



TOP OF THE TOWN, BASINGSTOKE

Concept Masterplan - a Vision for the future

March 2014



*Basingstoke
and Deane*

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1	Introduction	11
1.1	Introduction	12
2	Portrait of Top of the Town	15
2.1	Location	17
2.2	Historical development	18
2.3	Urban form and character	22
2.4	Land uses	24
2.5	Transport and movement	27
2.6	Property market	32
2.6	Development activity	37
3	Top of the Town Vision	39
3.1	The vision for Top of the Town	40
4	Concept masterplan	45
4.1	The concept masterplan	47
4.2	Strand One: The spatial plan	49
4.3	Strand Two: A cultural and activity programme	56
4.4	Strand Three: Management and promotion	58
4.5	A programme of incremental delivery	59

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: United Reform Church on London Street; Historic image (prior to the ring road); Basingstoke market; London Street; Lesser Market and the Haymarket Theatre on Wote Street

Background

Top of the Town is the historic heart of Basingstoke. In many ways the most interesting and dynamic part of the town but an area that has been somewhat neglected in recent years. Significant investment has gone towards enhancing the retail offer in Basingstoke's two shopping centres, The Malls and Festival Place whilst Top of the Town has become more peripheral.

The areas are however intrinsically linked. The success of the shopping centres and their ability to draw people to shop in the town is, in part, dependent on the wider offer that the town can present. Top of the Town already provides a complementary offer but this could be much richer providing a mix of specialist independent shops, cafes, restaurants, street markets and cultural activities within its smaller scale buildings and spaces and activities that bring life and atmosphere to its historic streets.

In July 2013 Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council appointed specialist urban design and masterplanning consultants Urban Initiatives Studio to prepare a Concept Masterplan for the Top of the Town. This masterplan sets a vision for the future of the area and aims to, over time, reposition Top of the Town as a destination in Basingstoke.

The concept masterplan has been prepared through an iterative process working closely with the council project team and senior officers. Two workshops were held with the town centre forum. The first to consult on the emerging vision for Top of the Town (9 October 2013) and the second to consult on the draft Concept Masterplan (22 January 2014).

This is a consultation draft report and will go to the council's Cabinet Committee for approval in March 2014.

The Vision

*Top of the town will become a more **vibrant destination** for the town with a mix of shops, cafes, and activities within its attractive historic streets and spaces.*

This following objectives are promoted:

- 1 To improve the **shopping and food offer** in Top of the Town so that it becomes a more attractive destination – with a focus on independent and specialist shops and cafes;*
- 2 To ensure that Top of the Town is easy to get to by car whilst **enhancing accessibility** by other modes including bus, bicycle and foot and to locate car parking and bus stops where this helps to channel footfall through Top of the Town;*
- 3 To improve the connections both within Top of the Town and to other parts of Basingstoke by car, bus, bicycle and foot creating a more **integrated place**;*
- 4 To celebrate Top of the Town's **heritage** and ensure that new development is complementary to the historic character and setting;*
- 5 To encourage and **manage development** to create a more attractive, street based, setting for the town centre;*
- 6 To encourage better use of the upper floors of existing buildings and promote further **residential development** in Top of the Town in order to increase the area's vitality;*
- 7 To enhance Top of the Town as a destination in the town through a year round **events programme** with Market Place forming the focus of these activities;*
- 8 To develop the area's **cultural role** and build a stronger link between the theatres and night time economy;*
- 9 To introduce **specialist markets** in Top of the Town;*
- 10 To enhance the **streets and spaces** throughout Top of the Town and remove unnecessary visual clutter;*
- 11 To encourage **temporary uses** that bring additional vitality and interest to the town centre; and*
- 12 To develop a **stronger brand for Top of the Town** as part of a wider branding and marketing strategy for Basingstoke town centre – the brand for Top of the Town to focus on HERITAGE, FUN, SPECIALIST SHOPPING and CULTURE.*





Central car park could be developed to provide mixed use development that will animate Top of the Town



New Road could become a two way tree lined street fronted by new development

The concept masterplan

The concept masterplan is a strategy for gradual and progressive enhancement that will reposition Top of the Town and create a more attractive environment for investment. It is composed of three strands:

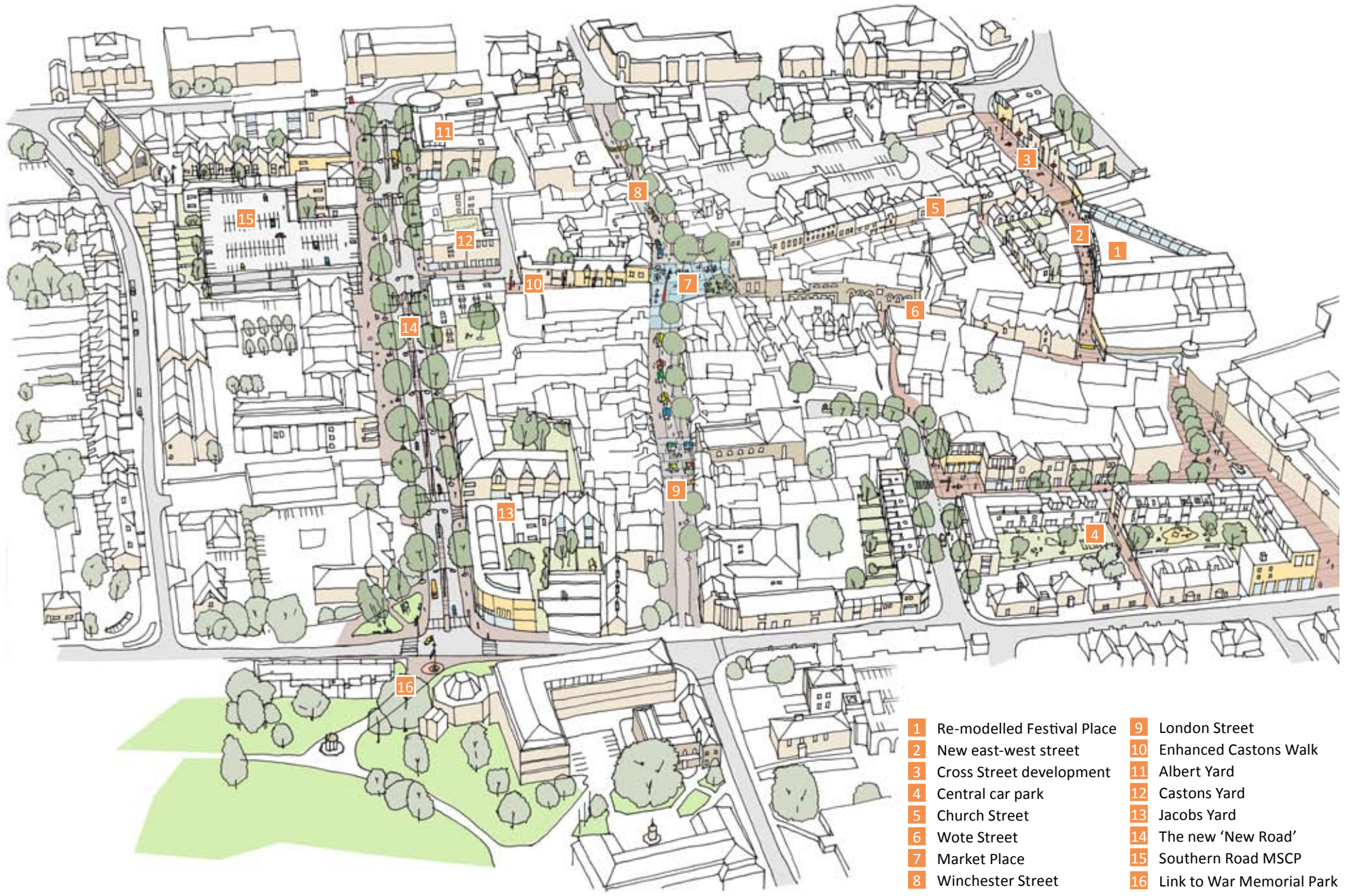
Strand One: The spatial concept

The concept masterplan promotes a series of changes within Top of the Town that will ensure that it is better connected with the town centre and the adjoining residential neighbourhoods and that over time it becomes a more attractive environment within which a mix of uses will flourish. Proposals include:

- Changes to the interface between Top of the Town and the Festival Place Shopping Centre to provide a more welcoming transition;
- New connections through Top of the Town to enhance permeability;
- New development that will provide frontage and overlooking of streets and spaces and introduce further activity;
- Introduction of two-way working on New Road with this section of the ring road being transformed into a civilised, tree lined, street;
- Enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities on New Road making it easier for people to cross this street;
- Consolidation of the space hungry surface car parks in Top of the Town into a new multi-storey car park on the site of the current Southern Road car park;
- Streetscape improvements on the main streets and spaces including Winchester Street, London Street, Wote Street, Church Street and Market Place; and
- Enhanced connections to War Memorial Park.



Concept masterplan



Birds eye sketch viewing across Top of the Town from the east

Strand Two: A cultural and activity programme

Generating interest in Top of the Town and therefore its profile as a place is not only dependent on physical changes. Indeed physical changes take time, normally require considerable investment and require negotiation and agreement through the planning system.

A much quicker way to change the image of Top of the Town is through a programme of activities and events that can attract people to the area, help to change perceptions of the place and generate excitement and interest.

The concept masterplan promotes the following:

- Engagement of a specialist market consultant to advise on how to grow and develop the market;
- Introducing specialist markets in the town and actively promoting these;
- Investigating the potential for an indoor market in the Haymarket Theatre;
- Creating a more active events programme and encouraging more live music and activities in the centre;
- Working with Haymarket Theatre to encourage a greater contribution to the towns events programme; and
- Making Market Place the focus for sitting out and events.



Strand Three: Management and promotion strategy

Marketing and branding are becoming increasingly important to the success of a place. Top of the Town forms an important part of Basingstoke's offer, providing a shopping offer that is complementary to the shopping centre and an environment that is conducive to cultural activities and independent operators. The mix of uses within Top of the Town can change overtime and will respond to the local 'market'. That market is the visitors who come to the town. Basingstoke has an affluent catchment but at the current time its offer is mid range, with other centres such as Winchester, Guildford and Reading providing a higher end offer.

Whilst promotion and marketing is essential management of the area is equally important. Visitors to Top of the Town want to see a clean well-managed and attractive environment. Vacant shops and poor quality shopfronts detract from this image. Town centre management must be proactive exploring opportunities for pop-up activities, temporary uses and responding to and supporting traders and businesses ideas. Grants can be offered towards environmental improvements and assistance can be provided to help traders to respond to the Councils adopted shopfront design guide.

Promotion and marketing

- Preparation of a marketing and branding strategy for Basingstoke town centre and Top of the Town;
- Development of a coherent signage and wayfinding strategy;
- Creation of a new interactive Top of The Town website;
- Creation of an APP to enhance the experience of visiting Basingstoke; and
- Promotion and review of the Top of the Town shopfront design guide.

Management and facilitation

- Offering vacant shop units as opportunity for pop-up shops;
- Engagement with Festival Place owners regarding the interface with Top of the Town;
- Encouragement to the Town Centre Forum to take ownership of projects; and
- Development of a more proactive response to support traders and businesses.





INTRODUCTION

Background

Top of the Town is the historic heart of Basingstoke. In many ways the most interesting and dynamic part of the town but an area that has been somewhat neglected in recent years. Significant investment has gone towards enhancing the retail offer in Basingstoke's two shopping centres, The Malls and Festival Place, whilst Top of the Town has become more peripheral.

Top of the Town provides a complementary offer to the shopping centres with smaller specialist shops, hairdressers and beauty parlours, banks and cafes attracting custom. A number of public houses and bars contribute to the town's night time offer. There is however a feeling that the area is in decline. The historic market has dwindled to little more than half a dozen stalls, the Haymarket theatre is less active than in the past and at times the streets lack footfall.

Town centres are inherently complex environments with an intricate web of interrelated factors all playing a role. The mix of uses is important but easy access, good parking and an attractive and vibrant street scene are also essential ingredients of a successful town centre. Top of the Town is disadvantaged by the movement patterns in Basingstoke which lead visitors towards the car parks and bus stops that serve the main shopping centres, and whilst the environment is attractive on the main streets the secondary streets and rear yards are unsightly.

Town centres are dynamic environments and there success is not just based on the bricks and mortar but also on the activities that take place within them, the image, buzz (or lack of it) and the offer both as a focus for retail, for leisure and also as a place to linger, browse, or gather. Top of the Town needs to improve its offer, generate more activity and promote itself in order to prosper in the future.

The Concept Masterplan

The concept masterplan provides a vision for the future of Top of the Town. To, over time, reposition Top of the Town as a destination in Basingstoke and a focus for niche retail, cafes and bars set within attractive streets and spaces. An area that will complement the shopping centres and add to the wider offer in the town.

It is recognised that change cannot take place overnight and that physical development alone will not transform the area. Whilst an indicative masterplan and some key structuring principles are presented here, the concept masterplan is also a strategy for gradual and progressive enhancement that will reposition Top of the Town and, over time, create a more attractive environment for investment.

The concept masterplan is composed of three strands:

Strand One: The spatial concept

- Street and public space enhancements;
- Changes to the movement network and to car parking; and
- Delivery of new development.

Strand Two: A cultural and activity programme

- New and improved markets;
- Temporary uses; and
- Events.

Strand Three: Management and promotion

- Marketing and branding; and
- Town centre management.



The first workshop with the Town Centre Forum

Masterplan process

The masterplan has been prepared through an iterative process working closely with the council project team and senior officers. Its recommendations follow on from the Basingstoke Town Centre Action Plan which set a rolling programme of measures to enhance the Top of the Town. This Action Plan recommended the formation of a town centre forum representing the town's different interests and this forum has been consulted through two workshops during the preparation of this concept masterplan. The first workshop was held to consult on the emerging vision for Top of the Town (9 October 2013) and the second to consult on the draft Concept Masterplan (22 January 2014).

Format of the report

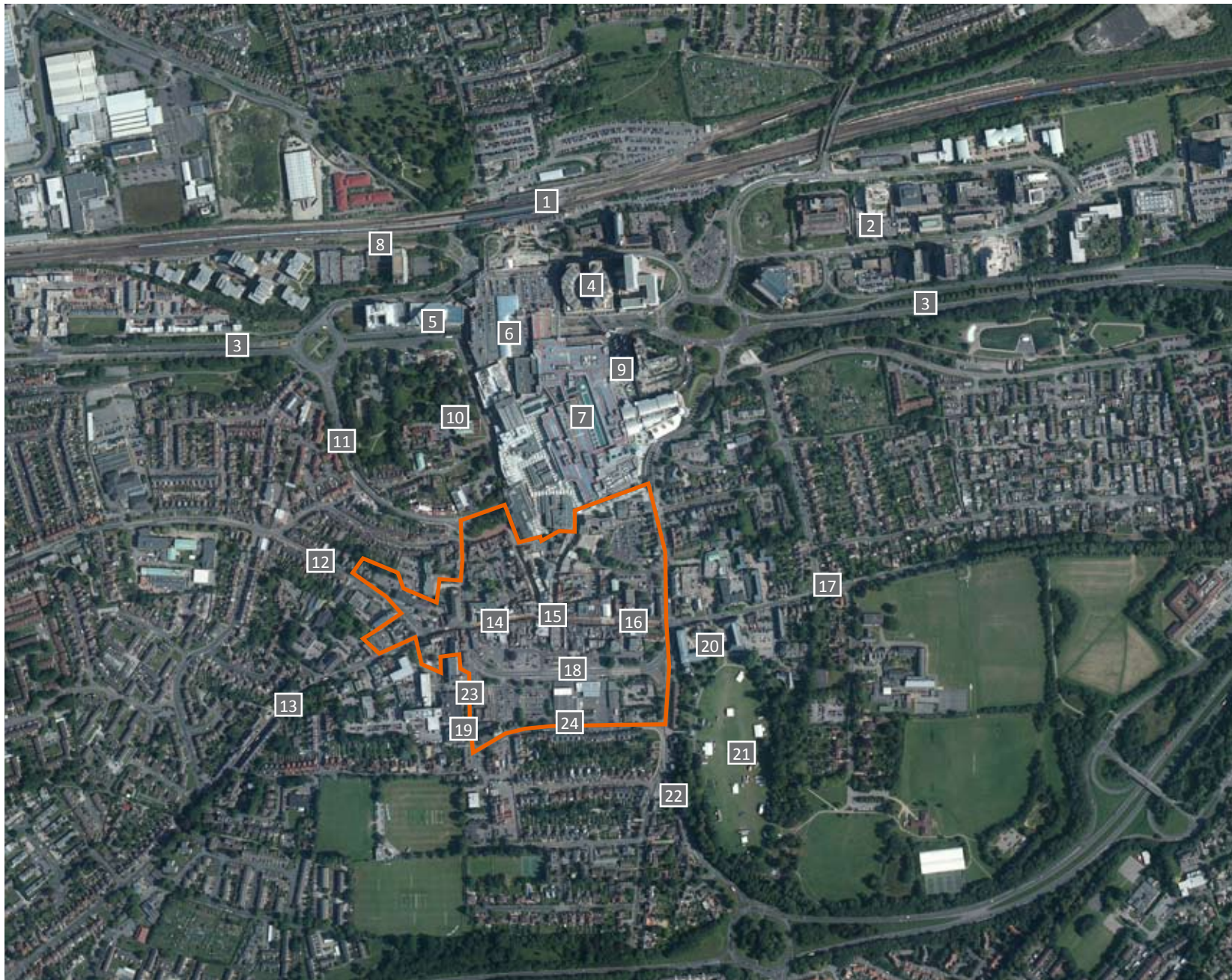
This report is set out in three further sections:

- **Section 2: Portrait of Top of the Town**
This section outlines the history, urban form and character, land uses, transport and movement network, property market and recent development activity in Top of the Town. It also describes its role and setting within the wider town centre.
- **Section 3: Top of the Town Vision**
This section sets out a vision for Top of the Town with twelve objectives identified that will help to ensure that the Top of the Town will become a more vibrant destination within the town.
- **Section 4: Concept masterplan**
This section describes the Concept Masterplan through three strands, a spatial masterplan, a cultural and activity programme and through management and promotion. This section also indicates a programme for incremental delivery of the masterplan.



Central car park could be developed to provide mixed use development that will animate Top of the Town





- 1 Basingstoke railway station
- 2 Basing View
- 3 Churchill Way
- 4 Crown Heights
- 5 The Anvil Theatre
- 6 The Malls
- 7 Festival Place
- 8 Winterthur Way
- 9 Bus Station
- 10 St Michael's Church
- 11 Timberlake Road
- 12 Sarum Hill
- 13 Winchester Road
- 14 Winchester Street
- 15 Market Place
- 16 London Street
- 17 London Road
- 18 New Road
- 19 All Saint's Church
- 20 Civic Offices
- 21 War Memorial Park
- 22 Hackwood Road
- 23 Victoria Street
- 24 Southern Road

Figure 2.1: Location Plan

Top of the Town is located towards the south of Basingstoke town centre and is the historic heart of the town. The Top of the Town area encompasses the western approach on Sarum Hill and Winchester Road and is defined by Southern Road to the south, New Road to the east and the Festival Place shopping centre and Timberlake Road to the north.

Whilst Top of the Town was once the heart of the town, the introduction of the ring road, and consolidation of the town’s main retail areas within The Malls and Festival Place shopping centres has shifted the town’s centre of gravity northwards. Top of the Town, a short walk up the hill, feels peripheral and isolated.

In preparing a vision and concept masterplan for the Top of the Town it is essential to explore its relationship and function within Basingstoke town centre and the role that Top of Town can play in the wider regeneration of the town. This section of the report therefore explores issues both in respect of the wider town centre and specifically in respect of Top of the Town.



Basingstoke began as a Saxon Village. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 with a population of 200. The parish church of St Michael already existed and the town had a market and three mills. In 1214 market day was fixed by royal charter to take place on a Wednesday and has done ever since. The town probably originally grew up near the Church and River Loddon, but its centre moved up the hill to where the main route from London to Southampton and the West Country was. This area is now known as Top of the Town.

The town grew initially around the wool trade. As this declined in the 17th century, tanning and malting trades became more significant to the towns economy. Basingstoke also became an increasingly important coaching town on the main turnpike from London to south-west. Several inns including the Red Lion and George (now Zizzi's) on London Street provided a place for travellers to rest and change their horses.

In the late 18th and early 19th century the town expanded northwards following the arrival of the canal (1796) and railway (1839).



Figure 2.2: ABOVE Early 19th Century Plan

This plan clearly indicates the historic origins of Basingstoke at Top of The Town. Winchester Street, London Street, Wote Street and Church Street are all evident and meet at Market Place.

LEFT: Historic sketch of Basingstoke Town Hall

This building, now occupied by the Willis Museum, was built in 1832 and fronts onto Market Place.

FAR LEFT: Historic image of Top of the Town (mid C19th)

This image shows Top of the Town prior to construction of the ring road when London Street / Winchester Street was the main east west route through the town.



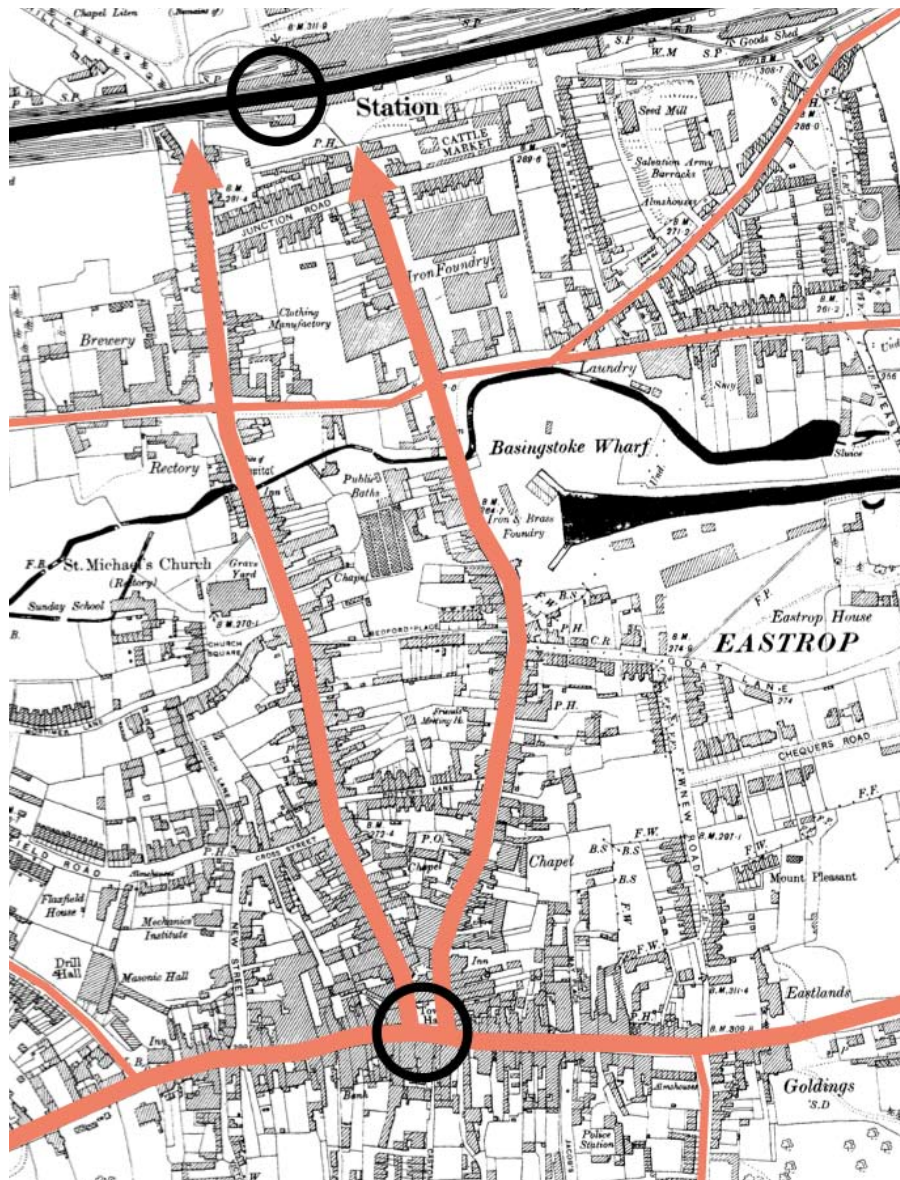


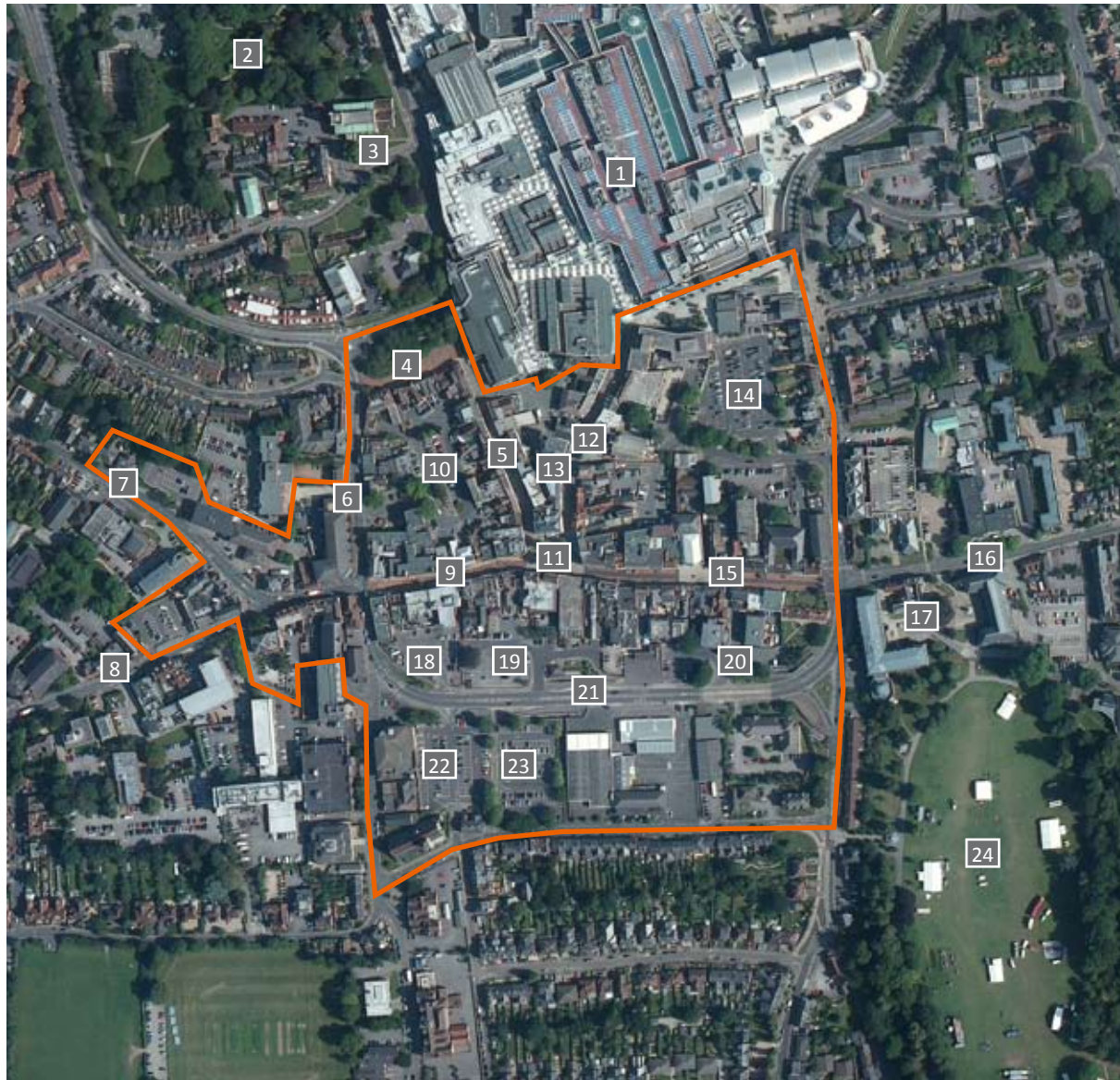
Figure 2.3: 1896 Plan

This plan indicates expansion to the north of Top of the Town and the new transport infrastructure, the canal and Basingstoke Wharf and the railway line and station.



Figure 2.4: 1946 Plan

The main structure of the town remains unchanged in the early part of the 20th century however by 1946 Basingstoke Wharf has been in-filled and the area used as a cattle market.



- 1 Festival Place
- 2 Glebe Gardens
- 3 St Michael's Church
- 4 Cross Street
- 5 Church Street
- 6 New Street
- 7 Sarum Hill
- 8 Winchester Road
- 9 Winchester Street
- 10 Joices Yard
- 11 Market Place
- 12 Wote Street
- 13 Haymarket Theatre
- 14 Central car park
- 15 London Street
- 16 London Road
- 17 Civic Offices
- 18 Albert Yard
- 19 Castons Yard
- 20 Jacobs Yard
- 21 New Road
- 22 Castons car park
- 23 Southern car park
- 24 War Memorial Park

Figure 2.5: Current day aerial image

The town centre is significantly changed with the development of the shopping centres, offices and introduction of road infrastructure including the ring road and associated roundabouts.

More significant growth of the town took place after the war when in 1961 an agreement was signed to expand the town and to provide 11,500 homes for families from London. The town centre developed rapidly and new housing, shopping centres and offices replaced much of the historic fabric. A ring road was introduced to improve access and circulation. The first shopping centre, the Walks, was opened in the early 1970's; this was covered and became the Malls in 1980's and more recently Festival Place opened its doors in 2002.

These 20th century changes shifted the focus of Basingstoke from the Top of the Town northwards and the new road infrastructure severed connections from outlying residential areas to the town centre.

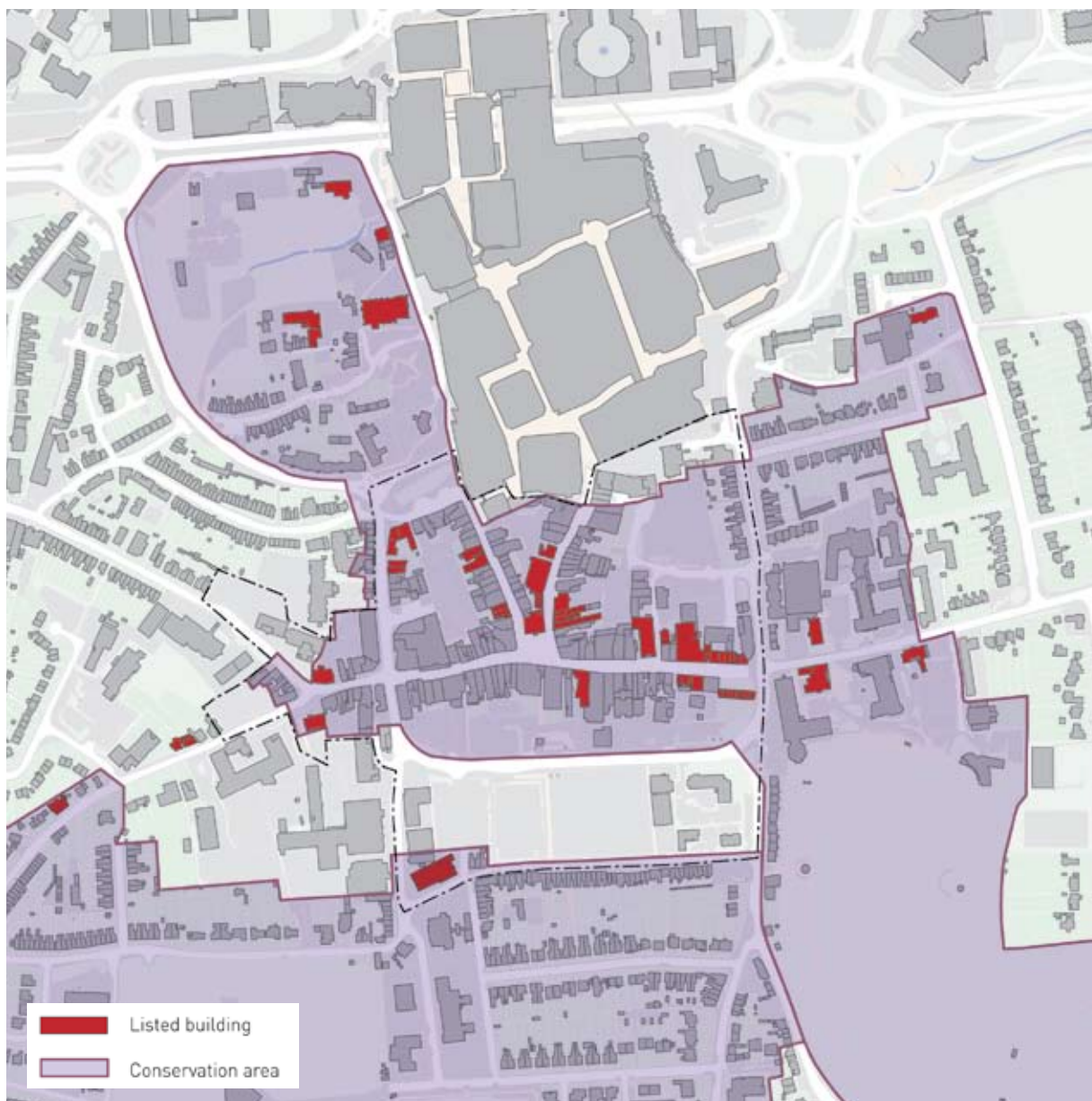


Figure 2.6: Heritage designations



Top of the Town heritage

In recognition of the special architectural and historic interest of Top of the Town much of it was incorporated in the Basingstoke Town Centre Conservation Area designated by the Council in 1977.

Several buildings and structures within Top of the Town are listed including:

- Willis Museum (formerly the Town Hall) on Market Place;
- Haymarket Theatre (formerly the Corn Exchange) on Wote Street;
- United Reform Church on London Street;
- Red Lion Hotel on London Street; and
- Deane’s Almshouses on London Street.

All Saints Church is located to the southern edge of Top of the Town within the Fairfields Conservation Area. The church is Grade II listed and its setting could be enhanced.

Numerous buildings are also locally listed.

Town centre character

The character of Basingstoke town centre is starkly different in the Top of the Town than in the more recently developed area on the lower lying ground extending northwards to the railway line. Here large-scale building buildings compete with one another and are separated by transport infrastructure that parcels land into single use zones.

In the heart of the town are two large interlinked shopping centres, The Malls and Festival Place. Whilst internally they function efficiently their relationship to the wider town is, in places, abrupt. They disrupt free movement and are insensitive to the changes in level in the town centre. Arrival at the station leads one directly into the shopping environment but for new visitors the internal environment can quickly disorientate.

Adjacent and to the east and west of the shopping centres are poorly defined urban fringe areas, dominated by transport infrastructure (the ring road and its junctions with arterial routes into the town) but also including heritage and cultural assets including the Grade I listed St Michaels Church, Glebe Gardens and the Anvil Theatre. These areas lack cohesion, and are poorly integrated into the wider town.

Basingstoke is a significant focus for employment and includes the headquarters buildings of numerous companies including BNP Paribas, the Automobile Association, De La Rue, Sun Life and Motorola. These are located within business parks both close to the town centre and further out. High-density residential development in the last 15 years has complemented this office use at Victory Hill, Crown Heights and Skyline Plaza.



Top of the Town

In contrast to the newer buildings to the north, Top of the Town is characterised by a fine grain structure with smaller scale buildings fronting the historic streets and numerous alleyways leading off the main streets towards yards to the rear. The street pattern is historic with the four main streets Winchester Street, London Street, Wote Street and Church Street evident in early historic plans. Wote Street and Church Street slope upwards to meet Winchester and London Streets at Market Place and this space forms the clear focus and centre of the old town. The four historic streets and Market Place have all been pedestrianised.

The historic pattern creates a diverse and interesting street scene with a number of special buildings, including the Willis Museum and United Reform Church, helping to provide further identity and sense of place. Willis Museum fronts onto Market Place and this space is well proportioned with the predominantly two storey buildings around it providing good enclosure.

Whilst the four main streets and the square are well enclosed, the backstreets and yards are not so well defined. The alleyways, which form an attractive and historic feature of the Top of The Town area, generally lead to unattractive yards or car parking areas and the lack of activity or frontages on the backstreets means that retail loops* are absent. The problem was exacerbated by the introduction of New Road (the ring road) in the 1970's. This route 'cut' through the former development plots exposing the rears of the historic properties that would have formerly been hidden from view.

To the south of Top of the Town, New Road passes through an unattractive environment that includes rear service yards and car parking areas. This is the impression of the area that is presented to visitors to Basingstoke arriving by car or public transport. Furthermore the ring road operates as a one way route and is intimidating to cross. It therefore serves to sever the connection between the Top of the Town and the historic residential neighbourhoods located to the south and west.

* Retail loops allow visitors to take a number of routes to their destination with each route animated by shopfronts.

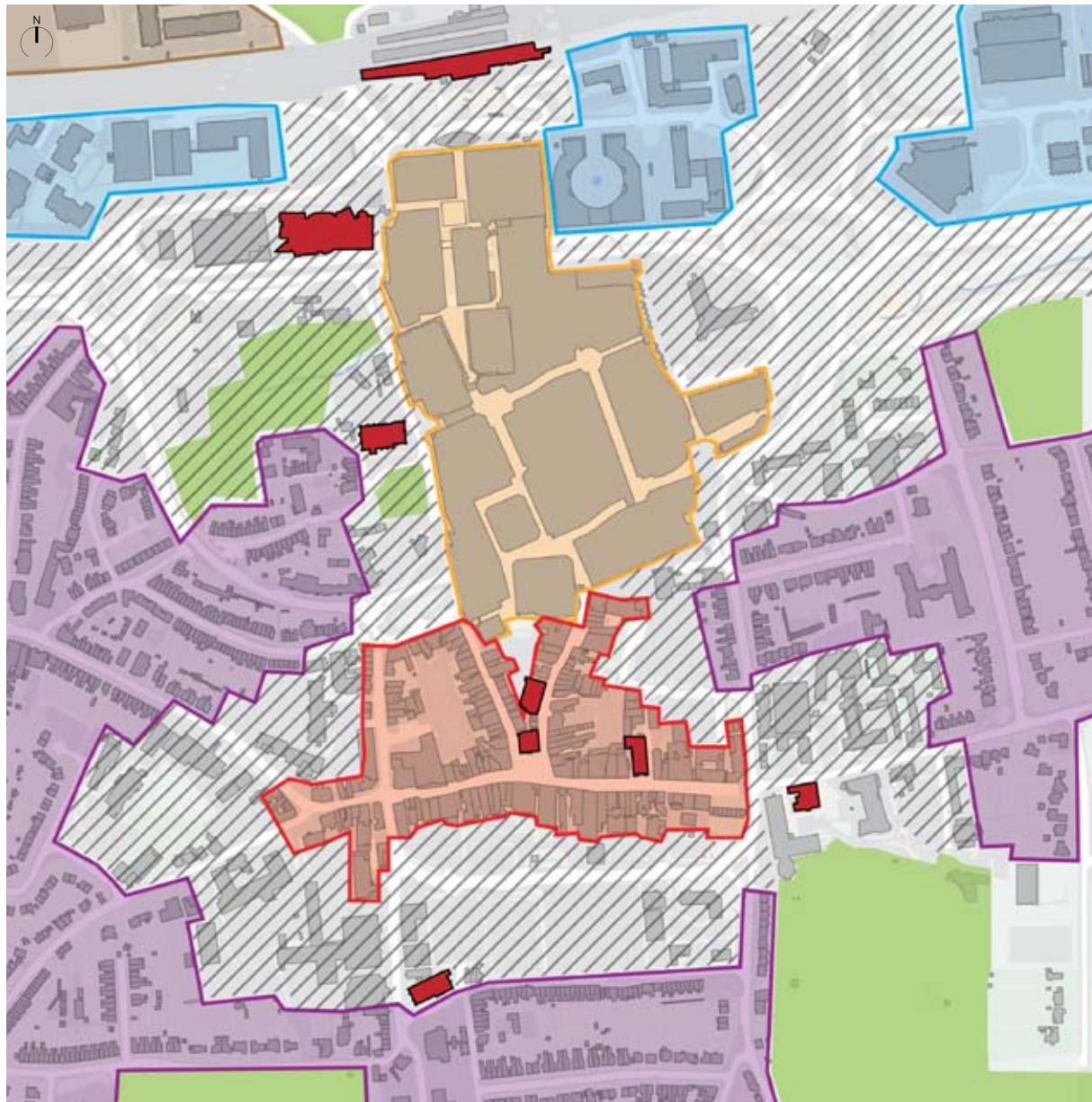


Figure 2.7: Heritage designations



Key

- Special building
- Historic core
- Victorian / pre-war residential area with later infill development
- Internalised shopping centre
- Campus style large scale development
- Green space
- Poorly defined / fragmented area

Basingstoke is functionally segregated with Top of the Town being the only truly mixed-use area. The town centre includes:

- Shopping centres providing convenience and comparison retail, food and drink, cinema and a library;
- Office clusters surrounding the centre and the civic centre;
- A residential hinterland that is disconnected from the centre;
- An ‘empty’ infrastructure fringe around the centre which serves to isolate the core; and
- Cultural amenities which are not well integrated and are located towards the periphery of the town centre.

Key

- Shopping centre
- Commercial / offices
- Civic offices
- Eating / going out
- Culture / entertainment
- Recreation / amenity
- Mixed use town centre
- Predominately residential area
- Major attraction
- Minor attraction

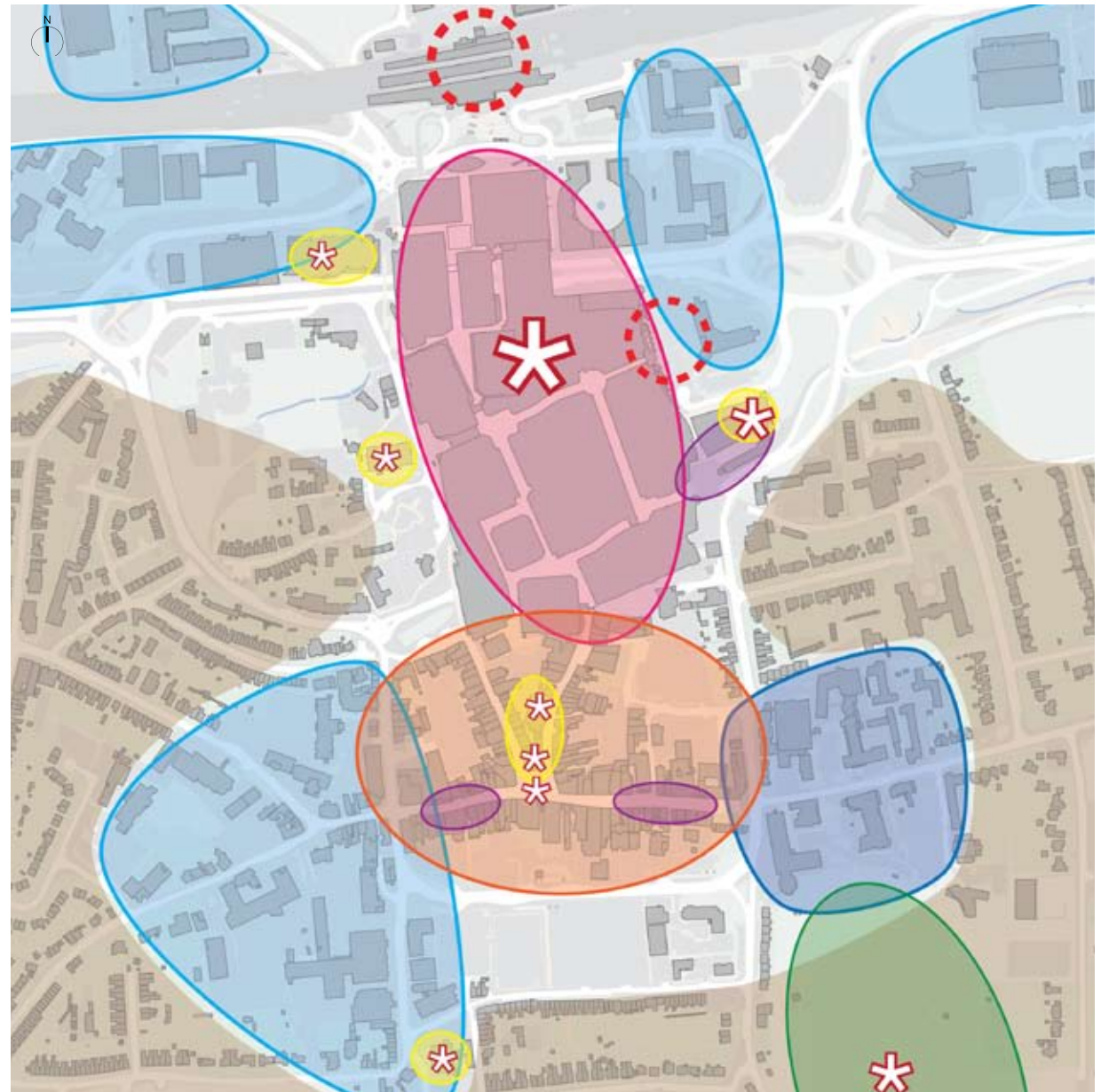


Figure 2.8: Broad town centre land uses

Top of the Town performs a complementary role to the Festival Place and Malls shopping centres. Whilst it lacks comparison retail (clothes, shoes, household goods, books, toys, sports equipment etc) it provides alternative, visitor focused, destination uses including:

- Services (banks, insurances, property agents, hairdressers and beauty salons);
- A post office;
- Specialist niche retail;
- Restaurants and cafés;
- Bars and clubs providing a night time economy focus;
- A number of historic inns including Red Lion Hotel on London Road;
- Cultural destinations including the Haymarket Theatre and Willis Museum; and
- Several surface car parks.

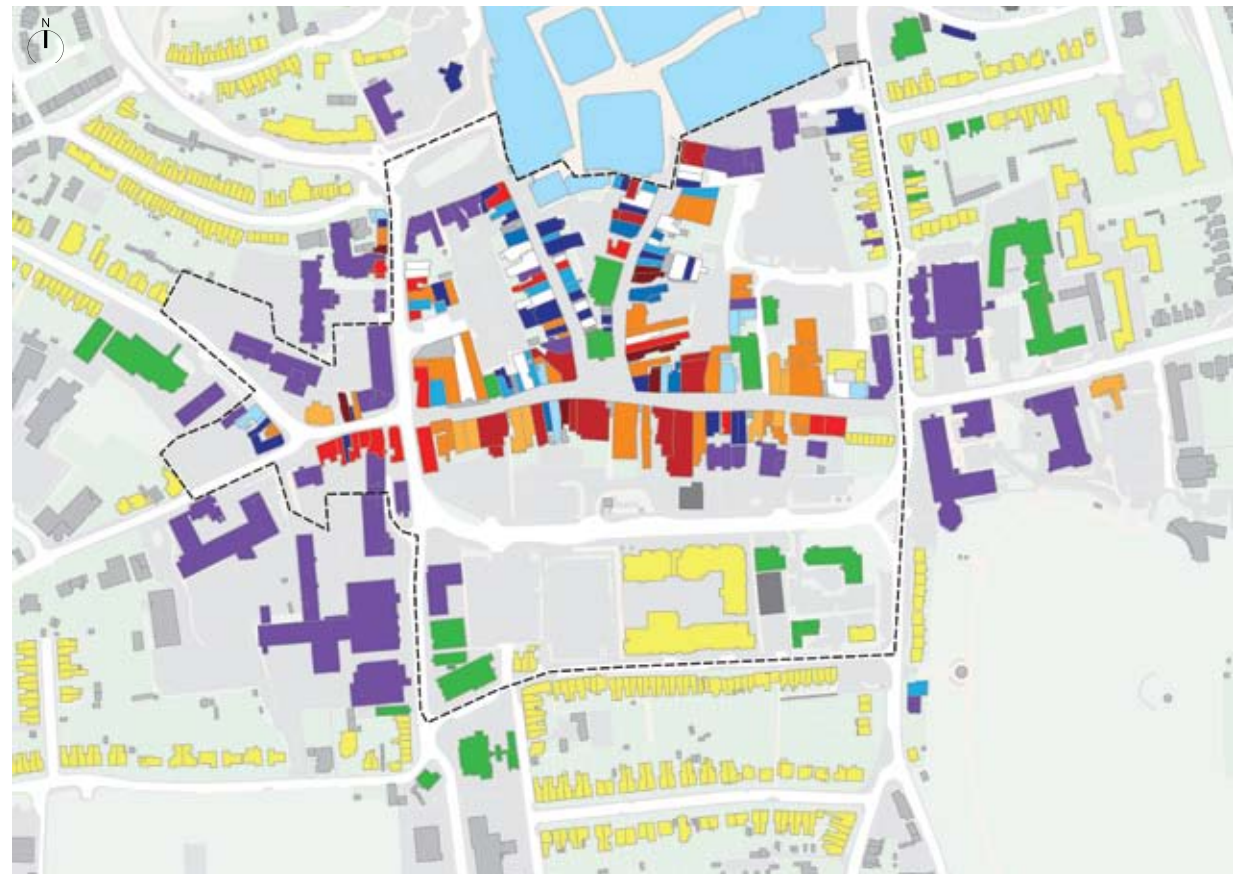


Figure 2.9: Top of the Town land uses (November 2013)

Key

Food and drink

- Restaurants and cafes
- Bars and pubs

Retail

- Standard retail
- Independent retail
- Charity shops
- Service retail

Employment and finance

- Betting shop
- Bank and money
- Estate agent

- Office
- Community
- Residential
- Light industry
- Vacant

There are some vacant shop units within Top of the Town particularly to the northern end of Wote Street and on Church Street. At upper floor level some buildings are used as offices however many appear to be vacant and under used. There is little residential accommodation in the Top of the Town area although the upper floors of shops on Feathers Lane have recently been converted to residential use. The council has received a number of enquiries from landowners who are considering conversions of vacant office buildings to residential under the temporary permitted development rights sanctioned by central government in May 2013.

Top of the Town is also home to Basingstoke Market. The market takes place every Wednesday and Saturday in Market Place but in recent years has declined to 8-10 stalls. Occasional specialist markets are also held in the space including a monthly craft market. The square is currently being resurfaced and the market has moved to a temporary location at the northern end of Wote Street adjacent Sun Alliance House.



Road network

Basingstoke town centre is encircled by a one-way ring road. This operates in a clockwise direction and severs the town centre from its immediate hinterland. The ring road passes to the south of Top of the Town as New Road and the environment to either side is fragmented. The one way system disadvantages Top of the Town channelling visitors that approach the town from the south-west along Winchester Road northwards around the ring road and into the Festival Place car park. Likewise visitors from the east are likely to approach the town on Churchill Way and again be directed towards the Festival Place car park.

Either side of the ring road, streets are truncated and access across the town centre is only possible in a west to east direction via Churchill Way. A number of smaller streets provide access into service yards and rear courtyards.

New Road provides the only means of vehicular movement across Top of the Town (and in a westerly direction only) as the other streets through the area are either pedestrianised or provide local access only.

Key

-  Strategic road
-  Local street
-  Truncated access street
-  Pedestrianised street
-  One-way operation

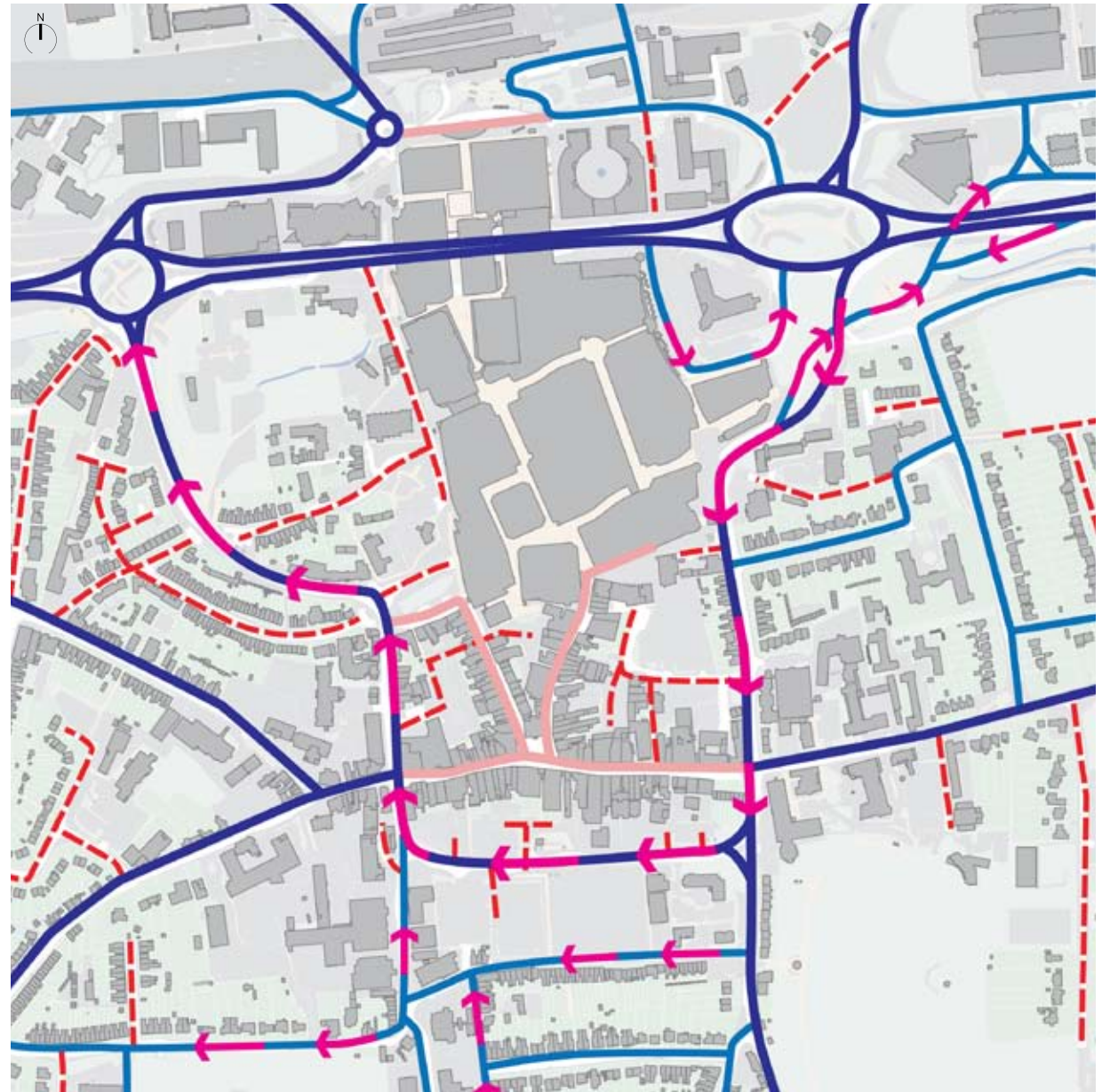


Figure 2.10: Road network

Parking

There are a number of car parks within the town centre with the largest being provided above the shopping centre at Festival Place (2,773 spaces). Approximately 2,000 council managed parking spaces are provided across the centre and 913 spaces are available at the railway station.

Top of the Town is served by a number of car parks including Central car park (138 spaces), Southern Road car park (103 spaces) and Castons car park (126 spaces) together with a number of smaller yards including Castons Yard (60 spaces), Joices Yard (68 spaces), Feathers Yard (20 spaces), Albert Yard (17 spaces) and Jacobs Yard (28 spaces). Most of these car parks provide short stay pay and display facilities. Figures 2.11 and 2.12 indicate the location, capacity and occupancy data on the town centre car parks.

Top of the Town is a popular short-term car parking location and provides car parking that is cheaper than Festival Place. However the pay and display function means that visitors must decide how long they will spend in the town on arrival and this reduces the potential for longer unplanned dwell times.

The council's parking strategy requires that the overall quantity of car parking in and around Basingstoke Town Centre and that the overall balance of short stay and long stay provision should be broadly maintained.

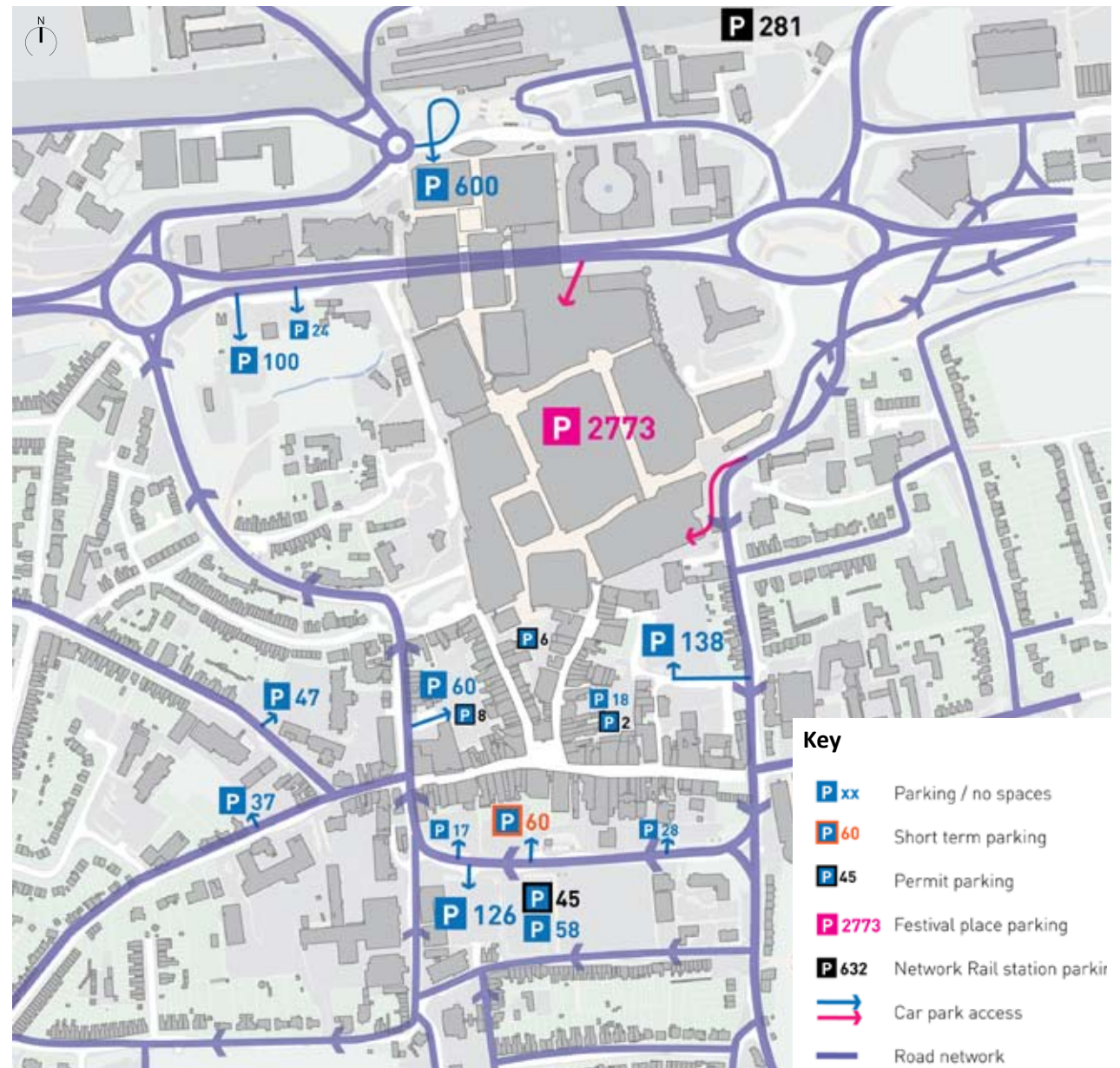


Figure 2.11: Town centre car parking

Car park	Spaces	Type	Occupancy	Average stay	Average users per day	Destination
Alencon Link (The Anvil)	600		90%	2-3 hours	1.9	Festival Place / The Malls.
Festival Place	2773		82%			
Vyne Meadow	345	Commuter car park, 320 permits 25 pay and display	capacity	Circa 10 hours	1	
Station Car Park North and South	632 (north) and 281 south	commuter	capacity		Not available	
Central	138				5.7	59% Festival Place / The Malls 41% Top of Town
Southern Road and Castons	Southern Road 58 pay and display + 45 permits. Castons: 126 pay and display			2-3 hours	2.1	Top of Town: Castons 83%; Southern Road 62%.
Caston Yard	60	Short stay 30 mins maximum			9.9	
Joices Yard	60 pay and display; 8 permits			1-2 hours	6.5	
Feathers Yard	18 plus 2 permit			1-2 hours	3.9	
Haymarket Yard	6	permit				
Albert Yard	17			1-2 hours	3.6	
Jacobs Yard	28			1-2 hours	4.4	
Brinkletts	37			1-2 hours	2.7	
Sarum Hill	47			1-2 hours	2.0	
Churchill Way	100			2-3 hours	2.3	
Churchill Way East	24			2-3 hours	3.5	

Figure 2.12: Town centre car parks capacity and use (data from 2010)

Public transport

Rail

Basingstoke is a popular commuting town with many residents commuting into Central London by train and a significant flow of commuters arriving at the station to work in the town centre. Basingstoke railway station provides regular connections to Central London (7 per hour), to Winchester (3 per hour), Southampton (2 per hour), Reading (2 per hour) and further afield Birmingham and Manchester (1 per hour). The railway station is located in the northern part of the town centre and connection from there to Top of the Town is poor. This reduces the attractiveness of walking to and from the station and of visitors to the town being aware of Top of the Town.

Bus

Basingstoke's bus network is radial with services channelled clockwise around the town centre and through the bus station towards the east of the centre. Few bus stops serve Top of the Town:

- None to the east;
- One to the south of Top of the Town on New Road – this stop is intensively used;
- Four to the west of New Road on Winchester Road and Sarum Hill. These are a little disconnected from Top of the Town; and
- None serving the bottom end of Church Road.

As with the road network one-way bus routing limits access to Top of the Town.

Park and ride buses link the leisure centre with the railway station, Basing View and the town centre at Alencon Way. This bus does not currently serve Top of the Town.

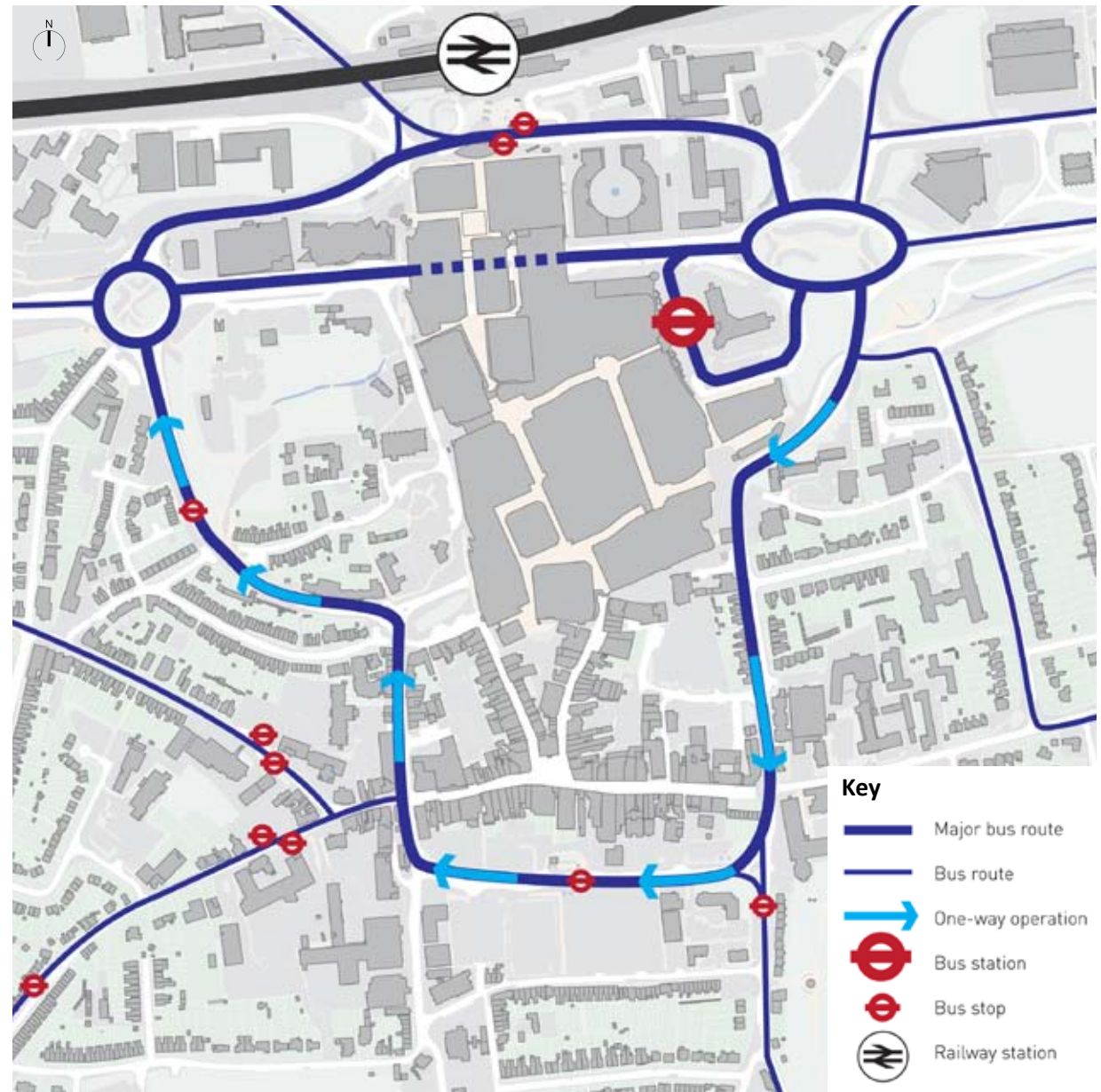


Figure 2.13: Public transport

Cycling

Basingstoke is an ideal sized town for cycling, but offers poor facilities.

The existing cycle route network is fragmented and there is a lack of dedicated cycle facilities on main routes. The large-scale junctions across the town discourage cycling.

Cycling is prohibited on pedestrianised streets in Top of the Town (with a max £500 fine) and there is limited cycle parking facilities.

Pedestrian routes

Whilst many of the streets in Top of the Town are pedestrianised much of Basingstoke town centre is unattractive for pedestrians to walk through.

The only quality north-south route linking the station and Top of the Town leads through the shopping centre;

- The other two north-south routes, along Church Street and past the bus station, are poorly enclosed or overlooked and unattractive;
- In places the ring road lacks footways and acts as a barrier with underpasses provided at the main crossing points;
- Many routes in Top of the Town pass through courtyards and others, for instance along New Road, are poorly enclosed; and
- Pedestrianised areas lack out of hours on-street activity and can feel unsafe.

Generally people avoid walking on routes that are unpleasant unless they have to and the character and environment in the town centre is likely to deter walking in particular after shops close.

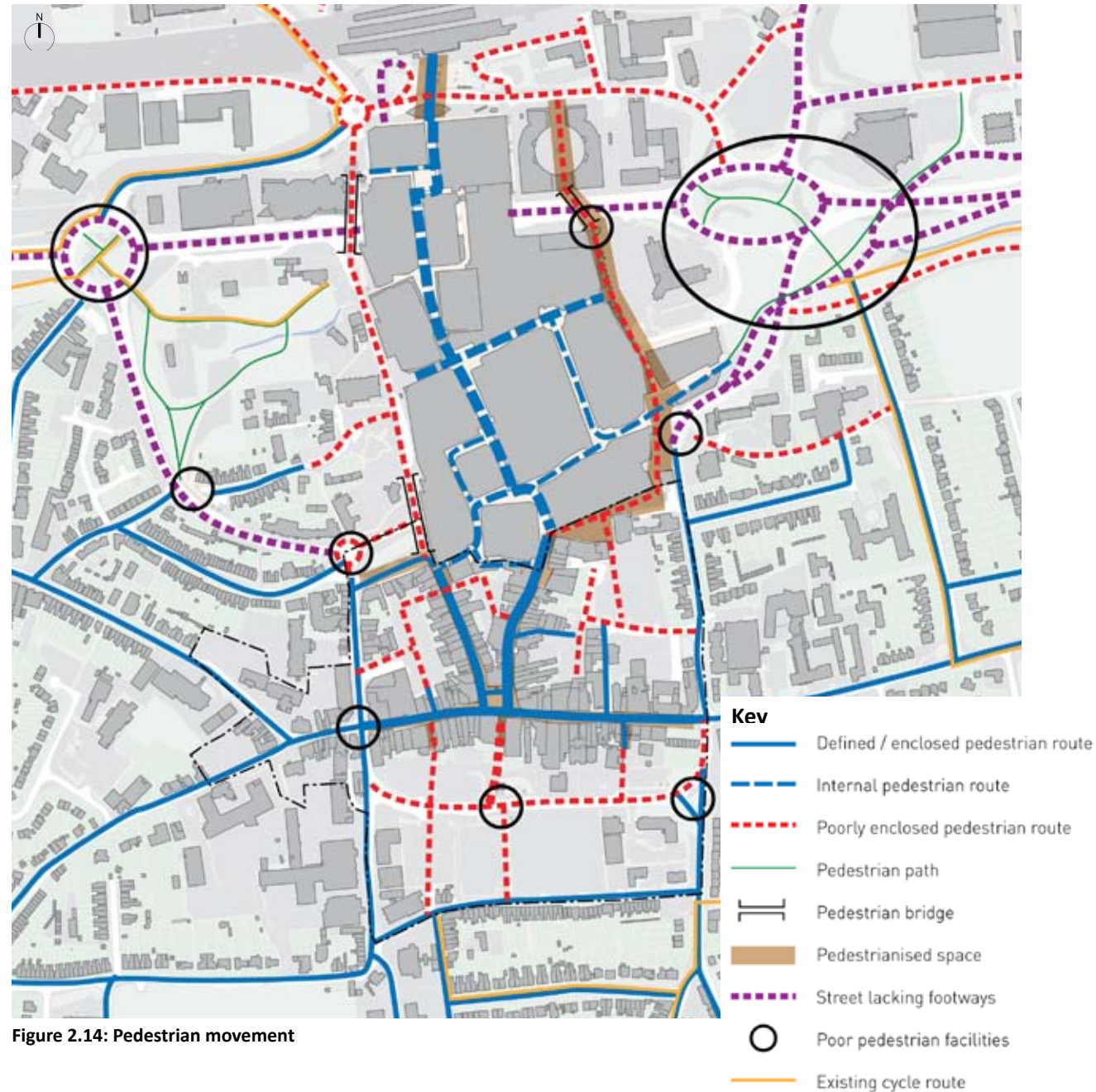


Figure 2.14: Pedestrian movement

A key element in achieving the vision will be, over time, the delivery of new development that enhances the Top of the Town and complements its character and offer. This section provides a baseline review of the market within Top of the Town, placing it in the context of Basingstoke more widely and other town centres in the sub-region that draw trade from the Borough.

Top of the Town Offer

As part of the town centre Top of the Town provides an important element of the retail floorspace provision within Basingstoke. It provides an offer that is distinct from the large format shopping malls immediately to the north of Top of the Town, with smaller units set within the historic network of streets, lanes and yards.

The active uses within Top of the Town reflect the dominance of The Malls as the key retail areas and the nature of the Top of the Town premises. A review of occupiers within the Top of the Town shows that 80% of active businesses are ‘non-retail’, i.e. are not businesses selling ‘goods’.

The occupier mix confirms the Top of the Town role as the ‘services hub’ for Basingstoke. Over 50% of occupiers are classified as being ‘service’ businesses, the majority within real estate and businesses services, including a large number of property agencies. The Top of the Town also accommodates a large proportion of Basingstoke’s banks and building societies with the majority of the main high street actors located here including Lloyds TSB, RBS and Halifax. London Street also accommodates the town’s main post office. The ‘service offer’ is broadened by a large representation of hair and beauty businesses including barbers, hair salons and nail bars.

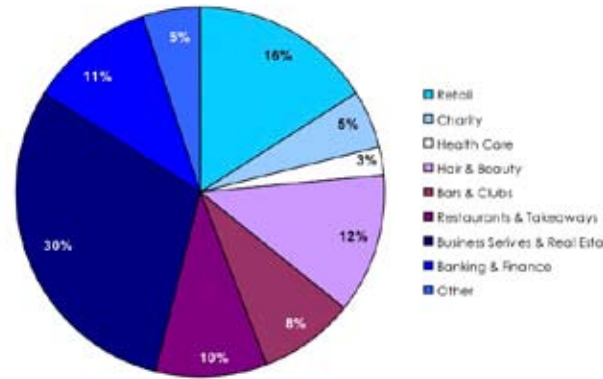


Figure 2.15: Top of the Town Mix of uses

The other key offer within the Top of the Town is the ‘commercial leisure’ activities, mainly in the form of bars, restaurants, cafes and cultural facilities. These uses are predominantly focussed along Winchester Street and London Street with representation from a range of chain (Café Rouge, Zizzi’s and Wetherspoon’s) and independent (The Lime Leaf, Tonic Bar and The Sanctuary) businesses. The mix of food and drink uses is supplemented by the Haymarket Theatre and the Willis Museum.

The nature of the market offer and property types has led to market activity within Top of the Town being driven by small retailers, with 84% of traders being ‘independent’ rather than part of a larger chain or franchise network.

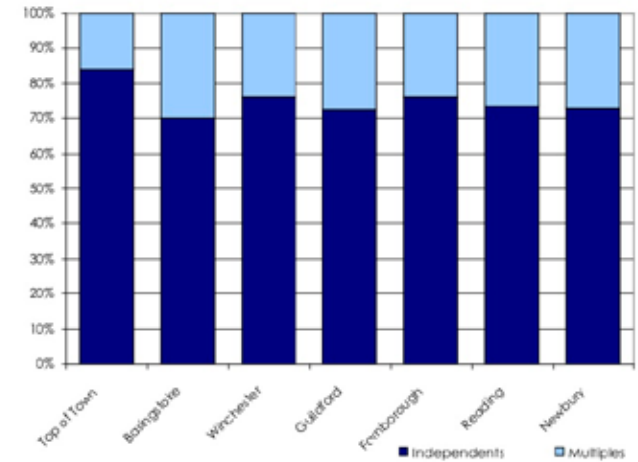


Figure 2.16: % of independents as a comparison with other centres

This concentration of independent retailers in Top of Town is much more significant than for Basingstoke as a whole and also greater than found in a number of other ‘competing’ retail centres (Basingstoke and Deane Retail Study 2012). The presence of independent retailers serves to broaden the range of goods and services available within Top of the Town with a number of ‘niche’ or ‘specialist’ businesses, such as Church Street Models and Kitchen Kapers.

Market performance

Retail

The performance of key market indicators for Top of the Town reflects its 'secondary' retail role within the town centre. Average letting sizes over the past five years highlight the role of Top of the Town's smaller premises, with the average letting being approximately 75% of that in the wider centre.

Rents are also considerably lower than other comparator town centres in the region. The most stark comparison is with Guildford where values are under half the achieved rent. Top of the Town rents are also little over half those achieved in Winchester.

Value differences do not only exist between places but there are considerable differences within Top of the Town itself. There is considerable variation between the value of individual buildings, which is unsurprising given the varying size and quality of stock in Top of the Town. There are also general trends between different streets; values on Wote Street for example being higher than on Church Street. These differentials appear to reflect both the different levels of footfall (and hence trading potential on each road) and also the nature of the floorspace provision, which tends to be lower quality on Church Street.

Office

Top of the Town is not a major office location with the core Basingstoke office market focused to the west of Top of the Town between New Street and Sarum Hill and within Basing View. The nature of provision within Top of the Town is predominantly above retail space or a limited amount of dated, purpose built space (largely within Sun Alliance House).

Unsurprisingly given its limited office role Top of the Town performs relatively poorly when compared to Basingstoke as a whole and the other comparator town centres. These values reflect the general office occupier and stock trends.

The traditional role of above retail spaces is as small office space predominantly used for professional services businesses. This market is being squeezed by increased provision of good quality purpose built floorspace within modern multi-tenant buildings and managed workspaces. The comparative quality and offer of above retail space is now less attractive to businesses and therefore demand and values have fallen. This is also reflected in the high levels of available floorspace of this nature.

Residential

At present Top of the Town does not have a large residential market, with limited provision above retail units.

Potential catchment and drivers

The previous section considered the historic performance of the property market within Top of the Town. It demonstrates that, in the short term, development within Top of the Town will be challenged. However, the Top of the Town concept masterplan is a long term proposition and will seek to improve the physical environment and trading conditions, and hence potential values.

A potential aspiration for the Top of the Town under consideration is the opportunity to raise the quality of the retail offer, increasing the presence of high end independent and niche chain retailers.

The potential to achieve this aspiration will be driven by the catchment that traders can draw from. To identify this capacity we have drawn on Experian data to consider the nature of the Basingstoke catchment both in terms of total spend and socio-economic characteristics.

Utilising the relevant District or Borough boundary as an approximation of a town’s main catchment we have compared Basingstoke to the comparator locations listed above. In terms of the total expenditure of the Basingstoke catchment there was a total spend on comparison goods of almost £530million, higher than the comparator locations.

Basingstoke town centre, as represented by the wards which cover the core retail centre, has a much lower total expenditure at approximately £330million. This is to be expected given the smaller number of residents, although even this is higher than some neighbouring districts (Rushmoor and Hart).

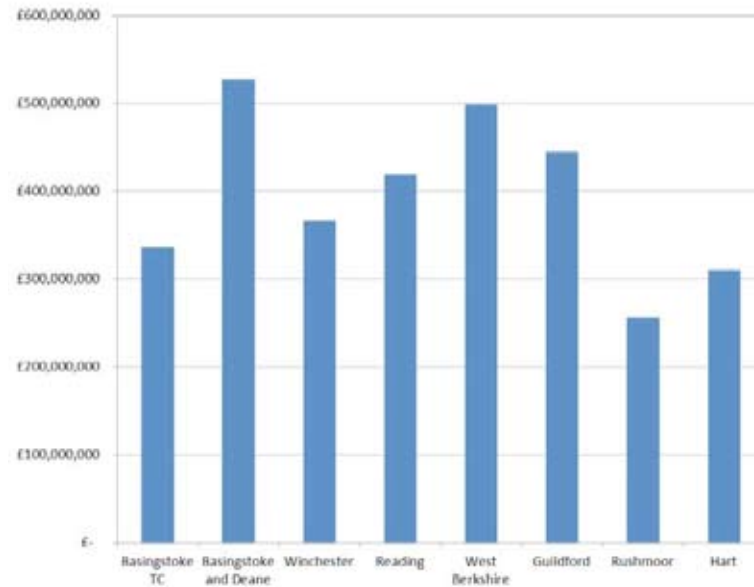


Figure 2.17: Total spend on comparison goods

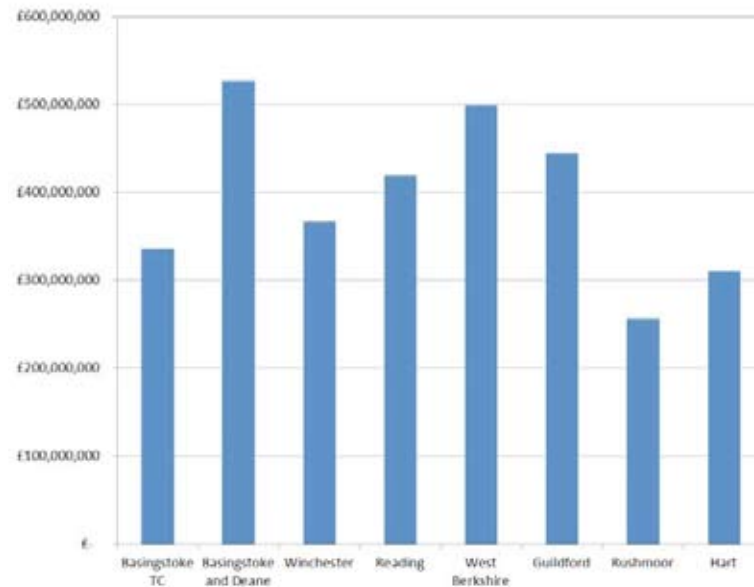


Figure 2.18: Spend per head of population

This core spend potential provides a strong starting position for improving the retail offer, with a high level of spend that could be attracted to Top of the Town. However, the actual spend profile is not so straightforward as it doesn't account for the relative scale of the catchment within each district, therefore we consider the spend per head (Figure 2.18)

This comparison tempers the potential of Basingstoke to a degree showing that the potential expenditure per head is in fact lower than Guildford, West Berkshire, Winchester and Hart, suggesting there may be less potential to establish an expanded retail offer based on the population within the borough alone.

However, retail catchments are not bounded by administrative geographies and with such close links to neighbouring areas, there is the potential to 'capture' spending from Basingstoke's neighbours.

Analysis undertaken by the Javelin Group on behalf of the owners of Festival Place Shopping Centre (March 2013) identifies the town's principal catchment area. This suggests that the town centre captures less than the share that may be expected from people living north of the town centre but is over-represented in the southern half. The area of under-representation incorporates a significant proportion of Hart District, West Berkshire and Wokingham. The under-representation is likely to reflect the greater choice and accessibility of retail centres to the north when compared to the south. It presents an opportunity to bring more money to the Top of the Town if the quality of the town centre can be raised and this 'natural' catchment maximised.

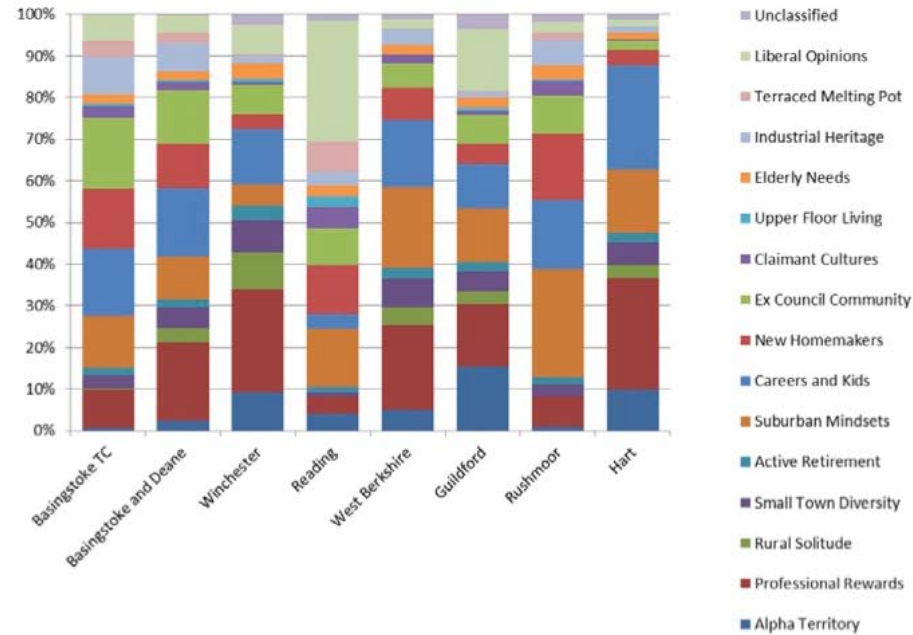


Figure 2.19: Mosaic Experian catchment profiles for comparative centres

The potential for high quality retail expansion will not only depend on the scale of expenditure but also the socio-economic classification of the shoppers. In the main the current retail offer in Basingstoke caters to a wide range, however it could be seen that a higher proportion of the offer is at the lower to mid range end of the retail spectrum.

Again, this is supported by Javelin's research. They highlight that the retail offer within Basingstoke is of lower quality than may be expected, and supported, based on the profile of its catchment. The opportunity therefore exists within the existing catchment to raise the quality of the town centre offer.

The research also notes that many of the higher quality high street brands are not represented in the town, with particular weaknesses in the fashion and dining sector. The dining sector in particular could provide an opportunity for Top of the Town given the quality of the built environment, the existing cluster of businesses and the existing arts/heritage offer.

Establishing a higher quality 'boutique' offer in Top of the Town is likely to require the attraction of higher value shoppers to the town centre, which requires them to exist in the catchment in the first place. Considering the 'Mosaic' classifications of the existing residents suggests that the Basingstoke catchment tends to have a higher concentration of residents in the 'middle tier' of the scale.

When benchmarked against the regional performance this proliferation of the catchment within the mid-tier of classifications is again reinforced. However, Basingstoke does have a strong proportion of the population within the “Professional Rewards”, “Careers and Kids” and “New Homemaker” classifications suggesting that there is scope for a higher level retail offer to be supported.

As is clear from Figure 2.19 Hart has a considerably higher proportion of higher end socio-economic classified residents, with almost 40% of residents in the top two bands (compared to c.20% in Basingstoke and Deane). 91% of Hart residents lie within the classifications that would be expected to have higher than average disposable incomes. Given the low penetration of Basingstoke into this part of the catchment there is a considerable opportunity to attract greater spend if Basingstoke can be established as their primary retail centre over other locations such as Farnborough, Camberley or Reading.

To identify the opportunity for Top of the Town it is important to understand the types of goods that are purchased within its catchment. Figure 2.20 indicates that the total expenditure within Basingstoke is relatively spread across a range of goods. However, as noted by Javelin, the actual quality of the retailers and goods on offer within the town centre is not as ‘aspirational’ as could be achieved given the potential catchment. This suggests that the particular issue for Basingstoke and Top of the Town is the ability to attract higher ‘net spend’ shoppers that can support a higher quality retail offer, rather than expanding the range of goods sold.



Figure 2.20: Goods purchased in Basingstoke (Experian data)

These expenditure shares are broadly consistent with the other comparator towns suggesting that the opportunity exists to ‘replicate’ the independent, high quality retail offer in other towns within the region. By drawing a greater proportion of more affluent residents within the catchment to the town (and Top of the Town specifically) both the scale and quality of the retail offer could be raised.

A number of developments are taking place or have been completed recently within the town centre. These include:

- 1 Brook House, Alencon Link – 30 flats in a new 6 storey building (consented);
- 2 Waitrose supermarket and John Lewis at Home (submitted for planning);
- 3 Greytown House, Feathers Lane – change of use and extension to form 24 flats at upper floors (completed);
- 4 35 Winchester Street - change of use of upper floors to create 7 flats (consented);
- 5 An 81 bed hotel (Premier Inn) on the junction of New Road and Victoria Street (consented); and
- 6 A sheltered housing and extra care housing scheme on the south side of New Road (recently completed).

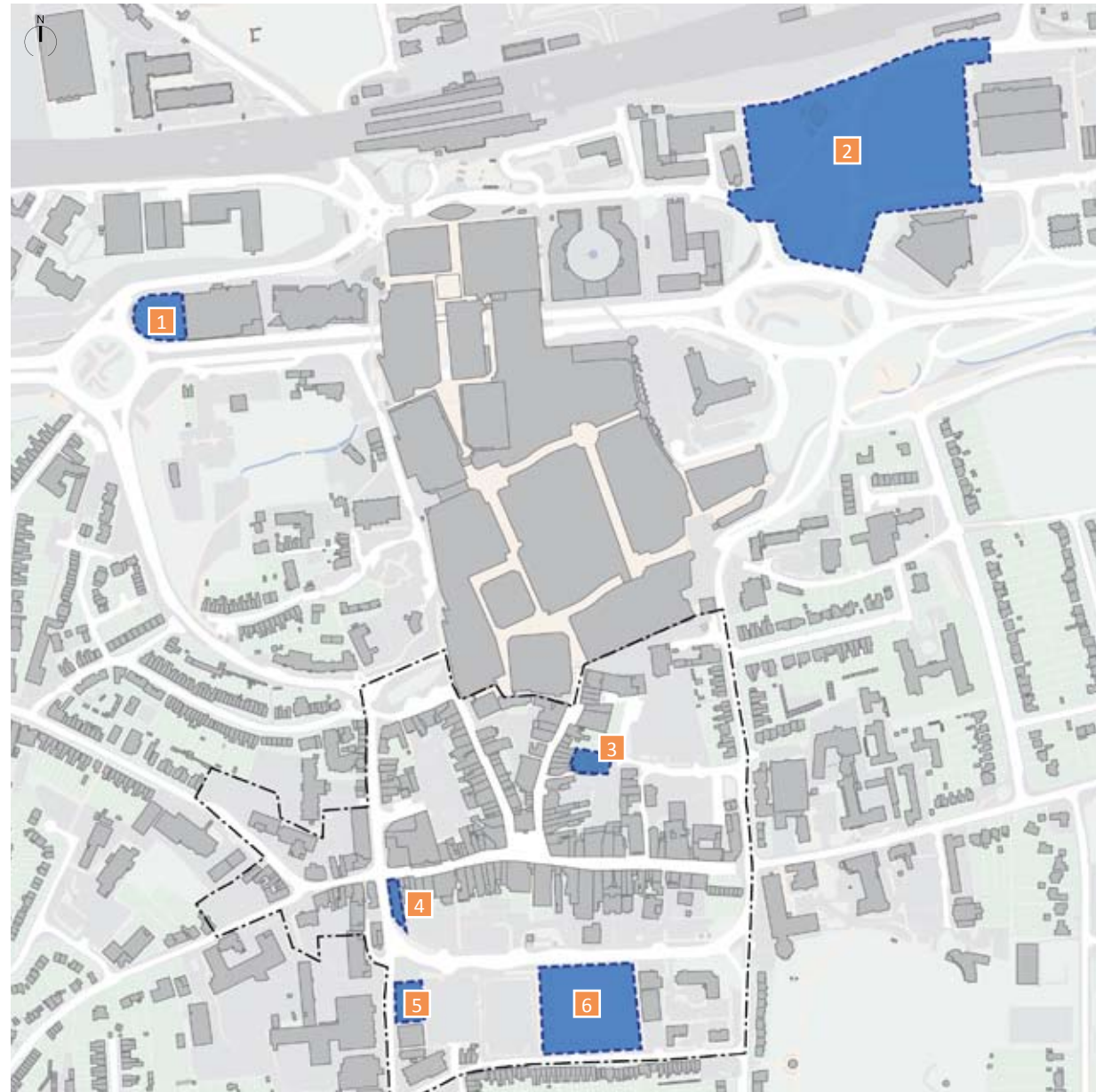


Figure 2.21: Development activity



*Top of the Town will become a more **vibrant destination** for the town with a mix of shops, cafes, and activities within its attractive historic streets and spaces*

3 TOP OF THE TOWN VISION



OBJECTIVE ONE

To improve the **shopping and food offer** in Top of the Town so that it becomes a more attractive destination – with a focus on independent and specialist shops and cafes

OBJECTIVE TWO

To ensure that Top of the Town is easy to get to by car whilst **enhancing accessibility** by other modes including bus, bicycle and foot and to locate car parking and bus stops where this helps to channel footfall through Top of the Town

OBJECTIVE THREE

To improve the connections both within Top of the Town and to other parts of Basingstoke by car, bus, bicycle and foot, creating a more **integrated place**



OBJECTIVE FOUR

To celebrate Top of the Town's **heritage** and ensure that new development is complementary to the historic character and setting



OBJECTIVE FIVE

To encourage and **manage development** to create a more attractive, street based, setting for the town centre



OBJECTIVE SIX

To encourage better use of the upper floors of existing buildings and promote further **residential development** in Top of the Town in order to increase the area's vitality



OBJECTIVE SEVEN

To enhance Top of the Town as a destination in the town through a year round **events programme** with Market Place forming the focus of these activities

OBJECTIVE EIGHT

To develop the area's **cultural role** and build a stronger link between the theatres and night time economy

OBJECTIVE NINE

To introduce **specialist markets** in Top of the Town



OBJECTIVE TEN

To enhance the **streets and spaces** throughout Top of the Town and remove unnecessary visual clutter

OBJECTIVE ELEVEN

To encourage **temporary uses** that bring additional vitality and interest to the town centre

OBJECTIVE TWELVE

To develop a **stronger brand for Top of the Town** as part of a wider branding and marketing strategy for Basingstoke town centre – the brand for Top of the Town to focus on **HERITAGE, FUN, SPECIALIST SHOPPING** and **CULTURE**

4 CONCEPT MASTERPLAN



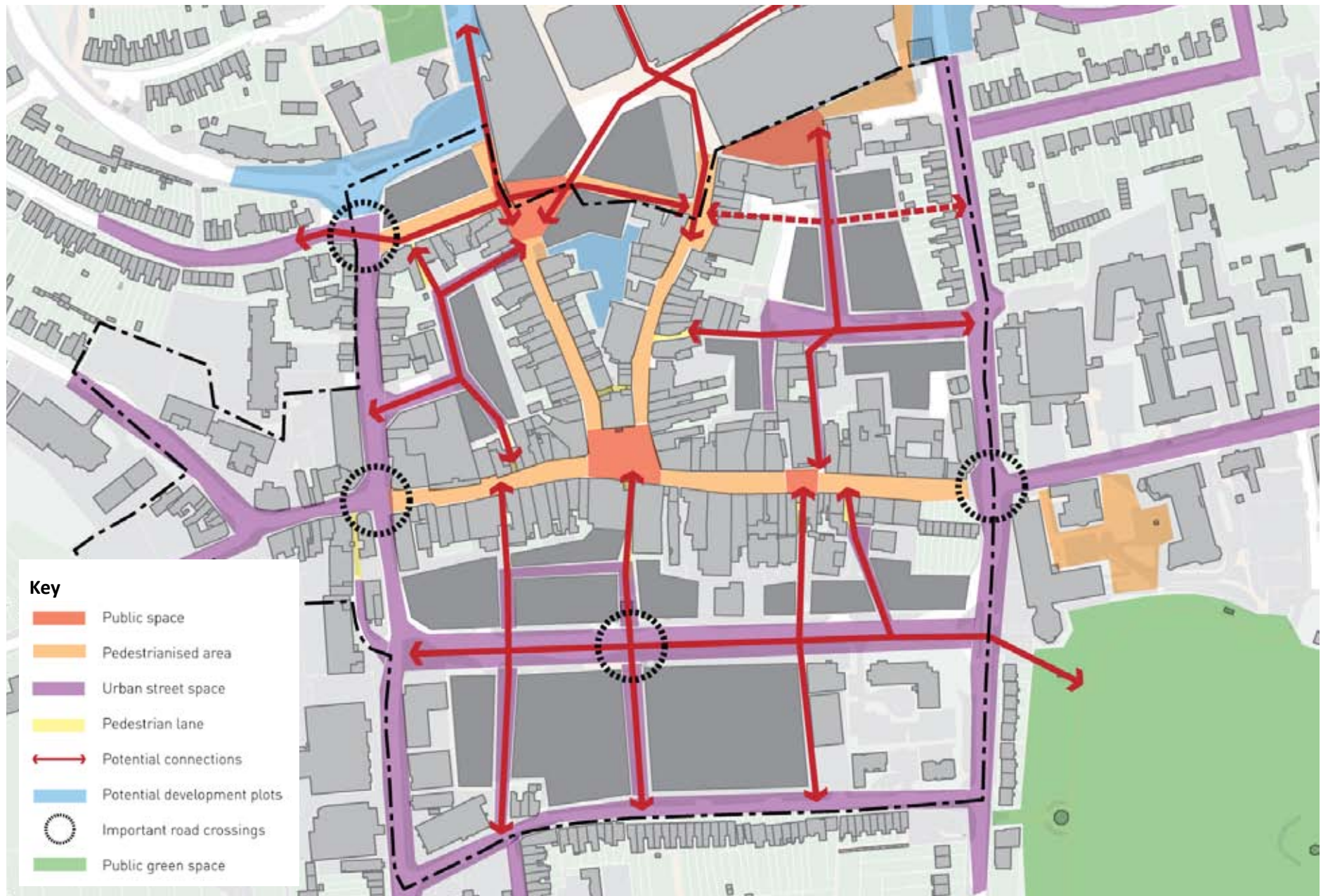


Figure 4.1: Concept masterplan

Complex environments

Town centres are inherently complex environments with an intricate web of interrelated factors all playing a role. The mix of uses is important but easy access, good parking and an attractive and vibrant street scene are also essential ingredients of a successful town centre.

Town centres are dynamic environments and there success is not just based on the bricks and mortar but also on the activities that take place within them, the image, buzz (or lack of it) and the offer both as a focus for retail, for leisure and also as a place to linger, browse, or gather. Top of the Town needs to improve its offer, generate more activity and promote itself in order to prosper in the future.

Many masterplans focus almost entirely on the physical form of the centre; on its structure, its network of routes and spaces and the location of the various uses within the centre. These elements are important. The structure helps to define the feel of a place and the way that one moves through it, can enhance the setting of a town's important buildings and spaces or its heritage assets and can also help to create an identity and physical image. However this alone will not create a dynamic and successful town centre. This requires more. It needs activity, events, uniqueness and dynamism. This can be delivered in part through active management, but also through the efforts of many players each of whom may bring a different ingredient to the mix, investing their time and entrepreneurial effort to make things happen.

There has been much discussion in the media about the decline of the high street and shopping habits are changing however town centres are still a place where people meet and engage and can still be the focus of activity in a town.

The Concept masterplan

Top of the Town is the historic heart of Basingstoke. In many ways the most interesting and dynamic part of the town but an area that has been somewhat neglected in recent years. Significant investment has gone towards enhancing the retail offer in the shopping centres whilst Top of the Town has become more peripheral.

The concept masterplan aims to address this and to, over time, reposition Top of the Town as a destination in Basingstoke and a focus for niche retail, cafes and bars set within attractive streets and spaces. An area that will complement the shopping centres and add to the wider offer in the town. In that context the masterplan cannot be seen in isolation and must work in tandem with a wider strategy to enhance and promote the town centre.

The concept masterplan is more than an 'end state' masterplan. Whilst an indicative masterplan and some key structuring principles are presented here, the concept masterplan is also a strategy for gradual and progressive enhancement that will reposition Top of the Town and over time create a more attractive environment for investment.

The concept masterplan is composed of three strands:

Strand One: - The spatial masterplan

- Public realm enhancements;
- Changes to the movement network and to car parking; and
- Delivery of new development.

Strand Two: A cultural and activity programme

- New and improved markets;
- Temporary uses; and
- Events.

Strand Three: Management and promotion

- Marketing and branding; and
- Town centre management.

These strands are interwoven and in the early stages efforts must be made to generate further animation and interest in Top of the Town. Whilst the spatial masterplan (Strand One) is indicated here as an end state plan it is recognised that the sequencing and delivery of this plan will need to work hand in hand with the cultural and activity programme (Strand Two) and the management and promotion of Top of the Town (Strand Three). This is explored further in Section 4.5.



Figure 4.2: Concept masterplan (references are to the connections identified in the text on the facing page)

Urban Structure

The concept masterplan promotes a strengthening of the urban structure of the Top of the Town area. It aims to stitch this part of town into the wider town centre enhancing connectivity, the experience for walking and creating a more coherent centre. The spatial masterplan promotes the following:

- Changes to the interface between Top of the Town and the Festival Place Shopping Centre to provide a more welcoming transition;
- New connections through Top of the Town to enhance permeability;
- New development that will provide frontage and overlooking of streets and spaces and introduces further activity;
- Introduction of two-way working on New Road with this section of the ring road being transformed into a civilised, tree lined, street;
- Enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities on New Road making it easier for people to cross this street;
- Consolidation of the space hungry surface car parks in Top of the Town into a new multi-storey car park on the site of the current Southern Road car park;
- Public realm improvements on the main streets and spaces including Winchester Street, London Street, Wote Street, Church Street and Market Place; and
- Enhanced connections to War Memorial Park.

Creating a more connected and legible urban fabric

Whilst the main streets in Top of the Town are enclosed and fronted by buildings, and many of these are attractive and distinctive, the secondary streets and lanes lead to unsightly service yards and car parking areas to the rear.

Many attractive historic centres including Brighton, Winchester and Norwich for example, benefit from the network of back streets that lead off the main routes. These allow visitors to explore and discover an area and ensure that in walking towards a particular shop or café the route back can be via a different route, enhancing the experience and allowing a linking of destinations. This secondary network is almost entirely missing in the historic heart of Basingstoke, in part as a result of the ring road cutting through the area. Retail loops are absent and footfall on the less connected routes, like Church Street, is notably reduced.

The concept masterplan aims to address this through promoting a number of new connections through Top of the Town including:

- 1 A new east-west pedestrian route linking Wote Street and Church Street (reproviding the historic Potters Lane that was lost when the shopping centres were developed);
- 2 A new north-south route linking Festival Place to London Road via May Place; and
- 3 A north-south connection linking New Road to Southern Road across the current Castons car park.

The following existing routes will also be enhanced:

- 4 The four main streets through Top of the Town (Winchester Street, London Street, Wote Street, Church Street together with Market Place) will all be enhanced through public realm and shop front improvements. This will include partial resurfacing, planting of street trees, reduction in street clutter and improvements to street furniture. These streets are all closed to traffic however further consideration could be given to opening up Winchester Street and London Street to some traffic after shops have closed in order to add vitality in the evening;
- 5 New Road will be transformed into a two way street fronted by new development that helps to enclose and define the space. New pedestrian crossings will ensure that severance is reduced and street trees and a consistent public realm treatment will enhance the experience for all users. This proposal will require further detailed investigation with the highway authority;
- 6 Albert Walk, Castons Walk and Mark Lane will all lead southwards off Winchester and London Street through new development that will provide positive frontage to the new New Road. These routes will be animated by this new development and a consistent public realm treatment will enhance the qualities of the routes;
- 7 Castons Walk which leads from the new car park at Southern Road to Market Place will be widened through redevelopment of the adjacent plot; and
- 8 Cross Street will become part of a new west to east route across the Top of the Town enhancing footfall on this street and bringing more activity to the northern end of Church Street.

Public spaces

The principal public space in Top of the Town is Market Place. This is a well-proportioned space with enclosure provided by the surrounding buildings. It is located where the main streets meet and in that context is important for the legibility, enhancing orientation and visitors spatial understanding of Top of the Town. The space is home to Basingstoke's market however it also forms a good site for events and activities in the town. Market Place is fronted by the Willis Museum (formerly the Town Hall) but few of the buildings that surround the space serve to animate it. Over time this location would be a good site for cafes and restaurants that could establish al fresco dining and help to animate the area and create a stronger destination.

The concept masterplan promotes the creation of a second public space in Top of the Town at the junction of Cross Street with Church Street. This space would form a gathering space at the entrance to a remodelled Festival Place and help to encourage greater footfall on Church Street.

War Memorial Park is the largest open space in the town centre. However access to it is restricted to a route through the Civic Offices on London Road and an entrance several hundred metres southwards on Hackwood Road. The concept masterplan promotes a more direct and legible access at the junction of New Road with Hackwood Road.



Sketch of Market Place used as an event space

Rationalising car parking

There are numerous surface car parks within Top of Town mostly providing short stay pay and display spaces for visitors to the town. Whilst this car parking is essential to the shops and businesses in the area it is unsightly and restricts change. The majority of the car parks in Top of the Town are within the council's ownership and a consolidation of these spaces would allow for development that could deliver a transformation in both the appearance and activity levels within Top of the Town.

The concept masterplan promotes the consolidation of much of the public car parking into a single multi-storey car park on Southern Road. This car park will act as an anchor to Top of the Town with people arriving here being channelled into Top of the Town via Albert Walk or Castons Walk.

A MSCP, with its greater size, allows for a different car park management regime (pay on exit) that, unlike pay and display, gives visitors a choice on how long to stay in the centre after they have left their car. This avoids the commonplace dash to get to the car before the ticket expires and could lead to prolonged visits in the centre.

The new Southern Road car park is envisaged as a five level car park that accommodates 470 spaces re-providing those in the Castons, Southern Road, and Central car parks and the Albert, Castons and Jacobs Yards and allowing these sites to then be developed. The car parking will be partly screened by new development and the frontage to New Road would need to be designed to a high design standard. At five levels, the car park will be of a similar scale and massing to the adjacent four storey buildings and will not affect the setting of All Saints Church and the adjoining Fairfields Conservation Area.



Sketch indicating the relationship of the New Road car park with Top of the Town

It is recognised that some visitors prefer surface car parking and as part of the redesign of New Road short stay, on-street, car parking spaces will also be provided.

Through regeneration in Top of the Town it is anticipated that additional visitors will be encouraged to come to the town. The wider use of the Eastlands car park (currently used by Council Officers) could be promoted to address this issue in the future.



Figure 4.3: Concept masterplan - potential development opportunities (sketch view from the east)

Development to add vitality

The rationalising of car parking in Top of the Town frees up several sites for development. This is essential to create a more coherent centre and to change the image of the area.

Much of Top of the Town has been designated a Conservation Area and new development will need to be of an appropriate scale and massing to complement the existing built form and to add to the quality of the streetscape. A fine grain of development that positively interfaces the street with active frontages at ground level, and overlooking from above is promoted.

The new development provides opportunity to expand the retail and food and drink offer in Top of the Town and to increase the number of people living in the centre by providing new homes.

The following sites are promoted for development:

1 Southern Edge of Festival Place

The southern edge of Festival Place interfaces badly with Top of the Town with a change in level, poor quality public realm and a noticeable decline in the quality of the retail offer. There is opportunity to address this through a redevelopment of this area to create more welcoming entrances on the Cross Street / Church Street entrance and at Wote Street. Through this development a new pedestrian connection lined by new shops could be created to link Church Street with Wote Street and enhance connectivity in this area. It is envisaged that this route would be open air rather than part of the shopping centre ensuring that it is publically accessible when the shops close.

2 Cross Street North

New development to the northern side of Cross Street that encloses this street and enhances the link to the square at the intersection with Church Street. The design will complement the fine-grained character (ie composed of a series of buildings) to the southern side of the street.

3 Central car park

Development of the car park for mixed town centre uses and providing enhanced connections through the area. Development would hide the unsightly rear to Sun Alliance House.

4 Albert Yard

Development of this yard, in parallel with a rationalising of New Road, with mixed town centre uses. Frontage to be provided onto both New Road and Albert Walk.

5 Castons Yard

Development of this yard and the toilet block to the east to provide with mixed town centre uses. Retail frontage to be provided on an enhanced and widened Castons Walk. This route will provide the main connection from the new multi-storey car park on Southern Road to Market Place.

6 New Road car park

Development of the Southern Road and Castons car parks to provide a new multi storey car park for Top of the Town providing approximately 470 car parking spaces. A new street lined by new homes to provide a connection southwards and town houses to be developed fronting onto Southern Road on the southern edge of the site. The setting of All Saint's Church to be enhanced and the new north-south link to focus views towards this building.

7 Jacobs Yard

Development of this yard in parallel with a rationalising of New Road, with mixed town centre uses. Frontage to be provided onto both New Road and Mark Lane.



Transforming the arrival experience – the new New Road

New Road currently operates as a clockwise ring road that cuts through the southern edge of Top of the Town. It is designed with sweeping corners and encourages high traffic speeds.

The concept masterplan promotes the transformation of New Road into a two way street which is fronted by new development that will enclose and define the street space. New pedestrian crossings will ensure that severance is reduced and

street trees and a consistent public realm treatment will enhance the experience for all users. Short stay, on-street, car parking spaces will also be provided.

Two way working will allow visitors to Basingstoke to more easily access Top of the Town, either by car or by bus. The success of many shops and services within Top of the Town will be dependent on the footfall that they receive and bus stops should be located in order to maximise accessibility.



ABOVE: New Road (existing); TOP: New Road (proposed)

Case Study: Ashford Ring Road

The Greater Ashford Development Framework formed the basis for many successful projects that shaped the growth and development of the town. This included establishing the plan to create a new hierarchy of urban streets to replace the one-way ring.

This idea gained momentum and an award winning street design scheme was delivered in 2008. This scheme turned a hostile unattractive urban highway that acted as a major barrier to pedestrian movement to the town centre into a civilised tree lined street.



“This urban project reverses old ideas about ring-ricing city centres and instead provides civilised streets.”

The Ashford Ring Road Scheme was shortlisted for the Prime Minister’s Better Public Building Award 2009



Generating interest in Top of the Town and therefore its profile as a place is not only dependent on physical changes. Indeed physical changes take time, normally require considerable investment and require negotiation and agreement through the planning system.

A much quicker way to change the image of Top of the Town is through a programme of activities and events that can attract people to the area, help to change perceptions of the place and generate excitement and interest.

Historically the Haymarket Theatre did more to promote the area, creating a buzz at the beginning of the season and taking its activities into the town through events and celebrations. In the past the market was larger and provided a wider and more compelling offer.

Over the last two years Basingstoke Festival has brought some excitement to the Top of the Town through June and July and the town needs more of this. More activities that celebrate the areas rich history, more events that show case the talent in the area and more opportunities for small and local businesses to sell their produce or creations. Incidental activities like busking and street performance should be encouraged, they make the streets more interesting and dynamic and add some colour.

Many towns across the country have established farmers markets, craft markets, vintage markets or seasonal Christmas markets as a way to make their centres more appealing to visitors. Managed by specialists they can quickly grow and give an area renewed identity and vitality. They allow small businesses to sell their produce without the risk of taking shop space and they can change their offer throughout the year.



Specialist markets can add to the offer in Top of the Town and they provide a quick, low risk means to create more activity in the centre. Historically Basingstoke market operated in Market Place and extended along Winchester Street and London Street. Going forward market stalls along the streets would allow the main public space to be available for other events and activities.

The Haymarket Theatre was formerly the Corn Exchange. This building is currently underutilised and space on the ground floor could be used to develop an indoor market where small businesses local to the area could take space.



The concept masterplan promotes the following:

- Engagement of a specialist market consultant to advise on how to grow and develop the market;
- Introducing specialist markets in the town and actively promoting these;
- Investigating the potential for an indoor market in the Haymarket Theatre;
- Creating a more active events programme and encouraging more live music and activities in the centre;
- Working with Haymarket Theatre to encourage a greater contribution to the towns events programme; and
- Making Market Place the focus for sitting out and events.

Case Study: The West Norwood Feast

The West Norwood Feast is a non-profit monthly market run entirely by volunteers from the local area. It was established in 2011 with the aim to work together to boost the profile of the area within Lambeth and bring more trade and interest to the high street. It is also a chance to meet new people and catch up with old friends. It includes free children's activities, four market 'hubs' for food, gardening supplies, arts and crafts and vintage and retro curios, as well as live music, there really is something for everyone.

From its beginning as a group of strangers meeting for the first time in a pub, the Feast has been powered by a desire for change and unceasing enthusiasm from the people involved. With Space Makers Agency acting as a catalyst, the West Norwood Feast has brought people from the community together to work towards making their neighbourhood a better place to live. More than that, it has altered the way in which people view West Norwood as a place, while at the same time acting as a platform on which to experiment, be creative, try new ideas, and meet lots of new people.

The Feast consists of four market 'hubs' - Food Fair, Retro Village, Artisans Corner and Fresh 'n' Green. These are spread along the high street, the aim being to draw people along the length of the street so that they sit up and notice what amazing resources they have in the shops on their doorstep. The Feast takes place monthly and has around 60 stalls in total and these are accompanied by free children's activities, music performances and workshops.



Marketing and branding are becoming increasingly important to the success of a place. Top of the Town forms an important part of Basingstoke's offer, providing a shopping offer that is complementary to the shopping centre and an environment that is conducive to cultural activities and independent operators. The mix of uses within Top of the Town can change overtime and will respond to the local 'market'. That market is the visitors who come to the town. Basingstoke has an affluent catchment but at the current time its offer is mid range, with other centres such as Winchester, Guildford and Reading providing a higher end offer.

Over time this can change and the arrival of John Lewis Home and Waitrose may bring a large range of shoppers into the town. A marketing and branding strategy for Basingstoke town centre and Top of the Town could help to both market the current offer and also encourage further investment in the town. The success of Festival Place and Top of the Town are intrinsically linked. Festival Place can aim to attract more up market retailers but this is only likely to be successful if the collective image of the town is improved. Should Festival Place be successful in attracting a higher income catchment this can also benefit Top of the Town and the potential for more specialist independent shops to locate there.

As part of this strategy a dedicated Top of the Town website should be developed that is interactive and could feature a 'virtual Top of the Town' where shoppers can visit online and 'walk' into each shop along the street and be immediately linked to that shops site. Similarly an APP can be developed that allows Basingstoke to be experienced digitally. On the ground signage should make it easy for people to find there way around the town. A signage strategy for the town centre is being developed in this respect.

Whilst promotion and marketing is essential management of the area is equally important. Visitors to Top of the Town want to see a clean well-managed and attractive environment. Vacant shops and poor quality shopfronts detract from this image. Town centre management must be proactive exploring opportunities for pop-up activities, temporary uses and responding to and supporting traders and businesses ideas. Grants can be offered towards environmental improvements and assistance can be provided to help traders to respond to the Councils adopted shopfront design guide.

Working collectively can bring benefits to traders; allowing buying in bulk and collective work to enhance the areas image. The establishment of the Town Centre Forum is significant and can help the Top of the Towns future success.

The concept masterplan for Top of the Town promotes the following:

Promotion and marketing

- Preparation of a marketing and branding strategy for Basingstoke town centre and Top of the Town;
- Development of a coherent signage and wayfinding strategy;
- Creation of a new interactive Top of The Town website;
- Creation of an APP to enhance the experience of visiting Basingstoke; and
- Promotion and review of the Top of the Town shopfront design guide.

Management and facilitation

- Offering vacant shop units as opportunity for pop-up shops;
- Engagement with Festival Place owners regarding the interface with Top of the Town;
- Encouragement to the Town Centre Forum to take ownership of projects; and
- Development of a more proactive response to support traders and businesses.



Building Momentum

The delivery of change in Top of the Town will not happen overnight and will be an incremental process that over time can lift values and make the prospect of further development to enhance the centre more viable. There are a number of low cost, early win projects that will help to engender interest and pride in the area and build momentum. These can lead, in the medium term, to the delivery of catalytic developments and ultimately a renaissance for Top of the Town.

Early Win Projects

Physical

- Street improvements on London Street, Winchester Street and Market Place;
- Introduction of specialist markets within Top of the Town;
- Closing of the underpass on New Road and the creation of a new short stay car park at Castons Yard;
- Enhancement of the connection from New Road to Market Place at Castons Walk;
- Creation of a new connection and entrance to War Memorial Park; and
- Offering shopfront improvement grants.

Movement

- Investigation into the potential to relocate bus stops to improve access to Top of the Town;
- Investigation into the opportunity to relocate long stay car parking from New Road to another site in the town;
- Consideration of changes to the car park charging strategy;
- Investigation into the potential to extend the park and ride to TOTT; and
- Provision of more cycle parking at points of arrival into the town.

Promotion and marketing

- Preparation of a marketing and branding strategy for Basingstoke town centre and Top of The Town;
- Development of a coherent signage and wayfinding strategy;
- Creation of a new interactive Top of The Town website;
- Creation of an APP to enhance the experience of visiting Basingstoke; and
- Promotion and review of the Top of the Town shopfront design guide.

Management and facilitation

- Offering vacant shop units as opportunity for pop-up shops;
- Engagement with Festival Place owners regarding the interface with Top of the Town;
- Encouraging the Town Centre Forum to take ownership of projects; and
- Developing a more proactive response to support traders and businesses.



Figure 4.4: Concept masterplan - early wins



Figure 4.5: Concept masterplan - catalytic developments (multi-storey car park on New Road and remodelling of the southern end of the Festival Place shopping centre)



Figure 4.6: Concept masterplan - Opportunities created following implementation of the catalytic projects on Central car park and Castons Yard



Figure 4.7: Concept masterplan - Delivering the new New Road