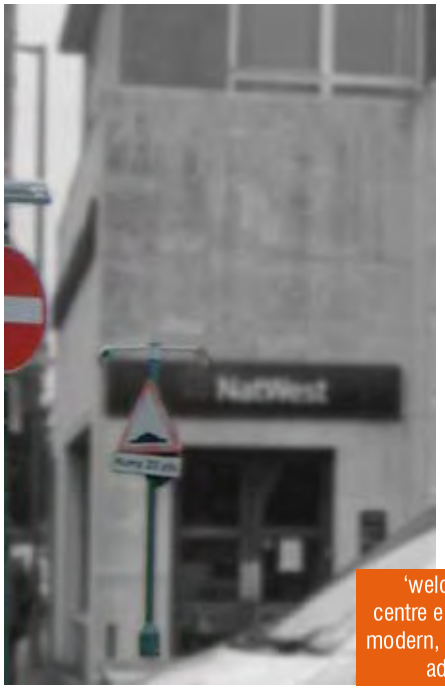
similarly coloured street furniture adds coherency and continuity to the streetscene however poor maintainance can detract from the overall appearence



poorly aligned cycle & motorcyle parking intrudes into pedestrian space, contributing to an overwhelming level of street clutter

Stand alone telephone kiosks require a large amount of space in the pedestrian environment. Poorly located 'A' boards create obstacles to movement and add to clutter

the excessive use of signage and associated columns clutter the footway and create obstacles



'welcome' signage creates gateways to the town centre environment, however they are not reflective of a modern, dynamic shopping and leisure experience. Local advertisments are functional yet look untidy

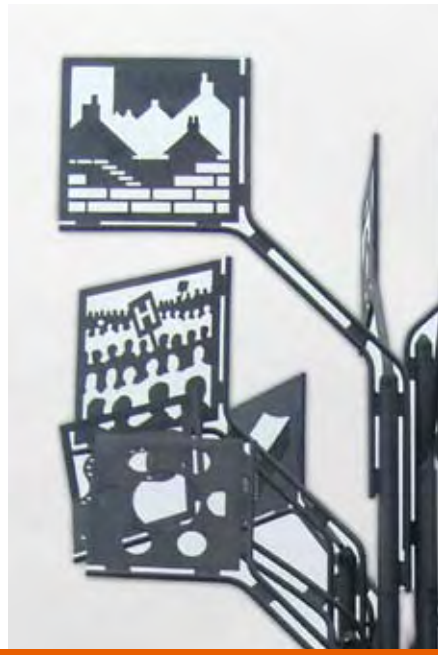
Unnecessary number of litter bins in a small space which is already dominated by a large amount of signage

street furniture in some locations suffer from poor maintainance. lack of planting in column planters adds to neglected aesthetic

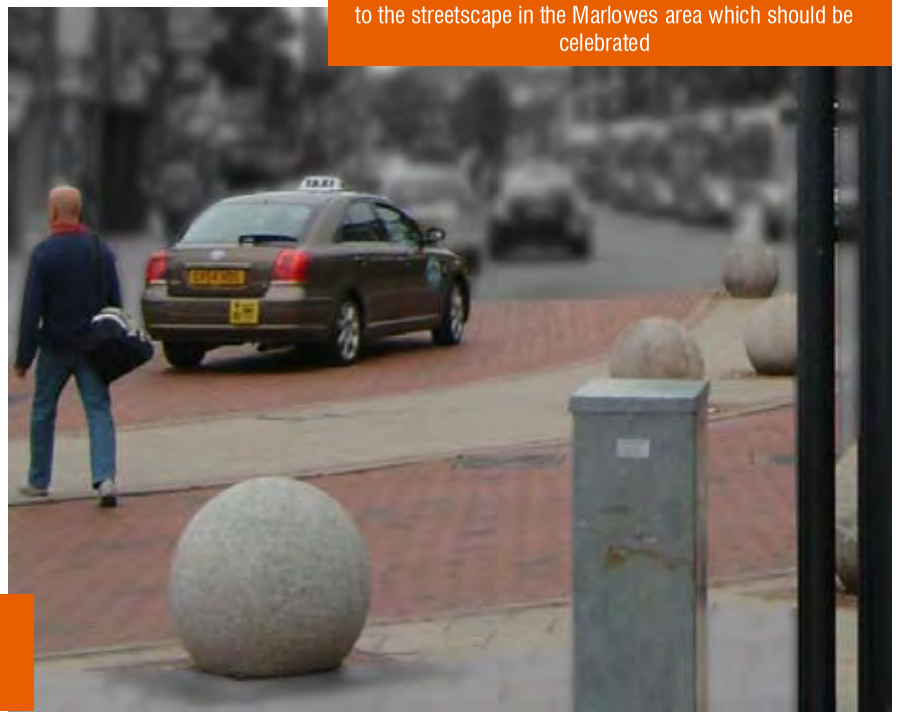
Whilst real time public transport information is a great asset to the town centre, it is often poorly located in terms of the predominant pedestrian movements

Vacant and run-down retail units detract from the streetscape and level of surveillance, creating a 'broken windows' effect on neighbouring premises

Bollards of various design are used across the Marlowes to delineate vehicular traffic routes and do not form a coherent street furniture pallette



Modern public art provides local identity and focal points to the streetscape in the Marlowes area which should be celebrated



Areas of shared space with reduced kerb heights and coloured surface materials connect the two halves of the High Street in a pedestrian friendly manner

people

The Statistics

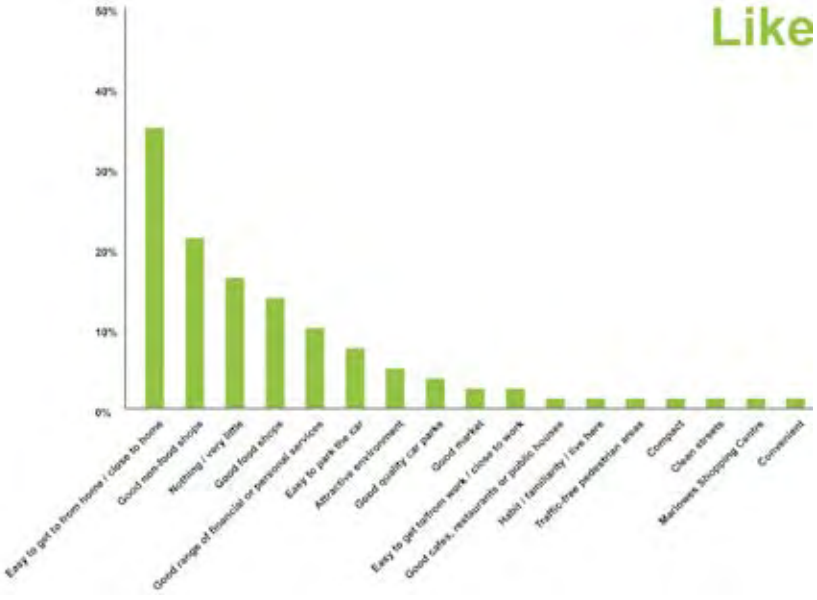
The Marlowes Shopping Zone is a popular shopping and leisure destination, catering for a large and diverse local and sub-regional population. A number of studies have been undertaken over recent years to understand the type of visitor to Marlowes, and the reasons behind their continued custom. The Dacorum Retail Study provides such an analysis, and was updated most recently in 2009.

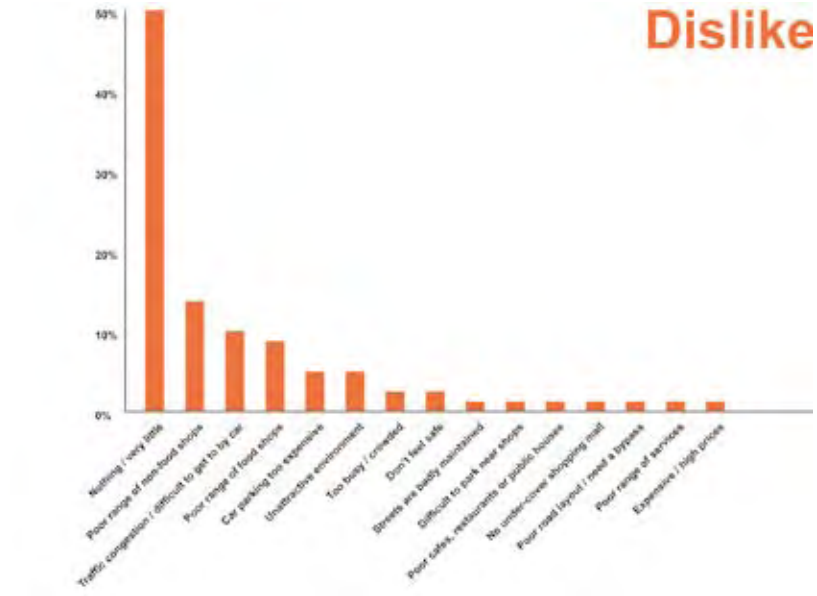
Visitors to the Marlowes area like and dislike different aspects of the zone. For those that use the area primarily for shopping, the ease of access to their homes is a major benefit (38% of respondents). Besides ease of access, the range of shops and services available in the zone is a major plus point. Ease of parking drew 7% of responses, whilst 5% like the shopping environment. 17% of respondents claim to like nothing or very little about the shopping zone.

When it comes to dislikes, the range of shops on offer seems to be an issue. 13% of respondents dislike the poor range of non-food shops, whilst a further 8% dislike the range of food shops. Traffic congestion for those travelling to the area by car was another area of concern (10% of respondents), worsened by expensive car parking (5%) and a perceived low quality shopping environment. However, over 50% of respondents did not claim to dislike anything or very little about the town centre. Compared to the lower 17% of respondents that claimed not to like anything, this suggests that overall, the town centre is perceived positively.

The Dacorum Retail & Leisure Study, 2006 established that most people shopping in the town centre were doing so for convenience, rather than as a result of a strong retail offer and attraction. Those looking for particular shops and services, and prepared to travel further afield, were just as, if not more, happy to travel to rival towns such as St Albans.

Generally, visitors to the town centre feel safe and secure during the day, whilst at night the perception of safety falls. This negative perception could be resulting in a reduced level of trading in the evening, and resultant reduction in the level of night-time activity on Hemel's streets





Youth Action Regeneration Day

During October 2010 a group of ten young people from a Hemel Hempstead school took part in an exercise aimed at encouraging young people to get involved in their community and discuss ideas for the improvement of the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

When asked to identify how the town centre could be improved, areas such as refurbishing paintwork, shop

fronts, updating street furniture and improvement to the ramped area were highlighted as key, whilst the top priorities were suggested to be cleaning of art work, improved colour/paintwork and an increased number of seating areas and coffee shops. When asked if there was anything missing from the town centre, a number of respondents suggested that evening shops and activities were lacking, as well as a graffiti wall, more cafes and improvements to make the art work more noticeable.

The Design Team's Direct Experience

The Design Team have undertaken focused site visits to the town centre on a number of occasions between September 2010 and January 2011. These occasions have provided essential insights into how the Marlowes Shopping Zone is used by people. On-site observations confirmed that the number and type of people that visit the town centre vary across the day, according to the patterns of a range of attractors and generators of pedestrian movement.

Typically, young adults (under 25), the later middle-aged (45-65) or the elderly (65+) tend to occupy the space on weekday mornings. A greater proportion of people visiting are female and this includes a large number of young mothers who tend to congregate in pairs or small groups, often accompanied by pushchairs and small children. The afternoon picture is similar, although at that time, a larger number of teenagers occupy the public space, perhaps as a result of lunch breaks at local schools and colleges. Afternoons attract a larger number of middle aged and elderly people, again with a female majority. Far fewer people use the Marlowes Shopping Zone towards the end of the day. At that time, at least half of people in the area are teenagers or young adults who tend to congregate in small groups. The remainder are middle-aged, leaving their places of work or shops after closing time. The number of elderly people reduces substantially, as does the number of people with young children.

Weekends tend to display a more even balance of males to females, with a lessened focus on young people in the afternoon as local schools/colleges are not in operation. Conversations with members of the local community have highlighted that many people living directly to the west of the Marlowes do not use it. Partial explanations cited included the different socio-economic profile of the residents, for example those who choose to shop at the more desirable stores in surrounding towns such as Berkhamsted and Tring, and the barrier created by Leighton Buzzard Road, encouraging them to use the car, thus making these rival destinations more attractive.

The Implications

The Marlowes Shopping Zone attracts a wide spectrum of society throughout the day, some of whom have generalised requirements for the public realm in order for it to operate effectively as a comfortable shopping and leisure destination. Others have more specific needs which should be accommodated within any proposed design interventions.

Certain basic requirements are common for all visitors to the Marlowes and include aspects such as the availability of comfortable seating, good levels of lighting, appropriate signage, suitable social spaces and clutter free environments.

Some visitors to the Marlowes may have more specific requirements for the public realm depending upon their personal circumstances. This could include suitably located seating and rest areas, wide, levelled and smooth footway materials with appropriate colour contrast, dropped kerbs, audible information, nappy changing facilities and play areas for various age groups.

The key to creating a design concept which caters for the diverse user population of the Marlowes Shopping Zone is to integrate these requirements within a coherent and legible public realm strategy, which will further encourage use of the space for play, socialising, leisure, shopping and work.

This brief overview of the socio-economic landscape brings useful insight on the community needs that any public realm interventions for the Marlowes should take into account. In particular, there are clear indications of the type of opportunities that could be harnessed in relation to the health agenda (e.g. opportunities for play).

Interestingly, from the conversations that have taken place, it has emerged that there is not a single remarkably negative element of the Marlowes Shopping Zone that affects its performance as a public space. However, it is still regarded as an uninspiring shopping precinct which for large sections could be described as ‘any-town’.

business

Retail Offer

The Marlowes Shopping Zone benefits from a wide range of products and services available to the public through a large number of retail units. The pedestrianised area of the Marlowes faces direct competition from the Marlowes Shopping Centre, which offers shoppers a protected environment with a managed climate. Whilst the additional shops on offer within the Centre help to generate footfall in the area, the Centre does not contribute to street activity. Improvements to the Marlowes could help to create a more controlled and pleasant shopping environment at a similar comfort level to that of the Shopping Centre.

Restaurants, Cafes and Bars

The distribution of restaurants, cafes and bars varies across the length of the Marlowes Shopping Zone. The largest group of drinking establishments are found to the far north of the study area, close to the library. The Marlowes Shopping Centre itself contains four restaurants and cafes. The majority of independent restaurants are located on the stretch between Hillfield Road and Bridge Street, whilst some chain cafes and fast-food restaurants are located in the pedestrianised shopping area catering for the higher passing pedestrian flow.

With the exception of the semi permanent tables with parasols associated with the 'Funky Food Cafe', the limited distribution of cafes and restaurants in the pedestrianised area of the Marlowes can be partly attributed to the lack of formal outdoor seating opportunities. Some external seating associated with businesses such as Costa, Greggs and Subway does exist which generates street activity and the beginnings of a 'cafe culture', which could be boosted through public realm improvements.

Independent vs. Chain Retailers

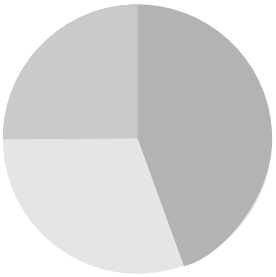
The Marlowes Shopping Zone benefits from a mix of independent and 'high street' chain retailers, spread across the length of the area. The majority of chain brands are located in the pedestrianised section of the Marlowes, with an even greater concentration found in the Riverside Shopping Centre along with its 'flagship' stores. Improvements to the Marlowes Shopping Zone should not force out these small retailers, but enable them to directly compete with the bigger players.

Market

The pedestrianised area of the Marlowes is home to an outdoor market on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The market offers a range of goods including meat, fruit and vegetables, household goods and clothes. The majority of stalls offer food, clothing or homewares. There are around 30 stalls which occupy

Monday - Saturday
Shop Opening Hours

09.00 - 17.00

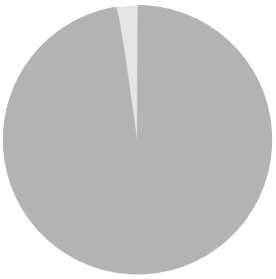


Thursday
Extended Opening Hours

09.00 - 19.00

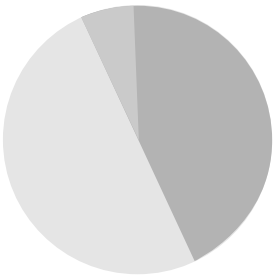
Monday - Sunday
Restaurant Opening Hours

12.00 - 23.30



Sunday
Shop Opening Hours

11.00 - 17.00



analysis

The variety of shops found in the Marlowes needs to be retained. A balanced mix of chain and independent shops strengthens the Marlowes' identity and help to differentiate it from rival towns.

the pedestrianised area on market days. In addition, a flea market operates within the Market Square every Wednesday morning. The market is popular on each of the days it is in operation, helping to draw more people into the surrounding shops and into the area in general. However, the layout and appearance of the stalls can be casual and detracts from the potential presence that the Market could offer.

The market stalls are temporary, constructed of 3m x 3m marquee units, or 3m x 6m units, which can be joined together to create a larger unit. The market stalls are all of the same colour and design which helps to create a more coherent identity. As well as the temporary marquee units, a small number of mobile catering units are situated within the market area, providing shoppers with hot and cold food. There is limited seating and tables available for the consumption of this food and people tend to use the planters and bollards as informal seating.

Riverside Shopping Centre

The Riverside Shopping Centre, which is located at the southern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone, is distinct from the Marlowes as it is occupied, almost exclusively, by high street brands. The development is home to five restaurants / cafes, which generate a limited degree of night-time activity. The Premier Inn hotel, which also has a bar and restaurant, situated on the site also contributes to this activity at a range of times across the day. The visual appeal of the development helps to create a more pleasant, high quality shopping environment. The Riverside Shopping Centre offers a more comfortable shopping experience through a greater sense of enclosure offered by the narrower street layout, the greater level of planting and use of water within the landscaping. The development does however turn its back on areas outside of the shopping zone, resulting in some relatively inhospitable pedestrian environments. However, the difference between the quality of environment of the older pedestrianised shopping area of the Marlowes and the Riverside Shopping Centre is considerable and measures proposed within this study will aim to draw some of this quality further north into the Marlowes.

Opening Hours

There is no firmly set pattern to the opening hours of retail units within the Marlowes Shopping Zone. Generally, most stores tend to operate a fixed weekday opening schedule of 09.00 to 17.00 or 09.30 to 17.30, with similar opening times on Saturday, and reduced hours of 11.00 to 17.00 on Sundays. Some stores (generally those closer to the Marlowes Shopping Centre) choose to have extended evening opening hours on Thursdays; generally opening at the same time but closing an

analysis

The market adds a useful vitality to the streetscape, but needs to be integrated better with the exsting retail offer, and made more compact and formal in its layout.

hour later at 19.00 (in a similar way to the Marlowes Shopping Centre). These limited opening hours result in a significant decrease in the level of street activity once shops have closed.

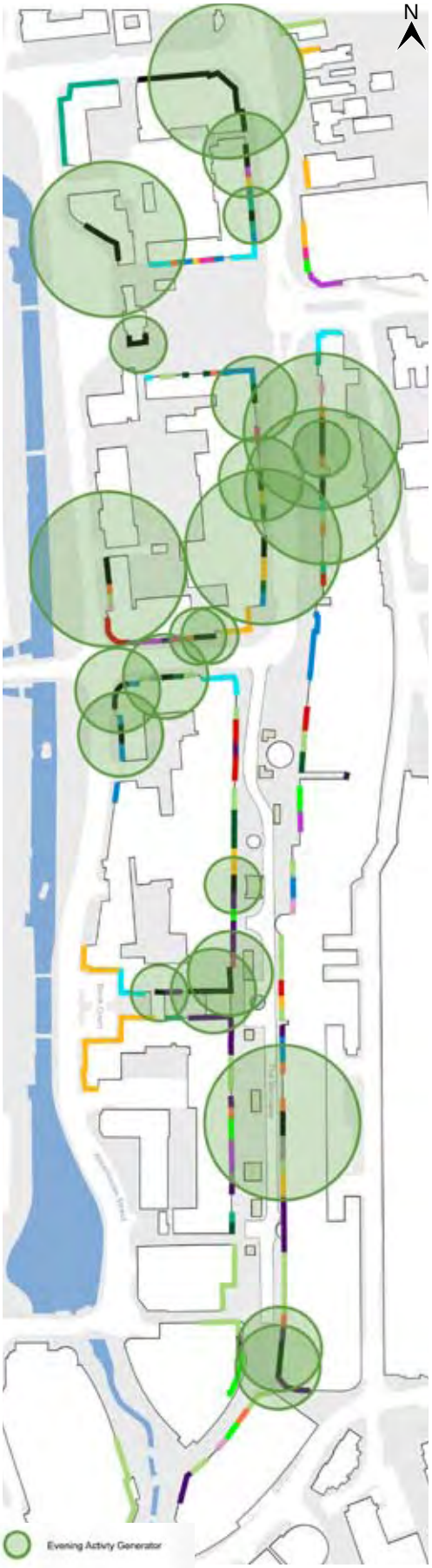
The area's broad range of restaurants are open considerably later than the surrounding retail units, with some open until 23.30 providing a degree of night time activity to the area. The majority of retailers operating into the evening are located in a small area between Bridge Street and Hillfield Road; the evening economy is unevenly spread across the study area.

Vacant Units

A number of vacant retail units can be seen around the Marlowes Shopping Zone. The majority of these are to the north, on the short segment between Hillfield Road and Bridge Street, whilst the more active pedestrianised area of the Marlowes hosts a smaller number of vacant units. As a result, blank facades are prevalent and have a greater impact on the visual quality of the environment.

analysis

Evening use fails to build upon daytime activity. The offer is limited, scattered and mainly clustered to the north of the pedestrianised area.



movement

The study area is well served by buses, with most stops found to the north. The town centre's bus station is found to the west of the Market Square, away from the activity of the Marlowes.

The Marlowes Shopping Zone forms the primary shopping area for Hemel Hempstead, with a large proportion of the town's business, leisure and civic facilities located within the study area, resulting in high levels of pedestrian movement throughout the day. However the integration of the Marlowes with the adjacent neighbourhoods and its permeability are limited, and has an impact on the pedestrianised area's patterns of use.

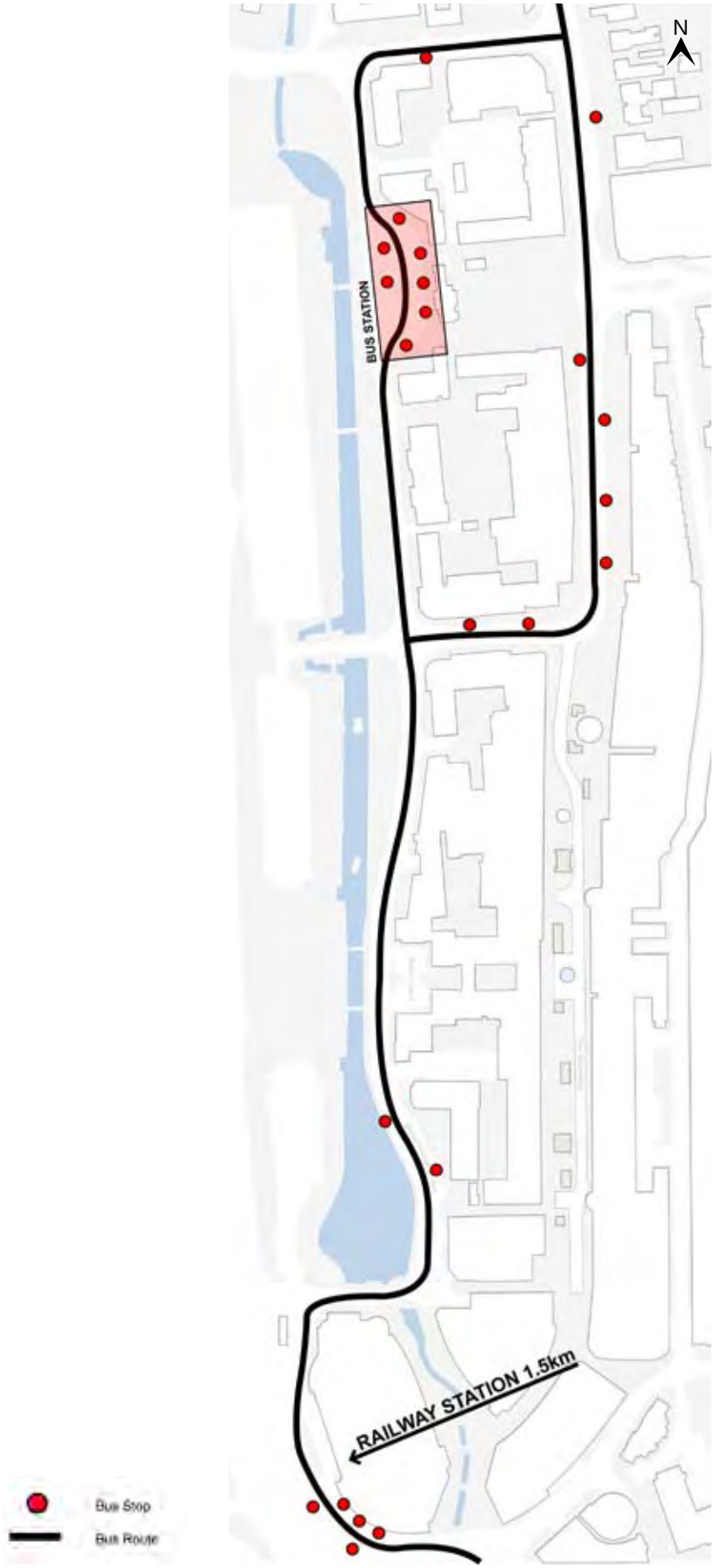
Public Transport

Train

Hemel Hempstead Railway Station is located around 2km to the south west of the Marlowes Shopping Zone. This equates to a 20 minute walk at a moderate pace. Bus services link the Station with the Marlowes Shopping Zone, and other parts of Hemel Hempstead. Whilst the distance between the Station and the Marlowes Shopping Zone is above what would be recommended as a suitable walking distance, there is limited scope for improving this connection as part of this study. Therefore the impetus should be on ensuring the frequency of bus services to and from the Station to the Town Centre and marketing this option through good quality information and clearly signed bus stops.

Bus

The Marlowes Shopping Zone is very well served by bus, with around 40 bus services calling or terminating at Hemel Bus Station, which is situated on Waterhouse Street, at the northern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone. The local bus network operates on a loop around Waterhouse Street, Combe Street, Marlowes and Bridge Street, with 15 bus stops being located on the loop providing excellent access into the Marlowes from the surrounding streets. A further two bus stops are located at the southern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone on Waterhouse Street near to the Riverside Shopping Centre, whilst modern bus stop facilities are provided at the Riverside Shopping Centre for terminating services. A number of bus shelters have recently been replaced on the Marlowes, providing an enclosed and inviting environment for bus passengers within the study area. The bus station, situated to the west of the Market Square, offers a very limited contribution to the street activity of the Marlowes due to its location off the main pedestrian route. It does however offer a safe and comfortable waiting environment for passengers. Options to redevelop this area in order to provide higher quality facilities should be explored. *Core Strategy Policy CS33 - Hemel Hempstead Town Centre* calls for the introduction of a new integrated public transport hub to form a new focus for the northern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone.



Visitors to the Marlowes still tend to drive, parking in one of the town's many car parks. Pedestrian routes between car parks and the retail core are important, and legibility of these routes essential.

Cycling

At present there are no designated cycle routes within the study area. At the same time, the town centre is not particularly conducive to cycling, with the morphology of the town, and the severance created by the ring-road acting as particular barriers.

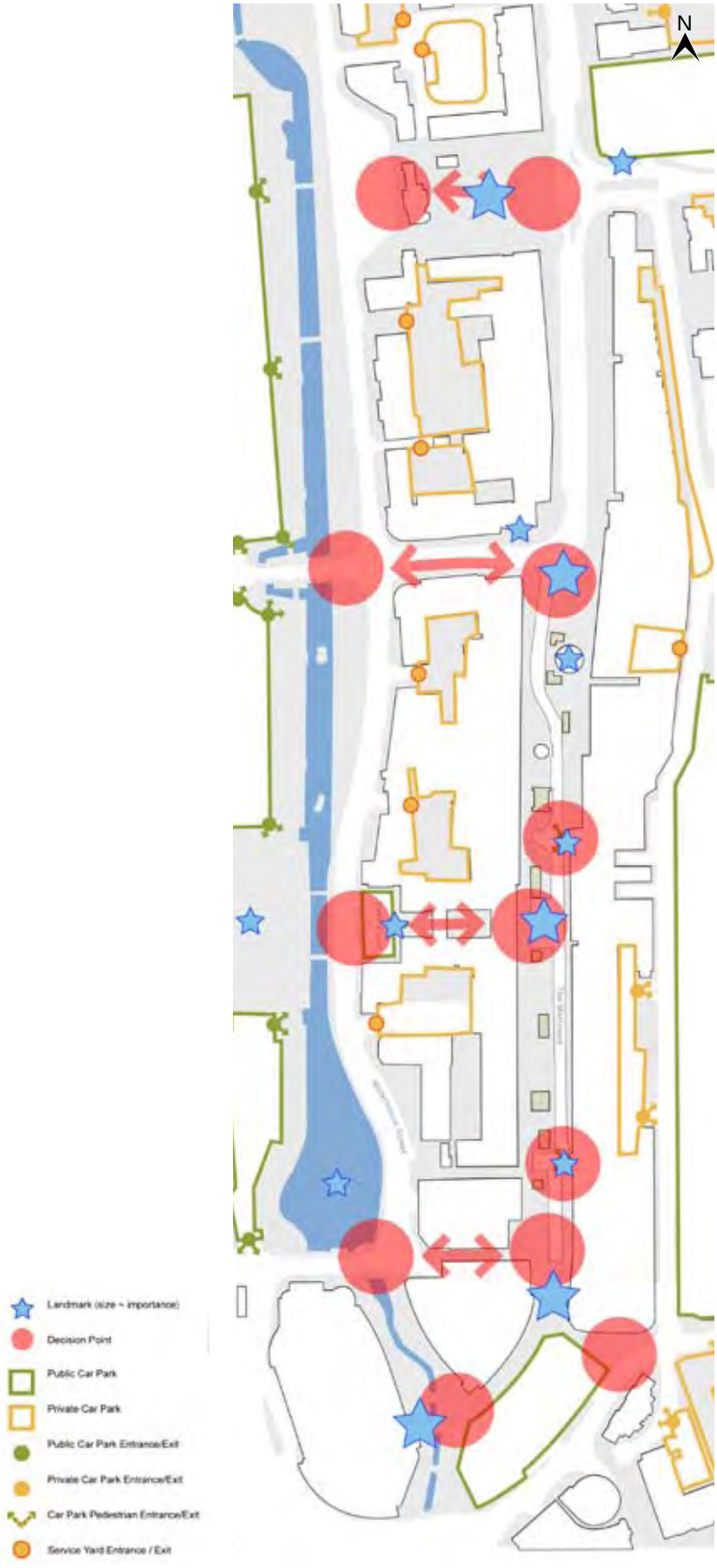
Under the Hemel Hempstead Transportation Plan, advisory routes were implemented between the Marlowes area and surrounding neighbourhoods including Maylands, Highfield and Gadebridge. The October 2009 Dacorum Cycle Strategy states that whilst cyclists can share bus access and lanes at the Marlowes, they are precluded from cycling within the pedestrianised area. Greater publicity and mapping should be provided to enhance the use of these routes.

There are currently numerous radial signed cycle routes which originate within the town centre, however only one of these actually penetrates to the edge of the Marlowes via Hillfield Road to the east. Other signed routes run to the north of the Marlowes along Leighton Buzzard Road and through parkland along a route shared with pedestrians. National Cycle Route 57 the 'Nickey Line' runs through the north-east neighbourhoods of Hemel Hempstead, however it stops short of connecting with the town centre. Other signed cycle routes exist to the south including the route along the River Gade passing close to the Station and a further route along Lawn Lane from its junction with the 'magic roundabout'.

There are a good number of cycle parking stands located within the Marlowes area, some of which are of a modern stainless steel design in the area around the Riverside while the others are considerably 'heavier' and tubular in style and are painted in the Marlowes dark green colour scheme. The cycle parking was observed to be under-utilised, particularly in regards to the poorly overlooked modern stainless style parking facilities. It should be noted that a small number of motorcyclists currently use the cycle parking (as well as motorcyle parking stands of a similar design) as secure motorcycle parking stands. There is opportunity to relocate and provide modern cycle parking in areas with greater surveillance and in places which would facilitate a higher number of cyclists using the stands.

Car Parks

The principal pedestrian routes from the area's car parks either lead along Bridge Street, through Bank Court, across the River Gade at the Watergardens and along the Marlowes itself. The location of parking facilities is well spread around the Marlowes Shopping Zone ; however the facilities located closest to the southern end of the Marlowes/Riverside appear to be better utilised as opposed to those in the north on



Hillfield Road.

A good provision of parking spaces is critical for a healthy shopping quarter. However, we note that a side effect at the Marlowes Shopping Zone is that they further isolate the town centre from the residential neighbourhoods because of the parking locations and their generous provision. The result is that visiting the town centre by car is a much easier and simpler option than walking or cycling. This has a negative impact on the types and level of activity at the edges of the Marlowes Shopping Zone, and on the health and wellbeing of local people, an affect further compounded by the severence created by the road network surrounding the town centre and providing access to the car parks.

Accessibility

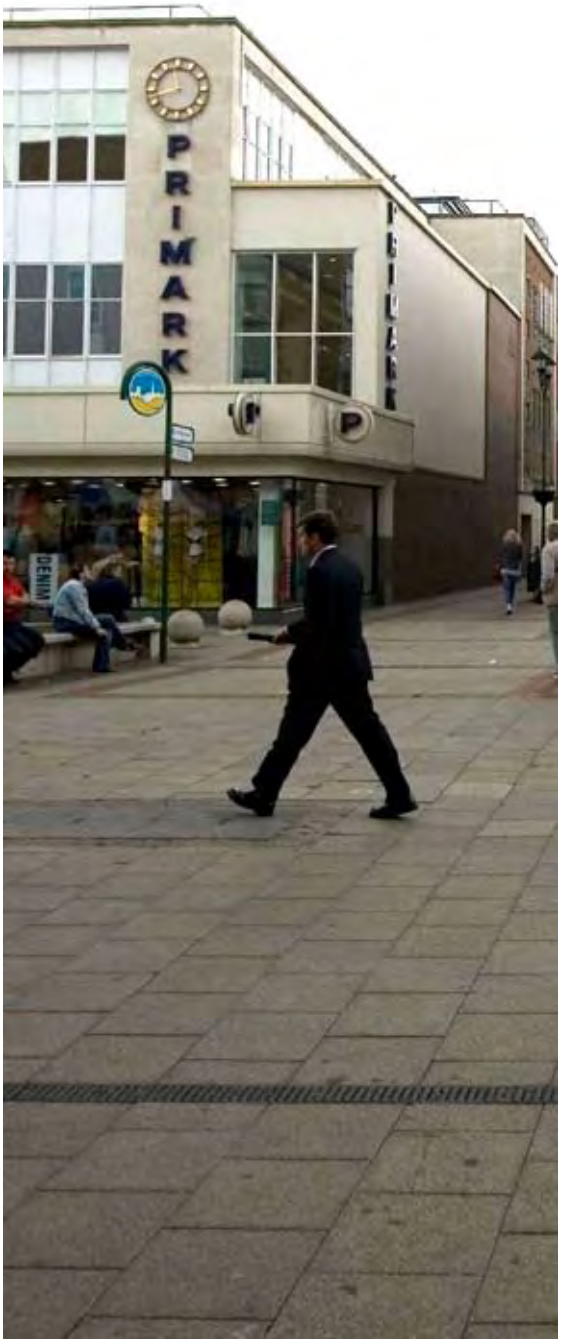
Generally, the Marlowes Shopping Zone is accessible to those with mobility impairment. The Marlowes itself is fairly level and, with the exception of the large volume of clutter, offers a wide footway space suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. In addition to this, dropped kerbs and tactile paving are provided where deemed necessary. Ramps are often used in place of stairs, which allows wheelchair users to access all of the retail frontages. At present there are a considerable number of seating options available, and areas of shelter can be found within the pedestrianised shopping area and beyond.

Along the eastern pavement of Waterhouse Street, the frequent access roads to the service yards present issues for the mobility impaired through the repeated level changes. The change in height from west to east can also cause difficulties, with movement to and from the residential areas to the east requiring movement along steep gradients. The pavements around the Riverside Shopping Centre and the associated bus stops to the south are particularly narrow, creating further problems.

Pedestrian Movement & Connectivity

Footfall is a vital ingredient of an active civic space and healthy retail quarter. The pedestrianised section of the Marlowes benefits from the highest level of footfall, where people are able to move freely with minimum conflict with traffic. The Marlowes is the principal north-south route for pedestrians, whilst Waterhouse Street, to the west, is the equivalent for vehicles.

Pedestrian movement on King Harry Street and Wolsey Street, both of which run north-south in the same alignment as Marlowes are very lightly used by pedestrians and primarily act as service and routes and access to car parks. East-west movement is very limited and generally restricted to narrow alleyways and passages. A better quality connection through to Bank



Court is used to access banks and shops to the west of the Marlowes, as well as parking located within the Court. Two pedestrian routes running along alleyways between buildings provide an important east-west connection between the Marlowes and Waterhouse Street although they offer poor pedestrian environments and are relatively poorly used. A further east-west connection is located mid-way along the Marlowes and by means of an alleyway between buildings leading to King Harry Street.

Core Strategy Policy CS33 - Hemel Hempstead Town Centre highlights a desire fo continue the riverside walk north-south along the River Gade in order to provide a pedestrian and cycle route alternative to the principle Marlowes route.

The level of street clutter, particularly within the pedestrianised area, hampers pedestrian movement. The large number of posts, bollards, signs and other street furniture gets in the way of the natural flow of pedestrians, at the same time as creating visual clutter that detracts from the overall appearance of the space.

Pedestrian connections between the study area and beyond are relatively limited. Leighton Buzzard Road presents a formidable barrier to those wishing to cross it, with only a few designated crossings along its length. Those crossings do tend to tie in with roads which permeate into those residential areas to the west, but are not conducive to pedestrian movement, resulting in a high number of local car trips. Crossings are still used at a moderate level, but principally by residents living in the immediate vicinity of Leighton Buzzard Road. Informal crossing options elsewhere along this road would increase the level of perceived permeability, resulting in a higher number of visits from residents of the neighbourhoods to the west.

Around the Riverside Shopping Centre pedestrian movement is particularly challenging. The presence of servicing areas and narrow pavements has resulted in sections of pavement being made inaccessible to pedestrians through the use of paving designed to discourage walking. This results in pedestrians either having to walk through servicing areas that can be unsafe, or attempting to use narrow pavements which are at risk from traffic.

Legibility

Landmarks & Wayfinding

Landmarks within the Marlowes are found at varying heights and scales. The majority are located along the pedestrianised shopping area, with the two entrances to the Marlowes Shopping Centre being two important wayfinding aids. These are supported by eye-level primary landmarks such as the artwork and sculptures

analysis

The majority of pedestrian movements take place along the Marlowes pedestrian zone. Pedestrian connections between the study area and beyond are relatively limited.

located within the pedestrianised areas (e.g. the 'time tree' and the Royal British Legion's Residents' Rainbow). The sculpted blocks on the side of the building on the corner of Bridge Street and Marlowes act as a high level secondary focal point for those travelling north along Marlowes. Similarly, the corner of the Riverside Shopping Centre acts as a high level focal point for those travelling south on Marlowes. Further north, the mosaic on the side of the car park at the corner of Hillfield Road and Marlowes acts as an additional reference point for those travelling north towards the Market Square and Library. The lack of landmarks in the northern part of the Marlowes Shopping Zone could be hindering the level of footfall in that area.

The fountain situated within the pedestrianised area, and the Central Garden are symmetrical landmarks, with both positioned on the same sight-line through Bank Court. This arrangement acts as an important orientation tool. The steeple of St Marys Church in the old town provides one of the few longer range views to the north along the length of the Marlowes. The church steeple is echoed by the Kodak Tower to the south, which points pedestrians to the direction of the railway station.

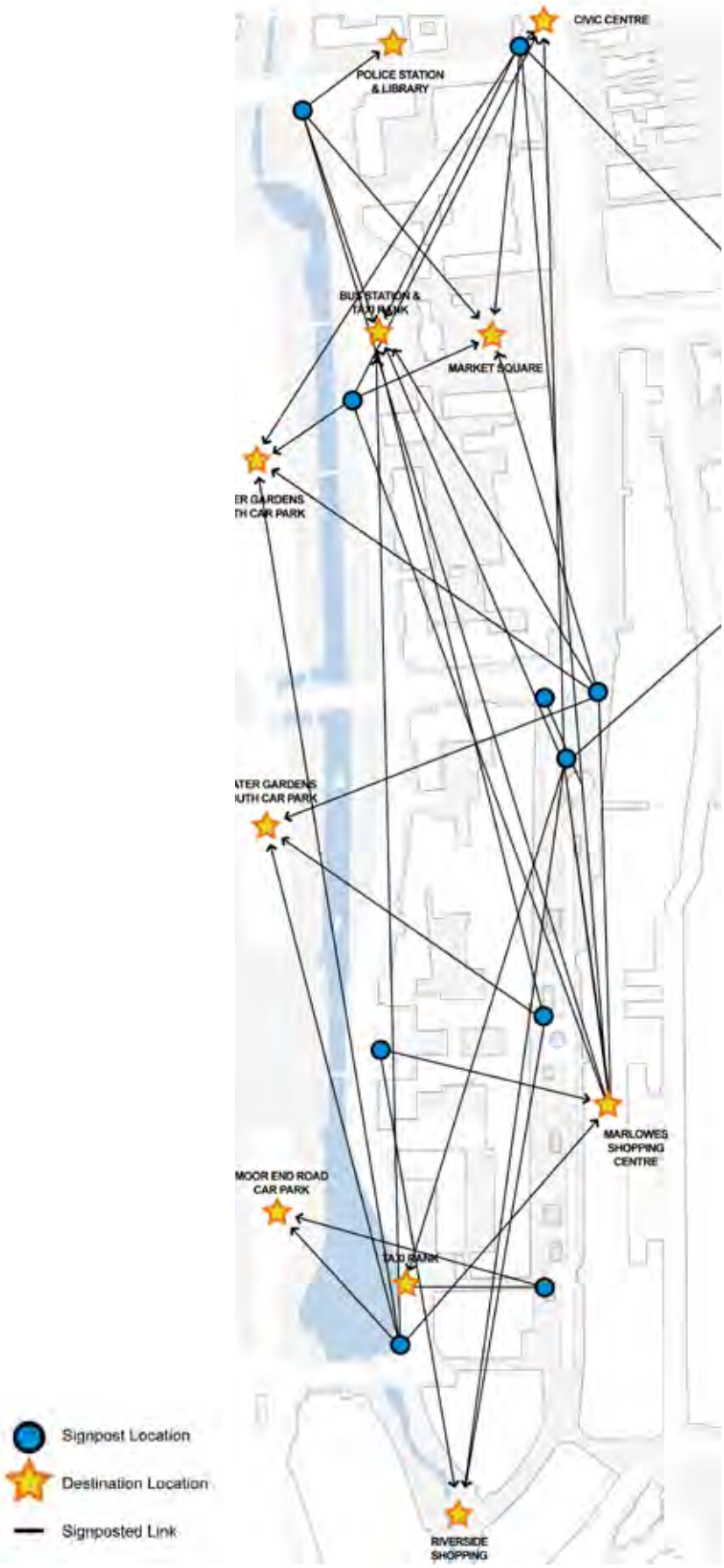
The linearity of the town centre layout creates a simple structure that offers the potential for an extremely legible town centre environment. The scale of Leighton Buzzard Road is unmissable, immediately orientating pedestrians as well as drivers. Navigation to and from the town centre from its periphery is not as easy however; an issue that could be addressed through public realm interventions.

Signage

Existing signage consists of Hemel Hempstead branded posts, with a variable number of directional destination arms. The signposts are coherent in appearance and colour to the existing street furniture within the area, although much of this is relatively dated. The majority of these posts are located within the pedestrianised section of the Marlowes, and direct visitors to a variety of destinations, including: Information Centre, Market, Bus Station, Public Toilets, Water Garden Car Parks, Marlowes Shopping Centre, Civic Centre, Taxi Rank, Hospital, Bus Stops, Riverside, Water Garden South Car Park, Moor End Road Car Park, and even Hemel Hempstead's sister town Neu Isenburg. New 'arms' have been added to the signposts associated with the Riverside development, which albeit a minor issue, do not necessarily fit in coherently with the 'dark green' theme. The signage within the town centre and Marlowes in particular is fairly comprehensive in terms of detail and number of signs; however it would benefit from modernising to continue the signage theme that exists at the Riverside Shopping Centre, or as part of a longer term rebranding exercise for the town centre.

analysis

Existing signage is focused at the edges of the study area, and at the north of the pedestrianised zone. Car Parks and the bus station are the most frequently signposted destinations.



lighting

The site's existing lighting scheme relies almost exclusively upon standard amenity and roadway lighting solutions.

The site's existing lighting scheme relies almost exclusively upon standard amenity and roadway lighting solutions, with a few feature treatments designed to illuminate specific elements such as public art. Where such feature lighting has been introduced these details appear largely ineffectual or no longer work.

Building facades or elements typically remain unlit. As a consequence, the night time environment lacks any real articulation or identity. Moreover, the contribution that such solutions could provide within the night time environment is not realised. The new Riverside Shopping Centre does benefit from some feature lighting however, whilst this no doubt serves to improve the area immediately local to the new centre, it further exacerbates the lack of animation, activity and investment along the older pedestrianised precinct. Indeed, where an opportunity exists to illuminate an aspect of a building facade, as is the case with the baners to the Marlowes Shopping Center, these are found to be non-operational. Vacant shops are allowed to remain dark which further contribute to the perceived lack of activity and vitality within the area.

The principle light source employed throughout the study area is high pressure sodium, which does not display good levels of colour rendering.

Highway Lighting

The highway lighting within the confines of the site is provided by a utilitarian street lantern mounted at between 6-10m .

Such fittings deploy bowl reflectors and a high pressure sodium light source which provides relatively poor colour rendering characteristics to the surroundings.

Open Area Pedestrian Lighting

High pressure sodium is also the source used along the central open pedestrian route. Here victoriana style lanterns are paired and located atop a 6m column.

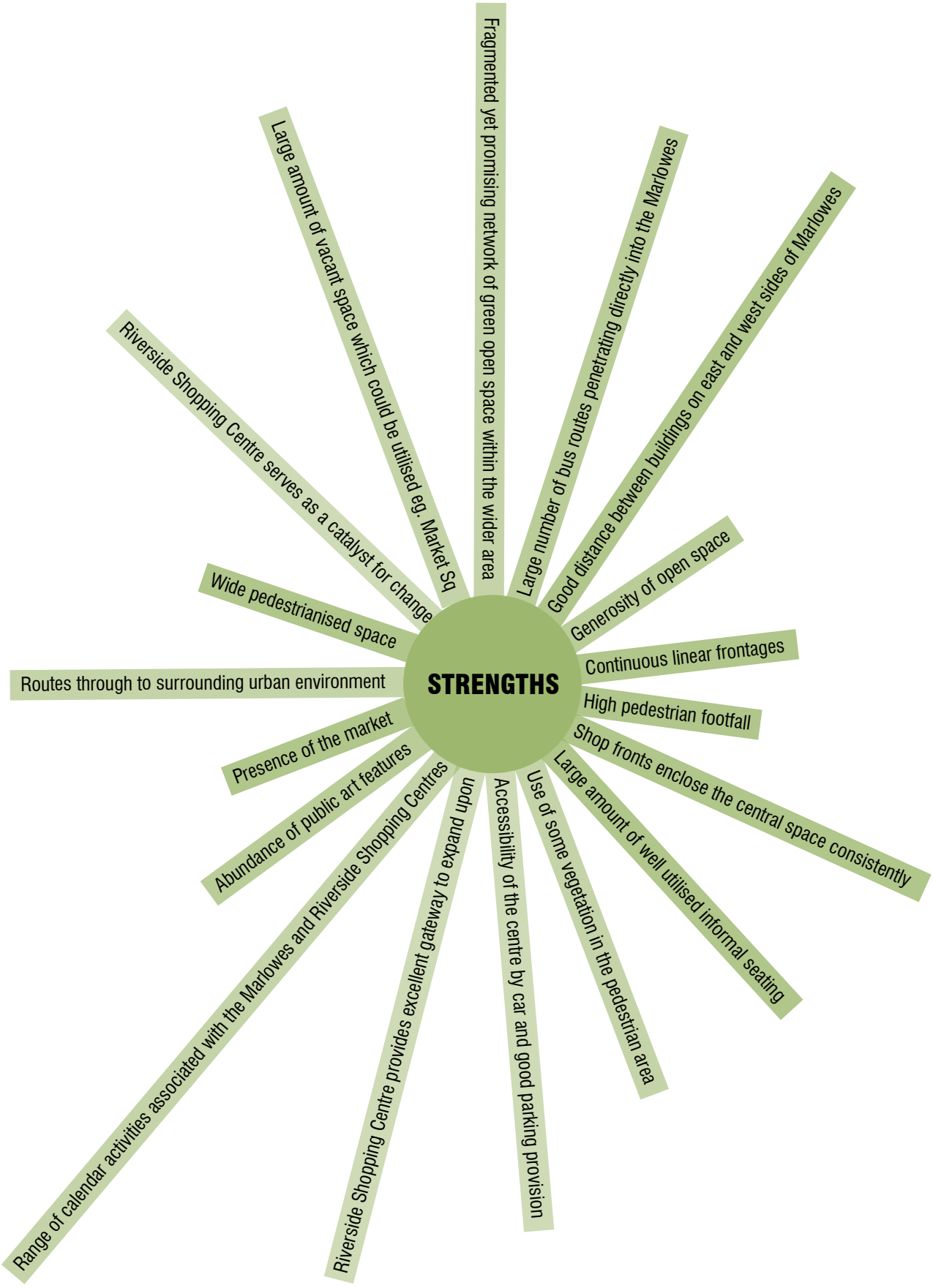
Local to the new Riverside Shopping Centre the aforementioned Victoriana lantern is replaced with a half covered globe style lantern. These lanterns also operate a high pressure sodium light source.

Under Canopy Pedestrian Lighting

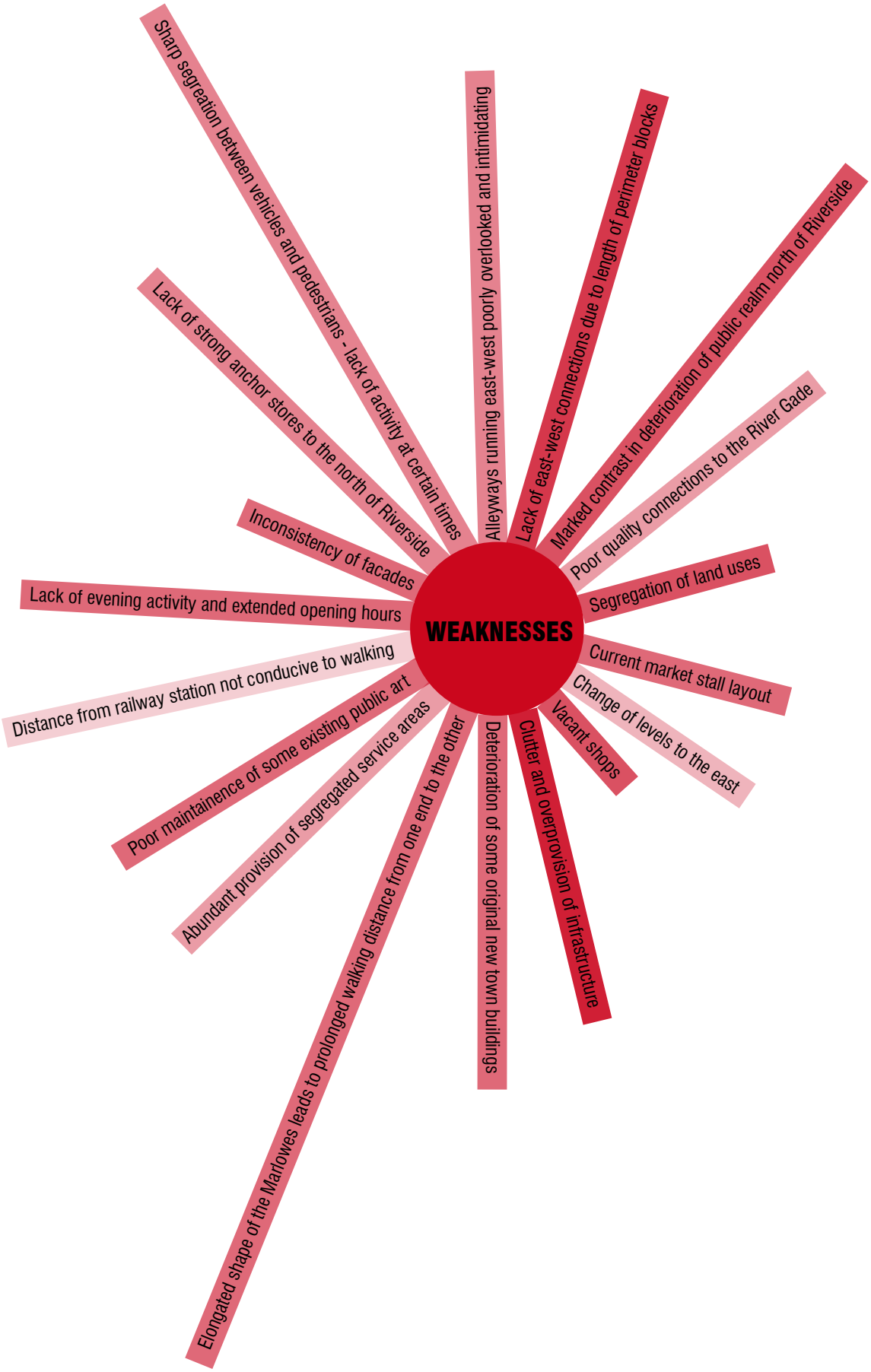
Under canopy areas are partially illuminated via a series of surface mounted fluorescent battens. In some instances the lamps are located behind a diffusing material, in others the fittings are simple standard non-IP rated battens. These appear damaged and corroded.

Lamp colour is inconsistent seemingly ranging between 3000 and 4000 K.

strengths & weaknesses



strengths & weaknesses



recommendations

Built Form

Usable Space

Improvements to the Marlowes Shopping Zone should ensure the ongoing functionality of the town centre. Embedding flexibility within the design proposals will ensure the long term success of the area as needs and desires change. At the same time, spaces created must be usable by all.

Spreading Activity

A balanced mix of land uses is key to ensuring the vitality of an area. Land uses within the town centre should be adapted so as to promote activity throughout the day and evening, supporting the Marlowes Shopping Zone's role as a town centre focal point.

Consistency

A coherent approach to frontages and materials can help to ensure the legibility, cohesion, consistency and maintainability of an area. The better aspects of the existing public realm should be embraced and drawn upon in order to form a defined base for future frontage and material improvements; promoting a sense of diversity, individuality and character within a defined public realm framework.

Accessibility

Access for All

Any proposed public realm interventions should fully understand the requirements of all street users. Particularly important are the needs of the mobility and sensory impaired, which may include features such as seating, paving, shelter, lighting etc. In order to create a truly successful and desirable space, it should cater for all.

Consistency

Ensuring consistency with neighbouring developments, and throughout the Marlowes Shopping Zone is key to creating a unified public realm that is condusive of movevement and enjoyment. The strong elements of the Riverside Shopping Centre should be drawn into the improvements proposed for the rest of the Marlowes Shopping Zone and any future improvements should build upon the work implemented through this strategy.

Economy

Spreading Prosperity

The northern section of the Marlowes Shopping Zone, around the Market Square and between Hillfield Road and Bridge Street, is home to a number of gambling and charity shops, as well as a large number of vacant units. Further south, the pedestrianised section of the Marlowes Shopping Zone is faring better, with fewer vacant units. Improvement measures should seek to spread the relative prosperity of the south further north. Measures outlined in the Draft Core Strategy suggest that the use of a new anchor store or integrated transport hub could help to spread this prosperity.

Spreading Activity

At present, the majority of shops within the Marlowes Shopping Zone are closed by 17.30. The extended trading hours on Thursdays help to generate activity within the area until 19.00. This measure should be reinforced by a greater number of shops opening into the evening, with opportunities for entertainment and refreshment available to those shoppers. The majority of restaurants within the area are located to the north. This identity could be strengthened to create a focused food and drink draw for those shopping further south, reinforcing the north-south connection, but additional evening attractors should be created within the pedestrianised area in order to spread the extent of evening occupation.

Movement

Redistribute

Support and encourage the movement of pedestrians into the north of the Marlowes Shopping Zone, around the Market Square and beyond as this area currently suffers from lower pedestrian flows than the primary shopping area to the south. This could be achieved through the deployment of a new transport hub or anchor attraction in this part of the area, supported by enhanced pedestrian and cycle connections.

Reconnect

Support bus services between the Railway Station and the pedestrianised area through frequency of services and signage of the option. At the same time, connect the town centre with its surrounding residential areas through improved crossings, enhanced lighting and general improvements to the pedestrian environment.

Reinforce

Whilst the existing landmarks within the town centre serve their purpose well in terms of navigation and aiding in wayfinding, they are often not presented in order to achieve the most from them. Enhancing the setting of these landmarks, combined with appropriate lighting treatment can help to make more of these features of Hemel Hempstead's past. There is also scope to rebrand the town centre, whether in print or online.

principles

The Improvement Strategy for the Marlowes Shopping Zone is designed to guide changes both in the short and longer term. In order to achieve a high quality public realm throughout this process, the strategy needs to set down guidelines, or principles, to shape design proposals. Each broad principle is to be delivered through a set of more focused strategies. These strategies are, in turn, delivered through defined design measures.

Inviting longer and enhanced use of the space

Encouraging evening use

Integrating the market

Enriching the Public Space Experience

Improving the perception of security

Utilising the Market Square

Legibility, linearity, and encouraging coherence

Strengthening north-south as well as east-west connections

Creating a unified and coherent materials palette

Building upon the image created by new developments

Branding Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

Creating a brand

Revitalising vacant shop fronts

Improving the quality of shop fronts and facades

Improving access to the town centre and beyond

Helping to identify and place the town centre

Ensuring suitability and availability of public transport options

Creating a network of green routes for pedestrians and cyclists connecting the Marlowes Shopping Zone with the residential neighbourhoods

Reintegrating the pedestrianised area with the rest of the town

Strengthening the links to the River

Reconnecting the Marlowes Shopping Zone with the Original Marlowes Zone and Hemel Old Town

Increasing the number and type of uses

Reconnecting the residential areas

Effective use of lighting

Introducing a lighting colour palette

Creating a lighting hierarchy

Inviting longer and enhanced use of the space

The Marlowes Shopping Zone experience could be enhanced significantly through the introduction of a selection of improvements to the public realm. A comprehensive decluttering exercise would immediately improve the appearance of the area by softening the impact of uncoordinated street furniture. This would also create an appropriate setting for the introduction of a contemporary landscape treatment celebrating the identity of the Marlowes Shopping Zone and refreshing the image of the Town Centre.

Enhancing the use of space would also mean ensuring an adequate level of comfort for the people choosing to spend time in the Marlowes Shopping Zone, especially in terms of the removal of obstacles for wheelchairs and prams, adequate provision of seating, play facilities and light levels, and improving the perception of safety and security.

Efforts will be made to improve the consistency of market stalls appearance and retail offer so that the market supports its surrounding retailers and vice versa rather than competing or, worse, damaging each other. A healthy market could also offer support to the introduction of specialist markets, supported by the creation of focal points at either end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone; promoting the colonisation of the entire length of the Marlowes Shopping Zone, rather than just the pedestrianised area.

Significant efforts should be made to encourage evening use of the area. In the short term this could be through improvements to lighting and opening hours of the shops and eateries along the pedestrian area, whilst in the longer term this could mean the introduction of new land uses with a focus on culture and leisure that encourage evening use and act as anchors. These measures will need to be supported by improvements to the perception of the level of security within the area, which would require further lighting changes, and alterations to Waterhouse Street and even its redevelopment in the longer term.

Legibility, linearity, and encouraging coherence

The Marlowes Shopping Zone benefits from a strong north-south connection, although east-west connections across this route are limited. The principal north–south thoroughfare is used unevenly, with a focus of activity within the pedestrianised precinct. The strategy seeks to address this unevenness; spreading activity along the length of the stretch. This will be achieved through the use of a unified materials palette and overall design strategy for the area. These aspects will build upon the work already undertaken by the developers at Riverside, in order to bring modern elements of the public realm recently deployed there, such as the matierals palette and street furniture northwards into the Marlowes. The deployment of key attractors at either end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone will also contribute to this rebalancing.

Branding Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

The development of a consistent and individual identity for Hemel would strengthen the town's appeal to those living and working within and outside the town. A town centre brand should be created through the emphasis and celebration of landmarks, and a consistent approach to the public realm and frontages. A new website for the Town Centre would help to market this new image to the outside world, and support a new programme of events that could be developed with the local community that will support the needs and desires of local residents and businesses. The impact of vacant units could be reduced through the introduction of pop-up shops/food outlets, temporary art, lighting installations and fake facades. These measures would help with the portrayal of the town centre as a desirable retail destination for shoppers and businesses alike.

Improving access to the town centre and beyond

Currently, access to the town centre is made principally by car or bus. In order to approach goals of sustainability and to increase the level of street activity, efforts to support pedestrian movement should be made. Increased signage to key destinations would help pedestrians to navigate through the relatively impermeable town centre, whilst new pedestrian crossings at key locations would allow for easier movement across busy roads, especially for the mobility impaired. Existing leisure routes for pedestrians and cyclists should be incorporated into a wider network of routes to increase ease of movement between the town centre and the periphery, not just within the town centre itself. Changes to the current bus station arrangement in the longer term could seek to bring buses closer to the heart of the town centre, increasing visibility, usability and street activity.

Reintegrating the pedestrianised area with the rest of the town

The current street layout of the principal roads within the Marlowes Shopping Zone hinders connections between civic and retail areas, as well as the Marlowes itself with the old town and residential areas. Public realm improvements, incorporating lighting and planting, could help to reconnect these areas, generating movement and activity throughout the town centre. Changes to the land uses currently found within the area would generate new forms of activity which would change the way the area functions at a social level.

Effective use of lighting

The challenge is to achieve a harmonious and coherent lighting presentation throughout the whole of the Marlowes Shopping Zone. One which will help to create an identity for the area and provide a framework flexible for interpretations by future lighting installations.

The way we perceive our night-time surroundings is almost totally dependent upon how they are illuminated. Lighting can generate feelings of invitation and warmth, intimacy or spaciousness, or excitement and drama. The Lighting Strategy will seek to promote a positive night-time experience across the site. Appropriate and considered lighting treatments will promote the safe movement of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic across the site. Similarly, lighting has been shown through various studies to be a powerful deterrent against night-time crime, significantly reducing the fear of crime thereby promoting a sense of well being and security for the individual.

Lighting of roads and key buildings or landmarks can aid ones orientation around the site at night especially for those unfamiliar with the site. Routes are thus made more legible which in its self promotes a sense of confidence in the traveller. Key buildings have their own identity and are to be individually expressed through their respective architectural form. It is possible to re-affirm a sense of identity by night via targeted feature lighting treatments.

The feature lighting of various buildings and elements will create a sense of spectacle within the study area. Moreover, treatments to elements such as those beyond the River Gade will effectively extend the boundary of the site by blurring the boundary with the surrounding local environment. All new lighting installations will comply with the latest European standards for the lighting of external environment.

Inviting longer and enhanced use of the space

Encouraging evening use

The most effective, yet simplest, way to extend the use of the Marlowes Shopping Zone into the evening hours is through the extension of the trading hours of local retailers. Hemel's retail offer is a major attracting factor for visitors to the area, and providing an option for those visitors to stay for longer would benefit both parties. Additionally, the provision of a space for, and encouragement of special events that extend in the evening would broaden Hemel's offer to visitors, as well as supporting local retailers' evening trade.

This measure would have the greatest spatial consequence within the pedestrianised area; Hemel's retail focal point. In order to support this extended offer, improvements to links between retail premises and car parks and public transport will need to be deployed. At the same time, lighting provision will have to ensure the safety of visitors and businesses, whilst providing an attractive night-time environment.

A medium term aspiration would be to see a diversification of uses within the town centre, through the introduction of additional restaurants and cultural venues at the mid-point between the civic and shopping cores, possibly at the current location of the Mosaic Supermarket. This mid-point would be an ideal location as it is in a prominent location around 400m from either end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone; a typical 5 minute walking distance. In the longer term a greater number of people actually living within the town centre would endow the Marlowes Shopping Zone with a more balanced level of activity between the day and the evening. The introduction of a healthy residential component would also further consolidate a shift in land use mix and would strengthen support for a wider range of land uses. The significant number of vacant units found within the Marlowes Shopping Zone currently would be reduced through any additional demand created.

Integrating the market

At present, the market positively contributes to the character of the pedestrianised area. However, the haphazard arrangement of stalls does weaken the overall image of the market. Improvements to the layout of stalls could be made. These should include greater thought for the relationship between stalls and shops, so that market stalls face shop fronts, to create a focussed browsing experience. Stalls need to be more compact, and steps should be taken to ensure that stallholders respect the new layout arrangements. The new layout should ensure the safe passage of emergency and service vehicles as and when required, whilst accommodating and making the most of pedestrian flows.

The market stalls themselves offer a wide range of produce; which is of significant benefit to shoppers. However, the products on offer could be better integrated with the surrounding retail offer of the high street shops. Greater coordination could help to strengthen niche aspects of Hemel's retail offer.

The uniformity of market stalls is essential in terms of retaining a character for the Marlowes, but also in order to portray a sense of professionalism, and therefore gain shopper trust. The appearance of stalls should be consistent in aspects such as style, colour and height. This could be achieved through either the system of temporary kiosks currently in place, or alternatively through the implementation of removable semi-permanent stalls. These measures would reinforce the legitimacy and permanence of the market, as well as ensuring that the stall layout caters for the necessary emergency vehicle and pedestrian movement routes.

Stallholders should stick to a rigid servicing regime in order to ensure that the market does not interfere with other retailer's requirements, as well as those of visitors to the area. Adequate refuse/recycling bins should be located close to food stalls in order to minimise the amount of litter generated. This could be achieved through the reorganisation of the market to create distinct sections of the market for stalls that share particular offerings. This approach could be strengthened through the adoption of specialist market days which act as a distinct attraction to draw in further visitors. Specialist markets (e.g. farmers market, continental produce) could operate on days when the current market does not trade, or alternatively be located in a particular area of the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

Any public realm improvement would have to take into account the requirements for space, but also for users' requirements (e.g. appropriate seating and lighting).

Enriching the Public Space Experience

In order to encourage the use of the ample space available within the Marlowes Shopping Zone, improvements need to be multifunctional, encouraging a range of potential uses. Therefore, the space needs to offer opportunities for shelter, seating, play, events, eating etc. In order to achieve this, adequate space will need to be provided, either through the creation of new areas or through the decluttering and reorganisation of existing spaces to increase efficiencies.

There is a significant opportunity to improve the colonisation of space along the whole length of the Marlowes Shopping Zone. This should be achieved through the creation of a series of "events" along the pedestrianised area. This measure, coupled with

Inviting longer and enhanced use of the space

the promotion of attractions further north will improve the overall use of the entire length of the Marlowes Shopping Zone, inviting visitors to discover what this area has to offer.

Waterhouse Street and the Water Gardens also have a great potential. Here, efforts should concentrate on improving the relationship between the buildings lining Waterhouse Street (often the back of them) and the street, the permeability/crossing of the street, the level of on-street parking, and improvements to the gardens (soft landscaping). Improvements to this area will also help support the needs of any new residents and businesses relocating to the area.

Improving the perception of security

In order to support the use of the space into the evening, as well as people who pass through the area at night, steps may be taken to improve the perception of security. Lighting improvements along the connections between the car parks and retail and civic areas could be made. At the same time, improvements to Waterhouse Street could improve pedestrian conditions significantly. These improvements could include changes to lighting, as well as to the service yard entry points (e.g. improved gates, artwork etc). In the longer term, changes could include the realignment of the road, the introduction of a shared surface along the Street, and the removal of the car parks between Leighton Buzzard Road and Waterhouse Street. Improvements to Waterhouse Street would be supported by changes at Bridge Street to provide a green link to the river, and reinforced connection to the residential neighbourhoods further west.

Utilising the Market Square

The Market Square offers a significant amount of open space, which is poorly used at present. Whilst longer term aspirations may see the redevelopment of this area, shorter term, temporary measures could be introduced in order to create a new focal point in this part of the Marlowes. In the longer term, a mixed-use development could reinvigorate the Market Square area, creating a counter focus to the shopping precinct, and acting as a new landmark along the linear Marlowes route. This is only likely to be deployed in the longer term however, so until then a range of temporary measures should be introduced to bridge the gap and fully utilise this large open space.

Legibility, linearity, and encouraging coherence

Strengthening north-south as well as east-west connections

Marlowes and Waterhouse Street act as the study area's principal north-south routes, with the Marlowes catering primarily for pedestrians, whilst Waterhouse Street is focused more on cars and buses. Pedestrian activity is not limited to the Marlowes however, with a significant number choosing to walk along Waterhouse Street. The pedestrian environment along this route is less than ideal however, with a series of private service area entrances along the eastern edge of the road. This series of entrances disconnects the pedestrian route, and reinforces its vehicular focus. Measures to improve the pedestrian environment of Waterhouse Street should include entrance treatments to these service areas, and the introduction of a shared surface in the longer term, rebalancing street priority in favour of pedestrians.

East-west movement is significantly limited within the study area, both for pedestrians and vehicles. Pedestrians wishing to travel eastwards or westwards are limited to small passageways or a small number of vehicular routes (with the exception of the Bank Court link). To the east, pedestrians take advantage of the small alleyway leading off Bridge Street in order to access the residential areas uphill further to the east. This small passageway is the only break in the urban block created by the eastern retail units of the pedestrianised area. As and when opportunities to improve permeability arise, new pedestrian routes to the east of the area should be created. To the west, a significant number of pedestrians travel through the Market Square and Bank Court. At Bank Court, a signalised crossing allows pedestrians to access the Water Garden car parks, but no such facility exists at the bus station. A new crossing in this location would remove the risk of informal crossings, and would be of significant benefit to the mobility impaired.

Creating a unified and coherent materials palette

While the street furniture and materials present in the Marlowes Shopping Zone are largely coherent at present, they are dated, bulky and in some cases damaged. A new strategy for the Marlowes Shopping Zone would be to build upon the street furniture and materials implemented in the new Riverside Shopping Centre in order to create a unified and coherent palette across the entire town centre area. This measure would help to create a more modern image for Hemel. At the same time, it would provide the perfect opportunity to reduce the overall amount of street furniture so as to create more space for movement and business use (and decrease the costs associated with maintenance). Within the pedestrianised area, seating would be integrated into the proposed landscaping improvements so as to further rationalise street furniture provision.

An approach to materials that echoes the materials already deployed within the Riverside Shopping Centre would ensure that an overall recognisable theme for the town centre's streetscape would be formed. Future developments should ensure compliance with the materials and street furniture strategies already employed to ensure ongoing coherence.

Building upon the image created by new developments

The Riverside Shopping Centre to the south of the Marlowes pedestrianised area has created a high quality public realm that should be used as a basis for improvements elsewhere in the town centre. Street furniture and surface materials adopted within the Riverside area have moved away from the town's previous approach. By adopting these elements of the development, there can be a more seamless transition between the Marlowes area and the Riverside area, thereby creating a coherent and strong retail image for potential shoppers and investors.

Branding Hemel Hempstead

Branding Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

Hemel Hempstead town centre currently lacks a coherent identity. The development of a strong identity would encourage visitors to see the town as a destination worth visiting. This measure, supported by interventions that make people want to stay in the area, would support the vitality of the town centre. The development of an identity would involve aspects such as the highlighting of landmark features, so as to create reference points. Consistency of building facades, market stalls and the public realm would rationalise the current competing identities, helping to consolidate them into a single, strong character.

A new town centre website could be developed, highlighting the range of retailers and opportunities for enjoyment available to visitors, and building upon the interactive information points already found within the study area. This website could feature details of a new range of events held within the town centre, so as to reach a wider audience than simply people that happen to be passing by. This range of new events and activities could be developed by members of the community, so that the people who would be most likely to see the events are there because it is something they have had a part in creating.

Revitalising vacant shop fronts

Temporary art and lighting installations should be deployed in order to revitalise vacant shop fronts. Where currently vacant fronts contribute nothing to the public realm, and detract from the quality of neighbouring units, the creation of features within these vacant units would generate interest, and portray a greater sense of retail vitality within the area. Where art and lighting installations are not feasible, fake shop fronts should be introduced to the same effect.

Whilst these physical measures would help reduce the impact of vacant units, in the longer-term, economic measures such as pop-up shops and foot outlets may be required in order to boost retail vitality. Subsidies or other incentives for new retailers, or existing retailers interested in expanding their offer within the town, could be offered. At the same time, changes to land use planning policy could create greater demand for space within the town centre, resulting in a reduction in the number of vacant units.

Improving the quality of shop fronts and facades

A consistent approach to building facades could help strengthen the unity and aesthetic quality of the area. Retail units are often inconsistent. Whilst this does add character and diversity to an area, some retailers take this too far, and end up damaging the image of neighbouring businesses. At the same time, non-retail facades are often inactive and the effect of this can sometimes be intimidating. Improving the quality of these facades would result in improved quality of environment, and could encourage pedestrian movement throughout the town centre.

A number of facades within the town centre are in need of repair. A small number suffer from graffiti, which should be cleaned, and then measures put in place to prevent undesired future access. The facades earmarked for improvement include the Mosaic Supermarket and Quasar building. A number of blank facades exist, such as at the old cinema. These present a good opportunity for wayfinding aids, or general improvements to improve the quality of the streetscape image.

Improving access to the town centre and beyond

Helping to identify and place the town centre

Currently, there are a range of signposts within the town centre area. The destinations highlighted by these signs tend to be car parks, or other destinations that are not necessarily the most popular places at this time. A revised signage strategy should improve the ease of wayfinding for visitors travelling between the town centre and car parks as well as public transport stops. They should also be fully integrated with the new spaces and features proposed within this Improvement Strategy. Signs should be adaptable, so that over time as destinations change, they can easily be changed and maintained, without detracting from the visual clarity and quality of the signage. The Riverside Shopping Centre has implemented a new range of signs, the design of which could be drawn upon for the design of any new signposts. A town centre website could help visitors understand the town centre offer before visiting, so that they are aware of the range of opportunities available, and get a feel for how to navigate the town centre.

Ensuring suitability and availability of public transport options

The private car dominates transport within Hemel Hempstead. In order to support a shift towards sustainable transport, greater importance and quality should be placed on the town's public transport. Increased frequency and punctuality of public transport would support current users, and encourage more people to use public services. The locations of public transport stops should be reviewed in conjunction with the Improvement Strategy to ensure that visitors are able to access important parts of the town centre, with minimal walking in between. In order to achieve this, a longer term aspiration could see the relocation of the bus station further east, so that it becomes a fully integrated feature of the town centre. This would result in improved visibility and ease of access, and would generate vitality within the town centre.

Creating a network of green routes for pedestrians and cyclists connecting the Marlowes Shopping Zone with the residential neighbourhoods

There are currently no designated cycle routes within Hemel town centre, although the Council does hope to create new routes as part of its transport strategy. Good quality walking and cycle routes between the town centre and residential areas may further encourage mode-shift away from private cars for short journeys, thus generating further activity on the streets, and promoting healthier lifestyles. Care should be taken to support any new residential neighbourhoods that are planned as part of the town's growth in order to ensure the permeability of the town centre into the future.

The network of walking and cycling routes within the town centre should be supported through the development of green routes that run into the outer regions of the town. These radial routes would become leisure opportunities for the local population, further supporting healthy lifestyles and sustainable transport to and from the town centre. The use of existing leisure routes such as the Nickey Line could help tie Hemel Hempstead's new green routes with other nearby towns and the countryside. Locations for new overlooked and secure cycle parking facilities should be identified, and steps taken to ensure that Hemel's streets are comfortable and suitable cycling environments.

Reintegrating the pedestrianised area with the rest of the town

Strengthening the links to the River

Currently, the Marlowes Shopping Zone functions as a series of parallel but poorly connected north-south routes. Links between the shopping area and the River are limited. These links should be strengthened, so as to encourage the use of this valuable asset by visitors as well as locals. Bridge Street is a key link between these areas. By introducing formal tree planting on this link, the green of the water garden will be drawn into the shopping zone, helping to encourage movement along the link, and greater patronage of both areas.

Reconnecting the Marlowes Shopping Zone with the Original Marlowes Zone and Hemel Old Town

Public realm improvements along the principal north-south links will reconnect the Marlowes Shopping Zone and Original Marlowes Zone. A shared materials palette and approach to urban design along the route will tie the two areas together, creating a unified town centre. The creation of new attractors along the entire stretch, will create a series of destinations. Travelling between these points will be a consistent experience, as a result of the standardised public realm and equal importance of each point along the route.

This intervention will also help to draw people to and from the old town further north. At the moment, the old town feels like a completely different area to the newer areas. Drawing people towards the civic area through an ordered approach to the public realm will assist in the goal of reconnecting the various character zones within Hemel Hempstead Town Centre.

Increasing the number and type of uses

A longer term aspiration is to diversify the number of land uses within the town centre. A greater number of residential units within the town centre, along with consequent supporting services (e.g. food retail, convenience) would increase the level of activity after hours, and change the social dynamic within the area. At strategic points, vacant or under-occupied buildings could be converted in order to meet demand for alternative uses, or in order to generate a form of activity not already present.

Reconnecting the residential areas

The existing residential areas to the west and east of the Marlowes Shopping Zone are relatively disconnected from the town core. In the long term, the permeability of the town centre should be increased through new routes integrated within new development schemes, and the reduced impact of the dual carriageway resulting from a more pedestrian-friendly design. Attractive and safe routes between the areas should be developed through lighting, planting and public realm interventions.

Effective Use of Lighting to Unify and Promote the Space

Introducing a lighting colour palette

The use of light colour is fundamental in the development and expression of a legible lighting framework. Also key is ensuring the use of sources which exhibit good colour rendering characteristics to improve the quality of visual information available in the night time environment.

Creating a lighting hierarchy

By considering both luminaire mounting height and luminaire type the lighting solution will create an identifiable sense of hierarchy across the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

The illuminated scene, be it interior or exterior, will typically be composed of a series of lighting components. The manner in which light is applied, its colour appearance and colour rendering characteristics, luminaire form and mounting height all combine to define the visual hierarchy within any given location.

The various lighting components are broadly categorised into four groups; Base lighting, Enhanced Base Lighting, Special Area Highlighting and Feature Lighting. The characteristics of each group may be summarised as follows:

Base Lighting provides the platform for the introduction of the other lighting treatments. Such treatments should comply with the appropriate technical requirements as provided by the British Standard 5489 and/or EN 13201.

Enhanced Base illumination signifies greater importance for an area, particularly in relation to pedestrian use. This component not only provides a positive addition to the night time scene, but is also effective in areas identified suffering form a high incidence of crime.

Local Area lighting signifies the importance of a space or area.

Feature Lighting specifically addresses key buildings and landmark elements across the site.

Key Principles:

- Accentuating main gateways and entry points
- Use of lighting to enhance legibility, orientation and safe movement
- Use of high colour rendering Base Lighting to provide a unifying element across the site
- Use Enhanced Base lighting for pedestrian areas and public spaces to reduce fear of crime and so promote a sense of well being.
- Adopt a “warm white light” policy for pedestrian routes, to create a more relaxing & comfortable environment.
- Use Special Area lighting to indicate prominent open spaces, routes, play areas and town markers.
- Provide Feature lighting for key buildings & art works, and so create drama & spectacle.
- Integrate the illumination of buildings with the lighting of walkways and areas of congress.
- Explore the use of lighting in order to enahance play areas with a sensory, interactive play experience.
- Achieve levels and types of illumination to improve CCTV camera imaging.
- Ensure all specifications and installations reduce energy use, light pollution, light spillage and glare.
- Use lighting equipment & fittings which are well designed, suitably located, appropriate to local character, and properly maintained.
- Avoid conflict with architectural forms.

general plan

The General Plan highlights the areas where interventions have been developed. Whilst not all of them lie within the study area, they form part of an overall vision for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre.

general plan

Temporary treatment of the Market Square

Creation of linear park above Water Garden car parks

Creation of anchor buildings to link the north and south of the Marlowes Shopping Zone

Improved bus stops

Greening of Bridge Street

Improved crossing facilities between Bridge Street and Cemetry Hill

Waterhouse Street shared surface

Pedestrianised area: focus of short term interventions

Leighton Buzzard Road shared surface

Traffic island to provide informal crossing to school

Improvements to service yard entrances on Waterhouse Street to create a consistent pedestrian route

Improved market stall consistency and layout

Re-open Moor End Road passage for one-way vehicular traffic (for pedestrianised area servicing/emergency vehicles only)

local project bank

de-cluttering

1

Phasing: Immediate to Short Term

The Marlowes Shopping Zone suffers from areas of poorly sited or excessive street furniture which clutters the public realm, creating barriers to movement and generally detracting from its aesthetic appeal. The greatest physical and visual impact comes from excessive rows of bollards and clusters of individual items of street furniture and signage at key locations. The existing street furniture is also considered outdated and overly bulky for purpose.

In order to reduce the level of unnecessary street furniture, a coherent de-cluttering and consolidation strategy is required to be rolled out across the Marlowes Shopping Zone. The primary focus would be on the removal of a large amount of the existing 'bulky' street furniture, either simply removed or replaced by a more modern design as per that implemented at the Riverside. A comprehensive plan indicating the location and arrangement of the new street furniture would need to be produced to inform the new layout.

Included within the new layout and de-cluttering programme, a comprehensive consolidation strategy of street furniture would also be adopted in order to reduce the impact of unnecessary stand-alone items. This strategy would require the integration of a number of currently individual street furniture items into one, for example,

- signage integrated into lamp columns;
- lighting and refuse bins integrated into planters;
- seating designed as part of planters;
- street furniture aligned to reduce the need for unnecessary bollards;
- public art installations integrated into planters;
- wayfinding integrated into building facades and public art;
- designing lighting onto the facades of buildings; and
- integration of electricity sockets associated with the market into planters or pull-up in-ground sockets.

Due to the extensive scale and itinerary of works proposed, an appropriate phasing programme would be required which would take into consideration refurbishment of facades, surface materials and public art (outlined in other project bank proposals) which are likely to have significant impacts on street furniture consolidation and implementation.

project bank

Excessive street clutter plagues the Marlowes. Existing furniture should be replaced by the rationalised street furniture styles adopted in Riverside.

Issues

Options

planters

2

Phasing: Immediate to Short Term

The existing planters form an integral part of the streetscape in the Marlowes, creating small areas of soft green space within what is essentially a very hard landscape. Whilst they generally still serve their purpose, time has taken its toll, with the concrete having become degraded and discoloured while the form of the planters has failed to fulfil their potential as multi-functional urban spaces. A planter enhancement and redesign strategy is proposed for the Marlowes which will not only provide areas of green space, but will allow for relaxation opportunities and both formal and informal play integrated within them.

The existing planters will where possible either be refaced / reconstructed reusing existing soil; or if not economically reusable replaced with high quality coloured concrete planters, designed so as to enhance pedestrian movement through the Marlowes which will be enforced through appropriate diagonal 'walkways' through the planters in line with the location of pedestrian desire lines and key connections.

Modularity of the planters will be essential to creating a sense of coherency and continuity, with the materials remaining consistent throughout, a standard width of between 6 metres and up to 8 metres and a regular height and alignment on the planter's eastern side which will be designed to incorporate seating and lighting. The planter lengths will vary depending on location. Modularity will help to ensure that costs are kept low through economies of scale.

While the eastern side will be a straight, consistent linear element, aiming to accentuate the unity of the pedestrian area, the western side of the planters will not be set and will fluctuate in height and alignment. The design of the internal areas of the planters will also vary in height and will include slopes, humps and level areas of grass which will promote informal play, sitting and socialising within the planters themselves, as well as improving planter accessibility. Formal play will be included, which would include timber-framed adventure play areas. The planters will integrate existing public art, offering them a more suitable setting.

At detailed design stage, it will be important to ensure that the planters do not obstruct desire lines or emergency access requirements. CCTV coverage of the planters will deter anti-social behaviour, and ensure their quality in the longer term.

Lighting

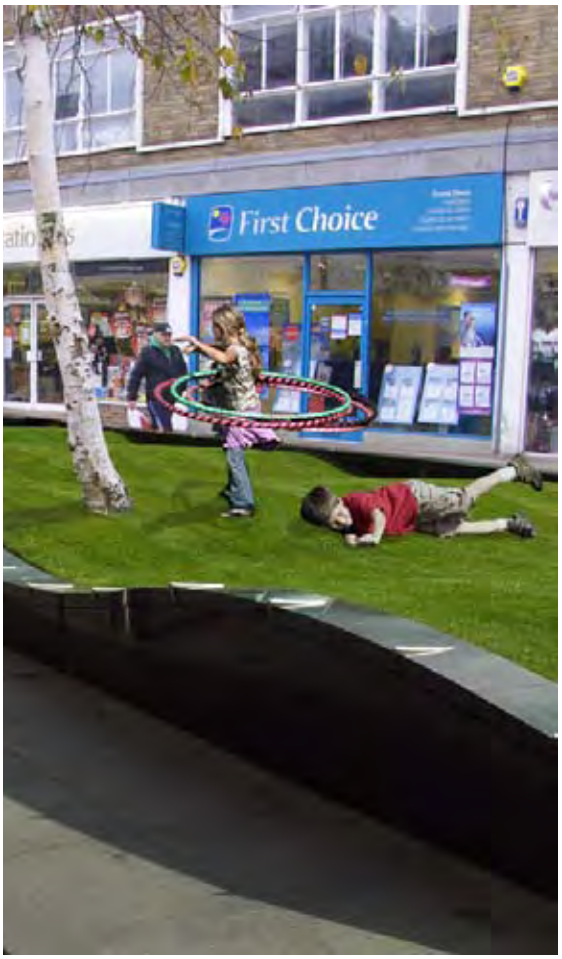
The rationalisation of the planter elements along the Marlowes main pedestrian route, presents an opportunity for the incorporation of new lighting interventions.

One proposal sees the introduction of a continuous LED lighting detail, integrated so as to run the full length of

project bank

Planters have been successfully introduced at Braham Park and Bishop's Square in London. Existing planting will be reinforced by new trees, with suitable lighting treatments.

Options



project bank

Bins, lighting and market power points will be integrated wtihin the planters. Planter facades could be used for artwork

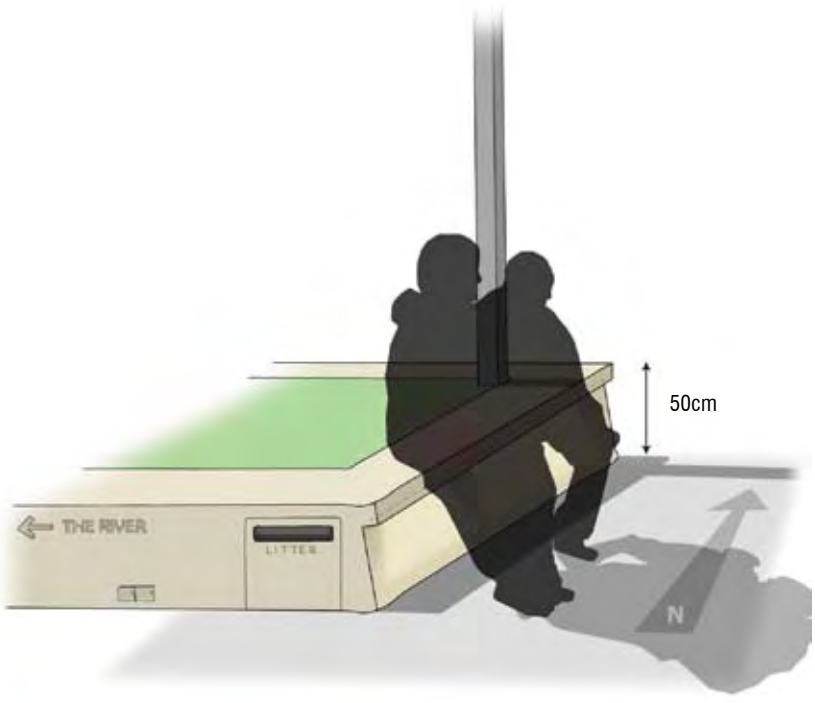
each bench element that is to define the formal edge of the planter.

The luminaire will offer a minimum level of protection of IP67 and ideally be encased within an aluminium extrusion for added protection. The detail would be located within a formed notch in the underside of the bench. The illuminated effect will be to notionally float the bench on a pad of light, assisting in defining the new arrangement of the planters by night.

The use of LED's will reduce both energy consumption and maintenance costs associated with lamp replacement.

The detail will see the introduction of light along the pedestrian route at a human scale – counterpointing those solutions which see light introduced into the night time environment from a greater height.

A warm white source of 2800K is proposed which will contrast with both the white lighting solution of 3000K proposed for the future grade of the amenity lighting and that of the existing amenity lighting solution (2200K).

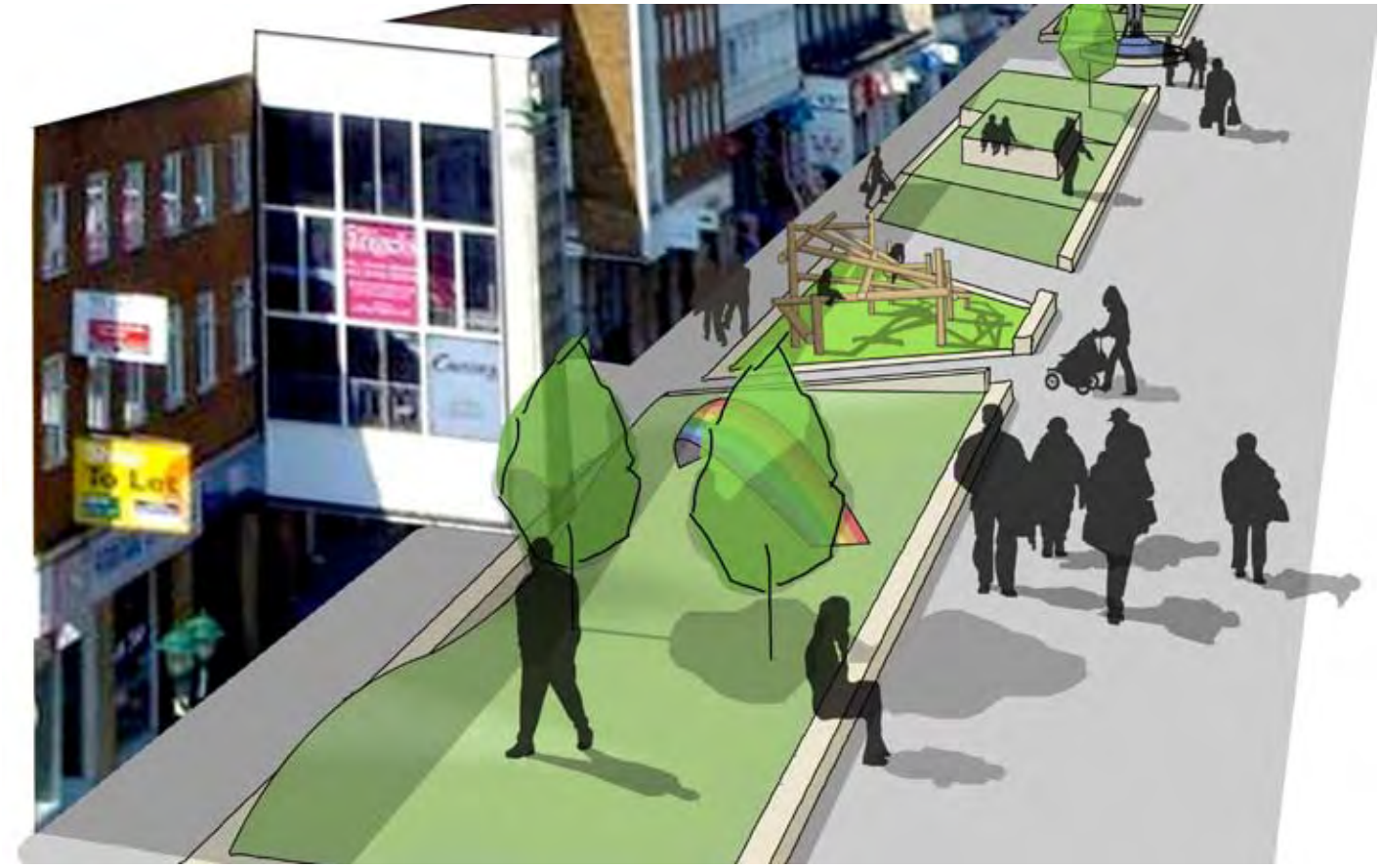


planters

2

project bank

Planter options include their extension to create a linear public space, or the introduction of new seating to encourage their occupation.



planters

2

project bank

The recladding of planters could rejuvinate the space with minimal cost. The introduction of light fittings to illuminate the space could encourage activity into the evening.

lighting

3

Phasing: Immediate to Long Term

Pedestrian Lighting

A white light source is to be used in this first layer of the pedestrian lighting, using a 3000 Kelvin a warm white colour temperature lamp. Lamp options include ceramic metal halide or LED. Either source type will exhibit a colour rendering index of Ra 85 which represent an improvement over the previously described Base Lighting solution.

The variance of colour temperature will assist in the de-lineartion of the pedestrian zone from the surrounding environs. However, the use of the Cosmo lamp as a base lighting source will ensure that the transition between the space will not be so profound so as to create a visual barrier within the night time environment.

The desire is for this luminaire to satisfy both the functional lighting requirements by night but to also assist in the creation of a readily identifiable aesthetic by day.

Source presentation will be key as although the luminaire is to have a lit presence by night it must not do so to the detriment of the night time presentation.

Ultimately the intention is to drive the enhanced base lighting into the surrounding environs, providing a connection into the local communities.

Along the principle pedestrian route the aim is to utilise the over sailing canopies where possible as a means of introducing a further pad of light adjacent to the building line. The source would be of the same 3000K colour temperature warmth as the column mounted pedestrian area lighting.

Source presentation is once again key in ensuring that the luminaire does not visually dominate the night time scene. A recessed or surface mounted metal halide downlight displaying good optical control should be considered. Should linear fluorescent sources be utilised then these should be louvred to once again reduce the presentation of the source.

Gateways

The proposals see the expression of those transitory zones that provide access to the heart of the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

A deliberately totemic element is positioned at the various thresholds to the central area. These elements will effectively articulate a gateway through which the individual is encouraged to pass. In singular or multiple arrays, they announce ones arrival or departure into or from the centre of the zone - assisting in defining the extent of the central area/space and contributing to the creation of a sense of identity and place.

These elements will effectively articulate the journey

project bank

High quality lighting treatments will create a strong evening identity for the Marlowes area, and help to support activity throughout the day.

Options

along the pedestrian route and by acting as a series of visual markers assist wayfinding and orientation.

Fountain Lighting

The opportunity should also be taken to incorporate lighting unobtrusively within the fountain details. This ensures that the details will read positively by night. The works should extend beyond the specific extents of the site area to include the River Gade fountain.

The use of long life LED sources should be investigated so as to minimise the maintenance required in relation to the upkeep of the installation.

Vacant Shops

In addition to the initiative to 'wrap' vacant shops already being progressed by Dacorum Borough Council; a further opportunity exists to install 'pop-up' light art installations in empty units. Such installations may comprise of simple elements such as static fluorescent battens with either coloured lamps or theatrical gel wraps and a simple back-drop. Alternatively, they may have an increased level of sophistication through the use of programmable kinetic or interactive equipment.

The key is to ensure that shop fronts are not allowed to appear dark and unoccupied.

Once again, the local community and schools and colleges could be engaged to conceive and implement such interventions.

Tree Lighting

The softening of what is ostensibly a hard urban environment may be achieved by night in part by the introduction of lighting treatments to those more organic elements such as any trees or similar soft landscaping.

In-ground uplighters will introduce light into the tree canopy after dark, presenting the tree as a sculptural element which will contribute to the creation of a positive night time environment.

The positioning of all uplighters will be co-ordinated so as to ensure clashes with the tree roots are avoided.

project bank

Improvements to pedestrian and highway lighting will be reinforced by feature lighting for trees, gateways, vacant facades, fountains and planters.

Options

market square

4

Phasing: Immediate to Short Term

The Market Square, located at the northern end of the Marlowes, is currently unused (with the exception of a weekly flea market and some low end retail premises on its periphery) and isolated from its surroundings. Whilst it is accepted that a site of this scale and potential within the town centre is likely to be subject to development at a later stage, there is an opportunity to utilise the space with a number of temporary uses within the immediate and short term in order to enhance its visual appeal and improve the level of footfall, particularly given its location adjacent to the bus station, which is also in need of improvement.

A possible temporary intervention which would add interest and colour to the square would be through painting its surface. A local artist could be commissioned to paint the square in an interesting pattern or design which could be clearly observed from the raised aspect of the Marlowes as you enter the Market Square.

Temporary green spaces, such as grass, 'wildflower fields' or a park could be integrated into the market square to enhance the use of the space and allow visitors to sit, relax and enjoy the space in a way which has not been possible in the past. These green spaces could either be located around the edges of the square to include areas of seating, or alternatively could encompass the entirety of the square providing a unique 'oasis' within the centre of the town.

Many of the shops situated around the edge of the Market Square are in need of repair. Improvements to these facades would improve the image of the Square, generating greater footfall and retail interest.

Lighting

Lighting to the Market Square should be flexible so as to deliver several different configurations and enable different uses of the space. The intention is to locate luminaires about the perimeter of the square thereby leaving the centre of the square free of fittings. These luminaires may utilise mirror technology so as to minimise column height and maximise light throw. Alternatively, a multiple array of luminaires may be affixed to each column. A number of these fittings designated for area specific lighting when combined with the use of gobos, coloured filters and the like, allow for a more theatrical presentation as might be appropriate at Christmas or for another festival or event held within the square.

Temporary or semi-permanent lighting installations around the market square would help to increase activity in the area in the evening whilst adding an interesting and playful element to the streetscape within the town centre as a whole. Options considered for the market square include a series of lighting columns around its edge, projecting images onto its surface either in

project bank

The Market Square offers a large blank canvas for temporary treatments. Options include removable attractions, as well as permanent measures such as shop facade improvements.

Options

the form of digital images/photos or larger projections which could, for example, cover the square in 'water' or 'grass', dramatically changing people's perceptions of the space. Such a facility could be used to promote local artists or work by local schools and the community. In this way, the projection of imagery is a reference to the town's previous role as host to the European Kodak Headquarters. At the same time, reactive lighting installations on shop frontages around the square, which activate through the presence or touch of the user, could also provide an exciting dimension to the evening appeal of the area.

We have the opportunity to introduce various light features so as to support the creation of a positive night time environment and so support the re-generation of the early evening economy. The proposals for the Market Square see the use of the square, when not occupied, as a large screen upon which a series of images could be projected. The square would thus be imbued with energy and dynamism even when empty.

project bank

Other options include lighting treatments, a community-painted market floor, or a greening of the market to bring the Water Gardens closer to the Marlowes.

Options

connections & wayfinding

5

Phasing: Immediate to Short Term

Whilst attention has been paid to wayfinding in the past by means of signs pointing towards various destinations, car parks and so forth across the Marlowes, a new wayfinding strategy is required to enhance legibility in the immediate term. It is anticipated that the existing bulky signage will be rationalised or removed altogether as part of the de-cluttering exercise, replaced by a new wayfinding strategy to harmonise with the Riverside signage strategy.

Signage will be located at appropriate locations througout the Marlowes Shopping Zone which would include key decision points, car parks and bus stops. A key requirement will be to provide clear maps as well as fingerpost signs. A tiered approach to wayfinding would be adopted within the Marlowes Shopping Zone with layers of signage at different levels supporting and supplementing that at eye level. Whilst the majority of wayfinding would be through sign posts as per that implemented at Riverside with directional fingers and stand alone information columns/boards, other innovative methods to aid legibility and wayfinding would be included. Firstly, this could involve mechanisms at low level specifically aimed at engaging young children and directing towards areas of play and secondly large, well designed and fitting murals at height on the sides of building facades at appropriate locations would be adopted. An example of where this strategy could be effectively implemented would be a mural on exposed blank facade of the 'Thorntons' building which would direct people along the adjacent alley towards the river.

Alleyway Lighting

Key to the success of any new lighting strategy is the integration of the various lighting layers. To this end the side routes that lead off the central pedestrian route must benefit from a similar quality of light to that introduced along the pedestrian route. Whilst the larger connections may allow the use of the similar lantern types to be employed either as column or wall mounted solutions such treatments may not be always possible with the smaller connections. Clearly, maintaining a consistent light source will be vital but it may also be appropriate to consider details which respond to the particular geometry of each connection.

Narrower connections will naturally be perceived to be less welcoming than those of more generous width. To compensate the presentation of the vertical surfaces should be considered more carefully and lighting applied accordingly. Whilst the functional lighting solutions will ensure that good facial recognition is provided, where appropriate such solutions will be supported by details, such as in-ground uplighters or wash lights, which seek to lift the presentation of these spaces above the merely functional. In so doing these routes are presented as more than a second class space.

project bank

Bold facade signage could be used to aid wayfinding. These treatments could be supported by lighting and signposts to form an overall wayfinding strategy.

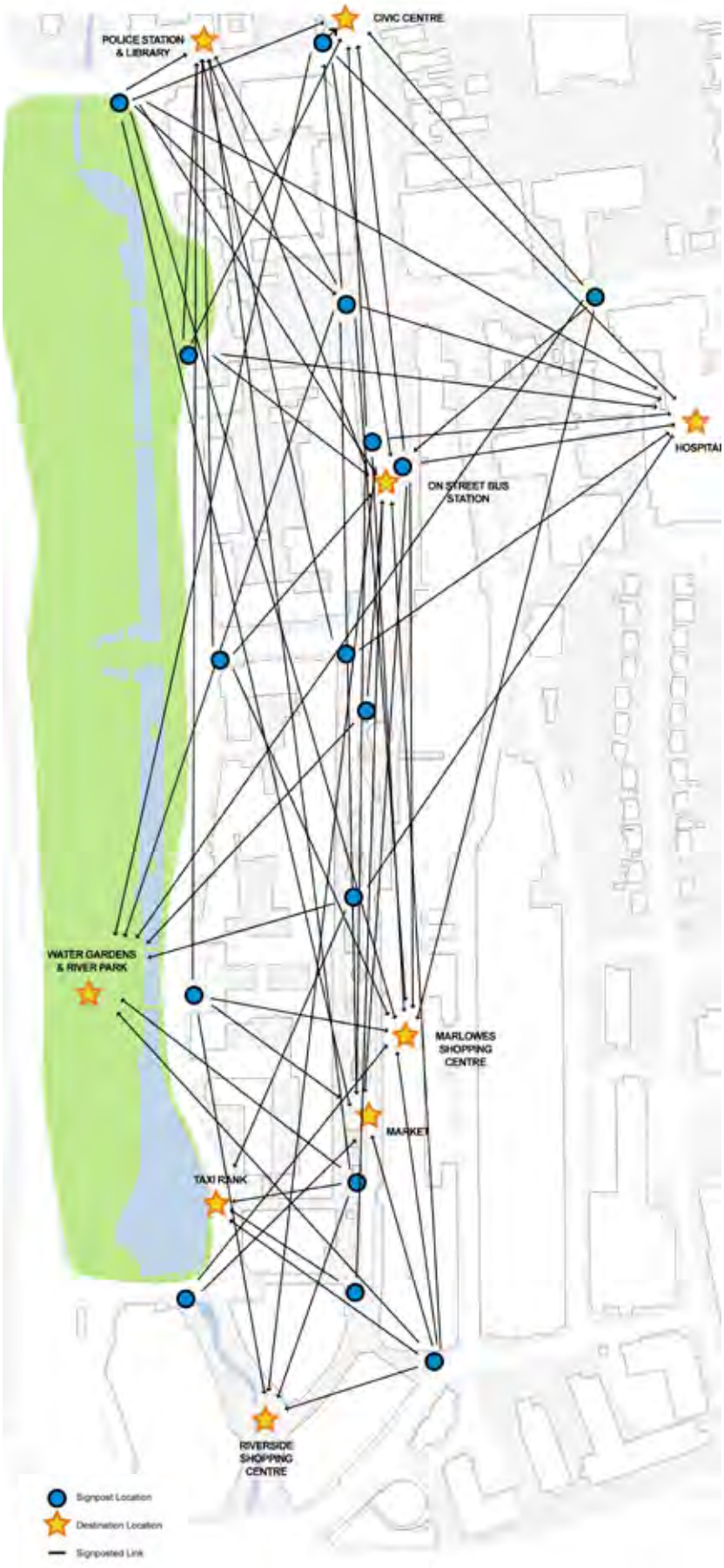
connections & wayfinding

Options

5

project bank

The new signage strategy would create a web of key destinations, each connected by wayfinding and lighting treatments.



food court

6

Phasing: Immediate Term

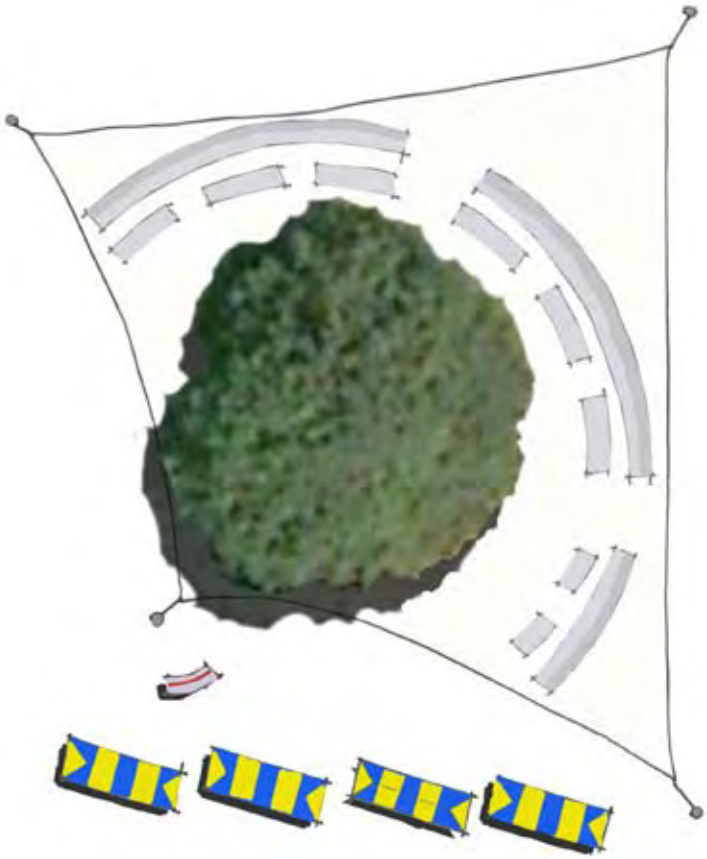
Allowing people to sit and enjoy something to eat, whether alone or as part of a group, is a key ingredient to activate public space within a town centre environment and encouraging socialising throughout the day and evening. In the case of the Marlowes Shopping Zone, there are fairly limited choices when it comes to alfresco dining. This is restricted to the one hot food van with associated permanent tables/seating and canopies located mid-way along the pedestrianised precinct. A number of other cafes and retail premises also have some outdoor seating. Whilst this seating area serves its purpose, there is potential to create a wider, specific outdoor 'street market style' food court within the Marlowes.

It is proposed to create a food court that would provide space for four or five temporary food marquees which will be arranged around a modern seating and table area. The seating would be protected from the elements by means of an innovative canopy structure, and could include feature lighting and signage to create a sense of place unique to the food court within the Marlowes. It is anticipated that on a longer time scale, a variety of food retail units would open up in the area surrounding the food court, which would further encourage use of the space for eating and socialising.

project bank

A covered area could be a focus for a specialist food court. The area would include seating provision for hungry shoppers

Options



greening of bridge st. 7

Phasing: Immediate Term

Bridge Street currently fulfils the role of a connecting route between Waterhouse Street and the Marlowes. It provides one of the limited few east-west vehicular linkages between the Marlowes and the surrounding highway network, whilst also providing a direct connection to the River and Watergardens for pedestrians.

Due to its role as a primary gateway to the town centre with key linkages to the Watergardens, there is a great opportunity to 'green' Bridge Street through appropriate material treatment and planting. The concept is to introduce and expand the green space associated with the River and Watergardens into the Marlowes, creating a visual and physical link between the two through linear rows of trees along Bridge Street.

project bank

Pavement extensions along Bridge Street could be coupled with a decluttering exercise and tree planting to create a boulevard linking the Water Gardens and the Marlowes.

market stalls

8

Phasing: Immediate to Short Term

The market provides a great opportunity to diversify the retail offer and attract more people into the town centre. However, whilst the market is successful, the space is not used as best as it could be and the actual offer provided by the market stalls is somewhat restricted.

The layout of the market stalls has been considered in respect of the requirement to retain an emergency vehicle route through the pedestrianised area. As a result, various layout options have been considered. Each utilises a combination of blocks and rows of stalls of varying number, primarily located between the planters.

The market stalls will be coherent in design and layout with a consistent colour scheme which will provide a definitive image for the market. Stallholders will be required to stay within the boundary of the market stalls and spilling out/haphazard extensions will not be permitted. This will ensure that a structured layout is retained and that pedestrian and emergency vehicle movement is not compromised.

A review of the retail offer provided by the market will also seek to provide specific markets on certain days of the week or month which could include farmers markets, antiques markets and so forth. These could either be accommodated within the proposed market layout or in a separate area such as the Market Square or Old Town.

The facing page presents four possible alternatives for the market stall layouts, assuming no change in the existing layout of the planters. This arrangement allows for access by emergency and service vehicles.

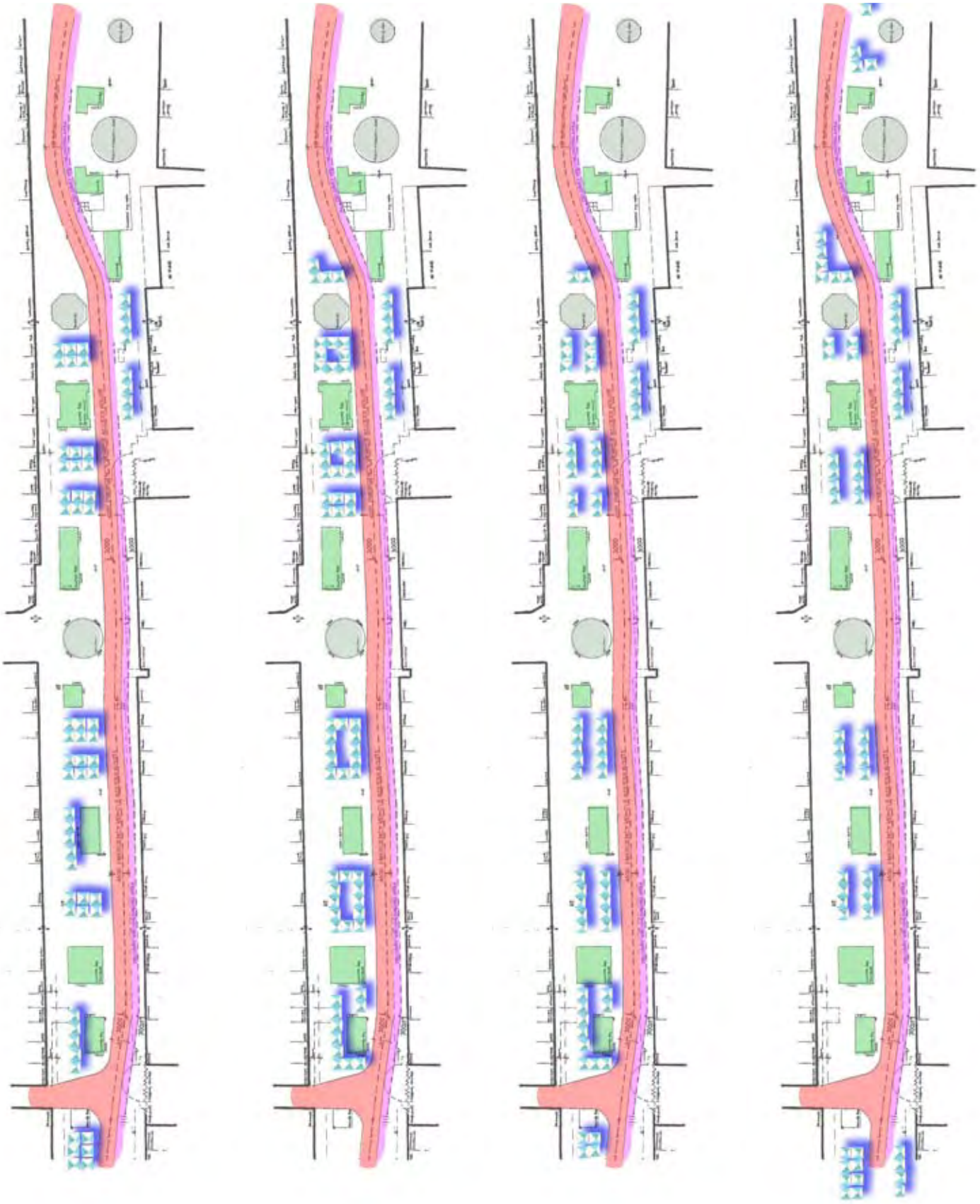
project bank

Semi-permanent market stalls could create a sense of uniformity and order within the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

Options

market stalls

8



buildings & facades 9

Phasing: Short to Medium Term

The Marlowes currently features a range of facades which have been constructed according to the prevailing architectural design and techniques of the period in which they were built. Whilst some facades are worthy of note, many appear aged and neglected, with graffiti and a lack of investment and maintenance becoming increasingly obvious. In order to create a more aesthetically pleasing environment and improve the image of the Marlowes, specific building treatment work and refurbishment of existing deteriorating facades is required. The focus of this would be to repaint or reclad those facades in need of repair. Whilst a few of the buildings date back to the original New Town, and therefore may require appropriate treatment to remain in keeping with the original design (e.g. Bank Court), other buildings may be candidates for more creative treatment.

Whilst the specific facade treatments for individual buildings will be subject to a further, more detailed study, the facades of those buildings listed below have been identified as in greatest need of refurbishment or enhancement:

- 224 Marlowes
- Marlowes facade and entry point to Fareham House
- Entry points and facades of Stephyns Chambers (located on Bank Court)
- Alleyway between Marlowes and King Harry Street
- 187A/B/C Marlowes
- 198-200 Marlowes
- 192 Marlowes
- 188-190 Marlowes
- 179 The Marlowes
- 176-186 Marlowes
- 147-149 Marlowes
- 150-156 Marlowes
- Hillfield Road Car Park
- Salvation Army Refuge, Waterhouse Street
- Flats 41-48 The Square

The majority of the facades considered for improvement are located along the pedestrianised area of the Marlowes. This provides an opportunity for a coherent, joined up approach to treating the facades in order to ensure that they create a definitive image for the Marlowes.

Two alleyways connecting Marlowes with King Harry Street to the east are of particular note due to their prolonged length of blank brick facade and poor lighting. Whilst there is limited scope to improve the facade in terms of surveillance, appropriate treatment to improve

project bank

A number of facades along the Marlowes could benefit from improvements. This could be achieved through repainting/ recladding or with the use of lighting.

Issues

the sense of overbearing enclosure and reduce the perception of insecurity.

Lighting

The perceived level of illumination of any space is influenced significantly by the presentation of the local vertical surfaces.

To this end the illumination of building facades can and will play a hugely important role in defining the night time environment. The considered application of light to certain facades will create a series of lit beacons which will both assist in the creation of a night time identity for the Marlowes and also create a series of visual markers which punctuate/articulate the night scene.

The new Riverside Shopping Centre benefits from feature lighting treatments to aspects of its facade. Such treatments act as a form of simple signage increasing the presence of the centre within the night time environment and also a means of contributing to the ambience of the night time environment within this location.

Simple architectural lighting will be employed to articulate specific aspects of certain building facades including the mural to the Emmett frieze on the Hillfield Road car park. Equally, treatments to the residential block immediately adjacent to the new Riverside Shopping development would assist in reducing the contrast that exists between the two building forms by night. Care will naturally be taken to ensure that light ingress into apartments is avoided.

project bank

Coupled with repainting/ recladding, lighting could be used to significantly improve the impact of facades along Marlowes.

Options

play

10

Phasing: Short to Medium Term

Play, both formal and informal, is a critical element to consider when redeveloping the public realm of town centre environments. It is increasingly recognised that children benefit from, and enjoy a wide range of play activities, which benefits the community as a whole and helps to combat childhood obesity and anti-social behaviour which can occur when young people are not stimulated.

"The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens" (David Lloyd George)

"Learning in the local built environment brings subjects to life. It also helps to increase self-confidence and maturity; provides new ways of learning; enhances pupil motivation; and encourages the development of social and lifelong learning skills. Furthermore it invites pupils to approach the places and space they inhabit from different perspectives, encouraging long-term engagement and a realisation that as young people they have a valid contribution to make to the development of the local area" (CABE Education)

The current play offering within the Marlowes Shopping Zone is relatively poor and dated, with formal play being restricted to a small area adjacent to the volunteer centre and a further play area to the north of Watergardens. Both of these play areas are not in keeping with that considered appropriate for a modern play environment and are focused primarily towards younger children with some aspects beginning to show their age through deteriorating condition or having been graffitied.

It is proposed to provide both formal and informal play throughout the Marlowes which reflects a modern, inviting and fun town centre environment for children. The planters could be designed to incorporate informal play through their design and layout, encouraging children to run through, play, sit and lie on the grass. Robust sculptures, which can also be used for informal play, could also be included within the design to encourage exploration.

Formal play areas could also be incorporated into the arrangement and design of the planters, with specific spaces between them being provided to accommodate sustainable play equipment. This could be in the form of wooden forts and adventure play areas which are robust and visually enticing to children, as well as modern and innovative play, such as seesaws that generate energy to power interactive lighting and games within the play areas; although ongoing maintenance costs must be considered if these are selected.

project bank

The pedestrianised area's dated playground could be replaced by a sustainable play zone fully integrated into the landscape treatment.

Issues

Options

social

11

Phasing: Short Term

A calendar of events will be implemented in the Marlowes in the short term, which will take place both within the pedestrianised area of the street and in the market square prior to its redevelopment. The Marlowes is a wide street, and therefore a range of activities can take place here including workshops/cooking events, small amusement rides and more imaginative events such as urban gardening, outdoor dance classes and so forth. A 'pop-up Hemel Hempstead' event could be implemented, as per other similar successful events, to make use of empty shops within the Marlowes whilst offering free promotions and offers at existing stores.

The market square currently provides an excellent space for events due to its generous size and the lack of disturbance to pedestrian flow on the Marlowes associated with larger events. A range of activities would be encouraged across the year, which could be themed towards certain times of the year or public holidays, and could include skiing/snowboarding, climbing and abseiling walls, funfairs, ice rinks, urban mini-golf, 360 degree trampolines and adventure trails. Events at this location would encourage pedestrians to visit the northern end of the Marlowes, promote the local independent shops and create a level of night-time activity, particularly through events such as outdoor film screenings.

Whilst the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres currently have their own tailor made websites advertising the stores, opening times, jobs and upcoming events, there is a distinct lack of a coherent website covering the whole of the town centre, of which the Marlowes Shopping Zone forms the great majority. The website would encompass the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres, whilst advertising the other businesses within the Marlowes, events and promotions as well as being used as a first port of call for public consultation on later phases in the redevelopment of the area. It is anticipated that the website could be advertised on boards and signage within the Marlowes Shopping Zone itself, on Pay and Display tickets and linked to on the Dacorum Borough Council website.

project bank

A new website could be used to promote a calendar of town centre events. Events could take place within the Water Gardens, Market Square or pedestrianised area.

service yards

12

Phasing: Short to Medium Term

A comprehensive service yard strategy is required for the prolonged length of rear building aspects which currently exist within the Marlowes Shopping Zone, primarily along Waterhouse Street and King Harry Street. Currently these service yards are haphazard, poorly maintained, cluttered with rubbish and often filled with car and van parking which all adds together to create a poor streetscene and a series of unwelcoming entry points to the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

The proposals seek to develop an overarching treatment approach which will cover all of the service yard entrances along the indentified routes. This is likely to be through the addition of a series of gates and associated fencing aligned to create a continuous frontage onto the street, coupled with ground-level gateway treatments at each entrance.

The access gates and fencing will be treated as public art, with patterns, whether shaped metal, actual painted artwork or sculpture integrated into the design. A common theme or design should be developed in order to create a coherent approach which can be used to project an image of the Marlowes Shopping Zone. Servicing will not be affected by these proposals, and all business proprietors will have independent access to their own service yard entrance or as per the existing situation in the case of shared service areas.

At ground level, priority could be returned to pedestrians, with the carriageway raised at entrance points to allow for a continuous crossing level for people travelling along the street. Rather than traditional tarmac, the entrances should act as continuations of the pavement, with vehicles giving way to pedestrians, but still with reference points for the visually impaired.

project bank

Existing service yard entrances should be improved for pedestrians through the introduction of gates and continuous pavements.

Issues

Options

Options

ramped area

13

Phasing: Medium Term

The ramped area of Marlowes, between Bridge Street and Hillfield Road could be targeted for regeneration as part of the improvement strategy. The design intereventions proposed aim to create a more integrated High Street, stepping away from the current seperation of uses.

The ramped area is home to a number of food and drink establishments. Measures to provide these units with space outside to expand could be introduced. Renewed paving, designated space for tables and chairs, as well as adequate lighting will help to encourage activity in this part of the Marlowes into the evening.

At ground level, the new bus stops that have been introduced along the stretch will be complimented by a greater amount of informal seating along the planters. The current problem with rodents inhabiting the planters will be solved through the cutting back of vegetation to create more open space.

Overlooking of the new bus stops by patrons using the street cafes would provide an improved sense of 'eyes on the street' and informal surveillance whilst creating a more active streetscene.

A new flight of steps will lead up to the ramped area from the bus stops so as to provide immediate and obvious access between the two areas. The new steps will also provide secondary informal seating area for those waiting at the bus stops.

Issues

Options

bank court

14

Phasing: Medium Term

Bank Court is a unique area within the Marlowes Shopping zone as it is on an human scale and possesses many high quality facades and qualities of a well proportioned public space. A public piazza could be created by reducing or relocating the current disabled car parking provision from Bank Court. The removal of cars from this area would leave a good sized, well enclosed public space for the benefit of retailers and visitors. Seating from nearby cafes could be introduced, alongside lighting treatments and measures to promote evening activity. This new role as a high quality, identifiable public space with improved landscaping and wider connections to the Watergardens could be reinforced through the introduction of a higher quality materials palette, echoing the quality of some of the surrounding bank buildings.

Lighting

The desired lighting proposals seek to create a reservoir of coloured light seemingly contained within the central courtyard area. This may be achieved via a series of high level projectors located at roof level which punch light down into the space. Alternatively, the floor surface may be punctuated by a grid array of low power LED uplighters. The cumulative effect of these fittings will be to create a bloom of light reflecting off the surfaces contained therein.

project bank

A pocket space could be created at Bank Court through its pedestrianisation, and by allowing a cafe seating area to be established.

Options

waterhouse street

15

Phasing: Medium to Longer Term

Waterhouse Street runs north-south along the edge of the built form of the Marlowes adjacent to the river and provides a key route for buses circulating around the town centre. Waterhouse Street presents a further barrier to pedestrians wanting to access the river and the Watergardens from the Marlowes, and therefore provides an excellent opportunity for a shared space arrangement which would help to reduce this perception and open up connections to the surrounding areas.

It is proposed that Waterhouse Street would operate as a shared space which will be restricted to buses and service vehicles only, thereby reducing the volume of traffic using the space and increasing its accessibility to pedestrians. Footways will lead from the Marlowes via Bank Court, Bridge Street and the numerous alley ways that run east-west to a flush surface on Waterhouse Street where the footway and carriageway are at grade to each other.

Contrasting materials will be carefully selected to provide delineation for pedestrians and vehicles, whilst planters, street furniture and vegetation will be planted in locations within the space to deliberately reduce speeds and enforce the perception of a shared space where no particular mode has priority. Crossings will also be demarcated using materials contrasting colour and form e.g. granite setts to delineate opportunities to cross from the Marlowes to the River Gade.

project bank

A shared surface on Waterhouse Street would promote greater movement between the Water Gardens and Marlowes, and return street ownership to pedestrians.

Options

river of time

16

Phasing: Medium to Long Term

When water is integrated into public realm design, it can form a dynamic and playful element which will add interest and create a softer aspect to typically hard built form of town centre environments.

Water has been successfully integrated into the design of the Riverside retail complex, and in the case of the Marlowes the addition of a water feature or lighting feature which captures the idea or essence of a river would enrich the visitor experience, whilst reinforcing the linearity of the built form. The introduction of an installation featuring water, either physically or visually into the precinct would also help to reconnect the Marlowes with the Watergardens, providing a visual and psychological link to the adjacent river running parallel to the shopping zone.

The 'river' would focus on the existing water feature fountain, from which it would run south through the pedestrianised precinct. The river could snake through a very shallow formed channel in the footway, which would be delineated through footway materials, and would be fully integrated into street furniture and planter design.

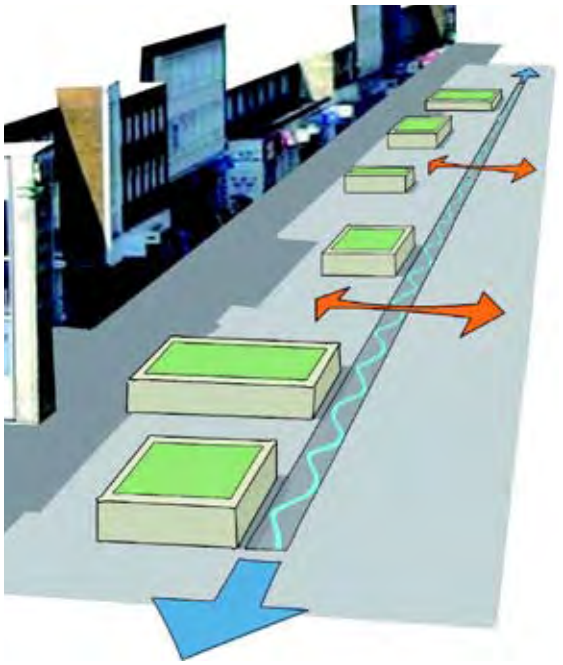
Lighting could also be introduced in order to enhance the appearance of the river during the evening through linear lighting along its route as well as feature lighting at key locations, whilst the layout of the river could be developed to include public art installations. These additional aspects would be subject to detailed consideration of budget and technical appraisals.

Alternatively, if the actual use of water proved to be unfeasible or unacceptable, a variety of alternative options can be explored, including using a light projection system to recreate the illusion of flowing water; or a permanent light installation using low-energy LED lighting to represent the 'river'.

project bank

A small stream could be introduced to echo the River Gade, and to create a sense of linearity and connection along the Marlowes.

Options



changes of use

17

Phasing: Long Term

There are currently a number of sites within the Marlowes which provide opportunities for strategic redevelopment and a change in land use in order to make the most of a currently under-utilised asset. It is also evident that there is a lack of variety in independent stores throughout the Marlowes, and a scheme should be implemented to try and revitalise and encourage growth in Hemel Hempstead's smaller business sector.

Two buildings at key locations within the Marlowes Shopping Zone have been identified for redevelopment and a change in land use as part of the long term interventions identified within this strategy

Hamilton House

Hamilton House is a medium rise, eight storey 1960s block located on the corner of the Marlowes and Hillfield Road opposite to the Market Square. The building is currently used as office premises however it is currently substantially under-occupied and could benefit from conversion into a residential development due to its appropriate size, town centre location and proximity to public transport facilities. A conversion of this nature, similar to that undertaken at the former Kodak Building, would help to improve the amount of pedestrian activity in this area at night whilst introducing a substantial residential element to the Marlowes Shopping Zone, and a critical mass for more diverse retail uses (e.g. food stores, take-aways etc), currently lacking within the town centre.

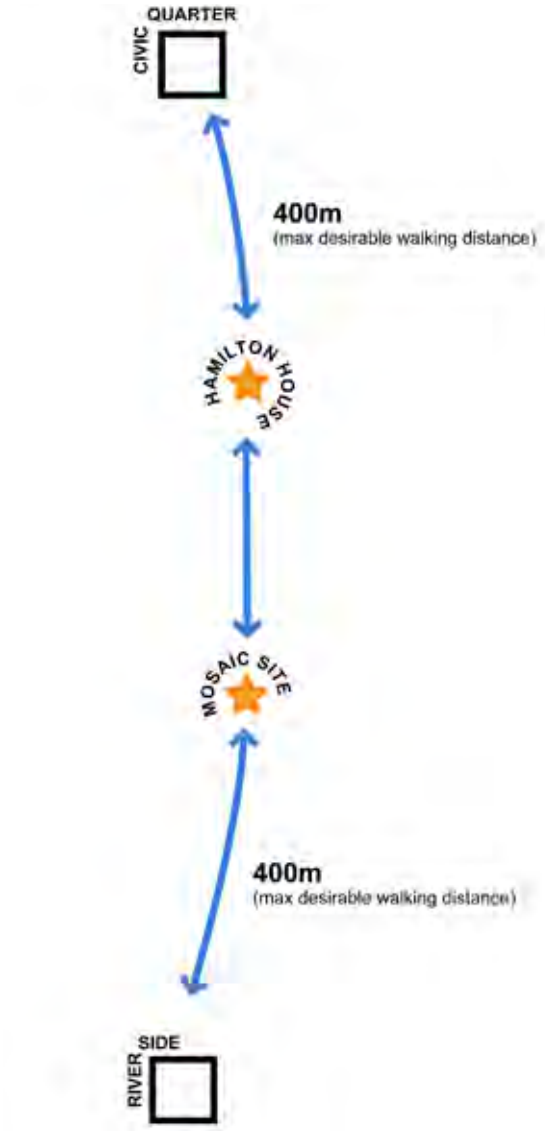
Mosaic Supermarket

The 'Mosaic Supermarket' (formerly Sainsbury's) building sits at a key gateway location to the Marlowes, bridging the area between the pedestrianised precinct area and the one vehicular route into the Marlowes via Bridge Street. The building is currently occupied by a budget food store, a vacant unit and Boots, and whilst featuring a drab and fairly neglected facade, could present an opportunity to create a new cultural and arts hub within the centre of the Marlowes, attracting people to the northern end of the street and creating a vibrant new land use for the town centre. The large internal floor area of the building could allow for a mix of uses including performance arts and production, with the substantial blank facade facing onto the Marlowes and Bridge Street providing a unique opportunity to create a dramatic 'showpiece' gateway.

project bank

Two sites have been targetted for possible targetted changes of use; Hamilton House and the Mosaic Supermarket. New attractors at these points would reconnect the Marlowes area.

Options



bus station

18

Phasing: Longer Term

The current bus station located on Waterhouse Street is inadequate for purpose and entirely unsuitable as a primary transportation hub for a town the size of Hemel Hempstead. The existing situation is a consequence of the failure of the Waterhouse Square redevelopment proposals to come to fruition, which has resulted in a semi-temporary bus station with a portakabin and small cafe on the edge of the Market Square. There is therefore a requirement to provide a better bus interchange and waiting facility within the town centre.

Proposals for a new bus station within the Marlowes Shopping Zone will be considered as part of the Masterplanning process.

project bank

The existing bus station could be relocated to create a linear station along Marlowes, closer to the pedestrian area (e.g. Dundee bus station).

Issues

Options

wider area project bank

wider area project bank

There are a number of projects which would contribute to the public realm of the Marlowes area despite being situated outside the Marlowes Shopping Zone.

These projects have been included as their implementation would have significant beneficial impacts upon the Marlowes Shopping Zone, and the areas around it. As such, they should be considered for inclusion in future masterplans and policy documents concerning the town centre to ensure a coherent and strong level of public realm improvement in the longer term.

leighton buzzard rd 1

A pedestrian friendly environment could be created on Leighton Buzzard Road through the introduction of a new road surface and median strip (e.g. Ashford Ring-road).

Phasing: Medium Term

Leighton Buzzard Road, located to the west of the Marlowes beyond the Watergardens, forms a strong north-south barrier to pedestrian movement between the town centre and the residential areas of Boxmoor, Gadebridge and Warners End in the west. This barrier effect is further amplified by the north-south alignment of the adjacent car parks and the river Gade.

In order to help break down these barriers to movement whilst ensuring that vehicular capacity is not reduced, a long term aspiration to reduce the physical and visual dominance of motor vehicles on Leighton Buzzard Road is proposed.

It is proposed to create an environment more conducive to pedestrians and cyclists through a series of interventions including a change in materials, appropriate treatment of junctions and spaces, flush footways onto the carriageway and planting.

Materials could include contrasting colours to delineate areas for pedestrians to cross, as well as coloured asphalt on the carriageway to try and enhance the perception that the road is not purely a corridor for vehicular traffic. Junctions will be treated appropriately with pedestrians having priority, whilst high quality materials and small 'pocket parks' and areas for seating will be provided in spaces at the edges in order to activate the street and reinforce the idea that this space is for pedestrians as well as vehicles. Low and high level planting at the edges of the carriageways will help to create a blurred boundary and distinction between vehicular and pedestrian space, whilst flush or minimum kerb upstand footways and crossings at grade with the carriageway will further help to reduce vehicular speeds and break down the perception of Leighton Buzzard Road as a barrier to pedestrian movement.

An enhanced pedestrian crossing could be introduced to link Cemetery Hill and Bridge Street, further reinforcing east-west connections and overcoming the barrier of the Leighton Buzzard Road. Similarly, further south, a new informal pedestrian crossing could be introduced to provide a simplified crossing adjacent to Heath Lane Nursery School, and meeting a worn desire line alongside the Watergardens.

Options

linear park

2

Phasing: Long Term

Whilst parking within the Marlowes Shopping Zone itself is relatively well sited, out of sight and commonly situated within development blocks e.g. the Marlowes Shopping Centre and roofs, the visual and physical dominance of car parking in the area to the west of the Water Gardens is much more obvious.

The proposed interventions seek to reduce this vehicular dominance and give more space back to pedestrians and cyclists through means of a continuous linear park, linking in with the Two Waters Open Space Study developed for the area to the south of Riverside. The linear park would run north from the Riverside/Moor End Road towards Combe Street and would run on top of the existing car parks and hard-standing through the creation of a 'green roof' on the upper storeys of the multi-storey car parks, and alongside the Moor End Road car park. This would reduce both north-south and east-west barriers to movement and provide an attractive public space to complement the adjacent Watergardens. The original formal walled garden implemented as part of the New Town design would be fully integrated into the linear park to enable the garden to restore its position as a popular and enjoyable green space within the town centre.

Lighting

The connection between the Marlowes Shopping Zone and Water Gardens should be maintained during hours of darkness. Lighting applications will fundamentally need to address the functional lighting requirements, ensuring that a sense of safety and security is promoted but equally, express various feature elements within the park. The intention is not to illuminate all aspects of the park but more to provide lighting to certain elements which then allow the gardens to be explored.

A white light solution will be driven into the park, achieved via a combination of light posts and illuminated bollards. Feature treatments to the bridges that span the River Gade may also be considered. Here a linear detail may be affixed to the underside of the bridge which would seemingly see the bridges floating above the water.

The illumination of central sculpture would provide an illuminated focal point or at the very least an illuminated backdrop, for those approaching the park from Bank Court. Certain tree canopies may also be targeted for illumination.

wider area project bank

A linear park could be created to link in with the Two Waters Open Space Study. The Park could utilise the multi-storey car park roof to enlarge the amount of open space available.

Options

phasing

The interventions described in this Improvement Strategy have been designed to work both independently and together to create a coherent design strategy for Hemel Hempstead.

The interventions have been sorted into timsecales so as to provide a framework for deciding which design measures should be introduced at which point in time in order to maximise the beneficial impact of the schemes.

Timescale	Intervention	Approximate Cost
Immediate	De-cluttering & Consolidation	
	Planter Treatments	
	Lighting	
	Temporary Treatment of the Market Square	
	Connections & Wayfinding	
	Food Court	
	Greening of Bridge Street	
Short Term	Play Strategy	
	De-cluttering & Consolidation	
	Additional Planter Treatments	
	Facade & Building Treatments	
	Lighting	
	Social Measures	
	Service Yard Entry Treatments	
	Connections & Wayfinding	
	Market Stall Improvements	
Medium Term	Ramped Area	
	Changes of Use - Mosaic Supermarket & Hamilton House	
	De-cluttering	
	Lighting	
	Facade & Building Treatments	
	Leighton Buzzard Road	
	Waterhouse Street Shared Surface	
	Bank Court	
	Restoration of Water Gardens	
	River of Time	
Long Term	Changes of Use - Various	
	Relocated & Enhanced Bus Station	
	Resurfacing of Pedestrianised Area	
	Creation of Linear Park	
	Lighting	

conclusions

conclusions

The Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy will feed into the masterplan that Dacorum Borough Council is currently preparing for Hemel Hempstead. The masterplan will be a key step in accomplishing the regeneration of the town centre in a coherent manner. The production of the Improvement Strategy presents Hemel Hempstead with a number of key opportunities, for a number of reasons:

- The Marlowes is located at the heart of Hemel Hempstead, in a strategic location that glues together its different neighbourhoods. Its prosperity is closely tied to that of the town and Dacorum.
- The Improvement Strategy will help to guide future development, so that it contributes positively and coherently to the town's identity.
- Public spaces are valuable settings for social interaction, bringing people together and engaging with all ages and abilities, contributing to the well-being of the local community.
- The Improvement Strategy is also essential in supporting the strengths of existing local businesses in the short term, as well as in attracting new businesses in the longer term.

The project team has attempted to harness these opportunities and translate them into a system of focused proposals that maximise the potential benefits, both as stand-alone measures, or as a combined package. The intention is that the improvements can be delivered as and when funding becomes available, delivering immediate improvements, whilst also combining to deliver an overarching benefit.

These goals have been achieved through the production of a robust set of inspirational yet achievable improvement projects.

The team would like to thank Kate Lang, Nathalie Bateman and Chris Taylor at Dacorum Borough Council for their essential assistance and help in producing this work.

This document has been produced by JMP Consultants Ltd and Pritchard Themis Lighting Design. The project team was Riccardo Bobisse, Martin Ivatt, Edward Povey and Alexis Themis.

bibliography

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Images

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Appendix A

Background

In order to fully understand the opinion of the people who use the town centre, whether it is for shopping, work, accessing services or as their place of residence, a public consultation exercise was undertaken at the Marlowes. The event took place over a Friday and Saturday (25th and 26th March 2011) in order to capture the widest possible audience on a standard weekday and a busy weekend market day. The overall aims of the event were to establish what those who visit the town centre would most like to see improved combined with promoting awareness of the public realm enhancement scheme for the longer term.

The event took place inside a market stall gazebo, where display boards outlining the potential interventions were provided, along with a ballot box 'voting system' and accompanying £50,000 'notes' with which consultees could vote for their favoured proposal. Participants were encouraged to stick notes onto the display boards with their comments on issues that affect the Marlowes, how these could be resolved as well as commenting directly on the proposals outlined. Participants were also encouraged to either complete a questionnaire at the event, or take one home to be completed online or returned by post. A web link was also provided which allowed people to access both the display boards and questionnaire on the Dacorum Borough Council website.

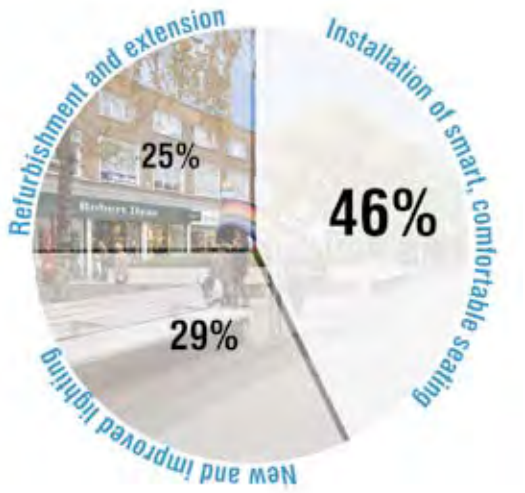
The event was attended by Designers from JMP Consultants, together with Officers from Dacorum Borough Council, who were able to run through and explain the proposals in detail and answer any questions relating to the interventions.

Summary of Responses

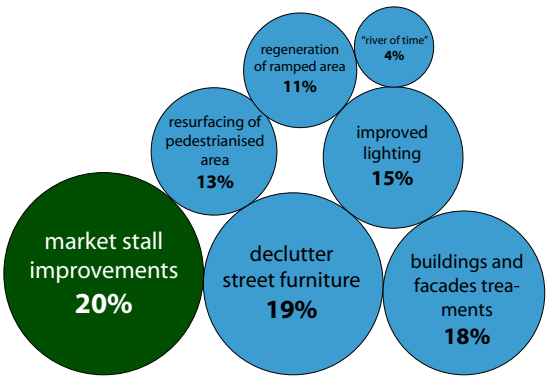
The two-day consultation event was well attended with over 100 people visiting the consultation stall and voting for the interventions they would most like to see delivered. A further 42 responses were recieved electronically and by letter. Due to numerous questions allowing the participant to vote for as many interventions as they deem appropriate, the tallied number of votes is often higher than the combined total of 128. The combined results of the consultation event and online questionnaire are outlined below:

Which of the following immediate term £50,000 interventions would you most like to see? (Based on the total number of votes recieved for each as most beneficial):

Which of the three options for enhancing the concrete planters which run through the Marlowes do you prefer? (Based on the total number of votes recieved for each):



Which of the following ideas for improvements to the Marlowes Shopping Zone would you support? (Based on the total number of votes recieved for each as a percentage of the total):



Appendix A

Whilst the voting system provides a good opportunity to understand which interventions would be preferred to others, the consultation also allowed for consultees to provide their own individual thoughts and input into the design process. As the consultation covered a wide spectrum of ideas and discussion points, as well as providing a chance to express views on the town in general, the number of comments received was high (total of 98 individual comments)'

Town Centre Environment

Watergardens

The Watergardens feature prominantly in comments on the overall town centre environment, with issues of particular note being the aspiration to see a cafe at the Watergardens, as well as general aesthetic improvements including improved lighting, better seating and general maitainence.

- "Need to build a tea hut/cream tea shop in Watergardens"
- "Better lighting on the river side"
- "Boating lake and cafe on the Watergardens"
- "Improvements to the Watergardens – better seating, less rubbish, better lighting"
- "The water gardens are an asset. Other towns and cities are developing waterside areas and we have a small one already why is it not maintained? The one time duck island is hidden the last time I looked when the trees etc green up in summer and the banks in this area are really no better after all the "green" work done some years ago. Obviously the shopping area is important but the leisure side should not be overlooked. People who work in the town would use the water gardens if they were cleaner with less rats.Years ago the flower/shrub area was colourful now there is green weed or sad looking shrubs. Cheap landscape gardening contracts are short sighted when you are trying to improve things so please try to redirect some extra time to the Watergardens now the fountain is running."

Empty Shops

Empty and low-end shops have been noted to be detrimental to the experience of visiting the Marlowes, with many consultees wishing to see the rates increased or other means of attracting mid-higher end businesses to the town.

- "Cheaper rents for shops to avoid closure"
- "Drop the charges on shops and less pound shops"
- "Too many pound shops and not enough family restaurants"

Venues

The closure of the 'Pavillion' was a recurrent issue raised by consultees, with many wishing to see the reinstatement of some form of entertainment venue in the town centre as it is perceived that there is now a distinct lack of activities, particularly for older people.

- "Need the pavillion back – something for older people"
- "Pavillion needs to be brought back"
- "More space for events/shows etc – events for the family – need to compete with Watford"
- "Pavillion for the elderly"
- "A new theatre to replace the pavillion to attract better entertainment"
- "We desperately need the return of arts and performance to the town, could the shop that used to be Sainsburys not be utilised for this purpose?"

Market

The current state of the market was raised by a number of consultees as requiring attention, with the arrangement of the stalls being of paramount concern. Numerous participants referred to the success of markets at neighbouring towns such as St Albans, stating that they would like to see the market in the Marlowes more aligned to this model which is seemlingly smarter and more professional than that at the Marlowes. Comments relating to the market stalls taking over the green benches were also recieved.

- "Please de-clutter! A better arrangement of existing stalls would give the market a better feel"
- "Please provide a proper market eg. St Albans"

Appendix A

- "Make the market stalls less messy"
- "Yes for the market – it gives Hemel a good look like St Albans"
- "Market should look more professional"
- "Can the council stop market stall holders taking over the green benches"

Planter Improvement Options

Improved Seating

Providing high quality seating along the edge of the planters was met with a good reception from consultees and was deemed the most beneficial of the planter interventions proposed by far. Most comments were positive, whilst concerns were raised regarding the design. Below are a summary of the main points raised.

- "Skateboarding would damage the benches"
- "Seating should have armrests to make it easier for people to get up after"
- "Most practical of ideas – can lighting be combined with seating"
- "As long as the wooden seating is well maintained ie. cleaned of pigeon droppings, this would be a great asset"

Lighting in Planters

Lighting was the second most popular planter intervention, with a mixture of positive and negative comments from consultees. Whilst many saw benefits in providing improved lighting, others were concerned with it being a waste of available funds due to the lack of evening activity in the Marlowes.

- "More lighting at night – its a yobs paradise"
- "Lighting is a great idea – will give warmth to a largely 'cold' concrete environment"
- "Cut lighting pollution – dont increase it!"
- "Don't waste money on lighting."

Refurbishment and Extension of Planters

Refurbishment of planters was deemed the least beneficial to the Marlowes and received the greatest amount of criticism from consultees. Issues were raised in regards to maintainance, crowding of the pedestrian environment and a reduction in access. Some of the comments receieved are included below.

- "Like the undulating planters – not the lack of space between them and the market"
- "Do not want kids to be encouraged to climb all over them"
- "Play area should be protected against vandals"
- "This would significantly reduce access – especially for those with mobility scooters"
- "Need better maintainance of the pedestrianised area"
- "Extending planters would cram shoppers into a smaller area to walk creating a more crowded and less attractive environment"
- "Grass wouldnt work"

Immediate Term Interventions

Temporary Treatment of Market Square

The temporary treatment of the Market Square was considered the most beneficial to the town, providing the greatest opportunity to enhance a large area of the town centre and provide a range of activities for the community. This intervention sparked discussion with consultees, with many wishing to express their opinion on what could be provided in the space whilst recognising the constraints of its location, resulting in a variety of varying ideas. A common theme was the use of the square for an ice rink and the addition of water features. Included below are a summary of the comments.

Appendix A

- "Using the square is a challenge due to its location – activities for 'Young People' such as a skating rink and the water feature illustrated look fun"
- "When there are events they are not properly attended"
- "Not sure that the grass is a great idea – high maintainence but would end up like grass beside the river after the geese have been!"
- "Fountains at the market square – Ice rink in the winter and childrens play area with water in the summer with seating around edges for parents"
- "Market Square for Community Groups"

Greening of Bridge Street

This intervention was the second most popular of the £50,000 interventions and recieved a good reception with consultees, many of whom would like to see more greenery in the town centre and believe it would be asthetically benefical to the Marlowes.

- "Great idea, the Marlowes needs to be more green"
- "Love it, the more trees the better!"
- "Cant complain about more greenery"

Food Court

The provision of a new food court was well received by consultees, however comments were limited. Consultees recognised that it is important to have a good quality, covered seating area within the Marlowes Shopping Zone, however many people expressed concern regarding the previous canopy which was vandalised.

- "Some covered seating would be a huge benefit to the Marlowes"
- "Last canvas was vandalised"

Childrens' Play Area

Generally, a new childrens play area was not well receieved by consultees, with many believing that there are already enough activities for children in the town centre and that it would be a waste of the allocated funding. However, some comments were noted as follows.

- "Wasting money on non essential items when money could be spent on more essential town projects. Childrens area only good idea."
- "Lots of space for kids to have reasons to visit the town centre"
- "Adult play zone or OAP zone – pensioner play park!"
- "We need more facilities for under 6 year olds"

Service Yard Entry Treatment

Whilst entry treatments to the service yards were considered benefical to the Marlowes Shopping Zone, it was not considered to be the most urgent intervention. Many consultees recognised the benefits of enhancing the service yards in a coherent approach, however this was not reflected in the votes. Only a single comment was received for this proposal.

- "Such a simple idea yet potentially asthetically pleasing!"

Improved Signage

Improved signage at the Marlowes was perceieved to provide the least benefit according to the votes undertaken by the consultees. Positive comments were made in regards to high level signage on sides of buildings, and generally improved wayfinding to assist visitors to the town. However, many concluded that improved signage would only benefit a small group of people who are visiting the town, and money could be better spent on other interventions that would serve a wider audience. Some comments on improved signage included:

- "Good idea – but also one sign showing where the Old Town is!"
- "Improving signage would certainly make the town more visitor friendly"
- "Is Hemel ready for this? What happens when it fades?"

Appendix B

The Marlowes

Lighting Interventions

PTL-390

October 2010

pritchard themis
Lighting Design

3rd Floor Studio
2 Plough Yard
London
EC2A 3LP
T: 0207 650 0700
F: 0207 650 0701
info@pritchardthemis.com
www.pritchardthemis.com

Building Facade Elements

Certain building facades need illumination to create a ‘celebration’ streetscape and to lift the focus of the street away from a cut-off point of the sodium street lights. Brightening elements of the buildings above the hoarding lines will immensely improve the street experience. The Roubaix streetscape in France is a case in point of this process.

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B 11

B 10

B 8

B 9

B 7

B 5

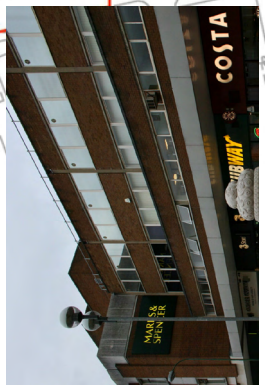
B 6

B 4

B 1

B 3

B 2



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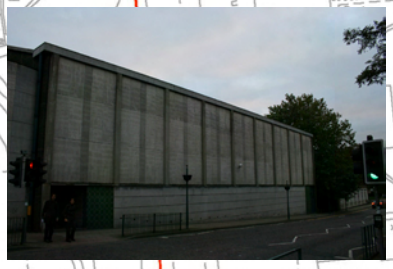
B 16



B 16

B 15

B 14

B 13

B 12

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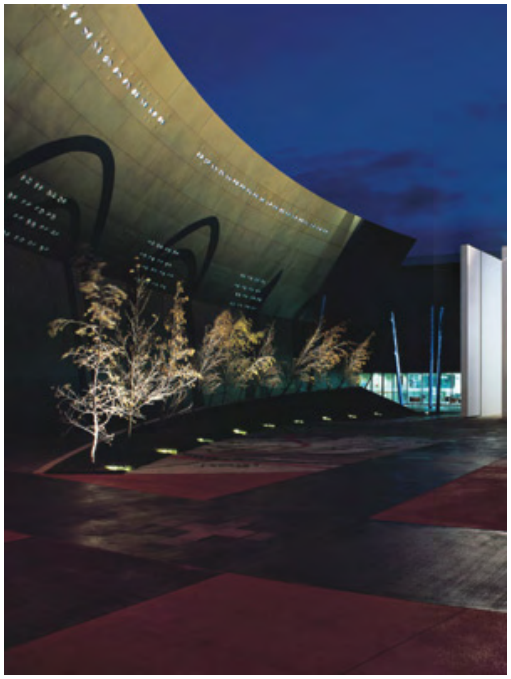
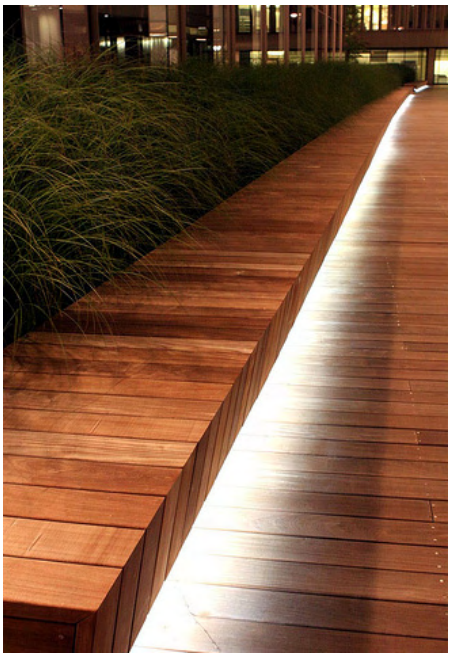
Feature Lighting

Feature lighting treatments should be incorporated to provide some visual interest within the built environment by night. prominent architectural elements, artworks and softlanmdscaping such a trees might be tagetted. The illumination of trees by night will go some way to soften the night time environment. Details should be introduced at a human scale to allow a sense of connection for pedestrians - lighting might incorporated into the proposed new seating details.





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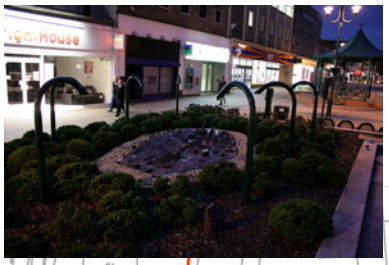
F 8



F 7

F 17

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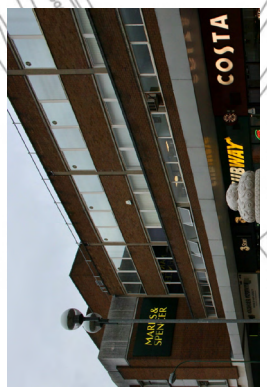
F 4

F 2

F 1



F 3

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F 15

F 14 d

F 13

F 14 a, b, c

F 12

F 10 & 11

Amenity Lighting Elements

As well as feature illumination there are qualities in the general ambient lighting that could be improved. Replacement of overly bright sodium sources with a low-glare white light solution and refurbishment of defunct under canopy lighting will much improve the sense of route and make it feel safer and more welcoming to the visitor.

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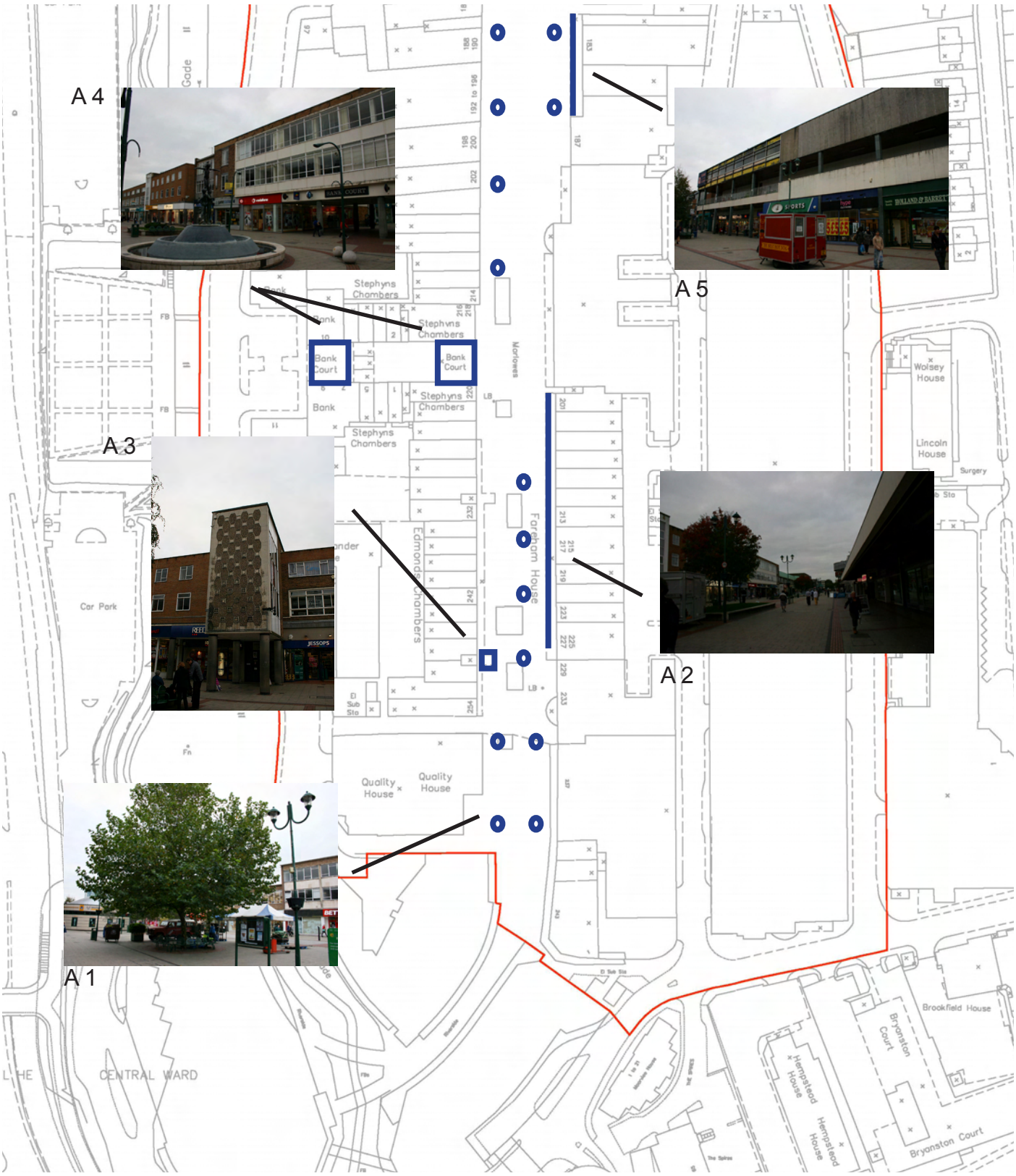

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