

Design Principles

5 Design Principles

5.1 The objectives of this Planning Brief are to identify the constraints and opportunities of the site within Maidenhead town centre and to guide the future development of the site whilst ensuring proposals are of the highest quality. This section sets out key principles for urban design and the public realm.

5.2 Local Plan Policy DG1 - Design guidelines states that the Borough Council will have regard to the following guidelines when assessing new development proposals:

1. Within new development schemes, public spaces should be overlooked by adjacent buildings and public and private areas should be clearly defined.
2. Developments should provide convenient access, parking and facilities for people with disabilities in accordance with the Authority's adopted standards.
3. The design of new buildings should be compatible with the established street façade having regard to scale, height and building lines of adjacent properties.
4. Materials which are sympathetic to the traditional building materials of the area should be used.
5. Public views of historic, townscape or scenic importance should be recognised and retained.
6. Development proposals, will be expected to include a landscape scheme. Landscaping, including tree planting, should form an integral part of a development's overall design and layout.
7. Developments should provide adequate off street parking for vehicles and cycles in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted standards. Such provision should be well landscaped.
8. Development should provide adequate vehicle access, loading and unloading facilities and circulation space within the site as appropriate.
9. The traffic generated by the proposed development should not have an unacceptable effect on the local road network and the environment of the locality.
10. Within mixed development schemes separate access should be provided to any residential accommodation.
11. Harm should not be caused to the character of the surrounding area through development which is cramped, or which results in the loss of important features which contribute to that character.

5.3 The Council is mindful that new development respects the scale, height and building lines of adjacent properties in accordance with Policy DG1, where appropriate. The Council also recognise that the site offers an exceptional opportunity to improve the town centre and expect that the height and scale of the proposed development will reflect this. There are clearly locations where a sensitive approach will be necessary but in other less sensitive locations along King Street, Broadway and within the site, there is an opportunity to diverge from this to create the desired step change in scale, design and quality of development.

Scale, Massing & Built Form

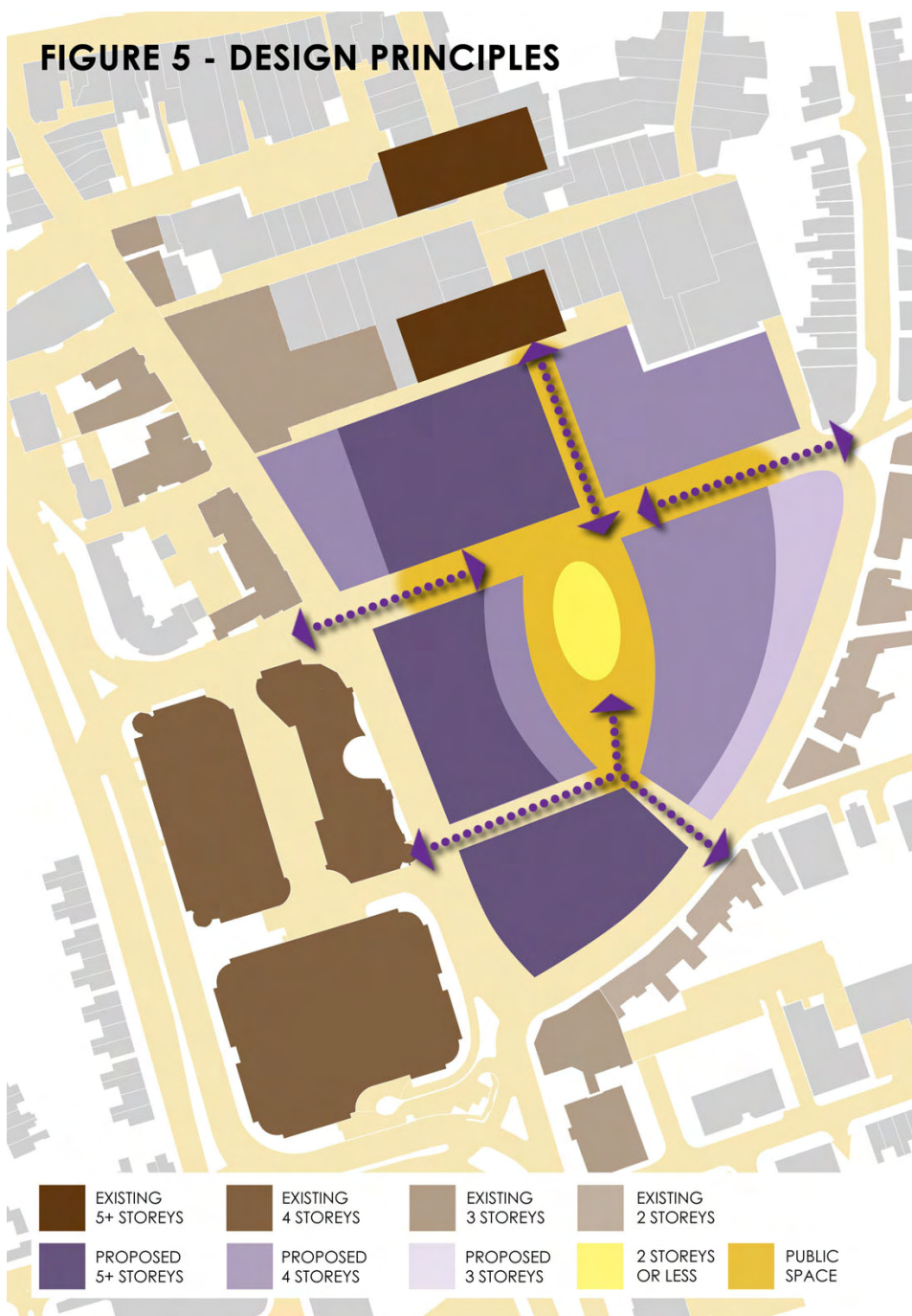
5.4 Although predominantly retail, any proposal should comprise a range of appropriate town centre uses. There should be a horizontal and vertical mix of uses across the scheme. As stated above, the form of the development should be mindful of the existing urban grain but not constrained by it. The site forms an opportunity to a create retail units in a range of sizes that are not currently available within the town centre. Retail will be located at ground floor level along the key routes through the site with potential for mezzanines and double height frontages, where appropriate.

5.5 The development should create a layout for the town centre that respects the existing urban grain and achieves the key linkages between the town centre and the station. The layout should also seek to create a successful and attractive open retail environment with attractive useable public spaces.

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5.6 Developments should be of a scale, height, massing and layout which achieves a step change in the town centre but sympathetic to the buildings and character of the immediate locality where appropriate (see Figure 5). The development should carefully consider the impacts upon the surrounding context and demonstrate that this has been extensively considered within the design statement accompanying any planning application. This includes careful consideration of minimising the potential for noise conflict between neighbouring land uses; such as homes and evening economy activities.

Figure 5 Design Principles



Layout and Linkages

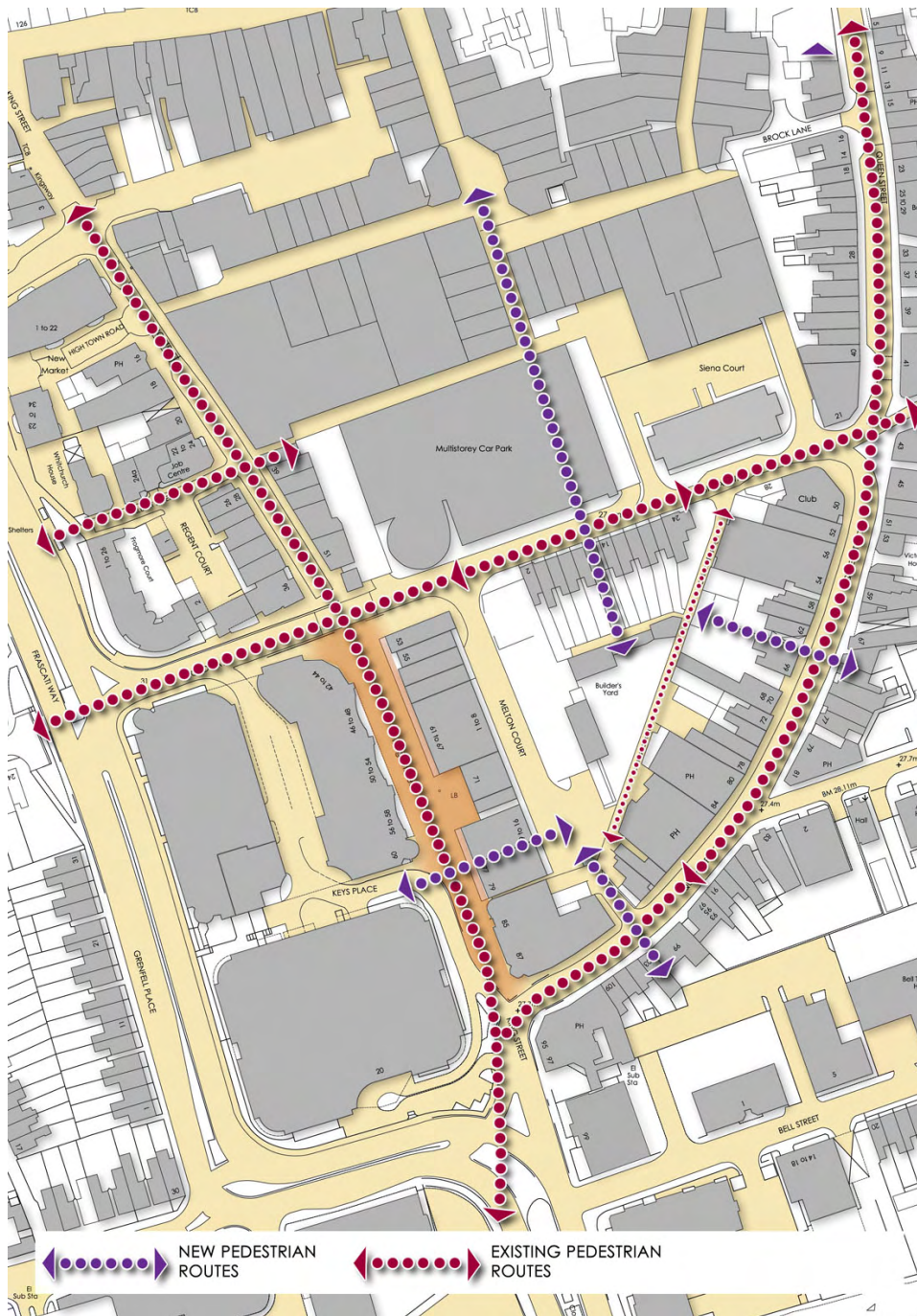
5.7 Key linkages will be created through the site linking the High Street and the Nicholson's Centre with the south of the town centre (see Figure 6). Along these linkages should be active frontages including new retail uses to create a vibrant and attractive street environment. The layout of new development should create greater permeability through the town centre to adjoining town centre areas and transport hubs.

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5.8 Developments facing key routes, such as Queen Street and King Street and the new retail streets within the development should be designed so that their key frontages and entrances face on to the street. This can help contribute towards creating a more animated and secure pedestrian environment particularly through optimising natural surveillance.

5.9 The southern tip of the site and the King Street frontage are clearly visible from Station Approach and therefore provides an opportunity to create a highly visible face to the new development. This could take the form of a landmark building or a focal point to create visual interest and draw people into the site and the town centre.

Figure 6 Pedestrian Linkage Diagram



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Public Realm

5.10 Development should be designed in order to create a secure town centre environment. New development should be designed in accordance with the principles set out in 'Secured by Design' so that opportunities for crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour are reduced and a safe living environment promoted through lively and animated streets and spaces (overlooked on all sides where possible).

Figure 7 Public Realm Opportunities



5.11 The scheme will be expected to create sustainable buildings and attractive spaces through good quality architecture balanced with harmonious treatment including public art, as an integral element of the whole, which will enhance the overall character of the area. A range of uses, building heights and spaces will create a varied, well mixed and attractive development.

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5.12 New public spaces should be engaging, distinct in character and contribute to the attraction of the town centre as a shopping and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work. Public areas should be pedestrian dominated and provide frequent seating opportunities, public art, and opportunities for entertainment and activity, exploiting the potential for the aesthetic role of planting as a contrast to the built environment. Opportunities exist to create a hierarchy of spaces with their character dictated by the function of that space and the uses within or surrounding it.

5.13 An opportunity also exists to create a hierarchy of spaces within the development including a central public space and smaller more intimate spaces in which to dwell (see Figure 7). The pedestrian environment on King Street should be retained and enhanced by the new development. This site will act as a catalyst for improvements to the buildings and public realm on Queen Street. The treatment of Broadway is likely to be dependent upon the status of the road in relation to the wider transport strategy for the site and the town centre. The opportunity should be taken to transform this route and introduce active ground floor frontages. Broadway would be further enlivened by the improved pedestrian routes to the Nicholson's Centre.

5.14 The greatest opportunity is to create a new public space within the town centre. The function and use of this space could be a focus for the development and should be clearly set out within a public realm strategy supporting the application.

Tree planting

5.15 To improve the attractiveness of the environment, future development should seek to include tree planting with any proposal. Trees in urban areas have a number of benefits, providing a sense of well being and place and they are also helpful in attracting inward investment. Tree planting, to produce leafy vistas along the wider streets, should be a key feature. Tree planting at junctions would also be desirable, given the increased prominence and therefore added impact. Tree planting to augment this may be appropriate in other public areas such as specifically designed public space. Sufficient space should be provided to ensure trees can be planted at normal ground level and not in raised planters or pots and have the space grow to maturity without conflict being caused or the need for significant pruning to be carried out. Utilities and drainage layouts would need to be positioned and or re-routed to provide sufficient space for tree roots, along with special porous surfaces to enable water percolation and gaseous diffusion through to the roots beneath. Appropriate species may include London plane, as the trees should be of an appropriate scale to complement the built environment.