

Woking

Town Centre Masterplan

July 2022

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Executive Summary

The Executive of the Council committed to prepare the Town Centre Masterplan at its meeting on 15 July 2021. In doing so, it placed public engagement at centre stage in the Masterplan preparation process. The Residents' Panel and key stakeholders were invited to give their views on what they envisage the Town Centre to be in 10 years' time. The following is the vision that residents and key stakeholders wish for the Town Centre:

Woking Town Centre will be:

- the primary focus of sustainable growth to maintain its status as an economic hub and a location for inward investment with a flourishing diverse, innovative, and digitally enabled economy,
- a transport hub which provides transport services, links and communication linking people to jobs, services and facilities;
- undergoing a significant change to be shaped by the Town Centre Masterplan, this change includes the provision of a range of shops, homes, jobs, cultural, health and leisure facilities to meet the needs of residents and modern businesses whilst enhancing the heritage and environmental assets of the area;
- a place where it is expected that development will be of exemplary design within the framework of the Townscape Strategy for the Town Centre and with green infrastructure embedded as essential and integral part of the design;
- a place where development is accessible to the disabled and all other users; and
- a place where development will be informed by appropriate public engagement.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to provide an overarching framework to help guide development and investment decisions in the Town Centre to achieve the above vision.

The Masterplan covers a range of topics that residents and key stakeholders want the Masterplan to address. The Masterplan covers them in detail. Below is a summary of the headlines under each topic. However, all are encouraged to read the Masterplan in full to understand its detailed requirements and how they will apply to day to day planning and investment decisions.

Townscape strategy

What it is about

The design quality of new development in Woking town centre has a direct bearing on its success. In supporting relevant Local Plan policy, the masterplan promotes high quality design in new development. In doing so, it is important that a proper account is taken of the existing character of Woking town centre. The Town Centre Masterplan defines new character areas across the centre which will help developers to do just this.

The town centre has seen some new very tall buildings. Tall buildings in the right locations can bring significant benefits to Woking. High density developments in central locations takes pressure off releasing more sensitive land in less central locations. But the town centre has until now lacked a strategic approach to where new tall buildings should be located. The Woking

Town Centre masterplan presents an evidence-based building heights framework for the whole town centre, identifying areas that might be better or less-well suited to new tall buildings.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- Update and establish a new Woking town centre character framework to help ensure new development takes proper account of its local context.
- Establish a high-level public realm and movement framework which identifies where improvements can be made to the town centre in the context of major identified development sites.
- Establish a building heights and tall buildings strategy for Woking town centre, to help ensure the form and scale of new development is appropriate and tall buildings are located only in the most appropriate locations.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- New development will be assessed against the character area, public realm and movement framework, and building heights guidance outlined in the Townscape Strategy of this Masterplan.
- To help guide development and ensure the right balance is made between making the best and most efficient use of town centre land and respecting local context, a series of studies have been undertaken on each of the Local Plan site allocations and HIF sites. These studies, whilst not representing a blueprint for development, provide the Council and potential applicants with guidance on how developments could respond to their local context whilst delivering high density and high-quality developments. Please see Appendix 1.

Sustainable construction

What it is about

The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency, pledging to accelerate its efforts to become carbon neutral across its own estate and operations by 2030, and by 2050 across the wider Borough. The Masterplan sets out clear policy requirements that development must achieve to be acceptable, to help ensure these targets are met. It highlights opportunities that exist to help achieve the requirements and provides good practice examples as guidance.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- A well-designed town centre and buildings that conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials.
- Design should respond to the impacts of climate change by maximising energy efficiency and minimising carbon emissions to contribute towards net zero targets
- by 2050.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development will be required to follow the energy hierarchy by reducing demand for energy through integrated approach to solar gain, securing efficient supply of heat and power, considering feasibility of on-site renewable energy generation.
- Large scale non-residential or mixed-use proposals will be required to conduct a BREAM assessment and achieve at least a Very Good rating;



- New development should incorporate measures to reduce water demand and for residential development, this should not exceed 110 litres per person per day;
- Development should incorporate electric vehicle charging points.
- Unless otherwise justified to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, development will be required to connect to the existing network of CHP.

Flood risk and surface water drainage

What it is about

Water is a natural part of our environment. However, the Town Centre is highly urbanised, with little natural or permeable space to absorb rainwater. Development has the potential to adversely affect surface water runoff and flood risk, and measures should be taken at the earliest stage of development to avoid or minimise flood risk. The Masterplan sets out the sources of flooding and provides examples of practical measures that can be used to ensure that surface water flood risk is not increased. It sets out clear requirements for development to meet or consider to be acceptable.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- The inclusion of SuDS within all development in the TCMP area will help to reduce flood risk to the multiple catchments the area drains to as well as helping to improve water quality to our rivers as required by the Environment Act 2021.
- Our Plan to achieve the objectives
- Development will be required to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. This should be considered and incorporated from the start of the development process.

- Development creates green/ blue streets, meaning that highways are designed to drain via rain gardens and surface water tree pits, where appropriate. An example of this has begun at Chertsey Road.

Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

What it is about

Green infrastructure makes a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of the community. There are significant opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and biodiversity in the Town Centre. The Masterplan provides an overview of the current green infrastructure provision, good examples of what can be achieved and requirements that development will be expected to achieve to be policy compliant.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- To take proactive steps to support 'bigger, better and joined up' habitats, green ways and spaces.
- To be tenacious in the long-term effort to reduce our impacts on the environment and to plan for sustainable growth.
- To increase people's access to enjoy greenspaces, recognising the well-being lift this gives, whilst protecting and enhancing our habitats.
- To ensure that planned development is supported by infrastructure including new natural and recreational assets.
- To increase the area of the overall tree, shrub and canopy cover of the Town Centre and ensure successful establishment and long-term growth potential as well as a diversity of suitable tree species.

- To work collaboratively with partners in all sectors to achieve the objectives.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development will be required to provide on-site measures for new natural and formal spaces, greenways and habitats on-site. Where on-site provision is not feasible, developer contributions will be sought to meet the requirements off-site;
- Providing pocket parks to help enliven streets and public spaces. Informal and inclusive play should be part of this to create child-friendly space for all.
- Development should help create clear links between the urban core of Woking and its surrounding natural open spaces. One such link is the Basingstoke Canal, where integration with the town centre would be improved.
- Early consideration of green infrastructure and biodiversity requirements in the design of development and street-scene improvements, continuing throughout development, including during construction and future maintenance is encouraged.
- Development will be expected to meet national and/or local policy requirements for biodiversity net gain, for example through new trees, shrubs and hedges, increasing canopy cover over the town centre; green and eco-roofs and walls; bird nesting and bat/ bird roosting features to increase habitat provision.

General Infrastructure

What it is about

It is important for development to be supported by adequate and appropriate infrastructure in a timely manner. The Council has undertaken an Infrastructure Needs Assessment, which has informed the Masterplan. The Masterplan sets out infrastructure requirements that development should contribute to provide.

Objectives of what it seeks to achieve:

- To work in partnership with providers to ensure that development in the Town Centre is supported by the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure in a timely manner.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives

- Work in partnership to deliver Woking integrated transport project.
- Replacement of Victoria Arch and improvement to the road network in its vicinity.
- Work in partnership with Network Rail to deliver significant improvement to rail infrastructure, including the Woking Flyover.
- Deliver Woking Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Heritage Assets

What it is about

Woking has a rich heritage that needs to be conserved as a distinct part of the town's development. Heritage assets include Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The Masterplan makes sure that development takes full account of the heritage assets of the area and their settings, with the aim of enhancing them.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- To conserve heritage assets, and retain them as a valuable part of Woking's evolving built environment;
- Prevent inappropriate development and loss or damage to heritage assets.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development should conserve heritage assets as a valuable part of a dynamic town centre. Development will be required to assess its impacts on heritage assets and their



setting, including the Conservation Area and incorporate appropriate measures to enhance the assets.

- Preventing development that involves loss or damage to heritage assets and take steps to enhance and restore them where beneficial to the asset and its setting.
- Relocate Town Gate to enhance public realm in the area.

Leisure and Culture

What it is about

Woking has diverse and rich leisure and culture facilities, but there are also significant opportunities for enhancement, partnership working between the public sector and the development industry. The Masterplan sets out how this can be achieved.

Objective of what it seeks to achieve

- To ensure the town centre is a leisure and culture destination that provides for the needs of its residents, workers and visitors.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives

- To make better use of existing cultural and leisure spaces through co-location.
- To work with community groups and businesses to expand and maximise the benefits of performing arts
- To maximise the connection between culture and heritage.

Economy

What it is about

The Town Centre is the primary focus for economic growth in the Borough to maintain its status as an economic hub. The period of the pandemic has had an impact on the economy

of the town centre, particularly on retail and hospitality. For example, the way people shop and working patterns are changing, and measure should be put in place to respond to these changes. The Masterplan responds to these challenges by setting out measures to facilitate sustainable economic growth and how developers can work in partnership to deliver that.

Objectives that it seeks to achieve

- To deliver a balance mix of uses including residential, commercial, leisure, culture, green spaces, as well as health and other public services.
- To have a vibrant and dynamic town centre where people want to live, work and visit.
- To have a town centre that is agile to respond and adapt to changing economic circumstances.
- To create a Town Centre environment that is conducive for inward investment.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- To make sure the Town Centre continue to be the primary focus for sustainable growth. In particular, to accommodate new development on previously developed land
- To promote and market a positive vision for the Town Centre
- To provide housing at the Town Centre as key part of the mix of Town Centre uses to ensure it continue to be dynamic and vibrant

Housing

What it is about

The Council has a policy obligation and a statutory duty to meet several housing requirements, including planning to meet locally identified housing needs. The Masterplan

ensures that housing development that comes forward is sustainable, including appropriate green infrastructure, and design-led within the framework of a well-considered Townscape Strategy. It also sets out a Townscape Strategy that will help determine anticipated capacities for the HIF sites taking a design-led approach.

Objectives for housing include:

- Ensuring the comprehensive delivery of the housing requirement in the Core Strategy earmarked for the Town Centre.
- To use all endeavours to facilitate the delivery of the HIF housing ask.
- To provide housing at the Town Centre as key part of the mix of Town Centre uses
- Improving the delivery of affordable housing
- Ensuring that the design and location of new housing contributes to the Town Centre's vitality and viability
- Providing a mixture of housing tenures and sizes in every part of the Town Centre
- To make sure the Town Centre continue to be the focus of new development

Our Plan to achieve the objectives

- To work in partnership to seek the redevelopment of the Day's Aggregates Yard to unlock the site for development of town centre uses, including housing.
- To improve the delivery of Affordable Housing
- To make sure that all policy and statutory housing requirements are met
- To seek the provision of private outdoor amenity spaces in housing developments.
- To require development with access core serving four or more dwellings to provide an access control system with entry phone.
- Requiring dwellings entered at the seventh floor (eighth storey) and above should be served by at least two lifts.

Transport

What it is about

Congestion is a key concern of residents and key stakeholders that needs to be addressed. Development should be accessible to all transport modes, and given the location of the Town Centre, by walking, cycling and public transport in that order before car-based travel. The Masterplan has specific proposal to help achieve this goal.

Objectives it seeks to achieve

- To substantially improve movement within the town centre
- To reduced town centre highway congestion
- To improve cycling and walking facilities linking the town centre under the Victoria Arch to the southern part of Woking town and around the railway station
- To replace Victoria Arch. The project will support Network Rail objectives such as Woking Station redevelopment, and future Flyover.
- The Council will work with Surrey County Council to explore the feasibility of introducing Liveable Neighbourhoods where feasible.

Our Plan to achieve the objectives:

- Development will contribute to the delivery of the Woking Integrated Transport Project and the sustainable transport package;
- The Council will deliver the replacement of Victoria Arch as part of the HIF project
- Development will be required to contribute to recover part of the cost of Victoria Arch Widening Scheme;
- Development should facilitate the delivery of the Woking Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.



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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The changes that have occurred since the Town Centre was established to date have been significant. Often the changes have been ad-hoc in responding to circumstances and community needs of the times without detailed attention to how they were coordinated. Whilst the Town Centre Masterplan looks ahead in shaping future development and investment, it is important to understand the historic context of the town's evolution to appreciate the key features that are worth conserving and to provide an effective linkage between the past, the present and the future. Given the volume of proposed future changes identified by the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) project, it is important that the changes are well coordinated, sustainable, well designed and appropriately innovated without losing the history and heritage assets that we all value and cherish. The Basingstoke Canal and the opening of the Railway Station in 1838, with links to London was a major influence on the development of the Town Centre. What is now the Albion Square was an arrival point into the town and the Town Centre. The Albion Hotel (where Albion House is now located) was originally built in 1856-7, and replaced in 1899 by a newer hotel. Today the building is called Spaces, which differs considerably as illustrated by [Figs 1 and 2](#).

From the middle of the 1800s the town's development began, first with the High Street, containing a collection of shops including a Post Office, grocers, chemists, butchers and draper and milliner. Some of these were converted from cottages, and some were new buildings. Buildings now situated on the High Street date from 1870 and have a high degree of historical significance to the town ([Fig 2](#)).

From the 1890s Chertsey Road began to take over as the town's main shopping street, and buildings were gradually constructed. Five shops were erected on what had been part of the grounds of the Albion Hotel and these were supplemented around 1898 by shops on the corner of Chobham Road and the opposite side of Chertsey Road. Broadway, which was originally the western extent of Maybury Road, started to develop at the same time, and contained the town's first telephone exchange.



Fig 1 Albion Hotel



Fig 2 High Street



Fig 3 Spaces - Budgens from upper part of High Street



By 1934 the Ordnance Survey map shows that at this point, much of the town centre was built. The general street pattern and built form and layout is very similar to how it was in 1934, despite changes to individual and collections of buildings.

The Town Centre continue to undergo significant change, and some of the changes such as Victoria Place have been dramatic in their impact on the general character of the area. The changes have evolved, often organically without the necessary coordination of effectively linking the past with the future. There is the risk that the Town Centre will lose its identity and sense of history if current trajectory continues, and as such local residents and key stakeholders have been requesting for a well-planned led approach to future development – A Masterplan.

The need for the ‘Town Centre Masterplan’ is therefore a request made by residents, developers, local businesses, and key stakeholders. The Council has listened and has committed to preparing the Masterplan that will provide the necessary framework to ensure sustainable development of the Town Centre. The Council has an up-to-date Core Strategy and a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) that provides the strategic policy context for the preparation of the Masterplan. The Core Strategy identifies the Town Centre as the primary focus of sustainable growth to maintain its status as an economic hub with a flourishing, diverse and innovative economy and a transport hub which provides transport services, links and communication linking people to jobs, services, and facilities.

Not only is the Town Centre expected to perform these functions, but it is also a hub for local people and a place to socialise and enjoy culture and recreation. The development of a dynamic and successful Town Centre is central to the achievement of sustainable development in the Borough. For example, it limits the amount of land that has to be found in the Green Belt to meet future development needs.

The Council has been concerned to make sure that the Masterplan strikes a good balance between the various expectations of residents and stakeholder and the often conflicting needs and impacts of development. To understand these tensions, the Council has undertaken a series of targeted engagement sessions to seek the views of a cross section of the community through Residents’ Panel engagement sessions and one to one engagement with local businesses and key stakeholders on what they want their Town Centre to be in the next ten years. The outcome of the engagement has been captured to inform the community’s vision for the Town Centre:

Woking Town Centre will be:



the primary focus of sustainable growth to maintain its status as an economic hub and a location for inward investment with a flourishing diverse, innovative, and digitally enabled economy,



a transport hub which provides transport services, links and communication linking people to jobs, services and facilities;



undergoing a significant change to be shaped by the Town Centre Masterplan, this change includes the provision of a range of shops, offices, homes, jobs, cultural, health and leisure facilities to meet the needs of local residents and modern businesses whilst protecting the heritage and environmental assets of the area;



a place where it is expected that development will be of exemplary design within the framework of the Townscape Strategy for the Town Centre and with green infrastructure and biodiversity embedded as an essential and integral part of the design;



a place where development is accessible to the disabled and all other users; and



a place where development will be informed by appropriate public engagement.

The Town Centre has great strengths to help deliver the vision of the Masterplan. It has a productive, thriving and an innovative economy, it is in close proximity to two international gateways – Heathrow and Gatwick, it is a location for the headquarters' of world class businesses, skilled labour force and a local political leadership that is committed to the preparation and delivery of the Masterplan.



2 Purpose of the Masterplan

The purpose of the Town Centre Masterplan is to produce an overarching one stop planning document with a townscape strategy that will provide the necessary framework to help guide development and investment decisions within the Town Centre to achieve the vision. The Masterplan cascades boroughwide policies and strategies to how they would apply in the Town Centre geographical area. With its south east of England location, Woking is at the centre of one of the fastest growing economic areas outside of London, and with its entrepreneurial businesses, highly qualified skilled force and exceptional communication links to international gateways such as Heathrow and Gatwick, there is potential to drive growth, which the Masterplan will provide certainty. The Town Centre is more than just a shopping centre. Whilst retail will continue to play a key role in the regeneration of the Town Centre, the Masterplan would also seek to create a Town Centre where people would want to live and work, a Town Centre which is a destination for leisure and culture and a place where people would want to socialise and have a range of experiences.

The geographical definition of the Town Centre which the Masterplan relates is as set out by the Proposals Map of the Core Strategy/ Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). This is illustrated by the Location Plan opposite.

The Council has and continues to invest significantly to improve the attractiveness of the Town Centre and help create the conducive environment for businesses to

invest. This includes about £25M of investment towards an integrated transport package, the landscaping of key streets such as Commercial Way, a Cycle Hub by the Railway Station, the Victoria Square public realm, the £700M Victoria Place development, which has recently opened and the on-going delivery of the £95M Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) project to replace the Victoria Arch. The Council is also working in partnership with Network Rail to deliver significant improvements to the rail infrastructure, including the Woking Flyover and a new Platform Six. This investment provides a good foundation for the sustainable delivery of the Masterplan.

The pandemic has no doubt had an impact on the way people live and work such as on the acceleration of on-line shopping and hybrid working. The Council has and continue to provide a wide range of support to help local businesses through the challenging times. The challenges are covered in detail under specific topics in the Masterplan, but overall, the Masterplan will help provide certainty for businesses to invest and a conducive environment for people to live, work, visit and socialise.

The Council is aware of its promotion and marketing role in highlighting the opportunities that exists in the Town Centre, and will be making every necessary effort to work with stakeholders and businesses to highlight the advantages and opportunities that the Masterplan offers for inward investment.



Fig 4 Town Centre boundary

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3 Content of the Masterplan

3.1 Key themes

The Masterplan covers the following key themes:

- The Planning Policy context
- How our Masterplan has been prepared
- Townscape strategy
- Sustainable construction
- Heritage
- Economy
- Housing
- Leisure and culture
- Green infrastructure
- Flood risk and surface water management
- General infrastructure
- Transport
- Delivery

Under each of these themes the following is covered:

- An overview of the current situation;
- Existing opportunities and constraints;
- The objective to be achieved;
- The Plan to deliver the objectives, which developers, partners and stakeholders will be required to contribute.

Whilst each of these themes are deliberately structured to be self-contained, they are also interrelated to provide a comprehensive approach to achieving sustainable development of the Town Centre.

3.2 Planning Policy Context

The Town Centre Masterplan will have status of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Being an SPD, it will have to be in general conformity with the requirements of the development plan. The development plan in this regard comprises of the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations DPD and the Development Management Policies DPD.

The Council has an up to date adopted Core Strategy. It provides the strategic policy context for the preparation of the Masterplan. Policy CS1 (A Spatial Strategy for Woking Borough) of the Core Strategy identifies the Town Centre as the primary focus of sustainable growth. The Core Strategy directs most new development to previously developed land in the Town Centre which offers the best access to a range of services and facilities to minimise the need to travel. The Town Centre is a sustainable location for the future direction of development. The Core Strategy encourages high density development that could include tall buildings in the Town Centre in a way that builds on its overall character and appearance and does not compromise that of nearby areas. This approach to the spatial distribution of development across the Borough is intended to minimise the amount of land that would be needed to be released from the Green Belt to meet future development needs.

In quantitative terms, Policy CS2 (Woking Town Centre) of the Core Strategy earmarks the Town Centre to accommodate 2,180 new dwellings, 27,000 sq.m of office floorspace and 75,300 sq.m of retail floorspace between 2010 and 2027. In addition to these figures, the Council has accepted a Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF) award of £95M to replace the Victoria Arch. The award requires the Council to deliver housing on its own sites (the Triangle site, Poole Road site and Concorde/Griffin House) and use its best endeavours to deliver an additional 10 sites, yield an anticipated total of 3,304 new dwellings in the Town Centre by 2030 over and above what has been committed in the Core Strategy.

Presently, Woking's housing need is significantly more than what it is required to provide. The housing need for the area using the Government's standard method of calculation is 431 dwellings per year. The Council is providing 292 dwellings per year with significant unmet need that is being met in Waverley and Guildford boroughs.

3.3 How the Masterplan has been prepared and consultation and engagement

The key principles that have underpinned the preparation of the Masterplan include:

- A commitment to early and an on-going community and stakeholder engagement and consultation
- An overriding aim to achieve sustainable development;
- Place making ethos to ensure the Town Centre is a place where people want to live, work and visit;

Each key principle is not mutually exclusive. They interact and integrate to provide certainty and confidence for business investment

The Council had been committed to make sure that the community and its stakeholders take ownership of the Masterplan. In this regard, community and stakeholder engagement had been central to the preparation of the Masterplan. The commitment to prepare the Masterplan was by a cross-party consensus of the Council. Members were appropriately briefed and engaged to provide a steer on what type of Masterplan they want for the Town Centre. Three options for the Masterplan were considered, and Members agreed that their decision for the preferred option should be informed by community and stakeholder engagements.

The preparation of the Masterplan was the beginning of the process of establishing a new dialogue with the local community about what they envisage the Town Centre to be by 2030 and the role that they think the

Masterplan could play to achieve that. The initial engagement focused on the concept of Master planning rather than the detailed contents of the Masterplan. In parallel to this initial consultation, the story about the journey to date in establishing the current pattern of spatial distribution of development was explained and discussed to seek views on whether the trajectory of the spatial distribution of development as set out in the Core Strategy should continue. Given the importance of the initial engagement, and the necessity to reach as many sections of the community as possible, a specialist consultant was engaged to work with the Council to undertake one to one engagement with key stakeholders. The outcome of the engagement was used to inform the preferred option for the Masterplan.

A significant part of the Masterplan had been written in-house by the Council. A multidisciplinary project team across the Council was set up to coordinate the preparation of the Masterplan and to take ownership of its delivery.

There has been significant Members' engagement. The Portfolio Holder, the Shadow Portfolio Holder and the Chair of the LDF Working Group received regular updates throughout the preparation of the Masterplan.

All the above engagement was undertaken prior to the Draft Masterplan being prepared and agreed for formal engagement and consultation.

The Masterplan will have the status of a Supplementary Planning Document and as such must meet prescribed statutory consultation requirements before it can be adopted. The draft Masterplan was reported to the LDF Working Group (5 July 2022) and the Executive of the Council (14 July 2022) to seek their comments and an authority to

formally consult the wider public. The public and stakeholders were given sufficient time to engage in the process between 25 July 2022 and 19 September 2022. Representations received were considered before the Masterplan was finalised. The Final Draft Masterplan will be reported to the Local Development Framework (LDF) Working Group, Executive and Council for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) before the end of 2022.

A Consultation Plan setting out details of consultation and engagement events undertaken on the Draft Masterplan is in Appendix XXX.

The Masterplan has been prepared with the overall goal to achieve sustainable development and create a place that people would like to live, work and visit. In this regard, the Masterplan brings together social, economy and environmental considerations into development decisions. It covers key themes such as climate change, green and blue infrastructure, economy, housing, heritage, transport, culture and leisure.

The Masterplan is informed by robust evidence base and several other strategies and programmes of the Council. For example, it is linked to the digital strategy, economic strategy, Woking 2050, Destination Woking, housing strategy and the Design SPD. Readers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these documents. Most importantly, the Masterplan is informed by representations received from residents, businesses and stakeholders throughout its preparation.



TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY

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4 Overview

The Woking Townscape Strategy is the central component in the Woking Town Centre Masterplan. In outlining a strategy within which Woking can attract investment and accommodate high density new development in appropriate locations, it takes a context-led approach and is based on an understanding of the town centre's environmental attributes.

The Woking Townscape Strategy has been composed in the following way:

1. **Urban analysis** - providing a map-based overview of town centre conditions including movement, land use, public realm and open space, heritage and landmarks, building types, urban grain, density and building heights.
2. **Town centre character framework** - providing a review and update of the character areas across the town centre included in the Woking Design SPD. This character framework provides the basis of subsequent masterplanning guidance and advice, particularly relating to building heights.
3. **Public realm and movement framework** - providing a pedestrian and cycling orientated movement and public realm framework which is relevant to all major developments that come forward in the town centre and the area immediately surround it.
4. **Building height strategy** - providing an evidence-based building height which sets out potentially suitable building heights for new development within each of the town centre character areas. The strategy also - using map-based analysis of factors which are considered to be make locations more suitable for, or more sensitive to, tall buildings - identifies locations which are considered to be potentially suitable for new tall building development.

- Consented scheme
- Scheme under construction



Fig 5 Existing plan of Woking Town Centre



5 Urban Analysis

5.1 Woking Town Centre

This section provides a comprehensive overview of environmental analysis of the town centre.

The analysis presented covers the following aspects of the town centre:

- Movement
- Land use
- Public realm and open space
- Heritage and landmarks
- Building types
- Urban grain
- Density
- Building heights

Plans at town centre scale are presented for each, supported by a concise commentary. This analysis forms an important context for the townscape strategy - enabling and informing a review of the town centre character areas - and wider town centre masterplan.

Allocated and opportunity sites

The masterplan is prepared in the context of a series of sites having been identified for potential redevelopment. Sites are allocated in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) and Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) project. These sites are shown on the plan opposite, as follows:

- UA2 Trizancia House, UA3 Chester House
- UA4, UA6 High Street and Commercial Way
- UA5 The Cornerstone
- UA8 Former Goldsworth Rd Arms
- UA9 113-129 Goldsworth Road
- UA10 MVA House (HIF8)

- UA11 1-7 Victoria Way (HIF8)
- UA13 30-32 Goldsworth Road (HIF8)
- UA14 Poole Road industrial estate (HIF12)
- UA15 The Big Apple (HIF11)
- UA16 Chertsey House
- UA17 Griffin House, UA18 Concord House (HIF10), Chobham Road (W1)
- UA25 101-121 Chertsey Road
- UA28 29-31 Walton Road
- UA30 Walton Road Youth Centre
- UA31 Car Park (East) Station (HIF2)
- UA32 Royal Mail Depot (HIF1)
- UA33 Coal Yard (HIF3)
- UA34 Quadrant Court
- UA35 The Crescent, UA36 Somerset House (HIF6)
- HIF4 Police Station
- HIF5 Station Plaza
- HIF9 BHS
- HIF7 The Triangle
- **HIF13 Church Gate**
- **Station sidings (W2)**

Building on the guidance and advice contained in the masterplan, design, massing and capacity studies on each of these key sites have been undertaken, set out in Appendix 1.

- HIF site
- Local Plan site allocation
- Windfall site

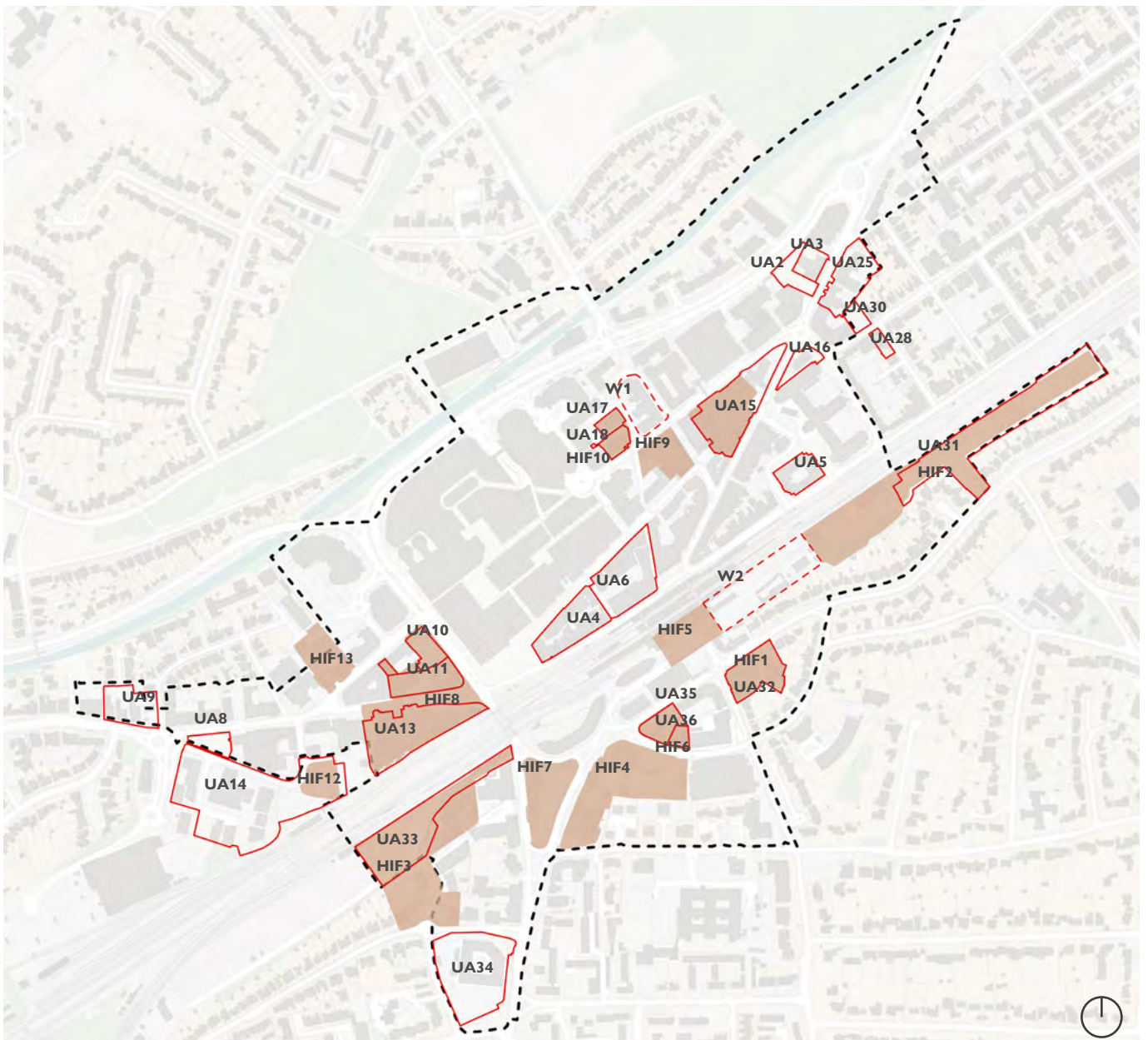


Fig 6 Allocated development and opportunity sites in Woking town centre

5.2 Movement

The dedicated Transport chapter provides more detail on the town centre’s movement context, but an assessment of movement, accessibility and the network of routes and pathways to and through the town centre is important to understand.

The commercial and civic core of the centre including Commercial Way, Mercia Way and Jubilee Square, have seen a radical transformation over the last ten years following an ambitious public realm investment programme. This work, completed a number of years ago, saw investments in pedestrian and cycle facilities along key pedestrianised streets.

Local bus services provide connections with surrounding towns and villages and Woking Railway Station supports high quality and frequent services to London Waterloo.

With good strategic road access to the M25 to the east via Junction 11, the M3 to the north via Junction 3 and the A3 to the south, vehicular routes converge to join the A320 at Victoria Way which is the main vehicular axis through the centre. The town’s principal car parks are generally accessed directly from Victoria Way.

Woking town centre is a highly accessible and sustainable location for new development.

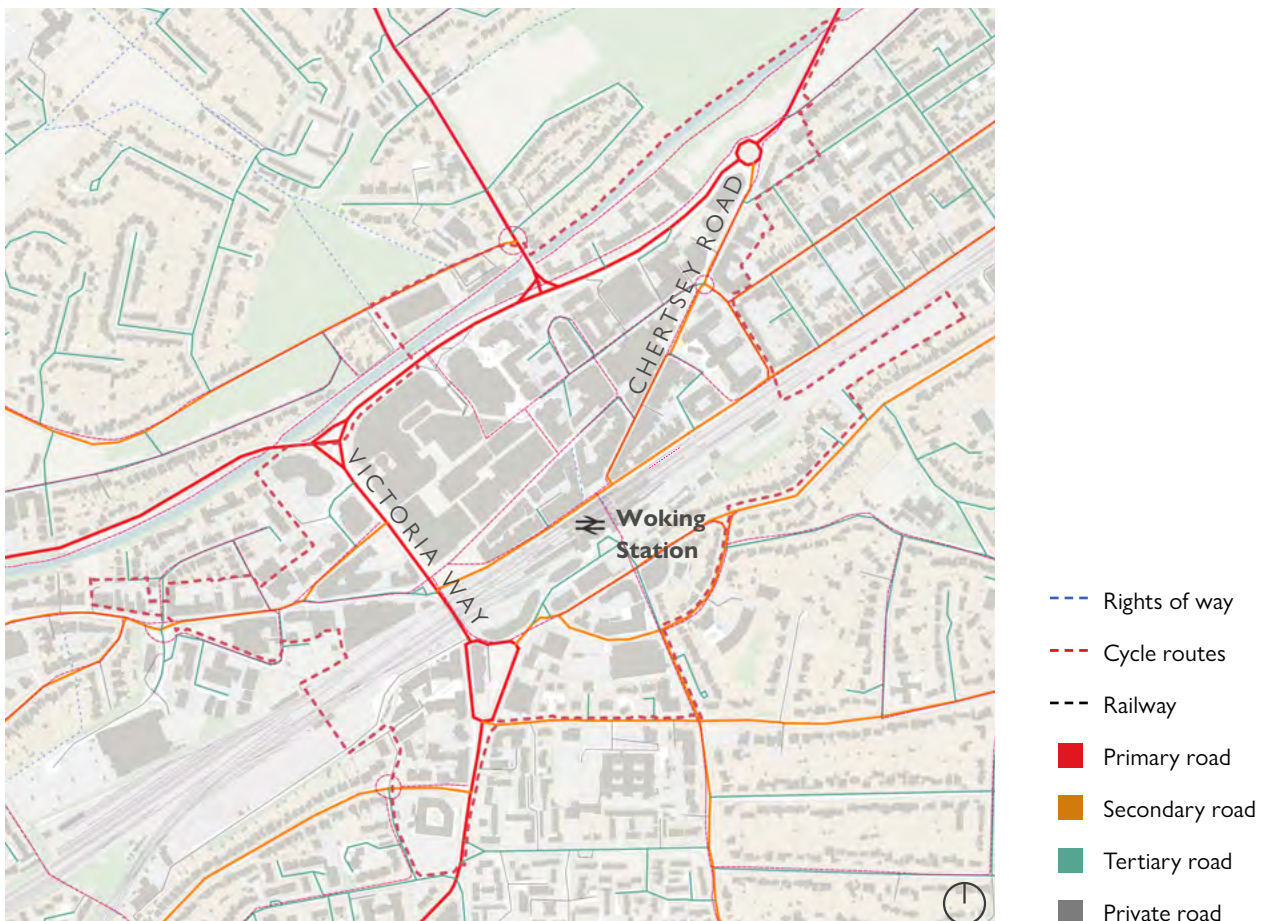


Fig 7 Existing movement plan within Woking town centre with the heirarchy of routes highlighted

5.3 Land Use

Commercial uses dominate the town centre. The retail core centres on Jubilee Square and the Victoria Place Shopping Centre. Major office developments are focused to the east of the centre.

The centre has seen major and very high density residential-led mixed use development around the station on the south side of the line and as part of the recent Victoria Square development on Victoria Way.

In recent times, west of Victoria Way, the Goldsworth Road area has also emerged as a focus for regeneration with major schemes still coming forward.

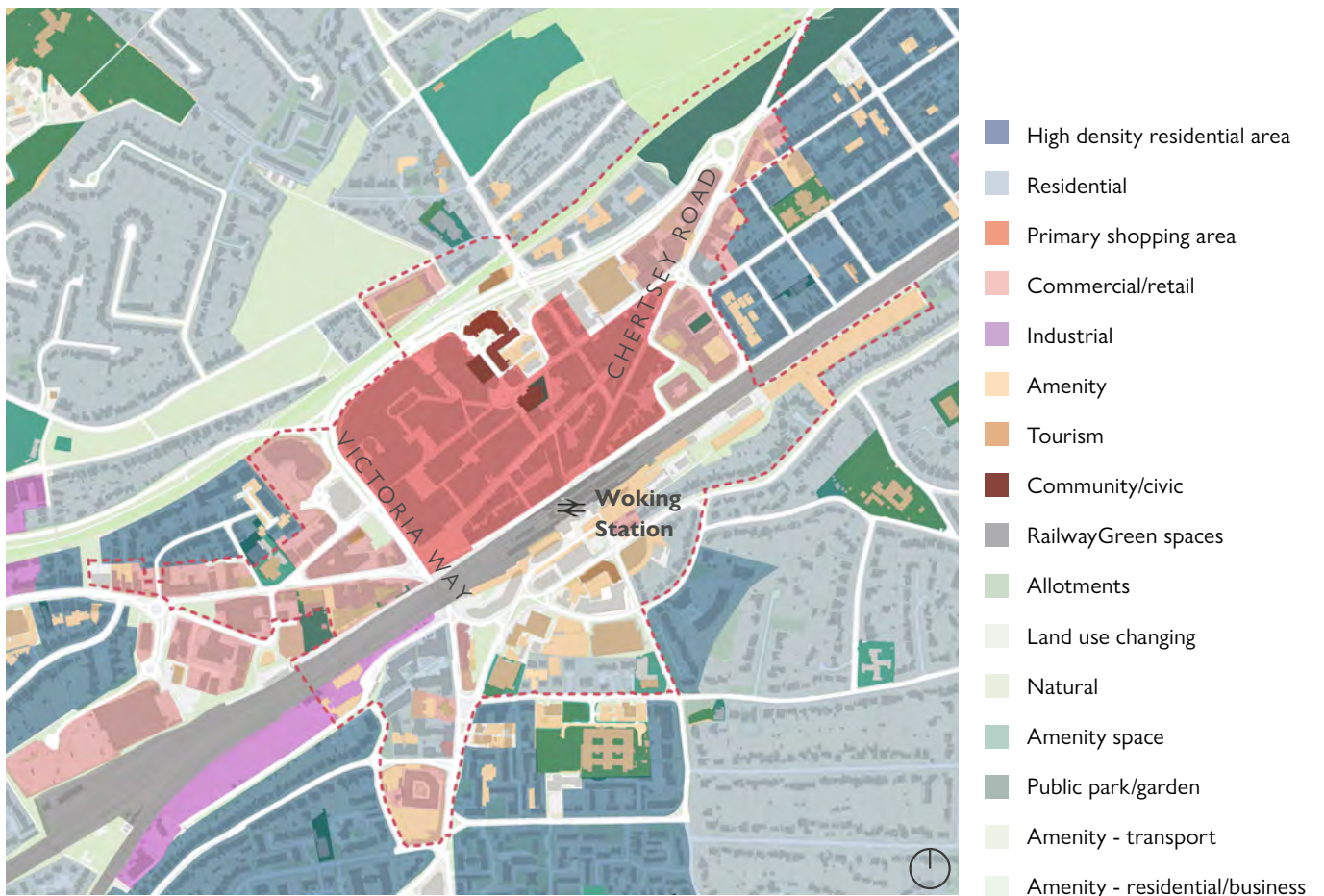


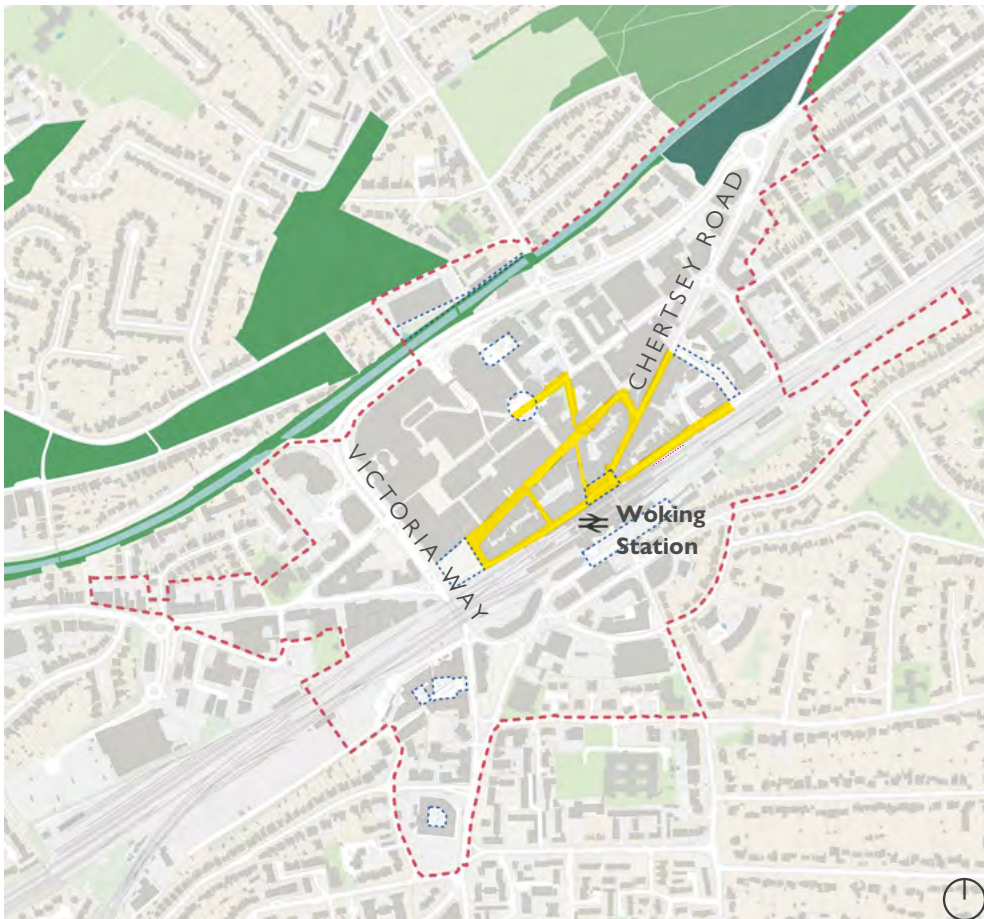
Fig 8 Existing land uses within Woking town centre and the peripheries

5.4 Public Realm and Open Space

Whilst there is very little green open space within the boundary of Woking town centre, the Basingstoke Canal corridor passes through the north of the centre, north of Victoria Way and provides a wonderful escape and respite from the urban character of the town centre.

Good quality access to Brookhouse Common is provided directly from Victoria Way to the north east of the centre and provides a link to the Saturn Trail which is a 15km bike and walking path that follows the Basingstoke Canal through the centre.

The quality of the central streets and urban spaces has benefited from a recent major programme of investment and improvement which was completed in around 2015. This programme saw the transformation of Commercial Way, Mercia Way and Jubilee Square.



- Key spaces
- Public realm
- Urban open space site allocations
- Green spaces
- Public park/garden
- Natural
- Functional amenity space

Fig 9 Existing public realm and open spaces plan with the key public spaces highlighted

5.5 Heritage and Landmarks

Whilst the Woking Town Centre Conservation Area, focused along the western end of Chertsey Road, acknowledges the historic grain and character of the centre, the town's three listed buildings are situated beyond its boundary.

Christ Church, designed by W.F. Unsworth and dating from 1889, is Grade II listed and occupies a prominent position in the centre and forms one corner of Jubilee Square. The Woking War Memorial enjoys a prominent position in the centre of Jubilee Square.

The Signal Box building is also Grade II listed and sits in the operational railway corridor between the tracks.

The Basingstoke Canal corridor is also captured within its own conservation area and locally listed buildings are distributed throughout the centre, with the main concentration being along Chertsey Road.



Fig 10 Existing heritage plan emphasizing locally and Grade II listed buildings

5.6 Building Types

The Woking borough-wide Character Study of 2010 categorises urban areas of the entire borough by age of building and development type.

Whilst high level analysis, it is useful in the context of a townscape strategy and town centre masterplan that should respond positively to exiting character.

The vast majority of the town centre is placed in the 'town centre redevelopment' category, but it is notable that the western end of Chertsey Road is flagged for its historic character.

This analysis is particularly useful in the context of the review of the town centre character areas.



Fig 11 Existing building uses categorized by era

5.7 Urban Grain

Analysis of urban grain often reveals the degree to which historic streets and buildings have been retained in centres. Larger floor-plate modern developments and town centre regeneration schemes often result in consolidated urban blocks and a more coarse form of development. The permeability of town centres can sometimes suffer as blocks are fused and routes lost.

This more coarse grain of development is evident west of Jubilee Square as a result of the Victoria Square Shopping Centre and the recent Victoria Way development.

In contrast, the finer grain character of the Chertsey Road corridor is evident with buildings defining clear street edges with yards and private spaces to the rear.

The analysis also reveals the relatively underdeveloped character of the Christchurch Way area of the centre.



Fig 12 Existing Urban Grain

5.8 Density

Floor Area Ratio is a useful measure of urban density, showing how densely developed different urban blocks are. A ratio of 1.0 would represent the site being completely covered by a single storey building. If exactly half of the plot was covered by a two storey development, the FAR would also be assessed to be 1.0.

The very high density nature of recent major town centre regeneration schemes of Victoria Way and Goldsworth Road are clearly evident.

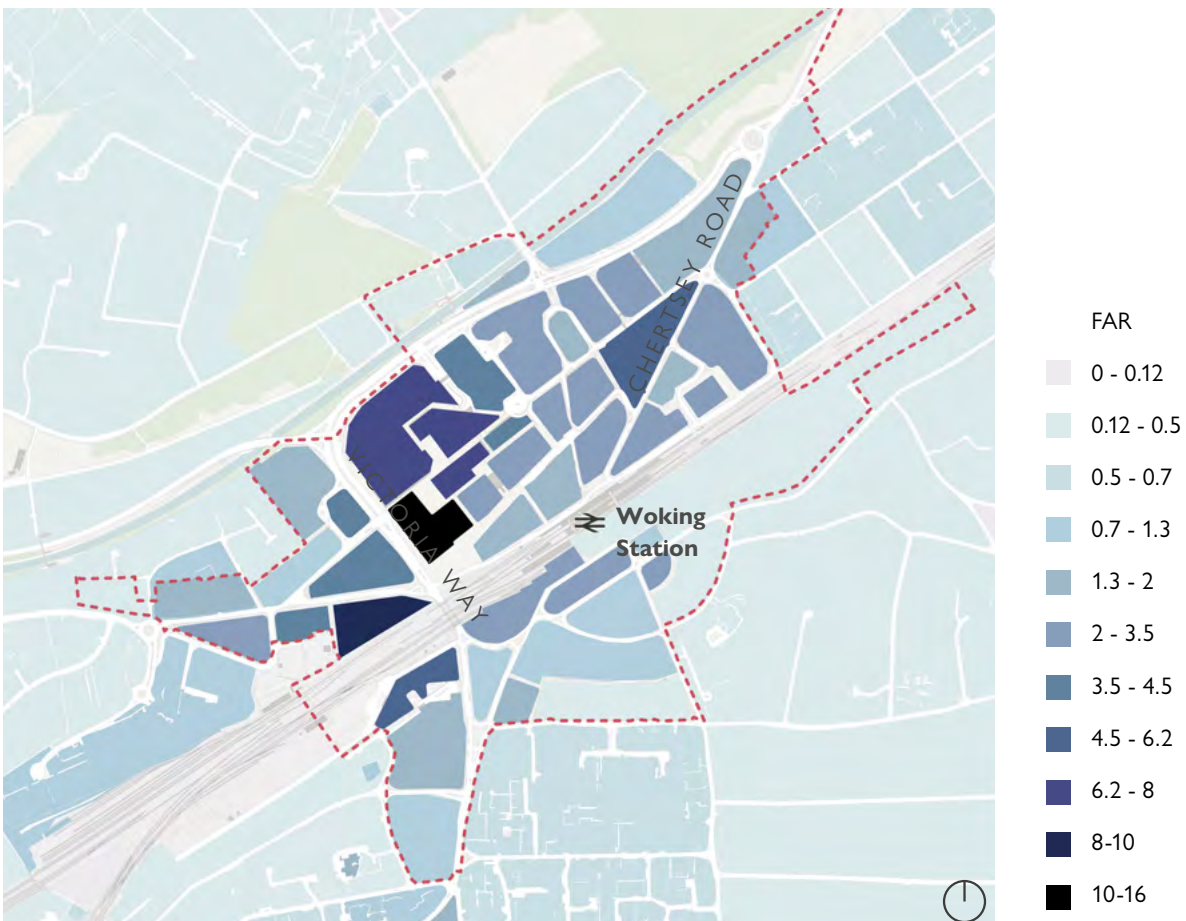


Fig 13 Floor area ratio shown per urban block

5.9 Building Heights

Building heights are directly related to urban density. The recent cluster of tall buildings on Victoria Way are evident in this plan, with prevailing shoulder building heights tending to be in the range between 7 and 15 storeys.

The larger office and retail developments in the town tender to be between 5 and 7 storeys with the prevailing heights of existing development in the more historic Chertsey Road and eastern part of the town typically ranging between 2 and 4 storeys.

South of the railway line, heights vary with more recent regeneration schemes also tending to be tall.

Beyond the commercial and mixed use core town centre, residential uses prevail, typically of two storeys.

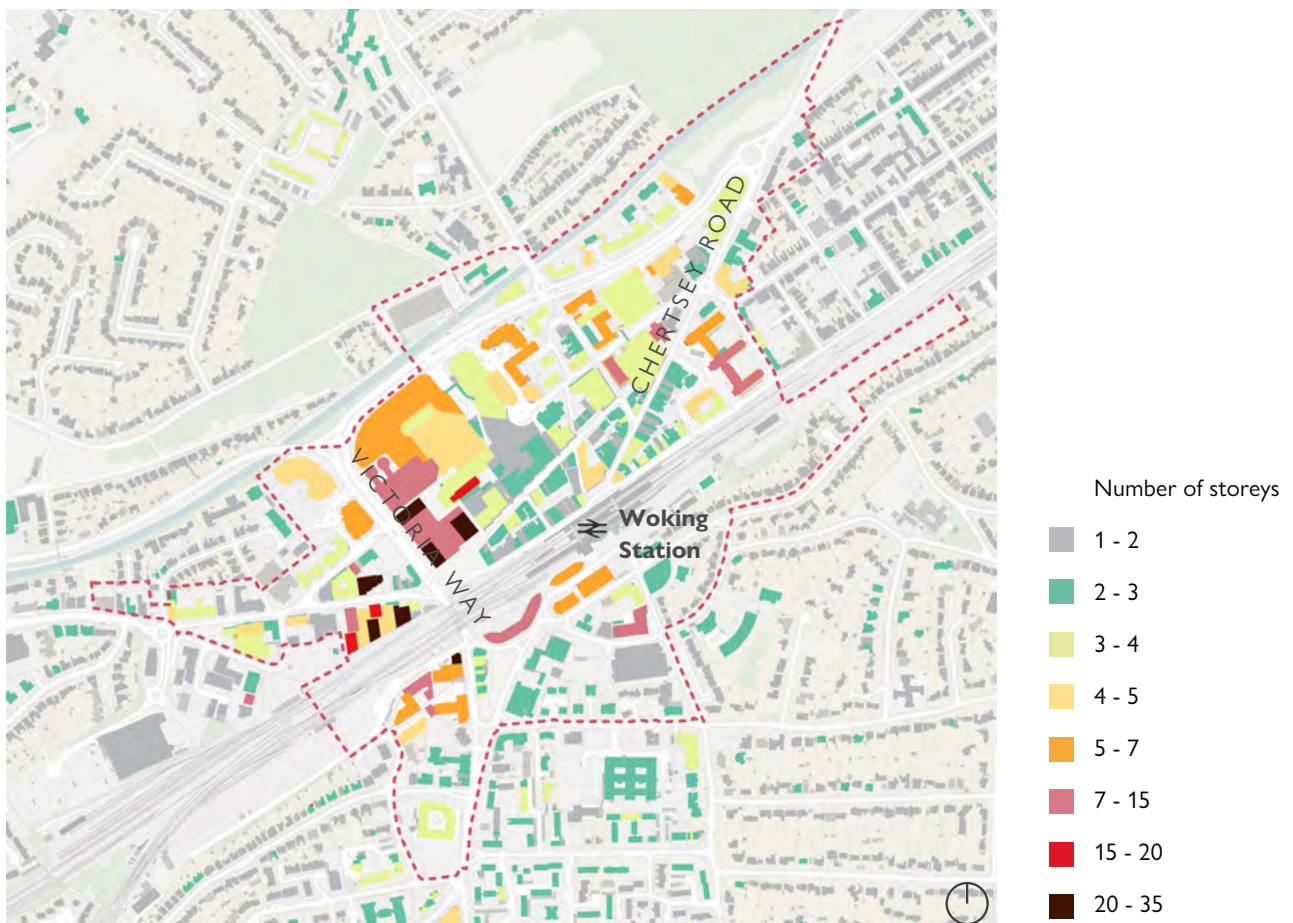


Fig 14 Existing building heights within Woking town centre, defined by the number of storeys

6 Town Centre Framework

6.1 Character Area Framework

The character areas within Woking town centre were established in 2014 during the preparation of the Woking Design SPD. Based on the analysis presented and reviewed above and in the context of some recent major developments since the production of the Design SPD, these boundaries can be reviewed and revised.

The plan opposite outlines these revised boundaries, taking account of grain, heritage assets, density of development and the distribution of land uses.

In the sections that follow present the characteristics of each of these character areas in turn.

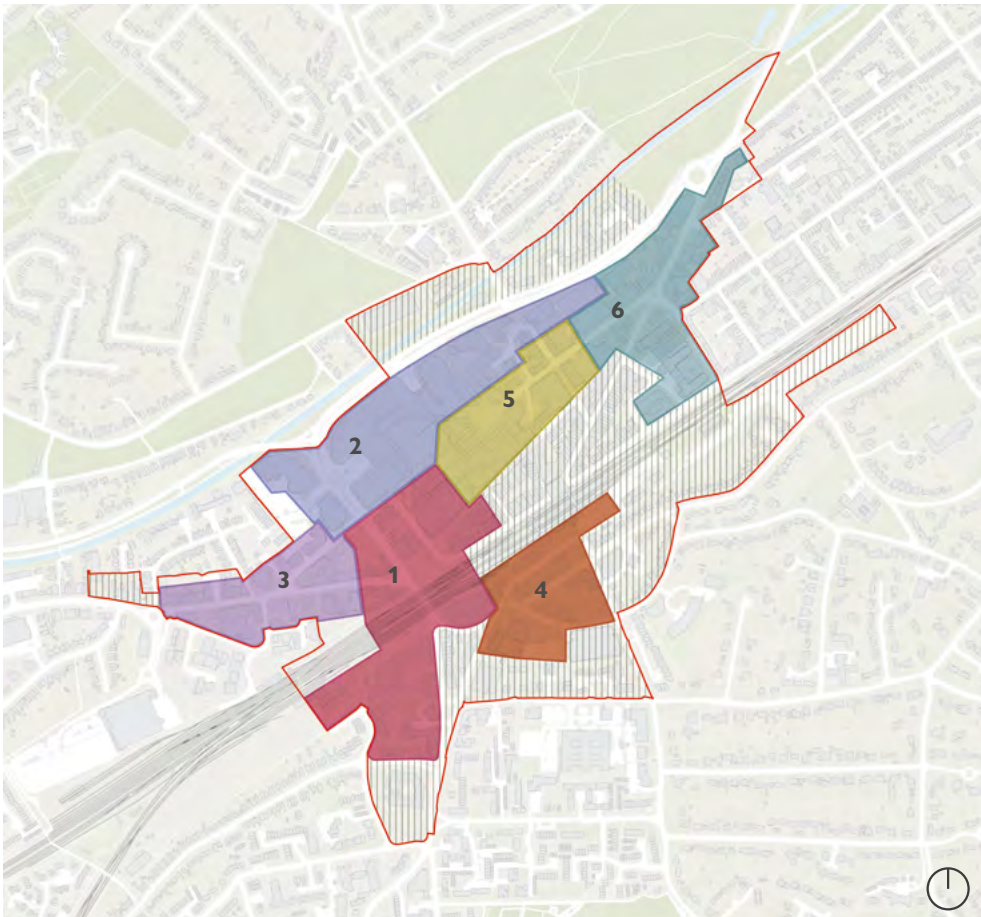


Fig 15 Character area boundaries from 2014

- Area 1 - Victoria Way South
- Area 2 - Victoria Way North
- Area 3 - Goldsworth Road
- Area 4 - Station approach
- Area 5 - Church Street
- Area 6 - Chertsey Road
- Area 7 - Historic Quarter

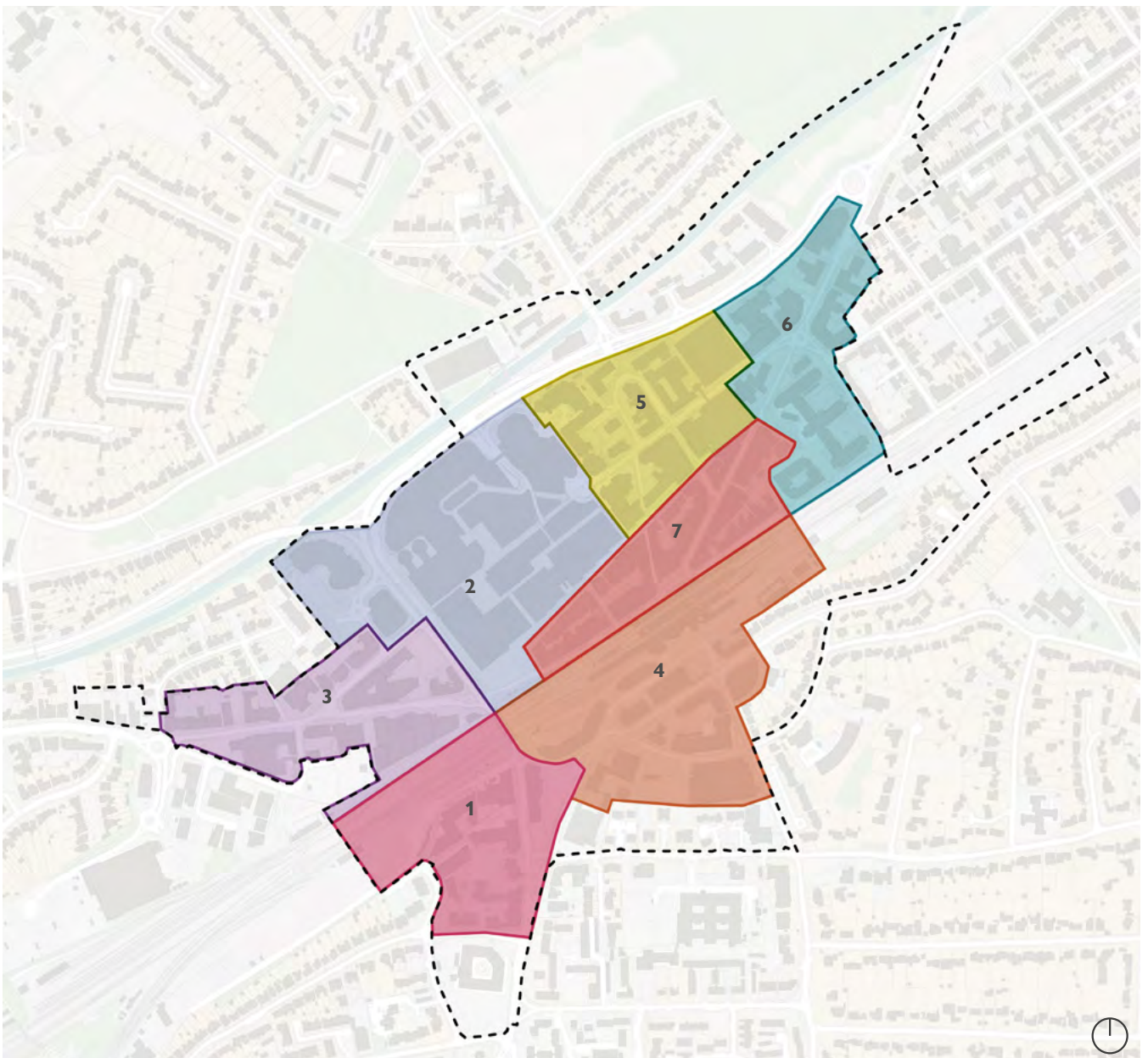


Fig 16 Existing revised character area boundaries

6.2 Victoria Way South Character Area



Existing condition

The site acts as a gateway to the town centre, increasing in height and density towards the centre with existing tall buildings including a recently completed housing-led scheme with a tower of over 20 storeys.

Key issues

- Precedent of tall buildings.
- Low rise context at fringe areas.
- Poor quality streetscape and public realm along Victoria Way, including the railway underpass.
- Railway reduces overshadowing but constrains movement.
- Locally listed row of shops.
- Existing planning permission for additional 19 storey building (Altura).

Features

1. New Central - 23 storey tower
2. Locally listed row of shops, Guildford Road 2/3 storeys



Fig 17 Aerial view of Victoria Way South looking northwards



Fig 18 Street level views of Victoria Way South



Victoria Way South Character Area - Street Views



Fig 19 Street view looking northwards along Guildford Road

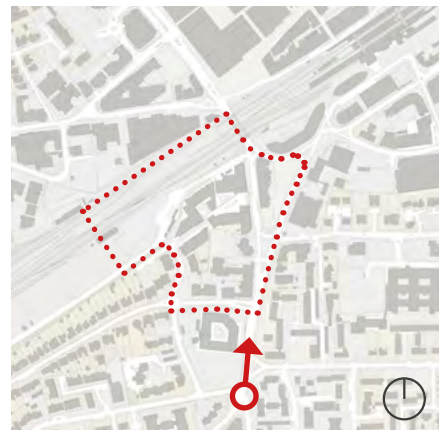
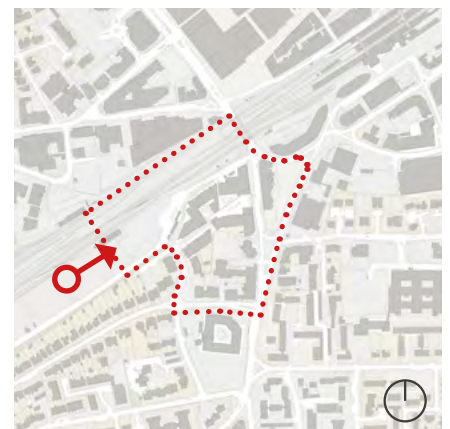




Fig 20 Street view looking eastwards along Downside Goods Yard



6.3 Victoria Way North Character Area



Existing condition

Victoria Way is characterised by large footprint commercial buildings and new residential towers. At the western end, the Peacocks Shopping Centre has resulted in an inward looking, consolidated urban block with extensive blank frontages facing onto Victoria Way and limited pedestrian connections. East of the shopping centre, urban blocks become more defined while continuing the theme of poor street frontages - primarily due to the civic uses leading towards Jubilee Square.

Features

1. Emerging tall building cluster
2. Peacocks Shopping Centre

Key issues

- Limited connections east-west across Victoria Way which acts as a barrier to the town centre.
- Need for better connections north-south of Victoria Way towards the canal.
- Undefined block structure due to shopping centre.
- Northern edge suits tall buildings due to low risk of overshadowing the town centre or surrounding residential areas.
- Little active frontage to Victoria Way.
- Narrow pavements and constricted public realm along Victoria Way.
- Proximity to the historic quarter and emerging tall building cluster results in conflict.
- Proximity to the listed Christ Church.

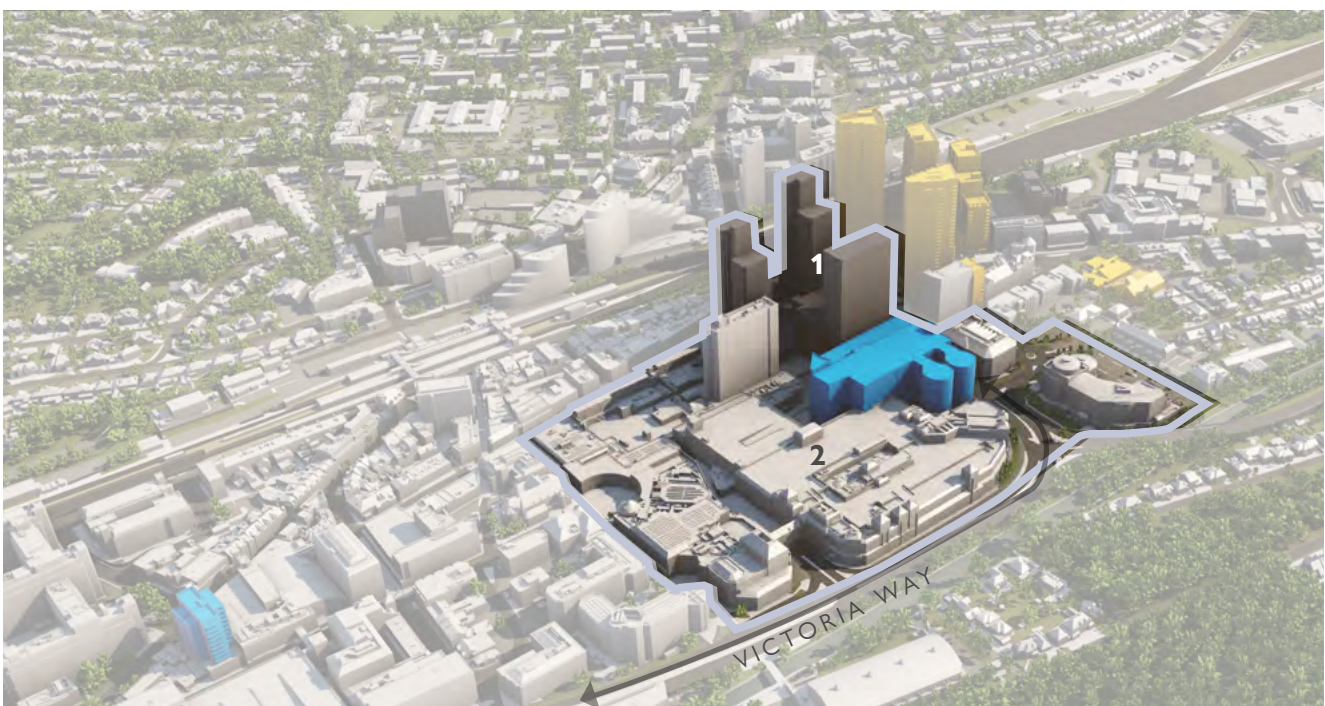


Fig 21 Aerial view looking southwards showing the existing condition including potential cluster of tall buildings

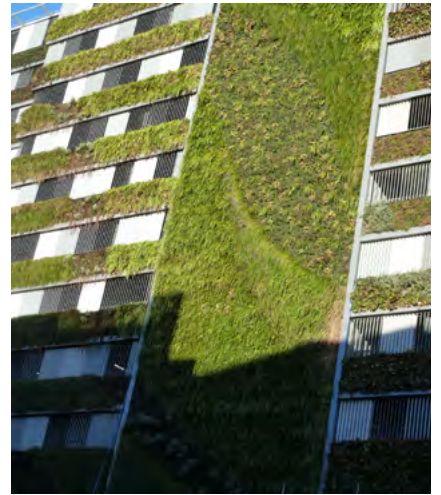


Fig 22 Photographs of the existing area condition



Victoria Way North Character Area - Street Views

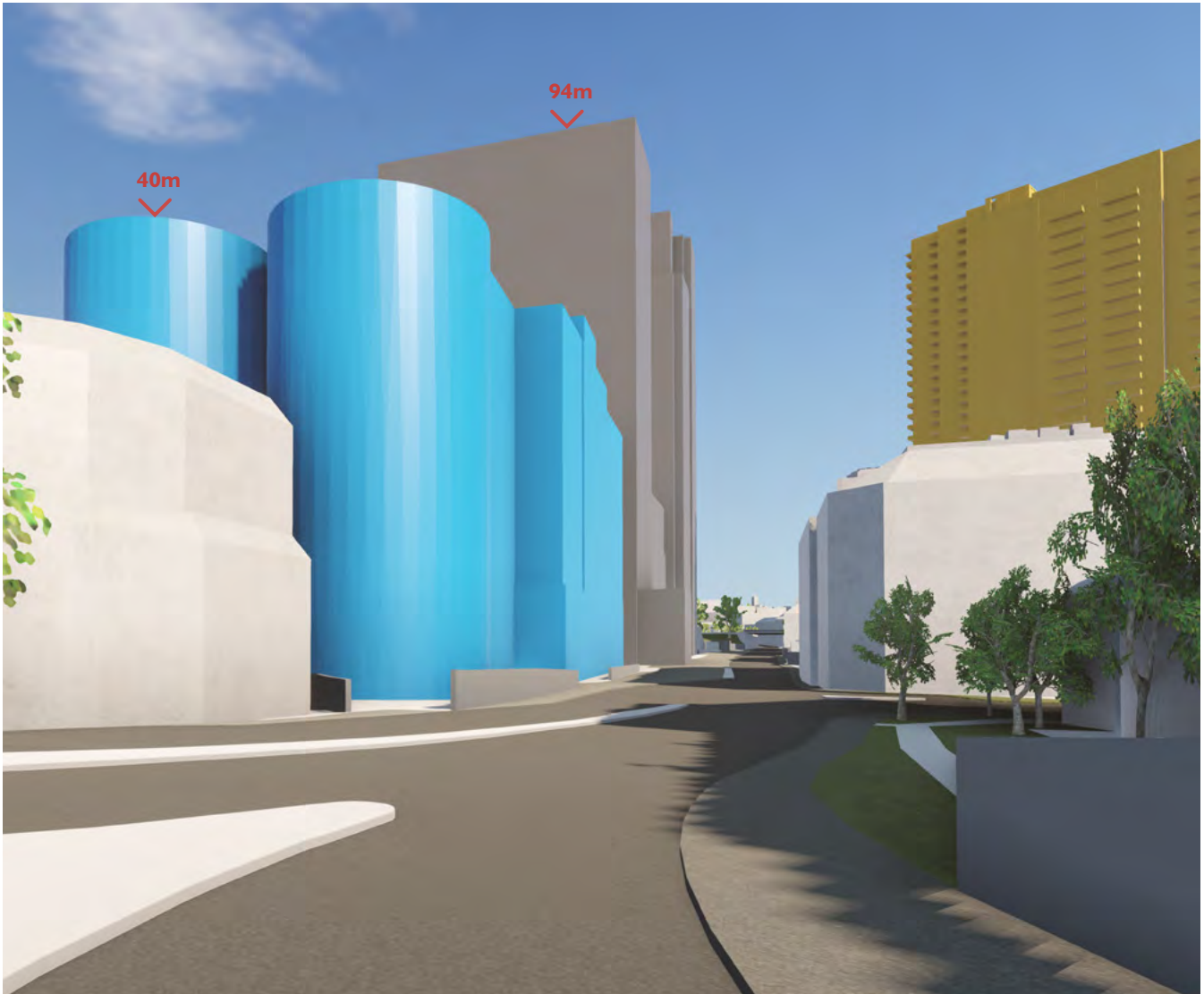


Fig 23 Street view looking southwards down Victoria Way

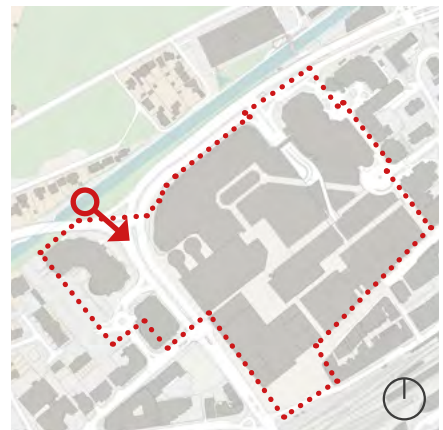
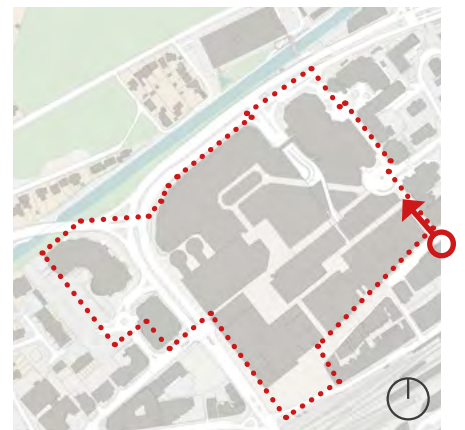




Fig 24 Street view looking eastwards along Downside Goods Yard



6.4 Goldsworth Road Character Area



Existing condition

Area 3 acts as a link between typologies, from industrial buildings to the south to residential in the north, with a consented tall building cluster along Victoria Way. Goldsworth Road is primarily characterised by 4-5 storey office and business buildings which provide lack of animation at street level.

Key issues

- Proximity to emerging tall building cluster on Victoria Way
- Poor quality public realm with the need of improving access to the town centre across Victoria Way
- Must avoid over shadowing residential buildings to the north.

Features

1. Consented tall building cluster along Victoria Way



Fig 25 Aerial of Area 3 looking north-east showing the consented tall building cluster



Fig 26 Photographs of the existing area condition



Goldsworth Road Character Area - Street Views



Fig 27 Street view looking eastwards down Goldsworth Road towards Victoria Way

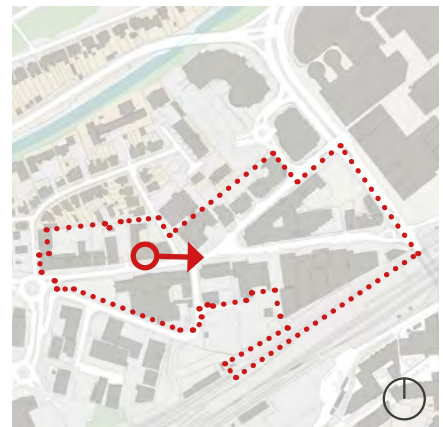
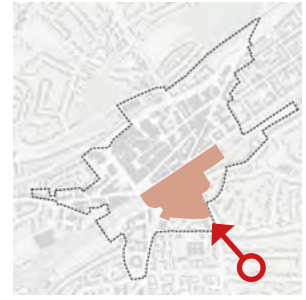




Fig 28 Street view looking southwards down Victoria Way



6.5 Station Approach Character Area



Existing condition

The Station Approach area varies considerably in scale with variation in heights, ranging from 3-4 storey apartment buildings, to a new 16 storey housing development, gradually increasing towards the station. Generally, the area provides poor quality public realm with a lack of animated frontages at street level.

Key issues

- Setting of the listed police station will need to be respected.
- Significant development sites at point of transition from low-rise context to recent tall buildings.
- Large amount of surface and decked parking.
- Topography is a factor in this area with a change in level across some sites - land rises to the south.

Features

1. Listed police station
2. Magistrates Court (vacant)
3. Existing 16 storey building
4. Vacant site with planning consent
5. Railway station
6. Car park



Fig 29 Aerial view of Area 4 looking north west



Fig 30 Street views showing the existing condition of Station Approach



Station Approach Character Area - Street Views

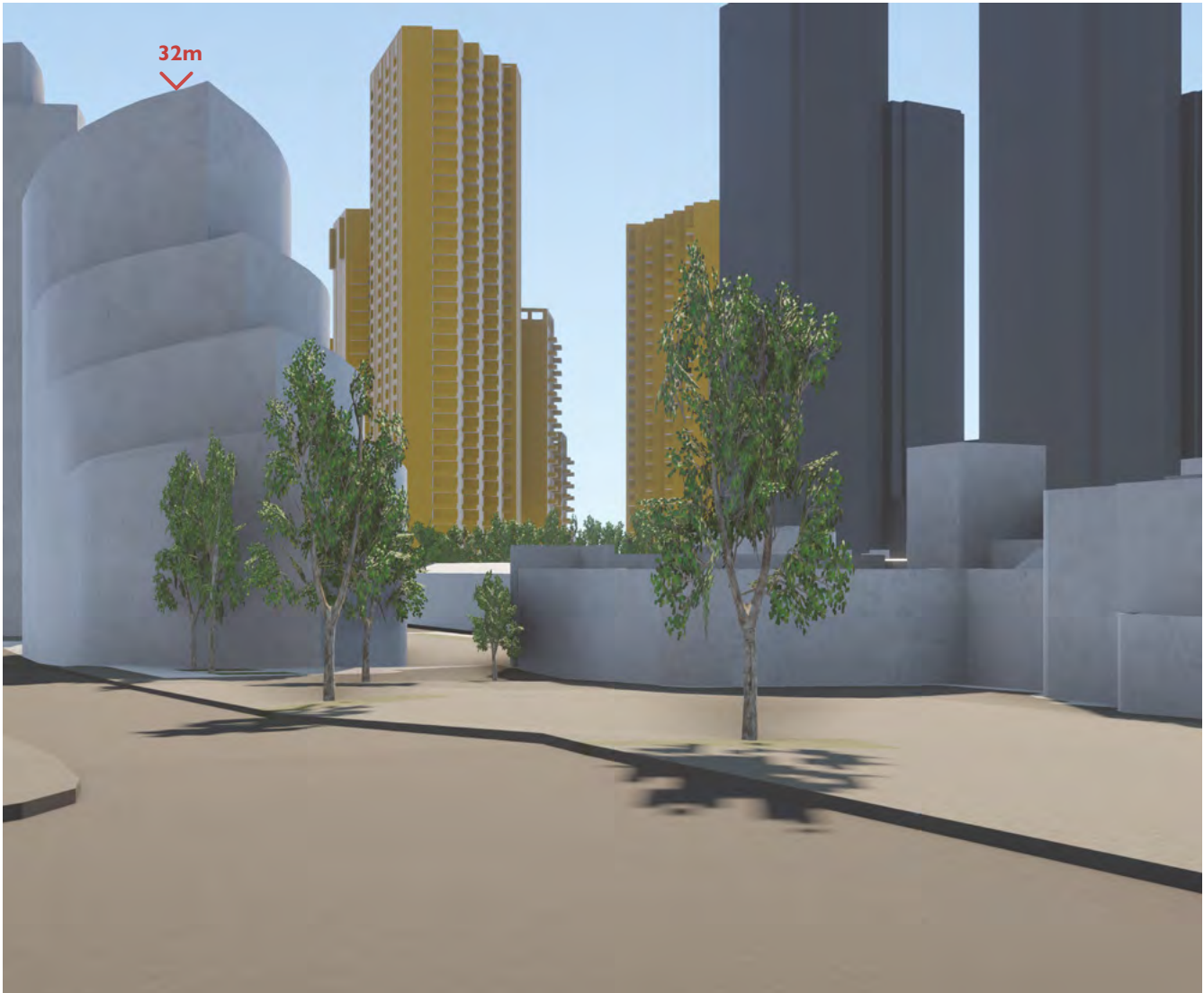


Fig 31 Street view looking west towards the station forecourt

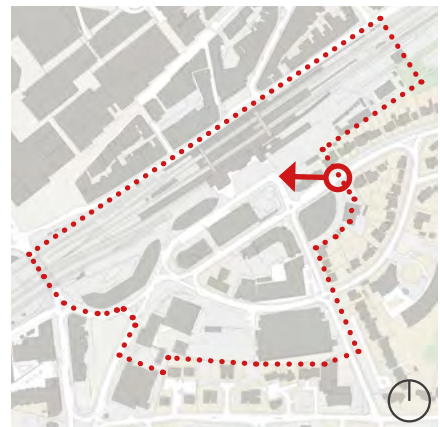
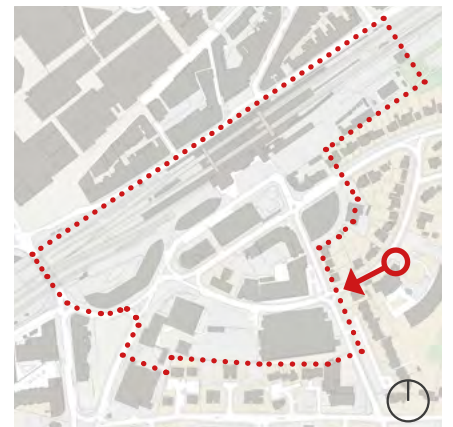




Fig 32 Street view looking west along Heathside Crescent, showing the new residential development



6.6 Church Street Character Area



Existing condition

Buildings in the Church Street area are typically between 3 to 5 storeys, but large footprint buildings with little active frontage mean that many of these area overbearing. Christ Church is centrally located and Woking Town Centre Conservation Area borders the area to the south. The area extends into the Peacocks and Wolsley Place Shopping Centres.

Key issues

- Setting of Christ Church.
- Relationship with Woking Town Centre Conservation Area.
- Lack of clear urban block structure along Christchurch Way.
- Office buildings with little active frontage to the public realm.
- Impact of Wolsley Place / Peacocks shopping centres.
- Back of BHS site is inactive
- Lack of green space

Features

1. Christ Church (Grade II listed)
2. Export House
3. Albion House
4. Jubilee Square

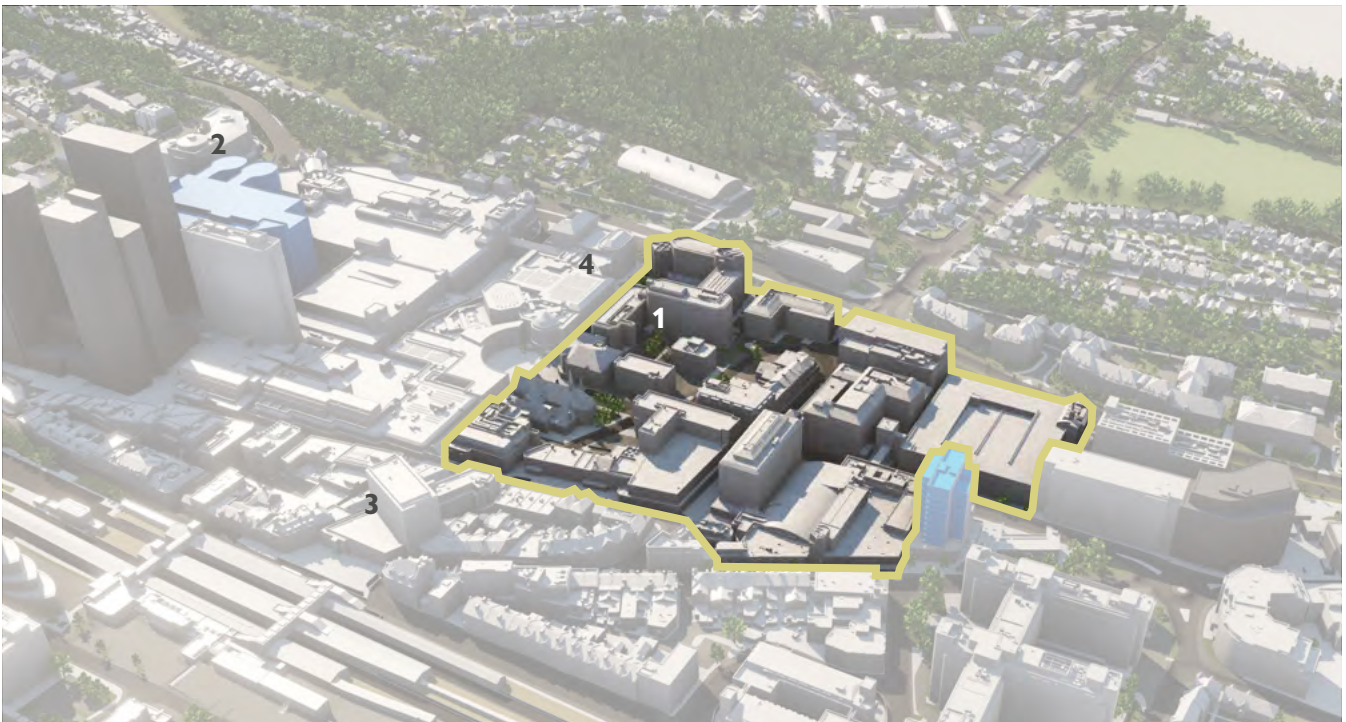


Fig 33 Aerial view looking north west looking north west towards Woking's civic cluster

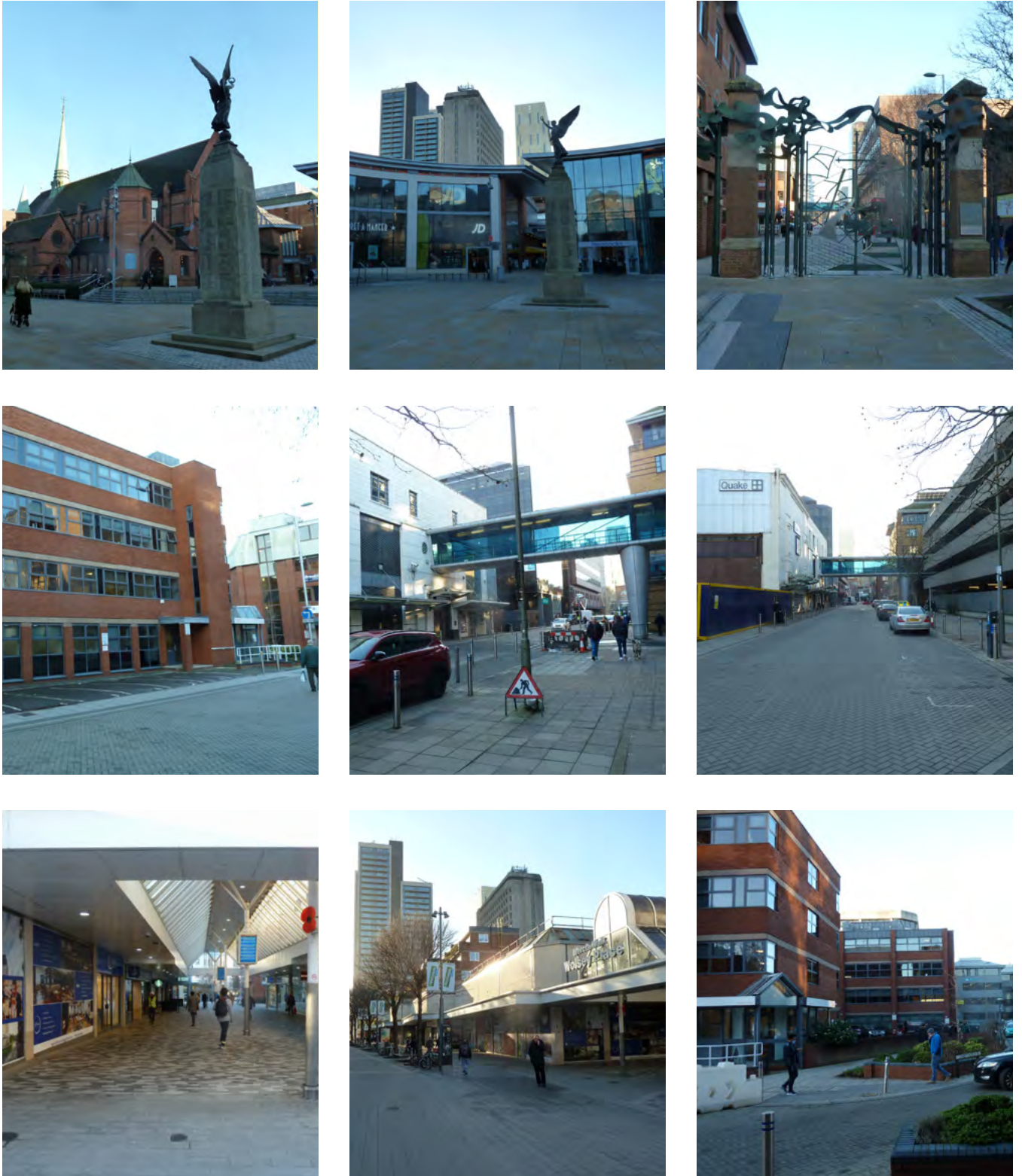


Fig 34 Photographs of the existing area condition



Church Street Character Area - Street Views

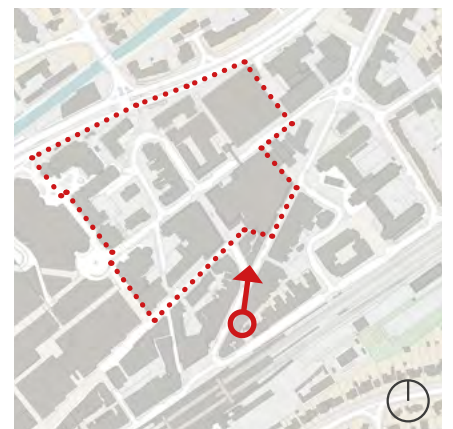


Fig 35 Street view facing west down Church Street

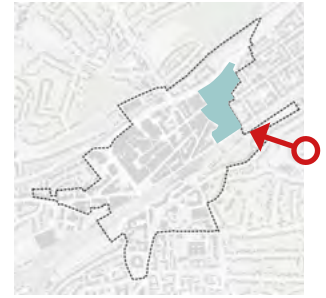




Fig 36 Street view facing north showing the junction between Chobham Road and Chertsey Road



6.7 Chertsey Road Character Area



Existing condition

Chertsey Road forms a key approach and gateway to the core town centre. The heights of buildings range from 2 to 10 storeys with the tallest building (a 10 storey housing-led development on Church Street) recently constructed. Area 6 is outside the core commercial part of the town centre and comprises mainly offices, a hotel and some more recent residential developments.

The majority of office buildings have a poor relationship to the public realm including a lack of active frontage.

Key issues

- Gateway to town centre.
- Recent development of 10 storeys.
- Lack of active frontage.
- Poor contribution to public realm.

Features

1. Enterprise Place
2. Duke House offices
3. William Booth Place

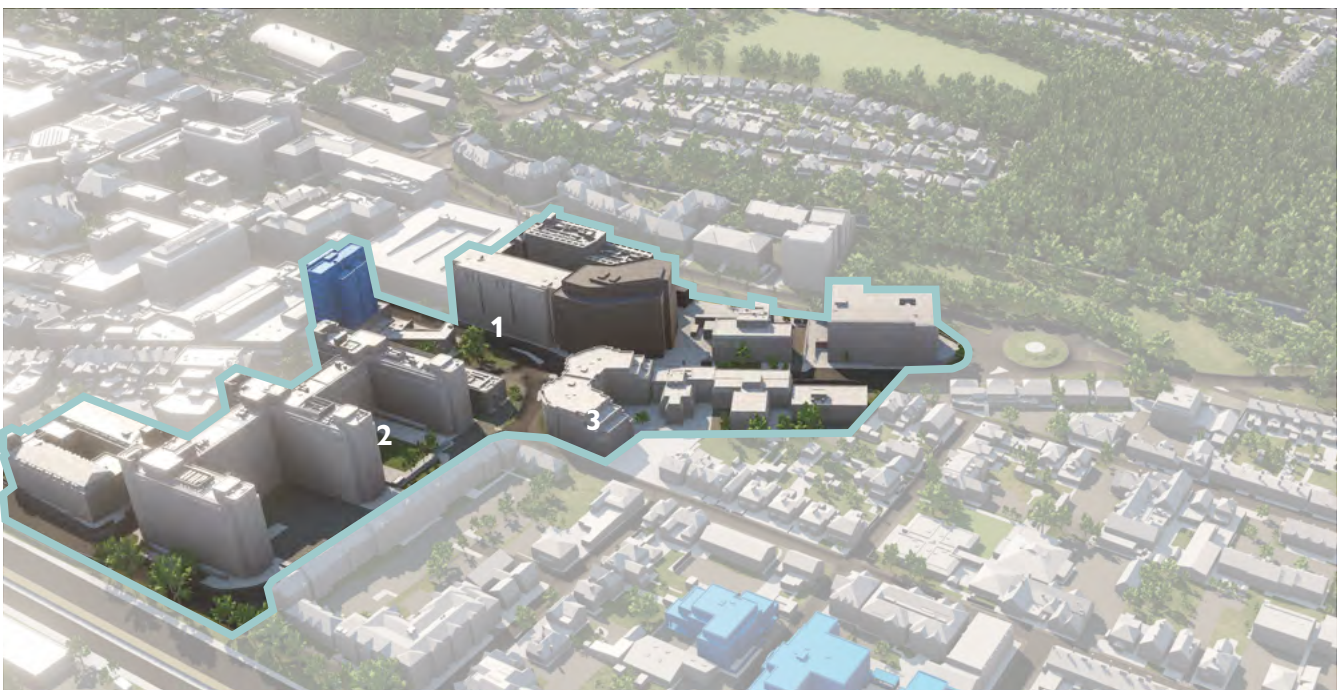


Fig 37 Aerial view facing west showing a key gateway into the town centre

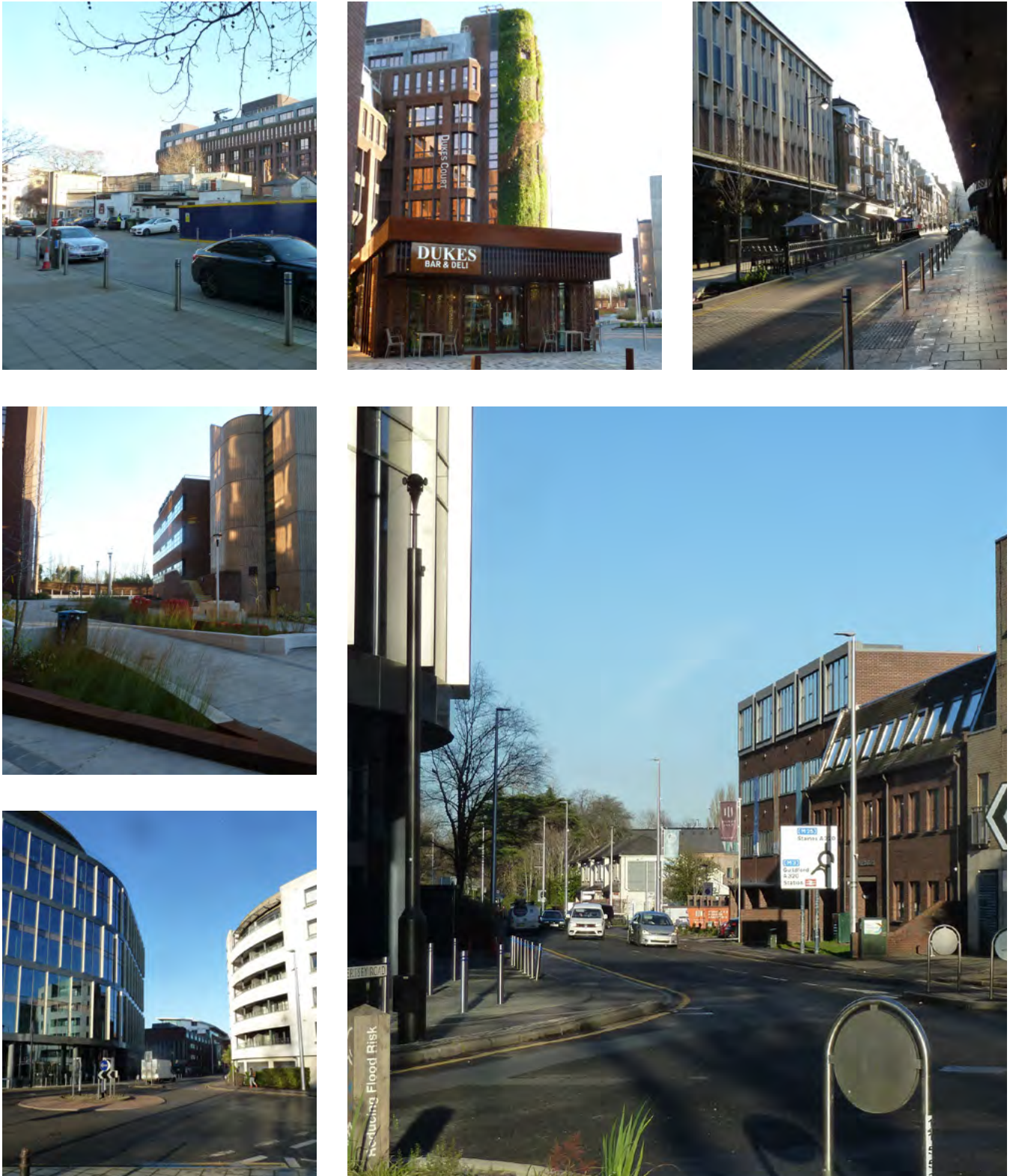


Fig 38 Photographs of the existing area condition



Chertsey Road Character Area - Street Views



Fig 39 Street view looking south west down Chertsey Road



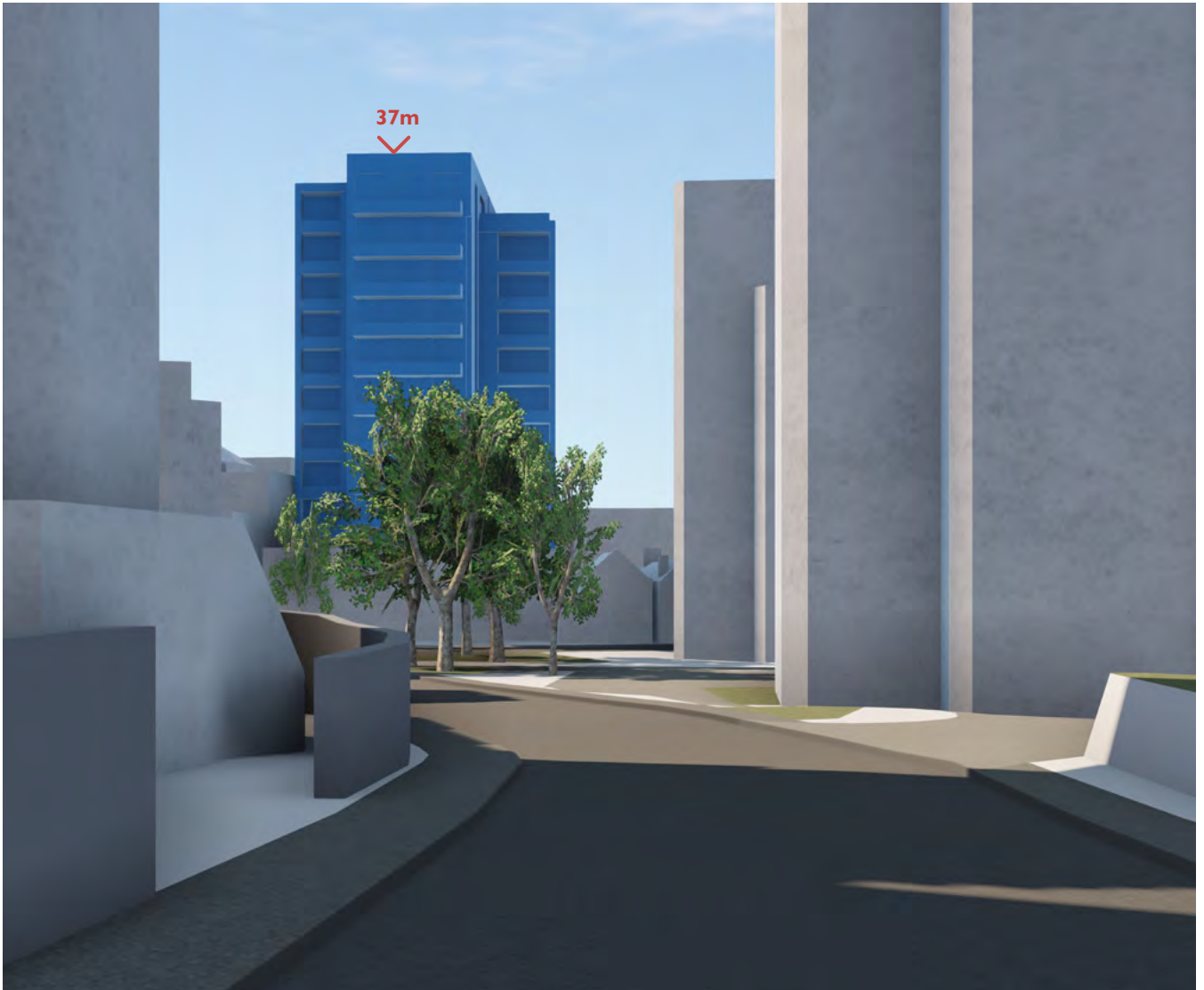
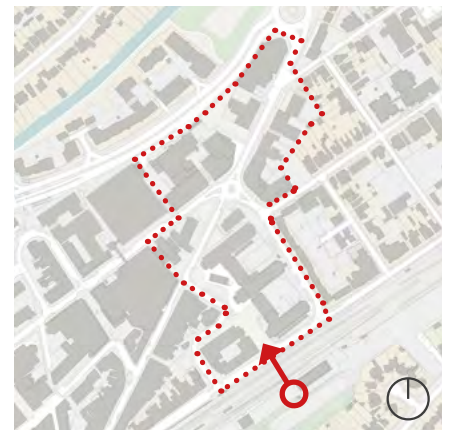


Fig 40 Street view facing north along Duke Street showing the new residential scheme under construction



6.8 Historic Quarter Character Area



Existing condition

The historic quarter is predominantly low rise with a recently refurbished co-working building sitting at 9 storeys. The area is the first impression upon first arrival to Woking, with the character being of Victorian

Key issues

- Gateway to town centre.
- Recent development of 10 storeys.
- Lack of active frontage.
- Poor contribution to public realm.

Features

1. Enterprise Place
2. Duke House offices
3. William Booth Place
4. Albion House

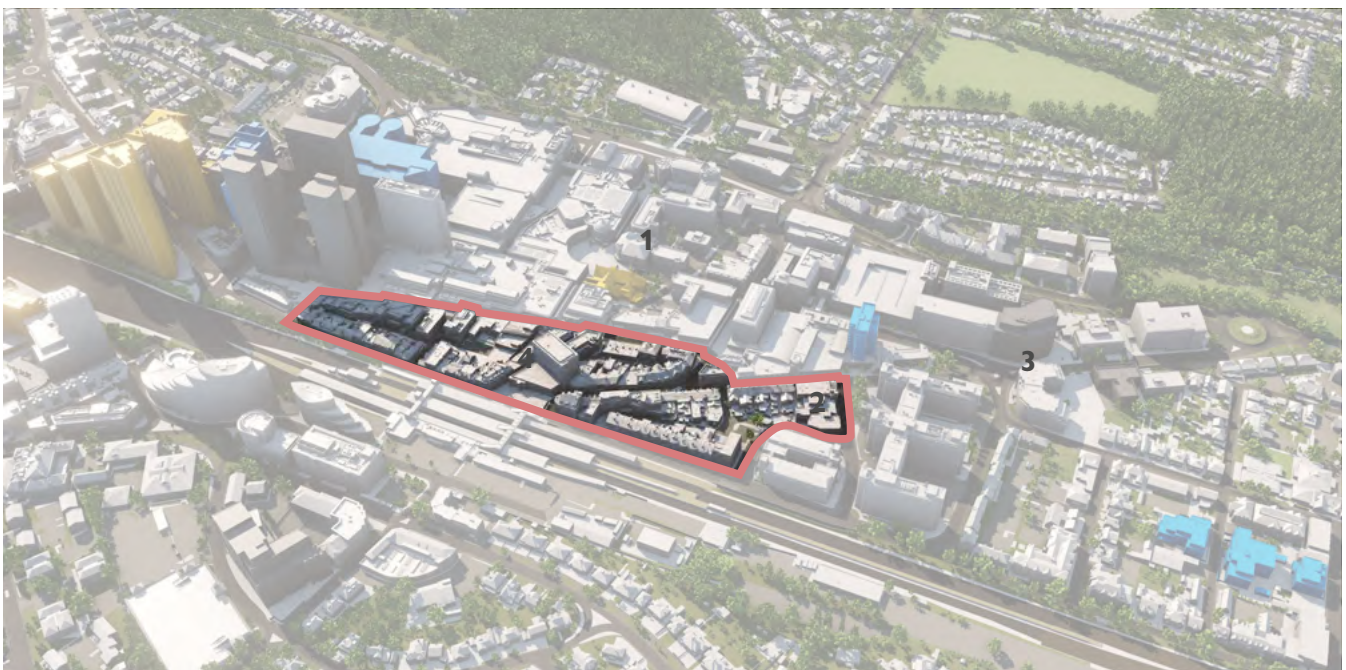


Fig 41 Aerial view facing west



Fig 42 Photographs of the existing area condition



Historic Quarter Character Area - Street Views

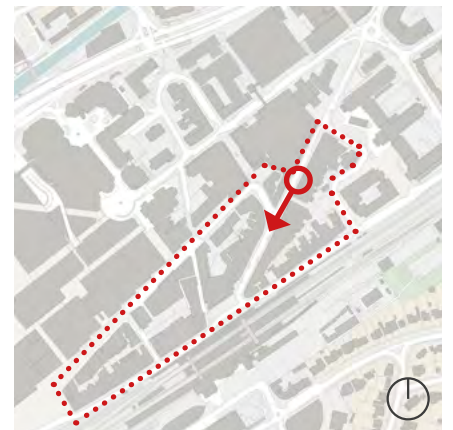


Fig 43 Street view looking west along The Broadway towards the station





Fig 44 Street view down Chertsey Road towards the station forecourt





7 Public realm and movement framework

The quality of a town centre's public realm framework is critical to its long term success. As investment comes and new development is delivered, ensuring the public realm sees equivalent levels of investment is essential.

Informed by a renewed understanding of the town centre, a refresh of its character areas and knowledge of the recent major investments in the town, the Woking Town Centre Mastetplan's public realm framework takes a high level and strategic perspective on the town's public realm network. It identifies a number of key issues and opportunities across the town where targeted improvement and investment will help ensure the spaces between the buildings, through which people move and meet, spend time and relax. A high-quality public realm, with good quality pedestrian and cycle connections which link different parts of the town centre together will help to attract and retain visitors and users into the centre and thereby bring more support to the shops, services and businesses that are located there.

Key opportunities include:

1. Improving the quality of pedestrian crossings across Victoria Way, particularly between the major developments at Victoria Square and the Goldsworth Road area;
2. Remodelling of the major junction between Victoria Way and Chobham Road which currently diverts pedestrian underground to an underpass and is a heavily engineered environment designed almost exclusively for the car.
3. Improving the quality of the connections between the town centre and the gateway to the town from Chobham Road to the north. Major redevelopment sites around the Christchurch Way and Chobham Road area just north of Church Street East could deliver significant improvements in this regard;
4. Improvements to the public realm at the Stanley Road, Chertsey Road roundabout to the east of the town centre. There are major opportunity sites in this area of the town, and these should support the opportunity to deliver public realm improvements including widening of pavements, retention of existing and planting of new trees, and extending the zone where greater priority is given to pedestrians.
5. Some of the major identified development sites present opportunities to create new or reinstate lost pedestrian connections.
6. The creation of a new station square and forecourt along Station Approach.
7. The widening of Guildford Road immediately south of the railway lines and improvement of the pedestrian environment leading towards the station.

- ⊙ Crossing improvement
- ▨ Public realm improvement
- ▭ Existing public open space
- Proposed public open space
- Main (A) road
- Potential for public art
- ⊠ Town centre boundary
- Development site
- Key town centre approach
- Pedestrian priority
- ⊠ Station
- ≡ Victoria Arch scheme

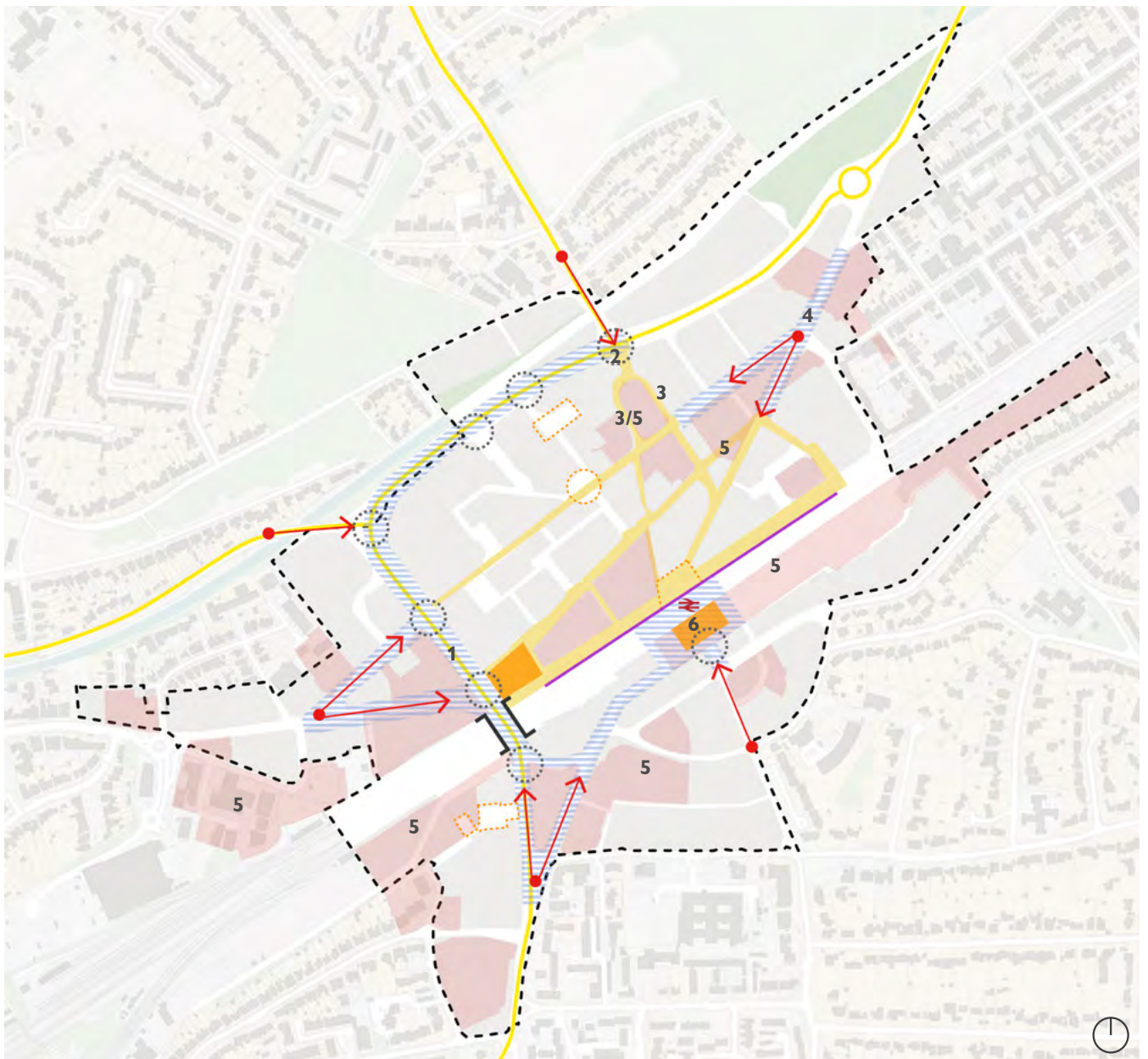


Fig 45 Proposed public realm and movement improvements

8 Methodology

Woking town centre has been the subject of numerous development proposals for tall buildings in recent years. Some have already been delivered, some are currently under construction and others have been refused or not supported. The Woking Design SPD provides some high-level guidance on tall buildings in the town centre but this falls short of an evidenced-based townscape strategy for building heights and tall buildings in the town. For some time now, there has been a need to devise a building height and tall building strategy for Woking to help promote high density development in appropriate locations whilst protect other less appropriate locations from their potentially adverse townscape impacts.

Informed by environmental and GIS mapping analysis, this section outlines such a strategy. Firstly, based on the revised character areas identified above, an assessment is made of the degree to which locations are considered appropriate for tall buildings. This assessment is a relative one, covering all urban blocks across the town centre. The degree to which a location is considered appropriate is based on a largely objective assessment of a range of factors relating to its relative suitability for, or sensitivity to, taller forms of new development.

Once this 'appropriateness' assessment has been made, further analysis of existing prevailing building heights helps to determine thresholds for each part of the centre above which new development would be considered tall.

This step is important because tall is a relative term. A four story building in a street wholly comprising two storey houses might be considered by many to be tall, whereas a new ten storey building in a central location adjacent to developments of eight storey buildings might not be considered to represent a tall building in that context.

The '**sensitivity**' analysis takes account of:

- Distribution of conservation areas;
- Distribution of listed buildings;
- Distribution of areas of finer urban grain;
- Areas characterised by low building heights;
- Proximity to public open spaces;
- Pedestrianised streets.

The '**suitability**' analysis takes account of:

- Existing tall building clusters;
- Walking distance from Woking Station;
- Gateway approaches where character changes;
- Major urban routes with a more robust character.

The chapter ends with a summary plan which identifies locations considered to be more or less appropriate for taller buildings, taking account of the layered analysis outlined across the following pages.

8.1 Sensitivity to Tall Buildings

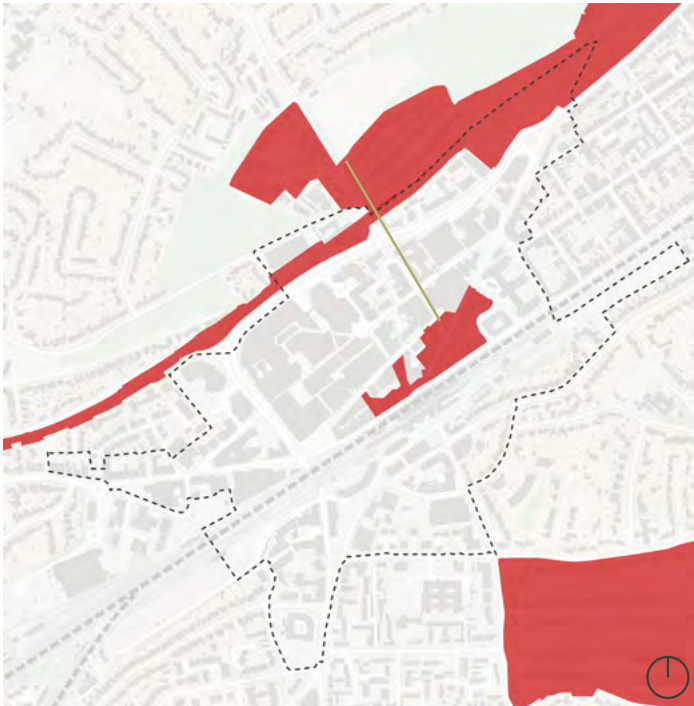


Fig 46 Conservation areas in and around Woking town centre

Conservation Areas

Two conservation areas cover parts of Woking town centre. The Woking Town Centre Conservation Area is focused on the western end of Chertsey Road, either side of the railway station. The Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area follows the axis of the canal across the borough although typically doesn't extend too far from its immediate channel.

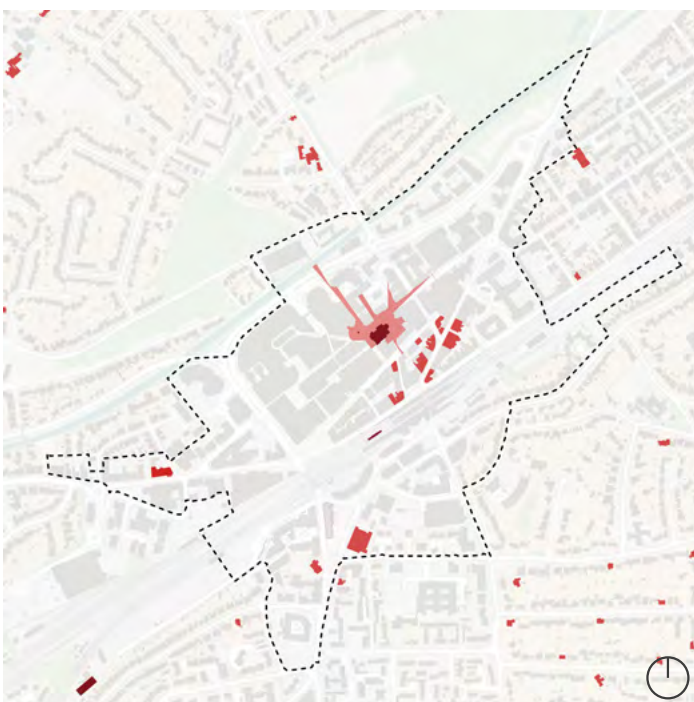


Fig 47 Statutorily & locally listed buildings in the town centre

Listed Buildings

There are three Grade II listed buildings in the town centre, with the most prominent in townscape terms being Christ Church on Jubilee Square. The sensitivity analysis presented here shows the distribution of statutorily and locally listed buildings in the town centre (and beyond) together with the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) around Christ Church. All represent significant sensitivities regarding the prospect of negative townscape impacts associated with new tall buildings.

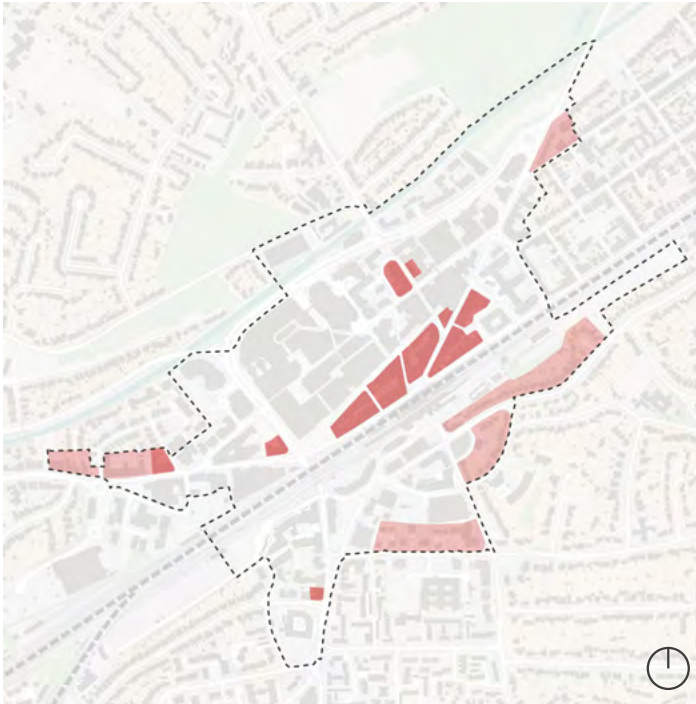


Fig 48 Areas characterised by finer urban grain in the town centre

Fine Urban Grain

Much of Woking's townscape has been redeveloped in relatively recent times. As a result there are only relatively few areas where Victorian or Edwardian townscape character prevails. The best quality areas of Victorian character are protected by the Woking Town Centre Conservation Area but there are other pockets of finer grain townscape which are worthy of recognition in this sensitivity assessment.



Fig 49 Areas characterised by low rise buildings in the town centre

Areas of Low rise

Whilst more recent developments have introduced tall buildings to the centre, the prevailing heights of commercial developments tend to be higher than the surrounding housing areas. However there are some parts of the town centre which are currently characterised by low rise forms of development which would make them more sensitive to the potentially adverse townscape impacts of new tall buildings.



Fig 50 Publicly accessible open space in the town centre

Publicly accessible open space

Open space is generally in short supply in Woking Town Centre with the exception of Brookhouse Common. There are however a network of hard landscaped urban spaces which are popular spaces for people gathering. These spaces and their immediate environs are considered sensitive to the potentially adverse impacts of new tall developments in view of potential overshadowing and wind effects. The design of new development in these locations should take account of the micro-climate impacts of new buildings at the ground and lower floors.



Fig 51 Streets where there is significant priority given to pedestrians

Pedestrianised Streets

There has been much recent investment in many of the key town centre pedestrianised streets in Woking town centre. Similar to open spaces, the design and comfort of these spaces are critical to the overall success of the town centre. These important central pedestrianised streets are therefore vulnerable to potentially adverse impacts of new tall development at street level and the design of new buildings should be tested to ensure the delivery of acceptable micro-climate conditions at street level.

8.2 Suitability to Tall Buildings

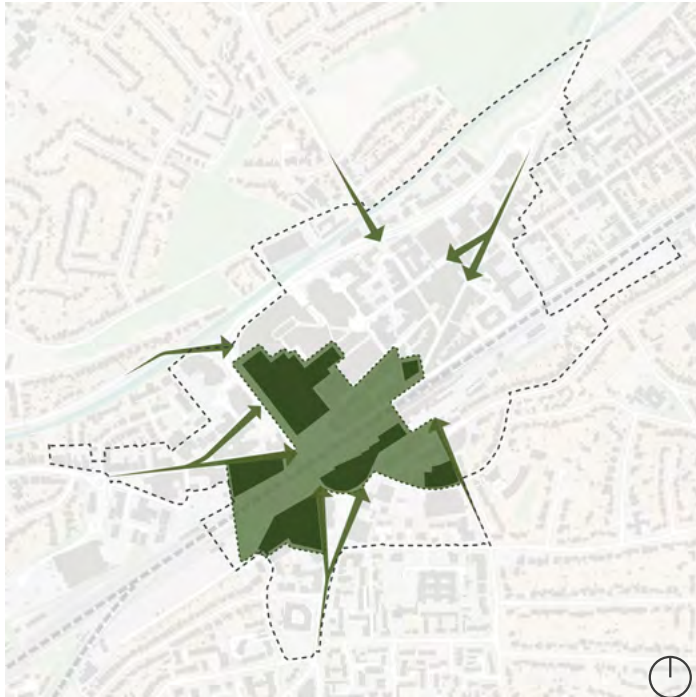


Fig 52 Existing tall building cluster

Existing tall building clusters

The presence of existing concentrations of tall buildings makes those areas less sensitive and therefore more suitable to that form of development. With the recent Victoria Way development and emerging schemes in the Goldsworth Road area, an cluster of taller buildings is emerging in this part of the centre which also extends south of the railway line.



Fig 53 Walking isochrone to Woking Station

Access to public transport

Accessibility to good public transport facilities and services is a key factor underpinning any given area's suitability for more dense forms of development. Woking town centre is well served by public transport, with local bus services supporting links to outlying towns and villages and Woking railway station support superb rail services to London and the south coast.

To objectively assess the accessibility of the centre, the adjacent plan shows local walking isochrones from Woking railway station. It demonstrates that the station is accessible to pedestrians from right across the whole of the centre.



Fig 54 Woking's townscape town centre gateway

Gateway approaches

Woking is a compact centre with established residential areas right up to its border. The main approaches to the centre therefore present gateway locations at the point of transition from hinterland to central areas. These gateway locations might be more suitable for taller forms of development given their gateway role in local townscape terms.

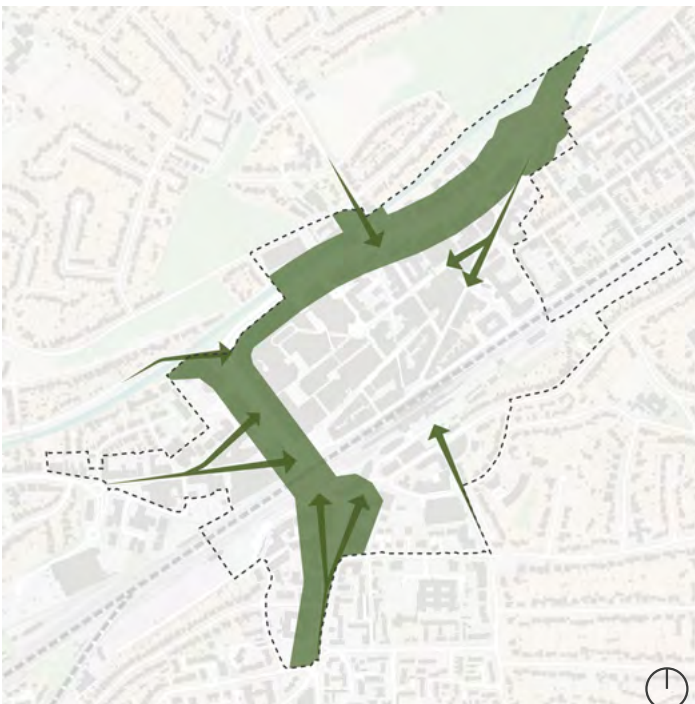


Fig 55 The major urban routes around the town centre

Major routes

Victoria Way is the primary vehicular route passing through the centre. This is a busy and urban route carrying significant amounts of traffic. It acts as a threshold to the more pedestrian orientated core town centre. In so doing, its axis around the centre may be more suitable to taller forms of development given its urban character.

8.3 Sensitivity

The plan below presents the composite picture of sensitivities across Woking town centre.

A concentration of sensitivities can be seen to cluster around the central cluster on the north side of the railway around the Woking Town Centre Conservation Area and the Grade II Christ Church building. The fringes of the town centre as it transitions across towards established residential neighbourhoods are also seen as being sensitive.

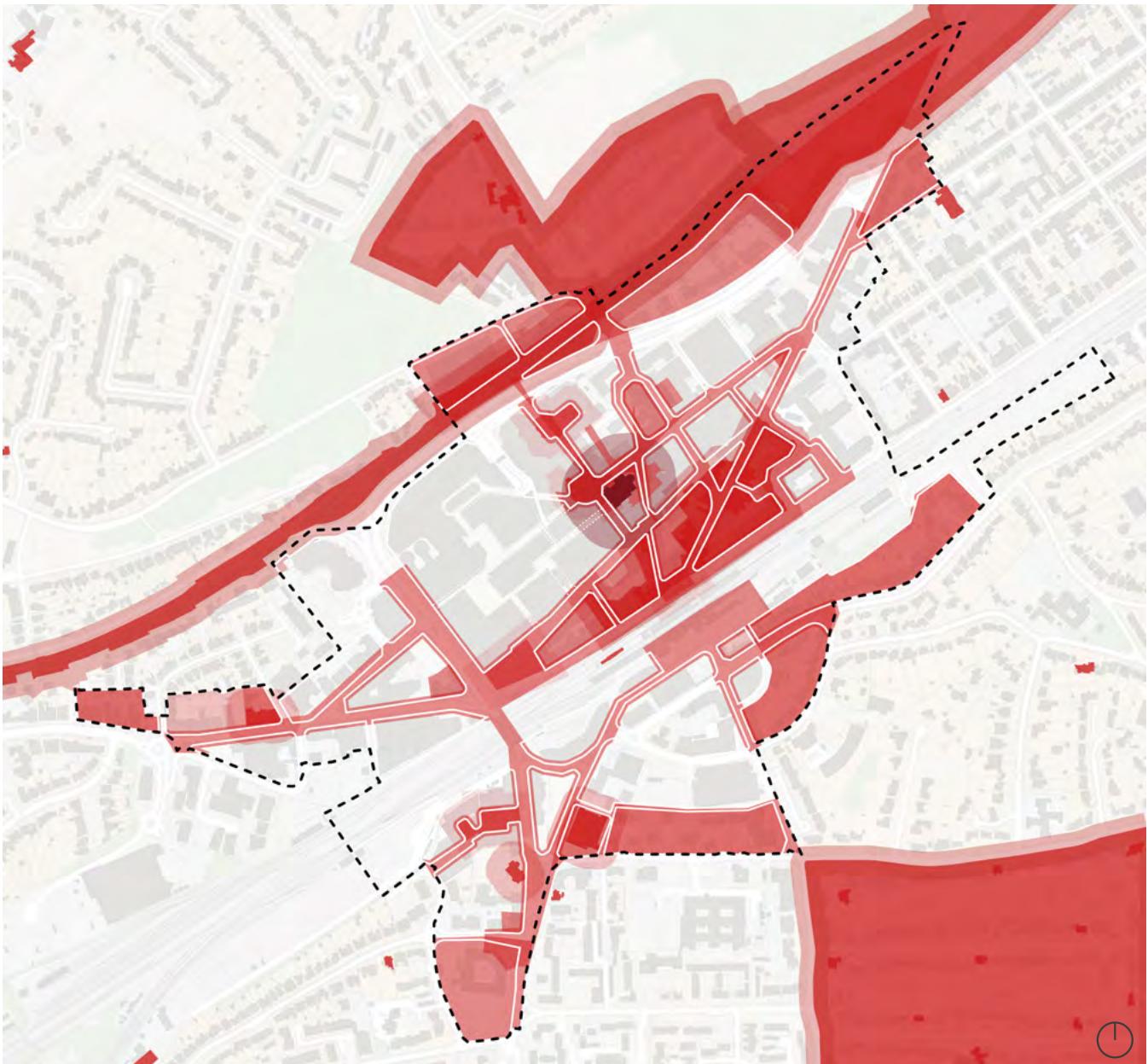


Fig 56 Composite sensitivity

8.4 Suitability

The plan below presents the composite picture of suitability across Woking town centre.

The area west of the centre around the recent Victoria Way development and new market square emerges as the most appropriate location for taller buildings.

It is notable that this more suitable area also generally coincides with areas of less sensitivity.

This helps to bring focus to areas across the town centre which are considered to be more appropriate for taller buildings.

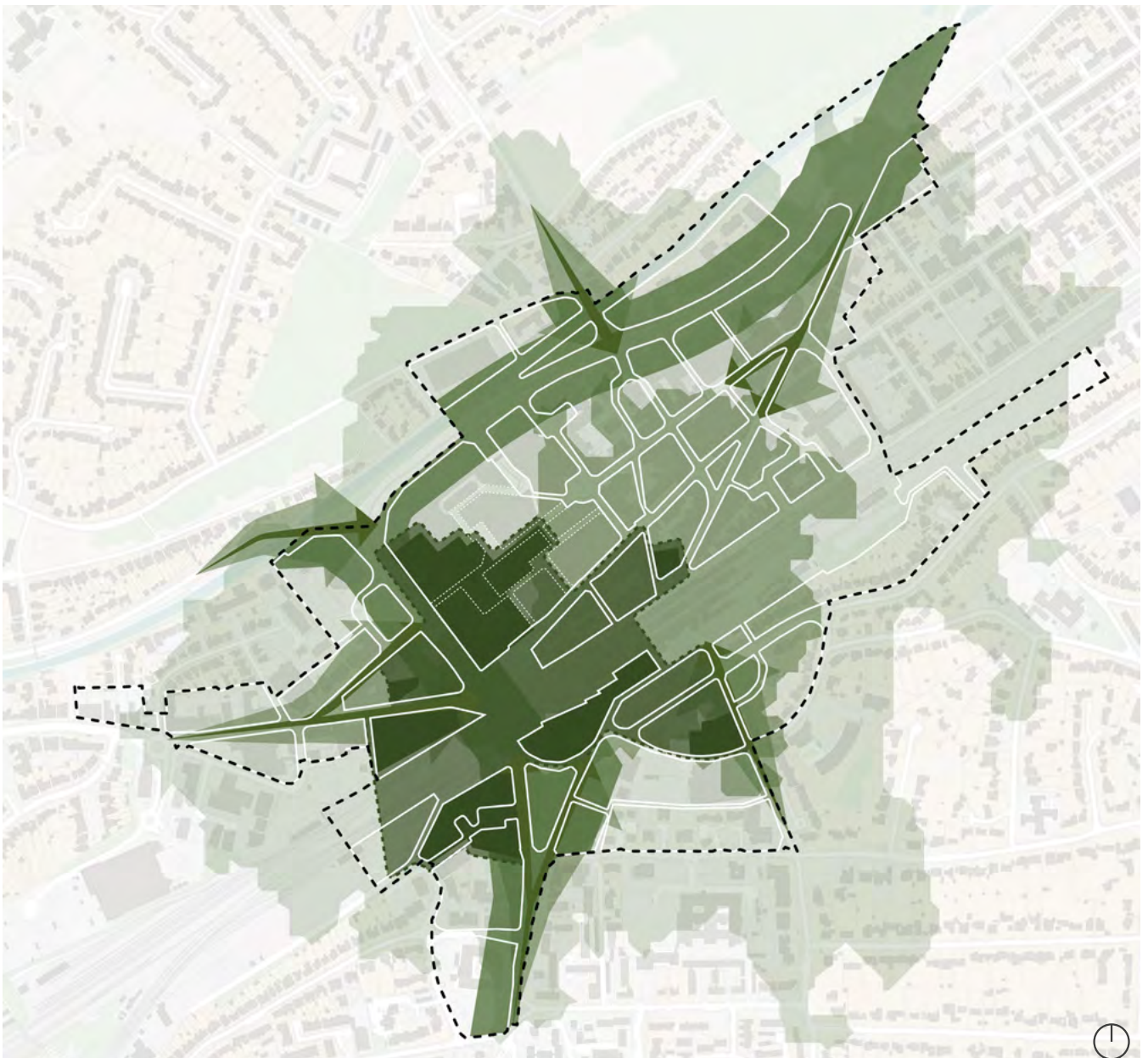


Fig 57 Composite suitability

8.5 Victoria Way South character area



Fig 58 Existing heights by building

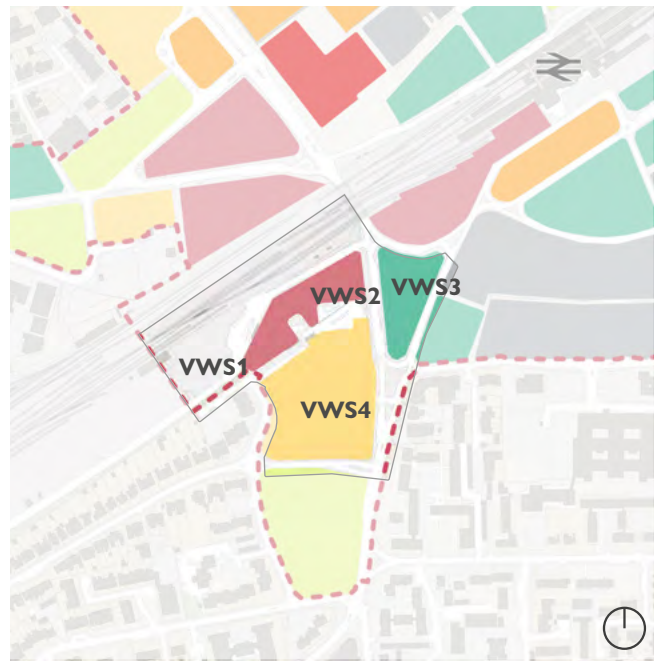
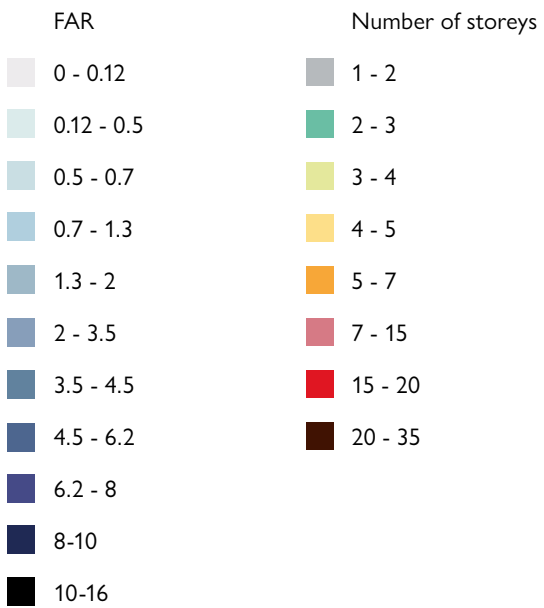


Fig 59 Existing heights by urban block



Fig 60 Floor to area ratio by urban block



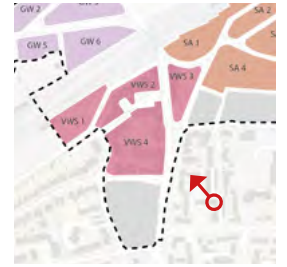


Fig 61 Representation (in green) of the 8 storey tall building threshold for the character area looking north-west

Development pipeline

- Consented scheme
- Scheme under construction
- Tall building threshold

URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
VWS 1	5.3	8	4 - 14
VWS 2			4 - 22
VWS 3			4 - 20
VWS 4			4 - 15

Fig 62 Building heights summary



8.6 Victoria Way North character area

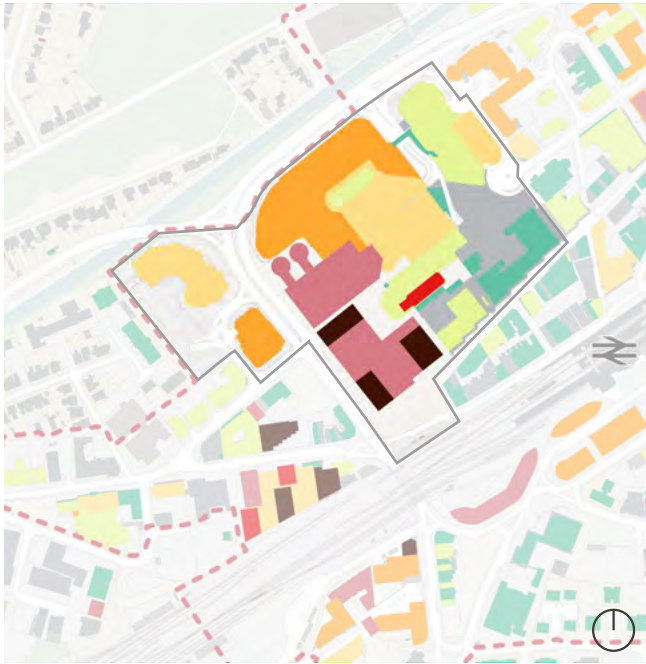


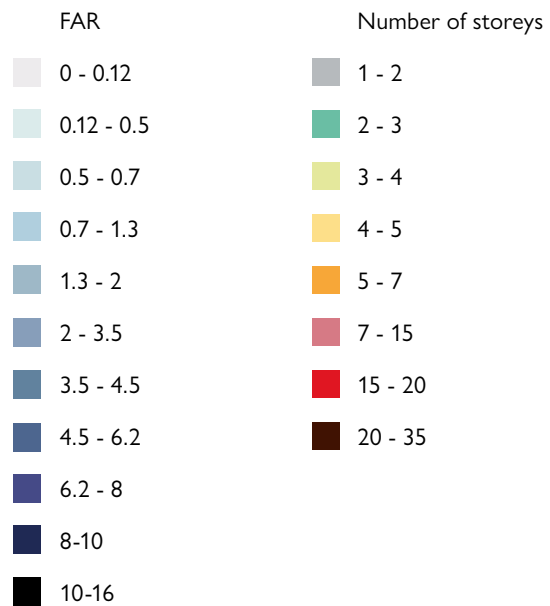
Fig 63 Existing heights by building



Fig 64 Existing heights by urban block



Fig 65 Floor to area ratio by urban block



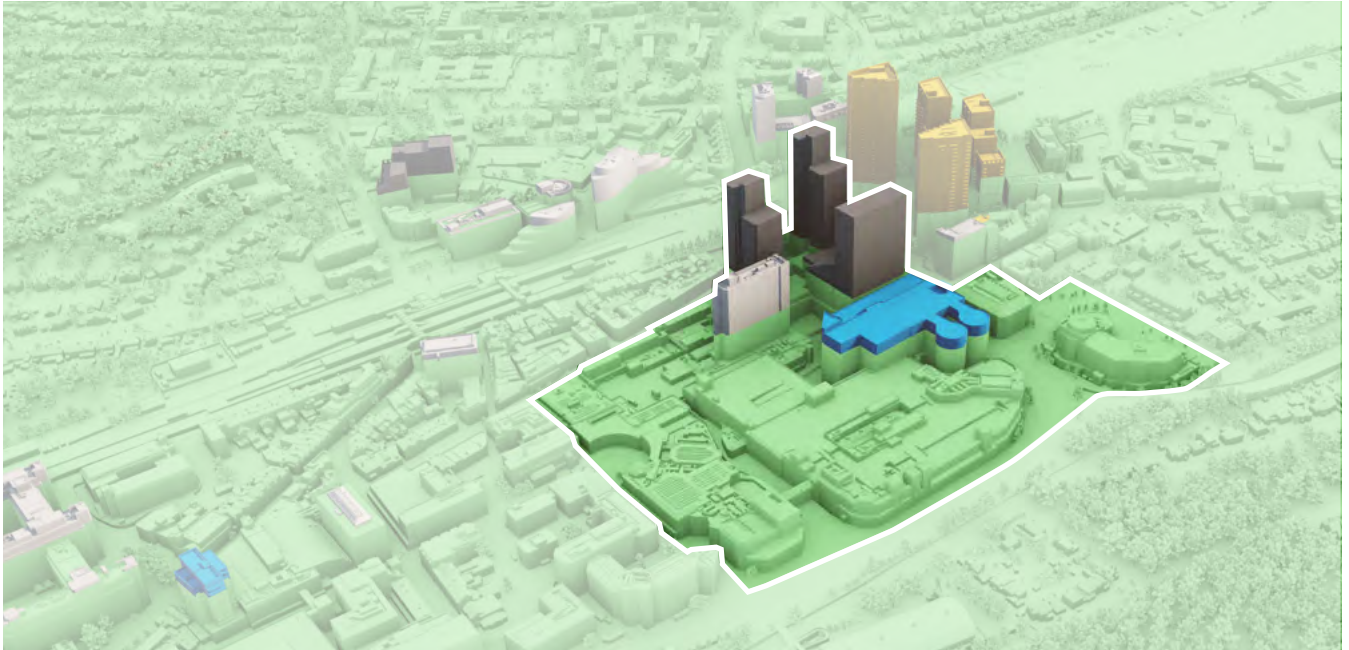


Fig 66 Representation (in green) of the 9 storey tall building threshold for the character area looking north-west

Development pipeline		URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
Consented scheme		VWN 1	6.2	9	4 - 9
Scheme under construction		VWN 2			4 - 9
Tall building threshold		VWN 3			4 - 6
		VWN 4			4 - 9
		VWN 5			4 - 6
		VWN 6			4 - 9
		VWN 7			4 - 9
		VWN 8			4 - 34
		VWN 9			4 - 30
		VWN 10			4 - 9

Fig 67 Building heights summary



8.7 Goldsworth Road character area

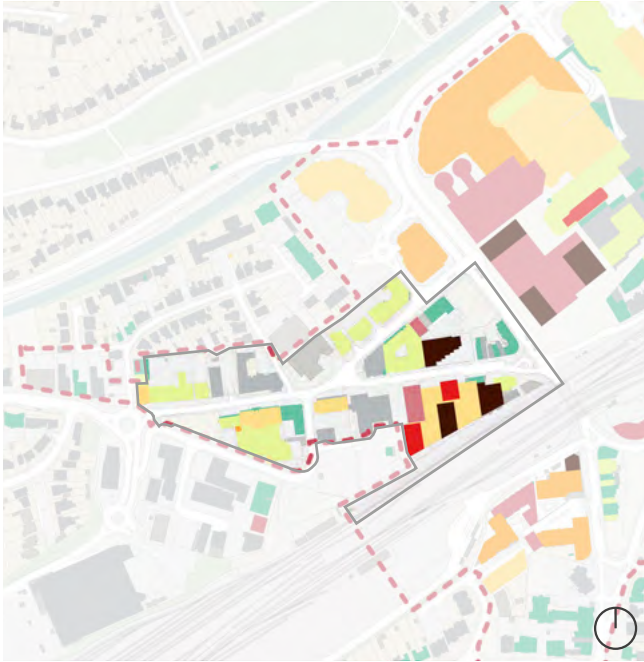


Fig 68 Existing heights by building

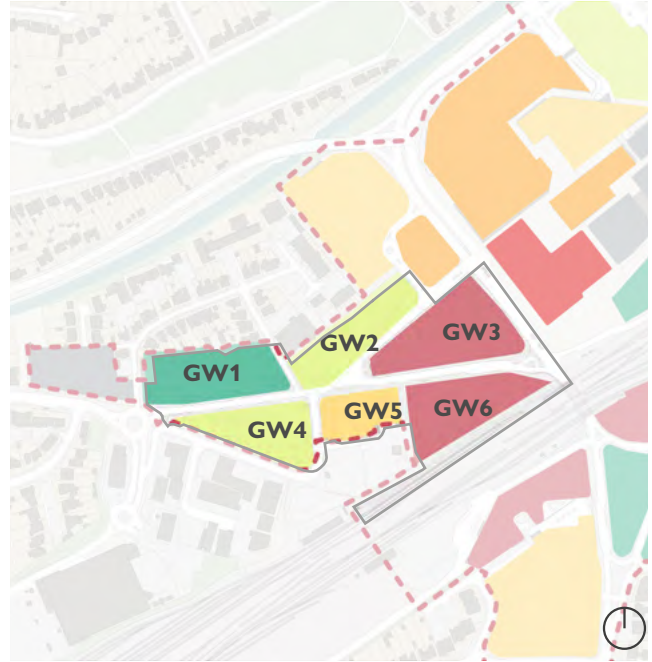


Fig 69 Existing heights by urban block

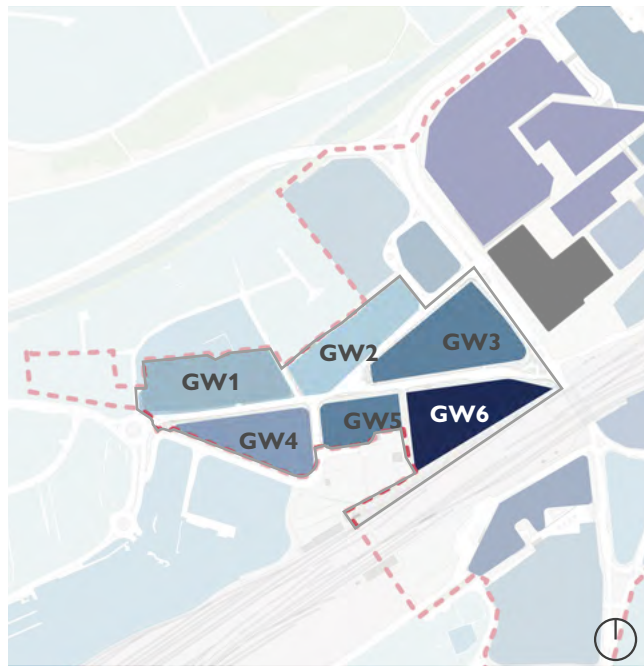


Fig 70 Floor to area ratio by urban block

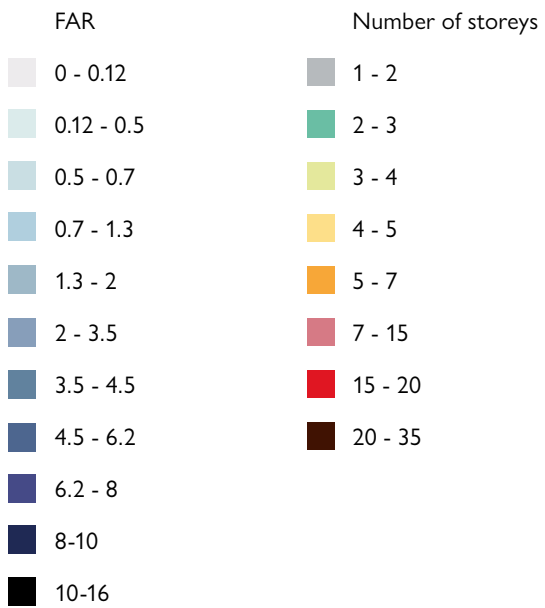




Fig 71 Representation (in green) of the 10 storey tall building threshold for the character area looking north-west

Development pipeline		URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
■	Consented scheme	GW 1	6.7	10	2 - 6
■	Scheme under construction	GW 2			4 - 6
■	Tall building threshold	GW 3			4 - 35
		GW 4			4 - 6
		GW 5			4 - 6
		GW 6			4 - 38

Fig 72 Building heights summary

8.8 Station Approach character area



Fig 73 Existing heights by building

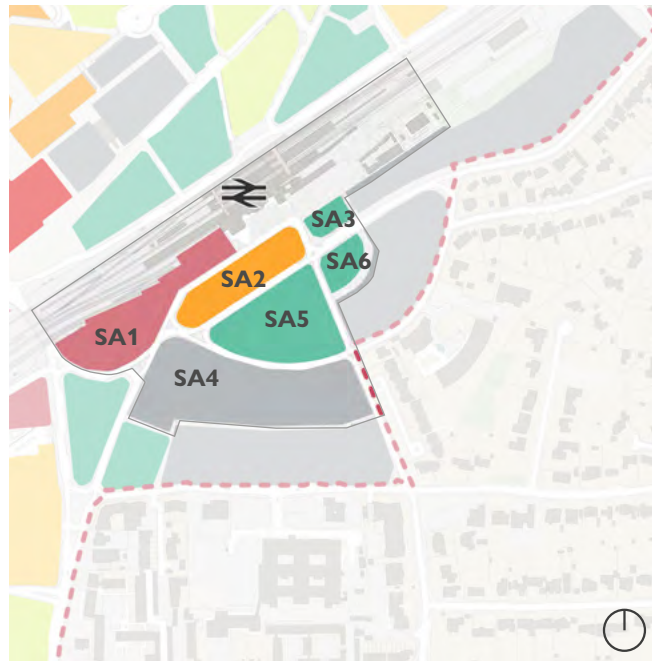


Fig 74 Existing heights by urban block

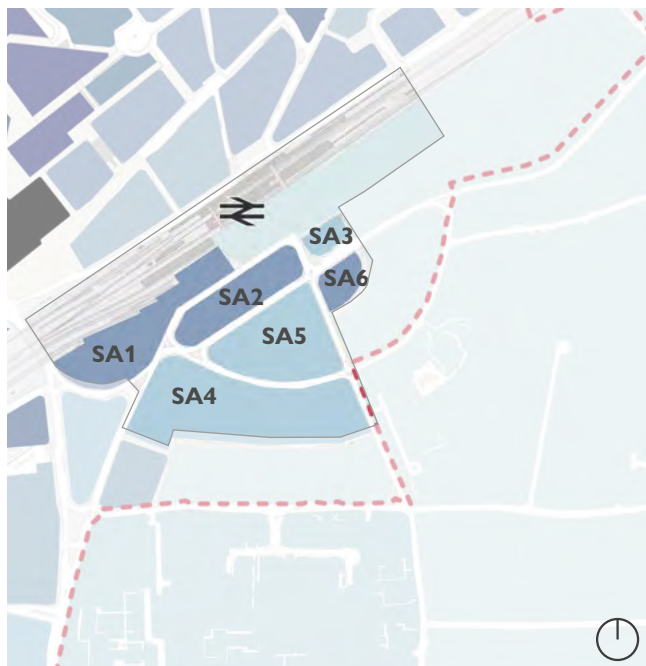
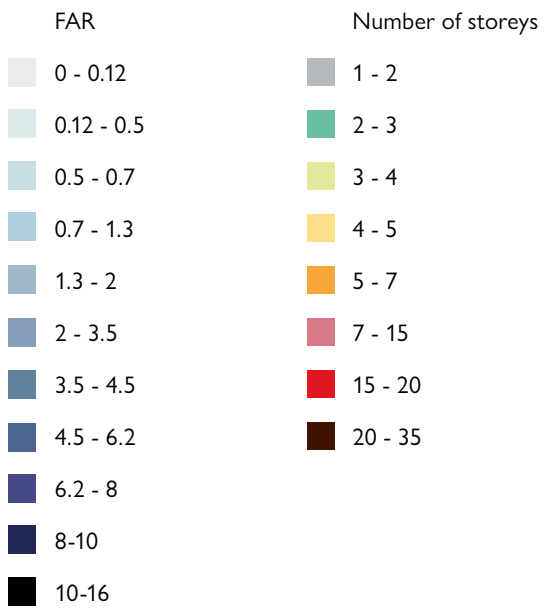


Fig 75 Floor to area ratio by urban block



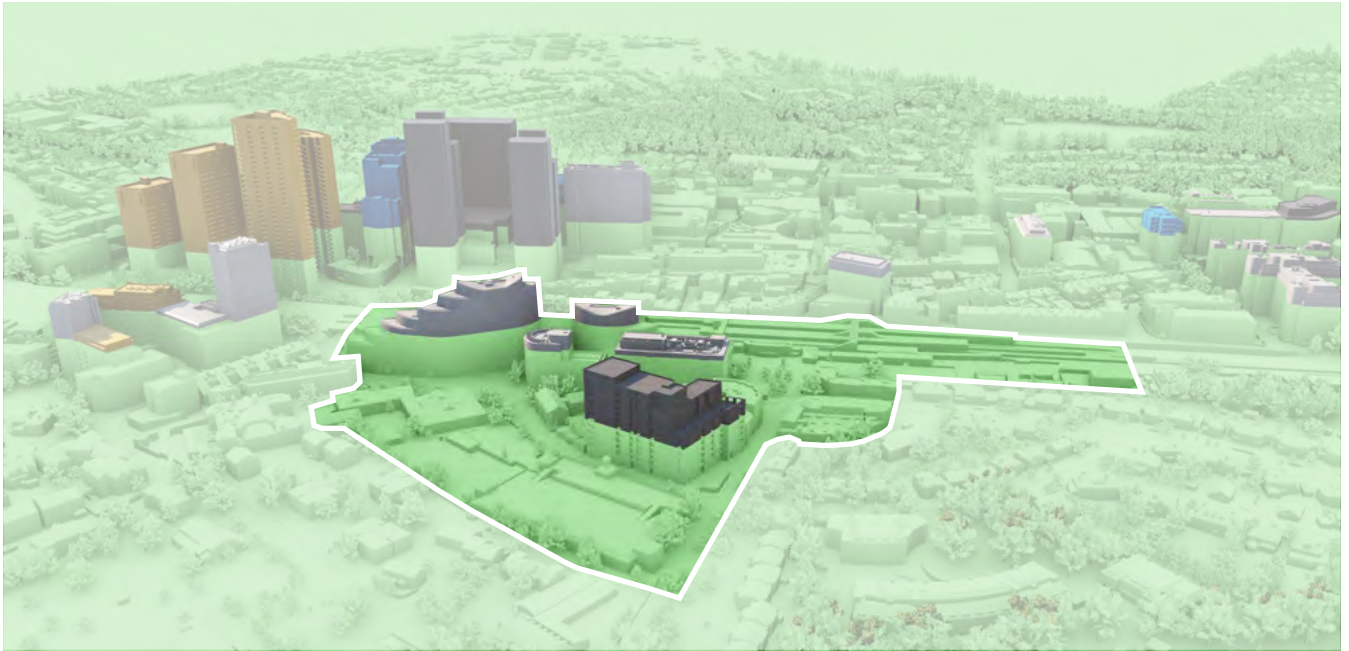
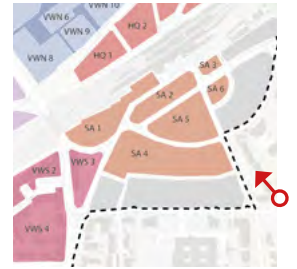


Fig 76 Representation (in green) of the 6 storey tall building threshold for the character area looking north-west

Development pipeline			
■	Consented scheme		
■	Scheme under construction		
■	Tall building threshold		
URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
SA 1	3.8	6	4 - 16
SA 2			5 - 10
SA 3			3 - 6
SA 4			4 - 8
SA 5			4 - 15
SA 6			4 - 15
SA 7			2 - 12

Fig 77 Building heights summary

8.9 Church Street character area



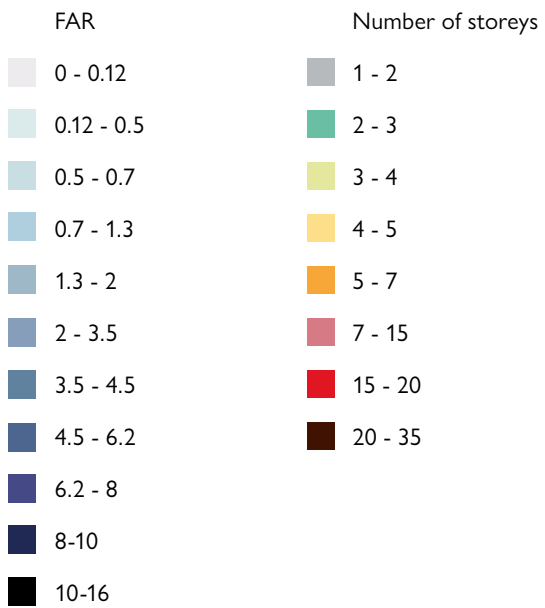
Fig 78 Existing heights by building



Fig 79 Existing heights by urban block



Fig 80 Floor to area ratio by urban block



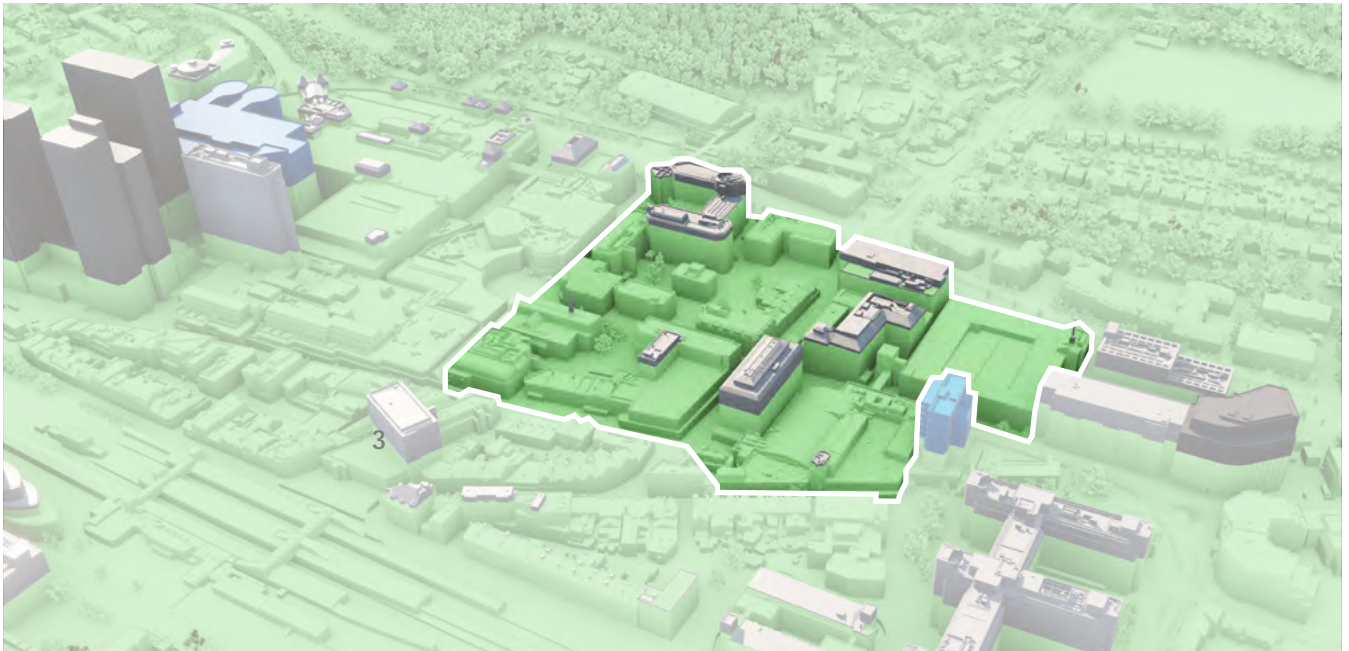


Fig 81 Representation (in green) of the 6 storey tall building threshold for the character area looking north-west

Development pipeline			
■	Consented scheme		
■	Scheme under construction		
■	Tall building threshold		
URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
CS 1	3.7	6	2 - 7
CS 2			3 - 10
CS 3			3 - 6
CS 4			4 - 10
CS 5			1 - 4
CS 6			2 - 10
CS 7			2 - 8

Fig 82 Building heights summary



8.10 Chertsey Road character area



Fig 83 Existing heights by building



Fig 84 Existing heights by urban block



Fig 85 Floor to area ratio by urban block

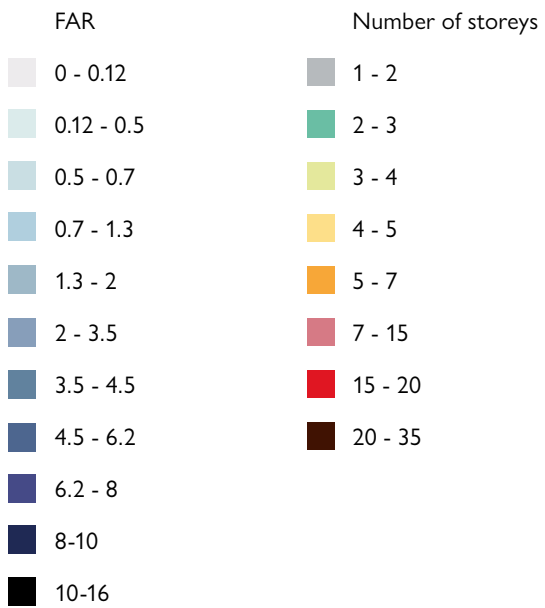




Fig 86 Representation (in green) of the 7 storey tall building threshold for the character area looking north-west

Development pipeline

- Consented scheme
- Scheme under construction
- Tall building threshold

URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
CR 1	4.8	7	4 - 10
CR 2			2 - 6
CR 3			4 - 10
CR 4			4 - 9
CR 5			4 - 6

Fig 87 Building heights summary



8.11 Historic Quarter character area



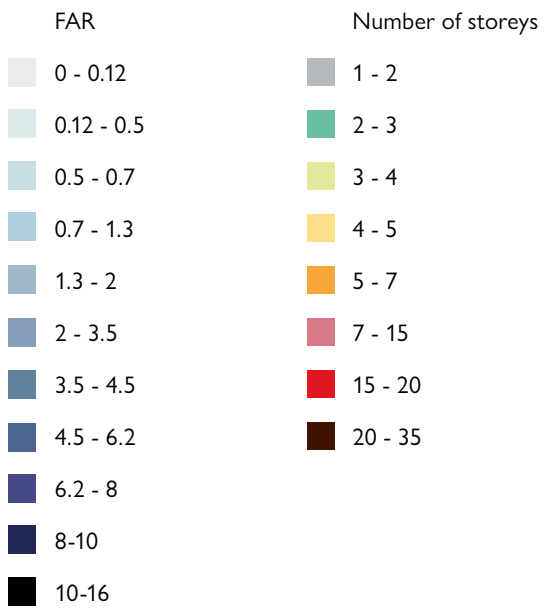
Fig 88 Existing heights by building



Fig 89 Existing heights by urban block



Fig 90 Floor to area ratio by urban block



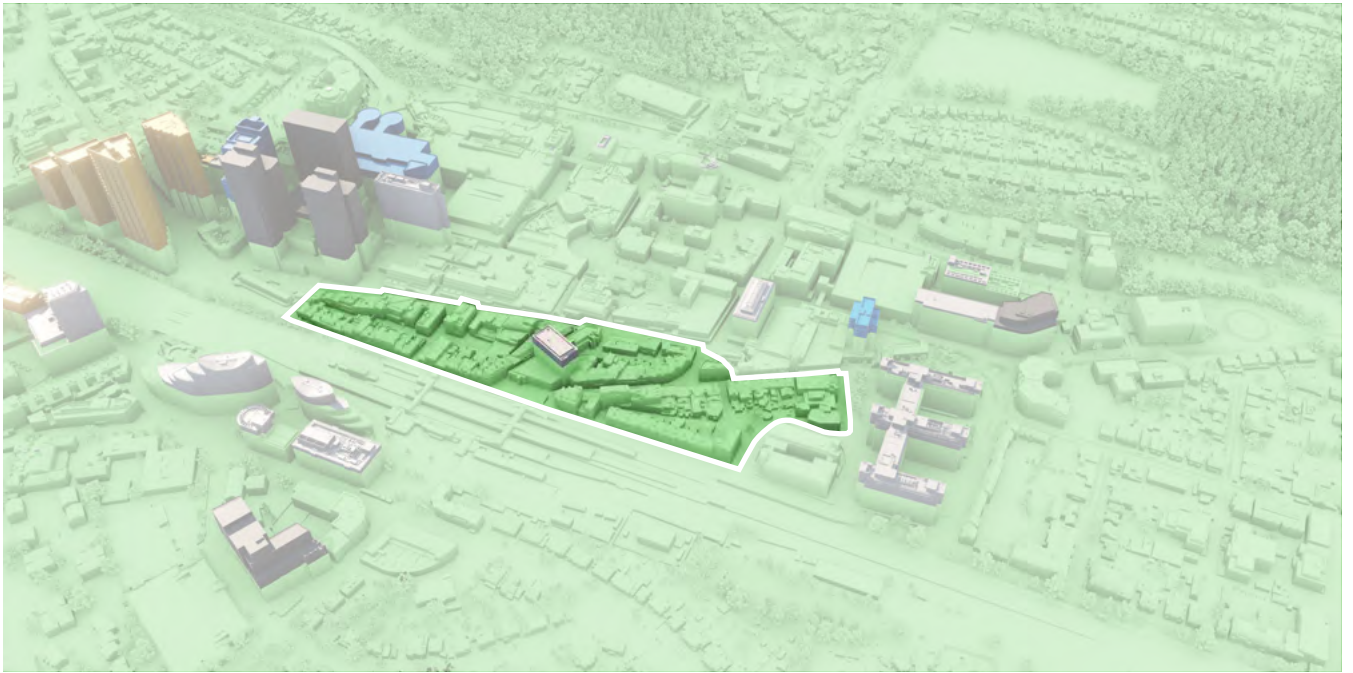


Fig 91 Representation (in green) of the 5 storey tall building threshold for the character area looking north-west

Development pipeline

- Consented scheme
- Scheme under construction
- Tall building threshold

URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
HQ 1	2.7	5	3 - 18
HQ 2			3 - 6
HQ 3			3 - 6
HQ 4			2 - 4
HQ 5			3 - 4
HQ 6			3 - 4

Fig 92 Building heights summary

8.12 Tall Buildings Framework

Building height and tall building strategy

Reflecting on the detailed analysis outlined above, a judgement can be made to assign threshold heights for all parts of the centre above which new development would be considered to be tall.

This information is then combined with the analysis which helps to determine locations considered to be more appropriate for taller buildings. The result is a building heights and tall buildings strategy for Woking town centre where all locations can be attributed to one of three building height categories, as follows:

- **Appropriate for taller buildings** - these are locations considered to be more appropriate for tall buildings relative to others across the town centre. Detailed testing of the townscape, visual, micro-climate and heritage impact will need to be undertaken to demonstrate that the proposals presents an appropriately high level of design quality;
- **Moderately appropriate** - these are locations where some taller buildings might be appropriate subject to detailed testing but these areas are typically already characterised by mid-rise (4-8 storey) buildings which should remain the prevalent scale of development. Care will need to be taken to ensure that the scale of new development conforms to the bell curve profile analysis, as shown by the existing skyline in section 8.13.
- **Inappropriate locations** - these are generally considered to be prohibitively sensitive locations for taller buildings in light of the potential negative townscape impacts.

Using VuCity software, the existing skyline of the town centre is show in the plan below.

The profile of the town, which includes both scheme currently under construction and those already benefiting from planning permission, demonstrates the a cluster of taller buildings has development in the western side of the centre, focused around the Victoria Square development.

A bell curve can be added as a useful tool to help reflect the prevailing scale and pattern of development in the centre. Whilst this is not a technical tool with verified views and informed by a detailed townscape and visual impact assessment, when combined with the detailed building height guidance outlined in this Townscape Strategy, this bell curve is another tool which can be used to help ensure new development will respect prevailing scale.

The table that follows provides an overview of the prevailing heights, tall building threshold and appropriate prospective building height range for each urban block in the centre across all character areas. This strategy guidance should be used as a guide and not a blueprint, but it has been informed by detailed analysis of existing heights and associated urban analysis of the centre and the Council will expect new development proposals to generally conform to this building height and townscape strategy guidance.

- Appropriate location for tall buildings
- Moderately appropriate location for tall buildings
- Inappropriate location for tall buildings

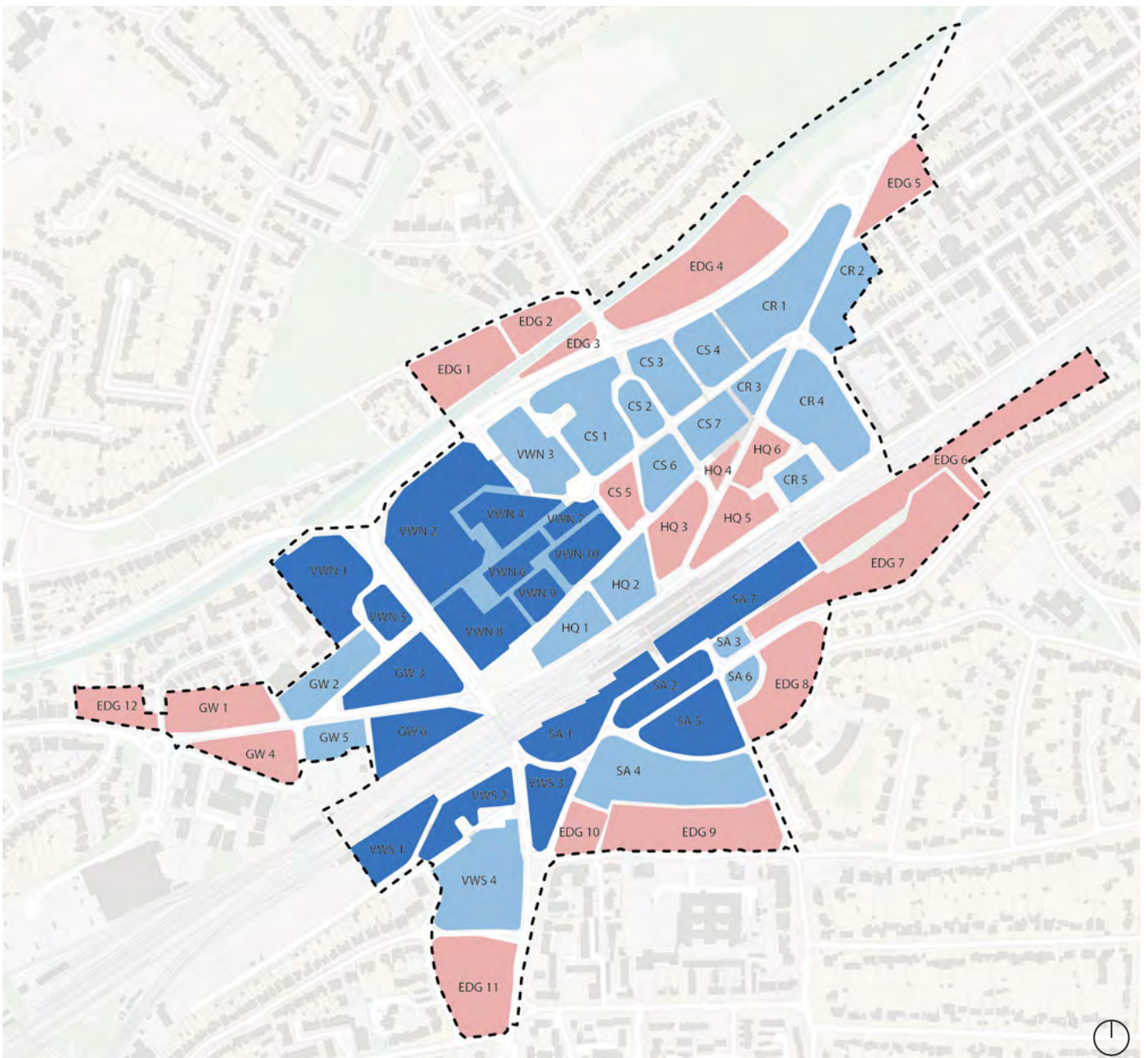


Fig 93 Building height and tall building strategy diagram



8.13 Existing Skyline

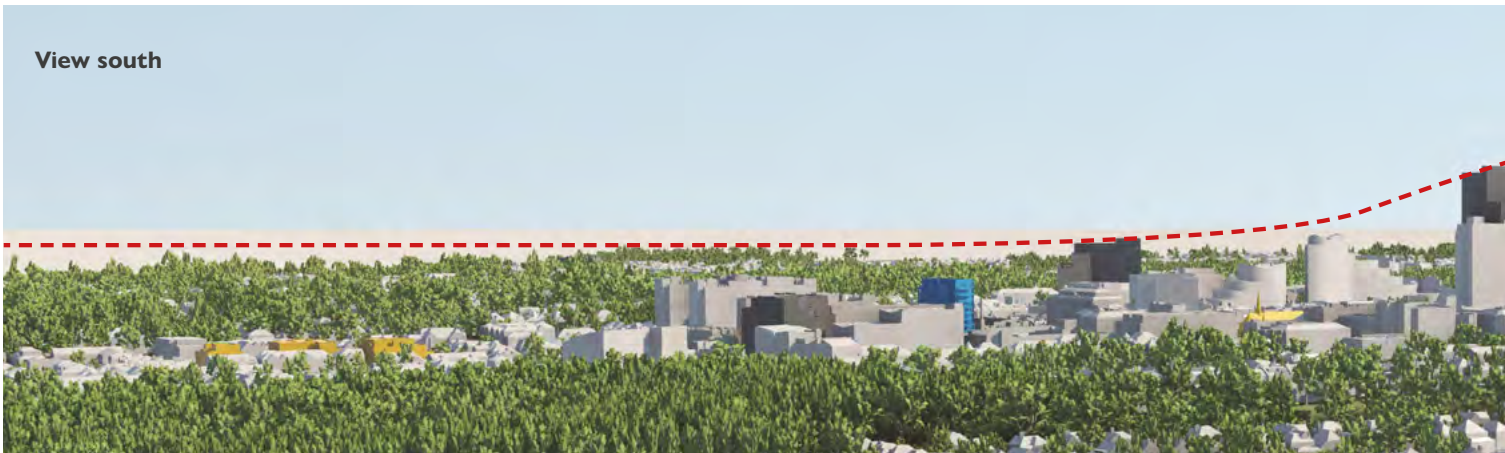
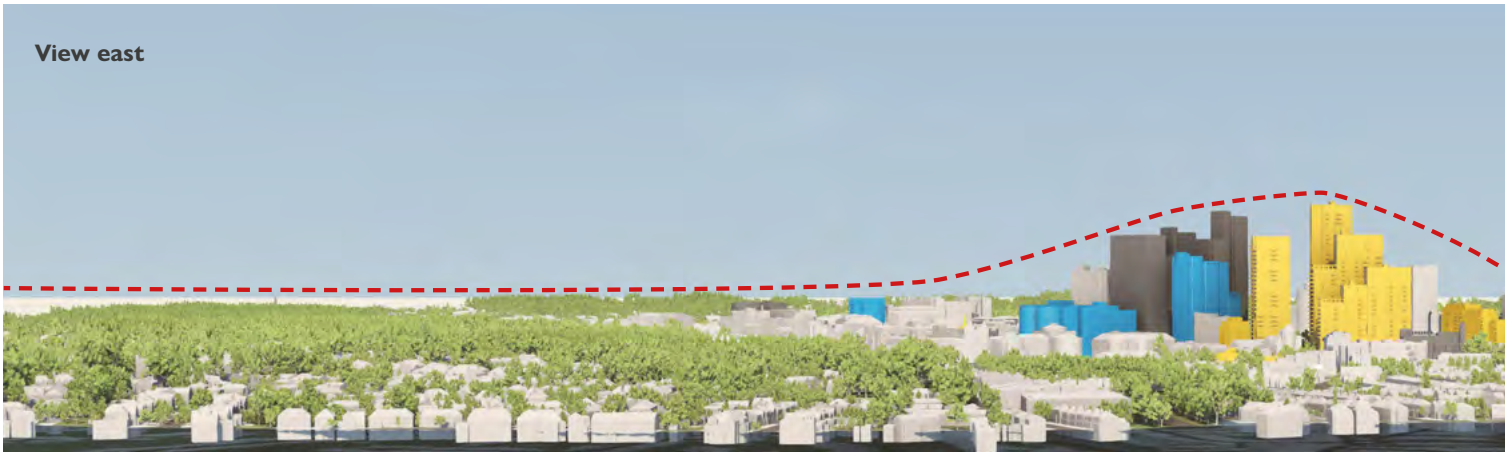
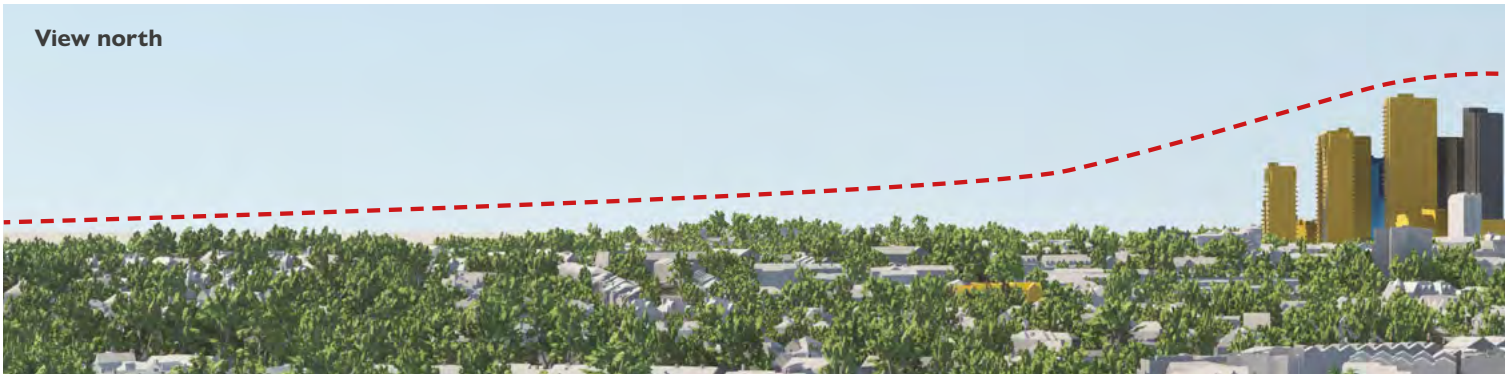
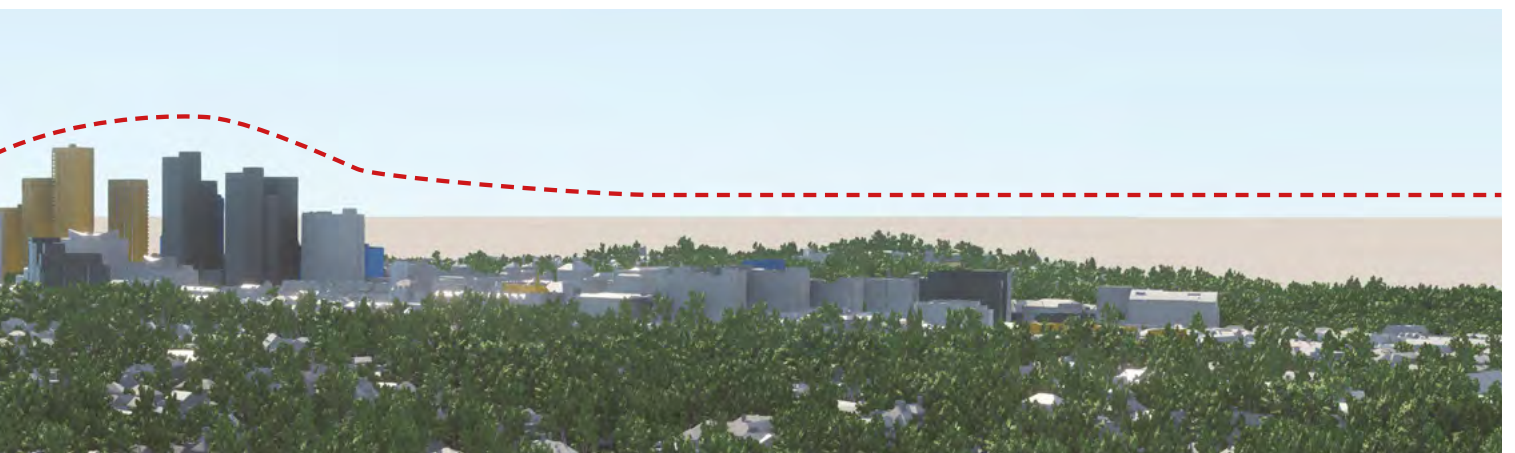
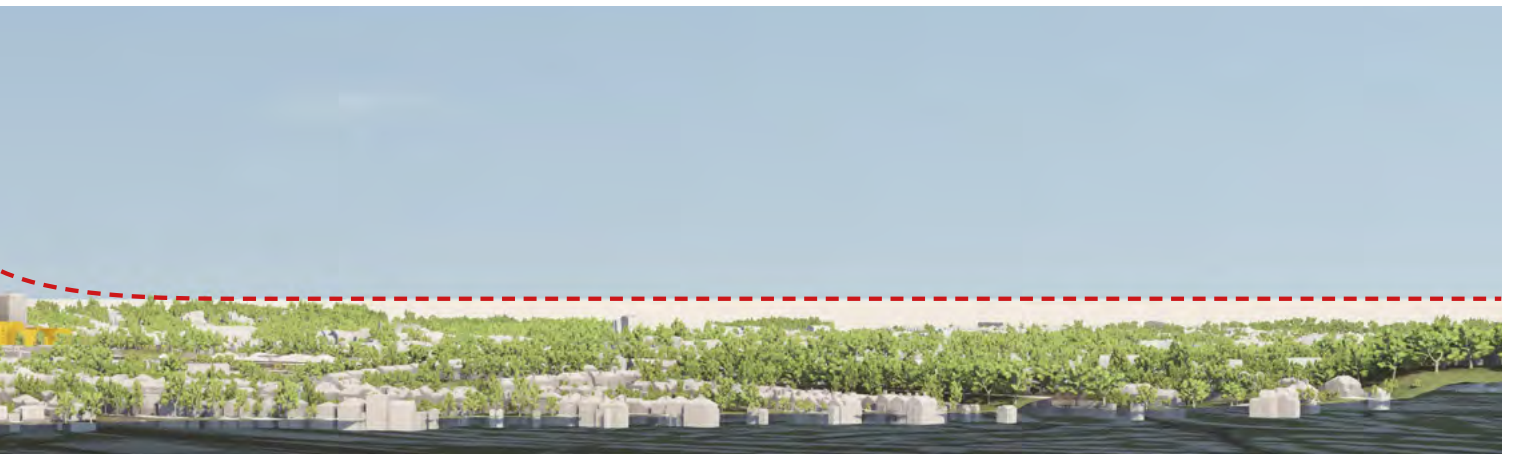
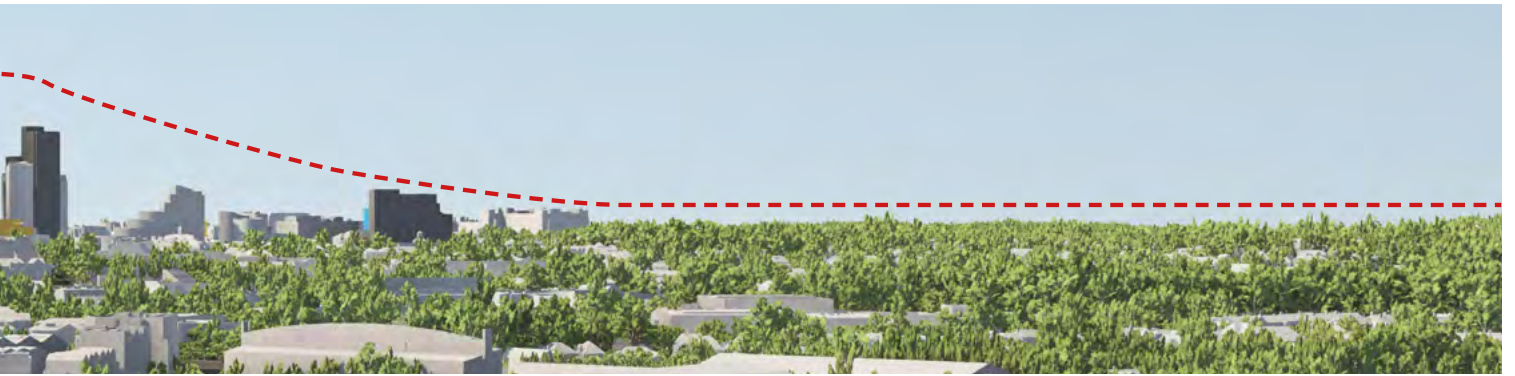


Fig 94 Bell curve height profile analysis





CHARACTER AREA	URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	CONTAINS ALLOCATED SITE	CONTAINS HIF SITE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
Victoria Way South	VWS 1	YES	YES	5.3	8	4 - 14
	VWS 2	YES	YES			4 - 22
	VWS 3	NO	YES			4 - 20
	VWS 4	NO	YES			4 - 15
Victoria Way North	VWN 1	NO	NO	6.2	9	4 - 9
	VWN 2	NO	NO			4 - 9
	VWN 3	NO	NO			4 - 6
	VWN 4	NO	NO			4 - 9
	VWN 5	NO	NO			4 - 6
	VWN 6	NO	NO			4 - 9
	VWN 7	NO	NO			4 - 9
	VWN 8	NO	NO			4 - 34
	VWN 9	NO	NO			4 - 30
	VWN 10	NO	NO			4 - 9
Goldsworth Road	GW 1	NO	NO	6.7	10	2 - 6
	GW 2	NO	YES			4 - 6
	GW 3	YES	YES			4 - 35
	GW 4	YES	NO			4 - 6
	GW 5	NO	NO			4 - 6
	GW 6	YES	YES			4 - 38
Station Approach	SA 1	NO	NO	3.8	6	4 - 16
	SA 2	NO	NO			5 - 10
	SA 3	NO	NO			3 - 6
	SA 4	NO	YES			4 - 8
	SA 5	YES	YES			4 - 15
	SA 6	YES	YES			4 - 15
	SA 7	NO	YES			2 - 12

- Appropriate location for tall buildings
- Moderately appropriate location for tall buildings
- Inappropriate location for tall buildings

Table 1.1 Building height and tall building strategy table

CHARACTER AREA	URBAN BLOCK REFERENCE	CONTAINS ALLOCATED SITE	CONTAINS HIF SITE	PREVAILING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	TALL BUILDING THRESHOLD (STOREYS)	APPROPRIATE PROSPECTIVE HEIGHTS (STOREYS)
Church Street	CS 1	YES	YES	3.7	6	2 - 7
	CS 2	NO	NO			3 - 10
	CS 3	NO	NO			3 - 6
	CS 4	NO	NO			4 - 10
	CS 5	NO	NO			1 - 4
	CS 6	NO	YES			2 - 10
	CS 7	YES	YES			2 - 8
Chertsey Road	CR 1	YES	NO	4.8	7	4 - 10
	CR 2	YES	NO			2 - 6
	CR 3	YES	YES			4 - 10
	CR 4	YES	NO			4 - 9
	CR 5	YES	NO			4 - 6
Historic Quarter	HQ 1	YES	NO	2.7	6	3 - 18
	HQ 2	YES	NO			3 - 6
	HQ 3	NO	NO			3 - 6
	HQ 4	YES	YES			2 - 4
	HQ 5	NO	NO			3 - 4
	HQ 6	NO	NO			3 - 4
Edge of town centre	EDG 1	NO	NO	N/A	N/A	1 - 3
	EDG 2	NO	NO			2 - 4
	EDG 3	NO	NO			1 - 3
	EDG 4	NO	NO			3 - 8
	EDG 5	NO	NO			2 - 4
	EDG 6	NO	YES			2 - 10
	EDG 7	NO	NO			2 - 3
	EDG 8	YES	NO			2 - 3
	EDG 9	NO	NO			2 - 4
	EDG 10	NO	YES			2 - 4
	EDG 11	YES	NO			2 - 8
	EDG 12	YES	NO			3 - 6



SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

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9 Objectives

The Sustainable construction objectives for the Town Centre are as follows:

- **A well-designed town centre and buildings that conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials;**
- **All new and redevelopment in the town centre will be expected to achieve high environmental benchmarks as part of the borough's commitment to addressing the climate and ecological emergency;**
- **Design should respond to the impacts of climate change by maximising energy efficiency and minimising carbon emissions to contribute towards net zero targets by 2050;**
- **Design should incorporate measures to adapt to anticipated effects such as warmer urban temperatures and the increased risk of surface water flooding.**

10 Overview

Woking Borough Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency, pledging to accelerate its efforts to become carbon neutral by 2030 across its own estate and operations, and in the longer term to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero across the borough by 2050, in line with national targets. The Council is committed to work in partnership with those developing, operating in and managing the town centre to ensure that these carbon targets are met. The Woking Core Strategy (in particular, Policies CS9, CS17, CS18, CS21, CS22 and CS23), the Site Allocations DPD, the Development Management Policies DPD and the National Planning Policy Framework combine to provide the policy basis to guide day to day decisions. Detailed information on sustainable construction requirements can be found in the [Climate Change SPD](#).

The council has already championed significant investment in low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure in the town centre, including the decentralised energy network, but the ongoing regeneration of the town centre provides a significant opportunity to design-in additional measures to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, and minimise resource use. Incorporating energy saving measures into the design and construction of new or refurbished

homes and buildings in the town centre can significantly reduce the amount of energy consumed, the carbon dioxide emitted and the running costs of the building over its lifetime. There are also opportunities to expand the decentralised energy network further, with the new energy station at Poole Road increasing capacity (Fig 96).

Urban design has a critical role to play in ensuring that buildings benefit from natural daylight, warmth and ventilation. It is also important to provide natural shading and air conditioning, and to control run-off through appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS). Incorporating adaptation measures into new and redeveloped buildings and the public realm will also create a town centre which is more attractive and sustainable in the long term, for example through enhancing green infrastructure. The Council has been putting in place measures to adapt to changing conditions, including rainwater gardens in built-up areas of the town centre to reduce surface water flooding (Fig 95), but there is significant scope to enhance adaptation through ongoing regeneration.



Fig 95 Rainwater Garden, Chertsey Road



Fig 96 Combined Heat and Power Centre, Poole Road

10.1 June 2022 Building Regulations

A new part L of the building regulations will come in to effect on 15 June 2022. Table 1.1 sets out what will be expected from developments coming forward in the Town Centre.

Special considerations and exemptions may apply if a building on which work to be carried out has special historic or architectural value, such as those within the designated Town Centre Conservation Area. A balance will need to be arrived at between historic building conservation and sustainable construction requirements, but it is perfectly feasible to retain the authentic, original, architectural and historic features of buildings during an energy-efficiency project.



Table 1.2 Summary of the minimum sustainable construction requirements that will be expected of development proposals coming forward in the town centre.

DEVELOPMENT TYPE	MINIMUM STANDARD AS AT JUNE 2022
New residential development – energy and water efficiency	Interim Future Homes Standard which requires around a 30% reduction on the Dwelling Emission Rate against the Target Emission Rate (based on the 2013 edition of Part L to the Building Regulations). A fabric first approach should continue to be prioritised. Meet the full Future Homes Standard once it comes into effect. Proposals for zero carbon development are strongly supported.
	Optional requirement set through Part G to the Building Regulations for water efficiency.
New non-residential development of 1,000sqm or more (gross) floorspace	BREEM Very Good standards, with energy component achieving progressive uplift in Part L to the Building Regulations in line with Government objective for non-residential buildings to achieve the Future Buildings Standard. BREEM assessment is also available for mixed-use schemes, combining both residential and non-residential development.
	Achieve mandatory credits under water category of BREEM assessment.
Minor non-residential development	Incorporate energy measures in accordance with interim requirements of Part L to the Building Regulations and full Future Buildings Standard once it comes into effect.
	Incorporate water efficiency measures (as per Climate Change SPD guidance).
Development with exceptional high energy consumption / power/cooling loads	Reduce total carbon emissions from development by 10% through use of on-site renewable energy measures.
All new development	Consider integration of Combined Heat and Power or other forms of low carbon district heating in the development. Connect to an energy station or district heat network, or be designed to be connection-ready, if located within town centre ‘connection zone’, unless a better alternative for reducing carbon emissions can be demonstrated.
	Electric vehicle charging point provision in accordance with Part S to the Building Regulations.
	Take into account layout, landform, orientation and landscaping to maximise efficient use of energy and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Accord with uplift in Part F (ventilation) and new Part O (overheating in new homes) to the Building Regulations, and full Future Homes and Building Standards once they come into effect.
	Designed to facilitate reduction of waste, and then recycling and composting of waste produced.
	Use sustainable construction techniques that promote the reuse and recycling of building materials. Responsible resourcing of materials, and locally sourced where possible.
	Make biodiversity enhancements such as green roofs/walls and bird and bat boxes.

11 Opportunities

- Increasing the density and intensifying the use of land and buildings in the town centre can help to mitigate the impacts of climate change by locating people closer to facilities, shops, jobs, and sustainable modes of transport, thereby reducing the need to travel by car;
- Redevelopment of town centre sites can help improve connections to existing/planned walking and cycling networks and maximise permeability for these modes within and outside of sites;
- Previously developed land in the town centre is used more efficiently so helps adaptation by increasing the ability for CO₂ absorption, and sustaining natural ecosystems and flood resilience on greenfield land elsewhere;
- Well-established low carbon decentralised energy network in the town centre, with high feasibility for new and redeveloped buildings to connect. Also good potential for on-site renewable energy generation via roof-mounted solar PV;
- Great potential to improve energy efficiency and resilience of outdated town centre buildings, including on those sites allocated for redevelopment in the Site Allocations DPD;
- Redevelopment of previously developed land in the town centre with low biodiversity value offers potential to reintroduce natural features and habitats into the built environment, improve permeability of surfaces, and address urban heat island effect through landscaping, including green roofs and walls;
- Town centre development likely to generate sufficient critical mass for shared travel solutions e.g. car club vehicles and cycling hubs, and to expand cycling and electric vehicle network;
- Higher quality existing buildings in the town centre can be retrofitted to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions – much of this falls outside the remit of planning, however, there are opportunities where applications are made for change of use, conversions, reversions and extensions.



12 Constraints

- The desire to increase density in the town centre needs to be balanced with retaining important open spaces and land for drainage, which will become more important in addressing warmer temperatures and increased storm events;
- Whilst higher densities are desirable due to the town centre location, there is a risk that tall buildings can restrict daylighting and solar gain, including overshadowing of existing buildings and public spaces. Higher density development can also compound the urban heat island effect;
- Costs associated with redeveloping town centre sites can impede viability of achieving high sustainable construction standards;
- Important to ensure that existing CHP facilities do not have an adverse effect on air quality;
- Higher instances of permitted development in town centre (allowing changing of use without any application process) reduces capacity of planning process to facilitate incorporation of sustainable construction measures;
- Heritage assets in the town centre, including that of the Conservation Area, can restrict degree to which sustainable construction principles are achieved;
- Existing electricity infrastructure in the town centre may not have capacity to support electric vehicle charging needs;
- Balance to be achieved between retrofitting outmoded buildings to reduce emissions and embodied energy costs and conserve resources vs. demolition and rebuild to boost supplies of affordable housing

13 The Masterplan

- Developments in the town centre will be expected to follow the principles of sustainable construction and design to reduce the demand for energy, use energy more efficiently and generate more energy from low carbon and renewable sources. Developments should not only avoid, mitigate or compensate for harm, but also seek ways to enhance, restore and add to biodiversity.
- Encouraging the re-use of good quality existing buildings before considering demolition or replacement (the 'retro-fit first' principle) (Fig 97).
- Development will be directed to follow the energy hierarchy by:

Reducing the demand for energy through an integrated approach to solar gain, access to daylight, insulation, thermal materials, ventilation, heating and control systems. Design techniques should be applied that maximise the capture and use of passive solar energy while avoiding excessive solar gain in summer e.g. using brise soleil, natural ventilation, shutters, cool or reflective building materials on roofs or facades – these passive measures should be considered prior to the inclusion of any active measures (Figs 98,99).



Fig 97 Renovation vs. Redevelopment at the Cornerstone Offices



Fig 98 Brise soleil to reduce passive cooling and overheating



Fig 99 Passive ventilation and solar PV at the Living Planet Centre

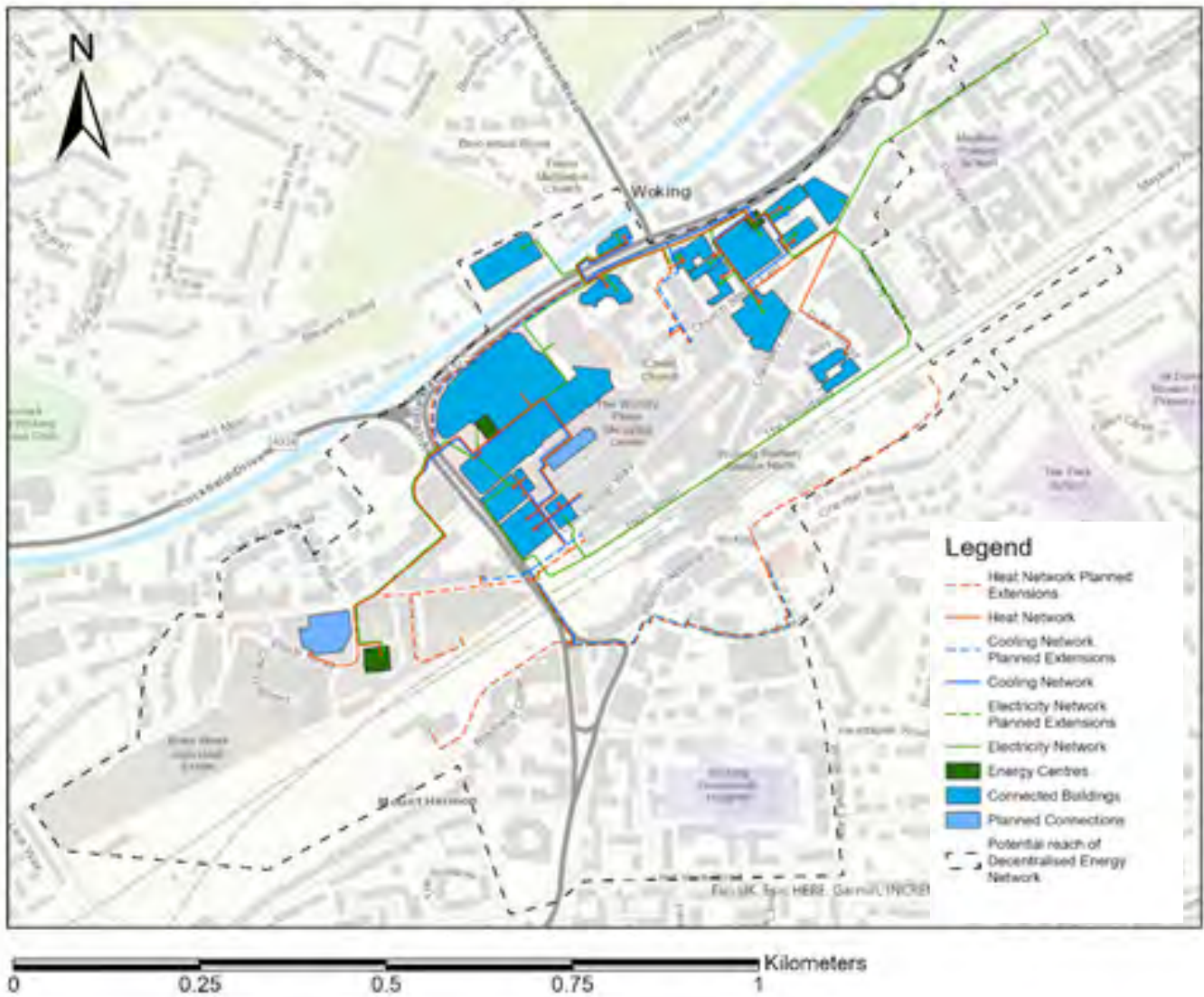


Fig 100 Caption



Fig 101 BREEM Excellent at Victoria Gate



Fig 102 All timber used

- Securing an efficient supply of heat and power, including through connection to the existing town centre decentralised energy network (DEN) (Fig 100). – all new development (including refurbishments and conversions where planning permission is required) should assess the feasibility of connecting to the existing network, and where this is not possible, being designed to be ‘connection-ready’ or establishing a new network – this will help realise the benefits in establishing and supporting the existing town centre DEN which has potential to transition to lower carbon and renewable energy sources over time;
- Considering the feasibility of on-site renewable energy generation, prioritising the use of technologies with no polluting emissions such as heat pumps or photovoltaics (PVs). Given the benefits of heat pumps, their use will be encouraged. Roofs in the town centre should be designed to maximise the use of solar panels, which can be adopted with other technologies to reduce emissions such as heat pumps, alongside fabric efficiency.
- New and redeveloped buildings should be built to high environmental standards and are encouraged to exceed minimum local planning policy and Building Regulations requirements. Whilst the 2016 Zero Carbon Homes target has been replaced with the Future Homes Standard, new residential development is encouraged to pursue net zero standards where feasible. Larger scale non-residential or mixed-use proposals will be required to conduct a BREEAM assessment and achieve at least a Very Good rating in accordance with policy CS22, but higher standards are achievable: a new-build exemplar is the [Living Planet Centre](#), which achieved BREEAM Outstanding, and the refurbishment of Victoria Gate, which achieved BREEAM Excellent (Fig 101).
- Operational carbon is only part of the story – embodied carbon in materials should also be minimised. Embodied carbon includes the carbon emissions associated with the extraction and processing of materials, energy use in the factories and transport as well as the construction of the building and repair, replacement and maintenance. It also includes the demolition and disassembly of the building at the end of its life. New and redevelopment in the town centre is encouraged to pursue low embodied carbon design, which is not inherently more expensive or more complex, it just requires awareness and good design (Fig 102).
 - Prioritise materials that are reused, reclaimed or natural from local areas and sustainable sources and that are durable. If not available use materials with a high recycled content.
 - Allow for flexibility and consider how a layout may be adapted in the future.
 - Allow for easy access for maintenance – maintained equipment will last longer.
 - Consider disassembly for reuse at the end of the life of the building.
- Promoting water sensitive drainage designs like swales, rain gardens, permeable paving, and grass so that water can soak away (Fig 103). Detailed guidance on Sustainable Drainage Systems, including design criteria to achieve multi-functional benefits – such as maximising the ecological value of drainage systems - is provided in [Surrey County Council’s guidance](#).
- New and redeveloped buildings should incorporate measures to reduce water demand and recycle greywater and rainwater. For residential development, water use should not exceed 110 litres per person, per day, ideally less, and for non-residential development, credits should be sought in the water category of BREEAM schemes.



- Providing recycling capacity in developments, including building in recycling facilities for organic and other wastes.
- To help reduce the town centre's exposure to air pollution, enable it to adapt to climate change and to deliver biodiversity net gains, new and redevelopment proposals should consider urban greening as a fundamental element of site and building design. Incorporate measures such as high-quality landscaping (including trees), green roofs, green walls, pocket parks, food-growing areas and nature-based sustainable drainage such as rain gardens. Heat and potentially drought-tolerant plants should be selected, as well as evergreen species as these can provide year-round sustainability and green infrastructure benefits. Biodiversity features can be designed into typical public-realm furniture (e.g. bollards and fences), and a range of bird and bat nest boxes can be integrated into facades and green walls. Residents' or office workers' participation can be encouraged by providing balcony planters and window boxes on residential or office schemes (Figs 104,105,106).
- Encouraging proposals to make more of the ecological and recreational value of the canal, heaths and habitats surrounding the town centre, and to create accessible connections to them, particularly where the public realm is being improved.
- Incorporating electric vehicle (EV) charging points and considering the provision of parking bays for car clubs – these should be easy and safe to use. Where parking is proposed, new housing and commercial development should be planned with capacity to support EV charging to enhance the town centre charging network. Further guidance, including on design and technology, is provided in the Council's Climate Change SPD and Surrey County Council's [Electric Vehicle Strategy \(2018\)](#) (Fig 107).
- Incorporate cycle parking in line with the minimum Parking Standards SPD – this should be secure, often best provided in places that are overlooked, and its location and design should be appropriate to the surrounding environment.
- Proposals that help to increase resilience to climate change and secure carbon reductions for historic buildings and other designated and non-designated heritage assets in the town centre are supported where they strike an acceptable balance with the conservation of the asset, or facilitate their sensitive re-use where they have fallen into a state of disrepair or dereliction.
- Development proposals in the town centre will need to show that guidance in the [Climate Change SPD](#) has been taken into account in Sustainability and Energy Statements submitted with planning applications, and complete a Climate Neutral Development Checklist.



Fig 103 Rain garden



Fig 104 Middle Walk



Fig 105 Green wall at Dukes Court



Fig 106 Green walls at Victoria Way car park



Fig 107 Promoting car sharing



WOKING

NOTICE TO STAFF
THIS IS NOT
AN AUTHORISED
WALKING ROUTE

WARNING
HOTEL

HERITAGE

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14 Objectives

The Heritage objectives for the Town Centre are as follows:

- **To conserve heritage assets, and retain them as a valuable part of Woking's evolving built environment;**
- **Prevent inappropriate development and loss or damage to heritage assets. Steps should be taken to enhance assets, by repairing historical features that may have been damaged, and exploring the potential to re-instate features that may have been lost where this is beneficial to the asset and its setting.**
- **Celebrate and capitalise upon heritage assets, to make them:**
- **A core part of future place-making in the town centre. They should be integrated and enhanced as part of a sensitive yet creative design approach, and help new development better fit its local and historic context.**
- **Widely appreciated by the public, through awareness and education, thus contributing to a enhanced sense of local identity and place.**

15 Overview

Woking has grown from a small country market town surrounded by farmland in the 1800s. Many of Woking's main roads, including Guildford Road, Chertsey Road and Oriental Road, began as ancient links across the heathland, linking Woking Common and Horsell Common, and are shown on the adjacent map (Fig 108).

The precursor to change and growth came with two major forms of new transport infrastructure, first with the Canal's construction at the end of the 1700s (completed in 1794) which in turn provided an important transport system for construction of the railway. The railway was built in the 1830s and started operating railway services to London in 1838, with fast trains taking just over 50 minutes. From 1840, the rail service to Southampton opened. One of Woking's oldest surviving buildings, now the Sovereigns pub, was built in 1840 as the 'Railway Hotel' to cater to the sudden influx of visitors to the town and Woking Heath.

The railway and station in Woking gave quick and easy access to London and was the beginning of Woking's rapid development. In 1856-7 the Albion Hotel (where Albion House is now located) was built and around the same time the High Street began to develop as the town's first shopping street, containing a collection of shops including a Post Office, grocers, chemists, butchers and draper and milliner. Some of these were converted from cottages, and others were new buildings. Buildings now situated on the High Street date

from 1870 and are the original commercial heart of the town.

The site of Christ Church was first used as a place of worship in 1877, and the current Church opened in 1889, to support a rapidly growing town. However, the area immediately surrounding Christ Church was largely residential until the 1960s.

The building occupied by the Slug and Lettuce on the corner of Chobham Road and Commercial Way (then Commercial Road) dates to 1874 and was linked to a second set of shops on Chobham Road built around this time. From the 1890s, Chertsey Road started to become the town's main shopping street, with Broadway beginning to develop at the same time, which contained the town's first telephone exchange. Many of the historic buildings on Chertsey Road and Broadway remain, displaying decorative and classical features, and providing an insight into the town's past.

Development began to expand onto the eastern extent of Commercial Way in the early 1900s, with some intricate and attractive Victorian architecture evident at 46 Commercial Way. Commercial Buildings (1920s) at 63-73 Commercial Way show a distinct Art Deco influence and the adjoining 75 Commercial Way (occupied by Turkish Kitchen) is an attractive historic building with detailed brickwork, arched windows and parapets.

At the junction of Commercial Way and High Street, where Victoria Place public space is now, was a collection of public buildings including a

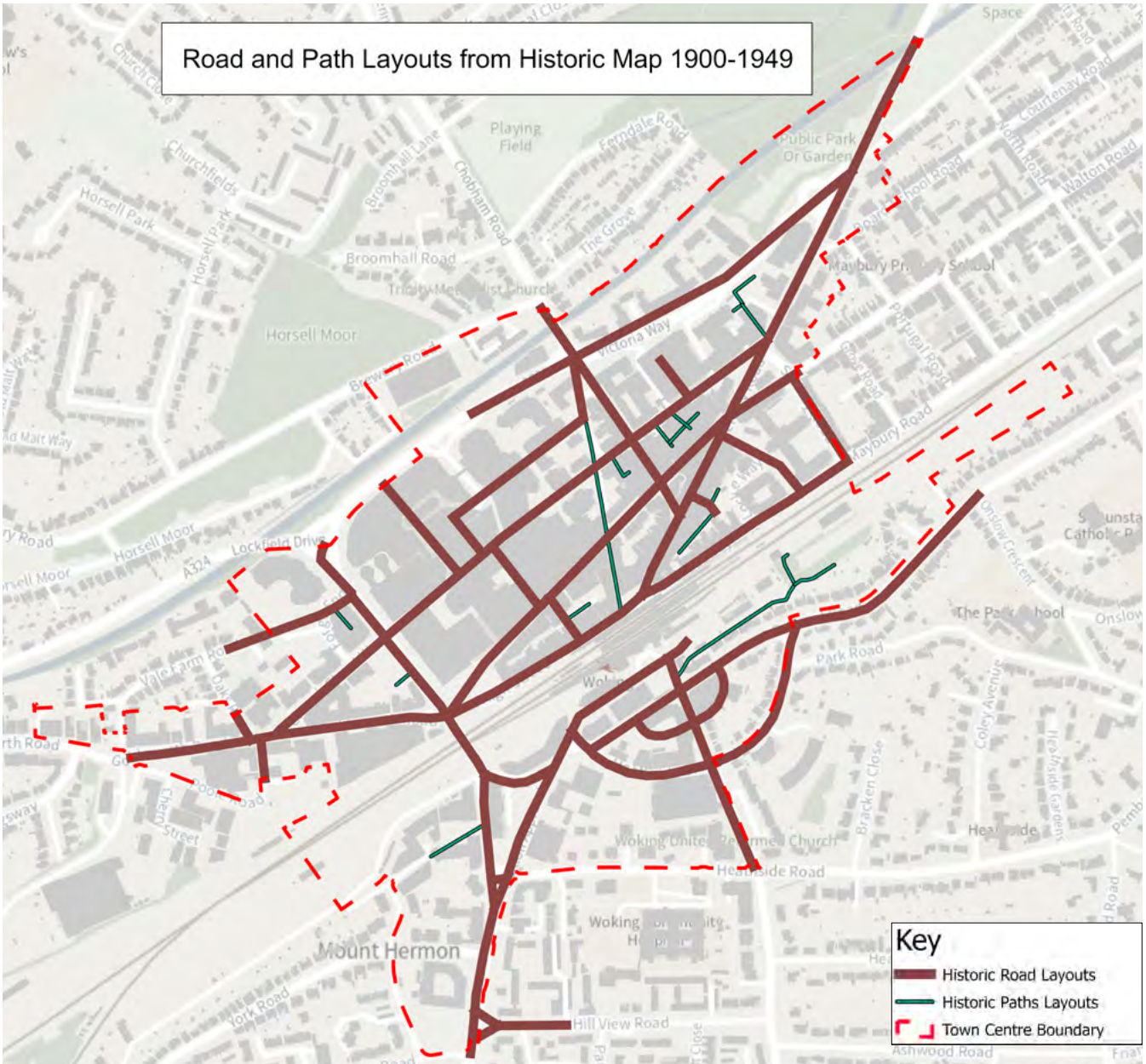


Fig 108 Woking Town Centre's Historic Road Layouts (1900-1949)

new Wesleyan Church, built in 1904 (replacing an older Chapel at Chapel Street, built in 1872) Council Offices, public halls, the Grand Theatre and the Constitutional Club. Woking Electric Empire operated from 1910 and showed early 'moving pictures'.

These public buildings lined Victoria Gardens, colloquially known as 'Sparrow Park', which from 1922 contained the War Memorial which was later moved to Town Square (now Jubilee Square).

Development continued gradually, with an increasing commercial and retail focus along Commercial Way. Buildings like that occupied by Carson & Co on the corner of Church Path date to 1934, with many buildings being constructed through the 1960s.

Woking Town Centre saw substantial change from the 1970s with the development of large footprint shopping centres, first with Wolsey Place, on land that had been a mix of residential and smaller scale shops and businesses lining the streets. This entailed major changes and redesign to the local road network. This large scale retail development continued through the 1980s, and the Peacocks Centre opened in 1992. The Mayor at the time, Councillor Dick Williams, stated it had transformed Woking from a 'one horse town' to an 'important regional centre'.

Transformation continues in Woking, with the recent opening of Victoria Place and further development planned for the town centre.

Woking's heritage remains as part of the town's built fabric, clustered most obviously in the existing Conservation Area but with heritage buildings distributed throughout the centre, as identified in the following section. Historic buildings help tell the story of Woking's past and development over the past 170 years, and should be protected and enhanced as a distinct part of our thriving and dynamic town.

16 Heritage assets in the town centre

Heritage assets are buildings, monuments or sites that are historically important at a local or wider level. They are often valued for their style, architecture, historical or cultural associations, and for the contribution they make to a place. Their value and people’s perception of a heritage asset can differ, and these perceptions are both personal and transitory. Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, and they may be designated or undesignated. The section below focuses on designated heritage assets located within the town centre, identifies and describes them, and then highlights opportunities for their improvement and protection.

Heritage assets are distributed throughout the Town Centre. They include two designated Conservation Areas (Town Centre and part of the Basingstoke Canal) and a number of heritage assets, which are either locally listed or statutory Grade II listed buildings and structures under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended. Most are standalone and there are some terraced buildings. Fig 106 illustrates this.

Alongside the preparation of the Town Centre Masterplan, a review of the Council’s Local List is taking place, which may identify additional heritage assets appropriate for designation in the Town Centre. Whilst the Masterplan focuses on designated Heritage Assets, the Council has robust local plan policies to conserve locally listed heritage assets.

The Town Centre Conservation Area, designated in 1991 and shown to the right,

forms a small yet distinct historical core that was the town’s original commercial heart, and is a unique quarter in the context of a predominantly modern town. An Appraisal of this Conservation Area has been prepared and assesses a number of features which in combination creates a distinct historical and architectural character. The Appraisal provides recommendations for how the area and its setting should be conserved to protect and enhance its historical features. For the purposes of this report in informing the Town Centre Masterplan, the key findings of the Appraisal are pulled out to identify opportunities for improvement and protection. Historic assets outside the Conservation Area but within the town centre boundary are also identified.



Woking High Street. Historic photo credit: Iain Wakeford, Woking Print and Publicity, 2003



Old buildings on Victoria Square

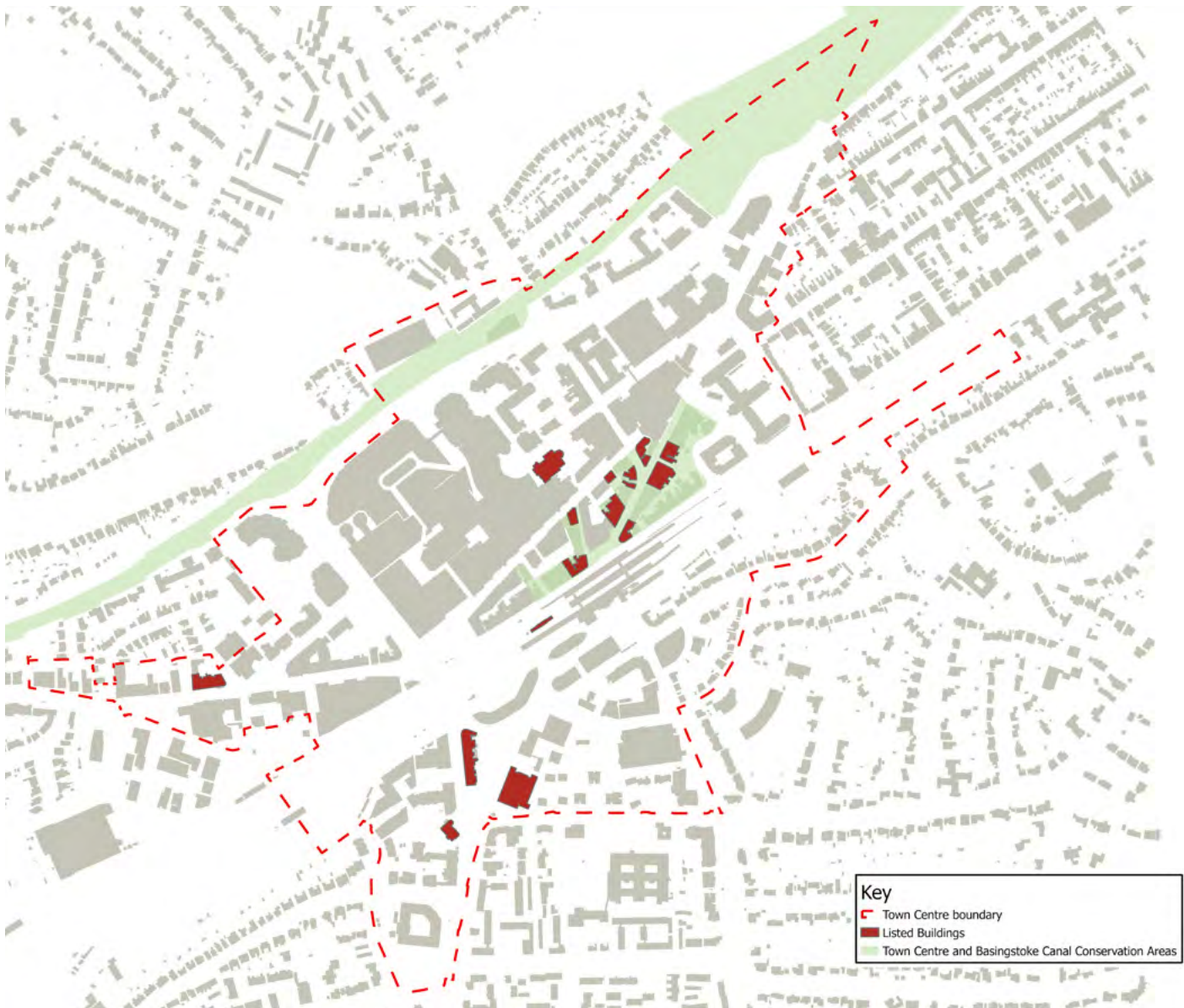


Fig 109 Woking Town Centre's Heritage Assets



16.1 Woking War Memorial

Woking War Memorial, situated at the centre of Jubilee Square is a Grade II statutory listed monument, unveiled in May 1922. It is listed for its special architectural or historical interest. It is an impressive and noteworthy memorial, comprising a sandstone column, above which is a bronze statue by sculptor Sir Francis William Doyle Jones, of a winged Victory holding a wreath of laurel leaves in her right hand and a palm branch in her left. The memorial originally commemorated the 552 members of Woking's community who lost their lives in the First World War, whose names are inscribed on the column. It was later inscribed with a carved wreath at the base of the column, dedicated to those who died in the Second World War.

The memorial was originally located at Victoria Gardens, locally known as Sparrow Park, at the junction of Commercial Way and High Street, where the public space in front of the Victoria Place is now. It was moved to its current location in Town Square (now Jubilee Square) in 1975. It holds 'group value' for its relationship with Christ Church, also Grade II listed, and has a strong visual connection with it.



16.2 Christ Church

Christ Church is a Grade II statutory listed building. It is located on the edge of Jubilee Square and opposite Wolsey Place shopping centre. It is a distinctive landmark building in this central location and is listed due to its special architectural or historical interest. It was designed by WF Unsworth in an austere Cistercian style and was first used for services on New Year's Day, 1889. It is built of typical red, Surrey brick, has a north and south chapel, circular and repeating curve-topped windows and green copper covered turrets and spires. The tallest spire rises over the south chapel and can be seen from Church Path.

Major enlargement and refurbishment took place in 1989-91 to create a café, offices and meeting space and while this changed the architecture of the Church as originally designed, it is considered to add positively to the building and does not detract from key elements of the church's architecture or design.

While the Church is an important place of worship, it also provides space for a variety of community events. It is therefore a heritage and wider community asset for the town.



16.3 Police Station

Formerly the Woking Grammar School, the Police Station is a standalone building constructed in 1914 and is locally listed. It exhibits Classical-inspired architecture and is situated in an elevated position, making it a distinctive landmark. It has always been in use as a public building, and therefore has civic value. In addition to the main building, there is an ornate entrance gate with an integrated lamp which forms part of the perimeter fencing.



16.4 Signal box

Built in the 1930s, the Signal box is situated in between platforms at Woking Railway Station. It is a good example of a Southern Region electro-mechanical Signal box in International modern style and is Grade II listed. It is representative of an era where interesting aesthetic design was integrated into infrastructure, and therefore serves as a pleasant reminder. It provides visual interest within the Station, as well as in the foreground of the emerging Town Centre skyline.



16.5 The Sovereigns Public House

The Sovereigns pub was originally built as the 'Railway Hotel' in 1840 to cater for the sudden influx in visitors to Woking Heath following the opening of the railway in 1838. It is one of the oldest remaining buildings in the town centre and is locally listed due to its architectural and historic significance. It sits at a prominent location at the top of Guildford Road, at the south-eastern edge of the centre



16.6 65-75 Goldsworth Road

This terrace of locally listed buildings is a rare survival of Victorian development within the Town Centre, outside of the historical core. It has some attractive architectural features and mostly retains its brick fascia and original windows; however, the ground floor shop fronts have undergone alterations, with some more sympathetic than others. The low-rise and fine-grained nature of this terrace is juxtaposed against larger modern development, which creates an incohesive townscape in this area of the Town Centre.



16.7 Basingstoke Canal

Basingstoke Canal runs from east to west across the Borough and town centre, and is a designated Conservation Area. The Canal was constructed in the late 1700s and was completed in 1794, connecting Basingstoke with the Wey Navigation at Woodham, with its links to the Thames. It was intended to boost agricultural trade in Hampshire, and barges provided an economical way of transporting coal and fertilisers from London, and corn, timber and other produce towards the capital.

The Canal was a precursor to the town's development and success, as important transport system in the construction of the railway, built in the 1830s and spurring the rapid development of Woking as a commercial centre in the latter half of the 1800s.

The Canal plays many roles. As well as its historical significance to Woking town centre and the Borough, the Canal is a multifunctional and designated urban open space. It acts as green corridor and is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance, with a vital role for biodiversity. It is well used for recreation, including Canal boats, for quiet enjoyment of nature and is a key sustainable access route. This highlights a diversity of uses, that can conflict and need careful management.

17 Opportunities

16.8 Opportunities for improvement and protection

The Town Centre Conservation Area

- a) The location of the Conservation Area, as an arrival or gateway location into the town, provides opportunity to maximise, improvements to the Conservation area to ensure the station and surrounding area is welcoming, conveys a sense of place and helps people find their way in the town. There is currently a lack of signposting, maps and public information, which should be addressed. Signs or information boards should tell people about the history of Woking Town Centre, and be designed in a way that is sensitive to the context of the Conservation Area.
- b) There is sufficient information to enable development in the town centre to have regard to historic road layouts, and consider layouts, design and access that aids permeability and wayfinding through the town.
- c) The current unsympathetic shopfronts and signage are identified as elements that detract from the historic fabric and coherence of the area. This provides opportunities for new shopfronts that are designed to be sensitive to the historic character of the Conservation Area, adopting traditional design principles and restoring historical features.
- d) New or recent developments has often used materials such as cladding or different brick colours, or fenestrations that do not fit or respond positively to that prevailing in the Conservation Area. There is opportunity for new development to be sensitively designed, and seek to preserve and enhance historic features, overall character and the streetscene. The Council will work in partnership with developers to develop a materials palette, to help guide the design of new development in a way that is sympathetic to the historic character of the Conservation Area.
- e) There is scope to encourage and where necessary require restoration and improved maintenance to ensure buildings of historic and/or architectural significance are retained to a high quality that preserves and enhances the area. This particularly relates to windows and use of unsympathetic materials such as UPVC, and cleaning and restoration of brick and stonework.
- f) There is significant scope to manage additions such as satellite dishes and security cameras that makes buildings appear cluttered and degrade their appearance. Care will be taken to minimise the impact of these. Also, replacement guttering and chimneys should use materials that are sensitive to a building's historic character.
- g) Public realm and street scene were key opportunities for improvement and protection in the Conservation Area and more widely in the town centre. This would enhance the setting and appreciation of heritage assets. Key points highlighted included:



- A need for sensitive location and design of spaces used for car parking and refuse storage to ensure these integrate better in the street scene. This may include siting car parking and refuse storage where it is less obtrusive, and/or planting and greenery to soften or partially screen them. The Council will work with its partners to ensure effective and rational car parking provision across the town centre.
- More trees and planting on streets and in public spaces would help soften and green streets and spaces in a number of locations. This would improve the setting of heritage assets as well as the wider town centre environment.
- Greater provision of seating in particular locations e.g. Albion Square and to the north of Christ Church, to increase use of public spaces, allow them to function better as meeting places and enable greater public appreciation of heritage assets.
- Street furniture including bollards and lighting have been replaced in some parts of the Conservation Area e.g. Chertsey Road but do not reflect the historic character of the area. These improvements should pay regard to their historic setting to ensure better integration.
- The bus shelter on Broadway is dated, dark and unwelcoming, and negatively impacts this part of the Conservation Area. Upgrading is encouraged, and a new shelter should allow light to reach street level and incorporate planting to green the area by the railway.

There is also a need for better cycle paths and infrastructure, including a cycle hire scheme, with hubs in the town centre and in locations in surrounding areas. Potential for such a scheme should be explored.

Woking War Memorial

The War Memorial is maintained to a high standard as are its immediate surroundings on Jubilee Square. It should continue to be maintained and protected in a way that enables appreciation of it, including Remembrance events. Its wider setting, particularly the view towards the Memorial from the east is currently blocked by the town gates and could be opened up by a possible expansion of public space connecting to the east of Jubilee square and moving of the gates, as outlined under Christ Church's opportunities for improvement. New development in the town centre should pay regard to potential impact on setting and views towards this asset.

Christ Church

The Church is well maintained from the exterior, as are its immediate surroundings at the front the building. It is a prominent landmark in the vibrant Jubilee Square, which surrounding by predominantly modern buildings. Public awareness of the Church and War Memorial could be improved with an information board outlining their history, helping make a connection to the town's past which is currently missing.

A proposal has been permitted in 2020 that maximises the Church's ability to support the local community, through updating, refurbishing and making the space more flexible. The development primarily replaces additions made in 1989-91, and retains the most significant historic elements of the church. While contemporary in design, the proposed additions respond to the context and significance of the historic church through material and design. The proposal was considered not harm the Grade II heritage asset and to preserve and enhance its special historic interest.



Fig 110 Example or indicative plan showing a potential layout and improvements to public realm around Christchurch

Looking further at the setting of the Church, Jubilee Square and the area between the Church and Wolsey Place are very well used public spaces. This adds vitality and allows the public to appreciate the Church. It is noted that Jubilee Square can become very busy in good weather, with people sitting on steps and crowding the space. Seating is provided around Jubilee Square but it does not meet demand at peak times. There is an identified lack of public open space in the town centre, and the square very much takes on the role in providing for this need despite its limitations.

It is noted that the proposed extension of the Church increases its built footprint into public space currently used by pedestrians. While sufficient space is maintained to enable access past the Church, the loss in terms of amenity space and setting could in part be compensated for, as suggested above.

Views to the south and east of the Church are largely compromised by buildings, however the north side of the Church sits alongside a newly pedestrianised space on Church Street east. This currently acts as an access point for pedestrians into Jubilee Square and the heart of the town centre, but the space is very bare and does little to maximise appreciation or views of the Church or War Memorial. Better integration is suggested, both to enhance the immediate setting of the assets and expand the area of high quality, useable public space, extending it out eastward from Jubilee Square. An extended public space including planting, trees and seating could be added to form a pocket park or gardens connected to the Church and War Memorial. The re-location of the gates on the east side of Jubilee Square should be explored as part of this, to remove a barrier and enable an extended and well-contained public space for

the town. This is illustrated by (Fig 110).

It is noted that street lighting on Jubilee Square is tall and unattractive (as can be seen to the left of the photo on page 6), and opportunities should be taken to ensure these do not continue to detract from the asset. Any replacement lighting should be more sensitively designed with regard to the Church and War Memorial.

Police Station

The Police Station building itself is in good condition and still has historical architectural features. However, there has been little regard for the setting of this Locally Listed building. The main road acts a barrier to the front of the building, and some adjacent developments do not exhibit good material choices or architectural design in general.

With the demolition of buildings on the adjacent Triangle site, there is an opportunity to maximise the enjoyment of the asset through pedestrianisation and expansion of the public realm, which could increase the threshold and high quality public space to the front of the Police Station. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for new development on adjacent sites to be sympathetically designed to maximise views of this asset, which could increase appreciation of the building's beauty.

Signal Box

Despite no longer being in use, the Signal Box is in reasonable condition, with no evidence of unsympathetic alteration. However, it would benefit from renovation and cleaning to showcase its striking geometric features. Given its current position between the railway lines, there is limited scope to utilise this asset for anything more than visual interest. However,

an innovative proposal to repurpose could be supported, so long as it does not compromise safety or the operation of the railway itself.

Woking Railway Station is part of a Site Allocation and is identified as a site unlocked via HIF (Housing Infrastructure Fund). Any redevelopment of the Station must take the Signal Box into account, and therefore opportunities may arise to make a feature of this asset.

Sovereigns Public House

The Sovereigns building is in good condition and retains its historic architecture. It sits at an entry point to the town centre, and its setting shows the contrast between this locally listed building and newer development in the town centre, which dwarf the pub. Sympathetic design of buildings at the Triangle Site and on other nearby sites should enhance the value, view and setting of this asset.

The road acts as a barrier, and traffic, congestion and the location of the pedestrian crossing directly in front of the pub means noise and air pollution impacts the pub's outdoor seating areas. Improved public realm and traffic calming could help mitigate these environmental issues and should be considered as part of planned highways improvements.

65-75 Goldsworth Road

This asset retains much of its historical interest and contributes to the interest of the townscape as it is, despite some incoherent ground floor frontages. Opportunities for improvement lie within the Development Management process, where applications for new shopfronts could arise. Any proposed development should consider opportunities for new shopfronts that are designed in a way

that is sensitive to the historic character of the buildings, adopting traditional design principles and restoring historical features.

Public realm improvements would also benefit the setting of this terrace, especially where it would increase the threshold for ground floor spill-out activities.

Further benefits will also arise from adjacent developments, which should be encouraged to take design cues from this asset and be designed in a way that complements its low-rise nature, integrating it into a more coherent townscape.

Basingstoke Canal

The town centre stretch of the Canal, and the stretches either side of the town centre, are busy sections for both pedestrians and cyclists. The Canal provides a linear public open space and a green corridor with clear health and well-being benefits for residents. Major improvements were made to Canal in 2018-19, with Woking Wharf being created as a joint initiative between Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council, with a contribution from the Basingstoke Canal Society.



Fig 111 Sovereigns Public House from the south

The Wharf creates an attractive open area for people to enjoy the canal side, a focal base for Woking trip boat 'Kitty' and includes an information board describing the Canal's history. Since its opening a mooring was permitted for a Canal Boat Café with customer seating on the wharf, which was considered to preserve the character of the Conservation Area while adding an element of vitality to the Canalside.

Woking Wharf provides outdoor space for activity by and on the Canal, and opportunities should be taken to support and enhance recreational enjoyment of the Canal. This may include further small scale café and retail uses, and water related activities, in a way that is controlled, managed and sensitive to nature and historic conservation, and the variety of users of the Canal.

In addition to the Wharf, new pedestrian and cycle friendly bridge at the Chobham Road crossing was opened in October 2020, to create an uninterrupted link between the towpaths on either side of the road and Canal, including ramps and bat-friendly lighting. The works took place as part of wider town centre improvements and was part funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership, Enterprise M3. While it provides greatly improved access, the bridge's design and street furniture is contemporary, fitting the context of the Lightbox that is situated by but making little reference to the historic context of the Canal. Further to these improvements, greater wayfinding links should be made to the Canal from within the town centre, with signage to help people find their way to it and from it.

Despite these major improvements to the Canal and its towpath, including an information board at Woking Wharf, little built fabric is left to point public awareness to the Canal's history or significance to the town. While it may be accepted that this not be physically retrieved, it should be considered in terms of historical referencing and further information provision in future enhancements or development.

As mentioned, the Canal is vital in providing green, linear public open space and access to residents. The Council is working with its partners at Surrey County Council and the Basingstoke Canal Society to ensure that increased use of the Canal, as a result of development and a growing town centre population, is mitigated and does not negatively impact the Canal's environment, amenity or value.



Fig 112 Kiwi and Scot towpath seating

18 Constraints

When referring to constraints surrounding heritage assets, these consist of threats that could potentially degrade the historic integrity of heritage assets. Generally, the threats associated with heritage assets in the Town Centre relate to development pressures and ongoing changes to the assets themselves.

- Post war, the Town Centre has generally developed in a way that has not given great consideration to heritage assets, and much development is unsympathetic to it. With the Town Centre undergoing significant change, the settings of heritage assets continue to be affected. This can result in a townscape where historical buildings are competing with new development, particularly in the case where tall buildings are built in close proximity, resulting in overbearing and overshadowing.
- The Town Centre's heritage assets have rich architectural merit and landmark value; however, this can be undermined by poor quality design of modern development nearby, and more widely, through the prevailing style of modern buildings across the Town Centre. In addition to this, development and infrastructure pressures have led to the loss of heritage assets, which continues to be an issue
- Direct changes to heritage assets, whether natural or man-made, can result in the degradation of historical fabric. Poor maintenance leads to direct damage, and this is evident at a number of historic buildings in the Town Centre Conservation Area. This lack of maintenance is attributed to a number of causes, including owner neglect, lack of knowledge and consideration for historic building, as well as lack of funding to carry out sympathetic repairs. Changes of use can also have negative impacts, particularly where these vastly differ from what a building was originally designed to accommodate, as this could result in changes to internal layouts, poor quality extensions and addition of utilities infrastructure.
- The Climate Crisis also has the potential to affect heritage assets. Many historical buildings are not energy efficient and need retrofitting. The mitigation measures may be unsuitable for historical buildings, as these may need to replace historic fabric, for example, windows. Furthermore, other mitigation measure such as solar panels are often functional and conspicuous in appearance, which could detract from the historical character of a building. To help address this issue, Historic England has published a suite of guidance relating to climate change and historic buildings, including guidance on how to improve energy efficiency.



19 The Masterplan

- The Masterplan will seek to ensure that heritage assets in the Town Centre are protected from harmful development, and retained and enhanced where possible. Furthermore, it will seek to ensure that these assets are celebrated and recognised as useful tools for place-making, and are used to increase public awareness and education.
- The Development Management process will be used as the basis to assess impacts of development on heritage assets, including pre-application discussions, consultation and Design Review to make sure that development proposals are in accordance with the requirements of the Masterplan and the Development Plan policies for the area. Though, there are additional ways in which the Council could address constraints and pursue opportunities for heritage assets in the Town Centre, as highlighted below.
- The Council will carefully monitor development impacts on heritage assets and if necessary, will explore the likelihood of producing further guidance, such as Design Codes, to provide more detailed guidance for development proposals. It may also wish to explore the introduction of Article 4 directions to obtain more control over permitted development, which can be harmful to heritage assets, particularly in the Town Centre Conservation Area.
- The emerging Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal is an evidence base study that has informed the preparation of the Masterplan. It outlines the special features of the historical core of the Town Centre, and in conjunction with the Masterplan should be used as a tool to inform the design of proposed development adjacent and in the wider Town Centre area. This can be used by developers to inform design elements of proposals such as materials, scale and architectural detailing. In addition, the review of the Council's Local List of non-designated heritage assets will provide detailed information on each entry on the List, including their significance and features, which is useful for informing development proposals and decisions.
- Opportunities for enhancements to heritage assets will be sought through development proposals, both on adjacent sites and proposals for assets themselves. This may include improvements to public realm and views, as well as repair works to restore historical features. Detail of opportunities for each heritage asset are identified in this section and alongside adopted planning policy, outlines what the Council expects from development affecting these assets.
- Outside of the Planning Process, the Council will seek to fulfil opportunities when funding becomes available and would seek funding through organisations such as Historic England. In particular, funding through Historic England's Heritage Action Zones initiative could be a valuable source of funding to improve the Town Centre Conservation Area if this becomes available.

- The Council will utilise heritage assets as educational resources through various means. This could include the installation of information boards outside of key assets to explain their history and could form part of a wider signage strategy for the Town Centre. Heritage Open Days are also a meaningful way in which the public can engage with the history of a place and is an event that has come to Woking in the past. In the future, the Council would explore opportunities to expand the offer of sites to visit when the event runs.
- The Council may directly issue guidance to owners and occupiers of heritage assets in order to protect them from harmful development, which could be in the form of information leaflets or advice on a Council webpage.



ECONOMY

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20 Objectives

The Economy objectives for the Town Centre are as follows:

- **To ensure a balanced town centre in terms of residential, commercial, culture, green spaces, and leisure plus the addition of health and other public sector services;**
- **To have a Town Centre that is attractive to the eye, well maintained, spacious and easily navigated;**
- **To have a vibrant Town Centre that continue to enhance the commercial and natural environment;**
- **To have a dynamic Town Centre where people want to live, work and visit;**
- **To create a Town centre environment that is conducive for inward investment;**
- **To have a Town Centre that is agile to respond and adapt to changing economic circumstances.**

21 Overview

The Core Strategy identifies the Town Centre as the primary focus for sustainable economic growth and as an economic hub with a flourishing, diverse and innovative economy. Like many Town Centres, its vitality was affected by the Pandemic.

As the UK emerges from the economic shock of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the underlying economic strength of Woking Town Centre remains fundamentally positive. Building on the Woking Borough economic indicators highlighted within the Economic Development Action Plan published in September 2021, this section adds supplementary qualitative narrative focused on the multiple facets of Woking Town Centre's economy. It helps to paint a picture of the opportunities and challenges that developers should consider when developing their proposals for planning consent.

Economic and social challenges will continue across multiple areas of Woking's economy, including adapting to hybrid working practices for the town's office occupiers, maintaining the town's retail core, keeping Woking as a primary shopping and leisure destination, strengthening the town's evening economy and reacting to the emerging short-medium term consumer cost of living pressures and still fragile consumer confidence. These challenges clearly articulate the strengths of Woking Town Centre.



Fig 113 Goldsworth Place refurbished office



21.1 Economic context

The economic context should be seen against a background of growing economic challenges. Prior to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the UK economy was forecast by the Office for Budget responsibility (OBR) to reach pre-pandemic levels in the early part of 2022 with a healthy rebound of 6.5% growth in 2021 followed by a similar level of growth forecast in 2022. However, the latest OBR report has revised this optimistic forecast as it predicts that higher inflation will erode real incomes and consumption, cutting GDP growth this year from 6.0 per cent in the October forecast to 3.8 per cent in 2022. With inflation outpacing growth in earnings and net taxes due to rise, real living standards are set to fall. Relatively high inflation together with supply chain disruption, rising wages, tax increases and rising global energy costs will be the main contributory factors. The resultant squeeze on household incomes is likely to affect the retail and leisure sectors, a key part of Woking's economy. The Masterplan responds to these challenges.

21.2 Post pandemic resilience

Woking has several attributes which help to make it relatively resilient in the face of adverse economic circumstances. Woking was recently dubbed "Wondrous Woking" when it came top of the UK Vitality Index in 2021, not only scoring highly on the dynamism of its economy, wage growth and commercial investment, but also scoring particularly strongly on health and environment. Woking also scored well on the internationally recognised Legatum Institute, 2021 UK Prosperity Index and was placed 4th out of 379 local authority areas vs. 5th in 2020 and 13th in 2011.

Woking has a strong and vibrant economy with a strength in new business creation as well as in innovative, technology-intensive and knowledge-based industries which tend to do better in an economic downturn. Leading companies in high value sectors choose to locate in Woking due to its excellent connections, highly skilled workforce, range of affordable premises and quality of life.

Woking has a distinct advantage in the size of its technology sector, which is a key strength of Woking's economy, comprising about 850 businesses or 16% of all businesses in the Borough in 2020.

The IT sector is heavily concentrated in the town centre where it makes up 17.34% of the businesses compared to 13.64% in outer Woking. The technology sector is crucial for the future development of high-value jobs in the Woking knowledge economy as it underpins and anchors technology-intensive businesses in other sectors which are clustering in Woking.

Woking's investment in the digital infrastructure and its Digital Strategy will therefore be a critical factor in sustaining future growth. Woking's highly skilled workforce is also an important factor which should increase resilience to the economic challenges ahead.

Woking's continually evolving and improving town centre stands to benefit from ongoing changes in shopping behaviour. Following a boom during lockdown, online shopping has fallen back from more than a third to just over a quarter of all purchases and there is evidence that people who are planning to spend more in physical locations intend to do that in their local town centres rather than city centres and retail parks. The forward-looking development of Woking town centre including not only modern retail but a range of state-of-the-art office and commercial premises, housing, leisure, a new restaurant quarter, and first-class digital infrastructure will all help to secure Woking town centre's future prosperity. The opening of Victoria Place on 23rd March 2022 with many new key brands and trading formats, together with significant housing units will send a clear message of the intentions for the Town Centre as an expanding retail destination and a place to live, socialise and work.

Woking is multicultural and significantly more diverse than nearby towns. This diversity is longstanding and brings vitality to the area.



Fig 114 Victoria Place Hilton Hotel and Car Park



Fig 115 Victoria Place Atrium

21.3 Grassroots community ventures

Woking also has one of the oldest Muslim communities in the UK. The Shah Jahan Mosque dates to 1895, the first purpose-built Mosque to be built in the UK and Northern Europe and played an instrumental role in bringing Islam to Great Britain through the associated Woking Mission.

This long history of multiculturalism means that Woking has a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, able to absorb different cultures successfully. Community led organisations such as the Woking Asian Business Forum and faith-based associations, including Woking People of Faith, aim to further the links between cultures through events, fundraising and membership.

Woking has a thriving community and voluntary sector, and the town centre is the location of several charities including household names such as Plan International which supports children and particularly girls worldwide and the World Wildlife Fund. Other examples include organisations such as the Community Foundation for Surrey, the Phoenix Cultural and Community Centre, the Lighthouse and the York Road Project for the homeless.

Small and independent businesses

Woking has an entrepreneurial economy with high rates of business creation. In 2020, 775 new businesses were registered in Woking, a rate of 127 per 10,000 working age population, compared to a rate of 98 new businesses per working age population in Surrey as a whole. Woking's ethnically diverse and relatively young population is likely to be a contributory factor.



Fig 116 The Lighthouse

21.4 Role of the Economic Development Action Plan

The Economic Development Action Plan for Woking's recovery is a post-pandemic, interim plan from the period covered by the current Economic Development Strategy (2017 – 2022) to the time when the new Economic Development Strategy is developed and published. The requirements of the new strategy should be taken into account when it is published.

The Economic Development Action Plan for Woking's recovery sets out five main priorities to navigate this period of uncertainty and change:

- Priority 1: Focus on business: enabling greater growth and productivity
- Priority 2: Build on our people and skills advantages: supporting our people's skills and employability, so they can make the most of economic opportunities
- Priority 3: Future proofing our Borough's town and village centres: making sure our town and village commercial centres and high streets are resilient and flexible to maintain our competitive advantages
- Priority 4: Woking the place to be: continuing to attract investment and deliver transformation, including digitally connected Woking, green and healthy Woking
- Priority 5: Destination Woking: developing Woking's identity, cultural and leisure offer and its desirability as a location for businesses and people
- The EDAP brings together and reflects the following:

- The aims and relevant actions in the Economic Development Strategy 2017-2022, the Core Strategy,
- The Framework for Recovery, and the new 2021-2022 Corporate Plan.
- The emerging direction of the Woking for all Strategy 2022-2027,
- Woking Town Centre Masterplan and Digital Strategy currently in development.
- The results of analysis of the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The EDAP contains an action plan which has been recently updated and which is reported on regularly to ensure that progress remains on course.



21.5 Office for National Statistics

The ONS contains a lot of data about the economy, and the following are drawn out to provide an overview of the current economic profile for the Town Centre. According to the ONS, the Borough of Woking had 5,465 businesses in 2021, of which 865 (just under 16%) were in the town centre using the best fit Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) for the town centre area. Professional, Scientific & Technical businesses along with Information & Communication, Business Administration, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation and Property tend to be more concentrated in the town centre, measured as a percentage of the business population, while Construction, Retail and Manufacturing make up a greater percentage of enterprises in Outer Woking.

The smaller concentration of retail as a percentage of all businesses in the town centre is accounted for by the fact that these businesses tend to be larger and there are therefore fewer businesses and that the ONS enterprise data do not include branches of chains whose head offices are located elsewhere.

Using units' analysis, the Woking Borough business population comprised 6,195 total units (i.e., including branches) in 2021 which 1,180 or 23.5% were in the town centre. Using this measure of units or outlets, Woking town centre still has proportionately fewer retail businesses than outer Woking although the difference is significantly smaller than on the enterprise's metric.

Woking attracts larger businesses including headquarters and major corporates due to its locational and skills advantages, availability of good quality accommodation and excellent connections.

The town centre is the chosen location for FE Fund Info, providing data to the investment and financial services industry with a turnover of over £64m together with its Woking-based subsidiary, FE Investment.

The town centre is the location of a thriving Arts, Leisure and Entertainment sector, as shown in the graph below, including a cluster of theatre companies, notably the Ambassadors Theatre Group as well as well as companies in the performing arts supply chain, such as Bloch UK, suppliers of dancewear.

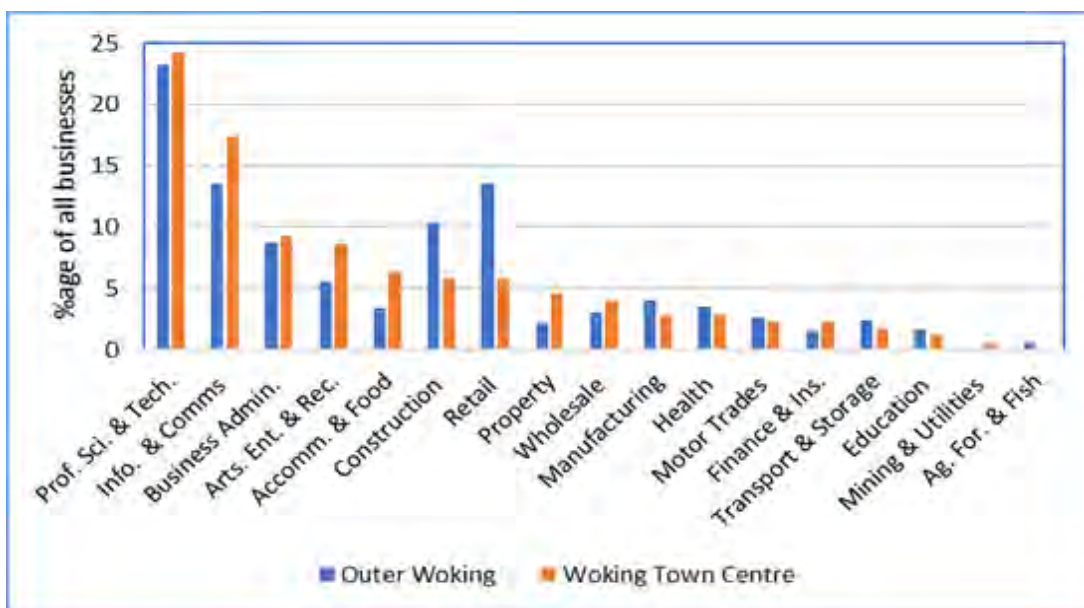


Fig 117 Percentage of total business population by sector .Source: ONS UK Business Counts MSOA analysis (enterprises).

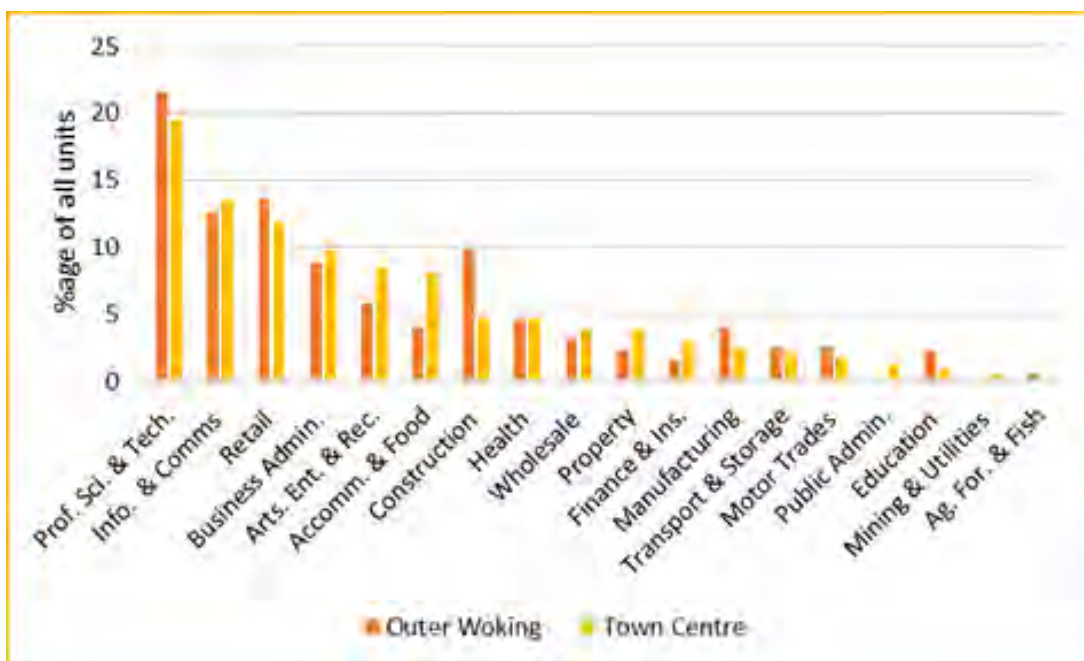


Fig 118 Percentage of total business population by sector in Outer Woking and Woking Town Centre 2021. Source: ONS UK Business Counts MSOA analysis (enterprises)

21.6 Employment

There was a total of 45,935 jobs in Woking in 2020 (latest data available) of which 14,755 or 32.1% were in the town centre. IT jobs (Information and Communication) and the Professional, Scientific & Technical sector make up the largest percentage of town centre employment with approximately 2,500 jobs each and nearly 17% of employment in each sector.

Together they account for 34% or over a third of all jobs, illustrating Woking's highly knowledge-based and technology-intensive economy which is concentrated in the town centre.

As well as Information & Communication and Professional, Scientific & Technical jobs, the town centre has a greater percentage of Accommodation and Food as well as slightly more Business Administration jobs than outer Woking.

Impact of the pandemic on town centre employment

There were large sectoral differences and some sectors gained employment while others lost. Notably, the town centre gained 200 construction jobs, 100 wholesale jobs and 50 transport jobs while outer Woking gained 650 retail jobs as people shopped locally. The hardest hit sectors in terms of numbers of jobs lost in the town centre were Professional, Scientific & Technical, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation and Business Administration.



Fig 119 Recently refurbished McLaren office

21.7 Business in Woking Town Centre

There are two sources of data in this section comprising the official ONS statistics from UK Business Counts and our recent census of businesses in the town centre. These arrive at different numerical values as the geographies covered are not comparable. Our business census used the area contained by the Red Line on the map in the Core Strategy while the ONS statistics refer to the best fit Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) for the town centre. Although the areas covered and numbers are different, the conclusions are similar; Woking is a highly knowledge and technology intensive town centre.

Predominantly, the businesses are knowledge economy and professional services (including legal and financial). These offices provide many jobs and often function as UK or regional headquarters.

The spaces the businesses occupy vary, depending on the size of their businesses with smaller businesses using the flexible co-working spaces or smaller office units within the mixed tenant buildings. The larger business (i.e., larger small, medium, and larger enterprises) either occupy their own dedicated space such as Asahi or take significant space within the larger mixed tenant buildings such as Fidessa at Dukes Court.

The last few years have seen landlords refurbish and upgrade the office stock which has seen several new town centre office occupiers.



Fig 120 Dukes Court Offices in background with Deli in front



Fig 121 Office based business brands in Woking

Retail

According to ONS, retail sales rose by 1.9% in January 2022, the latest statistics available) following a fall of 4.0% in December 2021 and sales volumes were 3.6% above their pre-coronavirus February 2020 levels. Non-food sales volumes rose by 3.4% in January 2022, particularly home improvement sales. However, clothing stores reported a fall of 5.0% over the month and were 12.6% below levels in February 2020.

As restrictions continued to be lifted, the proportion of retail sales online fell to 25.3% in January 2022, continuing a broad downward trend since its peak of 36.5% in February 2021 although the percentage of online sales remained higher than before the coronavirus pandemic (19.8% in February 2020). The greatest adoption of online has been for clothing, homewares, food, and electricals. Customer journeys that typically involve higher

value items and more consideration (such as furniture and high-end jewellery) have seen a greater proportion of shoppers revert to pre-pandemic behaviour.

Nevertheless, it appears that increased working from home is likely to continue for the foreseeable future and the evidence suggests that those intending to spend more in physical locations now that restrictions have been lifted, expect to do that locally with local high streets and town centres being the main beneficiaries, rather than city centres and retail parks. As fuel prices continue to rise and the squeeze on household incomes continues, Woking is well placed to capitalise on providing an accessible local shopping experience in one place with a good mix of goods on offer.

Woking's retail offer

Woking has over 80,000 sqm of retail floorspace, the second largest shopping centre in Surrey after Guildford. The landmark Victoria Place development provides over 429 new flats, a new hotel, mixed use space and car parking, a range of restaurants, financial and other services as well as extensive shopping.

A recent report for Woking Council by CACI concluded that the current retail offer in Woking is relatively well balanced with the level of supply matching the level of demand. Within this, the report indicated some room for growth in the grocery where space could be increased by 46% in the town and catering sectors, particularly fast dining where space could increase by 27% potentially, but not in non-food retail and leisure provision where current supply is judged to equal demand.

The report also highlighted that consumers are reconnecting with their local areas but that the demographic profile of consumers needs to be reflected in the offer and the brands available locally. It suggests Woking can capitalise on the increased desire to shop locally while allowing other destinations to fill full day out shopping experiences.

According to the CACI research, the catchment area for Woking town centre is relatively affluent and has annual household expenditure on comparison goods which is 24% above the UK household average and 18% above the UK average for all retail. Wealthy Woking residents are likely to show the highest propensity to spend on non-essential or personal goods. Residential spend in Woking is forecast to increase by 33% over the next 5 years.



Fig 122 Wolsley Place extension with Paperchase, Pret a Manger and JD Sports

According to our recent census of town centre businesses, there are 183 'pavement facing' businesses in the town centre, excluding hospitality and take-away outlets. These businesses range from retail through to beauty and other services. These are predominantly located within the main shopping centres (Victoria Place) with a spread of convenience stores and other services around the office and residential blocks. There are also about 104 retail units that sell goods to the public.

Woking town centre has a comprehensive café and restaurant offer with a strong food and beverage presence of around 80 establishments including 25 casual and fine dining establishments, 30 fast food and take-aways, 16 café and coffee shops and 8 pubs and bars.

These range from higher end to popular outlets belonging to major chains. A few examples include: Gordan Ramsay's Street Burger, Côte Brasserie, Bellini Luciano's by Marco Pierre White.

There are pubs and bars in the town centre which also offer food. The restaurants, pubs, and bars, together with a range of fast-food outlets, coffee shops and cafés, tend to be clustered in and around the shopping centre and along Commercial Way and Chertsey Road. Together, they offer a remarkably wide choice within a relatively small central area.

The main dining and higher end offers are found close to the shopping centre, galleries, theatre, and town centre workers. Chertsey Road is the other significant food and drink area with a mix of take-aways, dining and pubs which caters for both the weekday lunchtime market and the weekend and late-night market. Goldsworthy Road also has several food and beverage outlets which is close again to both office buildings and residential.

Given the extensive and accessible town centre food and drink offer, there is the need to work in partnership to expand the evening economy, particularly during the working week. The provision of housing as an essential mix of town centre use will help increase footfall across the Town Centre. Ways of encouraging the evening economy will be a priority to retain and grow this diverse food and drink cluster, a key part of the town centre's offer.



Fig 123 Chertsey Road: Nando's with seating area

Café and restaurant culture:

Woking town centre has a comprehensive café and restaurant offer with a strong food and drink presence of around 80 establishments, including 25 casual and fine dining establishments, 30 fast food and take-aways, 16 cafés and coffee shops, and 8 pubs and bars.

The main dining and higher end offers are found close to the shopping centre, theatres and cinema. These range from higher end names to popular outlets belonging to major chains. A few examples include Gordon Ramsay's Street Burger, Côte Brasserie and Luciano's by Luciano Marco Pierre White. There are also a number of successful independent restaurants such as Jeitta, Araceli's, Beit Beirut and Latino.

There are pubs and bars in the town centre which also offer food, including Marciano Lounge and Slug & Lettuce. The restaurants, pubs, and bars, together with a range of fast-food outlets, coffee shops and cafés, tend to be clustered in and around the shopping centre, along Commercial Way and Chertsey Road. The latter has a mix of restaurants, take-aways, and pubs, which caters for both the weekday lunchtime market and the weekend and late-night market. Together, they offer a remarkably wide choice within a relatively small central area.

Goldsworth Road, in the western part of the town centre also has several food and beverage outlets which is close to both office buildings and residential.

Given the extensive and accessible town centre food and drink offer, there is the need to work in partnership to expand the evening economy, particularly during the working week. The provision of housing as an essential mix of the

use in the town centre will help increase footfall. Ways of encouraging the evening economy will be a priority to retain and grow this diverse food and drink cluster, a key part of the town centre's offer.



Fig 124 Luciano's



Fig 125 Commercial Way: Bacaro



Night-time economy

Night-time economy in towns and cities has suffered more proportionally, than the daytime economy throughout the pandemic. COVID-19 caused a 6% shift in footfall away from the night-time economy and towards the daytime economy. Nationally, the night-time economy has been slow to recover and that remains true in Woking town centre where footfall in the night-time is low, despite the varied eating out offer. Initiatives aimed at providing public reassurance around the night-time economy such as the Home Office supported 'Best Bar None' accreditation scheme, or the international 'Purple Flag' scheme should again be considered as measures to specifically support Woking's night-time economy.

Night-time activities have the potential to increase economic activity within town centres and provide additional employment opportunities. They can allow town centres to diversify and help develop their unique brand and offer services beyond retail. In fostering such activities, local authorities will also need to consider and address any wider impacts in relation to crime, noise, and security.

Unique place offer

As well as a rich and varied food and drink offer, Woking town centre contains extensive modern retail facilities including the Peacock Centre as well as hotels, leisure facilities, including the Light Box, the New Victoria and Ambassadors theatres, gyms and a bowling alley and the landmark World Wildlife Centre. The town centre is also an important source of employment and centrally located for sustainable housing provision. Parking is available at the Victoria Way, the shopping centre, the station, and several other locations providing a

total of 5,526 town centre parking spaces. All is within easy reach, on one level, accessible and contained within a relatively small area. These opportunities have to be promoted and marketed to maximise the benefits as highlighted in the Masterplan.

Excellent transport connections to London in just under half an hour by rail means that Woking has the potential to provide a base for visitors offering reasonably priced accommodation from which visitors can explore not only London but also nearby attractions such as RHS Wisley, the top visitor attraction in the South East in 2020 and the 3rd most visited paid attraction nationally, as well as the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Legoland and Thorpe Park which are all a short distance from the town. Woking's status as a cycle town provides a connection with the growing popularity of the Surrey Hills as a top destination for mountain and road cycling.

Woking currently has a low profile on the Visit Southeast England and other tourist destination sites but can offer reasonably priced accommodation, particularly as accommodation prices including AirBnB in central London are becoming out of reach for many families.

In addition to Woking Town Centre's very good and varied food and drink experience and its quick access to London there are other visitor attractions nearby.

Examples include:

The Lightbox

The Lightbox gallery and museum in Woking is one of the foremost cultural spaces in the Southeast. Its three large galleries host a huge range of exhibitions which change regularly. The Lightbox has received several awards, including a

commendation for the Beautiful South Tourism Award, being Shortlisted for the Fantastic for Families Awards in 2019 and gaining Silver in the 2016 Visit England Green Tourism Award. The Lightbox was designed in 2007 by Marks Barfield architects who also built the London Eye.

New Victoria Theatre/ Buzz/ Rhoda McGraw:

There are three theatres in Woking. Outside London, New Victoria Theatre in Woking is one of the largest theatres in the country attracting many West End shows. It includes the Rhoda McGraw Theatre.

Woking Borough Council also transformed some unused space in Victoria Place to a 50-seat theatre to be used by Italia Conti and other production houses.

Nova Cinema

The is a 7-screen cinema venue with top of the range technology. Nova Cinema provides an opportunity for local people to influence which films are to be screened.



Fig 126 Theatre and cinema

Public Art

Born in Woking in 1965 Sean Henry has created several sculptures in the town centre adding to the cultural heritage of Woking, including four painted bronze sculptures in the town centre: “Woman, Being Looked At” 2006, in the Peacocks Centre, “Standing Man” 2010 in Jubilee Place, “Seated Man” 2011 at Woking Station, Platform 1, and “The Wanderer” 2012 in Woking High Street.

H.G. Wells is also commemorated in Wells Plaza, just off Victoria Way and Chobham Road hosts “The Thinking Man” sculpture, produced by Wesley Harland as well as The Martian, standing 23 feet (seven meters) tall. Sculptures of Dame Ethel Smythe and Ade Adepitan are also featured.

Italia Conti Dance Academy

Italia Conti will move to Woking in September 2022. The new site will be 48,000 sqft over 2 floors. Over 280 students and 100 staff will be moving in September 2022.

Christchurch and Welcome Church:

The Town Centre is represented by two places of Worship, the Anglican Christchurch which dates to the 1870s and the Evangelical Welcome Church.

Leisure facilities

Woking Superbowl is relocating to Victoria Place where the complex will include will have a bowling alley, Laser Quest, pool tables, party rooms, bar, and diner.

The Gordon Ramsey Academy offers guests of all ages and all levels of cooking ability the chance to take cookery classes. The Academy has multiple kitchens and a large demonstration room.

Gyms - The town centre has 3 gym providers which are based close to other commercial and residential buildings. New provider, The Gym Group, will be opening in Summer 2022 in Victoria Place.



Fig 127 Dame Ethel Smythe statue



Fig 128 Welcome Church

Hotels, B&Bs and Guesthouses

Woking currently has a low profile on the Visit Southeast England and other tourist destination websites but can offer reasonably priced accommodation, particularly as accommodation prices in central London are becoming out of reach for many.

The town centre currently has three hotels. The new Hilton is set to open in early 2023 and will bring the number of hotel rooms to 574. Aside from the centrally located Hilton, these are found around the edges of the main commercial areas, close to car parks and travel connections as well as the town centre amenities.

Of these, the DoubleTree by Hilton and the new Hilton have conference and event facilities alongside their restaurant and bar offers. In addition, there are smaller independent bed and breakfasts and short term lets to meet the need of business and leisure travellers.



Fig 129 Hilton DoubleTree Hotel

Offices and Mixed-use development

Mixed-use development can help to make office space which would otherwise be unviable a commercially attractive proposition through cross subsidisation by, for example, including residential space in the mix. The overall project can therefore become viable through providing a complementary range of uses. Working currently has reasonably high occupancy levels of retail and office accommodation, particularly compared to current national occupancy levels. The Site Allocations DPD allocates a range of sites to meet future business needs.

To attract and retain tenants, new developments need to be aesthetically pleasing but they also need to provide mixed use schemes with a broad variety of uses to encourage tenants and increase visitor footfall. Technology means that consumers have more power to choose where they shop and work, and it is increasingly easy to order food at home. The commercial property market is becoming harder for landlords as a result and mixed use that offers a range of experiences and opportunities is the answer. If they are designed well, mixed use schemes can provide living, working, shopping, leisure, cultural and other experiences in a visually pleasing and attractive environment.

The key to the survival of today's shopping centres will be to transform and enable imaginative mixed use development offering lifestyle destinations. These will help attract footfall and visitor expenditure but also create living and working communities that keep the area alive in the evenings and at weekends. Landlords need to understand the local community's needs and take a strategic approach to meeting them. The right blend of mixed use, combining retail, residential, leisure and workplace can increase property values

and stimulate increase investment as well as developing the economy of the local area.

Size requirements for commercial space and office occupancy models

With the shift to more home and hybrid working, demand for large HQs and offices is likely to stabilise. Savills' reports point to an occupancy rate of just 25% for offices nationally and, while they expect that demand for offices will rise in 2022, they do not expect that it will return to pre-Covid-19 levels.

To a degree, this fall in need might be compensated for by rising headcount and space per capita, but nevertheless, less desirable offices in less accessible locations will become even harder to let. Added to this is the significant challenge related to decarbonising the built environment. Savills estimates that nearly 2.5 billion square feet of retail and office space needs upgrading over the next decade, and the market alone cannot be relied upon to drive the necessary change.



Fig 130 The Forge: Recently refurbished office

Carter Jonas reports that the flexible space market or serviced office sector is experiencing a growth in demand from companies seeking to accommodate hybrid working while they assess their long-term real estate requirements. This has encouraged co-working firms to take more space.

The report also concludes that office occupiers want to provide outstanding environments for their employees that underpin the return to the office and support staff retention, recruitment, wellness, and collaboration. They also require high energy efficiency and a low carbon footprint to meet increasingly ambitious targets and to demonstrate their environmental credentials. As a result, footloose office tenants are focusing their property searches on energy-efficient, low carbon footprint, grade A space, a trend that will only intensify in 2022.

Woking has continued to attract inward investment and support business growth by providing a range of commercial premises at competitive prices including, in addition to retail, town centre offices, business parks such as Genesis, Orchard and Woking Business Park and warehousing stock. While premises such as Space provide a state-of-the-art office working environment with showers, roof terrace, electric charging points etc. and command premium rents of circa £38 per sq. ft., much of Woking's stock needs upgrading to meet modern business needs, particularly in the light of new environmental regulations and the drive to net zero carbon.

There is a need to establish how Woking can provide different types of office space to accommodate new occupiers that do not align with the traditional occupancy model, such as those seeking flexible office space and incubators for emerging businesses.

Provision of flexible office space in Woking

Flexible office space is a growth area, but the indications are that it is in short supply in the town centre. There is currently a very small number of flexible or co-working spaces available for rent in Woking town. The largest flexible space available is at Spaces Woking One in Albion House opposite the station, which has 42,000 square feet available in this extensively refurbished 1970s building. Regus offer managed offices in the same building and Easy offices also provides managed offices on Commercial Way, although these are somewhat different in concept than flexible space on long lease. There are two other flexible offices to let which are smaller and are for around 7 or 8 people. They are in older style properties in York Road and at 14-18 Commercial Way.

Housing

A recent report commissioned by Woking Council identified that the 4,964 new housing units being developed across the Woking would bring in an additional residential spend of £63.8m per annum. Increased levels of housing in the town centre mean that Woking will be more able to capitalise on the change in shopping habits following the pandemic towards more local shopping and use of local facilities as well as helping to revitalise the evening economy. The Masterplan addresses this by directing housing provision to the Town Centre.



Fig 131 Spaces: Flexible office space

22 The Masterplan

- The Council has adopted a Site Allocations DPD which allocates sufficient and range of sites to meet future employment needs over the entire plan period up to 2027, including land for offices, retail and community facilities.
- The Town Centre will continue to be the primary focus for town centre uses because of its proximity to key services and facilities that are accessible by sustainable modes of travel.
- The Council will take a leading and a sustained role in promoting a positive vision for the Town Centre, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic and employment growth.
- The Council will work with its stakeholders to respond to structural changes in the economy, in particular changes in shopping and leisure patterns and formats, the impact these are likely to have on the Town Centre, and how the planning tools available to them can support necessary adaptation and change.
- The Council will facilitate a wide range of complementary uses at suitably located spaces to help support the vitality of the Town Centre, including residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure and entertainment, healthcare, and educational development. The same is true of temporary activities such as 'pop ups', which will often benefit from permitted development rights.



- The Council will encourage residential development as key part of the mix of town centre uses because of the important role it can play in ensuring the vitality of the centre, giving communities easier access to a range of services.
- The Council recognises that effective and creative leadership by local authorities and other stakeholders is key in bringing forward a vision for town centres that meets wider economic and community needs. It will therefore work effectively and positively with stakeholders with an interest in the success of the town centre and encourage them to engage in the delivery of the evolving vision set out in the Masterplan. The stakeholders that would need to be involved for each project will depend on the local context and their relevant interests.
- State of town centre environmental quality
- Balance between independent and multiple stores
- Extent to which there is evidence of barriers to new businesses opening and existing businesses expanding
- Opening hours/availability/extent to which there is an evening and night-time economy offer

Given the changes in the economy, the Council will monitor carefully the following economic indicators in assessing the health of the Town Centre to help plan for their future:

- Diversity of uses
- Proportion of vacant street level property
- Commercial yields on non-domestic property
- Customers' experience and behaviour
- Retailer representation and intentions to change representation
- Commercial rents
- Pedestrian flows
- Accessibility – this includes transport accessibility and accessibility for people with different impairments or health conditions, as well as older people with mobility requirements.
- Perception of safety and occurrence of crime



HOUSING

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23 Objectives

The Housing objectives for the Town Centre are as follows:

- **Ensure the delivery of the full quantity of housing in the Town Centre, as required by the Core Strategy (to be delivered through the SADPD allocations);**
- **To use all endeavours to deliver the housing ask of the Housing Infrastructure Fund project.**
- **Improve the delivery of affordable housing.**
- **Ensure that the design and location of new housing contributes to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a whole.**
- **Provide a mixture of housing tenures and sizes in every part of the Town Centre.**
- **Respond to the changed living patterns produced by the Coronavirus pandemic by ensuring a healthy, congenial, secure and accessible living environment for all residents.**

24 Overview

Over the last twenty years, Woking Town Centre has been successfully transformed from a largely commercial zone with relatively few dwellings, into a thriving and vibrant mixed use area, with residential land use being a major element of the mixture. As well as benefiting the Town Centre, the development of housing in this area has, and will continue to, significantly contribute to meeting the Borough's housing need. Due in part to its good public transport connections and proximity to key services and facilities, the Town Centre remains the best location in Woking for new housing development from the point of view of environmental sustainability, resource use and community building.

The Woking Core Strategy, the Development Management Policies DPD and the Site Allocations DPD provides a robust policy context for housing provision in the Town Centre. This includes overall quantum of development to be provided, Affordable Housing provision, dwelling mix, housing for the elderly and vulnerable groups and density of development.

The Core Strategy directs most new development to the Town Centre and sets an indicative figure of 2,180 dwellings to be delivered in the Town Centre from 2010 to 2027. Progress to date against meeting this figure is as follows:

- 869 dwellings have been delivered in the Town Centre up to 1 April 2021.
- 823 dwellings had outstanding planning permission as of that date (including 429 at Victoria Square), and are expected to be complete by 2027.
- The Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) allocates Town Centre sites with an indicative capacity of 998 dwellings. Of these, 567 dwellings are expected to be complete by 2027. The latter figure excludes allocated sites with planning permission at 1 April 2021, which are included in the figures above, and also some sites where development is expected to start, but not complete, by 2027.
- If the above sources were the only ones we could draw on, there would therefore be 2,259 dwellings delivered in the Town Centre up to 2027, representing 104% of the indicative figure of 2,180 in policy CS2.

In addition, the Council has successfully received a grant from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), to use all its endeavours to enable the delivery of 3,304 additional dwellings on top of those identified in the Local Plan. The scale of the development was the subject of an initial consultation with the community and it is agreed that the Townscape Strategy will determine the appropriate capacity for the development of each site.

Policy CS10: Housing Provision and Distribution gives an indicative density range for residential development in the Town Centre of 'in excess of 200' dwellings per hectare (dph). Average density to date (for dwellings completed between 2012-21) is 218 dph. As shown in figure XX, this average density figure covers significant variation over the years since the Core Strategy was adopted.

Policy CS12 Affordable Housing sets out an overall target for affordable housing of 35%. This target has been far from having been met in the Town Centre for many years. Average provision since 2012 is about 6%. The main underlying reasons have been development viability, and the fact that it is not possible to require affordable housing from projects involving change of use to residential under permitted development rights.

Before the introduction of the first NPPF and permitted development rights for office conversions, affordable housing rates were somewhat higher (12% of permissions between 2002-2012), although there was also a tendency for developments in the Town Centre to make a financial contribution to the delivery of affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. On the other hand, in 2020/21, 23 flats in a newly completed development in the Town Centre were bought for use as Affordable Housing. The latter are not counted in the figure for delivery against Policy CS12, since they are not secured as Affordable Housing in perpetuity by a legal agreement.

The Council's Housing Strategy (2021) commits to delivering at least 510 new affordable homes from 2021 to 2026, including on council owned land or in partnership with Thamesway,

Registered Providers and developers. This is a separate target from that in the Core Strategy and would incorporate affordable dwellings delivered through the planning process. The Strategy identifies a challenge to delivering affordable housing in the Town Centre in terms of high land values.

The Strategy commits to reviewing the Affordable Housing Delivery SPD.

The part of the Town Centre which lies in Canalside ward is subject to a Pilot Selective Licensing Scheme, requiring landlords of private rented dwellings (or their management agents) to hold a licence for each property they own in the area. As of April 2022, 900 homes in Canalside ward had been issued with a licence. This pilot scheme comes to an end in 2023 and is currently under review. The Council also licences Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), of which there are several in the Town Centre.

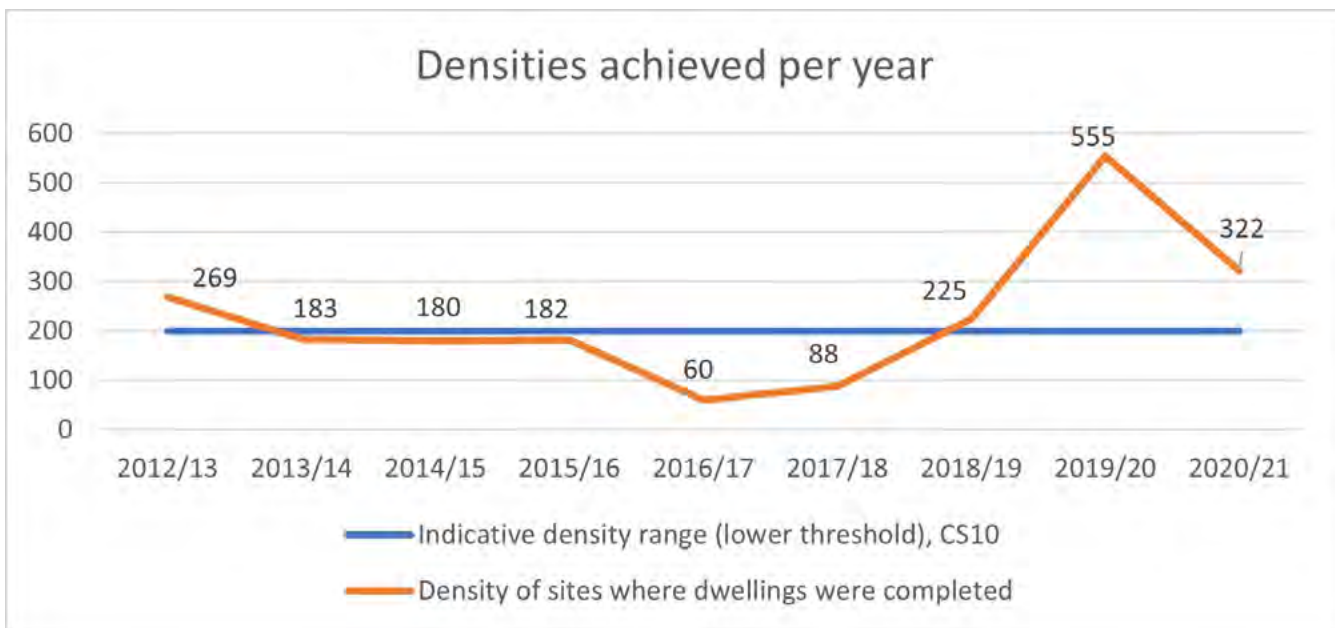


Fig 132 Densities achieved per year

24.1 Woking Town Centre housing market analysis update (GL Hearn, 2022)

This piece of work assesses whether the Town Centre has the capacity to absorb the nature and type of homes proposed for the town centre (1 and 2 bed units), and reviews the deliverability of proposed town centre housing sites by an examination of market conditions. The overall conclusion of the study is that there is sufficient demand to accommodate the proposed growth up to 2030. A copy of the Study is on the website and can be accessed by [XXX](#)

small area. For example a postcode covering a single apartment building may be represented by a small square at the entrance to that building. Postcodes at the following sites, containing significant numbers of residential addresses, are represented by squares rather than polygons:

- Metro Apartments, Goldsworth Road: 33 units
- New Central: 327 units
- Centrium: 240 units
- Harrington Place: 147 units
- Middle Walk, Commercial Way: 23 units
- Enterprise House, Church Street East: 126 units.

24.2 Spatial analysis and recommendations

The following analysis provides, first, a set of graphics illustrating the demographic situation and trends in housing development across the Town Centre since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2012, and, second, analysis of the existing housing situation in each of the Town Centre Masterplan Character Areas, including the nature and development of existing housing, identification of any constraints and future opportunities of housing development in each area, and 'The Masterplan': location specific guidance for each area.

Current distribution of housing in the town centre

Figure 133 shows the current density of residential addresses per hectare in each postcode area in the town centre. It should be highlighted that some postcodes cover a very

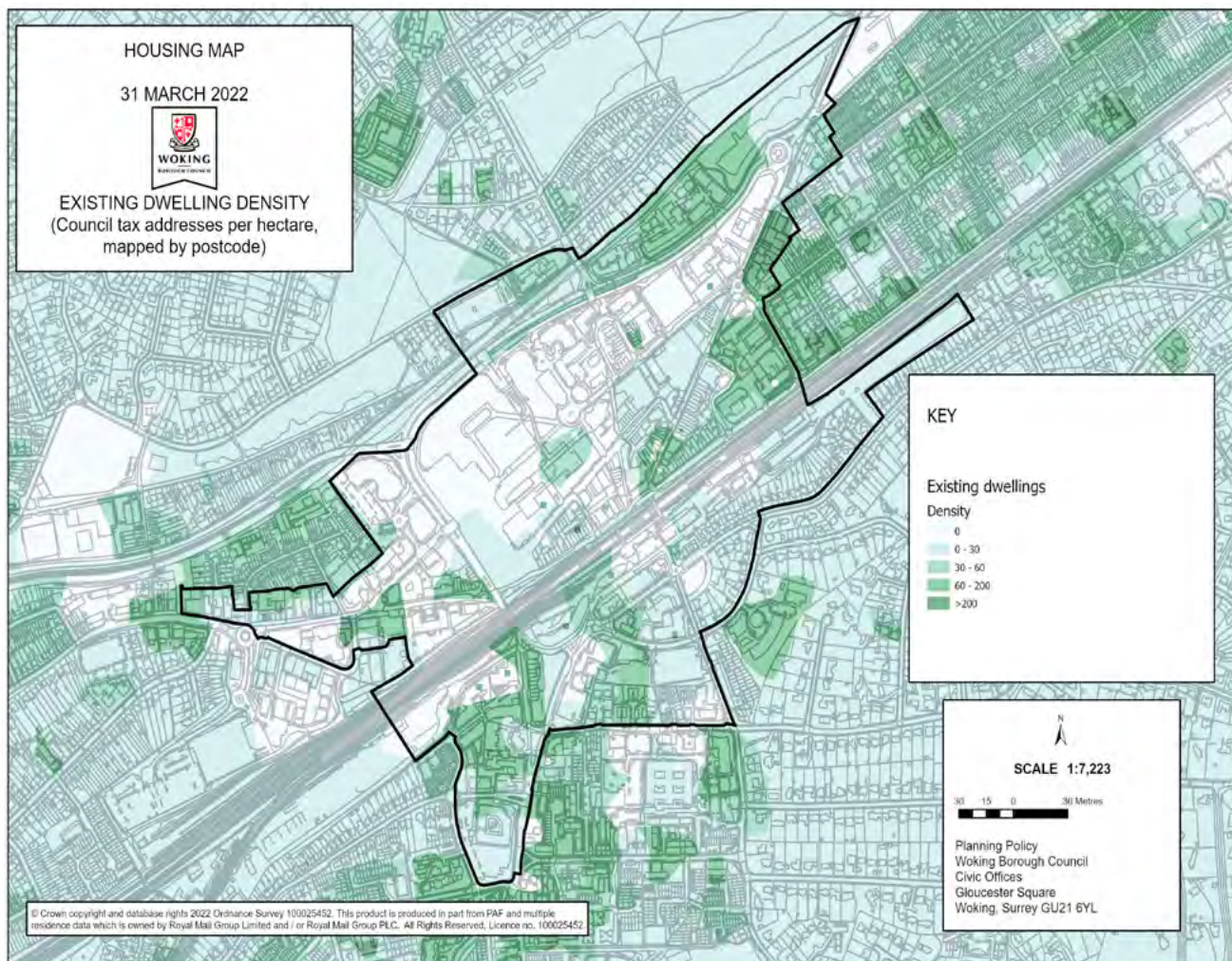


Fig 133 Existing dwelling density

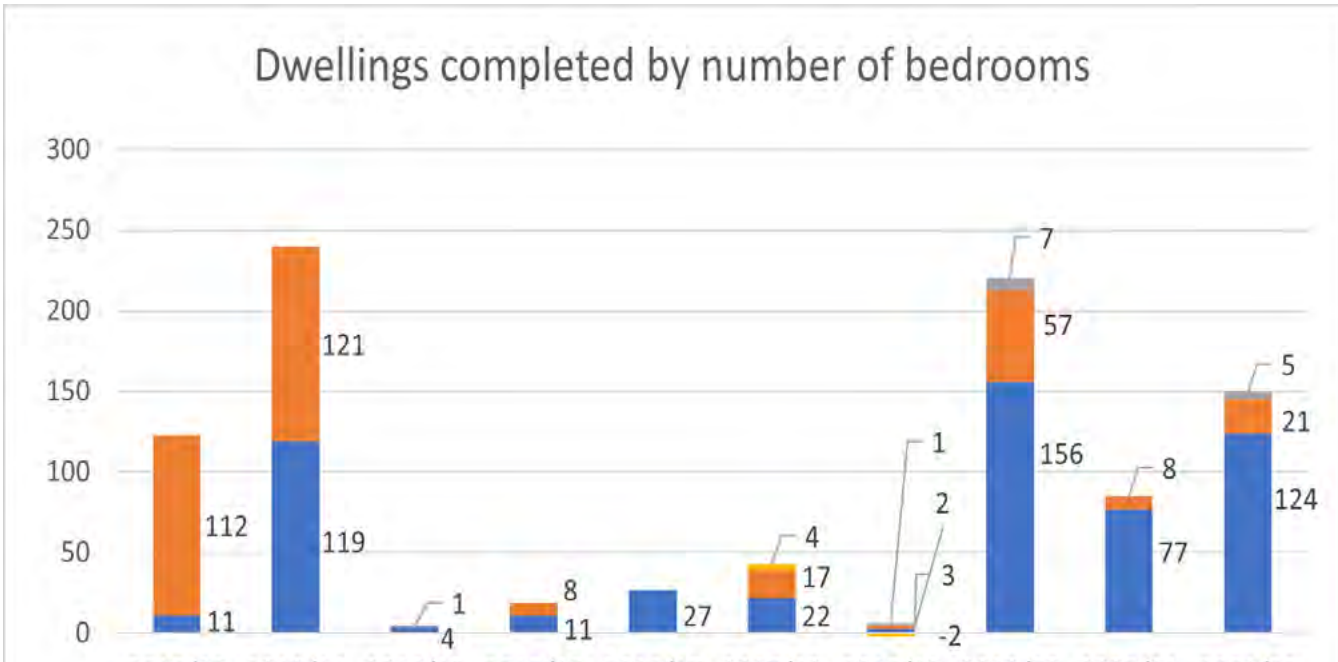


Fig 134 Densities achieved per year

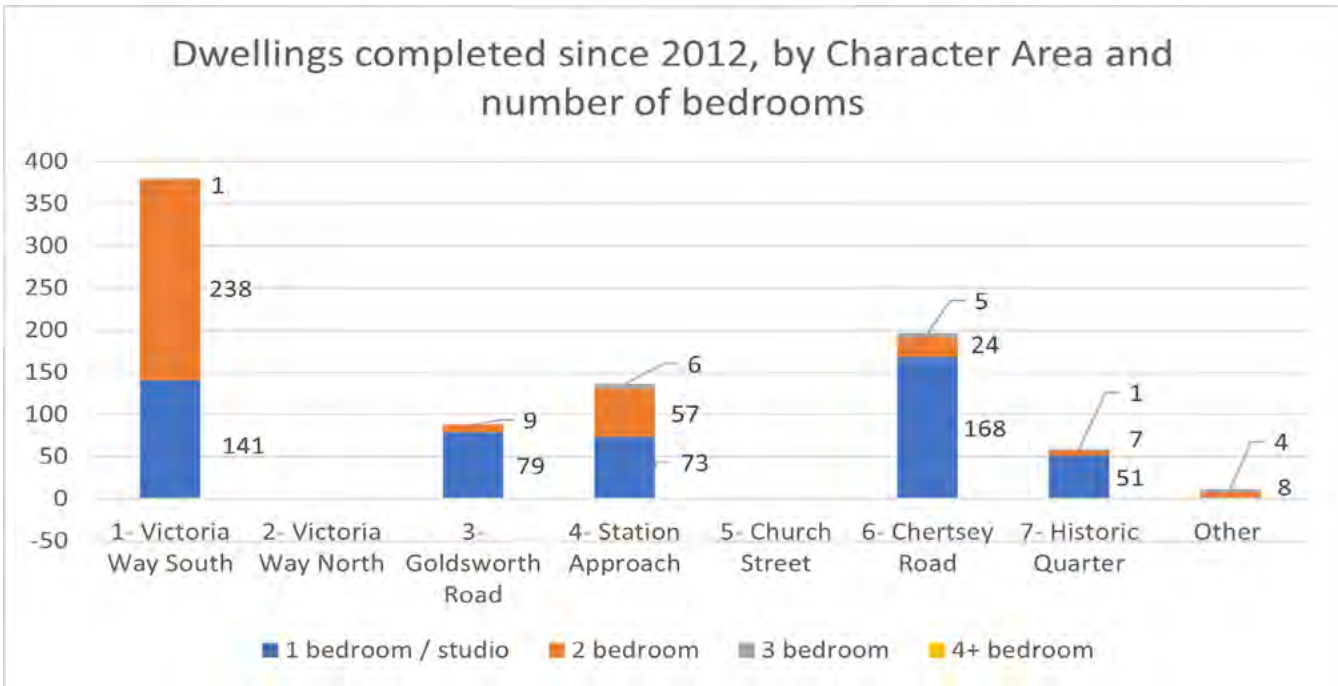


Fig 135 Dwellings completed since 2012

Overall development trends

Figure 134 shows the rate of dwelling completions in the Town Centre since the adoption of the Core Strategy, broken down by number of bedrooms per unit. The first two years were dominated by the building out of the New Central site west of Guildford Road, which received Reserved Matters permission in 2007. There followed a lull in completions, reflecting the recession that began in 2008, together with the long lead-times for significant development, especially in the Town Centre context, which meant that those effects were felt for many years afterwards. In recent years, the rate of development has recovered, mainly supported by the delivery of the large Harrington Place redevelopment and six major Prior Approval schemes for office-to-residential conversion. Further significant new build completions are expected in the next two years.

The breakdown by unit type illustrates a general trend towards one-bedroom and studio flats becoming increasingly dominant in the dwelling mix. Likely causes for this include worsening affordability ratios, and the large number of completions on prior approval sites in recent years. 2020/21 saw the approval of a very large scheme with a higher proportion of two bedroom flats at 'Land North and South of Goldsworth Road'.

Figure 135 shows a breakdown of dwelling size (number of bedrooms) by the different character areas in the town centre. The variation in size visible in the chart is not caused purely by variation in the timing of development in different areas; for example, the Station Approach area, with a high proportion of two bedroom flats, includes the large Harrington Place site, completed in 2019/20 (when Figure

134 shows that most completions were of one bedroom flats or studios). Rather, there seems to be a variation across the Town Centre in terms of the size of dwellings being built. To generate balanced communities, it would be preferable to encourage a mixture of dwelling sizes in each area, in particular where that does not currently occur.

24.3 Analysis of housing development in each of the Town Centre Character Areas

The Townscape Strategy breaks down the Town Centre into seven character areas. The following section sets out how each area has developed since housing began to be reintroduced into the Town Centre around twenty years ago, and how development in those character areas needs to be treated. Recommendations regarding the dwelling mix for each area should be read in the context of Core Strategy policy CS11.

24.4 Victoria Way South

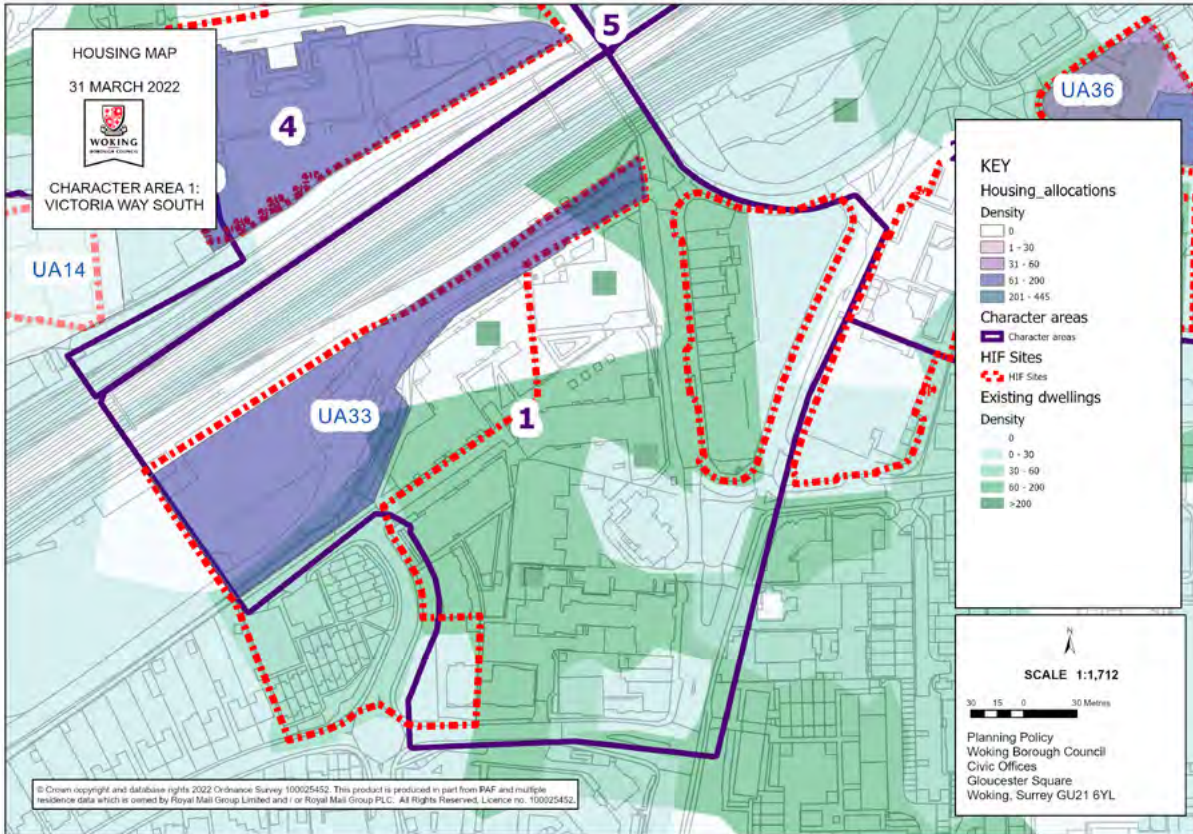


Fig 136 Character area 1 - Victoria Way South

Situation

- Since 2000, this most southerly of the Town Centre's character areas has seen residential redevelopment progressively extend from its outer edge inwards towards the railway and the heart of the town centre.
- First, in 2000 and 2004, permission was granted south of the Sovereigns Public House, for seventy apartments.
- Existing housing in this area is dominated by the New Central development (with 83% of the area's 561 council tax addresses). This site, which formerly contained office blocks, first received outline planning permission for a housing-led mixed use development in 2006/07,

going on to receive full planning permission the next year, for 479 dwellings.

- Amendments to the buildings have given permission for another 71 dwellings within the site. The site was largely complete by 2014.
- In the north of the character area is the locally listed terrace at 1-11 Guildford Road, the upper floors of which have seen seven permissions for residential conversion or subdivision granted over the last twenty years, and which now contains nineteen residential addresses. The whole of this block has prior approval for demolition as part of the Victoria Arch Scheme highway works.

Constraints

- The loss of ground floor active frontages (to housing) within the New Central development has been disappointing. In fact a further change of use scheme has been refused permission on the site. Current barriers to this are the development's separation from the rest of the town centre by a busy road, and the lack of anything to attract people through to the other side of the development. This situation is likely to improve when Site Allocation UA33 is developed. However, it contains a lesson on the importance of development proposals being informed by a realistic public realm strategy and transport/access assessment.
- The western part of the site is constrained by the operation of the aggregates yard, with all the associated restrictions set out in the relevant site allocation policy UA33.
- The north-eastern part of the site is heavily constrained by the highway system and this may become still more the case when the roads in the area are widened.

Opportunities

- The northern part of this character area also contains two major proposed housing sites.
- Site Allocation UA33 (Coal Yard/Aggregates Yard) is situated west of New Central, and is ascribed an indicative capacity of 100 dwellings in the SADPD. Development on this scale would increase the number of residential addresses in the character area by 18%. A larger version of the same site- also taking in properties on Bradfield Close- is identified for development in the Housing Infrastructure Fund project.
- The 'Triangle' site, including 1-11 Guildford Road and the land to its rear facing Station Approach and Victoria Road, is also identified for development in the Housing Infrastructure Fund project.

Table 1.3 Dwellings in Character Area 1

	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	88	100	224	188-312

24.5 Victoria Way North

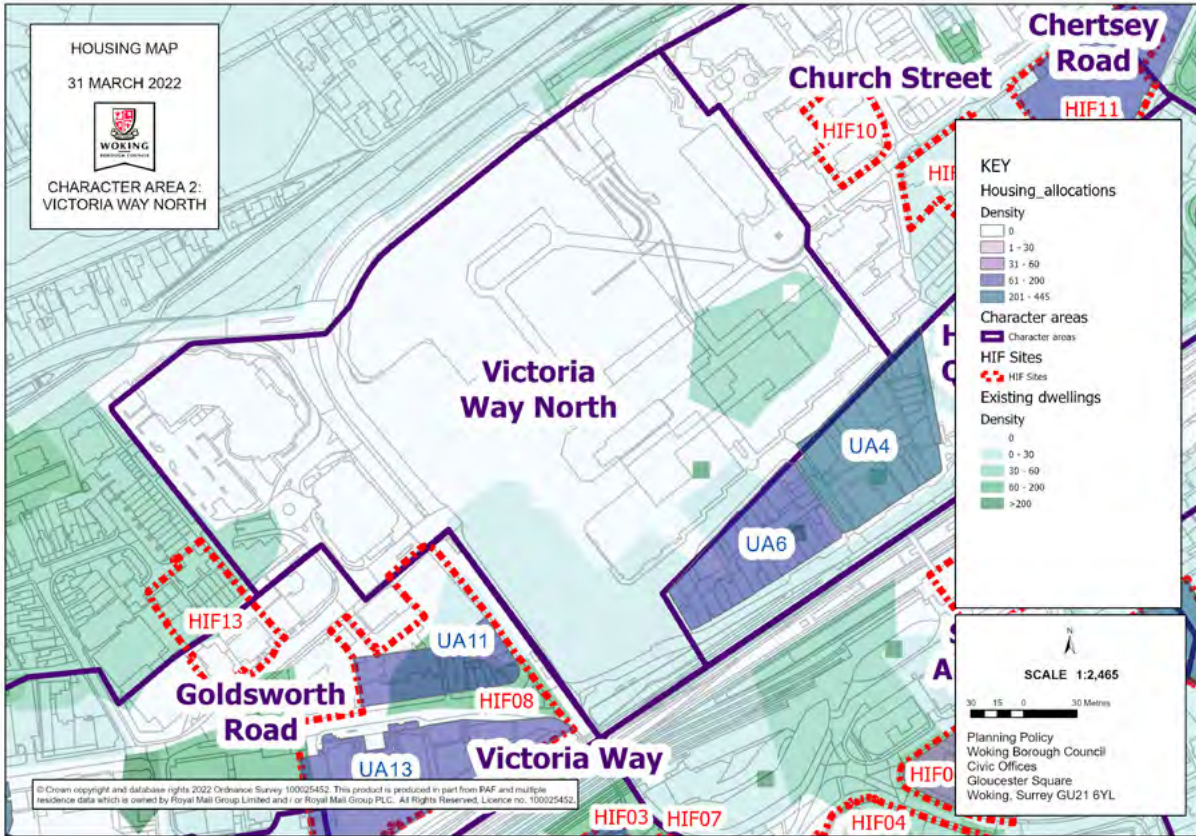


Fig 137 Character area 2 - Victoria Way North

Situation

- This area is the commercial core of the Town Centre, including Woking's covered shopping centres. Until very recently therefore, housing in the area was limited to the 46 flats at Middle Walk, above the Wolsey Place shopping centre, recently extended upwards
- The principle of flats above retail has now been radically extended by the construction next door to Middle Walk of the high-rise Victoria Place (The Marches), with 429 dwellings.

Constraints

- No additional major housing sites are proposed in this character area, which is already heavily built up with buildings in active commercial use.

Table 1.4 Dwellings in Character Area 2

	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	436	0	0	436

24.6 Goldsworth Road

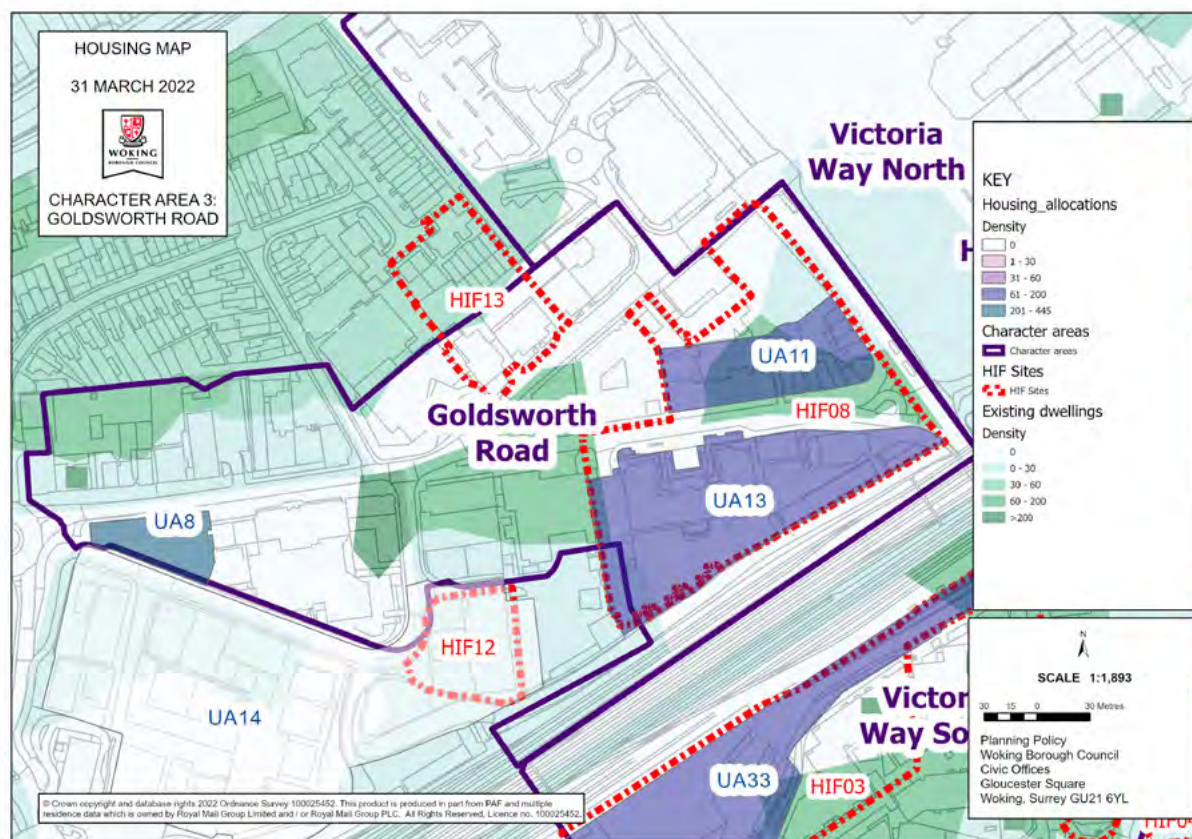


Fig 138 Character area 3 - Goldsworth Road

This western gateway to the Town Centre, much developed with office buildings over the late twentieth century, has seen a great deal of residential development over the last twenty years, through the redevelopment of lower density buildings, and also the change of use of offices, and now includes 208 residential addresses. Among the larger developments, the 2000s saw the redevelopment of retail units with flats at key junctions: Metro Apartments (95 - 111 Goldsworth Road) and Birchwood Court (45-49 Goldsworth Road). More recently, a new fire station has been constructed with cluster flats above, in connection with the Victoria Place development; a former petrol station has been redeveloped and an office building converted through permitted development.

Opportunities

- There are outstanding prior approvals in this area for a further three conversion schemes of purpose-built offices to residential- two of which also have associated planning permission for upward extensions. In total, these projects include 120 new flats. In addition to purpose-built offices, the area also includes a number of older buildings in mixed use, which have been subject to small conversions and extensions.
- In January 2022, permission was granted for what would be the town centre's largest residential development, a mixed use scheme on land north and south of Goldsworth Road (planning application reference PLAN/2020/0568) with 929 flats.



- If all permitted developments are constructed, the number of dwellings in the character area will increase by 504%.
- The Goldsworth Road character area includes four sites allocated for housing/mixed use development:
 - UA8 (the former Goldsworth Arms PH), with an indicative number of 43 dwellings;
 - UA11 (1 -7 Victoria Way and 1 -29 Goldsworth Road), with 55 dwellings; and
 - UA13 (30-32 Goldsworth Road, Woking Railway and Athletic Club, Systems House and Bridge House), with 125 dwellings.
- 50% of site allocation UA12, and the whole of site allocation UA13, are within the boundary of the recently permitted application PLAN/2020/0568. If the allocated area covered by this planning permission is discounted from the indicative allocations figure (discounted pro rata for site UA11), the remaining allocations would add another 10% to the sum of existing and committed housing in Character Area 3.

The character area includes two sites in the HIF project:

- Site 08 ‘Goldsworth Road’, covers the whole area of planning permission PLAN/2020/0568, plus the remainder of site allocation UA12, and further land to the north amounting to an additional 0.18ha (this is vacant land allocated for office use in the SADPD).
- Site 13 ‘Church Gate’ covers two of the sites on Church Road East which currently have prior approval for housing, together with land to their north which lies outside the town centre boundary.
- Lastly, Character Area 3 adjoins the Poole Road Industrial Estate, which lies just outside the Town Centre boundary. This industrial estate is allocated in the SADPD (Site UA14) for offices, warehousing and an energy centre, with the potential for an element of residential use. Part of the estate, adjoining the Town Centre boundary, is also included in the HIF as site 12, ‘Thameswey Church Road’.

Table 1.5 Dwellings in Character Area 3

	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	1049	71	82	1053-1120*

* The delivery of site HIF13, as per the site analysis, would not be compatible with the existing permission on that site.

24.7 Station Approach

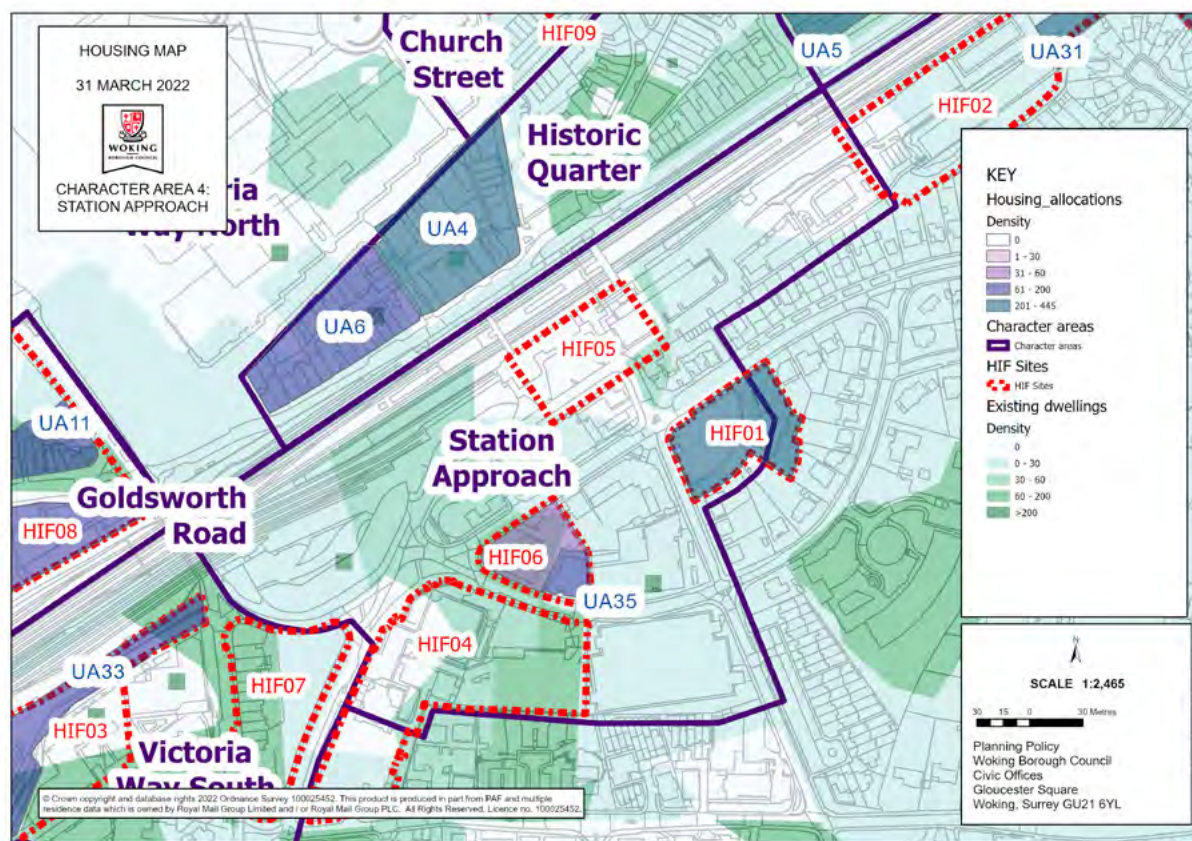


Fig 139 Character area 4 - Station Approach

Twenty years ago this central character area was very largely dominated by institutional buildings; housing was restricted to the ten flats at 1-6 Oriental Road, the eighteen flats at Somerset House and the adjacent residential accommodation at The Crescent.

However, in 2003 permission was granted for the first largescale major and tall residential development in the heart of the Town Centre. This was the Centrium development, with 240 flats and ground-floor retail units on the site of an old railway goods yard. The following year, permission was granted for 48 flats replacing the adjacent telephone exchange building.

The focus of Town Centre development then moved elsewhere, until 2017/18, when permission was given for 147 flats replacing a church and social club on Heathside Crescent (Harrington Place). Some of the ground floor commercial units at Centrium have also been replaced with flats. With 472 residential addresses, this character area is now one of the most populous in the town centre.

Opportunities

The area includes three SADPD residential allocations:



- Site UA32 (Royal Mail Sorting/Delivery Office), with an indicative dwelling number of 88. This site is also included in the HIF project as site 01, 'Royal Mail Depot'
- Site UA35 (The Crescent) and UA36 (Somerset House), with ten net additional dwellings each. These two sites are together covered by HIF site 06, called 'St Dunstan's Phase 3'.

In total, the delivery of the SADPD indicative numbers on these sites would increase the number of dwellings in the area by 23%.

In addition to the HIF sites listed above, there are two more HIF sites in the area:

- HIF Site 04 Police Station/Magistrates Court- one of the largest potential development sites in the Town Centre
- HIF Site 05 Station Plaza

Table 1.6 Dwellings in Character Area 4

	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	0	108	450	108-450

24.8 Church Street

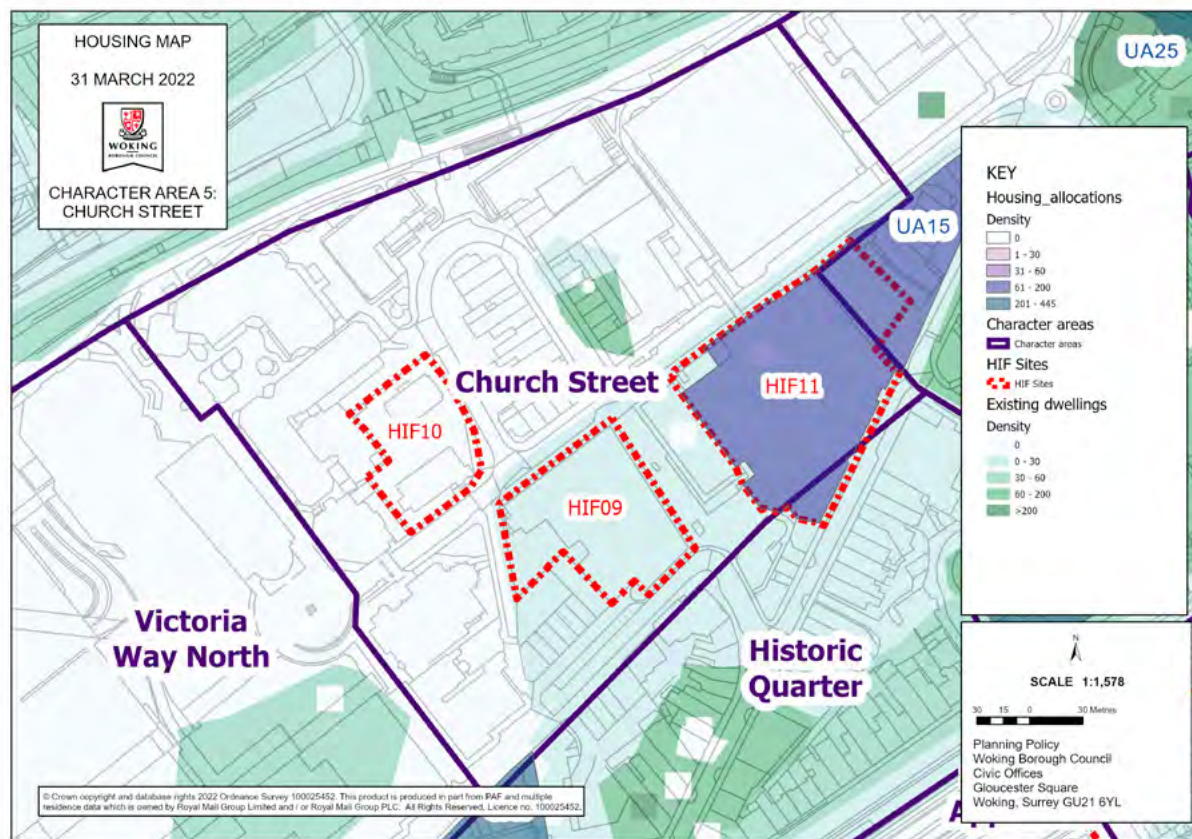


Fig 140 Character area 5 - Church Street

The Church Street character area, in the commercial heart of the town centre, has been left almost untouched by the growth of town centre housing, and remains dominated by offices and ground floor retail. The only residential addresses are the small number of flats at Central Buildings on Chobham Road.

Opportunities

- The Site Allocations DPD does not identify most of this area as a place for residential development. The only part-residential allocation here is located in the area's south-western corner:

- Site UA15, The Big Apple American Amusements Ltd, H.G. Wells Conference Centre, the former Rat and Parrot PH and 48-58 Chertsey Road – 67 dwellings
- Only half of this large site is located in Character Area 5, with the remainder being in Areas 6 and 7. The site is allocated for a broad mix of uses. The indicative dwelling number is therefore relatively small, considering the site size, and could be met entirely outside Character Area 5 by a development currently under construction. However, it should be borne in mind that the number given in the SADPD is only indicative and there is nothing to stop additional residential development on the



rest of the site, providing the other allocation requirements are met and the development is in conformity with the Townscape Strategy.

The sites listed in the HIF would cause a radical increase in the level of residential development in this part of the town centre, with three sites:

- HIF Site 09 'BHS Residential/Commercial'
- HIF Site 10 'Concorde/Griffin House'
- HIF Site 11 'Planets/Rat & Parrot': A smaller version of allocation UA15 (though the part of the site in Character Area 5 would remain the same size)

Table 1.7 Dwellings in Character Area 5

	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	4	0	162	4-166

24.9 Chertsey Road

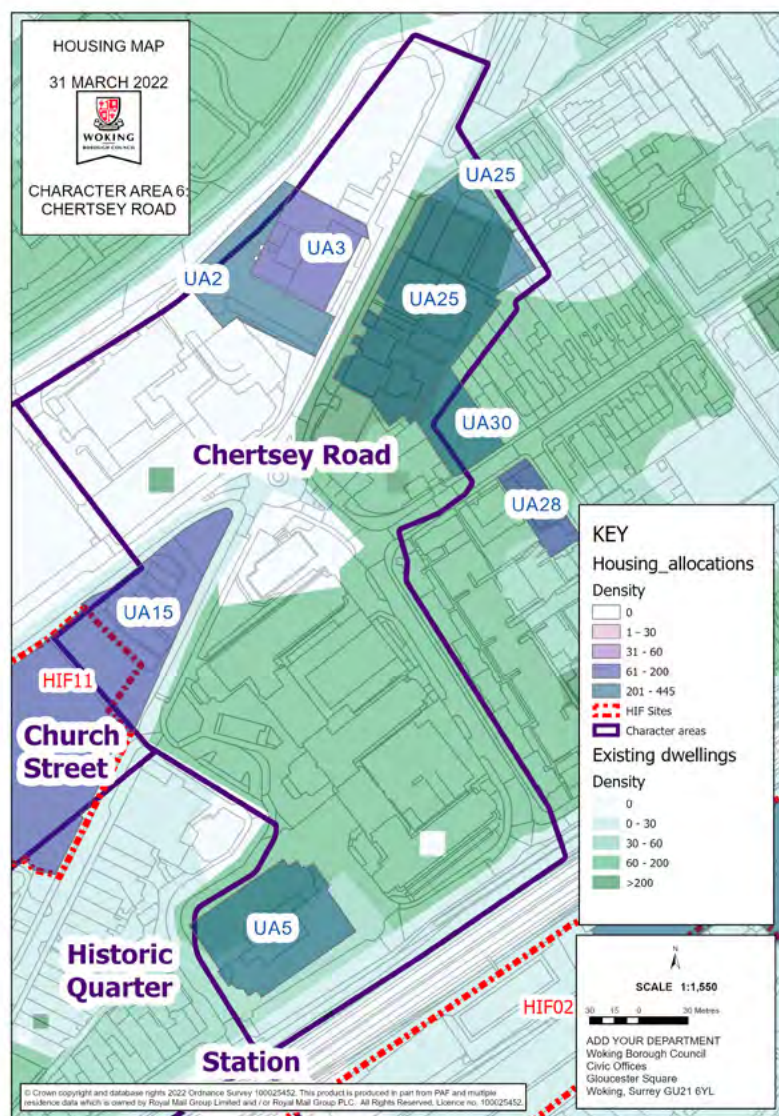


Fig 141 Character area 6- Chertsey Road

This area on the north-eastern side of the Town Centre was dominated by purpose-built office, car park and hotel buildings, and prior to 2003 contained just a handful of residential properties, mostly in the one remaining cluster of old buildings. In contrast to the neighbouring Area 5, however, the area has since seen a large amount of residential development. This began with two modestly sized redevelopments, of a social club and a place of worship, on the very edge of the town centre (permitted in 2003 and 2005), followed by the construction of a large residential

block, Enterprise Place, on a hotel car park (permitted in 2007). A second wave of residential development came with prior approvals between 2018 and 2020 for the change of use to residential of the large office building, Elizabeth House/ Cornerstone, and of a row of office buildings on the east side of Chertsey Road (two of the latter buildings also had upward extensions permitted) and one planning permission for a new build block on the site of the Rat and Parrot PH. The area is now home to 402 residential addresses.



Constraints

- Some of the development to date has been weak in terms of providing active frontages. This has a negative impact on the street scene and should not be taken as a precedent, but rather compensated for by the provision of active frontages on sites that come forward in future. Opportunities should be sought wherever possible to improve the street level appearance of existing development. The landscaped area to the west of Dukes Court sets a positive precedent for public realm design in the area.

Opportunities

- There is one outstanding planning permission in this area- the twelve-storey tower on the site of the Rat & Parrot, with 68 flats currently under construction.
- The SADPD allocates four sites in Area 6. Two of these sites have already been completed: Site UA5: The Cornerstone, The Broadway and Elizabeth House- with an indicative number of 94 dwellings and Site UA25: 101-121 Chertsey Road- 104 dwellings

- The three remaining sites include two adjacent ones on the west side of Chertsey Road: Site UA2 Trizancia House and Woodstead House, with an indicative number of 50 dwellings, Site UA3 Chester House, 76-78 Chertsey Road, with 14 dwellings and lastly site UA15, The Big Apple American Amusements Ltd, H.G. Wells Conference Centre, the former Rat and Parrot PH and 48-58 Chertsey Road, with 67 dwellings
- See above under Area 5 for more details of this site. 34% of the site is in Character Area 6. The ‘Rat & Parrot’ site development mentioned above could meet the whole of the indicative dwelling number for this site.
- The only HIF site in this character area is that part of HIF Site 11: ‘Planets/Rat & Parrot’ which is already undergoing development.
- Completion of the Rat & Parrot site development, plus the delivery of the indicative numbers on UA2 and UA3, would produce a 33% increase in dwelling numbers in this part of the Town Centre.

Table 1.8 Dwellings in Character Area 6

NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
	68	64	38	106-132

24.10 Historic Quarter

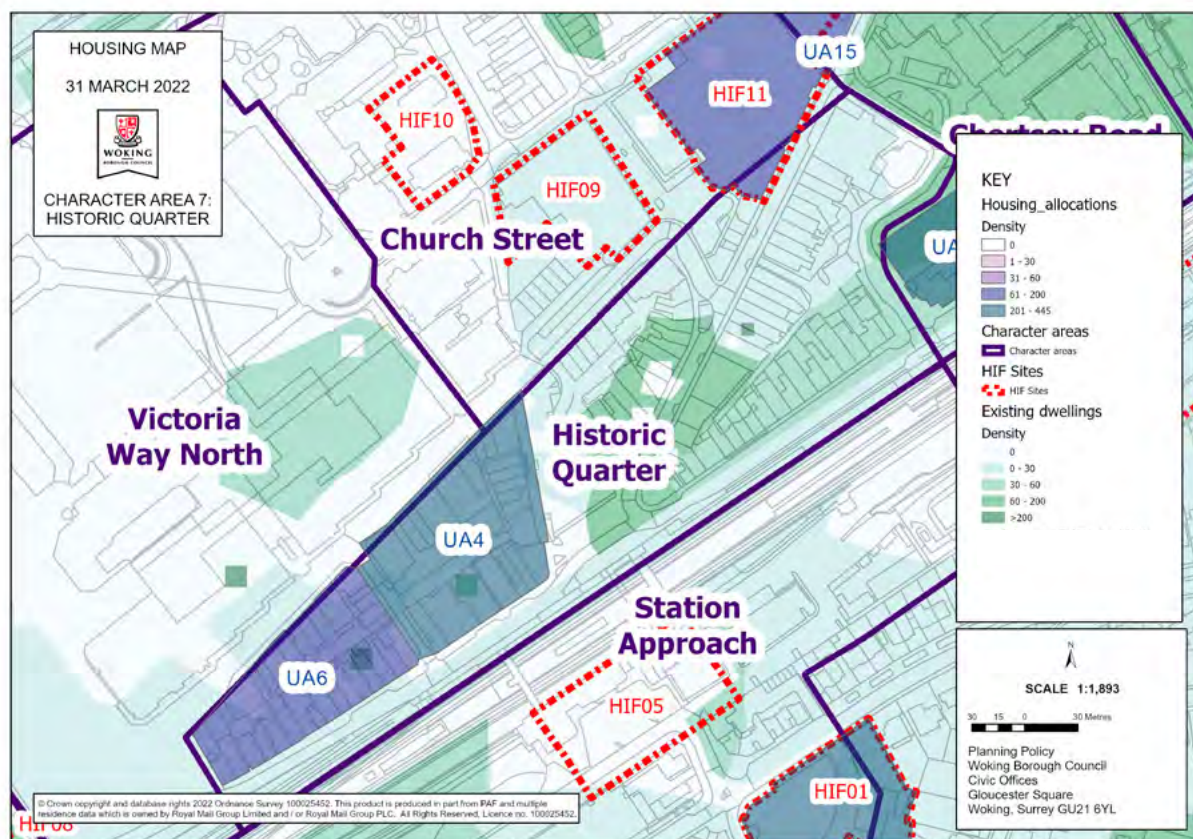


Fig 142 Character area 7 - Historic Quarter

This area contains a large proportion of the Town Centre's stock of older housing, comprising flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) above and to the rear of commercial units. Many of these units are the result of conversion from office or ancillary retail use, and some are the result of upward or rear extensions (the most recent example being the addition of three floors above McDonalds on Chertsey Road). Some of the accommodation is accessed from the main shopping streets, while a large proportion is accessed by rear courtyards from minor town centre streets such as Chapel Street and Addison Road.

Two-thirds of the HMOs in the Town Centre are located in the Historic Quarter.

Over the last twenty years, the Historic Quarter has seen the third lowest number of dwellings permitted of any Town Centre character area. However, the area has seen by far the highest number of individual planning applications and prior approvals: 39% of the Town Centre total. Only four of these applications were for more than 10 dwellings, and none for more than 19 dwellings. This reflects the nature of an area with strong heritage constraints where opportunities for large scale redevelopment are limited. There are currently 155 residential properties in the character area.



Constraints

- Heritage issues, and the needs of the many businesses in the area, present constraints to housing development and to the living environment.
- The quality of accommodation is very varied. Some flats which face onto the courtyards have outdoor balcony or roof terrace space, generally a small amount but in some cases quite substantial. However, many flats have no outdoor space and negative outlook.
- There are a few blocks outside the Historic Quarter which share similar characteristics: for example, the corner of Victoria Way and Goldsworth Road, and 1-11 Guildford Road.

Opportunities

- There are currently nine sites in the Historic Quarter with outstanding planning permission or prior approval for housing, for a total of 31 dwellings.
- The Site Allocations DPD allocates two sites entirely within this area, and one partially within it, as follows:
- Site UA4: 1-12 High Street and 26-34 Commercial Way, with an indicative number of 149 dwellings

- Site UA6: 2-24 Commercial Way and 13-28 High Street, with 50 dwellings
- Approximately 16% of Site UA15: The Big Apple American Amusements Ltd, H.G. Wells Conference Centre, the former Rat and Parrot PH and 48-58 Chertsey Road, with 67 dwellings in total (or 11 dwellings, if pro-rata'd according to the proportion of the site located in this Character Area). This portion of site UA15 is also the only HIF site located in the character area.
- Delivery of the outstanding planning permissions / prior approvals, together with the indicative numbers on site allocations, would increase the number of dwellings in the Character Area by 135%.
- The area contains a few buildings which have a negative impact on the historic character of the area, and whose redevelopment offers the potential for improvement. These are identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Table 1.9 Dwellings in Character Area 7

	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	31	199	235	230-266

24.11 Fringes of town centre (outside character areas)

The character areas do not precisely match the boundaries of the town centre, and there are various areas around the edge of (but within) the centre which are not covered by any Character Area. In several cases these areas include relatively dense low-rise housing constructed in the years before housing began to be built in more central parts of the Town Centre. The town centre fringe areas are listed below in clockwise order, together with any relevant planning permissions or allocations.

- North of Victoria Way: 257 dwellings north of Victoria Way were constructed in the late 1990s and late 2000s.
- 11 dwellings are found in sizeable pre-1918 villas near the Chertsey Road/Victoria Way roundabout.
- 54 suburban-style dwellings on Oriental Road, Heathside Crescent and White Rose Lane. This area includes Site Allocation UA31: Car Park East, Oriental Road, with an indicative capacity for 250 dwellings. UA31 also forms part of HIF Site 02: Ex Station Car Park.
- 83 dwellings north of Heathside Road, including houses built in the 1980s and 1990s and older flats.
- 16 dwellings on Goldsworth Road, at the westernmost end of the Town Centre. 14 of these are flats granted permission in 2012. This area also includes Site Allocation UA9, (113-149 Goldsworth Road), with 55 dwellings.

Table 1.10 Dwellings in town centre, but outside Character Areas

	OUTSTANDING PLANNING PERMISSION AT 31.03.2022	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER IN SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD	INDICATIVE (ADDITIONAL) NUMBER BY TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY SITE ANALYSIS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	0	305	268	268-305*

* The Townscape Strategy also indicates 258 dwellings on sites close to the Town Centre. On the same sites the SADPD only indicates 26 dwellings.

25 New Town Centre wide residential development guidance

The Housing Market Analysis Update identified that the Coronavirus pandemic had increased demand for housing with outdoor space and also with indoor flexibility for home working. This chimes with many comments received through the Masterplan engagement process to date regarding the amenity and living environment of some recent housing developments in the Town Centre. They are also supported by the analysis of private outdoor amenity space described above, the levels of provision of which shows high levels of variation between different developments. In lockdown conditions, which may return in future, these issues, together with security, accessibility and neighbourly relations, take on additional importance for the wellbeing and mental health of residents, and this was evident through the engagement so far. In addition, whilst much of the housing in the town centre might not have been designed with families in mind, it is inevitable that families will live in the town centre and their needs should be taken into account.

The introduction of the National Design Guide (NDG) and National Model Design Code (NMDC) over the past three years has also changed the context for assessment of design, by outlining, illustrating and (in the latter document) expanding on the Government's priorities for well-designed places.

It is not possible to introduce a requirement for development to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards through this SPD, as the national policy regarding those requires a viability assessment. Likewise, potential increased requirements for accessible dwellings will require additional evidence on housing need. These issues can potentially be considered through the next review of the Core Strategy. However, it is possible to introduce guidance relating to other parts of the lived residential environment.

With regard to private outdoor amenity space, the NMDC guidance notes (p.75) state 'Access to external private space is important for people's wellbeing... Guidance may ... be provided about the provision and size of balconies on apartments.' Woking's Design SPD and Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight SPD already set several different requirements for the design of balconies, including a minimum width of 1.5m, but, unlike for gardens, where size standards are included in the Outlook SPD, there is currently no size requirement for balconies. The review of recent housing developments revealed a great deal of variation in balcony size, with the usefulness of many balconies being limited by their small size. It is therefore proposed to introduce a minimum area standard for balconies.

The NMDC guidance notes (page 75) also state that 'People's feeling of security within their home is influenced by the design of the home and the way it relates to its neighbours... Layouts need to ensure natural surveillance, encourage community interaction, engagement and participation and environmental control'. Internal circulation space plays a big role in the character of apartment buildings, in particular interactions between neighbours. Where the space is dark and constricted, interactions between neighbours are less likely to be positive. Where corridors serve large numbers of flats it is less likely that neighbours will recognise and get to know one another, so the circulation space can feel intimidating. On the other hand, a well designed and secured circulation space can help to build a community, which is one of the main aims of this Masterplan.

The NMDC guidance notes (p.67) also note that 'Single aspect apartments... can cause environmental issues in terms of light and ventilation. Gallery access and limited apartments per core can facilitate dual aspect apartments that address such issues.' Further guidance on best practice regarding internal circulation space, in particular in tall buildings, can be found in 'Recommendations for Living at Superdensity' (2007), 'Superdensity: The Sequel' (2015) and 'Secured By Design: Homes 2019' (2019). These have informed the guidance on internal circulation spaces below.



26 The Masterplan

26.1 Townscape Strategy Framework

The Townscape Strategy provides a design led framework to guide development in the Town Centre, in particular, to determining the appropriateness of the heights of development in the various character zones. The accompanying Site Analysis includes useful information on how each site should be considered within the overall Townscape Strategy and these should be considered at the early stages of the development process. The framework will be a significant material consideration in determining the acceptability of a proposed development.

26.2 Town Centre wide guidance

Private outdoor amenity space

A minimum of 5sqm of private outdoor space should be provided for 1-2 person dwellings and an extra 1sqm should be provided for each additional occupant.

Internal Circulation Space

- Each core should be accessible to generally no more than eight units on each floor.
- An access core serving 4 or more dwellings should provide an access control system with entry phones in all dwellings linked to a main front door with electronic lock release. Unless a 24 hour concierge is provided, additional security measures, compliant with GDPR, including audio-

visual verification to the access control system (between the occupant and the visitor) should be provided where any of the following apply:

- more than 25 dwellings are served by one core, or
- the potential occupancy of the dwellings served by one core exceeds 100 bed spaces, or
- more than 8 dwellings are provided per floor.
- Where dwellings are accessed via an internal corridor, the corridor should receive natural light and adequate ventilation where possible.
- All dwellings entered at the seventh floor (eighth storey) and above should be served by at least two lifts.
- It is desirable that every wheelchair user dwelling is served by more than one lift.

Table 1.11 Spatially specific guidance for Character Areas

GUIDANCE	CHARACTER AREA WHERE GUIDANCE APPLICABLE
Ground floors facing the street should be active frontages.	Victoria Way North, Church Street, Historic Quarter
Ground floors facing the street should be active frontages or contribute to passive surveillance through multiple street entrances and large windows.	Parts of the Town Centre outside Townscape Strategy character areas (except for Heathside Crescent and Heathside Road)
	Achieve mandatory credits under water category of BREEAM assessment.
Minor non-residential development	Incorporate energy measures in accordance with interim requirements of Part L to the Building Regulations and full Future Buildings Standard once it comes into effect. Incorporate water efficiency measures (as per Climate Change SPD guidance).
Ground floors facing the street should be active frontages or contribute to passive surveillance through multiple street entrances and large windows.	Parts of the Town Centre outside Townscape Strategy character areas (except for Heathside Crescent and Heathside Road)
The proportion of affordable housing in these areas has been particularly low to date. To ensure diversity of tenure in the areas, future proposals should seek to redress this balance.	Victoria Way North, Goldsworth Road, Chertsey Road, Historic Quarter
The provision of private outdoor amenity space in housing developments has been relatively low in these areas. Opportunities should be taken through new development and spending by the Council and partners to deliver additional, multifunctional public open space in the areas, to help address the needs of local residents.	Goldsworth Road, Chertsey Road, Historic Quarter
The area has seen a relatively low number of one bedroom/ studio flats compared to other parts of the Town Centre. Therefore this would be the preferred location for developments focussed on this type of housing.	Station Approach
Development in these areas has been disproportionately of one-bedroom and studio flats. New development should redress this balance with a higher proportion of two-bedroom flats.	Chertsey Road, Historic Quarter
As an area with little current housing, this part of the town centre could have good potential for development of the night time economy or other town centre uses with the potential to generate a nuisance to residential neighbours. Proposals for new housing should take this into account and avoid the potential for conflicts with any such uses.	Church Street



LEISURE AND CULTURE

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27 Objectives

The Leisure and Culture objectives for the Town Centre are as follows:

- **To build on recent development and enhancements to ensure that Woking Town Centre is a leisure and cultural destination that competes strongly with neighbouring towns and provides for the leisure and cultural needs of its residents, workers and visitors.**
- **To ensure a dynamic, varied and vibrant cultural and leisure economy during the day and evening:**
- **Enabling small and large commercial leisure and cultural enterprises, as well as non-commercial and community culture, music and arts organisations, which bring significant social benefits and civic pride to Woking, to thrive.**
- **Expanding the evening economy, particularly the range of activities and events available, including the growing music and culture sectors (Retail Topic Paper, 2019)**
- **To continue to encourage co-location and flexible use of spaces to maximise the use of existing assets, both indoor and outdoor, for temporary installations, displays, uses and events. This adds changing activity and interest to the town centre, which can respond to variations in market demand and exploit major events and festivals (e.g Wimbledon, Queen’s Jubilee and Christmas).**
- **Ensure that accessible and sustainable social and community infrastructure is provided and safeguarded in line with Core Strategy Policy CS19.**

28 Overview

Woking town centre has a strong and varied leisure, culture and entertainment offer, highlighted by the provision of three theatres and the newly refurbished state of the art Nova Cinema, which opened in 2021. The town's theatre offering is both professional, at the New Victoria Theatre and amateur, hosted at the Rhoda and Buzz Theatres.

There is a diverse and vibrant food and drink offering throughout the town centre. Recent openings include Island House, Luciano's, the Tea Terrace and Itsu, which expand, upgrade and diversify the town's the food and drink scene. There is a good mix of restaurants, cafes and shops that reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the town, and Market Walk provides space for an eclectic mix of small, often start-up, businesses. Residents in Woking value the multicultural nature of the town, and paired with an improved public realm, cafes and restaurants are considered to create a positive atmosphere (feedback from the Residents Panel).

Further to this, the Council runs a programme of events under its Celebrate Woking brand, which aims to highlight and support the Borough's cultural attractions. It has hosted Party in the Park (in Woking Park), Woking Food Festival, Diwali and Chinese New Year celebrations in the centre. Alongside Woking Shopping, other arts and cultural events include the Summer Zone with deckchairs, table

tennis, giant chess and a big screen, and an Ice Rink in winter 2021-22, the anachronists library (an immersive theatre event in Jubilee Square in 2021-22) and the Wiggle and Scribble playground in March - April 2022.



Fig 143 Jubilee Square: Summer Zone

The Lightbox is situated by the Basingstoke Canal, within the town centre, and offers art galleries, a café, workshops and events, as well as an exhibition on the history of Woking. A pop-up Lightbox gallery has been included at Victoria Place, bringing art to the heart of Woking's expanded shopping centre. In addition the Woking Art Trail (arcgis.com) is an interactive map produced by the Council, which enables and promotes exploration of public art across the town centre and more widely.

Woking has a community music and arts venue, the Fiery Bird which hosts a range of events, workshops and training. It has seen operational disruption in recent years due to the lack of a permanent venue (previously located at the Phoenix Cultural Centre on Goldsworth Road, scheduled for redevelopment) but is expected to move to a new location at Spaces in autumn 2022, subject to funding from Surrey County Council.

Woking library is a large and valued facility in the centre which provides a range of services including free WiFi, computers and printers as well as an extensive collection of books, e-books and audio books. The library, theatres and cinema, and the Lightbox are cultural and leisure facilities that are valued by the public, together with the choirs and orchestras that use them (Residents Panel feedback, 2021).

Leisure in the form of gyms and sports facilities are provided by private enterprises within the town centre, with the Gym Group coming in June 2022 and several other private gyms

available. The Big Apple houses bowling, Laser Quest, a large arcade and bar. HG Wells is a conferencing and events space that hosts a number of local cultural activities (including the orchestra mentioned above) and is proposed for redevelopment with the Big Apple, as one of the Council's Site Allocations.



Fig 144 Fiery Bird

29 Opportunities

Woking's spatial vision (Core Strategy 2012) sets out that the town centre will be a focus for economic activity centred on a vibrant, enhanced town centre that provides a good range of quality shops, jobs, cultural facilities, services and infrastructure. Development to date is expanding cultural and leisure facilities, with two large spaces provided within the newly opened Victoria Place. The first of these will be occupied by Woking Superbowl, expected to open later this summer and offering a bowling alley, Laser Quest, pool tables, party rooms, bar and diner. The second is Italia Conti, a leading performing arts academy, relocating and consolidating from three previous sites to a purpose built 48,000 sq ft two floor unit, expected to open in September 2022. Both of these facilities will strengthen cultural, events and entertainment provision in the centre, and provide scope for further opportunities.

An opportunity could link to the Italia Conti as well as existing performing arts groups, to potentially create activity and animate outdoor public spaces for performance. The Council will explore how this can go forward as part of its events and cultural programme.

Another recent addition at Woking Shopping Centre this spring (2022) has been a virtual reality gaming business, Animo Gaming. This brings interactive entertainment aimed at families and young people to the heart of the Peacock's Centre, and its continued operation will help bolster the attractiveness of the centre.

The Council's Retail Topic Paper (2019) highlights the growth of leisure and restaurant uses in the Borough in recent years, as can be seen with recent openings in the town centre, and points to need for responsiveness to a rapidly changing retail market. This evidence can be used to support further growth of such uses and to inform the Council's assessment and determination of planning applications for new development, both for changes of use within existing floorspace, and for new buildings. The Council's adopted Planning Policy framework, encompassing the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPD, allows for delivery and implementation of development, taking account of the latest available evidence.

Further opportunities for leisure and culture lie in the form of allocated development sites. The Council's Site Allocations DPD (2021) seeks to deliver the Core Strategy's vision and objectives for a vibrant and enhanced town centre. It contains a large site in the town centre, taking in the Big Apple and HG Wells as part of Site Allocation UA15, proposed for mixed use development that includes re-provision of floorspace to accommodate entertainment, cultural and community uses. Existing uses includes music, dance and concerts, and events for the public and charity sectors and religious groups, who used the centre at a reasonable cost. Re-provision of this floorspace is necessary to ensure that a number of existing operators, which contribute to the Town Centre's diverse cultural economy and support its vitality, can

continue and thrive, and are not left without a home. There are limited alternative venues within the centre which can accommodate these activities.

While not specific allocated uses in the Site Allocations DPD, the development on land north and south of Goldsworth Road, allowed at appeal on 12 January 2022 and covering UA11, UA12 and UA13 includes 2,710 sq metres (gross) floorspace for flexible commercial uses including shops, cafés and restaurants, bars and pubs as well as assembly and leisure uses and non-residential institutions. Once complete, this will provide space and opportunities for a range of cultural and leisure uses, dependent on market demand.

In addition, the Canal has potential for an expanded cultural offer. As mentioned the Lightbox provides a significant cultural asset located by the Canal. However it does little to allow visitors to appreciate the Canal, as windows do not look out on it and landscaping in the garden entrance area shields views of it. This relationship could be enhanced. Woking Wharf has recently been improved to widen and re-surface the towpath on this well-used stretch of Canal. There are further opportunities to be explored for the Canal as a distinct cultural asset and small scale hub of activity, linked to its heritage and green open space value. This could foster increased water related activity and moorings for small businesses (where they are sensitive to Canal's environment, access and amenity).



Fig 145 The Lightbox

30 Constraints

While a variety of cultural and leisure facilities are available in the town centre, residents highlight that cultural and entertainment provision in the town centre is insufficient or are concerned about its decline (Residents Panel feedback 2021). Since the point of survey, facilities are expected to improve with the new openings and occupiers at Victoria Place. However, these concerns should be addressed in the Masterplan's objectives, particularly with regard to smaller, niche and non-commercial cultural and leisure uses.

There are both financial and space constraints to provision. While space constraints have been mitigated to some extent by the opening of Victoria Place development including the Hilton hotel, this primarily caters to the commercial leisure, hospitality and conferencing market. It does not cater to or accommodate cultural or leisure activities, particularly those run by community/ voluntary groups or the public sector that do not make profit but create significant social benefits and civic pride to the town centre, making it more attractive to residents and business. There is limited floorspace available to accommodate these groups and a challenge will be to find an approach that enables sufficient floorspace for such uses within the town centre.

31 The Masterplan

- a) As development comes forward, the Council will expect developers to assess the latest evidence and work with local community and cultural groups to explore potential for space to accommodate cultural or leisure activity. Where loss of community or social uses is proposed, this will need to accord with the requirements of Core Strategy Policy CS19.
- b) To make better use of existing cultural and leisure spaces, such as the Buzz Theatre as a venue for a range of performance. The Council will publicise these spaces to relevant community organisations and schools etc.
- c) To maximise the benefit of the town's expanded restaurant and bar scene, and improved cinema, and work with stakeholders (local residents, businesses and community groups) to identify opportunities to improve and enhance the day time and evening time economy on offer in the town centre. This may include helping to facilitate an expanded music scene.
- d) To work with existing community groups and businesses, and new occupiers such Italia Conti to maximise the benefits of performing arts in the town centre. Initial ideas would include more outdoor performance to help animate public spaces, particularly at Victoria Place and Jubilee Square. This may require enabling improvements to the public realm, such as more seating and improved spaces for performance. Some ideas can be seen below.
- e) Maximise the connections between culture and heritage, as highlighted in the Heritage report for the Masterplan. This primarily seeks improvements to outdoor spaces and information/ signage to increase appreciation and awareness of protected heritage assets. This could help enhance informal culture and recreation, linking to the Council's social and well-being objectives. Spatially, it focuses on Jubilee Square (with regard to Christ Church and the War Memorial) and on the Canal, the latter being a cultural, heritage and green infrastructure asset in the town. Improvements have already taken place at Woking Wharf, and encouragement of small businesses (in addition to Kiwi and Scot café boat, (image 3), particularly food and drink business, could increase activity and enhance the Wharf as a distinct focal point and small-scale hub of activity.



1



2



2



3



3

- 1 Outdoor amphitheatre at More London, by the GLA building
- 2 Outdoor seating examples that could enable use of space for performance and appreciation of heritage assets
- 3 Basingstoke Canal



COMPLETE RPI Your property our priority

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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32 Objectives

The objectives for Green Infrastructure in the Town Centre are as follows:

- **To take proactive steps to support ‘more, bigger, better and joined up’ habitats, green ways and spaces. This simple but effective ambition should inform all development proposed in the town centre.**
- **To be tenacious in the long-term effort to reduce our impacts on the environment and to plan for sustainable growth. Ensuring excellent quality, connected greenspaces and a richness of wildlife habitats will contribute strongly to making these visions a reality.**
- **To increase people’s access to enjoy greenspaces, recognising the well-being lift this gives, whilst protecting and enhancing our habitats. Earlier work has identified the existing network and gaps for potential new provision, and to connect the individual elements to make strong recreational, ecological and environmental networks.**
- **To ensure that planned development is supported by infrastructure including new natural and recreational assets. Natural Woking seeks to balance these environmental and ecological needs with the development and economic needs of the borough.**
- **To increase the area of the overall tree canopy cover of the Town Centre and ensure successful establishment and long-term growth potential as well as a diversity of suitable tree species.**
- **To work collaboratively with partners in all sectors to achieve the objectives.**

33 Overview

As a consequence of the impacts of the Pandemic, the link between Green Infrastructure provision and the health and wellbeing of the community continue to be of significant importance.

For the purpose of the Masterplan, the term green infrastructure describes the network of multi-functional green spaces, threading through and around urban and rural areas, which together deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits.

These include biodiversity and habitat creation, supporting mental and physical wellbeing through improved access to green space, reduction of flood risk and improved quality of the urban environment, for example through mitigation and adaptation to climate change, screening and softening, and replenishing oxygen. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will be integral to expanding Green Infrastructure.

Increasingly the economic value of eco-services is being recognised and attempts made to quantify these (natural capital). High quality green infrastructure is also a positive driver of development saleability, property prices and encouraging inward investment, eco-tourism and a strong local economy.

Green infrastructure is made up of different landscape elements, which can often be considered as separate entities, but these together form a whole landscape which exceeds the sum of its individual parts. This is an overarching principle of green infrastructure,

alongside biodiversity connectivity and networks. Biodiversity (biological diversity) encompasses the whole of the natural world, all living things and the rich variety of habitats, species and ecosystems of which they are a part. It is not restricted to rare or threatened habitats and species. Protecting biodiversity and their habitats is critical to creating a sustainable borough.

The advice in this section should be read in conjunction with that elsewhere in this Masterplan, including sections regarding sustainable construction, blue infrastructure, leisure and culture (including sport), and transport.

Woking 2050, the borough's current climate change strategy, provides an overarching vision to coordinate efforts to create a sustainable borough by reducing our impact on the environment. Its 'great outdoors' theme celebrates access to local natural environments, whilst also recognising our responsibility to protect these as a legacy for future generations.

Natural Woking, our biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy, explains in more detail how the council and others will enhance the provision and accessibility of green spaces, conserve existing biodiversity and habitats and creating opportunities for species to return.

Woking borough contains a wealth of green infrastructure assets, each individual element forming part of the wider green infrastructure network. From statutorily designated sites, protected landscapes, formal and informal greenspaces like parks, through to private gardens, individual trees, shrubs and vegetation, these existing assets and the new green infrastructure coming forward through development are making an increasingly significant contribution to Woking's distinctiveness and appeal as a great place to live, work and visit.

The wider landscape is mainly characterised by our areas of the Thames Basin Heaths, being generally low lying with gentle undulations in the landform. The entire heathland has declined over time, becoming fragmented and being overtaken by woodland. The remaining areas of heathland are of significant importance for nature conservation and are protected as such. Although the heathland is outside the Town Centre, there are trees and woodland that play a key role in enhancing the town centre's landscape setting.

A detailed audit of the green infrastructure and biodiversity which the local environment supports is available in Natural Woking, the borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy (see appendix 4 of the Natural Woking Supporting Information guide). This identifies green assets within the borough and outlines the existing protection these are afforded, as a basis for identifying what may be lacking and what approach can be taken to further strengthen and enhance the natural environment and access to it in the future. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan, meanwhile, explains what new green infrastructure is required to meet the levels of growth planned for by the Core Strategy.

This evidence highlights that, whilst green infrastructure is more evident on the outskirts than the borough's central built-up core, the urban areas including Woking town centre are far from absent of green assets.

As [Figure 146](#) and the townscape strategy illustrate, Woking's town centre has a diverse abundance of attractive, accessible green spaces, link routes and sensitive habitats within walking and cycling distance of its boundary. Just a few minutes' journey will take you from the vibrant town centre to amenities such as the Basingstoke Canal and Brookhouse Common, offering the biophilic qualities of nature, and a gateway to, the borough's wider countryside beyond.

Town centres can be a thriving home for many species of trees, shrubs, plants, mammals and birds, which in turn highlight the diversity of habitats needing to be present for such a range of species. The variety of different land uses found in and close to the town centre creates a rich and varied mosaic of habitats. For example, a high-rise building in Woking town centre is a preferred nesting location for peregrine falcons.

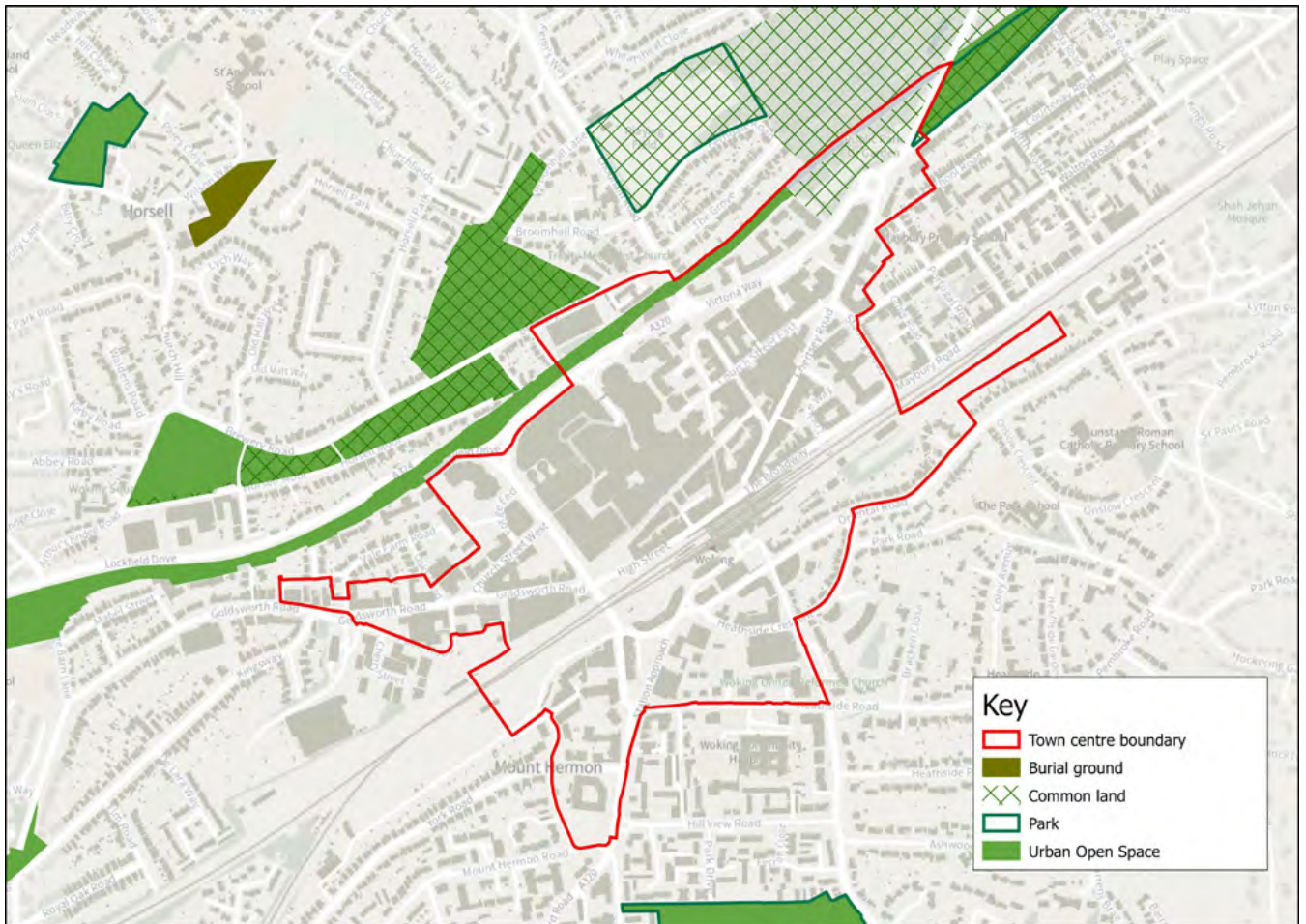


Fig 146 GI map 1 Woking borough green infrastructure network

Green spaces including parks, recreation areas, road and railway verges, and tree lined streets can, depending on their structure and management, support a large number of invertebrate and bird species. In addition to serving as places for recreation, and providing visual amenity, these green (and blue) infrastructure assets additionally act as biodiversity reserves and wildlife corridors for the movement of species from one neighbourhood to another, enabling the dispersal and migration of flora and fauna and, in so doing, bringing more biodiversity into the town.

Urban environments are under pressure. For instance there is a national trend towards surfacing of private front gardens, providing room for car parking but reducing vegetation and space for nature.

At one time the contrast in the amount of green and open space elements between the outskirts and the more central areas of Woking appeared stark. However, a coordinated programme of improvements is now being implemented for central areas. The town centre has a range of well-defined urban open spaces, and the borough council is leading by example by incorporating additional green infrastructure into Woking town centre's urban fabric. This is being delivered through public realm improvements and new developments, via street tree planting and landscaping, living walls, green roofs, roof gardens, rain gardens, bird nest boxes and similar, working collaboratively with a range of partner organisations to create and maintain these features.

Elsewhere the council partnered with Natural England to pilot the new great crested newt district level licencing, so far delivering extensive habitat improvements for the species south of the town, and could be a part of Biodiversity Net Gain to meet development requirements of the Town Centre.

Figure 147 illustrates the existing network of green infrastructure in the Town Centre.

Figure 148 (images) show a range of examples of what can be achieved.

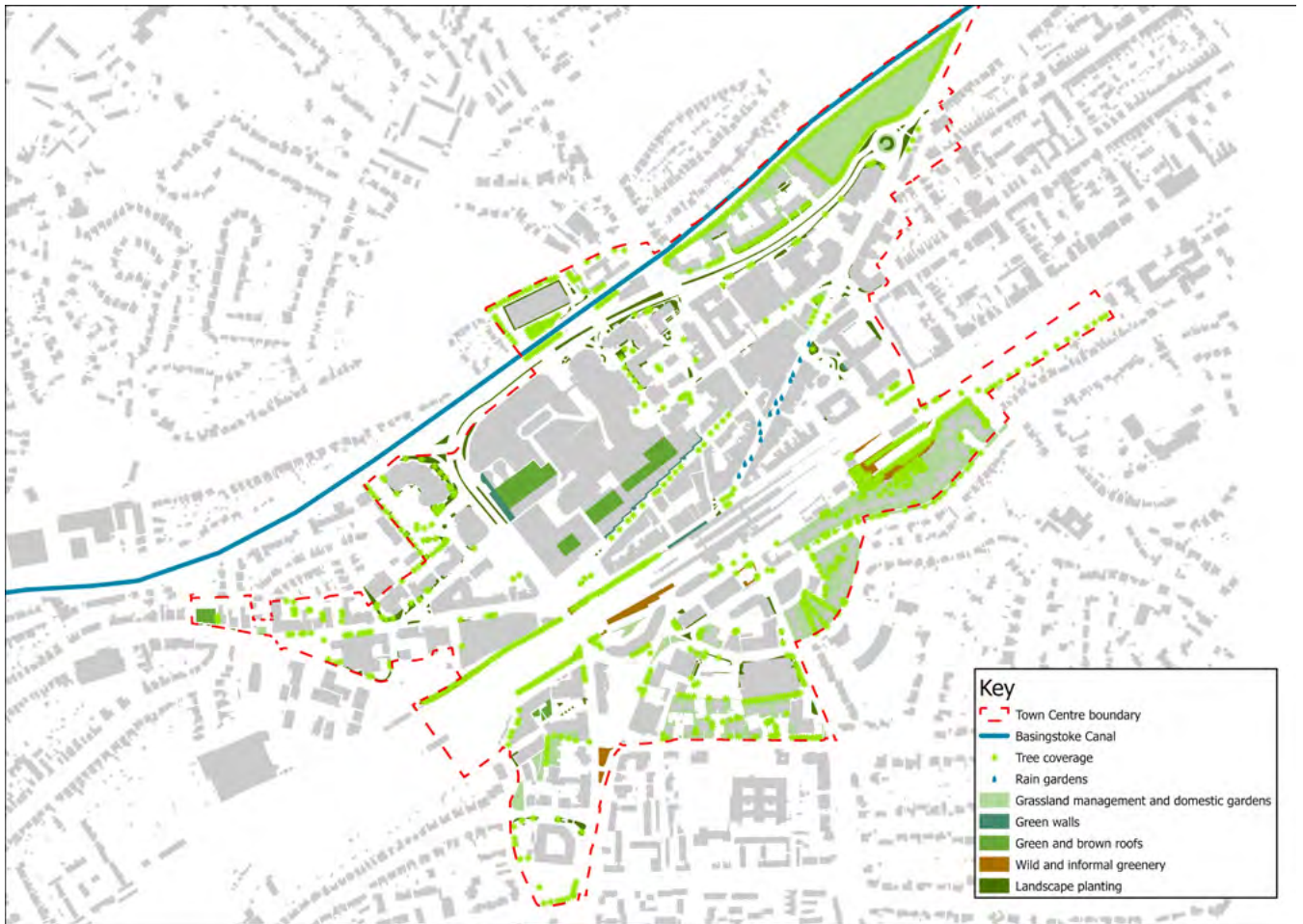


Fig 147 GI map 1 Woking Town Centre green infrastructure network

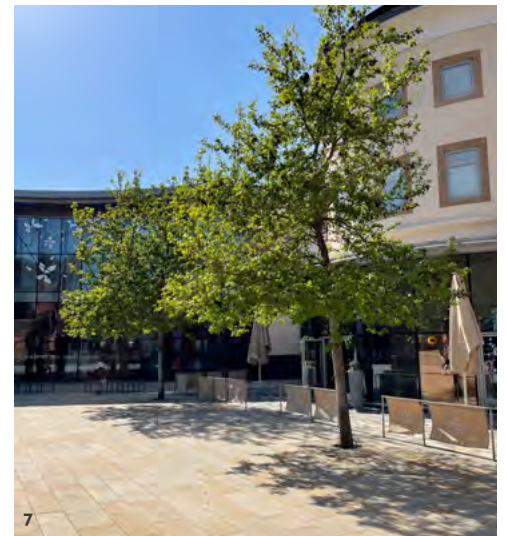


Fig 148 Existing green infrastructure and biodiversity measures in Woking Town Centre



- 1 Peregrine falcons (photograph by James Sellen)
- 2 Basingstoke Canal
- 3 Tree lined street Commercial Way
- 4 Landscaping New Central development
- 5 The 'Cushion Garden'
- 6 Urban open spaces
- 7 Amalanchier trees by Island House Jubilee Square
- 8 The Cushion Garden
- 9 Tree planting and landscaping, tree by Christ Church Jubilee Square
- 10 Open space in town centre
- 11 Landscaping, New Central development
- 12 The Cushion Garden
- 13 Victoria Square including silver birch trees

34 Opportunities

The Core Strategy established a presumption against the loss of open space and play facilities, except where it can be demonstrated that there is an excess of provision, or where alternative facilities of equal or better quality will be provided as part of the development.

There are clear needs, which translate into opportunities, for future provision of green infrastructure (habitat) in the borough, to which the town centre will significantly contribute.

At a strategic level, green infrastructure must be able to cope with and as far as possible respond to existing and future demands for green space and outdoor recreational facilities whilst also responding to issues such as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

There is a need to ensure good access to locally based green space and outdoor recreation facilities, supporting both casual use and organised activities for residents and for those who visit or work in the borough.

There is a need to provide opportunities for individuals and organisations to access activities which develop personal health and well-being, encourage community spirit, provide for life-long learning and promote the area as an attractive place.

The need for quality standards which provide for a clean, healthy and safe environment and ensure that recreational facilities meet the standards expected by the community for formal and informal activity.

The protection and enhancement of Woking's high quality natural environments including landscapes and wildlife habitats. An existing policy requirement for schemes to deliver a biodiversity net gain will, in November 2023, become a national mandatory requirement for most developments to formally demonstrate and deliver at least a 10% uplift in biodiversity net gain.

There is clear potential to link together green infrastructure assets within the Town Centre and where possible beyond the Town Centre and borough to strengthen our green infrastructure network. This will also benefit biodiversity by increasing habitat connectivity, building nature recovery networks. Multifunctional links and spaces are ideal in this respect. Town centre development has a key role in contributing to expanding such connectivity, through scheme design and financial contributions to off-site infrastructure such as SANG. Figure 30 illustrates the geography of green infrastructure opportunities in the borough.

Improving integration of the Basingstoke Canal into the town centre, currently a somewhat hidden jewel, by making it more known about, easily accessed and enjoyed.

Inclusiveness and accessibility for all - except where access would harm wildlife or their habitats.

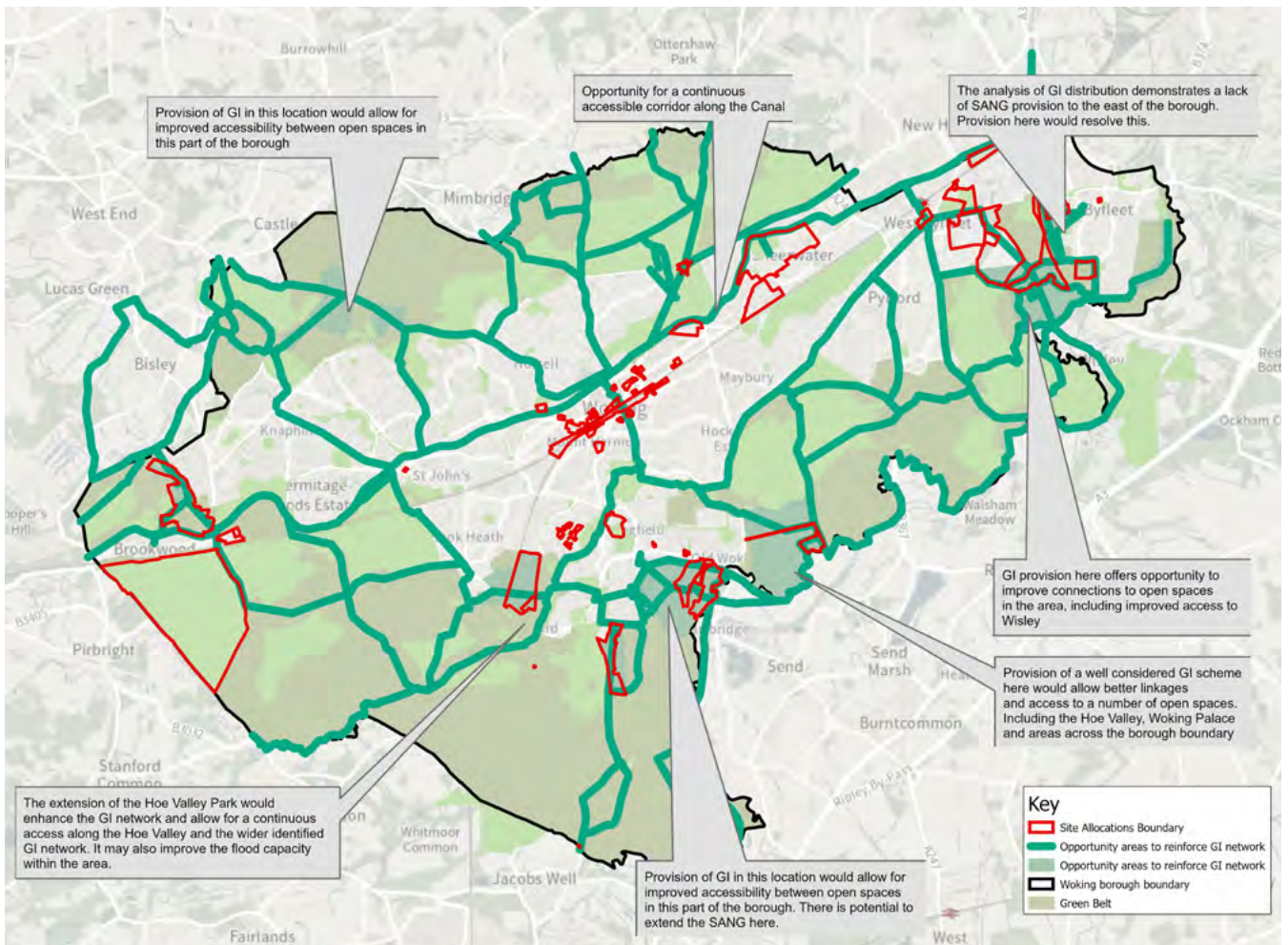


Fig 149 Borough wide Green Infrastructure network

Cohesiveness in the design and detailed specification of green spaces, features and planting throughout the town centre, through having regard to existing infrastructure and continuing or complementing these. High quality, innovative design is also welcomed where this will sit comfortably within its visual context.

Awareness raising through visibility, where appropriate access and interpretation signage, helping understanding of in particular the more innovative green infrastructure and/or habitat measures.

Designers of new development in Woking town centre must consider the ways in which their new build or conversion schemes can contribute to fulfilling these opportunities.

35 Constraints

Woking town's urban core is well contained. This compact form features a series of quality urban open spaces, and some green pockets of public or private land, however more green areas and the amenities these offer will benefit the town centre environment.

Under-used publicly owned/managed public realm space is limited, imposing a natural constraint on future opportunities to create new pocket parks and large planting beds. This underlines the importance of taking every opportunity possible to design in new, high-grade, multi-functional green infrastructure into town centre development.

A national challenge is the declines seen over time in our natural environments including in the populations of many species, the outcome of a combination of many factors but including climate change, pollution, habitat loss fragmentation and disturbance, changing building and land management practices, and a lack of shared knowledge about species and what they need to thrive.

Artificial lighting can present a significant barrier to sensitive wildlife, such as bats, and disrupt normal nocturnal behaviour patterns.

The State of Surrey's Nature notes the important role of urban environments for wildlife is often overlooked but these areas can in fact offer an improved sanctuary to some species that are under greater pressure elsewhere.

Some wildlife is very dependent on buildings for breeding, including birds such as the starling, swift, house martin and swallow, as well as many of the commoner bats (ibid). Unless specifically designed in, modern buildings exclude such eaves nesting sites.

An absence of connectivity within, to and from the centre and its surrounds inhibits the natural migration and colonisation throughout ecological networks. Detached habitats lead to vulnerability and species losses.

The barrier effect of the railway also hinders ease of movement, particularly walking and cycling into and out of the town centre in a north/south direction due to limited crossing points. This includes Victoria Arch and the railway station subway.

Modern property boundary treatments like fencing can be impermeable or hazardous to wildlife. Grey infrastructure such as road and rail corridors act as barriers to movement of land-based species. Yet at the same time their often tree/shrub edged fringes and verges provide habitat, their linear forms are a preferred flight path for bats, and they offer opportunities for re-connecting to habitat elsewhere.

36 The Masterplan

To ensure that development plays a significant role in delivering green infrastructure and biodiversity gains.

The development sites allocated by the Site Allocations DPD provide a clear basis and requirement to introduce new natural and formal spaces, greenways and habitats on site, connecting these to surrounding existing and other new provision. The key requirements for each allocated site include proportionate on-site measures to support the creation, protection, enhancement and management of green infrastructure, which could potentially include parks, gardens, recreation grounds and amenity green space depending on the scale of each proposal.

Smaller development proposals will also be required to bring forward smaller, incremental improvements or may be required to pay towards off-site provision via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Section 106 legal agreements.

The Council will seek to ensure that development proposals are policy compliant to be acceptable. The Core Strategy establishes the strategic approach to green infrastructure provision. The policies of the Development Management DPD then set out more detailed criteria for developers in terms of identifying opportunity areas for green infrastructure extension and enhancement. These include trees and landscaping, outdoor sport and recreation, development near the Basingstoke Canal, environmental pollution, air and water

quality, and noise and light pollution.

When considering the function and design of green infrastructure assets designers should consider sustainability issues relevant to the development site, which new or enhanced green infrastructure assist to address.

Early consideration of green infrastructure and biodiversity requirements is strongly recommended, to make space for green infrastructure spaces and features from the outset in all design processes. These needs cannot be properly planned for as an add-on at the end. A lack of early consideration of these issues will not justify poor or no such provision within a development proposal. It is important to make space for nature, green space and links from the outset in all design processes.

Adoption of an integrated design approach will support delivery of these environmental plus the development's other key objectives, as part of an overall sustainable design. In some cases, multiple aims can be achieved through a single space or feature. Early engagement with the borough council during the iterative design process is encouraged.

New development will be expected to deliver the following, as appropriate to the nature, scale and position of the proposal.

In accordance with Policy DM1, where new or enhanced green infrastructure (GI) is proposed and/or is required as part of a major development, the following information should be submitted:

- a description of any GI assets affected by the development, and how the development seeks to incorporate and/or enhance and/or conserve them
- a map of new GI assets
- a short statement of the functions and benefits achieved by the provision of the GI asset(s) e.g. wildlife habitat, surface water flooding alleviation.

More information on these topics is available where cited and from the further resources, including appendix 8 of the Natural Woking supporting information guide's specific advice for land managers and developers.

Development schemes should contribute to the goal of better connecting the town centre core out to its edge and beyond to the residential hinterland and attractive greenspaces beyond. The following measures are specifically intended to achieve that.

Figure 149 illustrates the geography of green infrastructure opportunities in the wider borough. This seeks to link the urban core (in particular Woking town centre) with the natural open spaces within the wider borough by identifying a series of radial routes connecting to the wider countryside. Connections between these green corridors of a quiet nature are also shown. Whilst there is no absolute science behind this approach, hence the routes illustrated are not definitive, they do represent a good guide of what is expected to be achieved.

There is a need to enhance access to green spaces across Victoria Way, which acts as a barrier for walking and cycling. Connections from the north of the town centre offers particular opportunities to link into Woking

Heaths (which includes Horsell Common) and to the south the River Wey and tributaries Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs). In the future regard should also had to the Urban Biodiversity Area for Byfleet to Woking and Knaphill (UrBOA 05) and to the proposed nature recovery strategies.

The strengthening of an area's green infrastructure network is a flexible and iterative process. The most appropriate method or route for enhancement will depend on the circumstances of a site together with a clear understanding of what is to be achieved. In this regard, early engagement with the Council to determine what is appropriate for a particular proposal is encouraged.

The growing network of SANG (existing and proposed) sites will continue to contribute to the borough's wider green infrastructure network. Development will be required to contribute towards the provision of SANGs through CIL payment or Planning Obligations where relevant.

Permeability for pedestrians and cyclists around and where appropriate through schemes, utilising linear tree, shrub and other planting to form green connections within the town centre, will help to link into green corridors beyond. The local walking and cycling plan also identifies walking and cycling networks that would connect Woking town centre to surrounding areas.

Details of requirements relating to improvements to the walking and cycling network are set out in the General Infrastructure and Transport sections.

There are certain instances where requirements cannot be met on site

Where required on-site provision of green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement has been fully explored through the design process but cannot be fully realised within the development site's boundaries, consideration should be given to how effective functional provision can be made elsewhere in the borough.

In this regard a whole borough view will be taken to green space management and creation, to enable proactive delivery of more high-quality habitats and good physical connections between these; and to benefit wildlife and local people alike, whilst conserving biodiversity and maintaining existing species and their habitats. This approach will also better prepare for and respond to the inevitable changes in climate predicted for our area.

The following offers a practical guide to help deliver our Green Infrastructure objectives.

Soil

- Soil is the main medium in which most green infrastructure assets are grown. The protection of soil during development is important to safeguard future ability to grow vegetation and protect water quality.
- Maximise opportunities to recycle soil during construction projects, in situ or for alternative re-use off site.

Trees and hedges

- Incorporate planting of new trees and shrubs, of suitable size and species, in a manner

and locations which will support them to successfully establish and reach their long-term growth potential, whilst contributing to an increasing tree canopy cover within the Town Centre. The use of underground tree root cell structures recommended for all new tree planting.

- To increase diversity, age structure and diseases resistant species within the overall town centre tree canopy cover, plant using a mix of species both native and exotic.
- Use berry-bearing and nectar-rich blossoming species in suitable locations.
- Identify prominent opportunities for a feature tree to be planted.
- Plant trees for shade near a key building, space or thoroughfare.
- Use hedges and shrub planting rather than fences, to better support wildlife, trap pollution, store carbon and insulate buildings.

Vertical and high-level planting

- The Council encourages all major developments to incorporate eco-roofs and green walls and window boxes.
- Where feasible, the above should be integrated in all development. This may take many different forms and should be sought where the opportunity arises.
- Whilst it is unrealistic to green all roofs in the town centre, all viable opportunities should be taken on flat or shallow-sloped roof profiles to provide green and brown roof(s), following the standard set by current examples.
- A further step is a living roof, which can provide foraging opportunities for birds, and support a range of native plants (subject to suitable building form and structure).



- Where feasible, consideration should also be given to creating accessible roof gardens, terraces and balconies.
- Vertical green planting, through the use of living green walls and supported climbing plants can deliver multiple benefits including cooling, insulation, air quality, carbon storage, habitat and visual amenity.

Habitat provision and connectivity

- Ensure all necessary ecological surveys and advice is in place early on to fully inform the design process.
- Installation of bird nesting and bat/bird roosting features in every new development will provide homes for many species. Specialist boxes, bricks and tiles are available; bricks and tiles are preferred owing to their greater longevity. Introduce water into your design at an appropriate scale. For example, a simple ground-based feature water bowl will assist many species.
- Gardens within the urban area offer can offer many opportunities for wildlife, including the planting of native species, ponds, and links through the creation or retrofitting of hedgehog highways.
- Ensure responsible environmental practices during site construction as well as in the final development. For example: support wildlife movement by maintaining physical corridors; provide temporary nest boxes for (migratory) birds returning to regular breeding sites ahead of re-provision in the final development; request a 'toolbox talk' from the Woking Peregrine Project for tall building schemes.
- Utilise fruiting and pollen rich flowering trees, shrubs and plants in suitable locations (away

from the main public realm) to provide natural food sources throughout the year. Design to minimise risk of birds striking glazing panels. Consider the use of translucent glass or marked with spaced dots/lines across its surface (fritted glass).

- In spaces where nature conservation may not be the primary objective (e.g. private gardens, formal parks, footpaths and cycleways) consider how these can be designed and managed sensitively to still help sustain wildlife and serve as a green stepping stone or corridor.

Lighting

- Ensure lighting design is appropriate – lighting can greatly affect wildlife, especially bats – consider designing areas of no or low-level lighting, particularly near green spaces, canal and other watercourses.

Water management

- See the Flood Risk section for information on incorporating a well-designed and maintained SuDS, rain garden or other water management solution.
- Harvest, store and re-use rainwater to provide a local supply for irrigation of living green features in the vicinity.
- Encourage the integration of water within the design of the development where feasible, this may include rain gardens .

Education and engagement

- Design in opportunities for residents, workers and visitors to learn about nature, through appropriate features such as artwork, interpretation signage, community garden beds.

- Making space for nature and green outdoor spaces will support not just biodiversity but also the enjoyment of these by workers, visitors and residents. Being close to nature will help to raise awareness of nature's simple needs – food, water, shelter – and inspire more well-informed action that make a positive difference.

Visual amenity/views

Consideration should be given to the potential impacts of development upon the surrounding green infrastructure network's views back into the town centre. For more information see the landscape character assessment and the Design SPD.

This should include the impacts of development within but close to the town centre boundary and the affects upon views towards this urban fringe and its visual integration into the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Built form, public realm and landscaping specifications

To continue to build a cohesive palette of high-quality materials and detailing throughout the town centre, new development and its associated public realm and landscaping will be expected to have regard to a range of townscape specifications, which are already present through recent public realm or development works or which represent new opportunities to complement these earlier investments in the quality of Woking's central areas.

The following is not exhaustive but gives a flavour of some of the specifications being used to achieve a repeated rhythm of high-grade streetscape throughout the town centre:

- Trees - disease resistance Elms in Commercial Way, Amelanchier's in Jubilee Square, silver birch in Victoria Square, Pyrus Calleryana along Gloucester Walk.
- Well maintained green living walls and other vertical/climber planting
- Horizontal green planting links for wildlife movement and assisting air quality (High Street ivy wall, hedges and shrub planting)
- Green pocket parks (garden r/o Civic Offices)
- Successful green roofs (Middle Walk, new shoppers' car park)
- Tree root pits to give scope for future root growth
- Bird nest boxes (nest boxes integrated within the Dukes Court living wall)

For more information, see the townscape strategy, tree strategy and Design SPD.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act gained ascension in November 2021 and has a two year transition period for its requirements to come into effect. The Act requires a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10% on development for which Planning permission is granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (there are a few exemptions). The Council currently has no mechanism to secure the mandatory BNG in advance of the effective date of its introduction and does not have a Local Plan Policy which requires a 10% BNG. However, it is important to note that the current up to date policies of the development plan highlights the need for biodiversity enhancement as a result of development, which needs to be applied when determining day to day planning applications until the mandatory requirements are introduced.



Policy CS7: Biodiversity and Nature

Conservation requires 'development proposals to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and geodiversity features and also explore opportunities to create and manage new ones. ... The policy encourages new development to make positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, where appropriate, and the creation of linkages between sites to create a local and regional biodiversity network of wildlife corridors and green infrastructure. It seeks to retain and encourage the enhancement of significant features of nature conservation value on development sites.'

Policy DM1: Green Infrastructure Opportunities stresses that 'the provision of new or enhanced green infrastructure assets will be expected to take any reasonable opportunities to connect to, or enhance, the existing Green Infrastructure Network. Particular attention should be given to enhancing the green infrastructure opportunity areas that provides biodiversity benefits such as biodiversity opportunity areas (BOA) identified in Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy and by Surrey Nature Partnership. The Council will encourage partnership working in the delivery of new or enhanced green infrastructure'

Policy DM2: Trees and Landscaping 'require the design, size, species and placement of trees and other landscape features to take practicable opportunities to realise their multifunctional green infrastructure benefits as set out in Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy, including: connecting the development site to the surrounding green infrastructure network and wildlife habitats'

These development plan policies provide policy justification to seek biodiversity enhancement on the back of proposed development.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) also promotes 'the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.' The NPPF is a material consideration to be fully taken into account when determining planning applications.

The Council's preference is for Biodiversity enhancements to be provided on site. Where this could not be achieved for justifiable reasons, a financial contribution will be secured through planning obligations to support biodiversity off site. The Council is in the process of making sure that it is ready to introduce the national requirements when it is introduced in 2023. The Council is happy to work in partnership with Developers to enhance biodiversity using the Policies stated above and to develop its approach to applying the mandatory requirements. His section future-proof to allow the introduction of the mandatory requirements and to request developers to take that into account at the early stage of developing their proposals.

36.1 Delivery

A proportion of funding for green infrastructure provision will come from the CIL. This will contribute towards specific forms of strategic green infrastructure identified and costed in the CIL Regulation 123 list. Currently these include the following forms of open space: outdoor sports, allotments, child play space and teenage play space.

The CIL tariff also includes SPA mitigation through the provision of SANG. The CIL tariff allows for payment in kind, for example land payment, determined on a case-by-case basis.

36.2 Future maintenance

The delivery of a green infrastructure asset does not necessarily signify the end. Developers should be mindful of the long-term maintenance and management requirements.

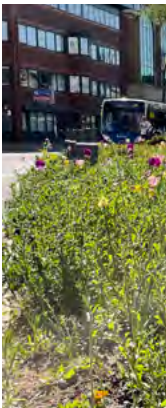
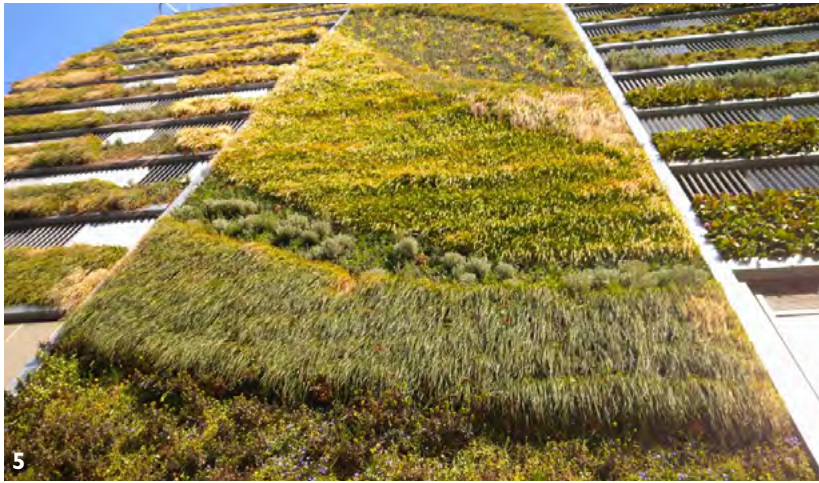
A maintenance and management plan will be required where provision is on private land.

If the site is to be in public ownership, then the council will manage and maintain these areas through CIL or other available sources of funding. There is usually also a maintenance charge through s106.

Development proposals should clearly demonstrate how green infrastructure spaces and features will be maintained in the future, minimum 10 years, including how, when and who by.

Careful planning and funding are also essential to ensure effective long-term care for green infrastructure spaces and features delivered. Without adequate provisions in place these will degrade over time, as will the benefits secured and potentially also risking safety.

Take up of the most environmentally friendly land management practices viable for existing land and properties is also important.





- 1 Bird box in green living wall
- 2 Living Walls, Dukes Court
- 3 Living Walls, Dukes Court
- 4 Living Walls Dukes Court
- 5 Living walls - example from new shoppers car park
- 6 Living walls - example from new shoppers car park
- 7 Living walls - example from new shoppers car park
- 8 Ivy wall
- 9 Rain garden, Chertsey Street
- 10 Landscaping by Town twinning swift sign
- 11 Horizontal green planting links for wildlife movement and assisting air quality
- 12 Living walls - example from new shoppers car park
- 13 Swift (photo by James Sellen)
- 14 Horizontal green planting links for wildlife movement and assisting air quality





FLOOD RISK AND SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT

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37 Objectives

The objectives for Flood Risk and Surface Water Management in the Town Centre are as follows:

- **The inclusion of SuDS within all development within the TCMP area will help to reduce flood risk to the multiple catchments the area drains to as well as helping to improve water quality to our rivers as required by the Environment Act 2021.**

38 Overview

Woking Borough is a thriving, vibrant and growing community. New developments of all shapes and sizes have the potential to adversely affect surface water runoff and flood risk within the borough if measures are not incorporated into the Masterplan for the sites at the earliest opportunity. Suitable measures have the potential to impact the design, levels, and layouts of developments and therefore it is essential that these are thought about and strategically designed at the planning phase of development to ensure features are integrated into the design and to maximise their benefits.

Parts of the town centre masterplan area are shown to be at risk of surface water flooding, and the areas that are not, contribute to the surface water flooding experienced historically outside of the masterplan area. Therefore, it is essential that any development within the masterplan area incorporates suitable mitigation measures to ensure surface water flood risk is not increased to the site itself or to others.

The majority of the Town Centre Masterplan Area (TCMA) is highly urbanised and very little of the area is natural and permeable meaning rainwater currently runs off uncontrolled overland or through existing piped surface water drainage systems directly into the boroughs watercourses. During intense rainstorms the piped network is often overwhelmed prior to reaching the final discharge points causing water to flood surrounding areas including properties.

The rainwater discharged to the watercourses is untreated meaning that pollutants from highways and other impermeable areas flows straight into the rivers affecting the water quality within it and in turn affecting the biodiversity of those watercourses. After long, dry spells pollutants can build up on hard surfaces and are then washed into the waterways at high concentrations causing existing aquatic wildlife to be killed.

Since a change in legislation to NPPF in 2015 all development that requires planning permission has had to incorporate suitable mitigation measures to ensure flood risk from all sources is investigated and mitigated to ensure flood risk to the development and others is not increased and it must be ensured that any surface water runoff from the site mimics the natural process and where this is not possible it must be discharged as close as reasonably practicable to predevelopment discharge rates.

In addition to developments, small scale measures have started to be retrofitted within the town centre area to deal with discharge from the highway areas which include the incorporation of bioretention features such as raingarden these help to reduce the volume of water discharge from the highways but also provides treatment of the water to reduce the volume of pollutants reaching the boroughs watercourses.

It is vital that any new or retrofitted development does not adversely affect the surface water drainage of site, increasing flood risk to itself or to others as is a requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) mimic nature's way of managing rainfall.

37.1 Flood risk

Surface water flood risk is the main source of flooding that affects the Town Centre, in addition adjacent to the Basingstoke canal, where it is raised above the surrounding ground levels there is also small areas that are classified as rapid inundation zone, as shown in red hatching on [Fig 150](#). Any development proposed within the rapid inundation zone will require a site-specific flood risk assessment, including breach modelling, which demonstrates that the site will be safe for the proposed vulnerability use over the lifetime of the development.

There is an increased likelihood of surface water flooding and sewer flooding in urban areas, due to impermeable surfaces and culverted channels. The Town Centre drains to 4 separate catchments as shown within [Fig 151](#). The northwest of the masterplan area drains to the River Bourne Catchment. The northeast area drains to the Basingstoke canal, the Southeast catchment drains to the Rive Ditch and the Southwest Catchment drains to the Hoe Stream. Each of these catchments has a history of flooding the most recent being in 2016. Due to the nature of surface water flood events, they are very difficult to predict and therefore there is no form of flood warning.

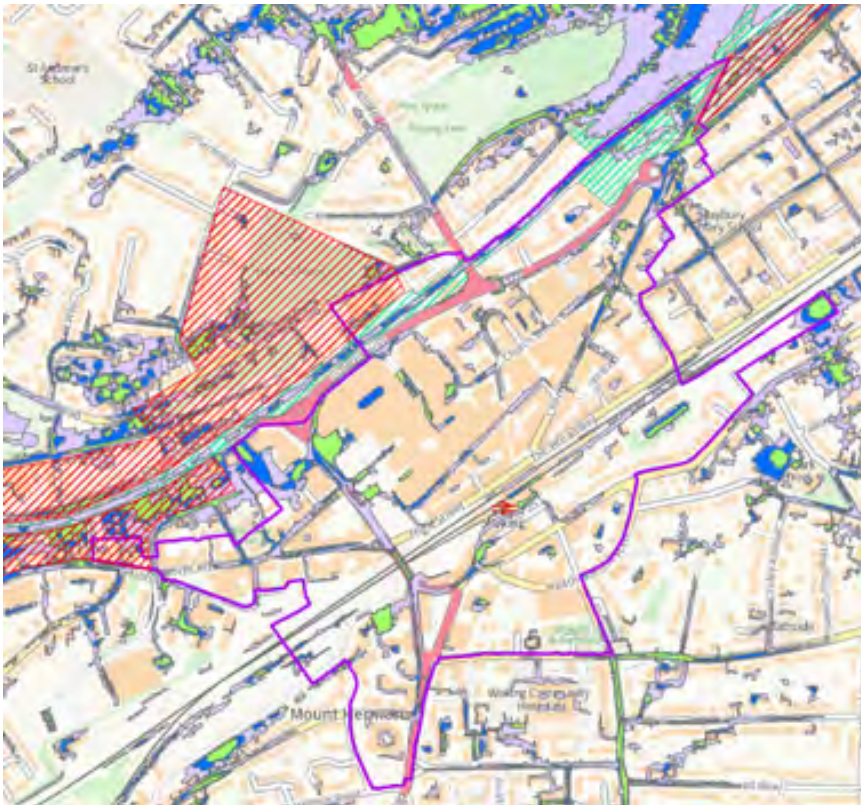


Fig 150 MAP

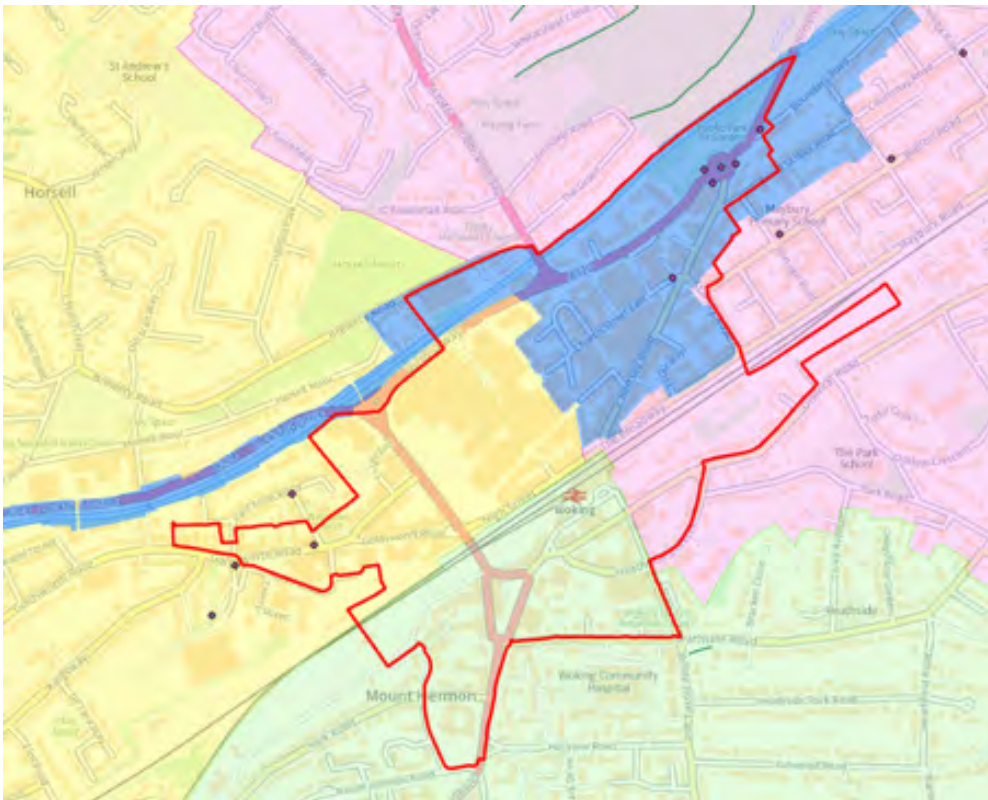


Fig 151 MAP

38.1 River Bourne Catchment

Surface water runoff from the northwest of the Town Centre eventually flows to the River Bourne, located in the north of the Borough. This part of the town is heavily urbanised and includes a large proportion of Victoria Way in addition to the High Street and Goldsworth Road as well as multiple smaller roads within the area. The surface water from this area drains through multiple pipes towards the Basingstoke Canal and then syphoned under the canal in two locations although these networks join up again at Arthurs Bridge Road to the north of the canal and outside the Town Centre. On this network there are historic records of flooding on Arthurs Bridge Road where the pipe network combines, as well as the south side of the canal where properties have flooded internally along Vale Farm Road.

the water is highly alkaline down to the acidic waters in Woodham, Woking. These's water conditions are ideal for a variety of aquatic water plants and in turn provide a perfect habitat for a variety of dragonfly. The Canal interacts in places with the Rive ditch, in some areas and therefore increases in untreated surface water runoff from the Town Centre area can not only adversely affect the rare habitat provided by the canal but also contributes to the flood risk to surrounding properties from the Rive.

38.2 Basingstoke Canal Catchment

Surface water runoff within the northeast of the Town Centre area drains directly to the Basingstoke Canal, which flows along the northern boundary of the Town Centre area. Although the canal upstream and downstream of the Town Centre area is designated as a site of Special Scientific Interest due to the Flora and Fauna found along the entire stretch of the canal, due to the urbanised nature of the canal and its hard banks, the Town Centre section is not designated. The Basingstoke canal is a rare manmade watercourse, which is Groundwater fed, due to the changes in groundwater acidity from its source in Greywell in Hampshire where

38.3 River Ditch Catchment

The southeast of the Town Centre, mainly to the south of the main railway line, flows directly to the Rive Ditch. In 2016, flash flooding from an intense storm which was estimated to have greater than a 1 in 30 (3.33%) return period caused 44 properties to flood internally within the Rive Ditch Catchment area, in some locations the depth of water was over 800mm deep. South of the railway line incorporates mainly residential developments as well as the train station and a carpark, and includes large areas of permeable surfaces include gardens, highway verges and green open space.



Fig 152 photo

38.4 Hoe Stream River Catchment

The Southwest of the Town Centre area drains to the Hoe Stream, this areas is heavily built up and include a large proportion of the A320. The surface water network in the area is known to surcharge and flood White Rose Lane outside of the Town Centre boundary. The last recorded occurrence was in August 2020 and is shown in the photos below although no properties were internally flooded water depths were recorded as just below door threshold levels and due to the surface water entering the foul sewerage system, issues with foul flooding occurred elsewhere on the network. Storm overflows for the foul pumping station within White Rose Lane and discharge untreated foul sewerage into the Hoe Stream were also activated.



Fig 153 photo



39 Opportunities

Water is a natural part of our environment and in Woking Borough we require developments to consider this and design accordingly. Water is a part of everyday life and should not be hidden away. Woking Borough Council welcomes new creative ideas for managing surface water runoff. The benefits of early consideration of SuDS are substantial for developers as well as the communities that will live in the new development.

40 The Masterplan

- SuDS should be considered from the start of a development not part way through. This is particularly important with the location of above ground drainage features as these can be challenging to retrofit effectively and efficiently. The non-statutory standards for SuDs are the minimum standard the council requires all development to comply with in accordance with NPPF, this includes ensure all developments, even those that were previously developed, achieve predevelopment greenfield run off rates. Guidance supporting the design of SuDs can be found within the SuDS Manual 2015 Ciria C753.
- Thames Water should be engaged on major developments at an early stage to determine the appropriate measures for managing sewage and waste water infrastructure to serve development.
- Naturally rain falling onto the ground will either evaporate, be absorbed by the soil or follow over land flows to the nearest watercourse, or pond helping to sustain life by refiling our waterbodies. A sustainable drainage system will mimic this by filtering, infiltrating and attenuating rainwater before it is discharged from the site. A well-designed SuDS system should be easy to install, maintain, low cost to construct and provide betterment to the local community by providing green space, improving air quality and biodiversity. The Key Requirements of the Proposals in the Site Allocations DPD stresses the need for SUDs on specific sites.
- Sustainable drainage systems can enhance existing open space and new development adding character to the Borough with new landscaping and improved surroundings. Careful consideration must be applied to the position and design of SuDS elements to ensure that they form an appropriate and integrated component of the landscape -taking into account all site constraints, including issues of access and safety. This does not cover just the general layout but also the design character and distinctiveness of schemes to ensure special landscapes are retained or established.
- The management of surface water should be carried out as close to the source as possible and consideration needs to be given to the inlet capacity of any drainage feature. Buildings should incorporate suitable designed green/sedum roofs where appropriate to attenuate the 1st 5mm of rainwater prior to the roof discharging through a guttering system or green walls if suitable to the ground system as required with Woking Borough Councils Core Strategy Policy CS9. Open surface features such as raingardens, swales, permeable paving, should be considered in the first instance to allow treatment of the rainwater and attenuation of any flows below the ground. Designs should allow for the attenuation and conveyance of flows through the development and should not rely on end of pipe tank designs which only provide water quantity benefits on their own and no other benefit that properly designed SuDS can provide.

- When selecting SUDS components, the site opportunities and constraints need to be fully considered, it is sometimes schemes that provide a combination of approaches that provide the best results.

Appropriately designed, constructed and maintained SUDS systems are more sustainable than traditional drainage methods as they can mitigate many of the adverse effects on the environment of storm water runoff, for example by:

- Reducing runoff rates (i.e., reduces risk of downstream flooding).
- Reducing additional runoff volumes and runoff frequencies that can exacerbate flood risk and damage water quality of receiving waterbody.
- Reducing pollutant concentrations in storm water, thus protecting the quality of the receiving waterbody.
- Contributing to the enhanced amenity and aesthetics value of developed areas.
 - A SUDS approach to drainage can be implemented for all development sites, although individual site constraints may limit the potential for a solution to achieve maximum benefit for all functions.
- Highways within the town center should be designed to drain via rain gardens and surface water tree pits where appropriate. Creating green/blue streets along Chertsey Road has already begun and it is visioned that this will continue all the way towards the Basingstoke canal, creating raingardens within the Brookhouse Roundabout and existing verge areas. This has the potential to link to the new green street proposed along Goldsworth Road as part of the developments taking place there and linking to the plans of raingardens at the Morrisons roundabout adjacent to Vale Farm Close. There may be opportunities to expand the network of rain gardens throughout the Town Centre.
- To the south of the station, there is also opportunity to incorporate rain gardens and surface water tree pits along White Rose Lane, attenuating some of the excess surface water overflows prior to it reaching the houses. This will connect the Town Centre to the Hoe Stream River Corridor.



Fig 154 photo



GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE

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41 Objectives

The objectives for General Infrastructure in the Town Centre are as follows:

- **To work in partnership with providers and key stakeholders to ensure that development in the town centre is supported by the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure in the right place at the right time, whether this is by using current spare capacity in existing infrastructure or bringing forward new infrastructure where necessary.**
- **To deliver committed and emerging schemes that will provide efficient and sustainable transport networks – create a high-quality network of streets in and around the town centre, and improve the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.**
- **To seek opportunities to facilitate the enhancement of infrastructure through new and redevelopment coming forward along Chertsey Road to the east, along Christchurch Way and along High Street / Commercial Way to the centre, and around Goldsworth Road to the west.**
- **To seek opportunities for dedicated cycle lanes North to South and East to West across the Town Centre and enhance existing cycle routes as well as opportunities for secure cycle parking both North and South of the railway line.**

42 Overview

Woking town centre attracts and retains business and people because of its diverse selection of retail, leisure, cultural and office facilities, and its strategic location at the heart of two of the South East's main growth corridors, with exceptional communications and connectivity. After the Covid-19 pandemic, it is now crucial to ensure the town centre is fit-for-purpose into the future by continuing to invest in transport and other infrastructure improvements to support development.

The Council has published an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to assess the infrastructure needs to support future planned growth and how and when they would be delivered, and where relevant at what cost. The IDP assesses needs for transport, education, health care, social and community facilities, green infrastructure, public services and utilities. It also identifies key stakeholders and funding streams necessary to deliver infrastructure requirements.

There are some major schemes currently being delivered to improve highway and sustainable transport infrastructure in the town centre but securing sufficient funding to deliver all of the infrastructure necessary to support growth remains challenging.

To demonstrate its commitment to infrastructure delivery to support development, the Council has set up a cross party Infrastructure Sub Group of the Woking Joint Committee to coordinate infrastructure

delivery in the borough, including within the Town Centre. The Council has also adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy as the primary means for securing developer contributions to fund infrastructure.



43 Opportunities

- Site Allocations DPD recently adopted, which allocates land at Woking Railway Station, bus/rail interchange, railway flyover and Victoria Arch, High Street, Broadway, Station Approach and Victoria Way for essential transport infrastructure improvement
- Infrastructure investment can facilitate appropriate development to enhance vibrancy and vitality of the town centre including during economic recovery from Covid-19
- Good existing relationship with infrastructure providers, including Surrey County Council to improve public transport and cycle/pedestrian facilities in the town centre
- Woking Borough Council is a significant land owner within the town centre which will allow it to lead and strongly influence the infrastructure delivery process
- Significant amount of funding already secured via Housing Infrastructure Fund and Local Enterprise Partnership to improve highway and sustainable transport network to meet additional demand for travel from new homes e.g. Victoria Arch and Woking Flyover
- Significant public realm and wayfinding improvements already achieved, with good quality and quantity of pedestrian-priority spaces - any proposals to update highways to improve traffic flow and movement also brings the opportunity to continue to improve the public realm and increase the town centre's overall attractiveness
- A Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan has been produced and identifies some priorities for investment

44 Constraints

- Barrier effect of the railway, which compromises ease of movement into and out of the town centre in a north/south direction due to there only being limited crossing points – within the town centre boundary, this includes Victoria Arch and the railway station subway
- Accommodating proposed growth in the town centre without putting significant pressure on the existing infrastructure
- Encouraging infrastructure providers / stakeholders to focus their time and resources in Woking as a priority, when they have competing demands from neighbouring boroughs. Infrastructure providers are also all working to different timetables for delivery.
- A broader Use Class Order removes ability of the Local Planning Authority to allocate sites for specific uses to meet infrastructure needs e.g. healthcare infrastructure
- Identifying and attracting appropriate streams of finance, which are subject to a range of external influences and significant risk, particularly in the current economic climate

45 The Masterplan

Specific measures are set out under various infrastructure topics where need has been identified. Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy identifies the town centre for housing, employment, and retail growth, supported by adequate social, community and transport infrastructure as set out in the IDP. The latest IDP was published in 2021 to support the planned growth set out in the Site Allocations DPD. For the Town centre, the Site Allocations DPD allocates land to deliver an indicative 1,264 dwellings and 32,000sqm of office/retail floorspace. Poole Road Industrial Estate, just outside the town centre boundary, has also been allocated to deliver around 41,000sqm of office/warehouse floorspace, and potentially an element of residential development. In addition, the Council will use all its endeavours to deliver 3,300 new homes that would be ‘unlocked’ through the £115 HIF project to replace Victoria Arch and improve transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the Arch.

The following infrastructure requirements have been identified to support growth in the Town Centre:

Transport

- **Woking Integrated Transport Project** – funded by a combination of developer contributions and a grant from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), this multi-modal improvement scheme is now nearing completion

and has achieved much to improve the highway network and create a safer, better connected environment for cyclists and pedestrians within the town centre. Works include creation of a new public plaza outside Duke’s Court; a new pedestrian and cycling bridge uniting two sides of the canal path, improving connectivity to the rest of Woking’s cycle and pedestrian routes; the new Bedser Bridge over the canal; a new public plaza outside the railway station; relocating the taxi rank to The Broadway; resurfacing various streets with granite block paving; reconfiguring High Street to a one-way bus lane with widened pedestrian footpath and cycle lane; and improving the highway network at various locations [Fig X]. Resurfacing works along Chertsey Road have resulted in a semi-pedestrianised zone boasting a wide, shared cyclist and pedestrian path, interspersed with rainwater gardens to reduce surface water run-off [Fig X]. The funding has allowed for major improvements to the town centre’s public realm, resulting in improved pedestrian facilities and access to the town centre.

- Victoria Arch Widening Scheme – The Council has been awarded £95m grant towards a £115M project to replace the Victoria Arch and to widen the highway along Guildford Road and Victoria Road, put in place traffic management systems and provide improved pedestrian and cycle routes to Woking Train Station, the town centre, and join up with other existing off-road routes. The project will provide the basis

for significant rail improvements including the Woking Flyover and a new Platform Six. The Council is working in partnership with Network Rail to achieve these rail benefits

- Woking Sustainable Transport Package – This is a LEP funding package which has delivered a series of improvements to Woking’s pedestrian, cycle and bus infrastructure, addressing gaps in the network into/out of the town centre and Woking railway station and aiming to improve the attractiveness of sustainable travel modes. Completion is expected within two years. Details of the package includes a safe, direct route through the town centre between the Victoria Way/Chobham Road junction and Woking railway station; improved cycling parking provision in the town centre; a new shared surface bridge across the canal adjacent to Lockfield Drive highway bridge; and improvements both onboard buses and at bus stops. This project has been designed to complement and integrate with the Integrated Transport Package. It also lays the foundations for Woking’s long-term walking and cycling infrastructure network, which is laid out in the Woking Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (Woking LCWIP – see below).
- Woking Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Projects – SCC has worked with WBC to develop a LCWIP which identifies how investment might best be made to increase rates of walking and cycling in Woking. A key objective is to connect the high quality town

centre ‘Core Walking Zone’ and canal towpath facilities with the borough’s surrounding residential neighbourhoods, to create a cohesive network. Priorities for investment in cycling infrastructure are to connect Sheerwater to the town centre and West Byfleet (‘Ceres Trail’), upgrading cycle facilities along Lockfield Drive; improved cycle provision along Oriental Road’s Deimos Trail (a key route improving connectivity with the town centre); and connecting Horsell to the town centre (‘Europa Trail’). To help connect surrounding neighbourhoods to the pedestrian-friendly town centre, priorities for investment in walking infrastructure include along Chertsey Road, from the railway station to Carlton Road; from the railway station to Monument Road; from the canal to College Road; connecting the railway station to Woking College; and links between Horsell and the town centre. Some of the schemes highlighted in green which will help improve gaps in and around the town centre, including Maybury Road]. Both the LCWIP and SCC’s Forward Programme (accompanying the Transport Plan) will provide SCC with the basis for funding bids to support the delivery of cycling and walking infrastructure and the Local Transport Plan. Development will be required to help deliver the cycling and walking infrastructure.

- Woking Railway Capacity Enhancement, including Woking Flyover and a new platform – a project to facilitate an increase in mainline capacity as passenger demand recovers in the longer-term, which would see the upgrade of

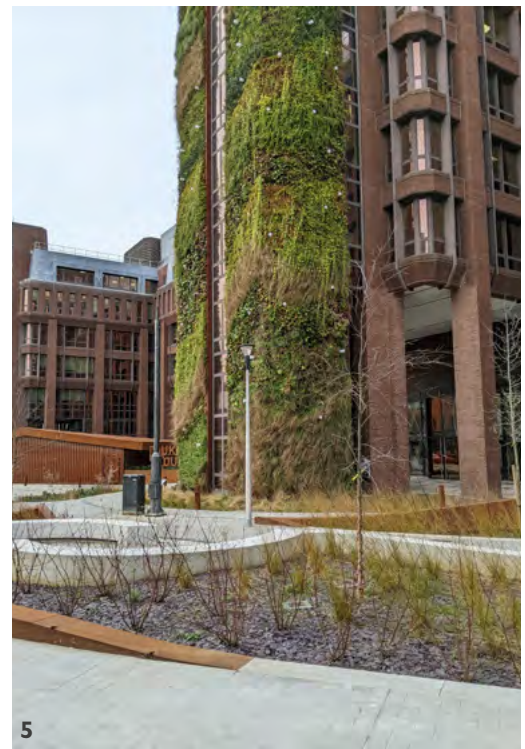


Woking Junction to incorporate a flyover from the Portsmouth Line in the London direction, together with an expansion at Woking Station.

The Council has safeguarded land in the Site Allocations DPD for future transport infrastructure provision. Policy UA7 of the Site Allocations DPD safeguards 9.43ha of land for a transport interchange hub at Woking Railway Station, to include a plaza, bus interchange, railway flyover, improvements to rail facilities and taxi rank to the south side of the station, secure bike parking area within station facilities on the south side, improvements to bus interchange to the north side and improvements to Victoria Arch.



Fig 155 Safeguarded land, policy UA7





- 1 Bridge
- 2 Bus infrastructure
- 3 Lightbox
- 4 New Bridge
- 5 Public Plaza, Dukes Court
- 6 Public realm
- 7 Chertsey Road
- 8 Maybury Road
- 9 Public realm, Church Path
- 10 Square Green
- 11 Middle Walk
- 12 High Street Corridor





Education Infrastructure

- Early Years: The IDP finds that even with additional provision coming forward in the Sheerwater community hub, additional early years provision would be needed in Canalside to support demand arising from town centre housing growth – and this would need to incorporate access to two-year-old funded, affordable places assuming a proportion of new, flatted development is categorised as affordable.
- Primary and secondary: the IDP finds that planned growth in the town centre is not such that it is likely to warrant the establishment of new primary or secondary schools, and demand could be met predominantly through capacity in existing schools or expansion in admission numbers.
- The delivery of additional 3300 homes on the back of the HIF project would generate a need for a two-form entry primary site ideally near the town centre, with the remaining pupils provided for with local expansion across a number of sites, dependent upon availability at the time. Expansion of two 'edge of centre' schools – Bishop David Brown to the east and Hoe Valley to the south – would also need to be considered to accommodate secondary pupils.

Education infrastructure continues to be identified as a priority for CIL investment to address the cumulative impact of development coming forward in Woking.

Healthcare

Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) commissioned Coplug Ltd to assess likely health service requirements and cost impacts of planned growth in the town centre, using up-to-date assumptions associated with new models of healthcare provision. Existing facilities in and around the town centre were mapped, and indicative yields and housing trajectories from the SA DPD were used - a higher incidence of smaller, one person and single couple households was taken into consideration. The model then calculated the healthcare needs to meet town centre growth, illustrated in. It is the CCG's preference to expand or reconfigure existing healthcare facilities in the first instance where it is feasible to do so, and then establish new healthcare facilities which are modern and flexible enough to support implementation of the new workforce model and new ways of working. The Victoria Place development in the town centre includes approximately 600sqm of new medical floorspace to help meet demand arising from housing growth, and there are likely to be opportunities for further on-site provision through redevelopment proposals coming forward. The Council continues to work with the CCG to identify suitable opportunities to improve healthcare infrastructure

Town Centre Outputs to 2027	Healthcare outputs	Floorspace outputs (sqm)	Capital cost outputs (£s)
Acute healthcare provision			
Acute elective inpatient needs	0.10 Beds	4.11	22,748
Acute non-elective inpatient needs	2.04 Beds	98.25	526,836
Acute day case needs	0.52 Beds	24.96	138,999
Total Acute Needs	2.66 Beds	127.32	688,583
Mental healthcare provision			
Mental health needs	1.25 Beds	61.25	338,925
Intermediate healthcare provision			
Intermediate needs	0.67 Beds	43.55	208,091
Intermediate Day needs	0.93 Spaces	48.36	231,466
Total Intermediate Needs		91.91	439,557
Primary healthcare provision			
GP and Primary Care Services	1.52 Clinical Rooms	133.76	628,211
TOTAL		633.47	2,095,277

Fig 156 Town Centre healthcare outputs to 2027, generated by SidM Health data analytics platform, conducted by Coplug Ltd.



Social and Community Infrastructure

Policy C19 of the Core Strategy sets out how the Council will work with its partners to provide accessible and sustainable social and community infrastructure to support growth in the borough, including that of the town centre.

A new community hub is being delivered as part of the Sheerwater regeneration scheme to help meet needs generated by development in the town centre – this is expected to include nursery, youth, and healthcare facilities.

The Council is working in partnership with SCC to explore the ongoing modernisation of the town centre library through use of new technologies to make services more efficient, engaging and accessible to a growing population. The co-location of interrelated activities at the library is also being explored.

As well as increasing the utility of existing community facilities, there is potential for new multi-purpose facilities to be delivered as part of redevelopment of sites in the town centre, including specialist accommodation and community uses as part of the Goldsworth Road proposal (UA13), and community/cultural uses as part of The Big Apple/HG Wells Conference Centre redevelopment (UA15). The Victoria Place redevelopment, for example, includes new facilities for the performing arts and for bowling.

SE Cambridge Ambulance Service has identified a need for a new ambulance community response post in the town centre to respond to planned growth, and the police force has indicated that increased incidents caused by housing growth in the town centre will generate a need for capital infrastructure to support additional uniformed officers and support/divisional staff. The Council will work in partnership with these service providers to meet the identified needs.

Utilities

- The Council will continue to share development data with utility providers regularly to inform their population and property forecasts and shape their plans to meet the demands of growth. The utility providers have indicated that town centre growth is likely to require reinforcement of their networks in order to sustain current levels of service and stem the loss of capacity due to additional loads imposed by development, including for water, wastewater, gas and electricity. Developers will need to engage with providers early in the development management process to review specific needs.
- UK Power Networks have identified a particular need for high and low voltage reinforcements to respond to an increased demand for electric vehicles – the town centre EV network is expected to expand. Individual circuits and substations will be prioritised accordingly, as and when this new load materialises.
- The decentralised heat network will expand to help meet energy demands from planned growth, including under Victoria Arch to reach areas to the south of the railway [see section on Sustainable Construction].

Digital

New development in the town centre will be expected to be designed to enable high-quality and future-proofed broadband connectivity, in accordance with policy DM21 (and amended Building Regulations). Whilst the town centre enjoys good digital connectivity, improvements to enable gigabit-capable broadband and 5G coverage will be required. [See section on economy)



TRANSPORT

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46 Objectives

The objectives for Transport in the Town Centre are as follows:

- **In addition to the above Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council have jointly developed a number of schemes that will make it easier to travel on foot, by bike and by bus to and from Woking town centre and railway station as part of the Woking Sustainable Transport Package (WSTP). Some of these works have already been completed and some still to be completed. They will:**
- **Support the town centre regeneration and other development planned in Woking Borough, by improving access to the town centre and helping to lower traffic congestion**
- **Increase the range of sustainable travel options, which have a lower impact on local air quality and lower carbon emissions**
- **Make it easier, safer and more pleasant to walk and cycle short journeys in Woking, giving more people the opportunity to enjoy healthy, physical activity as part of their everyday travel**
- **To introduce dedicated lanes for mobility scooters where it is feasible to do so.**

47 Overview

Transport accounts for 30% of the Borough's carbon footprint. Whether you live, work or visit the Borough, the Council would like travelling around Woking to be easy while also contributing to and maintaining cleaner, greener borough. The Council's priority would be that walking, cycling and public transport will be the first choice for short journeys. Not only does this benefit local air quality and carbon emissions, there are clear health and wellbeing advantages of Active Travel.

Much of the provision of transport infrastructure has been covered under General Infrastructure. It is not intended for this to be repeated. This section on transport focuses on key elements of the transport provision and should be read in conjunction with the General Infrastructure section.

Woking Borough Council has recently made considerable investment into the town centre for sustainable transport infrastructure. Working in partnership, Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council have recently completed the Woking Integrated Transport Project (WITP) a multi-million pound highway improvement project delivering new infrastructure to transform the highway network and significantly enhance traffic flow in the area whilst make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists, and stimulating economic growth in Woking town centre work.

The works range from minor highway changes, resurfacing works and creating new junctions to relocating the existing town centre taxi rank.

The project has improved the town centre for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors. The Woking integrated transport project was funded by developer contributions and a grant of £11m from the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership.

Since 2016 when the project began, Woking Borough Council has achieved much to improve the highway network and create a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrians within Woking town centre. A summary of the works completed is below.

- Created a new public plaza outside Duke's Court with a Green wall and restaurant complete with green roof.
- Created a pedestrian footbridge across the Basingstoke Canal at Chobham Road
- Improvements to Maybury Road junction with Stanley Road.
- Created new bus lane and Town Wharf bus stop along Victoria Way.
- Removed planters and widened Church Path before resurfaced with granite block paving.
- Created new pedestrian public plaza outside railway station.
- Relocated the taxi rank to The Broadway.
- Resurfaced Chapel Street with granite block paving.
- Rebuilt and resurfaced The Broadway and bus bays with granite block paving.
- Reconfigured High Street to a one-way bus lane, widened the pedestrian footpath, incorporated a contra-flow cycle lane and resurfaced the highway.



- Extended High Street and created new junction with Victoria Way.
- Adapted Goldsworth Road to incorporate new box junction and reconfiguration of junction with Victoria Way.
- Rebuilt and resurfaced Stanley Road.

In addition to the above, Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council have jointly developed a number of schemes that will make it easier to travel on foot, by bike and by bus to and from Woking town centre and railway station as part of the Woking Sustainable Transport Package (WSTP). Some of these works have already been completed and some still to be completed. They will:

Support the town centre regeneration and other development planned in Woking Borough, by improving access to the town centre helping to lower traffic congestion

Increase the range of sustainable travel options, which have a lower impact on local air quality and lower carbon emissions

Make it easier, safer and more pleasant to walk and cycle short journeys in Woking, giving more people the opportunity to enjoy healthy, physical activity as part of their everyday travel.

48 Opportunities

There are further opportunities for improvements to transport provision through the Victoria Arch widening scheme. Homes England have provided Woking Borough Council with the opportunity to improve the road and rail infrastructure at Victoria Arch when in 2020, following approval by Woking Borough's elected members a contract was signed between the borough and Homes England to deliver the £115 million (£95 million grant from Homes England) highways enhancement scheme, Woking's biggest infrastructure project to date.

The highways works will comprise of a number of changes to the A320 (Guildford Road) to facilitate better access into and through the town centre. The proposed works include:

North of Victoria Arch (Victoria Square development side of the bridge)

- Widened highway on the western side of Victoria Way.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle link along Victoria Way.
- Left turn moved from Goldsworth Road to Church Street West.

South of Victoria Arch (The Triangle side of the bridge)

- Removal of the one-way gyratory system and replacement two-way dual carriageway.
- Enhanced pedestrian and cycle paths.
- Installation of four new toucan crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Revised junction at Heathside Road to provide a left in and left out to/from Guildford Road.
- Improved informal pedestrian crossing island near York Road to ease access to the bus stop.
- Improved informal pedestrian crossing facilities near Constitution Hill.



49 Constraints

The railway line is a key barrier to travel and transport within Woking town centre. The historic road layout underneath and on either side of the Victoria Arch railway bridge create a pinch-point for traffic resulting in significant peak-time congestion. These issues have restricted local growth and housing development opportunities for many years. Demand for housing in Woking is high, leading to an unmet affordable housing need. Research suggests that developers are willing to develop in Woking, but are restricted by the lack of transport infrastructure which places a significant burden on development viability. It has been a long held aspiration of Woking Borough Council to address these issues by upgrading the highways configuration and widen the Victoria Arch bridge to benefit all users and unlock development sites for much needed town centre housing. Historically, this has been constrained by the substantial investment required to deliver such major improvements and the timely alignment of Network Rail's strategic objectives and resources.

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Deliver the Victoria Arch Widening Scheme which will have the following benefits:

- Substantial improvement to movement within the town centre
- Reduced town centre highway congestion
- Improved cycling and walking facilities linking the town centre under the Victoria Arch to the southern part of Woking town and around the railway station
- Improved sustainable travel mode options to support the climate change agenda
- An enhanced railway bridge, funded and delivered as part of this HIF project, supports future Network Rail objectives such as Woking Station redevelopment, and future Flyover (yet to be given the go ahead by the Department for Transport), will significantly increase passenger capacity on the Wessex Region rail network which will underpin both local and regional growth.
- Improvement to the town centre highway will unlock housing development potential as 13 town centre brownfield sites, which will provide up to 3,304 extra town centre units over and above existing commitments. Affordable housing provision will be included within this allocation.
- Continues the regeneration of Woking town centre, which benefits the wider borough and supports the Council's ambition of being a regional focus of economic prosperity
- The Council will work with Surrey County Council to explore the feasibility of introducing Liveable Neighbourhoods where it is reasonable and justified.
- The Council will work with developers and partners to expand the use of the Transport Plan and promote its benefits in accordance with the policies of the Core Strategy.
- Improve connectivity for walking and cycling including across Victoria Way from Goldsworth Road.
- Enhance connections for cycle access throughout the Town Centre.
- Make it easier, safer and more pleasant to walk, cycle or use pedestrian controlled vehicles, such as mobility scooters to give more people the chance to enjoy healthy, lower carbon and less polluting options as part of their everyday travel.



DELIVERY

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51 Overview

The Masterplan will lead to a continuous process at the Town Centre. In this regard, the delivery of the Masterplan will be continuous, sustained, coordinated and sustainable. There would be barriers and challenges along the way such as national economic factors that are beyond the Council's control, however, the Council will work constructively with its partners to find creative solutions to these challenges.

The key delivery mechanisms for the Masterplan will through:

The Development Management process, ensuring that development proposals are policy compliant and in general conformity with the requirements of the Masterplan and other Supplementary Planning Policy Documents to be acceptable. The Council will not compromise on good quality design;

Ensuring that development is of high environmental standards. Meeting our climate change and environmental standard is a primary objective of the Council to be taken full account;

- The rationalisation of public sector assets to achieve comprehensive development/ redevelopment where necessary;
- The use of compulsory purchase powers and Article 4 Direction where that can reasonably be justified;
- Work with partners to undertake joint venture schemes that has wider community benefits;
- Securing developer contributions to align infrastructure provision to development;
- Public sector investment in infrastructure to create the environment for business investment;
- Engagement with local villages, communities and neighbouring authorities to ensure that their views are considered in the development management process;
- Effective engagement with councillors to ensure that their views are considered in the development management process.
- The changes envisaged in the Town Centre will require more than physical intervention, it will also require partnership working, promotion and branding of the opportunities that exists at the Town Centre.

