

**LEIGHTON BUZZARD TOWN CENTRE
PRIORITY SCHEMES SCHEDULE**

DRAFT

Contents

1. Introduction and purpose of document
2. Leighton Linslade Partnership Committee
3. About the area
4. Linked projects: Bridge Meadow and Land south of High Street development briefs
5. Linked projects: Managing car parking effectively
6. Project funding
7. Priority schemes for delivery
8. Project information and monitoring forms

Introduction and purpose of plan

Central Bedfordshire Council and Leighton Linslade Town Council wish to implement a range of improvement projects within Leighton Buzzard town centre. The Town Council has identified these proposed improvements through an extensive programme of engagement with residents, businesses and other interested individuals. This engagement, which stretches back to 2007 has resulted in the production of a number of strategies and vision documents including the Big Plan 1 and 2, Signage Strategy and Community Improvement Plan.

Whilst the Town Council has a clear vision of what it wishes to achieve, it has not yet been able to bring a number of specific priority projects to fruition. Availability of funding is perhaps the most significant element in this however ensuring alignment of priorities between Central Bedfordshire Council and the Town Council is also an important factor.

The purpose of this document is primarily to act as a tool for enabling delivery by identifying potential funding sources available both now and in the future. Drawing on previous engagement and related strategies it will also identify priority projects which can be taken forward jointly by Central Bedfordshire Council and Leighton Linslade Town Council. It is envisaged that at any one point there will be four active projects in either research or delivery stage. As schemes are implemented the project pipeline will be supplemented by additional initiatives agreed by the Leighton Linslade Partnership (both CBC and Town Council) Committee. .

This plan is intended as a living document that will be updated continuously. Responsibility for managing the overall delivery programme will sit with a working group comprised of relevant CBC officers and the Town Clerk and/or relevant deputies. If funding is not available at any one time for implementing priority projects this plan will provide 'off the shelf' project brief's that can be taken forward as and when funding does become available.



Leighton Linslade Partnership Committee

The Leighton Linslade Partnership (joint CBC and Town Council) committee is charged with the responsibility for preparing and maintaining a Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan to foster and encourage appropriate improvements to the town centre. This responsibility is discharged through the agreement of priority projects as outlined by this delivery plan and monitoring of their delivery. Any updates or changes to this delivery plan must therefore be approved by this committee.

About the area

Leighton Buzzard is an attractive and historic market town located in the west of Central Bedfordshire bordering the County of Buckinghamshire. It forms part of the conurbation of Leighton Lincolns which has a population of 37,470, the second largest in Central Bedfordshire.

Leighton Buzzard town centre provides a good quality visitor experience with a range of specialist and independent shops and services in an attractive setting amongst historic buildings. It does experience significant competition however from other destinations such as Aylesbury and most notably Milton Keynes. Despite this the relative quality of its offer does help to mitigate this threat which enables it to maintain a good level of economic performance with lower than average shop vacancies.

Notwithstanding the threat of online shopping, in the future, the town centre will be met with even more competition in the local area in the form of a new out of town centre retail park development proposed at Grovebury Road. It is therefore more important than ever that every opportunity is taken to maximise the performance of Leighton Buzzard town centre by ensuring its 'offer' remains sufficiently high quality to attract visitors to its shops and services.

Whilst competition will remain a constant issue there are also genuine opportunities for sustainable growth with up to 2640 new homes planned in east Leighton Buzzard. There is also expected to be substantial growth of over 5,000 new homes in the nearby town of Houghton Regis. If the quality of Leighton Buzzard town centre can be maintained and increased then this population growth could provide a substantial number of new customers to the town centre.



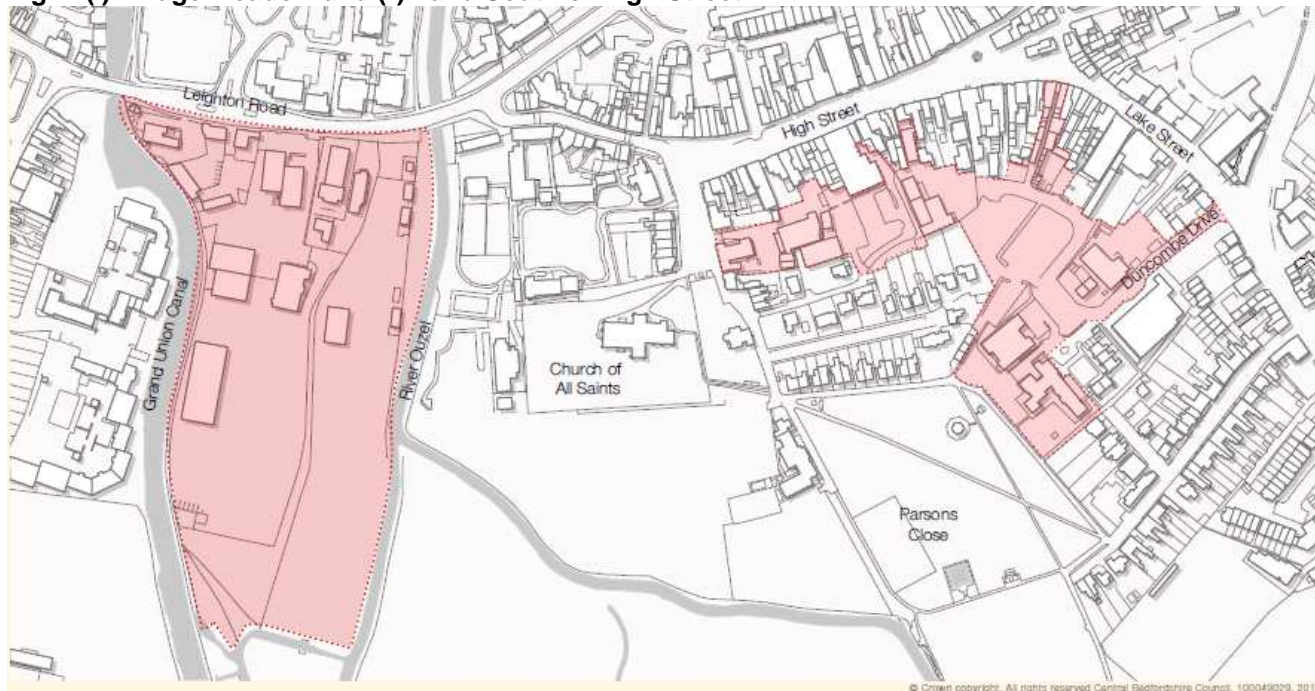
Linked projects: Bridge Meadow & Land south of the High Street development briefs

In March 2012 Central Bedfordshire Council adopted two development briefs focused on 1) land south of High Street and 2) Bridge Meadow both within or close to Leighton Buzzard town centre as technical guidance for development management purposes.

The purpose of the development briefs were to set out how Central Bedfordshire Council and key partners such as the Town Council wished to see the sites developed and to help encourage redevelopment to take place. Both sites have a direct impact on the future composition of the town centre in that they propose the development of new retail, housing, civic space, leisure and other complementary uses. The land south of High Street scheme is particularly important as it directly links to the existing High Street with some elements of the proposed scheme dovetailing with this delivery plan.

Supporting both proposed developments should be considered a fundamental part of this delivery plan and where linkages between projects can be made that support their realisation this should be encouraged.

Fig 1: (l) Bridge Meadow and (r) Land South of High Street



Linked projects: Managing car parking effectively

Central Bedfordshire Council and Leighton Linslade Town Council are in the process of jointly commissioning a study and management review of car parking in Leighton Buzzard town centre covering both on and off street car parking. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify current usage patterns - length of stay, user type and if there are any enforcement issues (at morning, daytime, early evening). Data to be sourced via beat surveys and other desktop data available such as ticket sales/enforcement notices
2. Consider and review any impact on residential areas of parking by town centre employees, visitor and shoppers.
3. Quantify what the current supply and demand is amongst different user types, forecasting future parking need
4. Estimate proportion of available capacity currently being used across town centre as a whole and within identified on/off street car parks
5. Forecast likely changes (5 & 10 years +) based on population and economic growth, specifically considering redevelopment of key town centre sites
6. Include quality audit review of the car parking locations in the study area that will consider issues including surveillance, security, pedestrian / vehicle access, lighting, signage etc
7. Evaluate existing car parking management practices and enforcement in Leighton Buzzard
8. Prepare an overall plan for managing parking across the town centre. Plan should consider how best to balance competing needs and utilise appropriate charging or management tools, advising on capacity, tariff structure, parking / signage improvements, management / enforcement, residential parking controls, spatial arrangement of car parks and monitoring



The parking study for Leighton Buzzard will be commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council during early January 2013. Parking surveys will be carried out during February/March (subject to weather conditions). Completion of the study is expected during April 2013.

Project funding

The primary obstacle to delivering on the priorities outlined in this delivery plan is a general shortage of funding available for full implementation and/or uncertainties regarding when funding, particularly that which is secured from developers (S106) will become available.

Whilst the broader UK economy appears to be on a more upward trajectory the recovery from the financial crisis of 2008 is still extremely fragile and slow paced. Government austerity programmes and their likely continuation into the next parliament also mean that the reductions in public funds available for investment will continue well into the next parliament. Consequently and in order to deliver the improvements that we desire for Leighton Buzzard town centre we have to be much more adept and creative at identifying and securing funds from a multiple range of sources.

This includes cross funding schemes as much as possible from existing complementary projects, e.g. cycling or walking schemes as well as securing contributions from as yet unallocated funding programmes. It is very important in this regard to have in readiness costed 'off the shelf' projects that can be taken forward as and when funding becomes available. These 'shovel ready' schemes can also aid the negotiation process when determining S106 contributions with developers on new commercial schemes and also inform the new Community Infrastructure Levy process which may also be able to provide funding for schemes in the future.



The funding available to support delivery of this programme is currently very limited and amounts to a total of £55,000 sourced directly from Leighton Linslade Town Council. These funds however can be used to develop the proposed projects from the initial ideas stage to costed proposals which can then be used to secure additional funds for delivery.

Priority schemes for delivery

The Town Council has developed over an extended period several strategies and plans which have identified a range of ideas for improving the town centre and its visibility to shoppers. The most important of these was the Big Plan produced in 2007 that outlined a broad range of improvements that the local community wished to see made in the Leighton Linlade area over the next 20 year period.

This document was recently updated and renamed Big Plan 2 to take into account changes and progress made since 2007. As you may expect Town Centre and Retail issues features very prominently, the Big Plan 2 however also covers:

- Children & Young People/ Sports & Leisure
- Social Infrastructure
- Jobs & Employment/ Education & Lifelong Learning
- Green Infrastructure/ Greening Leighton-Linslade
- Culture, Heritage & Tourism
- Sustainable Transport
- Health & Social Care
- Planning & Growth/ Local Services

Some of these issues such as planning and growth, jobs and employment do cross over and feature as prominently within the town centre as other areas. As the town centre forms the primary hub for services, culture, entertainment and leisure any improvements made will impact on most if not all aspects of Leighton Buzzard life and business. Documents such as the Big Plan 2 and other related strategies act as the source documents to this delivery plan. The Town Council has initially selected 4 projects from these plans to prioritise for delivery. That does not mean that other projects are not being progressed. It does underline however the importance of delivering these four priorities and their wider impact.



The four initial priority schemes identified by the Town Council are:

- High Street – enhancement programme leading to creation of a pedestrian only area on Saturday Market Day's.
- Environmental improvements to alleyways and mews.
- Improving Signage:- To create and install brown tourist signs at key entrance points to the town.
- Gateways:- Environmental improvements at gateways to the town to include public art, new surfacing and soft landscaping.

These projects are summarised in more detail in the following pages.

Project information and monitoring form – High Street enhancement scheme

Project	Status
High Street enhancement scheme	Research
Project description	Linkages/
<p>The purpose of this project is to improve the appearance, and accessibility of the High Street whilst increasing its use-ability for hosting town and specialist markets as well as seasonal entertainment and events. Achieving these aims will depend on creating a much improved environment on the High Street whilst also addressing congestion of bus services and potentially relocating the bus layover function and bus stops to more appropriate locations. This project has the potential to be transformative for the High Street. It is also a high cost scheme that may need to be delivered in phases as and when funding opportunities are realised. The first stage in this project is to commission the preparation of a scheme design, costings and phasing plan for delivery. Important factors to be considered in this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transport: existing route plans and scheduling issues • Existing bus stop/layover locations and options for relocation or rationalisation • Options for improving/increasing taxi rank provision • Options for pedestrian only spaces or use of shared space principles • Traffic flow arrangements through the High Street <p>Completion of this stage of the project will be out to competitive tender to a range of highways and urban design specialist agencies. It is anticipated that this project will be completed within an 8 week period from commissioning. Physical delivery of the proposed improvements will be subject to availability of capital funding. As already mentioned this project could potentially cover a large area and consequently would be a high cost scheme. It will very likely be necessary to deliver improvements in phases. Agreement of which phases are most appropriate or high priority will be considered as part of this commission. The Town Clerk will act as lead for the delivery of this project in conjunction with the Central Bedfordshire Council officer group who will provide advice and guidance in the preparation of the project brief and completion of the commissioning process.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relocation of bus stops/taxi ranks 2. Operation of town and specialist markets 3. Improvements to alleyways and mews
Milestones	<p>Brief for contact prepared and approved – February 2014 Contractors commissioned and commenced – March 2014 Transport and design analysis completed – April 2014 Options and design appraisal completed – May 2014 Initial design options submitted to LLTC/CBC for consideration – May 2014 Final design and scheme components completed – May 2014 Design and costing's stage of project complete – May 2014 Public consultation?? tbc</p>
Estimated start date	February 2014
Estimated completion date	May 2014
Project lead	LLTC in conjunction with CBC
Project partners	LLTC/CBC joint officer group
Design cost (if applicable)	£15,000
Total estimated cost of delivery (if public led)	£200,000 to £800,000 (implementation)

Project information and monitoring form – Alleyways and Mews

Project	Status	
Environmental improvements to both the High Street and its approaches and in particular the alleyways and mews	Research	
Project description	Linkages/	
The purpose of this project is to revitalise and make improvements to the numerous alleyways which are a feature of Leighton Buzzard town centre. Many of the alleyways are used as main thoroughfares and important linkages between the High Street / Market Square and some of the town's car parks, but are in poor condition and would benefit from improvements such as cleaning, improved lighting, re-painting etc. The project will seek to work with landowners, occupiers and others to make improvements and enhance these important linkages for the benefit of the town as a whole. This project will initially be run on a pilot basis in a location to be determined. The improvements to be made could include a deep clean of the alleyway, improvements to lighting where necessary, redecoration and measures to reduce the presence of pigeons and other bird life. Other works may be required subject to the condition of the alleyway/mews including repairs or improvements to surface/paving. Work is already underway in identifying appropriate pilot schemes. The project will be monitored at all points and will be subject to an evaluation on completion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land south of High/Bridge Meadow schemes 2. High Street enhancement scheme 	
Milestones	Identification of appropriate pilot scheme(s) – April 2014 Agreement with landowners – April 2014 Specification of works finalised – May 2014 Tender for works to be carried out issued – June 2014 Works contracted – June 2014 Pilot scheme completed – July 2014 Potential second scheme milestones to be identified on completion of pilot	
Estimated start date	April 2014	
Estimated completion date	July 2014	
Project lead	CBC	
Project partners	LLTC, landowners	
Design cost (if applicable)	n/a	
Total estimated cost of delivery (if public led)	£20,000 (based on completing improvements to 2 alleyways/mews)	

Project information and monitoring form – Improvements to signage

Project	Status	
Improvements to signage to and within the town centre	Research	
Project description	Linkages/	
<p>In 2012 the Partnership committee published a signage strategy for the Leighton Linlade area. Objectives for the town centre included new signage to the town centre from the bypass, Leighton Buzzard Railway Station, narrow gauge railway and canal towpath. Points of interest for possible finger signage within the town centre were: All Saints Church, Market, Library Theatre, Market Cross, Parson's Close/Splash and play, canal and river walks, independent local shops and fair trade recognition. Also considered essential by the strategy was improved and uniform signage to and from town centre car parks. This item is likely to be considered within the review of town centre car parking mentioned within the linked projects section.</p> <p>As part of this programme the first priority to be considered from the signage strategy will be brown tourism and fair trade signage. To this end a Welcome to Leighton Buzzard sign and two new Fairtrade signs have already been ordered. The signs will be located on the bypass with the objective of directing more footfall to the town centre. Further signage options included below will be considered by the Town Council for manufacture/installation during December 2013.</p>	1.Car parking review	
Milestones	<p>Initial signage orders placed (welcome to LB and 2 x fair trade signs) – November 2013 Installation complete December/January 2013 Additional required signage to be selected and orders placed – December 2013. See next page for signage options. Additional signage, installation date tbc.</p>	
Estimated start date	Underway	
Estimated completion date	<p>Initial orders placed. Installation to be confirmed shortly. Further new signage to be selected. Installation dates tbc.</p>	
Project lead	LLTC	
Project partners	Amey, CBC	
Design cost (if applicable)	Inc below	
Total estimated cost of delivery (if public led)	£5,000	

Example of signage on order and additional signage options for consideration at 12th December committee meeting



62.5xht

75xht

1435x335



1730x405

1420x700



1700x830

1460x1050



1755x1300

Project information and monitoring form – Street lighting improvements – High Street and mews

Project	Status	
Street lighting	Research	
Project description	Linkages/	
Street light improvements: Option 1, 2 3 etc	Alley way/mews High street enhancement	
Milestones	Preferred option selection - ***** 2013	
Estimated start date		
Estimated completion date		
Project lead	LLTC	
Project partners	Amey, CBC	
Design cost (if applicable)		
Total estimated cost of delivery (if public led)	Option 1 Option 2 Option 3 Option etc etc	

Project information and monitoring form – Gateways enhancement scheme

Project	Status	
Gateways	Research	
Project description	Linkages/	
<p>Improving the attractiveness of important gateways/strategic highways routes is important in raising the perception and quality of offer the town centre providers to existing and potential visitors or centre users. The partnership committee wish to ensure key entrance points into the town centre are attractive and welcoming. This project will review which gateways are of sufficient importance to the overall perception of the town centre and what type of improvements can be made. This could include ensuring gateways are maintained to a higher standard or may require investment in the form of new paving, open spaces or other improvements including public art or useable. Once priority gateways have been identified recommendations for their improvement will be prepared. This may include the commissioning of designers and/or highways engineers to prepare improvement schemes to be used as ‘off the shelf’ schemes ready for delivery in the event funding becomes available.</p> <p>As this is the least developed project priority in terms of agreed outputs it is recommended that this scheme be taken forward and funded post 2014/15.</p>	<p>High street enhancement Street lighting</p>	
Milestones	<p>Key issues and priority gateways identified (potential workshop with town council and relevant partners) – tbc Options appraisal completed - tbc Project brief prepared - tbc Tenders issued - tbc Schemes/recommendations for improvements prepared – tbc</p>	
Estimated start date	TBC	
Estimated completion date	TBC	
Project lead	LLTC	
Project partners	CBC	
Design cost (if applicable)	TBC	
Total estimated cost of delivery (if public led)	TBC	

Leighton Buzzard town centre – budget allocation– Priority projects –

Scheme	Budget	Type of spend/output produced	Output delivered by:
Review of car parking capacity and management	£5,000 Contribution of £20k being provided by CBC. Total budget: £25,000	Car park surveys and analysis. Output: Parking Strategy and Management Plan	March 2013
High Street environmental improvements and creation of a pedestrian only area on Saturday Market Day's.	£15,000	Design fees and technical reports. Output: Full costed, designed scheme.	May 2014
Signage – at key access points	£5,000	Sign design, manufacture and installation. Output: New signage installed.	February 2013
Environmental improvements – alleyways and mews	£20,000	Design, lighting and decoration. Output: Two alleyways/Mews enhanced	July 2014
Street lighting	£10,000	Design, manufacture and installation Output: New lighting installed	tbc
Gateways:- Environmental improvements at gateways to the town, potentially to include public art, new surfacing and soft landscaping.	To be funded from future years budgets.	Design fee's and technical reports. Output: Outline of schemes/potential designs/feasibility analysis	2015/16
Total allocated budget:	£55,000		