Solihull Town Centre
PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

Final Draft Report
June 2023

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

ARCADIS

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Report Number	10050372/REP/PRS/01
Date:	June 2023

Version Control

Revision	Date Issued	Description	Author	Checked	Reviewed	Approved
01	12/09/2022	Draft	Project Team	EM	BW	BF
02	01/06/2023	Final Draft	Project Team	EM	BW	BF

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PART 01

BASELINE

01 Introduction

Purpose of Public Realm Strategy

The Public Realm Strategy (PRS) addresses Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's (the Council's) strategic aim to create a town centre that will attract investment, be resilient and that people will be happy and proud to use. The PRS is a roadmap to deliver public realm improvements with the opportunity to create transformational change that enables sustainable solutions, increasing active travel and meeting climate change goals. Building on the focus areas identified in the **Solihull Public Realm Masterplan** (2016) and **Solihull Town Centre Masterplan** (2020), the strategy creates a vision for Solihull's public realm and builds on the importance of public realm and the future of the high street and the experience of our town centres post-covid. The Council aspires that the design approach to public realm development will be of a high quality, which respects and enhances Solihull's distinctiveness and identity in order to create a vibrant and dynamic public realm that can be enjoyed by residents, workers and visitors alike and that celebrates Solihull's history, character, diversity and future.

This strategy is intended to support delivery of seamless, high quality public realm space throughout Solihull town centre by setting out design guidance to inform future development. The strategy provides an overall framework of design principles for future projects to adhere to, ensuring a coordinated approach and continuity as developments come forward at different times. The Council will adopt this document as supplementary planning guidance to steer delivery and outcomes of a rolling programme of public realm improvements.

The PRS considers the value of public realm in improving movement in and around Solihull town centre, but also in generating interaction that supports economic activity, builds on the leisure and recreational offer to increase the town centre experience and stimulates further investment. The aim is to provide continuity in public realm quality across the town centre through the provision of a simple palette of materials and furniture, supported by generic detailing to meet the functional and sustainability requirements of the streets and public spaces. Design quality is the primary requirement, and this document sets a high but attainable standard, which is based on good design and construction practice.

The PRS underpins and directs strategic investment for public spaces, streets and greenspaces within Solihull town centre. Building on the Town Centre Masterplan (2020) it reflects the Council's aspirations for the future of the town centre and supports transformational change to the public realm. The guidance document sets out a vision for the future public realm in Solihull town centre and identifies proposed street and space typologies and a series of themed spatial strategies, that form the overall public realm strategy for the town centre. The PRS identifies a series of key public realm intervention areas across the town centre that would support interim works and future public realm transformations. Seven focus areas have been identified as the key public realm intervention areas to help prioritise investment and are supported by high level design proposals and strategic design guidance. These are discussed in more detail in section 3 of this report.

01 Introduction

Contextual Documents

The PRS is a strategic document for the future of the public realm for Solihull town centre and has been developed following a review of town centre studies produced over the last 10 years including the Public Realm Masterplan (2016). The PRS reflects Strategic and Local Plan policies and the recommendations of the Town Centre Masterplan (2020), listed below are the key studies and preceding documents, which provide the framework for this public realm strategy.

Solihull Conservation Area Appraisal (2022)
Solihull Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2021)
Solihull Town Centre Masterplan (2020)
Solihull Masterplan (2016)
Solihull Public Realm Masterplan (2016)
Solihull Public Realm, The Square – Civic Enhancements (2015)
Public Realm Framework Plan for Solihull Town Centre (2014)
Solihull Town Centre Street Furniture Audit (2013)
Solihull Town Centre Strategy: Urban Design Analysis (2006)
Supplementary Planning Guidance No. 1 The Historic Environment (2001)

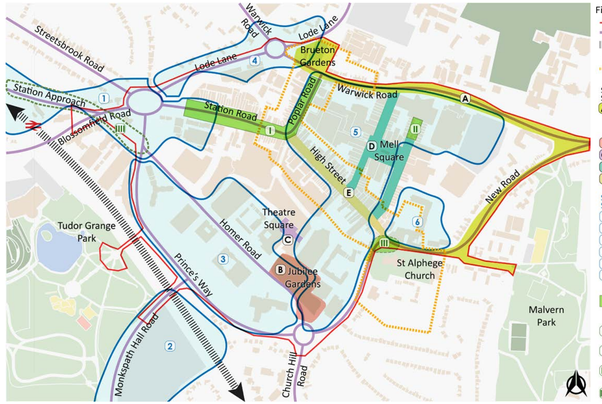


Figure 1 - Public Realm Masterplan Review

Town Centre Core Area
Primary Road
Railway
Solihull Railway Station
Conservation Area

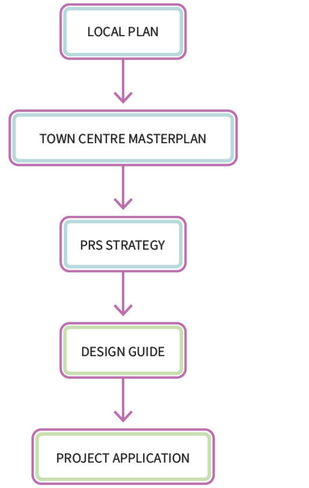
Solihull Public Realm Masterplan
Site Specific Public Realm Concept Design Areas
A Warwick Road, Brueton Gardens, Malvern Park
Warwick Road
St Alphege Church to Malvern Park
Brueton Gardens to Malvern Park
B Jubilee Gardens
C Theatre Square
D Mell Square
E Solihull High Street

Solihull Town Centre Masterplan (2020)
Six Areas of Change
1 Western Gateway
2 Southern Gateway
3 Business and Commercial Quarter
4 Northern Approach
5 Heart of Solihull (Retail Core)
6 St Alphege Quarter

Key Public Space (identified for enhancement in PJA Public Realm Framework February 2014 Solihull Town Centre:
I Junction of High Street, Poplar Road and Station Road: Gateway Project - completed
II Drury Lane Refurbishment - completed
III Junction of High Street, New Road & Church Hill Road buy St Alphege Church - considered
IIII Station Approach to Homer Road Connection (Phase 1) - completed but not part of Public Realm Masterplan

The plan below summaries the 5 Concept Design Areas outlined in the Public Realm Masterplan (2016), the 6 Areas of Change identified in the Town Centre Masterplan (2020) and the 4 Key Public Space for enhancement in PJA's Public Realm Framework Plan for Solihull Town Centre (2014).

The flow diagram below shows where this strategy document sits in the sequence of planning documents. Building on the Town Centre Masterplan (2020), it sets out the strategic framework and principles for the town centre public realm. This should then be followed by a design guide or technical manual for more detailed guidance and standards for delivery of the public realm. A technical supporting document such as this is discussed in the delivery section at the back of this document.



Project Objectives

SOLIHULL TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM – PROJECT OBJECTIVES [draft]

ATTRACTIVE	Quality	Improve the public realm so that it reflects the quality, reputation and offer of Solihull
	Distinctive	Improve the public realm and ensure that it positively reflects local distinctiveness and enhances the local setting
ACHIEVABLE	Affordable	The Masterplan must set principles strategies that are affordable to deliver and maintain
	Deliverable	The masterplan must set principles and strategies that are constructible and deliverable
	Reduces conflict	The masterplan needs to identify the best uses for each public realm space. Where there are multiple uses it needs to identify ways that these uses can co-exist without conflicting with or hindering each other
	Adaptable	The masterplan needs to set principles and strategies that create a public realm that works for different purposes at different times of the day, and the year. It should identify efficient ways of providing infrastructure to enable events, and needs to able to adapt to changes in the use of the built environment surrounding it
	Accessible	The Masterplan needs to identify ways that the public realm can be designed to make the town centre accessible for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, businesses, residents, vulnerable road users, emergency services, utility providers and others
	Built to Last	The masterplan needs to identify materials and furniture that are suitable for the amount and type of use, and needs to be replaceable and repairable
CONNECTED	Welcoming	The masterplan needs to identify ways that the public realm can be improved to make the town centre more welcoming – to activate frontages and address the 'inward facing' nature of the town centre
	Intuitive & Navigable	The masterplan must identify ways that the public realm can be used to make movement around the town centre feel seamless and intuitive. It must identify ways to improve wayfinding to encourage trips between the town centre and the greenspaces, residential areas, and train station on the periphery
	Walking and Cycling	The masterplan needs to identify ways public realm can help establish walking and cycling as a safe convenient way of accessing and moving around the town centre, and provide the infrastructure needed to support pedestrians and cyclists.
DESIGNED FOR TODAY, READY FOR THE FUTURE	A Place in its own right	The masterplan needs to set principles and strategies that help the public realm become a place the people use and visit in its own right, rather than the space people pass through to reach other places. Somewhere people can be active, have fun, socialise, enjoy and relax.
	Exemplar	The Masterplan needs to clearly define our vision for the public realm and the quality we expect to see from public and private sector development. The design of the first phase scheme needs to demonstrate how the principles and strategies of the Masterplan can be applied to a real scheme.
	Fit for the future	Masterplan needs to be considerate of how the use of public realm may change as a result of development proposed in the Town Centre Masterplan, and make passive provision for changes in behaviours and services – i.e. more click and collect, increase in residents, more emphasis on 'experience' , and the digitisation of high streets
HEALTHY – FOR PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT	Sustainable	The Masterplan needs to set objectives and strategies that help to deliver the priorities of the climate change prospectus and achievement of the net zero targets.
	Healthy	The Masterplan needs to identify ways that the public realm can be designed to help people recycle, to reduce litter and environmental damage, and to encourage healthy lifestyles
	Green	The masterplan needs to showcase how planting and landscaping can be incorporated in a meaningful and sensitive way, and used to create green corridors connecting the greenspaces surrounding the town centre

Anticipated Long Term Outcomes

Economic growth and Prosperity
We can begin to improve the public realm so that it helps to in still confidence in potential investors, and attract inward investment increase the rateable value of property

Increase visitor numbers
Increase visitor number, ensure town centre remains competitive, people dwell longer, spend more and return more often in turn making Solihull an attractive place to invest

Increased Mode Shift
Enable visitors to access the town centre by active modes, helping to ease vehicle congestion

Health and Wellbeing
Multiple health benefits associated with healthy lifestyles, and reduced carbon emissions.

01 Introduction

Public Realm Context

Public realm incorporates all areas to which the public has open access such as streets, squares, right of ways, parks, canals, and open spaces. Public realm is always considered in a wider urban context that include interacting elements of streetscene, movement, surrounding buildings and the activities they contain. Public realm can be described as the space around, between and within buildings that are publicly accessible including streets, squares, parks and open spaces. These areas and settings support or facilitate public life and social interaction.

Components of the public realm include:

- Surfaces
- Street Furniture
- Lighting
- Urban Greening
- Public Art / Signage
- Blue Infrastructure / Water

These components are discussed in more detail throughout the document.

Qualities of Good Public Realm

An Inclusive Environment	• public realm is for everyone to enjoy • local authorities & transport providers have duty to ensure no one is excluded from services and spaces • designed to provide equal access and be welcoming and understandable to all • work in partnership with disability and road user advisory groups to understand all users' needs • sensitive design to ensure enhanced access provision keeps historic places special for all
Public safety and ease of movement	• movement of people & goods is fundamental purpose of streets, roads, and public realm, highways works are most frequently directed to improving this • safety for all is a fundamental requirement • risk exists where different modes of transport share space, and all users should understand risks and be able to move through public spaces with confidence • the hierarchy of transport modes is important and will effect the use and character of places and their significance, and how risk will be managed • segregation of users should be proportionate to present risks, and reflect the overall vision for the space •using key spaces as routes is a way in which we can experience their history how the use of buildings and spaces is shaped around them
A healthy environment supports our wellbeing and cohesion	• public realm can affect; air quality, tranquillity of our surroundings, and our anxiety & stress levels • urban greening can reduce impact of traffic on air quality • public realm enhancements can encourage positive social interaction, build a more cohesive society and provide opportunities for people to be more physically active • need to consider spaces as places for public iteration, not just movement • consideration of how historic places have functioned in the past, and to preserve or restore through enhancement schemes
A high-quality environment	• quality of our environment is a measure of our quality of life, contributing to our experience • to achieve or sustain high quality environments, public realm and highways must be both functional and attractive • use materials of appropriate quality & durability for the setting and purpose, as well as achieving positive aesthetic impact • works to complement historical character of areas, sustaining the significance of historic buildings and spaces, and enhance access & understanding of significance • designers must identify significance and value in features of historical public realm & conservation areas, and work to sustain this value
Economic benefit	• sensitive investment in public realm to conserve special interest of historic places, and unlock new opportunities for business and experiences • public realm improvements usually result in direct & indirect benefits for the local authority, residents & businesses • designers should be explicit about the economic benefits they aim to achieve, measuring performance before & after to demonstrate the economic success • local communities and businesses to advise on potential unintended outcomes of schemes

01 Policy Context

Strategic Policy Objectives

Global Climate Challenges and Policy

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. It has produced a series of reports on Global Warming, significantly its special report in 2018 which advised on the pathways that could help limit warming to 1.5°C, above pre-industrial levels. The report stated that achieving this limitation would require carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions to peak imminently then decline rapidly (by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030). This aim of reducing carbon dioxide emissions has driven national policies, commitments and actions around the world, including the UK.

The next and latest IPCC report on climate change, the Sixth Assessment Cycle, is expected to be released in September this year and will report on 'Current Status and Trends', the 'Long-term Climate and Development Futures', and the 'Near-term Responses in a Changing Climate', which will consider current international policy timeframes, and the time intervals between now and 2030-2040.

The **Sustainable Development Goals**, produced by the United Nations, sets out 17 goals for a sustainable future. Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and communities and Goal 15 Life on land contain targets that are particularly relevant to the development of our public realm and publicly accessible spaces.

National Declaration and Carbon Net Zero by 2050

In June 2019, UK parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050. This target has driven the development of the Governments Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, published in October 2021.

The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 May 2021

This document sets out the government's long-term vision for the treescape it wants to see in England by 2050 and beyond. The plan sets a target for increase in national woodland cover of 12% across the country by 2050 as required by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs (2021).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Landscape & Sustainable Development – the Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021, first introduced to Parliament in 2019, received royal assent and became law on 9 November 2021. This is an important and wide-reaching Act that has been closely scrutinised, debated and amended during its lengthy passage through Parliament and introduces a new post-Brexit environmental protection regime.

The Act principally creates a post Brexit framework to improve and protect the natural environment, which the newly created Office for Environmental Protection will oversee. It also makes wide ranging provisions covering waste and recycling, air quality, the recall of products that fail to meet environmental standards, water, nature and biodiversity, conservation covenants and updates to laws on chemicals (REACH).

The planning system plays an important role in environmental protection, with one of its three overarching objectives enshrined in national planning policy being to protect and enhance the environment. This Act introduces new statutory requirements that will strengthen this objective. One of the more ambitious provisions of the Act, which overlaps with the planning regime, is a new mandatory requirement for developments to provide a 10% biodiversity net gain.

Inclusive Design and the Equality Act

All of those involved in planning, design and delivery of public realm schemes need to be aware of the requirements of the Equality Act (2010). The fundamental thread in design, maintenance and operation of streets and places should be that the needs of all users are considered to create an inclusive public realm.

Inclusive design means making places attractive and accessible to all. It encapsulates more than physical infrastructure. It should also be considered as part of a process to encourage community involvement and participation. The Council is committed to inclusive design and removing barriers to movement for people with impaired mobility and for pedestrians generally. Public realm design should create safe environments which will encourage people to use outdoor facilities and shift towards sustainable modes of transport. Factors include providing appropriate seating and lighting, level access and features to help people find their way around. Guidance on the provision of tactile paving is set out in the Department of Transport publication 'Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving' and 'Inclusive Mobility' on the use of tactile paving surfaces and reference should be made to those documents when specifying tactile paving.

Inclusive design is about making places everyone can use. The way places are designed affects our ability to move, see, hear and communicate effectively (CABE, 2006). This represents a key government policy, namely the creation of an inclusive society – and this means social, economic and physical inclusion.

In 1995 the government introduced the Disability Discrimination Act (amended in 2005) as a commitment towards improved civil rights for disabled people. This has now been replaced by the Equality Act 2010 – which brings together, harmonizes and extends existing equality law. The Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of 'protected characteristics' (previously called 'grounds') covering a wide range of areas such as disability, gender, race, religion and sex.


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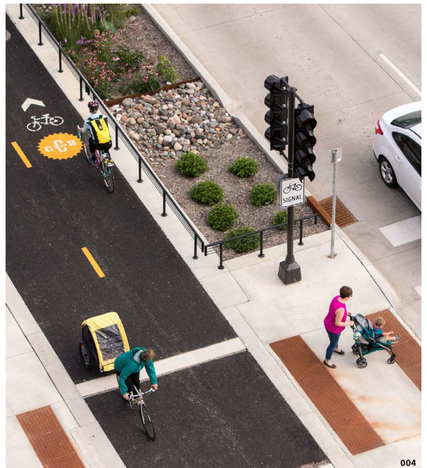
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The protected characteristic of disability applies to a person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The act gives disabled people rights in the areas of transport, employment, education and access to goods, facilities and services. It also requires employers to make reasonable adjustments by removing barriers allowing disabled people's participation.

Under the Equality Act 2010, local authorities have a legal duty as a public body to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between key equality strands. These include age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity.

Liveability, Wellbeing, and Place Quality

Over the past decades, liveability and wellbeing have remained key objectives for UK urban policy – and these have been brought into sharp focus by the global covid-19 pandemic.

"How people feel about the place they live – the liveability of their place – has a significant impact on whether they consider society to be fair. In particular, we found that inclusive and healthy local areas are seen by the public as an important aspect of fairness. Improvements to communal spaces, the cultural offer and cohesion of local communities, as well as addressing issues such as the social determinants of health, could play a critical role in improving the experience people have of the place they live".

PwC's Future of Government Research Programme

Good quality places affect us all and influence our decisions around where we live, work and spend our leisure time. They can lift our spirits, creating a sense of delight but also help us relax and unwind. They have a central role in our health and well-being; our feeling of safety, security, inclusion and belonging and our sense of community cohesion.

Creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental and embedded in the UK's National Planning Policy Framework. The National Design Guide (and National Model Design Code) takes this further to illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. The National Design Guide builds on the long-standing premise that good design is fit for purpose, durable and brings delight. It defines ten characteristics to well-designed places illustrated in the diagram to the right.

Best practice guidance to be adhered to include:

- National Design Guide
- National Model Design Code
- Manual for Streets (MfS)
- Streets for a Healthy Life

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The ten characteristics of well-designed places, National Design Guide.

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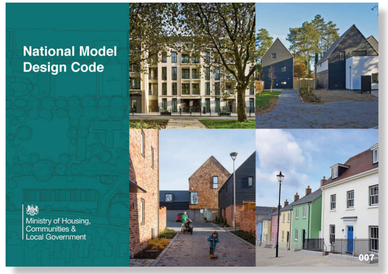

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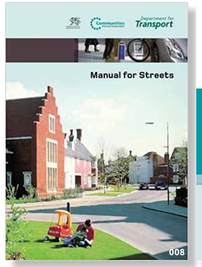

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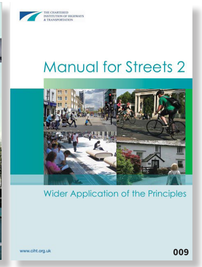

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01 Policy Context

Solihull's Climate Change Response

The need to make a regional contribution to the national target for Carbon Net Zero has driven regional commitments by the West Midlands Combined Authority. At the local level, Solihull Council has made commitments to contribute to climate change aspiring to a low carbon economy and environmental protection actions.

Climate Emergency Declaration

The Council has recognised the challenges connected to climate change by declaring a climate emergency, with unanimous support of its members, on 8 October 2019. The declaration sets a platform from where the challenges associated with climate change can be explored, the impacts understood and actions to address them prepared.

The declaration sets out the Council's intent to address these challenges through nine commitments, which include the need to raise awareness, carbon budgeting and targeting - as well as recognising the need for engagement across community, business and political stakeholders. The declaration is driving the Borough's response to the Climate Emergency through the Solihull's Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP,) agreed at Cabinet in November 2021. The plan summarises 54 Goals and 203 actions that will help to deliver on three core objectives:

1.Identify actions.
2.Estimate carbon savings, costs and payback associated with implementation.
3.Prioritise actions toward net zero.

The Borough is now focused upon the development of an implementation plan for actions that the Council can take to meet the Region's ambitious goal to be net zero by 2041.

Climate Change Prospectus

This is Solihull's roadmap for implementation that guides this work, setting out the Borough's goals and how they will be achieved. It articulates the Borough's low carbon vision and opportunities for delivering sustainable growth. Focusing on four themes of clean growth, clean air, nature gain and communications, educations and engagements it states the vision and objectives for a Sustainable Solihull, seen in the table opposite. Under each of these themes it also identifies actions, initiatives and statements of intent. A number of these relate to the public realm through delivery catalyst, direction and where the public realm could contribute and are discussed in brief below.

Sustainable Solihull

Theme	Vision	Objective
Clean Growth	**A Prosperous Borough** with thriving, sustainable, low carbon economy which enables green growth, capitalising on the growing market for low carbon goods and services and attractive national and international investment.	Create an economic environment that supports progressive, innovative businesses to make the transition to a low carbon economy and deliver Solihull's green growth aspirations.
Clean Air	**A Smart Low Carbon Borough** with increased decentralised energy and low carbon generation with smart grids and smart meters to help control the supply and demand of energy.	Develop an efficient and low carbon infrastructure that enables and maximises the opportunity for low carbon economic growth.
	A Resource Efficient Borough where natural resources are used efficiently. Where the emphasis is on moving waste treatment up the hierarchy - promoting waste reduction, recycling and circular production.	Improve the energy efficiency of domestic, commercial and industrial buildings in Solihull to reduce the energy demand required.
Nature Gain	**An Accessible Borough** with a rebalanced mode share that is less dependent on the car, where road space is used more efficiently and streets are created for people and public transport.	Efficiently accommodate the future demand for movement. Enhancing Solihull as a sustainable, healthy place to live and work.
	A Naturally Healthy Borough where nature is maintained and enhanced and the benefit of nature provided to society, our economic prosperity and our well-being is recognised, valued and taken into account in decision making,	Invest in the boroughs natural environment to maximise its benefit to people and wildlife. Understand the risks from climate change and adapt accordingly.
Communication, Education and Engagement	**And Engaged Borough** where all members of the community, from residents, to schools and businesses, are encouraged and enabled to play their part in creating a sustainable future.	Encourage and enable active participation in sustainability issues - supported by effective communication.

Solihull Town Centre Energy Network

This is an innovative project to provide low carbon heat and power from a single energy centre directly into town centre buildings, for both public and private sector customers. The establishment of the project represents a significant commitment to reducing greenhouse gas and increasing the amount of renewable and low carbon energy for the town centre on a strategic scale. Installation of a new town centre wide infrastructure network will help position Solihull as a low-carbon town that is responsible and forward thinking. New high-quality public realm improvements will also complement this enhanced image for the town.

Solihull Walking and Cycling Strategy

This presents the Borough's overall approach to active travel, setting out the vision, standards, expectations of major developments and embedding initiatives into local policy. As part of this strategy, Solihull's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan has been produced that identifies cycling and walking improvements at a local level and is discussed in more depth below. The modal shift towards active travel is steering the direction of the public realm to a more people focused environment, increasing priority for pedestrians and cyclists.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2021)

The development of the Solihull Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) seeks a mode shift from the car to cycling and walking and to improve conditions for those that wish to travel by bike or on foot across the town. It considers where and how people are currently travelling and how this is likely to change in the future based on various factors including developments proposed through the Local Plan.

The Solihull LCWIP provides a strategic approach to identify a long-term Cycling Network Plan (CNP), key corridors and core walking zones (CWZs) within major district centres and employment zones. The CWZs have been identified to improve the pedestrian environment in areas with current or potential high footfall.

The key objectives of the Cycling Network Plan are:
- helping to develop the convenience of cycling and walking for journeys under 5km
- identifying a CNP to inform delivery of a high-quality cycle and walking network across the Borough through prioritised schemes
- improving urban to rural connectivity via new cycle provision
- informing delivery of high-quality pedestrian environments in the CWZs identified

A key output of the LCWIP relevant to the PRS, is the identification of seven 'priority cycle schemes' including detailed cost and feasibility analysis. Of these, five of the priority corridors link directly into the town centre.

Route A - Solihull Town Centre to Monkspath (additional link to Cheswick Green)
Route C - Solihull Town Centre to Dickens Heath
Route D - Shirley to Solihull Town Centre
Route E - Solihull Town Centre to UK Central Hub via Lode Lane, Catherine-de-Barnes and Damson Lane, including Elmdon section of A45
Route G - Knowle to Solihull Town Centre

Solihull Initiatives

There are several initiatives that address climate change and environmental issues that the PRS can contribute to and deliver on through urban greening. These include the following;
- Urban Forestry Strategy - aims for 20% canopy cover across the town centre
- Wildlife Corridors – habitat connections along walking and cycling routes with wildflower, bulbs and tree planting
- Planting for the Future – a pledge of 250,000 trees planted and enhancement of the wider environment, from meadows to green roofs
- Solihull Community Safety Partnership – priority to making our neighbourhoods safer places in relation to road safety, terrorist attacks and antisocial behaviour

West Midlands Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5)

The region's new West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP5) outlines ways our local streets should be designed, managed and used for the transport network. The LTP5 Core Strategy includes a proposed Area Strategy for Solihull to explore opportunities to reimagine the transport system - with well-connected 15 minute neighbourhoods within a 45 minute region. This vision is based on a combination of walking and wheeling, cycling and scooting, and riding travel options. It means that a good range of everyday services within our neighbourhoods and centres can be accessed in a round trip of no more than 15 minutes, and a good range of places across our region can be accessed for work, leisure and socialising within a 45 minute trip. These measures in the strategy are further promoted in the Big Move policies, including the Draft Big Move 3: Walk, Wheel, Cycle and Scoot through delivering on safer streets through greater levels of investment, connecting people onto our regional networks, prioritising space for active travel modes throughout our streetscapes and reducing traffic to help achieve 'vision zero'.


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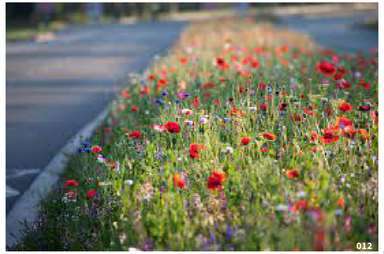
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01 Solihull Today

Context

Solihull is a large town in the south-east of Birmingham. The town is largely surrounded by greenbelt countryside, and despite its proximity to cities like Birmingham and Coventry, much of Solihull has maintained its unique and distinct identity. The name 'Solihull' is thought to have come from the position of St Alphege Church, on a 'soily' hill, because the hill that the church was built on quickly turned to sticky mud in wet weather.

Solihull is home to the independent Solihull School, two preparatory schools and several state-funded schools, primary schools, a sixth form college and a College and University Centre.

The town is well connected via rail to London and Birmingham via the Chiltern Line, to the national highway network via the M42 and the nearby M6 and M42. It also has good road links to Birmingham, Coventry and surrounding towns that are served by local bus services. Solihull also benefits from a cycle hire scheme in the town centre, encouraging active travel for residents and visitors.

Solihull offers great retail options, including the Touchwood shopping centre, the High Street and Mell Square as destinations for shoppers. There are also a selection of food and drink outlets, ranging from independent businesses to well-known chains. Visitors are drawn to the town to visit the Core Theatre, Solihull Arts Complex, cinema and Tudor Grange leisure centre, as well as attractions close to the town such as the Resorts World Arena and National Motorcycle Museum.

Green space around Solihull town centre is generous, with three large public parks accessible directly from the town centre. These include Tudor Grange Park, Malvern Park and Brueton Park, and the latter two are interlinked. These parks offer a range of attractions including playgrounds, green space, small lakes, bike tracks and skateparks.

A - Park Road
B - The Solihull Manor House, High Street
C - New Road
D - Station Road
E - Solihull Train Station
F - Brueton Gardens
G - New Road
H - Mel Square
I - War Memorial, New Road
J - Malvern Park
K - Jubilee Gardens
L - Mell Square
M - Footpath linking Homer Road & Prince's Way
N - High Street
O - Mell Square
P - Brueton Gardens
Q - Footpath linking Homer Road & Tudor Grange Park


A


B


C


D

E

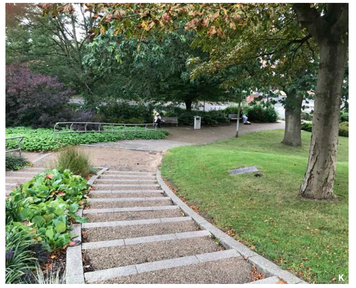

F


G


H


I


J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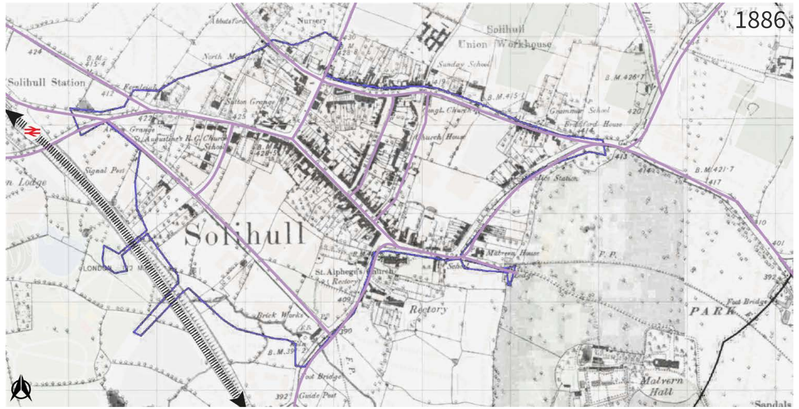
01 Solihull Today

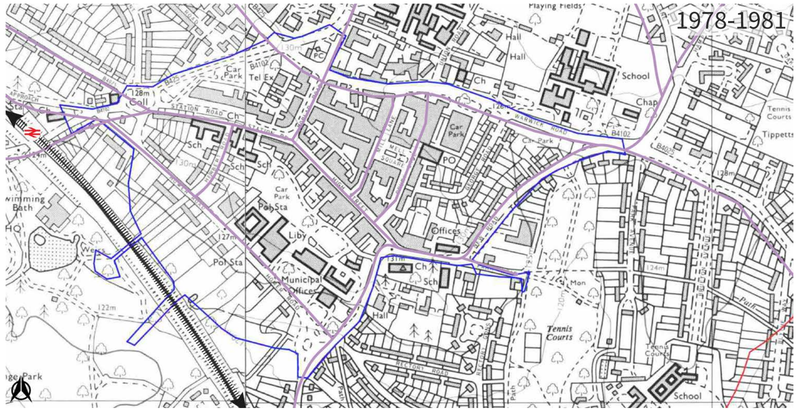
Solihull's Evolution

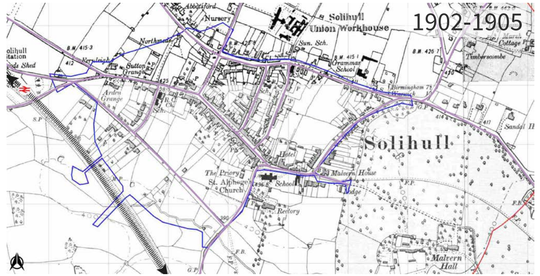
Reflecting on the historic maps and the evolution of Solihull's urban fabric, longstanding characteristic features and structure have been present since before 1886. There are significant historical features such as the High Street and St Alphege Church, Solihull Grammar School and the sizeable parkland of Malvern Hall. The Victorian rail station and the road network is, for the most apart, the same as it is today. Notably, Homer Road and Herbert Road pre-date 1886.

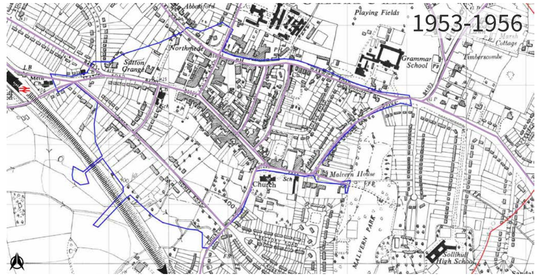
A big step change in the development of the town centre area can be seen from the 1930's onwards, with an increase in development both infill within the existing central road framework and residential expansions. These expansions are mostly detached and semi-detached housing to the northwest, north and east, as parts of Malvern Hall parkland are converted to housing development. This development represents a significant shift from a large well serviced village to a small market town. The 1950's saw the arrival of Solihull Hospital and expansion of Solihull Grammar School.

Between the 1950 and 1970's, there was further housing development infill and expansion beyond the town centre core. Tudor Grange Park was created, and highways infrastructure developments implemented with the introduction of the A41 Solihull Bypass, extension to Lode Lane and introduction of Blossomfield roundabout. This period also saw a shift in the urban grain within the town centre itself with the introduction of larger scale retail units and Poplar Way shopping precinct north of the High Street associated with Mill Lane and Drury Lane and the emergence of Mell Square. Larger scale commercial builds along Homer Road were also introduced around this time. In more modern history, Touchwood shopping centre was built in 2001.









01 Solihull Today

Character & Heritage

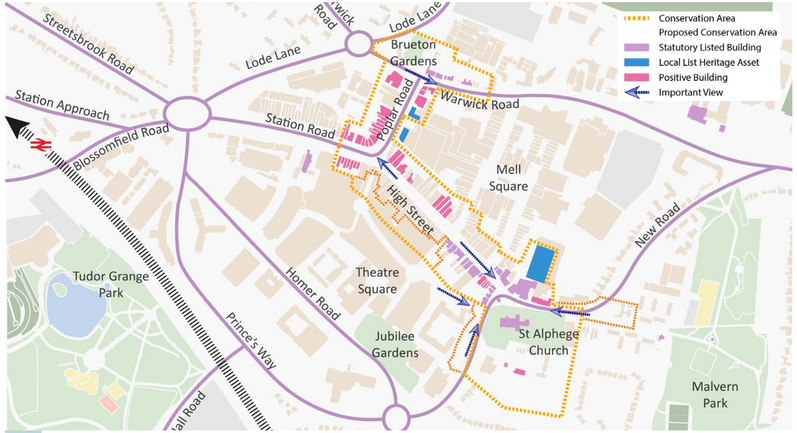
Designated in March 1968 and revised in November 1977, the Solihull Conservation Area focuses on the town's historic core. It includes St Alphege church and churchyard, the area of land immediately to its south, The Square, High Street, and sections of New Road, Poplar Road, Station Road and Warwick Road. There are proposed additions to this area at Church Hill Road and Park Road. An appraisal of the Conservation Area has recently been adopted, which recommends minor changes to the current boundary. The extent and features of the Conservation Area are shown in the map below.

Environmental analysis identifies the Church of St Alphege and the group of buildings within The Square and at the south-east end of High Street collectively form the historic core, which is arguably the area of greatest heritage interest within the Conservation Area. However, Church Hill Road, The Square and New Road form a main vehicular route and the constant traffic detracts from the otherwise high environmental quality of the area.

The analysis carried out in the development of the PRS identifies High Street's strong linear character and almost continuous building frontages as of notable interest and there is surviving evidence of the historic medieval burgage plots layout. The fine urban grain and continuous frontages enclose the public realm with domestic scale two storey buildings. There is a harmonious mix of styles and heights, creating an interesting and varied roofscape, and the use of locally distinctive traditional building materials.

There is a distinctive style of inter-war development on Station Road and Poplar Road with three-storey purpose-built shopping 'parades' fronted by wide pavements with symmetry and detailing retained on the first and second floors. Brueton Gardens was presented to the inhabitants of Solihull by H. J. Brueton in 1938 and the clock was added in 1964 to commemorate the town's elevation to a County Borough. Warwick Road close to the north of the town is a historic route between Warwick and Birmingham and it pre-exists Solihull, with several listed buildings of architectural interest.

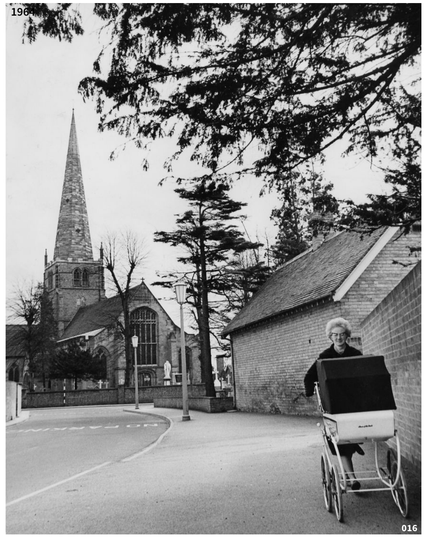
Negative impacts on the Conservation Area include the volume of vehicular traffic within The Square and along Warwick Road, physical and visual street clutter such as signage, road markings, bollards and CCTV cameras, and dated paving materials.



22 Figure 2 - Conservation Area & Listed Buildings

Desired Outcomes:

- **Reduce the vehicle dominance within 'The Square' as an area of high heritage significance**
- **Improve the environmental quality and reduce vehicle dominance of gateway junction near Brueton Gardens and Warwick Road**
- **De-cluttering and improved surface treatments**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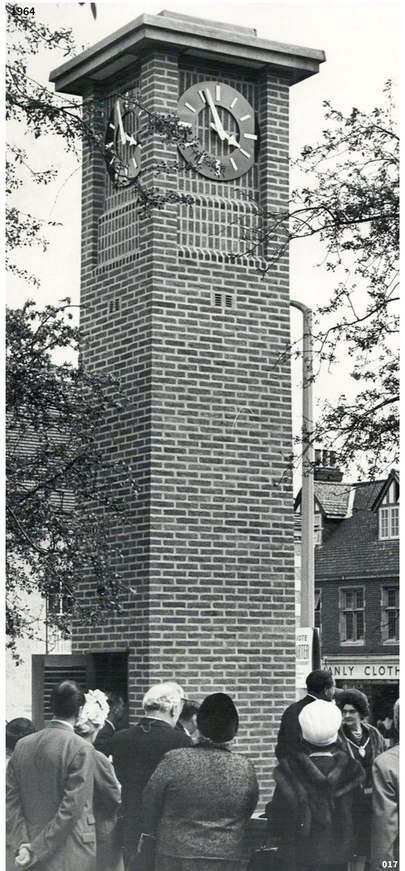
1964

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1954

018


1971

019

1952

020

01 Solihull Today

Land Use & Users

The future approach to land use is to provide a balanced mix of retail, leisure, housing, education, culture and health to the town centre that meets the needs of the residents and workers, and attracts visitors as set out by the **Town Centre Masterplan** (2020). The spaces around buildings and land uses are public spaces that facilitate life and social interaction, and activities should be encouraged to spill out into the public realm. The public realm is now more important than ever in considering the future of the high street and the need to create a sense of community and localism in town centres post-covid.

The plan shows the existing broad land uses that exist in the town centre broken down into the following general land use classifications:

- Retail/ Commercial & Hotel
- Residential
- Non-residential/Civic/ Education
- Green space/ Leisure
- Night-time economy

Moving forward the evolution of Solihull's town centre with the delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan (2020) will see a shift in its diversity of offer, a user experience focus and increase in residential uses to retain an active, sustainable and vibrant centre. In addition, there is a desire for the emerging night-time economy to flourish and expand, increasing dwell times and the daily lively hours of the centre. The public realm improvements will need to support these shifts and designed to be adaptable for further future changes.

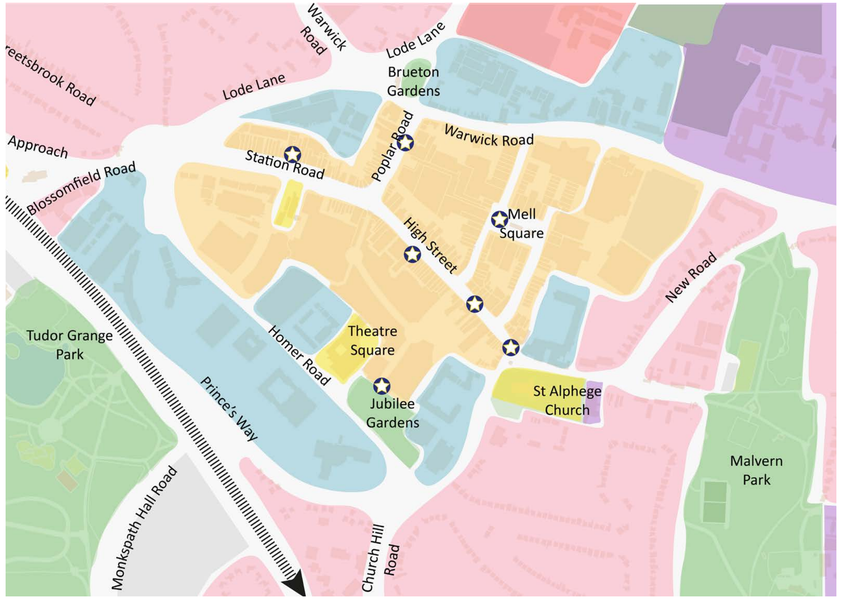


Figure 3 - Land Use

- Railway
- Solihull Railway Station
- Residential
- Mixed Retail
- Cultural
- Commercial & Hotel
- Greenspace
- Sports Pitches
- School
- Hospital
- Night Time Economy Hubs

Desired Outcomes:

- Enhance and add to user experiences and encourage increased dwell times
- An adaptable public realm that can accommodate different uses and needs both on daily cycle and more longer term future changes in the needs, uses and offer of a town centre

01 Solihull Today

Amenities & Facilities

Solihull town centre lies at the heart of the Borough and provides a mixed-use hub of activity including business, accommodation, education, leisure and recreation facilities, parks, a hospital and a range of high-quality retail stores and restaurants. Whilst the town has seen investment in the expansion of these facilities and services, the public realm has begun to look tired and no longer complements the high-quality environment that the town has. A lack of 'green' within the public realm in the heart of the town centre diminishes the environmental quality and sense of place.

In order to retain and attract investment and remain attractive to visitors and future operators, the public realm requires upgrading. Such improvement will enhance the user experience across the town centre and create a quality environment that is key to delivering the aspirations of the Town Centre Masterplan and the future of the town centre.
The plan maps out the existing amenities, facilities and services across the town centre.

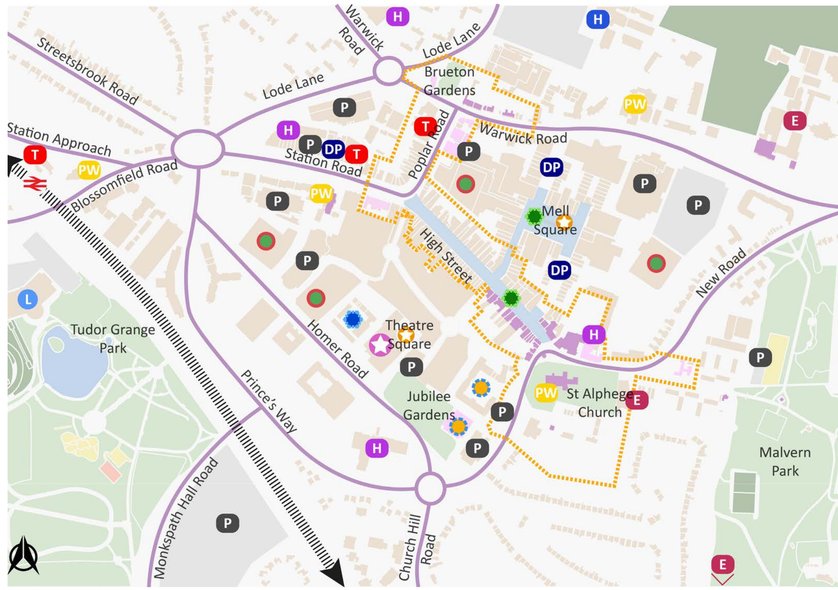


Figure 4 - Amenities & Facilities

- Primary Road
- Railway
- Solihull Railway Station
- Pedestrianised Area
- Conservation Area
- Listed Buildings
- Buildings of Local Importance
- Council
- Police Station
- Market Locations
- Hospital
- Library / Arts Centre
- Informal Dining / Seating Area
- Leisure Centre
- Education - School / College
- Place of Worship
- Hotel
- Supermarket
- Parking
- Disabled Street Parking
- Taxi Rank

Desired Outcomes:

- Improve environmental quality of the public realm to reflect the quality, reputation and offer of Solihull
- Reflect local distinctiveness and enhance the local setting
- Create a public realm that's a place that people use and visit in its own right

01 Solihull Today

Movement

Across the town centre there are several different movement routes that currently connect people, public transport, cyclists and cars to and around the town centre. Consideration of these routes identifies a series of arrival points and gateways to the town centre, areas of congestion and potential conflict, key nodes and public spaces. Consideration of movement is separated out into pedestrian connectivity, cycling connectivity and public transport connectivity over the following pages.

Pedestrian Connectivity

The central pedestrian zone of the town centre comprises High Street and Mell Square. High Street constitutes the main pedestrianised street. The bus interchange is accessed from Station Road at the end of High Street and there are various bus stops around the town centre. Legibility and wayfinding are not optimised within the core of the town, especially for pedestrians. The general lack of wayfinding and visibility between the different parts of the town centre makes it feel somewhat fragmented.

Tudor Grange Park and Malvern and Brueton Park are key attractions for the town centre that are separated from the town centre by the existing road network. Pedestrian and cycle infrastructure to these parks are in need of improvement: routes are narrow, poorly lit and uninviting and are compromised by vehicular traffic. Some of the key routes connecting the two public transport hubs of the rail station and main bus area are not pedestrian friendly. Many of the pedestrian connections to town from the surrounding communities are constrained by having to cross large highways. Solihull College & University Centre located on Bloomsfield Road is also disconnected from the town centre for pedestrians. Despite the presence of controlled crossing points on New Road the speed of traffic, narrow pavements and pinch-points discourages the use of these crossing points by pedestrians.

There is potential for planned improvements to create a pedestrian priority area along New Road and The Square to ensure better connectivity with the town centre. There is also potential to create pedestrian friendly routes/green routes between the town centre and existing parks.

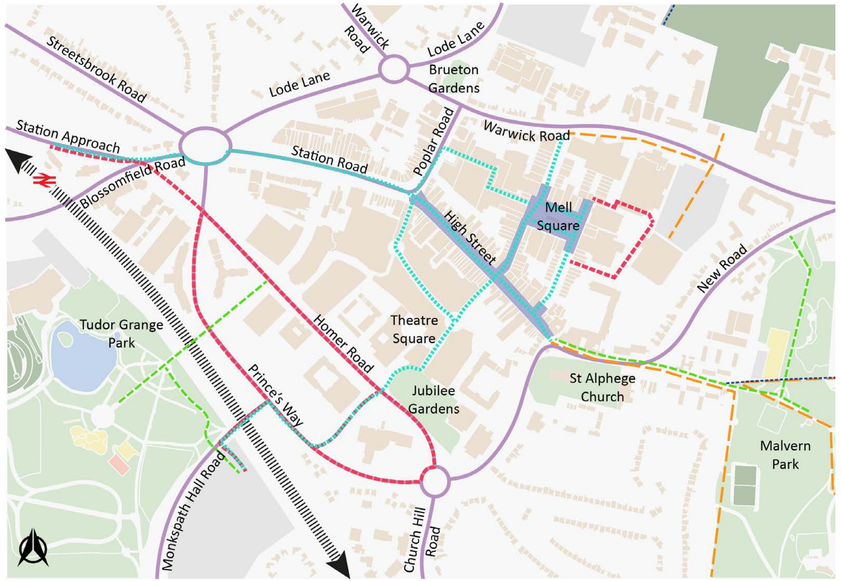


Figure 5 - Pedestrian Journeys

Primary Road
Railway
Solihull Railway Station
Pedestrianised Area
Public Right of Way
Shopping Journeys
Employment Journeys
School Journeys
Green Space Journeys

Desired Outcomes:

• Increase pedestrian priority and reduce vehicle dominance within the streetscape
• Improve connectivity, legibility and wayfinding to assist with navigation
• Ensure inclusivity, accessibility and clutter free spaces within the public realm
• Raise quality, profile and presence of links to parks

01 Solihull Today

Cycling Connectivity

Although Solihull is understood to have a relatively high level of cycle ownership, it also has lower levels of cycling usage compared to other West Midlands local authority areas. Car ownership and use is relatively high – partly because Solihull is composed of large rural and semi-rural areas. Solihull's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), discussed earlier in the policy context section, seeks to encourage a modal shift towards active travel.

Cycling journeys take place around the town centre, including using existing advisory cycle lanes on Blossomfield Road and Warwick Road. The relatively low level of cycling is influenced by the lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure. Surveys undertaken across the country relating to cycling consistently highlight safety concerns as the major barrier to cycling.

Provision for cyclists around and within the town centre could be improved, with current cycle routes disconnected, sporadic and mainly limited to main roads, away from key desire lines. Cyclists are currently forbidden from using the main pedestrianised routes such as the High Street, forcing them onto the more hostile main roads, and reducing the incentive to cycle. In addition, there is also a poor provision of cycle parking throughout the town and at key destinations, particularly at Solihull Train station.

West Midlands Cycle Hire has been appointed by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) as West Midlands' bikeshare operator. Docking stations have been located around key sites in the town centre with bikes available to hire 24 hours a day.

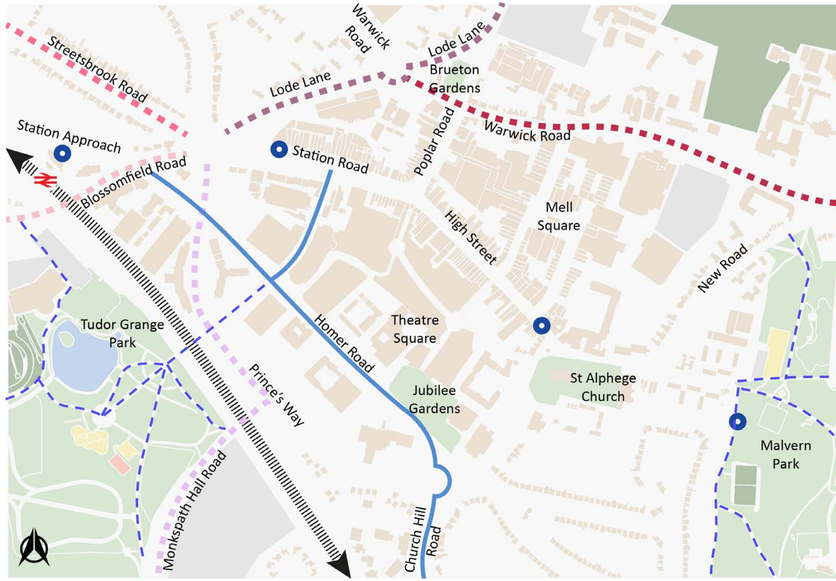


Figure 6 - Cycling Network

Desired Outcomes:

• Provide connectivity between the Priority Cycle Corridors with cycle routes across the town centre
• Support a modal shift by creating safe convenient ways to cycle to, from, and around the town centre
• Improve supportive cycle infrastructure such as storage and facilities within the public realm
• Reduce vehicle dominance within the streetscape

Railway
Solihull Railway Station
Advisory Cycling Route
Shared Cycle & Pedestrian Footway
Off Road Routes
Cycle Hire

Solihull LCWIP Priority Cycle Corridors
Route A - Solihull Town Centre to Monkspath Hall Road
Route C - Solihull Town Centre to Dickens Heath
Route D - Shirley to Solihull Town Centre
Route E - Solihull Town Centre to UK Central Hub via Lode Lane, Catherine-de-Barnes and Damson Lane, including Elmdon section of A45
Route G - Knowle to Solihull Town Centre

01 Solihull Today

Bus Connectivity

A series of bus stops exist around the town that provide easy access to the different destinations around the town centre whether for shopping, work, leisure or school or education. Designated bus corridors exist along Station Road and future bus lanes are identified on key roads around the town including Warwick Road and New Road.

The main bus interchange is located opposite the railway station entrance on Station Approach and provides connections to the town centre and further afield. The current station environment fails to provide a sense of arrival or facilitate seamless movement of travellers between various modes of transport. Solihull town centre bus service currently operates from several street bus stops mainly located along Station Road that are managed by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM). Several bus services run from Station Road connecting the town centre and railway station with a vast number of areas within the wider region.

The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan has identified some rapid transit corridors. Two 'SPRINT' routes are proposed serving Solihull town centre and Solihull Station interchange: Birmingham Airport and Solihull to Birmingham City Centre. These rapid transit links with dedicated bus lanes and priority through areas of congestion, intend to make journey times around 20% quicker than conventional buses and create a better link between Solihull and Birmingham.

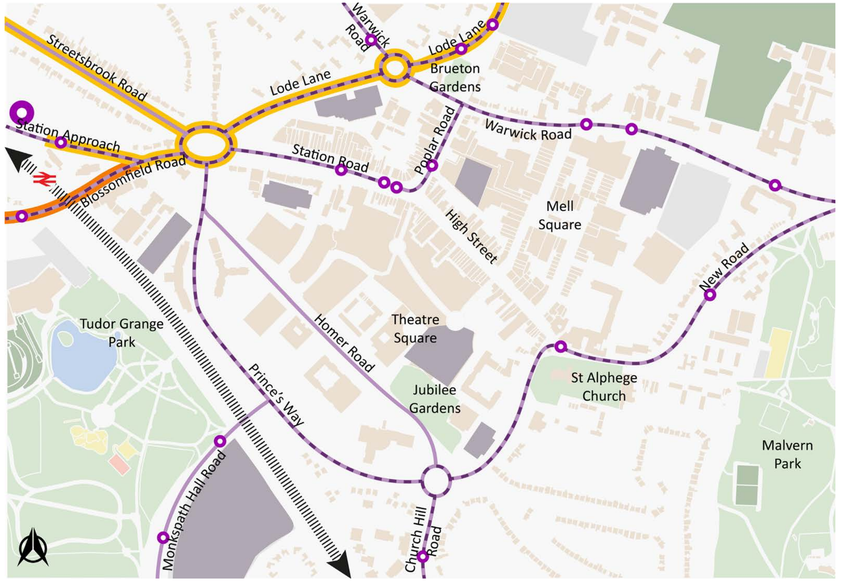


Figure 7 - Bus Routes & Bus Stops as Arrival Points

- Primary Road
- Railway
- Solihull Railway Station
- Bus Route
- SPRINT Bus Route
- Indicative Future Phases of SPRINT Bus Route
- Bus Interchange

01 Solihull Today

Rail Connectivity

Solihull railway station is located to the west of the town centre and still feels disconnected from the town centre by its 'ring road' despite recent upgrades to the pavements and crossings in the immediate vicinity of the station. It requires people to cross several busy roads and major junctions. The poor connectivity is compounded by a lack of signage, poor legibility and lack of clear sightlines to the town centre. At present, Solihull suffers from relatively low usage of the train station compared to other modes, despite its frequent services to Birmingham and London. Trains to and from these destinations run at a frequency of around 2 trains per hour.

The planned redevelopment of Solihull railway station to cope with the expected growth in demand will expand its size and capacity and include the following facilities:

- Ticket office
- Passenger facilities
- Access to platforms
- Improved retail offer
- Internal planting
- Taxi pick-up and drop off
- Electric vehicle charging
- Car parking
- New cycle route
- Sprint route

Desired Outcomes:

- Provide further improved connectivity between the Station and town centre
- Enhance legibility and wayfinding to assist with initiative navigation

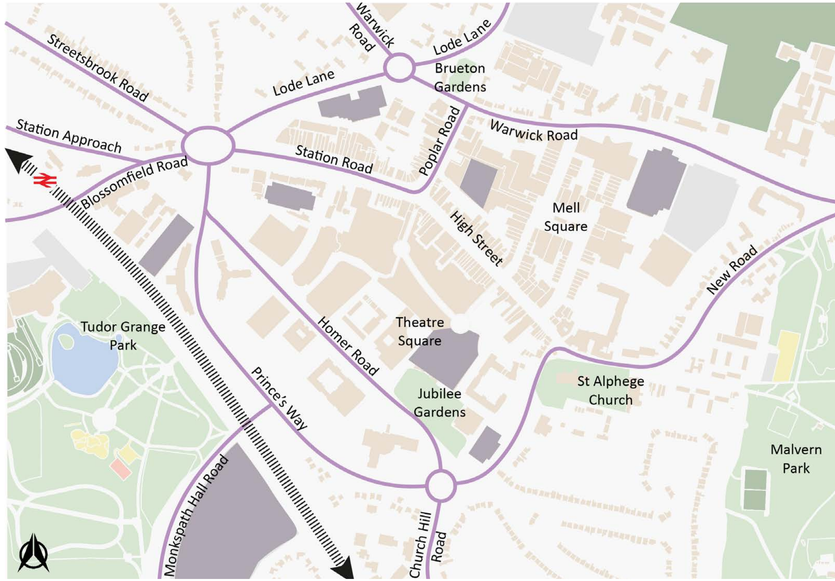


Figure 8 - Public Car Parks & Arrival Points

- Primary Road
- Railway
- Solihull Railway Station
- Public Car Parks

01 Solihull Today

Green Infrastructure

There is a limited amount of existing green space within the town centre. The two key areas of green space next to the town centre is Jubilee Gardens on Homer Road and Brueton Gardens on the corner of Warwick Road and Lode Lane. These isolated pockets offer trees, lawn and ornamental planting. There is a small nature area within Jubilee Gardens that provides some native and wildlife friendly planting - albeit this planting stock needs refreshing. There is potential to enhance these areas and improve connectivity to them.

Several notable trees and trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) are scattered across the town centre, and those trees within the Conservation Area are subject to the same level of protection as TPOs.

Other key green spaces which are located on the periphery of the town centre include Malvern and Brueton Park and Tudor Grange Park which are Green Flag Parks. Tudor Grange Park includes the following facilities: cycle track, pitch and putt course, play area, free car parking, lake and stream, skate park and annual park events. Malvern and Brueton Park includes the following facilities: play area, dedicated picnic area, Brueton Tree Trail, free car parking, local nature reserve, mature woodland, ornamental gardens, ornamental lake, park events, Parkridge Café, a pond, sensory garden, tennis courts and walking trails.

From an ecological perspective, there are no international statutory designated sites located within 5km of the town centre. There is one SSSI identified approximately 0.5km south-east of the town centre: the River Blythe, comprised a lowland river on clay, with riffles, pools, small cliffs and meanders. Malvern & Brueton Park Local Nature Reserve offer ecosites consisting of a mosaic of habitats and a potential breeding ground for barn owls. The town centre itself has the potential to support some common nesting birds but in general it has a low biodiversity offer.

Desired Outcomes:

• Increase the greening of street-scenes and spaces within the town centre
• Increase biodiversity, nature based solutions and climate resilience within the public realm
• Enhance wayfinding and association with the parks, drawing green corridors into the town centre

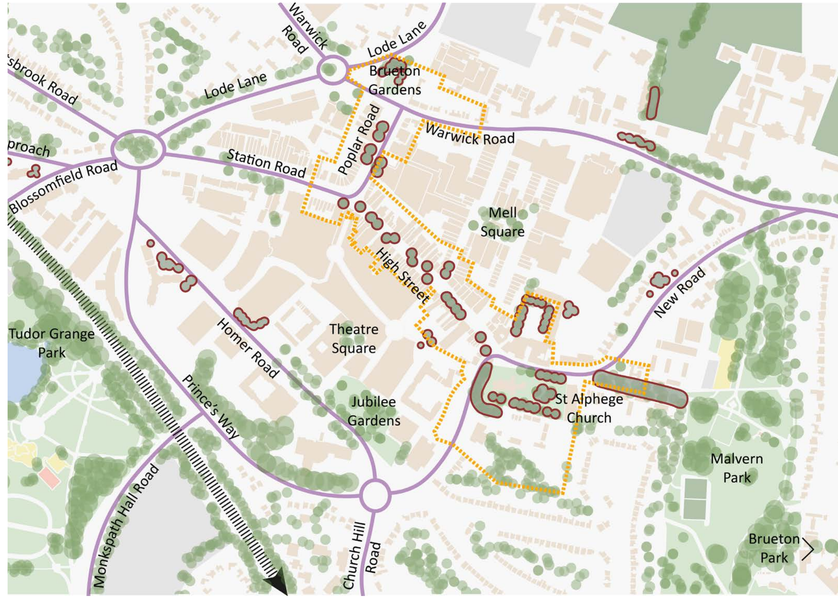


Figure 9 - Green Infrastructure

- Primary Road
- Railway
- Solihull Railway Station
- Greenspace
- Sports Pitches
- Play Ground
- Skate Park
- Lake
- Trees
- Tree Protection Order
- Conservation Area

01 Solihull Today

Public Spaces

The existing open spaces within Solihull town centre have been identified and appraised set out by the aerial photographs and plans over the following pages.

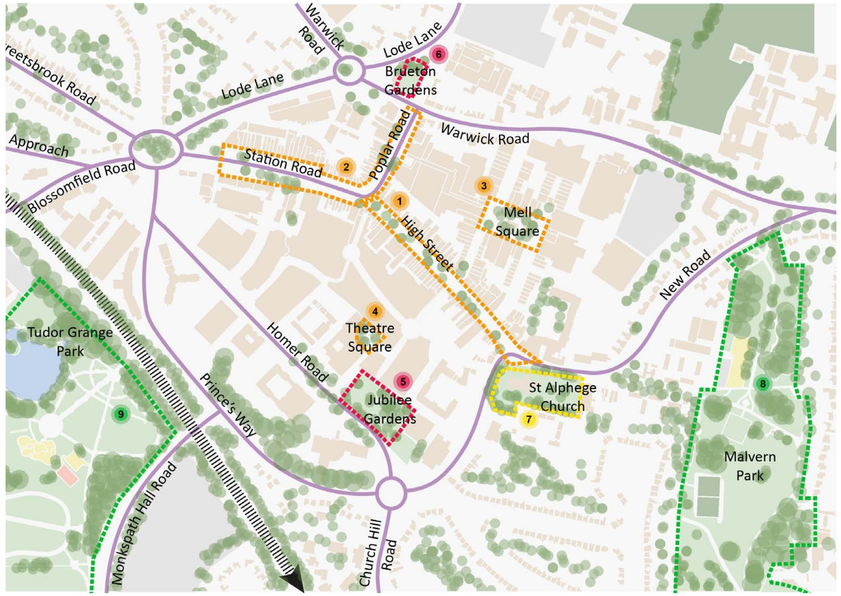


Figure 10 - Open Space

- Primary Road
- Railway
- Solihull Railway Station
- Greenspace
- Sports Pitches
- Play Ground
- Skate Park
- Lake
- Trees
- Urban Hard Landscape
- Urban Green Space
- Church Yard
- Park

01 Solihull Today

Open Space Analysis

High Street

High Street is at the heart of Solihull, running from the north-west of the town centre to the south-east. The pedestrianised retail core includes notable historical and listed buildings as well as access to Touchwood shopping centre and location for markets. The northern end joins the bus stops and cycle parking, connecting the town to its outskirts, while the southern end leads to St Alphege Church and Malvern Park.




Station Road & Poplar Road

Station & Poplar Road is the main transport hub of the town centre, not including the Station as several bus routes alight here. Station Road includes a number of bars and restaurants with outdoor seating, creating a meeting place that is alternate to the offerings of the High Street.




Mell Square

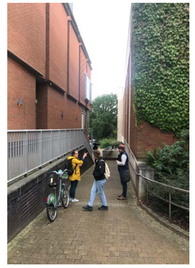
Mell Square is a multi-functional hard space bordered by retail and cafes and centred by several bars and food outlets in semi-temporary shelters. Temporary outdoor seating is abundant, comprising benches and picnic tables. Dwelling in the space is encouraged with the presence of artificial grass. Mature trees surround the centre of the square providing shelter and natural elements. It is the preferred location for events such as the BID food festival and jazz festival.




Open Space Analysis

Theatre Square

Theatre Square is an enclosed hard space outside The Core Theatre. Temporary shelters and seating are periodically installed to encourage outside meeting and the square includes several trees and an area of artificial grass. The square can be accessed via an alley to Homer Road or through the Touchwood shopping centre.

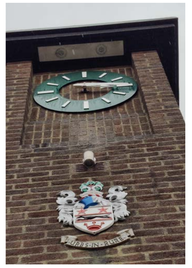


Jubilee Gardens

Jubilee Gardens is an urban green space adjacent to the rear of Touchwood. It comprises of a small nature area, that encourages local wildlife habitats with informal planting. The gardens also include a grassy, outdoor amphitheatre space, overlooked by the outdoor seating from the bars and food outlets of Touchwood.

Brueton Gardens

Brueton Gardens is a small urban green space located adjacent to a busy road junction at the end of Poplar Road. It features the historical clock tower, installed in 1964 to commemorate the town's elevation to a County Borough, and formal planting, areas of hard paving and benches.



01 Solihull Today

Open Space Analysis

St Alphege Church Yard

St Alphege Church Yard is a historical green space within Solihull. The medieval church dates back to the 13th century, and the church yard consists of stone paths leading to the church through gravestones. Mature trees surround the church yard and are dispersed amongst the graves.

Malvern Park & Brueton Park

Malvern & Brueton Park were created by the joining of two separate parcels of land, the park includes a large lake and runs adjacent to the River Blythe. The Malvern side is more formal, offering displays of floral arrangements and a large playground. The Brueton section is more devoted to wildlife. Also available within the park are tennis courts, a café, rose garden and the Parkridge Centre Wildlife Reserve which is run by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

Tudor Grange Park

Tudor Grange is an informal recreation area featuring a lake and stream dissecting the park. Features of the park include a cycle track, playground, skatepark, pitch & putt course, athletics track and a football pitch. It is host to major events such as the Solihull Carnival and music festivals. Tudor Grange Park has direct links to Herbert Road and Homer Road via a pedestrian and cycle link under the railway bridge and Prince's Way.

01 Solihull Today

Key Challenges & Aspirations

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for Solihull public realm are summarised below:

Strengths

- A rich heritage and historic core
- Existing public transport infrastructure and central arrival points
- Existing street pattern and physical connections and routes into the town centre
- Existing market
- A high-quality town centre
- Frontages associated with the main High Street are of generally high quality and provide a varied and positive street frontage with numerous cafés and a varied built form which reflects the historic nature of the town
- Solihull town centre benefits from being near two large public parks, Tudor Grange Park; and Malvern and Brueton Park
- Existing strong market reputation for shopping, which includes the high-quality Touchwood enclosed precinct and a John Lewis store
- In comparison with the West Midlands, the surrounding community of Solihull town centre is affluent

Weaknesses

- Air quality and noise issues around transport hubs
- Wide range of non-uniform street furniture styles, lighting and low-quality paving materials
- Presence of street 'clutter'
- Lack of sense of arrival, legibility and wayfinding
- Lack of facilities for cyclists and cycle friendly streets
- Inconsistent shop front design and frontages
- Low quality signage and inconsistent wayfinding
- Lack of inviting spaces to sit, dwell and play
- Lack of street trees and greenery in the town centre
- Lack of outward frontage resulting in an insular facing town, which fails to promote itself to people arriving at Solihull
- Solihull's main gateways are currently characterised by large scale highway infrastructure
- Key arrival points for pedestrians and cyclists fail to convey the quality and vibrancy associated with Solihull
- The train station feels remote from the centre and has a relatively poor environmental quality
- Frontages along ring road are generally lower quality and do not overlook the street
- There is very little greenspace within the town centre core and access to parks is at present poorly signposted and compromised by highways
- The town is characterised by large single use areas, which have little interaction
- Limited residential offer in the town centre

Opportunities

- To improve connectivity, wayfinding and legibility across the town centre
- To create walkable, cyclable town centre and well-connected town that is easy to navigate and enjoyable
- To encourage urban greening and new urban parklets to increase the presence of trees and green areas across the town, increasing biodiversity net gain and enhancing green infrastructure links through the town
- Improve accessibility to surrounding parks to encourage people to use them
- To encourage public realm enhancements associated with transport initiatives and hubs
- To create streets and spaces that are safe, relaxing, inviting, and encourage activity
- To enhance the setting of listed buildings and the character and appearance of Solihull Conservation Area
- To provide a comprehensive approach to street furniture and lighting
- To develop designs to improve the air quality in the area and address noise issues
- To create an enhanced destination within the town with high quality public realm and increased leisure opportunities
- To create a new 'front door' to Solihull though redevelopment of the train station that demonstrates the inherent quality of the town
- To increase the demand for town centre living, extending the 'opening hours' of the town centre and creating a safer town centre
- To support a focused retail core with a more diverse offer during the day and night to encourage footfall
- To define the market location and improve the quality market offering
- To create a sustainable and resilient town centre

Challenges

- Addressing the air quality and noise issues around transport hubs
- Ensuring a consistent approach to street furniture, lighting and high-quality paving materials across the town centre recognising that public realm improvements are likely to be delivered over time rather than all at once
- Balancing the removal of street clutter with highway safety and the need for wayfinding signage
- Retrofitting cycle infrastructure and creating cycle friendly streets
- Retrofitting street trees into the existing public realm across the town centre
- Environmentally and socially responsive to a changing demographic; elderly, youth and young families – from an environmental and social perspective
- Responding to the competitive nature of similar towns in the wider context
- Responding to climate change and the push for sustainability
- Ensuring reinstatement of high-quality materials following works by statutory utilities providers
- Creating a high-quality public realm that is affordable and maintainable

Summary Evaluation

The opportunity and focus areas for the PRS will support the town centre to attract investment and create a place that people will be happy and proud to use are highlighted on the plan opposite.

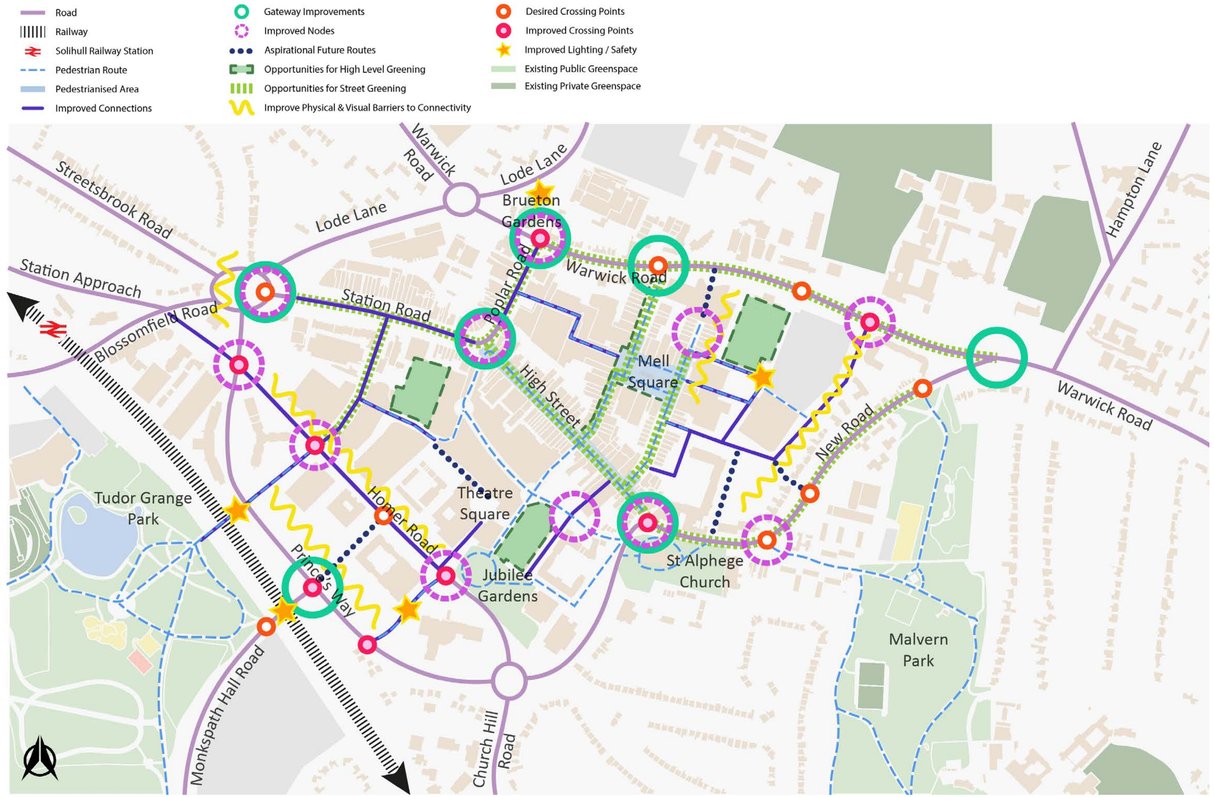


Figure 11 - Opportunities

01 Solihull Today

Place Activation

'Tactical urbanism' encourages low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighbourhoods, city gathering places and activate places. It can provide a spectrum of change, from demonstration to pilot projects, before interim design and finally permanent installation followed by the benefit of real-life testing in use. There is an exciting opportunity to trial and test proposals for the public realm improvements to help shape and focus longer term investment for the town centre.

Solihull BID

Solihull Business Improvement District (BID), which represents town centre retailers, have successfully activated places around the town including Mell Square and Theatre Square. Their activities and events support town centre economy by helping to advertise local businesses, increase footfall in the town and organising thriving events throughout the area. Events aim to appeal to a wide range of people, of all ages, engaging those who live in the surrounding areas, as well as bringing in new visitors from further afield. A popular instalment in the town, was the addition of artificial grass and increased seating to Mell Square and Theatre Square, providing more outdoor space to gather safely during the pandemic.

Past successful events organised by Solihull BID include:

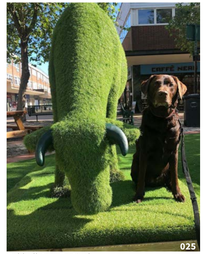
- Jazz Festival
- Continental Street Market
- Festive Feast Market
- Food & Drink Festival
- Rum & Reggae Festival
- The Dinos
- Jingle Bell Jog
- Wimbledon Big Screen

Winbledon in Mell Square

Solihull Jazz Festival

Solihull Continental Market

Astro Animals



Christmas Characters

Solihull Jazz Festival

Red Arrows

Solihull Jazz Festival

Solihull Food & Drink & Rum & Reggae Festival

The Dinos

PART 02

PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK

02 Vision

The public realm masterplan: *Urbs in Rure – A Town in the Country – the dual benefit of a diverse and vibrant town centre enveloped in a green and sustainable environment, for a distinctive, healthy and resilient place.*

Although 'Urbs in Rure' is a long-standing traditional town motto for Solihull, its relevance rings true today more than ever. In the face of the current climate crisis, the vulnerable future of High Streets and post-covid shifts in behaviour and priorities, what we need from our town centres has changed. There is a widespread move towards the importance of user experience, people focused spaces that embrace a shift to active travel, the value of open space and a return to 'buying local' thus creating a sense of community and a place to be. A leafy, pedestrian priority public realm to support a well-established market town embodies current thinking and direction for a climate resilient, economically secure and greener town centre.

Vision & Key Aims

The vision is to design a public realm that, through simple uncluttered design, allows the local identities of vibrant destinations and character areas of the town centre to be better connected, expressed and celebrated and bring the countryside and its park back into the town centre. Encouraging the rediscovery and re-imagining of the town centres heritage, its parks and local distinctiveness through pedestrian and cycle friendly streets and trails, along with the simplification of the public realm design to create a sense of place and resilient town centre. Through the use of high-quality materials, sustainable technologies and urban greening it will support an accessible, safe and healthy town centre which blends strong identity and character with aspirational new and refurbished buildings, greener streets and spaces, new landscape features and flexible social spaces for today and in the future.

This vision for Solihull Town Centre Masterplan is underpinned by three key aims that sets out the ambition for Solihull:

THRIVING - "A prosperous and desirable town centre with a strong retail and growing commercial core and residential offer, alongside outstanding connectivity."

VIBRANT - "A network of integrated spaces offering unique experiences through a constantly evolving offer and a variety of reasons to return."

VISIONARY - "A demonstrator of new trends and opportunities. The strategic objectives include the championing of sustainability in all aspects of design and accessibility and a commitment to invest in innovation and growth."

02 Placemaking Principles

01 CONNECTED
Improving connectivity and ease of movement

- **Welcoming** – improving arrival and destination points
- **Navigable** – creating a legible town centre that is intuitive
- **Inclusive** – accessible spaces for all that are safe and secure
- **Permeability** – complete network of interconnected routes for active travel

02 ATTRACTIVE
Place, quality and identity

- **Distinctiveness** - celebrating local history and culture, creating a sense of place
- **Desirable** - creation of exemplar spaces where people want to visit and stay
- **Active Spaces** – events and interactive, playable features for user experiences
- **Clutter Free** – simplistic spaces with clear desire lines
- **Pedestrian Priority** – people focused environments

03 ACHIEVABLE
The life of the public realm

- **Affordable** - to deliver and maintain
- **Deliverable** – attainable and constructible improvements
- **Diverse** - flexible spaces for multiple uses
- **Adaptable** – accommodate new priorities over time

04 HEALTHY
Supporting improved physical and mental wellbeing

- **Environmental Quality** – improved air, noise and visual quality
- **Active Travel** - encouraging modal shift to active travel
- **Multigenerational** - family spaces, embracing the full spectrum of community
- **Community** – opportunities for social interactions and sense of belonging
- **Green Streets** – access to nature and seasonality

05 FUTURE READY
Climate resilience and low carbon economy

- **Urban Greening** – microclimate stability and improved environmental quality
- **Biodiversity** – increasing habitat diversity and quantity for environmental and biodiversity net gains
- **SuDS** - nature based solutions to surface water management
- **Carbon Healing** - net zero & climate positive design

02 Masterplan

The public realm masterplan captures the streets and spaces that make up Solihull's public realm where the vision and placemaking principles have been applied. The plan illustrates the improvement opportunities for a well-connected, legible and inclusive town centre, that puts active travel and urban greening as key transformative messages. It illustrates a high quality, cohesive and coordinate approach across the centre, creating a strong identity and sense of place that's easily navigated.

There are several Town Centre Masterplan (2020) projects that are relevant to PRS that have been identified on the public realm masterplan for context and are listed below. For three of the projects (Solihull Train Station, Westgate and Eastgate) there are evolving designs and are likely to come forward sooner so have been included. Whilst the Prince's Way project is less progressed, it introduces a new aspirational pedestrian link that is important to capture in the public realm masterplan. An additional aspirational new pedestrian link is also illustrated that provides desired connectivity and improved permeability between George Street and New Street.

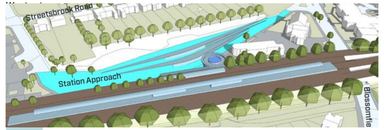
Town Centre Masterplan (2020) projects

Western Gateway development sites
- Solihull Train Station
- Westgate

Heart of Solihull development site
- Eastgate
- Mell Square

Business & Commercial Quarter
- Prince's Way

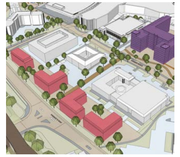
1 Solihull Train Station
A multi-modal Integrated Transport Hub that gives the Western Gateway a new sense of place with a new a landmark station and supports the transformation of the connectivity between the station and the town centre. Its development provides the opportunity to pedestrianise the lower end of Station Approach to create a high-quality civic space.



2 A landmark building on a prominent gateway with the opportunity for an impressive new arrival point to the business and commercial quarter. An office development with collaborative working spaces and public realm enhancements that will look to improve pedestrian connectivity.

3 Eastgate
A vibrant and new quarter within the town including a brand-new civic building with high quality public spaces, new retail and leisure, arts and culture uses. A new residential neighbourhood providing modern, sustainable homes in a town centre setting.

4 Prince's Way
The reconfiguration of space to the rear of existing offices to create new office developments that provides an impressive new frontage onto Prince's Way. At the heart of the design of the site would be an attractive new pedestrian and cycle boulevard connecting north to south that radically improves the permeability of the town and creates an attractive new streetscape.



5 Mell Square
The creation of a vibrant mixed-use destination at the heart of the town centre attracting visitors. Home to high quality retailers, restaurateurs, and independent businesses, set within the context of stunning high quality multi-functional public realm. An exceptional new residential offer will breathe new life into the area, drawing a new resident population, who will be drawn to and support the employment opportunities on the door-step, the thriving leisure arts and culture offer, and bustling evening economy.

02 Strategy & Typologies

Street & Space Typologies

Streets have many functions, and wherever schemes or designs are being developed it is essential to consider all of them to achieve and maintain a high standard of design which can be managed cost effectively. Adopting a balanced approach to the planning and design of streets ensures better outcomes and can promote a better quality of living for everyone.

Streets exist primarily to accommodate the movement of people and goods, whether on foot or in any type of vehicle. In addition, they provide access to and from buildings and contribute to their lighting and ventilation. They are a route for utilities and drainage, and are used for storage, particularly for vehicles. They are public spaces used by everyone and enable social interactions of all kinds. All these functions must be given due consideration if adequate, satisfying and attractive street environments are to be created and maintained.

The place function is essentially what distinguishes a street from a road. Defining the relative place and movement functions is therefore critical to considering where change is either desirable and/ or practical and achieve the ideal balance. The relationship these streets have with public spaces is also key in realising a successful network of public realm.

The balance of place and movement as presented by Manual for Streets

Link and Place Methodology

Traditionally road functions were based on traffic needs with a conventional road hierarchy expressing the relative importance of a road depending on the vehicular flow; from a major highway down to a local access road. This was reflected in highway infrastructure designs with wide carriageway widths and extensive visibility splays optimised for vehicular movement (a prime example being the B4102 Warwick Road). Yet streets are used for a multitude of activities covering the movement of people and goods, for parking and loading and a variety of civic, social and economic activities.

During the 2000's, The European Commission funded a major research project called Arterial Streets Towards Sustainability (ARTISTS). Academic and government organisations from nine European countries took part in developing a new approach to street design – one that recognised the importance of place and the numerous health, environmental and financial benefits of making streets more cycle and walking friendly. The resulting Link and Place Methodology created a new paradigm for the planning and design of urban streets.

The concept of link and place is embedded within Manual for Streets and is widely used in the UK. The methodology also now underpins Transport for London's approach to its transport planning policy in the capital. (The majority of current guidance uses the term 'movement' rather than 'link', but the principle is the same).

PLACE > *A destination in its own right; an opportunity for shopping, visiting a library or having a coffee. It also presents further opportunities to take a rest, meet a friend or have chance encounters with people you pass on the street. It can also be an important node or gateway where opportunity for art and urban branding can positively contribute to place quality and identity. A place user will predominantly be on foot but could also be on a scooter, in a buggy or being pushed in a wheelchair – highlighting the importance of inclusive design.*

MOVEMENT > *A conduit for through-movement and is an integral part of a wider urban street network. A link user may travel by a variety of modes: private car, commercial vehicle, public transport, bicycles or on foot. The overriding need is for this passage of movement to be continuous with minimal disruption and seamless interchange between modes.*

Street & Space Types Matrix

The concept of Movement and Place sets the basis for developing a strategic approach to street and space classification in Solihull.

This is expressed in a two-dimensional matrix where the axes are defined in terms of place and movement. Areas where people are likely to gather and interact with each other will have a place function. Likewise, roads that are principally focused on the movement of vehicles such as a major road or dual carriageway will have a high movement function.

Whilst the street type matrix uses labels for each category such as urban greenway or town street, shorthand labels have also been provided to emphasise the functional classification therefore focusing on the character and priority of the street or space over a descriptive identifier.

The following typologies have been identified:

- **Distributor (M3/P1)** – A key movement corridor accommodating high levels of vehicular traffic with limited place value. Designed to encourage efficient passage of commercial, residential and visitor motor vehicles.
- **Urban Greenway (M3/P2)** – A green multi-modal corridor as part of a concentric town centre 'loop road'. The typology is typified by high levels of vehicular traffic (at peak periods) as well as effective provision of cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, complemented by generous urban greening.
- **Gateway (M3/P3)** – These sites create a series of town centre thresholds or gateway features. They provide the opportunity for strategic place branding, creating an important first impression for visitors. The design may be wide ranging: a feature sign, a piece of public art, a lighting installation or a high-quality soft landscape.
- **Connector/Arterial (M2/P1)** – These routes make up most of the town's approaches. They are the principal points of arrival and transition that link directly into the core network of town streets via the gateway nodes. They are typified by moderate levels of vehicular movement passing through a range of urban environments but are predominantly residential.
- **Town Street (M2/P2)** – Town streets carry moderate levels of traffic and have a range of commercial frontages, varying road users and a mix of parking and deliveries. Encouraging mixed priority in these streets is important to improve accessibility planning, accident reduction as well as quality of life and sustainability.
- **Civilised Street (M2/P3)** – The predominately pedestrianised core of the town dominated by commercial, public and institutional buildings. Vehicular access is restricted in these areas creating a high-quality people focused environment conducive to shopping, dining and other leisure uses. These streets will encourage significant urban greening.
- **Access Road (M1/P1)** – Simple functional street type providing access to businesses and institutions. They are typically discrete in nature and of a low place quality.
- **Pedestrians Lanes (M1/P2)** – Small scale streets/footways used for accessing local buildings and linking up key pedestrian and cycle routes. They are pedestrian/cycle only with no access for vehicles.
- **Places (M1/P3)** – A square, plaza or green space dedicated to providing a high-quality public space for a variety of community uses such as gatherings, markets, alfresco dining, play, people watching etc. These places are significant in creating civic pride and a unique identity for a town.

The design of these streets and spaces, their landscape and building frontages are all dependent on an integrated approach, with individual streets only being addressed in the context of others. The streets in the town centre should be designed so that pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles can utilise these safely.

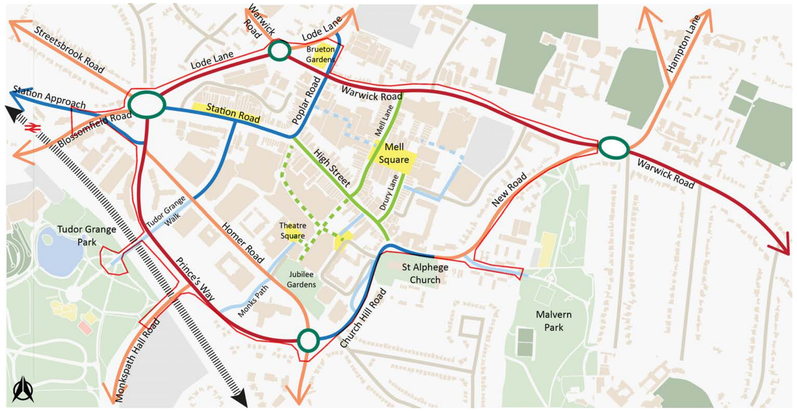


Figure 12 - Existing Street & Space Typologies

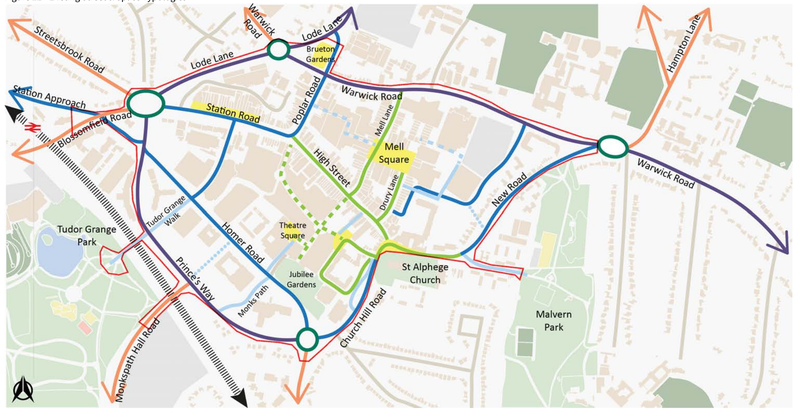
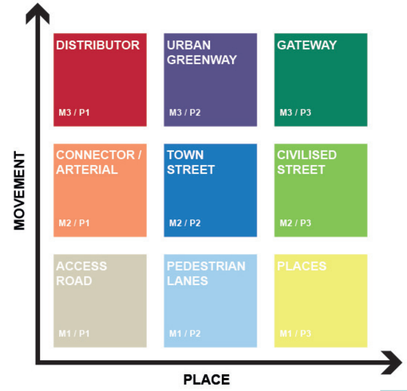


Figure 13 - Proposed Street & Space Typologies

■ ■ ■ Internal 'Semi-Public' Routes
●●●● Future Aspirational Routes



02 Strategy & Typologies

Typology Examples

- Distributor (M3/P1)
- Urban Greenway (M3/P2)
- Gateway (M3/P3)
- Connector/Arterial (M2/P1)
- Town Street (M2/P2)
- Civilised Street (M2/P3)
- Access Road (M1/P1)
- Pedestrians Lanes (M1/P2)
- Places (M1/P3)

The User Hierarchy

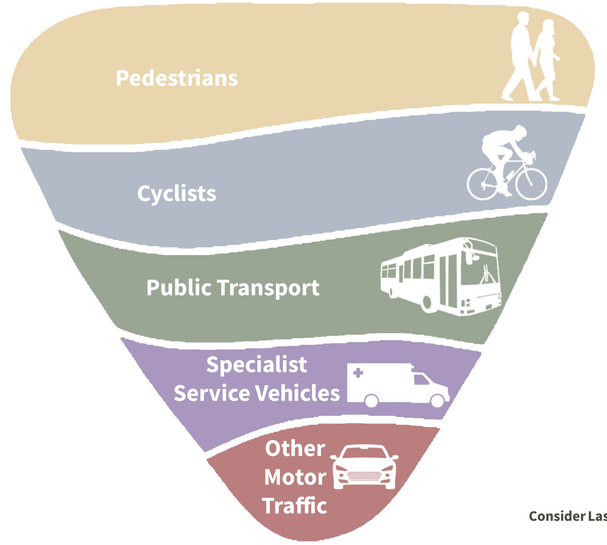
Manual for Streets (2022) recommends a user hierarchy is established where pedestrians are considered first in the design process and recommends the user hierarchy outlined below.

The PRS follows this user hierarchy. This approach aligns with Solihull Council's ambition to become a zero-carbon town by prioritising sustainable and healthy travel.

To prioritise sustainable travel, infrastructure and links for walking and cycling must be considered at the start of the design process. By considering the location of destinations and services, an assessment of the suitability of walking and cycling facilities can be considered. This consideration ensures that a holistic movement hierarchy is established, active travel should be the preference, followed by public transport and, finally, movement of general vehicular traffic.

Manual for Streets User Hierarchy

Consider First



Consider Last

02 Strategy

Pedestrian Network

Opportunities exist to radically transform the streetscapes of Solihull by encouraging accessibility for all. Successful schemes should review existing practices and exploit the possibilities of fresh approaches to the existing and future public realm. The creation of new destinations, new crossing points and improvements to existing crossings, pedestrian priority areas and pedestrian priority signals, street improvements and central walking loops around the town centre will increase footfall and encourage people to experience the town centre for longer during the day and evening as illustrated by the plan opposite.

The plan shows the locations of existing pedestrian crossings for improvement to achieve greater pedestrian priority. Improvements include clutter free level crossings adjusted to suit pedestrian desire lines with wider crossing zones that are shorter where possible, with high quality paving design and pedestrian priority signals on all crossings. The introduction of 6no new pedestrian priority crossings will assist in reducing the severance impact of the informal ring roads. These new crossings follow desire lines to priorities ease of movement for pedestrians, increasing permeability and access for a better-connected network that is more people focused.

The creation of streetside linear parks and landscaped zones to further separate pedestrian movement from the road carriageway brings significant environmental quality enhancements. Such improvements can be achieved on Warwick Road, New Road, and sections of Herbert Road and Homer Road. De-cluttering of footways on streets and pedestrianised spaces and new high quality surface treatments will provide a blanket improvement to the pedestrian experience across the network.

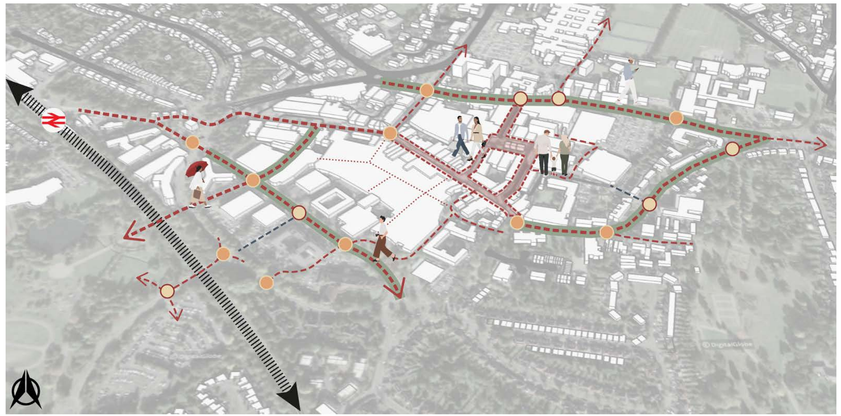


Figure 14 - Pedestrian Network

- Pedestrian Improvements
- Aspirational Route
- Enhanced Environmental Quality
- Existing Crossing Improvements
- Proposed New Crossing

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Cycle Network

Successful schemes should review existing practices and exploit the possibilities of fresh approaches to the existing and future cycle connectivity across the town. To encourage cycle usage requires improvements in getting cyclists to town and providing the right facilities when they're there, so new cycle lanes and suitable storage are required.

Improvements to existing cycle routes are needed as well as introducing new designated cycle lanes within the town centre network that complement the strategic level priority cycle corridors identified in the LCWIP. Although the High Street should remain a dismount zone to minimise conflicts between users, it should be tailored to offer cycle access outside of retail hours. This approach provides a complete network and satisfies a natural desire line for commuter routes through the middle of the town centre.

Facilitating infrastructure for cycling includes toucan crossing points and increasing the quantum and quality of bike storage at arrival points, destinations and the High Street, thus getting cyclists as close to their desired locations to help make this mode a preferred option. Cycle storage should be secure and ideally covered to protect from rain with long and short stay options. Additional cycle-hire points across the town will help encourage more people to cycle in and around the town centre. Opportunities exist to create cycle hubs at the four gateways into Solihull town centre. These cycle hubs could include larger scale long stay cycle storage and supporting facilities such as a café, repair stations and showers as shown on the plan opposite.

LTN

Cycle infrastructure should be designed in accordance with relevant guidance including Local Transport Note 1/20 and West Midlands Cycle Design Guidance (Version 3 published in December 2022) to ensure all cycling infrastructure is designed to a high-quality, and safe standard.

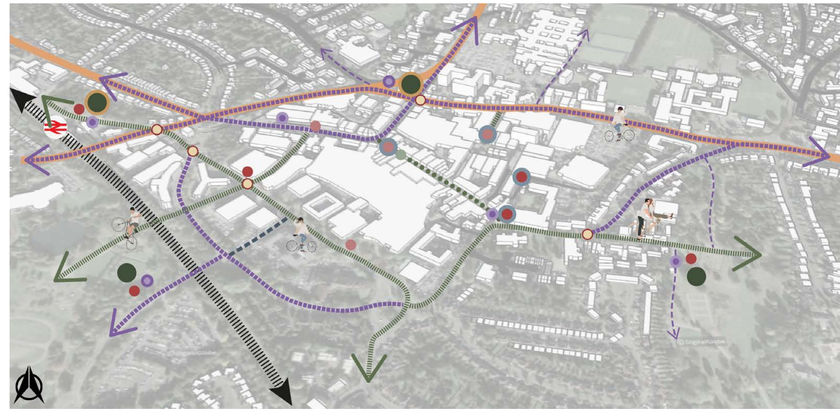

Figure 15 - Cycle Network

- Cycle Route Improvements
- Designated Cycle Lane
- Enhanced Shared Cycle & Pedestrian Route
- Cycle Access Outside Retail Hours
- Aspirational Route
- Priority Cycle Routes
- Proposed Cycle Hire
- Existing Cycle Hire
- Proposed Toucan Crossing
- Propsed Cycle Stands
- Existing Cycle Stands
- Proposed Cycle Hub
- Existing Cycle Repair
- Secure Storage, Small Scale, Short Stay
- Secure Storage, Large Scale, Long Stay

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Green Infrastructure

Opportunities exist to make transformative changes in the green infrastructure offer within Solihull town centre which will make for a healthier urban environment for the people, wildlife and urban microclimate. It also provides placemaking qualities and natural place branding reflecting the Urbs in Rurs vision by drawing the essence of the town parks into the centre. A combination of street greening, vertical greening and high level greening has the potential to create a connected network of green infrastructure linking pockets of green space.

The plan identifies street greening opportunities such as street trees and vegetation associated with rain gardens and planting beds within the public realm, providing human scale greening. It also identifies building facades with potential for vertical greening with consideration to aspect, façade suitability and location, be that at a gateway point, end of a vista or key corner. Vertical greening can entail green walls, climbers and vertical growing plants with the choice being influenced by value for money in relation to the prominence of the location. High level greening opportunities should be explored for flat roofs with capacity for green or brown roofs.

This tapestry of greening also enhances biodiversity through the creation of new habitats, increased canopy cover and habitats for nesting birds and bats (utilising bat and bird boxes). Due to the relatively low biodiversity value across the town centre, there is an opportunity for a high uplift of both biodiversity, ecological connectivity and ecosystem services, through the inclusion of quality green infrastructure throughout any redevelopment. Collectively, the public realm proposals across the town centre should achieve the governments biodiversity net gain requirements.

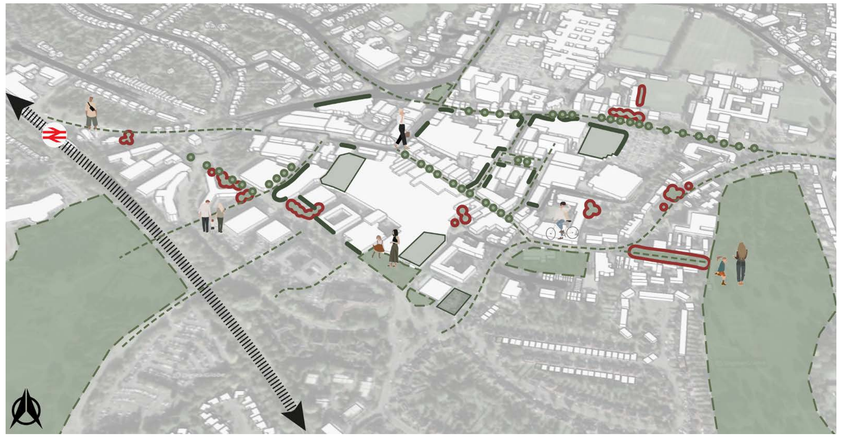

Figure 16 - Green Infrastructure

- Route Greening
- Potential for Vertical Greening
- Potential for Rooftop Greening
- Proposed Tree Planting
- Tree Protection Order
- Green Spaces


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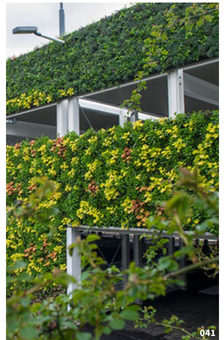
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Blue Infrastructure

For a sustainable and climate resilient town centre the introduction of nature-based solutions for surface water runoff is critical. High quality blue infrastructure within the public realm also contributes to the placemaking and green messaging for a future thinking town centre alongside the environmental quality and biodiversity gains.

The plan highlights opportunities for roadside SuDS features in the form of vegetated depression swales or rain gardens to key road corridors. Capacity for rain gardens within the more public spaces is also identified where a more formalised and visually interesting feature is desired. Rain gardens make a significant contribution to increasing biodiversity gains within the urban setting as well as bring a playful quality to the public realm. They can offering space activation through natural play features such as informal stepping-stones and mini bridges. They can also bring the water story to life in a tangible and accessible way, adding a dynamic aspect to the street-scene. Features such as these contribute to the user experience and family offer encouraging people to stay and play.

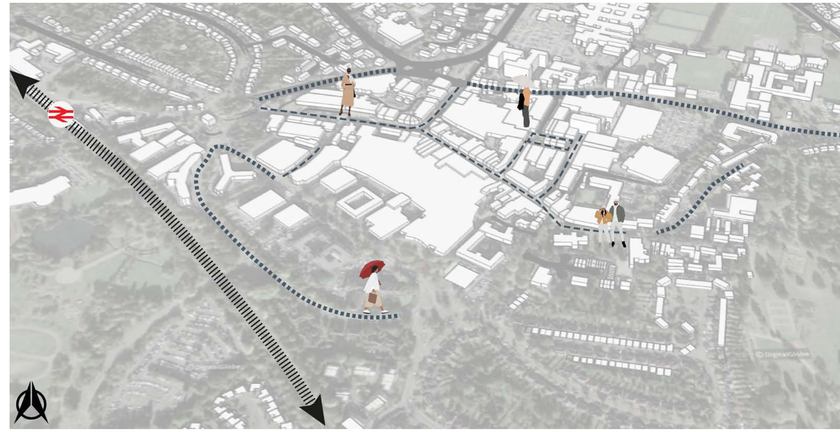

Figure 17 - Blue Infrastructure

- Proposed Highway Swales
- Proposed Street Rain Gardens


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Public Spaces & Activation

Active spaces include existing and future social spaces that have been identified across the town and include Mell Square, High Street, Jubilee Gardens, Theatre Square and Brueton Gardens. These existing and future spaces offer an important pedestrian environment within the town centre focussed on people, safety and places to dwell and spend time. These spaces offer the opportunity to become exciting, animated spaces, play spaces, with flexible multifunctional uses and areas to sit - for reflection, relaxation, entertainment, education, and outdoor working environments, and supported by the latest technology to enable Wi-Fi, charger points, and digital placemaking . Digital placemaking is the use of digital technology to support, enhance, or increase community engagement in public place. These technological approaches can include urban screens; interactive installations; augmented reality with location-based content; responsive lighting and projections. Digital placemaking uses digital technology and creative solutions to improve or enhance the public experience of place.

Existing spaces have been categorised in terms of experiences, activity and quality to help focus improvements on these people focused nodes and spaces. Interventions for these key spaces include animation, play and interaction, flexible spaces and pop-up events. There is also potential for 'tactical urbanism', type of space activation, illumination and natural surveillance, digital placemaking, Wi-Fi and real time information, artwork and signage.

The plan opposite shows the proposed interventions and experiences across the town centre for each of the active places and how each space will be enhanced through a series of temporary and permanent interventions.

Key interventions include:
• Urban greening and public spaces for improved health and well-being, rewilding and enriched biodiversity
• Experience walking lines and loops , based upon key arrival and orientation points, connections to key spaces, movement nodes and green links to increase footfall, encourage exercise and active, and promote space activation
• To reduce clutter, coordinate design and reinforce local character while maintaining safety and accessibility for all
• Connecting the virtual world through digital placemaking, town centre trails and new events and destinations• Improving and enhancing existing green spaces within the town centre to create flexible spaces and offering a range of activities and events throughout the year

In the table opposite, is a high-level programme for potential events and activities suited to the three key social spaces; High Street, Mell Square and Jubilee Gardens . Such a programme creates activation and creation of flexible public space, enhancing user experiences, encouraging social interactions and people to stay longer.

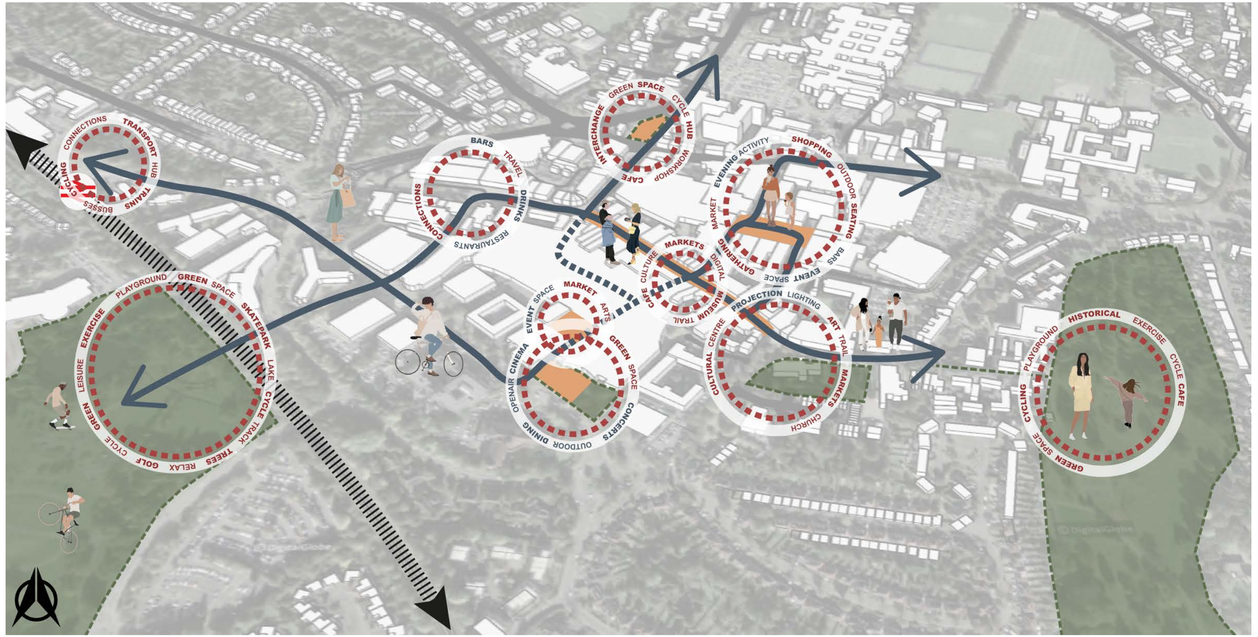
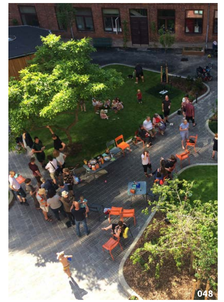


Figure 18 - Space Activation

Pedestrian Routes
Destinations
Green Space
Event Space

Space	Event typology	Suggested events
High Street	Bespoke seasonal markets, Smaller scale audiences Passing by interest	Craft markets Art exhibitions Single street performers/buskers Alfesco dining Small food units (in keeping with existing) Informal play
Mell Square	Large scale events Weekly markets with a larger footfall Intentional destination as well as passing by interest Larger scale audiences Free flow events, unticketed	Farmers markets Christmas events Big screen events (cinema / fan park) Digbeth dinning Music performances Art & design markets/festivals Group street performers/buskers Alfresco dining Art and tech-inspired community activities Outdoor gallery (ref Kings Cross) Oversized outdoor play (jenga/chess etc) Temporary wheeled sports events Drop in workshops (circus skills)
Jubilee Gardens	More controlled events, ticketed Smaller scale, more intimate Arts and cultural events associated with The Core theatre	Outdoor plays/ theatre Small scale music performances Outdoor workshops Arts festivals Outdoor gym/ yoga classes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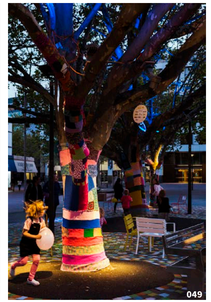
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Public Art & Placemaking

Public art is a vital component of successful placemaking, enhanced user experience and the creation of a unique town centre. It enhances the physical fabric of an area and can be an important component in improving the streetscape environment and animating public space. As an overarching theme, art can be delivered in a multitude of formats: experience trails, integrated into paving and street furniture, expressed through lighting and digital placemaking as well as more typical features such as sculptures. It can introduce symbolic meaning or beauty into functional objects and spaces. It can underpin a playable landscape, aid wayfinding and form part of the town's branding. The involvement of the community and expression of the local culture and heritage of Solihull is paramount to celebrating local distinctiveness and creating a sense of place that people can connect with.

An example of where public art is a device for creating a strong identity, legibility and branding within the public realm is the introduction of permanent high quality medium scale themed sculptures. Accessible and distinctive sculptures can form focal point features and assist with space activation and user experience. They can help form a playful landscape, celebrate Solihull's heritage and culture and become iconic elements of the town.

A potential option as a theme for sculpture could be the greyhound, for example. A running greyhound appears within several official and longstanding visual representations in Solihull. The greyhound is taken from arms of the Greswold family who built Malvern Hall and the Manor House in the High Street. It features in Solihull's Metropolitan Borough coat of arms and Solihull School's logo. The greyhound has a discreet association with the town and its history. It is neutral and uncontroversial and yet it is playful and sparks intrigue.

Figure x - Solihull Coat of Arms

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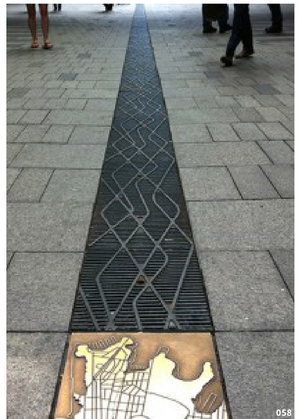
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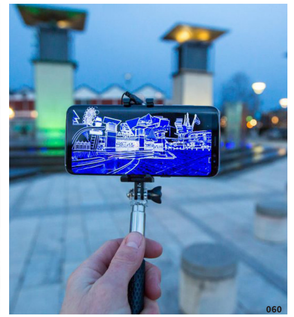
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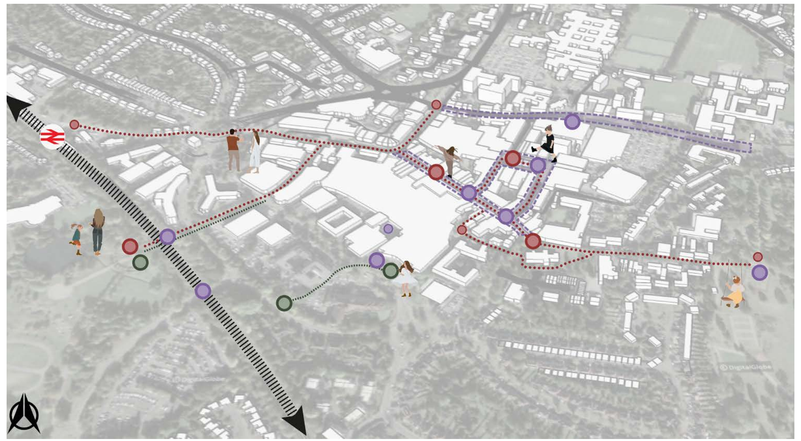

Figure 19 - Interactive Museum Trail & Play

Experience Trails & Play

Enhancing user experience and creation of playable landscapes can be achieved through themed experience trails within the public realm. These trails create space activation fostering intrigue and discovery, making the public realm a destination in its own right, and a reason to visit the centre. It helps diversify the centre's offer, makes for a more family friendly environment and broadens the visitor audience and their dwell times. For Solihull there is potential for experience trails related to heritage, play and nature and the plan opposite explores the opportunities for where they could feature.

Opportunities exist for a heritage experience trail expressed in the form of an open-air museum trail. It would focus on the historic streets and places within the town centre but also links to the key arrival points and gateways. Feature points create the opportunity to pause, reflect and discover different parts of Solihull's history and include opportunities for viewpoints and portholes, curiosity cabinets and artefacts, digital recordings and interaction pepper potted throughout the town centre.

Nature trails could be integrated within the green people focused spaces such as Jubilee Gardens and associated wildlife garden, and the green links of Tudor Grange Walk and Monkspath. These areas have capacity for accessible and diverse habitats for exploration and education opportunities through information boards, 'rubbing posts', story circles and grown willow tunnels.

Alongside nature trails, a playable landscape experience is further encouraged with feature points proposed on High Street, Mell Square, Jubilee Gardens and park gateways. They invite informal play through steppingstones within SuDs features, public art and accessible sculptures, interactive water features, dynamic lighting and illumination.

Wayfinding & Signage

Streets provide the network of routes for moving through and experiencing a town. On streets where the footways are congested by obstacles such as signs and guardrails, and vehicles begin to dominate, people concentrate less on their surroundings and so the environment is less enjoyable. Some towns are naturally easy to navigate by virtue of their typography and buildings/landmarks. Others are less legible and can be perceived as less friendly and attractive - particularly by new visitors.

The underlying principles of this aspect of the PRS is to reduce clutter, coordinate design and to reinforce local character, whilst maintaining safety and accessibility for all. The aim is to encourage linked trips that start at key arrival points and offer an experience around the town centre with numerous orientation points whilst celebrating landmarks and vistas, with the establishment of new frontages, green walls and informative signage and lighting embedded in the environment along with digital placemaking.

The plan opposite illustrates the importance of wayfinding and interpretation at gateways to the town centre, key nodes and along key routes. The purpose is to help create a legible town centre that is easy to navigate by all ages and abilities. This will be done through a combination of different types of lighting, consistent signage (as totems and within the paving), street and building name plates, digital placemaking trails and public art.

Signage should be delivered as a family of coordinated products appropriate to their position within the public realm. A high-level strategy for the signage hierarchy is illustrated in the plan. It is recommended that wayfinding specialists should be consulted to develop a detailed wayfinding strategy for Solihull, that incorporates public art and branding. As a starting point, destination totems with large maps should be used at destinations points and gateways, giving an overview of the centre to aid orientation and route planning. Narrower route totems are situated at key decision points along prominent routes that focus on the route in use. These are supported by a network of directional information signs such as finger posts, with distances and walking times, at key junction points to assist navigation.

Figure x - Example of suite of signage

Figure 20 - Wayfinding & Signage

- Routes
- Destination Totem
- Route Totem
- Directional Finger Post
- Gateways

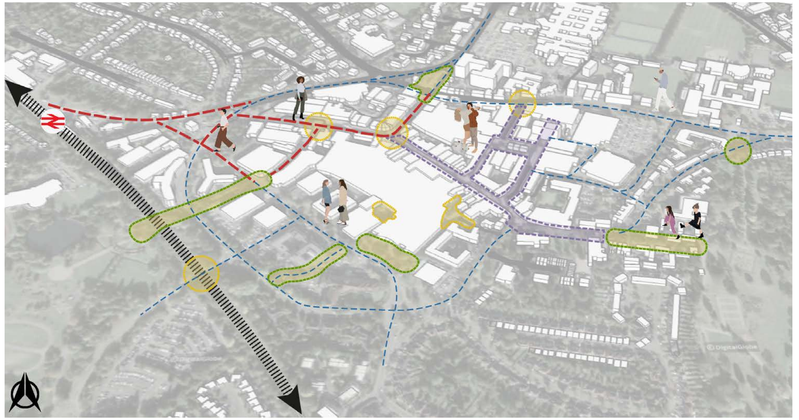

Figure 21 - Lighting

- Functional Lighting Improvements
- Feature Lighting Improvements
- Feature Lighting Zones
- Ecological Sensitive Lighting
- Enhanced Feature Lighting to Public Realm Core

HOARE LEA

Solihull Public Realm.
Solihull.
Arcadis.

SPECIALIST LIGHTING MASTERPLAN CONCEPT
REVISION 01

02 Strategy

Lighting

Lighting in the public realm has two main objectives: firstly, to provide a safe street network, and secondly to support street activity into the evening beyond the summer months. Functional lighting contributes to the safety of street users and enhances security and the perception of security. Feature lighting enhances and brings to life the mood of the town centre, highlighting key buildings or other special features or routes and aiding space activation.

Where functional lighting columns are necessary, they must be designed in scale with their setting. Key processional routes should also be designed to accept banners/ Christmas lights although removable banner arms should be specified. The layout and spacing of units should respond to the requirements of the street/space, both functionally and aesthetically, minimising street clutter whilst ensuring adequate levels of illumination. LED lighting should be prioritised for environmental and energy efficiency reasons. For the majority of street associated functional lighting, the lighting approach should complement the shift from a highways style to a more pedestrian and cycle friendly environment. As such, mounting heights should be kept to the minimum which still allows an efficient design with the intent of making the scale more human. Lighting should be positioned to enhance the visibility of the crossings for both safety and enhanced identification. The street greening that will be established can include feature lighting to trees, soft landscape and hard features to enhance the space.

Within the public spaces, to help achieve a clutter free environment, multifunctional lighting columns should be used where possible and incorporate elements such as wi-fi , CCTV, street vendor power outlets and additional feature lighting. They should also be positioned to ensure free access through the space and not create street clutter. Building mounted lighting should be minimised as much as possible but where architectural lighting is desired, effective building owner consultation, wayleaves and listed building consent (where relevant) will be required. The use of feature lighting such as that integrated in street furniture and soft landscaping, catenary style, interactive, dynamic, coloured and/ or projected patterns should be used within the public realm core and feature zones for space activation, navigation and legibility gains. Where feature lighting is installed, it will be necessary to determine the ownership and maintenance/energy responsibility.

The plan opposite illustrates the different lighting improvements and proposals across the town centre. It includes functional lighting improvements along connecting streets and feature lighting improvements along the main pedestrian friendly streets and spaces. It also identifies areas requiring ecological sensitive lighting, feature lighting zones at gateways, key nodes and interfaces, and areas of enhanced, more invested feature lighting to the public realm core. A lighting strategy for the town centre has been produced by Hoare Lea to supports this document. The light strategy provides more detail on lighting considerations such as safety, colour temperature, controls and connectivity as well as more technical criteria such as illumination requirements, light pollution and carbon reduction. It also sets out lighting principles for the eight focus areas in relation to both functional and feature lighting. These principles are discussed in more detail for each focus area within section 3 of this document.

Digital Infrastructure

Digital placemaking is the use of digital technology to support and increase community engagement in the public realm, deepening the relationship between people and place. Content is tailored specifically to the location by linking back to local art, culture and heritage, helping make public spaces more meaningful, attractive and distinctive. Digital placemaking uses innovative digital technology and creative solutions to improve or enhance the public experience of place.

Digital placemaking includes technological approaches such as urban screens; wi-fi; interactive installations; augmented reality with location-based content; responsive lighting and projections. The public realm needs to be supported by the latest technology to enable Wi-Fi, charger points, projection and digital placemaking interventions, and digital marketing. This infrastructure should be integrated within, but not exclusive to, social spaces within the town centre where people will dwell and spend time such as Mell Square, High Street, Jubilee Gardens, Theatre Square and Brueton Gardens. Digital infrastructure and placemaking adds to the flexibility of a space and its multifunctional uses from an outdoor working environment to an interactive, playable landscape. It has the capacity to extend activation times into the evening and increase dwell times.


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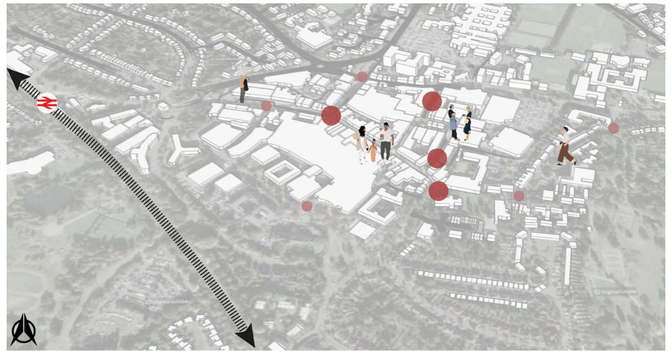
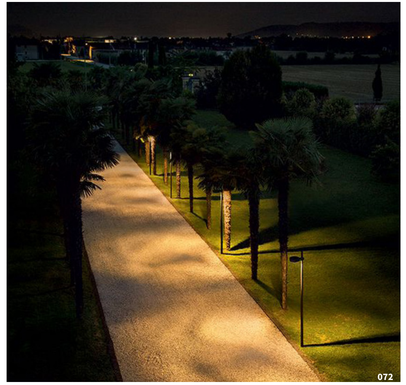


Figure 22 - Areas requiring HVM consideration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Safety & Security

A safe environment for users is key for a vibrant, inclusive and accessible public realm where people want to spend time and enjoy the town centre. This is achieved through natural surveillance, activation of space, CCTV and appropriate hostile vehicle mitigation (HVM) measures, where necessary, and applying the principles of Secure by Design. The evolution of safety and security measures will be in partnership with key stakeholders eg Police, to identify and review hot spot areas, HVM risk areas and antisocial behaviour areas.

Surveillance

By the nature of de-cluttering streets for a more simplistic and legible public realm, visibility and sightlines are also improved for both users and CCTV surveillance. Tree planting within the public realm should for the most part be in avenues, largely led by the linear nature of most of the public realm spaces, including the street corridors High Street, Mill Lane and Drury Lane. This arrangement of tree planting minimises conflicts with CCTV sightlines and improves desire line views for people moving along the streets and spaces.

Hostile Vehicle Mitigation Measures

Along with many other public realm design drivers, security issues should be considered from the outset to ensure that HVM measures are woven successfully into the fabric of new proposals. The design of the public realm must consider the application of HVM measures holistically, to ensure that the correct level of protection is provided without compromising the ability to create aesthetic and functional public spaces. It is important that our surroundings remain open and inclusive, and that the addition of physical security measures designed to protect us are integrated and proportionate to the assessed threat. HVM must be integral to public realm design, using features that add to the overall quality of the space, and not overt 'add-ons'. Elements within the public realm that can be adapted and developed to provide integrated HVM include public art, water, play, seating, street furniture, levels and walls if they are compliant with standards PAS 68 or IWA 14. Diversity of public realm equals opportunities for integrated HVM. The plan opposite identifies areas within Solihull's town centre that will require HMV measures and consideration.

Emergency access

To maintain emergency and maintenance access to the pedestrianised zone of High Street, Mell Square, Mill Lane and Drury Lane, there are currently five points of access via locked gates. The access point at the eastern end of High Street that feeds into 'The Square' is underutilised and thus due to be removed. This removal will enhance the quality of 'The Square', the area of highest heritage significance, enabling de-cluttering and freer movement of people at this narrow pinch point and improve views of the Church. Appropriate HVM measures must be in place but achieved through integrated features of the public realm with suitable positioning and specification of the public realm elements. As part of the public realm upgrades it is recommended that the remaining four access points be controlled by HMV compliant automated rising bollards in a style in keeping with the street furniture palette.

02 Design Guidance

This section of the PRS outlines best practice design guidance for the design and aftercare of the public realm. The overriding aim is to achieve a clean, unobstructed pedestrian friendly environment. Good public realm design is about good design 'manners', including the treatment of the towns surfacing, its layout and integration of public realm components.


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Streets & Their Layout

Streets, as defined by the carriageway (road) and footway (pavement), provides clarity in a streetscape by defining zones of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. In general, the proportional relationship between these zones should be reinforced with the correct use of surface materials, edging and other components.

In any streetscape environment there will be minimum and desired levels of space allocated to a street cross section. An informed judgement must be made over the relative 'link' and 'place' status of the street segment as a basis for deciding how much of the space is allocated to each street user.

Traffic management devices such as kerb build outs, splitter islands and staggered pedestrian crossings often fragment and complicate the street-scene. Several factors are important in the layout of the street:

Carriageway Width
The width of the road surface, along with a range of other psychological and perception-based techniques play a strong part in influencing driver behaviour. Reducing the carriageway width is understood to be an effective way of reducing driving speed and in turn improving pedestrian comfort and safety.

Corner Radii
Streets that are designed to accommodate large vehicular swept paths reduce footway widths and endanger pedestrians and cyclists through the encouragement of faster vehicle speeds. Designing corner radii to be small reduces traffic speeds and improves safety and movement, particularly for the more vulnerable users. Larger vehicles can be usually accommodated within the overall geometry of the carriageway and not just within the lane markings. Corners should be reinforced to prevent damage during misuse.

Kerb Upstands & Level Surfaces
The vertical design of the highway - and the relationship between the carriageway and footway - can make a significant contribution in influencing traffic speed, pedestrian safety, and the quality of the street environment. The manipulation of traditional street elements has become more popular over the last decade as part of a new approach to urban design, traffic engineering and road safety. Lower kerb heights are easier for pedestrians to negotiate and reduce the degree of segregation. Research carried out by Guide Dogs for the Blind indicated a 60mm height was generally acceptable to all cane users, with most detecting a 50mm height.

It should be highlighted that the design of level surface schemes can create difficulties for visually impaired users yet create significant benefits for mobility impaired users - so there is an inevitable compromise between the needs of various street users. To assist clear visual definition of curbs, it is often appropriate to use different colours that differentiate kerbs from the gutters. Level surface schemes are better when there is a clearly defined area that is totally free from vehicles. In addition, the success of such an approach is likely to be achieved if vehicle flows and speeds are low, and the design is considered holistically considering both infrastructure and user defined behaviour.


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Carriageways

The carriageway is usually the predominant element in a street-scene and makes an important contribution to the quality and appearance of the street. The choice of surfacing has a significant effect on perceived user priorities but must be based on a balanced judgement between the existing/intended quality of the street as well as its traffic status. Like footways, carriageways should be kept as a neutral canvas complementing the streetscape. Carriageway specification should consider cost-effectiveness, noise reduction, skid resistance, durability and porosity.

In some circumstances where pedestrian priority governs, it may be appropriate to raise some pedestrian streets to pavement level to create a level surface environment with the carriageway laid with granite setts and 'footways' defined by flush channels.

Coloured Surfaces - Coloured surfaces in the carriageway are often proposed to aid parking enforcement or help define bus lanes, bus stops and cycle lanes. These surfaces can be visually intrusive, especially in historically sensitive areas where they can detract from the overall appearance of the street-scene. They can also create a maintenance liability especially when they become oil stained and when utilities fail to re-instate them properly to specification. Coloured surface treatments should be used sparingly to aid enforcement at traffic management thresholds, to help define bus stops or lanes with outline markings or to define advanced stop areas for cyclists. Anti-skid surfacing can be sourced in colours and finishes other than red or buff. Therefore, it is recommended that dark grey/black (Guyana Bauxite) should be used within the town centre to minimise visual clutter.

Yellow lines & road-markings - Yellow lines are a control measure to prevent parking in inappropriate areas and are a standard measure known to achieve compliance. However, their use can detract from the built form, especially in conservation areas and pedestrian streets.

Alternative means of parking zone enforcement should always be explored in sensitive urban environments using controlled zones, restricted zones and historic core zones – which are all acceptable means of reducing visual clutter. Careful use of the Traffic Signs Manual can indicate how reduced sign clutter can be achieved. Where necessary, to control parking in the town centre the sensitive use of yellow lines should be specified, irrespective of whether the street is situated in a Conservation Area or not. Lines should be primrose yellow and 50mm wide.

As a general principle the extent of road markings should be kept to the minimum and only used to ensure safety and achieve compliance with traffic regulations. Careful alteration or reduction can create psychological benefits in speed reduction and safety. This can include removing the centre line or creating visual narrowing to create pinch points.

Yellow boxed areas can look unsightly in sensitive historic environments and consideration should be given to using advisory 'KEEP CLEAR' white text marking where legal enforcement is not necessary.

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02 Design Guidance

Footways

Achieving a respectful neutral backdrop for adjacent buildings is the overriding objective of material specification within the footway. Traditional large rectangular paving slabs, or 'flags' are often more visually appealing than smaller unit sizes but are generally more susceptible to cracking under vehicular loading. However, a re-enforced concrete sub-base can minimise the risk of flag damage.

Natural stone flags should be laid stretcher bond at right angles to the direction of travel (using a minimum 75mm stagger). The introduction of corner paving fan details is to be encouraged but they do require a high standard of workmanship and may not always be feasible.

Tactile Paving
Tactile paving provides warning, guidance and information to assist blind and partially sighted people negotiate potential hazards as they move through the urban environment. The Department for Transport's 'Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving, 2022' provides clear guidance on the use of tactile paving.

Excessive use of tactile surfaces where advice and recommendations contained within the national guidance are not followed can result in user confusion and potentially disadvantage a wider user group. In addition, historic areas are more sensitive to the colour and type of tactile paving typically available. However, a sensitive interpretation of the guidance is possible to incorporate both human and environmental needs. Using an alternative light/dark contrast for tactile paving in combination with the change of surface texture is often preferable and permitted within sensitive environments.

To provide uniformity across the town centre the following rules should be applied. The choice of granite or PCC should be considered to suit the context, budget and the overall paving palette.
- Controlled crossings blister tactile – Purple-Red granite or Red PCC
- Uncontrolled crossings blister tactile – Charcoal grey granite or Charcoal PCC
- Hazard warning corduroy - Charcoal grey granite or Charcoal PCC

Stainless steel or brass studs are not recommended due to their high initial cost and demands on maintenance. It has also been reported that studs can create a slipping risk to pedestrians.


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Inspection Covers
Inspection covers, chambers and stop taps etc are commonplace within the footway. Most of these items are owned by utility companies. However, a small proportion may be owned by the local authority relating to traffic signals, drainage and CCTV. Often the utilitarian nature of inspection covers can detract from otherwise attractive surroundings, although conversely some iron work can add interest in the pavement.

Where possible, all utility covers should be recessed to incorporate the surrounding paving material and aligned in the direction of the paving bond. Close cooperation is required with the utility companies to specify unit/weight restrictions and agree future maintenance. Recessed covers should always be used in areas of tactile paving.

Side Street Treatment
When a side street joins a main street, it should be made possible, in so far as practical, for pedestrians to cross the side street without deviating from the desire line. Pedestrians should be able to cross on this line (and often do so regardless of design intention) and junctions should be designed so that they are safe and accessible to all user groups without the need of unsightly pedestrian guard-railing. An appropriate dropped kerb with tactile surface should be installed following the building line where possible, away from the junction mouth.

The introduction of a raised pedestrian crossing with a change of carriageway material can also improve the continuity of the floor-scape creating a more unified pavement surface and safer more accessible crossing point. In this instance, a full kerb height should define the kerb radius with a tactile surface covering the flush crossing area.

Kerbs & Channels
Kerbs and channels are significant visual elements in the streetscape unifying the palette of surface material, delineating the boundary to the carriageway, and providing an effective means to channel surface water. Kerbs of a different colour to the gutter also provide an important visual guide for the blind and partially sighted in the absence of a clear building line.

Silver grey granite kerbs 300mm wide are suggested to be used throughout the core area for their traditional relevance and simple robust nature. The kerb face will be typically 120mm delineating the carriageway; however, this may be reduced to 60mm in areas of high pedestrian footfall where traffic flows and speeds are very low dependent on the context.

A complementary 300mm wide channel of setts will also be used on most street types to replicate traditional detailing and street character across side road junctions, entrances, and parking bays . This commonality of materials and dimensions provides visual continuity.

Footway Drainage
Effective pavement drainage is essential for the comfort of all users. Footways typically drain into the carriageway drainage systems by virtue of their gradient. Where the footway falls towards the building line pavement drainage will be necessary by means of a linear drain or flush channel and gully arrangement. However, there is also often a desire to guide rainwater from down-pipes across (or in some cases underneath) the pavement in some form of controlled fashion. Each situation should be considered on its own merits.

In level surface or pedestrianised environments more sophisticated footway drainage may be necessary to ensure a simple uncluttered pavement. This may involve the careful manipulation of levels along with the coordination of drainage channels and/or the use of integrated SuDS or rain gardens.

Typically slot drains and steel grid linear drains should be laid perpendicular to the dominant line of pedestrian movement and be sufficiently narrow to avoid hazard to wheelchairs and prams/buggies.

At Grade Pedestrian Crossings
The creation of a successful walkable town is very much concerned with the clarity and ease of movement afforded to pedestrians. Safe pedestrian crossings that reflect 'true' natural desire lines play an important role in stitching together the public realm to help create a legible network of streets and spaces.

'Grade separation', as a solution to the traffic/pedestrian interface (through underpasses and pedestrians bridges) has proven to be impractical, costly, and detrimental in securing an accessible and safe public realm. This approach is generally not supported as a means of crossing the carriageway unless considered within a wider comprehensive context.

At grade crossings provide the best balance of user requirements. These can be 'controlled' (Zebra, Pelican, Puffin, Tucan) or 'uncontrolled' where pedestrians must navigate their own safe crossing.

Courtesy Crossings – embody the concepts associated with the European shared space approach, whereby the physical design of the streetscape is designed in such a way to self-enforce slower driving speeds. Courtesy crossings can reduce street clutter and improve the environment for pedestrians without reducing safety.


085

02 Design Guidance

Street Furniture

Street furniture is commonplace in the public realm. However, the uncoordinated spread of inappropriate street furniture can have a negative effect on the quality of the public realm and create unnecessary barriers for pedestrians, particularly for wheelchair users and people with mobility and visual impairment. Over provision of traffic signs and other traffic management paraphernalia, contributes to 'street clutter' - damaging sensitive urban environments.

Street furniture should be used to strengthen the identity of a place. In addition, a limited range can bring continuity and legibility to the urban street scene. In general, street furniture should be fashion neutral – well designed, long lasting, in muted colours and easily distinguishable from surrounding surfaces.

Street furniture should also be used sparingly, as too much fixed street furniture clutters the view and can impede movement. Furniture needs to be easily detectable by the visually impaired by good colour/tonal contrast.

This section provides guidance on street furniture components. The coverage is not exhaustive but provides clear commentary on those elements that make a significant contribution to the streetscape.

Siting/Zoning

Street furniture such as seats, lighting, trees and signage should be carefully coordinated to avoid unnecessary cluttering of the public realm. Pedestrian desire lines should always be respected, and consideration should be given to the interface of vehicular traffic and pedestrians with particular care for those with visual and physical impairments.

Zoning the footway helps to order the arrangement of street furniture to create a logical and harmonious streetscape that aids pedestrian/vehicular movement. In narrow footway situations a kerb zone and an absolute minimum clear footway of 1.5m should be accommodated.

A similar approach should be applied to the siting and zoning of street furniture within squares and spaces with a simple logical structure to allow for unimpeded movement between desire lines. Usually, the design of spaces offers flexibility for the siting of street furniture, particularly seating in terms of social interaction.

Any new or upgraded project should exploit opportunities for multi-purpose street furniture (i.e., signal heads on lighting columns) and building fixing (lighting, signage & CCTV – although owners' consents and 'wayleave' agreements may be required).

Seating

Seats are important pieces of furniture in the public realm as they provide resting places for pedestrians and provide places where people can enjoy the view or interact socially. Seats should be designed to combine design aesthetics, comfort for all users, ease of maintenance and resistance to vandalism.

A variety of seating types and configurations can be used in order to respond to expected usage and context. Incidental seating (where seating is intended for short periods) can take the form of natural stone blocks or with slight modification, be incorporated within other streetscape elements such as bollards and walls – this can be beneficial where paving is narrow or where a simple clutter free design is preferred. Benches (without backs) are useful in situations where people may want to sit in either direction.

In general backs and armrests should be provided on seats to provide a comfortable and inviting resting place and to assist less-mobile people. Arm rests may be omitted from one end of the seat to allow better access for wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs. Timber (from Forestry Stewardship Council approved sources) is the preferred seating material where people are expected to sit for longer periods of time.

Careful consideration needs to be given when concerns of anti-social behaviour are raised. The removal of seating for these reasons alone should be seen as the last resort. Skateboards, bikes, and rollerblades (grinding the edge of seats) can be a real problem in streets and public space. Whilst the retrofitting of steel studs or bands is a direct and functional solution to the problem a more holistic approach of floor-scape treatment and designed-in furniture deterrents should be considered in the first instance.

Guardrails

Pedestrian guardrails provide a means of discouraging pedestrians from entering the carriageway by channelling them to a safer section of road where they can cross. But they also present significant disadvantages: pedestrian guard-railing narrows the footway by 450mm, prevent pedestrians crossing along desire lines, reduces inter-visibility between motorists and vulnerable users and endangers people who decide to jump over or go round them. Furthermore, they imply that vehicles have priority which leads to higher speeds and presents an increased risk to cyclists.

Their use should be discretionary not compulsory. In principle, as a starting point no guardrail should be present in the street-scene. Quality audits (including a road safety audit) as defined by Manual for Streets should be used to establish need. An 'evidence based' approach will ensure that guardrails are used only where there is a specific risk to pedestrian safety.

Vehicular Control Barriers

Solihull has adopted several unsightly vehicular gates around the town to aid traffic management. These utilitarian structures detract from the street-scene and should ideally be replaced with either retractable bollards or an enhanced barrier design incorporating chunky timber posts.


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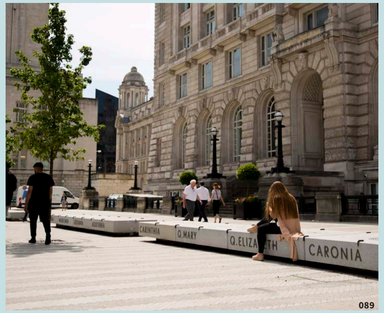

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Bollards

Bollards are used to physically separate pedestrians and vehicular space. Their use can control over-running and vehicular access or deter parking and damage to footways, street furniture and structures. However, their overuse can create visual clutter, narrow the available footway and pose unnecessary hazards for people with mobility and visual impairments.

Bollards should only be used where there is no alternative means of keeping vehicles off the footway. If vehicles are known to mount the footway on rare occasions, pavement re-enforcement is an acceptable solution to prevent surface damage.

Where bollards must be provided, they should be specified in a manner that is consistent with the prevailing streetscape character. The most appropriate bollard design is timber for its heritage feel and cost effectiveness. A steel cap can be introduced to add visual appeal and functional protection of the upper face to weathering. Away from the historic core a more traditional (but simple) steel bollard will be more appropriate.

Bollards should be 1000mm high and contrast with the surrounding surfaces and incorporate a contrasting band placed near to the top if tonal contrast is poor.


090

Cycle Parking Facilities

The provision of secure cycle parking is vital to encourage cycling in the city and to ensure that streets are accessible to all. Their placement must be based on a strategic understanding of provision and siting. Stands should be clustered in areas off the footway clear zone but have natural surveillance and good lighting. Small groups of stands spread around an area are preferable to a large cycle park. Poorly designed cycle parking can be a hazard to pedestrians. Cycle stands should be aligned with other street furniture and not cause an obstruction to pedestrian desire lines. Stainless steel should be avoided due to its poor visibility for those with visual impairments, best practice is to specify a through-colour polyurethane over painted steel for robustness and longevity.

If located near a physical barrier, such as a wall, a minimum spacing of 300mm for single use and 900mm for double use cycle parking is required. Cycle stands should be set at 45 or 90 degrees to the prevailing movement of travel with a minimum spacing of 1000mm (preferably 1200mm). Contrasting visibility bands will be necessary where visual contrast is poor.


091

02 Design Guidance

Trees & Planting
Planting in the public realm provides multiple benefits: it can introduce colour, improve the micro-climate and improve air quality, provide shade and shelter, remind us of the seasons and provide valuable homes for urban wildlife. The most fundamental consideration with planting is a commitment to management and maintenance - particularly during the early years of establishment. Without such care and support, planting should not be undertaken.

Trees are an integral component of the urban landscape and its architecture. They contribute to local character and create 'soft' structure to help define space. The success of new tree planting depends upon an understanding of the individual tree's requirements.

A number of factors need to be considered:
• Species – the right tree for the right place
• Existing underground conditions, particularly the degree of compaction and overlying soil type.
• The location of services (underground/overhead)
• CCTV locations – because trees can obscure sightlines
• Vehicular sightlines at junctions
• Spatial requirements and root habit of the specified tree – including the proximity to boundaries, kerb lines and other street furniture
• Drainage
• The character and appearance of the Conservation Area; recognising that some streets were traditionally 'hard' spaces lacking greenery, whereas in other locations street trees have historically been an integral characteristic of the space.
• The setting of listed buildings, key unlisted buildings and important views and vistas

Street trees suffer a wide range of environmental pressures; the most significant problem being the scarce quantity of usable soil for root growth. In urban areas, soils are often compacted and covered by impermeable pavements; so, the soil has few voids. Roots cannot penetrate highly compacted soil and will not grow in soil that lacks air and water. The presence of soil volume is important to enable larger and healthier trees in towns and cities. Published research recommendations range from a minimum of 11m3 to more than 29m3 per tree. (Urban, 2008).

The promotion of SuDS features to manage surface water, including rain gardens, swales and sponge parks should be encouraged where appropriate across the town centre.

092


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Lighting
Lighting in the public realm has an important role to play both functionally and aesthetically. There are two aspects to lighting in the public realm: feature lighting and street lighting. Functional street lighting contributes to the safety of street users and enhances security and the perception of security. Feature lighting enhances and brings to life the public realm, highlighting key buildings or other special features or routes.

Feature Lighting – Lighting is recognised as an important component in creating a successful town centre, particularly in stimulating an evening economy. Feature lighting strategy can highlight important buildings and features in a simple and effective way. The use of modern LEDs and non-directional mood lighting offer enormous creative opportunities.

Street Lighting - Where lighting columns are necessary, they must be designed in scale with their setting and have sufficient strength (in column design and foundation) to accommodate traffic signs or signal heads where appropriate. Key processional routes should also be designed to accept banners/Christmas lights although removable banner arms should be specified. The layout and spacing of units should respond to the requirements of the street/space, both functionally and aesthetically, minimising street clutter whilst ensuring adequate levels of illumination.

Building mounted lighting should be encouraged along pedestrian lanes or retail streets, where streets are narrow, and columns would create a pedestrian obstacle on the pavements or shared surfaces. Opportunities to accommodate lighting from buildings in other areas will help to reduce street clutter. Effective building owner consultation, wayleaves, and listed building consent (where relevant) will be required.

The use of decorative lighting and non-directional lighting are mostly suitable in pedestrian areas off the highway as part of an integrated public realm design. However, feature lighting can also be used in the highway with spectacular results to demarcate gateways and other thresholds/landmarks. Attention must be paid to the potential safety risk through driver distraction. Where feature lighting is installed, it will be necessary to determine the ownership and maintenance/energy responsibility.


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02 Design Guidance

Signage
A good urban environment will provide a legible streetscape in which there is little need for directional signage. Most townscapes require some form of information or signage to assist clear wayfinding.

At a pedestrian level we are concerned with information and interpretation as well as directional signage. Often of a bespoke nature, a wayfinding strategy and graphic communication system can contribute significantly to the quality and enjoyment of the public realm.

Traffic signs by contrast are strictly regulated and deal with directional and highway information as well as warning of potential hazards. However, over time, traffic signs have become excessive and sometimes unnecessary, creating streetscapes that are confused and cluttered.

Directional Signage - For people visiting a city/town, clear directional signage is vital. Good pedestrian signage is a prerequisite for a welcoming, inclusive urban environment. A consistency of approach is important to ensure the continuation of a wayfinding concept.

Traffic Signs - Traffic signs have three separate functions - directional, warning and regulatory. The highways authority sets out the statutory requirements but working within these regulations there is scope for reducing the subsequent visual clutter by rationalisation and removal, combining signs and utilising street furniture.

The principal legal element of the traffic sign is the sign face itself. Its mounting and style can be changed within reason to best suit its locality or context so there is no fixed requirement for high level steel mounted signage. Alternative options include timber, stainless steel and stone pillars (doubling as gateway features). Building fixing should always be explored wherever possible.

Regulations require some signs to be directly lit at night where they are in areas of street lighting. Internally lit signs provide the best performance although special authorisation can be obtained for the use of super-reflectorised signs without the need for luminaries. This approach can create energy cost benefits across an area.

Street Name Plates - Street name plates are an essential aid to both pedestrian and vehicular navigation. Consistency of design materials and lettering is required across the town centre. To minimise clutter, wherever possible street names should be secured to adjacent buildings (with their consent and wayleaves) at 2400-3000mm in height and placed at street corners.

Traditional cast iron signs should be retained and restored where possible.

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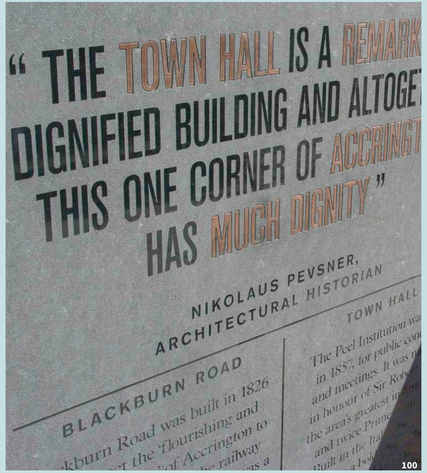
Traffic Signals & Control Boxes
Traffic signals and their controller cabinets are very prominent elements in the street. A proliferation of traffic signals and poles can add unnecessary clutter and controller cabinets can, if incorrectly sited, create obstructions in the footway.

Design teams should ensure that junctions and crossings conform to current best practice in relation to urban design, accessibility, signal design and equipment technology. Opportunities to mount signal heads on lighting columns should always be explored to reduce street clutter.

Traffic signal controller cabinets should be sited to allow unimpeded use of the footway, especially those in wheelchairs or pushing prams. Cabinets must be positioned to allow the signal heads to be visible from the control cabinet for maintenance purposes. Ideally all control boxes should be located at the back of footway.



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Management & Maintenance

Having invested significant capital resources in well-designed schemes, materials, and good workmanship, it is essential that correct and timely maintenance is carried out to sustain a safe, high quality public realm.

All areas of public realm shall be designed for practical and easy maintenance. There are usually a variety of maintenance issues that must be considered at the design stage of each project and early dialogue with those who will undertake the maintenance is vital to the success of any scheme particularly where there are departures form the standard palette of materials and furniture.

Typically paving of natural stone should give a design life in excess of 40yrs. However, it is sometimes appropriate to use cheaper concrete-based materials which usually requires more frequent remedial work and re-paving. Lighting and street furniture items have shorter life expectancy than paving, and it is anticipated they will be changed with more frequency due to wear and tear and changes in fashion and technology. Designs should therefore allow for adaptability in use over time - particularly in spaces that will host events, markets etc. - to prevent the need for replacement when materials are still within their design life.

Maintenance budgets are typically a mixture of obligations collected from developers within the town as well as existing council annual maintenance budgets (predominately highways focused). It must be accepted that a step change in the quality of public realm needs to be matched by an enhanced commitment to management and maintenance.

A stock of spare materials should always be provided at the completion of each phase of works for storage by the council or other partners to be used to repair or replace damaged areas of paving or items of street furniture or lighting. A town centre manager (or delegated public realm officer) should oversee the storage and use of materials in the maintenance of the town centre to ensure all repairs are carried out immediately and to a high standard as set out in the O&M manual. Typically, an allowance of circa 5% should be considered for additional materials being purchased and set aside.

It is recommended that the overall responsibility for the long-term management of the town lies with a dedicated town centre manager (TCM). The TCM would work in partnership with stakeholders and the community (and Solihull BID team) ensuring all relevant and beneficial by-laws, planning conditions and legal requirements are observed and upheld.

Responsibilities
Local Authority - Highway's maintenance lies with Solihull Council, who is responsible for ensuring that the carriageway, footway, and some public spaces are maintained for the safety and comfort of all users. All maintenance regimes and schedules will be in in accordance with Solihull Council's Highway Maintenance Plan (2019), along with the specification of major structural components.

Utility Companies - Utility companies on occasion are required to maintain, repair, and install additional underground apparatus within public spaces. The Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in the Highways (2020) is the statutory code of practice outlining the quality expected for the reinstatement of these spaces to ensure they do not shorten their life expectancy or create unsafe or uneven surfaces. The local authority has a duty to inspect these works and can provide specialist material to the Utility Company to ensure materials match. Where inspection shows sub-standard materials and workmanship, a defect charge may be levied, requiring the reinstatement work to be re-done.

As already stated, there are usually several maintenance issues that must be considered at the design stage of each public realm project, particularly where there are departures from the standard palette of materials and furniture. The following is not an exhaustive list of issues to consider:

- **Paving** – Must be fit for purpose, easily cleaned and detailed to allow for ease of repair.
- **Furniture** – Must be sited where it can be serviced and cleaned around. Where vehicle access is required (bins, lamp columns), the paving leading up to it must be capable of carrying the vehicular weight.
- **Tree planting** – Thought must be given to the eventual size of the tree, its maintenance requirements (watering, pruning), vehicular access, seasonal impacts (including leaves on pavements, drips from canopies onto bus stops etc). Trees adjacent to the highway will have a minimum clear stem of 2.5m.
- **SuDS** - The siting and design of SuDS within public spaces must consider safety and maintenance issues. This includes specific design requirements such as soil types, drainage material and overflow, and incorporating inspection points which are easy to access. Plants must be chosen for their eventual size and maintenance requirements.
- **Planters** – Where planters are used, consideration must be given to maintenance access and the impact of vehicles leading up to them. It is also important that planters don't 'leak' onto the pavement when watered.
- **Lighting** – When specifying bespoke lighting, consideration must be given to the long-term maintenance using common components and replacement fittings.
- **Water** – Siting and design of features must consider safety, public health and maintenance issues, including access, overspill/spray and proximity to electrical sources.

Design Reviews
An effective public realm design process, as shown in Local Transport Note 1/08, can have a significant influence on the ease of ongoing maintenance, management and monitoring of the public realm. All public realm projects should be the subject of design review at relevant stages in their development – concept, outline, and detailed design.

The design review should consider a series of discrete pieces of advice, including a Road Safety Audit (RSA) and give due consideration within the design process throughout the life of the project.

The type and extent of studies required will vary according to each project but should always include a street audit of the existing condition to inform the design. Other audit/studies may include visual quality, community street audit, access audit, cycle audit, risk assessment or place-check for example. Further information is available in English Heritage's publication Streets for All. No one form of assessment takes precedent and a balanced and informed approach is required to achieve high quality public realm that is attractive, functional, and safe.

02 Palettes

Palette of Materials

In recognising the town's conservation area status natural stone has been selected as the preferred material within the town centre core for its traditional relevance, its robustness in serving these functions and its value for money over its design lifetime. However, some economic reality has been applied meaning there is a range of cost options reflecting street hierarchy and location. The PRS outlines three main paving palettes:

GOLD
Sandstone/porphyry - Fine grained hard sandstone with porphyry used as paving highlights and to demarcate key spaces.

SILVER
High quality concrete (exposed aggregates to top face) in warm buffs and greys to complement the core palette. Warm grey/buff granite used for feature areas.

BRONZE
Standard buff/grey concrete (dependent on context) small unit flag/block with decorative aggregate asphalt.

Where streets are to be renewed or maintained a 300mm wide punched granite kerb and granite setts channel are the key ingredient to provide continuity across the public realm. Where level surface schemes are proposed a minimum punched granite channel shall be used with appropriate tactile surfacing. Wherever possible, the use of reclaimed kerbs and setts should be considered to encourage a sustainable approach to material supply and specification.

Adherence to the defined palettes will create a consistent approach to public realm across the town centre. Additional materials may be appropriate within squares and public open spaces and will be considered within the context of individual designs.

It should be noted that a wide variety of sandstone is available from the market, both indigenous and imported, which offer extremely varied technical and visual properties. Some imported sandstones for example are greatly inferior to the traditional Lancastrian Yorkstone and are a poor match when undertaking repairs or when tying into existing surfacing. However, very good and cost effective imported sandstones are also available, but good specification, approval and supervision are vital. As such, all newly specified stone must be fine grained hard sandstone – typically of the Upper Carboniferous (coal measures) geology and to the approval of Solihull Council.

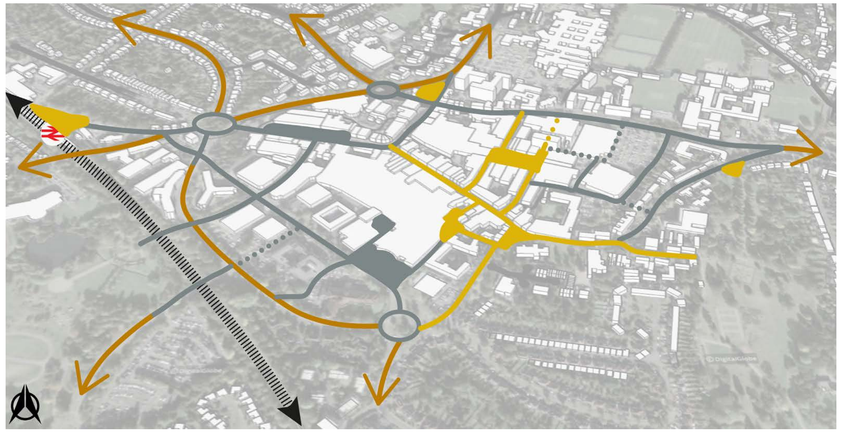


Figure 23 - Palette Treatments

Gold Palette
Silver Palette
Bronze Palette

02 Palettes

Core Palette - Gold

This palette of materials will be used within the central pedestrian zones of Solihull, including High Street and Mell Square along with key connecting streets to this area. The predominant material will be sandstone flags and porphyry setts in neutral mixed shades of buff, brown, orange and purple will be the main material used, along with sandstone paving. Wide top silver-grey textured granite will be used for the kerbs and drainage channels.

Material	Attributes	Location
Hard Sandstone (Upper Carboniferous)	Natural - greys & buffs	Footways
Porphyry	Setts in buff, brown, orange & purple	Feature areas
Granite	Silver-grey punch textured	Kerbs & channels
Resin Bonded Gravel	Buff	Park link

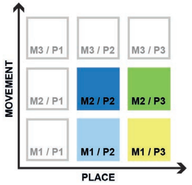
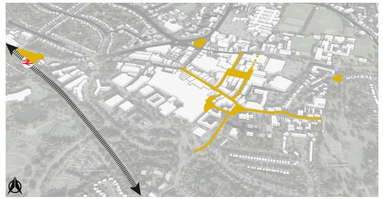


Diagram highlighting which street and space typologies the gold palette applies to. Refer to page 46-47 for more details on street and space typologies.

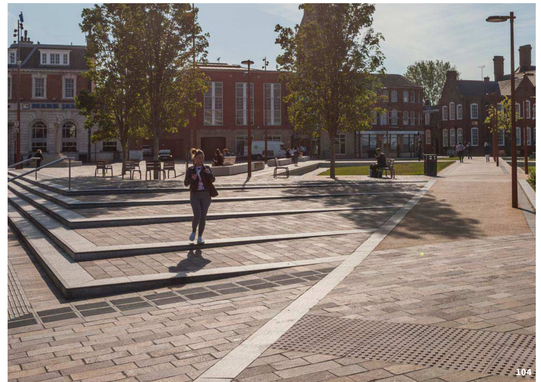


Sandstone paving

Porphyry setts in mixed shades

Sandstone blocks

Jubilee Square, Leicester



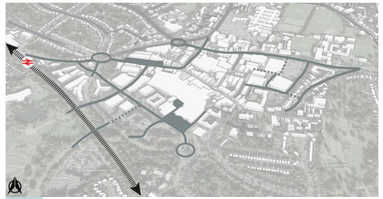
02 Palettes

Sub-Core Palette - Silver

The secondary pedestrian-focused streets and spaces will consist of a simple palette of high-quality exposed top face concrete in warm buffs and greys, complemented by granite paving to feature areas. Key public spaces including Jubilee Gardens and Theatre Square, along with vehicular junctions, and pedestrian gateways and nodes will use this palette. Wide top silver-grey textured granite will be used for the kerbs and channels.

Material	Attributes	Location
Concrete	High quality aggregates to top face, warm buffs & greys	Footways
Granite	Warm buffs & greys	Feature areas
Asphalt	Decorative aggregate/coloured	Carriageway
Granite	Silver-grey punch textured	Kerbs & channels

Diagram highlighting which street and space typologies the silver palette applies to. Refer to page 46-47 for more details on street and space typologies.



Granite aggregate concrete paving

Granite aggregate concrete paving

Silver grey textured granite kerbs

Station Road, Solihull

02 Palettes

Secondary Palette - Bronze

The main movement and connection routes around the town centre (Lode Lane and Prince's Way) as well as key connector routes leading into the urban greenway loop will consist of a standard buff/grey concrete flag or block. The palette is purposefully functional but cost effective and easy to maintain. Wide top silver-grey textured granite kerbs will be encouraged to create continuity in the arrival experience.

Material	Attributes	Location
Concrete	Pressed concrete flag & setts. Warm buffs & greys	Footways
Granite	Textured, silver-grey	Kerbs & channels
Asphalt	Black	Carriageways

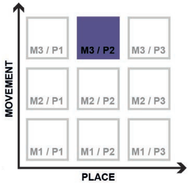
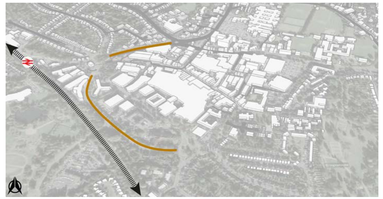
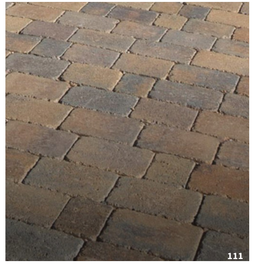


Diagram highlighting which street and space typologies the bronze palette applies to. Refer to page 46-47 for more details on street and space typologies.





Buff Coloured Tegula Paving

Asphalt

Buff concrete paving

Buff Flags

02 Street Furniture

Street furniture plays an important role in strengthening Solihull's place identity. Whilst it is accepted that an over-provision of street furniture - particularity where it is uncoordinated and utilitarian - creates visual clutter and can impede free movement, a simple holistic approach can help create elegant and inspiring people focused places and spaces.

The approach to Solihull's street furniture suite is two-fold – in the core area (corresponding GOLD paving palette) an enhanced palette is proposed that seeks to utilise robust materials with simple styling to create a unique craft inspired visual vocabulary. In the remaining streets and spaces an elegant cost-effective solution is sought where functionality and ease of maintenance is paramount.

The street furniture suites will be cohesive in the use of materials, focussing on sustainably sourced timber with metal and natural stone. There are three types:

STANDARD
The standard suite is typified by high quality off-the-shelf street furniture in timber and steel. The products will be fashion neutral - simple, robust and easy to maintain.

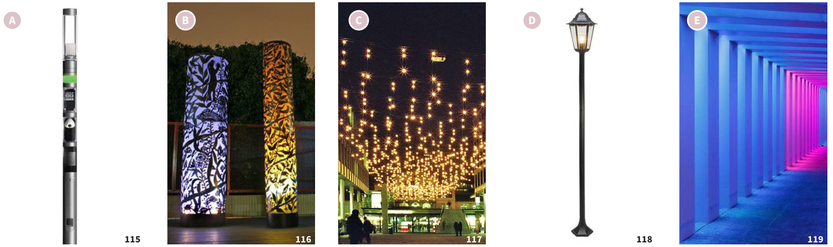
STANDARD PLUS
The standard plus suite is an extension of the standard palette where greater space creates an opportunity for larger or bespoke versions of the core furniture palette i.e. long chaise style loungers and perch blocks.

SIGNATURE
For the appropriate public spaces more creative bespoke solutions are encouraged working with artists/product designers. These 'feature' pieces can help celebrate local culture and history and contribute to Solihull's unique identity. Whilst bespoke, the products still need to be robustly detailed with ease of maintenance a key consideration.

Figure 24 - Street Furniture Palette

Standard
Standard Plus
Signature

A - High Street: Multifunctional stack lighting columns, simplistic, neutral and multi purpose.
B - Mell Square: Feature lighting, sculptural and eye catching.
C - Mill Lane & Drury Lane: Catenary lighting.
D - Church Square: Heritage lamp posts reminiscent of the original lighting.
E - Monkspath Hall Road Railway Bridge & Tudor Grange Walk Railway Bridge: Artistic feature bridge lighting.

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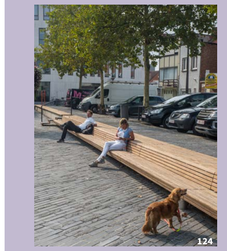
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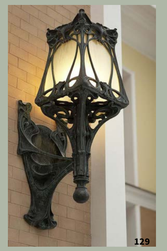
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PART 03

KEY MOVES

03 Public Realm Key Moves

03 Key Moves

Focus Areas

Seven focus areas have been identified across the town centre as locations for improvements based on the vision and themes set out in the PRS. The level of intervention may vary depending on location and should include some or all the following interventions – de-cluttering, urban greening and linkages, sustainable travel, place specific design (including lighting and illumination), change in surface materials, additional street furniture, new signage and wayfinding, new landmarks, social and community interaction, spatial artistry, public art and digital placemaking.

The seven focus areas highlighted on the plan opposite connect with important streets and spaces through the town centre area and includes the main arrival point for visitors, workers and residents. Each of the focus areas build on the proposals from this Public Realm Strategy and Town Centre Masterplan which sets out the design principles and vision for the future public realm. The interventions in each area will help create a ripple effect for wider and longer-term public realm improvements across the town with the aim of creating a better connected, expressed, and celebrated town centre to support and encourage future investment.

- 1 - High Street to Malvern Park
- 2 - New Road
- 3 - Mell Square
- 4 - Tudor Grange Walk
- 5 - Homer Road
- 6 - Jubilee Gardens to Prince's Way
- 7 - Warwick Road

The detailed interventions proposed across each of the focus areas are discussed in the following pages.

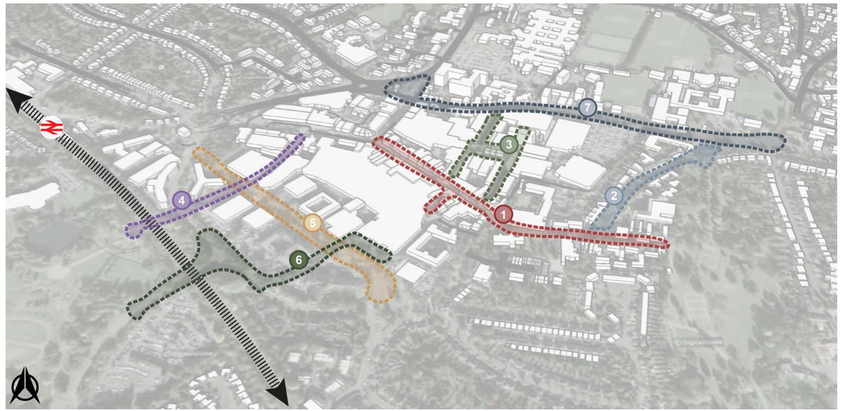


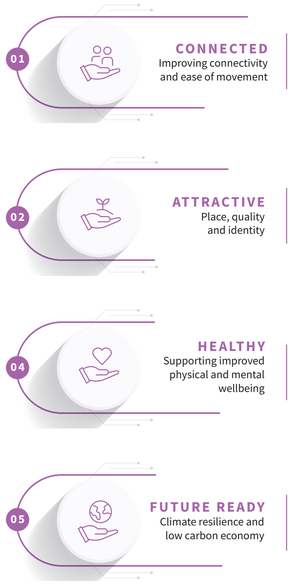
Figure 25 - Key Moves

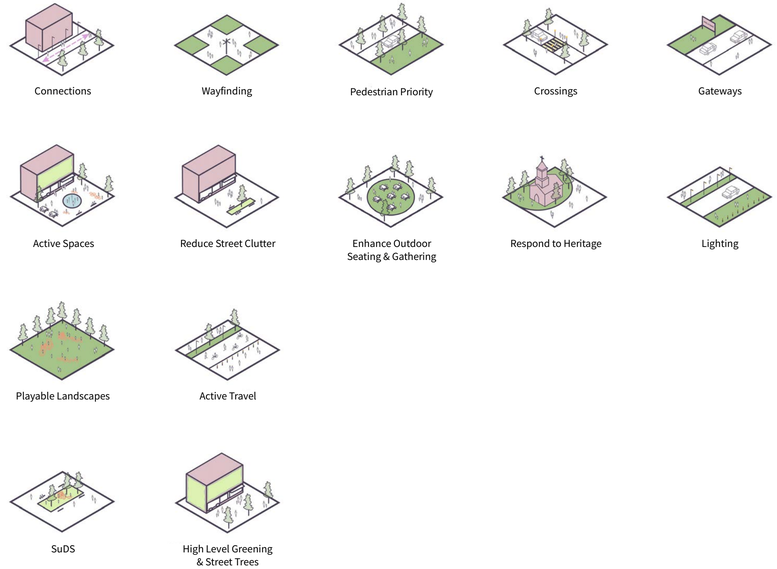
03 Key Moves

Town Wide Initiatives

In line with the placemaking principles and in order to achieve the desired outcomes of the PRS, there are a number of town wide public realm themes that have been applied to the each of the focus areas.

These themes are summarised in the infographics below.





03 Key Moves

High Street

Focus area 1 is a key piece of the public realm that captures an important experience line from the High Street through to Malvern Park. It embodies the project vision and placemaking principle of Urbs in Rure, highlighting the existing connection between the town centre and its parkland context within arm's reach of the town core. A key project objective is to revive and strengthen this association promoting linked trips for retail and leisure with health and wellbeing benefits and increasing town centre dwell times. The focus area comprises of three parts: High Street, New Road and link to Malvern Park. The High Street through to Malvern Park link is a short-term project. It aligns with the objectives of the planned Knowle to Solihull cycle route, and delivery should be coordinated with this scheme, the Eastgate development, and the Town Centre Energy Network.

High Street

As the principal route at the heart of the town centre, the High Street should be enhanced to reflect its status, with materials and street furniture of a suitably high quality to make the proposed street hierarchy clear. The streetscape could be improved by de-cluttering and framing views towards St Alphege Church, and by identifying clear areas for seating and market stalls which work together and so reduce potential conflict. In addition, there are opportunities to introduce public art and references to the heritage of Solihull to create a clear identity that is distinctly Solihull.

Design Objectives

- To create a 'legible' and clutter free environment with a clear identity that celebrates Solihull
- To upgrade the quality of the pedestrian environment in order to raise the prominence of the High Street as an important retail street
- Reflect the historic linear character of High Street, which reflects its origins as a planned street, set out with development plots
- To accommodate existing small markets and events and create a functional environment for these activities with supporting infrastructure, such as power points
- To complement the existing cafe culture which takes place along the high street
- To provide seating areas in the sun and shade as well as introduce playable landscape features to enhance user experiences and increase the family offer
- To maintain service vehicles, emergency services and market traders' access along High Street
- To use street trees and introduce sustainable soft landscaping to improve biodiversity and green infrastructure through the town centre
- Introduce sustainable drainage solutions to improve climate resilience
- To create a safe environment

Figure 26 - High Street Masterplan

Design Principles

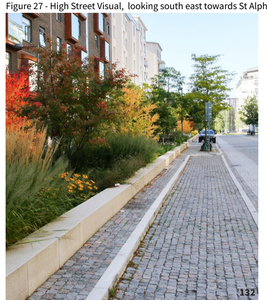
The public realm design should enhance the storytelling aspect of placemaking, inform wayfinding, and strengthen the connection with local distinctiveness. The introduction of a new single treatment to hard surfaces should be supported to help simplify the public realm. Being a principal public space, high quality paving (gold palette) and bespoke feature street furniture (signature palette) is required here as set out in the materials palette in section 2. In addition, an improved lighting scheme and infrastructure to support digital placemaking would encourage local activity to span across both day and night enhancing the use of the space for all users.

1 **Centralised zone**
Simplifying the High Street profile to a have a centralised zone will help declutter the street-scene and achieve a safer, more inclusive and legible space. This arrangement will assist with ease of movement and increase space for outdoor seating associated with a growing café culture. The centralised zone will accommodate trees, rain gardens, soft landscaping, street furniture, pause spaces and feature lighting. The nodal points have a capacity and facilities to service a small number of market stalls however, the larger market is better located in Mell Square. The creation of a linear park type feature will increase biodiversity and strengthen the town centre's green infrastructure network. It will also offer a strong and forwarding looking identity to the High Street, making a placemaking statement for a greener, healthier and more resilient town centre. It both modernises the public realm whilst reflecting Solihull's Urbs in Rure vision, strengthen its links to the park and local leafy character.

2 **Linear Park**
The introduction of rain gardens offers a nature-based solution for managing surface water and slowing flow rates and thus contributing to a more climate change resilient urban environment. The introduction of more green infrastructure, including larger canopied trees also helps stabilise the microclimate of the High Street. The linear park so created in the High Street also provides opportunity to introduce a playable landscape including public art, heritage components and the rain garden themselves. This infrastructure will bring a new dimension to High Street, creating a more family friendly environment.

3 **Cycling**
Cycling is proposed to remain restricted along High Street at peak retail hours to limit conflict in this high pedestrian activity zone. However, permitted access outside retail hours will both support the natural commuter route across the town centre to complete the cycle network and facilitate a night economy. Improvements to cycle infrastructure include proposed additional bike racks along the High Street with enhanced storage providing short stay secure and covered storage facilities.

Figure 27 - High Street Visual, looking south east towards St Alphege Church



4 Lighting
For a clutter free space, lighting columns should be within the centralised zone and be used to light as much space as possible to maximise efficiency from a single location. On High Street, building mounted lighting is to be avoided as much as possible and existing lighting on a number of buildings could be refurbished to maintain a link to the past with longevity into the future. Due to the area falling within the conservation area, lighting solutions should be in accordance with the conservation strategy and be approved by the conservation officer. Opportunities exist for architectural lighting especially to the heritage buildings, however, this must be balanced with minimising or eliminating impact on the fabric of the buildings. Architecturally neutral products are proposed (to be agreed with the conservation officer) and are to use modern technology light sources. Multi-functional columns can aid the reduction of street clutter by incorporating elements such as wi-fi, CCTV, street vendor power outlets and additional feature lighting. Lighting should be considered in the context of the street furniture and the planting, including the street trees. Also, pockets of feature lighting such as dynamic interactive coloured or pattern projections can be incorporated at the main intersections for points of interest and activation of the nodal spaces. Up-lighting, floodlighting and visible light sources should all be considered to create a visually interesting environment with enhanced vertical illuminance to the space to enhance the perception of brightness.

5 Heritage / Public Art
High Street is an important location for both public art and a heritage trail to be accommodated within the centralised linear park. Opportunities exist for a range of public art interventions ranging from playable sculptures to artwork integrated into street furniture and paving. Feature points as part of the open-air museum such as viewpoint frames, curiosity cabinets and recordings of historic accounts and storytelling provide an interactive experience bringing Solihull's heritage to life.

Shop front design guidance to ensure that improvements are well-integrated and adopt a consistent and appropriate style to uphold the architectural heritage of the High Street street-scene and character. High quality paving materials in line with the recommended materials palette in part 2 are appropriate for, and complement the heritage buildings, both in quality and style.

6 Emergency Access
Maintenance and emergency access continues to be accommodated to one side of the centralised zone. It is further simplified with the underutilised access gate at the eastern edge of High Street to be removed. This will improve the setting and views of St Alphege Church as well as the quality and relationship between the High Street and The Square. Hostile vehicle movements can still be managed appropriately but through more discrete ways such as using street furniture.

7 Manor Walk
The historic passage is an interesting part of the streetscape that extents off High Street. New paving consistent with the High Street surface treatment and rationalisation and coordinated lighting palette would help to improve the space, whilst maintaining the integrity of the passage and this historic link.

New Road adjacent to St Alphege Church
The heart of the historic village of Solihull is located at 'The Square', a position located today by the war memorial outside St Alphege Church. This is positioned where High Street meets Church Hill Road, the "soily hill" that gave the village its name. New Road links High Street to Malvern Park with a high footfall, particularly students at the beginning and end of the day moving to and from Solihull Sixth Form College, situated on the southern edge of Malvern Park.

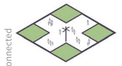
The public realm around St Alphege Church is regarded as an integral historic element of the town centre and it is therefore essential that any alterations to it must take the historical and cultural significance of the Conservation Area and church into consideration. Future public realm enhancements should reflect the historic qualities of the area both in the use of materials and street furniture and in the envisaged function.

Design Objectives
- Improve the heritage setting of the Church, Solihull War Memorial and the historic core 'The Square'
- Improve connectivity and legibility of link to Malvern Park
- Create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists
- Increase sense of pedestrian priority and reduce vehicle dominance
- Declutter entrance to High Street and improve visual connectivity between the high street and St Alphege Church


Attractive
Active Spaces


Attractive
Enhance Outdoor Seating & Gathering


Attractive
Respond to Heritage


Connected
Wayfinding


Healthy
Playable Landscapes


Attractive
Reduce Street Clutter

Design Principles

9 Pedestrian priority enhancements
Creation of a more pedestrian friendly environment through realignment of the road to release space for a public space, both at the end of the high street and at the entrance to the park, forming localised gateways. Crossings should be level and on pedestrian desire lines increasing legibility of routes. Roads and footways should be paved with shallow kerbs and reduced speeds. This sees a change in street typology from a town street to a more place driven civilised street. The vehicle becomes a guest and pedestrians have priority to move freely through the space. De-cluttering The Square and removal of the underutilised emergency and maintenance access gate, allows for ease of movement and opens up the space and views to St Alphege.

10 Encourage the use of The Square
Changes to the streetscape profile shifts towards a greater proportion allocated for public realm. This unlocks space to accommodate informal 'staying' activities through the provision of seating and commercial 'staying' activities by making space for outdoor dining. Hard surfaces should be improved using a single treatment providing better visual flow through the space. As a space of high heritage significance, high quality paving (gold palette) and bespoke street furniture (signature palette) is required here, as set out in the materials palettes in section 2. High quality materials in keeping with the heritage style should be used, creating a simple elegant design to place the focus on the quality of the historic buildings.

11 Reducing vehicle dominance
Down grading perceived vehicle dominance by creating a sense of place rather than a road corridor by removal of road markings, surface treatments, shallower kerbs and a 20 mph zone. Removal or relocating bus bays where possible, further along New Road to avoid blocking views of the church from the High Street. Retain provision of but rationalise church drop off zone for weddings and funerals processions. Ensure school associated coach drop off is accommodated.

12 Cycling enhancements
Integrating and co-ordinating the public realm with the strategic priority cycle route from Knowle to Solihull, taking cyclist safely to the high street.

13 Potential enhancements to St Alphege Church and its setting
As a prominent and significant heritage asset, St Alphege Church and its setting is an important and valued feature within the public realm. Opportunities exist for environmental improvements such as improved architectural lighting to the church and renovations to St Alphege's boundary wall, such as re-introducing historic features and posts/gates. Crown lifting of existing trees to allow for better views of the church building and introduction of a new access to north-east corner wall, linking in with existing internal graveyard path.

Figure 28 - High Street Plan

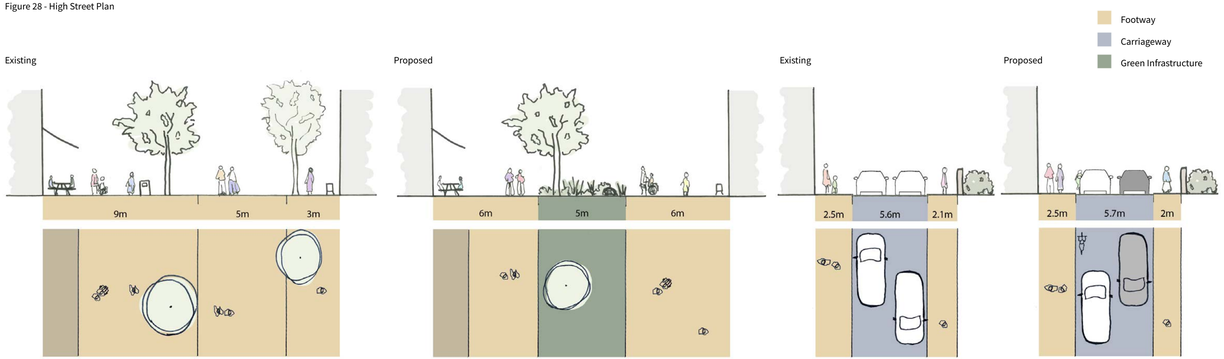


Figure 29 - High Street Cross Section 1

Figure 30 - New Road Cross Section 2

03 Key Moves

New Road

New Road forms part of the east approach into the town centre leading to the historic core of St Alphege Church, The Square and High Street. It accommodates the main entrance to Malvern Park. Although part of the informal ring road around the town centre its setting is different to that of Warwick Road, Lode Road and Prince's Way in that the urban grain is terraced and detached residential dwellings. The LCWIP identifies the Priority Cycle Corridor route between Knowle and Solihull to run along New Road to connect Solihull town centre.

Design Objectives

- Improve setting and links to Malvern Park
- Improve the visual amenity and gateway quality of New Road
- Create a more residential scale street-scene with improved environmental quality
- Improve pedestrian and cycle movement in particular accommodating a cycle lane as part of Knowle priority cycle route

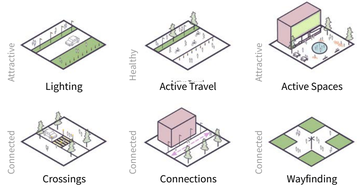


Figure 31 - New Road Masterplan

Design Principles

1 **Improved pedestrian and cycle friendly environment**
Reduce vehicle dominance of streetscape by reducing the carriageway down to a single lane in both directions adjacent to each other on the western side of the street and making it a 20 mph zone. The existing green central reservation area to be enhanced to a wide landscape zone and buffer between the road and an new attractive active travel route on the eastern edge. This route has capacity to accommodate a 3m wide two-way cycle lane as part of the priority cycle route from Knowle to the town centre alongside a 3m wide footway, offering a safe and active travel friendly environment. This arrangement sees a shift in typology from a movement focused connector road to a more place driven town street. Paving materials for resurfacing and street furniture to this section of New Road is to be the silver and standard palette, respectively as stated in the section 2.

2 **Improved connectivity**
Introduction of a new level-controlled crossing, such as a zebra crossing, at the main entrance to Malvern Park at the northern end of New Road to improve access to the park. Also, a new level courtesy crossing point aligned with the potential future link from George Road to improve permeability and connectivity to the town centre and Mell Square.

3 **Street greening**
The space gained for public realm by reducing the carriageway creates opportunity to expand the central landscape zone. There is potential for more street trees and roadside SuDs (vegetated depression swales / rain gardens) for nature-based surface water solutions, increasing tree canopy coverage and introducing new habitats to offer biodiversity gains. Also, small pause space interventions and playable landscape features can be introduced to improve the environmental quality of the route. This approach will celebrate a strong identity of Solihull as a green rich rural town on approach to the town centre and create an improved gateway and arrival experience.

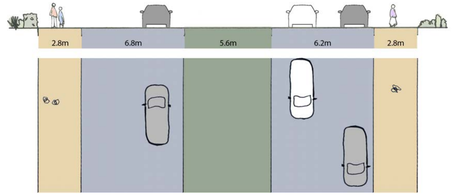
4 **Lighting**
The lighting should complement the shift from highways to a more pedestrian and cycle friendly environment - moving from highways lighting to a placemaking approach.

5 Lighting should be positioned and selected to enhance the visibility of the crossings for both safety and enhanced identification. Similarly, with increased street greening there will an opportunity to establish feature lighting to trees and soft landscape to raise the visual impression of the space creating a people centred environment.

Malvern Park entrance
Potential improvements to the main park entrance space include thinning of the conifers to allow in more light, new planting and introduction of a cluster of multi-stem blossoming trees within the lawn for a more appealing setting. Widening of the two footways and resurfacing of hardscape with high quality paving (gold palette) in line with the material palette for improved access. Introduction of entrance signage with a public art piece integrating the parks title 'Malvern Park' and park information board. This coupled with ecologically sensitive feature lighting to trees and public art signage for enhanced place-making and interest at the gateway.

Footway
Carriageway
Green Infrastructure
Cycleway

Existing



Proposed

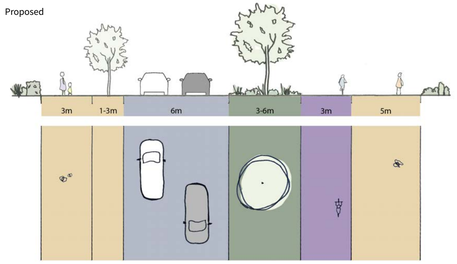
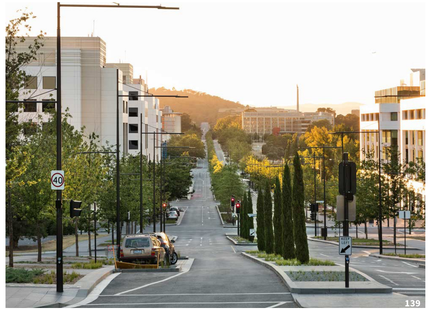


Figure 32 - New Road Cross Section



Pedestrian route
Improved pedestrian crossing point
Additional pedestrian/cycle link
Cycle lane
Two way traffic flow
Levelled crossing
Proposed trees
Existing trees
Landscape zone
Roadside suds
Park entrance improvement
20 miles per hour zone
Information board
Sculptural signage with park name
Thin conifers
Widen footpaths

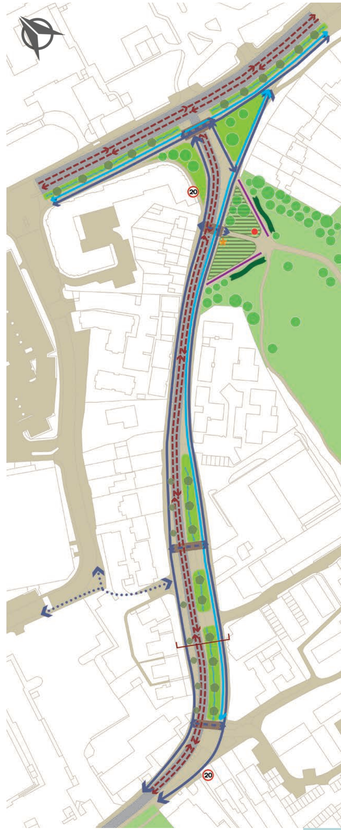


Figure 33 - New Road

03 Key Moves

Mell Square

Mell Square is the central public square for Solihull, with links to High Street, Warwick Road and Station Road (via Mell Square Shopping Centre). The streets and spaces within Mell Square should be comprehensively decluttered, and provide a main square which is lighter, greener, more attractive and multi-functional. The guiding principles behind the redevelopment of the square will look to create a safe and vibrant 'urban village' which ensures high quality design, improved access and signage and provides a safer, more secure feel. It is envisaged that this will include a flexible open square which can be used for a variety of events during the day and evening with pavement cafes established around its perimeter. Within this square new public art, lighting, street furniture, feature seating and playful landscape elements will create a hub of social activity. Mell Square is a medium-term project that supports the objectives of the wider Mell Square Redevelopment scheme. Delivery should be coordinated to meet the requirements of the wider redevelopment.

Design Objectives

- Create a distinct identity
- Create a multifunctional event space
- Create a space where people want to spend time
- Animate the space and make it more welcoming at night
- Review seating arrangements and provide wider variety considering views, events opportunity and sun
- Make the most of the edges of the space where overhangs provide shelter
- Strengthen retail circuit into Drury Lane and Mill Lane and reduce vehicle dominance

Figure 34 - Mell Square Masterplan

Design Principles

1 **Flexible space**
Decluttering , rationalising and simplifying the space to enhance its character and significance is key. As the principal public square, it will have high quality paving (gold palette), bespoke street furniture (signature palette) and a focus for enhanced feature lighting. Removal of the central building to open up the space is key to enable more activation of the space through day and night activities which will transform the public square into a social hub with space for people to congregate. A flexible space is created with the capacity to host a number of different events supported by water points and power supply hook ups. By default, the edges become areas of concentrated multifunctional activity with urban greening, SuDs, café spill out zones and playable landscape features.

2 **Urban greening**
Mell Square has the space to allow for more significant green infrastructure contributions through feature rain gardens, planting beds, green walls and green roofs. The establishment of such infrastructure reinforces the Urbs in Rure feel and identity in the principal public square. Existing trees are to be retained albeit pared back to a single avenue on each side, under which an activity zone sits along with the rain gardens and planting beds. These green rich zones assist with climate resilience and microclimate stability within the social square. The architecture and flat roofs to the buildings surrounding the square lend themselves to green walls and green or brown roofs. The western façade is a suitable location for a green wall with a good aspect, blank facade and visually prominent with no tree canopies obscuring the view. In key locations, upper blank facades of buildings on Mill Lane and Drury Lane are suitable for vertical greening such as green walls, where they form gateway markers or prominent facades in key views.

3 **Interactive water feature**
Water jets at the quieter eastern end of the square that catches afternoon sunshine will provide a civic quality to the square. These installations offer a flexible, interactive feature that doesn't restrict movement across the space with the capacity to be switched off in winter or if events in the square necessitate it. This playful element becomes a community focal point augmenting the family draws of the centre, creating a new dynamic to Solihull's public realm that is socially engaging and invigorating. Microclimate cooling gains of such a water feature during summer months will be beneficial for supporting increased dwell times.

4 **Shade structures**
A sculptural shade structure to the western extent of the Mell Square, offering microclimate relief to the sunnier more exposed section of the square. A vertical structure here also provides a visual landmark and wayfinding tool, leading users in along Mill Lane and highlighting this approach to the town centre for users on Warwick Road.

5 **Space activation**
Activity zones focused along the perimeter of the open square, predominantly on the northern and southern edges in the dappled shade of the existing trees. These zones can accommodate outdoor dining and social feature seating to support the growing café culture and an evolving evening economy for a social square. Playable landscape features such as table tennis or giant chess, sculptural public art can also be in these zones.

6 **Lighting**
Catenary lighting is proposed for Mill Lane and Drury Lane (subject to permissions/ wayleaves etc). I t will provide a softer appearance that will encourage visitors to investigate and move into the development, both during daytime and at night. To support a flexible open square, taller lighting columns can provide support for multiple lighting sources and effects and can be kept to the periphery of the space to create an open area. Such columns can be a piece of art in their own right, potentially with integral lighting to the structures for further 'wow' factor. They should be fully controllable, allowing effects to be produced and variation of the ambient light levels depending on the usage of the space. Programmable coloured feature lighting can be used at desired times to add drama and activation to the space together with pattern projections, both static and dynamic, and thus add an interactive public art quality that enhances evening user experiences.

7 **Cycling**
Increased bike parking provision at the thresholds of the dismount zone which blanket covers the pedestrianised area. This provision should ideally be secure covered short-stay storage to encourage bike users visiting for retail and restaurants.

Figure 35 - Mell Square Visual, looking south-east

8 Heritage trail
Mell square is a principal space for heritage trail and open museum features: it is a key congregation point where people will gather and spend time. It contributes to an active and playful space exploring Solihull's history in a more interactive way and adding to the user experience. Ideal locations for interactive heritage features are the activity zones along edge, the eastern end as a focal point to Drury Lane vista or associated with the shade structure at western end on the key fulcrum point with Mill Lane.

9 Reference to Touchwood Manor
This is an interesting historic reference as it encapsulates the towns social, industrial and technological past. Reference to this in the public realm would enhance the story telling aspect of placemaking, but also inform wayfinding, and provides an interesting way to break up the space in a way that is specific to Solihull.

10 Mill Lane and Drury Lane
A shift in perceived priority in these lanes, that require vehicle access for retail servicing and disabled parking provision, to a more pedestrian focused environment is needed. A continuity of material of the hard surfaces to both footway and carriageway will evoke a shared space feel. This treatment continues up to the thresholds with Warwick Road and George Road so vehicle users are aware they're entering a pedestrian priority space. Consolidation of parking to a single parking zone to one side with perpendicular parking spaces to maintain numbers. This arrangement creates the sense of a wider pedestrian through route on the opposite side. The introduction of street trees associated with the parking zone and rain garden beds beyond, but not obstructing the emergency access gates, will increase the urban greening and sense of public space and dilute the sense of vehicle presence.

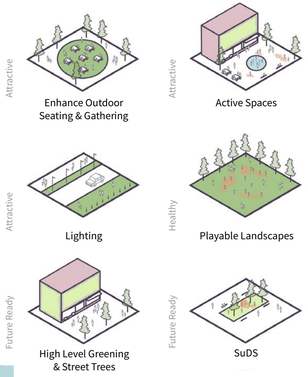


Figure 36 - Mell Square Visual, looking north-west

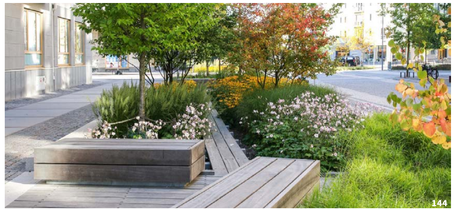
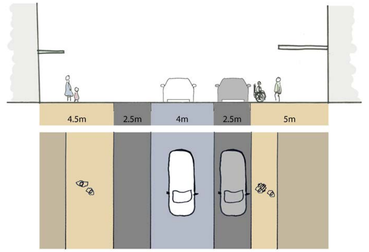


Figure 37 - Mell Square Plan

Existing



Proposed

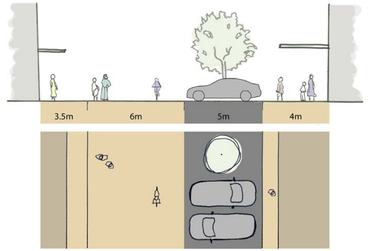


Figure 38 - Drury Lane Cross Section

Footway
Carriageway
Disabled Parking

Clear views and pedestrian movement
Conservation Boundary
Existing vehicle maintenance / emergency access point
Disabled parking bays
Listed building
Parking zones
Outdoor dining zone
Potential market stall locations
Potential area for larger market
Open air museum feature point
Playable landscape features
Cycle Infrastructure - enhanced existing and proposed bike stands (secured, covered, short start stay parking
Interactive water feature
Shade Structure
Wayfinding
Digital placemaking
Existing trees
Proposed trees
Rain gardens
Activity zones with seating, SuDs, soft landscaping and playable features
Vertical greening opportunites

03 Key Moves

Tudor Grange Walk & Herbert Road

Focus Area 4 is a key pedestrian and cycle route between Tudor Grange Park and the town centre. Strengthening physical and perceived links with the park is key, highlighting the added leisure and recreation offer of a town park within arms' reach of the centre. Linking this park to the town helps showcase Solihull's broad offer of activity and draws, encouraging linked trips and increasing dwell times. Herbert Road also provides a prominent link between Homer Road for people arriving by train. 'Tudor Grange Walk' is a short-term project. It complements the Town Centre Masterplan's proposals for development on and around Homer Road and supports the ambition to encourage more people to visit the town centre by foot or by bike. Delivery of this scheme could be coordinated with the delivery of Solihull Town Centre Energy Network, a low carbon energy project, or the delivery of the Westgate Office development. Herbert Road is a medium-term project with delivery coordinated with the Homer Road improvements. For cyclists, these projects will link the town centre through Tudor Grange Park to connect with the newly created cycle corridor on Blossomfield Road that leads to the west of the Borough.

Design Objectives

- Improve pedestrian and cycle priority
- Improve cycle movement
- Enhance legibility and navigation of route between Homer Road (and station users) and the town centre
- Enhance legibility and status of route between Tudor Grange Park and the town centre
- Improve environment of underpasses and safety along the route

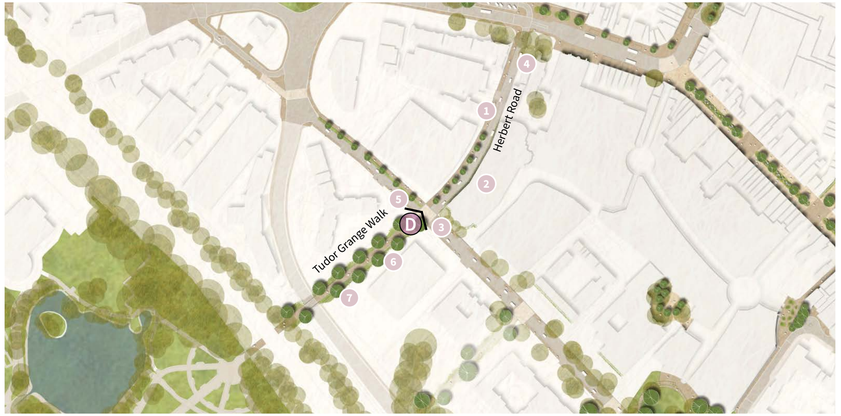


Figure 39 - Tudor Grange Walk & Herbert Road Masterplan

Design Principles

Herbert Road

1 Pedestrian and cycle focused environment

A minor shift in Herbert Road's street-scene profile by reducing the highway's width releases space for an improved public realm environment. Reducing the two-lane carriageway to 5.5m enables for a wider footway on the western edge to be established creating a 20mph zone environment. Widening of the pavement enables a continual 4m wide shared pedestrian and cycle path along Herbert Road, reducing conflicts between users and improving pedestrian and cycle movement. It plugs localised gaps in the street level cycle network making it better for bike journeys into and across the town centre. To reinforce the pedestrian priority along this stretch of public realm there should be level crossings to minor road junctions. Upgrading of materials (silver palette) and street furniture (standard palette) as set out in section 2, will create a cohesive public realm and raise the hierarchy of the street.

2 Street greening

The wider public realm on the western side enables introduction of street trees, creating a greener environment to Herbert Road and increasing tree canopy cover. This echoes the Urbs in Rure vision and raises the link's profile as a route to the large town park. Street greening here aids intuitive legibility and navigation along the route with subconscious wayfinding clues. Opportunities exist for vertical greening to John Lewis car park's blank façades, creating features on this prominent corner. This greening intervention has both biodiversity and wayfinding benefits and green messaging gains, celebrating Solihull's forward looking greener identity.

3 Pedestrian priority and junction improvements

A feature crossing at Homer Road / Herbert Road junction will create greater pedestrian and cycle priority, improving and strengthening the route from Tudor Grange Park to the town centre. A clutter free level crossing with high quality paving detail and design for a simplistic but clear crossing points on or as near as possible to desire-lines. Toucan crossings are required on both the Homer Road and Herbert Road crossings to support the east-west and north-south pedestrian and cycle movements.

4 Lighting Herbert Road

With the shift towards favouring pedestrians and cyclists on Herbert Road, the lighting needs to reflect this intent. Lighting products should be of a quality appearance moving away from a highway street light appearance. Mounting heights should be kept to the minimum which still allows an efficient design with the intent of making the scale more human. Product positioning must ensure free access through the space and not create street clutter. In suitable locations, the vertical greening could be illuminated to increase vertical luminance and thus the perception of brightness whilst enhancing the organic nature and texture of the planting.

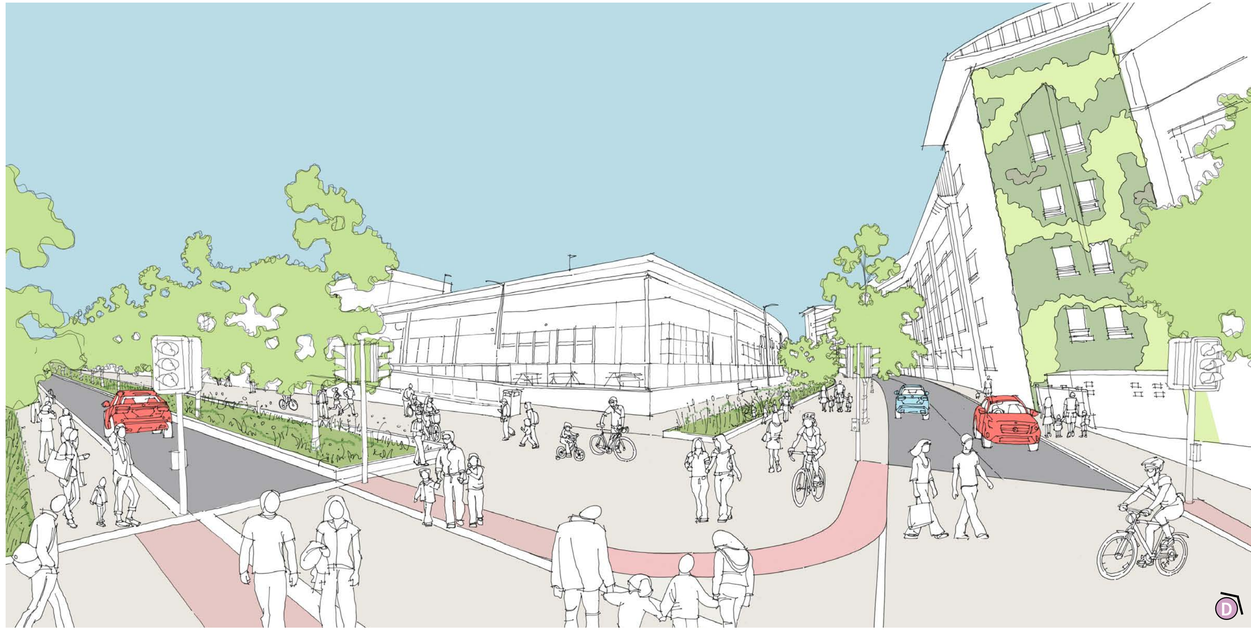


Figure 40 - Tudor Grange Walk & Herbert Road Visual, looking up Herbert Road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153

Tudor Grange Walk

5 Improved path entrance

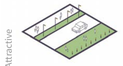
Widening of path entrance on Homer Road to make a more pronounced and safer entrance. On the western side, widening could be achieved by chamfering the corner, clearing vegetation back and burying/ relocating the utility box, aiding desire line movement towards the crossing. Land acquisition will be required as the vegetation sits outside of the council's ownership. Focal point paving detail with wayfinding features at the entrance to create a gateway node with integrated signage to help highlight the access to aid intuitive navigation. Widening will improve visibility and safety and facilitate easier movement at the junction point.

6 Activating route

Refurbishing Prince's Way underpass and resurfacing the path without a central white line for a shared pedestrian and cycle path enhances the quality of the route. Introducing pause spaces with seating and lighting because it is a steep incline to the path creates a more inclusive route. Clearing out portions of the evergreen structural planting and introducing wildflower planting would have both biodiversity gains and make the route feel safer. Similarly, crown lifting some of the trees would allow more natural light in, thus benefiting biodiversity opportunities and a safer environment. A more biodiverse environment along this route will contribute to the Council's Wildlife Corridors initiative. This theme could be further supported by activation interventions such as nature boards with wildlife information as part of an educational trail to stop and look at on the way.

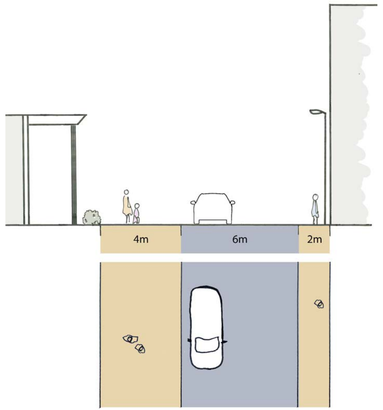
7 Lighting Tudor Grange Walk

The underpasses and route need particularly careful treatment due to their enclosed nature. A balance between good levels of illuminance with appropriate vertical illumination that is also ecologically sensitive is needed. The underpasses can then have further layers of lighting added through the application of colour, intensity and interactivity. Such as triggers to activate lighting effect or the use of shadowing from multiple light sources to create separated and coloured shadows. The space shall be fun and exciting, creating an adventure for the passers-by, providing passive surveillance through the attraction of visitors and making an 'otherworldly' space.



- Footway
- Carriageway

Existing



Proposed

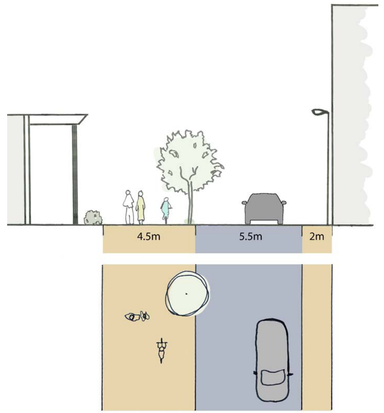


Figure 41 - Herbert Road Cross Section

- Pedestrian route
- Shared pedestrian and cycle path
- Improved pedestrian & cycle crossing
- Toucan crossing
- Single-lane traffic flow
- Two way traffic flow
- Levelled crossing
- Wildlife information boards/ activity stations
- Widened entrance
- Activation feature lighting to underpasses
- Pause spaces
- Playable landscape features
- Proposed bike stands
- Bike hire dock station
- Cycle hub with facitlites
- Wayfinding
- Proposed trees
- Existing trees
- Wildflower planting
- Roadside suds
- Vertical greening opportunites
- 20 mile per hour zone

Figure 42 - Tudor Grange Walk & Herbert Road Plan

03 Key Moves

Homer Road

Homer Road is a wide leafy street that provides an alternative pedestrian route from the station to the town centre, secondary to the primary pedestrian route via Station Road. It acts as a feeder road at the centre of the commercial area of Solihull town centre and multiple vehicle accesses to Touchwood. Large scale commercial buildings and established mature trees and landscape characterise the streetscape. Its current vehicle -based focus feels disproportionate to the low traffic movements outside of office peak hours especially in the context of changes in working patterns post-covid. Plans as part of the Town Centre Masterplan 2020, propose additional access to buildings on the southern side of Homer Road via Prince's Way which would reduce the vehicular demands on Homer Road. Homer Road is considered to be a medium-term project. It complements the Town Centre Masterplans proposals for future development on Homer Road and the ambition to create a quick, safe and intuitive walking and cycling route between the train station and the town centre. Delivery of this project should be coordinated with the delivery of the Town Centre Energy Network, the Westgate office development, and other potential development sites identified in the Town Centre Masterplan.

Design Objectives

- To upgrade wayfinding, signage and legibility as a route from the station into the town centre
- To improve pedestrian and cycle movement and create a more active travel friendly environment
- To enhance the pedestrian scale and environment along Homer Road
- Improve pedestrian priority and navigation of the Homer Road/ Prince's Way junction
- To raise the environmental quality of the junction along Homer Road with Herbert Road and Tudor Grange Walk
- Enhance the environmental quality of pedestrian crossing point at the top of Monks Path

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Figure 43 - Homer Road Masterplan

Design Principles

1 **Pedestrian and cycle friendly environment**
Narrowing the carriageway to 5.5m wide enables the existing shared pedestrian and cycle path along the northern edge of the street-scene to be widened up to 4.5m. To achieve this for the full length of Homer Road, future developments between Herbert Road and Touchwood car park entrance will need to accommodate this footway widening. De-cluttering, reducing road markings and removal of guard rails with reduce the vehicle dominance of this street, create a self-enforcing 20 mph zone and improve active travel user experience. Also, having level crossings to minor junctions will reinforce a more people focused environment. This, combined with upgrading materials (silver) and street furniture (standard) as set out in section 2, sees a shift in street typology from a movement focused connector road to a more place motivated town street. From Herbert Road junction to Prince's Way, Homer Road should be one way in a westerly direction. This enables a 6.5m wide public realm zone on the northern side. As part of which, a landscape strip can be introduced accommodating street trees and roadside SuDs. In addition, one way only at this end of Homer Road, enables a wider footway on the Prince's Way junction in front of the future Westgate development which is a much-needed benefit for ease of movement on this key corner.

2 **Street greening**
The section of extra wide public realm towards the western end of the road can accommodate roadside SuDs and street trees, adding to the green street character already established on Homer Road, increasing tree canopy coverage and introducing new habitats to the street-scene.

3 **Pedestrian and cycle priority junctions**
A simplified pedestrian and cycle crossing on Prince's Way via a level crossing with a more direct alignment that follows pedestrian desire lines. The wider footway provides a comfortable landing to the crossing where users can either head north and enter the town centre via Station Road or continue along Homer Road to reach the centre. As a direct, simplified level crossing, this creates seamless movement across the junction that raises pedestrian priority, improves legibility of the route and creates more intuitive navigation of the junction. Herbert Road junction and the pedestrian crossing at the top of Monks Path are covered in focus area 4 and 6, respectively.

4 **Lighting**
With the refocus of the area to enhance pedestrian and cyclist desire lines, the lighting needs to reflect this intent. Lighting products should be of a quality appearance moving away from a highway street light appearance. Mounting heights should be kept to the minimum which still allows an efficient design with the intent of making the scale more human. Product positioning must ensure free access through the space and not create street clutter. Pedestrian and cyclist crossings should be highlighted through enhanced lighting and product type/positioning with enhanced vertical illuminance.

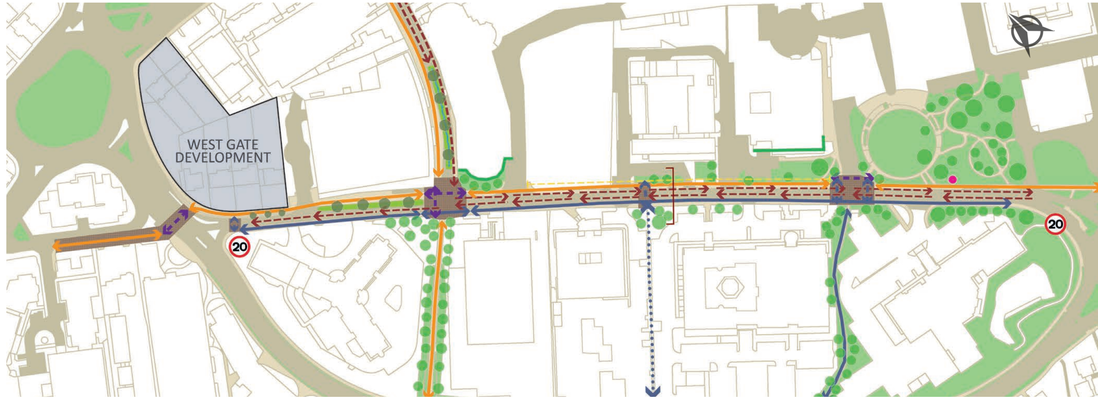

Figure 44 - Homer Road Plan

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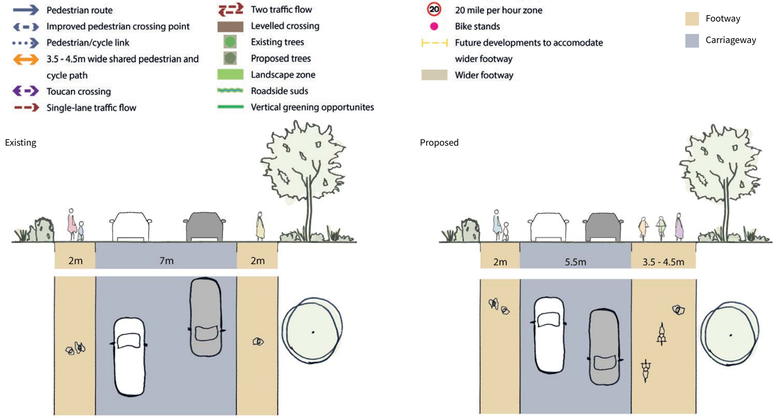

Figure 45 - Homer Road Cross Sections

03 Key Moves

Jubilee Gardens to Prince's Way

Jubilee Gardens

As one of the only green spaces within the town centre, Jubilee Gardens is a vital public space that provides a more intimate and greener environment. Its sunny aspect, combined with Touchwood's outdoor dining In a leafy setting provides a light relief to the more urban public realm spaces: a quiet, peaceful space to retreat to.

The adjoining nature area, as a wildlife garden, offers an up close and personal interaction will nature in the heart of the town centre, a valuable well-being and educational space for toddlers through to the elderly. This space will also form the backdrop to the future Eastgate developments.

Monks Path

This green meandering pedestrian route runs from Homer Road down to Prince's Way flanked by large established trees and structural evergreen planting with ecological value as a green corridor. It provides a link from the Jubilee Gardens and the southern end of the town centre to Tudor Grange Park and Monkspath Hall Road car park via Prince's Way. As Monkspath Hall Road is the only long stay car park, this route is well used by commuters.

Prince's Way / Monkspath Hall Road links to Tudor Grange Park

These streetscapes provide the final section of the route to Tudor Grange Park and Monkspath Hall car park. Plans identified within the Town Centre Masterplan 2020, identifies an aspirational new link from Homer Road down to Prince's Way further strengthening pedestrian movement between the town centre and the town park.

Jubilee Gardens and Monks Path is considered to be a medium-term project. They support the Town Centre Masterplan proposals to encourage people to access the town centre by foot or by bike and reduce the number of people driving into the town centre. This project could be broken into smaller elements and delivered as standalone improvement schemes, or they could be delivered alongside larger redevelopment proposals identified in the Town Centre Masterplan.

Design Objectives

- Improve the functionality and durability of the amphitheatre space and introduce traditional seating close to the entrance to Touchwood
- Introduce a hierarchy of surface treatments to emphasise importance and character
- Enhance the existing nature area by improving its seasonal interest for the benefit of wildlife and visual amenity for people
- Improve the user experience of the nature area
- Introduce signage, seating and public art
- Enhance awareness and legibility of Monks Path as a route to Tudor Grange Park from the town centre
- Improve pedestrian priority of Homer Road crossing point
- Improve wayfinding between Monkspath Hall Road car park, the Council House and The Core arts complex and Touchwood shopping centre
- Improve biodiversity and environmental quality of the route

Figure 46 - Jubilee Gardens to Prince's Way Masterplan

Design Principles

Jubilee Gardens

1 **Improve seating offer**
Increasing seating opportunities will assist in creating a meaningful and useful space for office workers and residents to relax, socialise, eat and meet, and that supports the active ground floor use in the area. Improving the interface with Touchwood outdoor dining area by re-profiling the existing ramp and steps for a more direct, clutter free movement that offers a multi-function feature embracing the sunny aspect. Hardscape terracing with integrated seating, steps and ramp to increasing seating options should be delivered. In addition, refreshing the formalised grassed terracing with a degree of light touch hard surfacing to support more robust all year-round use. As part of these refurbishments to a key public open space, upgrading materials (silver) and street furniture (signature) in accordance with palettes identified in section 2 will renovate the space in line with the wider public realm.

2 **Biodiversity gains**
For Jubilee Gardens, establish perennial planting areas, clear invasive and non-native plants and ensure continued success of the recently planted wildflower turf. Enhance the nature area by removal of invasive and non-native plants and reinvigorating the flora with new wildlife friendly and edible planting, bring with it biodiversity benefits. Increasing wildlife habitats and feature points through bug hotels, bee houses and 'loggeries' create discovery and learning opportunities as well as biodiversity gains.

3 **Space activation**
Within Jubilee Gardens, ecology sensitive feature lighting to trees, proposed new terraced steps and projected lights to the stage area will bring a dynamic aspect to the space, invigorating the evening offer and economy. For the wildlife garden, light touch interventions to add to the playable landscape such as willow tunnels and log seat reading circles encourage space activation and enhance user experiences. New wildlife information boards should be installed to enhance interpretation and potentially to be the starting point for the nature trails along Monks Path and Tudor Grange Walk. Increased seating will allow more enjoyment of the space.


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Monks Path

4 **Improve crossing on Homer Road**
A simplified crossing with greater pedestrian priority is needed. Improvements include a level crossing with a surface change achieved by a large and raised table, pulling the crossing points closer to desire-lines and upgrading of materials (silver palette) as identified in section 2. Also, the introduction of a toucan crossing on the access arm to Touchwood car park should be established to support the shared pedestrian and cycle route along the northern edge of Homer Road. As part of Homer Road improvements, de-cluttering, removal of guards and reduction of road markings will also reduce highway dominance.

5 **Improved path entrance**
Widening of the path entrance on Homer Road to make a more pronounced entrance and gateway paving detail with wayfinding features, using silver and standard materials and street furniture palettes in section 2. On the western side, widening could be achieved by chamfering the corner and clearing vegetation back to the existing tree, aiding desire line movement towards the crossing. Land acquisition will be required as the vegetation sits outside of the Council's ownership. A substation forms the eastern edge of the entrance limiting capacity to widen here. However, clearing of vegetation and re cladding the public facing walls of the substation will create a sense of space and highlight the entrance. Re-cladding could be a high-quality material for an architectural point of interest or inclusion of public artwork or branding with integrated naming or signage. This will aid intuitive navigation, improve visibility and safety entering the path and facilitate easier movement to crossing points. Similarly, widening of the entrance on to Prince's Way, with vegetation clearance and gateway paving detail will create a more pronounced entrance improving legibility.

6 **Greening**
Reduction of structural planting and introducing wildflower planting will build on the existing baseline ecology value, providing both biodiversity gains and improve sightlines for a greater sense of safety. Similarly, crown lifting to some of the trees to let in more natural light, improving biodiversity opportunities and a safer environment.

7 **Space activation**
Introducing pause spaces with seating and lighting because it is a steep incline to the path, creates a more inclusive route, using standard palette street furniture as outlined in section 2. Similar to Tudor Grange Walk, introduction of information boards with wildlife facts as part of an educational nature trail would help 'activate' the route.

8 **Lighting**
As Monks Path usage is purely pedestrian-based, lighting can be people focused, thus making these spaces feel safe and secure whilst also ecology sensitive. Utilising human scale 'tall' bollards provides the balance between efficiency and appearance. By using a taller bollard, vertical illuminance can be provided, allowing facial recognition for an added feeling of safety whilst reducing the possibility of vandalism or tampering. They also enable ecology sensitive downward focused lighting to minimise impacts on wildlife. The resting places that provide seating and dwell spaces can have feature or localised illuminance to create small pockets for relaxation and interest.


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Prince's Way and Monkspath Hall Road

9 **Improve pedestrian crossings on Prince's Way**
The improved crossing should be level for better user experience and a greater sense of pedestrian priority. The introduction of planting blocks at either end of the crossing, using the wide central reservation, together with a surface change to the crossing will enhance its appearance for pedestrians on this vehicle dominated stretch of road.

10 **Aspirational new link from Homer Road to Prince's Way**
A potential new future link identified in the Town Centre Masterplan (2020) will provide a legible and distinct route for pedestrians and cyclists encompassing small seating areas, clear signage and should be fronted onto by new development to ensure that the route is safe and overlooked.

11 **Upgrade to pedestrian priority crossings on Prince's Way/ Monkspath Hall Road junction**
The aspirational future new link will break out on Prince's Way at the Monkspath Hall Road junction and require future improvements to the existing crossing points. These should include upgrading to pedestrian priority crossing points with activation buttons. Widening of the crossing points and increasing the depth of the pedestrian refuge is key to create a more pedestrian friendly environment.

12 **Space activation to railway bridge over Monkspath Hall Road**
As a southern entrance to the town centre, the journey experience should not appear to be a functional uninspiring journey on foot. As such, for the railway bridge over Monkspath Hall Road, coloured lighting can enhance the aesthetics of the underpass and provide a 'hello' or 'goodbye' to the visitors. Whilst the lighting in the underpass can be quite active, in this location it needs to be considered carefully to ensure it retains the safety for vehicle drivers without distraction. However, it will still allow for light to 'paint' the structure and can be animated through dimming and colour change.

13 **Improve pedestrian links to Tudor Grange Park**
Introduction of a new pedestrian crossing point on Monkspath Hall Road on a more natural desire line. Positioned opposite the eastern entrance to Tudor Grange Park and the pedestrian only access route in the north-west corner of the car park, creating a more intuitive and direct route to Tudor Grange Park if approaching from the town centre.


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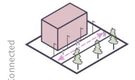
Active Spaces

Crossings

Wayfinding



Connections

Enhance Outdoor Seating & Gathering

Lighting

- Pedestrian route
- Shared pedestrian and cycle path
- Toucan crossing
- Improved pedestrian crossing point
- Future aspirational route
- Two way traffic flow
- Levelled crossing
- Pause spaces
- Playable landscape features
- Proposed bike stands
- Wayfinding
- Existing trees
- Wildflower planting
- Hard surfacing, terracing with integrated seating
- Hard surfacing to grass terracing
- Wildlife information boards/ activity stations
- Widened entrance
- Activation feature lighting to underpasses

Figure 47 - Jubilee Gardens to Prince's Way Plan

03 Key Moves

Warwick Road

Warwick Road is a juxtaposition between a vehicle dominant street-scene and a shop window for the town. It is the only outwardly looking section of the town centre with shop frontages on the road corridor. The western end also sits within the Conservation Area. Brueton Gardens junction forms a northern gateway and is a prominent pedestrian route from the north and hospital as well as a key bus junction. However, it currently has a much greater vehicle weighting that causes severance for users coming from the north and isolation of Brueton Gardens. Warwick Road public realm improvements are considered to be a long-term project. They align with the Council's ambitions to change travel behaviours towards using more sustainable modes, and they complement the Mell Square redevelopment scheme. Delivery of this scheme would be dependent on achieving a reduction in vehicle movements along this stretch of road and by increasing the number of people accessing the town centre by foot or by bike. Brueton Gardens could be delivered alongside a scheme planned to accommodate the new Sprint route, or as part of the long-term Warwick Road improvements.

Design Objectives

- To create a sense of arrival into the town centre
- Raise the visual amenity of Warwick Road
- Improve pedestrian priority and de-clutter the road and pavement
- Improve pedestrian crossing to Mill Lane on Warwick Road
- Enhance views in and out of the town centre
- Reinforce nodes in the town and pedestrian links to Brueton Gardens
- Improve the route between Mell Square Car Park and the town centre
- Improve the crossing point at the junction between the hospital and town centre

Figure 48 - Warwick Road Masterplan

Design Proposals

1 Pedestrian and cycle friendly environment
A reordering of the streetscape profile to Warwick Road to support a modal shift from a vehicle dominant character to a people focused environment. Pedestrian priority is achieved by combining the carriageways along the north of the street-scene of Warwick Road, reducing the severance effect. This enables the introduction of a linear park along the southern edge to facilitate a pedestrian and cycle super-highway with clutter free, segregated routes. To reinforce the pedestrian priority along this linear public realm park, there should be level crossings to minor road junctions. Upgrading surface materials (silver) and street furniture (standard) as set out in palettes in section 2, will improve the sense of place in this street-scene. Collectively, there's an environmental change to the street-scene that will influence users' perspectives, creating a self-enforcing 20 mph zone. This sees a shift in street typology from a movement driven distributor road to a place focused urban greenway.

2 Street greening
The linear park sees the introduction of large-scale street trees, wildflower planting and roadside SuDs such as vegetated swales or rain gardens. Several large buildings present suitable facades for vertical greening that create landmark features as wayfinding markers for the town centre. Where space allows, street trees should be introduced on the northern side of Warwick Road. Similarly, roadside rain gardens can be integrated in the footway on the north-west corner of Brueton Gardens junction. Collectively, they provide a rich tapestry of greening that will improve the biodiversity value of the street and a vibrant identity of a sustainable and healthy focused town, celebrating its Urbs in Rure feel.

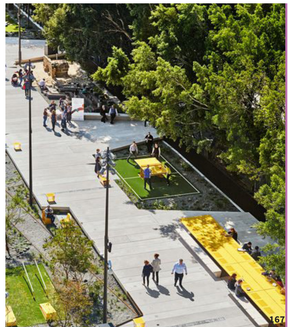
3 Improved crossing
Relocating a crossing point on Warwick Road closer to Mill Lane for ease and direct movement into Mell Square, following natural desire lines. Also, introducing a new crossing opposite Mell Square car park. Both of which should be level and controlled crossings which will increase pedestrian priority and improve connectivity. Furthermore, combining of the carriageway lanes as proposed will improve user experiences of crossing points by creating a clean single stage crossing only.

4 Brueton Gardens junction improvements
Introducing pedestrian priority crossings on all arms of the junction with potential for an 'all pedestrian phase' crossing, with a change to the road surface and a level profile, will improve connectivity. These crossings will need to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. Widening of footways is critical at the junction's north-east corner and along the northern edge of Warwick Road for pedestrian safety and improving the setting to the listed buildings and the Conservation Area. With a very generous footway on the western side of Warwick Road's northern arm there is capacity to shift the road carriage to the west by 1m, enabling a wider footway on the junction's north-east corner.

5 Brueton Gardens
Opportunities exist to create a cycle hub as a gateway function to activate this space being well positioned on the fulcrum of priority cycle routes. The hub has potential for café, toilets and shower facilities, repair station or shop together with long stay, secure covered storage to support a cycling commuter community. It could be accommodated within the eastern extent of the gardens, with removal of the hedge and land take of the predominantly grassed area. This would be a dual aspect facility with a key interface with Warwick Road but also activation on the garden side. As a key public open space with heritage interest, new surface treatments and street furniture in line with gold and signature palettes, respectively, detailed in Section 2, will revive the gardens as a desirable destination. Lighting of the features such as trees, steps and the clock tower, in an ecologically sensitive way, will invigorate the space and improve night-time quality. These interventions, activation and improved connectivity will help create a safer environment.

6 Lighting to Warwick Road
The street lighting should complement the shift from a highway focus to a pedestrian and cycle friendly environment, moving from highways lighting to a town centre approach. Lighting should be positioned and selected to enhance the visibility of the crossings for both safety and enhanced identification. Similarly, with increased feature lighting to trees, soft landscape and hard features should be included to raise the visual impression of the space creating a people centred environment.

Figure 49 - Warwick Road Visual, looking west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Connected
Pedestrian Priority

Healthy
Active Travel

Connected
Crossings

Connected
Gateways

Healthy
Playable Landscapes

Future Ready
High Level Greening & Street Trees


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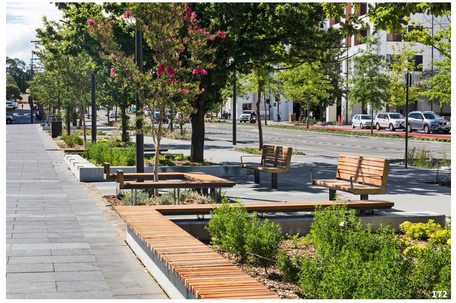
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Figure 50 - Warwick Road Plan

- Pedestrian route
- Improved pedestrian crossing point
- Widen footpath
- Cycle lane
- Two way traffic flow
- Existing bus & cycle lane
- Levelled crossing
- Twenty mile per hour zone
- Conservation Boundary
- Listed building
- Buildings of local importance
- Open air museum feature point
- Playable landscape features
- Cycle Infrastructure - enhanced existing and proposed bike stands (secured, covered, long stay parking)
- Cycle hub with facitlites
- Wayfinding
- Roadside suds
- Proposed trees
- Linear park
- Vertical greening opportunites

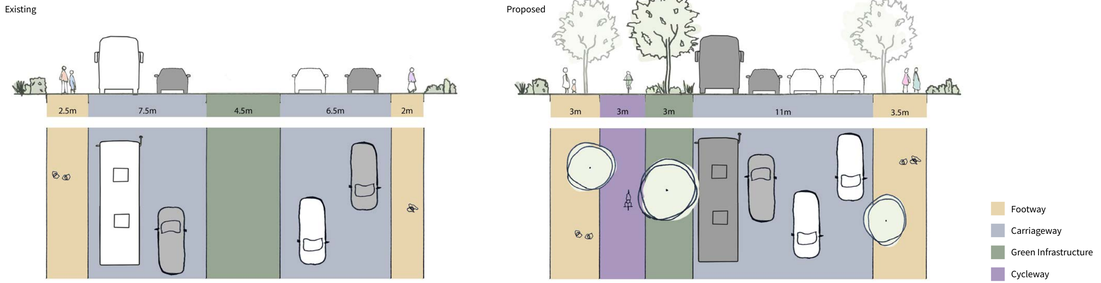


Figure 51 - Warwick Road Cross Section

Delivery Plan

The Life of The Public Realm

To ensure that the new public realm in Solihull is well delivered and cared for, the following chapter establishes a series of processes to help support the delivery, management and maintenance of the public realm.

Whole Life Costing

Whole life costing is the "systematic consideration of all relevant costs and revenues associated with the ownership of an asset" (National Platform for the Built Environment). It provides a tool to quantitatively assess and compare design proposals and helps justify greater initial outlay on higher quality, longer lasting materials.

To be truly beneficial the exercise needs to be systematic covering such things as:

- Initial capital investment
- Longevity and robustness
- Ease of maintenance
- Reactive maintenance where a 'do nothing' option is included
- Parking revenue
- Street trading
- Increased business occupancy
- Increased property prices (due to improved public realm and street trees)
- Reduced cost associated with flooding (if using SuDS)
- Reduced policy costs
- Reduced costs on health services through active lifestyle changes

A Public Realm Technical Manual

To ensure the aspirations of the Council are upheld, and as presented in the PRS, it is recommended that a detailed technical manual is prepared to help steer public realm design development, implementation and aftercare. Whilst applicable to the projects being proposed in the PRS, the manual may also cover areas outside of the core area (such as arterial corridors and district centres).

A public realm technical manual would aim to:

• Secure quality – simple, fit for purpose, and timeless

• Ensure consistency – creating a seamless environment encouraging social interaction, walking and cycling

• Simplify maintenance - identify a limited palette of materials, street furniture and planting that is robust, low maintenance, easily repairable and replaceable, vandal resistant and affordable

• Facilitate discharge of planning conditions – used by developers and their consultants to provide certainty in Solihull's expectations thus easing workload and facilitating timely discharge of conditions

• Help secure best rates – large orders ensure best value is ensured

Ultimately the technical manual – shaped in partnership with Solihull service leads - would provide a valuable reference document for the local authority. It is also recommended that Solihull consider a dedicated public realm coordinator role/PM to take ownership of delivering the high aspirations and technical requirements of the manual.

Phasing

The PRS provides the vision and town centre wide strategies along with design principles for the seven focus areas. Its sets out design guidance to inform future development in Solihull town centre to support delivery of seamless, high quality public realm through the rolling programme of public realm improvements.

Funding and delivery of the individual public realm improvements will come from a combination of public sector, private developers and partnerships. The adjacent table and figure set out potential phasing for the various public realm improvements to ensure an achievable and deliverable outcome, categorised by short term (0-5yrs), medium term (5-10yrs) and long term (10-15yrs). It also identifies interdependent projects that may influence timings for delivery. Early delivery of some of the key moves will have a transformative effect on Solihull's town centre, benefiting users' experiences, the local community and economy, attracting investment and setting Solihull as an exemplar town centre.

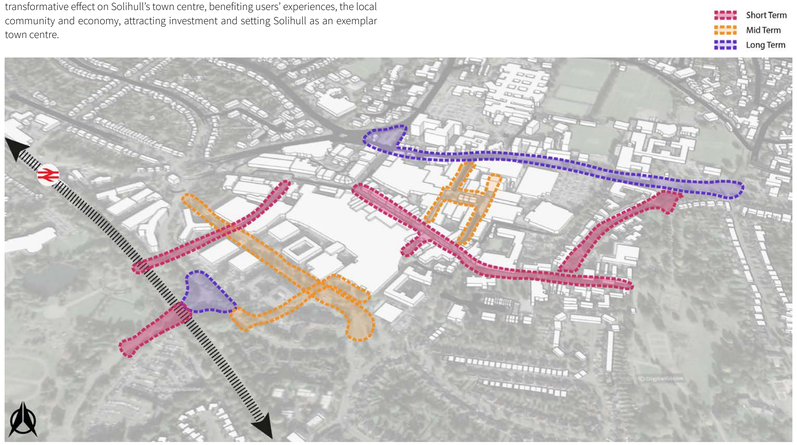
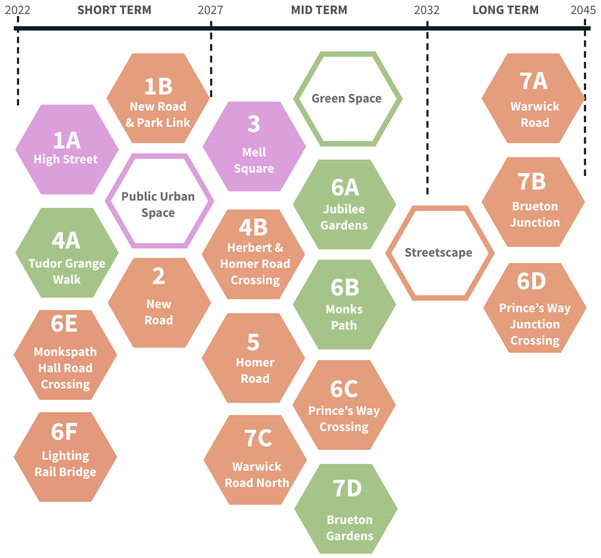


Figure 52 - Delivery Plan

Phasing

No.	Focus Area	Projects	Related schemes | Inter dependencies	Short | Medium | Long	Funding Private | Public | Combination	Catalyst Standalone | Associated with another scheme
1	High Street to Malvern Park	1A - High Street	Eastgate Phase 1 Solihull Town Centre Energy network	Short term	Public	Standalone
		1B - New Road and Park link	Knowle cycle route	Short term	Public	Standalone
2	New Road	2 - New Road	Knowle cycle route	Short term	Public	Associated with another scheme
3	Mell Square		Mell Square Redevelopment	Medium term	Combination	106
4	Tudor Grange Walk & Herbert Road	4A - Tudor Grange Walk	Solihull Town Centre Energy Network Westgate (Medium Term)	Short term	Public	Associated with another scheme – Energy Network
		4B - Herbert Road	Solihull Town Centre Energy Network Homer Road improvements	Medium term	Public	Major Highways Improvement scheme
5	Homer Road		Police station coming forward Eastgate (Medium long term) Westgate (Medium) Solihull Town Centre Energy Network	Medium term	Combination	Standalone/ Major Highway Improvement/ Associated with another scheme
6	Jubilee Gardens, Monks Path and Prince's Way	6A - Jubilee Gardens		Medium term	Private	Standalone
		6B - Monks Path		Medium term	Public	Standalone
		6C - Prince's Way crossing		Medium term	Public	Standalone
		6D - Improved junction crossings	Monkspath Hall car park development (medium/ long term) Prince's Way TC masterplan project and associated new link from Prince's Way to Homer Road	Long term	Combination	Standalone / Associated with another scheme
		6E - New crossing on Monkspath Hall	Linked to Lighting rail bridge (6F) Monkspath Hall car park development (medium/ long term)	Short term	Public	Standalone / Associated with another scheme
		6F - Lighting rail bridge	Linked to Monkspath Hall Road crossing (6E)	Short term	Public	Standalone / Associated with another scheme
7	Warwick Road, Brueton Gardens,	7A - Warwick Road		Long term	Public	Major Highways Improvement scheme
		7B - Brueton Junction	Linked to Warwick Road improvements	Long term	Public	Major Highways Improvement scheme
		7C - Warwick Road (North arm)	Linked to SPRINT and bus gate	Medium term	Public	
		7D - Brueton Gardens	Linked to SPRINT and bus gate	Medium term	Public	



03 Key Moves

Solihull Town Centre Place Hub

Purpose

The purpose of Place Hub is to foster meaningful connections between people and place, by using creative methods of engagement to encourage active participation in the future of our buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods. It is strongly recommended that a Solihull Place Hub is created to assist the delivery and engagement for the rolling programme of public realm interventions across the town centre. It has been a beneficial tool in other towns going through public realm regeneration.

Description

The Solihull Place Hub would be a physical place on the high street where local stakeholders can come to understand, debate and get involved in the past, present and future of where they live, work and play.

This interaction is a key opportunity to show support for the future of the town post-covid and encourage people to experience the town centre and its streets and spaces in new and exciting ways. As a collective space and shop front in the town centre, High Street it will be a drop-in centre for information and advice about the up-and-coming programme of projects for the town centre, and an active space to engage and help re-imagine its future. It will also act as a creative space on the high street to host events, hold meetings and workshops, and a co-working space for the client and project team.

Location

Centrally located within the town centre to encourage access and engagement during the daytime and in the evening. A vacant premise on High Street, Mell Square or Mill Lane would be recommended.

Benefits

To promote change for Solihull town centre from a central, visible and accessible location in the town centre. To support and encourage creative engagement in the long-term planning of the town centre. Adopting a participatory approach to regeneration and urban change through different tools and techniques to encourage interaction, generate discussion and feedback and foster community regeneration and well-being. Bringing key stakeholders together to help deliver change across the town centre, including BID team, local businesses, residents, SMBC officers, local artists and investors.

To trial and test different ideas within the town centre through trails, temporary installation, pop-up stores and tactical urbanism to encourage people to visit the town centre and engage with the public realm, new activities and town centre experiences.

Next Steps

Re-energising the public realm of Solihull is an exciting prospect forming a key component in the future prosperity of the town and wider region. The PRS creates the appropriate framework to develop targeted quality of place improvements and it's vital this ambition is carried through to project conception and initiation, design, construction and aftercare.

This will ultimately depend on long term investment, strong leadership and governance, and a robust framework of performance and technical standards. Key next steps are shown below.

Programme of future activity

- Public engagement and consultation – establish Place Hub
- Establish town centre working group and design champion
- Appoint Public Realm Coordinator as part of a new town centre management team
- Prepare detailed public realm technical manual for the town centre
- Prepare and submit planning applications for phase 1 pilot scheme works
- Securing funding and establish delivery mechanisms for each phase/works package
- Complete design and undertake construction phases
- Instigate thorough handover process and defects period
- Establish strategy for long term management and maintenance of the public realm

APPENDIX

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