

ST. JOHN'S HILL AREA MASTERPLAN (DRAFT)

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MARCH 2025

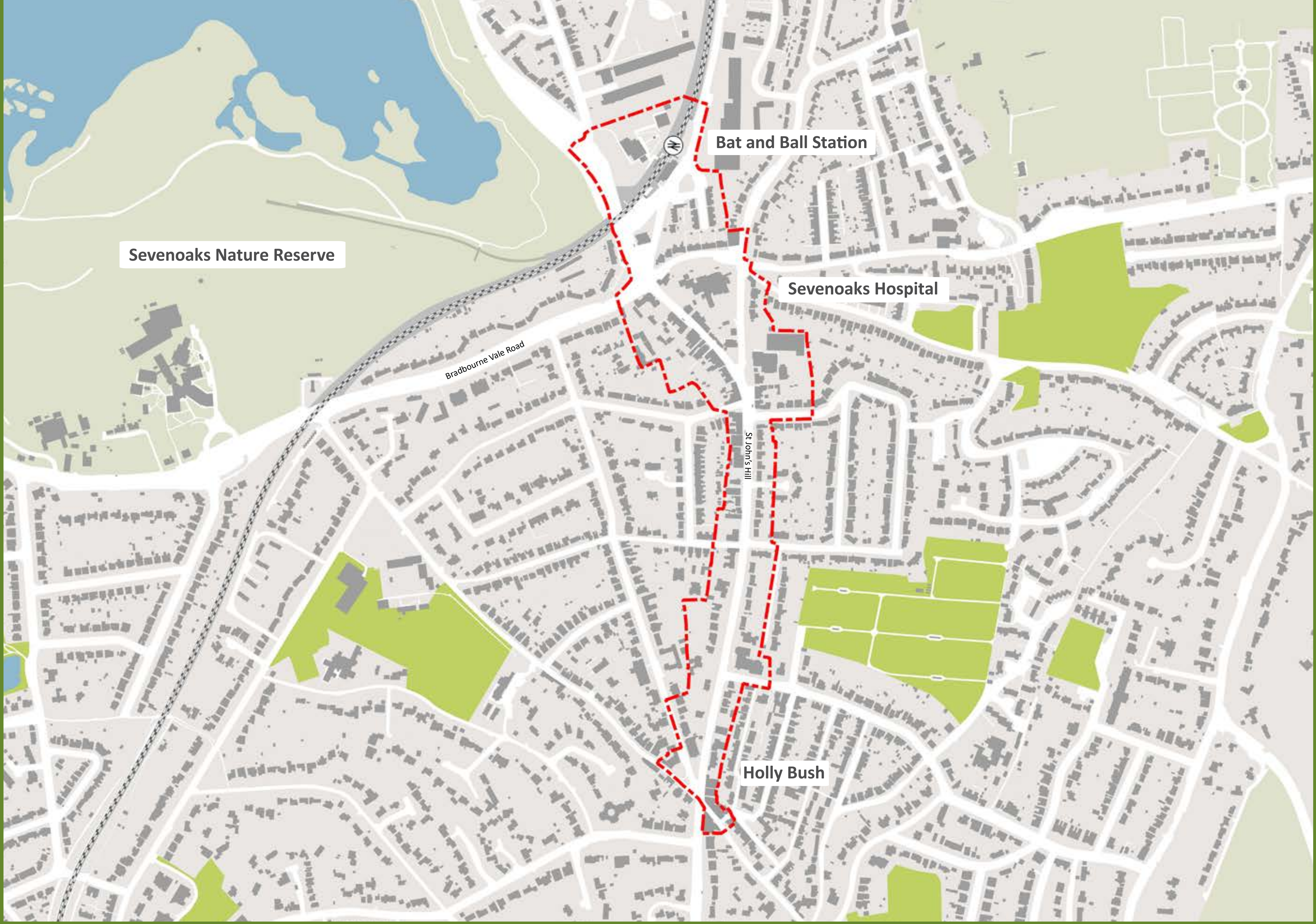
WHY PREPARE A MASTERPLAN?

- To agree a shared spatial vision for the St. John's and Holly Bush Neighbourhood Centres
- To help to guide future decision making and investment in the Neighbourhood Centres
- To identify where change could take place, including opportunities for new development and improvements in the environment for walking and cycling
- To build on the objectives and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan
- To provide an opportunity to share ideas and thoughts about the future of the centre and how to address some of the 21st century challenges

TIMELINE



ST. JOHN'S HILL MASTERPLAN STUDY AREA



TEN PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE PLAN

1

ENHANCE THE IDENTITY OF LOCAL HUBS

- Improve the setting of Bat and Ball Station, Holly Bush and St. John's Hill Neighbourhood Centres
- Improve the sense of arrival into Neighbourhood Centres
- Enhance visual connection and wayfinding to Bat and Ball Station from Bat and Ball junction and Otford Road

2

RESPECT AND CELEBRATE THE AREA'S UNIQUE HERITAGE

- Enhance the setting of historic assets and retain and re-use historic buildings
- Ensure that new development responds to local character and scale and massing
- Protect important views

3

BE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE

- Encourage active travel modes, including cycles, e-bikes and scooters and provide more electric charging points
- Enhance biodiversity
- Introduce SuDs / rain gardens where appropriate
- Energy efficient buildings and homes

4

ENHANCE THE LOCAL OFFER

- Ensure centres provide for everyday needs
- Provide opportunity for independent shops and services
- Speciality offer that draws customers from further afield
- Restaurants, takeaways, cafés and sitting out areas
- A variety of workspaces including co-working and studios

5

ENCOURAGE ACTIVE MODES OF TRANSPORT AND REDUCE VEHICULAR TRAFFIC

- Provide safe and convenient walking and cycle routes to schools, the Wildlife Reserve, Sevenoaks Quarry, Dunton Green, the train stations and town centre
- Provide secure cycle parking and introduce e-bike hire
- Provide bus stops and real time service information
- Provide a workable solution at the Bat and Ball junction
- Provide car parking but whilst minimising impact

6

CREATE A PEOPLE-FOCUSED PUBLIC REALM

- Reduce impact of vehicular traffic
- Introduce 20mph speed limit through local centres
- Consider reclaiming street space to use as public spaces
- Create flexible spaces and more places to sit and relax
- Change surfacing materials through neighbourhood centres

7

GREEN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

- Introduce more green infrastructure, (trees, planted areas)
- Improve access to and connect existing green spaces including Bradbourne Lakes and Sevenoaks Nature Reserve
- Protect and retain existing trees
- Consider long term maintenance and management

8

DELIVER SMALL INTERVENTIONS, EVENTS AND EARLY WINS

- Identify a programme of small interventions that are quick and easy to implement e.g. temporary uses
- Encourage community initiatives and activities that bring greater pride and ownership in the town
- Introduce urban greening, specialist markets and events
- Introduce specialist markets and events
- Improve signage, wayfinding and interpretation

9

MAKE BETTER USE OF POORLY DEFINED LAND

- Redefine fragmented areas to the rear of St. John's parade as positive spaces
- Provide a mix of workspace and residential uses to animate areas at different times of the day
- Maximise potential of left over and poorly defined areas

10

DELIVERING RESILIENCE TO FUTURE CHANGES

- Retain a strong sense of local community
- Retain Bat and Ball centre as a hub for community activities and events
- Prepare for an increased catchment population notably from Sevenoaks Quarry and former Sevenoaks Gasworks

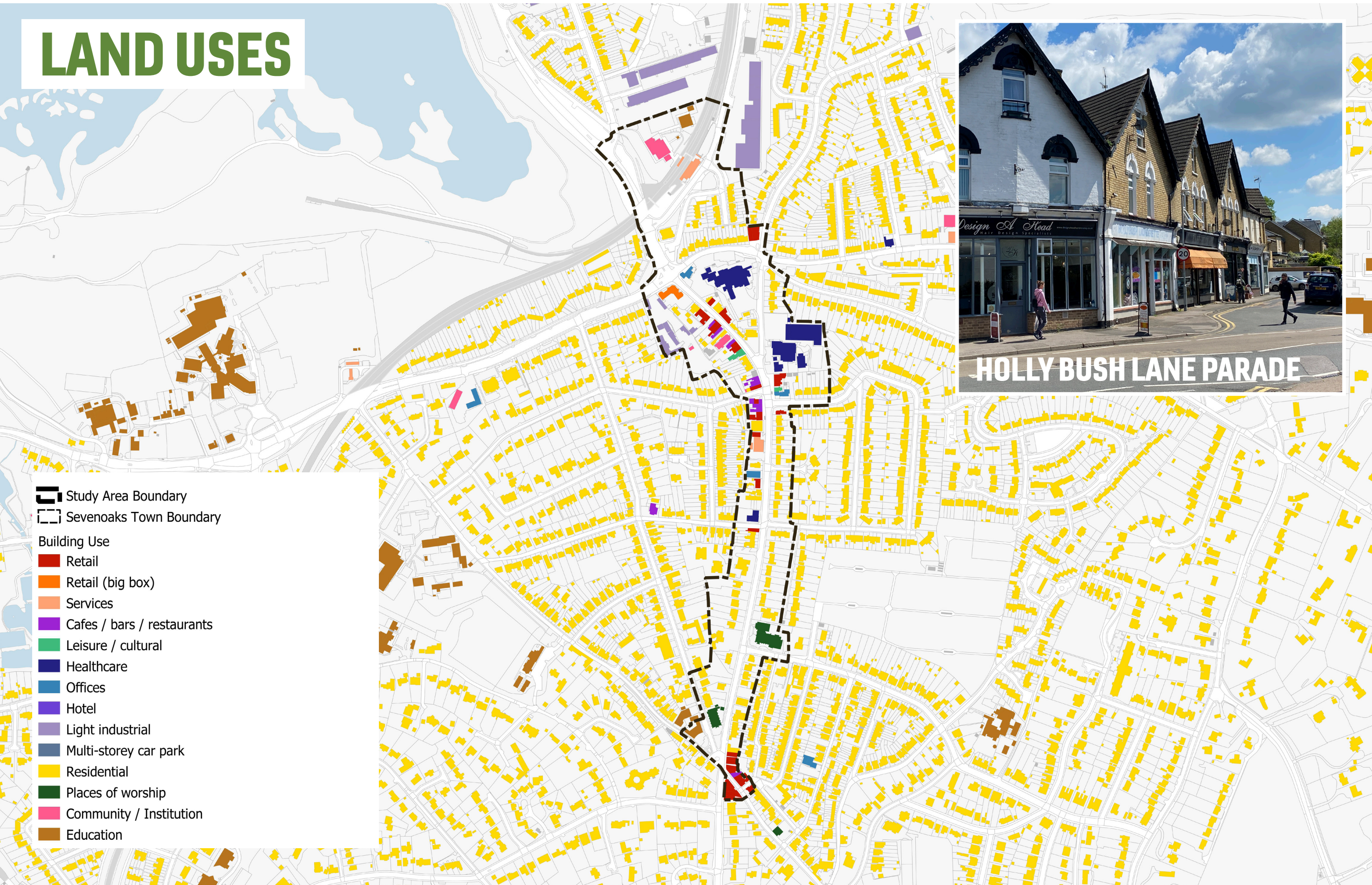
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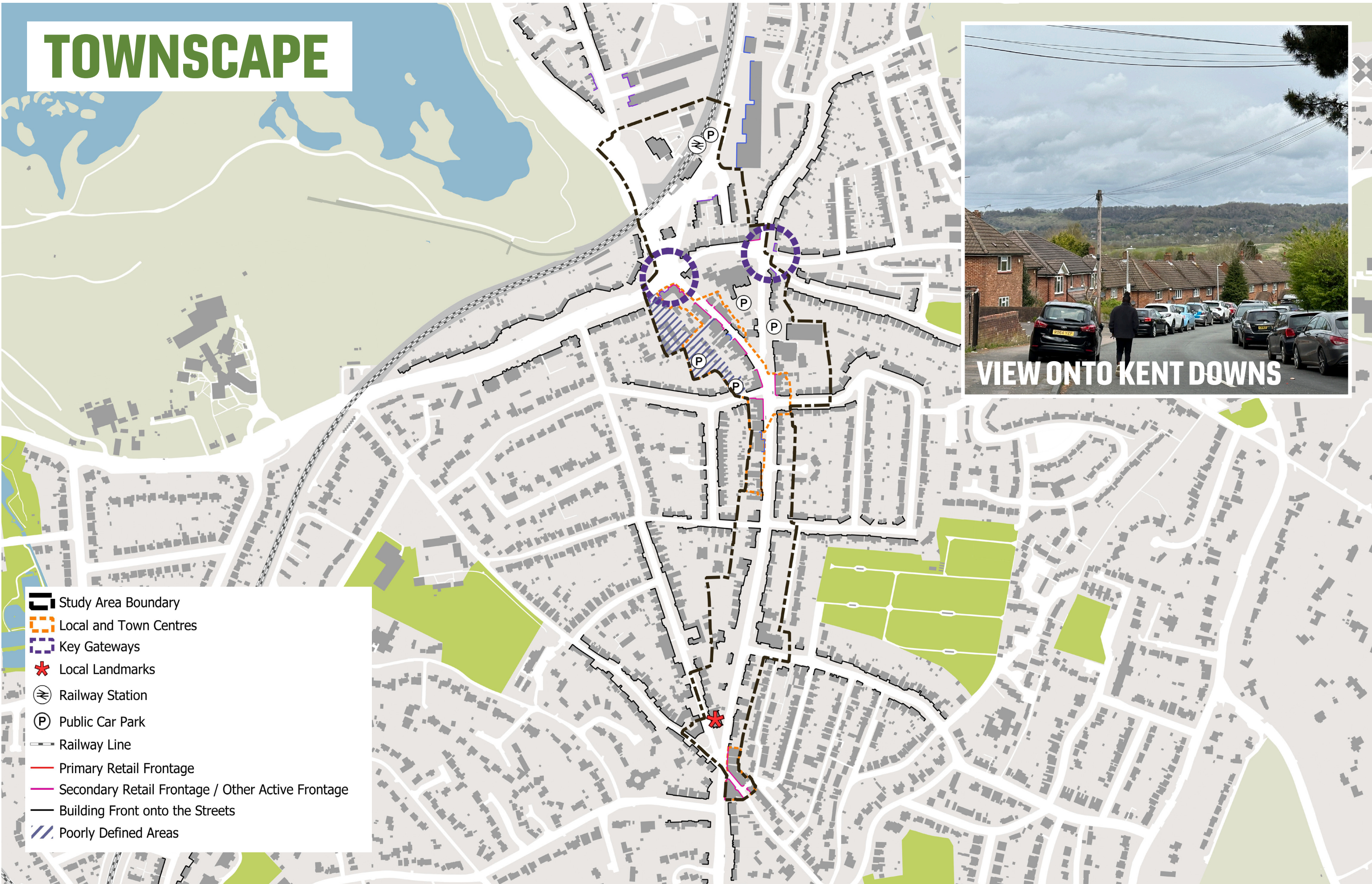
ST. JOHN'S HILL AREA CONTEXT ANALYSIS



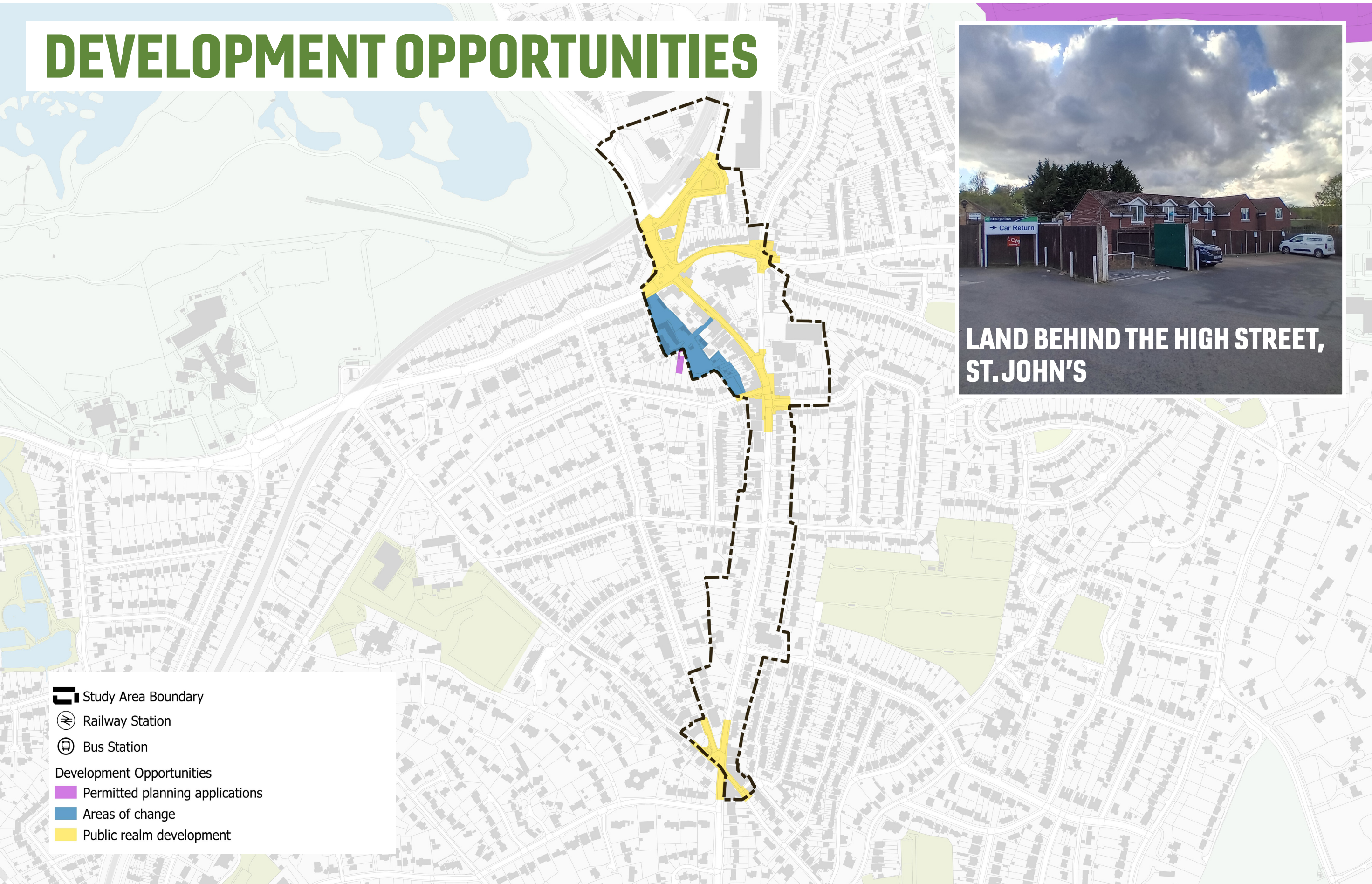
The St. John's Hill area has several heritage assets, including the Grade II listed Bat and Ball Station, and locally listed buildings including the Masonic Lodge and former Old Bat and Ball Public House. The southern tip of Holly Bush Neighbourhood Centre is part of the Sevenoaks Hartslands Conservation Area



The two Neighbourhood Centres provide a mix of shops, cafes and services to meet the needs of the surrounding residential area. St. John's centre also provides some small office space and light industrial uses are located to the north around Bat and Ball Station



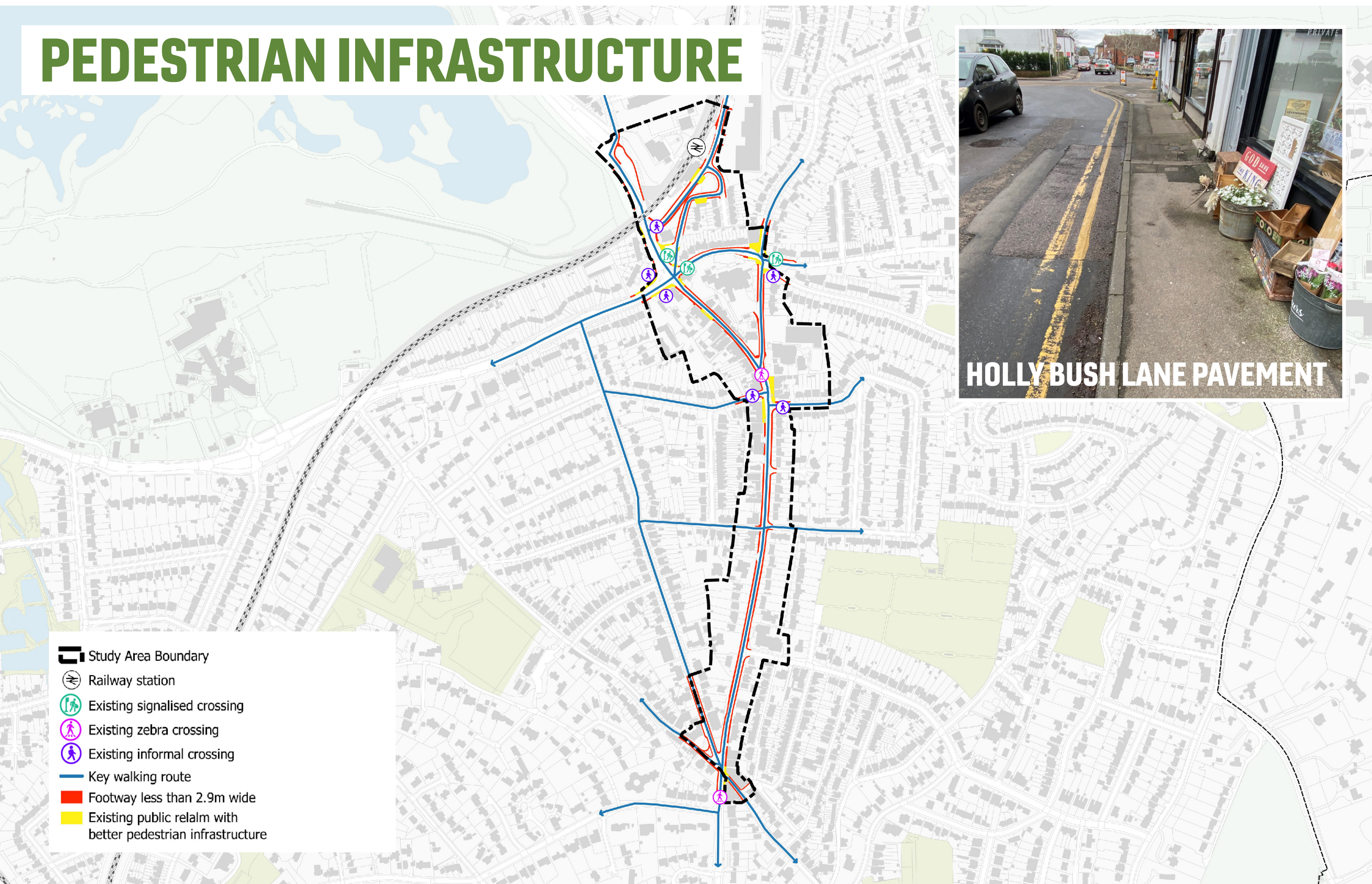
The identity of the St. John's Hill area is shaped by its topography, with views north to the Kent Downs and a sense of arrival at Holly Bush Neighbourhood Centre at the top of the hill. Historic routes and buildings link the area to its surroundings, influencing its atmosphere and street dynamics



Two major developments in northern Sevenoaks (950 homes at Sevenoaks Quarry and 136 at the Gas Works site) will increase the town's population by over 10%. There may also be opportunities for development behind St. John's Hill shops and potential improvements to Sevenoaks Hospital



The A225 which connects St. John's and Holly Bush Centres is impacted by congestion, poor pedestrian infrastructure, and heavy traffic. Plans to improve the Bat and Ball junction and introduce a 20mph speed limit are under consideration



The road infrastructure around St. John's and Holly Bush prioritises motor traffic, with narrow pavements and limited pedestrian spaces. High traffic volumes, poor crossings, and a lack of signage make walking challenging, while heavy goods vehicles on St. John's Hill pose additional risks

RESPONDING TO THE CONTEXT

- A comprehensive site analysis has been carried out to assess strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, including transport links and natural assets
- Public workshops have been held through the design process to engage local residents and gather community insights
- The findings from the site analysis and public feedback have been integrated into the masterplan
- A spatial vision and masterplan that helps to celebrate and reinforce the identity and sense of place and connections to the two centres has been prepared



Images from stakeholder engagement workshops held in the Town Council offices

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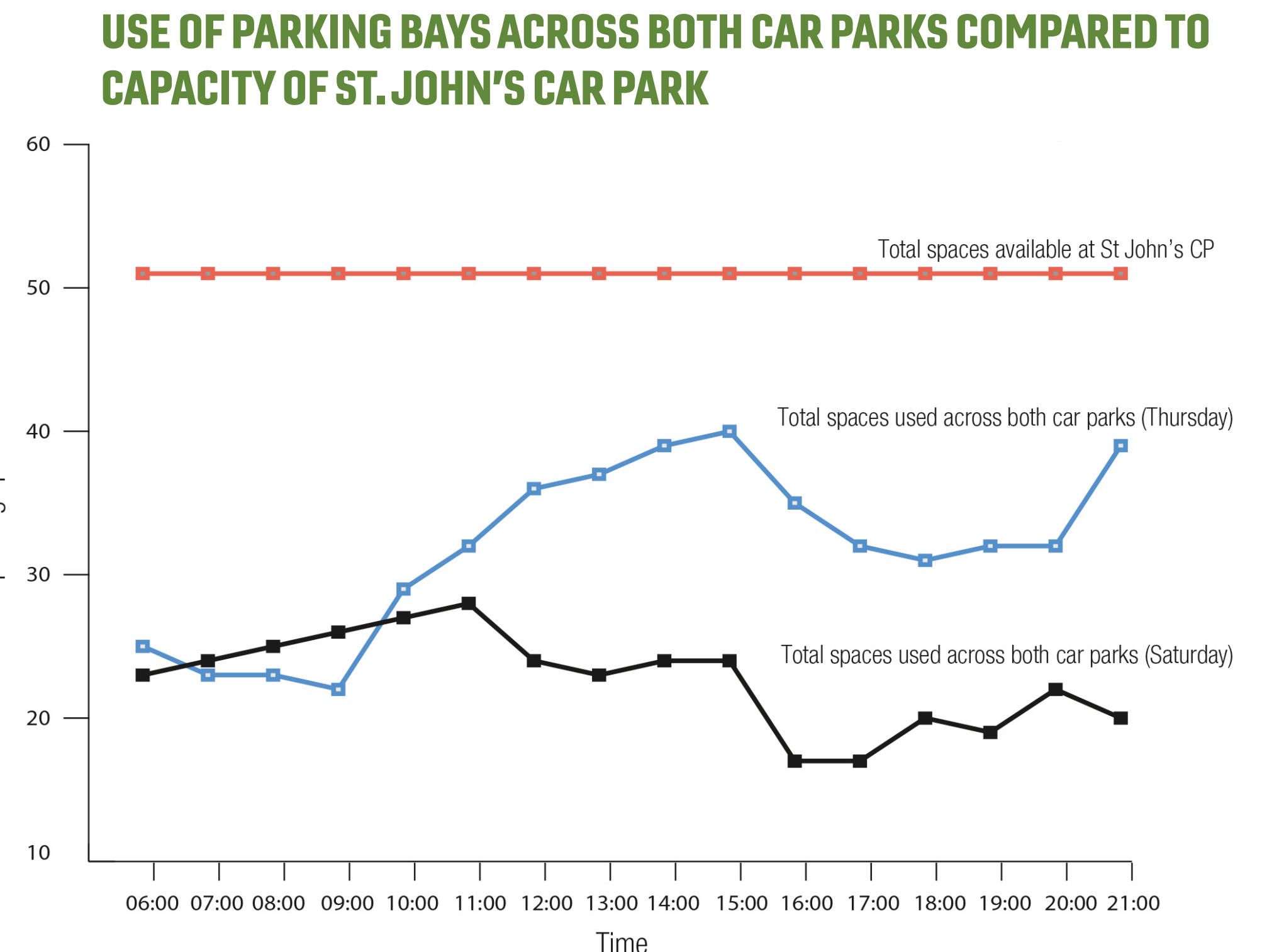
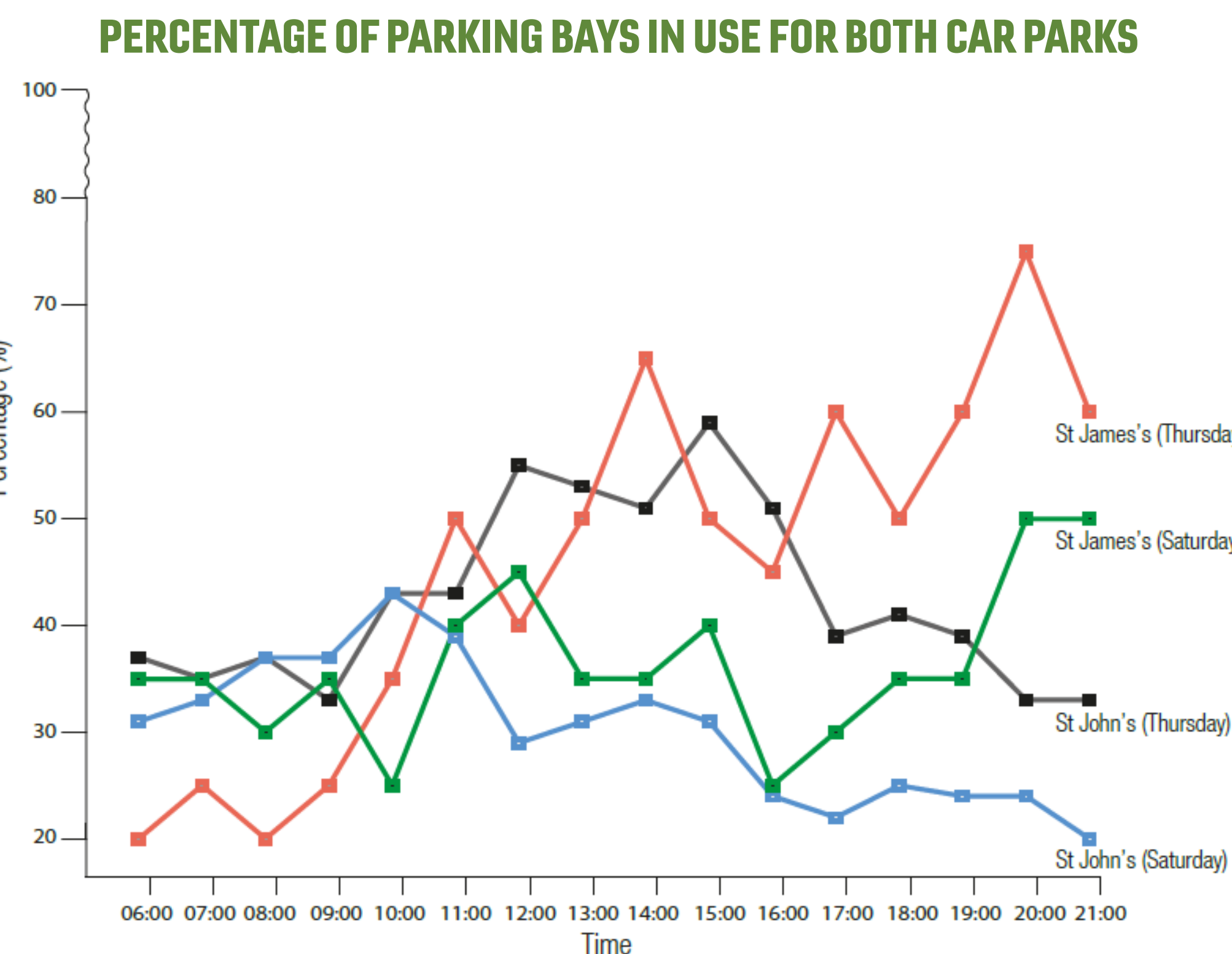


PARKING STUDY

Local residents have raised concerns about on-street parking in the ‘St. John’s Triangle’ area. This extends beyond the St. John’s Hill masterplan area. Issues include blocked driveways, footway obstructions, and commuters parking for free. The Town Council commissioned Urban Movement to study parking challenges through surveys, research, and stakeholder engagement. The study identifies where parking pressures are greatest, reasons for parking, and where parking restrictions are being ignored. Urban Movement are proposing a toolkit of potential measures to address the issues.

CAR PARKS: DATA

Surveys of the usage of the St. John’s Hill and St. James’s Road car parks were conducted on a Thursday and a Saturday. The findings from the collected data are outlined below.



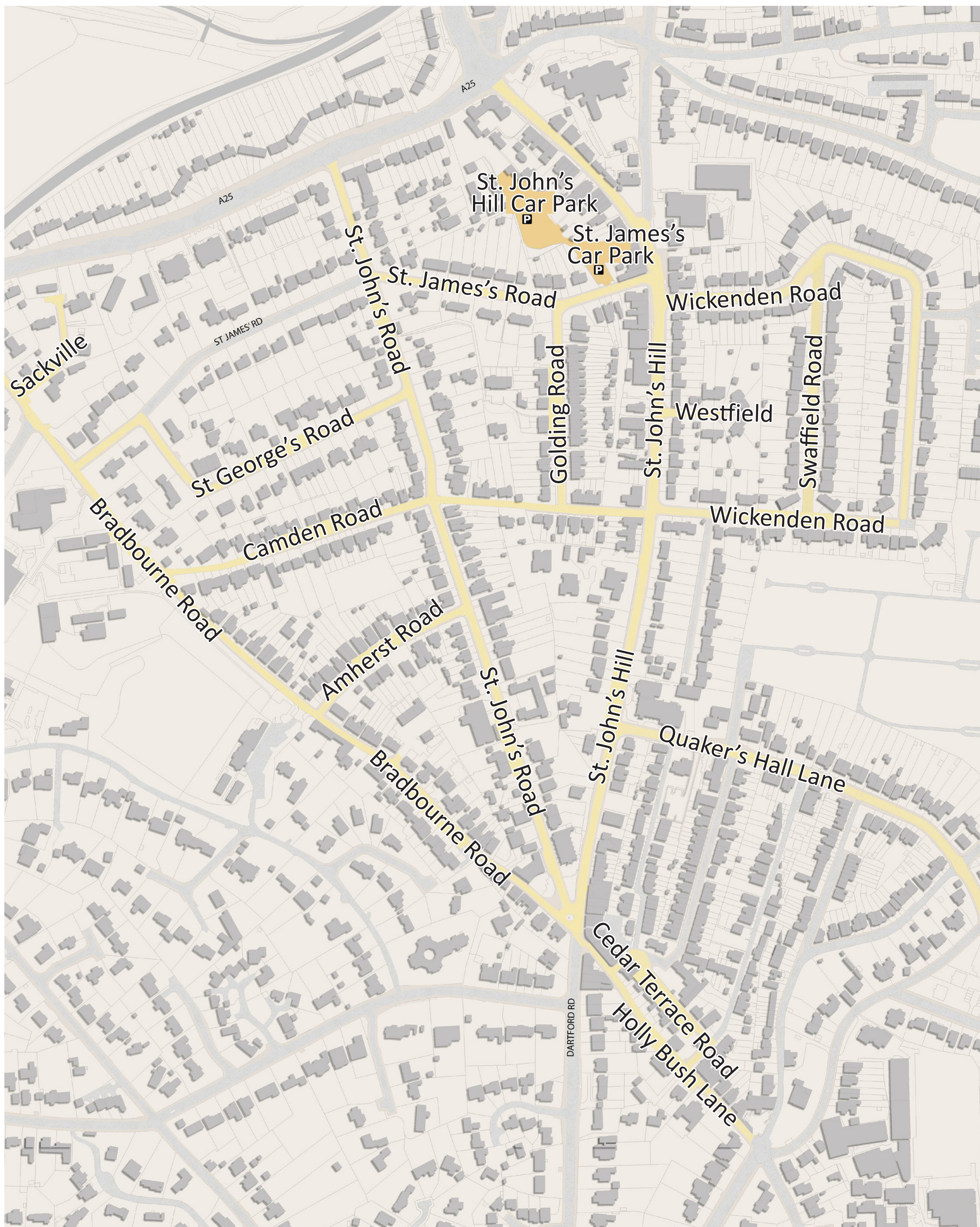
TOOLKIT

- IDEAS TO CREATE MORE CAR PARKING CAPACITY**
- Formalise parking bays to improve parking efficiency
 - Extend CPZs
 - Adjust parking restrictions to suit the needs of each street
 - Traffic management to increase space for parking to improve traffic flow
 - Minimise vehicle lanes in line with National Guidance to maximise space for parking
- IDEAS FOR MITIGATING CURRENT IMPACTS FROM ON-STREET PARKING AND TRAFFIC**
- Redesign junctions to give priority to people walking
 - Provide crossing points and improved footways
 - Continue to encourage ‘Park and Stride’ from St. James’s car park
 - Formalise parking bays to discourage footway parking

LONG-TERM APPROACHES

- Aligned with local policy and ambition, long-term car parking strategies in St. John’s can reduce demand and free up space for other uses. However, achieving this requires a shift in transport habits and car ownership, which falls beyond the scope of this study. These include:
- Trip reduction or mode shift
 - Supporting the delivery of car clubs
 - Increasing cycle infrastructure and opportunities for e-mobility
 - Increasing bus frequency and reliability, including school buses or mini buses
 - Further discussions with schools, places of worship, etc. to better understand how parking can be managed
 - Roll-out of Park and Stride at other schools

PARKING STUDY AREA

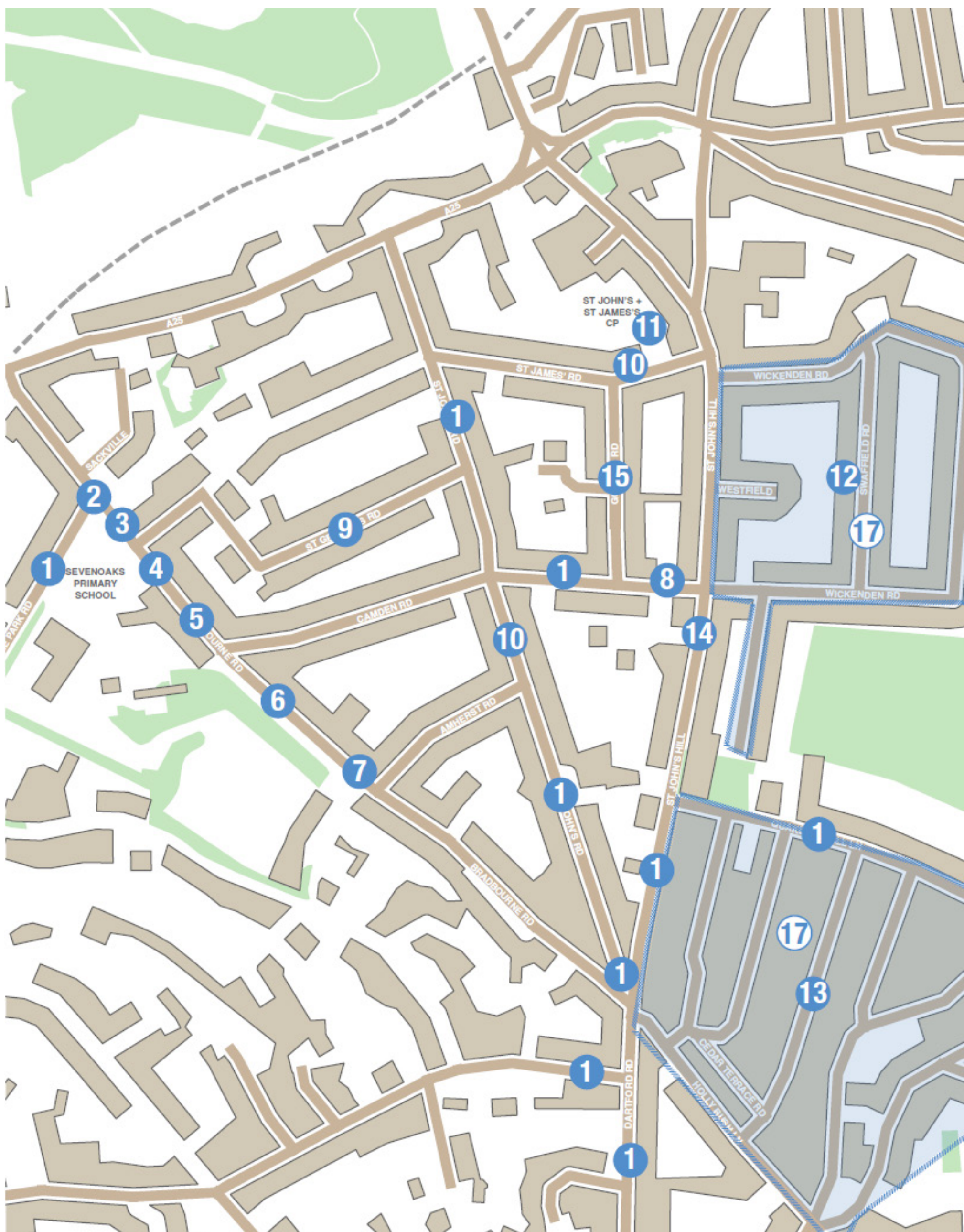


CAR PARKS: FINDINGS

The St. John’s Hill and St. James’s Road car parks, operated by SDC, provide access to the northern end of St. John’s Hill but are a ten-minute walk from Holly Bush Lane shops, likely deterring shoppers. Parking costs are £0.50 for 30 minutes, £2 for 2 hours, and £5 for all-day parking. Enterprise Car Hire currently leases spaces on a short-term basis.

Survey data showed neither car park was ever full on the days surveyed. St. John’s car park reached 75% capacity briefly on Thursday and 43% on Saturday (including Enterprise spaces). St. James’s car park peaked at 65% on Thursday and 50% on Saturday. The highest total occupancy at any time was 41 spaces, well within the combined 71-space capacity, suggesting St. John’s car park alone could accommodate current demand.

APPLYING THE TOOLKIT



PARKING BEAT SURVEY



ON-STREET PARKING TRENDS

DAYTIME

Holly Bush Lane fills up during the day but clears by evening, mainly used by visitors. Quaker’s Hall Lane remains heavily parked, likely accommodating residents from smaller nearby streets. Bradbourne Road sees increased parking around 3pm due to school pick-ups, causing spillover. Wickenden Road’s restricted bays (1-hour stay) are highly used from 9am to 6pm, with limited parking outside these zones.

EVENING

Residents struggle to find parking near their homes, mainly due to high private vehicle ownership exceeding available spaces. Streets with minimal parking fill up quickly, leading to overflow onto nearby roads.

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ST. JOHN'S HILL AREA SPATIAL VISION

- The ten design principles are integrated into a spatial concept plan for St. John's Hill, focusing on arrival points, sustainable transit, connections, upgraded public realm, community uses, and development opportunities
- Neighbourhood centres' success depends on factors such as mixed uses, meeting local needs, building appearance, vibrancy and pedestrian experience
- Long-term, flexible planning is needed to enhance the environment and promote sustainable lifestyles



Improve entrance points and local hubs



Green links along key routes within and between neighbourhood centres



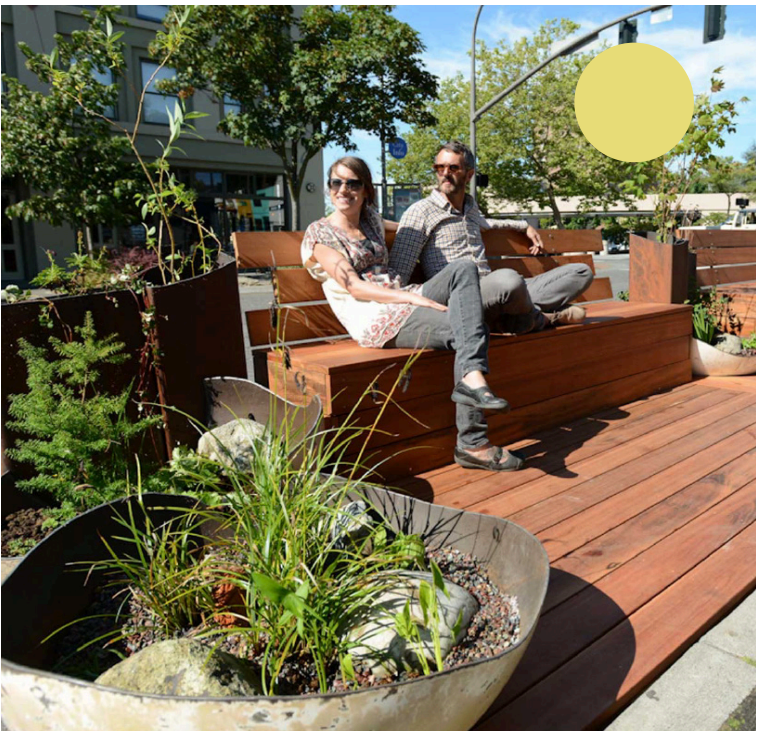
Preserve and enhance local character



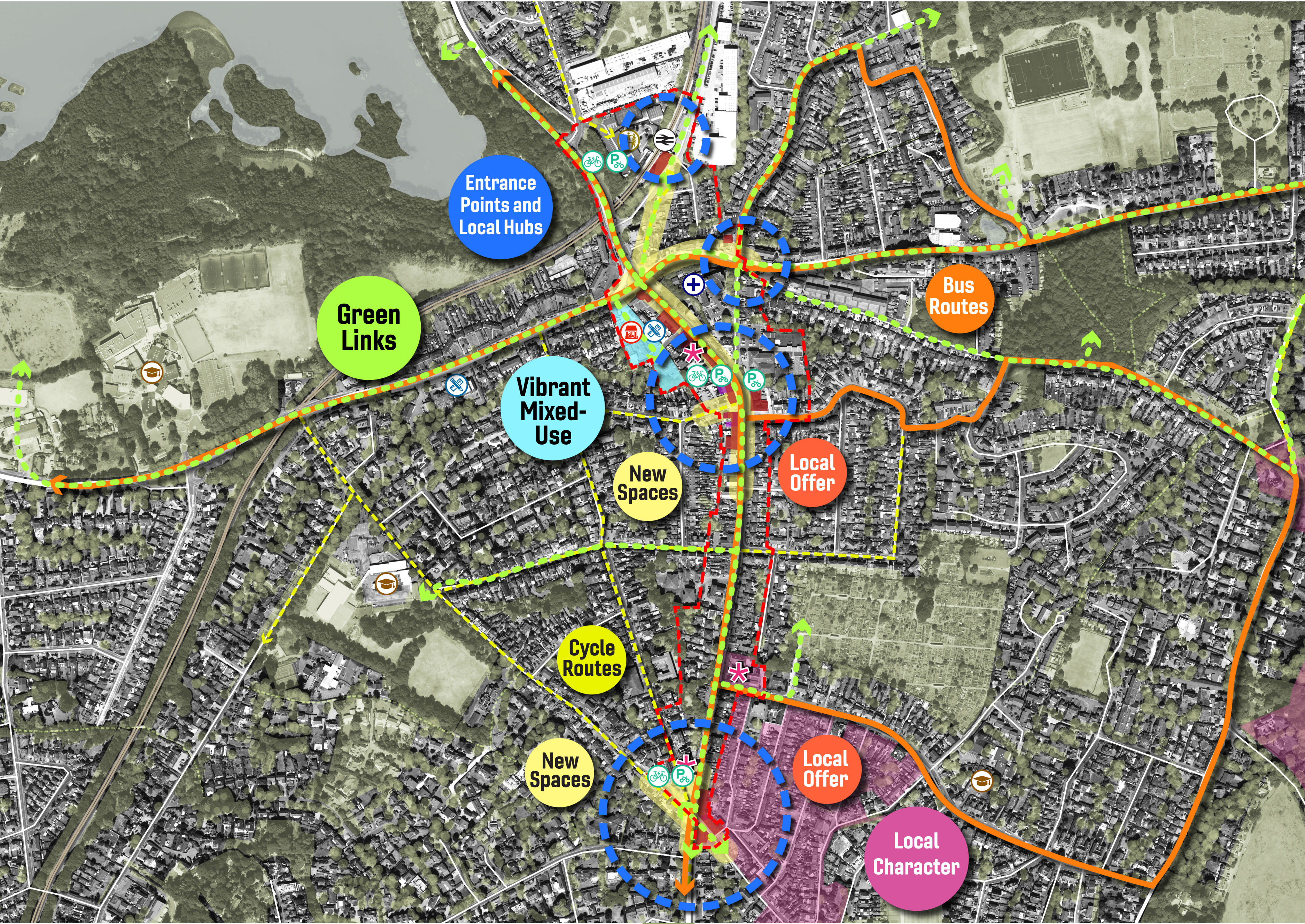
Provide vibrant residential-led development with ground floor mixed-use



Support the local offer through upgrading building facades and shop fronts



Plan new spaces that reflect high-quality public realm



ST. JOHN'S HILL AREA MASTERPLAN

The Draft St. John's Hill Area Masterplan presents a long-term spatial vision for St. John's and Holly Bush Neighbourhood Centres. Proposals include:

- The Creation of Holly Bush Square, a new public space enhancing Rheinbach Gardens with seating and a paved area, made possible through the closure of the southern end of Bradbourne Road (Board 5)
- The creation of Bat and Ball Gardens, a landscaped green area with seating adjacent to Bat and Ball Station (Board 5)
- The creation of St. John's Quarter, a residential-led mixed-use scheme behind St. John's parade (Board 5)
- The creation of St. John's Place, a small paved space within the proposed St. John's Quarter (Board 5)
- Public realm improvements, including junction improvements, enhanced pedestrian crossings, wider footways, resurfacing, street planting, rain gardens, shop front upgrades and enhanced connections to the Wildlife Reserve (Board 5)
- A programme of early win projects and initiatives
- Signage and wayfinding to improve navigation in both centres



Enhance local entrance points and hubs, such as Bat and Ball Station



Improve pedestrian routes to key points, such as the route from Bradbourne Vale Road to Bat and Ball Station



Upgrade parade in St. John's (including the well-known fish and chip shop and florist)



Improve connections to key areas of interest in and around the centres



Bat and Ball junction improvements in-line with proposals for Quarry Development



Rejuvenate undefined land, such as the area behind St. John's High Street



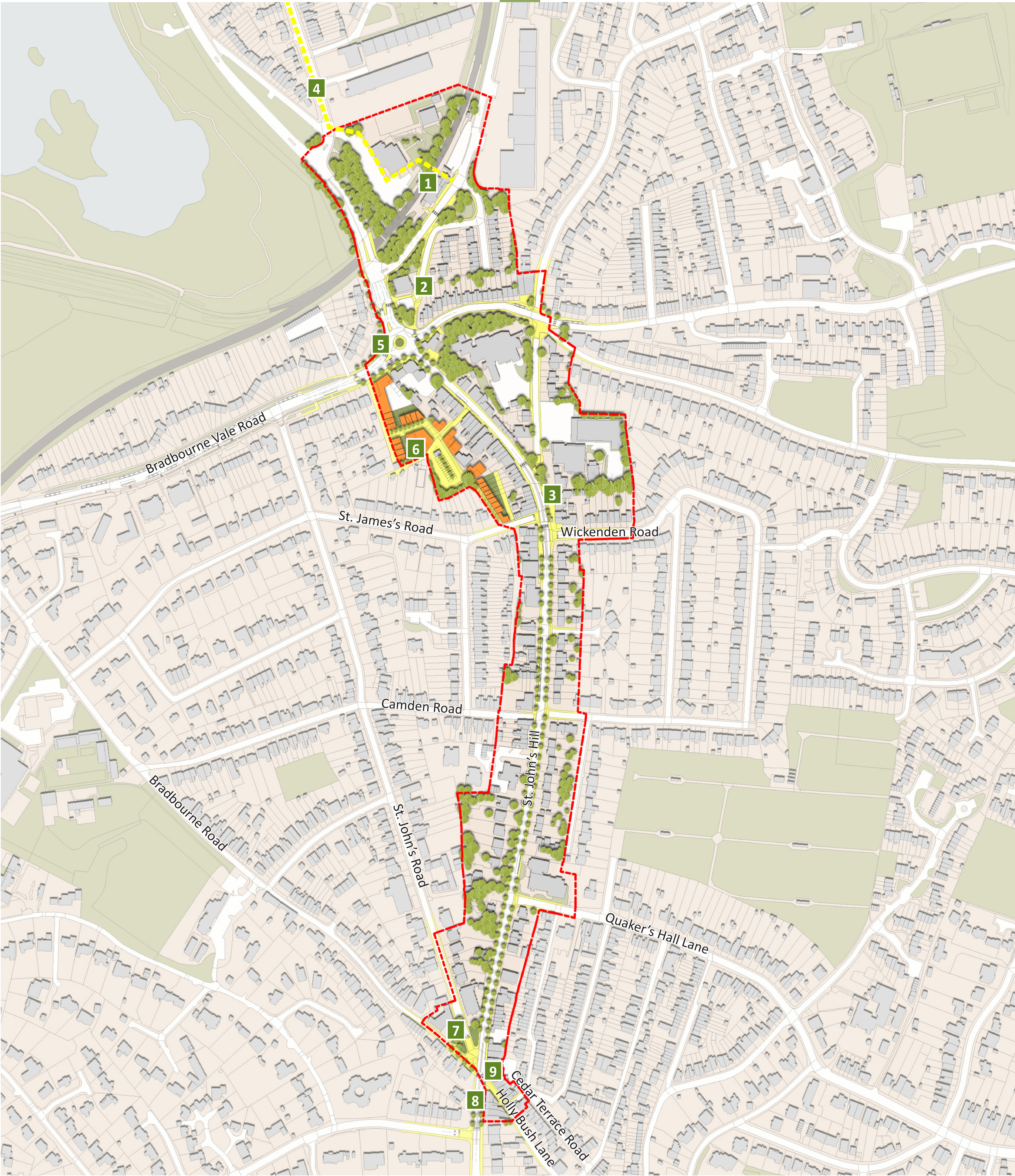
Enhance existing public spaces, such as Rheinbach Gardens in Holly Bush



Improve pedestrian experience, including more pedestrian infrastructure in Holly Bush Neighbourhood Centre



Improve the public realm, including along Holly Bush Lane



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MAIN MOVES: PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

This board highlights the main moves proposed in the Draft St. John's Hill Area Masterplan, focusing on pedestrian priority, the introduction of green infrastructure, and the creation of new public spaces for the St. John's and Holly Bush Neighbourhood Centres

ST. JOHN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

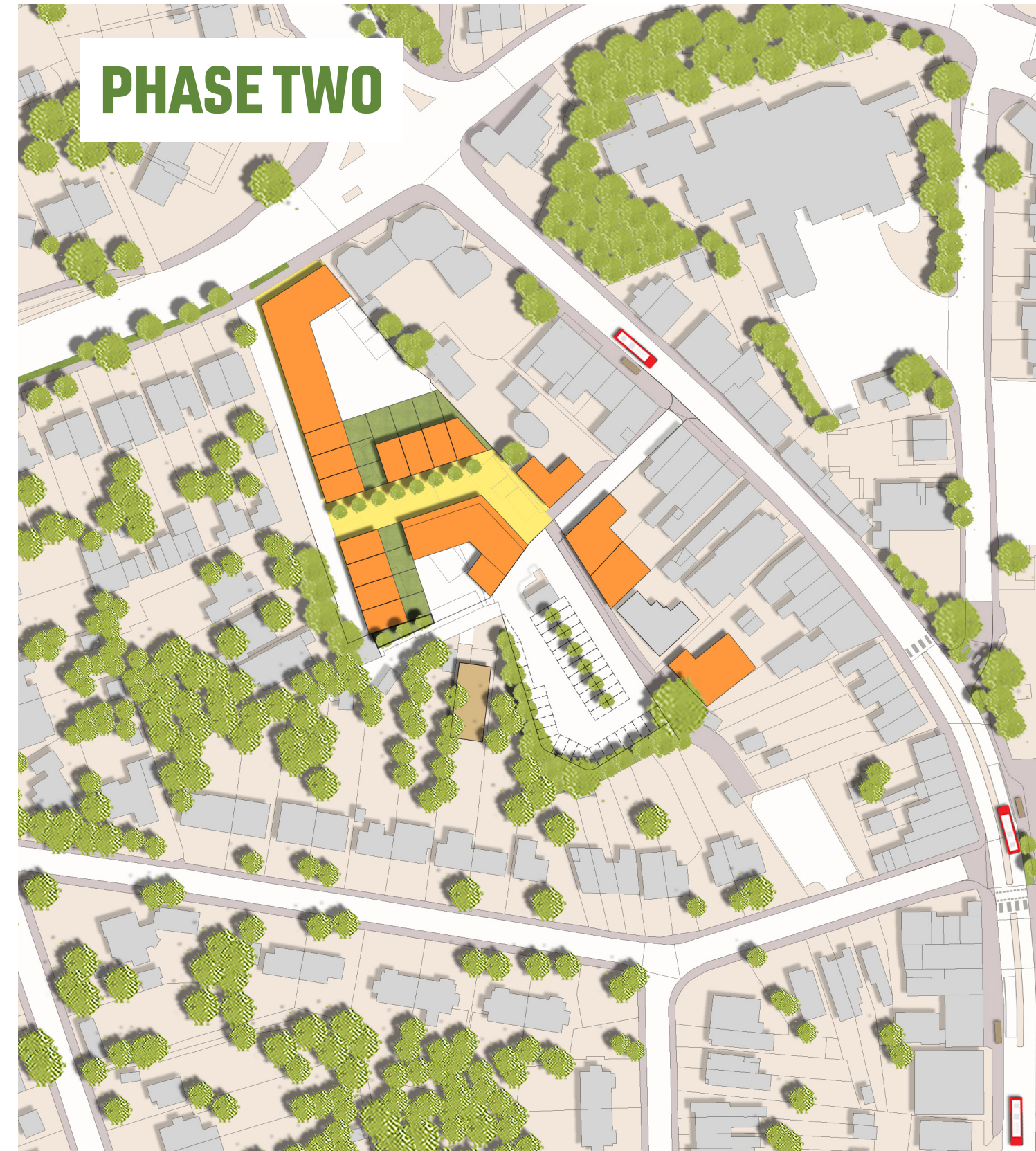


- Enhance arrival experience: Improve arrival from the south with public realm improvements, including footway resurfacing, shopfront upgrades, seating, tree planting, and a central median strip. Create direct connections to Bat and Ball Station and improve its setting. Replace Bat and Ball junction with a roundabout, delivered as part of the Sevenoaks Quarry development
- Right of way improvements: Tighten junctions and widen footways for more pedestrian space and café spill-out areas, including converting the bus layby to a wider footway
- Pedestrian-friendly measures: Introduce continuous crossings at road junctions to provide pedestrian priority. This means continuing the paving across minor roads that meet St. John's Hill including Hospital Road, St. James' Road and Wickenden Road. Improve pedestrian and cycle crossings along the LCWIP route, focusing on the crossing points where people want to cross the road
- Green the area: Add street trees, planting, and seating while reducing clutter from signage and ensuring bus shelters don't obstruct pedestrian flow

ST. JOHN'S QUARTER - THE POTENTIAL FOR PHASED CHANGE



- Redevelop the rear of St. John's Hill plots, adding workspace at ground level and new homes above, with positive frontage onto the car park
- Enhance the car park with additional trees to improve aesthetics, provide shade, and support biodiversity and air quality
- Explore dual-use potential for the car park, allowing it to host community or cultural events when not in use



- Redevelop the builder's merchant and business units into a mixed-use, residential-led development with active ground-floor spaces
- Create a north-south route through the site to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity, enhancing integration with the surrounding area



HOLLY BUSH NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE



- Simplify the junction: Close the southern end of Bradbourne Road to give priority to pedestrians, particularly benefiting school children accessing nearby schools
- Create a new public space: Establish 'Holly Bush Square' by combining reclaimed road space with Rheinbach Gardens, providing a venue for events
- Public realm improvements: Enhance the entrance to the centre with footway resurfacing, shopfront upgrades, and a new median strip on St. John's Hill to change character
- Improve Holly Bush Lane: Resurface in front of shops and allow outdoor seating for businesses, while keeping the road one-way for traffic with a contraflow for cyclists. Two parking spaces will be relocated
- Pedestrian-friendly measures: Introduce continuous crossings at key junctions and enhance pedestrian/cycle crossing facilities
- Green the area: Add street trees, seating, and reducing signage clutter to create a more inviting environment, while ensuring bus shelters don't obstruct pedestrian movement



- Develop new terraced homes on under-used land behind St. John's Hill plots, fronting onto a north-south pedestrian connection
- Provide car parking at the rear, accessed via an internal lane from St. James Road



- Develop mews-style homes on the southern St. James car park, extending Phase Three
- Homes will front the north-south pedestrian route, with car parking at the rear

The team conducted a Parking Survey to analyse vehicle usage in the St. John's Hill area. The findings played a key role in shaping proposals for both the St. John's Neighbourhood Centre and the Holly Bush Neighbourhood Centre, more information is available on Board 3!

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