

A VISION FOR CHESHAM

Stage 2 report, February 2018



**Chesham Renaissance
Community Interest Company**

**Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners**



Thickdiffe Cottages

Cromwell Terrace

Lincoln Place

Police Station

Flint Cottages

Chapman's Farm

Friends Meeting Hall

Smithy

Three Tuns

The Elms

Brewery

Blucher Terrace

Baptist Chapel

Congregational Chapel

Skottowe's Pond

CHESHAM

Brewery

S. Mary's Ch.

Baptist Chapel

Baptist Chapel

Weylands

Duck Alley

H.M. 330,6

Alms-houses

Hospital

School

Boat House

Germain's Cottage

Cottages



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INTRODUCTION

As part of Chiltern District Council and South Bucks District Councils' emerging Joint Local Plan, Chesham has been identified for significant growth in housing numbers over the coming 20 years. The town is a commercial centre for the District and is well connected to central London through the Metropolitan Line, both of which make it more suitable for new homes than other areas in the district.

This Document has been prepared for Chesham Renaissance Community Interest Company, a local organisation which has been established to promote and develop Chesham as a thriving town in ways which benefit its attractive historic character.

The Vision for Chesham sets out a high-level approach and set of principles to help guide new development in the town, to help ensure it provides a range of high quality new homes; strengthens the vitality and character of Chesham Town Centre; and supports a strong industry and employment base for the town.

A number of placemaking propositions are identified, which show how new development could come forward. These reflect the key principles and are provided as examples rather than 'fixed' plans. However, the propositions demonstrate that new development can be used to enhance Chesham town centre and support regeneration principles, whilst protecting surrounding Green Belt areas as far as possible.

The Vision will inform a masterplan for Chesham, to be developed within the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan policy framework. This will take account of physical and policy constraints and will translate the high level objectives and propositions from the Vision into more detailed spatial plans for the town.

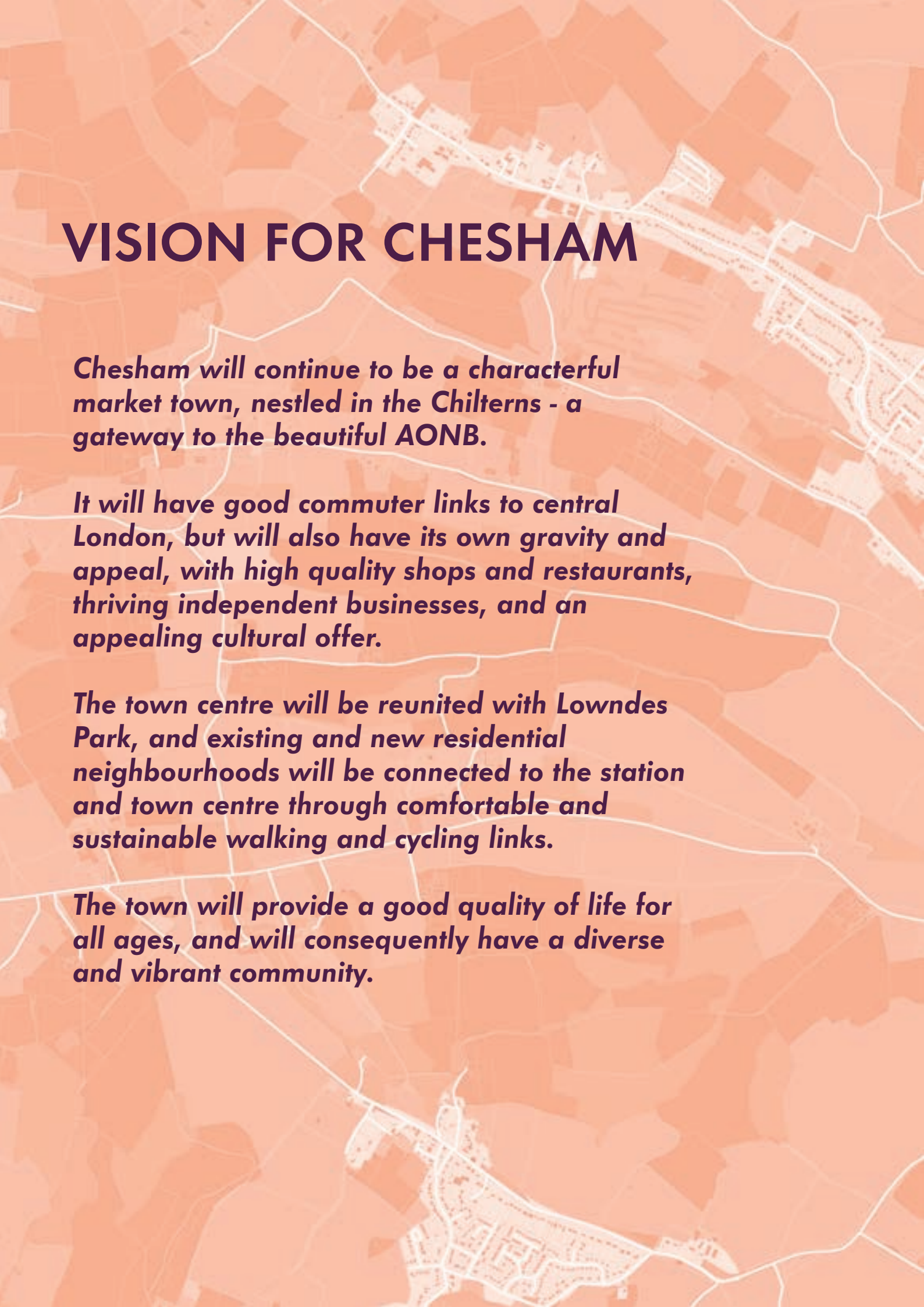


OUR IDEA FOR CHESHAM

Our Vision is to reinforce and repair Chesham's historic centre with new development and public realm improvements that enhance the existing attractive character of the place.

Mechanisms such as consolidating parking and relocating industrial uses out of the town centre will release land to enable new development for housing, business and community infrastructure. This will reinforce the vitality and sustainability of the town centre, and should also help to reduce the pressure for new housing land in the Green Belt where it would be less sustainable.



An aerial map of Chesham, UK, showing the town's layout, roads, and surrounding countryside. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The town is situated in a valley, with roads radiating outwards to the surrounding fields and villages.

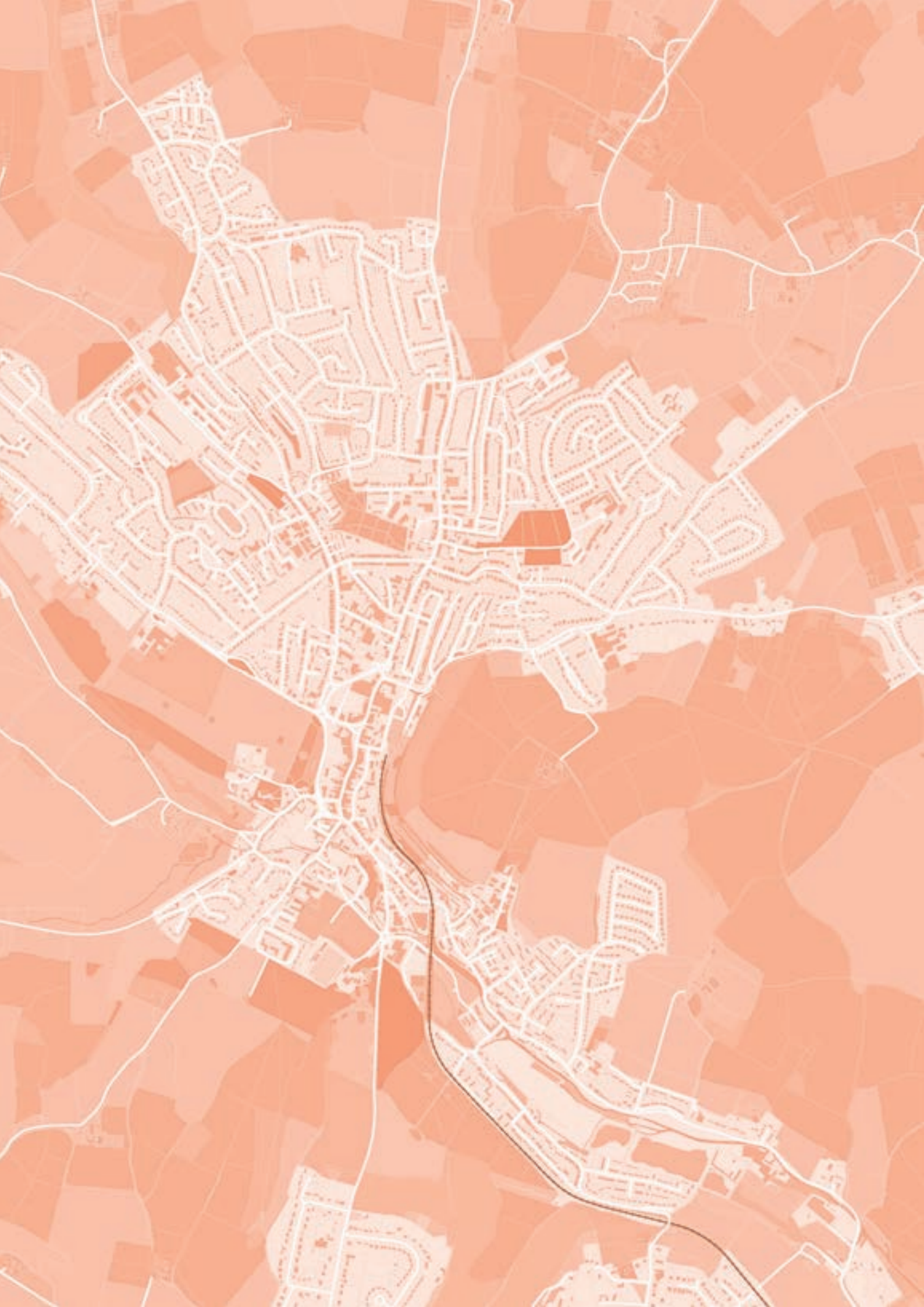
VISION FOR CHESHAM

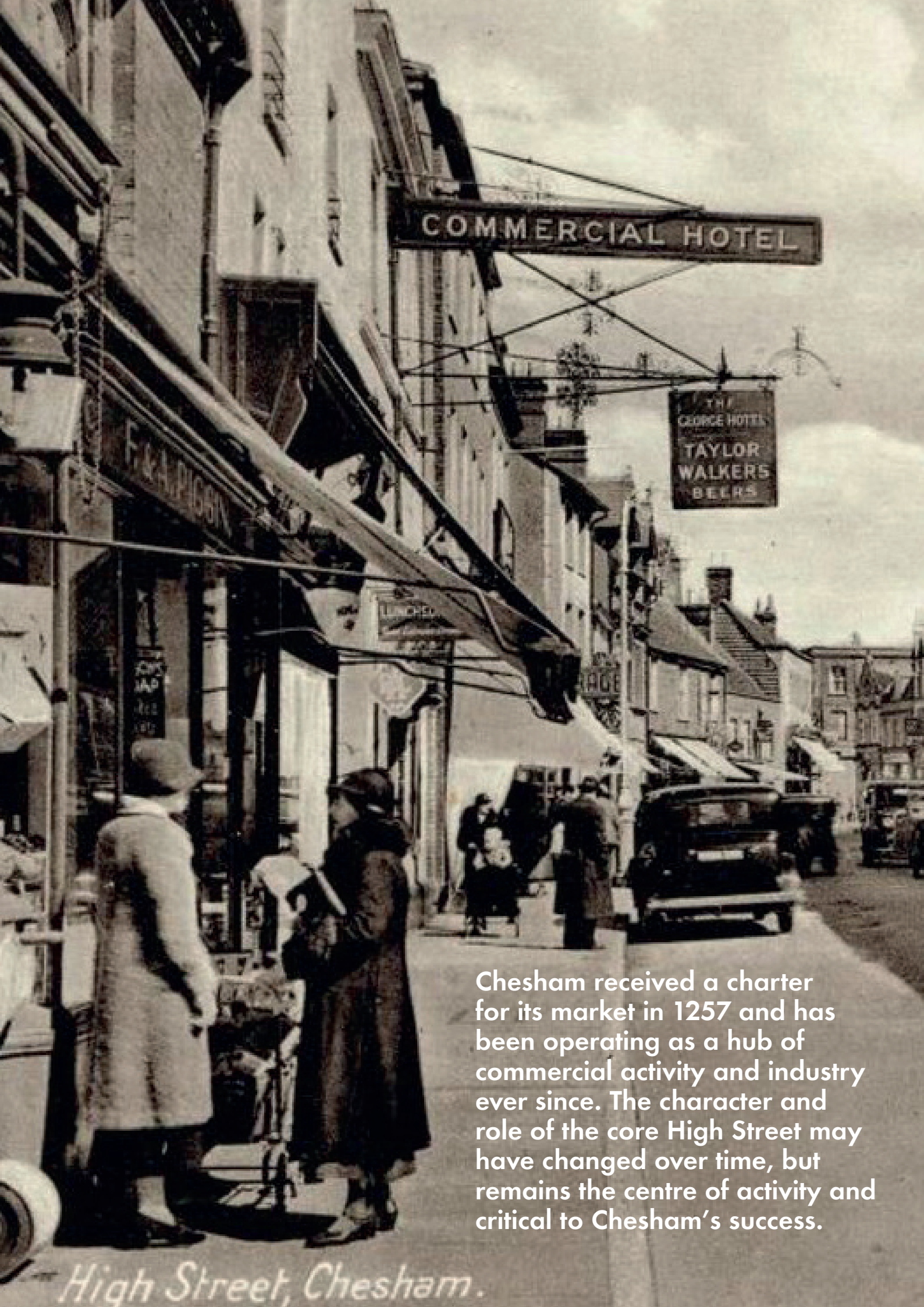
Chesham will continue to be a characterful market town, nestled in the Chilterns - a gateway to the beautiful AONB.

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

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

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



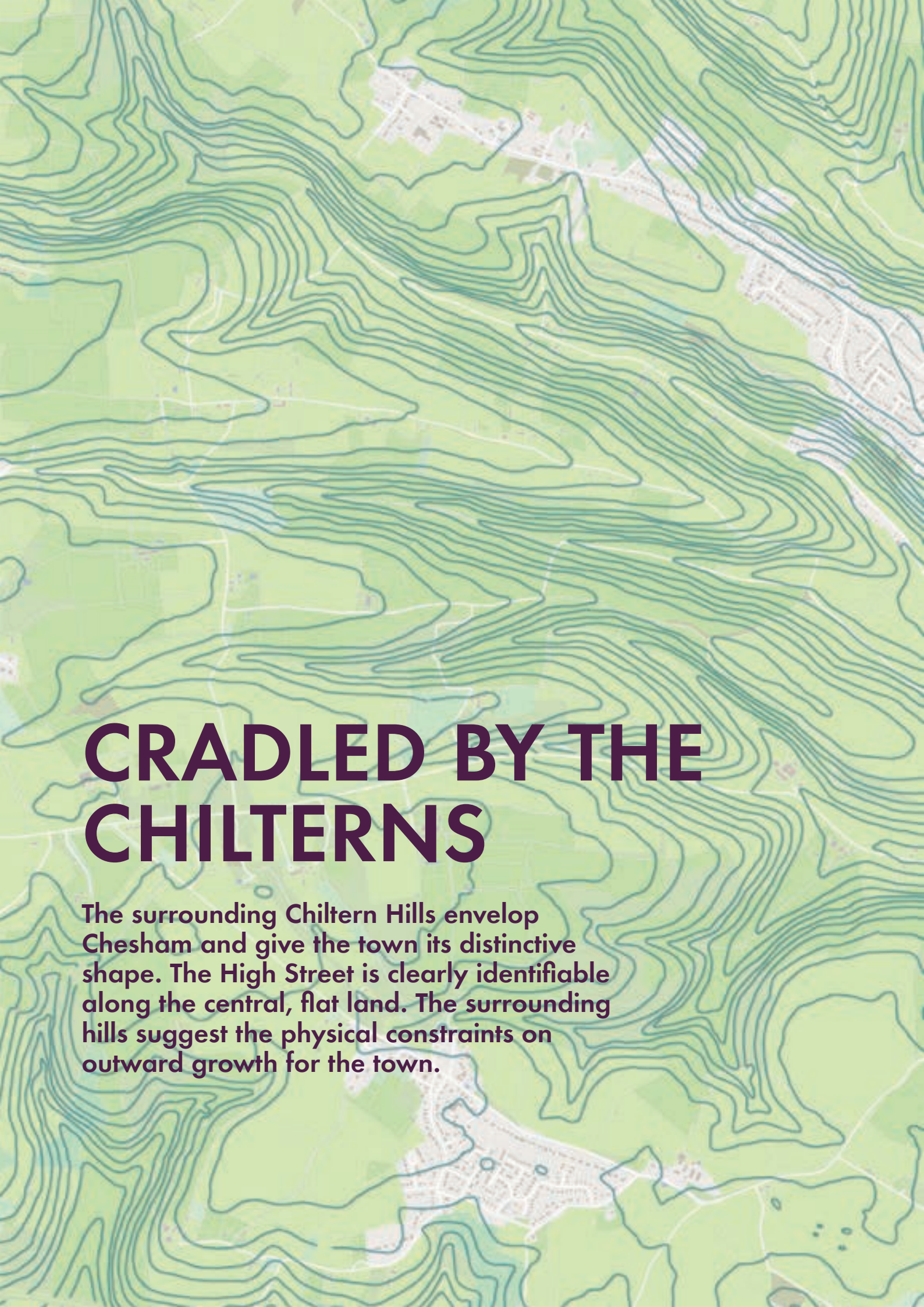


Chesham received a charter for its market in 1257 and has been operating as a hub of commercial activity and industry ever since. The character and role of the core High Street may have changed over time, but remains the centre of activity and critical to Chesham's success.

High Street, Chesham.

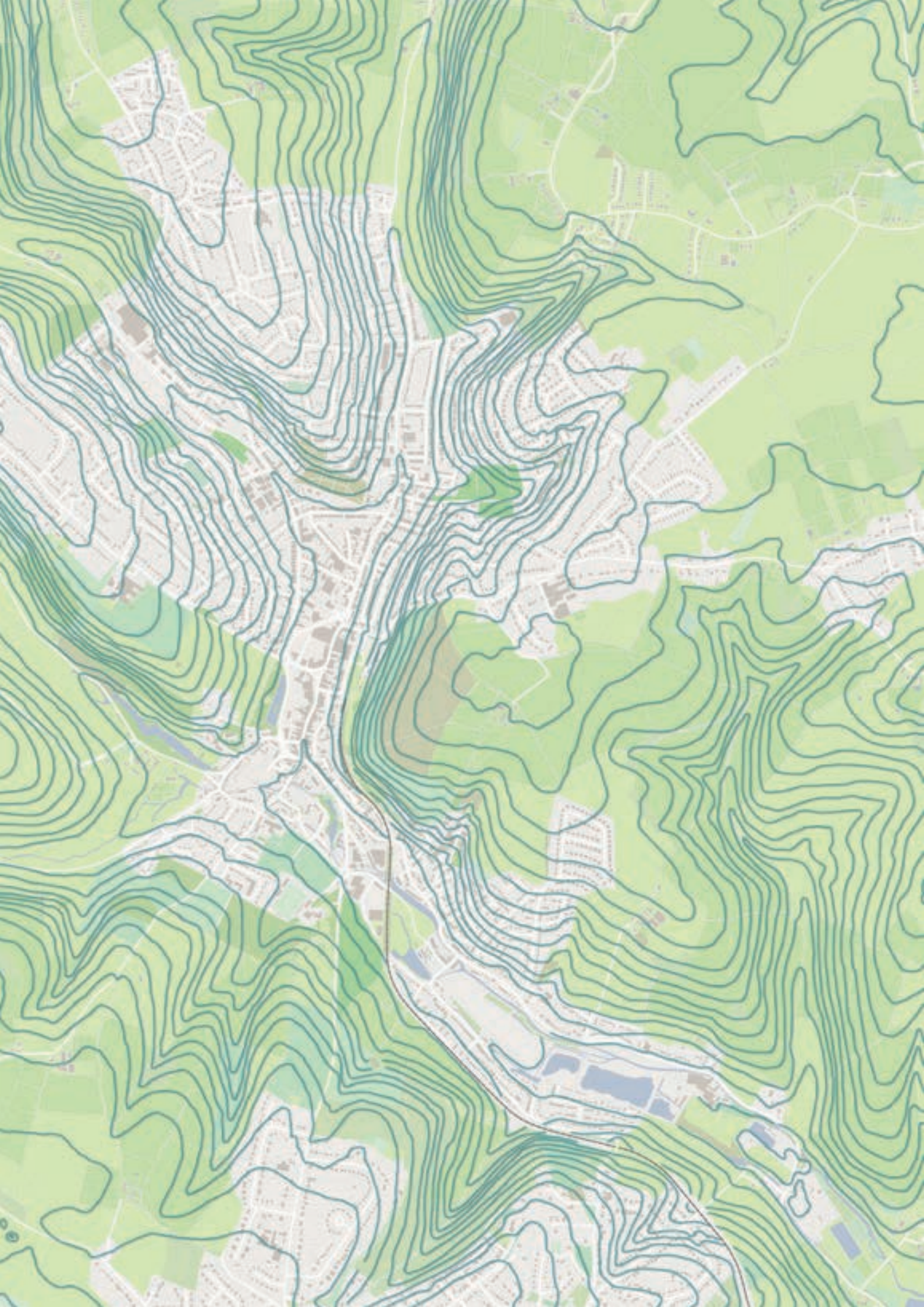


AN HISTORIC MARKET TOWN

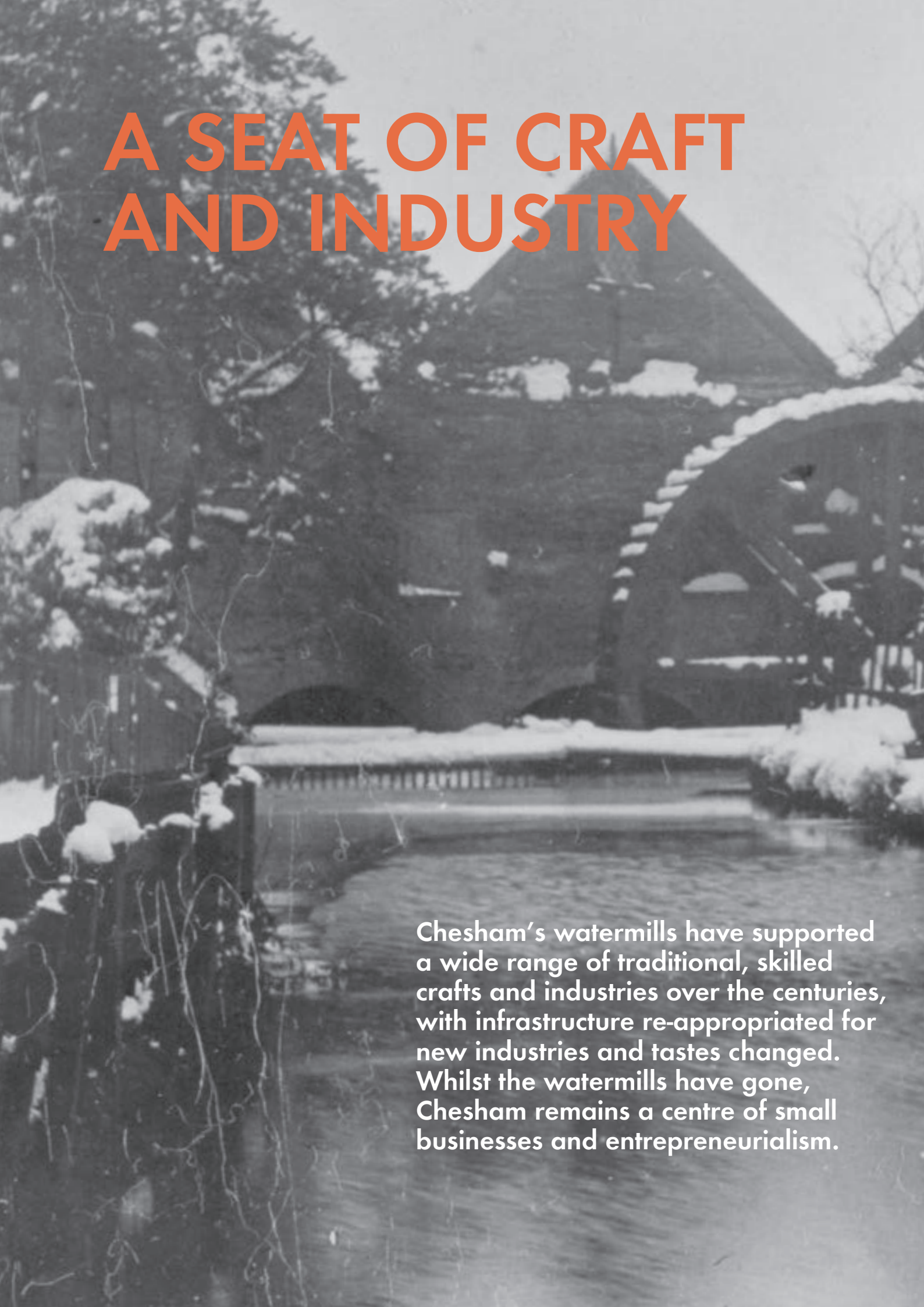


CRADLED BY THE CHILTERN

The surrounding Chiltern Hills envelop Chesham and give the town its distinctive shape. The High Street is clearly identifiable along the central, flat land. The surrounding hills suggest the physical constraints on outward growth for the town.

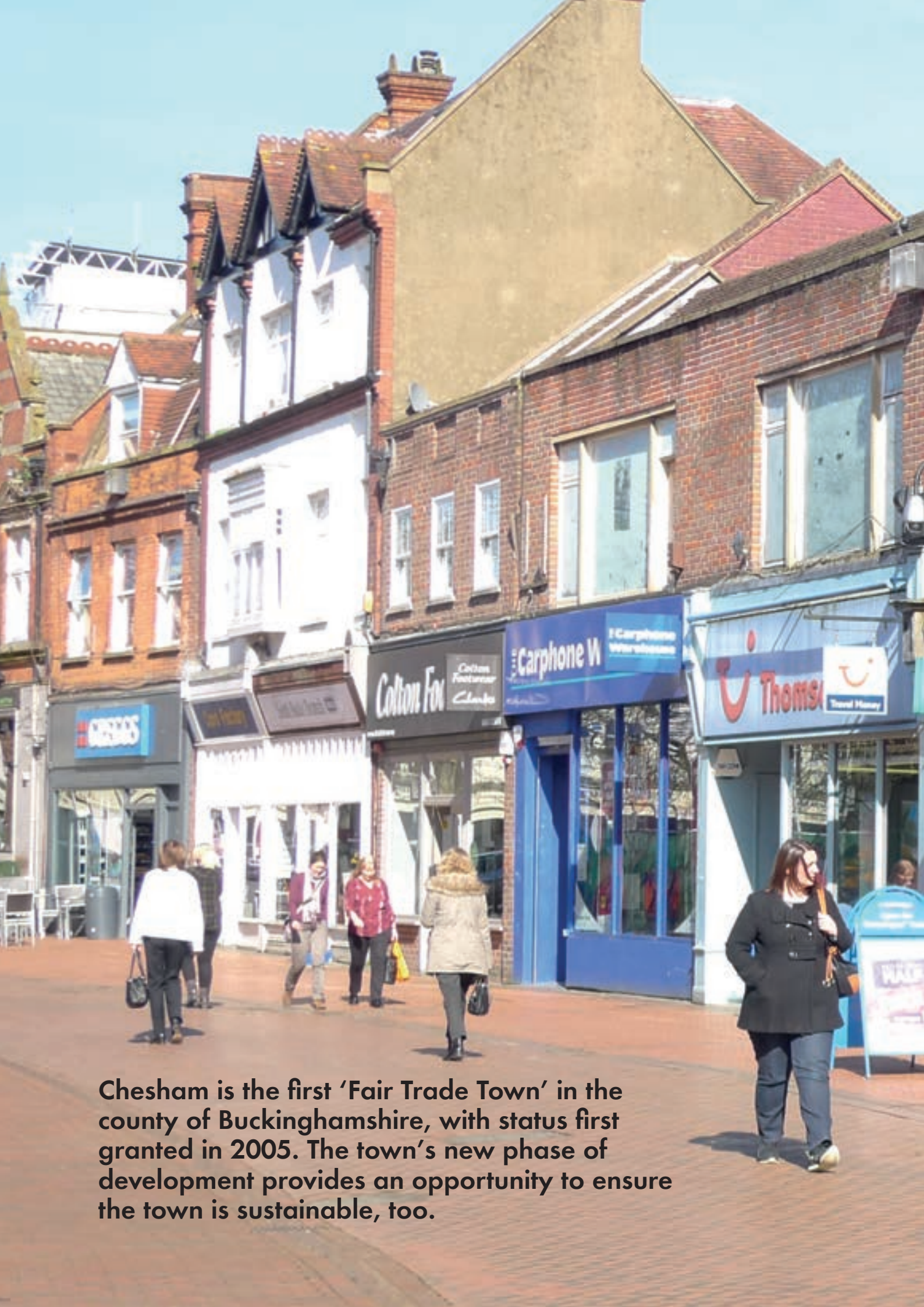


A SEAT OF CRAFT AND INDUSTRY



Chesham's watermills have supported a wide range of traditional, skilled crafts and industries over the centuries, with infrastructure re-appropriated for new industries and tastes changed. Whilst the watermills have gone, Chesham remains a centre of small businesses and entrepreneurialism.





Chesham is the first 'Fair Trade Town' in the county of Buckinghamshire, with status first granted in 2005. The town's new phase of development provides an opportunity to ensure the town is sustainable, too.

FAIRTRADE AND SUSTAINABLE



CHESHAM'S STORY

JOB

Farming

Paper making
Straw plaiting
lace making

Flour mills
Clothmaking
Woodworking

Tanneries opened:
Boots, saddle and
glove making

HOME

Workers cottages
around the mills

Paupers
workhouses

Artisans housing
built into the valley

Farmsteads

1257

1600

1700

1800

1867-9

Royal charter
for market

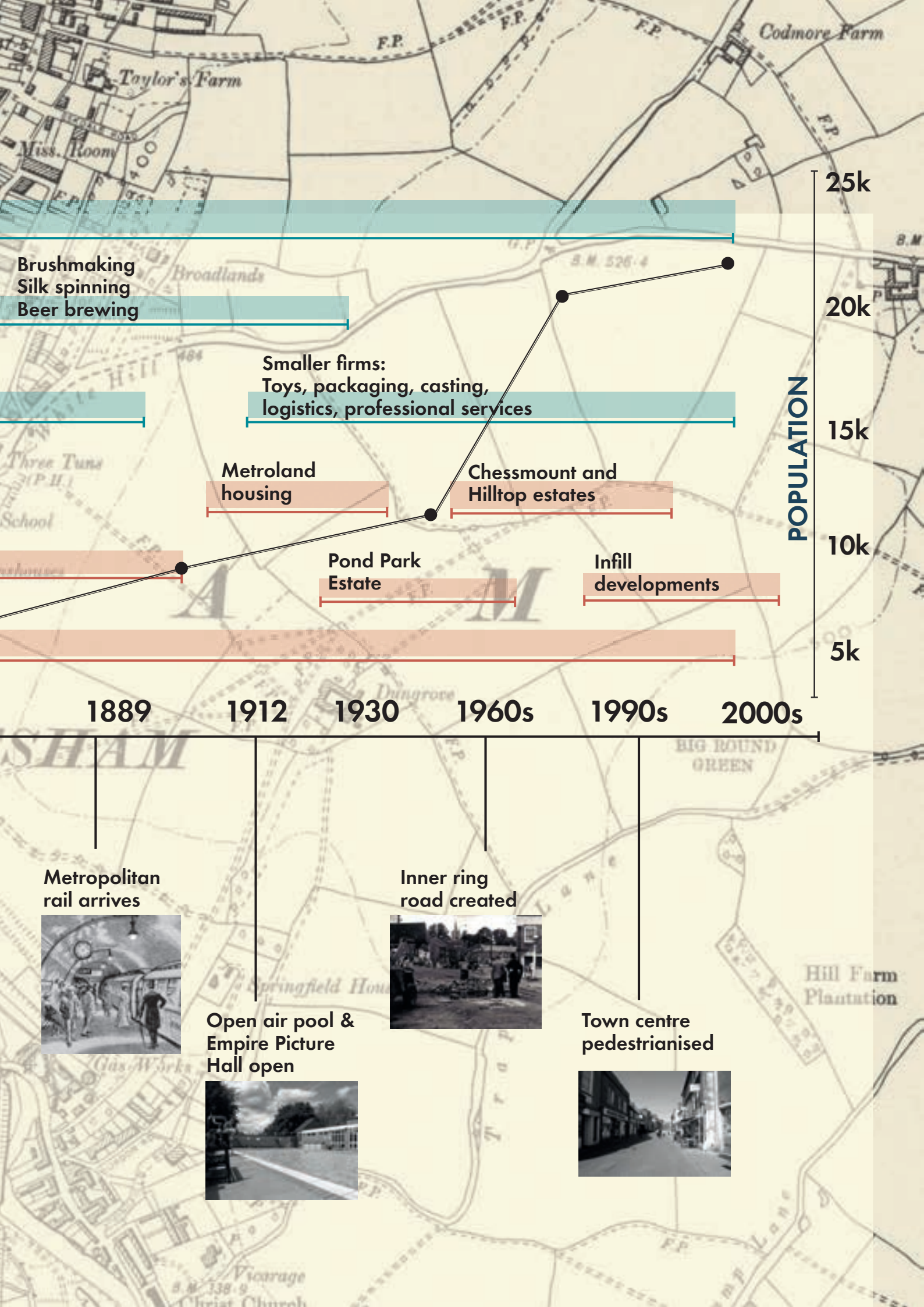


Watermills
prompt industry



Christ Church
and Cottage
Hospital open





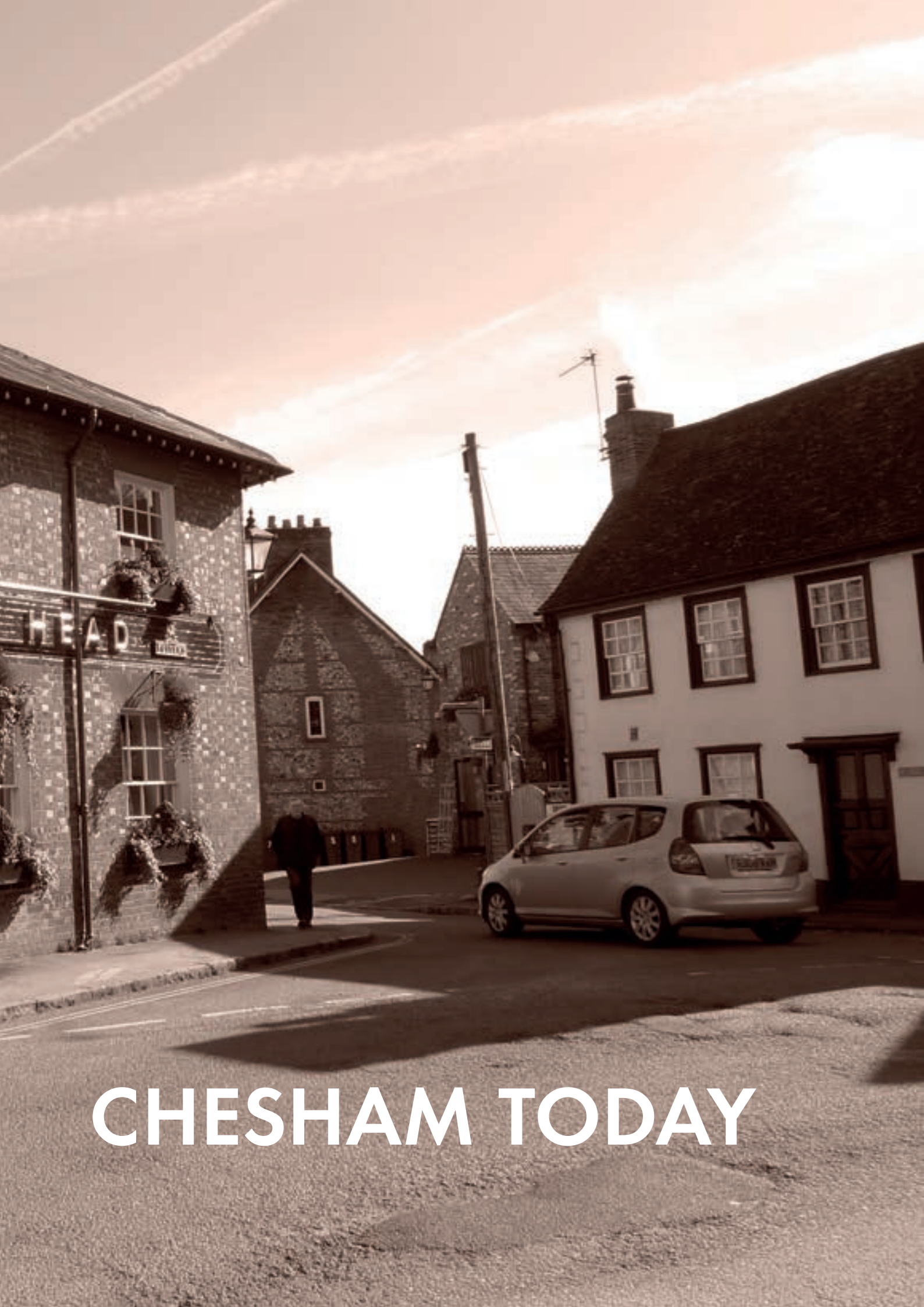


FOLLERS THE QUEENS

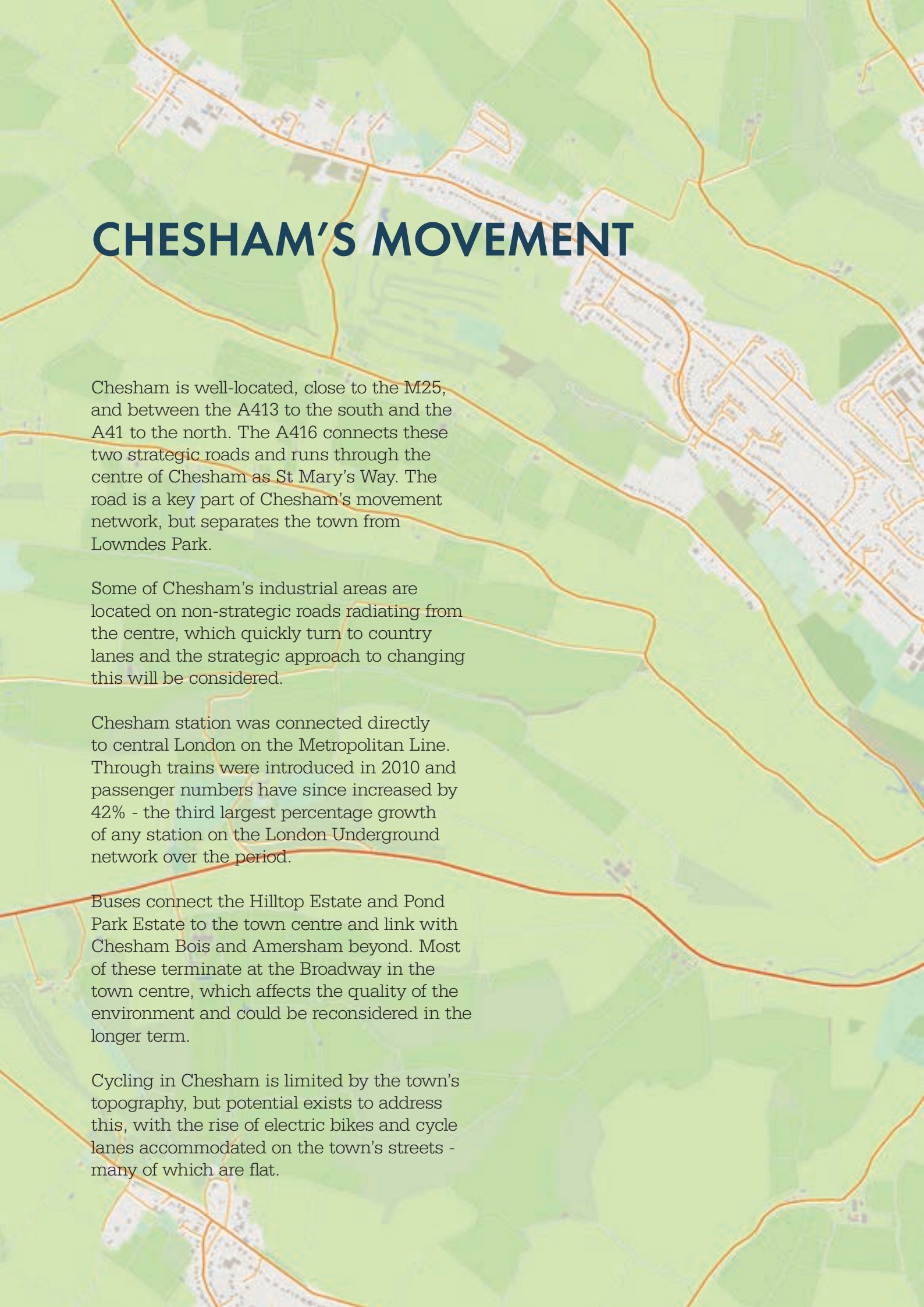
CHURCH STREET



WILKES COTTAGE



CHESHAM TODAY



CHESHAM'S MOVEMENT

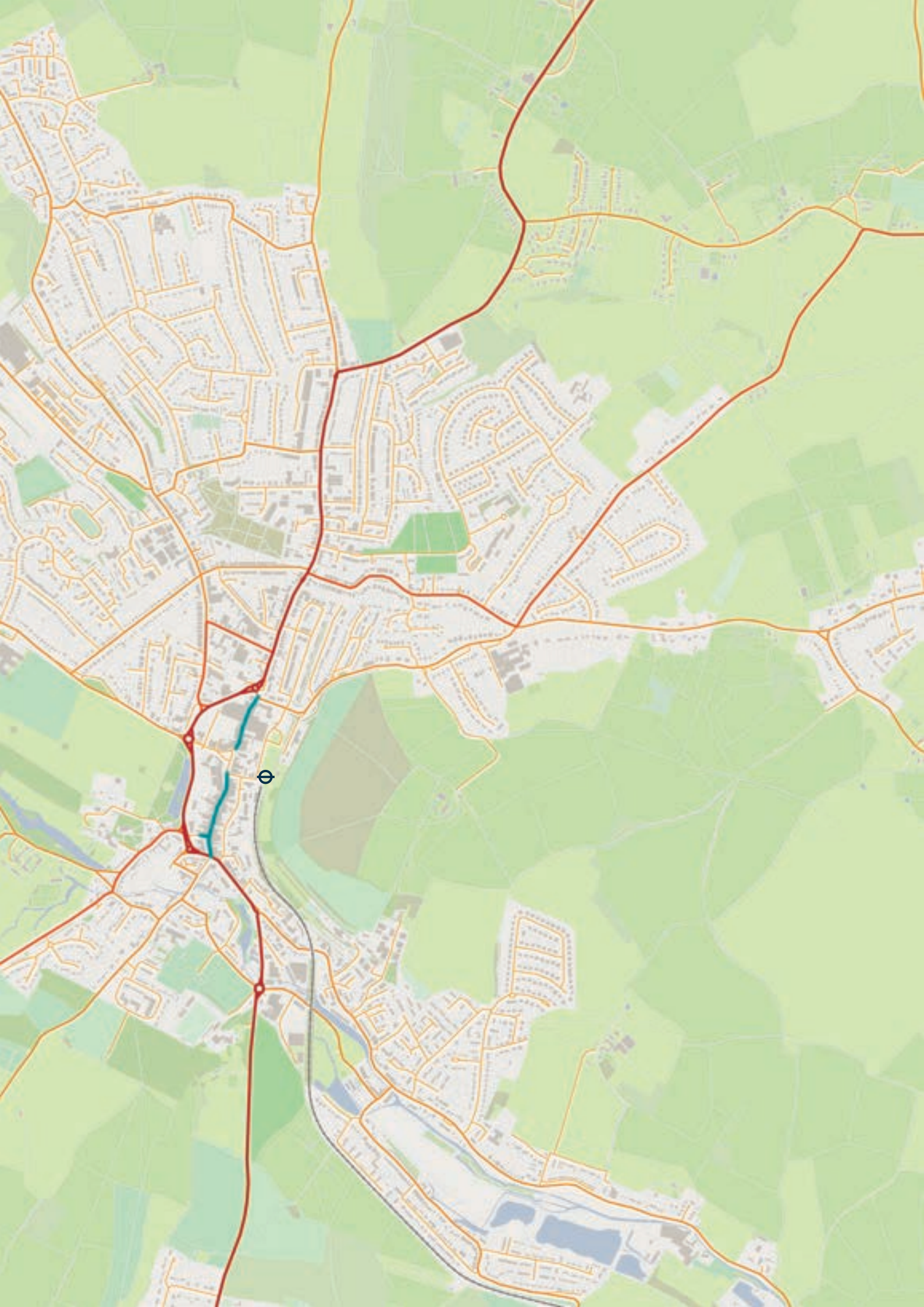
Chesham is well-located, close to the M25, and between the A413 to the south and the A41 to the north. The A416 connects these two strategic roads and runs through the centre of Chesham as St Mary's Way. The road is a key part of Chesham's movement network, but separates the town from Lowndes Park.

Some of Chesham's industrial areas are located on non-strategic roads radiating from the centre, which quickly turn to country lanes and the strategic approach to changing this will be considered.

Chesham station was connected directly to central London on the Metropolitan Line. Through trains were introduced in 2010 and passenger numbers have since increased by 42% - the third largest percentage growth of any station on the London Underground network over the period.

Buses connect the Hilltop Estate and Pond Park Estate to the town centre and link with Chesham Bois and Amersham beyond. Most of these terminate at the Broadway in the town centre, which affects the quality of the environment and could be reconsidered in the longer term.

Cycling in Chesham is limited by the town's topography, but potential exists to address this, with the rise of electric bikes and cycle lanes accommodated on the town's streets - many of which are flat.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Heritage setting

Chesham's attractive historic environment is reflected in the fact that much of the town centre is covered by a Conservation Area, which also takes in the Old Town and Pednor Road. Within this, and beyond it, Chesham has a number of listed buildings, and a scheduled monument in Lowndes Park.

These buildings provide an engaging environment and a shared history for Chesham and should be a central consideration for new development in the town.

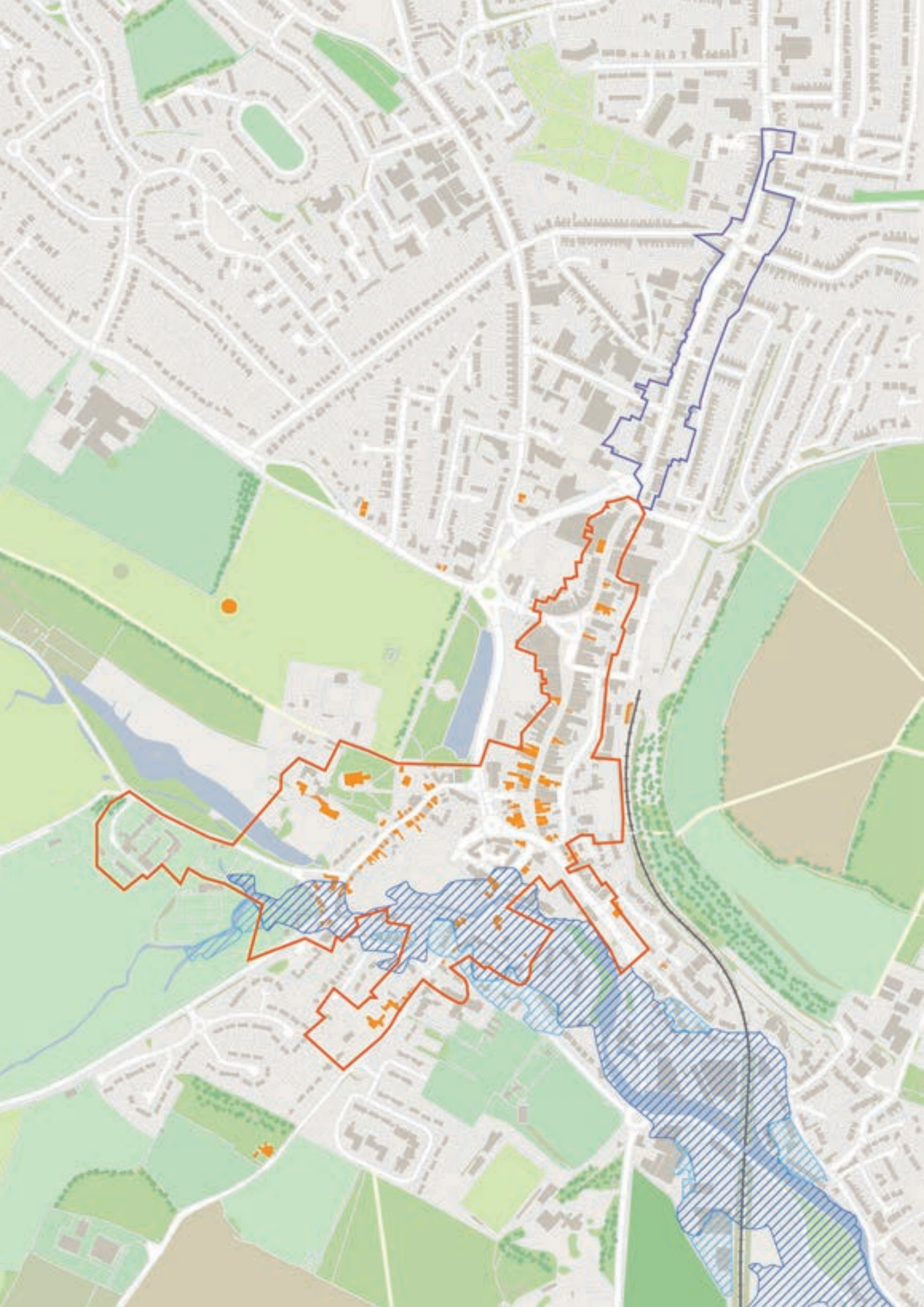
Flood Risk

A large part of the southern section of the town is covered by flood zones 2, 3a and 3b, which will influence the type of development suitable for these areas, particularly in terms of ground floor uses. The Environment Agency is developing a flood alleviation scheme for Chesham, which could involve de-culverting the waterway to the east of St Mary's Way and establishing this as an open waterway in future landscaping proposals.

Air quality management zone

Broad Street has been identified as a registered air quality management zone and new development should not place greater vehicular traffic pressure on this road. A shift to hybrid and electric cars and location of uses to limit car use will all help this.





HOMES FOR ALL

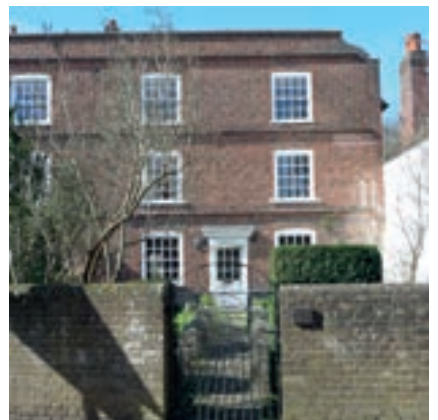
Chesham has a range of buildings which vary in age, character and typology.

The historic core of the town comprises largely Georgian and Victorian buildings, with some older examples, particularly to the south of the existing High Street.

The arrival of the Metropolitan Line stimulated a wave of Edwardian and subsequently interwar 'Metroland' housing. Residential estates including Pond Park and Hilltop are also a notable part of the town, and are influenced by the garden city movements in terms of their layout and building typology.

Housing patterns reflect the waves of development that Chesham has experienced over time. The limited remaining space in and around the town for new homes is also reflected in recent developments, which have tended to be small infill sites and permitted development office conversions.

The range of homes provides for people at different life stages and with different budgets, helping to give Chesham a well-balanced community. New homes should continue this pattern, providing for young families, but also for older people wishing to downsize or in need of care and support.



GREEN AND PLEASANT

Chesham's relationship with the surrounding Chiltern Hills is one of its defining characteristics. The town's next phase of development presents an opportunity to preserve and enhance this relationship, maintaining clear space between rooflines and the horizon and framing views at the local level. Preserving and promoting footpaths from the town that connect walkers to the Chilterns Way and other walking routes will also help to make the most of one of Chesham's greatest landscape assets.

Lowndes Park is close to the town centre and provides a range of facilities, including Skottowe's Pond, Chesham Bowling Club, a skateboard park and a community orchard. However, the park is disconnected from the town centre by St Mary's Way, and would also benefit from investment around the pond. With a larger residential community, the role of the Park will become more important, and will be a priority for public or lottery funding as this becomes available.

The location of Chesham's historic core in the bottom of the valley also speaks of the town's reliance on watercourses and their usefulness for mills, brewing and other crafts. The watercourses remain an attractive aspect of the town, albeit they are frequently dry due to water extraction.



YARDS AND PASSAGES

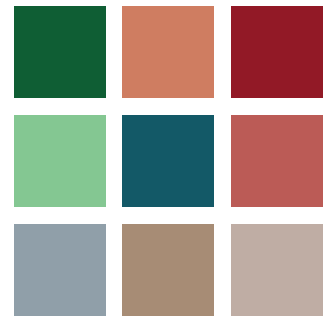
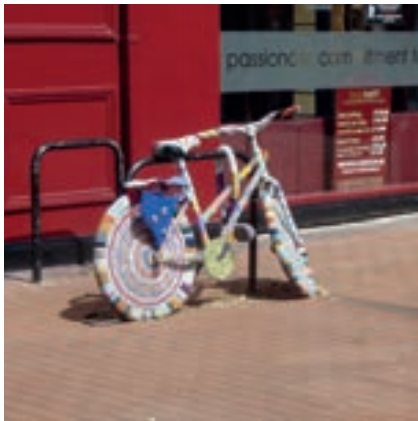
The yards and passages perpendicular to Chesham High Street are another distinctive characteristic of the town centre's historic bone structure. These yards link back to service areas and parking, but may have been populated with small shops, businesses and homes, many of which bring life and interest.

The yards provide an important opportunity for townscape improvement rooted in the historic character of Chesham. Developments on either side of the High Street should reflect this form, making new connections and adding to the rich historic character in a sensitive way.



PALETTE AND TEXTURE





CUES FROM THE PAST

The High Street

Chesham's High Street has long been the centre of activity in the town, and has seen many changes over the centuries, including the introduction of cars and the later removal of these with the pedestrianisation of the town centre.

Many of the same buildings are still in the frame, though some have changed. It is interesting to note the continuous materials on the High Street today, give the perception of a narrower street than the pavements and road of earlier eras.





The Broadway

Historic photos show that The Broadway has always been a 'turning circle' for Chesham town centre, whether for horse and carriages, car or the buses that use it today.

The historic photographs demonstrate that most of the buildings around the space have remained largely unchanged for many decades. The few exceptions such as the Superdrug building, which was developed in place of the former cinema, provide an opportunity for sensitive infill development.

Today the space is an ambiguous combination of shared space and bus stops, and future investment can help to clarify the role of the space, perhaps with more generous pavements for shops and businesses, and buses moved elsewhere.



CUES FROM THE PAST

St Mary's Way

At one time, St Mary's Church was directly connected to the town centre and its parish, with Church Street connecting into the High Street. Roads were dug up during the 1960s and the St Mary's Way dual carriageway established, which prevents pedestrians walking between the two areas through the introduction of railings and a car dominated environment.

Reconnecting St Mary's Church - and the Park - to the High Street for pedestrians would result in a far more integrated town centre.





Lowndes Park

The historic Lowndes Park has been an integral part of Chesham's town centre, connected by direct routes and with the backs of High Street plots overlooking the lake.

The development of St Mary's Way largely severed that connection due to the width of the road and the major roundabouts. The erection of the wall on the eastern side of the road to reduce noise further cut off the visual connection.

The opportunity to re-think the character of the road could make a significant difference in restoring the links between the town and its park.



A TIGHTLY BOUND SETTLEMENT

Chesham is tightly bound by the Green Belt designation, which hugs the settlement boundary on all sides, and at some points, such as in the northwest at Chartridge Lane, envelops the settlement.

The town is also surrounded by the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB), which does not enclose the settlement quite so tightly, but affects land immediately beyond the town extents in all but the north east and a small area to the south west.

Chiltern District Council has been through a detailed Green Belt Review and has identified an area to the north east of the town as possibly being suitable for release in the future, to accommodate new homes.



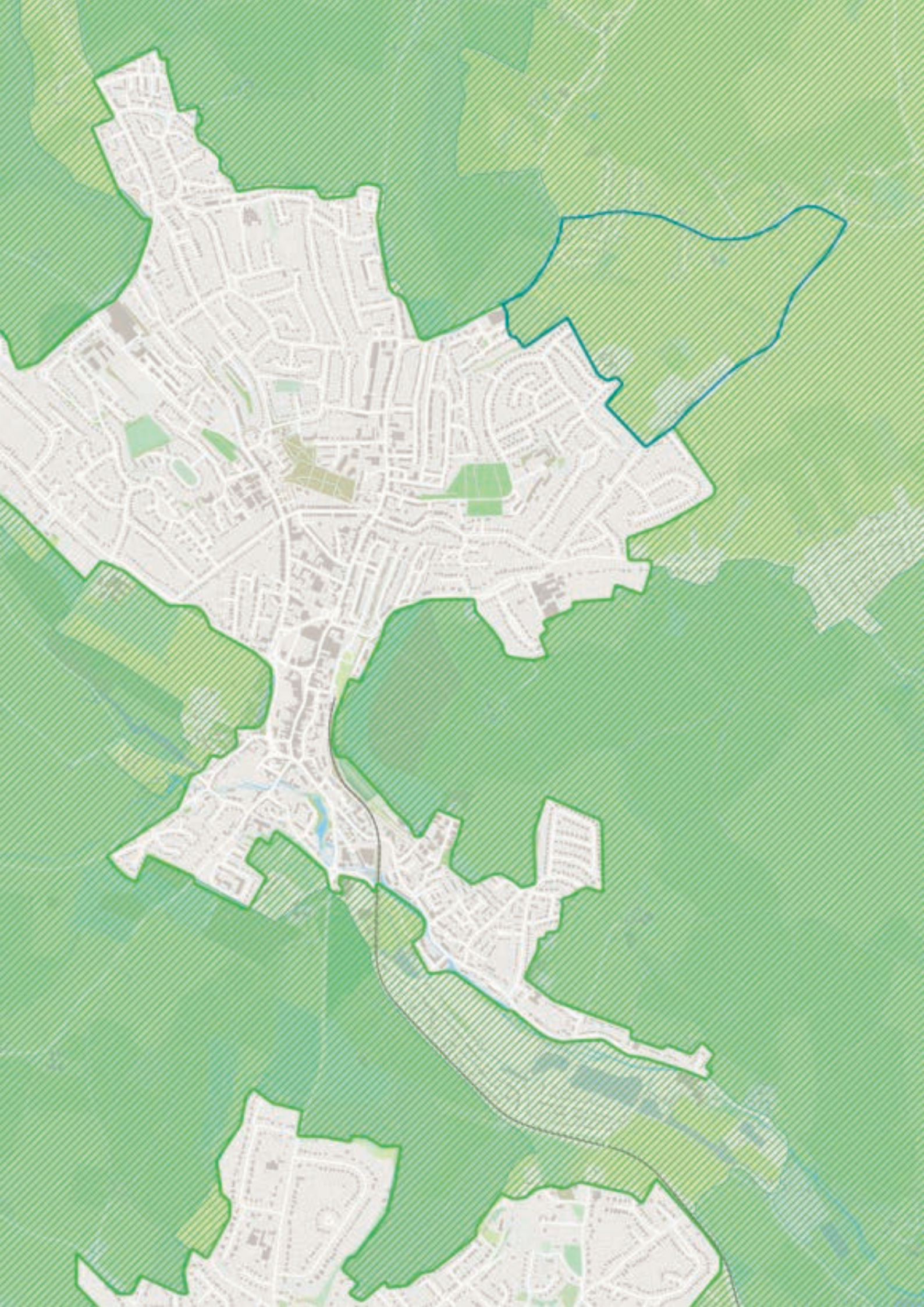
Green Belt land



AONB



**Proposed area for
Green Belt release**



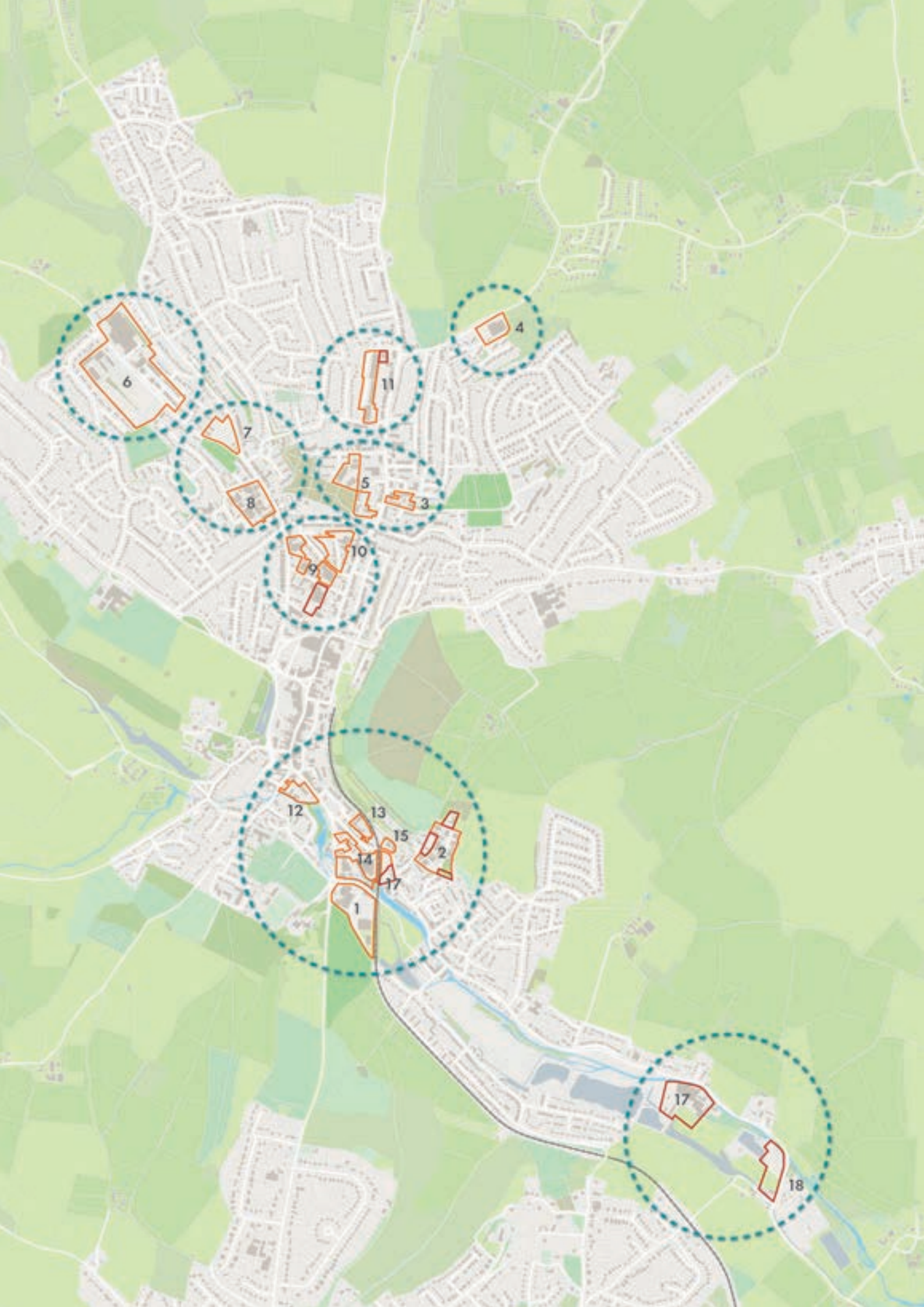
CHESHAM'S INDUSTRY

Chesham has a significant number of employment sites, including historic factory buildings in the town centre, such as at Waterside and Higham Mead, and larger footprint buildings further from the town centre.

Planning for new growth presents an opportunity to review the pattern and hierarchy of industry in the town. This can help to remove HGVs from the town centre and locate them on sites with better access for larger footprint uses. It can also ensure that Small and Medium Businesses (SMEs) without this need can remain in the town centre to support its vitality.



Employment Sites	Site clusters
1	Chess Business Park, Moor Road
2	Springfield Road Industrial Estate, Hospital Hill
3	Cameron Road
4	Preston Hill / Nashleigh Hill
5	Alma Road Industrial Estate and Crown & Mead Business Centres
6	Ashridge Road
7	Ashridge Road/Hivings Hill
8	Bellingdon Road/Deaneway
9	Higham Road /Townsend Road/ Bellingdon Road
10	Higham Mead
11	Howard Industrial Estate, Chilton Road
12	Chess House, Red Lion Street/ Germain Street
13	Waterside Business Park, Waterside
14	Waterside/Mineral Lane/Moor Road (North Side)
15	Chiltem House, Waterside
16	Saxeway Business Park, Chateridge Lane
17	Decco site, Latimer Road
18	Recycling Centre, Latimer Road
19	Jewson site, Hyde End
20	Middlegrove Farm, Hyde End



6

4

11

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8

5

3

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12

13

15

2

14

1

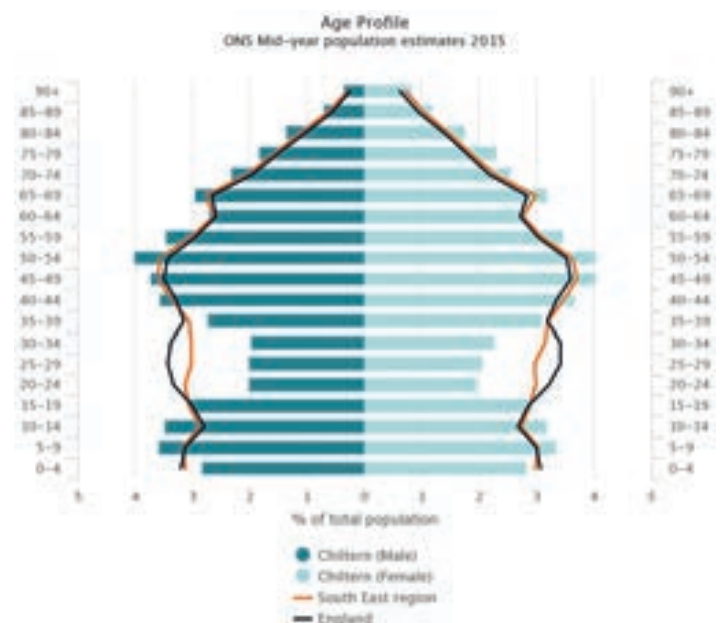
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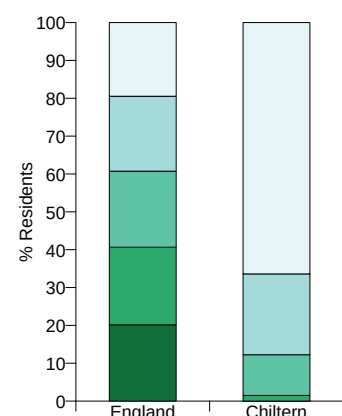
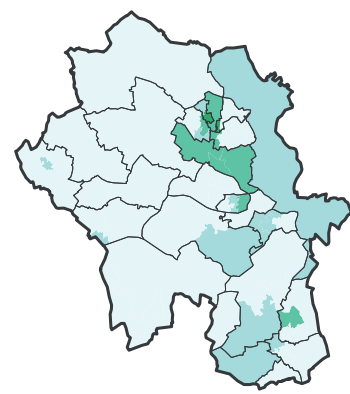
IMPROVING COMMUNITY LIFE

Demographic studies show that Chesham has a relatively high number of children aged between 5 and 14, and a relatively high number of adults from age 44 upwards. This indicates a large proportion of families in the town and a large proportion of retired people. The town has a significantly lower proportion of 20-39 year olds, suggesting people leave the town for higher education or to start work and live in London or other cities through their 20s and 30s. New homes will be planned to cater for Chesham's community, to ensure the right mix and affordability.

Whilst Chesham is relatively affluent on a national level, it does stand out as having relatively high levels of deprivation within the Chiltern District. Residential areas to the north of the centre, such as the Pond Park Estate have lower income and employment levels. However, the most striking results are the relative 'barriers to housing and services' for the rural areas surrounding Chesham, which are in the top 7% most deprived in the country.



Chesham's demography (PHE profile sheet 2016)
Source ONS



Right: Chiltern's IMD summary, including Chesham (IMD data 2015)



Employment deprivation (IMD data 2015)



Income deprivation (IMD data 2015)



Education and skills deprivation (IMD data 2015)



Barriers to housing and services (IMD data 2015)

PRINCIPLES FOR GROWTH





TOWN LIFE

1 Focus shops on the High Street



Like many market towns, the shift in shopping patterns has led to gaps in Chesham's provision. Consolidating shops in a central area will ensure this area is active and successful.

2 Develop evening economy clusters



Chesham has a potential evening economy. These uses will be clustered in areas with options for outdoor seating to animate the centre in the evening and support cultural uses.

3 Integrate the theatre with the centre



The Elgiva Theatre can be far better integrated with the town centre, with strong pedestrian connections and a front door presence to the street.

4 Create a civic cluster



The Town Hall and Library buildings are both in need of renewal, and are described as not fit for purpose. These can potentially be reprovided, together, creating a civic cluster and freeing up space for new homes.

An aerial map of a town with various buildings and roads. A thick orange line with arrows indicates a route starting from a central area and moving towards the bottom of the map. Several blue dashed circles are placed along this route, highlighting specific locations. Some buildings are outlined in black, and others are shaded in grey. The map shows a mix of urban and semi-urban areas.

5 Relocate 'bad neighbour' industry

Industry that relies on HGV access and is noisy can be relocated from the town centre, to more accessible locations on routes into the town centre.

TOWN LIFE



6

Curate the town centre with pop-up uses

Chesham's popular market provides a good base for curating activity in the town centre through events and performances. This can be focused on the High Street, but also on sites identified for development in the short term. Plenty of examples exist elsewhere of unused buildings and sites being put to good use, such as Today Bread, pictured.



7

Revive the craft industries

The beer brewing, fabric weaving and carpentry of Chesham's heritage are all crafts which are being revived as cottage industries across the country. Brewing has returned with Haresfoot at Nashleigh Hill and others could follow.

8

Retain SME knowledge businesses in the town centre

Chiltern House is a good example of Chesham's historic industry buildings being re-purposed for today's knowledge economy. Other central buildings such as at Higham Mead and Higham Road hold huge potential for similar adaptation.



chiltern house

PROVIDING NEW HOMES

1

Prioritise homes in the town centre

Locating the bulk of new housing on the outskirts of Chesham will create commuting car journeys and shopping car journeys to the town centre. It will also require greater land take for lower density homes. For this reason, new homes will be prioritised first in the town centre, as part of a wider plan to relocate some industry away from the centre.

2

Redevelop poor quality buildings

Not all of Chesham's buildings are historic, attractive or high quality. Some lower grade buildings exist which have a negative impact on the townscape and make poor use of sometimes central sites. These buildings can be replaced to provide new homes and enhance the character of the town.

3

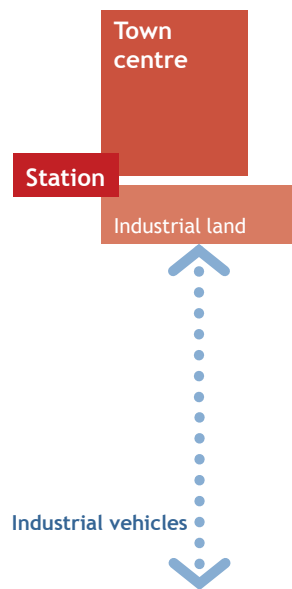
Make use of former industrial sites

If large footprint 'bad neighbour' industries can be relocated to more accessible locations on approach roads to the town centre, then these sites can be freed up to accommodate homes, which can reflect the scale of previous buildings, and be of higher density without necessarily being 'tall'.

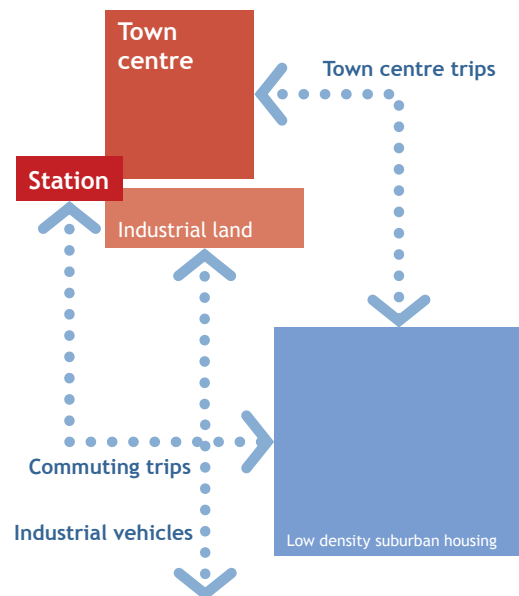
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Promote 'living above the shop'

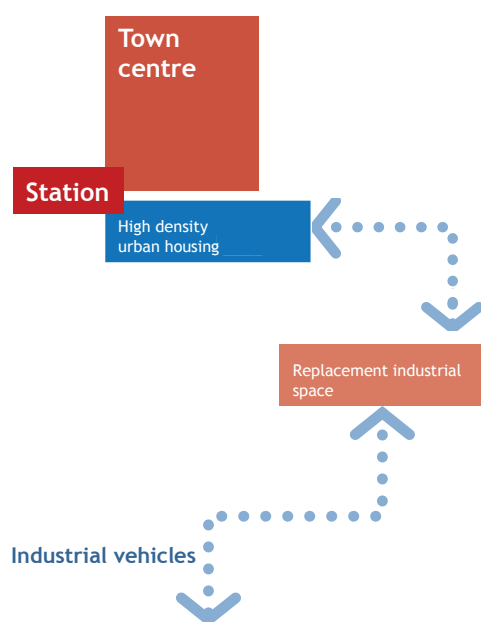
Some buildings on the High Street and in surrounding streets have under-used upper floors, which are either vacant or used as storage. Whilst Chesham's upper floors are more active than in other market towns, it is important to ensure all housing opportunities are used in a period of pronounced housing demand.



The existing pattern of uses in Chesham mean that HGVs regularly travel in and out of the town centre.



The proposals in existing planning policy develop new housing on green belt land outside the town centre, generating shopping and commuting trips by car whilst HGVs continue to travel in and out of the town centre.



The concept is to relocate industrial uses out of the town centre to sites where they can be more easily accessed. This releases land in the town centre for higher density housing and business space which generates fewer car trips and contributes to the vitality and sustainability of the town centre.

PROVIDING NEW HOMES

5

Exploit backland and parking areas

Chesham has a number of 'backland' areas and large surface car parks that could be used far more efficiently and attractively for new homes, once parking is consolidated elsewhere. This approach need not reduce the number of public parking spaces, simply make better use of the space available.

6

Ensure a broad mix of homes

Homes will cater to young families, people taking their first step on the housing ladder and those moving on. They should also cater to the private ownership and private rented sector (PRS) to ensure that they are available to as many people as possible.

7

Provide homes for older people

Chesham has a particular need for homes for older people who are wishing to downsize or move into an environment with care and support whilst retaining their independence. These homes will be close to the town centre and accessible in design.

Providing this sort of age-appropriate housing will also help to free up existing family homes for occupation.



New homes can be at a range of densities and a variety of typologies, making use of existing buildings and with new buildings that complement these.

CHARACTER

1 Work with the historic urban grain



Chesham has a fine grain of buildings, with narrow plots that give variety and interest to the street. New buildings will reflect this grain.

2 Re-establish historic approaches



The key historic approaches to the town centre have been compromised over time with highway interventions, and these can be re-established through landscaping and careful consideration of new buildings.

3 Rejuvenate historic yards and lanes



Chesham's narrow yards are already home to tables and chairs from cafes and independent shops. These set an example for what can be achieved with others.

4 Safeguard historic building settings



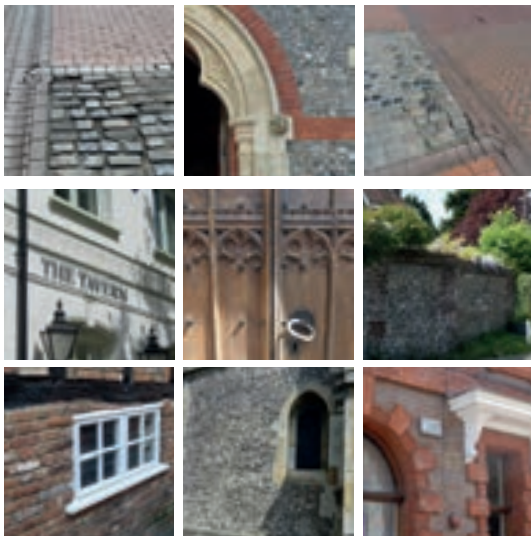
The many historic buildings of Chesham and the setting of the Conservation Area, will inform the approach for contemporary buildings, so that these can complement the existing built fabric.

5 Retain views of Chiltern Hills and Lowndes Park



Chesham's relationship with the surrounding Chilterns Hills and particularly the view to Dungrove and Lowndes Park will be retained, with clear space between the building line and the horizon of the hill.

6 Reflect Chesham's palette



Chesham is blessed with an attractive and coherent palette of materials, that were influenced by available building supplies. This will be reflected in new buildings to ensure development sits comfortably in its setting.

STREETS AND SPACES

1 Consolidate parking to create space



Large parts of the town centre are given over to surface car parking. Re-providing these spaces more efficiently will free up space for new homes and businesses in the centre and improve the physical environment.

2 Change the character of St Mary's Way



St Mary's Way is a key barrier between the centre and the park. This can be reconfigured as an urban street, fronted by new development at Star Yard car park.

3 Strengthen links to/from the centre



Pedestrian routes to the Elgiva Theatre, Lowndes Park, St Mary's Church and the surrounding historic neighbourhoods can all be strengthened and new development can help achieve this.

4 Invest in network of public spaces



Market Square, The Broadway, the theatre setting and space by the Red Lion are all identified as priorities for public realm investment, which will be sought through public funding and planning gain.

5 Encourage a shift to walking and cycling



Chesham has a compact town centre with residential areas stretching from this. Focusing new residential development as far as possible in the centre will limit car use and encourage walking and cycling.

Safe and comfortable cycle lanes, ample cycle parking and electric bike charging points will all help to encourage a shift in modal choice from residents in neighbourhoods slightly further out.

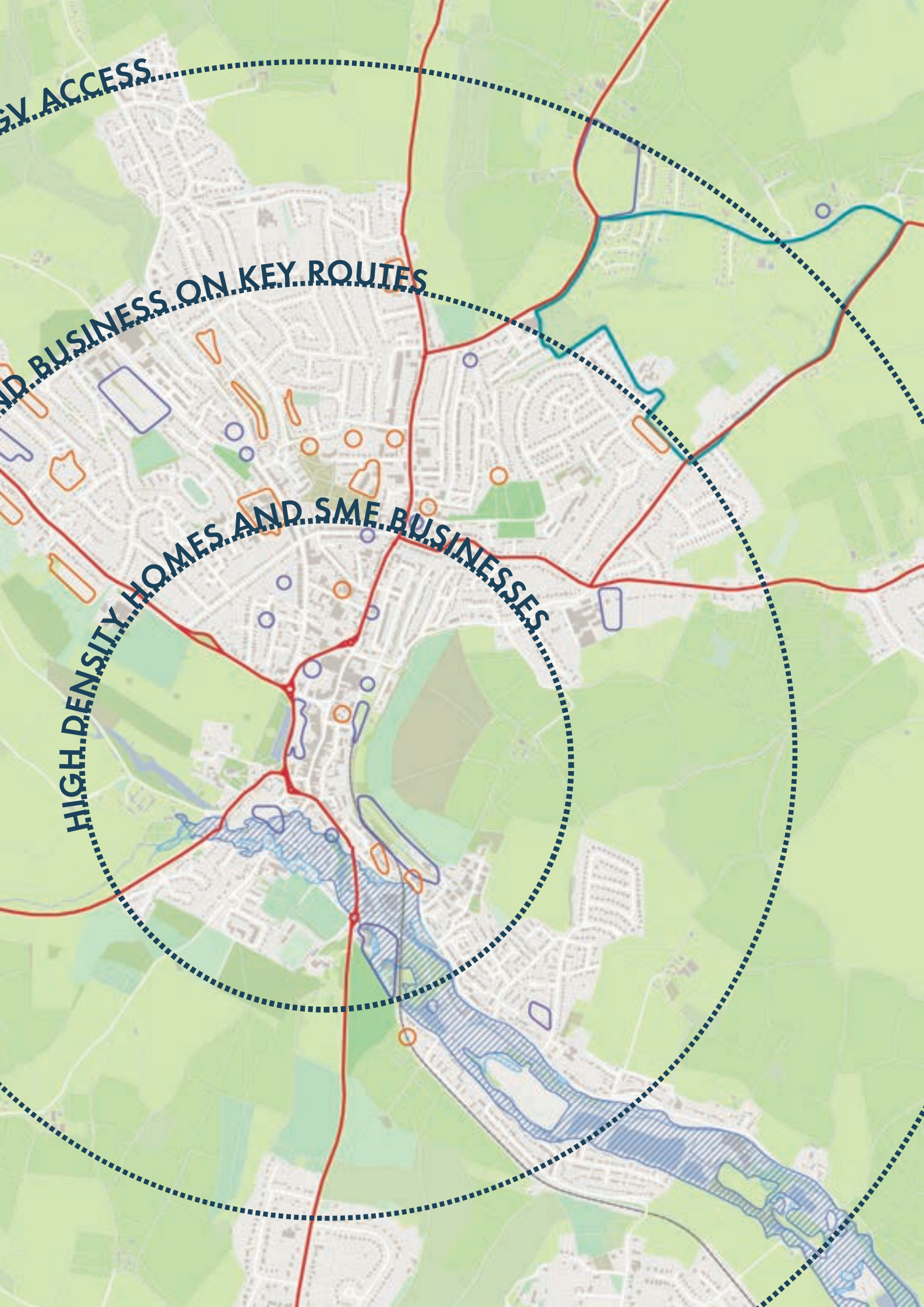
Trips to Chesham station for onward journeys to London can be a particular target for a shift away from cars to improve the environment in the town centre.



As a broad approach, the centre of Chesham is appropriate for higher density homes and knowledge sector SME business. The surrounding neighbourhoods are appropriate for medium density homes and businesses on key approach routes to the centre. The town's periphery is suitable for low density homes and businesses which require HGV access or are otherwise 'bad neighbours'.

LOW DENSITY HOMES AND BUSINESSES WITH HGV ACCESS

MEDIUM DENSITY HOMES AND BUSINESSES



EASY ACCESS

BUSINESS ON KEY ROUTES

HIGH DENSITY HOMES AND SME BUSINESSES





PLACEMAKING PROPOSITIONS

TOWN CENTRE OVERVIEW

This section of the report sets out the strategic approach for the town centre and a series of propositions for sites in and around the core town centre. They are intended to demonstrate possibilities and concepts which can be developed through more detailed masterplanning work and detailed proposals for individual sites.

The town centre is covered by a wide range of land ownerships and many existing interests are covered by ideas set out here. It is hoped that by highlighting commercially attractive development options this document will stimulate positive change.

Wherever possible, ideas have been set out so that the interests of different land owners can be delivered within the framework and independent of adjoining sites. Some areas of development, particularly such as the consolidation of parking into a few decked car parks will require more cooperation between several parties, including the different levels of local government. Chesham Renaissance CIC Limited has been established with the intent of promoting and facilitating this kind of collaborative approach to bring parties together and unlock opportunities for the sustainable growth of the town centre.

The propositions have been clustered into four areas as set out here:

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

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

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

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



STRATEGIC APPROACH

Chesham town centre has evolved organically over time, and some of these ad hoc changes have had a negative impact on the functioning and character of the town centre.

Setting out a strategic approach for the town centre and the role of different areas within it will help to guide future development and investment. This will ensure the town centre can realise its full potential and rectify some past mistakes.

The plan to the right identifies the key approach to consolidate national retailers in the centre, encourage independent retail at the northern and southern ends of the High Street, provide clusters of evening uses and turn the areas behind the High Street from service yards and 'backs' to mixed use areas, with homes fronting streets.

A transport interchange is proposed at the rail station, to encourage people out of private cars through good bus and cycle facilities. Opportunity is also identified for a landmark building in the town centre, either close to the theatre or to Lowndes Park. This could be a pavilion style building and need not be large in scale.

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

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

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

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

National retailers are consolidated on the centre of the High Street

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

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



ST MARY'S WAY

The development of St Mary's Way in the post-war period was instrumental in taking the pressure of traffic away from the High Street, creating a much more attractive town centre environment. However, the new road introduced further issues of its own, including cutting off historic connections to the park, the parish church and the wider residential hinterland.

Approaches to road design have moved on considerably since St Mary's Way was constructed, and there are opportunities to address some of these challenges, whilst recognising that the road has an important part to play in the highway network.

We want local residents to be able to walk and cycle into the town centre much more easily, and we want to re-connect the historic parts of Chesham. This can be achieved by making changes to the key junctions - switching them from roundabouts to signalised junctions so that a clear pedestrian and cycle crossing can be included. This will restore the historic routes into the town centre, and reconnect the core of the town with its park, its parish church, and its theatre.

The Environment Agency is already proposing to open up the existing watercourse which runs under the car park. Our scheme incorporates this into the new landscape verge alongside the road, acting as a buffer between the road and the pedestrian/cycle route.

Housing will front onto St Mary's Way, set back behind the exposed culvert and tree planting. Parking for this housing will be provided on site, potentially covered by garden terraces.

The service access to the rear of the High Street shops will be maintained, and the plan will allow for connections with the traditional lanes from the High Street. The service mews will be completed by small workshops and studios creating an active presence through the day.

The Sainsbury site is the largest area of parking in the town, and provides an opportunity to consolidate and improve parking whilst reducing its visual impact on the town. A key objective is also to establish good pedestrian links through the space which provide connections to the theatre and areas beyond.

A significant surface car park is retained in the scheme, reflecting the need for good shopper parking for the store. This is lined with active uses, making it feel more akin to a large market square and making the pedestrian routes along the edges feel safer and more attractive. The western part of the site is given over to a decked car park above commercial space, with buildings at either end and the existing dense tree belt on the western side against St Mary's Way effectively screening it from view.

Potential residential development around the Friends Meeting House and burial ground, evoking the form and spirit of historic alms houses

Improved pedestrian access and street frontage to the theatre

Surface car park framed by active uses

New decked car park to consolidate public parking. Active ground floor uses and buildings at either end

New signal-controlled junction with high quality pedestrian and cycle access

Improved public realm in the Broadway

New active frontage on to St Mary's Way, set back behind a generous tree-planted verge including the potential to de-culvert the existing stream.

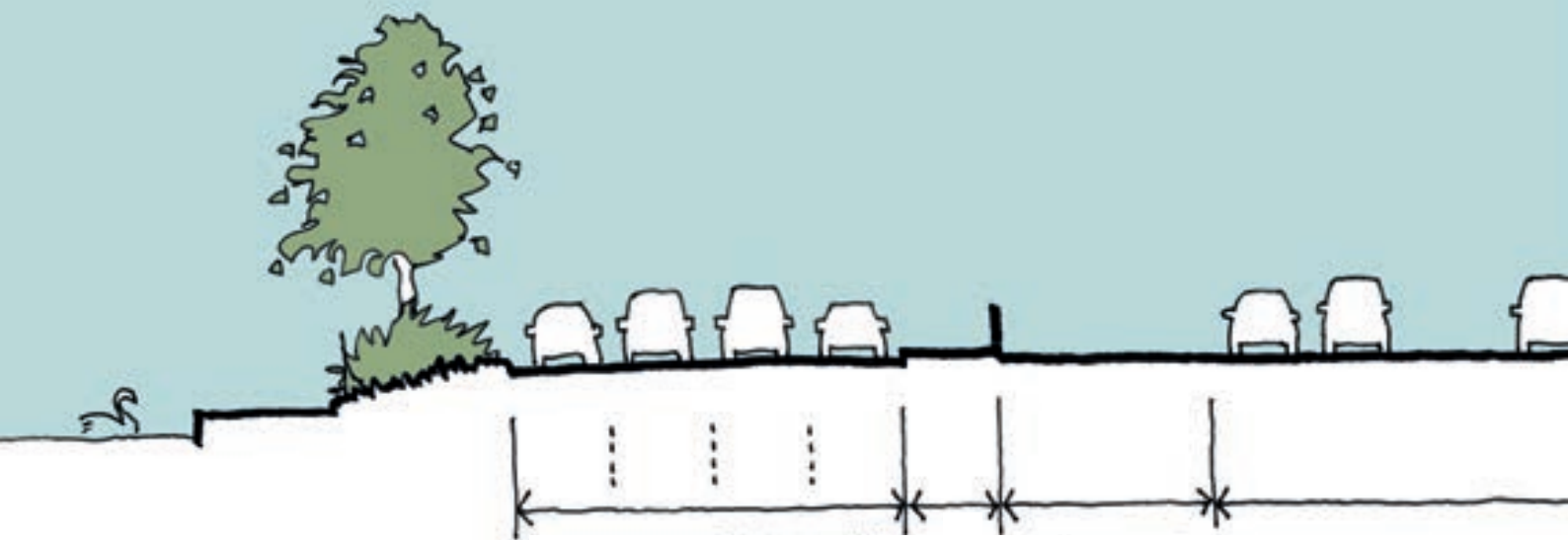
Potential connections from the High Street through existing yards

Improved connection from the Market Square to St Mary's Church and Lowndes Park

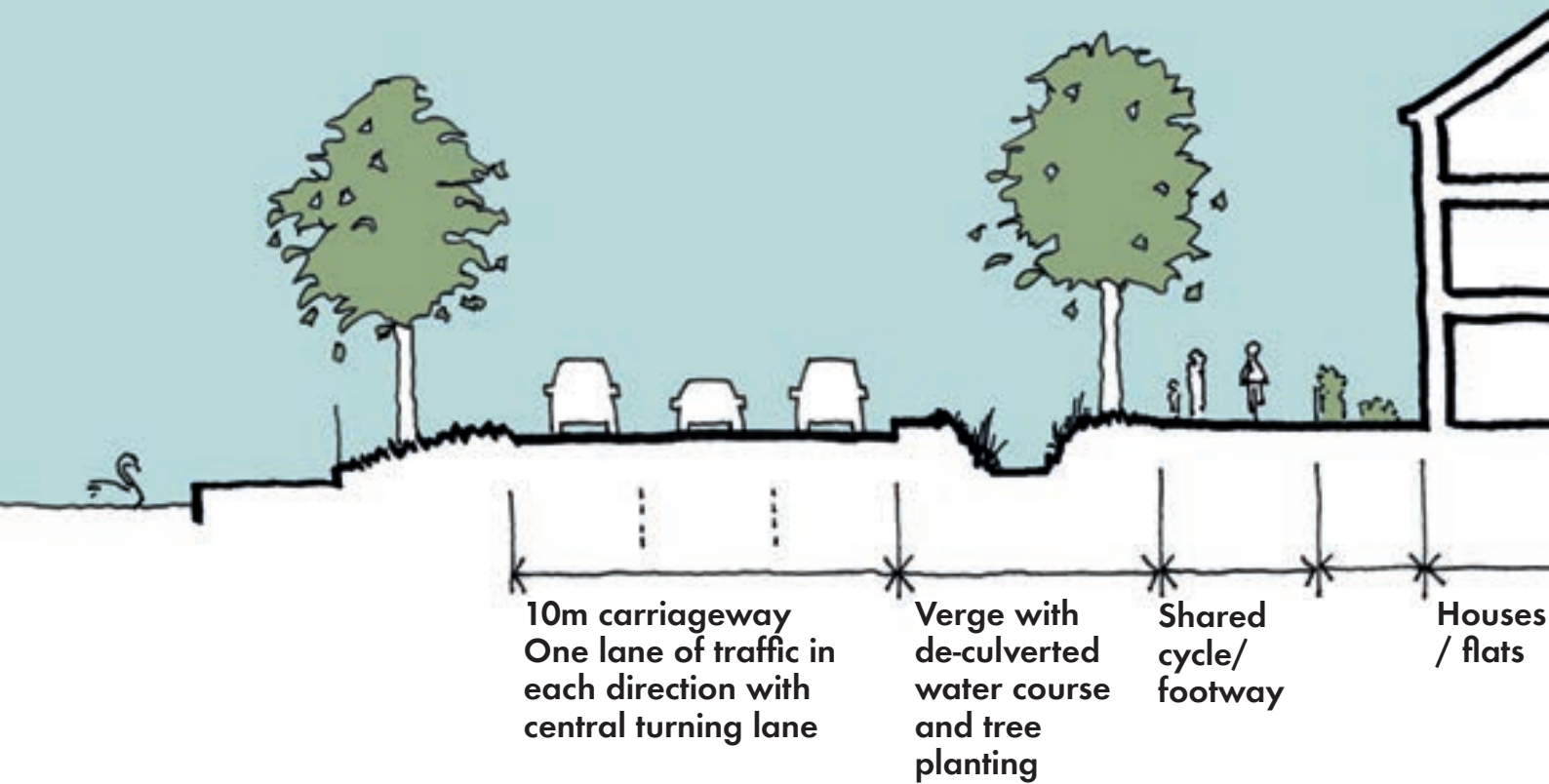


ST MARY'S WAY

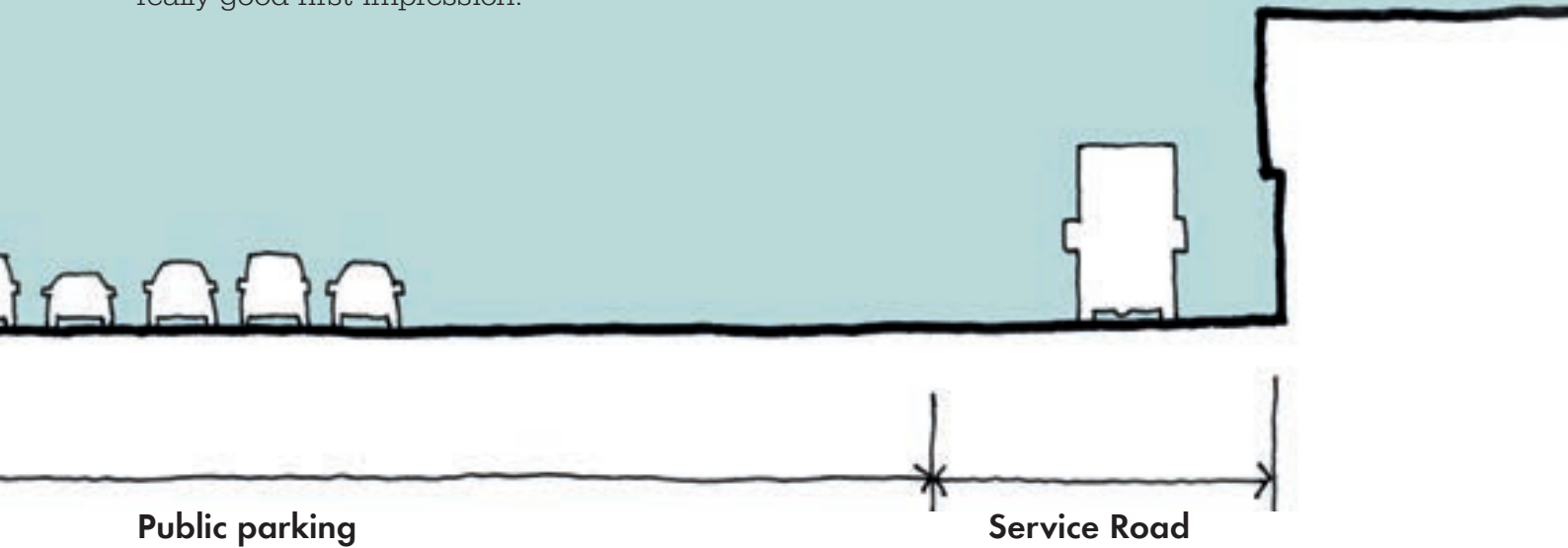
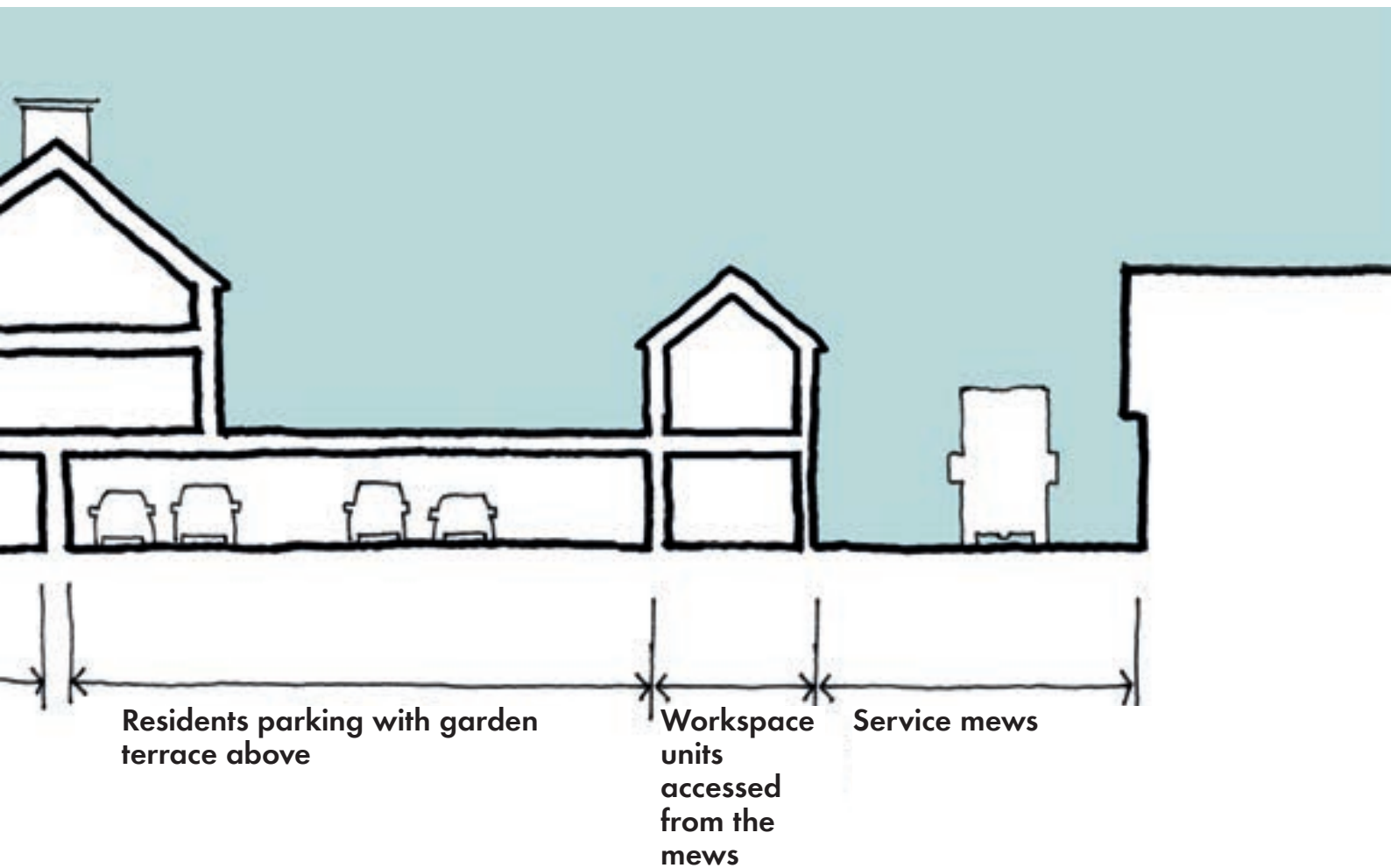
EXISTING SECTION



PROPOSED SECTION



Although the road link of St Mary's Way is important, it is possible to change the character of the street to create a much higher quality of environment with good walking and cycling links so that the town centre makes a really good first impression.



ST MARY'S WAY

An illustration showing the potential for change on St Mary's Way, bringing a new active frontage to the street, set back behind a line of trees and the revealed stream.





PARK ROAD

An illustration showing the impact of removing the roundabout at the junction with St Mary's Way. Pedestrian and cycle links from the town centre to the park and the surrounding town could be significantly improved.





ST MARY'S WAY WIDER CONTEXT

Remodelling St Mary's Way will be a significant undertaking, and may need to take place over several phases.

As the masterplan for Chesham is developed, the detailed work will progress for St Mary's Way, testing a range of different options for the detail of each element.

We have identified that the nature of some of the junctions restricts access for pedestrians and cyclists to and from the town centre. Options will be explored which achieve real improvements in the pedestrian connections whilst also being appropriate in the context of our historic townscape and maintaining access and capacity for traffic.

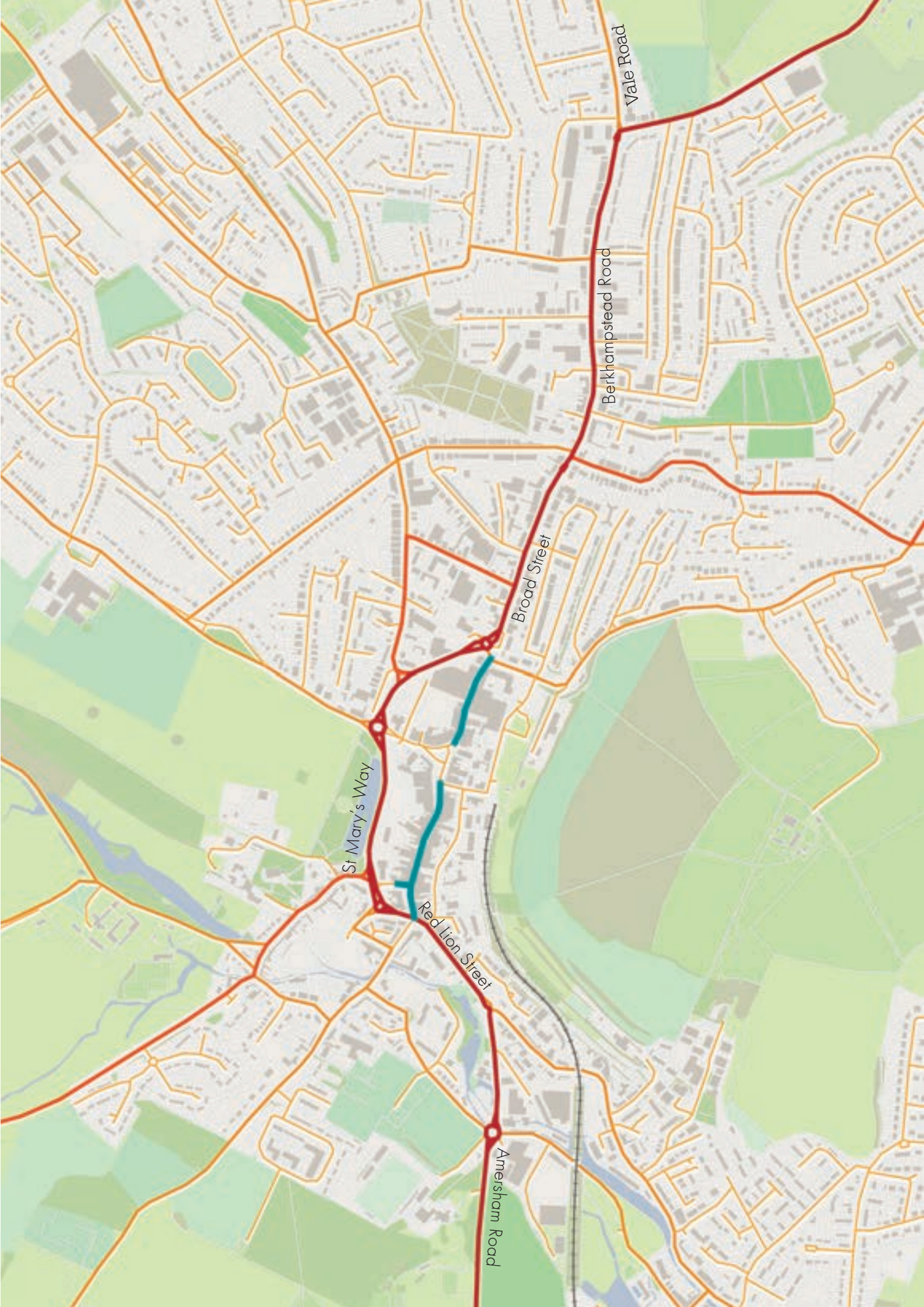
The approach of consolidating parking and changing service and access movements as well as having buildings fronting onto St Mary's Way will also significantly change its character. Vehicle speeds should be naturally slower, particularly at junctions, as fits a route which is passing through the centre of an historic town.

As well as focussing on the character of the route as it passes the town centre, we recognise that it will also be important to set this within the wider context of the road network in Chesham, and particularly the north-south spine of Vale Road/ Broad Street/ Amersham Road.

Changes to the road structure in the town centre need to relate to a wider understanding of traffic flows, junction design, air quality and congestion.

As the Masterplan proposals are developed it will be important to demonstrate through computer modelling how traffic flows may be affected by the changes to demonstrate that they do not have an adverse impact. This work will need to take into account a number of factors:

- Proposed junction and lane changes on St Mary's Way and the wider corridor;
- Consolidation of parking into fewer larger car parks;
- Changes to the service access to some buildings, particularly those on the western side of the High Street which will retain vehicle servicing directly from St Mary's Way;
- Increased population due to new residential and business developments which intensifies the use of town centre sites;
- Better links between the station and the High Street, limiting the impact of the level change;
- The potential shift from car use towards walking and cycling for short trips in and around the town centre as the public realm and the key crossings and connections improve; and
- Potential relocation of truck-based industry away from the core town centre, reducing HGV movements accessing the side turnings onto the main spine road.



THE BROADWAY

The Broadway remains an important point of arrival. However, the impact of cars and buses could be reduced, with the introduction of much wider pavements and the removal of street clutter to reclaim the historic dignity of the space.





THE BACKS

As Chesham improves, the street known as The Backs provides a significant opportunity for improvement. The street runs parallel to the High Street and includes two key town centre uses in the Station and Waitrose, as well as being home to several office buildings.

However, the quality of the townscape falls rapidly beyond the High Street and the station does not create a strong point of arrival and interchange.

The existing car parking is significant in the area it covers, but is not ideally configured. Waitrose car park is fragmented and serves the store poorly. This is partly due to it being on the wrong side of the road and also partly due to the level changes which require a sloping access and retaining wall to the pavement. Similarly, the station parking is awkward to access and gives nothing to the road.

Our plans draw the two areas of parking together into one decked car park, wrapped in development which could contain a mix of homes and workspace. At the northern end is an entrance which relates to Waitrose, providing easy level access for trolleys whilst at the southern end is a direct pedestrian connection towards the station. Parking management and charges would need to reflect the different patterns of use for the range of people using the car park.

Around the Waitrose end of The Backs there is the opportunity to create a small moment of public space. This will help to maintain the feeling of continuity so that the store feels like part of the town centre rather than the edge of the town. The buildings on the eastern side of this space will be kept modest in height to maintain views of the The White Hill Centre.

At the southern end there is the opportunity to establish a new small square as the entrance to the station, creating a stronger gateway into Chesham. This would need to accommodate taxis, but can also provide space for good quality cycle parking including electric assist cycle charging points and some elements of commercial use.



The existing car parking opposite Waitrose

Small square opposite the entrance to Waitrose, predominantly residential or office development

Easy level access to the parking for Waitrose shoppers, directly opposite the store entrance.

New decked car park serving Waitrose and the Station with potential for additional town centre parking

Infill residential or office development to screen the car park from the street

New Station Square, with space for taxis and cycle parking.



STATION SQUARE

The station is an important point of arrival for Chesham. Consolidating the parking will free up space to create elements of development around the space and along The Backs as it heads north up to Waitrose.







CHESHAM TOWN CENTRE

The development ideas proposed for Chesham work to repair the fabric of the existing town, mending gaps and completing streets. The introduction of new homes and jobs in the town centre will boost footfall and vitality and help the town to develop in a sustainable way.



CHESHAM YARDS

There are a cluster of industrial and business buildings to the north of the town centre. The opportunity to intensify these areas with mixed business and residential space could provide a new attractive space for local businesses, whilst also creating a new pedestrian and cycle connection which runs parallel to Broad Street, passes the Theatre and connects with the top of the High Street.



Examples of modern mixed-use infill development

Higham Mead

Higham Mead is a larger area, and includes several very attractive older industrial units which provide important fixed points within any redevelopment. Around these there are opportunities for connecting routes with Sunnyside Road through an existing access to extend the north-south route and potentially with Broad Street.

Townsend Yard

The block of buildings which sit between Townsend Road and Higham Road have the opportunity to redevelop for improved mixed use. There are several good existing buildings in the north-west corner of the site which provide a strong anchor for the character and design of the place. This area should continue the north-south connection towards the town centre.

Albany Yard

The site of the existing Wickes warehouse and adjoining commercial sites has the potential to be redeveloped to provide mixed residential and business space. Priorities include establishing a strong north-south link from the theatre and the town centre towards Townsend Road, linking in with other phases of development. The layout of the development will particularly need to take account of the position of existing residential buildings on the western side which are very close to the existing site boundary.



Attractive existing buildings in the area

OLD TOWN

Chesham's Old Town is an attractive part of the town and a pleasant residential area, but somewhat separated from the High Street by St Mary's Way.

As it also contains the Parish Church of St Mary's and is one of the key routes into Lowndes Park, this severance of a once well-connected street pattern is all the more distinct. Modern community infrastructure including the Job Centre and health centre are also located south of Red Lion Street.

The existing Water Meadow car park provides an important facility for some users at the southern end of town, but some of the longer-stay parking could be relocated, freeing up

space for sensitive infill development which creates a better quality environment in the setting of the conservation area.

The area is partially within the Flood Zone as defined by the Environment Agency, and so care will need to be given to the design of the layout, the buildings and the uses which can be located there. Our indicative plan shows the potential for a new square including parking, set back from the stream and retaining mature trees.

The remodelling proposals for St Mary's Way and the Market Square will help to restore the connections for pedestrians back into the core of the town centre, promoting walking and cycling.



The existing green space west of the car park



King Street - an example of the townscape character in the immediate area

Revised junction with improved pedestrian crossing of St Mary's Way linking to the park and church

New frontage development onto the pedestrian route. Existing green space and mature trees retained as generous gardens backing onto existing gardens

New development fronting onto the parking square with gardens backing onto courtyards and retaining access to Water Meadow House

Re-landscaped approach to the southern end of the Market Square, incorporating an improved crossing. This will help to re-connect the Old Town with the High Street



RED LION STREET



Old Town can be reunited with Market Square, with a wide raised crossing and shared surface linking the Red Lion pub with the Square. An uncluttered and high quality public realm can support the market, with retention of historic buildings, seating and cycle parking.







TOWN WIDE CONSIDERATIONS

TOWN-WIDE SITES

Beyond the town centre, a few additional sites are identified which could provide space for new homes. At present, these are all employment sites which are either in inappropriate locations or currently make poor use of the site. It should be noted, however, that replacing these sites with housing would prompt a need for alternative employment space elsewhere in the town. Potential sites for intensification are shown on the following page and will be explored further during the next stage of the project.

Asheridge Road/Hivings Hill

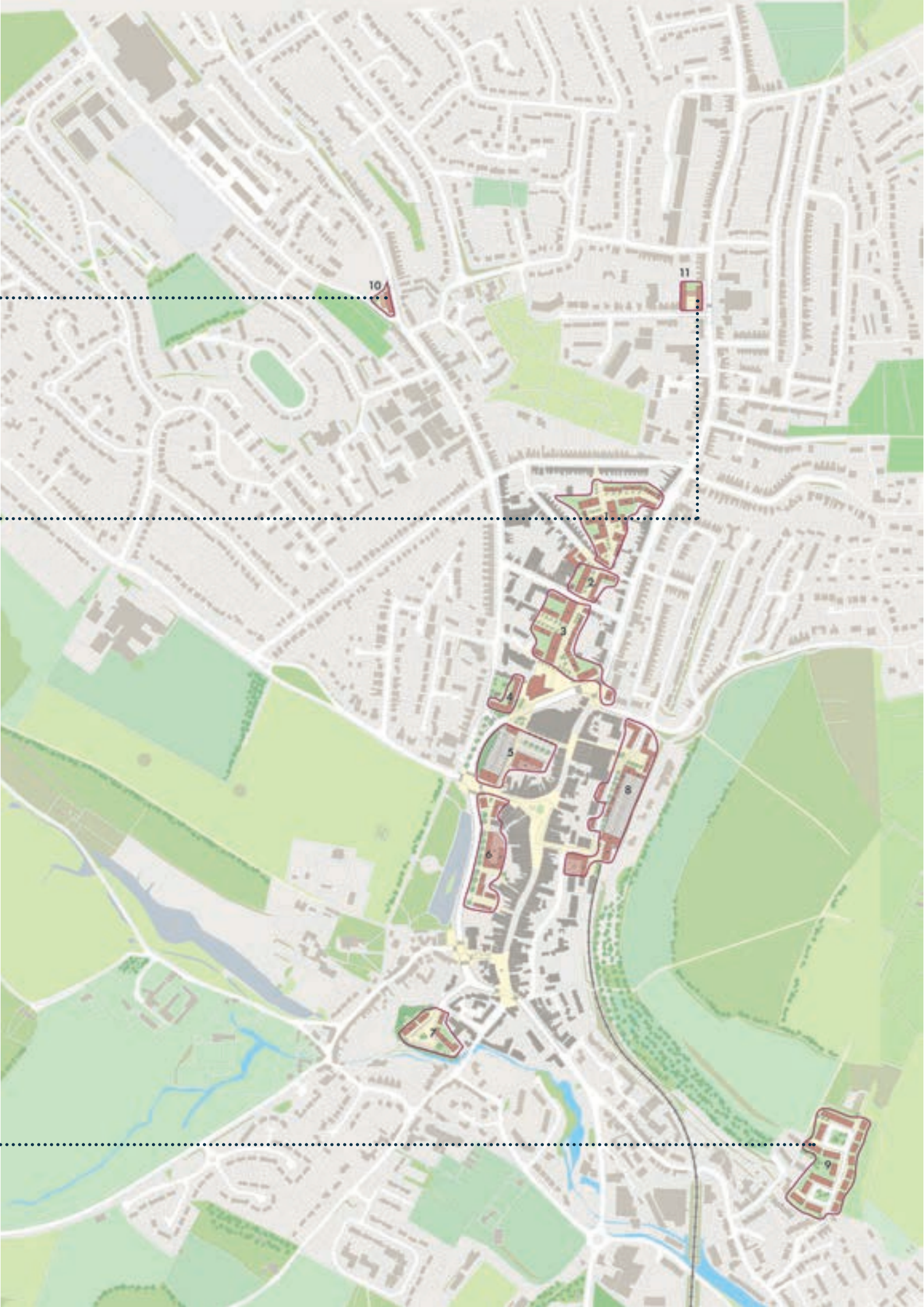
This is a high profile site in the town, at the northern end of Bellingdon Road, which is currently occupied by car and van sales. This could be replaced by a new development of maisonettes and give a suitable 'full stop' to Bellingdon Road. The car sales could be relocated to a less prominent site.

Alma Road/Berkhampstead Road

This former school site is currently underused as employment space, with a large front yard area. Options could include retention of the old school building, with a townhouse terrace fronting Berkhampstead Road, or replacement of the full site with maisonettes.

Springfield Road

This industrial area is currently poorly located, with access through a residential area and topography that does not lend itself to large floorplate uses, due to the incline. Opportunity exists to replace these with new homes that benefit from good southern views over the Chiltern hills. Replacement employment space would be required and it is likely that this would involve more intensive use of other employment sites in Chesham.



EMPLOYMENT SITES

A strategic approach is needed to Chesham's employment sites to ensure that these are in appropriate locations with good access; that the development of new homes does not erode Chesham's position as a sustainable place with industry; and that, with space at a premium, that employment sites are not underused.

Existing employment clusters are identified on this plan, with a three-tier approach:

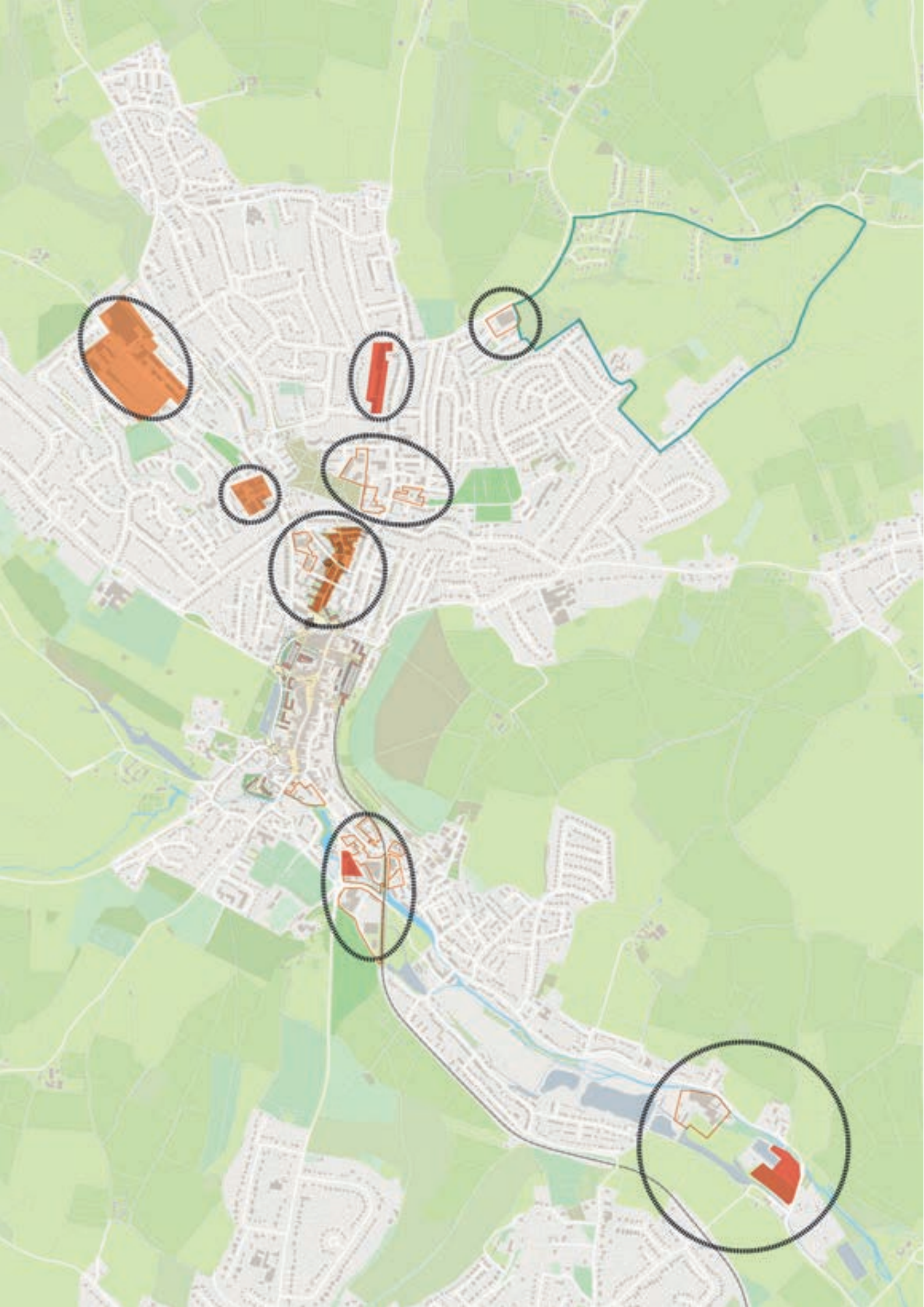
Red sites are identified as areas where existing employment space can be intensified to accommodate a greater number of jobs or activity.

Orange sites represent areas where employment sites are being intensified as mixed-use areas, with both jobs and homes provided.

The suggested Green Belt release site is included, as it would be sensible for this site to accommodate some jobs as well as homes.

These approaches should help to counterbalance areas where employment space is envisaged to be replaced by homes, such as has happened at Chartridge Lane, and is identified for Springfield Road and other small sites.





BUILDING HEIGHTS

The building heights proposed for central Chesham vary between 2 and 5 storeys, depending on the particular location in terms of topography, proximity to shops and services, and surrounding built context.

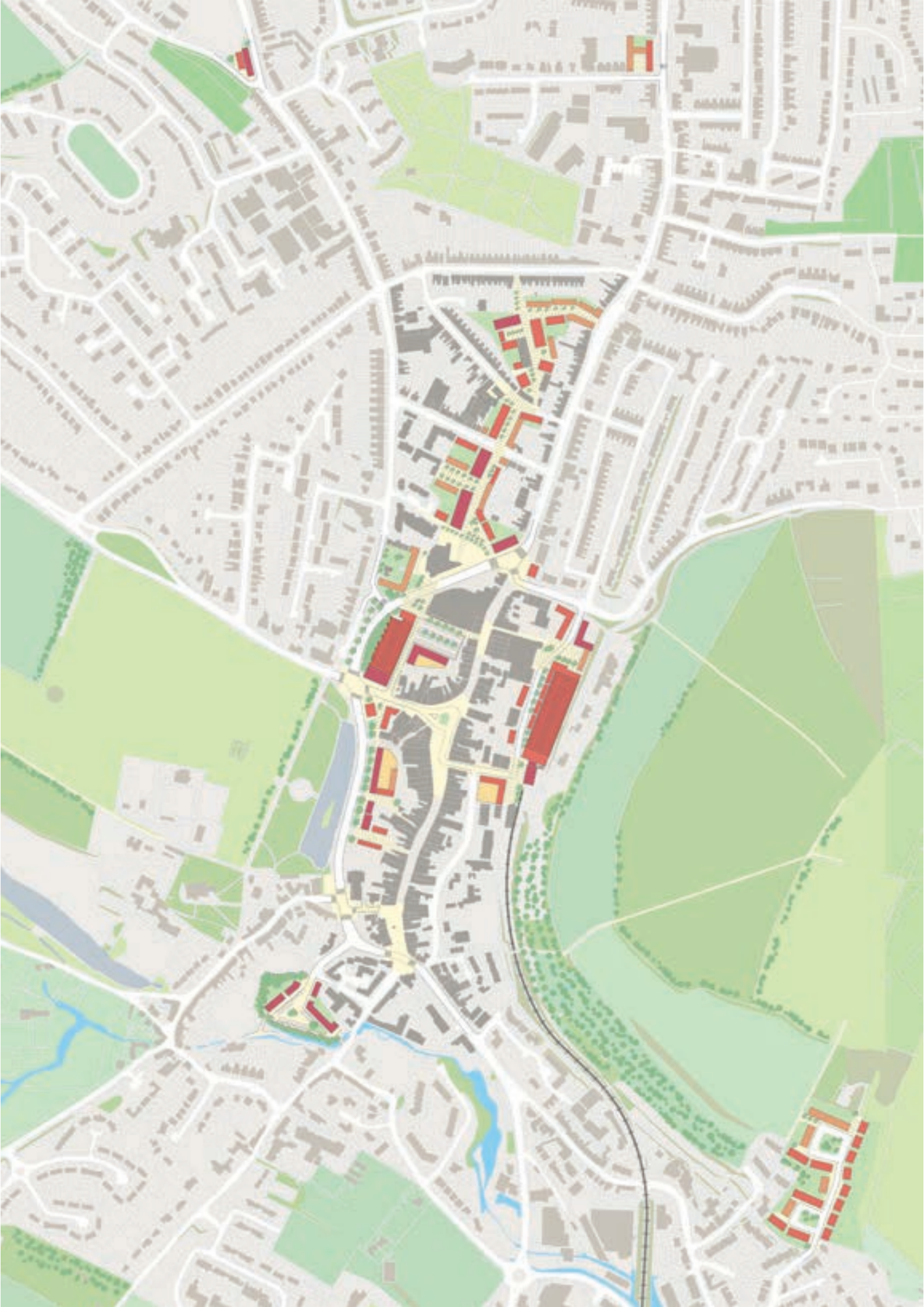


The focus has been on setting general building heights of 3-4 storeys. This is designed to provide reasonably low scale but high density development that reflects Chesham's historic character and creates critical mass for activity; supporting shops services and infrastructure.

The plan to the right sets out the proposed building heights for the new homes identified in the centre. These heights deliver the densities outlined on the previous page and contribute to the overall number of homes.



Examples of low scale but high density mixed use building typologies



LAND USES

The majority of new development in central Chesham is intended to be residential. However, in order to replace some existing employment spaces that are affected by development, make good use of historic buildings, and ensure a healthy and sustainable mixed-use centre, a number of sites have been identified which are appropriate for commercial space.

These spaces could be retail at ground floor in more central locations, with office or homes above; and office or SME workspace in areas just beyond the town centre, such as Chesham Yards. Commercial uses are identified in blue on the plan to the right.

In addition to these, suitable sites have been identified for a replacement, combined Town Hall and Library building. These are either at Star Yard, overlooking Lowndes Park, or close to the Elgiva Theatre, creating a civic and cultural focus for the town. These sites will be explored and tested during the next stage of the project and will of course have an impact on the number of homes currently reflected in the area schedule.

Although the series of small developments across the town centre do not individually trigger a need for new school or community facilities, the likely combined impact could give rise to new space requirements. This will be reviewed at the next stage and should be developed in consultation with Bucks County Council and Chiltern District Council.





DENSITIES

Whilst Chesham's historic core is reasonably compact and high density, later residential development in the town has been at very low densities, averaging between 12 and 20 dwellings per hectare (dph). This is illustrated by the density reviews of residential blocks at Darvell Drive and Chartridge Lane, to the right.

More recently, particularly low density blocks have accommodated infill development in the large back gardens of existing homes, with a new access route provided, as shown in the Chartridge Lane/Berkeley Avenue example, below right.

The Chesham Vision aims to significantly increase to densities in new development close to the town centre, to provide a critical mass to support shops and services, and to take advantage of these highly accessible locations which can make better use of active and public transport options.

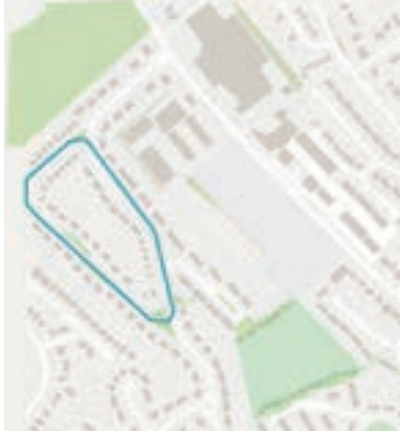
The densities related to the proposed developments are set out in the plan on the following pages.



Infill development between Berkeley Avenue and Chartridge Lane



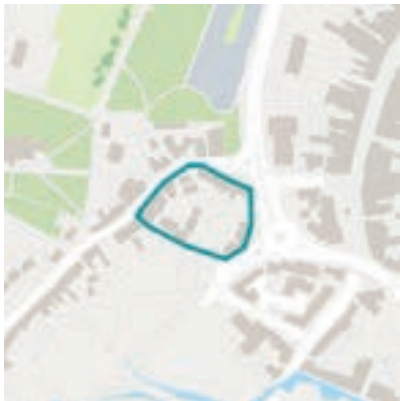
Infill development between Lowndes Avenue and Bellingdon Road



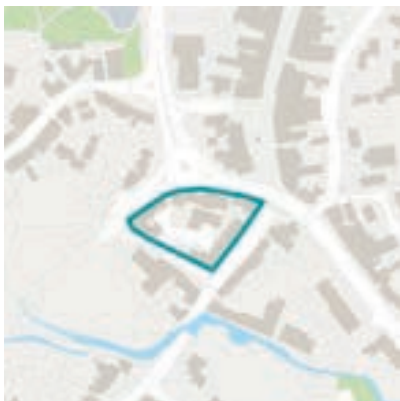
Darvell Drive
Area: **2.25 ha**
Dwellings: **43**
Density: **19.1 dwellings/ha**



Chartridge Lane
Area: **3.44 ha**
Dwellings: **47**
Density: **14.2 dwellings/ha**



Brook Court
Area: **0.39 ha**
Dwellings: **22**
Density: **56.4 dwellings/ha**



Town Bridge Court
Area: **0.30 ha**
Dwellings: **24**
Density: **80 dwellings/ha**

The propositions identified for particular sites in Chesham, vary in density between 50 dph and 100 dph. This provides for a variety of terraced town houses and apartments, and in some locations such as the Chesham Yards, can make use of the warehouse typology for a mix of uses - both homes and SME employment space.

These densities do not mean that buildings are tall in scale, the increase has been achieved by reducing the plot sizes for new homes - something that is particularly generous for existing buildings in Chesham.

Higham Mead

2-4 storeys, 84 homes, 74.9 dph

Townsend Yard

2-4 storeys, 34 homes, 105.6 dph

Albany Yard

2-4 storeys, 82 homes, 77.5 dph

Youth centre

2 storeys, 14 homes, 82.1 dph

Sainsbury's car park

3-4 storeys, 24 homes, 29.7 dph

Star Yard

2-4 storeys, 57 homes, 71.6 dph

Water Meadows

4 storeys, 35 homes, 69.2 dph

The Backs

2-4 storeys, 98 homes, 72.8 dph

Springfield Road

2-3 storeys, 75 homes, 53.1 dph

Chartridge Lane

3-4 storeys, 15 homes, 145 dph

Alma Road

2-3 storeys, 17 homes, 101.4 dph

TOTAL = 535 homes

68.4 dph average

Examples of building typologies and their typical densities



Short terrace rows
Family housing - 35-55 dph



Terraced townhouses/maisonettes
Varied residents - 50-80 dph



Apartments
Younger and older people - 60-120 dph

WALKING AND CYCLING

Walking and cycling links are being reviewed during this stage of the project, in collaboration with Phil Jones Associates (PJA) transport consultants and engineers. The next stage report will, therefore, look at this in more detail. However, a number of priorities have been identified for walking and cycling links in Chesham.

Links from High Street to Lowndes Park

The town centre is currently divorced from its park by the lack of crossings on St Mary's Way and the lack of a central entrance to the Park. Improvements are suggested to the yards that link from the west side of the High Street to St Mary's Way, framed by mews development. A new pedestrian crossing is proposed on St Mary's Way, and a new central entrance to Lowndes Park, with two short bridges connecting over the island in Skottowes Pond.

Links between High Street and station

Legibility between the station and the town centre is poor and the incline and narrow pavements of Station Road make this route awkward for pedestrians. By making this section of road one-way and redeveloping the plot to the south, the pavements can be widened and wayfinding added to give a far better connection to and from the station.

Good connections from surrounding neighbourhoods to town centre

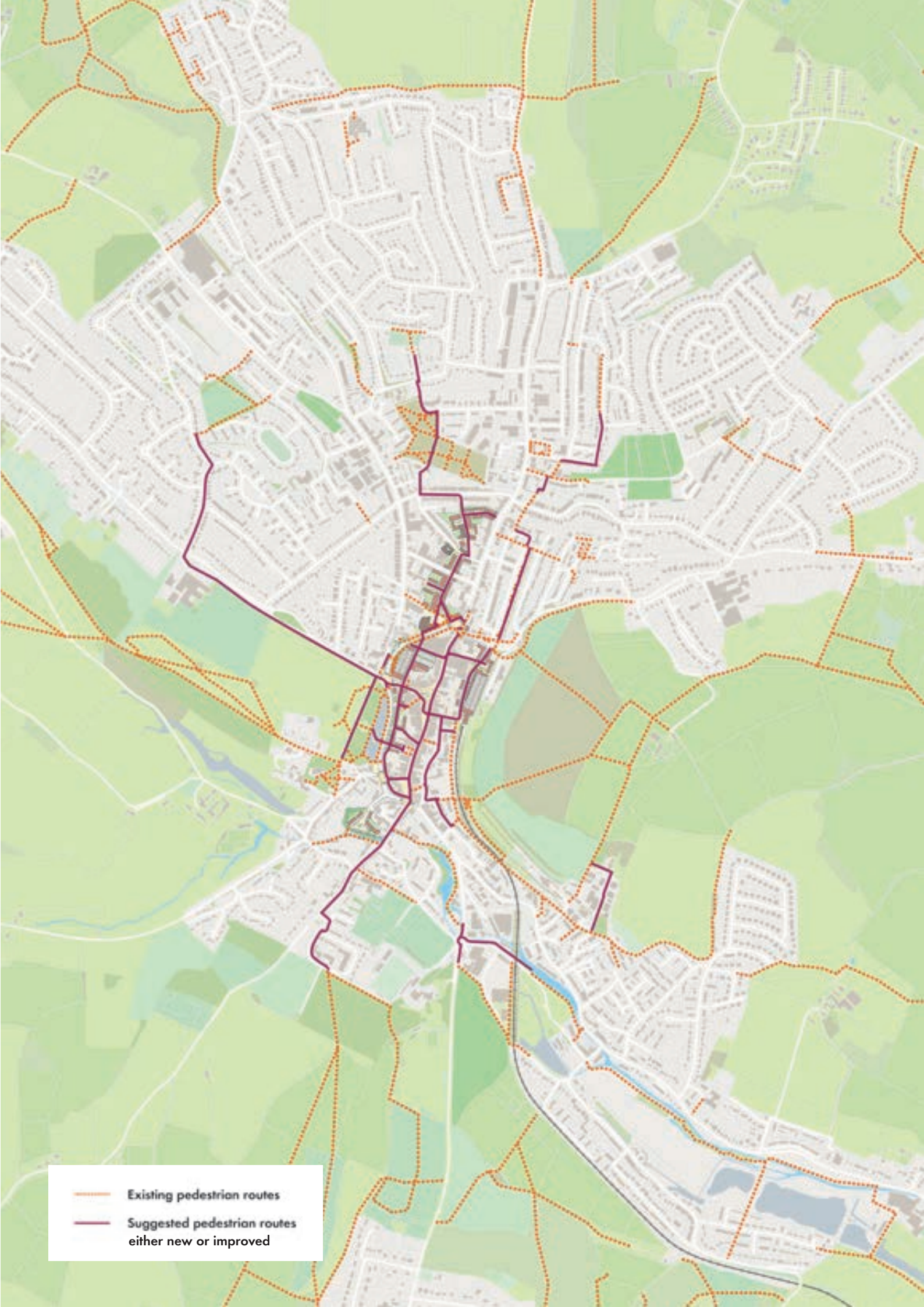
The 'corset' form of Chesham creates a number of triangular plots which result in very indirect routes for pedestrians accessing the centre from surrounding neighbourhoods - particularly to the north. We have identified opportunities where breakthroughs can shorten these walking routes, such as opening up a connection through Chesham Cemetery, opening this up as a public, green space.

Links to Chilterns and sign posting

As the gateway to the Chilterns, it is important to both residents and visitors that comfortable town centre pedestrian connections link effectively with the Rights of Way that lead out from the town to the Chilterns AONB. This includes connections through to Lowndes Park, links to Dungrove, and links south of the town. Wayfinding within the town centre will help walkers to continue on a route after passing through the town.

Safe cycling routes and parking

Whilst Chesham's topography does not lend itself to cycling, the rise of ebikes will make this far easier. Having safe cycling routes which are separated from general traffic, and sufficient parking and a maintenance point in the town centre will help to encourage cycling. Routes from the north east are most problematic at the moment, and will have implications for encouraging active travel if new homes are developed on the proposed Green Belt release land.

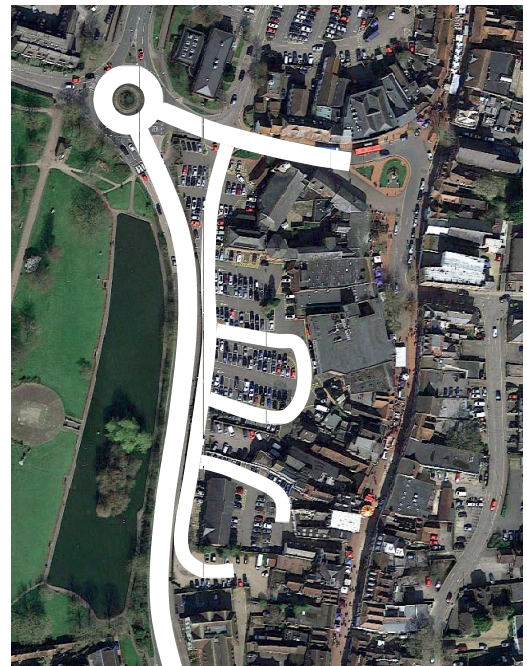
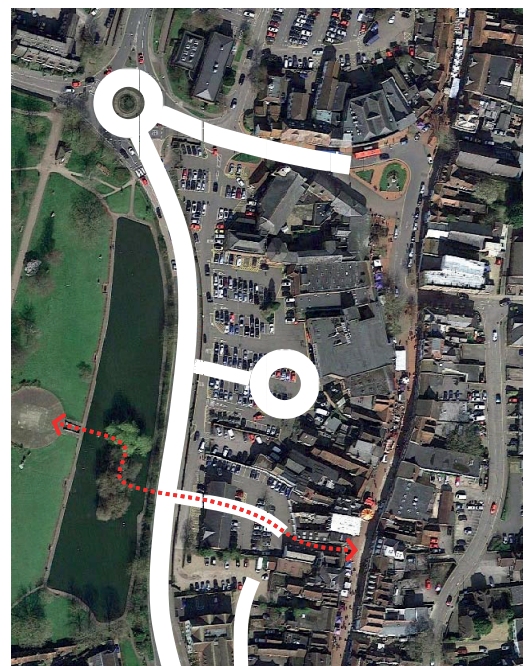


- Existing pedestrian routes
- Suggested pedestrian routes
either new or improved

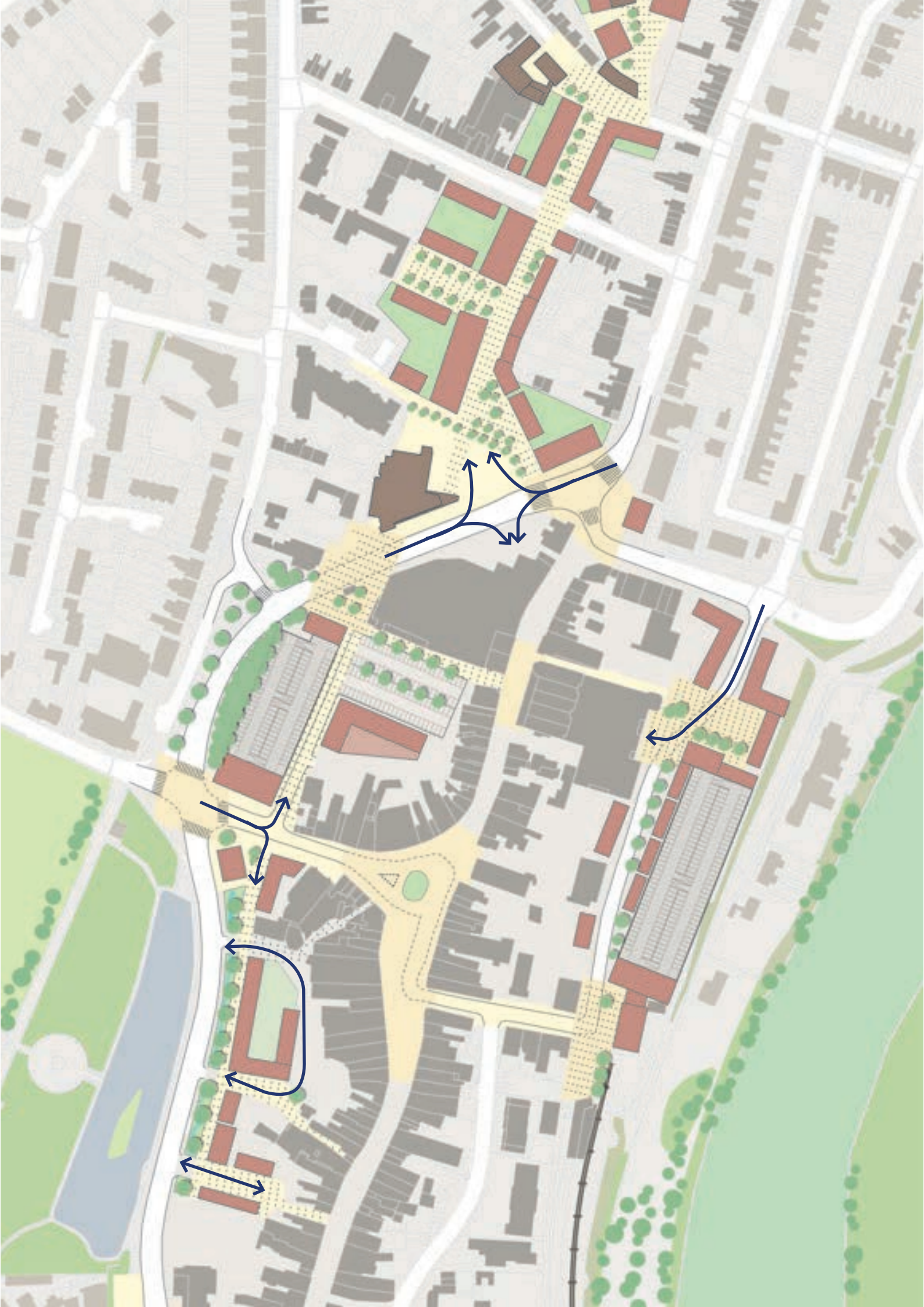
SERVICING AND ACCESS

The servicing and access approach is currently being reviewed by transport consultants, Phil Jones Associates, and will be confirmed alongside the agreed approach to the road layout and movement network. This will include the character and number of lanes at St Mary's Way and the replacement of existing roundabouts either with signalled junctions or smaller, continental-style roundabouts. Plans from the stage 1 Vision report have been used for this report, in advance of a finalised approach.

However, the agreed approach to servicing and access at a strategic level is to disperse access points to prevent these from dominating the pedestrian environment, such as at Blucher Street. Removing central reservations and adding right turns will also avoid delivery vehicles from having to drive beyond their intended delivery point, round a roundabout and back again in order to reach the access point.



Options exist for access to Star Yard



BUILDING IN CONTEXT

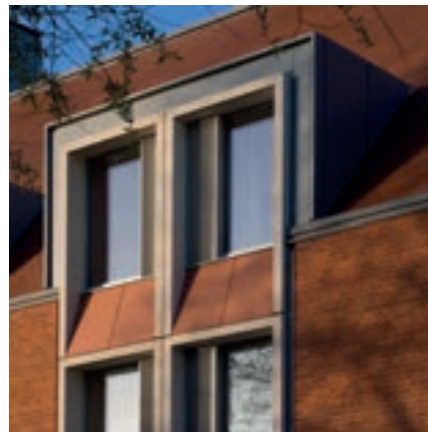
Chesham's historic character is one of the aspects which make the town such an attractive place. The use of local materials, linked to the landscape from which they come, and the particular local forms of building relating to function and place should remain important guiding principles for future development.

It must also be noted that the approach of using traditional materials and reflecting a range of building typologies from the domestic to the industrial is completely compatible with good quality modern design. This allows for creativity and innovation, including concepts such as re-purposing the traditional chimney form to provide passive ventilation and in doing so retaining an important aspect of the historic roofscape.

Different building types, and particularly the older workshops and mills also provide useful inspiration for modern town centre development. Their more robust form and scale can help to make larger development sit better in context. The spaces created within the buildings can also be more adaptable, looking towards the concept of 'long-life loose-fit' buildings which can enable workspace and residential development to sit alongside each other and change gradually over time.



Examples of developments using traditional materials in modern buildings



An aerial photograph of a city street grid. A red rectangular area is highlighted in the center of the image, covering a portion of the street grid. The red area is approximately 100x100 units in size. The surrounding area shows a dense network of streets and buildings. The red area is located in the lower-left quadrant of the image.

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