

AGENDA

LOCAL PLAN PANEL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 15 December 2021

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Mike Baldock (Chairman), Monique Bonney (Vice-Chairman), Alastair Gould, Mike Henderson, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Peter Marchington, Richard Palmer, Eddie Thomas and Ghlin Whelan.

Quorum = 3

Pages

Information for the Public

*Members of the press and public can listen to this meeting live. Details of how to join the meeting will be added to the website on 14 December 2021.

Meeting Link: To be added.

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1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chairman will advise the meeting of the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. This is particularly important for visitors and members of the public who will be unfamiliar with the building and procedures.

The Chairman will inform the meeting whether there is a planned evacuation drill due to take place, what the alarm sounds like (i.e. ringing bells), where the closest emergency exit route is, and where the second closest emergency exit route is, in the event that the closest exit or route is blocked.

The Chairman will inform the meeting that:

(a) in the event of the alarm sounding, everybody must leave the building via the nearest safe available exit and gather at the Assembly points at the far side of the Car Park. Nobody must leave the assembly point until everybody can be accounted for and nobody must return to the building until the Chairman has informed them that it is safe to do so; and

(b) the lifts must not be used in the event of an evacuation.

Any officers present at the meeting will aid with the evacuation.

It is important that the Chairman is informed of any person attending who is disabled or unable to use the stairs, so that suitable arrangements may be made in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for Absence and Confirmation of Substitutes

3. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 7 October 2021 (Minute Nos. 355 - 360) as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in

respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.

(b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary Interests (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the meeting while that item is considered.

Advice to Members: If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

Part A Report for Recommendation to Cabinet

5. Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 5 - 68

Issued on Monday, 6 December 2021

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about the work of the Cabinet, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Local Plan Panel Meeting	
Meeting Date	15 December 2021
Report Title	Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Baldock, Cabinet Member for Planning
SMT Lead	James Freeman
Head of Service	James Freeman
Lead Officer	Alison Peters
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	Members are invited to comment on the Draft Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) prior to the Cabinet Member for Planning authorising the document to be published for public consultation in January 2022.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report introduces the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD draft for consultation that, once adopted will provide a suite of complementary policies to support its vitality and viability and secure appropriate development, supporting the local economy and providing opportunities to maximise the use of land and buildings that are currently underutilised. This includes a costed proposal for public realm enhancements and identified opportunities for further improvements.
- 1.2 The SPD will form part of the planning policy for the borough pursuant to the adopted local plan, Bearing Fruits (and the Local Plan Review as appropriate).

2 Background

- 2.1 Swale's adopted Local Plan 'Bearing Fruits' sets out the role and purpose of Sittingbourne Town Centre in the settlement strategy. Policy Regen 1 Central Sittingbourne: Regeneration Area aims to support the consolidation and expansion of Sittingbourne's position as the main retail, business, cultural, community and civic centre for the Borough. Policies for maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of Swale's town centres are set out in Policy DM 2 Proposals for main town centre uses, which also identifies the town centre boundary and primary retail frontage for Sittingbourne.
- 2.2 The Council's Local Plan Review has identified Sittingbourne town centre as the location for a major programme of regeneration that would see the delivery of approximately 850 additional dwellings in the town centre and fringes.

- 2.3 The Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. A primary aim is to encourage active and public travel therefore the pedestrian and cycling environment must be safe and attractive to users. The key objectives which are particularly relevant to this SPD are:
- 1 Pursue the Swale Strategic Air Quality Action Plan,
 - 2 Spatial and transport planning to make fewer journeys necessary,
 - 3 Improve public transport,
 - 4 Encourage active transport,
 - 5 Develop the infrastructure for electric vehicles, and
 - 6 Make space for nature.
- 2.4 The SPD provides more design quality detail than the local plan by setting out detailed objectives for retail, food and beverage (F&B), culture, leisure, community infrastructure, public space, heritage, the physical environment with regards movement, the economy including the creative economy and town centre living: identifying the physical responses and possible layouts; and the expected design standards.
- 2.5 A visioning workshop for Members was held in Spring 2020, facilitated by a consultant, and the findings form the basis for the Vision for the SPD
- 2.6 The SPD will guide regeneration in a way that:
- respects the heritage and culture of Sittingbourne;
 - Introduces a wider range of land uses and activity;
 - enables walking, cycling and inclusive access throughout the area;
 - strengthens local communities;
 - responds positively to the challenges of climate change;
 - within an integrated landscape strategy, introduces green spaces and trees; and
 - creates opportunities for private and public sector investment
- 2.7 A screening to determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required was found unnecessary. The screening report has been issued to Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England for approval.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Much as the wider context of Sittingbourne Town Centre is important the SPD is focussed on areas with opportunities for change within the core town centre. The study boundary is illustrated on page 6 of the SPD in Appendix I.
- 3.2 The overarching Spatial Strategy for the SPD allows a consistent approach to deliver change over the long term and is crucial to shaping a successful place. Land uses, gateways, activity hubs and connections are integrated and complementary and are illustrated below on page 25 of the SPD in Appendix I.
- 3.3 The key physical moves are as follows:

- 1 The focus on the High street will be on improvements to existing heritage and public realm which are already underway, augmented with new trees within the high street and new green open spaces in close proximity, supported by new town centre living above and behind existing shops.
 - 2 St Michael's Road, as the key vehicular gateway of the town centre and currently lined with low density non-town centre uses, will be the setting for new mixed-use development to increase footfall to the high street.
 - 3 Central Avenue is already the community hub and this can be further clarified and expanded, encompassing existing and new facilities on available KCC and Swale Council land supported by new town centre living.
 - 4 With public realm improvements and new interpretation facilities, the Avenues of Remembrance can become visitor attractions in their own right.
 - 5 Lastly, in the long term, better connectivity to the town by bus, cycle and foot from Eurolink and Milton Creek, as well as from the southern residential district, will assist the liveliness of the town centre with increased footfall.
- 3.4 Delivery of the physical proposals over a timeframe of 10-15 years will ensure the realisation of the regeneration of Sittingbourne with the following opportunities:
1. To make an ambitious plan and find funding later, underpinned with clear branding provided by strong leadership.
 2. To bring the community together and along with the vision for the town with a particular focus on community involvement from the business and retail sector as well as the voluntary sector.
 3. The importance of public realm and to have shovel-ready projects with a mix of uses, for example identifying a location for the KCC S106 Sittingbourne Hub funding, plus the Bus Hub, with specific government funding, with a northern focus around Bourne Place and the Forum which should provide a catalyst for further development.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 It is being posited that covid has devastated high streets. Without a strategy to address the challenges faced by Sittingbourne, the Town Centre will not be able to satisfactorily serve its local community. The SPD provides the required plan of action providing certainty to communities and developers.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Informal discussion with landowners, including KCC, have taken place but without any firm commitments given by either parties.
- 5.2 Formal consultation of the SEA Screening is taking place with Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England.
- 5.3 The programme for developing the SPD has included:
- Initial discussion with Town Centre Members Group 19th May 2021 on initial draft document;
 - Further to a consultant based review on outstanding issues regarding changes to the Use Class Order the report taken to the Local Plan Panel in December 2021.
- 5.4 Community consultation has been programmed to take place in early 2022.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The SPD has been prepared with the aim of delivering the spatial aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan. In particular it supports the Council's corporate priorities of: Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all (Priority 1) Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges (Priority 2) Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone (Priority 3)
Financial, Resource and Property	The SPD is being progressed through existing service plan commitments and costs are met through existing service plan budgets related to Local Plan preparation.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The preparation of SPDs is prepared within a legal, regulatory and national policy framework.
Crime and Disorder	The SPD includes policies relating to design that aim to reduce crime and disorder.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The SPD seeks to deliver sustainable development.
Health and Wellbeing	The SPD includes policies and proposals that seek to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities. This includes policies on matters such as increasing and improving open space, encouraging walking and cycling to the town centre etc.
Safeguarding of Children, Young	None identified at this stage.

People and Vulnerable Adults	
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Risk management of the process has been undertaken as part of the Council's wider risk register and risk management policies, procedures and practices.
Equality and Diversity	The need to address equality and diversity in the SPD has been a consideration throughout its development.
Privacy and Data Protection	SPD preparation has complied with privacy and data protection laws and regulations as required.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix I: Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD: Pre-submission consultation draft.

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The Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Swale Borough Council

Contents

Introduction

- Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document
- Relationship with the Local Plan
- The Process

Vision and Objectives

- High Street
 - Retail
 - Food & Beverage and Leisure
 - Physical Environment
 - New developments
 - Historic environment
- Community
- Economy including creative economy
- Residential
- regeneration through heritage

Spatial Strategy

General policies

- Land uses
 - Retail, F&B, leisure
 - Residential
 - Employment
- Frontage, perimeter blocks
- Building height
- Gateways and hubs
- Movement
 - Walking, cycling
 - Public transport - bus, rail,
 - Parking and servicing
- New public realm
- New green spaces
- Design quality – architectural standards
- Heritage – enhance the historic environment
- Sustainability – refer to the Sustainable Construction SPD

Districts

- High Street and West Street
- East Street, Bell Road and Crown Quay Lane
- Central Avenue and Avenue of Remembrance
- St Michael's Road and Bourne Place
- Eurolink Way

Delivery

- Funding

Introduction

The pandemic has forced the adoption of new ways of living and working which will impact how Swale's towns look and operate in the future. The impact will be felt in new homes that are planned for the Borough and across all work sectors from distribution centres to offices, from retail to local small businesses and at home. Coupled with climate change this presents an opportunity for Swale to respond positively to the challenges and secure the long-term future of the Borough.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an acceleration of changes to the reasons people visit and use high streets. Data for November 2020 shows that footfall is at 45 percent compared to the same period last year. Before the pandemic, footfall had dropped over 10 per cent in the last 7 years. Internet sales had risen to 21 per cent of all retail sales at the end of 2019 compared to 7 per cent a decade earlier, and during the height of the national lockdown period in May this had jumped to nearly 33 per cent of all retail sales.”

Source <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/future-high-street-house-commons-10-december-2020>)

Towns centres were already under pressure from competition from online retailing and out-of-town shopping centres and Sittingbourne, with its historic core dating back to the twelfth century, is learning to adapt. Change in Sittingbourne Town Centre is already underway with investment by local businesses in new food and beverage outlets, new small scale residential schemes and the introduction of new a new leisure quarter, Bourne Place, which has led to new public realm at Sittingbourne railway centre. Surrounding the town centre new large residential communities are opening along Eurolink Way and Mill Way increasing the number of people in close proximity to the High Street and new recreation and cultural facilities Dolphin Sailing Barge Museum and The Mill Skate Park in walking distance from the High Street.

New ways of working and shopping are predicted for the future with the emphasis being on adaptations which embrace flexibility and social interaction. There is a need for a proactive plan to transform the place, looking not only to future retail and development, but to other uses and activities, that may draw people, enhance prosperity and improve the look, role and general feel of the town centre.

A recent study undertaken by Historic England about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our social lives includes our access to and engagement with our precious heritage and it has found that *‘historic places convey a sense of uniqueness and awe and are strong emotional pillars connecting communities... heritage can also improve personal wellbeing, by helping us understand our past, our individual and communal identity and help us connect with the places where we live’*. Managing heritage significance of the high street, so that it becomes a place for people to be proud of and want to visit, the heritage sector has an important role to play in our individual mental wellbeing in the future as well as on the economy of the town centre.

Process

In Spring 2020 a visioning workshop was held with Councillors to brainstorm the future for Sittingbourne town centre. Using scenario planning as an aid to discussion, the group identified a broad direction and series of priority themes and actions which become the starting point for the Supplementary Planning Document for the town centre as follows:

- *Greater diversity of use in and around the town centre over time*
- *More housing of a well-designed, and affordable type*
- *Encouragement of diverse shops and characterful shopfronts*
- *A greater emphasis on role of culture, events and creativity, both in uses, but also promotion of the town centre.*
- *Better links (particularly by walking and cycle) to/from the surrounding neighbourhoods on both sides of railway as well as strengthening of these locations.*
- *Better signing and wayfinding for locals, and also visitors*
- *Exploring the role of heritage in promoting Sittingbourne town centre's identity, design and visitor experience*
- *More street use and temporary activity, especially to bring people back to the town centre after COVID-19 lockdown, but also beyond that*
- *Appropriate new developments on gap sites to bring new activity, but also create a stronger sense of street.*
- *New employment, workspace and studios, including as positive local option for people who may normally commute five days a week.*
- *Greening and planting in key streets and spaces, including performing a SUDS, water management role.*

The findings from the workshop contributed to the development of a long-term strategic vision for Sittingbourne that meets the needs and aspirations of a broad range of users and stakeholders and achieve the ambition to shape a place where people want to live, work and spend their leisure time within an active high street.



Sittingbourne High Street

Aim of the SPD

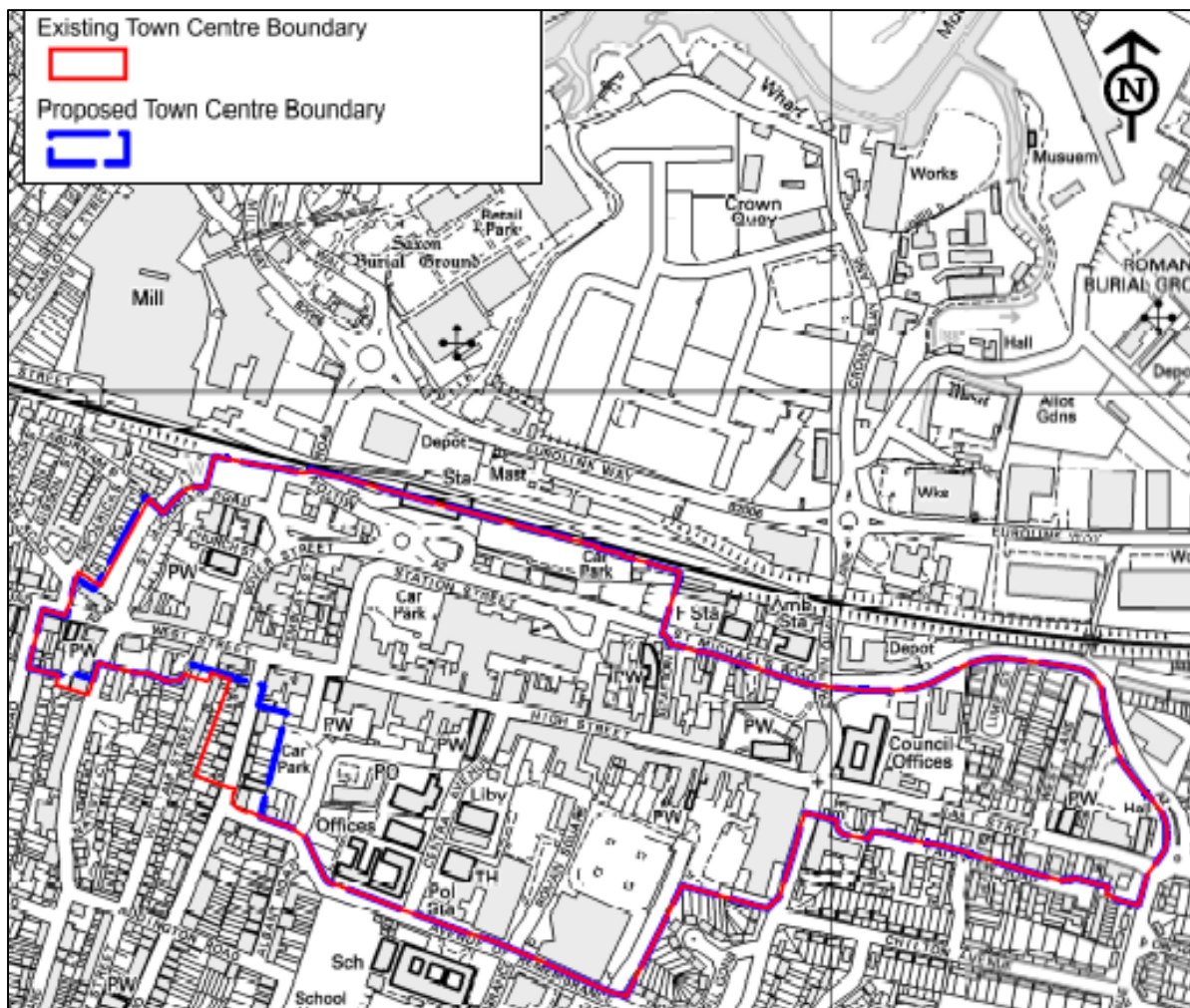
The Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will shape and guide regeneration and heritage in the town centre over the next 10-15 years. The focus is to create places that people want to visit and linger, places that encourage transactions and positive interactions throughout the day and night and which therefore contribute to the vitality and viability of Sittingbourne. The SPD will guide regeneration in a way that:

- respects the heritage and culture of Sittingbourne;
- introduces a wider range of land uses and activity;
- enables walking, cycling and inclusive access throughout the area;
- strengthens local communities;
- responds positively to the challenges of climate change;
- within an integrated landscape strategy, introduces green spaces and trees; and
- creates opportunities for private and public sector investment.

The SPD benefits from a design led approach to regeneration which aims to facilitate dramatic and beneficial change in the appearance and range of facilities of the town centre.

Site boundary

The town centre boundary includes the core High Street area as well as key areas ‘behind’ the High Street namely Central Avenue, St Michael’s Road/A2 and Eurolink Way as shown on the plan. A slightly extended boundary is also shown to be considered as part of the Local Plan Review to reflect a difference in focus.



Sittingbourne Town Centre boundary with proposed amendments to be carried forward through the Local Plan Review



Sittingbourne Town Centre boundary for the SPD

It is important to stress the value of linkages and gateways to the areas immediately surrounding the town centre as follow:

- To the north - Milton Creek recreation area including Dolphin Sailing Barge Museum, The Mill Skate Park, Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway, and Milton Country Park as well as Eurolink
- To the south – Borden Grammar School, Albany Park, Sittingbourne Cemetery, Appleyard and Sittingbourne Memorial Hospital.



The immediate context of Sittingbourne Town Centre

Recent development includes foodstores and a drive-in coffee shop directly north of the railway station, a new multi-storey car park (MSCP) on St Michael's Road, the new leisure facilities including cinema and bowling, hotel and restaurants in Bourne Place opposite the railway station and a large residential development on Eurolink Way. A number of smaller scale developments in the High Street itself and in the wider town centre are welcome additions to the place.

The railway station setting and public realm has undergone extensive improvement with new bus stop in close proximity; these assist with providing easy connections to the High Street. The railway line and Eurolink Way form significant barriers for pedestrian and cycle movement north south. The narrow footpaths under the two railway bridges are a particular challenge limiting pedestrian access to the important leisure and work facilities and new residential developments in the north.

The appearance of land behind the High Street in the town centre is generally poor, with unattractive views of commercial premises and service roads, whilst the centre as a whole is characterised by large areas of surface car parking which are poorly maintained in some cases and underused especially after business hours. They represent a poor use of space and also detract from the environment and amenity of the town.

Planning context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 86) requires planning policies for town centres to take a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation allowing for flexible mixed-use characterful places.

Swale's adopted local plan, Bearing Fruits, contains a suite of policies and proposals to support and deliver sustainable development. Policy ST 5 The Sittingbourne area strategy sets out the broad objectives for Sittingbourne town centre. This includes the need to ensure the vitality and viability of the town centre by creating and enhancing the range of shops, leisure facilities and public, commercial and voluntary services needed to enable retention of local spending by both the existing and new residents in and around the town centre.

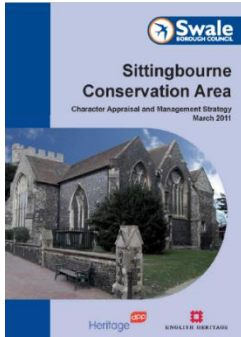
As part of this approach, the Council has already brought greater flexibility to the consideration of uses at the outer edges of the primary shopping area frontages and in the secondary shopping area frontage to take advantage of opportunities that may arise during these times of economic difficulty and uncertainty. Policy DM 1 Maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres and other areas and Policy DM 2 Proposals for main town centre uses set out the broad strategy for town centre development. The policies and proposals in this SPD provide an amplification of those 'parent' policies, providing more detail of what development is expected to deliver in terms of quality design that respects our heritage assets, supports vitality and viability and maximises opportunities for the Council and the market to respond positively to challenges.

Work has commenced on the Local Plan Review as required by NPPF para33. Given the opportunities that exist within the Sittingbourne town centre area, it is right to identify Sittingbourne town centre as the location for a major programme of regeneration that would see the delivery of approximately 850 additional dwellings in the town centre and fringes with further potential in suburban areas.

The Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. A primary aim is to encourage active and public travel therefore the pedestrian and cycling environment must be safe and attractive to users. The key relevant features which are relevant to this SPD are:

- Pursue the Swale Strategic Air Quality Action Plan,

- Spatial and transport planning to make fewer journeys necessary,
- Improve public transport,
- Encourage active transport,
- Develop the infrastructure for electric vehicles, and
- Make space for nature.



The Sittingbourne Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy, 2011, sets out the designated heritage assets and provides guidance for positive change and regeneration in the area. Following completion of its Heritage Asset Review, June 2015, the Council set out the intention to prepare a Heritage Strategy which shall aim to create a unified online database of all the designated heritage assets in the Borough and specifically provide an Action Plan for the preservation and enhancement of Sittingbourne Conservation Area.

The Grimsey Review 2, 2018, contains evidence of how towns are changing and sets out three recommendations and best practice examples:

1. There is a need for all towns to develop plans that are business-like and focused on transforming the place into a complete community hub, while developing a unique selling proposition (USP)



2. The key to success is outstanding, talented and committed leadership.
3. The curating of a place based on its distinct heritage is multi-dimensional and complex but should feature strongly when developing the 'offer'.

Following the impact of COVID-19 on high streets Grimsey's 'Build Back Better' 2020, identified how people are relying more than ever on their local centres and that the recommendation for community hubs is more important than ever. It states that it is much clearer now that places need to be designed for people and not cars with cyclists and pedestrians given priority in an accessible public realm. The key driver is "the '20-minute neighbourhood' concept, where people should be able to access to the services they need in a short walk" and this is how we should rethink our centres.

Historic England's research (Heritage Counts) on Business Improvement Districts (BID) suggests that Heritage is acknowledged as an important element in place branding, but this is often under-developed and not directly measured in place brand valuation. Heritage and historic buildings and places are an increasingly popular and locally valued and often premium location for creative and other new businesses. The role and contribution that heritage assets make to place branding are under-researched and often implicit but not explicit in place branding strategies - this research therefore represents an important contribution to knowledge and practice in this field. Heritage is used extensively by BIDs to assist with place branding and place making strategies. Where BIDs did engage with heritage, this invariably extended beyond the most obvious heritage assets in their area to include less prominent, intangible heritage. Individual examples of heritage being used by BIDs to assist place branding include offering local heritage tours to recently arrived businesses, developing smartphone applications (apps) that update with thematic heritage trails that include GPS directions, and leading larger, externally funded projects to restore and maintain heritage buildings.

Property market

In 2018, consultants WYG Planning carried out the Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment for the Council to assess the needs for additional retail and commercial leisure for the local plan review period and undertake a 'health check' assessments for town centres. The assessment concluded that the 'health' (vitality and viability) of the Borough's town centres is good with vacancy rates largely in line with national trends and a good range of shops and services while Sittingbourne town centre could accommodate up to 1,900 sq. m. of additional convenience floorspace and between 12,300 and 22,600 sq. m. of additional comparison floorspace for the period to 2037/38.

The Local Plan Review Viability Study (draft) 2020 by Aspinall Verdi recommends a "mix and match" approach for residential development depending on the weight the Council wish to give to affordable housing versus other potential future policy asks such as biodiversity net gain, EV charging and others.

Land Use

The High Street has a lively mix of retail, food & beverage (F&B), financial services and health & beauty services alongside a number of religious buildings. Above ground floor there are some retail functions but mostly storage, office and residential uses. The High Street and the Forum Shopping Centre, which lies to the north of the High Street, form the primary shopping area with a large number of retail stores complemented by F&B outlets and financial services. There is a concentration of F&B around the Station Street/ Park Road junctions. Bourne Place comprises leisure facilities including a cinema, bowling centre, hotel and restaurants.



An analysis of the districts of Sittingbourne town centre

Civic and community buildings in the town centre include the Council offices on East Street, Sittingbourne Library, Avenue Theatre and Swallows Leisure Centre off Central Avenue and a Post Office, Police Station and the former community hall Phoenix House, which is no longer in operation, also off Central Avenue. This area therefore forms the core community hub. There are a number of religious buildings with four churches located on the High Street including Sittingbourne Methodist Church and St Michael's Church at the eastern extent, the United Reformed Church at the heart of the High Street, and Sittingbourne Baptist Church in the western extent.

As well as the new multi-storey car park there are a number of surface car parks behind the High Street to the north and south. In addition, car parking is provided at Sittingbourne Railway Station.

St Michael's Road/A2 and Eurolink Link Way are both main traffic thoroughfares with a mix of non-town centre uses from car sales, car repair centres and open car parks. Sittingbourne's Fire Station is located on St. Michael's Road, the ambulance centre is now vacant having recently relocated.

Retail frontages

Analysis of the frontages and ground floor uses of the High Street, West Street and East Street identified the following:

- Traditional retail is focussed on the High Street between Station Street and Central Avenue and into The Forum.
- Independent retail is focussed on the eastern end of the High Street, West Street and East Street.
- There is a concentration of bars and public houses around the Station Street Park Road junctions although there also historic public houses along the length of the High Street.
- Chain food and beverage are located amongst the traditional retail. Independent food and beverage outlets are concentrated on the High Street between Central Avenue and Bell Road.
- There is a strong group of financial services on the High Street around Central Avenue.
- There is a large number of hair and beauty services along the full length of the High Street, West Street and East Street.
- There is an aspiration to retain historic shopfronts as set out in shopfront design guidance.



Analysis of frontage based of type of activity

In September 2020 the government amended the Use Classes Order that combined uses A1, A2 and A3 to class E with A4 and A5 becoming Sui Generis as a measure to support town centres during the Covid pandemic. This was made permanent from August 2021. This means that unless there are material changes to the shopfront or premises, units can change their use across this spectrum without the need for planning consent. Although the Council can identify a 'Primary Shopping Area'¹ and both primary and secondary frontages, should it wish to do so, it cannot use [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) as a mechanism to protect these areas from the loss of retail to other uses covered by E Class. Use Class E allows for shops, financial and professional service office and for cafes and restaurants to move

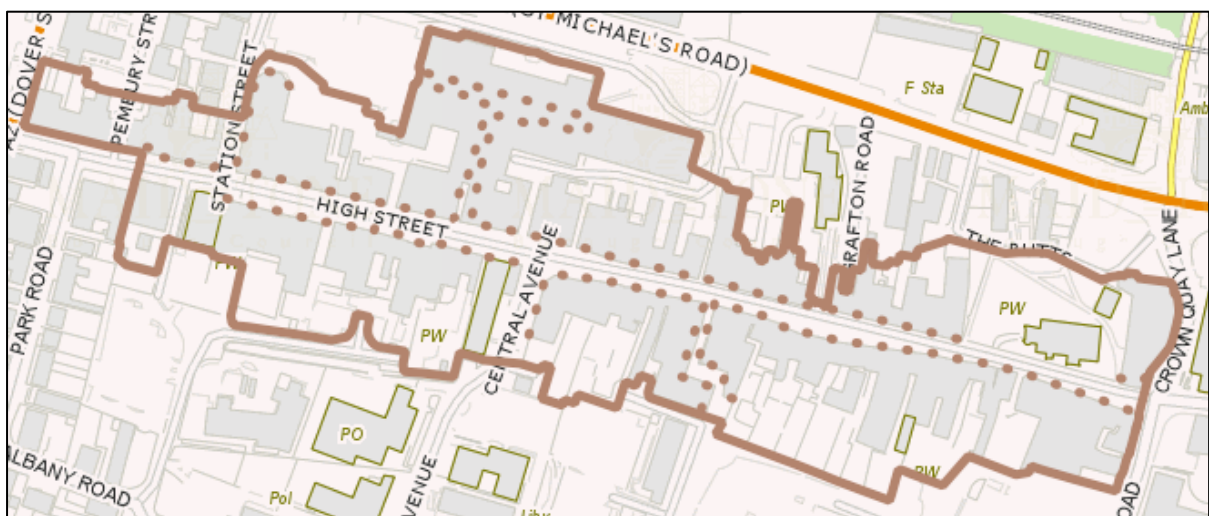
¹ **Primary shopping area:** Defined area where retail development is concentrated [Annex 2: Glossary - National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

between these uses without the need for planning permission. Any material alterations to the premises would be required to seek planning consent.

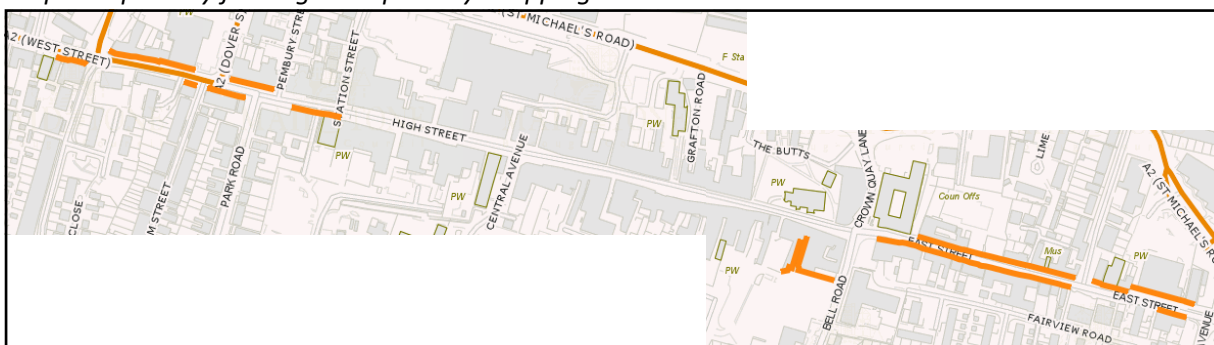
While the occupancy of units is ultimately an issue for the market, if there is an unacceptable dilution of retail uses in the core area, the Council will explore available tools to avoid harm to the vitality and viability of the town centre, noting that its role as a retail destination is one of its primary functions. This will be progressed in tandem with the Local Plan Review and will include consideration as to whether the Council believes it has a strong case for moving forward with an Article 4 Direction with a view to restricting the permitted development change of uses included within the new Use Classes Order.



Analysis of frontage based on predominant activity and type of retail



Proposed primary frontage and primary shopping area



Proposed secondary frontage taken

Whilst the Council recognises the need for flexibility at this time, it is imperative that ground floor frontages contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre by being well designed and in keeping with the character of the immediate area. Active frontages contribute to maintaining and enhancing a sense of place and natural surveillance and proposals for development involving alterations or new shop fronts must accord with Policy DM 15 New Shopfronts, signs and advertisements , even where a change of use is being sought.

Heritage

The High Street as we know it today dates back to the early 12th century when pilgrims started to make the journey from London to Canterbury following the death of Thomas Becket in 1170. From such humble beginnings the town grew, enhanced by the fact that it lies equidistant between London and Dover, and also Rochester and Canterbury. Sittingbourne was seen as being the ideal overnight stopping place. When the number of pilgrims started to dwindle, it gave way to the coaching trade and the town became a place where horses could be changed in the long journey between London and Dover. Even when faster coaches were introduced later on, Sittingbourne remained as the favourite overnight stopping place.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance and special interest of the Sittingbourne Conservation Area can be summarised as:

- Roman Watling Street
- Linear High Street following the medieval route
- Important 18th century coaching stop on route between London and Canterbury and the coast, the survival of coaching inns is of particular significance.
- Distinctive long and narrow burgage plots with some earlier buildings surviving – many behind later façades
- Predominance of 18th and early 19th century development remains providing a largely cohesive townscape
- 14th-15th century St Michael’s Church, set within open grassed churchyard, is a local landmark to the east

Successive generations of antiquarians have described the town as being ‘a street of inns’ and the town’s economy grew upon this. It was a prosperous place until the arrival of the railway in 1858 when London could be reached in a matter of hours rather than days. The town’s long- enjoyed position as an overnight resting place was no more and as a result the inns lost much of their passing trade. This was when many of the former inns became shops. Beneath the mishmash of later extensions and modern shop fronts lies a wealth of ancient buildings that date back many centuries.



Conservation area and Listed Buildings

Sittingbourne’s historic core is a Conservation Area and includes Listed Buildings. Potential candidates for locally listed buildings are currently under consideration in an appraisal of the Conservation Area.



Historic photographs of Sittingbourne High Street



The same locations in 2021

Strategic Road Network

Sittingbourne is in close proximity to a number of strategic road connections particularly the M2. The A2 runs through the centre of Sittingbourne providing access to a number of towns and villages within Swale, including Faversham, and beyond to Medway in the west and Canterbury further east. The A2 also provides access in the west to the A249 which runs in a north/south direction providing access to the Isle of Sheppey to the north and Maidstone to the south.

Just over three kilometres (1.8 miles) to the south of Sittingbourne is the M2 motorway which provides a connection to Chatham and Dartford. Maidstone, Canterbury and Chatham are approximately a half an hour drive from Sittingbourne. Employment sites in larger neighbouring towns and cities are accessible whilst Sittingbourne's employment sites, Eurolink for example, are equally accessible from residential areas beyond Sittingbourne. However, these strategic road links mean that people from within Swale can easily access alternative retail areas such as Canterbury.

Public Transport

Sittingbourne is well served by railway services which provides direct access to a number of destinations. This includes three services per hour St Pancras International, half hourly services to London Victoria and Sheerness, and hourly services to Faversham. Additional destinations include Ramsgate and Dover Priory. Journey times to London take approximately one hour.

In addition, there are a number of bus services operating in Sittingbourne including Stagecoach, Arriva and Chalkwell. Bus routes run locally to towns and villages in Swale including Faversham, Teynham, Iwade, Kemsley, Eastchurch and Minster etc. Further destinations outside of the Borough

which can be accessed by bus include Canterbury and Maidstone. There are also several school bus services operating around the Borough

Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

The High Street has wide pedestrian footpaths with shared surface raised tables which indicate crossing points over the carriageway for pedestrians. There are controlled crossing points at the eastern end of the High Street at the junction with East Street and Crown Quay Lane where levels of vehicular traffic increase and the road widens to allow two-way traffic.

There are many pedestrian connections to the High Street from 'behind' via numerous alleys which provide good access to car parks and other facilities but, to the visitor, are confusing.

Central Avenue has a pleasant pedestrian environment as does the Avenue of Remembrance which also has a well-used controlled crossing point providing access to Albany Park.

There are pedestrian footpaths along St. Michael's Road although the width of the road and the level of traffic makes it difficult for pedestrians to navigate alongside limited controlled crossing points and islands. The pedestrian environment along St. Michael's Road is unattractive, uninviting and, due to heavy traffic, feels unsafe. There is a single controlled crossing of Eurolink Way which makes it difficult to cross.

There are no dedicated cycle routes within the town centre although there are routes close by. There is a relatively good provision of cycle parking.

Parking

According to SBC's website (2020), there are thirteen car parks in Sittingbourne providing space for approximately 1,077 cars plus disabled bays. The largest of the car parks is the new multi-storey car park (MSCP), which has a capacity of 308 spaces, followed by the Forum Shopping Centre with 86 spaces. Swale House, which has a total capacity of 72 spaces, is only available for public use on weekends and bank holidays. Seven of these car parks are short stay only with a maximum stay of four hours. Two of the car parks (Grafton Road and Shortlands Road) are free, the MSCP is pay on foot whilst the remainder are pay and display which are free after 18:00 until 08:00 the following day. Thirteen of the car parks are managed by the Council. There is currently ample supply of parking spaces in the town and although there is likely to be a reduction in overall number of parking spaces as a result of future development proposals this will be assessed as part of the development study.

Legibility

Legibility is important in assisting people with a mental map of the town centre so that they can find their way around easily and remember where the places they want to visit are located. It contributes to the image and perception of the town centre. Legibility is usually defined in terms of gateways and approaches, landmarks and views and involves the interaction of building form, streetscape and open space. The High Street is linear and remains largely unchanged as a west-east route through Sittingbourne.

Sittingbourne has various levels of legibility based on its variation in architecture, street patterns and clear approaches. Legibility is better along the High Street to both West Street and East Street due its simple linear form. Legibility between the railway station and the high street was very poor however the new Bourne Place scheme has been designed to assist with imparting an image to the entry to the town and providing a new plaza and pedestrian route from the station. The last connection from Bourne Place to the High Street still needs improvement as the public toilets block

a clear visual and physical route between the two. Connections to beyond the town centre also need assistance with legibility.

Gateways and approaches into Sittingbourne define entrances into the Town Centre and points of arrival. They also influence first impressions of the Town. Sittingbourne has a number of landmarks and features that stand out which help to improve legibility. Landmark buildings and features have a significant historical, architectural, or cultural meaning:

- The former Court House at the junction of High Street and Park Road, currently in use as a public house.
- The United Reformed Church at the heart of the High Street which its church spire which extends above the roofline of the High Street;
- St. Michael's Church at the eastern end of the High Street which is set back from the road with green space and dates back to the 14th and 15th centuries;
- The former Odeon Cinema building from 1937 with its decorated art deco façade fronting on to the High Street; and
- Statue of 'The Bargeman' is in clear view when travelling to the High Street from the south along Central Avenue.

There are several important views that help convey the character and sense of place of Sittingbourne. Views along the High Street are channelled and often framed by the continuous built form. The spire of the United Reformed Church forms a principal view in the west against the two and three-storey buildings along the High Street. There is a 'rise and fall' along the High Street as land slopes upwards along West Street towards the approximate high point at the junction of High Street and Central Avenue. The land slopes downwards towards the east of the High Street.

Other key views along the High Street include that towards St. Michael's Church, although this is not as prominent as that towards the United Reformed Church due to the lower land at the east of the High Street. There are shorter views from the High Street along the narrow alleys which relate to the origins of the town and contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Public Realm

Public realm is defined as areas available for public use including; streets, pavements, parking areas, squares, parks and gardens. The elements that form the public realm are surfacing materials, street furniture, signs, lighting, public art and soft landscape. A successful public realm enables people to move easily through an area. It contributes to a high-quality environment and there is evidence that it is effective in attracting people and increasing 'dwell time'. The quality of Sittingbourne town centre's public realm however is variable.

The High Street is a one-way street, allowing vehicles to travel eastbound, with wide pedestrian footways. The pavement of the High Street is of an attractive warm brick which provides a link with the history of Sittingbourne as a brick maker and complements the buildings in the Conservation Area. However, over time poor repairs have compromised the paving in places which therefore need attention. Some street furniture can appear cluttered and block pedestrian routes and requires rationalising as well as sprucing up. The plethora of different signs also require review but with a new wayfinding strategy featuring maps on panel signs at Bourne Place a similar approach will be rolled out in the rest of the town centre.



High Street public realm and boundary to St Michael's Church in need of repair

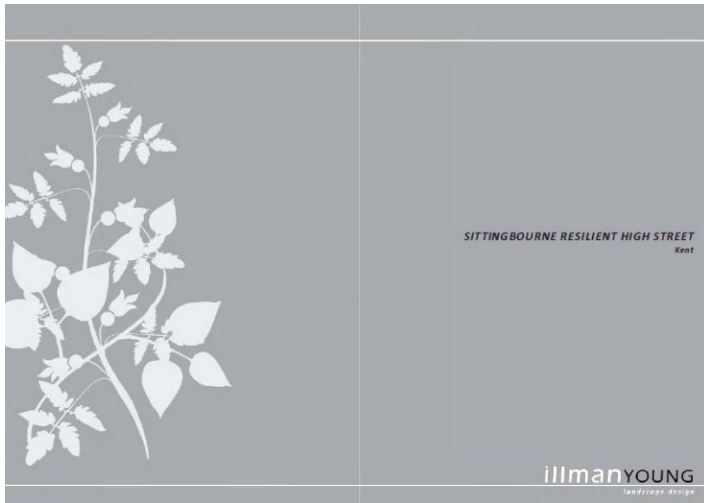
West Street and East Street mostly have narrow pavements limited by road carriageway however a review of the public realm would benefit the spaces.

Tree planting along Central Avenue and Avenue of Remembrance enhances the public realm but otherwise these main pedestrian routes are basic in terms of materials with some damage to memorials also requiring attention.

The Avenue of Remembrance is a lasting visual 'Living Memorial' to those who gave their lives in World War One, later extended to include World War Two. A number of memorials and plaques are damaged or missing, some trees are damaged therefore tree condition needs to be fully assessed and paving is also in a poor condition.

St Michael's Road and Eurolink Way are both dominated by the highway with a particularly poor pedestrian environment although significant improvements have been made around the railway station with high quality paving and street furniture which are also reflected in Bourne Place.

Green space with seating within the Town Centre is limited to the churchyard at St. Michael's Church which suffers from anti-social behaviour. The public space outside Swale House is not well used and has limited provision. Both spaces would benefit from improvement.



In 2015, KCC commissioned landscape architects Illman Young to undertake a study of the High Street to ensure that it is more resilient to climatic change. Proposals for street tree planting and storm water planters to assist with flood protection which is a particular concern on Crown Quay Lane. The proposals were technically feasible as the underground utilities were taken into account, the water storage capacity of the proposals was calculated and the scheme was fully costed.

Public Art

At the heart of the High Street, opposite Central Avenue, is 'The Bargeman' statue. The statue is a bronze sculpture of a man at a helm of a ship. The statue is modest, slightly elevated on a low platform and matches the scale of a person. With the exception of this statue, public art within Sittingbourne Town Centre is extremely limited.

Sittingbourne Town Centre Vision

Building on its enviable setting between coast and Downs, its rich heritage, positive economy and easy access, the vision is for the historic town centre of Sittingbourne to become the thriving community, leisure and economic heart of the Borough.



It will be a place where local people, businesses and visitors will want to be with a greater choice of things to see and do for all tastes and ages during the day and the evening. In support of the new the new leisure quarter the town centre will provide an excellent range of community, cultural, leisure, retail, office and mixed-use development and town centre living.

Building on its role as a convenient and competitive retail and leisure destination, the vision is to increase high street footfall by achieving a balance within the town centre between delivering retail, leisure, cultural and commercial space needed to support sustainable economic growth and delivering new homes that enhance role of the town centre as a vibrant neighbourhood.

The town centre will be promoted as a place for enterprise with a rich mix of businesses which thrive in reality and online providing people with jobs and purpose. Open for business, the town centre will support new office space in response to working locally and smart home-working, will expand the leisure business offer and will create a platform for entrepreneurship and creative industries.

It will be a safer and cleaner place where new public realm and buildings will be of a high-quality design to create a high-quality environment. New green spaces will support the expansion of the town centre for residential and leisure.

The town centre will be easy to access by foot, bicycle, bus and train as well easy to park ensuring its convenience particularly to access the high street's convenient retail and leisure facilities. The town centre will also connect well to wider leisure facilities such as Milton Creek and Albany Park as well as new residential districts especially from the railway station.

Any proposals for the town centre will respond to Swale Borough Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. Particular responses will include sustainable construction, 'greening' and extending biodiversity into the town centre and strategies to address the challenges of East Street Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

OBJECTIVES

1. Objectives for Retail

Sittingbourne is not likely to be able to compete with nearby retail centres strong in comparison shopping such as Bluewater, Chatham, Hempstead Valley and Canterbury. Similarly, Sittingbourne is not comparable to specialist experience retail that is available in Faversham, Whitstable and Canterbury where people tend to visit for the physical environment and to browse for unusual wares.

Sittingbourne's strength in retail lies in the wide range of budget and convenience shopping with readily available everyday essential goods including food, household, diy, toys, books, garden, pets, health, party goods, appliance, homeware and workaday clothes and accessories as well as the service sector such as financial institutions and the beauty sector. In support of this is a long list of different eateries and a strong service sector particularly hair, nail and beauty salons. Coupled with this the high street has a wide range of access points for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and private cars on a very accessible high street. Shoppers can find every essential they may need quickly and efficiently.

However, there is room for improvement in retail, F&B leisure and accessibility. Vacant units of a range of sizes provide an opportunity to further attract retailers that provide budget convenience shopping in tech and sports for example. There is also scope for a wider range of F&B outlets. In the medium-term however property owners are encouraged to combine forces and provide a programme of pop-up shops and F&B to attract younger people to the high street.

New office and residential developments in the town centre will support this focus on budget, convenience and essential shopping as well as the pop-up shops/F&B by increasing daily footfall. To attract people to stay longer in Sittingbourne the leisure and F&B sector must be an important strand.

Sittingbourne has its own unique historic qualities. The historic core- the High Street - dates back to the twelfth century, still exists largely in its original form and layout and is lined with significant Listed Buildings. Retention and reinstatement of historic shopfronts support the focus on heritage as a driver to attract people to the town centre.



Sittingbourne High Street's F&B and night-time economy

2. Objectives for Culture, F&B and Leisure

Sittingbourne town centre has gained a new cinema and bowling alley in Bourne Place supported by new restaurants. Sittingbourne already has a wide F&B offer and the addition of chains will extend the offer further.

Analysis of trends in the food & beverage (F&B) and leisure markets shows that these are evolving and moving away from traditional operator models to innovative new models which attract Millennials such as food-pop ups, escape rooms and virtual reality (VR) gaming which could also start in pop-up shops.

These provide the greatest opportunity to increase footfall into the town centre. A number of these concepts can operate from existing premises which provide flexible space in terms of size and lease terms.

Sittingbourne's adult night-time economy is located at the High Street/West Street junction and clarity of the physical links between this area and Bourne Place will assist with extending the hours of use. Outdoor seating in both areas will contribute to a lively street scene.

Sittingbourne has cultural facilities within the town centre including the Avenue Theatre on Central Avenue, the heritage centre within the Forum and a local museum on East Street. However, the recent move of the art centre No.34 the High Street is a loss. Further investigation into future opportunities for cultural facilities is required building on existing town centre facilities and the new Dolphin Barge Museum on the Creek.

3. Objectives for Public Space, Physical Environment and Heritage

Building on the Sittingbourne Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy, the main objective is to embrace the value heritage can add to the High Street with a focus on improving the physical condition of the heritage assets as follows:

- Breathe new life into old places that are rich in heritage and full of promise, unlocking their potential and making them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors,
- Unleash the power of the historic environment to create economic growth and improve quality of life,
- Historic buildings that have deteriorated through decades of neglect will be restored and put back into use; conservation areas improved to kick-start regeneration and renewal; and unsung places will be recognised and celebrated for their unique character and heritage, helping instil a sense of local pride, and
- Give clarity to desirable signage in the Conservation Area and on Listed Buildings specifically.

Repair to the public realm of the High Street is imminent. There are two key moves which will support public realm of the revitalised High Street:

- Clarity of the alleys and lanes leading off the High Street through their physical improvement, wayfinding mapping and economic strategy for employment use, and
- Green infrastructure along the High Street.

The walking and cycling environment will be largely improved through these key moves. In addition, the pedestrian connections between the car parks and the High Street will be also improved with a safer and cleaner environment.



An attractive Listed Building on the high street

4. Objectives for the Economy including the Creative Economy

The aim is for a town centre that boasts a thriving business community, full of life from early morning when shoppers start their food shopping, through lunchtime when workers from local business come for lunch and their convenience shopping, until dusk when friends gather after work for a bite to eat or go to the cinema.

St Michael's Road and Eurolink Way corridors present the public perception of visitors to Sittingbourne both from the railway station gateway and the as A2 vehicular-through route and from the Eurolink employment area.

Proximity to the railway station as well as the High Street presents an opportunity to introduce traditional office space and flexible office space, mixed with residential and active ground floor uses. The routes and alleys between St Michael's Road and the High Street will be activated with creative industries. The energy of innovators and entrepreneurs inspires new ways of working and this will be captured collaboratively.

The physical environment of the road will be radically changed to an attractive tree lined avenue with spacious and safe pedestrian and cycle routes to facilitate a pleasant environment within which to move sustainably.

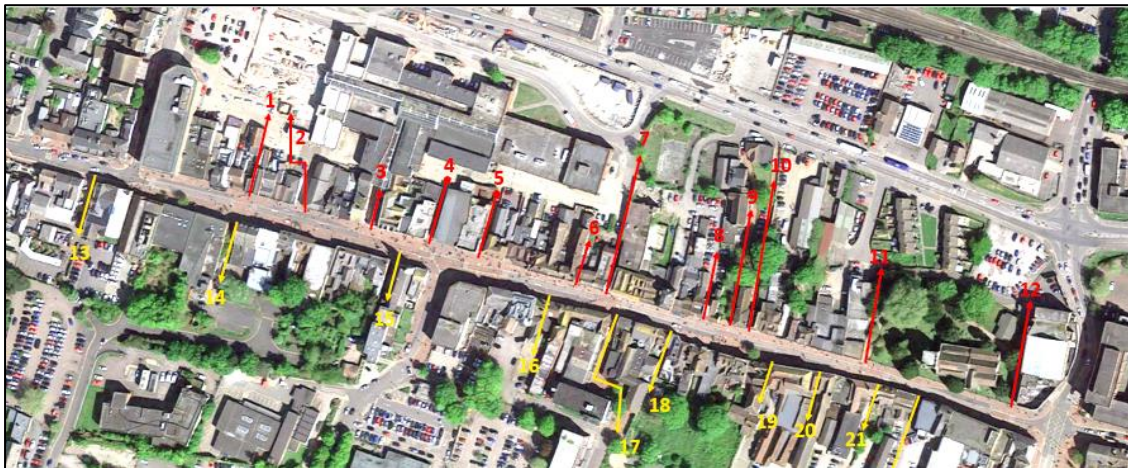
These corridors also provide the key pedestrian and cycle routes to facilities beyond but accessible from the town centre such as The Mill Skate Park and Dolphin Sailing Barge Museum at Milton Creek, Sittingbourne Retail Park, new residential development along Crown Quay Lane and the employment area of Eurolink therefore such pedestrian and cycle routes along Central Avenue and beyond will be clear, safe and attractive.

Alleys

There are many alleys leading from the High Street, many with historic origins. Some are better known and used than others. Few are actually signposted with where they lead to. There are many different uses along the alley ranging from car parking, retail, offices, homes and community uses such as places of worship. Recent restoration of alley artwork and name signs improves their appearance.

The objectives include:

- give greater clarity to the different alleys in terms of where they lead and provide a hierarchy for those which lead to the most useful places,
- consider how the use of the buildings lining the alleys can be intensified and particularly encourage uses along the alleys for creative industries,
- improve the public realm of the alleys, and
- protect the heritage of the alleys.



Alleys leading from Sittingbourne High Street



Examples of some of the alleys leading off the High Street

5. Objectives for Community Infrastructure

A number of existing community facilities such as the library, Swallows Leisure Centre, Avenue Theatre, the post office and police station, are clustered around Central Avenue. Phoenix House, housing a number of community groups, is also located on Central Avenue however the facility has been closed by KCC and new venue/s are sought.

Proximity of community facilities with the High Street provides a good synergy to contribute footfall to the high street where people access the range of available facilities. The existing functions are important to the town centre and the aim is to retain the community functions. Land on Central Avenue is underutilised in terms of single storey buildings, car parks, unused land and vacancy. This is an opportunity to create a cohesive and higher density Community Quarter with a mix of existing and new uses - community, residential, culture, public space and possibly education in the form of a College of Further Education.

Existing and new community facilities will be located on the ground floor to create active frontages. These will be associated with new public realm particularly a new public square in the heart of the development.

New residential development and/or a College of Further Education will be located on upper floors in the 'mansion block' approach to massing and height. Further work is required to determine the need and viability for a College of Further Education. The benefits of bringing such a facility to Sittingbourne's town centre are obvious both from the perspective of the students as well as the businesses in the town centre. But there are financial challenges to overcome.

A tranche of land in the area is owned by Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council providing opportunities to realise the objectives and in particular to deliver affordable housing. Central Avenue is a key route from the town centre to further key community facilities in the south of Sittingbourne leading to Borden Grammar School, Appleyard, Albany Park, Sittingbourne Cemetery and Memorial Hospital and as such pedestrian and cycle routes along Central Avenue and beyond will be clear, safe and attractive.

Avenue of Remembrance south leading directly to Albany Park will become a pedestrian and cycle priority route with access-only for vehicles to properties and hearses to access the cemetery. This route is already an important route but is currently compromised by parked vehicles. Pedestrianisation will improve the flow of movement from south of the town to the town centre as well as addressing Access for All issues currently posed by parked vehicles and tree roots.

6. Objectives for Town Centre Living

The aim for a lively twenty-four hour town centre will very much be assisted with the provision of town centre living. The objectives for new residential development in Sittingbourne Town Centre are as follows:

- Affordable housing will be provided throughout the town centre in accordance with Local Plan Review policy.
- Active frontage at ground floors will contribute to the liveliness and safety of the public realm including for residential-led mixed use development. A range of uses provide an active frontage which can be successfully mixed with residential including retail, leisure, appropriate F&B and community. Where residential is located on the ground floor active

frontage will include main entrances and living space such as kitchens facing the public realm. Well-designed entrances also contribute to active frontage.

- Conversions of buildings to residential will be encouraged where appropriate. Residential on upper floors are encouraged through-out the town centre whilst residential at ground level will be permitted everywhere except the primary retail zone.
- Space standards will be as set out in Local Plan Review policy.
- Due to the central location close to excellent railway facilities and the bus stops it is expected that car parking standards for residential development can be relaxed in accordance with the Parking SPD. In particular, any spaces that are provided will be for car clubs cars. In addition, electric vehicle charging facilities will also be provided.



New residential development located on upper floors above retail on Sittingbourne High Street

Spatial framework

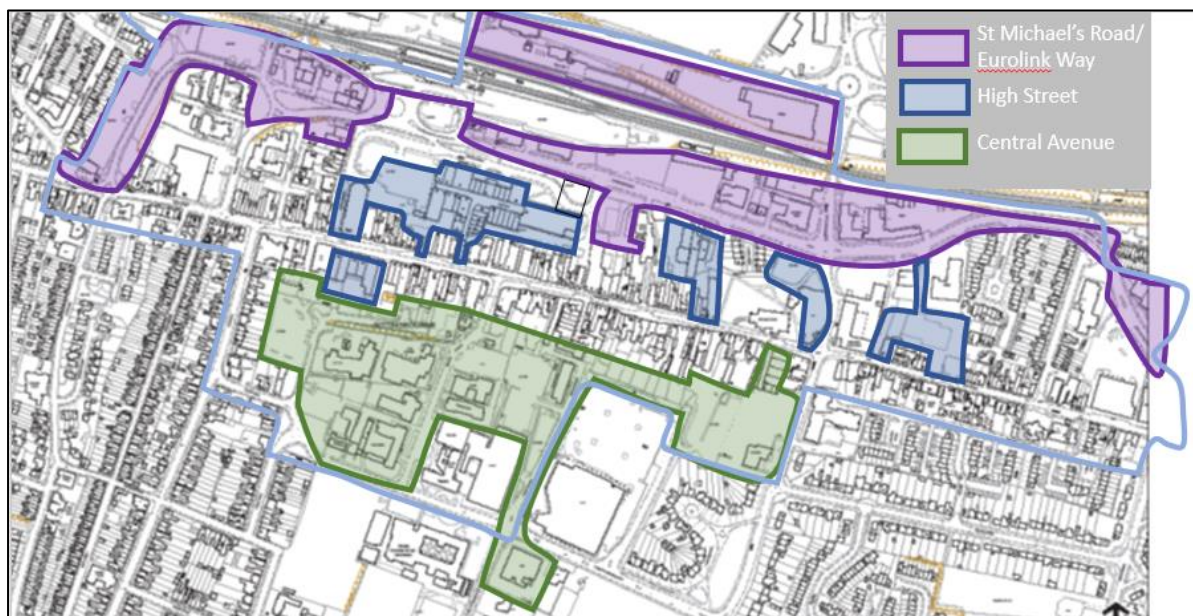
The spatial framework provides a strategic spatial strategy that allows a consistent approach to deliver change over the long term and is crucial to shaping a successful place. Land uses, gateways, activity hubs and connections are integrated and complementary.



Over-arching spatial strategy

The illustrative framework indicates how the principles could be interpreted for the whole of the town centre. In addition, the specific urban design requirements for each of the key areas of change are set out for the following districts:

- High Street
- East Street, Bell Road and Crown Quay Lane
- Central Avenue and Avenue of Remembrance
- St Michael's Road and Bourne Place
- Eurolink Way



Zones of opportunity

Retail, F&B, leisure and social infrastructure policy

Prior to COVID-19 competition from internet sales and out-of-centre retailers had impacted upon the health of Swale's town centres. The number of vacant units prior to lockdown was below the national rate and although COVID-19 is likely to have impacted on this figure Sittingbourne Town Centre appears to have shown a greater degree of resilience than some of its larger neighbours, reflecting the strength of independents and convenience shops in creating a positive future for the town centre. Looking forward the focus will be on improving the experience of the town centre as an attractive place to dwell, shop, see friends and run errands by taking advantage of the increased use of local high streets for a wider range of uses.

The Council seeks to enhance the role of Sittingbourne as a place to visit to carry out a range of activities from convenience and budget shopping, undertaking financial transactions, using beauty and hair services, visiting the post office and library, education, facilities for health, teeth and eyes, eating, drinking and exploring the new leisure particularly at Bourne Place. Sittingbourne will be a competitive town centre not only to visit but also to live and work in accordance with Policy DM 2 Proposals for main town centre uses. These activities are supported by conveniently located rail and bus connections, ample car parks, cycle parking and a good quality pedestrian environment.

Development that promotes Sittingbourne's vitality and viability will be encouraged:

1. The primary shopping area within the High Street promotes a retail-led mix of town centre uses on the ground floors that support the day-time and evening economy coupled with the sustainable use of upper floors for commercial and residential development. Focus is given to ground floor units to support development that interacts positively with the street scene and encourages footfall;
2. Beyond the primary shopping area the High Street, West Street and East Street will still be promoted for ground floor retail, leisure, F&B, services as so forth however to pro-actively support the vitality and viability of Sittingbourne town centre ground floor and upper floors will be available for commercial and residential development introducing uses that bring new life to more peripheral parts of the town centre;
3. In all cases, consideration will be given to the impact of proposed non-retail uses in terms of prominence and dominance within any given frontage, with account taken of individual unit frontage, overall frontage length, and number of existing/extant non-retail uses. Issues of amenity and disturbance will be a material consideration in determining applications for change of use.
4. Owners of vacant shops will be encouraged to accommodate appropriate meanwhile or pop-up uses and, in larger units, stalls for new local enterprise. The existing Friday street market will be supported and new opportunities for street markets investigated.
5. Frontages will be attractive and, especially in the Conservation Area, in keeping with the character and heritage of the High Street. Design should celebrate historic character and local identity with high-quality streets and public realm.
6. Opportunities will be explored for the provision of a place based integrated care systems (ICSS) approach to health care provision located within the town centre.



Bourne Place, part of the new connection between the railway station and the High Street

Residential policy

Housing in the town centre will contribute toward the overall housing for the Borough as set out in Local Plan review. In particular it will contribute toward the 850 units identified for Sittingbourne town centre.

The Council will permit at least 850 new homes in the town centre in the period up to 2038. This will include housing as part of mixed-use developments. The density to be achieved will be dependent on the character of the area and the other uses within the development or surrounding area.

Housing development will be encouraged to provide amenity space which may be provide on roofs or as balconies. Where space is tight contributions towards new green spaces identified in the town centre will be required.

Affordable housing will be provided as a minimum of 10% in accordance with Policy DM8 of the Adopted Local Plan. This will be reviewed as part of the Local Plan Review process.

Conversion of upper floors of existing buildings to residential use will be encouraged in all parts of the town centre including the High Street. Ideally access will be provided front the front of buildings but where this is not possible alternative access may be considered.

The overall massing and height of residential development will be reduced with the set-back of upper floors such that terraces or balconies can be provided.

Consideration of wind and air movement will be given in design of residential developments especially the taller buildings.

Entrances will be in a prime position, clear, obvious, uncluttered, well-designed and safe.

Size of dwellings will be in accordance with Policy ST 5 to enable sufficient space for living, storage and working in homes with a new focus on work-ready homes.

Employment policy

The impact of COVID-19 means that organisations will assess how work can be carried out in the future and whilst many individuals have adapted to new ways of working the greatest impact has been felt in the limitation in direct human contact.

Offices will still be needed to collaborate, build relationships or develop talent so therefore new offices will need to accommodate flexible or agile working with hot-desking either in a single company office or as a drop-in for independent users within a single office. These changes may not only improve how work is done but also lead to savings in rent, capital costs, facilities operations, maintenance, and management. Whilst how this evolves into the future is uncertain, it is possible that a move away from centralised city centre working towards a more dispersed pattern will benefit towns such as Sittingbourne due to excellent links with high-speed rail links to cities in the region.

Office design will undergo transformation and spaces will have to be fun, engaging, social and collaborative. People primarily home working may require access to different technology, facilities, small meetings or just a change of scene with access to food and beverage will use offices more flexibly as a club, a destination, a place to be requiring a different portfolio of space solutions: owned space, standard leases, flexible leases, flex space, co-working space and remote work.

The result is that town centres, high streets and small businesses will benefit from commuters remaining in towns rather than commuting to cities. This presents opportunities for new office space to be located along St Michael's Road or to re-purpose space, such as high street retail, to meet some of this new demand.

The surrounding built environment will be considered as important as the workspace itself with peripheral activities to work that support the office to function; morning coffees, working lunches, after work drinks with friends, industry and social events. Leisure and cultural activities create vibrancy, support local economy, contextualise work and give reasons for physical presence.

The Council will permit development proposals that improve the quality and range of office and business accommodation in a range of unit sizes.

Fast broadband will support new office and business accommodation.

Alleys policy

The numerous alleys leading from the High Street to the wider town centre whilst presenting a good opportunity to improve connectivity need to be addressed with regards legibility, safety and quality. The majority are public routes and will remain so. Measures include:

- Activating the alleys by putting the buildings into greater use with a focus on creative industries, other employment opportunities and to new residential developments,

- Consider new developments accessed by existing alleys utilising the under-used land behind the high street,
- Activating the frontage with eyes-on-streets along the alleys,
- Paving and signage to impart a better sense of the direction between areas behind the high street and the High Street itself via the alleys,
- Improved lighting to enhance safety,
- Additional tree planting where there is space.

Perimeter blocks and active frontage

Perimeter blocks are typically formed of buildings located around the outer edge of the block facing the public realm with private areas in the centre. A site may form a part of an overall perimeter block, the whole block itself or be large enough to create more than one perimeter block. The way buildings and associated parking areas relate to the street, public routes or spaces (public realm) has an effect upon townscape quality, safety, security and vitality.

- New development will contribute to a perimeter block structure and will front the public realm with active frontage and private rears. Where sites are adjacent to private land or inactive land use, such as the railway line, these boundaries form part of the private rears.
- Perimeter block sizes will vary and will support the creation of a grid of streets or public realm with a fine urban grain.
- A series of plots may contribute to blocks and the plots will be designed and articulated to prevent the creation of monolithic buildings.
- Free standing pavilion buildings should be avoided unless the design supports the street scene and avoids dead frontage.
- New buildings of all types will be designed with active frontage incorporating doors and windows facing public streets, routes and spaces.
- In key locations as identified on the plans the ground floor will contain retail/commercial/leisure/residential active uses.
- Buildings will make clear distinctions between public and private areas.
- Blank walls, including blank walls with blank doors such as fire escapes, and unattractive boundary treatments such as close boarded fences will be minimised facing public areas.
- Entrances to buildings will be significant, clear and well distinguished.
- Where required the ground floor of the building will be set-back to accommodate an appropriate footpath width, upper floors may still follow the ownership line.
- Refer to the section on parking

Establish appropriate building heights

Building heights have a significant impact on how a building integrates with the established townscape and they make a significant contribution to the character of the place.

- Subject to full justification taller buildings could be accommodated along the north side of St Michael’s Road. Possible heights are likely to be above six storeys.
- Medium height buildings will be accommodated to the south of the town centre around Central Avenue. Applications will include a 3-D massing study to explain and justify the building heights. Appropriate heights are likely to be between four and six storeys.
- New buildings along the High Street should not exceed the height of the tallest building in its vicinity (excluding church spires). Appropriate heights are likely to be between two and four storeys depending on the specific location and site context.
- Applications will need to demonstrate how the significance of heritage assets within the town centre will be preserved or enhanced by proposed new building heights. New buildings should not damage the key viewpoints or settings of heritage assets.
- All applications for tall and medium buildings should comply with the guidance produced by the Design Council and Historic England.

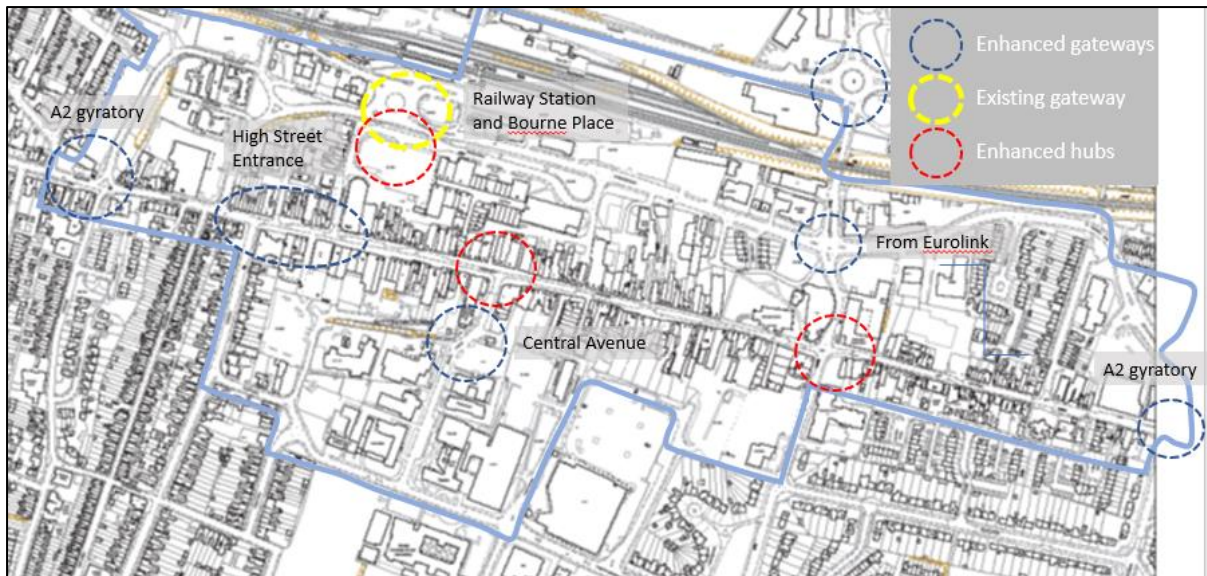


Building heights

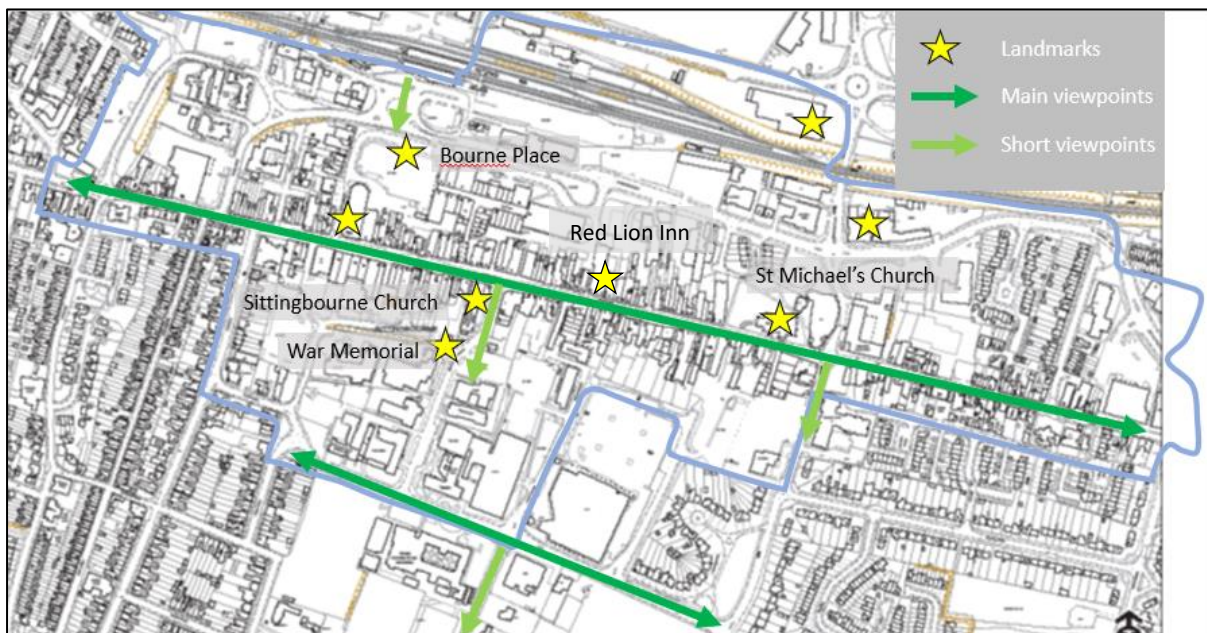
Gateways, hubs and landmarks

Gateways are located at the main arrival points into the town centre and help people form their first impressions of the town. Hubs are presented as opportunities for gatherings and form lively locations within the town centre.

- Gateways to the town centre and activity hubs will be marked by appropriately scales buildings, space with well-designed public realm and public art features.
- Key spaces in the town centre will be the hubs for outdoor public activity in the town and the spaces will be exciting and thought provoking.
- Gateways coupled with landmarks will be promoted for tall buildings.



Gateways and hubs



Key viewpoints and landmarks

Walking and Cycling

Sittingbourne town centre is compact and provides good opportunities to ensure a walkable and cycleable environment within the town centre. In addition, it is important to improve access to the town centre, helping to reduce traffic, reduce pollution and improve air quality, support the local economy and contributing to Sittingbourne being an enjoyable place to visit and spend time in.

St Michael's Road and Avenue of Remembrance skirt the town centre but do not create barriers to movement due to the well-placed pedestrian crossings including those outside the railway station. Beyond the town centre pedestrian and cycle connections that take account of desire lines to the following need to be improved that provide access to the following:

- Residential areas surrounding the town centre including dense urban neighbourhoods mainly in terrace form to the south as well as newer developments in the north,
 - To the north-east is Sittingbourne's main employment district Eurolink, to the north-west are retail parks and the Milton Creek visitor destination featuring a skatepark and museum,
 - To the south is Borden Grammar School and Albany Park, one of Sittingbourne's largest recreation grounds and beyond to Sittingbourne Cemetery and Memorial Hospital, and
 - Crossings will be at ground level and allow people to cross quickly and efficiently, preferably in one movement and guard rails will be avoided.
- A particular challenge is the pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the town centre and railway station to and from the north via Crown Quay Lane and Milton Road as the railway line is a barrier to movement. Pedestrian access to the station from the north is being considered to facilitate better use of the railway station by the new residential developments in the north and by people accessing Eurolink, Ridham and Kemsley for employment. Eurolink Way and St Michael's Road will be more pedestrian and cycle friendly with new tree-lined, wider provision to encourage people to walk to the north of the railway line.
 - New development will facilitate walking and cycling by providing or contributing to a permeable network of well-designed routes.
 - Streets will provide a pleasant and safe walking and cycling environment through the provision of wide pavements, dedicated on-street cycle lanes or hybrid lanes, active frontages and reduced traffic speeds.
 - A clearly legible and dedicated cycle network will be created which links cyclists through the town in the most efficient and safest route possible, with opportunities for cyclists to stop and engage with the town (i.e. cycle hubs and secure stands) at strategic points
 - Secure, well-lit, overlooked and easily accessible cycle parking and, where appropriate, changing facilities will be provided across the town centre and as part of new development. New residential and office development will provide secure lockable cycle facilities within the development.
 - Particular attention will be paid to the alleys leading from the High Street to ensure it is clear where they are leading to and to ensure that they offer a safe and appealing environment for pedestrians.



Movement and parking

Public transport

Sittingbourne is well served by rail with connections to especially west east to London, Ramsgate and Dover and north to Sheerness. Routes south, to Maidstone and Ashford for example, are more difficult involving train or even station changes and therefore direct connections are by bus only. People will be encouraged to travel by bus and rail to reduce the number of trips made by car which helps to reduce congestion and pollution.

- A new bus hub is located close to the railway station with bus services linking within and beyond Sittingbourne.
- Any changes to the streets and spaces will take the opportunity to improve the quality of bus routes and stops.
- Improvements to the bus hub, as a place to wait safely, warmly and dry, and to bus routes including frequency could be improved. Information regarding bus routes and frequency at the bus hub could be much improved.
- Pedestrian routes to the railway station, bus hub and bus stops will be logical, pleasant and safe.
- Bus stops will be sited to ensure all parts of the town centre and within 200m of a bus stop.
- Bus shelters will be provided as set out in the materials palette
- Developers will make provision for bus services as part of the mitigation for the transport impact of a development.
- The Council will seek to support initiatives which encourage improved integration between modes such as cycle parking near stations, electronic signage for buses and so forth.



The future bus hub and new multi-storey car park

Parking and servicing

Sittingbourne town centre is well served with car parks ranging from short-stay to long-stay, private and council owned and in all parts of the town centre. And is suitable for visitors accessing the town centre.



Electric vehicle charging point for taxis in Central Avenue

Parking for new development will consider the following:

- Proximity of the town centre to the railway station means that car parking requirements for new development can be reduced to the minimum as long as car clubs are provided.
- The location of private car parking should integrate into the design so that it does not dominate the public realm. Large surface car parks should be avoided and smaller car parks should be concealed from view for example in parking courts shaded with trees.
- Parking areas in perimeter blocks will be concealed by development to avoid dead frontage.
- On-street parking will be integrated into the streetscene in defined bays.
- Open car parks must be shaded by tree cover, ideally a tree planted every three parking bays. Trees will be native.
- Facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.
- Secure bicycle parking will be provided.
- Parking provision should be provided in accordance with the Council's adopted parking standards. Refer to Parking SPD.

Public realm

High quality public realm design creates attractive environments for people to experience as well as good settings for buildings. Significant improvements will be delivered to the quality of public spaces and public realm. The design of streets and spaces will provide visual interest and delight.

- Refurbished public spaces will be provided at identified gateways and hubs forming focal points to each area.
- Public spaces will be linked by high quality connections and visual links so that people can perceive the network of public spaces, both paved and green, to confidently find their way around.
- Streets and spaces will be well designed to foster a sense of place and to encourage walking and cycling.
- Spaces will have inclusive access to all members of the community. Spaces will take advantage of southerly orientation and aspect to maximise solar gain.
- New street furniture, paving and lighting will be chosen from the palette Appendix x. Lighting will enhance safety and promote local identity through feature and architectural lighting.
- Public art will enhance the cultural offer of the town centre ideally using local artists who will be involved at the start of design process in order to embed public art into the scheme. Robust public engagement will be carried out. Art will have local relevance and contribute to the cultural legacy of the town. Interventions which include green infrastructure are encouraged.
- Key locations for public realm improvements include:
 - The High Street including 'greening' opportunities with a hub focussed on the junction with Central Avenue.

- St Michael’s Road will be remodelled as a tree lined avenue to provide a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Central Avenue redevelopment area will feature new routes and spaces as part of a comprehensive redevelopment.
- Avenue of Remembrance
- Alleys – see earlier separate section.



Paved and green spaces

New green space

Green spaces are a great benefit to our environment. They filter pollutants and dust from the air, provide shade, lower atmospheric temperatures, assist with flood attenuation and provide an opportunity for increasing biodiversity, in other words a place for birds and bees. Green spaces also benefit people as a place to sit or exercise thus by improving physical and mental health, reduce stress and improve health overall. The town centre has few green spaces therefore new tree lined streets and new green spaces will be delivered to provide a place for respite and calm and, in addition, links to existing green spaces will be strengthened.

Existing green spaces include:

- St Michael’s graveyard – the council will work with the diocese to remove anti-social behaviour and provide a more accessible and pleasant place to visit.
- Bell Road open space –the council owned space will be improved with addition planting and seating,

New green spaces will be located as follows:

- As part of the Bourne Place redevelopment area the car park will be replaced with a new green space to improve links between Bourne Place and the High Street and to provide a much needed green space in the heart of the town centre including new tree planting, extensive new planting, seating, and public art as a place to join and celebrate.

- The 2015 study by Illman Young commissioned by KCC which includes designs for storm-water planters and appropriate planting along the length of the high street, terminating in to improvement to the space at the junction of Bell Road and East Street, will be taken forward. These proposals will be further detailed for consultation and implementation.
- As part of the Central Avenue redevelopment area a new open space will be designed as part of the series of open spaces which lead people to Albany Park to the south of the town centre.

S106 contributions from town centre developments will contribute towards the funding of green space within the town centre. In addition, any new public realm and new green spaces would need appraisal of the implications to the Council's budget.

Design quality – architectural standards

Good architectural quality and detailing of new development will make a significant difference to the appearance of Sittingbourne.

- With regards masterplanning, urban design, architecture and landscape the requirements of Policy CP 4 Requiring good design will be met.
- New buildings and spaces will be of the highest design quality.
- Within the Conservation Area buildings will respond directly to the local vernacular.
- Elsewhere new buildings will be of a high-quality contemporary design reflecting their land use.
- New development proposals should investigate and record the historic environment, including the archaeology.
- Opportunities to repair and renew the town centre built environment through redevelopment of unsympathetic.
- Shopfront design guidelines are provided for buildings with heritage interest on the High Street, West Street and East Street.

Respect heritage

The heritage of Sittingbourne is vitally important to the town's success.

- Preservation and enhancement of the character and setting of heritage assets will ensure the unique image of the town is celebrated.
- Close attention will be paid to the form, scale and mass of development to ensure integration between the historic and the modern townscape.
- The historic pattern of alleys will be retained and celebrated.
- Sittingbourne's palette of building materials includes: red and yellow stock brick, flint, slate and clay tiles, timber weatherboarding and render and new buildings should reflect this.

PROPOSED BUILDING FRONT IMPROVEMENTS





FLANK WALLS

Clean the original material of the wall (Brickwork or render) 

Renovate/reinstate original heritage flank wall (Including original frames and detailing if known)

Flank wall art of a traditional nature, to complement the heritage of the site and relate to the original flank wall artwork that existed.





MAP NEEDS TO BE COLOURED IN AND FLANK WALLS ADDED WITH RELEVANT NUMBERS



EXISTING FLANK WALL EXAMPLE

PROPOSED BUILDING FRONT IMPROVEMENTS





HIGH LEVEL BUILDING FRONTS

Clean original brickwork.

Remove paint to reveal original brickwork.

- Repoint brickwork if required.
- Use conservation methods for sensitive treatment of the facade - e.g. DOFF or TORC cleaning system)

Clean/paint/renovate window surrounds in a white or cream colour.

- Likely to be stucco


Clean/repair/reinstate cornices.

New, traditional, wet render.

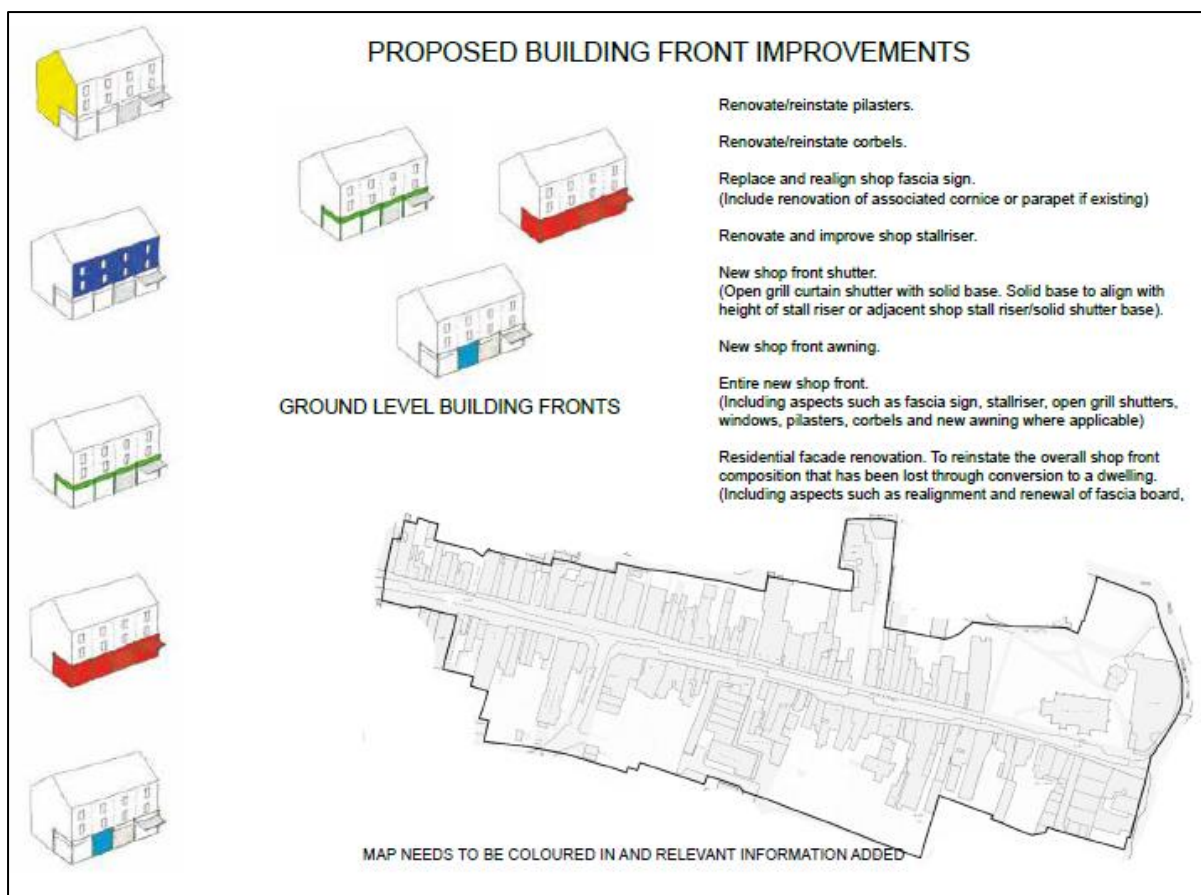
- Modest colour palette to suit heritage of the area

Repaint upper building front.

- Modest colour palette to suit heritage of the area



MAP NEEDS TO BE COLOURED IN AND BUILDING FRONTS TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH RELEVANT MATERIALS



Innovation

- Support and encourage high speed data hub workspaces
- Embrace digital innovation as an opportunity
- Real-time information displays for buses, car parks and advisory messages regarding congestion on the surrounding road network

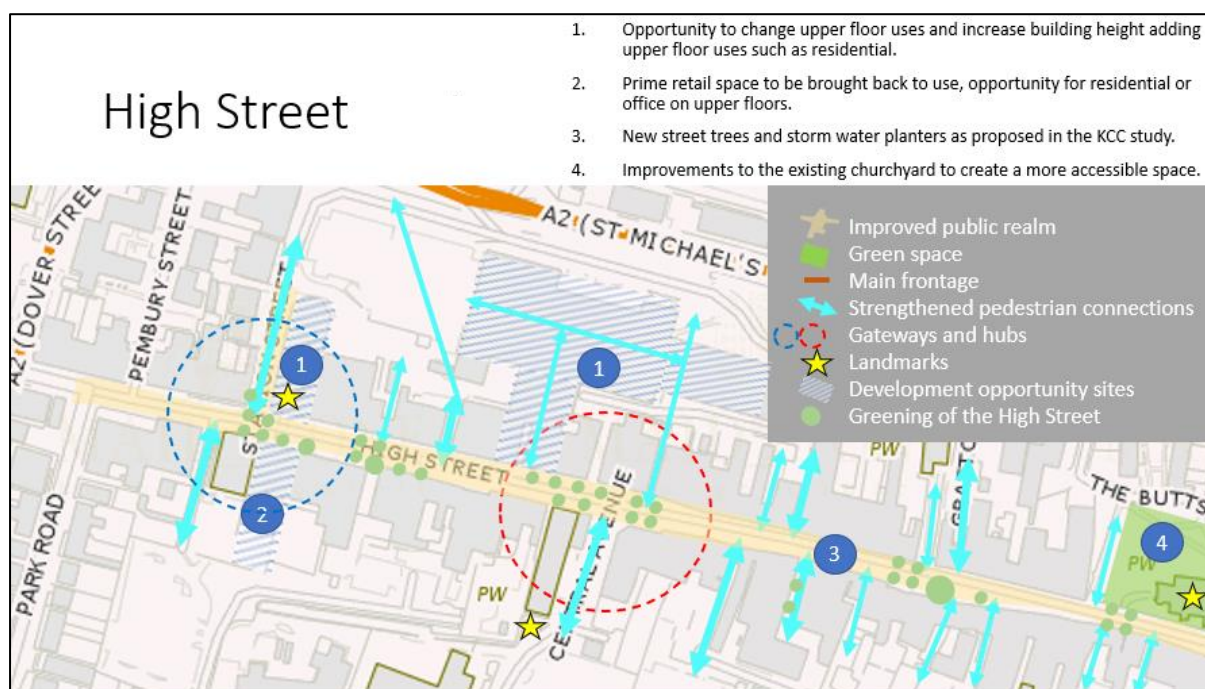
Sustainability

Sittingbourne is the primary settlement of Swale with the highest range of shops, services, employment opportunities and public transport links and is therefore one of the most sustainable locations in the borough. This, coupled with the Council's Climate Emergency, requires that new development should be in accordance with Policy DM 19 Sustainable design and construction.

Districts

High Street and the Forum

It has been determined that people are relying more than ever on their local centres and it has been identified that Sittingbourne is specifically benefitting. The main focus of retail in Sittingbourne are the High Street and The Forum which present opportunities to improve the retail offer, diversify the uses especially active uses at ground floor level, maximise residential uses on upper floors and improve the public realm.



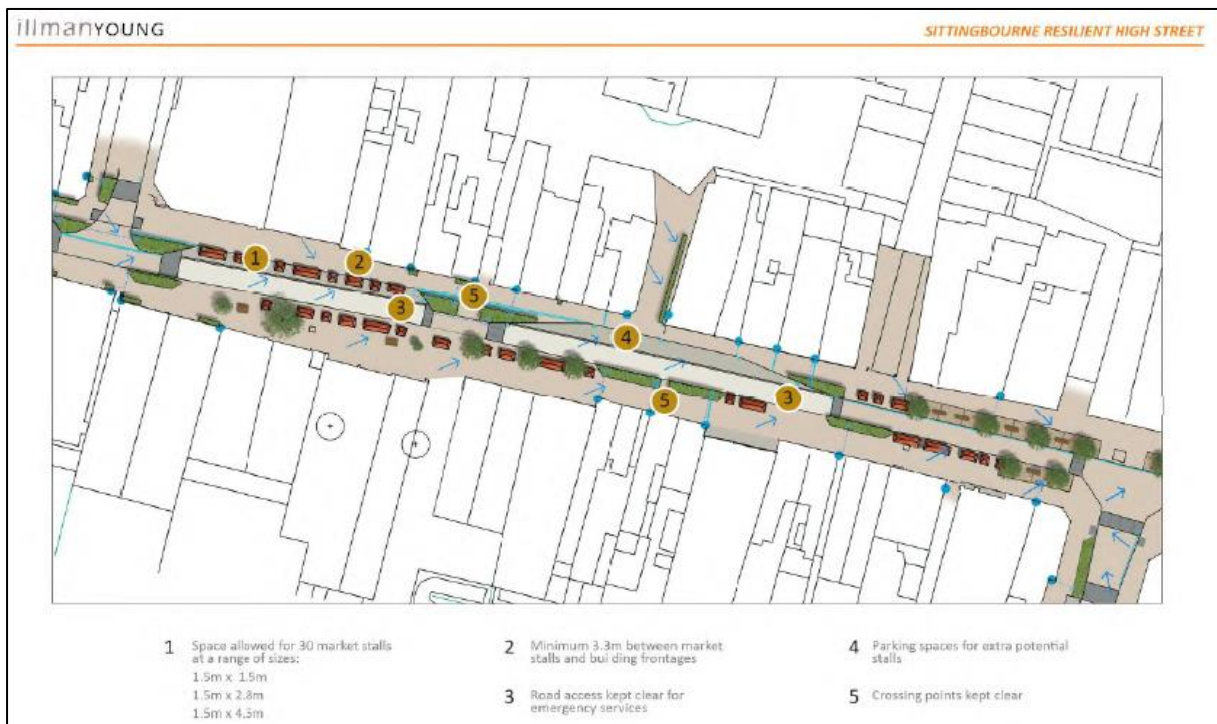
Proposals for the High Street

Opportunities include:

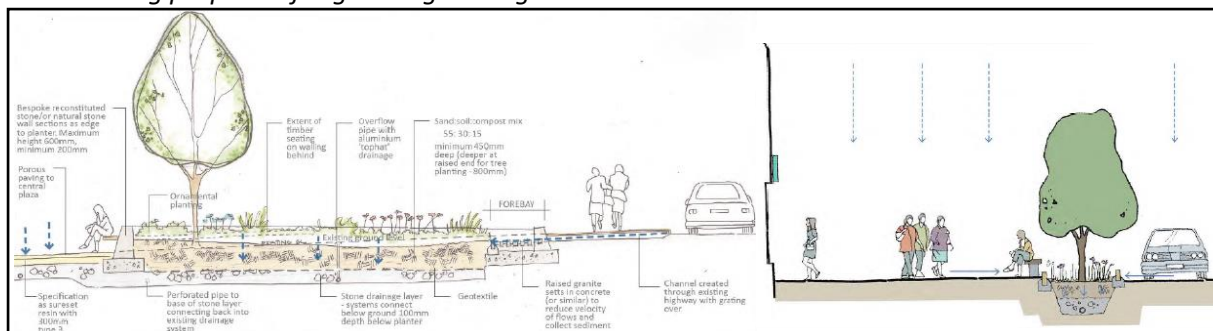
- a) Physical moves identified in the plan include:
 1. A range of opportunities to add both residential uses and additional retail uses above or around The Forum,
 2. An opportunity to put Wilko to greater use with residential floors above, and
 3. An opportunity to redevelop 23-25 High Street with retail at ground floor and other uses on upper floors and in the rear area.
- b) Where units are empty prime retail space is to be brought back to use by working with landowners to identified long term use and to encourage 'meanwhile' use of empty units to enliven the high street.
- c) Encourage a range of organisations with vested interests in the high street, including retailers, traders, community and voluntary groups, to work together to create a new and all-encompassing group to facilitate improved partnership working. Despite possible disparate views and interests collaborative working can spawn greater participation in forming ideas to attract people to the high street area, such as the organisation of events and activities, improving shop frontages and upgrade shop signage.
- d) The Conservation Area and Listed Buildings to play an important part in the revitalisation of the town centre; working with landowners to better maintenance of these buildings,

improve the overall appearance of the high street while putting unused parts of the buildings to good use to create value and liveliness.

- e) Opportunities to increase the height of some buildings and add upper floors for uses such as residential.
- f) The public realm to be spruced up through a programme of works which includes: painting street furniture, removal of street clutter, updating of signage and making good poor repairs to the paving and carriageway.
- g) Ensure strong, attractive and safe connections from the High Street to key activities beyond the High Street with particular focus on connections to public transport and car parks.
- h) Implementation of the greening, tree planting and storm water drainage strategy proposed for the High Street.



Illman Young proposals for greening the High Street



Illman Young proposals for storm water planters on the High Street

East Street, Bell Road and Crown Quay Lane

As a key gateway to the town centre from the north the St Michael's Road junction with Crown Quay Lane, linking the town centre with Eurolink business park, is a particular focus for redevelopment with a number of opportunity sites. The Crown Quay Lane and East Street junction is a focus for a hub of activity centred on Swale House and a new green space.



Proposals for East Street, Bell Road and Crown Quay Lane

Opportunities include:

- a) Physical moves identified in the plan include:
 - 1) Conversion of St Michael's Road to a tree lined avenue,
 - 2) Opportunity sites for new mixed-use development,
 - 3) Improvements to the existing cemetery green space, and
 - 4) The creation of a new green public space on Bell Road.
- b) As part of the conversion of St Michael's Road to a tree lined avenue with an attractive walking and cycling environment, the junction of St Michael's Road with Crown Quay Lane has a significant role to play to ensure good pedestrian connections from the High Street to Eurolink business park, encouraging travel by train/cycle/foot and a good setting for new development at the junction.



St Michael's Road and Crown Quay Lane junction, a key gateway to Sittingbourne from the north

- c) There will be some flexibility in the choice of uses the landowners consider for the redevelopment of the opportunity sites with active uses at ground level and uses which attract a number of people the main aims.
- d) A spruce up St Michael's Church cemetery and repair of the boundary coupled with prevention of anti-social behaviour aim to ensure the provision of a relaxing green space in the heart of the town centre.
- e) As a key part of the implementation of the greening, tree planting and storm water drainage strategy proposed for the high street the new design for the green space at the junction of Bell Road and East Street will be subject to detailed community consultation.

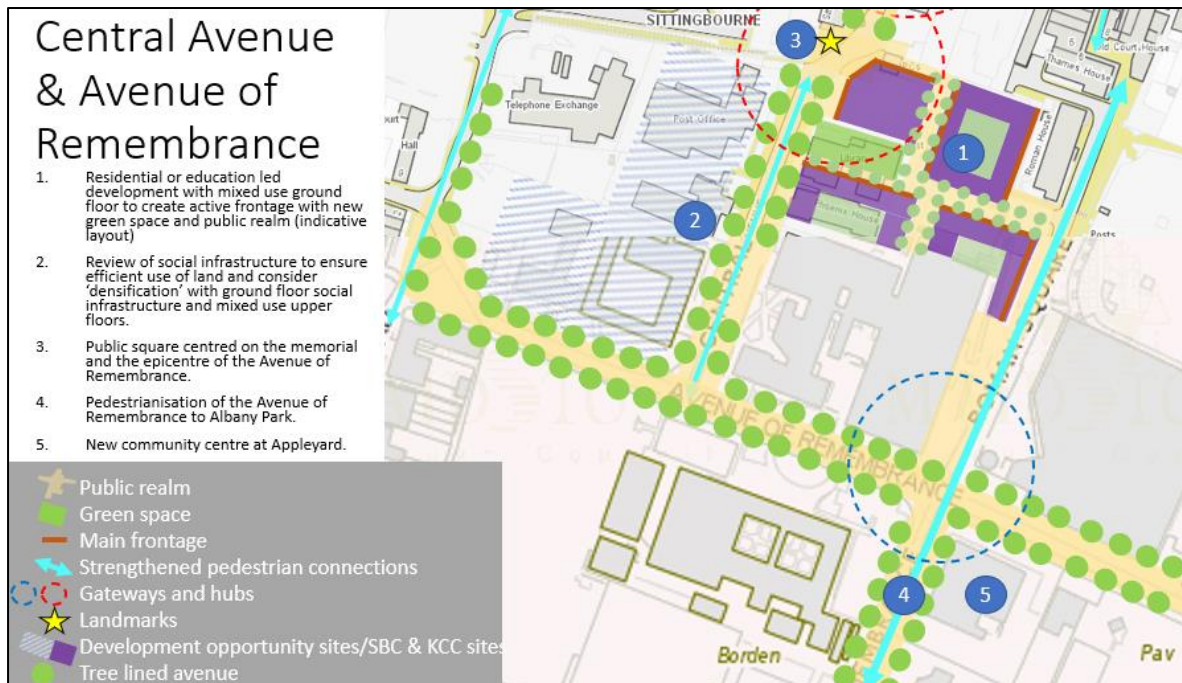


Public open space at the Bell Road East Street junction

- f) SBC land will be used to provide affordable housing and town centre living, enlivening East Street and providing a population within the catchment of the High Street.
- g) The frontage of the New Century cinema is considered of local historic interest and as such the façade is to be retained in any reuse or redevelopment proposals.

Central Avenue and Avenue of Remembrance

A swathe of land owned by SBC and KCC presents an opportunity for a comprehensive redevelopment to bring liveliness and footfall to the town centre. Public realm improvements in the wider vicinity, a new public square and refurbishment of the memorials associated with the Avenue of Remembrance also provide a new setting for retained social and leisure facilities.



Proposals for Central Avenue and the Avenues of Remembrance



The war memorial on Central Avenue



Public realm options

Opportunities include:

- a) Physical moves identified in the plan include:
 1. New residential and social infrastructure led development with mixed use ground floor to create active frontage, such as community uses, with the setting of a new green space and new public realm ensuring retention of existing access points to the Swallows Leisure Centre,
 2. Refurbishment of both the public square centred on the memorial and the Avenues of Remembrance,

3. Pedestrianisation of the route to Albany Park and Sittingbourne Cemetery.

- b) The aspiration is for the Avenues of Remembrance to educate local, national and international visitors about the history of our community. The Council is looking for new and innovative ways to display the memorials and share the stories. In addition, the public realm requires an overhaul to remove trip hazards and provide visitors with an attractive place within which to explore the memorials and sit to contemplate. The well-used north/south route linking the town centre with homes in the south will benefit from pedestrianisation and limited vehicle access (to occupiers and hearses for example) allowing cyclists and pedestrians safe access to Borden Grammar School, Albany Park and beyond.



Extent of the war memorials on the Avenue of Remembrance and Central Avenue (copyright S Palmer and R Emmett)



Current image of the Avenue on Remembrance leading to Albany Park and Sittingbourne Cemetery



Indicative image of the pedestrianisation of the Avenue of Remembrance

- c) Central Avenue presents an opportunity to create a cohesive and higher density Community Quarter with a mix of existing and new uses – community, health, residential, culture, public space and possibly education, through Further Education provision.
- d) The extent of available land on Central Avenue allows for ‘mansion block’ approach to building massing and height arranged around a new central green open space and pedestrianised spaces in a highly integrated neighbourhood.

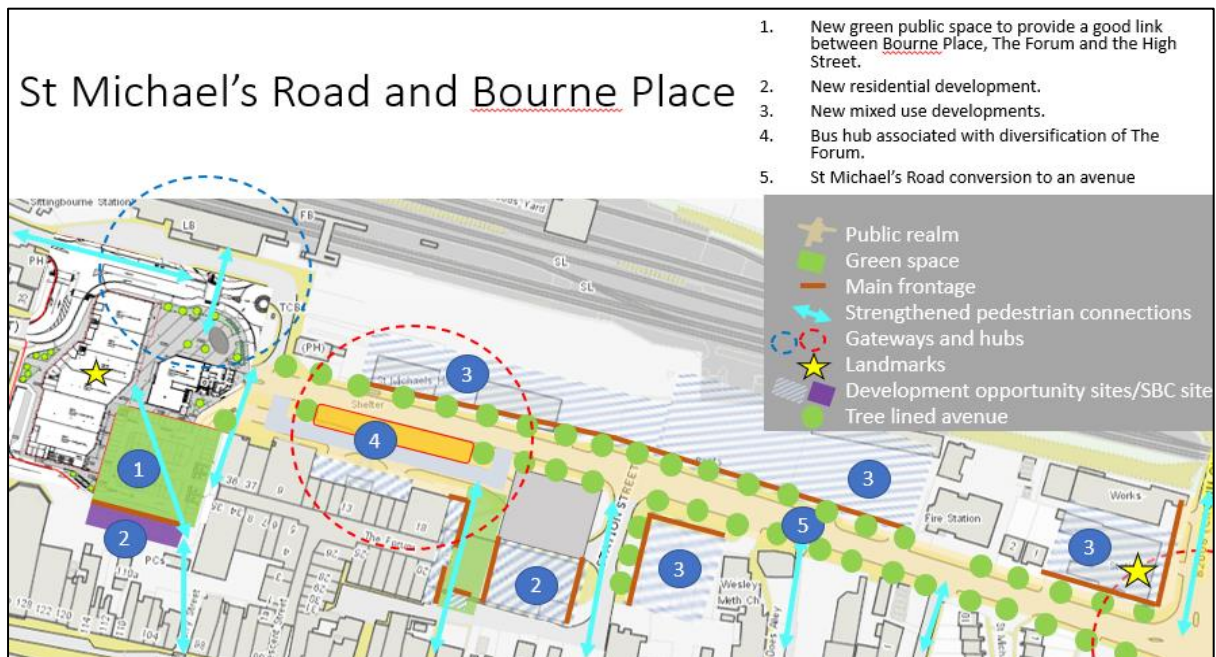
- e) New residential development will be located on upper floors contributing to evening liveliness.
- f) Existing and new community/social infrastructure facilities will be located on the ground floor to create active frontages. These will be specifically associated with the new public realm particularly a new public square in the heart of the development.
- g) Further work is required to determine the need and viability for a substantive Further Education provision in the town. The benefits of bringing such a facility to Sittingbourne's town centre are obvious both from the perspective of the students as well as the businesses in the town centre. But there is a need for a financially sustainable business case, set against uncertainty, in respect of future Further Education funding
- h) With the demise of Phoenix House local community and volunteer groups require new premises with many opportunities presented by under-utilised buildings to the west of Central Avenue or The Appleyard or within new development identified above.
- i) A review of social infrastructure in the area, to the west side of Central Avenue particularly, would ensure efficient use of buildings and land. This presents the opportunity to consider 'densification' within the buildings providing social infrastructure on the ground floor and mixed use on the upper floors.
- j) Roman Square is 'tired' and in need of refurbishment. There is an opportunity to reconfigure the development or start again and replace the development with something more up-to-date and relevant for use today.



Avenue of Remembrance

St Michael's Road and Bourne Place

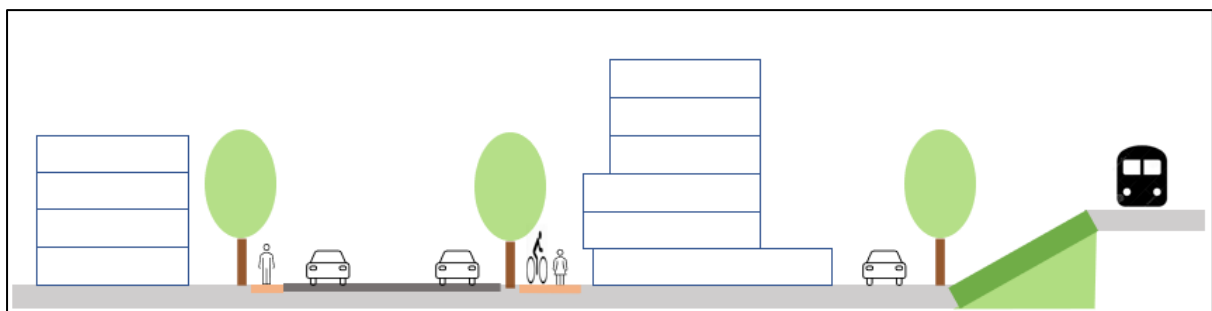
By converting St Michael's Road into a safe and attractive tree-lined avenue a new setting is presented for a wide range of opportunity sites along the road. Building on improvements to Sittingbourne Railway station and development of the new Bourne Place leisure facilities there are opportunities to further improve The Forum, the bus hub and the route between Bourne Place and the High Street.



Proposals for St. Michael's Road and Bourne Place

Opportunities include:

- a) Physical moves identified in the plan include:
 - a. Improvement to the public realm of St Michael's Road to form an avenue,
 - b. New green public space to provide a setting to Bourne Place and The Forum, to provide a place for rest and relaxation within the town centre and to provide an attractive route between the railway station and the High Street,
 - c. New residential development, maybe incorporating the Sittingbourne Hub to activate the ground floor, to provide a focus to the green space,
 - d. New mixed use and residential developments lining St Michael's Road, and
 - e. Improvements to the Bus Hub to ensure a safe, well shaded space to wait for buses.
- b) St Michael's Road conversion to an avenue would include provision of cycle facilities, improvement to the pedestrian surface and planting of street trees.



Indicative cross-section of St. Michael's Road on conversion to a tree-lined avenue



The poor condition of St Michael's Road



Indicative images of street trees forming an avenue on St. Michael's Road

- c) Currently sites lining St Michael's Road are underutilised low-rise buildings or unbuilt sites highlighting the opportunities for new mixed-use developments of taller buildings, with active frontage, rear parking with the new avenue as a setting leading to an increase in people wanting access to the facilities on the High Street.
- d) The view from Bourne Place towards the High Street is of a jumble of the rears of the high street buildings, service yards and car parking. A new residential development with active frontage at ground level, such as the Sittingbourne Hub, will contribute to natural

surveillance of the area as well as providing a screen to the rear of the buildings on the high street.

- e) The lack of a place in the town centre to sit and relax will be addressed with a new green space which also provide a setting for Bourne Place, The Forum and the new residential development as well as an attractive route from the railway station and the High Street.
- f) Berry Street is the prime route connecting the High Street with Bourne Place. A new map sign is located at the junction of Berry Street with the High Street giving directions to Bourne Place and the railway station but the route initially leads to a blank wall. Public art is one approach to facilitating identification of the route as having importance and a range of design approaches include linear art along the length of the route, textured surfaces on the walls of the route, lighting effects along the route or panels which cast light and shade along the route.



View of the rear of the High Street from Bourne Place



Opportunities for public art to enliven the route between Bourne Place and the High Street

Eurolink Way

Significant new residential development has been realised in the area between the Creek and Eurolink Way while Eurolink Way itself and the land between the road and the railway line to not currently match up to the ambition of the new development.



Proposals for Eurolink Way

Opportunities include:

- a) Physical moves identified in the plan include:
 - a. Eurolink Way conversion to an avenue,
 - b. New mixed-use developments to complete the new residential development on the north side of Eurolink Way, and
 - c. A new pedestrian connection to the railway station.
- b) Eurolink Way's conversion to an avenue would include provision of a cycle lane, safer pedestrian crossings and planting of street trees.
- c) New development adjacent to the railway line presents an opportunity for a building of significant height.
- d) Despite the challenges of achieving a new crossing and access to Sittingbourne railway station from the north significant new development in the north recently built, currently in the pipeline and new development likely along the Creek means it is the right time to commence negotiations.

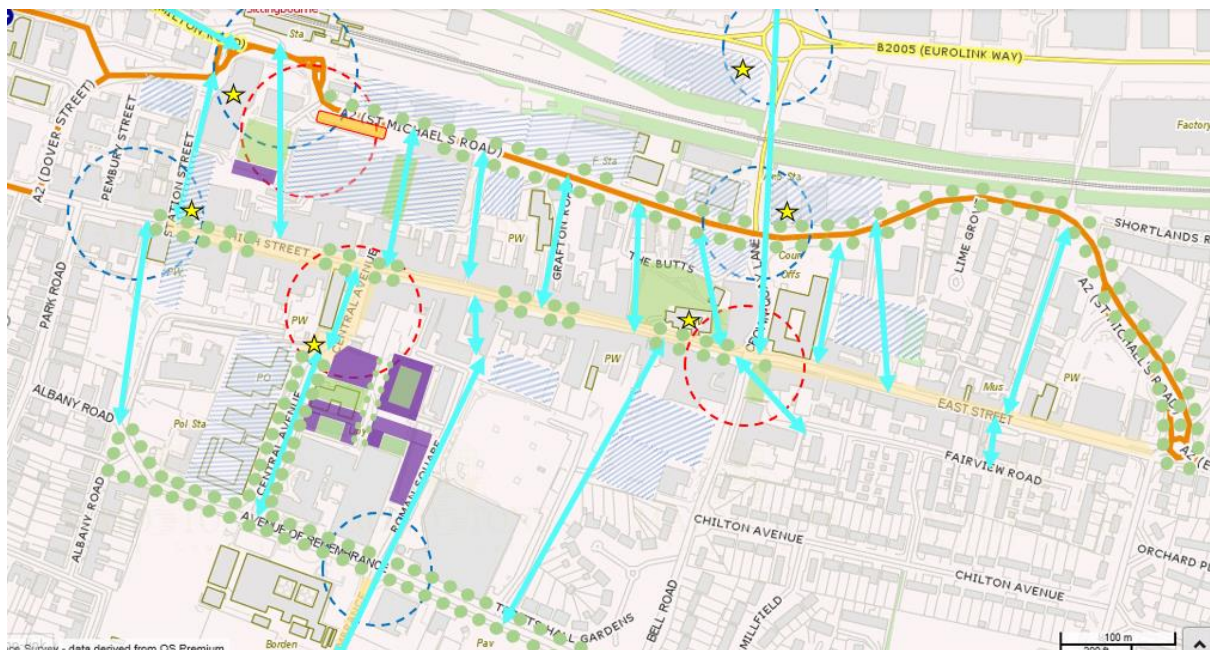
Delivery

A guide to future growth

This document puts in place a vision for the town for the next ten or more years and just as importantly, how it aims to achieve these goals. Whilst this SPD has been drafted in accordance with the Adopted Local Plan, it is considered that it will also contribute towards the Local Plan Review drafting and combined with new policies within that Review Plan will provide an opportunity to encourage new development and improvement which embraces the climate change and ecological emergency, promote new living for all the community through revised affordable housing policy and to ensure the vitality and viability of the Town centre is maintained or enhanced. .

The SPD itself is intended to be a strategic guide to the future delivery of growth and regeneration in Sittingbourne Town Centre. It is acknowledged that circumstances will change over time which will necessitate a flexible approach. Its purpose is to galvanise action in pursuit of the stated vision. Specifically it will:

- Guide planning policy so that development accords with the vision and principles set out in this document,
- Act as an investment framework and to coordinate resources in support of identified projects and interventions that can be made by the Council and other public and private organisations,
- Be followed by a detailed review of the heritage of Sittingbourne centre with regards the High Street Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and building of local heritage interest leading to a heritage strategy for the town centre.



Sittingbourne Town centre proposed plan

The majority of the sites identified within the SPD are in private ownership. The Council will continue to work with private developers, landowners and leaseholders to provide confidence, clarity and assistance to bring about developments that contribute towards our vision and objectives for the town centre. Projects involving private land and investment:

- St Michael's Road redevelopment as a mixed-use corridor with more active frontages at ground floor coupled with pedestrian and cycle routes and tree lined avenue will provide an opportunity to regenerate the area significantly and improve the image of Sittingbourne. the council already has an ongoing dialogue with the owners of the site to discuss the various routes and mechanisms for delivery. This will lead to a robust delivery plan.
- Consider the market for cultural/visitor/sound facilities and identify a shortlist of potential options based on gap analysis. Consult prospective partners who will be interested in investing in such a facility to determine requirements.
- Eurolink Way site as a mixed-use development coupled with pedestrian and cycle routes and tree lined avenue to form a gateway to the town centre spanning Eurolink area of employment with the railway station and the High Street.
- Smaller scale projects along and immediately behind the High Street predominantly residential in nature.

There is also some land in Council ownership and Kent County Council (KCC) ownership. These are locations where the council has the ability to exert control and can underpin growth and regeneration in the town centre including:

- Cockleshell Walk car park, Fountain Street and East Street bus depot are all earmarked for affordable housing delivered by Swale Rainbow Homes Ltd,
- The community hub around Central Avenue where the strategy is to build on its current role as a focus for community uses, encourage an more intense use of land currently used as car parking or single story buildings ensuring reprovision of existing uses and adding residential and possibly education uses with shared use of the library.
- Introduce green infrastructure to the High Street with trees and storm water planters along its length terminating in a new attractive green space at the junction of Bell Road and East Street.
- Improve the facilities at the new bus stops to provide a more attractive bus hub with live information and good weather protection.
- Highways and public realm is owned and managed by KCC.

Funding

Project delivery will be secured using a combination of public and private investment along with alternative sources of funds.

Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106

New residential and employment development in the town centre will be liable to make a S106/CIL contribution that can then be used to fund infrastructure. (Community Infrastructure Levy is a potential tool for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of an area and currently the Council does not employ this measure but that may change in the future).

Grants

There are a number of national and international funding sources that exist which the Council could bid for directly or support the community, private developers or landowners to bid for. Examples

include the High Street Fund, the Levelling-up Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Homes England funding.

The Council will engage with Government, its agencies and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to monitor the availability of funding for interventions in the town centre that fit with the vision set out in this document and where appropriate bid for this. The Council will also welcome the contributions that can be made by the High Streets Task Force and similar, helping inform the approaches taken to delivery and building a profile for the town and improvements and investment achieved

Central Government funds for movement

National Bus Strategy: Bus back better – launched in 2020, this national strategy sets out the vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services.

Local Bus Service Improvement Plan – by October 2021 KCC must submit a plan setting out how they will use their powers to improve services. Delivery of Enhanced Partnerships expected by April 2022

Bus services: grants and funding – a grant paid to operators of eligible bus services and community transport organisations.

Other

Along with the various delivery mechanisms and funding sources identified above other delivery mechanisms are likely to be pursued as the opportunities arise. For example, in the future the Council may wish to consider utilising its Compulsory Purchase Powers or entering into formal partnerships with developers to deliver development.

A Funding and Delivery Programme

The plan has identified a range of interventions that can be delivered over the next decade or so. However, it is our ambition to bring forward projects as soon as possible and we have already started to put funding into place to deliver elements. The programme for delivery can be seen in the tables below. These summarise delivery into:

- Short Term Delivery (S) – 1 to 2 years
- Medium Term Delivery (M) - 3 to 5 years
- Long Term and Transitional Projects (L)

Each of the tables below set out ambitions for delivery. However, the programme will evolve over time and be influenced by funding availability and opportunities. It will be the council's role to keep this up to date and communicate progress.

In terms of funding the Council is already committing a proportion of capital to support town centre regeneration.. There is also a further loan facility – Swale Rainbow Homes Ltd– aimed at unlocking sites for affordable housing.

As funding opportunities become available the council will make bids to deliver its programme.

Item	Project	Description and actions	Service Area	Timescale (S/M/L term)	Comments/dependencies
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1. PUBLIC REALM

1.1	Sittingbourne High Street public realm	Paving repairs Painting of street furniture	Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	S	Work with KCC
1.2	Wayfinding	Update of finger signs. New mapping	Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	S	Surveyed, analysed and commissioned
1.3	Tree and shrub planting in Sittingbourne High Street and St Michael's Road	STC tree and shrub planting associated with storm water drainage and biodiversity improvements based on KCC 2015 study. St Michael's Road tree planting associated with pedestrian and cycle improvements. Consultant to draw up construction drawings, spec and tender	Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	S-L	Consult with the community Create a 'shovel ready' project in readiness for seeking funding
1.4	Avenues of Remembrance	Consultancy study to determine the design	Regeneration and Economic Development	M	Terms of Agreement for the group have been established
1.5	Parking strategy	Review and update previous strategy	Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	M	Update and reprovision
1.6	Bus Hub	Consultancy study to determine the future strategy and design	Regeneration and Economic Development	L	

2. COMMUNITY

2.1	Create a strong and proactive Community and Business Group	Retailers, traders and the voluntary community	Regeneration and Economic Development	S	How can SBC assist with the process. Improve/ diversify the Sittingbourne Market offer. Link to events
2.2	Events	Animation of Bourne Place and the High Street public space	Regeneration and Economic Development	S	
2.3	Community/ stakeholder engagement	Develop a communications plan and stakeholder mapping	Housing and Community	S	Promote support by the local community of Sittingbourne High Street. To bring people with us once vision/ plans are agreed
2.4	Creative industries symposium	One day event to understand what creative individuals and businesses aspire to and how SBC can help deliver.	Regeneration and Economic Development	M	Facilitated Members led workshop. Build on Ideas Test Creative Network Programme. Attendees list of creatives, vendors of Swale markets, tech industries

3. DEVELOPMENT SITES

3.1	34 High Street	Identify and implement a meanwhile use whilst purchasing	Regeneration and Economic Development	M	
3.2	The Forum Praxis	Work with retailers, owners, developers to bring forward sites	Regeneration and Economic Development	L	
3.3	The Bell Centre	Work with retailers, owners, developers to bring forward sites	Planning and Commissioning, Environment and Leisure	M	
3.4	The Ambulance site	Work with retailers, owners, developers to bring forward sites	Regeneration and Economic Development	L	
3.5	Cockleshell Walk	Assess affordable housing	Housing and Community	M	Swale Rainbow Local Housing Company with Counties and Capital as the Development Partner
3.6	Fountain Street island	Affordable Housing - agree sale of sites	Housing and Community	M	Swale Rainbow Local Housing Company with Counties and Capital as the Development Partner
3.7	East Street/Mormon site	Assess affordable housing	Housing and Community	M	Swale Rainbow Local Housing Company with Counties and Capital as the Development Partner
3.8	Community facilities	Engagement with KCC regarding their facility. Work in partnership to explore the options for Phoenix House and its future.	Regeneration and Economic Development	S	
3.9	Creative hub/ studio space	Identify potential sites, pilot a scheme	Regeneration and Economic Development	M	Potentially within Swale House
3.10.	Community facilities	Determine Community Hub approach for The Forum car park	Regeneration and Economic Development	L	
3.11	FE college	FE college coupled with new public library as part of a Town Centre mixed use development	Regeneration and Economic Development	L	

4. HERITAGE

4.1	Heritage improvement	Conservation Area appraisal to protect Sittingbourne High Street's heritage	Planning	S	Review existing Conservation Area and Conservation Management Plan.
4.2	Heritage protection	Listed building enforcement	Planning	S	Targeted action

Key stakeholders

Private Sector

- Landowners -They have a choice to either dispose of their assets or to potentially optimise receipts by entering into a partnership agreement with other landowners (including public sector ones) and/or developers to promote a comprehensive scheme.
- Developers – will be responsible for bringing forward the actual physical development of the site and secure end users. The emerging opportunities will need to be attractive propositions (in terms of uses and profitability) to entice developers to the area.

Occupiers –occupiers (residential or commercial) and other businesses operating in the town centre will play an important role in developing the look, feel and offer in the town centre. As individual businesses how they present themselves, and what they offer will play a vital part in making it an attractive place to work, shop, visit and spend time. Occupiers also tend to have long-term commitments to the town and there is greater scope for collaboration to deliver improvements that contribute beyond their own immediate property or business interests, by communicating and working with other stakeholders as well as part of that community. The Council would welcome structures that further help facilitate such communication and collaboration.

Swale Borough Council - The Council has a number of roles:

- Promotional – the Council will need to ensure that once the Development Framework has been adopted that it continues to promote the key sites and objectives of the plan.
- Landowner – the Council has ownership in a number of the key sites and therefore is in an ideal position to bring these forward for development.
- Planning – the Council will responsible for ensuring that schemes coming forward are in accordance with the Development Framework and planning policy, to protect the historic environment and to encourage better quality shop fronts and advertisements.
- Site Assembly – the Council may consider taking on a facilitator role and working with landowners to assemble sites. The Council may also consider the use of its CPO powers in the event that site assembly proves to be difficult.

Network Rail

- Landowner – Network Rail is a stakeholder as both a landowner and operator of the railway.

Kent County Council (KCC)

- Local Highway Authority -defining and maintaining the movement network around the town centre and ensuring it functions satisfactorily.
- Service Provider – delivering some of the town’s public facilities.

Central Government

- There is a wide variety of funding streams supported by central government and the Council will keep a keen eye for any opportunities. Often little time is given to submit bids therefore it is clear that projects must be ‘worked-up’ in detail ready and waiting for future funds to be made available.

Role of the Council

The Council’s role has been to produce this town centre strategy SPD which sets out the approach for delivering a shared community vision.

The Council’s interventions to deliver the vision include:

- Use of Council assets - to support economic prosperity
- Public realm and green spaces – to create places for people to socialise
- Promote cultural, leisure and tourism initiatives – in support of the retail function
- Facilitate sustainable transport and connectivity and improve air quality and support climate change agenda

- Improve digital technology - to support business and social interaction and coworking space
- Car parking - to support retail as well as sustainable alternatives
- Street cleansing and litter management
- Compulsory Purchase Orders where land assembly is needed to deliver the vision.

The strategy set out in the SPD provides a framework for partnerships to support private sector initiatives and investment that deliver the vision, such as:

- To encourage and facilitate investment to deliver the vision
- To open up opportunities for external funding bids eg heritage and town centre initiatives that deliver the vision
- Facilitate meaningful business engagement with local traders and businesses
- Support and facilitate cultural activities and events
- Facilitate and support community initiatives
- Positively exploit heritage and natural assets to make more attractive and better connected spaces

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