

CHESHAM MASTERPLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION

EMERGING MASTERPLAN, NOVEMBER 2017

Introduction

Welcome to this exhibition of our Vision and emerging Masterplan for Chesham, prepared by the Chesham Renaissance Community Interest Company (CRCIC). The CRCIC has collaborated with masterplanners Allies and Morrison, transport consultants PJA and key stakeholders including the District, County and Town Councils to explore how Chesham can best accommodate new homes; how these can be balanced with decent and appropriate employment space; and how this process can be used to rejuvenate the town centre's public spaces and civic infrastructure.

Planning policy context

Chilterns and South Bucks District Councils are preparing the Local Plan to guide development in the area up until 2036. The Issues and Options consultation for this was held in early 2016 and the Draft Local Plan is due in early 2018. We have asked that the Local Plan allows for future place-specific planning guidance for Chesham, such as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and to consider a mix of uses at development sites. The emerging ideas in the CRCIC exhibition can inform this process.

Next steps

Following your feedback on the emerging ideas for Chesham, we will continue to develop the masterplan, to identify opportunities for much needed new homes that are balanced with employment provision, and to establish a long-term framework for a sustainable and healthy future Chesham. We will review all your comments and take these into consideration when further developing our ideas. We will be sharing our masterplan report for ongoing consultation in early 2018.

How to comment

Respond to the questionnaire on the CRCIC website:
www.cheshammasterplan.org

Or complete a printed copy available in the November edition of your Chesham or at consultation meetings.

Send an email to info@cheshamcic.org

Feel free to speak to directors & staff of CRCIC

April 2017

Initial
visioning
work

May 2017

Stakeholder
workshop

July 2017

Vision
report
produced

Sept 2017

Early
masterplan
work

Nov 2017

Consultation
on vision and
masterplan

Dec-Feb 2018

Vision and
masterplan
report

We are here



Chesham Renaissance

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Chesham in Context

To plan a successful and attractive future for Chesham, it is important to understand its past and the role that the town currently plays.

A historic market town

Chesham has significant roots as a market town, receiving its market charter in 1257. The High Street and Market Place are still visible today and form the bone structure of the town centre - a strong linear centre, with 'backs' either side.

Some buildings may have changed, but the historic view of the High Street is familiar today. Many historic buildings remain, giving Chesham a strong identity and palette of materials, such as red brick, flint, and the cobbled yards and passages that lead from the High Street. These offer cues for new development in the town, and new homes can respond to the town's character without having to imitate it.

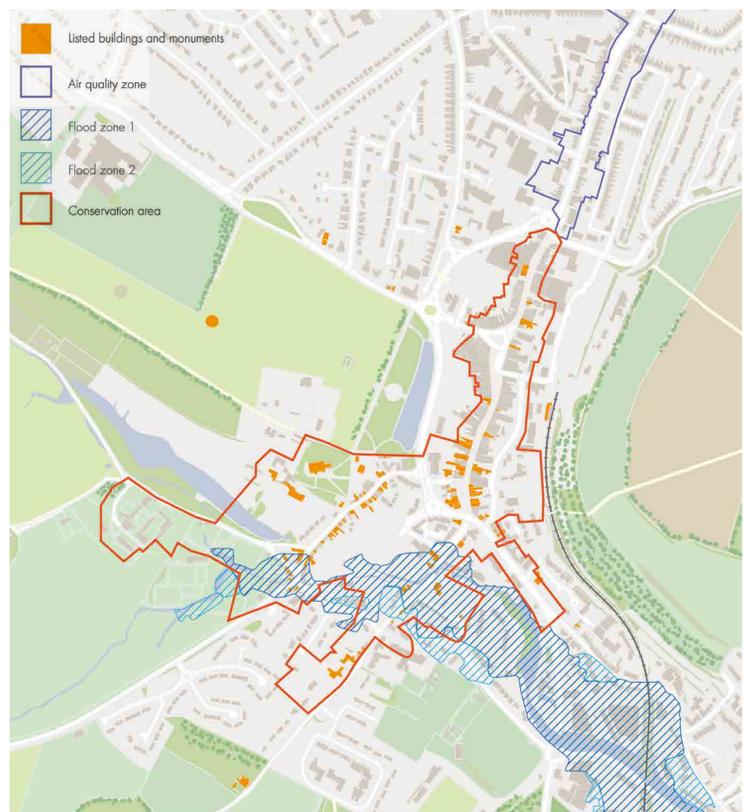
The Conservation Area, flood zones and Air Quality Management Zone are all important considerations for new development in the town.



Chesham's role

Chesham is in the enviable position of being within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and also on the London Underground network. This makes the town appealing, but places it under pressure from people commuting to London via the town from surrounding areas.

The town has a long history of craft and industry, with factories and mills adapted to new industries as tastes changed. Chesham remains a centre of small business and entrepreneurialism. Accommodating these will be important to the town's economic future.



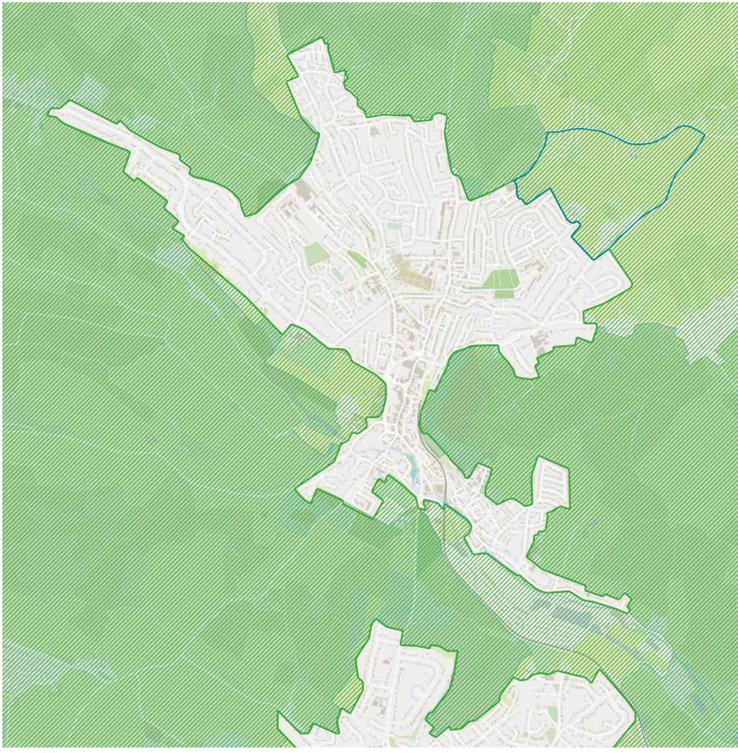
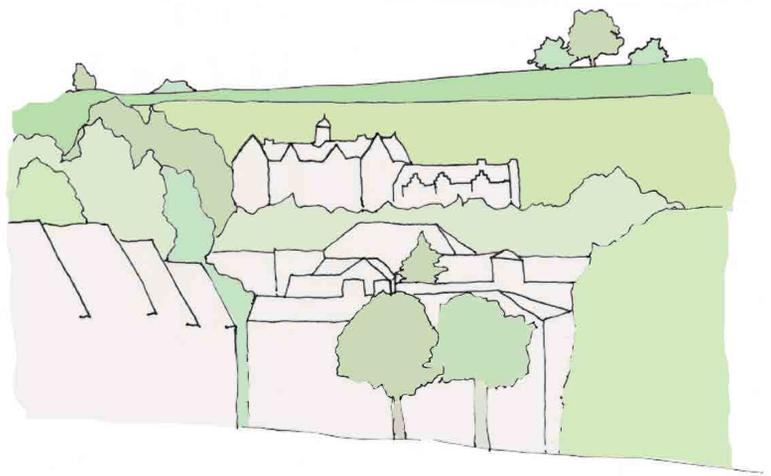
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Chesham in Context

A tightly bound settlement

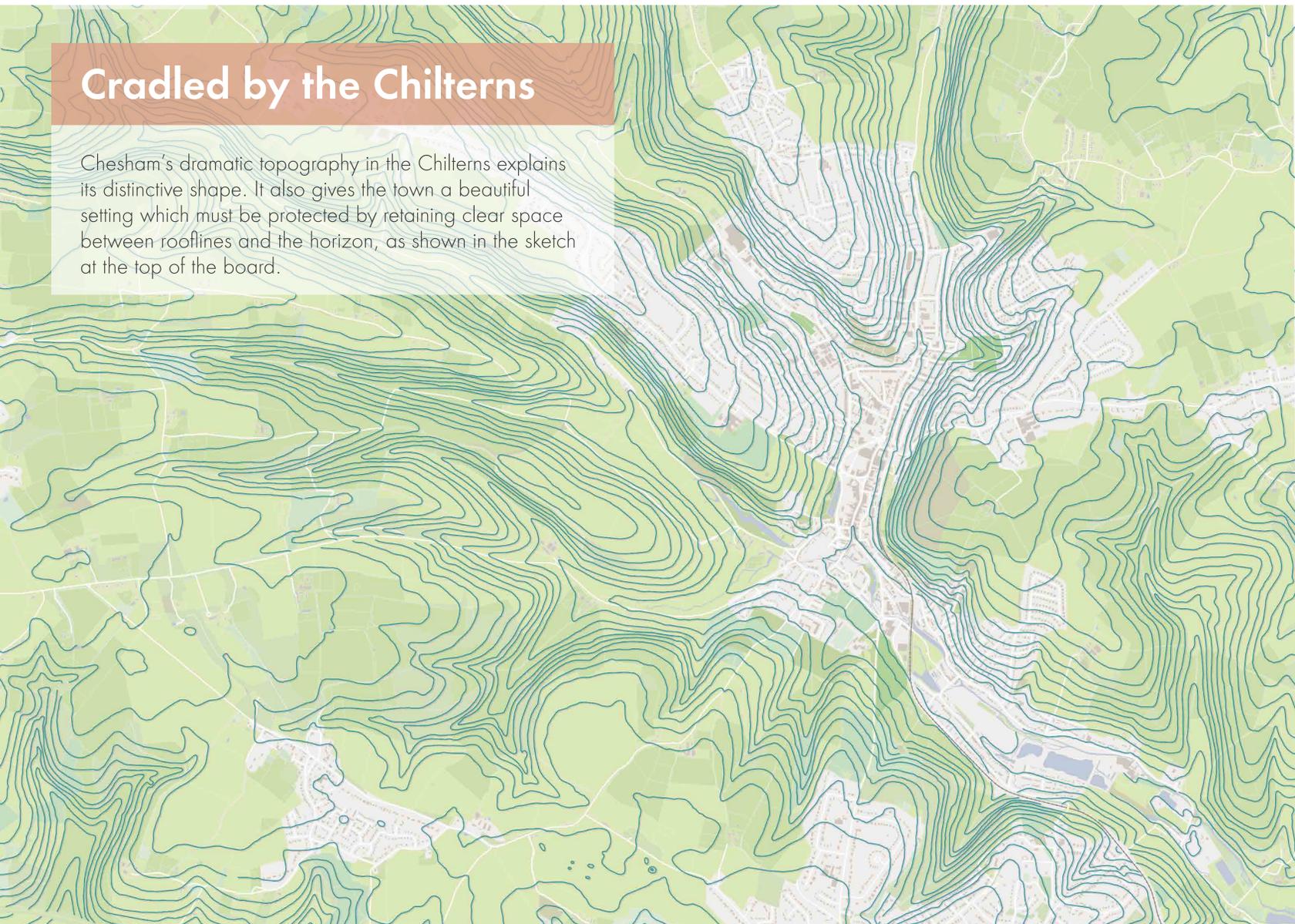
Chesham is tightly enclosed by Green Belt and the Chilterns AONB also bounds the settlement. This has made it very difficult for the town to expand to accommodate new homes and jobs. The District Council is reviewing potential to release Green Belt land to the north east of the town for new homes. We would like to take the pressure off this by accommodating new homes on brownfield land and other sites within the town boundary; and to explore whether some of this land could accommodate jobs rather than just homes.



-  Green Belt area
-  Area of Outstanding National Beauty
-  Area proposed by CDC for release from the Green Belt

Cradled by the Chilterns

Chesham's dramatic topography in the Chilterns explains its distinctive shape. It also gives the town a beautiful setting which must be protected by retaining clear space between rooflines and the horizon, as shown in the sketch at the top of the board.



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Vision and principles

Overarching vision

Chesham will continue to be a characterful market town, nestled in the Chilterns - a gateway to the beautiful AONB.

It will have good commuter links to central London, but will also have its own gravity and appeal, with high quality shops and restaurants, thriving independent businesses, and an appealing cultural offer.

The town centre will be reunited with Lowndes Park, and existing and new residential neighbourhoods will be connected to the station and town centre through comfortable and sustainable walking and cycling links.

The town will provide a good quality of life for all ages, and will consequently have a diverse and vibrant community.

Evening economy clusters for restaurants and bars are identified at Market Square, on the High Street, close to The Broadway and close to the Elgiva Theatre.

Large footprint retailers are located at the north of the High Street - in the longer term, would these be located in the town centre?

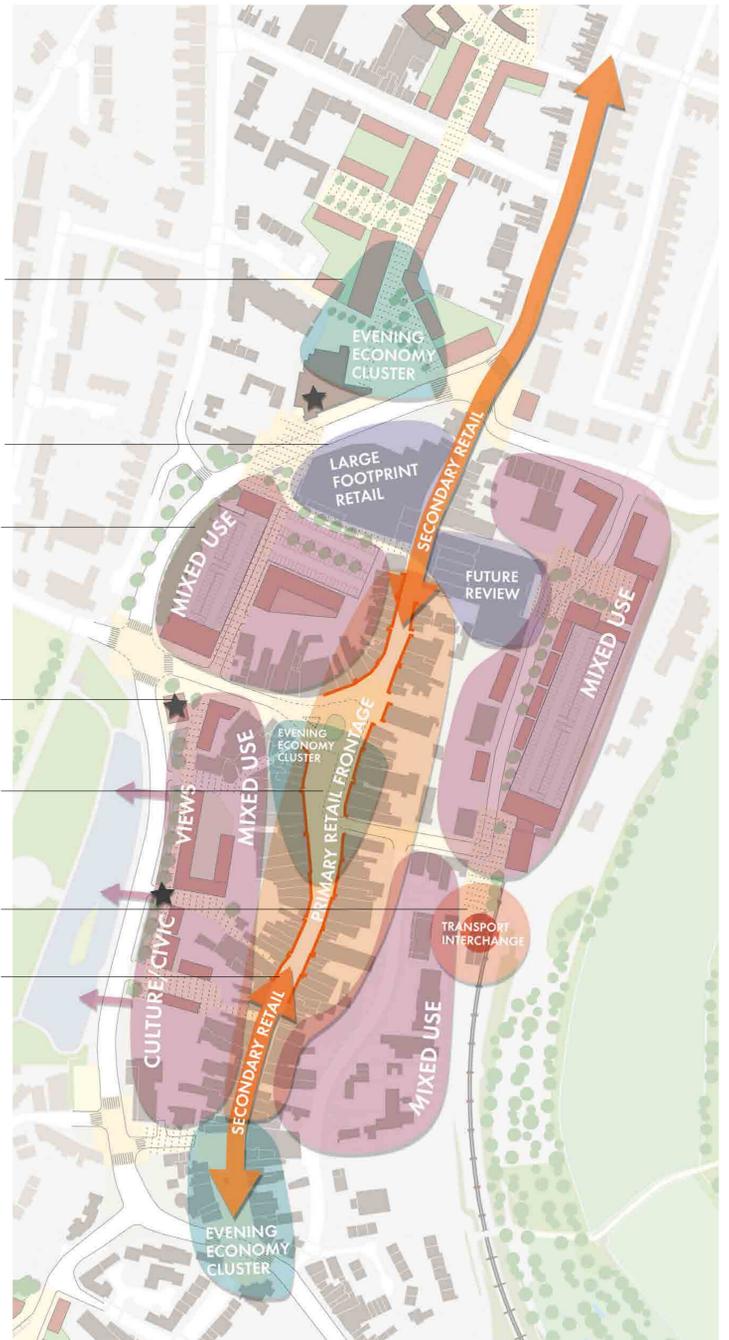
The 'backs' behind the linear High Street are currently poor environments. These could be improved with mixed-use development

Opportunity exists for a distinctive cultural and civic building, which could put Chesham on the map. This could make use of views over Lowndes Park

National retailers are consolidated on the centre of the High Street

A transport interchange is created at the station, with better facilities and walking links to the High Street

Independent and secondary retailers are focused on the northern and southern ends of the High Street, and on Broad Street



Principles for growth

Town life

Key priorities: integrating the theatre with the centre, focusing retail, creating a cultural/civic cluster, relocating 'HGV industries' but retaining SMEs in the centre; and temporary pop-up activities.

Character

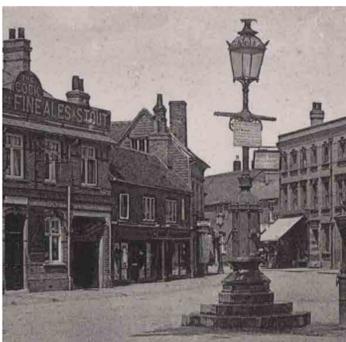
Key priorities: work with Chesham's historic grain, re-establish the historic approaches, rejuvenate the yards and passages, reflect the palette and retain the sky line.

New homes

Key priorities: Prioritise homes in the town centre using backland areas, make use of former industrial sites, re-use historic and redevelop poor quality buildings.

Streets & spaces

Key priorities: Consolidate parking, change the character of St Mary's Way, strengthen walking and cycling links from surrounding neighbourhoods.



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Emerging masterplan

The emerging masterplan sets out where we think homes, civic, commercial uses and parking could be located in the town centre and the areas close to this. The masterplan sets out a strategic approach, that could be used to guide future development at other sites in Chesham. Other sites in the town centre and beyond are also being reviewed but do not yet have sketch schemes.



New homes



Existing & for new homes

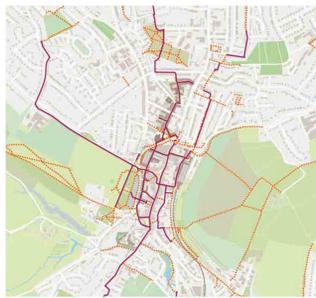


New civic/cultural space

Movement patterns



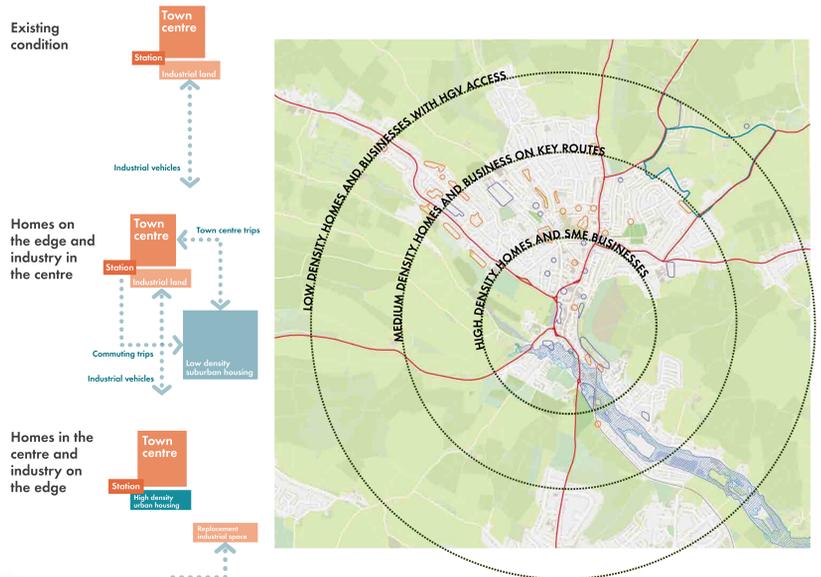
New cycle links are proposed from neighbourhoods to the centre, away from main roads. The road network and topography make links to the north east tricky.



New walking routes are proposed to better connect neighbourhoods, and to provide good links to the theatre and to Lowndes Park, with a new central entrance to this.

Strategic approach

We proposed that new homes should be prioritised in the centre, and work space that relies on HGVs be moved to strategic routes en route into the town. This will promote more sustainable movement options for residents, and help limit the number of HGVs that may need to drive through the town centre. Options are being considered to retain existing employment by change of use for specific sites within Planning Policy Guidelines.



Chesham Yards - a series of interconnected opportunities for mixed use redevelopment, working with the attractive character of existing historic industrial buildings to create a series of new yards along a north-south route

St Mary's Way - an opportunity to re-connect the town centre with its park, church and residential hinterland and to create a strong new first impression for the town

The Backs - consolidating parking for the station and Waitrose and introducing new street-frontage development

Water Meadow - establishing infill development on an existing car park site, creating frontage to the pedestrian routes and waterside



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Propositions

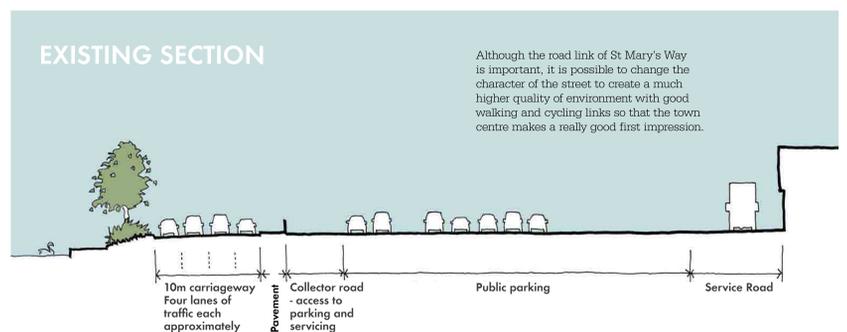
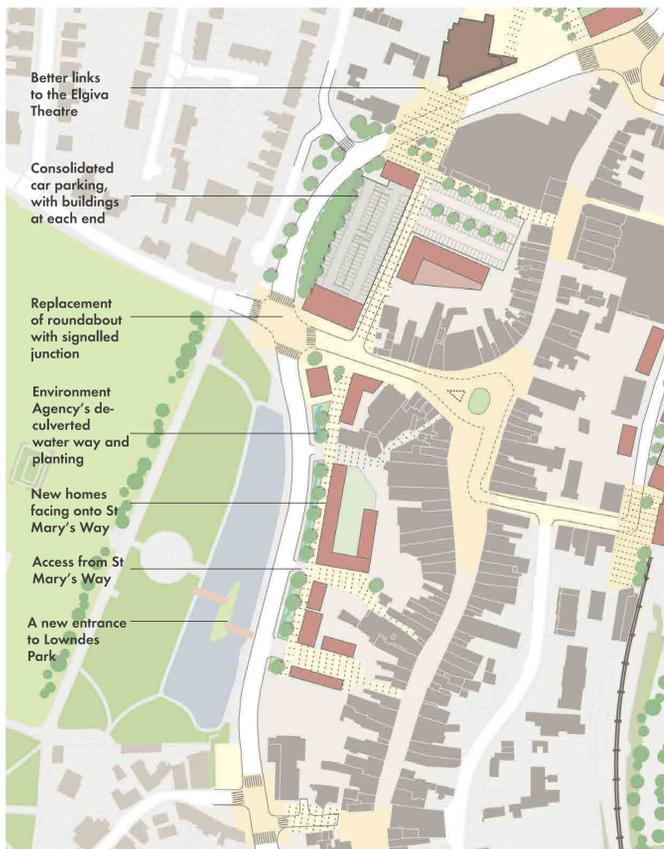
We have developed sketch proposals for key sites, to explore the priorities for these sites and demonstrate how development might come forward. These are set out over the following boards.

Star Yard and St Mary's Way

New homes are proposed to front towards Lowndes Park and help change the character of St Mary's Way. The number of road lanes could be reduced to three and the impact of this will be tested through traffic modelling. New access from St Mary's Way will avoid cars being funnelled via The Broadway and provide servicing access to the High Street. The removal of the roundabouts will improve walking links to the park and give St Mary's Way more of a town character. A new civic/community building could be provided. Star Yard car parking is relocated to a multi-storey car park to the north, which is bookended by new buildings. Better walking links are provided to the theatre.



Replacing roundabouts with signalled junctions can restore the historic approaches to the town centre and improve walking links between the High Street and Lowndes Park. Similar recent interventions have worked well. Traffic modelling would be used to test the feasibility of the concept as the detailed design is developed.



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Station Square and The Broadway

A transport interchange is proposed for Chesham Station, with a new Station Square transforming the arrival experience to the town. Space for taxis and bus interchange space, substantially increased cycle parking and covered car parking are all proposed. Potential to make White Hill one-way from The Broadway and consequently widen the pavements is being reviewed with the County Council.

At The Broadway, public realm improvements maintain bus access but extend the pavements in front of the shops, to give these breathing space, and simplify the materials so that the historic buildings stand out.



Simplified road layout and widened pavements in The Broadway

One-way White Hill, with wider pavements

New station square, with cycle parking and taxi rank

Covered parking for the station and Waitrose, with direct access points to each

New mixed-use development wrapping the car park, and fronting the street



A new station square, with active buildings fronting the street, car parking included behind these, cycle parking and a taxi rank - all providing a better arrival experience to Chesham



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Chesham Yards and The Water Meadow

At Chesham Yards, historic industrial buildings can be retained, either as employment space or adapted as warehouse style apartments. Between these, mews style development can provide a mix of uses and open up an attractive north-south walking link between the town centre and Sunnyside Road, avoiding the Air Quality Management zone of Broad Street. Development can help create a series of interesting spaces, with potential for cafes/bars close to the theatre, at the southern end.

At The Water Meadow, some public parking is retained to serve the southern part of the High Street, but it is possible to provide some homes in this area. Some of these are within the flood zone and would have undercroft parking spaces to ensure there are no habitable rooms on the ground floor.

A stronger walking link is proposed between Old Town and the High Street, with a wide raised-table crossing for pedestrians, which reintegrates the Red Lion pub with Market Square, making the historic square feel like one space again.

Higham Mead

Attractive older industrial buildings provide important fixed points. Around these there are opportunities for mews development connecting with Sunnyside Road through an existing access, extend the north-south walking route

Albany Yard

The site of the existing Wickes warehouse and adjoining commercial sites could be redeveloped to provide mixed residential and business space. Priorities include establishing a strong north-south link from the theatre and the town centre towards Townsend Road, linking in with other phases of development.

Townsend Yard

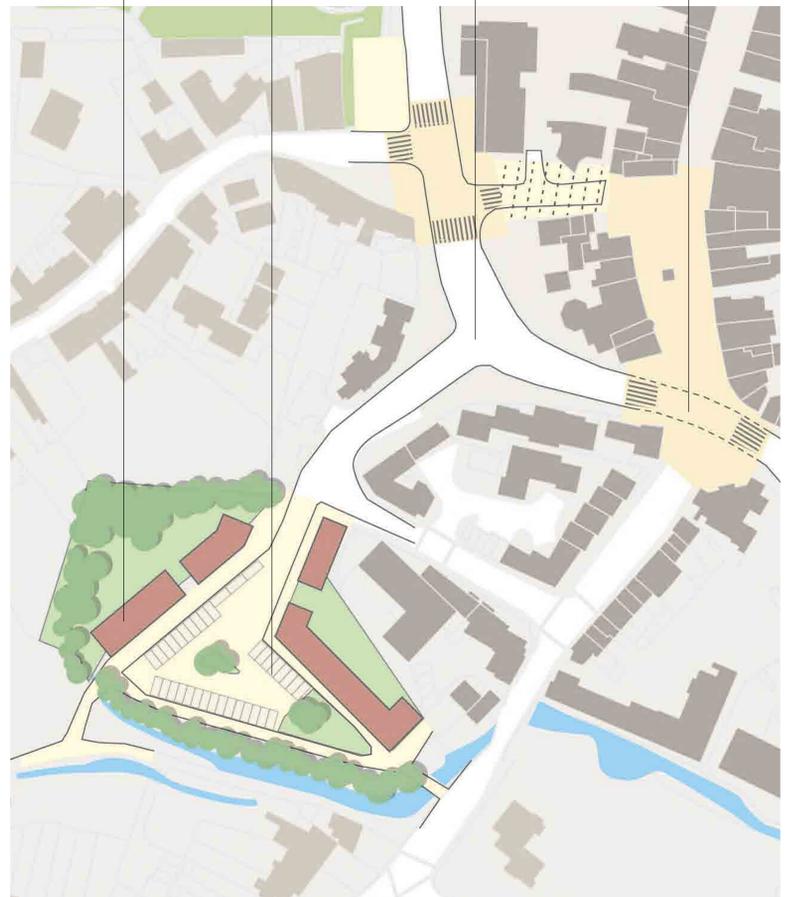
Mixed use redevelopment between the several good existing buildings which provide a strong anchor for the character and design. This area should continue the north-south link to the town centre.

New town houses and apartments, with undercroft parking where within the flood zone

Some town centre parking retained, making use of flood zone area

Removal of the wide roundabout connecting to The Water Meadow, giving space back to pedestrians and possible creating a new development site

A wide, raised-table pedestrian crossing, helping Market Square feel like one space again



Outdoor seating for Red Lion

Improved surface treatment

New cycle parking

Table-top crossing - full width of square

Integrated street lighting and signals

Increased outdoor seating

Increased cycle parking

Market stalls

