



Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Draft Vision 2040



The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Our Ambition is for Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre to maintain and enhance its reputation as a historic spa town. We want to ensure that it is an appealing and vibrant destination for residents, businesses and visitors alike with accessible and improved services and facilities as well as acting as a commercial, leisure and cultural centre serving the town's residents, workers, businesses, visitors, and the surrounding area. Royal Tunbridge Wells should be a welcoming spa town of the future, that will benefit from high quality and connected developments that protect and reinforce the town's distinctiveness.

We have carried out early engagement with stakeholders and the public to help shape this initial vision. We now want to engage more widely to ensure that the vision for the future reflects what is considered important by those who live and use the town and ensure that it continues to be a thriving and attractive location for residents, businesses and their employees and visitors. We want to ensure that local people and users of the town, help shape the future of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre.

We are now consulting on this early draft vision, principles, ambitions and opportunities for the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre to ensure that it reflects your aspirations for the future of the town. Please share your views of the current town centre, what's important to you in your town and how you would like to see it evolve and develop in the future.

The consultation runs until Midnight on Monday 15 April 2024.

Visit our webpage at
tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/rtw-town-centre-plan

We really want your views at this early stage in the process, so that they help to shape the Plan and the future of the town.

Contents

- 1 Draft Vision 2040
- 4 Summary
- 6 Draft Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan Vision 2040
- 8 Royal Spa Town Principles and Ambitions
- 10 Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Today
- 12 A Plan For the Future of Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre
- 18 Draft Town Centre Masterplan Framework
- 24 Key Sites and Opportunities
- 29 Our Engagement so Far and Next Steps



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Town Centre Plan



Royal Tunbridge Wells
Town Centre Plan

Summary



We need to decide what we want the town centre to look like in the future.

Royal Tunbridge Wells is a very special place, with a rich past providing a town which is full of heritage and culture. It benefits from a strong built and natural environment, with interesting buildings and appealing green spaces throughout the town as well as a range of services and facilities that not only serve the residents of the town but also the surrounding area and visitors from further afield.

Like many other towns, Royal Tunbridge Wells is not standing still. The Covid 19 pandemic and lockdowns accelerated many changes including a move to more online shopping, changes in working patterns, more empty shops and new uses being attracted to town centre locations. Change is inevitable and new sites and buildings across the town centre are now in need of revitalisation and repurposing to reinvigorate the town and ensure its future.

To plan this change we need a vision and strategy for the town and a comprehensive plan to deliver over the short, medium and long term. We want to ensure that it is an accessible, safe, happy and healthy place for people of all ages and backgrounds.

This document is the first part of that plan – **a vision shared for the future of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre by those that know and use it.**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has worked in partnership with a range of organisations to consider a draft vision and strategy for the town. A 'Town Centre Study' has been produced which has informed this vision document and is published alongside it at - [Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan webpage](#)

- The first part of this document sets out the draft Vision and ambitions for the town as well as an audit and baseline summary of the town as it is in 2023. We explain briefly why change is happening and why it is happening here, the current planning policy context and why we need a plan for the town centre.
- The second part sets out the opportunities and projects that could come forward for redevelopment and re-purposing over the plan period and what these might include and deliver. It also summarises the engagement that has been carried out so far and what has fed into the current draft vision and ambitions for the town and the various pieces of research and evidence that has been used to inform this document.

While a range of voices has created this draft vision, we want to understand what people who live in and use the town value most and what they want to see in the town in the future. This will make sure that Royal Tunbridge Wells remains a place where people choose to live, work and visit.

A number of questions are included throughout this document seeking views on the draft vision, ambitions, the opportunities and projects. We welcome comments from all. Please visit the [Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan webpage](#) to find out more about how you can get involved and have your say.



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Draft Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan Vision 2040



In 2040, Royal Tunbridge Wells is recognised nationally as a vibrant, welcoming and distinctive spa town. It celebrates its past whilst looking to the future and addresses climate change as a global and local imperative. The town centre embraces its royal spa town heritage character through a focus on culture, health and well-being, with unrivalled access to biodiverse green spaces and parks and reference to its improved heritage assets, drawing people and nature throughout the town centre.

It is a great place to live, work and play with a rich mix of jobs, services, homes, diverse public realm (i.e. the spaces between buildings, the streets, parks, street furniture, such as seating and landscape features), and cultural and leisure facilities, which meets the needs of people at all stages of their lives. Its diverse, passionate, creative and entrepreneurial community works together with energy and passion to achieve a common vision.

The Vision

Creating an Attractive Town Centre

By 2040, improvements to the public realm have resulted in spaces for markets and cultural events, working with businesses to improve and develop the day and night-time economy. Streets have been greened through new tree planting with a focus on enhancing biodiversity and connecting the attractive and welcoming green spaces that already exist in the town. Public art, walking and audio trails and play spaces are designed to re-imagine the spa water that the town was founded on and encourage residents and visitors to enjoy spending time in the town centre.

Harnessing Opportunities For Change

By 2040, buildings and areas of the town that were either in need of redevelopment and/or were previously underutilised have been repurposed and re-energised to create multi-functional spaces for both the day and night-time economy, catering to a diverse range of people. The embedded creativity of the town has been realised through the delivery of cultural, leisure and community facilities, ever-changing flexible spaces, and a range of retail and other business options to enable a prosperous and thriving town centre, attractive to all who use the town.

Enabling Sustainable Transport Choices

By 2040, Royal Tunbridge Wells has transformed its streets and spaces to better connect all parts of the town centre, promoting long term health and well-being through enabling active lifestyles. Walking, cycling, public transport and other forms of sustainable travel are the natural transport choice, further contributing to the transition to a low carbon economy and improving air quality. A network of electric vehicle charging points, a successful car club and the provision of more and better cycle infrastructure and storage facilities are available across the town centre.

Question 1
Do you agree with the Draft Vision for the Town Centre? If no, why not?

Question 2
Does it reflect what you think is important about the town and how it should develop in the future? If no, then please make suggestions of what else you think is important?

Question 3
Do you think it is realistic or ambitious enough? If no, please specify.

Question 4
Is there anything else that you think should be added to the vision? Please specify



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Royal Spa Town Principles and Ambitions



A number of key 'Principles and Ambitions' have been identified within the Town Centre Study. It is considered that these can contribute to delivering the overall Vision for the centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

These principles are split into seven key themes as illustrated. Further detail on these Principles can be found in the Town Centre Study.



A distinct place

Royal Tunbridge

Wells spa town character, heritage and unique sense of place is celebrated across the town's distinct quarters via heritage trails, public art, signage and events.



Town centre living

The town centre provides good quality homes to meet a range of needs, including affordable homes, within a welcoming neighbourhood, with access to greenspaces.



Connected landscapes

Royal Tunbridge Wells valued and

accessible greenspaces are well connected for people, habitats and wildlife to move between and enjoy. Streets have been greened with trees with a focus on making liveable streets.



Active streets and nodes

Streets have been redefined into high quality spaces where active travel, public transport and shared mobility are the natural and convenient choice for most journeys. Movement through the town is simple, safe and prioritises pedestrians and cyclists.



A low carbon future

All proposals have been designed to consider the town's climate resilience. This includes self-sufficiency with regard to energy, movement, reducing carbon emissions and adoption of sustainable and low carbon solutions for how new spaces, buildings and retrofits are delivered and managed.



A sustainable and resilient economy

High quality and diverse living, working, shopping, learning, leisure, cultural and historic environments attract and retain top businesses and the creative industries. There is a flexible and adaptable approach to future uses and sites that sustains the town's future vitality and viability.



A creative destination

Royal Tunbridge Wells is well known as a creative place in which to live, work and visit. Culture and creativity is embedded in the town, contributing to both social and economic well-being. High quality events across the year bring footfall to the town supporting the day and evening economy.

Question 5

What do you think about these seven 'Principles'? Do you think anything else should be included?



Photo: Martin Bryant



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Town Centre Plan

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Today



Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre

Royal Tunbridge Wells is the primary business, leisure, cultural and visitor destination in the borough and is a vibrant and viable town centre. It provides a range of services, facilities and events to serve not only local residents, businesses and employees but also visitors from the surrounding area and further afield.

As well as the diverse retail and commercial offer, the town also acts as a significant leisure, cultural and employment centre for the borough and beyond. The town boasts the new 'Amelia Scott' – library, art gallery and museum all in one venue as well as the Assembly Hall Theatre, Trinity Theatre and The Forum. There are also a number of other live music venues, eating and drinking establishments as well as a range of retail business and office provision.

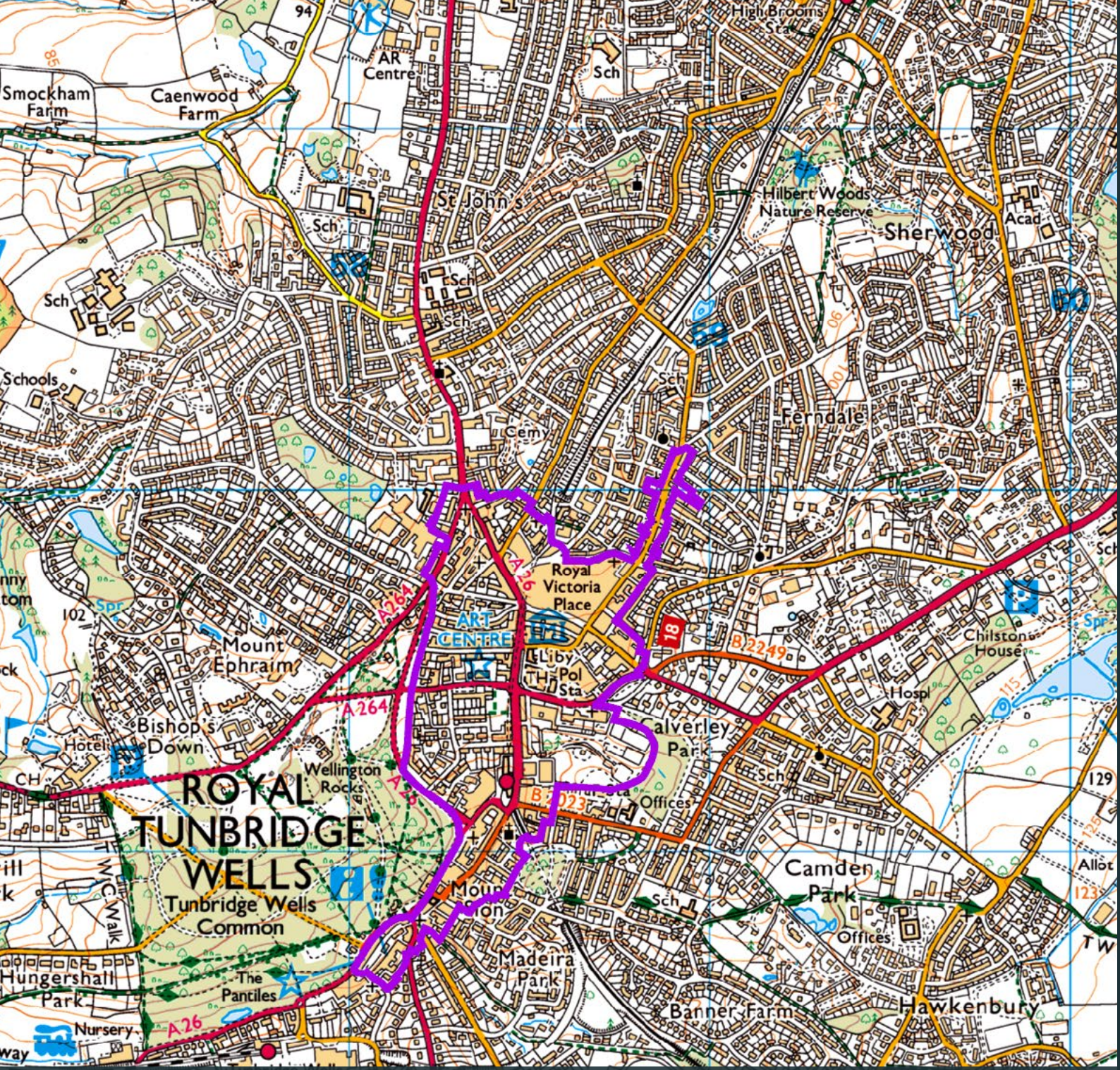
The town benefits from a rich cultural heritage evident through both the natural and built environment, with significant heritage assets providing a distinct role and identity for the town. These include over 150 listed buildings, a large Conservation Area covering much of the town centre, and other distinct areas such as The Pantiles and the Calverley Grounds, which is a designated historic park and garden. This distinctive environment attracts shoppers, businesses, employees and visitors to the town centre and it is important that this is protected and enhanced as part of all new development.

Changing trends

It is recognised that the town has been affected by changes to the national and local retail and commercial economy as a result of structural economic changes and the impact of Covid 19. In particular, the retail and office economy has changed significantly over recent years and the trends which were emerging have accelerated exponentially due to the 2020/2021 Covid-19 pandemic. It is also expected that the increased movement towards home/hybrid working and changes in working patterns, hastened as a result of the Covid-19 'lockdown' periods, have and will structurally change the need, make up and use of office space (including shared and flexible accommodation), and through this, impact on town centre uses which were previously supported by footfall associated with office employment.

It is widely accepted that the role of town centres needs to change and adapt to nationwide and local changes to shopping and working patterns and behaviours, in particular the impact of on-line shopping. It will therefore be important to devise a strategy for the town centre that will protect and enhance the centre and consider which existing and new uses could be accommodated within the town over the plan period to ensure its long-term prosperity.





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A Plan For the Future of Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre



The Council has an ambition to improve and enhance the role and offer of the town centre. This Plan is being prepared alongside inclusive community and stakeholder engagement to determine a vision and strategy to ensure its long-term prosperity and success. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has drawn a boundary which forms the area included in the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan. This defined area is illustrated on the following two maps of the wider town and the defined centre.

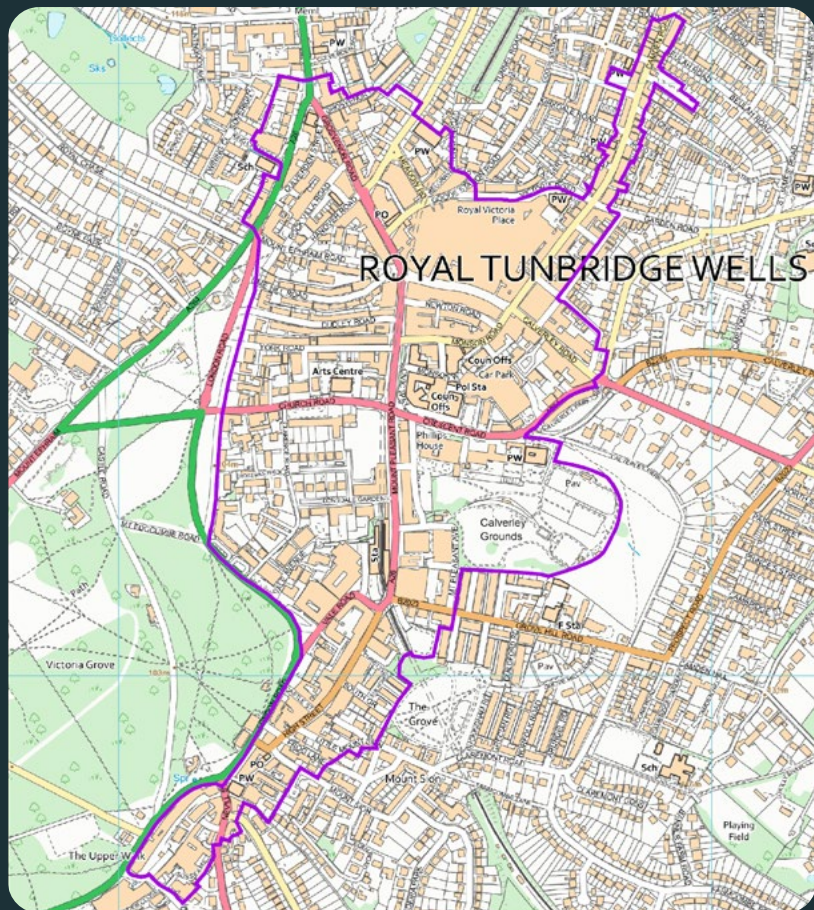
The Planning Policy basis

Consideration will also be given to the wider setting of the town centre in the production of the Town Centre Plan. This boundary is based on that defined in the Council's **Submission Local Plan** under Policy STR/RTW2 – Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre. This policy is the strategic overarching policy for Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre which sets the framework for the Plan.

Policy STR/RTW 2 makes clear that there needs to be an overall vision for the town centre with a range of issues and ambitions that need to inform and guide its future direction to ensure its future vitality and viability and sustainable growth. A list of sites are also included within the policy which are considered to be key to the realisation of the strategy – these are considered further at section 7 of this vision document – Key Sites and Opportunities.

Background

As part of the preparation of the Town Centre Plan, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has worked with consultants – LDA Design on a '**Town Centre Study**'. The work includes a baseline assessment of the town centre as it is now, including consideration of the



existing planning policy context, recognition of the built and historic environment, the natural environment and greenspaces, an assessment of the current economic position and baseline transport and sustainability assessment.

Additionally, the Council has also prepared and commissioned a number of other documents, which have all helped to inform this draft Vision document.

These documents can be viewed on the **Borough Council's website** and include baseline evidence base studies in relation to the built and natural environment, the economy, 'town centre health check' and shopping patterns, transport, parking, cycling and walking infrastructure as well as a stakeholder and community engagement report.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis

To assist in highlighting what the key strengths and opportunities of the town centre are as well as its weaknesses and threats, the Council worked with LDA Design to produce a 'Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats' (SWOT) analysis for the town centre. This is represented in the following pages and is split between 'Built Environment', 'Economics and Viability', 'Carbon Emissions and Decarbonisation' and 'Transport and Movement'.

Question 6

Do you think that the SWOT analysis below identifies all of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats applicable to Royal Tunbridge Wells Town centre? Please let us know if you think anything else should be added to the SWOT?

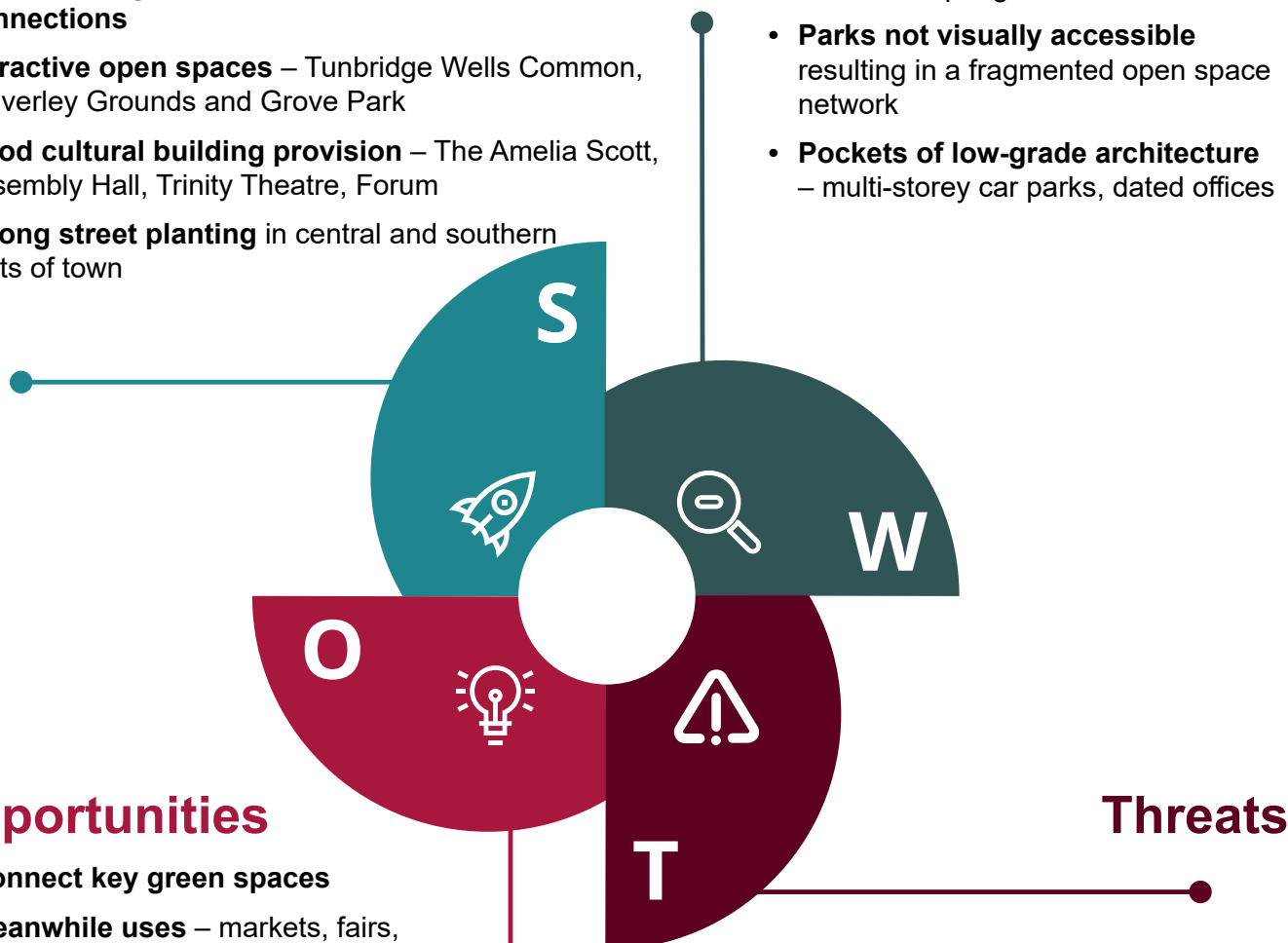
SWOT Analysis: Built Environment

Strengths

- **Heritage value** – numerous historic buildings, conservation area and registered park/gardens
- **Strong Street enclosure** – well defined linear route
- **Distinct Character** throughout the town
- **Good urban grain/network of streets and connections**
- **Attractive open spaces** – Tunbridge Wells Common, Calverley Grounds and Grove Park
- **Good cultural building provision** – The Amelia Scott, Assembly Hall, Trinity Theatre, Forum
- **Strong street planting** in central and southern parts of town

Weaknesses

- **Topographical challenges** – linear and hilly, impacting walking and connectivity
- **Limited street planting** in the north outside of spring/summer months
- **Parks not visually accessible** resulting in a fragmented open space network
- **Pockets of low-grade architecture** – multi-storey car parks, dated offices



Opportunities

- **Connect key green spaces**
- **Meanwhile uses** – markets, fairs, exhibitions, music etc.
- **More town centre living** – with a mix of typologies
- **Unlock underutilised buildings**
- **Public realm improvements** – civic heart, shopping streets, one way road layout, station area and bridge
- **Shop front design code/strategy** – simplify street signage
- **Explore opportunities for significant development sites**
- **Emphasise/celebrate** Royal Tunbridge Wells' rich history as a Spa Town

Threats

- **Stagnation** through lack of future development negatively affecting the built environment
- **Loss of identity/existing character** through unsympathetic new developments
- **Lack of maintenance and management** of open space/infrastructure/cycle routes, could reduce suitability and usage
- **Lack of affordable housing and gentrification** resulting in social/economic inequality
- **Designing for climate change** including whole life carbon assessments
- **Flooding and increased risk of the effects of climate change**

SWOT Analysis: Economics and Viability

Strengths

- **Strong economic and cultural fundamentals** and does not require total re-invention
- **Limited competition** – dominant centre in the region
- **Affluent catchment area**
- **Strong independent retail sector**
- **Pleasant shopping/tourism environment** – popular destination due to its rich history, culture and distinct character
- **Strong cultural and creative economy** throughout the town centre – (Theatres, The Amelia Scott, The Forum, Calverley Grounds) including music, art, pop-up events, ice rink

Weaknesses

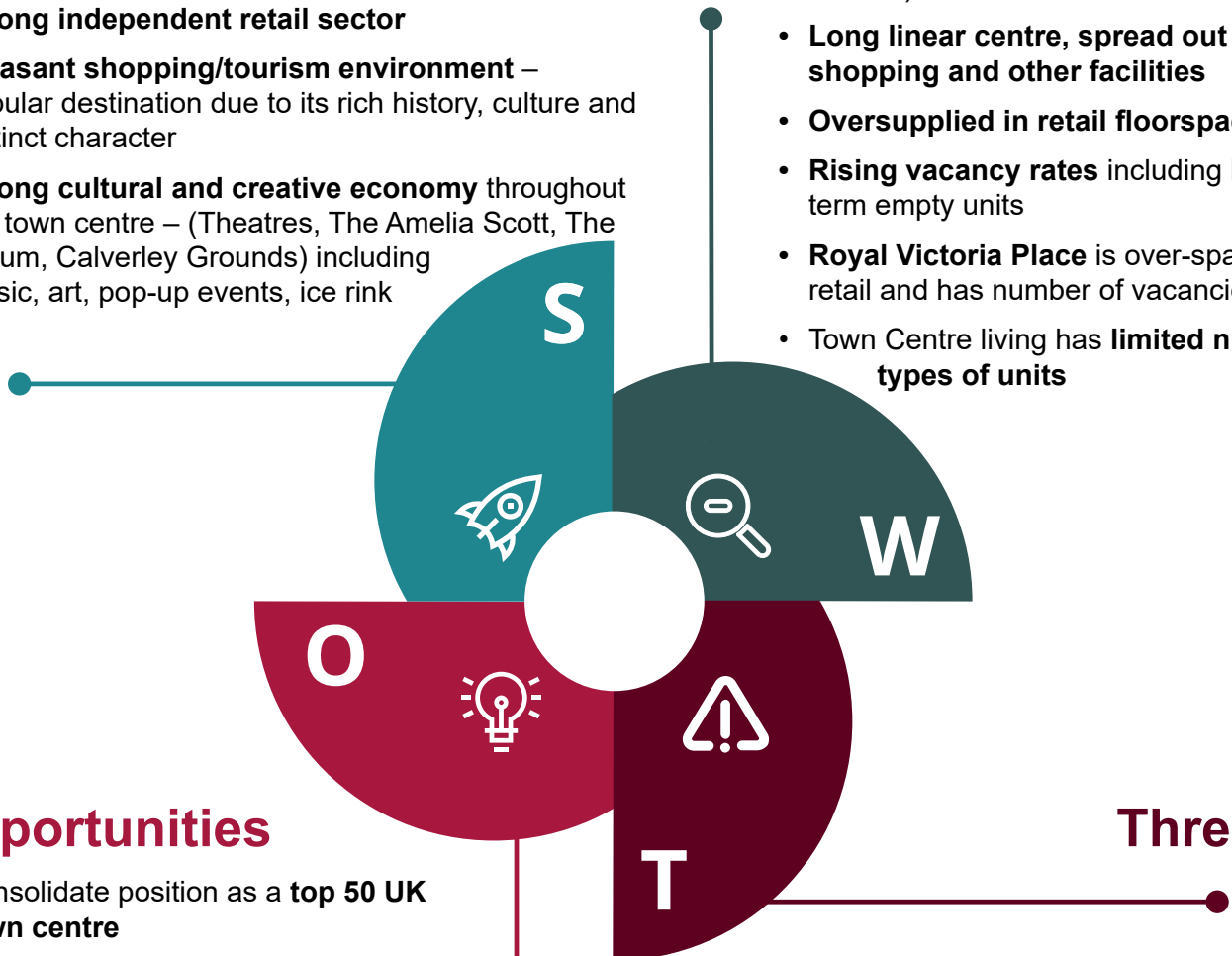
- **Age profile is middle-aged dominant** with younger profile under-represented
- **Punches below its weight as a town centre** (when compared to other similar centres)
- **Long linear centre, spread out shopping and other facilities**
- **Oversupplied in retail floorspace**
- **Rising vacancy rates** including long term empty units
- **Royal Victoria Place** is over-spaced in retail and has number of vacancies
- Town Centre living has **limited number/ types of units**

Opportunities

- Consolidate position as a **top 50 UK town centre**
- **Redevelopment/configuration of Royal Victoria Place** could act as a catalyst for the whole town centre, including meanwhile and cultural/leisure uses
- Renewed investment around Calverley Precinct/Road
- Improve/retain tenant line-up
- Potential of creative economy
- Increase overall leisure/cultural/food and beverage proposition
- **Improve night time economy** – new cinema and more leisure/cultural uses
- **Redevelopment of former ABC cinema site** – to provide a major springboard for Mount Pleasant Road and the centre
- **Spa heritage** could be enhanced by water features across the town

Threats

- **Stagnation** – ‘doing nothing’ sees the town drift and put-off potential investors
- **Increased leakage to other centres** (Bluewater, Maidstone) and out of town locations
- **Rising vacancy rates** – record high of 18.1% in 2021 (under-investment and UK wide trends)
- **Inability to attract new tenants** through uncertainty and evidence of decay
- **Town fails to capitalise on its potential** if not maintained and further invested



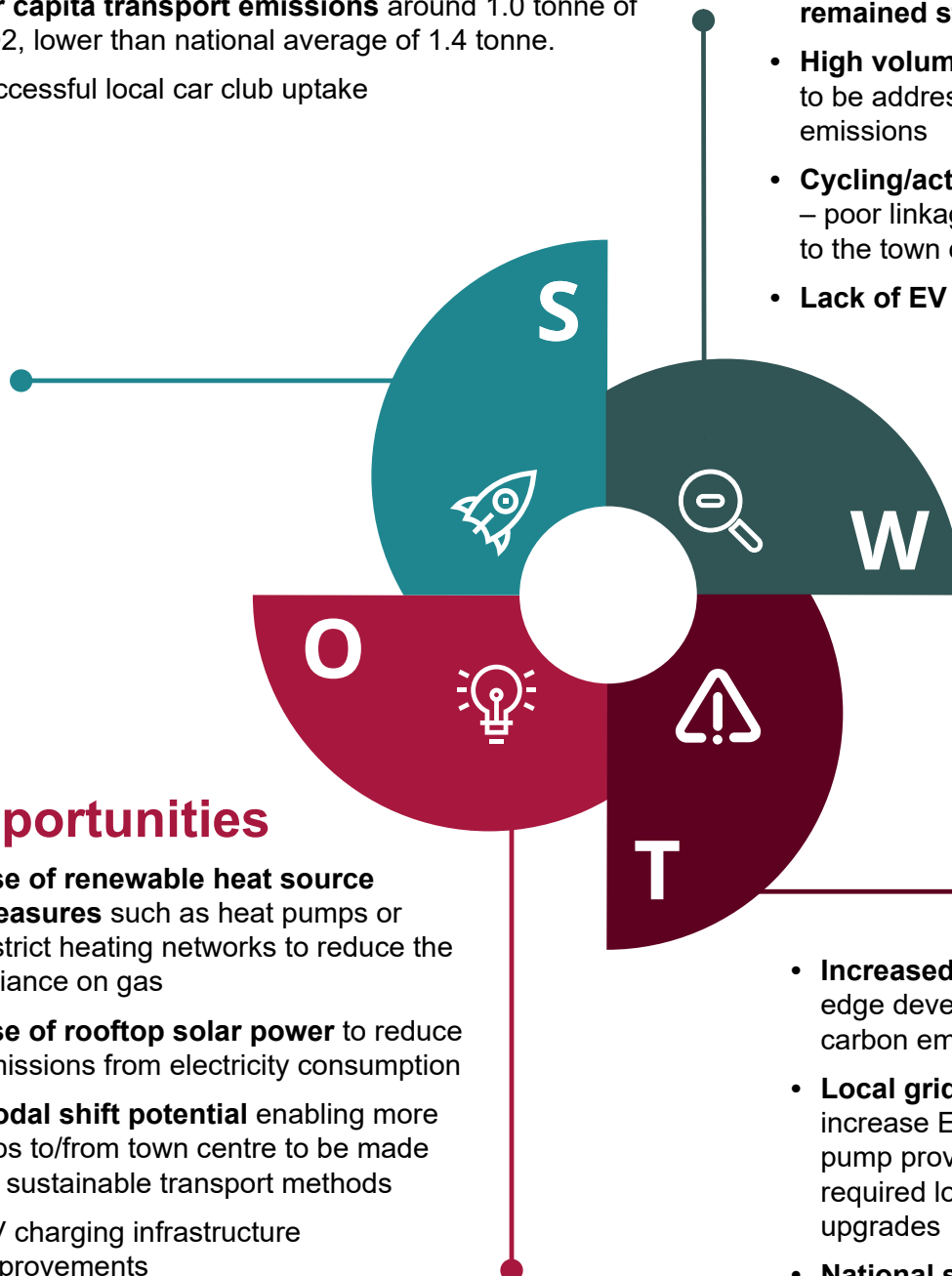
SWOT Analysis: Decarbonisation

Strengths

- **Carbon emissions** reduced by around 17% from all sources (2011 - 2018), compared to national average of 12.5%
- **Carbon emissions from electricity** almost halved (2011 - 2018)
- **Per capita transport emissions** around 1.0 tonne of CO₂, lower than national average of 1.4 tonne.
- Successful local car club uptake

Weaknesses

- **Increased gas heating reliance** (2011 - 2018) – emissions increased by around 0.4% (but lower than national average of 4%)
- **Overall energy/carbon emissions remained static** (2011 - 2018)
- **High volume of car journeys** needs to be addressed to reduce carbon emissions
- **Cycling/active travel infrastructure** – poor linkage from outer town areas to the town centre
- **Lack of EV charging infrastructure**



Opportunities

- **Use of renewable heat source measures** such as heat pumps or district heating networks to reduce the reliance on gas
- **Use of rooftop solar power** to reduce emissions from electricity consumption
- **Modal shift potential** enabling more trips to/from town centre to be made by sustainable transport methods
- EV charging infrastructure improvements
- Significant scope to improve the energy efficiency of buildings

Threats

- **Increased demand** – new outer edge developments could increase carbon emissions in the town centre
- **Local grid constraints** – move to increase EV charging and heat pump provision could be delayed by required local grid capacity upgrades
- **National skills shortage for the delivery of building retrofit opportunities** – e.g. heat pump installation
- **Changing and increasingly competitive national decarbonisation grant funding opportunities**

SWOT Analysis: Transportation and Movement

Strengths

- **Pleasant walking environment** – in some areas of the town centre, but with a limited level of pedestrianisation
- **Pleasant walking routes via green spaces** – e.g. through Tunbridge Wells Common from Rusthall
- **20mph speed limits** – better experience for walkers and cyclists
- **Successful car club**
- **Good rail connectivity** between London and Hastings
- **Good bus services on some routes**
- **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**

Weaknesses

- **Poor cycling infrastructure and cycle facilities**
- **Traffic and pedestrian severance**
- **Congestion and poor air quality**
- **Dominance of the car**
- **Lack of coach parking provision**
- **Lack of natural wayfinding/sense of arrival at rail station**
- **Shortage of bus stands for operators**
- **Limited/infrequent bus services for rural areas**
- **Plentiful affordable parking**
- **Lack of EV charging infrastructure**
- **Topographical challenges**

Opportunities

- **More active travel** – residential areas within realistic walking/cycling distance to the town centre
- E-bikes and micro mobility
- EV charging network expansion and other new technology
- **Peak spreading** – continue the post-covid reduction in peak hour traffic
- **Remove conflicts between pedestrians and buses** (particularly in central spine of town centre)
- New cycle and pedestrian routes
- Improvements to Mount Pleasant Road
- **Collaboration** with bus operators and KCC public transport
- Improve pedestrian connectivity

Threats

- **Bus service viability and cuts post-covid and in the future**
- **Opposition to reallocation of road space** to more sustainable transport modes
- **Increased travel demand** caused by new edge of town housing developments
- **High volume of delivery vehicles**
- **High levels of car ownership** making shift to more sustainable travel more difficult
- **Limited funding** opportunities for transport infrastructure



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Town Centre Plan

Draft Town Centre Masterplan Framework



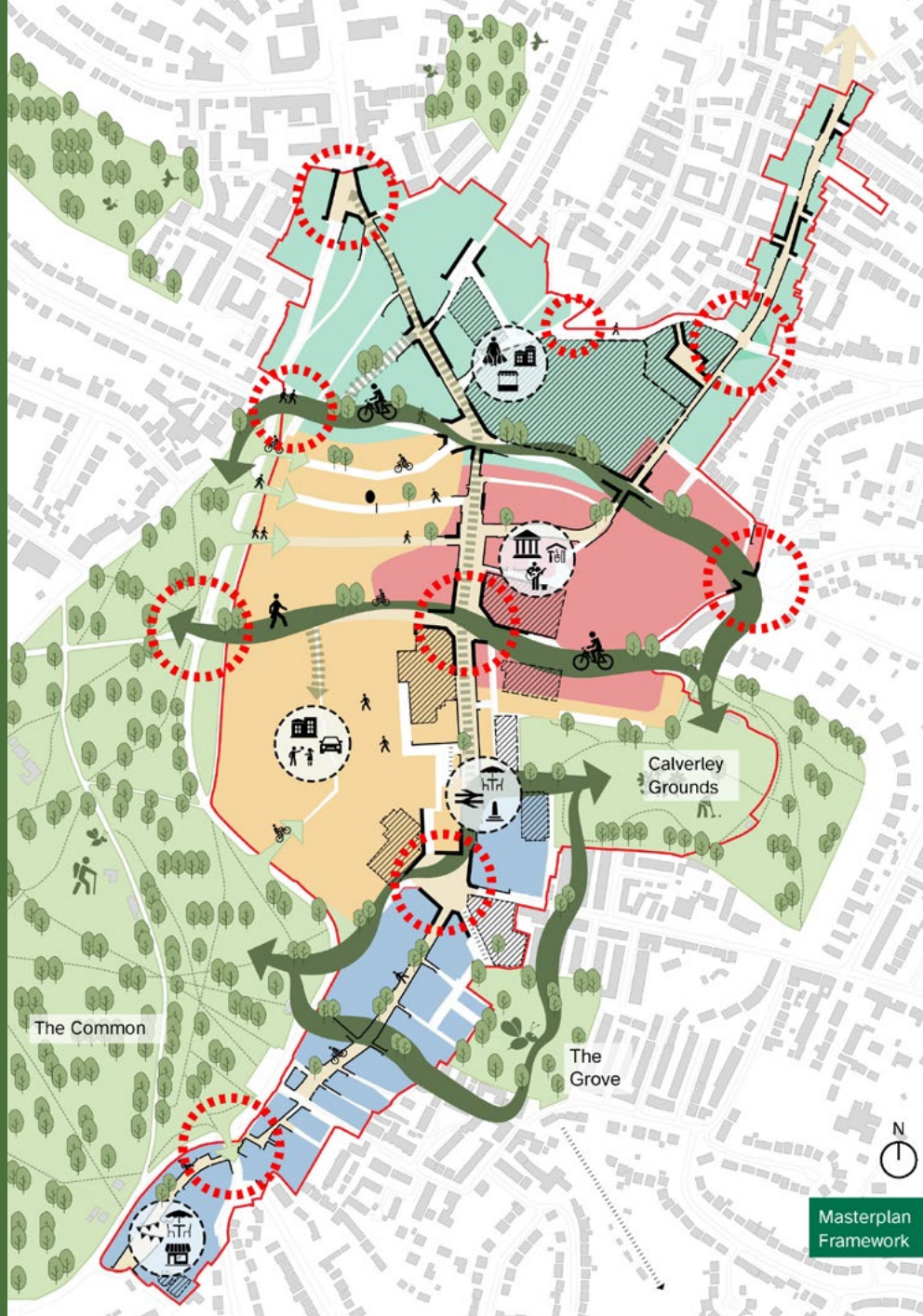
LDA Design drew up a draft 'Masterplan Framework' to guide future development up to 2040 dividing the town into four areas (known as 'quarters') illustrated below. This sets out priorities for intervention and change.

Town Centre Masterplan - Framework Quarters

The Town Centre Study recognises that Royal Tunbridge Wells is a linear town centre which is characterised by distinct quarters that give the town its sense of place. A range of uses are found within these quarters, which collectively contribute to the success of the town centre. It is recognised that these areas overlap and a range of uses are found in each area. The quarters also offer opportunities for change over the plan period. This could include opportunities for:

- New uses – such as residential/ town centre living, new commercial and creative space, leisure and cultural activities, increased food and beverage offer, public event space and gathering areas.
- Public Realm improvements – greening streets, enhancing connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Transportation improvements through amended layouts and routes and encouraging sustainable journeys and movement.

The quarters are defined within the Town Centre Study document and areas of opportunity are highlighted for each quarter. The following provides a summary of each quarter and possible opportunities over the plan period, but please refer to the Town Centre Study document for more information on each of these areas and the draft ambitions and opportunities set out.



Masterplan Framework Legend

— Town Centre Study Boundary

North Quarter

East Quarter

West Quarter

South Quarter

Opportunity for re-use / redevelopment

Primary / key streets

Parks & Greenspaces

Nodal point - existing gateway

Important green link connections between public open spaces and the town centre

Opportunity to introduce / enhance street trees and planting

Opportunities to improve the train station arrival experience and the surrounding public realm

Opportunities for regeneration with a focus on the making of a mixed use walkable neighbourhood and development infill

Opportunities to further showcase and celebrate towns heritage and cultural assets

Opportunities to reinforce central part of the town centre by providing further focal points for cultural, arts and civic events

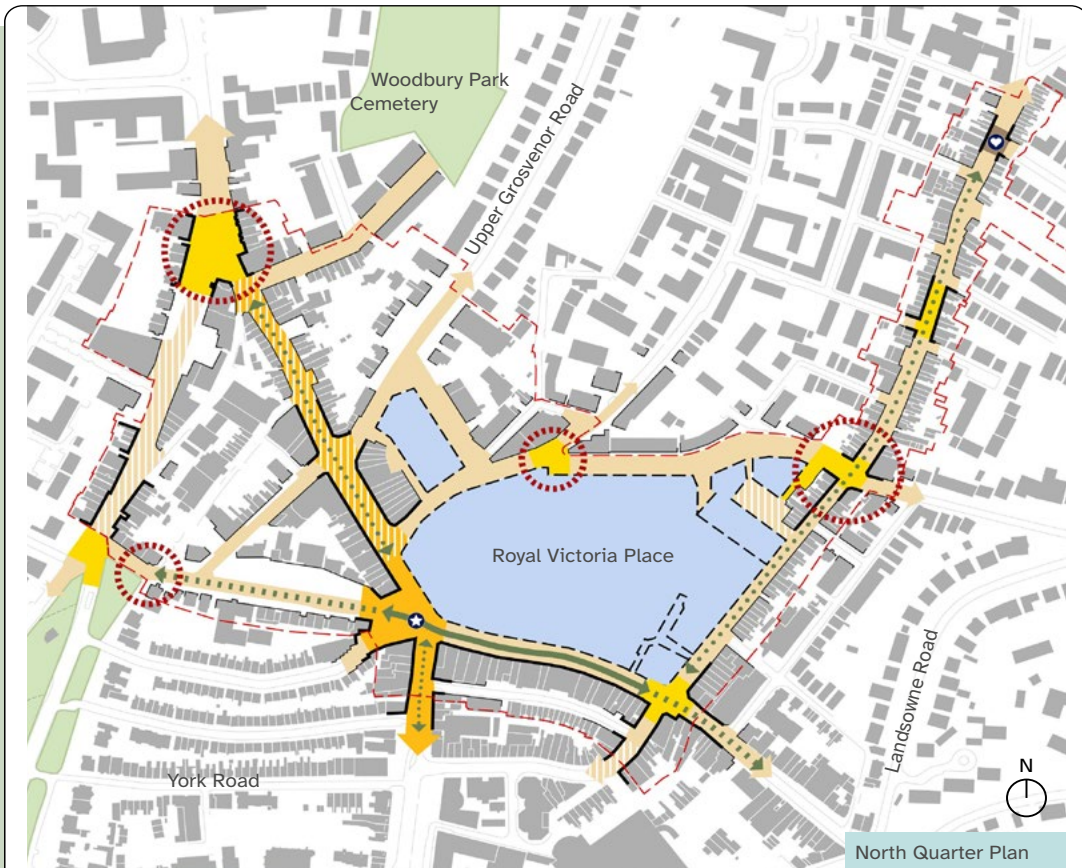
Opportunities to improve pedestrian and shopping experiences as well as public realm

Question 7

Do you have any comments on the Masterplan Framework – Please specify

North Quarter – Grosvenor Road and Camden Road

A vibrant destination that appeals to shoppers, tourist's local residents and those from further afield. Opportunity to enhance the existing spirit of local businesses, diversifying the shopping centre, promoting town centre living, improving the public realm and linkages to open spaces.



North Quarter Plan Legend

- - - Quarter boundary
- Opportunity for re-use / redevelopment
- Primary streets
- Secondary street and spaces
- Important green link between public open space and town centre
- Existing greenspace / park
- Nodal point - Existing gateway
- ★ Existing focal space
- Opportunity to introduce / enhance street trees, planting and pedestrian experience
- Opportunity to improve streetscape to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement
- Opportunity for redesign and improvements to junction to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity
- Opportunity for a new focal space

Question 8

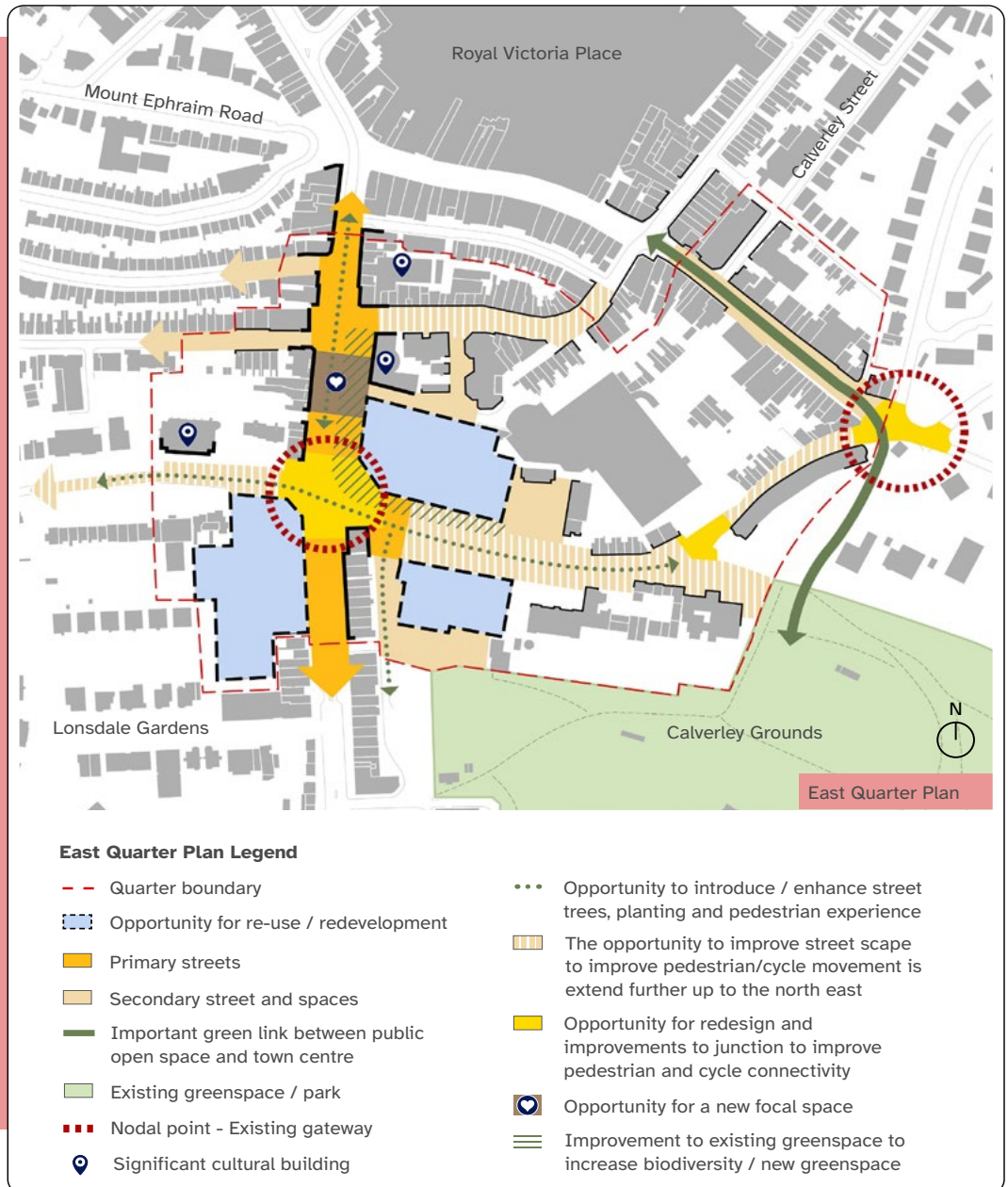
Please specify any other improvements/opportunities you think are important for the North Quarter?

North Quarter Opportunities

- Transformation of Royal Victoria Place – enhancements and alternative uses – leisure and cultural and town centre living
- Enhancement to Grosvenor Road as a gateway into the town
- Redevelopment opportunity at Meadow Road Car Park whilst maintaining public car parking
- Public realm and street scene improvements on Camden Road
- Improvements to retail experience at Calverley Road and shopfronts
- Town Centre repurposing of vacant retail and office space to other uses
- Improved links to the town's green spaces and parks

East Quarter – Mount Pleasant Road and Crescent Road

This quarter is at the heart of the town centre and acts as an important link between the north and south of the town. Focus should be on public realm improvements and reinforcing this area as the community focus for residents, visitors and workers and hosting events as well as being a destination for culture, leisure and the arts.



Question 9
Please specify any other improvements/opportunities you think are important for the East Quarter?

- ## East Quarter Opportunities
- Redevelopment of the former cinema site
 - Enhancements to the public realm and streetscape around Mount Pleasant Road – around the Town Hall and the Amelia
 - Improvements to Crescent Road, Civic Way and Monson Road
 - Re-purposing of the Civic Complex
 - Celebrating the town’s heritage within this core area of the town
 - Mount Pleasant Road and Church Road junction improvements
 - Improvements to the public realm within this area and support for existing and new events.
 - Evaluation of potential development sites over the plan period

West Quarter – Train Station and surrounds

Important gateway for residents, visitors and people working in the town. The sense of arrival should be enhanced with opportunities to create new public space, building on the town's Spa town character.

Range of mix of uses would be appropriate to improve the area as a destination as well as a point of arrival or departure.



West Quarter Plan Legend

- - Quarter boundary
- Opportunity for re-use / redevelopment
- Primary streets
- Secondary street and spaces
- Important green link between public open space and town centre
- Existing greenspace / park
- Nodal point - Existing gateway
- Opportunity for improvements to boundary of the Common with A26 to improve pedestrian and cycling connectivity
- ⚡ Tunbridge Wells Train Station
- Opportunity to introduce / enhance street trees, planting and pedestrian experience
- Opportunity to improve streetscape to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement
- Opportunity for redesign and improvements to junction to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity
- Opportunity for a new focal space
- Improvement to existing greenspace to increase biodiversity / new greenspace
- Opportunity to adopt TFL liveable street principles
- Listed pavement route

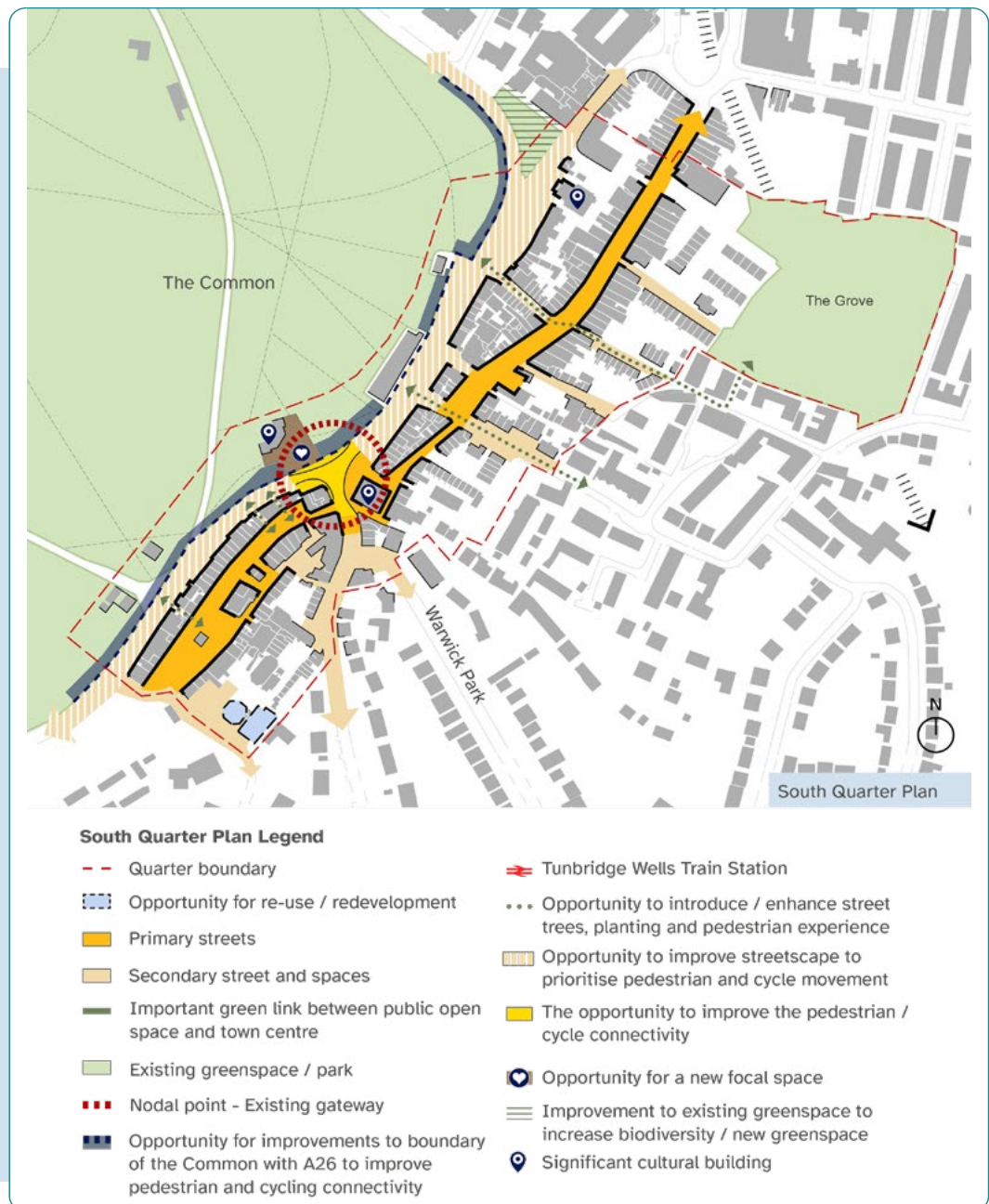
Question 10
Please specify any other improvements/opportunities you think are important for the West Quarter?

- ## West Quarter Opportunities
- Enhancement to Tunbridge Wells Train station and Mount Pleasant Road
 - Infill opportunities at Lonsdale Gardens, Clarence Road and surrounds
 - Improvements to character and linkages around London Road, the Common and the lower end of town
 - Improvements to the entrance of Calverley Grounds and opportunity for new uses at Mount Pleasant Avenue
 - Possible additional uses alongside parking at the Great Hall and Torrington Car parks

South Quarter – High Street and the Pantiles

Area characterised by the High Street and the Pantiles, the historic environment as well as the town’s spa heritage.

The area attracts visitors and residents and future development should enhance the quarters sense of place including promoting events throughout the year and celebrating existing cultural and heritage assets and improving connections and accessibility to the Common and this part of the town.



Question 11
Please specify any other improvements/opportunities you think are important for the South Quarter?

South Quarter Opportunities

- Enhancements to the street scene of London Road and Frant Road
- Public realm improvements in the High Street
- Further celebration of heritage and culture at the Pantiles including its spa town status
- General public realm and connectivity improvements within this quarter and linking to the surrounding area
- Opportunities around Grove Hill Road/Vale Road/High Street



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Key Sites and Opportunities

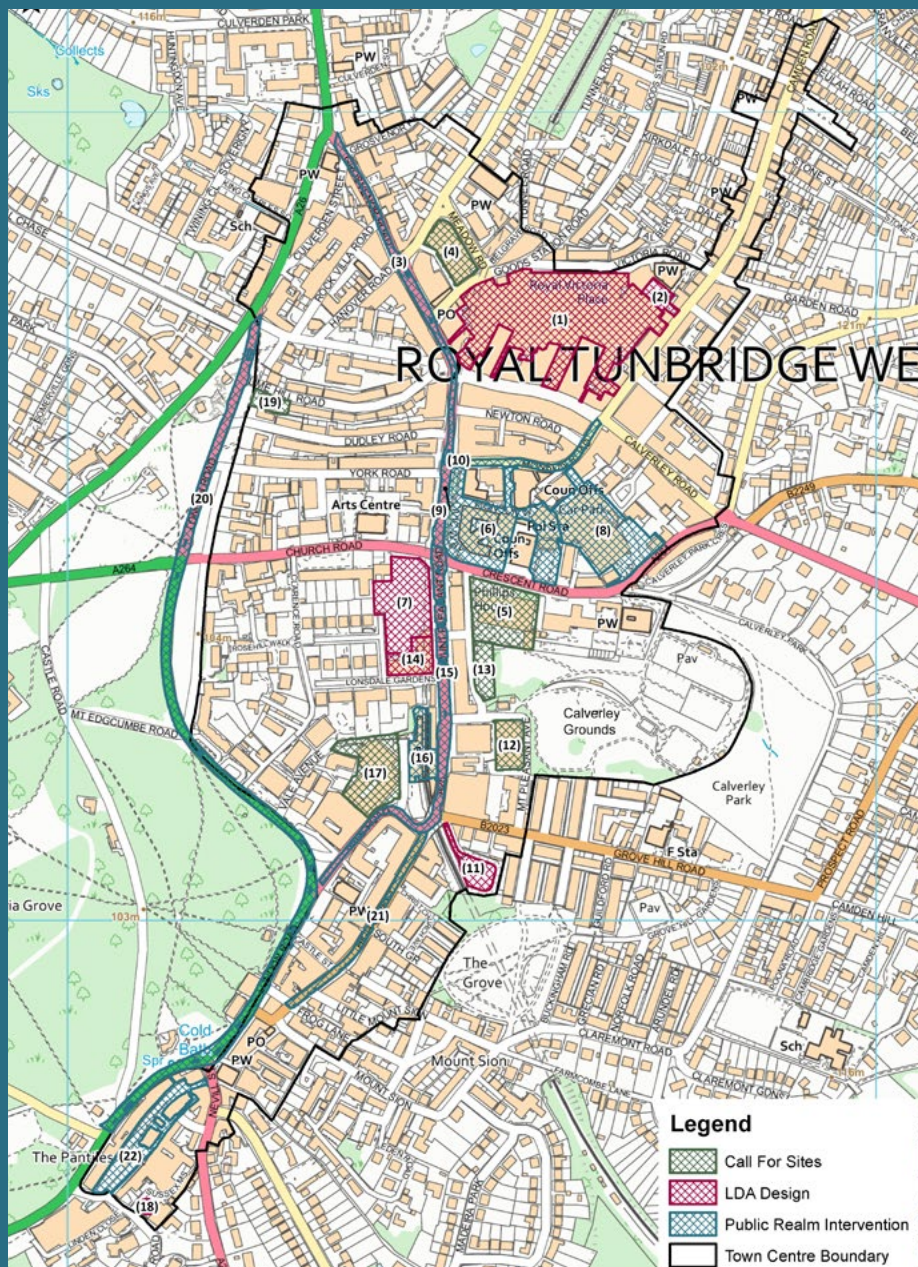


Within the **Town Centre Study**, a number of key projects have been identified as future project opportunities within the town centre through the work undertaken by LDA Design as part of the Town Centre Study.

The Council has also carried out a 'Call for Sites' to establish which sites within the town centre might be available for redevelopment or re-purposing over the Plan period. These sites have been submitted for consideration by landowners or those with an interest in the site. The Council has carried out an initial assessment of these sites, however it has not yet made a judgement on their suitability, availability or deliverability. This initial assessment is included within the interim '**Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Sites Assessment**'.

The sites/areas that are currently being considered for change/redevelopment over the plan period are shown on the accompanying plan and listed in the table below. Some are considered to be significant sites for change such as the development of the former Cinema site and the possible re-purposing of Royal Victoria Place, whilst others are interventions at a smaller scale such as improved connections between the different parts of the town and improvements to the streetscape. These can all add real benefits to the town centre and ensuring its future attractiveness and success.

As this work progresses, the Council will need to carry out detailed design and viability considerations alongside discussions with key stakeholders. This should include the landowners and their agents, Kent County Council Highways, bus and train operators, businesses and local interest groups and residents to consider these sites further.



It is also important to highlight that there are ongoing projects and interventions which will be carried out alongside this plan to help invigorate the town centre and are referred to in the **Town Centre Study** as 'Quick Wins'. These include temporary and seasonal projects such as;

- Pop-up shops and markets
- Temporary public art installations
- Community events and festivals
- Temporary green spaces and street furniture – planters, benches, tables etc
- Meanwhile uses

These projects are organised and carried out by a range of local stakeholders and organisations, such as TWBC, Tunbridge Wells Together (the BID), Kent County Council and others.

A range of funding opportunities exist for such projects and again further detail on this and how the overall plan can be brought to reality is set out within the **Town Centre Study**. It also provides further detail on possible and proposed transport opportunities and projects for the town centre area which will support and complement the vision of this plan.

The list of possible sites and project opportunities are listed in Table 1 below.

Site Number	Site or project	Potential project/site summary
1	Royal Victoria Place	Key site in town centre. Could be improved by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing retail floorspace • Consolidating/increasing leisure/residential/temporary uses in vacant units • Enhancements – entrances, shop fronts and artwork.
2	Market Square	Possible redevelopment as part of above site to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre living • Community focused spaces such as creative hubs, galleries and workshops
3	Grosvenor Road	Enhancements to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible reduction of vehicular dominance • Pedestrian prioritisation • General improvements to the street-scene • Opportunity site at Culverden Street
4	Meadow Road Car Park	Possible redevelopment opportunity over longer term to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-provided parking • Residential • Leisure and community and possible transport hub.
5	AXA Health Building – Philips and Eyensham House	Possible redevelopment for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential/town centre living • Commercial and leisure uses.
6	Civic Complex	Currently being re-purposed for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a mixed-use hub of co-working space • Creative and cultural activities • Further opportunities for reconfiguration of Civic Way into a pedestrian and cycle shared space.
7	Former Cinema Site	Existing planning permission for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra care accommodation • Ancillary facilities • Mixed-use floorspace such as food and drink venues
8	Crescent Road Car Park and surrounds	Improvements to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages to the town centre • Routes to Calverley Grounds/Town Hall/Mount Pleasant Road. • Opportunity site at 9-10 Calverley Terrace
9	Mount Pleasant Road North	Improvements to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing public realm and streetscape around the Town Hall • Creation of flexible and adaptable space.

Site Number	Site or project	Potential project/site summary
10	Monson Road	Improvements to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscape, shop fronts and planting • Possible temporary markets/events
11	Grove Hill Road Corner Site	Possible redevelopment of this site to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential • Links and access to Grove Park.
12	Great Hall Car Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of car parking provision on site, possible expansion of building by introduction of additional floors above for residential/ town centre living.
13	Mount Pleasant Avenue	Redevelopment of site for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential/town centre living, mixed-use development.
14	Mount Pleasant House and Southern Buildings	Possible area redevelopment to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre living • Retail/and or leisure at the ground floor.
15	Mount Pleasant Road (south) and Vale Road	Possible redesign of Vale Road junction to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodate better crossing • Widened footways • Activate linkage to the High Street and Pantiles.
16	Tunbridge Wells Train Station	Improvements required to the arrival experience at the station and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgraded public realm and streetscape • Introduction of artwork, way finding and lighting.
17	Torrington Car Park	Possible area redevelopment for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-provision of parking provision • Residential/ town centre living • Commercial/leisure uses.
18	Auction House	Planning permission granted and implemented for Change of Use to commercial with possibility for more comprehensive future mixed use scheme in the future.
19	The Russell Hotel	Possible redevelopment for mix of uses including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential or commercial.
20	London Road (A26)	Aspiration for A26 London Road to provide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape buffers • Safe pedestrian crossings and cycle routes.
21	The High Street	Existing temporary street interventions and pedestrian priority to be made permanent.
22	The Pantiles	Further enhancement of local heritage and cultural assets through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public art installations • Heritage trails and events.

? Question 12

Do you have any comments on the sites listed in table 1 above?
Please specify which site and your comments/suggestion

Further ‘Call for Sites’

The Council is keen to hear about any other sites which might be available for development/redevelopment during the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan period (up to 2040). If you know of or own a site which you would like to be considered through this process, please read and complete the ‘Call for Sites’ form at the link in question 13 below.

? Question 13

Are there any other sites that you think should be considered through the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan? – See the ‘Call for Sites’ webpage for more information and the site submission form.



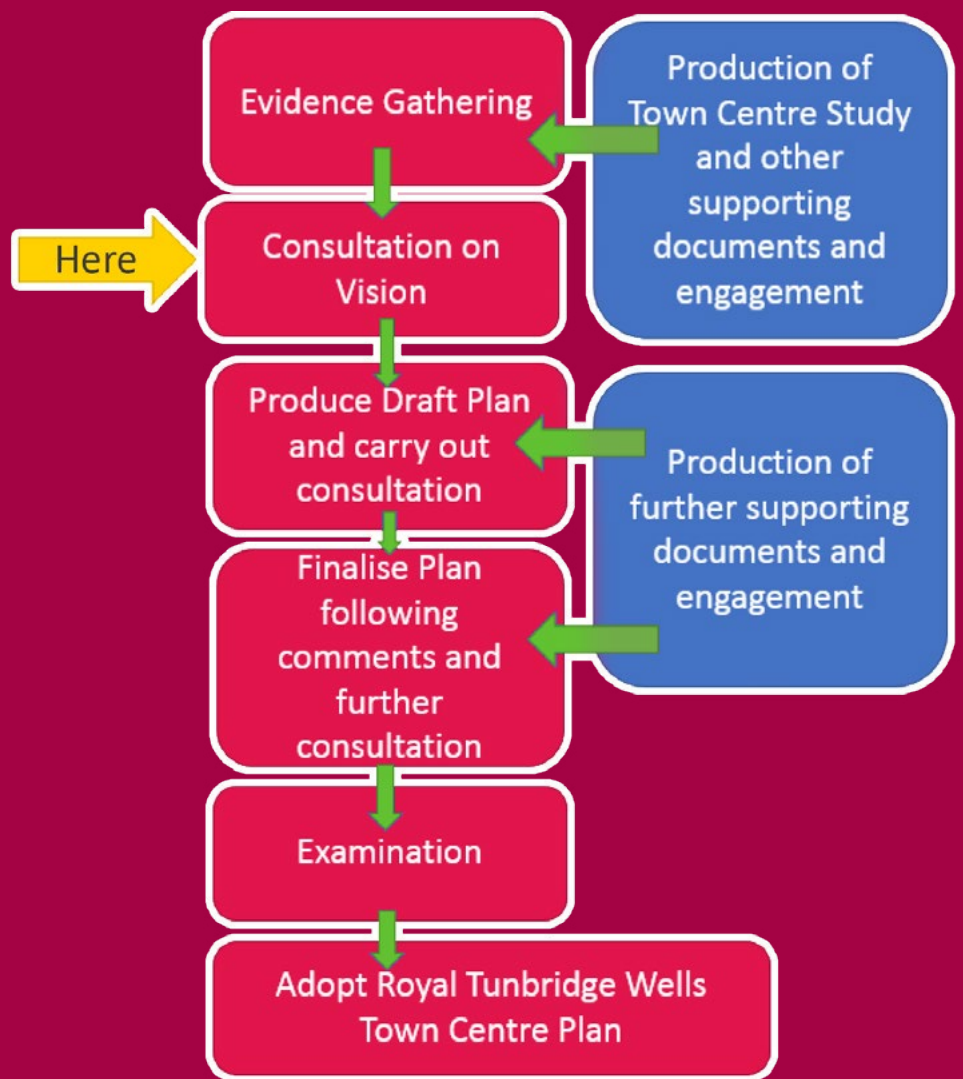


Royal Tunbridge Wells
Town Centre Plan

Our Engagement so Far and Next Steps



The following flow chart shows the stages in the preparation of the Plan and the stage that we are currently at. This draft document has been informed by a range of evidence, including the '[Town Centre Study](#)', which was produced by LDA Design and their subconsultants. This work was carried out in collaboration with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Working Group and a range of stakeholders who all have an interest and passion for ensuring a sustainable future for Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre. A number and range of consultation exercises were undertaken as part of the production of the Town Centre Study. Further information on these engagement events can be found within the [Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Study – Stakeholder and Community Engagement Report – May 2023 \(LDA Design\)](#).



The following early engagement events took place;

- A '**Walking Tour**' with the consultants, the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Working Group and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council officers and councillors.
- Three '**focused workshops**' were held with a range of stakeholders discussing and exploring a number of key themes for the town.
- A '**Community Pop Up Event**' was also organised at the Five Ways area in the Town Centre by the Millennium Clock providing an opportunity for members of the public to come and speak to the consultants and officers of the Council about the town centre and provide input.
- A '**Talking Point**' consultation – an on-line consultation was also live for three weeks asking focused questions about the town centre aimed at residents and visitors and also local businesses.

Following this current consultation, further work will be carried out by the Council to draw together a full draft plan for further consultation.

Have Your Say

We welcome your feedback on this work so far to ensure that the 'Vision, Principles and Ambitions' set out are supported by everyone so that we can move forward to the next stage in the production of the town centre plan.



Question 14

Do you support the Vision, Principles and ambitions set out in this Vision document? Do you think anything else needs considering? Please specify.



Question 15

Do you have any other comments on this document or the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan? Please specify.

Your feedback will help us to refine the Vision, Principles and Ambitions so that future iterations of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Local Plan develop in a way that enables Royal Tunbridge Wells to develop how we all want it to look in the future.

The consultation on this document will run from Friday 23 February to midnight on Monday 15 April 2024.

For more information and to find out about events and workshops, please visit our website -

tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/rtw-town-centre-plan

You can give us your comments in a number of ways.

By completing the on-line form on our engagement portal which you can reach via our website

By speaking to us at one of our drop-in events

By speaking to us at one of our online events (Facebook Live)

By e-mail at rtwtowncentreplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

By post by writing to the Planning Policy Team, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, The Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 1RS.

Thank you!

A special thank you to all residents, the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Working Group, community groups, stakeholders, businesses and agents who have contributed so far to the vision and ambition's and taken the time to respond to this public consultation.