

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 12 October 2022

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: The Sapling Room, The Appleyard, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne ME10 4DE*

Pages

Information about this meeting

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make officers aware of any special needs so that suitable arrangements may be made in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the meeting held on 27 July 2022 (Minute Nos. 219 – 229) 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, their families or friends.

The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

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6. Leader's Statement

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10. Questions submitted by the Public

To consider any questions submitted by the public. (The deadline for questions is 4.30 pm on the Wednesday before the meeting – please contact Democratic Services by e-mailing democraticservices@swale.gov.uk or call 01795 417330).

11. Questions submitted by Members

To consider any questions submitted by Members. (The deadline for questions is 4.30 pm on the Monday the week before the meeting – please contact Democratic Services by e-mailing democraticservices@swale.gov.uk or call 01795 417330).

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Issued on Tuesday, 4 October 2022

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

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Agenda Item 7

Motion – Condolences to the Royal Family

This council joins with the Mayor in sending its sincere condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and the entire royal family on the death of Queen Elizabeth II. We remember with affection, respect and sincere gratitude the Queen's lifetime of duty and of tireless service to the people of our country, the Commonwealth and the world. We are consoled in our sadness by the hope which is inherent in the passing of the Crown to a new generation, and we look forward with optimism to the coronation of our new Sovereign. God save the King!

Proposed: Councillor Mike Baldock

Seconded: Councillor Alan Horton

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Motion – Water

Following the major emergency declared on the Isle of Sheppey on the 13th July 2022, resulting from the loss of water supply islandwide, and similar incidents in January 2016 and September 2017, this council resolves;

For the Leader of the Council to make a formal complaint to the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) over the recent outage of water supply on Sheppey , covering both their handling of the emergency , and their failure to act to improve resilience of supply following the 2016 and 2017 outages

The Leader of the Council is asked to write to the CEO of Southern Water to notify them of this decision. A copy of this complaint should also be issued to the MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey and the Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

This failure of supply has been followed by residents of Dunkirk being without supply , and now a hosepipe ban, and while less severe in their impact , these have also revealed the inadequacy of investment in the supply . It is acknowledged that this year has been one of the driest on record , both increasing demand , and increasing leakage due to abnormal ground movements . However , records for weather extremes are being broken with alarming regularity as the climate changes . The National Audit Office report 2020 on water supply and demand management concluded that parts of the South-East are at risk of running out of water unless concerted action is taken .

Despite this , Swale is being asked to make allocations for increased housing numbers in the local plan review , which can only increase demand, but there is a presumption that the statutory undertakers and utilities providers will be able to provide whatever infrastructure is required , at whatever cost to the water bill payers , to meet the housing numbers .

In view of this :

The leader of the council is asked to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, asking him to review the legislation concerning the role of the statutory undertakers and utilities providers, in the local plan making process, to require them to give evidence at the public examination of the local plan of their ability to meet their obligations with regard to supplying proposed housing development, taking full account of the effect of climate change scenarios.

The Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group is asked to consider commissioning an independent study into the sustainability of water supply to form part of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the Local Plan Review

Furthermore, the council notes that residents are deeply concerned about the regular untreated wastewater discharges into our local rivers, estuaries and seas and the cumulative impact this is having on wildlife and on human health.

This wastewater, or sewage, not only comprises of human waste, which contains poisonous E-Coli bacteria and organic nitrogen, but also carries harmful levels of chemicals such as nitrates and phosphates, typically from domestic cleaning products.

Rivers in England are in a terrible state. Chemical health is classified as bad for all of them, and only 14% have a good ecological status. Beyond rivers, only 16% of waterways (rivers, lakes and streams) were classed as in ecological good health in 2020.

Farming and wastewater are the biggest offenders. Agriculture practices impacts nearly two thirds of rivers in England. Over half are also impacted by the water sector, mainly by sewage effluent. In 2021 data from the water companies themselves revealed that they had discharged untreated water containing raw sewage 375,000 times into English waterways.

Releasing sewage into rivers and seas is no longer an emergency only situation occurring as a result of severe storms, but an everyday occurrence even in 'normal' rainfall . In July 2021 Southern Water was fined £90m for illegally dumping between 16 and 19 billion litres of raw sewage into waterways and coastal areas of Kent, West Sussex and Hampshire. They pleaded guilty to 51 counts of dumping poisonous, noxious substances including raw sewage, after a criminal investigation.

Untreated sewage has a negative impact on human health and biodiversity. The 2020 'Kent State of the Environment' report identified just 11 out of 124 water bodies across the county met 'good' ecological status.

And here in The Swale, raw sewage discharges are increasing. From 172 spills and 358 hours of raw sewage discharges in 2019, to 286 spills and 1,190 hours of discharges in 2020 to the situation in 2021 where Southern Water reported 334 spills totalling 1,698 hours of raw sewage discharges across Sittingbourne, Sheppey and Faversham. That's almost double the number of spills and well over a fourfold increase in discharge duration in just 3 years.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Recognise this Council's obligation to protect its rivers, estuaries and seas, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution, in line with its local planning policy and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impact of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewage overload'.
3. Ensure that an evidence base is compiled that assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharge so that this is factored into decisions made in new iterations of the local plan, including the overall level of future development, if necessary independently from the evidence produced by the utility providers

4. Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage on our local rivers, estuaries, wildlife and the health of our residents.
5. To take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies.
6. Ask the Policy and Resources Committee to invite the Chief Executive of Southern Water plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Ofwat and Natural England to attend a meeting to answer questions on the current levels of CSO and sewage plant discharge, and to put pressure on Southern Water to stop all CSO discharges into chalk streams in and around Faversham (Cooksditch and Thorne Creek); asking why nutrient neutrality rules aren't deemed to apply to water flowing from Faversham Creek into the Swale; and encouraging SW to upgrade the Faversham WTW to include tertiary water treatment so that it can either be recycled into the SEW water supply or else pumped back into the aquifer.
7. Ask Southern Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewage; whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers or seas, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that at present this can only be requested not required).
8. Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses, including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.
9. The leader of the council is asked to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, asking him to review the legislation concerning the role of the statutory undertakers and utilities providers, in the local plan making process, to require them to give evidence at the public examination of the local plan of their ability to meet their obligations to safely dispose of sewage from proposed housing development.

The leader of the council is further asked to request the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to review the legislation concerning local plan reviews , so that in the event that the statutory undertakers and utilities providers are unable to provide adequate evidence that both supply of water , and effective wastewater treatment , are deliverable , this would be grounds for a deviation from the standard.

Proposed: Councillor Alastair Gould
Seconded: Councillor Lee McCall

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Wastewater Position Statement

Southern Water

2022



Introduction

Southern Water provides water and wastewater services across Hampshire, Sussex and Kent. This position statement relates to the wastewater service.

The purpose of this paper is to outline Southern Water's position with regard to provision of wastewater treatment capacity to serve development proposed in Local Plans.

Southern Water's statutory obligations and investment planning process

Southern Water has a statutory obligation to serve new development. The company is committed to providing the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time. To this end we look to work in collaboration with local planning authorities, developers and other stakeholders to understand the location and timing of development, and ensure that development is co-ordinated with provision of necessary wastewater treatment capacity in the event that significant development comes forward sooner than anticipated.

Southern Water can fund, plan and deliver additional capacity at WTWs to meet demand from new development through the water industry's price review process. This review is carried out every five years by Ofwat, the water industry's economic regulator.

As part of this process, Southern Water submits a Business Plan containing investment proposals to Ofwat. Those proposals are scrutinised and subsequently a price is determined that Southern Water can charge its customers. This price determination funds investment over the next five years. Towards the end of the five year period another price review is carried out to cover the next five year investment period, etc.

The next price review is in 2024, and then one in 2029, etc, giving repeated opportunities to plan investment over the timeframe of the Local Plan.

The adopted Local Plan is an important evidence document that supports Southern Water's investment proposals to Ofwat.

Provision of Wastewater Treatment Capacity and Environmental Protection

Good quality water is essential for water supply, fisheries, recreation, navigation and biodiversity. It is fundamental to sustainable development, health and quality of life.

Environmental bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England set and safeguard water quality objectives. The Environment Agency is the water industry's environmental regulator and define the environmental permits that water companies are required to meet. These permits are designed to protect the environment and ensure that water quality objectives are met.

Southern Water therefore operates its WTWs in accordance with environmental permits issued and enforced by the Environment Agency. The

permits set the maximum volume of treated wastewater that the company is permitted to recycle to the environment (in terms of Dry Weather Flow¹, DWF). They also define the standards of treatment that must be met in order to protect water quality objectives.

If the future release of treated wastewater at a WTW is anticipated to exceed the maximum allowed by the environmental permit (as a result of new development), Southern Water could apply to the Environment Agency for a new or amended permit. This would increase the volumetric permit headroom above that which is currently available. The Environment Agency would normally permit increased flows provided the treatment standards are tightened so that the total load to the environment is not increased. This is in line with the "no deterioration" principle.

It would therefore be inappropriate to use existing wastewater treatment capacity to determine the spatial strategy for a Local Plan, because additional capacity beyond existing permits could be provided that would mitigate the impact of new development. An amended permit might require investment at WTWs, but this is business-as-usual for Southern Water and not a "showstopper" to new development.

It is possible that future permit conditions become so tight that they cannot be achieved by conventional technology. This is likely to trigger the need for significant and expensive investment. The WTWs most likely to be affected in this way could be identified by looking at the sensitivity of the water bodies receiving treated wastewater and/or environmental designations such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Fundamentally wastewater treatment capacity is not a constraint to future new development even if investment requirements are significant. Southern Water has a statutory obligation to find solutions and provide infrastructure to serve new development. The planning period for Local Plans generally runs from 15 to 20 years so there are repeated opportunities through the water industry's five yearly price review process to investigate and implement solutions. Possible options where conventional technology could not achieve the required standards include:

- a) Reducing infiltration into the sewerage system
- b) Removing surface water from combined sewerage systems
- c) Reducing consumption of water by existing and future residents²
- d) Transfer flow to an alternative discharge location (where the environmental capacity of the receiving water is sufficient to accommodate the discharge)
- e) Treat wastewater to a higher standard using non-conventional technology.

¹ The Dry Weather Flow is defined as the total daily flow value that is exceeded by 80% of the total daily flow values in a period of twelve months (the 80%-exceeded flow).

² The Environment Agency has identified that based on a report commissioned by UK Water Industry Research, reductions in per capita consumption (PCC) of up to 25% can have a positive effect in the ability to treat waste water – see Technical Briefing Note: Water Quality Benefits of Reducing Domestic Water Consumption, Environment Agency, 2013

The implementation of one or a combination of these options would mitigate the impact of increased volumes of wastewater arising from new development and population growth, so that it would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the integrity of protected sites such as SPAs, SACs and SSSIs.

In terms of future development, Southern Water will prepare forecasts for each WTW in the period to 2030 and any investment required to meet demand will be carried out in this period (provided a need is confirmed). The forecasts for the current investment period (2020-2025) were prepared in 2017 based on (a) housing trajectories provided by planning authorities, (b) published five year supplies of housing and (c) household projections prepared by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Unless a sudden and significant step change in construction of new development is expected in the next five years (above that planned for in 2017), we consider that sufficient wastewater treatment capacity is currently available or could be provided to 2025.

A new price review will take place in 2024, when we will have the opportunity to incorporate updated information from the Local Plan to inform investment planning to 2030. There are additional price reviews in 2029, 2034 and 2039, so there are repeated opportunities over the planning period of the Local Plan to investigate, identify and implement solutions, in collaboration with our regulators, relevant planning authorities and other stakeholders.

As stated above, we consider that wastewater treatment capacity can be provided to meet demand from new development, thereby mitigating any adverse environmental impact from increased wastewater flows. However, we also consider that planning policies in individual Local Plans should secure phasing of development in the event that more complex issues arise that take longer than anticipated to resolve. Such policies would mitigate environmental risks that are currently unclear or unknown. Southern Water will engage in the preparation of Local Plans and will highlight any known issues as well as seek policies that co-ordinate development with provision of necessary infrastructure.

Taking account of the above, we consider that housing allocations in Local Plans can progress from a wastewater treatment perspective. Although we recognise that the National Planning Policy Framework requires the planning system to consider wastewater infrastructure, as well as conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, there is also a requirement for a proportionate evidence base. We consider that environmental designations and water quality objectives are more appropriate factors to inform the Local Plan than existing wastewater treatment capacity *per se*, particularly because water quality objectives drive future environmental permit conditions, information on future permit conditions is not readily available, and additional capacity could be provided in the future.

Account should also be taken of Southern Water's statutory obligations as the statutory sewerage undertaker. We will work with local authorities in this context and support a proportionate evidence base for the Local Plan.

Motion – KCC buses

This Council believes that the decision by KCC to cut bus subsidies is a seriously retrograde step that will have a hugely negative impact on many people in our communities for the following reasons:

It goes against policies supported by both KCC and this Council to improve the use and accessibility of public transport.

It unfairly impacts the elderly, the disabled, young people those who are unable to afford their own private transport.

It will increase rural isolation and the impact of loneliness on vulnerable people.

It undermines the local plan review which, to meet the Government housing target, will need to see a significant shift from journeys being made by private motor car towards greater use of public transport and active travel.

It is contrary to Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council policies to achieve net zero carbon emissions.

For these reasons we call on the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at KCC to cancel this withdrawal of bus subsidies with urgent effect.

Furthermore, we call on the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at KCC to instigate a review of how bus services can be made more relevant to people's daily travel requirements, more accessible and more affordable to increase use of bus services in line with the policies cited above.

Proposed Mike Baldock
Seconded Tim Valentine

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Council	
Meeting Date	12 October 2022
Report Title	Miscellaneous constitution updates
EMT Lead	David Clifford
Head of Service	Head of Policy, Governance and Customer Services – Monitoring Officer
Lead Officer	
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>Council is asked to agree the following constitutional changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes to the Environment committee areas of responsibility (paragraphs 3.1-3.3 of the report). 2. An update to the Audit committee areas of responsibility (paragraphs 3.4-3.6 of the report). 3. Changes to the table at section 3.6.7.4 of the contract standing orders (paragraphs 3.7-3.9 of the report). 4. An addition to the list of areas to which the contract standing orders do not apply (section 3.6.2.3 of the constitution) (paragraph 3.10 of the report). 5. Changes to the preamble to the scheme of officer delegations (sections 2.8.1.13 and 2.8.1.15 of the constitution) (paragraphs 3.11-3.14 of the report). 6. A further change to the preamble to the scheme of officer delegations (section 2.8.1.5 of the constitution) (paragraphs 3.15-3.16 of the report). 7. A new delegation to the director of resources (paragraph 3.17 of the report).

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report explains the background to a number of fairly minor amendments to the constitution, and invites council to agree these.

2 Background

- 2.1 Council voted unanimously in October last year to move to a committee system of governance from the 2022/23 municipal year. At the same meeting, council requested the cross-party working group which had been established to consider this governance change to continue its work in overseeing the detail of the new constitution. The working group comprises Cllrs Baldock (chair), Bonney, Darby, Henderson, Ingleton, Simmons, Truelove and Valentine.

- 2.2 Since the adoption of the new constitution in April and its coming into effect in May, the working group has continued to meet, with a view both to monitoring the working of the new constitution in practice and recommending improvements where necessary, and to working through the 'issues log' of areas of the old constitution which the group agreed could benefit from review but which were not essential to implementing the move to the committee system.
- 2.3 It is important that the whole constitution is kept under ongoing review, both as a means of ensuring that it is as clear and unambiguous as it can be and of enabling changes suggested by members or officers aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making to be considered and, where appropriate, implemented. The working group provides a helpful forum for debating such proposals, several of which were discussed at its meeting in early September. These are set out in the 'proposals' section below.

3 Proposals

Environment committee areas of responsibility

- 3.1 Section 2.3.3 of the constitution currently sets out the areas of responsibility of the Environment committee as follows:
- Refuse collection and recycling;
 - Street cleansing;
 - Climate and ecological emergency;
 - Environmental response, including fly-tipping, contaminated land, animal welfare, pollution control, littering and illegal encampments;
 - Environmental health, including management of public health and safety risks;
 - Air quality;
 - Green spaces, open spaces and grounds maintenance;
 - Flooding, sea defences and coastal protection;
 - Active travel; and
 - Public conveniences.
- 3.2 The chair of the Environment committee has highlighted that some of these bullet points include matters which span the responsibilities of multiple heads of service, and has requested that these are consolidated into the following list, which covers exactly the same matters but grouped into a more logical order:
- Refuse collection and recycling;
 - Street cleansing;
 - Climate and ecological emergency;
 - Air quality;

- Active travel;
- Environmental response, including fly-tipping, animal welfare, littering and illegal encampments;
- Environmental health, including management of public health and safety risks, contaminated land, and pollution control;
- Green spaces, open spaces and grounds maintenance;
- Flooding, sea defences and coastal protection; and
- Public conveniences.

3.3 Council is now **recommended** to agree this change.

Audit committee areas of responsibility

3.4 Section 2.4.1.3 (ii) of the constitution currently states that the Audit committee should “consider reports dealing with the management and performance of Internal Audit Services, including consideration and endorsement of the 3 year Strategic Internal Audit Plan”.

3.5 The interim head of Mid-Kent audit has advised that audit planning is no longer by means of three-year strategic plans, and has requested that this wording be amended to the more generic “...including consideration and endorsement of internal audit plans”.

3.6 Council is now **recommended** to agree this change.

Contract standing orders

3.7 The table at section 3.6.7.4 of the constitution sets out the financial thresholds and procurement procedures. A number of rows in this table covering smaller amounts of spend for which committee approval is not required state that decisions should be ‘in agreement with’ or ‘agreed by’ the relevant committee chair.

3.8 In the absence of individual member decision-making in the committee system, the formula used elsewhere is for decisions to be ‘in consultation with’ the committee chair. This does clarify that any formal decision is by the officer, and is arguably a less ambiguous formulation than using the word ‘agreed’.

3.9 Council is now **recommended** to agree that wording based on ‘agreed’ or ‘agreement’ should be changed to ‘in consultation with’ in all four of the relevant rows in this table.

3.10 A further change which has been requested by the commissioning manager is to add a point to section 3.6.2.3, which sets out areas to which the contract standing orders do not apply. This would be added as rule 3.6.2.3.8, covering ‘Agency staff where the current contract or framework agreements are not suitable due to the

specialist nature of roles and/or higher pricing'. Council is **recommended** to agree this change.

Scheme of officer delegations

- 3.11 The preamble to the scheme of officer delegations currently includes the following text:

2.8.1.13 The delegated powers held by an officer may be exercised by the line manager of that officer, and any Director or Head of Service may authorise other responsible officers (who have the relevant skills and knowledge) to act on their behalf, provided that there is a written record of such authorisation. A central record will be kept.

2.8.1.14 Where the Council, a Committee or Sub-Committee has delegated a function to an officer, the person or body making the delegation may at any time resume responsibility for the function either in respect of a particular matter or generally, and so may exercise the function despite the delegation.

2.8.1.15 In determining the suitability of an officer to be given this authority, regard must be had to the nature of the authority being given, the seniority of the post, the experience of the relevant officer and all other relevant circumstances so as to ensure that the authority and the relevant officer are appropriately matched. This authorisation must:

- *Be in writing, dated and signed by the officer giving the authority;*
 - *Specifically identify the post and person authorised to carry out the functions;*
 - *Specifically identify the functions to which the authorisation relates (attach an extract from the scheme as the numbering may change over time); and*
 - *Identify any conditions (if any) to which the authorisation is subject.*
- 3.12 It is strange that section 2.8.1.14 appears where it does, in between two paragraphs which appear to say similar things in different words. It may be that one of these two paragraphs was adopted at some point in the past as a replacement for the other, but that the other was not deleted.
- 3.13 The council does maintain a system for keeping records of what are now known as 'onward delegations' from officers who have a direct delegation down to more junior officers. Section 2.8.1.13 probably covers this point in sufficient detail, but there are potentially some safeguards in 2.8.1.15 which it would be sensible to retain.
- 3.14 With this in mind, council is **recommended** to agree that section 2.8.1.15 is deleted and section 2.8.1.13 amended to read as follows:

2.8.1.13 The delegated powers held by an officer may be exercised by the line manager of that officer. Any officer with a delegation in this scheme of delegations may authorise other responsible officers who have the relevant skills

and knowledge to act on their behalf. A written record of such onward delegations will be kept, identifying the post to whom the delegation is given, the precise delegation(s) involved, and any conditions to which the onward delegation is subject.

- 3.15 Section 2.8.1.5 of the preamble to the scheme of officer delegation currently reads as follows:

Any post referred to below shall be deemed to include any successor post or a post which includes within the job description elements relevant to any particular delegation, which were also present in the earlier post and shall include anyone acting up or seconded.

- 3.16 Simply for the avoidance of doubt, and based on a similar provision in the Maidstone constitution, Mid-Kent legal officers have suggested that this should be expanded slightly to read "...in the earlier post and shall include anyone acting up, seconded, or employed on an interim basis". Council is now **recommended** to agree this change.
- 3.17 Finally, in the interests of efficient and effective decision-making, the director of resources has requested a new delegation as delegation 2.8.7.26, "To determine the most appropriate source of funding for the capital programme each year in order to minimise borrowing costs". Council is now **recommended** to agree this change.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are aimed primarily at 'tidying up' the constitution rather than making radical changes. Nonetheless, some of the proposals would have a substantive impact. The view of officers, the constitution working group and the Policy and Resources committee is that these impacts will be positive in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of council decision-making, but council could legitimately decline to agree any or all of them.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 A draft version of this report was discussed in detail by the constitution working group at its meeting in early September, and the proposals in this final version reflect the outcome of those discussions. The report was agreed by Policy and Resources committee in late September.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Ensuring that the constitution is as clearly written and logically structured as possible, and that its provisions enable efficient and effective decision-making, is essential to the council achieving all of its strategic corporate objectives. The recommendations in this

	report particularly support the fourth corporate plan priority of 'Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future'.
Financial, Resource and Property	Amendments to the delegations to the director of resources, aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making, are proposed in the body of the report.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Amendments to the contract standing orders, aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making, are proposed in the body of the report.
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 There are no appendices.

8 Background Papers

8.1 There are no background papers.

Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	12 October 2022
Report Title	Community Governance Review Lucas Close, Queenborough – second stage consultation recommendations
EMT Lead	Lisa Fillery – Director of Resources
Head of Service	David Clifford - Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services
Lead Officer	Keith Alabaster – Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the results of the second stage consultation for the Community Governance Review conducted at Lucas Close – Sheerness Town Council area. 2. That having considered the results of the second stage consultation, the Council agrees the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Queenborough Town Council boundary is redrawn, so that Lucas Close becomes part of the Queenborough Town Council area and is no longer part of the Sheerness Town Council area. The new Queenborough Town Council boundary is moved north, from Moat Way to Brielle Way (A249).

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The council agreed to undertake the second stage Community Governance Review consultation, at its meeting on 27 July 2022. This followed the initial consultation, with residents and interested parties during May and June 2022.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present the second stage consultation results and to ask council to make decisions regarding the next steps of the review.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to regularly review anomalous parish boundaries. Whilst it only has to commence a community governance review if a valid petition is received, it is good practice to undertake a review wherever anomalous parish boundaries have occurred.
- 2.2 Ward Members for Queenborough & Halfway requested a review of the anomalous town council boundary. A new housing development, which created

12 houses in Lucas Close, is now fully occupied by residents. Access to this street, is exclusively through Queenborough and their postal address is Queenborough. However, there is an anomalous “V” shape in the Sheerness Town Council boundary that has subsumed Lucas Close into Sheerness.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Taking into consideration the results of the consultation, as set out in the appendices, the council is asked to consider the following for the Lucas Close, Community Governance Review:

Summary of Responses for Lucas Close

3.2 **Residents’ responses:**

5 responses received out of 20 leaflets / questionnaires sent out – 25% response rate.

YES (in favour of changing the boundary = 100% / 5 responses.

NO (do not wish the boundary to be changed) = 0% / 0 responses.

3.3 **Ward members’ responses:**

Sheerness ward members x 2 = YES (in favour of changing the boundary)

Queenborough & Halfway ward members x 1 = YES (in favour of changing the boundary)

3.4 **Town Council responses:**

Queenborough Town Council = YES (in favour of changing the boundary)

Sheerness Town Council = YES (in favour of changing the boundary)

3.5 **Kent County Council (KCC) response:**

No comments from KCC

3.6 **Local Government Boundary Commission of England (LGBCE)**

LGBCE are impartial, so cannot comment one way or the other, however they acknowledged receipt of the information and await to hear the outcome of the consultation.

3.7 **Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)**

No comments from KALC

3.8 **Summary and recommendation:**

The responses from residents, both Town Councils and ward members from both borough wards affected, were 100% in favour of moving Lucas Close into the Queenborough Town Council area. In addition, the proposed new boundary was also supported and no other recommendations or amendments to the new boundary were presented.

It is therefore recommended that the Queenborough Town Council boundary is moved north, so that Lucas Close will become part of the Queenborough Town

Council area. The new boundary should move from Moat Way to Brielle Way (A249), as the A249 is the most logical 'natural' boundary and will remove the anomalous "V" shape to the current boundary, that has caused this issue.

A full list of responses and comments can be viewed in Appendix (I)

A map of the proposed new Queenborough Town Council boundary can be viewed in Appendix (II)

4 Alternative Options considered and rejected

- 4.1 The alternative is to conclude the current review and no further action will be taken and the boundary will remain as it is. If the boundary is left as it is, residents will still have to make an 8 mile round trip to vote at their polling station in Sheerness and will continue to be represented by Sheerness Town Councillors and Sheerness Borough Ward Councillors, despite being geographically part of Queenborough.

All responses from interested parties were in support of changing the boundary, as detailed in the 2nd stage consultation booklet. We also received a number of comments, with compelling reasons to make this change and received no comments that opposed the boundary change. It is therefore not recommended to leave the boundary as it is.

5 Consultations Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Initial stage consultation – this was started in May and ran to the end of June 2022, which asked residents, and all interested to parties whether they wanted the boundary to be reviewed. Two thirds of respondents supported reviewing the boundary, therefore a 2nd stage consultation was commenced
- 5.2 Second stage consultation – this was started in July and ran until 16 September 2022, which asked residents and all interested parties, whether they supported the proposed new boundary, which would move Lucas Close from the Sheerness Town Council area into the Queenborough Town Council area. 100% of respondents supported this boundary change, as detailed in Section 3 and Appendix (I).

During both consultations, all registered electors in Lucas Close, were individually sent a booklet and questionnaire detailing the proposals. One property had no registered electors, so a non-personalised booklet and letter was sent to that household. Additional communications were undertaken to advertise the consultations.

In addition to residents, the following interested parties were asked for comment on the boundary review during both consultations and were also sent copies of the booklets and questionnaires:

- a) Ward members for Sheerness and Queenborough & Halfway wards
- b) Sheerness Town Council
- c) Queenborough Town Council

- d) Kent County Council – KCC members for Sheppey plus Lizzy Adam (Operations & Client Relationship Manager, Governance, Law & Democracy) and the Electoral & Boundary Review Committee.
- e) Kent Association of Local Councils
- f) Local Government Boundary Commission for England

A copy of the 2nd stage consultation booklet can be viewed in Appendix (III)

A copy of the 2nd stage questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix (IV)

- 5.3 If the town council boundary change is approved by Council, no further consultations will take place and an order will be raised to formally change the Queenborough Town Council boundary.
- 5.4 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England have confirmed that “None of the parish arrangements in your borough are protected so you can proceed with the parish changes without needing to seek the Commission’s consent.” However, if the proposed Town Council boundary change is approved, we would need to ask the Commission to also review the borough ward boundary, so it is co-terminus with the new town council boundary. The town council and borough ward boundaries would need to be done at the same time, so as not to adversely affect any voting arrangements for residents. The Commission has asked for borough ward boundary reviews to be requested by October 2022, in order to make the ward boundary changes in time for the May 2023 local elections.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Conducting the review in a way which fulfils our statutory obligations as efficiently as possible while also encouraging all sections of the community to make their views known will contribute to the council’s corporate Priority 4: Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future.
Financial, Resource and Property	The reviews will be financed through existing resources and £5,000 has been budgeted to conduct the review, within the Electoral Services budget.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Chapter 3 of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 devolves the power to take decisions about matters such as the creation of parishes, changes to parish boundaries and electoral arrangements including warding and numbers of parish councillors from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to principal councils in England. Principal councils are also required to have regard to guidance on undertaking community governance reviews, which has been published by the Boundary Commission.

Crime and Disorder	None identified at this time.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this time.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this time.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this time.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this time.
Equality and Diversity	In undertaking the consultation, the council will have regard to the joint statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of reflecting the identities and interests of the local community and that it is effective, convenient, and accessible to everyone.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this time

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix (I): Lucas Close CGR Stage 2 Responses
- Appendix (II): Lucas Close Map proposed new boundary
- Appendix (III): Lucas Close CGR Booklet 2nd stage consultation
- Appendix (IV): Lucas Close Questionnaire 2nd stage consultation

8 Background Papers

“Community Governance Reviews initial consultation stage recommendations” – Report to Council on 27 July 2022 (Agenda item 11). Report can be viewed at: <http://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g3749/Public%20reports%20pack%20Wednesday%2027-Jul-2022%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=10>

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LUCAS CLOSE, SHEERNESS TOWN COUNCIL AREA – STAGE 2 CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND COMMENTS

Residents Response (where Q = Questionnaire)

DATE R/C	MEDIA	RESPONDER	IN FAVOUR OF THE BOUNDARY CHANGE?	COMMENTS
18/08/2022	Q	0004	YES	
22/08/2022	Q	0011	YES	
22/08/2022	Q	0012	YES	Due to the location, it makes perfect sense to change to Queenborough and we would prefer this.
19/08/2022	Q	0018	YES	
19/08/2022	Q	0019	YES	I would like to take this opportunity to point out to the council, if this were not already known, that the area within the proposed new boundary is a thriving wildlife hotspot. Many different species. Including rabbits, foxes, hedgehogs, field mice, even grass snakes inhabit this area and is used as a source of food for owls, hawks (not to mention many bats frequent the area) among many other species of birds and animals. This wonderful display of nature <u>must</u> be protected and <u>must</u> be taken into consideration should any plans to develop the land be proposed in the future. I trust the council will also share my sentiments of passionately defending local ecosystems and the precious wildlife that inhabits them.

Town Councils Response

DATE R/C	MEDIA	RESPONDER	IN FAVOUR OF THE BOUNDARY CHANGE?	COMMENTS
09/09/2022	Email	Town Clerk at Sheerness Town Council	Yes	I can confirm on behalf of Sheerness Town Council, that we still fully support the consultation to amend the boundary lines.
16/09/2022	Email	Town Clerk at Queenborough Town Council	Yes	Queenborough Town Council have welcomed and included the residents of Lucas Close, in its' community since residency was taken in the Close, including the Close in all community events including the Town Council's annual freighter day etc. Queenborough Town Council believe that the residents of Lucas Close should stay in the Queenborough Community and the boundary for the Town be moved to effect this, with the only access to the Close being via Queenborough. As in previous consideration to the Swale Borough Council consultation, Councillors unanimously agreed to support the Swale Borough Council Governance Review for the boundaries to be redrawn with the Queenborough Town Council boundary moved north up to the A249, in supporting this Close coming under the umbrella of Queenborough Town Council so we may continue to serve the residents of the Close.

Borough Ward Members Response

DATE R/C	MEDIA	RESPONDER	IN FAVOUR OF THE BOUNDARY CHANGE?	COMMENTS
10/08/2022	Email	Cllr Eakin - Sheerness ward member	YES	I fully support these changes.
30/08/2022	Email	Cllr Harrison - Sheerness ward member	YES	I stand by my comments from stage 1 "This seems to be a common-sense change to me. When the lines were originally drawn, there were many grassy areas, which have since been built on, so I would expect that this will not be the last proposed change you bring forward." The proposed boundary change is the most sensible option.
09/09/2022	Email	Cllr Cameron Beart - Queenborough & Halfway ward member, Queenborough Town Council ward member, Deputy Mayor of Queenborough and KCC Divisional member for Sheppey	YES	As the SBC Ward Member for Queenborough and Halfway, as well as the QTC Ward Member for Queenborough, Deputy Mayor of Queenborough and KCC Divisional Member for Sheppey, I fully support the boundary move to incorporate Lucas Close into the parish boundary of Queenborough. It is an anomaly with the way the original boundary was drawn that should be rectified. Lucas Close is only accessible from Sterling Road and Moat Way which are in Queenborough, and the new homes have been registered with the post office under the ME11 postcode so form part of the town. It makes no logical sense to keep this road within the boundary of Sheerness with the residents contributing council tax to Sheerness Town Council for services they aren't receiving. For these residents to be able to vote in elections, their polling station is currently in Sheerness, an 8 mile round trip. With this change, their polling station will be less than half a mile away, a short 5-10 minute walk. This makes it common sense to me.

KCC Response

No response received from KCC

Local Government Boundary Commission Response

DATE R/C	MEDIA	RESPONDER	IN FAVOUR OF THE BOUNDARY CHANGE?	COMMENTS
11/08/2022	Phone	Richard Buck (Review Manager, Local Government Boundary Commission for England)	N/A	LGBCE can't comment one way or the other on the review, as they are impartial, but acknowledge receipt of the information and await to hear the outcome of the consultation

KALC Response

DATE R/C	MEDIA	RESPONDER	IN FAVOUR OF THE BOUNDARY CHANGE?	COMMENTS
12/08/2022	Email	Charmaine Keatley (Chief Executive of KALC)	N/A	KALC will not be commenting on this, but I have copied in Jeff Tutt, the Chairman of the Swale Area Committee who is better placed.

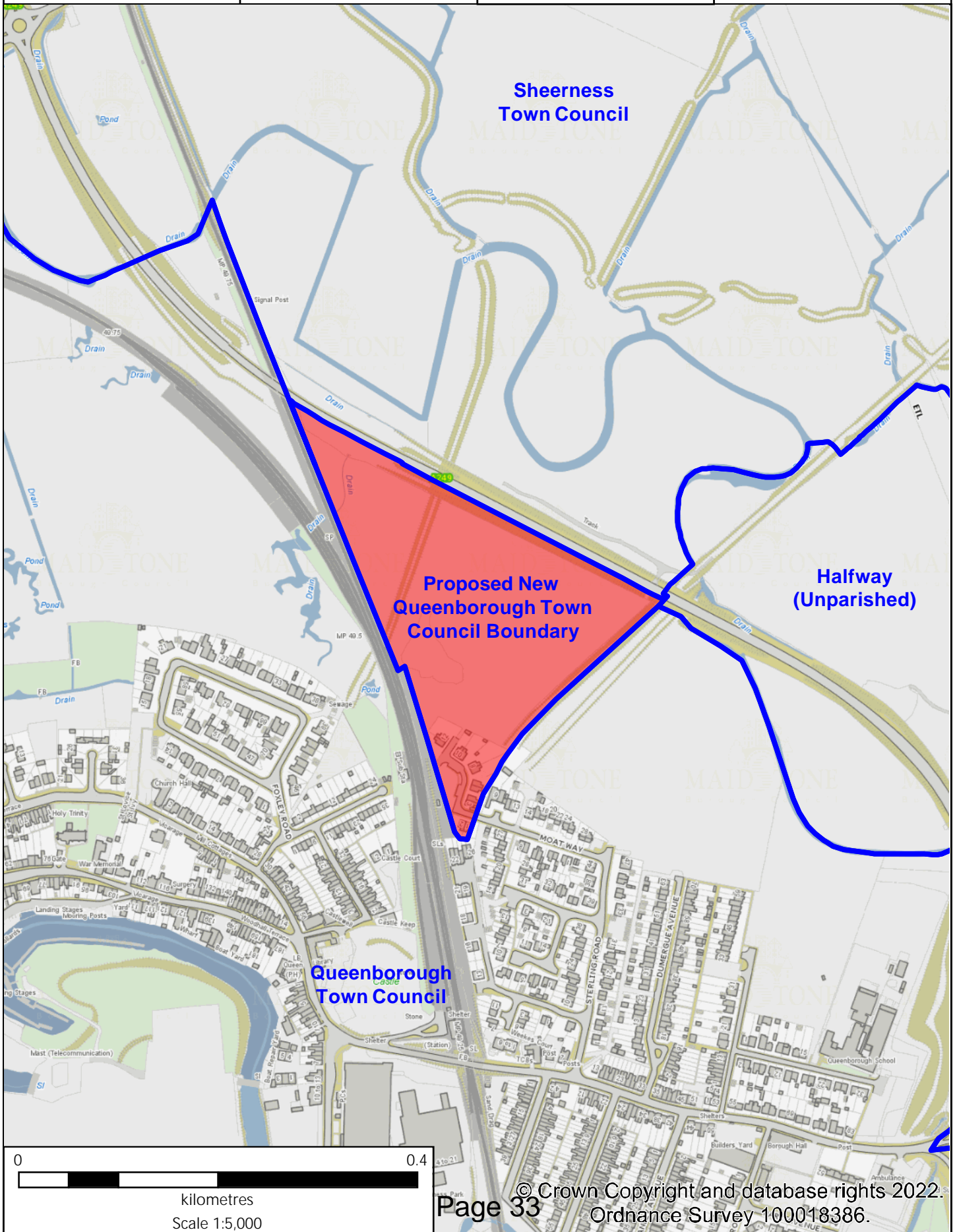


Proposed Boundary Change

Drawn By:
GIS

Date:
18/07/2021

Area in red to be removed from Sheerness Town Council and added to Queenborough Town Council



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Community Governance Review

**2nd Stage Consultation -
Lucas Close, Queenborough
(Sheerness Town Council area)**

Why are changes being proposed?

Residents and Borough Councillors have made Swale Borough Council aware of a town council boundary anomaly, which affects Lucas Close, Queenborough. Lucas Close is currently part of the Sheerness Town Council area and Sheerness Borough ward, but geographically is part of Queenborough, as all access in and out of the street is via Queenborough. Currently, residents of Lucas Close can only vote for councillors in Sheerness Town Council and Sheerness Borough ward. In addition, residents of Lucas Close can only vote at a polling station at West Minster Primary School in Sheerness, which is over 3 miles away.

Initial consultation results

An initial consultation, asking whether residents and other interested parties, wanted the town council boundary reviewed, was carried out during May and June 2022. Booklets and questionnaires were sent to all residents of Lucas Close, Sheerness and Queenborough Town Councils, and Borough Councillors for both Queenborough & Halfway and Sheerness borough wards. The results of the initial consultation were:

8 were in favour of reviewing the boundary

4 were against the reviewing the boundary

Next steps

At their full council meeting on 27 July 2022, Swale Borough Council agreed to launch a 2nd stage consultation for Lucas Close. Full details of the council report, recommendations and responses to the initial consultation can be viewed on our website at:

www.swale.gov.uk/2022-cgr

Proposal

This consultation proposes to move the current Queenborough Town Council boundary north, from Moat Way to Brielle Way (A249), so that Lucas Close will become part of the Queenborough Town Council area – see map in centre pages of this booklet.

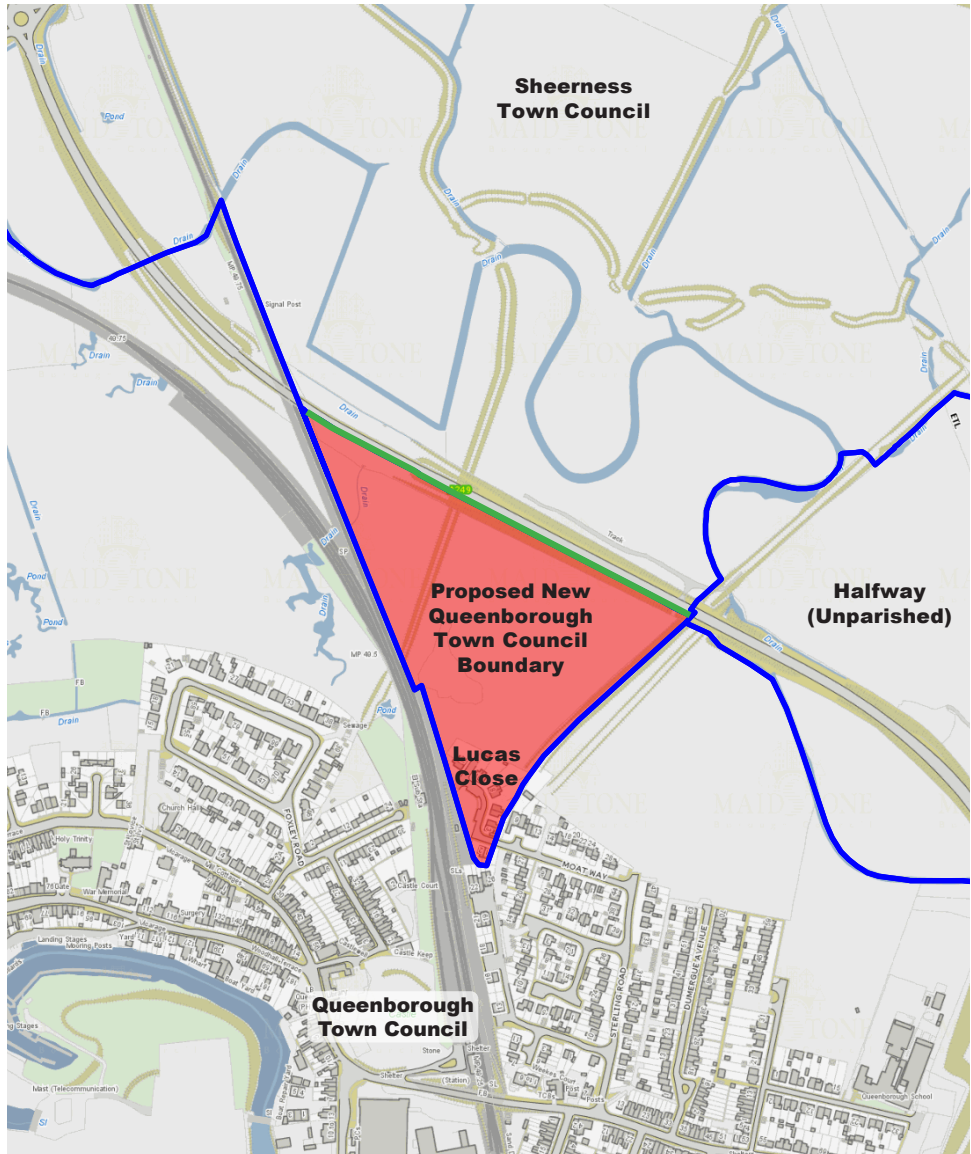
What impact will this have?

If changes were made to the town council boundary, as a result of the review, your property would come into the Queenborough Town Council area. You can find out more about Queenborough Town Council at www.queenborough-tc.gov.uk

This would mean that

- ◆ You would be represented by and vote for councillors on Queenborough Town Council, instead of Sheerness Town Council
- ◆ Your polling station would be much closer at Castle Connections, Well Road, Queenborough (0.4 miles away), instead of West Minster Primary School in Sheerness (3.5 miles away).
- ◆ You would pay your parish precept to Queenborough Town Council, instead of Sheerness Town Council. For a band D property for the year 2022-2023 this is £76.64 per annum for Queenborough Town Council and £49.38 per annum for Sheerness Town Council

We would also ask the Local Government Boundary Commission to review the borough ward boundary at the same time, so if approved, Lucas Close would also become part of the Queenborough and Halfway borough ward, so you would be represented by and be able to vote for Queenborough and Halfway borough councillors instead of Sheerness borough councillors.



- Area in orange to be removed from Sheerness Town Council and added to Queenborough Town Council
- Current town council boundary
- Proposed new Queenborough Town Council boundary

How to respond to the Community Governance Review.

Swale Borough Council welcomes any comments and representations during the specified consultation stages, from any person or body who may wish to comment or make proposals on any aspect of the matters detailed in the review. Enclosed with this booklet is a questionnaire asking whether you support or oppose the boundary change proposal and there is space to provide additional comments. Send your completed questionnaire back in the enclosed pre-paid business reply envelope (no stamp required), as soon as possible and no later than 16 September 2022. Alternatively, you can email your comments to: cgrconsultations@swale.gov.uk

What is a Community Governance Review?

A Community Governance Review is a review of the whole or part of the district to consider one or more of the following:

- ◆ Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes/town councils;
- ◆ Amending the names and styles of parishes/town councils;
- ◆ Amending the boundaries and/or electoral arrangements of parishes/town councils;
- ◆ Grouping parishes/town councils under a common parish/town council or de-grouping parishes/town councils

For the purpose of this review, the proposal is to only review the town council boundary in the specified area.

What is a parish/town council and what do they do?

A parish/town council is a statutory body with certain duties and legal powers. It is the first tier of local government closest to its community. A parish/town council is an elected representative body of the local community and their role is to represent the local community, provide services to meet local needs and improve quality of life and community well-being.

Parish/town councils have the power to provide some facilities themselves, or they can contribute to their provision by others. There are large variations in the services provided by parish/town councils, but they can provide, maintain or contribute to services in their community. For example:

- Providing allotments
- Providing bus shelters
- Supporting local crime prevention initiatives
- Local highway matters such as street lighting and maintenance of roadside verges
- Village halls/community centres
- Local youth projects
- Car parks
- Community safety schemes
- Litter bins
- Parks and open spaces
- Street cleaning
- Provision of community transport schemes
- Sport and recreation facilities
- Tourism

Who undertakes the review?

Swale Borough Council will be undertaking the review where the decision to proceed was made at the meeting of Full Council on 27 April 2022. The council will have 12 months to complete the review. This will be led by the Electoral Services Department at Swale Borough Council.

What will happen next?

Swale Borough Council will consider all responses to the 2nd stage of the consultation and will report to the full Council meeting in October 2022. The outcomes of the 2nd stage review will be published on our website at www.swale.gov.uk/2022-cgr If it is clear that interested parties would support a change to the boundary, we will make final recommendations to change the boundary. If this is not the case, the Community Governance Review would end at this point and the boundaries would stay as they are.

Have your say – complete and return the questionnaire by 16 September 2022

Or email cgrconsultations@swale.gov.uk

More information about the Community Governance Review can be found at www.swale.gov.uk/2022-cgr

Questionnaire

Please read through the leaflet before answering this question and return it to Swale Borough Council using the pre-paid envelope supplied.

Question: Do you support the proposal to move the Queenborough Town Council boundary north, from Moat Way to Brielle Way (A249), so that Lucas Close becomes part of the Queenborough Town Council area?

Please make a cross in the box of your choice.

YES

NO

If you would like to give a reason for your answer, or make any comments, please write it in the box below (if you need more space, continue on a separate sheet of paper and enclose with questionnaire).

Please return your completed questionnaire to Electoral Services at Swale Borough Council by 16 September 2022, using the pre-paid envelope supplied (no stamp required).

Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	12 October 2022
Report Title	Sittingbourne Town Centre, Supplementary Planning Document, Statement of Consultation Report, June 2022. Sittingbourne Town Centre, Final Supplementary Planning Document, July 2022.
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Flo Churchill, Interim Head of Planning
Lead Officer	Alison Peters, Principal Urban Design and Landscape Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the revisions to the SPD due to feedback from the consultation. 2. Adoption to Full Council.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 With a view to scope the approaches for the future of Sittingbourne town centre in 2020 the Council held a workshop for Councillors. The findings formed the basis of a long-term strategic vision for Sittingbourne that meets the needs and aspirations of a broad range of users and stakeholders to achieve the ambition to shape a place where people want to live, work and spend their leisure time within an active high street.
- 1.2 The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was developed over 2021 and summarises the drivers for change as the follows:
 - Residential - more residents in and around the Town Centre,
 - Creative, cultural, social – historic environment, more culture, arts, creativity, health and education,
 - Employment – employment creation and retention, and
 - Events and activities – events, activities, family use, temporary pop-ups.
- 1.3 The aim was for a highly graphic explanatory document that should excite the community, provide guidance and certainty for the stakeholders such as landowners and set a steer with regards planning and design policy for the Council's Development Management role.

2 Background

- 2.1 It is known that our town centres are changing - the way in which we shop, move, socialise and interact has changed and will continue to change even more in the wake of Covid-19. Town centres therefore need to adapt and reposition themselves in order that they continue to thrive and meet the needs of their local communities. Sittingbourne town centre requires refurbishment, regeneration and public realm investment. Like many smaller towns it has struggled in the recessionary period, suffering declining sales, footfall and closures. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is 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 including the needs of businesses, landowners, traders and the community.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Feedback from the statutory consultation of the SPD was received both electronically from members of the community as well as statutory consultees. There were twenty-four respondents in total of which three used the portal. The full list of consultees and their detailed comments are available to view on the Council's website. A summary of the main points of the consultation can be found in Appendix I.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The alternative, having in place no SPD for Sittingbourne Town Centre, was considered. This alternative was rejected for the following reasons:
- a. The aim is to achieve up to 850 dwellings in the town centre, therefore the document will be used by Development Management to assess planning applications and pre-applications providing 'material weight' for planning application assessments,
 - b. Having no SPD in place is likely to result in more time taken to assess each planning application as well as inconsistency between assessments depending on individual officers' assessment,
 - c. The SPD provides clarity of the objectives and physical form expected in the town centre with a clear long-term vision and is therefore beneficial to the future of the borough

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 In some circumstances an SPD may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to assess whether there are likely to be any significant environmental effects. The Council has carried out a 'screening' of the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD to determine whether a SEA and an assessment under the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required. Following consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England

the Council have determined that the SPD does not require a SEA or Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations. The final version of the SEA/HRA Screening Report can be found in Appendix II.

5.2 A Supplementary Planning Document has is a formal consultation process as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement as follows:

Supplementary Planning Documents

Document and Stage	What Will We Do	Who Will We Consult	How Will We Consult
Supplementary Planning Documents			
<p>Stage 1: Prepare Supplementary Document (SPD)</p> <p>Evidence and Ideas are gathered, and alternative approaches are considered</p>		<p>We will consult with those Individuals and bodies who are relevant to the successful implementation of the SPD.</p> <p>We may consult more widely if it is considered relevant and appropriate to do so.</p>	<p>This will depend on the type of SPD. The council will consider using one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence by letter or email • Workshops or focus groups • Meetings • Drop in events
<p>Stage 2: Publish draft Supplementary Planning Document</p> <p>The council is required to consult on the SPD. Publishing a draft provides opportunity to get comments on the document before it is finalised.</p>	<p>As a minimum, the council will comply with the relevant planning regulations</p> <p>We will consult for at least 6 weeks and make copies of the draft SPD available for inspection on the website and at the council's main office and other locations as appropriate to the type of SPD</p> <p>We will make all the comments received publicly available</p> <p>We will consider all representations received.</p>	<p>We will consult the specific, general and other bodies who are relevant to the topic of the SP being prepared</p> <p>We will consult residents or persons carrying on business in the area where it is appropriate to</p>	<p>This will depend on the type of SPD. The council will consider using one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making documents available on the council's website and at inspection points • Workshops or drop in events • Correspondence through letters or emails • Leaflets/Newsletters • Targeted measures for hard to reach groups relevant to the topic of the SPD
<p>Stage 3: Adoption</p> <p>Once the council has taken into account</p>	<p>We will prepare a consultation statement</p>	<p>We will send a copy of the adoption statement</p>	

<p>comments and made any changes to the document, it will be adopted by the council's Cabinet. An Independent examination is not required.</p>	<p>We will adopt the SPD</p> <p>We will publish the SPD, consultation statement and an adoption statement on the website</p> <p>These documents will also be available for inspection at the council offices and other locations as appropriate to the type of SPD</p>	<p>to any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption.</p>	
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5.3 The consultation that took place for the STC included the following:

Statutory Consultation

- Online Questionnaire– 6 weeks.
- Hard copies of questionnaire made available at Libraries (subject to public health guidelines).
- Specifically contact Statutory Consultees, persons carrying out business and activity in the area and residents of the town centre – 800 letters were issued advising of the consultation.
- Contact with journalists and the press.
- Alert the community that consultation is taking place through SBC’s website, social media and letter drops.

Informal Consultation

- In 2021 meetings were held with landowners with sites of significant opportunity.
- 7th February to 21st March 2022 unmanned exhibition through-out the consultation period with a series of exhibition boards held in three town centre location including The Forum, Sittingbourne Library and Swallows Leisure centre before returning to The Forum again.
- Comments could be made on the council website, by email to Lpcomments@swale.gov.uk or by post to Planning Policy Team at Swale House.
- Due to deadlines, any feedback from the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group will be tabled at the Policy and Resources Committee.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This Local Plan supports the priority of the Council to build the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all.
Financial, Resource and Property	The costs for the production of the SPD can be met from existing budgets.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	A Council minute confirming the adoption of the SPD will be required in order to ratify the document.
Crime and Disorder	Improvements to Sittingbourne Town Centre, including new residential development and new employment opportunities, facilitate more people within the town centre which assists with crime prevention.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Council has carried out a 'screening' of the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD to determine whether a SEA and an assessment under the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required. Following consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England the Council have determined that the SPD does not require a SEA or Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations. Planning applications will require their own environmental assessments on application.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

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, Supplementary Planning Document - Statement of Consultation Report, June 2022.

- Appendix II: Sittingbourne Town Centre, Supplementary Planning Document - Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report, December 2021.
- Appendix III: Sittingbourne Town Centre, Final Supplementary Planning Document, July 2022.

8 Background Papers

None



Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Statement of Consultation Report

June 2022

The Sittingbourne Town Centre - Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Statement of Consultation Report

June 2022

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1. Introduction

With a view to scope the approaches for the future of Sittingbourne town centre in 2020 the Council held a workshop for Councillors. The findings formed the basis of a long-term strategic vision for Sittingbourne that meets the needs and aspirations of a broad range of users and stakeholders to achieve the ambition to shape a place where people want to live, work and spend their leisure time within an active high street.

2. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Challenges

It is known that our town centres are changing - the way in which we shop, move, socialise and interact has changed and will continue to change even more in the wake of Covid-19. Town centres therefore need to adapt and reposition themselves in order that they continue to thrive and meet the needs of their local communities. Sittingbourne town centre requires refurbishment, regeneration and public realm investment. Like many smaller towns it has struggled in the recessionary period, suffering declining sales, footfall and closures. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is 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 including the needs of businesses, landowners, traders and the community.

3. The Supplementary Planning Document Proposals

The Supplementary Planning Document was developed over 2021 and summarises the drivers for change as the follows:

1. **Residential** - more residents in and around the Town Centre,
2. **Creative, cultural, social** – historic environment, more culture, arts, creativity, health and education,
3. **Employment** – employment creation and retention, and
4. **Events and activities** – events, activities, family use, temporary pop-ups.

The aim was for a highly graphic explanatory document that should excite the community, provide guidance and certainty for the stakeholders such as landowners and set a steer with regards planning and design policy for the Council's Development Management role.

4. Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) adopted 2018

A Supplementary Planning Document has is a formal consultation process as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement as follows:

Supplementary Planning Documents

Document and Stage	What Will We Do	Who Will We Consult	How Will We Consult
Supplementary Planning Documents			
<p>Stage 1: Prepare Supplementary Document (SPD)</p> <p>Evidence and ideas are gathered, and alternative approaches are considered</p>		<p>We will consult with those individuals and bodies who are relevant to the successful implementation of the SPD.</p> <p>We may consult more widely if it is considered relevant and appropriate to do so.</p>	<p>This will depend on the type of SPD. The council will consider using one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence by letter or email • Workshops or focus groups • Meetings • Drop in events
<p>Stage 2: Publish draft Supplementary Planning Document</p> <p>The council is required to consult on the SPD. Publishing a draft provides opportunity to get comments on the document before it is finalised.</p>	<p>As a minimum, the council will comply with the relevant planning regulations</p> <p>We will consult for at least 6 weeks and make copies of the draft SPD available for inspection on the website and at the council's main office and other locations as appropriate to the type of SPD</p> <p>We will make all the comments received publicly available</p> <p>We will consider all representations received.</p>	<p>We will consult the specific, general and other bodies who are relevant to the topic of the SP being prepared</p> <p>We will consult residents or persons carrying on business in the area where it is appropriate to</p>	<p>This will depend on the type of SPD. The council will consider using one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making documents available on the council's website and at inspection points • Workshops or drop in events • Correspondence through letters or emails • Leaflets/Newsletters • Targeted measures for hard to reach groups relevant to the topic of the SPD
<p>Stage 3: Adoption</p> <p>Once the council has taken into account comments and made any changes to the document, it will be adopted by the council's Cabinet. An independent examination is not required.</p>	<p>We will prepare a consultation statement</p> <p>We will adopt the SPD</p> <p>We will publish the SPD, consultation statement and an adoption statement on the website</p> <p>These documents will also be available for inspection at the council offices and other locations as appropriate to the type of SPD</p>	<p>We will send a copy of the adoption statement</p> <p>to any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption.</p>	

The consultation that took place for the STC included the following:

Statutory Consultation

- Online Questionnaire– 6 weeks.
- Hard copies of questionnaire made available at Libraries (subject to public health guidelines).

- Specifically contact Statutory Consultees, persons carrying out business and activity in the area and resident’s of the town centre – 800 letters were issued advising of the consultation.
- Contact with journalists and the press.
- Alert the community that consultation is taking place through SBC’s website, social media and letter drops.

Informal Consultation

- In 2021 meetings were held with landowners with sites of significant opportunity.
- 7th February to 21st March 2022 unmanned exhibition through-out the consultation period with a series of exhibition boards held in three town centre location including The Forum, Sittingbourne Library and Swallows Leisure centre before returning to The Forum again.



Exhibition at The Forum

- Comments could be made on the council website, by email to Lpcomments@swale.gov.uk or by post to Planning Policy Team at Swale House.

Future Programme

September 2022 – SPD Consultation report to Planning & Transport Policy Working Group and Policy & Resources Committee, and

Autumn 2022 – adoption of the SPD by Full Council.

5. Summary of the Consultation Feedback of the SPD

Feedback was received both electronically from members of the community as well as statutory consultees. There were twenty-four respondents in total of which three used the portal. The full list of consultees and their detailed comments are available to view on the Council’s website. A summary of the main points is as follow:

Retail and business

The feedback on the retail offer in Sittingbourne is polar from recognising that the town should play to it’s strengths which lies in budget shopping whilst also having the ambition for “specialty retail” and the café culture, flexible working space, improved street market, art galleries, event space and

night-time economy. However, there is a consistent message to stop empty shops and prevent the rate of loss of businesses to out-of-town shopping and neighbouring towns and cities.

It is suggested that the Council must play a larger role in addressing supply/demand imbalance. Incentivise opportunities for retailers to come into the town centre by reducing Business Rates, the Council purchasing leases on shops and renting them out according to the retail needs of the town.

Rodmersham Town Council feedback the following: "residents constantly tell us they want nice cafes, good quality clothing boutiques, specialist shops on their doorstep, shops where local food is sold etc. as they no longer want to drive to towns further away we want an attractive town with good quality retail."

Public realm, biodiversity and car parking

There is large support for overall public realm improvements, 'greening', tree planting and a storm water drainage strategy through the town centre although there is also scepticism that it can be achieved. Particular support is for the provision of street tree planting throughout the Spring Street, High Street, St Michael's Avenue, Avenue of Remembrance, Central Avenue, Eurolink Way and Bell Road open space as well as the provision of space for wildflower meadows, wildlife ponds etc. A request for clarity over the funding of public realm improvements, such as S106, is required.

There is concern about the loss of car parking both in the car parks and on-street with some call for cheaper or more free car parking. There is particular concern that the loss of free parking on Avenue of Remembrance will lead to an increase in parking on Albany Road and Connaught Road for example, however, free parking in the town centre should not be an option as there is plenty of well priced car parking available in the town centre. Residents request continuation of free public toilet access.

Environment

Better explanation of "climate change and ecological emergency" required.

Housing

Despite some support for the need for more housing, especially affordable, there is concern that more housing will increase the strain on local resources especially roads and medical facilities. More hospitals and school needed to cope with the increase and this needs to come before homes are built.

The overall support for more housing in the town centre, to take the pressure off of green field development in our countryside, is both as mixed-use schemes and through conversion of upper floors of retail but care to be taken so as not to replace retail with residential.

Town centre living needs to be a good mix of rented/private but also across the budgets including high end and also with a good proportion of disabled and elderly accommodation. Key worker accommodation should also be provided in the town centres.

Sport England is supportive of the objectives of the SPD, however they recommend a further objective that enables people to live an active and healthy lifestyle.

Mixed use

There is mixed support for the new mixed-use development at Bourne Place and for the proposed Community Quarter on Central Avenue as well as improvements around The Forum. The scepticism relates to the need to get the type of uses right, in the right place with the correct supporting infrastructure. For example, a consultee fed back that “the area at the back of Wilkos should be made better use of economically and visually”. In addition, encouraging economic activity not just food and beverage but late opening shops, art galleries, exhibitions, events etc and encourage footfall would make the town centre feel more vibrant and lived in.

There is support for new health facilities in a range of forms in the town centre from a new hospital, to GPs surgery to CCG facilities and so forth. In addition, there is support for new community facilities due to the loss of Phoenix House. Appleyard currently functions as a meeting place for community groups but concern is expressed about the role of Applyard as a community centre. There is also mixed support, both for and against, for an adult education centre.

Across the board there is positive support for the promotion of heritage in the town especially for it’s role in revitalisation of the town centre. It really important the SPD reflects the new Sittingbourne Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2011 and its new boundaries. A specific Heritage and Visitor Centre is requested by some.

Movement

The largest current complaint regards too much traffic congestion in the town centre with new development equated with further grid-lock and bottle-necks in the future as summarised as follows: “aspirations for people to walk, cycle or take a bus are laudable but in truth people have cars and need to get from one end of town to another”. Specific support for improvements to St Michael’s Road, Avenue of Remembrances and Central Avenue and to Eurolink Way must be carried out in conjunction involving wider highways strategy for the town involving alternative routes, measures to restrict HGVs etc

However other consultees identify the benefit of improvements to public transport, such as real-time bus information; provision of good, safe cycle routes particularly with electric cycles; overall support for the “20 minute neighbourhood concept” for the town with improvements to pedestrian movement especially where crossing the railway and improvements to the alleys provide an important pedestrian network as well as having a role in economic regeneration where promoted for use by the businesses such as creative industries.

Concern is expressed that, despite Sittingbourne being an historic town and in need of beautification coupled with the Council’s strategy for biodiversity opportunity as an element of the Climate Emergency, it should not be at the expense of vehicular access or on-street parking spaces facilitating passing trade for retailers on the High Street therefore, the request is to ensure continued ability to drive through and park short-term in the High Street. However,

National Highways request the Council add National Highways and Kent County Highways as key stakeholders. The SRN impacts of an additional 850 dwelling in/around the town centre as part of the new Local Plan will need to be assessed

General

There is an overall majority support expressed for the SPD and the vision set out within the document with strong support for the accompanying extensive objectives. However, two respondents expressed concern that the plan is 'divorced from reality'.

Due to the historic nature of the town and its important role within the borough, there is support for commitment to high quality design as set out in the document. However, there is a request to be more specific with building heights and landmarks with a suggestion of 6-8 storeys and an emphasis on how actual building heights can be determined through the DM process.

To prevent antisocial behaviour a request is made to ensure a visible Police presence (not part-time PCSOs).

Lastly, important planning comments include that a future CIL charge shouldn't render the aims and objectives of the SPD unviable and the SPD will need to coordinate with the emerging Local Plan.

Summary of the Changes to the SPD

The number of changes proposed to the SPD as a result of the consultation is minimal. A summary of the respondent and any resulting changes is as follows:

Clarification of National Planning Policy Framework reflected in change to text as follows:

4.1 The NPPF identifies that planning policies should define the extent of town centres and the primary shopping area. The only change to the Town Centre Boundary is minor and removes residential terraces on Park Road.

SBC Heritage Officer – Conservation Area now includes East Street. Historic England have good relevant reference documents to be referred to. *Conservation Area and Listed Buildings* plan to be updated to reflect new Conservation Area. Text changes as follows:

9.3 The Conservation Area has been extended to include East Street.

9.4 The documents "Places Strategy" 2019 [HE - Places Strategy \(historicengland.org.uk\)](https://historicengland.org.uk) and "Streets for All" 2018 <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/heag149-sfa-national/> both by Historic England have been prepared in accordance with the Historic England 'Place making Strategy Brief' (Dec 2017) and 'Place making Strategy Project Design' 2018) and with reference to the 'Wellbeing and the Historic Environment' report 2018 providing a wealth of useful guidance with examples of good design.

Cllr Rowles – new wording regarding No 34 High Street to reflect cultural activities undertaken under the new lease by Swale Media Arts Centre CIC. Text changes as follows:

19.5 Sittingbourne has cultural facilities within the town centre including the Avenue Theatre on Central Avenue, the heritage centre within the Forum, a local museum on East Street and the cultural centre No.34 The High Street. 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.

Development Management Officers - Clarification of the building height policy requested. Text changes as follows:

31.1 Bullet 2. Medium height buildings will be accommodated to the north and south of the town centre and around Central Avenue. Appropriate heights are likely to be between four and six storeys.

31.1 Additional bullet 6. Applications will include a 3-D massing and building height study to explain and justify the building heights in the context of the submission site, the existing built form and any other submissions within the town centre within the public arena such as Planning Applications and Swale Rainbow Homes Ltd data.

Active Travel Officer – Use of the High Street by vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Text changes as follows:

33.1. Add the following additional text: In the future further review and consultation of closing the High Street to vehicular traffic at different times of the day and evening will be undertaken.

Network Rail – include proposals for some form of footbridge from north Sittingbourne to the railway station. Text changes as follows:

33.2 Bullet 5. 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. To facilitate better use of the railway station by residents from the new residential developments in the north and by people accessing Eurolink, Ridham and Kemsley for employment Network Rail are planning improvements to pedestrian and cycle movement below the railway line bridges and provision of a pedestrian footbridge over the railway line from the north to better access the railway station. Similarly, to St Michael's Road, Eurolink Way will be more pedestrian and cycle friendly with new tree-lined, wider provision to encourage people to walk in the north of the railway line.

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**Draft Sittingbourne Town Centre
Supplementary Planning Document**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment
&
Habitat Regulations Assessment**

Screening Report

December 2021

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**Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitat Regulations Assessment
Screening Report for Draft Sittingbourne Town Centre
Supplementary Planning Document**

1. Introduction

Purpose of Report

- 1.1. Swale Borough Council (SBC) are in the process of preparing a draft Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.2. The purpose of the SPD is to provide additional advice and guidance on the implementation of Policy ST5 (The Sittingbourne area strategy) of the Swale Local Plan (Bearing Fruits 2031) (SLP) as it applies to Sittingbourne town centre. The SPD does not allocate sites or set policy.
- 1.3. The purpose of the screening report is to determine whether or not the SPD requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.4. The report will also screen whether the SPD requires a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). A HRA is required if it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected European Sites (also known as Natura 2000 sites and Habitats Sites¹), as a result of the implementation of a plan or project.

2. Legislative Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 2.1. The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations². Detailed guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005)³.
- 2.2. Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to carry out a sustainability appraisal (SA) for any documents that can form part of a local plan. It is considered best practice for the SA to incorporate the requirements of the SEA. There is no legal requirement for an SPD to have a SA; this is reflected in the Planning Practice Guidance⁴.
- 2.3. However, the PPG goes on to state⁵ that a SEA may in exceptional circumstances be required where an SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of a Local Plan. In addition, the PPG states that a SEA is unlikely to be required where an SPD deals only with a small area at local level, unless it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects.
- 2.4. The Town Centre SPD sets out design and heritage considerations within a specific area at a local level identified in the SLP. The Council must, therefore, determine whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan. This

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021

² The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020. The SEA Regulations, which previously implemented the requirements of the SEA Directive in England, will continue to apply as before unless and until new legislation is introduced.

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf

⁴ Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 11-005-20190722 Planning Practice Guidance (Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal), revised 22 07 19

⁵ Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 11-008-20140306 Planning Practice Guidance (Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal), revised 06 03 2014

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is done through a screening assessment. If the screening assessment indicates that there could be significant effects, an SEA is needed.

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)

- 2.5. The need for an HRA is set out in articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive and by regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), which require that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect upon the integrity of a European site (Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area or Ramsar Site) must be subject to an appropriate assessment.

3. Swale Local Plan

- 3.1. The SLP was adopted in July 2017. The SLP seeks to support the regeneration and environmental enhancement of central Sittingbourne with a focus on the town centre with Policy ST5 (The Sittingbourne area strategy) providing the policy framework to achieve this. The wording of the policy can be found at Appendix 1.
- 3.2. The SLP was subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal, which included SEA assessment, and an HRA was also undertaken⁶. Where appropriate these documents are referenced in the assessment of likely significant effects.
- 3.3. The Local Plan is currently being reviewed. The emerging Local Plan (LPR) is seeking to continue the current policy approach of promoting the regeneration of the town centre (Policy Regen 2 – Sittingbourne Town Centre). A pre-submission version of the Plan was published for consultation under Regulation 19 in February 2021, which was subject to SEA and HRA assessment⁷. Although the Council have decided not to proceed with this version of the Local Plan it nevertheless shows the direction of travel in respect of the policy approach to Sittingbourne Town Centre. Where appropriate, the LPR SEA and HRA are referenced in the assessment of likely significant effects. Following the adoption of the LPR, the SPD will need to be reviewed to ensure it remains consistent with the new Plan and effectively supplements relevant policies.

4. Town Centre SPD

- 4.1. The Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD provides a design led approach to regeneration, setting out additional guidance and principles of development, including the design principles that would apply on an individual site/area basis, and identifies opportunity areas for environmental enhancement within the town centre boundary.
- 4.2. The SPD is structured as follows:
- Introduction – outlines the purpose of the SPD, planning context and the issues to be addressed in the area covered by the SPD
 - Vision and objectives – outlines a vision and objectives for Sittingbourne Town Centre
 - Key development principles /zones – outlines development principles in respect of land uses, frontages, building height, gateways/hubs, movement, parking, public realm, green spaces, design

⁶ <https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/local-plans/adopted-local-plan-for-swale>

⁷ <https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/local-plans/local-plan-review/public-consultation#h2>

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quality and the urban design requirements for five zones within the town centre that offer the opportunity for significant improvements to be achieved

- Implementation, delivery and funding

4.3. The SPD will be of particular use to landowners, developers, occupiers and others looking to bring forward development proposals or undertake improvements within the area covered by the SPD as a framework against which to judge the suitability of proposals and the standards of design expected.

4.4. The SPD largely covers the Sittingbourne Town Centre as defined in the SLP but has slightly amended boundaries to include immediately adjoining areas. This is to enable a more comprehensive approach to the opportunities for enhancement in these areas. The area covered by the SPD is shown in Appendix 2.

**5. SEA Assessment
Assessment**

5.1. The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required.

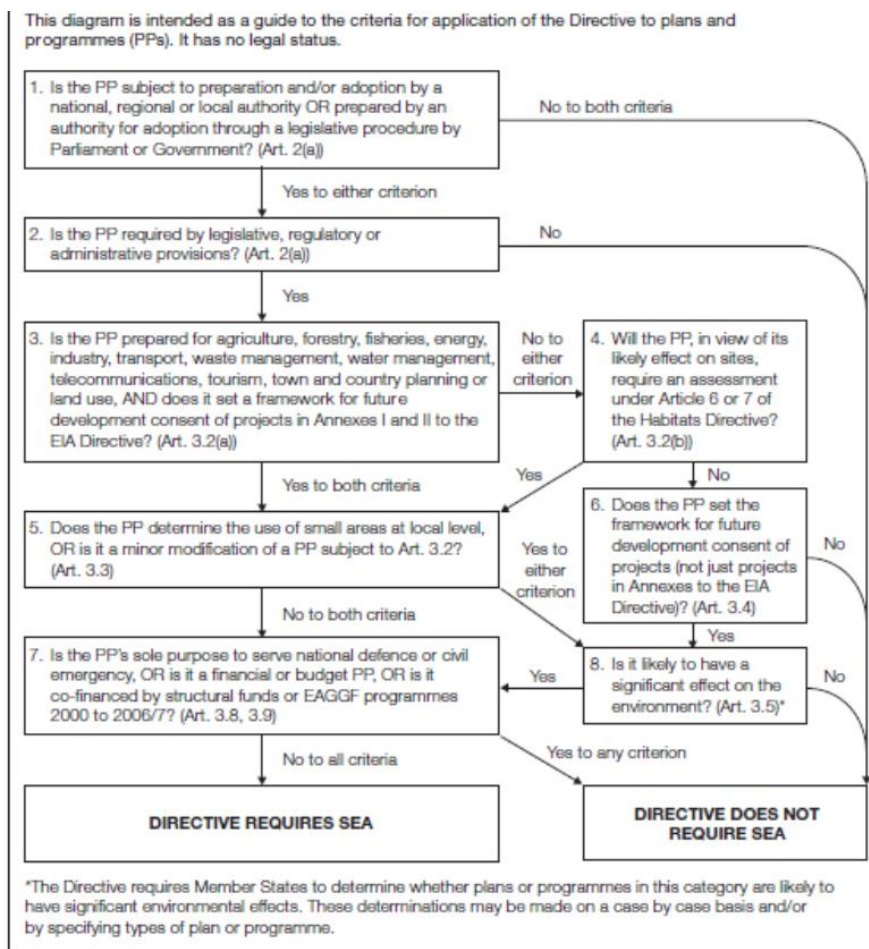


Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to Plans and Programmes

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5.2. Table 1 shows the assessment of whether the SPD will require a full SEA. The questions below are drawn from the diagram in Figure 1 which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art.2(a))	Y	The Town Centre SPD will be prepared and adopted by Swale Borough Council. The preparation of the SPD will be in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The preparation of an SPD is optional; there is no legislative, regulatory or administrative requirements to prepare an SPD. However, once adopted it will supplement Policy ST5 in the SLP and will be a material consideration in planning decisions. Therefore, it is considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects and whether an SEA is required.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Y	The SPD is prepared for town and country planning purposes. It supplements SLP Policy ST5 by providing more detailed guidance on how this policy will be implemented.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art 3.2(b))	N	A separate HRA screening assessment has been undertaken and can be found in Section 6 of this report.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art 3.2? (Art 3.3)	Y	The SPD will be a material consideration in determining planning applications within the area covered by the SPD, supporting the SLP through the provision of more detailed guidance.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	N	The framework for future developments is provided through the SLP (or as reviewed through the LPR), not the SPD.
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N	The SPD does not deal with these issues.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art 3.5)	N	The assessment of likely significant effects are considered in more detail in Table 2

5.3. Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below.

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1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
 - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
 - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
 - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
 - the cumulative nature of the effects,
 - the transboundary nature of the effects,
 - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
 - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
 - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, - intensive land-use,
 - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status
 - intensive land-use,
 - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

5.4. Table 2 below looks at the likelihood for the SPD to have significant effects on the environment.

1. Characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard, in particular to:		Is there a significant environmental impact? Y/N	Justification
1a	The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	N	The SPD will help implement Policy ST5 of the SLP, which provides the overarching framework for development in Swale through the provision of additional guidance. The SDP does not itself allocate resources, but it will help secure resources for the delivery of development and enhancement proposals within Sittingbourne Town Centre. The SLP has been subject to SEA as a matter of course.
1b	The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	N	An SPD is the lowest tier of local development documents, which does not influence other plans and programmes. Rather it supports the implementation of policies of the higher tier plan, the SLP. It is not, therefore, considered that the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD will influence other plans and programmes.

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1. Characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard, in particular to:		Is there a significant environmental impact? Y/N	Justification
1c	The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	N	The SPD is designed to have a positive effect by providing more detail and guidance to support policies within the SLP. The SPD identifies the opportunities for environmental enhancement with the Town Centre and provides guidance on improving the public realm, greening public spaces and provision of new green spaces and encouraging active travel within the Town Centre The SEA of the SLP identified positive effects on the environment in relation to the SPD 'parent' Policy ST5.
1d	Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	N	The SPD will not introduce or exacerbate any environmental problems. It has the potential to have a positive impact through enabling well designed development and identifying opportunities for environmental enhancements.
1e	The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of [European] Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	N	The SPD is not directly relevant to the implementation of European Community legislation on the environment. It does, however, support the implementation of a higher plan at a local level and the SLP has had regard to such legislation.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to:		Is there a likely significant environmental impact? Y/N	Justification
2a	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	N	The SPD is anticipated to have positive long term effects by providing additional design guidance to supplement the policies of the SLP.
2b	The cumulative nature of the effects	N	As the SLP SEA expects overall positive impacts to arise from Policy ST5 to which the SPD relates, cumulative effects within the SPD area are anticipated to be beneficial.
2c	The trans-boundary nature of the effects	N	As the SPD is related to a specific boundary within the borough, it is not expected that any cross-boundary impacts will arise.

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	2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to:	Is there a likely significant environmental impact? Y/N	Justification
2d	The risk to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	N	It is not envisaged that there will be any risks to human health or the environment arising from the implementation of this SPD, rather it seeks to lead to improvements in these areas, for example through the provision of guidance on greening of public spaces and measures to support active travel.
2e	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	N	As the SPD is applicable only to the defined area the effects will be felt at a local scale. The SPD will directly benefit residents, businesses and visitors to the Town Centre through supporting town centre and improvements in environmental quality.
2f	The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; iii) Intensive land use	N	<p>There are a number of heritage assets within Sittingbourne Town Centre. The SPD supports the implementation of SLP Policy ST5 and will not be able to set policy related to specific land uses. The SLP SEA noted that the implementation of Policy ST5 was not expected to result in adverse effects.</p> <p>In terms of biodiversity, the SLP HRA noted that Policy ST5 did not have direct HRA implications, other than the possible general contribution to recreational activity in the North Kent European sites applicable to all new housing within 6km.</p> <p>In common with all new residential development within 6km of the SPA, any housing development within the area covered by the SPD would be required to make a SAMMS contribution (Policy CP7 of the SLP).</p> <p>The HRA of the emerging LPR noted that Policy Regen 2 had no HRA implications as no linking impact pathways were present.</p>
2g	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	N	None identified. Any applications for development will be required to satisfy the relevant policies for protection of the character of the area before permission is granted.

Screening Outcome

- 5.5. The policy that the SPD will supplement in the SLP has been subject to SEA/SA, which concluded that there will be no significant environmental effects. The SEA/SA concluded that positive impacts could be expected for social and economic objectives and that neutral or positive impacts could be expected for environmental objectives: the exception was biodiversity where the effects were unclear. As the SPD is not setting new policy or allocating sites but only supplementing and providing further guidance to support the implementation of existing policies, it is considered that the conclusions of the SLP SEA/SA remain relevant.
- 5.6. On the basis of the assessments set out in Table 1 and Table 2 and taking into account the SEA/SA undertaken at a higher level, it is concluded that the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD is unlikely to have any significant effects on the environment and a full SEA is not required.

6. HRA Screening

- 6.1. The SLP has been subject to HRA, assessing all the policies in the Plan. The HRA assessed a variety of impact pathways linking the SLP to internationally designated sites. The HRA found that in respect of ST5 (Sittingbourne Area Strategy) there was the potential for residential development to contribute to recreational activity in the North Kent European sites and have a significant effect on the sites as a result of increased recreational disturbance.
- 6.2. In accordance with the Bird Wise North Kent Mitigation Strategy⁸ residential development within 6km of the North Kent Bird sites, which includes the Swale SPA, could result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the site as a result of increased recreational pressure. As such, to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the designated site occurs, all residential development (where there is a net increase in dwellings) within 6km of the SPA will be required to make a financial contribution to the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS). The requirement for SAMMS contributions is set out in Policy CP7 of the SLP. In the event a financial contribution to SAMMS is not made or it is demonstrated how different bespoke mitigation can adequately reduce any likely significant effects, then any planning applications would be refused.

Screening Outcome

- 6.3. The SPD has been prepared to provide additional guidance to support the implementation of existing SLP policies within Sittingbourne Town Centre setting out design and other qualitative criteria; it does not present new policies or development allocations. As the 'parent' policy has already been assessed in the SLP HRA and having regard to the scope of the SPD, it is considered that the guidance contained in the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD is not likely to have any significant effects on European Sites and, therefore, appropriate assessment is not required.

7. Determination

- 7.1. Before the Council made a formal determination, there is a requirement to consult the three statutory consultation bodies designated in the regulations: Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England.
- 7.2. Consultation on the Screening Report was carried out with the three bodies in November 2021. The three consultation bodies agreed with the conclusions of the Screening Report. The consultation responses received are provided in Appendix 3.

⁸ <https://birdwise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Mitigation-Strategy.pdf>

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- 7.3. Swale Borough Council are of the opinion, therefore, that an environmental assessment of the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD is not required as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
- 7.4. It is also the Council's opinion that a full Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment is not required, as the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD is unlikely to have a significant effect on any designated sites.
- 7.5. **This determination is made on the 16th December 2021.**

Appendix 1: Policy ST5 of the adopted Swale Local Plan (2017)

Policy ST 5

The Sittingbourne area strategy

Within the Sittingbourne area, the town is the principal urban centre and focus for the main concentration of developments in and adjacent to the town. Development proposals will, as appropriate:

1. Increase the supply and quality of employment provision at 'Existing Strategic Employment Sites' or at allocations, or within the town centre regeneration area, where the need for office floorspace can be additionally met. Unanticipated needs that cannot be met at these or other existing employment sites, will be permitted at locations close to the A249 in accordance with Local Plan policies;
 2. Ensure the vitality of Sittingbourne town centre, as appropriate, by:
 - a. enhancing its retail offer and attractiveness to secure local spending and jobs, whilst providing improved spaces, better north-south links and buildings of architectural excellence;
 - b. providing a wider range of services, including transport, education, health, leisure and cultural facilities;
 - c. enhancing secondary areas of the town within West Street, Dover Street, Cockleshell Walk and East Street;
 - d. enhancing local character, heritage and the built environment by either working with the grain and focus of the A2 or aiding the rediscovery of Milton Creek;
 - e. safeguarding and expanding the network of urban green space and street trees within and beyond the centre; and
 - f. adding to the mix of uses within the town centre to increase its vitality and viability.
 3. Support, as required, improved connections to the A249 and M2 from west Sittingbourne and, in the longer term, the completion of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road to the A2;
 4. Provide housing/mixed uses within the Sittingbourne town centre regeneration or at other sites within urban and village confines, or as extensions to settlements, where indicated by proposed allocations;
-
5. Create, where appropriate, mixed use and healthy communities and address disparities and housing market variances between communities north and south of the A2 through high quality design, new facilities and new jobs as appropriate;
 6. Maintain the individual character and separation of important local countryside gaps around Sittingbourne in accordance with Policy DM 25 and within the A2 corridor to the west of the town through to Rainham;
 7. Reduce levels of deprivation in the most deprived wards and facilitate as required, increased capacity in infrastructure and services;
 8. Where possible, achieve net gains in biodiversity and natural/semi-natural greenspace at development sites, especially within allocations to the north-west, south-west and east of the town and at Milton Creek and Iwade;
 9. In accordance with Policy CP 7, minimise and mitigate impacts on internationally designated sites for biodiversity, including, from developments within 6 km of an SPA, contributions toward the North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS);
 10. Improve the condition and quality of landscapes in the area, especially those in poor condition and ensure that development is appropriate to landscape character and quality, especially within landscape designations and areas with low or moderate capacity to accommodate change;
 11. Unless allocated by the Local Plan, avoid the loss of high quality agricultural land in accordance with Policy DM 31;
 12. Are consistent with local air quality action plans for Newington High Street, Teynham Greenstreet, St. Paul's and East Street and bring forward innovative proposals for mitigation of adverse impacts;
 13. Conserve and enhance the historic and special interests of the town, coast, its rural area and landscapes; and
 14. Are appropriate to the level of risk from climate change, flooding and coastal change, especially where subject to Policy DM 23 on coastal change management.

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Appendix 2: SPD Area



**Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitat Regulations Assessment
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Appendix 3: Statutory Body Responses

Consultation Body	Consultation Response
Natural England (dated 08/12/21)	<p>Summary of Natural England’s Advice NO OBJECTION</p> <p>Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed supplementary planning document (SPD) will not have significant adverse impacts on designated sites and has no objection.</p> <p>Natural England’s further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other natural environment issues is set out below.</p> <p>Additional Information Strategic Environmental Appraisal</p> <p>Planning Practice Guidance sets out that supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal. But may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies.</p> <p>Natural England note that the SPD provides further guidance relating to adopted Swale Local Plan Policy ST5. It is explained in Swale Borough Council’s assessment that, as the SPD is not setting new policy or allocating sites but only supplementing and providing further guidance to support the implementation of existing policies, it can be screened from further assessment. Natural England concurs with this view that the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD is unlikely to have any significant effects on the environment and a full SEA is not required.</p> <p>Habitat Regulations Assessment</p> <p>Natural England notes that Swale Borough Council, as competent authority under the provision of the Habitats Regulations, have through this draft Screening Report, screened whether the SPD requires a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). A HRA is required if it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected European Sites as a result of the implementation of a plan or project.</p> <p>The draft Screening Report sets out that the adopted Swale Local Plan was subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment which assessed all the policies in the adopted Plan.</p> <p>Natural England notes that the SPD does not allocate sites or set policies, but instead provides additional advice and guidance on the implementation of Policy ST5 (The Sittingbourne area strategy) of the adopted Swale Local Plan (Bearing Fruits 2031) adopted on 26 July 2017.</p> <p>Your authorities assessment concludes that the SPD can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination. On the basis of the information provided, Natural England concur with Swale Borough Council’s assessment that the guidance contained in the SPD is not</p>

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	<p>likely to have any significant effects on European Sites and that, therefore, an appropriate assessment is not required.</p> <p>Final Comments Should the proposal change, please consult us again.</p>
Historic England (dated 14/12/21)	In light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programme Regulations 2004, our view is that a SEA <u>is not</u> required in this instance for the reason set out in paragraph 5.6 of the Screening Report.
Environment Agency (dated 16/12/21)	We concur with the conclusions of the Screening Report.

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The Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 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>)

- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.

2. Process

2.1 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.*

2.2 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

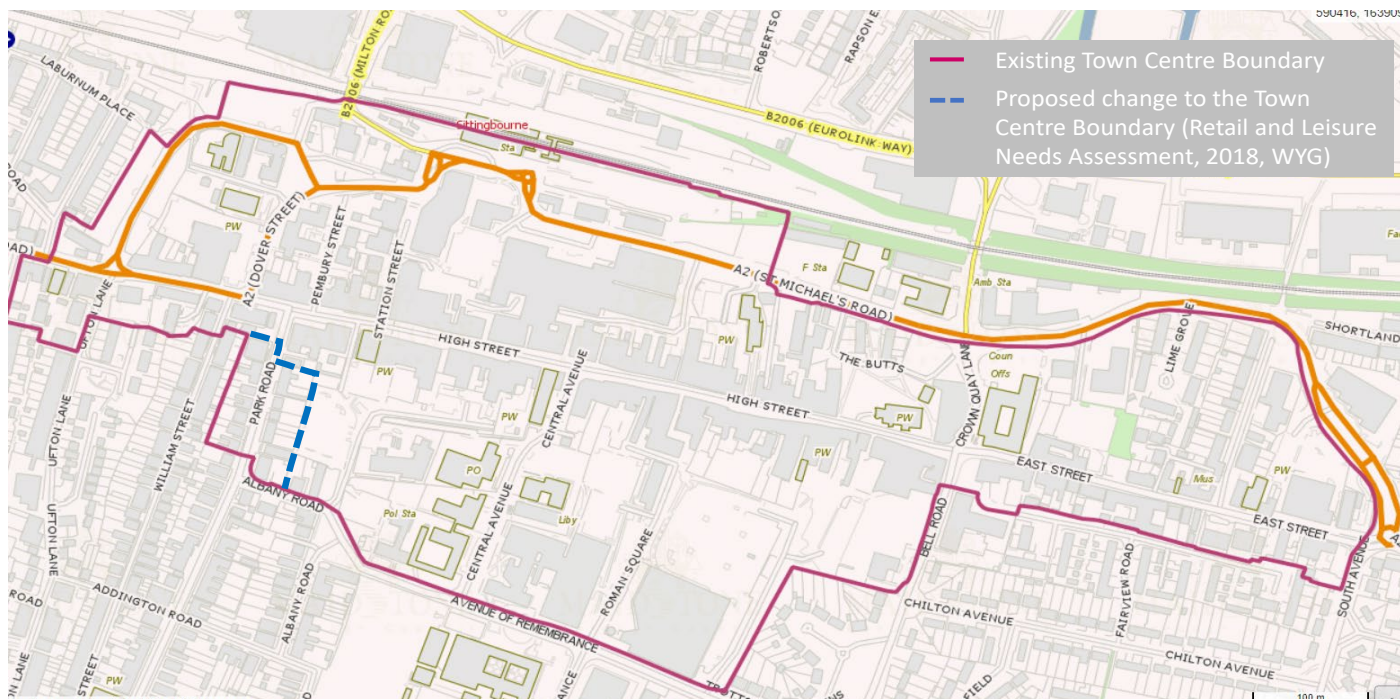
3. Aim of the SPD

3.1 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.

4. Site boundary

4.1 The NPPF identifies that planning policies should define the extent of town centres and the primary shopping area. The only change to the Town Centre Boundary is minor and removes residential terraces on Park Road.



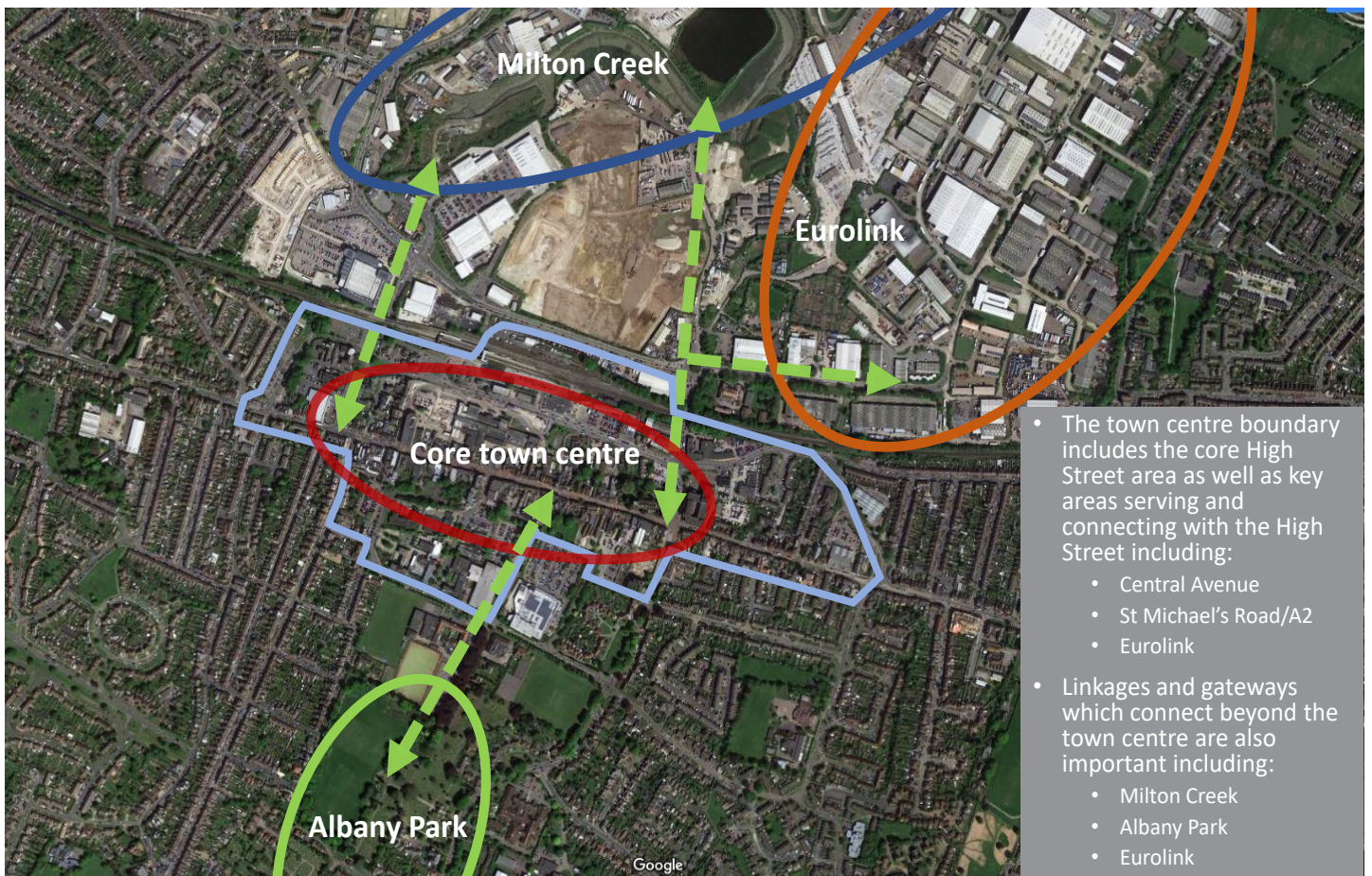
Sittingbourne Town Centre boundary with proposed amendments to be carried forward through the Local Plan Review



Sittingbourne Town Centre boundary for the SPD

4.2 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.



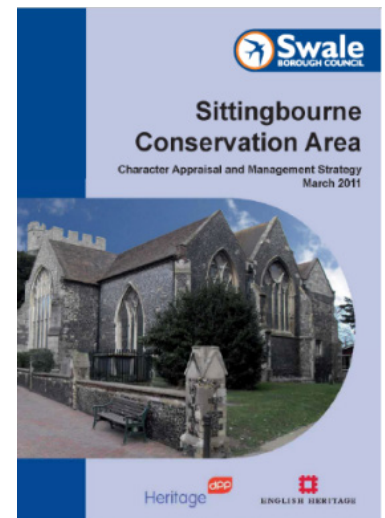
The immediate context of Sittingbourne Town Centre

- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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.

5. Planning context

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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 difficult 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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
 - Make space for nature

5.6 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.



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

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



5.8 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.

5.9 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.

6. Property market

6.1 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.

6.2 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.

7. Land Use

7.1 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.



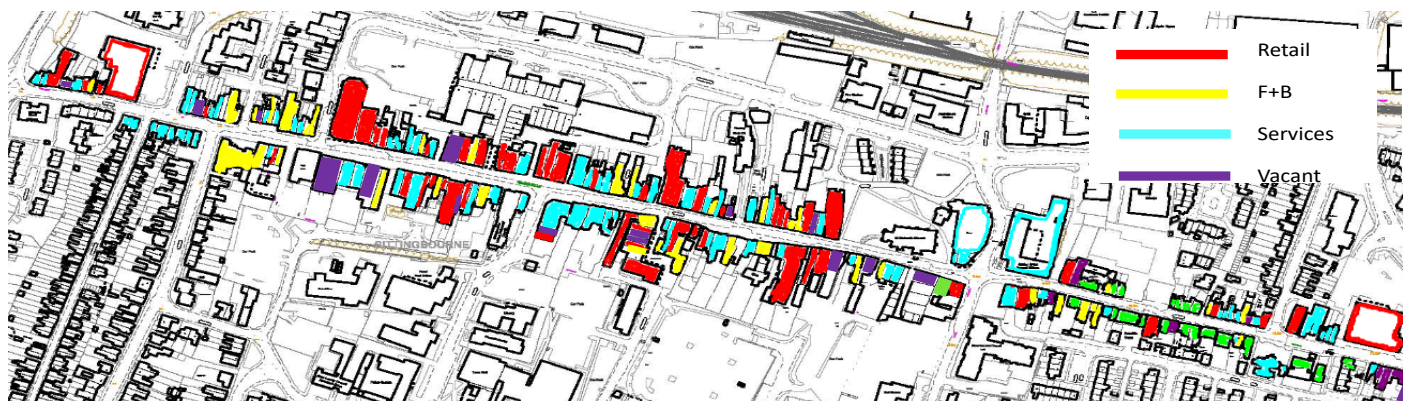
An analysis of the districts of Sittingbourne town centre

- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 St Michael's Road/A2 and Eurolink Link Way are both main traffic throughfares 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.

8. Retail frontages

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

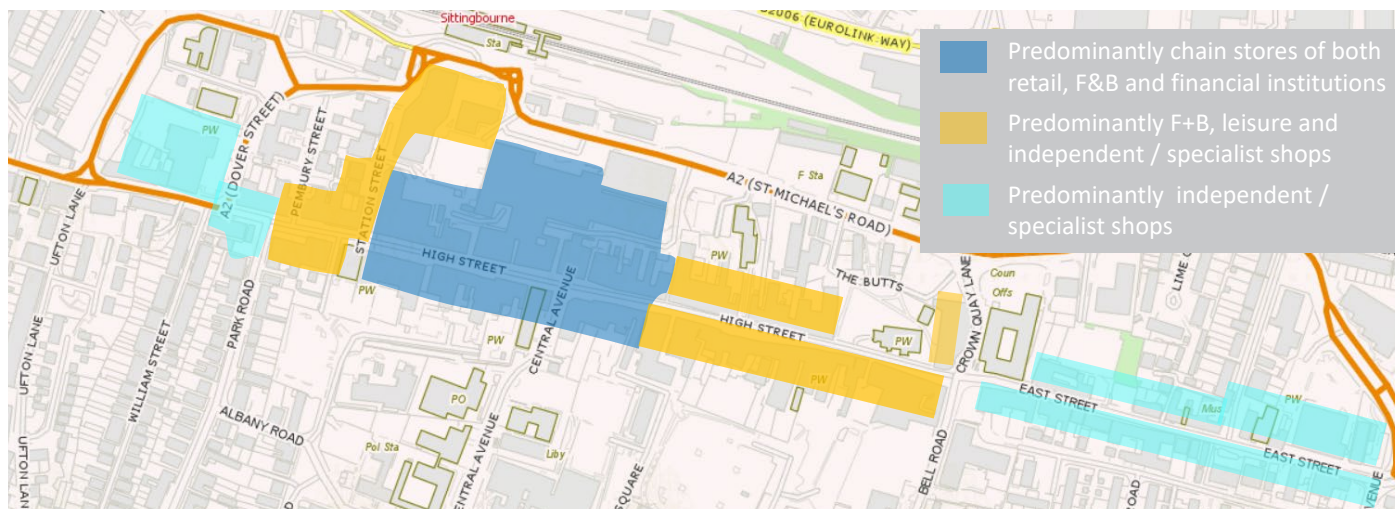
- Traditional retail is focussed on the High Street between Station Street and Central Avenue and into The Forum.
- Independent retail is focussed on the eastern end of the High Street, West Street and East Street.
- There is a concentration of bars and public houses around the Station Street Park Road 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

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

8.3 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's 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

8.5 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.

9. Heritage

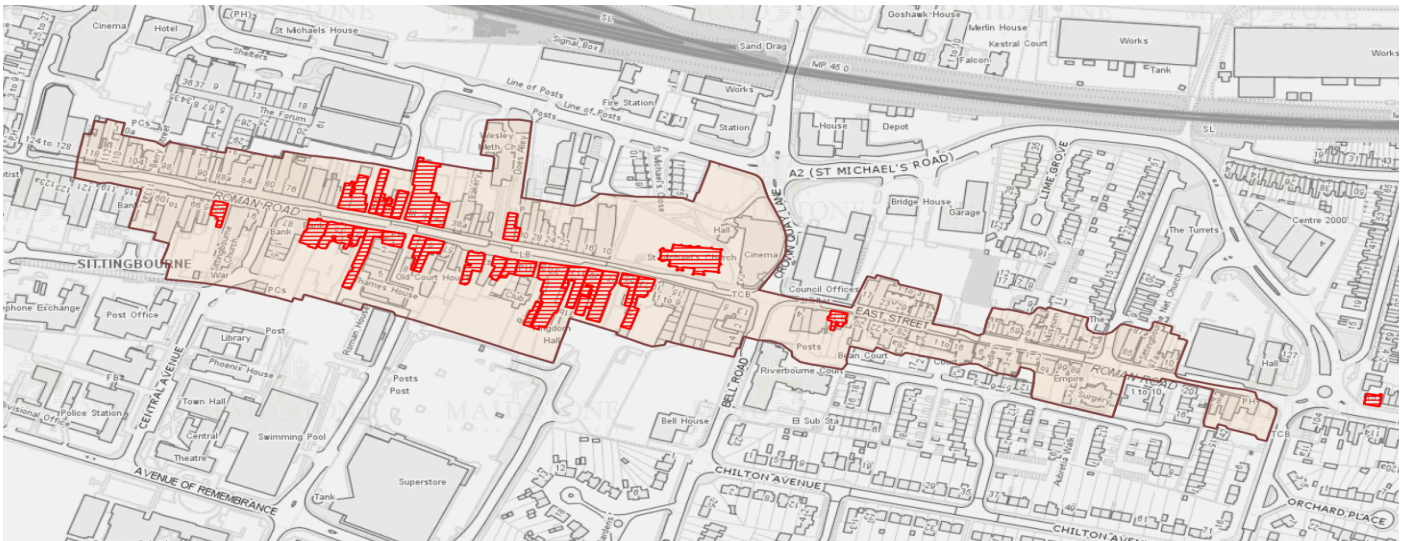
9.1 The High Street as we know it today dates back to the early 12th century when pilgrims started to make the journey from London to Canterbury following the death of Thomas Becket in 1170. From such humble beginnings the town grew, enhanced by the fact that it lies equidistant between London and Dover, 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

9.2 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

9.3 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. The Conservation Area has been extended to include East Street.



Historic photographs of Sittingbourne High Street



The same locations in 2021

9.4 The documents “Places Strategy” 2019 <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/planning/he-places-strategy-2019/> and “Streets for All” 2018 <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/heag149-sfa-national/> both by Historic England have been prepared in accordance with the Historic England ‘Place making Strategy Brief’ (Dec 2017) and ‘Place making Strategy Project Design’ 2018) and with reference to the ‘Wellbeing and the Historic Environment’ report 2018 providing a wealth of useful guidance with examples of good design.

10. Strategic Road Network

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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.

11. Public Transport

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 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

12. Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 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.

- 12.4 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.
- 12.5 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.

13. Parking

- 13.1 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.

14. Legibility

- 14.1 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.
- 14.2 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.
- 14.3 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.

14.4 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.

14.5 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.

15. Public Realm

15.1 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 as well as attracting people to an area. There is evidence that a high-quality well-maintained environment, with attractive street furniture and plants which contribute to biodiversity, is effective in attracting people and increasing 'dwell time'. The quality of Sittingbourne town centre's public realm however is variable.

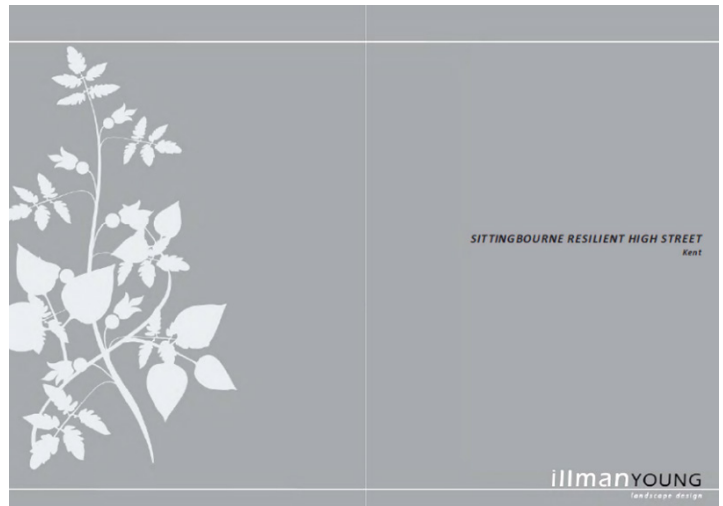
15.2 The High Street is a one-way street, allowing vehicles to travel eastbound, with wide pedestrian footways. The pavement of the High Street is of an attractive warm brick which provides a link with the history of Sittingbourne as a brick maker and complements the buildings in the Conservation Area. 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

- 15.3 West Street and East Street mostly have narrow pavements limited by road carriageway however a review of the public realm would benefit the spaces.
- 15.4 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.
- 15.5 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.
- 15.6 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.
- 15.7 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.

15.8 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.



16. Public Art

16.1 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.

17. Sittingbourne Town Centre Vision

17.1 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.



**Sittingbourne Town
Centre Vision**

- 17.2 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.
- 17.3 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.
- 17.4 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.
- 17.5 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.
- 17.6 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 highs 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.
- 17.7 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).

18. Objectives

18.1 a) Objectives for Retail

- 18.2 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.

- 18.3 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.
- 18.4 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.
- 18.5 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.
- 18.6 To attract people to stay longer in Sittingbourne the leisure and F&B sector must be an important strand.
- 18.7 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

19. b) Objectives for Culture, F&B and Leisure

- 19.1 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.
- 19.2 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.
- 19.3 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.
- 19.4 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.
- 19.5 Sittingbourne has cultural facilities within the town centre including the Avenue Theatre on Central Avenue, the heritage centre within the Forum, a local museum on East Street and the cultural centre No.34 The High Street. 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.

20. c) Objectives for Public Space, Physical Environment and Heritage

20.1 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.

20.2 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 can link existing and new biodiversity opportunities along the High Street and within the town centre as a whole.

20.3 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

21. d) Objectives for the Economy including the Creative Economy

- 21.1 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.
- 21.2 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.
- 21.3 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.
- 21.4 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.
- 21.5 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.

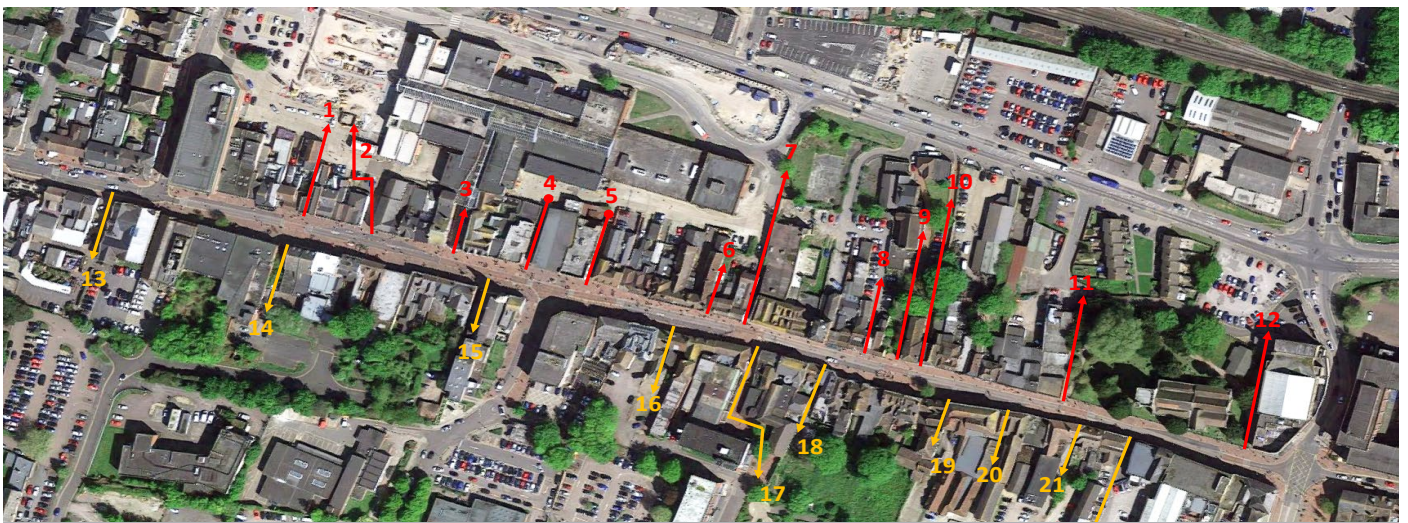
21.6 These corridors also provide the key pedestrian and cycle routes to facilities beyond but accessible from the town centre such as The Mill Skate Park and Dolphin Sailing Barge Museum at Milton Creek, Sittingbourne Retail Park, new residential development along Crown Quay Lane and the employment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

22. Alleys

22.1 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.

22.2 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

23. a) Objectives for Community Infrastructure

- 23.1 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.
- 23.2 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.
- 23.3 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.
- 23.4 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.

- 23.5 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.
- 23.6 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.

24. b) Objectives for Town Centre Living

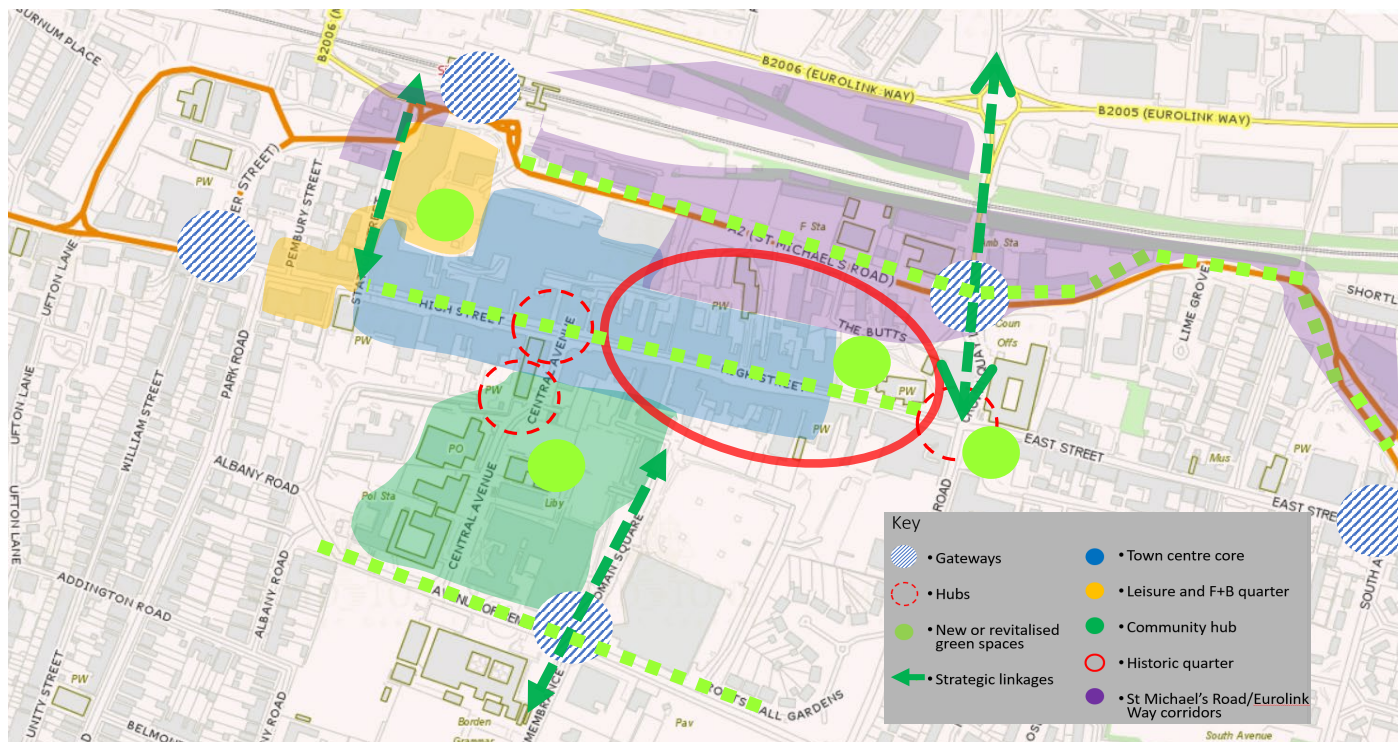
- 24.1 The aim for a lively twenty-four hour town centre will very much be assisted with the provision of town centre living. The objectives for new residential development in Sittingbourne Town Centre are as follows:
- Affordable housing will be provided throughout the town centre in accordance with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

25. Spatial framework

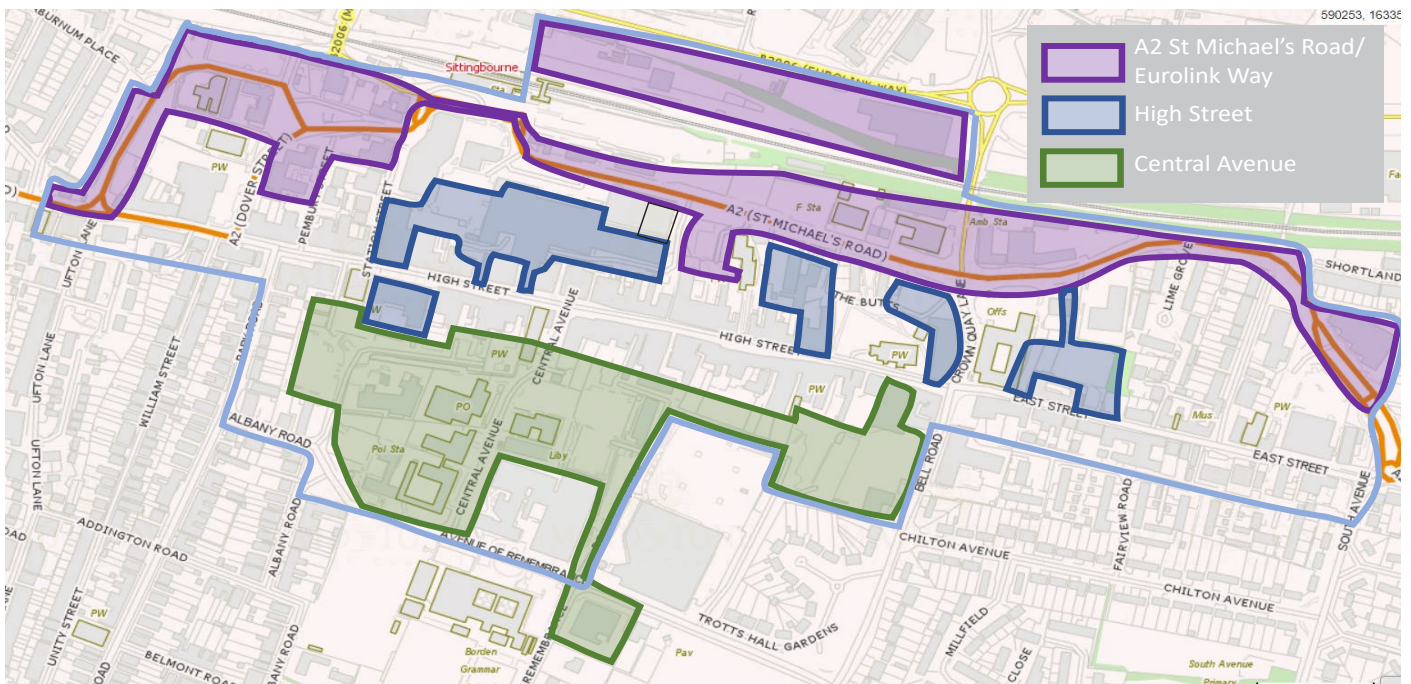
25.1 The spatial framework provides a strategic spatial strategy that allows a consistent approach to deliver change over the long term and is crucial to shaping a successful place. Land uses, gateways, activity hubs and connections are integrated and complementary.



Over-arching spatial strategy

25.2 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

26. Retail, F&B, leisure and social infrastructure policy

- 26.1 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.
- 26.2 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.
- 26.3 Development that promotes Sittingbourne's vitality and viability will be encouraged:
- a) 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;

- b) 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;
- c) 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.
- d) 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.
- e) Frontages will be attractive and, especially in the Conservation Area, in keeping with the character and heritage of the High Street as set out in Swale Council's SPD for The Design of Shopfronts, Signs and Advertisements, 2011 which will be reviewed in 2022 to include guidance on awnings. Design should celebrate historic character and local identity with high-quality streets and public realm.
- f) 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. It is important that new provision for GP services are provided within the town centre and several sites are being considered in discussion with landowners and NHS services.



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

27. Residential policy

- 27.1 Housing in the town centre will contribute toward the overall housing for the Borough. A capacity study of opportunity sites in the town centre has identified that 850 units can be accommodated in Sittingbourne town centre.
- 27.2 The Council will permit at least 850 new homes in the town centre in the period up to 2037/38. 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.
- 27.3 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.
- 27.4 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.
- 27.5 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.
- 27.6 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.
- 27.7 Consideration of wind and air movement will be given in design of residential developments especially the taller buildings.
- 27.8 Entrances will be in a prime position, clear, obvious, uncluttered, well-designed and safe.
- 27.9 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.

28. Employment policy

- 28.1 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.
- 28.2 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.

- 28.3 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.
- 28.4 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.
- 28.5 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.
- 28.6 The Council will permit development proposals that improve the quality and range of office and business accommodation in a range of unit sizes.
- 28.7 Fast broadband will support new office and business accommodation.

29. Alleys policy

- 29.1 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.

30. Perimeter blocks and active frontage

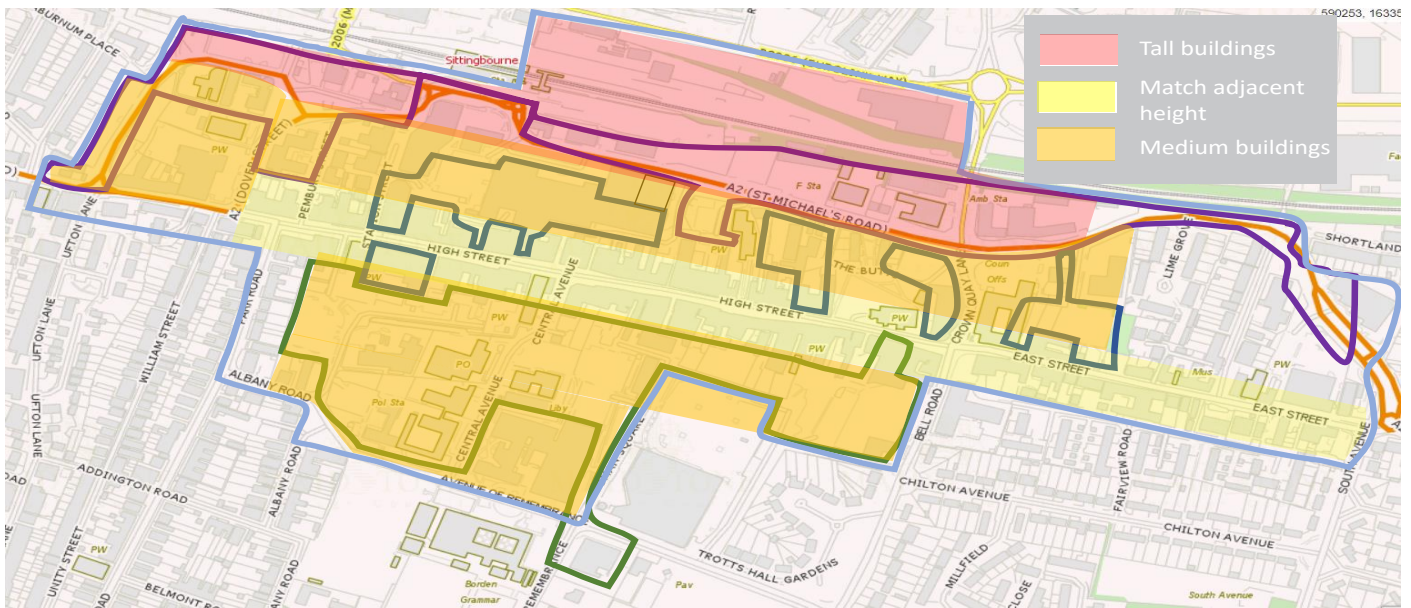
- 30.1 Perimeter blocks are typically formed of buildings located around the outer edge of the block facing the public realm with private areas in the centre. A site may form a part of an overall perimeter block, the whole block itself or be large enough to create more than one perimeter block. The way 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

31. Establish appropriate building heights

31.1 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 north and south of the town centre and around Central Avenue. 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.
- Applications will include a 3-D massing and building height study to explain and justify the building heights in the context of the submission site, the existing built form and any other submissions within the town centre within the public arena such as Planning Applications and Swale Rainbow Homes Ltd data.

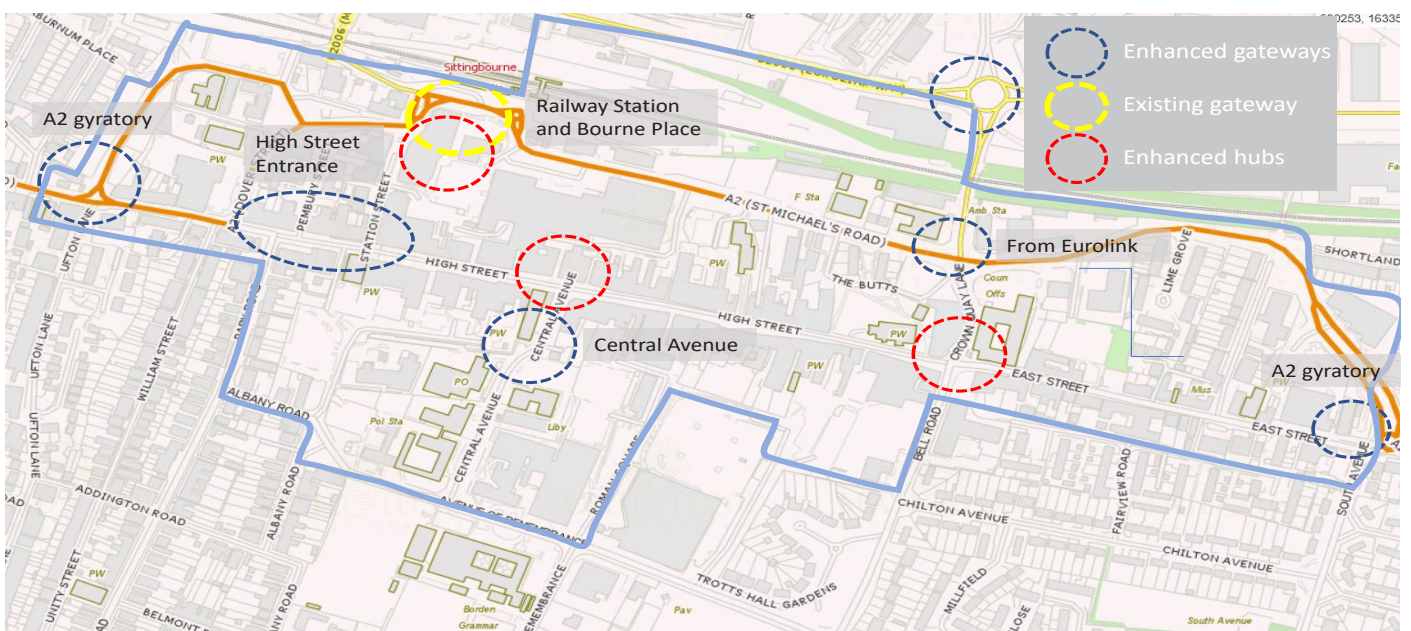


Building heights

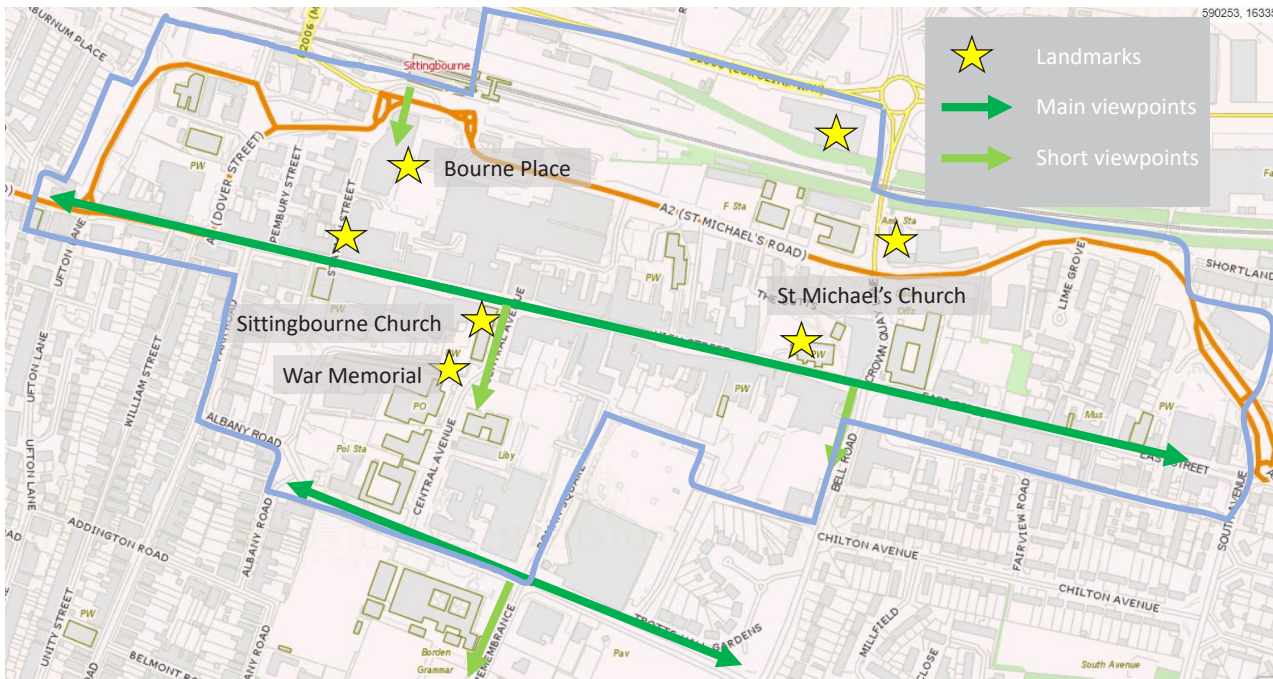
32. Gateways, hubs and landmarks

32.1 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

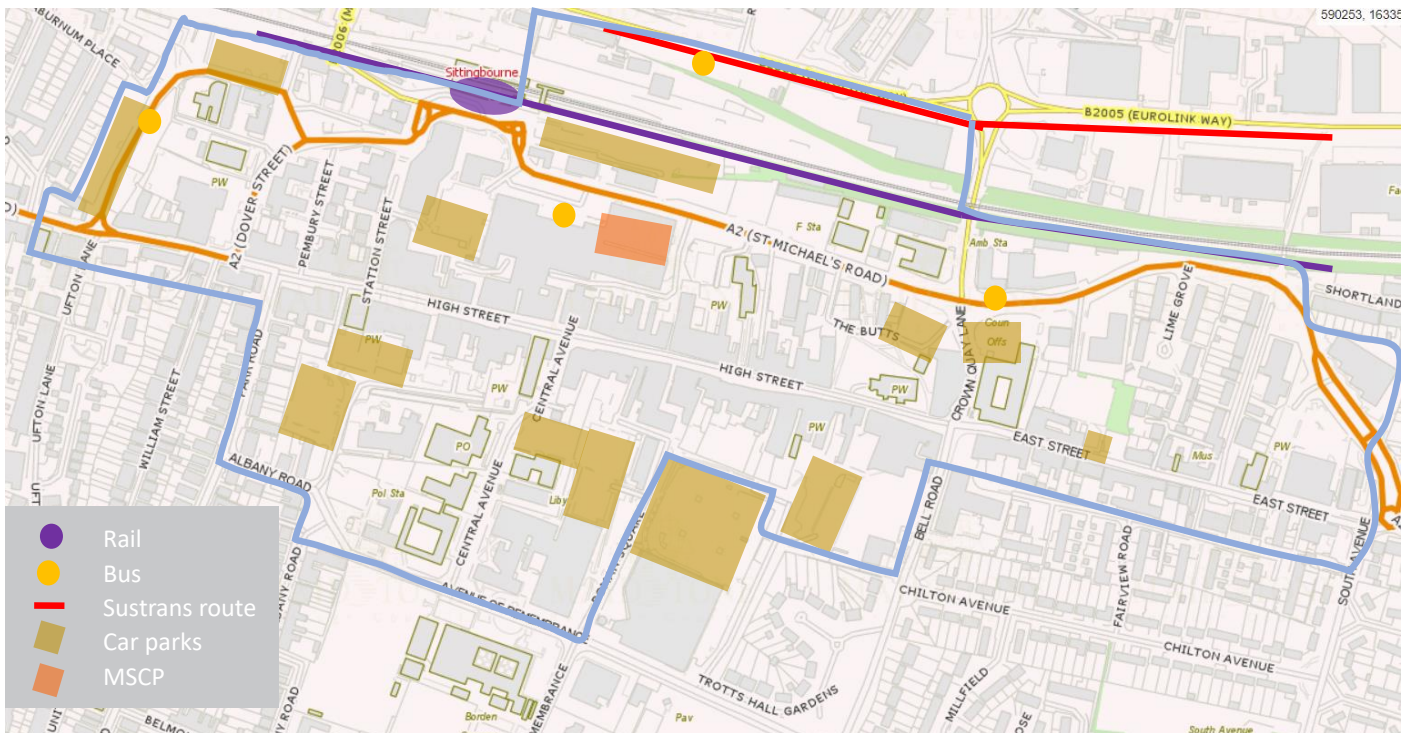


Key viewpoints and landmarks

33. Walking and Cycling

- 33.1 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. In the future further review and consultation of closing the High Street to vehicular traffic at different times of the day and evening will be undertaken.
- 33.2 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. To facilitate better use of the railway station by residents from the new residential developments in the north and by people accessing Eurolink, Ridham and Kemsley for employment Network Rail are planning improvements to pedestrian and cycle movement below the railway line bridges and provision of a pedestrian footbridge over the railway line from the north to better access the railway station. Similarly, to St Michael's Road, Eurolink Way will be more pedestrian and cycle friendly with new tree-lined, wider provision to encourage people to walk in 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

34. Public transport

34.1 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

35. Parking and servicing

35.1 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

35.2 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.

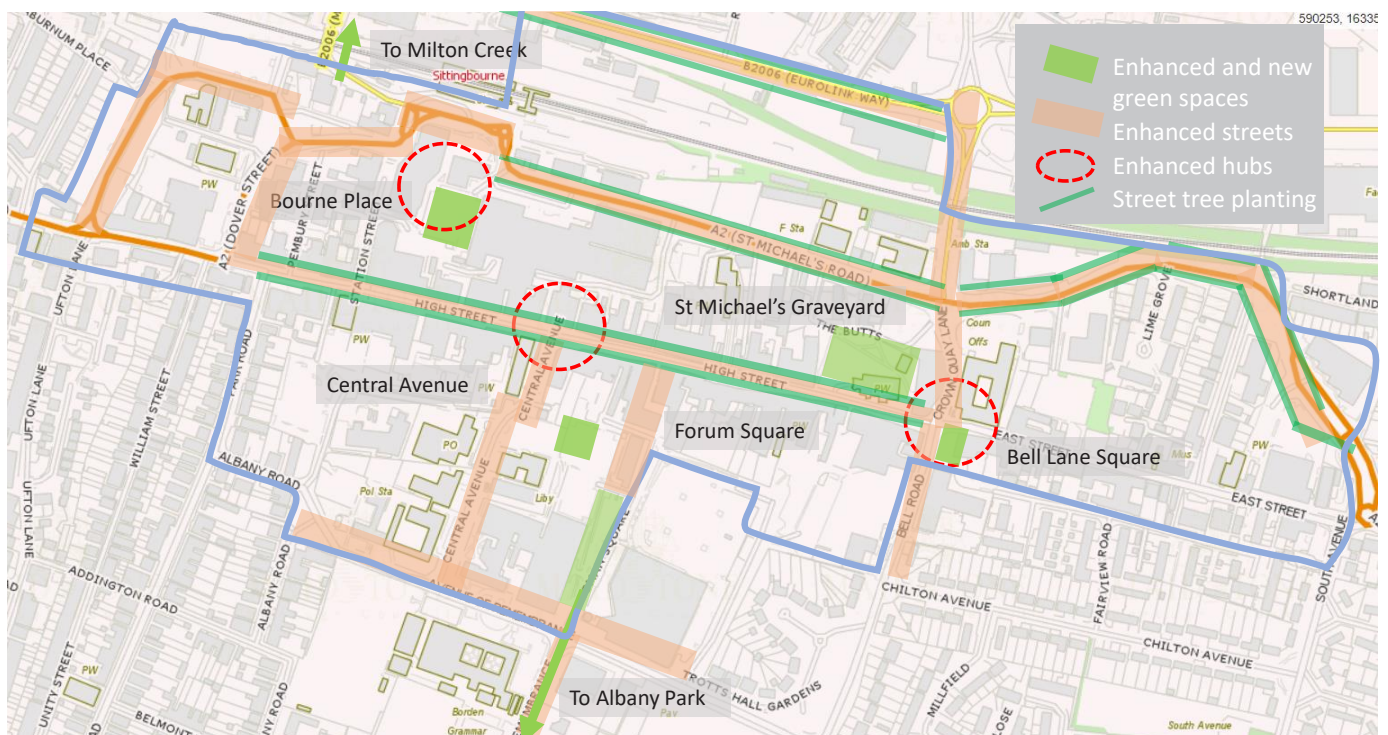
36. Public realm

36.1 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.

36.2 Key locations for public realm improvements include:

- The High Street including biodiverse ‘greening’ and opportunities with a hub focused 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.
- Avenues of Remembrance
- Alleys – see earlier separate section.



37. New green space

- 37.1 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.
- 37.2 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,
- 38.2 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.
- 38.3 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.

38. Design quality – architectural standards

- 38.1 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.

39. Respect heritage

39.1 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

PROPOSED BUILDING FRONT IMPROVEMENTS



GROUND LEVEL BUILDING FRONTS



Renovate/reinstate pilasters.

Renovate/reinstate corbels.

Replace and realign shop fascia sign.

(Include renovation of associated cornice or parapet if existing)

Renovate and improve shop stallriser.

New shop front shutter.

(Open grill curtain shutter with solid base. Solid base to align with height of stall riser or adjacent shop stall riser/solid shutter base).

New shop front awning.

Entire new shop front.

(Including aspects such as fascia sign, stallriser, open grill shutters, windows, pilasters, corbels and new awning where applicable)

Residential facade renovation. To reinstate the overall shop front composition that has been lost through conversion to a dwelling. (Including aspects such as realignment and renewal of fascia board,



MAP NEEDS TO BE COLOURED IN AND RELEVANT INFORMATION ADDED

40. 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

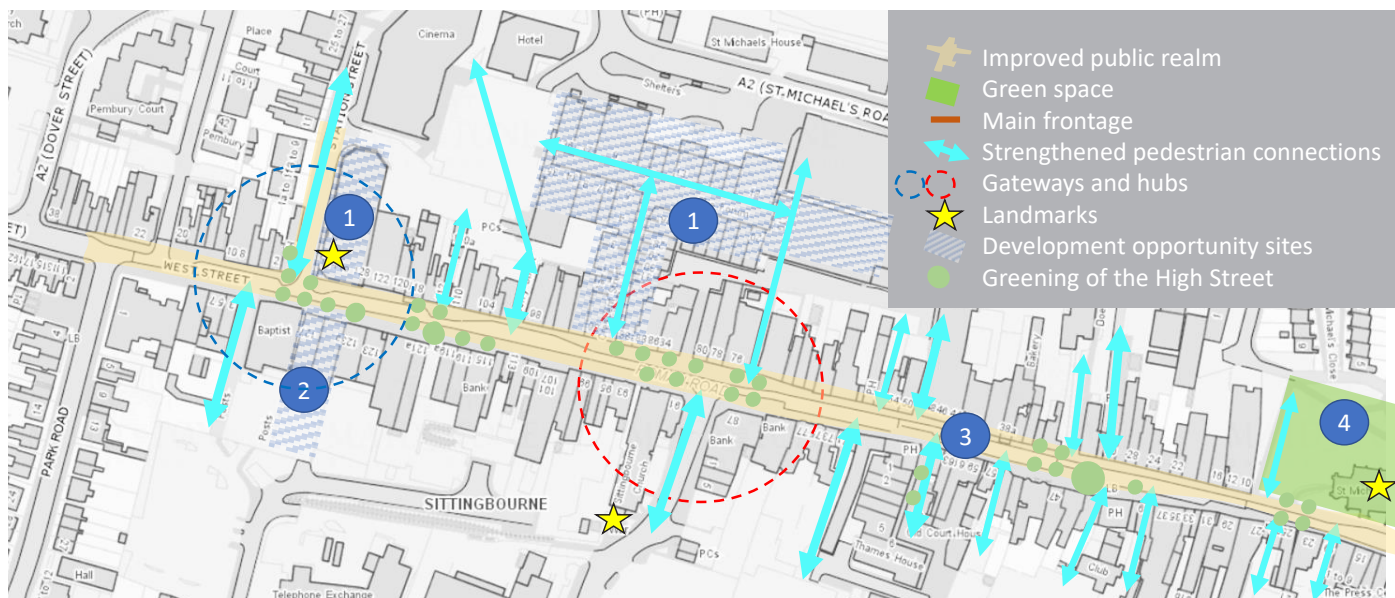
41. Sustainability

41.1 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.

42. Districts

High Street and the Forum

42.1 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

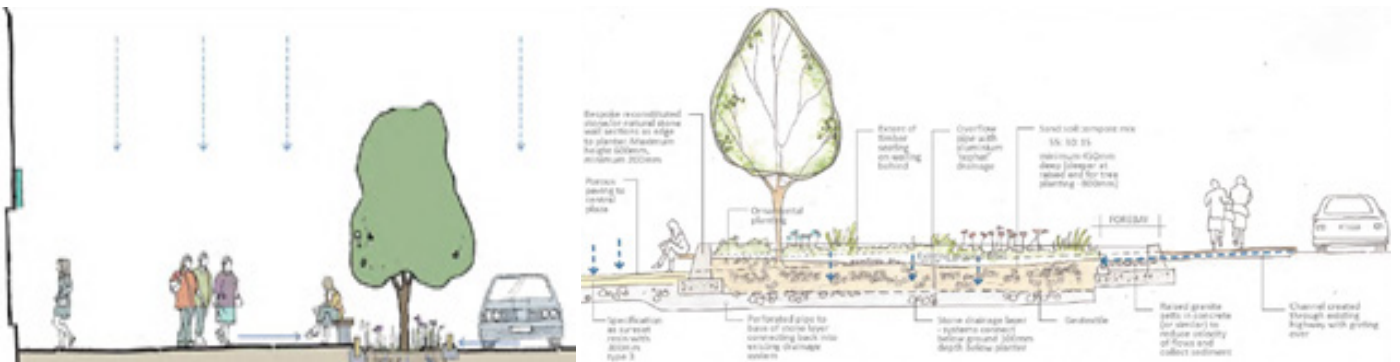
42.2 Opportunities include:

- a) Physical moves identified in the plan include:
 - A range of opportunities to add both residential uses and additional retail uses above or around The Forum,
 - An opportunity to put Wilko to greater use with residential floors above, and
 - 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 thorough 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.



- 1** Space allowed for 30 market stalls at a range of sizes:
 1.5m x 1.5m
 1.5m x 2.8m
 1.5m x 4.3m
- 2** Minimum 3.8m between market stalls and building frontages
- 4** Parking spaces for extra potential stalls
- 3** Road access kept clear for emergency services
- 5** Crossing points kept clear

Illman Young proposals for greening the High Street



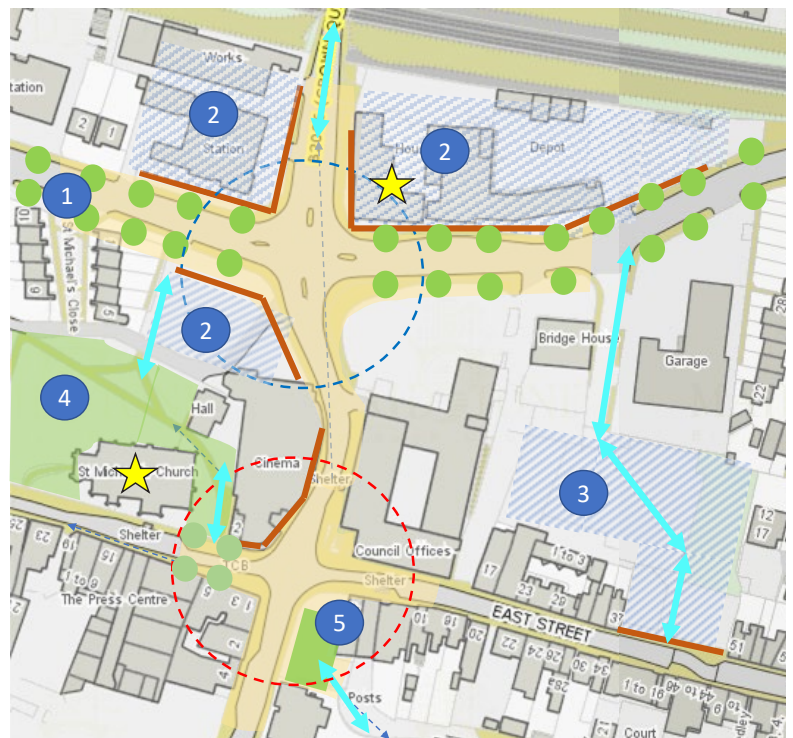
Illman Young proposals for storm water planters on the High Street

43. East Street, Bell Road and Crown Quay Lane

43.1 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.

East Street, Bell Lane and Crown Quay Lane

1. St Michael's Road conversion to an avenue.
2. New mixed use development.
3. New affordable housing development.
4. Improved to existing cemetery to create an accessible and safe green space.
5. New green public space with trees and storm water planters.



Proposals for East Street, Bell Road and Crown Quay Lane

43.2 Opportunities include:

43.3 Physical moves identified in the plan include:

- Conversion of St Michael's Road to a tree lined avenue,
- Opportunity sites for new mixed-use development,
- Improvements to the existing cemetery green space, and
- The creation of a new green public space on Bell Road.

43.4 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 & Crown Quay Lane junction, a key gateway to Sittingbourne from the north

- 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.
- 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.
- As a key part of the implementation of the biodiverse 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

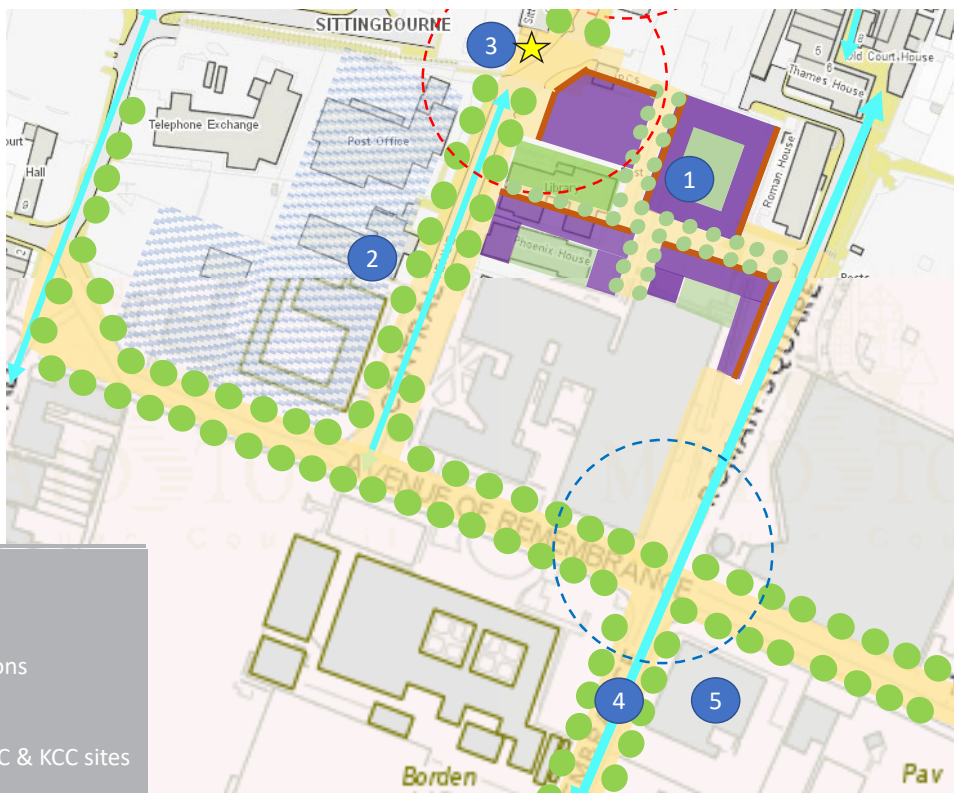
- Planting on the High Street, St Michael's Avenue and in the new public spaces will be biodiverse and will provide linkages and corridors for wildlife connecting new with existing green spaces such as St Michael's cemetery.
- SBC land will be used to provide affordable housing and town centre living, enlivening East Street and providing a population within the catchment of the High Street.
- 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.

44. Central Avenue and Avenue of Remembrance

44.1 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.

Central Avenue & Avenue of Remembrance

1. Residential or education led development with mixed use ground floor to create active frontage with new green space and public realm (indicative layout)
2. Review of social infrastructure to ensure efficient use of land and consider 'densification' with ground floor social infrastructure and mixed use upper floors.
3. Public square centred on the memorial and the epicentre of the Avenue of Remembrance.
4. Pedestrianisation of the Avenue of Remembrance to Albany Park.
5. New community centre at Appleyard.



- Public realm
- Green space
- Main frontage
- Strengthened pedestrian connections
- Gateways and hubs
- Landmarks
- Development opportunity sites/SBC & KCC sites
- Tree lined avenue

Proposals for Central Avenue and the Avenues of Remembrance



The war memorial on Central Avenue



Public realm options

44.2 Opportunities include:

44.3 Physical moves identified in the plan include:

- 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,
- Refurbishment of both the public square centred on the memorial and the Avenues of Remembrance,
- Pedestrianisation of the route to Albany Park and Sittingbourne Cemetery.

44.4 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

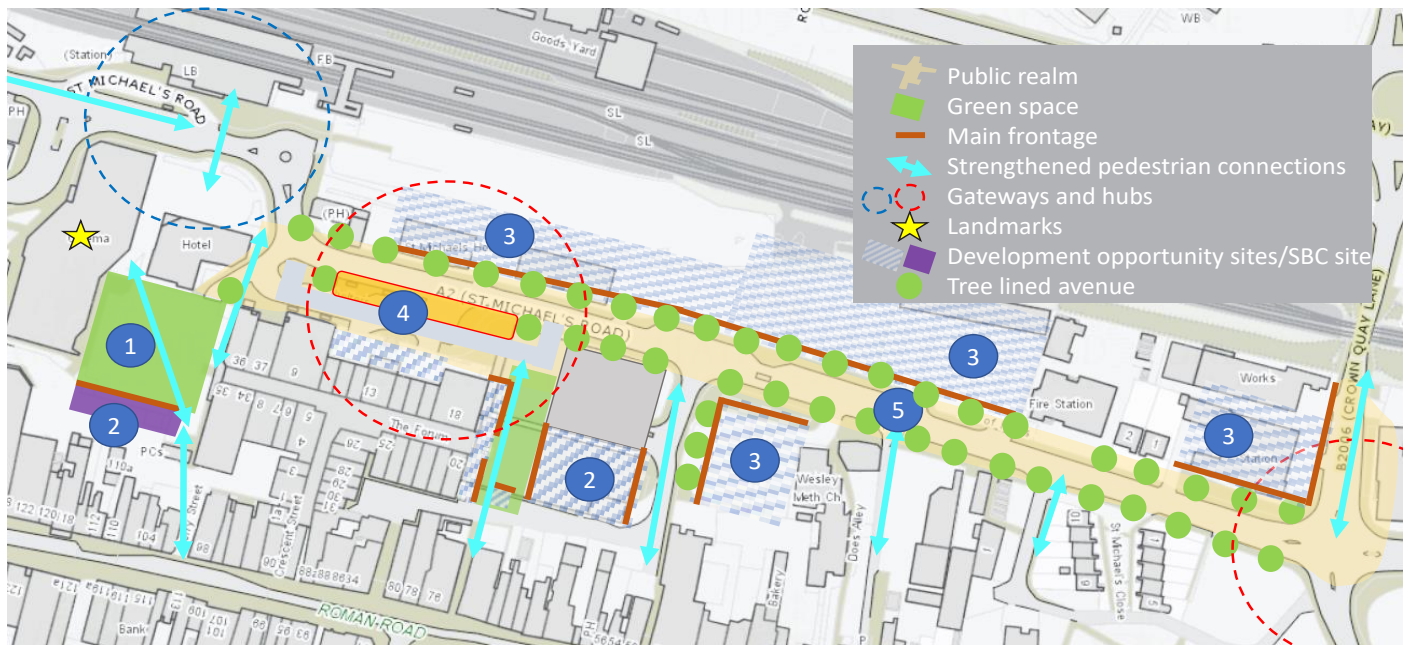
- a) Central Avenue presents an opportunity to create a cohesive and higher density Community Quarter with a mix of existing and new uses – community, health, residential, culture, public space and possibly education, through Further Education provision.
- b) The extent of available land on Central Avenue 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.
- c) New residential development will be located on upper floors contributing to evening liveliness.
- d) 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.
- e) 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
- f) 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.
- g) 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.
- h) 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

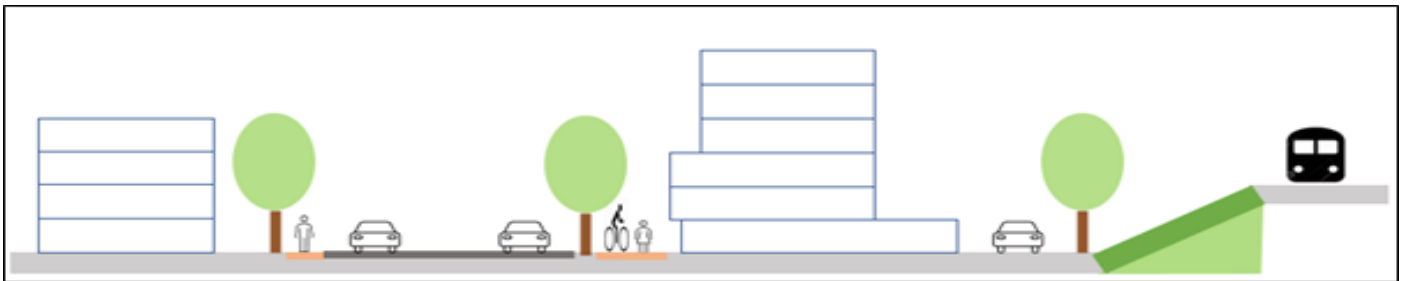
45. St Michael's Road and Bourne Place

45.1 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.



45.2 Opportunities include:

- 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.
- 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 image of street trees forming an avenue on St. Michael's Road

- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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

46. Eurolink Way

46.1 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.

Eurolink Way

1. Eurolink Way conversion to an avenue.
2. New mixed use developments.
3. New pedestrian connection to the railway station.



Proposals for Eurolink Way

46.1 Opportunities include:

a) Physical moves identified in the plan include:

- Eurolink Way conversion to an avenue,
- New mixed-use developments to complete the new residential development on the north side of Eurolink Way, and
- 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.

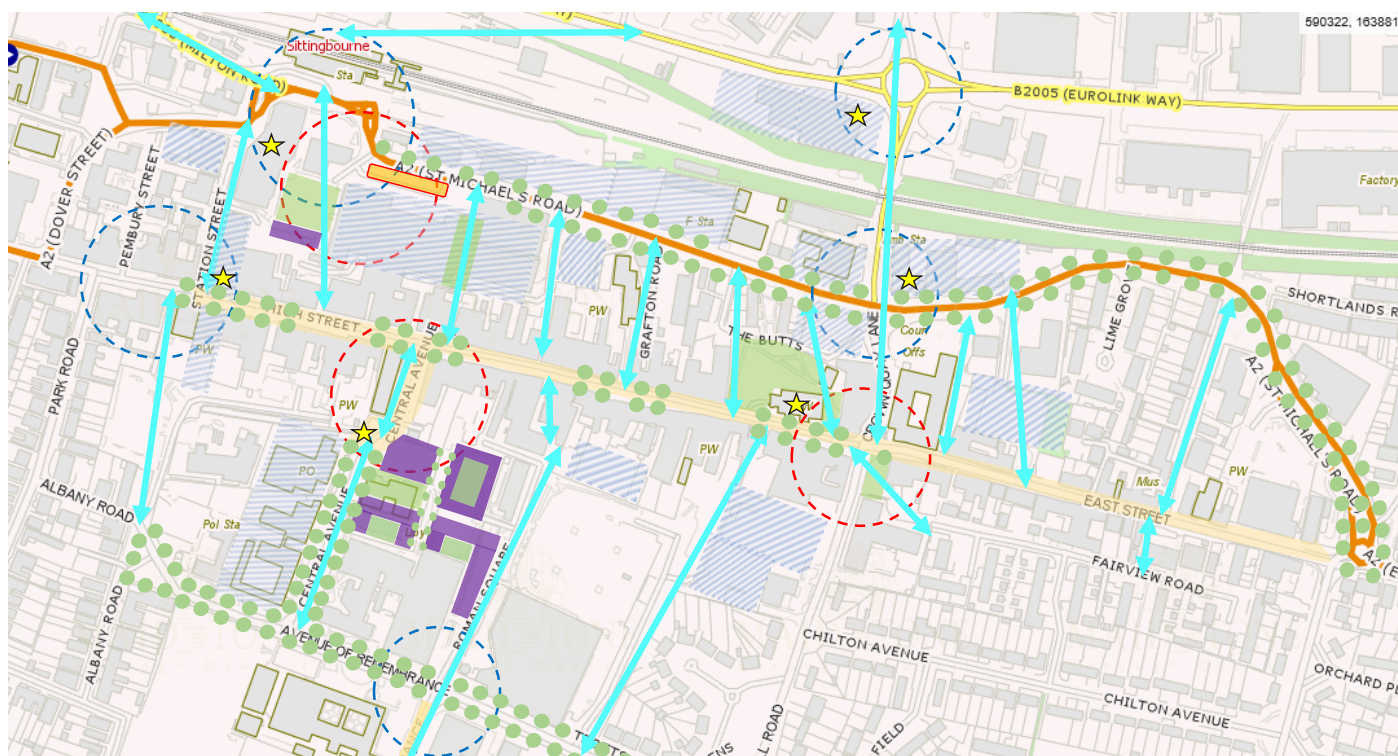
47. Delivery

A guide to future growth

47.1 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. .

47.2 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

47.3 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.

47.4 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 a 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 biodiverse 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 are owned and managed by KCC.

48. Funding

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

49. Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106

49.1 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).

50. Grants

50.1 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.

50.2 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

51. Central Government funds for movement

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

51.2 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

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

52. Other

52.1 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.

53. A Funding and Delivery Programme

53.1 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)

53.2 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.

53.3 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.

53.4 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
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

54. Key stakeholders

54.1 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.

54.2 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.

54.3 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.

54.4 Network Rail

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

54.5 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.

54.5 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.

55. Role of the Council

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

55.2 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 nature and biodiversity as well as 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.

55.3 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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Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	12 October 2022
Report Title	Audit Committee Annual Report – 2021/22
EMT Lead	Lisa Fillery – Director of Resources
Head of Service	Alison Blake – Interim Head of Audit Partnership
Lead Officer	Alison Blake – Interim Head of Audit Partnership
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. That the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2021/22 (appendix I) is agreed.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report details how the Audit Committee effectively fulfilled its duties during 2021/22. This report provides assurance to the Council that the Committee has monitored and addressed issues of governance, risk management and internal control throughout the year.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Audit Committee is required to monitor internal and external audit activity, review and comment on the effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework and review and approve the Council’s annual statement of accounts.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To agree the Audit Committee Annual Report as attached in Appendix I.
- 3.2 That the Chairman of the Audit Committee presents the report to a meeting of the Full Council setting out how the Committee has discharged its duties.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The production and presentation of an annual report is required by this Committee’s terms of reference. Therefore, no other alternative could be recommended.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The draft report was sent to the Chairman of the Audit Committee for consultation prior to submission for this meeting.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	None identified at this stage.
Financial, Resource and Property	The role of the Audit Committee includes the review of the financial reports for the Council, including the approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage..
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Audit Committee Annual Report 2021-22

8 Background Papers

- Audit Committee Reports, Agendas and Minutes

SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Audit Committee Annual Report

July 2022



Statement from the Chairman

As the Chair of the Audit Committee, it is my pleasure to introduce the annual report, providing an overview of the Committee's activity during the Municipal Year 2021/22.

The Council has continued to face big challenges because of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a Committee, we have maintained our focus on the issues facing the Council from a risk, control, and governance perspective. This report looks back and gives us opportunity to reflect on the activity and achievements of the Committee during the year.

We have met four times in the last year, either in person or virtually. The Committee has discharged its responsibility to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and the associated control environment.

We have also provided robust scrutiny and challenge of the Authority's financial performance. Among the highlights for the year, I am pleased to note a further unqualified accounts opinion and value for money conclusion from our external auditors. Alongside this, our internal auditors provided us with a positive opinion on the Council's control and governance.

We also reviewed the updated Corporate Risk Register, and an internal audit plan for 2022/23.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members and Officers that have supported the Committee over the last year. Their professionalism, integrity, and openness have helped us to discuss, challenge and debate key issues and agree solutions and improvements where appropriate to do so.



Councillor Derek Carnell - Audit Committee Chair

Purpose of the Committee

The Audit Committee operates in accordance with the [Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities](#) (updated 2018). This guidance:

- is published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA)
- recommends that audit committees should report annually on how they have discharged their responsibilities
- sets out the purpose of an Audit Committee.

Swale Borough Council Audit Committee Purpose:

To consider summaries of internal audit reports produced and review management action taken on associated recommendations. To consider and comment upon any items relevant to the internal audit function. To receive the annual management letter and report from the Council's External Auditors, to include any value for money studies.

The Committee is independent from other executive management and Cabinet and has clear reporting lines and rights of access to discharge its responsibilities in line with its Terms of Reference as per the constitution (Appendix 1). This includes direct access to the Council's Appointed Auditors and Head of Audit Partnership without the presence of other Officers, where appropriate.

The Committee monitors internal and external audit activity, reviews, and comments on the effectiveness of the Council's regulatory framework, and reviews and approves the Council's annual statements of accounts.

The Committee is not a substitute for the management function in relation to internal or external audit, risk management, governance, or any other review or assurance function. It is the Committee's role to examine these functions, and to offer views and recommendations on the way the management of these functions is conducted.

As per CIPFA's Position statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police:

Audit Committees are a key component of an authority's governance framework. Their function is to provide an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management.

The purpose of an Audit Committee is to provide those charged with governance, independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes.

Membership & Meetings

During 2021/22 the Audit Committee was comprised of Members and met four times. It was agreed. A quorum of three was present at each meeting. The attendance of the meetings can be found in the table below.

In addition to the above meeting, an additional meeting was held in May 22, to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2022-23. It was resolved that Cllr Derek Carnell be elected Chair, and Mike Henderson the Vice Chair.

Name of Attendees	Role	26th Jul 2021	26th Oct 2021	24th Nov 2021	9th Mar 2022
Cllr Simon Clark	Chair	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Cllr James Hall	Vice Chair	Apologies	Remotely	Apologies	Remotely
Cllr Derek Carnell	Member	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Cllr Steve Davey	Member	Present	Present	Present	Present
Cllr Simon Fowle	Member	Absent	Present	Apologies	Apologies sent substitute
Cllr Ann Hampshire	Member	Present	Present	Apologies sent substitute	Present
Cllr Denise Knights	Member	Present	Apologies	Present	Remotely
Cllr Peter MacDonald	Member	Present	Present	Present	Present
Cllr Eddie Thomas	Member to Oct 21	Apologies	Apologies sent substitute	-	-
Cllr Mike Henderson	Member from Nov 21	-	Present as substitute	Apologies	Present
Cllr Mike Whiting	Substitute Member	-	-	Present as substitute (Temp. Chair)	Present as substitute
Cllr Roger Clark	Visiting Councillor	-	-	-	Remotely
Cllr Peter Neal	Visiting Councillor	-	-	-	Remotely
Cllr Cameron Beart	Visiting Councillor	Remotely	In attendance	Remotely	Remotely
Cllr Ken Rowles	Visiting Councillor				Remotely
Cllr Hannah Perkin	Visiting Councillor	-	-	Remotely	-
Philippa Davies	Committee Services	In attendance	-	-	-
Billy Attaway	Committee Services	In attendance	-	-	In attendance
Kellie MacKenzie	Committee Services	-	In attendance	In attendance	-
Jo Millard	Committee Services		In attendance	In attendance	Remotely
Alison Blake (Officer)	Deputy Head of Audit Partnership	In attendance	In attendance	-	In attendance
Rich Clarke (Officer)	Head of Internal Audit	-	In attendance	In attendance	-
Julie Hetherington (Officer)	Internal Audit Manager	-	-	-	Remotely

Andrew Townsend (Officer)	Interim Head of Internal audit	-	-	-	Remotely
Lisa Fillery (Officer)	Director of Resources			In attendance	In attendance
Phil Wilson (Officer)	Financial Services Manager	In attendance	In attendance	-	In attendance
Richmond Nyarko (External Audit)	External Audit	-	-	-	Remotely
Darren Wells (External Audit)	External Audit	In attendance	-	-	Remotely

We did not arrange any all-Member training sessions for 2020/21. However, / in addition Members have been able to consult Officers with questions outside of the meetings. The Committee has also arranged training for prior to the July 22 committee meeting, and has agreed additional training throughout the year.

All Committee agendas, papers, and minutes are available on the [Council's website](#).

Committee Activity

Over the course of 2020/21 the Committee has drawn on a variety of sources to fulfil their responsibilities. They have considered, queried, examined, and made decisions on the following areas within its Terms of Reference:

Finance Activity

Treasury Management Outturn Report for 20/21 – Oct 2021

The report presented to Members was prepared in line with the CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management. It included Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy Statement on Financing and Investment Activities.

Members approved the Treasury Management Stewardship report for 2020/21, and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators.

Mid-Year Treasury Management Review for 21/22 – Nov 2021

This report was presented to Members. It outlined the mid-year outturn position on treasury management transactions for 2021/22, including compliance with treasury limits and Prudential and Treasury Performance Indicators.

Members noted the report, and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators were approved.

Internal Audit Activity

Annual Internal Audit Report & Opinion 20/21 – Jul 2021

The annual assurance report on the Council's Internal Control, Governance, and Risk Management activities was presented to Members. The report concluded that the Head of Audit was able to provide sound assurance with no qualifications to the opinion.

Members noted the opinion, and the Head of Audit Partnership's assurance of independence and conformance with the standards.

Mid-Year Internal Audit Update – Nov 2021

The internal audit update report presented to Members, detailed the progress against the audit plan for 2021/22.

Members noted the report.

Internal Audit Plan 2022/23 – Mar 2022

The internal audit plan for 2022-23 was presented to Members for their approval. Members approved the 2022/23 audit plan, and noted there was enough resources to deliver the plan independently and without inappropriate influence from management.

External Audit Activity

External Audit Plan – Jul 2021

External audit presented to Members the report which included an overview of the scope, cost, and timing of the audit for 2020/21.

Members noted the External Audit Plan.

Informing the Risk Assessment – Jul 2021

External audit presented to Members a report on the communication between them and the Audit Committee, around the responses from management about General Management, Fraud, Laws and Regulations, Related Parties, and Accounting Estimates.

Members noted the report.

Annual Report 20/21, and Audit Findings Report – Oct 2021

The Annual Financial Report for 2020/21 was presented to Members. The report issued an unmodified audit opinion. This meant that no major adjustments were required to the Council's annual financial report.

Members noted the report findings. Members approved the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council, the Annual Financial Report, and the Annual Governance Statement for year ending March 2021. The Chair of the Committee signed and dated the Annual Financial report.

Annual Audit Letter – Mar 2022

The report presented to Members, provided the audit findings and matter arising from the Annual Financial Report for year ending 31/03/21. It included recommendations to be considered or noted.

Members noted the report and the savings plan in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Consideration to be given making a clear distinction between statutory and discretionary spending in budget information provided to members and published on the web, and to formalise a consistent approach to benchmarking in relation to potential high unit costs or low outcomes.

Other Activity

Audit Committee Annual Report 20/21 – Jul 2021

A report on the activity of the Audit Committee was presented to members. It outlined the attendance of members, details the Terms of Reference for the committee, and activity of the committee throughout the year.

The Audit Committee Annual report was agreed by Members, and the Chair of the Audit Committee will present the report to Full Council to discharge their duties.

Re-appointment of External Auditor – Option to opt into national scheme – Nov 2021

The report provided proposals for appointing the external auditor to the Council for the accounts for the five-year period from 2023/24, including a decision to opt into the national auditor appointment arrangements.

Members accepted the invitation to opt-in to the national arrangements to appoint external audit.

Annual Risk Management Update 21/22 - March 2022

The report detailed for Members the Council's risk management framework arrangements.

Members noted the risk management framework arrangements.

Conclusion

The Audit Committee has worked in partnership with the Council's Internal and External Auditors and received support from Officers. This has provided robust and effective independent assurance to the Council on a wide range of risk, governance, and internal control issues.

The Audit Committee can demonstrate that it has appropriately and effectively fulfilled its duties during 2021/22 as set out in the respective minutes.

Appendix 1 – Audit Committee Terms of Reference

Statement of Purpose – Audit Committee

The purpose of an audit committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.

Membership – nine members

Audit Activity

- To consider the Head of Audit Partnership's annual report and opinion, and a summary of audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the council's governance arrangements, and any report from Internal Audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale.
- To consider reports dealing with the management and performance of Internal Audit Services, including consideration and endorsement of the 3 year Strategic Internal Audit Plan;
- To consider the external auditor's annual letter, the report to those charged with governance, and any specific reports as agreed with the external auditor;
- To liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the Council's external auditor, comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and ensure that it gives value for money;

Regulatory Framework

- To review any issue referred to it by the Chief Executive or the Director or any Council body;
- To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance in the Council.
- To monitor council policies on 'Whistleblowing' and the 'Anti-fraud and Corruption Strategy';
- To consider and comment on the authority's Annual Governance Statement and agree its adoption as part of the approval of the annual accounts.
- To consider the Council's arrangements for governance and whether adequate safeguards are in place to secure compliance with its own and other published standards and controls and best practice.

Accounts

- To review and approve the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether there are concerns arising from the financial statement or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Cabinet or the Council.
- To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues from the audit of the accounts.
- To be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies (Note: Council is responsible for adopting the Treasury Management strategy and policy).

Reporting

- To present an annual report to the Council providing assurance that the responsibilities of the Committee have been met.