



# Dartford

## Town Centre Framework

### Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)



Adopted July 2018

**DARTFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## A Word from the Leader

Many small changes have been taking place in Dartford Town Centre over a number of years, including improvements in Central Park and new shops, cafes and restaurants opening up. We now have a handful of major developments being brought forward that have the potential to be transformational. We have also been successful in securing £12M of government funding to help us improve the public spaces within the town centre.

We are on the cusp of major change but opportunities like this are rare: we want to make sure we get it right and make the most of this investment. We are clear that public and private investment must work well together to achieve maximum benefit.

Hence the Framework sets out where improvements to the public areas need to be made and sets out an expectation that private investment will compliment these improvements. Good design and buildings which contribute to the quality of the public spaces are key. The Framework places huge importance on the town centre being a place where people can move around freely and safely in pleasant surroundings; an enticing and inviting place where people can meet and enjoy their leisure time; a place where the town's heritage is respected whilst responding to modern day needs and lifestyles.

The consultation feedback we have had from local residents, businesses in the town and other organisations shows that there is a widespread enthusiasm for things to happen in the town centre. This Framework has taken on board these views to bring together a flexible plan for the town centre which can stand the test of time and respond to changing circumstances as they arise, encouraging development which will make the town centre a better place.

This Framework is only part of the story. It sets the scene for the type of town centre we want Dartford to be. As more detailed projects and plans come forward, we will continue to consult with you on the details of these and seek your input. It is your town and I would like you to have an influence on how it changes

Best wishes



Jeremy Kite MBE  
Leader of Dartford Borough Council



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This is an exciting time for Dartford, as the town has once again become a desirable location for investment and as a place to live.

1.1 These growth plans originate from the adopted Dartford's Local Plans, Core Strategy Policy CS2 in particular, aiming to revitalise the town centre and improve its range of attractions and the environment. The growth plans are happening: Dartford is now in the top five in the country for residential growth rates, proportionately, averaging 1.2% per year (2008 to 2016). As a result, this Framework has been prepared with the purpose of outlining investment priorities for a new high quality town centre for future generations.

1.2 Dartford is an historic market town with a rich heritage. Since the Romans built a ford across the River Darent, Dartford has benefitted from its strategic location and prospered from its innovative people. The architecture following the growth and prosperity of the Industrial Revolution is still visible today in the quality of buildings that remain along the High Street, along with the civic pride that remains evident in the detailing of the public buildings.

1.3 Recently, the town centre has seen significant new jobs and facilities, recent investment in and residential development, within and surrounding the town centre, which has proven to be popular with first time buyers and young families. There is now clearly potential for more.

1.4 To guide this, the Framework identifies a range of projects and regeneration priorities, including seven key sites to transform the town centre. The Framework identifies Objectives for guiding long term change. These are:

- *Making it easier to get around the town by all forms of transport*
- *Improving the look of the place through enhancing the historic core and high quality design in new development*
- *Encouraging a wider choice of leisure, shopping, community, cultural and business facilities and greater use of these*
- *Making more of the town's leisure assets such as Central Park and the Orchard Theatre*
- *Embedding arts into the town centre through activities and public art*
- *Continuing with digital innovation, such as public wi-fi and Smart Technology, so that the town centre responds to future change*

1.5 The Objectives are supported by Actions to help achieve our aims. Not everything shaping the town centre is in our control. But with the help of the Framework, we can set out the type of change we want when making planning decisions on development proposals. It will also be used to guide improvements in the town centre as further public funding becomes available.

1.6 As a whole, this Framework provides guidance on the built form, routes and movement, land uses and design principles, as a strategy for the delivery of a successful twenty-first century town centre. It outlines plans to implement specific development sites, initiatives to improve movement in the town centre and environmental enhancements which will spearhead change in the town, creating the conditions for businesses and residents to continue to prosper.

1.7 Adopted as a formal Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on 26 July 2018, the Framework is a weighty consideration when deciding planning applications. Development proposals for the town centre must clearly show how they contribute to objectives and the design principles and other requirements within this document.

## 2. A VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR DARTFORD TOWN CENTRE

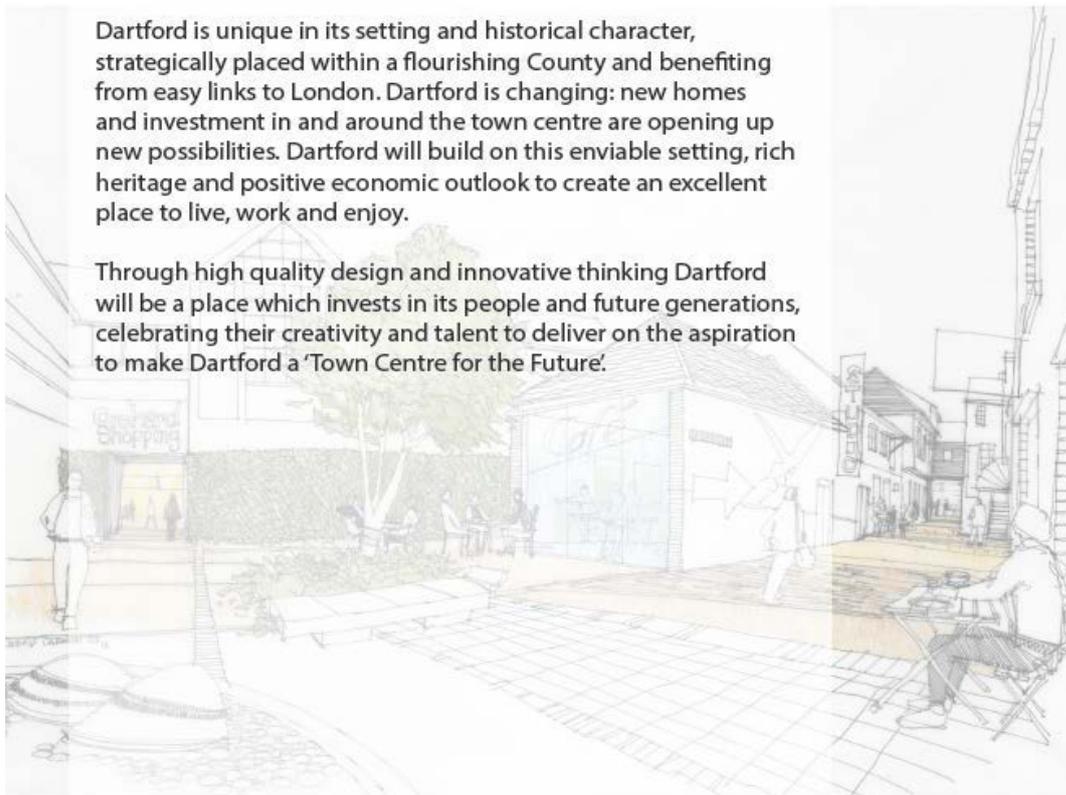
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This vision for Dartford Town Centre's future guides Objectives for the Framework:

### **DARTFORD: A TOWN CENTRE FOR THE FUTURE**

Dartford is unique in its setting and historical character, strategically placed within a flourishing County and benefiting from easy links to London. Dartford is changing: new homes and investment in and around the town centre are opening up new possibilities. Dartford will build on this enviable setting, rich heritage and positive economic outlook to create an excellent place to live, work and enjoy.

Through high quality design and innovative thinking Dartford will be a place which invests in its people and future generations, celebrating their creativity and talent to deliver on the aspiration to make Dartford a 'Town Centre for the Future'.



# Objectives

## 2.1 Movement

The Council is working with other organisations tackling both the causes and the symptoms of traffic, movement and access problems in the town centre. Most, if not all, of the traffic congestion that Dartford town centre suffers arises from people driving through the town centre, or more critically trying to bypass traffic caused by congestion elsewhere.

The Council cannot solve this issue through the Framework alone but we are working with Highways England to improve arrangements at the crossing and stressing the need to the Government for the Lower Thames Crossing to be provided as soon as possible to the east of the Borough. Through the Framework, we can improve access into the town centre by alternative, more sustainable forms of transport.

## 2.2 Leisure

Dartford is unique in its leisure offer that must be maintained and enhanced. It has an enormous Edwardian park connected to the heart of the town centre and the River Darent runs through the town. In the heart of the town is The Orchard regional theatre; the very popular Fairfield pool and leisure centre; an athletics track and a Park Run; an open air theatre; skate park; bandstand; as well as Dartford football club; Dartford cricket club; fishing lakes; golf club; and David Lloyd leisure centre all within walking distance. It is on the long distance walking path of Darent Valley footpath, and on long distance cycle routes.

## 2.3 Perception & Quality of Place

People who already live in Dartford know it is a great place to be. Perceptions of

Dartford are however sometimes clouded by traffic congestion. This means many of the town centre's assets are hidden to visitors; and like many town centres, the public realm is in need of renewal, with 'green' and appealing streets and spaces, attractive shopfronts and public places that highlight Dartford's historic buildings.

## 2.4 Town Centre Economy

Private investment slowed during the recession but the town centre now has very few vacant properties that do not have plans to bring them into new uses. There is strong investment interest in the town centre. The town needs to meet the changing needs of people visiting and living in the town centre, with new forms of retail/leisure services and community facilities. Dartford needs to lead the way in providing suitable new town centre activities, and smart economic growth.

## 2.5 Creative

As well as the very popular Orchard Theatre, the theatre in the park and bandstand, and the annual Dartford Festival, the town centre has an emerging arts and culture scene. Dartford's future economic productivity and culture can be inspired by its productive history and industrial heritage.

## 2.6 Innovation

Dartford is strategically placed in terms of the data network and the transport network. The Town Team has been active in bringing Wi-Fi into the town centre and is using technology to assist businesses in understanding the trade patterns and town centre activity.

### 3. DARTFORD TOWN CENTRE TODAY – ANALYSIS

This section sets out the context for the Town Centre Framework, looking at the individual ingredients that have made Dartford the place it is today and will help to position it as a great future town centre

3.1 The town centre is a melting pot of opportunities and challenges. It is important that this Framework recognises the existing limitations and challenges which the centre is experiencing in order to be able to address them holistically.

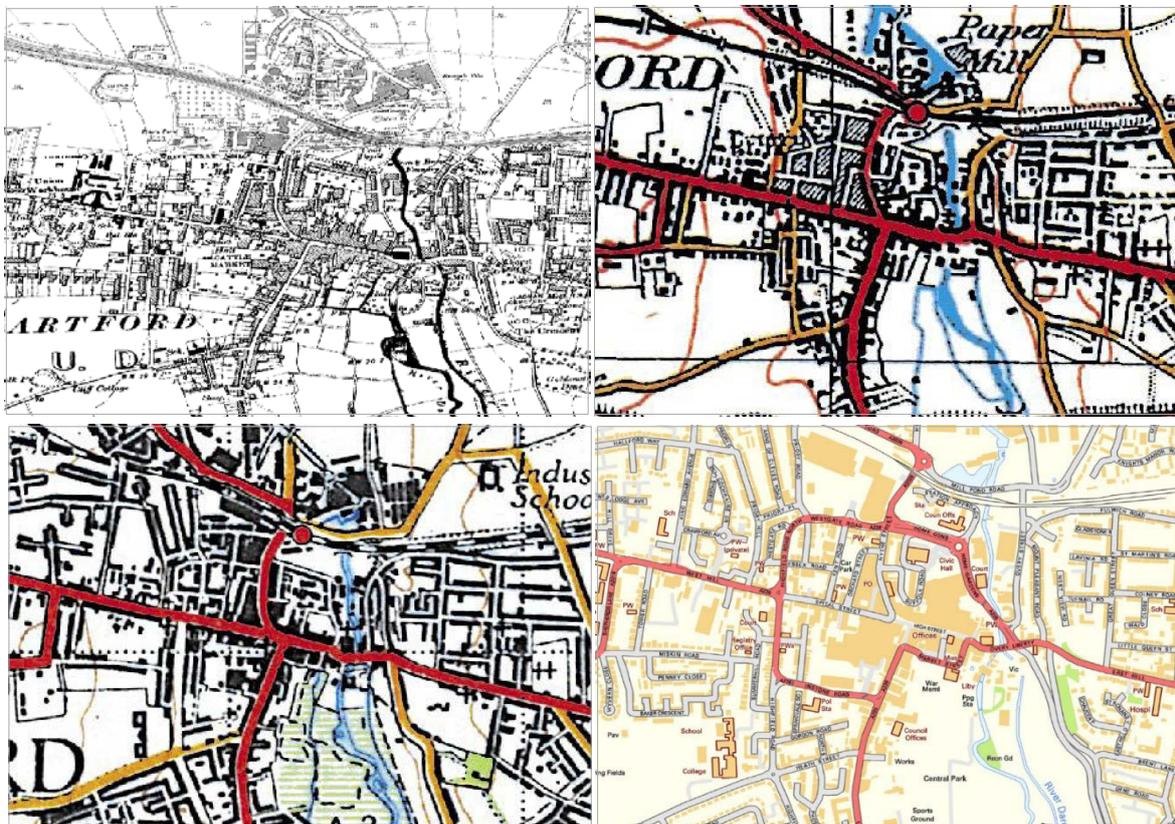
3.2 It is equally essential that the Framework recognises the many assets the town has to deliver distinctive and viable development proposals which will enhance the everyday experience of those using it, as well as its economic success.

### Perception & Quality of Place

#### Historic Environment

3.3 The majority of the town centre, including its High Street, is within the largest Conservation Area in the Borough. It is home to some thirty-eight listed buildings and structures, including coaching inns and historic pubs. Together with the significant number of unlisted historic buildings, these create a distinctive and attractive urban character for Dartford.

3.4 The majority of the town’s historic street pattern has remained following the Roman roads of West Hill and East Hill, providing dramatic entrances to the town centre and the High Street. The crossroads between the High Street / Spital Street and Hythe Street has retained its prominence within the town. This contributes to Dartford’s market town character.



*Historic development of Dartford’s form*

## Building Character

3.5 The historic core of the centre is predominantly 3-4 storeys in height. Modern buildings are higher and the new development to the north of the railway, fronting the Millpond, is up to 8 storeys high. The high point in the town centre is Station Mound (Station Quarter) and the Civic Centre dominates much of the northern part of the town centre's skyline.

3.6 Side streets and alleyways contribute to the character of the area and many of them are remnants of the numerous medieval courts that led off the High Street. Bull's Head Yard and Bullace Lane however lack a clear and inviting destination at their northern ends, while Market Place is weakened in terms of townscape by not being linked strongly to the High Street and Central Park.

3.7 Spital Street also has a coherent architectural form, made up of predominantly 2-3 storey buildings with a rhythm of the roof windows and consistent window sizes. The courtyards of St. James Place and Copperfields reinforce the distinction between Spital Street and West Hill.

3.8 Landmark buildings in the town centre, which have an increased scale due to their significant role, include Orchard Theatre, Holy Trinity Church and the Civic Centre.

3.9 There is a clear vista along the High Street from West Hill to Holy Trinity Church at the eastern end of the High Street.

3.10 Furthermore, the distinctive topography of the Station Quarter which sits above the town provides good views across the town centre and down the Darent Valley. These views and the legibility opportunities could be emphasised by new development on this site.

3.11 On the town centre edge, 2-3 storey Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing dominate the area.

3.12 The distinctive form of the town centre creates a clearly defined retail core; and reinforced by the defined edges on all sides: the river to the east; the railway line to the north; Highfield Road to the west; and Brooklands Fishing Ponds to the south.

3.13 The location of large retail blocks at the northern edge of the town centre, including Prospect Place and Orchard Shopping Centre, coupled with the issues of crossing the Ring Road, has made this edge uninviting for pedestrians. New development, improved public realm and enhanced crossing opportunities across Home Gardens, as well as more legible views into the town centre, will help mitigate this issue.

3.14 The existing form and massing of the town centre should be largely retained with existing issues improved by interventions in the public realm and building frontages. Opportunities exist to increase density and massing at the Station Quarter to deliver a defined gateway into the town, whilst new development in the town centre should use appropriate massing to define edges and corners where appropriate.

3.15 Given the extensive history of the town the area has significant archaeological potential. As well as buried structural remains some of the older buildings have been incorporated into more recent buildings. Archaeological investigations and building recording is likely to be required on many of the sites.



*Illustrative sections through the town centre*



*Section Location*

## Key Public Space

3.16 The Framework seeks to build on the emerging development in the town to identify opportunities to deliver significant improvements to the quality of public spaces and public realm in the heart of Dartford.

3.17 Dartford contains many spaces and streets which are of significant value to the town. Some of these locations and key places are shown or labelled on the following 'Existing key public space diagram':

### • 3.18 Central Park

Central Park provides a unique town centre setting for Dartford. The proximity of the Park, directly adjacent to the High Street, means that it delivers a usable green space within easy walking distance of the town and provides a venue for many town centre events as well as active recreation and relaxation. The Council has invested in the Park and continues to expand the range of events.

*There is a clear need for better physical and visual links from the town centre to the Park.*

### • 3.19 Memorial Gardens

Memorial Gardens provides a key landmark within the town centre and a gateway into Central Park. Its historic importance places it firmly at the heart of the community.

### • 3.20 High Street and One Bell Corner

The High Street provides the focus of retail activity and a defined pedestrianised space in the town. It is lined by a number of attractive historic buildings which could contribute more to the quality of the space through the repair of buildings and the replacement of low quality modern shopfronts and adverts.

A bi-weekly market and One Bell Corner, a small central space used regularly for events and exhibitions, enliven the space.

### • 3.21 Suffolk Road adjacent to Orchard Theatre

This recently improved space is one of the primary pedestrian routes from the Station to the High Street. The route provides access to the Orchard Shopping Centre and the Orchard Theatre, however the southern section of the route is backed by service yards and inactive frontages. This is a shared space which provides service access, car parking and pedestrian movement in a confined space.

### • 3.22 Acacia Complex

The site contains historic buildings, open spaces and the River Darent but is currently separated from the town centre by walls and clutter. *It has the potential to be better integrated.* The site's setting on the edge of the town centre and within Central Park, on the banks of River Darent, creates an attractive setting that is within easy reach of the town centre on foot.

### • 3.23 Market Street

Market Street is a vehicular thoroughfare and parking area for the town, causing severance of pedestrian movement between the High Street and Central Park.

However, as the ring road has been made two-way to the north, its use by vehicles has decreased as many buses no longer route this way. *It has potential to be a more pedestrian-friendly space which enhances the local landmarks of Central Park, Dartford Library, the Museum and the new development coming forward in the area.*

• **3.24 Overy Liberty**

Overy Liberty is a historic gateway to the town centre and is edged by historic buildings, notably the listed Holy Trinity Church. The Bridge over River Darent is of historic character that is lost visually due to the highway clutter and grime. The overall space at Overy Liberty is dominated by the traffic junction. *The setting of this space could be enhanced by the creation of greater enclosure and minimising the impact of the car.*

• **3.25 West Hill / Spital Street / Westgate**

This is another historic gateway to the town partially enclosed by historic buildings. A 20th century building detracts from the setting but *clear views are still maintained to the Holy Trinity Church at the eastern end of the High Street.*

• **3.26 The River Darent**

River Darent provides an attractive riverside setting for Acacia Mansion House and Central Park, and opportunities to enhance the river environment around the Northern Gateway development are underway. *Further opportunities exist to enhance the corridor and re-engage the river within the town centre itself.*

• **3.27 Station Concourse**

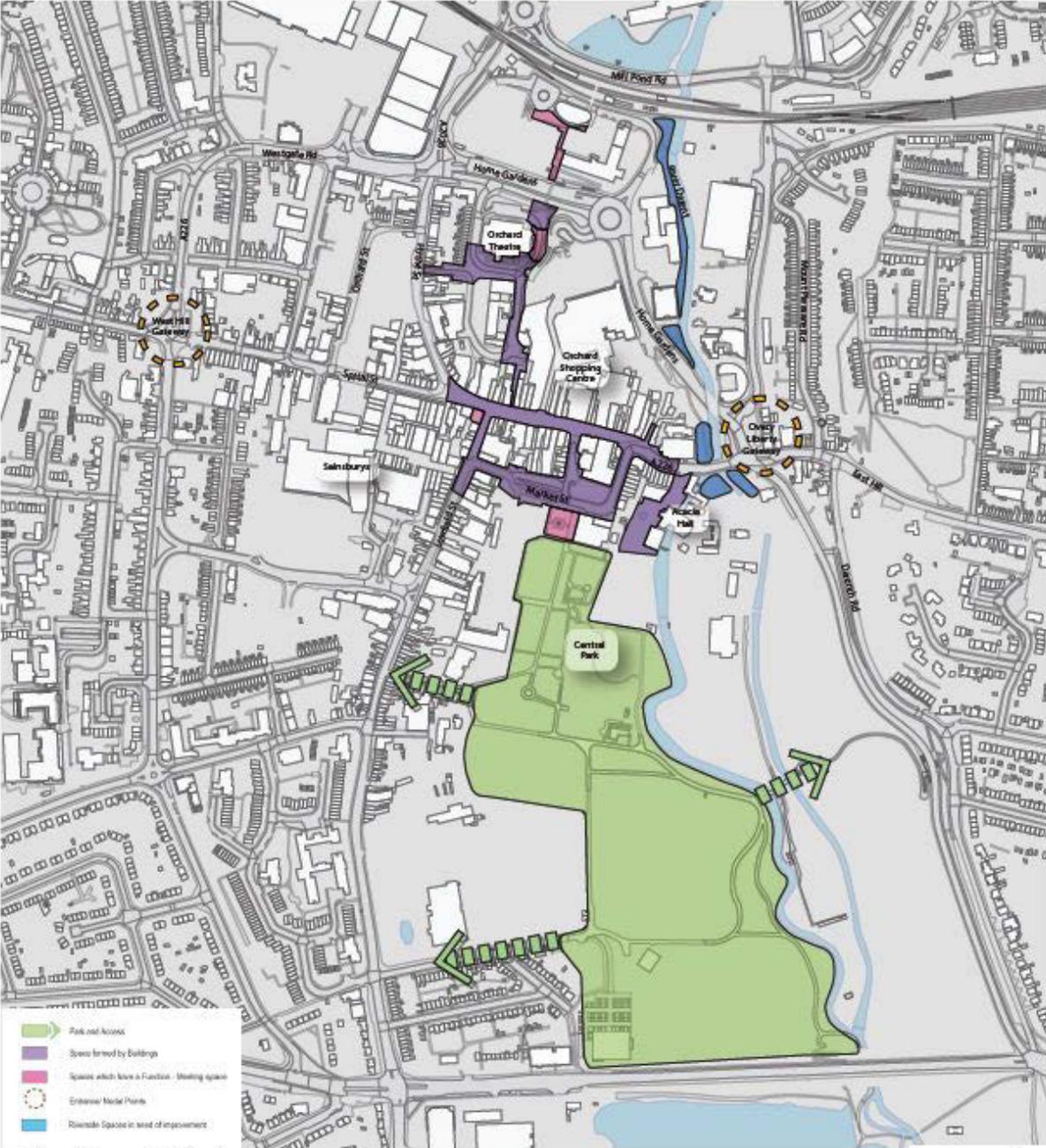
Dartford Station is the busiest on the North Kent line. A modern new station built in 2015 has improved facilities on the concourse and the pedestrian space outside is a popular and busy meeting place. *There is opportunity for further improvement to this public space through potential development around the station and improvement of links to the surrounding areas.*



Dartford's Central Park and bandstand

Acacia Hall mansion house





Existing public space in Dartford



Central Park



Market Street



River Darent

## Movement

3.28 Dartford town centre has excellent strategic links via rail, bus and road throughout the south east/ the rest of Kent, and into London. Although the proximity to the strategic road network provides opportunities for growth, it can also cause congestion issues within the town centre when incidents or road works on the strategic road network and at the Dartford Crossing cause traffic to divert through the town. The Council is working proactively with partners to reduce the vehicles diverting through the town centre.

3.29 The road network in the town centre is dominated by the “ring road” which is also the only route through the town for through traffic. It is also used by drivers as an alternative route when there are problems on the A2 (T) or the A282 Dartford Tunnel Approach. The north and east sections of the ring road are two-way but the south and west are one-way.

3.30 Once in the one-way system, traffic has to circulate around the ring road, increasing the weight of traffic within. A number of car parks access onto the one-way system, which adds to the circulation of vehicles on the ring road.

3.31 As a result of heavy demand, particularly at peak periods, and often exacerbated by incidents on the Strategic Road Network, the whole of the ring road has been declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

3.32 For pedestrians and cyclists the ring road causes significant severance and this is exacerbated by radial roads, feeding into the ring road, some of which have poor crossing facilities.

3.33 A high volume of vehicles, predominantly cars but a small proportion of goods vehicles, travelling at speed (in good traffic conditions) around parts of the ring road with multiple lanes makes cycling in particular unappealing and unsafe, and limits ‘at-grade’ pedestrian crossing.

3.34 Part of the town centre is pedestrianised and carries little traffic, but the number of illegal movements by light goods vans along the pedestrianised High Street is increasing.

3.35 The town centre is a key nodal point for a large number of bus routes in the area, but bus reliability is increasingly impacted by congestion at junctions in the town centre and entry routes as a result of the strategic road network and the need for buses to join with general traffic at junctions.

## Cycling and Walking

3.36 Dartford’s town centre is compact and therefore, within the ring road, provides an excellent environment for a walkable and cycleable town centre. However, the inactive frontages on the current pedestrian network, poor quality public realm and the lack of an integrated cycle network have led to poor legibility in the town centre.

3.37 The Ring Road is a barrier to movement, and has limited provision for cycling. Crossing at radial roads is difficult. The car dominates the town centre and restricts movement for pedestrians and cyclists.

3.38 Pedestrians often cross the ring road dangerously due to few ground level crossing facilities. The alternative for pedestrians is a bridge or underpass, which are unpopular.

3.39 Cycle routes are one-way only on the existing one-way roads within the ring road, and therefore there is no direct movement across the town centre for cyclists. This impacts both local cyclists using the town centre and those using national cycle network routes that pass through the town.

3.40 A clearly defined, legible, safe and ‘easy to use’ pedestrian network is required; one that engages with the river corridor, the

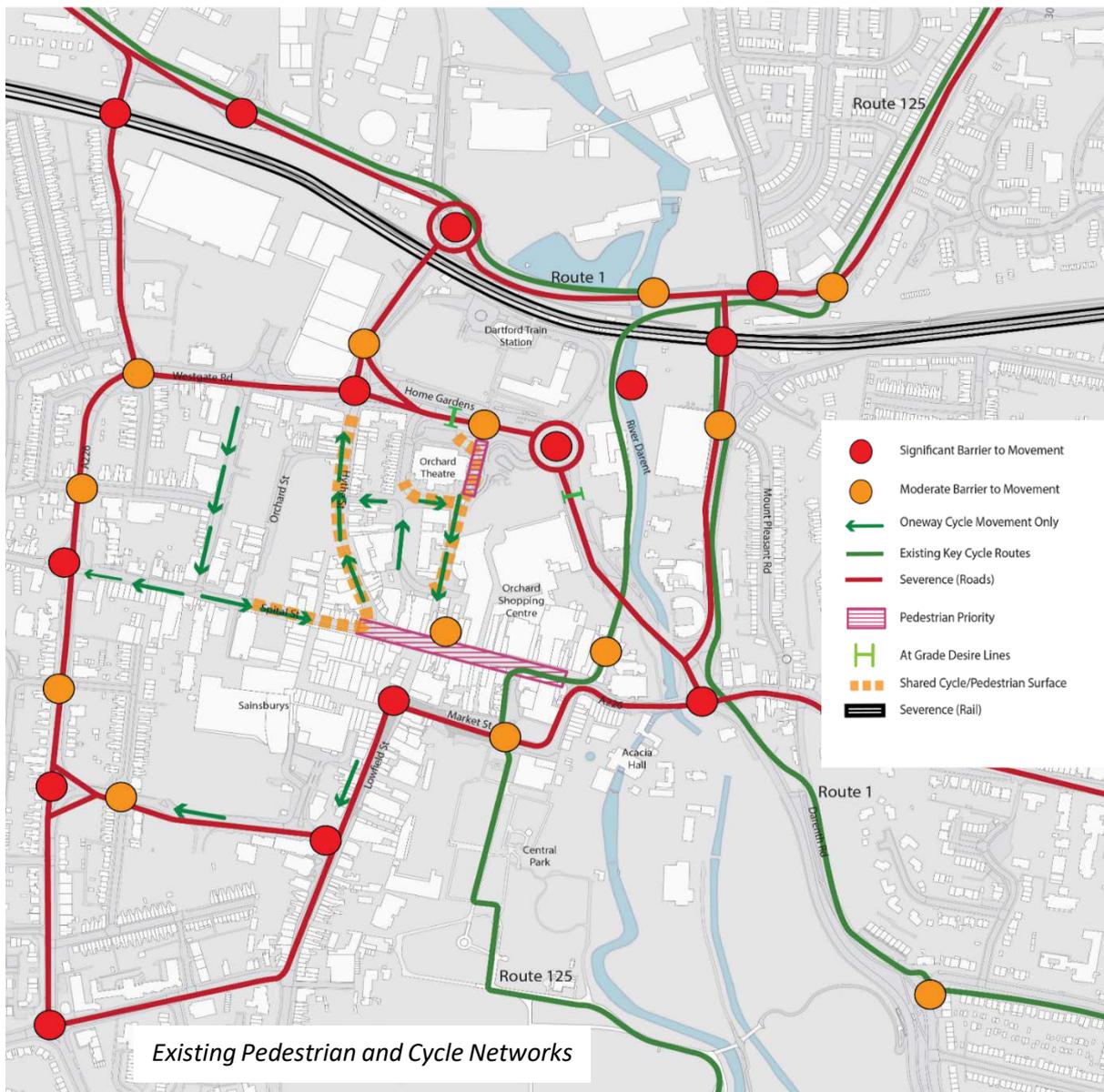
town's leisure activity, Central Park, the station and the retail core. The Council has recently installed new 'Wayfinding' signage in various locations across the town with further signs to be provided in the near future. The signs are similar to 'Legible London Signage' and provide maps and information to assist navigation to destinations by pedestrians.

3.41 Measures to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement across the town centre are required to enhance the existing network to maximise the opportunities afforded by the compact nature of the town and the links provided through multiple radial links including the river and roads.

3.42 The following plan identifies a number of barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement in the town centre.

3.43 The Ring Road and the Railway Line result in linear barriers to cross whilst some junctions create unsafe and unfriendly spaces which restrict connectivity in the town.

3.44 Using the identified desire lines between the town centre and surrounding residential areas, the station, Central Park, local leisure uses and surrounding commercial areas, the framework aims to break down these barriers and create a connected town centre.



## Car Parking

3.45 The total car parking capacity in Dartford town centre is approximately 4,000 spaces; 3,100 of which are in car parks across approximately 20 sites (a mixture of private and public ownership and operation) with an additional 900 on-street bays. The parking provision is generally evenly distributed around the town centre.

3.46 Parking tariffs were standardised in 2009 to reduce drivers patrolling the town looking for the cheapest place to park. This pricing strategy achieved the desired outcome and the usage in all facilities is fairly balanced. Pay-and-display ticket sales 2015/16 in town centre Council car parks indicates usage with short and long stay preferences. The ticket sales indicate that approximately 75% of parking visits were less than two hours long. Acacia car park currently has low usage but other town centre car parks operate near capacity. Many spaces in the edge of centre car parks are used by residents overnight and on Sundays, preventing use by visitors to the town centre.

3.47 The streets and roads surrounding the town centre also generally provide unrestricted parking and this is competed for by all drivers including residents, town centre workers, rail commuters, shoppers and leisure visitors. As this is unregulated there is no data about demand versus supply.

3.48 However, the relatively recent station car park on Victoria Road which has been provided specifically for rail related travel remains under-used. The availability of free car parking within 5-10 minutes' walk of Dartford's busy mainline station makes it difficult to encourage appropriate alternative sustainable solutions and potentially adds to traffic at peak times, as well causing annoyance to residents.

3.49 Car parks located on the one-way sections of the ring road e.g. the existing Acacia car park, result in drivers having to drive around the ring road to get in or out of the town centre. This may be one of the factors limiting usage but is also adding to the town centre traffic. In particular, this leads to traffic travelling through Market Street unnecessarily.

3.50 Potential development opportunities identified in the Core Strategy could result in the loss of some car parks and the Central car park has closed to allow the Lowfield development to go ahead. Replacement car parking is to be provided as part of the Acacia complex refurbishments. Further analysis looking into future parking requirements, both short and long stay parking, is being undertaken.

3.51 The current provision of electric vehicle charging points within town centre car parks is very limited.

## Gateways

3.52 Gateways matter to key movement and perception town centre objectives. The principal gateways to the town centre are:

- **3.53 Station Arrival:** The Station provides the primary pedestrian gateway, via train, to the town centre with routes to the town defined by the pedestrian bridge over Home Gardens.
- **3.54 Fastrack and Bus Stops:** Bus stops provide the arrival point for many pedestrians along Home Gardens and Market Street. Key secondary gateways into the town centre are therefore via Suffolk Road and Market Street.
- **3.55 Eastern Gateway:** East Hill and Overy Liberty provide the eastern gateway into the town centre core, with the Overy Liberty Bridge, Acacia Complex and Holy Trinity Church providing a distinctive gateway character at this point. This historic core of Dartford should be celebrated but is instead dominated by car infrastructure, with poor pedestrian and cycle crossings, detracting from the setting of important heritage assets for the town.
- **3.56 Northern Gateway:** Housing growth to the north of the railway line has increased movement under the railway viaduct and there is a need to enhance these gateway points at Hythe Street, Overy Street and along the river.
- **3.57 Western Gateway:** The entrance from West Hill creates a gateway into the town centre at the junction with Highfield Road, Westgate and Spital Street. This gateway continues into the town along Spital Street for pedestrians. Spital Street is cluttered with various on-street parking controls, narrow footways, broken one-way only cycle ways and poor quality frontages.
- **3.58 Southern Gateway:** Southern access into the town centre is predominantly via Lowfield Street (as far as Instone Road), although pedestrians and cyclist can access the town via Central Park. Lowfield Street only allows cyclists southbound at its northern end.
- **3.59 Car Parks:** Car parks are often the prominent arrival point for visitors to the town centre. The key car parks being Prospect Place, Westgate car park, the Orchard Shopping Centre, Market Street, Priory Shopping Centre and Acacia complex. The sense of arrival at these car parks and the subsequent pedestrian routes into the town centre are critical to the perception of the town.

## Public Transport

3.60 There is a good network of buses serving the town centre, as well as 'Fastrack', a rapid bus service specifically developed to link new developments across Dartford and Gravesham with important destinations. Collectively, these provide a high quality and reliable alternative to using the car for local journeys. There are 24 different bus services (17 regular and 7 school buses) operating within Dartford Town Centre managed by two principal authorities (Kent County Council and Transport for London, along with various schools). Home Gardens (close to the railway station) is the busiest bus stop area with 31 buses through every hour.

3.61 The movement of buses around the town centre is highly influenced by the ring road. On the whole, the majority of town centre destinations are within a short walk of a bus stop but not all bus routes are well located in relation to preferred or more suitable pedestrian routes. Walking to destinations is affected by the issues raised in the cycling/ walking section above. A particular issue identified by bus users is that the arrival and departure points for some bus routes are on opposite sides of the town and are several minutes' walk apart. These factors, together with no integrated ticketing or cohesive customer information related to town centre bus travel, can create a confusing and poor quality experience for the bus user in the town centre.

3.62 In addition, congestion in Dartford town centre has been identified as a primary cause of bus delays, which is reducing bus attractiveness for patrons. This can be attributed to issues such as routing of buses in and around the town centre, pinch points and barriers to movement, but also congestion in the town centre and surrounding areas, arising from the Dartford Crossing and the strategic road network.

3.63 Fastrack aims to provide rapid bus transit throughout the northern part of the Borough, linking existing and new communities to the town centre, Darent

Valley Hospital, Bluewater and Ebbsfleet. Whilst Fastrack is on a dedicated route for much of its length, it is also affected by town centre congestion. Plans are in progress to enhance Fastrack to better provide the objective of a high quality, rapid mass transit service. A proposal for introduction of electric buses is currently being explored which would assist with improvement of air quality.

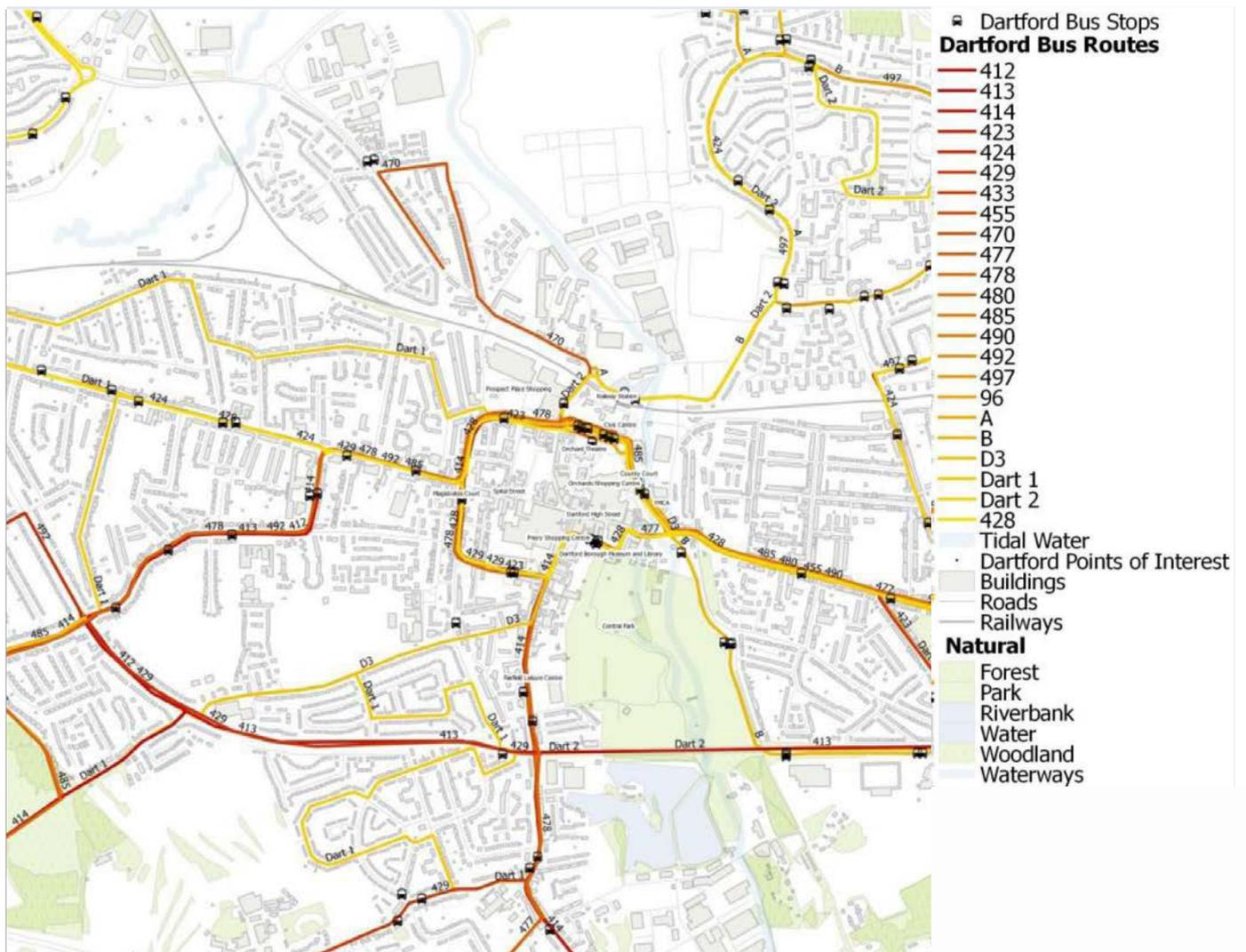
3.64 All of the above factors are unlikely to encourage people choosing to travel into the town centre by bus and support the objective of achieving more sustainable trips and increasing the vitality of the town centre.

3.65 Further investigation in the areas of bus infrastructure (bus hub concepts, along with bus stops and bus lanes), bus operations, and customer experience needs to be progressed to fully complement the vision and actions of the Framework and enable the transformation of the town centre.

3.66 Proposals for the upgrade of Fastrack routes to provide for growth in the east of the Borough in Ebbsfleet are likely to come forward and Dartford town centre must be able to respond to this if it is to benefit from the enhanced routes.

3.67 The railway station is busy throughout the day which suggests that rail services provide a good connection to the town centre from areas to the east and west served by the North Kent Line. The railway line currently offers a range of central London and Kent stations, with further destinations now available after the introduction of Thameslink services.

3.68 The Oyster card scheme and contactless payment has been extended to Dartford, increasing the attractiveness of the town for people wishing to re-locate from London. The Council and other organisations are exploring how service capacity and quality can be further increased. In particular there may be potential to extend the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail 1) service, currently terminating at Abbey Wood and due to open late 2018, to Dartford station or further east.



Bus routes around Dartford town centre



View of bus stops, bus lanes and buses on Home Gardens

## Town Centre Economy

3.69 The Town Centre provides a range of retail, leisure, cultural and civic facilities as well as residential and business accommodation. Its improving performance led to a 14% increase in average footfall in 2016/17 (most recent figures).

3.70 The town centre is at the heart of a highly economically buoyant Borough, with out-commuting more than outweighed by the number of people coming in to the Borough for work; and with jobs growth occurring alongside an influx of new residents.

3.71 Activities such as the bi-weekly market in the High Street (Thursday and Saturday) have enlivened the land use offer for the town centre and proved economically successful. Dartford has a market charter, as a result of its historic market town status, which prevents other competing markets being established in the wider area. This historical charter remains important to the success of the town centre. Investment has recently occurred in both shopping centres on Dartford High Street.

3.72 The Orchards Shopping Centre has gone through three phases of improvement and has now been fully refurbished, including the subdivision of units to attract new stores, and the Priory Shopping Centre (anchored by a Sainsbury's superstore), has been sold to an owner keen to transform it as a major shopping centre. A purpose built Lidl supermarket opened in December 2016 near Sainsbury's.

3.73 The Orchard Theatre is a major attraction for the sub- regional area, with increasing attendance rates. It is recognized there is particular potential for the town centre to increase the capture (before or after a show) of expenditure of theatre customers.

3.74 Whilst the Borough has seen steady growth over the last ten years in the total scale of café/restaurant (Class A3) floor space, the Town Centre is underprovided with multiple/family food and beverage providers at present.



*Vibrant street market attracts visitors and enlivens the High Street*

3.75 An increasing population, proximity to London and Bluewater, as well as good road links and public transport mean that the town is an attractive location for residential development. Opportunities for a diverse housing stock, including first time buyers, family and private rental sector (PRS) housing, can accelerate the growth of town centre living.

3.76 Expanding the number of residents within the town will also boost local expenditure and generate demand and investment in new and improved retail and leisure provision.

3.77 In delivering new residential units, there is an opportunity to create a 'lifestyle' offer within the town centre – an urban village – where the retail and leisure offer is focused on local needs and creating an enhanced mid- evening economy for the town. Importantly, the town centre has the competitive advantage of a choice of readily available or cleared development sites in prominent central locations. These new- build opportunities can be tailored to the needs of the town: significant new residential accommodation also bringing forward modern specification retail/leisure units.

3.78 The Kent Property Market Report 2017 highlights Dartford is “seeing robust occupier demand, particularly for A3 [café/restaurant] space”. In contrast to the general decline seen in many of the county’s towns, High Street retail rents in Dartford have recently been increasing.

3.79 Latest shop surveys (summer 2018) show the Town Centre’s diverse mix of retail uses, and that vacancy rates have continued to decrease. In the core ‘primary frontage’ the majority (59%) of the units are in Class A1 retail use, predominantly comparison goods, followed by Class A2 uses (banks, estate agents etc.) making up 15% of the units. In the ‘secondary frontages’, over 40% of the units are in A1 use, with a broad mix of other complementary uses.

3.80 Overall, with improved supermarket provision, the main under-represented sector is leisure. This is below average in scale of provision for a town centre and there is clear potential to improve the type of leisure (including the food and beverage offer).

3.81 The projected future additional resident population is expected to generate at least £35M p.a. extra of comparison (all non-grocery) retail spending, based on current local levels of expenditure. However this is likely to be an under-estimate given the likelihood of town centre redevelopment increasing the proportion of mobile and more affluent households.

3.82 Dartford Borough also sees strong demand for businesses premises. The town centre continues to accommodate several small businesses in office accommodation which continue to thrive. For example, within walking distance of the town centre is The Base, a popular location for business start-ups which has opportunity for expansion; with strong demand reflecting the performance of business parks across the town as a whole.

## Innovation

3.83 A community Wi-Fi and social media have been introduced on the High Street and in town centre anchor sites, such as shopping centres and leisure operators. The purpose of this is to cross-promote shops and services, increase dwell time and ultimately support the experience of picking up click-and-collect orders placed with online retailers. The same Wi-Fi system will also provide links to local community information providers, services and local media organisations. Local schools, churches and charities can provide information about fundraising events that normally could not be publicised to such a wide audience (circa 100,000 people per week).

This is complemented by the 'We Love Dartford' social media site.

3.84 The aim is to allow the town centre to work intelligently and allow residents and visitors to use its facilities with ease and efficiency. The innovations described above could be utilised to improve integration between the town's transport systems to provide up to date travel times, walking and cycling routes and real time parking information. This would ensure better interchange between systems, and ensure pedestrians and cyclists are using the town in the most efficient way which makes best of the town's facilities.

## Leisure and Creative

3.85 The following plan shows an excellent concentration of cultural and leisure facilities throughout the town centre, as well as a number of locations within easy reach of the town centre. There is a need to better integrate all leisure offers across the town and ensure they are all easily accessed on foot or by bike; and provide well located parking suitable for facilities such as the Orchard Theatre.

3.86 Cultural and leisure assets increase footfall and activity within the town. The framework should support these facilities to grasp the economic opportunities that they bring. For example, the Orchard Theatre provides an excellent opportunity to stimulate a thriving restaurant and café cluster to the north of the town centre along Hythe Street.



*Orchard Theatre in Dartford*



Culture and Leisure Locations

## 4. DARTFORD TOWN CENTRE TOMORROW – A CHANGING TOWN CENTRE

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Our analysis of the town centre and engagement with stakeholders and local people and organisations has identified a number of opportunities for change within the town centre.

4.1 There are extensive opportunities for new development in the centre of Dartford. The Northern Gateway, Station Quarter, the former Co-op Site and Lowfield Street have all been identified for development within the adopted Dartford Core Strategy and offer opportunities for development in the short to medium term. Further long term development opportunities also exist, for example along the river front adjacent to the train station and around the Orchard Theatre, which are also considered within this Framework. To deliver successful change within the town centre, these development opportunities must be delivered through an integrated strategy which provides connections and an enhanced urban environment, ultimately improving the overall experience of the town centre.

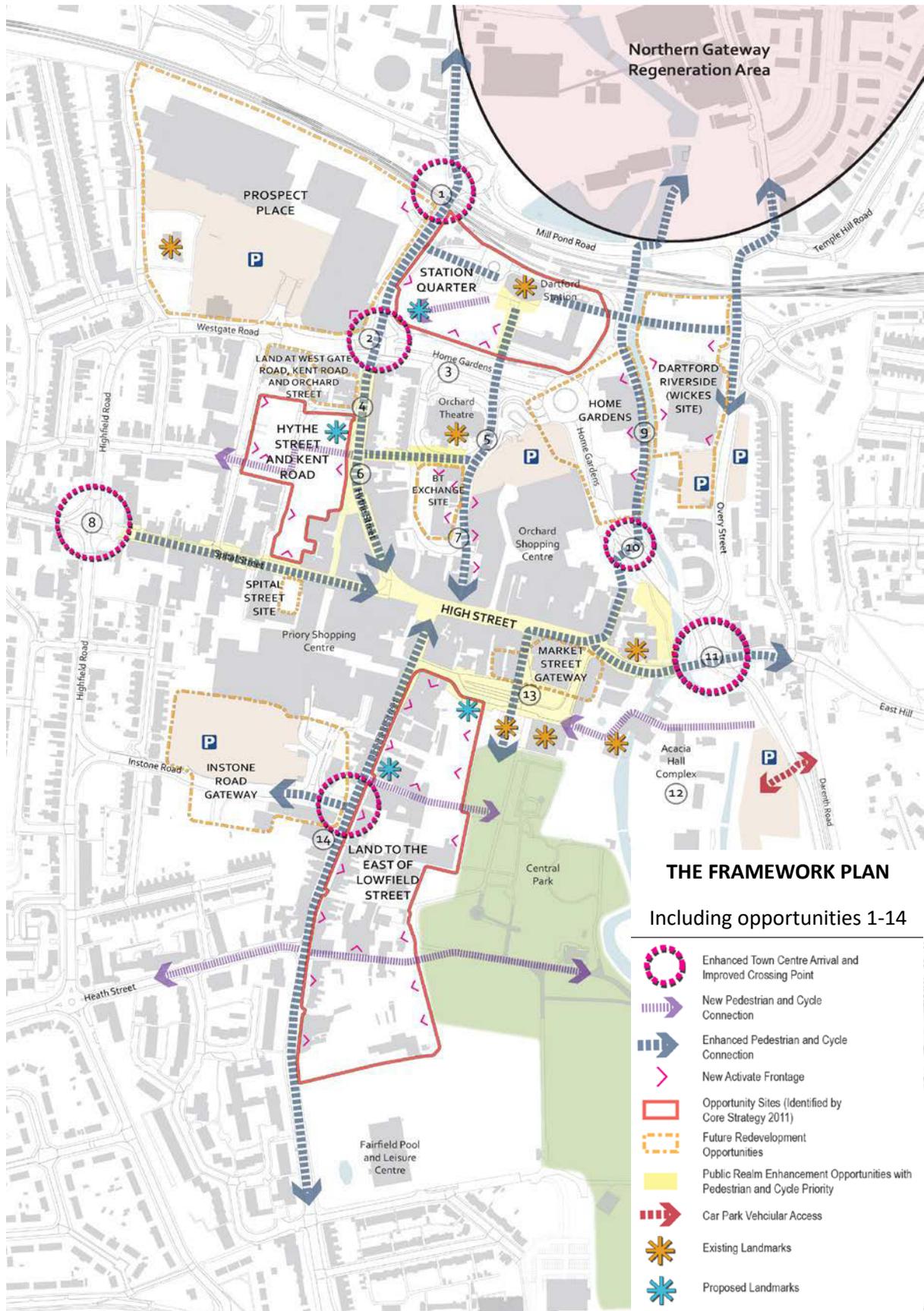
4.2 This Framework proposes key initiatives that will deliver change in the town centre:

- *Pedestrian Priority Areas:* Areas where the highway will be adapted to deliver enhanced pedestrian connection, improved cycle routes and rationalised vehicular movement.
- *New / Enhanced Public Space:* Defined civic spaces providing public realm, street furniture and framed by active frontages on all sides.
- *Improved Vehicular Access to Car Parks and New Development:* Changes to accesses in order to reduce the amount of traffic circulating the ring road.
- *Activated / Enhanced Building Frontage:* Improved frontages to new and existing development, to address streets and spaces, historic venues, and to improve the appearance and activity in these areas.
- *Enhanced Town Centre Arrival:* Improved highway arrangement, footways, cycle crossings and frontages to enhance sense of arrival at key gateway locations, complemented by reduced clutter.
- *Enhanced High Street Arrival:* Key locations to improve appearance, provide street furniture / wayfinding and maintain critical views into and along the High Street.
- *Enhanced Existing Pedestrian / Cycle Connections:* Improve existing routes and crossings to improve walkability and legibility on these routes. Improvements may be to increase ease of use, safety, street scene, landscaping, wayfinding and frontages.
- *New Pedestrian / Cycle Connections:* Creation of new routes, bridges and / or crossings to improve the overall connectivity across the town centre.
- *Enhanced Pedestrian / Cycle Crossing:* Develop effective and safe at-grade crossing points around the ring road and at entrances into the town centre so as to facilitate improved connections.

# Opportunities and Objectives in Dartford

Key opportunities 1-14 (referenced in the following plan) and recap of objectives:

<p><b>Movement Objective</b> </p> <p>To make it easier for the shoppers, visitors, workers and residents in the town centre to get in and out of the town centre by car and bus, whilst improving the experience of the town for public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians by improving connectivity throughout the town.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhanced pedestrian and cycle environment under railway viaduct at Hythe Street to enhance connectivity to the town centre from Northern Gateway</li> <li>2. Improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity crossing at Hythe Street / Home Gardens to respond to existing and future desire lines</li> <li>3. Improve interchange between bus stops and train station through enhanced public environment around bus stop and enhanced link to train station</li> <li>4. Hythe Street to provide an active route into the town centre by reducing the dominance of cars along the route and enlivening the space with cafes, restaurants and other active uses</li> <li>5. Enliven space around Orchard Theatre through enhanced frontage, active uses and clear pedestrian links to town centre and Orchard Shopping Centre</li> <li>6. Dedicated two way cycle link along Hythe Street</li> <li>7. Encourage active frontage along Suffolk Road and Bulls Head Yard</li> <li>8. Enhanced gateway with improved pedestrian and cycle route along Spital Street and improved public realm at junction</li> <li>9. Enhanced river setting with new development (long term opportunity) addressing the river and enhanced pedestrian/ cycle links</li> <li>10. Improve crossing across Home Gardens to east of the Orchard Shopping Centre, adjacent to Bullace Lane, to respond to pedestrian desire lines in the area</li> <li>11. Enhanced gateway into the town centre reflecting historic setting and reduced highways clutter and enhanced pedestrian and cycle connections</li> <li>12. Enhancement of built form and setting of Acacia Complex with improved links to Market Street, Central Park and the town centre</li> <li>13. Reduce dominance of the highway on Market Street and create an attractive and useable public space</li> <li>14. Enhance junction and remove subway to enhance the pedestrian and cycle environment, as well as improving the crossing</li> </ol>
<p><b>Perception Objective</b> </p> <p>Improve the perception of Dartford town centre through the enhancement of the built environment and public spaces to create a place of quality.</p>	
<p><b>Town Centre Economy Objective</b> </p> <p>Ensure the town centre can evolve to meet the needs of the growing population and workforce; encourage greater use of the town centre during evenings and weekends; and facilitate a greater mix of town centre uses outside the primary shopping frontage.</p>	
<p><b>Leisure Objective</b> </p> <p>To enhance and complement the many different leisure and recreation roles of the town centre, and provide a quality living and working environment as well as catering for visitors.</p>	
<p><b>Creative Objective</b> </p> <p>To embed arts into the town centre, through activities, uses, building design and the public realm so as to create a high quality, engaging and interesting environment.</p>	
<p><b>Innovation Objective</b> </p> <p>To continue with innovation and to use technology to support businesses in the town centre in order to meet current aspirations of being connected at home, at work and at leisure.</p>	





## Movement

*Objective:* To make it easier for shoppers, visitors, workers and residents in the town centre to get in and out of the town centre by car and bus, whilst improving the experience of the town for public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians by improving connectivity throughout the town.

4.3 Successful towns and cities are people-friendly places, with walking around the town centre being an enjoyable, safe and convenient experience. Getting to the town easily by car, bicycle, bus or train is also important, as is the convenience of the onward journey on foot after disembarking. A good distribution of car parks, bus stops and cycle racks in the town centre, with good onward connections on foot will assist this.

4.4 A distribution of car parks on the main approaches to the town centre would reduce the need for unnecessary circulation of the ring road. However when people arrive in the town centre they all ultimately end up on foot. Walking, therefore, is the primary means of getting around to do business or leisure in the town; so routes and paths in and around the town should consider the needs of pedestrians first.

4.5 The Framework seeks to redress the balance between the car and people to create a town centre that is more people friendly.

4.6 Improved connections through the Town Centre will be important in the delivery of enhanced town centre living and increased footfall to enhance economic activity. Key routes such as Spital Street, Hythe Street, Lowfield Street and Overy Street which connect to the radial routes and residential areas immediately beyond the Town Centre boundary are key to enable access for existing and new communities, whilst routes such as Hythe Street (south), Bulls Head

Yard and Lowfield Street (north) are critical to improving legibility and permeability within the centre and enhance activity along key economic corridors.

4.7 Development proposals located along primary pedestrian routes should seek to improve them visually and functionally. This should be through careful design in addressing the street, active frontages and improved connections with adjoining streets. Proportionate financial contributions will be sought, for example, towards improving 'Wayfinding', public realm improvements along the route, and/ or provision of safer crossing facilities or improved pedestrian and cycle connections. Consultation with Dartford Borough Council, and the principles for key routes and spaces set out below, will help define how development proposals might best contribute towards these routes.

4.8 Dartford Borough Council is committed to investing in its public spaces. This Framework defines a series of new or improved public spaces ranging from major civic spaces like Market Square to the creation of small, more intimate spaces within new developments. These spaces have all been selected to improve pedestrian experience, and enhance the quality and appearance of the town. The spaces have been located to create areas of activity along key pedestrian and cycle routes through the town centre.

## A Pedestrian and Cycle Network

**Some areas of the town are currently disconnected from the town centre. Pedestrian and cycle movement is discouraged by barriers including the railway viaduct and the ring road.**

### Principles of Pedestrian and Cycle Network

- Improve walking and cycling routes into and through the town centre by providing or upgrading crossings on the ring road and radial routes. Ensure routes and crossing points are designed to be safe and located on clear desire lines through the town centre.
- Improve the public realm and the appearance of the routes into the town centre.
- Ensure that pedestrians and cyclists take priority over cars and facilitate pedestrian and cycle movement into the town centre.
- Strengthen pedestrian and cycle “gateways” into the town centre.
- Retain views through the town to create visual links between key spaces and streets.
- A clearly legible and dedicated cycle network should be created which links cyclists through the town in the most efficient and safest route possible, with opportunities for cyclists to stop and engage with the town (i.e. cycle hubs and secure stands) at strategic points. All routes should be two-way along the principal routes through the centre and dedicated ‘traffic free’ areas where possible, even where these might be one-way for vehicular traffic, i.e. Hythe Street, Spital Street, Lowfield Street.
- Create improved connections between the Northern Gateway (north of the railway) and the town centre. Aim for passages under the viaduct at Hythe Street, Overy Street and River Darent that provide attractive, safe and legible routes to the town centre.
- Consider pedestrian / cycling requirements as a priority in public realm and highways improvements and projects, including consideration of traffic management measure that reduce traffic volumes and speeds (slow streets).

### **Pedestrian & Cycling Actions**

- Create two-way cycle routes along Hythe Street, Lowfield Street, and Spital Street.
- Enhance Hythe Street (south), reducing the vehicular carriageway to a single carriageway, widening the footway and creating the cycle route.
- Enhance the pedestrian route through Suffolk Road and Bulls Head Yard by creating active frontages.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle crossing at Hythe Street / Westgate Road/Home Gardens crossing.
- Investigate options for providing an at-grade crossing near Hanau Bridge bus stops.
- Improve the pedestrian and cycle crossing at Instone Road / Lowfield Street.
- Improve the pedestrian crossing at Market Street / Lowfield St junction.
- Ensure service vehicle access along the High Street does not allow for rat-running and that vehicle movement within the pedestrianized area is minimised.

- Address other key barriers that limit permeability, such as the Station Mound Bridge, which is narrow and has stepped access, where opportunities arise.
- Create a series of arrival points into the town centre that define an enhanced town centre edge which act as pedestrian gateways for the town:
  1. Improve the cycle crossings at Mill Pond Road from Hythe Street and Overy Street
  2. Investigate improvements to the pedestrian and cycle crossings at West Hill / Highfield Road, Spital Street / Westgate
  3. Lowfield Street and Instone Road: Close the Instone Road underpass and create an arrival space to define the southern edge of the town centre. Ensure links into Central Park are retained.
  4. East Hill and Overy Liberty: Create a defined eastern entrance to the town centre through enhancement of strategic open spaces adjacent to the river (St Saviours Way and Bridge House Gardens) which respect and facilitate views into and along the High Street.
  5. West Hill and Spital Street: Utilise clear views into the town centre and an active corridor along Spital Street to create an enhanced street scene complemented by active leisure/ food and beverage and controlled parking
  6. Hythe Street: Hythe Street will offer an arrival point for pedestrians coming from Prospect Place, the Northern Gateway and from Station Quarter. An enhanced crossing point and enhanced pedestrian friendly corridor toward the High Street will be activated by enhanced frontages and leisure uses.
  7. Station Quarter and Pedestrian Bridge: Deliver a major gateway development at this primary pedestrian arrival point to the town centre, providing a clear choice of routes into the town centre via an enhanced pedestrian bridge route through Bulls Head Yard and towards Hythe Street via an enhanced crossing at Home Gardens
  8. Enhance connections under the railway viaduct at Hythe Street, Overy Street and River Darent through public realm and wayfinding enhancements. This will create attractive, safe and legible routes into the town centre, and a 'green' river corridor.

## Public Transport

**There is a need to capitalize on the vision and agreement of all stakeholders to facilitate the use of the bus into the town centre; to make this a high quality and reliable choice of travel for local residents and increase patronage to encourage a shift from car to bus travel for local journeys.**

### Principles of Public Transport Integration:

- Ensure on-going co-ordination amongst stakeholders with regard to bus initiatives or other projects that influence the facilitation of buses in the town centre.
- Make the bus more visible in the town centre and better connected to the retail core – review bus stop locations and the potential for a ‘transport hub’.
- Ensure there are safe crossings and pedestrian connections from the bus stops directly into the town centre.

### Public Transport Actions

- Transport Interchange - Create an integrated transport hub which provides enhanced interchange between Home Gardens and the train station. Improve pedestrian and information links to integrate the train station and bus stops in the town.
- Investigate provision of Crossrail (‘Elizabeth Line’) rail services to Dartford Station, and the provision of a bus hub in the town centre.
- Investigate the ability to provide improved and dedicated turning for Fastrack within the town centre.
- Reduce the number of bus stands on Market Street to reduce clutter and minimise bus movement in this area.
- Improve integration between buses and rail at Home Gardens.
- Ensure legibility for bus users, so that arrival and exit points are in the same place.
- Improve real time information to facilitate efficient journeys.
- Review other bus infrastructure and needs of providers, alongside other user needs, such as safe and secure areas for layovers to ensure a high quality user experience is maintained.
- Remove bus layover points in the town centre to areas outside of the centre.
- Carry out further survey work of bus customers to understand how their experience of the service and the town centre can be improved.
- Work with the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and Kent County Council to enable Fastrack to move to a second phase of enhanced rapid and mass transit service.

## Vehicles

The primary road network in Dartford at times experiences high levels of congestion and the ring road (A226 - Home Gardens, Westgate, Highfield Road, Instone Road, Market Street and Lowfield Street) acts as a barrier to pedestrian and cycle movement in the town. There is a need to rebalance the current operation of the ring road by turning the road network system into a more people-friendly space and tackling the way that the road network dominates the town.

### Principles for Vehicle Management:

- Make it easier for cars visiting the town centre, for whatever reason, to get in and out of the town on the most direct route possible, minimising the need to travel round the ring road.
- Locate car parks accessible from the main access roads, west, south, north and east of the town.
- Ensure car parks have clear, safe, well-lit walking routes into the town centre.
- Reduce the dominance of the ring road, particularly Home Gardens, on the character of the town centre.
- Ensure car parks are available at all times for town centre users.
- Ensure proper parking management for all new developments to prevent rail-heading and inconsiderate parking by non-residents.

### Vehicle Management Actions

- Provide an access from the new Acacia complex car park onto Darenth Road, preventing the need for cars to move around the ring road.
- Reduce traffic along Market Street by removing unnecessary traffic and where possible creating access onto two-way parts of the road network.
- Provide additional car parking with direct pedestrian route to Market Street at the rationalised Acacia complex.
- A comprehensive parking strategy better relating to town centre destinations. Ensure car parks closest to the primary shopping area are for short term use.
- Provide long stay car parks for staff and all day visitors on the periphery of the town centre, but discourage commuter use including by enhancing the attractiveness for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport.
- Seek co-ordination of traffic light signals.
- Reduce the carriageway widths for cars on roads which have reduced traffic, e.g. Hythe Street.
- Improve parking management on-street in order to influence travel behavior and encourage non-residents to use managed parking places. Rationalise on-street parking in the town centre.
- Require new developments to implement a parking strategy and fund parking control schemes to discourage non-resident on-street parking where necessary.
- Encourage car club spaces in new developments and car parks.
- Full provision, through active and passive means for electric vehicle charging points, as a key requirement to be delivered at all new developments.

## Perception and quality of place

*Objective:* Improve the perception of Dartford and the physical and historic environment of the town centre creating a place of quality.

4.10 The historic core of Dartford is one of its defining features: high quality historic buildings and spaces, and the broad crossroads of Spital Street, High Street and Hythe Street (including One Bell Corner) contrasting with the intimate lanes that connect them with the surrounding area.

4.11 Dartford should be clearly recognizable as a historic centre, with enhanced public spaces and a commonality in the street frontage to reflect the character of the centre. New development must capture the essence of this character, repairing parts of the town where the historic grain has broken down, by (for example): creating new spaces around heritage spaces, and/ or providing buildings which are attractive and safe.

### Principles for perception and quality of place:

- Maintain and enhance existing high quality and heritage buildings and their settings.
- All new development should have a pedestrian scale at street level to provide interest on the street scene. Blank frontages should be avoided.
- A high standard of design which is innovative and relevant to Dartford will be sought. Contemporary design, where it respects and enhances historic assets, is encouraged.
- All development and public realm enhancements should ensure that opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour are designed out.
- Public realm should be designed to be pedestrian friendly but should also ensure the needs of town centre businesses are catered for.
- Retain and enhance historic and notable vistas e.g. View from West Hill along the High Street to Holy Trinity Church.
- Enhance key entrances onto the High Street, Hythe Street, Spital Street and Lowfield Street by enhancing frontages, active facades and new entrances, creating attractive and active narrow lanes and streets that open up onto these key spaces.
- Opportunities to repair and renew the town centre built environment through redevelopment of unsympathetic buildings and spaces will be encouraged.
- New development proposals should investigate and record the historic environment, including the archaeology.

## Perception & Quality Place Actions

- Seek high quality design through planning functions, respecting the historic environment and providing safe and appealing new places.
- Seek funding for public realm / street improvements.
- Encourage high quality shopfronts and signage.
- Promote the fantastic history of Dartford.
- Promote the assets of Dartford town centre to all new residents.
- Ensure a joined up approach for all public realm/transport improvements in the Borough.
- Ensure high quality of design for public realm improvements, and that streets are safe and decluttered through the removal of unnecessary signs and posts.
- Further expand the provision of wayfinding in the town centre.
- Incorporate public art into the public realm, and building to activate and enliven the built environment.
- Improve views into the Park from the High Street, along Market Place, from Lowfield Street and from the Acacia complex.
- Improve the setting of listed buildings in the Acacia Complex and the adjacent Holy Trinity Church, and ensure their integration into the wider town centre.
- Improve views on Overy Liberty to Holy Trinity Church.
- Enhance the historic setting of Overy Liberty and reduce highway clutter
- Create key gateway space into Central Park at Memorial Gardens and Market Street to encourage pedestrian movement across Market Street creating connections between the park and the High Street. Active frontages should be provided, facing onto the park along the eastern edge of the Lowfield Street development site.
- Ensure provision of active frontages, facing onto the park along the eastern edge of the Lowfield Street development site.
- Enhance the appearance of frontages and quality of public realm at Bulls Head Yard, Bullace Lane, Market Place and the pedestrianized area of Lowfield Street as it links to the High Street.
- Improve building frontages, signage and public realm along Spital Street, High Street and Hythe Street to clearly define the historic design quality of the town centre.
- Address vacancy in upper floors within the High Street whilst retaining quality of townscape within the Town Centre Conservation Area
- Create a recognisable and consistent pallet of materials for building, public realm, street furniture and signage to deliver commonality and quality of appearance.
- Deliver on the aspirations of Policy DP12: Historic Environment Strategy, ensuring that development should aim to reflect and interpret the historic character of the town centre and conserve its most significant historical aspects in order to create a sense of place.



## Future uses in the town centre

*Objective:* Ensure the town centre can evolve to meet the needs of the growing population and workforce; encourage greater use of the town centre during evenings and weekends; and facilitate a greater mix of town centre uses outside the primary shopping frontage.

4.12 Dartford's location within a growing residential catchment provides an excellent opportunity for enhancement of the retail sector, particularly the food and drink sector and the mid evening economy of the town centre. Dartford Council has already recognised the importance of Dartford's High Street through investment in business start-ups and a range of "Meanwhile Uses".

### Principles for future uses:

- Deliver an attractive town centre with excellent facilities for residents and workers.
- New development should support and complement existing town centre businesses.
- Enabling the delivery of significant new residential accommodation, providing a range of town centre living, will assist current and additional local shops and facilities.
- Promoting the provision of community facilities within the town centre to support town centre residents and the overall vitality of Dartford.
- As well as diverse retail choices, the town centre will offer a choice of leisure activities, food and beverage, entertainment, employment, important community uses and residential uses.
- Deliver a wide mix of uses which provide activity throughout the day and into the evening. Maximise the opportunities for synergy between work and leisure uses.
- Facilitate leisure uses that sustain the town and provide complementary food and beverage to other town centre activity, for example to sustain the Orchard Theatre, so as encourage greater spend in the town centre.

## Future Uses Actions

- Create more choice in the town to encourage extended visits, and attract a wider range of users of the town centre including families, students, traders and visitors.
  - Encourage an evening economy, particularly in the 'mid evening' period, in the town centre around the theatre by creating hubs of leisure, culture and places to eat and drink along Hythe Street and Spital Street. Promote uses, such as hotels and restaurants, to increase the evening economy spend.
  - Encourage adaptable floor spaces within new developments to ensure future flexibility of land uses to adapt to future market needs.
  - Provide a wider choice of comparison retail offer in the town centre with Meanwhile
- Uses encouraged to activate vacant stores and sites.
  - Encourage the reuse of the upper floors of town centre buildings.
  - Encourage key retail and leisure assets such as shopping centres to actively publicise/ advertise their facilities and the town centre to the wider area.
  - A range of leisure, retail, business, community and cultural facilities with new housing can be delivered around the station and Hythe Street to help regenerate this area of the town centre.
  - Support start-up businesses in the town centre.
  - Support development of a new health hub.



*Dartford High Street*



## Leisure

**Objective:** To enhance and complement the many different leisure and recreation roles of the town centre to provide a quality living and working environment as well as catering for visitors.

4.13 The town centre already has two exceptional leisure based assets: Central Park and the Orchard Theatre. The park offers a recreational, environmental and leisure asset for the town and as a result of new development adjacent to it, the destination role of the park will be strengthened by an active mix of uses on the park's edges. The Orchard Theatre is a major draw to the town centre and could become a focal point for a leisure based cultural hub in the town centre.

### Principles for Leisure

- Enhance the access to Central Park and create a greener character to the town with long views into the park and of green arteries branching out from the park into the town centre.
- Improve the setting of the theatre in terms of active frontages and safe routes to complementary uses.
- Maximise town centre leisure assets.

### Leisure Actions

- Well designed, legible and active routes into Central Park from Market Street, new routes into the park from Lowfield Street and through the Acacia complex to provide access for both pedestrians and cyclists.
- Promote the activities within the town centre for leisure and recreation including the Leisure Centre and swimming pool, sports pitches, skate parks and pitch and putt facilities for example.
- Improve access to River Darent and the quality of the environment along its edges, and the river's ecology.
- Deliver new developments that face the park, which enliven the space and provide overlooking of the space.
- Improve the setting of the theatre in terms of active frontages and safe routes to complementary uses.
- Support non-residential and leisure uses outside of the primary shopping frontages.



*Central Park and skate park*



## Innovation

*Objective:* To continue with innovation and to use technology to support business in the town centre and so as to meet current aspirations for being connected at home, at work and at leisure.

4.14 While online retail grows exponentially, the high street and town centres remain a vital local community resource and meeting place, and should act as an engine of growth for small firms and local entrepreneurs.

4.15 Dartford has already made great strides in delivering an innovative and connected town centre through the delivery of public Wi-Fi and Smart-Tech; and it is proposed support these initiatives by delivering public spaces and land uses where these innovations can be utilised, and where people can adapt to new ways of using the town centre

### Principles for Innovation

- Dartford believes that for the town centre to maintain competitiveness, the strategy for driving local economic growth must embrace digital innovation as an opportunity and not a threat.
- Consumers who visit Dartford High Street with one specific task in mind are able to take advantage of other shopping and leisure offers once there, and the experience is easy, engaging and enjoyable.
- Spaces should provide areas for networking and interactivity, providing Wi-Fi hot spots, charging points and Smart Technology where possible.
- Encouragement of local shopping in a traditional town centre but set in a modern environment with state-of-the-art facilities.

### Innovation Actions

- Continue to utilise public Wi-Fi and create spaces for interactivity, learning and networking which enhance the experience of the High Street.
- Use digital information to monitor the town centre footfall, bus congestion, car movements and journey times in order to inform decisions for future transport and public realm improvements.
- Support and encourage high speed data hub workspaces.
- Collective and individual opportunities are being developed for local SMEs, retail chains, market traders and public services to collaborate, using digital innovation to connect customers to the High Street and drive local economic growth.
- Investigate integrated ticketing on public transport.
- Support government initiatives to roll out 5G.
- Where appropriate, encourage the use of real-time information displays for buses, car parks and advisory messages regarding congestion on the surrounding road network.



## Creative

*Objective:* To embed arts into the town centre, through activities, uses, building design and the public realm so as to create a high quality, engaging and interesting environment.

4.16 The catchment for the town centre provides opportunity to draw on an excellent pool of young creative talent and skills within the region, providing an opportunity for a creative based economy. This is a vital strand in planning for the long term future of the town.

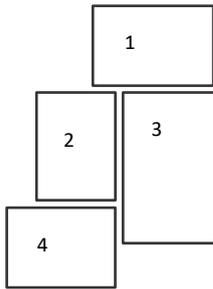
### Principles for Creativity

- Encourage town centre uses which have synergy with the theatre and encourage a creative culture
- To use cultural programming to invigorate town spaces and to develop a thriving professional arts community.
- Offer meaningful ways for the art and artists to connect to existing and future communities through engagement and participation.
- Increase the commissioning of public art in the town centre: adding value to a development, and to benefit existing and future residents and users, generating pride in the area and a sense of ownership.
- Integrate art creatively in the public realm (see following illustrative examples).

### Creativity Actions

- Explore potential art funding opportunities.
- Continue to work with and encourage the involvement of local artists.
- Encourage public involvement in arts projects.
- Facilitate increased open air theatre use.
- Support the expansion of the Orchard Theatre ensuring this contributes to enlivenment of space around the theatre.
- Commission and encourage permanent public art embedded into the public realm e.g. paving, seating, gateways and wayfinding to improve the visual quality and setting out the intention of a scheme.
- Encourage developers to commission permanent public art within the fabric of new buildings e.g. cladding, glass, and lighting adding identity and long term value to a property.
- Require developers to commission artists at the early stages of the development process to help inject meaningful and sustainable contributions within the public realm, built environment and across the communities that will be a part of a development's future.
- Seek funding to continue with the temporary public art programme in order to raise awareness of change and neighbourhood identity by considering its recent past and distinct characteristics.

## Creativity Illustration (Public Realm Aspirations)



1. **Embedded temporary public art to enliven space**
2. **Local distinctiveness**
3. **Public art creating varying levels of facade treatment**
4. **Telling a story in the street**



Dartford Creative. Lenticular commission artist Clare McEwan. Dartford Borough Council and Arts Council. Photography by Simon Kelsey



Rochester Station Commission Medway Council and Network Rail. Artist Katayoun Dowlatshahi. Photography by Richard Gooding



Engraved steel path at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. artist Gordon Young with Feilden Clegg Bradley Architects. Photography by Mark Graham (IBI Group)

## 5. AREAS OF CHANGE

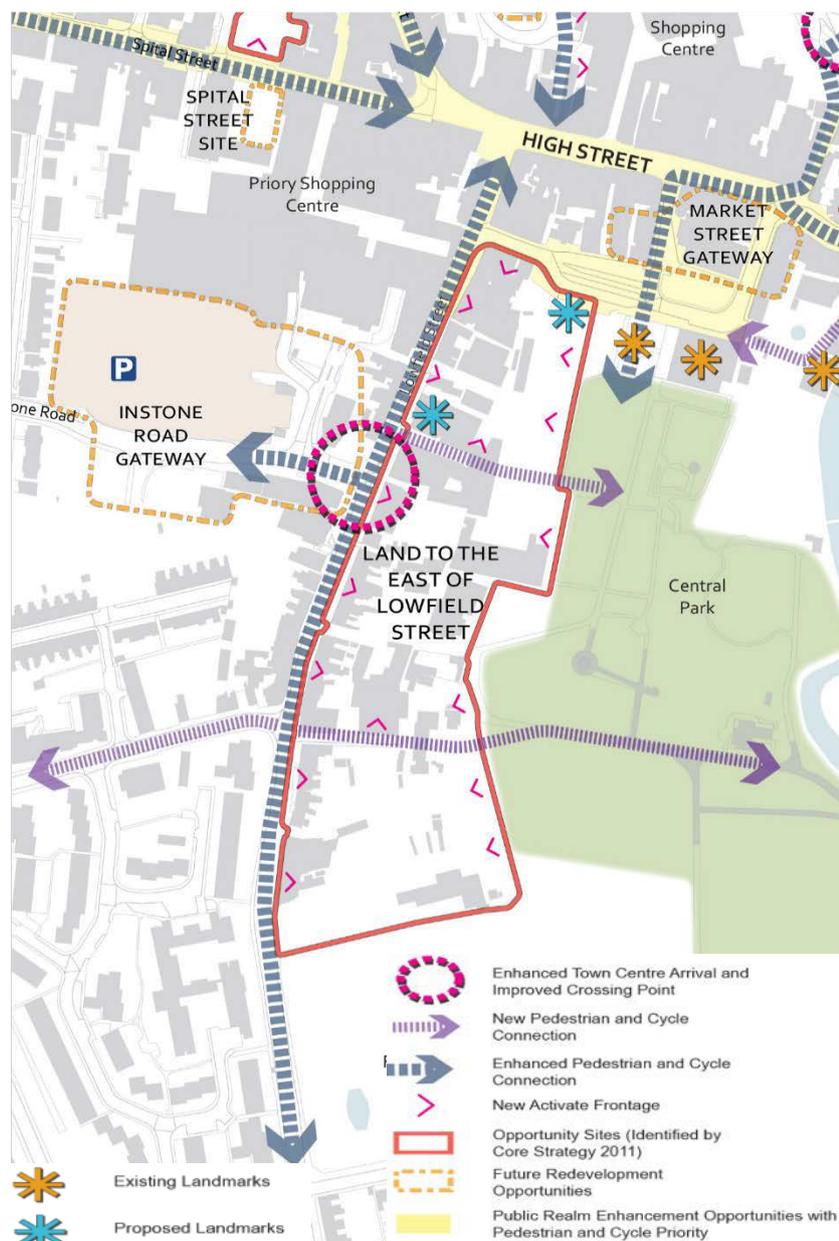
### OPPORTUNITY SITES – Land east of Lowfield Street

Identified as an Opportunity Site in the Dartford Core Strategy – an urban development in the heart of the town centre; close to key transport routes; benefitting from town centre facilities; and the parkside location, whilst supporting the town centre economy and enhancing the parkland setting.

5.1 This should be a distinctive place of variety, creativity and choice, with a range of uses and building styles and could cater to a broad range of people; young and old. The development will be largely residential, with town centre uses at the northern end.

5.2 Critically, the development will provide a defined and active frontage to the north, west and east, with legible corridors into Central Park from Lowfield Street.

5.3 The site was an area of Roman and Medieval urban activity and the site has potential for buried archaeology.



*Land to East of Lowfield Street Framework Plan*

#### 5.4 Development proposals should directly reflect these objectives, and:

- Accord with Local Plan policy, including CS2:1d and DP15:1.
- At the northern end, retail and other active town centre uses at street level will be sought on both the Lowfield Street side as well as on the Market Street frontage, to support and add to town centre activity.
- Development will need to be permeable, with routes allowing access through it on foot and cycle, creating connections to the wider area.
- Fully address the design and usage criteria in 5.5:

#### 5.5 Development and Design Principles

- Primarily residential mixed-use development with other town centre uses, particularly at the northern end. The facades at the northern end of Lowfield Street should be retained and adapted where necessary for new uses.
- Flood constraints determine that ground floor uses across part of the site may be restricted to non-habitable land uses at the eastern edge of the site. Activity should be created by other uses/activities and doors to the residential properties.
- Massing of the site should focus taller buildings along park frontage where they will be seen in the context of wide open space. Buildings along Lowfield Street should generally be no higher than 4 storeys to respect the character of the Street and the Listed Buildings along it. Some increased height on prominent corners / points may be permitted.
- Deliver three distinct edge characters that address Central Park, Market Street and Lowfield Street.
- Residential development along Lowfield Street should open onto the street.
- Create new frontage facing onto Central Park with sensitively designed balconies above the ground floor to activate the park edge.
- Buildings fronting the public realm should have active frontages, including property entrances, in order to provide passive surveillance.
- The development must encourage walking and cycling by providing clear pedestrian and cycle connections to the wider area as well as the town centre and the Park.
- New public pedestrian and cycle routes through to Central Park should be created from Lowfield Street and aligned as closely as possible to continue existing routes and connections.
- A shared cycle way/footway is to be provided south of Instone Road on the east side of Lowfield Street and the development should allow for this to be delivered through the set back of buildings where necessary.
- The public realm / transport improvements for the town centre include the creation of a two-way cycle way north of Instone Road together with associated improvements to the public realm. An optimum outcome would be if these improvements could be brought about at the same time as the development.
- New routes into Central Park can be treated as more informal lanes including the use of shared surfaces to accommodate a low frequency of vehicle movements for access only.
- New routes must be designed to allow access to the Park during opening hours, and avoid dead ends and blind corners that cannot be seen from Lowfield Street.
- In order to reduce traffic having to traverse the ring road and reduce cars on Market Street, vehicular access to the development should be taken as far as possible from points south of Instone Road where Lowfield Street has two-way vehicular movement.

- The northern end of the site should interface with the proposals for Market Street by providing an extension of the public realm overseen by active building frontages to the north of the site. Space to the rear of retained buildings along Lowfield Street should be integrated and planned for to ensure the rears of the inactive facades do not detract from the quality of the space but ensuring that servicing needs are met.
- The junction of Lowfield Street and Instone Road will be improved as part of the transport improvements for the town centre, and introduce a signalised junction which will allow crossing and slow traffic. Access to the development should take account of this junction and integrate with public realm improvements here.



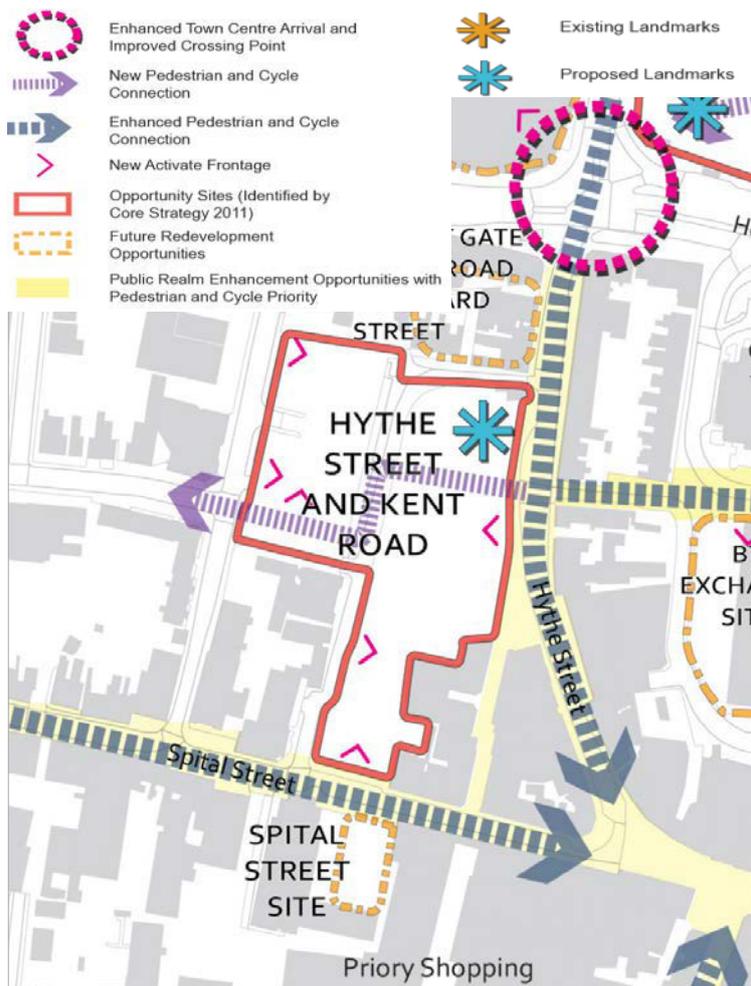
## OPPORTUNITY SITES – Hythe Street (Former Co-Op Site) and Kent Road (Westgate Car Park)

**These sites are identified in the Core Strategy as opportunity sites for redevelopment. As a combined site, they provide an opportunity for a mixed use development with potential to contribute to the community and leisure facilities in the town centre.**

5.6 This site provides the opportunity to maximise the value of The Orchard Theatre in the town centre by providing space for complementary uses, which may attract theatre-goers to stay in the town centre longer. It also provides the opportunity to reinvigorate Hythe Street, providing an active and attractive environment at street level to the north of the centre so as to encourage residents of the developments to the north of the railway to walk into the town centre.

5.7 The site is likely to extend towards the early Roman settlement of Dartford and there is potential for Roman and medieval remains on the site, it was also the location of a steam brewery and possibly earlier medieval maltings.

*Hythe Street and Kent Road Framework Plan*



## 5.8 Development proposals should directly reflect these objectives, and:

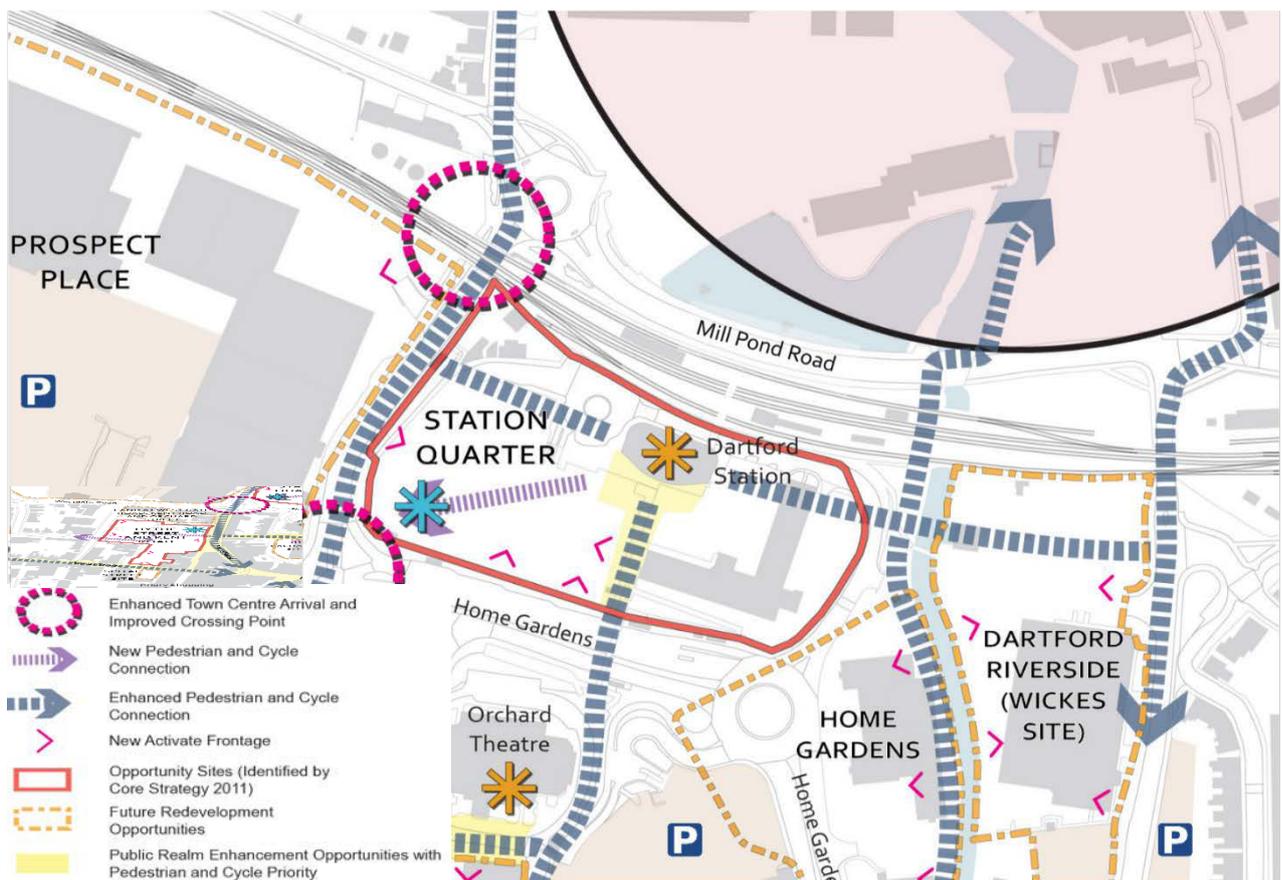
- Accord with Local Plan policy, including CS2:1d and DP15:1.
- Proposals should incorporate a mix of residential units, community, retail and leisure together with supporting food and drink uses to help create a new and vibrant area in the centre of Dartford that complements the existing retail core. The provision of a cinema would make a valuable contribution to town centre facilities as sought by policy DP15:1.
- New uses should link directly to the Station Quarter mixed use gateway site, the Theatre, Prospect Place and The Orchards Shopping Centre.
- Fully address the design and usage criteria in 5.9:

## 5.9 Development and Design Principles

- Proposals for hotel, retail, leisure and community uses, particularly proposals supported by food and drink offers will be encouraged. Provision of a cinema would be of particular benefit. The use should support a mid-evening economy for the area in synergy with the Orchard Theatre and encouraging families into the town centre.
- Residential use is anticipated to be a supporting use but should be avoided on the ground floor along Hythe Street.
- Town centre uses should be concentrated on the Spital Street and Hythe Street frontages.
- A building frontage of 4 storeys to parapet is appropriate along Hythe Street, although increased height is likely to be permissible through the use of set-backs at upper floors and landmark corner buildings.
- All frontages should be active to ensure interesting and safe street scenes.
- Retain and repair historic frontage facing Spital Street to south of site and ensure that this is activated, potentially as an entrance.
- Create a clear pedestrian route through the site connecting Hythe Street and Kent Road, and ensuring permeability from the residential areas to the west through to the town centre core.
- Seek to minimise vehicular access into the site from Hythe Street to restrict traffic in this pedestrian priority area and along Spital Street, as well as reducing traffic movement at the Westgate Road / Hythe Street junction.
- The development along Hythe Street and Spital Street should seek to enhance, integrate and complement the public realm improvements taking place in these areas.

## OPPORTUNITY SITES – Station Quarter

This site is identified in the Core Strategy as an opportunity site for redevelopment. The redevelopment of the Station Quarter site will provide the opportunity for the creation of a distinctive arrival point into Dartford.



### *Station Quarter Framework Plan*

5.10 The Station Quarter site will be a gateway site for Dartford, providing a distinctive arrival point into Dartford and a range of potential new uses.

5.11 A new Dartford station building has been provided. However development proposals for this site should be planned in recognition

of the critical need for major investment in this public transport interchange, in order to achieve Dartford's overall regeneration and development strategy, and addressing any specific transport upgrade proposals anticipated to occur in future.

## 5.12 Development proposals should directly reflect these objectives, and:

- Accord with Local Plan policy, including CS2:1f and DP15:1.
- The Station Quarter will be a new high quality point of arrival, departure and interchange defined by new development which creates a new urban block providing clear and legible routes into the town centre.
- Fully address the design and usage criteria in 5.13:

## 5.13 Development and Design Principles

- Small-scale retail and food and drink uses to serve the needs of station users and create activity in the area may be appropriate but should not detract from the retail function of the town centre.
- Commercial frontages should occupy the ground floor of developments and face directly onto the public space.
- Residential development is supported on site alongside a range of other uses which could include a hotel, offices, as well as community and small-scale leisure uses.
- Active uses will be sought along the key pedestrian routes through the site.
- Due to the location of the site adjacent to a public transport interchange, higher density development is likely to be acceptable but a visual impact assessment should be prepared for any buildings over 5 storeys in height in order for the impact of taller buildings on this higher ground to be fully considered.
- A new public space should be created at the entrance to the train station providing enclosure and active edges.
- Development should make the most of the site's elevated position and frame views out of the site towards the town centre and beyond to the Darent Valley.
- New buildings should consider views into the site from all edges, including long views and views from the train line, and ensure that the buildings contribute to the character and legibility of the town centre. The existing vehicular access to the site from the east via Station Approach will be retained to provide service, bus and taxi access to the Station.
- Some provision for drop off to the station and short term Park and Ride parking should be provided.
- Direct and legible pedestrian routes linking the station and Hythe Street to the west and Overy Street to the east (via an enhanced pedestrian bridge over River Darent) should be provided to ensure obvious pedestrian access points are delivered on all accessible sides (i.e. west, south and east).
- Bus integration with the station is an important issue and further consideration to this will be given as part of the town centre transport improvements works and any proposed development should be mindful of this need for integration.
- As the Station Quarter is on made ground proposals to reduce the levels to bring the site or buildings down to the level of Hythe Street and Home Gardens will be encouraged. Active edges on Hythe Street and Home Gardens will be sought.
- Soft landscaping of the site is important as the site is very prominent in the surrounding area and currently provides some green relief.

## STREETS AND SPACES – Market Square and Lowfield Street

**Create an enhanced space which links the town to the Park and enhances the setting of the Library and Museum, providing a public square for a range of activities and events.**

5.14 Market Street has for too long been relegated to being a part of the ring road, providing service access for High Street shops and with bus stands that are under-utilised.

5.15 The current arrangement creates a visual and movement barrier between the High Street, Library, Museum and Central Park.

5.16 There is now an opportunity to create a flagship public space for the town and better integrate retail, markets, residential, leisure and civic uses with an enhanced public realm. Delivery of a people-friendly space with a narrower vehicular carriageway will form an enhanced setting for significant local landmarks including the Museum, Central Park, Memorial Garden and Acacia Mansion House. Much of the space currently occupied by bus stands could be reconfigured to provide a people-orientated space, suitable for a range of activities and events. The Lowfield Street residential site will provide further opportunity to activate and enhance the setting of the space.

5.17 The northern part of Lowfield Street is closely integrated with the primary shopping frontage; it is currently dominated by a two lane vehicular carriageway which has a reduced flow of traffic since the ring road was made two-way to the north. Cyclists are however only able to travel one-way south. Improvements in this area provide opportunities to: reduce the vehicular carriageway to a single lane, provide for two-way cycle movements, improve the crossing at the junction of Lowfield Street and Market Street, widen the footway (where possible) and provide an enhanced street scene which will complement the refurbished Priory Shopping Centre and the new development coming forward on the east side of Lowfield Street.

5.18 There is high potential in this location for buried Roman and Medieval remains but the site provides opportunity for the heritage interpretation of the area given its location adjacent to the Museum.



*Market Place – Proposed view of the link between the High Street and Central Park*

## 5.19 Development and Design Principles

The following principles have been developed for the delivery of the above vision for Market Square and Lowfield Street north:

- Reduce dominance of the highway and bus terminals by decreasing highway to single carriageway and introduce traffic calming measures and new surface materials from Holy Trinity Church to the northern part of Lowfield Street adjacent to the Priory Shopping Centre.
- Reduce car movements through Market Street by ensuring car parks and development sites are accessed in a way which avoids the need to use the ring road.
- Create adaptable public realm to provide space for a range of activities.
- Utilise Lowfield Street and Market Place as key connection points into Market Square by creating defined public spaces on the High Street with views into the new space, and beyond into Central Park.
- Create clear sight lines along Market Place from the High Street and into Central Park to create visual and physical connections between the two.
- Create a link from Market Square to the Acacia Complex by creating an opening in the existing wall, removing the public toilets, and creating a new public space to enhance the Museum and Library frontage and link through to Mansion House.
- Improve the crossing of Lowfield Street at the junction with Market Street and enhance the public realm at the entrance to the Priory Centre.
- Provide for two-way cycle movements on Lowfield Street north of Instone Road, which is segregated from pedestrians.
- Utilise public art and street furniture to define new public spaces and on new buildings.
- Create an active frontage for Market Street as part of the development site.
- Provide rationalized parking within Market Square so that it does not detract from the enjoyment and safety of the space but provides replacement parking in a different format.

Vision for a new public square at Market Square with space for outdoor market, link to Central Park, street furniture, active edges and shared surface bus and vehicle route.



## STREETS AND SPACES – Bulls Head Yard and Suffolk Road

**Enhance Suffolk Road and Bulls Head Yard to create an improved link between the rail station and the High Street via the existing pedestrian bridge.**

**Achieve a safer and more interesting route, past historic and contemporary buildings.**

5.20 Together, Hythe Street and Bulls Head Yard provide a pair of parallel yet very different routes, each important to the overall function of the town centre.

5.21 The most direct pedestrian routes between the station and the High Street is via Suffolk Road and Bull's Head Yard. The route has a townscape value with a tight urban grain, and Bulls Head Yard is a historic

passageway which opens out onto the wider High Street. The route has been improved with high quality paving materials and street furniture, and new 'Wayfinding' totems have recently been installed. However, the area suffers from inactivity, with little visual policing and is currently backed onto by the Orchard Shopping Centre service yard and the BT Exchange Building.

### 5.22 Development and Design Principles

Providing activity and animated frontages will be key to enhancing this pedestrian route into the town centre. The following actions will be taken:

- Investigate the viability and encourage the provision of active frontages from the Orchard Shopping Centre onto the route, potential for one on Suffolk Road close to the Orchard Theatre and one to the south at the entrance to Bulls Head Yard.
- Encourage the enhancement and use of buildings along Bulls Head Yard to contribute to the character of the Conservation Area and animate the space throughout the day and into the evening – improving the perception of safety in this area.
- Create a new decluttered and enhanced public space to the south of the Orchard Theatre to act as an orientation space

which facilitates movement towards both Hythe Street and the High Street.

- Encourage active frontages in this area as a whole.
- Remove outdated structures and street furniture to enhance the appearance of the area and support the vision of Dartford as a town centre for the future.
- Utilise temporary public art to enhance the currently inactive frontages of the BT Exchange Building until it is possible to develop the site and introduce active uses on the ground floor to define the corridor.
- Investigate and encourage the long term opportunity to redevelop the BT Exchange Building to create active frontages on its north and eastern sides and enhanced townscape, together with better integration of the built form of the town centre.



Artist's impression of future Bulls Head Yard

## STREETS AND SPACES – Hythe Street

**Bring life into the town with a people-friendly feel to Hythe Street.**

**Create an enhanced, more attractive, vibrant and pedestrian-friendly public realm along Hythe Street to improve pedestrian connection and footfall to the High Street. Improve shop frontages and create new active uses, utilising the development of the former Co-op Site as a driver.**

5.23 Hythe Street is a key historic north-south route to the town centre and remains the most connected route from the Northern Gateway, Prospect Place and the Station through to the High Street, Spital Street, Lowfield Street and Central Park.

5.24 With its proximity to the Orchard Theatre, development opportunities on the former Co-op site, and increased footfall from the extensive residential development north of the railway, there is potential to develop cafes, restaurants, shops and community uses that will have synergy with the theatre

use and provide active uses along the Street throughout the day and into the evening. This is a significant opportunity to make Hythe Street a more attractive and vibrant route with new, improved public realm by better animating the frontages on both sides of the street.

5.25 The area has potential for buried remains, especially Roman and Medieval particularly at its southern end close to Spital Street which is considered to be on the alignment of the Roman road.



Artist's impression of future Hythe Street

## 5.26 Development and Design Principles

The following principles should be adopted when considering development and public realm works along Hythe Street:

- Reimagine the whole of Hythe Street as an enhanced space reducing car dominance to a single carriageway, removing the bus layover space, rationalising on-street parking, widening the footway and providing a two-way cycle route.
- Provide a dedicated two-way cycle path to allow direct north-south access into the town centre and to the station for cyclists from the south.
- Rationalise loading bays, bus layovers and on street parking to reduce car dominance.
- Enhance the extent of the existing “space” at the northern end of Copperfields Lane, and enhance views into the space to deliver an active public space and integrate into the Hythe Street public realm through the use of matching surface material.
- Remove unnecessary street furniture and signage to declutter space and increase views to the south towards the entrance to the High Street, defined by the listed Royal Victoria and Bull Hotel and to the north to Prospect Place.
- The public realm improvements in this area together with the new development coming forward should create a cohesive and attractive space which is defined by enhanced frontages. The north-south corridor linking Prospect Place and the High Street, and the east-west corridor linking the theatre and Orchard shopping centre with Hythe Street will be developed as key active pedestrian corridors to create a strong sense of place as a “Quarter” to the town.
- Improve quality of materials to create unity with the High Street and Spital Street to provide continuity through the town.
- Use the existing highway to create a defined node that connects the Orchard Theatre and Shopping Centre with Hythe Street.

## STREETS AND SPACES – Hythe Street / Westgate / Home Gardens Junction North to Victoria Road

**Making it easier, safer and more appealing to walk or cycle into the heart of the town.**

**Enhance this crossroads as a gateway into the town centre to create a bustling space which allows for pedestrian and cycle crossing on natural desire lines providing connections between the areas of activity around it: Dartford Station, Hythe Street, Prospect Place and the residential and commercial areas to the north of the town.**

5.27 The current junction layout acts as a barrier to crossing this part of the ring road. Improvements to this junction for pedestrians and cyclists will create improved access to and from the station and bus stops on Home Gardens, connect Prospect Place better to the High Street, and encourage increased

footfall along Hythe Street by residents of the new developments to the north of the railway.

5.28 Development of the Station Quarter and potential for change on the Prospect Place site also provide opportunity to create a more active frontage to Hythe Street north of the junction.

### 5.29 Development and Design Principles

- Adjacent buildings should address the junction and Hythe Street with active edges to create vibrant and usable space.
- Opportunities to provide active shop frontage to Prospect Place at the north western edge of the junction will be encouraged.
- New frontages should be created around the perimeter of Station Quarter, providing an active edge which addresses both Home Gardens and the junction together with clearly legible pedestrian routes into the newly formed block.
- Opportunities arising from redevelopment should seek to ensure that Hythe Street is enlivened and active uses are provided along this route.
- Encourage the better use of land within the north east corner of Prospect Place adjacent to the rail line in order to provide more active uses here and allow visual surveillance of the footway.
- Investigate options for improving the pedestrian and cycle routes under the railway arch.
- Seek to enable improved and more direct pedestrian and cycle crossings of Victoria Road / Millpond Road.
- Westgate/Hythe Street/ Home Gardens Junction. Further assessment work is needed regarding this complex and busy junction in order for improvements to be taken forward.
- The crossing landing areas should facilitate pedestrian and cycle movement towards the newly configured Station Quarter which should provide direct access from the train station arrival point.

## STREETS AND SPACES – Bullace Lane, Hanau Bridge, St Saviours Walk

**Improve routes for pedestrians and bus users at this historic location.**

**Maximise the historic assets of this area to provide an attractive pedestrian gateway into the town centre and provide better integration to the bus stops.**

5.30 Enhance the historic routes of Bullace Lane and St Saviours Walk, and facilitate an at-grade pedestrian crossing of Home Gardens to link these routes to the River whilst facilitating safe crossing for pedestrians between the bus stops and the town centre.

5.31 River Darent provides a direct walking and cycle route from Northern Gateway and Temple Hill to the town centre. A ground level crossing would provide a safer and more attractive route into the town and encourage greater use of this route.

### 5.32 Development and Design Principles

- Investigate further the potential for safe pedestrian crossing of the ring road to facilitate access between the High Street, bus stops and river.
- If safe crossing can be achieved, remove the existing underpass which is currently under-utilised and perceived as unsafe.
- Maintain existing access into Orchard Shopping Centre service yard and Bullace Lane, ensuring separation between pedestrians and vehicles at critical pinch points.
- Consider options to create improved public realm around the crossing to open up views as well as access to the River.
- Reduce opportunities for crime by opening up the areas around the subway and St Saviours Walk by reducing the height of landscaping and ensuring lighting is well maintained.
- Seek improvements along St Saviours Walk to encourage greater use and enhance the setting of the Holy Trinity Church.



*Existing situation at Hanau Bridge, St Saviours Walk and Bullace Lane*



## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

5.33 There are further sites in and around the town centre which do not maximize their town centre location. Redevelopment of some of these sites would help repair and renewal of the town and provide an opportunity to create a more sympathetic townscape and public realm. The Council will work alongside respective land owners on these sites to achieve a consensus for development and deliver appropriately phased development in this area.

5.34 Existing key sites are identified at Core Strategy Diagram 4 but there may be further opportunity for redevelopment in the town centre which maximises the potential of the town centre whilst enhancing the setting and historic character of the town centre.

5.35 In particular, redevelopment to regenerate the town's potential brownfield sites will be supported where in line with current (or updated) Local Plan policies, including policy DP15, and where sensitively designed and accounting for opportunities and constraints, including those identified below:

- **5.36 Riverside (Wickes) Site**

Long term opportunity for redevelopment of this site (when the existing retail units relocate) to provide a new riverside residential community facing onto River Darent and Overy Street. The redevelopment should provide attractive and safe pedestrian routes across the site and an improved river frontage, including designs that contribute to the river as a green corridor for ecology and wildlife movement.

- **5.37 Home Gardens**

Redevelopment of the site would enable consideration of reconfiguration of the roundabout at The Orchards Shopping Centre entrance to provide a more pedestrian friendly environment and improved public realm. In the long-term the potential for intensified redevelopment of the surface car park could be investigated.

- **5.38 BT Exchange Site**

There is long term opportunity to provide a development which has synergy with The Orchard Theatre and The Orchards Shopping Centre, provides active frontage to the north and the east elevations, and animates the route towards Hythe St and to Bull's Head Yard. The upper floors could provide a range of uses, including residential, office, and community uses.

- **5.39 Prospect Place**

Although close to the retail heart of the town, this shopping centre is more akin in some respects to an out-of-town retail park. Nevertheless retailers such as M&S are a vital part of town centre shop provision. Improvements at the Hythe Street / Westgate Road junction, as well as increased activity along Hythe Street, would better link the shopping centre with the High Street. The opportunity exists to redevelop all or part of the units: for more intensive, town-centre type development and to improve the frontages onto the surrounding streets. Specific opportunities could potentially include redevelopment of the existing 'Pizza Hut' unit to provide further premises on Westgate Road, and redeveloping at the corner of The Hythe Street/ Westgate Road junction, creating more prominent premises at this gateway location. Retail and food and beverage uses would be appropriate on the ground floor on the south and east boundaries. Residential may be appropriate along the western boundary and at first floor and above. Subject to rail safeguarding, the service yard could also be redeveloped. A reconfiguration of the centre would also provide opportunities for improved access arrangements to the car park.

- **5.40 Land at Westgate Road/Kent Road/Orchard Street**

This area is north of the former Co-op/Westgate Road site, which is an identified Opportunity site. This additional area has the potential for intensified redevelopment to provide a complementary built environment. The site could improve the frontage along Westgate Road and improve town centre linkages to Prospect Place.

- **5.41 Instone Road Gateway**

Instone Road currently has a poor built environment being dominated by cars both on the one-way road but also the car parks and accesses adjacent to the road. There is potential to make use of the ground level changes in the area to redevelop and intensify the use of land to provide mixed use development which creates an attractive street frontage for this part of the town.

- **5.42 Market Street gateway**

Although Market Street is fronted by some key historic buildings it also has a number of low rise buildings that are nearing the end of their life. There is potential for the integrated redevelopment of this area which increases density but is sympathetic to the

surrounding historic buildings and the High Street and enhances the new public realm in the Market Street area.

- **5.43 Spital Street**

This site has previously had planning permission for redevelopment. But unimplemented the site now creates a gap in the street scene detrimental to character and vitality of this part of the town centre. The development of this site provides the opportunity to complete the street scene, to maximise synergies with the adjacent Priory shopping centre and enhance the historic character of the Conservation Area in this location. It will be complemented by the redevelopment of the former Co-op site on the opposite side of the road.

- **5.44 High Street Shopping Centres**

Forming a vital part of existing town centre shopping circuit, the Priory and Orchard Centres may offer future opportunities for improved modern retail/ leisure facilities through refurbishment or mixed use redevelopment (Core Strategy Policy CS2 :1e).

## 6. IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

### Overview

5.45 The previous chapters outline the strategies for the development of Dartford and key actions to implement change for the town. These propose a mixture of development, public realm investment and strategic restructuring for increased connectivity.

5.46 Public consultation has demonstrated a high degree of interest and enthusiasm for significant and lasting improvements to Dartford town centre. In addition to the development sites, there are important gains to be made in delivering new attractive public spaces and increasing the choice of leisure activities and amenities within the town.

5.47 The Council wants to harness this interest and develop an implementation programme for key interventions that demonstrate commitment and build momentum to deliver the ideas in this Framework. The focus will be on working in partnership, incorporating the Council, the local community, landowners, businesses, transport operators and Kent County Council.

5.48 It is recognised that there is a need for a mix of early wins, short term projects and longer term economic growth in order to achieve sustained benefit to the town. A summary of the role of different stakeholders is provided below.

Organisation	Role
Dartford Borough Council	<p>The Council has a number of roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional – the Council will need to ensure that once the Development Framework has been adopted that it continues to promote the key sites and objectives of the plan.</li> <li>• Landowner – the Council has ownership in a number of the key sites and therefore is in an ideal position to bring these forward for development.</li> <li>• Planning – the Council will be responsible for ensuring that schemes coming forward are in accordance with the Development Framework and planning policy, to protect the historic environment and to encourage better quality shop fronts and advertisements.</li> <li>• Site Assembly – the Council may consider taking on a facilitator role and working with land owners to assemble sites. The Council may also consider the use of its CPO powers in the event that site assembly proves to be difficult.</li> </ul>
Network Rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowner – Network Rail is a stakeholder within the Station Quarter as both a landowner and operator of the railway and therefore will be a key collaborator in the delivery of this site.</li> </ul>
Homes England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator – the HCA is already actively involved in the delivery of the Station Quarter, former Co-op Site and Westgate Car Park, working alongside the key landowners and potential development partners to bring forward a scheme on both sites.</li> <li>• Funding – the HCA is administrator for a number of funds which may potentially be available to assist the delivery of new residential developments</li> </ul>
South East LEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional – as an organisation representing the economic interests of the local area, the LEP will have a key role in the promotion of Dartford to investors, developers and occupiers.</li> <li>• Funding – administrator for the Growing Places Fund.</li> </ul>
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowners - They have a choice to either dispose of their assets or to potentially optimise receipts by entering into a partnership agreement with other landowners (including public sector ones) and/or developers to promote a comprehensive scheme. For example, the owners of the Wickes site may wish to collaborate with the Council to bring forward a comprehensive scheme.</li> <li>• Developers – will be responsible for bringing forward the actual physical development of the site and secure end users. The emerging opportunities will need to be attractive propositions (in terms of uses and profitability) to entice developers to the area.</li> <li>• Occupiers – essentially occupiers (residential or commercial) will dictate the type of uses that come forward and at what rate.</li> </ul>
Kent County Council (KCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Highway Authority - defining and maintaining the movement network around the town centre and ensuring it functions satisfactorily.</li> <li>• Service Provider – delivering some of the town's public facilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Table 1 – Key Stakeholders</b>	

## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME

5.49 Recent investment activity has taken place by both the public and private sectors.

5.50 Dartford Council has consistently invested in improving the facilities and events at Central Park, with an ongoing programme in place. The adjoining Dartford Museum has been refurbished and integrated with the library to increase its accessibility to the public.

5.51 Proposals for reorganization of the Acacia site are being taken forward and funded by the Council to provide a better setting for the Mansion House, create new parking spaces for the town centre and opening up the Mansion House to pedestrian access from Market Street. Dartford Council has installed 'Waymarking' signs and additional cycle stands at the railway station.

5.52 The Council, jointly with Kent Highways, has been accumulating a funding pot (known as the Strategic Transport Programme) to spend on transport improvements in Dartford Town Centre in order to support the proposed growth in the area. The pot currently stands at £7.7million with a further £4.3 million secured from the Government through the Local Growth Fund to support public realm improvement works in the town centre. This brings the available funding to £12 million. Further funding may become available in the future.

5.53 Detailed design for the transport improvement/public realm works has commenced. This will identify a programme

of works, a phased delivery timetable for these and detailed design of the individual projects.

5.54 Shopping centres in Dartford have carried out internal and/or external refurbishment. Prospects for further private sector investment across the town centre have increased significantly.

5.55 Private developers should ensure that works carried out contribute to meeting the strategy and objectives set out in this document, and deliver formal Local Plan policies. The Council will use its powers as planning authority to maximise the benefits from private development in meeting the overall objectives and bring forward identified supporting infrastructure. The programme of works to be implemented by the Council/ Kent Highways and other providers will, as far as possible be phased to achieve maximum synergies with the private sector investment.

5.56 The table below identifies some of the key projects which are set to take place in the short, medium and long term together with on-going areas of opportunity which will be kept under review.

5.57 Long term projects are at early stages of development, so have less certainty. They will be subject to economic circumstances and funding availability at the time. The objective of this Framework is to make the town centre a more attractive investment prospect in the long term and so improve the likelihood of identified development sites coming forward.

WHAT	WHEN	WHO
<b>SHORT TERM</b>		
Acacia Mansion House opened onto Market St	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Provision of additional parking on Acacia site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018/19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Wayfinding Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dartford Council/ Kent Highways</li> </ul>
<b>MEDIUM TERM</b>		
Lowfield St site redevelopment for housing-led mixed use scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected construction starting 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developer</li> </ul>
Former Co-op Site Hythe St/Kent Rd including potential health hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected construction starting end 2019</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dartford Council/ Homes England (HCA) with joint development partner</li> </ul>
<p>Highway works including junction improvements and enhanced street designs will be carried out as a phased programme of works. The programme includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market Street creation of civic square</li> <li>• Market Street and Lowfield Street junction improvements</li> <li>• Lowfield Street and Instone Road junction improvements</li> <li>• Highfield Road and Instone Road junction improvements</li> <li>• West Hill, Highfield Road and Spital Street improvements</li> <li>• Hythe Street, Westgate Road and Home Gardens junction improvements</li> <li>• Hythe Street public realm improvements</li> <li>• Home Gardens and Overy Street junction improvements</li> <li>• Home Gardens, East Hill and Overy Liberty junction improvements</li> <li>• Traffic light phasing on Westgate Road/Home Gardens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The delivery of the programme is scheduled to start autumn 2018 and be delivered in phases up to 2022</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dartford Council/ Kent Highways</li> </ul>
Flood Alleviation Works – part of a wider package of works in South East London/Kent. Town centre project is prioritized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment Agency</li> </ul>

<b>LONG TERM</b>		
Enhancement of walk from Mill Pond Rd to town centre, including filling in subway on Home Gardens and replacing with at-grade crossing	S106 monies identified. To be programmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Public realm improvement, new and enhanced street furniture and repaving of High St	Funding and timing to be identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Station Quarter (Station Mound) redevelopment	To be confirmed - timing and funding of these is less certain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council/ Network Rail</li> </ul>
Work to support Crossrail 1 (Elizabeth line) extension and to maximize the benefits/ opportunities afforded through this		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council and other neighbouring local authorities</li> </ul>
Further phases of transport improvement/ public realm programme, specific schemes to be identified through study but may include:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council, Kent County Council and bus operators</li> </ul>
Bus hub/improved stopping areas, passenger infrastructure and access		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BT/landowner</li> </ul>
BT exchange building redevelopment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Renewal/Enhancement of Bridge over River Darent linking the station to Overy Street		
<b>ONGOING</b>		
Renewed/enhanced/provision of cycle and pedestrian infrastructure eg. Cycle racks, decluttering, new street furniture (seating, bins), disability access enhancements, lighting, partial/large scale refurbishment/repaving of pedestrian areas in the town centre	As funding is identified/is made available including that provided through new development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Projects to enhance the historic environment, shopfronts and adverts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council/ land owners</li> </ul>
Encouragement through planning to retain and deliver new good quality built environment, shopfronts and adverts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council/ land owners</li> </ul>
Public art projects		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council/ developers and partners</li> </ul>
Long stay non-commuter car parking provision		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Parking management strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council</li> </ul>
Marketing the town centre/working with businesses and Town Centre Forum		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Council</li> </ul>
<b>Table 2 – Implementation Programme for Change in Dartford Town Centre</b>		