



Strategic Theme:

# 2

## A Safe and Accessible Town Centre

### Strategic Priorities aimed at improving safety and accessibility in the town centre

Initiatives under this Theme include:

- Applying a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Strategy to certain 'hot spots'.
- Improving the functionality and amenity of the town centre streets with some measures specifically for the elderly and the disabled.
- Improving street lighting in the town centre
- Improving way finding opportunities for both locals and visitors, either on foot or by car.



## 5.2.1 Safety and the ease of getting around

The quality of the pedestrian experience and the ease of getting around have a profound influence on the economic functionality and the social and cultural wellbeing of the town centre.

The quality of the pedestrian experience has much to do with the state of the footpaths and continuity of buildings on the street edge, but also with perception of safety on footpaths, walkways, and in open spaces.

### Social safety

Surveillance and sightlines (see and be seen), a clear definition of open spaces (ownership) and a sense of orientation largely determine whether a person feels safe in a public place. Especially on the periphery of the town centre, but also within the town centre there are several areas which could be improved from a safety perspective.

### Walkability

Walkability specialist Rodney Tolley completed an assessment of walkability of the town centre streets in February 2009. He found many positives:

- Footpaths are mostly smooth and level with high quality surfacing.
- Footpaths are clean and well maintained.
- There are public toilets in the town centre and there are signs to them.
- Roads in the town centre of Blenheim would appear to be very safe from a pedestrian's perspective. There are good quality formal crossings and an abundance of informal crossings which work extremely well.
- In general pavements are at least of adequate width. Main shopping streets such as Market Street feel spacious and permit near unconstrained pedestrian activity, whether sitting, standing, window-shopping or passing through
- Blenheim has a pleasant, comfortable feel for pedestrians. Most traffic in the town centre is low speed, relatively quiet access traffic to town centre car parks. Crossing roads is easy and pedestrians appear to live in harmony with vehicular traffic. This is one of the most appealing aspects of Blenheim Town Centre.

There was also much that was adequate, but not best practice:

- Provision for those with physical disabilities is inconsistent.
- Seating is present but is inconsistent in quality.
- In terms of personal security, it is possible that there are areas and issues of concern, though these may not be too serious.
- There does not appear to be a consistent policy on the placement of street furniture, advertising boards, displays of shop goods etc, so that navigating pavements would be difficult for those with sight impairment.

There were also issues in need of attention:

- There is no current pedestrian way finding signage, maps or cycle signage.
- Walking routes are often hidden and themselves have no signage to destinations.
- The centre is almost devoid of public art and other aesthetic interventions for improving pedestrian space.

The findings of the analysis as part of this Urban Design-led formulation of a Town Centre Vision project are generally in line with the findings of the walkability assessment.

### General objectives

- Improving the quality of the pedestrian experience
- Improving walkability for the elderly (shelter, rest places) and disabled (removing footpath clutter, solving ambiguous traffic situations)
- Improving the legibility by means of wayfinding signage and hints
- Improving the safety of walkways in and around the town centre
- **This section focuses on the safety and ease to get around. The wider Streetscape proposals are presented under Strategic Theme 6: Vibrant Streets and Open Spaces.**



ABOVE FIG. 5-18: The column on the end of the crossing (behind the gentleman on the photo) could pose a safety hazard for the elderly and the disabled



ABOVE FIG. 5-19: The signposted walkway between the CBD and Pollard Park has some safety issues

### 5.2.3 Footpath upgrade initiatives

Assessment determined that the quality of footpaths is generally high. However, a more detailed look at the functionality and amenity shows an opportunity for improvement in several parts of the street network, with either a surface upgrade or a widening.

Figure 5-20 shows the proposed footpath upgrade strategy. High priority streetscape upgrades have been determined by a combination of the current state of the footpath and the role and function of the street. Footpaths in need of upgrade located close to the heart of the town centre (Market Square) are given priority over streets further away.

High priority upgrades are proposed for the following areas:

- The footpaths in Wynen Street. This should be done as an integrated part of a streetscape upgrade in conjunction with the development of the proposed Farmers store and the associated car parking structure.
- The quality of the footpaths in Queen Street is generally moderate. An exception should be made for one area on the western side of the street, between Arthur and George Streets. The pavement in this area should be targeted for upgrade as part of the focus placed in this Town Centre Vision on Queen Street and would result in a stronger pedestrian circuit from Market Place, Market Street, Bythell Place and Queen Street.
- In association with the proposed car parking structure in Alfred Street and the pedestrian connection to Queen Street: footpath improvements on the northern side of High Street, between Seymour St and Market Place. This is an important link between the shopping precinct and Seymour Square, the largest public open space in the town centre.
- Main Street (northern and southern side) between Market and Symons Streets.
- The footpaths on both sides of Scott Street between Maxwell Road and Kinross Street, as part of a larger streetscape upgrade (refer to Strategic Theme 6: A Vibrant Streetscape and Urban Open Spaces).

#### Pedestrian lanes

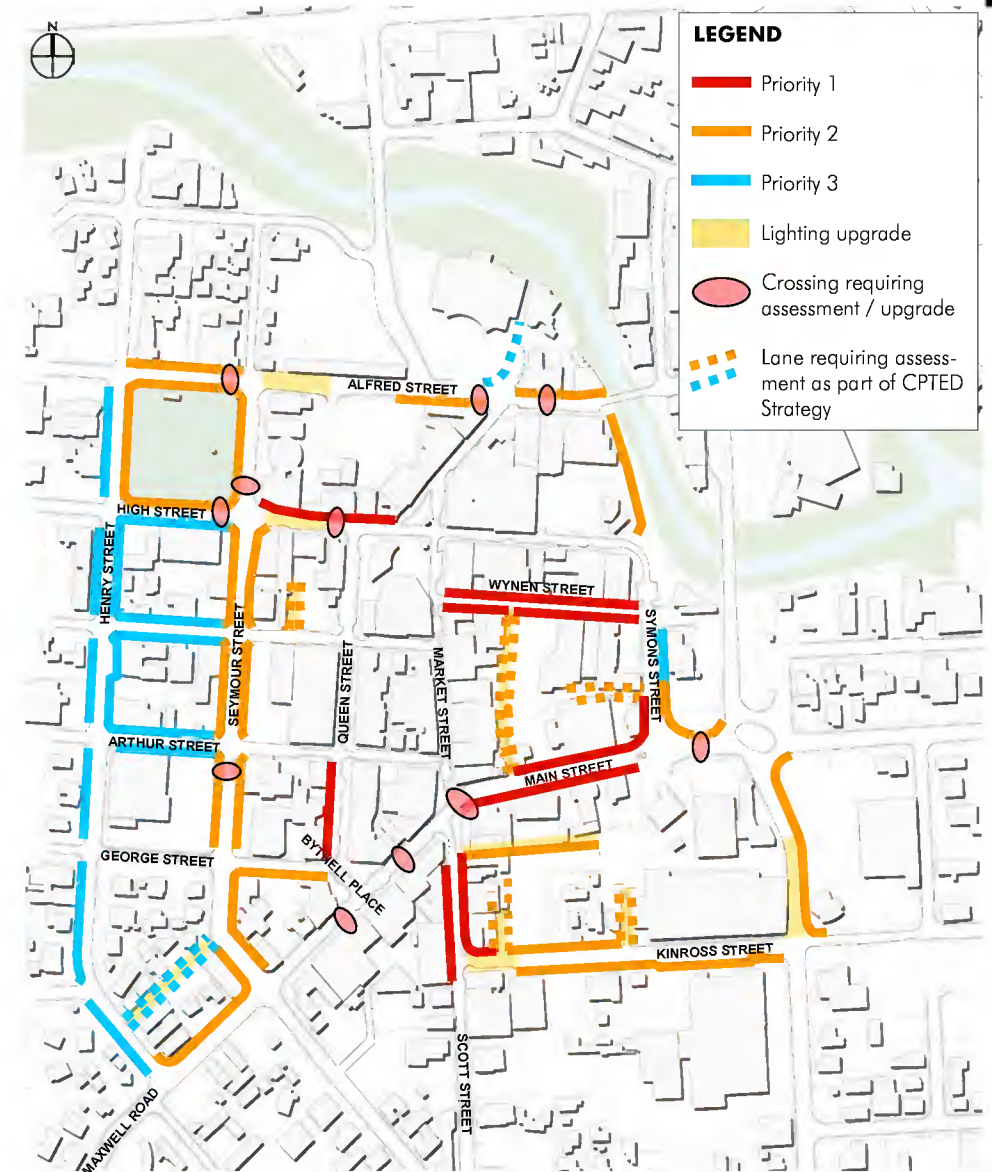
Other areas with a lot of foot traffic are the Lanes (First to Fourteenth). It is proposed that a lighting and access policy should be developed, given the safety issues that can be found in most of them (refer to the Crime Prevention strategy on page 47).

#### Pedestrian crossings

Several pedestrian crossings create uncertainty between car users and pedestrians and are potential accident spots. The situation and status of each of the crossings within the wider movement network requires further assessment, which could possibly lead to upgrade. Refer to figure 5-20 for locations.

#### Proposed streetlighting initiatives

Refer to the Crime Prevention strategy on page 47.



ABOVE FIG. 5-20: footpath upgrade initiatives

## Technical background: Footpath assessment

Refer to figure 5-23 for an assessment of the current state of the footpaths. The following issues are identified:

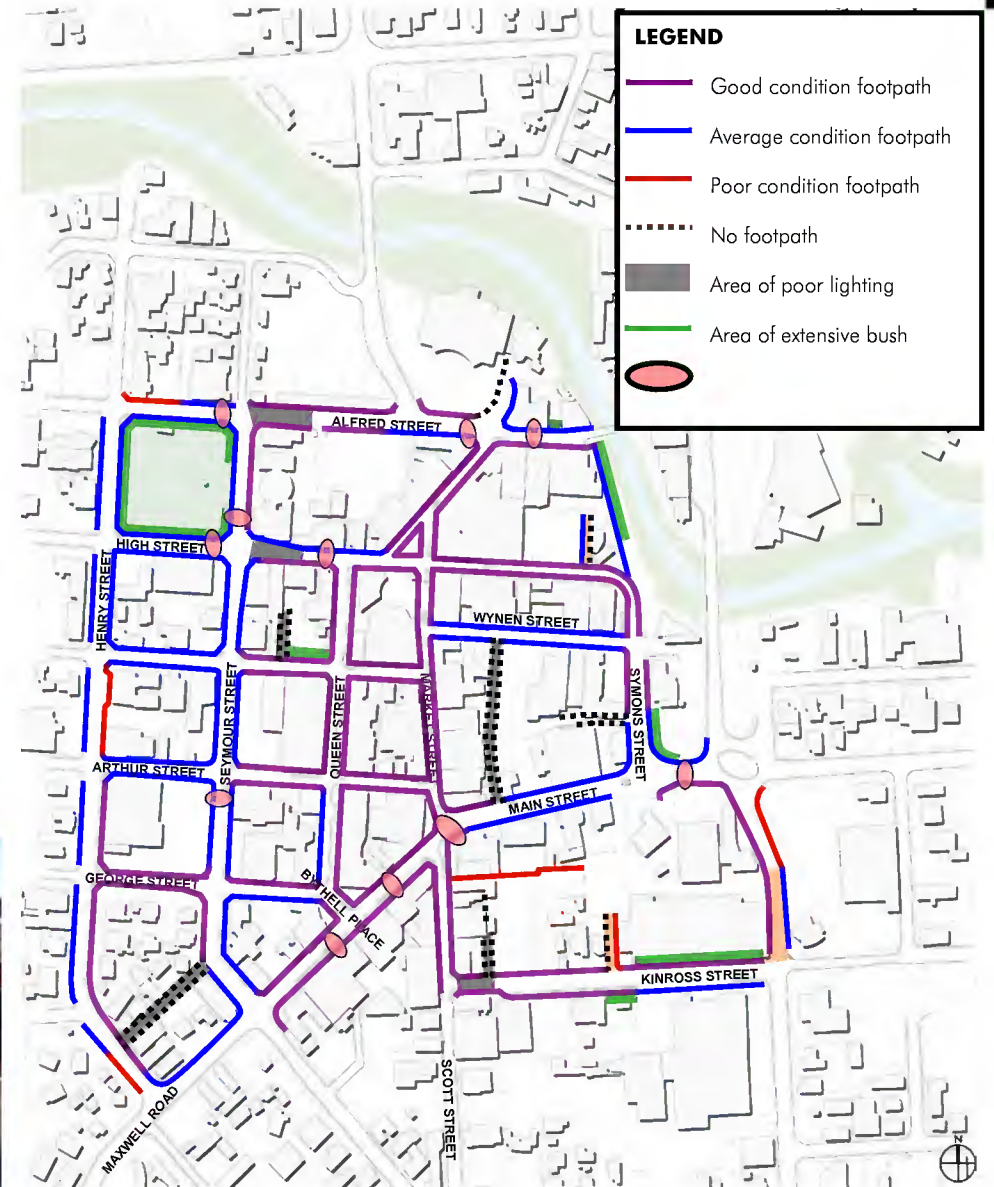
- Recent streetscape upgrades have resulted in good pavement conditions and sufficient widths in Market Street, Queen Street and Maxwell Road between Market and Queen Streets. The streets that are further away from these main shopping streets are generally characterised by more average conditions with some poorer parts interspersed.
- In many of the lanes, dedicated footpaths or sidewalks are non-existent as some of these have been designed only for vehicular access as driveways, serviceways or accessways to parking areas.
- Areas of poor lighting are indicated and many of them are found in the lanes. Additional areas are immediately next to the art gallery on Alfred Street, the side of the Council building in High street, and next to the Thai Restaurant by the Cinema in Kinross Street.
- Areas of extensive bush obstruct the free flow of pedestrians around Seymour Square by the riverfront walkway between High Street and Alfred Street, south of the Queen Street carpark in Charles Street, and west of the carpark by the fire station in Symons Street. Extensive bush areas can pose potential threats in the form of entrapment spots. This is dealt with in the CPTED Strategy on page 47.
- Ambiguous pedestrian crossings are possible accident spots due to a lack of clarity on the traffic situation, caused by either the use of certain materials, their layout or their overall location.



ABOVE FIG. 5-21: High quality pavement and good width of the footpath in Market Street.



ABOVE FIG. 5-22: Poor quality pavement and insufficient width of the footpath in Wynen Street.



ABOVE FIG. 5-23: Footpath assessment.

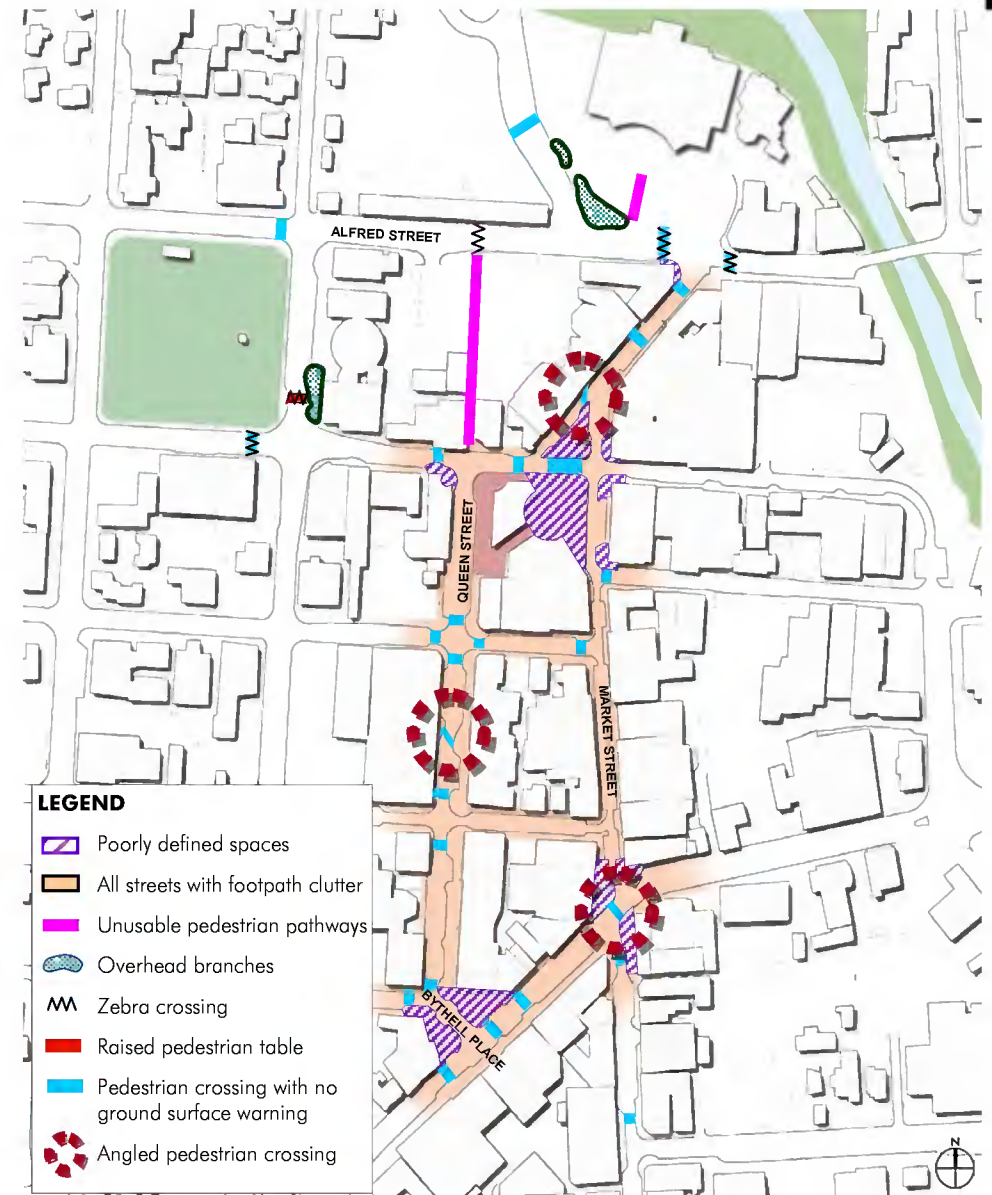
### 5.2.4 Non-visual experience and catering for the elderly

The experience of the town centre by sight impaired and elderly people requires extra attention. This is particularly topical in Blenheim as the town has one of the highest numbers of mobility scooters in the country and a contingent of elderly. Many younger, and better sighted people never realise what hazards and inconveniences exist for people with mobility or visual impairment issues.

A site visit to the town centre, guided by a sight-impaired local resident brought a range of issues to attention, many of which require intervention of some sort.

#### Proposed initiatives

- Proposals to give more definition to ambiguous spaces (Market Place and Bythell Place) will be part of open space upgrades (refer to Strategic Theme 6: A Vibrant Streetscape and Urban Open Spaces).
- This pathway through the Alfred Street carpark, unusable for sight impaired people, will be redesigned as part of the construction of the Alfred Street carparking structure.
- The Indicated areas with overhead branches should be targeted as part of Council's ongoing maintenance programme.
- The Council should design an upgrade programme to ensure that all pedestrian crossings will have ground surface warning.
- The angled pedestrian crossing in Queen street should be reconstructed as part of the proposed new library and art gallery in Queen Street; the angled crossing on the northern side of Market Place will be part of the upgrade of Market Place (Strategic Theme 6); and the angled crossing in Market/ Scott/ Main Streets will be included in changes to this crossing under Strategic Theme 8: A Future-proofed Street Network.
- The identified streetscape clutter in Market and Queen Streets and connecting streets between them, should be subjected to a clutter removal plan. For more details refer to Strategic Theme 6.
- Street trees with a large canopy should be used to provide shade against the heat and shelter against the wind and rain. This should be combined with increased seating opportunities, to create more places for rest along important pedestrian routes. An extensive Street Tree Strategy is developed and is presented under Strategic Theme 4: A Greener Town Centre.
- Consistent use of mountable kerbs in desired locations should be part of streetscape upgrade programmes.
- Careful consideration in the light of the above should be given to the location of new services such as transformers, fire hydrants and the like. Existing obstructions should be gradually moved out of the way as part of streetscape upgrade programmes.



ABOVE FIG. 5-24: Non-visual experience of the town centre area.

### 5.2.6 Finding your way around

For a town centre to have an understandable layout and be navigable, it must provide good wayfinding. This helps with the perception of safety and stimulates the local economy. The legibility of the town centre (how understandable the centre is laid out and how easy it is to find your way around) could be improved. Particularly from the eastern approaches, the roading layout is confusing because of some disconnections near the river, several one-way streets, several 135° angles, the intrusiveness of State Highway 1 on the local network, and poor definition of street edges by quality buildings.

Wayfinding and legibility should be improved by drawing attention to natural and built landmarks around the town centre, applying a consistent signage theme, and creating recognisable landscaping in public open spaces. Emphasising gateways that signal to people that they are entering the town centre will assist with this (refer to Strategic Theme 7: Attractive Entrances into Town).

Figure 5-25 shows proposed **initiatives** to improve way finding opportunities for both locals and visitors, either on foot or by car. They consist of a combination of formal signs and informal hints.

**Formal signs** consist of directional signage and information displays in key decision making points either by car or on foot (refer to example in figure 5-26).

- Town Centre signs aimed at the car user could be assessed on their effectiveness.
- Three categories of walking routes could be distinguished. Consistent signage could be developed for: routes connecting recreational destinations; routes connecting major destinations (Council building, Library, Convention Centre etc) and routes connecting heritage and character structures, possibly with heritage signs.

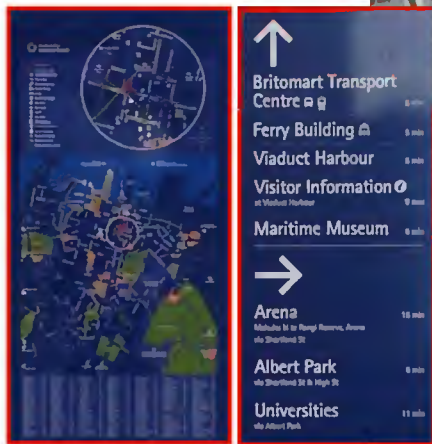
**Informal hints** are given by recognisable buildings and other features.

- A landmark function could be acknowledged in the designs of new buildings in key locations.

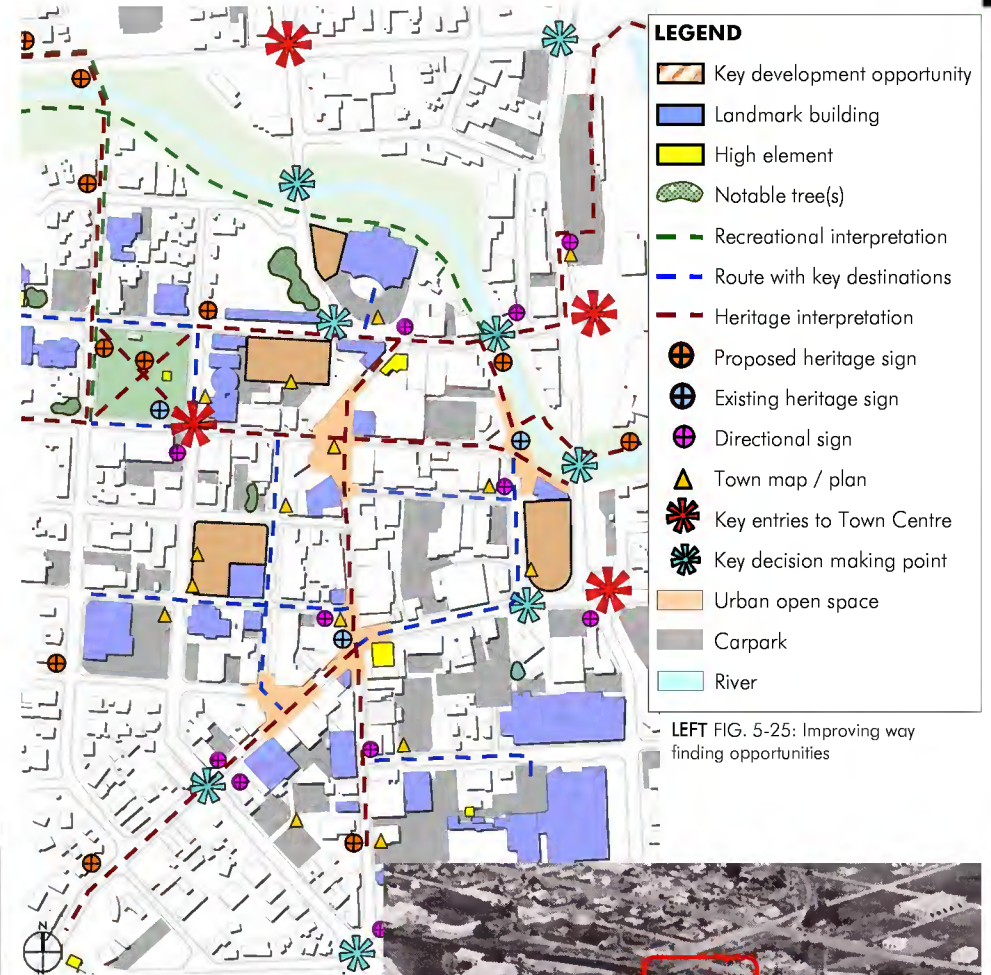
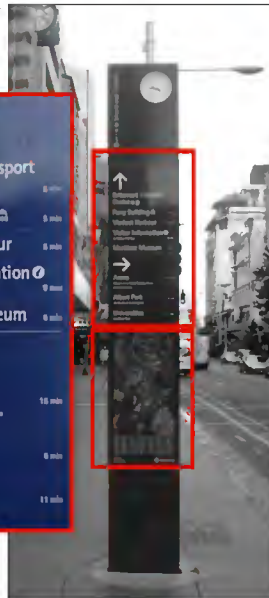
- View shafts to high building elements, such as spires could be protected as well as notable trees.

- Open spaces could be maintained and designed in such a way that they are distinguishable and memorable.

- Visual connections to the river could be cherished and protected and new ones could be considered.

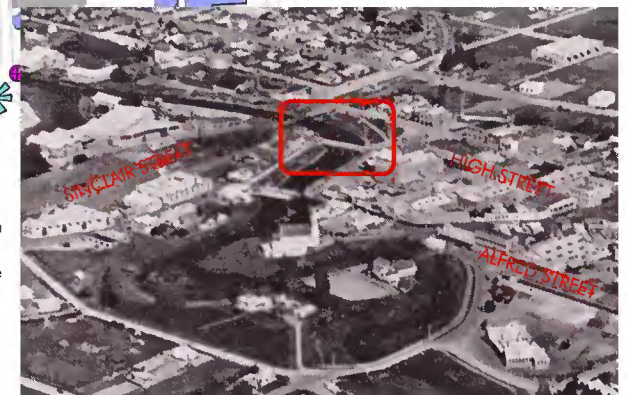


ABOVE FIG. 5-26: Example of effective formal signage aimed at the pedestrian



LEFT FIG. 5-25: Improving way finding opportunities

RIGHT FIG. 5-27: Aerial photo taken from the northwest (1937), showing the old High Street bridge. Demolition of that bridge complicated the legibility of the town centre as High Street suddenly lost its role as one of the most important entrances into town. Source: **The First Hundred**, The story of the Borough of Blenheim 1869-1969, by A. Beverley



## 5.2.2 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime prevention has a major impact on the vibrancy, economy and viability of a city centre. Although the Blenheim Town Centre has a reasonably low crime rate, the town needs to focus on becoming a safer place - a town centre which encourages activity over an increased number of hours, and creates a public realm with plenty of opportunities to see and be seen and which people feel comfortable being in, regardless of age, gender and ability. Careful and considerate design plays a large role in this, hence the term Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

There are two categories of safety issues for the town centre:

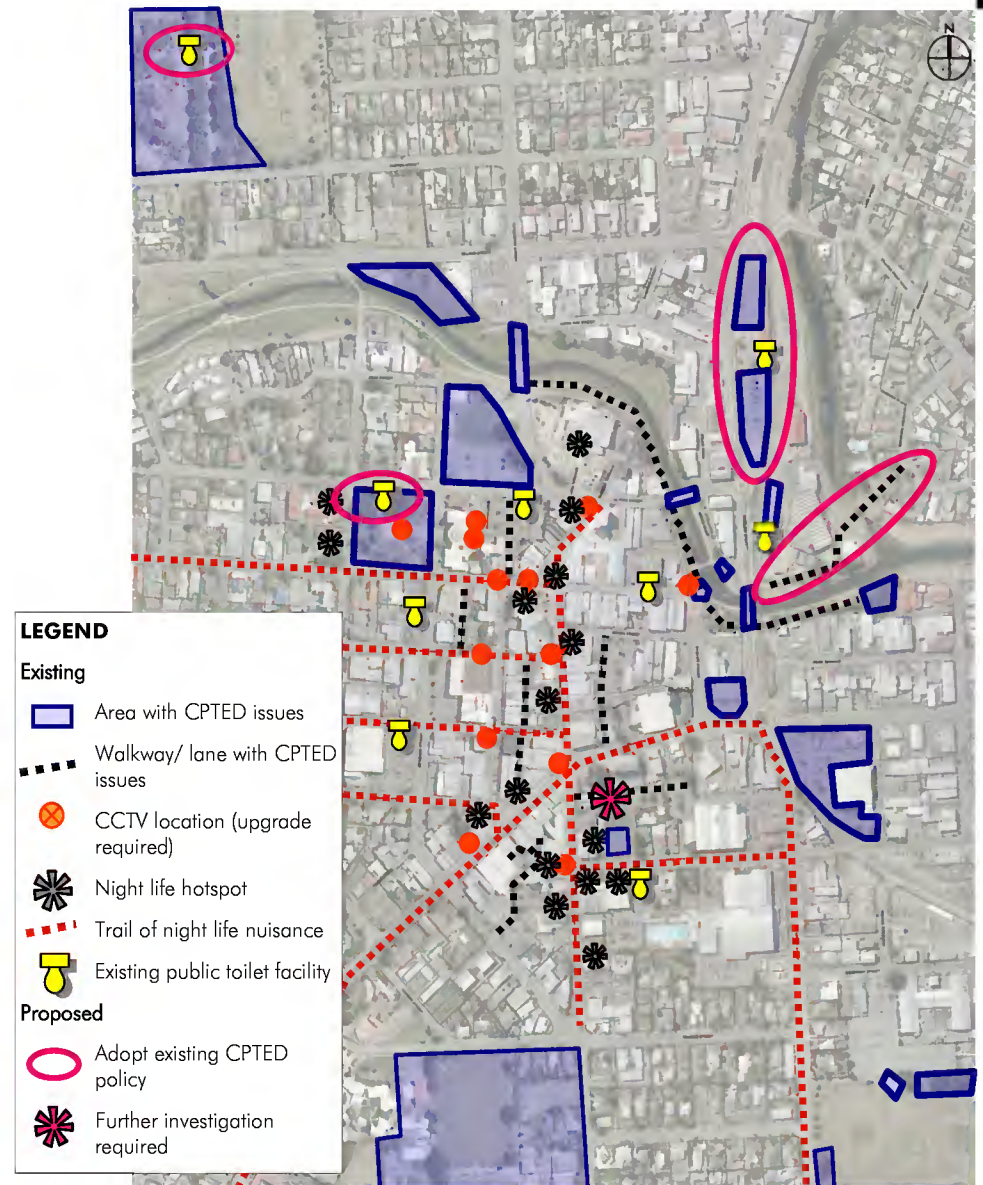
1. Crime: Alcohol related crime, theft of and from cars, property damage including graffiti, burglary of property; and
2. Perception: threats to personal safety from poor lighting, entrapment spots, reduced sightlines, a lack of legibility and activity, uncertainty of ownership, poor maintenance and reduced protection.

Several specific issues are summarised in figure 5-28.

- There are several open spaces with CPTED issues, due to the activity or lack of activity in it, absence of overlooking activities, location and type of vegetation.
- Walkways and lanes with issues, due to the lack of overlooking activities.
- Trail of nightlife nuisance in relation to nightlife hotspots (pubs and clubs).
- Some CCTV cameras are not working.

### Proposed interventions

- Commission a town centre-wide CPTED review to identify potential improvement across the centre. This should include detailed prioritisation and staging of recommendations and take account of existing CPTED policy and unadopted CPTED site assessments and other reports e.g. Boathouse Theatre Walkway, Seymour Square, Pollard Park.
- Additional street lighting in Alfred Street between Seymour Street and Seventh Lane and in High Street between Seymour and Queen Streets.
- Develop lighting and access policy for Town Centre Lanes (First - Fourteenth Lanes) including a detailed assessment of the alleyway from the Warehouse car park, along the rear of the Post Office Building to Market Street.
- Undertake CPTED improvements within Pollard Park to improve sightlines and visibility and to reduce entrapment spots (including toilet upgrade and clearing of vegetation in the playground area) in accordance with the recommendations of the Pollard Park CPTED Assessment.
- Ensure any Council commissioned works (landscape and urban design concept) goes through a professional CPTED review prior to its formalisation.
- Replace the existing CCTV cameras with wireless camera technology.
- Increase the general intensity and standard of street and pathway lighting.
- Create active frontage to streets, walkways and open spaces through building design.



ABOVE FIG. 5-28: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design: existing issues and proposed interventions.

## 5.2.7 Cost estimation, timeline & prioritisation

Ref*	page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/ medium/ low	Comments/ assumptions
D3	46	Improve Town Centre signage on three major entrances to town centre: intersections Nelson and Hutcheson Streets; Alfred and Sinclair Streets; Main and Sinclair Streets.	physical	Short term	High	
11	47	Additional lighting in Alfred St between Seymour St and Seventh Lane.	physical	Short term	High	
12	47	Additional lighting in High St between Seymour St and Queen St.	physical	Short term	High	
13	47	Develop lighting and access policy for Town Centre Lanes (First - Fourteenth Lanes).	administrative	Short term	High	
14	47	Commission a town centre wide CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) review to identify potential improvement across the centre. This should include detailed prioritisation and staging of recommendations and take account of existing CPTED policy and unadopted CPTED site assessments and other reports e.g. Boathouse Theatre Walkway, Seymour Square, Pollard Park.	administrative	Short term	High	
15	47	Undertake a detailed CPTED assessment of the alleyway from the Warehouse car park, along the rear of the Post Office Building to Market Street.	administrative	Short term	High	
16	47	Undertake CPTED improvements within Pollard Park to improve sightlines and visibility and to reduce entrapment spots (including toilet upgrade and clearing of vegetation in the playground area) in accordance with the recommendations of the Pollard Park CPTED Assessment.	physical	Short term	High	
17	47	Formalise CPTED considerations into the Blenheim town centre District Plan Review for all new development and building redevelopment.	administrative	Short term	High	
18	47	Ensure any Council commissioned works (landscape and urban design concept) go through a professional CPTED review prior to its formalisation.	administrative	Short term	High	

\*) Refers to Blenheim Town Centre Draft Implementation Strategy



Ref*	page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/ medium/ low	Comments/ assumptions
I9	47	Replace the existing CCTV signage and cameras throughout the town centre. Replace with wireless camera technology.	physical	Medium term	High	
O4	43	Footpath improvements in Queen St (western side) between Arthur St and George St.	physical	Short term	High	
O5	43	Footpath improvements in High St (northern) between Seymour St and Market Place.	physical	Short term	High	
O9	43	Footpath improvements in Main St (northern and southern side) between Market St and Sinclair St.	physical	Short term	Medium	
O10	43	Footpath improvements in Alfred St (northern side) between Russell Terrace and the bridge.	physical	Medium term	Medium	
O11	43	Footpath improvements in Alfred St (southern side) between Russell Terrace and Hutcheson St.	physical	Medium term	Medium	
O12	43	Footpath improvements in Seymour St (eastern and western) between Alfred and Maxwell Rd.	physical	Medium term	Medium	
O13	43	Footpath improvements in Symonds St (eastern and western side) between Wynen St and Main St.	physical	Medium term	Medium	
O14	43	Footpath improvements in Alfred St (northern and southern side) between Henry St and Seymour St.	physical	Medium term	Medium	
O15	43	Footpath improvements in High St (northern and southern side) between Henry St and Seymour St.	physical	Long term	Low	
O16	43	Footpath improvements in Charles St (northern and southern side) between Henry St and Seymour St.	physical	Long term	Low	
O17	43	Footpath improvements in Arthur St (northern and southern side) between Henry St and Seymour St.	physical	Long term	Low	
O18	43	Footpath improvements in Redwood St (eastern side) between Main St and Kinross St.	physical	Long term	Low	
O19	43	add footpath to the northern side of Kinross St, between Redwood St and railway line.	physical	Long term	Low	
O20	43	Footpath improvements in Henry St (eastern and western) between Alfred and Maxwell Rd.	physical	Long term	Low	

\*) Refers to Blenheim Town Centre Draft Implementation Strategy