

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Basildon Town Centre Masterplan

DRAFT for consultation
March 2025

Basildon Council

BASILDON BELIEVE IN BASILDON

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1.0
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Document Overview + Masterplan Methodology

Document Overview

This Masterplan aims to shape the future development and regeneration of Basildon Town Centre. This will provide a framework for future investment and development which maximises the opportunities for Basildon, capitalises on its existing assets, and sets out a clear vision for Basildon as a thriving, vibrant and visionary Town Centre.

The Masterplan is underpinned by an assessment of the socio-economic condition of the Town Centre and market analysis, which reviews the current and potential office, retail, leisure, civic and residential markets within Basildon Town Centre using the evidence base that informs the current Draft Local Plan.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes the vitality and viability of town centres as important locations for sustainable growth including patterns of development that enables ease of access by a variety of transport modes, particularly public transport. It also recognises the important role that residential development has in supporting the vitality of town centres.

Basildon Borough Council is keen to promote and support opportunities for development that have the potential to add to vitality and viability. Positive planning is required to attract a range of main town centre uses, including offices, retail, civic, leisure and cultural facilities that support the daytime and evening economy, as well as further residential development and a mix of appropriate supporting services.

Masterplan Methodology

An internal team was appointed to produce the Masterplan. The status and content of the Masterplan was agreed and each officer prepared a scope of work which was followed by collation and reporting of a detailed evidence base which considered options to inform the final Masterplan vision. This evidence and options were presented to Members and Officers whose feedback assisted in confirming a preferred approach.

The Masterplan has also been informed by several stakeholder meetings with landowners, retailers, public services, Council departments and special interest groups.

A formal six-week public consultation period will be carried out between February – March 2025 following publication of the Draft Masterplan Document.

1.2 Planning Policy Context

National:

The Masterplan has been prepared in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2024. The NPPF promotes the management and growth of town centres using a mix of uses, and sustainable patterns of development.

Local:

The Saved Policies of the Basildon District Council Local Plan (1998) provides general guidance on town centre development within Basildon. The Local Plan Saved Policies are supportive of retail, office, recreational, community facilities and residential development, as part of mixed-use schemes.

Emerging Planning Policy Context:

Local planning policy is currently being reviewed and will in due course be replaced by a new Local Plan, setting out the future strategic planning policy for the Borough up to 2043.

Strategic Town Centre Policies:

Basildon Town Centre will be developed and sustained as the main town centre in the Borough. It will be shaped and managed to deliver regeneration, investment, economic growth and success. The extent of Basildon Town Centre is defined on the Draft Policies Map. This Masterplan aims to promote and expand upon the visions set out for the Town Centre within the Strategic Town Centre Masterplan Policies.

Masterplan Status:

The Masterplan informs the strategic planning and regeneration of the Basildon Masterplan Area. In addition, it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the Masterplan Area. The suggested uses for land, public realm enhancements, transport infrastructure and other interventions will be given appropriate weight in pre-application advice and in determining planning applications.



National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2024



The Saved Policies of the Basildon District Council Local Plan (1998)



Basildon Borough Draft Local Plan 2023 - 2043



Emerging Policy: Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres

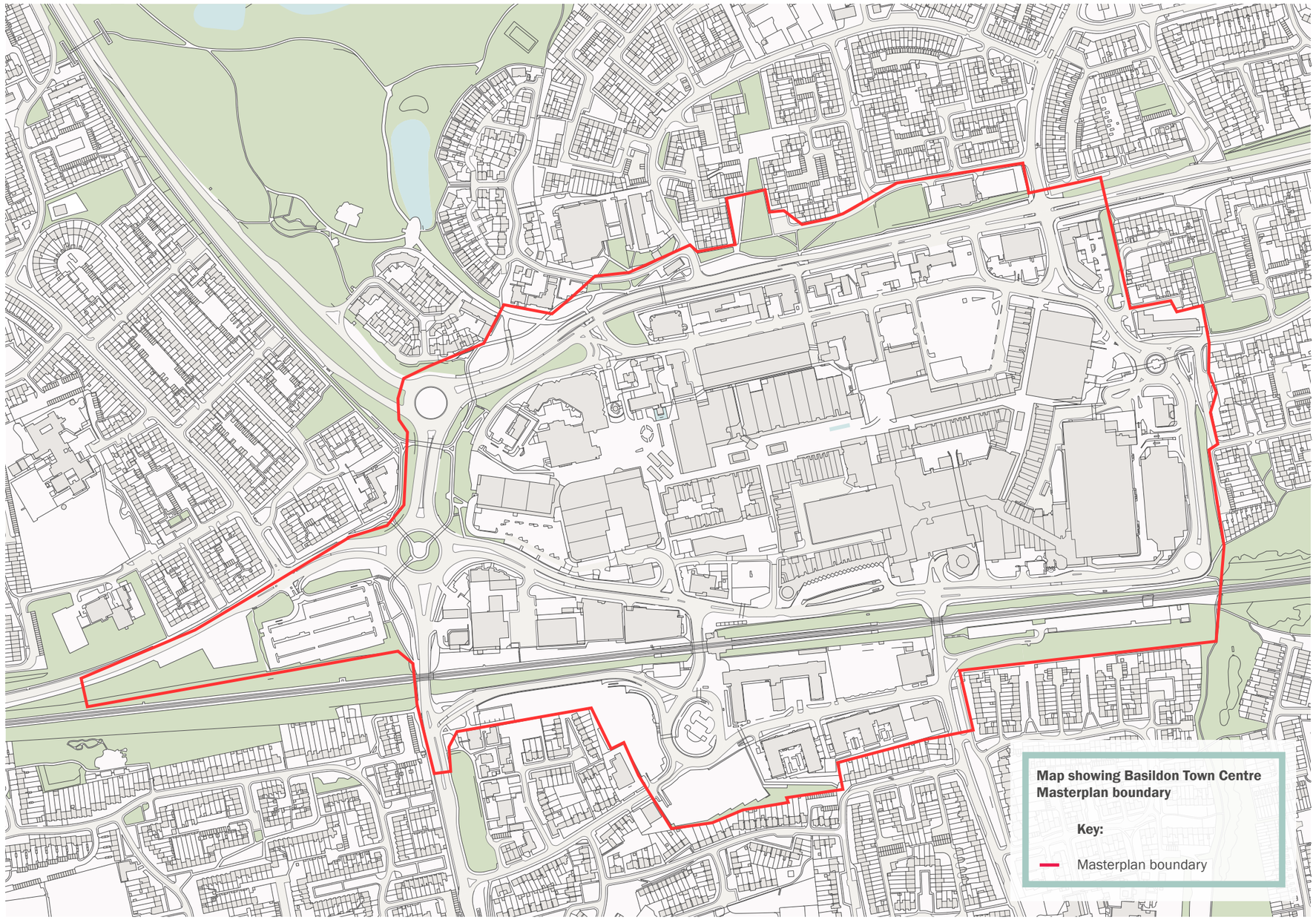


Emerging Policy R1: Development in Basildon Town Centre

1.3 Masterplan Boundary

The Masterplan boundary is mentioned in the draft Saved Local Plan under Town Centre Policy R1. According to the Policies Map, Basildon Town Centre serves as the civic heart of the Borough, as well as the primary hub for commercial activity and public transport.

Any proposed development within Basildon Town Centre must align with the Town Centre's role, adhere to the spatial strategy, and meet all other relevant policy requirements in the Local Plan. Land within the boundary will continue to support typical town-centre uses including but not limited to retail, offices, civic, leisure and community facilities, and residential (where it contributes to the viability and vitality of the Town Centre).



2.0
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Town Centre Position and Context

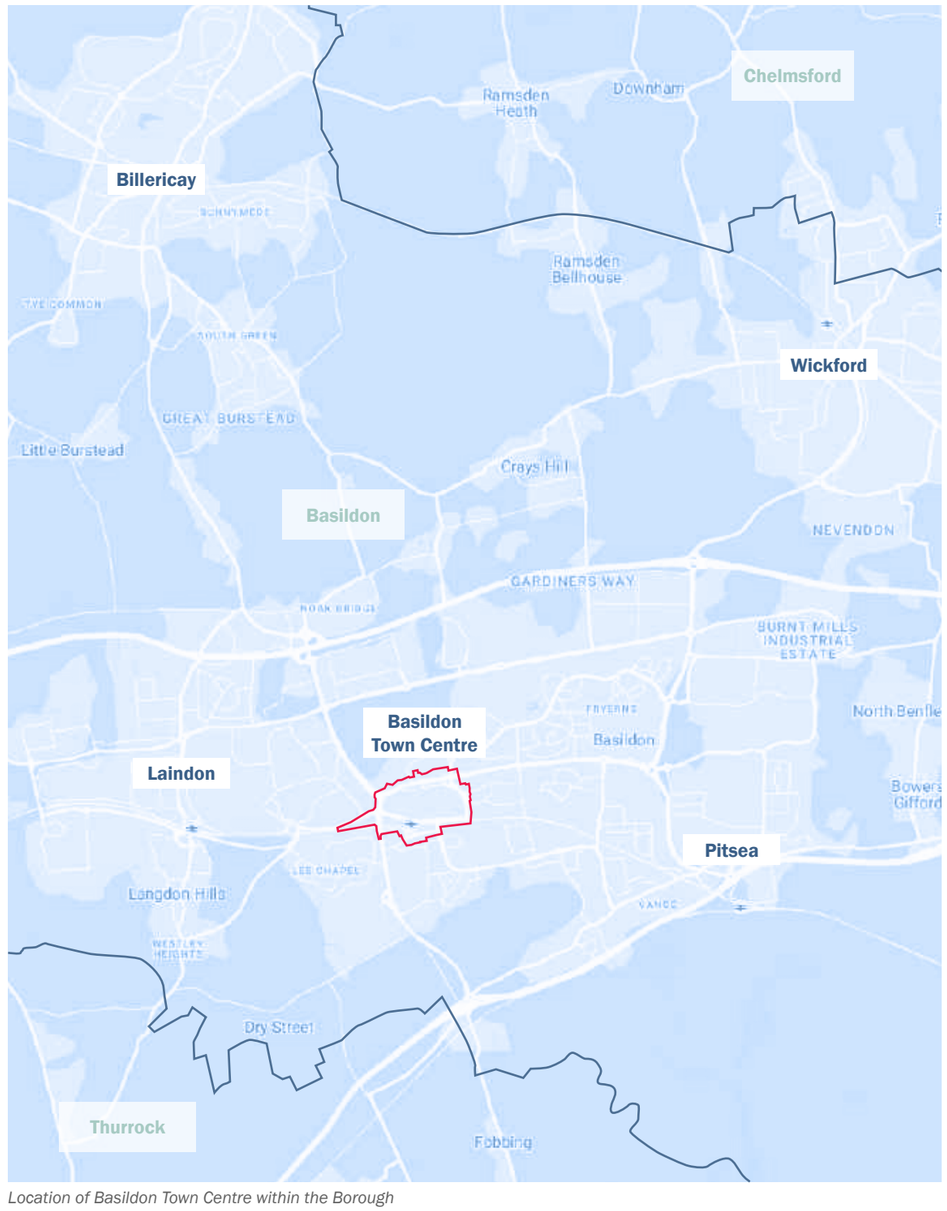
The Saved Policies of the Basildon District Council Local Plan (1998) provides general guidance on Town Centre development within Basildon. The Local Plan Saved Policies are supportive of residential development, retail, office, recreational, and community facilities, as part of mixed-use schemes within Town Centre.

Basildon Town Centre is the heart of South Essex, serving as a catalyst for future commercial and residential growth around the transport hub, whilst also supporting the economic and community life of this expanding sub-region. Located between two bands of Green Belt, it serves a broad catchment area (including those from outside the borough) as well as the growing population of Basildon New Town as a place to live, shop, enjoy leisure time, work and access community services. Strategically located along national and regional road and rail networks it has excellent links to London, Greater Essex and beyond.

Basildon Town Centre will remain the Borough's principal urban area and a key hub in South Essex, serving as the main shopping and leisure destination for the local area. As a Sub-Regional Town Centre, it provides significant employment, service, and civic functions to meet the needs of the wider population. The Town Centres of Billericay, Pitsea, Laindon and Wickford are smaller but offer a range of retail, leisure, and service uses that serve the needs to their local populations.



Basildon Borough Location Plan

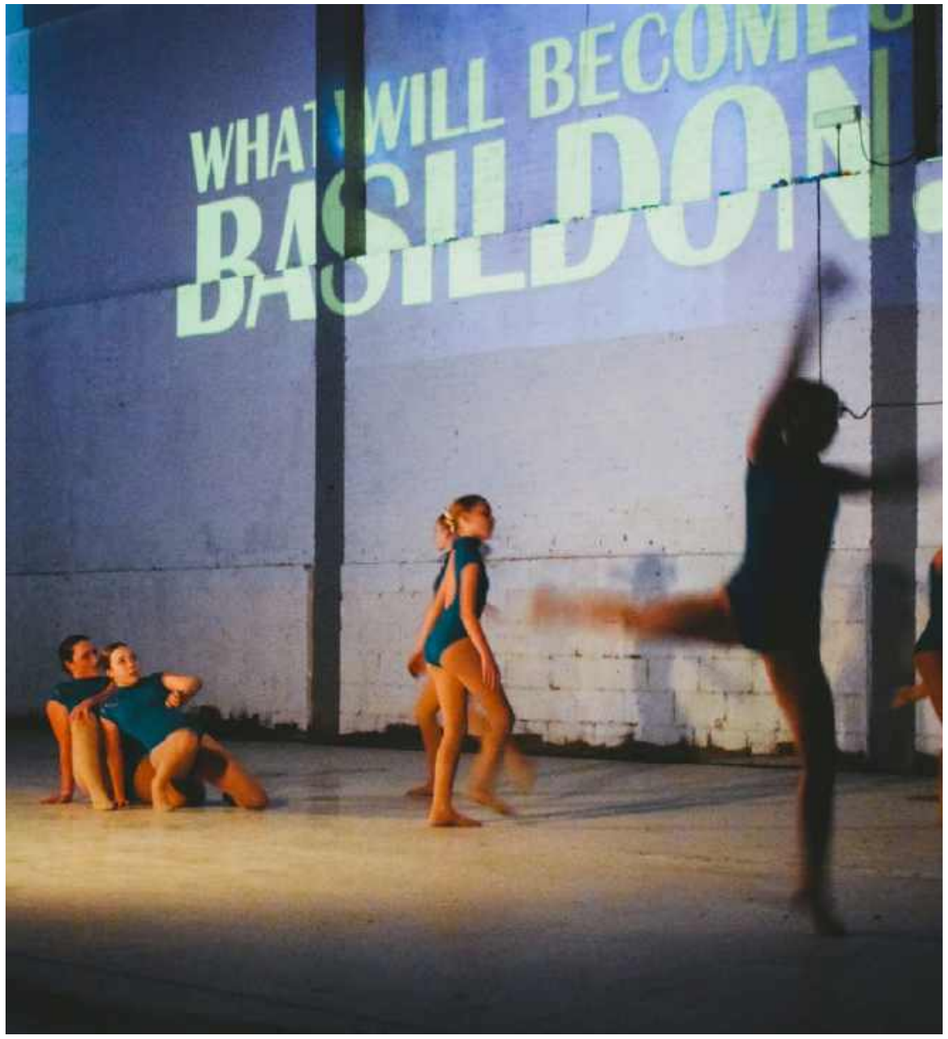


Location of Basildon Town Centre within the Borough

2.2 Drivers for change

The overall aim of this strategy is gradual enhancement of the Basildon Town Centre environment, fostering a stronger sense of place and community, as opportunities arise. The Town Centre-wide principles set out a framework for design, regulation and management of both public and private places, as well as the enrichment of local communities are set out in the following pages. All stakeholders involved in shaping the Town Centre are encouraged to align with the following principles ensuring a high-quality, cohesive and vibrant environment for the entire community.

In response, the Basildon Town Centre Masterplan calls for a focus on new development in prime areas to boost footfall and strengthen the retail circuit, and to foster a dynamic, welcoming and connected community. As many New Towns now face an oversupply of retail space and rising vacancies, there is a growing need for more adaptable store formats, shared retail spaces, enhanced digital integration, and temporary pop-up shops. Additionally, fostering a diverse mix of uses, including leisure, cultural and residential will help create a town centre that is not only commercially resilient, but also a dynamic and engaging place where people want to live, work and spend time. Strengthening the night-time economy through dining, entertainment, and cultural activities is also key to contribute to a thriving and well-connected community.



'What will become of Basildon?' Photo: Creative BasildON



Retail

Considering the structural shifts in the retail sector and the broader macroeconomic challenges that have emerged since the pandemic, the 2024 Retail and Leisure Needs Study highlights the growing importance of strengthening and diversifying the Town Centre's appeal. This approach is essential for fostering resilience in both the daytime and evening economies, while supporting opportunities for sustainable development. Encouraging the growth of new businesses, from start-ups to creative industries, will further enhance the Town Centre's vibrancy. With the demand for retail premises on the decline and an increase in vacancies over recent years, the dominance of existing retail space within the Town Centre can be reduced. Space can be repurposed to rebalance the existing mix of uses, with a greater emphasis on residential, office, leisure and culture.

The retail sector continues to evolve with trends such as flexible store formats that blend shopping with leisure experiences, shared retail spaces fostering collaboration and cost efficiency, and enhanced digital integration to capitalise on the growing online economy. Pop-up shops bring vibrancy to high streets with dynamic, short-term set-ups. Additionally, a thriving night-time economy in town centres boosts leisure activities, supports dining and entertainment, enhances community engagement, and generates employment opportunities.



Offices

In terms of planning for town centres, a wide range of complementary uses can, if suitably located, help to support the vitality and viability. Where retail vacancies are long-term and typically concentrated in secondary shopping areas, planning for alternative uses or redevelopment may be necessary. With the increasing emphasis on flexible planning through changes to the Use Classes Order and Permitted Development Rights, town centres are likely to see more mixed-use developments, such as the potential conversion of vacant units into office spaces.



Leisure and culture

In a post-pandemic world marked by cost inflation, it is essential to facilitate outdoor spaces by activating underutilised public areas and green spaces, such as Gloucester Park. This will support residents' health and well-being while encouraging more active lifestyles. The development of new commercial leisure venues, facilities, and attractions will depend on evolving economic conditions, market dynamics, and consumer trends. The Masterplan seeks to address this by introducing a mix of uses to boost activity and attract greater footfall.



Residential

The local housing requirement is being met through the Emerging Basildon Local Plan, which includes the delivery of brownfield residential development in the Town Centre. This will contribute to the regeneration by increasing footfall throughout the day and evening, diversifying land uses, and fostering the development of new neighbourhood communities.

Housing delivery in the Town Centre could meet a range of housing needs, from higher density smaller units in the centre, grading down to family-size units on the edges. Housing will be influenced by delivery timescales and viability for existing schemes in the pipeline, emerging schemes which could be delivered with public sector input and subsequent sites where schemes have not yet been proposed but require land assembly. New development projects have approval within the Town Centre that will have several mixed uses, combining residential units with retail and office spaces and introducing higher-density housing closer to the centre.

3.0
TOWN CENTRE APPRAISAL

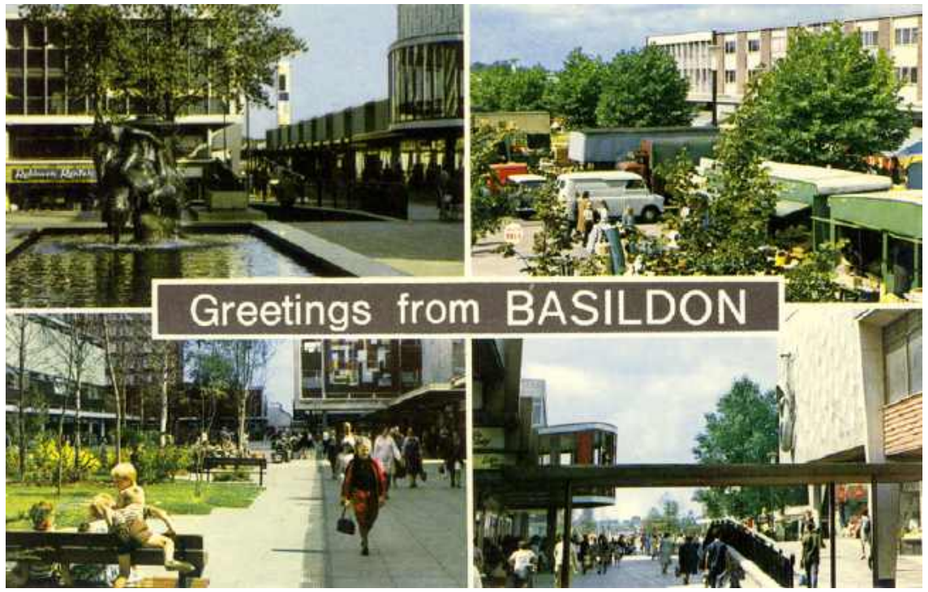
3.1 Heritage and Character

Historic Overview: New Town Formation

Designated as a New Town in 1949, Basildon was one of the first wave of British post-war New Towns. Like others brought forward under the New Towns Act of 1946, Basildon was built to address housing shortages and provide for population overspill into new settlements following the Second World War. The site for Basildon New Town came about through the purchase of plotland dwellings, a building typology that was prominent in Basildon prior to post-war developments. In 1949, the Basildon Development Corporation was formed with the main goal of developing the purchased land into Basildon New Town. Sir Basil Spence, a notable British Modernist architect, was engaged as consultant.

Basildon New Town incorporated the Essex villages of Laindon, Basildon, Pitsea, and Vange. At the time of the New Town's construction, all had poor housing provision and were in need of basic amenities such as mains water, gas, electricity, and surfaced roads. Delivered in the post-war Modernist architectural style and following Modernist planning principles, the New Towns movement sought to construct visionary buildings and places that would address these practical and social issues.

Much of Basildon Town Centre was built in the 1950s and 1960s. Its defining planning included a pedestrianised shopping centre encircled by car parks and a ring road, reflecting the emphasis on automobile use envisioned by contemporary planning thought. Within the Town Centre, a strong east-west route was established from East Square to St Martins Square, with Town Square being the core of town centre activity. Residential accommodation was introduced into the retail-focused town centre with the construction of Brooke House in 1962.





Top: 1960s postcard 'Greetings from Basildon' showing the new public realm and greenery in the Town Centre.

Bottom: Basildon Town Centre from the air, looking East. 1970s.

Town Centre Evolution

Since the conception of Basildon New Town, the Town Centre has transformed over the decades with changes to its architecture and planning. The diagrams below show its evolution from the original New Town to today.

Key:

- Existing Buildings
- New Development
- Masterplan boundary

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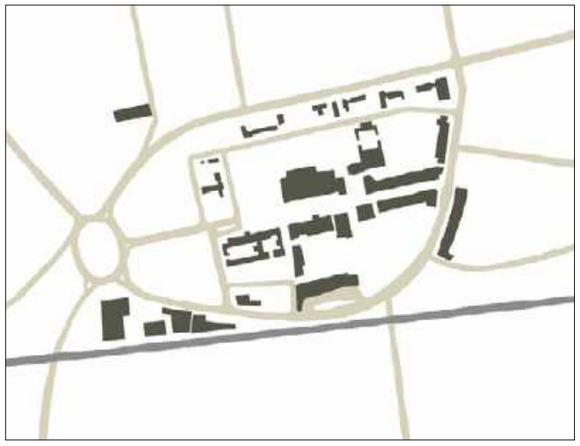
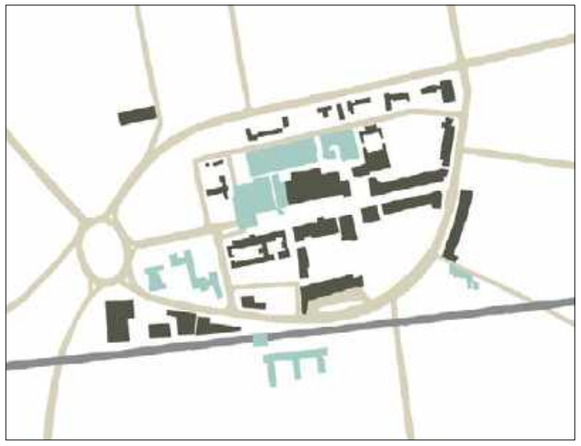


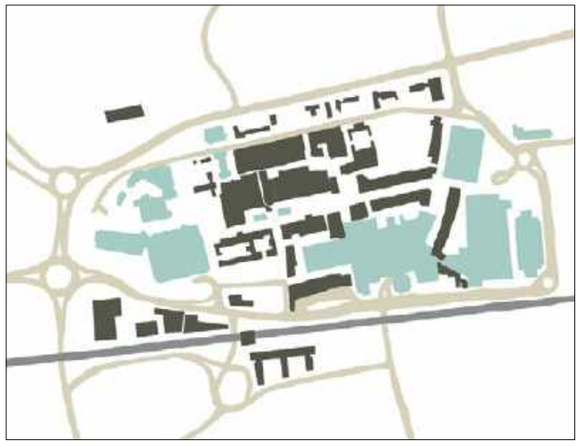
Original New Town: 1950s - early 1960s

- Basildon Town Centre was built as an island within a ring road, orientated along a central east-west axis. Low buildings formed civic squares complemented by landscaping.
- The original market was established on Market Square as Basildon Town Centre's first public space.
- Basildon Bus Station opened in 1958.
- Brooke House and its surrounding public realm were added as residential provision in 1962. St Martin of Tours Church was consecrated in the same year.



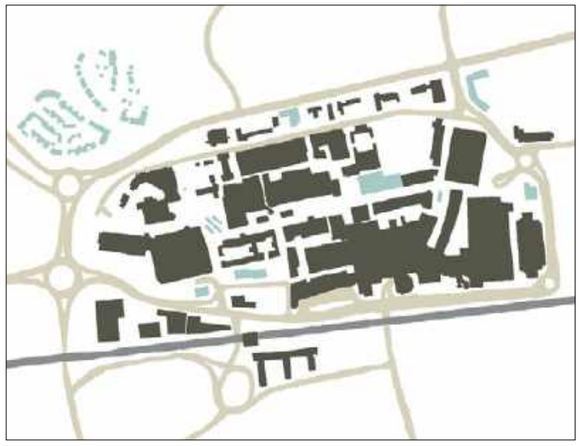
1960s - 1970s

- Basildon Fire Station opened in 1962.
- Further taller buildings were introduced, including Great Oaks House and Kelting House. Northgate House was also built during this period.
- A suite of leisure buildings was built at Gloucester Park, including a lake and swimming pool.
- Basildon Railway Station was opened by British Rail in 1974 on the London, Tilbury, and Southend line.



1980s - 1990s

- The bus station was rebuilt.
- Eastgate Shopping Centre was developed, changing the ring road which now wholly encircled the Town Centre core. The large roundabout on the west side of the Town Centre was remodelled into two smaller roundabouts in the 1980s, with the underpass reconfigured to align with the changes.
- Towngate Theatre and the Basildon Centre were delivered in 1989, followed by Westgate Shopping Centre on St Martins Square.
- Town Square was refurbished with two glass pavilions added.



The Millenium and the 21st-century

- The Bell Tower was built on St Martins Square as a Millenium project.
- Gloucester Park Swimming Pool was relocated and residential developments extended.
- Freedom House on East Square was replaced with East Square cinema.
- A new campus for South Essex College was built on Market Square, relocating the market to St Martins Square.
- Mixed-use residential developments are underway in the Town Centre, particularly in the south-west, north-east, and around Market Square.

Heritage Assets

The architectural and historical interest of Basildon is well-represented in the Town Centre. Within the Masterplan boundary, there are three Grade II listed assets:

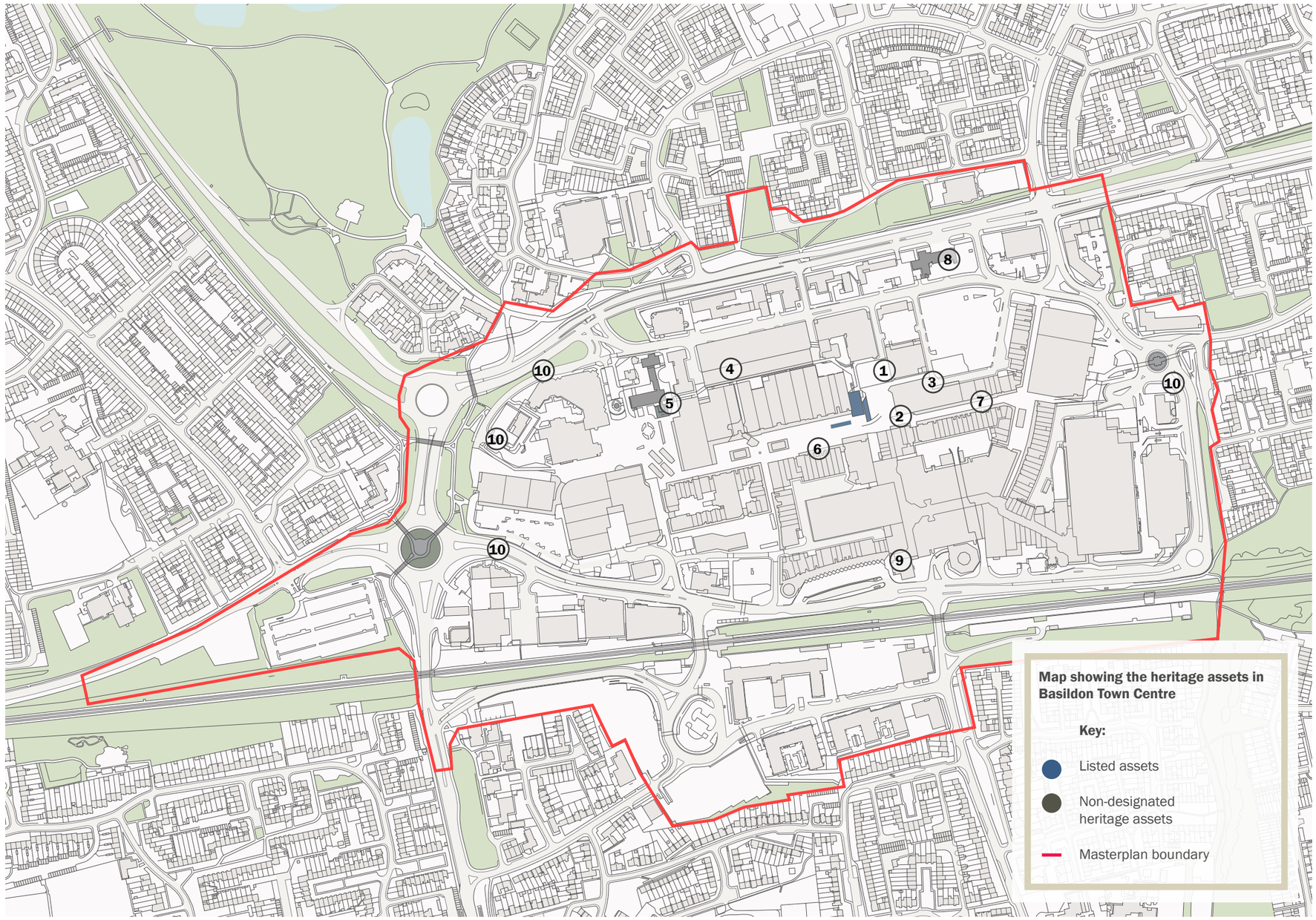
1. Brooke House;
2. Raised pool and Mother and Child sculpture;
3. Retaining walls, ramp, steps, staircases, bench and raised paving.

Apart from the above included in the National Heritage List, Basildon Town Centre has various non-designated heritage assets. These include but are not limited to:

4. St Martin of Tours Church;
5. St Martins Bell Tower;
6. Town centre clock;
7. “Man Aspires” sculpture;
8. Basildon Fire Station;
9. Basildon Bus Station mural (second iteration c.1990s);
10. Wendy Taylor artworks around the underpasses.

The Council accept there may be other non-designated heritage assets and recognise them with regards to guidance provided in Chapter 16 of the NPPF (“Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”).

There are no Conservation Areas or Scheduled Monuments within the Town Centre boundary.



3.2 Architectural Character Assessment

Basildon Town Centre is strongly influenced by its New Town origins, Modernist architectural style and series of well-defined public squares. As an example of post-war Modernist urban design, the Town Centre core is encircled by a dominant ring road. Buildings are arranged linearly along a strong east-west axis and form several pedestrian precincts.

Over the decades, the Town Centre has undergone many alterations to its built environment and continues to change. Although some aspects of its New Town architecture are extant and can be identified, they remain in fragments and the general physical fabric is worn, making the Town Centre appear tired. Some development patterns that emerged in the later 20th-century have disrupted the original planning intent, causing the Town Centre to lose some of its coherence.

At its core, Basildon's sense of place emerges from its distinct New Town character. The Modernist architecture stands in high contrast with that of wider neighbourhoods to give a unique identity. This is particularly evident in the Town Centre:

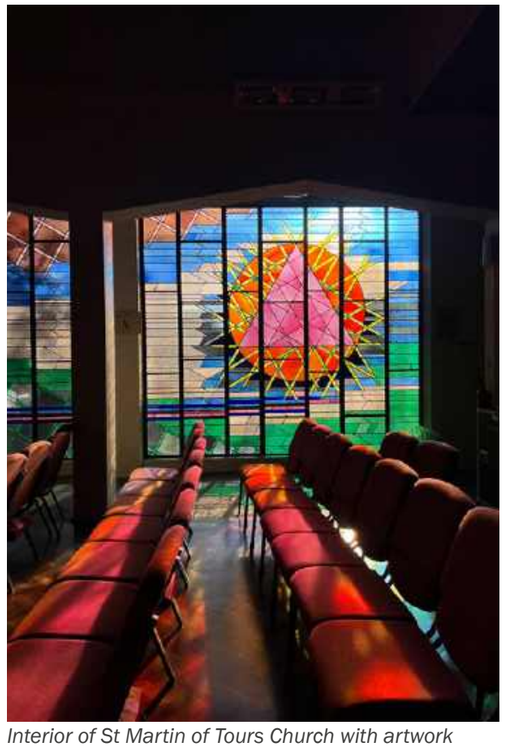
- Linear and rectangular low building forms with a strong horizontal form and emphasis;
- Pedestrianised precincts with shopping arcades covered by overhead canopies on ground level;
- Regular patterns of detailing, e.g. fenestration, that create rational elevations and add visual interest;
- Expressed concrete structural elements, e.g. columns, cantilevered arcades;
- Modern materials including concrete, frosted glass, steel, glazed curtain walling and stone, and aggregate faced cladding panels;
- Frequent use of public art within the public realm and on building frontages.



Scalloped canopies and Gabriel Pitcher mural, part of 2021 street art initiative"Our Towns"



Large civic square layout in Town Square surrounded by shopping arcades



Interior of St Martin of Tours Church with artwork designed into the architectural fabric



Assortment of materials in Town Square



Bus station mural (second iteration)

Design Characteristics

While there is individual variance in the different buildings of Basildon Town Centre, repeated themes can be identified that engage a unified Modernist language rooted in post-war design, including:

- Largely continuous glazed shopfronts highlighted by overhead canopies at street level. Canopies are generally cantilevered, with small design variations, e.g. some have roof lights or glazed bricks to allow light through. This is generally present along main pedestrian routes. It is particularly visible along East Walk where much of the original New Town fabric remains, giving this area an especially strong retention of New Town character;
- Distinctly formed columns where ground level overhead components are formed by buildings instead of a cantilevered canopy e.g. V-shaped pilotis supporting Brooke House;
- Expressed concrete framing with brickwork, glazing, and/or cladding infill;
- Regular and repeated fenestration patterns. This is seen both on St Martin of Tours Church (repeated vertical patterns) and Brooke House (protruding pattern of angled windows forming a rippling effect on the main elevations). Repeating patterns are also found in other cladding and detailing, e.g. decorative concrete blocks;
- Common material choices of concrete frames with brick infill, metal window frames, exposed aggregate on building elements;
- In parts, employing special material choices for visual interest and/or architectural distinction between buildings. Examples include the sparing use of stone, e.g. travertine on principle frontages. Later 20th-century developments (1980s-90s) used more yellow/buff brick. This distinguishes the later buildings around St Martins Square;
- Some parts of the Town Centre suffer from extensive blank elevations with a lack of active frontages, particularly in buildings closer to the periphery of the Town Centre and nearer to the ring road. This has been addressed in places by adding large-scale murals.

Recent town centre developments have attempted to respond to their distinct site context with varying results.



Travertine highlights on original New Town buildings along Southernhay



Shopfronts with overhead canopies along East Walk



V-shaped pilotis under Brooke House



Fenestration pattern on St Martin of Tours Church



Erin Holly mural activating a large blank wall in Market Square, part of 2021 street art initiative"Our Towns"



Horizontal buildings with projecting canopies and vertical expression along Southernhay

3.3 Public Realm and Open Spaces

Public Realm and Public Art

Basildon's pedestrianised civic squares are key to the Town Centre public realm. With varying degrees of enclosure, they provide gathering places and present opportunities for meanwhile use. There is room to incorporate more infrastructure to support the needs of all ages, such as seating and children's play. Additionally, areas at the periphery of the Town Centre could benefit from additional lighting and surveillance to address concerns with safety and wayfinding could be improved.

Canopies are a notable architectural feature in Basildon, allowing for the overspill of activity onto the streets and creating more vibrant environments. Public art, meanwhile, has been a key part of the town's identity since its 20th-century conception. Iconic pieces like the *Mother and Child* fountain, the bus station mural, and *Risen Christ* at St Martin of Tours Church contribute to a unique local character. Today, creative community groups continue to expand this artistic legacy with new murals, events, and installations.

Public art serves the Town Centre in many ways. Wendy Taylor's *Animal Fresco* and *Armillary Sundial* installation, for instance, contribute to a greater sense of safety and 'place' in the underpasses. Depending on scale and nature, some artworks provide more legible urban environments or provide wayfinding. The versatile role of public art has significant potential for more extensive application.



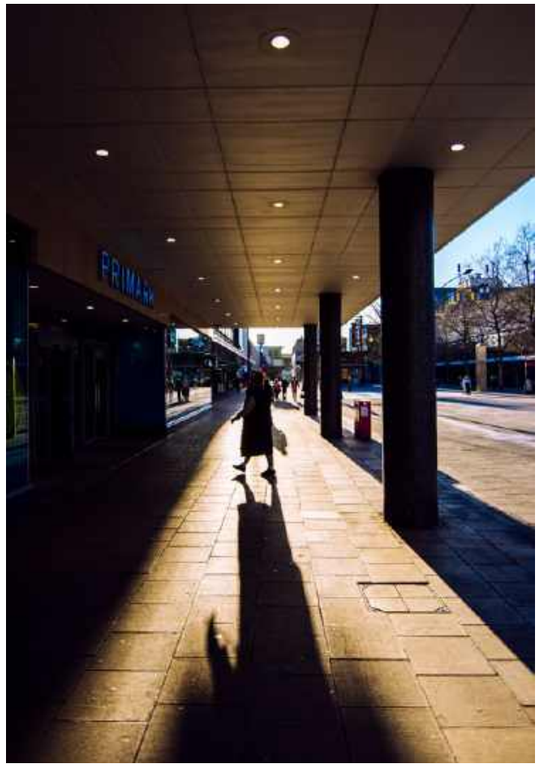
The Bell Tower and St Martin of Tours Church in St Martin's Square



Seating and paving in Town Square in need of uplift and maintenance



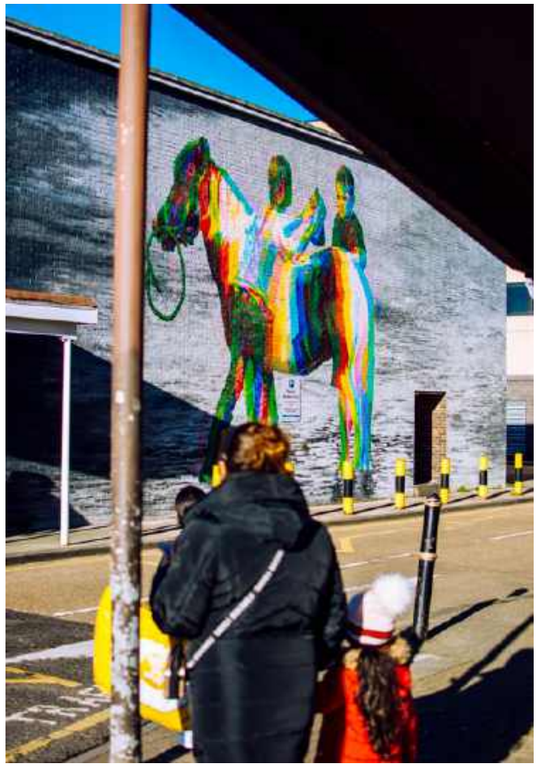
Wendy Taylor's Armillary Sundial (1989) for the Roundacre Improvement Scheme



Canopies extending over shop entrances provide shelter and identity to the Town Centre



St Martins Square with St Martin of Tours Church (left) and Marina Capdevila street art (centre)



Aches, part of 2021 street art initiative"Our Towns"

Green Space

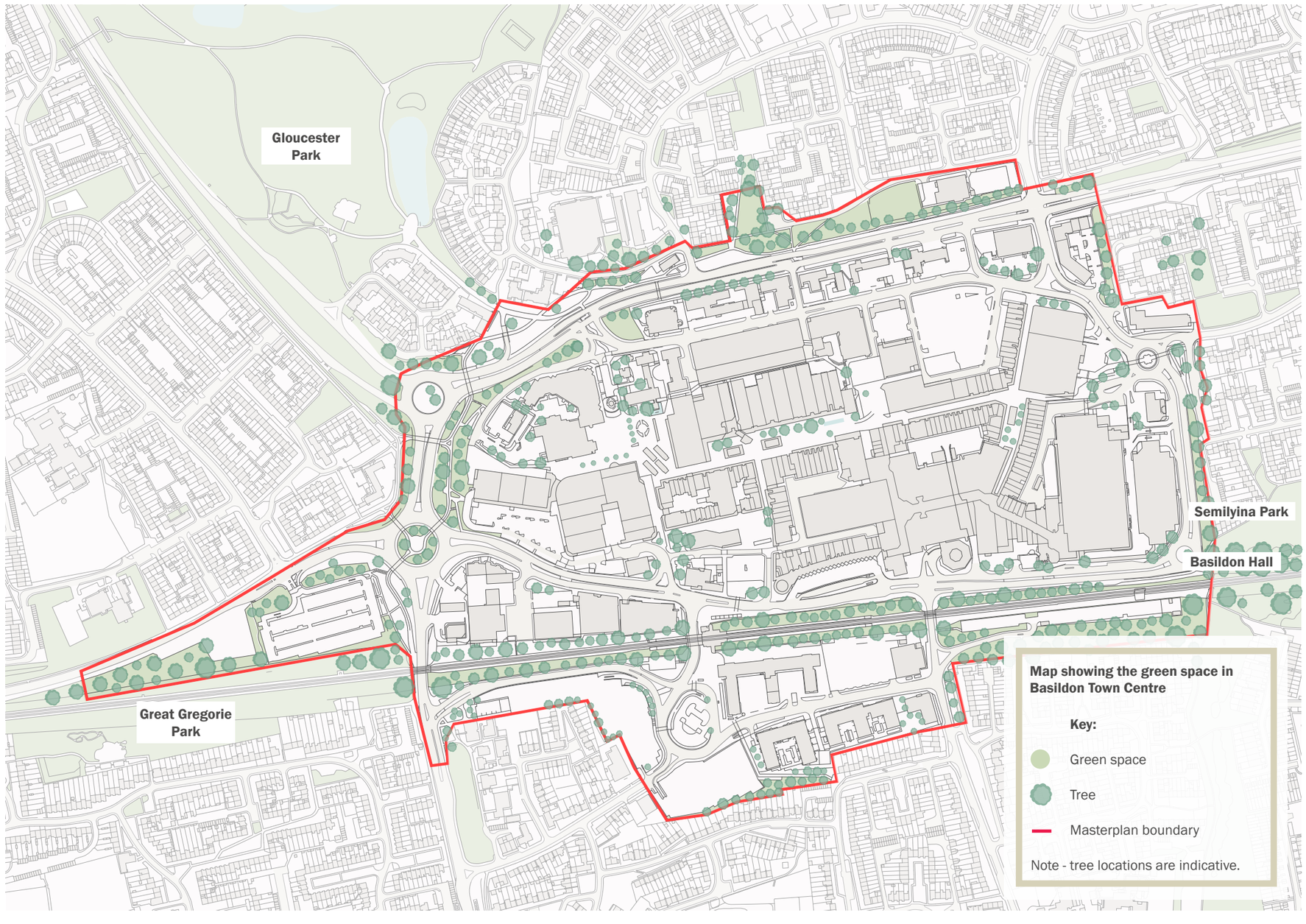
Basildon Town Centre is dominated by hard landscaping, with limited green open space in the form of verges and planting beds mainly located in peripheral areas near the roads. Some civic/ community buildings are supplemented by soft landscaping, such as St Martin of Tours Church and the Magistrates' Court; there are some trees integrated with street furniture in the civic squares, but they have minimal presence overall. There is potential to introduce more urban greening and works are currently underway to improve the provision of green spaces and the management of surface water in the town by turning 'grey to green'.

There are several parks within walking distance (up to 15 minutes) from Basildon Town Centre, including: Gloucester Park, Basildon Hall, Semilyina Park, and Great Gregorie Park.

Of the above, Gloucester Park is the largest accessible green space from the Town Centre. Since residential development was built to the south of Gloucester Park, wayfinding has been severely impacted. The connection between Gloucester Park and the Town Centre could benefit from more legible routes.



View in Gloucester Park



3.4 Connectivity and Movement

Public Transport

The railway and bus stations serve as the two main nodes of public transport in Basildon Town Centre.

Regular C2C train services connect Basildon to London and other parts of Essex, both within the Borough (Laindon and Pitsea stations) and beyond. The bus station provides access to an extensive network locally (e.g. to Billericay and Wickford) and further afield (e.g. to Chelmsford). It is the main mode of public transport into surrounding residential areas. The bus station remains busy throughout the day, in part due to the need to make connections to travel between locations.

Currently, there is a noticeable disconnection between the core of the Town Centre and the two key points of public transportation. Smaller bus stops around the Town Centre periphery have poor accessibility with little signage and minimal supporting infrastructure (such as bus shelters). There is room to improve these connections through more legible and accessible pedestrian routes. Furthermore, the arterial road around Basildon Town Centre disrupts the connection between the railway and bus stations, which could be improved by downgrading Southernhay and/or unifying the two stations into a centralised transport hub.

Active Travel

Basildon Town Centre is an island encircled by a multi-lane ring road. There is a lack of level-access pedestrian and cycle crossings, forcing pedestrians and cyclists to contend with a fast-flowing stream of traffic. In some areas, underpasses are the only option; however, the network is in poor condition, compromising both safety and appeal as viable routes.

Cycling provision is limited in the Town Centre. Much of the area falls under the Cycle Exclusion Zone, with poor cycle parking facilities sparsely located in the periphery of the Town Centre (often unrelated to the Cycle Exclusion Zone boundaries). Within zones where cycling is permitted, cycle routes are limited and lack continuity. There is room to upgrade cycling infrastructure significantly.

The primary pedestrian thoroughfare is the east-west axis across the Town Centre, but there is potential for greater permeability overall. There is also room for public realm improvements to make the town more accessible and desirable to travel through on foot. At present, wayfinding and signage, is limited, hindering efficient navigation (particularly at points of entry and exit) and pedestrian routes diminish close to the carriageway ring, with no pavements in some areas. A stronger emphasis on pedestrian needs is required.



Cycle and pedestrian routes will be improved in line with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrustructure Plan (LCWIP)



Underpasses are of varying conditions. Some experience maintenance issues and flooding



Basildon Train Station entrance



Basildon Bus Station and mural

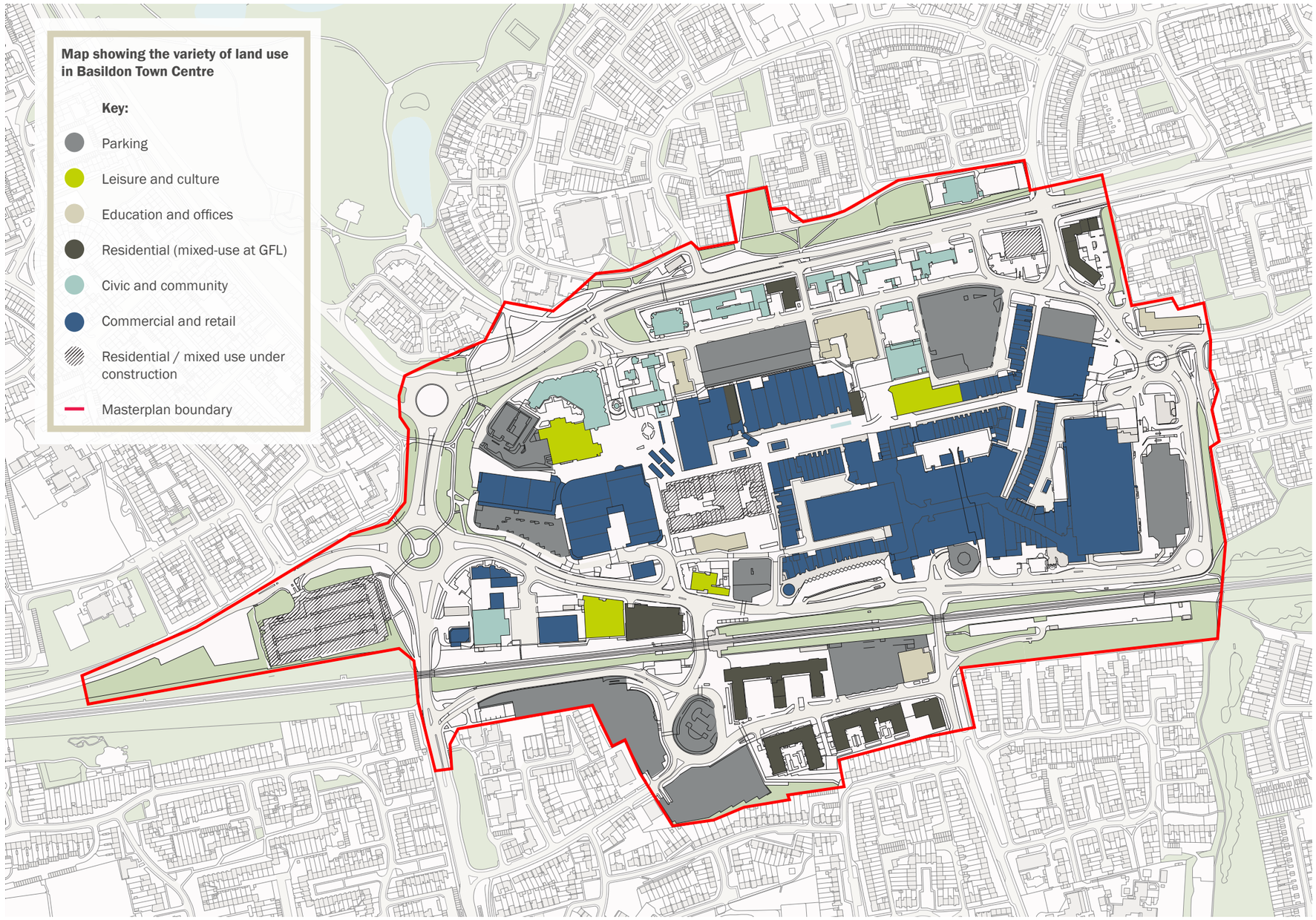
3.5 Land Use

There are opportunities to diversify the range of spaces within the Town Centre which are currently defined by a large number of shops of varying scales and services. At present there is little residential provision within the Town Centre boundary and there is potential to create a mix of uses and activities that can be shaped into a greener, healthier, public realm, with attractive, safe spaces where people want to spend time and enjoy the town's vibrancy and life. A more diverse and balanced range of uses could be introduced across the Town Centre to ensure its offer is comprehensive and meet the needs of those who use it.

During the day, activity levels in the Town Centre are relatively high, with a range of visitors, including residents, students, and people visiting for work or pleasure, especially on market days. On weekends the Town Centre can become particularly busy, sometimes with the addition of independent entertainers.

Levels of activity are much lower in the evenings with few units opening at night. There is potential to maintain higher activity levels by introducing more night-time offers such as leisure and culture uses. Introducing residential units into the Town Centre will also help improve the evening economy.

The Town Centre contains extensive surface parking in the form of outdoor car parks and multi-storey car parks, mainly located on the periphery. The surplus of surface-level parking presents opportunities to increase parking efficiencies at some sites and redevelop others for uses that better meet the needs of the Town Centre. A car park study, set to be published in 2025, will guide how these changes materialise.



3.6 Scale and Massing

During the New Town construction, much of the original Basildon Town Centre fabric had low buildings, with the construction of Brooke House providing vertical juxtaposition to the prevailing horizontality.

Further taller buildings have been added to the townscape in subsequent decades, including Great Oaks House, Acorn House, Kelting House, Trafford House, and The Icon. Some of these buildings are visible from medium and long-distance viewpoints within the urban area and the countryside beyond.

With the implementation of permitted schemes (such as that at Market Square), further change is expected for the Town Centre townscape. Massing of buildings in the Town Centre generally follow a rectangular and linear arrangement.



A range of built form in the Town Centre



Trafford House, built circa 1974



Example long view looking East from Laindon Link towards the Town Centre. Photo: Google



Low buildings from the New Town fabric along Market Pavement



The Icon, built circa 2008

3.7 Local Economy

Local Economy

Basildon Borough boasts a large and diverse economy, with hundreds of start-ups alongside multinational companies. The area's excellent transport infrastructure strengthens its position as an attractive business hub, providing a solid foundation for future growth in the Town Centre. However, footfall remains the key challenge for the Basildon Town Centre, which has seen a shift in its commercial landscape in recent years.

While Eastgate Shopping Centre still attracts a steady flow of visitors with its variety of shops, the loss of major anchor stores throughout the town has left many units vacant, affecting the area's vibrancy. Independent businesses and the market in St Martin's Square contribute to Basildon's unique character, but many would benefit from increased foot traffic—something a broader range of uses in the town centre could help generate. A stronger, sustained footfall would also help draw back more established retailers, as well as leisure and other businesses, by demonstrating the potential for increased customer engagement and long-term viability in the town centre.

Some office space exists in the town centre, but in limited numbers. Co-working spaces are set to increase with the delivery of the Market Square planning application, offering more flexible workspaces that cater to the needs of modern businesses and remote workers. This shift towards flexible office environments could further support the revitalisation of the town centre by attracting a diverse range of businesses and workers, contributing to the area's economic growth.

Leisure and Culture

Basildon has a strong historic connection with the arts, music and culture. Public art has always been important in the Town Centre and was included within the original New Town Masterplan. This has continued with organisations such as Creative BasildON, an arts collective focussed on empowering the Basildon community to choose, create, and take part in creative experiences in the borough. In collaboration with locals, they have delivered a variety of projects, including murals, youth engagement activities, and cultural trails within the Town Centre.

Towngate Theatre is the main leisure and cultural asset within Basildon Town Centre. The cinema complex in East Square offers entertainment andfood and beverage units but there is still a significant demand for further uses of this type. There are opportunities to expand the evening economy through a larger range of leisure and cultural offers for both residents and visitors.

The Town Centre also hosts seasonal events such as the Christmas Market, however, there is potential to implement a more comprehensive programme of meanwhile uses throughout the year to invigorate the Town Centre, drawing visitors in and adding to the life and energy of the public realm.

Education and Healthcare

The Basildon campus of South Essex College is based in the Town Centre. Completed in 2021, the Centre for Digital Technologies on Market Square replaces the previous site at Nethermayne and offers tech-based courses to students ranging from 16-18 years old to adults.

As part of the potential future plans for the Town Centre, an NHS ambulance hub, is set to commence in summer 2025. This will be located in Great Oaks, with Great Oaks Clinic on the adjacent site offering child healthcare services. Additionally, plans are under discussion to convert the former Debenhams store in the Town Centre into a medical centre, which would further enhance the mix use of the Town Centre and will diversify the potential in this area. This will integrate essential healthcare services that can benefit from the excellent connectivity provided by the nearby bus and train station.



St Martin's Square on market day



Performance in the Towngate Theatre

4.0
VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4.1 Town Centre Vision

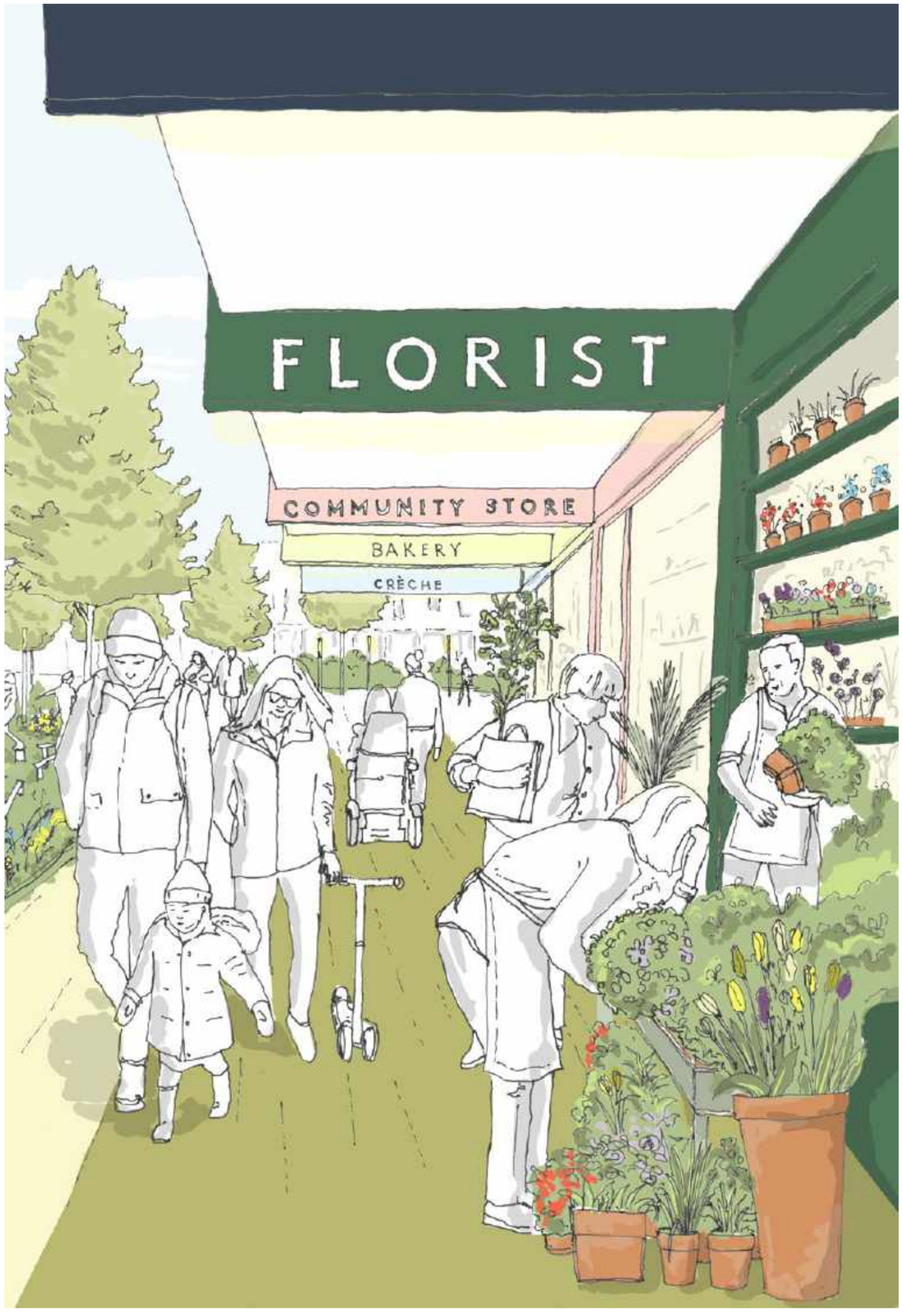
As the locus of civic and cultural activities, Basildon Town Centre will lead as a catalyst for growth and change for Basildon and wider South Essex and stimulate regeneration across the Borough.

Recognising the shift away from retail uses, the Town Centre will host a diverse mix of shops and services, offering a wider range of office and employment spaces, healthcare provision, and expanding leisure and cultural uses such as restaurants and cafés. Additionally, opportunities will be taken to achieve net environmental gain, where land is used efficiently, while also creating well designed and sustainable places.

To support this transformation, vacant retail units will be repurposed to provide a focused retail zone. As the most suitable and sustainable location for the high-speed delivery of housing needed to meet current targets, residential accommodation will also be introduced to the Town Centre, with the view to support a mixed and balanced community. The Town Centre will have a lively evening economy that extends activity throughout the day and remain vibrant across the year.

Public realm in the Town Centre will become an attractive setting for activities, from meanwhile uses to overspill from shops and cafés. Urban greening will soften the built landscape and bring forward a healthy town centre. The existing programme of public art will be continued and expanded upon, employing public art in broader uses such as activating blank frontages and creating safer environments.

The surrounding road system dominates the site, creating an island effect in the Town Centre and severing its connection to the wider context. Downgrading the ring road will prioritise active travel modes, fostering better links between the Town Centre and its surroundings. This will lay the foundation for improvements to support cycling, walking, wheeling, and public transport into the town. A Cycle Exclusion Zone exists within the inner ring road, and clear, attractive pedestrian routes will be developed throughout.



4.2 Guiding Principles

A series of Guiding Principles have been defined to support the delivery of the vision and ensure that proposals and investment align with the regenerative aspirations for Basildon Town Centre.

1

Create a dynamic and vibrant Town Centre

- Reduce the retail offer into a focused zone, freeing up space for other uses.
- A more diverse and balanced town centre will be brought forward by integrating a rich mix of uses, including workspaces, cultural and leisure activities, health, civic and community facilities, and homes.
- Active frontages will welcome people into the Town Centre and improve perceptions of safety.

2

Form pleasant neighbourhoods

- A range of housing types will create neighbourhoods and extend activity to all hours of the day.
- Housing suitable for varying needs to build mixed and intergenerational communities.

3

Embrace artistic and cultural identity

- Art is in the DNA of Basildon. From public art to music and performances, Basildon's rich artistic history shapes the identity of the town and should be celebrated.
- Art in all forms will continue to flourish in the Town Centre. Incorporating art into elements, including but not limited to public realm and urban furniture, will be highly encouraged. Development proposals will be encouraged to integrate spaces for art.
- Building strong leisure and cultural offers for residents and visitors to the Town Centre through the arts will expand the evening economy.

4

Recognise and appreciate design context

- Future developments in the Town Centre should respect the essence of the New Town heritage whilst producing identifiably contemporary designs.
- Designs for future developments should be informed by the original fabric of the Town Centre, including but not limited to scale, massing, form, colours, materials, and detailing, as well as the public realm.
- Approach planning with an understanding of the original planning principles that will remain legible in the Town Centre, such as the series of well-defined civic squares.

5

Embed climate change resilience

- As the climate emergency escalates, future proposals should demonstrate a consciousness of increasingly challenging climate conditions and be grounded in long-term solutions against these pertinent issues.
- Embrace a ‘repair-first’ approach and explore opportunities for refurbishing or retrofitting existing buildings before considering new builds, avoiding the embodied carbon emissions of new construction and the loss of historic fabric.
- Encourage proposals that account for the whole life carbon of a building and pursue principles of regenerative design.

6

Promote active travel

- Strengthen and expand the network of footpaths to increase safety and comfort for pedestrian access.
- While the Town Centre core remains a Cycle Exclusion Zone, the route to and from town should be improved for cyclist access.
- Upgrade routes to and from the railway and bus stations, including their surrounding public realm, to create a more cohesive and legible town centre.

7

Improve relationship to context

- The ring of carriageways that presently isolates the Town Centre should be softened through added pedestrian crossings, improving accessibility and better connecting the Town Centre to surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Improve periphery areas to create a more welcoming and outward-looking town centre.
- Transform underpasses into attractive pedestrian routes, highlighting these unique nodes of access as a feature of Basildon to be celebrated not avoided.

8

Reintroduce green spaces and links

- A healthy, green urban landscape was an integral aspect of the original New Town vision for the Town Centre.
- Explore opportunities for thoughtful additions of green infrastructure to improve access to green spaces in the Town Centre, elevating public health and well-being.

5.0
MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

5.1 Public Realm and Open Space

The regeneration of Basildon Town Centre presents an exciting opportunity to reshape its public realm and open spaces into vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable environments that enhance the town's identity and support community life.

Inclusivity is at the heart of the Masterplan, ensuring spaces are not only safe and accessible but also welcoming and adaptable to a variety of activities. Community engagement, including input from women/girls and young people, will shape the design, ensuring diverse voices are heard. The Town Centre will also address the lack of dedicated play spaces by introducing more child- and family-friendly amenities.

As footfall in the Town Centre grows, the demand for accessible green space increases. The regeneration will strengthen connections to Gloucester Park, enhancing its role as a complementary space for leisure and recreation, while also improving its vibrancy.

Key squares and arrival points will be better connected with clear, intuitive, and accessible routes. These shared spaces will encourage social interaction, support biodiversity, and promote movement throughout the town, while remaining safe and enjoyable at all times.

Public art and creative interventions will play a key role in wayfinding and reinforcing Basildon's evolving identity. Existing artworks should be preserved, and new works, including murals, commissioned to reflect the town's culture and aspirations. Some artworks will be temporary, adding vibrancy during construction, while others will be permanent symbols of Basildon's heritage.

Finally, the public realm will be designed to accommodate increased foot traffic, supporting a diverse mix of leisure activities, after-hours events, and sustainable residential development.



Neue Meile, Böblingen, Germany (bauchplan) showcases water features and high-quality public realm in a pedestrian precinct. Photo: C. Franke



City Centre Waalwijk, The Netherlands (Burobol) utilises lighting across seating areas, buildings, and edges to establish balanced light levels, creating a welcoming public square that invites activity well into the evening. Photo: LEEF Fotografie



Organically shaped benches at Varkensmarkt, Amersfoort (Grijsen) enhance public seating, creating vibrant, inclusive, and comfortable spaces for all ages and abilities. Photo: Atelier Loos van Vliet



David H. Koch Plaza at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (OLIN) features 100 new trees, providing shade to lower paving temperatures and create a more comfortable environment. Photo: OLIN



Bridget Joyce Square, London (Robert Bray Associates) integrates play with SuDS and biodiversity in an urban environment. Photo: Robert Bray Associate



Sovereign Square Park, Leeds (re-form Landscape) is an urban renewal project featuring a garden for green relief. Seating, planting, and a water feature create a pleasant spot to relax, socialise, or people-watch. Photo: Simon Vine



Improvements to Altrincham Market and the surrounding public realm have acted as a catalyst, attracting a range of businesses that boost the economy and reduce shop vacancy rates.



Basildon features numerous public art pieces, with painted murals enhancing street identity and aiding wayfinding.



Finsbury Avenue Square, Broadgate (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill), offers space for performance and play. During the 2018 London Design Festival, graphic design studio Kellenberger-White created a human-scale typography installation that invited visitors to engage and interact.



Granary Square, Kings Cross (Townsend) provides for all manner of activities and users. The focal point is its fountains, but the space also hosts performances, markets, and public events even when they're off. Photo: Granary Square



The Moorings, Thamesmead (Light Follows Behaviour) sees the transformation of a pedestrian underpass, co-designed in collaboration with local communities. Photo: Angus Mill

Policy: Public Realm and Open Space

The existing public realm and open spaces within the Town Centre will be enhanced, and new spaces designed to strengthen connectivity, reflect local identity, and foster an inclusive, welcoming environment for all users. New developments impacting the public realm must adhere to the following criteria, where applicable and relevant to their location:

a. Public routes and spaces shall be designed to encourage social interaction and activity and are open to all. Design should encourage movement through the Town Centre as an enjoyable experience at all times of day and evening;

b. Green infrastructure will be integrated across the Town Centre to enhance biodiversity, manage surface water, improve air quality, and strengthen connection to nature. A continuous green network is encouraged to benefit both the ecosystem and the community;

c. Proposals shall demonstrate innovative approaches to Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) that enhance the public realm, creating opportunities for connections to nature, play, and education. SuDS design will be in accordance with Policy CC6;

d. Use public art to animate the public realm and foster a sense of identity;

e. Prioritise pedestrians through good highway design, the introduction of new crossings, and active ground-floor frontages that encourage street life. Spaces must be welcoming, with passive surveillance, clear sightlines, and appropriate lighting, ensuring pleasant environments day and night;

f. Public spaces shall be fully accessible for people with mobility impairments. Developers shall engage with community groups to co-design inclusive spaces that meet the needs of all users;

g. Create adaptable public spaces that support wide-ranging uses including temporary installations, outdoor performances, seasonal markets, and social interaction;

h. Develop a comprehensive, safe cycle network to promote cycling as a sustainable mode of transport. Integrated cycling facilities, including secure cycle racks and hubs, to support an active lifestyle whilst ensuring safety and convenience for cyclists of all ages;

i. Cycle parking shall cater for a range of cycles, including trikes and cargo cycles in accordance with good practice;

j. Promote mixed-use residential developments that integrate housing with leisure, retail, cultural and other commercial activities. Design will prioritise green infrastructure, accessible public spaces, and safe, welcoming streets, fostering a strong sense of community;

k. Reduce street clutter to enhance accessibility and ensure clear movement for all users. Thoughtful coordination of street furniture, lighting, and landscaping will create an attractive, flexible and functional public realm that supports the town's visual appeal and pedestrian flow;

l. New development will be delivered in a phased, coordinated manner to maintain community engagement, minimise disruption, and preserve the town's vibrancy throughout construction. Pop-up uses, lighting, and art on site hoardings will aim to keep the town welcoming and visually cohesive during the regeneration process;

m. Existing underpasses will be upgraded to be accessible in all weather conditions. Provide visibility with good lighting, tiled finishes, and selective planting that will not block sightlines. Improve wayfinding with clear signage and art. Design gradients to and from the underpasses with inclusivity in mind, ensuring accessibility. Include benches for resting where needed; and

n. Co-design is encouraged to embed intergenerational, cultural and gender inclusivity in the public realm and open spaces.

5.2 Connectivity and Movement

A well-connected, sustainable town centre is crucial for revitalising Basildon, enhancing residents' quality of life, and attracting businesses and investment. The regeneration aims to strengthen transport infrastructure and provide safe, attractive routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users.

Strong rail links to Central London lay a solid foundation for the Town Centre as a key transport hub. However, local public transport and borough-wide accessibility requires improvement. By providing easier access to amenities through diversifying and densifying uses in the Town Centre, and better integrating existing transport networks, the aim is to reduce car dependency, offering environmental and health benefits, and the release of land for more productive uses.

Enhancing Public Transport and Sustainable Mobility

Although Basildon Train and Bus Stations are in close proximity, wayfinding and visual connectivity need significant improvement. The train station is further separated from the Town Centre by Southernhay and Roundacre, creating a fragmented transition. The regeneration of both stations will focus on prioritising pedestrians and reducing vehicle dominance in this area. Key initiatives include:

- Enhancing visual connectivity between the train and bus stations.
- Relocating the bus station closer to Southernhay to create a more cohesive transport hub.
- Upgrading wayfinding and the public realm around the stations, as well as the connections to the Town Centre.
- Downgrading the ring road to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists.
- Addressing poorly designed and unwelcoming underpasses.
- Clearly defining taxi drop-off zones.
- Upgrading and securing cycle storage.

This is further discussed in *Chapter 6.8: Southernhay and Stations.*

Prioritising Pedestrian and Cyclist Accessibility

The ring road is perceived as a barrier between residential areas and the Town Centre, dominated by cars and with poor environmental quality, especially in the underpasses.

Developers should coordinate with the Highway Authority, local authorities, landowners, business owners, and the community to explore downgrading Southernhay, Roundacre, and Broadmayne and create new level crossings. Pedestrian routes should improve connections to residential areas, schools, and parks, promoting a more walkable environment and align with BBC's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.



Lonsdale Street Redevelopment, Melbourne (BKK Architects) creates spaces for people along highways, offering pleasant routes and resting spots. Photo: John Gollings



Aura, Great Kneighton (BBUK) uses changes in materials, planting, and levels to distinguish transport modes without excessive signage and bollards. Filtered permeability encourages active transport. Photo: Tim Crocker & Tim Soar



Green Roofed Cycle Shelters. Secure, enclosed bicycle shelters with key-operated doors, where cyclists can use their own bike locks once inside. Photo: Green Roof Shelters



Pitt Street Mall, Sydney (Tony Caro Architecture) is a central pedestrian precinct featuring high-quality paving, seating, and planting areas. Photo: Brett Boardman

Policy: Connectivity and Movement

A more accessible town centre will attract residents and visitors, boosting footfall, supporting local businesses, and driving economic and social growth.

To promote active travel, walking and cycle routes should be the most attractive and accessible option. Development plans should align with the Healthy Streets framework and incorporate the following initiatives:

1. Major development shall:

a. Create walkable, wheeling-friendly and cycle-friendly neighbourhoods by providing high-quality movement routes that enhance connectivity and reduce obstacles;

b. Ensure that cycle routes set out in Basildon Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) are continuous, minimising interruptions requiring cyclists to dismount or navigate dropped curbs, promoting a smoother and safer journey in accordance with policy D1;

c. Install secure cycle storage facilities at strategic locations;

d. Design active travel routes to be attractive, accessible at all hours, and provide adequate shelter during adverse weather, ensuring seamless connectivity throughout the Town Centre;

e. Routes should provide places to stop and rest, should have things to see and do, and should be convenient;

f. Implement traffic-calming measures to reduce speed and traffic flow, improving the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists. The success of this initiative will depend on securing the necessary support and approval from the Highway Authority; and

g. Contribute to the development of a high-quality, accessible and integrated public transport hub for bus, train taxi and cycle transport.

2. To maximise sustainable forms of transport in Town Centre all residential developments shall:

a. Adopt a car-lite approach, integrating blue badge parking and car club provisions; and

b. Submit Transport Assessments and Travel Plans as required by the Highway Authority's relevant guidance.

5.3 Land Use

The regeneration of Basildon Town Centre presents a prime opportunity to create a mixed-use, vibrant urban environment that caters to the evolving needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. The land use strategy will focus on encouraging the Town Centre to becomes a dynamic space where people can live, work, play, and relax, contributing to a sustainable and thriving community.

A diverse mix of land uses will be integrated holistically, including:

- **Retail and Commercial:** The commercial centre will be consolidated into a reduced, focussed retail area and the introduction of a different mix of uses will enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a whole. Flexible store formats and shared spaces will be encouraged to enhance appeal to both locals and visitors and additional food and beverage offerings will help to foster a thriving evening economy.
- **Civic and Cultural Facilities:** Flexible cultural and community spaces will provide venues for events and gatherings, contributing to a strong sense of place.
- **Employment:** New job opportunities will be created through a mix of office, retail, and leisure spaces, supporting a broad range of businesses and driving economic growth. Affordable workspace and office space must be prioritised.
- **Residential:** A variety of housing options will be integrated to create vibrant residential neighbourhoods with easy access to services. The focus will be on sustainable development, making the most of brownfield land.

Currently, the size and layout of many existing Town Centre units have been unattractive to potential occupiers, contributing to high vacancy rates. Redesigning or adapting these spaces may create greater opportunities to attract food and beverage businesses, leisure start-ups, and meanwhile uses.

By improving the appeal of commercial units, there will be greater flexibility in coordinating and prioritising commercial development, strategically locating key uses. The introduction of artist studios, for example, would further enhance Basildon's unique identity and creative culture.



Castle Street, Kingston upon Thames, is one of many streets enhanced by small active uses, with frequent doors, windows, and movement. It is especially vibrant in warmer months when activities spill into the public realm.



Makeshift Society, Brooklyn (Dash Marshall). With the rise of shared co-working spaces and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of the 'office' has shifted. This project offers not just workspaces, but also areas for cooking, dining, and socialising. Photo: Bryan Boyer



Hackney School of Food, Hackney (Surman Western) teaches food skills while providing a community space and gardens. The street-side mural gives the space a strong, recognisable identity. Photo: Jim Stevenson



Marmalade Lane, Cambridge (Mole Architects) creates a vibrant, sustainable neighbourhood with shared spaces and green areas, where extensive communal facilities enhance social interaction and community living. Photo: David Butler

Policy: Land Use

To support the creation of a dynamic, sustainable, and people-centric urban environment, new development within Basildon Town Centre should meet the following criteria:

a. Development should integrate a mix of residential (affordable (including social rent), market sale, supported living, private rented), retail, commercial, cultural, civic, and employment spaces to create a vibrant Town Centre;

b. Phasing shall encourage the timely delivery of non-residential land uses, ensuring that commercial, retail, and community facilities are delivered early enough to support the needs of incoming residents in the initial phases;

c. Development should include flexible, accessible and inclusive community spaces that support a range of activities and events, fostering social interaction and cultural experiences throughout the day and evening in accordance with Policy INF3: Social and Community Infrastructure;

d. New commercial development should support a variety of employment opportunities, with a mix of office, retail, and leisure spaces to attract a diverse mix of businesses and stimulate economic growth;

e. Car parking should be consolidated, and redundant land repurposed for mixed-use residential development and community facilities, optimising land use and contributing to sustainable development; and

f. Development shall enhance community, health, and recreational facilities to support the growing population within Town Centre, with a focus on well-being and access to open spaces, community gardens and existing parks.

5.4 Biodiversity and Greening

The integration of green and blue infrastructure aims to connect people to nature, improve air quality, biodiversity and climate resilience, and enhance the well-being of residents, workers, and visitors.

Investment will focus on creating green corridors that link with existing amenities such as Gloucester Park and the green space to south and east of Town Centre, enhancing current green areas, and creating new pocket parks, green streets, and public spaces that support ecological health and offer relaxation and social interaction. Developers are encouraged to collaborate with community groups on urban greening initiatives.



Grey to Green, Sheffield (Sheffield City Council with Robert Bray Associates) is the UK's largest retrofit SuDS project and also the UK's largest inner-city 'Green Street'.



Grey to Green, Sheffield. In addition to its biodiversity benefits and improved surface water management, the project has stimulated economic growth, generating footfall and enhancing the food and drink offering in the area. Photo: Nigel Dunnet



White Horse Square, Wembley (DSDHA) includes biodiverse planting beds with low-maintenance, pollinator-friendly species that provide an urban oasis for locals. Designed in collaboration with local groups. Photo: Dennis Gilbert / VIEW



Sovereign Square Park, Leeds (re-form Landscape) provides accessible green space for residents, workers, and visitors. Photo: Simon Vine



Sharrow School, Sheffield, is an example of a biodiverse green roof.



Futuro Office Park, Liestal, Switzerland. This permeable parking strip drains to an adjacent grassy swale and helps protect water quality. Photo: Laura Tam

Policy: Biodiversity and Greening

To promote ecological health, new development within Basildon Town Centre should propose the integration of features that enhance biodiversity, foster a connection to nature, and improve public health. All new developments must meet the following criteria:

a. All new developments in Basildon Town Centre should incorporate green spaces and, where possible, blue spaces that enhance biodiversity, connect people to nature, and improve well-being. A minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain should be achieved on site (except in exceptional circumstances), with accessible green spaces provided for the public, alongside any residents-only areas;

b. New developments should integrate biodiversity-supporting features in the designs, such as green roofs and walls, swift boxes, and pollinator-friendly plants. Landscaping should create attractive resilient places that can also help the management of surface water;

c. Green spaces shall be designed to be accessible to residents, workers, and visitors, with pleasant areas for relaxation and social interaction. Educational signage should be included to raise awareness of local biodiversity and sustainability; and

d. Planting shall be robust and well-designed, with plant selection tailored to respond effectively to the local microclimate, soil type, and other environmental factors. Management plans must be in place to ensure the longevity of planting and green spaces.

5.5 Sustainability and Building Health

The policy on Sustainability and Building Health aims to position Basildon Town Centre as a leader in responsible, low-impact development. Its prominent and well-connected location provides an ideal opportunity to set a benchmark for environmentally sustainable development.

Central to this approach is the commitment to integrating sustainable solutions from the outset of projects, across all aspects of design. A proactive approach eliminates the need for costly retrofits, ensures sustainability targets are met, reduces energy costs for occupiers and business owners, and safeguards the health and well-being of Basildon's residents and workers.



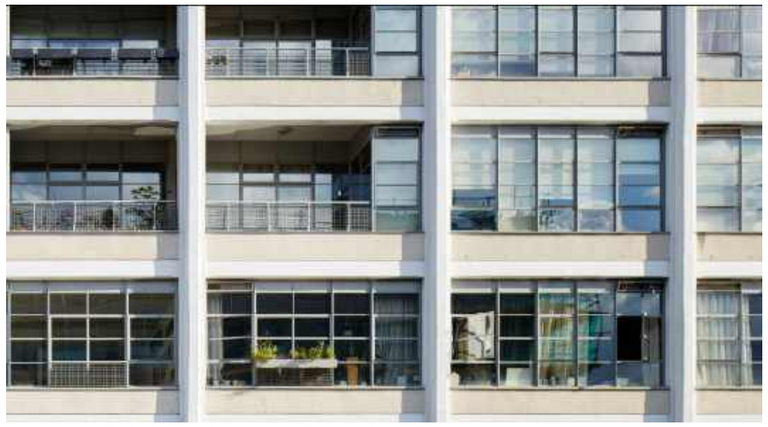
Park Hill, Sheffield (Mikhail Riches), takes a light-touch retrofit approach, celebrating the Grade II listed structure while thoughtfully updating it to modern standards. Photo: Tim Crocker*



Agar Grove, Camden (Hawkins\Brown and Mae) part of the largest estate regeneration scheme in the UK to aim for the Passivhaus standard. Photo: Jim Stephenson



6 Orsman Road, Hackney (Waugh Thistleton Architects) is a six storey cross laminated timber hybrid office exploring the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle. Photo: Ed Reeve



The Canal Building, Islington (Child Graddon Lewis) underwent a retrofit of a derelict 1930s Art Deco warehouse, once in severe disrepair. The transformation created 35 apartments, 45 live/work units, and 1,100 sqm of commercial space, sparking significant local regeneration.



A biosolar roof is the combination of biodiverse and extensive green roofs with photovoltaic systems, delivering environmental advantage and sustainable energy production.



Goldsmith Street, Norwich (Mikhail Riches) External shading to reduce overheating Photo: Tim Crocker

Policy: Sustainability and Building Health

Basildon Town Centre will address climate, ecological, and public health challenges head-on. Its visible and well-connected position makes it an ideal location to set a benchmark for responsible, low-impact development across the borough. This regeneration will be in accordance with Local Plan Policies CC1, CC2, CC4, CC5 and CC6:

a. Implement passive design principles, including a Fabric First approach to building design, focusing on optimising orientation, form-factor, window-to-wall ratios, air tightness, and solar shading, to minimise energy demand and improve internal comfort;

b. Use low-embodied carbon materials that complement the Town Centre's existing materials. These will align with the principles set out in Policy CC4 focusing on minimising environmental impact without compromising architectural quality;

c. Provide sufficient daylight, sunlight and privacy to new and surrounding housing that is appropriate for its context, whilst avoiding overheating and minimising overshadowing;

d. Design for optimal internal environmental conditions, addressing temperature regulation, humidity, ventilation and acoustics for enhanced air quality and occupant health;

e. Support circular economy principles by encouraging the reuse of materials, reducing waste, and designing for longevity, ensuring that buildings are adaptable and can be easily refurbished or repurposed; and

f. Take measures to reduce the performance gap, which refers to the difference between a building's expected performance (based on design and standards) and its actual performance once occupied. This can be achieved through alternative routes to meeting policy requirements, in accordance with Local Plan Policies CC4, such as through Passivhaus certification.

5.6 Making Efficient Use of Town Centre Land

New buildings must consider their massing and height in relation to the existing built form outlined in Chapter 3.6 Scale and Massing and assess their impact on the legibility and urban design of the Town Centre. The Town Centre predominantly consists of buildings ranging from 2 to 5 storeys, with a limited number of taller buildings that provide contrast to the generally low-rise character of the area. Any proposals that depart from the prevailing building heights, by replacing buildings with taller or shorter alternatives, must justify their suitability and sensitivity and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Suitability

Proposals must demonstrate alignment with key Town Centre priorities, including:

1. Support excellent public transport and cycling accessibility;
2. Offer high-quality living and working environments;
3. Enhance town-wide legibility, hierarchy and wayfinding; and
4. High-quality green space.

Sensitivity

Proposals must assess potential impacts on:

1. Neighbouring buildings and public realm;
2. Designated and undesignated heritage assets;
3. Key views and vistas, including long-range views from Gloucester Park, Broadmayne, the arrival into town by train, Southernhay junction, and other locations beyond the ring road such as Great Knightleys;
4. Enclosure of squares, streets and public spaces, avoiding canyon-like streets; and
5. Micro-climatic and ecological factors, ensuring that buildings respect pedestrian comfort and local nature.

Tangible Public Benefits

When the suitability and sensitivity of taller buildings are justified, they must demonstrate exceptional design quality and deliver tangible public benefits, including:

1. Enhanced affordable housing provision and a mix of dwelling sizes to meet local housing needs;
2. Growth of infrastructure provision in line with the growing population, including public transport, cycling, walking routes, and social infrastructure to support community health and well-being, such as public open spaces and access to education, health, and community services;
3. Adherence to high environmental standards, ensuring quality internal living conditions with good ventilation, daylight, and minimal overheating with good access to amenity space;
4. Maximised energy generation through low-carbon and renewable sources;
5. Minimisation of embodied carbon through careful material selection;
6. Positive contributions towards placemaking, including measures to reflect and reinforce positive elements of local character and deliver a recognisable and distinctive local landmark; and
7. Contributions to Basildon's distinctiveness, urban form, and design quality.

Fire and Life Safety

High Risk Buildings, as defined by the Building Safety Act, will be subject to heightened safety regulations and assessments.

Policy: Making Efficient Use of Town Centre Land

Proposals for all new buildings shall clearly demonstrate:

a. Outstanding design quality, including consideration given to the impact of height, massing, proportion, materials, detailing, site layout, and relationship with the surrounding character, setting them apart in terms of quality and distinctiveness, whilst positively contributing to the context and character of the area;

b. Significant public benefits that the development will provide, as set out in 'Tangible Public Benefits';

c. Significant sustainability benefits including building design, construction, operation and connections to the surrounding area;

d. A clear townscape rationale for the specific siting of taller buildings, marking key locations or nodes and analysing important views and sightlines;

e. A positive relationship with relevant heritage assets and their setting and the historic character that contributes to the town's distinctiveness;

f. That proposals have been designed to avoid harmful impacts on daylight, sunlight, wind conditions, overheating and microclimate on surrounding buildings and public spaces. The provision of appropriate mitigation will be required where appropriate;

g. That the height, massing and siting of taller buildings shall be designed to protect the potential for future development on adjacent land;

h. That appropriate amenity and play spaces are incorporated to a high standard for all residents;

i. That the development's setting will not be dominated by car parking due to the higher density. In this context, a car-lite approach should be taken; and

j. A balanced and comprehensive approach to servicing to avoid impact on local streets and spaces.

5.7 Design Characteristics and Quality

Basildon Town Centre will feature well-designed, sustainable buildings that reflect the heritage of the New Town, creating a space that residents can take pride in. The design will complement the area's mid-century architecture, characterised by consistent patterns of bays, fenestration, and simple, unified rooflines. Elevations will enhance internal spatial quality and function, while providing external visual interest through texture, depth, and modulation. Sustainability strategies will be integral to the design, with features like deep window reveals or integrated brise soleil for solar shading, and optimised window-to-wall ratios.

New buildings will adhere to high standards of craftsmanship, with a focus on robust design that prioritises longevity, low maintenance, and visual appeal. Material selection will be guided by a thoughtful balance of the site's character and context, the project's aesthetic vision, and the environmental impact of materials throughout their lifecycle. The colour palette will draw inspiration from the context, such as greens, buffs, and neutrals seen in Town Square and East Walk. The street presence of each building will be underpinned by thorough research into its function, cultural context, and location. Some buildings will stand out as civic landmarks, while others will integrate more subtly into the urban fabric.

Building forms, façades, materials, and details will be tailored to each Character Area, as detailed in the following chapter. For instance, buildings in Town Square and East Walk will feature continuous glazed shopfronts with canopies for shelter at street level. These canopies will be designed to harmonise with the adjacent buildings, creating a cohesive streetscape.

Architectural detailing will add visual interest and enhance the public realm, while careful coordination of materials will support the long-term durability and success of the buildings, preserving both their aesthetic and functional qualities for years to come.



Maurice Wohl Neuroscince Institute, London (Allies and Morrison) Pattern, rhythm and proportion to complement the existing architectural characteristics. Photo: Stale Eriksen



Europaallee Mixed-use Building, Zurich (Caruso St John). Articulated elements, strong entrances and double height space at ground.



Arthouse Student Housing, Portland (Lever Architecture) Through-views at ground floor create an open, active frontage.



Park Hill, Sheffield (Mikhail Riches), combines the historic mid-century structure with contemporary additions. Photo: Tim Crocker



East Square Cinema, Basildon (Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects) continues the rhythm of the original New Town columns and overhead canopy, which are key to East Walk's architectural identity.



ORTUS, London (Duggan Morris Architects) strong rhythm with contrasting materials and occasional variation. Photo: Jack Hobhouse



Ely Court, London (Alison Brooks Architects) generous inset balconies create a clean built form and provides shelter and privacy to residential balconies. Photo: Paul Riddle





Brentford Lock West, London (Duggan Morris Architects) slim profile metalwork balustrades creates elegant balconies that are integral to the elevation design. Photo: Mark Hadden

Policy: Design Characteristics and Quality

New developments will be expected to meet the following criteria:

a. The development of key design elements - such as elevational treatments, architectural details, and materials - should be prioritised early in the design process to minimise the need for deferring them to reserved matters or planning conditions.

b. Buildings must be tailored to specific character areas within the Town Centre, incorporating design features that harmonise with the surrounding environment, including façades, materials, and rooflines;

c. The colour palette will be influenced by the surrounding buildings and the character area analysis. The building's function will guide its aesthetic, with some buildings requiring a more civic presence, while others should integrate seamlessly into the urban fabric;

d. Materials should be aesthetically pleasing, durable, and low carbon, aligning with the Town Centre material palette, while aging well over time. Materials must balance sustainability with long-term maintenance needs;

e. Ground floor spaces must engage with the public realm by prioritising transparency and adaptability, creating a vibrant street environment. Uses such as bedrooms should be located on upper floors to maintain activity at ground level;

f. The architectural vision will extend beyond the building itself to the public realm and boundary treatments, creating a cohesive and beautiful environment.

g. A clear hierarchy of facades shall be established, with key entrances and public-facing facades, and areas of high pedestrian activity given architectural prominence;

h. All entrances must be clearly defined, with careful attention given to the threshold areas. Architectural treatments such as canopies, recesses and changes in materiality should help to mark transitions between the public and private realms;

i. Equipment such as post boxes, meter boxes, dry risers, lighting, ironmongery entrance canopies, and signage should be integral to the entrance design. They should be integrated into the facade design and complement the material palette.

j. Detailed or Hybrid schemes are strongly encouraged for all Major Applications. Outline Applications will only be accepted if they are accompanied by high-quality, robust design codes; and

k. A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) should be established with Basildon Borough Council for Major Applications, ensuring collaboration with Development Management Officers, Urban Design Officers, and Quality Review Panels throughout the design process.

5.8 Homes

Sustainable housing will play a central role in the regeneration of the Town Centre, providing much-needed homes, increasing footfall and strengthening the local economy. With the creation of new neighbourhoods, the Town Centre will remain vibrant well into the evening, supporting not only the evening economy but also fostering a sense of safety during night-time hours.

New developments will deliver high-quality homes that take advantage of their proximity to local amenities, with easy access to green spaces, public transport, and essential services. Town Centre housing, integrated with green infrastructure, will provide a balance between urban living and nature and support a diverse range of people while encouraging low-impact, sustainable lifestyles.

The design of each dwelling should be carefully considered to enhance both the arrival experience and the sense of home as a retreat. Homes will feature adequately sized rooms and convenient and efficient room layouts that meet the practical needs of residents, ensuring comfort and long-term adaptability.

The housing strategy will offer a variety of home types to meet the needs of a wide community. A range of sizes, tenures, and housing types will be available, including key worker housing and specialised, adaptable homes for the elderly and people with disabilities. The design of these homes will be inclusive, with no distinction made between tenures, encouraging all residents to feel integrated into the community.

Guided by the principle of the "agent of change," development will ensure that new housing supports broader urban regeneration goals while being sensitive to the surrounding environment and community dynamics. This approach will help address the potential impacts of change.

Architectural detailing will add visual interest and enhance the public realm, while careful coordination of materials will support the long-term durability and success of the buildings, preserving both their aesthetic and functional qualities for years to come.



Roseberry Mansions, King's Cross (Maccreanor Lavington), clearly defines communal residential entrances, improving legibility and enhancing the arrival experience. Photo: Tim Crocker



Fruit Market, Nottingham (Letts Wheeler) features a residents' courtyard that maximises sunlight and caters to diverse needs, with hardscaping for scooting and cycling, and planting creating intimate seating areas.



Ely Court, South Kilburn (Alison Brooks Architects) Clearly defined, generous defensible space is useful for residents and allows for personalisation and planting.



Hortsley, Seaford (RCKa) provides examples of home and room layouts designed to enhance everyday living. Photo: Jakob Spriestersbach



Derwenthorpe, York (Studio Partington) Photo: Tim Crocker

Policy: Homes

1. New housing shall:

a. Form a coherent, legible and navigable pattern of streets and blocks;

b. Engender street-based activity and provide a sense of safety;

c. Maximise active frontages on public-facing sides of a development, and, where appropriate, wrap around inactive frontages;

d. Provide sufficient daylight, sunlight and privacy to new and surrounding housing that is appropriate for its context, whilst avoiding overheating and minimising overshadowing;

e. Be orientated to optimise opportunities for visual interest through a range of immediate and longer-range views, with the views from individual dwellings considered at an early design stage;

f. Take measures to reduce noise from common areas to individual dwellings and between dwellings;

g. Comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards and will provide compliant storage within entrances and living spaces as well as bedrooms; and

h. Maximise the provision of dual aspect dwellings and avoid single aspect dwellings. A single-aspect dwelling should only be provided when suitable internal design quality can be demonstrated, including adequate passive ventilation, daylight, privacy, aspect, and the avoidance of overheating. North-facing single-aspect homes will not be supported.

2. Communal outside space shall:

a. Provide sufficient space to meet the requirements of the number of residents;

b. Be designed to be easily accessed from all related dwellings and integrated into an access route, encouraging activation;

c. Be located to be appreciated from the inside and positioned to allow overlooking;

d. Support informal social activity and play opportunities for all age groups; and

e. Meet the changing and diverse needs of different occupiers.

3. Private outdoor amenity space for each dwelling shall be usable and have a balance of openness and protection, appropriate for its outlook and orientation.

4. The development shall ensure that:

a. The experience of arrival, via footpaths, entrances and shared circulation spaces is comfortable, accessible and fit for purpose;

b. Features are designed for easy maintenance, such as window cleaning;

c. Sufficient levels of secure, covered and conveniently located externally accessible storage is provided for cycles, deliveries and other bulky items; and

d. Recycling, waste disposal, and management facilities are conveniently located, integrated, and designed to work effectively for residents and services and Quality Review Panels throughout the design process.

5.9 Leisure, Culture and Community

The Masterplan is committed to fostering a vibrant and inclusive cultural and community life in Basildon Town Centre. Central to this, is the enhancement of existing cultural offerings as well as promoting new activities that support a thriving after-hours economy.

Investing in the town's cultural infrastructure also means nurturing creative talent and providing opportunities for artists, performers, and entrepreneurs to flourish. Through partnerships with local businesses, community groups, and cultural organisations, the aim is to develop a rich calendar of events to ignite interest for the Town Centre that reflects Basildon's unique character.

Strengthening the cultural infrastructure will create opportunities for social engagement, cultural enrichment, and local economic growth, ensuring the Town Centre becomes the go-to destination and one that fosters community pride.



Kings Crescent, Hackney (muf) creates space for diverse recreation, blending traditional play equipment with natural elements like logs, rocks, and water. It includes props for imaginative play, such as a theatre and large table, alongside amenity areas with bespoke seating that caters to the elderly as well as it does to teenagers.



Pop Brixton, London (Carl Turner Architects) transforms a disused space into a vibrant community hub, using shipping containers to house independent businesses, fostering creativity and local culture.



The Great Gathering Weekend Festival 2024, Basildon



Performance at Towngate Theatre, Basildon



Creative Family Fun Day August 2024, Basildon



Art workshops with Creative Basildon. Photo: Creative Basildon

Policy: Leisure, Culture and Community

Proposals for leisure, cultural and community venues should:

a. Demonstrate high design quality and accessibility;

b. Offer diverse programming to meet the diverse range of needs in the community as well as attracting visitors from further afield; and

c. Demonstrate a collaborative approach involving local authorities, businesses, cultural organisations, and community groups to develop initiatives that are in line with the needs of the local community and contribute positively to the social and economic vitality of the area.

Proposals for businesses and activities supporting the evening economy should:

d. Demonstrate how they will create safe and welcoming spaces that encourage social engagement after hours. This includes ensuring that venues are respectful of neighbours and accessible, with clear, well-lit connections to public transport.

6.0
CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

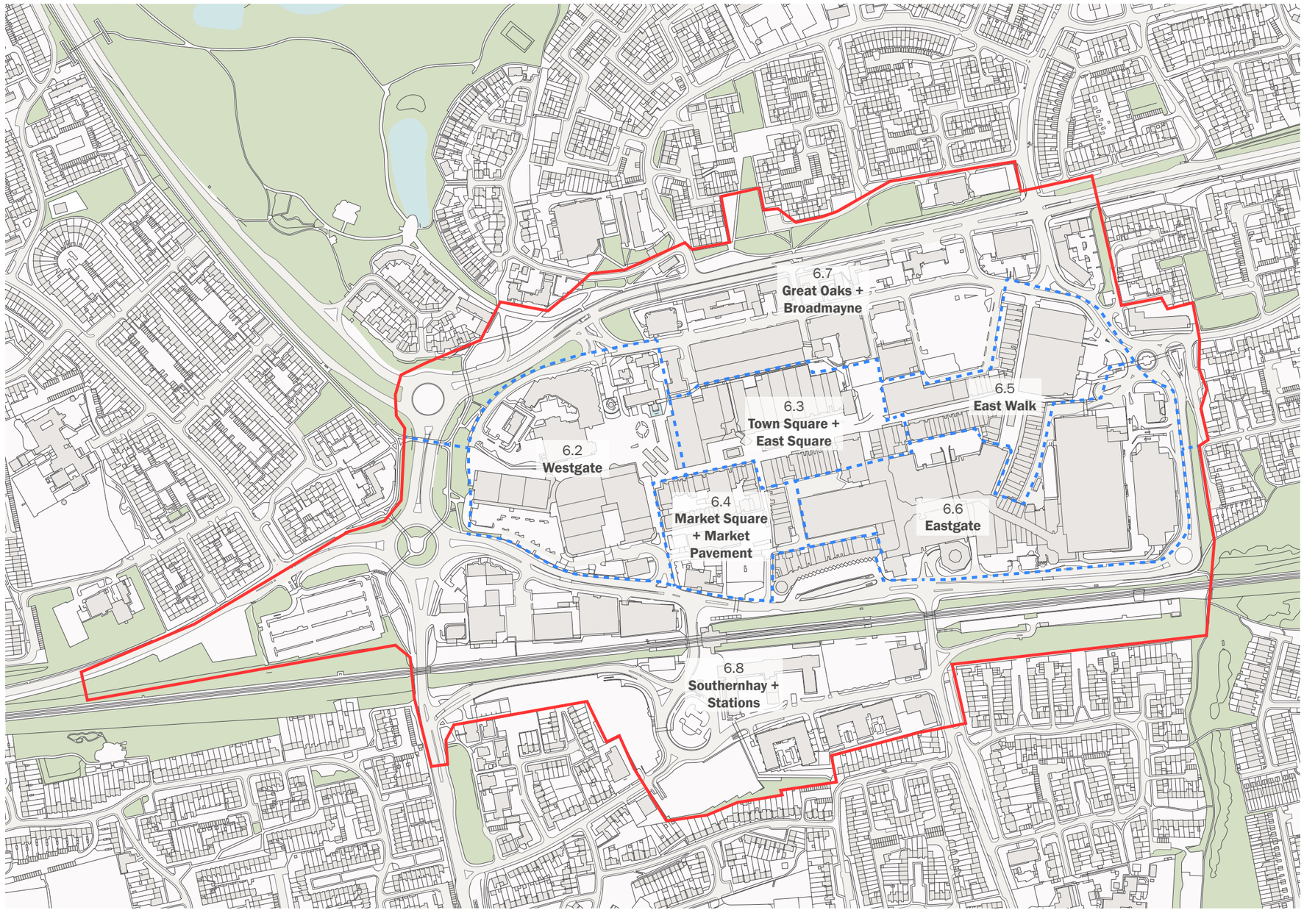
6.1 Character Area Overview

Seven Character Areas have been identified to ensure a comprehensive approach across the Masterplan, while addressing the unique qualities of each distinct area.

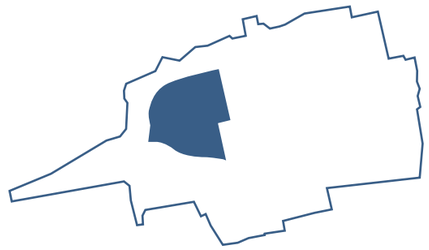
This chapter provides further detail on the strategic aspirations for each Character Area, focusing on **uses and hours, connectivity and public realm**, and **built form and architecture**, while highlighting key opportunities for development. The spatial and public realm strategies are coordinated across the Character Areas, and should be considered as part of an integrated whole rather than in isolation.

The following sections describe each Character Area in detail:

- 6.2 Westgate
- 6.3 Town Square and East Square
- 6.4 Market Square and Market Pavement
- 6.5 East Walk
- 6.6 Eastgate
- 6.7 Great Oaks and Broadmayne
- 6.8 Southernhay and Stations



6.2 Westgate



The final section of the original Town Centre to be completed, Westgate forms the western edge of Basildon, encompassing St Martin's Square, the town's civic and cultural core, and Westgate Retail Park, a large 1990s shopping centre.

St Martin's Square will be enhanced as the civic and cultural heart of the area, with a focus on celebrating Basildon's New Town heritage, including St Martin of Tours Church. At the same time, the retail park will be redeveloped to create a more welcoming, human-scale environment, featuring vibrant streets and a mix of uses. This transformation will better connect the space with surrounding neighbourhoods, drawing people into the heart of the Town Centre.



St Martin of Tours Church - one of the first buildings to be constructed in Basildon New Town and a significant example of Modernist architecture.



The glass Bell Tower, located between the Basildon Centre and St Martin of Tours Church.



The market activates St Martin's Square but the current configuration relies on the blank facade of the former M&S building to the left of the image.

Uses and Hours

- The area will diversify beyond retail, incorporating a mix of commercial, community, civic, and residential uses that enhance the Town Centre's offerings and encourage footfall throughout the day, stimulating the evening economy.
- St Martin's Square will become a focal point for civic and community activities, with potential for new spaces supporting creative and community-driven initiatives. The market, currently located in St Martin's Square, may be reconfigured to enhance permeability and create more active frontages onto the square.
- At present, the southern and western edges are dominated by car parking and service yards serving the retail and commercial facilities. These areas offer opportunities for future development, which could create spaces that better connect with surrounding neighbourhoods by improving links and increasing activity and pedestrian permeability.



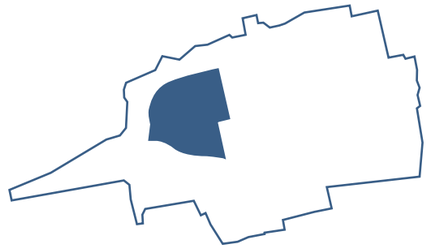
The impermeable edge to Westgate shopping centre is designed for cars and lacks frontage and connections.



The yellow brick and green accents of Westgate Retail Park, Towngate Theatre, and the Basildon Centre.



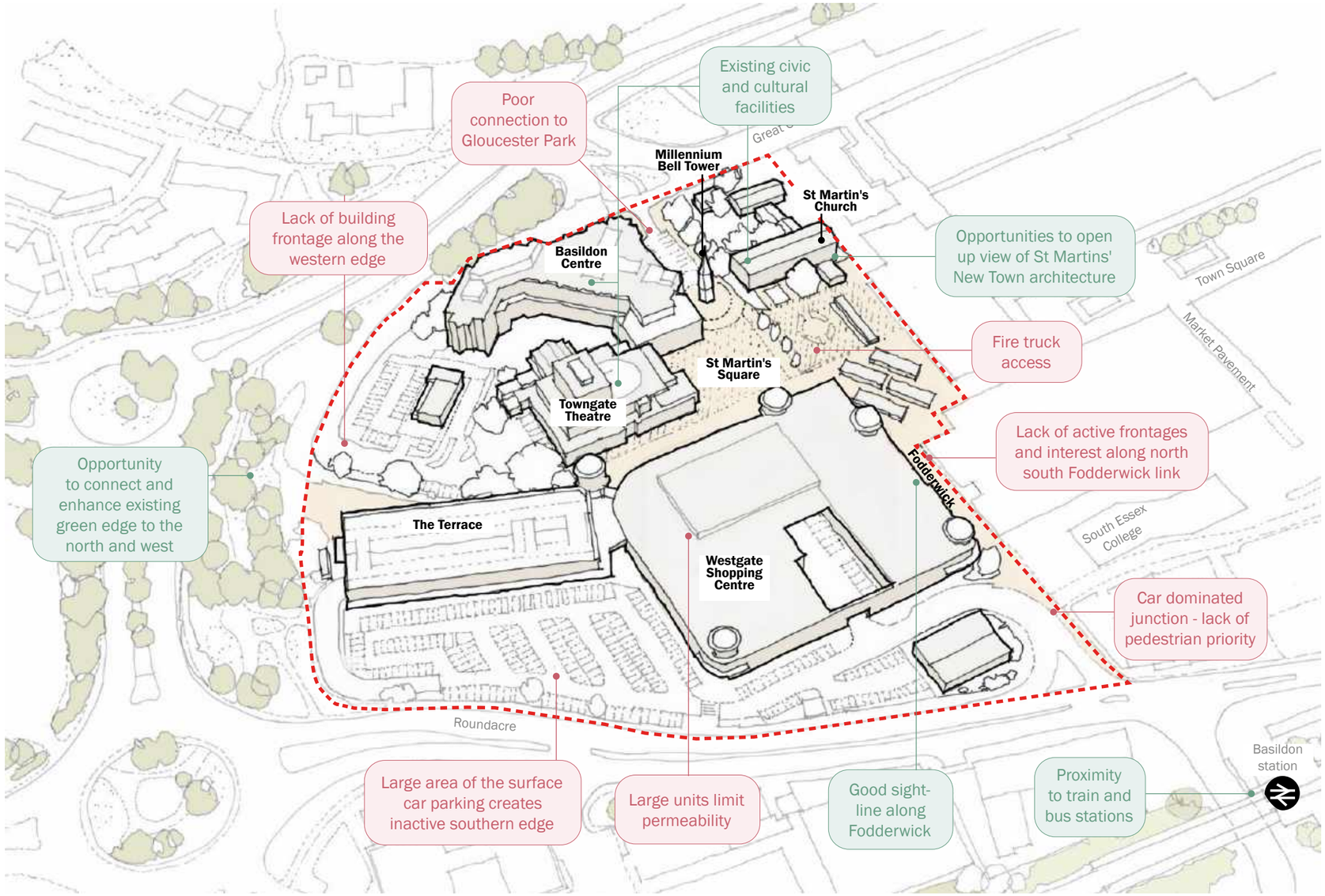
The east-west route between Westgate Shopping Centre and Towngate Theatre, looking towards Roundacre.

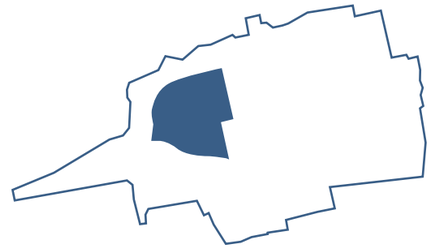


Connectivity and Public Realm

- The scale and layout of Westgate Retail Park, along with its car parking and service areas, hinder pedestrian permeability and visibility into the Town Centre. Regeneration presents the opportunity to give the Town Centre a clearer presence, enhance key access points and introduce new pedestrian and cycle links.
- Connections to Gloucester Park have been weakened and could be improved through St Martin's Square, with consideration given to enhancing views of the Bell Tower.
- There is potential to extend the Town Square's east-west spine, providing clear gateways into the Town Centre and possibly adding new outdoor spaces with a variety of activities at ground level.
- Fodderwick currently lacks sufficient overlooking, which could be addressed by prioritising active frontages to increase engagement with the area.
- The public realm west of Westgate Retail Park is bound by trees which help to screen the area from the adjacent road. The public realm along the remaining edges of Westgate should be improved, with landscaping to soften development and create a more inviting atmosphere.

Westgate Opportunities and Constraints:





Built Form and Architectural Character

Unlike the simpler, rectangular buildings typical of the 1950s and 60s throughout the Town Centre, Westgate features some variation in its more recent structures. The Towngate Theatre and the Basildon Centre have stepped forms, while Westgate Retail Park is distinguished by its drum shape. These buildings share a consistent height, around three to four storeys.

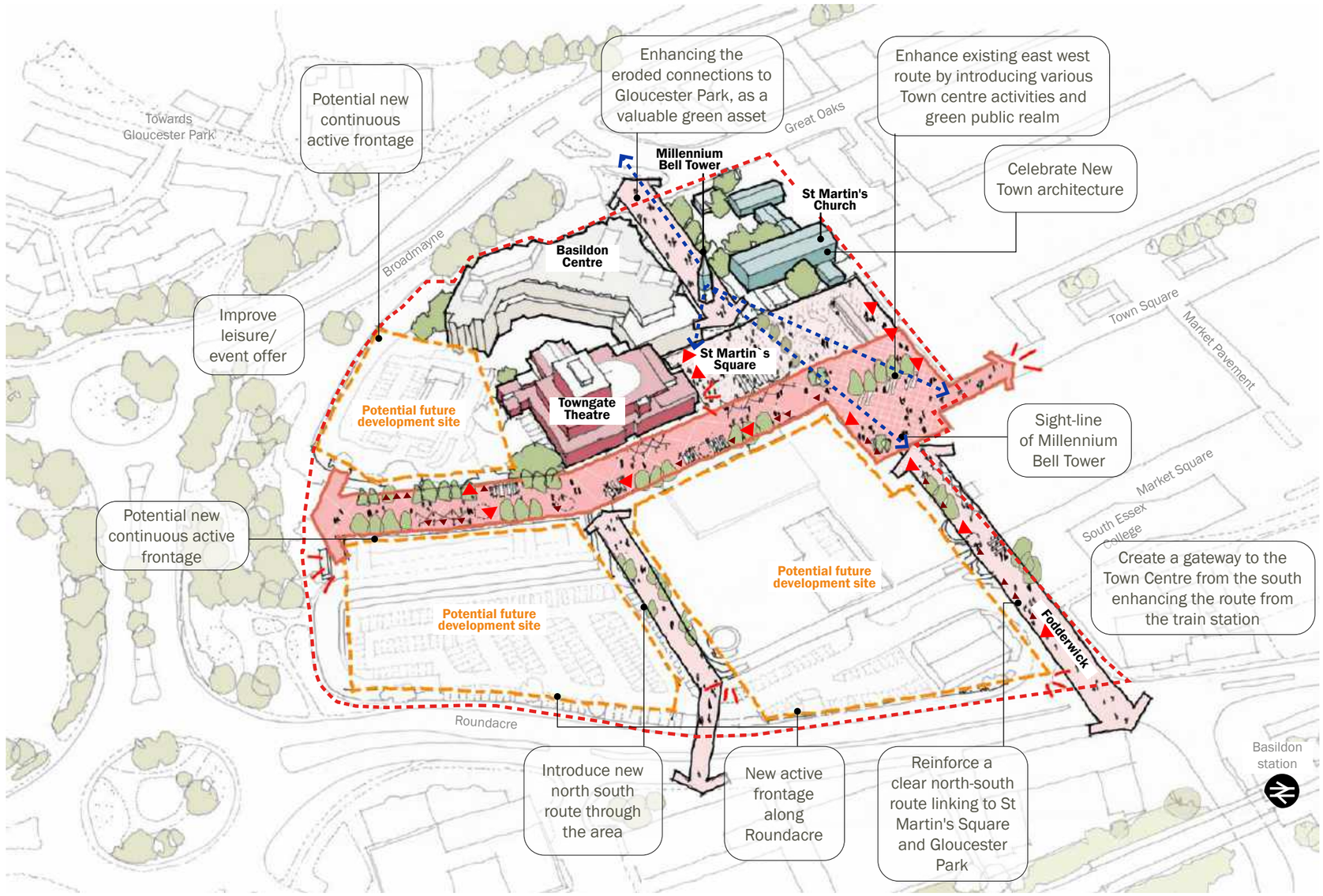
The yellow brick of Westgate Retail Park, Towngate Theatre, and the Basildon Centre dominate the area, distinguishing them from older buildings elsewhere in the Town Centre.

The buildings are significantly lacking in active frontages, which affects the vibrancy of the space.

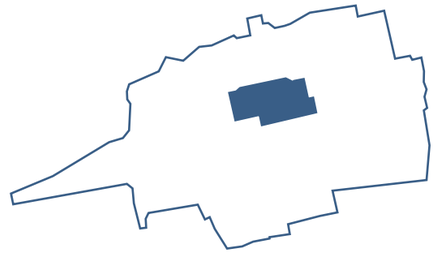
St Martin of Tours Church, one of the first buildings constructed in the New Town, is a defining feature of the area. Demonstrating Modernist principles, it features a unique fibreglass sculpture of Christ above the south door porch and striking colourful stained-glass windows. Nestled in the corner of the square, improvements to the public realm could better position the church as a focal point.

The glass Bell Tower, physically detached from the church, is visually interesting but could benefit from better landscaping to improve pedestrian flow and more effectively integrate the structure into the square.

Westgate Key Objectives:



6.3 Town Square and East Square



This Character Area is defined by Basildon Town Centre's two main pedestrian squares: Town Square and East Square. These squares form a pedestrianised east-west spine and retail precinct at the heart of the town, featuring a spacious public realm designed for pedestrians. They retain heritage elements from the original New Town design, such as the Mother and Child statue, the Orb Clocktower, and Brooke House, and are now home to new public artworks, including murals.

Town Square and East Square will continue to be reinforced as the heart of the Town Centre, evolving into vibrant spaces that showcase leisure, art, events, and community activities. Heritage elements will be celebrated, and the public realm enhanced to create a unique and engaging landscape where people can meet, socialise, shop, run errands, linger, and relax.

Uses and Hours

- The area will continue to feature retail units open to the public realm at ground floor level, with office space and residential accommodation above. Current residential provision is located in Northgate House and Brooke House.
- Town Square is reasonably well-used during the daytime, particularly at weekends, but remains quiet at night, with typical operating hours from 9:00am to 5:30pm. Diversifying the commercial offer, including the provision of food and beverage businesses, will encourage evening activity.
- Empty retail units, notably the former M&S building, contribute to Town Square's deteriorating character and the underuse of public space. Redesigning or adapting these spaces could improve the attractiveness of the units and create greater opportunities for organisations and businesses that benefit the community.
- In March 2022, a hybrid consent was approved for Town Square North, which seeks to remove the Marks and Spencer building whilst retaining the units to the north and building additional units above these. If built out, the development would deliver 535 units and 20,000 sqm of commercial and retail space. Although details and timing are uncertain, the site retains potential for future development opportunities.

Connectivity and Public Realm

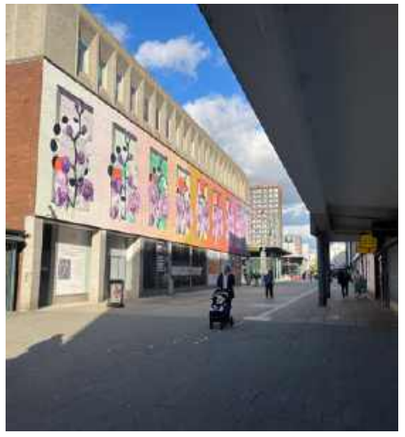
- Connectivity to and from Town Square is hindered by poor connections in the surrounding Character Areas. This will be addressed by improving routes and wayfinding throughout the Town Centre, with a particular focus on reinforcing north/south connections.
- The lack of intervisibility with Westgate and Market Square should be improved to enhance wayfinding.
- Town Square contains two free-standing retail pavilions. While the width of Town Square is sufficient to accommodate pavilions, their design and height could be reconsidered to open views and movement through the public realm.



Town Square, looking towards East Walk. The inconsistencies in surface treatments, street furniture, and lighting should be addressed through public realm improvements, and the space should work both for events and day-to-day use.



The design of the retail pavilions in Town Square blocks views and movement through the public realm.



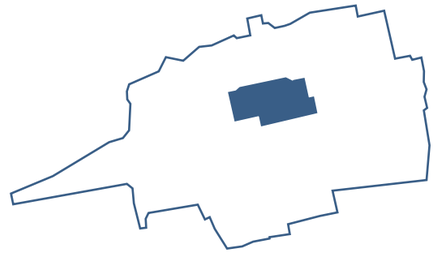
The connection between Town Square and St Martin's Square lacks active frontage and intervisibility since the closure of M&S. Applied to the old M&S building is the Insa mural, part of the 'Our Towns' street art initiative 2021.



While East Square features good lighting and cohesive street furniture it is underused and would benefit from planting to soften the hardscaping.

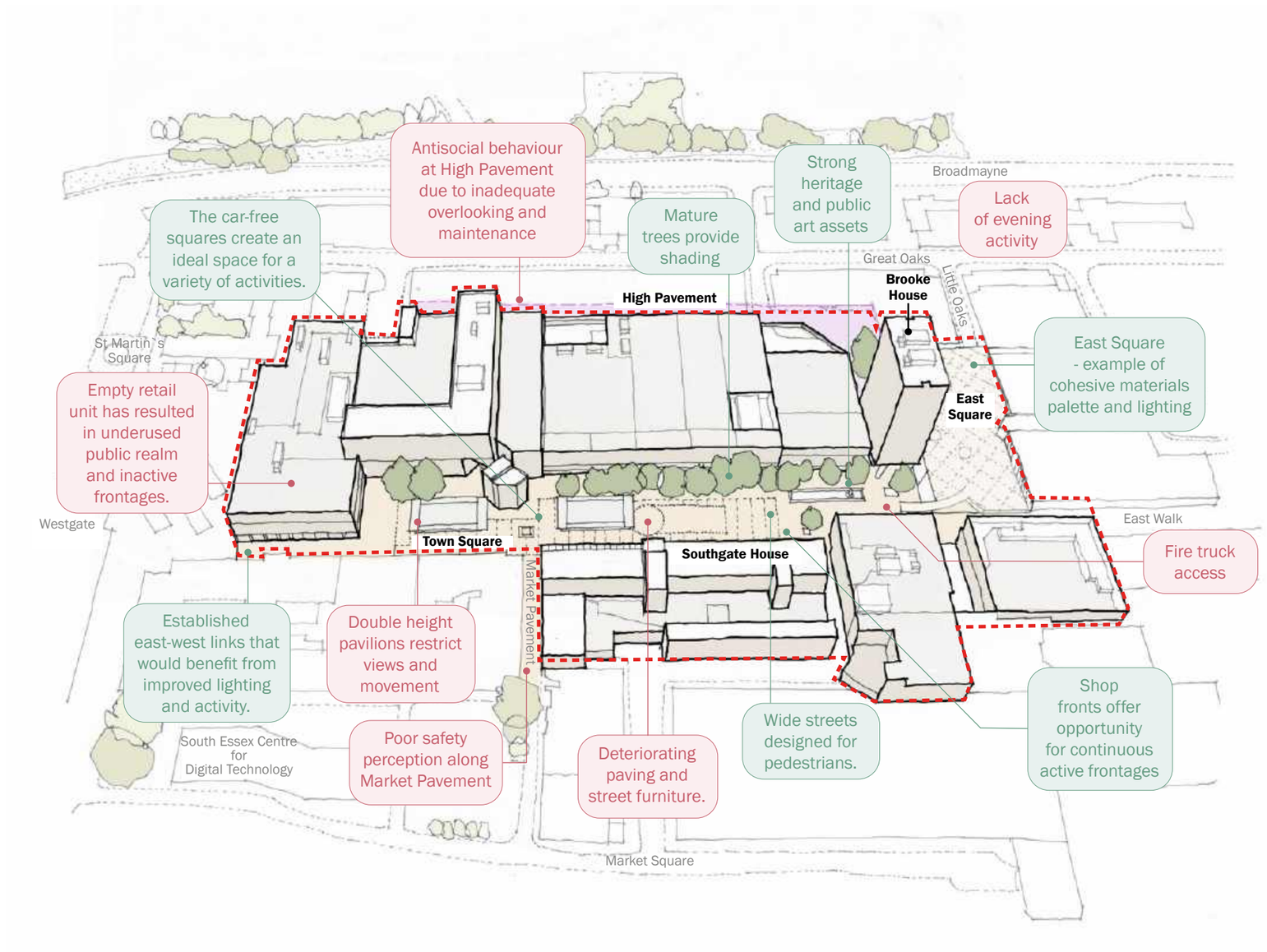


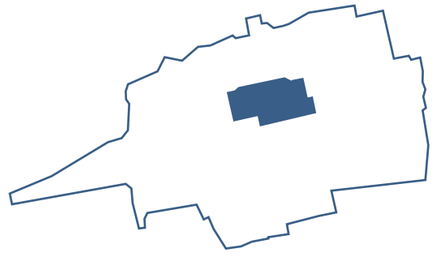
The bronze Mother and Child fountain, created by Maurice Lambert in 1962, celebrating the origins of the New Town.



- Town Square and Great Oaks are connected via High Pavement, an elevated route that is distinctive to the original New Town design. However, the route is not intuitive or welcoming, and issues of antisocial behaviour arise due to the tucked-away entrance, poorly overlooked routes, and ongoing maintenance problems. Improvements are needed to address these concerns.
- The public realm should remain adaptable and flexible for various commercial and community uses, with better unification of street furniture and ground materials. It should function well year-round, not just during events like the Christmas market.
- Ground treatment is largely hard standing, with little greenery. Materials should form a cohesive palette, and planting should be enhanced through initiatives like the council's urban greening project.
- The public realm at East Square, the sunken area outside Brooke House, was upgraded as part of the cinema development. While it features good lighting and cohesive street furniture, it remains underused and affected by windy conditions.
- Continuous active frontages are key to this area and contribute to the vibrancy and engagement of the area. Active frontages will be retained throughout and could be enhanced through the redevelopment of land north of Town Square.

Town Square and East Square Opportunities and Constraints:

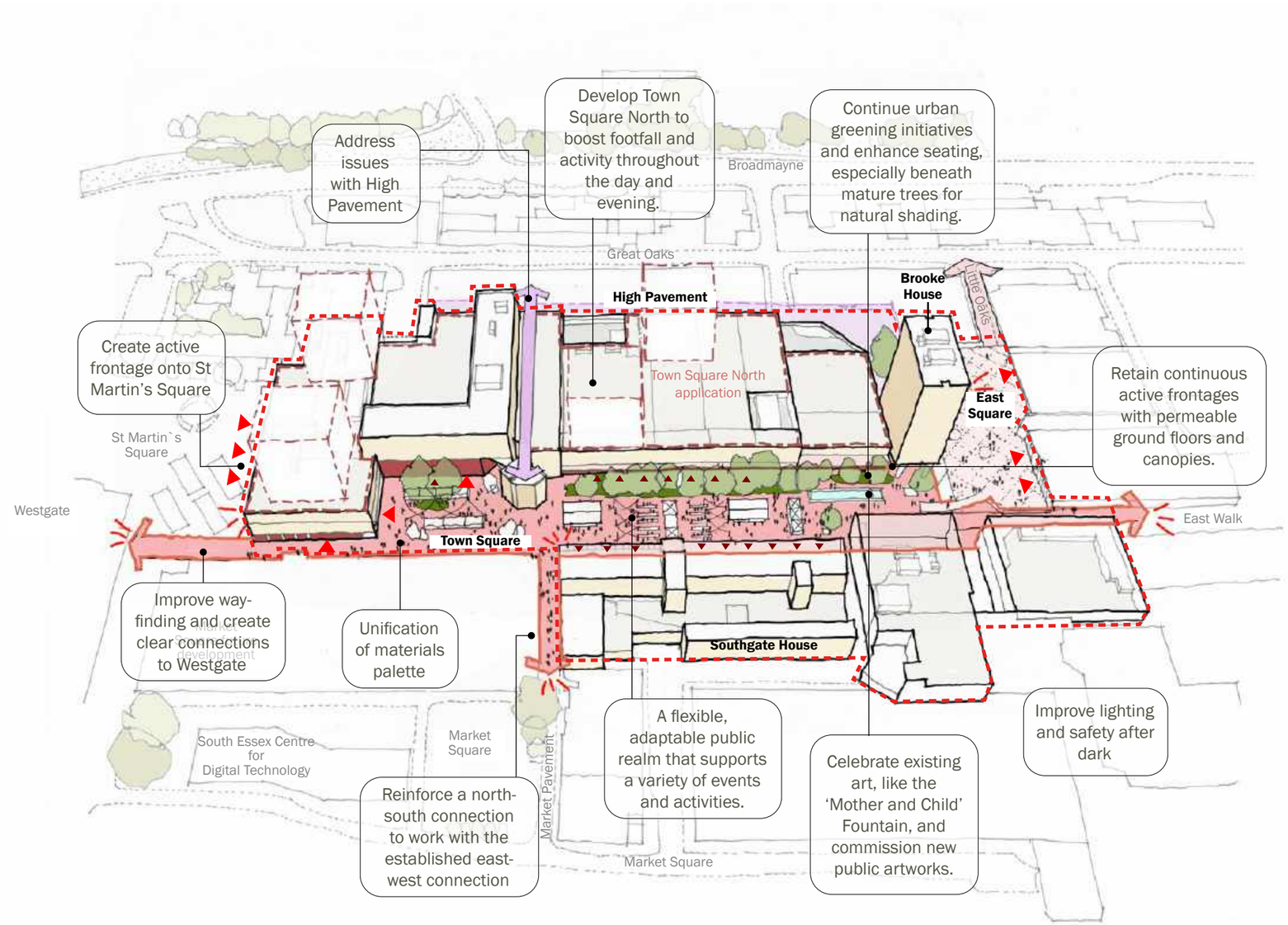




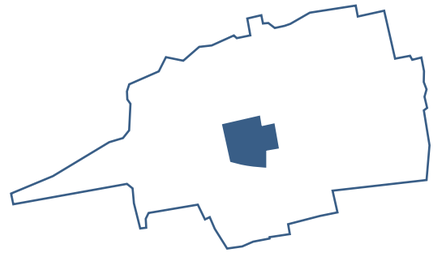
Built Form and Architectural Character

- Central to the character of the squares are the Modernist urban design principles, which emphasise a high level of enclosure to the public realm and a strong building line. These principles will be retained in future developments.
- The squares are lined with low-rise buildings of simple, rectilinear form, characterised by a strong horizontal emphasis and permeable ground floors, often beneath cantilevered canopies. These elements—permeable ground floors and cantilevered canopies—are key to Basildon's character and should be encouraged in new developments. In some areas, strong vertical elements, such as structural frames, columns, and fins, are also prominent.
- Key materials include concrete, glazed curtain walling, and stone or aggregate cladding panels, alongside multi-toned and brown brick, all applied in a simple manner to create a calm, unified appearance. The colour palette is dominated by raw concrete and neutral tones. Any new materials proposed will complement these existing materials, in line with the other considerations outlined in the Masterplan Framework.

Town Square and East Square Key Objectives:



6.4 Market Square and Market Pavement



Market Square is an education, residential, and retail precinct, currently dominated by vehicles and servicing on its southern edge. At its centre is a plaza, once home to the town market, now in need of greater identity and activation.

The South Essex College building, a contemporary three-storey structure, was introduced in 2021, alongside public realm enhancements. The market, previously located here, was relocated to St Martin's Square. Established nightlife venues like The Beehive and The Loft border the area, along with the site of Raquels, now closed but still a beloved local memory.

With its proximity to the stations, Build to Rent accommodation, and the College, the area has significant potential to become a vibrant nightlife destination, drawing in both residents and visitors alike



The original Market Square, 1959



South Essex College looking towards Fodderwick, with Market Square North to the right.



South Essex College entrance, looking towards Fodderwick

Uses and Hours

- The area is evolving, with the Market Square development introducing new uses to the town such as co-working spaces and Build to Rent accommodation, fronting both Market Square and Town Square.
- The area would benefit from enhanced creative and evening offerings, such as comedy, music, food, and drink, alongside a revitalised retail environment.
- Defining a unique identity for Market Square will help restore purpose to the public realm, especially since it lost its market.



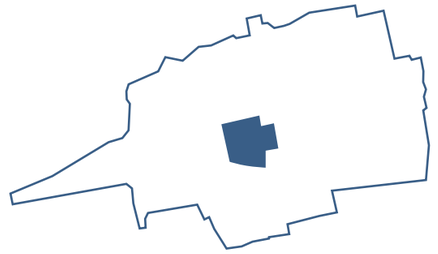
Market Pavement - view from Town Square



Market Pavement - surface car-parking ahead and South Essex College off the image to the right.



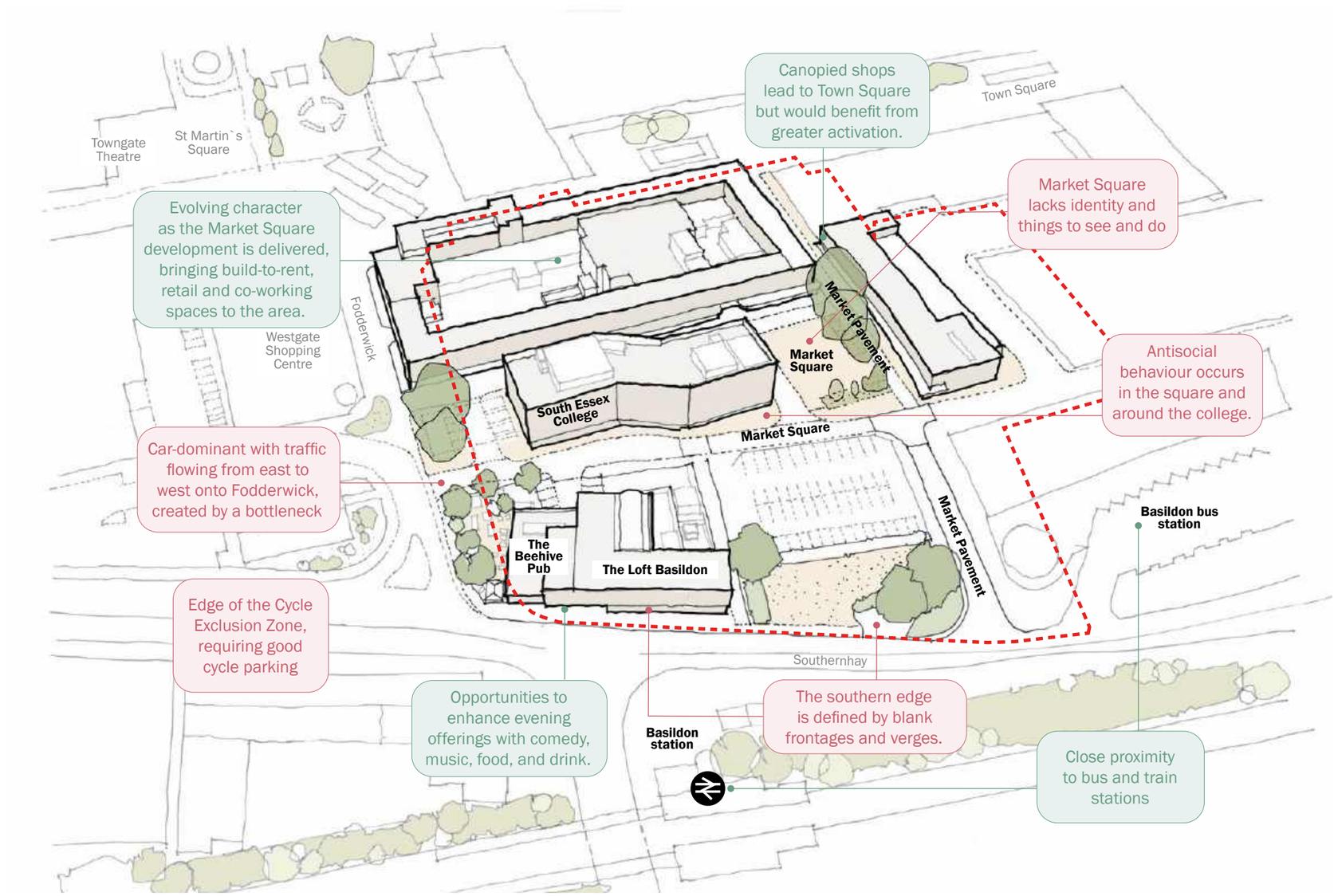
Erin Holly mural activating a large blank wall along Market Pavement, part of 2021 street art initiative"Our Towns"

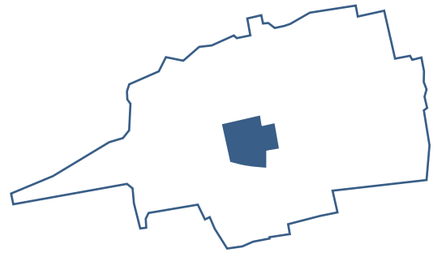


Connectivity and Public Realm

- Market Square and Market Pavement serve as the first impression of the Town Centre for visitors arriving from the train station. However, the southern edge is predominantly defined by blank frontages and car parking. Regeneration offers the opportunity to reconfigure these spaces and provide active frontages, improving the area's entrance appeal.
- A direct, green, pedestrianised route could be established to link the railway and bus stations to the college, Market Square, and Town Square, with Market Square acting as the central node. Activation and wayfinding elements will be key considerations here.
- Street furniture is minimal, and the public realm design has led to an over-reliance on bollards. Introducing comfortable seating, spaces for outdoor study, and areas for small group gatherings, complemented by strategic planting, would benefit residents, college students, and visitors alike.
- A bottleneck currently causes issues with traffic flow from east to west onto Fodderwick. At present, there is no pedestrian crossing, and pedestrians give way to vehicles. This needs to be addressed.
- Strategic secure cycle parking should be provided at key arrival points into the Cycle Exclusion Zone.

Market Square and Market Pavement Opportunities and Constraints:

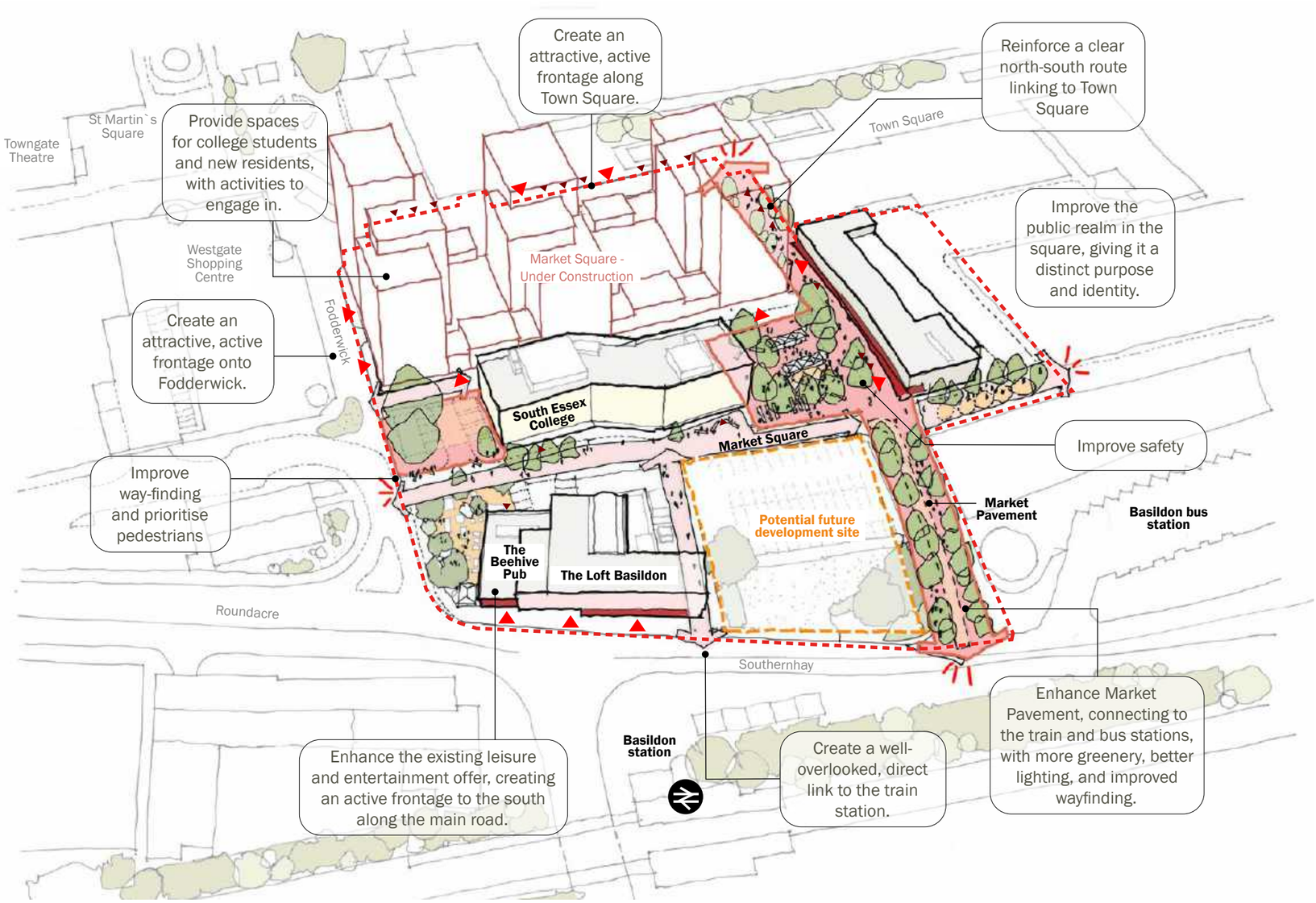




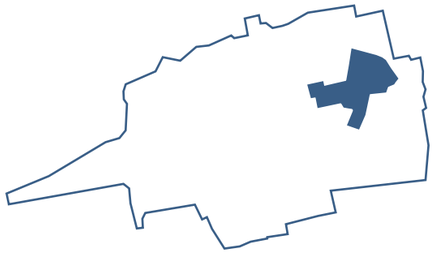
Built Form and Architectural Character

- This area features a blend of old and new, with low-rise buildings featuring deep, projecting canopies alongside the taller Market Square development.
- Small-format shops line Market Pavement, which will benefit from the increased footfall.
- While the College is a notable building in this area, it lacks active frontages. Therefore, vibrancy and overlooking in the public realm should be provided by other means.

Market Square and Market Pavement Key Objectives:



6.5 East Walk



The Character Area links Town Square, Eastgate, and Great Oaks with a series of fine-grain, canopied commercial units. Strong, distinctive New Town architectural elements, which define the area's character, remain more intact here than in other parts of the town. The aim is to repair the urban grain, disrupted by a large commercial unit, and transform East Walk into a vibrant leisure quarter that welcomes residents from the east, while drawing inspiration from the forms and materiality of the original New Town design.

Uses and Hours

- Pedestrian streets lined with shops offer significant potential for a vibrant public realm, particularly where the New Town urban grain remains intact. This area is well-suited for cafés, restaurants, and street-side seating, as seen in the square to the front of Eastgate Business Centre.
- There is also an opportunity to attract commuters and visitors to stay later in town, with accessible food and drink offerings that residents also can easily walk to.



East Square Cinema, Basildon (Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects) continues the rhythm of the original New Town columns and overhead canopy, which are key to East Walk's architectural identity. Man Aspires sculpture



Small commercial units with projecting canopies dating from the original New Town.



Travertine highlights on original New Town buildings along Southernhay



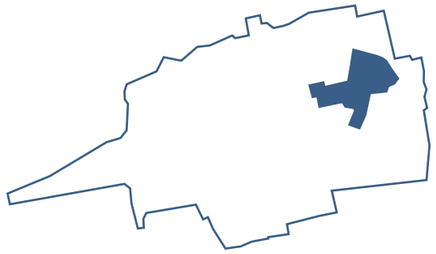
Large commercial unit disrupts the urban great and creates blank, inactive frontage to key movement route, creating unwelcoming, unsafe route.



Route to Long Riding is dark with poor overlooking and safety



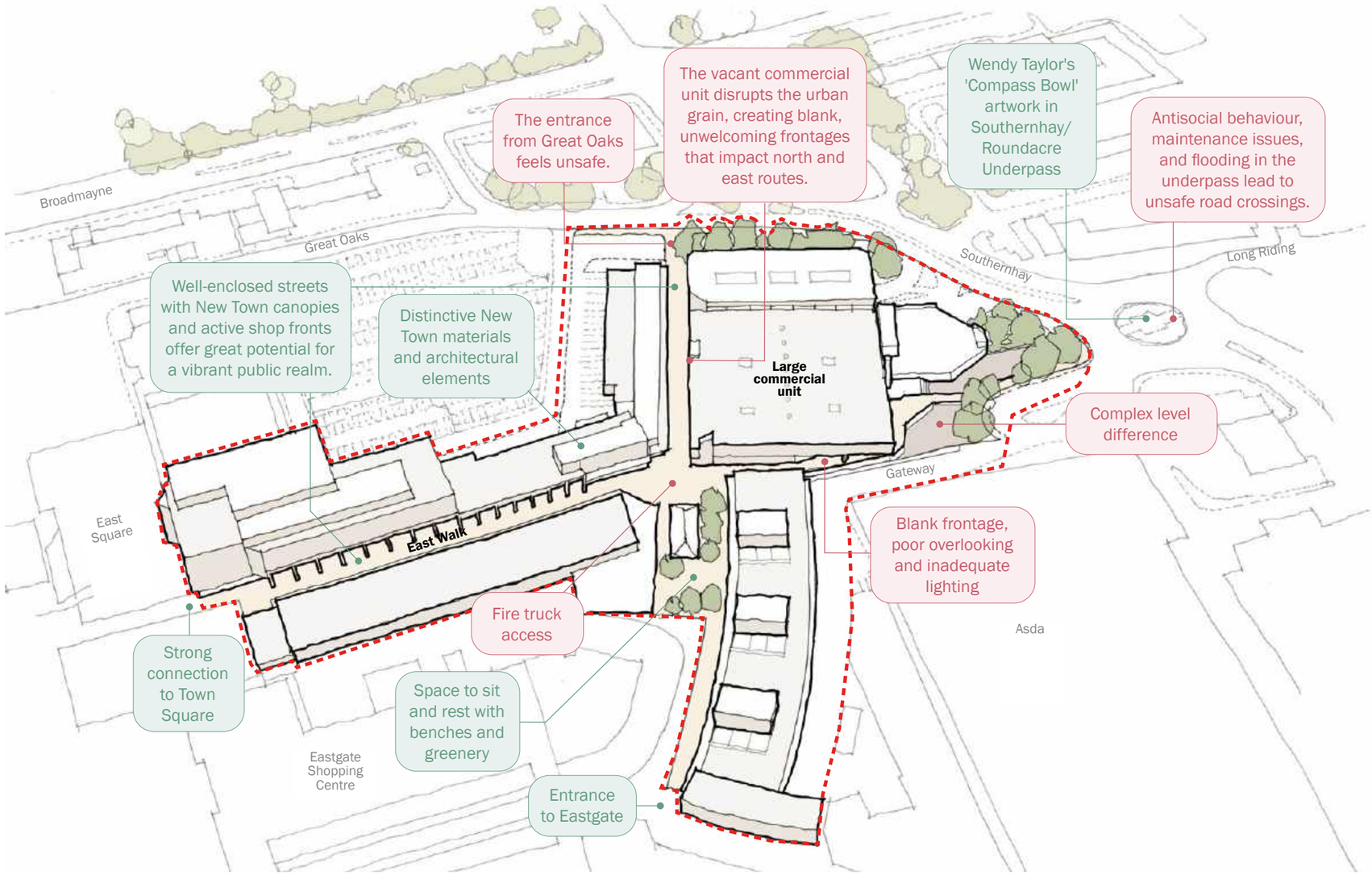
Route to the underpass connecting Town Centre to Long Riding

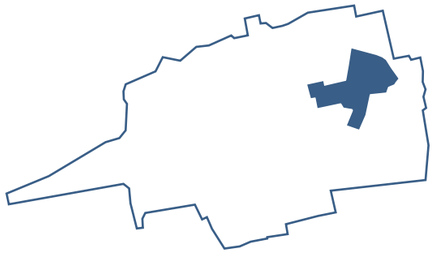


Connectivity and Public Realm

- The former Toys R Us building disrupts the original urban grain, creating blank, unwelcoming frontages and obstructing the connection to Long Riding.
- Currently, links to Long Riding are difficult to navigate, with pedestrians forced to choose between crossing a fast, unsafe road or using a poorly overlooked underpass prone to antisocial behaviour and flooding. Addressing this connection should be a key focus of development, as it will improve access to the Town Centre and boost economic activity.
- Lighting improvements are needed, with coordinated design across the area, particularly along canopies.
- The north-east entrance from Great Oaks feels unwelcoming and unsafe. Introducing active frontages could help transform this area.
- Cycle parking facilities are currently rudimentary and should be upgraded to better serve the community.
- The square in front of Eastgate Business Centre, with its permanent outdoor seating beneath existing trees, provides a strong foundation for further enhancement. Expanding greenery and adding playable landscapes could transform this area into a high-quality public space. Reimagining the pavilion also presents further opportunities to activate and enliven the public realm.
- Creating active, planted streets with spaces to rest, sit, and wait, along with public art and greenery, will further enhance the area's appeal.

East Walk Opportunities and Constraints

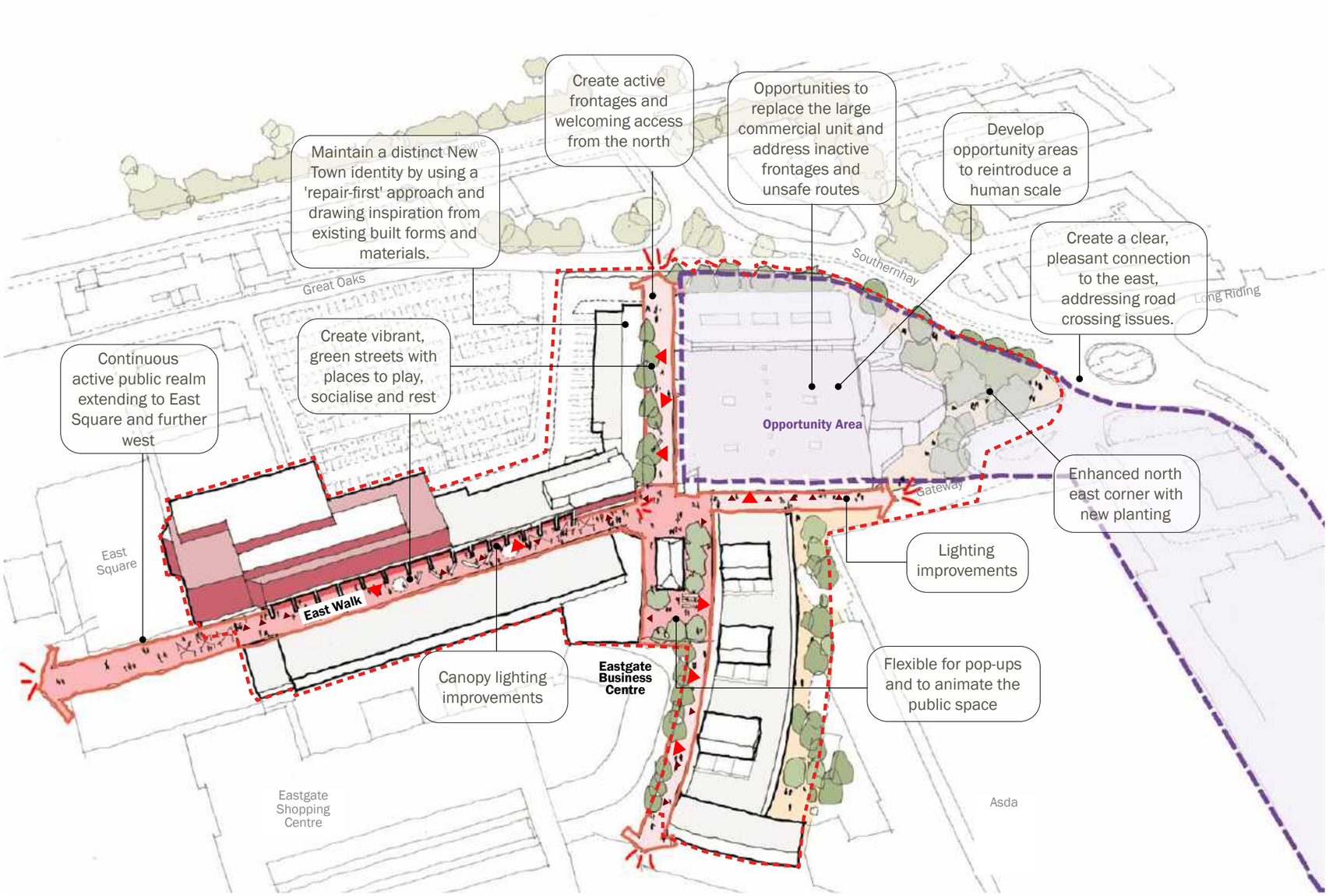




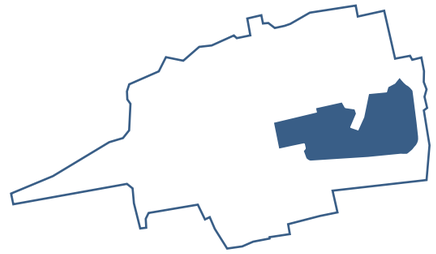
Built Form and Architectural Character

- Small-format shops with canopies are a distinctive feature of Basildon, along with high-quality materials such as travertine stone.
- Regeneration should embrace a "repair-first" approach, exploring opportunities to refurbish existing buildings before considering new builds. This approach helps reduce embodied carbon emissions and preserves historic fabric.
- The success of the small units should be recognised and, where possible, replicated or complemented when developing the eastern edge of the area.

East Walk Key Objectives:



6.6 Eastgate



Built in two phases during the 1980s, the Eastgate International Shopping Centre was once the largest indoor shopping centre in Europe, bringing 2,000 jobs to the area. The centre wraps around the south-east side of the Town Centre, dominating the area while providing significant retail space.

The shopping centre presents urban design challenges in the Town Centre, primarily due to its inward-facing layout, which creates a blank, uninviting edge along the inner ring road. This results in an unattractive boundary for the town, with extensive car parks and service yards. Regeneration will focus on improving permeability, addressing the shopping centre's scale, and creating a more welcoming gateway to the town.

Uses and Hours

- Currently, the area is dominated by retail, operating from 9 am to 5:30 pm, with pedestrian access restricted to business hours. Diversifying the area's uses will help create a more sustainable, mixed-use neighbourhood, incorporating residential, community, and commercial spaces.
- To enhance the area's vibrancy, it is important to provide amenities that attract commuters to stay in town after work.
- There are plans to introduce a healthcare facility to the west, near Market Square.



Eastgate Shopping Centre backs onto Southernhay, creating an impermeable edge of town that lacks active frontage



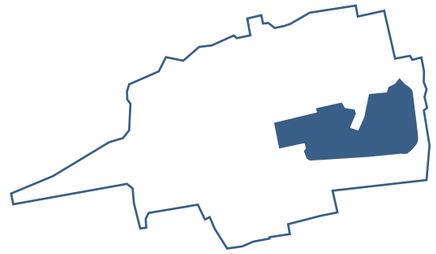
Eastgate Shopping Centre approached from Town Square



Eastgate Shopping Centre interior



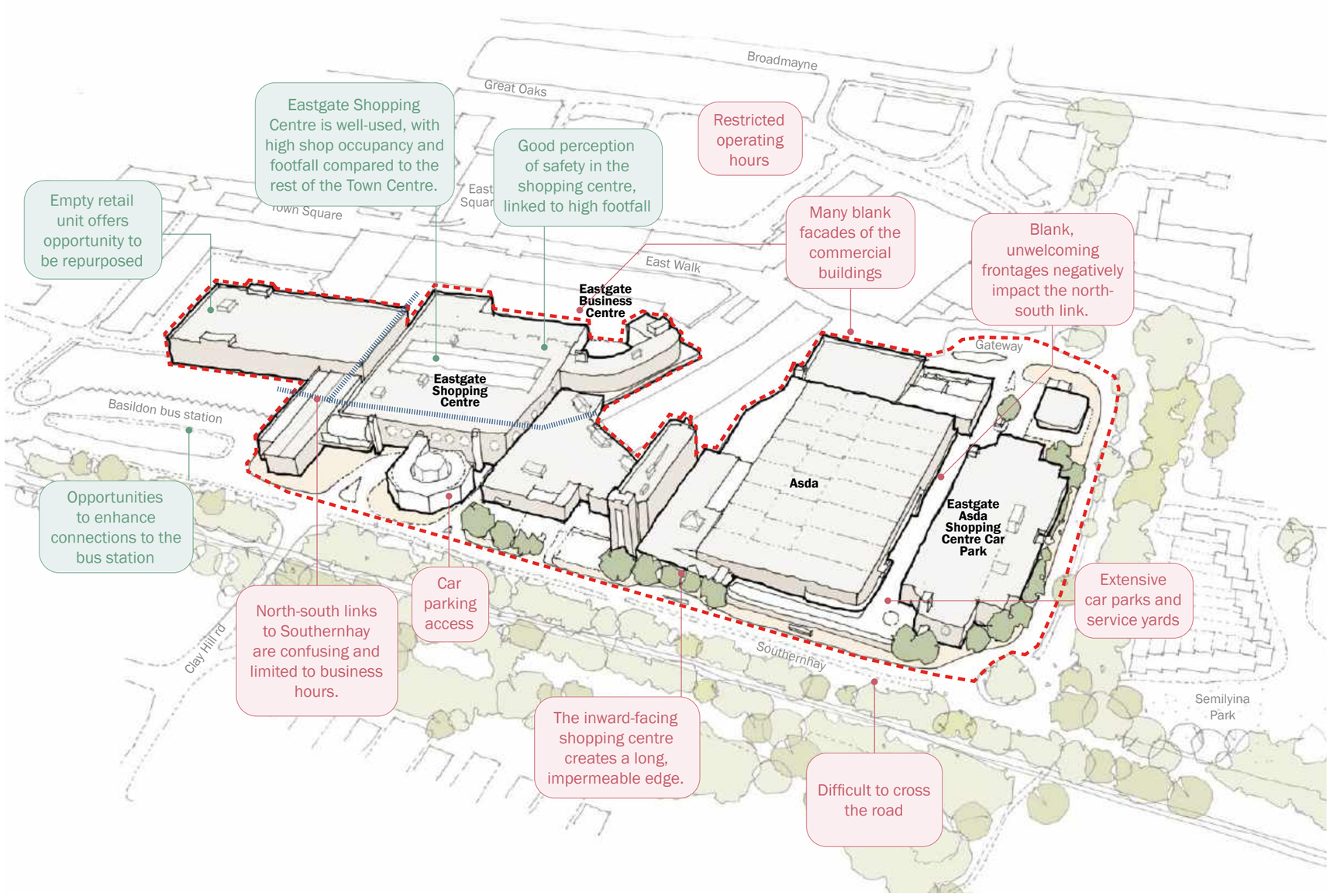
Gateway- an example of Eastgate Shopping Centre back of house servicing.

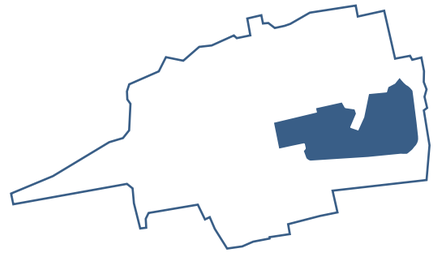


Connectivity and Public Realm

- The existing mall obstructs movement and creates confusing routes in the south-eastern part of the Town Centre. Prioritising the creation of clearer urban blocks will help improve connectivity.
- Access from Southernhay and neighbouring residential areas is limited. Inviting gateways should be introduced for commuters arriving by bus and train, as well as for those coming from nearby communities.
- Currently, access from Southernhay is restricted to shopping centre hours. Strengthening the north-south connection between East Square and the bus station/Southernhay will encourage more active travel and improve overall connectivity.
- There is an opportunity to better connect with existing green spaces to the south-east of the town, transforming them into welcoming spaces for residents and workers. Revising the road system to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists, with safe, level crossings, is essential for improving accessibility.
- The extensive blank façades and lack of ground-floor activation contribute to the inward-facing nature of the Town Centre. Buildings currently turn their backs on Southernhay, which should be addressed to improve the area's openness and accessibility.

Eastgate Opportunities and Constraints:



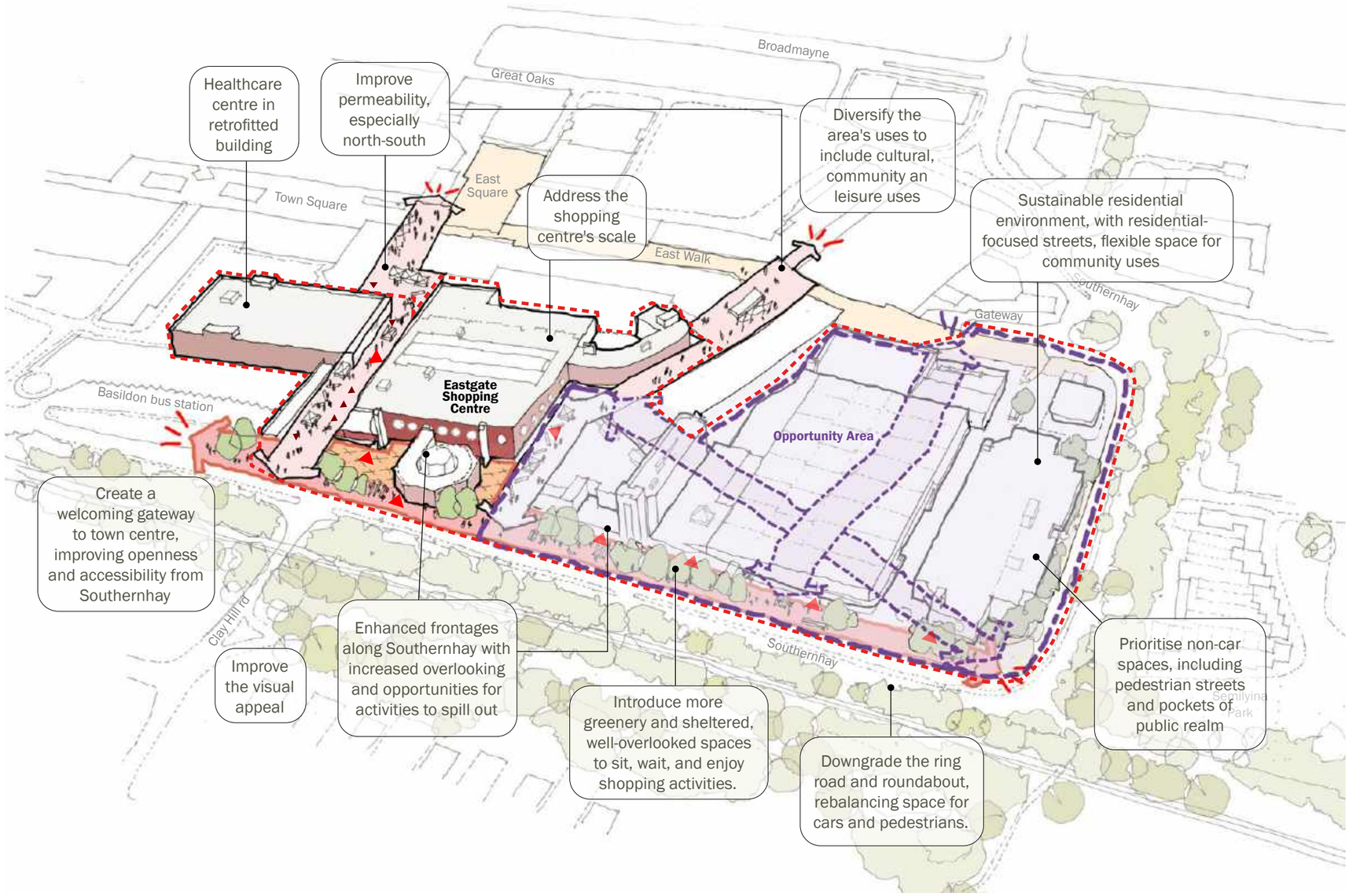


- Car infrastructure currently dominates the southern and eastern edges, creating an unpleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Future development should prioritise non-car spaces, pedestrian-focused streets, pocket parks, and greenways.
- Designing new streets and blocks to incorporate green spaces from the outset will be crucial in enhancing the area's liveability and creating a more welcoming environment for all.

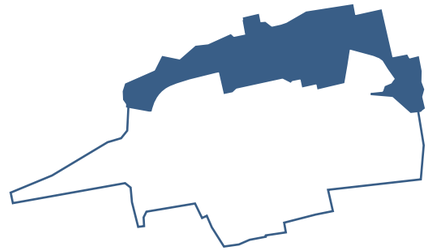
Built Form and Architectural Character

- The Eastgate Centre's large, irregular footprint of linked elements creates a development that feels out of scale with the rest of Town Centre, dominating the south-east side.
- The current architecture is bulky and uninspiring, contributing little to the townscape. New developments should introduce a human scale, creating vibrant and visually appealing spaces that enhance the town and provide enjoyable environments for the community.

Eastgate Key Objectives:



6.7 Great Oaks and Broadmayne



The Great Oaks and Broadmayne Character Area forms the northern edge of the Town Centre along Broadmayne and Great Oaks. Currently, public service buildings and vehicle infrastructure obscure the Town Centre, failing to signal its presence. Regeneration will open views into the town, enhancing legibility and creating an attractive green edge that improves movement between the Town Centre, its surroundings, and Gloucester Park.

Uses and Hours

- Great Oaks houses public and civic services crucial to Basildon Borough as a whole, rather than just the Town Centre. Their location should be reviewed from a broader, borough-wide perspective.
- Car parks dominate the area, with surface-level parking to the east and the Great Oaks multi-storey car park connected to the town via High Pavement. The regeneration of Great Oaks and Broadmayne will be guided by a wider analysis of the town's car parking, identifying areas of oversupply and exploring opportunities for alternative land uses.
- Existing residential and office spaces in the area will be expanded in line with the car park strategy. The Great Oaks and Broadmayne Character Area has strong potential for sustainable residential development, paired with enhanced public realm improvements to improve travel experiences along Broadmayne and into the Town Centre.
- While this area is not designated as a primary retail location, leisure and community uses are appropriate, particularly to the south, near East Square.



Great Oaks Car Park, Great Oaks



Church Walk, Great Oaks



Basildon Police Station, Great Oaks



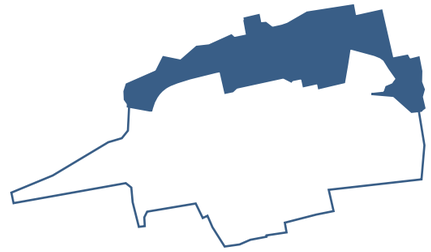
Great Oaks Clinic, Great Oaks



Southernhay leading into Great Oaks



Great Oaks looking towards the Royal Mail and Great Oaks House

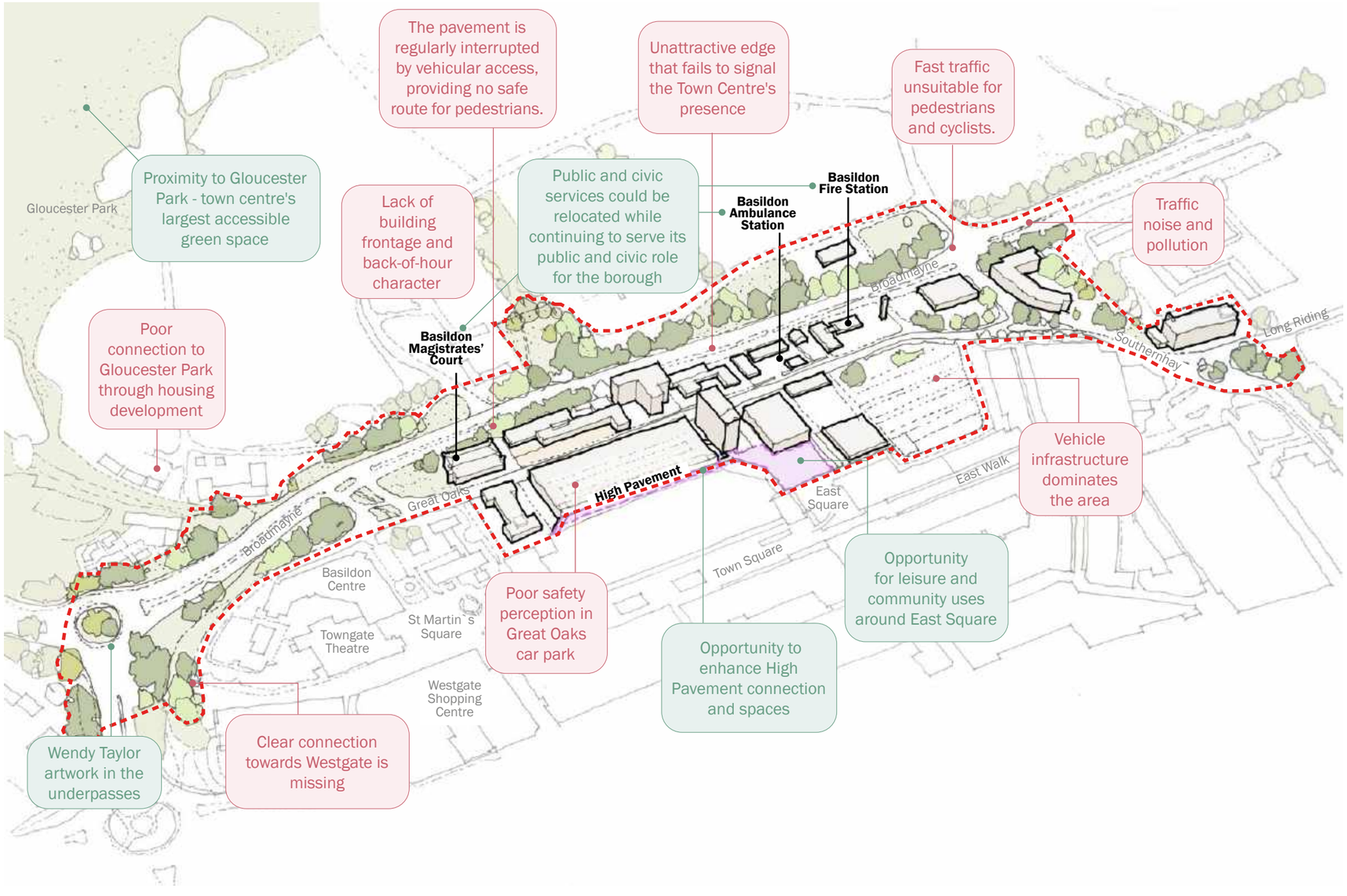


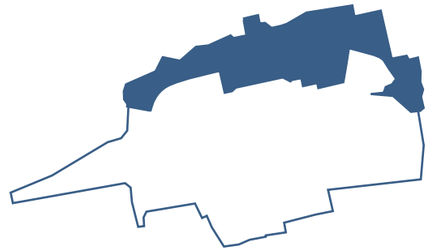
- To the north-west of this Character Area lies Gloucester Park, the Town Centre's largest accessible green space, while Festival Leisure Park is located to the north.

Connectivity and Public Realm

- Broadmayne is not pedestrian- or cycle-friendly, with high vehicle speeds, emergency vehicle presence, and footpaths interrupted by vehicle access on the southern side. The wind tunnel effect further diminishes walkability. Traffic calming measures should be implemented, potentially reducing the road to a single lane, in alignment with the car park strategy.
- To improve the pedestrian experience, key nodes and routes should be enhanced with wayfinding signage, safe crossings, cycle parking, and additional planting, fostering better connections between the Town Centre and surrounding areas.
- The Cycle Exclusion Zone directs cyclists onto Broadmayne, but the route remains unsafe due to high traffic speeds and acceleration after traffic lights. Cycle lanes should be introduced as part of broader active travel improvements, with secure cycle parking provided at the edges of the exclusion zones.
- The area currently feels disconnected from the Town Centre. Improving visibility and legibility will benefit both car users and those arriving via active transport, particularly from neighbourhoods to the north. Prioritising active frontages will help here.

Great Oaks and Broadmayne Opportunities and Constraints



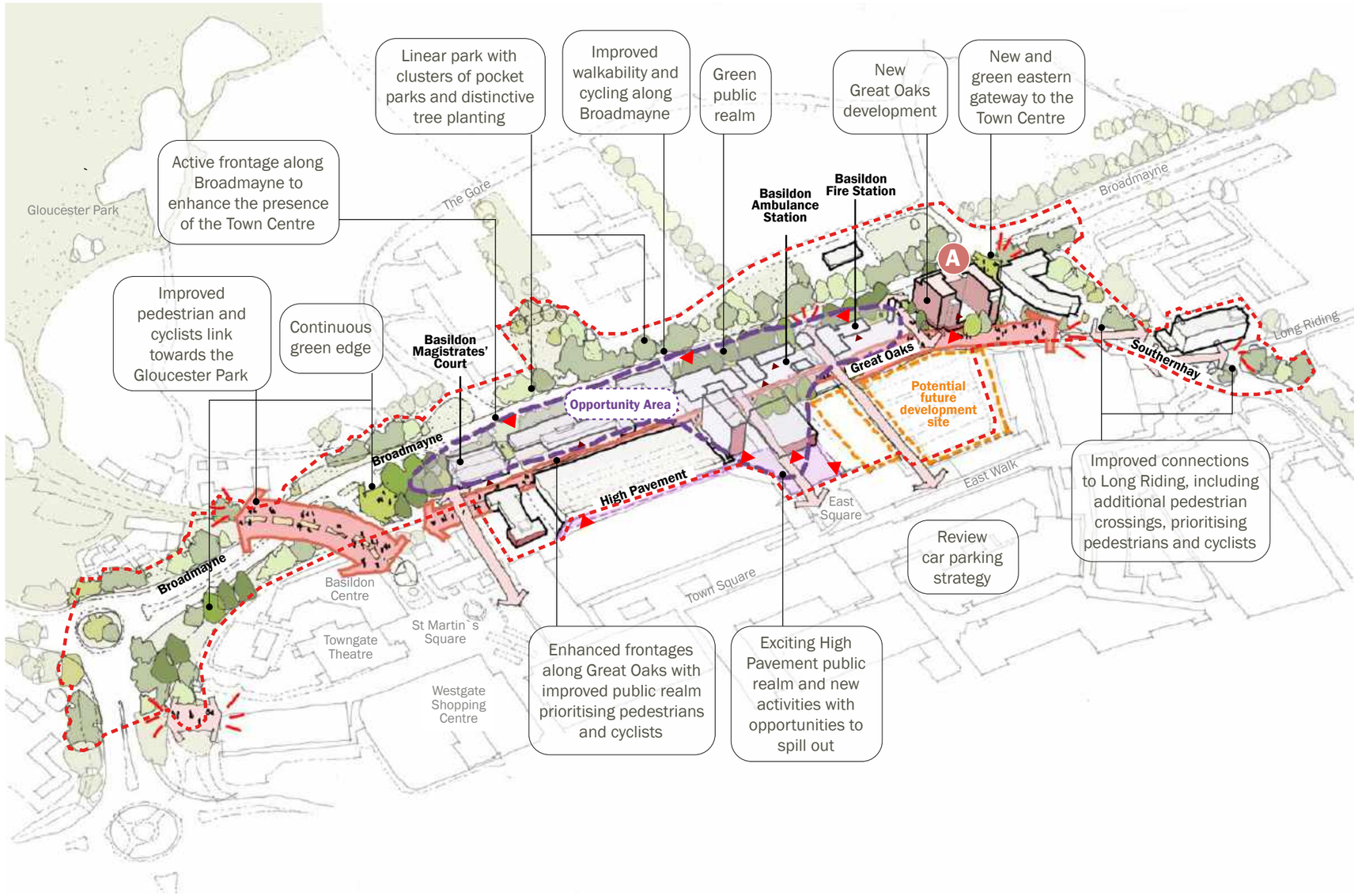


- Recent housing development near the entrance to Gloucester Park has obstructed the route to the Town Centre's largest green space, complicating wayfinding. To address this, enhanced pedestrian routes and planting along Broadmayne, should create a green corridor that provides both a biodiverse connection and a visual link to Gloucester Park.
- The peripheral planting along Broadmayne offers some relief from the harsh road environment but could be further maximised by creating social spaces, improving biodiversity, and incorporating public art. Traffic noise and pollution should be mitigated through roadside biofiltration.

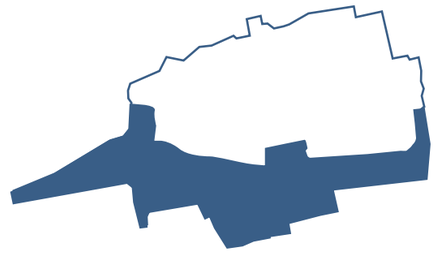
Built Form and Architectural Character

- Large portions of the area feel like the Town Centre's backlands, dominated by parking with a poor relationship to the street. This area should be redefined, creating a welcoming front that prioritises safety through effective overlooking, proper lighting, and well-designed active frontages.
- Current architecture is characterised by long, low structures with a strong horizontal emphasis.

Great Oaks and Broadmayne Key Objectives:



6.8 Southernhay and Stations



The southern periphery of the Town Centre, south of Roundacre, Southernhay, and the Laindon Link, features a wide mix of uses, including the train and bus stations, residential, and commercial spaces. With the public realm dominated by vehicular infrastructure, the aim is to create a memorable first impression for visitors arriving by train or bus, establishing a high-quality gateway to the Town Centre that celebrates Basildon's New Town character and unique identity.

Uses and Hours

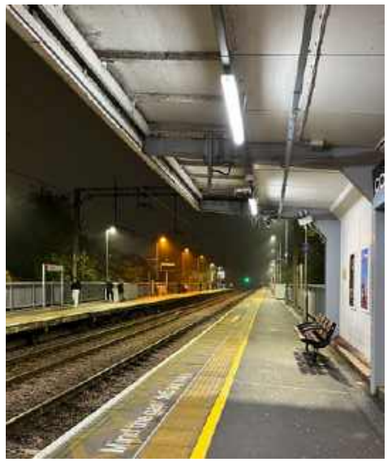
- The area's transport infrastructure includes the train and bus stations, a bus garage, and a filling station on Nethermayne.
- This Character Area features residential uses, including mid-rise apartments south of the station and mid-to-low-rise housing as part of the Car Park 14 redevelopment. The area is well-suited for sustainable, car-lite residential development, with potential for increased density.
- Leisure and retail activities south of Roundacre are designed with car access in mind. Parking-dominant edges should be addressed by consolidating parking with efficient solutions and integrating mixed-use development that capitalises on the area's sustainable location.
- Introducing mixed uses, active frontages, and high-quality lighting would support evening public transport use, contributing to a vibrant evening.



Basildon Train Station entrance



Underpass to the south of Town Centre with shared cycle path signage



Basildon Train Station platform



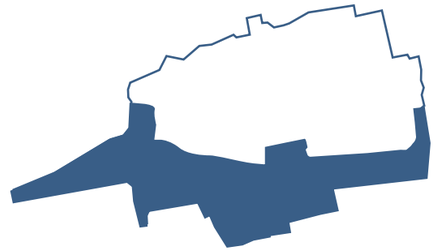
Basildon Bus Station



The Icon, built circa 2008



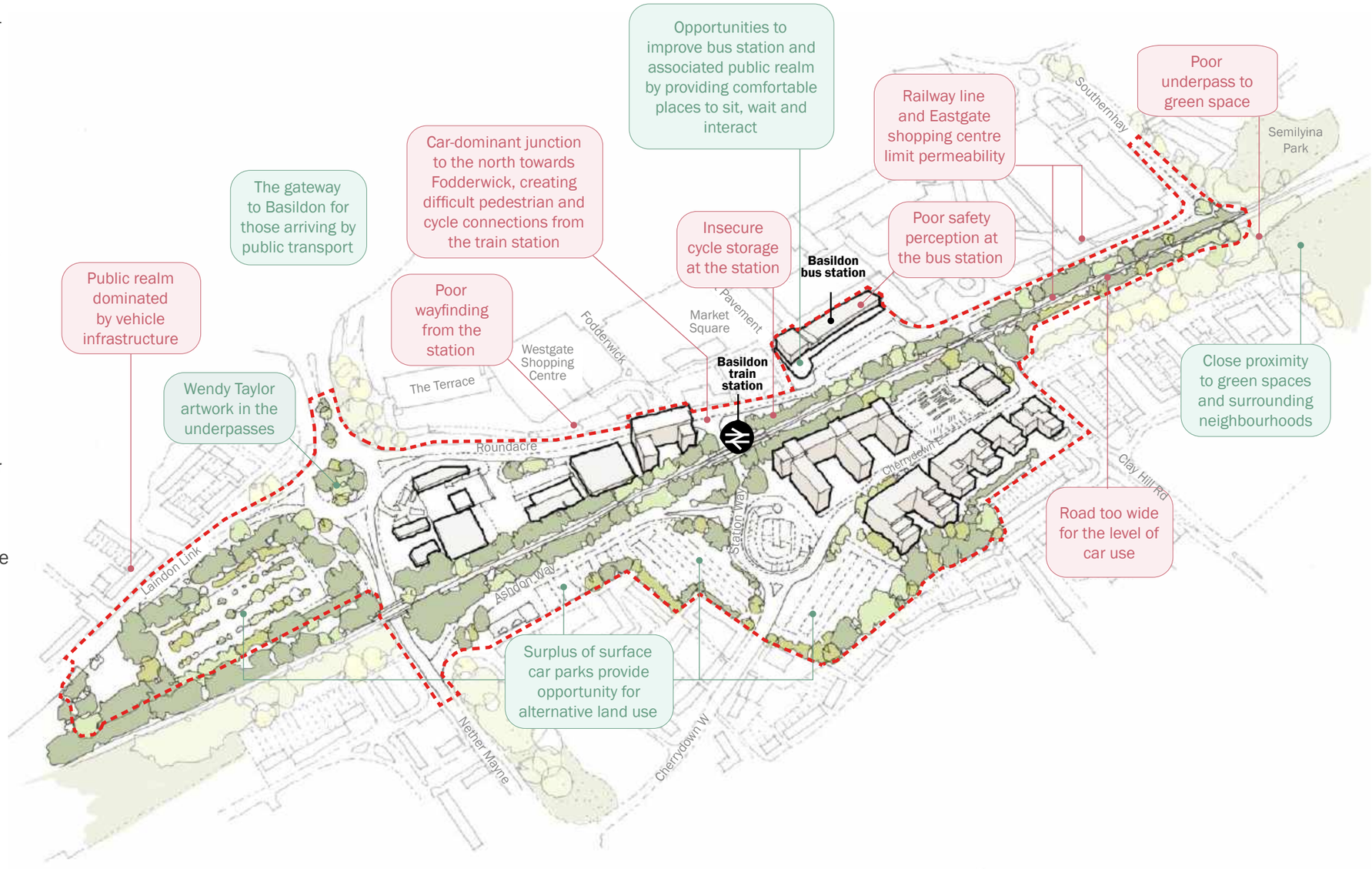
Trafford House, built circa 1974

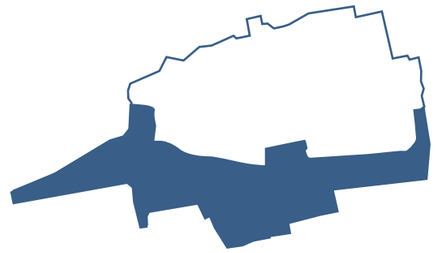


Connectivity and Public Realm

- Southernhay is currently not pedestrian- or cycle-friendly, with high vehicle speeds and a road width that exceeds the needs of traffic volume. The shared-use path is narrow, requiring cyclists to dismount at junctions and preventing a continuous cycle route.
- Southernhay should be reduced to a more suitable size for the traffic it accommodates, prioritising active travel. Narrowing the carriageway would improve cycle route continuity by adding dedicated lanes or widening shared-use paths to avoid disruptions at crossings. Walking and cycling routes should be enhanced with improved wayfinding, safe crossings, cycle parking, artworks, and additional planting.
- The railway line, Broadacre, Southernhay and the built form of the Town Centre itself limit permeability, particularly at the eastern end near Eastgate Shopping Centre, where the route into town is unclear.
- Wayfinding should be improved with clear signage for routes from the train station to the Town Centre, particularly at key entrances.
- Though the train and bus stations are close to each other, wayfinding and visual connectivity need improvement. Relocating the bus station closer to Southernhay would create a more cohesive transport hub.
- Cycle storage at the station is insecure, deterring cyclists. Secure, well-overlooked cycle storage should be provided near the stations to encourage use.

Southernhay and Stations Opportunities and Constraints:



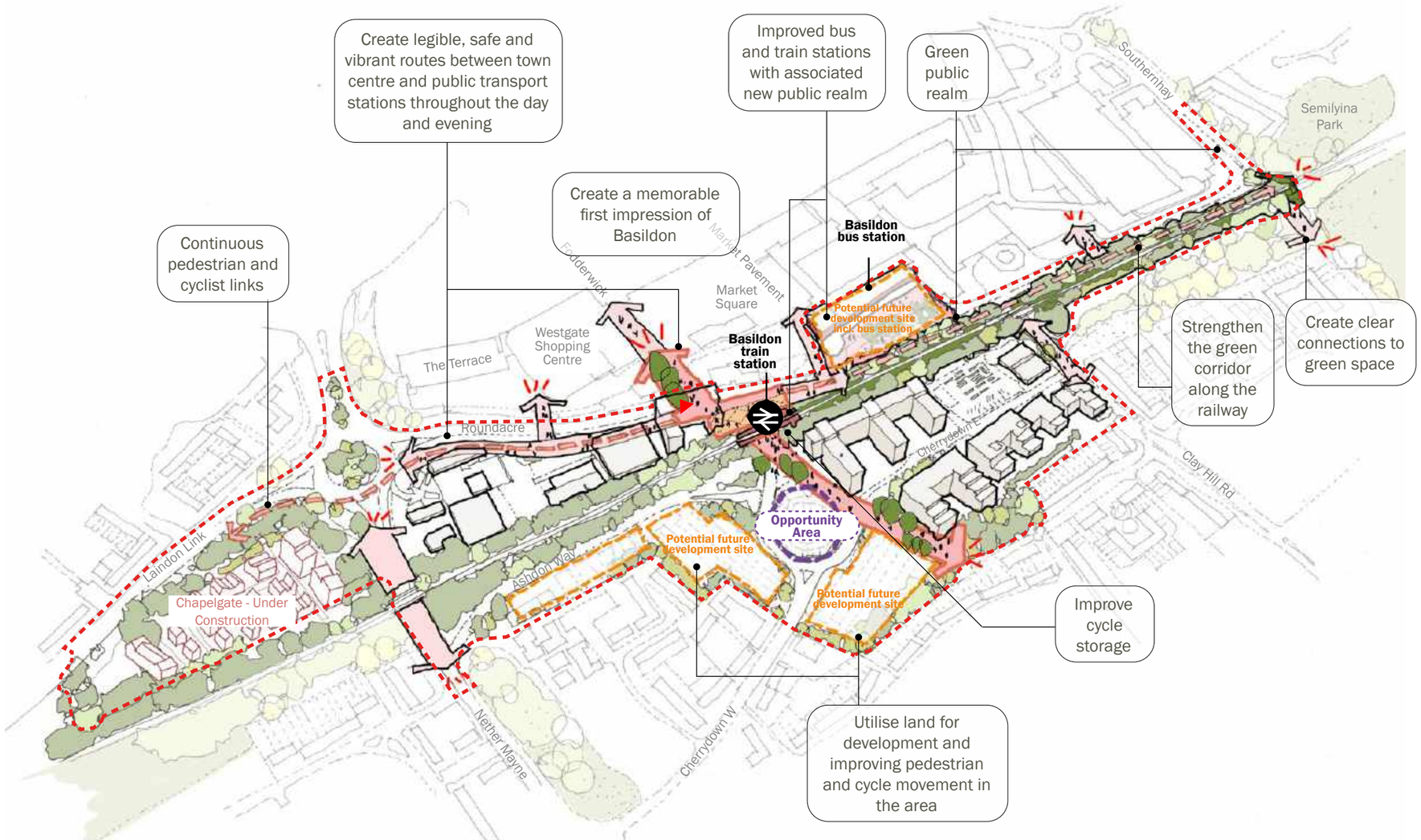


- The current design, which prioritises car use, has led to street-side fencing that obstructs pedestrian flow into commercial areas and signals a preference for car travel.
- The easternmost underpass crossing the railway to the green space southeast of the Town Centre feels unsafe and inaccessible. It should be replaced with a safe, level crossing as part of highway improvements, enhancing the area's liveability and creating a more welcoming environment for all.

Built Form and Architectural Character

- The area's built form varies from single-storey structures to nine-storey buildings, like Trafford House, with a strong horizontal emphasis.
- Generally, buildings are eclectic, with few exhibiting an overarching architectural character.
- Although altered since its construction, the bus station was part of the New Town and despite being a subsequent iteration, the bus station mural sets a precedent for public realm enrichment through public art.
- Large surface car parks south of the railway provide an opportunity for consolidation, unlocking land for alternative uses. Regeneration will be driven by a town-wide parking analysis to assess usage and oversupply.

Southernhay and Stations Key Objectives:



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7.0
Phasing and Delivery

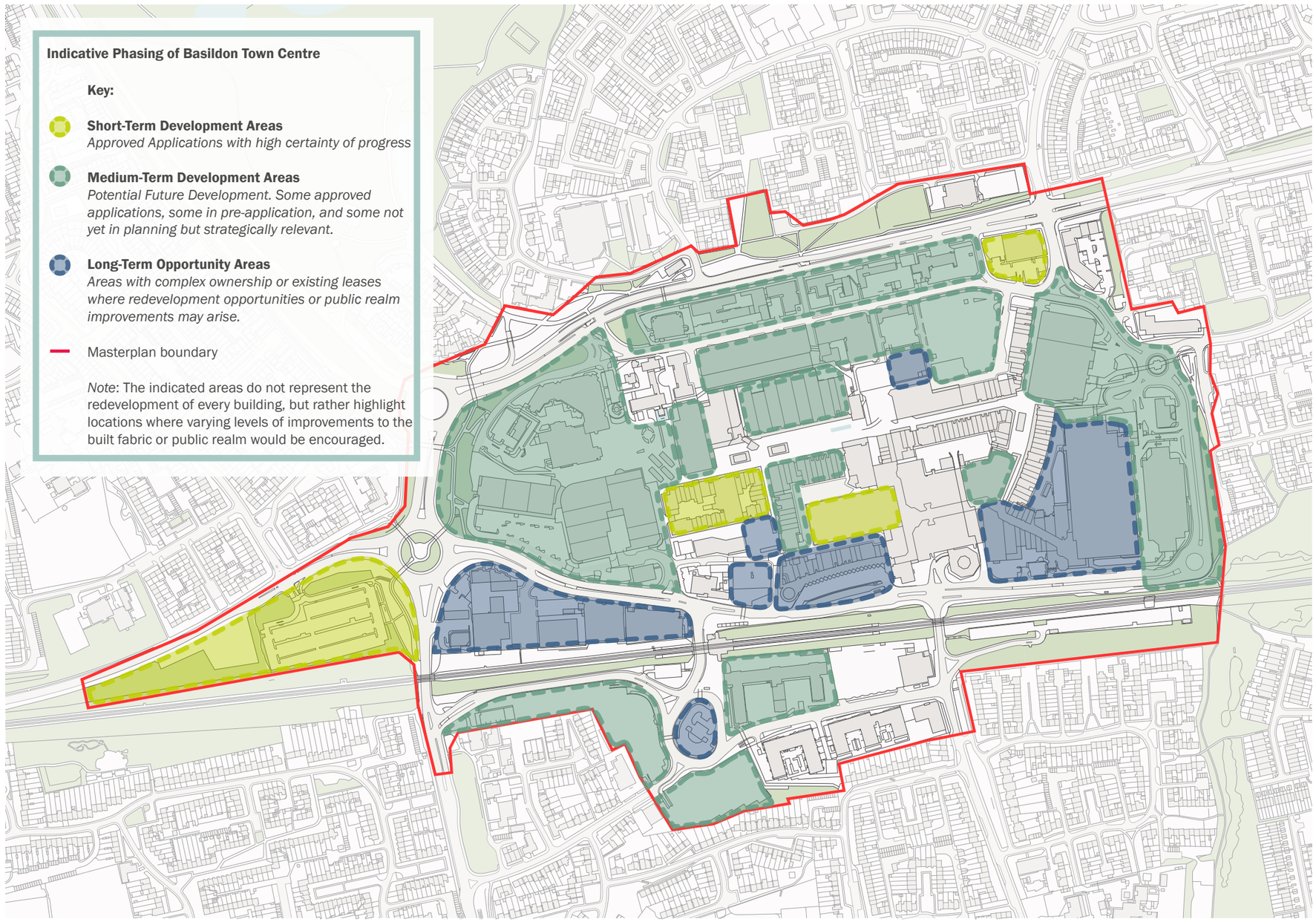
7.1 Phasing

While the Masterplan sets a clear vision for the regeneration of the Town Centre, it should be recognised that its delivery over time will need to be sensitive to socio-economic changes, property market trends and changes in the level of funding available.

Some proposals for the Town Centre are complex will take time to realise, while others can be delivered more quickly. Following permissions granted at Chapelgate, Great Oaks, and Market Square sites, developments are already being realised. Public realm improvements to the Town Centre, including lighting and urban greening, are also underway. Proposals such as the redevelopment of Westgate, which is in its early stages, have medium-term ambitions, while other projects like future plans for Eastgate and the realisation of a transport hub have longer-term ambitions.

Most of the proposals will rely on individual investment decisions by private developers, landowners, investors, retailers and other businesses. In this context, the role of the Masterplan is to create the conditions and policy framework to encourage private interests to develop and invest in the Town Centre while placing a strong emphasis on high quality design that benefits the wider community. The Council and its partners will actively engage with existing and potential stakeholders to promote the implementation of the Masterplan.

The phasing plan sets out the potential phasing to deliver the comprehensive regeneration of the Town Centre. This phasing is indicative only.



7.2 Key stakeholders

Successful delivery of comprehensive town centre regeneration relies on the participation of a number of bodies, focused on achieving the shared vision as set out in this Masterplan. Below are some of the key organisations and stakeholder groups that need to be involved in the delivery of the Masterplan, together with their roles and responsibilities.

Basildon Borough Council

The Council will lead on delivering the Masterplan through a variety of roles including:

Town planning – through its role as Local Planning Authority including adopting the final version of this Masterplan and in terms of development management decisions;

- Direct project delivery, such as Westgate;
- Land assembly to enable development;
- Housing delivery and housing management;
- Delivery of community services including cultural and leisure facilities, parks, community centres and support for community groups, car parking;
- Promoting the Town Centre for investment and economic development;
- Lobbying for public sector funding;
- Environmental services including maintenance and management of the public realm.

Local residents

Basildon Town Centre is an important asset for the people living and operating in it, but it has a much wider role serving broader resident communities. Local community groups have a critical role to play in shaping the direction of the Masterplan through consultation, engaging with the other stakeholder groups, helping to deliver community assets and using and enjoying spaces to make them a success.

Local businesses

Local businesses are integral to the function of Town Centre and much like the local residents, play a key role in shaping its future. Their input in stakeholder events, and community discussions helps influence its development. Beyond retail, local businesses contribute a diverse mix of services, enriching the Town Centre and enhancing its appeal.

Basildon New Future Advisory Board

The Basildon New Future Advisory Board (the "Board") has been established to provide strategic guidance, expert advice, and facilitate discussions with stakeholders about the future of the Town Centre. The Board will collaborate to advise BBC on promoting sustainable economic growth, enhancing the community's quality of life, and creating a vibrant, inclusive Town Centre that meets the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.

The Board offers input on regeneration projects, ensuring they align with the long-term vision for Basildon Town Centre. It also fosters collaboration among public, private, and community stakeholders to coordinate efforts and resources that reflect the aspirations of those who live, work, and visit the area. Regeneration initiatives are guided by adopted Plans, Strategies, and Charters, including the Town Centre Masterplan and Local Plan, sustainability goals, and community needs. The Board also identifies funding and investment opportunities to support regeneration activities.

Basildon Town Centre Management (BTCM):

BTCM is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee, and a key landowner in the Town Centre. Freeholders and leaseholders of property within a designated area of the Town Centre are eligible for membership of the Company. BTCM has a public responsibility to maintain the area for the benefit of the people of Basildon, as detailed in *Chapter 7.3*.

Essex County Council:

County Council roles in relation to the Town Centre include library, education and highways services as well as working with other public sector partners to deliver health, economic development and regeneration goals.

The Highway Authority:

The Highway Authority is responsible for delivering the necessary highways services to ensure that the roads in the Town Centre and surrounding areas are well managed. Highway improvements are a key component of the Masterplan, particularly regarding the downgrading of the ring road, enhancing public transport, and supporting active travel.

Homes England:

Homes England is the Government’s housing delivery agency and has potential roles in the regeneration of the Town Centre in terms of enabling the delivery of new housing through, for example, its interests in land within the Town Centre and as a funder to facilitate housing delivery.

South Essex College :

South Essex College is a further education college and one of its three main campus is located in Basildon Town Centre, having moved premises to a central location through a collaborative project delivered with the Council and Homes England. The College offers courses focusing on digital technology and the IT sector, providing skills that employers demand.

Health:

The Integrated Care Partnership and Alliance is responsible for planning and buying/commissioning local health care services and will be working with the Council and other health organisations to determine the optimal approach to provision in the Town Centre in the future.

Emergency services :

The East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, and Essex Police are responsible for providing emergency services to the Town Centre.

Transport:

Key transport bodies with a role in the delivery of the Masterplan include Network Rail (responsible for the operation, maintenance, renewal and enhancement planning of railway infrastructure) and C2C (the train operator for the line serving Basildon Town Centre). Essex County Council and commercial bus operators have roles in funding and delivering bus services that serve the Town Centre. Basildon Council and taxi operators have roles in relation to taxi service delivery. The Council's work with the National Infrastructure Commission will assist in the delivery of transport and infrastructure.

Utilities:

National Grid, UK Power Networks, Essex and Suffolk Water, and Anglian Water are key bodies who will be engaged in the planning and delivery of other types of infrastructure necessary to serve the Town Centre in the future.

Landowners:

Landowners in the Town Centre can be involved in the delivery of the Masterplan, particularly through bringing forward sites for development.

Developers, investors and occupiers:

These parties have significant roles to play in the delivery of the Masterplan through funding, delivering and occupying new development. The Council is actively promoting the Town Centre to these parties and is keen to collaborate.

7.3 Delivery and Management

Delivery

Whilst the Council leads the regeneration of the Town Centre, it is recognised that there are opportunities to use the resources and skills of the private sector to deliver change. The Council is exploring potential delivery mechanisms to achieve this, which could include development agreements and joint venture partnerships. These mechanisms will enable funding and skills from the private sector to be combined with the powers and leverage of the public sector to deliver on the Masterplan objectives.

Funding for regeneration objectives that include infrastructure improvements, public realm enhancements and community facilities will be sought through sources including:

- Developer contributions as part of the requirements in line with planning policy (for example through Section 106 contributions);
- The Council working with partners such as BTCM to ensure that budgets – for example in terms of maintenance of the public realm – are aligned with the aims of the Masterplan;
- Securing public sector funding to achieve objectives in terms of improvements to transport and cultural facilities.

Management of Basildon Town Centre

Effective management is critical to the successful delivery of regeneration projects in Basildon Town Centre, ensuring that the issues identified in this Masterplan are addressed and its ambitions realised. This includes maintaining the physical environment, as well as engaging with stakeholders to drive regeneration towards a shared vision.

Various bodies are responsible for the management of Basildon Town Centre:

- **Basildon Council:** Responsible for town planning, licensing, waste management, street cleaning, public realm maintenance, economic development, on-street parking, and aspects of Town Centre promotion and marketing. The Council is also a key landowner within the Town Centre.
- **Basildon Town Centre Management:** A key partner in managing Basildon Town Centre, originally set up by the Basildon Development Corporation to promote and manage the area. BTCM reinvests income from commercial activities back into the Town Centre for its improvement. BTCM currently owns, operates, and manages a significant portion of public areas within Basildon Town Centre, including most public car parks and Basildon Market.
- **Essex Police**: the Community Policing Team (CPT) is the dedicated Essex Police team for Basildon Town Centre.

Management Structure and Strategy

An effective management structure is crucial for leveraging opportunities vital to the success of physical regeneration, including:

- Engaging all stakeholders in Basildon Town Centre behind a common strategy
- Promoting the Town Centre
- Funding and managing maintenance and uplift of the Town Centre public realm
- Overseeing services such as car parking and the public market

BTCM's constitution and articles of association offer a framework for sustainable and effective Town Centre management. There is potential to review ownership and membership structures to enhance collaboration with Basildon Council and the Board.

In the future, additional groups, such as the emerging public art focus group, may contribute to specific aspects of Town Centre management, including organising public art installations.

Monitoring of the Masterplan’s progress will be reported through the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

8.0 Evidence Bases

Withdrawn Local Plan Evidence Base:

Post Submission Examination Documents:

- Basildon Town Centre - Market Report August 2021

Emerging Local Plan Evidence Base:

- South Essex Housing Needs Assessment
- Basildon Retail and Leisure Needs Study 2024 - Volumes 1 - 4
- Basildon Council - Local Centres Review - 2015
- PSD040 Basildon Borough Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Plus (LCWIP+) - June 2021
- PSD038 Basildon Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan - January 2022
- Initial Settlement Hierarchy Review 2024