

INFORMATION

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

meeting date: THURSDAY 17th JUNE 2021
title: LEVELLING UP FUND
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
principal author: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Members on the recently announced Levelling Up Fund.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Ambitions-
 - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
 - To help make people's lives safer and healthier

- Corporate Objectives –
 - To work with our partners to ensure that the infrastructure in the Ribble Valley is improved
 - To promote stronger, more confident, and more active communities throughout the borough

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members will be aware that earlier this year, as part of the Spending Review, Rishi Sunak MP announced the Levelling Up Fund. This fund is intended to invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK. The £4.8 billion fund will support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets.

2.2 Every area of the country has been placed into category 1, 2, or 3, with category 1 representing places with the highest levels of identified need. Ribble Valley falls within category 3. Notwithstanding this categorisation the prospectus for the fund confirms that bids from categories 2 and 3 will still be considered for funding on their merits of deliverability, value for money and strategic fit, and could still be successful if they are of exceptionally high quality.

2.3 After some consideration it was decided to submit a bid for Longridge Town Centre under the Regeneration and town centre investment theme of the fund. Officers of the Council worked with Buttress Architects who have produced a Strategic Overview Document (please see attached). This has been shared with the community of Longridge and two public engagement sessions have been arranged for Tuesday 8th June.

2.4 The Regeneration and town centre investment theme seeks to build on the Towns Fund framework to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.

2.5 The timescale for submitting a bid is exceptionally short, 18th June, and the process of developing some ideas for Longridge including the public engagement session has happened very quickly given the timescales imposed.

3 VALUE FOR MONEY

3.1 The assessment process of the fund will focus on the following key criteria:

3.1.1 Characteristics of the place

3.1.2 Deliverability

3.1.3 Strategic fit with local and Fund priorities

3.1.4 Value for money

3.2 An economic case is required to support the bid which explains the benefits of the bid and how it represents value for money.

3.3 In this regard quotes were sought from consultants who could produce such a case. In total seven companies were approached to bid for this element of work. Three came back almost immediately stating that they were working on numerous other bids and that they did not have the capacity to undertake the work within the timescales involved.

4 CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

4.1 Given the value of the work involved, and in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules, at least two written quotations (seven in total) were sought with a deadline of 4th June. As of the deadline only one quote had been received.

4.2 As set out within the prospectus for the fund demonstrating value for money in respect of any bid submitted is critical to the bid. Section 5 of the application form specifically relates to the value for money elements of the bid with all costs and benefits compliant or in line with HMT's Green Book, DfT Transport Analysis Guidance and MHCLG Appraisal Guidance. As such it is evident that for our bid to be given due consideration an economic case is essential in support of the application.

4.3 In accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules where the relevant number of quotations has been sought, but fewer quotations have been obtained, an exemption from the requirement to obtain the number of quotations required was requested, and written agreement for an exemption in this case was received from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Director of Resources.

4.4 Given the deadline for applications is 18th June there was not sufficient time to first seek approval from this committee for an exemption in this case.

5 ECONOMIC CASE

5.1 Edge Economics provided a quote for undertaking specialist technical assistance in respect of our bid. Given the restricted timescales involved the economic case which will be produced will enable the Value for Money section of the Levelling Up Fund Application Form (Section 5) to be completed. This will increase the visibility of the Council's projects and make the case as best as possible at this time.

6 RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources-** the cost of the production of the Economic Case will come out of the Council's Capital Programme for Economic Development Initiatives (currently £66,750) which is set aside to explore options for capital initiatives.

- **Technical, Environmental and Legal-** part of the work to facilitate the production of the bid will require exemption from the Council's Contract Procedure Rules based on the timescales involved in submitting a bid and the importance of including an Economic case in support of the bid.
- **Political-** None
- **Reputation-** considering options for improving infrastructure within the Borough will improve opportunities for our residents.
- **Equality & Diversity** – None.

7 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

7.1 Note the intended Levelling Up Fund bid for Longridge Town Centre

7.2 Note the exemption to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, which has already been granted, set out within Section 4 of this report.



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Levelling Up Longridge

Strategic Overview
May 2021



Version history

Project name: Levelling up Longridge

Project number: XXXX

Client: Ribble Valley Council

Rev:	Date:	Status	Name	Description
3	25.05.2021	FINAL	Kimberley Corral I Senior Architect	Issued for Comment
2	20.05.2021	DRAFT	Kimberley Corral I Senior Architect	Issued for Comment
1	17.02.2021	DRAFT	Kimberley Corral I Senior Architect	Issued for Comment
	06-05-2021	DRAFT	Lee Bowen I Architectural Assistant	DRAFT

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By 2028, Longridge will be regarded by its residents as a vibrant town in which to live, work and play, having retained its historic centre and its blend of urban and rural characteristics.

Residents will have access to a range of public services, healthy leisure activities and designated green spaces, whilst community facilities in the town will be improved and enhanced. Existing employment areas will be protected and opportunities for business expansion identified.

1.0

Strategic Overview

Longridge Overview

1.1 Longridge Profile

Longridge is a market town nestled in the picturesque Ribbles Valley. The town is also on the edge of the ancient Forest of Bowland, which was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1964.

Historic Context

The advent of the railway saw other industries opening in Longridge - including four large steam-powered cotton mills and brass and iron foundries. Rows of terraced houses were built for the workers at Stonebridge and on new streets constructed off Berry Lane. This led to substantial growth over the second half of the nineteenth century - transforming Longridge from a thriving village to a fully-fledged town.

Many of the traditional industries of Longridge declined or ceased altogether during the 20th Century. Following the final closure of the railway in 1967, the former line has been largely built over and the quarries and textile mills that it served have either found alternative uses or been cleared for development.

2011 Census

Longridge has a population of approximately 38,000 and the 2011 Census shows that 46.7% of Longridge residents were aged over 45, compared to 44% for Lancashire as a whole. The high proportion in the town shows its increasing attractiveness for retirement and the need to provide suitable accommodation for residents reaching old age.

The census shows that almost 30% of Longridge residents were aged under 25 - an indication that in the future there will be a need for more affordable housing to retain these individuals in the locality.

Neighbourhood plan

Six objectives have been outlined to achieve the Longridge Neighbourhood Development Plan vision.

Objective 1 - To help manage future housing growth in Longridge

The level of housing growth in Longridge has been set through the Ribbles Valley Core Strategy. By 2026 a minimum of 1,160 new homes will be built in Longridge.

Housing development proposals to address affordability and housing needs for older and younger people.

Objective 2 - To ensure a suitable level of infrastructure is in place

Any significant growth in the area should consider extra strain on existing services and infrastructure and address the needs.

Objective 3 - To protect local character, heritage and landscape

All new development proposals will only be supported when they are of good design that responds positively to the local character and distinctiveness of the surroundings.

Objective 4 - To maintain and enhance local shops and services

The neighbourhood plan seeks to support and facilitate appropriate retail development in the main centre of Longridge town as defined in the emerging Housing and Economic Development Plan Document.

Objective 5 - To protect and enhance community facilities

The community facilities are all considered to be essential to retaining the health and vitality of the area.

Objective 6 - To protect and enhance local employment opportunities

It is important that Longridge continues to perform an economic role by providing local employment opportunities. This will ensure the community is more balanced and does not become a dormitory, commuter town.



Strategic Overview

1.2 Identifying Zones

Zones outlined within the Longridge Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2028

-  Conservation Areas
-  Housing Developments Under Construction
-  Housing Developments in for Planning Permission

Town Zones

-  Zone 01 - Town Centre
Longridge town centre maintains an active high street with approximately only 1 vacant unit.
-  Zone 02 - Key Employment Areas
Important employment areas are identified that are supported by the neighbourhood plan.
-  Zone 03 - Key Outdoor Leisure
Outdoor leisure areas deemed important for both resident well being and with significant economic value.
-  Zone 03 - Key Green Spaces
Key green spaces are identified that are protected from development coinciding with the protection of land within green belt areas.



Strategic Masterplan

1.3 Existing Overview

The following map identifies specific properties outlined in the Longridge vision document and places them in relation to the town centre and other key existing sites.

Many of the properties are located along or around the main high street on Berry Lane. The high street has many active shopfronts with high business occupancy rates.

Key

Bus Route

Proposed Surface Parking

Bus Stop

Shopfronts

High Street

Main Roads

Key Outdoor Spaces

Community Assets

1. Youth & Community Centre
2. Longridge Library
3. Longridge Civic Hall
4. Over 60's Club

Leisure Assets

1. Heritage Centre
2. St. Wilfreds Club
3. Longridge Sports & Social Club
4. Conservative Club
5. Palace Cinema
6. Skate Park

Places of Worship

1. St. Pauls Church
2. St. Wilfreds Church
3. Christ Church

Supermarkets

1. Booths
2. Texaco Garage

Key Employment Areas

1. Queens Mill Commercial Area
2. The Old Corn Mill Industrial Estate

Schools

1. St. Wilfrid's Primary School
2. Longridge C of E Primary School



2.0

Emerging Strategy



Activate public green

Public realm improvements

Safe pedestrian crossing

Anchor site

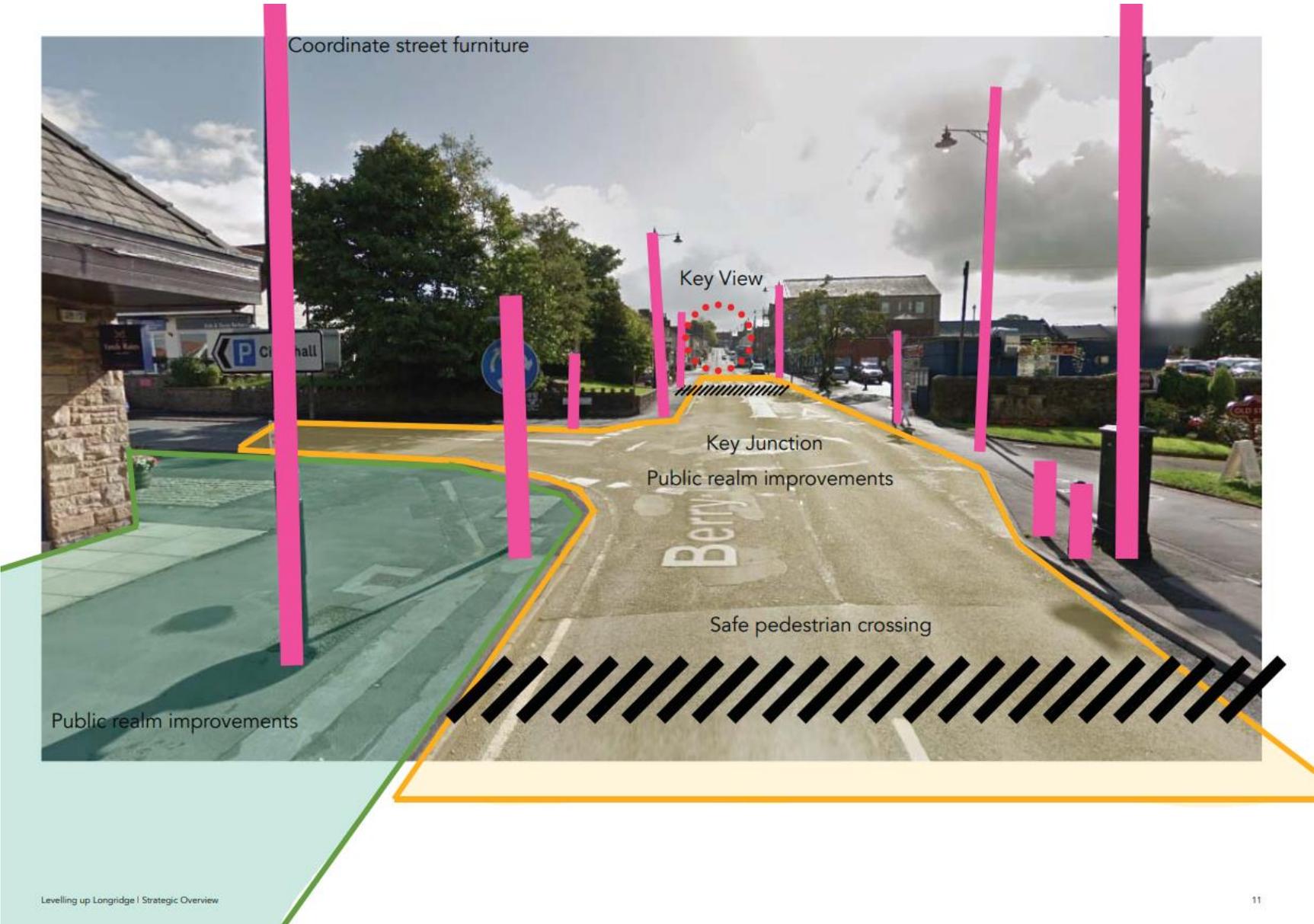
Shopfront improvements

Potential for one way traffic

Cycle Lane

Relocate street parking

Public realm improvements



Coordinate street furniture

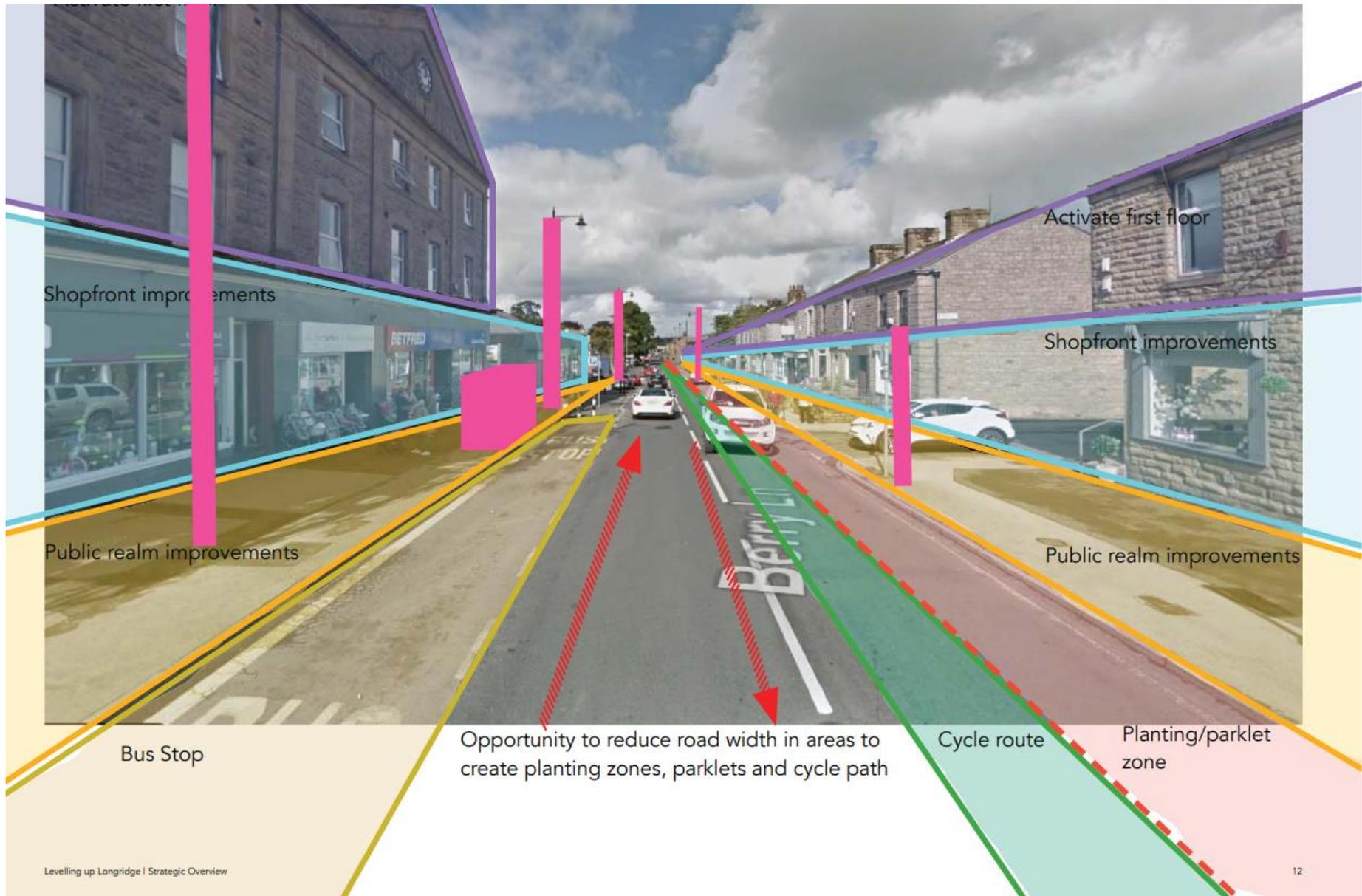
Key View

Key Junction

Public realm improvements

Safe pedestrian crossing

Public realm improvements



Shopfront improvements

Activate first floor

Shopfront improvements

Public realm improvements

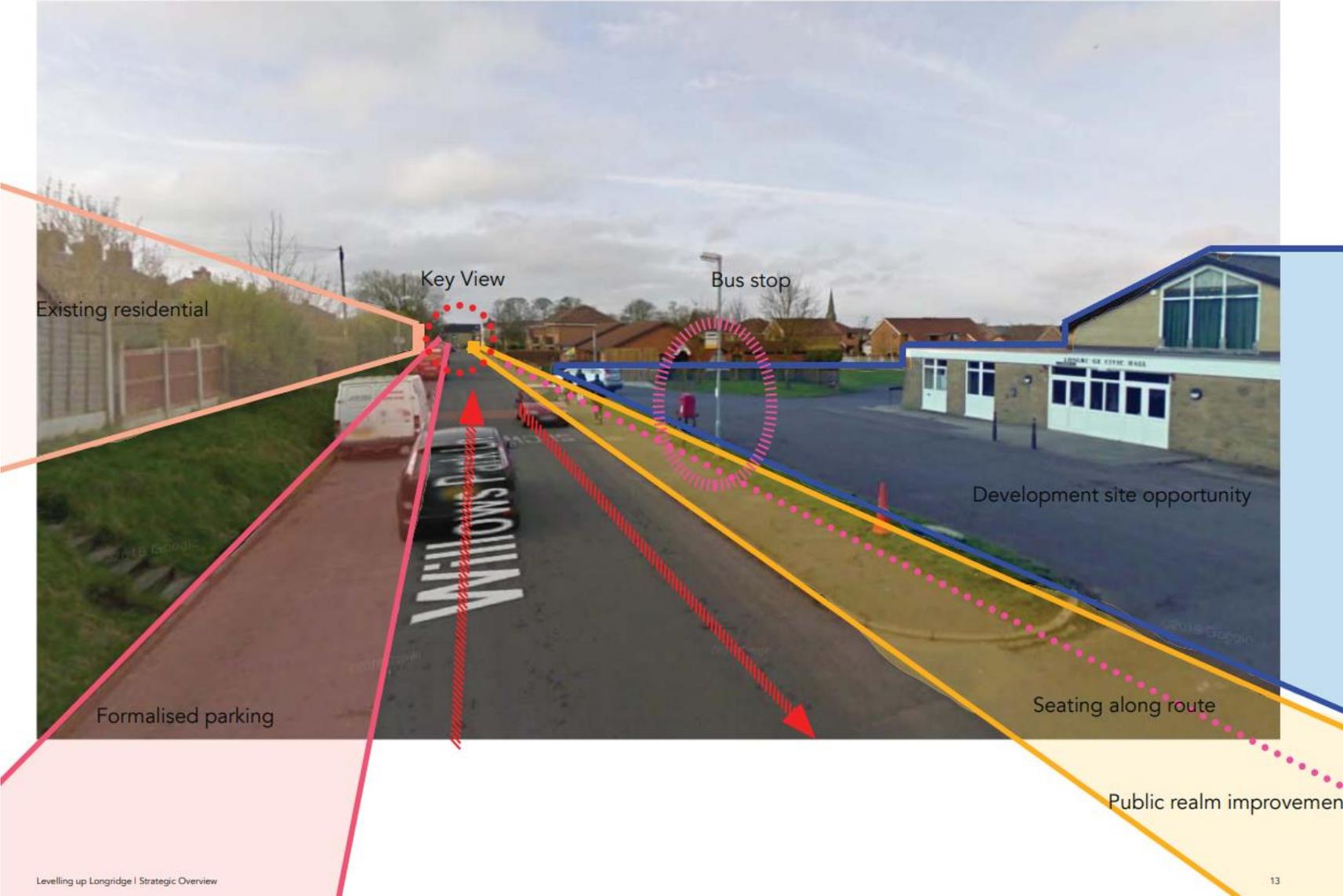
Public realm improvements

Bus Stop

Opportunity to reduce road width in areas to create planting zones, parklets and cycle path

Cycle route

Planting/parklet zone



Strategic Masterplan

2.2 Emerging Strategy

- Key**
- Development Opportunities (working with existing tenants and occupiers)
 - Local Suggested Development
 - Public Realm Improvements
 - High Street Shopfronts
 - Proposed One-way Vehicle Route
 - Key Pedestrian Connectivity



2.3 Zone 1 - Specialised Accommodation and Community Hub

- Create a new mixed use community hub with specialised accommodation
- Community hub to include shared hall facility and work hub
- Public realm improvements along Calder Ave to form better connections between the development and the high street.



2.4 Zone 2 - Activating Towneley Gardens

- Activate façades facing Towneley Gardens
- Explore options to maximise the use of the existing assets



2.5 Zone 3 - Public Realm improvements

- Option 1 introduces single flow traffic down Berry Lane, using the additional area to form outside seating and wider pedestrian footpaths
- Option 2 uses parklets to informally introduce increase outside seating areas and planting along Berry Lane
- Form new crossings along Berry Lane

- ↔ Key pedestrian crossing points
- Parklet/increased footpath
- Public realm improvements including cycle path



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