

Gravesend Canal Basin Area and North East Gravesend Supplementary Planning Document

Draft for public consultation November 2005



takingpride
IN GRAVESHAM

Gravesham
Borough Council



Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Statutory Instrument No. 2004/2204 The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

Regulation 17

Notice of pre-adoption public participation on the draft Gravesend Canal Basin Area and North East Gravesend Supplementary Planning Document

Gravesham Borough Council has produced a draft Supplementary Planning Document for the Canal Basin Area and North East Gravesend to which saved policies PM9 and PM11 of the adopted Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994) relate. If, or when, this document is adopted it will supercede the existing Supplementary Planning Guidance for the area and will form a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications for the area it covers.

Copies of the draft Supplementary Planning Document (together with the associated consultation statement, sustainability appraisal report, and the SPD matters) are available for public inspection at the following locations, free of charge during normal opening hours:

- Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend.
9.00AM to 5.00PM
- Planning & Regeneration Services Reception,
Cygnet House, 132 Windmill Street, Gravesend.
Monday to Friday, 9.00AM to 5.00PM
- Towncentric, St Georges Centre, Gravesend.
Monday to Saturday, 9.00AM to 5.00PM
- Gravesend Library, Windmill Street, Gravesend.
Monday and Friday, 9.00AM to 6.00PM, Tuesday
to Thursday, 9.00AM to 5.00PM, Saturday

9.30AM to 5.00PM

An exhibition of the draft Supplementary Planning Document will be on display at Towncentric, St Georges Centre, Gravesend from the 17th November to the 23rd December 2005. Staff will be available to answer queries in relation to this between 9.30 am and 12.30 pm on Saturday 26th November and Saturday 10th December.

The draft Supplementary Planning Document (together with the associated consultation statement, sustainability appraisal report, and the SPD matters) can also be downloaded from the Council's website www.gravesham.gov.uk

Representations relating to the draft Supplementary Planning Document should be sent to Planning Policy, Gravesham Borough Council, Cygnet House, 132 Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1BQ or via e-mail to planning.policy@gravesham.gov.uk. The closing date for making representations on this document is 12.00 Noon on Friday 23rd December 2005.

Representations may be accompanied by a request to be notified at a specified address of the adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document and to be sent a copy of the adoption statement. For any further information, please call the Planning Policy Team on 01474 33 76 03 or e-mail to planning.policy@gravesham.gov.uk.

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I Introduction and overview

What is an SPD?

A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) elaborates upon adopted policies in the Development Plan and is one of the material considerations that can be taken into account when determining a planning application.

Whilst the Borough Council is in the process of preparing a new form of Development Plan called a Local Development Framework (LDF), under the terms of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, new planning guidance can be issued based on saved policies from the existing adopted Local Plan.

The adopted Local Plan is the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and this Supplementary Planning Document is based upon saved Policies PM9 (North East Gravesend) and PM11 (Canal Basin Area) contained therein. Whilst the Gravesham Local Plan Second Review Deposit Version (May 2000) was issued for the purposes of public consultation, work on this document was suspended to concentrate on the production of the new Local Development Framework in November 2004. However, it remains a material planning consideration in the interim, although the weight which may be accorded it is limited. Policies MDS4 (Canal Basin Area) and MDS5 (North East Gravesend) from the Gravesham Local Plan Second Review Deposit Version reinforce the adopted policy stance in terms of progressing the regeneration of these areas.

The text of the above policies is reproduced in an appendix to this document.

Once adopted, this Supplementary Planning Document will supersede the adopted North East Gravesend Planning and Development Brief (December 1996), the Canal Basin Area Planning Brief (September 1997), and the Canal Basin Area

Planning Brief: Additional Supplementary Planning Guidance (November 2002).

Details on the procedure to be followed in preparing and adopting the Supplementary Planning Document are contained in an appendix.

This Draft Supplementary Planning Document was approved by the Cabinet of the Gravesham Borough Council for the purposes of public consultation on the 17th October 2005 and will be placed on deposit in accordance with the public notice reproduced inside the front cover of this document.

Introduction

Gravesham Borough Council is seeking to regenerate the Canal Basin and North East Gravesend, an area that takes in extensive tracts of previously developed land occupied by industrial and open storage uses; the Thames and Medway canal and basin, a substantial length of the Thames waterfront, and areas of degraded marshland to the south of the railway adjacent to the Southern Water Services wastewater treatment plant.

In line with Government policy, it is intended that priority should be given to regenerating previously developed or 'brownfield' land in advance of 'greenfield' land, protecting the marshland to the east as a non-renewable asset in the interests of sustainable development. For this reason, the document proposes no changes to the policy stance towards those parts of the marshes to the east of Gravesend covered by policy API9 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review.

In addition, no further Greenfield land release is envisaged within the remainder of policy area PM9, to the north and east of the existing Barratt's development, where the preference is to retain the openness of the remaining marsh as per the 1996

brief. Opportunities for the provision of open space and enhancement of the nature conservation of the interest may be further explored.

However, development is already well established at North East Gravesend and has commenced immediately to the south of the Canal Basin. This document is intended to refresh the planning framework for the remainder of the regeneration area in line with the requirement to deliver sustainable development in accordance with Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as expanded upon in ODPM Planning Policy Statement I Delivering Sustainable Development (2005). This sets out the four aims of sustainable development as being:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment;
- The prudent use of natural resources; and
- The maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

The primary intent of this policy document is that the regeneration area covered by Policies PM9 and PM11 should be redeveloped to a mix of uses that will help to meet housing demand in the south east as part of the wider Thames Gateway initiative, whilst also accommodating and nurturing local employment. The ambition is for the environmental quality of the area to be transformed by new development that is a model of good practice in urban design and sustainability.

However, the approach in this document isn't simply about building new development – it's about developing a place of distinctive character which benefits Gravesham and its existing local residents; a place which takes advantage of the town's historic riverside location; and a place which is accessible to all, connects to adjoining local communities, and promotes social inclusion.

In 2004 the Borough Council and SEEDA commissioned consultants to prepare a strategic design framework for the area, identifying opportunities and ways of resolving problems such as the fragmented urban form, poor access, contaminated land and difficulties of 'poor neighbour' uses. This SPD draws on the findings of that work to establish planning principles for the area. It seeks to achieve the vision stated in the design framework by reinforcing the planning policy and by drawing on current policies to provide detailed guidance on future development.

Overview of North East Gravesend

The site is a flat, low-lying area on the south side of the Thames estuary, bisected by the North Kent railway line. The area is characterised by a range of industrial uses, some of them marine or waterways related. The Thames and Medway Canal with its canal basin, constructed in 1799-1801, is an important historic and visual feature. A continuous flood wall protects the area from inundation during high tides. The area includes Gravesend's sewage works, located to the south of the canal and railway.

Gravesend has good rail links with central London, making it a popular commuter base. The M2, M20 and M25 motorways are also in easy reach. Marshland to the east is partly under arable cultivation, whilst the remainder is used for open grazing. Areas of land here are designated of nature conservation interest.

To the south of the river plain the land rises, and above the 5m contour line there is a mix of Victorian and twentieth century housing. The site is located to the east of the town and connected to it though a network of local roads, but there is only one vehicular route into each of the areas either side of the railway line. The southern part of the area is reached via the Lion Road roundabout, and the northern part via Ordnance Road.

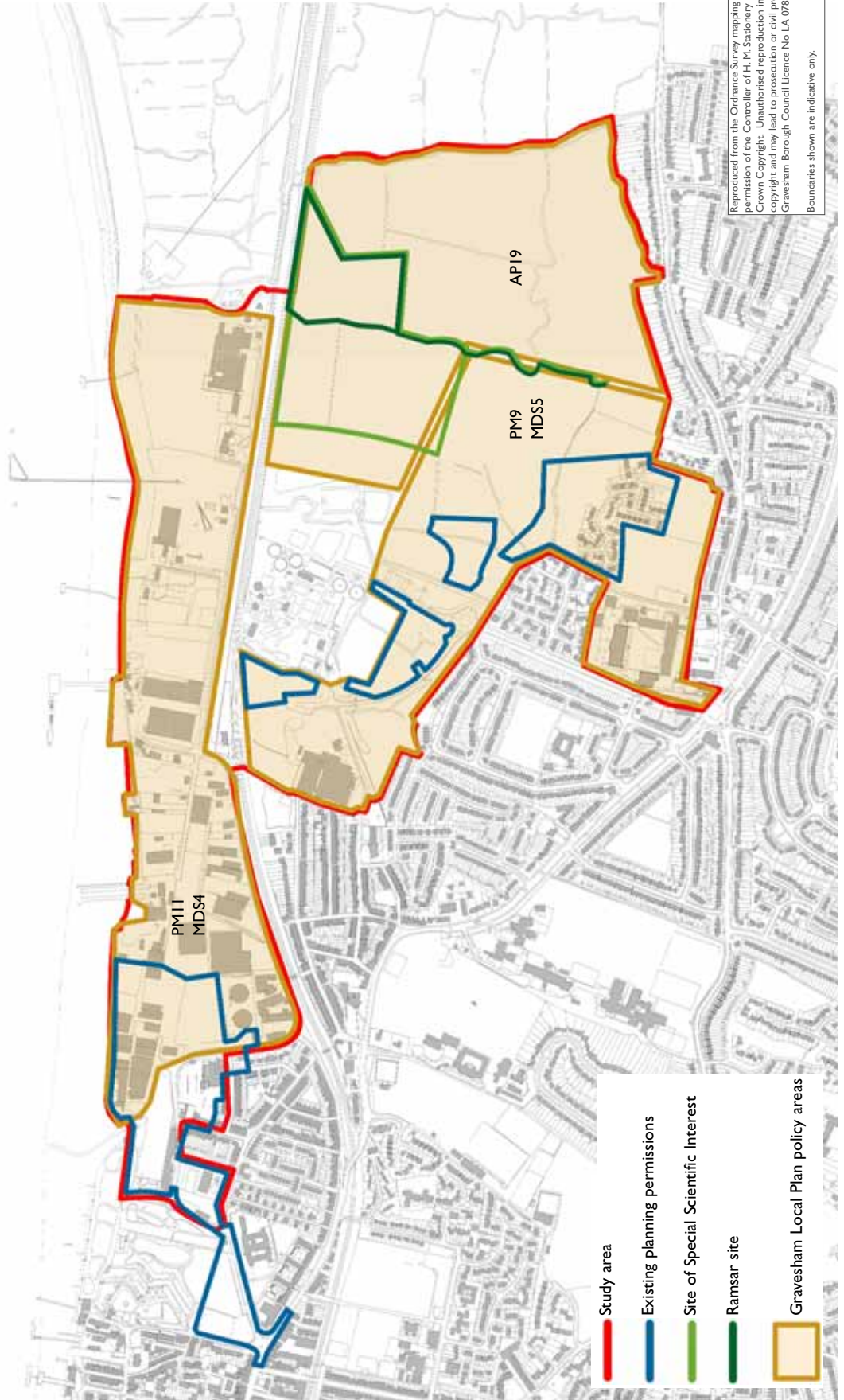


Figure 1. Site location plan - North East Gravesend

2 Analysis

This section sets out the context for the development proposals for the redevelopment of the North East Gravesend area through a baseline study of the main issues. This comprises a full urban design analysis of the site and its surroundings, covering the following:

- Natural features.
- Historic environment.
- Access and movement.
- Views towards the site.
- Views from the site.
- Edges.

This initial investigation culminates in a SWOT analysis of the site and an Issues and Opportunities plan, which will inform the key principles and objectives for redevelopment.

Natural features

Gravesend is located within the Thames estuary and a significant portion of the site is part of the historic flood plain of low lying marsh. The historic core of the town is on land above the marshes, but reaches down to the waterfront. Away from the river plain, the land rises gently towards the fields around the NW Kent College of Technology (formerly Gordon School).

Historic environment

As most of the site was former marshland it is unlikely to have had any intensive human activity or settlement in the past.

Accordingly the archaeological potential is low, other than in areas close to the Tudor Blockhouse, the Canal and Basin and the inter-tidal zone of the Thames foreshore. Within the marshland there is considered to be potential for the discovery of

previously unknown, deeply buried archaeological remains spanning the Mesolithic to Roman periods. These would, however, be several metres below existing ground level, at the base of or within the alluvial peats and clays. Previous development is considered likely to have had an extremely severe archaeological impact across the site, particularly in the existing industrial areas and former gas/power station site.

There are two conservation areas covering Gravesend town centre and the Canal Basin as shown in figure 5. Specific historic environment assets include:

- The Tudor Blockhouse.
- The Thames and Medway Canal and Basin.
- New Tavern Fort
- The former Gravesend railway station adjacent to the canal.
- The crashed aircraft/war grave site.
- Former Albion Baths site, south of Albion Parade.



Figure 2. The fort

NOT TO SCALE

1. New Tavern Fort/Milton Chantry
2. Milton Blockhouse site
3. Former railway station
4. Albion Baths
5. War Grave (approximate location)
6. Ship and Lobster public house
7. Cornwall Wharf



Figure 3. Conservation area and key historical features

Land form

Gravesend is located within the Thames estuary, and a significant portion of the land in the area forms part of the historic flood plain. Although modern defenses do mitigate against this area flooding, the historic pattern of development in relation to the flood plain can be seen very clearly in figure 7.

The historic core of Gravesend is located on land which is set above the level of the marshes, but which reaches down to the waterfront. Later Victorian and Twentieth Century development has extended the town to the east, but has largely remained above the 5m contour line to be above the most frequently flooded areas.

Those areas of historic development which break with this pattern tend to be industrial uses which are directly related to the river and the canal basin.

The river itself has a strong influence on the character of the landscape, as it creates a very open space which affords long views and open skies. This also ensures that Gravesend and its surroundings can clearly be seen for some distance, and particularly from Tilbury on the opposite bank.

Gravesend has historically been a place of arrival and departure for sea going vessels. The combination of the town's prominent position on high ground close to the water front and the observation post offered by Windmill Hill have enabled Gravesend to play an important role as the river gateway to London.



Figure 4. Typical flat landscape within the study area



Figure 5. Open estuary landscape to the east



Figure 6. Gravesend and Windmill Hill, viewed across the river



Figure 7. Topographical map of North East Gravesend

Legibility

Figure 11 illustrates the key features which shape peoples' understanding of the physical form of the area. The major features can be described as follows:

- The Thames, which acts as a universal reference point for the whole area;
- The basin and canal;
- The fort and its parkland setting which create a buffer of open space between the historic town centre and the canal basin development area;
- The railway lines, which bisect the site and which separate areas of existing residential development from each other and from key facilities;
- The sewage works;
- The A226, Milton Road, which acts as the key access to the site and which creates a strong dividing line between areas of development;
- Key landmarks, including the Town Pier, Royal Terrace Pier, the gas holders, church towers/spires (St George's Church, Gravesend Methodist Church and Milton Church) and the domes of the new Gurdwara; and
- Windmill Hill, which can be seen from the study area, and which affords wide views



Figure 8. The river margins



Figure 9. The gas holders



Figure 10. The canal basin

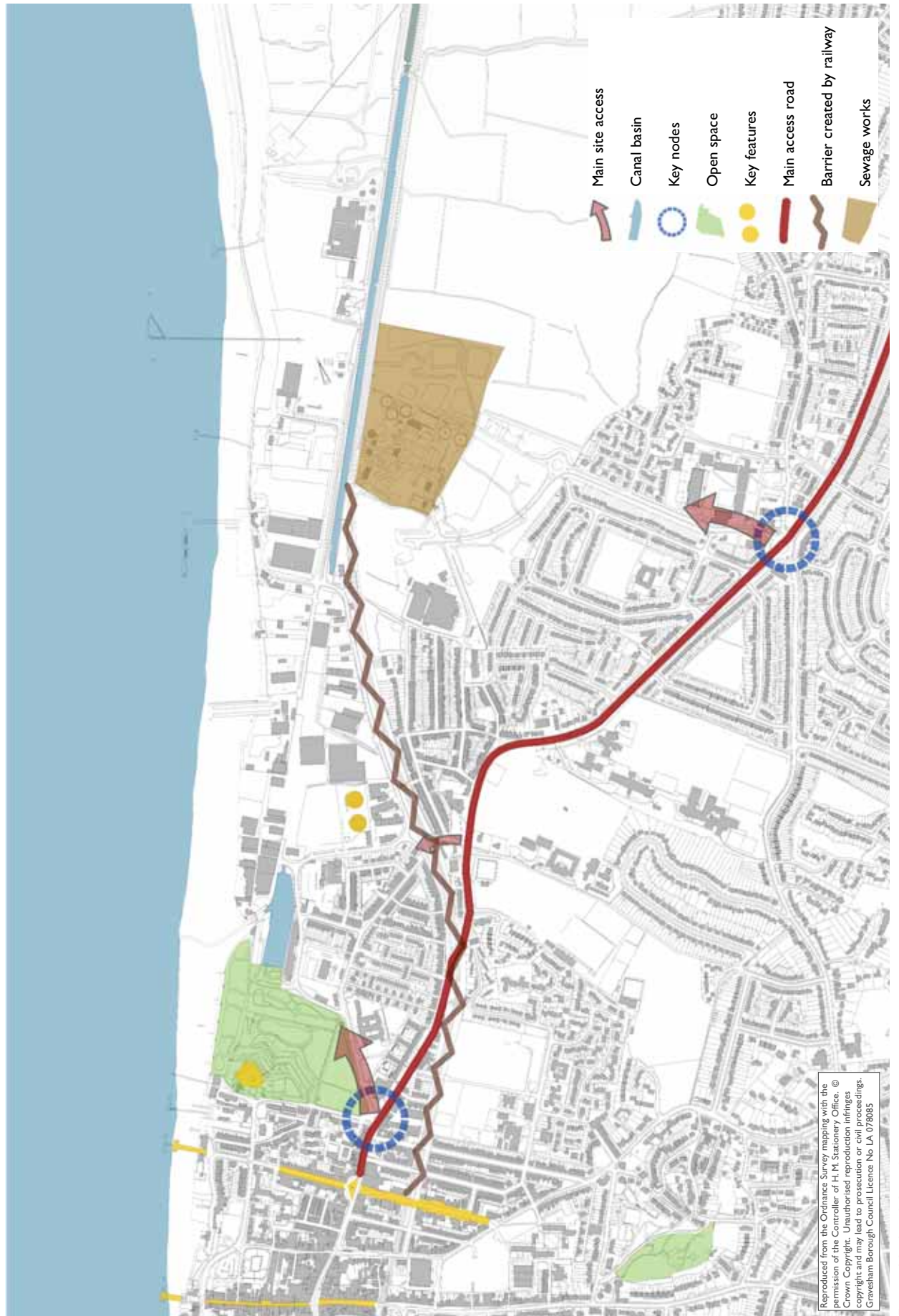


Figure 11. Legibility plan

Thames and Medway Canal

Originally devised as a means of avoiding the long trips out into the Thames estuary and the risk of attack by the French during the Napoleonic Wars, the Thames and Medway canal was begun in 1799-1800 and reached Higham 4 miles to the east by 1801. However, the link to the Medway, via the Higham tunnel, was only completed by 1824. The military origins of the canal can be glimpsed in the alignment of the western end which is dead straight, and which is aligned to afford a clear line of sight from the fort.

The full length of the canal had a relatively short operating life, with the Higham tunnel constructed to Medway in use by the mid - 1840's. The remainder of the canal between Gravesend and Higham continued in operation until the 1930's.

Since that time, sections of the canal close to the basin end have been gradually filled in, and the basin now serves a limited number of estuary boats. The operation of the basin is further limited by the removal of the lower set of lock gates. This means effectively that the basin can only be accessed for a short period either side of high tide, as there is no ability for boats to lock down when the water level in the basin does not match the river level.

The canal is considered to be one of the primary assets of the site. The Borough Council, together with SEEDA and Kent County Council, has commissioned a team of consultants, led by British Waterways, to set out an approach whereby the canal and basin could be brought back into sustainable operation. An assessment of potential flood risk within the area has also highlighted the role a reinstated canal might play in mitigating such risk and dealing with surface water drainage issues. The outputs from the British Waterways study will be expected to inform any subsequent development of the area.

Developers will be expected as part of their schemes to positively engage with the Borough

Council in securing the reinstatement of the canal, including phasing their schemes to facilitate reinstatement and allowing planned capital expenditure to be used as matched funding for grant aid. Should it not be feasible to reinstate the canal during the main construction phase, a corridor of sufficient width (minimum 13m width of water) should be left free from development (including fixed links or service infrastructure) to allow for its subsequent reinstatement. The design of any adjoining development should be configured so as not to preclude reinstatement at a later date



Figure 12. The canal basin

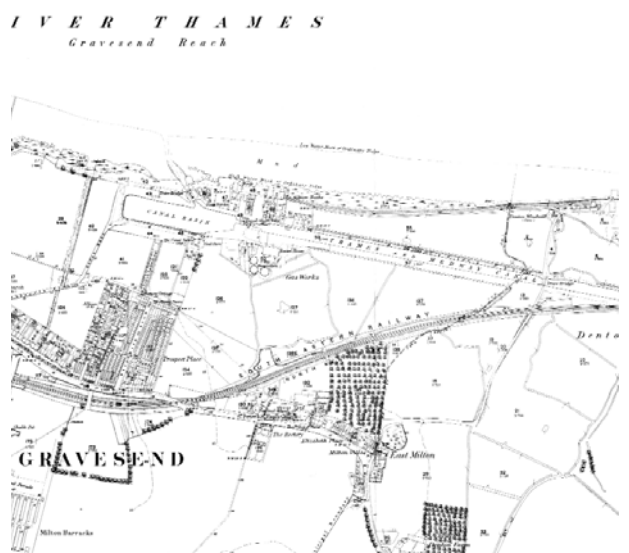


Figure 13. Gravesend 1865, showing the basin and canal

Existing land uses

Industrial uses predominate in the area to the north of the railway lines which bisect the study area. With the primary pressure being to provide housing-led development in sustainable locations close to the town centre, many of these industrial uses might be relocated to release land for housing. There are, however, several businesses and operations which either require a river frontage to function, or which might prove uneconomical to move, which are set out below:

1. Denton Slipway

The Denton Slipway plays an important role in maintaining river craft and is the sole surviving facility of this scale on the Thames. Its retention as part of the infrastructure to serve a working river is therefore considered important. Any development proposals should therefore address the constraint which this imposes in terms of their design and layout

2. Denton Wharf

The PLA's own wharf. Together with the storage units on shore this is a key part of the PLA's operations on this stretch of the river.

3. Canal Basin

The canal basin is an historic asset of the area, and provides mooring for river boats. It is a key river related use and one of the defining features of the area.

4. J Clubbs

The aggregate handling plant owned and run by J Clubbs takes sea-dredged aggregate from barges, processes, grades and bags it, and distributes it throughout the south east. The river frontage and established infrastructure cost would make this facility very expensive to move.

5. Police training centre and Milton Ranges

This facility is used to train police personnel in areas such as crowd and riot control, and features a selection of 'stage sets' where incidents are staged for training purposes. This facility requires a relatively isolated location due to the noise generated, and the aggregate operation to the west is regarded as a good buffer use.

6. Comma Oils

Comma Oils operates from a relatively new facility, and retains land in hand to expand their business.

7. Southern Water Sewage Works

The sewage works is a major element of infrastructure and is considered to be very costly to move. The odour plume it gives off and contaminated land-fill around the facility effectively dictates that residential development cannot take place immediately adjacent, but that business or industrial use would provide an effective buffer.



Figure 14. Existing land uses

Access and movement

Highways

The A226 is the main route across the site, as shown in figure 17, linking the town centre to the areas of the site to the north and south of the railway. At present the only vehicular access to the area north of the railway is via Ordnance Road, but a new link is proposed from the end of Denton Relief Road. Any highway improvements and design layouts should be designed to accommodate the requirements of Fastrack and a possible additional railway station, as outlined below.

Pedestrians and Cyclists

There is a continuous pedestrian route which follows the river as closely as possible, but is forced inland by industrial uses, particularly around the Denton Slipway. The historic canal towpath provides a valuable pedestrian and cycle route which could be enhanced within any development scheme, providing better connections between Gravesend town centre and the open countryside. Public footpaths NG1, NG2, NG2A, & NG12, including the route of the Saxon Shore Way, and the Sustrans National Cycle Route One pass through the area, forming important east-west links to the marshes as part of the emerging Kent Thameside Green Grid network.

The railway line is currently an impediment to free movement between the north and south of the site, and opportunities should be sought to improve connections.

Public Transport

The North Kent railway line traverses the site. The nearest station is Gravesend, in the town centre, but there is potential for another station to be opened to the east, at Denton, serving the site and surrounding area of North East Gravesend much

more directly. The route for a Fastrack bus service is safeguarded between Dartford and Gravesend town centre. An extension of the route is now established, linking the main centre at the basin with the railway station and a new secondary centre to the south of the railway. A ferry makes four crossings per hour from Gravesend to Tilbury.

Car Parking

In the older residential streets in Milton there is mostly on-street parking; the most recent development has off-street parking. There is informal public parking in the vicinity of the Canal Basin.



Figure 15. Riverside path linking to Gravesend town centre



Figure 16. Pedestrian bridge over the railway at Mark Lane

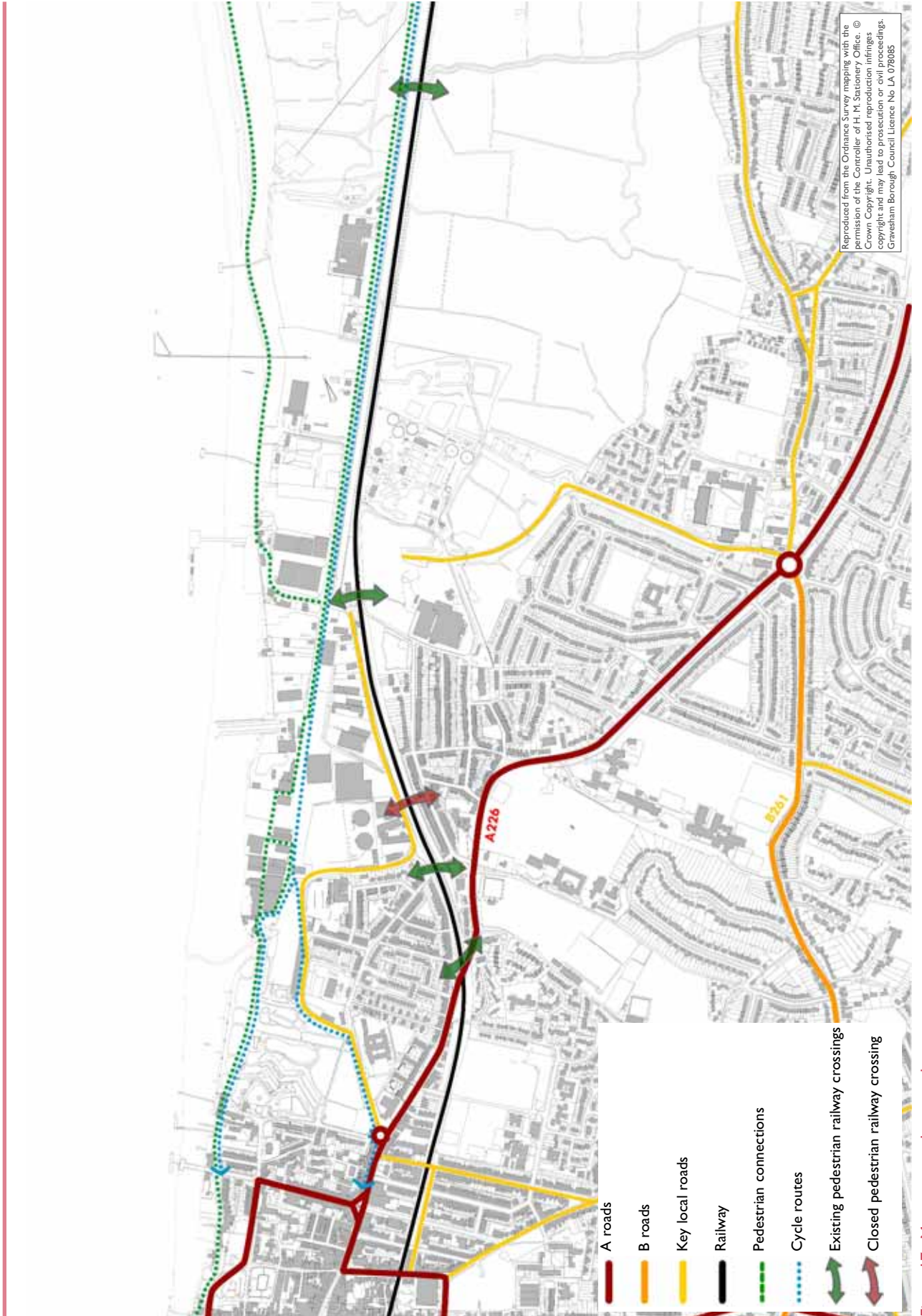


Figure 17. Movement and access plan

Views towards the site

There are a number of key views from the centre of Gravesend which link key public spaces to the waterfront. These links emphasise the importance of the Thames to the character of the town.

Outside the town centre there are several important vantage points:

- Windmill Hill, to the south of the town centre, which affords open views over the town, the study area and the estuary;
- The New Tavern Fort, which includes 'protected views' into the estuary and along the alignment of the canal;
- Tilbury fort, looking towards Gravesend;
- Views of the foreshore from the piers in Gravesend, particularly Royal Terrace Pier; and
- The river bank to the east of Clubbs aggregate works, which offers wide open vistas over both the estuary and the marshes inland.

The sequence of views experienced from the river, including the skyline of the town, is also of note.

Views from the site

There are panoramas across the Thames from the canal basin area, revealing the scale of the estuary and offering good vantage points for seeing the river traffic.

There are also a number of landmarks within and around the study area:

- The gas holders, which are destined to be removed in the long term;

- The tower of St Peter and St Paul's Church to the south of the railway, which creates a visual link across the barrier created by the railway;
- St George's Church tower;
- Views back along the canal towards Shorne; and
- The Sikh Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara, which is currently under construction to the south of the study area and is already a prominent landmark.



Figure 18. The Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara under construction



Figure 19. View towards NE Gravesend from Windmill Hill

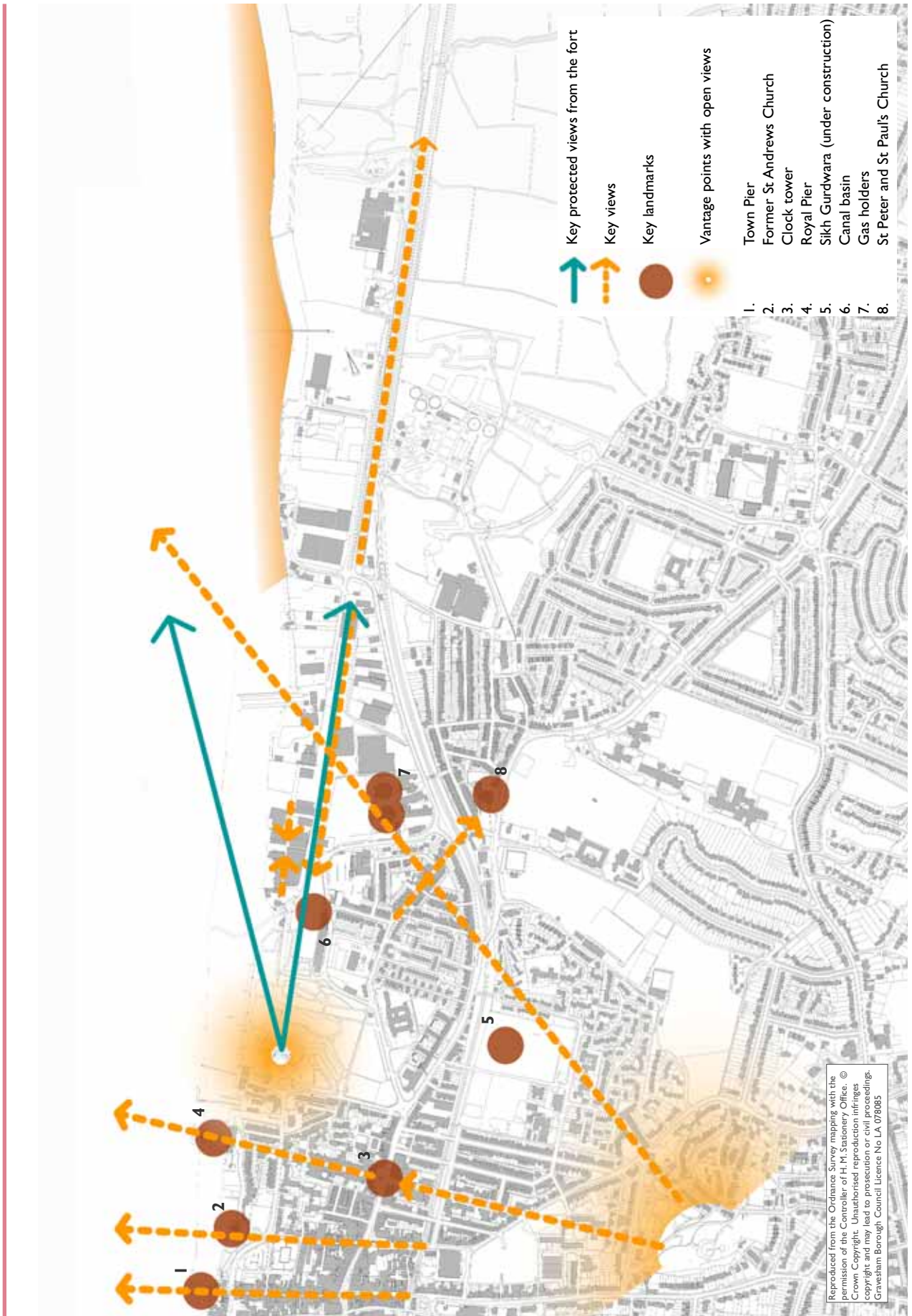


Figure 20. Key views plan

Character areas

Within and around the study area there are a number of distinct types of urban development and open space, which result in a number of character areas. This analysis is set out in figure 21.











-  Industrial area, including a mix of building types and uses
-  Historic industrial area which retains elements of the historic urban form
-  Modern residential development, following conventional suburban design
-  Post-war housing
-  Green open space, including public parks and farmland
-  Schools, including buildings and playing fields
-  Low density suburban development, predominantly 1930's and 1950's
-  Late Victorian and early Edwardian terraced housing
-  Central Gravesend, including a mix of uses and featuring larger building scales
-  Gravesend historic core



Figure 21. View towards NE Gravesend from Windmill Hill

Contamination

Figure 22 outlines the key contamination constraints within the study area. This data is derived from the detailed study undertaken by Wardell Armstrong which provides specific details of the each of the areas highlighted.









-  Gas holders and tipping
-  Former gas works site
-  Back filled canal
-  Former isolation hospital
-  Sewage works
-  Contaminated landfill site
-  Contaminated landfill site
-  Possible contaminant leaching from backfilled canal



Figure 22. Contamination of North East Gravesend

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Taking account of the analysis outlined above, a SWOT analysis of the North East Gravesend area can be summarised as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Impressive Thames views 2 Short, pleasant and level walk into Gravesend town centre 3 Large area planned for development 4 Historic character of canal basin 5 Good views across the valley and towards open countryside 6 Important wetland ecology to the east of the site 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Dominated by poor buildings and inactive edges 2 Cluster of 'bad neighbour' uses including aggregate works, sewage works and Metropolitan police training school 3 Significant land contamination from past activities on the site and strong odours from the sewage works 4 Declining industries and the area generally suffers from a run-down feel 5 Poor circulation and access, with the railway line being a major barrier
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Comprehensive redevelopment will raise the profile of Gravesend and the wider Gravesham area 2 Potential site for high density residential development, sustaining a mix of uses 3 Exploiting historic character of the area to attract recreational visits as well as an enhanced environment for residents and local workers 4 Restored Thames and Medway canal creating a unique character for the new development 5 Improved access to and within the site, including links across the railway line and a new railway station opened 6 Eradicating the contamination to reinstate a diverse wetland ecology 7 Marine-related industries retained and new employment created 8 Existing housing re-integrated with the town and benefiting from improved local services 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Low density development fails to generate the necessary mix of uses or fund public realm investment 2 Inadequate masterplanning results in an inward-looking development with poor links to existing housing and to the town centre 3 Prolonged uncertainties blight the area and there is continued deterioration, under-investment and employment loss

3 Planning context

This section sets out a review of the planning context for North East Gravesend, including:

- National Planning Policy
- Sustainable Communities
- Securing the Future - UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy
- Regional Planning Policy
- Development Plan Policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance

National Planning Policy

The Government Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Notes and Planning Policy Statements (PPS) set out national policy on different aspects of planning and development. Given North East Gravesend's context, it is considered useful to review briefly national planning policy as set out in PPS1, PPG3, PPG4, PPG13, PPG15 and PPG 25

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development states that policies should promote high quality design and inclusion within the planning framework, taking opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area. Sustainability is a major component of other guidance, particularly PPG 3 Housing.

PPG3 Housing defines the need to plan for the requirements of the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing. In addition, the guidance note also emphasises the importance of providing a better mix in the size, type and location of housing, in order to create mixed and balanced communities. There is a requirement that priority must be given to the re-use of previously developed land (PDL), with the government setting a target that 60% of new housing should be provided on PDL or through conversions of existing buildings by 2008.

Another priority is the creation of sustainable patterns of development. This is to be achieved by

building in ways which exploit and deliver accessibility by public transport to the full range of infrastructure and services, and seeking to reduce car dependency by encouraging walking and cycling; also by promoting mixed uses, and by improving linkages by public transport to infrastructure and services.

PPG4 Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms

seeks to encourage continued economic development in a way which is compatible with maintaining and improving a high quality environment. In particular it seeks to:

- encourage new development in locations which minimise the length and number of trips, especially by motor vehicles;
- encourage new development in locations that can be served by more energy efficient modes of transport (this is particularly important in the case of offices, light industrial development, and campus style developments such as science and business parks likely to have large numbers of employees);
- discourage new development where it would be likely to add unacceptably to congestion;
- locate development requiring access mainly to local roads away from trunk roads, to avoid unnecessary congestion on roads designed for longer distance movement.

PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

seeks to ensure that plan policies and planning decisions should aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add biodiversity and geological conservation interests. In taking decisions, local planning authorities should ensure that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance; protected species; and to biodiversity and

geological interests within the wider environment.

PPG 13 Transport promotes more sustainable transport choices for people and for freight and seeks to ensure that jobs, shops, education, health, and leisure facilities are accessible by public transport, walking, and cycling.

There is also a general principle to reduce the need to travel, especially by car. Major generators of travel demand should be situated in town centres near to major public transport interchanges. PPG 13 also supports the use of parking policies as well as other planning and transport measures to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce reliance on the car for work and other journeys. Sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choices for both passenger and freight movements should be protected.

PPG 15 Planning and the Historic Environment sets out policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment. PPG 15 states that conservation and economic growth area are not in conflict and that conservation can be a key instrument in stimulating investment.

In general, design in historic areas needs careful consideration in terms of scale, height, mass alignment and materials but not necessarily reproducing the style of old buildings.

PPG 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation seeks to ensure that sufficient facilities are available within local communities to satisfy needs for active and passive indoor and outdoor sport and recreation - this taking into account both quantitative and qualitative factors and the needs of people living in, working in or visiting the area.

PPG 25 Development and Flood Risk states that there is a need to adopt a precautionary approach in relation to any development which may be at risk due to flooding. This is particularly the case

where development is proposed behind existing flood defences and where any breach or over-topping of those defences might involve a high risk of loss of life as well as extensive damage to or disruption of property. However, the sequential test under PPG25 does not negate the requirement to prioritise the re-use of previously developed land under PPG3.

Sustainable Communities

In February 2003 the Deputy Prime Minister launched the Government's **Sustainable Communities Plan**, which sets out a long-term programme for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. It aims to tackle housing supply issues in the South East, low demand in other parts of the country, and the quality of our public spaces.

The Thames Gateway is a national priority for regeneration and growth and is the first and biggest of the Government's four growth areas identified in the Sustainable Communities Plan.

Securing the Future - UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy

In March 2005 the UK Government launched its new strategy for sustainable development, **Securing the Future**, in conjunction with a Strategic Framework. The strategy includes a commitment to place sustainable development at the heart of the land use planning system and at the heart of the new planning guidance.

Regional Planning Policy

Regional Planning Guidance 9: South-East

The regional planning framework (2001) seeks to encourage economic success throughout the South-East region, ensuring a higher quality of

environment with management of natural resources, opportunity and equity for the Region's population, and a more sustainable pattern of development. The main principles for development within the region which relate to Gravesend are:

- Urban areas should become the main focus for development through making them more attractive, accessible and better able to attract investment;
- The pattern of development should be less dispersed with more sustainable patterns of activity, allowing home, work, leisure, green spaces, cultural facilities and community services to be in closer proximity;
- Sufficient housing, and in particular affordable housing, should be provided for all who need to live and work in the region;
- The development of housing should be more sustainable, providing a better mix of sizes, types and tenures, having regard to the structure of households and people's ability to access homes and jobs;
- Access to jobs, services, leisure and cultural facilities should be less dependent on longer distance movement and there should be an increased ability to meet normal travel needs through safe walking, cycling and public transport with reduced reliance on the car; and
- Transport investment should support the spatial strategy, maintaining the existing network, enhancing access as part of more concentrated forms of development, overcoming bottlenecks and supporting high capacity and less polluting modes of transport. **The Regional Transport Strategy** (July 2004) revises and replaces Chapter 9 of RPG9.

RPG9 will be replaced by the **South East Plan** being prepared by the South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and currently in draft.

Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG9a)

The Thames Gateway Planning Framework is sub-Regional guidance issued in 1995, which identifies Kent Thames-side (Gravesham and Dartford north of the A2) as a main centre of development and a growth area of regional significance. The Planning Framework sets out the following principles for informing land use guidance and decisions on development:

- making the most of the Thames Gateway opportunity;
- creating a vibrant and sustainable pattern of communities;
- closely relating transport opportunity and land use opportunity;
- bringing life to the river and river-front; and
- a New Environmental Standard.

RPG9a highlights a number of opportunity sites in Kent Thames-side, including Gravesend Waterfront and East Gravesend.

Strategic Planning Guidance for the River Thames (RPG9b)

The management of the interface between the land and the river is a key factor in any development of the area, and there particularly needs to be a clear strategy which will permit ongoing maintenance and upgrading of flood defences. The Government's sub-regional guidance for the River Thames was issued in 1997 and contains the following objectives:

For the built environment:

- to secure a special quality for new development and improve the existing townscape;
- to protect and enhance historic buildings, sites, structures, landscapes, skylines and views of importance;
- to enhance the vitality of the river front by making best use of its potential attraction for a range of uses; and
- to protect important archaeological remains.

For the natural environment:

- to improve the quality and provision of open space along the river;
- to conserve and enhance the ecology of the river; and
- to respect Green Belt and other designations denoting areas of ecological, conservation or landscape importance.

For use of the river and riverside:

- to encourage and harness the transport potential of the river;
- to promote and increase the use of the river for recreational purposes;
- to safeguard land uses related to these functions; and
- to maintain and improve public access to, along and across the river.

Deposit Kent and Medway Structure Plan (September 2003)

The current Kent Structure Plan (adopted 1996) provided for development and change in the county. The Deposit version of its successor, the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, was published in September 2003 and responds to national and regional expectations with a framework for balanced and sustainable growth up to 2016. The Deposit plan establishes that new housing must be accompanied by the provision of essential community facilities and infrastructure. Housing growth should also be paralleled by job growth.

The strategic policy in the current Structure Plan for North Kent (Policy NK1) states:

"At, and in between, the principal urban areas of Dartford, Gravesend/Northfleet major mixed use developments based on previously developed or other damaged land will be comprehensively planned, including appropriate measures to integrate new development with existing communities, and phased in conjunction with the provision of new highway and public transport infrastructure, community services and facilities, and air quality management initiatives.

Provision will be made for a bus-based public transport network (Fastrack) linking Dartford and Gravesend town centres, Bluewater and the main Strategic Developments identified by this Plan. Opportunities for enhancing the economic, leisure, amenity and transport potential of the River Thames will be identified, including the safeguarding of deep-water facilities and associated land at Northfleet Riverside.

A network of open land and green spaces ('Green Grid') will be identified and provided to link major areas of open space with the Thames and with existing and new communities.

Proposals for the main Strategic Developments should contribute to enhancing the quality of the built, open and natural environment, including provision of elements of the Green Grid, and support a pattern, form and density of development that reflects accessibility to existing and planned transport provision."

Strategic Developments will include those at Gravesend/Northfleet Riverside and North East Gravesend involving the reuse of redundant previously used land and premises.

The Deposit Structure plan also reaffirms commitments to the preservation of the Metropolitan Green Belt, and maintaining the separation between Gravesend and the Medway towns.

Development Plan Policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance

Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994) and Gravesham Local Plan Second Review Deposit Version (May 2000).

The adopted Local Plan is the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994). Policies PM9 and PM11 (reproduced in the appendices to this document) relate to the potential regeneration of both areas taking the form of a mixture of uses.

The Gravesham Local Plan Second Review Deposit Version (May 2000) was the subject of public consultation but work on this document was suspended in November 2004 to concentrate on the production of the new Gravesham Local Development Framework. However, it remains a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications, although the weight which may be accorded it is limited.

The Gravesham Local Plan Second Review Deposit Version (May 2000) reinforced the policy position in respect of the Canal Basin and North East Gravesend regeneration areas under Policies MDS 4 & 5. The text of these policies is also reproduced in the appendices.

North East Gravesend Planning and Development Brief (December 1996)

In 1996 Gravesham Borough Council produced and adopted non-statutory planning guidance for North East Gravesend, covering land identified under Policies PM9 (North East Gravesend) and API9 (Great Clane Lane Marshes) to the south of the canal and railway line. The brief included provisions for safeguarding employment, providing homes in accordance with the adopted local plan and to improve the environment.

The 1996 brief is superseded by this current document, which covers a wider area and serves to integrate the planning approach with the area to the north of the canal and railway. The policy position in relation to policy area API9, which is greenfield land in arable use and of some nature conservation interest, situated to the north and east of the main regeneration area, remains unchanged by this document.

Canal Basin Area Planning Brief (September 1997) and Canal Basin Area Planning Brief – Additional Supplementary Planning Guidance (November 2002).

The 1997 brief established the basic principles by which the regeneration of the area to the north of the railway and canal would be brought about. This envisaged a residentially led mixed use development around the Canal Basin, with lighter industrial and employment uses (but with some potential for a mixture of uses, including residential) to the east. It was anticipated that heavier industrial uses would be decanted further to the west, with port related and open storage uses remaining to the east of Mark Lane. The possible use of the former National Sea Training College facility by the Metropolitan Police was also identified, as were a number of constraints, including contamination, flood risk, odour, and access. Maintaining the alignment of the former Thames and Medway Canal free from development was also identified, as was the possibility (in the medium term) of providing an alternative road access from south of the railway.

In 2002, the Borough Council updated the above planning guidance in so far as it related to the area immediately adjoining the Canal Basin as far east as the Denton Slipways site. However, the 1997 brief remained current in so far as it related to the rest of the area covered by Policy PM11 to the east.

This document replaces both the 1997 and 2002 briefs.

4 Site specific guidance

Vision

Within the next 15 years the Canal Basin and North East Gravesend will be transformed from its present, declining industrial condition into a thriving and distinctive urban quarter, complementing Gravesend's historic centre and enriching the town as a whole.

Through sustainable design and construction and the efficient use of resources, innovative development will create a broad mix of high quality homes, jobs and services to engender a vibrant, sustainable new community which is fully integrated with its surroundings.

To achieve this vision, the following objectives will be pursued:

- Maintain essential industrial employment and particularly riverside uses, whilst mitigating the effects of 'bad neighbour' uses.
- Create an attractive, high density, waterfront environment, through sustainable construction, design and occupation.
- Integrate existing adjoining residential areas into the structure of the Masterplan for the area so that they can benefit from new facilities, opportunities and amenities.
- Create a safe and accessible urban form, based on the existing waterfront character of Gravesend, to establish a unique sense of place.
- Create a sustainable community by providing an appropriate mix of uses, housing types and tenures, supported by community, educational, retail and other facilities and services, delivered on a phased basis to meet need as it arises.
- Create a network of multi-functional green and blue infrastructure (comprised of public and

private open spaces, water spaces, and connections) both to serve the development and to link into the wider Kent Thameside setting.

- Promote sustainable modes of transport and create a pedestrian-dominant street environment.

This section sets out key design and planning principles which will support these aims, including:

- Urban typology
- Connection to the river
- Managing views
- Human scale
- Mix of use and tenure
- Identity
- Streetscape and massing

Urban typology

It is important that major new development relates to the character of the area in which it is located. This applies to the architecture and urban grain, but should also guide the overall urban structure.

Inland towns commonly follow a concentric pattern, with the highest density historic core at the centre of the plan, sometimes tightly defined by city walls. This central area is the focus for civic and commercial life, and is surrounded by a lower density, predominantly residential hinterland, segmented by routes which radiate out from the centre.

By contrast, towns which face onto the sea or onto a large estuary are often asymmetrical, with the historic high-density core located at the waterfront. This emphasises the role that the water plays in the life of the community, whether for fishing, travel, trade or leisure. The diagrams illustrate these different typologies with reference to a range of other towns in the South East. Gravesend clearly follows this latter model, with great importance being placed on links to the waterfront, and it is therefore important for the creation of a successful urban extension that new development reflects this model.

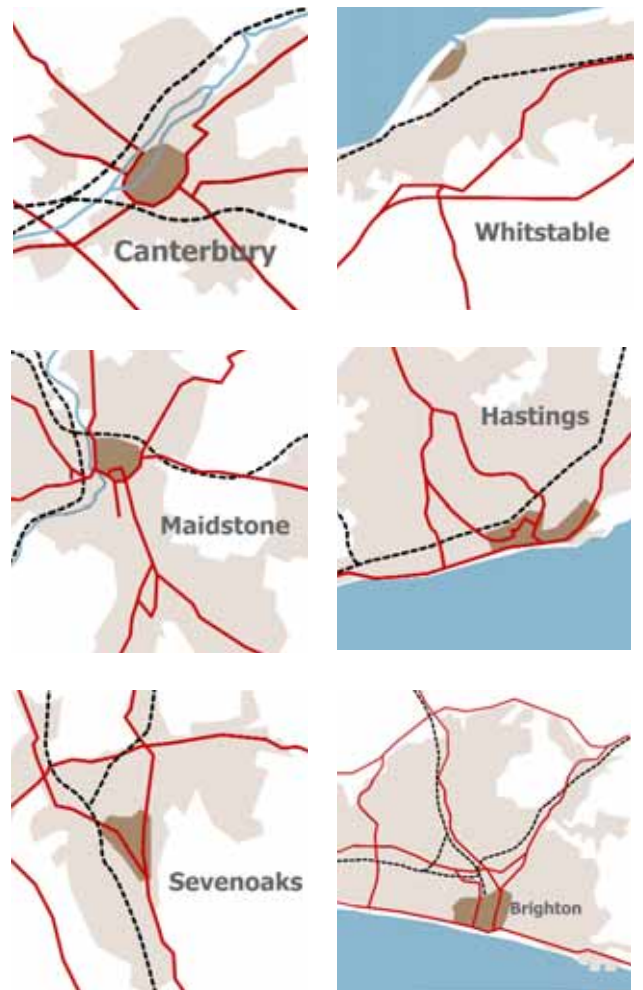


Figure 23. Urban typology models



Figure 24. The waterfront at Gravesend, showing the recently restored Town Pier

Connection to the river

The location of Gravesend on the Thames estuary has played a significant role in shaping its urban form. Gravesend has historically been a place of arrival and departure for goods and people, being conveniently placed on the approach to London, and a traditional 'last stop' at the start of long sea journeys. It is also a river crossing point, and this continues today in the form of the passenger ferry which makes four crossings per hour between Gravesend and Tilbury.

The importance of these connections with the river is demonstrated by the strong routes which run perpendicular to the waterfront and terminate in piers or jetties. These structures become key landmarks and provide focal points for the views to the waterfront which aid the legibility of the town centre. In some instances these landmarks are balanced by corresponding features inland, such as the clock tower which can be seen from the Royal Terrace Pier.

Whilst some of these streets connect important buildings or spaces in the town with the waterfront, other examples extend well beyond Gravesend, and link surrounding communities to the river and the crossing point to Tilbury on the north bank.

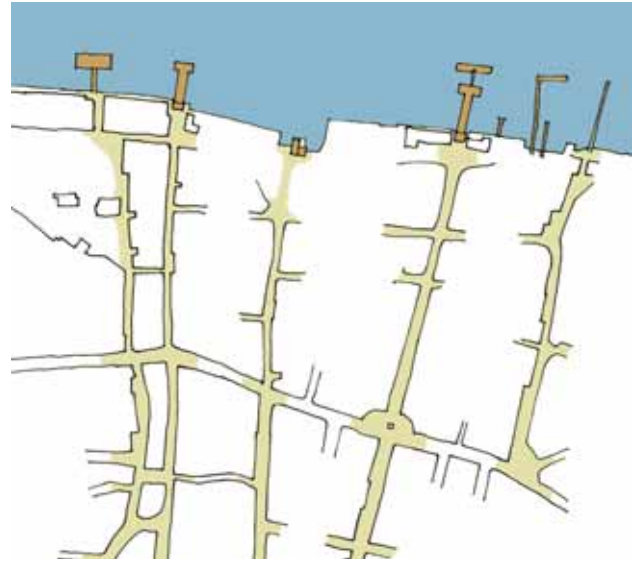


Figure 25. Key routes to the waterfront in Gravesend



Figure 26. View to the Town Pier along the High Street



Figure 27. View of the clock tower from the Royal Pier

Managing views

Having established the importance of the links to the river and the way in which these links can be emphasised through the street pattern, the design of any development must acknowledge the presence of Tilbury Power Station on the opposite bank of the Thames.

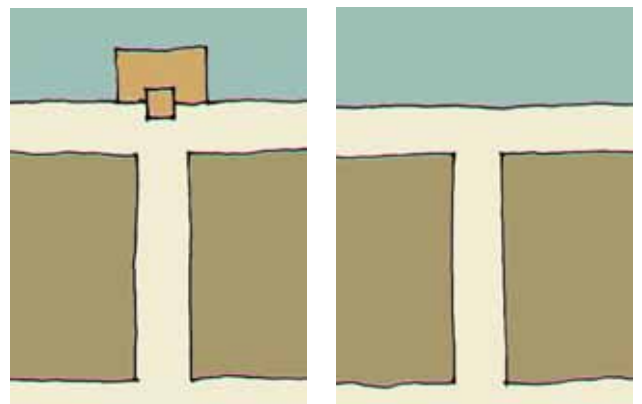
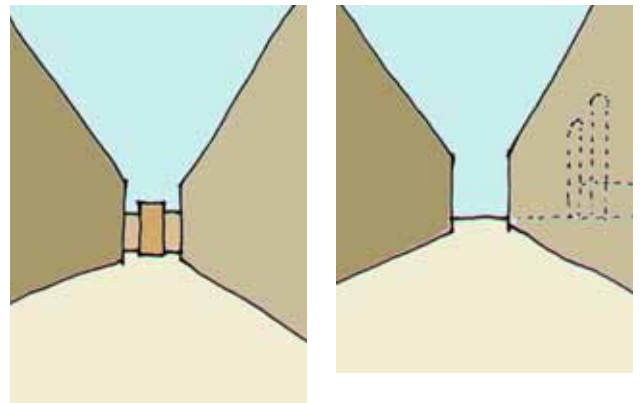
Some streets within existing areas of development align with the power station creating vistas of the industrial landscape, which provide important landmarks but can be unsightly.

It may therefore be desirable for views within the new development to be managed to minimise the visual impact of the power station through careful design.

- Buildings might be designed to terminate vistas, following the typology of the pier-head buildings in Gravesend.
- Streets should be sufficiently narrow to create focused rather than wide views, and should be orientated to direct views away from the power station.



Figure 28. View of the power station along Russell Road



Vista closed by a building

Vista aligned to mask the power station

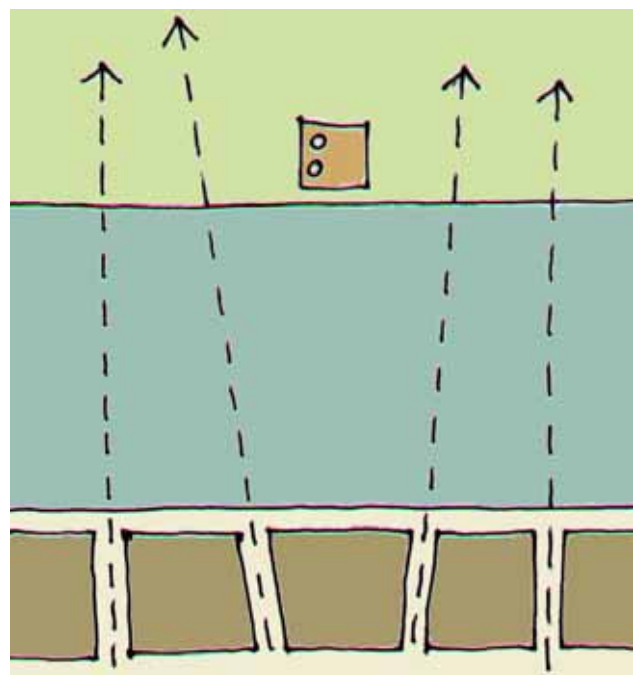


Figure 29. Views controlled to ensure that they do not align with the powerstation

Human scale

To be attractive and to achieve long-term sustainability, development should be designed at a human scale. Streets should be safe and attractive with an interesting mix of uses, facilities such as shops and community facilities should be within easy walking distance of dwellings, and sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport should be given priority over car movement.

The study area is bisected by the railway line, which effectively severs most of the pedestrian routes and creates two almost independent areas. There are substantial areas of existing housing in each of these zones which should be assimilated into any new development in order to ensure a balanced and cohesive place. New mixed use centres providing a range of retail, service and community facilities should be located to ensure that they are within easy reach of their respective catchment areas, and that each is well linked to the proposed location for a new station.

Mix of use and tenure

To create a balanced and thriving community, it is important that the development includes a mix of uses and housing tenures, and that these are not only mixed at block level, but that urban blocks and individual buildings are also mixed. Within high density areas, this mix of uses is especially important, and helps to ensure that the development is not merely a dormitory for more important urban centres, but has facilities and employment opportunities which help to establish a sense of place and community.

It is also important that housing development comprises a mix of housing types and tenures. This will enable a wide variety of people, including families, to settle here and to meet their changing needs and fulfill their aspirations by moving within the community rather than moving to another

area. This continuity enables people to develop longer term friendships and community ties, and will help to foster a stronger community identity.

Identity

Memorable towns and cities are often associated with an abiding image, which might include their skyline, waterfront, key group of buildings or predominant architectural style. This memorable image often describes the origins and functions of the place, and helps to establish a sense of identity, both for visitors and those who belong there.

In planning for significant new development in a prominent location, there is an opportunity to create an urban form which establishes an identifiable image. This can be achieved by creating a distinctive overall form and silhouette which can be observed from key vantage points such as Windmill Hill and the river, but also by creating a detailed urban form which emphasises the importance of the river to the area, and corresponds to the strong street pattern of Gravesend.



Figure 30. Development needs to be planned with a human scale - Local facilities should be within a five minute walk of dwellings, and key facilities such as a rail station within a ten minute walk.

Streetscape and massing

Attractive streets and public spaces tend to be those which provide a good sense of enclosure, and which are defined by buildings which present active frontages to the space. This gives a human scale to development and helps to provide a feeling of safety and security.

High density development is often considered to be linked to high-rise buildings. However, higher densities can also be achieved by adopting a low to medium rise approach, and in doing so create much more pleasing streetscape.

A key constraint on development within the study area is to ensure that there are no habitable rooms set below 7.2m AOD. This effectively means that there can be no living accommodation on the ground floor of any buildings. Given this constraint, it is important that creative solutions are devised either to establish active non-residential uses at ground floor level, or effectively to raise the level of streets to establish a strong relationship between private habitable space and the public realm. It would be a significant failing of any design strategy which allows ground floor parking to predominate to the detriment of the character of the public spaces.



Figure 32. Mixed-use streets in Gravesend



Figure 33. Poor environment around recent development

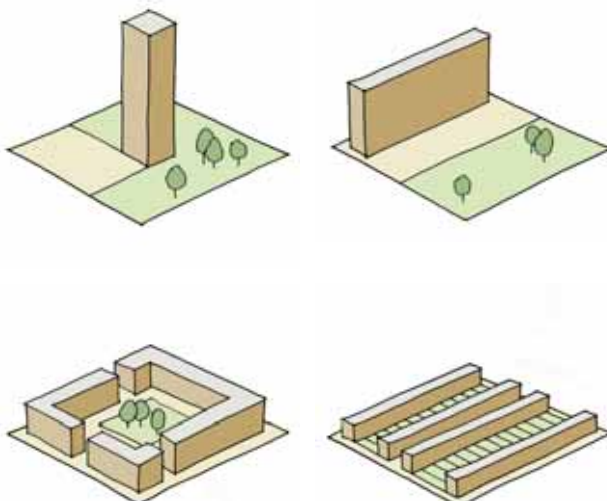


Figure 31. Development achieved with different urban forms



Figure 34. Attractive riverside development