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ASHFORD TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2010

Local Development Framework

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan



Adopted February 2010

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1 Introduction

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Introduction

This Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan:-

- sets out a clear vision for the town centre,
- demonstrates how the vision can be delivered,
- explains how significant change can occur on key sites, and,
- provides a sound policy framework for assessing planning applications in the Town Centre

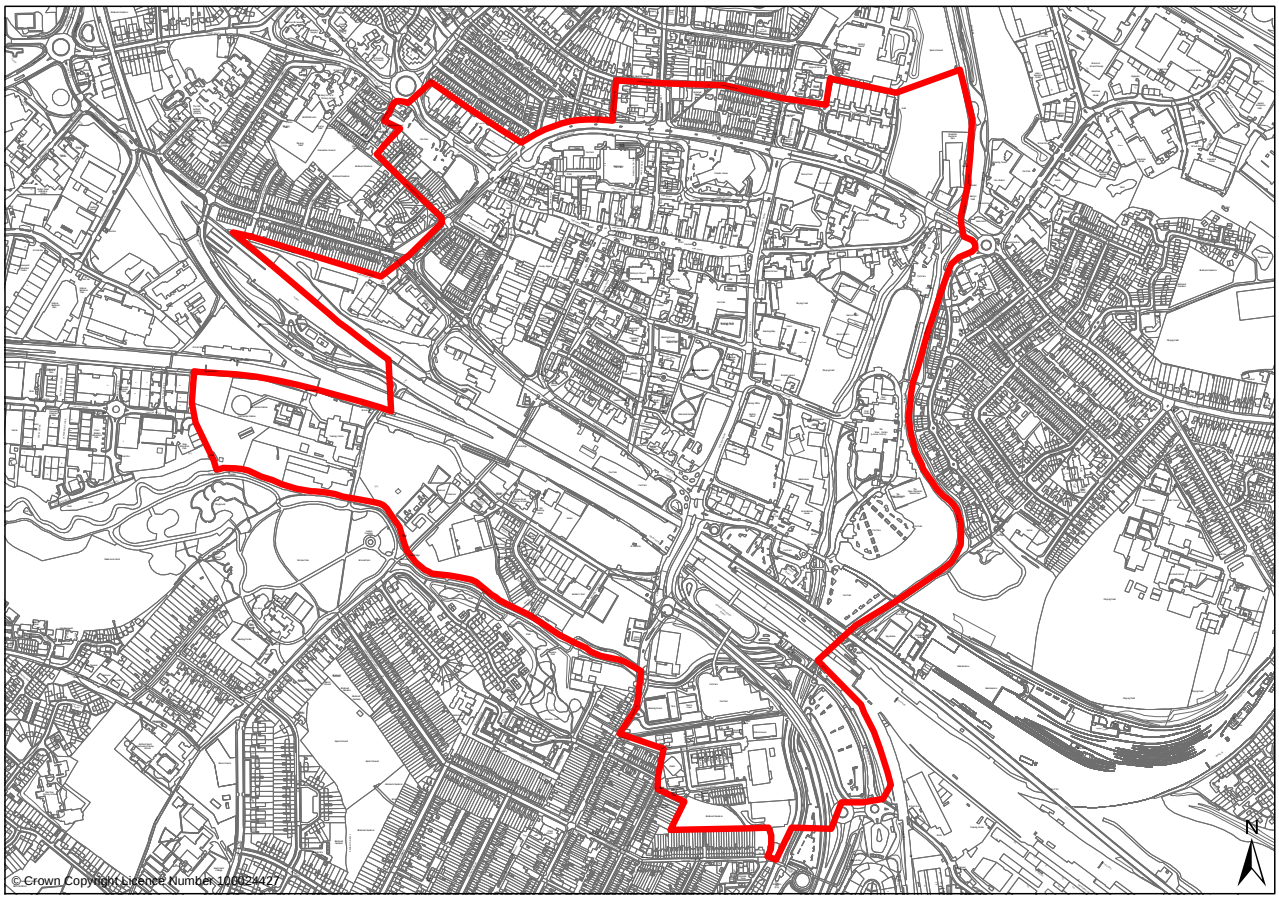
This AAP is one of the key documents of the Ashford Local Development Framework (LDF). It is the first area-based part of the LDF to come forward and allocates specific sites. The plan runs from 2009 to 2021 (the end date of the adopted Core Strategy).

A formal review of the Core Strategy will be adopted before 2015 and so it is anticipated that a review of the Town Centre AAP will commence shortly afterwards to take account of any changes in Core Strategy policy that affect the town centre. The review will also offer the opportunity to update the Plan in light of progress up to that time. Given the inherent uncertainties of the commercial and housing markets, and the significant scale of redevelopment proposed in this Plan, the Council considers this would be a prudent approach.

The Plan is drafted to provide the clear and firm guidance needed to achieve the aims for the town centre, but also with a degree of flexibility, accepting that much can and will change by 2021. This is especially true in Ashford where it is not possible to be sure how the commercial market will react to the growth area role and the arrival of high speed domestic rail services in 2009.

For the avoidance of doubt, development proposals in the town centre area will need to comply with the policies in this document (including at the different levels of guiding principles, Quarters and, where relevant, site-specific) as well as other adopted parts of the LDF and any appropriate 'saved' policies / SPG from the Borough Local Plan 2000.

This plan covers the area shown below:



Vision for the Town Centre

1.1 All town centres are an important focus for shopping, services, leisure and cultural activity. But in Ashford, with its growth area role, the town centre plays an additional and crucial role as a driver and key focus for growth. The town's population is likely to double over the 30 years from 2001. This is not an organic rate of growth and the speed of development needed in the town centre demands a carefully planned approach, bringing together public and private sectors to deliver an exciting, attractive and welcoming town centre.

1.2 The town centre is the heart of the town's growth area role and the economic 'driver' which will help to provide a strong commercial and service centre, meeting the rapidly expanding needs of the growing town. The unparallelled combination of high speed domestic and international rail services has created the opportunity for the town centre to increasingly be a major focus for employment (around 8,000 jobs by 2021).

1.3 This is a crucial aspect of the 'compact' Ashford growth model explained in the Core Strategy. The town centre needs to perform this strategic role to avoid more land having to be released elsewhere in less sustainable locations and to help deliver a new and successful public transport system for Ashford. It is therefore important that sufficient amounts of development are delivered on sites within the town centre. This Plan establishes minimum development targets in certain areas but overall flexibility within the wider growth targets is the key.

1.4 Ashford is in competition with other centres to attract town centre office jobs. The town undoubtedly has locational advantages but these need to be coupled with a wider and compelling offer to potential investors and businesses to invest in Ashford. The sense of place is crucial. This needs to be more than just protecting the attractive medieval

core of the existing centre – a harmonious blend of new development is needed along bustling, active streets and around attractive public spaces. This clear framework sets the context for continued quality growth and in that way helps strengthen investor confidence. The investment in removing the former one-way ring road and creating a series of attractive streets – focused especially on Elwick Road - is a good example of this.

1.5 Other aspects are also important – for example, major improvements to the training and skills base in the town to help provide the workforce skills needed. The proposed Learning Campus is the response. An attractive range of shopping (such as the recent extension to County Square) coupled with an enticing mix of places to eat, drink and enjoy leisure time is another key ingredient. There are a series of key site policies in this Plan drafted with this firmly in mind.

1.6 The town centre and the area immediately around it is also home to many people. In future there will be many more residents enjoying town centre living (2,500 homes by 2021). Town centre residents can take advantage of the improving range of facilities, coupled with the excellent transport links. At the same time those people help to bring life and activity to the town centre – making it more attractive to visit throughout the day and evening.

1.7 Meeting all these objectives demands:

- a clear Plan with sufficient flexibility to enable the market to respond but equally with a robust determination to deliver the highest possible design quality;
- strong and concerted delivery from the Borough Council and its public and private sector partners, co-ordinated by the Ashford's Future Partnership Board.

1.8 By bringing together these elements, the confidence the private sector needs can be created and sustained over what is a long period of rapid change and considerable growth in Ashford's Town Centre.

1.9 The Core Strategy explains the strategic significance of the town centre's role (policy CS3 below) and establishes an over-arching policy approach that is the starting point for this Plan. This is then taken forward in more detailed policy in this Plan for a series of 'quarters'; for key sites allocated in each quarter and in thematic policies (e.g. for parking).

"POLICY CS3: Ashford Town Centre

Development that will help to revitalise the town centre will be supported in principle and specific site allocations will be made through the Town Centre Area Action Plan. Schemes will need to demonstrate a quality of design that makes a real, and significant, contribution to improving the character of the town centre.

Development of the town centre is a priority and sites will be identified for an additional 8,000 jobs and up to about 2,500 new dwellings by 2021.

The conversion of the Ring Road to a high quality two-way street and the Victoria Way link road represent key infrastructure projects for the town centre.
Development proposals that assist with the delivery of these projects will be supported in principle to help enable the expansion of the town centre."

1.10 The Core Strategy contains several other specific policies which will may be particularly applicable to new development in the town centre, including Policies CS1 (Guiding Principles); CS8 (Infrastructure Contributions); CS9 (Design Quality); CS10 (Sustainable Design and Construction); and, CS12 (Affordable Housing), CS13 (Range of Dwelling Types and Sizes), CS15 (Transport), CS18 (Meeting the Community's Needs, CS19 (Development and Flood Risk) and CS20 (Sustainable Drainage).

Issues and Opportunities in the Town Centre

1.11 In addition to the Core Strategy, a number of background documents have also informed this Plan, please see appendix 2. Two important sources are:

- **Town Centre Development Framework -** In June 2004 consultants were commissioned by English Partnerships, on behalf of Ashford Borough Council, Ashford's Future and SEEDA to prepare a Development Framework for Ashford Town Centre. This framework brought together the visions and aspirations for the town centre, seen in the wider context of the Greater Ashford Development Framework which looked at the growth area as a whole. There was an extensive programme of workshops and stakeholder involvement during this work. Much of the approach in this document is now reflected in this AAP.
- **Town Centre Area Action Plan - Preferred Options Report -** In April 2006 the Council produced the 'Preferred Options Report' which set out the Council's broad preferred approach for developing the town centre up until 2021. This Report was subject to an eight week consultation period in which the Council received 332 formal representations. These responses have been taken into account when formulating the contents of this Submitted Action Plan. For further details, please refer to the Ashford Town Centre, 'Response to Preferred Options consultation statement'.

1.12 These documents and other supporting documents outline the constraints and opportunities in the town centre – these are briefly summarised below.

Local Economy

1.13 Ashford's current market profile is limited because of its peripheral location to London and major centres of population. The office market in the town is relatively immature, though strengthening. [1] The opportunity provided by high speed domestic services must be used to help trigger a step change in investment and town centre job creation. The full potential of the town centre will only be realised if it offers an ever widening range of attractions and is based on a determination to deliver quality place making by the Council and all its partners.

1.14 There has been major investment in retail development in recent years but the town faces strong competition from other centres and is vulnerable to leakage to other centres. [2] The Designer Village, County Square extension, and the focus on the town centre's future growth to the south and east may challenge the traditional focus of activity around the High Street. Considerable care will be needed to sustain a balanced centre with a well distributed and varied offer of both food and comparison good shopping. An important part of this balance is the presence of the street markets in the Town centre.

1.15 Skills training remains a key issue if the local workforce is to be best placed to take advantage of new job opportunities. [3] A major new, town centre Learning Campus to meet these needs is a priority. With a growing local commercial sector the ambition over time must also be to stem the current flow of highly skilled commuters out of the town and increasingly provide suitable local employment.

Movement

1.16 The former one way Ring road used to be a significant barrier to pedestrians moving into the core of the Town Centre. High traffic speeds and at least three lanes of vehicles, with limited crossings all resulted in a hostile environment for non car users. [4] The

1 Employment Land Review, p28-39, August 2008
2 Ashford Retail Study, 2003
3 Ashford Economic Baseline Position, p47-56, June 2004
4 Movement and Linkages Strategy, p1-15, April 2006

challenge is to tackle this situation but still provide good levels of vehicle access and significantly improve public transport to the town centre so that its economic vitality is not affected. Traffic simply using the town centre roads as a through route will be reduced by the creation of a new southern link - 'Victoria Way', providing a basis for extending the town centre south of the railway.

1.17 A system of new streets is being created as a framework for quality growth in the town centre.[5] The dominance of vehicles to the detriment of the other functions of a lively street has been re-balanced. Slower traffic speeds, wider pavements and a more attractive streetscene allow for traditional shopping street activities to return. Buildings can face onto the street and uses spill out activity onto it. This transformation and the creation of well designed streets, with a careful balance between the proportions of street and surrounding buildings, is a key element in delivering the vision for the town centre. Encouraging pedestrian movement around the Town Centre also help to achieve wider objectives of achieving a healthier community.[6]

1.18 The Domestic and International Railway Stations are a real asset to Ashford. As the economy of the town grows there are opportunities in the area around the stations – especially the station forecourt and the 'commercial quarter' - to create a strong, high density, business district with a high quality point of arrival to Ashford.

1.19 On the other hand, the railway lines themselves represent a significant physical barrier to pedestrian and vehicular movement, making it a particularly difficult challenge to plan definitively for the area south and east of the International Station. A more flexible approach is needed here, responding to evolving market interest.

Living in the Town Centre

1.20 The growing number of people who will live in and on the fringes of the town centre will be able to enjoy the improved range of facilities in the town but will understandably continue to demand a good quality residential environment. It is inevitable that the majority of new homes will be apartments. A growing and busy town centre will be likely to attract young people, childless couples and single people of all ages. That is not to say that family accommodation cannot be achieved as well – some sites are more suited to this and the site policies in this Plan indicate where this is the case. The quality of life of residents new and old is very important – particular care will have to be shown by applicants bringing forward development adjoining existing homes, and in designing new schemes that include living space. A Residential Space and Layout Standards SPD will be produced to help make sure that good quality living environments are created – this will be particularly relevant in the town centre where higher densities of residential development are inevitable.

Community And Voluntary Sector Use And The Cultural Offer

1.21 The Town Centre is a meeting place for the community and the social life of the Borough with people coming together to use community facilities and attend events.

1.22 A strong and growing town centre will generate additional needs for a range of community and voluntary sector services. These are found in a number of locations but from the public's point of view there may be real benefit from related services being combined in one place. By reducing the operating costs and having better shared facilities it can also be a major benefit to the organisations themselves. In the medium term there will be a need to provide a substantial voluntary and public sector hub for improved services. Feasibility work has begun on identifying potential sites, services and partners but proposals are not sufficiently advanced to shape specific proposals in this Plan. The

5 Public Realm Strategy, 2009
6 Town Centre Development Framework, 2005

Council will continue to work with developers and others to try to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

1.23 The cultural offer in the town is limited and needs to be increased to provide for a growing population. New venues often require subsidy for the initial capital costs (and may continue to in operation). The use of existing venues with suitable adaptation is obviously a sensible way forward – the public sector funding of works to St Mary's Church is a good example of investment in performance arts in the early stages of Ashfords growth area agenda. The Council will continue to work with the Ashford's Future Partnership Board and other agencies to explore ways of adding to the cultural offer.

Historic Character and Open Spaces

1.24 Ashford town centre retains much of its historic street pattern and has many well-preserved historic buildings (including over 100 listed buildings) and a large Conservation Area. (7) Smaller Conservation Areas also adjoin the current town centre in the Queens Road and Kent Avenue areas. Future growth needs to complement this heritage not threaten it. Particular care will be needed with the bulk and height of new development in the area and the pattern of building blocks, streets, lanes, footpaths and open areas.

1.25 There is limited public open space in the existing town centre, in particular within the central area, where the Memorial Gardens is the only significant piece of public green space. Victoria Park lies on the southern edge of the town centre but the quality of the links from this park into the heart of the town centre needs improving if it is to help meet the needs there. This includes the pedestrian bridge over the railway which must be improved in order to link the existing and expanding town centre to the riverside and parks beyond.

1.26 The two river corridors, located to the East and South of the town centre core area provide excellent opportunities to link the town centre to the surrounding network of green spaces running through the town, to the peripheral growth areas planned and to the countryside beyond. This will help to promote walking and cycling complementing the wider agenda for a healthier wider community. (8)

Public Realm

1.27 The old part of the town centre is an attractive place to be with a pleasant network of routes and spaces – animated by many places to sit, eat and drink and the regular market. Elsewhere, the public realm varies in quality and lacks major focal points, such as public squares and civic spaces. (9)

1.28 Recent work has helped to remedy this in part. The works to improve the environment of Bank Street will help to strengthen the pedestrian footfall along this part of Ashford's historic street pattern. The recent improvements to Elwick Road/ West Street set an exciting new standard for this key street and include and major new public square and show how public art can be integrated into the environment. Works are also underway to the domestic station forecourt. But the public realm around the northern periphery of the town centre is generally poor with hostile pedestrian environments and the area in front of the International Station is very unwelcoming. (10)

7 Town Centre Character Appraisal, p3-20, 2006
8 Green and Blue Grid Strategy, 2008
9 Town Centre Character Appraisal, p3-20, 2006
10 Public Realm Strategy, 2009

The Way Forward in the Town Centre

1.29 Having explained the elements that make up the overall approach to the planning of the future of the town centre, and the main issues and opportunities that arise there, this section of the Plan sets out the strategy needed in response. There are 5 key themes:

- Promoting design excellence
- Promoting Movement
- Promoting a mix of uses
- Dealing with the risk of flooding
- Meeting sustainability targets

Promoting Design Excellence

1.30 Delivering high design quality is essential if the vision for the town centre, and the wider aims of the Core Strategy, are to be met. The Core Strategy sets a clear design agenda – it is the starting point for anyone bringing forward development, especially in the town centre where development will impact on more people and shape the attitudes of the investment market.

1.31 The Core Strategy (policy CS 9) explains how schemes must show a positive response to each of the following design criteria:

- Character, distinctiveness and sense of place
- Permeability and ease of movement
- Legibility
- Mixed use and diversity
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of public spaces
- Flexibility, adaptability and liveability
- Richness in detail
- Efficient use of natural resources

1.32 Each of these criteria should be addressed at each stage of the design process – the Design and Access statement (see below) is the key document recording this evolution of ideas into a completed, high quality design.

1.33 Applicants and designers of town centre schemes will need to respond to the over-arching policy on design in the Core Strategy and the more detailed policy of this Plan drawn from:

- this general section on town centre design;
- the guidance given for each ‘quarter’; and
- the site specific policies within each quarter

1.34 This ‘hierarchy’ of design policy and guidance will be completed by a Town Centre Design SPD which will provide further detailed design guidance and advice.

1.35 Design in the town centre is not just to do with buildings and architecture – equally important is the quality of the public realm. Steps to improve the public realm have already begun, most notably through the conversion of Elwick Road, Forge Lane and West Street to a 'shared space'. This radical and innovative project has created a major shift away from the traffic-dominated former ring road and represents the start of the Council's aspirations to deliver a new town centre capable of supporting the major new growth proposed in the Core Strategy.

1.36 The Council and its partners have commissioned a Public Realm Strategy that sets out a framework for the public realm improvements that are needed to enhance the town centre's environment, as shown on the 'Public Realm Priorities' diagram, under section 6 of this AAP. Subsequently, a Town Centre Design SPD will set out more detailed proposals for public realm improvement schemes to be delivered via a combination of public funding, site development and public realm developer contributions, as referred to in policy CS8 of the Core Strategy.

1.37 As part of this overall approach to design quality, the Council considers that there is an important role for public art to play as an integral part of the town centre environment.

Design Aims For The Town Centre

These are:

1.38 **A town centre designed around a well defined framework of carefully inter-connected streets and public spaces –** the public realm and, set within it, a series of identifiable 'quarters'

1.39 **Quarters which have a recognisable character** that can help guide future development. This character is defined by each quarter's current and proposed function, its existing character and building types, and opportunities for development. Other important influences include links to key transport, shopping, open space and other facilities

1.40 **Busy town centre streets** that are the focus for these quarters, or in some cases the transition from one to another. These streets must play a combined role as traffic and pedestrian arteries but (unlike so much of the old ring road) they will be fronted by a range of retail and commercial uses, front entrances and main facades. Wide pavements, active uses at ground level, controlled traffic speeds and building fronts onto the pavement will all contribute to the success of these streets. Increased pedestrian activity will also help to tackle community safety issues.

1.41 **Building blocks that help re-create traditional streets** with continuous street frontage, avoiding blank, lifeless facades and set-backs. This can help to 'mend' areas of the town where this pattern has been lost. Careful detailing of entrances, windows and access arrangements will add to this quality.

1.42 **Activities and uses that create life at street level** such as shops, restaurants, display frontage, main entrances all help to create stronger, safer streets – especially along the most important routes. Ground floor designs will need to be flexible enough to cater for such uses.

1.43 **Scale and height that respects Ashford's context** as a town in transition but essentially a market town of traditional form centred around the prominent St Mary's Church. New development must protect important views of St Mary's Church. It is the most important landmark in the town and a key part of the town's sense of identity and distinctiveness.

1.44 The design vision for the town centre is based around the importance of vibrant streets and the scale and sense of proportion needed to enclose these and other areas of public realm. The vision is not based around high landmarks or point blocks. The scale of the traditional parts of the town centre and surrounding residential areas is well established – building heights should step down to this smaller scale and building widths narrow closer to the historic core where narrow frontages tend to predominate. Along the wider main streets the height of buildings should be proportionate to the width of streets and create a strong sense of place.

1.45 At this point it is important to explain in more detail the advice given in the Plan on building heights. This is expressed in terms of storey height but this needs explaining as different uses need different heights (for example, offices and shops have taller storeys than residential accommodation). As an approximate guide the following heights relate to different storey levels - from ground level (facade heights excluding any roof pitch):

- Flexible ground floor with residential above - 4 storeys 13m; 6 storeys 19m
- Flexible ground floor with offices above - 4 storeys 15m; 6 storeys 22m

1.46 Higher buildings may be justified in urban design terms in certain locations. These will include the Commercial Quarter, and close to the railway stations, some taller buildings may be justified to help 'signal' this key public transport hub and major business district. Site policies set out more details of the approach. However, tall buildings are not needed per se to deliver the quantum of development required in the town centre and it is not envisaged that towers significantly in excess of the current scale set by International House will be acceptable.

1.47 **Design for the whole environment**, working with stakeholders and local people and bringing the key design disciplines together to create an attractive and well co-ordinated series of places. This is an essential part of this AAP's strategy to make the town centre a special place and a magnet for investors, residents, shoppers and workers. Well designed spaces and public art in all its guises will make a crucial contribution to the environmental quality required in Ashford Town Centre

Delivering the Design Agenda

1.48 The ambition for the town centre set in this AAP and the delivery of design quality depends on a strong design process. The Design and Access Statement is central to this. Applicants will need to show how their scheme has evolved in response to a series of key influences:

- **The need for the involvement of stakeholders and local people** in helping to shape the design, typically through design workshops, public surgeries and exhibitions. The approach to be adopted will need to be agreed with the Borough Council – on large or complex sites a tailored design workshop is likely to be required to help generate quality design solutions.
- **The need for an integrated design approach** that brings together the various design disciplines involved in creating well designed buildings, set alongside high quality public spaces. Proposed developments will need to show how this relationship is achieved and will need to make available the funding necessary to deliver public realm to meet the quality standards set in the Council's emerging Public Realm Strategy.
- **The need to include proposals for public art** with artists being a key part of integrated design teams - all allocated sites will be required to come forward with specific proposals, helping to contribute to the Council's emerging Public Art Strategy.
- **The need for agreed site masterplans on complex sites** – especially where here are multiple ownerships. These are needed to show how development can come forward in part or on a phased basis, taking account of the wider design context and without prejudicing overall quality or deliverability. The need for such an approach is set out in site policies in this AAP – although, exceptionally, masterplans may also be needed for other sites should circumstances dictate.
- **The need to respond to advice received from an independent Design review Panel**. - All major schemes will be referred to the Panel at key stages in the design process. Applicants will be expected to prepare suitable material for such reviews and will need to show how the scheme has been re-evaluated, and where necessary amended, to take account of comments the Panel makes.

- **The need to deliver sustainable design and building construction.** Whilst several policies in the Core Strategy will have a bearing on design issues, this is especially true of the Council's sustainable energy and materials objectives (Core Strategy policy CS10). Further guidance on meeting this policy will be provided in the Sustainable Design & Construction SPD.
- **The need to respond to national quality standards, such as 'Building for Life', that are used by the Borough Council.** To help meet the design objectives set in this AAP the Council may use nationally developed standards. Tools of this sort will help in the evaluation of proposals. Furthermore, detailed guidance on all the above issues will be included in a forthcoming Town Centre Design SPD.

Promoting Movement

1.49 Planning Policy Statement 6 [11] sets out that a critical component in achieving a successful, sustainable and viable town centre, is the need to increase its overall accessibility, particular for pedestrians. The quality of associated public realm improvements, overall quantum of development and mix of uses, are all important factors in stimulating greater footfall movement within a town centre.

1.50 Development will need to generate an accessible, safe and attractive sense of place, through the promotion of high quality design, attractive public realm and interesting streetscape. A safer and attractive environment encourages greater pedestrian movement patterns.

1.51 Development on sites which front the former ring road will need to create a positive, pedestrian friendly streetscape which encourages ease of movement. New development around the domestic and international stations in particular should help to provide a more positive sense of arrival into the town. Sites adjoining the key routes and spaces identified in the 'Public Realm Strategy Movement and Crossing Hierarchy' diagram, shown under section 6 of this Plan, will need to deliver improvements here, as will sites where there should be improved links between the town centre and the river corridors and other open spaces.

1.52 As a general principle, this Plan promotes the incorporation of 'active' ground floor uses throughout the town centre area but especially along the major streets. These will be uses that can encourage a higher degree of pedestrian movement along the main routes through the town centre. On major streets, this ground floor should be designed to 4 metres minimum ceiling height, as this provides flexibility for future changes of uses.

Promoting a Mix of Uses

1.53 Successfully delivering a high quality mixed use environment within the town centre will encourage visitors and shoppers into the town throughout the day and evening. This will help to create jobs and will raise the overall profile of Ashford as a place to visit and enjoy, which in turn will encourage further investment. Many sites allocated in this plan propose a mix of uses drawn from those below. The precise balance on any one site will be determined by detailed design issues and to some extent by market interest.

1.54 The town centre needs a strong and varied retail offer, both to serve the needs of the rapidly growing population, but also to raise the centre's current position in the retail hierarchy in Kent. [12] The recent retail extension of County Square will play a key role, but additional retail investment is needed given the level of growth envisaged in the town. Work will be needed to counter the impacts of too strong a shift of retail activity to the south with the dangers this poses for decline elsewhere. More shopping floorspace will encourage more variety in the town's offer and the opportunity to encourage more

11 Planning Policy Statement 6, 'Planning for Town Centres', 2005
12 Ashford Retail Study, 2003

'speciality' shopping areas. A similar wider view is also needed for food retailing – it needs to be distributed in locations and in format sizes that best help to meet the overall objectives for the town centre.

1.55 Generating a substantial leisure offer to serve a much larger town is also important. Leisure uses help attract a greater number of people into a town centre, at differing times of the day, complementing other town centre uses. [13] The recent Stour Centre development provides a significant increase in the quality and quantity of leisure facilities provided in the town centre and is an important first step.

1.56 Providing substantial new office development is seen as a key component in helping to stimulate a significant new employment base for the town centre allowing it to deliver its strategic role set by the Core Strategy. [14] The area north of the domestic station – the Commercial Quarter – will be the main focus of this development as a new business district for the town. Public ownership of land in this area and the concerted actions of the Ashford's Future partners will help to bring forward comprehensively planned, high quality development here.

1.57 A larger residential population will also bring benefits to the town centre. The town centre is an inherently sustainable location for new housing, and an increase in residents will help to support the evening economy. Core Strategy policy CS13 establishes the need to provide a range of dwelling types within the borough, offering people a greater degree of housing choice. A mix of accommodation will provide a variety of options to enjoy high quality town centre living.

Promoting Key Infrastructure

1.58 Achieving a successful town centre will require the delivery of a variety of key infrastructure to come forward alongside or in advance of new development.

1.59 Parking within a town centre provides people with direct and quick access to the retail, leisure and commercial facilities on offer. However a careful balance is needed, as, over-providing for parking in a town centre can lead to problems of traffic congestion which could ultimately affect its accessibility and viability. [15]

1.60 The Core Strategy sets out the strategic approach to parking (paragraphs 11.14 -17) and, in particular, how parking that serves the town centre will be provided through a mix of spaces at out-of-centre Park & Ride sites and new multi-storey public car parks in the town centre. It also explains how parking standards should progressively reduce over time as public transport services improve in quality and frequency. Policies in this Plan cover the delivery of the new multi-storey car parks and set out detailed parking standards for new development in the town centre area.

1.61 Another critical infrastructure requirement is the delivery of Victoria Way. This will provide an alternative cross-town centre route for traffic, relieving the former ring road. It will also provide access to a multi-storey car park on the edge of the town centre and open up underused vacant land for development in the Southern Expansion Quarter. Developments that subsequently benefit from this new through route and / or have a frontage to it will be required to enhance the public realm along this important street to the design standard set for the completed route. [16]

1.62 There are wider physical and community infrastructure projects which will, directly or indirectly, benefit the town centre (for example, investment in the SMARTLINK transport system). The Core Strategy (policy CS8) introduces a strategic tariff that will help fund certain strategic infrastructure projects. This applies to residential accommodation in

13 Town Centre Development Framework, 2005
14 Employment Land Review, 2008
15 Parking Strategy, 2006 & Ashford Parking Strategy Technical Note 2009
16 Victoria Way Community Infrastructure Fund Appraisal, 2008

the town centre at a level to be set in the Infrastructure Contributions SPD. Employment and retail uses do not pay strategic tariff but the Core Strategy envisages that contributions to public realm enhancements are likely to be sought from this source.

1.63 In this Plan there is an expectation that all allocated sites (and other major development sites that may emerge during the Plan period) will bring forward public realm improvements associated with the site in question, and public art. Where there are specific requirements the site policies identify these – a Town Centre Design SPD will provide more detailed guidance drawing on the Public Realm Strategy. An Infrastructure Contributions SPD is being produced which will set out the details of developer contributions expected from developments in the town centre.

Dealing With The Risk of Flooding

1.64 The Core Strategy (policy CS19) sets out the Council's approach to all development coming forward within the identified floodplain. Some of the eastern and southern areas of the Town Centre are located within Flood Zone 3. (See Proposals map)

1.65 In principle, development in these areas would normally be resisted but this would potentially run contrary to the overall approach to the town centre's major role in delivering the growth agenda. The approach in the Core Strategy, in relation to the future development of the Town Centre, was supported by extensive flood modelling work carried out by the Environment Agency. In addition, an Integrated Water Management Study and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment were produced which justified the approach adopted.

1.66 The Core Strategy recognises that the flood category issue needs to be balanced with other considerations, such as the need to bring forward key brownfield sites for regeneration where there are no suitable alternative sites in a lower flood risk zone or sustainable development objectives take precedence (para. 15.9 of the Core Strategy). These exceptions do apply in one or two key parts of the town centre, notably in the Southern Expansion Quarter and the International Station Quarter.

1.67 It is practical to provide suitable flood mitigation to support development proposals within flood zone 3, without worsening the flood situation on site or elsewhere.[17] Against this background it is considered that the allocation of sites for development in this AAP is consistent with the Core Strategy. In any event, proposals coming forward in the town centre will still need to accord with policy CS19 of the Core Strategy. Where this is an issue on allocated sites within the AAP, it is reflected within the reasoned justification to those policies. In addition SUDS features should be incorporated into developments in accordance with policy CS20 of the Core Strategy.

Meeting Sustainability Targets

1.68 New development in the town centre will be subject to the challenging sustainability targets that are set out in policy CS10 of the Core Strategy. Whilst there will be a variety of technical ways to meet these targets, there is also the opportunity to consider strategic alternatives. For example, the 'critical mass' created by a series of sites in complementary uses may make it possible to provide Combined Heat and Power more efficiently and cheaply. In the Southern Expansion Quarter in particular, where large amounts of new development are proposed on a variety of sites, this may be feasible. The Council and its partners will be keen to work with developers and sustainable energy experts to broker the best solutions for all parties.

17 Town Centre Flooding Assessment, 2009

Guiding Principles

Policy TC1 - Guiding Principles

The following key planning objectives will apply to all development proposals within the Town Centre. These objectives complement the more general objectives in the Core Strategy.

A) Conserve and enhance the Town Centre's heritage and character, especially the two Conservation Areas and their settings, in particular by respecting the scale and bulk of existing buildings and protecting important views of the town's skyline and St. Mary's Church;

B) Create a balance and mix of uses within sites and around the town centre as a whole that helps to generate a varied and interesting urban environment that best meets the needs of all its users;

C) Protect existing residential environments and residents' quality of life and create new living environments of lasting quality;

D) Deliver an attractive and safe urban environment with a strong sense of place by the high quality design of buildings and public spaces to help attract investors, residents, employees, visitors, shoppers and tourists alike;

E) Create a network of public spaces in the town centre linked to the agreed hierarchy of streets and open spaces and built to an agreed quality standard;

F) Create attractive and vibrant main streets by achieving appropriate building forms fronting these streets, with active ground floor frontages, proportionate heights, and uses that respond to the agreed hierarchy of streets and open spaces;

G) Secure the inclusion of public art as an integral part of development proposals on allocated and other prominent sites;

H) Protect and enhance the Town Centre's existing green open spaces, and the river corridors by enhancing their wildlife, biodiversity and landscape value;

I) Where development, on sites within the 100 year undefended floodplain, is otherwise acceptable, ensure that this can be achieved without worsening flood conditions on site or elsewhere;

J) Protect and enhance the existing cycle/pedestrian network and create additional attractive and safe routes as opportunities arise, to increase the attractiveness of the town centre and create new routes between it and the green spaces and river corridors.

2 Achieving the Vision and Objectives for the Town Centre

The Quantity Of New Floorspace Required

2.1 The Core Strategy (policy CS3) identifies the need to deliver 8,000 new jobs within the Town Centre by 2021. It envisaged that this would be achieved by providing 94,000 square metres of new retail / leisure floorspace, 76,200 sq.m. of new office floorspace and new education facilities within an expanded Town Centre area (para. 3.3 of the Core Strategy). The Town Centre AAP is the vehicle to assess and plan for these figures in more detail.

2.2 In 2008, the Council commissioned an Employment Land Review (ELR) for the Borough which is a key part of the evidence base to support this Plan. This Review concluded that, in order for the Ashford Growth Area as a whole to meet its job creation targets by 2021, there should a greater focus on the delivery of town centre office development in the order of 93,000sqm by 2021. [18]. To take account of this more recent advice than that in the Core Strategy, the Plan has been amended to increase the amount of office floorspace.

2.3 The suggested quantum of retail / leisure floorspace in para. 3.3 of the Core Strategy has also been reviewed. Account has been taken of the contribution to the overall target - some 19,000 sqm of retail floorspace - resulting from the extension to the County Square, which opened in March 2008. Although more recent evidence of retail need to 2021 [19] indicates that a lower amount of new retail floorspace provision is more realistic, the Core Strategy highlights the importance of significant retail expansion to help raise the profile of the Town Centre, stem the leakage of shoppers to other competing centres, and ensure the need of the rapidly growing population is met. The revised gross indicative figure of around 70,000sqm of new gross retail/leisure floorspace remains challenging for Ashford to accommodate by 2021 and would more than meet the needs of the rapidly growing population whilst significantly raising the town in the retail hierarchy.

2.4 Based on a relatively conservative average standard job density of 1 job per 20 sq m gross floorspace for both town centre offices and town centre retail [20], the revised quantums of development (70,000 sq m retail/leisure and 93,000sqm of commercial) would provide an estimated 8,150 jobs in the town centre by 2021. Applying the same standards to the County Square extension this figure would rise to around 9,000 jobs. Furthermore, no allowance has been made in this figure for any jobs created in other growing sectors such as community/ voluntary, health, cultural or educational sectors in the town centre, where some significant developments may come forward e.g. the Learning Campus.

2.5 Therefore, altering the indicative floorspace requirements for office and retail/leisure uses from the Core Strategy in this way does not affect the ability to deliver the 8000 new jobs in the town centre set out in the Core Strategy and reflects more recent and detailed advice on how those jobs are likely to be realised.

2.6 The figures referred to in this document as development quantums on sites and within Quarters should be generally regarded as appropriate targets for delivery given reasonable assumptions about scale, height, density and mix of uses. However, these figures should only be regarded as indicative and will inevitably be refined through a more detailed assessment of individual sites and their constraints as they come forward. However, the figures should be regarded as providing a clear indication as to the relative ratio of different uses that would be appropriate on certain sites and within the different Quarters.

18 Ashford Employment Land Review, Conclusion, 2008
19 Ashford Retail Study, CBRE, 2003;Ashford Foodstore Retail Assessment, Savills, 2008 & 2009
20 Arup Employment Densities Guide for English Partnerships, 2001

The Number of New Dwellings Required

2.7 In relation to residential development, Policy CS3 states that up to about 2,500 new dwellings should be provided in the Town Centre by 2021. The sites allocated in this AAP could accommodate some 3,100 dwellings (see also the table at the end of this chapter).This higher figure takes into account the potential for a substantial portion of the planning permission granted by the Secretary of State on the former Powergen sites (TC12 and TC13) and some development on the Gasworks Lane site (TC14) to come forward during the Plan period. It is possible that not all of the allocations will be fully developed by the end of the Plan period and the higher figure helps to provide confidence and a degree of flexibility in meeting the required overall residential figure for the Town Centre, as set out in Policy CS3. This position will require ongoing monitoring, and the approach also makes no assumption in relation to windfall developments in the town centre, some of which are, nevertheless, likely to come forward in the Plan period.

The Urban Structure

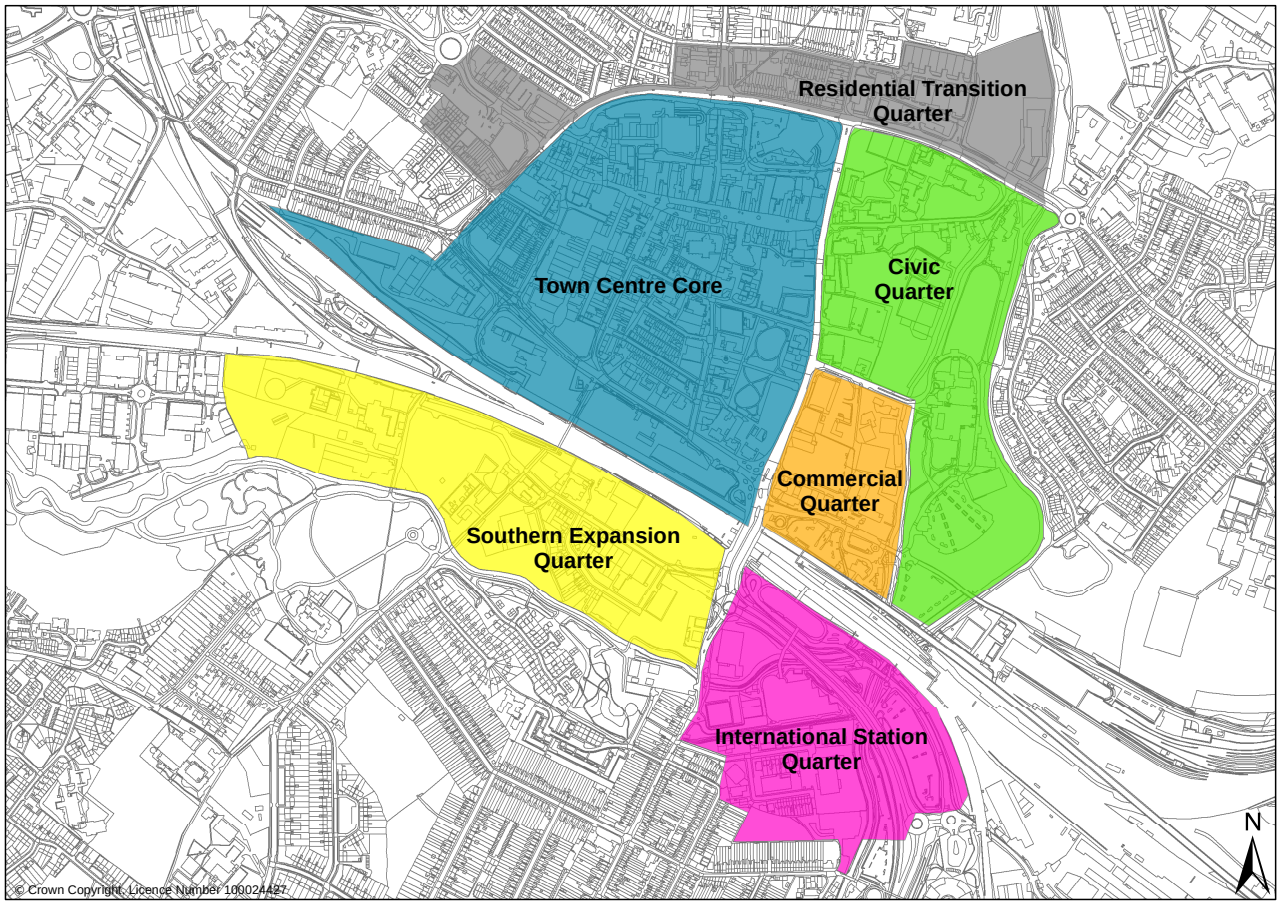
2.8 This Action Area Plan looks at the town centre as a series of ‘quarters’. Each has its own character, drawn from its history, its current function and its future role in a growing town centre. This approach was first taken in the Town Centre Development Framework and has been complemented by the Public Realm Strategy.

2.9 Quarters are not islands – they merge into each other at their boundaries, but they do each have a dominant character and purpose. By emphasising this and giving expression to it in the way uses are combined and the way the buildings and public realm around them are characterised, a greater sense of coherence is created for the town centre as a whole. This clarity helps to provide a stronger focus and an attractive basis for investors considering investing in the town.

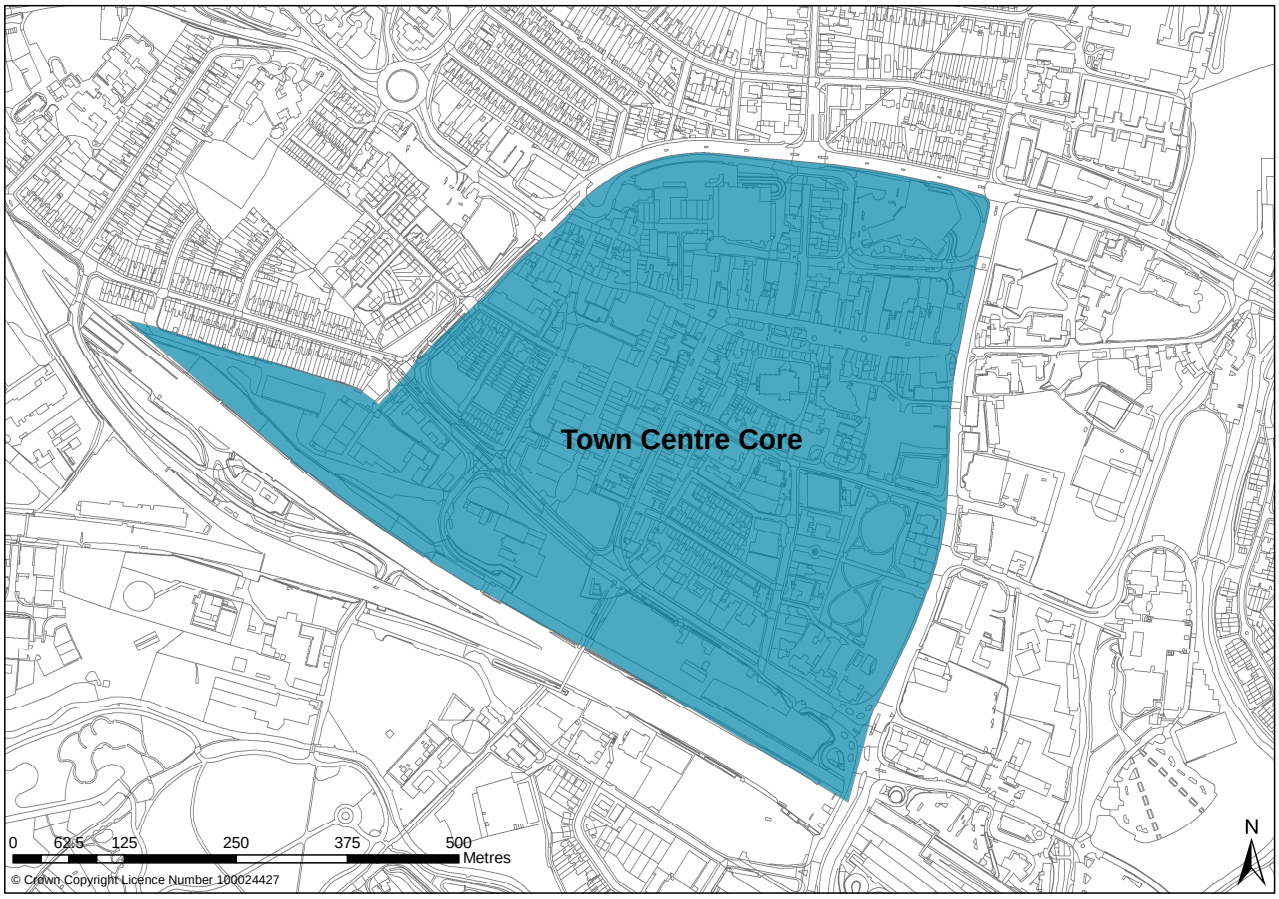
2.10 For each Quarter, this Plan sets out a policy approach, indicative targets for new development, and site specific proposals. **Proposals coming forward within the town centre will need to demonstrate how they contribute in a positive way to enhancing the character and meeting the objectives for the ‘quarter’ they are part of.**

2.11 Objectives have been established for each 'Quarter’ based on various factors including:

- existing character and role;
- location, especially in relation to public transport;
- current prominent uses;
- opportunities for new development;
- market potential;
- proximity to routes and spaces that help to structure a coherent town centre.


Residential Transition Quarter
Town Centre Core
Civic Quarter
Commercial Quarter
Southern Expansion Quarter
International Station Quarter
N
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The Town Centre Core



Vision

2.12 Ashford's original historic core serves as the focal point for retail, entertainment, tourist and cultural activity at the heart of the Borough. A complementary range of new mixed use schemes will enrich the vitality of this vibrant quarter and increase the resident population. The regeneration of vacant land and surface car parks, combined with improved pedestrian links across the former ring road will reconnect the Core with the outer quarters. The Town Centre Core's rich historic character will continue to evolve through new development that responds carefully to the context of the pattern and grain of the tightly packed urban centre with its intimate human scale of buildings and spaces.

Current Context

2.13 This Quarter is the most accessible location within the town centre, it is the focal point of the town and the wider borough. Over time this quarter has evolved, as with most market town centres, to become the focus of retail activity. The upper High Street is the traditional heart of the centre with the highest footfall movement in the town centre [21]. Two shopping malls lead off Upper High Street: Park Mall to the north, containing smaller units and the much larger County Square, a covered mall to the south.

2.14 This principal retail use in the quarter is complemented by a large office presence, numerous banks, various restaurants and cafés and leisure uses. In addition, the Library and Art College provide important community and educational uses for the town.

2.15 This quarter is the historic heart of the town and includes the listed St Mary's Church, several additional listed buildings and a large Conservation Area. Some elements of the medieval street pattern remain in place and form a T-shaped axis from High Street, St Mary's Churchyard and the New Rents area, served by a network of alleyways and passageways. [22] As is the case in most historic towns, there are numerous archaeological remains in the historic core of Ashford and therefore it will be necessary for an archaeological survey or watching brief to be carried out prior to or in conjunction with some developments.

2.16 This historic element richly enhances the town centre and provides a focal point for tourists visiting Ashford. The evolution of the centre has resulted in an integrated mix of substantial, modern, dense buildings, generally ranging from 3-5 storeys in height, with the original historic built form, usually ranging from 2-3 storeys and smaller building plots with narrow shop facades. Some of this modern building form has detracted from the attractive historic character of the town centre and now impose uncharacteristic bulk in prominent locations, such as at the Mecca Bingo hall, Edinburgh Road Car Park and Charter House - the latter being particularly prominent from the countryside surrounding Ashford.

2.17 The gradient of this quarter gently slopes from north to south with the St Mary's Church remaining a key landmark in the town centre and a visual focus for the town from all approaches. In addition, the attractive and well used Memorial Gardens represents an important oasis of public open space, serving the wider town centre.

2.18 In addition, this Quarter has a number of substantial brownfield development opportunities, including Vicarage Lane Car Park and Park Mall, falling within the former ring road, and Elwick Place, a large vacant site, running alongside the northern side of the railway line. The recent environmental improvements to the former ring road have greatly improved the environment for pedestrians moving into the Town Centre Core. However, several locations around the former ring road, particularly along Somerset and Station Roads, are currently characterised by inactive frontages with little pedestrian activity.

2.19 The railway line, which forms the southern boundary of the Quarter discourages movement into the town centre core from South Ashford in particular. [23] The recent creation of Elwick Square, at the entrance of County Square extension, is the first step towards improving the movement patterns along this key north-south axis.

Future Role

2.20 This Quarter will play a key role, in both delivering substantial new development and providing services for Ashford's rapidly increasing population. Planning Policy Statement 6 encourages planning authorities to focus built development within existing town centres on a sequential basis, with the centre of the town considered the most sustainable location.

2.21 However, this Quarter also represents the historic heart of the town centre which must be protected. Proposals coming forward within the Quarter will need to conserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area and its setting, with new development being required to be in keeping and sympathetic to its setting, including its buildings, pattern of streets and lanes and its essentially intimate scale.

2.22 The quarter is bounded by important streets – the treatment of these and developments fronting them needs to be handled well to make sure that pedestrian movement is encouraged, in line with the design aims of this Plan. Overcoming the physical barrier of the railway lines is also an important element in increasing the accessibility of the

22 Town Centre Character Area Study, 2006
23 Town Centre Development Framework, 2005

Quarter. The redevelopment of the land between Elwick Road and the railway line provides an opportunity for a large mixed use development. Providing an improved pedestrian bridge between this site and the Southern Expansion Quarter on the southern side of the railway at Victoria Way, is a key objective in creating better pedestrian access to the Core Quarter. (24)

2.23 Achieving an appropriate mix and proportion of uses is vital – the broad targets are explained above. In the Town Centre Core this should be predominantly through the provision of substantial new retail and leisure floorspace, building on the Quarter's current role.

2.24 Market advice shows that the greatest need for additional retail development in the town is for comparison goods. The 2008 County Square extension provided for some 19,000 sq.m. of comparison goods floorspace, however evidence suggests that the Town Centre should accommodate at least this level again up until 2021, to both serve the demand generated by Ashford's rapid increase in population and to help improve the centre's standing in the retail hierarchy of competing centres. (25)

2.25 Market advice also suggests that the Town Centre as a whole could accommodate substantial convenience retail space, in the region of 2,000 sq m, net, by 2021 in addition to existing commitments. (26) Currently food shopping is very limited within the town centre core area and food store(s) of an appropriate scale which serve the needs of shoppers, visitors and workers within the local area, would greatly complement the overall retail offer of the town centre.

2.26 To support the main retail and leisure function of this Quarter, other complementary secondary uses will help create a more vibrant mixed use environment, encouraging greater activity at different times of the day. In this category, office development is appropriate, especially where the links to the Commercial Quarter and the stations are strongest. Residential development is a very important part of the mix to help bring more vitality to the centre and support the evening economy. Additional educational, cultural, community or tourism-related uses are also appropriate here. This would build on the diverse nature of the Quarter, helping to meet various needs of the existing and future population, whilst also encouraging more visitors into the town centre.

2.27 Therefore, within this Quarter, secondary uses such as office development, community and cultural facilities and residential uses are encouraged in principle, as part of a well balanced mix that meets the overall floorspace targets for this Quarter.

Policy TC2 - The Town Centre Core

The primary focus in the Town Centre Core Quarter is on new comparison and convenience retail, leisure and residential uses . Complementary office, cultural, educational and community-related uses would also be appropriate.

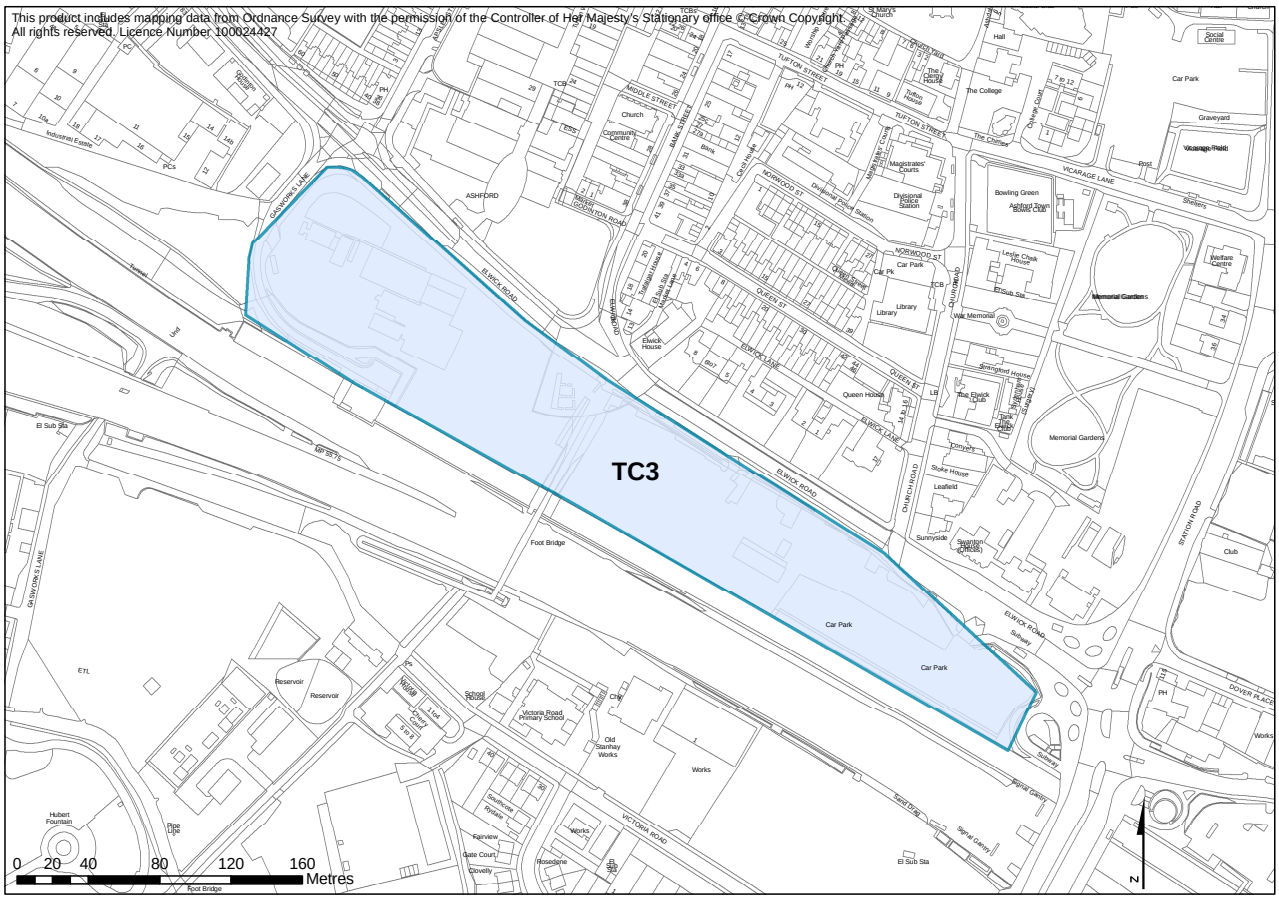
Proposals will need to demonstrate how they help to support the intended role of the quarter, through the promotion of an appropriate mixture of uses and overall quantum of development.

In doing this, proposals will need to have particular regard to the local context and historic character of this Quarter, especially on sites within or affecting the setting of the two Conservation Areas, ensuring development is of an appropriate scale, height, layout, materials and massing to fit comfortably alongside the existing historic built form.

24 Public Realm Strategy, 2009
25 Ashford Retail Study, 2003
26 Town Centre Foodstore Assessment, Savills, 2008 & 2009

Town Centre Core Site Specific Policies

Policy TC3: Elwick Place



2.28 The land on the south side of Elwick Road from the Beaver Road bridge to Gasworks Lane is one of the biggest and probably the most important of the development sites in the town centre. This corridor links the transport hub at the stations with the town centre and the County Square shopping centre. It also marks the transition between the established town centre and the major expansion needed to the south to meet the needs of a growing town.

2.29 It was because of this strategic importance that the pioneering 'shared space' remodelling of the town centre road network was focused here. The new Square at the junction of Elwick Road and Bank Street is a major addition to the public spaces in the town and marks the intersection of Elwick Road with the strong pedestrian movement from the southern part of the town northwards to the town centre. In short, this is a site in a location of strategic significance and the quality of development here will have a fundamental bearing on the town's future.

2.30 Because of the site's size it is likely that development will take place in phases. The initial planning submission must be comprehensive in their approach in that, as a minimum, they include a masterplan for the whole area covered by policy TC3. A hybrid application could be brought forward whereby the detail of an early phase is included alongside an outline submission for the rest of the site. This will need to be in the context of a masterplan for the whole site which shall be agreed with the Council before any permanent planning permission is granted. This will establish, in more detail than the policy below, the precise mix, scale and distribution of uses and the general approach to urban design. The opportunity to link development on this site with the adjoining Godinton Way Industrial Estate site (policy TC8) should be investigated and any masterplan for development on either site will need to demonstrate compatibility with the other.

2.31 Outline master-planning studies have shown that the site has the potential to accommodate in the region of 27,000 sq m floorspace in addition to residential uses – however, this figure will be refined through developing detailed designs that show how the aspirations set out in this policy can be met. The figure should not therefore be interpreted rigidly, nor as a ceiling.

2.32 West of Elwick Square, a predominantly retail-led mix is proposed to complement the County Square development opposite. Other appropriate secondary uses (mainly on upper floors) include residential, offices, hotel and leisure uses, including a cinema.

2.33 Some guidance is needed at this stage on the broad scale and form of development that will be appropriate on this site. In line with the overall approach to the town centre, the general scale guidelines are 4-6 storey development here. Development should also create a variety of roofscape through the site to avoid a repetitive and bland building form.

2.34 The County Square development provides a benchmark scale for development south of the road, although careful articulation will be needed to break up the scale of the block and give the vertical emphasis that one would normally expect in a town centre. Service access will be provided to the rear of these properties.

2.35 Along the whole of the Elwick Road frontage (west and east of Elwick Square), development will need to respond to the challenge of designing a north facing scheme that is attractive to pedestrians. This need to consider micro-climate in design is equally relevant around the Square so that sitting out is encouraged and full use made of the area. Whilst the Square will take much of its character from the sense of being enclosed, this needs careful design, for example by variety in frontage treatment and height to make this a truly attractive place to be with its own special character.

2.36 East of Elwick Square, the part of the site fronting the Victorian villas on the northern side of the street is proposed for mainly residential use (with the potential for some office space integrated into a more mixed use) and needs a design treatment that is sympathetic to the scale and pattern of building blocks these villas bring to Elwick Road. There will be various ways this can be achieved and a contemporary design may well be the most suitable approach providing it is of real quality and complements the character of the adjoining Conservation Area. Building heights on the Elwick Road frontage should not be out of scale with those on the north side of the road but should take account of a careful study of the proportions of street width to building height. Setting back an additional roof storey may be possible with minimal impact and could be an option.

2.37 On the railway-facing side of the site it may be possible to exceed the general 4–6 storey town centre scale by a modest amount to create a block or blocks benefiting from an expansive and southerly aspect, but these should not be intrusive when viewed from Elwick Road or land to the north, and should also present an attractive façade to views from the south and the railway.

2.38 The number of homes created here will depend on the detailed design and the size of the units – both flats and town houses / duplex apartments could be provided. To take full advantage of this key town centre location and to encourage a mixed and balanced community, a range of different-sized sized accommodation (but with the majority of units having 2 bedrooms or more), is proposed.

2.39 Given the scale and prominence of the site, a survey of views will be needed to show how short and long views into and from the town centre would be affected/ preserved.

2.40 At the eastern end of the site, closest to the railway stations, the emphasis should be on office development. This also provides the opportunity to change the building form and possibly bring frontages forward to help enclose this end of the street as well as providing more of a sense of place around the Station Square junction. This will help create a stronger sense of arrival to the 'shared space' and Conservation Area. This is an especially prominent part of the site and simple, but carefully articulated and well-proportioned buildings of high quality design will be needed to complement rather than compete with the surrounding character.

2.41 Vehicle access to serve that part of the site from the Beaver Road bridge to the eastern side of Elwick Square will be from approximately the location of the existing car park access. It is expected that the off-site parking for the retail and leisure elements of the site will be provided at the proposed Victoria Way multi-storey car park. It is therefore essential that the pedestrian link across the railway line is of a high quality and standard and it is proposed that the existing bridge be replaced (see para. 2.117 and policy TC10). A section 106 contribution towards the delivery of a replacement bridge will be expected from the developers of this site. This contribution is not expected to fully fund the costs of the replacement bridge. The sum sought will be proportionate and negotiated with the Council in the context of the overall viability of a redevelopment scheme for the site.

2.42 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

Policy TC3 - Elwick Place

The Elwick Place site should accommodate a range of uses. The type and mix of uses will vary along the site to reflect the role it has linking the retail heart of the town to the transport hub at the railway stations. A masterplan for the comprehensive development of the site shall be prepared and agreed with the Council. This master-plan shall reflect the general principles outlined below. Detailed design will determine the best solution but this should conform to the general pattern of development set out below;-

A) West of Elwick Square, a substantial retail-led development with easy pedestrian access from the County Square shopping centre opposite should be provided. This should be anchored by a comparison retail offer which both complements and extends the retail core of the town centre. Leisure (including a cinema), residential, a hotel and/or office uses would be suitable on upper floors. Building forms on this part of the site should reflect the broad scale set by the shopping centre opposite.

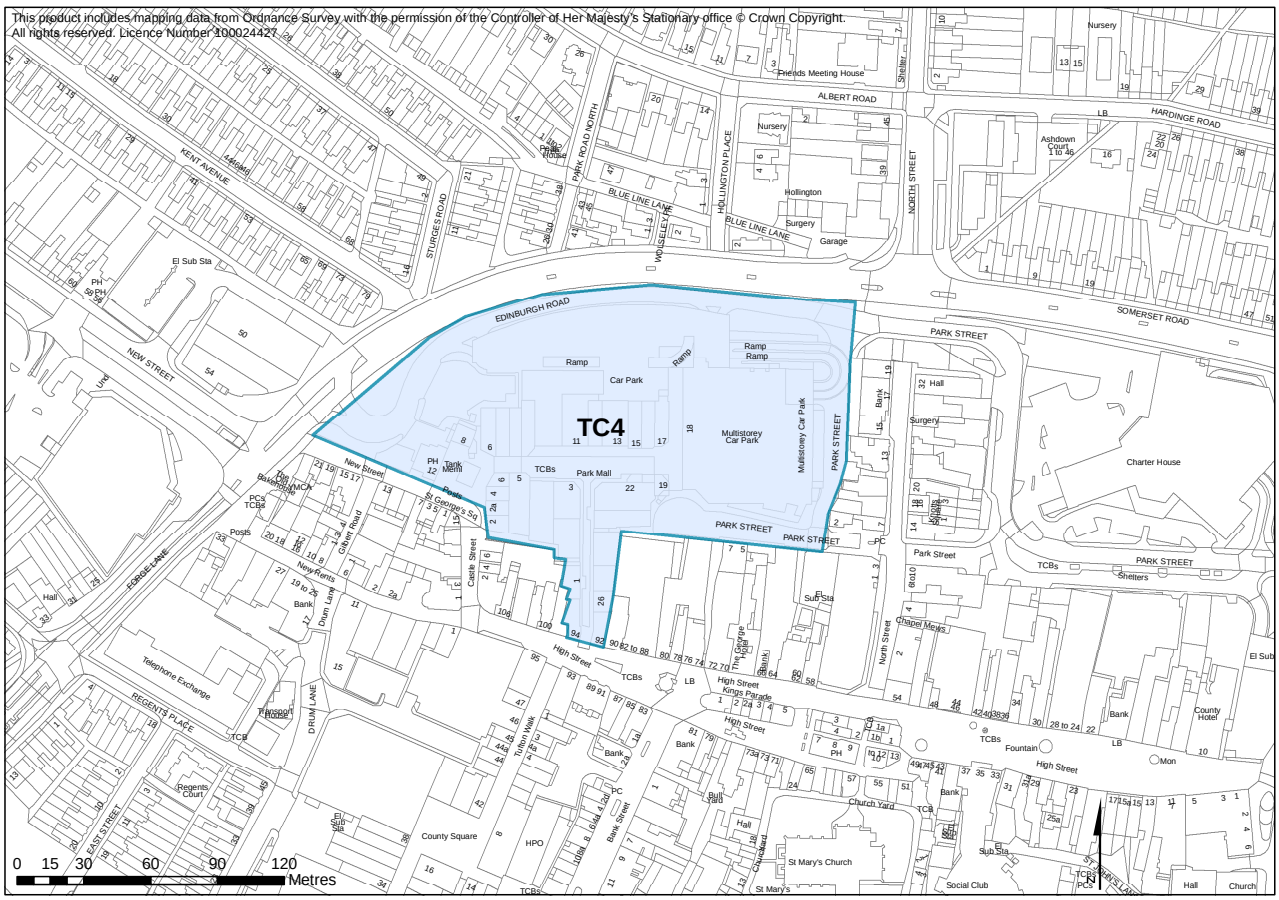
B) East of Elwick Square the site should accommodate a mix of uses based principally on residential and commercial development. Commercial office space (minimum 5,000 sqm) should be mostly towards the eastern end of the site closest to the stations. A business class hotel may also be appropriate here. The bulk of this area will be given over to residential use (likely range of 200- 300 homes) with a mix of accommodation able to meet the needs of a wide variety of households. The Elwick Road street frontage will need to be of a high quality so as to create a real sense of place. Active frontages will be provided, including appropriately designed residential development, leisure uses, small shops, cafés and similar uses. All ground floor uses will need to be compatible with a residential area.

Elwick Square is an important public space and development must provide an appropriate frontage and create activity here. At ground level, smaller retail units are appropriate, together with eating and drinking places and key entrances (e.g. to a cinema, major retail unit, etc). Upper levels should be primarily residential (or hotel) use to bring life to the area out of normal working hours although some office space would also be acceptable.

All proposals will be designed sensitively to enhance the setting of the Conservation area and the quality of the 'shared space' Elwick Road and Elwick Square so that the building line, its articulation, the façade design, the materials used on the buildings and the public spaces around them all combine to create very high quality town-scape. There should be a clear distinction between public and private spaces, a simple and convenient pattern of routes through the site, and an agreed palette of materials and street furniture for the site as a whole. This will help to create a strong and attractive sense of place and shall be consistent with the Council's Public Realm Strategy and Town Centre Design SPD. Development fronting the unimproved area to Elwick Road east is required to deliver an appropriate finish of public realm treatment.

A financial contribution, to be agreed with the Borough Council, will be sought to help deliver the proposed replacement bridge over the railway lines to link the site with the Southern Expansion Area and the proposed Victoria Way multi-storey car park.

Policy TC4: Park Mall



2.43 The Park Mall retail centre forms a key site in the northern part of the Town Centre Core. It includes a significant amount of existing comparison retail floorspace and multi-storey car parks. Parts of the area suffer from poor design with a long bland frontage facing the former ring road, and the Edinburgh Road car park. With the opening of the County Square extension, Park Mall has become a more peripheral retail destination despite its proximity and links to the upper High Street where there are a large concentration of retail units and the highest footfall movement levels in the town centre. [27]

2.44 To maintain the vitality of this important part of the town centre, the redevelopment or re-modelling of the Park Mall site would be encouraged in principle. A range of different uses would be acceptable but this should include a significant amount of comparison retail development to act as an anchor to the northern part of the Town Centre, counterbalancing the impact of the future development at Elwick Place and the already extended County Square.

2.45 Following advice from the Council's consultants [28], the Council also seeks the provision of new convenience goods shopping floorspace of up to in the order of 2,000 sq.m net, in this location as part of any new retail development. A food-store on this centrally located site, within the existing town centre core, is consistent with the sequential approach set out in PPS6 and would also generate a consistent and high level of pedestrian movement. Furthermore, it would help to create a major retail attractor to this part of the town centre core and thus help to provide the counter-balance to the

27 Town Centre Space Syntax Study, 2005
28 Savills Town Centre Food Store Assessment 2008 & 2009

new comparison-led floorspace at County Square and Elwick Place. This is considered to be essential for the future vitality and viability of the Park Mall area.

2.46 Other uses which could form part of an acceptable comprehensive redevelopment package for this site include leisure uses, office development and a limited amount of new residential flatted development on upper floors.

2.47 The Park Mall centre currently includes a multi-storey car park on two levels. This, alongside the adjoining Edinburgh Road multi-storey car park provides significant parking in this part of the town centre (approximate 600 parking spaces combined). The opportunity to redevelop Park Mall also provides an opportunity to redevelop the unattractive Edinburgh Road car park which sits above the existing Wilkinson store. Should redevelopment be proposed on this site, the Council will accept the replacement of the existing number of parking spaces at Edinburgh Road and Park Mall, as a maximum, providing a suitable design solution can be achieved. Additional parking should be provided at other proposed multi-storey car parks in Victoria Way or New Street (see policies TC12 & TC19).This approach is consistent with the Council's Parking Strategy, and the Core Strategy.

2.48 Improving access into this site for pedestrians is important both from the upper High Street, as this is where footfall is highest, but also from North Street and the residential areas north of Somerset Road where some of the historic routes into the town centre have been severed by the former ring road.

2.49 The site is situated in a very prominent position in the town centre and represents a key frontage to Somerset Road. The site is clearly visible from the 'gateway' entrances into the town centre from New Street and Canterbury Road and the design needs to respond well to this.

2.50 The current development is entirely inward facing - it is essential that a comprehensive redevelopment of this area creates a well-designed, outward-facing, active street frontage to Somerset Road. There is also the potential for the built footprint of the development to be extended towards Somerset Road. There is no requirement to retain the Edinburgh Road link road in its current form although suitable access will be needed for on site parking and servicing. Proposals for this site will need to achieve a significantly more pedestrian-friendly frontage here with the potential for the creation of a much-improved public realm in this part of the town centre.

2.51 A large part of the site falls within the Town Centre Conservation Area with a significant area fronting the attractive historic upper High Street and North Street. The design of any redevelopment should respect the scale and setting of those buildings within the Conservation Area and reflect the prevailing grain of the townscape and seek to create an appropriate building grid that reflects something of the street and movement pattern that one would expect in such a context.

2.52 Generally, development of an average 4-5 storeys would be appropriate here to create a sufficient scale of floorspace to promote the redevelopment of the site. The scale of buildings should generally step up from where it adjoins the smaller scale historic context – at the North Street / Edinburgh Road Car park area of the site, where redevelopment should be limited to a maximum of 3-4 storeys in order to better reflect the attractive historic character of North Street. Elsewhere, development of up to 6 storeys as a feature building would be acceptable in principle at the western end of the Somerset Road frontage to help create an entrance point to the town centre.

2.53 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

2.54 Should partial redevelopment or conversion of the existing centre be proposed, the Council will need to be assured that this would not prejudice the wider policy aspirations for this site.

Policy TC4 - Park Mall

The Park Mall site is allocated for a comprehensive mixed use redevelopment, anchored by retail uses and a limited number of residential units. The majority of this retail space will be for comparison shopping but convenience goods floorspace (indicative capacity 2,000 sq.m. net) should also be provided. Other supporting uses that may form part of a mixed use scheme include leisure and offices.

A masterplan for this large and complex site will need to be prepared and agreed with the Council, prior to the consideration of any detailed proposals for the site. Proposals will:

A) Provide a mix of uses at ground floor level and façade designs that make a major contributions towards animating streets and pedestrian routes that they front on to;

B) As a maximum, provide replacement car parking on site for that lost as part of the redevelopment, or otherwise contribute towards parking off-site in accordance with policy TC25;

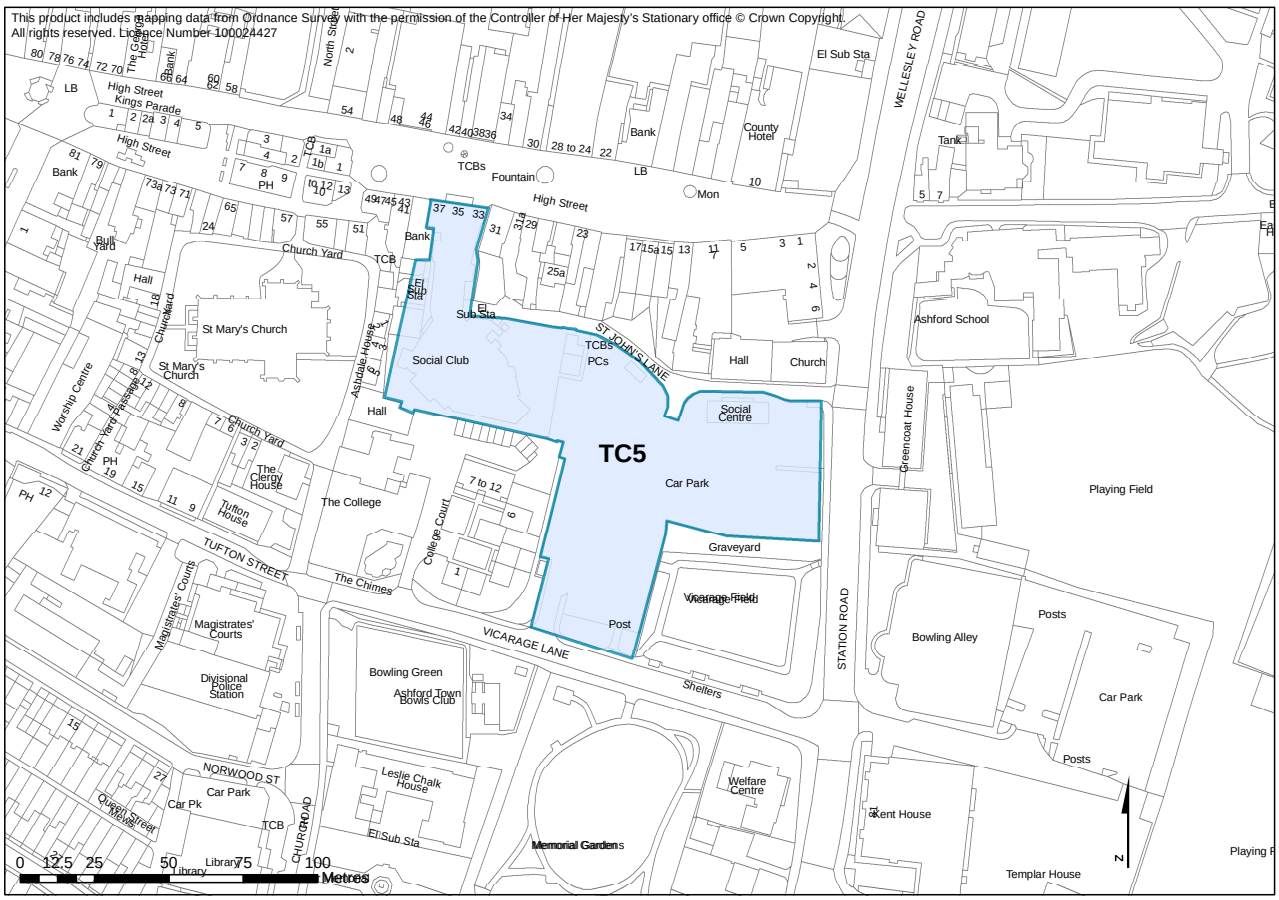
C) Investigate the potential to move the building line forward to front Somerset Road and create a significantly more attractive street frontage here in any event;

D) Provide an appropriate scale and massing of development that relates well to surrounding buildings but also helps to mark key entrances to the town centre;

E) Investigate the opportunity to comprehensively redevelop the existing Edinburgh Road car park; and

F) Improve the existing pedestrian movements into and through the site from the upper High Street, Park Street and Somerset Road using a carefully planned network of pedestrian friendly routes that helps to define building blocks of appropriate scale in this location.

Policy TC5: Vicarage Lane Car Park



This site is a key brownfield development site within the former ring road and is located within the Conservation area. It is bounded by Vicarage Lane, Vicarage Field, Station Road, St. John's Lane and properties fronting the lower High Street and St. Mary's churchyard.

2.55 Comprehensive redevelopment of this site is important so that a strong link can be made through the site of the Bingo Hall to the High Street (although it may be possible to achieve another link to the Lower High Street, this would be a weaker 'desire line' and less effective). Although the Bingo Hall is in active use, this building is unsympathetic to its Conservation Area location, because of its substantial bulk and mass and impact on important views of the Church. The current Bingo Hall use could be relatively easily re-located to an alternative town centre location.

2.56 Vicarage Lane Car Park is currently the town centre's principal surface car park and accommodates around 190 public car parking spaces, the Pop-Inn community facility and the public toilets. It is recognised that the car park is conveniently located, particularly for those with mobility problems and to serve town centre functions out of working hours.

2.57 Redevelopment of this site is consistent with the Parking Strategy for the town whereby public car parking within and served off the former ring road should generally be restricted and provided in more suitable locations. Only limited amounts of operational, on-site car parking will be allowed to serve the needs of the principal uses and residential properties, in accordance with the parking standards set out in the Parking Chapter of this Plan (policies TC22-24). Commuted payments will also be necessary, as stipulated in Policy TC25.

2.58 In accordance with the Parking Strategy, it is intended that new public car parking serving the town centre will be brought froward elsewhere and will act as a replacement for the existing public car parking on this site, in order for this site to be redeveloped.

2.59 However, if no new car parking has been brought forward to serve the town centre, including providing for the specific needs of those with mobility problems and to serve town centre functions out of working hours, proposals for the redevelopment of the public car parking element of this site should demonstrate that there is sufficient space capacity in the rest of the public parking stock centrally located to serve the town centre to enable the loss of the existing spaces at Vicarage Lane.

2.60 The redevelopment of this site must also make provision for the suitable replacement of the existing Pop-Inn community facility and the public toilets on site or elsewhere in the town centre, unless adequate alternative provision exists at the time.

2.61 A range of town centre uses would be appropriate for the redevelopment of this central site but given its location, a mixed scheme including retail, leisure, offices, residential and possibly community and cultural uses is proposed. An appropriate scheme should include a combination of some or all of these uses.

2.62 The redevelopment of this site is an important opportunity to give this area of the town centre a distinctive character and role, as a new attraction in the town centre to for visitors and residents alike.

2.63 Development should ‘stitch’ this site back into the urban fabric of the town, by promoting a smaller building block form which is sensitive to the historic setting of the church and the former cemetery both of which are listed. This building form should also establish a fine grained movement network of minor streets, similar to that which is apparent in much of the existing Conservation Area, and gives it so much of its attractive character. The relatively intimate scale of the surroundings make this a good location for a variation in the type of retail offer available in the town. More speciality shopping - moving away from the larger-scale format destinations of County Square and Park Mall – would be appropriate.

2.64 Significantly improving the existing pedestrian link to the High Street that is currently achieved through St John's Passage is critical. Although this existing route provides a direct link, it is narrow and unattractive. Additional connections, providing direct access onto the Lower High Street should also be explored, to help improve movement in this area.

2.65 The redevelopment or conversion of the Bingo Hall would create the opportunity for an important new pedestrian link into the north-eastern corner of the Churchyard.

2.66 The eastern boundary of this site fronts an important street - Station Road. It is at a lower level than the western end of the site, and development on the Station Road frontage should be between 4 to 5 storeys, to complement the enhanced role and scale of development envisaged along Station Road. Retail, food and drink or commercial uses, with an active street frontage, are required.

2.67 Elsewhere on this site, development should generally be limited to 3 or 4 storeys in height to protect the setting of the Church and the properties fronting the lower High Street, several of which are Listed, and the amenities of the residential occupiers in College Court.

2.68 It is important to seek to preserve or if possible, improve, key views of St Mary's church within the scheme design and a survey of views will be required with any proposal. More comprehensive redevelopment schemes that involve the relocation of the Bingo Hall should not seek to replicate the scale, height and bulk of the Bingo Hall and deliver a significantly improved set of views of the church. Proposals should also examine how

to create a small, informal space at a central point of the site where pedestrian routes converge with a view to the Church.

2.69 The emerging bus strategy for Ashford highlights that the existing bus stops along Vicarage Lane are likely to remain and as such will continue to generate higher levels of footfall. Development should fully harness this by promoting easy and attractive links into the site from Vicarage Lane.

2.70 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

POLICY TC5 - Vicarage Lane car park

The Vicarage Lane Site should be comprehensively redeveloped for a mix of uses to include residential, predominantly on the upper floors. Other uses should comprise retail and / or leisure uses, on the ground floor, alongside key pedestrian links through the site, with office development and / or community / culture uses.

Proposals will:

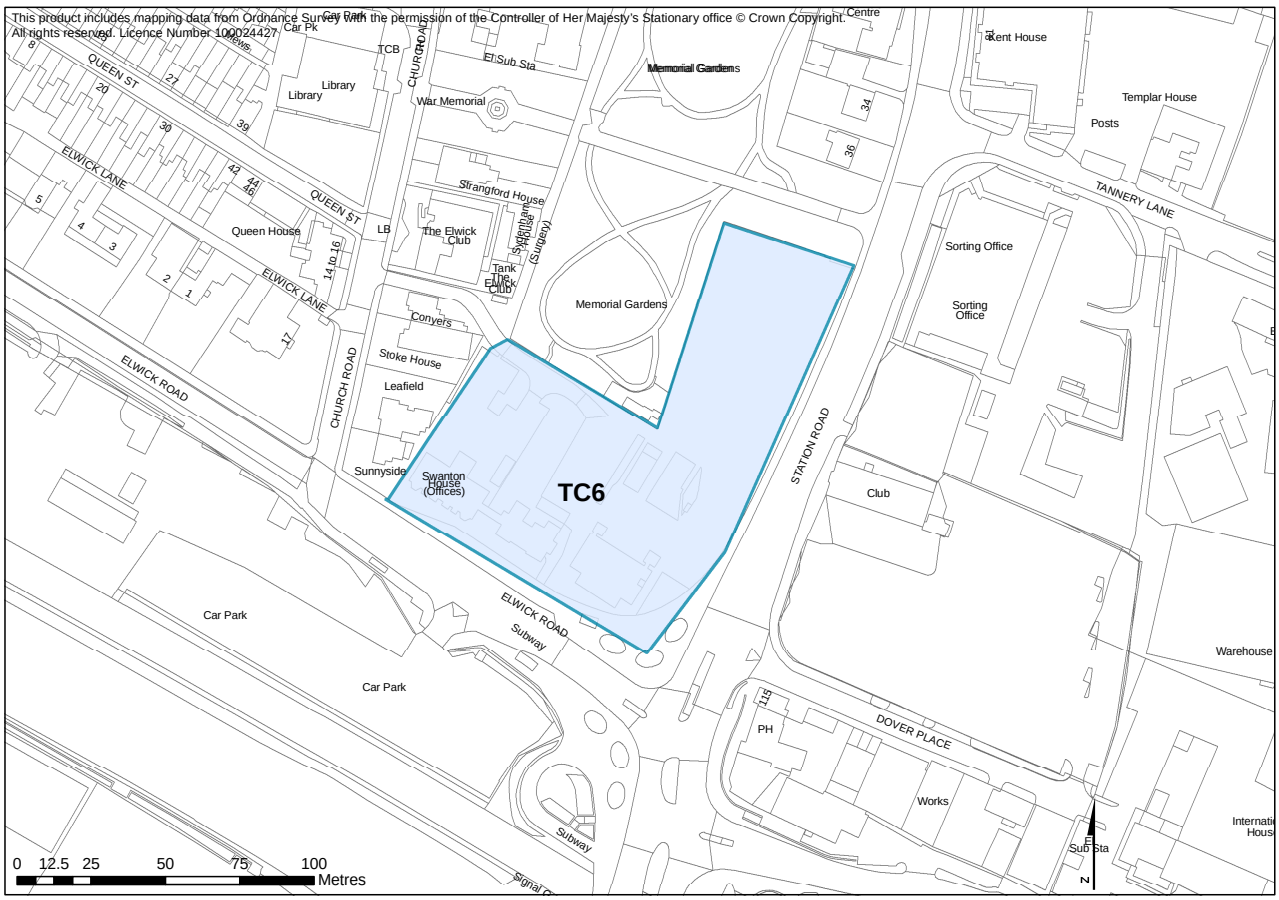
A) make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, including providing an appropriate building form and a fine grain network of streets/ paths that helps to connect and knit this site into the historic core - providing important new and enhanced links to the Lower High Street and the Churchyard;

B) provide a strong street frontage to Station Road with an attractive façade and active ground floor uses;

C) Provide alternative accommodation for the Pop-Inn Social Centre and public toilets, either on site or off site, in a suitable, accessible location, unless adequate alternative provision exists.

D) Need to demonstrate that there is sufficient spare capacity available in the public parking stock serving the town centre, or, that new public parking of the equivalent number of public spaces has already been provided to serve the town centre, such provision to include readily accessible parking out of working hours and for those with mobility problems.

SITE TC6: Corner of Elwick Road & Station Road



2.71 This site marks a very important entrance to the Town Centre from the railway stations and from the south. It is also prominent along Station Road and Elwick Road and is adjacent to the Memorial Gardens which is an attractive and well used enclave of public open space in the town centre. This site provides the transition between the stations and the heart of the town centre with the opportunity to open an attractive link through the gardens linking the two.

2.72 A variety of town centre uses would be appropriate for the redevelopment of this site. Some retail and/or leisure (food and drink) uses on the ground floor will concentrate and encourage movement through this area, harnessing its entrance location. Office uses could also be appropriate here, on the ground and upper floors, taking advantage of the site's close proximity to the stations and complementing the proposals for the Commercial Quarter on the opposite side of Station Road.

2.73 The Memorial Gardens provides an attractive opportunity for new residential development to overlook it and offer a sense of enclosure and supervision for the open space. On the corner, the vacant South Kent College building is of little merit and can be replaced by a building or buildings of a suitably high architectural standard on such a prominent site. A maximum of six storeys is suitable, to mark and help 'turn' this corner, but special care will be needed to relate in scale and proportion to the Swanton Villas and the Conservation Area.

2.74 The conversion of the former ring road here has left a significant area of public footway in front of this site which only serves to emphasise the visual dominance of the wide and busy road junction. Proposals for this site should investigate how building lines can be brought forwards towards the junction of Elwick Road and Station Road to create

a stronger building line and better sense of enclosure. The proposals will need to fund suitable works of high quality to the remaining public realm to provide an enhanced setting for this development.

2.75 There is a significant change in levels between the site and the public footway along the Station Road frontage reflected at present by a large retaining wall. Given its important transitional location, it is a key aspiration for the redevelopment of this site to create an active street level frontage along Station Road. The removal of the retaining wall is therefore encouraged, to enable active ground floor uses along this key street. Some breaks in this frontage may be acceptable to access development on the higher levels.

2.76 Development of up to five storeys along the Station Road frontage is considered acceptable, in order to complement the proposed building form and scale encouraged elsewhere along this street. Development fronting Memorial Gardens should be of a smaller scale to better reflect the more sensitive nature of the Gardens with 3 to 4 storeys here considered acceptable in principle.

2.77 The Swanton Villas, which currently lie on the Elwick Road frontage of this site, are buildings of distinctive local character which add positively to the character of the Conservation Area. The presumption, therefore, is that these buildings should be retained as part of any redevelopment proposals. These buildings are of most value in terms of their elevation to Elwick Road and the proportions and spacing of the building blocks in relation to other properties on Elwick Road. There may be opportunities to substantially re-model the rear of these properties as part of a comprehensive redevelopment of the area to create a high quality development embracing the Memorial Gardens.

2.78 Whilst not included in this site policy, the other properties on Station Road that back on to the Memorial Gardens contain existing uses but could also come forward for redevelopment. If this happens, proposals would need to be in keeping with the policy approach set out in this policy and elsewhere in this Plan for Station Road and the Memorial Gardens behind.

2.79 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

POLICY TC6 - Corner of Elwick Road & Station Road

The site is allocated for a mix of uses, which should include predominantly office development but with a focus on retail and/or leisure uses at ground floor level fronting Station Road. Community/ cultural or educational use may also be appropriate as part of the overall mix. Residential development is proposed around Memorial Gardens. Proposals will:

A) Provide active retail / leisure and/ or commercial uses along the Station Road ground floor frontage;

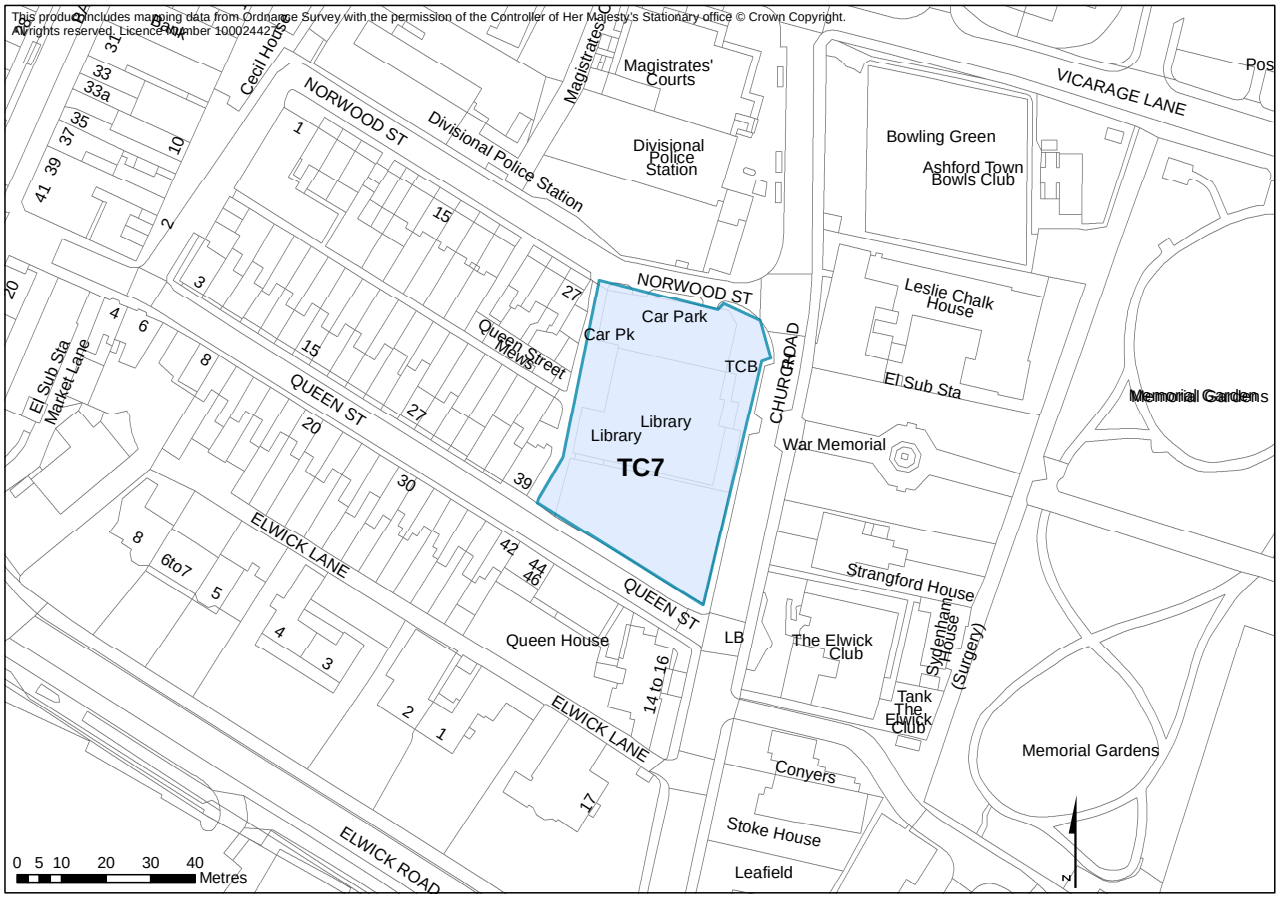
B) Respect and enhance Memorial Gardens through careful integration of the new built form, and creating an attractive sense of enclosure to the Gardens;

C) Create an especially high quality building on the corner of Elwick Road and Station Road which marks this important entrance to the town and helps create a more formal street pattern by moving the building line forwards to front the streets and improve the public realm at the junction;

D) Seek to retain the existing Swanton Villa buildings; and,

E) Create a safe and attractive secondary pedestrian route between Station Road and Church Road/ Vicarage Lane through the site.

Policy TC7 - Ashford Library



2.80 This site lies within the Town Centre Conservation Area. It stands in a relatively prominent position facing onto Church Road and the main entrance and route through the Memorial Gardens. This is a focal point for pedestrians and the site closes views from the central area of the Gardens. Queen Street, to the south of the site, is a residential street and provides direct access into lower Bank Street and the extended County Square shopping centre.

2.81 The current library is an important local resource for the community. As part of the County Council's commitment to enhancing community services within the growth area, it is proposed to deliver a 'Gateway Plus' scheme, redeveloping the current library, on the site and relocating the existing Gateway facility from Park Mall. It is therefore likely that Kent County Council will be the determining planning authority for this scheme. However, this policy sets out what the Borough Council would wish to see incorporated within any scheme coming forward here.

2.82 The 'Gateway Plus' facility is intended to provide approximately 2,500 sqm of community and educational use, including adult education adult social services, registrar office and one-stop 'Gateway' facilities. These facilities are a very important part of the community offer in the town and will help to complement the proposed Learning Campus, situated along Victoria Road (see policy TC11).

2.83 On this site, development of up to four storeys, fronting Church Road, Queen Street and Norwood Street is acceptable in principle. Development needs to reflect the existing built form of Queen Street and Norwood Street to help create a sense of continuity. The design of the ground floor of the building – especially the Church Road frontage - needs to create interest in terms of entrances, views into the building and careful articulation of the façade.

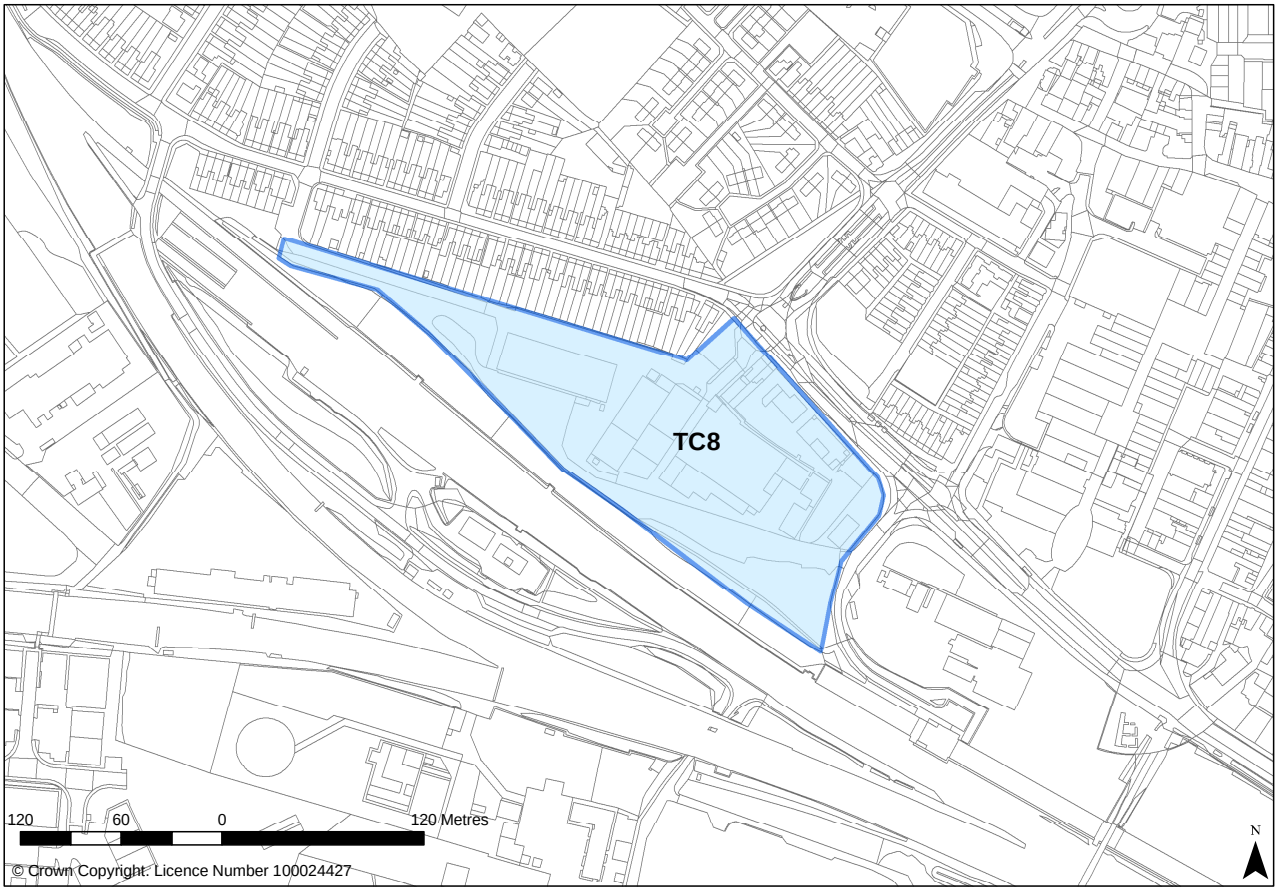
2.84 The design of the development should help to frame the view of St Mary's Church that opens up from Church Road. A high standard of design is particularly important for this development given its status as a key community building. The architecture and materials proposed should also respect the character and setting of the Conservation Area. Particular attention should be paid to the Queen Street facade given the uniformity and character of the streetscape there.

2.85 The existing library building contains interesting and distinctive examples of public art on its exterior which should be retained and re-integrated within the proposal or relocated elsewhere within the town centre. The design of the public realm around the Gateway Plus building will also be important in ensuring a pedestrian friendly feel to the area – the creation of a pedestrian friendly link across Church Road (a 'table top' or other suitable approach) to Memorial Gardens is especially important.

Policy TC7 - Ashford Library

This site is proposed for community and educational uses. Development here should provide a strong and positive development frontage to Church Road, Queen Street & Norwood Street, through high quality design and associated public realm improvements. The height of the development should not exceed 4 storeys. Where possible, active daytime uses should be provided on the ground floor frontages.

Policy TC8 – Former Godinton Way Industrial Estate



2.86 This site lies in the western part of the town centre. It is bounded to the north and west by terraced residential properties fronting Godinton Road, and the railway line to the south. To the east lies the Elwick Place site (see Policy TC3). The current industrial estate is largely vacant – the Council will support efforts to re-locate any remaining uses to suitable sites elsewhere in the town.

2.87 The location of the site, adjacent to a largely residential area and somewhat detached from the main shopping areas of the town centre (and their associated footfall), suggest that residential development would be most appropriate here. With careful layout planning an attractive addition to the existing residential area can be created with a good sense of place. Given the character of the adjacent residential properties, there is an opportunity to incorporate town-houses within any residential scheme coming forward here. This will help to provide a variety of residential accommodation in the town centre to counterbalance the likely predominance of flats on other allocated sites.

2.88 Any development on this site will need to avoid a damaging impact on the amenities of the occupiers of the existing dwellings in Godinton Road – the ambition must be to improve the overall quality of life in the area by creating a consolidated and well planned neighbourhood.

2.89 This is likely to result in the need for smaller scale buildings to be developed close to the boundaries of these properties. Development will also need to take account of the adjoining railway lines and, in particular, any noise or vibration. It will also be important for development on this site to be successfully integrated in terms of design and scale and access with the proposed Elwick Place redevelopment.

2.90 Currently it is not assumed that either the adjacent Godinton House commercial development or the buildings housing the Enterprise Car business will be available for redevelopment. However, the Council would encourage the redevelopment of these buildings or their refurbishment as part of a comprehensive redevelopment package for this area. Residential development would again be appropriate although on the Godinton Road frontage, non-residential uses such as local shops and services would be appropriate on the ground floor. In addition, office development on this frontage, as part of a residential led scheme would also be supported in principle. Should the inclusion of this area not be possible, any development proposals for the remainder of the site will need to show how the two areas can be developed in a compatible way through presenting a masterplan for the site as a whole.

2.91 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

2.92 Given its location, served by West Street and Elwick Road – both streets with shared space layouts and limited traffic capacities - any uses that would generate significant amounts of additional traffic to the site would not be appropriate. For example, major food or other car based retail uses are not considered appropriate for this site.

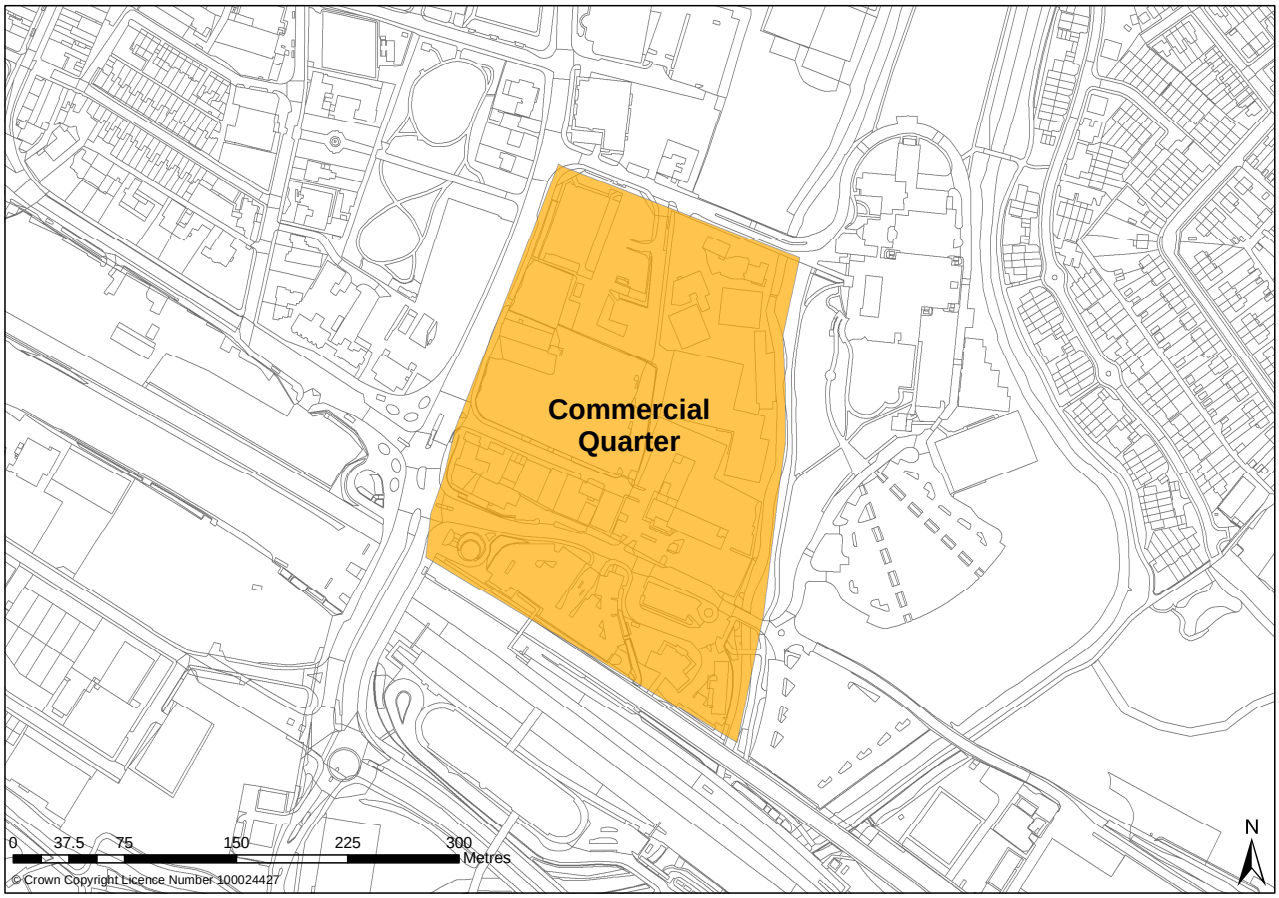
POLICY TC8 – Former Godinton Way Industrial Estate

The former Godinton Way Industrial Estate site is allocated for residential development. This should include the provision of a range of accommodation including a significant proportion of town-houses or other non-flatted residential development.

Proposals will need to show that they will not create any significant adverse impact on the residential amenity of occupiers of properties in Godinton Road.

Should the whole of the site not come forward for development, a comprehensive masterplan will be needed which shows how development can take place in phases without prejudicing an overall scheme for the site. Development coming forward on the Godinton Road frontage should seek to promote active ground floor uses.

The Commercial Quarter



Vision

2.93 The dynamic new main business sector of the town, stimulating major investment opportunities in new large scale office space that exploit the excellent strategic rail links. A lively new Station Square presents a welcoming and contemporary face to those arriving in Ashford. Robust and high quality, hard and soft landscaping around key routes through the site, with convenience uses, eating and drinking places located to help bring life to key routes. Imposing architecture and building forms create a strong sense of identity for the Quarter, with heights stepping down to the scale of Station Road and the riverside boundaries.

Current Context

2.94 This Quarter is a highly accessible location, including the domestic station with the International Station adjacent. This area offers development opportunities. Apart from a large 11 storey office block, International House, located opposite the domestic station entrance, the Quarter has a limited amount of existing commercial activity focused primarily on the Royal Mail sorting office and the Kent Woolgrowers business. The rest of the area is characterised by a large car park and small scale, low density,mainly light industrial employment uses.

2.95 The Quarter lacks any real cohesion and formal character. The area around the domestic station provides a poor first impression at this key gateway into the town. It is dominated

by traffic movements and fails to provide either a positive sense of arrival, or clear, legible links between the station and the rest of the town centre .[29]

2.96 However the Quarter does include 2 listed buildings (including the Grade II* Whist House) and a small number of locally historic buildings along Dover Place. The river frontage also adds to the potential character of the area although it is currently an underused asset.

Future Role

2.97 Given its location next to the domestic station and its relative lack of constraints to development, the principal objective for this Quarter is to provide the new centre for office employment that will help to drive the Ashford economy and meet a major part of the growth area aspirations for new jobs. [30] Central to achieving this objective is maximising the opportunities created by the commencement of high-speed domestic rail services from Ashford to central London in 2009.

2.98 The opportunity exists to cluster high quality, office development to create a 'commercial hub' for the town centre. A large quantity of floorspace is envisaged – enough to mark this area as a new office investment location in its own right with sufficient critical mass for occupiers to benefit from each others presence. Clearly, development will be phased over a lengthy period and the pace of development will be largely dictated by the market. Hence, it is important that the quarter is properly masterplanned from the start to ensure that the area is redeveloped in an effective and efficient manner.

2.99 Many of the uses currently located within the Quarter do not require a town centre location and in fact, may benefit from being relocated to a more appropriate location elsewhere in the town. To this end, SEEDA has been acquiring land in this Quarter (and elsewhere in the town) to facilitate the relocation of some of the current occupants.

2.100 Complementary town centre uses would also be appropriate in this Quarter, providing they are supplementary to and supportive of the main objective of delivering substantial new commercial floorspace here. This Quarter is considered to be a secondary location for retail uses, as it is removed from the main retail areas in the Town Centre Core. However, small scale retail uses, particularly in the restaurant, bar and food & drink sectors which could serve the needs of employees in this Quarter and the town centre's residential population, would be considered appropriate.

2.101 This Quarter could also accommodate new residential development to complement the main office use and encourage some activity outside office hours. The river frontage and the Station Road frontage above ground floor level are suitable locations for residential development in this Quarter. Providing a positive relationship between the residential units, especially if townhouses were promoted along the river front, with the bulkier and taller office buildings in the rest of the Quarter will be a significant design challenge and one that the masterplan will need to specifically address.

2.102 There is some potential for new development here to be densely developed and taller than in other Quarters in the town centre. Development fronting Station Road should average 5-6 storeys. On the riverside, 2-4 storeys is likely to be the appropriate range. In particular, the setting of Whist House should be respected and improved. An proposal for Whist House that will bring it back into active use will be encouraged.

2.103 Towards the centre of this Quarter, and facing onto the Station Square, taller buildings would be easier to accommodate – in the order of the height of International House but not exceeding it. A grouping of taller buildings here helps to mark this key transport

29 Public Realm Strategy, 2009
30 Town Centre Development Framework, 2005

hub and the most sustainable location for new employment space in the town. It is also helpful that this is one of the lowest lying areas of the town.

2.104 It is important for designers to show how the scale and massing of buildings reflect the topography of the Quarter and create a variety in both roofscape and streetscape. The layout of the Quarter should promote a network of pedestrian routes. These should be secondary in nature to the main pedestrian thoroughfares which should remain along the Station Approach and Station Road. These routes must provide interest and character – being animated by local amenities such as small shops, cafes or bars and public art. A small central public space within the Quarter would enable a local focal point to be created. A new pedestrian route along the west bank of the river corridor should be provided and a bridge linking the site to South Park and the Stour Leisure Centre will be required.

2.105 Improving the sense of arrival around the domestic station, alongside public realm improvements in the rest of the Quarter (including the Beaver Bridge junction) is vital to ensuring its success. The Public Realm Strategy has highlighted the need for a significant improvement to the design and legibility of the area outside the station buildings and a long term improvement scheme will be agreed. This could include a well designed and functional piece of shared space outside the domestic station entrance, including a 'plaza'. Contributions will be sought from development in this Quarter to an agreed package of public realm improvements in line with Core Strategy policy CS8 and Town Centre Design SPD.

2.106 Given the fundamental importance of delivering significant amounts of new development in this Quarter, development coming forward here must make the best use of land. A comprehensive masterplan for the Quarter will need to be established, working with SEEDA and other landowners, and agreed by the Borough Council. The masterplan will establish the template for development proposals coming forward in the Quarter and in turn, they will need to demonstrate that they achieve an appropriate level of development, in terms of scale, massing, quantum, density and mix of uses so as not to prejudice the aims for the Quarter. A detailed height and massing study will be required. The phased redevelopment of this Quarter will also need to clearly demonstrate that it would result in the successful delivery of the public realm improvements to help establish a strong and positive local character as early as possible.

2.107 Car parking for the significant amounts of office development proposed here should be provided in accordance with policies TC22 - TC25. Opportunities for shared parking facilities between different uses within the Quarter should be fully explored as part of the comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of this Quarter.

2.108 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

2.109 Some of the eastern part of this Quarter lies within Flood Zones 2 & 3. Development proposals in these areas should seek to mitigate the potential flood impact both on and off-site in accordance with policy CS19 of the adopted Core Strategy.

Policy TC9 - The Commercial Quarter

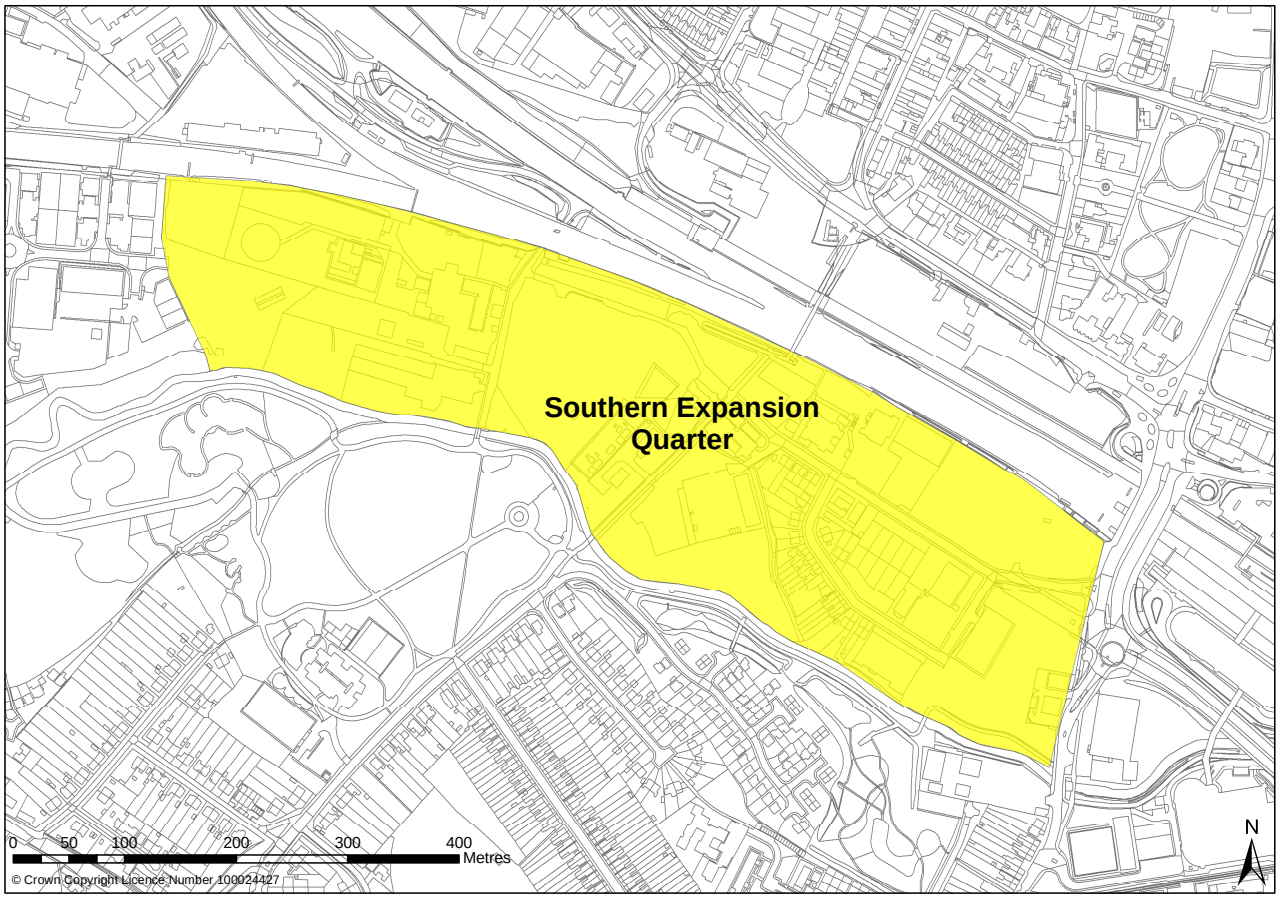
The Commercial Quarter is proposed to play a leading job creation role for the town centre, predominantly from new office development (indicative capacity 55,000 sqm). Other uses, such as small scale retail and/ or leisure uses (indicative capacity 2,500sqm), alongside residential (indicative capacity 150 units) and community-related development, would also be appropriate in this Quarter, providing they complement the objective to deliver the substantial commercial space envisaged here.

The Quarter should be planned comprehensively and a master-plan for the Quarter including public realm improvements outside the station entrance, shall be agreed with the Borough Council prior to consideration of individual schemes. These will need to demonstrate that they would not prejudice the ability to deliver the indicative quantum of office development.

Development in this Quarter should generally be an average of 5-6 storeys above ground level. In certain locations within the Quarter, development in the order of 10 storeys may be justified. The layout of the Quarter shall enable the creation of pedestrian routes through the area in line with the principles established in the Public Realm Strategy and Town Centre Design SPD.

Development in this Quarter should also help to facilitate and contribute towards the delivery of proposed public realm improvements around the domestic station approach and along Station Road.

Southern Expansion Quarter



Vision

2.110 A Quarter with a dense urban form and varied mix of uses at street level but which is a primarily residential area enjoying easy access to the rest of the town centre, the stations and the riverside parks. 'Victoria Way' is a lively, high quality street forming the backbone to the urban structure of this whole quarter and serves as a key movement corridor relieving vehicular traffic pressure on the town centre core. Victoria Way is at the heart of an exciting, bustling and contemporary new addition to the town centre. Where the Learning Link crosses Victoria Way, a new meeting place – Victoria Square- is created for pedestrians moving to and from the town centre core. The Learning Campus brings more activity and a cosmopolitan feel to what is an exciting part of the town – eating and drinking places spring up to serve students, workers and residents. The old and the new are juxtaposed with contemporary urban architecture sitting alongside pockets of traditional built form.

Current Context

2.111 This Quarter lies to the south of the railway lines and west of Beaver Road. At present, the area is somewhat detached from the main core of the town centre due to lack of access to it, and activity is based around the Victoria Road cul-de-sac. The river, running to the south, also serves to detach this area from residential neighbourhoods of South Ashford.

2.112 The existing character within the Quarter is highly varied. It contains some older commercial activities alongside large, vacant brownfield sites. There is a small residential community and a popular primary school which lies at the western end of Victoria Road.

A few of the existing buildings are of historic interest. The Quarter's southern edge is marked by the river Great Stour and just beyond that is Victoria Park and attractive riverside cycle and footways along the green corridor to the west and east. The pedestrian / cycleway route that passes over the railway lines to Elwick Road is a key link between large residential areas of southern Ashford and the town centre but is unattractive to use, particularly at night.

2.113 The Quarter suffers from poor public realm with no clear points of reference and limited pedestrian activity away from the main north/ south route. There are also various constraints to development affecting different parts of the quarter, including contamination, flooding and the presence of overhead cables and the electricity sub-stations.

Future role

2.114 The redevelopment of this Quarter into a vibrant, dense, mixed use neighbourhood which is well connected to its surrounding area is a vital objective in achieving the growth and the transformation of the town centre.

2.115 This Quarter represents an unusual opportunity for substantial regeneration and redevelopment very close to the centre of gravity of the town and the stations. Much of the area is brownfield land and where commercial sites are currently occupied, it is likely that these uses could be readily relocated elsewhere in the town on more appropriate sites. The Council and its partners will continue to work to help assist relocation where this is necessary.

2.116 Over time this is an area that will change rapidly and this will inevitably impact on existing residents. The speed of this change will largely be determined by the market and as land values rise existing land and property will be assembled for redevelopment. During this transition period the Council and its partners will work to try to minimise disruption to local residents' lifestyles.

2.117 It is not currently the Council's intention to bring about the redevelopment of the existing residential properties using CPO powers. Should the property market bring forward a suitable redevelopment proposal that includes some or all of these properties, then the Council would not seek to frustrate that development, subject to it meeting the policy requirements of this AAP and other relevant parts of the LDF.

Victoria Way

2.118 The key to successfully enabling the regeneration of this Quarter is the delivery of Victoria Way, which is a key piece of strategic transport infrastructure in the town centre, identified in the Core Strategy. This will create a new link from Beaver Road in the east to Brookfield Road in the west by creating a connection through this Quarter from Victoria Road to Leacon Road. This link will enable and stimulate development here whilst also playing a wider traffic role, allowing through-traffic to avoid the streets that comprised the former ring road.

2.119 The Key Diagram in the adopted Core Strategy suggests that Victoria Way would also subsequently pass northwards over the Ashford - Tonbridge railway line and through the Cobbs Wood Industrial Estate. More recent traffic modelling has now shown that this part of the route, which would be relatively complex in engineering terms because of the rail crossing and hence costly to implement, is not necessary in transportation capacity terms even within the lifetime of the Sustainable Communities Plan (2031). Without this crossing the Gasworks Lane site (see Policy TC14) can be redeveloped in a more comprehensive way.

2.120 Victoria Way will be delivered in phases. Kent County Council has recently obtained planning permission for phase 1, running from Beaver Road to Leacon Road. However,

the wider objective for Victoria Way is to provide a high quality urban boulevard and not just a traffic distributor, consistent with the aims set out initially in the Town Centre Development Framework and now in the Public Realm Strategy. The route corridor must therefore have sufficient width to create a 'street' with good facilities for pedestrians and cyclists as well as traffic, an attractive streetscape and a high quality of public realm, appropriate to a significant new town centre street serving a series of major development areas. It is anticipated that the full street width between building frontages will be adopted as the public highway. However, if ground floor building frontages were to be set back further (with balconies above, for example), then the additional part of the 'street' need not be adopted and could form an area of 'private' space that may contribute to a commercial activity along the street, e.g a café 'sitting out' area.

2.121 The full implementation of Victoria Way will take some years and will need to be funded in part by development contributions and / or site works from sites along its length. A clear specification for the eventual high quality treatment of the whole route will be set out in a Town Centre Design SPD and parts of phase 1 will be built to this standard (e.g. around Victoria Square). Elsewhere a more standard finish will be applied initially to the public realm along the route and when development occurs this will need to fund the upgrading to the full specification. To avoid a piecemeal approach that may result in variations in quality and in order to reduce overall costs, it may be necessary to assemble site contributions into a 'pool' so that a reasonable stretch of the road corridor can be improved at one time.

2.122 Victoria Way will play a critical role in attracting high quality development to the Southern Expansion Quarter. A centrally aligned route, as proposed, helps to realise the potential of reasonably large development footprints on either side of the route. These development blocks should create a strong, positive development front to the street. Complemented by active ground floor frontages, and high quality public realm, a vibrant, busy street can be created.

2.123 Delivering the optimum wider alignment for this street will require the eventual loss of the terrace of residential properties that lie opposite Victoria Road school. These properties may come forward for redevelopment in due course, but if this is not the case, the Borough Council understands that the Highway Authority would pursue any Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire the necessary land.

2.124 Victoria Way is also proposed to serve a new multi-storey car park (see policy TC12). This important piece of infrastructure forms part of the Ashford Parking Strategy and represents one of the three multi-storey car parks needed to serve the expanded town centre in policy CS15 of the Core Strategy. Provision of 500 public spaces here will help to serve development in this Quarter and in the Town Centre Core without attracting significant additional traffic movements onto the former ring road [31].

The Learning Link

2.125 At the centre of the Southern Expansion Quarter lies the major north-south pedestrian / cycleway route which links the residential areas of South Ashford and Victoria Park with the town centre core via the footbridge over the railway lines. This route is termed the 'Learning Link' due to its proximity to several schools (and now the proposed Learning Campus) and runs as far south as Stanhope and the edge of the town. The Learning Link Corridor is identified as one of the town's strategic transport improvements for pedestrians and cyclists in the adopted Core Strategy.

2.126 The existing pedestrian bridge over the railway is functionally adequate but is not of the quality needed to tempt people to cross it. If the expanded town centre is to work well, and the impact of the railway corridor be reduced, the Council and its partners share the view that a better replacement crossing is needed that provides greater space

31 Ashford Parking Strategy, 2006

and capacity and has an appealing design for users and creates a positive, lasting impression. The bridge is the direct link between two important new public spaces – Elwick Square and Victoria Square and needs to be of comparable design standard. Work is underway to identify potential design and funding solutions. The bridge is of such importance to the public realm in the town centre that contributions may be sought towards its costs through the proposed public realm tariff as set out in Core Strategy policy CS8. The bridge will also act as the key pedestrian link between the proposed multi-storey car park at Victoria Way and the main retail and leisure areas north of the railway lines.

2.127 Addressing the change in levels between Victoria Square (see below) and the new footbridge is a major challenge. The current ramped arrangement is unsatisfactory and difficult for people with impaired mobility. A variety of different engineering solutions may be possible including a sloping ramp, terraced plaza, or escalator combined with the inclusion of lifts. Development adjacent to this area must help deliver a high quality solution that meets the visual and functional requirements.

2.128 The design of any terraced section of the Learning Link leading between Victoria Square and the footbridge will need to be of an exceptionally high quality. Whilst the treatment of this change in levels requires a complicated engineering solution it must ensure the delivery of a high quality public realm with sufficient width and space to be genuinely attractive to users. A carefully integrated approach between the built form, terraced level changes, adjoining uses, high quality landscaping, street furniture, public art and high quality materials will be critical to achieving a high quality solution. Along the length of the Learning Link through this Quarter, development proposals will need to ensure that this key route is fronted by a built form which provides good levels of activity, natural surveillance and active frontages.

Victoria Square

2.129 The intersection of Victoria Way and the Learning Link corridors will be the focal point for the Southern Expansion Quarter. It is here that much of the activity and pedestrian footfall in this area will pass through and therefore, the creation of a new civic space, Victoria Square, should be situated at this point.

2.130 Victoria Square will play an important role in setting the future character of this Quarter and as such, should be designed with high quality materials and create a safe and interesting place for people to congregate and pass through.

2.131 Development proposals adjacent to the 'Square' should, by their uses and designs, complement the role of this public space as a vibrant, active place. In this location, the potential for, retail, community and office uses should be maximised, although some residential development on upper floors would also be acceptable to create some natural surveillance of the area.

2.132 The scale, design, form, massing and appearance of any buildings surrounding the square should be coordinated in a holistic way and reflect the importance and character of the space, at what will become a busy and interesting node. A scale of up to 6 storeys is encouraged, with a corner feature possible on the north-west corner of the square, to reflect the significance of this intersection, as well as defining the nodal point as a key link into the town centre.

2.133 An agreed design brief will need to be formulated to define the built form in the area around Victoria Square before any detailed proposals are considered. This will need to follow the design principles for the character of this space, the relationship to the built form and quality of materials envisaged,to be established in the Town Centre Design SPD and proposals for the sites adjoining Victoria Square will need to demonstrate they are in full accordance with the design principles established.

2.134 Several key sites in this Quarter have already received planning permission. The proposed Learning Campus, at the eastern end of Victoria Way provides up to 20,845 sq. m of educational use and was granted planning permission in 2008. The Campus is central to delivering the economic agenda for Ashford, helping to provide a wider skills base locally, especially in the younger adult population.

2.135 Opposite the Learning Campus site on the southern side of Victoria Way, land between the road and the river has been granted outline permission for 261 residential units, housed in a 5-6 storey development fronting Victoria Way and Beaver Road. This scheme also includes complementary commercial development at the ground floor level. These two sites create a key gateway into Victoria Way and the first steps to the redevelopment of the area.

2.136 Also in this Quarter is the site granted planning permission in 2008 on appeal to Zed Homes for 1,002 residential units, a foodstore and accompanying retail space, commercial floorspace and a public car park. The Council accepts that this scheme may be implemented although its preference for this location would be for a smaller scheme without taller buildings.

2.137 The principal use to be accommodated in this Quarter is residential development. This will help to underpin the role of the Quarter as a transition from the large residential area of south Ashford to the traditional commercial/retail heart of the town. With open spaces along the riverside being so close, there are opportunities to provide a range of homes from apartment blocks to town houses.

2.138 However, other town centre uses will also be acceptable in this Quarter. From Victoria square eastwards, given the relative proximity to the station and the Town Centre Core, a greater proportion of commercial development would be appropriate. Complementary small scale retail uses, including eating and drinking places at street level, would provide a vibrant mix of uses. A range of cultural, leisure or community uses would also be encouraged, to complement the proposed Learning Campus development. These types of uses would play an important role in attracting students to the Campus, and widening the appeal of the area as a destination in its own right.

2.139 The western half of the Quarter may play a slightly different role. Here, it is envisaged that development will be largely residential, taking advantage of the potential for views over the river, access to its banks and Victoria Park to the south. More detailed guidance on development in different parts of this Quarter can be found in policies TC11-14.

2.140 Large parts of the Western and Southern parts of this Quarter lie within Flood Zones 2 & 3. Development proposals in these areas will be required to mitigate the potential flood impact both on and off-site in accordance with policy CS19 of the adopted Core Strategy.

2.141 These flooding constraints mean that the ground floor of the development at street level, and Victoria Way itself are likely to be above surrounding ground levels. The design of the buildings coming forward on these sites, must ensure a seamless link with the street level, in order to avoid a change in levels which can result in dead frontage, unattractive grills, void spaces, awkward steps or ramped level changes. The design must also ensure occupier safety and means of escape in the event of a flood.

Policy TC10 - The Southern Expansion Quarter

The Southern Expansion Quarter should accommodate a large amount of new development with the primary focus on residential development, the proposed Learning Campus and a 500 space multi-storey car park all served by the new Victoria Way. Also within this Quarter, limited retail, leisure, commercial and community-related uses would be acceptable in principle.

Redevelopment proposals in this Quarter must enable the delivery of the vision for Victoria way as an urban boulevard. All proposals must demonstrate that they will produce a well proportioned street based on the relationship between building heights and street width. East of Gasworks Lane, redevelopment proposals shall ensure the delivery of a street 24 meters wide between building frontages. To the west of Gasworks Lane, redevelopment proposals shall ensure that the width of the street shall be based on the scale of building heights proposed along either side of the street.

Developments fronting Victoria Way will be required to deliver a finished quality of public realm to the quality set in the Town Centre Design SPD. This may involve improvements to the first stage construction standard of this space.

A new public urban space (Victoria Square) will be created at the intersection of the Learning Link route and Victoria Way in line with the Public Realm Strategy. Developments that would front or surround Victoria Square and/or the Learning Link will need to show how they complement their roles in terms of their use, scale and design. A design brief for this area will need to be agreed by the Council before detailed proposals are considered.

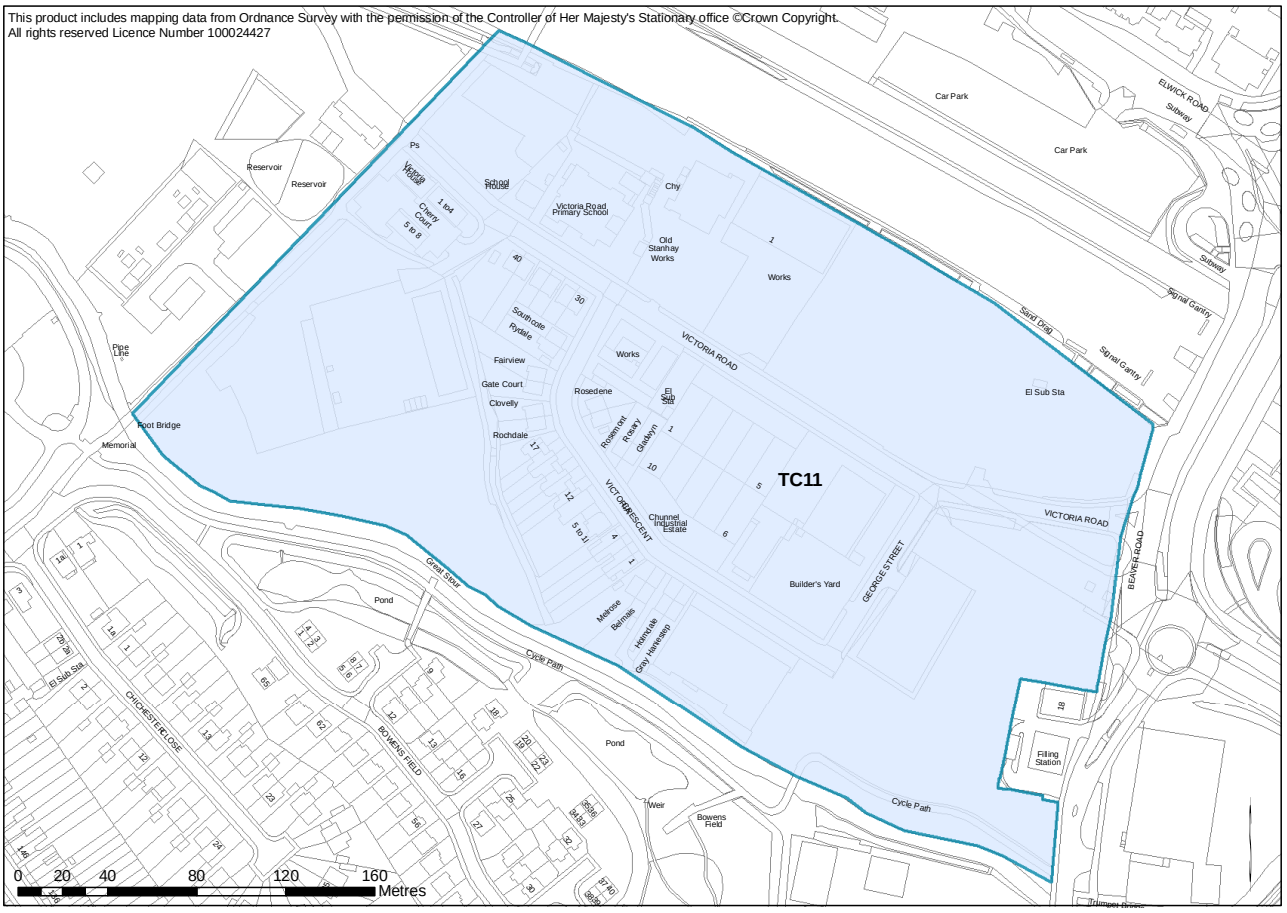
A replacement footbridge / cycleway shall be delivered to provide a improved crossing of the railway lines and link between Victoria Square and Elwick Square.

Development adjacent to the footbridge / cycleway must demonstrate how it will respond to the change of levels between Victoria Square and the footbridge in a way that assists in the delivery of a high quality public realm along any resultant ramped, terraced or stepped solution.

All proposals in this Quarter will need to demonstrate that they will create an attractive urban neighbourhood set in high quality public realm, based around Victoria Way and pleasant and easy access to the town centre core and the riverside open spaces. In doing this, proposals will need to respect the relationship with existing residential properties in this Quarter, the riverside landscape and its ecology and the Victoria Road primary school.

Southern Expansion Quarter Site Specific Policies

Policy TC11 –Victoria Way East



2.142 This policy relates to the area of land between Beaver Road in the east and the proposed Victoria Square and Learning Link in the west.

2.143 This area currently contains a mix of existing residential, commercial / industrial properties, a school and vacant brownfield sites. At the eastern end of this site, planning permission already exists for the proposed Learning Campus on the northern side of Victoria Way and residential-led development on the southern side of Victoria Way.

2.144 The Campus is a key project to address the skills deficit in the town, [32] and create an educational base in the town centre. If the Learning Campus does not proceed, this part of the site should be retained in any event for these uses unless and until adequate alternative provision has been made elsewhere in the town.

2.145 **Development on the land south of Victoria Way** should be a mix of office, residential or educational uses. Whilst Victoria Way will not become a significant shopping street in the timescale of this plan, some small scale retail uses on the ground floor frontage are needed. In order to provide flexibility in the uses at ground floor, internal heights should be a minimum of 4 metres. It is expected that development here should be generally between 4-6 storeys fronting the highway, with the scale and density of development gradually reducing towards the river corridor to the south.

2.146 Alongside the river corridor here, residential development should consist of town houses and apartments of 3-4 storeys to provide a varied mix of residential dwelling types in this Quarter. Should it prove viable in the future, a significant cultural, community or leisure facility would also be encouraged in this area towards the western edge of the site where it can benefit from excellent pedestrian links to the town centre core and a riverside aspect. New or enhanced pedestrian/ cycle links along the river should be provided, building on and extending the existing network. The riverbanks should also be enhanced for biodiversity.

2.147 Riverside development will need to be designed to help improve access and surveillance along this corridor but development should also ensure a soft green buffer to the development is provided which supports improved levels of biodiversity. The Environment Agency's byelaw restrictions regarding building near to river banks will need to be applied to layouts.

2.148 Through the careful orientation of streets and blocks, there is an opportunity to retain key views northwards towards the town centre core and St Mary's church spire and southwards to the river corridor. This is an important objective as it will help pedestrian movement and connectivity, improve 'legibility' and hence help strengthen the sense of place.

2.149 Victoria Way will be an avenue with a strong linear character and sense of enclosure. Complementing this, it is essential that development fronting Victoria Way provides active street frontages at ground floor level and that the sense of enclosure and continuity of built form is maintained in connecting streets.

2.150 A comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of this site will be preferred but the Council recognises that planning permissions for redevelopment of some of the site has already been granted and the presence of existing occupiers and multiple land ownerships may require a more piecemeal approach to be taken. Development coming forward will have to be in keeping with an overall masterplan for the area based on a clear network and hierarchy of routes. Development will also need to respect the amenities of existing residential occupiers in the area.

2.151 The existing large 3 storey Silcock building in Victoria Crescent provides an opportunity to provide some diversity and local history in the streetscene of this part of the Quarter. The form of this building is potentially suitable for conversion to residential units and its retention is encouraged. Any proposal to replace it will need to demonstrate that its replacement is needed, offers better visual quality and more greatly enhances the area.

2.152 **On the northern side of Victoria Way**, it may be possible to deliver a larger footplate for developments, consistent with the approach taken at the Learning Campus. A similar mix of residential and commercial uses as on the southern side of the street would be acceptable here, as would additional education use.

2.153 Developments here should also be generally between 4-6 storeys in height fronting the highway. Development should also provide a positively designed frontage to the railway as this is a key entrance to the town centre. A uniform, unbroken frontage here would not be acceptable.

2.154 The Victoria Way Primary school is popular and serves a local need. The buildings are distinctive and an attractive heritage asset. There are no proposals to relocate the school but should this situation change, the school's playing grounds would offer development potential. However, the Council would expect the retention of the School building, and the adjacent School House, as the part of any development on this site and their suitable conversion and re-use.

2.155 The Victorian former Stanhay printing works that sits next to the railway is also a building of some local history. As it is set back from the highway, a limited amount of development

in front of it would be acceptable in order to create the active urban street frontage envisaged for Victoria Way. Alternatively, this land could provide additional outdoor space for the Primary School. In either circumstance, the Council will seek to retain and re-use the Stanhay building.

2.156 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

Policy TC11 – Victoria Way East

Redevelopment in the Victoria Way East area should deliver a mix of residential, office and education uses complemented by active street frontages at ground floor level fronting Victoria Way comprising small scale retail and other consumer services, eating and drinking places.

The part of this site where planning permission has been granted for the Learning Campus will be protected for that or similar education use unless other suitable alternative provision has been made.

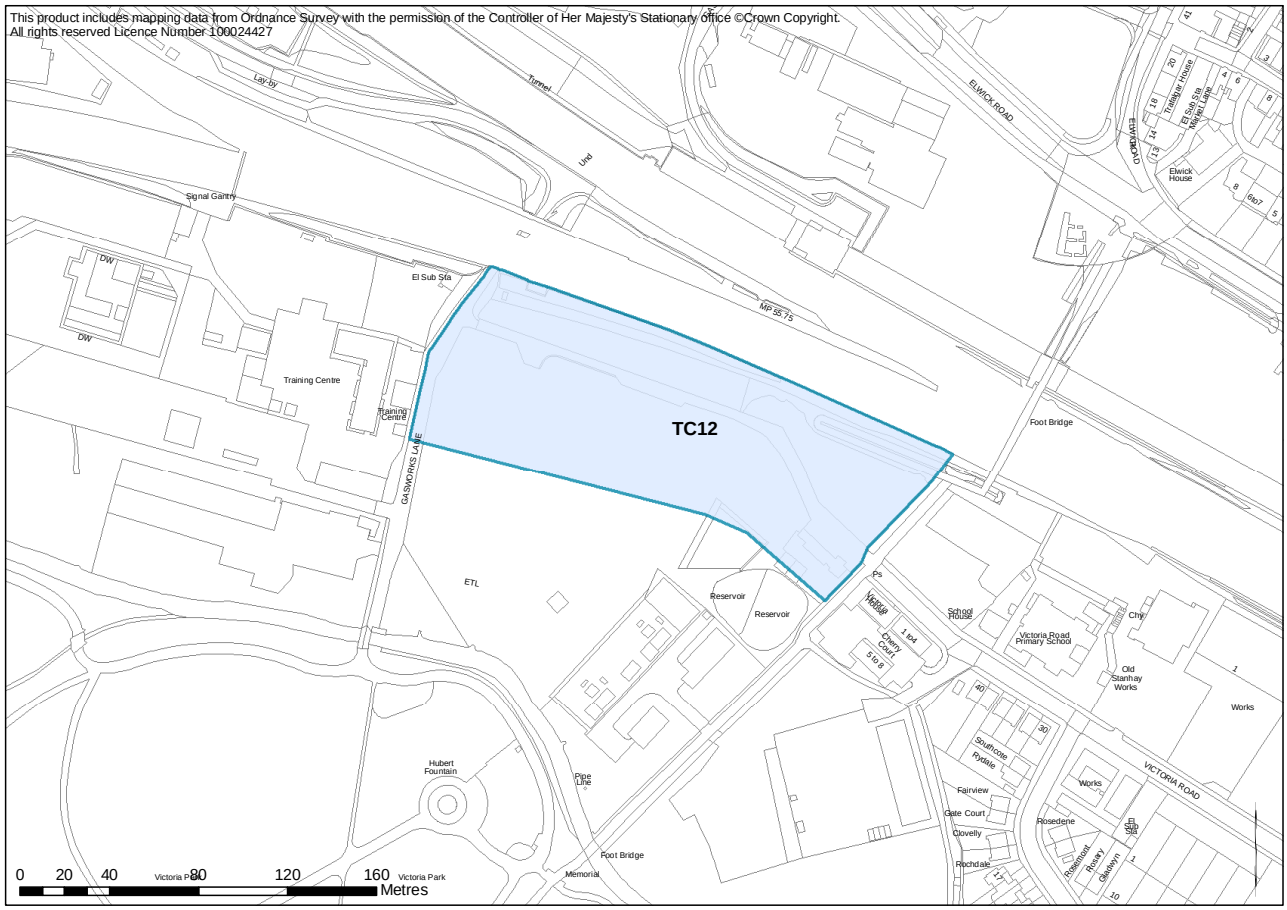
The scale of development along this section of Victoria Way shall be between 4-6 storeys fronting the highway. Building scale should step down towards the riverside.

The built form and layout of development in this area should provide enclosure to the street-scene with occasional breaks in the building line to enable glimpsed views northwards to the town centre core and southwards towards the river corridor. Any new building adjacent to the railway line will need to present a positive frontage to the railway and views from the north.

Where new development is close to existing residential properties it must avoid creating an overbearing impact or adversely affecting residential amenities.

Proposed development adjacent to the river corridor shall provide a built frontage to the corridor whilst ensuring there is adequate space between the building line and the river bank to improve the riverside environment in terms of its appearance and biodiversity.

Policy TC12 - Former Powergen site North



2.157 The former Powergen site North is situated to the west of the Learning Link, bounded to the west by Gasworks Lane and the south by the proposed route of Victoria Way. The site forms part of a larger site granted outline planning permission on appeal in 2008 for 1,002 residential units, 8,229 sqm of commercial floorspace, including a convenience goods supermarket up to 3,716sqm. Conditions attached to the permission limit the sales area of the foodstore to 2,230sqm, with up to 2,634sqm of other A-class uses and other commercial uses (B1) and leisure/education (D1/D2) floorspace and a 500 space multi-storey car park.

2.158 This is a key brownfield site in a strategic location and its role needs to be considered in light of the emerging policies for the rest of the town centre (in particular, the Southern Expansion quarter) in this Plan as well as the 2008 permission. Clearly, the developers may implement the 2008 permission scheme and in such circumstances the Council would work with them to deliver the best possible development.

2.159 Given the site's location adjacent to the proposed Learning Link bridge over the railway lines, it has been identified in the Council's Parking Strategy as a principal location for a new public multi-storey car park. This car park will be the principal and first new parking facility in the town centre and is needed to serve the new development in the town centre as a whole, including the retail and leisure elements of the Elwick Place development across the railway line.

2.160 Therefore, any development proposal on this site must include this car park (as an initial phase, if development is to be phased). Other uses that will be acceptable in principle on this site are residential and retail development.

2.161 In respect of retail use there is scope for a food store of 3,716sqm gross to be provided within the total retail floorspace of 6,350sqm gross allowed by the permission granted in 2008. This is also consistent with the advice of the Council's consultants regarding the approach needed to the scale and distribution of convenience retailing in the town centre to meet needs and provide for a robust, well balanced town centre [33]. Complementary levels of small unit comparison retail uses or eating and drinking places are also considered acceptable to help provide an active street frontage to Victoria Way.

2.162 The ground floor of any development (at the road level) must contain uses that will result in an active street frontage along Victoria Way and the Learning Link. A large single occupier across the whole of the ground floor frontage will be very unlikely to achieve sufficient activity and variety and should be avoided. The built form along Victoria Way must work hard to break up the building bulk and present an attractive and interesting appearance. It should be broken down into sections with some strong vertical emphasis to avoid creating a repetitive horizontal form. Subtle variations in the building line and set backs, scale, massing, detailing, and materials can help achieve a richer appearance and higher quality design.

2.163 The elevations to the railway must create a positive edge to the development as this will be a prominent facade. A flat form and bland appearance will be unacceptable. Functional and servicing elements of the buildings should not all be simply pushed to the rear so that it results in a facade dominated by corridors, stairwells, toilets and bathrooms. Fully integrated landscaping will also need to play an important role in creating a positive appearance.

2.164 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

Policy TC12 – Former Powergen site North

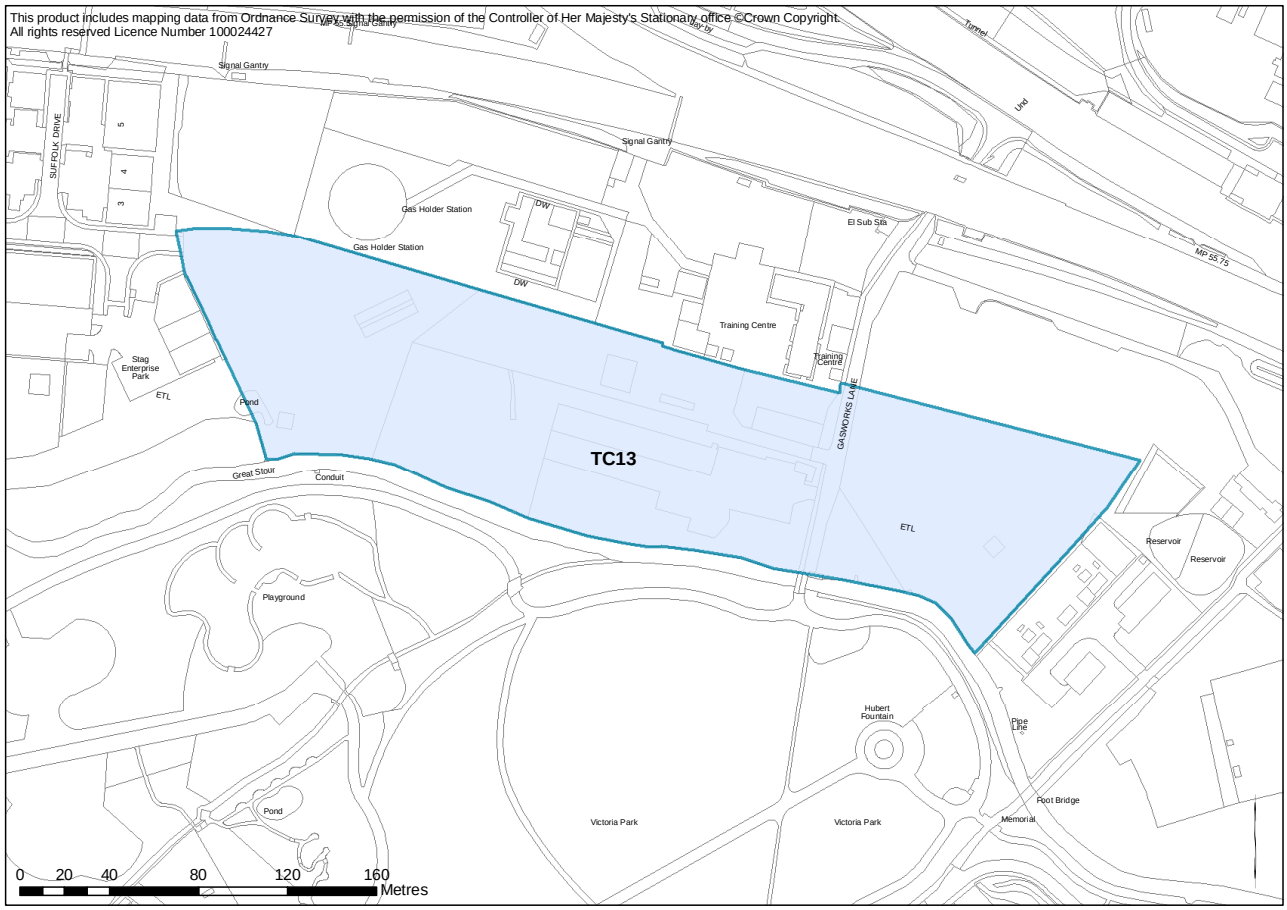
Development proposals for the site must include the provision of a public 500 space multi-storey car park, the delivery of which shall be included within any initial phase of development. Residential, food retail and complementary comparison retail space are also considered appropriate.

Proposals shall include the provision of active ground floor uses to Victoria Way and the Learning Link frontages.

The design of the scheme will need to show how it is compatible with, and can enable and/or deliver, proposals for an acceptable means of access to the crossing level of the pedestrian bridge over the railway taking the Learning Link from Victoria Way. Development on this site shall not prejudice the ability to replace the existing bridge.

33 Ashford Retail Assessment, Savills, 2008 & 2009

SITE TC13 – Victoria Way south



2.165 This site lies south and west of site TC12 and south of the Victoria Way corridor. Alongside site TC12 it forms the other part of the area granted outline planning permission on appeal in 2008.

2.166 The predominant use here should be residential, taking advantage of the attractive southerly aspect to the river corridor and Victoria Park. A combination of dwelling types and sizes should be provided here including lower density town houses to well designed flatted accommodation. Some small scale office or retail premises should be included on Victoria Way to help animate the street and these should be located at the busiest street intersections on the corners of buildings. Where residential development is provided at ground floor level facing Victoria Way, internal heights should be a minimum of 4 metres, to provide greater flexibility for uses at ground floor level.

2.167 Development should be designed to enable views through the site between Victoria Way and green spaces along the river corridor. Well spaced blocks of up to a maximum of 6 storeys may be an acceptable form of development along Victoria Way – a top storey set back will help to increase the sunlight to the street. Along the riverside 3 - 4 storeys are generally appropriate but care will be needed to ensure that views of St Mary's Church are not obscured from the park.

2.168 In order to provide improved access to the open space and recreational facilities of Victoria Park and create more movement and activity through the site, a further good quality pedestrian/cycle bridge over the river will be needed to give direct access to the Park for the residents of this site and the adjoining site to the north (TC14). Funding will be required from the developer of this site (and site TC14) towards the provision of

a new pedestrian / cycleway bridge across the river to Victoria Park on a proportional basis determined by the amount of residential units to be provided on each site.

2.169 In addition, this site should include a pedestrian / cycleway access along the northern bank of the river to improve connectivity through the site and links both east and west and seek to enhance the ecological corridor along the riverside. It should also enhance the existing bridge crossing at the end of Gasworks Lane.

2.170 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

Policy TC13 – Victoria Way south

This site is allocated for residential development. Development on this site should provide a variety of different unit types and sizes.

Complementary small-scale office or retail uses at street intersections along Victoria Way should also be provided.

Proposals will:

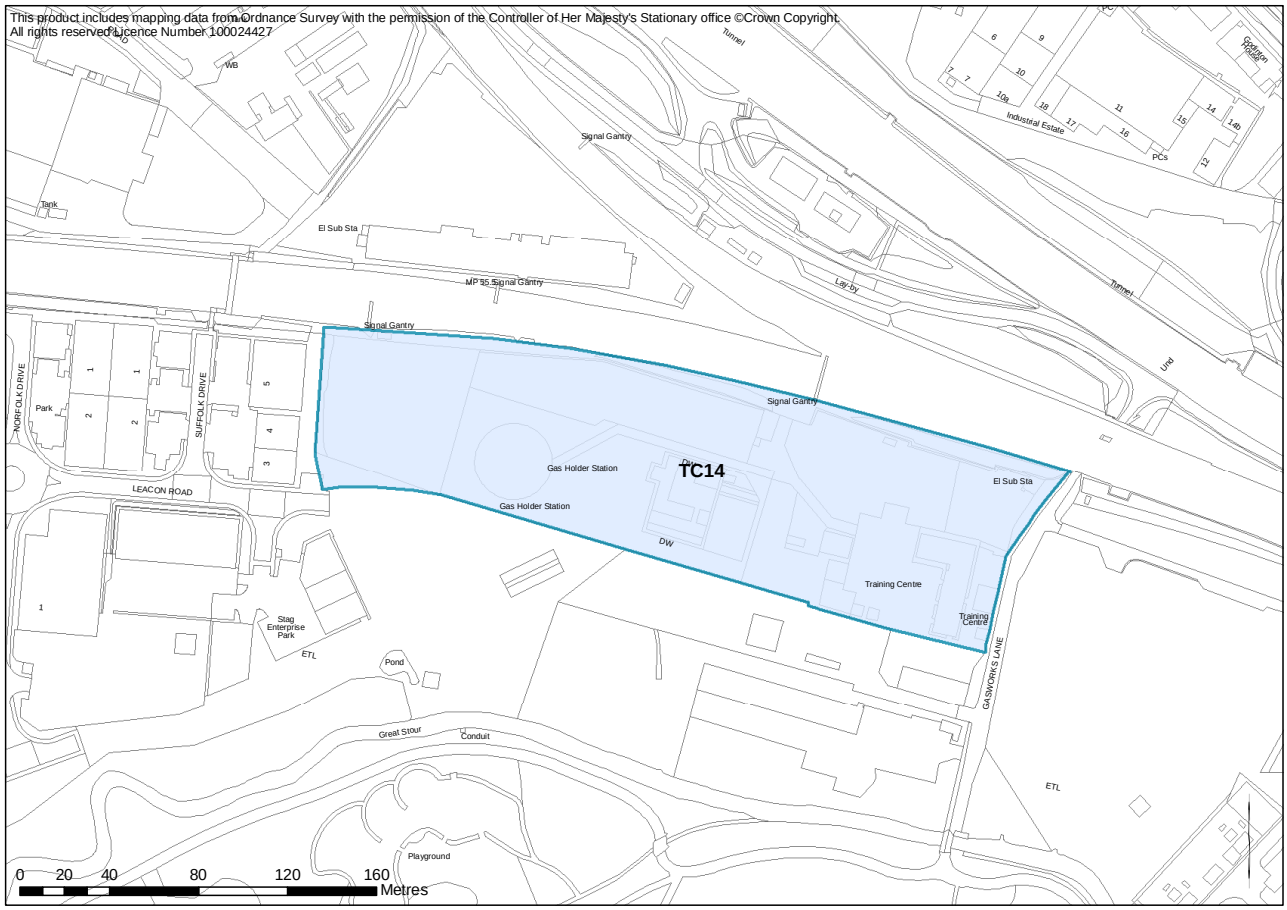
A) ensure development directly fronts onto Victoria Way and the river corridor;

B) range in height from around 4- 6 storeys along Victoria Way down to a general 3-4 storey scale for development that fronts the river corridor; and,

C) contribute to the provision of a new footway / cycleway bridge over the river to Victoria Park. The cost shall be divided on a proportionate basis with the development on site TC14.

D) provide a pedestrian / cycleway along the northern bank of the river.

Policy TC14 – Gasworks Lane



2.171 This site lies at the western end of the Southern Expansion Quarter between the railway and Victoria Way. The site is currently used for the storage and distribution of gas and as a depot for Southern Gas Networks. The western end of the site includes a gas holder which is scheduled to be decommissioned during the Plan period.

2.172 Due to its operational status and land ownership, it is expected that this site will come forward for redevelopment in a phased manner. However, the size of this site and its relationship to adjacent sites suggest that development should be planned comprehensively here and phased proposals will need to be consistent with a wider agreed approach based on a masterplan for the redevelopment of the whole site.

2.173 Residential development should be the principal use. Towards the western end of the site, where it adjoins the existing Leacon Road Industrial estate, some employment development could also be appropriate in order to provide a transition from an industrial to a more residential character. This could be in the form of some mixed use buildings or smaller scale buildings suitable for light industrial or office uses. Employment development and site layout issues may warrant an additional access to the approved access to Gasworks Lane.

2.174 Residential development on this site should be in the form of well designed flatted accommodation of varying sizes and types. This should include a strong street frontage to Victoria Way to reinforce the urban character of the area but with the potential for blocks of up to 5 storeys either along the street frontage or situated behind. As with site TC13, there may be potential to include complementary small scale retail or office uses at street intersections. Where residential development is provided at ground floor level

facing Victoria Way, internal heights should be a minimum of 4 meters, to provide greater flexibility for uses at ground floor level.

2.175 The scale of development on this site should help create a gradual transition in scale to the lower height employment buildings to the west. Development on this site will be restricted until the gas holder is decommissioned. Prior to this happening, there should be no new residential development within the appropriate defined areas around the gas holder in accordance with PADHI guidelines.

2.176 The redevelopment of the whole site will need to be accompanied by an assessment of any contamination arising from the existing or previous uses and proposals will need to demonstrate how any remaining contamination issues can be resolved.

2.177 As with policies TC11 and TC12 above, the north elevations along the railway frontage must create a positive edge to the development as this will be a prominent elevation. As on those sites, this should involve dual frontages to avoid the creation of a bland, featureless elevation to the railway.

2.178 Funding will be required from the developers of this site TC13 and towards the provision of a new pedestrian / cycleway bridge across the river to Victoria Park to create better accessibility on a proportional basis determined by the amount of residential units to be provided on each site.

2.179 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

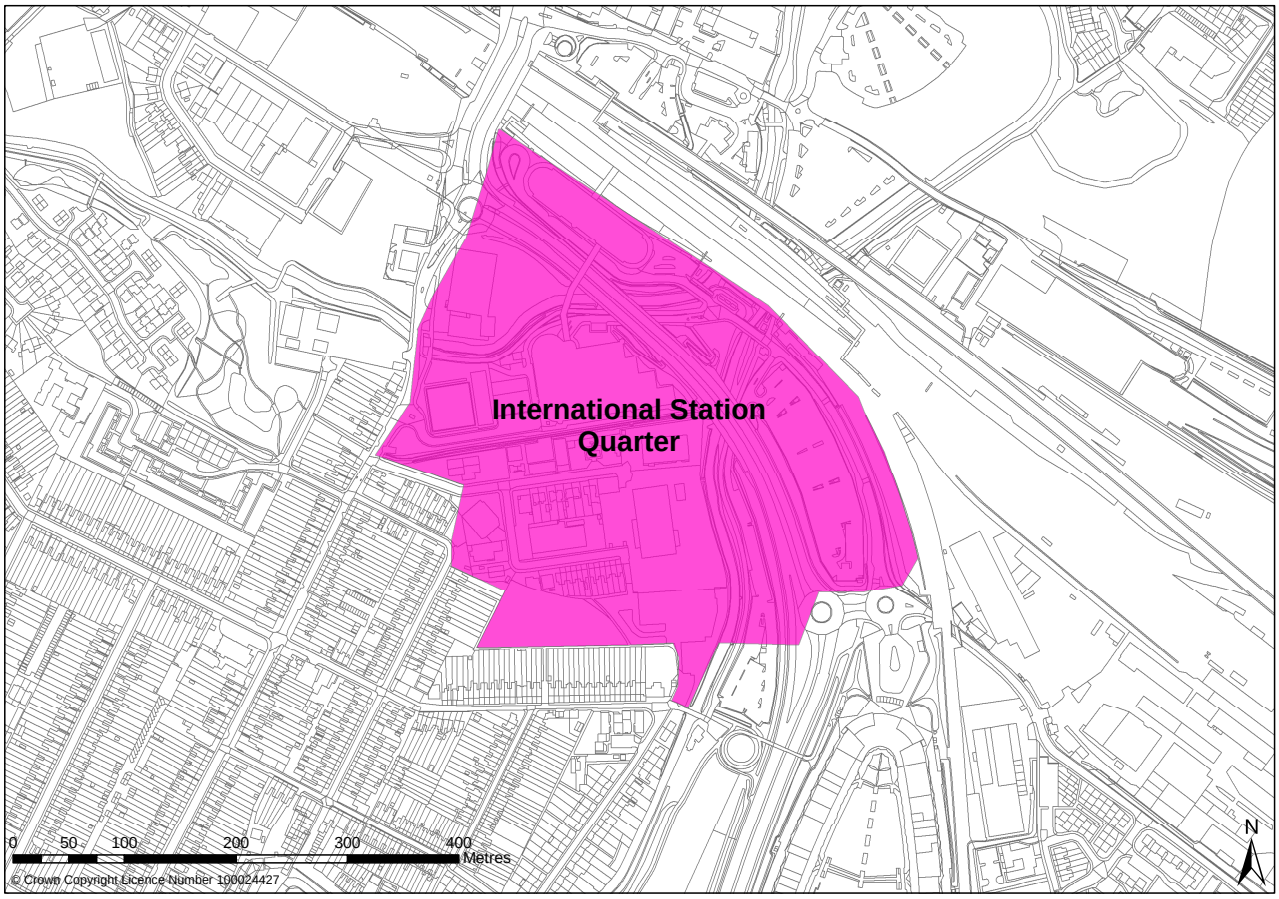
Policy TC14 – Gasworks Lane

This site is proposed for residential development. Development schemes should provide a range of different types and sizes of flats. Some limited employment use, particularly towards the western end of the site, is also encouraged. Proposals will:

A) provide a positive frontage to Victoria Way with a scale of development up to 5 storeys fronting the highway; and,

B) contribute to the provision of a new footway / cycleway bridge over the river to Victoria Park. The cost shall be divided on a proportionate basis with the development on site TC13.

International Station Quarter



Vision

2.180 A memorable International Gateway to the Town Centre, over time developing to offer a range of business, travel and tourist related functions and services by harnessing this Quarter's excellent connections with Europe and the Domestic Station. The existing road corridor will always carry a lot of traffic but the conditions for pedestrians can be radically improved and thereby help knit the International Station to the Designer Outlet Centre – creating an exciting and bold entrance to the town from the south and the M20 via Junction 10/10a. The currently stark transition between the long-established residential community to the south and the International station will be softened with an appropriate scale and type of development on intermediate land. The challenges of linking this area more seamlessly to the adjacent Southern Expansion Quarter and Commercial Quarter need to be overcome so that this area can form part of a wider town centre for people to enjoy.

Current Context

2.181 This Quarter is south of the existing town centre and is a key gateway and 'arrival' point. It is also the transitional area from the established residential areas of South Ashford and to the Ashford Designer Outlet which is a very important retail and tourist attraction for the town.

2.182 The Quarter is currently dominated by the International Station, multi-storey and surface car parks. The busy Romney Marsh Road, most of which is situated in an elevated position and which runs through the centre of the Quarter, gives it a traffic dominated character. West of Romney Marsh Road, a range of employment buildings – mostly

light industrial units and retail warehouses – and vacant land, are located in such this strategic position.

2.183 Given the visual prominence of the Romney Marsh Road, the volume of traffic using it, and the lack of commercial or other use along the road, this area has very low pedestrian activity. This serves to exaggerate the apparent distance of the Designer Outlet Centre from the station. As a result, this Quarter suffers generally from a lack of integration with the rest of the town centre as a whole.

2.184 The Designer Outlet has evolved to become a major draw for visitors to the town. Harnessing this asset by encouraging these visitors to enter the town centre, as part of an extended visit to Ashford, is a real opportunity that has yet to be realised. If this is to happen the current poor pedestrian links and environment need to be tackled.

2.185 The two rivers which converge in this Quarter appear more as barriers to movement than potential assets. However, flooding is an issue within this Quarter and especially in the residential area to the south. There may be opportunities to use the investment generated by new development to help mitigate the potential flood impact on existing homes – in any event all proposals will need to meet policy CS19 of the adopted Core Strategy.

Future role

2.186 This Quarter has an important role to play in the expanded town centre. Changing the character of this area through high quality development and improved public realm, would help to generate a stronger and more attractive image for Ashford and enhance the status of the International Station. Creating a focus of activity here will also help to provide jobs needed in the town centre, generate greater footfall movements and help to reconnect this Quarter with the rest of the town centre.

2.187 However, change may take some time - it is envisaged that some of this Quarter may not be available to come forward for redevelopment until later in the AAP period, or even post 2021. This is due to a number of factors, including multiple land ownership and the associated problems of land assembly; the difficult topography and the high cost of developing along the road; uncertain market demand; and the unknown demand for parking to serve the domestic and international services in the medium to long term.

2.188 Given the constraints above, this Plan has not sought to specifically allocate large areas of land in site specific policies within this Quarter, apart from at one key site opposite the International Station (see policy TC16). It is hoped that developing this site may stimulate further investment in this Quarter in the medium term and complement the operation of the station. The potential development on other sites is identified in the text below but because of the uncertainty of delivery this has not been expressed as formal policy.

2.189 Office use here is the most appropriate main use, building on the Quarter's excellent position close to both Stations and to complement the focus of commercial activity envisaged in the Commercial Quarter surrounding the domestic station area. Complementary retail and leisure uses, especially at ground floor level are also encouraged, helping to stimulate activity in this Quarter. Residential use, on the upper storeys would also be appropriate.

2.190 Given the proximity to the International Station, a good business class hotel in this Quarer would also be acceptable in principle should sufficient demand exist. A budget hotel catering predominantly for car based users would **not** represent an appropriate use of what is a strategically important location.

2.191 This Quarter currently provides a large amount of car parking, most of which directly supports the operational needs of the International and domestic stations. The surface

parking areas may be suitable development sites in the medium term – retaining car parking there by building over one or two levels of car parking below the road level and creating useable space at pavement level. Predicting the future need for car parking to serve the stations and possibly the Designer Outlet Centre is difficult – any new development will need to make allowance for reasonable levels of parking in this area in the light of an assessment at the time.

2.192 The land around South Stour and Eastmead Avenues incorporates a potentially major redevelopment opportunity for mostly residential use but also the opportunity for small office/ B1 uses as part of a mixed use scheme. The site provides riverside access and is well suited to a range of types of homes including houses. However, part of this area currently lies within the 100 year floodplain, as does a considerable part of the existing residential area to the south.

2.193 The Environment Agency has recently carried out work to assess the potential for a flood wall to protect this site to at least the 1 in 100 year event. These works could also benefit a large number of homes in the wider area that are susceptible to flooding. The financial assessment of benefits of providing the flood wall are not so compelling that this would be a high priority for public investment when judged against other needs in the region. But developer funding, possibly combined with contributions from businesses that would benefit, could part fund the flood wall and help draw in sufficient public funding.

2.194 Obviously the Council would wish local residents to benefit from such a proposal and, given that redevelopment here is supported in principle, the Council will work with the Environment Agency, landowners and prospective developers to seek to find a way of funding the works needed. Given the inevitable uncertainty involved, however, a formal plan allocation has not been made.

2.195 Should this be realised, the redevelopment of this area should be mainly residential in character and achieve an acceptable transition in terms of scale, character and density to the traditional terrace-style properties to the south. The river frontage should be used as a design feature with associated open space and residential development could be used to help break up the visual impact of the southern elevation of the International Station multi-storey car park.

2.196 Throughout this Quarter the river and the Green Corridor around it is under pressure to function as a through route and local amenity space – urban development presses in on all sides and the corridor is thin and vulnerable. But this Quarter is close to the heart of the town's network of green corridors so weak links at this point are damaging. It is essential that development close to the river tackles this challenge by the especially careful design of planting, access improvements and frontages that embrace and help supervise the river. Efforts need to concentrate on creating more space and a stronger sense of visual and ecological continuity for the corridor around the river – accepting the constraints in this compact area – and pleasant and safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy TC15 - The International Station Quarter

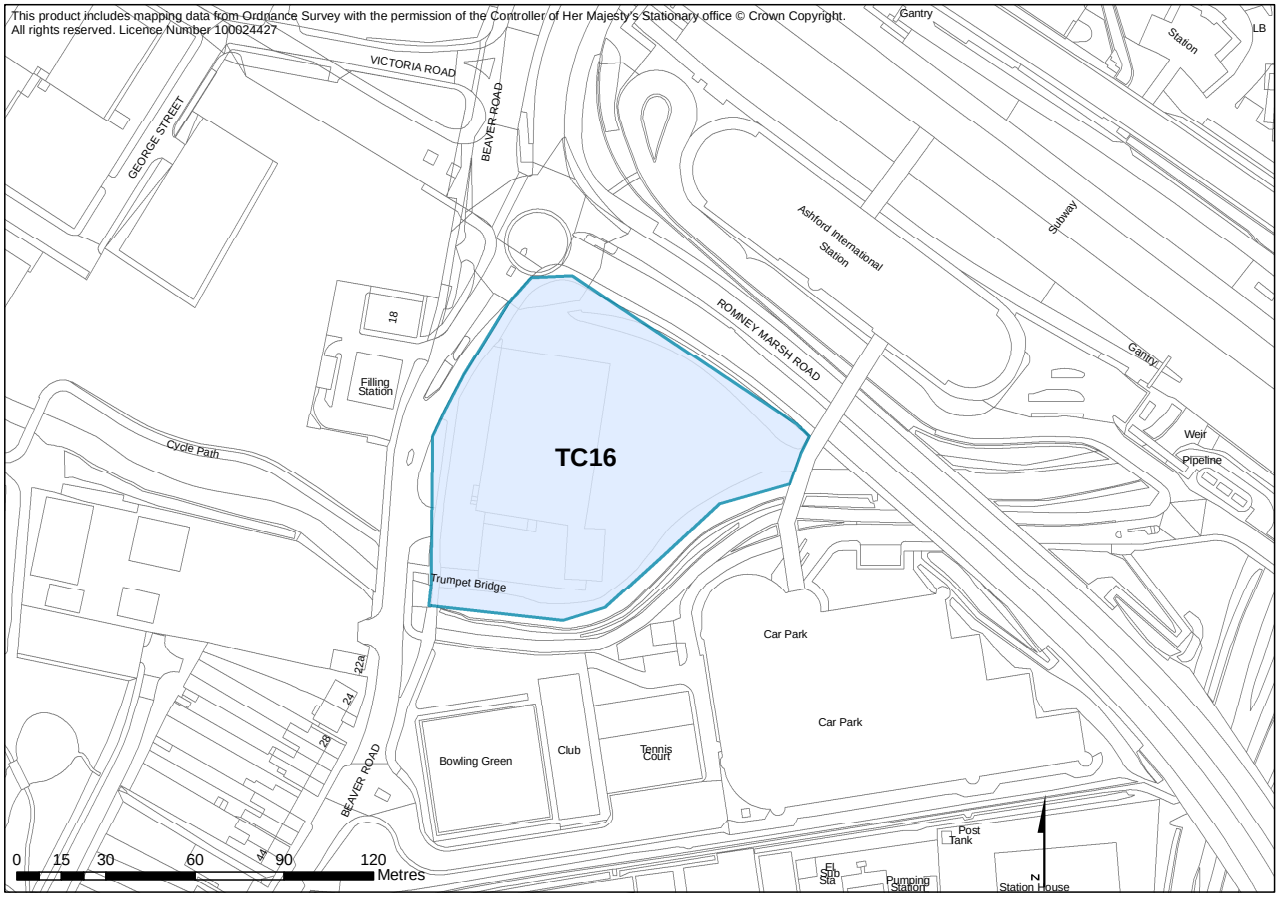
Development in the International Station Quarter should seek to improve the connectivity between the stations, the town centre and the Designer Outlet Centre to the south. It should also provide a more attractive gateway to the town for visitors using the International Station. This should be achieved by a combination of well-designed, high quality development and associated improvements to the public realm. In particular, development along the Romney Marsh Road should create active street level uses and a radically improved public realm alongside the road.

A mix of potential uses are appropriate in this Quarter, although an office based mix is anticipated on sites closest to the International Station along with a business class hotel. There are retail, office and leisure opportunities on Romney Marsh Road but buildings will need to be of a design standard that reflects the importance of this entrance to the town.

Buildings on each side of the river will need to step down to this smaller scale and help to bring forward planting and carefully considered access improvements to enhance the appearance and function of this stretch of the Green Corridor. Proposals will also be required to improve the riverside environment in terms of its appearance and biodiveristy. If the risk of flooding can be resolved, predominantly residential development on land in the South Stour / Eastmead Avenue part of the Quarter would be acceptable in principle.

International Station Quarter Site Specific Policies

SITE TC16: Former B&Q Site, Beaver Rd



2.197 This site stands on an important corner of the Beaver Bridge junction. It sits opposite the main entrance to the International Passenger Station – although at present the road design serves only to separate the two. This increases the impression of the site being something of an 'island' surrounded by the river, Beaver Road and Romney Marsh Road. It remains, however, an important redevelopment opportunity.

2.198 This should be the catalyst for a fundamental change to this Quarter's role and character driven by substantial levels of new high-quality development, which will raise the importance and prominence of this site within the future town centre context.

2.199 The current building is used as a retail warehouse and is utilitarian and of poor design quality. Its orientation results in a large 'dead' wall being the prominent characteristic when viewing the site from the Romney Marsh Road and the International Station. Overall, the current development does not create a positive sense of arrival into the town, failing to utilise its gateway location and its excellent relationship with the stations.

2.200 The varying levels across the site require a design solution that presents active frontages at different levels. This is particularly important for the frontage of the site that faces the International Station. The current building line should be brought forward to front and be a strong part of the street scene of Romney Marsh Road. It should do the same to Beaver Road and 'turn the corner' in the way well designed street blocks do – this helps to define the street and creates a stronger, enclosed sense of place around the junction which is for motorists the point of arrival to the town centre. This will be a heavily trafficked space but a lively one, animated by the Learning Campus opposite, the

International Station and the apartment scheme approved on the south side of Victoria Way.

2.201 The river, which defines the southern boundary of this site, provides a different challenge. A strong frontage is needed to help embrace the riverside as an attractive feature – a riverside path is not needed as there is limited space and in any event there is a well used route on the opposite bank. Part of the site falls within Flood Zone 2 and appropriate design and mitigation measures will be needed. Proposals here should also encourage improved levels of biodiversity.

2.202 Given the scale of surrounding buildings and roads, a relatively substantial building form can be positioned here - development up to 6 storeys above ground level (at Romney Marsh Road) is envisaged. Given the position of the site and its relatively 'stand alone' position it is possible that it could accommodate a landmark building of greater height – with less site coverage and more vertical emphasis. This approach would require a landmark building of proven, widely accepted architectural excellence to signpost this important entrance to the town.

2.203 Overall the built form of any proposal, will need to generate a positive sense of entering the town centre from Romney Marsh Road and enhance the pedestrian environment within and adjoining the site – including a strong link to the International Station.

2.204 Office use should be predominant on a site with such easy access to the stations. However, the proportions within the overall mix of uses are not pre-determined and residential uses on upper floors are considered to be appropriate. Other suitable uses include a good business class hotel catering for the emerging business market as the office role of the town develops, and capitalising on the excellent rail access and links to London and the Continent. Complementary retail and leisure uses would also be needed to provide active uses at street level.

2.205 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

POLICY TC16 - Former B&Q site, Beaver Road

The former B&Q site is allocated for a mixed-use development, utilising the gateway location to raise the importance and prominence of the site. A high quality office development is envisaged for this location, in combination with residential uses on upper floors and retail and/or leisure uses at street level. A good quality business class hotel would also be appropriate. Proposals will:

A) Generate a positive sense of arrival into the town by creating buildings of high design quality at the prominent corner site on the main Beaver Road/ Victoria Way junction at the entrance to the town;

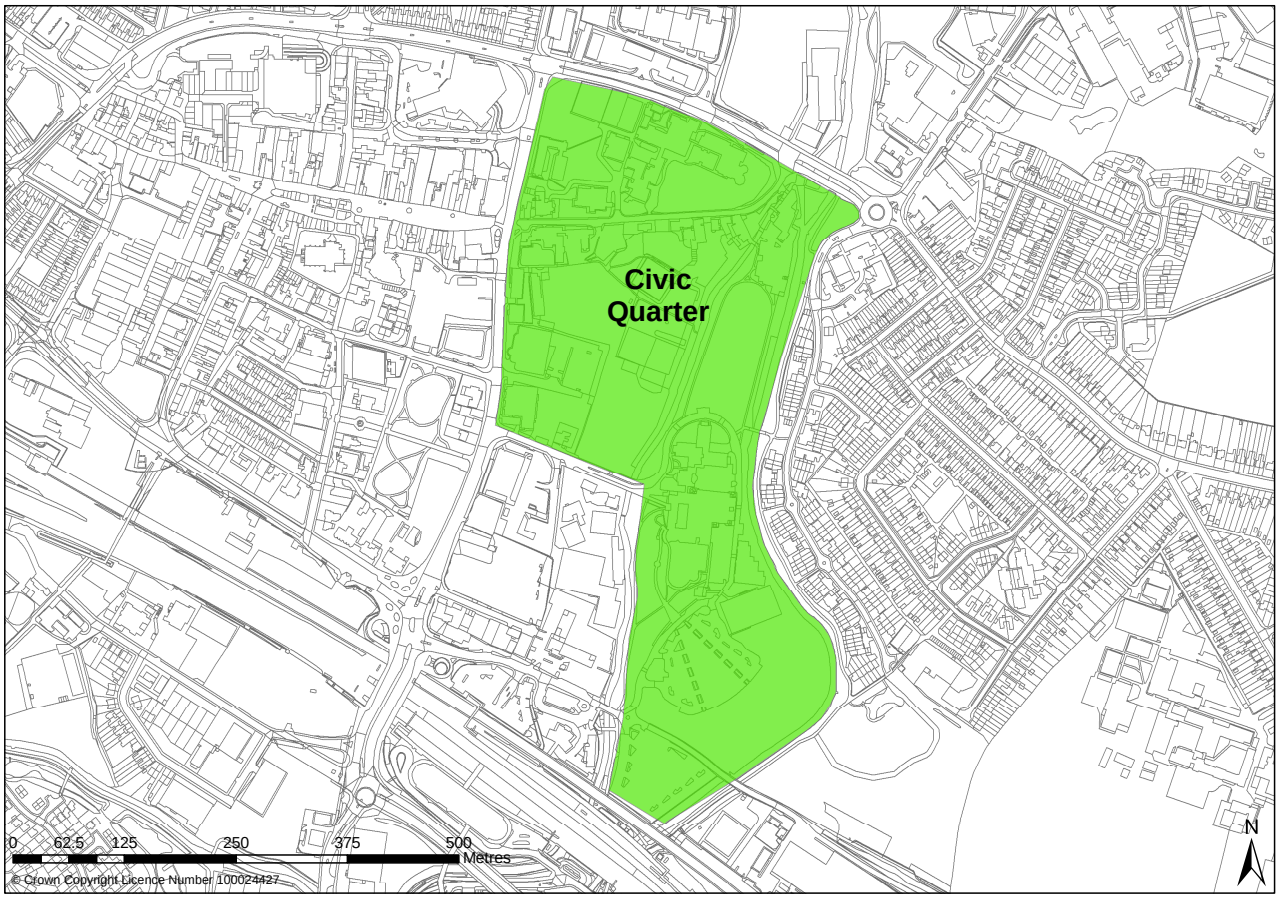
B) Establish a strong building line onto both Romney Marsh Road and Beaver Road and deliver high quality public realm both adjoining and within the site;

C) Be designed to encourage easy pedestrian movement across Romney Marsh Road to the International Station and fund the necessary improvement works;

D) Provide active uses at street level; and,

E) Improve the riverside environment in terms of its appearance and biodiversity

Civic Quarter



Vision

2.206 A more spacious quarter with a softer character than much of the busy town centre, heavily influenced by the presence of the river and the protected greenspace around it. Development is relatively dispersed and focused on established large scale educational, leisure and civic uses set in landscaped green spaces. With restricted opportunities for development the focus for change is concentrated on Station Road and Tannery Lane where this Quarter provides ready access to the Town Centre Core and the Commercial Quarter. Popular, informal green spaces have an important role to play in encouraging outdoor relaxation and informal recreation uses along the riverside as well as in North Park. These serve the existing community and daytime recreational needs of the large and growing local workforce - particularly in the Commercial Quarter. The green spaces also work as an attractive transition to the established residential communities to the east, and provide attractive routes to the town centre and stations from these areas.

Current Context

2.207 This Quarter is a focal point for civic and leisure uses, with the Civic Centre and the major attraction of the Stour Leisure Centre. It is within easy walking distance of both international and domestic railway stations and is adjacent to both the Town Centre Core and Commercial Quarters.

2.208 It has an attractive sense of place, characterised by a large amount of open space between the converging Great and East Stour rivers. The northern part of the Quarter is mostly occupied by the various buildings and large playing fields of Ashford School.

East Hill, now a pleasant lane situated within the Town Centre Conservation Area provides an attractive and well-used pedestrian link into the Town Centre Core area.

2.209 The southern part of this Quarter is bounded by Tannery Lane, which links directly into the Town Centre Core area from the Civic and Stour Centres. As a result Tannery Lane experiences reasonably high and consistent levels of pedestrian traffic. Another major public facility – the existing library; proposed for redevelopment as the Ashford Gateway Plus – sits on the opposite site of Memorial Gardens and there would be advantage in creating as direct a pedestrian route as possible between these major public facilities – an opportunity first identified in the Town Centre Development Framework.

2.210 The western part of the Quarter fronts onto Station Road, and is commercial in character with a series of medium-scale office developments and the bowling centre.

Future Role

2.211 This Plan seeks firstly to retain and enhance this Quarter's more open character around the river corridors. There are few realistic and deliverable development opportunities if the open character of the area is to be kept and bearing in mind the established uses here. Policy TC26 seeks to protect the Green Corridors through the town centre from any significant built development.

2.212 However, some of the areas which front Station Road and Tannery Lane may well come forward within the Plan period and offer redevelopment opportunities. Given the proximity to the Commercial Quarter, and the busy nature of these streets, predominantly office development would be anticipated here of a similar scale (4-6 storeys), although a range of alternative town centre uses could also be acceptable, including community uses. In the short to medium term it is likely that the eastern side of Station Road will only be a secondary retail location but ground floors should be designed with the in-built flexibility for future retail use should demand materialise. Any development on Tannery Lane should step down in height towards the river corridor.

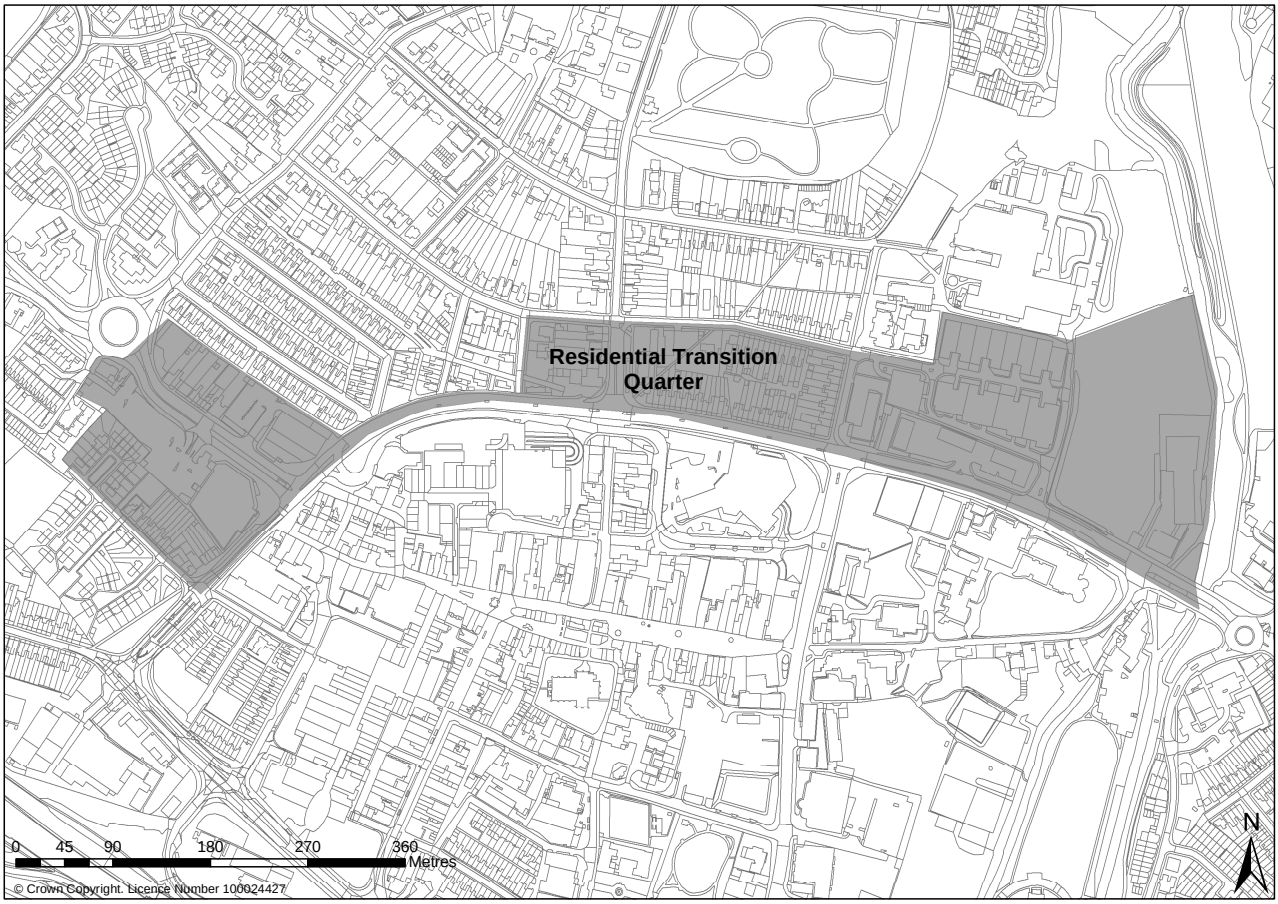
2.213 There has been some initial consideration of the potential for a substantial indoor arena for Ashford to cater for a range of future leisure and entertainment events of the sort that are currently only available in other large venues outside the Borough. If a scheme is found to be viable and brought forward during the Plan period, it would need to be located on a site that is highly accessible by public transport, preferably within the Town Centre. The most feasible option considered to date is the area of land south of the Stour Centre, which is currently partly developed as a surface car park for the Civic and Stour Centres. There would be considerable technical challenges to overcome including access arrangements and the fact that the land lies within the 100 year floodplain – any proposals would need to show that a practical solution exists and flood conditions would not be worsened on site or elsewhere.

Policy TC17 - The Civic Quarter

The Civic Quarter is proposed to accommodate relatively small amounts of new development based principally around the intensification of development on land fronting Tannery Lane and Station Road. Office uses complemented by community uses, and retail and leisure uses on the ground floor would be appropriate. Residential development would also be acceptable in principle where a living environment of sufficient quality can be created – for example, facing onto the green spaces.

Proposals in this Quarter will need to respect the setting of the Green Corridor and be consistent with policy TC26.

Residential Transition Quarter



Vision

2.214 This is an area of relatively little change where the primary focus is on handling a sensitive transition from the busy, growing town centre to the established tightly-knit residential areas surrounding its northern side. The residential focus remains but the main change is an intensification of development along New Street, the western approach to the town centre. This area will provide multi-storey parking for the town centre but as part of an intensified development that successfully acts as an attractive gateway to Ashford. The creation of an attractive landmark at the arrival to the town centre will be complemented by upgrading the quality of the public realm at this busy traffic junction. Elsewhere in the Quarter the residential emphasis remains – where there are suitable sites new homes can be provided. Wherever possible improved pedestrian links will be provided to help re-establish routes that were severed when the ring road was built.

Current Context

2.215 This Quarter is situated to the north of the town centre and is characterised by mainly terraced residential properties. The former ring road has formed a hard edge to this Quarter and severed many of the historic routes into the Town Centre core area and left no built edge to the street.

2.216 In addition, the Quarter also contains retail and leisure uses at New Street, and the Mace Lane industrial estate, to the east. Three main radial traffic routes - New Street, Canterbury Road and Hythe Road enter the town centre from this Quarter, all of which are important entrances to the town centre and subject to high levels of traffic movement.

2.217 The Quarter also includes a small part of the river corridor at the eastern end of Mace Lane and encompasses the Riverside Business park development.

Future role

2.218 This Plan aims to protect the existing residential character of this Quarter, enabling it to act as a area of transition between the high levels of new development within the Town Centre Core and the existing residential properties to the north and west. Only a limited quantity of development is proposed.

2.219 However, the Plan does seek to promote development at both sides of the New Street junction. Mixed use development on either side of New Street will strengthen its existing gateway role along the main entrance to the town from junction 9 of the M20. The current mixture of open parking and buildings does little to create a strong sense of arrival. The building form will increase in scale from the smaller scale at the western end of New Street towards the junction with West Street / Somerset Road – likewise it will need to respect the scale and amenity of the residential areas to the north and south.

2.220 A multi-storey car park is proposed at New Street. This important piece of infrastructure is needed here as it serves a key vehicular entrance to the town, where traffic movements are high and is in easy walking distance of the town centre's shops and services. This is an important part of the overall parking provision needed to support the growth of the town centre – the parking section of this plan explains the wider strategy in more detail.

2.221 The Parking Strategy also highlights the potential need for another multi-storey car park within this Quarter at Mace Lane, although it is not expected that this will be required until the very end of the Plan period or later. This part of the Quarter accommodates various existing viable uses, and as there is some uncertainty on the long term parking requirements on this site and multiple land ownerships, it is not proposed to make a site specific allocation in this AAP and the issue will be re-considered at the first review of this plan.

Policy TC18 - The Residential Transition Quarter

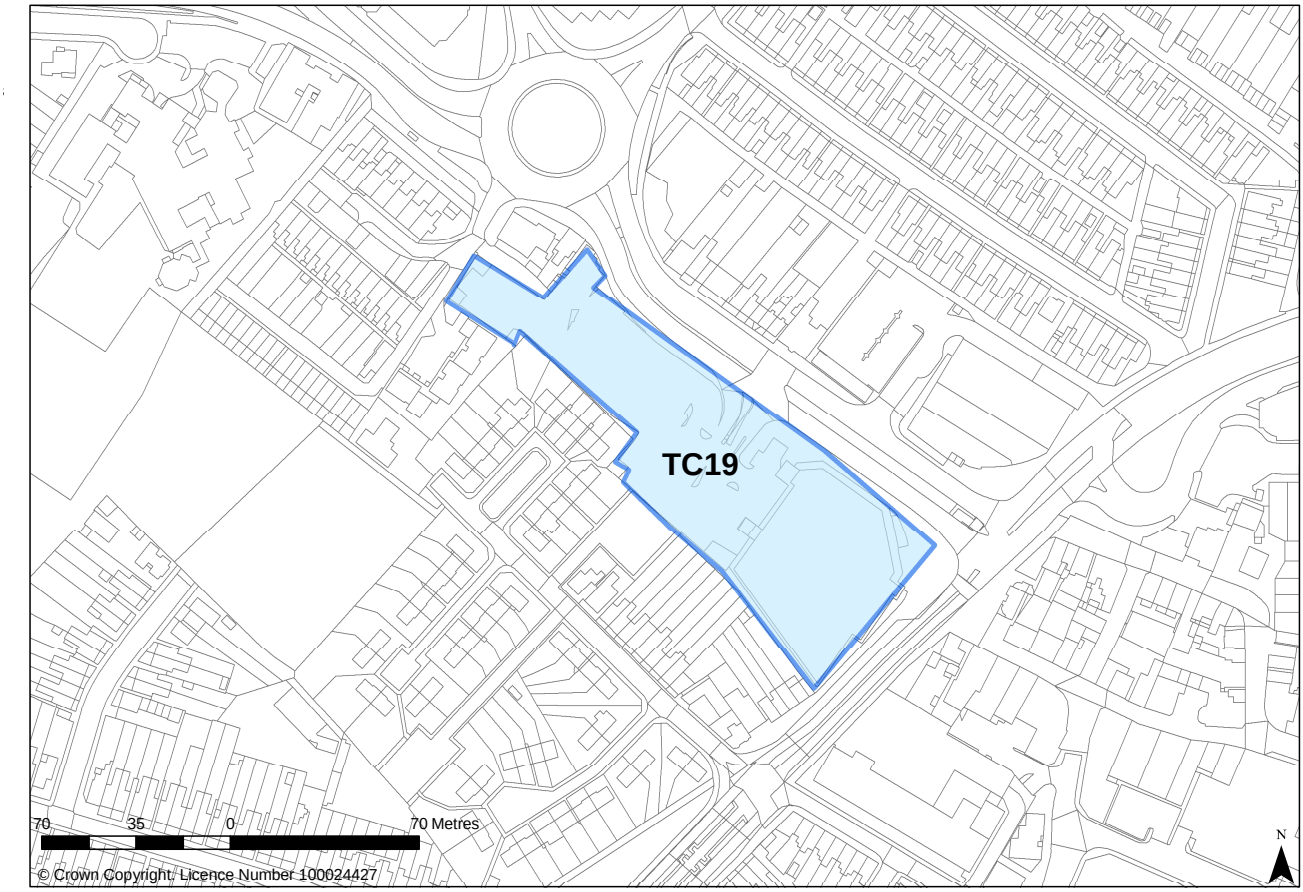
The principal role of this Quarter is to act as a careful transition from the substantial and larger scale development proposed in the Town Centre Core to the existing residential areas to the north and west. Proposals coming forward in this Quarter must be carefully integrated with the surrounding residential properties and respect the scale of these properties and the quality of life of existing residents.

Where there are small scale development opportunities residential use is appropriate – at street corners this can be complemented with small retail or leisure uses on the ground floor.

At New Street, a carefully designed, strong new entrance to the town centre is proposed with a multi-storey car park forming a key part of a development mix that can include complementary retail, leisure and office uses.

Residential Transition Quarter Site Specific Policies

Policy TC19 - New Street South



2.222 The majority of this site is currently used as a surface car park, serving the adjoining food-store and gym. The site is highlighted in the Council's Parking Strategy (2006) as a location for a new multi-storey public car park, to help provide adequate parking for the growth of the town centre. The site's location, serving traffic from the west and north, means that traffic can avoid having to use the former ring road to access car parking, helping to increase capacity elsewhere.

2.223 Its location also provides shoppers with the opportunity to park close to the town centre, offering direct and quick access to the town centre services. The car park will in turn generate greater pedestrian movement into the northern part of the town centre, helping to support the planned re-development here, notably at Park Mall (policy TC4), the New Rents area and the New Street North site (policy TC20).

2.224 The Parking Technical Note, 2009, indicates that a multi-storey car park here is required to accommodate 400 additional car parking spaces, and is likely to be required by around 2018.

2.225 The Council and its partners are working together to draw up a more detailed development solution for this site that reflects the its constraints. At present, there appears to be two main options for this site.

2.226 The first is that the multi-storey car park can be delivered on the existing surface car park. However, this is dependent on finding a suitable design solution for the development, notably the need to minimise the impact on the residential properties in

Marlowe Road and Norwood Gardens which lie to the south of the site. At the western end of the site, where the dwellings in Marlowe Road back onto the site and the listed Prince Albert public house lies adjacent, development should be proportionate in scale and elsewhere development should be limited in height to no more than 4 storeys.

2.227 The opportunity should also be explored to use basement level car parking to help reduce scale and impact. Opportunities to combine the delivery of the multi-storey car park with other forms of development on this site should also be explored. For example, retail uses could be provided along New Street on the ground floor as a means of providing a more attractive frontage to the site.

2.228 Alternatively, a multi-storey car park may be delivered as part of a comprehensive redevelopment, including the existing shop / gym. This approach would also enable an increase in useable floorspace, as well as meeting the car parking requirement because there is scope to build higher on the corner of New Street and Forge Lane (4 and part 5 storeys), and benefit the streetscape by moving the building line forward to front New Street and Forge Lane whilst still retaining good pavement width and public realm. Should this be the case, retail use could continue on the ground floor with leisure, offices or residential apartments above.

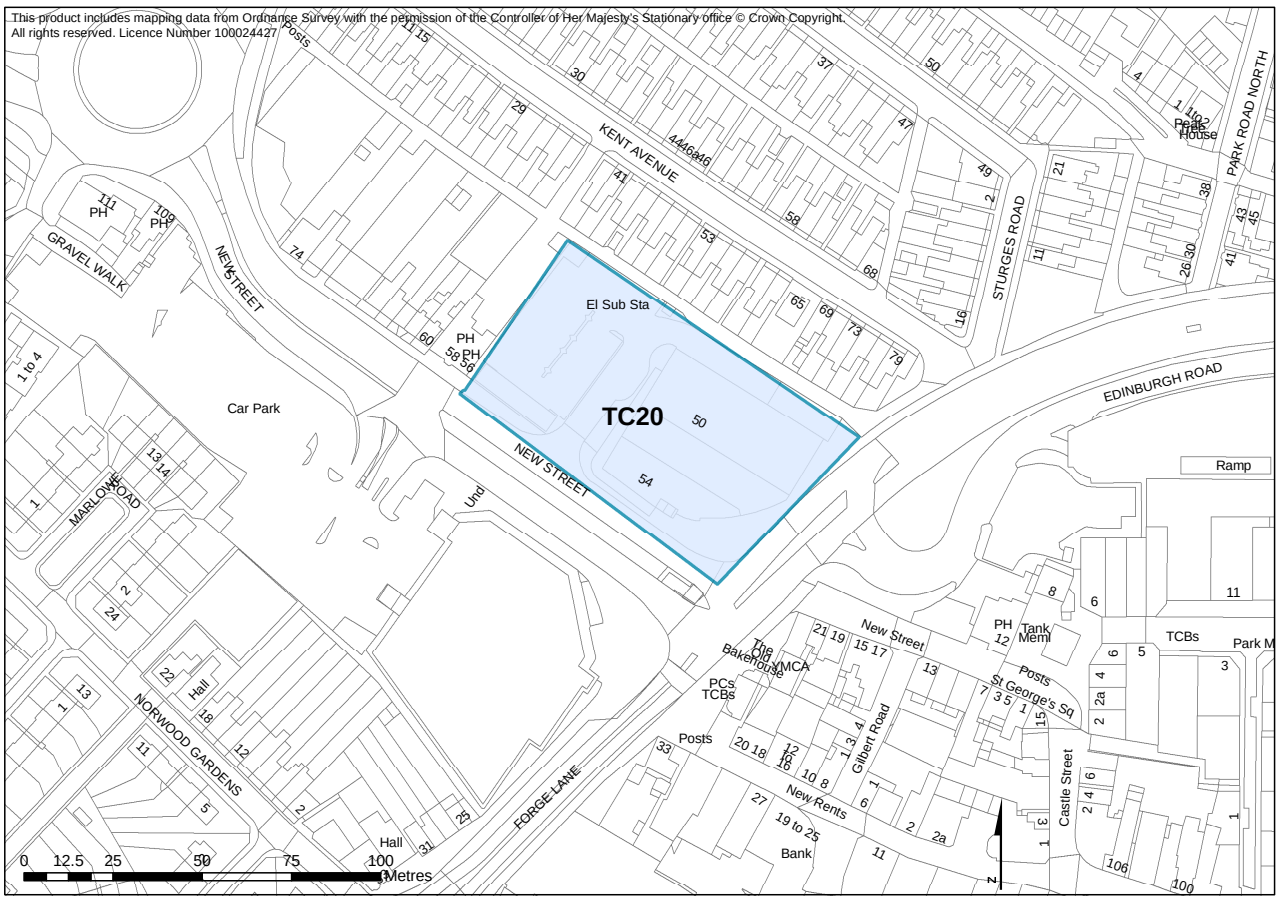
2.229 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

Policy TC19 - New Street South

This site is allocated to provide a multi-storey public car park, providing 400 spaces. A scheme will need to be designed to minimise the impact on residential occupiers of properties in Marlowe Road and NorwoodGardens and achieve a good design relationship with the adjacent listed public house.

A comprehensive redevelopment of the whole site, incorporating the multi-storey car park, would also be acceptable. In this case, a new building should provide a positive and strong development frontage to Forge Lane and the New Street junction, whilst achieving active ground floor uses and good pedestrian facilities on a generous pavement and enhancing the crossing facilities to the Town Centre Core. The building's design will need to be of special quality to act as a focal point and gateway to the town centre and complement the traditional architectural form and scale of the New Rents area opposite.

Policy TC20 - New Street North



2.230 This site is currently occupied by a single building split into three retail units. The site also accommodates an associated small public car parking area, designed principally to serve the shop units on the site.

2.231 The design of the current building is not of high quality – it is inward facing, and fails to provide an attractive or active street frontage onto Somerset Road or New Street. The Council would support comprehensive redevelopment of this site for retail, office, residential or leisure uses – or some combination of these uses.

2.232 The design issues on this site mirror closely those on the site to the south of New Street. A similar concern exists to limit impact on nearby residential properties and the Conservation Area; the same attention to architectural quality is needed and the building height issues are similar. Buildings should step down in height where they are closest to the boundaries of the residential properties in Kent Avenue and New Street. Once again there is the opportunity to extend the building footprint to create a stronger entrance and greater sense of enclosure at the New Street / Somerset Road corner. On this part of the site, development up to five storeys may be acceptable subject to the building form and positioning being designed to avoid a material impact on the amenities of the adjoining residents.

2.233 In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before the development can connect into it.

Policy TC20 - New Street North

Re-development of this site is proposed for retail, office, or leisure use or some combination of these uses, together with an element of residential development.

Proposals will:

A) Seek to provide active uses on the ground floor, but in any event be designed to have the main facade and entrances to buildings facing Somerset Road and New Street;

B) Be of high design quality and create a strong focal point and gateway to the town centre, with development up to 5 storeys;

C) Move the building line forward towards Somerset Road and New Street and create a good pedestrian environment; and,

D) Ensure that development here is sympathetic to the amenities of residential occupiers of properties in Kent Avenue and New Street and the character of the adjoining Conservation Area.

Indicative Quantum's of Development

	Uses (sq.m. - gross)			
Quarter	**Retail / Leisure**	**Commercial**	**Residential**	**Other**
Town Centre Core	50,500*	16,000	1,000	4,000
Commercial	2,500	55,000	150	-
Southern Expansion	8,350	8,880	1,750	Learning Campus
International Station	4,000	10,000	100	-
Civic	1,000	3,000	-	-
Residential Transition	2,000	2,000	100	-
Totals	**68,350***	**94,880**	**3,100**	
No. of Jobs	*4,370***	*4,740*	-	
Sites	**Retail / Leisure**	**Commercial**	**Residential**	**Other**
TC3	22,000	5,000	300	
TC4	9,000	3,000	100	-
TC5	5,000	2,000	100	-
TC6	2,000	4,000	200	1,500
TC7	-	-	-	Gateway Plus
TC8	-	-	300	-
TC9	2,500	55,000	150	-
TC11	2,000	5,000	450	Learning Campus
TC12	5,350	1,880	380	-
TC13	1,000	-	620	-
TC14	-	2,000	300	-
TC16	4,000	6,000	100	-
TC19	1,000	-	50	-
TC20	2,000	1,000	50	-
Totals	**55,850**	**84,880**	**3,100**	**Approx 24,000**

	Uses (sq.m. - gross)			
No. of Jobs	*3,750***	*4,240*	-	

Indicative Quantums of Development

** these figures exclude the 19,000 sq.m. retail expansion of County Square, completed in 2008.*

*** the job figures include an assumed 950 jobs created by the 19,000 sq.m. County Square extension based on an average job density of 1 job per 20 sq.m.*

2.234 The table above sets out the indicative development quantum and appropriate mix of uses envisaged to come forward within the Town Centre AAP area, across the respective Quarters and on specific sites, over the Plan period. These figures are regarded as suitable targets that would achieve the requirements for the town centre set out in the Core Strategy and should not necessarily be interpreted rigidly or as a maximum. The policies and supporting text for the respective Quarters and sites should be read in light of this table.

2.235 The mix of uses proposed in the table demonstrates how the Town Centre should develop over time, in order to achieve an appropriate balance of uses and deliver an integrated and attractive urban environment. However a degree of flexibility within and between the relevant commercial and retail/leisure mixes, is considered acceptable, providing the Plan's other policy requirements are met, such as achieving active ground floor frontages.

2.236 This flexibility is needed, particularly in the early years of the Plan period to help allow the market to respond to opportunities in Ashford and changing patterns of investment and occupier demand. It also enables the best mix to be achieved once more detailed levels of design have explored how to develop often complex sites in the best way. However, proposals that significantly depart from the broad mix of uses indicated are unlikely to be permitted. In particular, schemes which propose the replacement or significant diminution of strategically important uses on key sites (e.g. offices in the Commercial Quarter) will be likely to be unacceptable.

2.237 With the exception of residential development, the total development envisaged to come forward on allocated sites does not match the total figure for each Quarter. The difference reflects a small allowance made for development coming forward on unallocated sites within the Quarters. This is considered to be reasonable given the length of the Plan period and the likelihood that that other sites will come forward during this period – for example, land fronting Station Road in the Civic Quarter, the redevelopment of sites in Mace Lane, and the development potential of the International Station Quarter.

3 Topic Based Issues

Town Centre Car Parking

Objective

3.1 The overall approach to town centre parking has three primary objectives:

- to support the development of the town centre as a shopping and leisure destination through increasing the relative proportion of short-stay spaces and providing these in several specific centralised locations.
- to reduce the relative proportion of parking provided in the town centre for long-stay (i.e commuters or employees).
- to limit the need for additional vehicular movements on the former ring road, in particular the shared space along Elwick Road, West St & Forge Lane and any future extensions.

Introduction

3.2 The demand to travel to the town centre by car is forecast to grow significantly, given both the level of development envisaged here and the overall increase in population within the Borough. The traffic capacity of the former ring road has been reduced, with its reconfiguration into a two-way system and the implementation of the shared space scheme along Elwick Road as a first phase of its reconfiguration into a series of town centre streets.

3.3 The town centre and the roads leading to it cannot deal with unrestrained increases in traffic without damaging the town's environment and causing serious congestion. There is an overall desire to see a significant modal shift for Ashford, encouraging greater usage of public transport and less car traffic over time as alternative modes of transport become available and this premise underpins the sider strategic approach to development in the adopted Core Strategy. In the Town Centre, this is particularly relevant in relation to traffic using the former ring road.

3.4 Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy - 'Transport' recognises this and promotes three Park and Ride sites on the periphery of the town, served by SMARTLINK (a flexible, high technology bus-based system which will provide rapid transport from outer Ashford into the town centre). These Park and Ride services are seen as one of the main tools for combating traffic congestion in the town centre, particularly through the provision of long stay parking spaces at the Park and Ride sites. Long stay spaces cater mainly for commuters who travel into the town for predominantly employment purposes, either in Ashford itself or elsewhere via the railway Stations. This is particularly an issue for the town centre given the level of job creation envisaged here.

3.5 Short stay parking plays an important role in ensuring the well being of the town centre as a retail and leisure centre. Short stay spaces cater for car trips throughout the day and make efficient use of valuable town centre land, especially where provided in multi-storey car parks or under buildings.

3.6 Policy CS15 sets out that the town centre should seek to accommodate three new multi-storey car parks, located outside the former ring road. Their location would still allow shoppers quick access to the town centre's services and facilities but would not require car travel along the former ring road.

3.7 Nevertheless, even with the implementation of the Park and Ride schemes, and the delivery of peripheral multi-storey car parks, the Parking Strategy, [34] recognises that some parking spaces are also needed within the former ring road. It identifies the need

34 Parking Strategy, 2006

for short stay car parking in particular, allowing people to 'Park and Shop'. The locations of these spaces play a crucial role in sustaining the viability and vitality of the town centre, allowing direct access to its retail and leisure offer, in particular. These spaces can also provide more accessible parking facilities for the disabled.

3.8 A careful balance must be struck so that new parking to serve the town centre does not conflict with the overall objective of reducing traffic congestion and encouraging other non-car modes of transport. In this context, policy CS15 sets out that the town centre should seek to accommodate 1,700 new short stay spaces and 1,150 long stay spaces within the town centre. Since this was adopted, the requirement for these numbers of new spaces has been revised to take account of the proposed quantum and mix of development proposed in this Plan and this is now reflected below.

Future Parking Demand

3.9 The parking demand figures used in the Parking Strategy (November 2006), have continued to be updated as further transport modelling iterations with both the land use plan and SMARTLINK demand have been carried out. A Parking Strategy Technical Note, (January 2009) has been produced that summarises the results of this parking demand modelling; the rationale behind the extent of restraint used to take account of the capacity of a reconfigured ring road; and the need to encourage use of SMARTLINK, Park and Ride, walking and cycling. It also sets out a revised phasing strategy.

3.10 This shows that by 2021, and taking account of the need to encourage modal shift from car use to public transport, walking and cycling, 5,100 new car parking spaces will be needed to serve the expanded town centre - 3,100 of which will be for long-stays (over 5 hours) and 2,000 for short-stays (up to 5 hours). An estimated 400 of these new spaces will be in private non-residential (PNR) car parks that will replace 400 or so spaces that will be redeveloped or lost to change of use. 2,400 of these new spaces are proposed to be accommodated in 3 new Park & Ride sites constructed on the outskirts of the town.

3.11 A total of 1,776 parking spaces (including the 400 existing PNR spaces) are due to be lost through redevelopment proposals contained in this Plan. Therefore, of the 2,700 new spaces to be physically provided in the town centre itself, 924 of these are net additional spaces.

Future Parking Provision

3.12 The availability and location of car parking has a major influence on people's choice of means of transport. A careful balance is therefore needed to ensure that potential visitors to the town have direct and quick access to the town centre shops and services, whilst also ensuring traffic congestion remains manageable. The parking strategy proposes to achieve this balance in three key ways, two of which are directly relevant to the Area Action Plan.

1) Multi-Storey Car Parks

3.13 Policy CS15 'Transport' proposed three multi-storey car parks for the town centre. The most appropriate locations for these are on the periphery of the former ring road, at Victoria Way, New Street and Mace Lane. Their locations, on the main radial routes into the town centre, allow easy access for cars, but, crucially are just outside the former ring road thus reducing the need to travel on these routes to park. These locations are all as close as possible to, and within a short walking distance, of the Town Centre Core Quarter and therefore still allow for quick and convenient pedestrian access into the town centre.

3.14 In addition, the delivery of large amounts of car parking in multi-storey car parks allows the release of other town centre car parks for redevelopment, helping to make the best

use of valuable town centre land, e.g Vicarage Lane Car park (policy TC5) which can be released for re-development once one multi-storey car park is operational.

Victoria Way

3.15 The delivery of the 'Victoria Way' route, will provide a new link from Beaver Road in the east to Brookfield Road in the west and will play a key traffic distribution role. A multi-storey car park along this route would enable the traffic movements generated here, as a result of these improvements, to be captured. Its proposed location, south of the current footbridge over the railway provides quick and easy access into the town centre core for pedestrians.

3.16 The Parking Strategy envisages that the Victoria Way multi-storey car park will be delivered within the early stages of the plan, in tandem with the first phase of Victoria Way, running from Beaver Road to Leacon Road. This will provide 500 additional spaces (see policy TC12).

New Street

3.17 New Street provides consistent and high levels of traffic movements into the northern and western parts of the town centre on a key radial route. A multi-storey car park at New Street would harness this movement, whilst also being located outside the former ring road, helping relieve traffic congestion. Given how close it is to the northern part of the town centre, it would also help to support any redevelopment of Park Mall and pedestrian movements in this part of the town generally.

3.18 The Parking Strategy (as recently updated by the 2009 Technical Note) suggests that this car park will become operational by about 2018, and is proposed to accommodate 400 additional car parking spaces (see policy TC19).

Mace Lane

3.19 Policy CS15 and the Parking Strategy suggests that, dependent on all anticipated development coming forward before 2021, there is a possible need for a third multi-storey car park within the town centre in the final stages of the Plan period. This third multi storey car park is identified in the Town Centre Development Framework and the Parking Strategy at Mace Lane, serving the north-eastern areas of the town, and capturing traffic arriving from the east along the A292 Hythe Road. Four hundred additional spaces (200 short stay and 200 long stay) are suggested as being necessary here.

3.20 Although Mace Lane is an area which is slightly more remote from the existing main shopping area of the town centre, it still represents a location within easy walking distance of the town centre, in particular the lower High Street and Vicarage Lane areas.

3.21 It is not envisaged that the car park would be required until the end of the plan period at the earliest and then only if a further multi-storey car park proves to be required at that time.

Policy – TC21 - Multi-storey public car parks

Multi-storey public car parks are required to be delivered in the town centre before 2021 at Victoria Way(providing 500 spaces) and New Street (providing 400 spaces). Planning permission will not be granted for any alternative proposal which would prejudice the delivery of these multi-storey public car parks.

2) Public Parking in the Town Centre Core

3.22 In addition to the implementation of the Park and Ride schemes, and the delivery of the new multi-storey car parks, a small number of short-stay car parks, located inside the Town Centre Core Quarter or accessed via the former ring road, are also required to deliver the overall parking strategy. The locations of these spaces helps to sustain the viability and vitality of the town centre, allowing the most direct access to its retail and leisure offer in particular. These types of spaces can also provide easily accessible facilities for drivers with disabilities.

3.23 There are already existing public car parks at County Square, Park Mall, Edinburgh Road, Vicarage Lane, Station Road and Dover Place but most of these are due to be replaced as part of wider redevelopment proposals. The Council's approach is that some of these spaces could be re-provided as part of redevelopment proposals on these sites (except at Dover Place and Vicarage Lane) but that additional public car parking should be restricted in favour of the identified new multi-storey car parks.

3) Park and Ride

3.24 The delivery of three Park and Ride schemes on the periphery of Ashford will play a critical role in ensuring the overall success of the parking approach for the town centre. They will provide largely long stay car parking, helping to serve the level of new jobs envisaged to come forward in the town centre by 2021 and beyond. This Plan does not cover the location or delivery of these proposed Park and Ride schemes as they fall outside its boundary.

3.25 Details on the Park and Ride proposals are set out under Core Strategy Policy CS15 - 'Transport'. Further details can be found in the Parking Strategy and the 2009 Technical Note and will be forthcoming within the relevant DPD's within the emerging Ashford Local Development Framework. For reference, the relevant documents are the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD (for the Warren Park and Ride), the Cheeseman's Green and Waterbrook AAP, and the Chilmington Green / Discovery Park AAP.

Town Centre Parking Standards

3.26 Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 'Transport' requires development plans to set out maximum car parking standards for varying types of development, with the overall objective to reduce traffic congestion and encourage other, non-car, modes of transport.

3.27 The Core Strategy states that both a phased reduction in maximum parking standards, and a limit to the amount of long stay parking provision in the town centre, is required. This is primarily because of the amount of new office development envisaged, which generates a significant demand for long-stay car parking and the reduced capacity of the former ring road.

3.28 The Council accepts that maximum parking standards for retail and leisure schemes could be reduced in due course below existing PPG13 standards in the town centre due to the good access to public transport services. It is not reasonable to require reduced maximum parking standards at the current time for commercial office developments until improved and alternative transport infrastructure is in place. The phasing of the provision of Park and Ride and SMARTLINK are therefore critical factors to support commercial development. Park and Ride will provide substantial numbers of long-stay car parking spaces, reducing the need for long-stay parking in the town centre and in conjunction with the delivery of SMARTLINK will give employees the opportunity for fast and frequent transit into the town centre. Combined, these should provide an attractive alternative to long stay parking in the town centre whilst allowing for some conversion of existing long stay spaces to short stay provision.

3.29 Therefore, this Plan adopts an approach, outlined by the Parking Strategy and embodied in policy CS15 of the Core Strategy, to progressively reduce maximum parking standards below PPG13 levels and to reduce the amount of on-site spaces allowed in the town centre, once alternative parking facilities and the improved public transport to serve them is in place.

Mixed Use Development

3.30 It is likely that the majority of major developments in the Town Centre will incorporate a mixture of uses. In such cases, the Council, will seek to apply the maximum parking standards on a pro-rata basis, relating to the amount of each use being proposed. Proposals coming forward should explore the possibility of sharing spaces between uses, especially when the peak levels of use do not coincide, in order to reduce the overall on-site car parking requirement. For example, on-site, unoccupied office car parking at night, could be used by the residential element of any mixed use proposal.

Office Development

3.31 A significant level of new office development is envisaged within the town centre up until 2021. Office development generates a high demand for long stay car parking spaces, to serve the needs of the employment base created. However, as described above, a careful balance is needed as, in planning terms, long stay car parking provision in town centres should be reduced over time, as set out in policy CS15.

3.32 The current PPG13 maximum standard for office development is 1:30 sq.m. Given the need to balance the encouragement of a developing successful commercial office market in the town centre with the locational benefits of the town centre's location in respect of public transport accessibility, it is reasonable for this standard to be applied as the maximum for the time being.

3.33 However, in line with the need to progressively reduce parking standards, as set out in policy CS15 of the Core Strategy, it is proposed that maximum standards for office development in the town centre shall be reduced when alternative infrastructure and services are in place. Therefore, the maximum parking standard for office development will reduce to 1 space per 60 sq.m. on the introduction of the first Park & Ride services and 1 space per 85 sq.m. on the introduction of services from a second Park & Ride site linked by SMARTLINK bus services to the Town Centre.

Retail and Leisure Development

3.34 Large amounts of new retail and leisure development are also proposed in this Plan up to 2021. Unlike office development, retail and leisure developments generate a demand for mainly short stay car parking that will be used by several different occupiers each day. This form of parking is proposed to be primarily accommodated at the three new multi-storey car parks in the town centre.

3.35 Consistent with the overall approach, and taking account of the retail market in the town centre, the availability of short stay parking and the relative accessibility to public transport, it is proposed that a reduced standard for retail and leisure development of 1 space per 30 sq.m. should apply pending improvements to public transport and the delivery of alternative parking facilities.

3.36 This standard should then be progressively reduced to a maximum standard of 1 space per 40 sq.m. on the opening of the first town centre multi-storey car park or Park & Ride site (whichever is the earlier) and 1 space per 50 sq.m. on the opening of the second facility. (either town centre multi-storey car park or Park & Ride site, whichever is the earlier). Maximum parking standards for leisure developments in the town centre will also be progressively reduced against existing PPG13 standards. in principle, in line

with these trigger points and ration reductions but each proposal will be considered on a bespoke basis dependent on the type of leisure facility involved.

3.37 In most cases, the appropriate standard will be that which is in force at the time a decision is made on the relevant planning application. However, for larger schemes expected to be implemented over a long period of time, it is possible that a scheme (or part of it) may be implemented after a trigger point for a change in parking standards has been reached. In these circumstances, the Council will negotiate the appropriate maximum standard at which parking should be provided.

Policy TC22 - Office, Retail and Leisure parking standards

Maximum parking standards, for office and retail development, will be progressively reduced, in line with the provision of alternative infrastructure.

Office Development coming forward in the town centre will apply the following maximum standards:

1:30 sqm – before the delivery of any operational park and ride services

1:60 sqm - once one Park and Ride service is operational

1:85 sqm - once two Park and Ride services are operational

Retail development coming forward in the town centre will apply the following maximum standards

1:30 sqm - before any new multi-storey car park or park and ride service is operational

1:40 sqm- once either one multi-storey car park or one park and ride service is operational (whichever is sooner)

1:50 sqm - once either two multi-storey car parks or two park and ride services, or one of each, are operational (whichever is sooner)

Leisure developments coming forward in the town centre will apply maximum parking standards in line with PPG13 but these will also be progressively reduced on a bespoke basis in line with the retail development-related trigger points and ratio reductions above.

Residential Standards

3.38 Planning Policy Statement 3 requires Local Authorities to develop residential parking policies for their various areas, taking into account such factors as car ownership, the importance of promoting good design and the need to use land efficiently.

3.39 It is considered that maximum parking standards should be applied to all residential development coming forward within the Town Centre, given the finite and valuable nature of the land coupled with the need for higher density development within the town centre to meet the growth targets. The limited capacity of the town centre's road network, the sustainable location and the additional impact of the high speed rail services to central London due to commence in 2009 are also factors which justify this approach.

3.40 This Plan proposes to adopt an average maximum standard of 1 car parking space per residential unit for all units up to and including 3 bedrooms. For any larger residential properties in the Southern Expansion and International Station Quarters, an average

maximum standard of 1.5 parking spaces will be used whilst elsewhere the average maximum of 1 space per dwelling unit will continue to apply. This variation reflects the ability to access those two Quarters without using the former ring road and the slightly more 'edge-of-centre' location. For all residential schemes in the town centre, the Council will encourage measures such as 'car clubs' which can reduce the demand for on-site car parking and may thus help to justify a lower parking standard being applied.

3.41 In addition, where residential developments come forward as part of a mixed use scheme, proposals should demonstrate how they could share private parking spaces between the other uses proposed, especially at off-peak times, in order to lessen the number of parking spaces needed to serve the overall development.

Policy TC23 - Residential parking standards in the town centre

Proposals for residential development within the town centre shall apply an average maximum parking standard of 1 space per residential unit for all units of 3 bedrooms or fewer. Where applicable, proposals should also investigate the possibility of sharing parking spaces with other uses on-site, especially at off-peak times.

In the Southern Expansion and International Station Quarters, proposals for residential units of 4 bedrooms or more shall apply an average maximum parking standard of 1.5 spaces per dwelling. Elsewhere in the town centre, residential units of this size shall apply the average maximum standard of 1 space per residential unit.

Cycling

3.42 Cycling represents a highly sustainable and healthy mode of transport. Encouraging greater cycle use is a key aspiration for the wider Ashford Growth Area and will play an important role in achieving a successful modal shift for the Town. Appropriate cycle parking provision, within development schemes, will help to stimulate greater cycle usage within the town centre. Therefore, in relation to retail and leisure development, a minimum cycle parking standard of one cycle parking space per 10 car parking spaces, based on the overall maximum car parking demand generated from the development by the application of the maximum standards set out in policy TC23 above, will be applied and will be required to be provided on site.

3.43 For new office schemes, a more stringent standard should be applied to encourage a greater modal split as part of a Travel Plan for such developments. In these cases, 1 cycle parking space for every 5 car parking spaces should be provided as a minimum, based on the overall maximum car parking demand generated from the development by the application of the maximum standards set out in policy TC23 above, and will be required to be provided on site.

3.44 For town centre residential developments, it is also important to encourage greater cycle use through the provision of appropriate amounts and forms of cycle parking. For flatted developments, cycle parking should be provided communally in secure compounds within the development, whilst for town houses or other non-flatted forms of housing, a cycle parking facility should be provided within the curtilage of the property.

3.45 Where possible, the type of facility provided should make it possible for the frame and, if possible both wheels to be locked to the fixture without risking damage to the bicycle. The parking facility should be protected from the weather, lit at night and clearly sign-posted. Secure cycle parking will be encouraged at locations (such as railway stations) where cyclists are likely to want to park long term. Developers will be encouraged to provide shower and changing facilities for cyclists in large employment generating developments as part of an overall Travel Plan.

Policy TC24 - Cycle parking standards in the town centre

Within the town centre, proposals for retail or leisure development should apply a minimum cycle parking standard of 1 space for every 10 car parking spaces (generated by the application of the maximum car parking standards).

For new office developments, the minimum cycle parking standard shall be 1 space per 5 car parking spaces (generated by the application of the maximum car parking standards).

For new residential development, space should be provided at a minimum ratio of 0.3 cycle spaces per dwelling for flatted developments and 1 cycle space per dwelling for town-houses or other non-flatted units.

All the cycle spaces must be provided on-site.

Other Types of Development

3.46 The Council will adopt the appropriate higher level strategic guidance on parking standards, in relation to all other types of development proposed within the Town Centre. It may be appropriate to reduce the applicable standard over time as alternative transport infrastructure is provided.

Commuted Parking

3.47 Where appropriate, the non-operational parking needs of development can be provided by a system of commuted payments to finance public car parks either close to the town centre or in off centre locations such as Park and Ride sites. Government guidance also allows such contributions to be used to assist public transport, walking or cycling, where appropriate.

3.48 For new office development, the majority of the long-stay car parking requirement should be located off-site, principally at the Park and Ride sites and to a lesser degree at the proposed town centre multi-storey car parks. This is required to prevent large new private, non-residential car parks being developed in the town centre. Such car parking represents an inefficient use of valuable town centre land, is inconsistent with the aim of achieving a more sustainable modal split and is restrained by the reduced capacity of the former ring road and associated road network.

3.49 The Council believes it is appropriate for at least 50% of the overall parking requirement (inclusive of operational and non-operational parking requirements), for new office development to be commuted off site. Of the 1600 new spaces proposed at the town centre multi-storey car parks, 500 (about 30%) are scheduled to be long-stay spaces. Therefore, of the spaces that will be provided off-site to serve town centre office developments, 30% of these will be to the multi-storey car parks and 70 % to the Park and Ride sites.

3.50 As with new office development, it is not appropriate for all the parking requirements of retail and leisure developments to be provided on site. In fact, in town centres, the great majority of the parking demand for these uses are normally provided for in communal short-stay public car parks. Therefore, at least 90% of the overall parking demand for these uses should be commuted to off-site locations. This should principally be in the new proposed multi-storey town centre car parks but where this is not appropriate or deliverable, then parking may be commuted to the Park & Ride sites. As a guideline, the Council would expect at least 70% of commuted retail or leisure related spaces to be at the multi-storey car parks.

3.51 Any remaining on-site parking should therefore be confined to operational parking (including disabled spaces). In certain circumstances, this remaining parking could be made available to the general public through an appropriate charging and ticketing regime to be agreed with the Borough Council, in particular for off-peak residential use.

3.52 In accordance with policy TC25 below, the 'commuted' parking requirement will be met by a developer contribution related to the costs of providing a parking space and associated bus service at either a Park & Ride site or town centre multi-storey car park as appropriate. These contributions at 2006 prices are £5,000 per Park & Ride space and £10,000 per town centre multi-storey space. These contributions will be secured through Section 106 Agreements and will be payable on commencement of the associated development in order to enable the funds to be used to bring forward parking capacity.

3.53 Commuted payments received through the application of Policy TC25 may also be used to support the associated bus service which operates from the Park and Ride sites to the town centre, whether this is part of the SMARTLINK network or a bespoke service.

3.54 The Council's adopted commuted car parking policy allows for the return of any commuted payments plus interest to the developer if the Council has not made provision for the parking spaces covered by the payments, usually within a ten year period, In practice, the Council will seek to negotiate with developers on both the timing and phasing of commuted payments.

Policy TC25 - Commuted parking

Where retail, leisure and office development is proposed within the town centre, developers will be expected to provide the non-operational element of car parking requirement, as stipulated in policy TC22, in car parks available for public use, including new Park and Ride sites and multi-storey car parks. This will typically be achieved through appropriate agreements for commuted payments.

All office development coming forward within the town centre will provide funding for a minimum of 50% of the overall proposed parking requirement off site to be provided at the proposed Park and Ride sites (70%) and town centre multi-storey car parks (30%).

All retail / leisure development coming forward within the town centre will provide funding for a minimum of 90% of the overall proposed parking requirement to be provided at the proposed multi-storey car parks (minimum 70%) and Park and Ride sites (maximum 30%).

Management arrangements for on-site parking facilities will be required to be agreed by the Council where general public use is promoted, to ensure appropriate hours of opening, tariff and levels of public access.

In appropriate cases, the Council may seek to use commuted payments to assist public transport, walking or cycling to access the development. Where the Council has used forward funding to provide off-site public car parking in advance of development coming, commuted payments may also be used to repay such forward funding.

Green space / protected areas

Green Corridors

3.55 The Town Centre is bounded to the east and the south by the corridors of the Great Stour and East Stour rivers. These attractive river corridors provide a contrast with the urban townscape by offering a softer environment in the heart of the town. They also have various important functions as a large proportion of the town centre's public recreational open space and a network of pedestrian and cycle routes throughout the town. These natural 'green corridors' also include valuable nature conservation areas and act as wildlife corridors by linking urban habitats with the countryside beyond.

3.56 The existing Borough Local Plan identified a series of 'Green Corridors' that passed through Ashford with the objective of retaining their open character and enhancing their contribution to the environment. In April 2000, the Council produced a Green Corridor Action Plan, which forms adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance to the saved Local Plan policies EN13 & EN14. The Action Plan sets out proposals for improving the riverside environment and it is intended that this SPG will be updated and superseded by subsequent SPD, as referred to in policy CS18a of the adopted Core Strategy, in due course, but in the meantime the SPG remains extant.

3.57 This will reiterate the need to make sure that Town Centre riverside spaces form the focus for active frontages and enhance the overall legibility of the river corridor through the centre of Ashford, ensuring that future development responds positively to the opportunities of a riverside frontage.

3.58 The roles that the river corridors play has been reviewed through the Green and Blue Grid Strategy (2008). The Strategy took forward the principle of a 'Green Necklace' for the Ashford Growth Area that is reflected in the adopted Core Strategy (Fig. 2, para. 14.9 and policy CS18a) and highlighted the role of the river corridors in the town centre. [35]

3.59 The Green and Blue Grid Strategy suggested that the Town Centre is the most critical part of the whole Grid, given that it represents the key hub of activity and destination for the 'human' users of the Grid. The Town Centres Green corridors are a vital asset, providing a basis for encouraging a network of footpaths and cycle-ways, free from vehicular traffic, complementing the overall desire to improve the Town Centres overall accessibility, and the desire to encourage non-car modes of travel in and around the Town. Overall, therefore, this Plan should seek to continue the established role of the Green Corridors through the town centre.

3.60 Given the Green Corridors' important and varied role, it is considered that they should be protected, maintained and where possible enhanced. Therefore, any development coming forward within the green corridors as indicated on the proposals map, will normally be limited to uses which are considered ancillary to their function and role, such as access for pedestrians and cyclists and suitable leisure facilities.

3.61 Other forms of development will not normally be permitted, unless there are overriding planning benefits, and it can be demonstrated there would be no significant harm to the Green Corridor's environment, including its visual amenity, overall function and nature conservation value.

3.62 In addition, areas adjoining the Green Corridors are also important as they can have a significant effect on the character and appearance of the Green Corridors themselves. Therefore, development proposals on land adjoining the Green Corridors in the town centre will need to demonstrate how they make a positive contribution to the setting and appearance of the Corridors through their design and architecture. Buildings should

35 Ashford Green and Blue Grid, Strategy, 2009

be orientated so that they present their main facade to the Green Corridor and new pedestrian / cycleway routes that improve accessibility into and through the Corridors will be encouraged.

POLICY TC26 - Green Corridors in the Town Centre

The protection and enhancement of the Town Centre's Green Corridors is a key objective.

Development proposals within these identified Corridors will be permitted, providing it would be compatible with, or ancillary to, their principal open space use or other existing uses within them, and it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not harm the overall environment, biodiversity, visual amenity or functioning of the Corridor.

Other forms of development proposals, including those relating to an existing use within the Corridor, will not be permitted, unless:-

1) it would be in accordance with a site specific policy in this Plan, or,

2) there are overriding planning benefits, and it can be demonstrated there would be no significant harm to the environment, biodiversity, visual amenity and functioning of the Corridor.

Development coming forward on land adjoining the Town Centre Green Corridors shall make a positive contribution to the biodiversity value, setting, role, accessibility and amenity value of the Corridors.

Open Space, Recreation, Sport and Play

3.63 Recreation, sport and play help to enrich the quality of the lives of local residents and play a key role in enhancing many public places, parks and green spaces. The Town Centre currently includes Memorial Gardens, Vicarage Field and East Stour Park, as areas of 'designated open space'. The latter falls within the Green Corridor. In addition, Victoria Park, Bowen's Field, and Watercress Fields, all within the Green Corridor, lie just outside the Town Centre area boundary to the south. Victoria Park is one of the main strategic public open spaces referred to in Chapter 14 of the Core Strategy and plays a key role in meeting the open space requirements, and needs, of town centre residents.

3.64 In 2008, the Council produced a PPG17 audit which concluded that the Town Centre was deficient in the provision of recreational facilities, outdoor sports areas and children's play areas (with the exception of Victoria Park). This existing deficiency is likely to be exacerbated as the town centre expands and the local population increases. Therefore, it is critical to protect and enhance the existing public open spaces within and adjoining the town centre and improve the accessibility of these areas from within the town centre. This approach is reflected in Core Strategy policy CS18 'Meeting the Community's Needs'.

3.65 Despite this deficiency, this Plan does not seek to extend any existing open spaces within the town centre. This is primarily due to the limited physical space available in the Town Centre for new development and the need to accommodate relatively high density development in order to achieve the scale and mix of development needed to meet the targets in policy CS3 of the Core Strategy.

3.66 In relation to indoor sports provision, it is assumed that this demand will be met by the Stour Centre and its possible future expansion.

3.67 Whilst strategic recreation and open space facilities are to be provided via the proposed strategic tariff (see policy CS8 of the Core Strategy), policy CS18 of the Core Strategy establishes the principle that local recreation or play facilities should normally be provided on-site. However, for development sites in the town centre, it is likely that only relatively small amounts of open space provision will be able to come forward and their practical value will be limited by their size. This is unlikely to provide sufficient open space to meet the needs arising from the development and so an approach which seeks appropriate off-site provision or in-lieu financial contributions from the developer will be required. Such a scenario is identified in para. 14.10 of the Core Strategy. These contributions should ensure that the necessary equipped public open space can be provided within a reasonable walking distance, or that improvements can be made to the range of play facilities on an existing area of open space to allow for more intensive use.

3.68 The current Borough Local Plan includes saved policies on the appropriate standards for the provision of equipped public open space, play facilities and 'on-site' leisure / sporting facilities (policies LE5, LE7 and LE8). A starting point in relation to the likely scale of off-site financial contributions, is reflected within the adopted 'Developer Contributions / Planning Applications', Supplementary Planning Guidance, 2001.

3.69 These policies should continue to apply to new developments in the town centre where residential units are proposed until the extant SPG is superseded by a SPD based on the updated evidence from the PPG17 audit.

POLICY TC27 - Open Space, Recreation, Sport & Play facilities

Within the Town Centre area boundary, where on-site provision for open space, play or sporting facilities cannot be provided at an appropriate level to meet the needs of the development, a financial contribution will be sought to provide the remaining provision, off-site. Proposals must demonstrate that this off-site provision is situated in an appropriate and accessible location, and that it meets of the needs arising from the development based on the standards applicable at the time.

4 Implementation

Introduction

4.1 The delivery of the Ashford Growth Area agenda requires concerted input from a wide range of public and private sector agencies. Many of the challenges faced affect the town centre. This Plan has set out various infrastructure / projects which need to come forward to successfully deliver an expanded and enhanced town centre. These include:

- Public realm improvements, both strategic and on-site
- Multi-storey car parks
- The new Victoria Way
- Park and Rides sites on the periphery of the Town
- The Learning Link

4.2 This Chapter explains how these and other projects / programmes are currently being delivered and how they will come forward in the future. This Chapter also sets out the delivery mechanisms.

Implementation / delivery mechanisms

The Strategic Tariff

4.3 The Core Strategy (policy CS8) introduces a strategic tariff that will help fund certain strategic infrastructure and projects in the Ashford Growth Area. This will apply to residential accommodation in the town centre at a level to be set in the Infrastructure Contributions SPD. The Core Strategy explains that employment and retail uses will not pay the strategic tariff but that contributions to a programme of town centre public realm enhancements are likely to be sought from employment and retail developments in the Town Centre. Detailed guidance will be produced on this, in the Infrastructure Contributions SPD, taking account of the objectives of the Public Realm Strategy but also the ability of such developments to fund such works.

Site-specific Section106 contributions

4.4 Currently, all contributions from development towards infrastructure needs arising are collected through site-related s106 agreements. Even when the Strategic Tariff is introduced, and certain infrastructure is produced through that mechanisms as Policy CS8 makes clear, the strategic tariff will not replace the need for dedicated planning (ie Section106) agreements, as they will remain necessary to deliver specific site-related contributions which are not covered by the Strategic Tariff.

4.5 A good example of this is public realm improvements. It is expected that development projects will deliver the necessary on-site public realm improvements in line with the parameters set out in the site policy and other relevant policies including upgrading the pavement areas along adjoining highways. Schemes coming forward as windfall development will also need to deliver equivalent public realm improvements. All allocated sites and significant windfall sites will also need to provide public art works on-site (or contribute funding to more strategic works in the wider town centre). More detailed advice will be contained within the Town Centre Design SPD.

Ashford's Future Partnership Board and the Ashford's Future Company

4.6 The Ashford's Future Partnership Board brings together leaders from key organisations in the region to work together to deliver the growth area. The Borough Council is a key player but the Board is independent of the Council. All planning decisions remain the responsibility of the local planning authority (in the vast majority of cases, the Borough Council). The Partnership Board agrees a Programme for Development – revised each year – which establishes the key projects going forward and their funding.

4.7 Ashford's Future Company Limited is the delivery arm of the Ashford Future Partnership Board. It has been established to drive forward an ambitious programme of infrastructure projects to enable longer term growth opportunities and re-position Ashford as a new economic anchor in Kent, and also to co ordinate the wider framework of partner activity.

4.8 The Company was formed by its Founding Members, namely Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, SEEDA and the Homes and Communities Agency. It has a private sector Chairman and three other private sector directors on its Board.

4.9 In support of the economic growth of Ashford the partnership has identified that expanding and enhancing the Town Centre is one of its four key sub-programmes.

4.10 Overall the company is able to: enable and promote the Partnership's projects, hold, manage and develop assets, enter into contracts to deliver infrastructure and channel tariff, growth area and other funding (at the discretion of the Ashford's Future Partnership Board) to deliver projects for which it is responsible.

4.11 There are various funding streams on which the Partnership and the Company can partially draw, highlighted below:

• Growth Area Funding (GAF) from the Department for Communities and Local Government, via the Homes and Communities Agency

• Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF), a joint Communities and Local Government and Department for Transport funding stream

• The Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF), sponsored by SEERA and SEEDA

• In due course there will be contributions to infrastructure via the Strategic Tariff, through section 106 agreements between developers and the local planning authority

• Income from assets and investments

• Contributions from founding partners eg HCA and SEEDA and other partners e.g. the Learning and Skills Council

Business Plan

4.12 The Company has developed a business plan, approved by the Partnership Board, which sets out its contribution to the Programme for Development, providing a clear view of what it intends to do, how it intends to do it and the funding mechanisms to support the activities mentioned. The first business plan runs until 2011. The Plan will be monitored and updated yearly but with sufficient flexibility to respond in year to changing circumstances.

4.13 The total programme to the end of 2010/11 has attracted £26 million of Growth Funds, £16m of Community Infrastructure Funds and £15m of Regional Infrastructure Funds (CIF and RIF subject to confirmation in March 2009). This represents a total investment package of £57m to 2010/11, which is forecast to unlock private sector investment in

the region of £300million. How this money is related to the various projects in the Town Centre is highlighted below.

Cost Plan

4.14 The Company is continuing to develop an Infrastructure Cost and Funding Plan setting out the required infrastructure to deliver a sustainable community within Ashford, up until 2031, based on the Core Strategy.

4.15 In the town centre and elsewhere, this will be funded by a combination of growth and other dedicated funding streams (CIF/RIF and other grant funding), mainstream public sector funding, and from the private sector either directly or through strategic tariff contributions, or other section 106 agreements.

4.16 The Infrastructure Contributions SPD will outline the mechanisms for securing developer contributions for site-related and strategic infrastructure. The final form of this SPD will be influenced by the emerging proposals for a national Community Infrastructure Levy. This SPD will rely on a robust Infrastructure Cost and Funding Plan as a firm evidence base to justify the level of tariff, and the projects this income will fund. The timing for providing such infrastructure will also be modelled so that constraints to development can be removed – for example, by making funding bids and/ or seeking forward funding from other sources, to be repaid from strategic tariff in due course.

Monitoring

4.17 Both the Ashford's Future Partnership Board and Company will monitor the delivery of the programme, for example through the Business Plan. The Company will also review overall performance and benefits arising, in particular how delivery of key infrastructure impacts on a) policy requirements, such as sustainability and quality of life standards, and b) targets such as the 28,000 jobs and 31,000 homes targets between 2001 and 2031.

4.18 The Borough Council has a statutory duty to monitor this Plan - as set out in the Monitoring Chapter - and will link its monitoring of development to the work of the Partnership Board.

Major Town Centre investment underway or completed

1) Ring Road

4.19 The transformation of Ashford's inner ring road into a two-way town centre road system was completed in Autumn 2008. This project has created the opportunity for a series of well used, mixed use main streets as a basis for the town centre's growth. Elwick Road, West Street and Bank Street have been changed into 'shared spaces' with a focus on a fine new public space at Elwick Square.

2) Public sector investment in important sites in the Town Centre

4.20 Since 2004, the regional development agency, SEEDA and the Homes and Communities Agency have been bringing into public ownership a number of strategically important sites to facilitate regeneration of the town centre and lever in significant private sector investment.

4.21 Elwick Place – A large proportion of this site is owned by SEEDA who are working with a development partner to bring forward a major mixed use development, linking the station area to Bank Street and County Square.

4.22 The Commercial Quarter – SEEDA has assembled land in this area so that there can be a comprehensive approach to creating the major new business centre planned here.

This area is the key area for employment growth in the Town Centre and the public and private sectors will together bring forward the development planned.

3) Victoria Way

4.23 Victoria Way will help to release the regeneration potential of the Southern Expansion Quarter. Funding from the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) has been sought and the project is proceeding to planning application and tender. The first phase of this important new through route will be further enhanced at a later stage as development takes place to ultimately provide a quality 24m street corridor. Where the redevelopment of sites adjoining the Victoria Way corridor deliver public realm enhancements as part of their redevelopment proposals, financial contributions will not be sought to the public realm improvement fund.

4) The Learning Link

4.24 Options for a much improved pedestrian and cycle bridge linking the town Centre Core via the gateway to Elwick Place to the new Southern Expansion Quarter's developments to the south of the railway will be developed through a feasibility study and design competition using Growth Area Funding. Various sources of funding for the capital works will be needed, including development contributions for public realm improvements.

5) Park and Ride & SMARTLINK

4.25 As referred to in the Parking section of the AAP, Park and Ride sites will need to play a key role in meeting the future demand for spaces in the Town Centre. GAF funding has been secured to aid the delivery of the town's first Park & Ride, (due to be operational by 2012, subject to further funding). This Park and Ride will be served by SMARTLINK, the rapid bus transit system.

6) Multi-Storey Car Parks

4.26 Victoria Way - The first multi storey car park envisaged to come forward. This is likely to be delivered as part of the comprehensive development of the Powergen North site.

4.27 New Street and Mace Lane – The Parking Strategy suggests that New St should be operational towards the later period of the Plan, with Mace Lane likely to come forward at the end of or shortly after the Plan period. Both of these car parks are envisaged to come forward as part of a comprehensive development on these sites.

4.28 However monies from other sources may be needed to help secure these important pieces of infrastructure. This will be prioritised as part of the monitoring of the Infrastructure Cost and Funding Plan.

7) Public Realm & Public Art

4.29 Strategic improvements to the Town Centre Public Realm will be delivered through either tariff funding, in particular the contributions from employment and retail development towards the town centre public realm improvement fund, as set out in Policy CS8, or public funding.

4.30 Some publicly funded improvements are underway (e.g. at Latitude Walk). However many of the improvements needed, such as the works planned to the ‘Station Approach’, will be delivered as part of the redevelopment coming forward on adjacent allocated or windfall sites. For example, the Commercial Quarter will deliver works planned to 'Station Approach' / 'Station Square' and the Southern Expansion Quarter will deliver the necessary enhancements to Victoria Way.

4.31 All allocated sites (and other major sites that may emerge) will be expected to bring forward public realm improvements associated with the site in question, and also public art. In order to secure this, a Section106 agreement will be drawn up in line with specific requirements for the site in question. The principal issues are identified in this Plan but more detailed guidance will come forward in the Town Centre Design SPD and as site designs are worked up by applicants.

8) Station Improvements

4.32 A station refurbishment programme, in conjunction with South-Eastern Trains, will precede the launch of the full high speed domestic services, in December 2009. This includes an extended booking hall and better cycle and public transport facilities. This investment will help to kick start the longer term vision for the 'Station Approach / Station Square'.

9) Promoting Art and Culture

4.33 Improving cultural and artistic opportunities through the refurbishment of St Mary's Church is an important project and another element of Ashford's growth. Growth Area Funds are helping to deliver this project to broaden the town's cultural offer and help make the town a more attractive place to live and work.

10) Media / Technology Centre

4.34 Provisional funding is available for an Enterprise/New Media and Innovation Centre in the town centre, to provide incubator accommodation and support for new commercial businesses, especially in New Media and other knowledge economy sectors. The Centre will promote the use of fibre optic broadband and create linkages with Higher Education providers.

11) Community Schemes

4.35 As referred to in the Business Plan, there is a commitment by the Council and the Ashford's Future Company to:

• Work with the Learning and Skills Council and South Kent College to ensure the delivery of the Ashford Learning Campus

• help provide community and cultural facilities, including:

- Gateway 'Library Plus';
- The Primary Care Trust's Kings Avenue development;
- Voluntary Sector facilities – a sum has been set aside from Government Growth Area Funding to refurbish existing facilities through Community Chest grants, whilst the cost plan includes a longer term aim to develop a town centre based voluntary community sector hub.

• Explore the potential for a new large performance venue within the town centre.

12) Flood Alleviation Measures

4.36 The Environment Agency has recently carried out work to assess the potential for a flood wall to protect a large area of the International Station Quarter from the risk of flooding. These works could also benefit a number of existing homes in the area that are susceptible to flooding. The financial assessment of benefits of providing the flood wall are not so compelling that this would be a high priority for public investment when judged against other needs in the region. It is anticipated that developer funding, contributions from businesses affected and other potential funding sources can be brought together to enable the works to be commissioned.

Market Advice on Deliverability

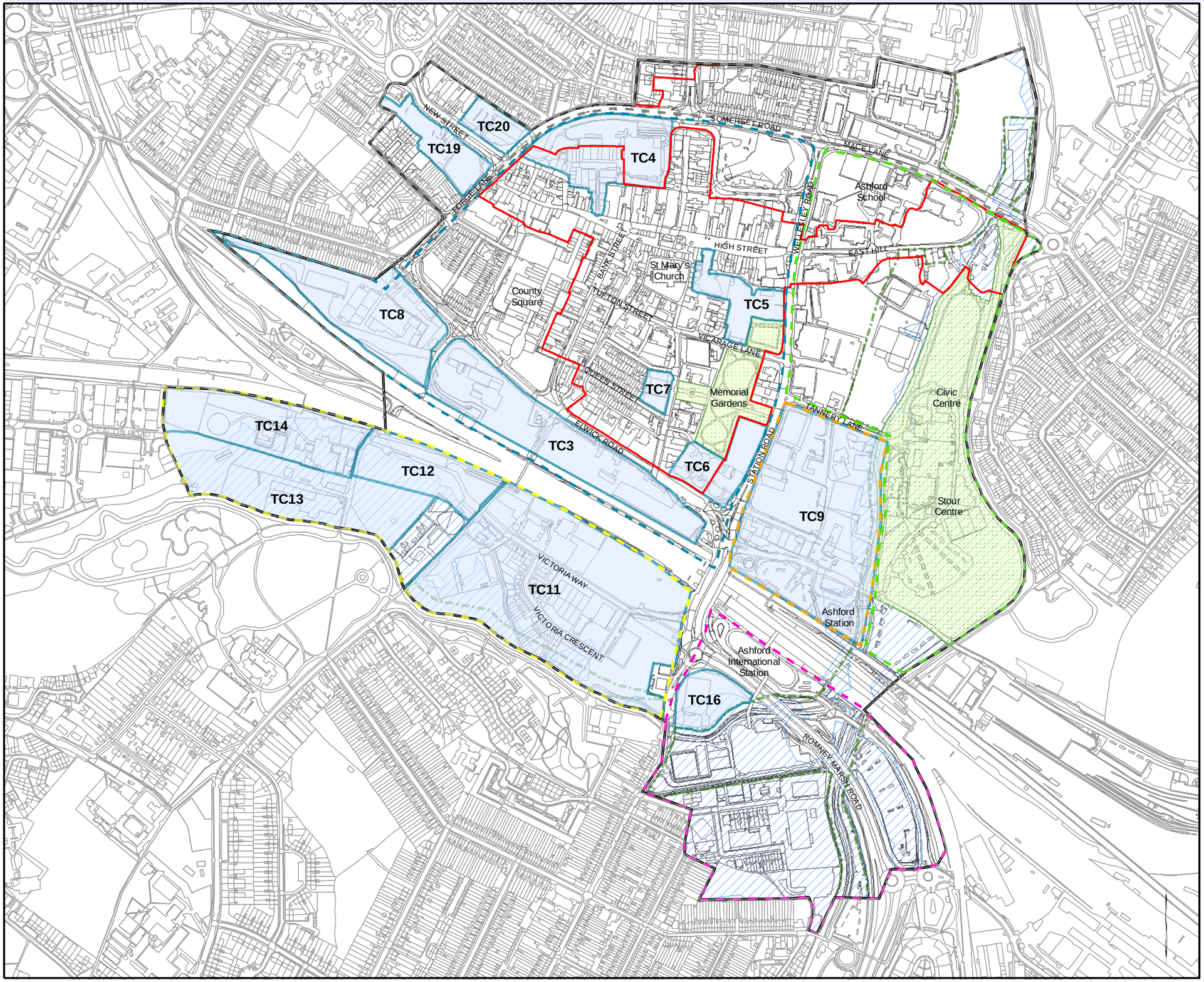
4.37 The Council has sought recent advice from the commercial consultants, Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) [36], on the deliverability of the main constituent elements of the AAP, both in general and across the various Quarters. Understandably, given the current exceptional economic conditions which are significantly different to those experienced during the preparation and Examination of the Core Strategy, JLL have some doubts as to whether, it is likely that the overall quantum of commercial and residential development proposed in the AAP will be delivered by 2021.

4.38 However, JLL are confident that the town centre will be able to deliver these quantums of development when market conditions have improved and the effects of the population growth of the town and investment in infrastructure are taken into account. There is good reason to anticipate that the step change in the Ashford economy that is required to drive the sustainable growth of the town can be achieved, following the catalyst of the commencement of high speed rail services to London in mid December 2009.

4.39 The Borough Council is also preparing an Economic Development Strategy that will assess in more detail the issues that need to be addressed in order to prepare the town for the market and set out proposals and actions to complement the planning and development policies encompassed in this AAP.

36 Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan Market Review, JLL, February 2009

Ashford Town Centre AAP Proposals Map



Key:

- Town Centre Boundary
- Development Site Proposals
- Floodzone 3 (1 in 100 year return period)

Conservation Policies

- Conservation Area

Recreation and Leisure Policies

- Green Corridor POLICY TC26
- Public Open Spaces POLICY TC27

Town Centre Quarter Policies

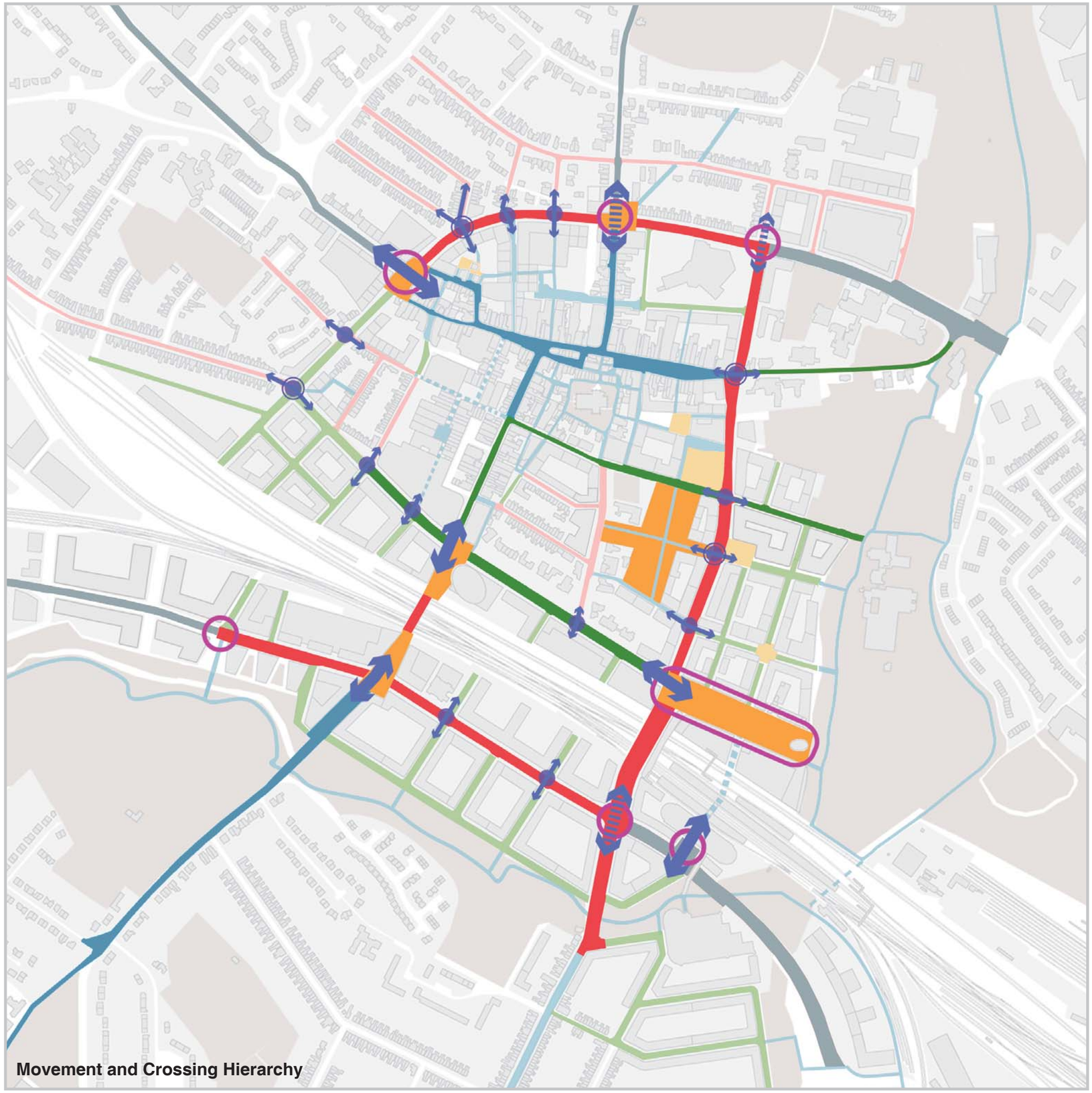
- Town Centre Core POLICY TC2
- Commercial Quarter POLICY TC9
- Southern Expansion Quarter POLICY TC10
- International Station Quarter POLICY TC15
- Civic Quarter POLICY TC17
- Residential Transition Quarter POLICY TC18

n.b. please also refer to Local Plan 2000 Town Centre Inset Map to view relevant saved policies.

0 80 160 320 Metres

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Movement and Crossing Hierarchy

PRINCIPAL ROUTES

- Principal Streets
- Principal Pedestrian Priority Street
- Principal Pedestrian Route

PRINCIPAL SPACES

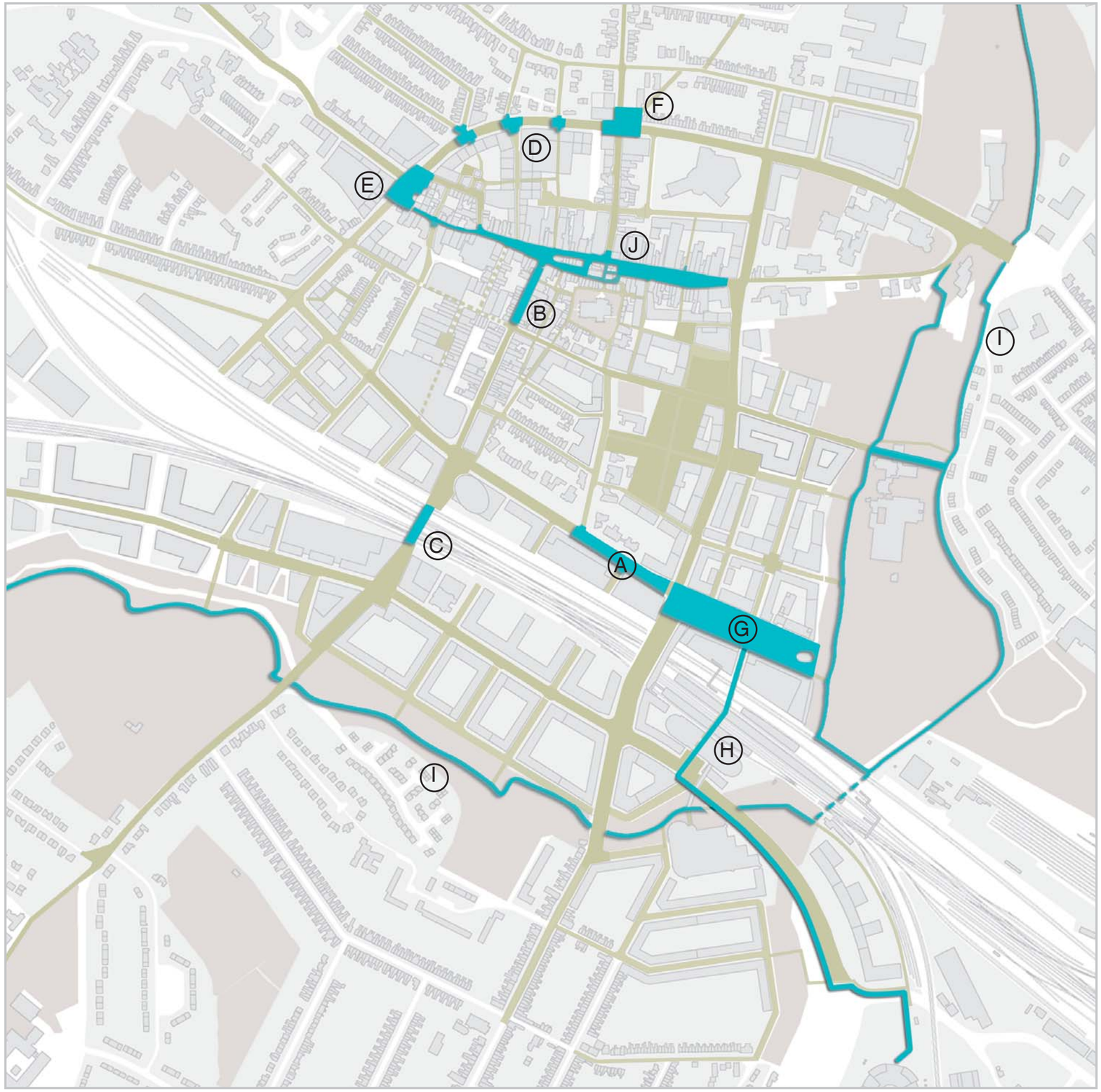
- Principal Public Space

SECONDARY ROUTES + SPACES

- Secondary Streets
- Secondary Pedestrian Priority Street
- Secondary Pedestrian Route
- Secondary Public Space
- Gateway Space

MISCELLANEOUS

- Space as crossing points
- Junction as crossing points
- Primary neighbourhood links as crossing points
- Secondary neighbourhood links as crossing points
- Internal Pedestrian Route
- Main Vehicular Approach Routes



Public Realm Priorities

The following public realm improvements are proposed (not identified in priority order):

A - Elwick Road East - A high quality, pedestrian friendly street linking the key route between the rail station and the town centre core of a quality which sits comfortably alongside the shared space scheme.

B - Upper Bank Street – Completes the enhancement of this key pedestrianised shopping street, linking with the retail heart of the town, by complementing the character established in lower section of Bank Street.

C – Footbridge – An attractive, safe and direct link between the town centre core and south Ashford which complements the public spaces at Elwick Square and Victoria Square.

D – Somerset Road – To mend the broken pedestrian links between the historic core and the residential areas to the north.

E – New Street Square – A new, high quality public space which improves access by foot into the town centre core and defines the place as a key entrance point to the town.

F – North Street Square - A new, high quality public space emphasising the historic gateway into the town and improving accessibility between the town centre and residential areas to the north.

G - Station Square – The point of arrival to the town centre - a major new public space which also acts as a busy public transport interchange, providing a positive sense of arrival to the town and connection with the town centre core.

H – Station Quarter – Connections between the domestic rail station, international station and Designer Outlet Centre and linking efficiently with the town centre.

I – Green Corridors – Attractive, well appointed green routes for increased footfall and cycle movement along the river corridors with strong links into the town centre.

J – High Street – Sensitive improvements to the historic character of the High Street in a manner which reinforces its strong identity as a key contributor to the vitality to the town centre.

7 Monitoring and Review

7.1 Monitoring will play a critical part in identifying any requirement for a review of the Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan as a result of national, regional or local circumstances. It will also enable early action to be taken to overcome any barriers to delivery of the Plan's objectives and/or proposals and policies.

7.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) every year and this will be the main mechanism for assessing the progress being made towards delivering the targets and objectives set out in the Area Action Plan.

7.3 There are two different types of indicator that are used to monitor policies, these are **Core output indicators**, which are mandatory for all Local Planning Authorities, and **Local indicators** that have been developed to monitor particular local circumstances and issues. Two of the indicators used in the AMR, which are specific to the Town Centre AAP require updating in response to this Plan.

Core output indicator: Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development in Ashford Town Centre between 2006 and 2021

Retail/ leisure uses: up to 57,700 sq.m. net
Commercial use 93,000 sq.m. net

Local indicator: Number of net additional dwellings completed per annum within Ashford Town Centre between 2006 and 2021

Total net new housing: 2750 dwellings
Affordable housing component: 825 dwellings

The anticipated phasing of the housing development in the town centre has been set out in the housing trajectory in the AMR. Once this AAP is adopted and individual sites thereby become allocated, it is the Council's intention to reflect these sites as individual elements in the housing trajectory table.

7.4 The estimates of housing completions are based on evidence and discussions with land owners, but housing completions will obviously be subject to market conditions. Clear delivery mechanisms are identified in the Plan but any short term under achievement of housing completions on these sites is likely to be accommodated by the overall context of housing provision set out in the Core Strategy.

7.5 Four further local indicators are required to monitor the progress of AAP policies and will be added to the AMR:-

Policy TC21

- At least 1200 new multi-storey public car parking spaces in the town centre by 2021.

Policy TC25

- Office development within the town centre will provide funding for a minimum of 50% of the overall proposed parking requirement off site.
- Retail / leisure development within the town centre will provide funding for a minimum of 90% of the overall proposed parking requirement off site.

7.6 Most indicators included in the AMR have been designed to monitor spatial strategy policies, and are relevant to all of the Local Development Framework Documents. As it is an aim to deliver the Town Centre development in a sustainable way the indicators

in the list below will be used to assess the Town Centre. At present these are borough wide or wider area targets but in future the contribution of Town Centre development towards the target will be monitored separately.

Indicator	Type of Indicator	Existing Target
Number of additional jobs created within the Town Centre 2001 - 2021	Local	8,000
Percentage of new homes meeting the relevant code for sustainable homes standard as set out in Policy CS10	Local	100%
Percentage of new non-residential buildings meeting the appropriate BREEAM standard and credits set out in Policy CS10	Local	100%
Reduction in average household water consumption (over existing consumption levels) in new developments	Local	30% to 2010 50% post 2010
Percentage of Carbon Dioxide Emissions reduced from new major developments for: CS3 Town Centre	Local	Target for 2007 - 2014 is 20%+
Amount of existing tourism lost (unless satisfactory replacement facilities are provided) and new tourism facilities gained as a result of new development	Local	To minimise loss of existing tourism facilities
Amount of existing public recreation, sports, children's play, leisure, cultural, school and adult education, youth, health, public service and community facilities lost (unless satisfactory replacement facilities are provided) and gained as a result of new development.	Local	No Net Loss
Percentage of new homes (on major sites) with a SUDS feature in accordance with the SUDS strategy	Local	100%

8 Glossary

This section explains some of the technical terms, documents and organisations referred to in the Town Centre Area Action Plan

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR): The Council is required to produce an AMR each year to assess the performance and effects of the LDF

Area Action Plan (AAP): A type of Development Plan Document focused upon a specific location or an area subject to conservation or significant change (such as major regeneration).

Ashford Growth Area: Term relating to Ashford town including its proposed expansion areas. Ashford has been identified by the Government as one of four major growth areas in the Sustainable Communities Plan.

Ashford urban area: The existing built-up parts of Ashford town.

Ashford's Future: Ashford's Future is a partnership of local councils, government agencies and others from the public and private sector. The partners are able to bring their own expertise and resources in their own areas of responsibility, to address the growth of Ashford under the Sustainable Communities Plan. This allows Ashford to maintain local democratic control of many aspects of the project with the help and support of others. For further details please view www.ashfordbestplaced.co.uk

Borough Local Plan: The Ashford Borough Local Plan was formally adopted by the Borough Council in June 2000. It sets out a framework of plans and policies to guide the development and use of land in the Borough. It is in the process of being replaced by the Local Development Framework.

By Design: Better practice guidance produced by the Government in 2000 which aims to promote higher standards in urban design.

Community Strategy: A document setting out a vision for the Ashford Borough community, produced for the Local Strategic Partnership of key local agencies. For more information, see chapter 1 of the Core Strategy.

Conservation area: Areas formally identified by local planning authorities for having special architectural or historic interest, which can be subject to stricter planning controls.

Design and Access Statement: A document which must accompany most types of planning applications explaining the design process for a development and providing details on how it can be accessed by everyone, including elderly or disabled people.

Development Plan Document (DPD): A key local planning document forming an essential part of the Local Development Framework. DPDs include the Core Strategy, site-specific allocations of land, Area Action Plans (where needed), and the Proposals Map. DPDs form part of the statutory development plan. All DPDs are subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Examination in Public (EIP): The public examination of a Structure Plan or Regional Spatial Strategy by an independent panel of Inspectors.

Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF): An important supporting document to Ashford's Local Development Framework, which sets out options for the growth of the town up to 2031. The GADF reflects findings from an extensive programme of consultation events, studies and plan-making undertaken during the course of 2004 and early 2005.

Greenfield land: Land, often farmland, that has not previously been developed.

Green & Blue Grid Strategy: The Green & Blue gird is the overarching strategy for the approach to the living network of green and blue spaces for people and nature across the borough.

Highway Authority: The authority responsible for maintaining the local highway network other than trunk roads and motorways. Kent County Council is the Highway Authority for the Ashford area.

Highways Agency: An executive agency of the Department of Transport, responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network of England.

Housing Needs Survey: A study to examine the housing requirements for the communities and households of the Borough. The Ashford Housing Needs Study was published in 2005.

Infrastructure: A summary term for facilities and services required to support development, including water supply, sewage and waste water treatment, electricity, highways, cycle routes, public transport, health and education services, community facilities, open spaces, parks, sports pitches, play areas, etc.

Kent and Medway Structure Plan: The Structure Plan for Kent and Medway, jointly produced by Kent County Council and Medway Council, which sets out the strategic planning framework for the protection of the environment, major transport priorities, and the scale, pattern and broad location of new development including provision for new housing and major economic development across Kent and Medway. The plan was adopted in July 2006.

Listed Building: A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building, and any buildings or permanent structures within the curtilage. English Heritage is responsible for designating buildings for listing in England.

Local Development Document (LDD): The collective term for documents forming part of the Local Development Framework, which include Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Local Development Framework (LDF): A term used to describe a folder of documents, which includes all the local planning authority's Local Development Documents, including the Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents, and the Statement of Community Involvement amongst others. More details about Ashford's LDF are in the introduction to the Core Strategy.

Local Transport Plan: A plan produced by Kent County Council which sets out how their transport vision will be achieved over a five-year period and outlines the funding required from Government to achieve this vision.

Parking Strategy: A background document to the Town Centre AAP (See Appendix 2 of this document)

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG): A series of documents issued by central government setting out national land use policies for England on different areas of planning. These are gradually being replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPS).

Planning Policy Statements (PPS): A series of statements issued by central government to replace the existing Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes.

Previously Developed Land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings) and associated fixed-surface infrastructure. The definition applies to the curtilage of the development. A detailed definition can be found in PPG3.

Proposals Map: An essential component of a Local Development Framework, showing the location of proposals in all current Development Plan Documents, on an Ordnance Survey base map.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) & the South East Plan: The replacement for Regional Planning Guidance. The RSS identifies the scale and distribution of new housing in the region, indicates areas for regeneration, expansion or sub-regional planning and specifies priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. The RSS for the South East is the South East Plan, adopted May 2009.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL): A housing association or a not-for-profit company registered by the Housing Corporation to provide social housing.

Section 106 Agreement: A legal agreement under section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act. S106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken.

SMARTLINK: A high quality, bus-based transport system proposed to link the many parts of Ashford, including the growth areas, to the town centre.

Special Landscape Area: A local, non-statutory designation protecting areas with higher quality, locally distinctive landscapes.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI): A key document within the Local Development Framework prepared by the Council, which sets out how the local community and stakeholders will be involved in the preparation of LDF documents. It also sets out arrangements for involving the community when considering planning applications and major proposals for developments.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): An environmental assessment of plans and programmes, including Development Plan Documents.

Strategic Tariff: A charge to be placed on developments in the Borough to help pay for the costs of strategic infrastructure needed to support new development. Further details are set out in chapter 8 of the Core Strategy.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): A Local Development Document that adds further detail to policies and proposals in a 'parent' Development Plan Document. Unlike Development Plan Documents, SPDs do not form part of the statutory development plan. Examples in Ashford will include SPDs on Design Codes and the Strategic Tariff.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): The equivalent of a Supplementary Planning Document under the old Local Plan system.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA): An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

Sustainable Communities Plan: A report published by the Government in 2003 which identified Ashford as one of four areas in the UK where major growth should take place.

Town Centre Development Framework: A background document to the Town Centre Area Action Plan, which sets out what kind of place the town centre should become by 2031. It is led by a vision and defines objectives for sustainable growth and regeneration of the town centre. It also outlines significant projects, phasing, delivery, and an implementation programme to guide regeneration and development.

Urban Capacity Study: A study undertaken to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within an urban area.

Windfall: A site, usually for housing, which is not specifically allocated for development in a development plan, but comes forward for development during the lifetime of the plan.

Appendix 1 - Schedule of superseded adopted Local Plan Policies

The following Borough Local Plan policies will be replaced by policies within the AAP:

Adopted Local Plan Policy to be replaced	Replacement Town Centre Action Plan Policy
EN6	TC1
S1	TC3 & TC2
S2	TC6
S3	TC9
S4	TC5 & TC17
S9	TC11 & TC16
S10	TC11
S11	TC17
S42	TC15
TP12	TC22
TP13	TC22
TP15	TC25

The following Borough Local Plan policies will be deleted once the AAP is adopted, as they are no longer relevant:

- S6, S7, HG17, TP5, TP9, TP14

Borough Local Plan policies EN13 and EN14 are not wholly replaced by policy TC26 as they continue to apply outside the Town Centre area. However, within the Town Centre area, policy TC26 shall take precedence if there is a conflict between it and policies EN13 and / or EN14.

Appendix 2 - A list of the Town Centre Action Plans supporting studies

Ashford's Capacity: A Handbook for Change (2003): This report presents the Quality of Life Capital approach, identifying thresholds and issues to help define growth.

Ashford's Future Parking Strategy (Nov 2006): A report setting out the proposed parking Strategy for the Ashford Growth Area reflecting and supporting the Town Centre Development Framework and Action Plan and including an implementation strategy for Park and Ride and new Town Centre parking provision.

Ashford's Future Parking Technical Note (March 2009): This document reviews and updates the approved Car Parking Strategy (2006), it reflects the development proposals in the Area Action Plan, and the revised demand modelling outputs.

Ashford's Future - Priorities for Growth (2005): The 'Priorities for Growth' document describes the range of economic activities and investments that are necessary to deliver sustainable communities in Ashford, including 31,000 new homes and 28,000 new jobs by 2031.

Ashford Green and Blue Grid Strategy: The Green & Blue grid is the overarching strategy for the approach to the living network of green and blue spaces for people and nature across the borough.

Ashford Retail Study (2003): This document was produced by CB Richard Ellis to guide English Partnerships and ABC on the scale of new retail development which would be needed as a result of the major urban extensions in Ashford.

Ashford Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2018): The Community Strategy is an 'umbrella' document for the whole of Ashford borough. It begins to set out a shared long-term vision for the area that reflects local aspirations and provides a way of agreeing what the priorities should be. It therefore draws upon all regional, county, borough and neighbourhood strategies and plans.

Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan Market Review (2009) : Report prepared by SEEDA on behalf of ABC to provide a review of the development proposals for specific sectors and Quarters proposed in the Town Centre Area Action Plan

Ashford Town Centre Baseline Analysis (March 2004): This report was commissioned by English Partnerships, SEEDA and ABC to prepare and deliver a mixed use development strategy for Ashford Town Centre in the form of a Development Framework along with development briefs for a number of key sites. This document is the baseline analysis of Ashford in 2004.

Ashford Town Centre Character Area Study (2006): The Ashford Character Area Study provides a comprehensive appraisal of Ashford's character including its urban form and townscape.

Ashford Town Centre Development Framework - (TCDF) (March 2006): In June 2004 consultants were commissioned by English Partnerships, on behalf of Ashford Borough Council, Ashford's Future and SEEDA to prepare a Development Framework for Ashford Town Centre. This framework brought together the visions and aspirations for the town centre, seen in the wider context of the Greater Ashford Development Framework which looked at the growth area as a whole.

Ashford Town Centre Development Framework Functionality Impact Study (June 2005): This study relates permeability and public space potentials to pedestrian activity, commercial viability and safety in the public realm.

Ashford Town Centre Foodstore Retail Assessments 2008 and 2009: In 2008,Savills were commissioned to asses the potential to accommodate a modern food store in or adjacent to Ashford town centre. In 2009, Savills were asked to provide an update of this report to take account of recently approved development commitments.

Ashford Town Centre Flood Risk Assessment (2009): A document, produced by the Environment Agency, which assesses the flooding issues in relation to the Town Centre and asses the development sites coming forward

Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan - Pre Submission Consultation statement: Report summarising the formal representations received on the Town Centre Area action Plan 'Preferred Options Report' and how the Council have taken these comments into account.

Ashford Town Centre Private Sector Engagement Report (2005): This report was produced by Jones Lang La Salle on behalf of SEEDA, ABC, KCC and Ashford's Future. The report establishes the optimum property offer and partnership arrangements to attract private sector to engage in the redevelopment of the Town Centre.

Ashford Town Centre Public Realm Project (2003): This report by Space Syntax studies pedestrian movements within the Town Centre, including peak and off peak pedestrian flows.

Ashford Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2009): A comprehensive review and update of the Draft Public Realm Strategy, 2006. Its role is to develop ideas set out in the TCDF to establish a clear, unique and recognisable identity and vision for future works in the Town Centres Public Realm. The Strategy sets out key design principles and restructuring elements to help knit the Town Centre together, based around a strong hierarchy of new and existing spaces, streets, lanes and alleyways.

Baseline Report: Ashford's Current position (June 2004): This report was produced by Ernst and Young and is an assessment of the baseline economy in Ashford in 2004.

Employment Land Review (2008): Commissioned by ABC in 2008 to provide forecasts of future employment land needs in the Borough, by sector, up to 2021.

The Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF): The main supporting document to Ashford's Local Development Framework, which sets out options for the growth of the town up to 2031. The GADF reflects findings from an extensive programme of consultation events, studies and plan making decisions undertaken during the course of 2004 and early 2005.

Halcrow Overarching Report (2002): Report produced by Halcrow in 2002 setting out the key findings of capacity studies into Ashford's Growth.

Integrated Water Management Study (IWMS): A background report to the Ashford LDF, which examines water management issues in relation to the Ashford Growth Area.

Movement and Linkages Strategy (April 2006): A movement strategy for the town centre that addresses the issues associated with the expected levels of growth envisages to come forward in the Town Centre.

The Open Space Audit (Dec 2008): The overall aim of this study was to undertake, research, analyse and present conclusions meeting the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) : Open Space, Sport and recreation. This report was commissioned by ABC and completed in December 2008.

Strategic Flood risk assessment (SFRA): An SFRA was carried out for the Core Strategy, and as such covered the Town Centre Area. The SFRA covered; assessments of flood risk in the Borough, the impact of surface run-off, and advice on locations where specific flood mitigation measures are required.

Sustainability Appraisal of Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan - Regulation 27 Publication Version (2009): All policies and proposals contained within the Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan must be appraised to ensure they contribute to the aims of Sustainable Development. The Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan Appraisal Report sets out the results from this appraisal.

Tourism Development Framework (April 2006): This document produced by ABC sets out a framework aimed at increasing the Borough's future benefits from tourism without damaging the very assets that attract visitors in the first place

Town Centre Area Action Plan 'Preferred Options Report': Produced in April 2006, was the first formal part of the LDF process for the TCAAP. It highlighted the key development issues facing the Town Centre and suggested a preferred approach to tackle these issues. It was released in April 2006 for formal pubic consultation and received more than 300 responses. These are addressed in the 'Town Centre Area Action Plan - Preferred Options Report (2009) - Consultation responses

Town Centre Flood Risk Assessment (2009): This Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been prepared by Ashford Borough Council and the Environment Agency to support the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) proposals. It should be read in conjunction with the Core Strategy (adopted 2008) and the accompanying Borough-wide Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) adopted October 2006.

Town Centre Shopping Frontage Assessment: A shopping frontage assessment of the central Town Centre shopping area, to determine the percent of A1 retail uses

Urban Capacity Study: A study undertaken to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within the urban area. An updated Urban Capacity Study was carried out for Ashford in 2006 by Halcrow.

Victoria Way Vision Scheme - Technical note (2009): A document which sets out the concept and reasoning behind the need for Victoria Way; from the initial master-planning, the GADF and the Town Centre Development Framework through to the current position. The report also covers how Victoria Way will be funded and delivered in two key phases.

Appendix 3 - Links to the Community Strategy

Community Strategy Partnership response to the Challenge	Relevant Town Centre AAP Content
Learning For Everyone	
We will work together to help deliver a new, state of the art Learning Campus for the Borough. This will dramatically improve local opportunities for post 16 education and broaden the courses on offer for local people. But the Campus will also cater for the community as a whole - for example, by providing adult education and public events - and become a major new venue for the community at Ashford.	**POLICY TC1 & TC11** sets out the importance of securing a Learning Campus in the Town Centre, to improve the existing and future skills base of the local population.
We will work together to promote community and educational uses. A 'Gateway Plus' facility is proposed at the Ashford Library site which will be a very important community offer for the town and will help to complement the proposed Learning Campus.	**POLICY TC7** sets the design principles for the site.
We will work together to make sure that pre-school, junior and secondary school facilities are designed and operated as an integral part of new and existing communities in Ashford. Schools need to work alongside other local facilities such as health centres, community buildings, shops and leisure uses to make up multi-purpose local centres where everyday needs can be catered for. This helps to build a stronger sense of community and, by grouping local services, reduces the need for people to drive.	**POLICY TC11** assumes the retention of the school and provides opportunities to expand the school's grounds should the need arise.
Economic Success - Opportunities for All	
We will continue the transformation of Ashford town centre to ensure that the town meets the needs of new and existing businesses and a growing population;	**POLICY TC1, TC2, TC7, TC9, TC10, TC11, TC17 and TC18** all set out the framework for promoting appropriate levels of development quantum, to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population, and how significant job creation can be achieved.
We will support the preferred developer for the Elwick Place site (south of Elwick Road) in promoting a major new mixed use development that will set new standards of design and sustainability, bringing new jobs, new leisure facilities and new housing to help revitalise the town centre	**POLICY TC3** sets out a positive policy for Elwick Place, setting out the likely level of development envisaged, its broad mix and range of uses and the design parameters to which development should respond.

Community Strategy Partnership response to the Challenge	Relevant Town Centre AAP Content
We will ensure that people using the railway stations – especially after the launch of high-speed domestic services in 2009 – have a pleasurable experience and gain a positive impression of Ashford by providing improvements to the integration of the station with the expanding town centre	**POLICY TC9** requires that development coming forward in this area, must deliver a key urban square, and public realm improvements, around the Domestic station entrance. This will generate a positive sense of arrival into the Town Centre at this key gateway.
We will work with landowners and developers to ensure that new and expanding businesses have access to a range of flexible workspaces and we will provide a package of business support services to help businesses to expand and compete effectively through engagement, involvement and community ownership	A range of AAP policies seek to provide new employment floorspace that should assist in providing flexible workspace. The Council is working with its Ashford Future partners such as SEEDA to assemble sites in the Commercial Quarter **(POLICY TC9)** and Elwick Place **(POLICY TC3)**
We will look to develop Ashford as a 21st Century town with 21st Century telecommunications infrastructure to support jobs growth and community benefits	There is no specific content in the AAP. SPD dealing with telecommunications and broadband issues is due to be published later in 2009.
Improving Health and Wellbeing	
We will ensure that health and social care facilities are provided in line with housing growth and maximise the wider benefits for improvements in health arising from new housing and job opportunities	No requirement for additional health facilities has been identified on a specific site, within the Town Centre area. The proposed Kings Avenue facility falls on the periphery of the Town Centre area. Additional social care facilities will be delivered from the proposed Gateway Plus.
Promoting Environmental Excellence	
Our aim is to protect the Borough's environment and, even where development is needed, to set and achieve high environmental standards in areas such as water supply and quality; protecting important landscape and habitats and making sure there is no increase in the likelihood or severity of flooding	**POLICY TC1, TC7, TC9, TC11, TC13, TC16, TC17 and TC26** all set out how the significant change within the Town Centre can be successfully amalgamated within the existing environment. This includes the approach towards development within the Conservation Area, the protection of those buildings in the Town Centre which are considered to add to the areas local distinctiveness, and the likely scale of development which is acceptable throughout the Town Centre.

Community Strategy Partnership response to the Challenge	Relevant Town Centre AAP Content
Where major development is planned we will make sure that places of real quality are created with attractive open spaces that contribute to the 'green necklace' of spaces around the town.	**POLICY TC1,** establishes that new, attractive, urban spaces are need in the Town Centre to improve the sense of place, and to help encourage greater footfall movement **POLICY TC5, TC9, TC10 and TC18** identify specific projects in the Town Centre, including the provision of civic spaces and improved public realm, to deliver a more attractive urban area **POLICY TC26** emphasises the importance of the Green Corridors around the Town Centre and promotes their enhancement and protection.
We will ensure that there is adequate open space for sports and recreation associated with new educational facilities	**POLICY TC27** establishes the importance of existing open space, and how its retention and enhancement, is needed to meet the needs of the existing and future residential population.
Securing Stronger and Safer Communities	
We will work with developers to ensure that the layout and design of major new developments facilitates the emergence of strong communities with a clear sense of identity and a readiness to work together	**POLICY TC1** sets out that the need for development to create a positive, safe mixed use environment, which encourages movement at differing times of the day.
Enjoying Life	
We will seek to expand cultural, leisure and sporting facilities in line with the growth in the population, negotiating vigorously with Government and its agencies and with developers to meet the initial capital costs	**POLICY TC1** promotes the importance of culture and leisure uses to meet the requirements of a growing population, and sets out that the Town Centre is an appropriate location for these uses. **Policy TC7** proposed community and educational uses as an important part of the community offer in the town. **POLICY TC27** establishes the importance of existing open space, and how its retention and enhancement, is needed to meet the needs of the existing and future residential population.

Community Strategy Partnership response to the Challenge	Relevant Town Centre AAP Content
We aim to provide a new arts/cultural venue in the town centre in the short term. We will work towards the provision of a major new sub regional cultural venue that will transform Ashford's cultural offer	**POLICY TC1** sets out the importance of art/culture uses within the Town Centre and highlights how projects, such as Centrepiece, are vital to ensuring the successful delivery of a fully integrated and diverse Town Centre. **POLICY TC17** encourages the delivery of an Arena to enhance the art/cultural offer in the Town Centre.
Keeping Ashford Moving	
We will promote plans to build a new road ("Victoria Way") between Beaver Road and Brookfield Road to open up new sites for development and provide an alternative route around the town centre	**POLICY TC10,** identifies the importance and role of Victoria Way, in the successful regeneration of the Southern Town Centre area. The AAP safeguards the route needed, and promotes positive building lines, active ground floor frontages and an attractive street scene, all along its route. **POLICY TC11, TC12, TC13 & TC14** all set out how development can compliment the successful delivery of Victoria Way.
We will enhance the already good cycle network and make sure that new developments make adequate provision for cycle ways and footpaths	**POLICY TC1** encourages greater levels of cycle movements into and around the Town Centre, to reduce traffic congestion and encourage healthier lifestyles **POLICY TC24** establishes cycle parking standards, and improvements to cycle storage facilitates, which combined, should encourage cycling in the Town Centre. **POLICY TC26** promotes the role of multi-functional Green corridors, and how cycle routes along the river corridors should be encouraged.
We will implement a Parking Strategy that will meet the needs of residents, employees, shoppers and visitors, opening the town's first Park and Ride by 2010 and a new town centre multi storey car park shortly thereafter	**POLICY TC12, TC19, TC21, TC22, TC23, TC24 & TC25** all set out an appropriate Parking Strategy for the Town Centre, including the location and delivery of Multi-Storey car parks, attributing appropriate parking standards to

Community Strategy Partnership response to the Challenge	Relevant Town Centre AAP Content
	development types, and setting out an approach to commuted payments, to help fund the delivery of this infrastructure.
Achieving High Quality Homes	
We will demand high design standards in new housing or mixed use developments and promote the use of innovation in construction. We will continue to promote extensive stakeholder engagement during the preparation of Development Briefs and other planning documents	**POLICY TC1** sets out the importance and need for high quality design on all development coming forward within the Town Centre. It also establishes the expected process which developers should follow, including the need for agreed development briefs on key sites.
In line with housing needs, at least 30% of the housing units in major developments will be social rented units or available on a low cost shared equity basis. Appropriate provision will be made to meet the housing needs of the elderly and other disadvantaged groups	The approach to affordable housing is established under **Policy CS12**, 'Affordable Housing' of the adopted Core Strategy.
We will insist on high environmental standards for all new dwellings and set up a mechanism to support the “retrofitting” of water and energy efficiency measures to existing dwellings	The approach to achieve high environmental standards, is established under **Policy CS10** 'Sustainable Design and Construction' of the adopted Core Strategy

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