



# South Oxhey Initiative

December 2011

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## Executive summary

The South Oxhey Initiative has been prepared in response to local planning policy requirements and recognised local issues. It aims to bring about change and enhancement. It endeavours to assist with the identified economic, social and environmental problems in South Oxhey and to support local aspirations to improve the estate, so meeting the contemporary requirements of the local community. The South Oxhey Initiative assesses the appropriate level of intervention needed to effect the regeneration of the area.

As detailed in section 2 the South Oxhey estate is formally identified as an area suffering high levels of multiple deprivations. Consequently Three Rivers District Council Core Strategy (Policy PSP2) encourages master plan led regeneration at South Oxhey, facilitated by the South Oxhey Initiative.

As identified within section 3 of this document the South Oxhey Initiative addresses a range of issues including health facilities, community facilities, retail provision, car parking, condition of roads and footpaths, building layout, pedestrian routes and open space. A number of other issues, including education and the separation of South Oxhey and Carpenders Park, are considered to go beyond the scope of the South Oxhey Initiative at this time. This is not to say that they are not issues that will ultimately be important to delivering regeneration.

In line with local planning policy requirements, the Government's commitment to the 'Big Society', and to ensure the local community has a sense of ownership over any improvements in the area, the South Oxhey Initiative has been informed by substantial community engagement, including community workshops and public open days. The outcome of each workshop and public open day informed considerations of how change might be delivered through different levels of intervention.

Participants at the first community workshop highlighted that there is a limited retail offer and no draw or central attraction in South Oxhey. There is a need to replace or provide improvements to the outdated community facilities and improve the quality of the existing housing stock. There is an opportunity to provide a mixed-used development at the 'heart'.

The relative importance of the issues established from the first workshop was tested at the first public open day and views were sought as to how matters might be addressed. It was clear that the precinct is the most widely used facility in South Oxhey and with Oxhey Drive and Station Approach, is viewed as its 'heart'. There was a perceived need to see an improved shopping experience, including a better market with support for a community hub.

Participants at the second workshop identified that there was an opportunity to provide a new supermarket, although it would need to be of an appropriate size. There was support for the provision of a community hub and there are opportunities to relocate some of the community facilities from Oxhey Drive.

The purpose of the third community stakeholder workshop was to obtain the views of local groups on the potential for different levels of intervention (do nothing, refurbishment, part refurbishment and part redevelopment, complete redevelopment). Doing nothing was not seen as a realistic option. A number of limitations were raised relative to refurbishment, including funding and lack of wider community benefit, such as new facilities and housing. There were similar concerns about part refurbishment and part new build, whilst there might also be an inappropriate juxtaposition between old and new.

Members of the public were updated on the progress of the South Oxhey Initiative at the final open day and their views were sought on the appropriate level of intervention. The event was not a referendum and there were a number of external influences and preconceptions amongst attendees. Rather the idea was to test the local appetite for change. 38% supported refurbishment, 29% favoured some form of redevelopment, whilst 30% of attendees did not state a preference.

Through the consultation process some shopkeepers expressed a desire to protect their existing retail businesses in the event of any change. This may have affected people's views on appropriate change, with refurbishment considered least likely to result in the loss of traders.

When considering the potential introduction of a supermarket there were questions raised about the relationship to existing retailers and the size that it might be. There were also questions about how any works would be funded, whether they could be delivered and whether it might impact on the retailer's rates and rents.

Section 4 of this report seeks to recognise all the key issues raised, provides detail on how the South Oxhey Initiative responds to them and provides a link to the relevant recommendations.

In reflecting on the way forward it is important to recognise that in South Oxhey 'business rents are currently subsidised by the Council' which as Cllr Ann Shaw OBE, Leader of the Council identified in a press release, is not sustainable and rents need to increase to commercial levels.

Although recognising the preference of some residents in South Oxhey for refurbishment of the 'heart', the South Oxhey Initiative ultimately suggests that a high level of intervention could be pursued. Indeed complete redevelopment would provide a mixed-use development to act as a focus for the community whilst delivering retail improvements, facilitating public realm improvements, making most efficient use of the available space, enhancing the image of the area, providing additional housing in close proximity to the station and offering most opportunities to respond to planning policy requirements.

The recommendations outline how a mixed-use development can be progressed and recognise the need for market testing, survey work, and preparation of a Master plan, in line with the parameters plans, as part of the emerging Site Allocations Development Plan Document. The Master Plan would also form the basis for any planning application submission.

A sequence of recommendations is set out at section 5, with supporting explanation and justification being provided. In broad terms these identify:-

- The need to proceed with improving the 'heart'
- The preparation of viability assessments for the two main levels of intervention (refurbishment and redevelopment) so as to inform the route forward. Without identified sources of funding, neither option will be deliverable
- That a high level of intervention will be required to really improve the 'heart', through complete redevelopment and that the next stages will serve to examine the form of regeneration which will provide most advantage to the area

- The need to engage tenants and homeowners who live above the shops and to identify decant sites
- The type of mixed-use redevelopment which will best act as a focus for the community and provide inward investment and a thriving, recognisable and successful 'heart' to South Oxhey
- The potential for relocating existing retailers within a new precinct
- How to deliver any redevelopment and as part of this it will be necessary to test the market's interest and funding availability
- A Master Plan will need to be devised for the mixed-use development. This will inform the emerging Site Allocations DPD and form the basis for any town centre planning application
- Beyond this it will be appropriate to look at how the momentum of the South Oxhey Initiative is carried forward and sustained



The community will continue to be involved in what happens with the future of South Oxhey. Opportunities for further consultation and involvement will arise as the Council's planning policy documents are progressed, i.e. the Site Allocations Development Plan Document and the related Master plan. Any planning application, setting out the detail of what is intended, will also be subjected to extensive consultation.

# 1 Introduction

## Purpose of the South Oxhey Initiative

1.1 Three Rivers District Council's (TRDC) Core Strategy highlights:

The 'South Oxhey Initiative' involves engagement with stakeholders, the public and other technical work to produce a Master plan to set out how future development in South Oxhey can respond to identified challenges.

1.2 This planning policy requirement identifies the need to respond to the identified economic, social and environmental problems in South Oxhey. Through a number of recommendations the South Oxhey Initiative provides a starting point for regenerating the social, economic and physical fabric of the area.

## Background

1.3 Terence O'Rourke Ltd was engaged by TRDC to progress the production of a framework for South Oxhey to guide improvements in the area. The Core Strategy sets out the importance of the South Oxhey Initiative to the regeneration of the area and that it should be informed by extensive community engagement. At this stage, and following local input, the South Oxhey Initiative examines the appropriate levels of intervention that might assist in the regeneration of the area.

## Scope of the South Oxhey Initiative

1.4 The wider estate, including Carpenders Park and Oxhey Hall, was taken as the starting point but early in the engagement process local groups and residents identified significant issues with the Precinct, Station Approach and Oxhey Drive, outlining a number of improvements they wanted for this area. It was generally acknowledged that this should be the principal, though not exclusive, focus of the South Oxhey Initiative in the first instance, as this would deliver the most immediate local benefit. Accordingly, the South Oxhey Initiative has evolved to focus on the 'heart' of South Oxhey, which is taken to include the 'strip' on Oxhey Drive (currently providing community buildings such as doctors' surgeries, the police station and Parish Council offices), station approach and the precinct which is the main shopping area in South Oxhey and the area surrounding the Carpenders Park Railway Station.

## Moving forward

1.5 The starting point for considering what improvements are necessary at South Oxhey and what development should seek to achieve was to fully understand the existing situation. This was the basis of the baseline study, which is provided at Appendix A. It identified some of the key issues, especially the social

and economic problems facing the area, and the relevant planning policies that need to be taken into account. The key issues and how these have informed opportunities for improvement are outlined in section 2.

1.6 Through a series of community workshops and open days it was possible to understand from local groups, residents and technical stakeholders what works and what does not work so well in South Oxhey, areas where changes might be needed, where the opportunities and constraints lie, what factors should inform any improvements and how change could be delivered through different levels of intervention. Section 3 outlines the events that took place and section 4 illustrates how the recommendations for progressing the South Oxhey Initiative identified in section 5 were informed by the consultation process.

1.7 The South Oxhey Initiative is a starting point for South Oxhey to realise its full potential for the whole community. Moving from the current situation will take time. The South Oxhey Initiative will only succeed if it responds to the issues facing South Oxhey with the support of key stakeholders and residents feeling engaged, and understanding of why changes are taking place. As a result there is greater potential for the community to feel they have a stake in the decisions being taken and also a sense of ownership of those changes.

1.8 There will be considerable further opportunity for the community to be involved and consulted on what happens in South Oxhey. Opportunities for further consultation and involvement will arise during the course of TRDC's preparation of their local Development Plan Documents (DPD), including the Site Allocations DPD, and any subsequent planning application.

1.9 Whatever option is pursued it will have to be viable and examine available sources of funding for the type of regeneration programme proposed. The recommendations outline the further work that is required to move the South Oxhey Initiative forward in relation to the regeneration of the physical fabric of the area.

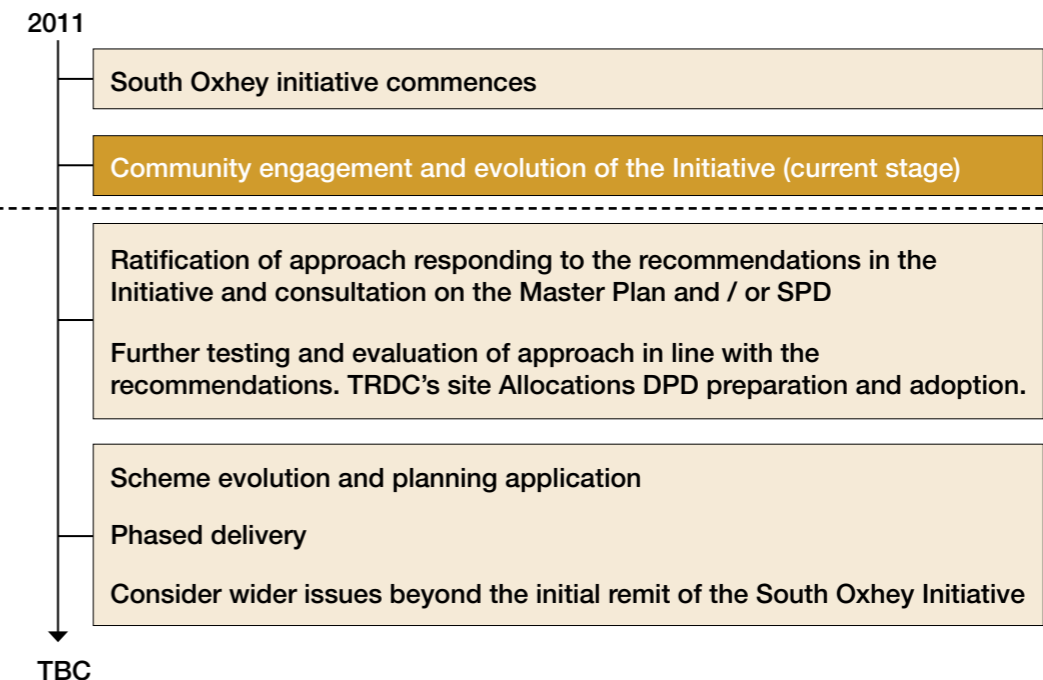



Figure 1: Location plan

 Strong existing woodland blocks that help to enclose South Oxhey



## 2 Issues and Opportunities

### South Oxhey context

2.1 This chapter draws on the baseline study, which is provided at Appendix A. It describes the existing situation at South Oxhey. It explains the important issues facing the area and the relevant planning policies that need to be taken into account are also identified.

### Location

2.2 South Oxhey is a post war settlement to the north west of London. The railway line to the east, woodland to the west and open green space to the north and south contain it. Rickmansworth is approximately 4 miles to the north west of South Oxhey, Northwood is approximately 3 miles to the west, Harrow is approximately 5 miles to the south and Bushey is approximately 2 miles to the east. South Oxhey lies towards the south east corner of TRDC's administrative boundary.

2.3 For the purposes of profiling 'South Oxhey' is taken to comprise Hayling, Northwick and Ashridge wards. Given their demographic, environmental and socio-economic similarities, there is a need to clearly identify and present the existing situation and highlight pressing issues at the estate. However, given the proximity and wider relationship to Carpenders Park and Oxhey Hall these have also been included in the physical baseline assessment.

### Current situation

2.4 The South Oxhey estate was substantially developed over a five-year period immediately after the Second World War to provide homes and a new start for Londoners who had lost their homes as a result of the major bombing of the capital. The estate was well planned, with a clear and logical distribution of homes, schools and open spaces, with the precinct and its shops forming the focus of the new community.

2.5 The rise in private car ownership and the increasing range and scale of convenience and comparison retailing gradually eroded the economic base for smaller retail centres, such as that found at South Oxhey, particularly in deprived areas.

2.6 The South Oxhey estate was transferred to TRDC from the former Greater London Council in 1980. In March 2008 TRDC transferred its stock of 3,742 social homes across the district, including South Oxhey, to Thrive Homes.

### Demographic

- South Oxhey has a total of 11,970 residents (2001 census).
- South Oxhey has a relatively young population compared to the wider TRDC area with a higher proportion of residents up to 29 year olds and lower proportion of 35-64 year olds (2001 census).

### Socio-economic

- In terms of indices of multiple deprivation South Oxhey is a deprived area with the Hayling and Northwick wards being "in the 50 most deprived in the country" (Watford Observer 17 November 2010).
- 33.9% of all persons aged 16-74 in South Oxhey have no qualifications, 12.1% higher than the TRDC average of 21.8% (2001 census).
- Claimant count data (2010) shows that unemployment in the Northwick ward is 4.8%, Ashridge ward is 3.7% and Hayling is 3.4%, being the highest in Three Rivers respectively.
- South Oxhey has a lower proportion of residents employed as 'Managers and Senior Officials' (13.1%) than the wider TRDC area (21.7%) (2001 census).
- 31.2% of households in South Oxhey do not have access to a car or van, compared to the TRDC average of 16.2% (2001 census).

- There are six primary schools in South Oxhey, with a current surplus of places, but no secondary school.

### Environment

- With regard to housing provision the Local Investment Plan (November 2010) highlights that:

in South Oxhey...some stock is now in need of significant updating.

The structural condition of the main shops is... showing signs of deterioration.

- Although the retail premises in the town centre are 98% let (Local Investment Plan, November 2010) the current levels of rent are substantially below market levels, which are required to maintain a viable and sustainable centre.
- The areas of open space, much of which is publicly accessible, surrounding the built up areas are within the Metropolitan Green Belt and are subject to protection in national and local planning policy.
- There are a number of Local Nature Reserves, parks and Local Wildlife Sites in South Oxhey, from this perspective the area is well provided for.
- The combination of Green Belt designation, large areas of protected woodland, the railway line and the incidence of Council housing, South Oxhey being one of the largest post war Council housing programmes in the District, have reinforced the feeling

of social exclusion and effectively isolated the community from the wider urban area and the more affluent areas of Carpenders Park and Oxhey Hall.










### Planning policy framework

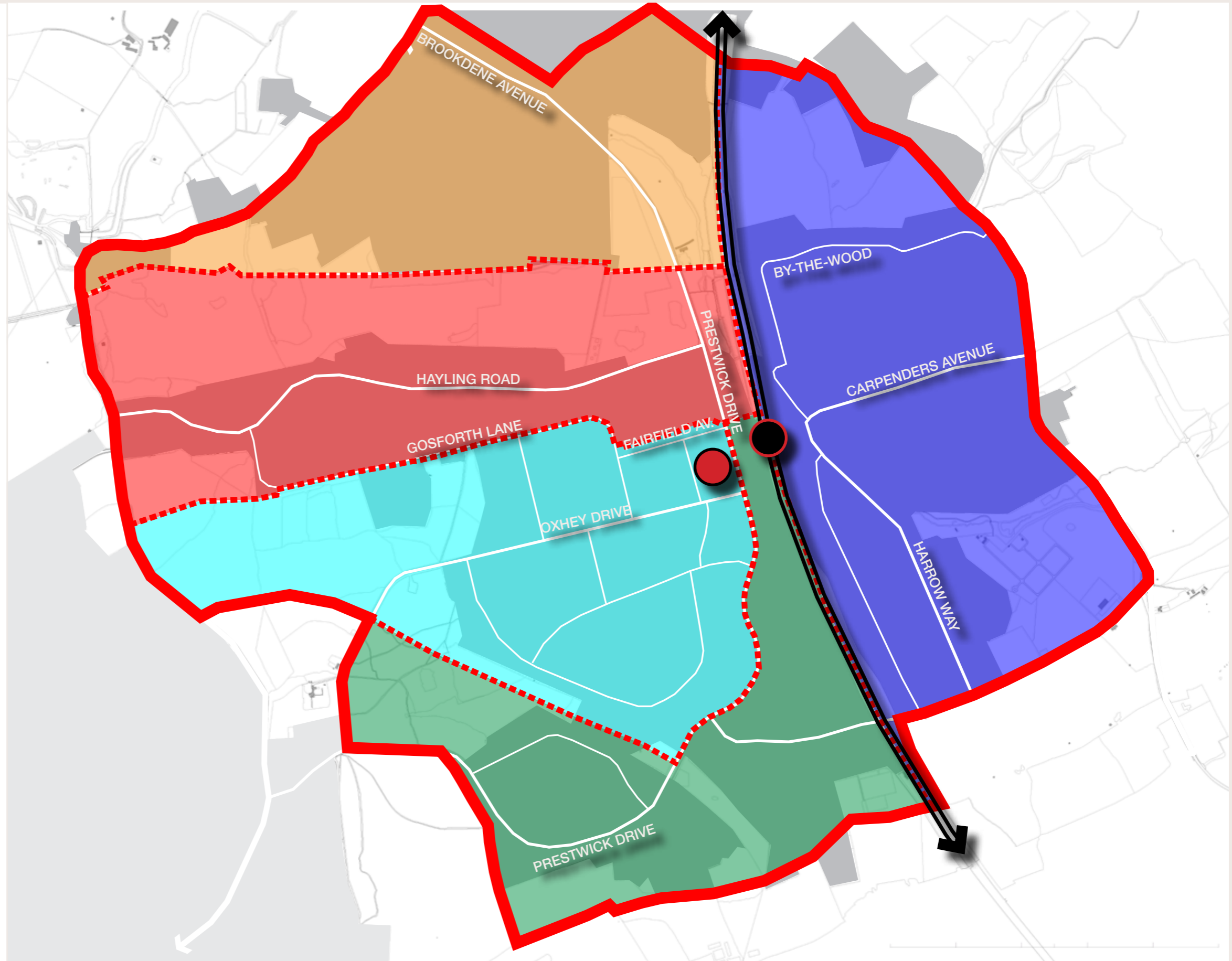
2.7 There is a range of planning policy and guidance that is relevant to South Oxhey, setting out the current position and high-level policy aspirations for the area.

2.8 At the national level Planning Policy Statement 4 *Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth* encourages economic development and regeneration of town centres. These objectives are also reflected in the Government's emerging National Planning Policy Framework. Ensuring that the South Oxhey Initiative is locally driven is in line with the Government's commitment to 'Big Society', as seen in the emerging Localism Act.

2.9 TRDC adopted its Core Strategy on 17 October 2011. This sets out in broad terms how growth and future development in the borough is to happen. The Core Strategy forms part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) that will replace the saved policies of the Three Rivers Local Plan (adopted in 2001). The LDF will also include the Site Allocations DPD, Development Management Policies DPD and a Gypsy and Traveller DPD.

Figure 2: Study area

-  Study focus
-  Political ward boundaries
-  Oxhey Hall
-  Hayling
-  Northwick
-  Ashridge
-  Carpenders Park
-  South Oxhey Shopping Precinct
-  Carpenders Park London Overground Station





### Core Strategy

2.10 The key policies and information from the Core Strategy are highlighted below.

### Background and Context

2.11 *The Spatial Portrait of Three Rivers* section identifies an opportunity to make better use of land at South Oxhey:

It is important to continue to achieve high levels of new development on previously developed land but, in general, the supply of previously developed land is falling. The exception to this may be in South Oxhey where potential for redevelopment and regeneration highlights an opportunity to make better use of land in the area, achieving higher levels of development on previously developed land (paragraph 2.2)

2.12 It raises the inequalities that the South Oxhey estate experiences:

While the District as a whole is ranked low in terms of deprivation, there are inequalities. South Oxhey is particularly affected by income, barriers to education, skills and training, living environment and crime and disorder. (paragraph 2.2)

2.13 It also highlights some challenges facing the housing stock:

Housing stock in the District is generally of good quality and does not present particular concerns. The exception is in South Oxhey where some stock is now in need of significant updating. (paragraph 2.2)

2.14 The five priorities of the Community Strategy that are applicable to South Oxhey are to address the following:

- i. Anti-social behaviour, crime, and the fear of crime
- ii. Reducing inequalities (including access to services)
- iii. Improving the environment
- iv. Children's and young people's access to education, skills and training
- v. Improving the supply and standard of affordable housing (paragraph 2.7)

### Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives

2.15 One of the priorities for the future, as outlined in the spatial vision is, *"to reduce inequalities across the District, in particular through regeneration of the South Oxhey area"*. (Spatial Vision g)

2.16 Strategic Objective S8 seeks, *"to maintain and enhance the viability, vitality and variety of shops and services within the Principal Town and Key Centres and retain shops and services in other smaller settlements states:"*

Ensuring that ... South Oxhey, Mill End and Leavesden and Garston provide a good range of goods and services across the District will reduce the need to travel to centres further away, especially to meet everyday local needs, and will support local businesses. (TOR underlining)

2.17 The Spatial Strategy states:

In order to achieve the Spatial Vision for Three Rivers and meet the Objectives for the District:

1. New development will be directed towards previously developed land (including surplus employment land) and appropriate infilling opportunities within the urban areas of the Principal Town (Rickmansworth) and Key Centres (South Oxhey...) as these have been identified as the most sustainable locations in the District.

### Place-Shaping Policies - PSP2: Development in Key Centres

2.18 Development in Key Centres will:

- a) Focus future development predominantly on sites within the urban area, on previously developed land
- b) Provide approximately 60% of the District's housing requirements over the Plan period to include approximately 45% of affordable housing ...
- c) Maintain and enhance employment opportunities in the Key Centres ...
- e) Maintain and enhance primary and secondary shopping frontages within Abbots Langley, Chorleywood and South Oxhey District Shopping Centres ... to meet needs from existing and new housing development and to enable Key Centres to be sufficient in meeting local daily needs
- f) Provide for a modest extension of retail floorspace within the Key Centres where opportunities arise in accordance with the Retail Capacity Study
- g) Contribute to an integrated approach to improve transport, including public transport, and movement into, and around, the Key Centres and connectivity ...

- h) Promote development, infrastructure and services that will help tackle deprivation affecting South Oxhey (Ashridge, Hayling and Northwick wards) particularly in relation to improving access to education, skills, training and employment and reducing crime. Some improvements identified include the 'Step Up' building on Oxhey Drive which will provide courses to help people get back into work and counselling to people with mental illness. In addition the 'South Oxhey Initiative' involves engagement with stakeholders, the public and other technical work to produce a Master plan to set out how future development in South Oxhey can respond to identified challenges. Detailed proposals will be included in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document ...
- k) Promote regeneration in parts of South Oxhey to improve housing stock quality and reduce inequalities through the provision of targeted services in more efficient ways. This could include mixed-use development consisting of new housing, offices, shopping and community uses. The 'South Oxhey Initiative' involves engagement with stakeholders, the public and other technical work to produce a Master plan to set out how future development in South Oxhey can respond to identified challenges. Detailed proposals will be included in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

l) Conserve and enhance the local distinctiveness of the Key Centres ...

m) Improve provision of, and access to, services and facilities, to meet future demands, specifically through: ...

iii. Improvements to bus services providing access from Key Centres to Watford Junction and Watford General Hospital/Watford Health Campus ...

viii. Improve the range of youth facilities in all Key Centres ...

xiii. Improve facilities at Oxhey Woods Local Nature Reserve including the provision of an education centre on site

xiv. Improve quality of and access to children's play space in South Oxhey ...

xvii. Expansion of existing schools and/or provision of new schools meet identified needs in the Key Centres.

#### Core Policies – CP2: Housing Supply

2.19 TRDC will:

identify sufficient land for housing in the District to meet the Three Rivers housing target of 180 dwellings per year until 2026. It is anticipated that approximately 60% of housing requirements will be met in the Key Centres as defined in the settlement hierarchy. This is likely to be achieved in part ... through regeneration in South Oxhey.

#### Core Policies – CP4: Affordable Housing

2.20 TRDC's approach to affordable housing is:

a) In view of the identified and pressing need for affordable housing in the District, seek an overall provision of around 45% of all new housing as affordable housing, incorporating a mix of tenures.

#### Core Policies – CP6: Employment and Economic Development

2.21 The sustainable growth of the Three Rivers economy will be supported by:

Supporting opportunities for economic development in the South Oxhey area as part of plans for regeneration of the area

#### Core Policies – CP7: Town Centres and Shopping

2.22 With regard to town centres and shopping South Oxhey's centre is identified as a District Centre. The policy states:

Where there is an identified need for new town centre development, Town and District centres will be the focus for this development. Retail development will specifically be directed to within the Primary Frontages of these centres. Proposals for new town centre and shopping development will be considered taking into account:

- a) The location of the proposed development with preference given to centrally located and accessible areas, served by a range of transport modes including public transport
- b) The impact of development on the viability and vitality of existing centres and local shops
- c) The appropriateness of the type and scale of development in relation to the centre and its role, function, character and catchment area.

The hierarchy of retail centres and their established character and diversity will be maintained through:

d) Protecting and enhancing the vitality and viability of the retail cores of the town and district centres by generally resisting the loss of Class A1 retail uses particularly within their Primary Frontages

e) Promoting uses which are complementary to the Primary Frontages, normally within adjoining Secondary Frontages

f) Taking account of the contribution of non-retail uses to the vitality and viability of centres, having regard to market conditions and impacts on local amenity

g) Protecting and enhancing existing Local Centres and other local shops which cater for local day-to-day needs...

With regard to convenience (food) shopping:

k) Proposals for any major convenience (food) floorspace (over 1,000sq metres) over the Plan period will generally be resisted

l) Smaller scale local convenience stores coming forward will be considered on their merits taking into account the criteria listed above.

#### Core Policies – CP10: Transport and Travel

2.23 The policy promotes journeys to be made by sustainable means and highlights that:

Major development will be expected to be located in areas highly accessible by the most sustainable modes of transport, and to people of all abilities in a socially inclusive and safe manner, in accordance with the user hierarchy below. Priority will be given in the following order:

- i. Pedestrians, particularly people with restricted mobility
- ii. Cyclists and where appropriate, horse riders
- iii. Public transport (including taxis)
- iv. All forms of motor vehicles.

#### Core Policies – CP11: Green Belt

2.24 The Council will, "Maintain the general extent of the Metropolitan Green Belt in the District".

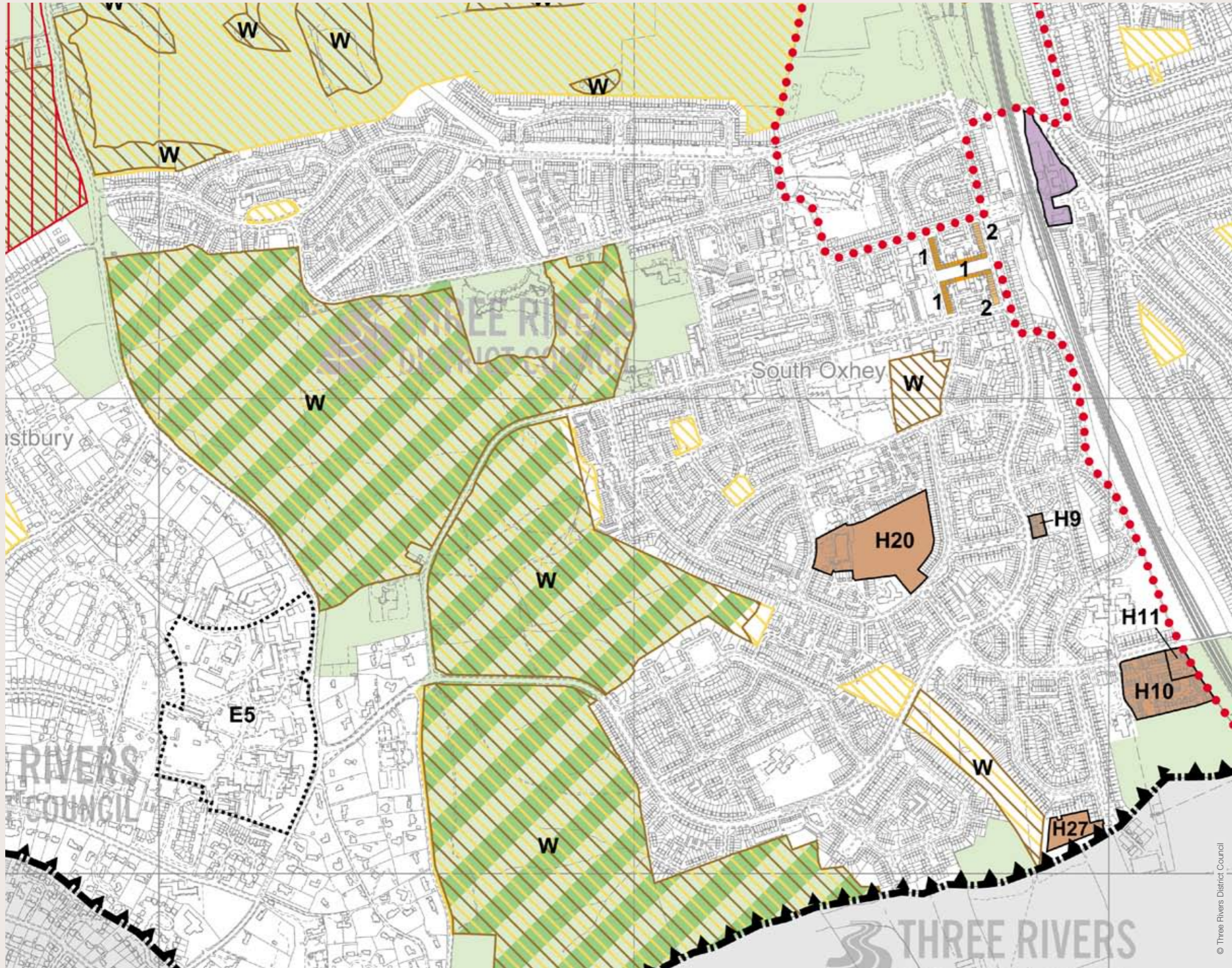


Figure 3: Local plan proposals map extract, South Oxhey

-  Metropolitan Green Belt
-  Local wildlife site
-  Nature reserve (LNR / Wildlife trust)
-  Housing development site
-  Business / industrial site
-  Shopping frontage (policies S1-3)
-  Publicly accessible open space
-  Proposed cycle routes

© Three Rivers District Council

### Other relevant guidance

2.25 The South Oxhey Scoping Review (2009), prepared by Lambert Smith Hampton, concluded that to enable transformational change to take place at South Oxhey's shopping centre:

it is necessary to address the issue of the number of units. The current total retail area of 85,000sqft is more than required to support the needs of the local community. It would be expected that this area would support a supermarket offer of up to 40,000sqft with a limited number of smaller shops.

2.26 The Core Strategy Further Preferred Options (2009) highlights that:

A review of South Oxhey Town Centre may indicate there is potential for regeneration. This could include a mixed-use development consisting of housing, offices, shopping and community uses. It is anticipated that the housing part could be significant and therefore that the housing capacity of the area should increase from 105 to 200 dwellings.

2.27 76% of respondents to the consultation on the Core Strategy Further Preferred Option agreed with an increase in the number of homes to be provided in the town centre.

2.28 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2010) found that the requirement for affordable housing in and around TRDC remains exceptionally high. This is largely a result of very high house prices and rents, a constricted supply of suitable sites for all housing types and losses from the existing affordable stock through 'Right to Buy'.

2.29 TRDC published their updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in April 2010. The SHLAA found that there is enough housing land available that is considered developable at South Oxhey to provide 641 new dwellings (Ashridge – 119 dwellings, Hayling - 21 dwellings, Northwick – 501 dwellings) over the next 20 years, although a phasing period has not been identified for some sites.

2.30 The SHLAA highlights that:

This update includes one 'broad location' (site NW44) where specific sites have not been identified. The broad location is South Oxhey Town Centre where there is intention to regenerate the town. Although some specific sites have been identified within the broad location, the capacity attributed to the broad location is in addition to these sites and reflects potential from redevelopment and re-design of some existing residential sites within this area.

Estimates of potential housing supply have been developed with regard to the nature and scale of opportunities within South Oxhey. The broad location has an estimated capacity of 100 dwellings as a result of intensification of residential uses associated with regeneration proposed within the broad location.

2.31 An extract for South Oxhey from the Local Plan Proposals map is provided to the right. Local Plan policy N2 Sites of Nature Conservation importance states proposals for development likely to have an adverse effect on the Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Sites will not be permitted unless the need for the proposal clearly outweighs the nature conservation value of the site.

2.32 TRDC is consulting on the Site Allocations Preferred Options DPD and Development Management Policies Preferred Options DPD in January-February 2012. Work on the South Oxhey Initiative and associated public consultation will inform the Site Allocations DPD.

2.33 The Site Allocations DPD will identify the Council's preferred sites for housing, employment, retail, open space, education and community uses.

2.34 The Development Management Policies DPD will set out the detailed policies against which planning applications will be assessed.



Figure 4: Landscape designations and flood risk

-  Green Belt
-  Local nature reserve & local wildlife site
-  Local wildlife site
-  South Herts Plateau Landscape Area
-  Zones 2, 3a & 3b flood risk

### Vehicular movement

2.35 The area itself is set out on a deformed grid pattern of streets which create a very legible network of main routes. The presence of surrounding woodland and rural fields has limited the number of routes out of South Oxhey, to the extent that no vehicle route heads directly south. There is only one vehicle connection between Carpenders Park and South Oxhey.

2.36 The London Overground station at Carpenders Park provides connections to the heart of London to the south and via Watford to the Midlands and the North. However the railway line itself creates a major connectivity barrier between South Oxhey and Carpenders Park.

### Public transport links

2.37 Given that the main reason for the development of the South Oxhey area was to provide homes for Londoners after the WWII Blitz, it follows logically that the settlement was based around Carpenders Park overground station which provides direct links into the heart of London in approximately 30 minutes. The surrounding woodland belts, topography and rail line have acted as barriers to significant highway connections which has in the later part of the 20th century isolated the area within the immediate urban hierarchy. Public transport has largely developed to connect South Oxhey to the north with the major neighbouring settlement of Watford.

Figure 5: Transport links



## Opportunities for improvement

### Local aspirations

2.38 From a review of relevant reports and press releases, it was possible to identify a number of issues that are important to South Oxhey:

- The retail centre:

is being considered for a comprehensive redevelopment to provide a more customer focused retail offer, new housing and other public facilities and amenities (SW Hertfordshire Employment Land Update, 2010).

- The need for, and benefit of, a master planned approach to potential redevelopment has been recognised in the Local Investment Plan (November 2010) and is expected to help with:

Improving the supply and standard of affordable housing ...  
Reducing inequalities between South Oxhey and the rest of Three Rivers, particularly in relation to: Access to services, access to employment and income deprivation, living environment meeting the needs of an ageing population.

- Through regeneration there is:
  - an opportunity to make better use of the land in the area, achieving higher levels of development on previously developed land (Local Investment Plan, November 2010).
- Residents and Councillors have expressed a desire to see a secondary school at South Oxhey (Watford Observer 17 November 2010).
- Major funding partners are likely to include the supermarket operator and the HCA but taking this project forward will of course present a considerable challenge. (Local Investment Plan, November 2010)

### Character impressions: Shopping precinct

2.39 The shops, with flats above, represent the heart of the South Oxhey area. The area provides the day to day needs of the surrounding residential community and has a good supply of on-street and public parking to assist in capturing passing trade.

2.40 On the west side of Bridlington Road and Henbury Way are a number of uses which perform social and community functions within the area, such as The Ox public house and the Library.



1. Bridlington Road shops



2. The shopping precinct

3. The Ox Public House



4. The Library



### Community facilities

2.41 On the east side of Henbury Way are more social and community functions such as the working mens' club, the scout hut and the Kingdom Hall of the Jehovahs Witness.

2.42 On the south side of Oxhey Drive are a collection of civic and health related uses such as the Parish Council offices, police station and medical practices.

2.43 Dominating Gosforth Lane is the Community Leisure Centre and Youth Club facility.

### Local group / networks

2.44 There are a number of well supported community groups in South Oxhey including ASCEND, the Community Learning Partnership, Thrive Homes, Watford Rural Parish Council, local schools including St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Colnbrook Primary School, Warren Dell Primary School, Oxhey Wood School, Woodhall Primary School and Greenfields Primary School, sheltered housing providers, sports clubs including Oxhey Jets, GP's and practices, Scout group, churches including St Josephs Roman Catholic Church and All Saints Church, neighbourhood watch, etc.

2.45 In order to ensure that the South Oxhey Initiative is locally driven it was important to try and engage these groups to utilise their local knowledge and expertise. Further, they could raise the profile of the work being done to assist with engagement with the local community, including notifying residents of upcoming open days and progress made.



1. The Working Mens' Club



2. The Police Station

3. The Community Leisure Centre



4. The South Oxhey Youth Centre





## 3 Locally Driven

### Community engagement

3.1 An extensive community engagement process has been central to evolving the South Oxhey Initiative and included:

- Three Rivers Times and website survey – Spring 2011
- Community workshops - 31 March 2011
- Public open day - 7 April 2011
- Community workshops - 16 June 2011
- Community workshops - 14 July 2011
- Public open day - 15 September 2011

3.2 Information on each event, including details on the purpose, attendees and outcomes are provided at Appendices B-F whilst this section reflects on how issues that were raised have been taken forward. A summary of the key issues raised and how the South Oxhey Initiative has responded to them is provided at section 4 of this document.

### Extent of regeneration

3.3 The early consultation events and review of the baseline context provided the list of potential headline issues affecting South Oxhey. The initial discussions with local groups, residents and technical stakeholders revealed the limitations of what the South Oxhey Initiative could achieve in the short term, whilst highlighting where most change could be achieved in the first instance.

3.4 The following table outlines the range of issues identified through the process. It makes clear what could be dealt with by the South Oxhey Initiative at this time, and what is peripheral or may go beyond what realistically can be addressed. Simply because an issue is not considered a priority here does not mean it is not significant to the regeneration and improvement within South Oxhey, it just recognises that it might take too long, involve organisations and processes beyond the scope of the South Oxhey Initiative, have significant financial requirements, will only deliver limited improvement or simply cannot be achieved at this time.

3.5 A simple illustration of this is the provision of a secondary school, which is a significant yet contentious issue within the local community, but is clearly beyond the scope of the South Oxhey Initiative requiring County Council involvement and funding.

3.6 The following regeneration issues are listed as being peripheral or beyond the remit of the South Oxhey Initiative for the following reasons:

- Public transport and accessibility issues – Whilst the South Oxhey Initiative cannot directly address public transport issues, as TRDC is not responsible for the provision of public transport services, including bus and rail, the relative accessibility of the centre is a factor in relation to its development potential and ability to accommodate change. Planning policies allow for higher density developments in areas well served by public transport and other facilities. An improved ‘heart’ to South Oxhey could attract more people and therefore more public transport services through increased demand and patronage. Consideration should be given to parking provision (both motor vehicles and bicycles) and access arrangements to the ‘heart’.
- Sport and recreation – TRDC own the leisure centre, although operated by a private company, and playing fields and although they are not located in the ‘heart’ there is scope for their consideration in the South Oxhey Initiative.



Considered within the South Oxhey Initiative	Peripheral to the South Oxhey Initiative	Beyond the South Oxhey Initiative
	Public transport (making best use of existing sustainable location, improving station approaches)	
Health facilities		
Community facilities		
Retail provision		
Play area improvements		
		Separation of South Oxhey and Carpenders Park
		Education
Car parking		
Condition of roads		
Employment uses		
Building layout		
Pedestrian routes		
Open space provision		
Quality and tenure of housing		

- Separation of South Oxhey and Carpenders Park – The railway line separates the two communities. Whilst the provision of additional highway links across or under the railway may be beyond the remit of the South Oxhey Initiative. The enhancement of the buildings and landscaping of the station approaches and improvement of the retail offer and attractiveness of the centre can only assist in bringing the separate communities together.
- Education – Hertfordshire County Council, the education authority, has not identified South Oxhey as a potential location to accommodate a secondary school. The provision of a secondary school was beyond the remit of the South Oxhey Initiative due to the associated need to find an appropriate site of approximately 15ha, which would most likely necessitate the use of Green Belt land, the costs involved, the reluctance of HCC to support such provision and the complex process involved.
- Employment – There are opportunities at the ‘heart’ to provide uses that generate jobs, including retail, construction and office jobs, and training apprenticeships for local people. The South Oxhey Initiative has identified some potential employment space. This said, further work is required on the extent and nature of employment generation.

### Establishing the level of intervention

3.7 This section demonstrates how the outcomes of each workshop and public open day informed considerations of how change might be delivered through different levels of intervention. This, combined with the table at Chapter 4, provides a ‘trail’ to demonstrate how the recommendations in Chapter 5 were derived.

3.8 A number of key issues were considered throughout the process and informed how they could be taken forward through the South Oxhey Initiative process. Substantive views expressed at the workshops were specifically tested at the public open days to clarify their relevance to the wider community.

### Three Rivers Times and website survey

3.9 The survey, results of which are included at Appendix F, sought residents’ views on a number of issues including how satisfied they were with the local natural and built environments, community facilities, services including public transport and housing provision. TRDC collated and analysed the results of the survey. The issues that were raised, which are similar to those at the first workshop and public open day, are identified and considered in the table at Chapter 4.

### Workshop 1

3.10 The purpose of the first community workshop was to establish what ‘works’ and ‘what does not work so well’ in South Oxhey, how the area could be improved and whether any additional community groups and representatives needed to be contacted to participate in the ongoing engagement process. Local groups and technical stakeholders, including District councillors, Thrive Homes, Hertfordshire County Council officers, Watford Rural Parish Council, the HCA, Chamber of Commerce, Police, ASCEND, Hertsme Leisure, London Overground, Citizens Advice Bureau, representatives from local schools and churches, and the local area forum participated in round table discussions. Details on the outcomes from the workshop are provided at Appendix B.

3.11 The following were identified as the main strengths of the area:

- Strong sense of community and desire to improve the area
- Well served by local facilities including pre schools, primary schools, community and sports facilities
- Residents like living in the area, which has lots of green space, trees, good transport links and low density family housing
- Established local support networks and dedicated community groups / activity organisers

3.12 The main weaknesses of the area include:

- Limited retail offer and no draw / central attraction in South Oxhey to make it a destination
- Poor quality of local facilities
- Leisure facilities are not well used
- Problems with the mix of affordable housing provision
- Quality of housing stock
- Insular and isolated community which is sometimes negatively perceived from outside
- Lack of a secondary school, although a significant number of participants felt travel outside the area to school was good for broadening pupils’ horizons and combating the insular/ isolated nature of the community
- Poor evening and weekend bus services, cost of using public transport and a lack of cross boundary services
- Segregation between South Oxhey, Carpenders Park and Oxhey Hall and need to improve links to the surrounding area
- High levels of deprivation and consequent lack of aspiration
- Poor state of repair of roads and footpaths throughout the area
- Degradation of green spaces and verges caused by inappropriately parked cars

3.13 Participants highlighted the importance of the local community taking ownership of the South Oxhey Initiative. Indeed, the local choir were invited to subsequent events as a result of discussions at the workshop. Engaging a range of community groups and using existing websites / circulars to advertise upcoming events were suggested as ways of improving public involvement in the future of South Oxhey.

3.14 Participants considered the opportunities and constraints to improving South Oxhey before providing their thoughts on how the area might be improved. The main points included:

- Improvements to the quality of the public realm and in particular improved footpaths and better integration of parking across the area
- The ‘strip’ on Oxhey Drive and the precinct were identified as key areas that were at the ‘heart’ of South Oxhey
- There could be a mixed used development at the ‘heart’ which could include a medical facility, supermarket, cinema or performance area
- There is an opportunity to make better use of the area around the station

- South Oxhey needs a draw to attract visitors from outside of the area
- There is a need for a more diverse range of housing and tenure types across the area
- Improvements to routes through existing woodlands and involvement of the local community in woodland management

3.15 The issues raised at the workshop were summarised to inform the first public open day. The main issues were considered to be:

- Improving public involvement in the future of South Oxhey
- Raising the profile and image of South Oxhey
- Identifying key areas for improvement
- Replacing outdated community facilities
- Improving the quality of the existing housing stock

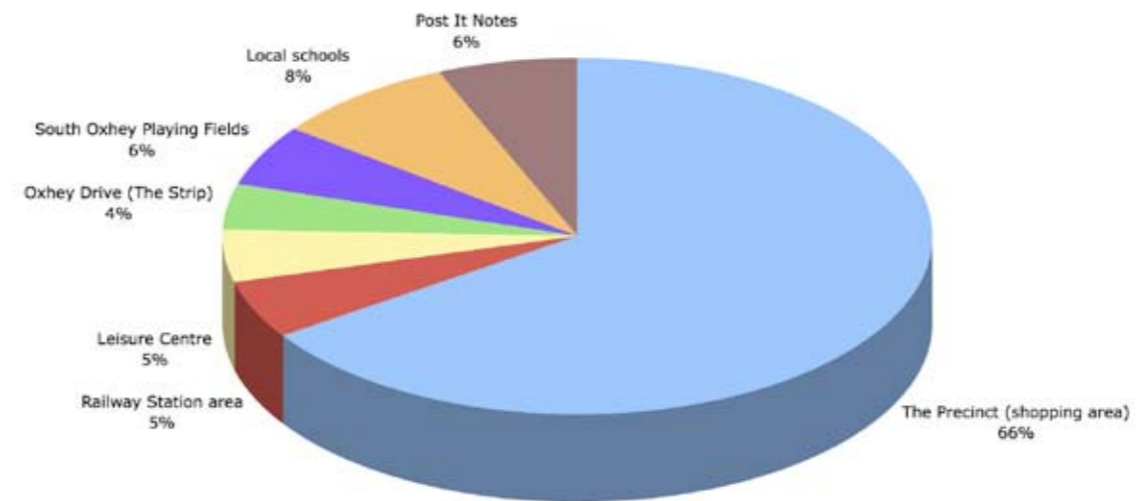
### First public open day

3.16 The purpose of the first public open day was to introduce the main issues identified at the preceding workshop, to seek confirmation of the importance of these issues and to understand the views of local residents on how these might be best addressed. The event was advertised in the Three Rivers Times, leaflet drops in the area and by community groups promoting attendance at the event. 370 people visited the open day, over 75% from South Oxhey, and 200 people completed the questionnaire that enabled the identification of the key issues of concern.

3.17 The questionnaire results revealed that 77% of respondents consider South Oxhey to be a place they are 'happy to call home'. 75% of respondents consider that it is a friendly place to live with 63% of respondents adding that there is a strong sense of community spirit. The important roles of local groups, such as the choir, ASCEND and the local churches in uniting the local community was also recognised.

3.18 The display boards included six questions that asked for the views of respondents on certain issues. Respondents were able to place stickers on specific options or write on the post it notes provided. The following graphs show how the respondents replied to each question.

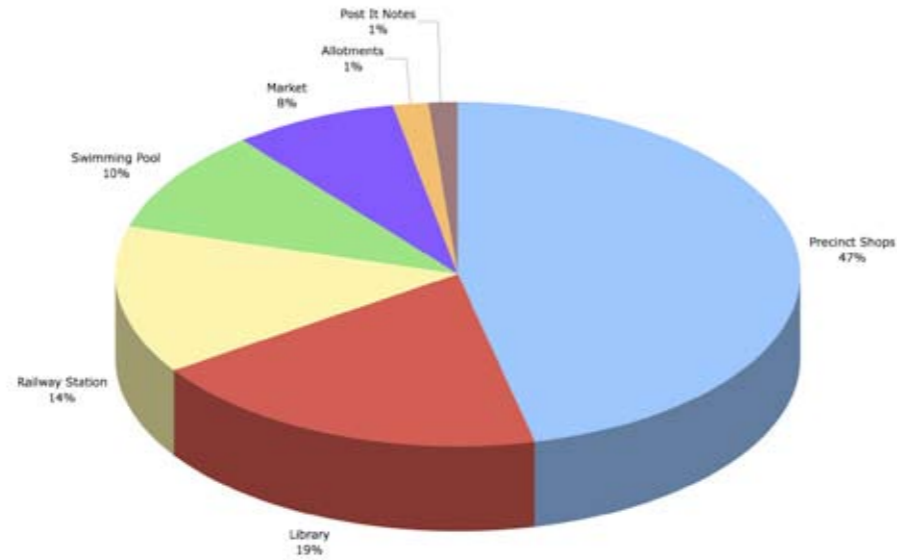
- What do you think of as the heart of South Oxhey?



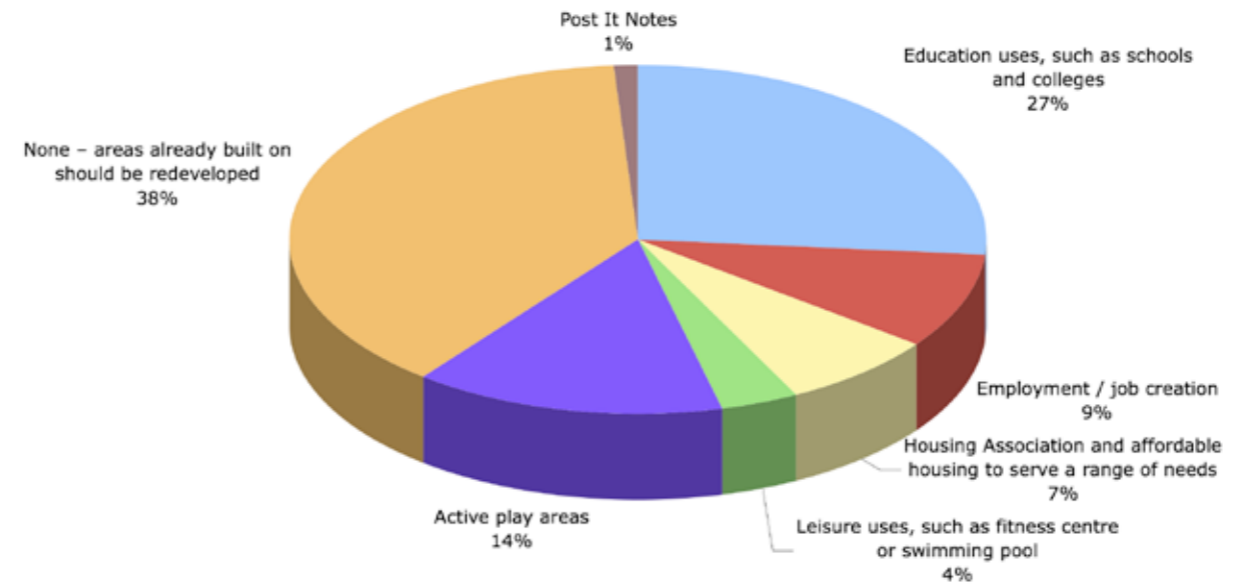
- What do you feel are the most important improvements needed in the area?



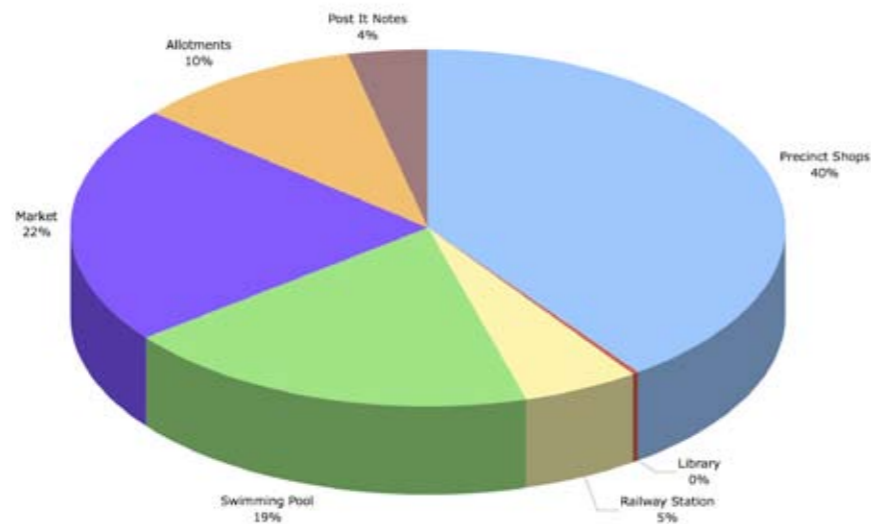
- What facility do you use the most?



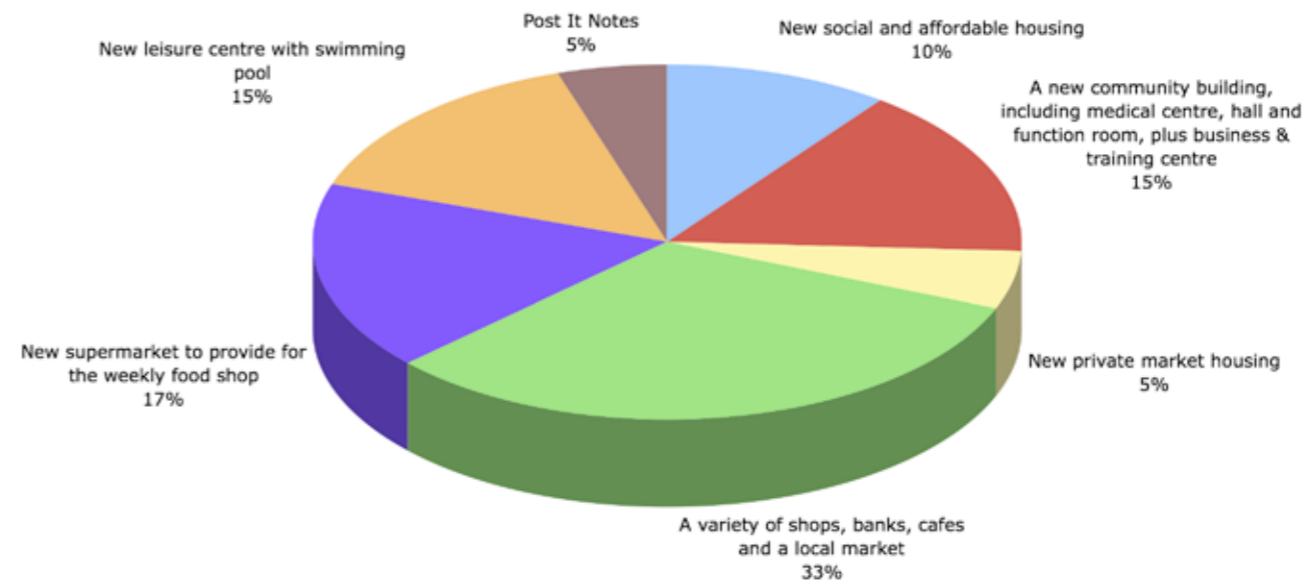
- Which of the following do you feel might be acceptable to be provided on an existing green space, if it meets a community need?



- Which facility do you think is most in need of improving / updating?



- Which of the following would you most like to see provided in South Oxhey?



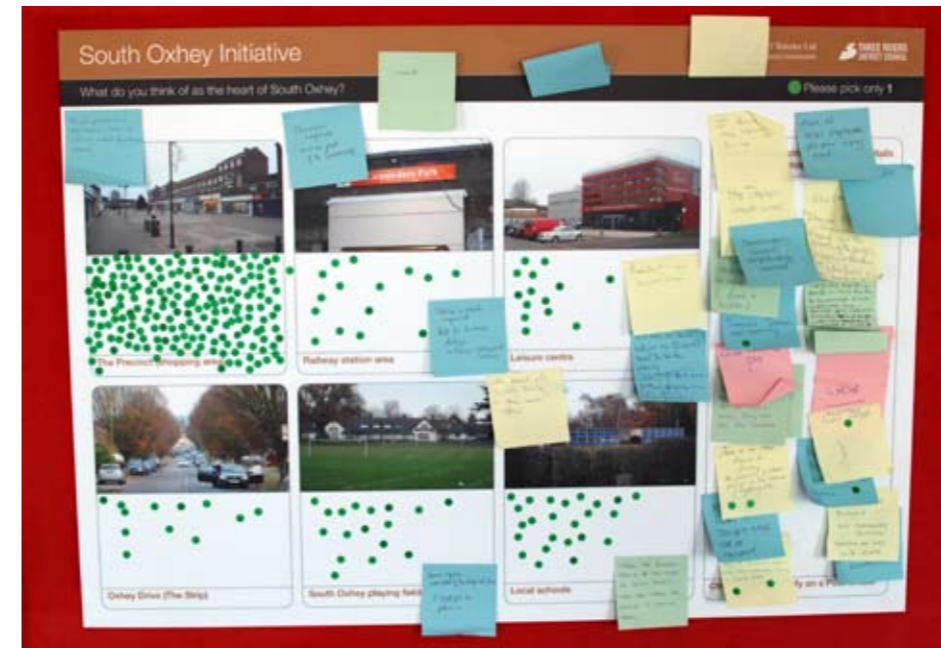
- Which of the following neighbourhood principles do you feel are the most important for the future of South Oxhey?



3.19 The clear messages coming out of the open day were:

- The precinct is the most widely used facility in South Oxhey and is viewed as its 'heart'
- There is a major desire to see an improved shopping experience including a better market
- Support for a community hub within the 'heart' to contain a variety of uses

- Strong desire to improve the roads, footpaths and parking areas
- Support for improved leisure facilities, which should include a swimming pool or combined sports facilities
- Very protective of the green open spaces within South Oxhey
- Potential to expand the local market



3.20 Despite the stakeholder workshop raising the lack of a secondary school as an important local issue, there was no clear public view from the open day on the desire/ need for a secondary school. Indeed, the issue was only generally considered when it was specifically referred to on one of the exhibition boards.

3.21 A secondary school would require 15 hectares of land, which equates to the area occupied by approximately 300 houses at the suburban densities of South Oxhey. Realistically this would have to be delivered within the playing fields, which form a significant part of the Green Belt. This would conflict with

the 52% of respondents who felt that no built development should take place within the Green Belt. Furthermore Hertfordshire County Council, the education authority, has not identified South Oxhey as a potential location to accommodate a secondary school. Given this it was considered that the provision of a secondary school was beyond the immediate remit of the South Oxhey Initiative.

## Workshop 2

3.22 The first workshop, reinforced by the public open day had clearly defined the major area of community interest as the precinct area of South Oxhey. Improvements here to local shopping and community facilities were seen as the best way of changing and improving the area which would benefit the majority of the neighbourhood. It was seen as presenting a major opportunity to re-invigorate this area to be as appropriate to today's residents as it had been to the original residents of the area. A significant number of people saw it as an opportunity for transformational change, which could provide a more positive and vibrant image for South Oxhey within the wider district.

3.23 The purpose of the second community workshop was to obtain the views of local stakeholders on the key issues to be addressed in order to improve the precinct and



inform the development of options/ scenarios for improving the 'heart'. Details on the outcomes from the workshop are provided in Appendix C.

3.24 Following a discussion on the outcomes of the first public open day the participants were asked to consider the following questions that would inform how the 'heart' could be improved:

- What are the key shopping facilities that required to support day-to-day needs?
- Where would the best place be for a new market square?
- What are the key activities that are needed to make a community hub-building work?
- Where is the optimum position for the community hub building?
- What streets/ links need improving to help footfall to the heart?

### What are the key shopping facilities required to support day-to-day needs?

3.25 A number of key facilities, including food shops (as well as a supermarket), hairdressers, cafes, chemists, butchers, post office, residential units, entertainment facilities and community uses, were identified as being needed to support the day-to-day needs of local residents. There was a consensus that a mix of small retail units could be provided alongside a supermarket, residential units and community facilities at the 'heart'. A supermarket would need to be carefully considered in terms of the appropriate size, as this was the most contentious issue, with sharply divergent views between those who thought a significant supermarket offer was needed in the area and those who were strongly opposed to the idea.

### Where would the best place be for a new market square?

3.26 A variety of locations at the 'heart' were put forward for a new market square and a number of suggestions were made on what activities could be included within the space. It could be partially covered, to allow a variety of activities to take place all year round, and incorporate some green space, play space and parking. Landscaping measures such as local art, a fountain, seating and lighting should also be provided. The space should be flexible to accommodate a variety of uses and should not be dominated by any single use.

### What are the key activities that are needed to make a community hub building work?

3.27 Key activities / organisations that were identified to make a community hub building work included:

- The Police
- GP surgeries
- Parish Council
- Thrive Homes
- Space for the choir
- Children / youth centre
- Adult learning
- Volunteer centre
- Dentist
- Scouts
- ASCEND

3.28 Participants thought existing community uses located on Oxhey Drive could be relocated to the community hub, although a balance needs to be achieved between accommodating a variety of uses and the size of the building.

### Where is the optimum position for the community hub building?

3.29 Participants felt that it was important that the community hub building was placed in a prominent/ high profile position to signify the importance of the facility to the community. It was felt that either Prestwick Road or Oxhey Drive were good locations as these are the most prominent and highly accessible positions, given the proximity of the major street network and public transport access by bus and train. It was felt that the market square should be associated with the community hub.

### What streets/ links need improving to help footfall to the heart?

3.30 Participants highlighted that there is a need for an improved pedestrian link across Prestwick Road between the train station and the 'heart'. Pedestrian links through the centre from Prestwick Road, Oxhey Drive, Bridlington Road and Fairfield Avenue should also be provided for. Participants agreed that the Prestwick Road frontage needs to be enhanced and bus facilities along here should be improved.

3.31 Participants also raised a number of other points:

- There is a need for a variety of uses at the 'heart' to ensure vibrancy / activity throughout the day / evening

- There needs to be sufficient parking provision at the 'heart' but not at the expense of creating a quality place / experience
- The sites of the existing community facilities on Oxhey Drive could be used for housing provision if the community hub building were to be provided
- Old and new buildings need to be linked through the design
- Upper floors can be used for different uses from the ground floor
- Food shopping is a key activity, but the size of store should not be too big
- Spaces can be used for more than one thing - market, small performances, parking
- On-street short stay parking is good as it helps to attract passing trade
- Greening of streets and spaces makes them more attractive
- Streets need to be faced by development, with the main access point being provided directly from the street

### Workshop 3

3.32 The second workshop established that there is an opportunity to provide a mixed-use development at the heart. This could include a mix of small retail units alongside a supermarket, residential units and community facilities. Participants identified that there was an opportunity to provide a supermarket although it would need to be of an appropriate size for the precinct. There was support for the provision of a community hub and there are opportunities to relocate some of the community facilities on Oxhey Drive to such a hub.

3.33 Whilst the opportunity to provide a mixed-use development at the heart had been established the purpose of the third community stakeholder workshop was to obtain the views of local groups on the potential for different levels of intervention and change to improve the 'heart'. Participants were asked to consider broad options for improving the 'heart', highlighting the elements they liked or did not like, and to state a preference for a particular level of intervention. Details on the outcomes from the workshop are provided in Appendix D.

3.34 These options were based on:

- Stand still (i.e. do nothing)
- Total refurbishment
- Part refurbishment - Part redevelopment

- Complete redevelopment

3.35 The options consisted of:

- Options A representing a total refurbishment option
- Option B representing a part refurbishment and part redevelopment option
- Options C, D, E and F redevelopment options, which varied in the level of change

3.36 Options C, D, E and F allowed for complete redevelopment of the existing shopping precinct and the area around the entrance to Carpenders Park station. All options allowed for the potential for the local market to expand.

3.37 Options D, E and F located the community hub and new parking square to the south of the site and the retail block, with housing above to the north on the route to the railway station.

3.38 Option C reversed this with retail to the south and community hub to the north.



3.39 Options C and D additionally showed a pocket park on the current car park between Bridlington Road and Henbury Way, and potential future development on the remainder of the land currently occupied by the Ox public house, library, Labour Club and Kingdom Hall. This is based on the community facilities being reprovided in the community hub.

3.40 Option E left the library block as existing and placed development on the existing car park.

3.41 These options were set out to stimulate discussion rather than provide design details. Their purpose was to seek broad views on the elements participants liked or did not like, what should stay or change and if there is to be change how far should it go.

3.42 Participants agreed that doing nothing was not an option, whilst a number of obvious limitations were raised relative to refurbishment:

- Little prospect of the refurbishment being funded as it would rely totally on public sector finance as there is no opportunity for private sector funding to enable development
- Can not address problems with the existing layout
- Can not change the amount of floorspace provision within each retail unit to attract new retailers

Would cause major disruption to existing tenants during the works. This is likely to involve the need to temporarily relocate residents and close shops

- Would disrupt the wider community through temporary loss of local shops during periods of phased refurbishment
- No improvement of community facilities through the inability to provide a new community hub building
- No improvement to footpaths or highways through cross subsidy
- No improvement of green spaces through cross subsidy
- No opportunity to provide additional homes to help those in need of social and affordable homes
- Loss of some existing shop units and flats to provide front entrances, staircases and lifts to the flats above the shops
- Loss of some existing shops to allow for more space efficient shop units to be provided
- Fail to address local housing need

3.43 Participants also considered that part refurbishment and part new build would create an unwelcome juxtaposition between old and new, and it would also fail to deliver sufficient change. For instance community facilities could not be improved, as there will be an inability to provide a new community hub, as development of the new block would most likely need to pay for the refurbishment of the existing block. Participants felt that the market square would be best located at the corner of Prestwick Road and Oxhey Drive given the prominence of this location, and shops would be best placed along the route to the railway station to increase the potential for passing trade.

3.44 The need for a strong visual entrance to South Oxhey was reiterated, which could include a landmark building. It was felt that the hub building would be best placed on Oxhey Drive associated with the new square to give the building a high public profile within the community. Some felt there is potential for a landmark building in this location as a positive statement of change, improvement and community identity.

3.45 Participants were keen that the petrol station should be retained. A shared surface on Prestwick Road could help link the station approach with the centre. There was support for an enhanced park / open space, within the 'heart', as long as it is a suitable size.

3.46 Specific comments included:

- Key emphasis should be on the quality of design
- Street furniture should be included in any open space provided
- Rooftops on the community hub and foodstore should be used for photovoltaics
- Any new police station should be highly visible
- Opportunities to provide roof gardens on the community hub and foodstore should be explored
- The parking area appears large and might be better split into smaller areas

3.47 The feedback from the workshop confirmed that the broad options should be presented to local residents at the second public open day to understand the level of intervention that residents are willing to accept in order to improve the 'heart'.





### Second public open day

3.48 Having obtained the views of community stakeholders at the third workshop on the level of intervention that should be pursued the purpose of the second public open day was to obtain the views of local residents in terms of the appetite for change. This was stimulated by presentation of illustrative options representing different levels of intervention for improving the 'heart'. It was not a referendum to support a particular option for change. The open day was widely advertised through leaflet drops and promoted by community groups and councillors. Details on the outcomes from the open day are provided in Appendix E.

3.49 Prior to the open day Cllr Ann Shaw OBE, Leader of the Council helpfully addressed the financial context of the South Oxhey precinct, highlighted in a press release on 7 September 2011 that it:

must pay its way in the long term. Business rents are currently subsidised by the Council and all options will lead to a decrease in the number of shop units as rents are steadily increased to commercial levels in the long term.

3.50 1,080 people visited the open day, 761 stickers were placed on the display board that outlined the illustrative options representing different levels of intervention, 289 comment forms were completed and 106 comments were provided on Post-its.

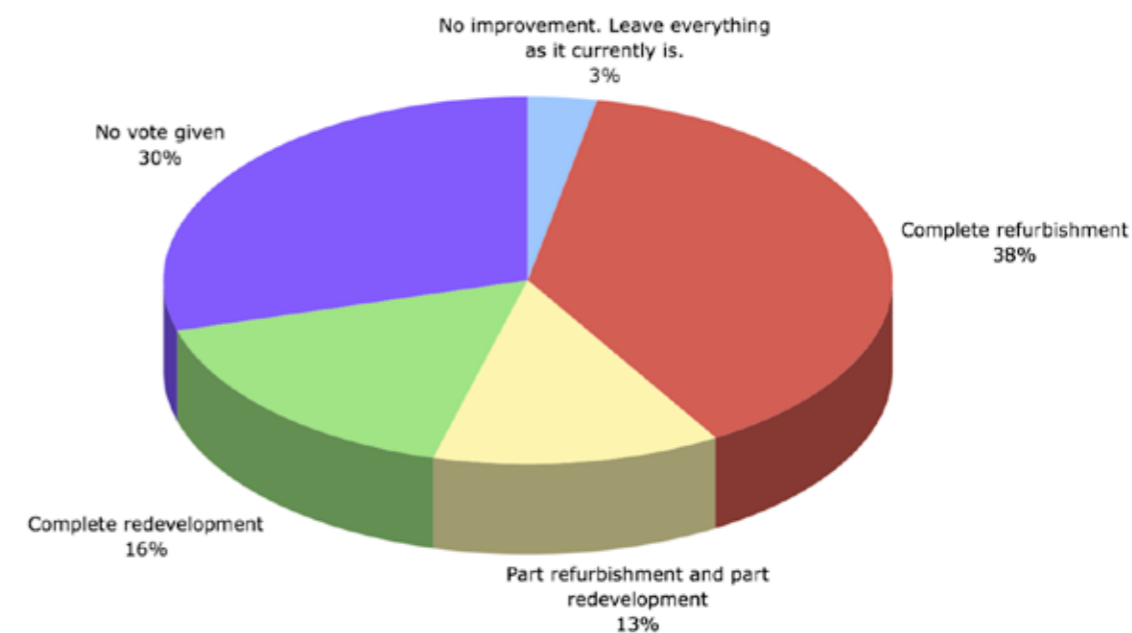
3.51 The results of the final open day may have been affected by some people actively lobbying other participants. Lobbying on the day was clearly evident to those manning the exhibition. Members of the public also complained about the apparent pressure and misinformation. Through discussion it was also apparent that a degree of misinformation was being circulated. Many people attended the event having been presented with preconceptions not based on fact. For example one view was that all shops would be lost and replaced by a single supermarket, whilst those currently living above the shops would be made homeless.

Despite the fact that such assertions went against the information presented at the event and advice of the organisers it proved very difficult to correct these pre-conceptions. The impact on the results from this activity cannot be quantified.

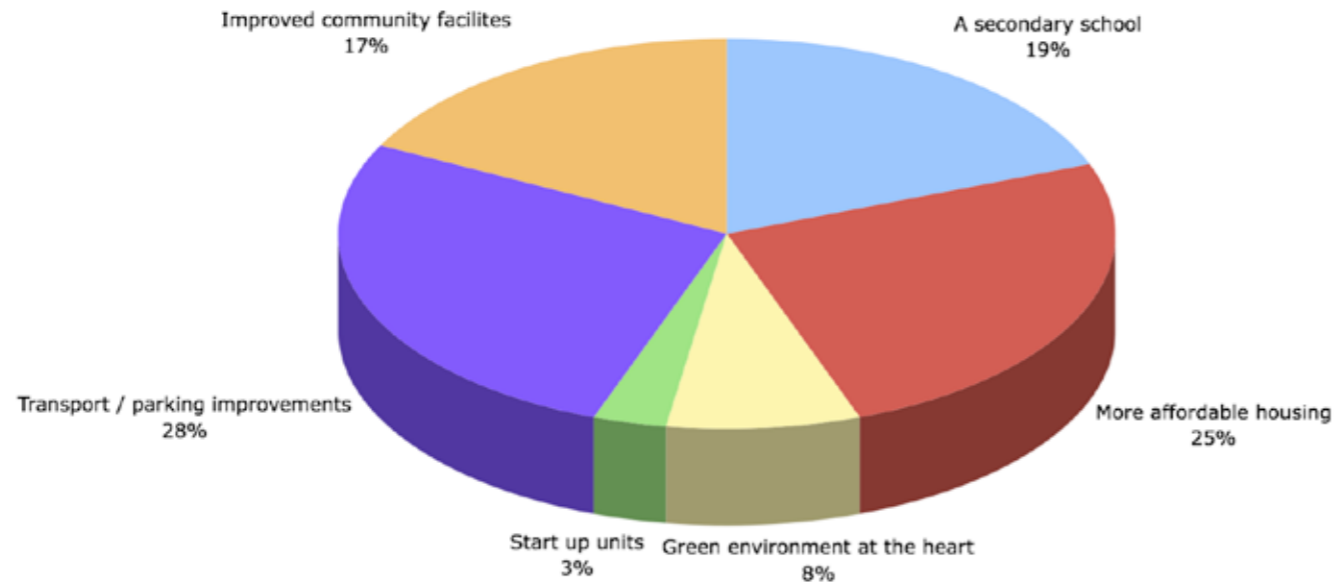
3.52 Although 1,080 people attended the open day only 761 stickers were placed on the options board. It is not possible to say for certain how many attendees placed stickers as true members of the public as the project team observed some attendees placing more than one sticker during the course of the day.

3.53 Only 3% of attendees were in support of no change, which demonstrated that there is an appetite for some form of improvement at the 'heart'. 38% supported complete refurbishment, 29% favoured some form of redevelopment, whilst 30% of attendees did not state a preference.

- Level of intervention



- Specific comments on facilities/ infrastructure



3.54 Despite the number of attendees only 289 comment forms were completed and 106 comments were provided on post-its. The comments from both sources were analysed together, because of the similarity of issues raised, and revealed a number of interesting views on matters related to local shopping needs:

- 42% of respondents were in support of a new supermarket. There was no consensus on the size of the supermarket
- Refurbishment is associated with protecting existing shops
- Those in support of redevelopment often added a caveat that local needs must be provided for and the character of the area should be improved
- Existing retailers want to remain
- Existing shops should be provided for in the improved 'heart'
- The retail offer should improve
- Residents want the sense of community retained in any scheme

3.55 63 comments were made by attendees, either on a comment form or post-it, which expressed support for particular improvements to local facilities/ infrastructure on the comment forms provided.

3.56 A number of specific comments were made on these facilities/ infrastructure:

- The community hub should not accommodate all local services
- The petrol station should be retained
- The new library should not be lost
- A covered market space should be provided
- More facilities are needed for young people
- The swimming pool should be retained
- Free parking should be provided

3.57 Respondents also raised the following issues:

- Problems with the consultation, including:
  - There is a concern for the future of residents living above the shops
  - Criticism of how the residents living above the shops have been engaged in the process
- Do not like the way in which the illustrative proposals were presented
- Concerns with funding

## 4 Reflection on key issues

4.1 The table that follows shows all the key issues that have been raised throughout consultation and where they were identified in the process including community engagement events, surveys, review of local planning policy and local aspirations. Reflection on how the South Oxhey Initiative has responded to each issue is provided. The last column identifies the recommendations in Chapter 5 that respond, at least in part, to the issues to provide a clear audit trail of how each issue has been addressed and recommendation arrived at.



Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
General:			
There is a need to address deprivation	Pol, WS1	All of the actions coming through the South Oxhey Initiative are seeking to respond to this through provision of an improved environment, improved living conditions and better community facilities	3, 5, 6, 14
Need to engage the community fully and address any misinformation. This relates particularly to those living above the shops	WS1, OD2	Extensive consultation has taken place to date and further consultation activity is being proposed	4,11,12
Perception that TRDC has made its mind up on how the area will be improved	OD1, OD2	This has been addressed in part through consultation and should be carried forward in future activities. TRDC has not made any decisions at this time	1, 2, 4, 7, 12, 14
Residents are concerned about where the funding for any improvements would come from and whether anything will actually happen	OD2	If any form of development is to come forward there is a need to ensure that it is viable and to demonstrate that it is achievable. If any proposals are to be deliverable then funding is critical. It is suggested that best value assessments and viability testing of the options should be undertaken	2, 5, 8, 9
There is a need to make better use of land within South Oxhey, especially in the precinct	Pol	The South Oxhey Initiative identifies opportunities to make best use of land and to deliver change, including provision of more housing, improved community facilities and an improved retail offer	3, 5, 6, 11, 14
The Heart and Hub:			
The 'strip' and precinct are seen as the 'heart' of South Oxhey and is the most used area	WS1, OD1	It is for this reason that the South Oxhey Initiative quickly focused down on the precinct and 'strip' as change here would deliver the most significant improvement to be experienced by the most people	3, 6
There is potential for a mixed use development in the 'heart', which should include community facilities, retail and residential	WS1, WS2	In looking at the 'heart' the opportunities for a mixed use development have been recognised	3, 6
The precinct is the facility most in need of improvement	OD1	This is addressed by the fact that the precinct evolved as the focus for change	3, 6

Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
The library is an important facility, being the second most used, and needs to be retained	OD1, OD2	There is a need to recognise the importance of this community facility. Any redevelopment options would seek re-provision of a public library/ resources centre	6
The market is a valued facility but is in need of improvement	OD1	The Central Area Key Principles Plan seeks to provide an improved space for a market place	6
As well as a mix of uses the heart should contain green spaces, play space, street furniture, lighting and public art	WS2, WS3	The Central Area Key Principles Plan seeks to respond to such requirements, whilst moving forward evolving DPD policy. The content of any planning application should ensure that these features are addressed	6, 11
There is a desire to see improved community facilities	WS1, OD2	The South Oxhey Initiative is seeking provision of a hub building to re-provide, improved and extended community facilities. There will be a need to enter into dialogue with providers to enhance the range of services on offer	6, 11
Existing community facilities located on 'the strip' should be re-provided within a community hub	WS2	The South Oxhey Initiative approach would seek to achieve this	6,11
The provision of any new market square should be at the corner of Prestwick Road and Oxhey Drive	WS3	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan	6
Consideration should be given to partially covering the market	OD2	At this stage this has not been addressed, but there will be potential to include such provision through more detailed master plan/ design work if considered appropriate moving forward	6
The Police building should be provided in a prominent location	WS3	Although not addressed within the work to date it is something that can be achieved through appropriate design and liaison with the Police	11
Retail:			
There is a limited retail offer/ poor shopping experience	WS1, Sur, OD1	A fundamental element of works to the precinct will relate to the shopping provision. A better shopping environment and improved space should attract more people and a wider range of retailers	3, 6, 7, 8, 11

Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
Need to cater for the everyday retail needs of residents	Pol	Part of the retail works will focus on the level of convenience provision. New unit sizes and the possible introduction of a supermarket may assist in providing shops that are better able to capture those needing their weekly shop	6
Existing rent levels are being subsidised which can not continue- must 'wash its own face'	Pol, OD2	Rent levels will be set at commercial rates, which need to be reviewed in the normal way over time. Existing and new retailers should expect to pay commercial rents. This would be the case whatever the form of change progressed- refurbishment, partial refurbishment/ partial redevelopment or total redevelopment	7
Concern about impact on existing retailers. Perception that refurbishment will protect them	WS1, OD2, WS2, WS3	Impact on retailers to be considered, whilst there is a need to address residents' misunderstanding of the cost implications to retailers associated with each of the options as well as the TRDC's inability to continue to subsidise retailers in the long term.  It is recommended that any redevelopment or refurbishment options will need to be costed and assessed against a series of viability and sustainability criteria. Such assessments to have particular regard to the fabric of the existing buildings and the long term cost to the public purse	7
Existing retailers want to remain	OD2	Impact on retailers to be considered	7
Potential resistance to a supermarket over 1,000sq.m	Pol	The South Oxhey Initiative would not result in any significant increase in total retail floor space. Any redevelopment option would simply reconfigure what is there. It is possible that the overall level of provision would reduce	6
The size of any supermarket will be very important	WS2	Consideration would need to be given to the optimum size of any supermarket based on planning policy, viability issues, market demands and what is required to enable South Oxhey to become more self contained	6
A mix of smaller retail units could complement a supermarket	WS2	May be appropriate to consider scope to retain some of the existing retailers	7
Retail units could be located along the route to the railway station	WS3	Refer to parameters plan	6

Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
Education and employment:			
There is a need to address unemployment	Pol	Through improved education, support facilities and enhanced employment offer within South Oxhey there will be scope to start to address this. Appreciating this, there will be a need for stakeholder engagement on exactly what the 'hub' would need to provide to assist with this issue. Redevelopment may provide many hundreds of jobs. The Council would wish to see priority given to local people.	6, 7, 11, 14
There should be more employment generated uses	OD1	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan	6, 7, 11
Desire to see a secondary school in South Oxhey	Press, Sur, WS1, OD2	As highlighted in Chapter 3, due to site requirements, costs, lack of support for such a facility from the County Council, land ownerships and processes being dictated by the County Council this is not an issue that the South Oxhey Initiative can address at this time. TRDC is likely to continue to explore the issues with relevant third parties	NA
Should be improved education, skills and learning	Pol, Sur	At this stage the South Oxhey Initiative has concentrated on relevant consultation and regard as been had to space requirements. There will be a need for continued work to establish fully what is needed with a view to incorporating facilities within a new community 'hub' should the Council pursue the redevelopment option	14
There is a need to deal with antisocial behaviour	Pol, Sur	As with other regeneration schemes by creating an active and attractive place, of which people can rightly be proud, it is hoped that this will help counter criminal and anti-social behaviour. This will be assisted by a Police presence in an appropriate/ prominent location, a scheme which designs out crime, provision of quality residential accommodation and ultimately improved active uses at street level and uses in addition to shopping which will encourage evening activity	3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 14

Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
Need to address inequalities	Pol	This requirement is a cornerstone of the South Oxhey Initiative and the comprehensive review of the 'heart' will respond to this, whilst other work on education, linkages, balancing the type of residences, outside perceptions, etc will help with this, as with other significant regeneration projects	3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 14
Educational uses are the only form of development possible on open space	OD1	As highlighted in Chapter 3 of this report, due to site requirements, costs, land ownerships, planning policy and processes being dictated by the County Council this is not an issue that the South Oxhey Initiative can or needs to address at this time	NA
<b>Housing:</b>			
There is a need to increase the supply and quality of housing across the estate. This includes 200 new dwellings in the South Oxhey town centre. There is also a need to improve the quality of housing	Pol, WS1	The South Oxhey Initiative is likely to result in more intensive intervention, which is the only way to increase the number of residential units within the centre of South Oxhey. As such an approach will involve building new homes it will be possible to respond to modern standard in terms of Code for Sustainable Homes and Lifetime Homes. Through consultation it will also be possible for the design to respond fully to residents' requirements	3, 4, 5, 6, 11
Improving the tenure mix of housing at the estate	WS1, Sur	Through the provision of additional/ new residential units there is scope to rebalance the housing offer in South Oxhey through increasing the share of open market and shared equity units, whilst responding to the changing nature of affordable housing currently coming through at a national level	3, 5, 6, 11
Should be increased affordable housing provision	Pol, OD2, Sur	Through the provision of additional/ new residential units in the central area there is scope to increase the number of affordable units	3, 5, 6, 11
The 'strip' site should be used for housing once existing facilities are relocated	WS2, Pol	This is likely to be a fundamental element of bringing forward change. Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan	3, 5, 6, 11
<b>Community:</b>			
There is a need to improve the physical environment	Pol	This requirement is a cornerstone of the South Oxhey Initiative and the comprehensive review of the 'heart' will respond to this through responsive designs	3, 6, 11

Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
Residents want to see the area improved	WS1	The comprehensive review of the 'heart' will respond to this through good design	3, 6, 11
There is a desire to see outdated community facilities replaced	WS1, OD2, Sur	A comprehensively planned community 'hub' facility would be able to respond to this, making the most efficient use of land with the shared use of space as appropriate. The detail of the exact uses to go into the 'hub' would be subject to further discussion	3, 6
Pick up the needs of the elderly	Pol, Sur	New housing would be able to address identified needs of the elderly, whilst good design will enable improved access to retail and community facilities, via a better quality and more inviting streetscene	3, 6
The swimming pool is in need of improvement	OD1, OD2	Given the importance of the facility there is a need to address this issue, although in the short term it is not considered to be appropriate to locate it within the 'heart' and therefore it is not a primary focus of the South Oxhey Initiative at this stage	14
More facilities are required for the young	OD2	There is scope to improve and add to play space whilst the 'hub' would provide space for facilities to serve the young. Further liaison would be required with key stakeholders to establish exactly what is needed	3, 6
<b>Environment:</b>			
Requirement to protect the Green Belt	Pol	This has been respected although potential opportunities to meet future development needs could be considered in future planning policy review	N/A
South Oxhey is negatively perceived by those outside	WS1	By improving the environment, quality of the buildings, providing a more balanced community, increasing opportunities for training and jobs and helping to address antisocial behaviour and providing key facilities/ uses in the hub, as well as introducing national retailers will help with the way South Oxhey is viewed	3, 5, 6, 11, 14
Residents like living in South Oxhey. The green spaces and the trees are highly valued and should be protected	WS1, OD1	Seek to protect such areas whilst exploring opportunities for their enhancement and provision of additional space within the 'heart'	3, 5, 6, 11, 14

Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
South Oxhey is segregated from the surrounding area	WS1	Giving greater focus to the 'heart' by providing an improved retail offer, a community 'hub', enhancing community facilities, improving the station approaches creating a more pleasant environment and improving routes will serve to bring people together	3, 5, 6, 11, 14
There is a desire to see improvements to the public realm and open/ play space	WS1, OD1	See the Area Parameters Plan and Central Area Key Principles Plan. These can also be secured through good design	3, 6, 11, 14
The roofs of any new buildings should accommodate photovoltaic panels	WS3	Sustainable construction and energy saving will be important issues to be incorporated into any major redevelopment. Such measures can be incorporated within any scheme formally progressed. The practicality and relative cost of such measures (including retrofit to existing buildings as compared to incorporation into any redevelopment) will need to be assessed in relation to the various options	11
<b>Design:</b>			
There is a need for a master planned approach to South Oxhey development	Pol	The South Oxhey Initiative and the parameters plan presented is the start of this	6, 11
There should be better use of the area around the station	WS1	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan	6, 11, 14
South Oxhey needs a draw to attract visitors	WS1	Creating a vibrant retail and community offer at the 'heart' of South Oxhey will attract its use by the widest number of people	6, 8, 11, 14
A hub building should be located at an arrival point – Prestwick Road, Fairfield Avenue, Oxhey Drive	WS2, WS3	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan	3, 6, 11
The Prestwick Road frontage should be improved with better provision for bus links along it	WS2	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan. The detail of what this means will need to be established and progressed	3, 6, 11
Good design will be required to link between old and new buildings	WS2	This requirement would need to be taken up as proposals progress. Responsive design reflects its context and ways can be found to relate between existing and proposed development that is appropriate to its site specific location	6, 11
Refurbishment will not address required change or cross subsidise other works/ facilities. Further it can not provide increased housing and is likely to result in a nett reduction in residential and retail units	WS2	More significant intervention is needed. Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan. the comparative advantages and disadvantages of redevelopment vs refurbishment options will need to be assessed	3, 6

Key Issue:	Event(s):	South Oxhey Initiative Response:	Relevant Recommendation:
Part refurbishment and part redevelopment will not deliver the level of changes required	WS3	More significant intervention is needed. Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan .	3, 6
Wholesale redevelopment is the only way to start to deliver the change required	WS3	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan .	3, 6
It is appropriate to use landmark buildings to announce arrival at South Oxhey	WS2, WS3	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan .	3, 6, 11
Residents are keen to see retention of the petrol filling station	WS3, OD2	The Central Area Key Principles Plan . gives scope for retention though not specifically referenced. Any review in this regard should be based on a cost benefit analysis. It could be argued that it is an employment activity	3, 6
Residents are concerned about the design of the buildings	WS3	No prescriptive design is presented at this stage. Through further work the design can be evolved with associated consultation	3, 6, 9, 12
<b>Access:</b>			
There is a need for increased/ enhanced public transport	Pol	By improving the area, with more homes, better retailers and community facilities South Oxhey, as a destination, will become more popular, attracting operators who will respond to this demand. Further work is required with bus operators and HCC Passenger Transport Unit over time	3, 6, 8, 11, 14
There is a need to address the poor quality of roads and footpaths	WS1, OD1, OD2, Sur	The comprehensive approach to the 'heart' offers scope to address such issues in this area and could be opened up further subject to TRDC, HCC and Thrive funding. Refer to the Area Parameters Plan	1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 14
There is a need for improvements to routes through the woodland	WS1	This is an issue beyond the existing focus on the 'heart' but is an important issue which will need to be considered further as part of the wider "green infrastructure".	14
Pedestrian linkage between the station and Prestwick Road should be improved	WS2	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan .	6, 11
Should be sufficient car parking, including on and off street, to serve the 'heart'	WS2	Refer to the Central Area Key Principles Plan. Car parking is not addressed in detail at this stage but is a requirement that can be provided for through further design work	6, 8, 11

**Key to events:**  
 Pol = Planning policy  
 Sur = Three Rivers Times survey and website survey  
 WS1, 2, 3 = Workshops 1, 2 and 3 respectively  
 OD 1, 2 = Public open days 1 and 2 respectively  
 Press = Press

## 5 A strategy for South Oxhey

5.1 This locally driven process has ensured that the important views of residents, community groups and stakeholders have been collected and have informed the way forward. A number of issues have been raised and opportunities identified. The precise shape of the regeneration scheme has yet to be decided but the consultation process has provided a broad scope for moving forward and signposting the direction of travel.

5.2 The following recommendations, which should be considered in sequence, outline how change at the 'heart' can be progressed. Reference to the table in section 4 demonstrates how these recommendations have arisen.

### 1. TRDC need to establish whether it proceeds with improving the 'heart'

5.3 **Explanation:** There are a number of factors that support the improvement of the 'heart':

- The property is deteriorating and does not meet current standards or expectations
- The issues identified in the baseline study

- Planning policy supports regeneration at South Oxhey, including the 'heart'
- The 'heart' is not achieving its full potential
- There is local appetite for improvement
- Desire to retain / improve sense of community
- The rents for the retail units cannot continue to be below market level (the Council has a duty to secure best prices reasonably obtainable)
- The engagement process has started to raise local expectations
- TRDC and Thrive Housing Association are the principal landowners so there should be relatively few land ownership issues to hinder delivery
- TRDC's commercial aspirations to generate value from land in their control to make funds available for future investment in the area.

5.4 If TRDC proceeds with improving the 'heart' it will then need to consider the appropriate level of intervention that should be pursued. There are high levels of support amongst local residents and retailers for basic refurbishment but there is also significant support for a more substantial redevelopment.

### 2. Prepare viability assessments for different levels of intervention, to inform the route forward

5.5 **Explanation:** The primary requirement is to find a viable scheme whilst appreciating that there could be uncertainty as to when resources are available to TRDC to enable the improvements to be delivered. The availability of grant funding from Government or other sources, and/or other mechanisms for securing funding, should be explored. Timing and how much could be secured would need to be established.

5.6 The viability assessment should explore the costs and implications of the two key levels of intervention supported by local residents, community groups and stakeholders, being refurbishment or more substantive redevelopment. The development cost and value of either level of intervention and likely sources of funding need to be explored. Indeed basic viability information may be required ahead of any decision as to whether to continue with either level of intervention.

### 3. Pursue a high level of intervention to improve the 'heart' through complete redevelopment

5.7 **Explanation:** Assuming TRDC's positive decision as to whether it proceeds with improving the 'heart' (recommendation 1) and the outcome of the viability assessments (recommendation 2), a decision is required as to what level of intervention is to be pursued, either no change, refurbishment or redevelopment.

5.8 There are a number of limitations with the lower levels of intervention. A "no change" decision would be contrary to planning policy and is not supported locally. Whilst there is support for refurbishment of the existing housing and shops, this would not allow TRDC to meet planning policy requirements, or address the unsustainable situation with rents. Nor would it achieve other objectives such as improving the retail offer, or increase housing numbers in the centre. Further, refurbishment would only improve buildings built in the 1950s, which are coming towards the end of their expected lifespan. Part refurbishment and part new build could create an unwelcome juxtaposition between old and new, and would also fail to deliver sufficient change.

5.9 Complete redevelopment of the 'heart' should be considered for the following reasons:

- Support from local community groups, stakeholders and a significant proportion of residents
- Planning policy supports the provision of a mixed-use development at South Oxhey. Since lower levels of intervention would provide very limited opportunities to secure private sector funding, a mixed-use development could not be provided
- Planning policy requires regeneration at South Oxhey town centre to provide new housing. Lower levels of intervention can not deliver this
- The reduced rents that retailers currently pay are unsustainable
- Redevelopment can address problems with the layout of buildings at the 'heart'
- It can deliver best value from land in TRDC ownership to increase funds available for future investment in the local community
- Community facilities can only be significantly improved / reprovided through redevelopment



- Delivery of lifetime home standards with the appropriate code for sustainable homes, which will be driven by viability, can only be realistically and economically achieved through complete redevelopment
- Delivery of pocket parks, improved quality of public realm and appropriate and adaptable space for use as a local market can only be achieved through complete redevelopment

#### 4. Engage tenants and homeowners who live above the shops

5.10 **Explanation:** Accepting the criticism of how the residents living above the shops have been engaged in the process, TRDC should specifically meet with these residents to understand their concerns and establish their specific housing needs. Potential scenarios for re-housing and any associated decant strategy should be explained to the residents. Reducing residents' anxieties about change is critical to improving public acceptance.

5.11 It is noted that those who own a flat or maisonette over the shops are likely to have different concerns to those that are in rented accommodation. To ensure the best

use of any meeting, it would appear appropriate to have two separate discussions/ presentations.

#### 5. Identify sites which could provide new homes to meet local requirements

5.12 **Explanation:** In line with planning policy the redevelopment option would provide new dwellings at the 'heart' to help meet local housing requirements. TRDC should work closely with Thrive Homes to understand the amount and mix of dwelling sizes and tenure types that are required in South Oxhey and where in the estate these should be provided. TRDC will need to consider how this relates to the sites available for housing development to inform any decant strategy for existing residents living above the shops.

5.13 The Core Strategy sets a target of 45% provision for affordable housing on all housing sites. However, given the nature and scale of development proposed as part of the South Oxhey Initiative, it may be appropriate for lower or higher targets to be set on individual sites. The 45% overall target should still be sought across the initiative area but this could vary, taking into account the viability of the wider scheme and the need to create mixed communities. Details of housing type, tenure and phasing of each housing site should be set out in any planning application/ master plan.

#### 6. Create a mixed-use redevelopment to act as a focus for the community and provide a recognisable 'heart' to South Oxhey

5.14 The key requirements for the heart are:

- To create an inviting, welcoming and safe place at the centre of the community, where all feel comfortable to spend time in the company of others, whilst completing day to day tasks
- To provide a community hub building which allows for the replacement and rationalisation of community facilities in a modern "fit for purpose" environment which becomes the recognisable community focus for South Oxhey
- To provide convenience retailing, including a food supermarket of sufficient size to provide the opportunity for residents to complete their full weekly shop within South Oxhey, rather than the current need to travel elsewhere to meet their day-to-day needs
- To provide improved employment opportunities for local people from a range of uses including retail, community and commercial uses.
- To avoid providing any individual land-use which impedes the current network of streets

- To provide new homes and commercial buildings which meet the appropriate code for sustainable homes and lifetime homes standards, and non residential buildings to meet appropriate BREEAM rating standards
- To provide a range of comparison retailing to help support the day-to-day needs of the community
- To improve the quality of the public realm by providing streetscape features, repairing and improving highways and footpaths, with a view to prioritising pedestrian, cycle and public transport access to the heart
- To improve the quality of green spaces by the provision of improved play facilities, green spaces/ roof gardens and increase the planting of street trees associated with the heart
- To create flexible spaces between buildings that can be optimised for a variety of uses, in particular potential expansion of the weekly market
- To provide bus shelters and real time information associated with bus routes around the heart to improve the comfort and convenience of bus users

- To provide, through comprehensive redevelopment, the opportunity to create a new image for the area to signify change and renewal, and to provide a centre which is 'fit for purpose' to sustain the community of South Oxhey for the next generation and beyond
- To provide appropriate levels of short-stay public on and off-street parking to assist the vibrancy of the local centre, in a manner and locations that do not hinder walking cycling and public transport accessibility

5.15 **Explanation:** The South Oxhey Initiative establishes that a high level of intervention is appropriate and sets out the key parameters and components that a master plan for the mixed-use redevelopment should consider. The proposed uses and design aspirations were identified and tested through the engagement process with local groups and residents. The appropriate size of convenience retailing will be a key issue for viability testing given the concerns of parts of the community over the possible size of a supermarket.

5.16 Whilst Core Strategy Policy CP7 suggests that food retailing outlets should not normally exceed 1,000 square metres a case for making an exception could be made on the grounds of viability, regeneration benefits, the need for an anchor tenant, enabling other development and the loss of trade to other centres due to the lack of a full range food supermarket. Further, it is anticipated that there will be no significant net increase in total retail floorspace within South Oxhey as a result of the redevelopment. The provision of new retail floorspace irrespective of type (comparison or convenience) or size (above or below Core Strategy threshold for convenience) could be justified through local and national planning policy provided it can be properly evidenced in relation to need, impact, appropriateness and fits within the wider context of regeneration in the local area. This retail evidence base will need to be carried out as the South Oxhey Initiative is progressed.

5.17 An assessment of the retailing provision for South Oxhey and its capacity to accommodate an anchor store is recommended. Some residents considered that the new library should not be reprovided in the hub due to the recent expenditure on this facility.

5.18 Careful consideration will need to be given the arrangement of buildings and access at the 'heart'. Preference was expressed that the community hub could be located on Oxhey Drive, in association with a new square to give the building a high public profile within the community. The community 'hub' facility could provide new space for existing community facilities and there is also an opportunity to attract new facilities/ services to the area.

5.19 Some residents wished to see the petrol station to be retained.

5.20 A Central Area Key Principles Plan, as follows, has been prepared to indicate the key elements that a master plan for the redevelopment of the 'heart' will need to respond to.

**7. Consider providing existing retailers with an opportunity to occupy a retail unit in the redeveloped 'heart'**

5.21 **Explanation:** The engagement process has revealed concerns over the future livelihood of the existing retailers. TRDC should engage with the existing retailers as provision for relocation can be designed into any redevelopment scenario. However, the viability issues, with TRDC continuing to subsidise rents, will have to be highlighted along with the consequences of all retailers facing market rents in the future, which will be the case regardless of the level of intervention selected. Existing

retailers will have an opportunity to state whether they want to be provided for in any future mixed-use development. Accordingly any future design could be produced to cater for them. It will be important to test interest and to get those expressing an interest to demonstrate their ongoing commitment.

**8. Test the market**

5.22 **Explanation:** If following the foregoing TRDC decides to progress a redevelopment at the 'heart' they should consult with potential developers, supermarket operators and high street retailers, in addition to the existing retailers. This will establish the level of interest in locating to the improved facilities and understand any specific requirements they may have, including the amount of floorspace, their operational needs, access requirements, etc.

**9. Consider how the redevelopment could be delivered**

5.23 **Explanation:** TRDC should give careful consideration as to how any redevelopment could be delivered. Opportunities to engage a development partner and different funding mechanisms should be explored. This will help build public confidence that any redevelopment can be delivered. All land owners at the 'heart' will need to be identified and engaged. This will help ensure that the redevelopment can be delivered in a timely manner.

**10. Carry out survey work**

5.24 **Explanation:** In order to progress the redevelopment of the 'heart' a number of technical studies should be carried out to establish the existing situation at the site. This could include a topographical survey, ground investigation works, utilities surveys and any other appropriate surveys. These will flag up any issues that the detailed design of the redevelopment would need to respond to.

**11. Prepare a master plan for the mixed-use development, to inform the emerging Site Allocations DPD, and to form the basis of any planning application submission**

5.25 **Explanation:** The drawings presented at the workshops and open days were concept illustrations to demonstrate different levels of intervention, they deliberately did not propose a particular design solution, or architectural aesthetic to avoid attempting to lead the public unduly towards any particular option. In order to respond to the concerns raised with the design and the key principles outlined in the Central Area Key Principles Plan, a Master plan should be prepared, which would allow for thorough public scrutiny of the proposed design. Any planning application may require an Environmental Impact Assessment, which will need to be tested through the submission of a screening opinion request.

5.26 Development of the planning application and master plan should be subject to its own community engagement process. However, this engagement will need to be set within very clearly defined terms of delivery of a financially viable redevelopment. It will also need to be set with a clear phasing strategy, which reflects funding considerations, identifying the sites to assist decanting and retain the operation of essential community uses, such as convenience retailing, pharmacies and post office. Specialist input on the master plan should be sought if required.

5.27 The Area Parameters Plan, which follows, has been prepared to indicate the key areas that improvements across the estate should respond to. This includes housing sites that have emerged from TRDC's work on their evidence base, which will inform emerging planning policy documents. The Area Parameters Plan therefore reflects the South Oxhey Initiative and other processes to provide a holistic view on the regeneration of South Oxhey, and will help inform the Site Allocations DPD.

Illustrations of how the redevelopment could appear



## 12. Consider how the momentum of the South Oxhey Initiative is carried forward and sustained

5.28 **Explanation:** TRDC will need to consider how the South Oxhey Initiative is carried forward. It could be used as part of the evidence base as work on TRDC's development plan is progressed. TRDC's Core Strategy requires detailed proposals on how future development in South Oxhey can respond to identified challenges, as set out in the South Oxhey Initiative, to be included in the Site Allocations DPD.

5.29 The Site Allocations DPD will be the key part of the development plan that will support the delivery of the South Oxhey Initiative. The Area Parameters Plan, provided here, will inform the Site Allocations DPD consultation which is expected to commence in January 2012.

5.30 Once a decision on the extent of the proposed change has been taken, a master plan should be prepared. This will respond to the Central Area Key Principles Plan and Area Parameters Plan, and can be included in the Site Allocations DPD.

5.31 Based on the above, a planning application may be deferred until the Site Allocations DPD has been adopted in mid 2013, or at least until the Council has received the Inspector's report, anticipated for spring 2013, once the examination has taken place.

5.32 Opportunities should also be taken to prepare a localised impact study of the various levels of retailing in South Oxhey. This will examine the qualitative and quantitative retail offer in the town centre. The existing District wide retail capacity study only looks to guide provision to 2021. Should the localised assessment show a need for additional retail capacity (both quantity and quality, especially in relation to day to day convenience) in the South Oxhey area, then the Master plan can be prepared to respond accordingly. The focus of increasing levels of housing on brown field land and the increase in local population combined with the lack of facilities in neighbouring areas will need to be taken into account and may influence the final decisions on the ability of the town centre to accommodate change.

5.33 Indeed an up to date and localised evidence base containing technical information on all proposed forms of development, types and uses will be crucial for supporting the master plan, and the work on the Site Allocations DPD. This will effectively provide a more localised and updated planning policy context for South Oxhey than the current Core Strategy.

5.34 The South Oxhey Initiative has been, and should continue to be, locally driven. This is in line with the Government's commitment to 'localism' and their emphasis on local communities taking ownership of change in their areas.

5.35 The South Oxhey Initiative could also be used as a guide for any potential delivery partner or brief for a master planner.

## 13. Consider improvements to the wider estate

5.36 **Explanation:** In addition to focusing on the 'heart' there is a need to reflect on activities and keep an eye out for opportunities to deliver improvements to the wider estate. These could include:

- playspace
- woodland walks and ecological enhancement
- provision of residential units outside of the town centre
- enhanced public transport services
- opportunities for enabling development and for peripheral or windfall sites to contribute to the overall objectives of the South Oxhey Initiative physically or financially and to provide wherever possible for an orderly re housing of existing tenants in brand new accommodation built to modern requirements

5.37 Associated with any physical improvements to landscape and townscape of the area there needs to be a coordinated approach to the deep rooted problems of the area. This will involve close cooperation and setting up new working arrangements with a wide range of local community organisations. These shared initiatives will need to target crime, education, poverty, training, housing, health and employment issues.

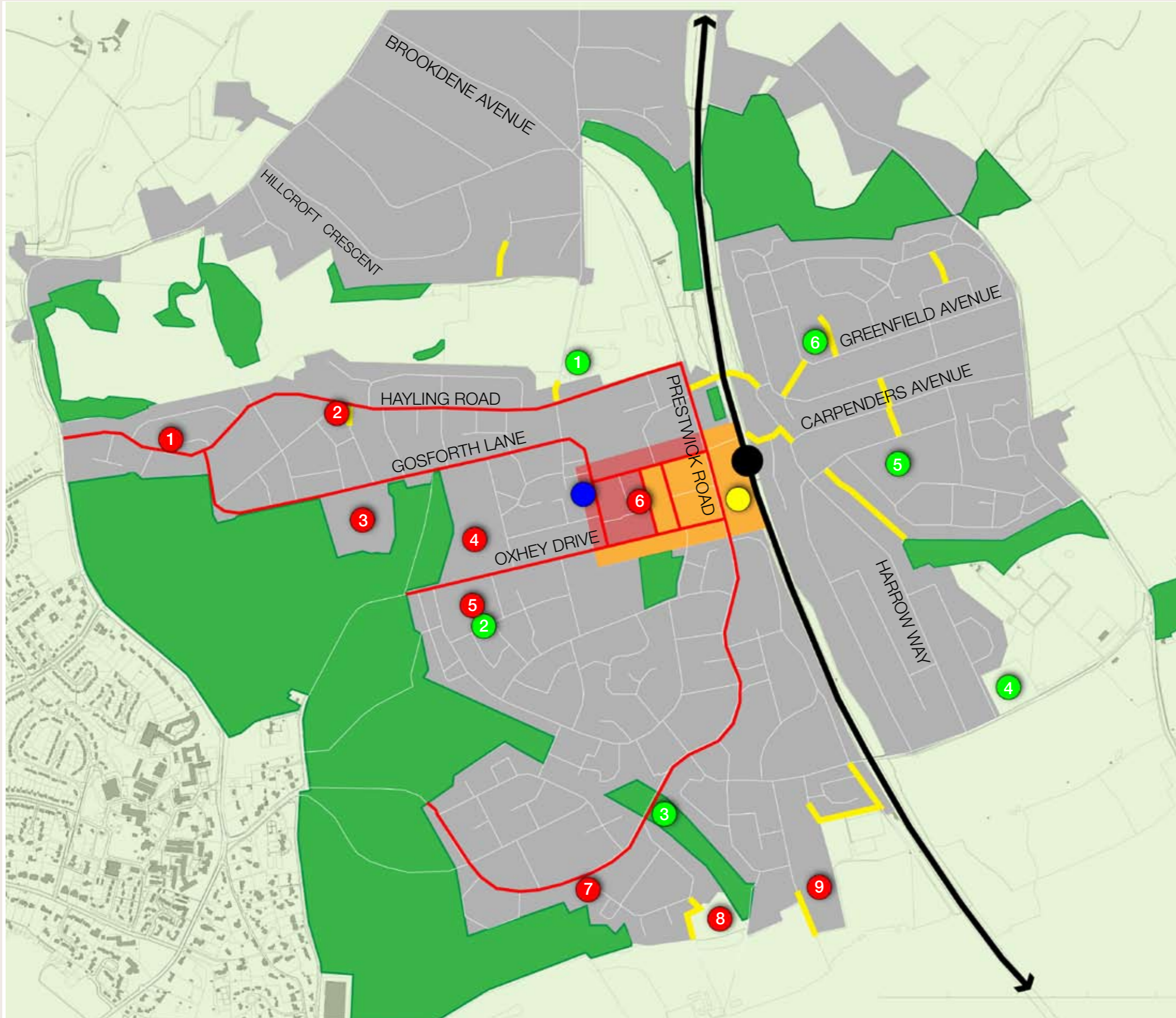
5.38 In this context, the Council will expect to work with schools, colleges, local employers, sports clubs, churches, housing associations, the Police and emergency services, the County Council and the Homes and Communities Agency as well the contractors selected for whichever regeneration scheme for the town centre may be adopted.

## 14. Examine the potential for providing sport and recreational uses in the centre of South Oxhey and/or expanding the facility at Gosforth Lane

5.39 **Explanation:** The existing swimming pool and leisure centre are considered key community uses within South Oxhey and they should be enhanced where possible. Local groups and residents felt strongly, however, that it was inappropriate to necessarily re-provide these facilities as part of the community hub within the 'heart', because of their size.

5.40 Consideration needs to be given to any sporting, community or leisure facility, particularly those that can utilise flexible space, which might be better provided elsewhere in the centre of South Oxhey.

## Area parameters plan



- Urban Area
- Central Area
- Railway
- Core mixed-use centre
- Landscape and wildlife enhancement areas
- Priority footpath and alleyway enhancements
- Priority street enhancements, including footpath and carriageway surfaces and street furniture

- Play area enhancement
- 1. Hayling Road
- 2. Ballater Close
- 3. Prestwick Meadows
- 4. Oulton Way
- 5. The Mead/Foxleys
- 6. Greenfields

- The Centre
- Employment site - Rear of Prestwick Road
- Housing development site
- 1. H(34)
- 2. H(35)
- 3. H(36)
- 4. H(37)
- 5. H(38)
- 6. H(39)
- 7. H(40)
- 8. H(41)
- 9. H(42)

**NB.** This plan reflects other TRDC policy documents and their associated evidence base to provide a holistic view on the regeneration of South Oxhey

## Central area key principles plan

-  Priority street enhancements, including footpath and carriageway surfaces and street furniture
-  Parking Square
-  Street tree enhancement
-  Pocket park including play area
-  New footpath link
-  Protected potential future link to station
-  Priority bus user enhancement route
-  Access to public parking
  
-  Mixed-use  
Community, retail and office with residential above
-  Employment
-  Housing
-  Swimming pool & Leisure centre
-  Key active frontages Retail & community uses
-  Development frontages
-  Development block  
Subject to local reprovision of important existing community facilities
  
-  General building height maximum  
Mixed use blocks are assumed to have a commercial ground floor building height of max 4.5m. Buildings adjacent to the railway line are dependent on development restrictions appropriate to the presence of high voltage overhead power lines
-  Corner marker building  
Building height may exceed general heights subject to acceptable design quality
-  Access to private parking/servicing

