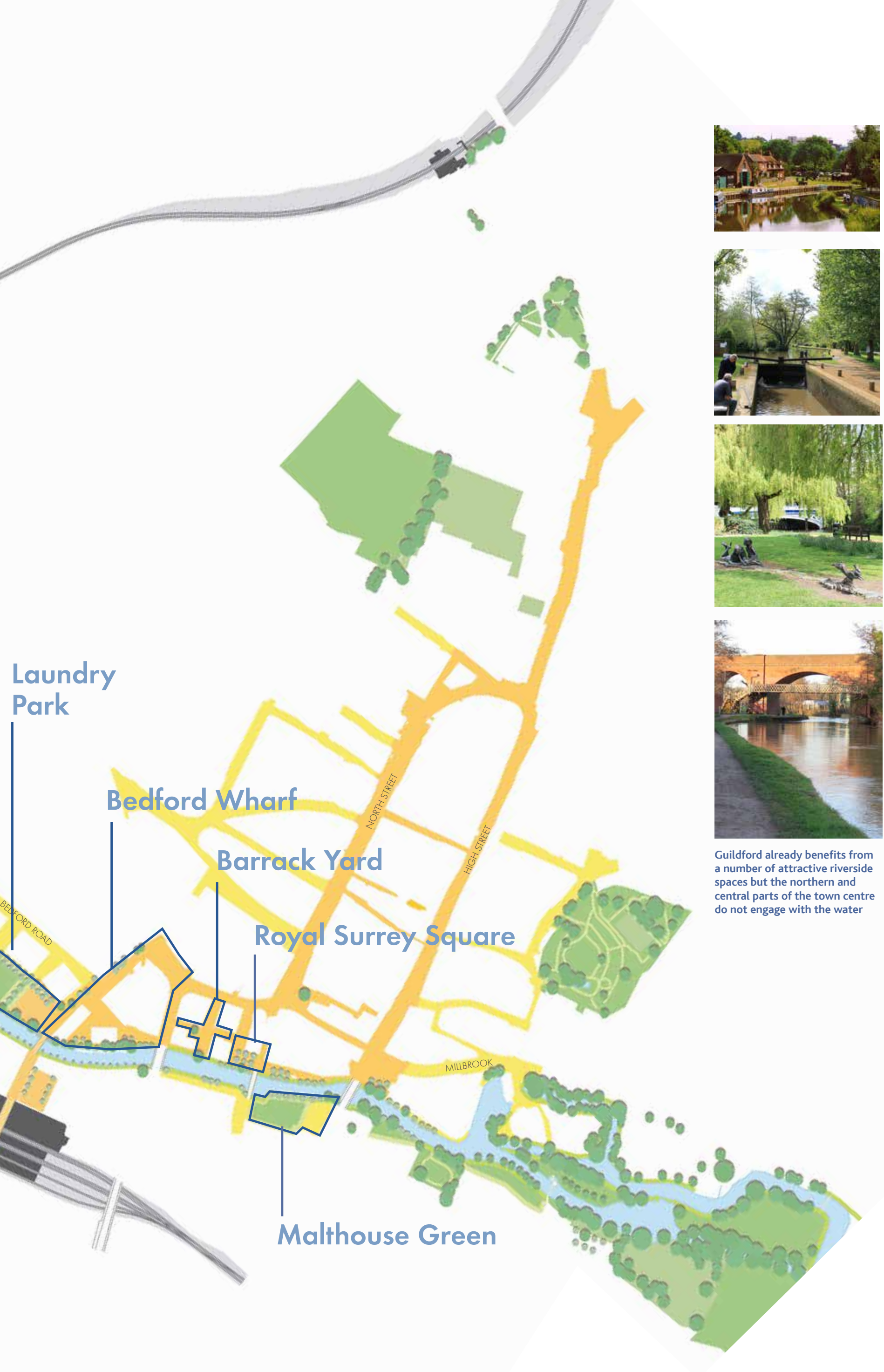


THE NEW RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY PARK

The riverside could provide a major opportunity for new leisure, cultural and commercial uses making the most of the attractive water-side setting. Improved connections between the riverside and the existing town centre would enable integration with the High Street and North Street to reinforce the existing heart of Guildford. Opportunities to enhance the river quality status of the Wey will also be encouraged.





Laundry Park

Bedford Wharf

Barrack Yard

Royal Surrey Square

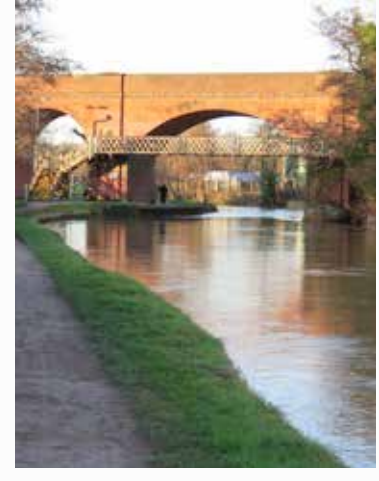
Malthouse Green

NORTH STREET

HIGH STREET

MILLBROOK

BEDFORD ROAD



Guildford already benefits from a number of attractive riverside spaces but the northern and central parts of the town centre do not engage with the water



The view south across Woodbridge Meadows. The meadows could be broader and the road relocated to create an area of open space of leisure and recreation. New development on the western side of the meadows will face onto the open space and will include community facilities and local shops at ground floor level.



RIVERSIDE PARKS AND SPACES

Woodbridge Meadows could become a substantial new park, created by the removal of an existing road and buildings alongside the river. New homes on the western side could screen the parkland from the main railway line and overlook the space with the potential to provide a range of sports and leisure facilities. This is likely to be a long-term proposal which requires further consideration and review through the consultation process and Local Plan preparation.



Woodbridge Meadows

Walnut Tree Gardens is proposed as a new space which straddles the river, connected by a new pedestrian and cycle bridge at the end of Leas Road. It would be the first point heading north from the town centre where the riverside park starts to widen out significantly, with a gradual change in character from the more formal town centre towards a more informal character. At the northern end of the park the old Dapdune House has the potential to be resurrected as a new visitor centre.



Dapdune House

Bartons Farm is proposed as a new open space opposite Dapdune Wharf. It would face south up the river corridor towards the town centre, and together with the cricket pitch and Dapdune Wharf could form part of a major area of greenspace. This area of the river corridor is significant as it provides an improved connection to the University, including an improved bridge parallel to the railway and a new pedestrian and cycle bridge at the southern end.

Laundry Park is proposed as a more formal urban green space, activated by the presence of new cafes and restaurants on the eastern side at the base of new civic and office buildings. The landscaping here could play an important role in providing flood storage capacity facilitating development on other key sites in the town centre subject to more detailed assessment and modelling.



Improved river towpath



View to Laundry Park

Bedford Wharf could form a new connection between the station and the town centre. The high footfall and riverside setting has the potential to create a lively area, supporting bars and restaurants and providing the space for riverside markets and events. Bedford Wharf could be an ideal area to locate the main jetty for the proposed riverboat "Park and Glide" service, subject to more detailed feasibility studies.



Bedford Wharf

Royal Surrey Square could link the bottom end of North Street with the river and would largely be created by the removal of the eastern side of the gyratory system. The replacement of the existing road bridge with a lighter structure for pedestrians and cyclists would restore the ground levels to a more normal condition, creating potential for a range of exciting riverside uses.



Royal Surrey Square

Malt House Green could be the first of the new riverside spaces to be delivered through the temporary remodelling of the Portsmouth Road car park. The George Abbot pub acts as an anchor at the southern end of the space whilst a strip of development would be possible along the western edge, screening the park from the elevated road. The close proximity of this site to the High Street and North Street would make it an ideal venue for events and seasonal markets.



Malt House Green

Millmead already enjoys a slim strip of green space alongside the river which is popular despite its tiny dimensions. Replacing the car parking and much of the road to the south with green space could create an enhanced space, helping to maintain a continuous green chain. An element of vehicle access will need to be retained for access to properties including the Baptist Church and the Britannia pub.



Millmead

GROWING A SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTRE

TOWN CENTRE DESTINATIONS

Guildford's attractive historic features are viewed as a great asset. Although Guildford benefits from good road links, the post war road network severely constrains the performance of the town centre. The impact of traffic on the shape of the town centre and the impact of poor buildings has left a fragmented and damaged heart to the town. This area needs to be sympathetically nurtured and carefully reconnected with the river and the wider hinterland.

One of the successful aspects of Guildford's town centre is its compact form. North Street and the High Street are linked by a series of attractive lanes with other intimate spaces leading south towards the castle. New shops and town centre uses should be located to work with this existing structure – reinforcing it rather than competing with it. It is important that any significant new town centre uses are not located away from this core area. Many successful historic towns struggle to find suitable development sites to enhance their historic core.

The proposals encourage the expansion of the town centre to embrace the riverside, alongside other major opportunities including North Street.

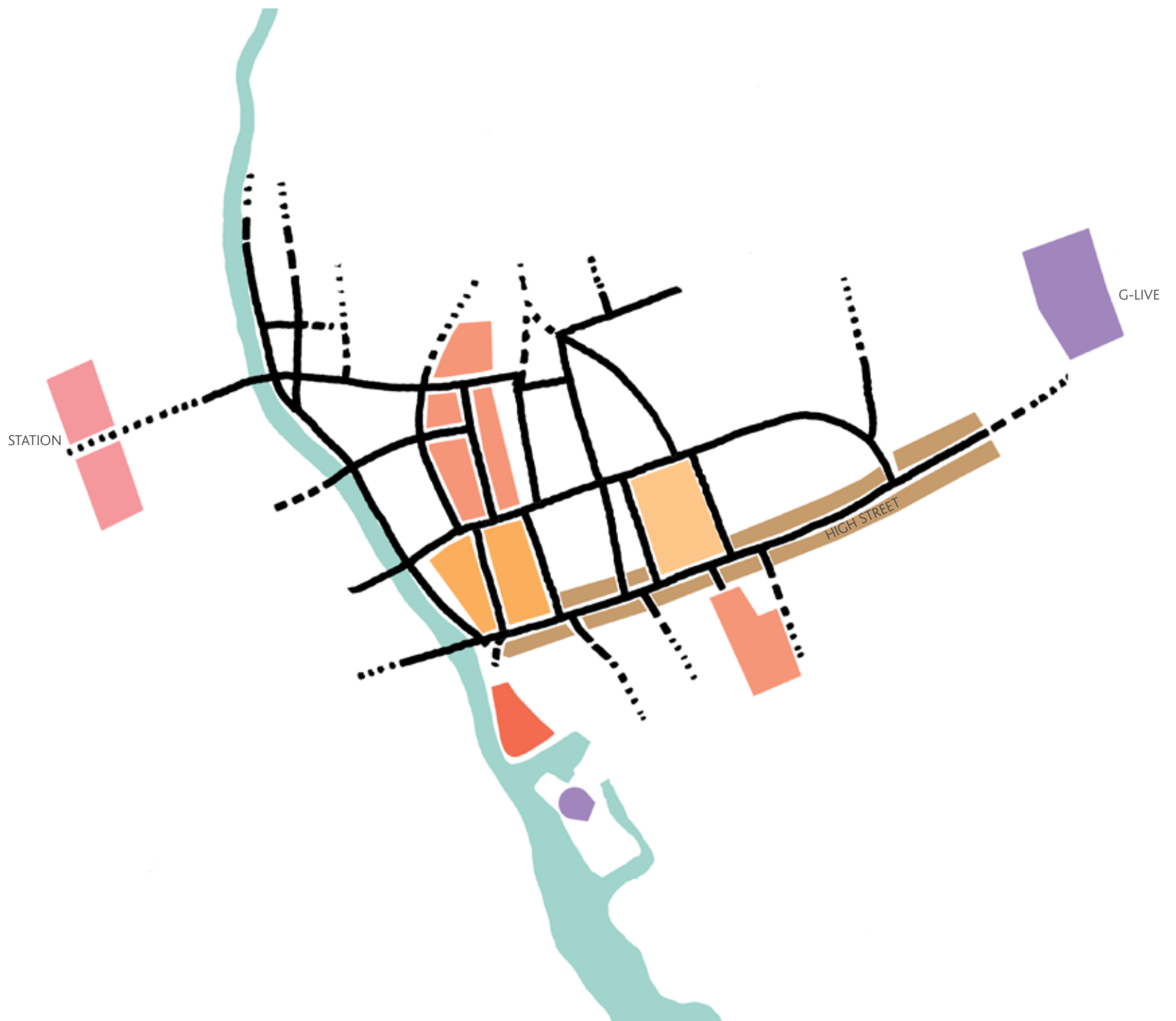
The Council is considering a long-term approach of releasing land in the river corridor to create a range of new uses to accommodate housing growth and town centre vitality. This is potentially outside of the timescales for the Local Plan and is subject to further discussion, review and consultation.

These areas are a natural extension of the existing town so their successful development will draw more people into the centre of Guildford rather than out to other competing locations. The riverside areas in particular offer a fantastic opportunity to introduce new waterside restaurants, bars, shops and event spaces. These include some projects which can be introduced at an early stage, such as the creation of a town centre pop-up park in place of the Portsmouth Road car park.

Other uses such as hotels, leisure activities and new modern office space will also play a key role in the town centre.



The High Street forms the centre of a successful retail offer



New patterns of activity - the masterplan proposes the expansion of the town centre, establishing stronger connections to the river and nurturing new retail, leisure and cultural attractions. The masterplan also proposes areas of improved public realm in the historic town centre. The different colours highlight key destinations in the town centre, and illustrate the concept of diversifying the offer in Guildford.



Existing retail circuit



Proposed retail circuit - proposals for North Street, Bedford Wharf and the gyratory will see an expansion in the retail circuit. The drawing on page 45 illustrates the pedestrian priority areas in the masterplan.



Artist's impression of mixed use proposals for North Street

The Council is keen to promote a major mixed-use retail scheme for this important part of the town centre. The image above illustrates a potential approach to the site with a high quality development with new retail and mixed use development alongside attractive streets and spaces. This should be considered in the context of the Council's previous assessment of the North Street area which identifies capacity for a 32,500 to 37,000 m² retail-led scheme including a 200,000 sq.ft department store. Illustrative proposals continue to evolve for this important site.



Artist's impression of public realm and shopfront improvements to the existing High Street

As well as seeking opportunities for substantial new development, there is also a more subtle and gradual process of repairing elements of the existing centre. Much of this work relates to removal of street clutter and the ongoing process of renewing paving and sets on the key streets. Shop-front improvements are also needed in some areas and some of the less attractive buildings would benefit from sensitive upgrading or redevelopment to better complement the rest of the town centre. Guildford's rich and varied character means that new development does not need to be pastiche in style. Rather, it should reflect the scale, proportions and variety of the existing architecture and all but the most important buildings should seek to join in with the townscape rather than stand out.

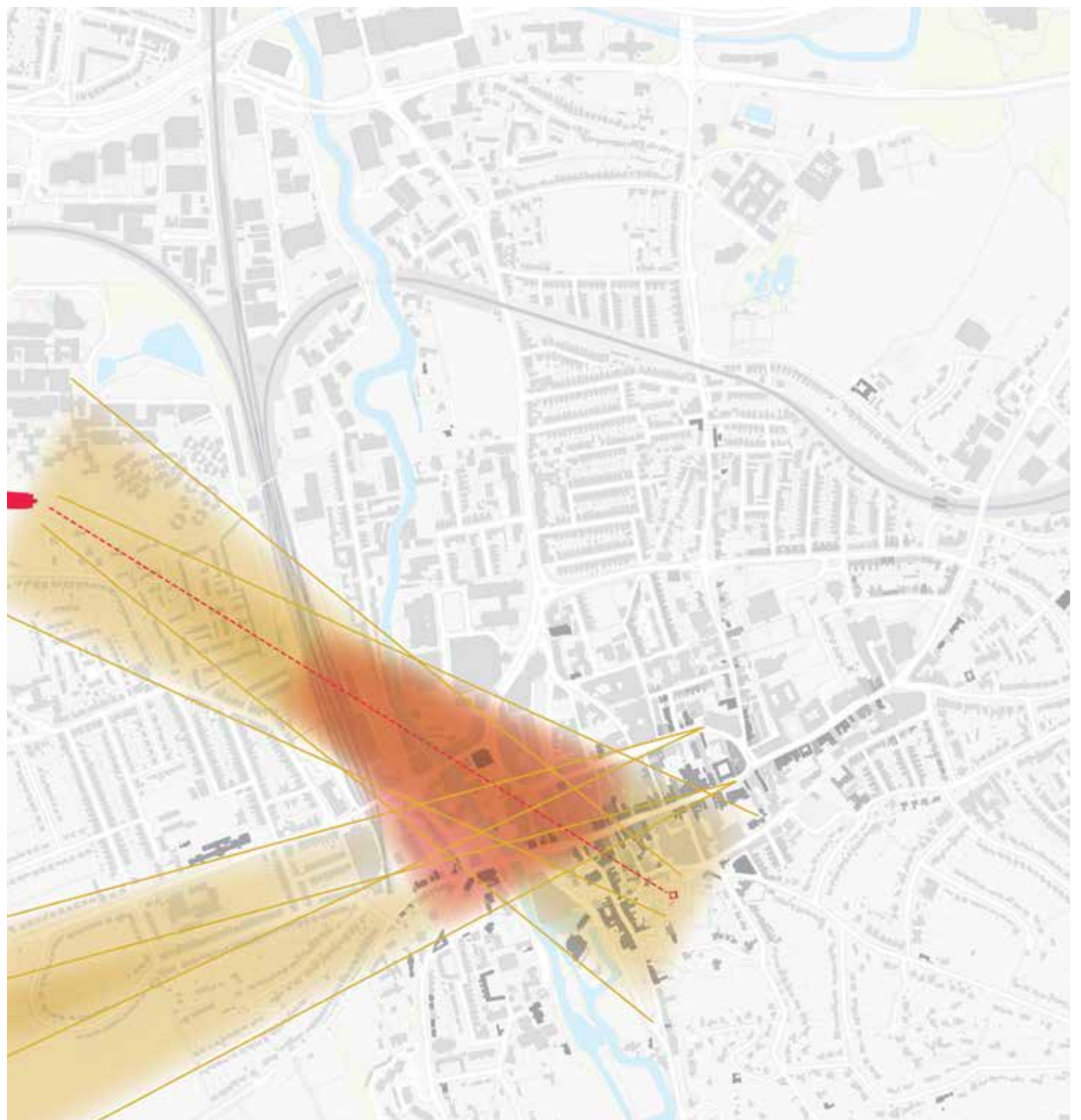
Access to the High Street will largely be restricted to pedestrians and cyclists. It is envisaged that Blue Badge Parking would be permitted alongside predominantly out of hours servicing.

INTEGRATION WITH THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

Part of Guildford's appeal is the nature of the town stepping down the hillside to the river crossing and the views it offers. For centuries this relationship between the town and the landscape has been a defining feature of its character, with the graceful cascade of rooftops down the hill to the river crossing punctuated by the towers of churches and the castle. A challenge for future development is how to meet current needs whilst working with this attractive character. The masterplan strategy advocates avoiding the need for tall and bulky buildings which would have a negative impact on Guildford's character.

Views between key buildings such as the cathedral and the castle and views from the town centre to the surrounding countryside are also important features of Guildford. These views are very vulnerable to the impact of taller buildings, particularly where these would break the silhouette or the skyline.

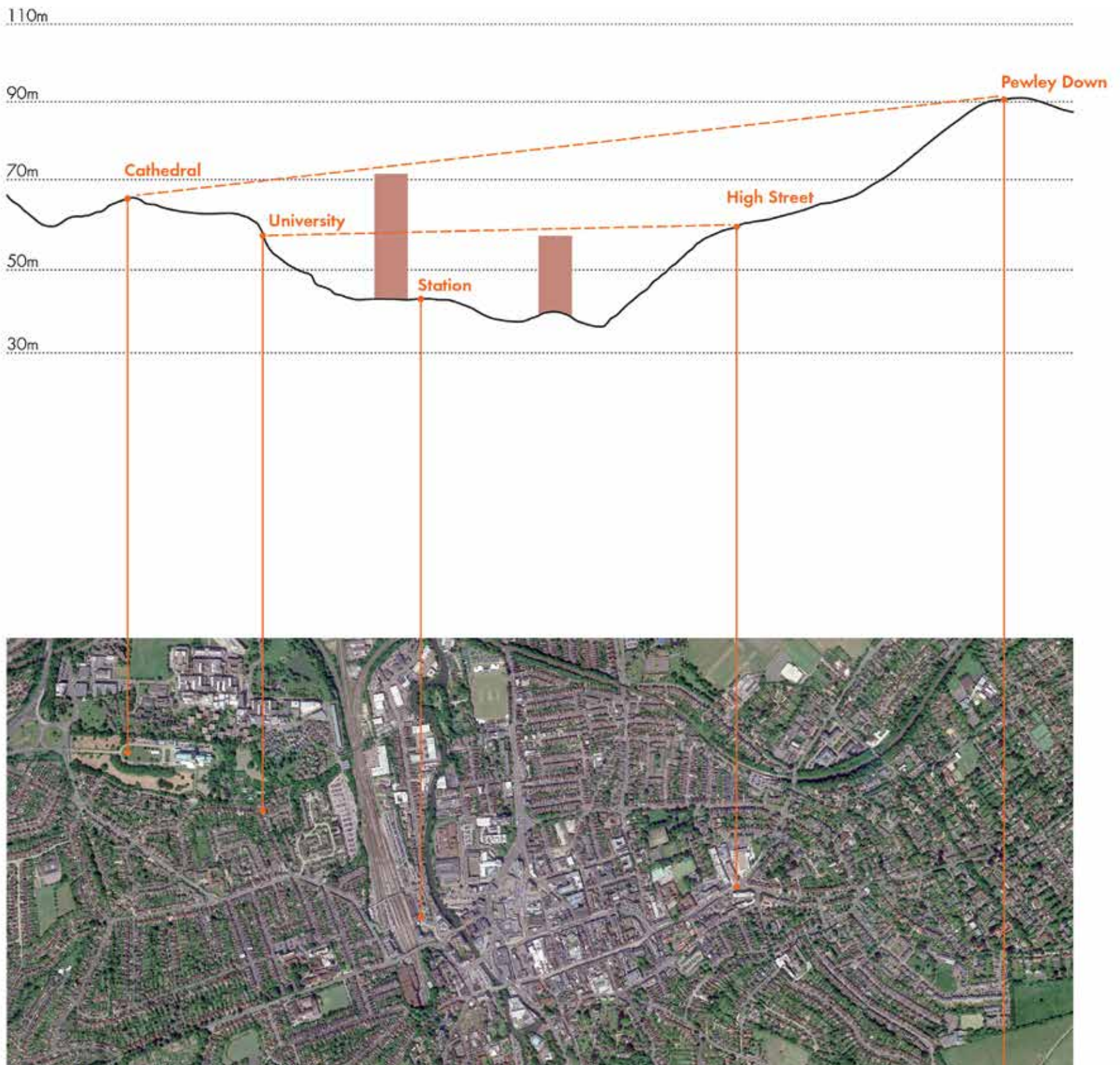
The following drawing highlights the existence of a number of important views, alongside a zone of particular sensitivity to the impact of taller buildings.



The coalescence of viewing corridors highlights a zone of particular sensitivity in relation to scale, mass and height. Proposals in the river corridor, near the station and around Bedford Wharf and North Street will require a clear rationale in relation to building heights



Proposals should seek to protect and enhance key views and settings (including the view from the castle, far right)



Diagrammatic section highlighting the sensitivity of proposals which exceed c. 6 storeys in the base of the valley. All proposals need careful consideration with respect to height, particularly where adjacent to Listed buildings and the Conservation Area

KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Surrey University is an important part of Guildford's economy. It attracts a high calibre of student and its presence as a centre of excellence benefits Guildford in many ways. As well as seeking to improve the connections between the town centre, the University and Surrey Research Park, there are also opportunities to provide space for University-related activities, whether this is faculty space or incubator space for business and research start-ups, in addition to the incubator space which is already provided for students at Surrey Research Park.

Guildford's town centre is an important employment centre, with a strong range of employers and a particularly significant tech sector. There is potential to gradually add to this strong base, making sure that a range of opportunities are provided for start-ups and development projects linked to Surrey University through to larger companies seeking more substantial offices. The masterplan promotes a flexible approach to respond to changing demand over time.

ARTS AND CULTURE

In 2012, the visitor sector generated £300 million to the local economy (GBC, 2014) and is one of the fastest growing sectors in the town. Guildford benefits from an optimal mix of retail destinations, historic and landscape assets and a growing tradition of arts, festivals and cultural events.

The overarching strategy of protecting the historic character of central Guildford alongside public realm improvements and improved linkages will increase footfall, and support the viability of arts and culture. Improvements to the movement network and parking strategy will improve accessibility for visitors arriving by foot and cycle.

The proposals open up the River Wey, creating a major new park and establishing a new destination for leisure and relaxation. The park and improved town centre public realm will provide a setting for future formal and informal festivals and events. This arrangement will support the circuit of leisure activities, with enhanced anchor uses at Bedford Wharf.

Taken as a whole, the proposals also provide a supportive context for new cultural activities, museums or venues in the town centre or waterfront as key cultural and visitor anchors.

EVENING ECONOMY

The town centre benefits from a positive range of evening economy uses within the core town centre including bars and restaurants alongside G-Live to the east but there are opportunities to enhance the broader leisure and evening economy offer as set out in chapter 2. There is an opportunity to consider greater emphasis on leisure, and food and drink uses adjacent to the river, broadening the town centre and enhancing its overall vitality.

The combination of enhanced public realm, improved connections to the river, and creation of an expanded retail and cultural offer supports the context for the night time economy. This will be enhanced through the promotion of new hotel development.

The Council will consider specific proposals in relation to planning and licensing.



Guildford's historic environment provides an excellent setting for retail and evening economy activities

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Guildford needs to grow if it is to continue to be a successful and vibrant town - new sites need to be found for housing, business and other uses. This need for growth is putting pressure on the greenbelt which wraps around the town and constrains the ability to expand. The town centre has a major role to play in helping Guildford deliver growth in the most sustainable way.

Guildford needs a sustainable approach which makes best use of town centre sites to deliver higher density development. This will not provide all the housing sites that Guildford needs for the long term, but it could assist in limiting the loss of green belt.

In addition to more significant opportunity sites, there are a number of smaller infill development sites which could deliver additional dwellings in smaller tranches.

MEETING HOUSING NEEDS

Urban housing, built close to shops, services and public transport can be built at higher densities than suburban housing, using a fraction of the land that is required for the same amount of housing built to suburban fringe densities. Suburban homes also tend to be remote from shops, services and employment – this makes them harder to serve effectively by public transport, generating car trips to the town centre and to the station.

There are some brownfield sites in the town centre which can contribute to housing delivery in this way. However, for a sustainable scale of development it will require the relocation of commercial uses along the river corridor. The existing commercial uses in the river corridor tend to be car-based, and many occupy relatively old buildings.

Proposals for the relocation of existing uses and the re-designation of employment land for alternative uses are longer term possibilities and might be beyond the Local Plan period. The Council will consider the approach to these sites including timescales / planning process in the context of consultation feedback, the wider evidence base and the broader strategy for the Borough as a whole.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The work which is being undertaken to examine the town centre road network has also identified that town centre housing in place of light industry would generate less traffic, helping to reduce the load on the gyratory system and moving larger vehicles associated with these uses out of the town centre.

The new town centre homes which are built along the river corridor could deliver a substantial area of new housing for Guildford.

The proposals for the riverside park also offer the possibility of improved accessibility to Suitable Alternative Natural Green spaces (SANGs) which are already in public use. This relates specifically to the Riverside Nature Reserve, an extensive linear wetland and meadow area owned and managed by Guildford Borough Council provides avoidance for the Guildford urban area in the context of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The NPPF encourages the role of planning in helping to shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure (NPPF, para 93).

Opportunities to meet this requirement should be pursued through the use of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscape to minimise energy consumption. The masterplan also encourages provision for renewable energy and low carbon energy.

In addition to environmental issues, it is vital that social needs are carefully considered. The masterplan encourages future-proofing of residential development to ensure that housing is adaptable in line with Lifetime Homes principles.

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Whilst the masterplan has regard to the planning guidance established in the NPPF (2012) in terms of the suitability of uses in particular flood zones, the assessment of sites in this masterplan has not been informed by a flood risk sequential test. This will be carried out as a part of the preparation of the Local Plan, and inform the next iteration of the Local Plan.

The masterplan adheres to planning guidance established in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). The NPPF states that Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk, taking account of the impacts of climate change by applying the Sequential Test, and if necessary, the Exception Test.

The aim of the Sequential Test is to steer new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. Development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding.

Flood zones are defined as follows in the NPPF:

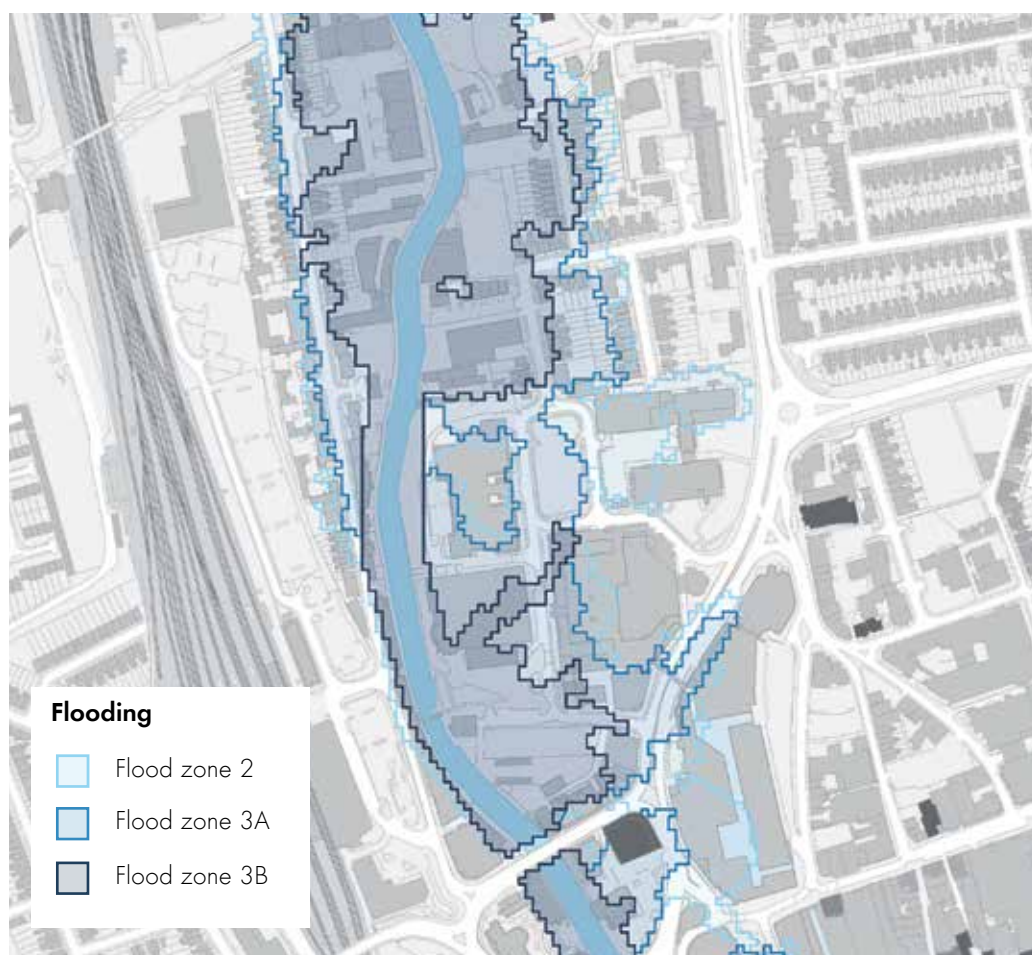
- Flood zone 1 (low probability): Land having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding.
- Flood zone 2 (medium probability): Land having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding;
- Flood zone 3a (high probability): Land having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding; and
- Flood zone 3b (the functional flood plain): This zone comprises land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood.

The overall aim should be to steer new development to Flood Zone 1. Where there are no reasonably available sites in Flood Zone 1, local planning authorities allocating land in local plans or determining planning applications for development at any particular location should take into account the flood risk vulnerability of land uses and consider reasonably available sites in Flood Zone 2, applying the Exception Test if required. Only where there are no reasonably available sites in Flood Zones 1 or 2 should the suitability of sites in Flood Zone 3 be considered, taking into account the flood risk vulnerability of land uses and applying the Exception Test if required.

Following application of the sequential test, in the absence of alternative sites at less risk of flooding, less vulnerable land uses can be directed towards Flood Zone 3A.

In that context, the masterplan seeks to avoid any development in flood zone 3B, and avoids the promotion of any residential development in flood zone 3A. The Council, in discussion with the Environment Agency, would consider the identification of a non-appropriate use in NPPF terms where allocation might contribute to the delivery of key policy priorities for the Council. This would need to be taken forward through more detailed modelling work and engineering / design proposals in tandem with the Sequential / Exceptions Test as part of the Local Plan process.

Proposals will also be required to demonstrate consideration and appropriate responses to ground water protection zones.



Extract of flood zone mapping (flood zone 2 represents medium risk, flood zone 3B is highest risk)

