

6 Public Realm Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The PRDG document embraces the aims of the Transforming Trowbridge UDF which seeks to promote and enhance the River Biss corridor in Trowbridge. The relationship between this document and the UDF have been shown by extracting relevant statements in highlighted boxes.

6.1.2 This chapter outlines how the objectives will be implemented as part of the Public Realm Strategy through improving accessibility to the River Biss corridor and the use of high quality design within the public realm areas.

6.1.3 The PRDG is a comprehensive strategy which integrates both the public realm and development sites where opportunities for interaction with public space should be maximised. The aim will be to create a high quality public realm which is attractive, safe and provides usable public space for a wide range of activities throughout the day and into the evening.

UDF: Works should be of the highest standard and respond to the streetscape context and scale.

UDF: Public realm should be delivered as part of a co-ordinated approach and provision should be put in place to ensure the initial investment in the public realm is maintained across the town centre.

UDF: Provide environmental improvements to enhance the river corridor.

Objective 1 – To promote a strong sense of place, and a distinct and positive identity which respects the historic environment and character of Trowbridge by creating a clearly defined, ‘seamless’ public realm which co-ordinates existing and new development.

6.2 Respecting Context and Character

6.2.1 Good design comes from a thorough understanding of place and context. The CABE publication ‘By Design’ (2000) and the English Partnerships and Housing Corporation publication ‘Urban Design Compendium’ (2000) both contain useful information on urban design issues in general, and on how to analyse context.

6.2.2 Heritage issues are a key consideration given that a large part of the river corridor is within the Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area and the site contains a significant number of listed buildings. There are a number of useful English Heritage publications which provide useful guidance, in particular, ‘Streets for All (2005), and ‘Building in Context (2001)’ which should be referred to.

6.3 Identity, Image and Brand

6.3.1 The character analysis has an important role in helping to develop a distinctive identity for the Biss corridor.

6.3.2 Local distinctiveness can also be strengthened by the appropriate use of materials and the introduction of appropriate street furniture, planting, lighting and signage.

6.3.3 In order to create a distinctive brand for the River Biss it is important that the river corridor is associated with a quality product. This is not only in terms of new design work and materials, but also in terms of the river itself. There is a need to address low flows and the current water level, and also to address water quality throughout the river corridor.

6.3.4 The main aim is to make the river corridor more inviting, more prominent and more open. By improving access and key views to the river it can once again become a central part of the Trowbridge townscape.

6.4 Gateways

6.4.1 Gateways play an important role in creating attractive and inviting entrances to the town, which encourage visitors to enter the town centre. Town Bridge and Cradle Bridge perform important gateway functions in Trowbridge and should be designed in order to enhance this role.

6.5 Landmarks

6.5.1 A unique identity for the river corridor can be achieved by enhancing existing landmarks and by creating new ones. Landmarks such as distinctive buildings, or features of a building, help to provide reference points and enhance the legibility of a town. Landmark buildings are often used to terminate vistas along key streets, to define key pedestrian routes, and are placed at key nodal points such as road junctions and at gateways into the Town Centre.

6.5.2 New spaces should reflect the history of the area and important buildings.

6.5.3 Landmark buildings provide the opportunity to make an architectural statement by providing a focus and vertical emphasis to the townscape. The treatment of these buildings should be in keeping with their townscape role in terms of scale, materials, style and detailing. In terms of the public realm strategy, the setting of landmark buildings should be respected. St James’ Church is the dominant landmark in Trowbridge and views and vistas to/from this building should be conserved.

6.5.4 Recognisable landmarks should be developed at key locations, such as corners, to enhance the legibility of the built environment and assist people in building a coherent ‘mental map’ of their neighbourhood. Developments should also define vistas and focal points ensuring all routes are legible for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists who use the river corridor and adjacent areas of Trowbridge.

6.5.5 Public art can also play an important role in creating local landmarks and should be introduced into the strategy at key public realm locations.

UDF: Integrate water into the fabric of Trowbridge’s key public spaces to help create individual and memorable spaces which celebrate the town’s rediscovery of the river.

UDF: Public realm design should seek to reinforce the unique character of the different districts- Waterside, Parkside, Old town and Brewery

UDF: Create a strong identity for the town squares and public spaces by night and improve the cohesive appearance of the townscape

Objective 2 – To create a vibrant, well-used waterfront by promoting a range of activities along the Biss corridor.

6.6 Promoting Activity and Increased Use

6.6.1 In order to maintain and enhance activity throughout the day and into the evening a range of uses has been encouraged in the Town Centre.

6.6.2 The creation of new land uses in the area, through new development, will represent a fundamental change to the character of the area. For the purposes of this study we have based the public realm strategy and area design guidance on current planning policy, approved planning applications, and on emerging land uses and layouts presented in current planning applications. These provide the context for the PRDG. The adjacent figure shows the types of activity areas emerging from these proposals.

6.6.3 Land use significantly affects the way the public realm is used. It is important that the uses adjacent to the public realm are people generating uses, in order to encourage increased activity. Mixed use developments tend to promote activity throughout the day and into the evening and should be encouraged in appropriate locations. This document supports the introduction of a range of mixed uses to the town centre and River Biss corridor as a means to enliven the public realm.

6.6.4 By responding to the uses proposed in development areas a range of spaces can be created along the river corridor adding variety and interest. This Strategy seeks to promote the public realm as a venue for a range of activities from sport to education, from play to informal leisure and relaxation, making them relevant to the local communities and to the 21st century. The public realm should also be socially inclusive, promoting and supporting social interaction and being accessible to all potential users.

Note: This strategy cannot allocate land uses and the adjacent map is based on the existing West Wiltshire District Plan First Alteration (Adopted June 2004).

UDF: Wherever possible streets should contain a variety of uses.



Figure 6.1: Existing and proposed predominant land uses and activities

Objective 3 – To create a network of high quality, diverse and multi-functional public spaces responding to the adjacent mix of land uses.

6.7 Public Open Space Network

6.7.1 Trowbridge currently has a limited range of existing public spaces. The aim for designers should be to create a linked network of diverse public spaces including both green spaces, and more urban public spaces such as squares and pedestrian streets.

6.7.2 A strong network of public open space is important both in terms of human use, but also in terms of protecting ecological systems and processes. Typical open space strategies follow the ‘string and beads’ principle where key open spaces and nodes of activity (such as pubs, cafés, play areas arranged at strategic locations) are linked via relatively narrow corridors of leisure routes or pedestrian/cycleways. This is particularly appropriate for the River Biss corridor which consists of a series of linear routes and spaces.

6.7.3 The open space network should be multi-functional and incorporate ecological assets, activity areas, recreational facilities and be linked with routes for walking and cycling. In this respect the river corridor should be broken down into a series of ‘events’ and a network of spaces accommodating different activities. By creating a series of linked ‘waterside spaces’ it is possible to create spaces to stop, and features for people to see.

6.7.4 The townscape analysis has identified a number of public spaces in the town centre which are which are currently poorly defined and would benefit from enhancement, such as Cradle Bridge. The proposed enhancements to the public space network are illustrated in Figure 6.2. Opportunities for new public open spaces have also been identified with reference to the UDF.

- UDF: Create three new principal public spaces which will form a focus for pedestrian activity within the town both by day and into the evening.
- UDF: Create smaller secondary squares which act as neighbourhood focal points
- UDF: Create a series of small scale local pocket parks and spaces
- UDF: Enliven spaces and create a sense of theatre and drama
- UDF: Create a new garden in the People’s Park adjacent to the existing pond which should be reconfigured to create a softer edge to it’s banks.

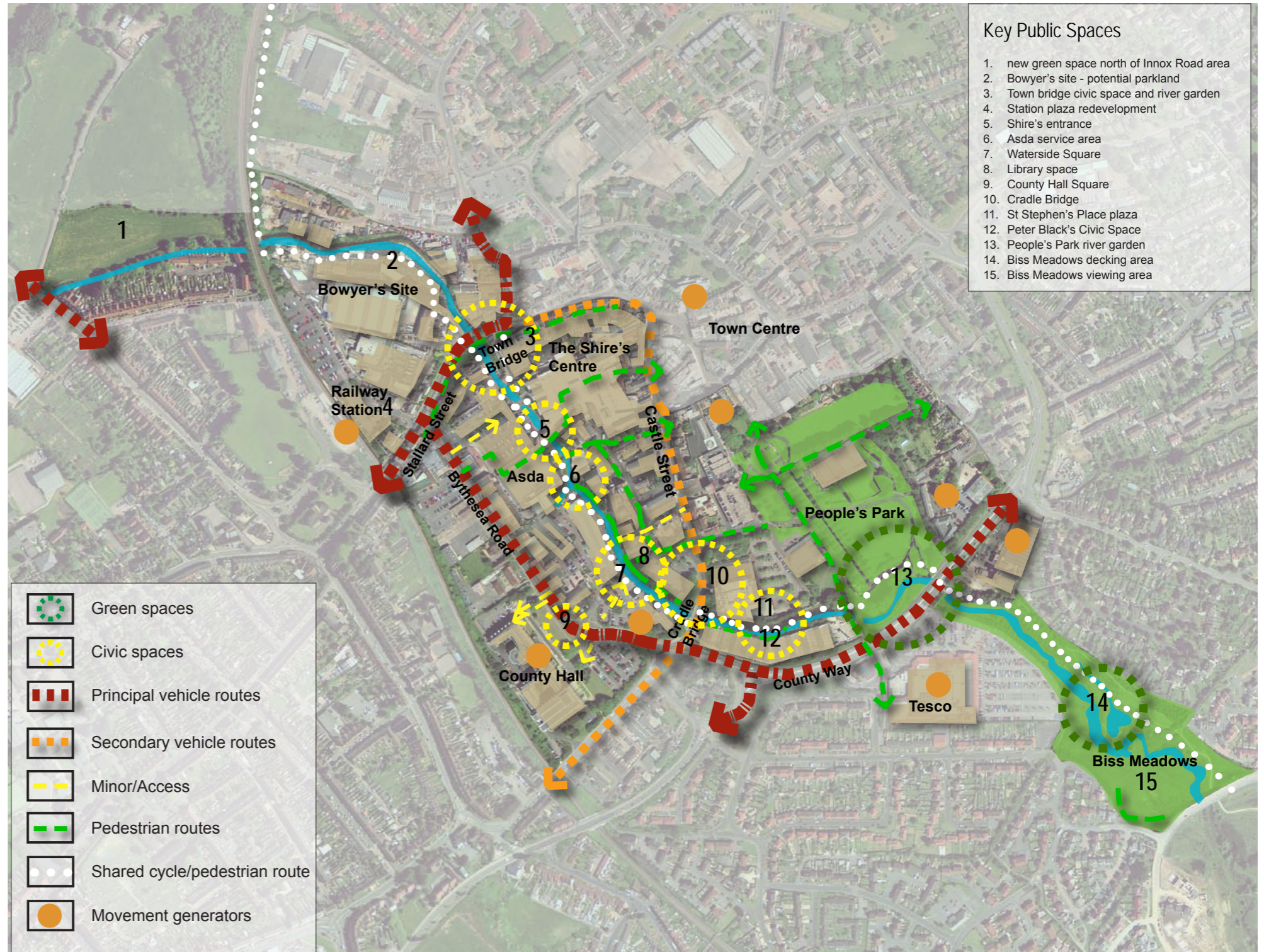


Figure 6.2: Proposed movement strategy and key linkages diagram

6.10 Ecology and Biodiversity

6.10.1 A key component of the public realm strategy is the promotion of landscape and wildlife enhancements along the River Biss, which needs to be addressed in the context of new development. The public open space network should aim to deliver a series of linked spaces to encourage biodiversity and nature conservation interest through the design of a range of semi-natural greenspaces.

6.10.2 Certain areas such as, the residential edge and parkland character areas present the greatest opportunity for improving the ecology of the river corridor, especially in Biss Meadows and the People's Park. Selective tree and scrub removal, whilst retaining the best examples of mature trees, would present an opportunity to reduce heavy shading and allow more sunlight into the river and its corridor.

6.10.3 The treatment of the river channel presents a significant opportunity to enhance biodiversity along the river corridor. In some locations, re-grading of the river banks could be carried out and enhancements made to the existing weirs. The river would also benefit from cutting a low-flow channel through the existing substrate.

6.10.4 By implementing ecological enhancements at the locations shown in Figure 6.3, Trowbridge would benefit from 'bringing the countryside into the town' thus, not only benefiting nature conservation, but also underlining the town's rural setting and helping education and interpretation of riverside habitats.

6.10.5 Whilst it is appreciated that there are less opportunities for intervention in the more urban areas of the town, some regrading of the river edges should be sought, along with the introduction of more sensitive lighting.

UDF: The strategy will seek to improve the river corridor as it passes through the town centre creating an ecological corridor which connects with the country park.
UDF: Implement a soft landscaping strategy along the river corridor which increases the ecological and amenity value of the river corridor.

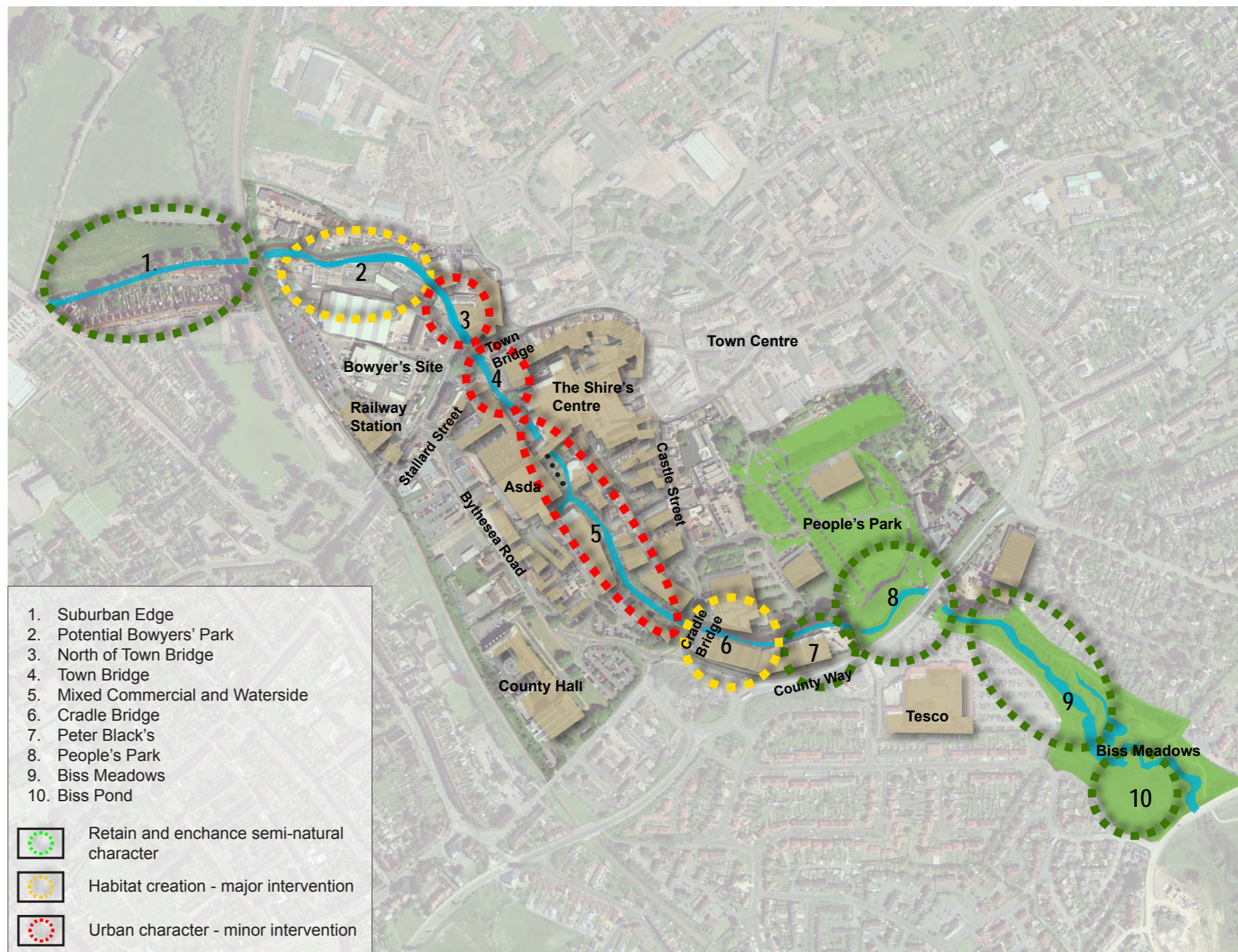


Figure 6.3: Ecology strategy

Objective 6 - To promote the river corridor as a cultural and educational resource through interpretation, public art and nature conservation.

6.11 Culture and Education

6.11.1 There are significant opportunities for introducing cultural and education elements to the river corridor. The value of riverside habitats to education has been referred to under Objective 5. Public art can contribute to local distinctiveness and performs an important role in the public realm by creating identity, focus, and a link with the history of an area, as well as adding the cultural experience.

6.11.2 In the context of the PRDG, public art is considered to be an integral part of street furniture, lighting and signage. Trowbridge would benefit from new pieces of public art as few examples currently exist in the town. There is potential for different forms of art to be located within key public spaces throughout the town centre and within public space proposed as part of a development. Developers should ensure that opportunities for civic art installations are accommodated within their respective development sites. There is a significant opportunity to appoint a co-ordinating artist to provide a coherent approach to public art along the riverside. The industrial history of Trowbridge is reflected in the built environment which surround the riverside. This is part of the culture of the town and could be reflected within proposals for public art and the design of public spaces. The adjacent plan shows the key locations for public art.

6.12 Creative Lighting

6.12.1 The level of lighting along the River Biss is currently very poor. At night time the river corridor is very dark and in the day, the tree canopy blocks a significant amount of light. In order to ensure safety, strategic tree removal may be required.

6.12.2 The river corridor needs to be well lit, so pedestrians and cyclists along the river corridor feel safe. However, it is important that there is a varied approach to lighting design to address environmentally sensitive areas. Offers are known to use parts of the River Biss, and it is important that the movement of these animals is not adversely impacted through inappropriate lighting. Sensitively designed lighting is therefore required in order to avoid light pollution and reduce disturbance to wildlife.

6.12.3 Increased safety is a factor that is likely to attract both inward investors and visitors to the area. The lighting of key landmark buildings

UDF: Use art to pay tribute to the rich industrial heritage of Trowbridge in particular its importance in the wool and cloth industries.
 UDF: Incorporate artistic lighting within the town to create dramatic effects by night.

UDF: provide spaces and opportunities for performance art within the town centre.
 UDF: Provide safe levels of light for pedestrian and vehicular movements and crime prevention.

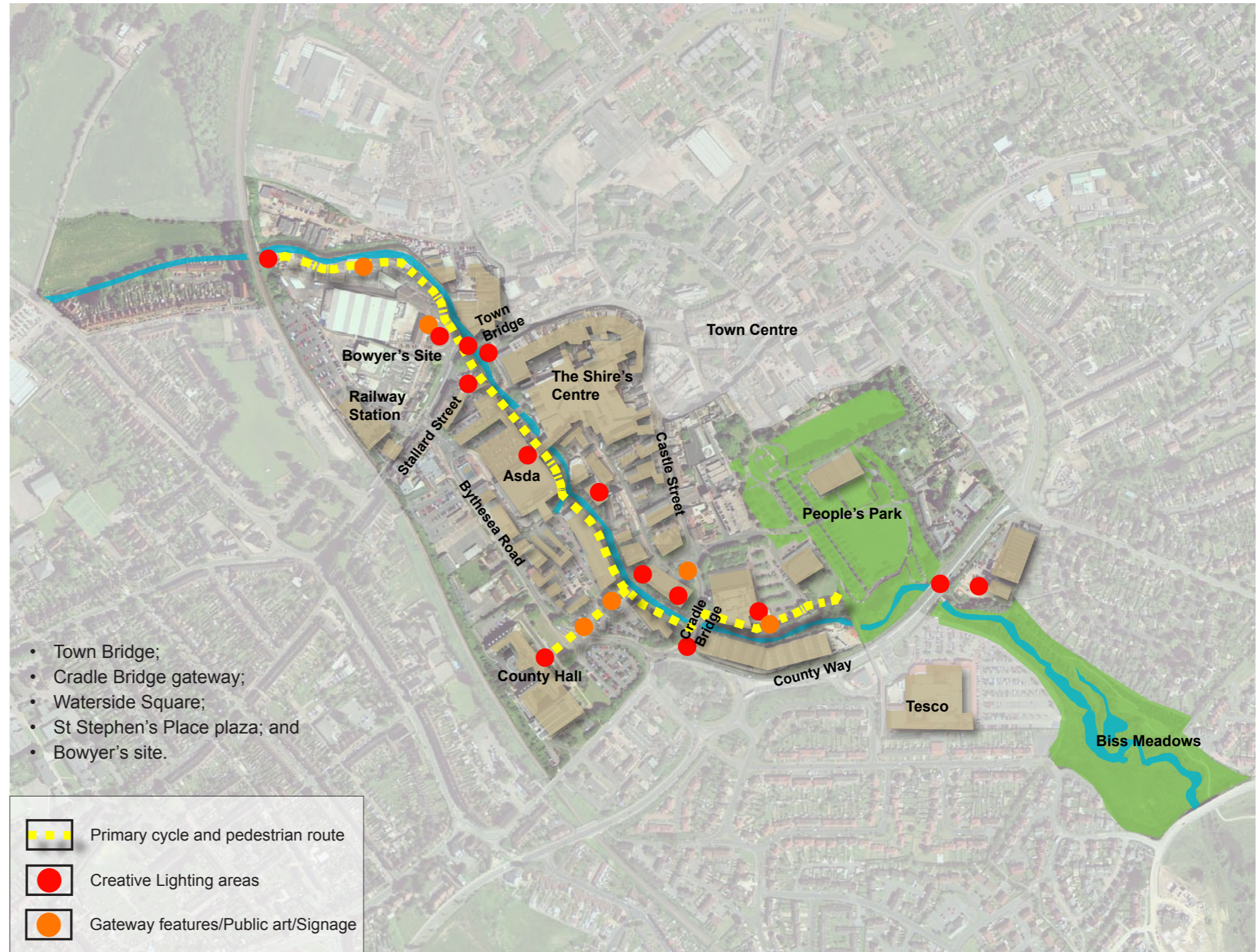


Figure 6.4: Public Art and Creative lighting strategy

would encourage business and leisure use during the evening and would emphasise that the area was valued by WWDC and private organisations.

6.12.4 At night much of the visual interest that defines urban spaces is lost. Through selective lighting of building facades and key features, trees and landmarks this visual interest can be retained. In addition to lighting, stakeholders consultation has suggested the introduction of closed circuit television (CCTV) at key public spaces and continued monitoring through existing CCTV facilities.

6.12.5 The approach to lighting described in chapter 9 also aims to establish a distinct theme for the design of lighting columns and fittings.

6.13 Signage and Interpretation

6.13.1 Signage should enhance the legibility of the Biss corridor and elevate the status of key destination points and places of interest. There should be a coherent system linking the river to other local facilities and the key Town Centre locations within the historic retail core.

6.13.2 Gateway sites, such as Town Bridge and Cradle Bridge, are important locations for signage. The primary aim is to 'catch' people at these locations and guide them into the Town Centre. Visitors should be 'welcomed' into Trowbridge by a distinctive marker sign located at key entry points, car parks, major pedestrian links and major roads. This should include not only directional signage but also interpretation on the history of the town and the provision of community information.

6.13.3 In particular, interpretation of the history of the mills and the woollen industry associated with the Biss is appropriate, and would nurture a distinctive identity for Trowbridge.

UDF: A clear hierarchy of pedestrian and traffic signage should be provided throughout the city centre.

UDF: Use the minimum level of information necessary to effectively direct people and to ensure a maximum degree of simplicity and clarity.

UDF: Traffic signage should be minimised and located sensitively with regard to pedestrian movement.

UDF: Provide guidance into the town centre along key access routes.

Objective 7 - To design the public realm to address issues of community safety and reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour within the context of good urban design principles.

6.14 Safety and Security

6.14.1 Design has a crucial role to play in delivering and creating a safe and secure environment. Stakeholders have expressed a desire to improve community safety issues along the River Biss corridor. Addressing security issues should be seen in the context of wider urban design objectives.

6.14.2 In April 2004 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office published the Government's guidance on safety and security in the built environment: Safer Places. The document sets out the seven attributes of urban design that are particularly relevant to crime prevention:

1. **Access and Movement:** places with well defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security;
2. **Structure:** places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict;
3. **Natural Surveillance:** places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked;
4. **Ownership:** places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community;
5. **Physical Protection:** places that include necessary, well-designed security features;
6. **Activity:** places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times;
7. **Management and Maintenance:** places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future.

6.14.3 Busy, active and interesting streets are more pleasant to walk in. Increased activity, in turn, encourages safety and security within the public realm and can deter certain aspects of criminal behaviour, the result of which is the 'self policing' of an area.

UDF: Design should promote a safe and secure environment along the river corridor.

Objective 8 – To ensure that the quality of public realm provision can be sustained in the long term and through efficient and effective maintenance and management.

6.15 Sustainability

6.15.1 One of the key design principles of the strategy should be to ensure that the River Biss public realm is sustainable in environmental, social and economic terms, at the initial stages as well as through the use of the completed scheme.

6.15.2 The principles of sustainable development in the context of this study include the following:

- Consider the Whole Place - use planning guidance and local provision standards with sustainability in mind;
- Design for Minimum Waste – introduce initiatives to encourage waste minimisation;
- Aim for Lean Construction – source materials and labour locally and where possible use traditional materials and techniques as these are often recognised as sustainable;
- Minimise Energy in Construction and Use – build to reduce the amount of energy used;
- Do Not Pollute – plan pollution management into project from the outset;
- Give People Transport Choices - link into existing local transport initiatives and provide shelter and cycle storage at key destinations and visible cycle parking close to building entrances;
- Conserve and Enhance Biodiversity - promote and implement the local BAP and provide for public access;
- Reusing Buildings and Land – plan building width, depth and orientation to maximise active frontage, daylight and ventilation etc.;
- Conserve Water Resources – provide porous hard surfaces enabling water to drain away and design in SUDS;
- Respect People and their Local Environment - involve the local community in developing the project as early as possible;
- Adaptability - the public realm should be flexible to accommodate changes of use and circumstances through changing social, technological and economic conditions.