

# Riley Road (M4 Site)

## Marlow

### Development Brief

**Approved April 2009**

This document has been prepared to give a simple clear expression of the kind of place that Riley Road should become. It is intended to be a starting point for thinking and expresses the underlying principles, concepts and expectations that are sought from the regeneration of this important site in the centre of Marlow. This document takes forward the aims of the Adopted Local Plan Policy M4 for the area. It incorporates the comments made during the Public Consultation about the brief carried out in November/ December 2008.

The brief is free to download from the WDC website. Printed copies are also available at the WDC Queen Victoria Office priced £6. If you have difficulty accessing a copy of the brief, please contact Carol Courcha at [Carol\\_courcha@wycombe.gov.uk](mailto:Carol_courcha@wycombe.gov.uk) or 01494 421277.



Spatial Planning Division

April 2009

## I. Introduction

The Riley Road (M4 Site) covers an area of approximately 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres) and is located north west of Marlow town centre between West Street and Riley Park Trust (Riley Recreation Ground). The site accommodates a number of retail premises, businesses, and both public and private car parking areas as well as a small amount of residential use.



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The site sits in a context of town centre uses to the south and predominantly residential uses to the north, and is within the Marlow Conservation Area.

It suffers from a poor environmental quality and has many of the negative characteristics associated with backland sites. The distinctive surrounding historic fabric, need for regeneration and additional retail capacity present an opportunity to both resolve the structural connection issues and create an area that better reflects the high quality of its surroundings.

This brief is being produced to satisfy the Adopted Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011 which requires a comprehensive development brief to explore and test potential solutions.

It advocates an innovative development of primarily food retail and public parking with some ancillary residential uses. The proposal should secure significant environmental improvements to protect and enhance the Conservation Area, facilitate the retention of buildings of heritage value; improve the outlook from Riley Park Trust and provide high quality pedestrian links to the surrounding area.

This document has been produced in conjunction with the following organisations: The Civic Trust; Marlow Town Council; The Marlow Forum; The Marlow Society; Marlow Chamber of Commerce, Marlow Townswomen's Guild; Marlow Ladies Circle and representatives from Great Marlow School and Sir William Borlase's Grammar School.



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## 2. The Brief's Purpose and Structure

This document provides non-statutory development guidance for the site that will be used to evaluate planning applications for redevelopment as and when they are submitted with the aim of coordinating development to achieve wider objectives.

The objective of this document is to provide a clear basis for the future development of the Riley Road area. It is intended to fulfil the requirement for a development brief included in the Adopted Local Plan.

This brief will assist landowners and developers to formulate proposals that achieve wider objectives and to reassure local people and businesses about what is intended and what the benefits and impacts will be. It will be used along with other local and national planning policies to guide the decisions made on planning applications within the Riley Road (M4) Site.

The principles in the brief have been subject to the involvement of key stake holders and the wider community in a public consultation that took place in November / December 2008. Comments made during the consultation can be found in Appendix 2. The brief also forms part of the ongoing work for the Wycombe Development Framework.

Previous public consultation events about this site include workshops in February 2004 and the various events that took place as part of the Imagine the Future Consultations (2004-2007) which informed the preparation of the now adopted Core Strategy. The consultation in Spring 2007 noted broad support for the production of a brief for the Riley Road Site.

This brief for redevelopment sets out:

- A summary of key planning policy **principles**
- **Analysis** of the site and its context, and the redevelopment **issues** and how they can be resolved.
- Redevelopment **objectives** that guide the concept
- The **brief** for redevelopment and its key components
- Potential **Phasing** Options based on landownership.



### 3. Key Planning Policy Principles

The current policy framework is the **Adopted Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011** within which this site is identified specifically under **Policy M4**.

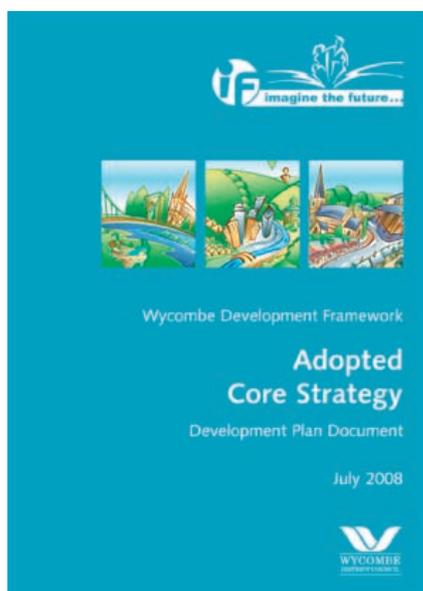
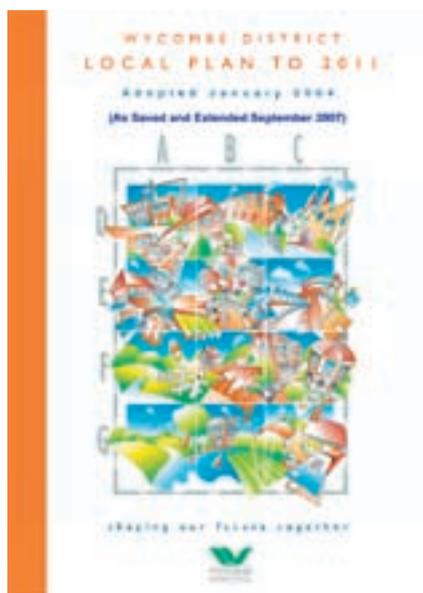
This policy allocates the site for comprehensive mixed use development primarily for food retail use with the potential for some ancillary residential uses.

It requires:

- Maximum use of the area facilitated through land assembly to deal with the complex land ownership issues; potential realignment of Riley Road itself; and the provision of comprehensive servicing and rear access to accommodate existing properties fronting West Street
- The design and appearance of the buildings should reflect their function and respect the open aspect of Riley Park Trust and residential buildings to the north
- Provision of public parking to meet current and future needs
- Retaining and enhancing the pedestrian links to West Street
- Protecting existing rear servicing before the provision of the above comprehensive scheme

In the recently adopted **Core Strategy** Marlow is identified as being in Tier 2 of the Town Centre Hierarchy (Policy CS10) - this means that it is an important service centre serving its rural catchment area. Tier 2 centres should not seek to serve residents in other towns, or rural areas outside their primary catchment areas.

The **Retail and Town Centre Uses Study** carried out in 2004 and updated in 2007 projects that some additional convenience retail floor space is required in Marlow in the next 12 years to accommodate anticipated growth and ensure local trade is not lost to the town.



The site is within the Marlow Conservation Area, for which a Conservation Area Character Survey was produced and adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2004. This document includes a checklist for the consideration of any development to ensure new development safeguards, preserves and enhances the appearance and special character of Marlow Conservation Area.

In particular it mentions the need to respect and conserve traditional and historic shop fronts and the character of the frontage of key streets like West Street; that new buildings should be generally no more than three stories high; and that they should respect the width of existing plots particularly along the frontage.

See Appendix I for extracts from the Local Plan, and adopted Core Strategy.





Looking north east along Riley Road



Town Lane looking towards West Street



Typical service access off Riley Road



M4 Site Boundary



Clear positive edges formed by buildings



Less defined and unclear built edges



Listed Buildings



Key access points



Existing routes to the town centre



No physical links



Screening vegetation

## 4. Analysis of the Site and its Context

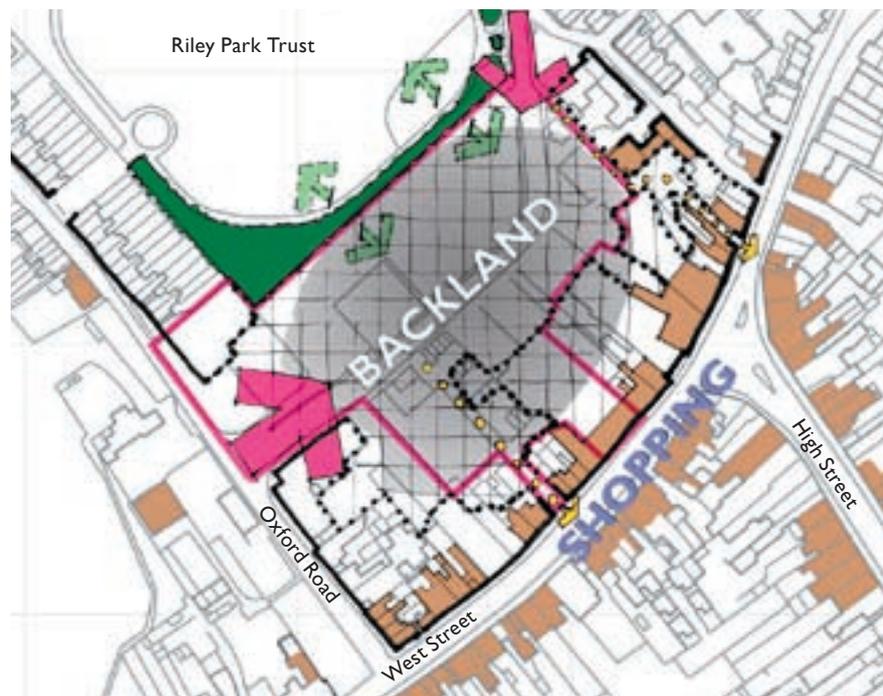
The analysis has been grouped in four subject areas:

1. The site itself
2. The Townscape Setting or Context
3. Connections
4. Landuse

Each subject area identifies the main issues and potential responses to those issues in relation to the Riley Road site.

### The Site: Main Issues

- A backland site with a poor environmental quality and sense of place in contrast to the surrounding area
- Adjacent to the main shopping area in Marlow with some frontage onto West Street
- Poor quality pedestrian connection to West Street/ town centre
- Adjacent Riley Park Trust which is protected as green space but poor relationship and an impermeable boundary
- The current functional needs (parking & servicing) of the site dominate its character



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**The Site: Key Responses**

- Use new development to provide frontage and give the area a positive sense of place. Encourage remaining existing users to make improvements to their frontages
- Support, compliment and link with the existing shopping area
- Provide good pedestrian links to the centre and residential areas to the north
- Create a permeable boundary with Riley Park Trust
- Ensure that the functional requirements of the site are accommodated but do not dominate the character of the space

**Townscape Setting: Main Issues**

- The site is contained visually and currently makes little impact or contribution beyond the immediate area
- Key views of the town and distant hills from the north
- Views of the site from Quoiting Square and glimpses from adjacent roads.
- Larger footprint buildings jar with the finer grain of the majority of the built fabric of the town
- A change in level of some 1-2 metres between the rear of West Street and Riley Road



*View of town centre and Riley Road from Riley Park Trust*



*Views looking east of Riley Road from Colonel's meadow*



*View south towards the site down Oxford Road*



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-  M4 Site boundary
-  Buildings visually enclosing the site
-  Existing significant trees
-  Key current views of M4 Site
-  Key potential views of M4 Site
-  Large footprint buildings
-  Change in level

**Townscape Setting: Main Issues (continued)**

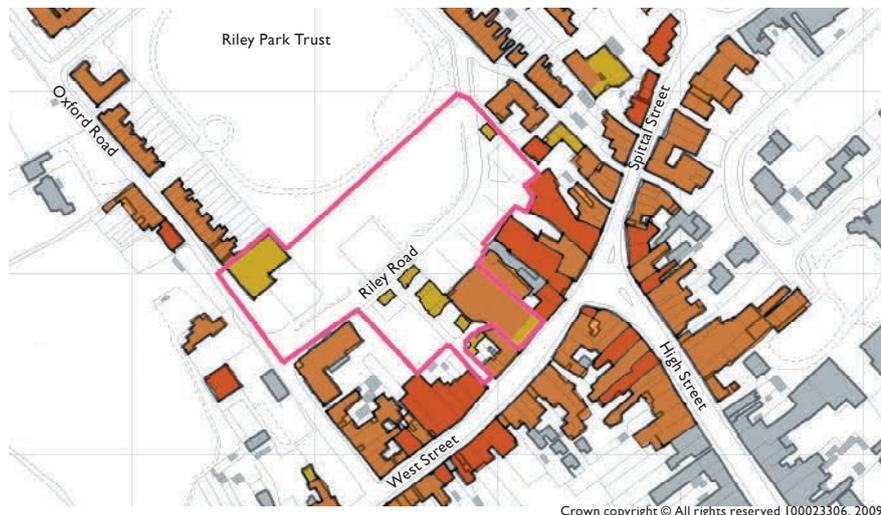
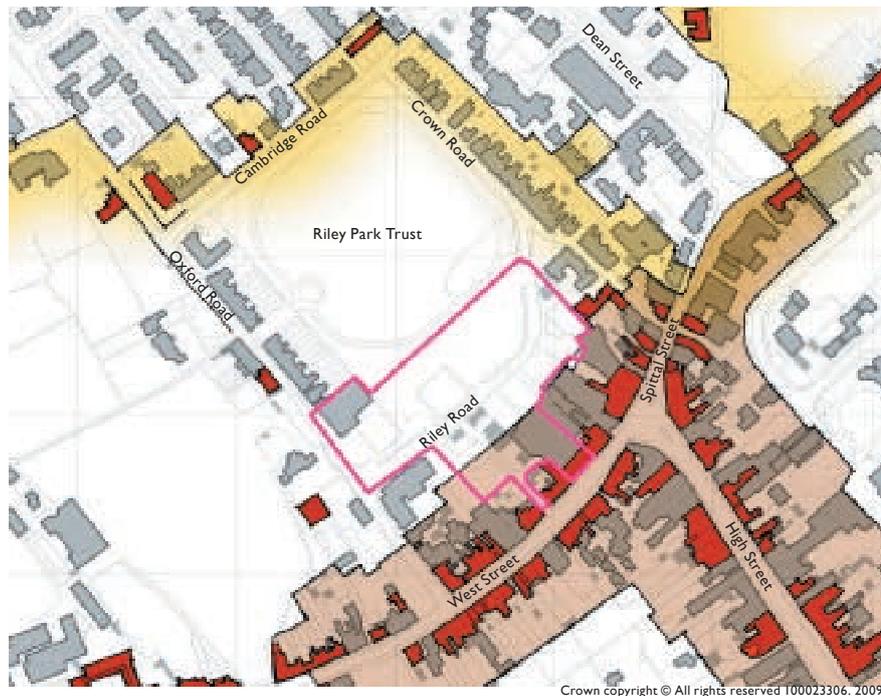
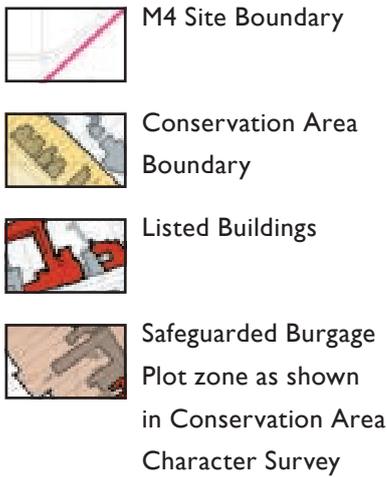


View north east along West Street



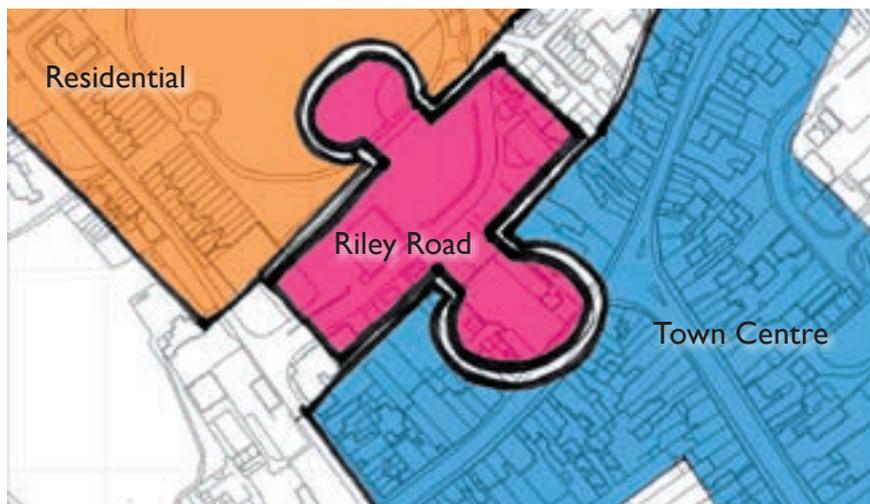
Typical Victorian/ Edwardian housing fronting Riley Park Trust

- A rich historic context - the site is within the Marlow Conservation Area and most of the West Street frontage is listed
- Building heights are predominantly two storey with some three storey fronting West Street/ Market Square
- A range of building styles but predominantly Victorian/ Edwardian to the north; Georgian/ Victorian to the south
- This site is a key link between the town centre and the park/ residential area to the north



**Townscape Setting: Key Responses**

- Realise the opportunity through redevelopment to provide this missing link between the town centre and the residential area to the north
- Ensure new development does not change the visual prominence of the town centre. It should not be higher or seen to be bulkier than the immediate context
- Respect the sensitive listed frontage and retain existing roof and building line along West Street. Preserve the character of the street scene while avoiding pastiche
- Could be some opportunity for high quality design of a new character in the rest of the site to the north of West Street
- Any large footprint buildings should be designed to respect the finer urban grain of the West Street frontage character



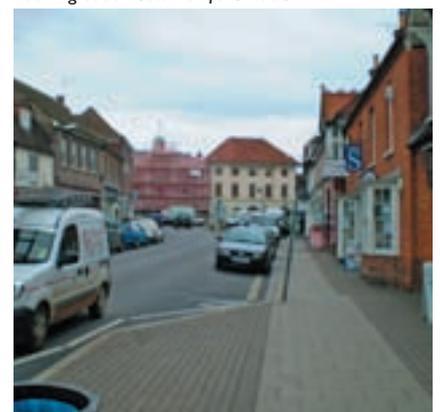
Riley Road Site - the "missing piece in the jigsaw"



Looking south down Oxford Road



Attractive rear elevations of Listed buildings visible from Town Lane



View up High Street towards Market Square



West Street frontage including the existing Waitrose Store which forms part of the Riley Road Site



Terraced housing along Dukes Place



Road Access to Riley Road from Oxford Road



Road Access to Riley Road from Crown Lane



M4 Site Boundary



Primary vehicular routes



Secondary vehicular routes



Areas devoted to car parking



Servicing/ vehicular accesses off Riley Road



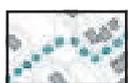
Pedestrian footpaths



Pedestrian desire lines



Internal pedestrian desire lines through shops



Draft Marlow Cycle Network route



Entrances to Crown Lane and Dukes Street respectively from Spittal Street

**Connections: Main Issues**

- Riley Road is primarily an access to car parking & rear service areas
- Poor pedestrian connection north/ south
- Unattractive pedestrian and cycle environment but nevertheless works as a shared space in spite of vehicle dominated character and haphazard / ad-hoc nature of the layout
- Key role of site in providing parking for the town, current food store, and business uses
- A wide access/ entrance off Oxford Road that is uncharacteristic of the rest of the towns highway infrastructure
- Poor existing junction between Oxford Road and West Street



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**Connections: Key Responses**

- Improve north/ south pedestrian and cycle links across the site
- Create an environment that is attractive to people
- As a minimum, maintain current levels of parking and rear servicing access
- In addition accommodate the parking needs of new development
- Parking and servicing should not determine the sole character of the place as at present
- Roads & accesses to be scaled appropriately for this historic town
- Options to improve the Oxford Road/ West Street junction should be explored and implemented as part of the redevelopment

## Land use Setting: Main Issues

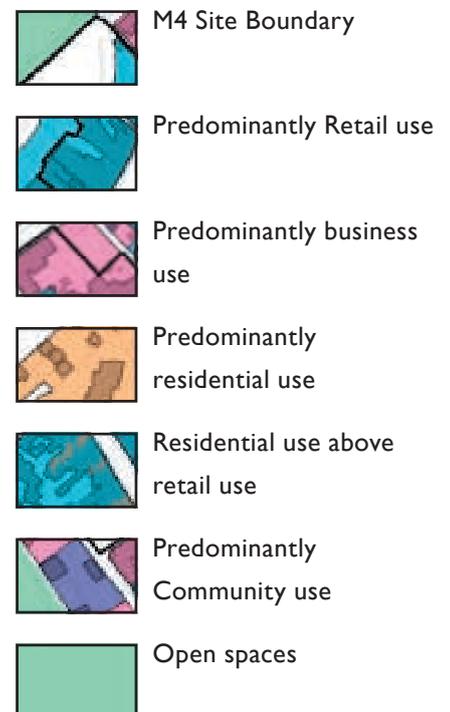
- Predominant uses of retail and business which this area currently serves through parking and rear service access
- Some existing business uses (e.g. the garage site) are currently unattractive visually
- Complex land ownership and leasing arrangements
- Surrounding land uses shift from residential to the north to town centre to the south
- Key M4 policy requirement of this site to accommodate future food retail and parking needs



Garage site at entrance to Riley Road from Oxford Road



View of funeral directors premises from Town lane



## Land use Setting: Key Responses

- Keep retail uses close to the existing town centre to the south and east
- Consider provision of some limited residential use to the north to integrate with existing residential areas and provide an active frontage for Riley Park Trust
- Encourage partnership to ensure layout is not driven by the arbitrary landownership boundaries
- Encourage (but not require) relocation through redevelopment of less attractive elements of existing businesses to less prominent locations within this site or off site elsewhere in the town

## 5. Redevelopment Objectives

The issues and key responses identified in the analysis can be further refined into a number of redevelopment objectives. These form the basis for the brief itself and upon which options will be tested.

### **Create a place that reflects the true environmental quality and historic character of Marlow**

*The site does not currently do Marlow justice, for visitors and residents alike it gives the wrong impression as they park and walk through the area to do their shopping. Any redevelopment must address this issue by making the most of the attractive landscape setting of the park and views towards attractive historic buildings.*

### **Utilise the growing retail needs of the town to regenerate this area**

*The need to provide more shopping should not only result in more shops but facilitate environmental improvements to, for example the car park area, that would otherwise be difficult to fund.*

### **Create a permeable fourth side to Riley Park Trust with a positive relationship with the town centre**

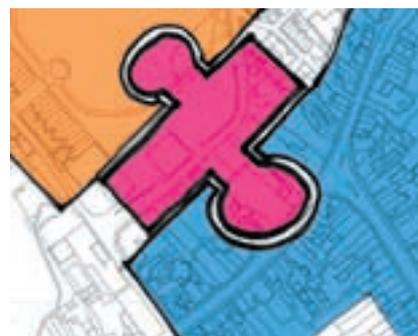
*It is not surprising that the open space currently turns its back on this area as it is an unattractive car park. A raising of the quality of the Riley Road site would enable new visual and pedestrian links to be made to the park without compromising its own quality, similar to recent improvements made at the Oxford Road entrance.*

### **Accommodate the existing important functions of car parking and servicing without letting these dominate the character of the place**

*The site performs vital functions for the town, in terms of parking and servicing the shops and businesses. The capacity for parking must be maintained. Any additional demand created by new development must also be met. These uses don't have to look unattractive. Pedestrian focused layout, new development fronting the space, the inclusion of trees and use of attractive paving will all be necessary to ensure this objective is achieved. To significantly increase the capacity for parking, underground or decked parking is likely to be needed. Underground parking could have a low impact upon character while with decked parking, only one level above ground is likely to be acceptable.*

### **Provide the link between the town centre and residential area to the north** **“The missing piece in the Jigsaw”**

*From the analysis it is clear that this site is a barrier between the town centre and the residential area. It should instead facilitate movement and regeneration provides the opportunity to plug the current gap that exists.*



## 6. The Brief for Redevelopment

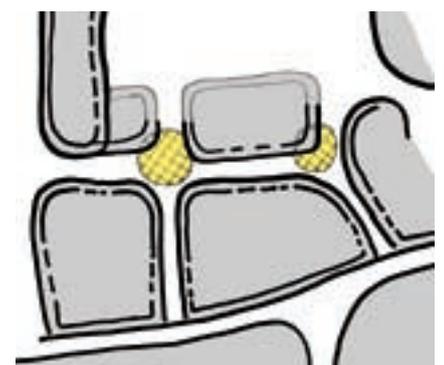
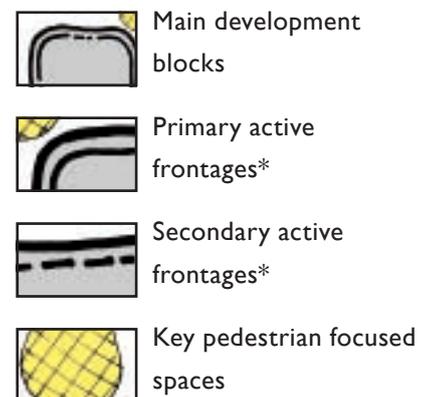
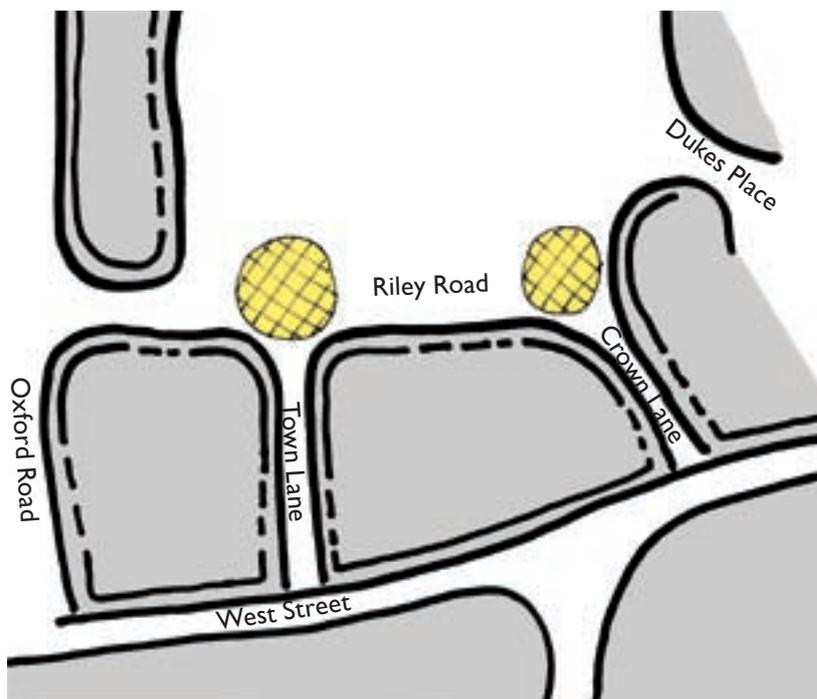
The key elements to be delivered in this brief are **structure**, **connection**, increased **retail** capacity and a better **environmental quality** that truly reflects the historic town of Marlow.

The complexity of the site and the range of potential solutions mean that a definitive framework plan is not possible or indeed beneficial at this stage in the process of regenerating this part of the town. Instead the brief is formed by a series of diagrams that detail the key requirements that should be met by any development.

Firstly **structure** - how the place is put together.

The diagram below indicates the main blocks of buildings and the spaces, streets and footpaths created in schematic form. It shows at which sections of the building edges activity should be focused. It also identifies where key public spaces that might accommodate events could be formed alongside the junctions of the main routes.

*\*By active frontages we mean buildings with frequent doors and windows, so that the activity within the building is visible from the street.*

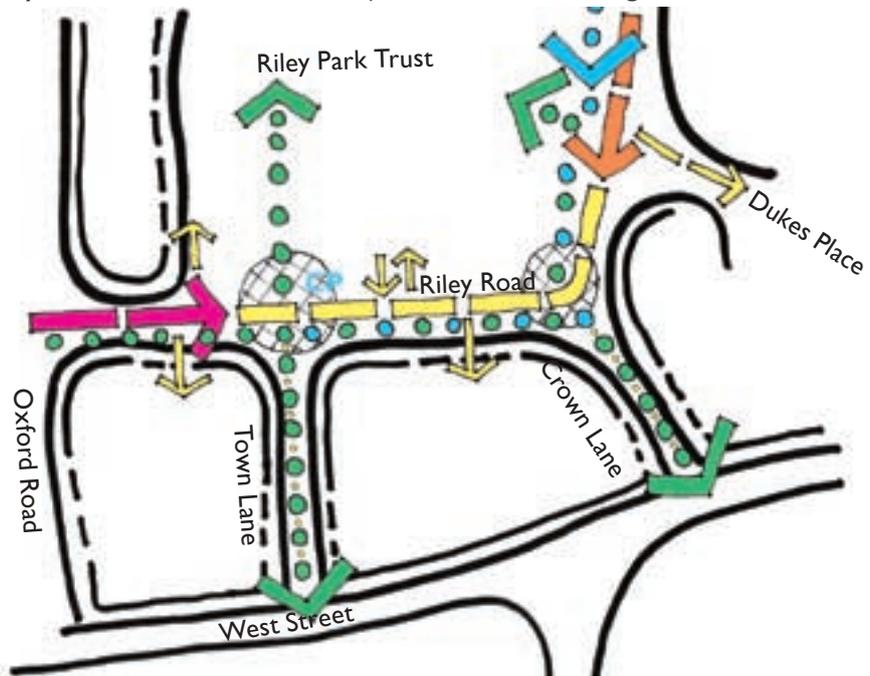


The diagram to the right shows how the block structure could work if the car park was developed with basement parking to significantly increase current provision.

Secondly **connection** - how you get around.

The diagram below shows enhanced and improved main public footpath routes linking the residential area to the north with the town centre. It also shows route of the draft cycle network linking with the town centre and cycle parking associated with the food store. The main vehicular access for servicing and car parking will be from Oxford Road, with a secondary access from Crown Road serving properties and business at the eastern end of the site. Further opportunities to improve pedestrian connection between this site and the town centre should be explored and a wider study of parking and traffic flows undertaken to inform any proposals. The new entrance to Riley Park Trust would be subject to the Trust's agreement.

-  Primary vehicular access point
-  Secondary vehicular access point
-  Vehicle access routes within the site
-  Indicative improved pedestrian routes
-  Vehicles limited to service access only
-  Route of draft cycle network
-  Informal cycle route as part of shared space
-  Cycle parking at rear entrance to food store

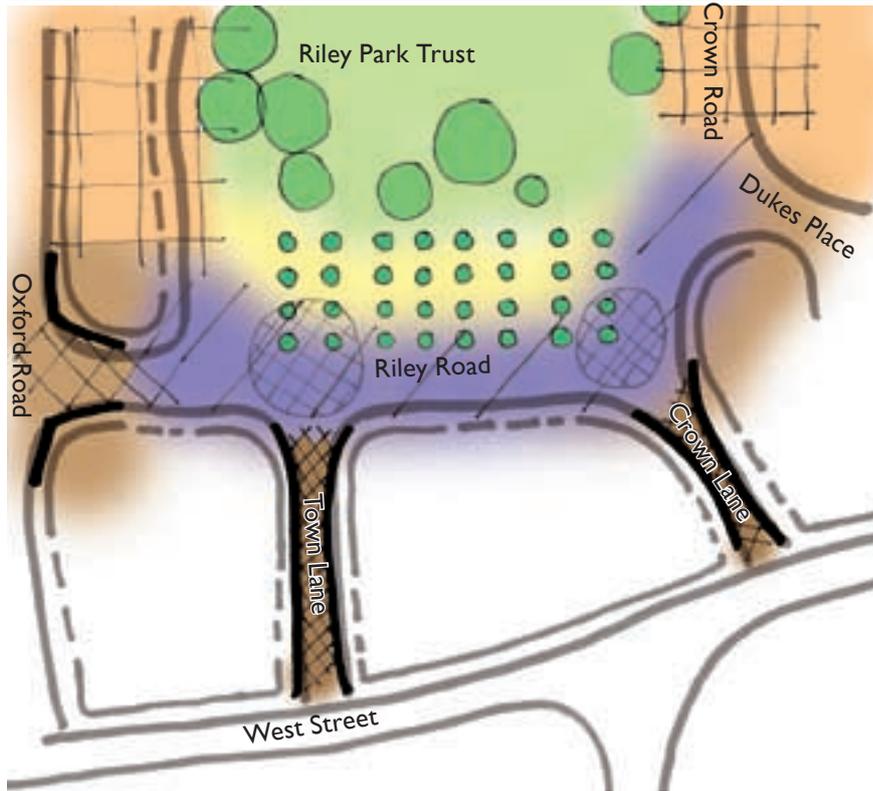


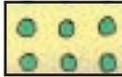
Thirdly **character** - what the place will look and feel like.

The diagram opposite indicates that places adjacent to the historic town centre should reflect this already strong and greatly valued character. Places to the north could reflect more the existing domestic residential character. There is an opportunity to create a new character along Riley Road itself of high quality with materials firmly rooted in the local palette. There should also be a gradation in character south to north from the close knit townscape quality of the town centre to the greener open space of the park. If the new car park is surface level the amount of landscape/ tree planting and quality of paving will be important to enable this transition.

# Riley Road (M4 Site), Marlow

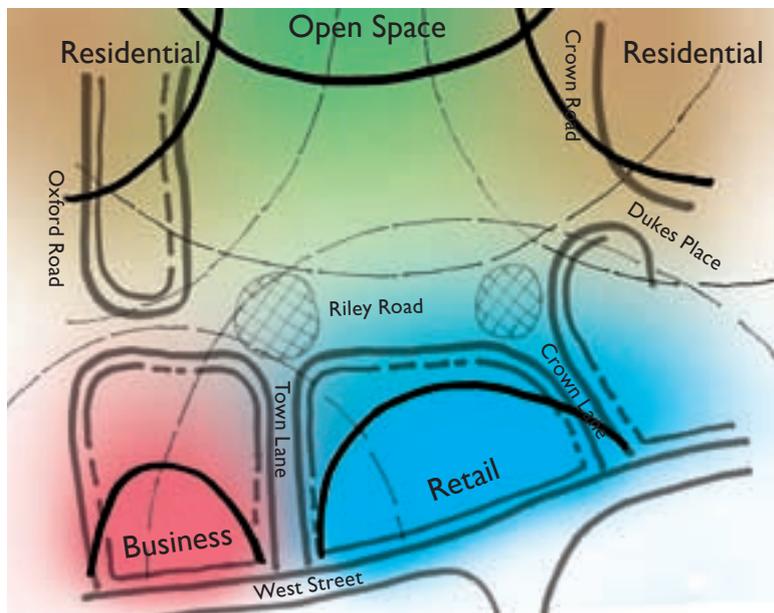
## Development Brief



-  Tight-knit historic urban character
-  Gateway with historic references in character
-  Urban character
-  Landscaped urban space
-  Informal recreation open space character
-  Domestic/ residential character

Fourthly **land use focus** - the predominant activity taking place.

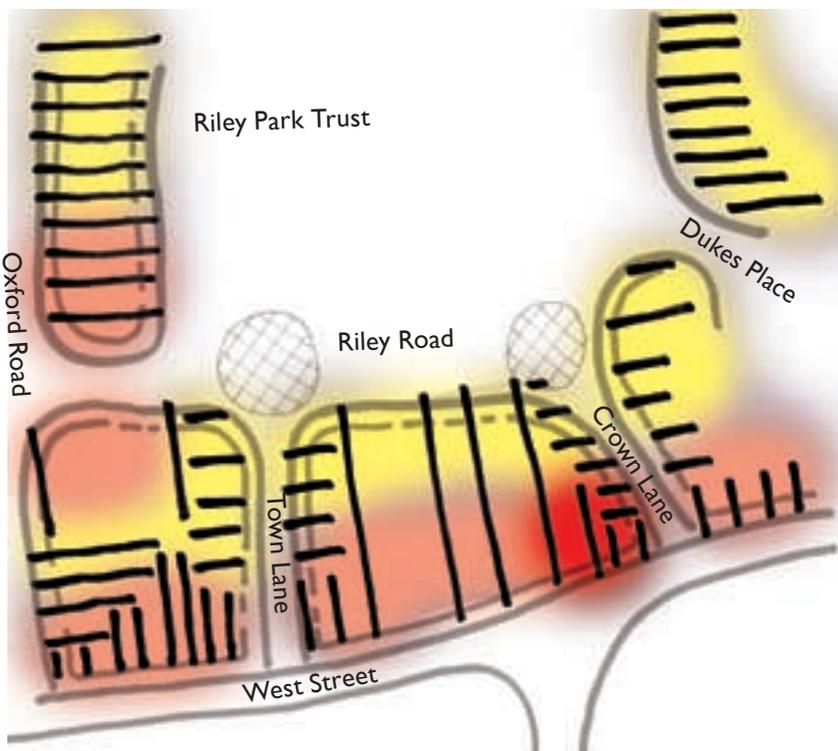
To accommodate the retail needs of Marlow this site must have a retail focus. This focus should be weighted towards the existing town centre to support rather than compete against existing shops. Residential, open space and business form the other key uses and it makes sense that this site responds to the predominant adjacent uses and these uses are strongest in these locations. The centre of the site provides the opportunity for a mix of residential and retail uses as well as providing for the parking needs of the area.



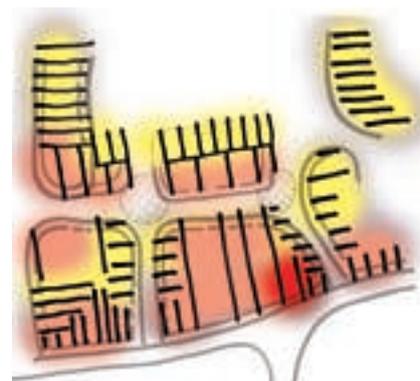
-  Predominantly Retail use
-  Predominantly business use with some retail frontage
-  Predominantly Residential use
-  Open space - Riley Park Trust
-  A mix of uses where the existing predominant uses overlap

Fifthly **scale, grain and height.** - the size, shape and form of buildings

The footprint of the redeveloped foodstore should be located close to the larger existing buildings where it will relate best. Elsewhere a finer grain of development is required, either to respond to the narrow burgage plots of the town and tight knit lanes or the more domestic residential scale towards the north. Heights should reinforce the current dominance of the old town hall and existing town centre. This means that heights will be limited to two to three storeys to not exceed existing buildings, the higher elements should be located to aid legibility – for example at entrances or junctions.



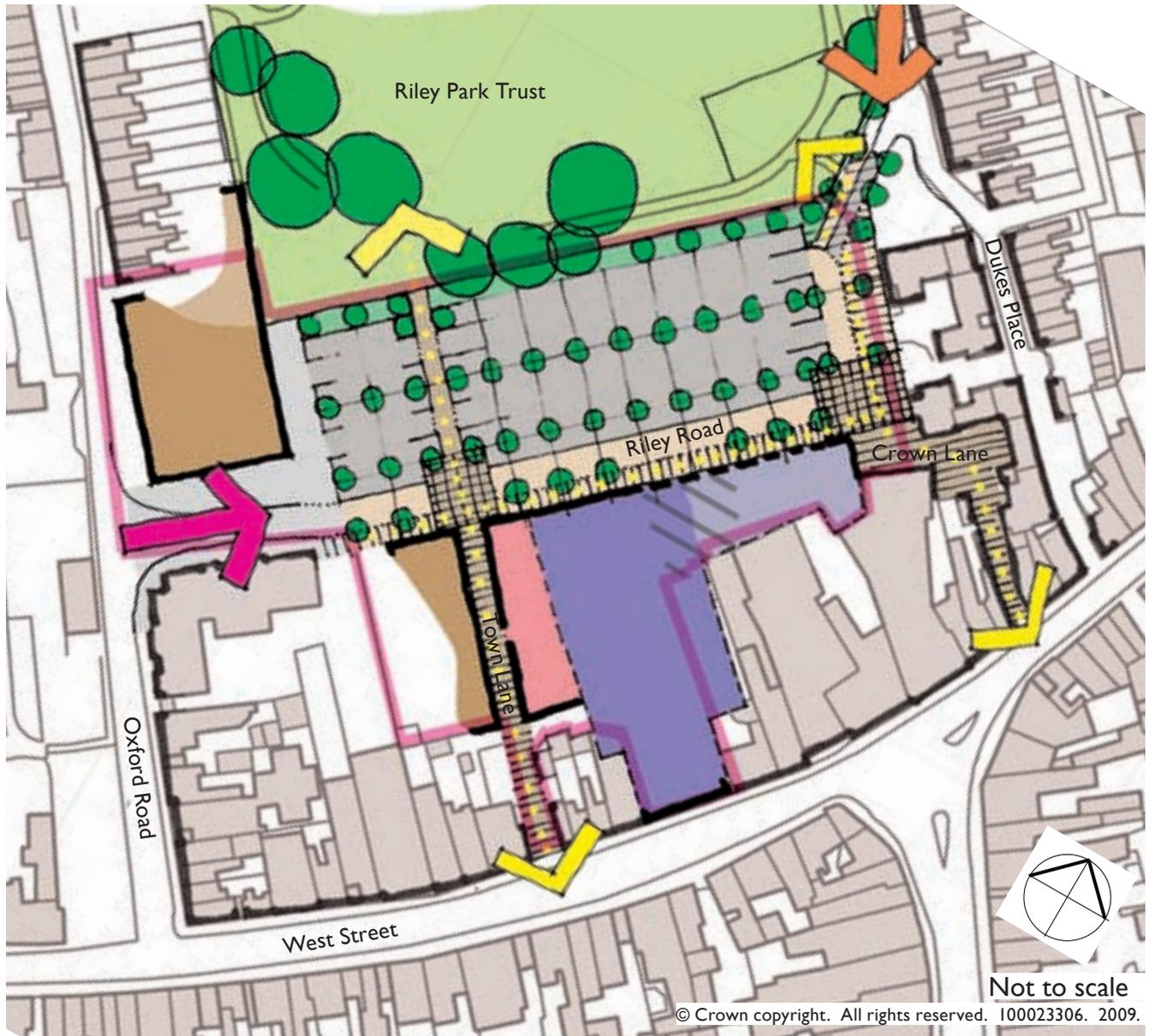
-  Locate larger footprint buildings here
  -  Reinforce fine historic grain of development
  -  Predominantly two storey up to 8metres\* (26ft)
  -  Predominantly two to three storey, up to 10metres\* (33ft)
  -  Predominantly three storey up to 12metres\* (40ft)
- \*measured to ridge of building



The diagram to the right shows how the scale and grain could work if the capacity of the car park was significantly increased with basement parking.

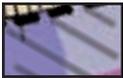
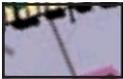
*These diagrams are not intended to show definitive site boundaries or configurations, instead they illustrate the main development principles. A number of different specific layouts could achieve the requirements outlined in these diagrams. Any proposals should clearly demonstrate how they meet these requirements.*

Putting all these principles together, the plan below indicates one way how the site could be developed.



Not to scale

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	M4 Site Boundary		Pedestrian priority squares		Primary vehicular access
	Redeveloped foodstore		Enhanced pedestrian priority Lanes		Secondary vehicular access only
	Servicing for foodstore and adjacent shops		Shared surface street		Pedestrian routes/gateways
	Potential for new secondary retail		Landscaped car parking area		
	Existing funeral directors or new retail/ residential use				
	New residential/ business use				

***This plan is not intended to show definitive site boundaries or configurations, instead it illustrates one way the main development opportunities could be realised.***

## 7. Activity and Land uses

Apart from the new structure, spaces and environmental improvements, when phases of redevelopment come forward, the primary land uses to be considered for these areas are **food retail and car parking**.

Alongside these primary uses there will be a range of secondary uses. These should include:

- Existing community uses such as the public toilets and recycling facility
- Servicing and rear access to West Street frontage properties

They additionally could include:

- Ancillary residential uses

Until the time of redevelopment, the existing uses remain on the site.

**Retail** would be primarily formed by the redeveloped foodstore, but could include other smaller complimentary retail units if they can be seen to support both the vibrancy and connection with the existing town centre. It should make a significant contribution to meeting the growth in demand for retail space in the town.

**Car parking** should accommodate both the current and anticipated additional demand created by new development. (see appendix 9 of the Local Plan regarding parking standards). The existing public parking areas in the M4 site accommodate approximately 200 spaces.

**Servicing** of existing shops and businesses should be maintained and measures explored that would reduce the visual impact through reducing the amount of space taken up by creating common servicing facilities or screening existing service areas.

**Housing**, if provided, will include 40% affordable units and range from apartments and mews type dwellings close to the town centre. While sites in proximity to the residential areas of Oxford Road and Crown Lane would be more suited to family housing. Density would reflect this mix with the higher densities being in the vicinity of the town centre.

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**Sustainable Construction Techniques**

It is expected that high standards of resource efficiency will be met. This will be demonstrated through submission of a statement with the application setting out measures to achieve this.

The following must be provided for any new development:

- BREEAM standard of very good or above for non-residential development and code level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes for residential development
- High levels of water efficiency including grey water recycling;
- Generation of at least 10% of energy demand through on-site renewable energy generation
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
- Use of materials rated 1 or 2 in the BREEAM construction guide
- The recycling of redundant materials arising from demolition and construction and reduction of waste going to landfill

## **8. Phasing and delivery**

The vision presented here could take a number of years to realise because of the fragmented ownership and varying time scales of developers. The structure illustrated in section 6 allows an incremental approach as sites become available for redevelopment while also allowing existing successful uses to remain. Where existing uses do remain environmental improvements of public facing areas will be encouraged.

However, there is an opportunity to achieve, in a relatively short space of time, the key aims of the brief through the redevelopment of the food store and associated environmental enhancements to the existing car park and surrounding public realm. In fact the imminent need to regenerate these sites has in part lead to the production of this brief.

Any single redevelopment in this area should support and at the very least not prejudice the realisation of the key aims of this brief in terms of structure, connection, land use and enhanced environmental quality.

## **9. Other information**

Please refer to our website for information regarding details of our pre-application advice service and details of what information to include in a planning application.

**Riley Road (M4 Site)  
Development Brief**

Approved version

April 2009

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Planning & Sustainability  
Wycombe District Council*

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