

Subject:	Future High Streets Fund/ Heritage Action Zone for Bacup town centre	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Council	Date:	25 th September 2019
Report of:	Director of Economic Development	Portfolio Holder:	Regeneration and Economic Development
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	Council to note the successful award up to £150,000 of the first stage of the Future High Streets Fund and to authorise acceptance of the grant.
1.2	Council to note the pending stage one High Street Heritage Action Zone application decision for Bacup.
1.3	Council to note the consultation to date on the emerging draft Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan. To authorise full consultation to take place to strengthen forthcoming funding applications with a view of adopting the Vision and Masterplan as official Council policy and supplementary planning document status at a future Council meeting.
1.4	Council to agree to the establishment of a Bacup 2040 Vision Board to act as a policy and steering group for the project. Terms of reference to be delegated to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the portfolio holder.
1.5	Council to allocate £250,000 from the Employment and Transport Reserve, delegated to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the portfolio holder to support detailed designs, studies, consultation, planning permission and professional reports to strengthen the second round application based on the emerging draft Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan. Unused funds will be returned to the reserve after the bid is concluded.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To update members on the status of external funding bids to improve Bacup town centre, authorise full consultation on the emerging draft Visions and Masterplan and to allocate funding to enable strong evidenced and costed second stage proposals to be submitted.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **A connected and successful Rossendale that welcomes sustainable growth:** our priority is to ensure that we are well connected to our residents, key partners and stakeholders. We want to make the most of every pound we spend and we are always

looking for new and innovative ways to make the resources we do have, work harder for us.

- **A proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale:** our priority is to ensure that we are creating and maintaining a healthy and vibrant place for people to live and visit.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- 4.1
- Offer letter not received:
At the time of writing we have only received a basic letter confirming our stage 1 success, we are pending the detailed letter that will confirm if we have been awarded the full £150,000. If this is less then we will be seeking to use the reserve funding to support the application further.
- 4.2
- Guidance notes not published at the time of writing:
Government, at the time of writing this report, have not published the detailed stage 2 guidance notes. This is necessary to calculate the cost of the funding bid as the amount of detailed professional reports can vary greatly by the level of project advancement that is required. A substantial contingency has been allocated to allow for this risk.
- 4.3
- Failure to obtain stage 2 approval for Future High Streets bid:
This is still a highly competitive process at stage 2 and it is important that the best possible bid is submitted to achieve capital investment into Bacup. The project will be managed effectively with regular quality control checks made at each stage of the process.
- 4.4
- Failure to obtain stage 1 or 2 approval for High Street Heritage Action Zone:
The outcome of stage 1 is not known and as this is highly competitive and oversubscribed this is a real risk. Although this would be disappointing if this bid was unsuccessful as it will provide additional heritage related funding, a possibility of some improvements to targeted buildings remains through the Future High Streets Fund.
- 4.5
- Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan consultation feedback is negative:
The current draft Vision and Masterplan have been based on consultation with residents and stakeholders. All comments will be assimilated to identify real trends and concerns and the plans adapted where necessary in consultation with the Bacup 2040 Board.
- 4.6
- Feedback from the town centre (specialist) task force requires changes to the Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan:
We have not as yet received the specialist feedback from the government task force as this comes after the project team including technical consultants will have been appointed. We will listen carefully to any constructive feedback received and make appropriate changes to the plans where necessary.

5. BACKGROUND

5.1 Bacup town centre

Bacup has historically been a thriving mill town based around wool and cotton production. The town sits in the centre of the South Pennines. It has been described by English Heritage as one of the best-preserved mill towns in England. Despite the post war decline in traditional industries, a strong community spirit and determination is evident in the many community groups that are involved in the town centre such as Bacup Pride.

Bacup town centre directly incorporates two wards; Greensclough and Irwell with a population

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of 11,310. It also is the main town centre for a greater geographical area estimated at 25,500 residents in the south and east of Rossendale.

The Council's Economic Development Strategy has identified town centres as its number one priority. Since then resources have been concentrated to support the regeneration of the town centres. In Bacup, initial work has concentrated on developing strong partnerships involving businesses, investors and community groups. This partnership working has led to the development of an emerging draft strategic long-term Vision, Masterplan, consultation and external funding bids submitted by the Economic Development Team.

In March 2019 at the time of the Future High Streets Fund stage 1 application, baseline data was established. This showed that Bacup had a high retail vacancy rate of 25.86% which is significantly more than the national average of 9.9% reported by Springboard in a national survey. The data relates to ground floor retail units. Vacancy rates are a useful tool in determining the success of a town centre and high vacancy rates are evidence to support the need for public sector intervention and challenging business conditions.

In March 2019, Bacup had two completely derelict buildings, the Bingo Hall / former Regal Cinema and the locally known former Woolworths building and 3 other large semi-derelict buildings, former Barclays bank, former NatWest bank and the former Lancashire & Yorkshire bank within the town centre. Both of the two completely derelict buildings are in a very poor condition and occupy large footprints. There are also significant derelict buildings on the outer fringe of the town centre boundary, such as Forrest Mill, Old Market Hall and Waterside Mill. These buildings represent a challenge in bringing them back into viable modern uses or present redevelopment opportunities.

Footfall counts were conducted as part of the bid submission and these showed that footfall was relatively low during the day and the evening.

Despite the need for investment, repurposing and town centre management it should be noted that some significant progress has been made since the baseline data was established in March 2019. The Bacup Business Association has been reformed with new leadership and is now functioning as a strong organisation. Bacup Now have successfully held events that have drawn new people into the town centre. Some cosmetic work has been undertaken on the former Woolworths building and plans are being developed by a community group to transform one of the semi derelict buildings. New food and drink businesses have also located in the buildings refurbished by the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) project and occupancy rates on St. James Street have notably improved and are now approaching full occupancy. It is hoped that this new buzz around Bacup can be built upon by the Vision and funding bids to bring lasting transformation to the town.

5.2 Bacup THI evaluation and forward plan

The Bacup THI project has been instrumental in creating the renewed buzz in Bacup. It involved £1.5m From THI, £400,000 Rossendale Council and £100,000 from Lancashire County Council giving a £2 million budget. The project concluded on 30th June 2019 and upgraded many of the properties on St. James Street and St. James square, public realm enhancements and community training initiatives.

At the conclusion of the project an evaluation and survey involving 300 respondents was undertaken. This showed the following:

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- 97% of people surveyed live in Bacup or nearby
- 91% of people felt that the recently completed Bacup THI project 2013-2019 had made the shops more attractive.
- 70% of respondents to the Town Centre Survey felt that Bacup is now a more attractive place to shop.
- 62% of respondents use Bacup Town Centre to shop
- 63% of respondents felt that the range of shops did not meet their needs
- 70% of respondents rarely visit Bacup in the evening- 86% of respondents would like more things to do in the evening
- 83% of respondents want more themed events
- 93% of respondents would like to see more restaurants and bars
- 57% of respondents felt that leisure opportunities are poor
- 2/5 of respondents felt the atmosphere in the town is poor or below average
- 79.5% commented that the range of market stalls is poor or below average
- 66% felt that the atmosphere in the market area is poor or below average
- 60% of respondents felt that Anti-social behaviour in Bacup is poor or below average.

The survey results indicate that the Bacup THI had improved perceptions of the town but significant challenges remain to meet the expectations of modern town centre visitors; in particular the need to improve the retail experience, improve the evening economy, better food and drink opportunities, more events and leisure activities, improve the market area as well as reduce anti-social behaviour.

The THI was a significant start in addressing Bacup's need for enhancing its heritage, image and vibrancy. However, it is also important to build on this initial success and address the challenges that remain.

5.3 Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan

In order to address the remaining challenges facing Bacup town centre a long-term Vision has been produced. This is based upon the Bacup THI evaluation survey, feedback from business owners, landlords and a vision workshop where all of the active community groups and stakeholders were invited to develop key themes. It is important that this document reflects the views of the local community.

This information was assimilated and the emerging draft Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan has been produced, see support appendixes two and three. The document identifies a number of options based on the following themes:

- Enterprise- Bacup will be known for providing business support for start-ups and growing companies. It will have a strong tourism presence, enticing quality food, drink and cultural experiences from dawn 'til dusk
- Place - Bacup will be a functional, sustainable and attractive town centre, with greater accessibility for all. It will be a place with varied opportunities for living, work, culture, leisure and creativity.
- People - Bacup will be a safe town with something for all ages, promoting good physical and mental well-being. Education, employability, voluntary and health provision will be readily accessible.
- Vibrancy - Bacup will be a booming town with a broad and varied town centre

offering and cultural ambience. It will have a fresh approach to enhancing and promoting its heritage, excellent connections to the countryside, art and nature.

The main Masterplan changes that are proposed are:

- Concentration of the retail offer within the town centre core
- New market square providing an outdoor market, events and theatre area
- Two new multi-use events, market, community, restaurant/café, entertainment and residential building adjacent to the new market square
- Derelict buildings refurbished and brought back into use
- Repurposing of vacant buildings in the outer core to residential, leisure or community use
- Development of themed hub areas
- Improved car parking signage and provision
- Improved pedestrian walkways from car parks to the core area
- Public realm enhancements to widen the footpaths to enable a café culture with outdoor seating and one-way system
- Water restoration of the fountain subject to further permissions
- Public art and signage
- Take-away policy
- Community engagement, events and festivals plan
- Creating a community hub concept
- Digital engagement strategy

To establish the emerging draft Vision as policy, it will be necessary to develop this further within the funding bid timescales. This will require the creation of a community led stakeholder Board as well as further consultation.

5.4 **Bacup 2040 Board**

One of the key assessment criteria for both the Future High Streets and the High Street Heritage Action Zone bids is that the bids receive strong community and stakeholder support. It is considered good practice to establish a town centre strategic group to steer and guide the project. As such it is proposed that the Bacup 2040 Board consisting of elected RBC Members, RBC Officers, businesses, landlords and representatives from all community groups operating with the town centre be brought together under the terms of reference.

The remit of the board will evolve if funding bids are successful but this will be reviewed if a successful application is realised at a future Council report.

5.5 **Consultation**

Although considerable stage one consultation has taken place it is necessary to formalise the Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan as this is the basis for existing and future high street bids for Bacup. After the consultation a future Council report will receive the feedback from the public and stakeholders and adopt them as official Council policy and supplementary planning document status.

The following consultation is planned:

- Publishing on the Council's website and social media of a link to an online questionnaire

- Writing to all households in Irwell, Greensclough and Stacksteads wards publicising the Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan and inviting residents comments either via the web link or by paper returns.
- Letter to all landlords within the town centre boundary
- Letter to all business owners within the town centre boundary
- Consultation with market traders
- Continued stakeholder group feedback and workshops through the Bacup 2040 Board
- Awareness stalls in Bacup town centre
- Engagement with local school students

5.6 Future High Streets Fund

The Future High Streets Fund has been set up by government in order to meet the national challenges that town centres are facing with the decline in traditional retailing. The fund is capital expenditure focused to support the following:

- Investment in physical infrastructure
- Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm
- Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area
- Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification
- Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology

The funding is highly competitive with over 400 bids received in the first call for projects. 100 have been selected to go forward from the first stage to the second stage application including Bacup.

Up to £150,000 has been awarded to Rossendale Council to develop up the bid, a greenbook economic assessment across the five recognised themes; strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management cases. Pending confirmation in the detailed guidance notes; supporting documentation showing advanced RIBA designs, planning and costs for new build projects; detailed development appraisals for refurbishing and repurposing derelict or vacant buildings; modelled, consulted and costed public realm proposals; land acquisition and building valuations, professional and technical reports, governance structure, community plan etc. is likely to be required by the 30th April 2020 submission.

The more shovel ready the proposals the stronger the application will be received as applications that are unclear on public support, deliverability, risk and costs will be viewed unfavourably by the assessment panel. A funding allocation of £250,000 from the employment and transport reserve has been requested to support the advancement of the proposals. However, every effort will be made to reduce costs where prudent and it is possible that part of this allocation will be returned to the reserve after the two funding bids have been concluded.

If successful up to £25 million is available at the second stage with a national funding pot reported as up to £1 billion. A smaller award is expected for a town the size of Bacup as it will have to pass rigorous value for money checks and judged nationally by its benefit cost ratio score.

The critical and challenging deadlines for this work are:

- Capacity resource grant up to £150,000 allocated September 2019
- Business Case guidance notes published September 2019
- Inception meeting October 2019
- Indicative funding request submitted November 2019
- Early draft business case submitted 15th January 2020
- Final business case and supporting documentation submitted 30th April 2020

It should be noted that we have not had an official grant award letter and the detailed guidance notes have not been issued at the time of writing by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. However, in view of the demanding critical deadlines associated with this funding bid it is necessary to progress this report and its recommendations at this time.

5.7 High Streets Heritage Action Zone

At the time of writing, the outcome of the stage one submission is not known but a decision is expected imminently. This is a £1.1m heritage enhancement bid that focuses on improvements to 29 buildings on Market Street, St James Square and Burnley Road including the Bingo / Regal building. The bid aims to improve the heritage features in buildings that were not part of the recent THI project and aligns with the aims of the wider Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan.

If successful this project would act as a separate project to the main Future High Streets Funding bid and can not be used to duplicate resources.

Once again this is a competitive process with only the highest scoring bids being selected. If successful a second round submission would need to be submitted by February 2020 that detail full costings and proposals.

5.8 Extra resources

This project will be managed by the Economic Development and Property Services Team who will lead on the consultation, Bacup 2040 Board, Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan amendments, Management and tendering of consultants etc. It is officers' preference to use internal resources where possible as they have extensive local experience and this reduces costs with only technical aspects contracted out to consultants.

As a small team this will add considerably to the workload and to assist in this a suitable extra resource of 2 days per week utilising existing grade 6 part-time Communities Team staff has been identified. As such it is proposed to extend the working hours to cover this requirement up to the submission date.

5.9 Next steps

Following this report the Bacup 2040 Board will be formed and tenders will be awarded for the specialist technical consultants that are required.

A further Council report will be presented to approve the final version of the Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 Financial implications and risks are noted in the report. The Council currently has available £811k in the Employment and Transport Reserve. As the report indicates the initial grant of up to £150k is yet to be confirmed and there is no guarantee that the final bid will be successful.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 All necessary tenders shall be advertised and awarded in line with the Council's Constitution and Public Contract Regulations. All necessary grant funding agreements will be considered and completed following all necessary due diligence.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 Consultation is detailed within the body of the report.

8.2 Internal resources have been identified within the Communities Team. All HR policies will be complied with. An EIA is not required at this time.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The Bacup 2040 Vision and Masterplan will be finalised after further consultation with residents, businesses and community stakeholders.

9.2 A further second round application for Future High Streets will be made in April 2020; High Streets Heritage Action Zone if successful is expected to be made February 2020.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Bacup 2040 Masterplan – opportunities map	Annex 1
Bacup THI Evaluation	https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/1160/overview_and_scrutiny_committee see item D1
Bacup 2040 Vision	https://www.bacupthi.org.uk/uploads/docs/Minutes%20of%20the%20Bacup%20THI%20Partnership%20Board/Fountain%202018/The%20Bacup%202040%20Vision.pdf
Gov.uk Future High Streets Fund	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/783531/Future_High_Streets_Fund_prospectus.pdf
High Street Heritage Action Zone	https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/regenerating-historic-high-streets/

Annex I - Bacup Master Plans

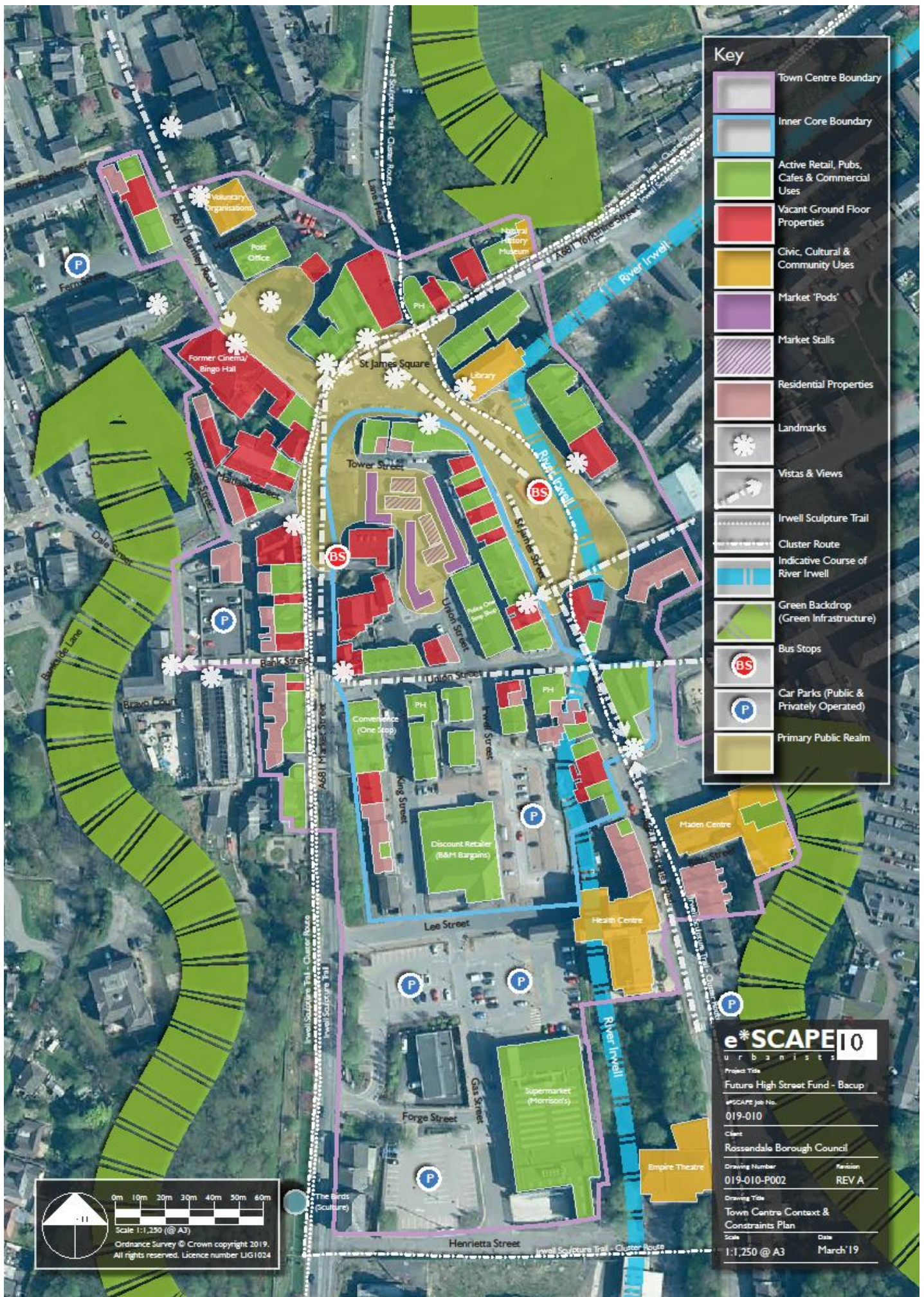
Future High Streets Fund

Included in this annex are the following drawings to support the Bacup 2040 Vision

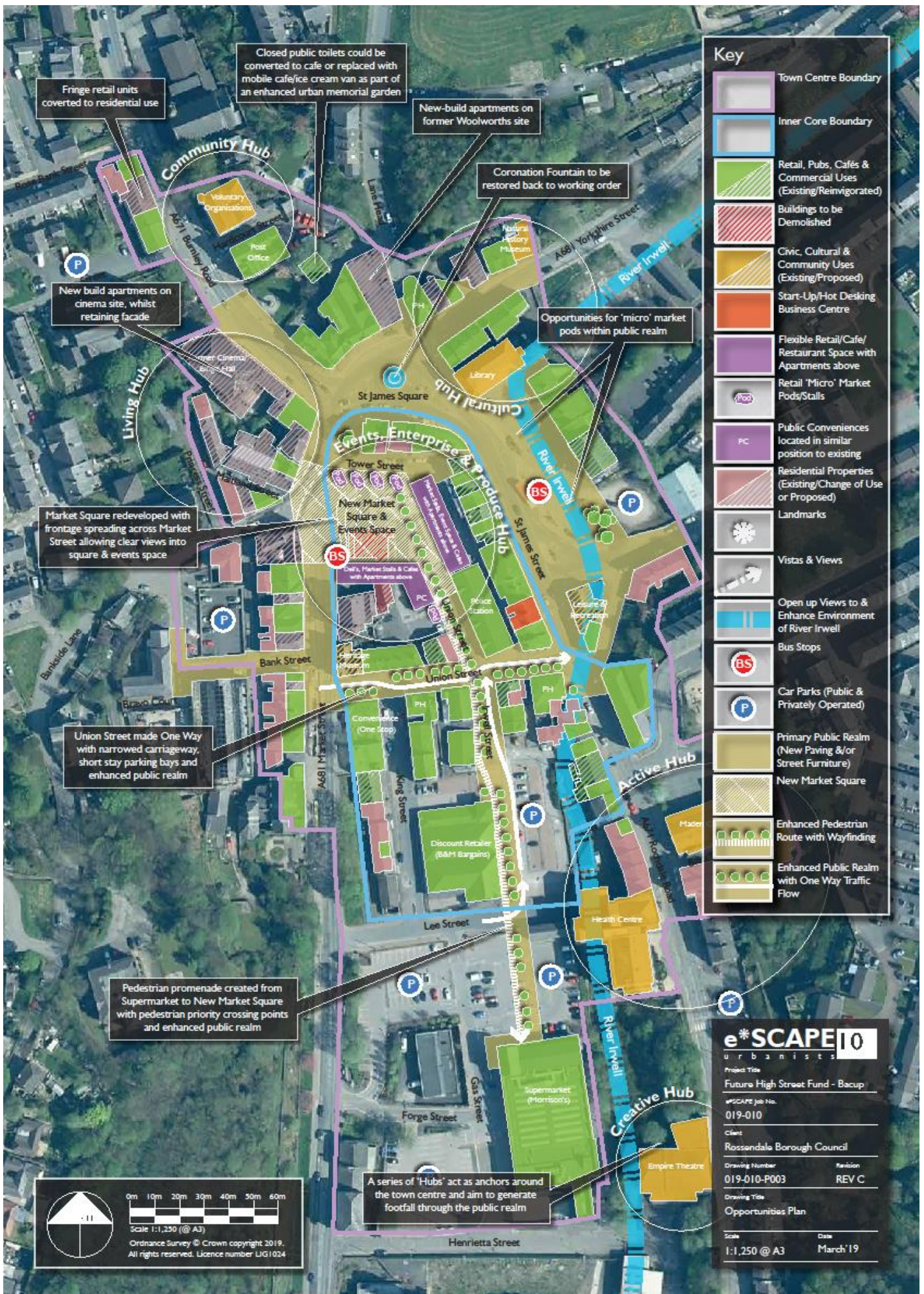
- Map 1: Constraints Plan – this defines the limitations and feasibility of the Bacup 2040 Vision (Annex D)
- Map 2: Opportunities Plan- indicates the future proposals for Bacup
- Map 3: Illustrative Masterplan- provides a further visual representation of the opportunities plan
- Map 4: Movement Parameters Plan- provides information on how vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists will navigate the town centre
- Map 5: Land Uses- provides information on how the buildings will be repurposed
- Map 6: Multi-storey Heights Plan- provides information on the proposed height of new and existing buildings

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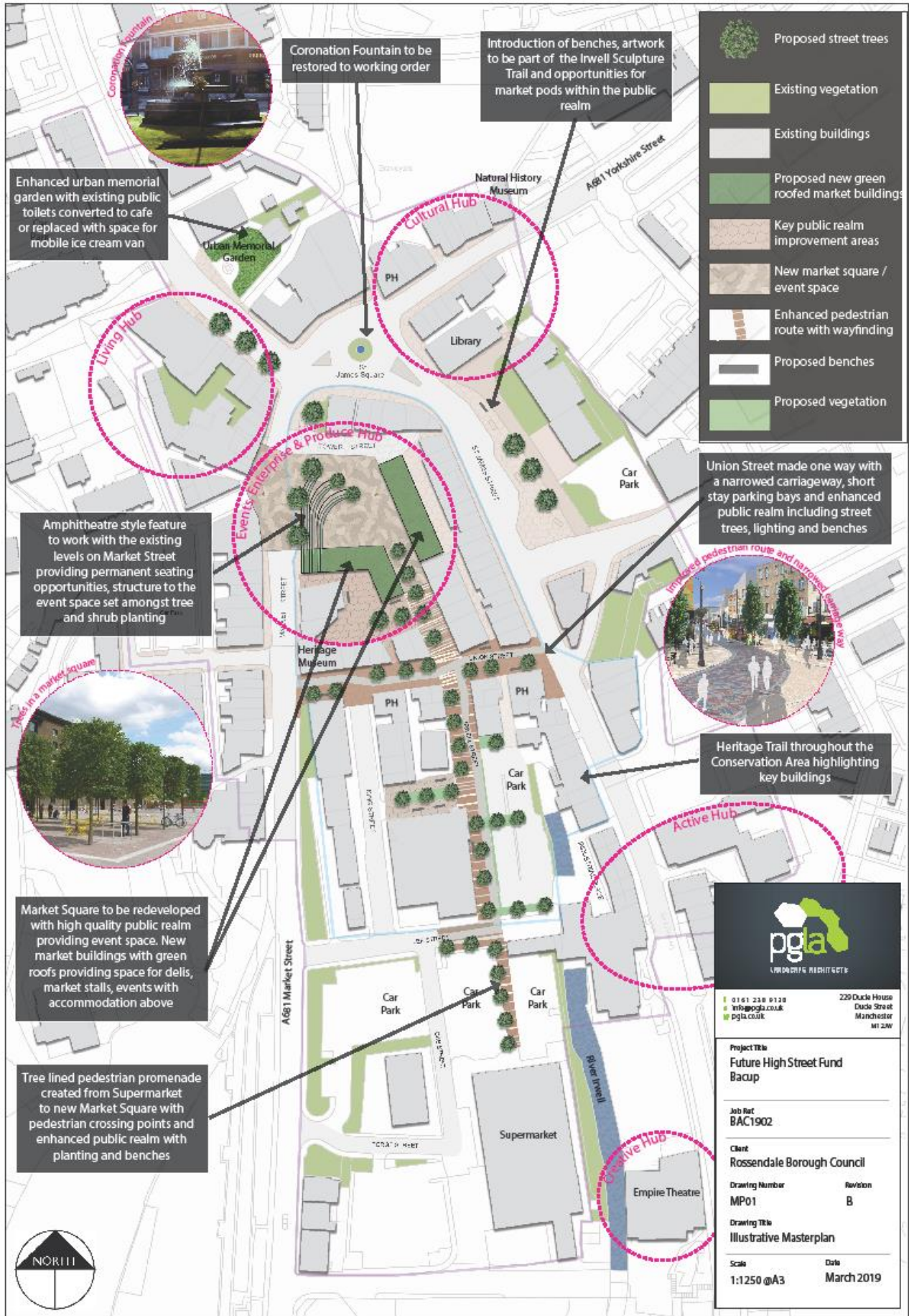




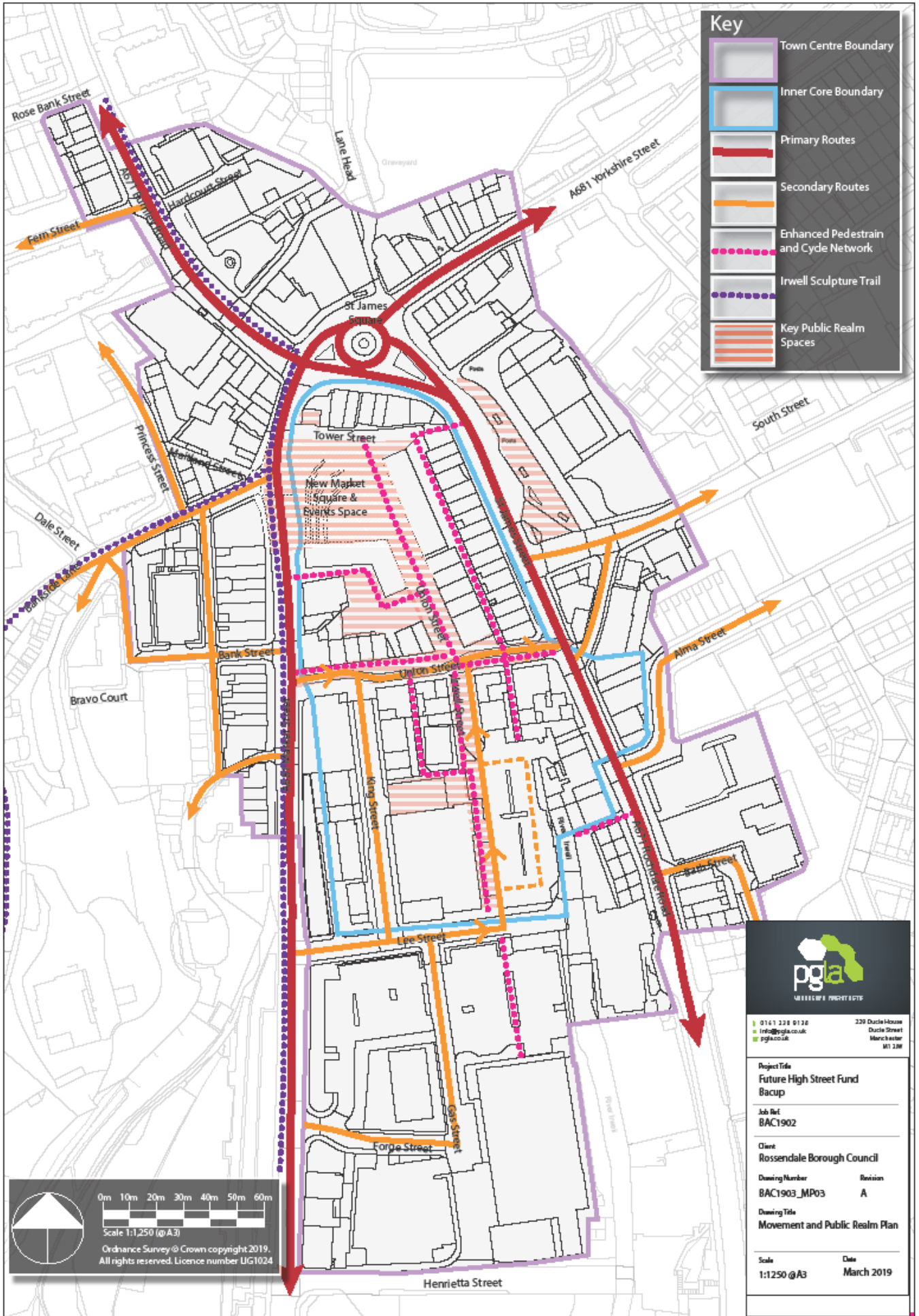
Map 1: Bacup Constraints Plan



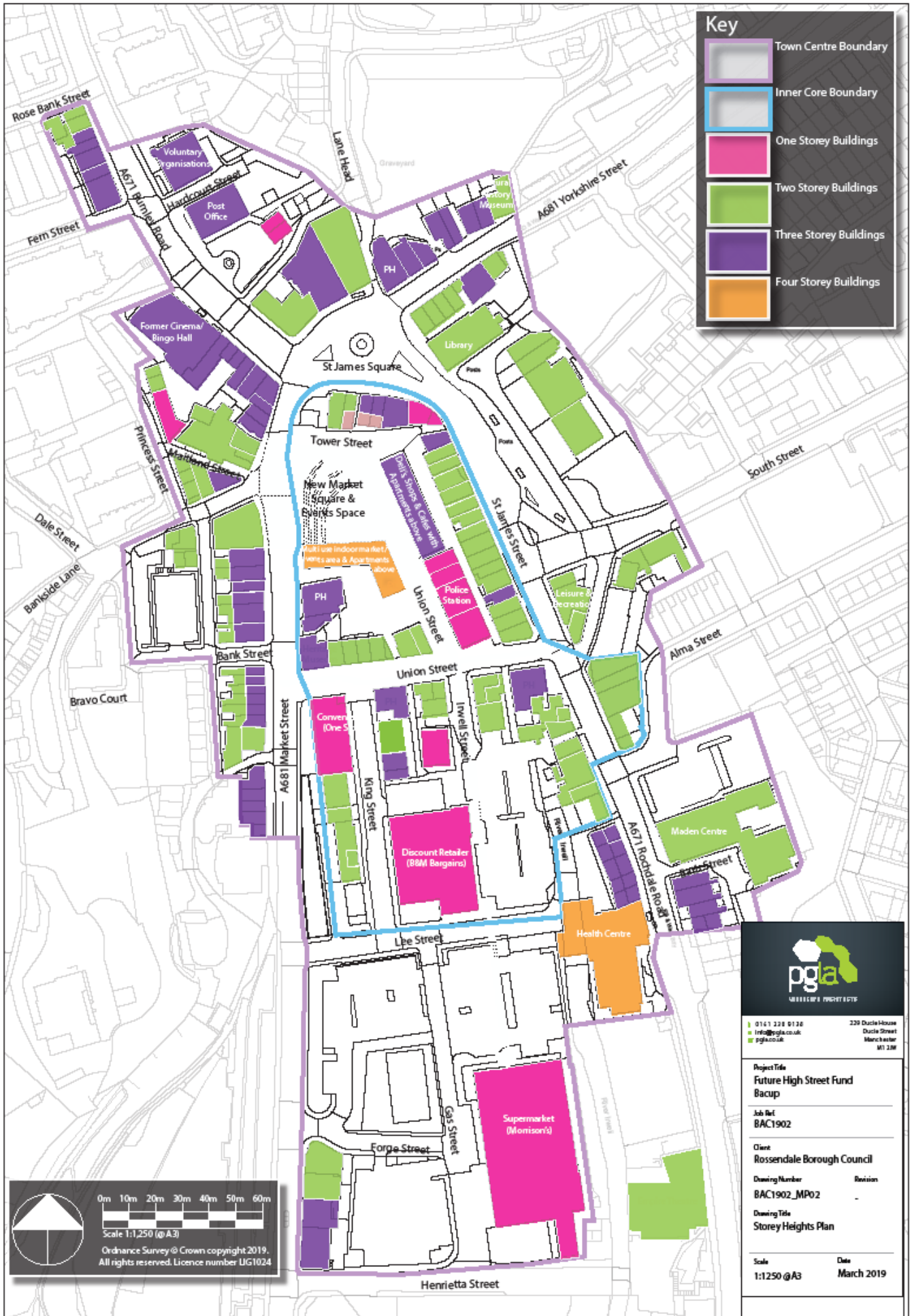
Map 2: Bacup Opportunities Plan



Map 3: Bacup Illustrative Masterplan



Map 4: Bacup Movement Parameters Plan



Map 6: Multi-storey heights plan