

READING

**TOWN CENTRE
DELIVERY PLAN**

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Delivery Plan sets out to ensure RBC's resources are focused on enabling high-impact, high-visibility projects that catalyse change.

The delivery plan identifies projects that:

- Align directly with the town centre strategy's principles for growth
- Deliver high civic, social, and environmental value but may not be commercially viable.
- Enable or de-risk wider regeneration and investment.
- Address long-standing spatial, accessibility, or environmental challenges identified in the town centre strategy.



WHAT THE COUNCIL AND PARTNERS CAN INFLUENCE

WHAT THE COUNCIL CAN INFLUENCE

- Setting the direction for decisions through this place shaping strategy, so individual schemes add up to a coherent, liveable centre.
- Using planning and regeneration levers to set clear expectations for design quality, inclusive access, public realm, sustainability and the mix of uses, especially in the Opportunity Areas.
- Targeting investment and coordination (via the Delivery Plan) to prioritise projects, align programmes, and unlock funding and delivery routes.
- Convening partners and coordinating governance across transport, culture, community safety, health and infrastructure so delivery is joined up.
- Leading on public realm standards and stewardship expectations for Council led schemes and influencing long term maintenance expectations across the centre.

WHAT PARTNERS CAN INFLUENCE

- **Developers and landowners:** designing schemes that contribute to the principles and funding them through delivery and planning obligations.
- **Transport partners and operators:** improving interchange quality, public transport reliability, accessible routes and the everyday experience of arriving and moving through Central Reading.
- **Health, education and community partners:** planning services and capacity so infrastructure keeps pace with town centre population growth, with accessible, easy to reach provision.
- **Cultural organisations and venues:** programming, partnerships and public space uses that strengthen Reading's cultural identity and animate the centre across the day and year.
- **Business organisations (including the BIDs):** town centre management, events, marketing, business support and action to support a welcoming, thriving centre and a safer evening offer.
- **Community and resident groups:** shaping priorities through lived experience, testing what works on the ground and co designing inclusive local activation and use of spaces.

REVISITING THE TOWN CENTRE VISION PRINCIPLES

OUR PRINCIPLES

- 1. BUILDING HEALTHY AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES**
Supporting wellbeing, accessibility and belonging through inclusive streets, services and shared spaces.
- 2. TRANSFORMING READING'S RIVERS AND PUBLIC SPACES**
Making the Thames, the Kennet and the town centre's parks, squares and streets central to daily life.
- 3. ENABLING CONNECTED AND ACTIVE TRAVEL**
Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport so the town centre is easy to reach and get around without relying on a car.
- 4. BUILDING A GREENER, CLIMATE-RESILIENT TOWN CENTRE**
Embedding climate resilience into design and day-to-day management so the town centre is lower carbon, greener, cooler in summer, and better adapted to rainfall.
- 5. CELEBRATING READING'S CULTURE, HERITAGE AND IDENTITY**
Protecting and showcasing Reading's heritage assets, supporting a strong cultural offer, and reinforcing what makes Reading unique.
- 6. REIMAGINING THE TOWN CENTRE EXPERIENCE**
Evolving Reading's historically strong retail core by strengthening the wider mix of leisure, food and drink, culture, services and experiences.
- 7. SUPPORTING GROWTH AND INNOVATION**
Supporting business growth and new ways of working by creating high-quality workplaces and the right mix of spaces.

MAKING DELIVERY REAL

Delivering the Reading Town Centre Strategy requires coordinated action across planning, transport, public realm investment, culture, community infrastructure, developers, businesses and residents. This section brings together all delivery expectations into a single framework that partners can use to shape, assess and implement proposals.

THEME	ACTION
1. Building Healthy and Connected Communities	→ Plan community infrastructure with health, education and community partners so services keep pace with town-centre population growth.
	→ With partners, secure community hubs through planning and regeneration, providing accessible space for advice, health, learning and community activity.
	→ Use meanwhile space for temporary health, wellbeing and community uses in vacant or under-used units.
	→ Embed inclusive design in all schemes, ensuring step-free routes, clear wayfinding and welcoming public spaces for all ages and abilities.
	→ Strengthen family-friendly provision by securing play space, safe routes and communal areas in and around new development.
2. Transforming Reading's Rivers and Public Spaces	→ Require credible long-term management plans as part of planning obligations so new homes, shared spaces and public realm are well managed and support stable communities.
	→ Set clear design expectations via Reading's Public Realm Strategy.
	→ Collaborate with developers/partners to secure green infrastructure and public realm through new schemes and planning obligations where appropriate.
	→ Plan for maintenance so spaces remain clean and welcoming.
	→ Use temporary activation to bring underused spaces to life while longer term projects materialise.
3. Enabling Connected and Active Travel	→ Align planting and sustainable drainage with the Biodiversity Action Plan and Tree Strategy.
	→ Secure measurable biodiversity net gain in town centre schemes.
	→ Use the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 as the statutory framework for sustainable mobility and align town centre interventions to it.

THEME	ACTION
4. Building a Greener, Climate Resilient Town Centre	→ Align with Reading’s climate strategies and targets, including climate emergency commitments and partnership led boroughwide action through the Reading Climate Change Partnership.
	→ Use the Local Plan sustainability policy framework to secure consistent standards through development.
	→ Coordinate phasing and funding through the Delivery Plan, prioritising early wins (EV charging, cleaner buses) alongside longer term energy infrastructure.
	→ Collaborate with developers and energy partners to progress investable heat network opportunities and embed low carbon solutions in major schemes.
5. Celebrating Reading’s Culture, Heritage and Identity	→ Align delivery with Reading’s Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015–30 and related action planning so the Town Centre Strategy reinforces (rather than duplicates) existing direction.
	→ Use planning tools, agreements and contributions to secure cultural spaces and the event ready public realm needed to sustain programming over time.
	→ Collaborate with partners across arts, heritage, education and community sectors to embed culture in regeneration and broaden participation.
6. Reimagining the Town Centre Experience	→ Work with the BID and retail stakeholders to protect diversity, support independents and coordinate events, marketing and town centre management.
	→ Coordinate with the Community Safety Partnership so evening economy growth is matched by safety, prevention and support measures.
	→ Use planning tools and the Local Plan framework to guide the location and mix of retail/leisure/culture in ways that support vitality and viability.
	→ Support temporary uses and pop ups through a more flexible approach to activation and licensing, particularly in transition areas.
7. Supporting Growth and Innovation	→ Track trends such as vacancies, footfall patterns, sector mix, and the performance of interventions (meanwhile use, events, public realm changes).
	→ Use this evidence to target quick wins (e.g. activating underused space) and to shape longer term decisions on workspace, retail/leisure balance and skills alignment.
	→ Strengthening the Town Centre’s role at the heart of Reading’s wider economic geography through improved connections to major hubs (Green Park, Shinfield Studios, University, TVP, TVSP).

PRINCIPLES CHECKLIST FOR PROJECTS

To ensure strategic alignment and delivery readiness, RBC will apply the following draft criteria to assess and prioritise interventions:

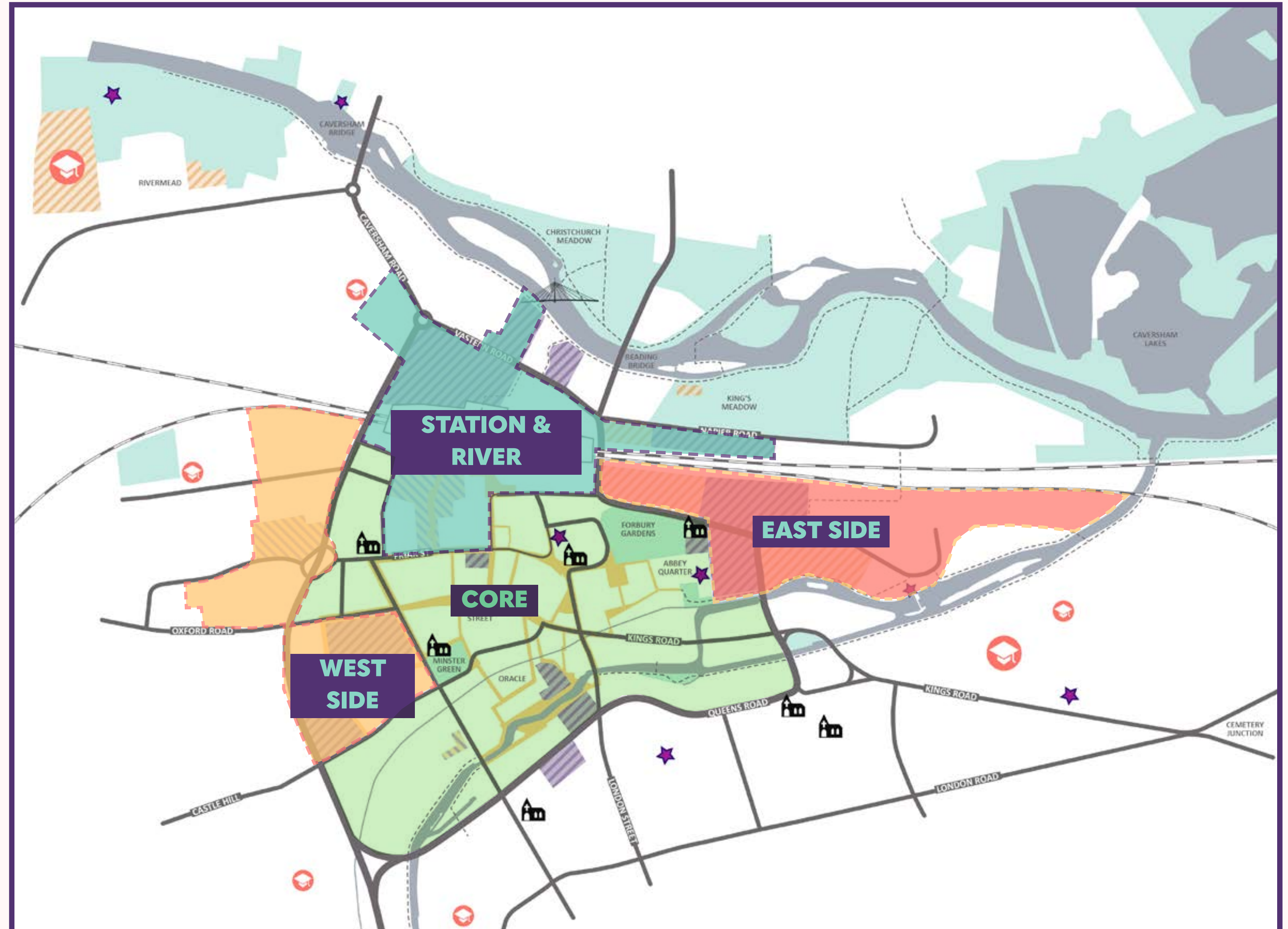
THEME	ACTION	✓
1. Building Healthy and Connected Communities	→ Provides a mix of home sizes and tenures, including family suitable homes, and meets affordable housing policy requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Contributes to accessible community infrastructure on site or nearby.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Delivers inclusive play and family friendly provision close to homes and routes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Ensures usable, well managed communal spaces with long term management plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Creates social ground floor and public realm environments that encourage belonging and interaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Identifies meanwhile uses that fill gaps during transition.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Provides homes that meet space standards, daylight, amenity, and include private/shared outdoor space.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Transforming Reading's Rivers and Public Spaces	→ Helps connect the Parks and Rivers network to the town centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Makes streets and squares more comfortable (shade, seating, planting, lighting).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Embeds climate comfort features and water management (SuDS, cooling, shade).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Strengthens legibility and heritage character at gateways and civic spaces.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Enabling Connected and Active Travel	→ Removes or reduces severance (IDR crossings, underpasses, gateways).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Strengthens the station arrival experience and reduces pedestrian vehicle conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Completes safe walking and cycling links between station, core, rivers and key destinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Improves bus reliability and interchange quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Reduces car dominance to unlock space for public realm and accessibility improvements.	<input type="checkbox"/>

THEME	ACTION	✓
4. Building a Greener, Climate Resilient Town Centre	→ Uses low carbon, fabric first design and is heat network ready where appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Delivers shade, greening and climate comfort in high footfall areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Integrates sustainable drainage and manages surface water through visible SuDS.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Supports sustainable travel and contributes to improved air quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Celebrating Reading's Culture, Heritage and Identity	→ Improves legible links between cultural anchors (Abbey Quarter, Museum, Hexagon, riverside).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Secures cultural or creative space, or enables programming through event ready public realm.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Demonstrates a positive contribution to Reading's identity and heritage setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Supports grassroots creativity via affordable or flexible space and meanwhile uses.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Reimagining the Town Centre Experience	→ Supports independent and varied retail via small or flexible units and improved arcades/heritage streets.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Enables flexible, affordable meanwhile uses to reduce vacancy and support local enterprise.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Strengthens waterside activity and makes riverside space more legible from the Core.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Contributes to a balanced evening economy and improves night time vitality and safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Provides active frontages and public realm that increase dwell time and welcome.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Supporting Growth and Innovation	→ Provides affordable and flexible workspace or enables re use of vacant units.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Secures small units and flexible ground floor formats for makers and independent enterprises.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Strengthens cluster conditions (networks, visibility, grow on space).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Improves everyday usefulness of the centre through public facing anchors.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	→ Contributes to better data and monitoring for smarter town centre management. → Improves connections to major employment and education hubs (TVP, TVSP, University, Green Park).	<input type="checkbox"/>

OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Central Reading will change most visibly in three Opportunity & Character Areas identified in the Local Plan: **Station & River**, **West Side**, and **East Side**.

These areas have the scale to deliver new homes and workplaces, upgraded public spaces, and stronger links to the Thames and Kennet, supporting Reading's evolution as a walkable riverside town centre. These all centre around the **'Core'** of Broad Street and the Oracle.



DELIVERY ROLES

Clear delivery roles are essential to turn strategic ambition into tangible outcomes. This section outlines how Reading Borough Council and its partners will share responsibility across delivered, present, and future projects, ensuring collaboration and accountability at every stage of regeneration.

DELIVERED PROJECTS

RBC-Led: Projects RBC have recently delivered

Shared Delivery: Joint initiatives

Partner-Led: Schemes already delivered where RBC enabled progress

PRESENT PROJECTS

RBC-Led: Tactical improvements and civic projects RBC are already delivering

Shared Delivery: Joint initiatives where RBC and partners co-invest or co-design

Partner-Led: Schemes already in motion where RBC enables progress

FUTURE PROJECTS

RBC-Led: Strategic capital projects requiring feasibility and funding

Shared Delivery: Joint initiatives where RBC and partners co-invest or co-design

Partner-Led: Long-term developments aligned with the Local Plan

DELIVERY PLAN PROJECTS MAP

DELIVERED

1. Station Hill (Phase 1 & 2)
2. Oracle Retail & Leisure Enhancements (2025)
3. Huntley Wharf

PRESENT

4. Civic Centre
5. Hexagon Studio Theatre
6. Heat Networks
7. Minster Quarter Central
8. Broad Street Mall Redevelopment
9. Oracle Riverside
10. Reading Riverworks

FUTURE

11. Friar Street Upgrades
12. Station Road Enhancements
13. Green Routes
14. Town Centre Play Park
15. Union Street ("Smelly Alley")
16. Queens Road & London Street Junction
17. Station Transport Interchange And Brunel Arcade
18. Community Spaces
19. St Mary's Butts
20. Arcades For Independents
21. Reading Gaol
22. Station Hill Phase 3
23. Garrard Street Activation

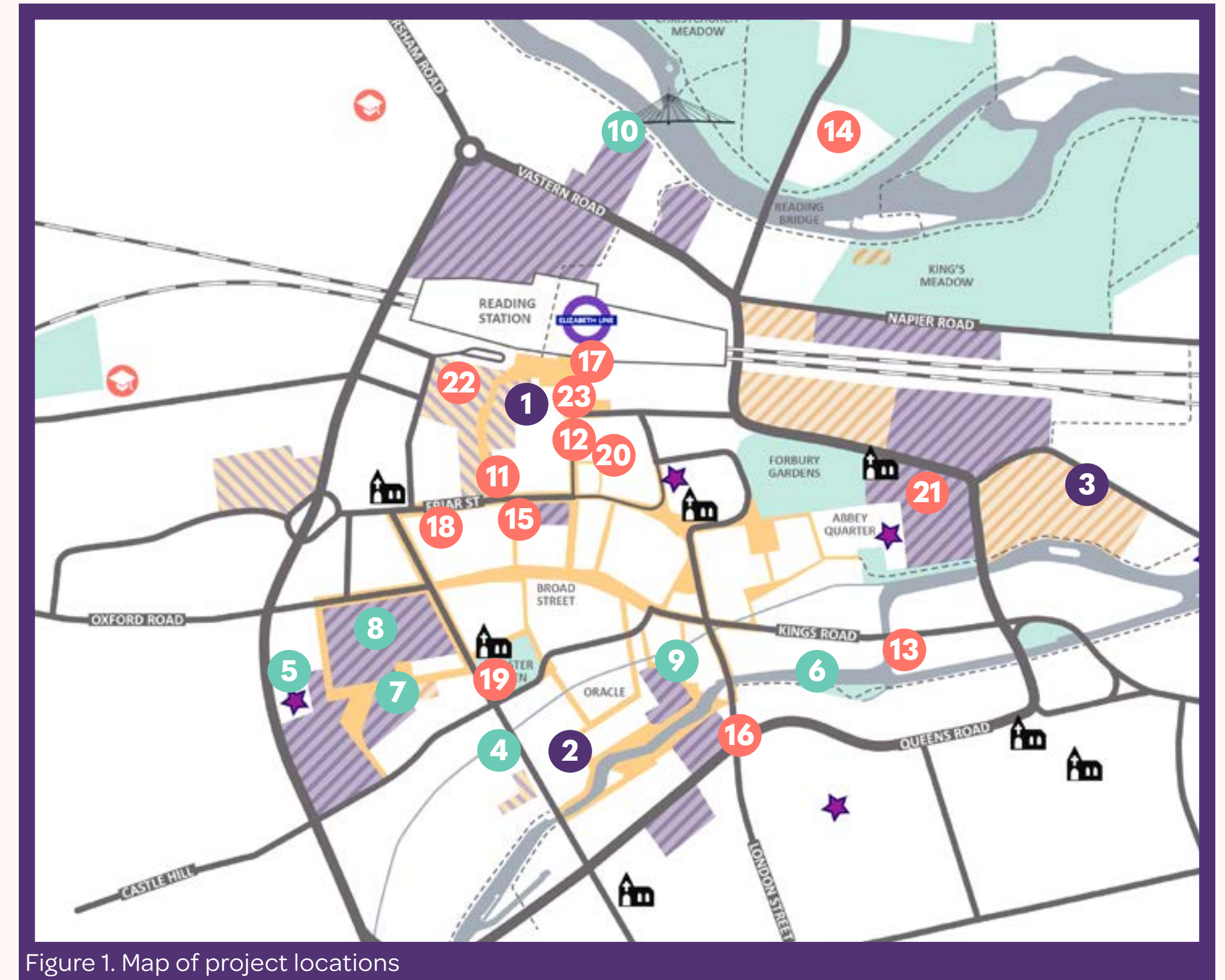
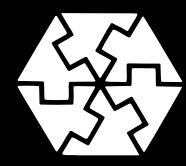


Figure 1. Map of project locations

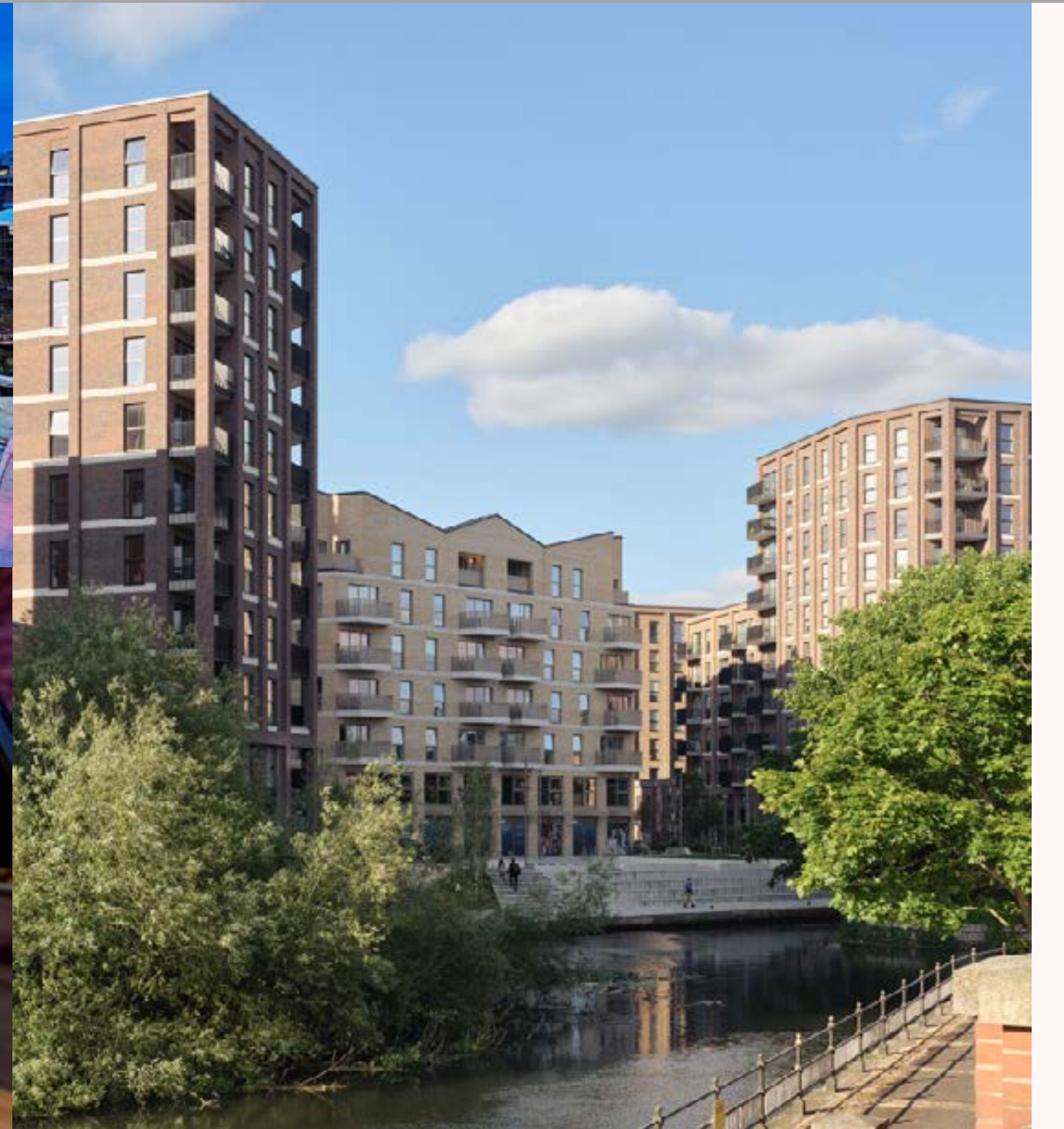


SELECTED DELIVERED PROJECTS

DELIVERED PROJECTS

- **RBC-Led:** Projects RBC have recently delivered
- **Shared Delivery:** Joint initiatives
- **Partner-Led:** Schemes already delivered where RBC enabled progress

PARTNER LED PROJECTS



**STATION HILL
(PHASE 1 & 2)**

**ORACLE RETAIL AND LEISURE
ENHANCEMENTS (2025)**

HUNTLEY WHARF

PROJECT

OBJECTIVE

NEXT STEPS

DELIVERY

STATUS

- Flagship mixed use regeneration scheme.

- Ebb and Flow - Build to Rent let
- Ground floor commercial spaces opening
- Coordinate with cultural programming to ensure year-round activation.

- Lincoln Property Group

→ DELIVERED

- More diverse retail and leisure offer.

- Investment in tier one retailers and flagship stores.
- New bowling offer
- Investment in riverside public realm

- Hammerson

→ DELIVERED

- High quality riverside residential scheme.

- Let remaining vacant ground floor units
- Coordinate with cultural programming to ensure year-round activation.

- Berkeley Homes

→ DELIVERED



SELECTED PRESENT PROJECTS

PRESENT PROJECTS

- **RBC-Led:** Tactical improvements and civic projects RBC are already delivering
- **Shared Delivery:** Joint initiatives where RBC and partners co-invest or co-design
- **Partner-Led:** Schemes already in motion where RBC enables progress

STATUS	MEANING
COMMITTED	→ Funded and in delivery
PLANNED	→ In progress with identified delivery route, subject to funding
PIPELINE	→ Identified priority with delivery route to be determined
ASPIRATIONAL	→ Long-term ambition requiring future funding or feasibility

COUNCIL LED PROJECTS



PROJECT

CIVIC CENTRE

HEXAGON STUDIO THEATRE

HEAT NETWORKS

MINSTER QUARTER CENTRAL

OBJECTIVE

- A modern civic anchor for learning, culture, and community engagement.

- Regenerate Reading’s cultural infrastructure and support the night-time economy.

- Deliver low-carbon district heating infrastructure to support sustainable development and energy resilience across Reading Town Centre for both private and public sector developments

- Enable delivery of a new mixed-use neighbourhood at Minster Quarter, supporting town centre living and economic growth.

NEXT STEPS

- Finalise capital works
- Develop programming strategy aligned with other cultural venues.

- Deliver capital works and fit-out.
- Develop programming and partnerships.
- Coordinate with evening economy strategy.

- Engage with potential Heat Network users, National Wealth Fund, and ESCOs.
- Commission technical feasibility
- Explore delivery models (e.g. RBC-led SPV or joint venture).

- Design development and stakeholder engagement.
- Detailed planning application
- Planning, construction and infrastructure coordination with neighbouring landowners.

DELIVERY

- Levelling Up Fund (secured), RBC capital

- Levelling Up Fund (secured), Arts Council England, RBC capital, Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

- National Wealth Fund, Energy Service Company (ESCo) investment, Central Government Grants, Developer contributions

- Primarily private sector sought by McLaren Living MQC Ltd, with additional public sector enabling and infrastructure funding (such as Brownfield Land Release Fund).

STATUS

→ COMMITED

→ COMMITED

→ PIPELINE

→ PLANNED

PARTNER LED PROJECTS



PROJECT	BROAD STREET MALL REDEVELOPMENT	ORACLE RIVERSIDE - Residential	READING RIVERWORKS
OBJECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces 643 tenure-blind, build-to-rent apartments (1, 2, & 3-bed) to the area, including 12.5% affordable housing. Includes around 19,000 sq ft of new commercial space and significant public realm enhancements Extends the existing NHS Walk-In Centre and integrates with the Minster Quarter masterplan. 	<p>Hammerson are planning a significant mixed-use regeneration of the eastern end of their estate. Plans to introduce new retail, leisure, and residential units with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 400 homes Smaller replacement cinema Upgraded riverside area Ground floor commercial uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major residential regeneration project located on a 1.9-acre former power station site on the banks of the River Thames. Transform the area into a new, sustainable waterfront community of 209 one, two, and three-bedroom apartments BREEAM Excellent certification, using eco-friendly construction materials, air-source heat pumps, and rainwater harvesting.
NEXT STEPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Management Plans Enabling works on mall, car park and public realm Support integration with Minster Quarter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrades to the mall Lease negotiations Design development and Planning application S106 negotiations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Sales and occupation
DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private investment from AEW delivered by McLaren Living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hammerson and investment partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private investment from Berkeley Homes
STATUS	→ PLANNED	→ PLANNED	→ COMMITED

SELECTED FUTURE PROJECTS

FUTURE PROJECTS

- **RBC-Led:** Strategic capital projects requiring feasibility and funding
- **Shared Delivery:** Joint initiatives where RBC and partners co-invest or co-design
- **Partner-Led:** Long-term developments aligned with the Local Plan

STATUS	MEANING
COMMITTED	→ Funded and in delivery
PLANNED	→ In progress with identified delivery route, subject to funding
PIPELINE	→ Identified priority with delivery route to be determined
ASPIRATIONAL	→ Long-term ambition requiring future funding or feasibility

COUNCIL LED PROJECTS



PROJECT

ST MARY'S BUTTS

UNION STREET ENHANCEMENTS
"Smelly Alley"

COMMUNITY SPACES

OBJECTIVE

To transform St Mary's Butts into a positive, clutter-free public space that celebrates its architectural heritage, supports walking and cycling, and manages vehicular movement more effectively.

- Reclaim road space to create a central civic space.
- Enhance the setting of Reading Minster
- Improve the market layout
- Introduce greening, seating, and opportunities for informal play and events.

Enhance and upgrade Union Street to encourage pedestrians to use it as a key route into the town centre from the Station/ Friar Street.

- Developers and key landowners can repurpose or create new spaces for community use, integrating services and activities including providing centres for neighbourhood health support.

NEXT STEPS

- Design development
- Agree funding strategy

- Engagement between owners, council and tenants (existing and prospective).
- Support business planning and tenant mix strategies
- Explore public realm interventions
- Private investment alongside landowners, with potential for business support grants and partnership funding.

- Identify suitable sites in partnership with landowners.
- Provide design guidance and support funding applications.
- Enable community engagement in design and delivery.

DELIVERY

- Infrastructure grants (e.g. Active Travel England), potential developer contributions, S106, CIL.

- Developer contributions (Section 106/CIL), with potential for grant funding and sponsorship.

STATUS

→ ASPIRATIONAL

→ PIPELINE

→ ASPIRATIONAL

SHARED DELIVERY PROJECTS



PROJECT

PEDESTRIAN ROUTES - STATION TO CENTRE & THAMES

QUEENS ROAD AND LONDON STREET JUNCTION

STATION SQUARE PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE AND BRUNEL ARCADE

OBJECTIVE

- Create a legible, inclusive pedestrian route linking Oracle, Broad Street and Station Hill to the River Thames, unlocking riverfront placemaking and making use of our characterful side streets such as Union and Chain Street.

Reduce severance caused by the IDR and improve the pedestrian and cycling experience along the north-south London Street corridor, while enhancing the setting for future development and celebrating local heritage.

- Transform the Brunel Arcade and surrounding interchange into a modern, welcoming gateway to Reading, improving connectivity, accessibility, and the visitor experience.

NEXT STEPS

- Commission a route masterplan and river crossing feasibility study.
- Coordinate with Station Hill and other developers

- Design development
- Agree funding strategy

- Input into feasibility and design studies with stakeholders, led by Network Rail.
- Engage with Network Rail, transport operators, and local businesses.
- Develop a phased delivery plan aligned with station operations.

DELIVERY

- Infrastructure grants (e.g. Active Travel England), potential developer contributions, S106, CIL.

- Development contributions and transport funding streams.

- Potential sources include Network Rail investment, government capital investment funds, Section 106/ CIL contributions, and private sector partnerships.

STATUS

→ ASPIRATIONAL

→ ASPIRATIONAL

→ ASPIRATIONAL

PARTNER LED PROJECTS



PROJECT

ARCADES FOR INDEPENDENTS

READING GAOL

STATION HILL PHASE 3

GARRARD STREET ACTIVATION

OBJECTIVE

Encourage the creation of vibrant arcades and spaces for independent businesses, supporting local enterprise and diversity.

Property owners and developers can repurpose underused arcades or create new spaces tailored for independents, enhancing the town centre offer particularly at:

- Smelly Alley (Union Street)
- Bristol and West Arcade
- Harris Arcade

Enable the sensitive redevelopment of the former Reading Gaol, unlocking its heritage and cultural value. Ziran Education Foundation plan to transform Reading Gaol into a multi-functional space that includes:

- An educational centre providing services to the local community.
- Museum outlining the Gaol's history
- A public exhibition space,
- Partial development into a hotel.

Enable the successful delivery of the final phase of Station Hill, completing a major regeneration project for Reading.

Reactivate the frontage of a strategic building along the main thoroughfare (Station Road) into the retail core of the town centre

NEXT STEPS

- Engagement between owners, council and tenants (existing and prospective).
- Support business planning and tenant mix strategies

- Support engagement with Historic England and cultural partners.
- Facilitate planning and design guidance.
- Enable access to heritage and cultural funding streams.

Planning Application

- Engage with owners to explore options and overcome barriers.
- Support planning and design processes.

DELIVERY

Private investment alongside landowners, with potential for business support grants and partnership funding.

Private sector-led, with potential for heritage and cultural grants.

Lincoln Property Group

Private investment, with potential for public sector enabling funds.

STATUS

→ ASPIRATIONAL

→ ASPIRATIONAL

→ PLANNED

→ ASPIRATIONAL

PROJECTS SUMMARY

A programme of public realm improvements is proposed to create safer, more welcoming and family-friendly streets in Central Reading.

Feasibility work will assess opportunities for greener, more comfortable spaces; improved play; better pedestrian-vehicle balance; accessibility; and proportionate security measures.

This phase will identify capital options and ensure future investment delivers the resilient town-centre spaces outlined in the delivery plan.

RECOMMENDED PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Friar Street Enhancements
- Station Road Enhancements
- Union Street Enhancements
- Town Centre Playpark

