

# Quality Design - West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Document



## Area Design Focus Bath Road, Thatcham



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Andover Road, Newbury



Speen Lane, Newbury



Salisbury Road / Atherton Road / Crescent Way / Church Way, Hungerford



Halls Road / The Meadway / New Lane Hill, Tilehurst

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document comprises part of several publications which form the West Berkshire Council (WBC) design guide series "Quality Design - West Berkshire". Together the series forms a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which supports the policies in the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 - 2006 and the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016. **As such, it is a material consideration in determining planning applications and if not followed, may lead to the refusal of planning permission.** It is intended that in the future this SPD series will also support relevant policies in West Berkshire Council's Development Plan Documents. It also complements other existing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs) and SPDs, including any site specific development briefs which may be produced in the future.
- 1.2 This section, Area Design Focus - Bath Road, Thatcham, is one of a series of Area Design Focus documents which aim to ensure that the cumulative effects of infill development do not harm the quality of residential neighbourhoods. To achieve this, the Council has identified the key elements that define the character of particular areas that could be susceptible to infill development. These include main arterial routes into towns, which make infill sites particularly attractive to developers or areas with particular characteristics that need to be preserved.
- 1.3 Key characteristics are included on the plans on the following pages and include important tree groups, landmark buildings and important frontages. In addition, the plans also identify sites where development schemes could enhance the character of the corridor or area.
- 1.4 The Area Design Focus documents examine in detail the key elements that define the character of these areas, such as;
- Important frontages, building line and set backs;
  - Gateways and landmarks;
  - Tree groups, landscaping, public open space, amenity space and garden characteristics;
  - Vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist movement and connections, parking and bus stops;
  - Materials, roof line, architectural detailing.
- 1.5 In addition, each Strategy provides an initial indication of what is important to protect or enhance in the consideration of new infill development.

1.6 The potential enhancements (*see text in italics*) are suggestions as to how the physical environment of the area **could** be improved. Therefore, they do not represent specific commitments of the Council and do not override any existing strategies or plans. If it is considered that the suggested improvements are desirable they could be secured and funded in a number of ways including direct involvement of the local councils, action by landowners and through developer contributions associated with developments. When development proposals are considered their possible contribution to securing potential enhancements should be assessed.



**Bath Road, Thatcham**

1.7 The Council will produce Area Design Focus Statements for other key areas requiring a more detailed approach, as appropriate.

## **2. Bath Road Context**

2.1 The town of Thatcham formed originally a linear fashion, along Bath Road before later spreading further north and south, on each side of the road. The Bath Road remains the main arterial route through Thatcham and in fact, is the key road, other than the M4, between Newbury and Reading. It is therefore extremely busy and becomes dual carriageway in part, along its route.

2.2 The route is an important gateway into Thatcham, particularly from Newbury to the west and since the inter-war period, a number of different neighbourhoods, each with their own characteristics have developed along the route.

2.3 In general, the road is characterised by a mix of type and size of properties dating from the pre-war and inter-war periods. However, since that time, infill development has occurred, resulting in a mix of ages and style of properties in places along this linear route. The road abuts the town centre to the east, which forms the eastern boundary to the Area Focus and links into a roundabout to the west, which forms the western edge of the study area and the western edge of Thatcham.

2.4 Behind Bath Road's linear development, lies mainly post-war infill; a variety of cul de sac and through route development and a mix of property types and styles. Further detail on these areas is contained within Part 3 of this series – Residential Character Frameworks.

## 3. Protecting established neighbourhoods



Example of pre war housing on Bath Road



Example of inter war housing on Bath Road



Example of post war housing in cul de sac off Bath Road



Strong landscaped boundary along Bath Road

- 3.1 The nature of the Bath Road changes along its length, so it is important that infill development respects the immediate surrounding area. In general, the road is characterised by detached houses, set back from the road on individual plots with small front gardens and private driveways, access to which is directly off Bath Road.
- 3.2 There are a few exceptions, however, such as properties to the west of Bourne Road, which are set up at a slightly higher level than the road, behind a grass verge. In addition, those to the east of Bourne Road are set in a small cul-de-sac running parallel to Bath Road, behind a strong landscaped boundary, which significantly changes the nature of Bath Road along this stretch.
- 3.3 Towards the eastern end of the study area (east of Northfield Road - Area 3), there is a distinctive crescent of semi-detached properties, in front of which lies a hard standing area, informally used for parking. The set back from Bath Road is distinctively different from any other part of the study area.
- 3.4 Future infill development should protect the patterns of urban form along Bath Road. All new development must front the main road and appropriate set backs and front gardens or an appropriate threshold should be provided. Properties backing onto Bath Road, or sides of properties facing the road should be avoided.
- 3.5 The slight set back and small front gardens means that in general, there is good natural surveillance over the footways, yet privacy of properties is respected.

## 4. Protecting Key Frontages

- 4.1 Key frontages along Bath Road have been identified on the accompanying map. Whilst almost all development along the route fronts onto the road, these stretches have been identified as those which are particularly distinctive and therefore any infill in this location needs to respect this form. A particular example is the row of villa-style properties close to the junction with Beverley Close.

## 5. Reinforcing the Western Gateway

5.1 **Area 1** is located at the western end of Bath Road, close to the roundabout marking the western outskirts of Thatcham. This gateway is flanked by a garden centre and adjacent open space to the north and residential development to the south. At present the area provides a poor pedestrian environment and the road is difficult to cross. In addition, the presence of the rear fences of properties in Pegasus Close reduces natural surveillance, creating an unattractive and uncomfortable pedestrian environment. There are two bus stops nearby and a cycle route which currently crosses the landscaped area near to the roundabout.

5.2 *Environmental improvements could make it a more usable area and improve the immediate environment around the bus stops on either side of the road and the cycle path. Improvements could include lighting and seating around the bus stops and realignment of the cycle path so that it is better integrated with the pedestrian environment thereby improving natural surveillance and safety of the route.*

5.3 *An improvement to the pedestrian environment could be to improve crossing of the road in this area.*

## 6. Enhanced Local Centre

6.1 **Area 2** is identified due to the occurrence of pavement parking, which has resulted in this area becoming less attractive and difficult for pedestrians. Properties along this stretch were built with limited or no parking arrangements. *Improvements could to be made to better define parking spaces and to distinguish between vehicle and pedestrian realm.*

6.2 Similarly, **Area 3** is identified as having potential for improvement due to the condition of the gravelled and grassed area in front of the crescent properties, which has deteriorated due to the area being used for informal parking, over flow parking and the storage of wheelie bins. In addition, the front gardens of these properties are gradually being eroded through ad hoc parking.



**Crescent properties fronting poor quality parking area and green space**



**Backs of properties on Bath Road**



**Distinctive villa style frontage on Bath Road**



**Poor pedestrian and cyclist environment at western gateway**





**Deteriorated quality of public realm in places along Bath Road**

6.3 **Area 4** is located in front of the Church and adjacent hall and mainly consists of car parking. A War Memorial is situated on Bath Road to the east. This area is close to Thatcham town centre, almost a gateway in to the retail centre from the predominantly residential area to the west. However, this area is not integrated with the rest of Bath Road, feels under used and has experienced some deterioration. The cluster of community uses in this area means that this stretch of Bath Road is fairly well utilised yet despite this, provides a poor pedestrian environment. *The area could benefit from improved landscaping and street lighting and potential formalisation of the car park.*



**Informal pavement parking in front of properties endangers pedestrians and cyclists and creates a deteriorated walking and cycling environment**

## 7. The Landscaped Street Scene

7.1 The extent of landscaping varies along the length of the study area and over time, the traditional front hedgerows have been replaced with fencing and open driveways. Parking has begun to dominate many of the property frontages, due to construction in the post war period taking place without parking provision.

7.2 *When considering new infill development along Bath Road, it is therefore essential that adequate parking and driveway provision is made at an early stage. However, the pattern of two storey development facing the road, with small front gardens and hedgerows should be respected.*



**Poor pedestrian environment in front of Church and Hall on Bath Road**

7.3 Incidental features such as low retaining walls and the scattered areas of mature landscaping need to be protected and retained in future infill proposals, although detailed analysis of the immediate surroundings will determine whether this is appropriate.



**War Memorial and small garden on Bath Road**

Please make reference to the emerging Thatcham Vision found at [www.thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk)



**Example of erosion of mature landscaping and hedgerows, replaced with fencing and parking**



**Example of mature landscaping scattered along length of Bath Road**

## Bath Road - Area Design Focus Summary

Set out below are the key design objectives for this area



**Create frontage development which addresses Bath Road and provides surveillance and safety, particularly in areas of infill**



**Reinforce the western gateway to provide safer and usable pedestrian and cyclist environment and crossing points**



**Enhance the local centre through formalised parking spaces, cycle parking, seating and litter bins. Address shop front design longer term**



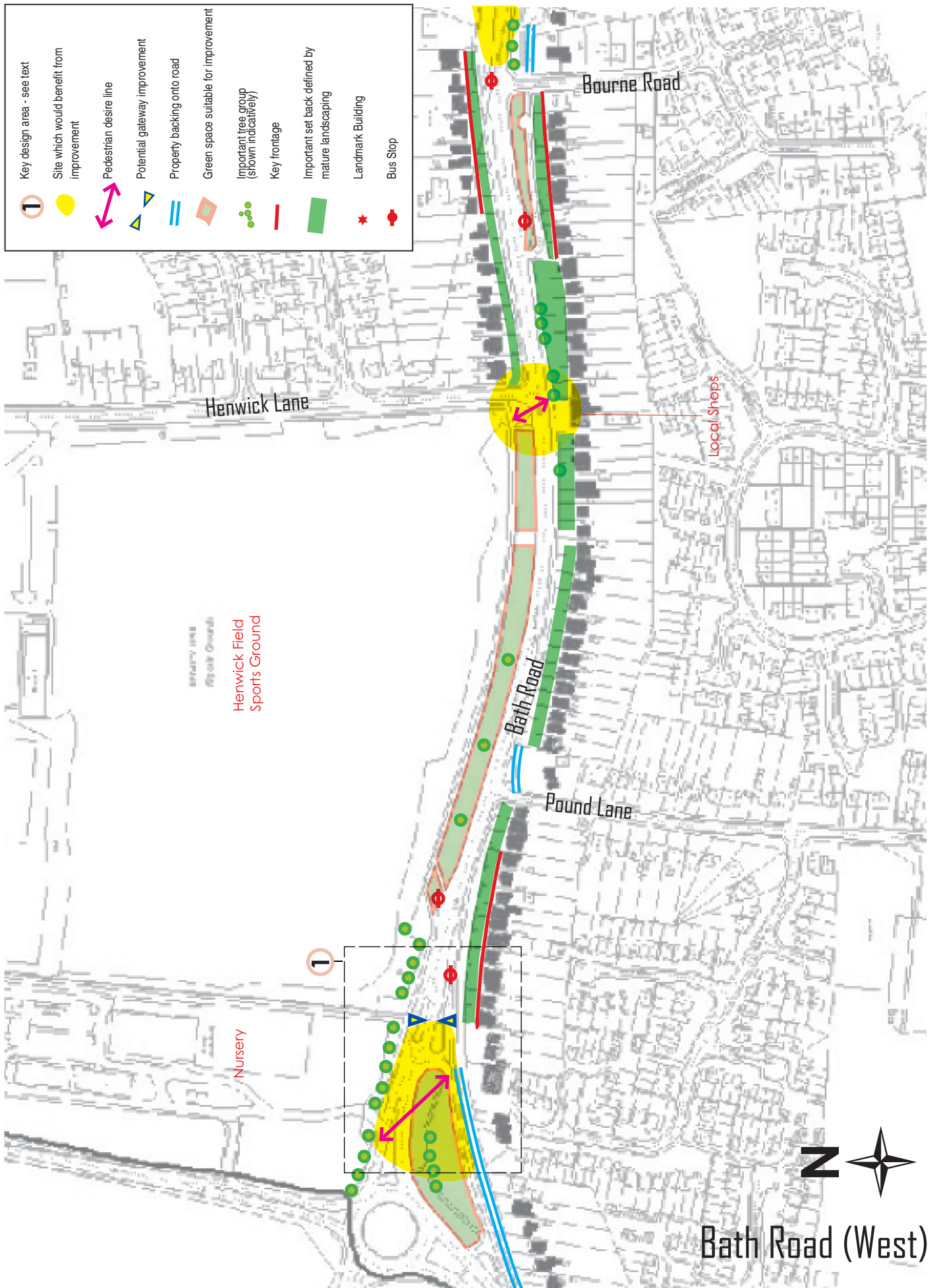
**Improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience along the entire length of Bath Road, with particular emphasis on deteriorated areas**

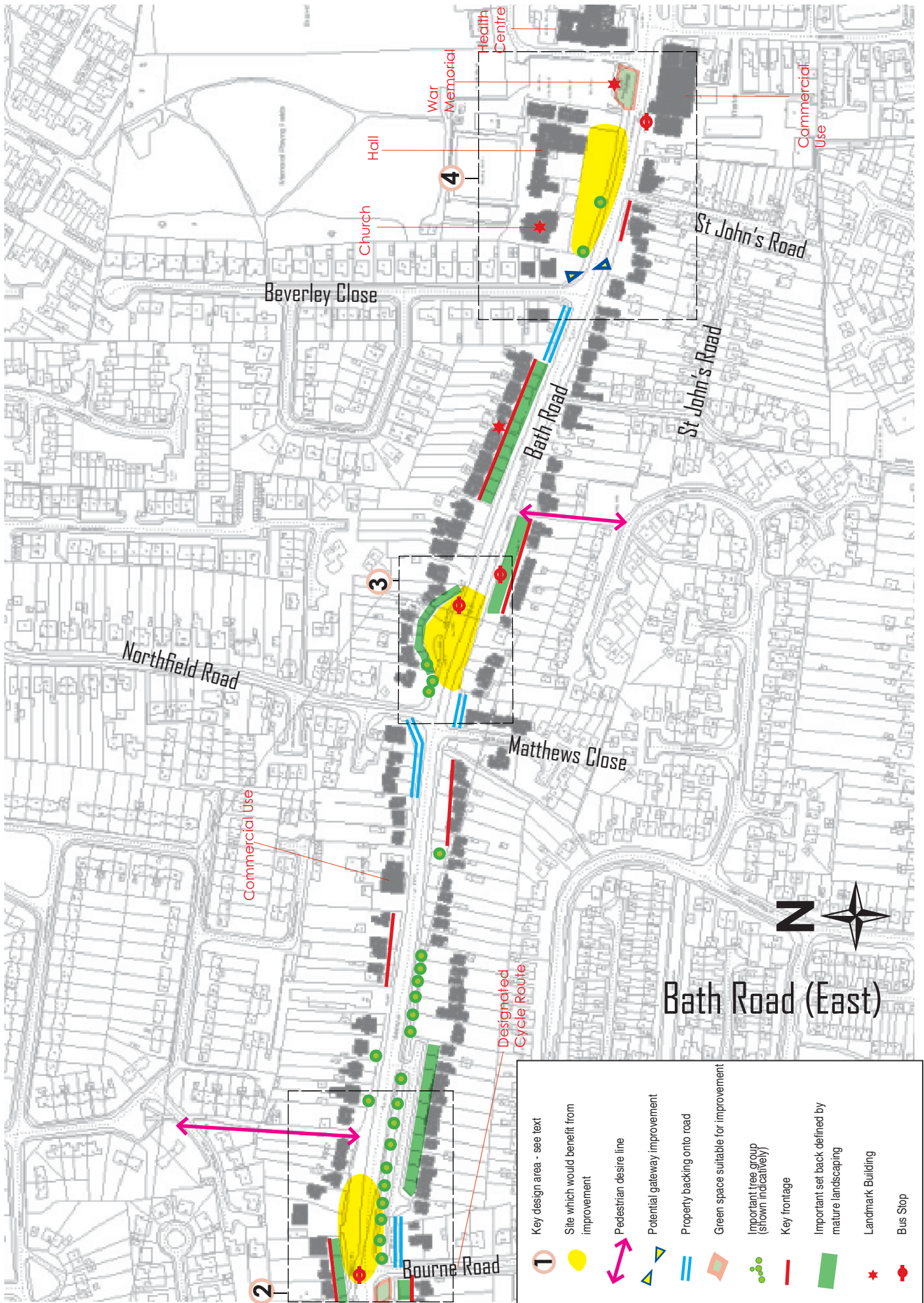


**Protect and enhance mature landscaping, particularly on Bath Road frontage, ensuring that parking and driveways do not dominate frontages**



**Parking regime along length of Bath Road, to include formal paved spaces, driveways and enforcement where necessary, ensuring definition of vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist realm**







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Local  
Development  
Framework



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