BroadwayMalyan^{BM}

Bicester Public Realm Strategy Framework

Stage 1 - Site Diagnosis
November 2024
Issue 08

Creating
places.
Together.

Bicester Public Realm Strategy Framework
Bicester - Cherwell

BroadwayMalyan ᴮᴹ

Contents

Section 1 - Introduction
Approach

Introduction

This study was commissioned by Cherwell District Council in April 2023. In two parts, the first establishes an evidence baseline of the existing condition of the public realm in Bicester.

This informs the second part which identifies opportunities and constraints, project aims and aspirations and then makes recommendations for public realm interventions in the urban centre.

01. Site Analysis

As preparation for the site visits, a desktop based analysis of Bicester and its public realm was undertaken.

Site Visit

Bicester was visited on 21st April 2023. During this site visit aspects such as street activity, pedestrian desire lines, street clutter and other key elements were recorded.

We documented the look and feel of the public realm and its quality and condition.

The gathered data supported the further analysis work of the Movement and Place Analysis and helped to establish Street Typologies and Public Realm Character Areas.

The site analysis records and appraises the following themes:

- Walking distance
- Movement – Walking/Cycling/Vehicle
- Street Activity and Active frontages
- Planning Review
- Culture and Heritage
- Urban Green Infrastructure
- Microclimate
- Landmarks and Key Views
- Land Use
- Public Realm Surfacing Materials
- Public Realm Furniture and Boundary Elements
- Place and Movement Analysis
- Street Typologies and Existing Attributes
- Public Realm Comfort and Safety
- Public Realm Character Areas

02. Public Realm Vision and Objectives

This section needs to be read alongside the Town Centre and Retail Study (September 2021), a part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review 2040; and in the context of the following earlier policy documents:

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need

Further work is anticipated aligned to the existing policy framework.

Within the report **recommendations** are presented in pink boxes.

Section 2 - The value of the Public Realm
A manifesto for investment

The public realm refers to the shared spaces and facilities that are accessible to everyone in a town/village centre, including streets, pavements, footpaths, parks, public spaces, and other open spaces. It plays a critical role in shaping the vitality and viability of town/village centres, as well as contributing to the overall quality of life of the community. The importance of the public realm is rooted in its ability to foster social interaction, stimulate economic activity, and enhance the environmental sustainability of urban areas.

Firstly, a high-quality public realm can foster social interaction and community cohesion, providing a place for people to gather, connect, and interact. Public spaces provide opportunities for socializing and cultural exchange, facilitating a sense of belonging and connection among residents. This enhances the overall quality of life and wellbeing of the community, as people feel more engaged and invested in their neighbourhood.

Secondly, the public realm is critical to the economic vitality of town centres. Public spaces and amenities, such as parks, green spaces, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, can attract businesses and encourage spending, boosting local economies. A well-designed public realm can also create a unique sense of place that attracts visitors, further supporting local businesses and enhancing the overall economic activity in the area.

Lastly, the public realm plays a critical role in promoting environmental sustainability. A high-quality public realm can reduce carbon emissions by encouraging sustainable modes of transportation such as walking, cycling, and public transit. Public spaces can also serve as important natural habitats for wildlife and improve air and water quality in urban areas.

Overall, the social, economic, and environmental benefits of a high-quality public realm are clear. Investing in public spaces and amenities in town/village centres can lead to more vibrant, connected, and sustainable communities. Moreover, understanding the value of the public realm and prioritizing its maintenance and improvement can help ensure that town/village centres remain vibrant and vital for generations to come.

Section 3 - Context to the Strategy
Historic mapping and context

Bicester is a historic market town in the Cherwell district of Oxfordshire. It was founded in Saxon times close to Roman roads and the ford over the river Bure. The church was built around 1200, and the market established by 1239, and the form of the Market Place and adjoining streets is little altered since medieval times. Following the dissolution of Bicester Priory the town was rebuilt in timber, brick and stone, the Town House in the Market Place dates from this period.

Fires in the 18th century led to further rebuilding with Bicester becoming a significant staging post on the route from London to Birmingham, with coaching inns and other services catering to travellers. In the 20th century the town developed considerably but the old town was little changed and still displays a variety of styles and materials in its historic streets. In 1916 an airfield for the Royal Flying Corps was established becoming RAF Bicester in 1918. 'Homes fit for Heroes' were built after the First World War on the Buckingham Road, and following the establishment of the Central Ordinance Depot in 1942, houses for civilian workers in Bardwell and elsewhere.

After Local Government Reorganisation in the 1970's, Bicester was designated a 'Country Town' and became a focus for significant growth, this continues with developments now set to increase the population to over 40,000. Large numbers of domestic and foreign visitors are attracted to Bicester Village and Bicester Motion (the UK's first dedicated centre for the restoration and display of vintage and classic cars, motorcycles and aeroplanes).
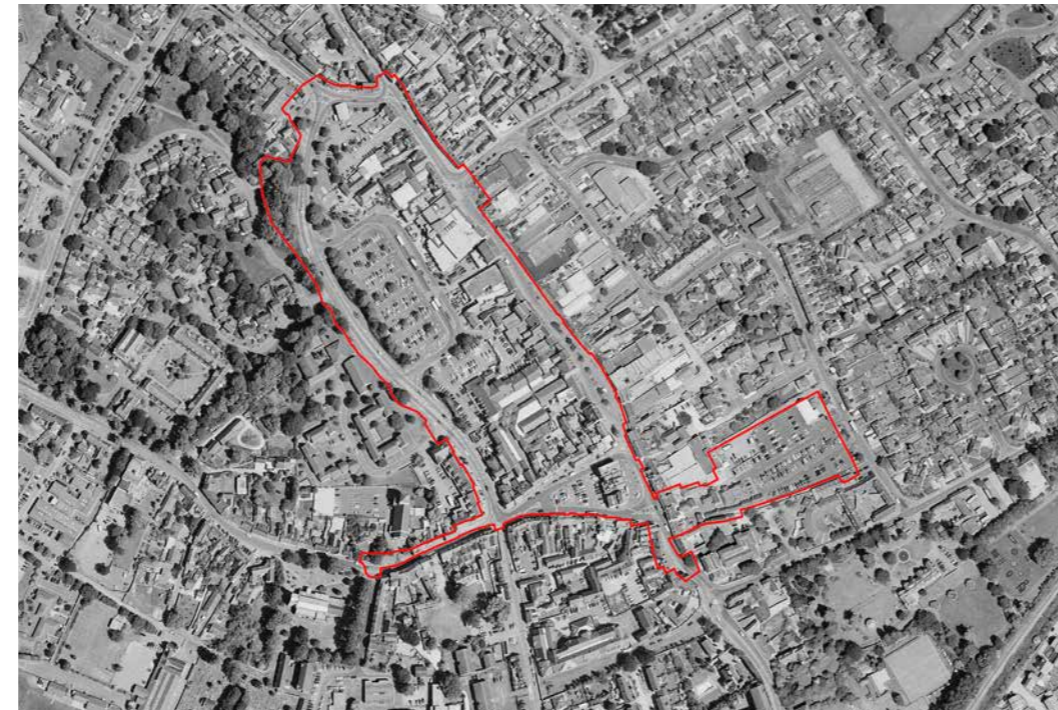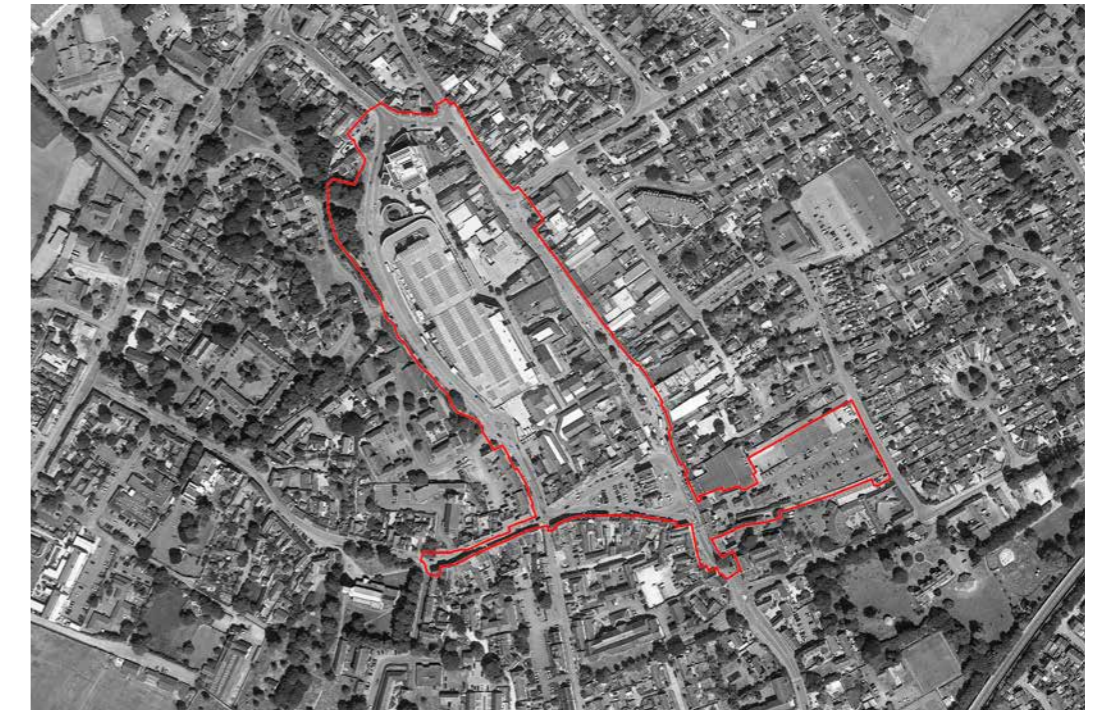
Reference heritage story in place narrative
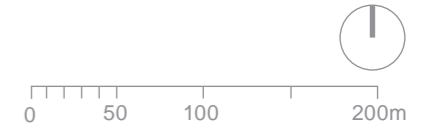
1753

1910
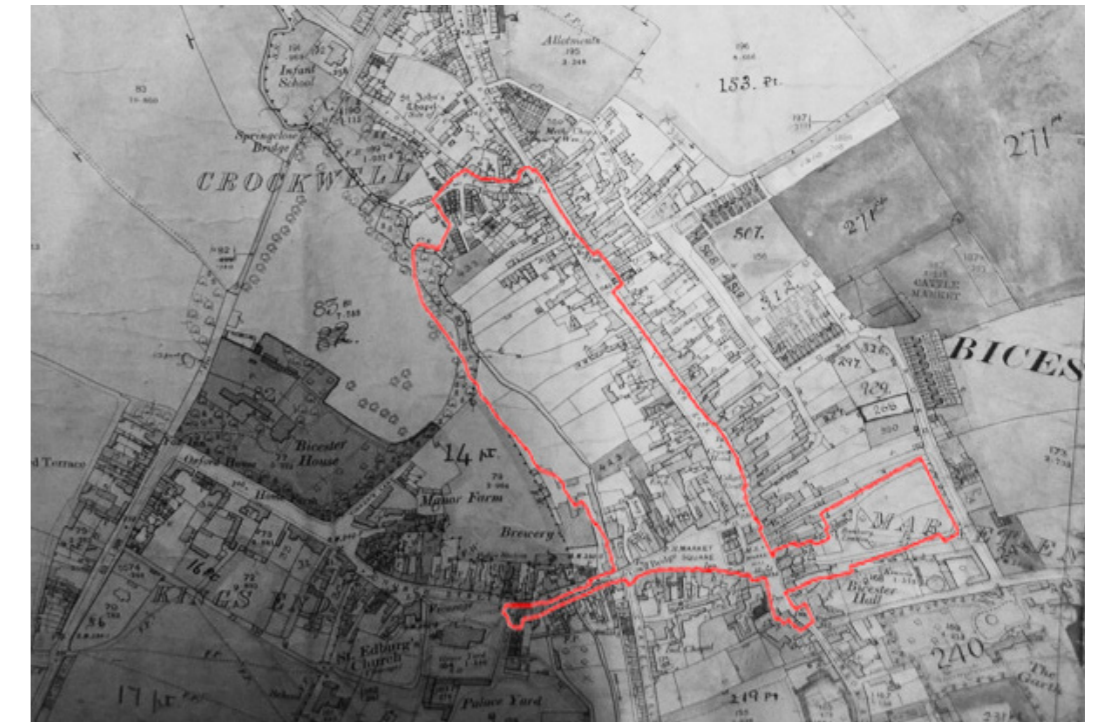
2004

2023

Section 3 - Context to the Strategy
Urban Grain

Bicester's Sheep Street is characterised by the linear frontage of burgage plots along the wide space of the town's original livestock market. This pattern is very different from that of the earlier Market Square, which was partially built on over time with a number of encroachments, one of which, the buildings known as the 'Island Block', remains. The current car park, therefore, occupies a space which has seen a variety of uses, with buildings, market stalls, fairs and events. Market stalls used the area until the pedestrianisation of Sheep Street in 1994.

The finer urban grain, present in the town centre, is notable as this is surrounded by claims about the range of benefits that it provides for mix of use, mix of ownership, mix of business, streetscape and street life in the urban centre. Finer grain represents richer diversity of use and life on the street.

Pioneer Square (built in 2013) forms a large footprint providing additional town centre retail and leisure facilities.

Rationalise/ Restructure use of open space and redistribute vehicle spaces for pedestrian and cycle movement and street activity.

Pioneer Square

Sheep St.

B4100

Market Square

KEY

—— Site boundary

███ Urban fabric

Section 4 - Understand Bicester
Site Visit

Bicester was visited on 21st April 2023.

During the site visit aspects such as street activity, pedestrian desire lines, street clutter and other key elements were recorded.

We documented the look and feel of the public realm and its quality and condition.

The gathered data supported the further analysis work of the Movement and Place Analysis and helped to establish Street Typologies and Public Realm Character Areas.

The site analysis records and appraises a number of themes, as shown in the photographs:

Underwhelming gateways

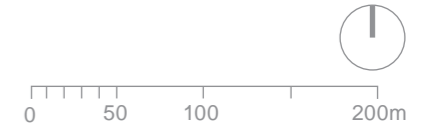Spill out opportunities provide activation

Mix of street furniture clutters experience

Pedestrianised highstreet and key routes

Vehicles impacting on quality of place

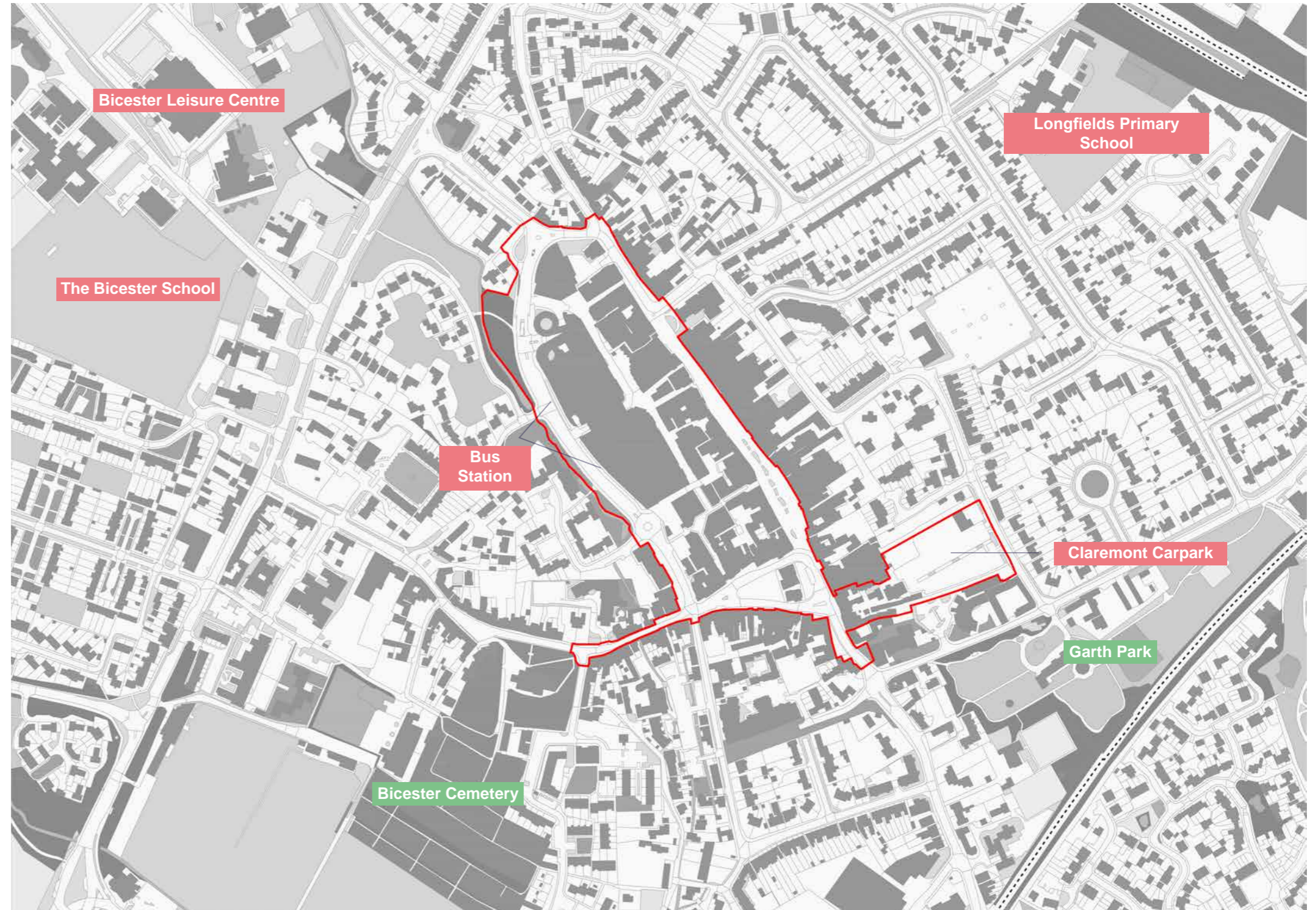# Section 4 - Understand Bicester
The Study Area

The Study Area

The study area aims to include both the town centre core alongside the gyratory and key arterial street which currently accommodate an extension of town centre uses (Causeway) in order to understand the interface between the Town Centre, gateways and arrival experiences on all transport modes.

The study area includes the Cherwell District Council operated Claremont car park, which is identified as a key arrival node.

Other arrival nodes are Sainsbury's car park; Chapel Street car park; and Manorsfield Road for bus passengers.
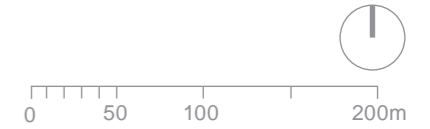

0   50   100   200m

Bicester Leisure Centre

Longfields Primary School

The Bicester School

Bus Station

Claremont Carpark

Garth Park

Bicester Cemetery

KEY

—— Site boundary

Section 4 - Understand Bicester
Walking Distance: 400m/5min

Walking Distance: 400m/5 min

We have mapped a 400m radius which illustrates a 5 minute walking journey. The diagram illustrates a very high level of potential local footfall from neighbouring residential areas within this 5 minute catchment.

Also within the 400m radius lie Bicester bus station, public schools and Garth Park.

Note: Reference Bicester LCWIP

https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/260/bicester-garden-town/720/bicester-garden-town---travel/2

Maximise walking and cycling connectivity to create safe and comfortable slow mode networks and active travel opportunities into and across the town centre.

Bicester Leisure Centre

Longfields Primary School

400m/5min

The Bicester School

Bus Station

Claremont Carpark

Garth Park

Bicester Cemetery

KEY

— Site boundary

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Walking Distance: 800m/15min

Walking Distance: 800m/15 min

A 15-minute neighbourhood is a neighbourhood in which you can access all of your most basic, day-to-day needs within a 15-minute walk of your home.

A number of significant local assets sit within an 800m radius of the town centre including;

- Bicester North/ Village Station and
- Bicester Village.

Looking beyond 800m for those able to walk further or cycle:

- Pingle Brook Open Space
- Langford Meadows
- Gavray Wildlife Meadows

Note: Reference Bicester LCWIP

https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/260/bicester-garden-town/720/bicester-garden-town---travel/2

KEY

—— Site boundary
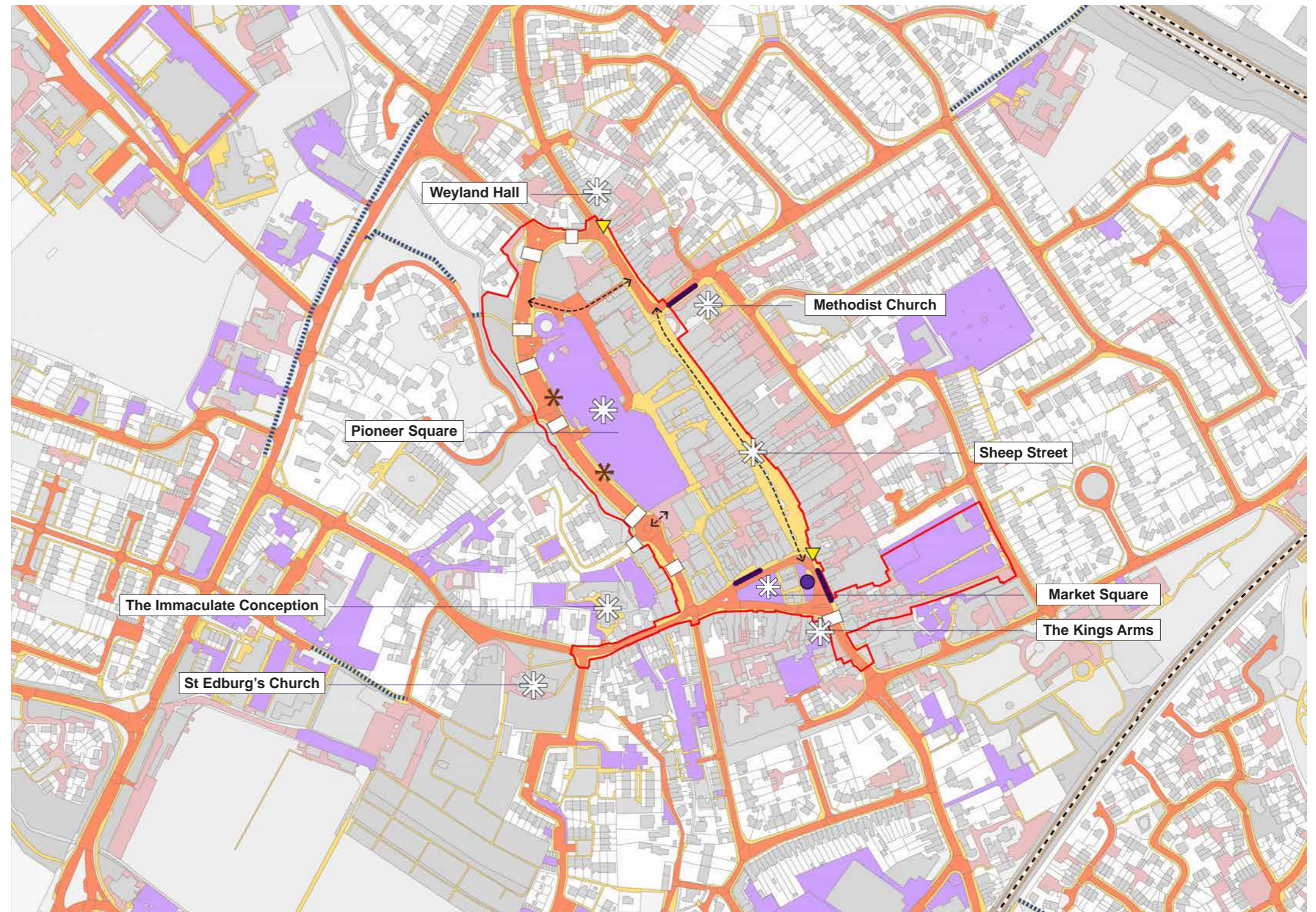
Section 4 - Understand Bicester Movement
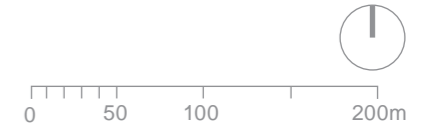
Movement: walking, cycling and vehicular

Across the study area there are a range of movement types.

Within the immediate town centre two pedestrianised streets (Sheep St/ Bure Place/Crown Walk) provide a safe and traffic free town centre environment.

There are a few major roads running through the town centre, including the A41 and A4421, which provide access from surrounding areas. These routes are traffic dominated and create severance of access to the town centre - especially from the South of the town.

Bicester town centre has several car parks, both surface and multi-storey, providing ample parking options for visitors and residents. The car parks are located in close proximity of the town centre and offer both short and long-term parking options. Some of the car parks are operated by the council, while others are run by private companies. Parking fees vary depending on the car park and the duration of stay, with some car parks offering free parking for a limited period.


Weyland Hall

Methodist Church

Pioneer Square

Sheep Street

The Immaculate Conception

Market Square

The Kings Arms

St Edburg's Church

KEY

Site boundary	Pedestrian area
Vehicular area	Car parking area
	Courtyards

On-road car parking
Cycleway
Signalised pedestrian crossing

Bus Stop
Taxi rank
Cycle stands

Key destinations
Service access
Railway

© Broadway Malyan   12

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Movement

Adjacent streets within the study area are heavily vehicle dominated some with narrow footways, pedestrian guard rails, and on-street car parking (mostly time restricted) and loading.

Public transport provision is provided. Train station is 800m walking distance. Bus Station is currently provided at B4100, outside Pioneer Square.

A taxi rank is located to the north of Market Square.
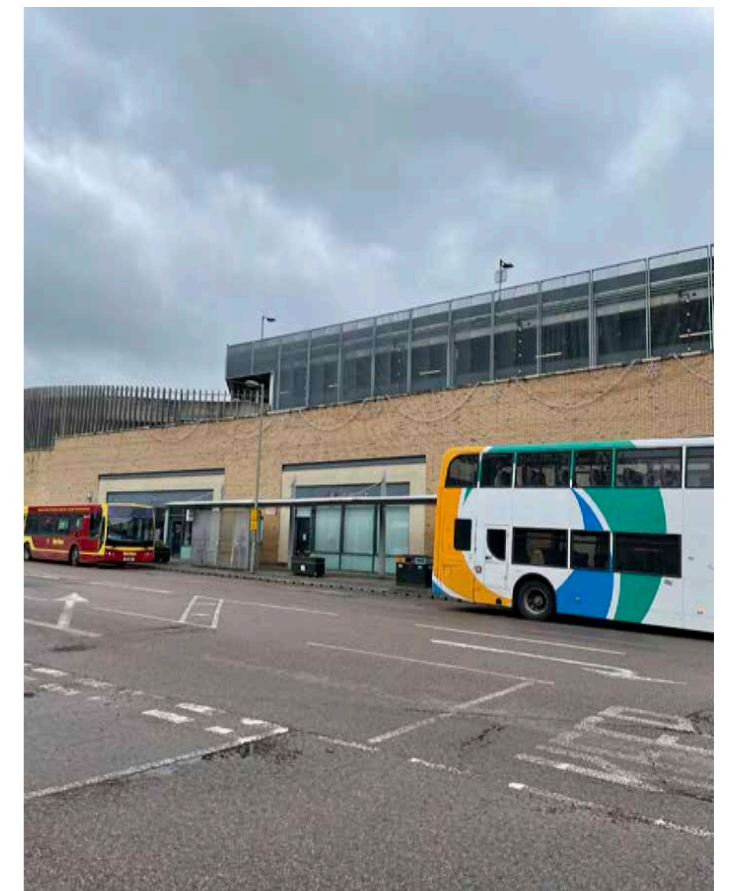
Improve walking and cycling provision especially at crossing facilities/key points and mode interchange locations.

Consider an equitable streets approach where a balanced division of space is allocated across modes - cycling approach to be thought through to ensure relationships with cyclists and pedestrians are considered.

Section 4 - Understand Bicester
Street Activity and Active Frontages

Sheep Street /Bure Place– The pedestrianised approach generates activity through visitors walking/strolling leisurely along the street. A number of businesses use the street in front of their premises. The market stalls (market day on Fridays) provide additional activation (and footfall).

Around Market Square small independent businesses are established, some of which have active frontages/outdoor seating.

These streets tend to be active with pedestrians moving quickly along them. Vehicles dominate, on-street car parking is prominent within the street scene and highway/parking creates severance across the street.

Accommodate existing requirements and enable future spill-out by businesses in key areas.

Provide a platform/facilities for activity within the street scene - markets/ events/ music/ play.

Consider removal of on street / Market Square parking

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Planning Review

Bicester is identified as a Town Centre by the Cherwell Local Plan, adopted in July 2015.

Policy B5, Strengthening Bicester Town Centre, states that 'shopping, leisure and other 'Main Town Centre Uses' will be supported within the boundary of Bicester town centre'. Residential development will also be supported in the centre, except where 'it will lead to a loss of retail or other main town centre uses'. Residential development, within the primary shopping frontage, above ground floor level, is encouraged, as well as proposed mixed use schemes.

The Council seeks to widen the boundary of the town centre. Bicester's 'Area of Search', identified for an extension, includes the existing retail park to the south. Policy 5 of the Local Plan, Strengthening Bicester Town Centre, states that 'retail and other main town centre uses will only be supported within the Area of Search if they form part of new schemes which help deliver the aims for central Bicester'. Policy 5 also states that 'residential development will also be supported within the Area of Search in appropriate locations.'

Currently the council is undertaking a Local Plan Review.

Also, Policy 5 of the Local Plan advises that development proposals have 'particular regard to enhancing the character of the [existing, Bicester] Conservation Area.'

Worth noting the role of Permitted Development Rights in changes of use from use class E to residential.
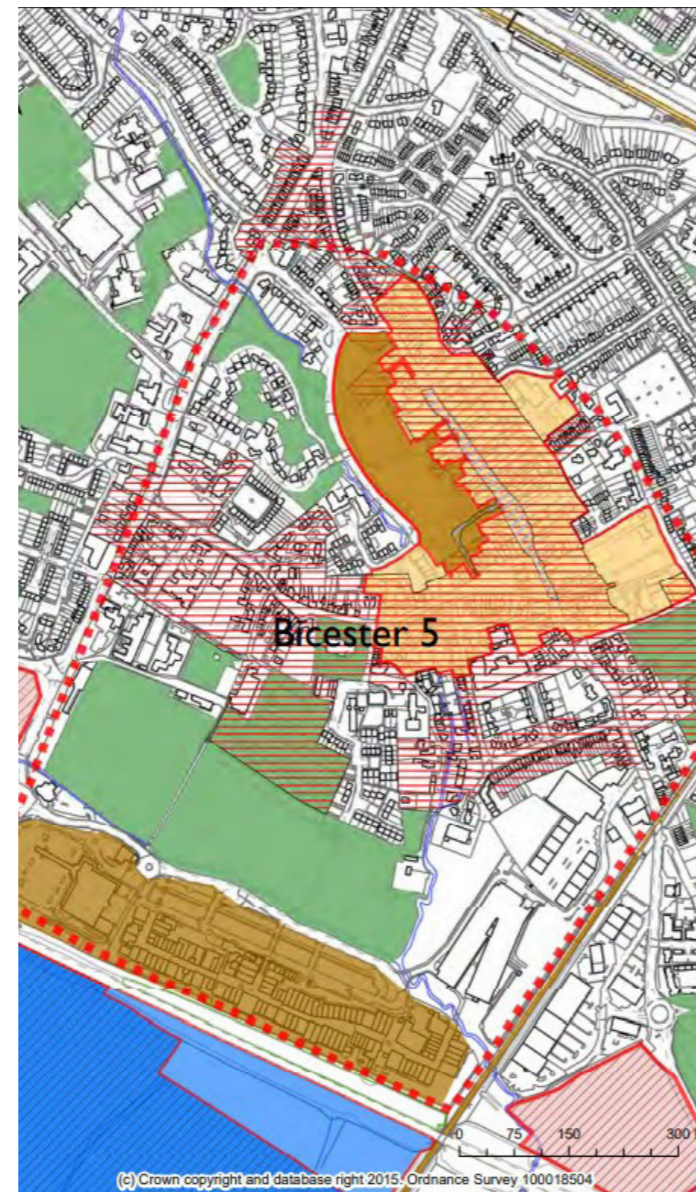
Public realm proposals to follow and support local policy by promoting the role and function of the centre and active ground floor use, and by making a positive contribution to the overall vitality and viability of the centre.

Provide high quality, safe and accessible design.

Enable interchange between transport modes and improve/ extent the walking and cycling network, especially between the pedestrianised area and the perimeter road network/ residential neighbourhoods.

Enhance heritage assets settings, Green Infrastructure and biodiversity.

Key:
- Primary Shopping Frontage
- Tourism Development
- Bure Place Redevelopment
- Existing Town Centre
- Town Centre Extension (Area of Search)
- Existing Retail Parks (Indicative)
- Approved Housing Sites
- Mixed Use (Housing and Employment)
- Strategic Housing Sites
- Existing Strategic Employment Sites (Indicative)
- Approved Employment Sites
- New Employment Sites
- Existing Green Space
- Conservation Target Areas
- Conservation Areas
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Neighbouring Authority

Bicester 5

(c) Crown copyright and database right 2015. Ordnance Survey 100018504

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Culture and Heritage

Bicester town centre boasts a range of heritage buildings that provide a glimpse into the town's past and cultural heritage.
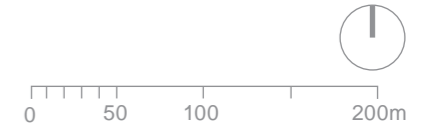
Notable buildings include the 17th-century Market House and St. Edburg's Church, a medieval church with impressive stained glass windows.

Other heritage buildings in the town centre include the Old Vicarage and the Grade II listed King's Arms Hotel, both showcasing the town's rich history. These buildings and many others in the town centre serve as a testament to Bicester's cultural heritage and offer a sense of connection to its history.

Bicester offers a range of cultural attractions. Cultural events in the town include the annual Bicester Festival, a community arts event with a parade, live music performances and participatory workshops. Each year Bicester Choral and Operatic Society perform a concert at St Edburg's Church as well as a staged musical production at The Cooper School.

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Culture and Heritage

There are a number of listed buildings in the area as well building with an architectural interest.
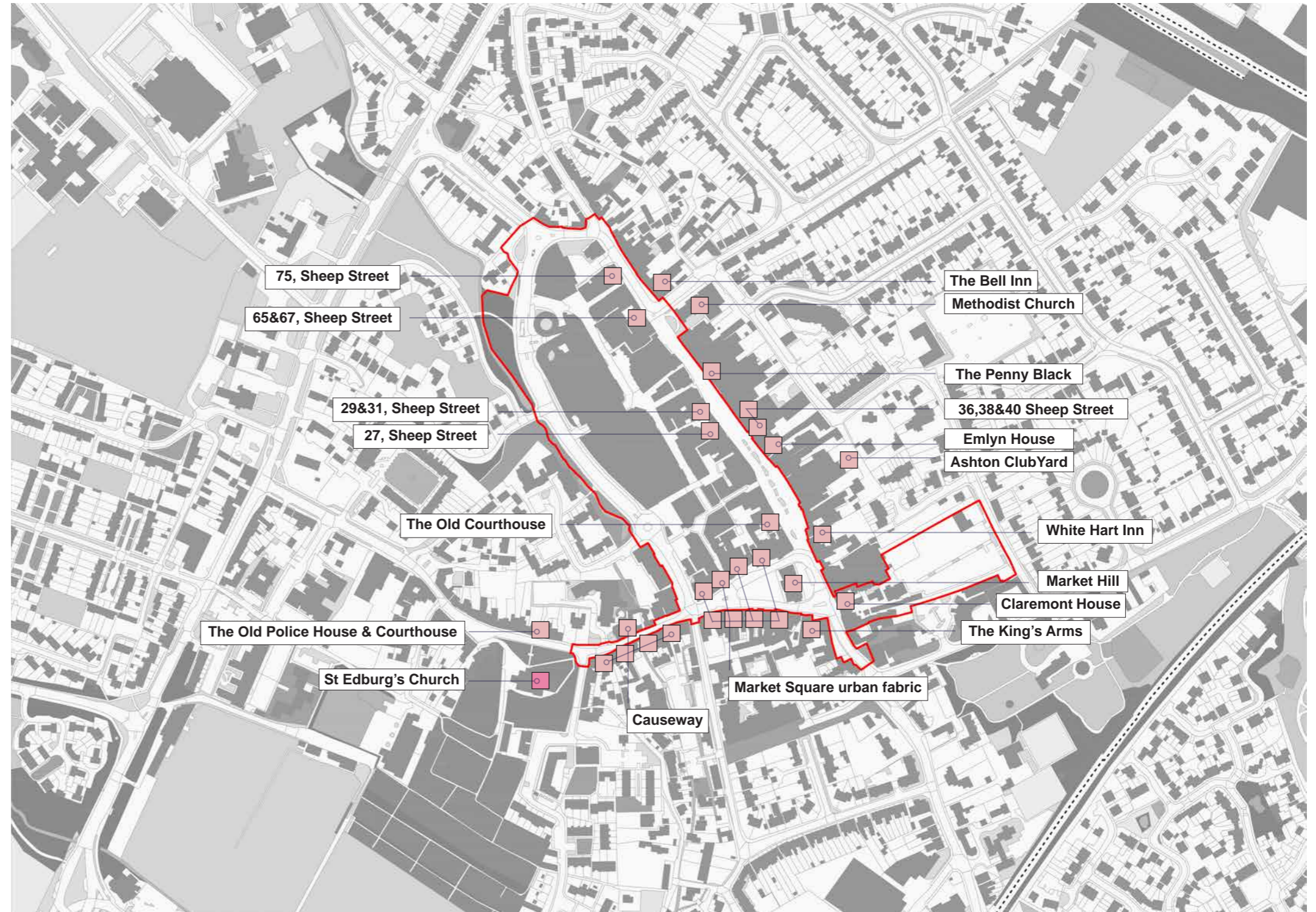
Recognise and celebrate heritage and cultural assets. Use public realm to provide a suitable setting for these.

Establish walking loops/routes that make more prominent networks of heritage/culture.

Create a flexible public realm that can accommodate events/activities.

75, Sheep Street
65&67, Sheep Street
29&31, Sheep Street
27, Sheep Street
The Old Courthouse
The Old Police House & Courthouse
St Edburg's Church
Causeway

The Bell Inn
Methodist Church
The Penny Black
36,38&40 Sheep Street
Emlyn House
Ashton ClubYard
White Hart Inn
Market Hill
Claremont House
The King's Arms
Market Square urban fabric

KEY

—— Site boundary

▮ Grade I listed Buildings

▮ Grade II listed Buildings

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Urban Green Infrastructure
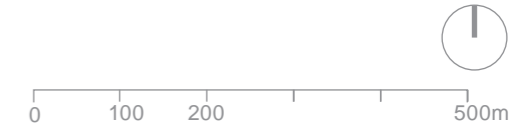
A number of public open spaces exist across the wider area including:

Woodland

Parks

Meadows

Community gardens

Community orchards

Allotments

Recreation ground

Sports pitch

Public Open Space

Playground

Water bodies

Farmland

Incidental amenity planting

scrubland

These form a network of accessible amenity within walking distance of the town centre and adjacent neighbourhoods

800m/15min

Longfields Primary School

The Bicester School

Garth Park

KEY
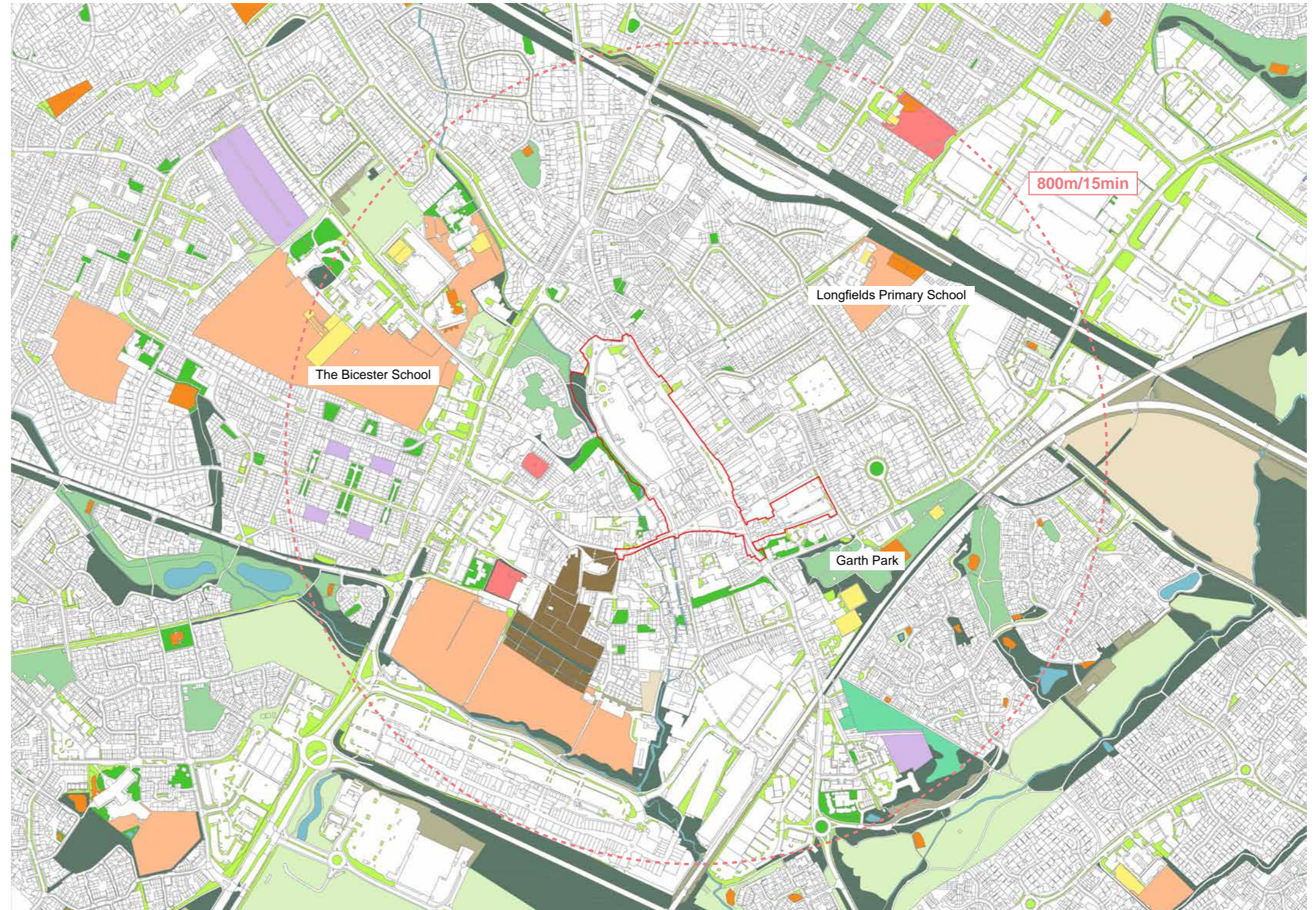
—— Site boundary	Park	Community orchard
Woodland	Meadow	Allotment
	Community garden	Recreation ground

Sports pitch   Farmland

Playground   Cemetery   POS

Water bodies   Scrubland   Incidental amenity planting

© Broadway Malyan   18

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Urban Green Infrastructure

There is street tree planting within the pedestrianised area. These are predominantly immature specimens although do add to the street scene and provide some biodiversity contributing to the microclimate (mitigating wind/providing shade/shelter) and provide human scale. They also contribute to the sensory experience (dappled shade and rustling canopy/birdsong). Species here seem inappropriate from sustainability perspective, living only relatively short lives in urban environments. There are some raised planters with ornamental planting.

A mature amenity space is located adjacent to Town Brook to the south of the town centre.

Generally very limited trees are provided on any streets within the study area

Longfields Primary School

Hunt Close Open Space

The Bicester School

400m/5min

Town Brook river

Garth Park

KEY
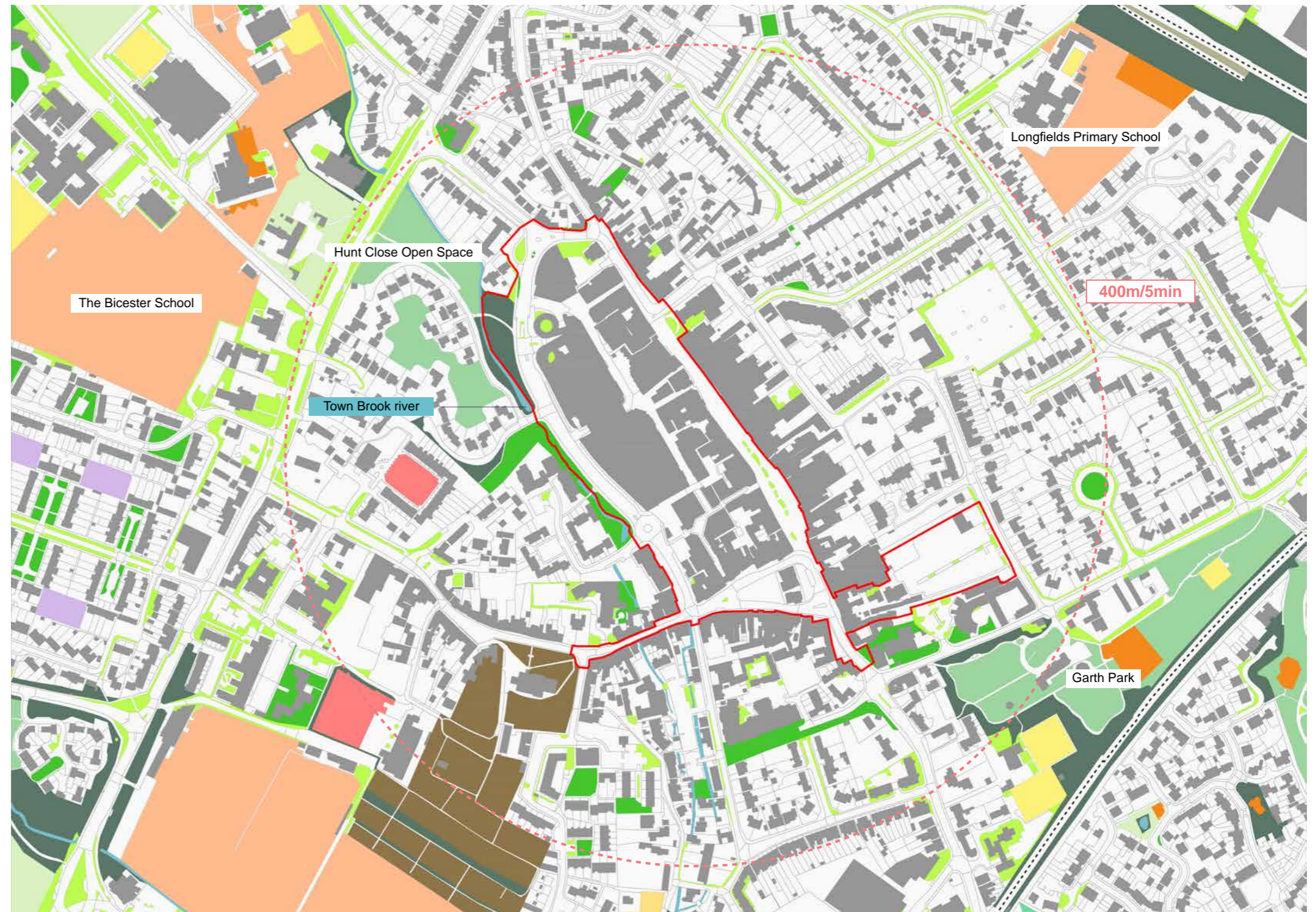
—— Site boundary	Park	POS	Sport pitch
	Meadow	Allotment	Playground	Cemetery
Woodland	Community garden	Recreation ground	Water bodies	Incidental amenity planting

© Broadway Malyan   19

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Urban Green Infrastructure

Define a coordinated planting strategy for the town centre choosing appropriate species to strengthen character areas, highlight gateways, taking account of pedestrian and vehicular movement, built structure and other constraints.

Utilise Green Infrastructure to tackle effects of climate change e.g. in the form of SUDS(Sustainable Urban Drainage), and improved microclimate.

Use tree planting and green infrastructure to 'humanise' the town centre, soften street scenes and contribute to health and well-being of residents and visitors.

Policy driver is encouraged to incorporate additional tree planting with street scenes and areas of public open space.
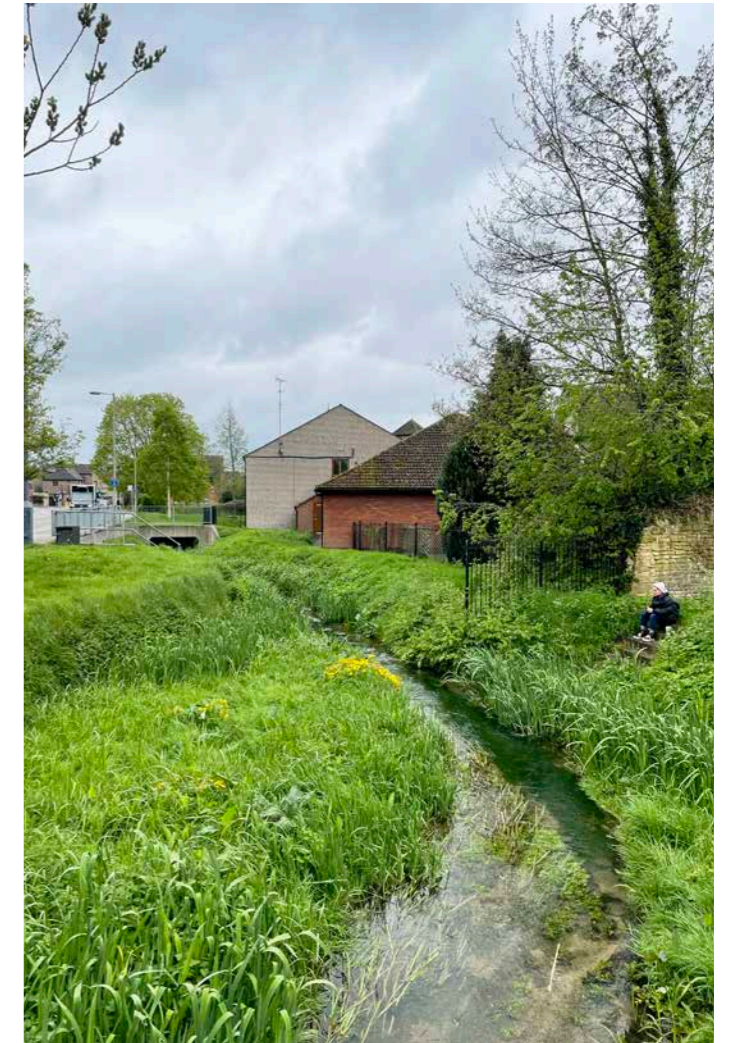
Section 4 - Understand Bicester Microclimate
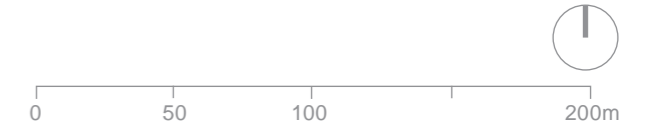
Within the core of the town, low rise buildings result in an open and unshaded Sheep Street - Bure Place Moor Lane is overshadowed by adjacent buildings.

Market Square is open and South facing sunshine penetrates.

Prevailing winds are from west and south west however Bicester's location in the inland southeast of England means that it is shielded from the full force of these weather systems, resulting in a relatively mild and temperate climate

Generally the dense urban edges are likely to create some shelter from the wind.

Encourage street tree planting to help adjust the temperatures to provide a cooling effect within key hot spot areas.

Identify Hot Spots and spaces requiring shelter and take these into consideration when planning stopping and staying spaces.

Plan comfortable active travel routes.

KEY

— Site boundary

— → Sun path

---→ Assumed wind corridor

⬤ Assumed hot spots
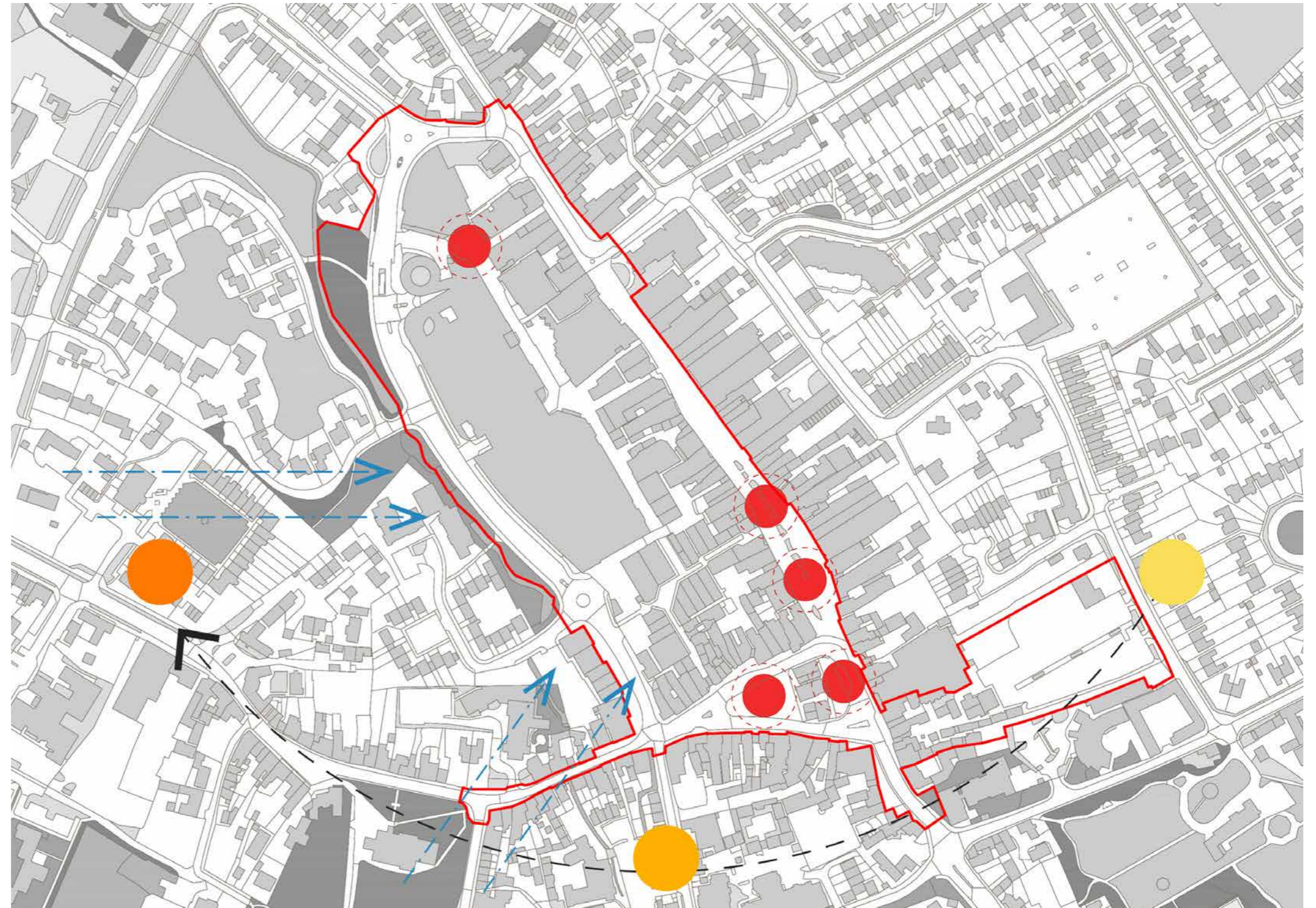
Section 4 - Understand Bicester Landmarks and Key Views
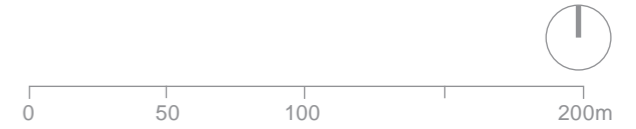
Bicester town centre is home to several notable landmarks and key views that offer a glimpse into the town's history and cultural heritage.

One of the most prominent landmarks is the Market Square, which features the 17th-century Market House and a range of independent shops and cafes.

Nearby is St. Edburg's Church, a striking medieval church with an impressive Norman tower and stained glass windows. Visitors can also enjoy views of the town's picturesque River Bure.

Enhance key views within the core and visual connectivity from surrounding neighbourhoods by revealing and creating sequences of landmarks for orientation and attractive gateways. De-clutter streetscapes and places where possible.

St Edburg's Church

Market Square

KEY

—— Site boundary

✳ Landmark

⤧ Key views

Section 4 - Understand Bicester
Land Use
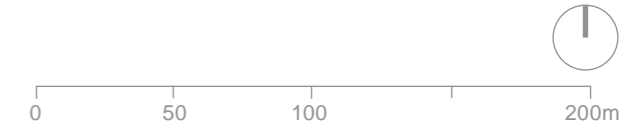
Bicester town centre has a diverse range of land uses that cater to the needs of residents and visitors alike.

The town centre is primarily a retail and commercial hub, with a range of shops, restaurants, cafes, and bars, many of which are independently owned and operated. There are also a number of banks, building societies, and other financial institutions located in the town centre.

In addition to retail and commercial land uses, Bicester town centre also has a range of cultural and heritage sites.

St. Edburg's Church,is a popular destination for visitors interested in local history and architecture.

Outside the study area are several public spaces and green areas, including Garth Park and Pingle Field (this will be a new town park developed by Bicester Village), which offer a range of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Finally, Bicester town centre also includes a number of residential areas, with several apartment complexes located in and around the town centre.
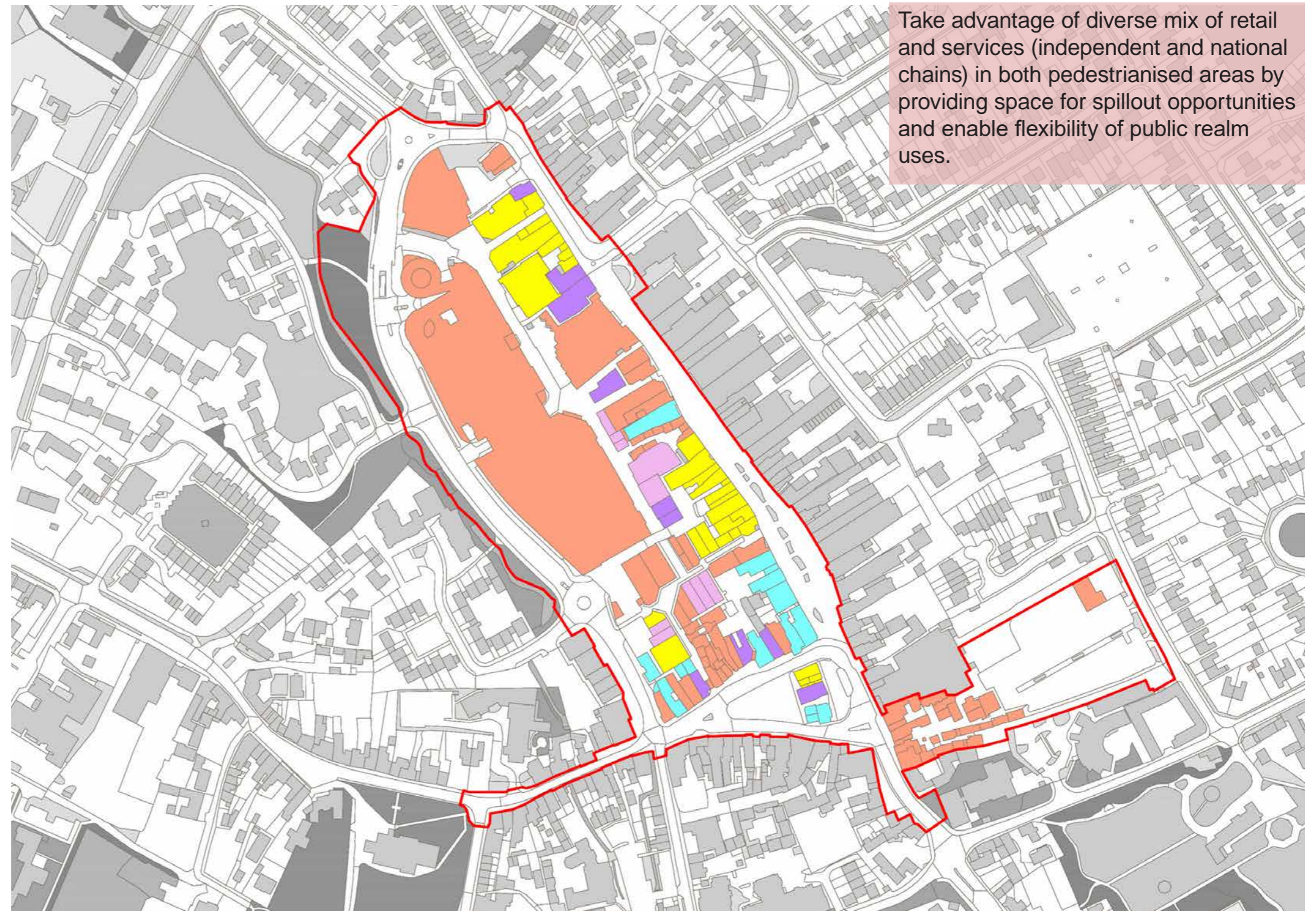
Take advantage of diverse mix of retail and services (independent and national chains) in both pedestrianised areas by providing space for spillout opportunities and enable flexibility of public realm uses.

0   50   100   200m

KEY

— Site boundary

▬ Residential

▬ Retail / Resi mixed

▬ Retail / Commercial

▬ Food & Beverage

▬ Office / Finance / Letting shops

▬ Services

Section 4 - Understand Bicester
Public Realm Surfacing Materials

Surfacing materials across the study area are of a mixed quality, age and condition

Within Sheep Street concrete block paving is used across the street cross section. Finishes are level with integrated drainage channels. There is some pattern to create interest and suggest spatial use central 'movement' zone with adjacent store frontage zones. These materials do not extend into 'gateway' spaces connecting to car parks etc.

More recent Bure Place (adjacent to Pioneer Square) development uses high quality granite palette - these extend along some perpendicular routes

Car parks are predominantly tarmac with no definition/provision of footways

Arterial streets follow a traditional tarmac road surface with concrete slabs. Footways are poor quality condition with some patching and edging with tarmac.

All low quality/condition materials should be reviewed with an aim to improve impression of the town and enjoyment of the experience.

Define a palette of materials appropriate to an updated town brand.

Identify hierarchy of materials that can be used in a coordinated fashion across the town centre.

Section 4 - Understand Bicester
Public Realm Furniture and Boundary Elements

Within the Sheep Street/ core furniture is generally matching following a traditional aesthetic. Items include: Light columns/ Benches/Litter bins/bollards.

Bure Place has an alternative suite of furniture. (Opportunity for enhancement at Pioneer Square is identified)

There are some examples of street 'clutter' at key gateways as illustrated.

Guard railing is located at points along the B4100 and at interfaces with arterial streets.

Along the B4100 routes street furniture is limited to statutory lighting and signage which creates numerous examples of cluttered street scenes.

Define a coordinated palette of furniture appropriate to an updated town brand.

Review guardrail in-line with current thinking on safety.

Consider decluttering exercise

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Place and Movement Analysis

A Movement and Place assessment establishes classifications for the 'place' and 'movement' function of a road as they are now and how they could be in the future.

Within the matrix (right), streets are defined by their functional significance in terms of movement of people and goods, and, how successful they are in encouraging people to visit and stay in certain locations.

Currently the road network surrounding the town centre is movement focused and generally dominated by car movements.

Places are suffering as a result of the focus on vehicular movement, with streets such as Causeway, B4100, Market Square, St John's St appearing homogeneous and lacking character.

Key place attractors (e.g. St Edburgs church) and residential areas are severed from the town centre core.

The proliferation of car parking within the town core encourages vehicle access and in-turn an engineered approach to the streets.
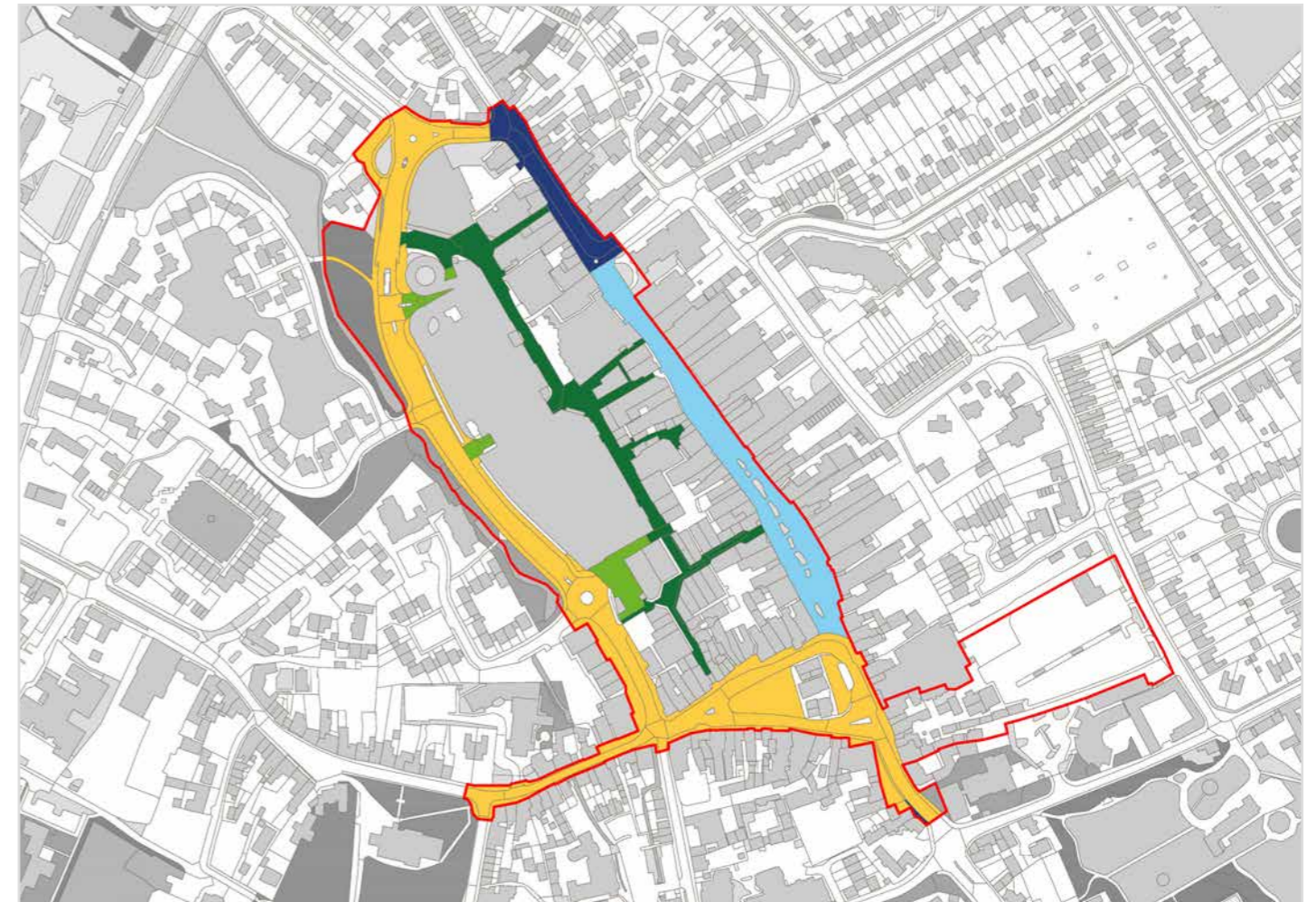
There is an opportunity to better balance movement, with more consideration for walking and safe/accessible movement.

There are historic buildings/spaces that require more emphasis and improved settings.

A renewed focus on quality place attributes could help rebuild local economies.

| Place Function	Movement Function
P3: Attracts National, Regional, non-adjacent District to District visitors	**M3:** Primary routes which play a key role for the Regional movement of goods and people (not SRN / Motorways) and / or high levels of slower mode movements
P2: Attracts visitors from within the settlements and from Adjacent settlements (City, Town)	**M2:** Connects local destinations to ensure people and goods can move freely
P1: Predominantly local function / negligible attraction	**M1:** Local access only by people and deliveries

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Street Typologies
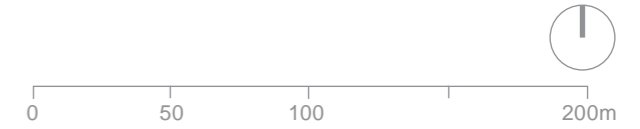
Street typologies help to establish a clear hierarchy of movement and function across the town centre.

Currently there are limited typologies which can be seen illustrated here:
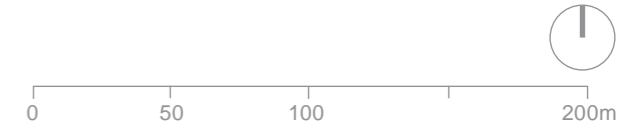
- High Street
- Town Streets
- Alleyway
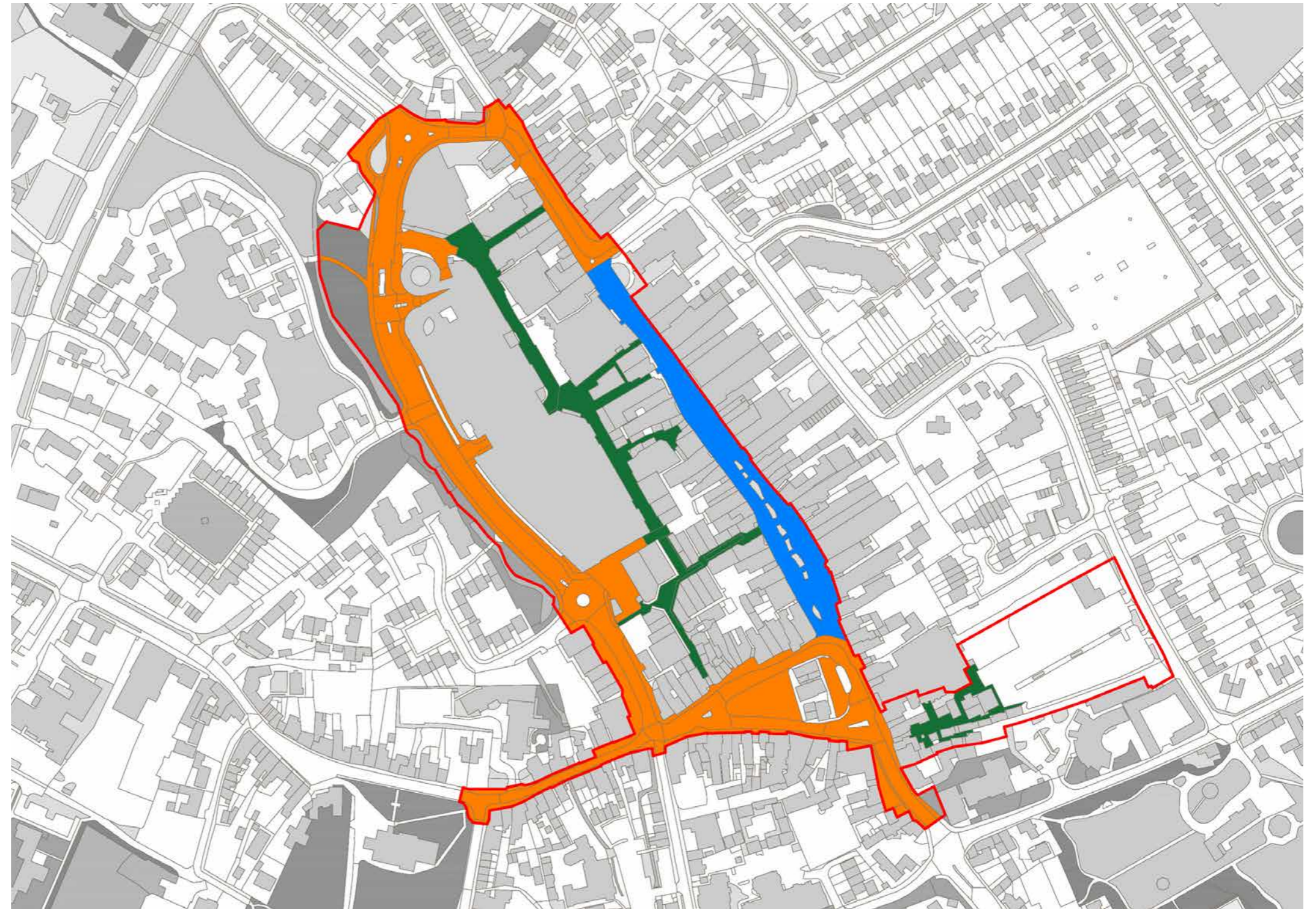
Establish a clear hierarchy of street typologies to help define use, access, character and modal share.

KEY

— Site boundary   ▬ Town street

▬ High street   ▬ Alleyway

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Public Realm Comfort and Safety

Emotive heat mapping records user's perceptions of a street/ place against an established criteria of emotional responses (see key below)

While this exercise is considered subjective, the response output can be a useful starting point for engagement with stakeholders.

Issues:

On key areas of public realm perception is of unsafe / unpleasant / uncomfortable

No areas of high quality/delight identified.

Opportunities:

Rebalance the use of town centre streets to enhance feelings of safety and delight for pedestrians/cyclists/ slower modes.

Uplift key areas/gateways to act as High Quality/Delight space.

No areas to be less than safe & comfortable

KEY

——— Site boundary

🟥 Feels Unsafe / Unpleasant / Physically Difficult to cross

🟧 Can be uncomfortable / feels safe away from conflict points

🟨 Feels safe & comfortable

🟦 Pleasurable / Attractive Environment

🟩 High quality space

© Broadway Malyan   28

Section 4 - Understand Bicester Public Realm Character Areas
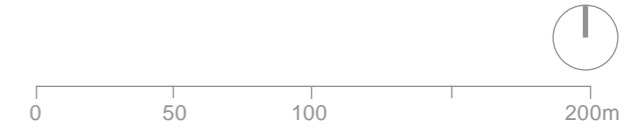
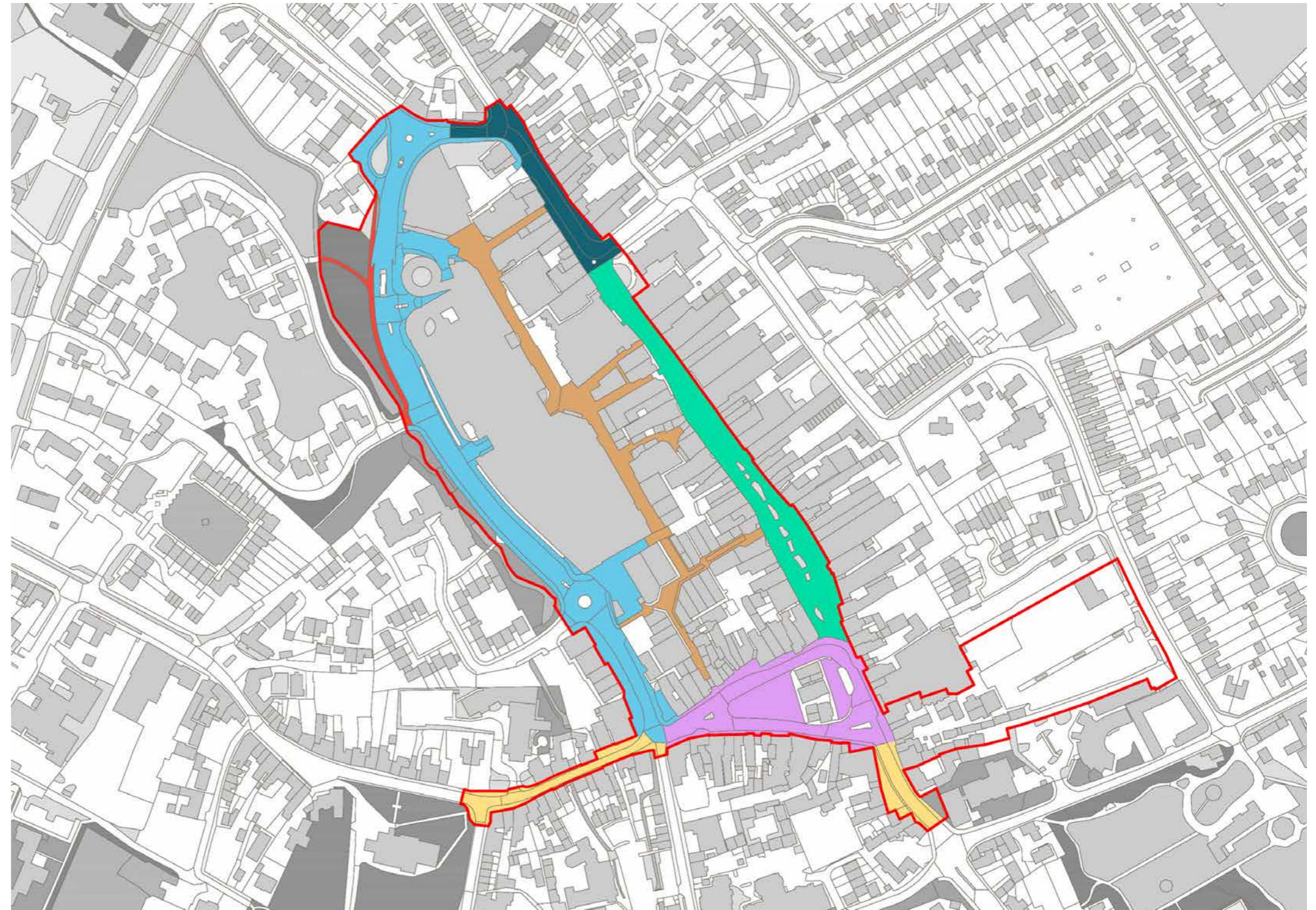Currently character types are loosely along different routes;

Sheep Street - Town Centre/Retail/Food and Beverage led

Bure Place - Undefined mix of retail,Food and Beverage, Back of House, Service access

Market Place - Historic but vehicle dominated

B4100 - Vehicle dominated gateway

Residential Living - busy highways with adjacent residential use

Establish clear and well defined characters across the study area reflecting use, heritage, movement and gateway functions.

KEY

Site boundary	Sheep Street	B4100
	Bure Place	Residential Living
	Market Place	Retail Led Mixed Use

Section 4 - Understand Bicester
Public Realm Constraints
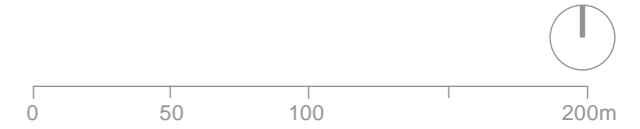
Key constraints to consider:

Heritage buildings and their settings

Severance - Barriers to movement, especially for pedestrians and cycling and impact of vehicles

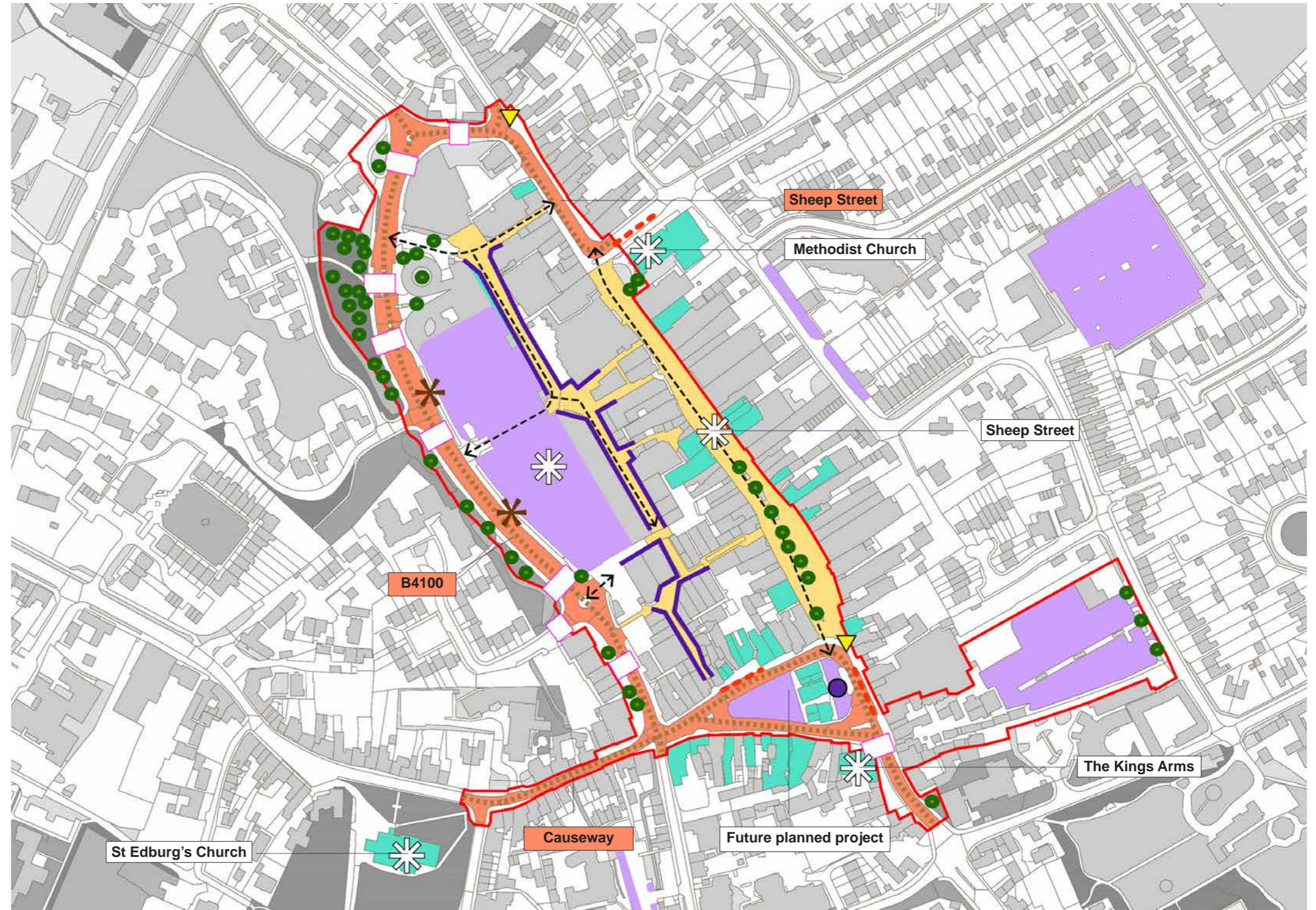Visual barriers - Limited active frontages

Parking - On-street

Service access on Sheep St and Bure Place

Green infrastructure deficit/access and poor condition in town centre

Land use - Predominant retail and leisure uses of buildings

Quality of streetscene materials/furniture/ etc

Sheep Street

Methodist Church

Sheep Street

B4100

The Kings Arms

Causeway

St Edburg's Church

Future planned project

KEY

— Site boundary	● Existing trees	■ Listed buildings	▢ Pedestrian crossing	▽ Cycle stands	● Taxi rank
▬ Adopted road mapping. Adoptable boundary information not available at this time	❋ Key destinations	■ Car parking area	✳ Bus Stop	▬ Limited active frontage	
	⤢ Service access	▬ Pedestrian area	On-road car parking	┅ Severance	

© Broadway Malyan   30

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Public Realm Opportunities
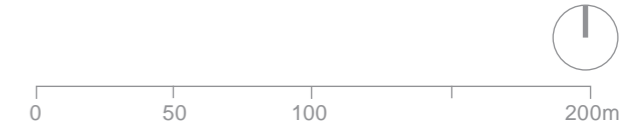
Key opportunities:

In line with the recommendations of the site diagnosis, this plan identifies opportunities for public realm improvements across the study area.

These fall into the following 5 main themes:

Establish distinctive and authentic character for the town centre referencing local place narrative.

Uplift quality of street materiality - paving / furniture / planting.

Identification of key public realm improvement areas connecting across the town - Gateways / Market Square / ETC. Realm to enhance access and linkages to Bicester Village to the south and Pingle Field.

Define and implement improved public realm nodes across the town centre environment - secondary stopping and staying at intersections. Developments in Bicester to understand resting stops as part of the design development which don't hinder use of space.

Create safe and inclusive crossing points into town core across vehicle routes - propose more equitable use across street cross sections, connect into GI destinations.

Sheep Street

Sheep Street

B4100

Causeway
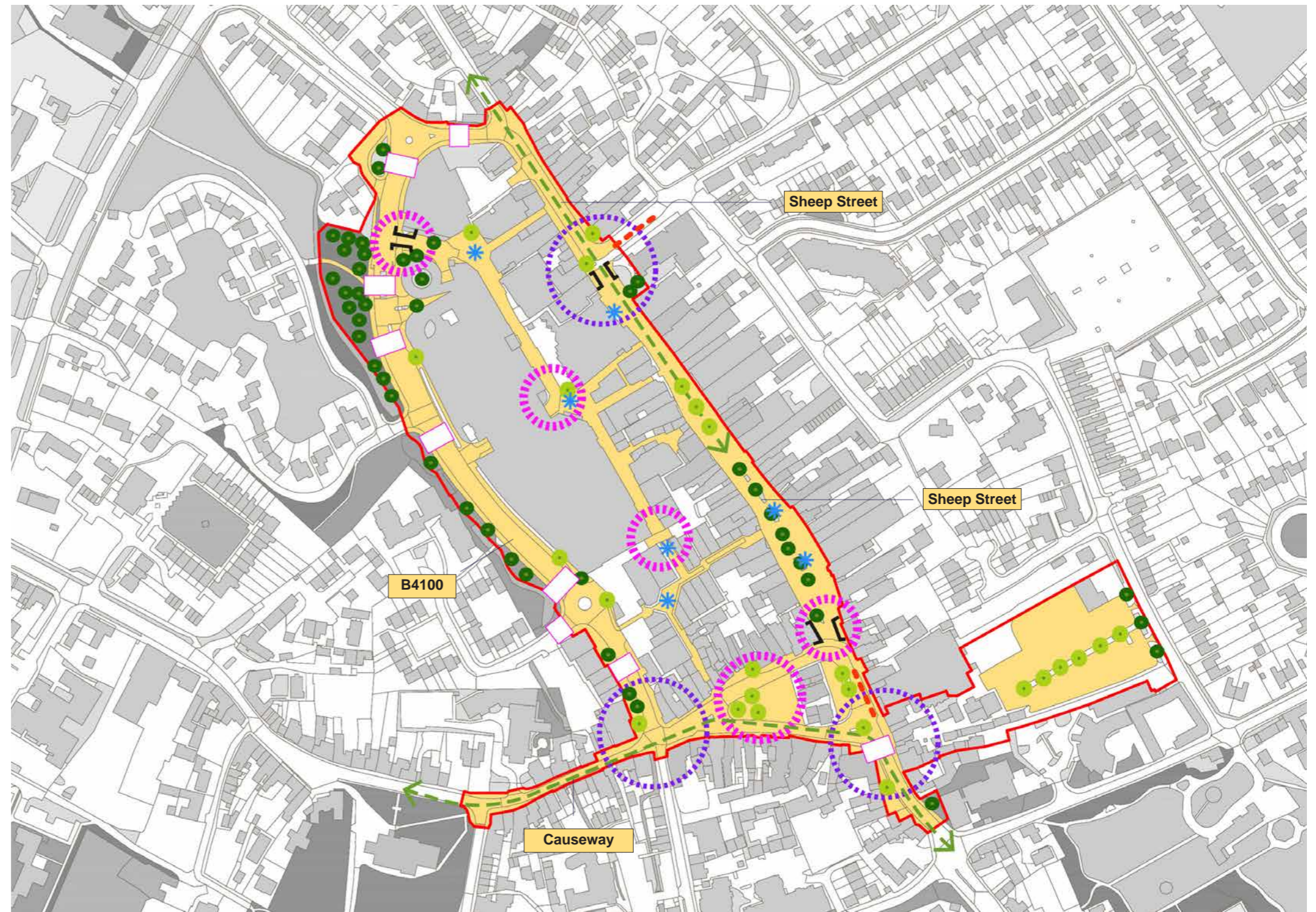
KEY

○ Existing trees
— Site boundary
○ New trees
→ Improved green space network

Public realm improvements
⊙ Improved arrival gateways
⊙ Improved public realm nodes

Control of service access
Pedestrian crossing
✴ Resting stops

© Broadway Malyan   31

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Vision

'Beautiful streets and places will connect Bicester creating an inclusive, liveable and walkable town.

A Streets for All approach will positively transform the experience for people on foot, cycles and public transport.

Arrival experiences will be memorable and attractive.

Designs will recognise the rich cultural heritage in Bicester; draw on distinct characteristics and amplify to create a modern identity for the town centre"

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm
Project Aims
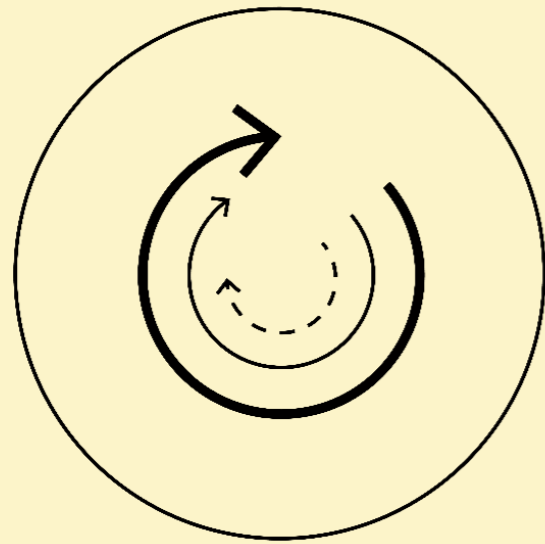
Movement

Establish a clear hierarchy of movement & access to support a 'Streets for All' approach
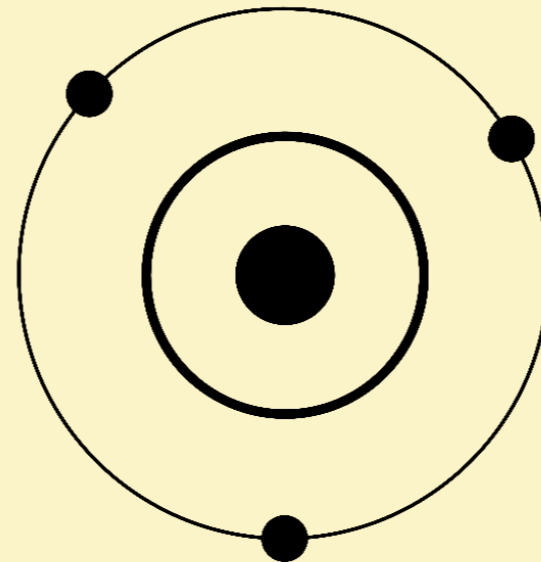
Place

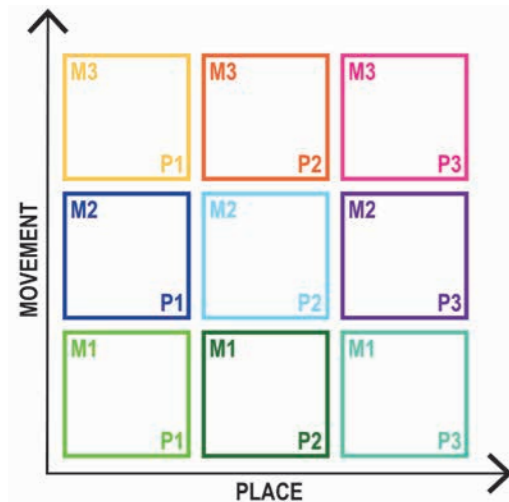Ensure a 'Place led' and contextual approach
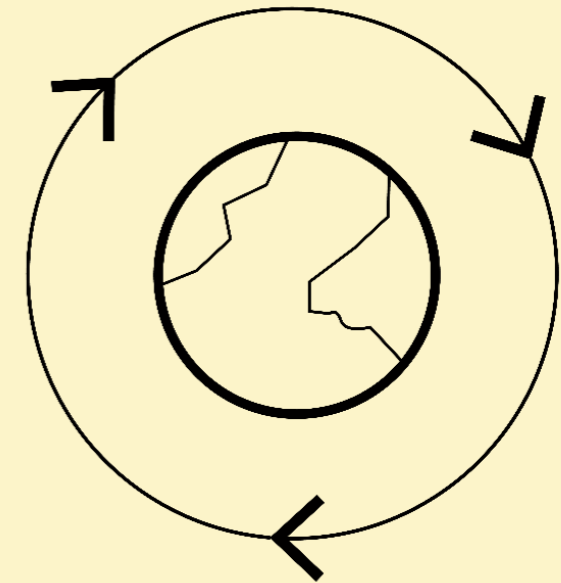
Climate

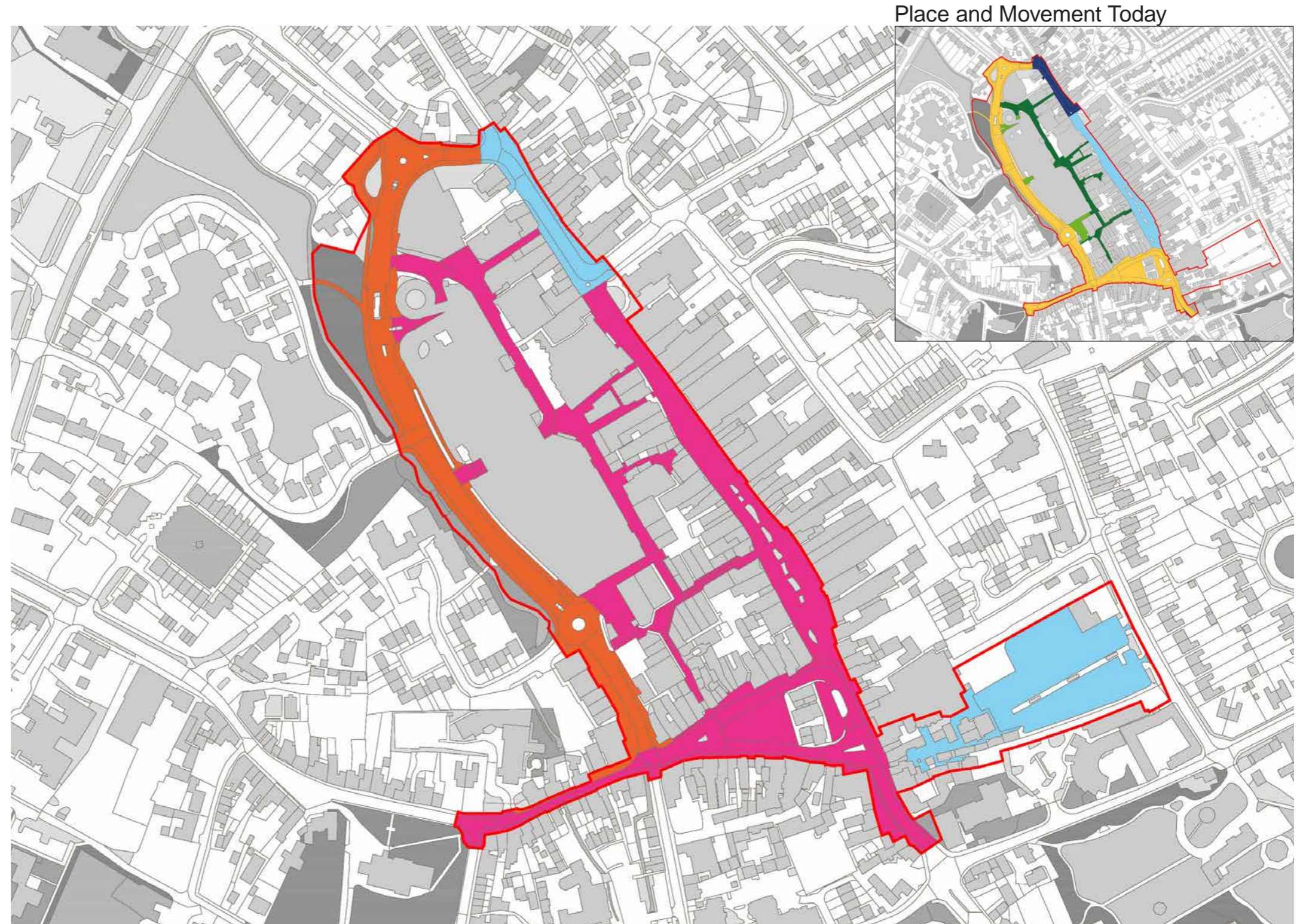Promote sustainability across all aspects of the design

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Aspirational Place and Movement Functions

Drawing on the Movement and Place assessment established in the site diagnosis, the definition of aspirational classifications for the 'place' and 'movement' function of Bicester's street/ space in the future informs the development of street typologies and a vision for Bicester's town centre public realm.

Across the study area the aspiration has been to uplift the place function while balancing movement.

| Place Function	Movement Function
P3: Attracts National, Regional, non-adjacent District to District visitors	**M3:** Primary routes which play a key role for the Regional movement of goods and people (not SRN / Motorways) and / or high levels of slower mode movements
P2: Attracts visitors from within the settlements and from Adjacent settlements (City, Town)	**M2:** Connects local destinations to ensure people and goods can move freely
P1: Predominantly local function / negligible attraction	**M1:** Local access only by people and deliveries

Place and Movement Today

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Street Typologies and Aspirational Attributes

Street typologies help to establish a clear hierarchy of movement and function across the town centre.

Currently there are limited typologies which can be seen illustrated here:

- High Street
- Town Streets
- Alleyway

The following pages illustrate the proposed attributes in terms of place and movement for each of the Street Typologies.
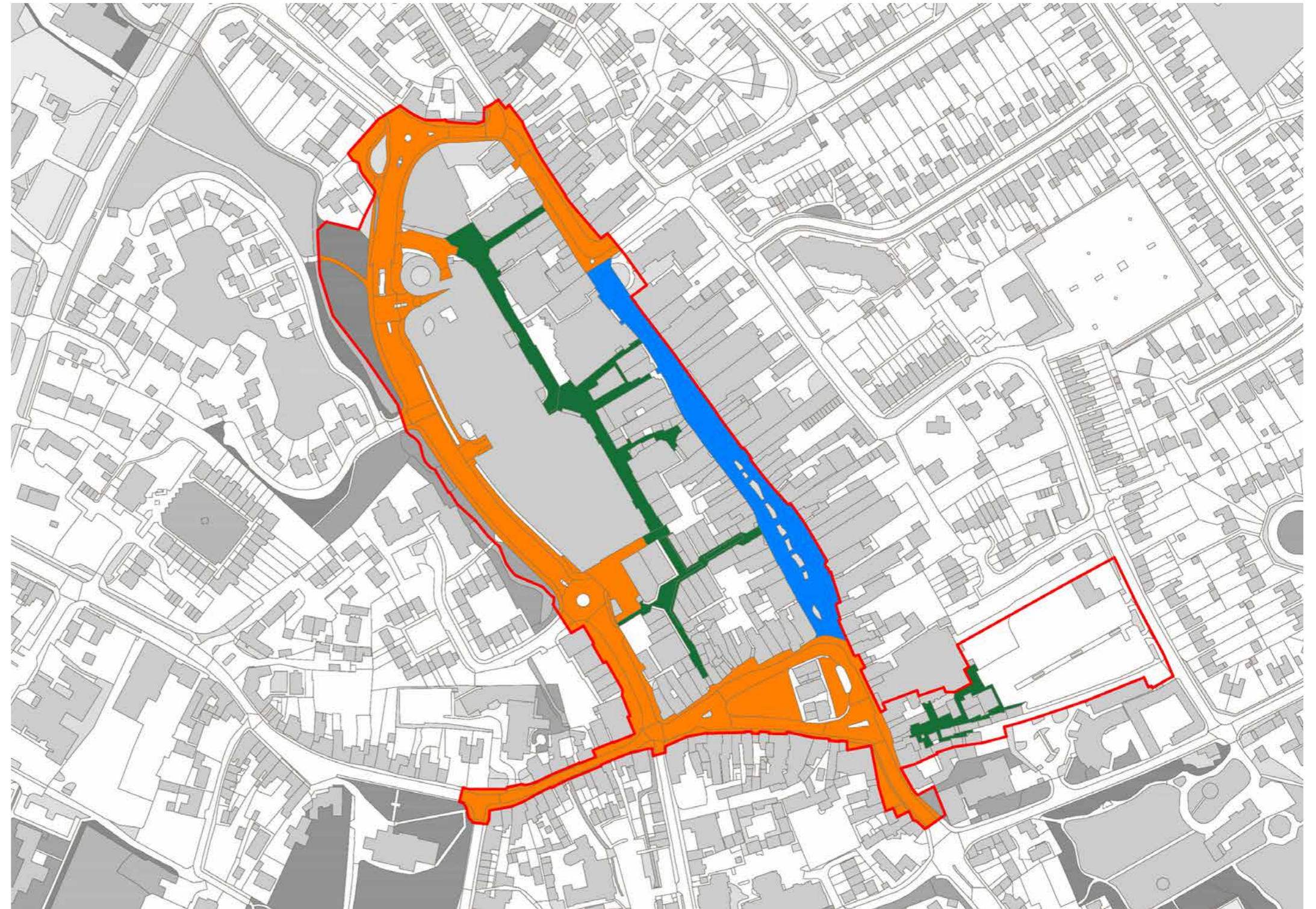
KEY

Site boundary
High street
Town street
Alleyway

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Street Typologies and Aspirational Attributes
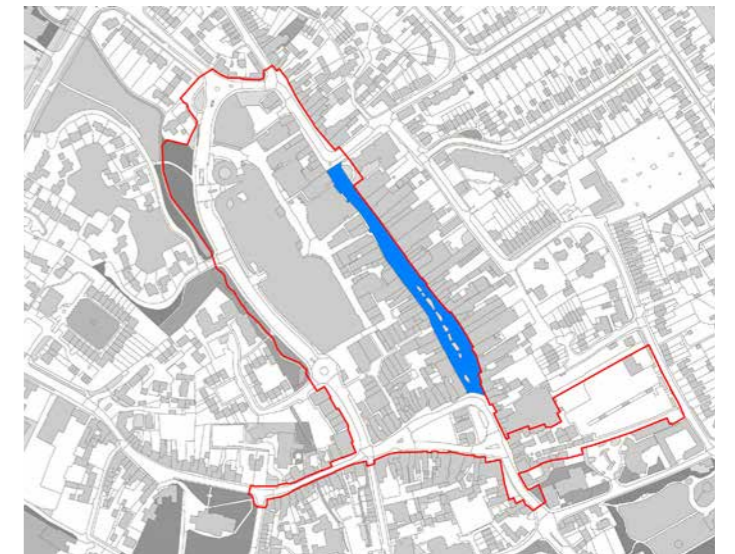
High Streets

Place

- The space is delightful and has the highest quality public realm including features and activity that make it a destination with identity and distinctiveness.

- A pedestrian only space (apart from servicing/deliveries etc), where movement is easy and intuitive with multiple points of access and egress.

- Where buildings border this space there will be active frontage with regular spill out into the street.

- Trees provide shade and vertical structure softening the hard lines of surrounding buildings and giving the space a natural uplift and human scale.

- Pocket parks and Hot Spots provide more intimate space for relaxation, fun and interaction.

- Maintained key sight lines of heritage assets, providing appropriate setting to these.

Movement

- Key pedestrian hub within the town centre linking several through routes as well as being a destination to meet and gather.

- A key place for cyclists to stop and carry on by foot. Cycle parking provided.

- Controlled / limited access for service, cleaning and events vehicles.

- Generally, no vehicular access or parking.

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Street Typologies and Aspirational Attributes

Town Streets

Place

- Street use is carefully considered to ensure redistribution towards pedestrians.
- Street is high quality, attractive, pleasant and comfortable to walk and cycle in, with wayfinding made easy and include seating and activity that makes the area a draw and destination.
- Public realm to encourage desirability for people to want to live in the flats above shops.
- Buildings with entrances front on to most of the street with active frontage.
- Spill out is facilitated to encourage activation.
- Tree Planting humanises street scene and calms any vehicle use
- Pocket parklets occur as permanent and temporary features providing more intimate space for relaxation, fun and interaction.

Movement

- Key pedestrian and cycle links that are direct and good quality.
- Cycle facilities are segregated where possible.
- Vehicles speeds are very low (10 to 20mph) limited and designed.
- Provides access to public transport.
- Access for servicing available but may be limited to certain times of day.
- Private vehicle access is permitted at all times.
- Some on-street parking available but may be limited to certain times of day.
- Public realm to enhance access and linkages to Bicester Village and Pingle Field.
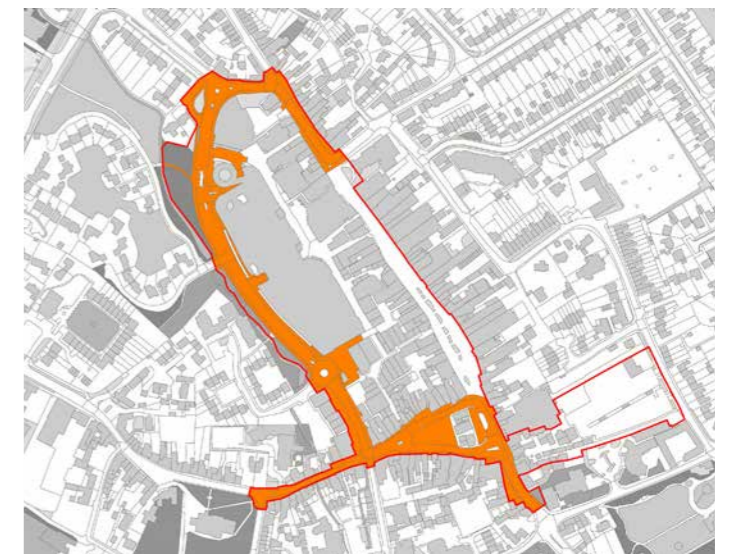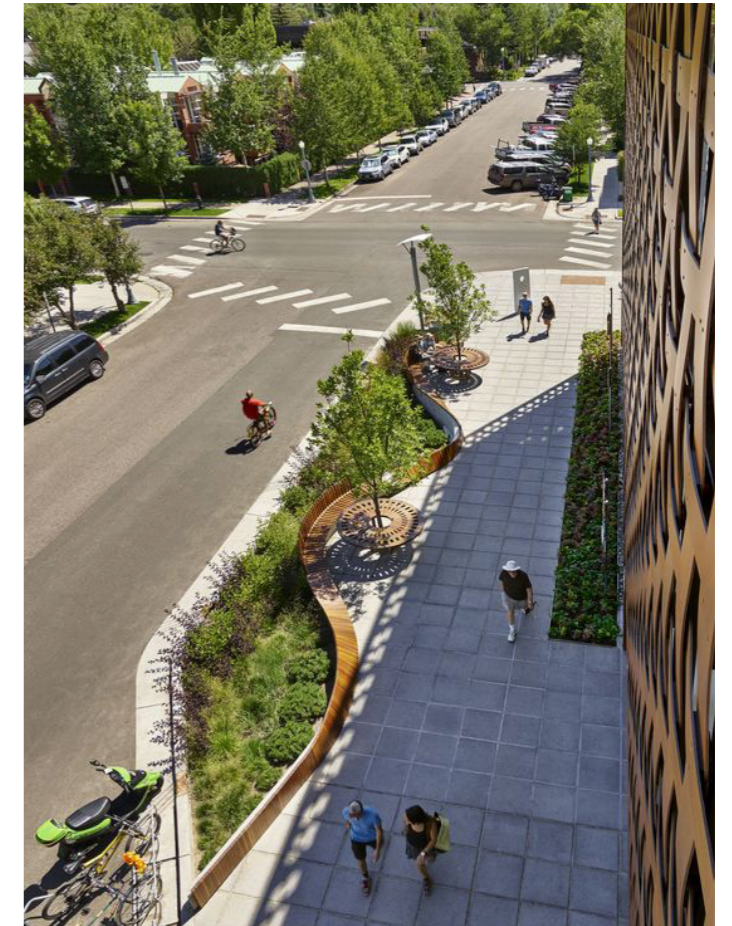
Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Street Typologies and Aspirational Attributes

Alleyway

Place

- Street feels safe and comfortable to walk and cycle in, with wayfinding made easy.
- Likely to have limited or no active frontage with few opportunities for spill out.
- Simple treatment - paving and planting improvements only.
- Medium quality material use.
- Tree planting provides formality and gives the space a natural uplift.
- De-cluttered.

Movement

- Pedestrianised with service access.
- Vehicle speeds are 5mph (self-enforcing).
- Private vehicle access is not permitted.
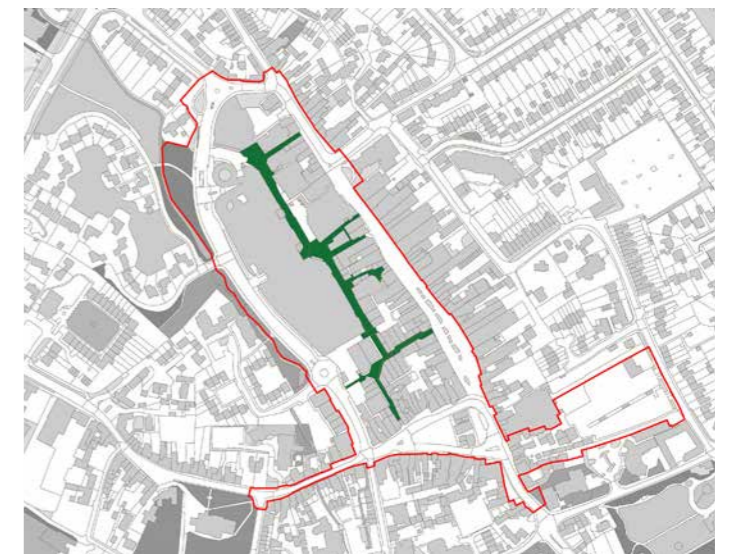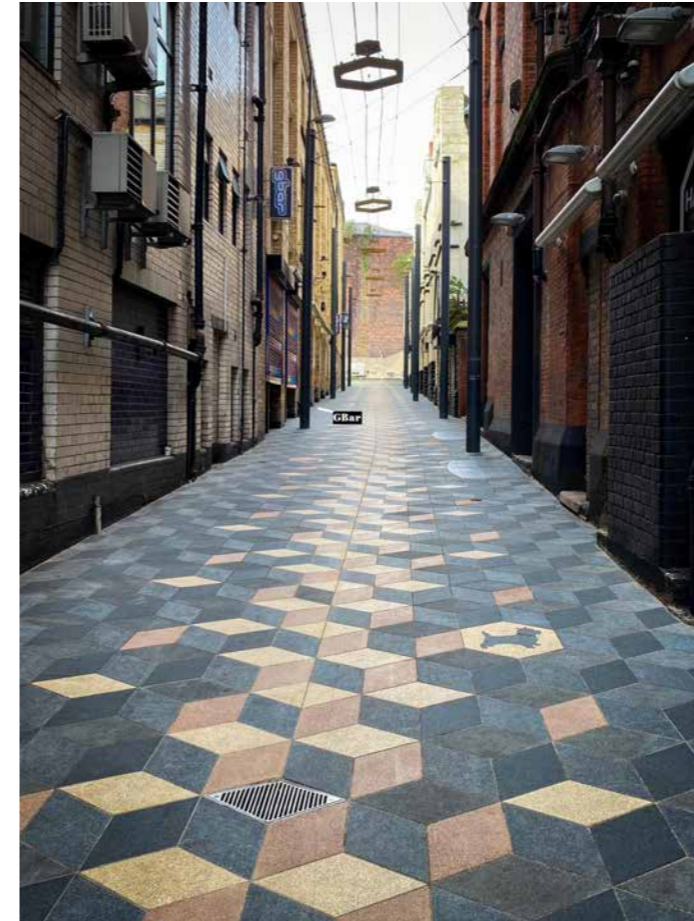
Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Aspirational Public Realm Comfort and Safety

As part of developing a vision for Bicester and its public realm, an aspirational emotive heat mapping presents future and improved user perceptions of a street/ place against an established criteria of emotional responses (see key below).

The aim is to achieve a minimum of a safe and comfortable environment for the users at all times with implementation of key spine of high quality spaces.
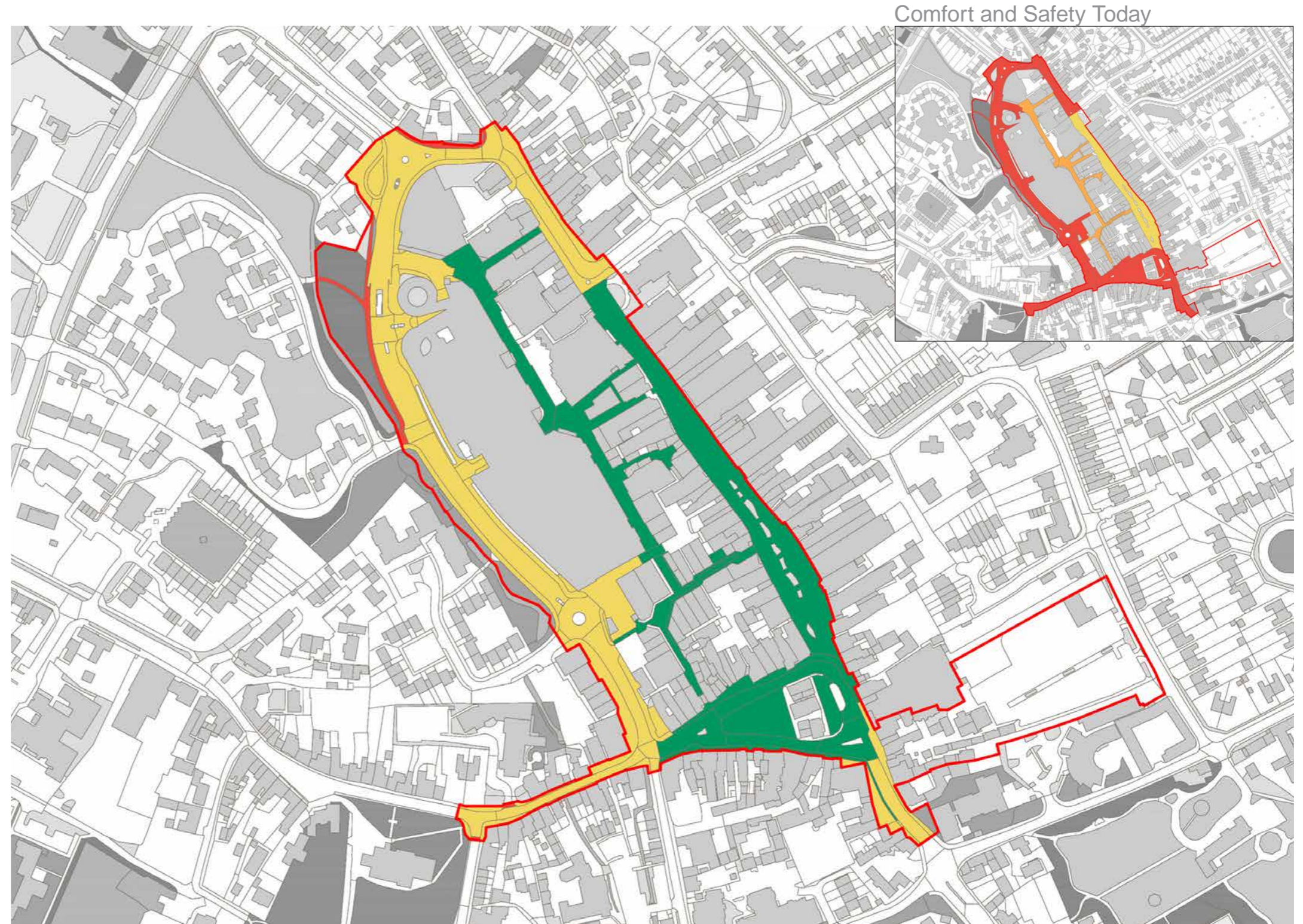
Comfort and Safety Today

KEY

— Site boundary

🟥 Feels Unsafe / Unpleasant / Physically Difficult to cross

🟧 Can be uncomfortable / feels safe away from conflict points

🟨 Feels safe & comfortable

🟦 Pleasurable / Attractive Environment

🟩 High quality space

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm
Principles of the Framework

Connected Bicester

Fine grained, equitable, uninterrupted networks of people centred, walkable, streets and spaces. Connecting socially, digitally and physically. Enabling seamless interchange, improving air quality, slow mode safety and congestion.

Green Bicester

Greening the streets, providing biodiversity, ecology and improved attractiveness to the town. Mitigating the town's climate emergency, proving innovative sustainable urban solutions.

Resilient Bicester

Distinct, unique and context driven designs. Resilient to climate change, adaptive to economic influence, socially inclusive, liveable, vital/active and regionally competitive.
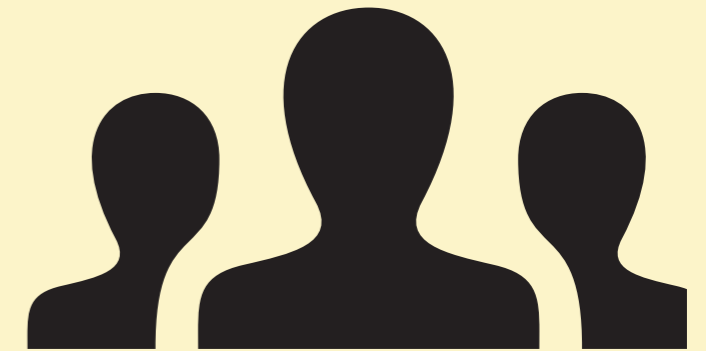
People First Bicester

Responsive to local needs. Streets as place to enjoy. Public Realm supporting the health and wellbeing of visitors and the Bicester community, providing a inclusive platform for events, activity and vitality. Anchoring residents to the town.

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm Improvement options

Understanding both the context of a space and the demands placed on it helps us understand how best to achieve substantial improvements through the right type and scale of improvement. These measures, increasing in complexity and cost, are the main actions that people and organisations can use to achieve better streets:

Do Minimum Improvements

Do Maximum Improvements

Do Something Improvements

Tidy up

Look to remove unnecessary road markings or broken street furniture which is simple to clear up and will not damage the footway

De-clutter

requires a more strategic justification for every individual piece of equipment in the street, with the presumption of removal unless a clear reason for retention is given

Relocate or merge functions

any remaining features should be rationalised to combine signage and lighting or better locate street furniture to fulfil its intended use

Rethink traffic management options

by considering user priority, changes to carriageway widths or removal of traffic signals

Recreate the street

complete remodelling of the street may be suitable if a new set of objectives or character is desired

Sense of arrival and welcome gateways to new Square   Visual focal points design
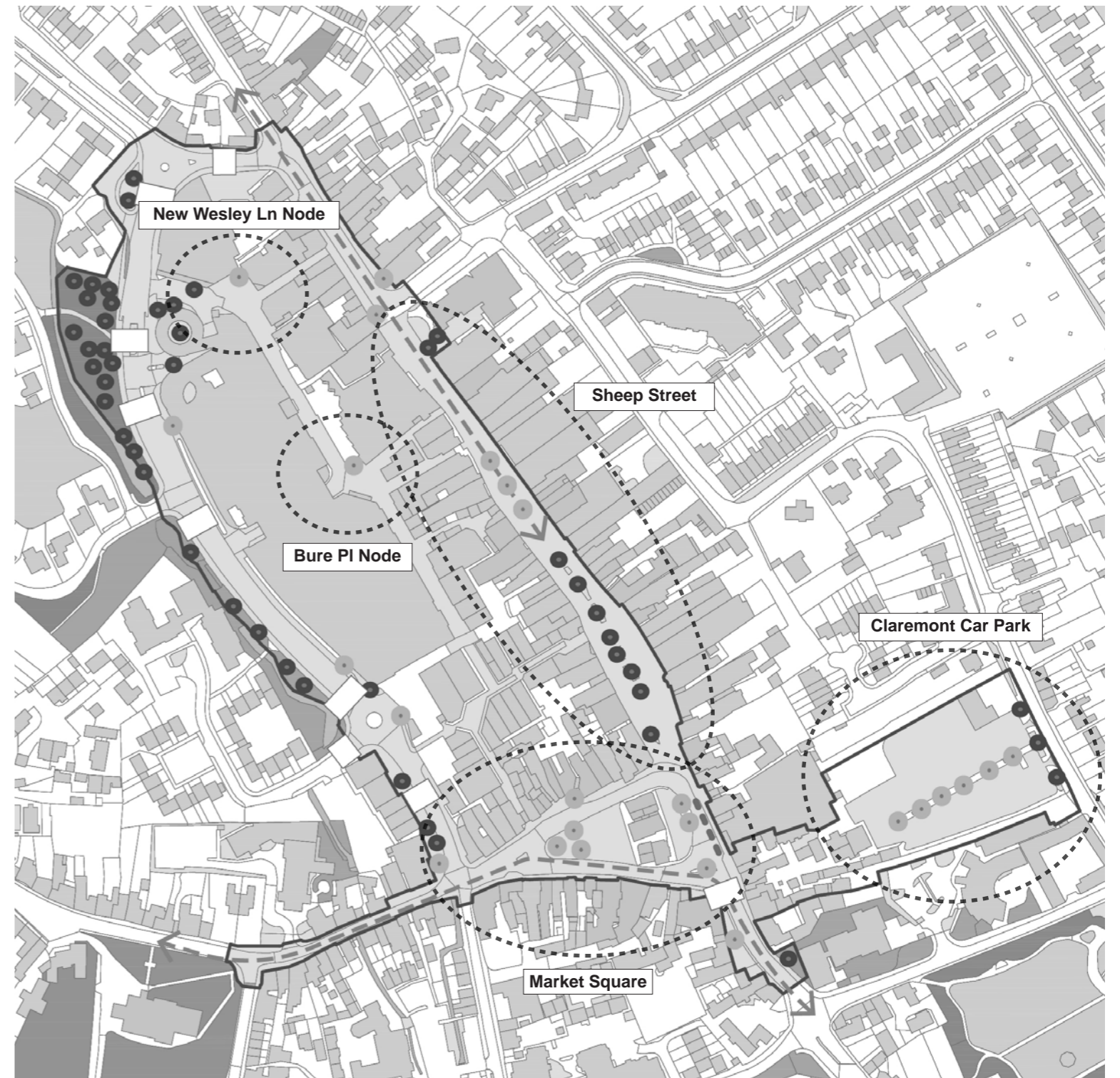
# Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Key improvements introduction

Further to the vision, aims and principles established in this work a selection of key improvement zones have been identified and described in the following pages.

These improvements best deliver value in line with recommendations.

They should form the focus/priority for public realm concept designs in the next stage of work.

New Wesley Ln Node

Sheep Street

Bure Pl Node

Claremont Car Park

Market Square

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Key improvements 01
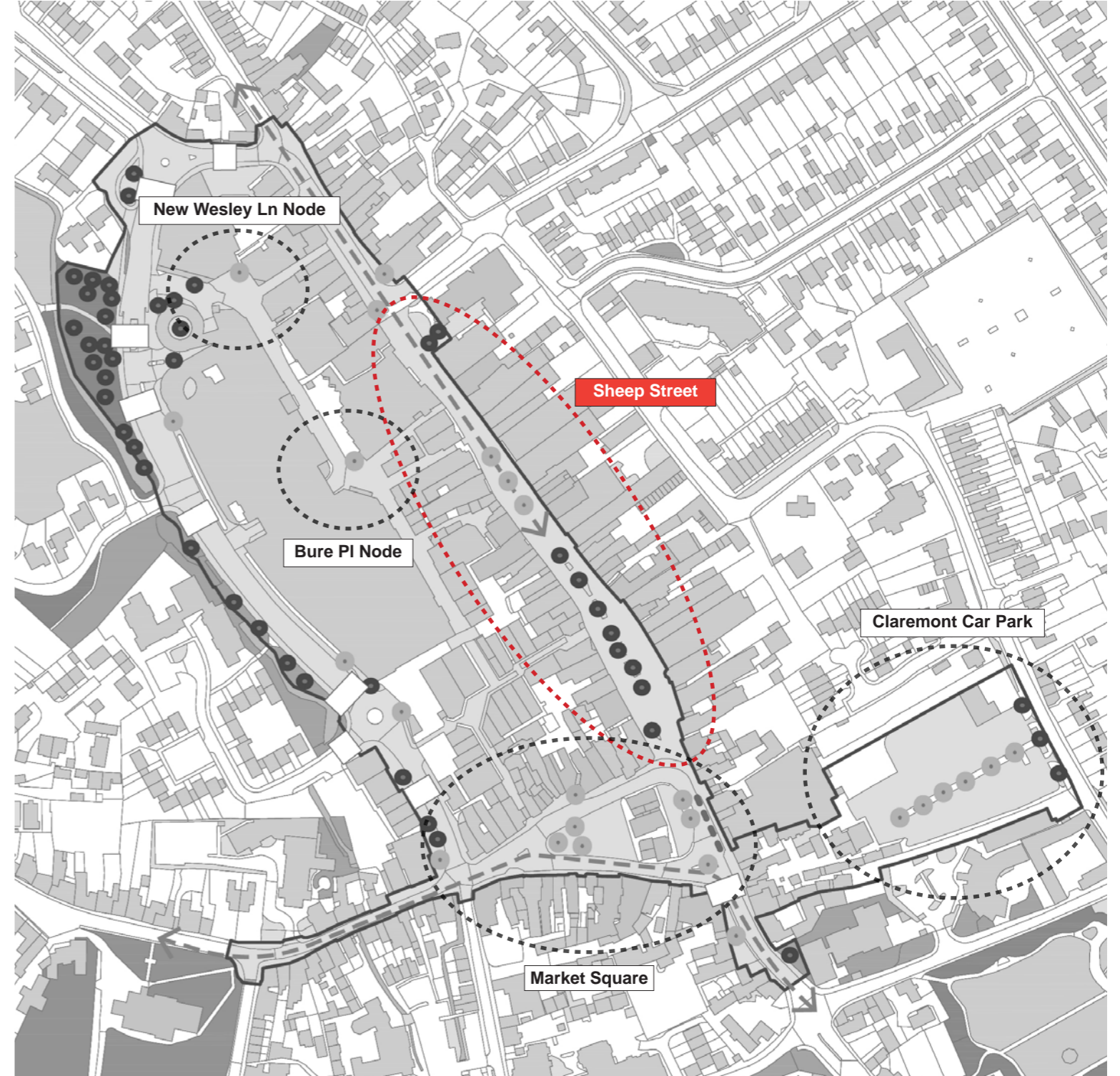
Sheep Street attributes:

Improvements to include tidy up, decluttering, merging and relocating. New paving, continuous pavement to prioritise pedestrian movement.

Removal of highways paraphernalia where possible e.g. unneeded signage

Legible, welcoming, interesting gateways

Service access regulated/controlled

Generally surface materials/ street furniture are replaced to improve legibility, navigation, accessibility/inclusive and attractiveness of the town

Green the street using street trees (in the ground where possible subject to utilities surveys etc.)

Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) are implemented through bioswales/rain gardens/tree catchment pits. These add amenity as well as sustainability.

Create a network of habitats where possible to increase biodiversity and provide ecosystem services.

Enabling active frontage use through flexible public realm as a platform for spill out.

Public realm areas to be multi functional, flexible in arrangements to accommodate varied activities and events. Power and other facilities to be incorporated.

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Key improvements 02

Market Square attributes:

Prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users to provide improved comfort and safety for these users.

Adaptable and inclusive public realm to facilitate community interactions.

Encourage active travel and provide outdoor green spaces for all users to enjoy.

Enabling active frontage use through flexible public realm as a platform for spill out.

Service access regulated/controlled

Allocation of additional space for

pedestrians – review of parking/ reduced carriageway widths/ adjusted materials.

Generally surface materials/ street furniture to be of the highest quality that can be achieved/afforded are replaced to improve legibility, navigation, accessibility/inclusive and attractiveness of the town

Green the space using street trees (in the ground where possible subject to utilities surveys etc.)
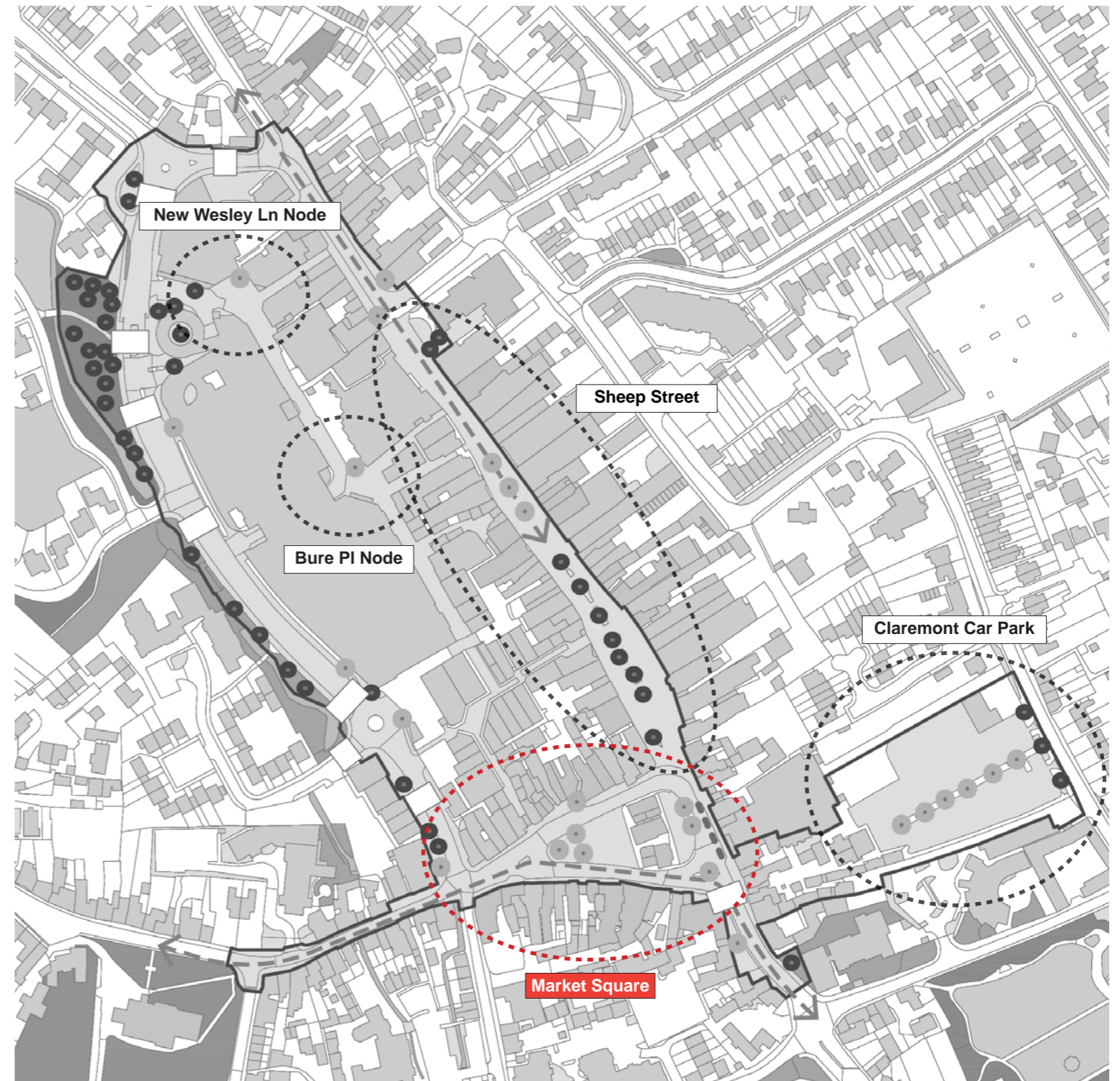
Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Key improvements 03
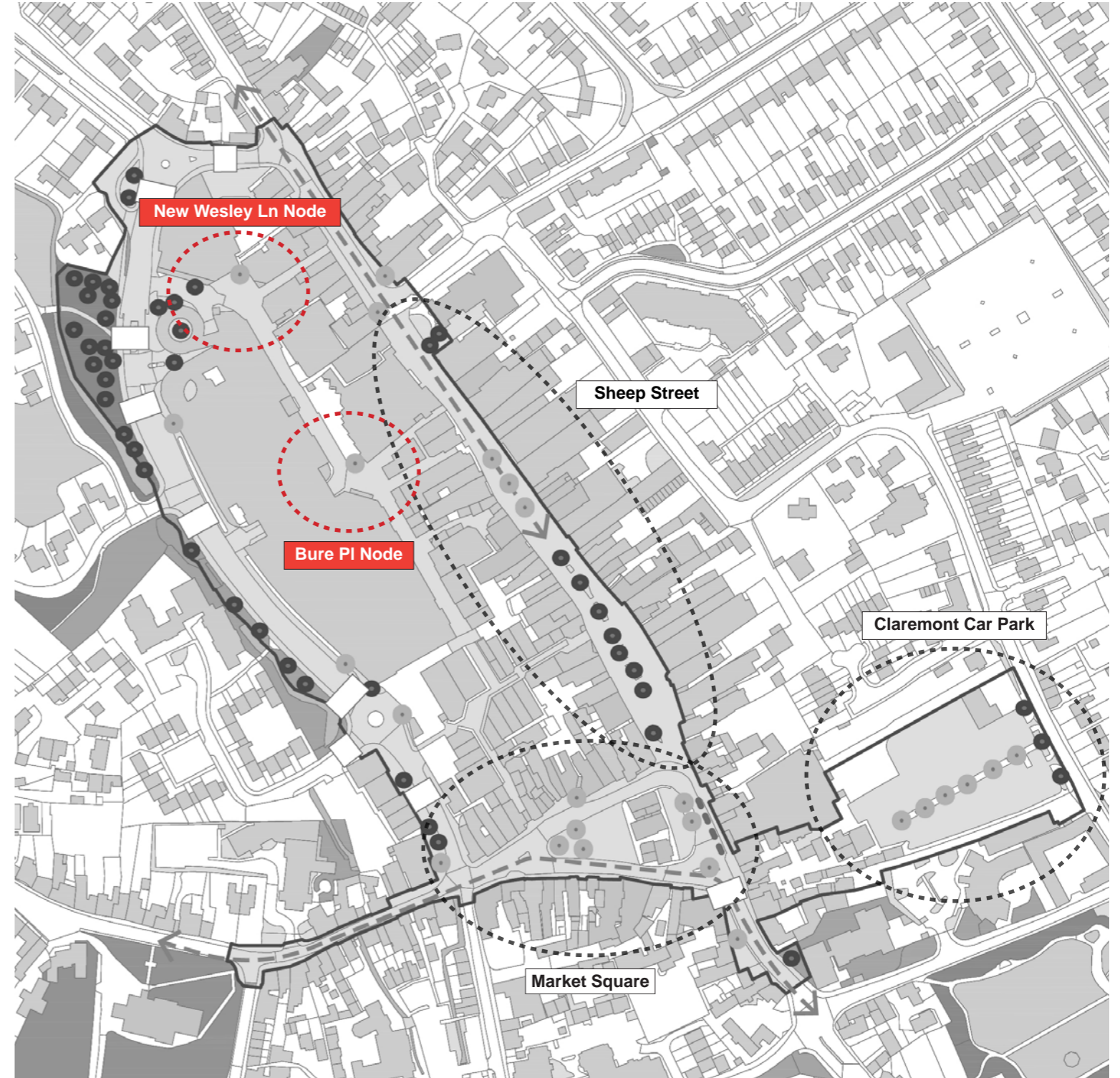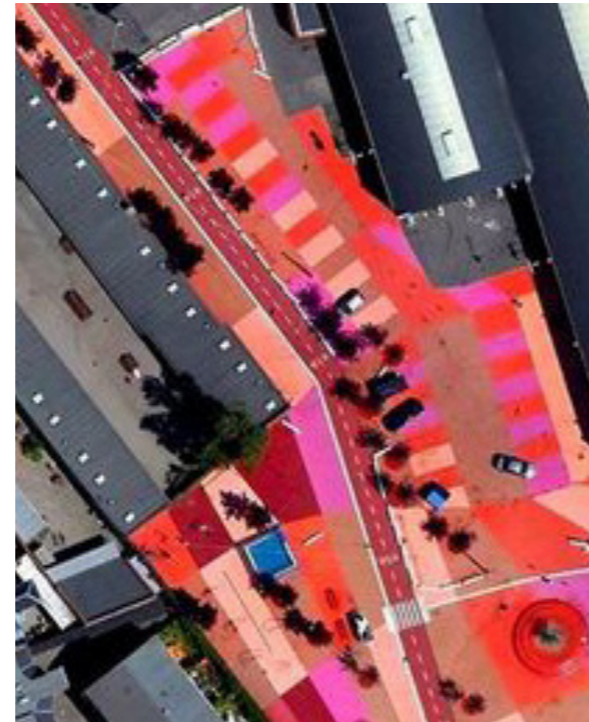
New Wesley Lane & Bure Place Node attributes:

Arrival space arranged to facilitate pedestrian movement into town core.

Service areas access regulated/ controlled.

Surface materials/ street furniture are replaced to improve legibility, navigation, accessibility/inclusive and attractiveness of the gateway

Retain and incorporate existing Green Infrastructure.

Ensure that proposals reflect

distinctiveness of Bicester and unique character.

Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists to provide improved comfort and safety for these users.

Provide outdoor green spaces for users to enjoy.

Green the space using street trees (in the ground where possible subject to utilities surveys etc.)

Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) are implemented through bioswales/rain gardens/tree catchment pits.

Section 5 - Strategy for the Public Realm - Principles of the Framework - Key improvements 04
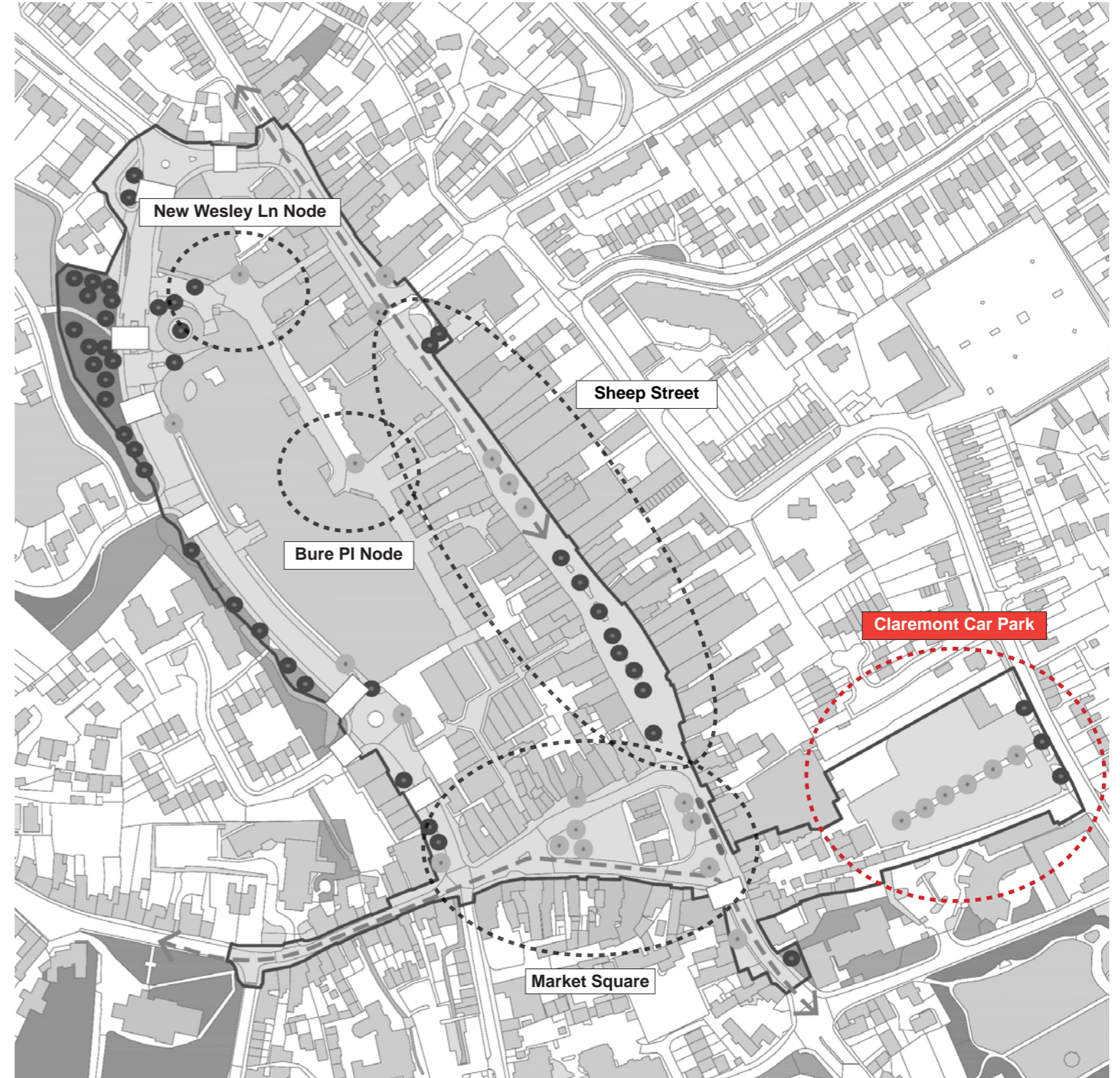
Claremont Car Park attributes:

Vehicle arrival spaces (car parks) arranged to facilitate pedestrian movement into town core.

Alleyway connections from car park are repaved and improved lighting and street art programme recommended (early win project)

Green area using street trees (in the ground where possible subject to utilities surveys etc.)

Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) are implemented through bioswales/rain gardens/tree catchment pits. These add amenity as well as sustainability.

Ensure that proposals reflect distinctiveness of Bicester and unique character.

Provide improved comfort and safety for cycle users.

New Wesley Ln Node

Sheep Street

Bure Pl Node

Claremont Car Park

Market Square

BroadwayMalyan ᴮᴹ

Creating
places.
Together.