

Chelmsley Wood

Town Centre Masterplan

What is this consultation about?

A message from Councillor Ian Courts

Leader of Solihull Council and Lead Member for the Economy

Solihull Council is developing a long term plan to ensure that Chelmsley Wood Town Centre continues to thrive and serve the needs of the local community as we witness the role of our town centres changing, both locally and nationally.

By working with a team of planners, transport consultants, retail and property experts, and by consulting with local people and businesses, we want to help develop an exciting new future for Chelmsley Wood Town Centre. One that is both ambitious and deliverable, and which responds confidently to the challenges and opportunities facing the town centre.

Of course, change won't happen overnight, but we believe that a phased plan of improvements is possible which could transform the town centre through phased delivery over the next 10 years.

We will start by focusing on the Northwest Quarter of the town centre, exploring how we can deliver a thriving, attractive, high quality, better connected local centre for people to enjoy and feel proud of. We will need your help to shape this emerging masterplan. Please help make sure we get this right by sharing your views.



Chelmsley Wood was built in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of a national drive to build new homes in the post-war era. The shopping centre, which dominates the town centre as a whole, was opened in 1970 and is still a vital facility for the local community today.

The Northwest Quarter of Chelmsley Wood Town Centre (illustrated on the plan opposite) is currently underused and does not fulfil its potential. The space is currently occupied by the West Midlands Police building, Job Centre, vacant former library site, BT Telephone Exchange, and former Royal Mail sorting facility. As the majority of the Northwest Quarter is in public sector ownership, the Council is working with stakeholders to develop deliverable masterplan options for this area of the town centre.

Solihull Council is being supported by planning and design consultant BDP, alongside a team of transport, retail and property experts to develop a plan for the future of the Northwest Quarter.

For further information about the project please visit our web page at www.solihull.gov.uk/chelmsleywoodtowncentremasterplan, or scan the QR code below:



Above: Chelmsley Wood Town Centre when it was first opened in 1971 (including image of Cllr Eric Collins, former Mayor of Solihull - top right)

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Challenges and Opportunities

What are the key challenges and opportunities?

When Chelmsley Wood Town Centre was built, over 50 years ago, it represented the latest thinking in how people wanted to shop. The creation of pedestrian precincts away from roads and cars, the modern shops with deliveries and storage hidden out of the way underneath the shops, the incorporation of a variety of civic and social amenities such as the original library (since demolished), the police station, the bingo hall and the social clubs – all these things were new and modern ideas at the time.

The way people use town centres has changed over the last 50 years, and this change has only been accelerated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and move to online shopping. Whilst we still want to visit shops, we now want our town centres to offer more in the way of leisure activities, from cafes, bars and restaurants, to gyms and play areas. We also want our town centres to be places where we can get together socially, with friends and family but sometimes also for community and other events.

Town centres are also increasingly becoming places for people to live and work, and therefore some office and residential accommodation is vital to promote the long-term sustainability of our centres.

Redevelopment of the Northwest Quarter presents a prime opportunity to introduce a variety of new uses into Chelmsley Wood Town Centre, serving as a catalyst for regeneration of the town centre as a whole.

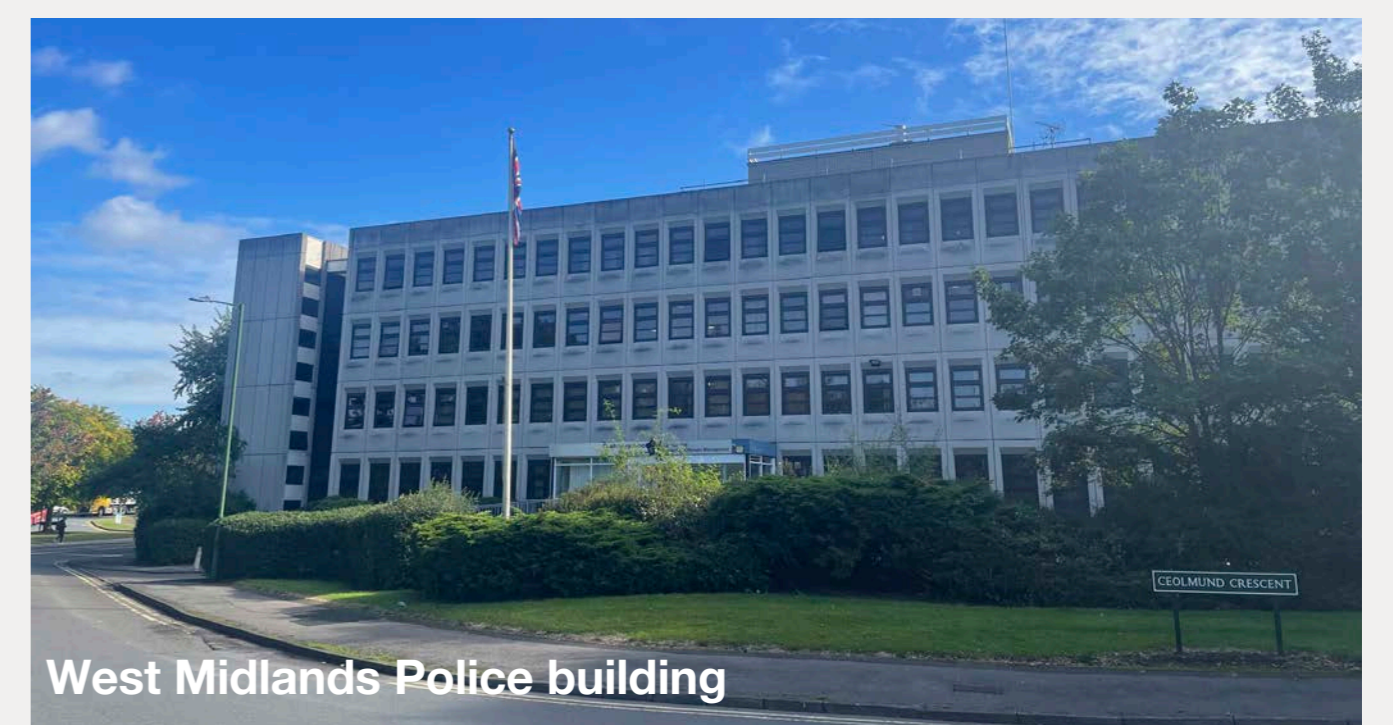
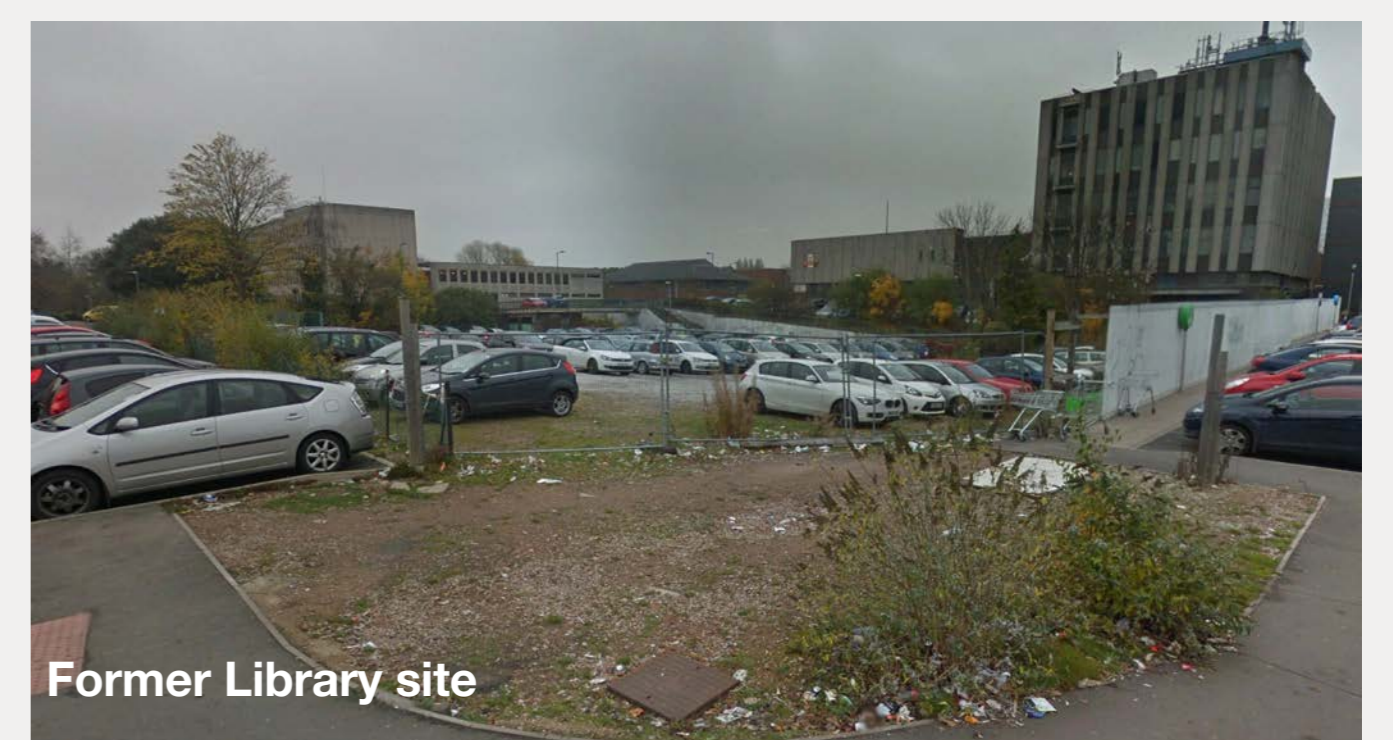
However, there are a number of key challenges and opportunities to be considered when thinking about what uses could be accommodated in the Northwest Quarter. These are illustrated on the plan below and summarised opposite.

Challenges

- The main highway access points will stay as they are.
- The BT Telephone Exchange is unlikely to become available for redevelopment within the next 10 years.
- The West Midlands Police building will remain unless an alternative location can be found in the town centre.
- Service access must be retained into the shopping centre.
- No development can take place along Kingshurst Brook due to risk of flooding and high environmental value.
- The relocation of Chelmsley Wood Job Centre will be required to enable development on the Job Centre site.

Opportunities

- Create better links between the town centre and the surrounding parks, leisure centre, school and colleges, especially for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Make better use of Kingshurst Brook as a greenspace in the town centre.
- The former library site provides an early opportunity for development and change.
- The former postal sorting facility could be further improved for community use.
- Create a new pedestrian link to the existing shopping centre.



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New Uses in the Town Centre

What new uses could be accommodated in the town centre?

An initial review of the property market and demand in Chelmsley Wood has been completed to identify what new uses could be accommodated within the Northwest Quarter. All new uses would be complementary to the existing offer in Chelmsley Wood Town Centre, enhancing the overall user experience.

Discount Food Retailer

There is the opportunity for a discount food retailer to establish a presence in Chelmsley Wood Town Centre, complementing the existing retail offer in the town centre. A discount food retailer in Chelmsley Wood would provide greater choice for local residents, and also generate footfall in the Northwest Quarter which would in turn create an environment and demand for other uses.

Additional Retail, Food and Drinks

There is also the potential for new food and drink uses such as coffee shops, cafes, family restaurants and bars, as well as other small shops that might be attractive to shoppers visiting a new foodstore, such as drycleaners or shoe repairs. Any new retail or food and drinks offer will be expected to complement rather than compete with the existing retail offer in the shopping centre. Through the development of food and drinks offer, there is also the opportunity to generate an evening economy in Chelmsley Wood.

Health and Leisure

There may be the opportunity for new health and leisure uses in the Northwest Quarter, such as an indoor gym, community space for leisure use, and health services.

Public Sector Hub

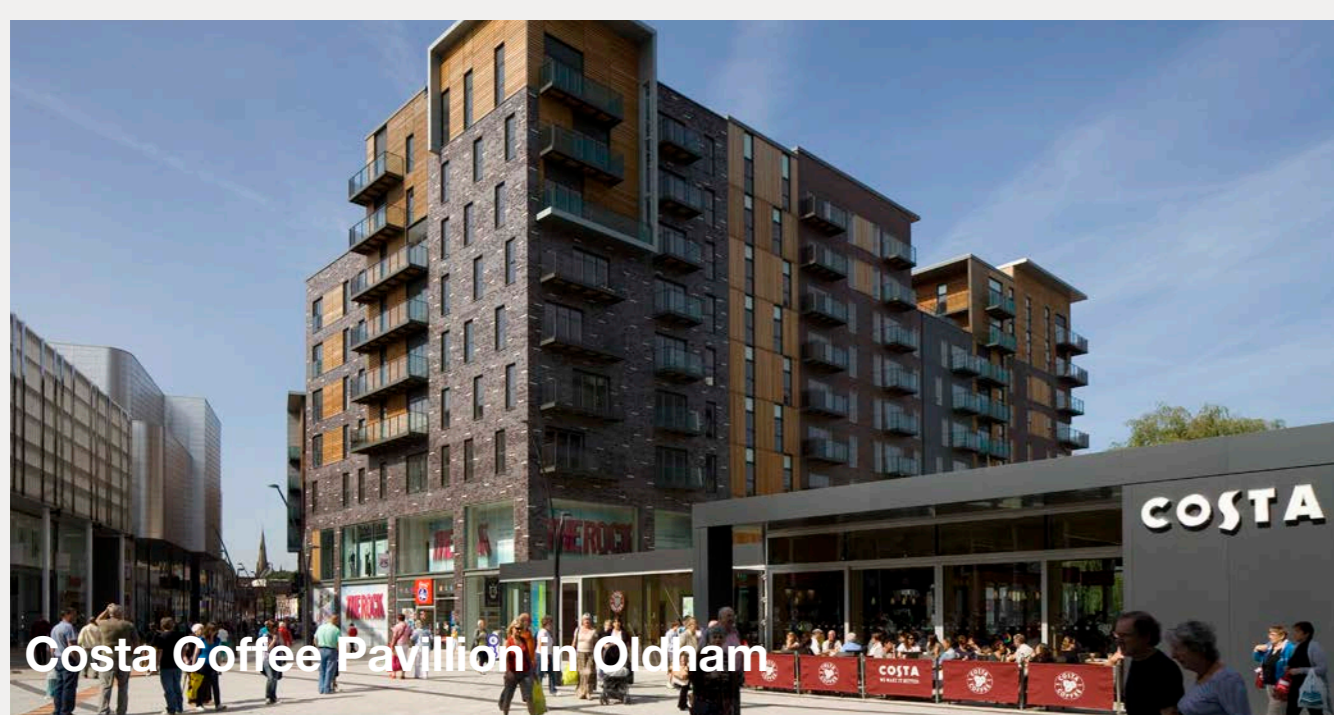
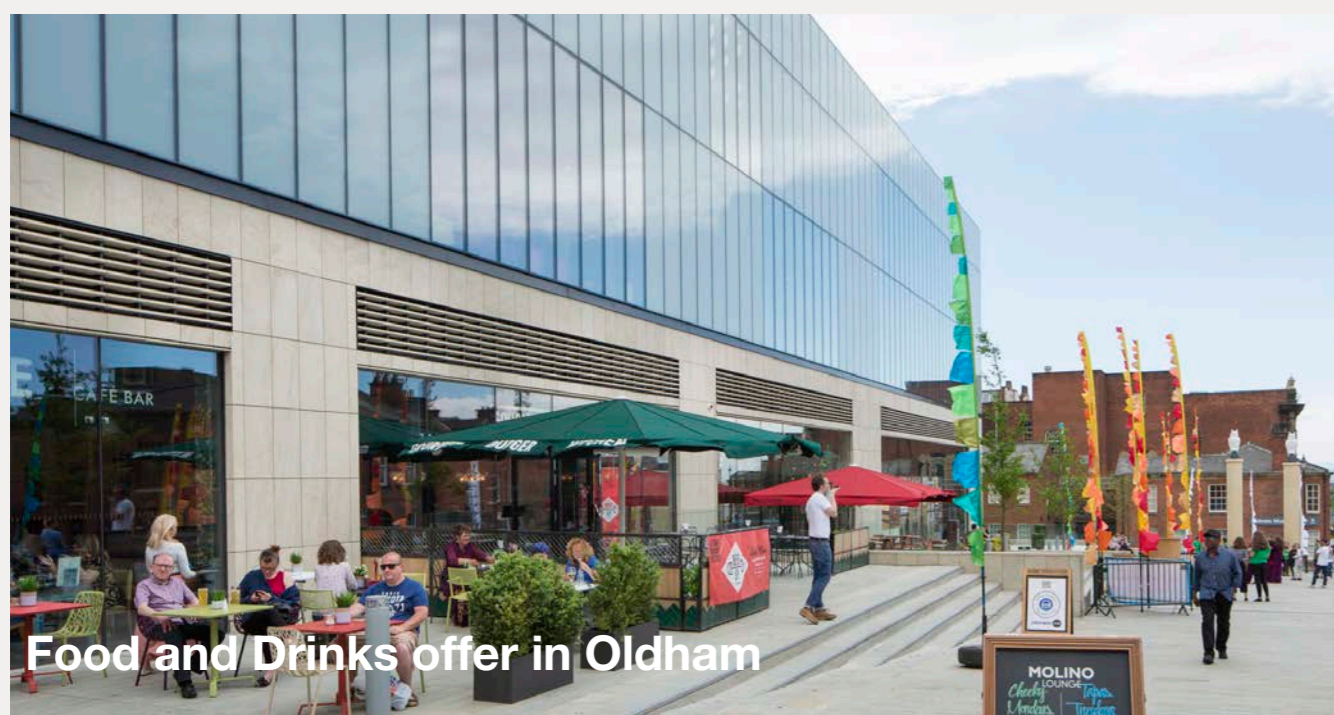
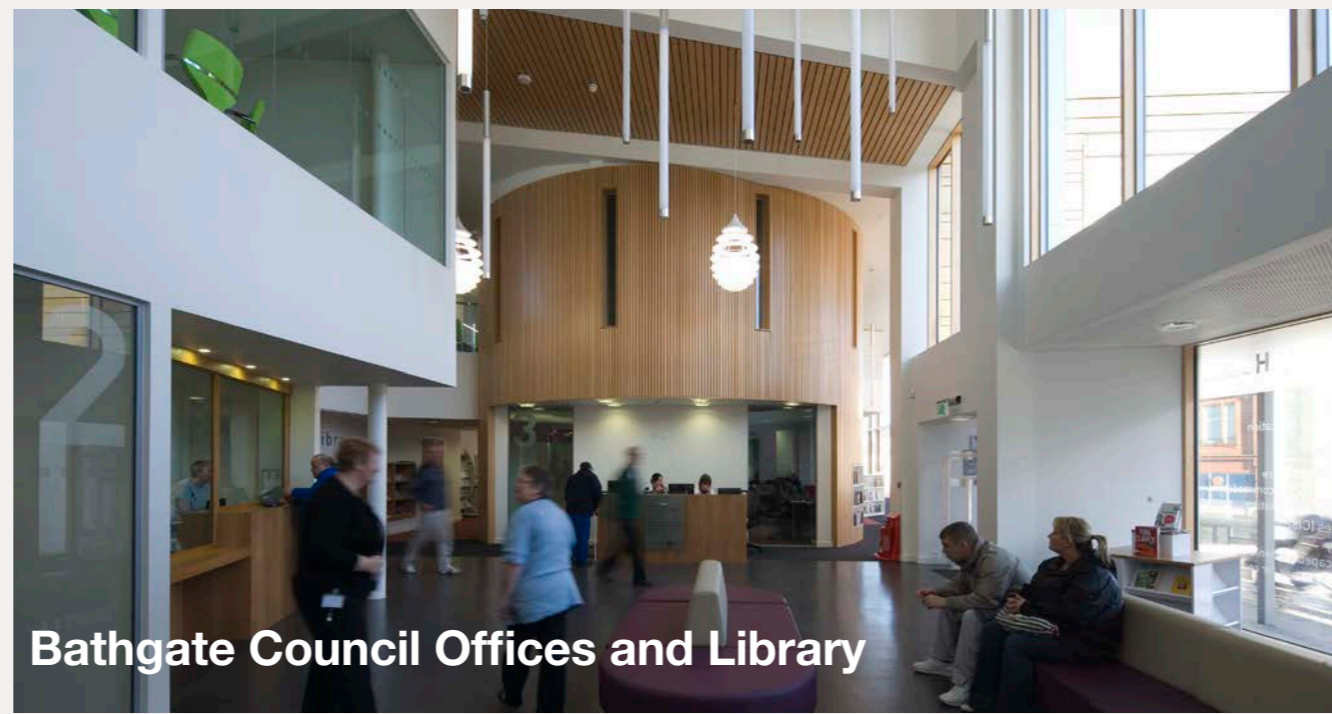
The Council is keen to consolidate a number of its public services within Chelmsley Wood Town Centre, generating the demand for new or repurposed office space in the Northwest Quarter. Public services which could be accommodated within this space include employment and skills, health, housing, and social care.

Residential

Through the redevelopment of the Northwest Quarter, there is the opportunity to provide new town centre living opportunities in Chelmsley Wood. A review of the property market in Chelmsley Wood and the surrounding area has indicated demand for 'Extra-Care' housing, which provides residential housing with additional facilities to support independent living for members of the community in all phases of life. There is also the opportunity to introduce affordable housing in the town centre. Any new residential accommodation in the town centre would probably be in the form of apartments, potentially over new retail or food and drink offer.

Community Space

Whilst the BT Telephone Exchange will remain operational, there is an opportunity to consider the redevelopment or refurbishment of the former Royal Mail building for continued use as a community space or other leisure or cultural use.



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Public Realm

How could the public realm in the town centre be improved?

Having high-quality, attractive public realm has the potential to transform the Northwest Quarter and in turn, improve the look and feel of the town centre as a whole. Prioritising pedestrian movement, creating spaces for people to sit, meet and dwell, and providing the facility for outdoor events and activities encourages people to spend more time in the town centre, creating a vibrant and active hub of activity for all.

Public realm in the Northwest Quarter, and more broadly in the town centre, is currently dominated by cars and roads, with no spaces for people. There is limited shelter from poor weather and there is no town square or flexible events space. Without a central space or evening uses, the town centre is often left empty in the evenings, resulting in a perception of unsafe spaces which discourages people from spending time in the town centre.

However, there are a number of key opportunities to improve the public realm in the town centre which could enhance connectivity within the centre, as well as link to surrounding assets, such as Kingshurst Brook and Meriden Park.

Some ideas for the improvement of public realm in and around the Northwest Quarter could be:

Creation of a town square / flexible events space

Redevelopment of the Northwest Quarter and the introduction of new uses such as a cafe, family restaurant, or bar, creates the opportunity for the creation of an animated and vibrant town square, which could also be used as a flexible events space from time to time.

Improving the pedestrian environment

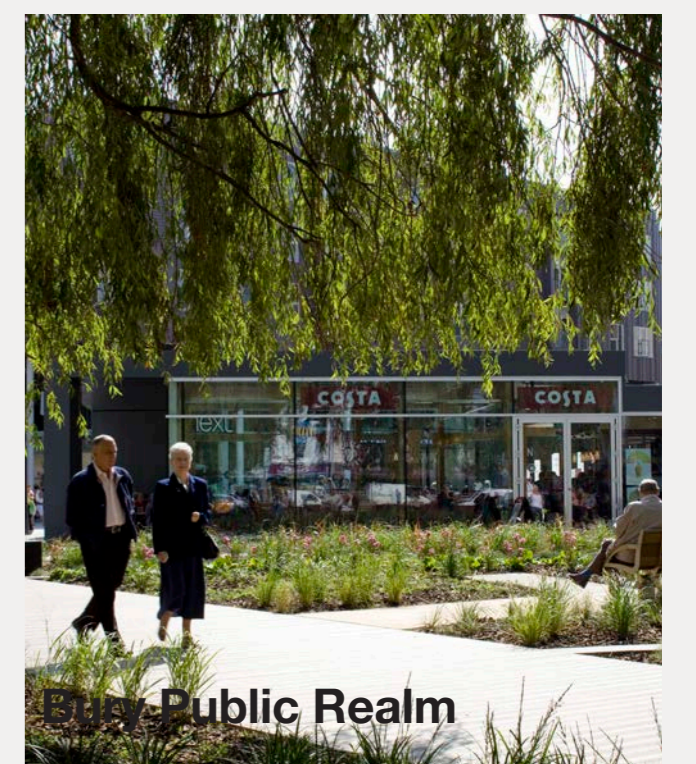
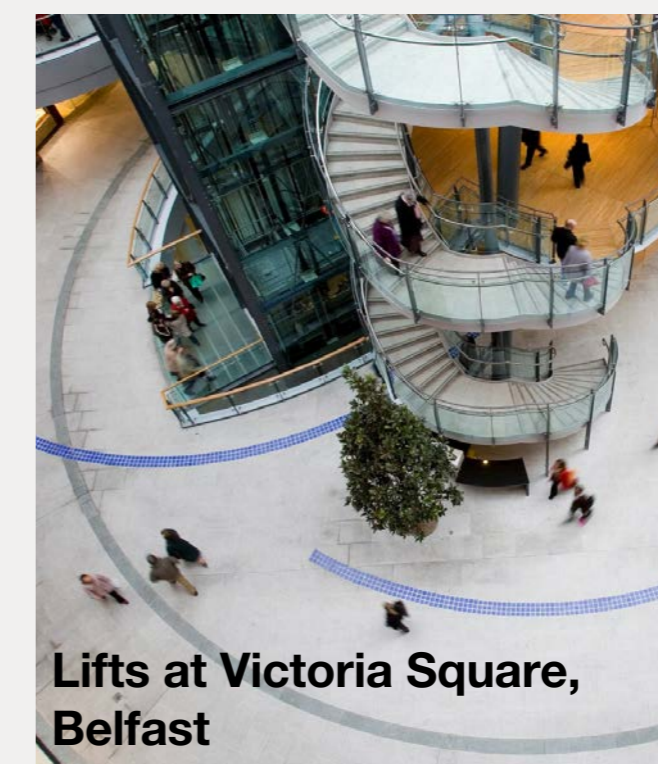
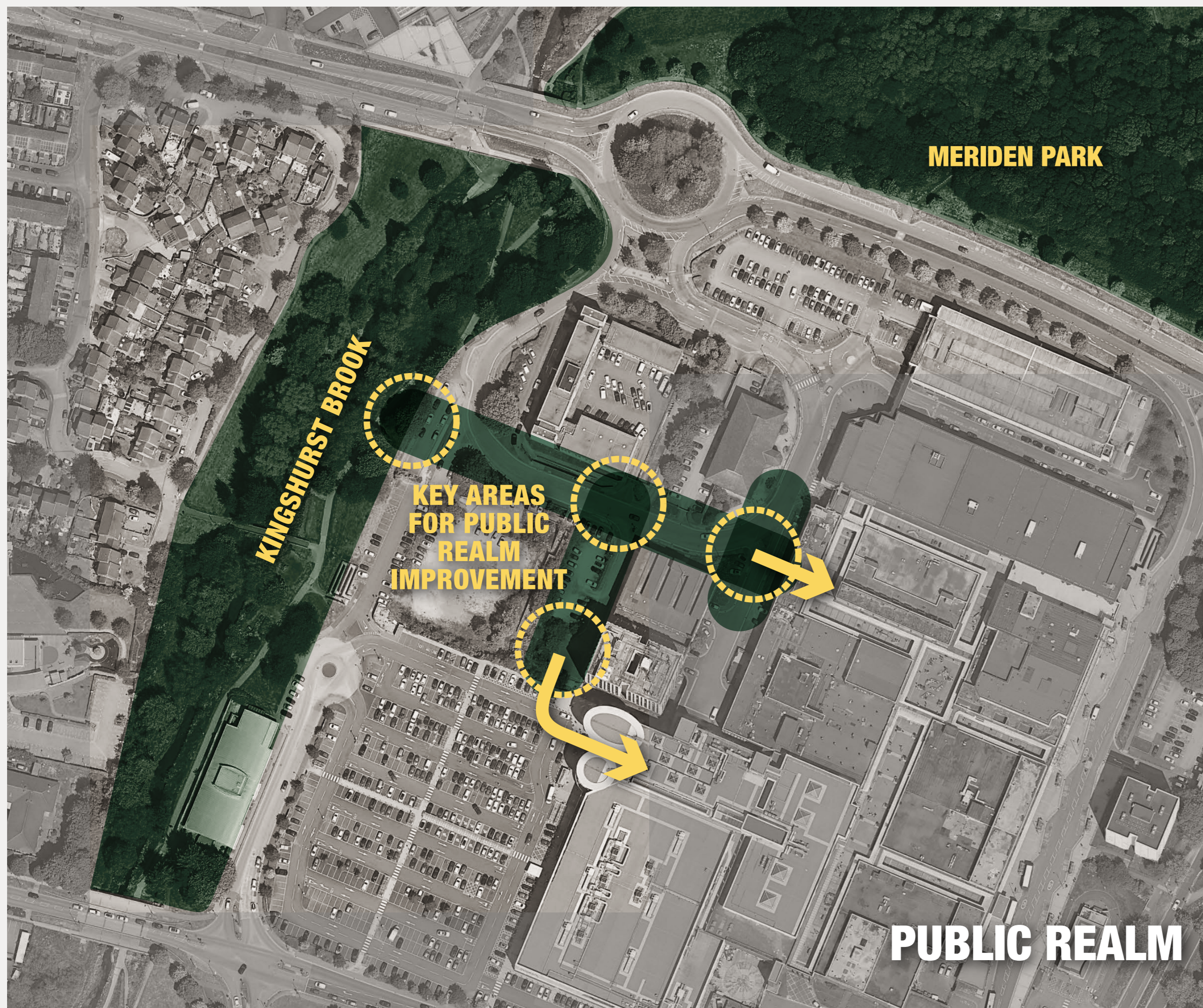
Currently, the public realm in the Northwest Quarter is dominated by vehicle movement. Public realm works in this area could implement measures such as shared surfaces to prioritise pedestrian movement and active travel routes, creating an environment where people feel safe and comfortable walking and cycling in and around the town centre.

Links to Kingshurst Brook and Meriden Park

Kingshurst Brook and Meriden Park are excellent local assets and should be easily accessible from the town centre. Currently both feel detached from the town centre by poor public realm and the existing highways network. Whilst the highways network will need to remain as it is, an improved pedestrian environment could encourage movement to and from these areas, bringing them in to the overall town centre experience.

Creating a link between the Northwest Quarter and the existing shopping centre

A key opportunity for the redevelopment of the Northwest Quarter is to create a link between this area of the town centre and the existing shopping centre, which is currently completely segregated by a blank wall. This could be in the form of steps up to the centre, as shown on the image below. Any solution would need to include an accessible option, such as a lift.



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A Healthy, Sustainable and Inclusive Town Centre

How do we create a sustainable town centre for everybody?

Town centres are not just for shopping. Town centres are also **great places for the community to come together**, to meet with friends and family, to socialise and catch up, which is important for our general sense of wellbeing. The experience of the pandemic has reminded us how important it is to see and meet with others. We want Chelmsley Wood town centre to be a place that people enjoy visiting and are happy to spend time in. This means creating spaces where people can meet outside as well and thinking about protection from wind, rain – or even sunburn!

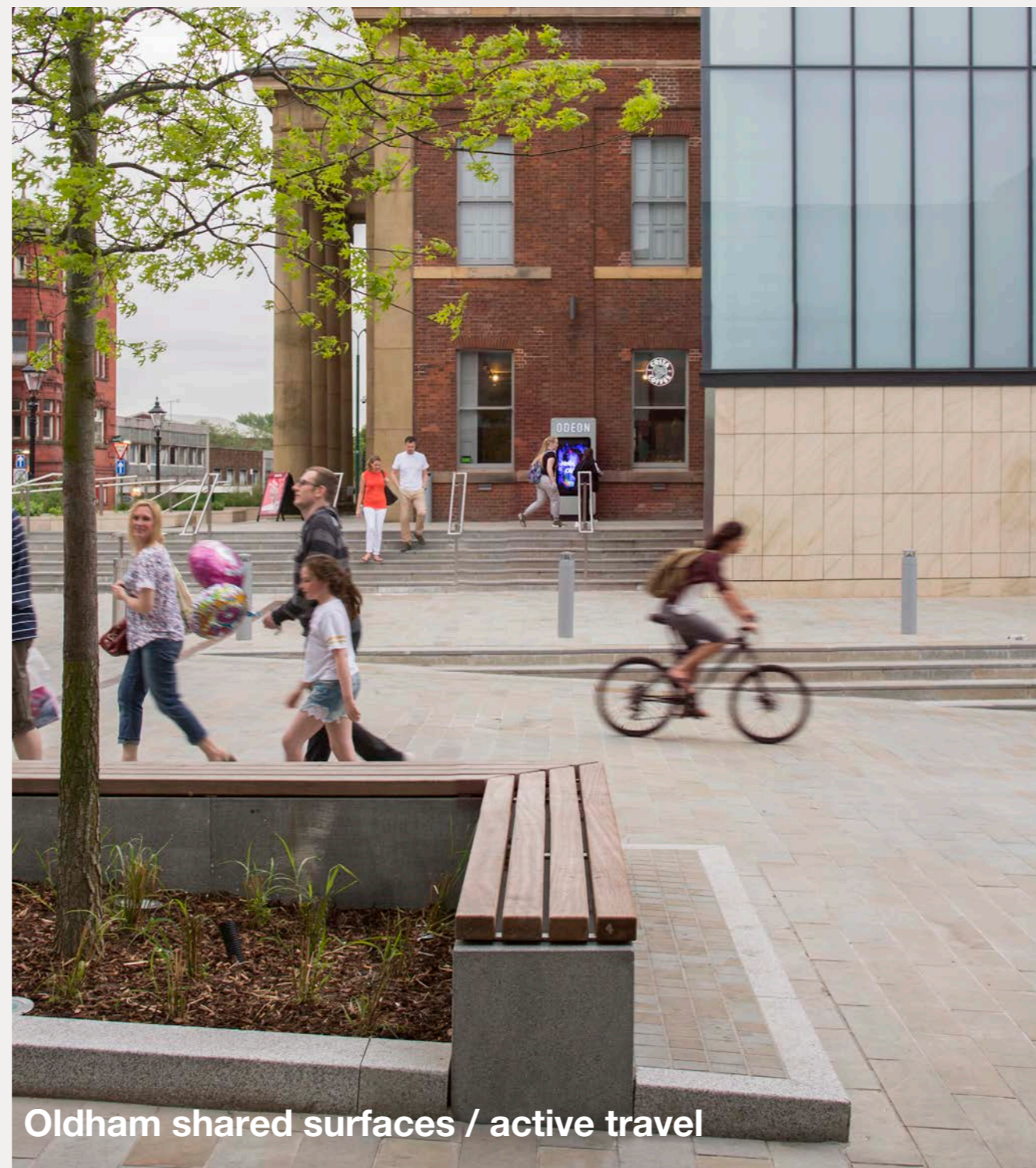
Visiting the town centre should also be an **opportunity to take part in healthy activities**. This might mean being able to visit a gym, or join a keep fit class, but creating pleasant routes to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists for example, is another way in which visiting the town centre can help the community stay fit and healthy.

It goes without saying that people should feel safe when they visit the town centre. In general, if there are other people around then it feels safer than if there is no one around, so ensuring more activities in the town centre, including more people living in the centre, will help people to feel safe daytime and evening. The design of any new developments should also be carefully considered, to make sure we are not building in spaces in which anti-social behaviour could thrive. This is called **'designing out crime'** and is something the Council's planners and West Midlands Police will advise on through the planning applications process.

Some specific objectives and ideas for the redevelopment of the Northwest Quarter of the town centre could be:

- **Places to meet** - Making sure that any development of the Northwest Quarter includes new cafes as well designing the outdoor spaces – the public realm – to include places for people to sit and talk;
- **Active travel routes** - Linking the town centre with the surrounding housing areas with better pedestrian and cycling routes, including pedestrian priority crossings on highways and ensuring any new developments are accessible from the main bus stops;

- **Designing safe spaces** - Working with Council planners and West Midlands Police specialists, to ensure redevelopments result in streets and spaces that are pleasant and safe to use, throughout the day and evening;
- **Promoting a mix of uses** - Including new housing (apartments) and offices as part of 'mixed-use' town centre development with retail and business uses at the ground level, so that there is more likelihood of people being around more of the time, to help the town centre feel safe;
- **Health, wellbeing and employment support services** - Consolidation of services in a new public sector hub, providing vital support and advice to local residents;
- **Sustainable!** - We want our town centres to be sustainable, playing our part in tackling the environmental crisis and helping the Council achieve its net zero target. This could mean reusing buildings which is often more sustainable than demolishing them and building again. Any new buildings should be built to meet high environmental standards. New streets and spaces can also play a part in a sustainable development, for example by using low energy lighting, plants that don't need lots of watering and drainage systems that absorb and retain water rather than overloading drains and rivers.



Interested in finding out more?

Creating safe and healthy town centres across Solihull Borough is a key objective of the Council's **'Inclusive Growth'** strategy. This strategy ensures that development proposals and investment in the borough benefits the whole community, creating better places to live and opportunities for all residents to access new jobs and services.

For more information on 'Inclusive Growth' you can explore the Council's strategy by scanning the QR code below or by requesting further information using the contact details provided in this exhibition.



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Next Steps

What happens next?

We want your views on the proposals for the Northwest Quarter so we can develop a masterplan that best meets everyone's aspirations whilst also ensuring that the proposals are realistic and can be delivered. These exhibition boards will be set up and available to view at the **Solihull Recruitment & Training Centre, 16-18 Maple Walk, Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre, B37 5TS**, with copies of the boards also available to view at Chelmsley Wood Library.

We will be running two drop-in sessions in Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre on the following dates:

- 3rd March 2022, 10am-2pm
- 12th March 2022, midday-3pm

There will also be the opportunity to get further information by joining one of our webinars on the following dates:

- 9th March 2022, 11am-12:30pm (local business focused)
- 24th March 2022, 6pm-7:30pm

Once we have received and reviewed feedback from the public consultation exercise, we will prepare masterplan options for the Northwest Quarter that best meet your aspirations and objectives whilst being achievable and deliverable in terms of the site constraints, interest from potential providers (eg. of residential accommodation) and in terms of potential funding available to deliver development.

Once confirmed, the masterplan for the Northwest Quarter will be used to guide any potential bids for government funding and will inform any planning applications coming forward for development on the site. There will be a further opportunity for you to provide feedback at the pre-application stage.

For further information about the project, please contact:

Chelmsley Wood Town Centre Masterplan Team

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Solihull, B91 3QB

Telephone: 07775031752

Email: cwtcmp@solihull.gov.uk

Let us know your ideas for Chelmsley Wood!

Now that you have looked through our ideas for the town centre, we would love to hear yours. Please have a think about the following questions then follow the link to our survey below.

- What new uses would you like to see in Chelmsley Wood Town Centre?
- What improvements would you like to see to the public realm?
- What do you think would encourage more walking and cycling to and from Chelmsley Wood Town Centre?
- How do you think we can create a safe and healthy town centre environment?

We need your feedback!

We would love to hear your opinions on what you would like to see for the future of the Northwest Quarter, and what uses you think would improve Chelmsley Wood Town Centre as a whole.

To share your feedback, please scan the QR code below or type the following link into your browser: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/F2YLF2/. A paper copy of the survey is also available for collection from Chelmsley Wood Library.

You can also view all the information shown in this display on the dedicated Chelmsley Wood Town Centre web page at the following link: www.solihull.gov.uk/chelmsleywoodtowncentremasterplan

We look forward to hearing your ideas for the future of Chelmsley Wood!

