

# BEDFORD CENTRAL TOWN

## MASTERPLAN REPORT

**BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

June 2018

## FOREWORD



*In 2017 Bedford Council secured funding from the Government's One Public Estate initiative to pay for a study into the southern and western parts of Bedford town centre. The aim of the One Public Estate initiative is to explore how public assets can be used more efficiently, for the benefit of local people, releasing land and delivering new homes.*

*Bedford benefits from a great strategic location both in terms of its links to London, but also as part of the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor. Unlocking the potential of the dozens of sites in and around the town centre and the station as well as transforming our streets and spaces capitalises on this opportunity. It will help to support the vitality of our town centre, support high quality jobs and improve the quality of life for existing residents.*

*This document is the result of that work and has been prepared by a professional team working with the Council. It has also been informed by public and stakeholder consultation. The team has looked at both the public assets and the wider context, producing a masterplan which brings together many different development opportunities, infrastructure projects and public realm ideas.*

*Some of these projects are within the control of the public sector and give us clear ideas which we can progress. Our team has already been working with the other public sector organisations to involve them in developing the ideas and formulating delivery options.*

*Some of the development opportunities are for sites owned by private land owners - the report highlights the potential open to them and the ways in which development could take place. For these sites the Council will have a role in facilitating the development and managing the design through the planning process, but will not lead on delivering development.*

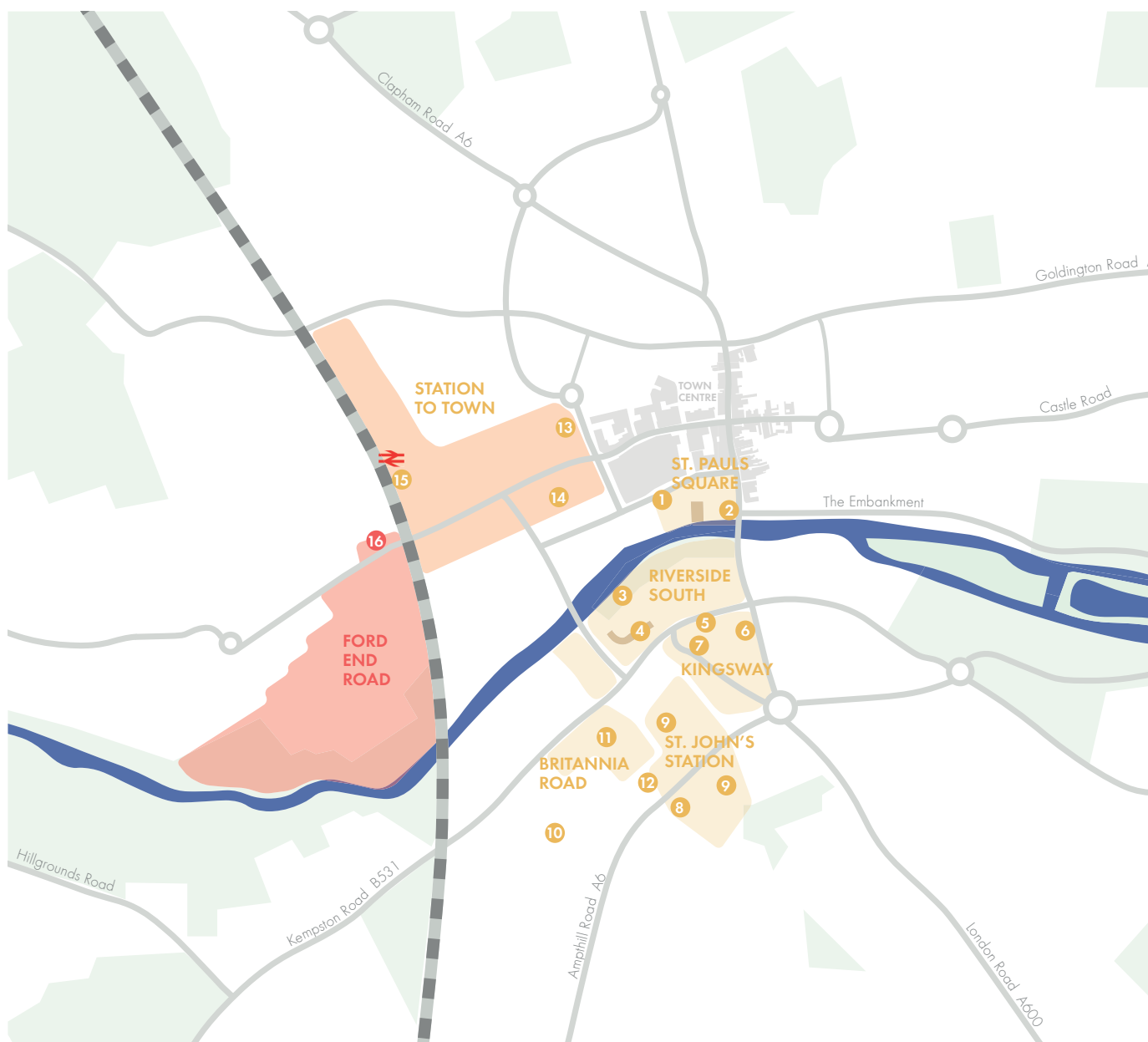
*A further range of projects relate to infrastructure and public realm improvements. In some cases these can be delivered as part of public sector or commercial developments. For some of the bigger changes this masterplan will be instrumental in helping us to bid for the funding needed to deliver them.*

*All of this work is framed within a series of ten key themes giving us a flexible and resilient approach which sets a positive vision for the future of Bedford.*

**Dave Hodgson**  
**The Mayor of Bedford Borough**

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#### KEY SITES

- 1 Pilgrims House
- 2 Shire Hall and Bank site
- 3 Borough Hall Phase 1
- 4 Borough Hall Phase 2
- 5 26 Cauldwell Street
- 6 Clarence Hotel site, St. John's
- 7 Cauldwell Street car park
- 8 Raleigh Training Centre
- 9 Melbourne Street
- 10 Endsleigh House
- 11 Britannia Road NHS car park
- 12 Britannia Road NHS works dept.
- 13 Greyfriars Police Station
- 14 Midland Road Area
- 15 Station area and west of Ashburnham Rd
- 16 Ford End Road

#### PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 1 BPHA, BBC (Bedford Borough Council)
- 2 Ministry of Justice, BBC, Housing associations
- 3 BBC, Police Service
- 4 BBC, Bedford Hospital, Network Rail, LEP
- 5 BBC, SEMLEP Velocity Growth Hub
- 6 BBC, One Housing Group
- 7 BBC, inward investor, LEP, Network Rail, Bedford Hospital, NHS Trust
- 8 BBC, Police and Bedford Hospital NHS Trust
- 9 BBC, Network Rail
- 10 Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, BBC local housing association
- 11 Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, BBC, Network Rail
- 12 Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, BBC, Network Rail
- 13 Police Service, BBC
- 14 BBC, ELFT
- 15 BBC, Network Rail
- 16 Charles Well, National Grid, Rolls Royce, Network Rail, NHS

- South
- Station
- Ford End

**Fig 1** One Public Estate Bedford site list



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- 1.1.1 Bedford Borough Council has appointed GL Hearn Ltd, together with its consultancy team Allies & Morrison, Alan Baxter, Capita and Johnson Associates to prepare a masterplan for sites in and around Bedford town centre.
- 1.1.2 Bedford town centre area is experiencing a number of changes, with new real estate investment at Riverside Bedford, and a number of residential schemes within and on the edge of the town centre, including both new build and conversions. There are some key challenges as well, in terms of creating more employment opportunities, alleviating congestion at key junctions, and tackling social issues, particularly at night.
- 1.1.3 The masterplanning exercise for the central part of Bedford town is a key project within the One Public Estate Transforming Bedfordshire Partnership programme that is seeking to utilise public sector assets to deliver cost savings to central and local Government, as well as facilitating regeneration through new residential and mixed-use developments. The document is one of two masterplans being produced by Bedford Borough Council, with the other focusing on the brownfield land at Ford End Road.
- 1.1.4 The One Public Estate Partnership Board is chaired by the Mayor of Bedford Borough, and includes the Chief Executives from Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council and representatives of Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Network Rail, SEMLEP, NHS Property, Bedfordshire Police, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, Bedford College, and Homes England.
- 1.1.5 The plan on the adjacent page highlights the Council's initial One Public Estate sites and areas for consideration, although some sites on the list are under construction or completed (e.g. sites 1, 6 and 10).
- 1.1.6 The masterplanning process has also assessed the capacity and land use mix of development sites to inform the emerging Bedford Local Plan, which has identified some areas of the town centre, such as Kingsway with potential to deliver homes. There are a number of sites that are linked and have interdependencies requiring a co-ordinated approach to their release, especially those within the ownership of One Public Estate partners. It is recognised that these sites can be difficult to unlock, and as a consequence may take time to come forward, possibly beyond the timeframe of the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.1.7 This masterplan has been designed to be able to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to the new Local Plan once it is adopted. This document contains design guidance detailing how development should come forward on the site. A separate baseline report provides supporting background material.
- 1.1.8 The views of the general public were sought in October 2017 through a public consultation exercise and a number of observations, issues and ideas have been factored into the masterplan.





**Fig2** Aerial photograph of Bedford Town Centre



## The growth of the town centre

1.1.9 Archaeological evidence indicates that Bedford may have been inhabited in prehistoric times and that it was likely a Roman route. However, the first records of Bedford as a settlement are from Saxon times. The name of the town is potentially derived from the Saxon chief called Beda, at the ford of the River Great Ouse. These roads form the basis of today's street pattern and both St Peter's and St Mary's churches have towers which date from the late Saxon period.

1.1.10 Bedford grew during the 18th century due to its technical advancements in engineering and architecture. The 19th century saw modest growth initially, with rapid changes when the railway connected Bedford to London in 1873 which saw extensive housing growth outside of the older core. In the 1960/70s rapid development was incongruous with historic elements, including new office blocks, a bus station, car parks, shopping areas and blocks of flats.

1.1.11 The masterplan focuses on sites on the edge of the historic core and to the south of the town centre, with a cluster of specific sites/areas, namely (see figure 1):

- **Bedford Station and Midland Road**

The main rail station in Bedford is located to the west of the town centre at Ashburnham Road. The main site includes the station building and surface car parking to the north and the south. The masterplan also considers the environment along Midland Road, Network Rail operational land and the Royal Mail land to the south of the Ford End Road Bridge.

- **Greyfriars Block**

Land to the western side of Greyfriars opposite the bus station including the police station and retail parade.

- **Shire Hall and the former Bank Site**

The buildings are located in St Paul's Square and Shire Hall is Grade II listed which accommodates the County Court and Family Court. The former Bank site is an area of tarmac land, used for motorcycle/cycle parking and parking for the street market.

- **Borough Hall and Prebend Street Car Park**

Borough Hall is Bedford Borough Council principal offices. The building was constructed between 1965-1969 and extends to 14,780 sq.m. The Archives building, surrounding hard and soft landscaping, surface car parking and Prebend Street Car Park is included in the site area.

- **Kingsway Triangle**

This area is to the south of the River Great Ouse that is bounded by three roads forming a triangular shape – Cauldwell Street, St John's Street and Kingsway. Within this area, there are a number of different land uses, including residential, retail, education, offices, restaurants, car park, and a car wash.

- **Melbourne Street**

The site comprises a mixture of existing industrial, leisure and office premises together with undeveloped land and a long stay car park. The site is bounded to the west by the railway line with the Bedford St Johns station stop.

- **Britannia Road**

A large site characterised by several hospital buildings, car parking predominantly for staff working at Bedford Hospital, the Danfoss assembly facility (heating components), the Rayleigh Centre and Cauldwell Community Centre. The site is situated either side of Ampthill Road, and is bounded on the eastern and southern side by the railway line.





# VISION AND KEY THEMES



## 2 VISION AND KEY THEMES

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 Ten themes have been agreed that will help focus investment in the town centre and build consensus about how new development should come forward.

**1. Bedford's Potential**

**2. Accessible and Attractive**

**3. Celebrate the River**

**4. Affirming the Heritage**

**5. An Appropriate Scale**

**6. Civic Spaces**

**7. Homes for All**

**8. A Place for Business**

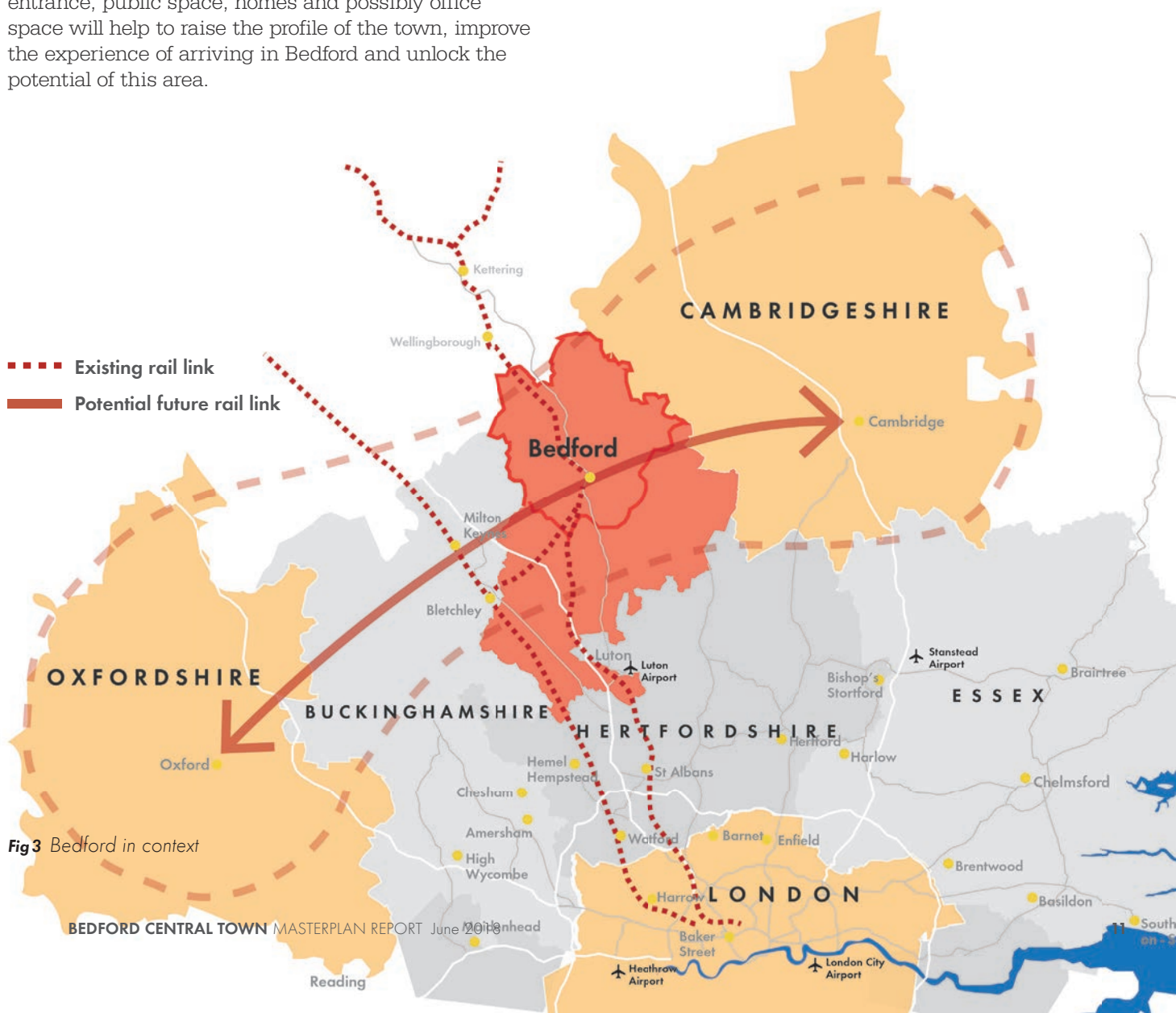
**9. Community infrastructure**

**10. An Adaptable Framework**

## 1. Bedford's Potential

This is a time of significant change and opportunity for Bedford town centre. National policy recognises the growth and potential of the wider Oxford/Cambridge corridor and the town is well placed to take advantage of this positioning by creating new jobs and homes to attract people to this fast growing area.

The town is also very well connected to London and local airports, with fast train and road connections. A transformational scheme at the station with a new entrance, public space, homes and possibly office space will help to raise the profile of the town, improve the experience of arriving in Bedford and unlock the potential of this area.



## 2. Accessible and Attractive

Improving the environment for walkers in the town centre is a key priority to make Bedford accessible for everyone. Regardless of how people travel to the town centre, we all use our pavements and public spaces at some point in our trip. Having public realm investment priorities will help attract funds to improve connections into town on key routes such as Ford End Road/Prebend Street. The road network could be simplified and junctions improved to ease congestion. Cycle connections should also be improved, to help encourage more people to travel into Bedford by bike to help ease congestion.



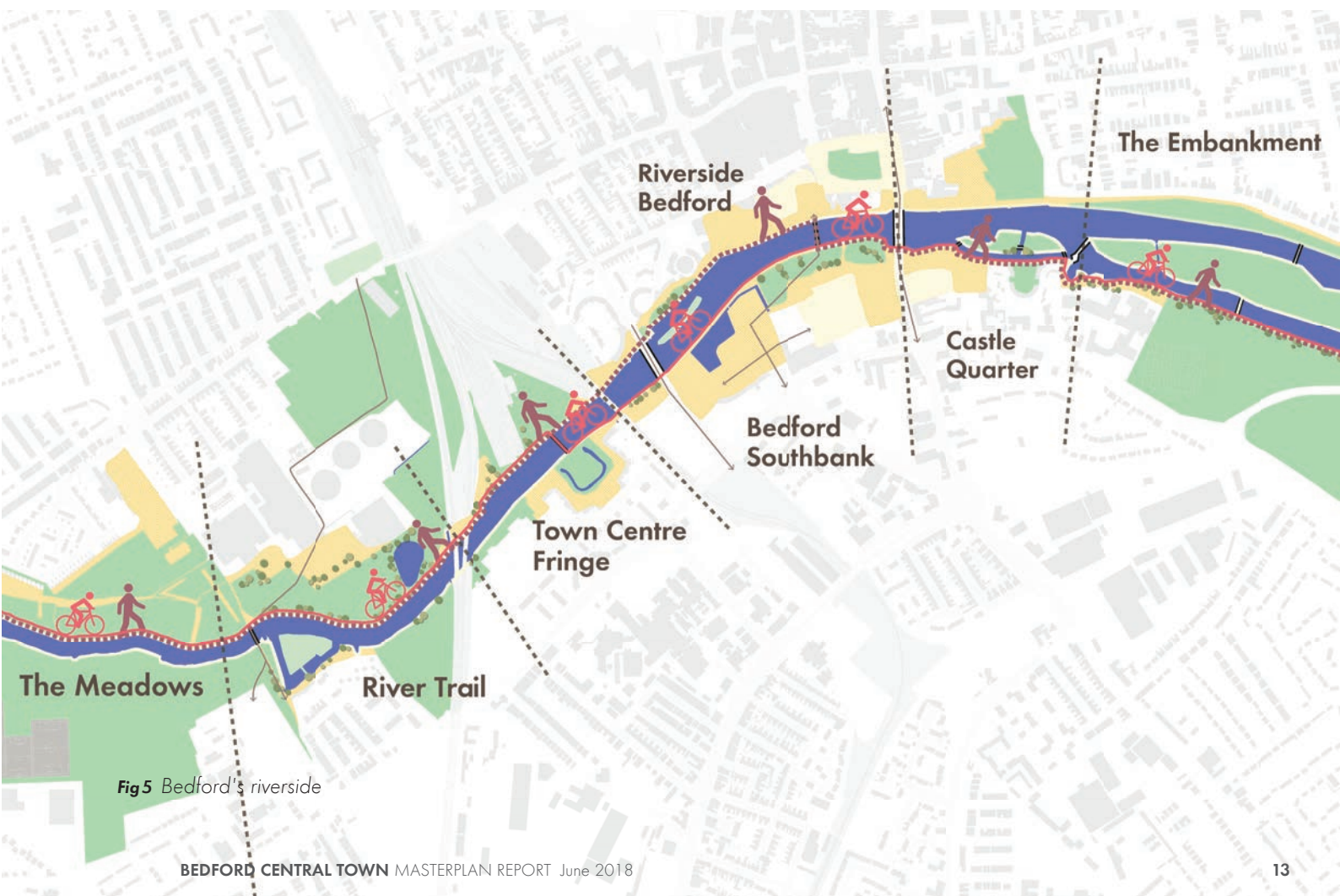
**Fig 4** Walking and cycling routes and spaces in the town centre



### 3. Celebrate the River

The River Great Ouse is the defining landscape feature in Bedford, with amenity spaces surrounding it. New and existing spaces will create a continuous route along the river, passing through a series of distinct character areas. Some of these will feel natural and connect to the wider countryside, while others will be more town centre focused, with new spaces for leisure uses.

The masterplan will help to create spaces for events, festivals and activities to promote greater use of the riverside in the town centre.



## 4. Affirming the Heritage

The historic street patterns and heritage buildings in Bedford town centre reflect its rich history. This historic character should be protected and enhanced, with assets such as the Victorian terraced streets revitalised, and new uses found for former railway buildings and other characterful buildings in the town centre such as Shire Hall. The Council will support the Ministry of Justice's search for a viable use for this buildings when vacated. Sustainable future uses need to be identified that will breathe new life into these assets.

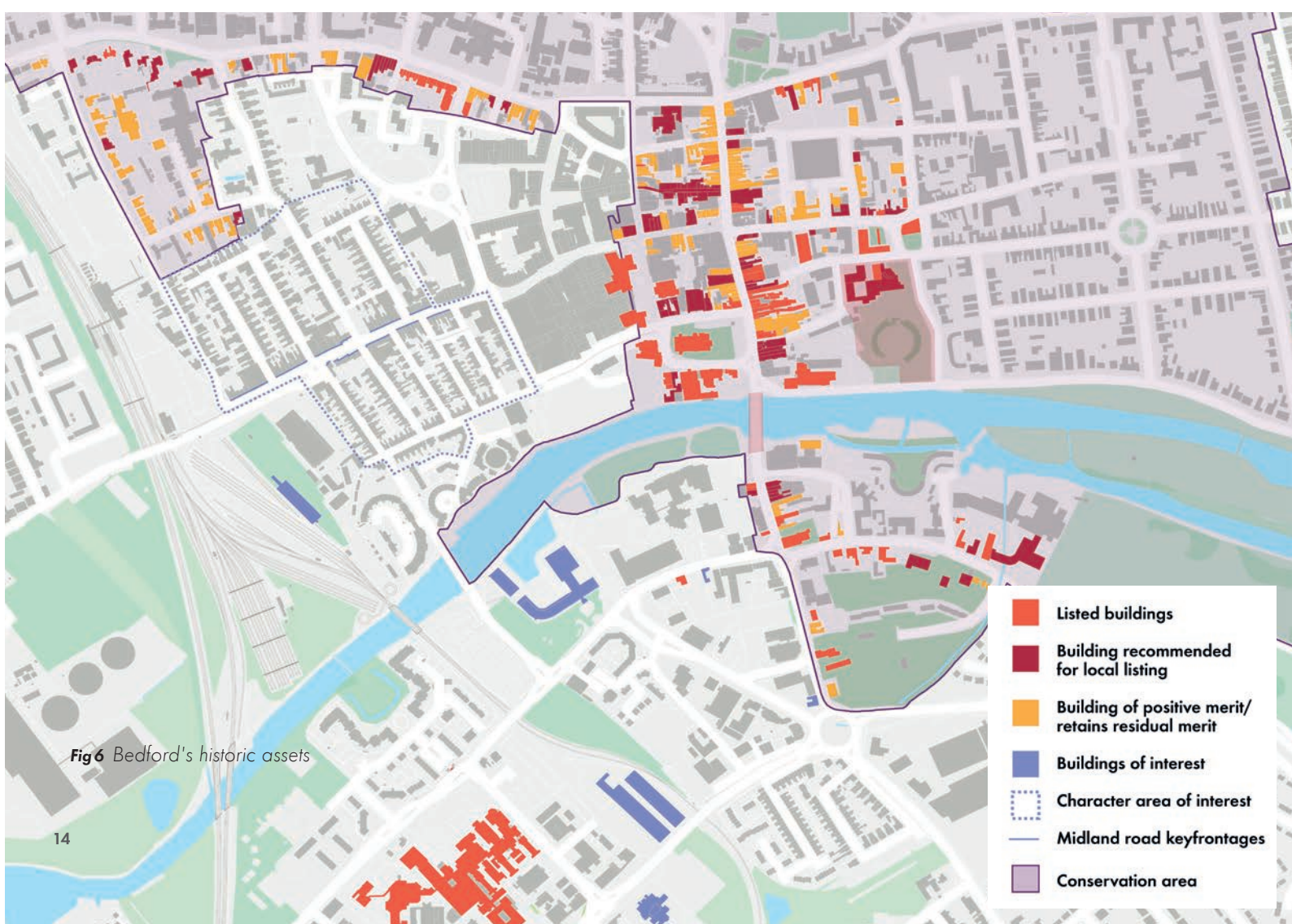


Fig 6 Bedford's historic assets



## 5. An Appropriate Scale

Bedford is a county town with an attractive historic character that can provide an engaging setting for new buildings. Bedford's post-war tall buildings are not its greatest assets, but equally some central streets could be better framed by buildings which are taller than the current two storeys.

The masterplan helps to set parameters for the scale, massing and materiality of new buildings within sensitive areas of the town centre. This is important so that new development is in keeping with the existing character of Bedford and responds to its context.



**Fig7** Bedford's buildings

## 6. Civic Spaces

The masterplan will identify a network of spaces with enhanced links to the riverside. New urban and green spaces will be sought as part of new developments and projects identified for funding bids. Opportunities to create public spaces include an arrival point at Bedford station and improvements to Midland Road. St Paul's Square could also be transformed in the longer term with improved public realm, enhancing the church within its surroundings.



**Fig 8** Bedford's civic spaces



## 7. Homes for All

Bedford already has some attractive and accessible residential neighbourhoods on the edge of the town centre, which can provide inspiration for new development. The masterplan has identified a significant number of sites that could deliver a range of new homes within a one mile radius of the station and town centre which will help support new shops and services for existing residents.

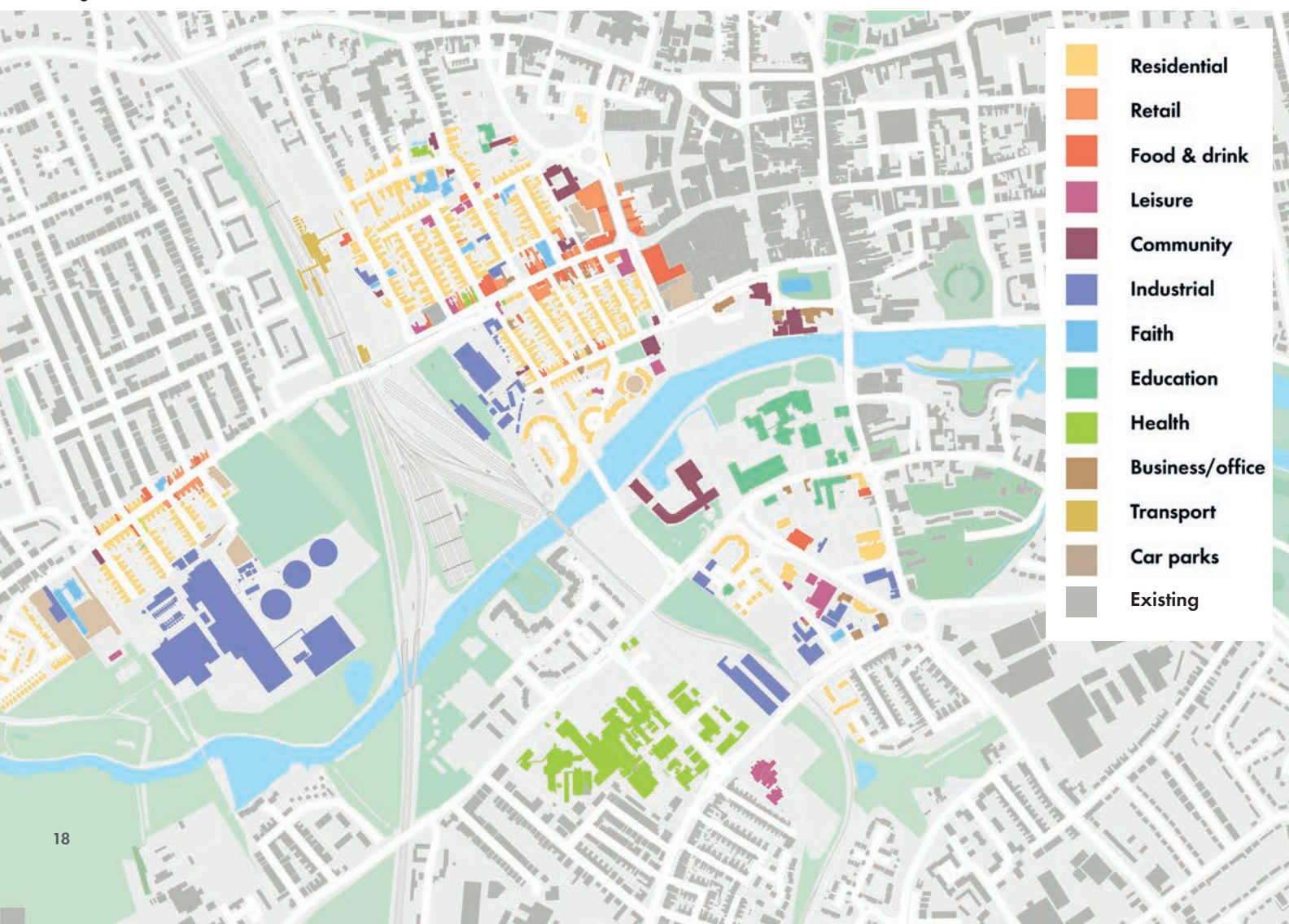


**Fig9** Bedford's homes

## 8. A Place for Business

Bedford has a good number of large employers that have remained in the town centre. These will be supported and strengthened by identifying new employment spaces, focused in strategic locations, to help retain jobs in the town centre, and capitalise on the Oxford/Cambridge arc and links to London St Pancras.

**Fig 10** Land uses in Bedford

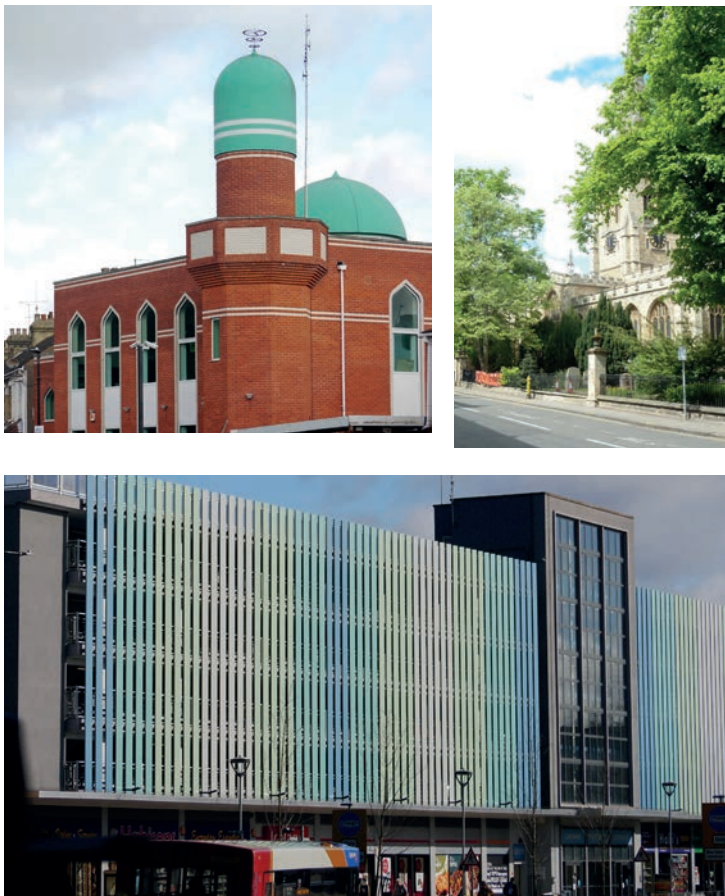




## 9. Community infrastructure

The masterplan has identified a number of sites both on the edge of the town centre and within a one mile radius of Bedford to deliver new homes and create new communities. These new homes will also support new shops and services for existing residents.

The forthcoming Local Plan will have a key role in setting the framework for the delivery of new schools, affordable housing and healthcare provision to support an increasing town centre population. This masterplan has identified key opportunities and the most appropriate locations for new schools and other community services.

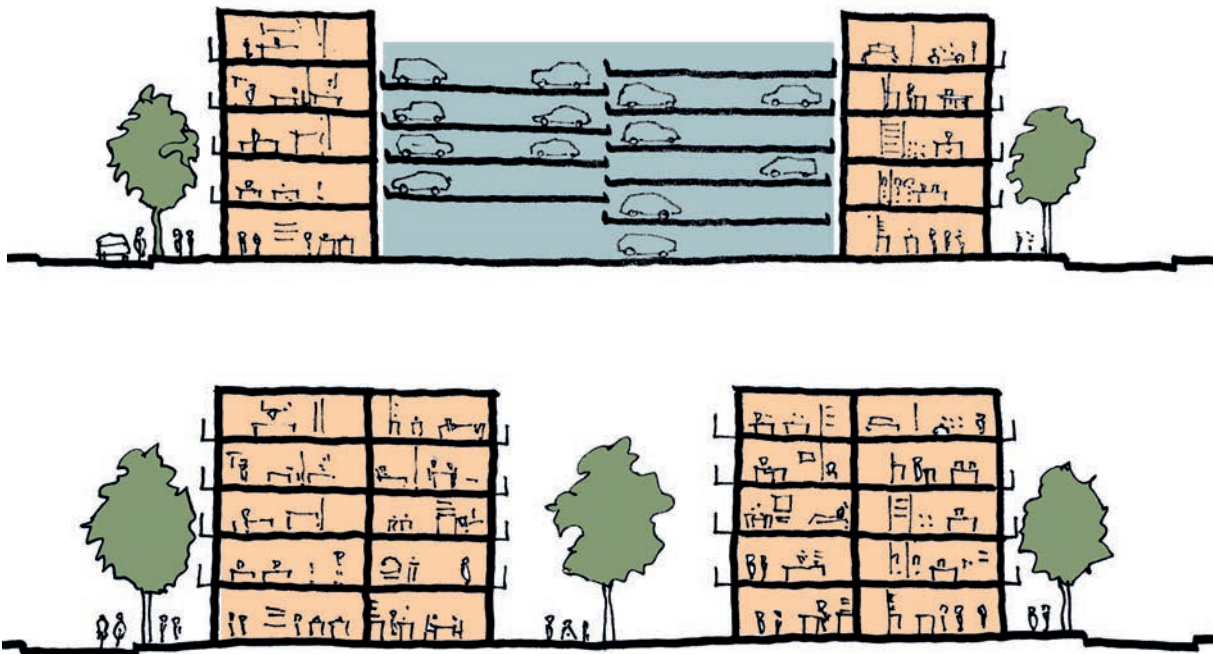


**Fig 11** Bedford's community infrastructure



## 10. An Adaptable Framework

New developments should be adaptable to cope with an unknown future, to accommodate changes in the property market and technological innovations. The diagram below is one example of an adaptable form, others include providing buildings which can adapt to different uses in future, as Bedford's Georgian and Victorian buildings have successfully done.



**Fig 12** Decked car parks bring parking together, making sure we can meet today's parking need, whilst releasing land for new homes and jobs. Wrapping them with offices or flats which face out into the street screens them from view. We can also design the structures to be adaptable if driverless cars mean we need less parking in the future.





**Fig 13** Bedford town centre's variety of streets and spaces



# THE MASTERPLAN





## 3 THE MASTERPLAN

### 3.1 A FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK

3.1.1 The masterplan provides guidance on future development within Bedford Town Centre. The masterplan is designed to provide an illustration of how the development principles could be applied and act as guidance for planning applications which are currently coming forward.

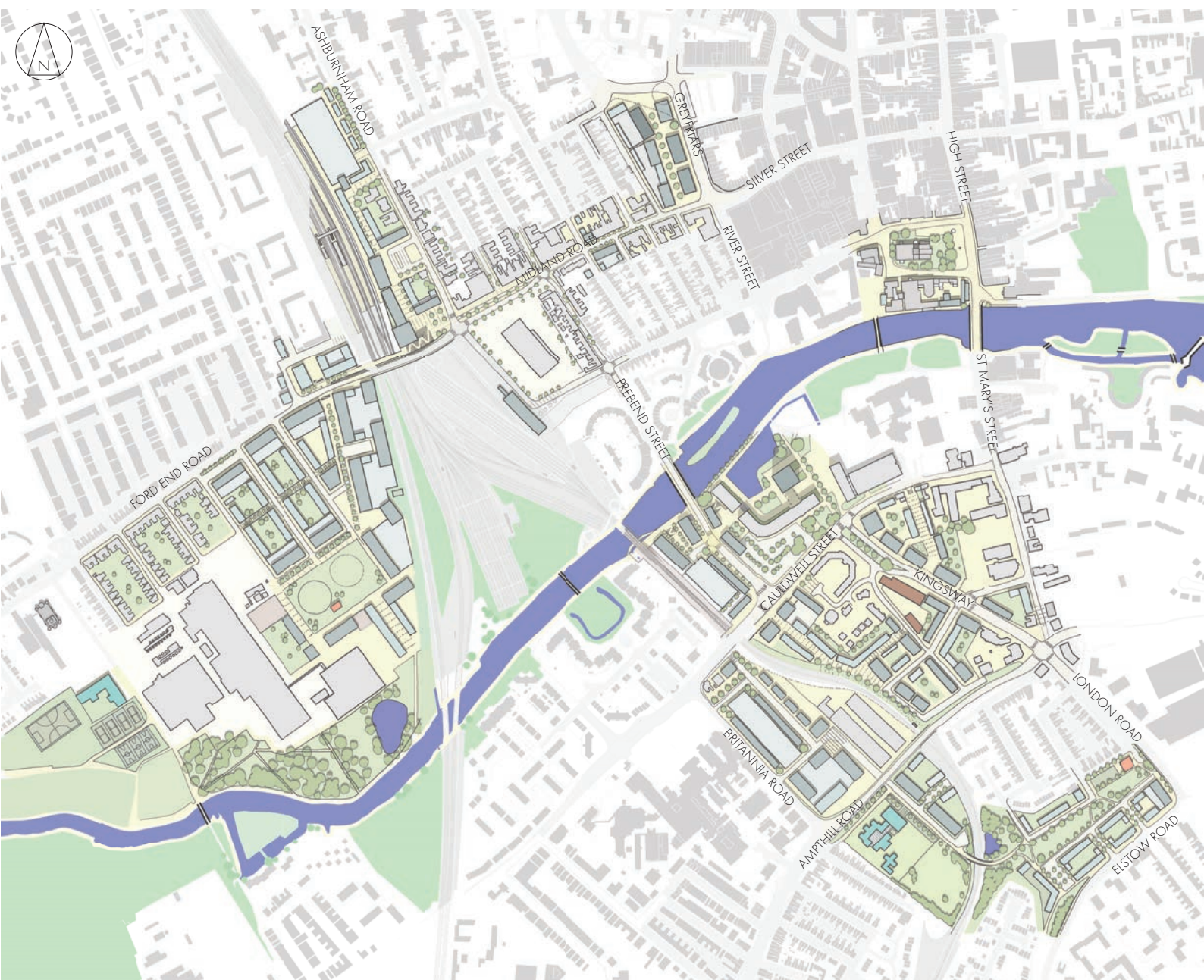
3.1.2 The urban design framework proposes both shorter term physical environmental improvements and longer term development projects, should certain sites within the area come forward. Longer term strategic transport and development projects have also been proposed which would unlock the potential for a greater number of homes in the area.

3.1.3 The masterplan has been used to inform the emerging Bedford Local Plan, which identifies some areas of the town centre, such as Kingsway and Ford End Road to deliver significant new residential neighbourhoods. This urban design framework has assessed the capacity and land use mix of the development sites to provide guidance for separate land owners and the council to ensure this site comes forward in the best possible way for Bedford.

3.1.4 The framework illustrates the Council's aspiration for the quality of placemaking for sites in the town centre. The approach is:

- A masterplan that guides rather than prescribes long-term development.
- Avoiding any disruption to existing homes at all costs.
- Retention of large employers - the Council will continue to work with large employers to retain jobs in the town centre.
- Long term public space improvements are identified for developer investment and future funding bids.
- Transport options are promoted to support future bids for infrastructure funding.
- Above all, development proposals have to be viable and deliverable, working within land ownership boundaries as far as possible.

- Masterplan proposals
- School building
- Community building
- Consented planning applications
- Retained



**Fig 14** Bedford masterplan

## 3.2 PUBLIC REALM

- 3.2.1 Public realm and open spaces will play a significant role in improving the connectivity between areas of the town centre, providing the setting for new homes and improving the amenity of the riverside. A guiding principle for the strategy is to provide a legible network of walkable streets, connecting the riverside to existing communities and public spaces in the town centre. The plan opposite illustrates new and existing public spaces, identifying the key new and improved pedestrian connections the masterplan facilitates.

### Public green spaces

- 3.2.2 The riverside and its associated parks are the most significant amenity assets in the town centre. This offer will be enhanced with a new park within the Ford End Road neighbourhood and improvements to the existing public spaces at the riverside. A large play space and small community building will help to create activity in the park. Mature trees should be retained and habitats should be retained and created. These green open spaces will connect to the riverside path and other green spaces, both to the east (castle mound and Priory Country Park) and towards open countryside along the River Great Ouse to the west.

### Hard landscaped spaces

- 3.2.3 A series of new hard landscaped spaces will be provided alongside and within new areas of development in the town centre. A significant new space will be provided at the station, creating a welcoming and high quality environment (please see section 4 for further detail). The southern bank of the riverside will be enhanced with a series of spaces linking the existing landscaping at Borough Hall with

the new pedestrian crossing over the river and development on Prebend Street Car Park. Additionally new spaces will be created at Greyfriars, Ford End Road and within residential areas in the Kingsway area.

### Riverside paths

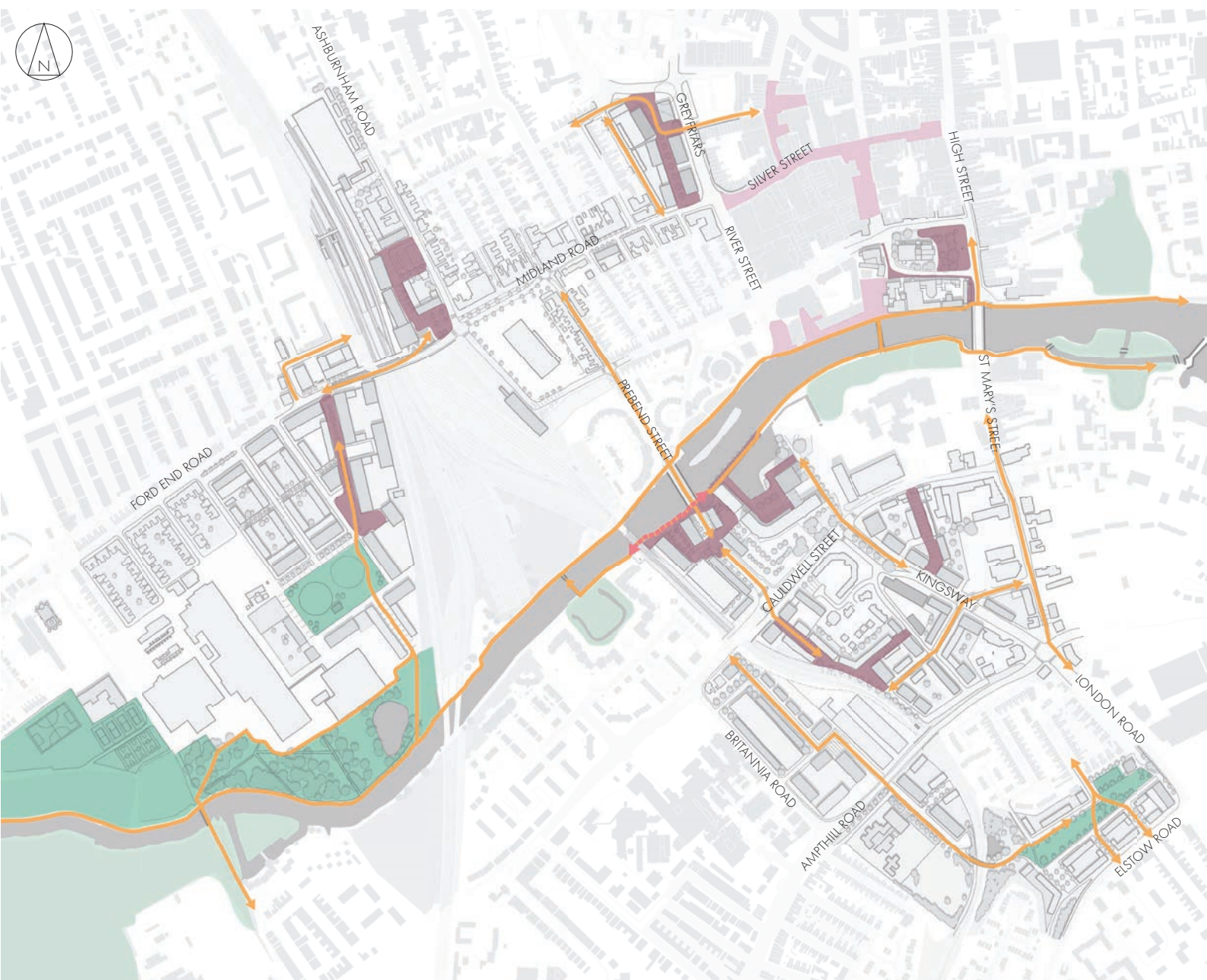
- 3.2.4 The northern bank of the riverside has a fairly complete path running through the town centre from Ford End Road through to the green spaces at Castle Mound. The crossing and route behind Shire Hall along The Embankment should be enhanced with a better pedestrian route over the A600/High Street, just north of the river.
- 3.2.5 There is a less continuous route along the southern bank of the river and the masterplan proposes an aspiration that a route is created from the pedestrian bridge at Britannia Iron Works, using floating pontoons to connect under the low bridges (subject to technical feasibility work and external funding), eastwards to Borough Hall and Priory Country Park beyond.

### Other new and improved connections

- 3.2.6 The orange arrows on figure 15 illustrate the key improvements to pedestrian movement introduced by the masterplan. Key routes include from Ford End Road to the station and into the town centre. Other key moves include north-south connectivity from residential areas into the town centre.



- Existing hard landscape public space
- New/improved hard landscape public space
- Existing green spaces
- New/improved green spaces
- New/improved pedestrian connection
- New connection under bridges



**Fig 15** Public realm framework

### 3.3 CYCLE MOVEMENT

3.3.1 Ambitious cycle provision is planned for Bedford's town centre. At present, there is both on carriageway and off carriageway provision. On carriageway typically consists of marked cycle lanes, advanced stop lines, and shared footways/cycleways. Off carriageway cycle provision is provided primarily on shared paths along the River Great Ouse. However, there is a lack of continuity at present, particularly with the on carriageway cycle provision.

3.3.2 New cycle provision would therefore respond to the gaps in the network, with reference to existing cycle provision, desire lines and likely routes, and given the opportunity of redevelopment sites and existing streets which have room for retrofit. These would be a mix of segregated/light segregated tracks, advisory cycle lanes, and shared footways/cycleways.

3.3.3 New provision would sometimes be associated with new internal roads constructed in new development sites. In other instances plots of redevelopment would allow existing carriageways to be widened and new cycle provision to be included e.g. Cauldwell Street.

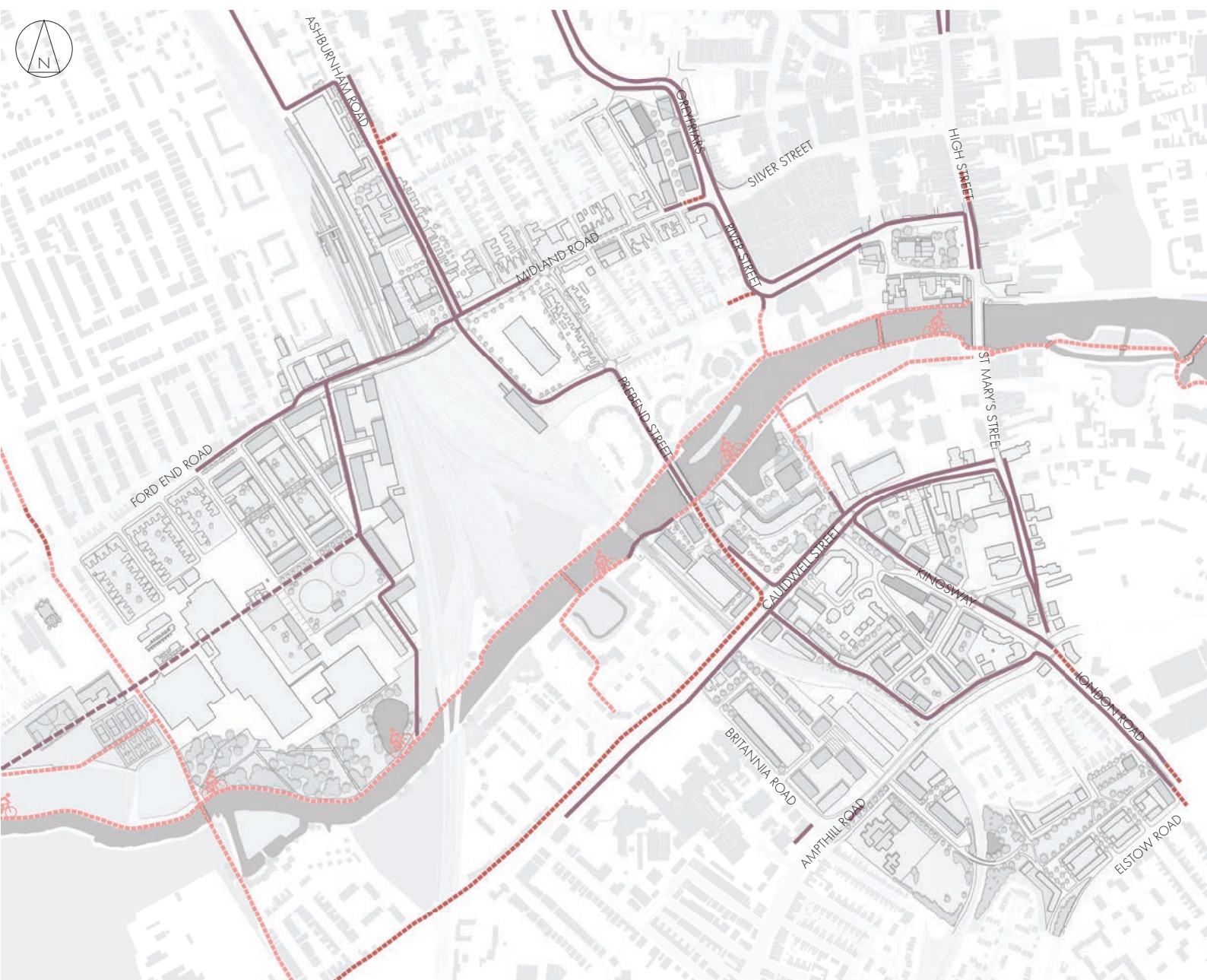
3.3.4 Finally, more ambitious interventions would involve retrofitting the streets e.g. Midland Road (West), or the provision of new infrastructure e.g. the Ford End Road Bridge. These would frequently be in conjunction with changes to vehicular movement (addressed in the next section). Otherwise, there are still locations where new cycle provision would not be possible due to existing properties and carriageway widths, e.g. along stretches of Midland Road. In these instances cyclists would mix with vehicular traffic.

3.3.5 Anticipated new cycle provision can be summarised as follows:

Road/Site	Likely Cycle Provision
Ford End Road Bridge	Construction of a new bridge for vehicular traffic, and reuse of existing bridge for cyclists and pedestrians
Midland Road (West)	Two-way off carriageway path as part of urban boulevard proposals
Midland Road (East)	Carriageway widened to north and on street lanes added. Enabled by new development (i.e. no loss of traffic lanes)
Ashburnham Road	Cycle route to/from Bromham Road within new development. Advisory on carriageway cycle lanes to Midland Road junction.
Greyfriars	On street lanes advisory lanes added as part of roundabout removal scheme
River Street/Horne Lane	On street advisory lanes added following relocation of carriageway space
Prebend Street-Ashburnham Road Link	New road link constructed, including two-way off carriageway path on west/south side
Prebend Street	Shared footway/cycleway on west side as part of link road scheme. Requires some third party land.
Prebend Street Car Park Site	Inclusion of a new shared pedestrian/cycle path adjacent to river
Southern Site	New light segregated route between Prebend Street and London Road designed as part of new development
Kempston Road	On carriageway advisory lane or shared footway/cycleway on south side where condition permits
Cauldwell Street	Carriageway widened and on carriageway advisory lanes added
Kingsway	Two-way off carriageway path on east side
St John Street	Becomes two-way as part of Kingsway gyratory scheme, with on carriageway cycle lanes added. Southern end is ped/cycle only
London Road	Carriageway space reallocated to provide on carriageway lanes where conditions permit.
High Street	Carriageway widened at St Pauls Square and on carriageway advisory lanes added



- Existing on street cycle provision
- Existing off street cycle provision
- Proposed new cycle provision
- Proposed long term cycle provision



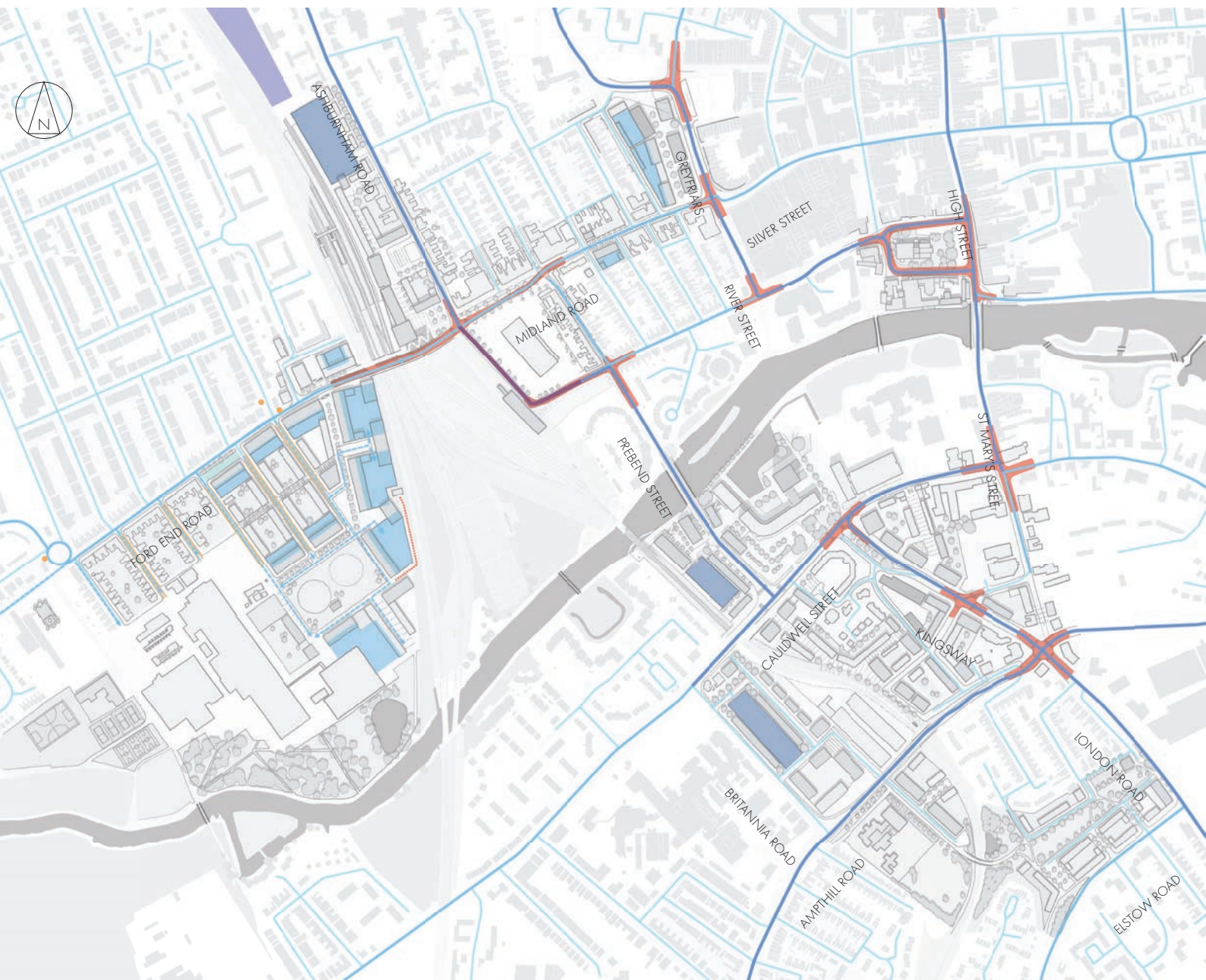
**Fig 16** Cycle framework



## 3.4 VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

- 3.4.1 Broad changes to the movement of vehicular traffic across Bedford has been considered in tandem with the amount of proposed development, orientation of redevelopment plots, the inclusion of cycle provision, and the general desire to create a more urban and liveable public realm. These changes have been tested using traffic modelling. Dependent on location, a variety of changes to the highway network are proposed. These include carriageway widening, carriageway narrowing, changes to the direction of traffic (including the removal of gyratories), the signalisation of key junctions, the pedestrianisation of existing streets, and the addition of new streets. The changes to the highway network in key areas are considered in more detail on the following page.
- 3.4.2 Car parking numbers in areas of new residential development will be based on comparable town centre sites, in line with existing car parking standards although individual schemes in and around the town centre can often be lower in terms of car parking provision. This was the provision assumed in the Local Plan modelling work. In areas of new development, the creative use of car parking will be used to soften its effect on public realm. For example alternating parallel spaces with trees/planting, the use of parking courts, or using spaces as a light segregating element for cycle routes.

- Main road
- Secondary road
- Local street
- Multi-storey parking
- Undercroft parking
- Existing surface parking
- Junction improvements
- New road connection



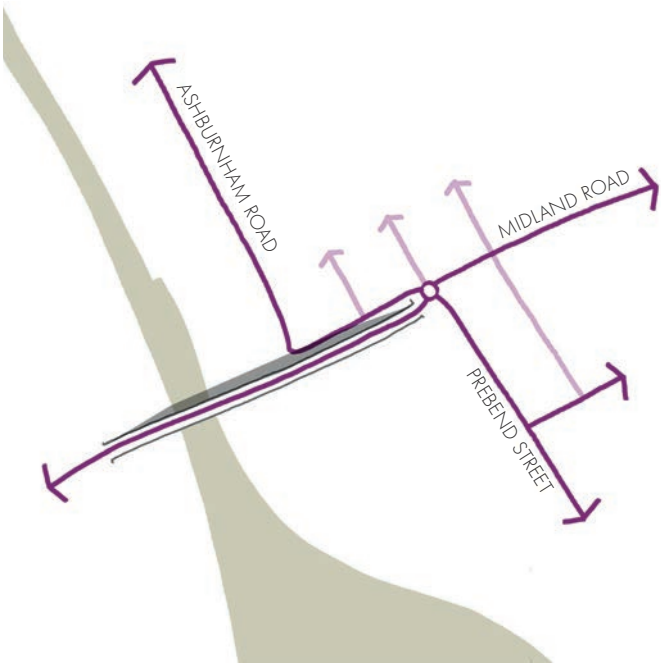
**Fig 17** Movement and parking framework

3.5 KEY MOVES

Station approach road network

3.5.1 The construction of new homes at the Ford End Road site (addressed in the Ford End Road Masterplan Report) means changes to the highway network in the area immediately east of the Ford End Road Bridge. This could be an interim solution with a link road from Prebend Street connecting to Ashburnham Road beneath the existing Ford End Road Bridge. Or, as a more preferable final solution, the Ford End Road Bridge would be replaced altogether, with a new bridge relating better to new development at the station site with a high quality station square and existing development on Midland Road. This would be a notably superior option in terms of placemaking, and dramatically improve the entry experience to Bedford. In general, at a more strategic level, there would also be a benefit in creating a new route which allows through-traffic to avoid the narrow residential section of Prebend Street.

3.5.2 It has been identified that the long existing bridge is a barrier to both north-south movements and to east-west pedestrian and cycle connections. Therefore, it could benefit all modes of travel to upgrade this link, and in turn help to make much more normal street conditions in this part of Bedford. Given the potential constraints, a phased process has been identified as a way to deliver the new bridge without limiting development potential in the shorter term.

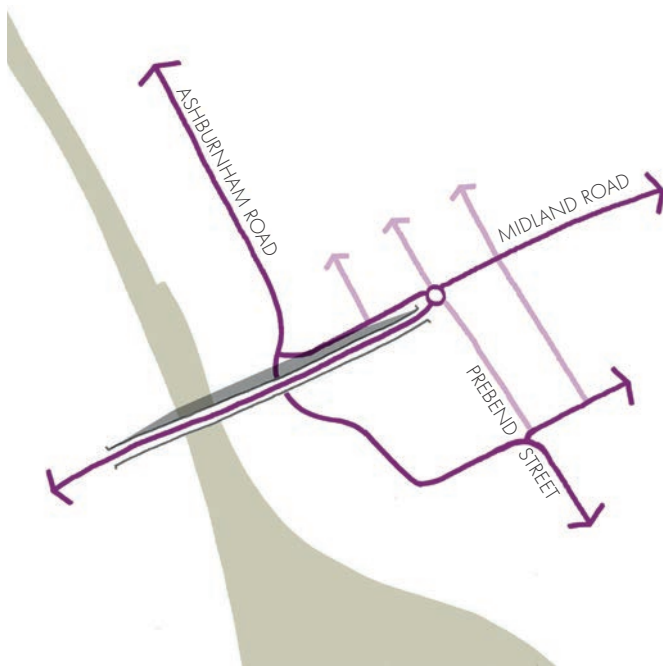


Existing condition

3.5.3 The existing bridge extends way beyond the crossing of the original railway lines. This requires both vehicles and pedestrians to double-back on themselves when connecting from the station towards Ford End Road. The duplicated road takes up twice the space, and the bridge limits the ability to place buildings on both sides of the street.

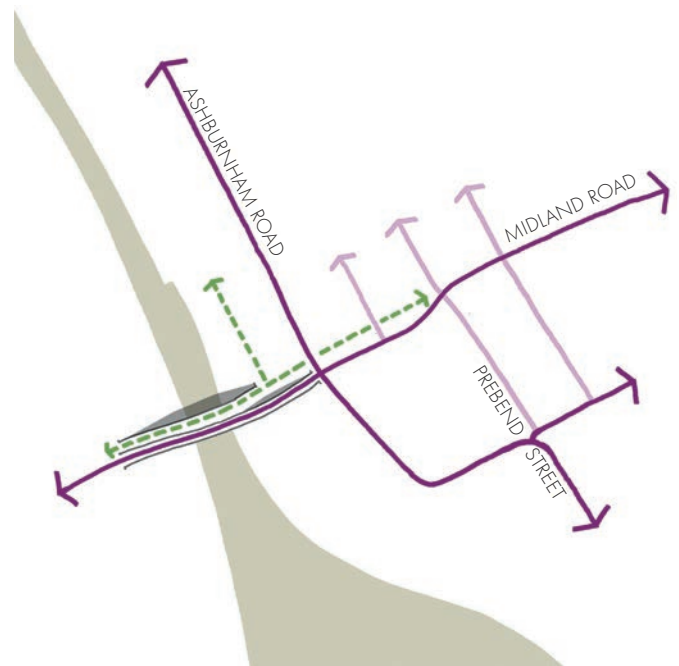
Road/Site	Changes to Highway Network
Ford End Road Bridge (long term)	Construction of a new road bridge, with a new signalised junction with Ashburnham Road, Midland Road, and the new link to Prebend Street.
Midland Road (West) (long term)	Rerouting of the carriageway, oriented with the new Ford End Road Bridge, and in order to create a new urban boulevard
Ashburnham Road	Reorientation of the southern end to tie in to a new junction
Prebend Street- Ashburnham Road Link	New road link created, allowing traffic to bypass Midland Road. Oriented to new development blocks and existing properties, with a new signalised junction at the northern end





### Interim solution

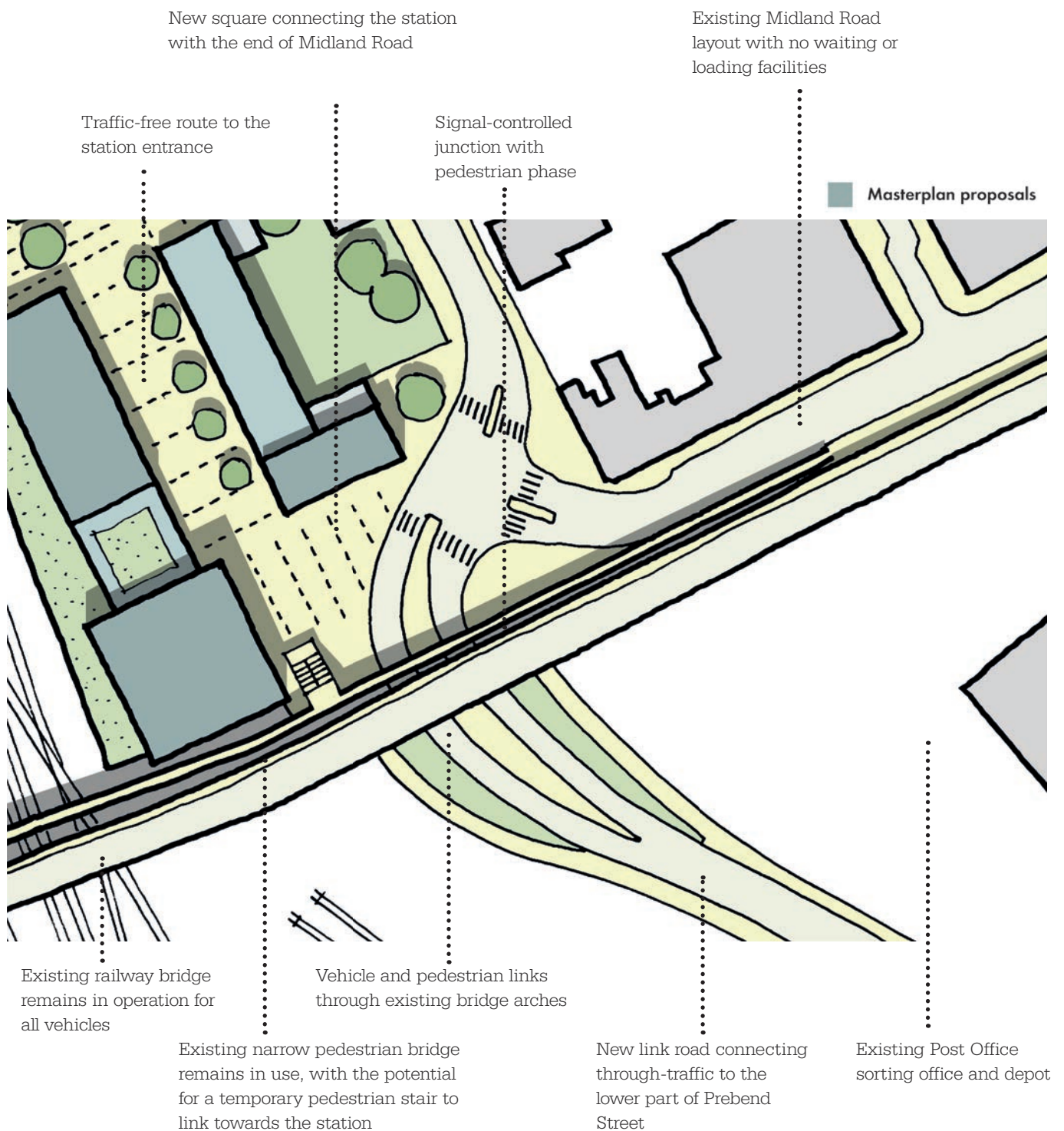
- 3.5.4 As an interim measure, a less ambitious highways solution could be constructed. Instead of a new bridge, the existing bridge could remain, and the new link from Prebend Street to Ashburnham Road could be constructed passing beneath the existing viaduct. This would have the significant benefit of removing the need for through-traffic to use the residential section of Prebend Street.
- 3.5.5 However, this interim solution would have some limitations. It would not deliver many of the strategic public realm benefits, including better pedestrian and cycle connections. The existing pedestrian facilities on the Ford End Road Bridge (which would be retained) are sub-standard, and are not appropriate for use by cyclists.



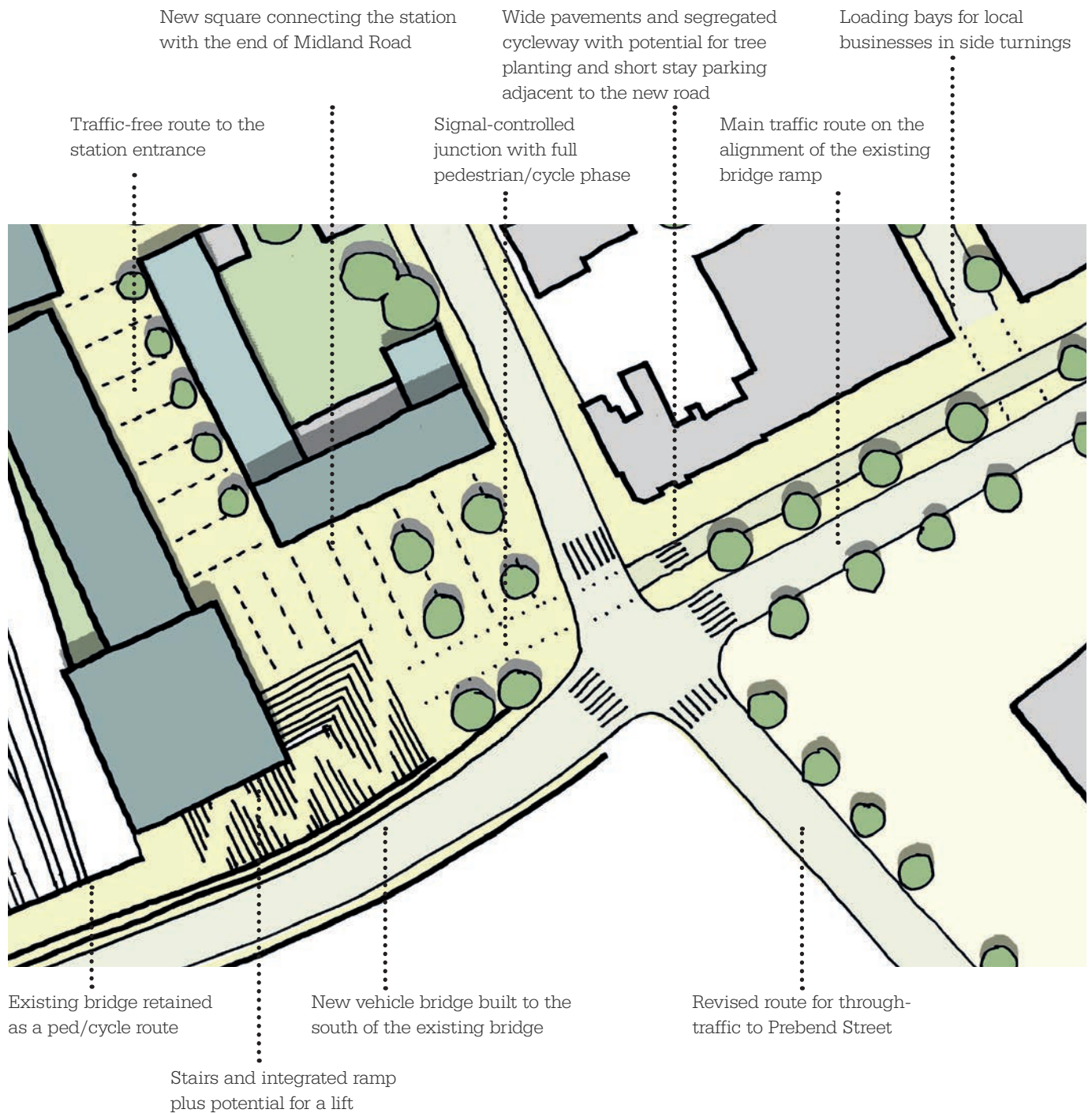
### Preferred/complete solution

- 3.5.6 The preferred approach can be delivered as a more complete solution, to deliver greater benefits to Bedford Station area and support the delivery of new homes. This will deliver a new shorter vehicle bridge over the railway, connecting back into a revised junction at the bottom of Ashburnham Road.
- 3.5.7 The central spans of the existing railway bridge will be retained and used as a new wide ped/cycle link, providing direct connections to the station and on to Midland Road.

## Junction layout as an interim measure



## Preferred/completed junction layout





## Midland Road

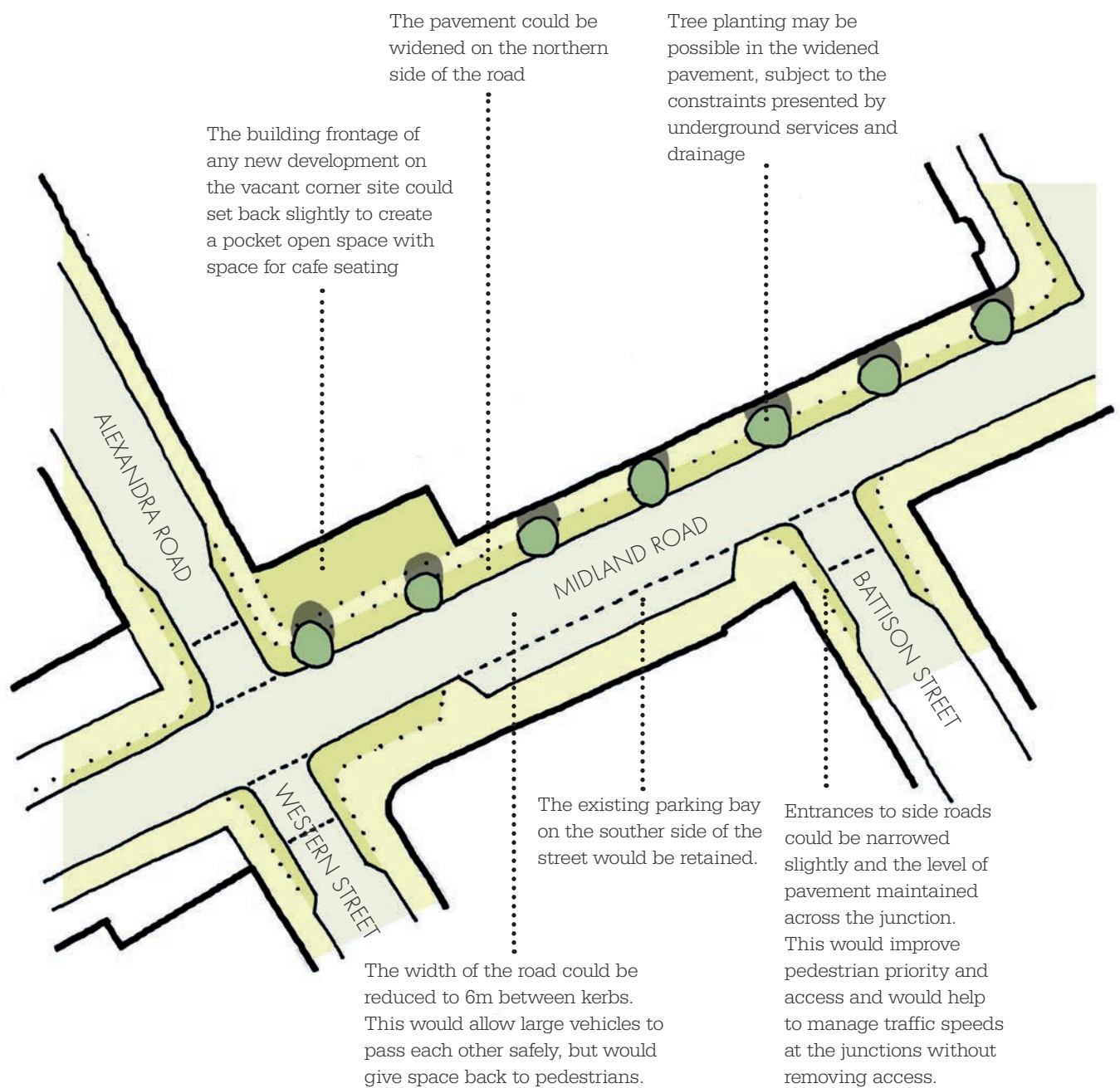
3.5.8 The narrowness of the pavements along Midland Road was a key issue identified through consultation. It has a big impact on the people's perceptions of Midland Road, and presents a good opportunity to improve both the links between the station and the town and the quality of the local place.

3.5.9 Midland Road will need to continue to provide an important vehicle route, and must be designed to allow large vehicles to pass safely. However, it has been noted that there are some parts of the street where the carriageway is wider than it needs to be. Reducing this wide stretch down so that it is consistent with other existing parts of the street will allow for wider pavements and other improvements. The wider route would be more accessible, and would make the

busy pavement a calmer and more attractive environment. It could also allow for some trees to be planted, depending on the presence of existing underground services and drains.

3.5.10 A further improvement which could be made to improve the pedestrian environment along Midland Road is for the side streets to be slightly narrowed at their entrances and potentially for the pavement to carry through at the same level. This approach, often referred to as a Copenhagen or blended crossing, would improve accessibility and reinforce the existing pedestrian priority across the head of the T-junctions.





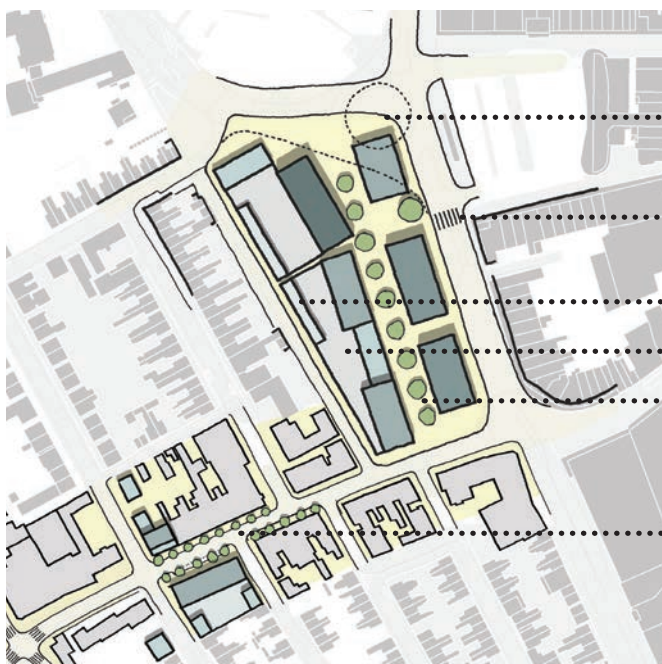
## Greyfriars

3.5.11 The existing roundabout at Greyfriars is a segregating and space hungry arrangement in an otherwise central part of Bedford. A signalised junction is therefore proposed, having a more economical footprint, allowing additional development to come forward, and providing new pedestrian crossings. The junction of Greyfriars/Midland Road/River Street is also proposed for retrofit, removing the central island and being resignalised.

3.5.12 Existing bus entry and exit points would be maintained as would the circulation of buses through bus station. As part of the new signalised junction and controlled pedestrian crossing, there would be the potential to use signal technology to give buses exiting the bus station some level of priority over other vehicles.

3.5.13 The highways upgrades to this area can be summarised as follows:

Road/Site	Changes to Highway Network
Greyfriars (West)	Removal of splitter island and realignment of carriageway for new signalised junction. New pedestrian crossing
Hassett Street	Removal of splitter island and realignment of carriageway for new signalised junction. Reprovision of pedestrian crossing
Greyfriars (South)	At northern end, removal of splitter island and realignment of carriageway for new signalised junction. At southern end, removal of central island and junction retrofitted and resignalised
Midland Road (East)	Widening of carriageway to north to accommodate cycle lanes



- Existing roundabout can be replaced with a smaller signalised junction to improve walking and cycling links and release land for development
- Controlled crossing on the desire line improving links to the bus station from Alexandra Place
- Mews development providing frontage on Priory Street
- Residents' parking below a podium terrace deck
- New pedestrian lane, predominantly residential in character
- Elements of wider pavement and tree planting on Midland Road where space allows, particularly between Alexandra Road and Brereton Road

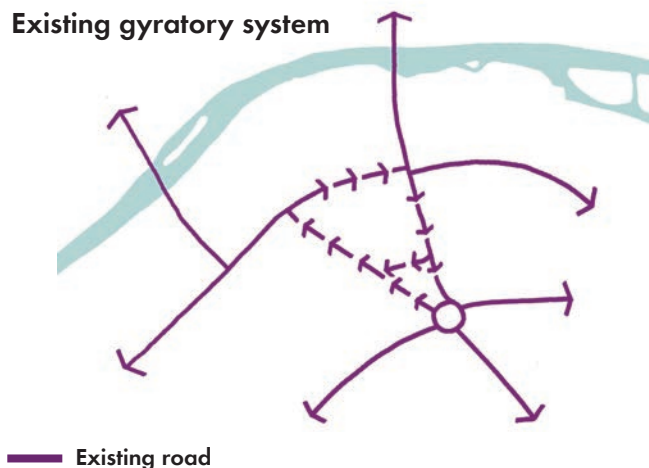


## Kingsway

- 3.5.14 A substantial gyratory traffic system presently exists, consisting of Cauldwell Street, St John's Street and Kingsway. At the south, the Kingsway roundabout is fed by five arms. As with Greyfriars, the roundabout acts as severance to the area. The Kings Ditch (a ditch dug to defend the town in Anglo-Saxon times) is a landscape feature in this area.
- 3.5.15 Within the last fifteen years converting one-way streets back to two-way is an approach that has been taken by many local authorities around the UK, as they have recognised a negative impact from these environments. Coupled with new development that has a strong relationship with the street, there are benefits to Kingsway that could come from adopting a similar approach. In order for the area to fulfil its potential as a mixed use neighbourhood with up to 2,500 new residents, a more positive urban quality could be formed by introducing network of two-way streets.
- 3.5.16 Two-way streets have less vehicular capacity than an equivalent one-way system, but the broader urban and economic benefits may off-set this.
- 3.5.17 The proposal within this master plan is to further investigate options for improving the highway system in the Kingsway area by reviewing the operation of the gyratory system, and the option of a signalised junction to replace the current Wilmer's Corner roundabout.
- 3.5.18 The highways upgrades to this area can be summarised as follows:

Road/Site	Changes to Highway Network
Amphill Road/London Road/Rope Walk	Removal of splitter islands and realignment of carriageway for new signalised junction. New toucan crossings
Kingsway	At southern end, removal of splitter island and realignment of carriageway for new signalised junction, with a new toucan crossing. Carriageway widened to four lanes along full length, splitting to north to accommodate existing trees, and widened locally for bus stops and right turn to Melbourne Street. Junction with St John Street and new internal road reoriented. At northern end, traffic islands removed and junction reconfigured and resignalised, and carriageway narrowed to west for the removal of bus stop.
Cauldwell Street	Junction with Kingsway reconfigured and resignalised, with entries to Council car park reprovided further west. Carriageway widened to north and south, dependent on location of existing buildings to be retained, provision of turning lanes at junctions, and provision of new cycle lanes. Junction with St John's Street reconfigured for two-way traffic, removing central island, adding turning lane and being resignalised.
St John's Street	At northern end, carriageway widened for junction with Cauldwell Street. Becomes two way along full length, with southern end closed to through traffic.

Existing gyratory system





# STATION TO TOWN





## 4 STATION TO TOWN

### 4.1 CONTEXT AND CONSTRAINTS

- 4.1.1 The Station to Town area has suffered in recent years from social deprivation and a lack of commercial investment. Bedford Station is linked to Greyfriars at the edge of the town centre via Midland Road, although the current pedestrian route takes visitors through residential streets. Investment at both Bedford Station and Greyfriars is anticipated to create a new desire line for visitors to use Midland Road as the route of choice thus helping to bring renewed investment to the shops and businesses along Midland Road.

#### Landownership

- 4.1.2 Bedford Station is owned freehold by Network Rail, although there is a long leasehold interest to Bedford Borough Council on the car park to the south of the station building. Bedford Station has a Training Operating Company (Govia Thameslink) that manages the station building and the associated car parking, which is predominantly to the north of the station building. Along Ashburnham Road are a number of different landowners with residential and business uses.
- 4.1.3 At Greyfriars, The Police Station has been marketed for sale by Bedfordshire Police, and the adjacent landowner is Castlecap, which owns the shopping parade and residential flats above. Bedford Borough Council has a landholding at Midland Road, and there is a third party landowner at Priory Street.

#### Archaeology

- 4.1.4 A desk-top review of the archaeological assets in the vicinity of Bedford Rail Station identified artefacts relating to the 19th Century period, including railway infrastructure such as the signal box, warehouse, engine house etc, together with the former Biscuit factory at 2 Prebend Street. According to the Historic Environment Record, there are no finds before this period, which indicates that the archaeological value of the site could be low.
- 4.1.5 At Greyfriars, the site lies outside of the Medieval Town (HER 10530) but in close proximity to the Roman Road Viatores No 210 (HER 10480). The site may therefore have archaeological value, although the construction of the Police Station and the shopping parade may have disturbed the archaeology over the years.
- 4.1.6 Bedford Borough Council is likely to require further information to be submitted at planning application stage, including possibly some intrusive works to be undertaken.

#### Flood Risk

- 4.1.7 A desk-top flood risk review of the area reveals that Bedford Rail Station is within Flood Zone 1 and therefore the risk of fluvial flooding is low. A small part of the site to the south was inundated during the 1947 flood.
- 4.1.8 Greyfriars is located in Flood Zone 1, with a minimal part of the site on the southern boundary within Flood Zone 2. The risk for flooding is therefore considered to be low, with only a small part of the site experiencing historic flooding in 1947.



**Fig 18** Constraints

### **Tree Preservation Orders**

- 4.1.9 At the Station, there are several clusters of TPOs associated with the site at Ashburnham Road. At the southern end of Ashburnham Road adjacent to the backs of properties and the Council's car park as several TPOs. This includes a cluster of two Swedish Whitebeam, and four individual trees, which are a 2 Horse Chestnut trees, and 2 Common Lime trees. There is also a cluster of 6 Plane Trees near the entrance to the Station. These will need to be considered in future development proposals.

### **Noise**

- 4.1.10 The key source of noise and vibration is from the speeds of the trains passing through Bedford Station. However, appropriate mitigation measures can be introduced for dwellings in close proximity to these sources, including an increased level of glazing for windows and doors, plus acoustic fencing if necessary. A noise and vibration assessment would be required as part of a planning application to establish the level and frequency of the noise and an appropriate strategy for its mitigation.

### **Ecology**

- 4.1.11 There are a number of mature trees at Bedford Station, especially at the northern end of the site, which need to be investigated. A Phase I Extended Habitat Survey would be undertaken as part a planning application to establish the potential for protected species within the site. This would be followed by a series of absence and presence surveys where necessary.

### **Air Quality**

- 4.1.12 The Council monitors air quality in relation to the Air Quality Management Area that covers a larger portion of Bedford town centre. As expected air pollution is greater near busy roads, particularly where traffic builds up. Key roads are Bedford High Street, Shakespeare Road, Prebend Street and Ampthill Road. Although average levels of pollution are not necessarily above the threshold, health impacts are seen at levels below threshold. In Bedford, the annual mean objective for NO<sub>2</sub> is exceeded at a number of locations across the Borough. All but one of the exceedances are located within the town centre AQM





**Fig 19** Station and Greyfriars

## 4.2 KEY PRINCIPLES

4.2.1 The Station and surrounding sites presents an exciting opportunity for Bedford Town Centre. A comprehensive redevelopment of the Rail Station is a long standing aspiration which is promoted within the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) which was adopted in 2008, and the potential opportunity from East-West Rail provides further impetus.

4.2.2 A series of key principles have influenced the development proposals for the site:

- **A prominent gateway to the town centre -**  
The station and its surroundings should proudly announce the gateway to the town centre. A new entrance further to the south of the existing location provides a better connection with the town centre, raising the visibility along Midland Road.
- **A new space and destination -**  
Outside of the new station entrance will be a high quality area of public realm with a new square and tree lined routes leading to the new car park, pick up and set down area and to Midland Road. The mix of uses in buildings around the square will include new homes and the potential for small-scale retail/cafes and possibly offices if occupier demand can be realised.
- **Enhance access to the station -**  
The station area needs to be easily accessible on foot, by bike, by bus and by car. New car parking will be provided in a multi-storey car park located adjacent to the station and in a surface car park to the north. Pick up and drop off space and bus stops will be provided in a new dedicated square next to the new station entrance. The pedestrian route to the station is enhanced via new step access from Ford End Road Bridge and through a new

public square, located at the end of Midland Road. Extensive cycle parking will be located adjacent to the new station entrance.

- **Improve connections eastwards and the environment along Midland Road -**  
The public realm along Midland Road should be enhanced to improve this connection from the station to the town centre. Attracting investment for shop front improvements, new public realm treatment and the widening of pavements and the provision of cycle infrastructure where possible will raise the quality of this important route. This will be a focus for potential funding bids and developer contributions.
- **Improve connections westwards over Ford End Road bridge -**  
Pedestrian connectivity over the bridge across the railway lines should be enhanced. There may also be an opportunity to add a new entrance to the station from the west, accessed via Kempster Close.
- **A stronger gateway at Greyfriars -**  
Midland Road should be bookended at the eastern end with the redevelopment of this block to enhance the gateway to the town centre at this important junction. New mixed use blocks provide a strong corner and frontage to Greyfriars while new homes step down in scale to meet the existing residential terraced streets at Priory Street.

4.2.3 The options set out overleaf includes the potential railway route alignment for the East-West Rail Central Section at Bedford Station. It should be noted that no decision has yet to be made on the preferred route for the Central Section and therefore the options are designed not to prejudice the future delivery of the railway alignment, which should be considered indicative at this stage.



- Building with permission
- Key pedestrian route
- Towpath
- Key frontage
- Trees
- Public realm
- Green space



**Fig20** Station to town urban design framework



### 4.3 LAND USE

4.3.1 Two new clusters of development are created around the station and at Greyfriars.

4.3.2 At the station there is potential for new homes and supporting commercial uses.

4.3.3 Opportunities for redevelopment of a small number of blocks along Midland Road exist to help raise the quality of the street environment.

These should be delivered with retail space at ground floor and new homes above.

4.3.4 At Greyfriars, new retail units are shown providing frontage to the main street with residential behind, providing frontage to a new public space and Priory Street behind which will have a mews environment/character.



**Fig 21** Station to town ground floor land use



- Residential
- Retail / cafe
- Multi-storey parking
- Community
- First floor terrace
- Office
- Station
- Cycle parking



**Fig 22** Station to town upper floor land use

## 4.4 BUILDING HEIGHTS

- 4.4.1 The building heights framework reflects the local scale and character of this part of Bedford. The block structure at the station has been designed around a central space, with buildings fronting Ashburnham Road mimicking the existing scale and massing of the large villas along this road. A number of taller elements are set against the railway line.
- 4.4.2 At Greyfriars development on Priory Street matches the scale of the terraced streets behind the development. Larger blocks, ranging between four and seven storeys provide frontage to Greyfriars.
- 4.4.3 Any opportunities for infill development along Midland Road should be in keeping with the existing scale and character, rising to three storeys.



- 8 storey
- 6 storey
- 5 storey
- 4 storey
- 3 storey
- 2 storey
- 1 storey



**Fig23** Station to town heights plan

## 4.5 INDICATIVE CAPACITY

- 4.5.1 The illustrative masterplan for the station to town area of Bedford identifies a number of potential opportunities which could account for a significant development capacity. This is estimated as:

**350** homes

**2,000sqm** office

**2,000sqm** retail

**Over 1000** station car parking spaces

**1** new station building

- 4.5.2 The masterplanning process has informed the emerging Bedford Local Plan. Within the masterplan area there are a number of sites that are linked and have interdependencies requiring a co-ordinated approach to their release, especially those within the ownership of One Public Estate partners. It is recognised that these sites can be difficult to unlock, and as a consequence may take time to come forward, possibly beyond the timeframe of the Local Plan.





**Fig24** Station to town masterplan





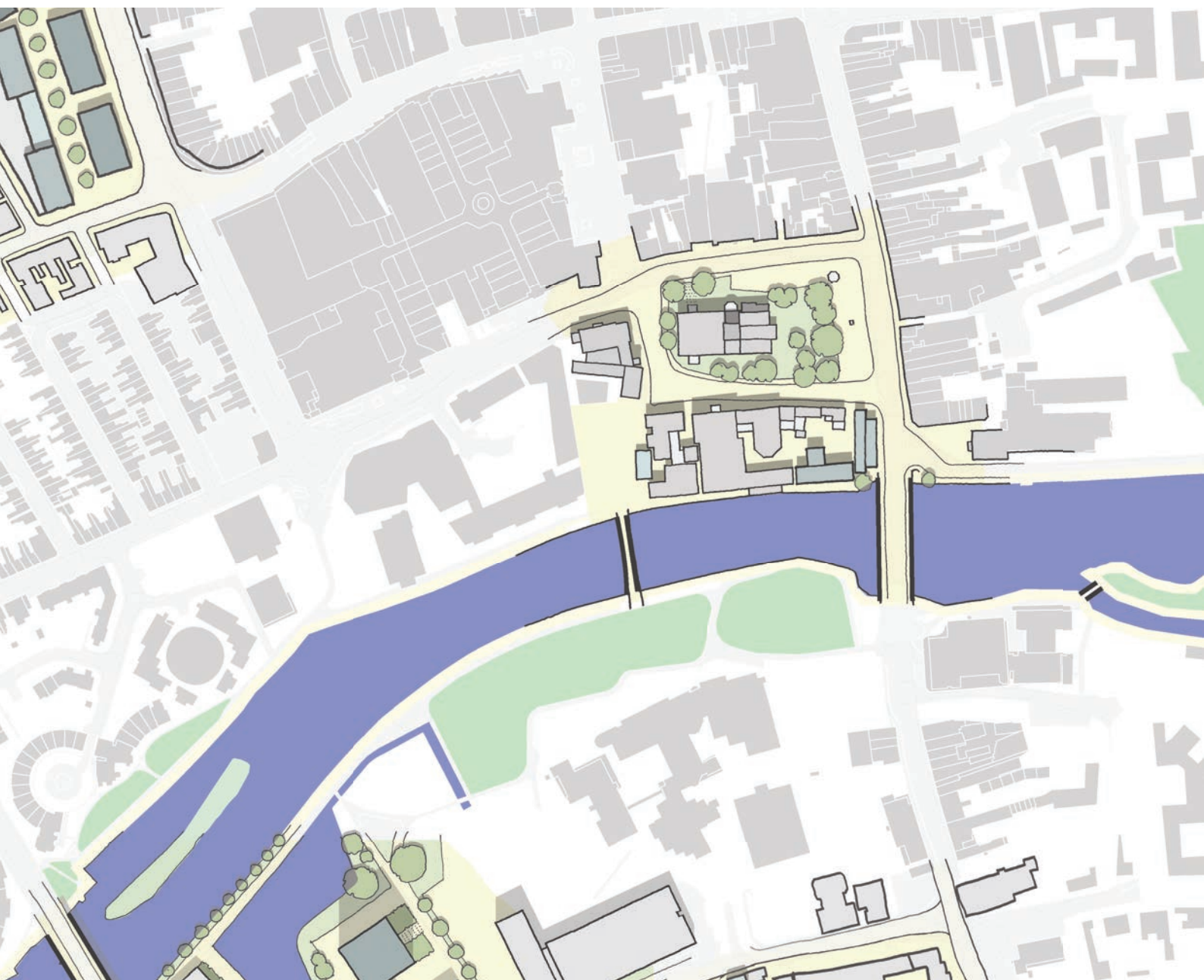
# ST PAUL'S SQUARE



## 5 ST PAUL'S SQUARE

- 5.1.1 St Paul's Square is one of the gems in the town centre given the beautiful church, riverside setting and historic properties on the south side of the square.
- 5.1.2 The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has officially stated that it will leave Shire Hall, although discussions with MoJ indicate that there is no firm timeline for its withdrawal. The County Court and Family Court operates from Shire Hall following the relocation of the Magistrate's Court to Luton. Shire Hall is a Grade II listed building with several impressive court rooms, particularly Court Room 1 which witnessed the trial of James Hanratty, one of the last people to be hung in the UK. The architectural and historical significance of the building makes its conversion a difficult proposition. The adjacent car park used by MoJ staff is within an area of potentially high archaeological value. The Council owns several properties at St Paul's Square including No.6 and 7a at the western end adjacent to the new Riverside North scheme and the former Bank site at the eastern end adjacent to the High Street. This vacant and cleared site has redevelopment potential either in isolation or linked to the Court's car park.
- 5.1.3 Proposed development as part of the masterplan involves a new building on the former bank site now used as a small car park, providing frontage to High Street as it begins to cross the river. Opportunity also exists for a light pavilion building to help animate the new public spaces on the riverside on the east side of the new square.
- 5.1.4 Shire Hall itself requires a new use given that the Ministry of Justice plan to close the facility. There is the potential for a small building to the rear to deliver new residential units facing the river. The Shire Hall building itself should be refurbished to create a viable mix of uses, which could take the form of civic, cultural and education with associated administrative office space with potentially residential uses where the building can be divided successfully without compromising the important sensitive parts, particularly the courtrooms.





**Fig25** St Paul's Square



# SOUTH OF THE RIVER





## 6 SOUTH OF THE RIVER

### 6.1 CONTEXT AND CONSTRAINTS

- 6.1.1 The area south of the River Great Ouse in Bedford is identified for intensification, especially in relation to the number of surface car parks. The area is undergoing change with several recently developed schemes under permitted development rights, and other schemes in the planning pipeline. This area has a significant amount of land within the ownership of One Public Estate partners, including Bedford Borough Council, Network Rail and Bedford NHS Hospital Trust.

#### Landownership

- 6.1.2 The area has a number of landowners, including both private and public sector. The public sector land holdings are spread across the southern area, including Borough Hall, owned by Bedford Borough Council. The Borough Council also own car parks at Prebend Street, Cauldwell Street and Melbourne Street. Network Rail owns land either side of the railway line, and the Secretary of State for Transport is the key landowner at Elstow Road. Bedford NHS Hospital Trust together with Network Rail and Danfoss (private manufacturing firm) are the key landowners at Britannia Road. The majority of the private landowners can be found at Kingsway and Melbourne Street, with a number of uses including light industrial, retail, office, leisure, community uses, and bespoke uses, such as an undertakers, car wash etc. Some properties are owner occupied, and others are let to tenants.

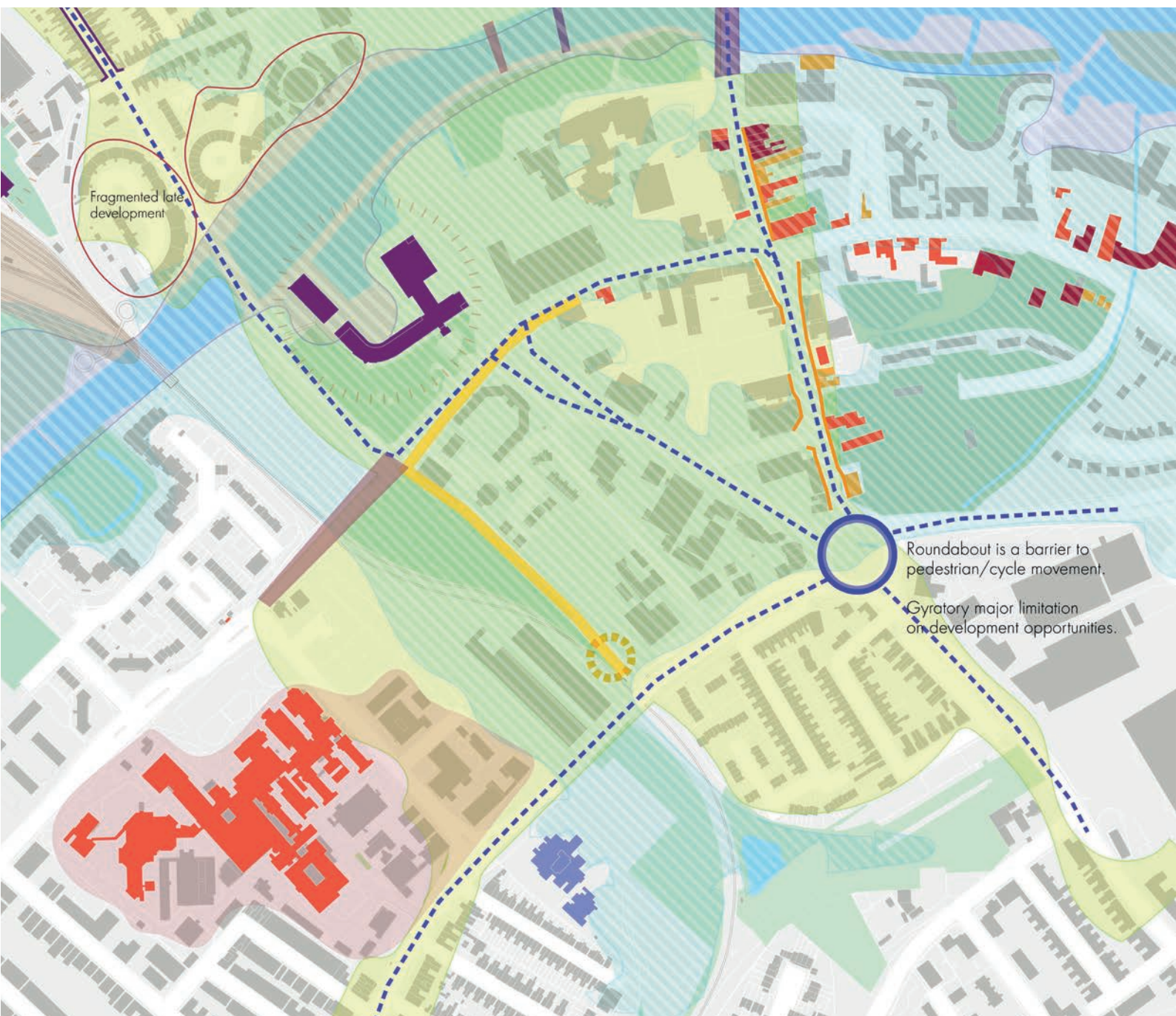
#### Archaeology

- 6.1.3 A desk-top review of the archaeological assets identified a couple of finds in the vicinity of the Borough Hall, including a Palaeolithic (stone age) Flake and a former coal yard. The area contains the remains of the King's Ditch, which was the Anglo-Saxon boundary ditch to the historic Bedford southern fortified settlement by Edward the Elder in c.919AD. The construction of the Borough Hall and associated pond in the 1960s is

likely to have disturbed much of the archaeology in this area, although the area between Borough Hall and St Mary's Gardens may have greater potential for the King's Ditch to be preserved. At the Prebend Car Park site, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 1995 as part of the proposal for the Magistrate's Court, but no further archaeological evaluation was required at the time, indicating that the archaeological value of the car park site could be low.

- 6.1.4 Kingsway triangle is at the heart of the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Historic core of Bedford (HER 10530). Previous archaeological excavations in the area of Cauldwell Street and St John's demonstrated well preserved remains suggesting occupation on the southern bank of the River Ouse links back to the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon fortification. The area has archaeological potential and could contain complex urban archaeological remains, although detailed investigations are required.
- 6.1.5 At Britannia Road, a couple of finds were recorded including a Bronze Age Awl (tool for making holes) and a Copper Alloy Ring. The land to the west of the railway line was also the site of Maltings and Dairy and former residential properties with coal bunkers. Of potentially more significance, is the site of the medieval hospital of St Leonard, to the east of the railway line at Elstow Road, within the Secretary of State for Transport (London and Continental Railways) land. The exact size, composition and location of the hospital are not known. The former railway through this site may have disturbed the archaeology.
- 6.1.6 Bedford Borough Council is likely to require further information to be submitted at planning application stage, including some intrusive works to be undertaken.

- Poor air quality
- Distinctive building
- Attractive but hidden old school building
- Road network limits development opportunities
- Area with very poor urban structure
- Improved river/rail crossings
- Remnants of historic street and attractive buildings
- "Stressed" street environment
- Cluttered & complex Hospital campus
- Fragmented late development
- Station facilities poor + station barely visible
- Rail infrastructure disconnects
- Tree preservation orders
- Flood zone 2
- Flood zone 3



**Fig26** Constraints plan



- 6.1.7 A heritage assessment was also undertaken for 26 Cauldwell Street, which highlights the need to provide an appropriate setting for this Grade II listed building. Historically, the Council's car park to the rear of the building formed the gardens to the houses on this side of Cauldwell Street.

### **Flood Risk**

- 6.1.8 A desk-top flood risk review of the area reveals land within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3. Parts of the southern area were affected by the by the 1947 and 1998 flood events. The land with the highest flood risk is adjacent to the river at the Borough Hall and Prebend Street car park.

### **Tree Preservation Orders**

- 6.1.9 There does not appear to be any tree preservation orders where development is proposed.

### **Noise**

- 6.1.10 The key source of noise and vibration is from the railway line that passes through the southern area. The principal roads also create noise from traffic. A noise assessment would be undertaken as part of a planning application to establish the level and frequency of the noise and an appropriate strategy for its mitigation if required.

### **Ecology**

- 6.1.11 The key parts of the area which may have ecological value include the land adjacent to the river, the land adjacent to the railway line within the ownership of Network Rail, and the disused railway land, which includes a pond at Elstow Road. A Phase I Extended Habitat Survey may be required as part a planning application to establish the potential for protected species within the site. This would be followed by a series of absence and presence surveys where necessary.

### **Air Quality**

- 6.1.12 The Council monitors air quality in relation to the Air Quality Management Area that covers a larger portion of Bedford town centre. As expected air pollution is greater near busy roads, particularly where traffic builds up. Key roads are Bedford High Street, Shakespeare Road, Prebend Street and Ampthill Road. Although average levels of pollution are not necessarily above the threshold, health impacts are seen at levels below threshold. In Bedford, the annual mean objective for NO<sub>2</sub> is exceeded at a number of locations across the Borough. All but one of the exceedances are located within the town centre AQMA. Appropriate air quality assessment would be required as part of a planning application.





**Fig27** South of the river

## 6.2 KEY PRINCIPLES

6.2.1 The area to the south of the river has significant potential to feel more like a joined-up neighbourhood with walkable streets, new homes, employment locations and car parks - all well connected and close to the centre of town.

6.2.2 A series of key principles have influenced the development proposals for the site:

- **Enhancing the southern riverside -**

New development close to the River Great Ouse will help to strengthen the character and use of riverside routes for walking and cycling and the areas of parkland on the south side of the river. Borough Hall and the areas surrounding the council buildings have an important address on the river front and opportunities to strengthen this campus with infill development should be explored. Similarly, Prebend Street surface car park should be redeveloped to provide frontage and activity to the riverside. The college does not currently have a strong relationship with the street or the river and a far stronger presence could be established, to help improve the river park and pedestrian routes through this area.

- **Establishing clear urban blocks -**

The area of the town centre to the south of the river feels quite fragmented due to the mixture of land uses and previous highways engineering-led schemes. There is also a number of cul-de-sacs that make the existing street network disjointed. Opportunities exist to strengthen the block structure through the redevelopment and careful refurbishment of existing buildings and the creation of a clear street network.

- **Improving the setting of heritage assets -**

St John's Street has some attractive heritage assets that are currently under-appreciated due to heavy traffic and surrounding

development that is not in keeping with the historic scale and grain. The masterplan proposes public realm enhancements, changes to vehicular movement and development proposals to enhance this area of the town centre.

- **Intensify car parking -**

This part of the town centre contains large areas of surface car parking that have a negative impact on the environment. Land should be more intensively used within sites this close to the town centre. Car parking should be consolidated in key locations in a fewer number of multi-storey car parks, to free up space for housing and jobs, whilst at the same time retaining the existing number of public car parking spaces.

- **Enhancing pedestrian and cycle routes from residential areas to the riverside and town centre -**

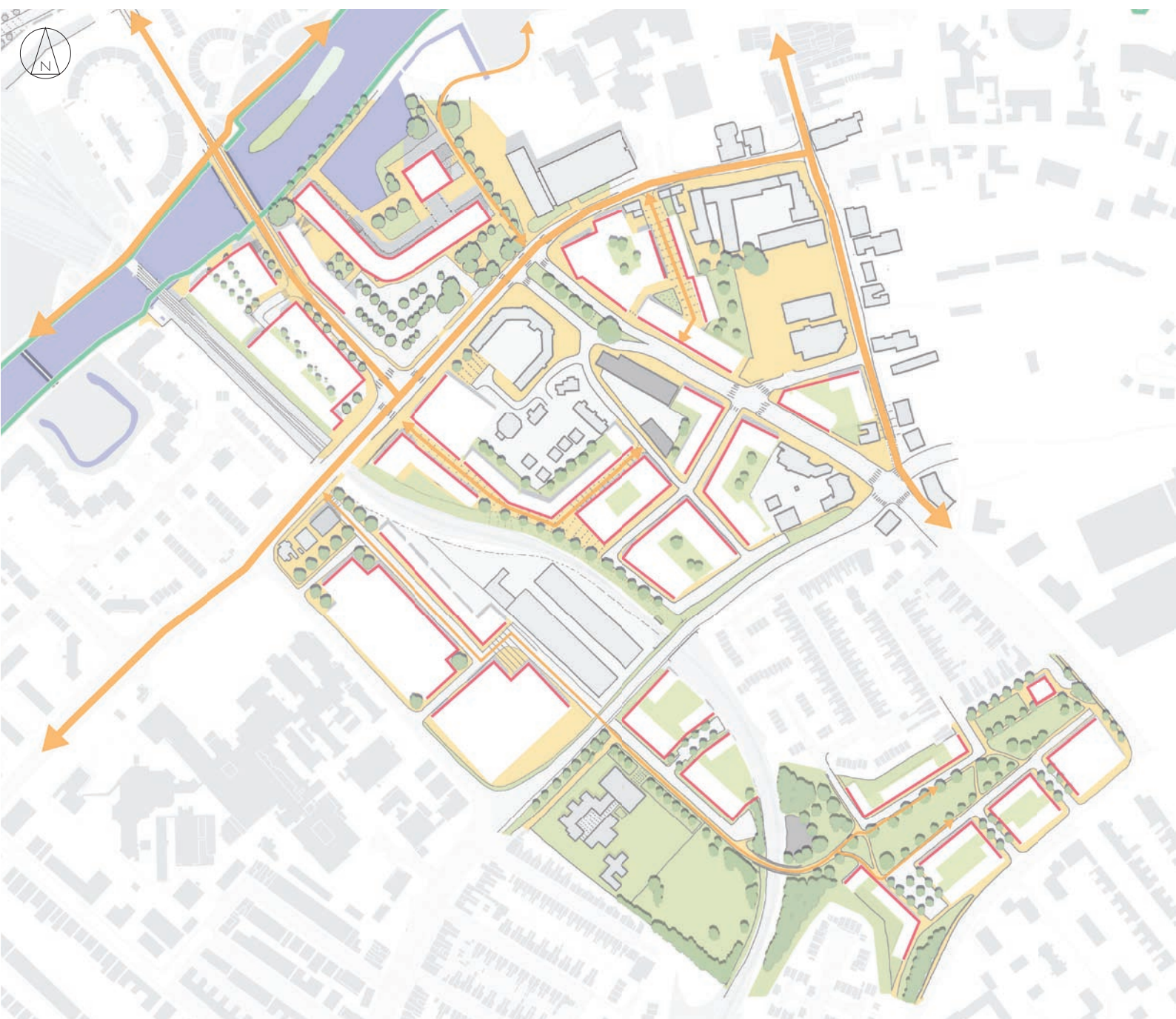
The framework aims to enhance a number of key walking and cycling routes from residential areas south of St Johns towards the riverside and into the town centre. These neighbourhoods are only a ten minute walk from the town centre but currently, the walking environment is poor and unappealing.

- **Removing the Gyratory -**

In order for the area to fulfil its potential as a mixed use neighbourhood with up to 2,500 new residents, a more positive urban quality could be formed by removing the one-way system and conversion to a network of two way streets. A substantial existing traffic gyratory presently exists, consisting of Cauldwell Street, St John's Street and Kingsway, causing severance in the area. Two-way streets can be seen as being more accessible and having a more 'natural' pattern of movement.



- Building with permission
- Key pedestrian route
- Towpath
- Key frontage
- Trees
- Public realm
- Green space



**Fig28** Framework plan



## 6.3 LAND USE

6.3.1 New development in this area will consist mostly of new homes - a mixture of town houses and flats. A greater proportion of flats will be located nearer the town centre and riverside, while town houses will be more appropriate to the south of St Johns.

6.3.2 At Borough Hall a new building is proposed in the longer term to replace the existing Council chamber which will have a new cafe at ground floor, with flats above. The Council chamber will

be accommodated within other parts of Borough Hall.

6.3.3 Important local employers such as Danfoss are retained, with new development shown in the surrounding context.

6.3.4 A new primary school is shown to the south of Ampthill Road with a community building located adjacent to the new park and homes at St Leonard's Avenue/London Road.



Fig 29 Ground floor land use



- Residential
- Retail / cafe
- Multi-storey parking
- Community
- First floor terrace
- Office
- School



**Fig 30** Upper floor land use

## 6.4 BUILDING HEIGHTS

- 6.4.1 The prevailing scale in this part of Bedford is much more mixed than in other parts of the town centre.
- 6.4.2 Building heights rise towards the river with some opportunities for taller buildings, rising to around 9 storeys on the riverside next to Borough Hall. This is an opportunity to create a modern landmark on the riverside, that should be slightly taller than the existing buildings on the site.
- 6.4.3 Generally new development is taller towards the river, rising to four and five storeys, with development further south around St Johns generally a lower height around three and four storeys.



- 9 storey
- 6 storey
- 5 storey
- 4 storey
- 3 storey
- 2 storey
- 1 storey



**Fig31** Building heights plan

## 6.5 INDICATIVE CAPACITY

- 6.5.1 The illustrative masterplan for the area of the town centre to the south of the river identifies a number of potential opportunities which could account for a significant development capacity. This is estimated as:

**1100** homes

**450sqm** retail space

**1** new primary school

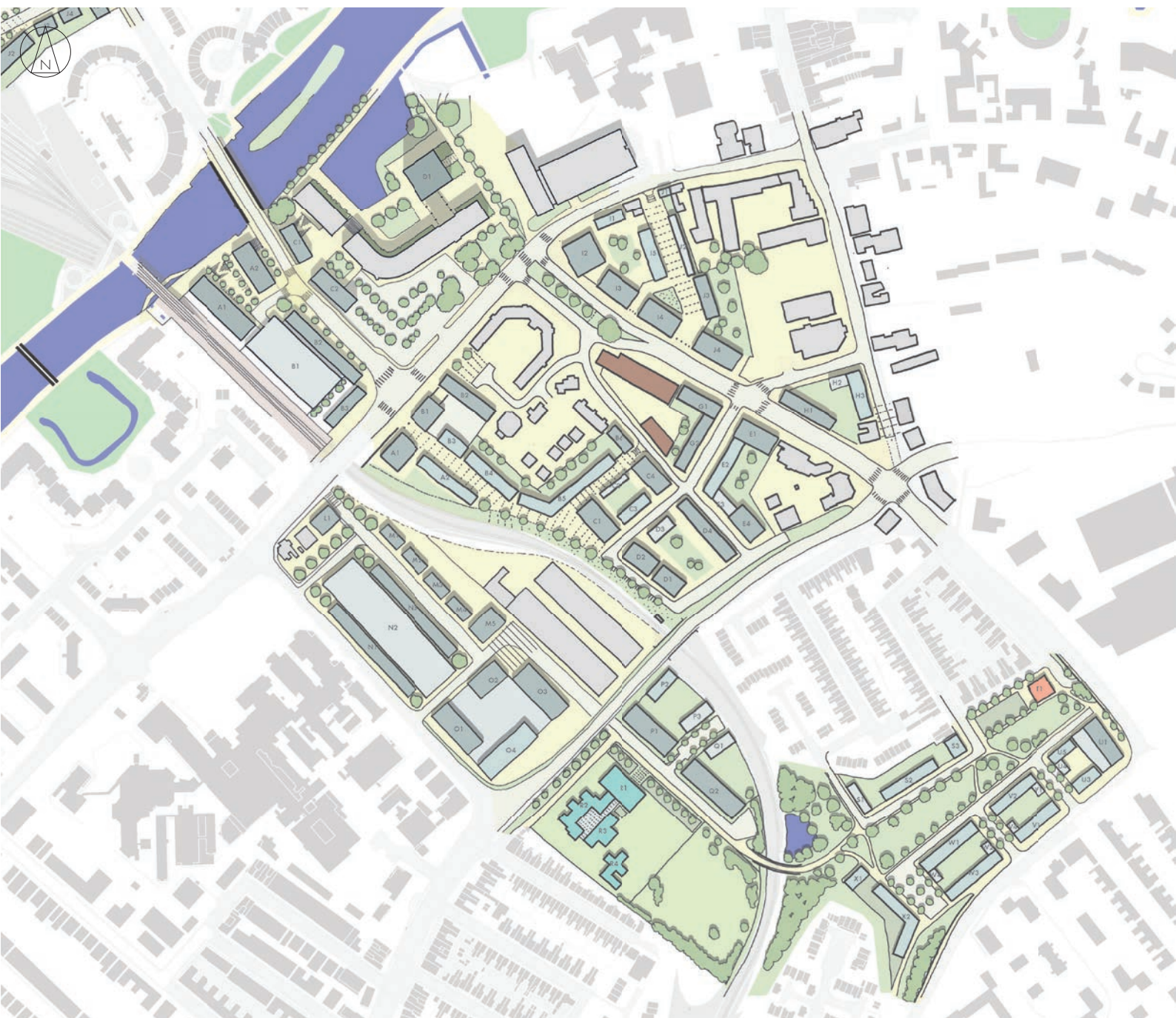
**1** new community building

**1** remodeled civic building

No net loss of public car parking

- 6.5.2 The masterplanning process has informed the emerging Bedford Local Plan. Within the masterplan area there are a number of sites that are linked and have interdependencies requiring a co-ordinated approach to their release, especially those within the ownership of One Public Estate partners. It is recognised that these sites can be difficult to unlock, and as a consequence may take time to come forward, possibly beyond the timeframe of the Local Plan.









# DELIVERY AND NEXT STEPS



## 7 DELIVERY AND NEXT STEPS

### Delivery and Next Steps

- 7.1.1 The sites identified within the Bedford Central Town area include land within the ownership of One Public Estate (OPE) partners and private landowners. The masterplan is designed to encourage private landowners to bring forward individual land parcels within the overarching framework of the masterplan and for OPE partner's to plan and deliver sites in a complementary and phased way.
- 7.1.2 In the cases of some sites, there is a clear rationale for public sector organisations to work together such as at Bedford Station, Britannia Road and Melbourne Street. For other sites, there is a strong rationale for the OPE partners to also work with private landowners, such as at Greyfriars, Melbourne Street and Elstow Road to facilitate a wider more comprehensive development.
- 7.1.3 Whilst it is recognised that both the masterplan and the emerging Local Plan provide the framework to encourage the regeneration of sites in and around Bedford town centre, it also acknowledges that in some cases the use of compulsory purchase powers may be required to assemble certain sites in order to deliver wholesale regeneration.
- 7.1.4 The delivery of circa 1,450 homes requires some key infrastructure improvements, including a new primary school, and highways improvements, including the relief road at Ford End Road. The Council may wish to allocate funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy to help fund some of these infrastructure items.
- 7.1.5 Within this context, viability issues will be a key consideration at planning application stage, as the costs of site development are balanced against the design criteria, level of affordable housing possible and s.106/s.278/CIL payments.

### Station to Town

- 7.1.6 At Bedford Station, development of surface car parking areas and improved station facilities requires a collaborative process between the key landowners, (Network Rail and Bedford Borough Council) and the Train Operating Company (TOC), Govia Thameslink. Collaboration with private landowners at Ashburnham Road is also required to facilitate the development proposals, including the new station approach.
- 7.1.7 A regeneration scheme at the Station is an important "gateway" project for Bedford town centre as a whole. However, it is considered to be a medium to longer term project, recognising opportunities for investment in the station infrastructure including car parking through a new TOC agreement (2021) and supporting residential and commercial development. The masterplan recognises the need to maintain the current levels of car parking as it plays a key role in serving the commuters travelling through the station on a daily basis. The relocation of surface car parking spaces into a multi-storey car park in step one in the process, which would in turn release land to the south of the Station for mixed-use development.
- 7.1.8 The interim and longer term highways solution at Ford End Road/Midland Road/Prebend Street will also need to be factored into any development proposals at the Station to ensure that future options are not stymied.
- 7.1.9 The land at Greyfriars owned predominantly by Castlecap and Bedfordshire Police offers a shorter term regeneration opportunity to be realised for the town. The Borough Council and other private interests own smaller parts of the overall site. The former police station site is currently being disposed of, and it is anticipated that a new residential scheme will be developed out in due



course. A more comprehensive scheme with the Castlecap block could come to fruition, and Bedford Borough Council as landowner will have a role to play in the development proposals and phasing of this site, particular if the opportunity to remodel the roundabout and release additional land for development are brought into play. The masterplan sets out an overall development framework for the Greyfriars site which will be material consideration in determining planning applications. However, the masterplan also recognises that landowners may wish to develop at different rates depending on their lease arrangements and disposal timeframe, and therefore does not seek to prejudice individual parcels from coming forward independently as long as they complement and accommodate each other.

- 7.1.10 The delivery of these two 'book end' developments (Station and Greyfriars) to Midland Road is designed to change the desire lines for visitors travelling from the Station to the town centre, and improve the trading and investment prospects of Midland Road with associated public realm improvements that can be facilitated through CIL.

## **St Paul's Square**

- 7.1.11 The key historic asset of Shire Hall requires a long term viable use as the Ministry of Justice is to close the building at some point in the future. The building has the potential for a range of uses, and a collaborative approach with local stakeholders, including Bedford Borough Council, the educational institutions and cultural/creative venues is required to explore the potential of the building and the prospect of introducing residential uses as part of this mix. Sources of funding for historic building such as the Heritage Lottery Funding are to be explored as part of a business plan for the building and its renovation. It is acknowledged that further work by stakeholders is required over the coming months and years to find the optimum solution. In the interim period, Bedford Borough Council has the opportunity to develop the former Bank site for a mixed-use scheme with restaurant/café at ground and residential above.

## **South of the River**

- 7.1.12 The area is starting to undergo change with several new residential conversions, and new build schemes in the planning pipeline. The OPE partners are set to lead the regeneration of this area by utilising the surface car parks in this part of the town and other surplus land, within the ownership of Network Rail and Secretary of State for Transport. The Borough Council and Bedford Hospital NHS Trust are both reviewing staff car parking and assessing the options to utilise spare capacity in other car parks across the town, and ways of co-locating car parking in a couple of locations in order to free up other sites.
- 7.1.13 New multi-storey car parks are proposed at Prebend Street and Britannia Road to serve Council and Hospital staff and public parking requirements in this part of the town, with no net loss of spaces overall.

- 7.1.14 It is envisaged that through this partnership approach on car parking, key sites can be brought to market in the short term by the OPE partners. There are potentially several different disposal options open to OPE partners, depending on the level of control and risk which the partners wish to take, and this needs careful consideration .
- 7.1.15 It is also acknowledged that public sector partners may need to use funding mechanisms such as prudential borrowing from the Government to facilitate the construction of any multi-storey car park as the first stage, before surface car parks are released for residential-led development.
- 7.1.16 In parts of Kingsway, Melbourne Street and Elstow Road, private landowners are encouraged to take the initiative and redevelop their landholdings. This may require waiting until key leases expire or seeking to relocate existing tenants early through negotiation. Bedford Borough Council will have a role to play in terms of helping these businesses find suitable alternative sites and premises, including potentially utilising its own property assets where appropriate as relocation space.

### **Key Projects for OPE**

- 7.1.17 There are several key One Public Estate partners with land holdings within the masterplan area including Network Rail, Bedford Borough Council, Bedford Hospital NHS Trust and Bedfordshire Police. These and other OPE partners are working together, and with the local planning and highways authority to resolve several of the key issues, including:
- 7.1.18 The transport improvements at Ford End Road/ Midland Road/Prebend Street, including the potential to explore and secure funding from Government programmes such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- 7.1.19 Car parking strategies for staff working at the Council and Hospital in order to relieve congestion and release key sites for development.
- 7.1.20 Future use of Shire Hall, which needs on-going stakeholder consultation and feasibility work to create a long lasting use(s) for the building.
- 7.1.21 Early dialogue with key private landowners to ascertain their future plans and relocation requirements of owner occupiers and tenants, particularly at Melbourne Street.
- 7.1.22 The Council to use its planning powers and the development principles as set out within the Masterplan to ensure a high quality development, including extracting appropriate contributions towards the primary school, public realm improvements, and junction works through s.106, s.278 and Community Infrastructure Levy payments.





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