

West End Vision

West End in Context

Introduction

The West End is a City Centre quarter with a distinct character and function. It is part of the City Centre containing the railway and bus stations, the Civic Centre, Citizens Advice, Volunteering Centre, two theatres, County Hotel, businesses and shops which support the city as a whole. There is also an established residential population, enlarged through recent large scale residential development.

The West End provides links with the City Centre, including the High Street, Cathedral, and County Hall to the east, Central Park to the south, Anglia Ruskin University to the northeast, King Edward VI Grammar School (KEGS) to the north and other employment and residential areas nearby. It forms part of a busy route serving the key transport interchange and High Street.



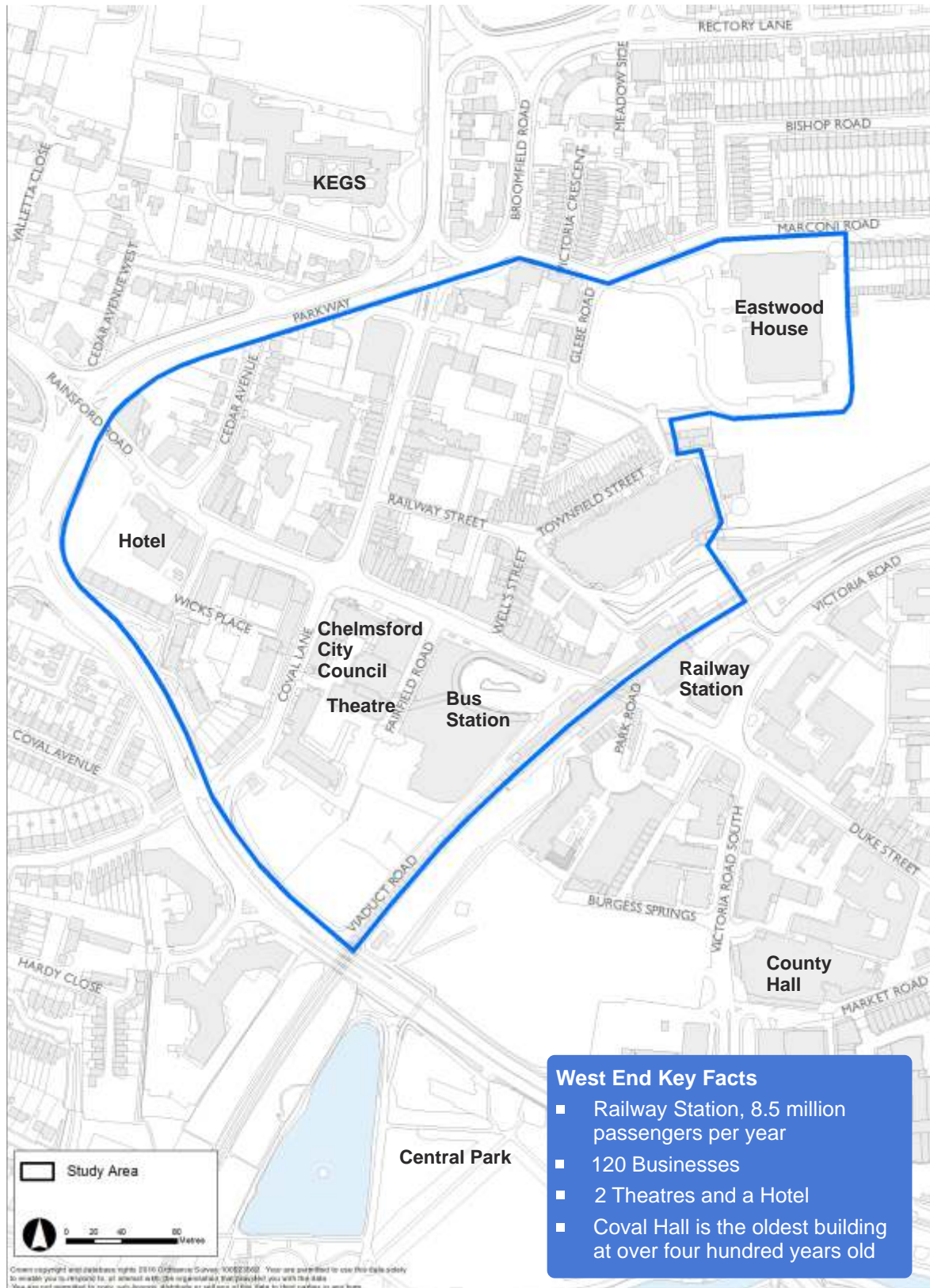
The Purpose of this Document

The West End has great potential as a thriving urban quarter. However, at present parts of it feel run down and there is a perceived segregation from the City Centre. Recent development at City Park West, Station Square and the Railway Station have seen improvements to the area. There are a number of sites with development potential which will be realised in due course and will contribute to the future of the West End. There are opportunities to enhance the area, strengthen its character and address some of the negative aspects.

A co-ordinated approach will provide a vision for the West End which can shape its future, protect its important assets and seek to deliver enhancement.

This vision will form the basis of engagement with the community, development of policy within the new Local Plan and the provision of a framework to guide the future of the West End.

Study Area



Our Vision for the West End

An improved and distinctive urban quarter including:

1. Development of key sites to deliver business uses and residential development, with enhanced cultural and public facilities
2. Reinforced cultural focus and stronger links between cultural and arts functions and local businesses
3. Enhancement of the built environment
4. Engagement with and investment of local businesses in the future direction of the area
5. Continued public realm improvements



Strategic Priorities

To realise our vision for a thriving West End, led by the development of culture and arts, strengthening of business and employment and an enlarged residential population in to order guide our interventions there are five priorities:

- Involving the community
- Strengthening the arts and cultural offer and developing a mixed use community
- Working with business and employers to develop the local economy and seek investment for the West End
- Enhancing the built environment
- Delivering public realm improvements



Involving the Community

The local community, including businesses, residents, visitors, owners, transport operators, commuters and other interest groups are important to delivering an enhanced West End. The Council can orchestrate improvement of the area, but genuine enhancement will require the support of all interested parties. The best way to achieve this is to devise a vision which all parties support.

In order to involve the community the Council will:

- Develop links with the local community and seek their involvement in the implementation of the vision for the West End. This will involve engaging with local stakeholders, including landowners, employers, businesses, residents, commuters, transport operators, the highway authority and other interest groups.
- The West End Forum and West End Business Association, made up of local businesses and groups, have been active in the past and their reinvigoration and involvement would be welcomed.

These views will be used to shape the future of the West End and develop a vision for enhancement.



Strengthening the Cultural Offer and Developing a Mixed Use Community

The Civic and Cramphorn Theatres are at the heart of the West End and provide an important arts and entertainment offer to the whole city and beyond. There is an opportunity to develop the existing cultural offer through improved links with the local community and businesses. Recognising and strengthening a cultural centre within the West End provides an opportunity to develop associated art related activity and business in the West End which can help sustain one another.

A key component of sustainable development is strengthening existing communities, with a mix of uses which provide everyday facilities, with places to work and live. There are currently a mixture of uses in the West End and the desire is to retain and strengthen a range of community and leisure, retail, food, business and residential uses and reflect this in new development proposals. The Council will:

- Work with the theatres to develop the cultural offer and links with local businesses and the community.
- Seek new mixed use development that reinforces the cultural offer.
- Work in partnership to develop the Council's Cultural and Arts Strategy.
- Seek to retain existing uses which contribute to the function of the area, including the use of additional planning controls.
- Use art to help in shaping places and enhancing the environment – art can have the power to provoke, inspire and transform.



Developing the Local Economy and Seeking Investment in the West End

The West End is an important part of the Chelmsford economy. It occupies a key position close to the City Centre, with the rail and bus interchange at its heart. With over 8 million passenger trips per year through the railway station, the area presents a good opportunity for business to thrive and succeed. Connections to the growing Anglia Ruskin University and existence of the theatres present other opportunities for business to succeed in the area.

The business make-up of the West End has changed over time. Today the area predominately supports small businesses employing less than 10 people, although there are larger employers within and on the periphery – notably A-ON, BAE Systems, QBE, IFDS and Chelmsford City Council. These add a relatively large daytime office population, that helps support some of the local businesses. The smaller businesses in the area are a mix of retail, beauty, restaurant and food businesses and the area has the feel and appearance of a secondary retail area. There are also one or two professional service businesses in the area that have been established for many years, for example Strutt and Parker. In more recent years the increase in housing in and around the West End has been a factor in sustaining businesses and attracting new business to the area including RP2 media, a leading marketing and media business.

There are currently in the region of 120 businesses within the Study Area (including the businesses within the railway viaduct arches). Vacancy rates are relatively low, although there are some notable empty units in key positions at the Bus Station and on Broomfield Road.

Development opportunities that come forward in the West End will continue to support the local economy, businesses and the cultural role of

the area with the opportunity to capture passing trade. In order to enhance the West End economy and support the businesses within it, the following actions will act as the focus:

- Develop a targeted and bespoke business support offer for West End businesses through the BEST Growth Hub and CCC Economic Development Team.
- Seek neighbourhood CIL funding with ward members.
- Promote the commercial and development opportunities within the area via Invest Essex and the CCC Economic Development Team.
- Re-establish a West End Business Association working alongside the Chelmsford City Marketing Manager.
- Encourage and promote environmental enhancements to premises, shop fronts and the wider public realm to encourage new investment and consumer confidence in the area.



Enhancing the Built Environment

The majority of the West End is designated as a Conservation Area due to its special character. This character relates to its historic and townscape interest, partly associated with development of the railway in the 1840s.

The mix of building types and styles reflects its history and contributes to the character of the area. However, at present its special character is undermined by a lack of maintenance, unsympathetic alterations and poor quality signs and shop fronts. The quality of building fabric is however, still very strong and could be re-appreciated if the negative aspects of the area could be addressed.

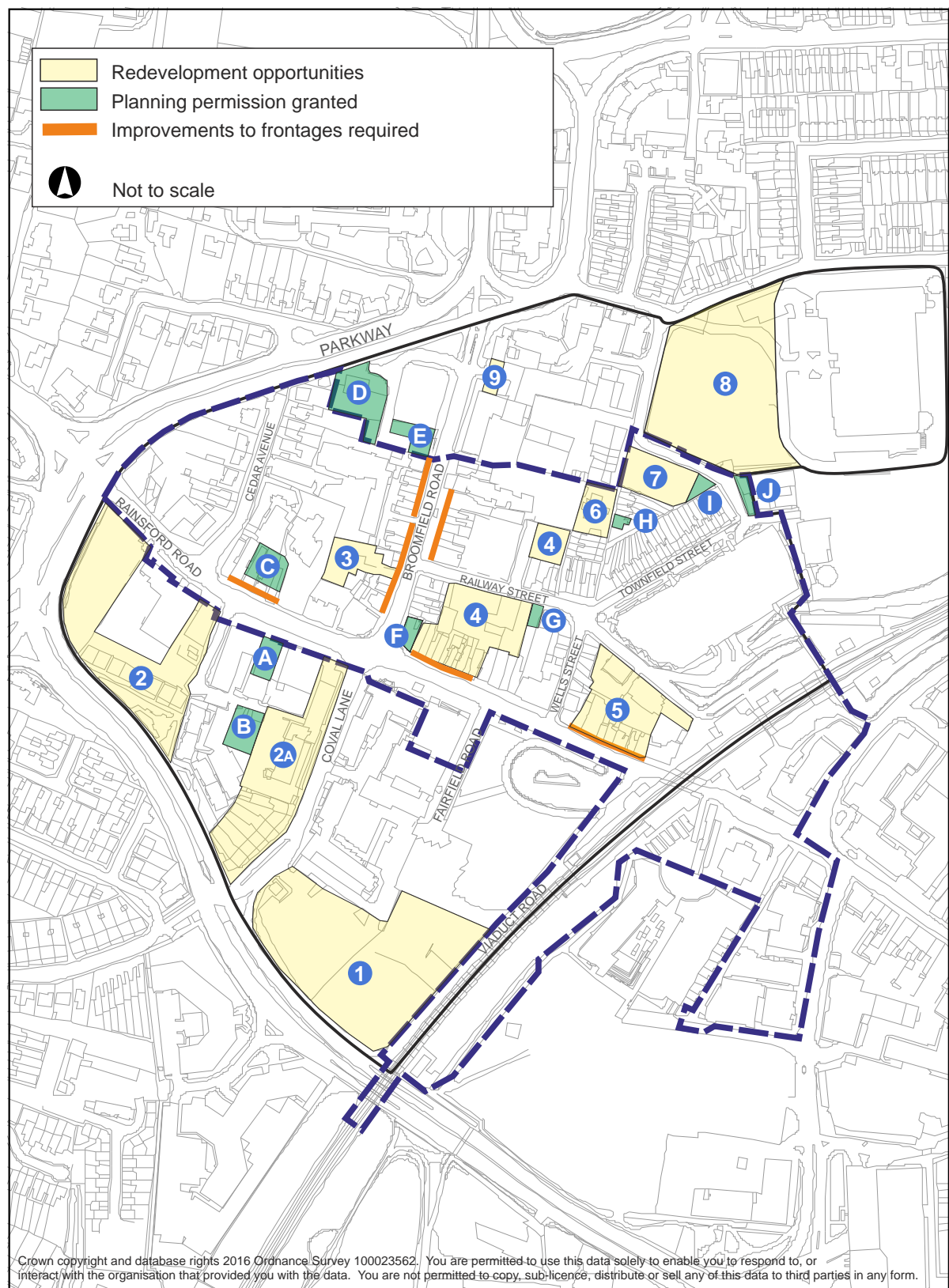
In order to promote enhancement of the area, the Council will:

- As a priority, review the Conservation Area in order to define its character, redefine its boundaries if necessary and identify enhancement opportunities.
- Identify sites suitable for development and work with landowners to deliver new high quality development.
- Work with owners to encourage maintenance and enhancement of buildings.
- Produce guidance for building alterations, including shopfronts and adverts and use this to promote and encourage improvements to the visual quality of buildings that are currently detracting from the West End. This will form a basis for seeking better alterations in the future through the planning system.
- Where necessary, planning powers will be used to enforce against unauthorised development or advertisements, require untidy sites to be improved and introduce additional planning controls.



Development Opportunities

The following pages provide guidance for opportunities at the potential development sites



Development Opportunities

Refer to plan on page 9

The following sites offer opportunities for developments to assist the enhancement and regeneration of the West End

Site 1

Civic Centre and Fairfield Road Car Parks

The land to the south of Marconi Plaza is currently used for surface car parking. The site is close to the transport interchange, theatres, Parkway and Central Park, offering the opportunity for well-connected mixed use high density development.

Objectives

- Optimal use of major development site.
- Provision of art, residential and car parking with community or leisure uses adjacent to Marconi Plaza

Urban Design

- 3-6 storeys with scope for a tower on the eastern part of the site to relate to the cluster of towers at the bus station and City Park West phase II.
- Enhanced pedestrian routes - linking Coval Lane to the transport interchange and opening up railway arches 37 and 38 to link with the City Centre.
- Defined active built frontages to site edges, routes and public spaces. Multi-level parking concealed within.
- Contemporary architecture.
- Possible new access from Parkway.

Land Use

- Primary uses - art, community, leisure, office, residential and car parking.
- Secondary uses - restaurant and retail.

Site 2

County Hotel Car Park

There is a large area, with multiple ownership, including frontages to Parkway and Rainsford Road which presents an opportunity for co-ordinated development creating an enhanced built environment and defined edge to Parkway.

Objectives

- Remove unsightly and inefficient buildings and make use of private surface car park.
- Co-ordinated development.
- New frontages, enhancement of the setting to the County Hotel.

Urban Design

- 3-5 storey development.
- Defined street edges, an enhanced gateway.
- Avenue tree planting to Parkway and Rainsford Road.
- Public realm improvements to site edges.

Land use

- Primary uses - hotel, offices and residential.
- Secondary uses – ground floor retail,

Site 2A

Coval House, Halford House and Coval Lane

This area covers the whole frontage to Coval Lane, between Parkway and Rainsford Road, with multiple ownership. It presents an opportunity for co-ordinated development creating an enhanced built environment.

Objectives

- Remove unsightly and inefficient buildings and promote high density development.
- Co-ordinated development.
- New frontages.

Urban Design

- 3-5 storey development, potential 6 storey to Parkway edge and to replace Halford House.
- Defined street edges, an enhanced gateway.
- Improvement or replacement of Halford House, Link House and Coval House buildings.
- Public realm improvements to site edges.
- Co-ordinated development with Site B, potential access from Wicks Place.

Land use

- Primary uses - offices and residential.

Site 3

Land off of Broomfield Road

This is a small backland site accessed from Broomfield Road, within the West End Conservation Area where there is scope for development.

Objectives

- Enhance the setting of Coval Hall (grade II listed) and the Conservation Area.

Urban Design

- 2 storey, traditional scale.
- Retain protected trees.
- Protect significant views to Coval Hall.

Land Use

- Residential and office.

Site 4

Railway Street Car Parks

Car park sites which detract from the character of the street, but provide important short stay and business parking.

Objectives

- Reinstate street frontages to enhance character and maintain or re-provide car parking.

Urban Design

- 3-4 storey, continuous street edges with active frontages. Sensitive treatment of Duke Street frontage.
- Retain significant buildings.
- Public realm improvements to Railway Street.
- Protect Conservation Area character.

Land Use

- Primary – residential and car parking
- Secondary – ground floor commercial uses.

Site 5

Land between Duke Street and Railway Street

Car parking and a mix of buildings with the opportunity for co-ordinated redevelopment to enhance the area.

Objectives

- Redevelopment and improvement to reinforce character.

Urban Design

- 3-4 storey, continuous street edges with active frontages. Sensitive treatment of Duke Street frontage.
- Protect Conservation Area character.
- Public realm improvements to Railway Street.

Land Use

- Primary – retail, food and office.
- Secondary – residential or office upper floors.

Site 6

Steamer Terrace

A small backland site with potential for development.

Objectives

- Repair the urban grain of Steamer Terrace.

Urban Design

- 2 storey terraced form.
- Enhance the Conservation Area.

Land Use

- Residential.

Site 7

Glebe Road Car Park

A public car park which could be developed to enhance the townscape.

Objectives

- Provide a built street edge.
- Enhance the Conservation Area.

Urban Design

- 2-3 storey, new street frontage.

Land Use

- Residential or office.

Site 8

Eastwood House Car Park

A private surface office car park. Eastwood House is a large office building built in 1995. The surface car park has potential for development. The site is a five minute walk from rail, bus and local services, and close to the University and businesses on New Street. This location is suitable for both residential and business use. It is surrounded by Glebe Road and Marconi Road, containing two and three housing and offices. High density development will depend upon good walking and cycling links to station, Duke Street and New Street. Eastwood House should be capable of remaining in office use, with a visible presence and sufficient car parking.

Objectives

- Optimise the development site for residential and employment.
- Establish direct walking and cycling routes to the station, New Street and Duke Street.
- Create a distinctive street edge and active frontage to Glebe Road and Marconi Road.
- Enable continuing use of Eastwood House for business, with parking and an enhanced setting.
- Residential-led mixed uses.

Urban Design

- Masterplan the whole area west of Eastwood House building to determine layout, use options, phasing and capacity.

- A new access to Eastwood House and a new front concourse.
- New connecting pathways leading directly south to new station access and directly east into Marconi quarter and New Street.
- 3-5 storey massing, with a 6 storey building focussed in the South East corner of the site.
- Well-defined street edge and frontages with entrances and windows.
- Parking for existing office use.

Land use

- Residential and business uses. This location is eminently suited to new offices. In line with the Council's economic policies non-residential use will be encouraged to generate business activity.

Site 9

Broomfield Road

A gap site with an opportunity to continue the street frontage.

Objective

- Screen car parking and define the street edge.

Urban Design

- Protect the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.
- 2 storey, retain car park access.

Land use

- Office.

Sites with Planning Permission

Site A

7-13 Rainsford Road (15/00116/FUL)

Conversion of the existing building, remodelling and the addition of two extra floors to create a ground floor commercial unit and 8 residential flats.



Site B

Land at Wicks Place (14/01065/FUL)

New build 14 residential flats and basement Masonic Hall.

Site C

22-28 Rainsford Road (12/01484/FUL and 15/01512/FUL)

Conversion and extension of existing buildings to create two commercial units and 13 residential flats.

Site D

47 Broomfield Road (16/01045/FUL)

New build 14 residential flats.

Site E

43 Broomfield Road (16/01092/FUL and 16/010482/FUL)

New Build 4 residential flats, conversion and extension of existing building 8 residential flats.

Site F

56 Duke Street (10/00445/FUL)

Conversion and extension 4 retail units, 8 residential flats.

Site G

Land rear of 43 Duke Street (14/01085/FUL)

New build 1 retail unit, 2 residential flats.

Site H

5 Steamer Terrace (15/01369/FUL)

Extension to create 2 houses.

Site I

Anchor Works, Glebe Road (15/01868/FUL)

2 new houses.

Site J

Land rear of 26 Townfield Street (13/00857/FUL)

2 new houses.

Delivering Public Realm Improvements

The quality of public spaces is key to a thriving City Centre, with legible, safe and pleasant routes and spaces with access for all. Recent work within the West End has greatly improved its public realm with enhancement schemes at Station Square, and the north side of Duke Street, and from development schemes at City Park West, the bus station and railway station, plus the recently installed wayfinding signposts, but there is still much to be achieved. The Council will:

- Seek financial contributions or works from development sites and work with partners to deliver further public realm improvements.
- Identify opportunities to enhance key public routes, spaces and gateways, prioritising delivery.
- Seek to improve traffic signage both from and to the West End to better integrate the area with the rest of the City Centre.
- Work with the Highway Authority to rationalise traffic signs at the road side.
- Encourage the operator of the bus station to carry out maintenance as well as seek further improvements.
- Continue to lead the project for Mill Yard and Station Square Phase II to open up new public realm, and a new walking and cycling link towards Anglia Ruskin University.
- Work with transport providers to ensure the transport interchange meets future demands.
- Work with the highway authority to maximise the efficiency of the transport network, including mitigating the impact of new development, and improve walking and cycle routes to and through the West End.



- Ensure that Railway Street and Coval Lane short stay car parks are signed from Parkway, rather than being lost amongst signs for High Chelmer and Townfield Street (which does not serve West End businesses).
- Removal of unnecessary signs.

Other Signs

There are many signs challenging for the public's attention. Seek to rationalise these to target the West End through working with stakeholders.

Marketing and Publicity

A simple identity for the area, based on its diverse character that can be easily used by businesses and used for signs and banners.

- Brand name and strapline – graphic identity to use in marketing.
- Advertising – guidance to businesses to use the material in their advertising.
- Poster sites to publicise theatre events.

Roundels on Lampposts

Small signs with the West End graphic attached to lampposts. These will act as entry markers based on marketing image.

Gateways

There are four key gateways into the West End, which are important to the identity of the area and the visitor's experience.

- Rainsford Road - improvements as part of redevelopment of the car park adjacent to the County Hotel.

- Broomfield Road - space improvements.
- Duke Street – recent work to improve the station environment and bridge to be completed.
- Parkway – improvements to the setting of the railway viaduct.

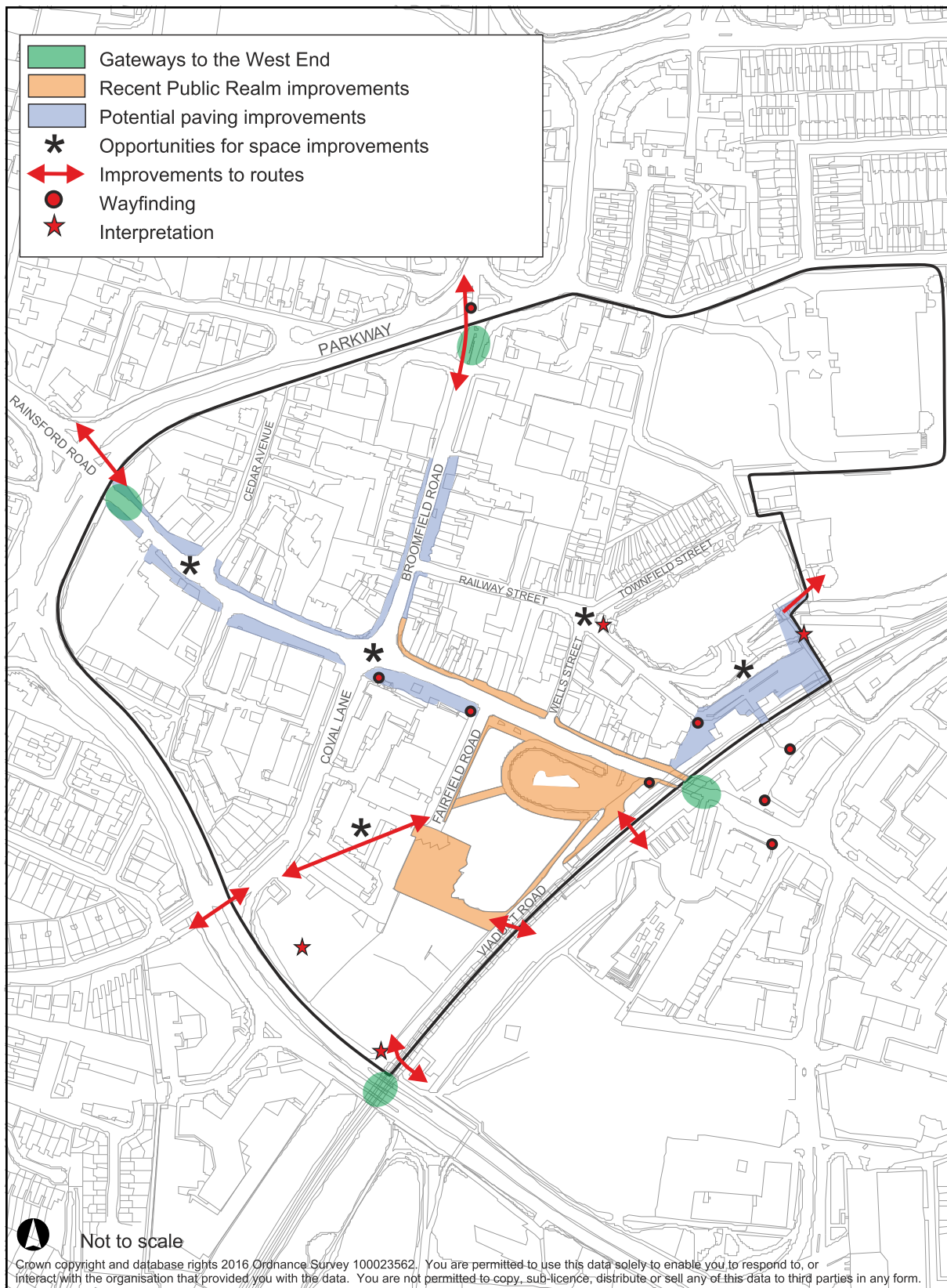
Pedestrian and Cycling Route Improvements

The West End feels segregated from the rest of the city by the barriers created by Parkway, and the railway viaduct and Mill Yard. The following actions are proposed:

- Improvements to the pedestrian routes and crossing on Parkway at Coval Lane, Rainsford Road, Broomfield Road and from Central Park into Viaduct Road.
- Delivery of the Mill Yard scheme to improve the railway station environment and enhance the pedestrian links with the University and Eastwood House.
- Seek the opening up of viaduct arches 23, 37 and 38 to link the West End with the City Centre.
- Improve the well-used pedestrian route from Coval Lane/Parkway towards the railway station as part of redevelopment of the CCC car park.



Public Realm Enhancement



Public Realm Works

Wayfinding

The City Centre wayfinding scheme has delivered installations for the West End in its first phase, as part of a co-ordinated approach to pedestrian and cycle signage across the City Centre.

- Map nodes – Duke Street/Fairfield Road, Duke Street/Station Square, Parkway/Broomfield Road.
- Finger posts – Duke Street/Coval Lane, Anne Knight Building, Station Surrounds.

Proposal:

- At West End car parks improve arrival information for people to explore the local area.
- At the Bus Station and Railway Station aim for co-ordinated signage with the City Centre wayfinding system.

Interpretation and Art

Bringing the history of the West End to life and shaping identity through art:

- Heritage interpretation boards for the Railway Viaduct, Burgess Well and Railway Street.
- Public art at key sites and gateways delivered through development of adjacent sites.
- Temporary arts based events, trails or entertainment using Marconi Plaza, neighbouring streets, shop windows and vacant units, delivered through working with local community groups and/or artists.



Road signs

Work in partnership with the highway authority to:

- Introduce a West End signing scheme to encourage new customers and to boost business in this part of the City Centre. The key is to improve footfall, not the number of cars, but to guide people to most convenient parking place.
- Change road signs to specifically signpost the West end, short stay car parks, theatres, churches, shops, hotel and nightlife.

Paving Works

Recent paving works at the bus station, railway station, City Park West and Duke Street have greatly enhanced the built environment. Further works will be pursued subject to funding at:

- Duke Street and Rainsford Road
- Broomfield Road
- Mill Yard/Station Square Phase II

Street Furniture

- A co-ordinated approach to high quality street furniture.

Space Improvements

There are several key public spaces where improvements could be sought:

- Cedar Avenue/Rainsford Road
- Duke Street/Broomfield Road
- Railway Street/Townfield Street
- Civic Centre Plaza
- Station Square Phase II

Trees

Trees make a significant contribution to the character of the West End:

- Seek retention of significant trees.
- Promote new planting in public realm; works; Parkway, Rainsford Road and Broomfield Road.



Conclusion

The West End is an important City Centre quarter, which provides a range of functions and could be enhanced as an attractive mixed use area and as a cultural hub of Chelmsford. It has suffered from limited investment and individual actions of businesses have not made a positive contribution to the area in the round, but it has great potential to be enhanced as an exciting place to work, live and visit.

This vision document will be used to consult with interested parties to implement a strategy for the enhancement of the West End. This will include developing policies within the new Local Plan and promoting redevelopment, improvement of the built environment and public realm, and working with local businesses and seeking investment in the area.

Future assessments will provide a detailed analysis of the area and identify its special character and opportunities for enhancement.



Annex A - Priorities

Enhancement of the West End is a complex task which requires the support of all stakeholders. Certain works will be delivered in the short term, others will require further design and funding. The following sets the Council's priorities for delivery.

Short Term

- Review the Conservation Area
- Community engagement
- West End support, identity and marketing
- Wayfinding
- Interpretation
- Mill Yard implementation
- Building maintenance
- Link with the art strategy
- Seek funding streams

Medium Term

- Key development sites
- Building frontage improvements
- Duke Street and Broomfield Road improvements
- Street furniture
- Open up railway arch routes

Long Term

- Space and route improvements
- Strategic development sites



Contact details

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