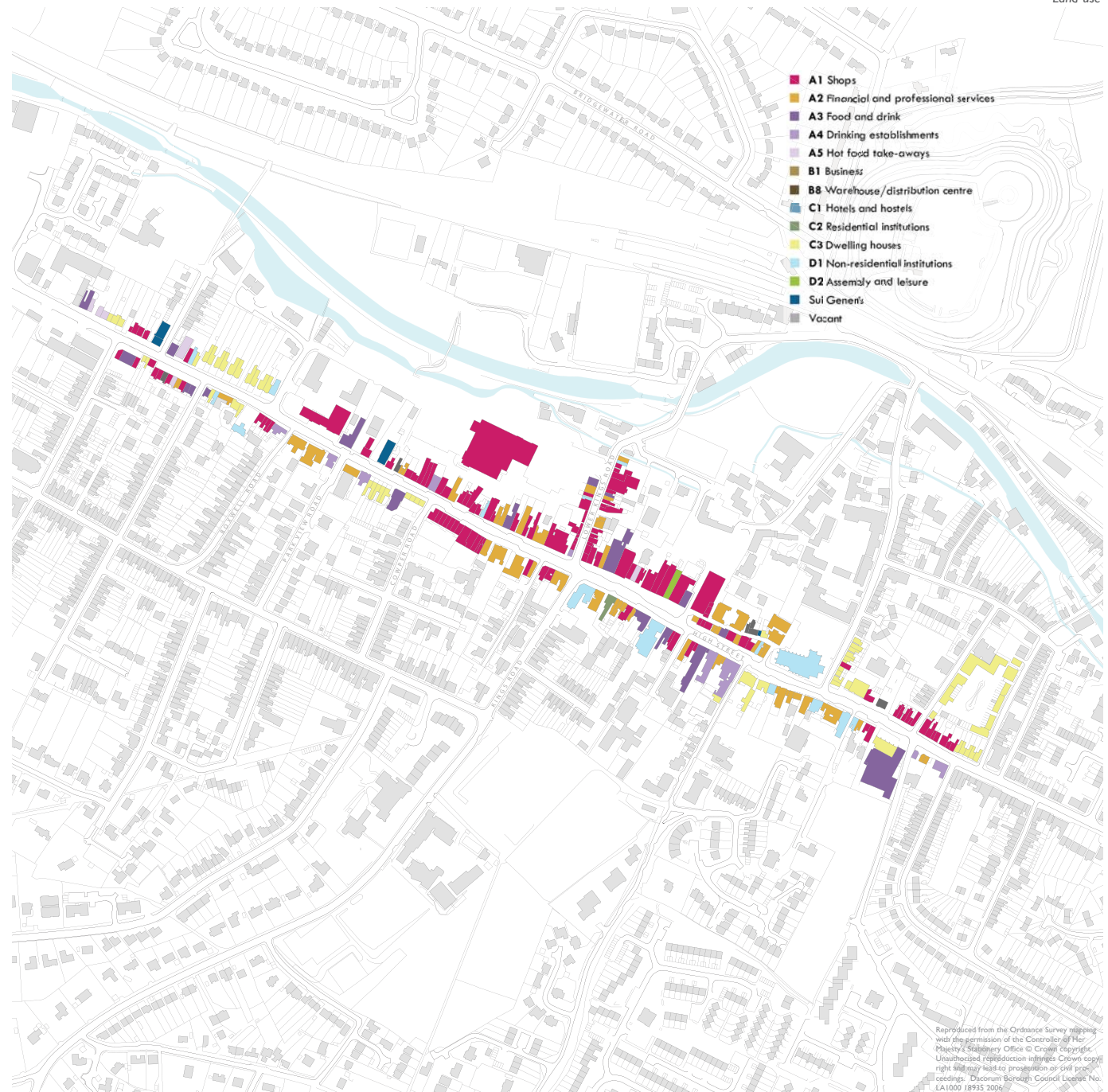


MAKING CONNECTIONS LAND USE

The land use drawing to the right classifies each building by its ground floor use. The map will be used for the purposes of this urban design assessment to analyse the movements of people based on the existing land uses.

Berkhamsted High Street's land uses are extremely diverse and of consistent quality on both sides of the road. The blocks between Cowper and Chesham Road are notable for their density of active uses, with no residences located in this area. There are a particularly large number of financial and professional services uses within the town centre. For a town of its size, the centre offers a relatively good range of restaurants, public houses and cafes. There are two major food retailers - Waitrose and Tesco's Metro. The Waitrose is located off the High Street drawing people through alleyways or cars off of Lower Kings Road. There are a number of institutional uses along the High Street, including two churches, the civic centre, the town hall and the police station.



KEY ISSUES MCI: LAND USE

MCI A
Berkhamsted High Street has a strong mix of land uses.

MCI B
Waitrose draws people off the High Street through pedestrian alleyways. Both Tesco's Metro and Waitrose attracts drivers into the town centre who generally park on the north side of the High Street.

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MAKING CONNECTIONS CIRCULATION, DEMAND AND LINKAGES

The circulation diagram to the right represents an analysis of existing circulation conditions with contributions made by local residents at the consultation event. Heavier lines denote heavier usage and thinner lines signify less frequent use. The drawing has been simplified to highlight the predominant paths.

Pedestrian routes

The High Street, with its wide pavements, is a highly-trafficked pedestrian route. Lower Kings Road is a common axial route across the High Street to both the station and the residential areas. The path along the canal is a common pedestrian route. There were several other routes noted by consultation participants as paths to the countryside. The connections between the High Street and the Canal Walk are very poor.

Vehicular routes

Berkhamsted has evolved along the Roman road, and the High Street remains a significant street for through traffic, retail traffic and destination-to-home journeys. While Berkhamsted's High Street has been a strong through route for almost two thousand years, the axial routes running up the valley slopes to the residential areas have been built more recently. Consultation participants noted frequent congestion issues related to the narrowness of these side streets. They also expressed a concern that the traffic signal timings increased congestion.

KEY ISSUES

MC2: CIRCULATION DEMAND AND LINKAGES

MC2A

The High Street, with its wide pavements, is a highly-trafficked pedestrian route.

MC2B

The connections between the High Street and the Canal Walk are very poor.

MC2C

Consultation participants noted frequent congestion issues related to the narrowness of these side streets and residential streets.

MC2D

Consultation participants noted that the traffic signal timings appeared to increase congestion.



MAKING CONNECTIONS PARKING (Town Centre)

Car parking issues are significant in Berkhamsted town centre with respect to the convenience of shoppers, its relation to traffic congestion, and its relation to open space.

Public car parks

There are a number of major car parks behind the northern side of the High Street, most notably to the east and west of Waitrose and behind Tesco's Metro. There are no significant car parks north of the canal or south of the High Street. This was cited as significant issues by consultation participants. The car parks on the northern side of the street are frequently full and serve both the High Street and the food retailers. The parked cars act as significant barriers to the open space along the canal.

On-street parking

There are a number of pay and display parking bays along the High Street. The bays are well-defined, paved with cobblestones and set higher than the street bed. On-street parking along the side streets (south of the High Street) raises several difficulties. Because of the narrowness of the street, cars partially or entirely block the pavement. With parking on both sides of the street, such as on Boxwell Road, two-way traffic frequently cannot pass. Consultation participants cited this street in particular for stricter parking regulations or the creation of a one-way street direction.



The Waitrose car park directly abuts a pedestrian bridge over the canal.



The Tesco's Metro car park is an important pedestrian path to the northern side of Berkhamsted.

KEY ISSUES MC3: PARKING

MC3A

Town centre car parking occupies significant valuable open space and acts as a barrier to the existing open space.

MC3B

Car parking is a valuable convenience to High Street and food retail shoppers.

MC3C

There are no significant car parks north of the canal or south of the High Street.

MC3D

On-street parking along on side streets, such as Boxwell Road, causes major traffic congestion and blocks the pavements.



The High Street parking bays are carefully-designed.



Boxwell Road was cited by several consultation participants as problematic two-way side street where traffic is congested and the pavements are blocked by parked cars.

MAKING CONNECTIONS WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

Wayfinding signage is a critical aspect of navigating the urban landscape and can be significant in forming distinctive urban or rural character.

Marking critical paths

The wayfinding signpost (top left) shows local destinations which are of both practical and historical value. The signpost's design works well with the town centre's character.

Creating gateways

The wooden post (top far right) acts as a gateway marker to Berkhamsted. There is potential to locate gateway posts or signage at the both north and south ends of the High Street, helping to demarcate the 'boundaries' of the town centre.

Distinctive signage

The standard road signage (bottom left) differs greatly from the local wayfinding posts shown above. It is significant that the town has road markers and wall plaques pointing out the local heritage sites (bottom right).



The town centre employs some distinctive wayfinding signage.



This gateway sign fits with Berkhamsted's image as an historic market town.

KEY ISSUES

MC4: WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

MC5A

Berkhamsted has useful and distinctive wayfinding signage.

MC5B

The town centre has road signage directing people to local heritage sites.



The town centre road signage highlights local landmarks.



Small blue plaques indicate a local heritage walk.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

Berkhamsted's streetscape elements perform several roles, including contributing to community cohesion and the aesthetic appeal of the town.

Community cohesion

Consultation participants noted the desire for more public space, stating that the open space by the canal was good for recreation but not town-centred socialising. The wide pavement space allows for a number of possible opportunities on the streetscape. The current plant sale provides a popular activity on the pavement. Pavement cafes would support additional public social space. The existing community noticeboards are important streetscape elements that serve an important community function.

Aesthetic appeal

The Berkhamsted lampposts currently have hanging baskets attached to them, proving a strong visual character to the streetscape. It is important to note that the streetlights add to the character of the town while reinforcing traffic calming.



The plant sale is an example of temporary streetscape elements that can become an important community focus.



Noticeboards can provide a point of focus along the pavement.

KEY ISSUES

QPRI: STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

QPRI A

Well-designed cafes and activities on the streetscape can help satisfy the consultation participants' interests in more public social space.

QPRI B

Berkhamsted's streetscape elements, such as the streetlights and hanging baskets, add to the town centre's character.



The Berkhamsted streetlights have hanging baskets throughout the summer.



A newer residential development uses wrought iron fencing along the pavement to encourage cyclists to dismount.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM NATURAL ELEMENTS

As noted earlier, there is little designated open land in Berkhamsted, and many of these spaces are in limited access areas, such as school grounds or along the railway embankment.

There is significant open space along footpaths outside of the officially designated open land areas (top left and right images), including areas along the River Bulbourne in the Northchurch area. These footpaths are good opportunities for enhancing the rustic nature of Berkhamsted. In addition, the St Mary's churchyard is an important undesignated open land.



There are a small number of footpaths in Berkhamsted.



A small footbridge is used to cross a narrow part of the River Bulbourne.

KEY ISSUES

QPR2: NATURAL ELEMENTS

QPR2A

There is significant open space along footpaths outside of the officially designated open land areas.

QPR2B

These undesignated areas are important for enhancing the rustic nature of the town.



The pavement leaves the side of the street, creating a rustic feel to the area.



There are a number of significant allotment gardens in Berkhamsted.

LEGIBILITY VIEWS, VISTAS, GATEWAYS

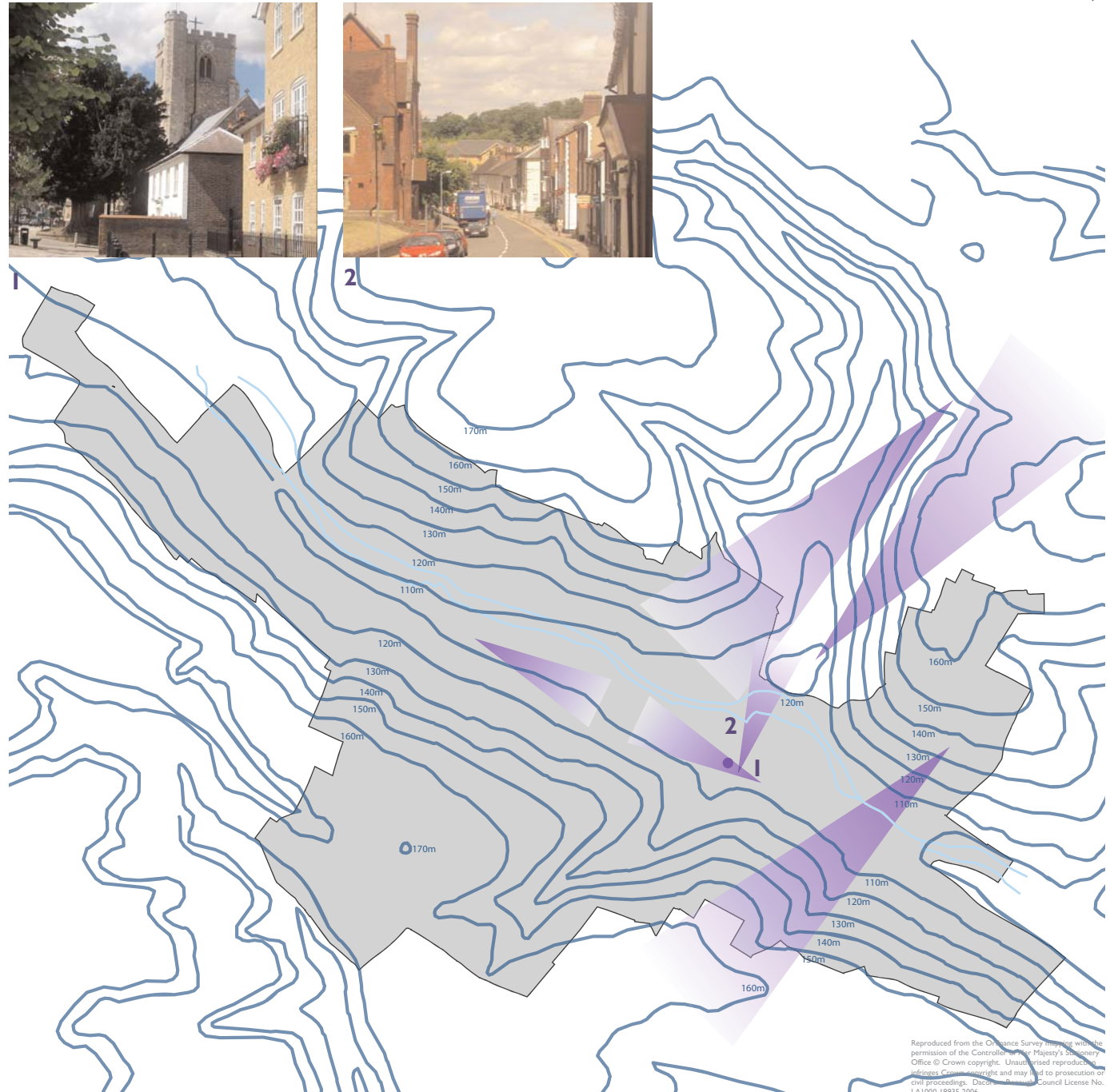
Due to its position in the Bulbourne Valley there are several views from the edges of the settlement out to the surrounding hills, and from the edges of Berkhamsted into the town.

Views within Berkhamsted

Views both directions along the High Street provide a strong sense of the town centre's Conservation Area (1). The church is particularly visible from the southern end of the High Street. Castle Street, with its slight elevation change and curve creates strong views of the streetscape and countryside to the north (2). Views along the canal are also significant.

Views into the countryside

The residential neighbourhoods in the western end of Berkhamsted have the strongest views into the countryside. There are several strong views from Berkhamsted into the surrounding Green Belt. The views from the Norman Castle are particularly noteworthy.



KEY ISSUES

LE1: VIEWS, VISTAS AND GATEWAYS

LE1A

Views along the High Street, Castle Street and the canal are among the most noteworthy views within Berkhamsted.

LE1B

There are several strong views from Berkhamsted into the surrounding Green Belt. The views from the Berkhamsted Castle are particularly noteworthy.

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LEGIBILITY EDGES, PATHS, AND LAND- MARKS

Landmarks, gateways and orientation points
The Berkhamsted Castle is perhaps the only settlement-wide orientation point. Along the High Street, St Peter's church is a clear gateway into the town centre. The gateway at the western end of the High Street is much less clear, with no significant landmarks determining the start point to the town centre.

Paths and edges
The High Street is clearly the most significant path in Berkhamsted and the Canal towpath, running parallel to the High Street, is the most important pedestrian path in the town. The railway acts as a major barrier to north-south movement across town, and within the town centre, the car parks are a barrier to pedestrians walking from the High Street to the canal.

KEY ISSUES
LE2: EDGES, PATHS, LANDMARKS AND CHARACTER AREAS

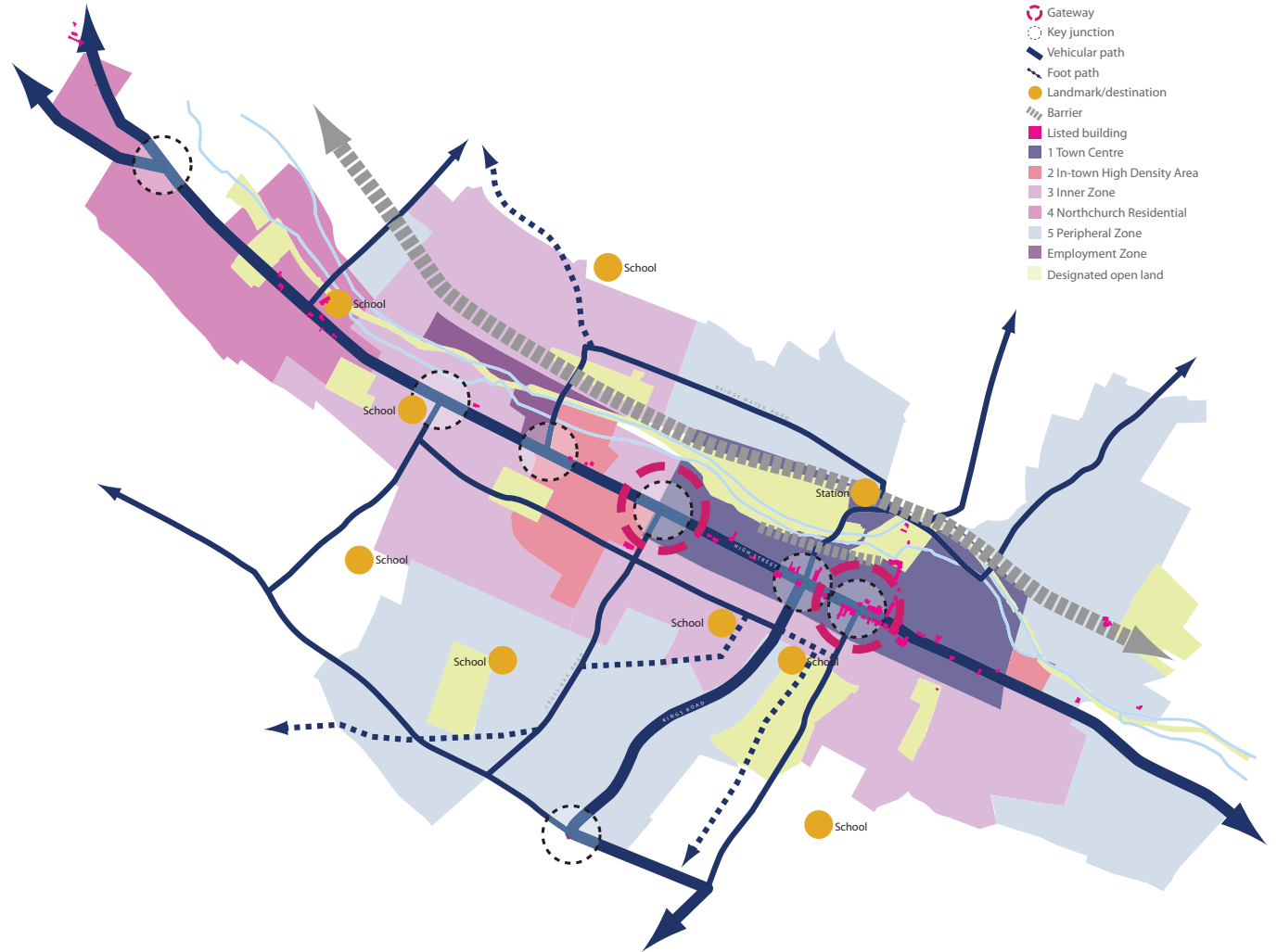
LE2A
Berkhamsted Castle is a key orientation point for the town.

LE2B
St Peter's church is a gateway to the eastern end of the High Street, and the western end lacks a clear gateway.

LE2C
The elevated railway is a strong edge extending east-west along the length of the town.

LE2D
On the scale of the town centre, the food retailer car parks are a barrier to north-south movement between the High Street and the canal.

LE2E
The Canal has become a significant recreational path.



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