

BLENHEIM TOWN CENTRE

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

FOR MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

JULY 2009

PREPARED BY

URBANISMPPLUS LTD

POCOCK DESIGN:ENVIRONMENT LTD

PROSPEROUS PLACES PTY LTD

PATRICK PARTNERS PTY LTD

TTM CONSULTING PTY LTD



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sustainable
communities**

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A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

FOR MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

This report is a comprehensive summary of the outcomes of a four day Inquiry By Design workshop. The projects identified within this report should be considered indicative only.

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URBANISPLUS LTD

Level 1 Premier Building, 2 Durham Street East, Auckland City, tel: +64 9 302 2488, fax: +64 9 302 2489

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The outcomes of an urban design-led project aimed at revitalising the Blenheim Town Centre are summarised in this report.

The goal of this **Blenheim Town Centre, a Vision for the Future** project is to increase wellbeing in a social, environmental, cultural, and economic sense. More specifically, the project is envisaged to lead to growing community cohesion and local pride, increased business vitality and better environmental performance. The revitalisation of the town centre will in turn have a positive effect for the wider Blenheim settlement, with flow-on effects for the Marlborough District.

In order to achieve this, project objectives are set as follows:

- Review of existing policy and outcomes of previous projects pertaining to the town centre;
- Facilitation of community and stakeholder consultation;
- Facilitation of a four day intensive Inquiry-By-Design community workshop;
- Identification of issues and opportunities and analysis of possible development responses with detailed conceptual design ideas being progressed where applicable; and
- Provision of a summary of implementation actions including recommendations for District Plan changes and staging agendas.

This report summarises the preferred development recommendations which are intended to underpin future Council plans and create a mandate for Marlborough District Council projects. The interactive and integrated nature of the project is envisaged to lead to a strategy that has buy in from the Marlborough community as well as Council staff. All initiatives amount to a considerable investment over the next decades in physical works as well as business and organisational initiatives and stimuli. The earliest benefits resulting from these investments will be noticeable over the next few years.

Opportunities and critical issues requiring action are identified. A range of place-based initiatives - large and small - are recommended under ten 'Strategic Themes'. These underpin a long term vision for the Town Centre area with implementation commencing in the short term.

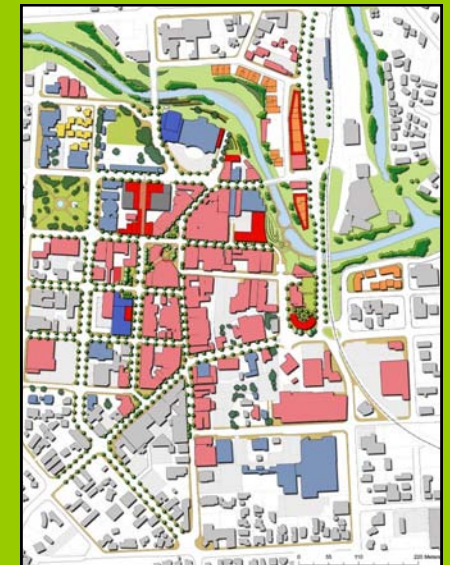
To be successful, the recommended investments aim to be both visionary and practical. Design and planning responses included within this report integrate a

broad range of interests, including the **vitality** of the town centre, **safety** and **accessibility**, **economic performance**, **tourism** and **employment** opportunities, town centre **vegetation**, connectivity with the **rivers**, streetscape **vibrancy**, attractiveness of **entrances** into the town, long term **transport efficiency** and **user amenity**, protection of **characteristic structures**, and improved **architectural quality**.

Blenheim's population growth is not expected to enable strong private sector driven growth. Besides, the process established that large structural changes to the town centre are not required. Instead many of the initiatives are aimed at better and more efficient utilisation of the parts of the town centre that are already present, such as the rivers, urban open spaces and key streets.

Some of the highlights include:

- A proposal for a new library and art gallery in Queen Street with direct connections to Market Street;
- Upgrade or redesign of several urban open spaces and the formation of new ones to achieve a greater variation in public open spaces in the town centre; this includes opportunities to capitalise on Blenheim's riverside setting;
- Identification of private sector opportunities that offer potential for improvement in the way the town centre presents itself to users of the State Highways;
- Streetscape upgrade, lighting and tree planting programmes to incrementally make conditions to shop, work and meet more attractive;
- Upgrades of parts of the street network aimed at improving traffic flows and increasing walkability; and
- Planning measures to celebrate Blenheim's characteristic structures and attract quality architectural development.



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introduction PART 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the project

Marlborough District Council has facilitated a new vision for the Blenheim Town Centre. It is the outcome of a place based Inquiry-By-Design (IBD) workshop and consultation process held between February and May 2009. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for the Council and the Blenheim community in their decision making for future investment to ensure the centre makes the greatest possible contribution to our wellbeing.

1.2 Project aims and deliverables

Overall project aim:

To develop an integrated long term vision for the Blenheim Town Centre with the ultimate aim to "create the environment for others to get on with their business" (Francis Pauwels, Strategic Planning Manager Marlborough District Council).

Urbanismplus Ltd has been engaged by the Council to directly manage the visioning process. It has been assisted by Prosperous Places Ltd, Pocock Design:Environment Ltd, Patrick Partners Ltd, TTM Consulting Ltd, a number of technical Council officers, and various interested parties including members of the design community and general public.

Specific aims relevant to this project include:

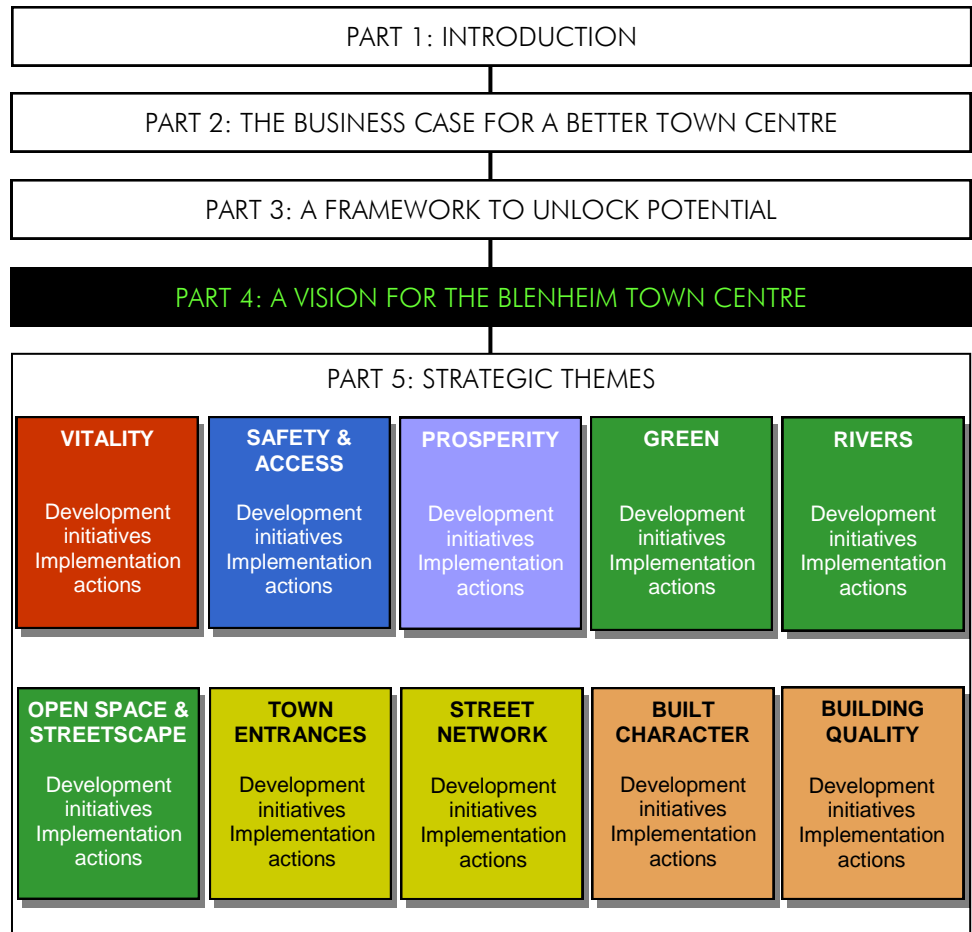
- Review existing policy and outcomes of previous projects pertaining to the town centre;
- Facilitate the pre-workshop community and stakeholder consultation;
- Facilitate a four day intensive Inquiry-By-Design community workshop;
- Identification of issues and opportunities and analysis of possible development responses with detailed conceptual design ideas being progressed where applicable; and
- Provide a summary of implementation actions including recommendations for District Plan changes and staging agendas.

The preferred development recommendations within this report are intended to:

- Underpin future Council plans;
- Create a strategy that everyone has bought into; and
- Create a mandate for Marlborough District Council projects.

1.3 Report structure

An integrated approach has been applied within the workshop and reporting process to ensure that investments and future development in the town centre occur in a holistic manner. The report is structured around 10 'Strategic Themes', principle-based strategies which translate into specific development initiatives. Collectively, these recommendations form the vision for the town centre, supported by a series of project based implementation actions.

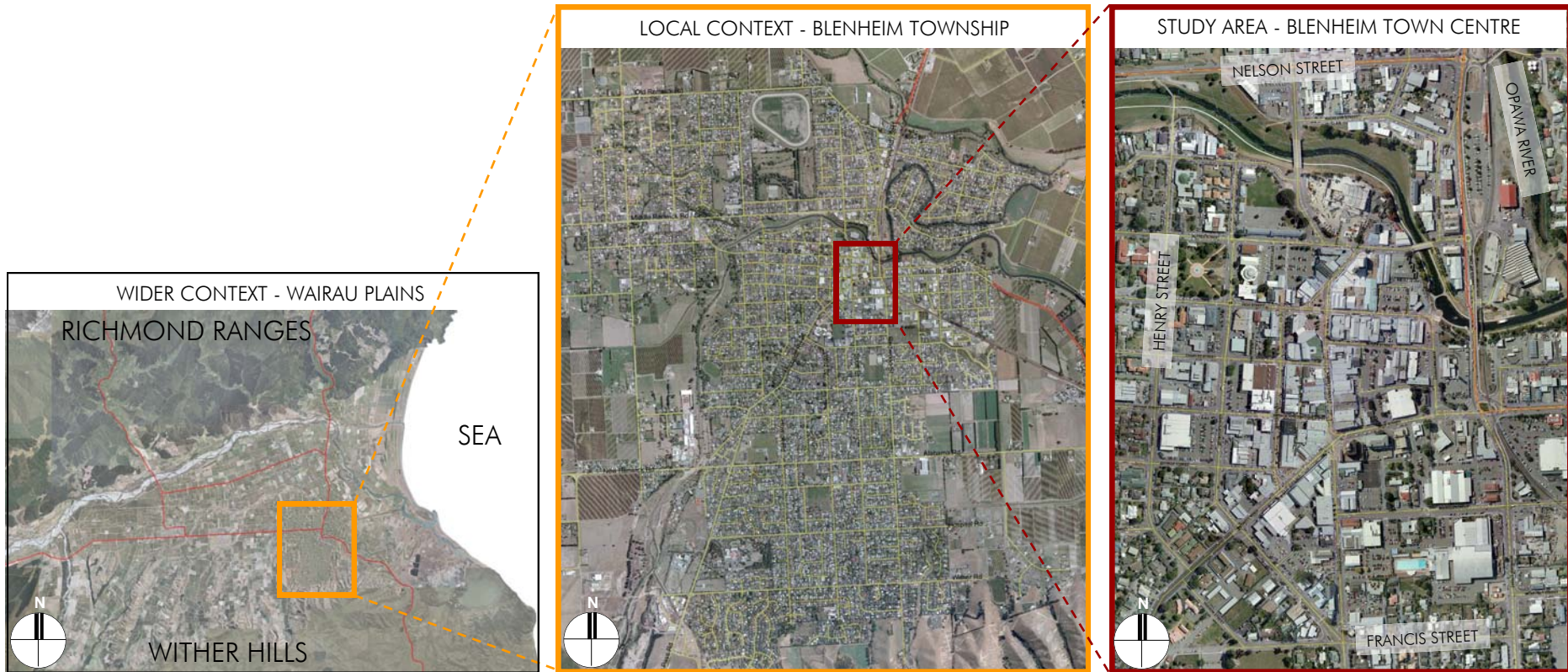


ABOVE FIG. 1-1: Structure of the report

1.4 Project context

The Blenheim town centre study area can be defined as the area which extends from Nelson Street in the north to Francis Street in the south and between Henry Street in the west and Opawa Street and the Opawa River in the east. The study area is the centre of the Blenheim township and is also referred to as the Central Business Zone (CBZ) within which the 'Primary Shopping Area' is located. Blenheim performs a role as the 'capital' and business centre of the Marlborough District. It is located on the Wairau Plains between two ranges, Richmond Range (Tuamarina Hills) to the north and the Wither Hills to the South.

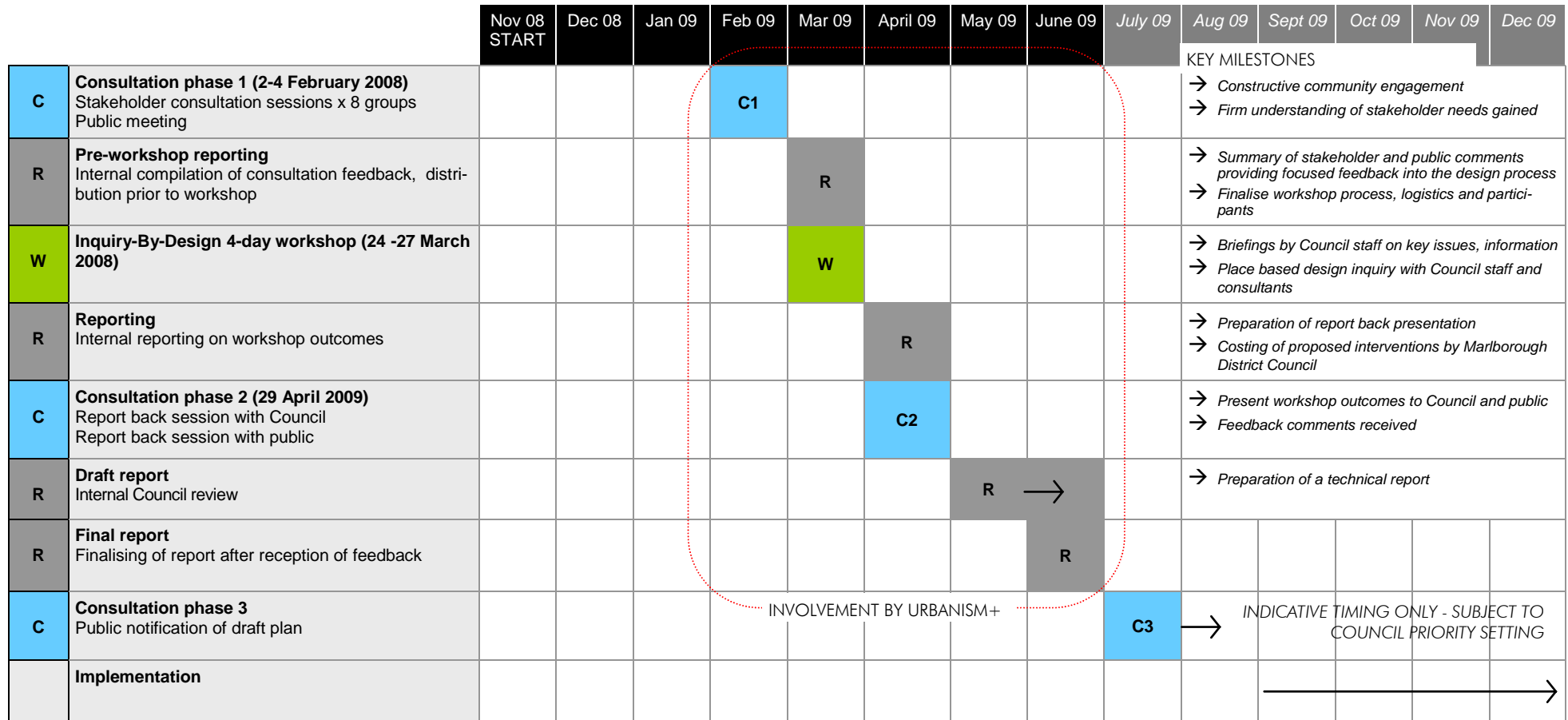
The project has looked beyond the confines of the study area boundaries to ensure that wider land use and transportation influences have been acknowledged and responded to. Community institutions such as Blenheim School, Marlborough Boys College and St Mary's School, as well as Stadium 2000, Wairau Hospital and Landsdowne Park, all of which lie just inside or immediately outside of the study area, are of critical importance to the development of the Blenheim Town Centre. The same applies to major transportation networks. SH1 between Picton and Christchurch and the intersection with SH6 to Nelson are of major importance to the town centre.



ABOVE FIG. 1-2: The wider context, the local context, and the Blenheim Town Centre study area

1.5 Project process - an indicative timeline

INDICATIVE TIMING ONLY - SUBJECT TO COUNCIL PRIORITY SETTING



LEGEND

- W Workshop stage
- C Consultation stage (in four phases)
- R Reporting stage
- P Plan / framework stage

ABOVE FIG. 1-3: Summary of the project process and area of involvement by Urbanism+

1.6 Project consultation

The project relied on interested members of the public and other stakeholders to be involved in the process. Focus group sessions and formal public meetings provided a key opportunity for this to occur. Key community representatives were also involved in a technical 4-day Inquiry By Design workshop. In addition to these formal consultative opportunities, several written or verbal comments or discussion points have contributed to a broader community input into the project.

WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED?

Two public meetings were organised for general community consultation.

- On 3 February, an interactive session took place attended by about 70 people. Ideas were developed and discussed in groups using large base maps, tracing paper and felt pens.
- On 29 April, the general public was invited to a report back session hosted by the Council in which the consultants presented the findings of the project so far. Approximately 130 people attended.

Eight Focus Group meetings have been held additionally to consult with selected stakeholders:

- Representatives of community organisations and institutions such as: Marlborough Boys College, Marlborough Girls College, Blenheim Borough School, Sport Marlborough, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Library, Marlborough 4 Fun, Art Gallery, Civic Theatre, Stadium 2000, Canterbury Community Trust, Sustainable Housing, Primary Health, Health Overview, Grey Power, Age Concern, Ministers' Association, NZ Police, Te Runanga a Rangitane O Wairau, Ngati Toarangatira, Maori Health, Access & Mobility, Safer Communities;
- Representatives of major Marlborough industries such as: NZ Winegrowers, Hunters, Safe Air NZ, Aviation Heritage, Marine Farming, Federated Farmers, Chateau Marlborough, Destination Marlborough, RNZAF Base, Marlborough Forest Industry Association, Marlborough Research Centre, Marlborough Regional Development Trust, Wine Marlborough;
- Representatives of local businesses and business owners: Chamber of Commerce, various retailers, various property owners, Radio, Combined Clubs;
- Marlborough District Council technical staff;
- Marlborough mayor, councillors, and executive staff;
- Major local developers and investors such as: Robinson Construction, Neil Charles-Jones, De Castro, Deluxe Group, Thompson & Devanny, First National, TH Barnes, Century 21; and
- Representatives of transport related organisations, such as: Marlborough Roads, Opus, HEB, Walking & Cycling, I-office, Access & Mobility, Road Safety.

PRE-WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



Public meeting - 3 February 2009



Stakeholder focus group session - 2 February 2009

POST WORKSHOP COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



Newspaper article inviting the general public to the public report back session. Source: Marlborough Express, 29-04-2009

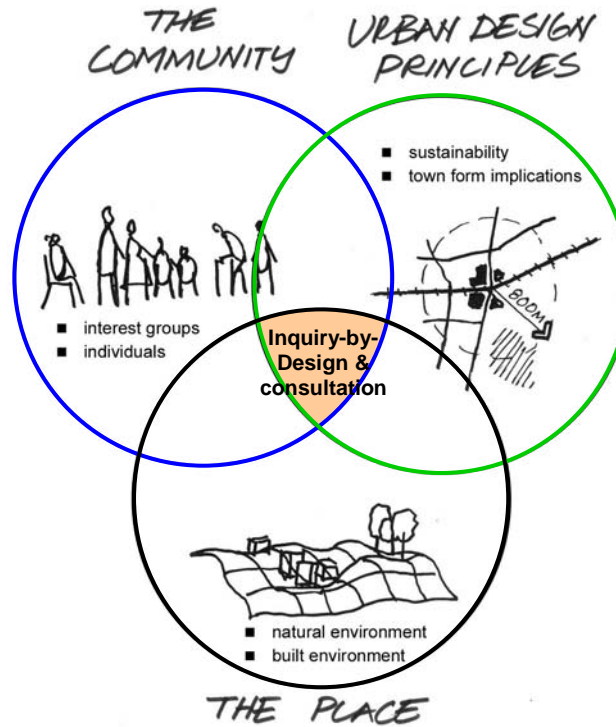
1.7 Inquiry-By-Design workshop process

The core of the Blenheim Town Centre project has focussed around an interactive, multi-disciplinary 'Inquiry by Design' (IBD) technical and community based workshop. The workshop took place in Blenheim over 4 days between 24 March and 27 March 2009. It involved a specialist project team in conjunction with relevant Council Officers, several representatives of the community (including local retailers) as well as of relevant institutions (such as library, art gallery, Destination Marlborough), and Consultants. Council participants included representatives of:

- Transport;
- City Planning and policy;
- Community planning;
- Parks and recreation;
- Infrastructure;
- Tourism; and
- Heritage.

The IBD approach enabled extensive understanding of the wide range of issues and complexities facing the town centre to be canvassed over a relatively short timeframe. The workshop pulled together technical specialists within many disciplines to identify and resolve the issues facing many different interests.

The participatory nature of IBD also enabled an inclusive and consultative planning and design process that people could take ownership of. The Mayor and District Councillors were invited to presentations.



ABOVE FIG. 1-4: Inquiry-By-Design brings together local knowledge and technical knowledge within an integrated, multi-disciplinary setting.





the case for a better town centre PART 2

THE CASE FOR A BETTER TOWN CENTRE

2.1 Getting the best return on investment

The Council identified that a better 'return on investment' in the town centre is necessary to enable long term community wellbeing. Three key progress indicators have been identified:

- Increase in visitor numbers and significant positive economic impact on the CBD;
- Increase in property values within the town centre and surrounding areas; and
- A positive community experience and local pride.



2.2 Growth and development trends

The need to invest in the Blenheim Town Centre should be understood against the background of some headline trends pertaining to economy, employment, population, and tourism in Marlborough.

Marlborough has transitioned from a horticulture-based economy to high value viticulture. This has led to employment growth but at the same time to a less diversified and therefore more vulnerable economy. Little growth should be expected in the need for land for employment uses located within the town centre. Tourism and visitor attraction seems to offer the greatest economic growth potential.

One third of visitors to Blenheim are day visitors (450,000 of the 1.3m visits per year). This is more day visitors than tourists Blenheim is estimated to attract from the Inter Island ferries. Only about 50% of the 1 million ferry passengers per year travel past Blenheim, and less than a third of these are believed to stop and engage with Blenheim. Most Inter Island ferry visitors are older free independent travellers over 60 years old. The other major component of Inter Island ferry passengers are young independent travellers aged 20 to 29 years old. Only a third of Blenheim visitors stay over-night, with the average overnight stay of business and recreational visitors being only 1.6 nights.

Current retail supply is estimated at 73,200 square metres by Market Economics Ltd. in the town centre and 84,700 square metres in the Marlborough District. Currently around 43,200 people reside in Marlborough District, 29,000 of which live within Blenheim. It is suggested that the area is generally well served by the current provision of retail floorspace based on an industry rule of thumb of 2 square metres per person. That is not to say that more retailers should not be welcomed, but rather that the District does not appear to have an under provision of retail floor space.

Marlborough population projections to 2031 suggest a low decline to modest population growth (from the current 43,200 people to between 41,800 and 53,800). Therefore, population growth alone is unlikely to drive economic and retail growth. The resident population is aging and the highest population growth comes from the over 60s, and those approaching retirement who are already over 50 years old. The contribution of these groups to the local economy, economic growth and retail expenditure will likely decline as they age. Statistics trend a loss of those aged 39 years and younger over time. This extends beyond Marlborough's young adults leaving for higher education, overseas, or big city attractions. The loss includes those in the family formation stages of their life.

Figures show a large turnover of residents, with 50% of residents arriving within the last 10 years (but population growth in that period being less than 16%). Like many other districts, Marlborough is facing the challenge of attracting residents to settle permanently in the district. The Blenheim Town Centre could play a major role for Marlborough District in attracting and retaining young people, through the creation of employment, education and training opportunities.

2.3 Enhancing Wellbeing

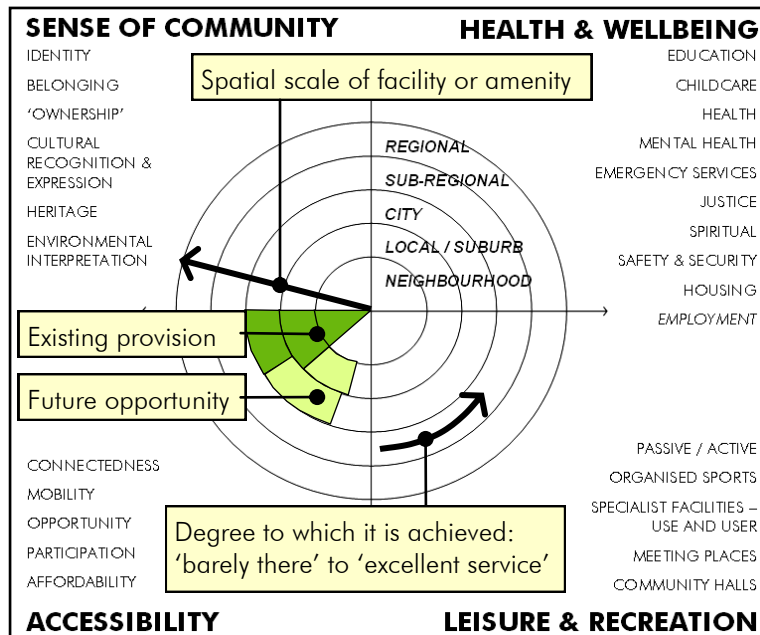
A look at the wider social network provides a more complete picture of the town centre in its context.

A successful social network facilitates community building, provides good accessibility to facilities and opportunities to participate. The provision of social infrastructure such as educational, healthcare and community facilities, and also the qualitative, less tangible aspects of community such as 'fostering a sense of place' and 'identity' in Blenheim were analysed against a range of criteria. This was done for all the different 'community catchments' of Blenheim as well as the central area. Refer to figure 2-1 for the summary of this approach. The composite result is shown in figure 2-2. The Town

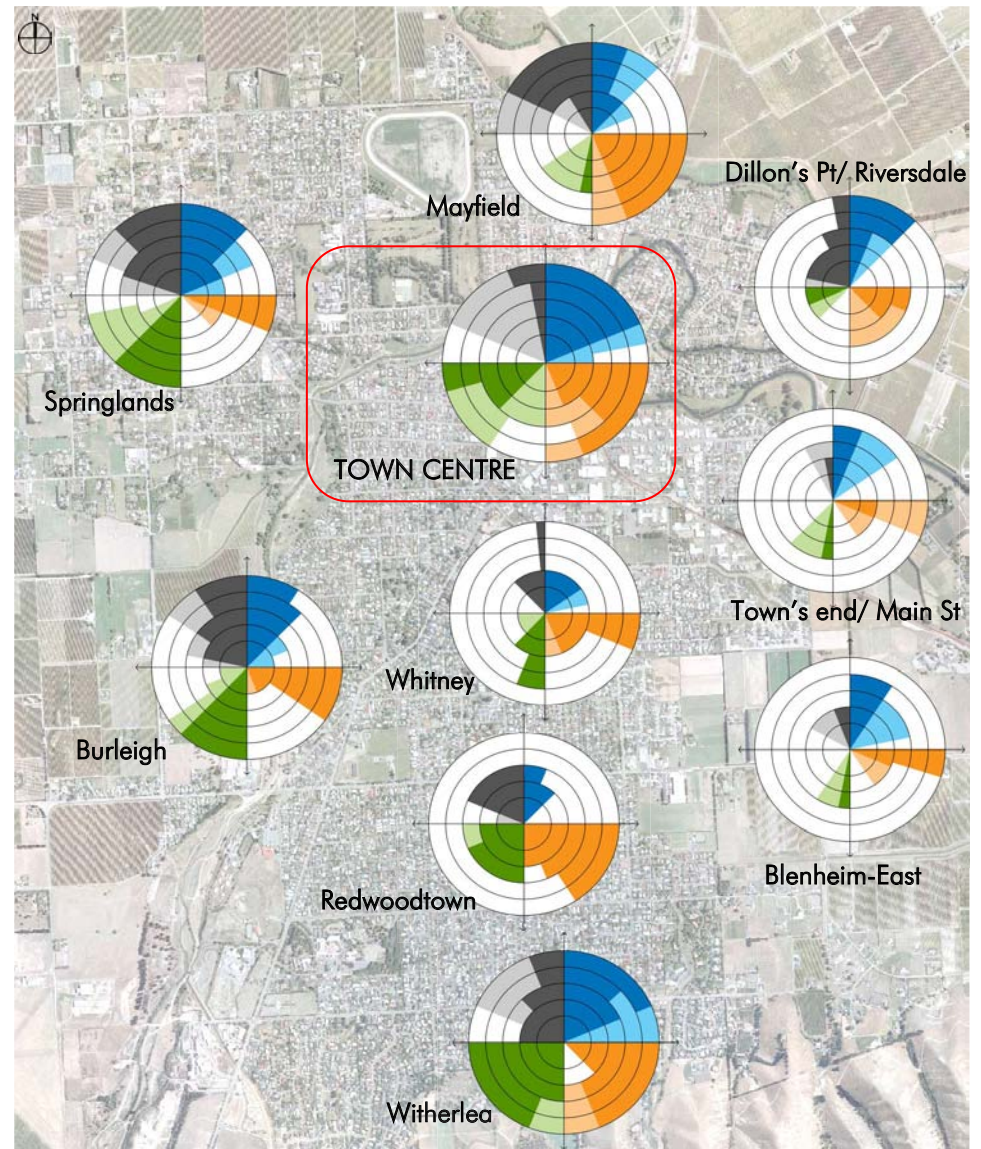
Centre circle depicts a representation of physical community infrastructure on the right hand side of the circle. This is explained by the presence of facilities located in Blenheim that cater not only for the town, but also for the wider district. However, it is clearly shown that the town centre lacks the more intangible qualities, such as sense of community and accessibility.

The areas east of the town centre appear the least strong in this context. This might mean that special attention should be paid to connections between the town centre with all its facilities and the weaker areas to east and south of the town centre. Targeting the barrier formed by State Highway 1 should be part of this.

Specific projects outside the scope of this project could help address these issues as well.



LEFT FIG. 2-1: Base for the radial plots for each individual catchment



ABOVE FIG. 2-2: plot of existing and future social wellbeing of major community catchments in Blenheim

2.4 Opportunities & Challenges

The performance and role of the town centre in the wider Blenheim economic context appears strong.

The 'brand' of the town centre is not considered to be as effective as that of the Marlborough District. A mismatch exists between the expectations of the visitor market, based on the internationally recognised Marlborough brand and the ability of the town centre to add a distinct and meaningful cultural experience to the Marlborough journey. There could be an opportunity for the town centre through a leveraging strategy tied to these attractive regional resources. The challenge in this context is to extend the 'high season' and cater for the off season and weekends.

The Taylor and Opawa Rivers, flowing on the edges of the town centre, represent major green open space opportunities. Blenheim has recognised these opportunities in recent and earlier developments of open spaces and walkways. An opportunity exists to add to these through strengthening of existing connections or implementing new connections and developments of additional open space. The river could also be recognised as a high amenity setting for high quality new developments.

Blenheim is located on the busy SH1 between Picton and Christchurch and on the intersection with SH6 to Nelson. This offers an opportunity to present the town centre to a large amount of 'passing trade' and entice them to engage with the town centre. High quality areas around the entrances into the town centre will be crucial for this purpose. The legibility of the town centre (a logical and understandable urban structure) is of similar importance for both visitors and locals. This would best be achieved through an efficient, safe and balanced movement network for pedestrians, mobility scooters, bicycles, private vehicles, and tour coaches that provide interest for all users.

The presence of the State Highways also poses challenges for the functionality of the town centre. Severance effects have weakened the connections with areas north and east of the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists and, to a lesser extent, for vehicular traffic. Areas of significance such as the station area, open spaces around the Opawa River and Pollard Park are in close proximity to the town centre, but difficult to access.

The quality of the streetscape is an important factor for the amenity of the town centre. Blenheim has not long ago invested in a streetscape upgrade of Market Street. Important considerations would be to define if this streetscape upgrade has resulted in the desired high quality amenity in the town centre and whether this or another treatment should be extended to other areas within the centre. This offers an opportunity to consider existing and new vegetation. Closely related to this is the distribution of hard and soft open spaces and connections between these.

Another opportunity for investment in the town centre is offered by the required new accommodation for the library or an upgrade of the existing one. The same opportunity exists for the art gallery, as the current building constrains the operation of the gallery. Strategic investment into these facilities could have positive spin-off effects for (certain parts of) the town centre.

Council has planned for a new theatre to be built next to the Combined Clubs. This means that the current theatre building in Queen Street may become available for other uses.

The Council is progressing plans for a new carpark building in Alfred Street with space for other uses on the ground floor. This offers the opportunity to attract the desired uses to this area, strategically located at the northern entrance to the town centre. It will also assist in improving the legibility of the town centre as visitors could park in a logical place. Convenient and logical pedestrian connections will be crucial to generate benefits from this investment in the town centre.



ABOVE FIG. 2-3: Grove Road (SH1) leading into Blenheim



ABOVE FIG. 2-4: The Taylor River, a valuable asset for the town centre



ABOVE FIG. 2-5: Council is progressing plans for a car parking structure in Alfred Street

2.5 Issues facing the town centre

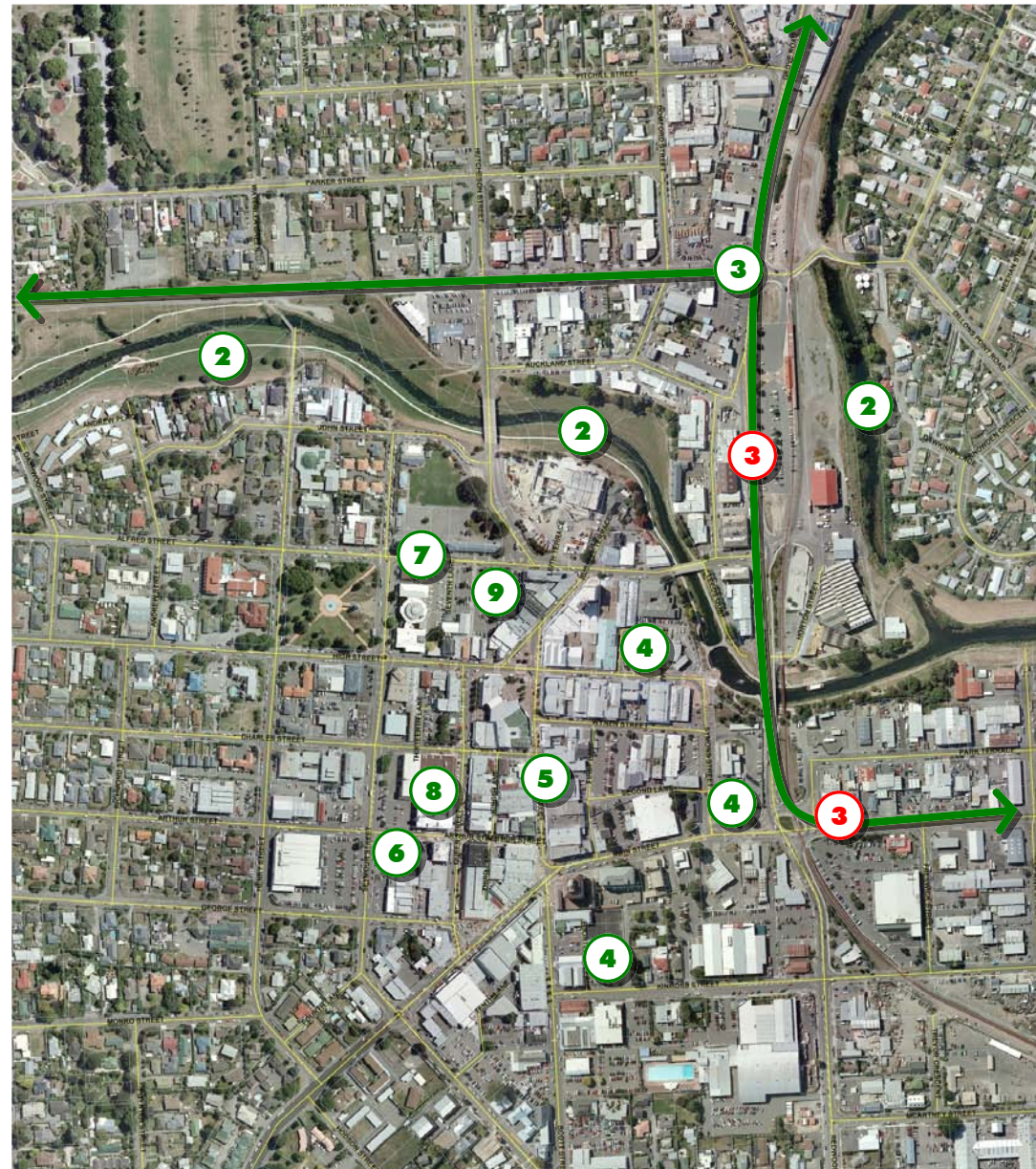
Opportunities

1. The wider Marlborough amenity (natural, economic and cultural) could be leveraged from.*
2. The Taylor and Opawa Rivers in close proximity to the town centre offer potential for greater amenity.
3. The large flow of traffic that passes the town centre on SH1 and SH6 could be better taken advantage of.
4. Vacant or underutilised land is present in the town centre. Some of it is in Council ownership.
5. Market Street has been upgraded recently. This or another treatment could be extended to other areas.
6. The library needs more space or a new building.
7. The art gallery needs more space or a new building.
8. The current theatre building will become available when the new theatre is built next to the Combined Marlborough Clubs.
9. The Council has planned for investment into a new carpark building in Alfred Street with space for other uses on the ground floor.

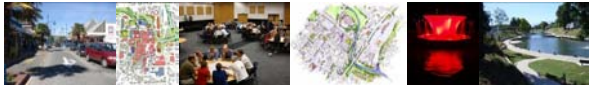
Challenges

1. Whereas Marlborough has established a certain brand or identity, it is difficult to define the identity of the Blenheim Town Centre.*
2. Blenheim's economic growth is not as strong as that of the District.*
3. The State Highways create severance effects between the town centre and areas to the north and east.
4. Demographic projections show static or little growth, an aging population, loss of young people, and a quick turnover of residents.*
5. Legibility within the town centre is poor.*
6. There is little demand for retail and office growth.*

* = not shown on map



LEFT FIG. 2-6:
Opportunities and
challenges in the town
centre



a framework to unlock the potential PART 3

A FRAMEWORK TO UNLOCK POTENTIAL

3.1 Place-making approach

This project is aimed at helping the Blenheim Town Centre develop as one with a distinct sense of place. This “place-making” approach integrates the widest range of issues possible in a manner that will distinguish Blenheim from other towns, appeal as a location to live in and visit, deliver a responsive built form and provide a framework for future development opportunities. This approach is aimed at achieving outcomes that:

- have community support;
- achieve ecologically sustainable design objectives;
- respond appropriately to the regional context;
- promote economic and employment benefits;
- stimulate social activity;
- are viable and responsive to market conditions; and
- are practical.

PLACE-MAKING INFLUENCES WELL-BEING

Well-being and quality of life are linked to the ability of people to easily engage in social, economic, cultural, and environmental exchange around them. As all exchange occurs at some point in space, the built environment can play a large role in either facilitating or lessening potential exchange from occurring.

People will generally engage in more exchange when in a space they feel comfortable in. Wellbeing will accordingly be maximised if the city is thriving and provides a distinct environ within which people can strongly associate and readily feel ownership.

The public realm (parks, roads, squares, and public-use buildings) is the main setting for exchange of all sorts. To maximise exchange, the public realm needs to be as convenient, comfortable, and safe as possible. The way in which private activities relate to it is just as critical as the design quality of the public realm itself.

GUIDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR “PLACE” CREATION

The following components are factors that can contribute to the creation of high quality ‘places.’ The focus should be on delivering outcomes that provide opportunities for:

Socially active and safe environments

- well-used public spaces which promote social contact, e.g. Market Place, Bythell Place, open spaces near the rivers;
- connected streets where motorists provide surveillance of pedestrians and property;
- parks which are prominent and visible from streets and buildings, e.g. places on Queen Street and by the river; and

- properties and parking areas which are well overlooked to deter property vandalism, burglary and car theft.

Integration with the wider community

- good street links to specific sites and locations, such as Pollard Park, the Hospital, NMIT, Stadium 2000;
- overcoming severance effects generated by State Highways 1 and 6;
- a street network providing safe access through locations with a pedestrian emphasis, such as Market Place, Seymour Square, Bythell Place, the station area, areas around the rivers etc.; and
- a range of house types provided by manipulating market conditions (a revised Council development contributions policy for example) to meet a wide range of needs, e.g. on the periphery of the town centre.

Ecological responsiveness

- the retention and enhancement of natural features, such as viewshafts with the Wither Hills and Richmond Range;
- focusing on the introduction of diverse, native trees and plants when considering new vegetation such as street trees;
- protecting the Taylor and Opawa Rivers and their riparian margins; and
- ensuring the provision of high quality stormwater design.

Cleaner air and reduced car dependency

- creating safe, interesting walkable environments within and around the town centre and the rivers; and
- creating connected street patterns with shorter travel distances, which encourage people to walk or bike to town, rather than travel by car.

Coping with change over time

- a network of streets for flexible traffic management;
- an arrangement of backs and fronts where uses can change over time;
- economically sustainable environments and aiming for flexible buildings; and
- saleable properties in high amenity environments.

Place-making extends beyond simple design techniques aimed at making an area aesthetically pleasing. It is underpinned by several broader objectives, aimed at delivering a holistic design response that enables wellbeing and prosperity.

3.2 Urban Design Framework

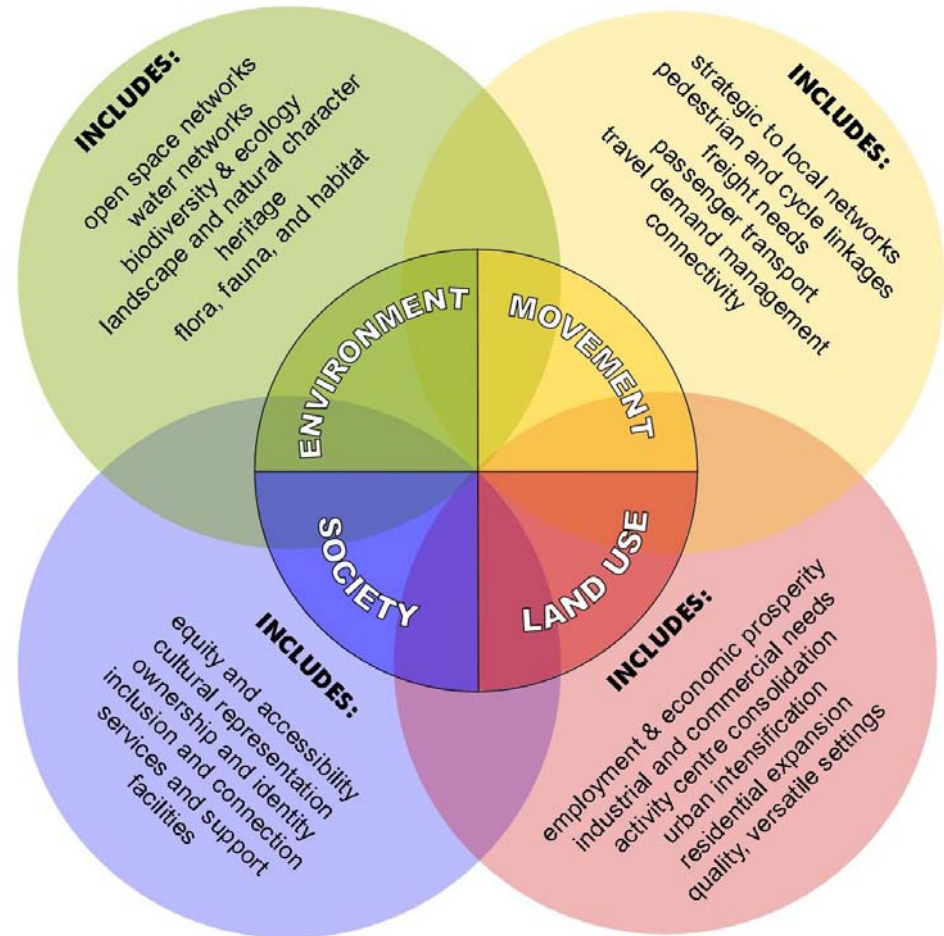
This project is based on an urban design framework which sets out the key assumptions, priorities, and goals for the project. Its purpose is to provide a rationale and focus for what the project should achieve. The use of a framework will ensure that a comprehensive view of Blenheim’s potential is taken.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Ensuring that design is undertaken in a holistic manner to avoid the risks associated with ‘tunnel vision’ or artificial separation of intrinsically inter-related elements. This applies to both:

- The core qualities of the environment (the ‘quadruple bottom line’); and
- The technical disciplines and specialisations that the community uses to apply knowledge.

An integrated approach combines the economic, ecological, cultural, and social components of an area. Intertwined within these key components are sustainability aims, community considerations and implications for existing and future businesses and retailers.



ABOVE: FIG. 3-1: A BALANCED VIEW: Space is finite and it can only be used for one or a few uses. This means that with every action there is an opportunity cost for all other potential uses no longer possible in that space. An integrated approach helps base decisions on the most accurate and informed understanding of exactly what opportunities are being lost as a consequence of specific development choices. Understanding the full range of issues also helps identify the most efficient and effective possible outcomes, directly helping pursue more sustainable ways of urban management.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

A 'Principled' approach has been used to drive the process, based on key urban design elements that can best deliver sustainability into a built outcome. This allows a spatially robust, defensible 'bottom line' to be established against which the potential of the town centre can be explored. Key urban design values factored into the project relate to:

- The essential qualities that should guide development of the built environment; and
- The design principles that are necessary to create optimal physical settings that facilitate social and economic exchange.

Good urban design becomes paramount in ensuring that intensifying and developing the city centre contributes to better economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes.

The urban design principles that underpin the Urban Design Framework are in line with the Ministry for the Environment's "People Places Spaces". They are illustrated on this page.

Key principles of sustainable urban design		
Principle	Elements	Purpose
Consolidation and Dispersal	DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND INTENSITY	To promote higher intensity development in the town centre and lower density around the periphery of Blenheim. This allows local communities, businesses and public transport to be strengthened and resource efficiencies to be achieved, whilst reducing environmental impacts on peripheral areas. It also means maximising the potential of the existing centre to provide logical, high-quality development intensity and 'energy' around a coherent, high-quality public realm. An example of a specific challenge for the town centre would be the consolidation of car parks in car parking structures, to utilise land more efficiently and help local retailers attract
Integration and Connectivity	MOVEMENT NETWORKS; BUILDING INTERFACES	To promote development that is integrated and connected with its surrounding environment and other existing or future communities. This facilitates ease of access, economy of movement, and improved social interaction. It also means supporting and improving local networks and pedestrian links that enable better connectivity to the destination points in the town centre and beyond: Stadium 2000; the train station; Pollard Park; the hospital, Landsdowne Park, NMIT and between other locations that offer employment, growth or recreational opportunities.
Diversity and Adaptability	RANGE OF DENSITIES; MIX OF USES; FLEXIBILITY OF BUILDINGS	To promote choice through the provision of a diverse mix of compatible activities and uses in and around the town centre. These built environments can better adapt over time. This facilitates the ability to respond efficiently to social needs, provides for a range of market demands, and allows for changes in lifestyle. It also means understanding the many different uses already present within the environment and how these may best accommodate natural changes over time. As an example for business uses this includes how lower-value uses, e.g. around Sinclair and Auckland Streets, Grove Road and Park Terrace convert into higher value premises over time.
Legibility and Identity	TOWN FORM; VISUAL CHARACTER; SPECIAL PLACES	To promote places and a streetscape that are easily understood by their users, display a strong local identity, and create appropriate visual character, typical for Blenheim as the capital of Marlborough District. This facilitates an enhanced usage, enjoyment, and pride in Blenheim. It also means enhancing the visual and physical connections with the two rivers and the hills to the north and south of the town.
Environmental Responsiveness	ECO-SYSTEMS; GREEN NETWORK; URBAN WATER; WASTE; ENERGY	To promote urban environments that are responsive to natural features, eco-systems, water quality issues, reduced energy usage and waste production, and balance the spatial needs to achieve this with that required for urbanisation. This facilitates improved ecological outcomes. It also relates to initiatives that will enhance the existing open space network and associated waterways, particularly the Taylor and Opawa Rivers. Additionally, it is about creating safe and attractive environments that encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

3.3 Connecting with other Marlborough District strategies

In undertaking this project, other Council Plans, policies, projects as well as other statutory documents, previous studies, and local expertise were canvassed. These helped provide a full and detailed background to the issues affecting the Blenheim Town Centre.

Principal references include:

General Planning

- Annual Plan 2007-2008
- LTCCP 2006-2016
- Marlborough Regional Policy Statement Review: Discussion Paper 1 - Quality of Life in Marlborough, 2007
- Marlborough Regional Policy Statement Review: Discussion Paper 2 - Marlborough Townships & Small Settlements, 2007
- Marlborough Regional Policy Statement Review: Discussion Paper 9 - Energy Management, 2007
- Marlborough Regional Policy Statement Review: Discussion Paper 10 - Transport & Access, 2007
- Notes: Generic Blenheim Urban Issues, 2006
- Plan Variations: 42, 49 and 50; including scope of variation and s.32 analysis

Transport

- Improving Walkability In Blenheim, Rodney Tolley, 2009
- Marlborough Walking & Cycling Strategy, 2005
- Blenheim and Wairau Plains Strategic Study: Final Report, New Zealand Transport Agency & Marlborough District Council, 2008
- Cycle Route Network Philosophy Discussion Document, ViaStrada Ltd, 2009
- Blenheim Parking Study, TDG, December 2005

Land use

- Residential Land Availability Blenheim & Renwick, December 2007

- Marlborough Townships and Small Settlements Growth Study, 2008
- Blenheim Retail Land Demand Assessment, Market Economics, 2006
- Discussion Document: Proposed plan variations for Business and Industrial Zones, September 2005
- Blenheim Business Land Study - April 2006
- Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Marlborough District - 1997
- Progress Marlborough Economic Development Strategy - July 2008
- Commercial, Industrial and Business Activities in the Wairau / Awatere Area - July 2005

Landscape and Ecology

- Marlborough's Freshwater Bathing Water Quality, F S Tiernan, Environmental Science and Monitoring & Marlborough District Council, 2006-2007
- Source Apportionment of PM10 in Blenheim, Environet Ltd & GNS Science, 2007
- Annual Air Quality Monitoring, Environet Ltd, 2007
- Blenheim Air Emission Inventory, Environet Ltd, 2005
- Management options for reducing PM10 concentrations in Blenheim – Update, Environet Ltd, 2007
- Ecological Assessments of Spring-fed streams on the Wairau Plain, Cawthron Institute, 2002
- Seddon Landscaping Initiative - State Highway 1, Opus & Marlborough District Council, 2006
- Blenheim Landscaping Initiative – Main Street, Opus & Marlborough District Council, 2005
- Blenheim Landscaping Initiative – Sinclair Street, Opus & Marlborough District Council, 2005
- Blenheim Landscaping Initiative – Grove Road, Opus & Marlborough District Council, 2005
- Open Space Strategy: Reserves Management Strategy, Marlborough District Council, 2008
- Tui To Town, Eric Spur, 2008
- State of the Environment report 2003-2004

The project work will build on, not repeat, the substantial amount of work undertaken in previous CBD studies that canvassed a wide range of issues.

3.4 From principles to Blenheim-based solutions

Simply collating strategic ambitions, albeit based on good principles and values, is unlikely to make the town centre a better place. What Blenheim needs is a set of actions and steps that are practical, realistic, affordable, understandable and well-accepted.

ANALYSIS

Fundamental to this urban design-led vision for the town centre are:

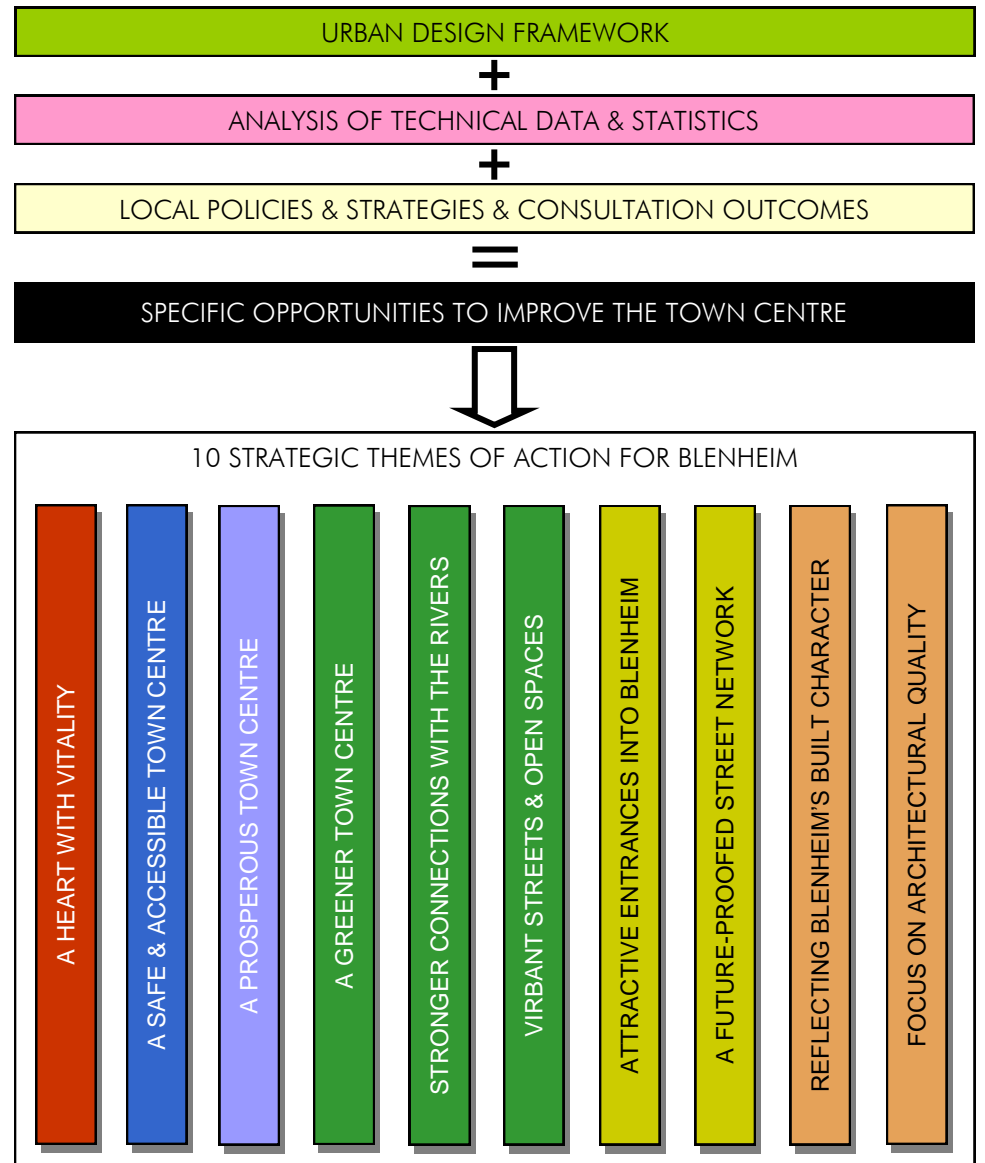
- A framework of broad and generic urban design principles and values, based on best practice and experience gained over time and in a wide range of places worldwide.
- Analysis to gain a full understanding of specific Marlborough and Blenheim-based technical data, growth projections, traffic flows, retail performance figures, ecological indicators etc.
- Analysis of Council policies and strategies and knowledge of local (sometimes conflicting) aspirations and visions of the Marlborough community and other stakeholders.

This has led to compilation of a full picture of the current state of the town centre in the form of a range of issues, opportunities and constraints.

ACTION

To ensure that a fully balanced view and understanding of the issues associated with the town centre was taken, ten *Strategic Themes* have been formulated, loosely associated with particular disciplines such as: environment; community; employment; retail; tourism; movement; and regulatory planning.

Within each of these themes, a number of specific *Strategic Priorities* are identified. Each objective is designed to be mutually reinforcing to the other objectives to ensure that multiple advantages for the CBZ are gained from every proposed investment decision. For example, if focus is placed on changes to the roading network within the CBD under the Strategic Priority of 'efficient movement', benefits are also tried to be gained in other priority areas. The road design for instance could incorporate street trees to help with local character, sense of place, amenity in the form of shelter from the heat (community) and stormwater functioning (environment) and so on.



STRATEGIC THEMES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Each of the 10 *Strategic Themes* forms the umbrella for the *Strategic Priorities*, a group of concrete actions and initiatives that together form the Vision and guide the identification, prioritisation and measurement of detailed physical works and administrative interventions found within specific initiatives. These are described in greater detail in **Part 5**.

STRATEGIC THEME	STRATEGIC PRIORITIES INCLUDE (refer to Part 5 for more)	GO TO PAGE:
1. A Heart with Vitality	<i>Locations for new civic buildings; Parking and Retail development; i-Site location; Markets in town; Town centre management</i>	28
2. A Safe and Accessible Town Centre	<i>Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design; Lighting, Wayfinding, Catering for the elderly and visually impaired; Footpath assessment</i>	41
3. A Prosperous Town Centre	<i>Development opportunities, Employment opportunities; Community opportunities; Tourism opportunities</i>	50
4. A Greener Town Centre	<i>Biodiversity; Urban Parks; Street trees</i>	62
5. Stronger Connections with the Rivers	<i>Riverside parks; Changes to river area; Pedestrian connections with the river</i>	68
6. Vibrant Streets and Open Spaces	<i>Market Place; Bythell Place; Streetscape upgrade Scott Street; Street furniture</i>	75
7. Attractive entrances into Town	<i>Development opportunities for highly visual locations; Entrance features; Sinclair Street</i>	81
8. A Future-proofed Street Network	<i>Traffic lights; Local re-routing of State Highway 1; Walking and cycling plan; Ring road considerations</i>	86
9. Reflecting Blenheim's Built Character	<i>Heritage and character buildings and places</i>	94
10. Focus on Architectural Quality	<i>Changes to the District Plan, Urban Design panel</i>	100

3.5 Making it happen

Actions identified under the respective headings of the Strategic Themes are summarised in tables. For each of these actions, a rough order cost estimate has been provided by Council officers. A summary of the primary funder; the projected timeframe; and the priority are also supplied.

The actions can be broadly divided into three types of implementation:

1. DIRECT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Many of the initiatives detailed within the strategy require direct physical project implementation e.g. acquire a site, reconfigure a road, construct a building.

2. ANCILLARY ORGANISATIONAL / ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT

This may include:

- **MDC Town Centre Champion**, the appointment of someone from within Council to be responsible for driving the project forward.
- **Blenheim Town Centre Steering Committee**. This 'executive' committee is made up of representatives who monitor the progress of the project. Consideration could be given to the invitation of Blenheim ward Councillors, Marlborough District Urban Design Champions, Senior Leadership Team members and Divisional Managers into the group.
- **Urban Design Panel** to help improve the standard of urban planning and design outcomes within the town centre.
- **Development trust**: the establishment of a local authority private trust or agency that undertakes the development, management and operations of large scale development projects.
- **Town Centre Management Organisation**
- **New forms of consultation**. This Urban Design Project could be an appropriate project under which to undertake alternative forms of public consultation which focus on more narrowly defining areas where community feedback is desired.
- **Opportunities to streamline** the execution of functions under several Acts should be explored. For example, ways to undertake the same consultation for a proposed project activity under both the Local Government Act and Resource Management Act. It is also important that the staging, funding and implementation of all work is integrated with the Long Term Council Community Plan.

3. CONSEQUENTIAL CHANGES TO OTHER ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES / PRACTICE TO ENSURE CONSISTENT AND MUTUALLY REINFORCING OUTCOMES

This may include:

- **Regional Policy Statement and Regional Strategies**. The Town Centre Urban Design project may inform future revisions to the Marlborough Regional Policy Statement and other regional strategies e.g. growth, transport, economic development.
- **District Plan and regulatory framework**. This plan recommends changes pertaining to the Central Business Zone and Primary Shopping Area of the Wairau/ Awatere Resource Management Plan (the District Plan). This will have to inform a Council led Plan Change for the CBD that will include a significant revision of objectives, policies, rules, methods and assessment criteria to guide all types of development.
- **Design guidelines**. It is recommended that the District Plan is supported by a non-statutory design guide which advocates quality design responses to typical development challenges in the town centre. This should include specific focus on best practice responses to mixed use, heritage, employment activities, riverside and lane and alley way development. Guidelines are an effective way of informing developers on ways to improve subjective issues such as visual quality and façade design.
- **Review of development contribution policies**. Council could consider the revision of its current development contribution system. Although it has many advantages, the current system may not send a satisfactorily aligned price signal or allocation of community facility demand, that reflects the sustainability benefits of intensification in and around centres, relative to other residential development choices.
- **Council landowner policies on open space and parks**. Supporting actions may need to be undertaken including revisions to the access, use and maintenance policy of park and reserve assets.
- **External policy adjustment**. Other major governmental institutions, such as the New Zealand Transport Agency may need to complete their own amendments to policies, plans and projects to reflect the outcomes (works, staging and funding) of various initiatives in this plan for which they are a major partner.



a vision for blenheim PART 4

4.1 Blenheim big picture

An outline of the key initiatives has been summarised. All of these require further detailed study, costing and consultation in subsequent project phases. Refer to Part 5 of this document for a full explanation of each.

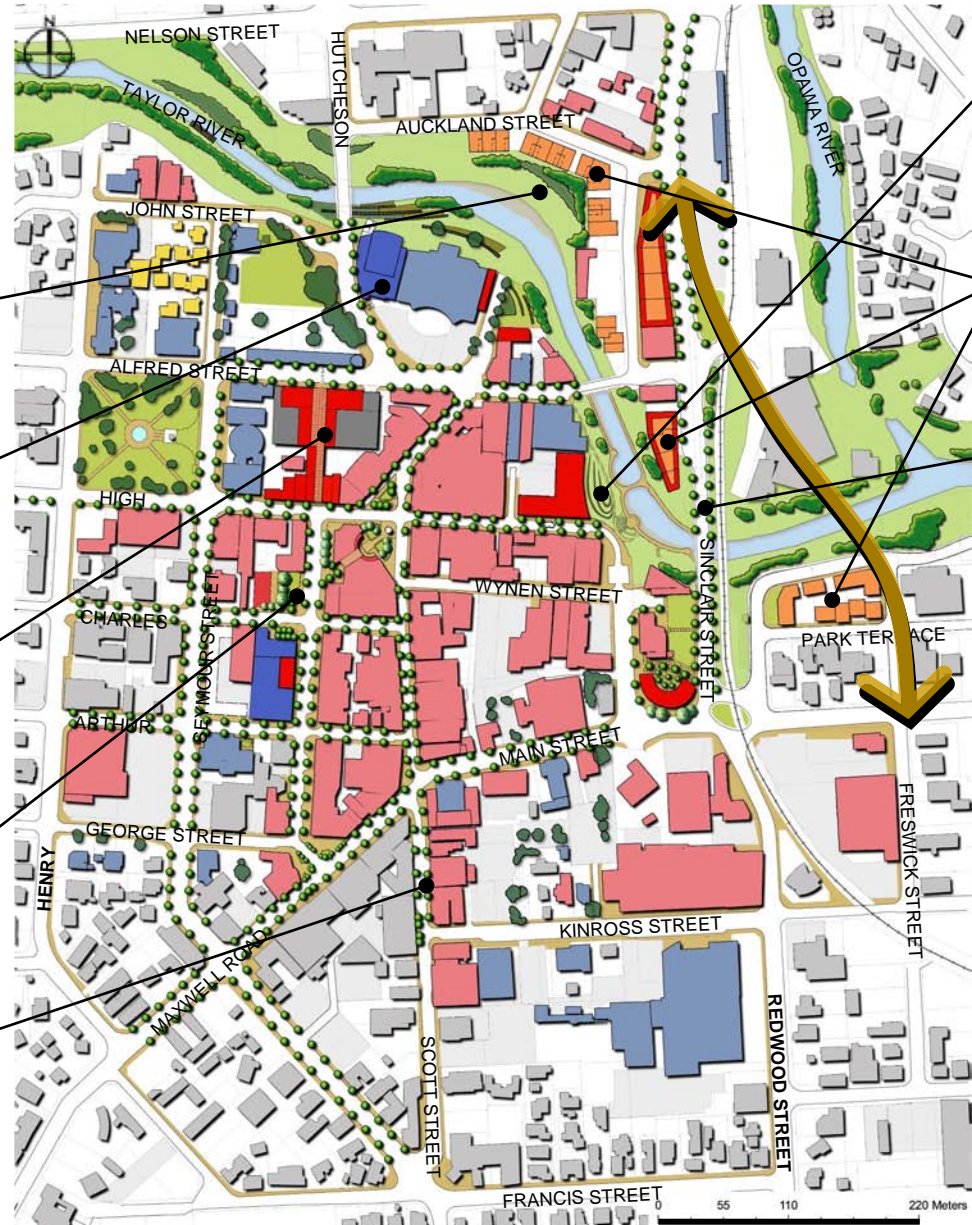
Changes to landscaping and amenity of the area within the river banks
Strategic Theme 5

Proposed new theatre, replacing the current one on the corner of Queen and Arthur Streets
Strategic Theme 1

Proposed Alfred Street carpark possibly with I-site and other uses on ground floor, pedestrian link with Queen Street
Strategic Theme 1

New urban pocket park on the current Queen Street carpark, with potential development of more active uses on the western side
Strategic Theme 4

Streetscape upgrade extended to the upper part of Scott Street
Strategic Theme 6



New riverside parks surrounded by development opportunities for uses with active ground floors, such as mixed-use, and/ or tourism oriented developments
Strategic Theme 3 + 5 + 7

Mixed-use development opportunities relating to open space around rivers
Strategic Theme 3

Greening of Sinclair Street in combination with features at the entrances in the town centre
Strategic Theme 7

LEGEND

- Commercial (proposed)
- Community facility (proposed)
- Mixed-use (proposed)
- Mixed-use, commercial ground floor (proposed)
- Open space
- Footpath
- River
- Existing retail
- Existing community facility
- Existing low density housing
- Existing building

CONTINUED OVERLEAF...

Blenheim big picture -cont'd

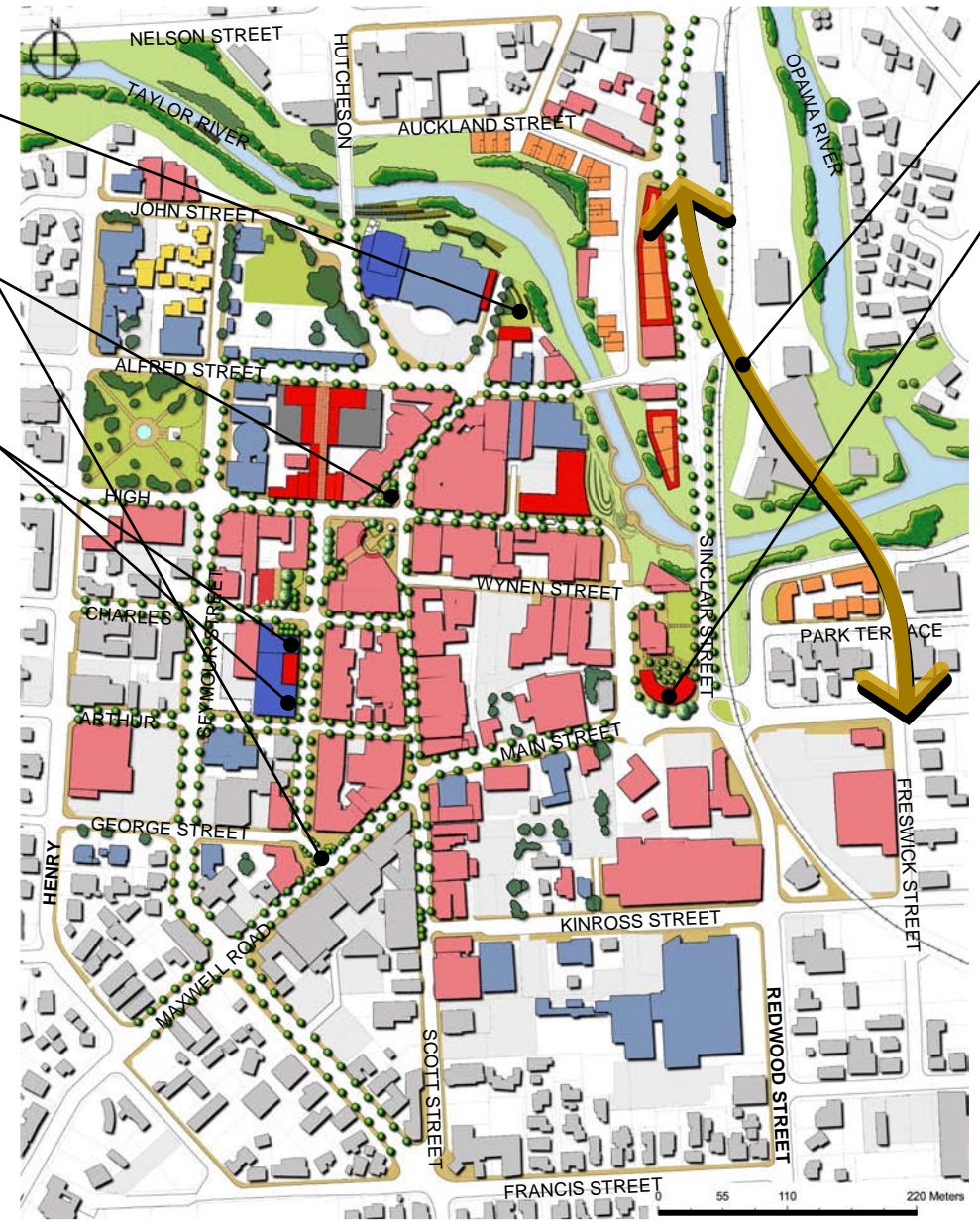
Development opportunities Old Clubs building to increase interaction with the river
Strategic Theme 3 + 5

Public open space upgrades to Market Place and Bythell Place
Strategic Theme 6

New art gallery on the corner of Charles and Queen & new library on the corner of Arthur and Queen, attracting more (pedestrian) life to Queen Street
Strategic Theme 1

LEGEND

- Commercial (proposed)
- Community facility (proposed)
- Mixed-use (proposed)
- Mixed-use, commercial ground floor (proposed)
- Open space
- Footpath
- River
- Existing retail
- Existing community facility
- Existing low density housing
- Existing building



Preferred long-term option for the re-routing of SH1
Strategic Theme 8

Attracting an active use in an iconic building in this highly visible location
Strategic Theme 3 + 7

- Other general initiatives**
- Biodiversity linkages
 - Parks and urban space development
 - Arts and creative initiatives
 - Responding to an aging population
 - Community services
 - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
 - Provision of public facilities
 - Valuing history and culture
 - Place Management Organisation
 - Town markets
 - Employment interventions
 - Visitor and tourism strategy
 - Traffic management
 - Pedestrian and cycle interventions
 - Streetscape upgrades
 - Way finding & Signage
 - Heritage and Building Character recognition
 - Planning and building controls

4.2 Overall Vision for the Blenheim Town Centre





strategic themes **PART 5**

Strategic Theme:

1

A Heart with Vitality

Strategic Priorities aimed at strengthening the vitality of Blenheim's Central Business Zone and Primary Shopping Area

Initiatives under this Theme include:

- Locating a new library and a new art gallery in Queen Street with integration of retail space and public toilets. Good pedestrian and other connections with Market Street will further strengthen the viability of businesses in the town centre.
- Offering a new home to a number of community services in the old library building, creating synergies and efficient sharing of resources for these organisations.
- Identifying high quality retail development opportunities in combination with a Parking Strategy.
- Identifying a preferred location for a new inner city i-Site and associated uses. Consideration of strategic pedestrian connections with Queen Street and the rest of the town centre and car parking functionality is part of this.
- Accommodating markets in town to inject more life into the town centre.
- Setting up a town centre management structure in order to look after the collective marketing of the shopping area.



5.1.1 Vitality of the Central Business Zone

Strengths:

- The current performance and role of the CBZ in the context of a wider Blenheim economic environment appears strong. This is also due to the lack of serious competition within Blenheim or the wider district.
- The town’s functional role represents the entire complement of retail and commercial activity expected from a major country town centre.
- The area is generally well served by the current provision of retail floorspace, based on a rule of thumb of 2 sqm per person (refer to the table below).
- There is substantial long term capacity for additional retailers across a wide variety of sites. This is aligned with Council’s strategy to consolidate car parking within a number of structures in the CBZ. The additional (proposed) structured parking allows around 16,000 sqm of commercial/ retail development in the CBZ.
- Market Street is generally well formed and appears to be functioning well from a business perspective.
- An informal cluster of night life activity has formed in Scott and lower Market Streets.

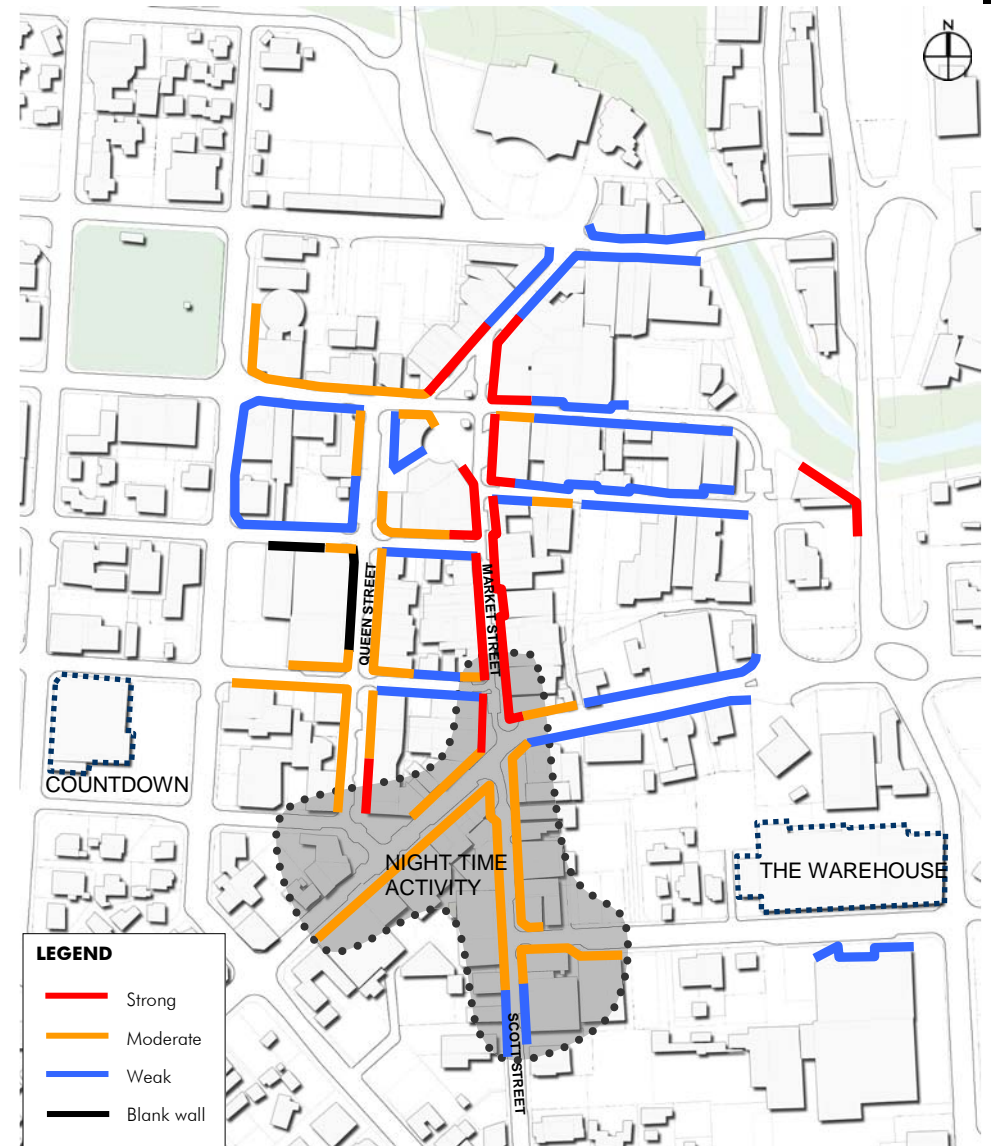
	Marlborough District	Blenheim Town Centre
Population 2008	43,200 persons	29,000 persons
Current retail supply (Source: Market Economics)	84,700 sqm	73,200 sqm
Demand for retail floorspace (based on 2sqm per person)	86,400 sqm	58,000 sqm
<i>Projected population 2031</i> <i>Estimated retail demand</i>	<i>41,800 to 53,800</i> <i>83,600 to 107,600 sqm</i>	

Challenges:

- The built form quality is generally inconsistent.
- Particularly Queen Street has interruptions to the spatial continuity and visual complexity of the streetscape. Several blank walls are presented to the street in the area around the current theatre.
- The vitality of town centre streets, other than Market Street could be improved.

Objectives:

- Investing in retail-compatible uses (such as civic uses and tourist facilities) in high quality buildings in locations with quality, direct pedestrian connections to Market Street, to complement the retail function and create synergies between existing and new uses.
- Replacing the blank walls in Queen Street with uses with more active edges.



ABOVE FIG. 5-1: Analysis of the Retail Vitality in the current situation

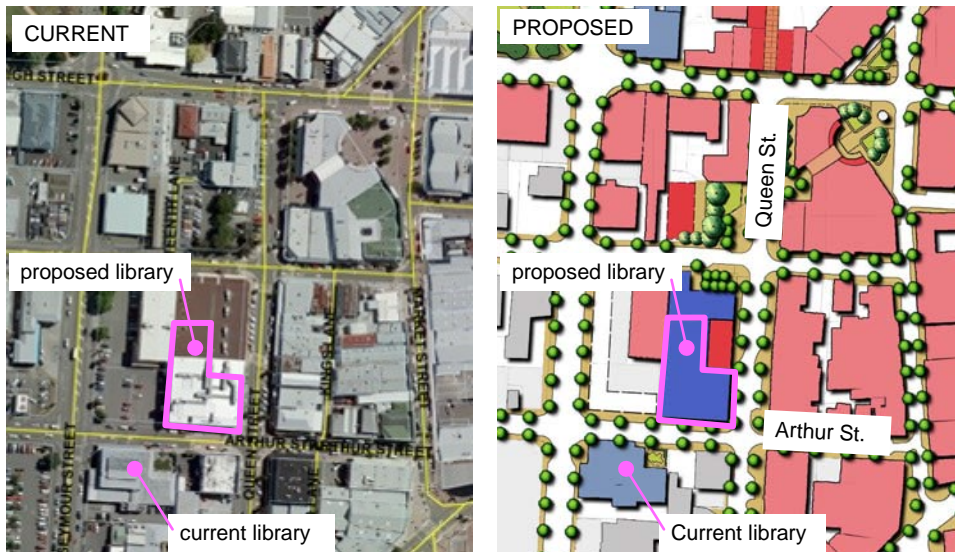
5.1.2 A new library in Queen Street

The Blenheim library has outgrown its current building. Ideally, the library needs a building up to twice as large. The current building also poses constraints on the functionality of the library.

The modern library is more than a single purpose destination. An increasing number of users combine a trip to the library with shopping and vice versa. It also has a limited information centre attraction for visitors. A library therefore, has the potential to generate considerable positive effects for retail and businesses when located in close proximity to them. This will further strengthen the viability of businesses in the town centre, provided that direct and short pedestrian connections with the shopping area are in place.

The Civic Theatre may vacate its current site on the corner of Arthur and Queen Streets in the near future. It is proposed that a new library on the site could bring more activity to that part of the town centre over an extended period, on all days of the week. Integration of some retail space is desirable as a library only has a limited amount of active street-focused spaces.

The current library building can efficiently be re-used, in offering a home to a number of community and related services. This could create synergies leading to efficient use of resources for these organisations. Refer to section 5.3.3 for more details.



ABOVE FIG. 5-2: The preferred location for the proposed new library building with larger and more functional space



ABOVE FIG. 5-3: The preferred location for the new library next to Hotel d'Urville, in the place of the current Civic Theatre.



ABOVE FIG. 5-4: Artist's impression of a new library in the preferred location next to Hotel d'Urville. The new building should respond to the hotel in terms of its scale

Technical Background: Site assessment new library

Library requirements:

- Currently 1400m² - need 2800m²
- Located on the ground floor (2/3), with limited space upstairs (1/3)
- On CBZ side of river with good pedestrian connections with the rest of the CBZ
- Preferably some sheltered outdoor space
- Possibly clustering with an art gallery
- Parking and a bus stop in close proximity
- Integration of a café
- Close to existing community cluster
- Incorporating community use space (homework tutoring; elderly meetings etc.)
- Possible combination with retail within the same building

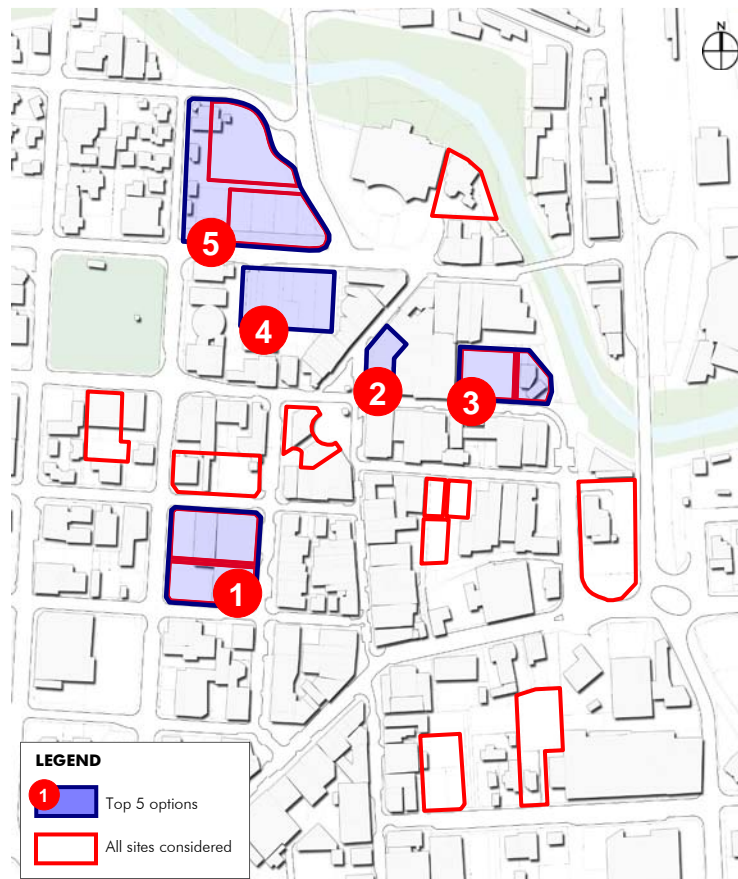
Site assessment (from a library perspective):

	Preferred site (1)	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5
Size	++	++	++	++	++
Ground Floor	++	++	++	++	++
Foot Traffic	+	++	+ (dependent on carparking & bus stop)	-	--
Outdoor Space	+ (Queen St Pocket park)	+	++ (river)	-	++ (river)
Clustering with other services	-	++	++	+	-
Parking	+	+	-- (need new)	+	-
Bus Stops	++	-	-	+	+
Cafe	++	++	++	+	-
Close to rest of CBZ	+	++	+	+	-
Close to other services	+	++	++	+	-
Retail within building	+	+	+	-	-
Structural Constraint/availability	-- (existing use)	-- (structural constraints)	+	+	-- (existing use)

Explanation: ++ satisfies requirements; + reasonably satisfies requirements; - does not meet requirements; --does not meet requirements at all



LEFT FIG. 5-5: Example of new main street-based library in Ellenbrook, West Perth



LEFT and FAR LEFT FIG. 5-6: All possible library sites within the town centre (new build and adaptive re-use of existing building options) and assessment of the 5 preferred options

5.1.3 A new art gallery in Queen Street

The growth of the Blenheim art gallery has led to it reaching the limits of its current building. The building is too small and limits opportunities for the art gallery.

Many visitors to the art gallery seem to be people who happen to walk past the building, as opposed to deliberate 'destination visitors'. A location where a lot of pedestrians walk past it whilst shopping or doing business would therefore be beneficial for the gallery. The art gallery also has the potential to attract tourists and could therefore help generate considerable positive effects for retail and businesses when located in close proximity. This will further strengthen the viability of business in the town centre, provided that direct pedestrian connections are in place.

It is proposed to redevelop the Shoe Warehouse site (corner of Charles and Queen Streets) for a new art gallery. This will inject more life into that part of the town centre over an extended period of all days of the week. A green public open space of similar proportions to that of the current library could be located on the northeast corner of the site to make for a sheltered green forecourt. Public toilets could be integrated in the building and replace the facility block on the Queen Street car park.

The current art gallery building can efficiently be re-used. Options are developed as part of this Town Centre Vision. Refer to 5.3.3 for more details.



ABOVE FIG. 5-7: The preferred location for the proposed new art gallery building with larger and more functional space.



ABOVE FIG. 5-8: Example of a new art gallery –The NewDowse– in Lower Hutt.



ABOVE FIG. 5-9: The preferred location for the new art gallery in Queen Street, within the primary shopping area.



ABOVE FIG. 5-10: Artist's impression of a new art gallery in the preferred location opposite the Queen Street public car park. A sheltered green forecourt presents itself to the street corner. Attractive architecture should make this building Blenheim's showpiece.

Technical Background: the best location for the art gallery

Art Gallery requirements:

- Focus Point/ High Visibility
 - Purpose built in construction
 - 350 m² current, up to 500 m² needed (staff area, storage)
 - Secure loading spaces
 - Climate Controlled Buildings
 - General security
 - Public car parking nearby
 - Ground floor ideal, offices upstairs
 - Combination with retail possible
- Combination with library (in 1 building preferred)
 - Alternatives with i-Site
 - Catering for locals + tourists
 - More casual visitors than destination visitors
 - Cafés close-by or in-house
 - Outdoor space like current library preferred

Site assessment (from an art gallery perspective):

Site A:

- Too far removed / no pedestrians
- Traffic constraints

- Focal point from SH1 **3**
- Lower on pedestrian flows

Site B:

- Too far outside CBZ / no pedestrians
- Availability?
- Combine with Library

Site G:

- Too far removed
- Seymour Square close-by

Site C:

- Too far removed from pedestrian flows
- Access by car difficult
- River link

Site H:

- Good if Library across the road **2**
- Good pedestrian flows

Site D:

- Limited pedestrian opportunities **4**
- Focus point / high visibility

Site I:

- Limited pedestrian flows **5**
- Availability?

Site E:

- Adaptive re-use Farmers **1**
- Middle of town
- Combine with Library

Site J:

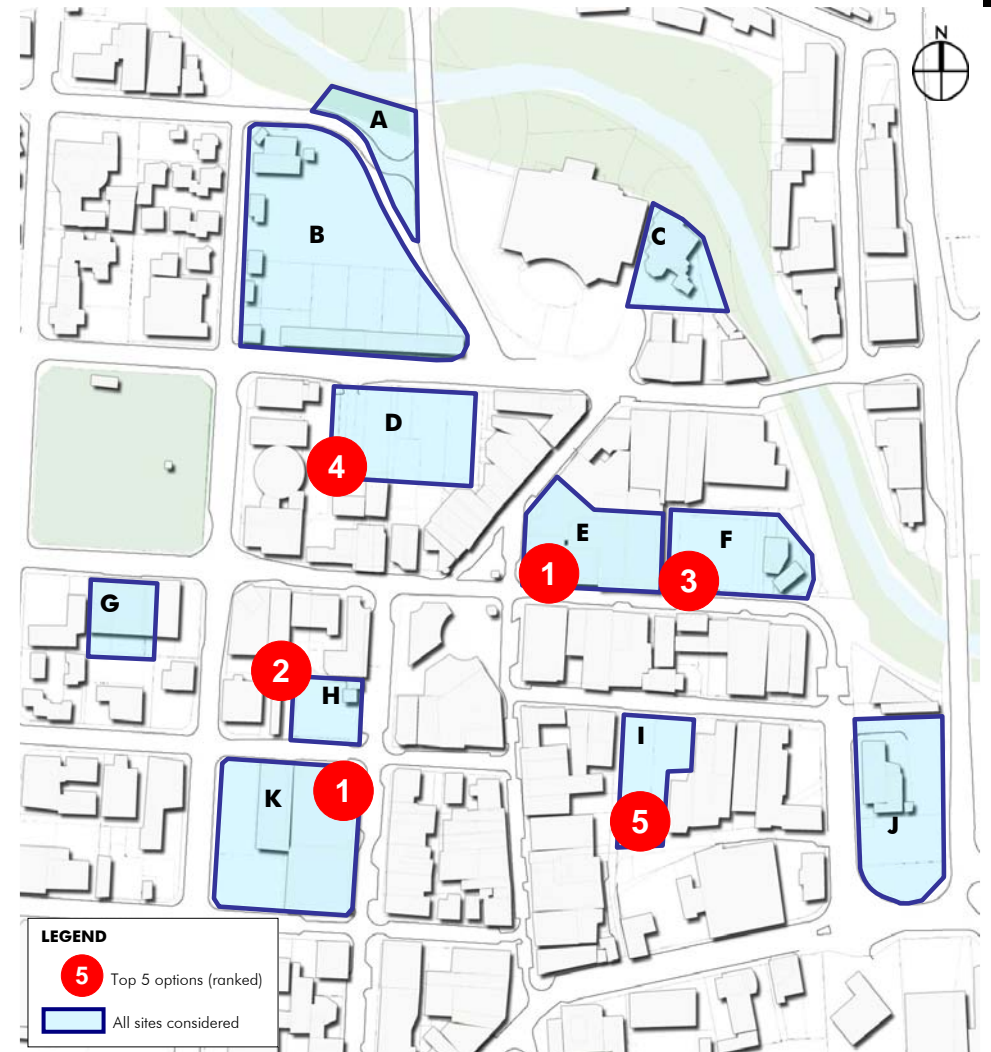
- Focus point / high visibility
- Only if SH roundabout was fixed up
- Only with Library
- Not good for pedestrians

Site F:

- Only if combined with Library
- River / open space link

Site K:

- Good option to combine with Library
- Available site Civic Theatre **1**
- Good pedestrian flows



ABOVE FIG. 5-11: The top-5 among all sites considered for the location of a new art gallery (NB. Sites E and K share first preference)

5.1.4 The spatial quality of the street

Consolidation of car parking

The Council is currently pursuing the consolidation of car parking within a number of structures at the edges of the town centre. These are located in Alfred Street in the north, Kinross Street in the south and Wynen Street in the east. This off-site car parking strategy creates the opportunity to focus on the wider city centre performance in general and built form and public realm quality in particular. The most important factor in the future performance of the CBZ is the quality of its buildings and their relationships to the street edge. It is this quality of built form, the visual complexity of the streetscape and the spatial continuity and intimacy that creates the conditions for the town to grow its cultural appeal and improve its economic and social performance.

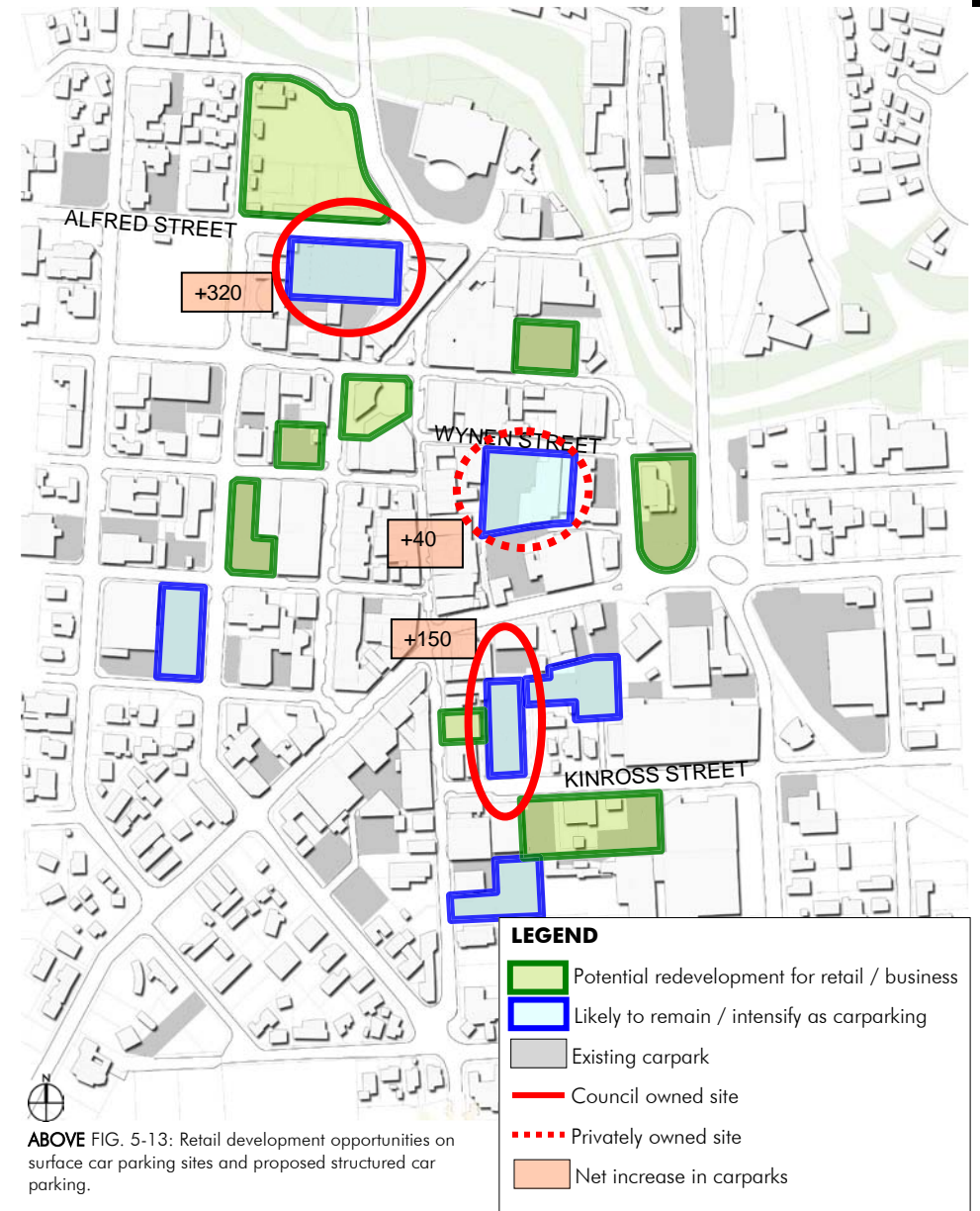
If quality improves, then the desire for people to walk further increases as the journey becomes more attractive. This is a very different approach to the more utilitarian strategy of single use retail precincts where the focus is on convenience and ease of access by car and from the car park. The approach for Blenheim should focus on the experience of moving through the town centre, rather than the ease of it. In other words, the cultural aspect of town and the link with the Marlborough brand can be improved through a focus on public realm and built form quality, partly as a consequence of disconnecting the car park from the site.

Development opportunities

The additional proposed structured parking (a net increase of 510 carparks) allows around 16,000 square metres of commercial or retail development in the CBZ upon completion of these three decked structures. This additional supply of parking should over time allow for the “banking” of development capacity on existing Council at-grade car parks. Refer to figure 5-13 for the preferred location of these sites.



ABOVE FIG. 5-12: Example of the contrast between an interesting streetscape with visual richness and a bland inactive street edge



ABOVE FIG. 5-13: Retail development opportunities on surface car parking sites and proposed structured car parking.

5.1.5 Location of the Tourist information Centre (i-Site)

Blenheim's i-Site for visitors to the town and the Marlborough district is currently located near the railway station, by the junction of SH1 and SH6. This location leverages off the general flow of tourists arriving or departing from the train station and those travelling along the State Highways to visit the attractions of the region. However, it has only limited spin-off effects for the town centre.

It is proposed to establish a new visitor information centre on the ground floor of the new car parking building, that the Council has proposed for Alfred Street.

Considerations:

To establish the information centre in a more central location is based on a 'whole of economy approach', which is to create synergies between enterprises both within as well as outside Blenheim and thus deliver multiple benefits for the region.

If Blenheim can 'hold' people for greater than 1.5 hours, there is a good chance they will identify a number of reasons to stay longer, including things to do, places to visit, or even staying overnight. Additional tourist experiences could be developed in the town centre around the proposed i-Site area. Furthermore, the location proposed, is in close proximity of major hotels (existing and proposed), the Convention Centre, the planned Civic theatre and the Taylor River precinct, which is proposed to undergo a major upgrade as part of this Town Centre Vision.

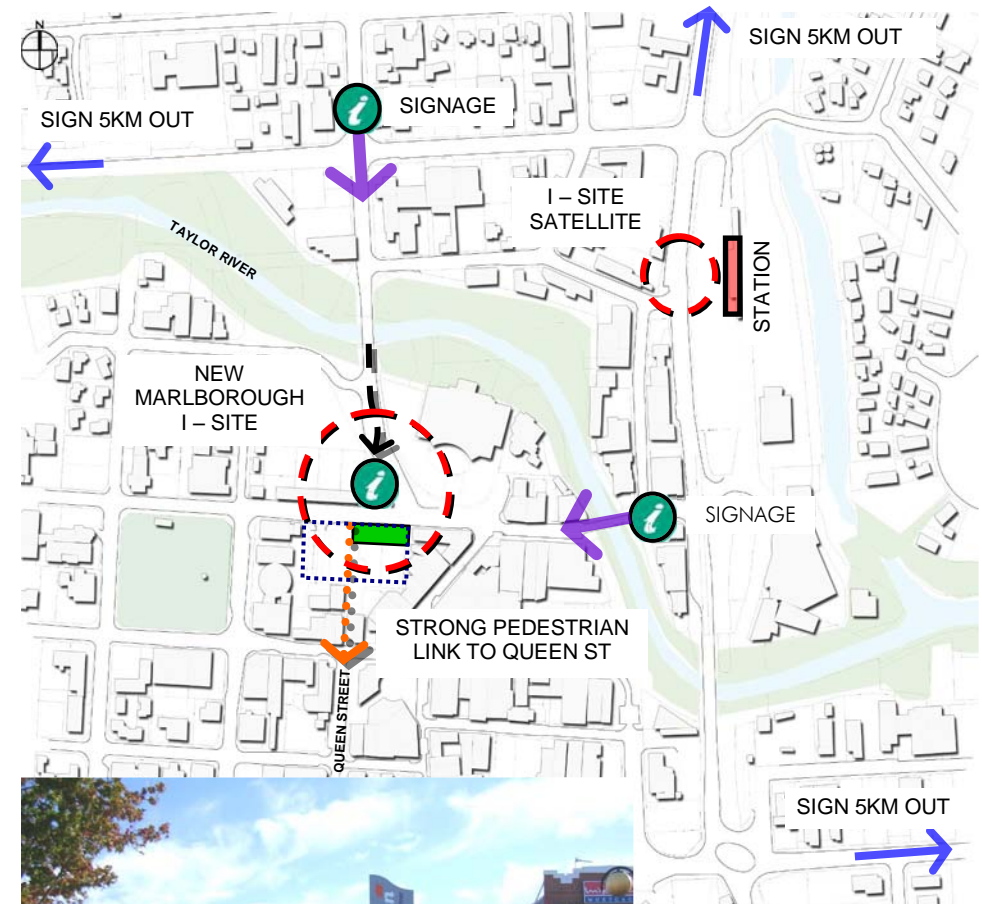
A strong and attractive pedestrian connection to Queen Street will further strengthen the proposals for the new art gallery and library in Queen Street. The quality of this connection and the experience of Queen Street will be crucial factors in maximising the benefits of attracting tourists into the town centre.

This is an opportunity to present visitors to Blenheim with a new, modern, contemporary, purpose built building. The centre could be more than just an information centre and would ideally be combined with in-house attractions, compatible retail and tourist related businesses such as rental car companies, internet cafes, galleries and souvenir shops.

The proposed car parking building will be a key central destination in the town centre, easy to find, and accessible. The proposed i-Site is located on strategic access points off SH6 and SH1, which should have signs leading to the facility. Additional signs should be placed in strategic locations (5 km out on SH1 north, SH1 south, SH6 west).

Alfred Street should be upgraded to accommodate tour bus and campervan parking, whereas normal cars could be parked in the proposed new carparking building.

It is proposed that the current i-Site will continue as a satellite of the main information centre, in combination with train ticket sales.



ABOVE FIG. 5-14: The preferred location of an inner city i-Site, with strong pedestrian links to Queen Street will inject more life into that part of the town centre. The location of appropriate signage is indicated.

LEFT FIG. 5-15: Pedestrian connection with Queen Street

Technical Background: the best location for the i-Site

Possible i-Site Location: **Junction SH1/SH6** (north of rail station). Assumption: co-located with Wine Centre and other uses.

Attribute	Score	Comments
Ease of direction finding for traffic by following signage	10	Obvious, with most visitor traffic naturally passing by (no need to follow signage trail)
Ease of Access by Vehicle	2	
Visibility from passing traffic	10	
Ease of parking and availability of free parking	3	
Ability to generate passing pedestrian retail trade	0	
Centrality within the town centre/ proximity to the retail heart	0	
Easy to see and find for pedestrians	2	
Proximity to public plazas and squares and other Civic/community facilities	0	
Space for visitors to loiter without disrupting other activities	8	But no reason for them to do so, as once finished at centre just drive off
Proximity to magnet visitor attractions (able to occupy them for 1.5 hours)	4	Only if, and because, Wine Centre is co-located there
Security and safety outside normal business hours	3	Only from passing vehicles, no out of hours or passing pedestrian traffic
Possibility of shared facilities with other public facilities	3	Only by co-locating activities best located within walking catchment of retail heart
Space for expansion, events and display space	10	
Total Score (maximum possible 130)	55 (43%)	

Possible i-Site Location: **Alfred St Car Park Site**. Assumption co-located with structured car parking.

Preferred option

Attribute	Score	Comments
Ease of direction finding for traffic by following signage	10	
Ease of Access by Vehicle	8	
Visibility from passing traffic	4	
Ease of parking and availability of free parking	10	
Ability to generate passing pedestrian retail trade	8	
Centrality within the town centre/ proximity to the retail heart	8	
Easy to see and find for pedestrians	8	
Proximity to public plazas and squares and other Civic/community facilities	8	
Space for visitors to loiter without disrupting other activities	8	
Proximity to magnet visitor attractions (able to occupy them for 1.5 hours)	8	
Security and safety outside normal business hours	7	
Possibility of shared facilities with other public facilities	10	
Space for expansion, events and display space	10	
Total Score (maximum possible 130)	107 (83%)	

Technical Background: best location for the I-site (cont'd)

Possible i-Site Location: **Fire Station Site** (between Symons & Sinclair Sts).
Assumption: co-located with Wine Centre and other uses

Attribute	Score	Comments
Ease of direction finding for traffic by following signage	8	
Ease of Access by Vehicle	2	Difficult to access although you see it (which is why the fire services want to leave this site)
Visibility from passing traffic	10	
Ease of parking and availability of free parking	10	
Ability to generate passing pedestrian retail trade	7	
Centrality within the town centre/ proximity to the retail heart	7	
Easy to see and find for pedestrians	7	
Proximity to public plazas and squares and other Civic/community facilities	4	
Space for visitors to loiter without disrupting other activities	8	
Proximity to magnet visitor attractions (able to occupy them for 1.5 hours)	6	
Security and safety outside normal business hours	7	
Possibility of shared facilities with other public facilities	10	
Space for expansion, events and display space	10	
Total Score (maximum possible 130)	96 (74%)	

Possible i-Site Location: **Horton St/ Port Blenheim Site** (Between Horton St and River).
Assumption: co-located with Wine Centre and other uses

Attribute	Score	Comments
Ease of direction finding for traffic by following signage	8	
Ease of Access by Vehicle	7	
Visibility from passing traffic	9	
Ease of parking and availability of free parking	10	Some delays at rail crossing (12 times in 24 hours)
Ability to generate passing pedestrian retail trade	1	
Centrality within the town centre/ proximity to the retail heart	5	Reasonably close using the pedestrian bridge across the River to High St
Easy to see and find for pedestrians	4	
Proximity to public plazas and squares and other Civic/community facilities	2	
Space for visitors to loiter without disrupting other activities	8	
Proximity to magnet visitor attractions (able to occupy them for 1.5 hours)	6	
Security and safety outside normal business hours	4	
Possibility of shared facilities with other public facilities	2	
Space for expansion, events and display space	10	
Total Score (maximum possible 130)	76 (58%)	

5.1.6 Market options in town

A proposal made to Council to accommodate markets in town is supported. The Marlborough Farmers Market, currently located at the A&P Showgrounds, has proposed to set up their stalls for a “Twilight Town Market” in Market Place over the three winter months. If this trial appears successful, there could be a possibility to extend it to a “Summer Twilight Market”, also in Market Place.

This means potentially a great stimulus for the town centre, as it could inject more life and diversity into the town centre. Further, it could be beneficial to retail performance. The aim should be to offer the possibility of the entire market moving to the town centre in the long term.

The Council could therefore assist with logistics and also with a rent free trial to get it up and working. Council could also assist with promotion and with whatever resources are needed to get it working. It is also important that the market is attractive and has appropriate cover and facilities. The Market has a strong and established record at the Showgrounds that theoretically should easily transfer to the town centre.

Location

The first preference for a location in the long term, is Market Street between Main Street and High street.

The basic preference is the formality of a street and the ability to both institutionalise and control the quality along a linear space (which can be much more striking, and is easier to control and access). This is more effective than a series of ‘bits and pieces spaces’, like when it is spread out over Market Place (North and South) or the Queen Street carpark and parts of Queen Street. In marketing terms, a photo of a market down a street is a typically a more powerful image, compared with a shot of ad hoc stalls.

Further, from a retail performance perspective it is important to engage as many other shops as possible in the pedestrian movement dynamic that accompanies a market.

The other main reason is that a formal space along a street requires all, including the Council, to improve the quality of the market presentation and insert power points in the pavement, purpose design cover, require consistency in presentation etc. Spreading it over multiple spaces creates a problem in unity and establishes a different mindset for the operator, the Council and customers. It could be perceived as if it is located in leftover space, different from when it gathers in Market Street, Blenheim's best town centre street.

Other options, such as upper Scott Street, the Queen Street carpark or Market Place are all appropriate locations for the market, but lack the qualities of Market Street as described above. It will therefore be more difficult to present a top quality market, with similar positive effects for the retail.



ABOVE FIG. 5-16: Options for sites to locate inner city markets.

5.1.7 Town Centre Management

A key issue for the town centre is its ability as a place in its own right to contribute to deliver input into services and strategies of the Council. The economic performance of Marlborough is in part tied to the qualities of its town centre. These qualities are most typically a consequence of high levels of cooperation between the private and public sectors acting in collaboration to achieve pre-agreed outcomes and strategies.

It has been well documented that the success of shopping centres (malls) is mostly due to Coordinated Retail Management (CRM), where all aspects of the function of these centres are carefully managed by the shopping centre owner. Many town centres have adopted the CRM model and applied it through various management vehicles to the public realm of the town centre environment. These organisations often start out as a consequence of “mainstreet programs” that were primarily designed to improve the physical quality of the public realm of town centres. Town centre management has moved on from these programs, to become more sophisticated and involved in all aspects of town centre management. They are mostly funded by special rates levied on the land owners by the local Council.

The most effective means of coordinating all public realm activity in the town centre is through such an organisation. Blenheim has possibly not had the same economic imperatives to put such an organisation together due to the dominance of its market and the absence of regional competition (refer to figure 5-17). However, competitive response is only one motivator for formation. Such an organisation should be conceived as a positive influence in looking after private sector interests as well as achieving many of the objectives that are set for the Blenheim town centre by various statutory plans.

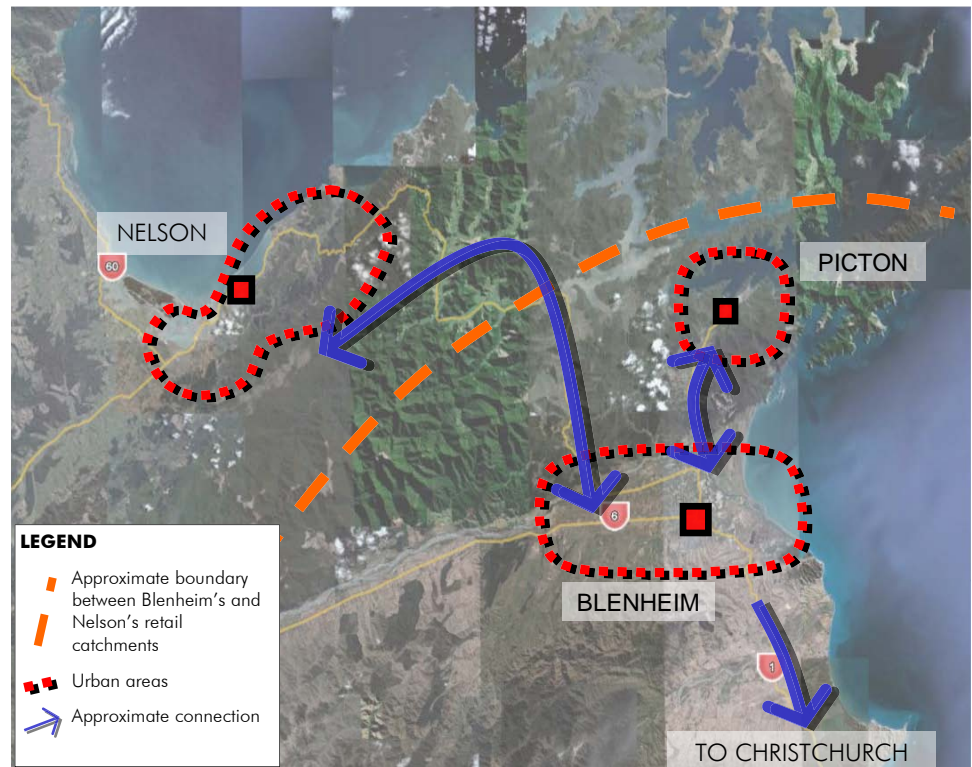
Aspects of the role of such an entity could include all areas of current municipal service delivery such as the following:

- Maintenance and cleaning
- Marketing
- Education (of city businesses and retailers to ensure a balanced mix etc)
- Events and promotion
- Working with leasing companies for targeted leasing strategies attracting new retailers and businesses, with particular focus on achieving the right mix of retail offer
- Market research and strategy
- Lobbying
- Building town centre partnership with working groups

In some comparable towns, the management organisation employs staff to assist with a range of activities that would otherwise be delivered by the District Council (including gardening, cleaning and public relations). In some the brief is limited to marketing and events.

There are various ways of funding such an organisation. One option is to make it an organisation that is entirely directed and funded by the business owners. In an alternative that is more public sector focussed, the Council should consider striking a special rate for the town centre and establish an operating charter for the organisation. Either way, strong business involvement is critical in the long term value and success of the group.

Blenheim should benchmark a number of comparable towns in New Zealand and meet with the various town centre management organisations to determine the most appropriate fit.



ABOVE FIG. 5-17: Retail catchment of Blenheim in the context of the wider region

5.1.8 Cost estimation, timeline & prioritisation

Ref.*	Page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/ medium/ low	Comments/ assumptions
G1	29	Develop the new theatre in the proposed location next to the Convention Centre. Negotiate purchase of current Civic Theatre site (or sufficient area to provide for art gallery and library).	physical	Short term	High	
G2	30	Develop a new library (approx. 2800m2 GFA over ground floor and first floor) on the current theatre site. Include some retail space (approx. 800 m2) on the ground floor addressing Queen St.	physical	Short term	High	
G3	32	Develop a new art gallery (approx. 500 m2 over ground floor and first floor) on the southwestern corner of Charles St and Queen St, including a small public green open space on the corner of this site addressing Charles and Queen Streets.	physical	Short term	High	
G4	39	Align leases with development plans.	administrative	Short term	High	
J1	39	Benchmark a number of comparable towns in New Zealand and meet with the various town centre management organisations to determine the most appropriate fit.	administrative	Short term	High	
J2	39	Consider striking a special benefit rate for the land owners within the town centre to fund it and establish an operating charter for the town centre management organisation.	administrative	Short term	High	
J3	38	Investigate opportunities to accommodate markets in town centre (options: Market St - Market PI; Market PI - Queen St-North - Queen St Carpark; Scott St between Main St and Kinross St and possibly beyond). Combine with already proposed twilight markets.	administrative	Short term	High	
Q3	32, 65	Integrate Queen St public toilets with new art gallery. Include mothercare, breastfeeding, baby changing facilities.	physical			

*) Refers to Blenheim Town Centre Draft Implementation Strategy

Strategic Priorities aimed at ensuring future quality of built form in the town centre

Initiatives under this Theme include:

- Changing several controls and requirements in the District plan in order to enable development of a type and form that is beneficial for the Blenheim Town Centre as whole.
- Considering the establishment of an urban design panel or other application assessment techniques to ensure high quality development that is appropriate for its context and is aligned with the aims and objectives of this vision.



Strategic Theme:

10 A Focus on Architectural Quality

5.10.1 The district plan and development controls

The IBD workshop process identified several issues with the District Plan relating to built form and quality. Like most District Plans, the development controls and rules within the Marlborough District Plan are based largely on the most recent Scheme prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act, prior to 1991 and the requirements of the Resource Management Act. Problems with the relevance of many rules, and with the inconsistent quality of development that complies with rules, were commonly identified.

A comprehensive review of all planning provisions in the Central Business and Primary Shopping zones within the District Plan is recommended. This review should not be about creating more or less rules, but rather on identifying the *right* rules that make development easier to undertake, but in a manner which also helps make Blenheim a better, more attractive, and more vibrant place.

A departure away from simple bulk and location envelope planning (ideal for isolated rural and landscape view settings) - in which the outline of a building is controlled, but the detail within is not, should be a critical outcome of this process. In most cases, the detail of entrances, public and private space transitions, façade design, and material use have a greater relevance to how a building sits within an intimate, busy urban context than whether the building is half a metre above or below a generic height limit.

Without prejudicing the outcomes of the District Plan review recommended above, it seems likely that a more restrictive land-use consent approach will be necessary. By way of example, greater or more explicit reservations of control and where appropriate restricted discretionary status will give the Council ability to act on best practice design principles and recommendations from such sources as an Urban design panel.

	ORANGE PRIMARY SHOPPING	BLUE CENTRAL BUSINESS
SITE COVERAGE	100%	100% less setbacks
HEIGHT	20 m	12 m
STREETSCAPE	Verandas on street frontage	Setbacks: 1.5m for 33% of street frontage; 3m for 66% of street frontage
LANDSCAPING	None	10% site area green landscaping
PARKING	None	<u>Offices:</u> 1/35 m ² gross area <u>Restaurants and Bars:</u> 1/10 m ² ; 1/15 m ² outdoor eating area <u>Retail:</u> Less than 1000m ² floor area: 1/25 m ² g.f.a.; Greater than 1000 m ² floor area: 1/25 m ² for first 1000m ² ; 1/30 m ² of remainder <u>Cultural/Entertainment:</u> 1/4-5 persons the facility is designed to accommodate. Cash in lieu of parking possible

ABOVE FIG. 5-97: Current relevant provisions under the Resource Management Plan



ABOVE FIG. 5-98: Existing District Plan zoning

5.10.2 Proposed District Plan changes

Various changes which could be considered under a District Plan Change for the central business and primary shopping zones were identified. These indicatively related to activity status, assessment criteria, and development control methods at least as much as modifications to objectives and policies. In particular, the following key issues could be better managed from an urban design perspective:

ISSUE	ELEMENTS
INTERFACE / AMENITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building facades - Corner treatments - Site service screening - Minimum balcony areas - Ground floor condition - limiting ground floor uses to certain activity types - Parking treatments - Non active use treatment - Aural amenity protection - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
CONNECTIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pedestrian entrances and movement - Vehicle entrance and movement - Servicing - Parking requirements which are more site and use responsive - Maximum parking standards, e.g. of 1 space for residential activities
DIVERSITY / ADAPTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible buildings to convert uses - Amending provisions relating to retail and commercial activities (especially relating to car parking) - Providing for a mix of uses (unit types and sizes)
BUILDING BULK & MASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing minimum height provisions above or below which requires resource consent - Area / site specific height assessment - Viewshafts affecting height - Managing horizontal and vertical mass - Minimum lot sizes for comprehensive developments
LEGIBILITY + IDENTITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond to local identity through specific heritage provisions - Architectural character
ENVIRONMENTAL RESONSIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solar access - Natural ventilation - SW treatment and disposal - Shading/wind effects - Energy efficient building design and materials - Landscaping which relates to activity scale + location

5.10.3 Urban Design Panel

One way identified to raise the standard of urban design within Blenheim's town centre could be through the establishment of an urban design panel. Typically, an urban design panel provides independent pre-application advice, and assesses Council-initiated strategic projects and resource consent applications by private developers. Panels can also assist with improving the efficiency of the consent process through early identification of design issues. To date, advisory panels have been established in Auckland City, Manukau City, Tauranga City, Christchurch City and Queenstown Lakes District Council. Panel members most typically include professionals in the fields of urban design, architecture, planning, landscape architecture, transportation planning, development, and property. While output from panels has been inconsistent, there does appear to be a general consensus approving of their use, especially if membership is managed to ensure balanced representation across relevant disciplines, and vice versa that it is not dominated by any one.

Launching an urban design panel in Blenheim could be a positive tool used alongside other regulatory and policy changes to help improve the quality of development and the urban environment. It may also have some limitations. Consideration should be given to:

- the associated costs of setting up and running of a panel. Most panels provide no cost to developers with the costs of administration, panel members fees etc absorbed by the Council. This can become a considerable cost.
- because of its size and distance from major cities, the available pool of potential panel members (and expertise) may be lower than in main centres. This may affect the quality of all possible members, or preclude the ability to have a rotating panel and more assured neutrality. This could result in the 'picking and choosing' of panel members by applicants, or of an unacceptable occurrence of bias.
- potential for undermining of the panel whereby the sitting (active) panel members representing the Council, are in opposition to other (non active) panel members on behalf of a consent applicant. This could result if private sector developers deliberately looked to recruit non-active panel members.

Alternatives options for the recommended Regional Urban Design Panel would be:

1. A 'roving' Marlborough District-wide Urban Design Panel.
2. The use of independent Hearing Commissioners with urban design expertise for major developments.
3. Establishing an information requirement from MDC for an urban design assessment from approved urban designers at the resource consent application lodgement stage.
4. Processing of resource consents by an external consultant / Council approved party.

5.10.4 Urban design guideline

The workshop participants identified the opportunity for a user-friendly, practical urban design guideline (as a non statutory resource management mechanism) specific to the town centre. These have been successfully used elsewhere in NZ. This could include specific guidance on adaptive reuse and development sensitivity towards heritage and character buildings. Voluntary use of such a guide could be maximised if it related to a processing 'advantage' through District Plan provisions or an urban design panel process.

5.10.4 Cost estimation, timeline & prioritisation

Ref.*	page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/medium/low	Comments/ assumptions
P2	102	Prepare a Town Centre Development Design Guide which also covers heritage / character as a non-statutory planning tool to guide appropriate responses to new development and adaptive reuse development	administrative	Short term	High	Note: Also identified in Part 5.9.
P10	102	Complete a Development Opportunities Study to investigate potential strategic property development opportunities, possible property acquisitions and preliminary development concepts	administrative	Short term	High	
P11	102	Implement a District Plan Change in the Primary Shopping / CBZ zones to provide greater control of built form and streetscape quality. This should include the revision of certain rules to be more site and context responsive such as: parking provisions, landscaping requirements, street interface, height and signage	administrative	Short term	High	
P12	102	Investigate the introduction of a Regional Urban Design Panel to oversee major resource consent applications within Blenheim. Alternatively, consider other suggested constructions greater urban design control of built form and streetscape quality.	administrative	Short term	High	
P13	102	Encourage redevelopment of the area bound by Hutcheson Street, Nelson Street, Taylor River and Opawa River for residential and commercial uses, under strict quality guidelines	administrative	Short term	High	
P14	102	LTCCP / Local Government Act review of MDC Development Contributions Policy relating to new development in Blenheim	administrative	Medium term	High	



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

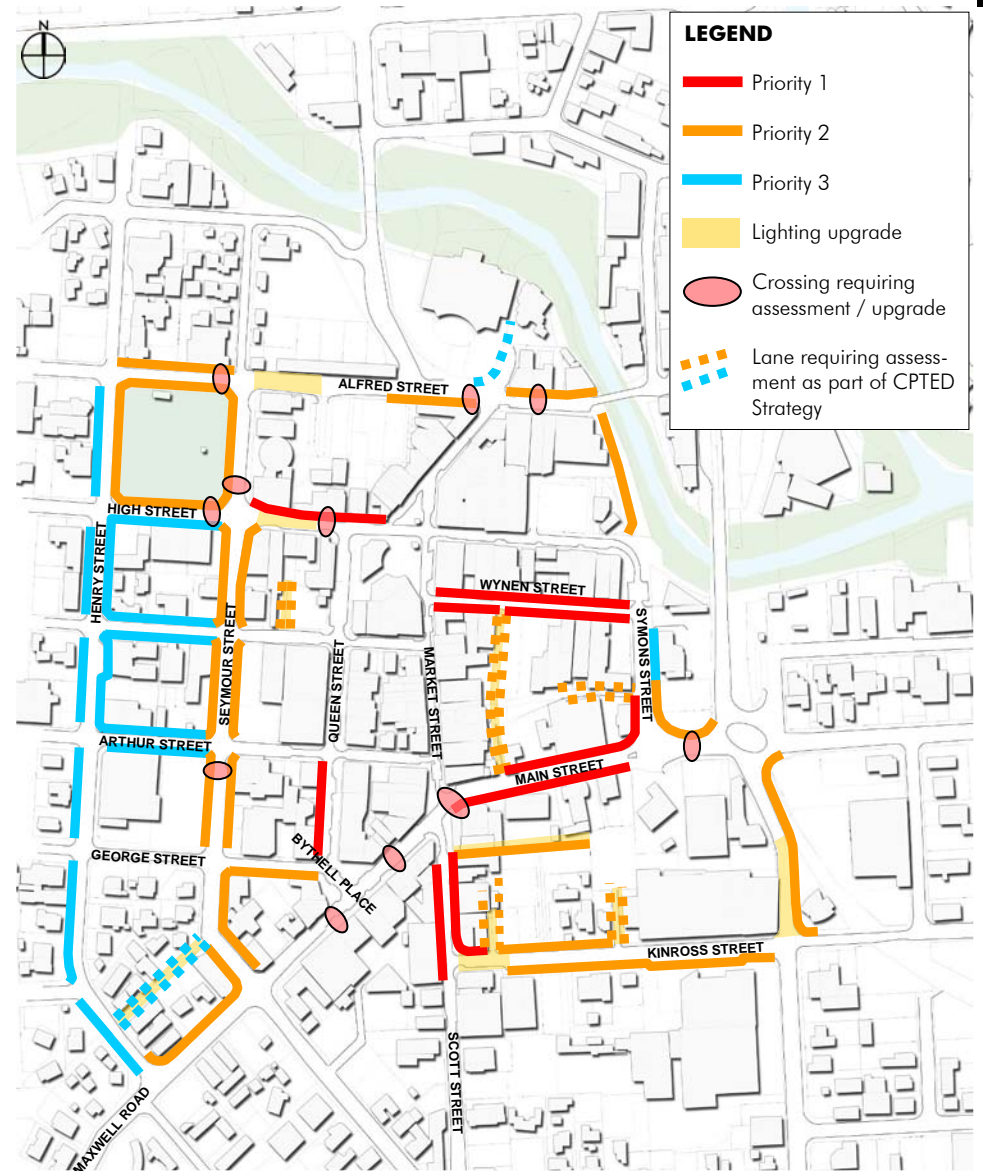
Other areas with a lot of foot traffic are the Lanes (First to Fourteenth). It is proposed that a lighting and access policy should be developed, given the safety issues that can be found in most of them (refer to the Crime Prevention strategy on page 47).

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:

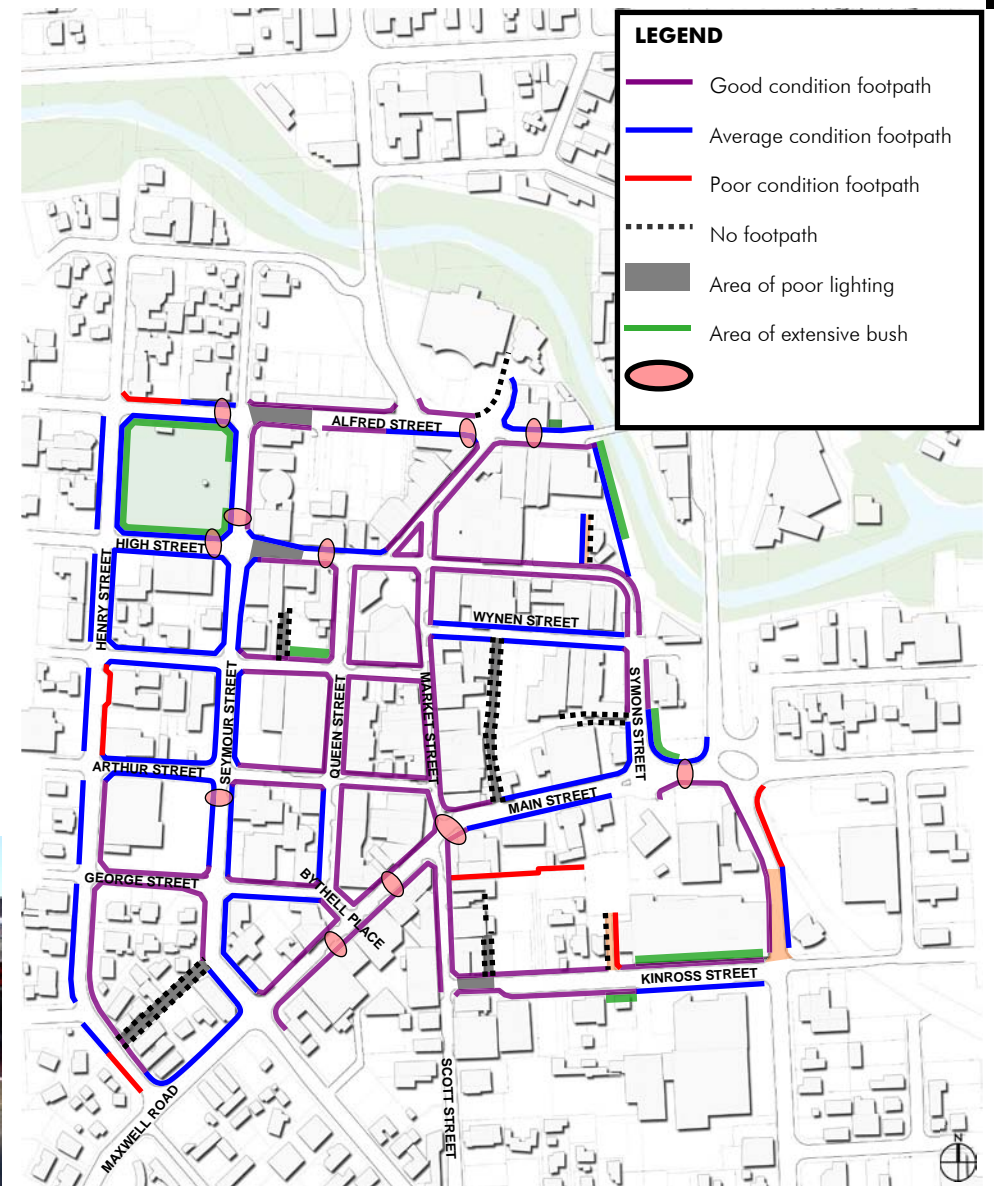
- Recent streetscape upgrades have resulted in good pavement conditions and sufficient widths in Market Street, Queen Street and Maxwell Road between Market and Queen Streets. The streets that are further away from these main shopping streets are generally characterised by more average conditions with 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.

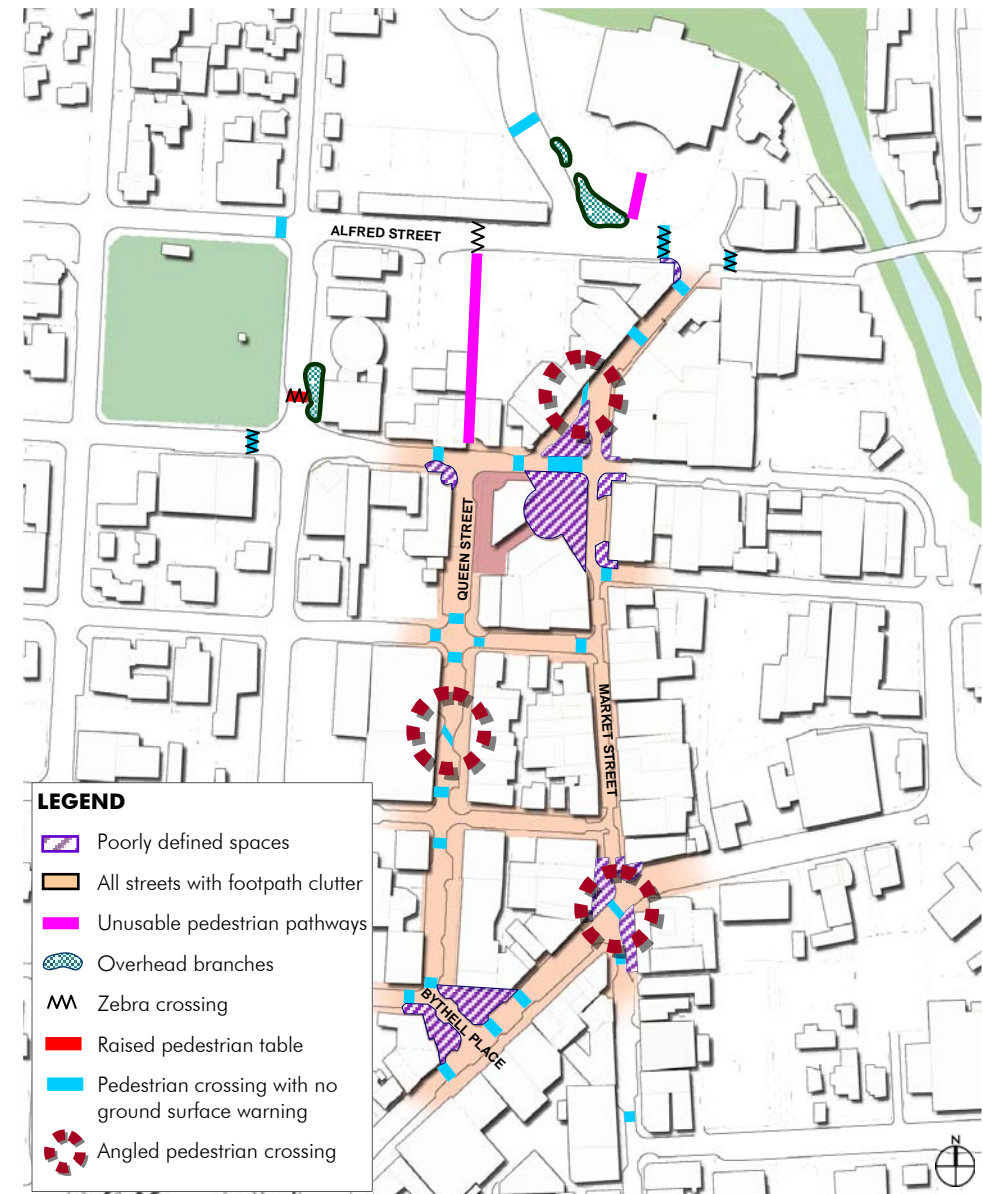
5.2.4 Non-visual experience and catering for the elderly

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.

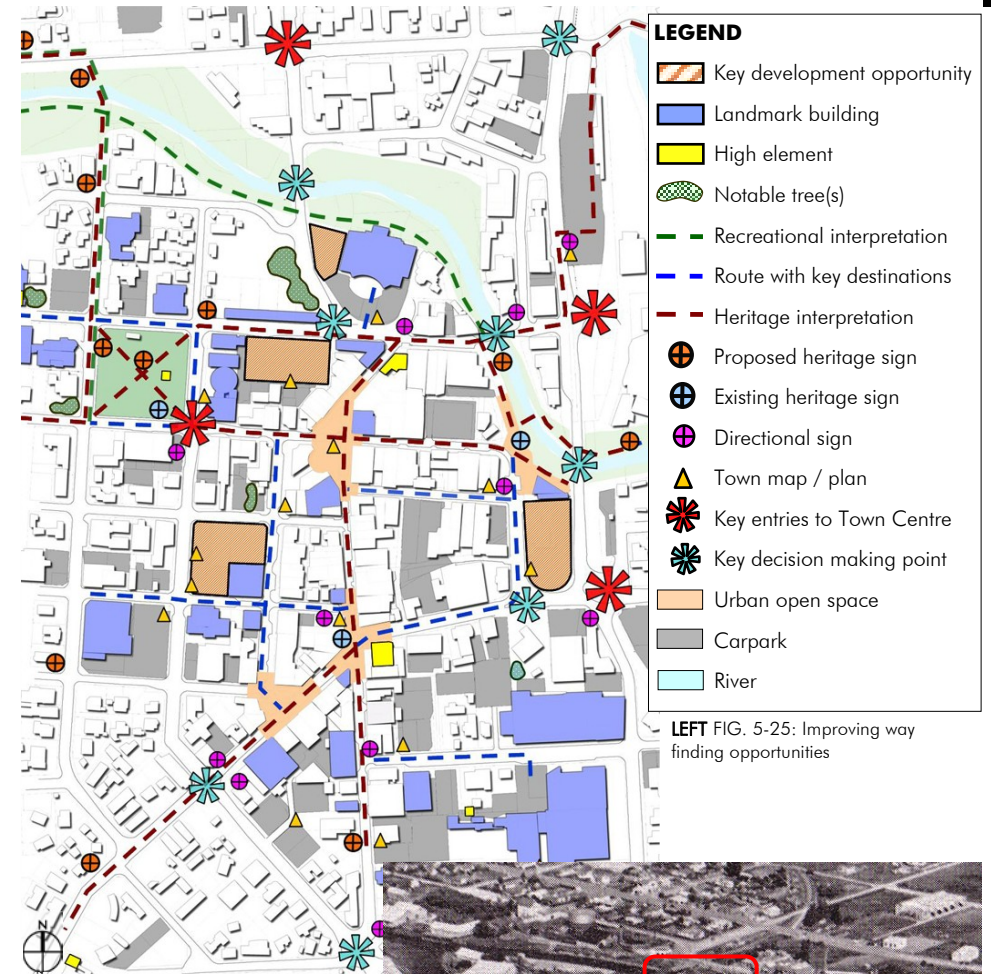
- View shafts to high building elements, such as spires could be protected as well as notable trees.

- 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.

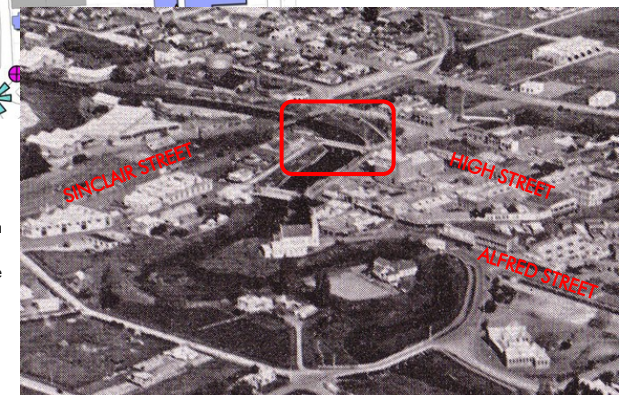


ABOVE FIG. 5-26: Example of effective formal signage aimed at the pedestrian



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:

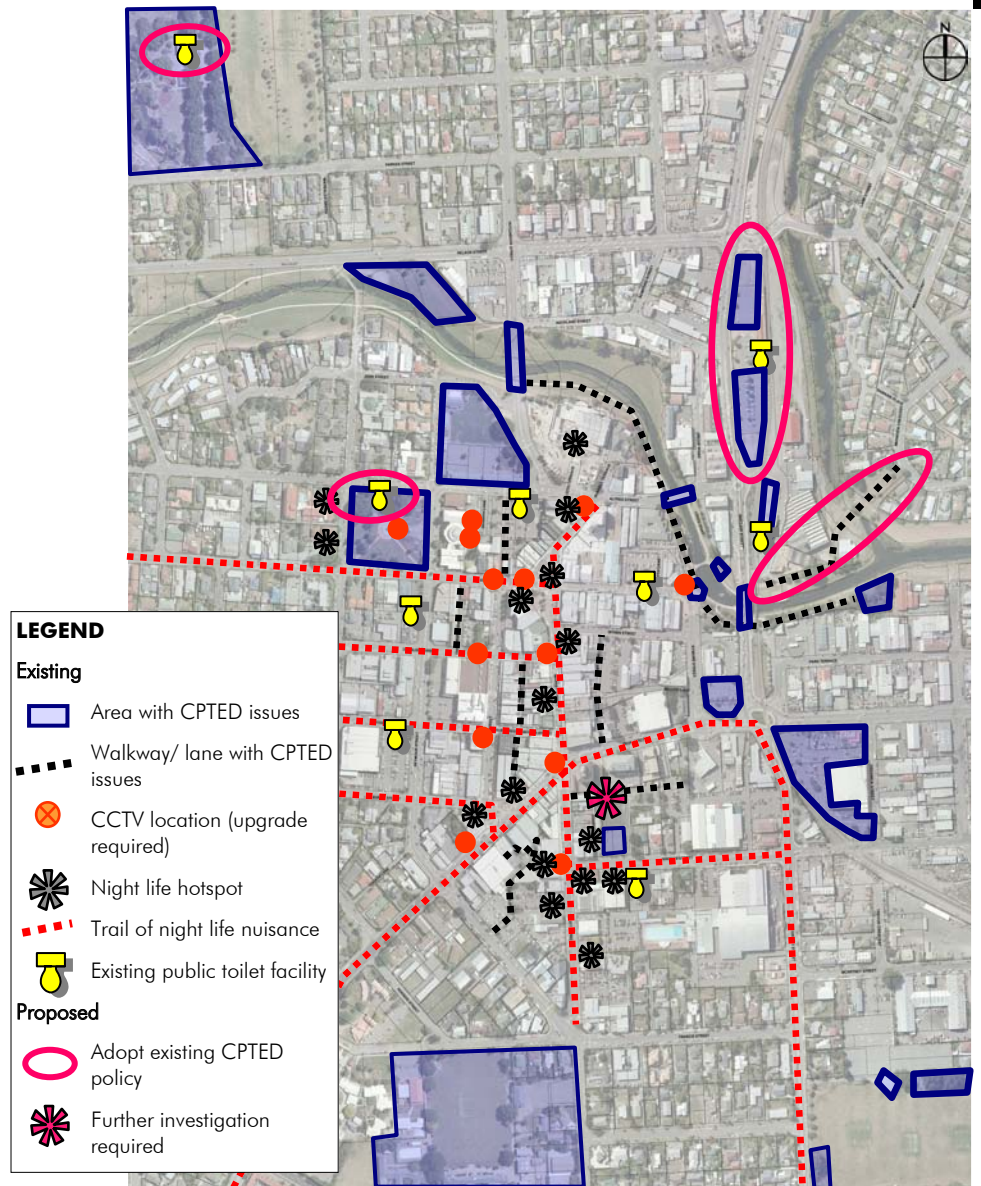
1. Crime: Alcohol related crime, theft of and from cars, property damage including graffiti, burglary of property; and
2. Perception: threats to personal safety from poor lighting, entrapment spots, reduced sightlines, a lack of legibility and activity, uncertainty of ownership, poor maintenance and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