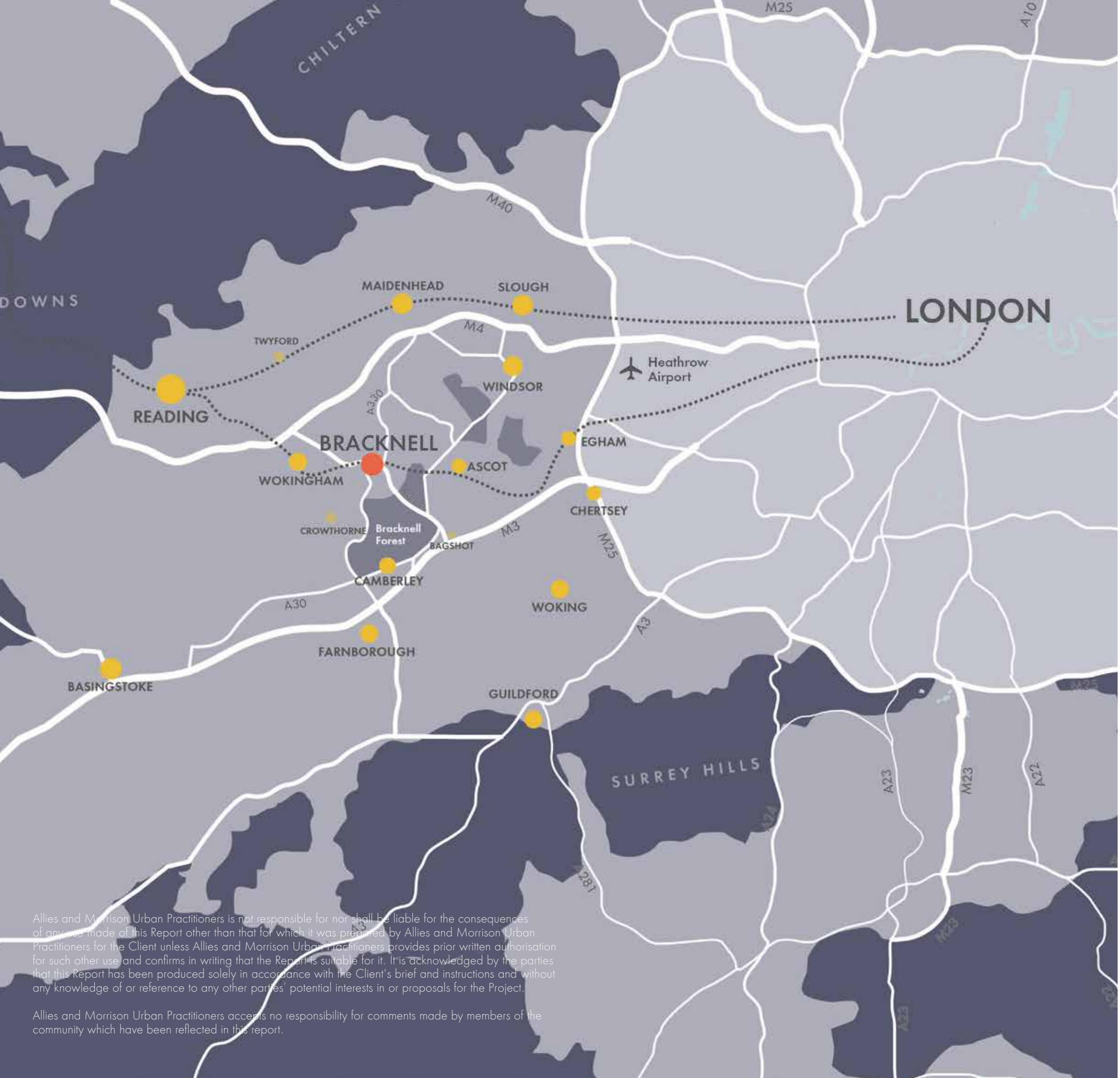


An aerial photograph of the Bracknell town centre, showing a dense grid of buildings and streets. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'BRACKNELL TOWN CENTRE VISION 2032' is centered in the lower half of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

# BRACKNELL TOWN CENTRE VISION 2032



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Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners accepts no responsibility for comments made by members of the community which have been reflected in this report.

Prepared for Bracknell Forest Council by:

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# OUR STORY



Site of Caesars Camp

Hill fort called Caesar's Camp  
evidence of earliest settlement

200BC to 40AD



1823 map by Henry Walter  
showing part of Windsor Forest  
including the site of Caesars  
Camp

Situated in Windsor Forest and used  
by royalty for hunting. A Royal  
Hunting Lodge was built in 1350 for  
King Edward III.

1066 - 1714

Turnpike Road  
from Virginia  
Water to Reading  
(now A329)  
improves road  
communications to  
Bracknell

1759



Bracknell station today

Bracknell consisted of a  
small village with a long  
narrow street, inhabited  
by shopkeepers

1847



1871 map  
of Bracknell  
showing its  
historic linear  
spine

Bracknell station opens and  
Bracknell develops into a coun-  
try town

1856

Weekly cattle and poultry  
market started.

1870

942 AD

Bracknell first recorded  
as 'Braccan Heal' in the  
Winkfield Boundary Charter

1463

Old Bracknell mentioned in  
Goring Charter

1851

Bracknell population  
is about 650

1860

Thomas Lawrence Brickworks  
opens, famous for 'red  
rubber' brick, found in Royal  
Albert Hall and Westminster  
Cathedral

1900

Local brick making  
at its peak -  
Thomas Lawrence  
brickworks reach  
an annual output  
of 12 million bricks

Bracknell has a much longer and richer history than its  
present New Town character would suggest. Look a  
little deeper and there are many interesting fragments  
of history which continue to shape the town today.



The brickworks were  
located to the north-east  
of Bracknell, shown in  
this map from 1900



# OUR FUTURE





# BRACKNELL TOWN CENTRE TODAY

With the recent opening of The Lexicon, Bracknell is in its most exciting period of transformation since the construction of the original New Town in 1949.

Bracknell has major corporate occupiers providing local employment. Many of these are located on the outskirts of the town with more limited office stock within the town centre. Bracknell is also in the top 10% of national productivity (GVA), albeit it lags slightly behind other Thames Valley competitors.

Bracknell's population is largely prosperous, with the proportion of people in the wealthiest socio-economic categories (Lavish Lifestyles and Executive Wealth) double the national average.

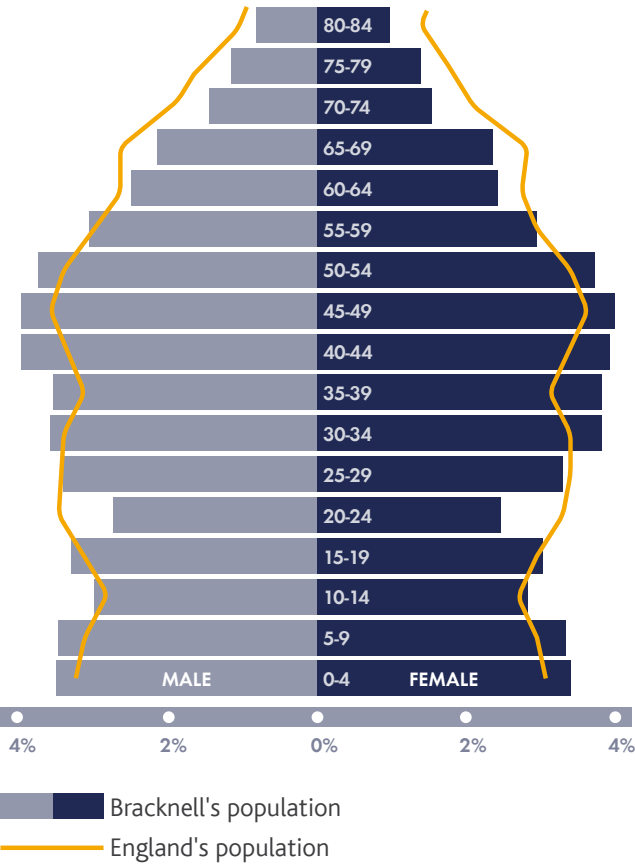
Lower income families make up the second largest social group within Bracknell and it will be important that Bracknell's Town Centre Vision provides for a range of economic backgrounds.

The highest population groups within Bracknell are families; with both children under 14 and those aged 35-54. There is a proportionately low number of people aged 20-24, compared to the national average.

Bracknell is experiencing a residential renaissance, with a series of town centre residential developments either complete or in the pipeline. This increase in town centre living will add a

vibrancy to the place and more development will promote true urban living.

The opening of The Lexicon, has brought a strong retail and leisure offer to attract visitors, with potential for a great cultural anchor.





# OUR VISION

Bracknell Town Centre 2032 is the new vision which sets out the way forward for Bracknell's town centre. Over the coming decade, Bracknell will realise its potential as a strong town centre, serving a prosperous and dynamic area. It will draw on its twentieth century New Town character and blend this with its deeper legacy as a historic town to create a hybrid which captures the benefits of both worlds.

The strong retail centre which has been carefully developed will be extended with complementary uses, supporting a diverse and resilient economy. New cultural activities, leisure uses, hotels, high quality offices and homes will form a major part of ensuring that the town centre feels vibrant and welcoming. Bracknell will particularly respond to its role as an important hub for tech industries by addressing the needs of a young, smart workforce.

The inner town centre road structure will be remodelled to establish a better-connected network of sites, encouraging walking and cycling routes, creating a more legible centre. The car will continue to be accommodated, but in ways which anticipate the possibility of significant changes in mobility over the coming generation.

The resilient urban form which this vision creates will help Bracknell to continue to adapt and develop. The result will be a welcoming, sociable and invigorating place which provides amenity, entertainment and excitement for all.





# INVESTMENT

Bracknell's newly opened Lexicon development comprises over 50,000sqm of new town centre uses, including Fenwicks Department Store, a Cineworld cinema and a range of new high quality shops and restaurants - an exciting new place which puts Bracknell on the map

The future opportunities for growth in the town centre will see a further development of leisure and cultural uses. There is great potential to link to Bracknell's tech-sector strength with innovations such as computer gaming hubs as well as providing space where creative independent business can complement the well-established commercial sector. Elsewhere, there has been growing investment in the town's residential market, with town centre living increasingly a realistic prospect.





# INVESTMENT

## Retail

The £240m Lexicon by the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, a 50:50 Joint Venture between Schroder UK Property Fund and Legal & General Property has doubled the amount of retail and leisure provision in Bracknell to over 1 million sq ft, and has doubled Bracknell's shopper population. Collectively operators including Fenwick, M&S, Primark and Cineworld have significantly boosted the town's attractiveness to shoppers, retaining more of the local retail spend that had previously been lost to nearby towns.

## Homes

Bracknell's housing market has been dominated by new detached and terraced housing in areas outside of the town centre.

There is a growing pipeline and investment within the town centre itself. Residential developments which have recently completed include Platform (108 homes), Ringside (45 homes) and Enid Wood House/Miflats (97 homes), with more under construction at Royal Winchester House (311 homes). In total, there are 608 homes in the pipeline until 2019. More housing is required within Bracknell to meet demand, and more investment in developments which encourage urban living would promote additional vibrancy in the town centre.

## Workspaces

Corporate occupiers within Bracknell include Waitrose, Honda Motor Europe, Fujitsu Technology Solutions UK, Hitachi, and Dell EMC, all of which are located to the west and south west of the town centre. The John Lewis Partnership has been present in Bracknell since 1972, and the site continues to be Waitrose's UK Head Office. Bracknell is also the UK Headquarters for Honda.

In total, the Bracknell office market provides approximately 450,000sqm of office accommodation, much of which is outside of the town centre. Within the town centre, several major office buildings, mainly purpose built but outdated

stock, have been converted to residential use, which has reduced supply by approximately 25,000sqm. As a result, the town centre provides approximately 45,000sqm of accommodation; just 10% of the town's total provision.





# RE-INVENTION

Bracknell town centre has undergone a series of significant transformations, moving from a traditional village high street to a post-war new town and most recently into a modern centre with renewed public spaces and a fantastic new shopping and leisure experience.

The coming generations of development in Bracknell will enable the town to gradually move beyond this episodic cycle of renewal to a more sustainable and stable condition. The creation of a normal network of streets and spaces will mean that individual buildings can be updated or renewed easily without disrupting the wider town.



founding



re-planning



re-developing



re-imagining



# PUBLIC SPACES



Bracknell's public spaces have been comprehensively renewed in parallel with the Lexicon development, extending the same high quality treatment through the existing town centre streets.





# PUBLIC SPACES

Bespoke wayfinding guides people around the town and artwork which has been created to reflect the natural heritage of the local area



Streets animated with outdoor seating for cafes and restaurants, and spaces created for street performance and events



Existing historic buildings have been restored and carefully integrated into their new setting



Extensive tree planting reflects Bracknell's character as one of the most extensively wooded boroughs in the UK



Plenty of seating has been included in the remodelling work, making it feel more relaxed and encouraging people to spend longer



Vertical greening and street planting are incorporated to bring the town's green character right into the centre





# BUSINESS

Traditional ways of working are being disrupted by the accelerating pace of technological change across the UK. New competitors are rapidly scaling and competing globally. Entire industries are being transformed by new applications and business models, devastating companies not agile enough to respond to a shifting competitive landscape. Not since the onset of the industrial revolution has technology been poised to play such a transformational role in the lives of consumers and operation of businesses. The Internet of Things (IoT), smart cities, cloud computing, additive manufacturing and artificial intelligence – to name only a few examples – will fundamentally change the way people live and work.

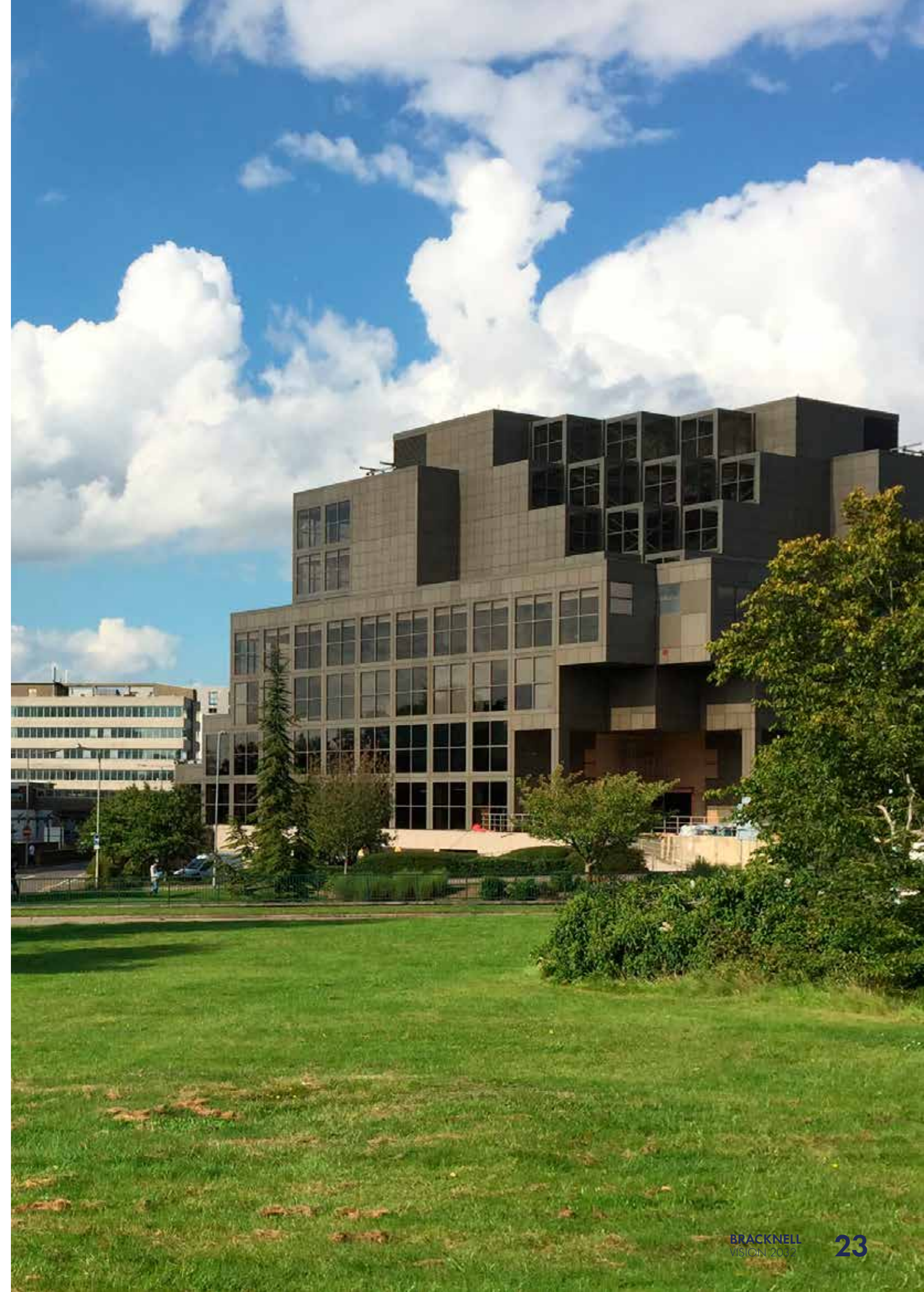
The future workplace will look radically different as employers respond to a growing requirement for a work-health balance, with an abundance of research demonstrating links between employee wellbeing and bottom line financial outcomes.

A range of factors from the changing geopolitical and economic climate, changes relating to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, the increasing reliance on technology, changing demands for flexible working from staff, and a preference for town centre locations rather than more isolated business parks all mean that businesses (and small businesses and start-up companies in particular) are placing increasing importance on the flexibility of their accommodation. Agile workplaces which can respond to these changes are important, and

can be supplemented by additional floorspace from co-working concepts. Co-working can also create a community between different businesses, which can disrupt industries and lead to innovative solutions.

In Bracknell, office rents are affordable in comparison to other Thames Valley locations, despite the town being home to a number of major corporate headquarters and head offices. While prime headline rents are currently £25 per sq ft in Bracknell, they are up to £37.50 per sq ft in Reading and Maidenhead. However, there is a lack of town centre grade A office provision in Bracknell, partly due to the historic location of the business parks on the outskirts built upon the necessity for workers to travel by car, compounded by the conversion of a number of buildings to residential use in recent years. This highlights a significant latent potential within the town centre for office development.

There is the potential for a whole range of different types of business accommodation to thrive in the town centre, including small suites and co-working space for small companies and start ups. Supported by the opening of the Lexicon, the town centre is experiencing a change in perception which could be accompanied by a new type of business community and office provision within Bracknell.





# LIVING

Successful towns of recent years have focused not just on providing certain property uses as identified within local plans, but by taking a holistic view on development to provide a high quality mixed-use urban environment and an organic approach to place making. In practice this relates to residential, retail and office property uses being located side-by-side, in truly mixed use schemes and communities.

Demographic shifts and an emergence of the “millennial” generation has led to an increasing trend for people to desire being close to both local amenities and working environments. This trend is seen particularly across London; however high property values are forcing many people to relocate to regional towns and cities across the country, providing a significant opportunity for places such as Bracknell.

Bracknell Forest Council has delivered an average of 376 dwellings per year for the last 5 years. An annual figure higher than the current delivery rate is anticipated up to 2036 in order to meet the demand for growth in accordance with the five-year projections. Whilst there are some significant schemes underway, particularly within the town centre, there is still significant opportunity for further residential development to keep up with demand.





# LANDSCAPE

Bracknell is surrounded by great landscape, including the miles of walking and cycling trails in Swinley Forest and the sweeping parkland of Windsor Great Park. A key legacy of the New Town is the integration of landscape and town, and Bracknell retains open space and extensive tree planting connecting the town centre with its context.

Woodland covers approximately 38% of the Borough, making it one of the most densely covered Boroughs in the UK. There is a mix of plantation forest and ancient woodland, including the UK's largest collection of veteran oak trees within Windsor Forest.

Bracknell Forest Borough also contains major areas of heathland - a valuable environment for biodiversity in the south east and protected as part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

This special landscape context provides large areas of valuable amenity to the people living and working in Bracknell, providing opportunities to connect to nature and space for a wide range of outdoor leisure and sporting activities.

The recent Lexicon development has embraced this character through extensive planting including substantial new trees, green walls and planting within the streetscape. The scheme also integrates natural motifs in the street furniture, drawing on local plant species for inspiration.

Future development will continue this approach, connecting people and wildlife, to benefit local health and well-being, promoting biodiversity and delivering the natural climate change resilience which comes from having extensive and well connected areas of natural estate.



Proposals for Bracknell will balance sustainable development in the town centre with the need to retain the landscape influences of the post-war character which link Bracknell with its countryside.



Bracknell's existing road network means that the town centre is easily accessed by car. It also benefits from good bus and train access. However, we also want to make sure that more people are able to access the town centre on foot and by bicycle, using safe, direct and attractive routes from the surrounding areas.

# CONNECTIONS

Bracknell was one of the first wave of New Towns, along with contemporaries including Stevenage and Harlow. Like these similar developments, Bracknell has a very particular approach to cars, pedestrians and cyclists. The New Towns were designed to segregate different modes of transport to remove conflict between uses. The design of the town, with separate residential and business neighbourhoods away from the town centre provides a further level of segregation.

Whilst this approach has made Bracknell well suited to the car, it makes walking and cycling less attractive, partly due to the longer distances involved with low density development but also due to the safety concerns of the underpasses which are integral to the segregated design

Car use and ownership is likely to change rapidly over the coming decades. Whilst it is realistic to expect that vehicles in some form will continue to be part of the way we live and get around, making the town centre more accessible on foot and by bicycle will help more people to choose the healthy, low-impact option.

This approach can be facilitated by a series of development projects on the fringes of the town centre which start to reconnect the centre with the wider town. The existing road structure can be remodelled to reduce the amount of land taken up by tarmac, freeing up space for other uses.





# CONNECTIONS

One of Bracknell's advantages as a New Town is its extensive network of planned, segregated cycle ways. Whilst many towns and cities are struggling to retro-fit cycling facilities to existing streets, Bracknell has a significant head-start on the trend towards more walking and cycling in urban areas.

Bracknell's size means that most of the people living or working in the town are under three kilometres from the town centre - an easy cycle ride on safe cycle paths. Even a small switch from walking to cycling could take hundreds of car movements off our roads every day, reducing congestion, improving air quality and helping people stay fit and healthy. Dockless bike schemes can make cycling an easier option, whether or not you already have access to a bike.



A series of elements have been identified as important to bring the existing cycle network up to the best standards:

## At grade-crossings

The existing network of cycle lanes relies on underpasses and over-bridges to cross roads. The roads in turn have been designed to act as car-focussed freeways rather than urban streets. As we transform the street network, more of the crossing points can be normal surface crossings, making these safer and more attractive for everyone.

## Continuity along existing routes

The best cycle routes are continuous, direct and easy to follow. There are opportunities to improve our existing cycle routes by giving them a higher priority in junction design to make them as continuous as possible.

## Extending the network

Although the New Town plan delivered extensive cycle routes some later areas of the town were more car focussed in their design. This needs to be addressed to make sure that facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are accessible across the town.

## Cycle parking

New cycle parking has been provided as part of the Lexicon scheme in safe, prominent locations. This approach should be extended to other key destinations in developments around the edge of the town centre.

## Tackling Bracknell's roundabouts

The existing roundabouts handle major through-routes, local traffic and access to car parks and servicing. Pedestrian and cycle routes are segregated into underpasses on the original roundabouts or at grade on more modern ones.

Relocation of the car park access and service access directly from the main road will simplify the roundabouts and could also remove the need for some elements of the inner service road - the Ring.

These changes mean that the roundabout can be simplified to two signalised junctions in place of six sets of signals which operate at peak time in the existing arrangement.

The changes to the road layout release land which is no-longer required as operational highway space and can be developed. It also allows for more normal streets to be created, with integrated pedestrian and cycle facilities





# UNLOCK GROWTH



## Bracknell now

- Lexicon scheme delivered, including new Fenwicks Department store and new Cinema
- Bus station improvements delivered
- New Waitrose delivered
- Town centre public realm improvements delivered



## Short term

- Identifying and unlocking key sites with immediate development potential, including Easthampstead House
- Catch and steer on emerging projects to align with future vision
- Develop meanwhile opportunities on fallow sites



## Medium term

- Deliver highway changes which unlock further sites and complete the street network
- Re-provide the bus interchange facility as on-street provision to release the bus station site
- Complete initial phases of development



## Longer term

- Opportunity to extend the developing street network to the west, integrating the Peel Centre and connecting the western industrial area more closely into the town centre



# SHORT TERM

## Initial opportunities

There are a number of great opportunities for early development across the town centre.

Easthampstead House and the adjacent library in the north east corner of the town centre provide a clear opportunity following the relocation of the Council to alternative premises. This strategic site adjacent to the new Fenwick store would extend the town centre to the east and will be well linked with both colleges.

There is also an opportunity to develop the Jubilee Gardens site to the south of the town centre to create a development of significant scale as a gateway to Bracknell, which currently provides a poor arrival point to the town centre.

Flexibility of use should be maintained across the sites. There are clear reasons for development of residential and office accommodation within these areas as well as supporting retail and service uses. In addition, the cultural gap analysis has highlighted a deficit of cultural uses compared to other towns within the Thames Valley; therefore there is a key opportunity to provide this within a range of options including museums, theatres, E-sports hubs and other venues.

## Meanwhile uses

There is a great opportunity to bring a range of cultural uses to enliven Bracknell and specific sites in advance of development.

This includes pop up cinemas and bars within vacant car park land, festivals, exhibition space, and markets. Temporary art installations, lighting schemes, new green walls and new street furniture would also enliven the public realm.



Redevelopment of the former Winchester House site in progress

Development on the west side of Market Street and on the medical centre car park creating new street frontage



Redevelopment or re-use of the existing Council offices library, retaining the existing service access to the rear of Fenwicks



Redevelopment of the former Bentalls site, creating improved connections from the Lexicon to the Princess Square shopping centre



Infill development to the rear of Time Square, establishing future potential street connections between Market Street and future development to the west.

Development on the existing open space to establish a north-south pedestrian street reflecting the existing strong desire line

Redevelopment of the Royal British Legion site and land to the south creating new street frontage establishing the east-west street which will link to Mount Lane

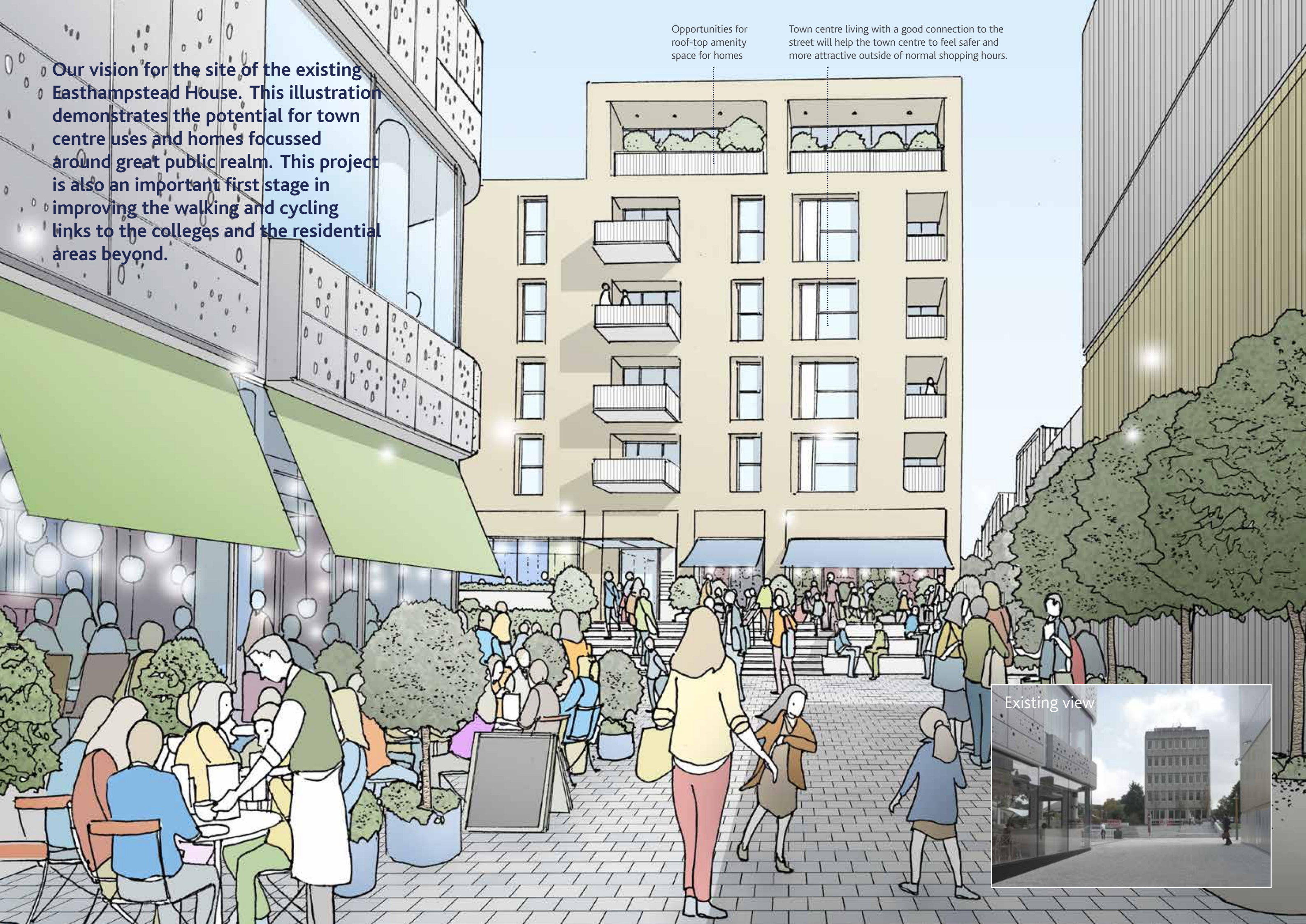




Our vision for the site of the existing Easthampstead House. This illustration demonstrates the potential for town centre uses and homes focussed around great public realm. This project is also an important first stage in improving the walking and cycling links to the colleges and the residential areas beyond.

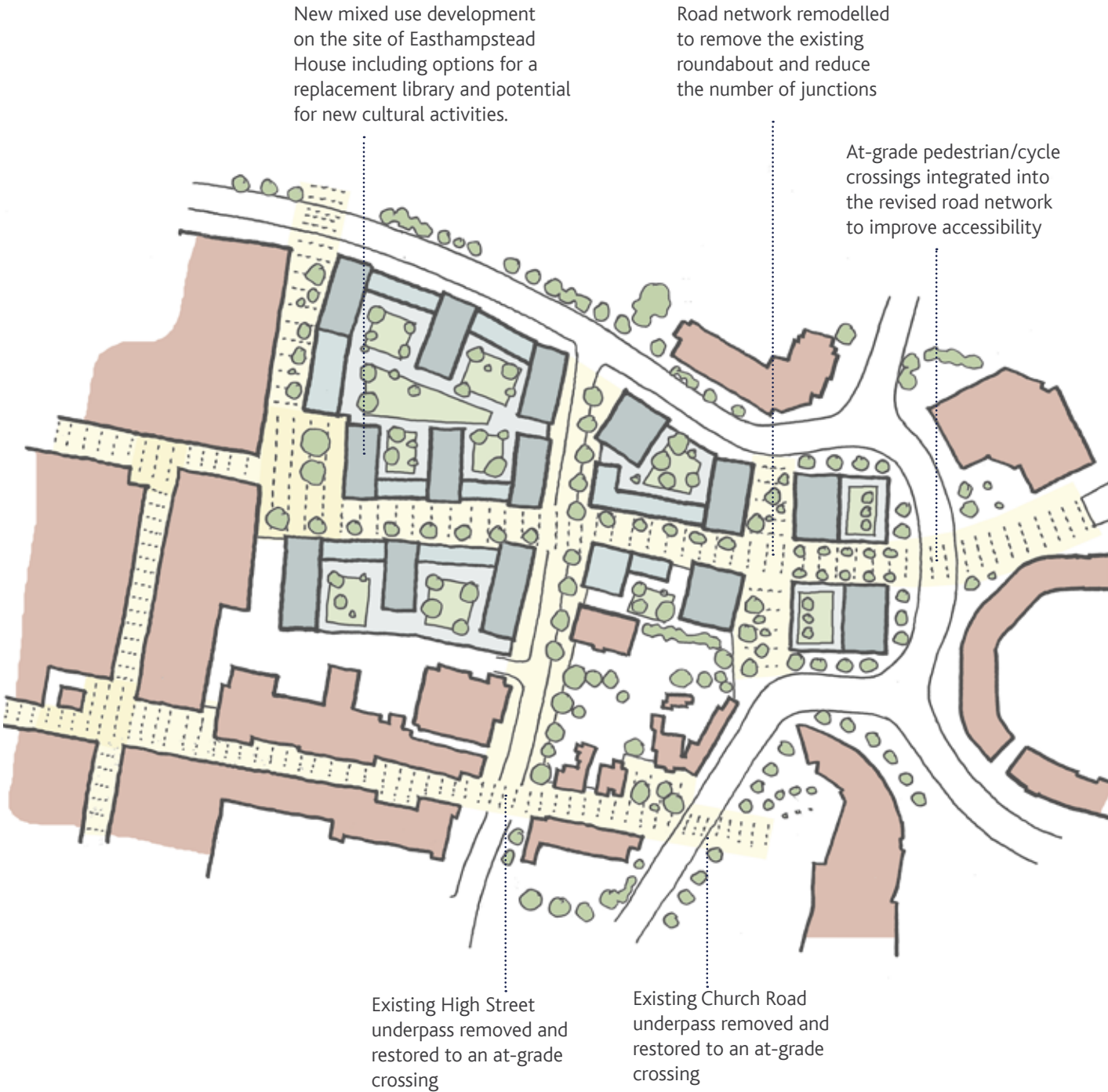
Opportunities for roof-top amenity space for homes

Town centre living with a good connection to the street will help the town centre to feel safer and more attractive outside of normal shopping hours.





# CIVIC QUARTER



Bracknell's original civic quarter is an important part of the town centre in terms of establishing strong connections with the colleges and the surrounding residential areas. The existing road network dominates, but there is great potential to make access simpler and to unlock land trapped by the highway layout.



The proposed framework for the area establishes a much clearer and strong connection for pedestrians and cyclists into the existing town centre. It integrates with the existing road network to create a more normal network of streets and spaces - ideal for a mix of uses including housing with complementary town centre uses animating the ground floor.



Easthampstead House, the Library and the Magistrates Court provide the initial development opportunities and have the advantage of already being fully integrated with the eastern end of the Lexicon scheme. There may also be the potential to develop some elements of the wider area within existing green space prior to the remodelling of the main junction.



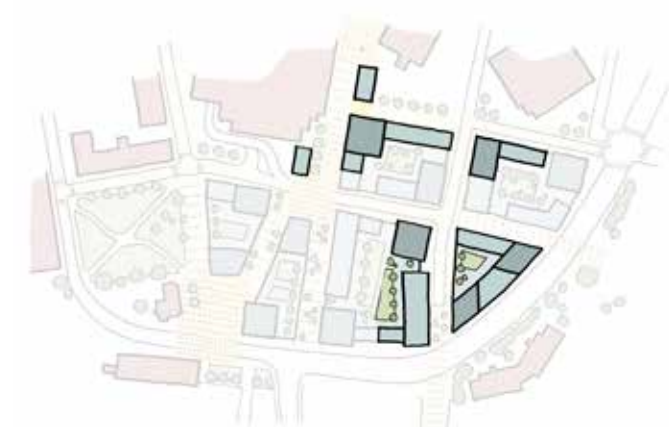
The removal of the former Met Office roundabout has the potential to unlock significant areas of land and complete the street network. Other elements such as the site of the existing Police Station may also come into consideration alongside a series of more local revisions to the road network such as the removal of the High Street underpasses at The Ring and Church Road.



# STATION QUARTER



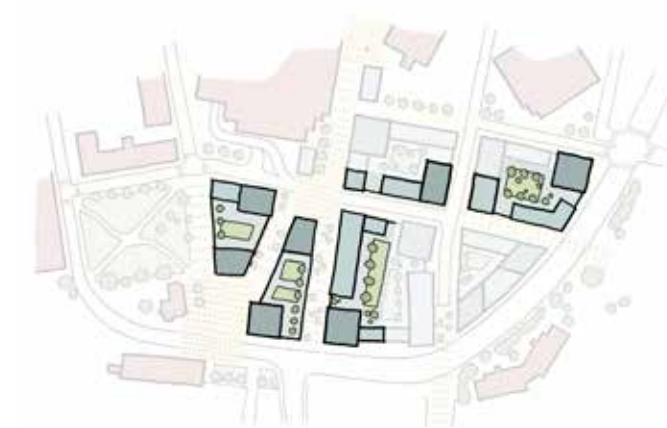
The existing area is dominated by highways, including Station Way, The Ring and the large areas of unused land which are left as road verge. The combination of the bus station and the nature of the road network creates a major barrier between the railway station and the town centre.



A series of development opportunities can be delivered within the constraints of the current road network. The Jubilee Gardens site, together with the site of the Royal British Legion building can create linking development which improves the land at the southern end of the existing town centre, whilst the land between Church Road, The Ring and Station Way can also deliver new development and new street links.



The framework for the area proposes a series of urban blocks and the establishment of a normal network of streets and spaces. The one-way loop of The Ring will be modified to create a normal two-way street including a new junction with Church Road to maintain access. Pedestrian and cycle connections are made more direct, improving the town-to-station links



Remodelling of The Ring and Station Way will unlock further phases of development, completing an integrated urban area. The redevelopment of the existing bus station site, moving the bus stops to more conventional on-street locations will also be critical in creating a new station square and in establishing a high quality link with the town centre.



**An illustration showing how new development could open up the connections to the station and strengthen the southern part of the town centre**

Existing view



Fully inclusive public realm design, seamlessly integrating the ramp from the church with the main public space

New buildings on the site of the former British Legion building and Jubilee Gardens

Enhanced setting for the war memorial

Route south widened into a normal street, and the underpass removed and replaced with a normal road crossing

Legible route to the station through the new development





# MEDIUM TERM

## Medium term development

A number of additional sites could be released once the various highway changes identified have been carried out, particularly around Millennium Way and the Met Office Roundabout, and around the Bus Station and Station Way. This would also involve the re-alignment of pedestrian routes to ensure permeability into the town from the station.

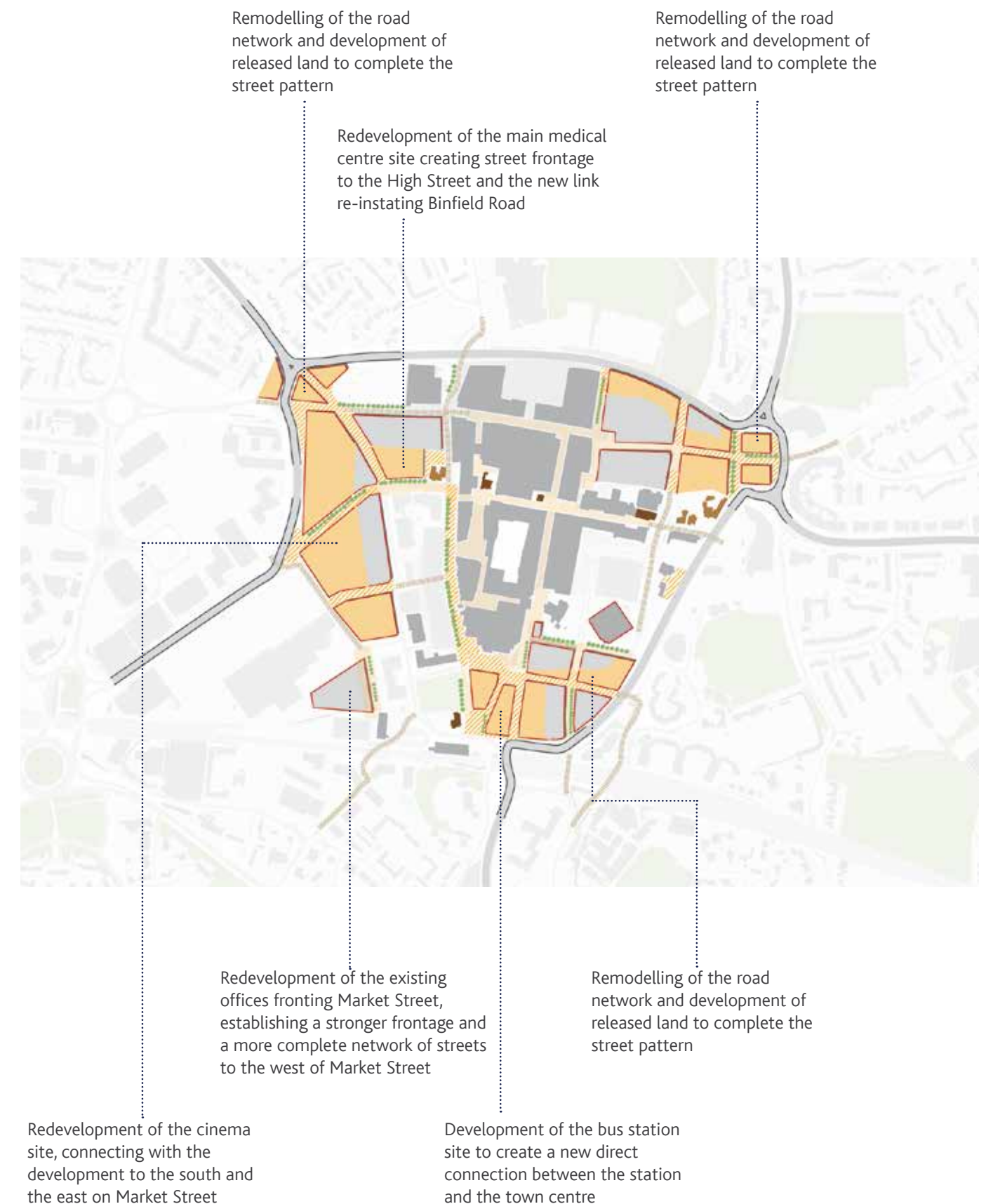
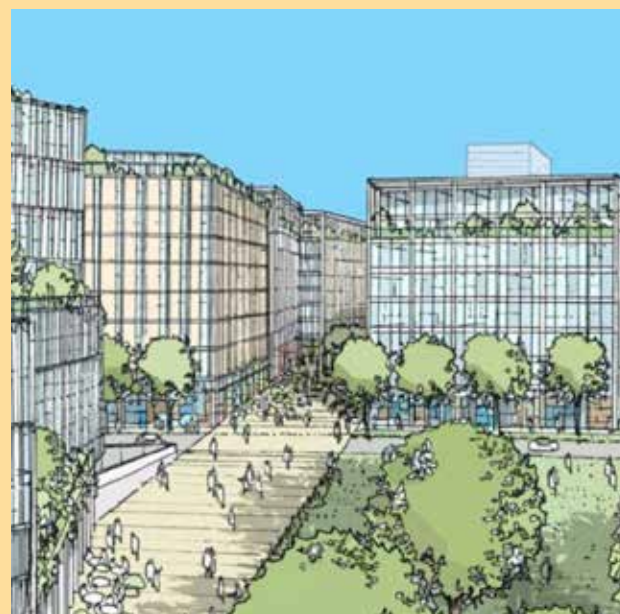
There is significant potential in the town for both office and residential development, given the low values of each compared to other regional competitors. Mixed use accommodation would provide vibrant spaces for urban living. There is also a lack of hotel accommodation in the town centre, creating an opportunity for future development.

Given the Lexicon development there is less potential for future comparison retail development and demand, although some development in this sector to complement office and residential uses would be desirable.

## Phasing development

Development of this scale will require phased delivery. The development blocks highlighted within the medium term could be built over a period of 5-7 years, based on a planned approach allowing for effective traffic and pedestrian management throughout. A phased approach will also ensure a pipeline of accommodation which the market can absorb over a number of years.

By designing flexible spaces and a flexible vision for the town, buildings could be adapted depending on trends and demand. This will create a modern place which is undergoing regular renewal as various sites are developed.





An artist's illustration showing how new mixed used development could transform the area around the station, creating a focus for workspace and residential development as well as greatly improving the links to the town centre.

Existing pub retained in an enhanced setting, fronting onto a generous pedestrian public space

Clear and legible pedestrian route to the town centre

Existing view



Improved pedestrian crossing facilities, connecting the station directly with the town via a table-top crossing

Mixed use development including retail and cafe space facing onto the street with offices, hotels and flats above

Bus stops relocated on-street with real-time information, providing a better quality environment for waiting.



# LONGER TERM

## Protecting long term opportunities

Once the short term and medium term development sites have been developed, there is likely to be a range of other areas which could provide long term opportunities. These include areas around the Peel Centre and further to the west of the town centre.

By this time (approximately 2027-32) the town of Bracknell will have undergone significant change. The sites to the west of the town centre will provide a clear opportunity for longer-term expansion and additional growth of the town.

Although these sites may be some way off in terms of their readiness for redevelopment, it will be helpful to have a clear vision for the long term.

An understanding of the future potential block structure for redevelopment will be valuable in making decisions about earlier developments, leaving connections and routes ready to connect in the longer term and helping to ensure that future prospects are not cut off by present day considerations.

## Future-proofing options

Significant changes are being experienced within business and retail sectors. Combined with the expectation of other factors on the nature of our town centres from driverless cars to the impact of the internet on amenities and services, it will be important to future proof Bracknell throughout the next stage of development. Flexibility in design will be crucial, to ensure the buildings and their uses can evolve to suit the needs of future generations.

Continual identification of new opportunities and flexibility will be of benefit to the town, including the long-term potential to re-plan very car-based areas on the edge of the current town centre.



Opportunity to extend the developing street network to the west, integrating the Peel Centre and connecting the western industrial area more closely into the town centre

Redevelopment of the High Street car park, allowing the introduction of a connecting route from Market Street through to the town centre.



# DELIVERY

The Bracknell Town Centre Vision shows its depth of ambition for the future, building on the success of the Lexicon. This document identifies a range of opportunities and interventions which will help deliver that Vision.

The scale of development proposed will mean that the schemes will be spread over several years, with some of the sites immediately available while others will take some time to unlock.

The re-configuration work to the roads will require careful consideration and planning to keep the town running smoothly. Yet this will be an important step to improve efficiency within Bracknell and adapt to modal changes in transport.

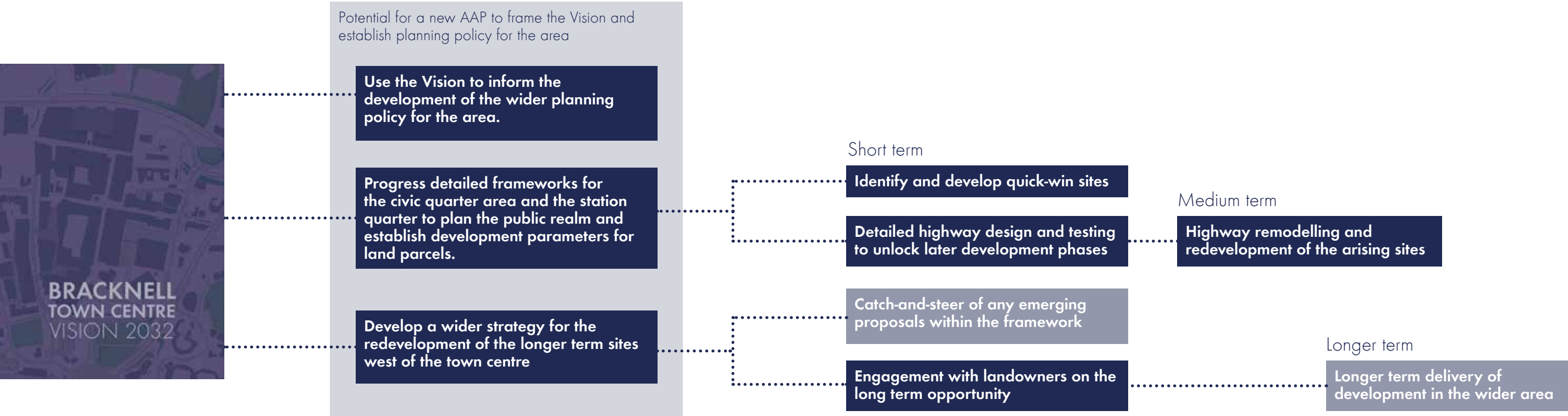
Realising the potential of Bracknell will require collaboration. Bracknell Forest Council will take an active role in this process, and already control a number of the sites identified. Other parties and landowners will be invited to support the process of development and innovation.

Delivery will be through partnerships, joint ventures, land sales and delivery by the public and private sector. Consultation with the local population early in the process will be an integral part of the process.

The most appropriate scale and use for each development will require more detailed analysis and design work. New cultural activities, leisure uses, hotels and homes will form a new part of the Vision. Meanwhile uses of sites available today, which can host temporary events and uses at low cost, will be an important first step in maintaining the momentum of the Vision.

Bracknell 2032 will be culturally self-confident; a resilient place, a welcoming place and a sociable place, providing amenity, entertainment and excitement for all.

The flow chart below sets out our approach to delivering the short-term opportunities, unlocking the medium-term opportunities and planning carefully for the long term prospects which may arise.







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