

Corsham

Stage 1 Report Understanding Corsham

public realm study
September 2015





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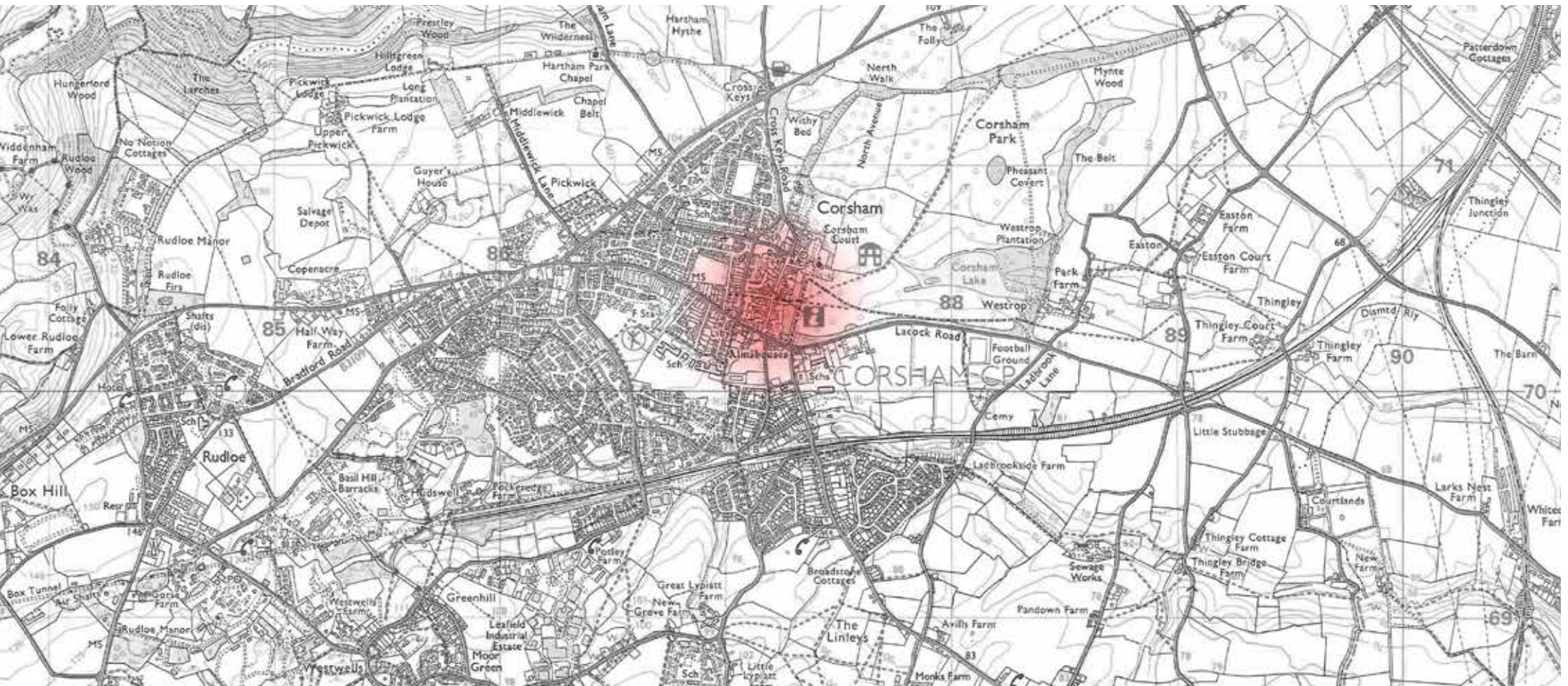
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01 Introduction



Location of Corsham



Corsham's need for a public realm study is the result of recent work conducted by the Town Council on marketing Corsham as a destination and through consultation with local residents about the Town's Strategic and Neighbourhood Plans. These processes highlighted concerns about the policies and strategies regarding the public realm in Corsham.

Therefore the Town Council has agreed to undertake a public realm project for Corsham involving three stages as follows:

1. A study

- To establish the current condition and character of the town and the opinions and wishes of residents, businesses and visitors.

2. A strategy

- To establish the overall concept and initial design solutions for the whole of the town centre, identifying key spaces where specific interventions are recommended.

3. Implementation

- Preparation of detailed, costed proposals for specified areas to allow the strategy to be delivered on a phased basis.

In March 2015, Corsham Town Council commissioned NEW masterplanning and the Urban Engineering Studio to commence with the initial **Stage 1 Study**.

This report is an interim document which establishes the current condition and character of the town as well as the opinions and wishes of residents, businesses and visitors.

The findings from this report will inform the production of an overall strategy for change in Corsham town centre and form the basis for Stage 2 of the Town Council's public realm project.

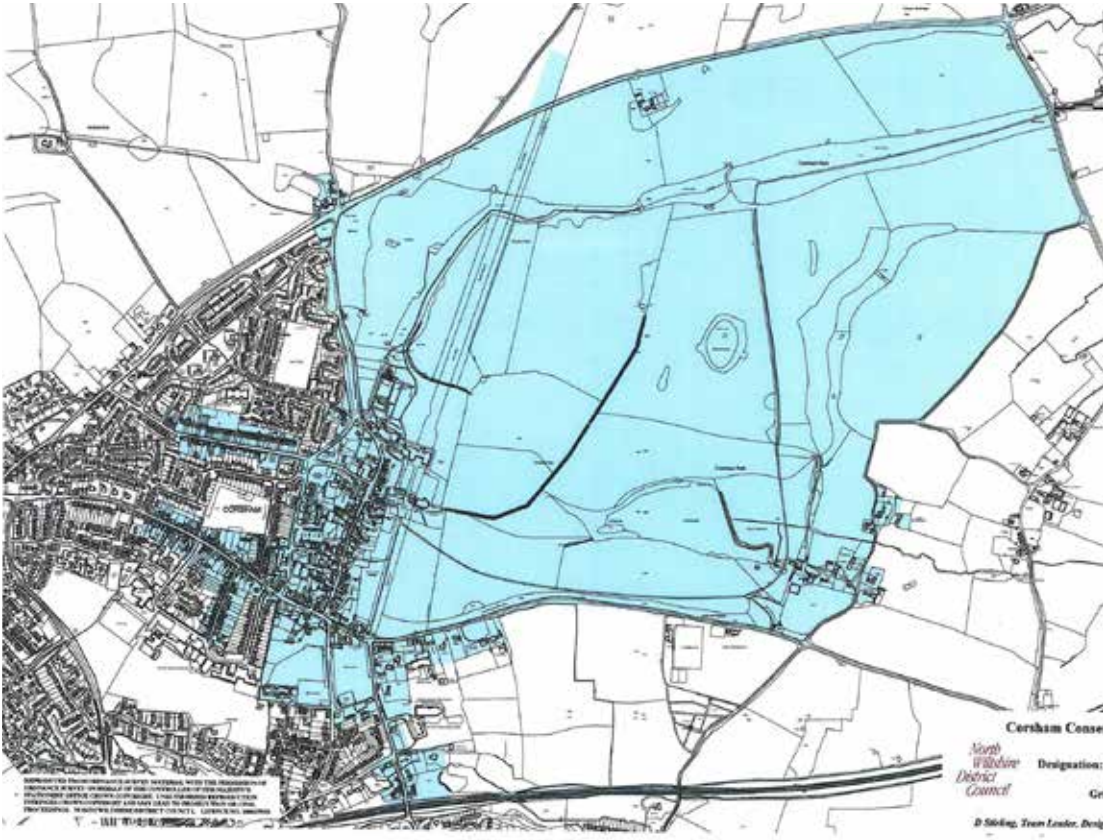
Process

The preparation of this study has been informed by the process of review, analysis, and engagement.

The town centre has been the primary area of focus for this study; however, the wider context has been considered, in particular the conservation area and the arrival gateway at Pickwick.



Core town centre study area



Conservation area boundary

Review

An inception meeting was held on 16th April 2015 with Corsham Town Council members. At the meeting members presented an overview of the issues in Corsham. Other ongoing studies, including the Neighbourhood Plan and a wider Framework study for Corsham, were also discussed.

A suggested list of key stakeholders as well as key dates of future events was discussed.

A review of existing documentation received from the Council was undertaken to inform the analysis work including: conservation area statement, benchmarking reports, signage, marketing, retail and economic studies as well as emerging proposals for key sites including the Mansion House. Traffic data, including car parking usage, was also reviewed.

Analysis

Town surveys and study visits were undertaken by NEW masterplanning and the Urban Engineering Studio during the winter / spring of 2015 to conduct public realm, urban design and movement audit work. This was reinforced by discussions with Corsham Town Council and a 'town walkabout'.

The analysis process also included looking at the gateways surrounding Corsham and the opportunities for drawing in passing traffic; understanding how people arrive and move around the town centre; the difficulties they encounter in trying to find the historic centre; a review of land uses, key buildings and open spaces; an audit of the key streets that comprise the historic core, and a review of clutter, materials and street furniture across the study area.

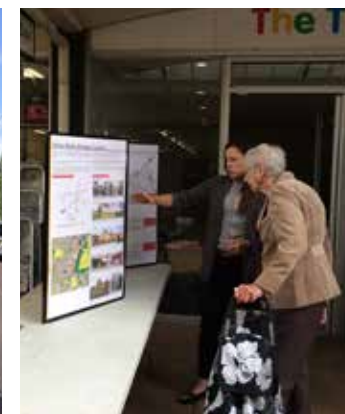
Engagement

Engagement with Corsham Town Council officers, Wiltshire Council officers, stakeholders and residents was crucial to informing this study.

An open day held in the Martingate Shopping Centre on 9th of June 2015 allowed the team to present their initial analysis. A series of boards were displayed covering topics including: gateways, arriving in Corsham, detailing the public realm and an analysis of key streets and spaces. Local residents and visitors to the town centre were keen to discuss the ideas and to provide feedback.

The exhibition remained on display in the Town Hall and the Springfield Community Campus, for the following three weeks. This allowed as many residents as possible to see the initial study work and to provide feedback. A questionnaire was used to gain written feedback.

A focused stakeholders workshop including town centre business owners, residents and land owners held 9th June 2015 helped to generate useful discussions, ideas and feedback for the study.



Survey work, a walkabout and community engagement have helped to inform the study

Key findings & next steps

The report establishes the current condition and character of the town as well as provides an understanding of the opinions and wishes of residents, visitors and stakeholders.

It highlights that there are a number of areas where public realm improvements would not only enhance the physical appearance of the town centre but also help to deliver a series of economic and social improvements as well.

In summary these improvements include:

- Helping to create a more welcoming environment to attract new shops / business to the area and to increase footfall in secondary streets which will support both a day and evening economy.
- Improving the gateway arrivals to Corsham to help change perceptions and to let people know what Corsham has to offer.
- Reinforcing the green feel provided from Corsham Court and other green spaces within the town centre.
- Improving the arrival experiences for all modes of transport and ensure that visitors can easily arrive and circulate within the town centre.
- Creating safe and attractive walking and cycling routes to the town centre.
- Creating arrival / civic spaces at either end of the High Street to help announce the town centre and to provide space for community events.
- Ensuring the public realm encourages visitors to explore the whole of the High Street.
- Making the Martingate Centre feel more connected to the High Street.
- Removing clutter and developing a holistic approach to materials and street furniture which helps to unify the town centre and reflects Corsham's historic past.

Following on from the Stage 1 summary report the next steps will involve developing a comprehensive public realm strategy. This will build on the analysis from this report and start to develop an overall concept for Corsham as well as initial design solutions for priority areas for change.

Report structure

The structure of the report is as follows:

Section 2 - Importance of the public realm

- Provides a clear definition of public realm and highlights the importance and value of a high-quality public environment and how this relates to Corsham. It also illustrates the various levels of improvements that can be made and the transforming effect they can have on a space.

Section 3 - Town context

- Provides an understanding of Corsham's strategic location and the influences that have shaped the town as well as its important assets. This section also outlines the key land uses, buildings and open spaces in the town centre.

Section 4 - Arriving in Corsham

- Analyses how people arrive in Corsham and identifies the problems and pressures shoppers and visitors have in finding and accessing the town centre.

Section 5 - Streets & spaces

- Reviews the current condition of key streets and spaces. It provides an understanding of their role and function within the network as well as existing problems.

Section 6 - Materials

- Looks holistically across the town centre, at the application of materials, areas of clutter and the selection of street furniture.

Section 7 - Engagement

- Outlines the feedback from both the stakeholders workshop and the verbal and written feedback received by the team at the open day.

Section 8 - Key findings & next steps

- Explores the key findings from the Stage 1 analysis and engagement. It also outlines the next steps required to bring the recommendations together as a strategy for long term change in Corsham's town centre.

02 The importance of the public realm

This section provides a definition of the public realm. It highlights the importance and value of a high-quality public realm and how a long-term strategy can help make improvements for Corsham. It also demonstrates the various levels of intervention that public realm improvements can take using an example space in Corsham.



What is the public realm?

To understand the purpose of this study it is important to establish first what we mean by public realm. Public realm means many different things to different people, but essentially in this study we are dealing with the space in which public life takes place.

It is the space between buildings which are publicly accessible including streets, lanes, alleys, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces. Although it also includes publicly accessible space within buildings such as churches, shopping centres and community buildings.

This study is focused on the publicly accessible outdoor space between buildings.

What can a high quality public realm deliver?

An attractive and memorable public realm helps us to form a 'mental map' of where we live, it gives us a sense of pride in our town and it shapes our well-being.

It also helps to create a strong 'sense of place', and deliver wide-ranging economic, physical and social benefits including:

- Reinforcing heritage and community identity
- Creating safer places
- Attracting more visitors
- Supporting independent retailers
- Attracting more investment

“Public spaces bring communities together, shape the cultural identity of an area and provide a sense of place for local communities”
(The value of public space)

“ These are the places that shape our feelings of well-being... the ‘living rooms’ of our towns and cities”
(Street Design for All)

“A high quality public realm can have a significant impact on life and is an essential part of any successful regeneration strategy” (Design Council)

Reinforcing, heritage & community identity

The public realm can help to foster a sense of identity and civic pride. Corsham benefits from a unique setting in that its historic core is full of architectural interest. Its relationship to the adjacent Corsham Court and its associated green space provides a unique combination of contrasting environments. Better connections between these unique environments can help to set Corsham apart from other places.

Corsham has a strong heritage. Its past in the wool and stone mining industries and involvement in the Second World War are all historic strands that could be celebrated through the public realm.

By reinforcing what makes Corsham special it helps local residents appreciate the past and reinforces a sense of community. A strong identity or brand will also make Corsham a highly marketable destination to attract visitors.



Chepstow's public space improvements allowed for local artists to create art which celebrates Chepstow's history.



The public space in Hafencity, Hamburg reflects its previous use as a dock through public art and materials.

Creating safer places

The design of public spaces can help to balance the needs of all road users including pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities and drivers. It can also promote healthy active lifestyles by encouraging walking and cycling as part of everyday life.

The greater variety of activity that a street can accommodate both day and night the more successful it is likely to be and the safer it will feel.

Across Corsham's town centre there are a number of streets and spaces that could be enhanced. Public realm improvements would create more inviting environments, spaces to sit and people-watch and places to hold community events.

Access to Corsham's core is a priority. Measures need to be taken to ensure safe, inviting routes are created along key routes. This includes Newlands Road and Pickwick Road and the residential neighbourhoods they serve. Residents that feel connected to Corsham will be less likely to drive to surrounding towns for their shopping and leisure needs.



Exemplar photos highlight how a better distribution of space in the public realm can accommodate all modes of transport in a safe and inviting manner.

Attracting more visitors

An attractive environment with inviting, logical connections that link key destinations and attractions can encourage more people to explore a place, spend more time and more money there.

Corsham's current gateways need to do more to invite passing traffic into the town. This would help to signal to motorists and rail passengers the qualities of the town and encourage them to visit. This is particularly important for Corsham as key routes such as the A4 do not pass through the town centre.

Connections between Corsham's many assets, including Corsham Court, the High Street, the Almshouses and the Pound Arts Centre need to be more coherent, providing visitors with a variety of straightforward routes from which to explore the town.



Photos highlight a series of successful environments which are inviting, provide clear routes, and create inviting spaces that cater for a variety of activities including browsing, sitting, people watching and larger spaces for community events.



Supporting independent retailers

Independent retailers are often located in the historic core of a town centre. An attractive and coherent streetscape, which is memorable and helps to distinguish one town centre from another, will help to create a unique place that encourages people to visit and shop.

Corsham prides itself on its strong independent retailer offer. The historic setting and existing public realm along the High Street helps to support these shops. However, improvements would reinforce the environment.

Better integration is required between the High Street and the Martingate Centre. Improvements in secondary retail locations such as along Pickwick Road and along the upper section of the High Street will help to create better retail circuits. It will also help to attract new independent shops, cafés and restaurants increasing Corsham's day and evening appeal.



Corsham already has a strong group of independent retailers. Improvements to the public realm will help to support these stores and increase footfall in secondary streets.

Attracting more investment

Attractive spaces in a town can help to attract new businesses and retailers to invest and help grow the town centre and to ensure the success of regeneration projects.

Public realm improvements will make Corsham a more desirable location for businesses. It will also ensure projects such as the redevelopment of the Mansion House succeed.

The expansion of Corsham's town centre will need to occur outside of the historic core and put the necessary connections in place to allow for future growth.

High quality spaces in secondary streets will help to attract additional retailers, both independent and complementary national retailers.



Public realm improvements can help to attract new businesses and national retailers to complement existing ones.



What types of improvements can be made?

Public realm improvements can be delivered on a variety of scales and budgets depending on the level of change proposed to enhance a place.

The photomontages (right) are not suggested designs for Corsham. They are examples which show how three such levels of change could possibly transform a space such as the gateway at Pickwick. The varying levels of intervention are numbered 1-3.

- Simple improvements, including tidying up the street and removing clutter, can help to aid legibility and showcase historic surroundings (1).
- More ambitious changes will help to redress the needs of all users and change how a place is perceived (2).
- Complete redesign and changes to the layout of a space help it fulfil a new role within the town's public realm network (3).



The existing layout at the Hare and Hounds junction with the A4



1. Tidy up and declutter

- Remove any unnecessary or redundant road markings, signage or street furniture.



2. Improve design / layout

- Aim for a coherent street design, not just individual parts for different users
- Reduce the white lines.
- Create crossings for pedestrians which are direct, safe and not over engineered.
- Repair broken paving.



3. Create a memorable place

- Change the arrangement of traffic.
- Provide a shared surface environment to change the character of the area and provide prominence to important buildings.

03 Town context

Corsham is a small but vibrant market town with a historic High Street, a strong sense of heritage and direct connections to the surrounding countryside. Corsham's population is just over 13,000 which combines with the wider community area to provide an overall population of around 20,000.

Understanding how a place has evolved is an important starting point in its analysis. This section explores the historic influences that have helped to shape Corsham, its strategic context, and defines its key assets. It also provides an overview of land uses, building quality and key open spaces in the town centre.



Evolution of Corsham

The current form and layout of Corsham has been strongly influenced by the position of Corsham Court and its associated grounds to the east, the rail line to the south, and the A4 to the north. This led to the town's direction of growth to the west.

In 1086 the Domesday book records Corsham as consisting of a Royal Manor with a church and a population of 650.

For generations the Royal Manor was passed down the Royal Family until the reign of Elizabeth I. The current house, Corsham Court was constructed by Thomas Smythe in 1582. It was sold to the Methuen Family, who still retain ownership, in 1745.

The High Street as we know it today contains buildings which primarily date from the 17th and 18th century and the success Corsham experienced as a result of the wool trade.

With the arrival of the railway and the construction of the Box Tunnel in 1841 came the discovery of limestone and Corsham's mining boom. The stone was used extensively in the construction of Bath while rail links facilitated international export. The mining industry saw Corsham's size double in just over 100 years.

The demise of the stone quarries reduced Corsham's population again. During the Second World War the maze of underground tunnels were repurposed as munition depots and huge underground factories for the military. Corsham's population peaked at 25,000 people of which 10,000 remained after the War.

The military presence remains today with facilities at Corsham hosting the National Information System Services and a small number of other units with around 2,000 personnel including military, civil servants and industry partners.

With the heavy Ministry of Defence (MoD) investment in secure communications and data storage Corsham now has the most secure cloud data centre and electrical power supply in the country and supports a growing cluster of digital industries.

Corsham currently has all the attributes of an innovation region where the right measure and timing of interventions by local and central government, businesses and academics should bring significant economic benefits. Furthermore, these can be market-ready in relatively short time.

The public realm has an important role to play in helping entice these companies to set up in Corsham and to help support the local economy.



Corsham 1886 - development concentrated around High Street and Pickwick Road.



Corsham Today - growth has been to the west and defined by the boundaries of the A4 and Corsham Court creating an off-centre town centre location.

Corsham's strategic location

Corsham is an attractive place to live and work and the historic town centre has the potential to attract large numbers of visitors.

It benefits from strong:

Heritage & landscape

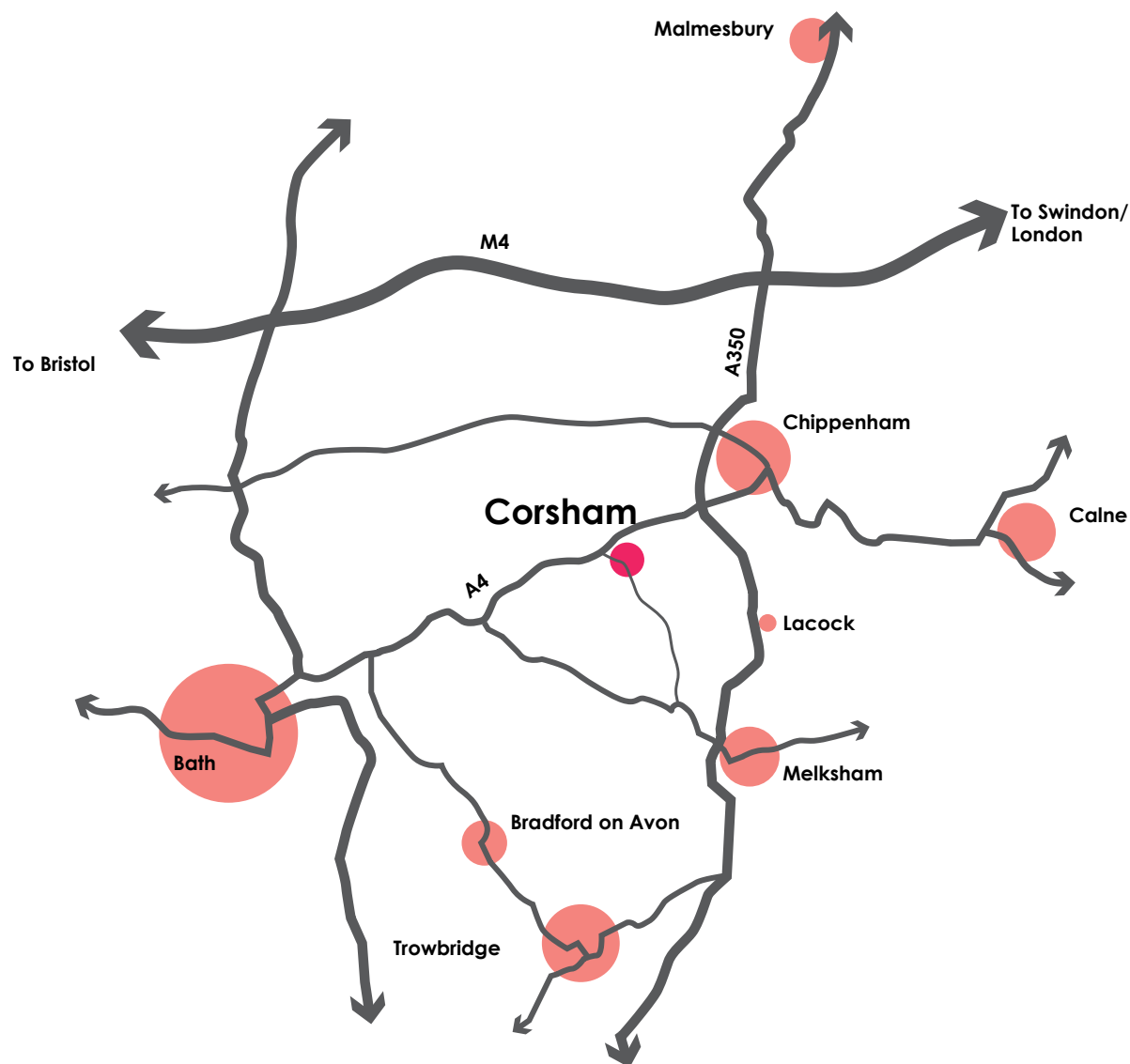
- Its positions near the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) of the south Cotswolds and location close to the UNESCO World Heritage City of Bath and other local tourist towns including Malmesbury and Lacock. The surrounding countryside boasts one of the highest concentration of stately homes in the UK.

Transport connections

- The A4 provides direct connections to Bath and Chippenham. Corsham benefits from close proximity to the A350 corridor and junction 17 of the M4. Further funding is earmarked via the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Deal to improve connections for Corsham as part of the A350 growth corridor.

Digital economy

- Corsham is quickly becoming an innovation hub with digital, information and communications industries already accounting for 10.2% of employment in the town, well above the 3.8% for the rest of Wiltshire. Plans are in place to expand the Corsham Institute and funding is in place to convert the Mansion House into the 'Digital Mansion'; a project that could bring significant economic benefits to the town centre.



Corsham forms a key part of the M4 and A350 corridors, but is competing with neighbouring settlements for investment.

Corsham's assets

Corsham's assets include:

Historic High Street

- Main attraction of the town centre that has a quintessentially English feel about it with attractive historic buildings, interesting independent retailers, community facilities and a weekly market. (1)

Green on the doorstep

- Parks and countryside are easily accessible from the town centre with Corsham Park, the cricket ground and the Meriton Avenue recreation ground all within easy walking distance of the town centre. (2)

Heritage

- Strong historic past that visually dominates the High Street and is present in many buildings around the town centre including Corsham Court, Almshouses, Weavers Cottages and the Town Hall. Corsham boasts over 400 listed buildings in the town, and many historical properties within easy reach of the town centre. (3)

Independent & distinctive

- A good range of strong independent shops, cafés and restaurants which are well supported by the local community. (4)

Arts & Culture

- Strong local arts community supported by the Pound Arts Centre, plus a range of festivals, and filming and TV opportunities. (5)



(1)



(2)



(4)



(3)



(5)



Land use - day & evening economy

Corsham's core retail area comprises two contrasting environments. The historic High Street consists primarily of specialist and independent retailers. The purpose built Martingate Shopping Centre includes larger units and is anchored by the Co-op food store.

The retail offer drops off considerably outside of the pedestrianised area with some secondary retailing located along Pickwick Road and towards the top end of the High Street.

Vacancy rates have been on the rise in Corsham from 3% in 2012 to 8% in 2015. This is slightly higher than both the national and south west small towns rates of 7%.

Retail studies from 2011 and reviewed in 2015 suggest that while it is important for Corsham to maintain its range of specialist and independent shops it will also need to acquire a better range of everyday shops and services. This will help to cater for the needs of local residents and to reduce car trips made to surrounding towns.

There is a strong residential presence on the High Street. Adding to the mix of uses, this can also create issues when trying to balance all users' needs.

Corsham has a limited evening economy. A few eating establishments and pubs are dotted along the High Street. Several takeaway establishments are located more along the periphery of the town centre. The Pound Arts Centre has a fantastic range of evening performances and events but feels slightly removed from the town centre.

While there are a number of service-based uses in the town centre there are relatively few offices. The proposed redevelopment of the Mansion House into the Digital Mansion will provide office space for start-up businesses.

Bath Spa University has a presence in the town centre with post graduate facilities at Corsham Court. It has plans for future expansion which would increase the student population in Corsham.

The Methuen Arms offers high-end accommodation in the town centre. However, there is a lack of affordable or mid-range accommodation catering towards tourists or business travellers.

Leisure / community facilities have recently been relocated to the new Springfield Community Campus. Connections between the campus and the town centre are critical to ensure that the loss of facilities in the town centre, such as the library, does not result in a loss of trips.



Building quality

Corsham has over 400 listed buildings and structures in the local area. The High Street boasts the largest concentration consisting primarily of listed buildings.

These are well supported in the pedestrianised area of the High Street through the sympathetic design of the public realm. However, more could be done to provide a setting for key buildings at the arrival space including The Grove and The Methuen Arms.

Narrow pavements along the middle of the High Street provide little space from which to appreciate the buildings.

Cars and signage dominate the upper section of the High Street making buildings feel secondary to the space. In particular the Town Hall, the former market building for Corsham, lacks a setting from which to be appreciated. On-street parking along the frontage of the Weavers Cottages does not allow for them to be properly appreciated either.

Corsham Court is a Grade 1 listed building and is one of Corsham's most important buildings both in terms of architecture and historic value. The house and its associated grounds and buildings are located adjacent to the High Street. Stone walls and landscaping secure the boundaries and provide a secluded setting for the house. Corsham Court is privately owned and access to the Court is limited despite being one of Corsham's largest tourist attractions. Church Street and the gates at the arrival to South Avenue play an important role in providing access and creating a setting for the Court.

Outside the High Street the number of listed buildings drops off. However, there are still a number of important buildings located along Pickwick Road including The Methuen Arms, The Grove and adjacent Osborne House, and Mansion House. Again these feel secondary to the road environment.

The quality and style of buildings along Newlands Road drops significantly compared to the core.

If Corsham was to expand, the town centre sites along Newlands Road could fulfil this potential. Growth westward would help connect the residential neighbourhood and the new community hub, located at the Springfield Community Campus, to the town centre.



Open space

There are a number of green spaces in close proximity to the town centre catering to a variety of leisure and recreational purposes.

Corsham Court and Park provide a rural edge with expansive open countryside on Corsham's doorstep. Although well served by a number of connections the narrow lanes do little to entice people towards the park.

The cricket ground provides limited public leisure access; however, the green open space creates a fantastic green setting along both Pound Pill and Station Road.

The Meriton Recreation Ground is a hidden gem located close to the town centre of Corsham but poor connections make the space feel disconnected. The recreation ground could provide a focal space for larger community events with its close proximity to the town centre.

Within the town centre a small green space is located adjacent to the Martingate Shopping Centre. It could help to support the gateway arrival to Corsham but high walls and a lack of seating make it feel isolated and not a welcoming space to stop.

While there are a variety of green spaces which support the town centre, the landscaping, in particular surrounding Corsham Court, has a strong influence over the public realm. Background views along the High Street and from approach roads are often framed by tree canopies or shaped topiary. Individual and mature trees or small clusters are often found in the core also strongly influence their surrounding space.



- Green space
- Trees / planting that influences the public realm



Corsham Park provides access to the countryside on the doorstep of the High Street.



Individual mature trees strongly influence spaces across the town centre.



A small green in the town centre lacks seating or space to dwell.



The cricket ground provides recreation and a strong arrival space to the south of the historic core.



Meriton Recreation Ground is a well located but hidden community space.



The 'green' from Corsham Court strongly influences the public realm of Corsham.

04 Arriving in Corsham

Arrival in Corsham by all modes of transport including car, walking, bike or bus should provide visitors with points of arrival that are inviting, well designed and create a feeling that you are entering somewhere special.

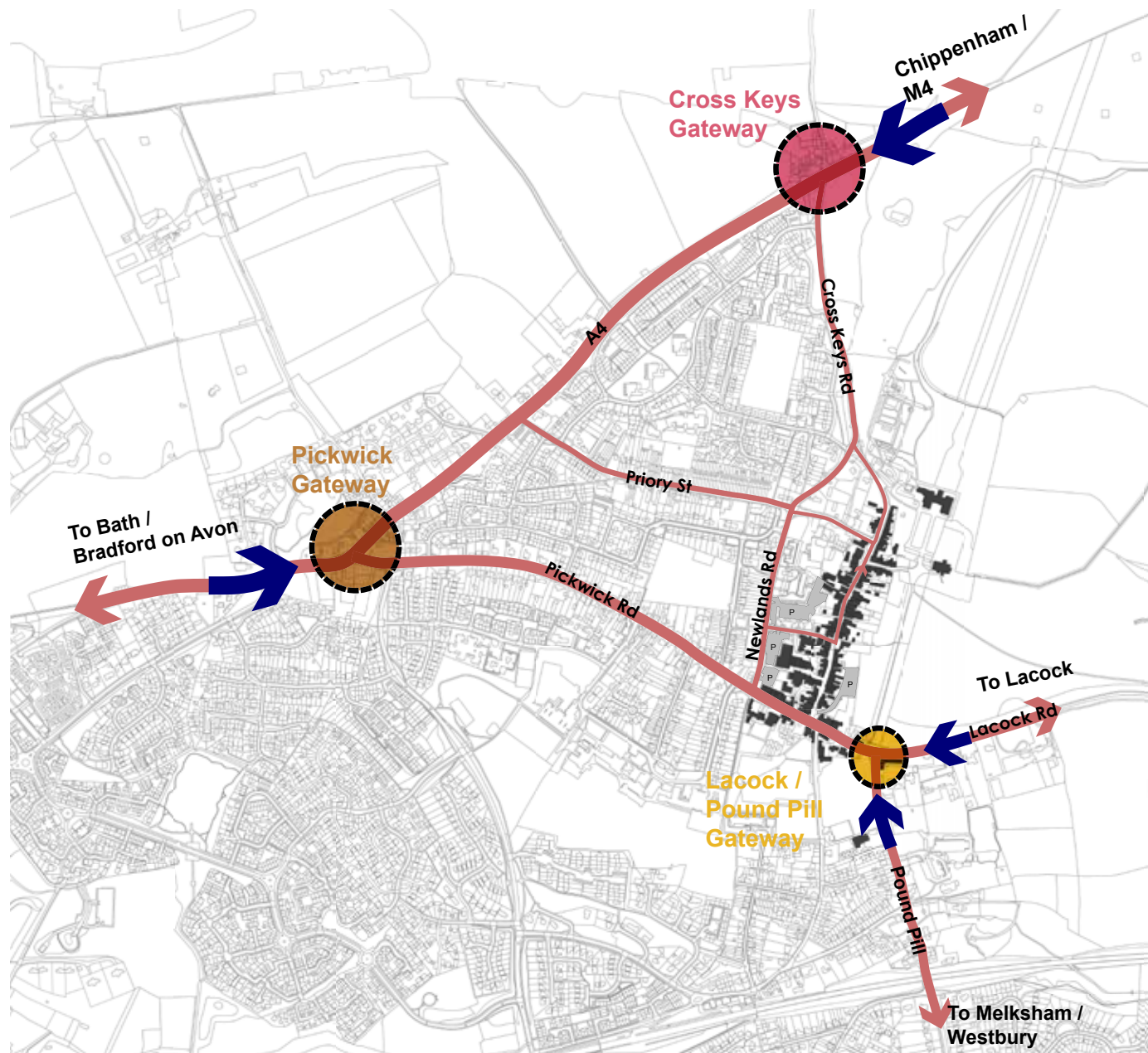
This section provides an analysis of how and where people arrive in the town centre by looking at the town's gateways. It also looks at arrival in Corsham and the issues visitors might encounter in trying to find the town centre by all modes of transport and traffic management issues in the town centre.



Gateways

Our first impressions of a town are always formed via our experiences at its gateways. A successful gateway announces the arrival at the town. It makes it clear where the town centre is and invites those who are passing to visit the place.

In Corsham there are two main 'gateways' located along the A4 and a third smaller local 'gateway' at Pound Pill and Pickwick Road.



Pickwick Gateway

The gateway arrival from Bath is framed by the historic 'Hare and Hounds' pub, and the picturesque Pickwick Village. The narrowness of the road naturally slows traffic allowing pedestrians to navigate the space.

Signage to the town centre is not clear. The dominance of highway signage and road marking detract from the historic surroundings.

Historic stone walls, green overhanging from private gardens and a green verge enhance the backdrop of the setting. Narrow pavements adjacent to the busy carriageway do not make it inviting for pedestrians.



Historic gateway framed by stone wall and overhanging green, but space dominated by signage and road markings.



Cars typically cut the corner (as shown) on the approach from Bath.



Narrow and historic approach from Pickwick helps to slow traffic.

Cross Keys Gateway

Traveling from Chippenham the gateway arrival at the Cross Keys has a 'green rural' feel.

The junction is made notable by a mature chestnut tree on the town side and the vacant historic Cross Keys pub on the adjacent corner. The gate piers and lodge house to Hartham Park, located in the background, also add to the space.

A wide junction encourages traffic to pass through the intersection unaware of Corsham. Signage is easily missed and there is little room provided for cyclists and limited footpaths for pedestrians.



Wide 'green' approach at the Cross Keys junction makes it easy to drive past Corsham.



Key features surrounding the gateway.

Lacock Road & Pound Pill Gateway

A smaller local gateway on the approach from Lacock Road is surrounded by some of Corsham's strongest assets. This includes the gates and tree lined South Avenue for Corsham Court and adjacent Tudor style lodge, the War Memorial, and the Almshouses.

An over-engineered roundabout does not celebrate the gates and grand, tree-lined avenue of Corsham Court or provide an appropriate setting for the adjacent Almshouses.

Fast moving traffic does not create a pleasant environment for pedestrians or cyclists. This is of particular issue as there are two primary schools located within close proximity. Safe passage for children walking to school should be encouraged at this gateway through the design of the space.



Carriageway dominates the arrival from Lacock and does not provide the appropriate setting for the Almshouses.



The current road arrangement does not make the most of the setting of the lodge, gate piers and war memorial at the arrival to Corsham.



The approach from Lacock does little to reduce traffic speeds on the approach to the town centre.

Finding Corsham's town centre

People travel to Corsham by a variety of methods including the car, by foot, bicycle and public transport. It is important to recognise how and where visitors arrive using these methods of transport and the issues they encounter in trying to find Corsham's historic core.

Arrival by all modes of transport should offer clear, inviting routes to the town centre and a public realm that creates the feeling you are entering somewhere special.

Arrival approaches to Corsham's town centre



Green arrival from Cross Keys, quality of route drops upon reaching Newlands Road.



The urban route to the town centre via Pickwick Road.



The historic approach from Lacock allows visitors to pass the High Street unannounced.

Newlands Road - arrival



The arrival experience along Newlands Road does not create a positive first impression of the town centre.



Arrival by Car

A benchmarking survey of visitors to Corsham in 2014 showed that 73% of people arrived by car, a 20% increase over previous years.

Arrival to the town centre from the A4 gateways is via Cross Keys and Pickwick Road. Cross Keys provides a 'green arrival'. It is flanked by the stone boundary wall and trees of Corsham Court and a linear green park, lined by mature oak trees. A narrow footpath hugs the boundary wall.

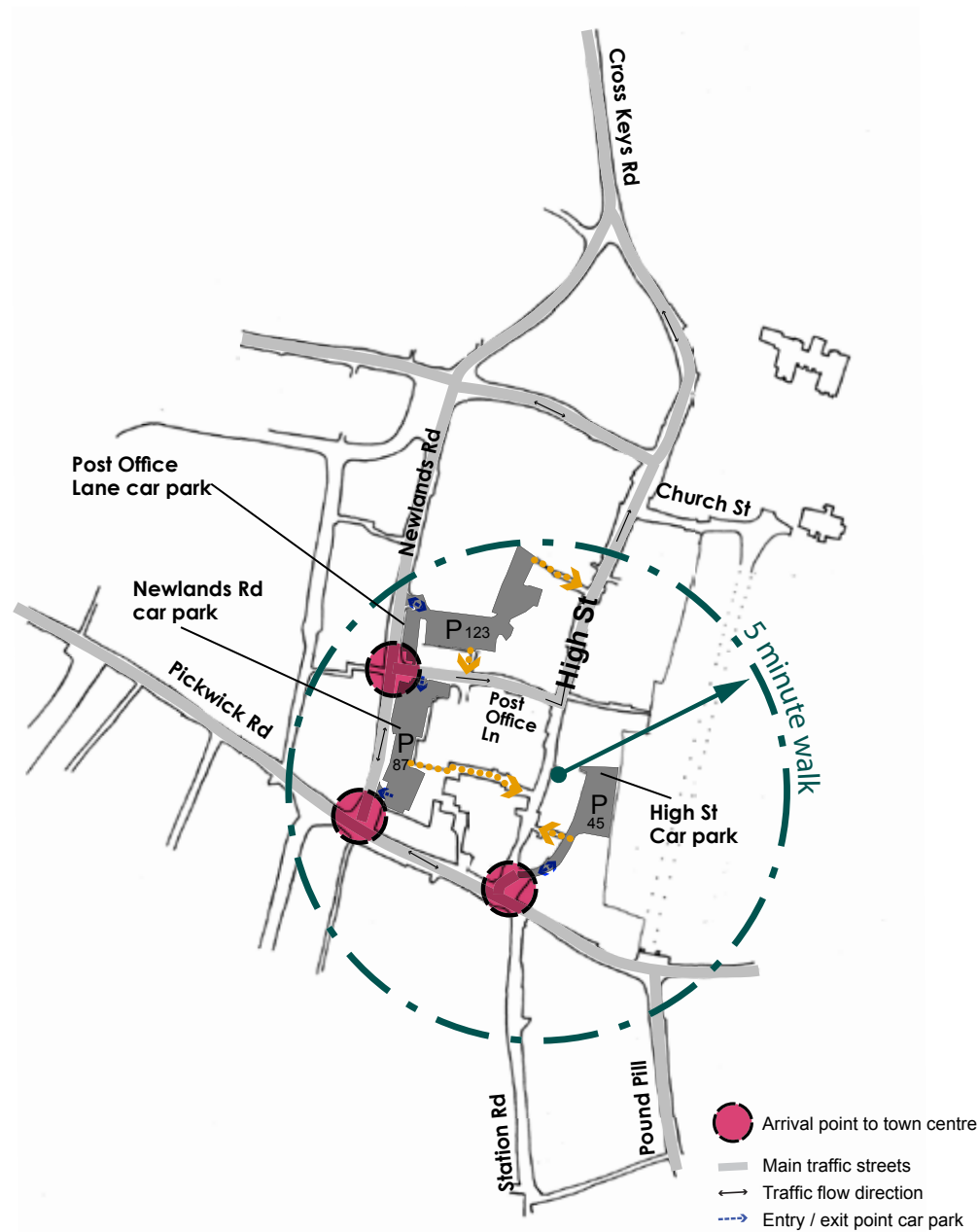
Pickwick Road offers a more urban approach. Stone villas are set back behind low stone walls and greenery which provides a nice cohesion to the street. Footpaths are provided along both sides of the route.

The arrival from the gateway at Pound Pill is along Pickwick Road. This historic route passes the bottom end of the High Street but fails to announce it.

From the arrival routes, signage primarily directs visitors to the two car parks located on Newlands Road.

Newlands Road lacks enclosure or cohesion and consists of a mix of building forms and uses that are not in keeping with the historic quality of the High Street. It does not announce the town centre.

Visitors to Corsham Court are directed to arrive at the Court from Cross Keys and Church Street. Upon departure, visitors are prevented from accessing other areas of the core before first leaving the town centre due to the one-way system.



Car parks

There are over 250 car parking spaces provided in three car parks all within several minutes walk of the historic High Street.

Benchmarking reports suggest car parks are underutilised: 2014 surveys found car parks operating at 54% vacancy on a busy market day and as high as 63% on a non market / quiet day.

Post Office Lane Car Park (access via Newlands Road)

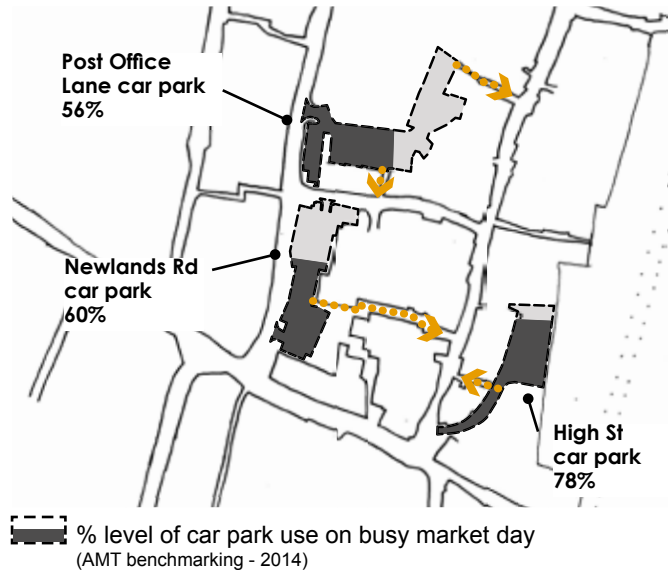
- Shared access with adjacent properties creates uncertainty over public / private space.
- Unclear circulation and layout.
- Connections to the High Street are not obvious or particularly welcoming.

Newlands Road Car Park (access via Post Office Lane)

- Vehicle access is not welcoming adjacent to public toilets and blank elevation of shopping centre
- Entrance and exit only access makes circulation unnecessarily complicated.
- Well connected to High Street via Martingate Shopping Centre but uninviting public realm.

High Street Car Park

- Well connected to the High Street. Vehicular access is not well signed.
- Illegal parking in the arrival area of High Street can make access difficult.
- Connection to High Street via narrow lane not inviting due to poor quality materials. Private bins can add clutter to the route.



Routes from the Post Office Lane car park to the town centre are not welcoming.



Access to Newlands Road car park is not well defined.



Poorly maintained materials make the route from the High Street car park feel neglected.

Arrival by walking / cycling

A benchmarking survey of visitors to Corsham in 2014 showed that 27% arrived by walking, a 13% decrease compared to previous years. No surveyed visitors in 2015 arrived by bicycle, a decrease of 5% from previous surveys.

Although residential areas are primarily located to the southwest of town a large proportion of the population is within a 5-10 minute walk.

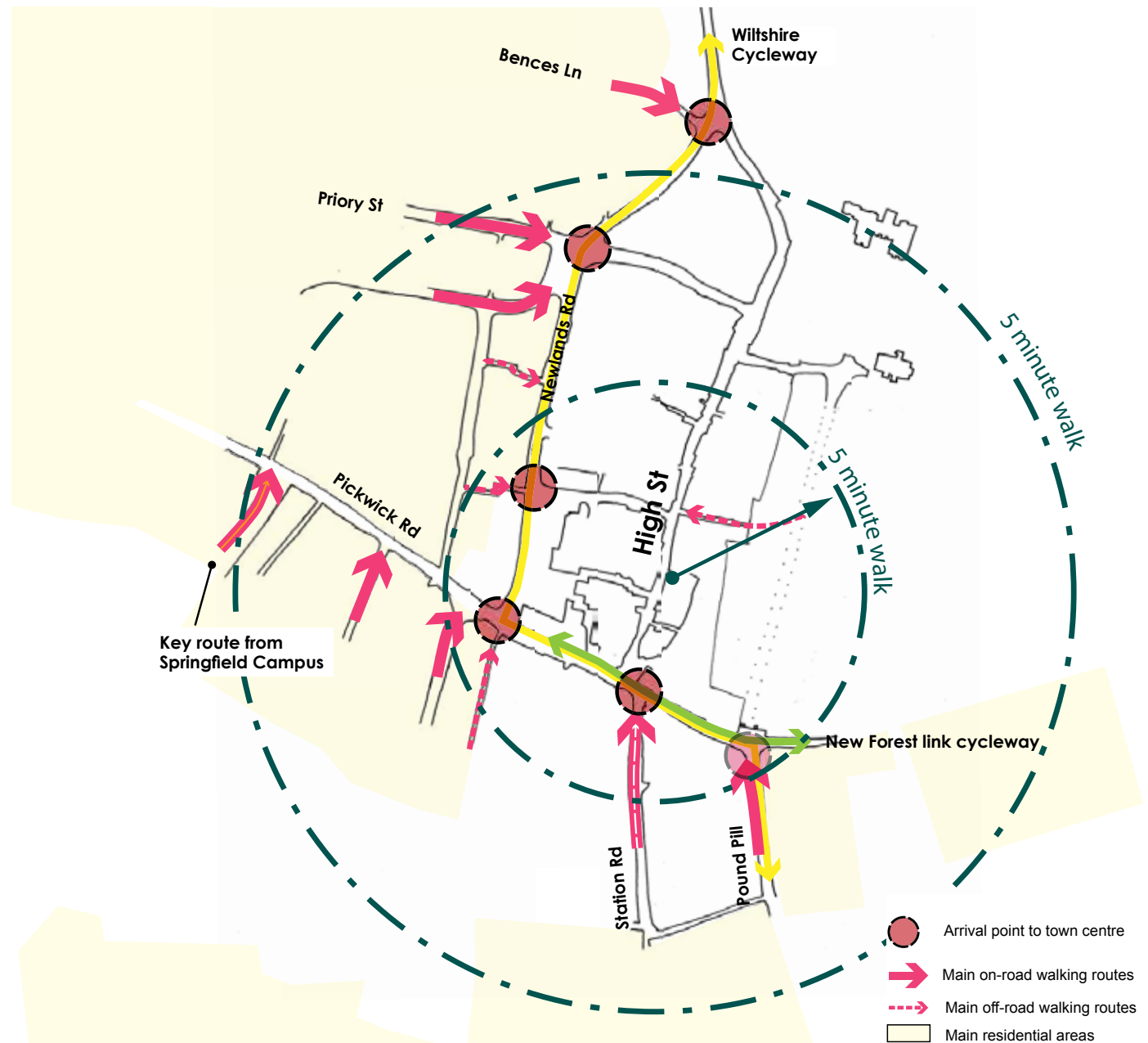
Residential streets offer pleasant walking and cycling experiences to the edge of the centre however traffic, narrow or poor quality pavements and limited crossings along Pickwick Road and Newlands Road create a physical barrier to accessing the town centre.

The Wiltshire Cycleway and the New Forest Cycle Link connect to Corsham. Cycle infrastructure such as cycle lanes along these routes are limited.

The town centre lacks convenient and easy to locate cycle storage facilities. Prominent 'no cycling' signs at the High Street arrival spaces potentially discourage cycling as a mode of accessing the town.



Traffic and poor crossing points make Pickwick Road and Newlands Road a barrier for pedestrians accessing the town centre.



Arrival by public transport

There is potential for a rail station to be reopened in Corsham. The first impressions of the town will be formed at the station and on the arrival route. Station Road will play a key role in creating a welcoming gateway to the town centre.

A benchmarking survey of visitors to Corsham in 2014 showed that no visitors on the day of the survey arrived by public transport, a 7% decrease over previous years surveys.

The bus arrival is centrally located within a few hundred metres of the High Street; however, there is no clear connection. Brick pavers attempt to create a connection across the car park to the entrance of the Martingate Shopping Centre but it is not obvious.

The arrival / waiting space is limited and cluttered and puts bus users in the footpath of Newlands Road.

Corsham currently lacks facilities for coach parking which is necessary to attract tour operators and potentially large numbers of tourists.



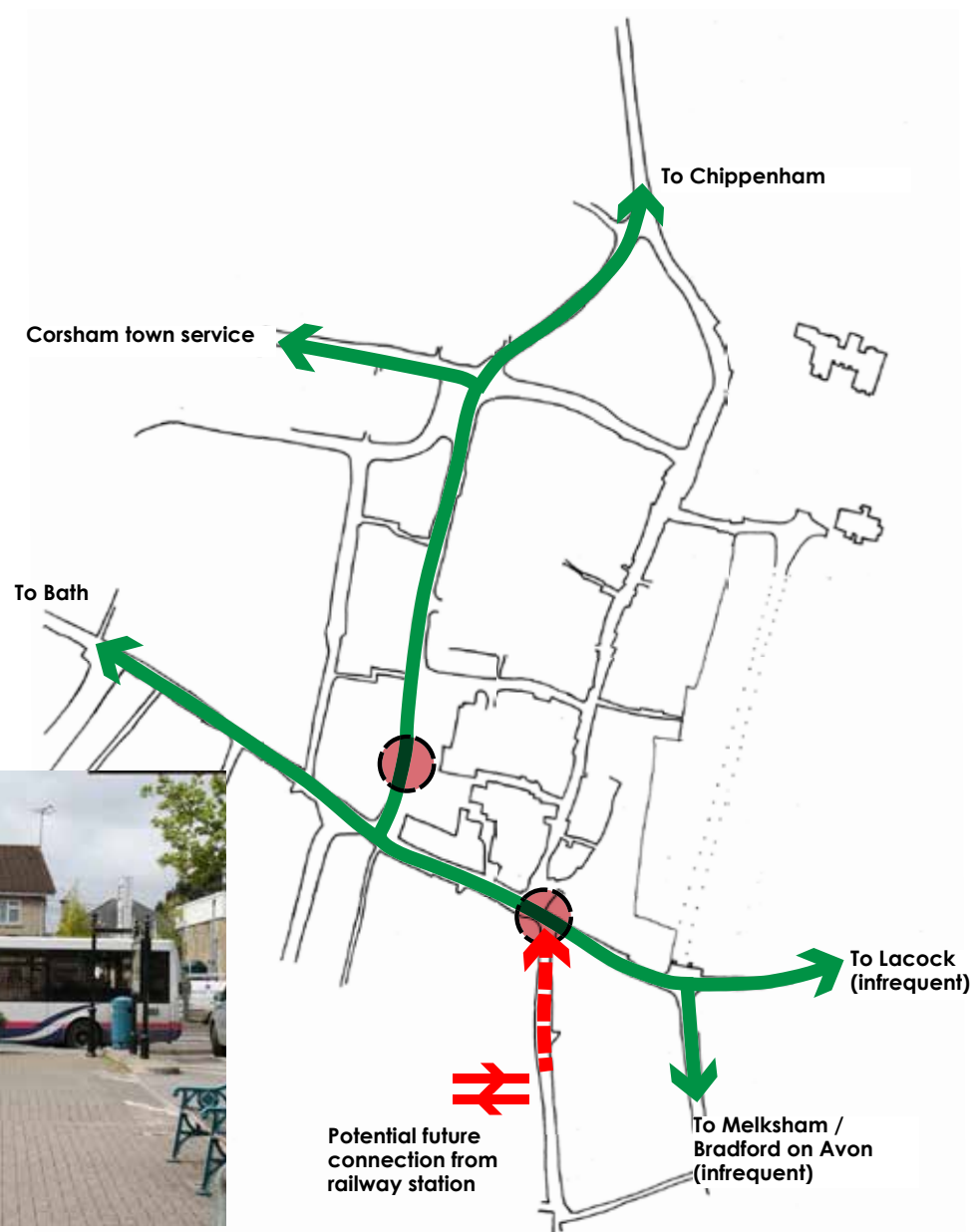
Station Road key arrival route for potential future rail users.



Clutter could be reduced to improve the arrival experience.



Brick paving attempts to link the bus stop to the town centre across the car park.



Various routes provide connection from the town centre across Corsham and further afield.

Traffic management

Traffic has a big influence on the quality of the public realm. Managing parking, priority and traffic speed can help improve the environment for all people.

Where cars have full priority within the street the attractiveness and sense of safety for pedestrians is reduced. Improvements could help to redress this balance.

Public realm improvements can help to reduce non-essential traffic. Creating a clear and safe environment is a priority to encourage greater and more frequent pedestrian activity in the central area as well as enhance the character of Corsham.

Illegal parking often occurs in important civic areas such as the Town Hall and the entrance to the High Street. This undermines the setting of these important spaces and the attractiveness of the central area.

The sudden shift in priority from a pedestrianised space to a priority space for traffic creates a potential point of conflict at the entrance to Post Office Lane from the High Street. Pedestrians can be intimidated by the quick shift from traffic-free to a priority space for traffic. Pedestrians often turn around and travel back down the High Street believing there is nothing else to explore along the route. Similarly at the top of the High Street traffic signage and strong road markings detract from the space.



Poor traffic management often detracts from key spaces and routes in the town centre.

05 Streets & spaces

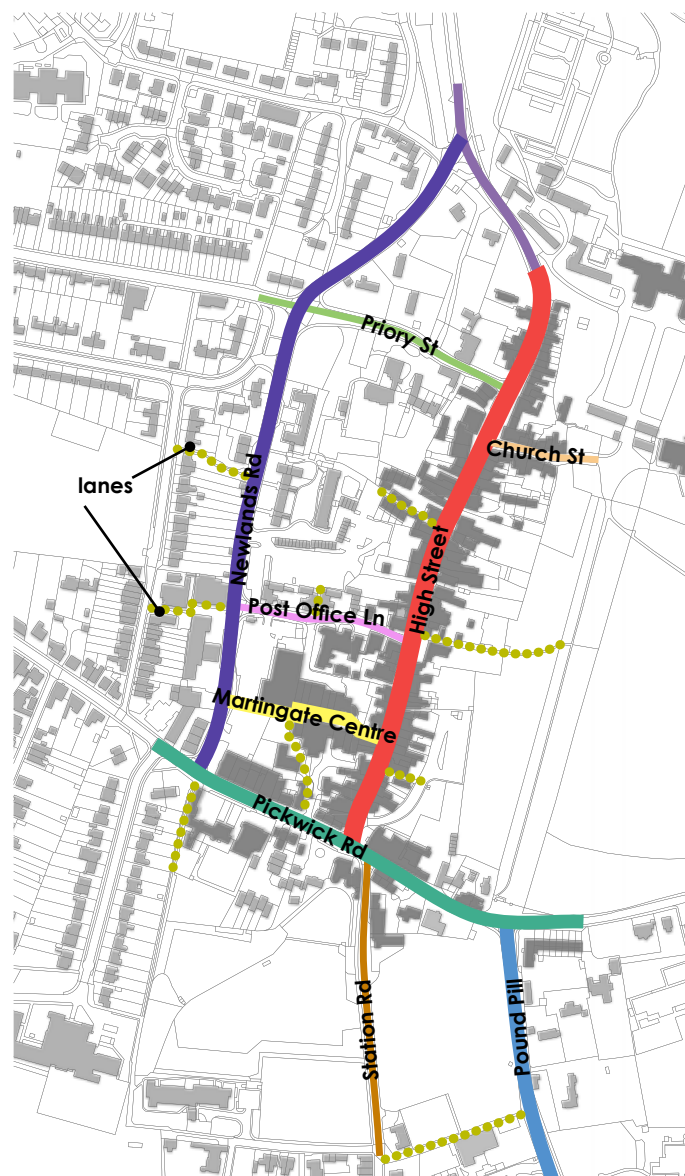
At the core of Corsham's street network is the long linear High Street. The High Street is contained by Corsham Court to the east and the through traffic routes of Pickwick Road and Newlands Road. It is fed by a series of narrow lanes and secondary streets. Outside of the town centre core a historic network of alleys provides connections between residential areas, leisure facilities, schools and the town centre.

This section provides a review the current condition of the key streets and spaces that comprise Corsham's core street network. It provides an understanding of their role and function within the network as well as existing problems and pressures.



Network of streets & spaces

The following plan highlights the network of streets included in the following audit.



Pedestrian activity

In order to understand the success or failings of a street network it is important to study pedestrian footfall patterns to see where gaps exist. Surveys in Corsham were conducted at midday on a typical market day in June.

Recorded pedestrian flows (dark indicates higher footfall) indicate that the busiest area of the town centre is along the pedestrianised section of the High Street and through the Martingate Shopping Centre leading to the Newlands Road car park.

Heading up the High Street footfall decreases with the introduction of vehicular traffic. The one-way system priority and delivery vehicles discourage pedestrians to continue and explore further.

An uninviting public realm, fast moving traffic and a lack of crossing points reduces footfall along Pickwick Road.

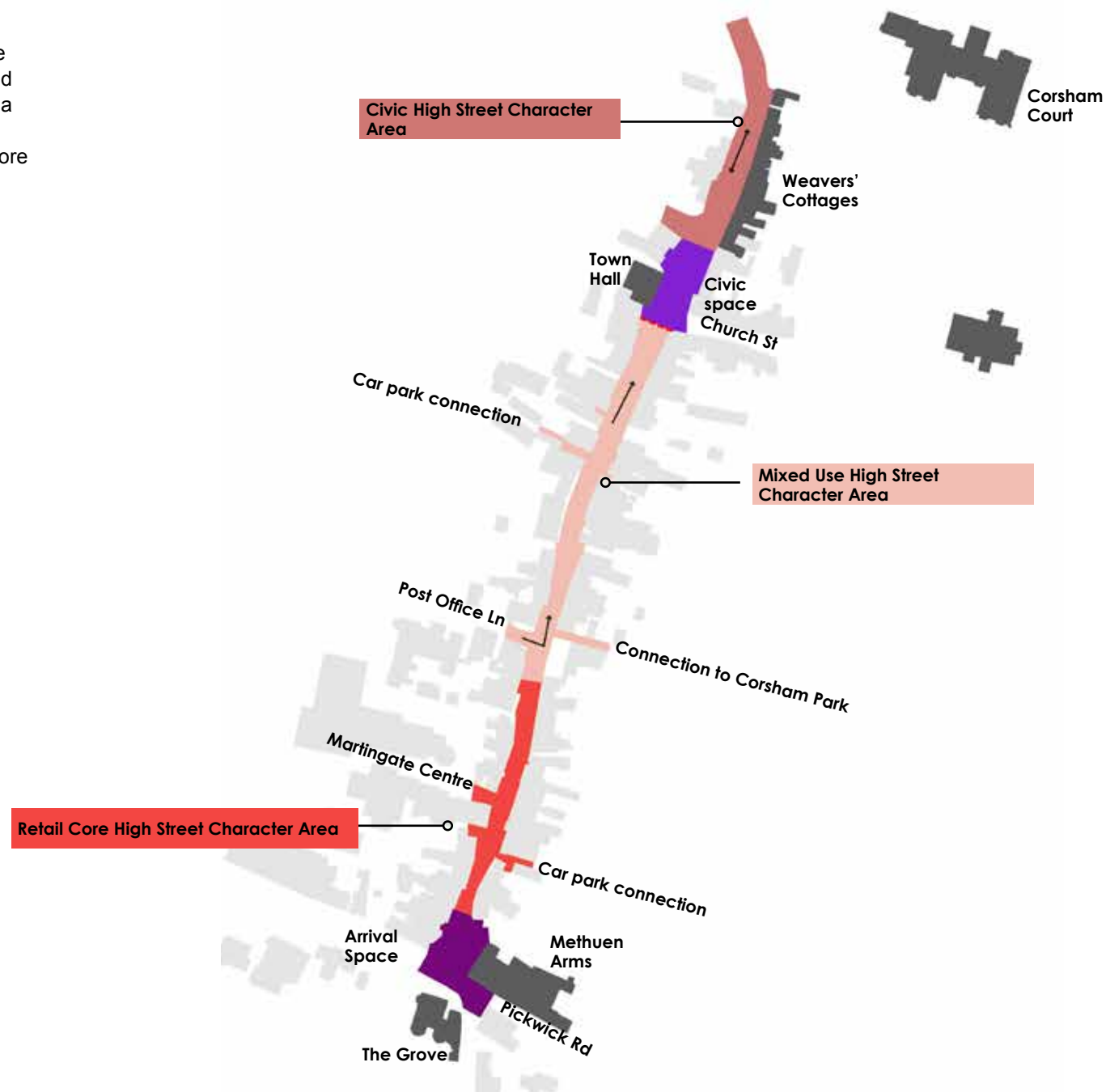
The lowest footfall was recorded along Post Office Lane. While there is no retail activity along this street the route does provide direct connections to the High Street from adjacent car parks and residential areas. An uninviting public realm means people avoid this route which could have implications for the upper section of the High Street.



The network of streets that comprise the town centre.

The High Street

The linear High Street is the main attraction of the town centre. It provides a good mix of uses including a range of independent shops, restaurants, cafés, residential and community uses and a weekly market all located within a historic setting. The street is divided into three different character areas shown right. These are described in more detail over the following pages.



The High Street - Retail core character area

The central retail focus of the High Street lies in the southern pedestrianised area. Shoppers can wander and chat in a safe and inviting environment.

Buildings are located at the back of the footpath creating a well enclosed space. A variation in building heights, materials and shop front façades add to the environment.

The approach from the south is not well announced despite the location of The Methuen Arms and The Grove. The arrival space is often blocked by parked cars. This creates a physical and visual barrier for people trying to access the High Street.

The weekly market draws additional footfall on a Tuesday. However, there is potential conflict between existing shop owners and market traders. Stalls set up adjacent to shops leave little room for pedestrians.

The Grove acts as a prominent feature at the end of the High Street and helps visitors to orientate themselves. Street clutter or stalls on market day can obstruct or detract from this key view.

Seating facilities are limited. Cycle parking provision is also limited and poorly located.

The quality of the public realm is generally good but clutter and poor repair work to street materials detract from the streetscape.



The existing street design creates a sympathetic setting for historic buildings.



The Grove provides a focal point at the end of the High St.



Clutter and signage detract from the environment.



The weekly market restricts views and access along the High St and causes tension with existing businesses.



Some residential and service providers located in the retail core.



High quality materials on the High St let down by poor quality repair work.

The High Street - Mixed use character area

The 'middle' section of the High Street is defined by attractive architecture and a mix of uses including service, retail, food and drink and residential uses.

Narrow lanes from the High Street provide access to Corsham Court and Park and town centre car parks.

The introduction of one-way traffic from Post Office Lane and a reduction in pavement width creates a barrier beyond which pedestrians are often reluctant to explore.

Narrow pavements, combined with on-street car parking, leave little space for 'window' shopping or cafe 'spill out' space.

In places, vehicles mounting the kerb have damaged the high quality paving materials.

The gentle curve in the street provides views towards the grand and overhanging topiary from Corsham Court in the distance.

The quality of the public realm is poorer leading off the High Street making people less likely to explore lanes and side streets.



Varied building lines, heights and architectural styles create a well enclosed and interesting streetscape.



Residential setbacks add interest and green to the street.



Servicing and vehicular traffic often make the transition between the pedestrianised and middle High Street difficult.



Narrow pavements and on-street parking leave little space for pedestrians.



Traffic management could maintain the street's movement function but also create a better environment for pedestrians.



Lanes provide direct connection to car parks and Corsham Court.

The High Street - Civic character area

Beyond Church Street the High Street widens with buildings stepping back along the eastern edge. The area incorporates a mix of civic, retail and residential uses. The space is marked by the noteworthy Town Hall with the historic Flemish Weavers' Cottages located further along. The boundary wall and overhanging topiary from Corsham Court create interest in the background.

This is a key arrival space from the north and for visitors to Corsham Court.

Two-way traffic is permitted. Parking is allowed on both sides of the street surrounding the Town Hall. A free, half-hour parking zone results in a high vehicle turnover in the space.

An over-dominant carriageway, road markings and signage do little to complement the setting of the Town Hall. Limited provision is made for pedestrians. Road markings and large traffic signage spoil attractive views down the High Street.

From the High Street pleasant views along Church Street are terminated by the church spire at St Bartholomew's.

The Weavers Cottages are located north of Priory Street. Cobbled footpaths reinforce their historic setting. However, uncoordinated planters and on street parking along their frontage draw away from the view.



Key arrival space at the top of town.



Traffic dominates the space and clutter detracts from the historic environment.



The grand Town Hall lacks a setting or space to host civic events.



On-street parking obstructs key views towards the Weavers' Cottages.



Although not signed as an entrance route to Corsham, access along Cross Keys / High Street makes for an interesting arrival.



Strong visual connections along Church St towards St. Bartholomew's Church.

Pickwick Road

Pickwick Road is dotted with historic buildings including The Grove, The Methuen Arms and the Mansion House.

It is a retail street and provides key connection between the primary schools, residential areas, the Pound Arts Centre, Springfield Campus and the town centre.

Historic buildings narrow the space on the approach to the High Street. This limits the space for pedestrians and cyclists. Past the High Street wide carriageways allow for fast-moving traffic, again making a poor pedestrian environment.

Upon arrival at the town centre Pickwick Road does not announce the High Street, allowing passing traffic to easily miss the core area.

Crossing facilities for pedestrians are limited. The condition of the pavements is generally unappealing. Stains, cracks and inconsistent patching after utility works do not create a positive first impression of the street.

An open servicing area to the rear of the Martingate Shopping Centre detracts from the streetscene. Illegally parked car's obstruct the entrance to the narrow lane leading through to the shopping centre.

Redevelopment of the library and Mansion House should be used to improve this important 'address' street.



A wide, straight carriageway does not announce the High Street or create a setting for the surrounding historic buildings.



High Street is easy to drive past and miss.



Limited crossings make it difficult to connect the two sides of Pickwick Road.



Exposed service yard dominated by yellow lines and parked vehicles create an unattractive environment.



Improvements to the public realm will need to integrate the redeveloped Digital Mansion into the town centre.



Improvements to the public realm could create a more inviting environment for shoppers.

Martingate Shopping Centre

The Martingate Centre is a busy, purpose-built shopping centre which connects the High Street with Newlands Road, Post Office Lane car park and the key bus stop. It offers a good range of shops to complement those on the High Street.

It has larger shop footprints which could be appealing to national retailers.

The purpose-built shopping centre is not as architecturally appealing as the High Street and the blank edges it presents to Newlands Road do little to create a welcoming environment.

Along the parade of shops oversized awnings, signage and clutter obscure views to the historic High Street.

A small green space is located adjacent to the Co-op entrance; however, high walls obscure views making the space feel disconnected and links to the rear of the shopping centre and the adjacent pub easy to miss.

The public realm is not in a bad technical condition; however, it consists of a multitude of surface treatments and uncoordinated furniture. The materials do not relate to the materials in the High Street.



The change of surface materials makes the Martingate Shopping Centre feel detached from the High Street.



The arrival to the main shopping area bears little resemblance to the historic High Street hidden behind it.



Retail units and office space located to the rear of the main shops feel detached.



Street furnishings detract from the route through to the High Street.



The lower section of the Martingate offers pleasant areas for seating and views toward the High Street.



High walls and a lack of seating areas make this green an underutilised space in the town centre.

Newlands Road

Running parallel to the High Street, Newlands Road is a wide, arterial through-route connecting Pickwick Road to the Cross Keys junction of the A4. Originally built to remove traffic from the High Street it also now acts as the main arrival street for Corsham's car parks and the hub for public transport.

North of Pickwick Road, the arrival to Newlands Road is dominated by the blank elevations of the Martingate Shopping Centre and the adjacent car park.

A lack of definition between the edge of the car park and the pavement blends the spaces. The unsightly and prominent toilet block, uncoordinated materials, furniture and signage do little to encourage pedestrian movement along the street.

A few mature trees dotted along the boundary of the car park add an element of green. Where there is provision for lower level landscaping the beds are often empty or poorly maintained.

The current bus arrival location provides a poor arrival experience for public transport users. Connections to the High Street are not clear. The location of the bus shelter and waiting area can cause congestion at peak times with pedestrians using the footpath.

Along the western edge of Newlands Road, buildings are set back from the street in a paved setting. Buildings are of an inappropriate architectural style for Corsham's town centre.

North of Post Office Lane, green hedging and stone walls help to define the edges of the street and add a green element. Three-storey residential apartment buildings are not in keeping with the historic character of the town centre.

Footpaths are provided along both sides of the street, which are well used. However, wide driveways and poorly maintained pavements do not make this a pleasant environment for pedestrians.

The poor quality environment created for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users could be a cause for the increasing numbers of people arriving by car to the town centre, as highlighted in the annual benchmarking report.

Public realm improvements along Newlands Road could help to tidy and reduce clutter as well as improve connections to the town centre in the short term. However, it would be more beneficial in the long term to explore the opportunity for redevelopment sites along Newlands Road. This would facilitate the expansion of the town centre outside of the historic core. Expansion westwards would create better connections with existing residential neighbourhoods as well as create a better arrival experience in the town centre.



Wide junctions and driveways create numerous interruptions in the footpath, making pedestrian activity feel a secondary function of the space.



A variety of street furniture and materials add clutter to Newlands Road.



A wide junction makes for a poor pedestrian experience at the junction with Priory Street.



Modern development set back from the road is not in keeping with the character of the historic core.



The uses and buildings along Newlands Road are not complementary to the historic town centre and do not create a seamless transition into the town centre.



A wide expanse of tarmac, backs of buildings and street clutter do not make a positive first impression of Corsham.

Post Office Lane

Post Office Lane is a narrow one way street. It provides access to the main town centre car park, service access to the Co-op, residential properties and the High Street.

A wide roundabout poorly defines the arrival from Newlands Road.

Modern residential properties dominate the street. Buildings are located in courtyards set back from the road behind stone walls. Tall, blank elevations and a lack of enclosure create an unfriendly pedestrian environment.

A grouping of historic cottages towards the junction with the High Street adds interest and a more pedestrian-friendly scale.

The public realm is uninspiring, dominated by road markings and in need of repair.



A lack of cohesion from the surrounding buildings does not present a welcoming arrival at Post Office Lane.



Blank edges and a poor quality public realm detract from the street.



The character towards the eastern end of the street becomes more historic and in keeping with the High St.



Road markings detract from the historic buildings.

Church Street

Church Street is a short, narrow lane providing passage between Corsham Court and the High Street. Lined with historic buildings, the gently sweeping street frames fantastic views towards The Flemish Weaver pub and Town Hall or of the spire at St. Bartholomew's Church.

A low traffic volume allows pedestrians to spill out onto the carriageway. Pavements are of a high quality stone material sympathetic to the setting of buildings. In places they are in need of maintenance and repair.



Views towards The Flemish Weaver pub.



Views towards St. Bartholomew's Church create interest.

Priory Street

Past the large modern intersection with Newlands Road the character of Priory Street changes from a dense collection of terraced villas to a low density, leafy, green street.

High Stone walls and pavements line both sides of the street. The pavements would benefit from repair.

Heywood School is set back from the road in a parkland setting while, closer to the approach of the High Street, buildings are reintroduced on the back of the footpath.

Road markings at the junction with the High Street direct traffic away from the town centre which could prove confusing for visitors.



Priory Street provides a quiet, green approach to the town centre.



The sweep of the road at the junction with the High Street directs people away from the town centre.

Pound Pill

Pound Pill is the busy approach route to Corsham from the south. Long stretches of wide carriageway, narrowed by runs of on-street parking, often result in traffic racing to make 'gaps'. Narrow footpaths line both sides of the route. A green verge softens sections of the eastern edge.

Two of Corsham's primary schools are located on, or close to, Pound Pill making it a priority walking route to school.

Visually the route is attractive with wide views over the cricket grounds. Long vistas are terminated at the gate piers of Corsham Court.

Narrow, poor-quality pavements and a road dominated environment detract from the space. Connections to the town centre could be stronger.



Wide carriageways allow traffic to dominate the edge of the street.



The Pound Arts Centre, a cultural focus for Corsham, feels removed from the core.

Station Road

Station Road is a quiet, pedestrian / cycle friendly route. It links residential neighbourhoods to the town centre and will be the key approach route to the town centre if the railway station is reopened.

Lined by historic walls with overhanging green the route provides views over the cricket green towards the Almshouses in the distance.

The pavement is located along the boundary of the allotments and is narrow, particularly towards the Pickwick Road junction. The pavement quality is technically good but could benefit from improvements.

South of the cricket ground, a narrow lane provides an attractive route to the Pound Arts Centre. However, the connection is not obvious for visitors.

Glimpsed views towards the High Street on the approach are let down by the domination of Pickwick Road. A lack of safe crossing facilities prevents Station Road from properly connecting into the core.



Glimpsed views towards the High Street create interest but the public realm does little to integrate the spaces.



Station road provides a pleasant walking alternative to Pound Pill.

Lanes

Corsham is linked by a web of narrow historic lanes which provide connection between residential areas, schools, community facilities, the town centre and Corsham Court.

While these provide a traffic-free route for movement across Corsham, their lack of maintenance can make them feel neglected and unsafe.

Their narrow openings and subtle entrances make them easy for visitors to miss or unsure of what or where they connect.



Corsham Park is well connected to the High Street but the links are not always obvious or welcoming.



The narrow and uninviting lane between Newlands Road and Alexander Terrace provides direct connection between the town centre and the Meriton Recreation Ground, a key recreation opportunity in the town centre.



Defined by historic stone walls and overlooking the bowling green, the lane beside the Pound Arts Centre provides a safe and well used connection to the local schools.



Narrow lanes off of Pickwick Road provide important connections to residential areas. Their current neglected appearance undermines their role in providing safe, alternative pedestrian routes for local residents.

06 Detailing the public realm

The quality and state of street surfaces, signs, bollards, cycle racks, bins and seating have a significant influence on how a place is perceived. These elements play a key role in helping to unify the streets and spaces of a place and in helping to reinforce its identity.

This section reviews the current use and condition of materials in Corsham's town centre. It also highlights areas where clutter detracts from the streetscape and analyses the current selection of street furniture found in Corsham.



Reducing clutter

Clutter can have an eroding effect on the public realm, making a place look neglected and uncared for. It can detract from historic views, undermine the character of a place and also have an impact on pedestrian movement.

In a few locations across Corsham a lack of co-ordination between elements in the street, including signage, road marking and street furniture, can make spaces feel cluttered. This can have an impact on visitors' orientation and willingness to explore.

This is particularly apparent in the Martingate Shopping Centre and the adjacent car park where signage and the placement of benches often impede pedestrian movement and do little to aid pedestrian wayfinding.

Clutter impacts on both arrival spaces to the pedestrianised High Street. An abundance of signage, planters, bins and seating overwhelms shoppers and visitors, visually detracting from the historic setting of the surrounding buildings.



Materials

A coherent use of materials that are fit for purpose and easy to maintain adds value and helps to connect spaces in the town.

In Corsham the High Street's surface treatment is respectful to the surrounding buildings, adding to the historic identity of the street. However, poor quality repair works can present a negative first impression of the space.

Where vehicular traffic is permitted along the High Street, sections of pavement have been damaged as a result of traffic mounting the kerb. Poor quality repair work makes the space look unkempt.

Across the rest of Corsham a range of surface materials can be found throughout the streets and spaces. This can present a challenge to unifying the town centre.

This is particularly evident in the transition between the Martingate Shopping Centre and the High Street where the existing materials do little to integrate the two spaces. Throughout the remainder of the Martingate Shopping Centre, a variety of materials are used which overly complicate the space and do little to aid pedestrian movement.

Generally, the materials across Corsham are technically sound; however, their appearance can make them feel neglected. Problems such as chewing gum stains, and poorly patched utility repairs give a negative impression of the environment.



Street furniture

Appropriately chosen, co-ordinated street furniture helps tie the public realm together. It can also help to reinforce the local identity and character of a town.

In Corsham there is an inconsistent approach to street furniture. Across the historic town centre, street furniture is provided in a variety of styles, colours, shapes and sizes.

Its placement and quality often detracts from, rather than adds to, the street. This is notable along the historic High Street where large, black, bin-like planters have been positioned to act as bollards to prevent traffic from entering the space. These elements are not in keeping with the historic High Street and detract from the quality of the environment.

Positive elements such as the wall-mounted historic lighting and signage on the High Street are appropriate and sympathetic to their surroundings.



Positive elements such as historic wall-mounted lighting and way finding signage add to the public realm in Corsham.



Uncoordinated approach to street furniture across Corsham.

07 Engagement

A crucial part of the Stage 1 public realm study has been the engagement process with both stakeholders and local residents. Understanding the opinions and wishes of those who live and work in Corsham will help to ensure a framework is developed that responds to the local community and is well supported by it.

This section outlines the process and outcomes of the open day and the stakeholders workshop.



Stakeholder workshop

On 9th June, approximately 21 local stakeholders including local residents, business owners, Councillors, town and unitary council staff, and representatives from Bath Spa University and Corsham Court Estate participated in an afternoon workshop held at the Town Hall.

NEW masterplanning started the session with a short presentation. This helped to define the public realm and outlined the team's initial analysis on Corsham town centre covering both the town's assets as well as a few of the public realm issues it faces.

Following the presentation the stakeholders worked in groups and were provided the following questions to guide their discussion:

- What brings people to Corsham?
- How do people move around in Corsham?
- What are the opportunities for Corsham?

Each group, with the help of a facilitator, debated the questions and recorded their views and ideas, some written and others drawn. At the end of the session a spokesperson from each group fed back to all the attendees so the ideas could be shared between the stakeholders.

This section presents a record of the workshop findings and concludes with the common themes from the session.



Group 1

The key points from Group 1 are summarised below. One of the participants provided sketches and imagery for her vision of how historic buildings could be better utilised to promote Corsham's history and upcoming events. These images are shown opposite.

- Need to use the gateways to attract people to come back and visit. Better signage/ arrival features along the A4 to announce Corsham.
- Potential to use existing assets such as Brown's woodworking building to promote the town via locally designed art murals which depict Corsham's history and/or help advertise upcoming events such as the Walking Festival.
- Narrow lanes around the town should be cleaned up for local residents to use as foot and cycle connections to access the town centre. Lighting, lower fences, arts features at the entrances would help to mark their entrance points and aid wayfinding.
- Need to improve / create public space in front of the Town Hall and at the bottom of the High Street to announce town centre.
- Create a gathering space in front of the Town Hall for events that helps to maximise commercial gain for local businesses.
- Civic spaces to sit out / dwell and people watch.
- Need to look at materials holistically across the town centre.
- Need to entice coach tours into town. Drop off tourists in a 'pretty' location while coaches park elsewhere.
- Car park locations need to be clearer, entrances more welcoming and routes to town centre more accessible.
- Newlands Road needs to be more attractive (British Legion and garage are not welcoming features to town centre.)
- Need an affordable hotel in the town centre to make Corsham a stopping destination. Would also attract 800+ MoD people that come into town each week. Often stay as far away as Bath or Bristol. Would help to support evening economy.
- Need to promote the 'film trail' – Lacock, Corsham and Box.
- Meriton Recreation Ground – Big space, centrally located, great for families and picnics.
- Need to improve tree-lined avenue for Corsham Court.
- Declutter! Remove redundant signage.



One stakeholder's vision for using historic façades such as the Brown's Woodworking building to promote Corsham's history or to advertise upcoming events

Hand-drawn map of a city area with various handwritten notes in red ink. The notes include:

- Railroad + Street + Shop + Station
- 20-30 year old
- Museum
- Some students choose to live here
- Both Sp. than like to be more
- Exhibitions
- Museum
- Parking in the night pub as well
- Student meeting
- Museum
- IT Building
- Balcony with
- Hugle St has changed over 20 years
- Supermarket in Melldham
- Attractive to Commuters
- Tourism? -> Castle of parking in historic sites
- Cathedral, Church, popular
- Trip reduction
- top attraction
- Nikolaus Plesner
- Prize of architecture

- N
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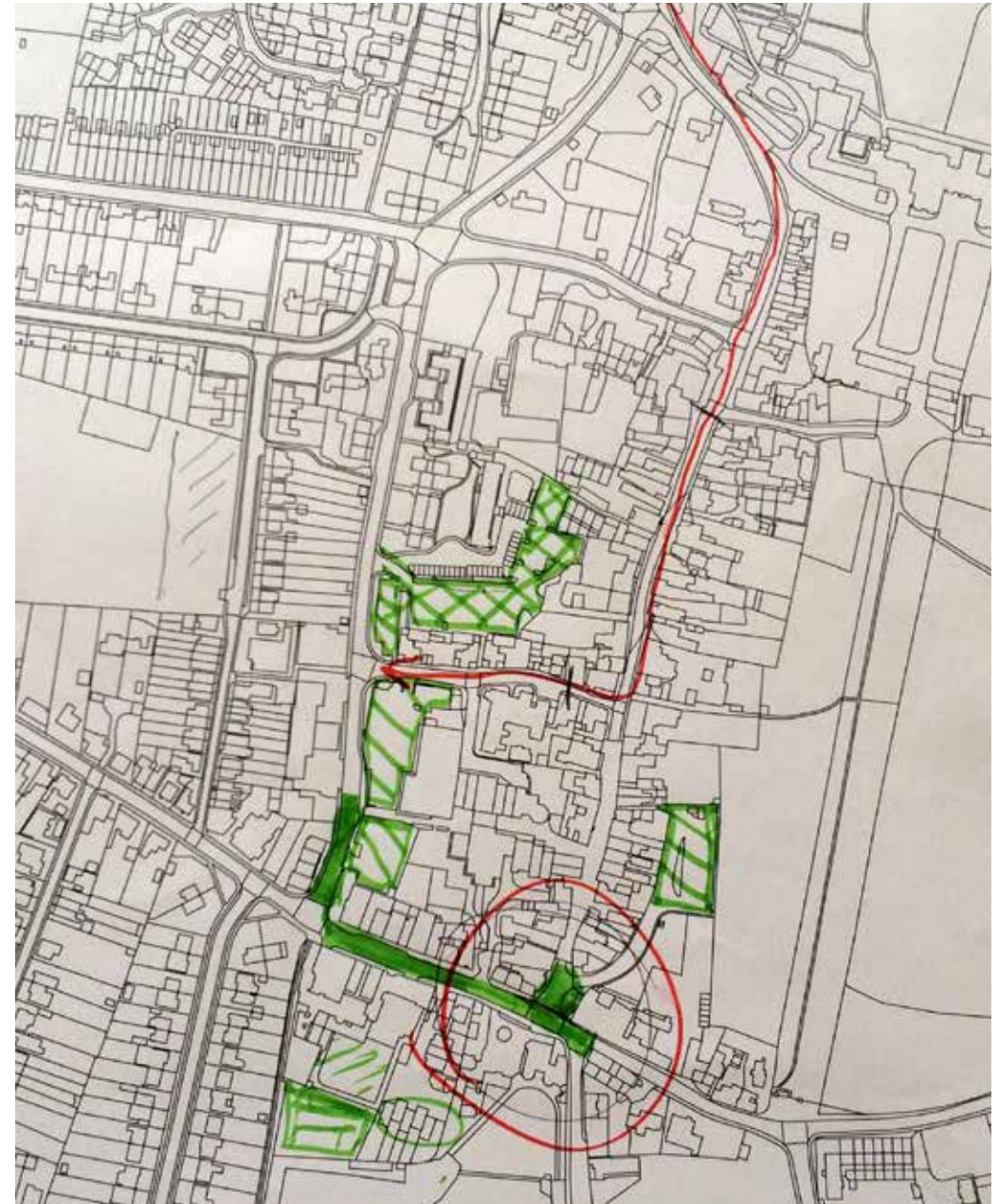


Notes and drawings from Group 2

Group 3

The key points from Group 3 are summarised below and highlighted on the plan opposite by the group during the workshop:

- What is Corsham's identity? Is it the peacock? The town seems to have many identities.
- Strong group of independent retailers, is it a specialist hub?
- Need to get a better understanding of who we want to come to town.
- Need to get people here but also keep them!
- The High Street arrival needs to be more welcoming. Should create 'Horsefair' town square.
- Very easy to miss the High Street from Pickwick Road due to the oversized road. Need to slow traffic and celebrate the arrival / view up the High Street.
- Should make Pickwick Road 'nice' from The Methuen Arms to the Mansion House allowing for spill out space. Needs to feel more inclusive for all users.
- Along the A4 when you go through Pickwick you feel like you've gone through the town.
- Need to make more of the Avenue at Corsham Court. Should extend down towards The Pounds Arts Centre along Pound Pill. Perhaps lighting? Make more of the roundabout.
- The entrance to the long stay car park is confusing.
- Art / local identity, 'quick-fix' for blank walls in the Martingate?
- The curry house is not the end of the High Street, it's twice as long - we need to get people to go further.
- Should the direction of the one way system be turned around so you see the pedestrian area?

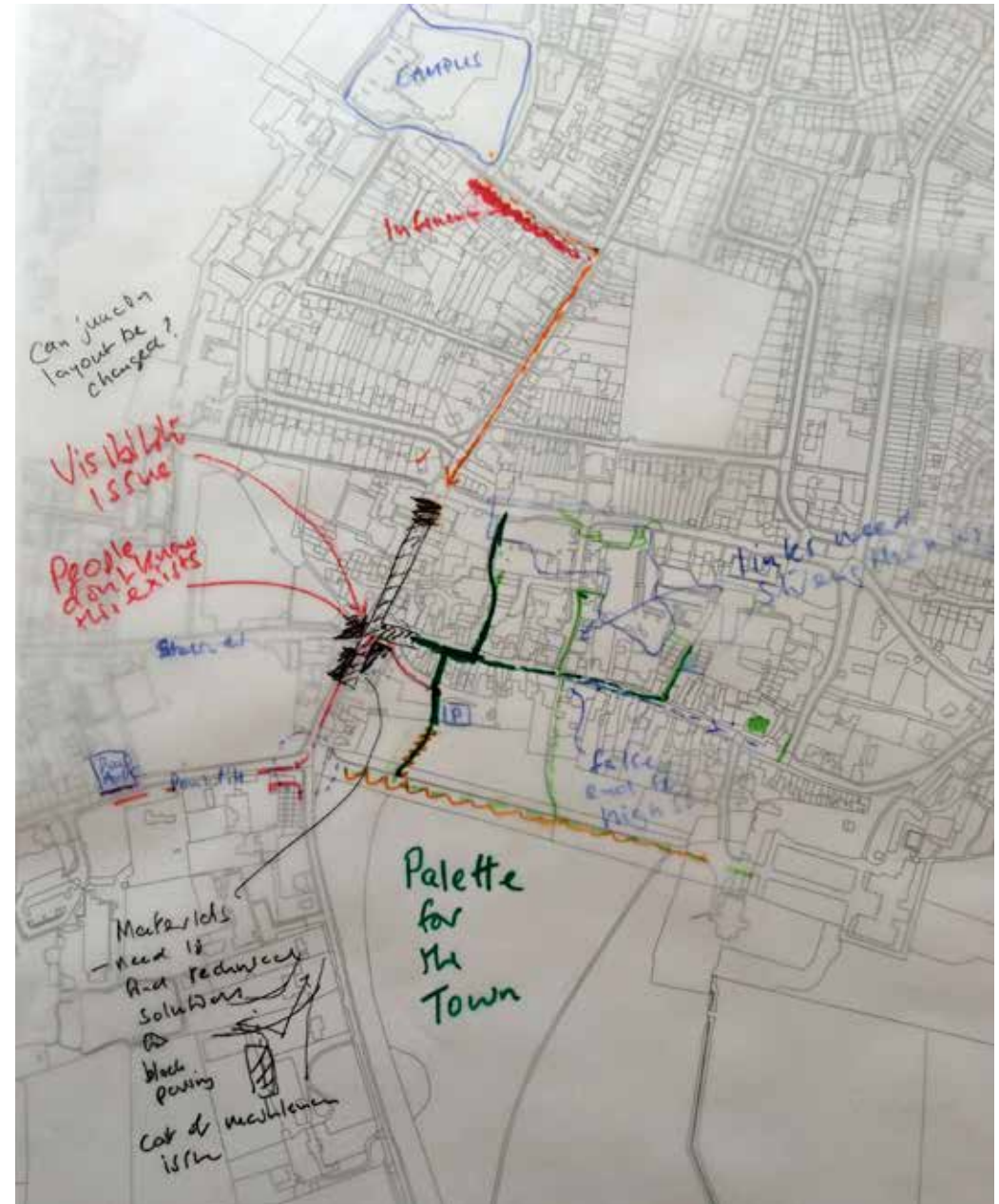


Notes and drawings from Group 3

Group 4

The key points from Group 4 are summarised below and highlighted on the plan opposite by the group during the workshop:

- Along the A4 at the Hare and Hounds need to change perceptions that there might be something else to follow.
- Suggest that we use visual cues not signage to improve the public realm as we already have too much!
- Need to change how Pickwick Road feels, it should feel more part of the town. It needs to link Mansion House to the town centre so it is not isolated once it is redeveloped. It should also help to better integrate Station Road, possibly through the use of different materials?
- The Springfield Campus – needs to link to Pickwick Road to ensure the facility is connected to the town centre.
- Need to create better connections from the car parks to the town centre. It is not clear how to get to the High Street from the car parks.
- A coach park located at Newlands Road is far enough away from the destinations to increase footfall on the High Street.
- 'White van man' and the Jaipur Indian Restaurant currently signal the end of the High Street for pedestrians.
- Drivers in the town centre need to understand they don't have priority.
- Secondary routes need to feel more connected.
- There is no consistency between materials across the town centre.
- Move the market to a Saturday so everyone can attend.
- The green space (graveyard) at the Martingate Centre feels isolated and could be better used.
- Filming can be disruptive for shoppers / shop owners – could a waiting area be provided by the production company for shoppers?



Notes and drawings from Group 4

General themes

There were many common themes which emerged from the afternoon session. The main points of agreement are summarised below.

- The gateways along the A4 need to be improved to change perceptions and to let people know that Corsham has more to offer.
- Improvements needed at both ends of the High Street to help announce the town centre.
- Pickwick Road needs to be better integrated into the town centre. Traffic calming measures should also be imposed to make the space from The Methuen Arms to Newlands Road more inclusive and for all users allowing for spill-out and dwell space. Improvements should also ensure that the redevelopment of the Mansion House and new Springfield Community Campus feel connected to the town centre.
- More needs to be made of the tree lined Avenue at Corsham Court; the space should also feel like it extends down Pound Pill towards The Pound Arts Centre.
- The surrounding streets have a poor relationship with the High Street and need to feel more connected.
- Need to extend the High Street past Post Office Lane to ensure pedestrians explore the whole length of the High Street.
- Coach tours would help the tourism trade in town. There needs to be a suitable location for coach drop-off and parking which doesn't just drop tourists at the attractions but allows them to explore the town as well.
- Car parking locations need to be easier to find, entrances need to be more welcoming and the routes to the town centre clearer and more appealing.
- The town centre needs to be decluttered and redundant signage removed.
- Need to find a way to move people more effectively around a wider area of the town centre without having to use signage which detracts from the public realm.
- A more holistic approach to materials should be used across the town centre.
- An affordable hotel would help to draw working MoD staff and tourists to spend more time in the town centre.



Stakeholder feedback

Open Day

The team, with the help of Corsham Town Council, also organised a public open day to coincide with the stakeholders workshop on 9th June.

Located in a shop front in the Martingate Centre, the open day was scheduled to coincide with Corsham's market day to ensure maximum exposure and passing footfall. The event ran from 10am until 7pm to allow for as many local residents as possible to attend.

Prior to the event leaflets were posted around Corsham inviting residents to attend and provide their feedback and experience of Corsham's public spaces. Information regarding the event was also posted via the Town Council's social media platforms.

Following on from the 9th June open day the exhibition was also displayed, unmanned, in the following locations:

- Martingate Shopping Centre from the 9 -14 June;
- Corsham Town Hall, 15 – 19 June;
- Springfield Campus, 20 – 26 June.

This was done to ensure that as many members of the public could view and provide comment. The decision to display the exhibition at the Springfield Campus was also taken to try and potentially gain feedback from residents who might not currently use the town centre. Feedback forms were left for residents to provide written responses.

The exhibition

The exhibition consisted of nine A1 exhibition boards which explained Corsham's assets, what public realm improvements can deliver and various levels of intervention. They described the experience of arriving in Corsham and of finding the town centre; analysis of key spaces including the High Street, Pickwick Road, and the Martingate Shopping Centre, as well as other issues including traffic management, clutter, material and street furniture. Please see attached copy of the final boards displayed.

Five members from the consultation team attended with expertise in all facets of public realm including transport, landscape, urban design, and economic development and planning.

A constant and steady flow of local residents viewed the proposals over the course of the day. Discussions with local residents allowed the team to ask questions as well as to try and gain local perspective and experience of Corsham's town centre from its key users.

A large map of Corsham was included in the display with members of the public being asked to write their comments on 'stickies' and post them. The plan helped spark discussion throughout the day as residents were keen to read others' comments. This helped the team to further facilitate discussion with local residents. The comments also had the effect of facilitating discussion between local residents.



General feedback

Overall feedback about the exhibition and the idea of the public realm study was positive. Most people agreed with the topics highlighted on the exhibition boards and were happy to see something positive being done in the town centre.

Residents generally are concerned over the number of shops closing in the High Street and Martingate Shopping Centre and feel improvements to the town centre environment are definitely needed.

Most residents agree that more can be done to attract passing trade from the A4 into Corsham and feel that the current gateways do little to welcome visitors.

Parking is mentioned by most residents with most requesting free or at least one- hour free parking. Many also agreed that the existing car parks are confusing and that the routes to the High Street from the car parks are unattractive. These issues often mean that people prefer to park on surrounding residential streets which cause concern for residents living on those streets.

Most feel that the High Street is very positive but that the connecting streets are of a lesser quality and should be improved. Many agree it is difficult to find the High Street from Newlands Road and that Pickwick fails to announce the High Street at all.

Most feel that the Martingate Shopping Centre is of a poor architectural quality in comparison to the High Street and that improvements would provide a better shopping experience and arrival for visitors to Corsham.

There is concern about the speed of traffic along both Pickwick Road and Newlands Road and most express support to see traffic speeds reduced and improvements made for pedestrians along these routes.

General traffic management is well supported, issues include removing cars parked on pavements, reducing speed and decreasing car priority across the town centre.

Most feel that the current amount and positioning of signage is not in keeping with the character of the town centre and feel it should be reduced in amount and size. (It was suggested that the same should be done for other features such as the black planters on the High Street.)

Materials and maintenance are an area of concern with several people mentioning issues for the elderly / disabled and parents with prams. Several people mention the recent repair work to the High Street as being positive for those with mobility issues and that the remainder of the repair needs to be done; however, others mention the poor quality of the repair work and feel it should be improved.

Pound Pill is repeatedly mentioned as an area of concern due to traffic speed and the amount of pedestrians using the crossing between The Pound Arts Centre and the school. Many suggest traffic calming measures here to make it safer for children walking to school.

There is mixed support for the potential reopening of the railway station. Some feel it is essential for the future of Corsham while others are more sceptical, feeling it will cause people to leave Corsham and shop elsewhere. Residents who live on roads around the station are concerned their streets will become car parks during the week for those commuting to work on the train and that careful consideration of these impacts need to be addressed before the station is reopened.

There are mixed reactions towards the market. Many like the market but feel that the stalls should not be offering similar wares as stores already on the High Street. Others like it but feel that it detracts from the High Street and should be moved. Suggested relocations include to the car park of the Martingate Shopping Centre or the top of the High Street in front of the Town Hall. It is also suggested that the market should be moved to a Saturday to draw more people into the town centre on the weekend.

Additional seating / a gathering space for events / civic space is suggested by many people as something Corsham lacks. In front of the Town Hall, the graveyard near the Martingate and along the High Street are all suggested locations.

Written feedback

In addition to the 'stickies' feedback the public were also invited to fill in a short questionnaire to provide the team with more detailed written responses. Overall, 42 written responses are received; 17 on the open day and an additional 25 being returned to the Town Council before 3rd July, 2015.

These responses are summarised in the following tables.

Question 1

What do you visit Corsham for and how often?

What do you visit Corsham for?		
Percentage	Responses	
79%		Shopping
	45%	- General shopping
	24%	- Independent stores
	12%	- Food shopping
29%		Visiting for social/ pleasure or exercise
19%		Using the bank
17%		Eating and drinking
10%		Using the Post Office
7%		Visiting the park at Corsham Court
5%		Work
5%		Market
5%		Education
5%		Service - beauty, dentist, optician

How often do you visit Corsham?	
Percentage	Responses
31%	1-2 times a week
26%	Daily
21%	3-4 times a week
5%	Monthly

'I live in the town centre and walk the length of the High Street daily'

'Shopping and meeting friends, I visit 3-4 times a week'

'Visit on a daily basis for pleasure and for local shops'

'As residents we use Corsham town centre on an almost daily basis for domestic needs and social activities'

'Not too much now despite living local, due to parking charges'

'Eating out - several times a month'

Question 2

What would make you visit the town centre more often?		
Percentage		Responses
49%		Improved shopping
	19%	- Wider variety and choice of shops
	12%	- More independent shops
	10%	- Better or different supermarket
31%		Improvements to parking
	3%	- 1 hour free
	6%	- Free
	2%	- Cheaper
12%		More / improved eating and drinking establishments
7%		Improved / redeveloped Martingate Shopping Centre
5%		Better disabled access
5%		More coherent public realm
5%		An evening economy
5%		A greener town centre

'1960s part of town could be improved, this part is completely out of keeping with the rest of the town'

'I enjoy the High Street, but not the rest so a more aesthetically pleasing and coherent environment would help'

'Place needs tidying up - more coherent public realm design that responds to our heritage'

'Reintroduction of first hour free parking. Coming into town for just a short visit is discouraged by having to pay a parking charge.'

'The distinctive 'special shops'...make a real difference'

Question 3

Are there improvements that can be made to the streets and spaces in Corsham town centre?	
Percentage	Responses
21%	Improve parking
19%	Declutter
19%	Improved / redevelop Martingate Centre
19%	Traffic calming and traffic management throughout town centre
14%	Improvements to the High Street
14%	Improvements / more coherent approach to materials
14%	Ensure that Corsham's character is retained / restored
10%	Improvements to Pickwick Road
10%	Better / more maintenance
10%	More public dwell and seating space within the town centre
7%	Improved greenery / tree planting
7%	More attractions / reduced vacancies
7%	Better connections between places
7%	Better cycle provision
5%	Fewer 'municipal' designs
5%	Children's play space
5%	Improved gateways
5%	Improved disabled access

'Both ends of the High Street seem to 'under-perform', no places to linger'

'High Street is very pretty, needs to be a place to wander'

'Wider pavements on Pickwick Road'

'The Pickwick Road end of the High Street needs to be cobbled or similar to slow down traffic and 'announce' the High Street'

'The traffic light junction on the A4 gives no indication of Corsham's historic centre'

'Shopping areas seem a bit disjointed - needs pulling together somehow'

'Improved traffic management - design around walkers and cyclists'

General Comments

General Comments	
Percentage	Responses
26%	Concerned with the current level of vacancy rates and wanted to see more retail in the town centre
19%	Traffic speeds managed in the town centre
14%	Safer walking routes to the town centre
12%	Improvements to the quality of the public realm
10%	Connections made with the new Springfield Campus to ensure people still use the town centre.
7%	Improvements to Martingate Centre
7%	Improvements to Pickwick Road
7%	Improvements to Pound Pill / Lacock Road
5%	Corsham Station (positive)
5%	Corsham Station (against)
5%	Improved greenery / tree planting
5%	Improved arrival gateways
5%	Improve Newlands Road
5%	Keep character of the town
5%	Better advertisement of town centre events

'The primary area in my opinion is Pound Pill as this area is very dangerous for pedestrians'

'You rightly stress decluttering and reversal of over-engineering with more equally shared space and less priority to the car's needs'

'Linking the community hub - Springfield - with the town centre'

'Would like to see the footpath to Corsham Lake extended to go right around the lake, this would encourage people wanting an interesting walk'

'Would love to see a greater use of appropriate trees around the town. This would make a huge difference to the townscape'

08 Key findings & next steps

This section explores the key findings from the Stage 1 analysis and engagement. It also outlines the next steps required to bring the recommendations together to progress to Stage 2 of the Town Council's Public Realm Study and to develop a strategy for long term change in Corsham's town centre.



Key findings

The report has established the current condition and character of the town as well as gained an understanding of the opinions and wishes of residents, visitors and stakeholders.

It has also highlighted that there are a number of areas where public realm improvements would not only enhance the physical appearance of the town centre but also help to deliver a series of economic and social improvements as well

In summary these improvements include:

Improving the town centre

- Helping to create a more welcoming environment to attract new shops / business to the area and to increase footfall in secondary streets.
- Creating spaces where bars / cafés could spill out into the public realm to help bolster the evening economy.
- Creating opportunities to provide additional complimentary uses in the town centre such as mid-range hotel accommodation or employment opportunities.
- Creating better connections to and between green spaces.
- Reinforcing the green feel provided from Corsham Court in other areas of the town centre.

Improving gateways

- Improving the gateways along the A4 to change the perceptions of Corsham and to make it a destination.
- Providing clearer routes to the town centre.
- Providing a more welcoming environment for all users including pedestrians and cyclists.
- Reducing traffic speeds on approach to town.

Improving arrival & circulation

- Improving the transition between the arrival routes and the town centre.
- Encouraging more efficient use of the car parks.
- Creating better pedestrian connections between car parks and town centre destinations.
- Providing a clear and dedicated arrival / waiting space to support public transport use.
- Providing a convenient location for coach drop-off and parking.
- Reducing non-essential traffic in the town centre.
- Creating spaces that allow for safe, efficient movement while still respecting the historic character of Corsham.
- Creating safe and attractive walking and cycling routes to the town centre.

Improving streets & spaces

- Creating spaces at either end of the pedestrianised High Street to help announce arrival at the town centre.
- Creating a better transition between 'pedestrianised' and middle High Street areas.
- Making the Martingate Centre feel more connected to the High Street.
- Making the Martingate Centre more appealing to national retailers.
- Maintaining and enhancing views to key buildings.
- Creating a better setting for the Town Hall.
- Providing an important civic space for functions and events.
- Enticing Corsham Court visitors to explore the High Street.
- Strengthening routes to encourage people to explore beyond the main pedestrian areas.
- Improving existing network of lanes so people feel safer accessing the town centre.
- Creating a variety of spaces which allow for sitting, walking, exploring.

Improving the detailed elements

- Removing redundant signage.
- Reducing clutter from the streetscape and where possible combining elements.
- Creating a maintenance strategy to ensure the character of the area is maintained.
- Providing seating in areas where it will be well used and does not obstruct pedestrian routes.
- Selecting a pallet of materials which are sympathetic to the setting of the buildings, are robust and will help to unify the streets in the town centre.
- Selecting elements which reinforce Corsham's historic past.

Next steps

Following on from the Stage 1 summary report the next steps will involve developing a comprehensive public realm strategy. This will build on the analysis from Stage 1 and start to develop an overall concept for Corsham as well as initial design solutions for priority areas for change.

As with Stage 1, it will be important to keep the momentum going and involve local residents and stakeholders in the development of the strategy. This will ensure the proposals are well supported by the local community.

