



THE LONDON BOROUGH

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Orpington Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted July 2023

Bromley Council

Orpington Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document - adopted 5 July 2023
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1. A Vision for Orpington Town Centre

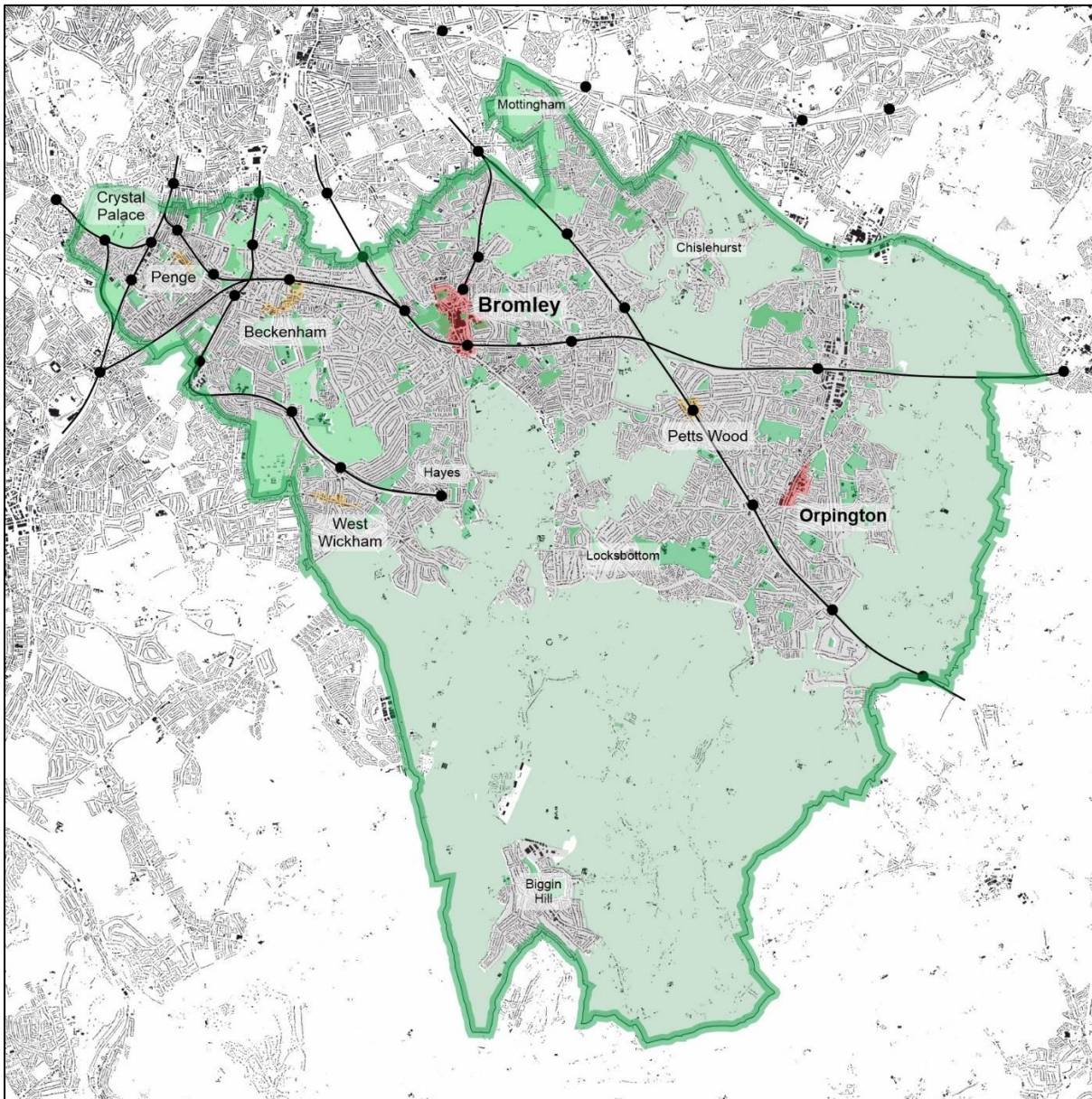
Introduction

- 1.1. Orpington Town Centre is set within the Cray Valley and located on the suburban Green Belt fringe of the London Borough of Bromley. It is a Major Town Centre, as set out in the Bromley Local Plan¹ and the London Plan², which together make up the statutory Development Plan, for the Borough.
- 1.2. The nature of the London Borough of Bromley is predominantly suburban, with district centres interspersed with large areas of open Green Belt countryside, urban areas are mainly concentrated in the north west of the borough. The two key centres, Bromley Town Centre and Orpington Town Centre, each have distinct residential catchment areas with significant wedges of open space designated either Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land separating the two areas. Orpington's catchment includes rural villages such as Chelsfield, Farnborough, Pratts Bottom and Downe.

¹ Bromley Local Plan (adopted January 2019), available from:
<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/51/bromley-local-plan>

² London Plan (adopted March 2021), available from:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/the_london_plan_2021.pdf

Figure 1: Borough context map



- 1.3. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance on the interpretation of adopted planning policies as they relate to the Orpington Town Centre area; it does not set out new planning policy, as this cannot be done in an SPD. The Council is undertaking a review of the Local Plan; this SPD will help to inform preparation of this document, in relation to policies for Orpington Town Centre and the surrounding area.
- 1.4. Guidance is provided through a number of ‘SPD guidance notes’ set out in later sections of the document; these guidance notes include references to relevant policies and guidance where appropriate (although these are not exhaustive and there may be other relevant policies and guidance which apply). The SPD assesses the varied characteristics of Orpington by reference to character areas, and within them further sub-areas.
- 1.5. Some of the character areas include ‘development opportunities’ (including allocated and non-allocated sites). For non-allocated sites, the guidance does not equate to a site allocation. The intent of providing guidance for these non-allocated sites is to identify broad development parameters which may be suitable, but the guidance defers to the need for detailed justification to address relevant policy requirements in the adopted Development Plan.
- 1.6. The SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications within the area covered by the document.
- 1.7. The Council also has a range of strategies which should be read alongside this SPD, including the Regeneration Strategy³ and Economic Development Strategy⁴.

Vision for Orpington

- 1.8. The Bromley Local Plan sets out the Vision for the Borough through to the 2030’s, the majority of which is directly applicable to aspirations for Orpington:

“Bromley is known for the high quality of its living, working and historic and natural environments. The Council, local people, organisations and businesses work together to ensure that we all enjoy a good quality of life, living healthy, full, independent and rewarding lives.

Bromley values its distinctive neighbourhoods, ranging from the rural to suburban and urban. Neighbourhoods provide a choice of good quality homes, jobs and a range of shops and services appropriate to the different town, district and local centres.

The protection and enhancement of conservation areas and heritage assets, along with high quality new development have contributed to civic pride and wellbeing.

The Green Belt fulfils its purpose, and, together with other open spaces, contributes to protecting Bromley’s special character and the health and wellbeing of local residents and visitors alike.

Bromley has high levels of educational attainment, whilst strong and diverse businesses are able to invest to support a thriving economy.”

³ London Borough of Bromley Regeneration Strategy 2020 to 2030, available from: <https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50083012/RegenerationStrategy.pdf>

⁴ London Borough of Bromley Economic Development Strategy 2021 to 2031, available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/1749/economic-development-strategy-2021-to-2031>

1.9. Taking account of the Local Plan vision and consideration of Council priorities for the town centre and public consultation feedback, the following vision will underpin this SPD and sets out the key aspects of how Orpington should develop:

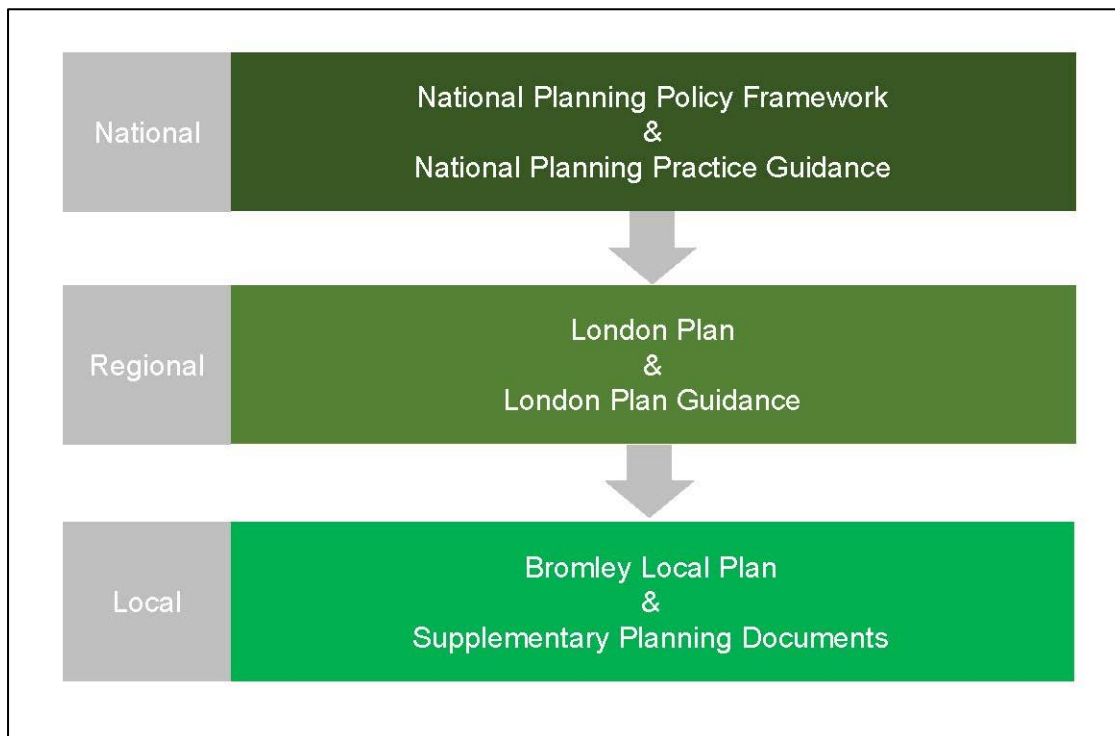
Vision for Orpington

- Orpington Town Centre will be a thriving Major centre with a strong social, leisure, retail, education, culture and heritage offer, supporting the health and wellbeing of the south-eastern area of the Borough. It will complement the role of Bromley Metropolitan Town Centre providing a lively centre addressing a range of the needs of surrounding communities.
- The town centre environment will comprise streets, squares, places, courtyards and ways, responsive to the human scale and easily navigable. Movement through Orpington's key spaces should be easy and legible. Different areas will be recognisable due to the character and scale of surroundings, with buildings helping to define places and historic structures being a natural part of the town and how it is composed. Historic 'gaps' in the fabric of the town, especially between the High Street and surrounding neighbourhoods, should be enhanced
- Orpington will be integrated and carefully connected to its surrounding suburbs and landscapes, though remaining distinct from these areas in terms of its role and character. It's green spaces and historic parks & gardens will be connected to form a well-programmed and ecologically rich sequence of landscapes and spaces. Orpington will celebrate its location embedded in the Cray Valley landscape, and its proximity to the Green Belt.
- Orpington will be a place where heritage assets are respected and referenced by new development. The area has a strong historic environment with a number of listed and locally listed buildings and a conservation area.
- Orpington will be a people-focused town centre where pedestrian movement will be prioritised, and traffic impacts on public spaces will be minimised. The High Street, Market Square, and the original settlement in Orpington Priory Conservation Area should first and foremost be places to dwell and enjoy.
- Orpington will provide a place to work and collaborate including formal office space but also flexible, dynamic spaces for start-ups and creative workspace and spaces that are responsive to new working patterns post-pandemic.
- Orpington will be resilient and able to deal with social, environmental and economic challenges and changes, including mitigating and adapting to climate change, weathering economic cycles and enduring the changing nature of our town centres. Spaces and development types should promote cultural, economic, education, social and leisure activity without constraining future transformations.

2. Policy framework

2.1. The policy framework for Bromley encompasses planning policy and guidance at a national, regional and local level.

Figure 2 – policy framework diagram



National planning policy and guidance

- 2.2. The National Planning Policy Framework⁵ (NPPF) sets the national policy context for preparation of local plans. Local Plans must be consistent with national policy and should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF. The NPPF is also capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The current version of the NPPF was published in July 2021. National Planning Practice Guidance⁶ (PPG) provides further detail on various aspects of the NPPF.
- 2.3. The NPPF sets out a range of policies addressing matters including the areas of economy, town centres, sustainability and design; and advises that strategic policy-making authorities should “set clear expectations for the quality of the places to be created and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles); and ensure that appropriate tools

⁵ National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021), available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

⁶ Planning Practice Guidance, available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

such as masterplans and design guides or codes are used to secure a variety of well-designed and beautiful homes to meet the needs of different groups in the community.” (Paragraph 73c).

- 2.4. The NPPF also advises that *“significant weight should be given to: a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”* (Paragraph 134)
- 2.5. To support future design codes, the National Model Design Code⁷ (NMDC) provides a framework for local authorities to develop their own localised codes; based on the ‘ten characteristics of a well-designed place’ as set out in the National Design Guide⁸ (NDG) and expanded upon within the NMDC.
- 2.6. The Environment Act received royal assent in November 2021. Once the provisions of the Act are commenced in 2023, it will mandate a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) with the aim of leaving the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. The Act also proposes the use of a recognised Biodiversity Metric to assist with calculating BNG.

London planning policy and guidance

- 2.7. The Mayor of London produces a spatial development strategy (known as the London Plan). The current version of the London Plan was adopted in March 2021. The London Plan forms part of the Development Plan for each of the London local planning authorities and is used to assess planning applications.
- 2.8. Orpington is one of 34 Major centres in Greater London and the only one in the Borough, making it the second most significant centre after Bromley Town Centre. The nearest ‘Major’ centre is Eltham in Greenwich Borough, approximately 10 miles away. Orpington is identified in the London Plan as a centre that should see medium levels of residential growth.
- 2.9. There are a number of relevant London Plan policies that could apply to development proposals in Orpington, including:
 - Policies D1-D9, which set out a design and character-led approach to growth;
 - Policy D12, which relates to fire safety and aims to ensure that the fire safety of development is considered at the outset.
 - Policy HC1 which seeks to protect heritage assets including conservation areas;
 - Policy HC5, which seeks to protect existing cultural venues, facilities and uses where appropriate and support the development of new cultural venues in town centres;
 - Policy G5, which sets out a requirement for certain development proposals to provide urban greening in line with a target ‘Urban Greening Factor’ score.
 - Policy T6, which stipulates that development in Major and Metropolitan town centres and in areas with a PTAL rating of 5-6 should be car-free; and
 - Policies SD6-SD9, which set out a number of policies for town centre development which follow a ‘town centre first’ approach to intensification and commercial uses.

⁷ National Model Design Code (July 2021), available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

⁸ National Design Guide (January 2021), available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

2.10. The Mayor also has a number of adopted and draft London Plan Guidance (LPG) documents⁹ which provide further detail on policies set out in the London Plan. This includes the Fire Safety LPG¹⁰.

Local planning policy and guidance

2.11. The Bromley Local Plan was adopted in January 2019. The Local Plan sets out a number of planning policies, site allocations and land designations for the Borough, and along with the London Plan (2021) forms the Borough's Development Plan (used to assess planning applications). The Local Plan is accompanied by the Policies Map which illustrates geographically the application of the policies in the Local Plan.

2.12. The Local Plan requires development within Orpington Town Centre to provide a range of uses that will contribute towards its role as a Major Centre. Relevant policies supporting this requirement are set out below:

- Orpington is contained within one of Bromley's five Renewal Areas, the Cray Valley Renewal Area.
 - Policy 13 defines the purpose of Renewal Areas, including as places where proposals should provide demonstrable economic, social and environmental benefits and address identified issues and opportunities.
 - Policy 14 states that development in Renewal Areas should demonstrate how their benefits as set out in Policy 13, and where appropriate be guided by Development Briefs or other guidance.
 - Policy 17 defines expectations of the Cray Valley Renewal Area:

“Proposals within the Cray Valley Renewal Area will be expected to maximise opportunities:

a - to create a successful economic “growth area” along the Cray Valley, including the Cray Business Corridor, supporting the health and wellbeing of the community; and

b - to protect and enhance the green wildlife corridor along the River Cray, integrating with the public realm, along highways and open spaces and through commercial and industrial areas by creative design, and

c - to support Orpington Town Centre in its role, as a Major Town Centre, serving the east of the Borough in respect of retailing and community services and developing a thriving retail, office and leisure economy.”

- Policy 20 supports the provision of accessibly located and designed facilities to meet community needs and resists the loss of community facilities.
- Policy 21 addresses opportunities for community facilities including ‘meantime uses’, community hubs and sports and recreation facilities in areas of deficiency or where they present a tool for renewal and recreation.
- Policy 22 expects new developments to provide social infrastructure appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal.
- Policy 26 requires applications to maximise opportunities to support and enhance health & wellbeing, encouraging physical activity, providing accessible and adaptable new dwellings, ensuring appropriate access to open space, particularly in areas of deficiency, and optimising health benefits throughout scheme design.

⁹ Available from: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/london-plan-guidance-and-spgs>

¹⁰ Available from: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/implementing-london-plan/london-plan-guidance/fire-safety-lpg>

- Policy 27 defines land with permitted use for education purposes (including colleges) as 'Education Land' and safeguards this land for education purposes.
- Policy 37 requires all development proposals to be of a high standard of design and layout.
- Policies 38 and 39 concern listed and locally listed buildings. There are a number of listed and locally listed buildings within the town centre.
- Policies 41 and 42 concern conservation areas and areas adjacent to such areas. The Orpington Priory conservation area covers the northern part of the town centre, while the Broomhill conservation area lies to the west of the town centre.
- Policy 45 impacts upon Priory Gardens as it is a Historic Park and Garden. Applications within or adjoining a Registered Historic Park or Garden will be expected to protect the special features, historic interest and setting of the park or garden.
- Policy 48 identifies 'Views of Local Importance'; relevant views for Orpington are the view east over Kent from Crofton Road, Orpington, and the view from Chelsfield Green looking North towards the Cray Valley.
- Policies 59 and 79 set out 'Areas of Local Park Deficiency' and 'Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature'; Orpington Town Centre is included in both types of deficiency.
- Policy 78 advises that the Council will assess the likely impact on the quality and character of green corridors through the Borough and will seek and support appropriate enhancement and management.
- Policy 85 aims to retain good quality office floorspace by safeguarding Knoll Rise (and two other clusters in the borough) as 'office clusters'. 'Redevelopment proposals will be expected to provide at least the same quantum of office floorspace' in these locations. The office cluster designation seeks the promotion and retention of office premises and floorspace. The Knoll Rise office cluster contributes significantly to the boroughs commercial function. Article 4 Directions¹¹ are in force to withdraw permitted development (PD) rights in the Knoll Rise office cluster, including PD rights for change of use from Class E to residential. The removal of PD rights through the Article 4 Direction enables the Council to plan properly and ensure uses which contribute significantly to economic growth are protected.
- Policy 91 aims to limit town centre uses to town centre sites wherever possible, and to ensure proposed uses have a positive impact on town centre vitality and viability
- Policy 92 aims to preserve and enhance active frontages and ensure that changes of use away from A1 are carefully managed¹², to different degrees for primary and secondary frontages. Criteria for secondary frontages are less onerous than those for primary.
- Policy 97 sets out criteria for how proposals for conversion of upper floors in town centres will be assessed and aims to preserve office space where possible
- Policy 98 aims to ensure appropriate delivery of restaurants, pubs and hot food takeaways in town centres.
- Policy 99 aims to manage the change of use of town centre ground floors from retail to residential uses. Such proposals will be permitted subject to a number of criteria including not undermining retail vitality and viability.
- Policy 100 aims to retain market trading in town centres and encourage new markets, subject to criteria. Orpington has an existing market within the 'market square' pedestrianised area.
- Policy 101 aims to retain shopfronts of architectural merit and sets out criteria for the design of existing and new shopfronts.

2.13. The Council has prepared the Urban Design Guide SPD to provide clear guidance on urban design to inform and engage developers, applicants, planning officers, residents and all other interested parties in bringing forward proposals for development in Bromley. The Urban

¹¹ Available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/PermittedDevelopment>

¹² The former A1 Use Class has now been subsumed into Use Class E.

Design Guide SPD will be relevant to development within Orpington, including guidance on inclusive design, tall buildings, biodiversity, shopfronts, designing out crime and public realm; it is not necessary to repeat the detailed guidance in the Orpington Town Centre SPD, although the guidance in this document does reflect the six design principles set out in the Urban Design Guide SPD.

Infrastructure delivery

- 2.14. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allows charging authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers undertaking new development, to help fund new or improved infrastructure required to support the growth identified in adopted Local Plans. CIL replaces much of the existing process of planning obligations commonly known as Section 106 (S106) agreements.
- 2.15. In Bromley, both a Mayoral CIL and local CIL are applied to relevant planning permissions (applications with an applicable charging rate which are determined after the relevant CIL charging schedule has come into effect). The Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy¹³ (known as MCIL2) took effect on 1 April 2019; and the Bromley Community Infrastructure Levy¹⁴ (CIL) took effect on 15 June 2021.
- 2.16. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) 2016 set out the infrastructure required to support planned growth identified in the Local Plan, over the period 2016-2031. The IDP was updated as part of the preparation of the Bromley CIL¹⁵.
- 2.17. The majority of Orpington-specific infrastructure projects detailed in 2016 IDP have been completed, notably:
- the Orpington Health & Wellbeing Centre, which opened in the town centre in 2019;
 - public realm improvements in the Walnuts shopping area;
 - investment in the Hospitality, Catering and Enterprise Careers College; and
 - cycle hub secure storage at Orpington Station.
- 2.18. However, as pressures and expectations evolve, there is likely to be an on-going need for a range of enhanced infrastructure, including green, transport, social, energy, waste and digital infrastructure.
- 2.19. Planning obligations may still be sought on specific schemes, particularly to secure affordable housing, transport, open space, green infrastructure and carbon offsetting contributions, and to secure mitigation of any site-specific impacts (including through provision of any site-specific infrastructure necessary in addition to CIL). The Planning Obligations SPD¹⁶ sets out the Council's approach to securing planning obligations.

¹³ Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy, available from: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/mayoral-community-infrastructure-levy>

¹⁴ Bromley Community Infrastructure Levy, available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/planning-policy/bromleys-community-infrastructure-levy>

¹⁵ Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) Update Report 2020, available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/698/london-borough-of-bromley-infrastructure-delivery-plan>

¹⁶ Planning Obligations SPD (June 2022), available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-obligations-supplementary-planning-document>

3. Context

Townscape and Growth Analysis

- 3.1. Orpington has a character reflecting its development over time, dating back to the Stone Age activities along the Cray Valley. The origins of the village are centred around the Priory building towards the southern end of the Cray Valley. Orpington remained a small Kentish village in a rural setting well into the 19th Century.
- 3.2. The arrival of the railway in 1868 brought early residential development to the Crofton and Broom Hill areas. From its village origins, the expansion of the railway station and residential development led to significant growth throughout the latter part of the 19th and early 20th Century.
- 3.3. Early maps show a predominantly linear village form extending about half a mile along the High Street, stretching towards the station and forming an extension of routes along the Cray River valley. The town was centred on the intersection of Church Hill, with the White Hart Inn and Post Office located on the west side of High Street.
- 3.4. The suburban development of Greater London led to significant interwar suburban development. The town became a bustling centre for businesses servicing the surrounding residential population and the industrial areas in the Cray Valley.
- 3.5. During the 20th century there was a consolidation of this urban form. Whilst this period saw transformation of much of the town centre, with new retail premises and road-widening projects at the southern end of High Street, the northern end retains a village scale and form; the earlier rural village setting is reflected today by the extensive Priory Gardens.
- 3.6. The High Street developed south west towards the station, tracking the valley floor to the war memorial. Development rises up steeply either side of the High Street, to the west (NNW) with predominantly residential development and areas of commercial development as the High Street draws closer to the station. The rising land to the east, beyond the town centre development in the valley floor, comprises suburban residential development.

Topography

- 3.7. The town centre is located within the Cray Valley, with land rising upwards to both the east and west of the town centre. The change in topography is a key characteristic of the town centre and an important consideration for future developments. Orpington Town Centre has good accessibility via public transport; however, Orpington Station is situated outside the town centre and is accessed via a relatively steep walking route. Future developments in the town centre should seek to address these topographical challenges with the aim of providing new development which can be accessed by sustainable modes of transport, consistent with Development Plan policy.

Land use

- 3.8. Orpington has become a major suburban town centre, serving a large residential catchment which fans out east towards the Green Belt and west, encompassing the suburbs of Petts Wood, Crofton and Farnborough. The residential areas of St Mary and St Pauls Cray to the north and Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom to the south all fall within the hinterland of Orpington Town Centre.
- 3.9. The town centre provides a range of comparison and convenience retail, office, leisure (including the Walnuts Leisure centre and Odeon cinema) and community facilities, education (Orpington College) and civic functions (including Orpington Library). Critically Orpington Station to the west of the defined town centre also provides direct rail links to Central London.
- 3.10. Recent changes to the Use Classes Order could have an impact on the retail offer in Orpington, as shops can now convert to previously separate uses such as cafes, restaurants and estate agents without requiring planning permission. Additionally, new permitted development rights allow Class E uses to convert to residential use. The Council is putting in place Article 4 Directions to remove these new permitted development rights in Orpington Town Centre.
- 3.11. The successful retail offer in Orpington has been maintained in recent years. During the pandemic, the use of the public realm has been enhanced, supporting the commercial use of the pavement by cafes and restaurants. The town centre has shown remarkable resilience during the pandemic, with few long-standing vacant units remaining.
- 3.12. Orpington 1st is the Business Improvement District (BID) for Orpington Town Centre¹⁷. The BID was first established in 2013; the BID uses levy payments from local businesses to provide services and develop projects within the BID area, for the benefit of local businesses, residents and visitors.

Scale and Character

- 3.13. Orpington Town Centre has a strong sense of place and commercial vitality, especially along its High Street and within the Orpington Priory Conservation Area. It also benefits from good quality adjacent suburbs, landscapes and historic environments.
- 3.14. The High Street is characterised by 2-3 storey buildings, predominantly narrow fronted shops with residential flats above. These are punctuated by several larger buildings generally set on corners or other key sites. The northern end of the High Street has retained a village scale and form reflected in the street width and placement of buildings flush against the street frontage.
- 3.15. The Orpington Priory and Broomhill Conservation Areas are distinct areas which have particular architectural or historic interest, as set out in the respective Conservation Area SPGs.
- 3.16. Church Hill runs perpendicular from High Street to All Saints' Church past several important buildings which have heritage significance.
- 3.17. Aynscombe Angle to the north of the High Street is a cohesive grouping of terraced houses conceived and developed as a group with a strong consistency in form and materials but with

¹⁷ Details of Orpington 1st are available from: <http://www.orpington1st.co.uk/>

variations of detail. Incremental changes to the component buildings since their construction have generally been sympathetic to this consistency.

- 3.18. Housing typologies across Orpington are varied as a result of the town's growth over time. The majority of homes in Orpington are interwar semi-detached houses with sizable gardens which extend up to, and radiate out from, the town centre. Small greens and school playing fields are located within built up areas, with the eastern boundary defined by Green Belt. Orpington benefits from the open green space of Priory Gardens in the heart of the town, as well as Poverest Park and other incidental landscapes and parks nearby.

Heritage

- 3.19. Heritage designations and assets in Orpington Town Centre reinforce local distinctiveness in the town centre.
- 3.20. Orpington Priory Conservation Area, located in the northern part of the town centre, includes the town's most significant concentration of listed buildings, located in the historic village centre. The house known as Barn Hawe (formerly Fern Lodge) dates from the 1770s and is Listed Grade II, as are the timber-framed outbuildings of The Priory. The Priory is Listed Grade II* and includes elements dating from the fifteenth century with successive enlargements and changes, notably the timber-framed seventeenth century extension. Orpington Priory Conservation Area also includes 35 Locally Listed Buildings, which are of additional importance in a townscape and heritage character context
- 3.21. Orpington Priory Conservation Area Statement SPG (2002) sets out guidance and advice for the maintenance, preservation and enhancement of Orpington Priory Conservation Area, which covers the historic, pre 19th century heart of Orpington. The SPG divides the Conservation Area informally into three areas or 'sub-elements':
- 'the older shops and business premises which remain along the northern end of High Street still reflecting a village form;
 - the planned residential group in Aynscombe Angle; and
 - the axis of development up Church Hill, including The Priory and its gardens, and All Saints' Church and churchyard.'
- 3.22. This subdivision and the analysis of the qualities and attributes of these areas, as set out in the SPG, is relevant for this SPD.
- 3.23. The Broomhill Conservation Area lies to the west of the town centre, centred on Broomhill Common. This Conservation Area includes five locally listed buildings. The Broomhill Conservation Area (and the associated SPG) could also be a relevant consideration for development in the town centre.
- 3.24. Other non-designated heritage assets as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework which are identified during the course of any proposals are important to consider.
- 3.25. The Local Plan (policy 46) identifies a number of areas which may have important archaeological remains surviving. If a proposed development takes place in these areas, then the preservation or recording of archaeological remains will be an important consideration. Historic England has recently reviewed Bromley's archaeological priority areas; this review will be a relevant material consideration for planning applications in Orpington¹⁸. The majority of Orpington Town Centre is covered by an archaeological priority area (as set out in the recent

¹⁸ Further information is available on the 'Archaeology in Bromley' webpage, available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/local-history-heritage/archaeology-bromley>

Historic England review), including the entirety of the Orpington Priory Conservation Area. The London Plan policy HC1 will also be relevant to any development proposals within these areas.

- 3.26. Crofton Roman Villa, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, is sited adjacent to 19th and 20th Century commercial and transport development at Orpington Station. Though well protected by the late 20th Century structure that encloses it, the Villa's impact on the wider public realm is currently minimal.

Green Networks

- 3.27. The presence of the River Cray and the Cray Valley is currently only visible in terms of landscape morphology, though it had a defining impact on the beginning of the settlement.
- 3.28. Orpington benefits from the beautiful and valued Priory Gardens Historic Park and Garden, in the heart of the town, as well as Poverest Park and other, incidental landscapes and parks nearby. However, the southern end of the town centre is identified as deficient in access to local parks and borders on an area deficient in access to nature. The town centre's position within the Cray river valley, offers opportunities for a connected, ecologically rich series of green spaces of various types to enhance the life of the town centre.

4. Design Principles

- 4.1. The Council has identified six overarching design principles (performance indicators) that are considered essential components in delivering good quality design, and which are widely documented as being among the key characteristics of successful well-designed places:
- Contextual (Character and Identity)
 - Responsive (Architecture and Landscape)
 - Connected (Movement and Connectivity)
 - Inclusive (Access and Inclusion)
 - Healthy (Health and Well-being)
 - Sustainable (Sustainable Design, Adaptability and Resilience)
- 4.2. The guidance notes which relate to the design principles set out relevant policy and guidance which is relevant to the principles; this is not an exhaustive list and there may be other policies and guidance that apply to development proposals.

SPD guidance note 1

Development proposals should provide sufficient information to demonstrate how they have addressed the six design principles set out within this SPD and specific guidance relating to the character area within which they are located.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 4, 13, 26 and 37

London Plan – objectives GG1-GG6 and policies SD6-SD10; D2-D9; G1; T1, T2 and T4-T6; and DF1

NPPF – paragraphs 8-11, sections 5-9, 11-12 and 16

Contextual (Character and Identity)

- 4.3. Orpington has a strong architectural and cultural heritage with a distinctive character arising from its protected green spaces and open countryside. The success of new development in Orpington is largely dependent upon how well it relates to, and responds with, its surrounding context.
- 4.4. As set out in the NDG, well-designed places are based on a sound understanding of the surrounding context, influence their context positively and are responsive to local history, culture and heritage. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion. Well-designed places respond to existing local character and identity and contribute to local distinctiveness.
- 4.5. There are several historic buildings of notable architectural merit and local significance. A key urban design objective is to preserve and enhance the existing qualities of Orpington's townscape, landscape, and streetscape character.

- 4.6. The nature conservation context of an area is an important part of its character. The retention of trees and wildlife features of value, and the enhancement of biodiversity (for example through biodiversity net gain) can help to protect and enhance character. The replacement or relocation of species and habitats should only be a last resort, and replacement trees should reflect the existing value of the benefits of the trees removed.

SPD guidance note 2

Development proposals should make a positive contribution to the existing townscape and character, by identifying existing physical, natural, social and cultural assets and seeking to strengthen them in the design of new schemes in order to reinforce local identity and sense of place.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 13, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 42

London Plan – objectives GG1 and GG2 and policies SD6-SD10; D2-D5, D8, HC1, G1, G6 and G7

NPPF – sections 12 and 16

Responsive (Architecture and Landscape)

- 4.7. Good design is about making places for people and should seek to evoke a sense of joy and delight. Well-designed places focus not just on the physical characteristics of buildings and spaces but on how they are used and experienced. Quality is measured as much by experience as it is by appearance.
- 4.8. As set out in the NDG, well-designed places use the right mix of building types, forms and scale of buildings and public spaces for the context and proposed density, to create a coherent form of development that people enjoy.
- 4.9. Historically, the juxtaposition of new buildings and spaces alongside the existing urban fabric demonstrates how traditional character and innovative design can coexist; with local identity highlighted rather than eroded by new interventions.
- 4.10. In order to achieve this careful consideration should be given to the key aspects of development form: layout, scale, height and massing, appearance and landscape. All new development should consider its relationship with both the immediate and wider context including neighbouring buildings, streetscape, townscape, urban grain, and local views, vistas and landmarks.
- 4.11. All new development should seek to reference local context to inform detail, materials, and landscape; incorporating and/or interpreting those elements that are attractive, valued and which contribute to the quality of the surrounding area. Architectural design and materiality should be sympathetic to the local vernacular and responsive to the surroundings so as not to undermine or compromise local character, identity and distinctiveness.

SPD guidance note 3

The Council will seek to promote design excellence to ensure that new development achieves the highest standards of visual, functional and environmental quality to engage and inspire people, reflecting local identity, values, and aspirations.

All major development proposals should be subject to independent design scrutiny by an appointed Design Review Panel bringing together leading professionals in the fields of architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, and environmental sustainability providing independent, expert advice to support the delivery of high-quality development.

All major development proposals should be subject to meaningful collaboration and community engagement ensuring that residents and stakeholders have the opportunity to inform and influence new development.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policy 37

London Plan – policies D2-D9

NPPF – section 12

Connected (Movement and Connectivity)

- 4.12. Ease of movement is integral to well-designed places, influencing how places function and feel. Creating better connections allows people to have greater choices between different modes of transport and greater access to social and economic opportunities both within and beyond their communities.
- 4.13. As set out in the NDG, successful development depends upon a movement network that makes connections to destinations, places and communities, both within the site and beyond its boundaries.
- 4.14. Well-designed streets contribute significantly to the quality of the built environment and play a key role in the creation of sustainable communities. The Council will seek to promote healthy streets and active lifestyles in accordance with London Plan and Local Plan policies by encouraging walking and cycling and promoting sustainable modes of transport.
- 4.15. Legibility is a key aspect of movement and a key urban design objective. A legible place is a place that is easy to understand and move through, new development can promote legibility by providing recognisable routes, focal points, nodes, and landmarks which stitch into the existing urban fabric. All new development should promote accessibility, legibility, and ease of movement by creating places that connect well with each other and the wider area.
- 4.16. Future opportunities to enhance active travel and improve permeability would align with the aims of the 'Connected' design principle, prioritising walking and cycling to facilitate safe, efficient, ease of movement as part of an integrated transport network, particularly east/west connections across the High Street and north/south connections between Homefield Rise and Priory Gardens.

SPD guidance note 4

Development proposals should establish a clear hierarchy of permeable routes and spaces ensuring that new connections correspond with existing routes to promote greater ease of movement and improve wider connectivity.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 31 and 34

London Plan – policies T1-T7

NPPF – section 9

Inclusive (Access and Inclusion)

- 4.17. Inclusive design is integral to good design. The built environment should be safe, accessible, and convenient for all, it is therefore essential that new development considers inclusive design principles from the outset.
- 4.18. Inclusive design “*aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation, enabling everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities*”¹⁹. It is integral to good design.
- 4.19. Inclusive design places people at the heart of the design process, acknowledges diversity and difference, offers more than one solution when required, provides for flexibility in use, and provides buildings and spaces that are convenient and enjoyable for everyone.
- 4.20. As set out in the NDG, well-designed places are those designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. This includes families, extended families, older people, students, and people with physical disabilities or mental health needs. They provide well-integrated housing and other facilities that are designed to be tenure neutral and socially inclusive.

SPD guidance note 5

Applicants should carry out meaningful engagement with relevant user groups at an early stage in the design process, which may include disabled people or older people’s organisations. Development proposals should achieve the highest standards of inclusive design, contributing to a built environment that is safe, accessible, and convenient for all.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 33 and 37

London Plan – objective GG1 and policy D5

¹⁹ See CABE guidance document ‘The Principles of Inclusive Design’, May 2006 - available here: <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/principles-inclusive-design>

Healthy (Health and Wellbeing)

- 4.21. The places in which we live and work affect our health and well-being. Adopting healthy placemaking principles which prioritise our long-term health is an essential part of good urban design.
- 4.22. As set out in the NDG, well-designed places include well-located public spaces that support a wide variety of activities and encourage social interaction, to promote health, well-being, social and civic inclusion. Well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide good quality internal environments and external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users.
- 4.23. New development can help to provide strong, vibrant, sustainable communities by creating healthy environments which support both physical and mental health. In particular, the link between healthy homes and access to green open space and mental well-being is well documented.
- 4.24. The Council will promote healthy living by ensuring that new development seeks to maximise opportunities to support and enhance health and well-being, encouraging physical activity, providing accessible and adaptable homes, ensuring social inclusion and access to open space particularly in areas of deficiency, and optimising health benefits throughout each stage of the design process. New development can also help to combat loneliness, for example through design which delivers community infrastructure and which fosters social interaction²⁰.
- 4.25. Objective GG3 of the London Plan advocates use of Health Impact Assessments, which are used as a systematic framework to identify the potential impacts of a development proposal, policy or plan on the health and wellbeing of the population, and to highlight any health inequalities that may arise. Health Impact Assessments should be undertaken as early as possible in the design process to identify opportunities for maximising potential health gains, minimising harm, and addressing health inequalities.

SPD guidance note 6

Good design can significantly improve quality of life. Development proposals should seek to promote and prioritise health and well-being, demonstrating how Local Plan Policy 26a has been addressed. Major development proposals are encouraged to submit a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to assist with the determination of health-related aspects of the proposed development. The scope of the HIA should be agreed with the Council at pre-application stage; this should include consideration of any best practice guidance for producing HIAs, including guidance produced by the NHS.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 13, 17 and 26

²⁰ 'Tackling Loneliness: A strategy for Bromley 2022 to 2026' sets out various actions the Council is taking to tackling the issue of loneliness, and may be a useful reference for applicants preparing planning applications. It is available at: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/1165/tackling-loneliness-a-strategy-for-bromley-2022-to-2026>

London Plan – objective GG3 and policies SI 1 and SI 4

NPPF – sections 8 and 12

- 4.26. Orpington’s location in the Cray Valley, along with some key backland sites and existing footpaths along the river valley, present an excellent opportunity to deliver a linked series of green spaces (existing and new) that run along the Cray valley corridor and enhance access to nature and access to green space, supporting physical and mental health.
- 4.27. Other opportunities to provide high-quality public space and support outdoor recreation should be prioritised, to enrich the appearance and public life of the town centre. Public space should take advantage of views and underused spaces – including spaces above ground floor level; this will allow larger and taller development to have public amenity value beyond street level.

SPD guidance note 7

Development proposals should explore opportunities to provide or enhance spaces which are publicly accessible and promote health and wellbeing. This might be in the form of public parks, tree planting, squares and gardens, pocket parks, and, where taller buildings are considered appropriate, public space at height such as viewing terraces, and rooftop gardens.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 26 and 59

London Plan – objective GG3 and policies D3, D9, G1, G4 and G7

NPPF – section 8

Sustainable (Sustainable Design, Adaptability and Resilience)

- 4.28. The NPPF highlights three interdependent overarching planning objectives in achieving sustainable development; economic (supporting growth), social (supporting communities), and environmental (protecting and enhancing our natural and built environment) that need to be considered collectively.
- 4.29. A key urban design objective is to ensure that new development achieves the highest standards of sustainable design and construction in accordance with national, London and local plan policies, to improve environmental performance by reducing energy demand, improving resource efficiency, and by encouraging the efficient use of buildings and previously developed land.
- 4.30. The London Plan highlights the importance and multifunctional benefits of green infrastructure (an important element of sustainable design) which include promoting physical and mental health, enhancing local biodiversity, and its role in helping to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Air quality, cooling, and flood mitigation can all be addressed in part with green infrastructure. Consideration of groundwater sensitivity is also important, to ensure that water resources are not contaminated by polluting developments.

- 4.31. As set out in the NDG, well-designed places and buildings conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change, is fit for purpose and adaptable over time and adopts technologies to minimise their environmental impact.
- 4.32. The most successful places are those that are adaptable to change and are able to continually evolve in order to remain vibrant. Places need to be adaptable at every scale.

SPD guidance note 8

Development proposals should be designed to allow for future social, economic, and environmental change to accommodate the needs of both existing and future communities. Development proposals should achieve high sustainability standards in line with the London Plan and relevant LPGs. This should include adopting circular economy approaches to promote resource efficiency and address the challenge of climate change, and the use of Whole Lifetime Carbon Assessments.

Development proposals are encouraged to follow a 'Retrofit first' approach from the outset of designing the proposal, to fully investigate whether existing buildings can be re-purposed (either wholly or in part) instead of demolishing and rebuilding which has more significant impacts in terms of carbon emissions and waste.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 112-118 and 123-124

London Plan – objective GG6 and policies G1, G6, SI2-SI5 and SI7

NPPF – paragraphs 8 and 174, and section 14

5. Character areas

Character areas and sub areas

- 5.1. The SPD divides Orpington Town Centre into a series of character areas, as shown on Figure 3. These areas have been derived through consideration of the context of the wider area and represent those parts of the area which are considered to have similar characteristics – these are explained below.
- 5.2. The character areas and sub-areas are not intended to be finite boundaries; they are identified for the purposes of this SPD to set out relevant guidance applicable to each area. They have been drawn with deliberately 'soft' edges reflecting the fact that boundaries between character areas are fluid rather than 'fixed'. These areas are not self-contained in terms of the impacts of development; proposals in one area can impact on another area, or areas.

Figure 3: Orpington character areas and sub-areas



Character Areas and Sub Character Areas

- Orpington North
- Orpington East
- Orpington West
- Orpington Station



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Orpington East character area

Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping Centre and Leisure Centre

5.3. An area entirely of mid-late 20th century town centre development, originally master-planned in the post-war period but subsequently reworked in later years. Includes the Walnuts shopping centre (part of the original masterplan), leisure centre, college and a key public space, the Market Square. The development fills a former void between the High Street and eastern suburbs.

Key characteristics:

- Land use – mix of uses including retail, leisure, education and social infrastructure uses
- Prevailing building height – varied heights across the sub-area; two to three storeys on the High Street frontage, range of three to eleven storey buildings fronting Market Square; and two to four storeys on Lych Gate Road
- Development potential – high

Eastern Edge

5.4. Backland areas, largely undeveloped or underdeveloped, between the High Street and eastern suburbs, and to the south of the post-war development at the Walnuts.

Key characteristics:

- Land use – mix of backland commercial (retail and leisure) areas and residential
- Prevailing building height – two to three storeys
- Development potential – medium

Orpington North character area

The Village

5.5. This original and historic centre of Orpington, including the oldest and most significant historic buildings. Closely aligns with the designated Conservation Area and includes a northern stretch of the High Street which feels notably more intimate in scale and character than the later southern extension.

Key characteristics:

- Land use – predominantly residential with some commercial uses on High Street, significant part of the area covered by Priory Gardens
- Prevailing building height – two to three storeys
- Development potential – low

Orpington West character area

Orpington High Street

5.6. The stretch of late 19th and early 20th commercial High Street as it stretched south towards Orpington station, also including some backland sites which front primarily onto the High Street.

Key characteristics:

- Land use – retail, leisure, cultural and office uses
- Prevailing building height – two to three storeys
- Development potential – medium

Western Edge

5.7. 'One street back' from the High Street and to the west of it, includes significant areas of office use.

Key characteristics:

- Land use – office uses and backland commercial areas
- Prevailing building height – three to five storeys
- Development potential – low to medium

Orpington Station & York Rise

5.8. This area is centred around the station and is made up of an area between the railway and the established suburb of Crofton. Due to its location the station currently feels slightly detached from the town centre but should not be conceived of in design terms as being a separate or unrelated entity.

Key characteristics:

- Land use – Orpington Station is predominant land use
- Prevailing building height – two storeys
- Development potential – medium

General guidance for character areas

- 5.9. Further to the guidance for each character area – set out in the following sections of the SPD – there is general guidance which applies across all of the character areas.

Heritage and conservation

- 5.10. The historic environment in Orpington adds significantly to the character and distinctiveness of the area. It is an integral part of achieving sustainable development in the area.
- 5.11. Orpington has a number of heritage assets, including the designated Orpington Priory Conservation Area, several statutory listed buildings, locally listed buildings, archaeological priority areas and a Scheduled Monument. The Broomhill Conservation Area is in close proximity to the town centre.

SPD guidance note 9

Development proposals must clearly set out any positive and/or adverse impacts on heritage assets. A Heritage Statement will be required in certain circumstances, as set out in the Council's validation requirements; all applications are encouraged to submit a Heritage Statement where the proposed development is in close proximity to a heritage asset. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 38-43 and 45-46

London Plan – objectives GG1 and GG2, and policies HC1 and HC3

NPPF – section 16

Density

- 5.12. All development proposals should follow a 'design-led' approach in order to establish appropriate density and site capacity, with a focus on context and character, in accordance with the London Plan.
- 5.13. Establishing appropriate densities for sites in Orpington should result from a creative, design-led approach which responds to the particular characteristics of the site, its surroundings and the needs of future residents, rather than applying general density standards.

SPD guidance note 10

Development proposals should seek to optimise site capacity ensuring that development is of the most appropriate form and land use for the site, responding to context and capacity for growth, with a focus on quality of place over quantum of development.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 4 and 37

London Plan – objectives GG1, GG2 and GG3, and policies D3 and D4

NPPF – sections 11 and 12

Tall buildings

- 5.14. Tall buildings are those that exceed the general height of their surroundings and cause a significant change to the skyline. As set out in the London Plan, this may vary in different parts of London but should not be less than 6 storeys or 18 metres measured from ground to the floor level of the uppermost storey.
- 5.15. Well-located and well-designed tall buildings can provide important urban landmarks and much needed homes at increased densities. They can also facilitate wider regeneration benefits. However, due to their scale and prominence, tall buildings have the potential to significantly alter local character and impact on the setting of heritage assets and Conservation Areas, and impact negatively on local environmental conditions and amenity (micro-climate effects).
- 5.16. The existing prevailing heights in an area are particularly important in determining suitable heights for new development proposals. It is essential that proposals for tall buildings respond appropriately in terms of their height, scale and massing – to both neighbouring buildings and the wider context of the town centre and the Cray Valley beyond. Guidance on building heights which the Council considers to be suitable is provided in relation to specific character areas (where appropriate).
- 5.17. In addition to location, architectural design quality and demonstration of wider benefits, a detailed justification for all tall building proposals will be required; this may include townscape contribution – providing visual emphasis, marking thresholds or land use.
- 5.18. Tall buildings should be grounded in their context, they require articulation and a clear narrative informed by local character and identity which should be reflected within the architecture, materiality and detailing – particularly those which form part of an established built-form frontage, as opposed to stand-alone buildings which may, where appropriate, convey a different identity.

SPD guidance note 11

Development proposals for tall buildings must provide detailed justification relating to their visual, functional, environmental and cumulative impact, in line with Policy D9 of the London Plan. Proposals will be required to make a positive contribution to the townscape ensuring that their massing, scale and layout enhances the character of the surrounding area.

Tall buildings will need to be of the highest architectural design quality and be appropriate to their local location and historic context, including taking account of 'Views of Local Importance'; east over Kent from Crofton Road, Orpington, and from Chelsfield Green looking North towards the Cray Valley.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 37, 42, 47 and 48

London Plan – objectives GG1, GG2 and GG3, and policies D2, D3, D4, D9 and D12

NPPF – sections 12 and 16

Transport and connectivity

5.19. Figure 4 sets out a number of key connections and potential new connections. Development proposals should have regard to both existing and emerging connections and movement patterns from the outset. Development proposals should seek to enhance these connections to improve movement and connectivity within and across Orpington Town Centre.

Figure 4: Orpington key connections and potential connections²¹



²¹ Please note that the key connectivity improvements shown on Figure 4 are indicative not literal; they set out the broad locations/directions where connectivity improvements may be sought as part of any development proposals that may come forward.

- 5.20. Pedestrian and cycle movement is impacted by parked cars and vehicular movement in the High Street. There have been a number of recent improvements on the High Street which have enhanced the area for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 5.21. At a wider scale, the London Cycle Network Route 22 connects Orpington with Petts Wood and on to Bromley Town Centre. Route 22 runs away from Orpington High Street via the steep incline of Knoll Rise to meet Lynwood Grove. Additionally, a number of improvements have been made to the cycling facilities on the A224 (Cray Avenue / Court Road) in recent years with the introduction of a segregated off-road path; however, the A224 junction with Orpington High Street (A223) and the northern end of the High Street remains a challenging junction for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 5.22. Orpington is very well connected by bus, being served by 20 bus routes (including a night bus route) to other locations in Bromley and areas beyond the borough (including central London). Rail links are also excellent, with frequent and fast services into central London and to parts of Kent.
- 5.23. Connections between the town centre and the surrounding suburbs are fragmentary and potentially confusing, especially in relation to the Knoll Area of Special Residential Character (ASRC). There is potential to improve pedestrian permeability (including to the town centre and station) whilst preserving its valued character. To the west of Orpington, a cycling and walking improvement scheme running along the A232 Crofton Road towards Orpington has recently been completed but ends at Orpington Station.
- 5.24. The accessibility of the station (PTAL analysis) offers potential for development and enhanced connectivity with the High Street

SPD guidance note 12

Development proposals should link with existing pedestrian and cycling key routes and should seek to improve these routes or create new routes where appropriate (particularly major developments). Routes connecting with public transport, particularly those through to Orpington Station and the surrounding suburbs, will be a priority. Routes which connect to and link local public open spaces should also be prioritised.

Public realm schemes which improve pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and access to public transport would be consistent with local, regional and national planning policy; the delivery of any future schemes would be a separate decision for the Council, subject to funding and consultation.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 31 and 32

London Plan – objective GG2 and policies T1 and T2

NPPF – paragraphs 92 and 104

- 5.25. The development of the town has seen a series of awkward, underutilised spaces to the rear of the High Street, between the town centre and the wider suburbs. Some have been filled but do not necessarily give an enhanced sense of place. There are opportunities to increase the permeability and the richness of experience to areas of the town centre beyond the High

Street by providing and /or enhancing streets, yards and alleys across the town, ‘one street back’ from the High Street, intensifying uses within the town centre in a way that increases permeability and links into the wider green network. Such spaces could also have benefits in terms of the vitality and viability of the town centre, providing complementary spaces for shops on the High Street, for example outdoor leisure spaces.

SPD guidance note 13

Development proposals should seek to enhance the attractiveness and vibrancy of areas to the rear of the High Street, through improvements to the permeability and legibility of the town centre, strengthening / creating a green network through the town centre and potentially spaces providing variety and interest for new and existing local businesses.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 17, 91, 92, 97 and 98

London Plan – objectives GG2 and GG5, and policies SD6-SD9, E1, E9, E10 and HC5-HC7

NPPF – sections 6 and 7

Green infrastructure and biodiversity

- 5.26. Orpington offers a range of opportunities to develop an environment-focused approach for the town centre, maximising the potential offered by green spaces and routes within and beyond the town centre. This links with other opportunities, notably the opportunities to enhance connectivity and active travel.
- 5.27. The town centre sits in the centre of the Cray Valley and the character of this sequence of landscapes should inform development to enhance or create better connections to strengthen the green corridor along the Cray Valley.
- 5.28. The environmental quality, public use and connectedness of the Cray Valley network of landscapes offers the opportunity to create a connected sequence of spaces, which could facilitate a range of public uses, be ecologically rich and contribute to public health and wellbeing.
- 5.29. The Bromley Biodiversity Plan (BBP) 2021-2026²², seeks to promote coordinated action for biodiversity at the local level. The BBP is a relevant material consideration for planning applications in relation to biodiversity issues. The BBP details the priority habitats and species in the borough and should be read in conjunction with idverde Bromley Biodiversity Action Plan (iBBAP) written by idverde²³, who manage Bromley owned land. The iBBAP provides detailed actions and targets for Bromley owned land but these are also generally applicable to habitats under different ownership.
- 5.30. As highlighted above, Orpington is designated both as an ‘Area of Local Park Deficiency’ and an ‘Area of Deficiency in Access to Nature’. The creation of new green infrastructure, such as

²² Available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/planning-policy/biodiversity-bromley>

²³ Available from: <https://www.bromleyparks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Bromley-Biodiversity-Action-Plan-Public-Version-Branded.pdf>

green spaces (including pocket parks) which provide linked habitats and green corridors, provides opportunities for biodiversity to flourish through linkages between local Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

SPD guidance note 14

Applicants should demonstrate how their development proposals enhance the ecological richness of the local environment using the Government's published Biodiversity Metric, to achieve a biodiversity net gain in line with relevant legislation and policy. Proposals near to existing green and open spaces should maximise opportunities to enhance biodiversity and create a joined-up sequence of functional, publicly accessible green spaces through the town centre, reinforcing connections to the wider Cray Valley and Green Belt landscapes.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 17b, 37c, 59, 71, 72, 73, 74, 78, 79

London Plan – objective GG3 and policies G1, G4, G5 and G6

NPPF – paragraphs 130, 131, 174 and 180d

Sustainability

- 5.31. Development Plan policy, particularly policy set out in the London Plan, is underpinned by the need to deliver sustainable design. Good Growth objective 6 of the London Plan notes the need to improve energy efficiency and support the move towards a low carbon circular economy, contributing towards London becoming a zero-carbon city by 2050. To achieve this, the objective notes the need to ensure that buildings and infrastructure are designed to adapt to a changing climate, making efficient use of water, reducing impacts from natural hazards like flooding and heatwaves, while mitigating and avoiding contributing to the urban heat island effect.
- 5.32. In line with the 'Sustainable' design principle, new development should minimise its energy use and maximise carbon reduction, both in terms of its design and materials and its future use. London Plan policy SI2- and accompanying GLA guidance requires major development proposals to undertake an energy assessment and develop a carbon reduction strategy, aiming to be "zero carbon". In accordance with the policy, reductions should be made on site where possible, although there is provision for off-site mitigation and/ or a carbon off-setting payment where agreed. Smaller scale developments should also aim to reduce their carbon footprint and are strongly encouraged to demonstrate how they have been designed to accord with the energy hierarchy.
- 5.33. Development proposals in Orpington should strive to provide exemplary sustainable design in line with Development Plan policy; this is particularly the case for larger schemes such as the expected development proposal at the Walnuts Shopping Centre, which, due to their scale, offer the opportunity to deliver significant sustainability benefits.
- 5.34. The potential for overheating should be considered in all developments, in line with London Plan policy SI3. The cooling hierarchy clarifies that the design of buildings is crucial to minimising overheating, and that air conditioning (active cooling) should be a last resort. As noted above, green infrastructure should be investigated for its multiple benefits to the town

centre, as set out above, including increasing shading and improving comfort for residents and visitors.

- 5.35. Orpington Town Centre is within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), which are areas declared by the Borough in response to modelled or measured existing exceedances of legal air quality limits. The London Plan policy SI1 sets out specific requirements to tackle poor air quality, including a requirement for major development proposals to submit an Air Quality Assessment. The Bromley Air Quality Action Plan 2020-2025²⁴ outlines the actions the Council is taking to improve air quality in the borough.

SPD guidance note 15

The London Plan sustainable infrastructure policies must be addressed in full, with provision of detailed and timely information to enable assessment against the relevant policy criteria.

The energy hierarchy is the starting point for future-proofing development in Orpington Town Centre, increasing energy efficiency and minimising carbon emissions. The same principles apply to refurbishments of existing buildings as to new buildings.

Development proposals must be designed in accordance with the energy hierarchy, prioritising design solutions which minimise the energy demand of the proposal in line with the hierarchy priorities.

Opportunities for retrofitting of existing buildings should be robustly investigated ahead of demolition and rebuild; this could reduce the need for new materials, as long as the resulting development is fit for purpose, efficient and comfortable for users. Otherwise, the replacement of a building should reuse demolition materials on site and take advantage of the potential for a more energy efficient construction and design.

The heat and power needed for users should be provided as efficiently as possible and through low or zero carbon technologies. Where feasible, new developments should link to any local heat and energy networks, or plan for connection in the future.

The comfort of users should be a key part of designing development proposals, minimising the need for heating or powered cooling in particular.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 112-117 and 123-124

London Plan – objective GG6 and policies SI2-SI5, SI7 and T7

NPPF – paragraph 8 and section 14

Renewal Area

- 5.36. Orpington is within the Cray Valley Renewal Area. Proposals in this area are expected to maximise opportunities to support the economy, and the health and wellbeing of the

²⁴ Available from: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/download/314/air-quality-action-plan>

community; to protect and enhance the green wildlife corridor along the river valley; and to support Orpington Town Centre in its role, as a Major Town Centre. The contribution any individual application can make will be relative to its scale.

SPD guidance note 16

Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that opportunities to address the Renewal Area policies – to deliver demonstrable economic, social and environmental benefits - have been fully explored.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 13, 14 and 17

London Plan – objectives GG1-GG6, and policy SD10

NPPF – sections 5-8

Use Class E and permitted development rights

- 5.37. The introduction of Use Class E has the potential for some positive benefits for Orpington, by increasing flexibility to allow for the introduction of a wider range of commercial uses, but conversely it could undermine planning policy and local strategies for the town centre, where particular types of uses are prioritised.
- 5.38. The UCO changes are a blunt tool which do not allow consideration of the potential adverse impacts of the new use, particularly in those predominantly retail areas which continue to perform strongly. Unrestricted change of use in Orpington Town Centre could ultimately have adverse impacts on the vitality and viability of the area, for example, by reducing the provision of shops which provide essential services.
- 5.39. Permitted Development rights also have the potential to undermine Development Plan policies, with potentially significant adverse impacts on local amenity resulting from the loss of designated retail and employment areas such as the Knoll Rise office cluster. In particular, Part 3, Class MA PD rights (which allow Class E uses to convert to residential use) could fundamentally alter the face of the town centre, with the likely loss of a significant amount of economic and retail floorspace. This would undermine the ability of the Council to deliver on economic growth aspirations set out in the adopted Local Plan and other strategies.
- 5.40. The Council intends to utilise planning conditions to restrict permitted development rights and changes within Use Class E, to ensure that such changes will require planning permission and can therefore be assessed against relevant Development Plan policy.

SPD guidance note 17

Where considered necessary to protect the vitality and viability of the town centre and assist with the implementation of Development Plan policies, planning conditions will be used to remove the provisions of Use Class E and to remove specific permitted development rights.

A planning condition may be imposed on new development proposals involving Class E uses to restrict the operation of Section 55(2)(f) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and require that the premises subject to the application shall only be used for a specific use(s) within Class E, therefore limiting the ability to change to other Class E uses without planning permission.

Planning conditions may be imposed on new development proposals to remove permitted development rights, particularly Part 3, Class MA permitted development rights which allow Class E uses to change to residential use.

Relevant policy and guidance includes:

Local Plan – policies 13, 14, 17, 20, 85, 91-92 and 98-99

London Plan – objectives GG1-GG3 and GG5, and policies SD6-SD10, E1, E9 and HC5-HC7

NPPF – sections 6-8

6. Orpington East

Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping Centre and Leisure Centre

- 6.1. This sub-area consists entirely of mid-late 20th Century town centre development, originally master-planned in the post-war period but subsequently reworked in later years. It includes the Walnuts Shopping Centre, leisure centre, Orpington College, Saxon Day Centre and a key public space, the Market Square. This post war shopping centre occupies a prominent central space within the town centre, between the High Street and eastern suburbs, but it currently forms a significant barrier to east-west and north-south permeability, both in terms of the physical barrier of the existing built form and the level change across the area.

Development Opportunities

- 6.2. There are several development opportunities within this character sub area, all of which are 'windfall' sites that have come forward following the adoption of the Local Plan.

The Walnuts Shopping Centre and Market Square

- 6.3. The Walnuts Shopping Centre site offers the opportunity for development which optimises the site (by adopting a design-led approach), delivering a significant quantum of new housing and commercial development, alongside public realm enhancements and provision of significant green space / play space / street greening.
- 6.4. Any development proposal which comes forward on this site should accord with the following key parameters:
- Taking into account the local context, which is characterised by low-rise development, the Council considers that higher density development, predominantly 3 to 9 storeys, would be appropriate in this location. Heights should graduate from 3-4 storeys at the edges of the site, to respond sensitively to the existing low-rise scale of the predominantly 2 storey residential properties to the north, east, and south.
 - The higher end of the 3-9 storey threshold should be located towards the centre of the site in order to mediate between the surrounding contrasting scales. Subject to detailed justification which addresses relevant policy requirements, a single taller element with a maximum height of up to 15 storeys, taking reference from the height of the nearby Orpington College tower, may be suitable. Any taller element should be located centrally within the site to minimise the impact on the surrounding low-rise context. The Council considers an elegant slender building to be more appropriate than a larger slab block, in order to reduce the appearance of bulk and to create a more distinctive and positive contribution to the skyline.
 - There is an opportunity for new development to act as a visual marker providing a positive landmark at the heart of Orpington Town Centre and should be designed to assist with wayfinding as part of a coherent streetscape, whilst protecting or enhancing key views as set out in the Local Plan.
 - In accordance with Local Plan and London Plan requirements, particularly Local Plan policy 47 and London Plan policy D9, tall and large buildings will need to be of the highest architectural design quality and materials and be appropriate to their local location and historic context, including strategic views. New development should be integrated with the established street network of the wider town centre, redesigning the existing covered

shopping area as pedestrian streets linking the High Street to Lych Gate Road (east-west) and improving the environmental quality and security of north-south links, particularly links to Priory Gardens to the north and links to the south which could improve access to the train station. These key routes should be reinforced with clear wayfinding cues.

- High quality public realm will be a key requirement, improving key connections and providing a network of green, playable spaces fronted by active uses.
- London Plan policy S6 requires large-scale developments (i.e. developments with a total floorspace of more than 15,000sqm) that are open to the public to provide new public toilets. Any large-scale development at the Walnuts Shopping Centre site should address this requirement.
- Development proposals should seek to provide a range of commercial unit sizes to ensure that space can be occupied by a range of different operators. This could include larger retail space that can be sub-divided. Other commercial space including different typologies of office space may be suitable.
- Enhanced greening and landscaping is sought, to create a strong linear park/green space network following the general route of the River Cray and its valley, including enhanced public realm and environmental connections along the rear of Bruce Grove to Bark Hart Road and Priory Gardens, and south to Homefield Rise and along Gravel Pit Way. Vertical greening should be prioritised on key elevations.
- Red and buff brick predominate on the High Street. Development proposals in the area should have regard to these existing materials and conditions, which should be used to inform new development in the area (both new development and redevelopment or retrofitting of buildings).

6.5. Market Square is the civic heart of Orpington, providing an accessible space which plays host to the market and various events. Future development should ensure the retention of the existing uses and avoid interventions which may affect the future viability or operation of the market or compromise the event space function. Redevelopment of the square offers the potential for significant enhancement to create a more attractive and appealing space in which to gather, socialise, shelter, and dwell, activated by shops, cafes, a new leisure centre, college, and other community facilities.

Leisure centre

- 6.6. As part of any redevelopment of the leisure centre, retention of the leisure centre within the town centre is considered the preferred option, as it forms an important part of the town centre offer and contributes significantly to the vitality and viability of the centre. Any redevelopment of the leisure centre must be consistent with Policy 20 of the Local Plan, which resists reductions in the quality of provision and the loss of facilities without strong justification.
- 6.7. Wherever possible, temporary facilities should be provided in an accessible location during any closure period. Where temporary reprovision is not possible, any closure period should be kept to a minimum.
- 6.8. Other guidance and best practice may be relevant to any proposals for redevelopment of the leisure centre, including guidance produced by Sport England.
- 6.9. London Plan policy D13 (agent of change) is particularly relevant to any redevelopment of the leisure centre. The introduction of residential uses in close proximity to a leisure centre increases the potential for adverse impacts relating to noise and disturbance, which could affect the ongoing function of the leisure centre. The agent of change principle places the responsibility for mitigating impacts from existing noise and other nuisance-generating activities or uses on the proposed new noise-sensitive development; this means that any

applicant proposing new residential uses in close proximity will need to provide robust evidence to demonstrate that there will be no impacts.

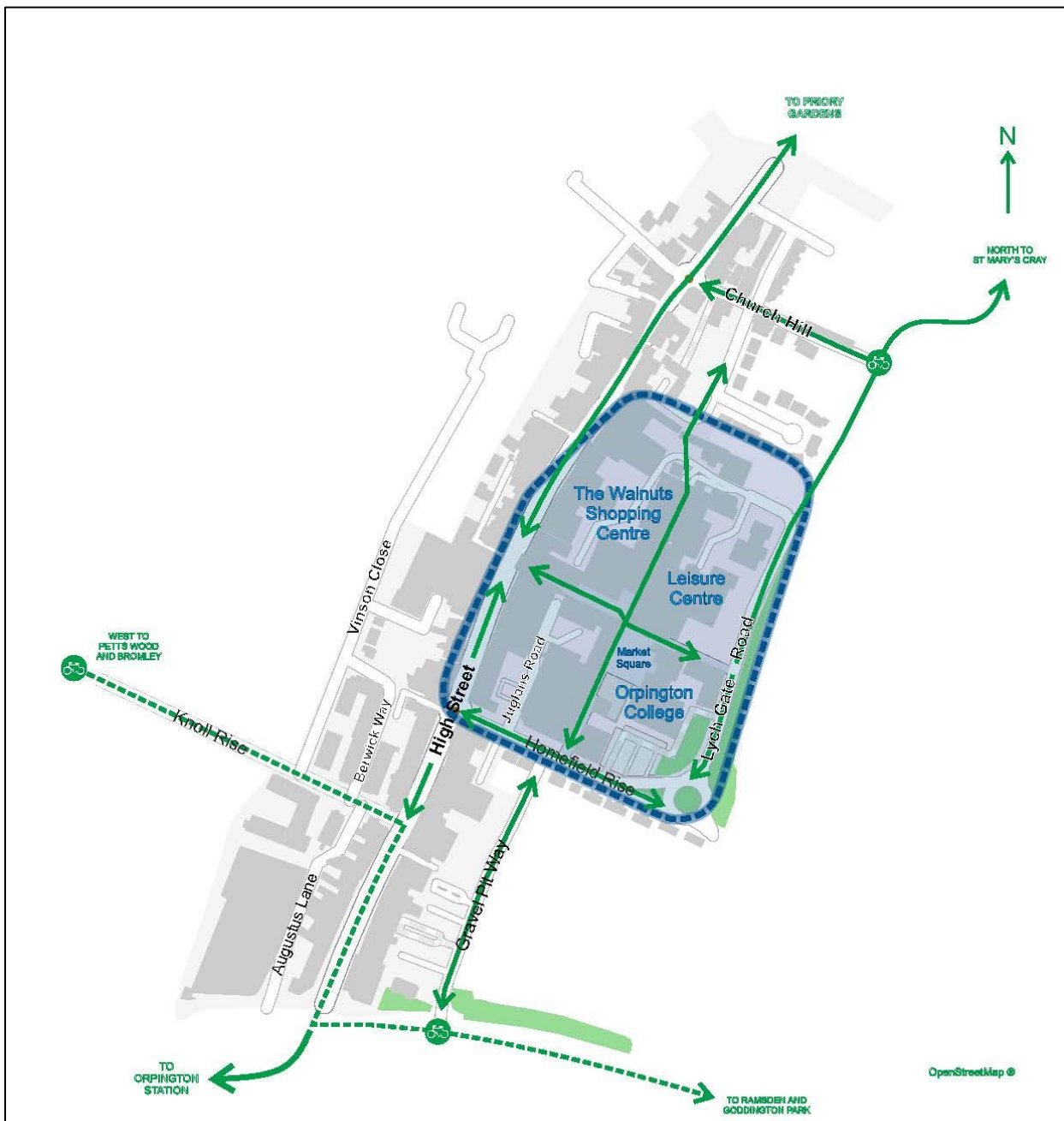
Orpington College

- 6.10. The Orpington Campus of London South East Colleges is located in Orpington Town Centre, with a frontage onto Market Square. The presence of the campus at the heart of the town centre attracts students from across the borough and beyond, adding to the diversity of uses in the town centre, enhancing vitality and viability and providing important educational opportunities. The college site offers a development opportunity to enhance college provision, deliver green infrastructure and improved public realm and potentially additional mixed-use development including housing and commercial uses. Local Plan policies 20 and 27 will be a key consideration where any development comes forward; the policy aims to ensure that social infrastructure provision in the borough is protected.
- 6.11. The site is intrinsically linked to the adjoining Walnuts Shopping Centre site with the existing building fronting directly onto Market Square. It is therefore important that opportunities to improve legibility and permeability across the site are optimised and the cumulative impact of height, scale and massing is considered as part of any future redevelopment proposals.
- 6.12. The existing college buildings, including the tower, lend themselves to a retrofit-first approach, which would ensure that impacts from existing embodied carbon are significantly reduced, compared to a proposal involving demolition of the existing buildings.
- 6.13. Orpington College is the tallest building in Orpington and is prominent from several locations across the town, dominating views and acting as a visual landmark for the college, Market Square and the Walnuts Shopping Centre. The Council considers that a maximum height of 12 storeys is appropriate for any redevelopment of the Orpington College site that does come forward, in order to retain an appropriate relationship with both the existing and emerging context. This includes the recent Brunswick House development to the west which has a maximum height of 9 storey at its highest point; and the modest scale of the existing residential areas to the south and to the east.
- 6.14. The height and massing of any development proposals must provide detailed justification addressing relevant policy requirements and will be expected to make a positive contribution to the immediate setting and wider townscape skyline. Consideration should also be given to the cumulative impact of proposals on the College site with proposals for the Walnuts Shopping Centre site. The Council will encourage a collaborative joined-up approach in order to optimise the development potential of both sites.




Saxon day centre

- 6.15. Where development proposals involve the Saxon day centre, Local Plan Policy 20 will be a key consideration, meaning that reductions in the quality of provision or the loss of facilities would require strong justification. Any redevelopment of the day centre should ensure improved quality provision and should remain equally as accessible for its users. Wherever possible, temporary facilities should be provided in an accessible location during any closure period. Where temporary reprovision is not possible, any closure period should be kept to a minimum.

Figure 5: Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping Centre and Leisure Centre sub-area



Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping Centre and Leisure Centre Sub Character Area

-  Sub character area
-  Cycle route
-  Key connection



Eastern Edge

- 6.16. This sub-area sits to the south of the Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping and Leisure Centre sub-area. It consists of commercial back-land areas along Gravel Pit Way, to the rear of the High Street and within the defined Local Plan Town Centre boundary. These are unattractive, largely undeveloped or underdeveloped areas including open area surface car parking between the High Street and eastern suburbs.
- 6.17. The Eastern Edge also includes a Local Plan site allocation - Site 11, Homefield Rise, Orpington - which is immediately adjacent to, but outside the defined town centre boundary. Local Plan policy 1 and appendix 10.2 identify the site for around 100 residential units (87 units net, deducting the existing 13 dwellings on the site). Two phases of redevelopment have now been permitted²⁵, which will provide a total of 63 dwellings.

Development Opportunities

- 6.18. This sub-area has a transition in height between the existing taller, five to six storey elements at the southern edge of the Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping and Leisure Centre sub-area (including the car park and Sapphire House) and the lower rise, traditional two storey suburban residential development of Lancing Road (the gardens of which back onto Gravel Pit Way). This will be a key consideration for any development that does come forward.
- 6.19. The sub-area offers a key opportunity to improve permeability across the town centre, particularly with regard to improving links through the Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping and Leisure Centre sub-area to Priory Gardens to the north and links to the south which could improve access to the train station. These key routes should be reinforced with clear wayfinding cues.
- 6.20. High quality public realm will be a key requirement, improving key connections and providing a network of green, playable spaces fronted by active uses.

Site 11

- 6.21. Site 11 is opposite the five to six-storey Sapphire House but backs onto smaller scale residential properties on Lancing Road. The redevelopment of this site provides an opportunity to mediate between these contrasting scales to create a more subtle/stepped transition between the urban edge and the suburban residential fringe.
- 6.22. Any future redevelopment should provide a good amount of separation between existing properties in Lancing Road to safeguard amenity and provide an active frontage to Homefield Rise, with prominent entrances and a green buffer to soften the edge and enhance the street scene.
- 6.23. Future development proposals should respond appropriately to the corner junctions with Gravel Pit Way and Mortimer Road; there is an opportunity to bookend a linear block layout to create a strong east-west visual connection/relationship between buildings.
- 6.24. Due consideration should be given to scale and massing which should respond to the topography of the site; given the linear nature of the site, it will be important to create visual breaks between blocks to avoid the perception of a continuous wall of development fronting

²⁵ Planning permission reference: 20/02697/FULL1

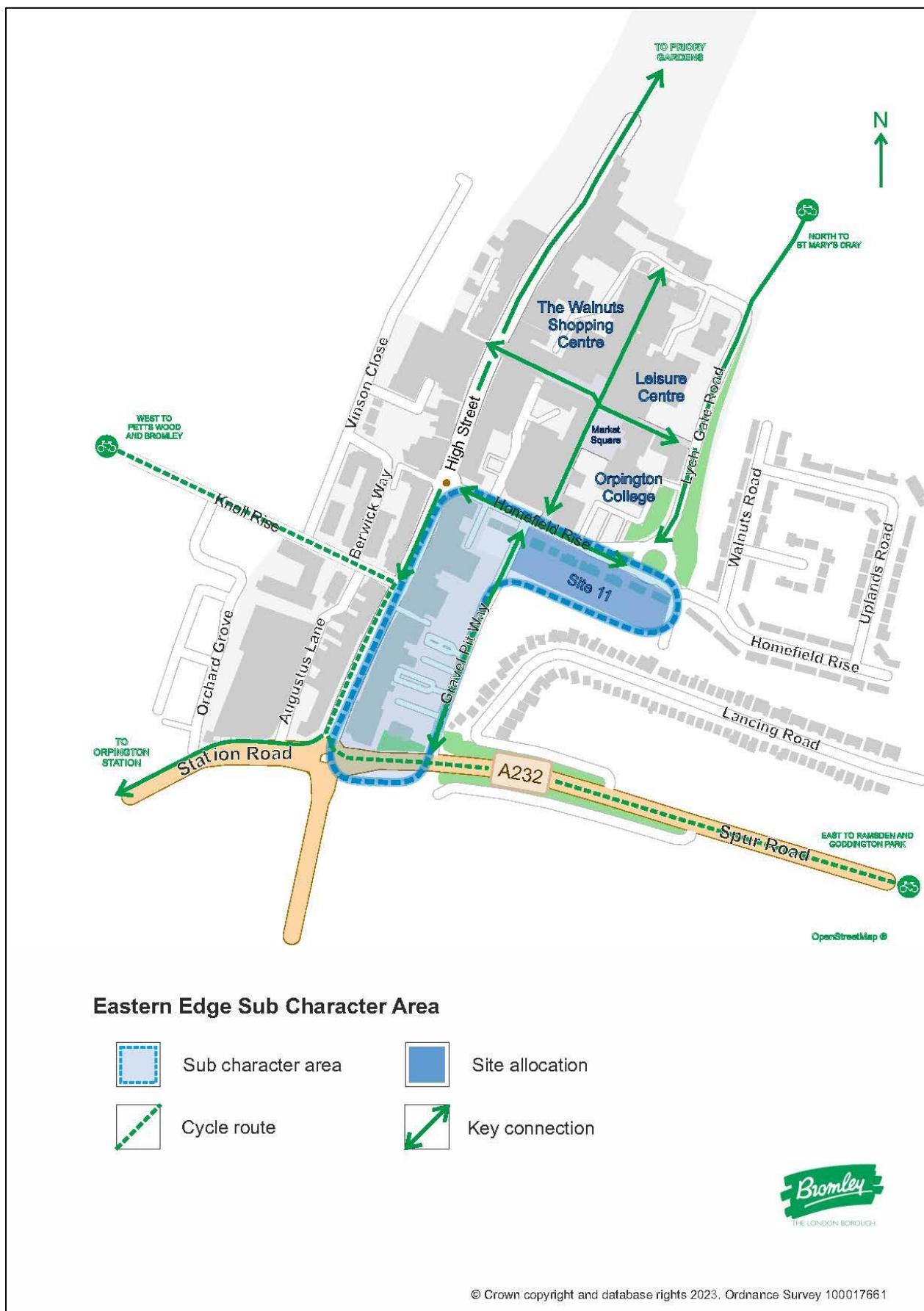
Homefield Rise. A maximum height of three to four storeys is considered acceptable subject to appropriate scale and massing and detailed design considerations.

- 6.25. The architectural language should respond to the contemporary style of emerging developments nearby but should also reference the character and materiality of Orpington Town Centre and the suburban residential fringe.
- 6.26. Any development proposal which comes forward on this site should also accord with the following key parameters:
- Contribute to an improved public realm and improved permeability (particularly north-south across Homefield Rise through Market Square and along Lych Gate Road).
 - Utilise urban greening which contributes to a green link running through the town centre.

Gravel Pit Way

- 6.27. There are a number of parking and servicing yards to the rear of the High Street on Gravel Pit Way. These areas could provide opportunities to optimise the Eastern Edge, increasing permeability through the town centre and utilising areas of the town centre beyond the High Street to create new areas of activity and help facilitate improved vitality and viability on the High Street itself.
- 6.28. This could include measures such as pocket parks, improved greening and outdoor seating, which offer a place to dwell and relax for people visiting the town centre.
- 6.29. There may be potential for redevelopment of the spaces to the rear of Gravel Pit Way to provide additional commercial space (including a range of typologies of office and workspace) to support and enhance the commercial function of the High Street; this could include some residential uses as part of a commercial-led mixed-use development. Any development proposal which comes forward on these spaces should accord with the following key parameters:
- Ensure that any development fully considers and mitigates impacts on properties on Lancing Road. The height of any development should be set back from Gravel Pit Way, potentially utilising green features and public realm as a buffer between the development and the rear of the Lancing Road properties. A new street frontage along Gravel Pit Way would activate this space and transform the area into a town centre destination.
 - Respond appropriately to the local context (including the low-rise character of the High Street and properties on Lancing Road) and relevant reference heights. The Council considers that this site could accommodate a medium-density development of 2-3 storeys. This could be in the form of linear blocks, with breaks in massing to accommodate public realm, greening and east-west links through to the High Street. Any new links should be functional and usable, planned as an integral part of any development and not included as an afterthought.
 - Contribute to new green public realm linking through to Homefield Rise and further north towards Priory Gardens.
 - Ensure that any adverse impacts that may arise due to the loss of the existing parking and servicing yards are mitigated.

Figure 6: Eastern Edge sub-area



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7. Orpington North

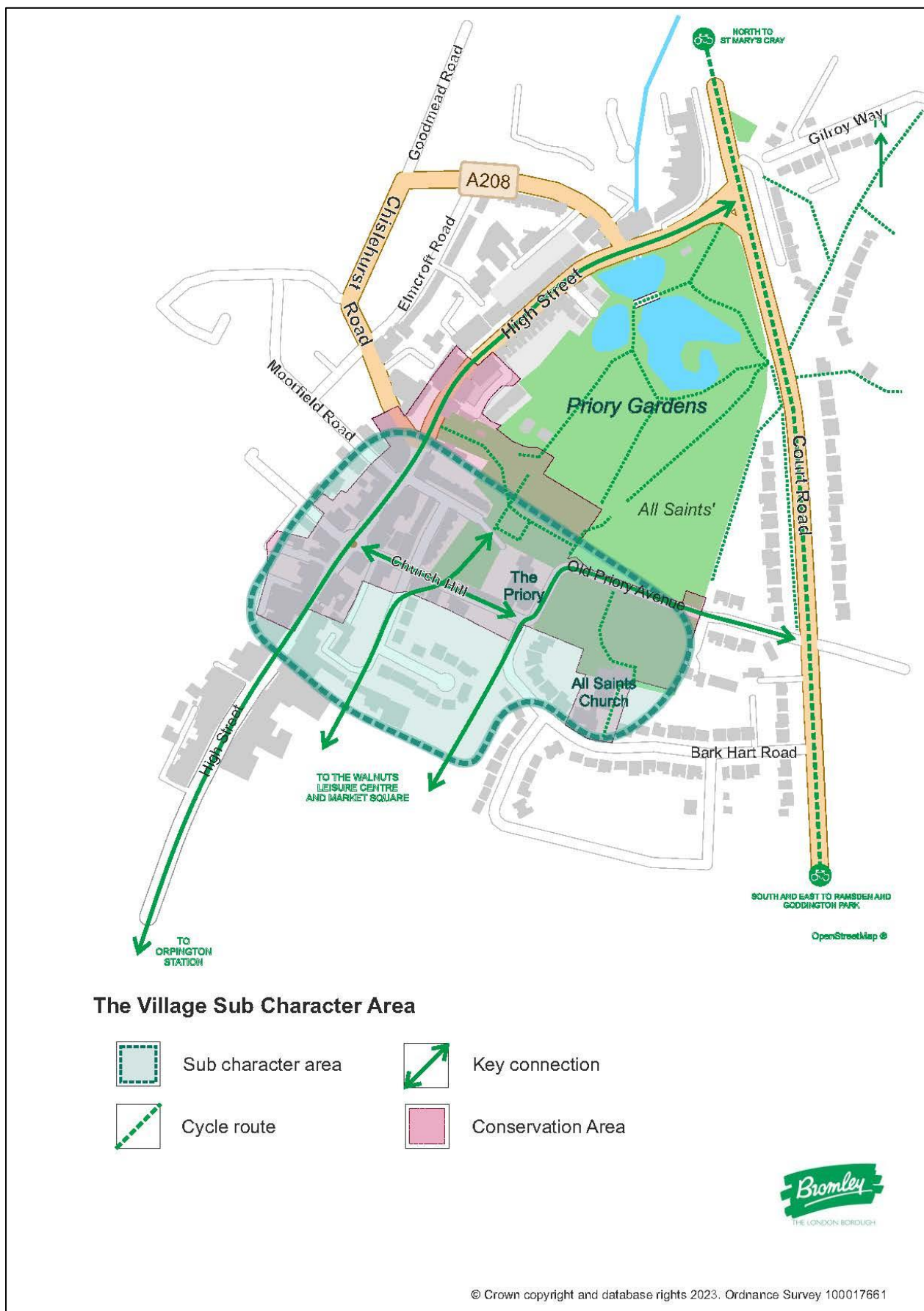
The Village

- 7.1. This sub-area is the original and historic centre of Orpington and includes the centre's oldest and most significant historic buildings. It closely aligns with the designated Orpington Priory Conservation Area and includes a northern stretch of the High Street which feels notably more intimate in scale and character than the southern part of the High Street (which was developed later). The area is not expected to see significant amounts of development, but where proposals do come forward, the Orpington Priory Conservation Area SPG will be a strong material consideration in the determination of planning applications within this sub-area; and also for applications outside the sub-area which may affect its setting or detract from views into or out of the area. Given the heritage constraints and the existing low-rise character, heights of two to three storeys may be acceptable on the High Street part of the sub-area, dependent on the suitability of other elements of the scheme design. Heights of more than two storeys are unlikely to be acceptable in the predominantly residential part of the sub-area.
- 7.2. In terms of acceptable uses, it is expected that any proposals that do come forward would maintain active frontage at ground floor level, for commercial or community uses. On upper floors, residential use may be appropriate where such uses can be accommodated without affecting the operation of High Street commercial uses and where high-quality residential units are provided which provide a good level of amenity for future occupiers.
- 7.3. The High Street / Chislehurst Road is a key bus corridor; therefore, any redevelopment should seek to avoid or minimise adverse impacts to bus operations, especially during construction.
- 7.4. The historic and architectural character of the sub-area is a significant asset, which should be consolidated and enhanced. Its picturesque sequence of High Street buildings would benefit from a public realm that prioritises pavement activity and outdoor facilities linked to restaurants, bars or pubs, enhancing pedestrian experience and connectivity, and providing greater accessibility to cultural and heritage assets. Urban greening, particularly new street trees, will be supported, whilst maintaining a clear pedestrian thoroughfare in line with inclusive design principles. New high quality public realm will also benefit the High Street to the south, providing improved access, trip generation and places to dwell.
- 7.5. The Priory and All Saints Church are both statutorily listed and date back to the formation of the original settlement. They both offer the potential for a strong public and civic role in the life of the town and should be more closely integrated with the rest of the town through improved public realm.
- 7.6. Part of Priory Gardens is located within the sub-area; this is the most significant open green space for Orpington residents, businesses and visitors. It is a very important multifunctional asset for the town centre, providing important green space, a place for people to socialise and for children to play, and as a key walking and cycling route along the Cray Valley corridor. Links to and through Priory Gardens should be prioritised as part of development in Orpington Town Centre.
- 7.7. At the northern fringes of Priory Gardens, wayfinding and landscaping can play a role in conveying the wider Cray Valley landscape to users of Priory Gardens, with potential for improved access to the north to link with other green spaces along the Cray Valley corridor.

Improvements to biodiversity should also be sought, reflecting the SINC status of part of Priory Gardens.

- 7.8. The Broomhill Conservation Area lies to the west of the sub-area and town centre. Any development should have regard to the setting of this Conservation Area, and reflect guidance set out in the Broomhill Conservation Area SPG.

Figure 7: The Village sub-area



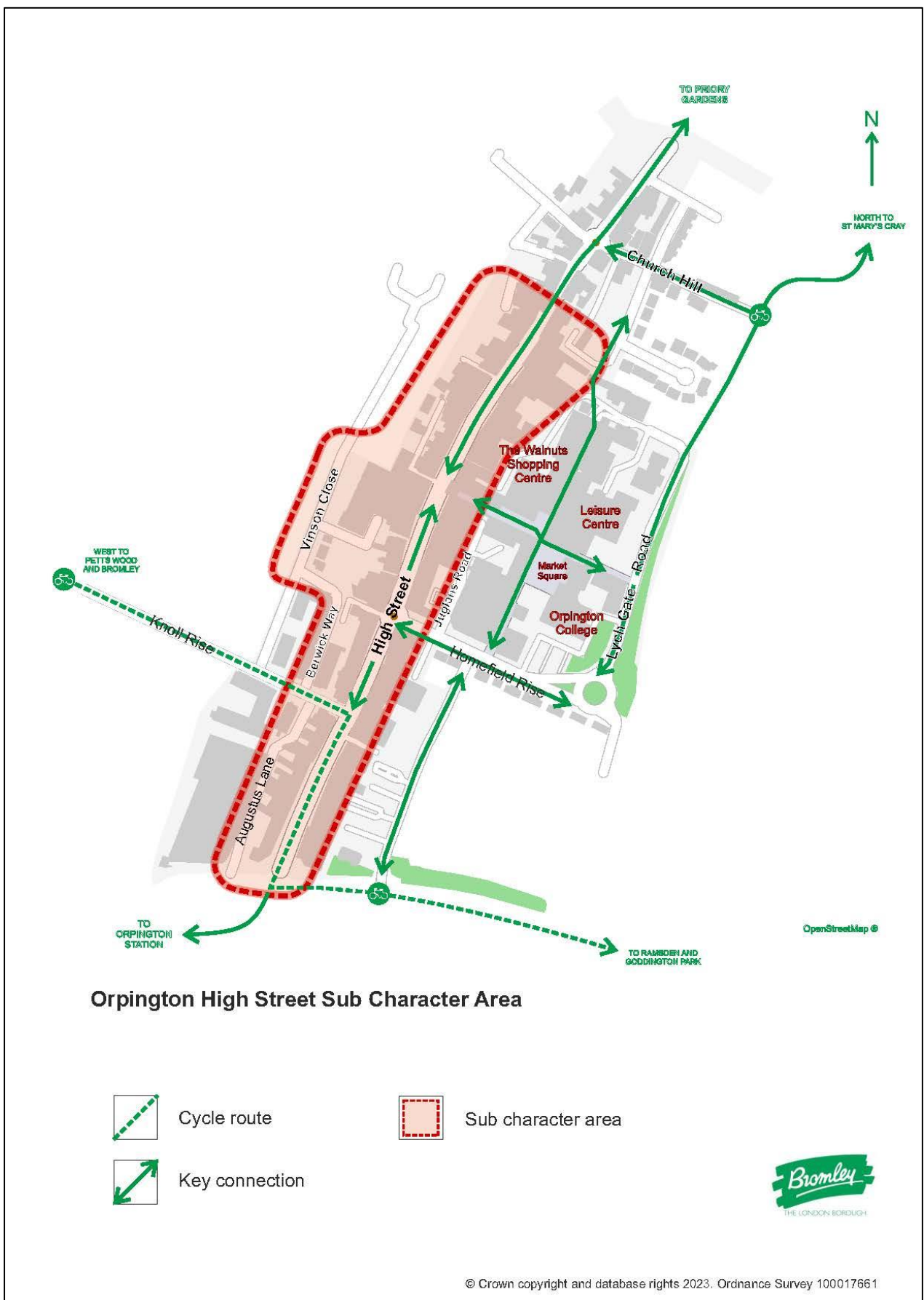
8. Orpington West

Orpington High Street

- 8.1. This sub-area is a long linear commercial High Street, formed as the original settlement began to stretch out toward Orpington station in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. It also includes some backland sites used as yards or servicing for the High Street.
- 8.2. The High Street should present a lively commercial and cultural space, with its existing offer augmented by new offices and workspaces, and culture and leisure uses. Diversifying the High Street offer is considered important to ensure that the vitality and viability of the High Street is protected and enhanced, and that it remains successful in the future, in the face of huge challenges from the changing nature of shopping and post-Covid. However, the function of the High Street should remain predominantly commercial, particularly at ground floor level. Residential use may be suitable on upper floors, particularly where such uses can be accommodated without affecting the operation of High Street commercial uses and where high-quality residential units are provided which provide a good level of amenity for future occupiers.
- 8.3. The public realm should be seen as a series of connected routes and spaces that helps to define the character of Orpington as a place. As the High Street changes, opportunities should be taken to extend new east-west connections across it and into the rear yards and 'back of the High Street' spaces, which can allow for uses, spaces and types of business that are different to those on the High Street. Redevelopment in the Market Square, Orpington College & the Walnuts Shopping and Leisure Centre sub-area offers an opportunity for new public realm and connections linking the High Street with areas to the east through Market Square and onto Lych Gate Road. There are opportunities for improved greening and wayfinding to aid navigation to the north of the High Street toward Priory Gardens and the wider Cray Valley.
- 8.4. The High Street public realm is extremely important to its overall economic, social, and environmental success. High quality, functional, easily navigable public realm helps to support local businesses by encouraging people to visit, creating a more attractive, appealing space in which to 'stop and stay', as opposed to a sterile transient space to quickly move through. The long linear nature of the High Street lends itself to focussed public realm interventions at key junctions (including new east-west routes where these are created) which turn them into places by providing clusters of activity. The public realm should focus on the pedestrian experience, prioritising pedestrians over vehicle movement, it should be user-inspired to deliver innovative, engaging, and inclusive design. Opportunities for urban greening including tree planting should be an integral part of the wider public realm strategy; opportunities to link new and existing green infrastructure should be investigated.
- 8.5. There may be opportunities for small-scale and infill residential and/or commercial development along the High Street and to the rear, including upwards extensions of existing buildings. Where such opportunities do come forward, any increase in height should be modest and reference prevailing heights in the vicinity, which is generally two to three storeys. Developments of a similar height may be acceptable subject to detailed design considerations.

- 8.6. Development proposals should respond sensitively to designated and non-designated heritage assets and should avoid the creation of an abrupt or excessive step change in scale so as not to negatively impact on townscape continuity and character. The human scale feel of the High Street contributes to its character which should be retained and reinforced. The design of small-scale and infill development should reference the prevailing character and materiality evident along the High Street. Extensions of existing buildings should also accord with a retrofit-first approach, by utilising existing buildings rather than demolishing and rebuilding them.
- 8.7. The High Street is a key bus corridor; therefore, any redevelopment should seek to avoid or minimise adverse impacts to bus operations, especially during construction.
- 8.8. The High Street has a strong civic character, with predominant red and buff brick buildings. Development proposals in the area should have regard to these existing materials and conditions, which should be used to inform new development in the area (both new development and redevelopment or retrofitting of buildings).

Figure 8: Orpington High Street sub-area



Western Edge

- 8.9. This sub-area consists of commercial back-land areas to the rear of the west side of the High Street, some of which falls within the defined Local Plan Town Centre boundary. It is an area of transition between the commercial, more urban character of the High Street and the suburban character of the Knoll residential area.
- 8.10. The sub-area includes significant areas of office use within the designated Knoll Rise office cluster. The south of the area is dominated by a large mixed-use development including a Tesco supermarket, flats and car park.
- 8.11. Office uses are a primary function of this sub-area. Developments within the Knoll Rise office cluster will be expected to enhance the quality of existing office floorspace and re-provide existing floorspace in line with Local Plan Policy 85. Office typologies not traditionally found on the High Street, such as co-working and sharing spaces, could be suitable in this area, as part of a mix of office typologies.
- 8.12. The prevailing heights in the area are mixed, with several buildings ranging from three to five storeys. Given the proximity to the three storey properties along the High Street, further increases in height above this range would be considered unsuitable. Development proposals of around three storeys may be appropriate, subject to detailed design considerations.
- 8.13. Development proposals should seek to deliver additional and improved connections to the High Street and to the west toward the station and the surrounding residential areas. New routes to the station should include improved wayfinding, green features and facilitate easier access via walking and cycling.
- 8.14. Improved public realm within the sub-area could help to support new and existing office and High Street uses, providing space for people working in or visiting the town centre to dwell and relax. This could include measures such as pocket parks, urban greening and outdoor seating. New or enhanced public realm can function as a wayfinding tool and should be co-ordinated with any improved connections through the sub-area, particularly routes to Orpington Station.

Orpington Station & York Rise

- 8.15. This sub-area is framed around Orpington Station, a key public transport facility for the east of the Borough which enables access into Central London in 15 minutes. The sub-area includes a Local Plan site allocation - Site 12, Small Halls, York Rise, Orpington. Planning permission for development of 35 residential units was granted in December 2021²⁶. This site has excellent public transport accessibility due to the proximity to Orpington Station, with a PTAL rating of 6a.
- 8.16. The sub-area is outside Orpington Town Centre and currently feels slightly detached from the town centre; this is exacerbated by the area's topography. Station Road (A232) runs between the sub-area and the 'Western Edge' sub-area; while it does not fall within a character area, there may be potential for some intensification of development and public realm improvements.
- 8.17. In design terms, the sub-area should be considered in relation to the town centre and not as being a separate or unrelated entity. The area is low-rise with two-storey development being prevalent.
- 8.18. The siting of the station to the south west of the town centre creates issues of severance and wayfinding difficulties. The current planning policy context and site allocations present an opportunity to address this challenge, firstly by improving pedestrian and cycle connections between the station and town centre, and secondly by transforming the station environment into an attractive and functional urban space which better integrates Orpington with the Crofton suburb.
- 8.19. The two existing key pedestrian and cycle routes into the town centre via Station Road and Knoll Rise should be integral to any future wider public realm strategy; these should be attractive for pedestrians and cyclists, leafy and navigable, with places to pause along the way.
- 8.20. Remaining distinct in character from the rest of the town centre, this area can become a vibrant urban place with activity generated by the station and improved public realm, which may include a station square to enhance the setting. New development should seek to compliment local heritage assets, including Crofton Roman Villa, which could become a clearer character reference for the area. Any future redevelopment in the vicinity of the Roman Villa enclosure should consider how to enhance the local environment in a way that positively impacts on this historic attraction, thereby supporting its viability and the preservation of the remains.
- 8.21. Residential uses would be an acceptable land use, although some small-scale commercial uses may be suitable.
- 8.22. The area along Crofton Road and Station Road, between Orpington Station and the High Street, features a number of houses, some commercial uses and stretches of blank frontage. While not having a discernible, overarching character, it nevertheless forms a critical connection between the defined Major Town Centre and the station (and on to Central London and the wider South East). Development proposals along this stretch should pay careful attention to the interface with the public realm to support the enhancement of this important route and should accord with the prevailing two storey building heights.

²⁶ Planning permission reference: 21/02861/FULL1

Figure 10: Orpington Station & York Rise sub-area

