

CAMBERLEY TOWN CENTRE

MASTERPLAN AND PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

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1 Introduction

Camberley town centre is changing rapidly. Major development in the town centre has taken place in the last few years to deliver the Atrium, and there are significant plans for new investment in the immediate future. It is essential that future changes have a wholly positive impact on the town centre and exceed the expectations of the residents and visitors it serves. To manage and steer this scale of change Surrey Heath Borough Council has developed a masterplan that will form the framework for the town centre. This document sets out the masterplan and the movement, public realm and development strategies which underpin it.

The Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan adopted in July 2014 provides the basis for future change and development in the town centre. The Area Action Plan sets out the broad land use policies which will steer development and identifies the Opportunity Areas which will form the focus for change.

This SPD provides the next layer of information and guidance to support the delivery of the vision encapsulated in the Area Action Plan. It will be used to help determine planning applications in the town centre, as well as to steer street and public space investment.

Local stakeholders have informed and supported the content of this SPD through

informal consultation in 2014 and formal consultation on a draft version of the SPD in early 2015.

This Supplementary Planning Document will:

- add detail to the guidance established in the Area Action Plan;
- establish key parameters for each development site;
- set out development briefs for each site;
- establish a clear concept design for the town centre's public realm;
- establish parameters for public realm improvements and indicate a preferred palette of materials to be used; and
- outline the improvements for which developer contributions will be sought.

The document is structured as follows:

- Context - covering background policy and urban design analysis.
- Town centre framework- outlining strategic town centre wide objectives and development, public realm and movement concepts.
- Opportunity area guidance - setting parameters for change in the four opportunity areas.

2 Context

2.1 CAMBERLEY TODAY

Camberley is located in the heart of the Blackwater Valley at the north western tip of Surrey. The town's green and picturesque location is a reminder of the days when the landscape of the area was defined by natural heathland and the surrounding woodland is still a dominant characteristic.

Camberley is a dynamic and progressive town set in the heart of one of the most affluent parts of the UK. The town is well connected, only ten minutes drive from the M3 and within easy commuting distance to London.

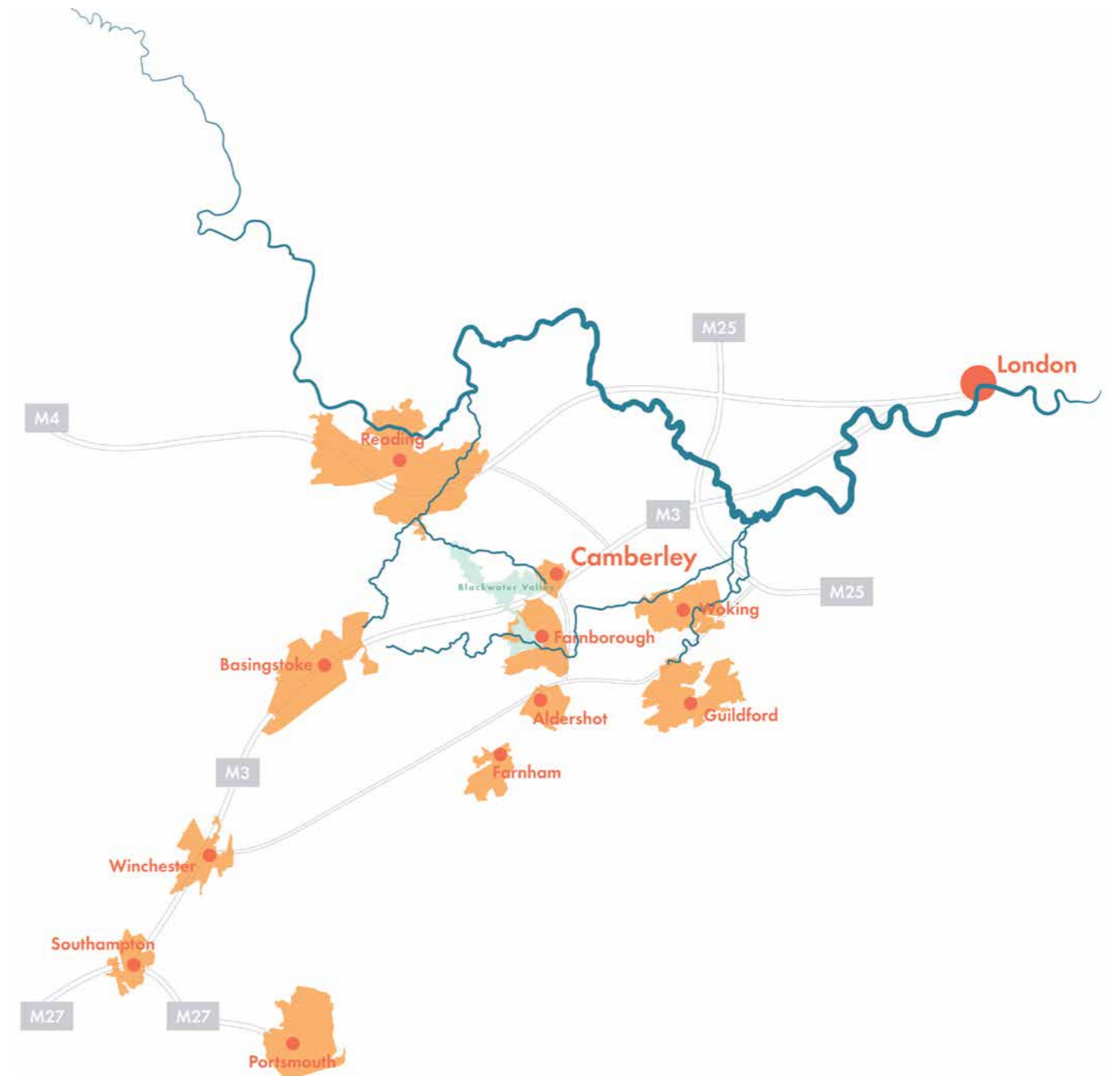
Camberley has a thriving and active community. The town is one of the safest in the UK and considered a very welcoming and family-friendly location to live.

Camberley is home to 25,000 people. The town centre is identified as a Secondary Regional Centre serving mainly local needs. It is currently ranked 26th out of the top 50 centres in the South East, and is one of very few Secondary Regional Centres included in this set.

The town centre is home to approximately 500 residents, but has around 5,660 people working in the centre during the day, making a significant contribution to the town centre economy.

In addition to significant retail floorspace, the town centre also boasts a broad range of leisure and cultural facilities, including Camberley Theatre, The Atrium cinema and bowling and Surrey Heath Museum. The Arena Leisure Centre is located just beyond the town centre boundary on London Road.

To the east of the town centre is Camberley Park and beyond this The Obelisk - a Grade II listed structure built in the mid 18th century which forms an important local landmark.



Camberley's location in the Blackwater Valley

2.2 HISTORY

Origins

Camberley Town Centre began life as Cambridge Town, a centre planned to serve the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. Its regular grid structure clearly demonstrates the influence of military planning and the consistent character of the historic buildings along the London Road and High Street are testament to the rapid pace of development which saw the town centre take shape over a relatively short period of time.

A rail link to London was established in 1878, and by 1915 the town centre had been largely filled out along the grid structure which still forms the principal network of streets today.

London Road, facing the Royal Military Academy was originally the principal street. However, High Street grew in importance as the connection between the RMA and the railway station.

A number of attractive buildings remain, particularly along the High Street, which give a strong flavour of the late Victorian and early Edwardian period in which the town originally grew.

Post war change

After the Second World War, Camberley Town Centre underwent extensive redevelopment, to allow for a significant increase in shopping and commercial uses. A new outdoor shopping precinct, between Park Street and High Street, was established in the 1960s. This reflected the grid form of the town and in the case of Obelisk Way and Princess Way incorporated and redeveloped existing streets. Most of the buildings were two storey, many of them with dwellings on the upper level.

In the late 1980s this development was again remodelled, with the central streets including Princess Way and Obelisk Way glazed over to create enclosed arcades. This had the effect of providing a more sheltered environment for shoppers, but at the expense of usable streets at times when the shopping centre was closed.

The resilient grid of the town centre provides the ideal template for a successful shopping environment and provides a strong basis on which to enhance Camberley town centre and deliver the bold vision for change.



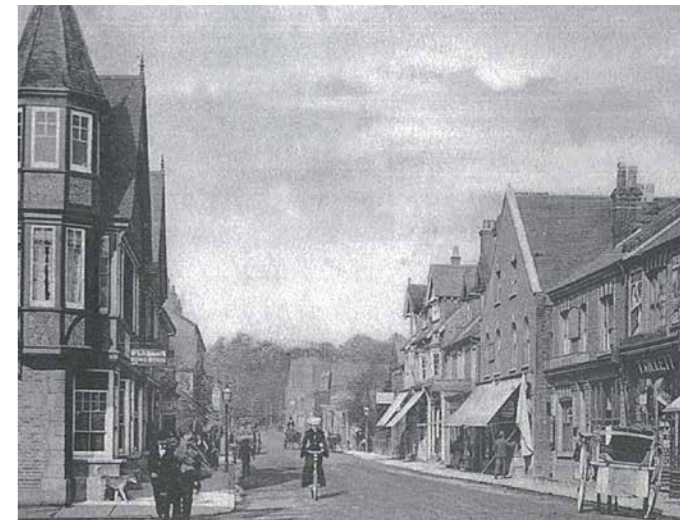
Camberley, 1871



Camberley, 1897



Camberley, 1935



High Street, 1905



London Road Post Office, 1914



Camberley town centre 1979

2.3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The role of this Supplementary Planning Document is to support existing planning policy for Camberley. This has been developed over recent years and forms a robust and consistent basis for attracting investment and managing change.

The principal documents are:

- Surrey Heath Borough Core Strategy (2012); and
- Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan (2014).

Surrey Heath Borough Core Strategy

Policy CP10 Camberley Town Centre in the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2011-2028 states that: "The role of Camberley as a Secondary Regional Town Centre will be consolidated and enhanced through measures to improve shopping, business, leisure, cultural and community activities."

In addition, "regeneration of the town centre to sustain vitality and viability and in particular address the high level of office vacancies within the town and the poor environmental quality along the London Road frontage" will be promoted. The Core Strategy anticipates that up to 200 new homes could be delivered alongside 41,000 square metres of gross retail floorspace in the period up to 2028.

The policy also states that new development should contribute toward some or all of the following as appropriate:

- Serve the retail needs of the resident population and the working population within the catchment area for comparison and convenience goods.
- Support the role of the town centre as a centre for employment.
- Enhance the role of the town centre as a centre for leisure and cultural activity within the Borough.
- Contribute to the enhancement of public transport services for the town centre and improvements to the local highway network including pedestrian and cycling facilities.
- Create a high quality well designed environment.
- Meeting the housing needs of the Borough.
- Aspire, in residential schemes, to achieve CO2 reduction and water efficiency in line with Code 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes
- Seek to achieve zero carbon and efficient use and recycling of other resources in new commercial or retail development
- Avoid having an impact upon the European Sites.
- Protecting and enhancing Public Open Space.

Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan

The principal objectives for the town centre are highlighted in the Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) adopted in July 2014. The vision and objectives follow on from those set out within the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2011 - 2028. The town centre boundary as defined in Policy CP10 of the Core Strategy forms the basis of future work on Camberley town centre. However, for completeness the Council's justification for this approach is set out in the AAP.

The Council's approach to the future spatial strategy for the town centre is based around accommodating retail redevelopment, regenerating the London Road A30 frontage and encouraging the re-use of vacant office floorspace. The land uses that will drive regeneration are retail and housing.

The Opportunity Areas and Sites identified in the AAP are as follows: London Road Block, Pembroke Broadway North, Camberley Station, Land at Park Lane, Land east of Knoll Road, Former Magistrates Court and The Granary.

The Area Action Plan goes as far as giving guidance on the mix of uses, scale and form of development of the town centre. This

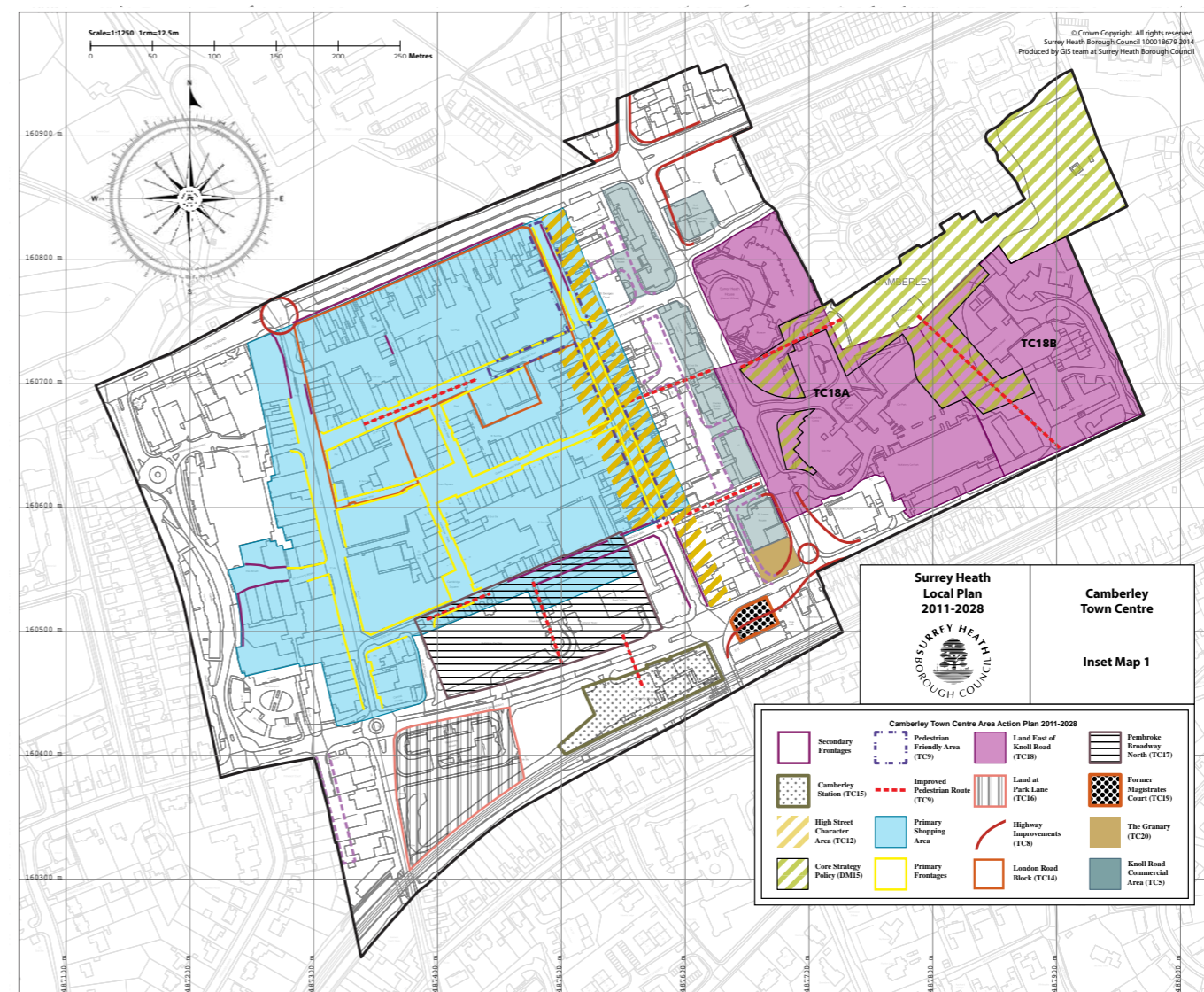
Supplementary Planning Document is a continuation of the AAP in terms of detailed design objectives for the public realm and opportunity areas and sites identified above. The SPD is a supporting document to the policies in the AAP.

Camberley Town Centre Statement 2014-2030

Although not a planning policy document, the Town Centre Statement 2014-2030 sets out the Council's corporate approach to Camberley Town Centre:

"Camberley town centre will be a thriving centre offering a wide range of shops, excellent leisure facilities, high quality office premises and residential opportunities, and a full range of community services for the local and wider community."

There will be a high quality of design with an attractive streetscene, and a range of natural and civic open spaces for use by the public. There will be easy access to the centre with a good public transport system, and an emphasis on pedestrian priority. (Pg.2)



Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan Proposals Plan, July 2014

Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

London Road

Camberley Park

Knoll Road

Park Street

Pembroke Broadway

London Road Recreation Ground



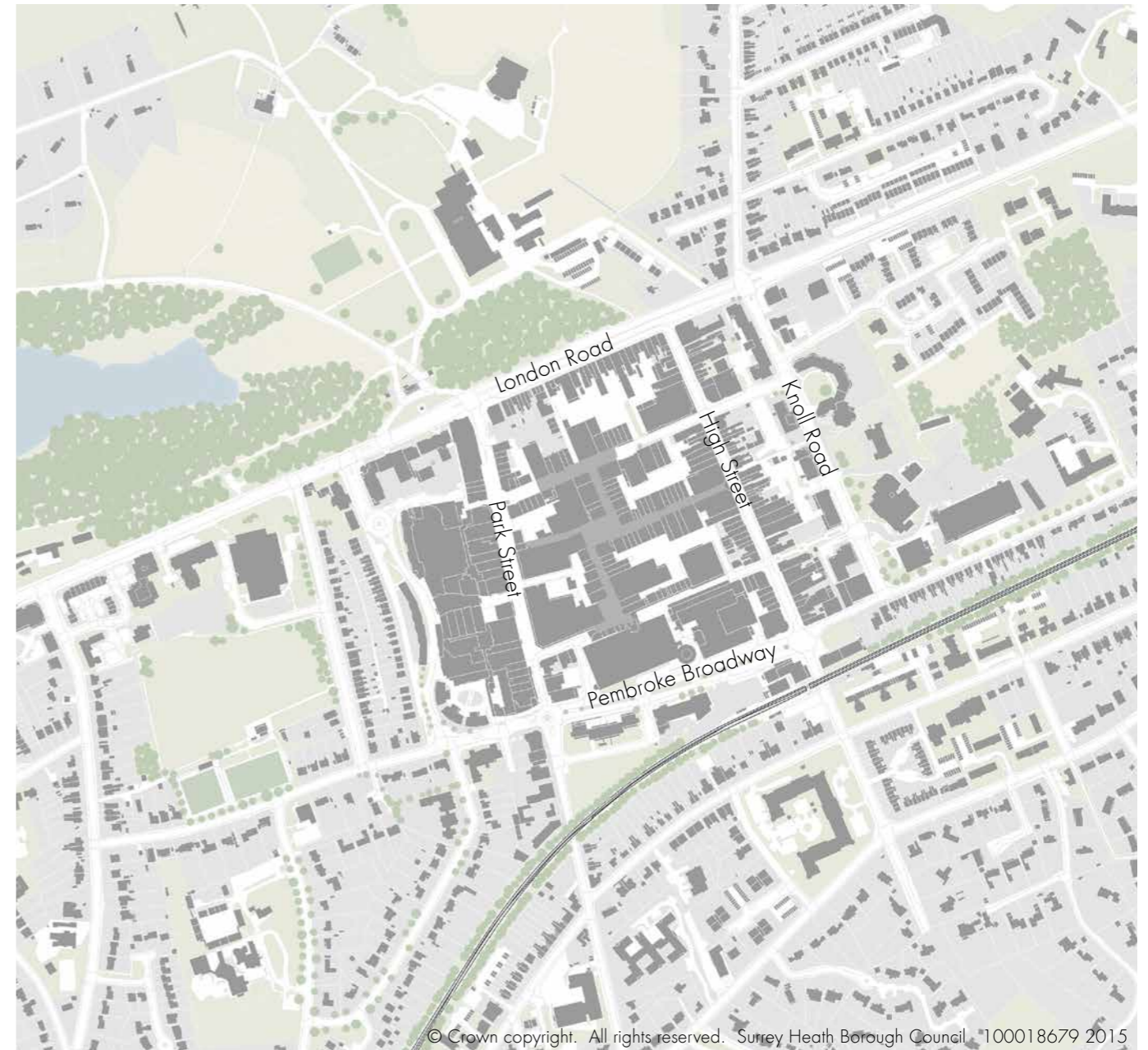
2.4 UNDERSTANDING CAMBERLEY - EXISTING ASSETS AND ISSUES

This section describes the physical qualities of Camberley town centre - how it currently is. This analysis highlights the facets which make up its character and identifies the problems it experiences. In setting out the issues that need resolving, this section provides the mandate for the guidance detailed in this SPD.

Stakeholders and local residents have fed into the analysis. A street market consultation event asked local people to identify what they liked and did not like about the town centre, as well as what they thought should be priorities for change.



Street market consultation event, July 2014



Camberley town centre today

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CHARACTER

Camberley is a place with its own identity and character.



The attractive landscape edge of the Royal Military Academy



There is a generally consistent scale of buildings throughout the centre



The historic Obelisk looks over the town



Attractive and coherent Victorian/Edwardian core, but poor shop fronts

Landscape setting

Camberley is set on a gentle slope down to the Blackwater Valley, and is located within the Thames Basin Heaths landscape character area, which is a low lying, gently undulating landscape. The surrounding context is heavily wooded with coniferous forestry and broad-leaved plantations (Surrey County Council Landscape Character Assessment).

The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is one of the South East's most important natural assets, with the lowland heath supporting important populations of Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark - all vulnerable ground-nesting birds (SHBC). The SPA includes Old Dean Common and West End Common to the north and east of Camberley respectively.

The Royal Military Academy estate lies along the northern edge of the town centre, providing a very green edge to London Road, but with few views into the estate beyond the dense trees along this route and thus its presence is very understated.

The town centre itself has a gentle east to west slope. The town centre is notable within the wider landscape for its lack of trees – only a handful exist on Park Street, and many are very small varieties having minimal impact and affording little shade or shelter.

Townscape character

Camberley town centre has a strong street grid pattern. This is a legacy of its well planned rapid development and remains one of the area's strongest qualities. It establishes a walkable scale and a network of streets which has the potential to be very legible and attractive.

Much of the Victorian/Edwardian built fabric remains along the High Street and in pockets around the town centre including along London Road. These sections have a fine grain and coherent architectural character to them.

Extensive redevelopment through the post war period of the area between High Street and Park Street created an outdoor shopping precinct which followed the alignment of the original streets. This was subsequently refurbished into the indoor shopping mall present today. The enclosed nature of this fragments the centre, making it harder to navigate during the day time and dividing the town into isolated parts when the centre is closed.

Red brick is used extensively throughout the centre both in historic and modern buildings, as well as for pavement surfacing.

LEGIBILITY

Camberley has a clear street structure which makes it easy to understand.

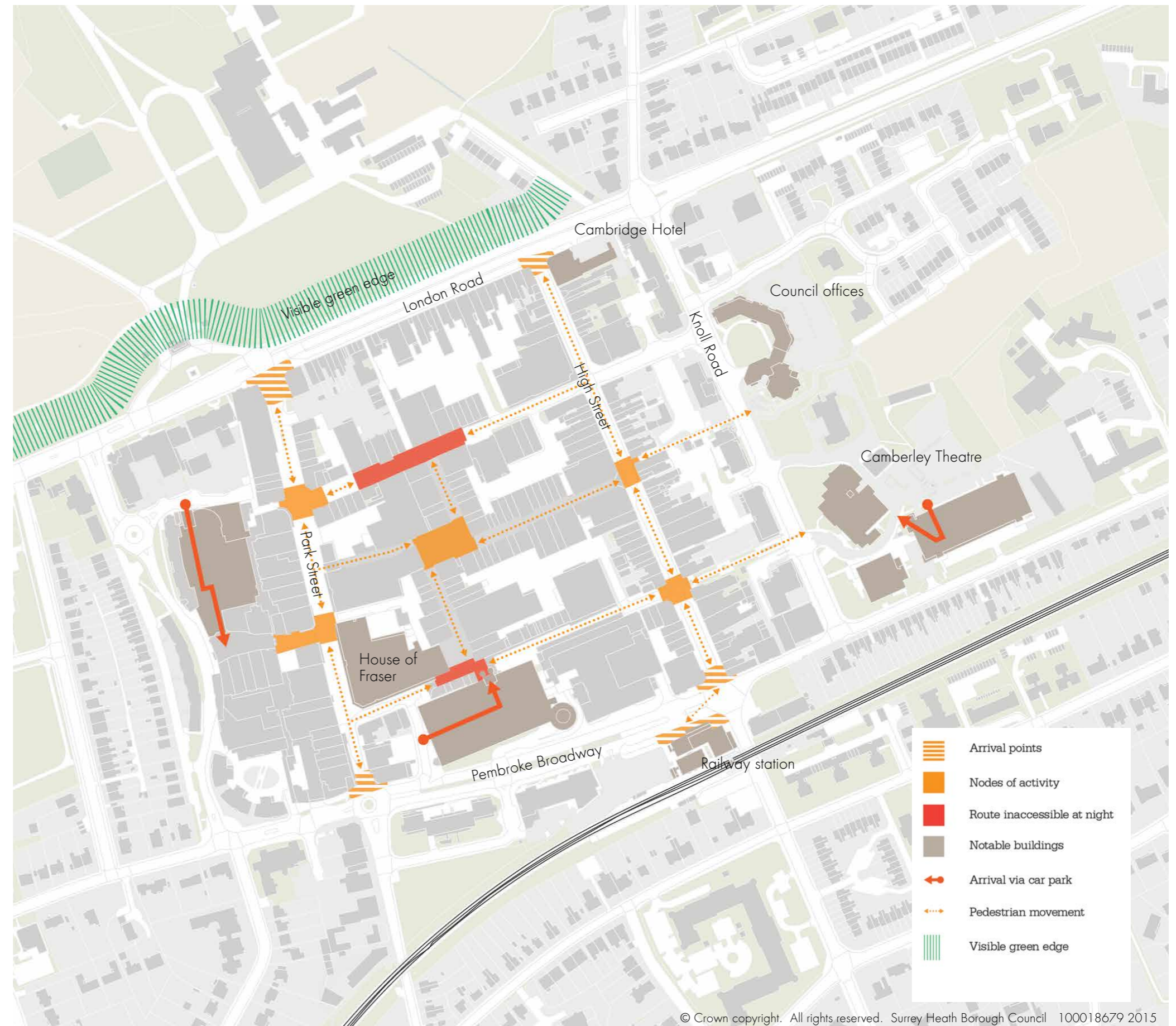
Camberley has a strong urban form. However, there are a number of factors which affect the appeal of the town centre and the ease with which people can find their way around.

A primary concern is that of the London Road frontage which is the area of the town visible to people passing along the A30. Currently this presents an unfairly negative perception of the town centre and the qualities it has to offer.

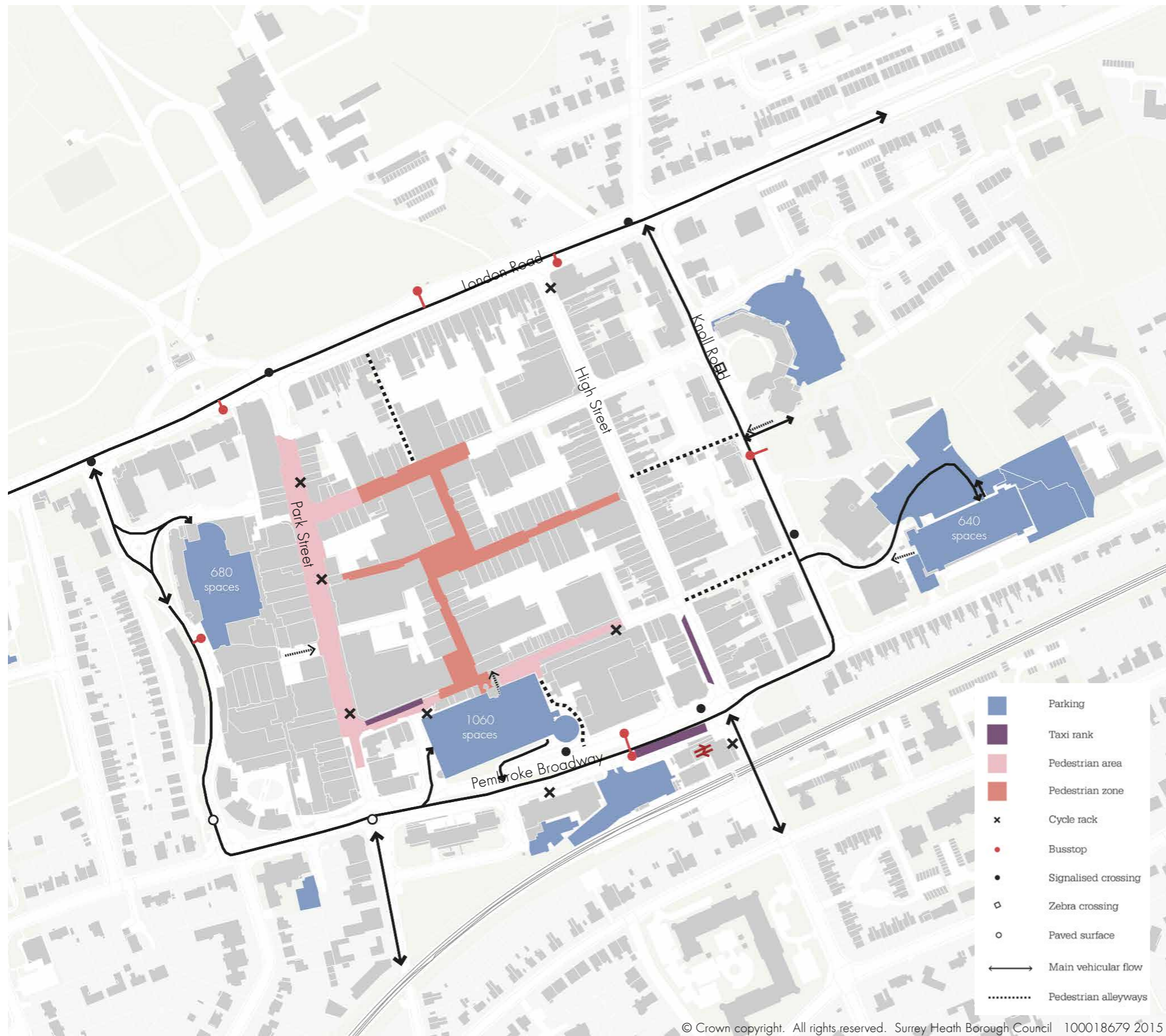
From the south, the bridge on Park Street and the level crossing on Heathcote Road leading into the High Street are primary gateways. However, the relatively weak character of development around Pembroke Broadway visually fractures the link between the qualities of the town centre and the attractive suburbs south of the railway.

A key issue for legibility in the town centre is the impact of the enclosed shopping areas on Princess Way and Obelisk Way. These make the town harder to navigate and completely sever direct links at night.

The various characters around the periphery of the town centre contribute positively to perceptions of Camberley. The cluster of civic buildings on Knoll Road is set in a very green landscape, whilst the Royal Military Academy to the north of the London Road could offer views of mature parkland and historic buildings.



Legibility analysis



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Patterns of movement and access in the existing town centre

EASE OF MOVEMENT

Camberley is a place that is easy to get to and move through.

Camberley's grid street pattern provides a strong basis for good connections across the town centre. During daytime hours the central and western parts of the town centre are largely pedestrianised. But within High Street, pedestrians are limited to relatively narrow pavement space.

Pedestrian and cycle access from the residential hinterland is relatively easy, but could be improved with more and/or better located crossings points over roads such as Knoll Road.

Three main car parks (The Atrium, Main Square and Knoll Road) provide good access into the town centre from the west, south and east. The quality of some of these car parks is being improved and opportunities exist to improved the links between Knoll Road car park and the primary shopping area.

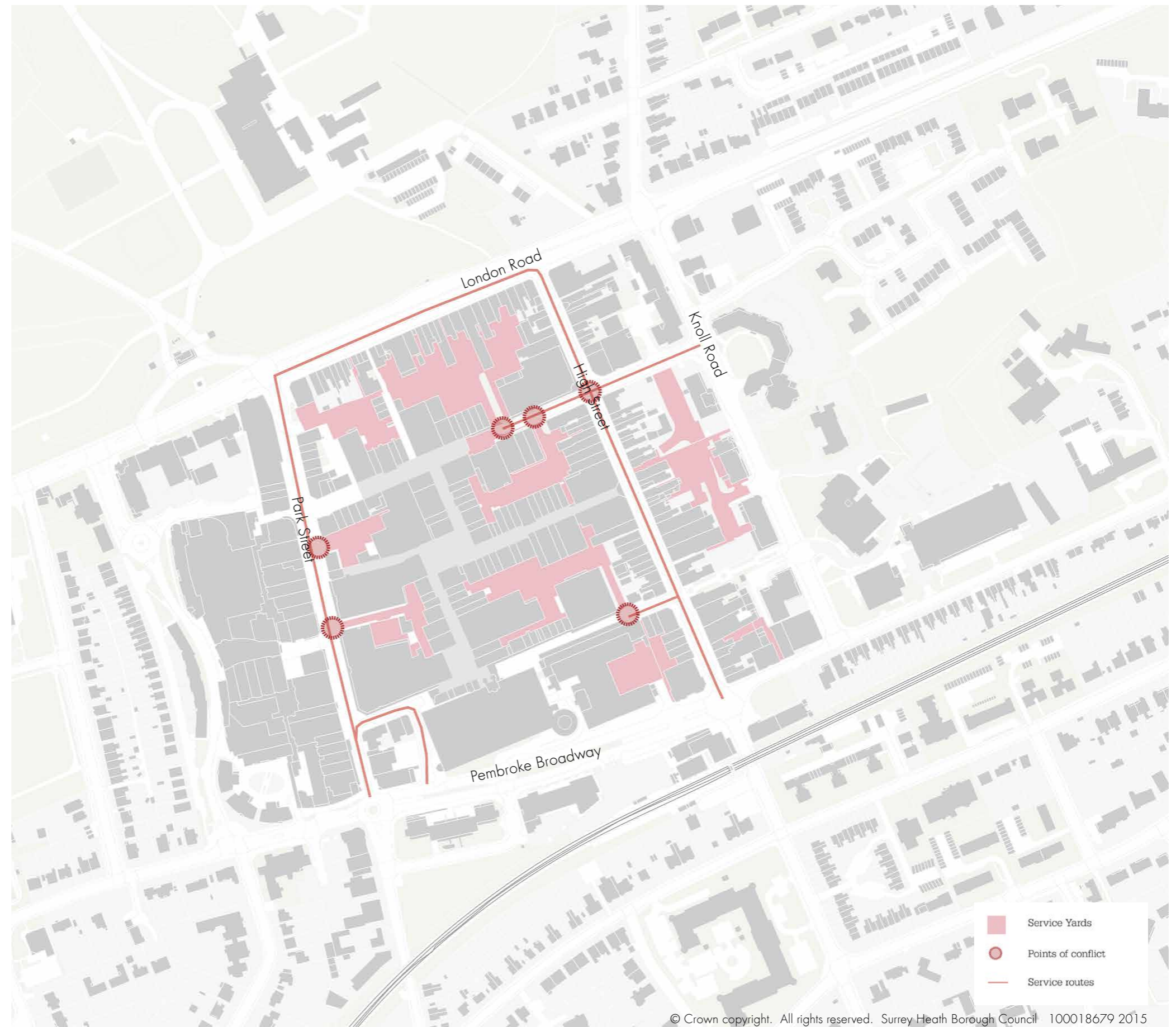
Bus routes serve the main vehicular roads around the town centre (Pembroke Broadway, Knoll Road, London Road and Lower Charles Street).

Whilst the location of the train station is adjacent to the town centre, the station entrance and environment itself need much improvement if the town centre is to benefit from this proximity. An opportunity exists to deliver much enhanced transport interchange linked to the rail station.

The redevelopment of large parts of the town centre in the post war period allowed for the provision of generous service areas within the core shopping area. Whilst these provide a good functional facility, they all have an impact on the public spaces due to their scale and their relatively open character. Furthermore, there are two service areas which are accessed from Park Street, bringing service vehicles through what is otherwise a pedestrian street. Deliveries to these areas are therefore restricted to between midnight and 10am; and then again between 4pm and 6:30pm.

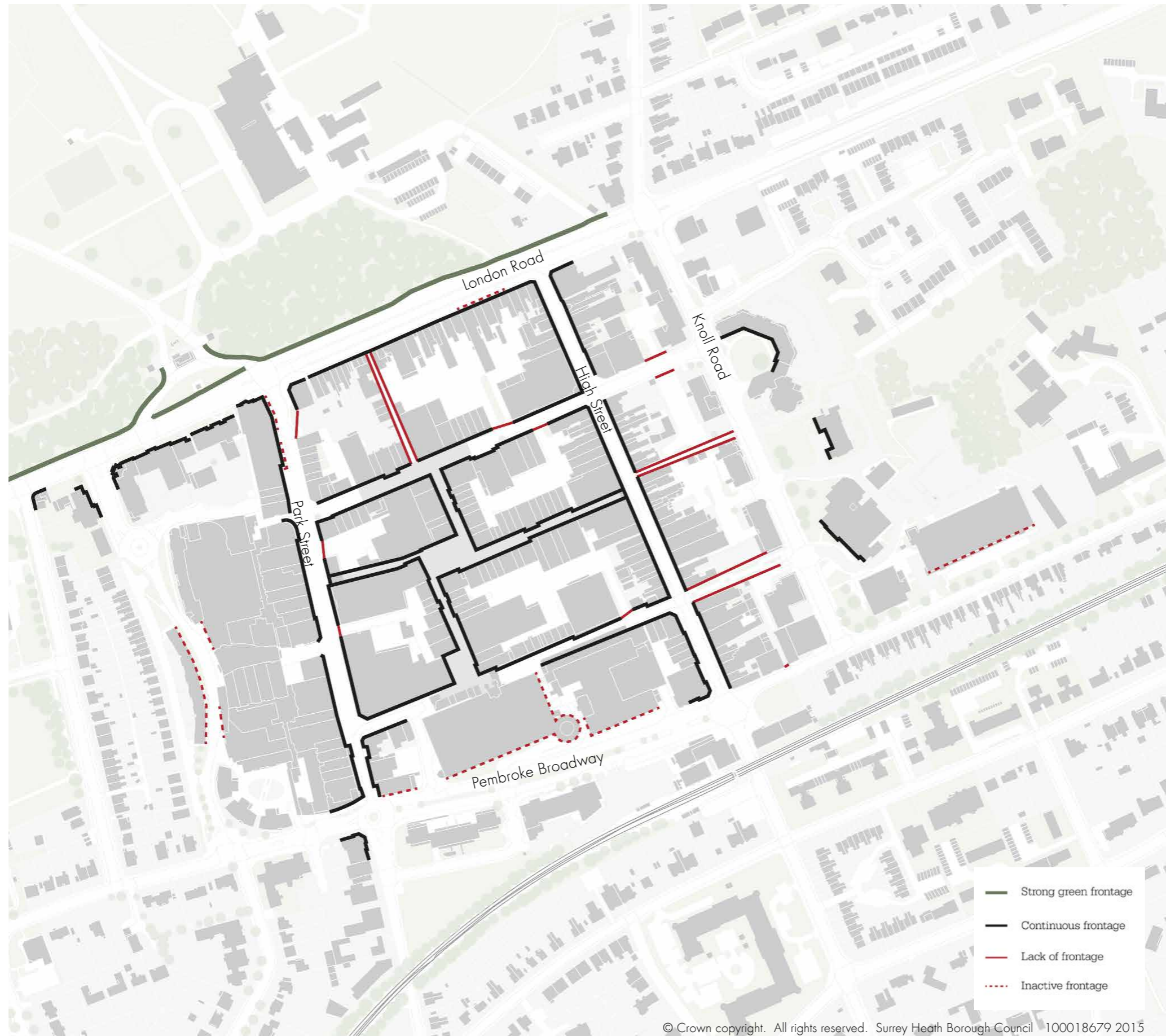
The High Street provides access to three service areas on the western side of the street, drawing heavy vehicles through the core of the town centre. A number of units are serviced out of shopping hours, particularly Sainsbury's. As the southern end of the High Street is closed on selected evenings to help manage the evening economy this means that lorries are required to access the service area by driving the wrong way down the street under supervision of the police.

The blocks between the High Street and Knoll Road presently have a somewhat fragmented service arrangement, with a series of discreet areas each having its own access and turning facility. This results in large areas of spaces which are underused for most of the time and there is potential for rationalisation and consolidation of the service areas in order to facilitate more attractive redevelopment of the area over time.



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Service access in Camberley town centre



Continuity and enclosure analysis

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

Camberley is a place where public and private spaces are generally clearly distinguished

The central core of the town centre is characterised by well defined streets with good active frontage provided by shops and businesses. Within this central core, only the service yard entrances and some blank facades of larger buildings disrupt this pattern.

A number of alleyways exist which have little frontage and thus have been highlighted by users as feeling unsafe - Sparvell Way, Knoll Walk, Bissingen Way.

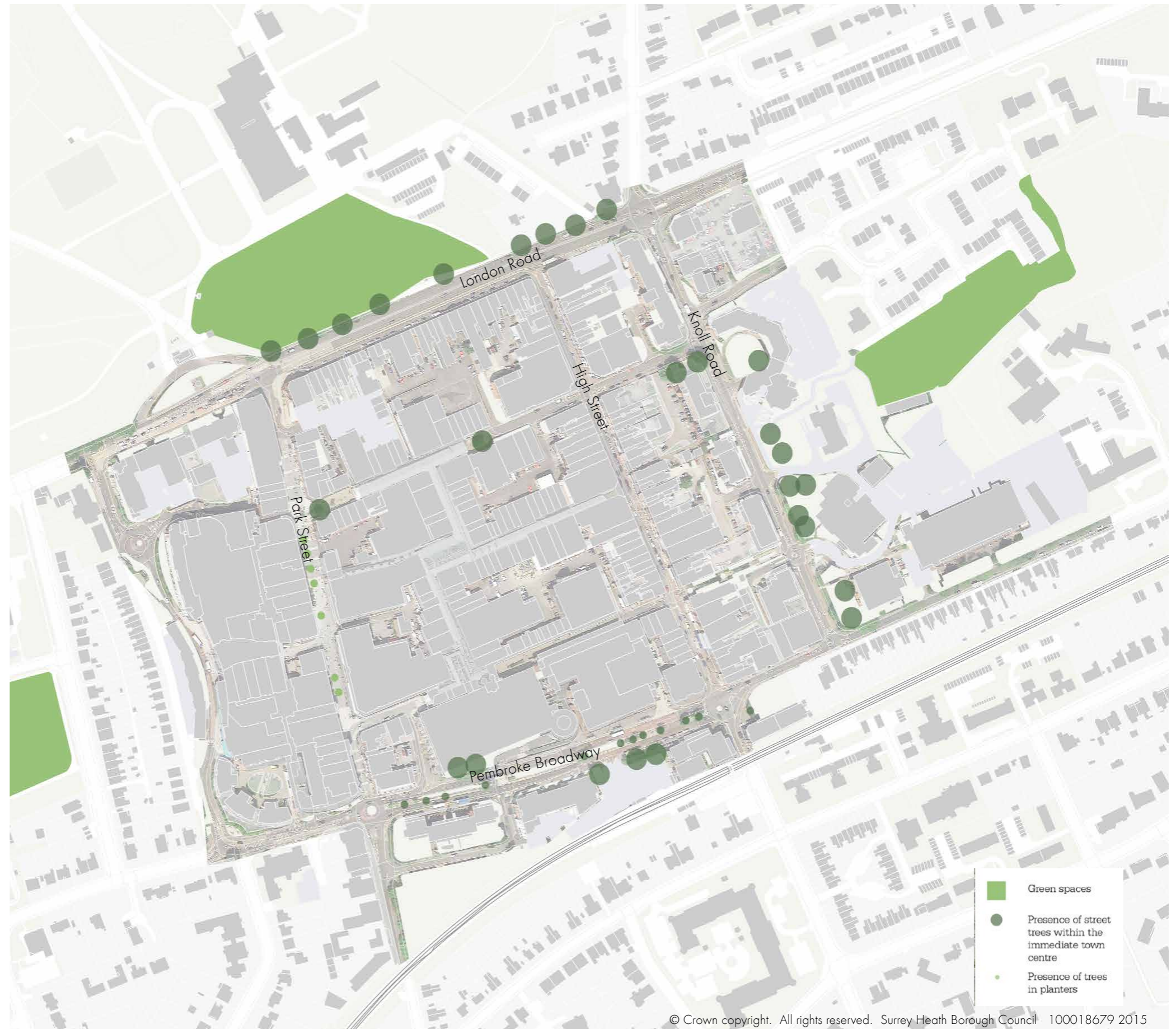
There is significant potential to tackle the quality of these routes through the project to redevelop the London Road block and through the potential for gradual rationalisation of the land between Knoll Road and the High Street. These routes are particularly important as they link the core town centre with the civic quarter to the east.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Camberley is a place with well-used outdoor areas which could be enhanced

There is a range of types of streets and public spaces in the town centre, from historic shopping street (High Street) to covered pedestrian routes (The Mall). Some areas have seen recent investment and improvement (Park Street) while other have been neglected and are looking tired (London Road).

The current condition of the town centre's streets contribute to a public realm which appears inconsistent and at times of a low quality.



Public realm analysis



Limited planting in the town centre



Strong green presence immediately to the north



Poor quality surface materials



Poor quality pedestrian connections to the station



Camberley Park is the main public space in the centre



Attractive views to and from the Obelisk



High Street is dominated by space for vehicles



Excessive use of barriers to movement

The public realm issues which need to be addressed across the town centre are:

- Varying carriageway and pavement widths
- Inconsistent use of materials and poor quality finishes
- Lack of connections between Park Street and High Street
- Lack of direct crossing opportunities for pedestrians
- Busy and unclear junctions
- Undefined character areas
- Inconsistent approach to street furniture palette across the town centre
- Cluttered public realm



Various types of street bin



Temporary signage adds to cluttered nature of the streets



Multiple vertical elements positioned in groups



Entrance to Park Street dominated by bollards



High Street pavements cluttered with various types of street furniture



Park Street furniture positioned towards sides of the street where clear routes for retail are desirable



Large footprints in the core of the town centre can be inflexible to changing demands and uses



The smaller plots found on the High Street can adapt quickly to new opportunities and uses



The greener parts of the town centre will have more comfortable micro climates in the future



Areas with limited street greenery or shelter risk becoming less attractive places as extreme weather events increase as a result of climate change

ADAPTABILITY AND DIVERSITY

Camberley is a place with variety and choice, where the more historic areas have proved adaptable to change

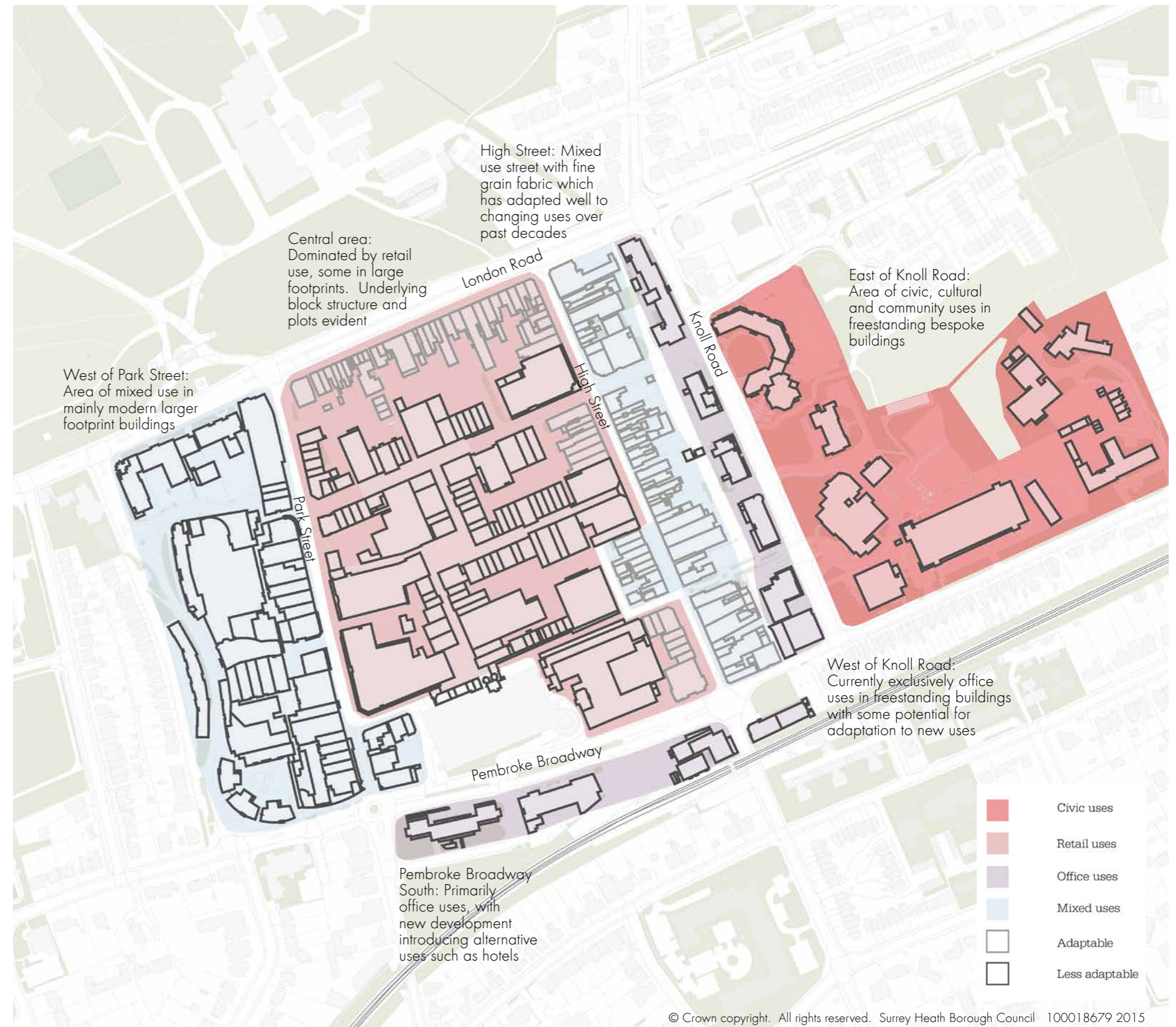
Land use distribution within Camberley town centre is relatively tightly defined into a series of distinct zones. The central blocks of the town centre between Park Street and High Street are almost exclusively retail. Blocks to the west of Park Street represent the only sizeable areas of mixed use, including leisure uses such as the cinema and also integrating town centre residential provision.

Office uses are focused along the western side of Knoll Road, with cultural and civic uses grouped on the eastern side. The presence of office uses within the town centre is important in supporting the daytime retail economy. Pembroke Broadway comprises a series of large buildings along it ranging from large scale office to residential.

Fine grain small retail units along High Street have highly adaptable upper levels, and have shown their ability to change to accommodate different uses over their history.

Overall, the most important buildings in the town centre include the historic fabric along High Street, whilst the blocks underpinning the central core area are of a flexible format to support change and intensification in the future.

A further consideration in terms of adaptability and resilience is the long term prospect for climate change. Measures such as street tree planting to provide shade to streets and buildings will play a part in maintaining an attractive and habitable environment. The ease with which existing buildings can be adapted to support solutions such as natural ventilation will vary significantly across the centre.



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Adaptability and diversity of land uses and buildings