



Balsall Heath

LOCAL ACTION PLAN

December 1997

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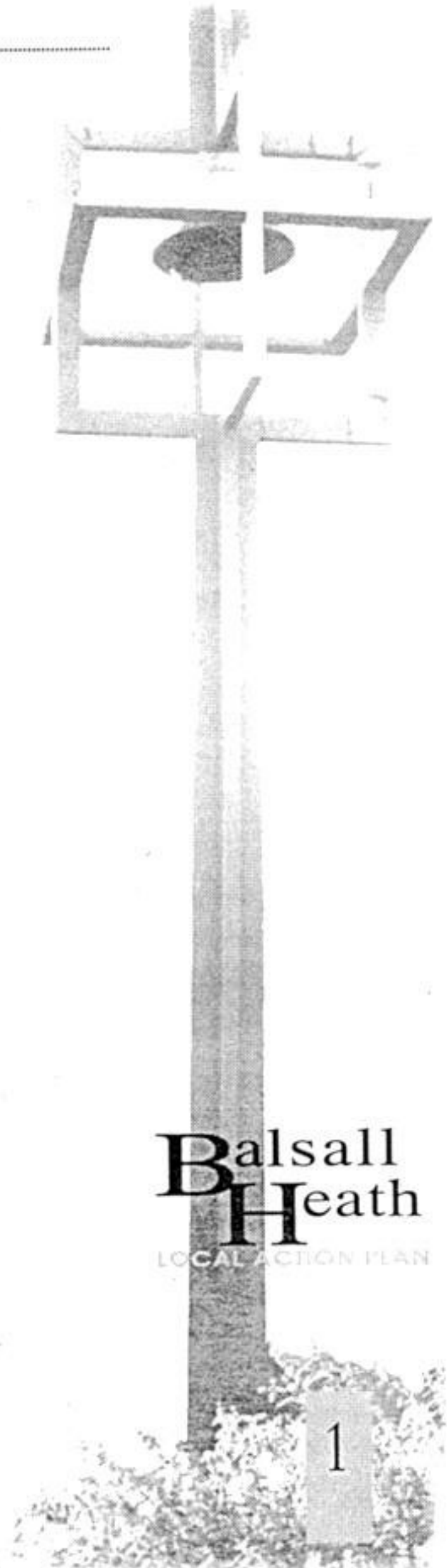
1. Introduction

1.1 Much has been achieved in the past in changing physical conditions in Balsall Heath, with new and improved houses, more areas of open space and a better environment. Much remains to be done however.

1.2 The problems require a range of responses from voluntary and statutory agencies such as the City Council, the Police, and community based organisations.

1.3 The concerted and successful efforts of the residents, police and local authority to rid the area of some of its problems is creating a climate of increased optimism. The European Union initiative URBAN, and Central Government SRB programme offer a realistic opportunity of funding and implementing many of the improvements described within the Local Action Plan.

1.4 It is therefore appropriate that this Local Action Plan is produced now, updating previous guidance, identifying remaining issues, and suggesting ways of dealing with them.



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2. Status of the Plan

2.1 The Balsall Heath Local Action Plan has been prepared by a group including representatives of local residents, the local business community and representatives of the voluntary organisations having an interest in the area. The proposals have been the subject of extensive consultation.

2.2 This Local Action Plan has been prepared within the context of the Birmingham Plan - Birmingham's Unitary Development Plan. The Birmingham Plan sets out policies and proposals for land use and transportation across the whole City. This Local Action Plan is one of a series of similar plans being prepared across the City to flesh out the proposals in the Birmingham Plan.

2.3 Part of the Local Action Plan area is contained within the City Council's Sparkbrook, Sparkhill and Tyseley Area Regeneration Initiative (ARI) see plan 1. The initiative is aimed at the regeneration of this part of Birmingham which exhibits some of the worst deprivation in the City. Economic regeneration is central to the strategy, with particular emphasis on training and business support. Success in these areas will help reduce the unemployment levels, bring prosperity back to the area and

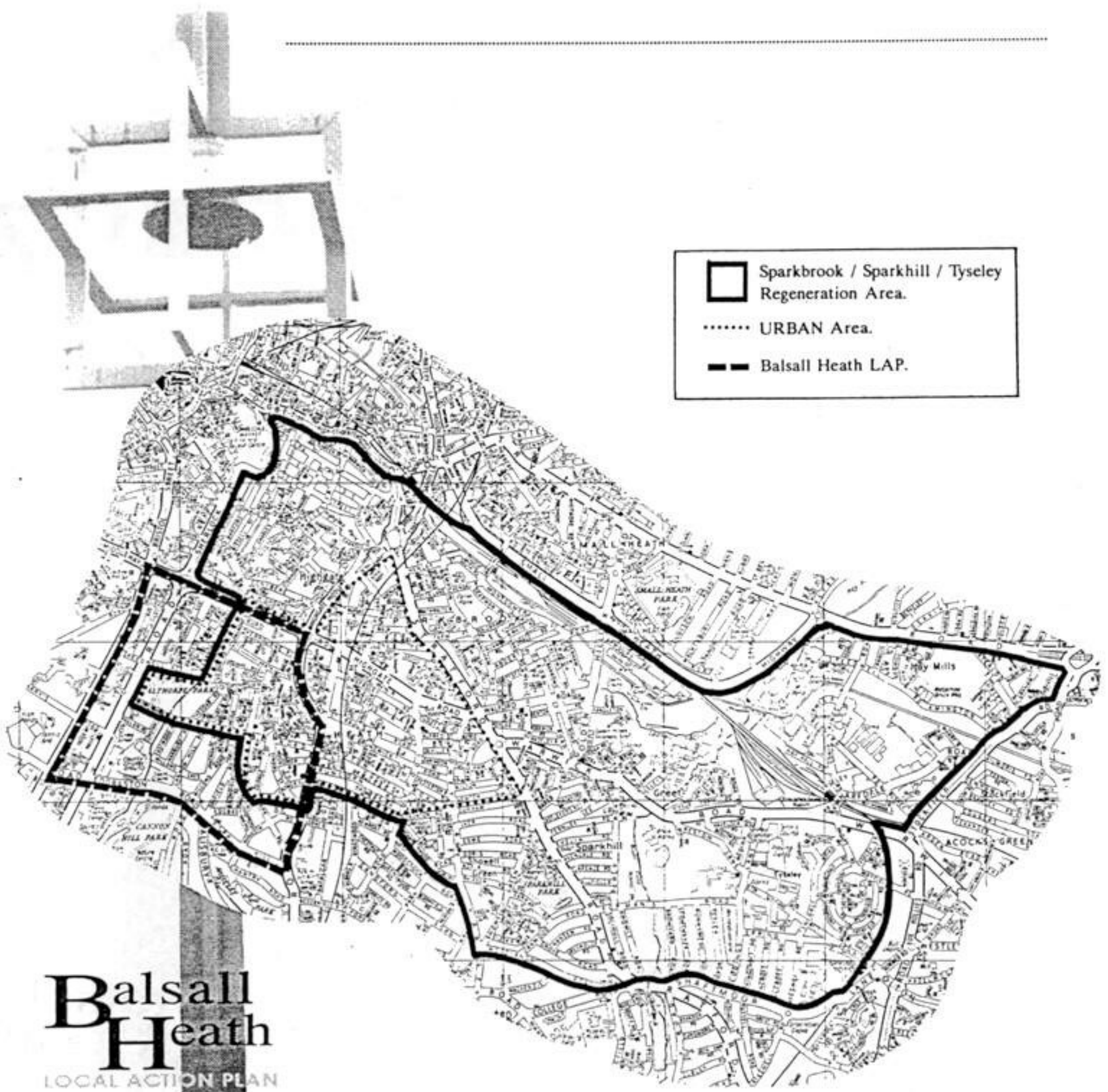
generate inward investment. The strategy of this Area Regeneration Initiative has been used as the framework for successful national and European funding bids.

2.4 Within this overall strategic framework, the Balsall Heath Local Action Plan will contribute towards the achievement of the goals of the Sparkbrook ARI and the wider policies of the City Council.



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Plan 1 Sparkbrook, Sparkhill, Tyseley Area Regeneration Initiative.



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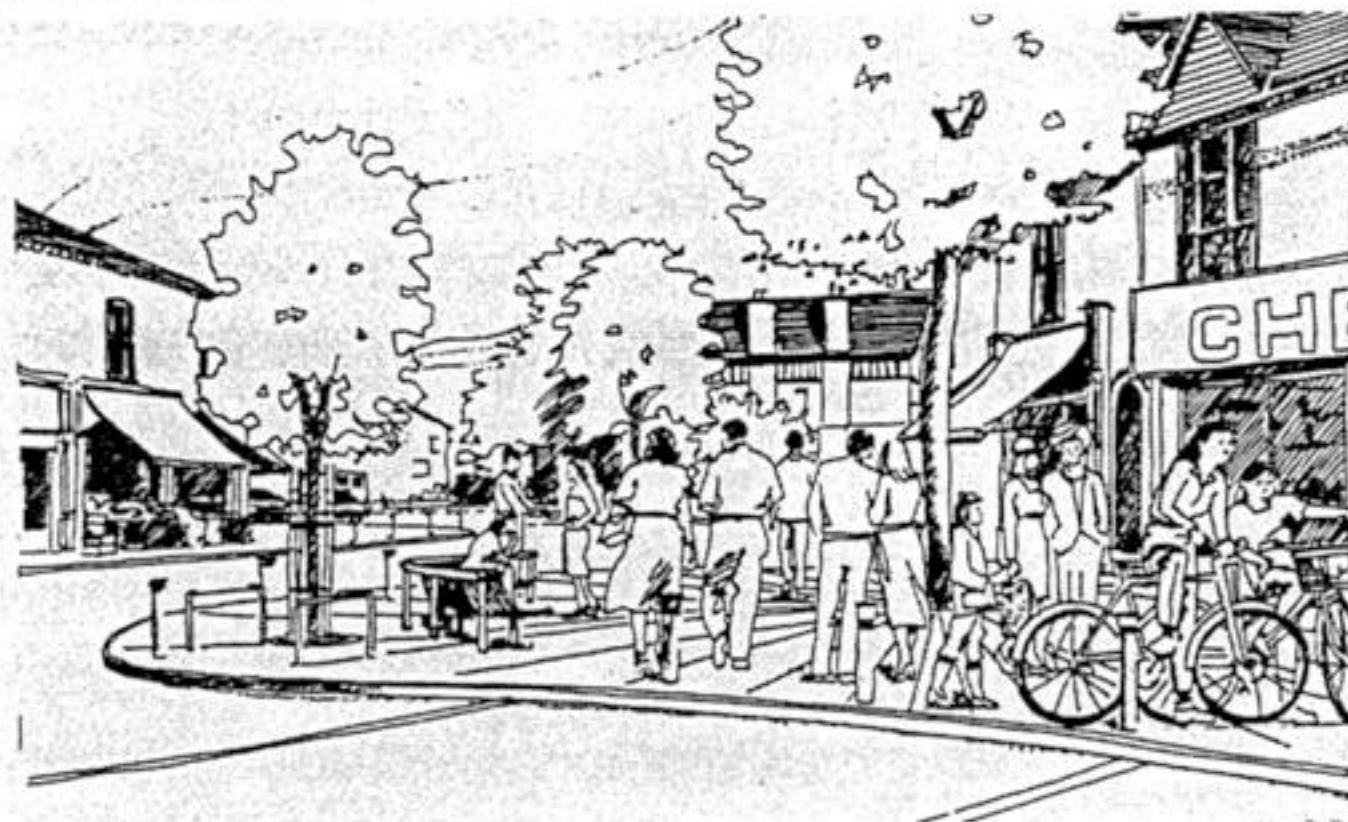
3. The Proposals

3.1 Most of the Victorian/Edwardian houses in Balsall Heath have been significantly improved, primarily under the urban renewal programmes of the 1970's and 1980's. Although there are outstanding housing clearance issues that need resolving, the general fabric is in good condition. There are currently no proposals therefore for further major public investment in housing. The Benmore Estate has also recently undergone a substantial improvement programme to its low rise housing stock, and a bid being worked up under the Governments Estate Renewal Challenge Fund may secure additional money to continue the improvement works.

3.2 The Victorian street pattern limits the opportunities for enhancement of the public domain, and the close

proximity of Balsall Heath to the City Centre has meant that the residential character of the area has been compromised by "rat running" commuter traffic. Prostitution and drug dealing has also brought non-residential traffic into the area, further eroding the amenity and quality of life for the residents. A dramatic reduction in this activity has occurred and the proposals contained within this plan build upon this success.

3.3 The proposals within this plan seek to reaffirm the identity of Balsall Heath as a residential suburb improving its environmental quality, and consolidating the commercial base of the local shopping core. The identification and enhancement of a Neighbourhood



Neighbourhood Centre

Centre between Hallam Street and Cheddar Road will go some way to achieving this goal.

3.4 The whole plan area has been considered with an emphasis placed on aspects of environmental quality; accessibility and movement (for both pedestrians and motorists), and community safety.

3.5 The main proposals fall into three categories, pedestrian safety and traffic management, environmental improvements, and land use. The specific proposals will need to be developed further prior to implementation.

4 Pedestrian Safety & Traffic Management

4.1 Balsall Heath is a busy neighbourhood; too busy in terms of traffic due to its position in relation to the City Centre. An assessment of traffic flows has been undertaken and it is proposed that by using a range of physical traffic calming techniques, a reduction in traffic speed can be achieved throughout the majority of the plan area. The proposals are aimed at having maximum impact on rat-running and other traffic not having a destination in the area, whilst seeking to minimise the inconvenience caused to those living in the area. It is therefore proposed to introduce traffic calming measures in order to reduce the average speed of vehicles to around 20mph.

4.2 In order to facilitate access to the area by emergency vehicles, buses and service traffic, it is proposed that Edward Road and Lincoln Street/Hallam Street are calmed using speed cushions rather than speed humps. Cushions allow wide wheel base vehicles to straddle the obstruction. Humps are however proposed for the primarily residential roads.

4.3 It is not thought to be desirable to radically alter the pattern of traffic journeys through the area as the economic vitality of the area

would suffer from a large number of road closures. Road closures have therefore been kept to a minimum but are proposed in response to specific problems. Balsall Heath Road will be closed between Belgravia Close and Princess Road, and the experimental road closure on Benmore Avenue has now been made permanent.

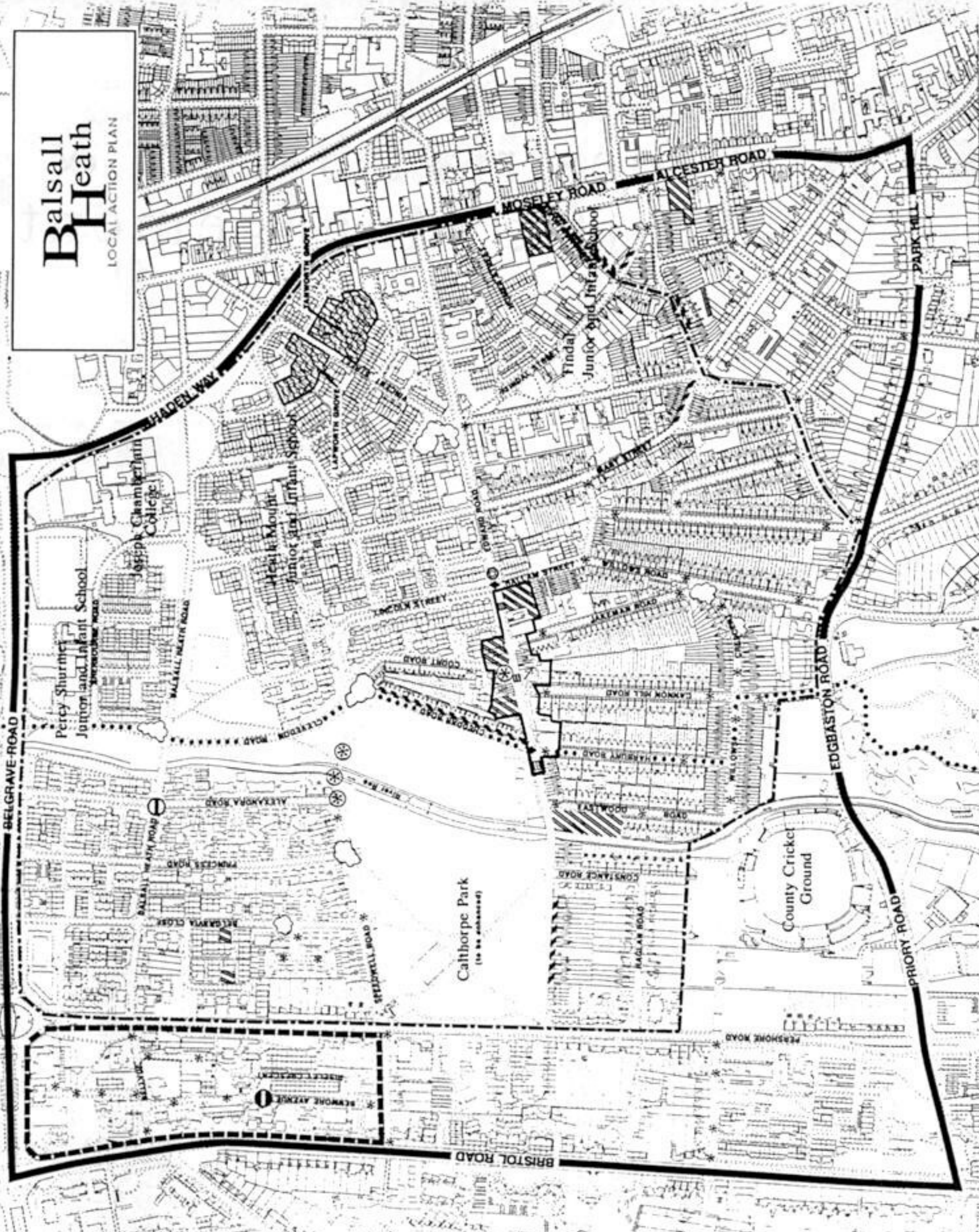
4.4 The only other significant traffic management proposal within the plan boundary is a proposal to change the traffic priority of Edward Road at its junction with Hallam Street. This proposal will slow traffic as it enters the Neighbourhood Centre.



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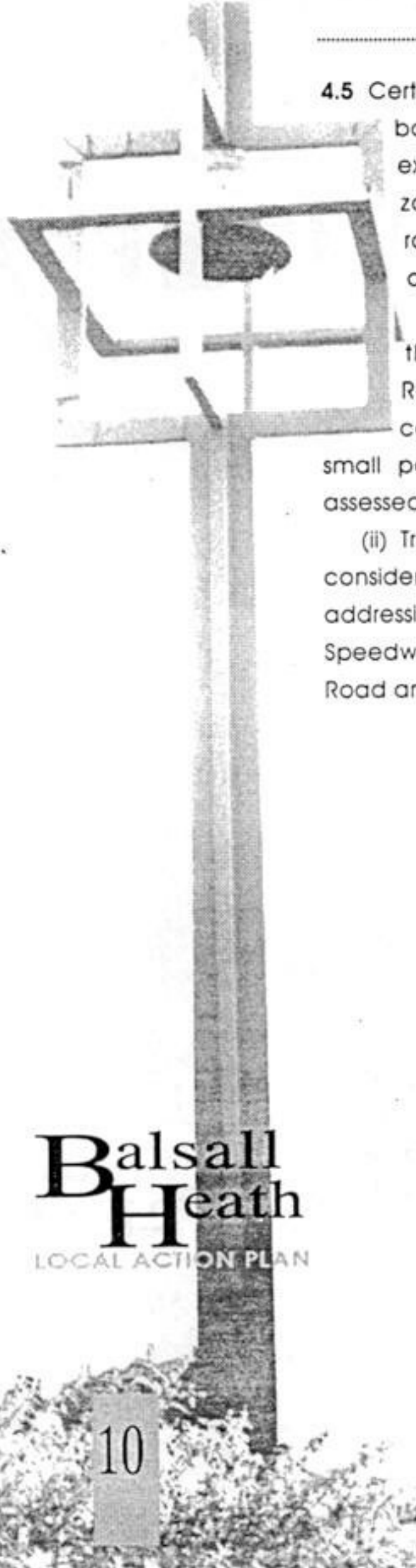


LEGEND

- Local Action Plan boundary
- Benmore Estate Master Plan
- Neighbourhood Centre
- Balsall Heath speed reduction zone
- Pedestrian crossings
- Road priority change
- The Rea Valley Route (Cycle & Pedestrian)
- Landscaping
- Environmental & Housing Improvements
- Frontage landscaping
- Lighting - new
- Lighting - upgraded
- Centre gateway
- Development sites
- Road closure to be confirmed
- Proposed road closure

Not to Scale
December 1997

North



4.5 Certain roads within the plan boundary have been excluded from the 20 mph zone. Treatment to these roads however is being considered:-

(i) Parking congestion at the junction of Sir Harrys Road and Pershore Road, caused in the main by a small parade of shops, is being assessed for parking restrictions.

(ii) Traffic control measures are considered to be appropriate for addressing the traffic problems on Speedwell Road (between Pershore Road and Bristol Road).

5 Environmental Improvements

5.1 The heavily developed street pattern in parts of the plan area limits the scope for environmental improvements. There is however a need to soften the environment of much of the area and this can be achieved by a combination of tree planting on road "nibs" (designed as part of the traffic calming proposals), and carefully designed landscaped areas.

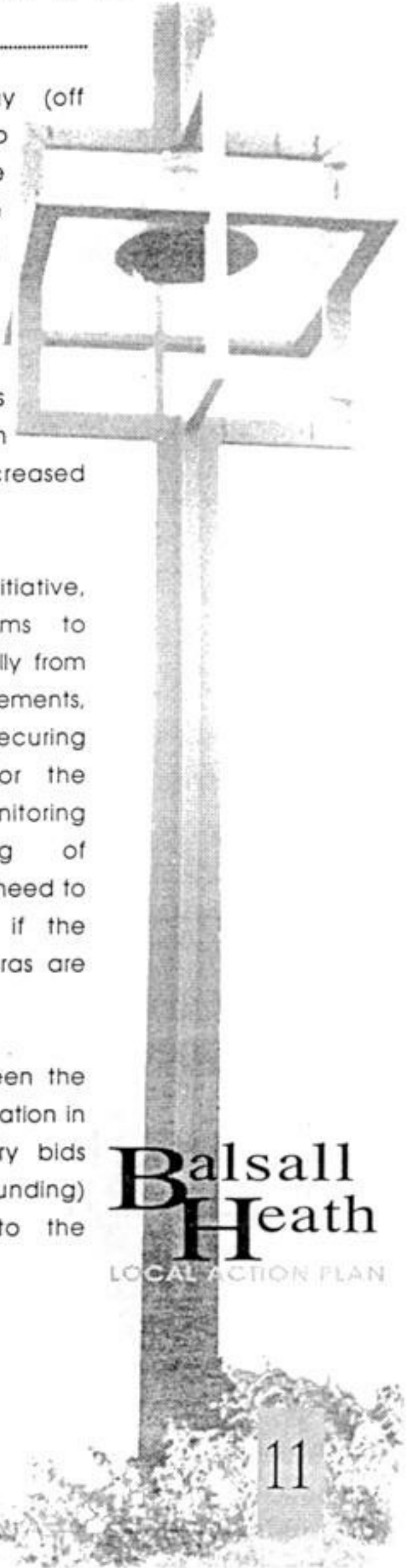
5.2 Street lighting is an important element of any environmental improvements programme in Balsall Heath. The fear of crime is heightened by inadequate levels of illumination. Powerful lighting for security consideration can however be intrusive; a balance must therefore be struck to achieve safety without loss of amenity. Parts of the area have already been upgraded since 1985. Eastwood Road, Harbury Road, Cannon Hill Road, Jakeman Road, Willows Crescent and Cannon Hill Grove, were improved in financial year 1995/96. Site specific lighting problems will be addressed by either installing or upgrading existing lanterns, or by improving the effectiveness of the lighting by trimming trees and bushes etc.

5.3 Two particular locations have been identified for attention. The footbridge over the River Rea and

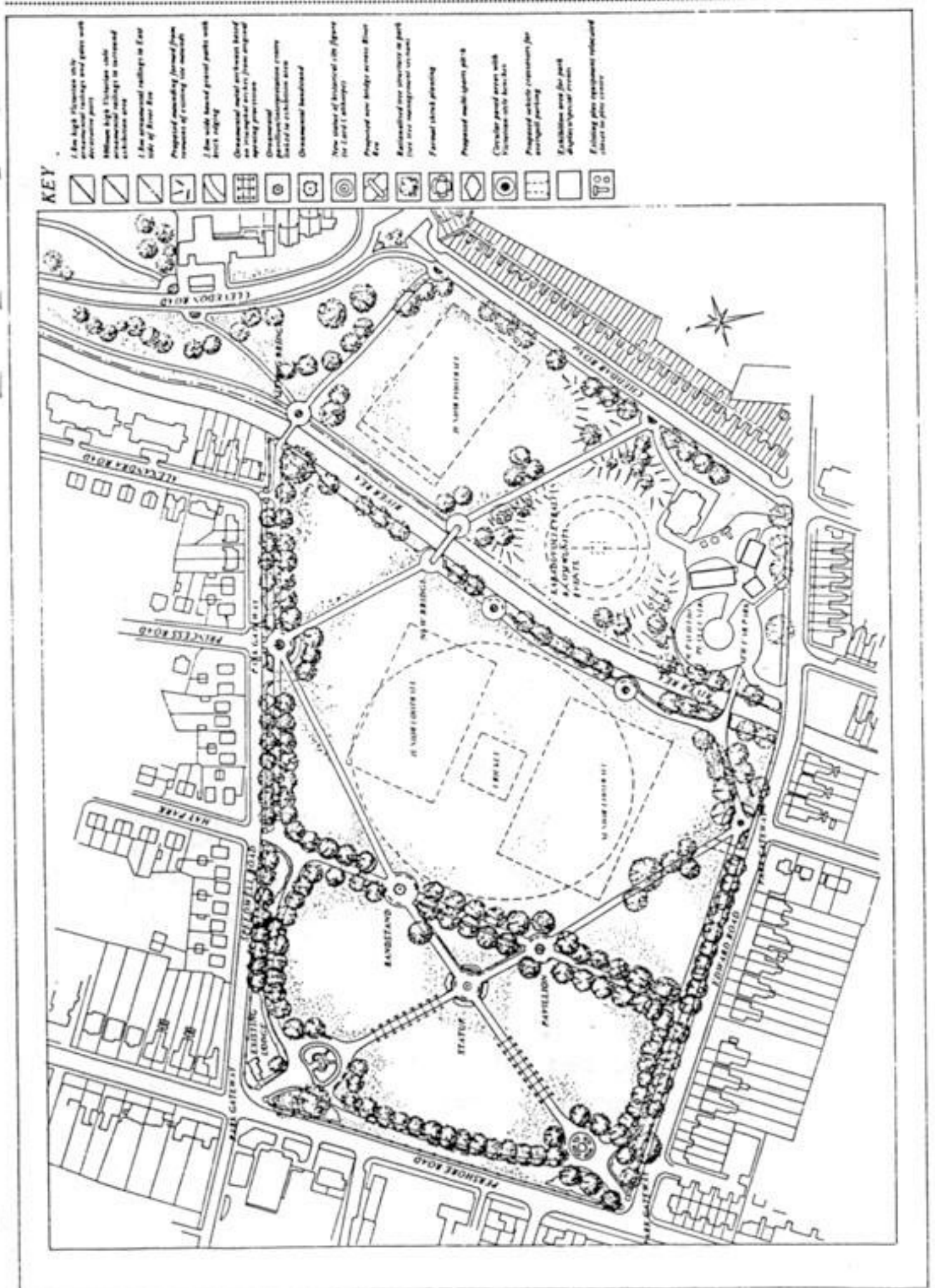
the connecting pathway (off Speedwell Road) has no street lighting; users of the path at night feel vulnerable and exposed. The area adjacent to the electricity sub station on Court Road adjoining Reaside Croft is also regarded by residents as a problem site which could benefit from increased illumination.

5.4 A local resident initiative, "Streetwatch" which aims to reclaim Balsall Heath, initially from anti-social and criminal elements, has been successful in securing Home Office funding for the installation of CCTV monitoring equipment. The siting of environmental features will need to be carefully considered if the effectiveness of the cameras are not to be compromised.

5.5 Calthorpe Park has been the subject of extensive consultation in the past, and two lottery bids (together with URBAN funding) have been submitted to the National Lottery Boards.



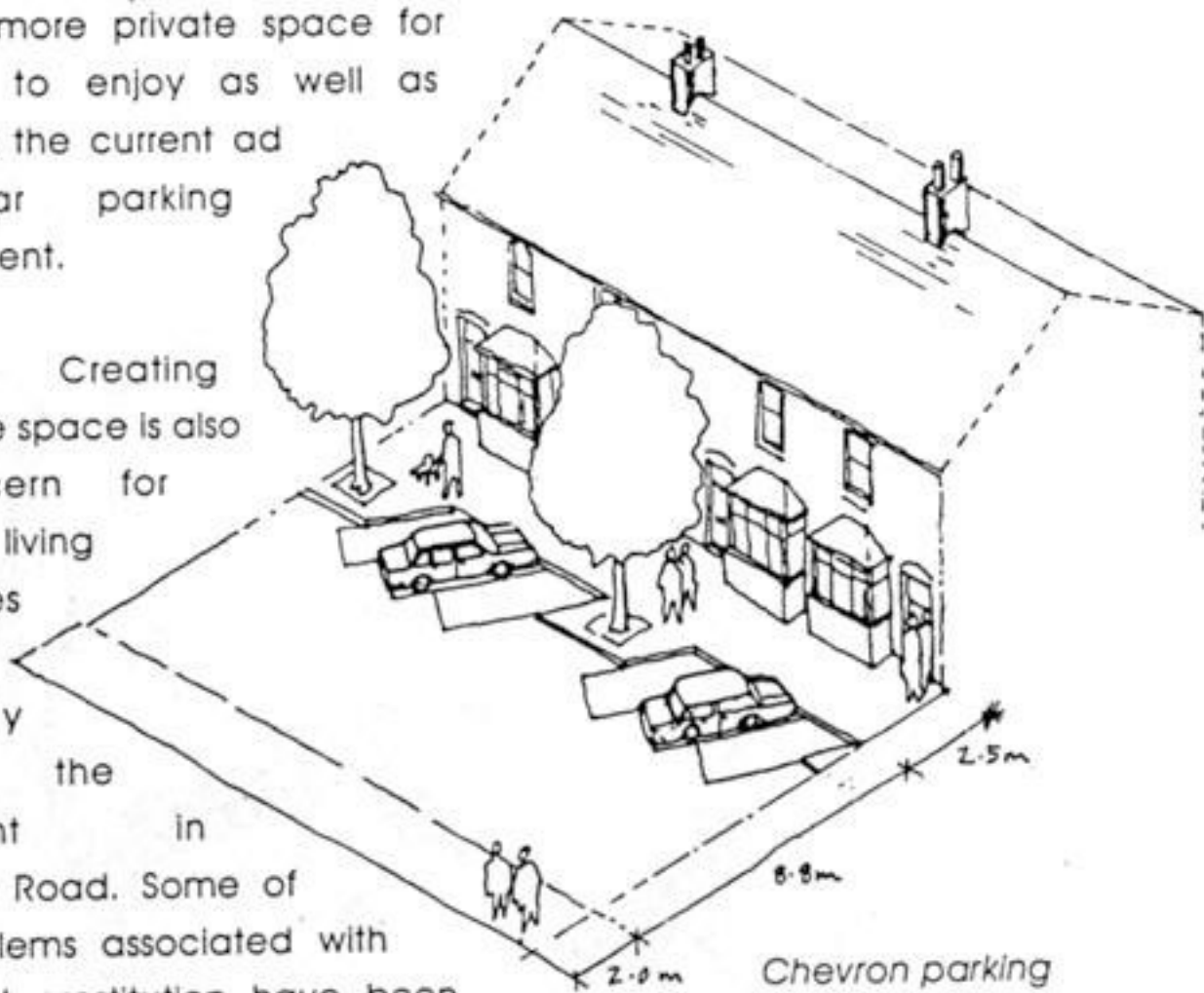
Plan 3 Proposed Improvements to Calthorpe Park



5.6 As part of its programme of stock improvements, the Housing Department have installing new UPVC windows and central heating to its maisonette blocks at Tanworth and Lapworth Groves. In order to comprehensively improve the Groves for residents and to complement the existing investment, an environmental improvement scheme has been prepared. The scheme suggests creating more private space for residents to enjoy as well as improving the current ad hoc car parking arrangement.

distance separation between the houses and the carriageway proper can be achieved by introducing chevron parking rather than normal kerbside parking. This will also have the benefit of increasing the number of spaces available for resident parking within the road.

5.7 Creating defensible space is also a concern for residents living in houses fronting directly onto the pavement in Cheddar Road. Some of the problems associated with residential prostitution have been attributed to the absence of front gardens, and it was suggested that creating them would reduce the impact of the activity. There are problems with this suggestion, in that such extensions would encroach over electricity cables etc in the pavement, however



5.8 The "warren" of pedestrian routes through the Belgravia and Vincent Street estates, coupled with open sites (formerly communal areas or garage blocks) has led to calls from the local residents to review the use of the alleyways and spaces with a view to rationalising them.

This review has commenced. However, because of the size of the problem and the need for individual consultation with adjoining residents/owners, no proposals are contained within this plan, apart from a commitment to investigate further the possibilities.

6. Land Use

6.1 The predominant land use within the plan boundaries is residential, with approximately 11,900 people living in 4,650 households (1991 Census). The area can now be regarded as largely improved and settled. Over 50% of the housing stock is owned and managed by the City Council or housing associations. There remains a need for ongoing maintenance to privately owned dwellings. Practical repair and care training would in particular benefit owner-occupiers. This is being promoted as part of the SRB/URBAN initiatives.

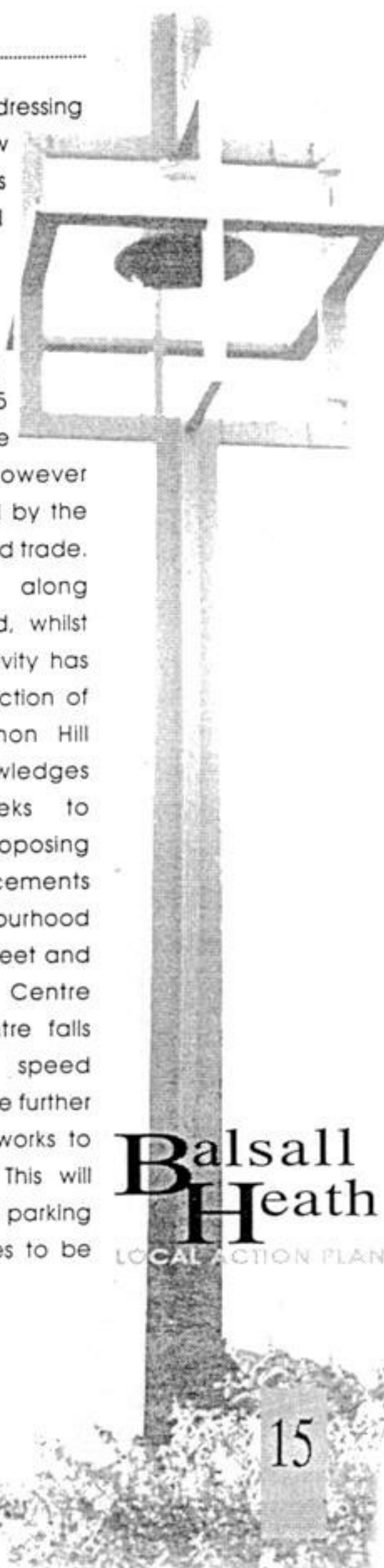
6.2 The redevelopment proposals contained within the previous Area Plans have in the main been implemented. Proposals for the remaining sites are as follows.

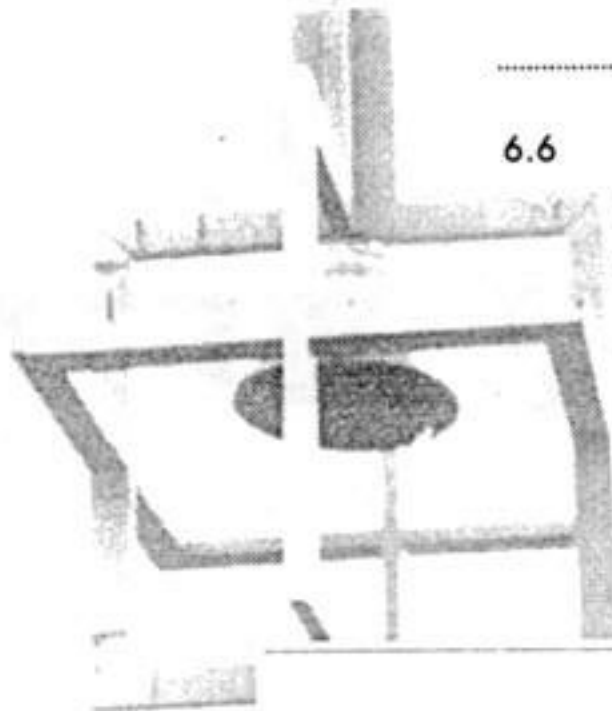
6.3 The site of nos. 1-31 Eastwood Road together with adjoining land fronting Edward Road will be redeveloped for family housing purposes.

6.4 Nos. 2-8 Harbury Road suffer from structural problems which prevented their inclusion in past improvement schemes. A Compulsory Purchase Order for Nos. 6 & 8 Harbury Road, together with an improvement package for Nos. 2 & 4 Harbury Road, is considered to be the most

appropriate means of addressing the issue; this Order has now been made. If the CPO is successful, infill residential development is proposed.

6.5 The shopping pattern in the area has remained fairly constant over the last 15 years. General retail trade on Moseley Road has however diminished, to be replaced by the take-away or restaurant food trade. Smaller isolated shops along Edward Road have closed, whilst the focus of shopping activity has developed around the junction of Edward Road and Cannon Hill Road. This plan acknowledges those trends and seeks to consolidate them by proposing environmental enhancements which will create a Neighbourhood Centre between Hallam Street and Calthorpe Park Play Centre (Harbury Road). The Centre falls within the proposed speed reduction zone, which will be further emphasised by on street works to narrow the carriageway. This will enable the creation of car parking bays and allow street trees to be planted.





6.6 Within the proposed Neighbourhood Centre two sites currently exist which need developing in order to strengthen the core of the Balsall Heath community; the site adjacent to no. 233 Edward Road, and the site

6.7 The site adjacent to no. 233 Edward Road, formally a haulage yard and site compound, has planning consent for development for housing. An alternative use would be for shopping. However it seems unlikely that a shopping scheme would be financially viable

Plan 4 Proposals for Neighbourhood Centre



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at the junction of Hallam Street and Edward Road.

and grant aid to provide shopping units is not available. The preferred use for the site is for family housing.

6.8 The site at the junction of Edward Road and Hallam Street, formerly occupied by a parade of shops and now owned by the City Council, is an important location in relation to the Neighbourhood Centre proposals. Its prominence at



Junction of Edward Road and Hallam Street

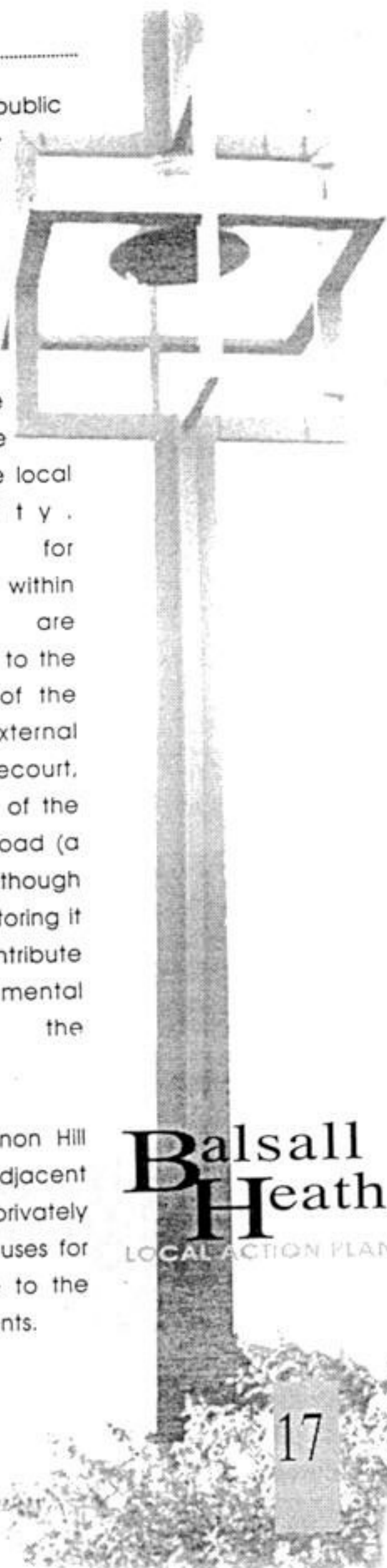
this crossroads requires a sympathetic yet bold design. The site will become the gateway to the Neighbourhood Centre and although the previous use of the site was commercial, it is considered that residential use is more appropriate. This will strengthen the core shopping frontage at Cannon Hill Road. A substantial residential development comprising three storey family houses, dual fronted for the corner part of the site, would provide the necessary massing to achieve this objective. Cannon Hill Place lying to the rear of the site does not have off street car parking. The new development will need to provide some car parking provision to redress this situation.

6.9 The former Cannon Hill public house, is being considered for use as an advice and training facility. This will bring together currently dispersed activity at various locations because of lack of space at a central

site. This will help reinforce the positive aspirations of the local community. Opportunities for community use within the building are possible, subject to the internal layout of the

accommodation. External improvements to the forecourt, including the refurbishment of the urinal fronting onto Court Road (a Grade II listed building, although not with the intention of restoring it to its former use) will contribute towards environmental improvements to the Neighbourhood Centre.

6.10 Both the former Cannon Hill Public House and the site adjacent no. 233 Edward Road are privately owned, but the proposed uses for both sites are acceptable to the owners and the local residents.



6.11 Proposals have existed for some time for the redevelopment of two sites on Moseley Road and Alcester Road. The redevelopment of these sites was to be implemented following the making of the proposed Balsall Heath Planning Compulsory Purchase Order. However, due to changes in financial circumstances the Planning Compulsory Purchase Order was not made.

6.12 In the previous Balsall Heath Area Plan, it was proposed that the site of former nos. 571 - 575 Moseley Road should be used for education - an extension of Tindal School play ground which is deficient in play space. Without the funding to execute a CPO however, it is unlikely that the preferred option will be implemented. Any industrial/commercial use will need to have regard to the adjoining school and residential properties. A compromise of part education use and part industrial/commercial redevelopment, would be a pragmatic solution to resolve this situation.

6.13 The site of nos. 5-15 Alcester Road and the car body shop to the rear of the site was identified in the previous Area Plan for future commercial/residential use. A land swap had been proposed previously with the owners of the industrial unit with a view to removing a potentially bad neighbour from the rear of the houses.

6.14 This remains the intention of the Council and it will resist disposing of the site for any other purpose whilst the situation remains the same.



Junction of Edward Road and Harbury Road

Points of Contact

Planning matters

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Street Lighting

Graham Channon (Tel: 303 7667)

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Sparkbrook

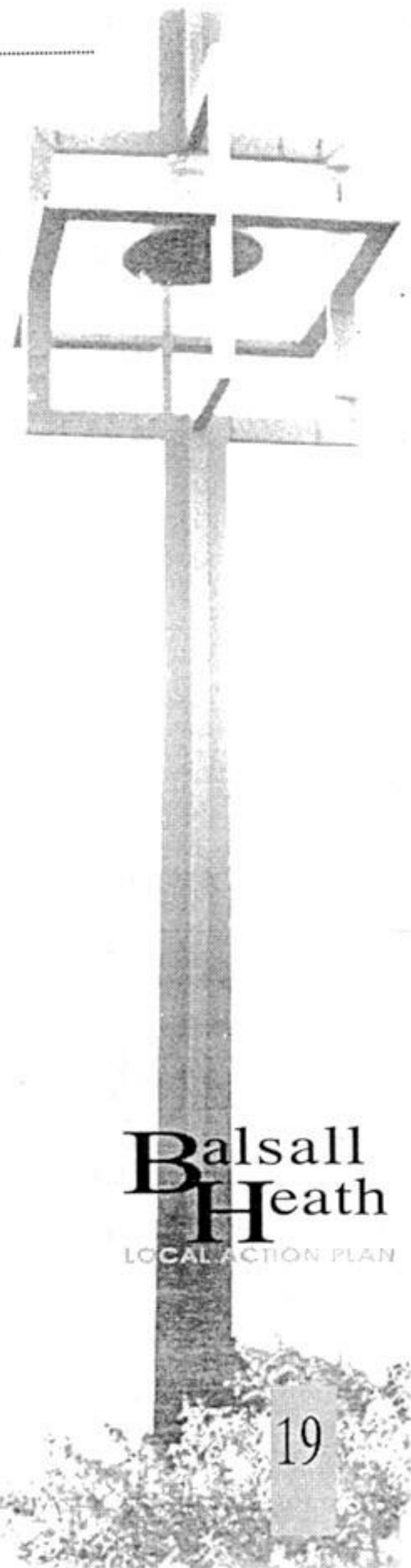
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 **Birmingham City Council**
Department of Planning
and Architecture

*“Securing a **Better**
environment for all the people of
Birmingham”*

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