

An aerial photograph of the Rochester Airport Masterplan site. The image shows a large green field with several runways and taxiways. In the foreground, there are several small white and red aircraft parked on the grass. To the right, there are several large buildings, including a multi-story office building and a smaller structure. A parking lot with many cars is visible. In the background, there is a residential area with houses and trees. The sky is clear and blue.

**Superseded by
Innovation Park
Medway
Masterplan 2019**

Rochester Airport Masterplan

January 2014

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The Vision

Rochester Airport and adjoining land will be developed as a strategic gateway and economic hub. The existing general aviation airport will be retained and improved and high value economic activities provided on surplus land to create skilled employment opportunities. This will capitalise on the presence of the existing BAE facility. An opportunity to enhance working aviation heritage facilities as a public visitor attraction will also be achieved. The open outlook provided by the airport will be retained and improved. Over the longer term reinvestment will be encouraged on the Laker Road and Airport industrial estates and other adjoining sites. This will establish Rochester Airport as an economic location of real significance and a model for the area.

1 Introduction

1.1 Rochester Airport is owned by Medway Council and is a vital part of Medway's future economic prosperity. The Council wants the airport and adjoining land to provide a strategic gateway to Medway and an economic hub. This hub will create skilled employment opportunities that will capitalise on the presence of the existing BAE facility, so establishing Rochester Airport as an economic location of real significance and a model for the area.

1.2 Medway Council is committed to retaining and improving the airport. The airport's facilities are nearing the end of their economic lives, and investment is needed to secure the airport's medium to long-term future. Medway has developed a strategy of making the airport 'smaller but better' with improved facilities for users and visitors. The main change will be removing one of the two grass runways, and constructing a new hard-surfaced runway and parallel grass runway on the alignment of the existing 02/20 runway. The proposed changes are explained in more detail in chapter 2.

1.3 These changes will free up land for employment-led development next to the airport. New development provides the opportunity to:

- meet Medway Council's aspirations for the area by creating a hub for knowledge-based employment; and
- release value from Council-owned land, so helping to fund improvements to the airport.

1.4 In addition to new employment, the development of the area will:

- enhance working aviation heritage facilities as a public visitor attraction;
- retain the open outlook westwards across the airport; and
- over the longer term, encourage reinvestment on the Laker Road and Airport industrial estates.

1.5 Whilst there are planning policies identifying the area as a hub for high quality employment, there are no specific policies that protect the airport. This document is intended to set out clear policies for both the airport and the surrounding area by providing a masterplan. It has been subject to public consultation and Sustainability Appraisal, and so has followed appropriate planning procedures for the masterplan to be given significant planning weight.

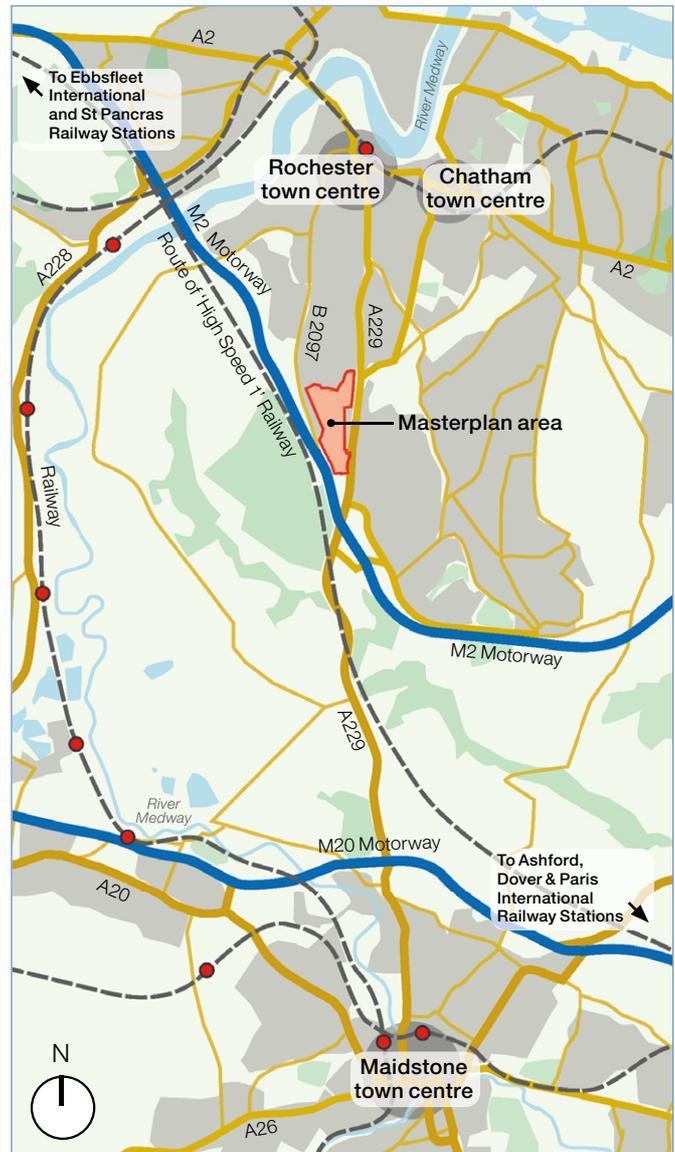


Figure 1.1: Location of the masterplan area

1.6 This document provides guidance on the principles of development, including land uses, access and building heights. However, as it is a masterplan for the long-term, it does not dictate the detail of exactly what buildings will look like and where they will be located. This level of detail will be set out in planning applications that come forward after this masterplan is adopted.

1.7 Planning applications that come forward in the future will be required to clearly explain the impacts of environmental issues such as traffic generation and noise, and how the proposals will address any impacts. Local people will be consulted on any planning applications.

2 The future of the airport



Figure 2.1: Extract from Medway public information leaflet, December 2012

Introduction

2.1 First established in 1933, the Rochester Airport site is owned by Medway Council and has been leased since 2000 to an airport operator - Rochester Airport Limited (RAL). Many of the buildings and facilities on the airport are reaching the end of their useful life. This means that Medway needs to consider how to safeguard the important aviation activity that happens at the airport and help improve community access to this unique facility.

2.2 Rochester Airport is important to many people living in Medway and is something that Medway Council has committed to securing a long-term future for. The Council has been working for a number of years to identify a financially viable way to protect the airport and provide greater public access for aviation and heritage/leisure use.

2.3 Working with airport specialists and neighbouring businesses including BAE Systems, the Council has evaluated a number of different options for the future of Rochester Airport. The proposals shown in Figure 2.1 above show Medway's preferred approach to improving the airport. This was set out in a leaflet that was circulated to local people in December 2012.

2.4 Following on from the publication of the leaflet, Medway has worked to safeguard the future of the airport by:

- completing a process of inviting tenders for an airport operator to work in partnership with the Council to carry out improvements to the airport, and to manage it long-term. RAL has been selected as the preferred operator, and is working closely with Medway to develop detailed plans for the airport; and
- producing this masterplan to provide a clear vision for the future of the airport area.

The proposals for the airport

2.5 This masterplan is not intended to provide a detailed masterplan for the future development of the airport. Instead, it sets out broad principles for the airport and the areas next to it. These broad principles provide a balance between certainty as to what will happen and flexibility to allow for detailed design decisions to be made later. However, improving the airport will involve:

- major improvements to existing airport facilities on their current location on the airfield;
- better public access to the site for heritage, leisure and tourism;
- a new permanent home for the nationally recognised Medway Aircraft Preservation Society (MAPS);
- creation of new parallel paved and grass runways to replace the existing 02/20 grass runway, as well as improvements to navigation aids and outdated facilities; and
- closure of the old 16/34 grass runway.

2.6 The benefits of these improvements will include:

- safeguarding Rochester Airport as a 'smaller but better' sustainable airport with improved facilities for Medway residents and visitors;
- releasing new land for job creation - with the potential to eventually create up to 1,000 new skilled jobs;
- providing a new aviation heritage attraction to encourage more visitors to Medway;
- preserving the existing green view of the airport from Maidstone Road, as well as reducing aircraft noise around the airport through the use of a paved runway; and
- creating opportunities to attract private sector investment into Rochester Airport by offering a 25 year lease alongside a Council contribution to the overall development.

Consultation

Process

2.7 The Council sought to carry out broad consultation in the development of the Masterplan for Rochester Airport. This included wide publicity on the proposals to consider changes at land at and around the airport from late 2012. An initial consultation was held in Spring 2013 to discuss the emerging plan and issues with residents and wider stakeholders. Details of this first stage of consultation have been published in a Consultation Feedback Analysis Report¹

2.8 A formal consultation was held from 22 July to 20 September 2013. This was carried out in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement that sets out the standards by which consultation on planning policy are conducted. The length of the formal consultation made allowance for the summer period, by extending the time in which people could make responses. The Council sent a leaflet to 7300 households and businesses in the local area outlining the Masterplan proposals and encouraging people to respond to the consultation.

2.9 The consultation sought to provide a range of options in how people could respond.

2.10 Medway Council officers and representatives of Rochester Airport Limited staffed an exhibition held over two days on 22 and 23 July 2013 at Medway Innovation Centre. The venue was selected for its proximity to the airport, and therefore convenience for local people. 222 people attended the exhibition. Consultation feedback forms and copies of the proposals were available for visitors at the exhibitions. The exhibition display panels remained on display at the Innovation Centre for the duration of the consultation period.

2.11 Information on the proposals and the draft Masterplan were published on the Council's website. People were able to submit comments on line. Copies of the Masterplan were available to view at each library in Medway, and at the reception desk at the Council's offices at Gun Wharf.

2.12 Statutory organisations, neighbouring Councils, parish Councils, interest groups, and businesses were notified of the consultation on the Masterplan and invited to make their comments. A focus group was organised to seek the views of businesses on the proposals, as part of the consultation process.

1 www.medway.gov.uk/rochesterairport

Responses

2.13 The Council received 908 responses to the consultation held from 22 July to 20 September 2013. The majority of the responses (over 80%) were received in association with a campaign set up to object to the Masterplan proposals. Just under 80% of all responses were strongly opposed to the Masterplan, reflecting the high proportion of replies submitted in support of the campaign against the Masterplan. In considering the responses received independently, more mixed views are seen, with a small majority in support of the Masterplan.

2.14 90% of the responses received were from local residents. 3% were submitted by businesses, and 7% from others, including statutory organisations invited to make comments on the consultation. Many of the local residents lived in locations directly under the flight path connected to the runway 02/20, which would see an increase in use following the closure of runway 16/34.

2.15 The Council analysed the comments made in response to the consultation.

2.16 It is noted that the responses received to the formal consultation on the Masterplan from July to September showed a stronger objection to the proposals than the views expressed at the earlier stage. A number of people who had engaged in the Spring consultation chose not to participate again in the formal consultation process.

Concerns raised

2.17 Assessment of all the responses that raised concerns with the Masterplan identified a number of commonly recurrent matters:

- Increase in air traffic activity, associated with a commercialisation of the airport
- Noise, particularly in association with increased activity
- Increased risks to safety, particularly in relation to increased activity
- Road traffic impacts
- Specific aspects of the design components of the Masterplan
- Limited consideration of options for the site
- Negative impact on property values
- Use of public funding

2.18 In proposing changes to the Masterplan, respondents frequently asked for the Masterplan to be abandoned and for a new consultation to be carried out. With regard to the airport, some sought its closure, and

relocation of the facility or operations to another site. Others wished it to remain operating on its present arrangements.

Grounds of support

2.19 In reviewing the comments made in support of the Masterplan, there were also a number of common themes. These were:

- Securing the role of the airport as an important asset for Medway, supporting community services, recreational users and businesses.
- Much needed improvements to the infrastructure and facilities at the airport, including the benefits arising from a paved runway
- Promoting local heritage assets, particularly supporting the work of the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society
- Economic development and regeneration

2.20 The Council considered the concerns raised through the consultation and made a number of amendments to the draft masterplan:

- a reduction to the annual cap on aircraft movements and operating hours for flying at weekends
- further information on the anticipated markets from leisure, public service, training and commercial uses, including the restrictions on the type of aircraft that would be able to land at Rochester.
- additional information to clarify the distinctive characteristics and offer of the site for employment and aviation purposes
- higher promotion of the heritage value of the site, and its reflection in the marketing of the site for high quality employment
- greater consideration of the site's environmental and wider context, the need to protect key views, and residential amenity
- outline of the process for seeking planning permission, and other consents for development at the airport and employment land, including the areas in which detailed information will be provided, the consultation and assessment requirements.

2.21 More details on the consultation process, including full copies of the responses received and the Council's consideration of the issues raised are available on the Council's website.²

2 <http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=21903>

Key airport questions answered

2.22 Through consultation sessions, a number of questions were raised about the future operations of the airport, with people wanting to know the detail of the types of aircraft, numbers of flights as well as understanding where new facilities may go. As RAL is developing its plans for the future of the airport in parallel with the process of producing this masterplan, it is not possible to provide detailed information on the airport at this stage. However, improvements to the airport will need planning permission. Local residents and businesses will be consulted on the planning application and will have the opportunity to put forward views about the proposals.

2.23 However, it is possible to answer some of the questions raised by local people at this stage:

What kind of aircraft will use the airport? The type of aircraft are expected to remain similar to those that currently use the airport, with the airport's core business remaining as leisure flyers, along with helicopter and air taxi uses. It will not become a busy passenger or cargo airport as the runway is not long enough. Examples of aircraft are shown overleaf.

Will the airport be busier? Over the past ten years, the airport has handled an average of over 31,500 aircraft movements per year or 86 movements per day. This varies from year-to-year, and the variation is due to a number of factors - fluctuating demand for emergency services and how economic conditions affect leisure movements, for example. There are currently no restrictions on the number of movements. If planning permission is granted for the improvements, it is likely that a restriction on the number of movements to 38,000 per annum or an average of 104 per day is considered appropriate and in line with, but not exceeding, the airport's busiest years. The cap on movements would be subject to review to allow flexibility. This would be subject to evidenced data being provided by the operator to justify doing so. Consideration of the impact on local amenity would also need to be considered carefully. Careful monitoring will be in place to check the number of movements.

The paved runway will mean that - in the case of inclement weather - movements can be spread throughout the day rather than concentrated in 'weather windows'.

Will having just one runway reduce safety? The paved runway will improve safety - a grass runway is slippery when wet and can be boggy. Runway 02/20 is currently used for around 70 per cent of the time, as it has a better alignment in relation to wind direction than runway 16/34.

Civil Aviation Authority guidance confirms that a hard runway can increase safety. AIC (127/2006)³ issued by the CAA discusses aircraft performance. The document shows a comparison between grass and hard surfaced take offs, with planes on the latter needing 20-30% less runway and landing aircraft 15-35% less. By definition, if a departing aircraft needs less runway it will be higher at the boundary, which provides a positive safety message.

It is anticipated that less than 10 per cent of the time the airport will be unusable due to high crosswinds. Each aircraft (and some operators) has individual crosswind limits. It is down to the individual pilot or operator to assess wind conditions at the time of flight. This is one of the many calculations made by all pilots prior to getting in their aircraft. It has been assessed that the airport will lose far fewer flights to crosswinds than currently to unsuitable field conditions.

The airport operator has a very good safety record. Rochester Airport will continue to be licenced by the Civil Aviation Authority, who take matters of safety very seriously. The airport will be subject to full annual inspections and re-assessments. The development works to the airport will also be subject to CAA licensing review, in addition to the assessments made through the planning application process.

Will there be more noise? Having a paved runway means that aircraft will be able to accelerate more quickly than on grass and take off earlier, a view that is supported by the CAA and the General Aviation Safety Council. This means that they will have climbed much higher before they pass over homes near the airport - which will result in less noise than at present.

In addition, the number of aircraft movements will be restricted at the airport, to within levels recorded in previous years.

What about hours of operation? There are currently no restrictions on when the airport can be used. It is likely that a restriction will be imposed if planning permission is granted. RAL have suggested maximum core operating hours of 7:30 am to 7:30 pm during the week and 8.30am – 5.30pm at weekends. Aircraft based at Rochester will retain the right to operate up until dusk or 9.00 pm as now. Emergency services and military will be able to use the airport 24 hours per day (as is the case at present). This matter will be addressed through the planning application process.

3 <http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/20130121SSL07.pdf>

Will there be more road traffic to/from the airport?

Leisure road traffic at weekends and bank holidays may increase but it is not envisaged that this will increase substantially during the working week from current levels.

The Masterplan recognises the importance of careful planning for transport movements, in the context of the wider area. A traffic impact assessment will be carried out at the planning application stage, and further details for management schemes proposed. This approach has been supported in the consultation response made by the Highways Agency.

Will the airport transform into a commercial aviation facility? There are no plans to transform the facility into a commercial airport, with regular scheduled and/or chartered passenger flights. Currently the airport operations consist of a mix of operations, including:

Leisure aviation	Helicopter sightseeing (London and Kent), Private Pilots Licence training, Microlight, Autogyro, fixed wing light aircraft and helicopters.
Public Service	Police, Air ambulance, Medivac fixed wing, Network Rail, Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. Operating on a 24/7 basis.
Training	Training for a one off experience or to qualify for a licence, Microlight, Autogyro, Fixed wing and Helicopters and any conversion of different types. Including advanced training to Commercial Pilots Licence.
Business	Small business and Charter flights (single or twin engine), Fixed wing or Helicopters. In bound from UK/Europe for day trips or longer.

The runway will not and cannot be extended due to the airport’s physical size, therefore its length prohibits the landing and take-off of larger aircraft. The types of planes that currently use the airport and that will use it in the future will not increase in size.

Rochester Airport is currently a Category 2c code runway. It will change to a 2b code runway, which limits the type of non-military aircraft to the airport (CAA CAP168⁴ Chapter 3, pages 2 and 3). The runway’s coding defines the width of the runway, and the types of planes accessing the airport based on wingspan and wheelspan.

What type of employment will be generated on the masterplan site? The airport’s direct operations have the opportunity to protect current jobs and the potential to provide some new ones with the development of more modern and diverse facilities.

Within the airport operator’s lease boundary, there is also a commitment and opportunity to create aviation related employment that could diversify and benefit the airport’s traditional operations.

The airport site is very well placed to create higher value employment on the land that will be released for development at the south and north of the site with the closure of Runway 16/34. This is due to a number of factors,

Examples of smaller aircraft



Figure 2.2: Cessna C-180



Figure 2.3: Spitfire



Figure 2.4: Eurocopter EC-135

4 <http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP168.PDF>

Examples of larger aircraft



Figure 2.5: Piper PA-42



Figure 2.6: Socata TBM-700



Figure 2.7: Cessna Caravan C-208

including its excellent accessibility, visibility, access to superfast broadband, hotel availability, and co-location with existing prominent employers such as BAE Systems, Aeromet and several businesses based at the Innovation Centre.

Working with local academia and existing employers provides an excellent opportunity to attract and grow a prominent industry sector that is rooted in Medway.

What are the future plans for enhancing heritage facilities at the airport? Rochester Airport is home to the valued Medway Aircraft Preservation Society (MAPS), which has an illustrious history of rebuilding historical aircraft. Many of these have seen service during World War II.

There is a clear opportunity to maximise the positive contribution that MAPS brings to the airport site with its redevelopment. There is potential to enhance its working infrastructure at a gateway point to the airport and therefore diversify the airport offer into the tourism and visitor market.

MAPS could also provide valuable training opportunities in engineering for young people in Medway – there are clear linkages with Medway’s engineering focussed University Technical College.

Are the airport’s development plans subject to planning consent? Planning consent for the airport’s development proposals will be required. There will be an initial screening of the potential environmental impacts. The planning process may involve more than one planning application, with outline consent sought for an overall masterplan and detailed planning applications to follow for specific aspects of proposed development. The applications will be submitted with evidence and information on a number of technical matters. These include a range of environmental and amenity impacts, air quality, pollution, noise, ecology, landscape, flood risk and drainage, infrastructure and services, heritage, safety, details of operations, transport and traffic impact assessments, topographical and structural surveys as required, an economic statement.

Any planning application formally submitted will be consulted upon in accordance with the Council’s adopted consultation procedures. This will include statutory consultees and local residents and businesses. Given the nature of the development, the applicant will be expected to arrange public consultation on the proposals prior to the submission of a planning application. All material planning considerations raised as a result of representations received will be considered in the processing of the planning application.

In addition to the planning application process, the airport operator will need to seek licensing consents from the Civil Aviation Authority.

3 The masterplan area



Figure 3.1 Aerial view

Introduction

3.1 This chapter provides a description of the area covered by this masterplan and the technical issues that the masterplan will need to address. The chapter is organised under the following headings:

- land ownership;
- urban design;
- engineering and environmental issues; and
- safeguarding.

Land ownership

3.2 Creating one parallel runway opens up land surrounding the improved airport for development. The masterplan area encompasses several areas of land around the airport, and these are shown in Figs 3.1 and 3.2.

- A** Land currently occupied by part of the 16/34 runway.
- B** Land on a long lease to BAE Systems, partly used by BAE Systems for car parking.
- C** The Innovation Centre - there may be opportunities to extend this successful business location.
- D** Vacant land to the south of the Innovation Centre owned by Medway Council.
- E** Woolmans Wood Caravan Park. This is in private ownership.
- F** Potential for some new development within the airport area beyond its operational facilities, mainly providing new heritage facilities for the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society.

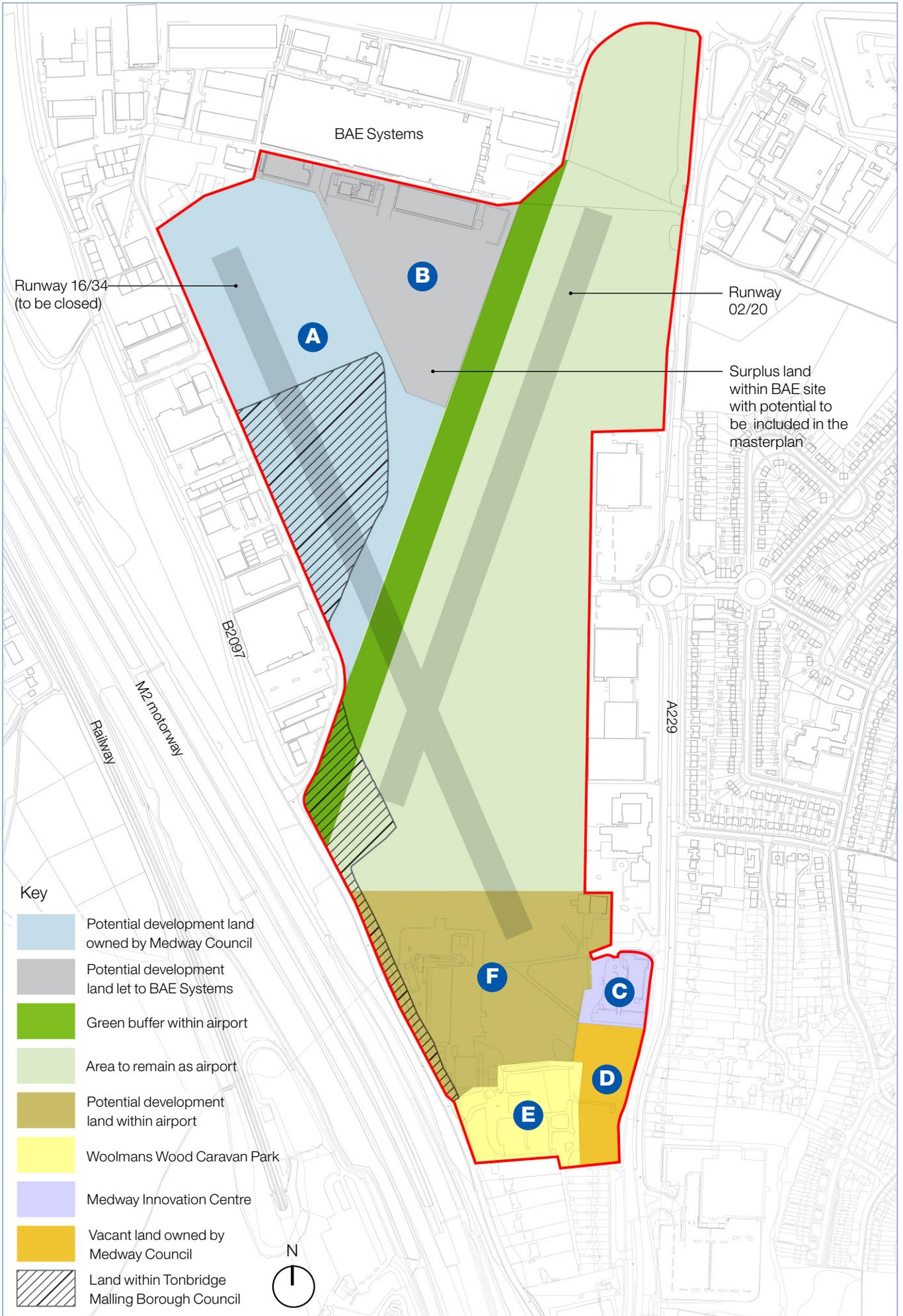


Figure 3.2: Plan showing the masterplan area

Urban design

3.3 It is important to understand the character of the masterplan area and its immediate context. This helps to guide the masterplan - are there areas where character is special and needs to be preserved? Is there an opportunity to improve the character of the area through new high quality development? Are there opportunities to improve the quality of the existing employment areas over time, so that the area as a whole is improved?

3.4 How the masterplan area connects with the local area is also important - where can vehicular access be provided? Where do pedestrians need to get to?

3.5 This urban design section addresses these two issues: character and access.



1: BAE Systems

- Mixture of industrial sheds and office accommodation.
- Between one and five storeys.
- Surrounded by perimeter fence. No public access in to or through this area.
- No uniformity between building styles and ages, varying heights, between one and five storeys.



2: Horsted Retail Park

- Double height retail units with parking - set back from Maidstone Road, Chatham.
- Holiday Inn Hotel - low rise between one and three storeys - separate access from retail units.
- Frontages vary - central part fronts on to A229 and forms relatively strong relationship with road.



3: Airport

- Varied accommodation including: 2 Hangars, Flight School, Aircraft Preservation Society, gun club, cafe, control tower, museum, function room.
- Some accommodation in poor condition and in need of replacement.
- Two grass runways.



4: Laker Road Industrial Estate

- Variety of varying office and industrial/manufacturing uses. No frontage to B2097.
- Accessed along Laker Road.
- No uniformity in building types, materials, heights or forms.
- Frontages along Laker Road are not uniform a - variety of fronts and backs overlook the airfield. This gives a somewhat untidy appearance.





5: Rochester Airport Industrial Estate

- Variety of building types including offices and industrial. Some leisure and retail uses along B2097 (above). More formal frontage makes this part of the site seem more organised.
- No uniformity in building types, materials, heights or forms - results in a somewhat untidy appearance.



6: Southern area

- Heavily treed Woolmans Wood has 'private' character with limited views from outside the site.
- Vacant land presents unattractive frontage to the A229.

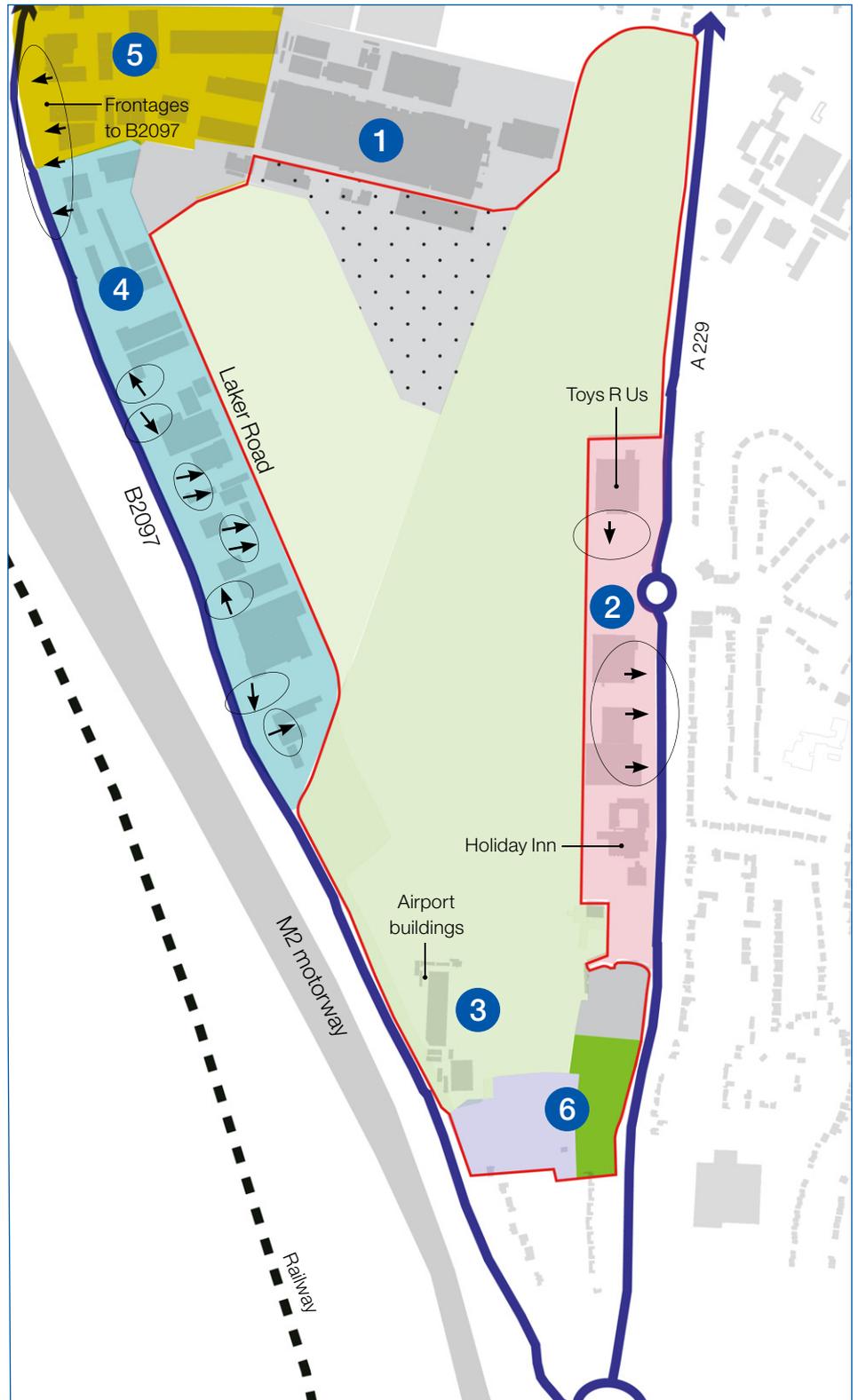


Figure 3.3: Plan showing character areas

Access and circulation: urban design issues

3.6 In its wider context, the site is well-connected to the road network. However, access onto the airport is limited. The main access is from the Maidstone Road, Chatham, which is poorly signed and is shared with a hotel at the southern end of the airport's eastern boundary and Medway's Innovation Centre, the latter of which hosts in excess of 250 jobs. The main access becomes busy at rush hour times and can cause delays to vehicles leaving the site.

3.7 As the main airport accommodation is located on the southwestern side of the field, access to this area is taken close to the southern end of runway 16/34. As this is crossed by aircraft, the road is controlled by a traffic light system operated from the control tower. Queues can build up here when there is a high level of runway usage. Emergency access points are located at the southwestern, eastern and western boundaries.

3.8 The aim of the masterplan is to deliver new employment-led development that can meet Medway's aspirations for high quality jobs, along with improved access to the airport facilities, particularly those to which the public wish to gain access (such as MAPS). An essential part of the masterplanning process is therefore to create high quality, legible access points (or 'gateways') to the new development. The site is challenging in this regard. Figure 3.4 opposite highlights the key opportunities, and these are:

- **8:** the existing primary access to the airport from the A229;
- **4:** from the southern corner of Laker Road, which has the advantage of taking drivers straight into the development area; and
- **3:** direct access via Lankester Parker Road.



1: Entrance to Rochester Airport Industrial Estate

- No access to development land and no visual connection with airfield.



2: Entrance to Rochester Airport Industrial Estate

- No access to development land - potential to connect to Laker Road?



3: Entrance to Laker Road Industrial Estate

- Public access to industrial and business space along Laker Road.
- Visual connection to airfield.



4: Entrance to Laker Road Industrial Estate

- Visual connection to airfield, although obstructed by trees.
- Potential to develop buildings as gateway.



5: Airport (back door)

- Not currently legible as a point of entry.



6: Entrance to caravan park

- Secluded entry point amongst heavy planting.



7: Entrance to freehold development land (not used)



8: Primary access

- Innovation Centre naturally marks entry.
- Access from A229 Road is difficult.
- Visual connection to the airport is weak.



9: Marconi Way

- Public access to existing park and ride.
- Access to BAE Site (private /secure only).
- No access to airfield currently.



Horsted Retail Park

- Serves retail units.
- Visual connections with airfield.
- No potential for vehicular access to airport land.

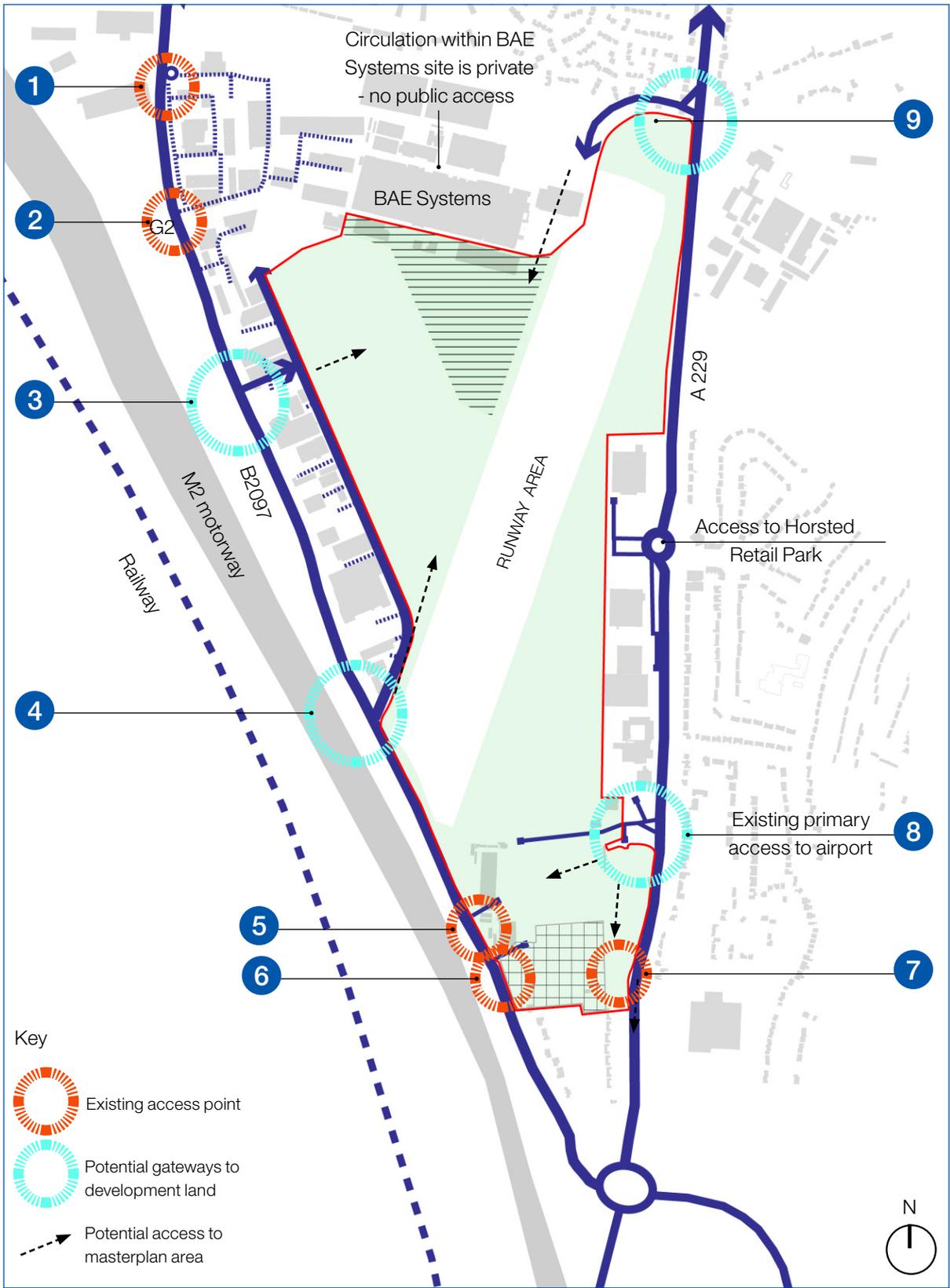


Figure 3.4: Access and circulation plan

Engineering and environmental issues

3.9 The key engineering and environmental issues considered at this high-level masterplanning stage are:

- access and circulation: technical issues;
- site history, and in particular the potential for ground contamination, unexploded ordnance and underground features from the Second World War; and
- ecology, trees and landscape.

3.10 Noise has been considered in relation of the proposed uses - that is, checking that employment, hotel and cafe/restaurant uses and the airport are compatible. Detailed technical issues, including noise, will be considered at planning application stage.

Access and circulation: technical issues

3.11 **Existing road network:** The masterplan area is bounded by the A229 Maidstone Road to the east and the B2097 Rochester Road to the west. These roads meet to the south of the site at the Bridgewood roundabout interchange with the A229 continuing to the south via a grade-separated flyover and a signalised roundabout giving access to the B2097 and the A2045 Walderslade Woods which runs to the south and east of the junction.

3.12 To the south of the Bridgewood roundabout is another grade-separated junction which connects the A229 to the link road leading east to the M2 motorway. The M2 grade separated interchange also gives access to the A2045 to the east meaning that there is some route choice available for drivers travelling between the A229, M2 and A2045.

3.13 Towards the north, the B2097 Rochester Road, Rochester becomes the B2097 Maidstone Road, Chatham as it approaches Rochester town centre. The A229 Maidstone Road continues north and meets the Horsted Gyratory where the A229 City Way continues north to Rochester town centre and the A230 Maidstone Road, Chatham continues northeast to Chatham town centre.

3.14 **Walking and cycling:** The majority of the existing pedestrian and cycle facilities are to the east of the airport with limited facilities in the vicinity of the B2097. There are no footways on a section of the B2097 to the south of Laker Road. Existing pedestrian facilities include a signalised crossing on the A229 providing access to the Davis Estate

area and southbound bus stops on Maidstone Road. There is a cycle route along the A229 consisting of both on-street and off-street paths. This route connects the Walderslade area with Rochester town centre.

3.15 **Public transport:** The area is served by a number of bus routes, primarily service 101 which runs via the A229 to Maidstone in one direction and Chatham and Gillingham in the other direction. In addition to this route there is service 185 which runs between Chatham and Lordswood and Walderslade. On the western side of the site, service 142 operates via Warren Wood between Blue Bell Hill village and Rochester and Chatham.

	Peak	Daytime	Evening
101	4 per hour	4 per hour	1/2 hourly / hourly
185	hourly	hourly	-
142	-	hourly	-

Table 3.1: Weekday frequency of local bus services

3.16 Most buses used on the 101 carry a distinctive colour scheme to create awareness of the frequent service. The 101 buses are fully accessible with ramps at the entrance to allow those in wheelchairs to board and alight with ease. The buses are fitted with free Wi-Fi capability.

3.17 The bus stops closest to the Innovation Centre are located adjacent to and opposite the Holiday Inn. Facilities comprise only a bus stop flag on the southbound stop and a bus stop flag and shelter with seating on the northbound stop. The southbound stop is accessible via the signalised pedestrian crossing further to the north across the A229.

3.18 **Potential transport improvements:** The location of the site means that it is most accessible by private car. Whilst there are opportunities for improvements to walking, cycling and public transport, a key consideration is the operation of major junctions in the local area. The key junctions are:

Horsted Gyratory: Medway Council has developed a three mini-roundabout improvement scheme. This is being tested and the geometric layout fine-tuned. There may be a need to explore traffic lights to assist:

- BAE traffic exiting the site in a southbound direction, although major delays have not been observed; and
- egress from the proposed new fire station which is to be located at the currently disused park and ride site.

The potential for safeguarding a strip of land around the airport boundary for any future highway improvements / pedestrian or cycleway should be explored.

Retail Park access: At busy times there is sometimes congestion within the retail park which can block back to the main road. Similarly there were times when exiting the retail park was thought to be difficult. The roundabout takes a lot of Asda traffic with traffic approaching Asda from the south having to make a u-turn at this roundabout. The same applies to traffic heading south from the Innovation Centre / hotel. There are proposals for a new Asda at Chatham Docks which is likely to change the catchment area of this store and may have the effect of reducing traffic on this section of the road network.

Innovation Centre / Hotel access: This is currently a left-in / left-out junction. There is potential for fully signalised 'all-movements' junction, which could relieve the retail park junction by also taking the u-turning Asda traffic. This masterplan recommends that this is explored at detailed design stage.

Bridgewood Roundabout: No issues were identified in terms of capacity or operation of this junction. This junction was not included in the Highways Agency study of the M2 junction as it was not deemed to interact with the roundabouts or traffic signal junctions leading to the motorway. There is potential that, if required, there was room to further increase capacity at the roundabout by adding flares/lanes.

3.19 Overall, whilst there are some existing issues of congestion, there would appear to be opportunities to improve capacity.

3.20 The majority of new development is proposed on the western side of the site, where access by public transport and walking and cycling is currently poor. There is an opportunity to work with the operator to improve the 142 bus service. This service currently diverts into Laker Road, where there are stops but no shelters. Opportunities could include improving the frequency of services, improving bus shelters and routing the bus through the new development area.

3.21 There are limited opportunities to improve pedestrian and cycle access along the B2097 south of Stoney Lane. However, there is an opportunity for this masterplan to provide a pedestrian / cycle route along Laker Road. This could then be linked to pedestrian / cycle improvements to the B2097, to the north of the masterplan area.

3.22 Should the Marconi Way access road be improved in the future, there is an opportunity to incorporate better pedestrian / cycle access into this.

3.23 Individual planning applications that come forward in line with this masterplan will need to include a Transport Assessment (TA) and provide improvements, if required. This assessment will include consideration of the impact of the development on the strategic road network, and particularly Junction 3 of the M2.

Site history and ground conditions

3.24 The 1938/39 maps show the airport and buildings. These consisted of hangars and a flying training school were constructed in this period. The Shorts Brothers factory is not shown at the northern end of the site although the three main hangars were constructed in this period for the manufacture of Shorts Stirling Bombers, it was normal not to identify military targets on the 1930's OS series maps. Also built at this period was the Pobjoys factory towards the northwest corner of the BAE site.

3.25 Little development of the airfield is shown post-war until the addition of a new hangar at the southern end of the site between 1990 and 2002. The BAE works to the north of the site grew progressively post war. The only other significant change to the site is the construction of the Rochester Airport Industrial Estate to the West and recent construction of the Innovation Centre in the Southeast corner.

3.26 The site was a major strategic target in World War Two and was bombed three times in August 1940 leading to extensive damage of the Shorts factory at the northern edge of the site. A plan has been obtained showing the location of bombs but no information has been obtained indicating that there are any known unexploded bombs. Any development will require appropriate risk assessment as there is clearly a residual risk.

3.27 The site is recorded as having been mined with pipe mines (Source: Brief History of Rochester Airport by Preston and Moulton; October 1992). These were long pipes laid transversely under runways and filled with explosives. Designed to deny the runways in the event of invasion, they were reported as having been removed but caution needs to be taken. There are at least two other sites in the UK where residual live pipemines have been located needing removal and suitable precautions need to be taken in any development to ensure that all mines have been removed.

3.28 There is generally a higher risk of contamination in areas of World War Two usage particularly the old fuel filling point and ARP shelters. Asbestos is likely to be found locally in made ground. It is likely that low level Radium 226 contamination could be found on site in areas of old incineration. Radium 226 is typically found in luminescent paint on old aircraft dials. Investigations will be required and remediation may be needed as part of any development.

3.29 Generally it is not expected that the site will contain extensive obstructions and ground bearing on the head or underlying chalk should be adequate for normal foundations. There are reports about underground solution features which should be considered by developers.

Ecology, trees and landscape

3.30 There is no ancient woodland within the masterplan area and no rare plant species. Some of the trees within Woolmans Wood Caravan Park are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Any masterplan should aim to retain these trees and, if any are required to be removed, replace them with appropriate species elsewhere on the site. The wooded character of this part of the masterplan area must be maintained.

3.31 Peters Pit Special Area of Conservation (SAC) covers an area of 70 acres (28.3 hectares) and is located approximately 1.8 miles (3km) to the south-west of the masterplan area. It is designated on the basis that large great crested newt populations have been recorded breeding here. There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reasonably close to the masterplan area. These are:

- Wouldham to Delting Escarpment (SSSI) covers 768 acres (311 hectares) and lies approximately 1 mile (1.5km) south west from the site.
- Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment SSSI covers 1,494 acres (605 hectares) and lies approximately 2.8 miles (4.5km) north west of the site.

3.32 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) that lie within the vicinity of the site include Baty's Marsh 26 acres (10.4 hectares) and is located approximately 1.5 miles (2.5km) north of the site, and Boxley Warren 205 acres (83 hectares) is located approximately 1.8 miles (3km) south of the site.

3.33 Development of the masterplan is unlikely to impact upon these designated sites due to the distances and barriers (major roads and the railway) that exist between the site and these areas, which mean that accessing these sites is difficult.

3.34 The airport is an elevated site, making it prominent from a distance. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is on the flight path of the airport. Any intensification of use of the airport will therefore have some impact on the tranquillity of the AONB to the west and south of the site. The impact of the height of new buildings on views out of the AONB should be taken into account at the planning applications stage.

3.35 The airport site is close to residential and commercial areas. There are valued local views across the open frontage on the northern part of the airport's boundary with the A229, providing wider views to the setting of the Kent Downs AONB to the south west.

Safeguarding

3.36 The height of any proposed development must take account of a continued use of the airport as an operational airfield.

3.37 In 2012 Medway Council and BAE Systems appointed TPS to carry out an option study to study potential aerodrome layouts to enhance the viability of Rochester Airport.

3.38 This study developed the Council's intentions to close runway 16/34 and the construction of a paved runway. Two layout options were presented, one on the existing runway alignment and the other on an alignment which is slightly rotated relative to the existing.

3.39 The cost difference between the two options was very little and both had both advantages and disadvantages. Although the rotated option made better use of the shape of the airfield and provided longer runways with fewer obstacles, it required changes to aircraft routes, which may be difficult to achieve. The existing runway alignment option released substantially more land in the vicinity of the Innovation Centre. This masterplan is based on the existing runway alignment - the precise alignment will be the subject of agreement with the operator, but it is expected to be broadly as set out by TPS.

3.40 TPS's study provides 'safeguarding' plans which define the areas of land that may be released for development and the maximum height of buildings and other structures that may be accommodated. Figure 3.5 opposite provides a simplified version of TPS's safeguarding plan, showing the developable areas as being defined by the five metre height contour, with permissible height increasing with distance from the runways.

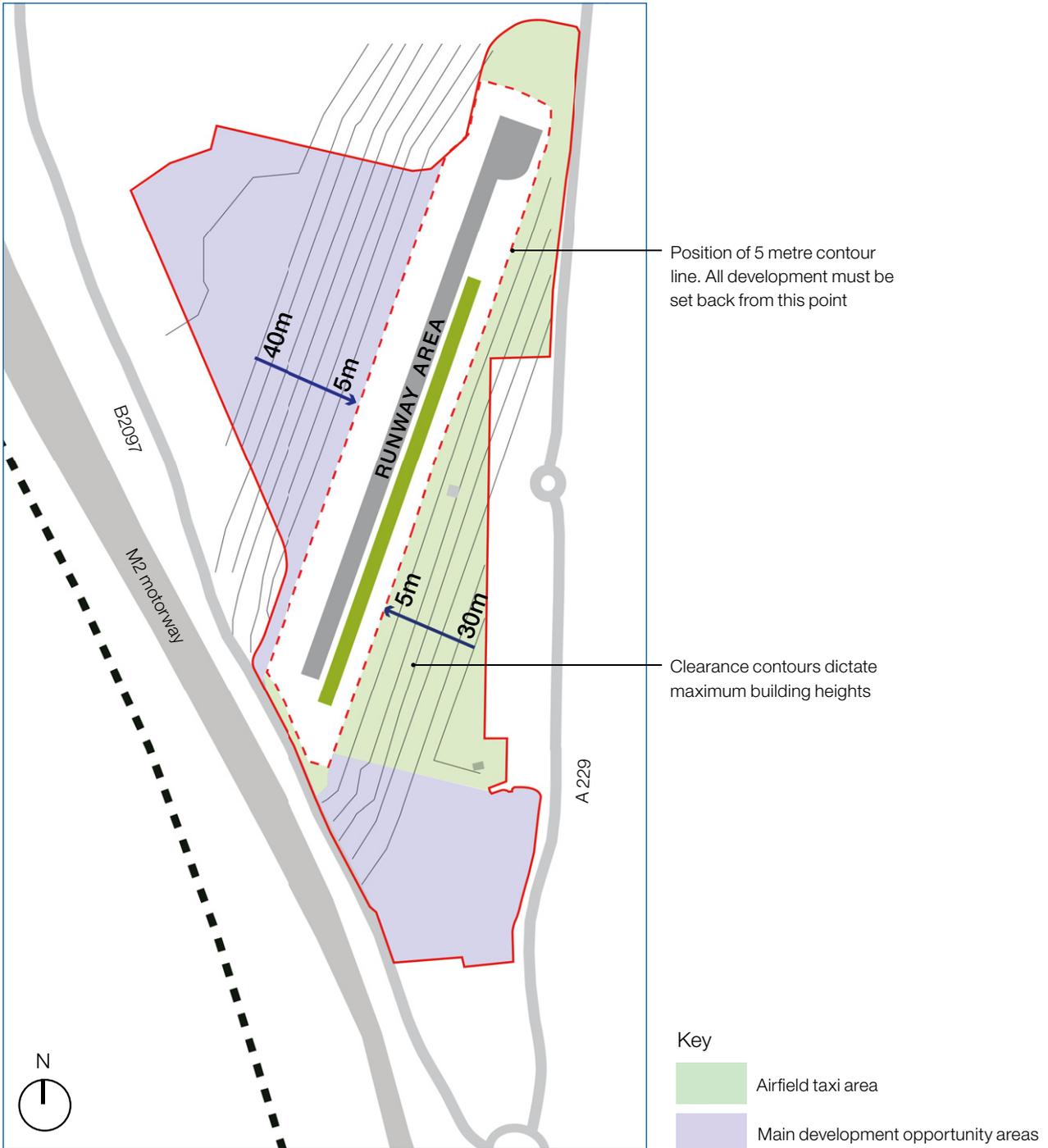


Figure 3.5: Safeguarding showing developable areas

4 Policy context

Introduction

4.1 The planning authorities for the airport are Medway Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC). As landowner, Medway liaises closely with TMBC on airport-related issues. The planning policy context for the masterplan area is set by:

- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- the saved policies of the Medway Local Plan (2003);
- the Tonbridge and Malling Council Core Strategy (2007); and
- the Tonbridge and Malling Development Land Allocations DPD (2008).

4.2 In addition, the following documents are of relevance to the masterplan:

- the Medway Economic Development Strategy for 2009 – 2012; and
- the Medway Employment Land Review Consolidation Study 2010.

4.3 In late 2013, Medway Council had to withdraw a well advanced draft Core Strategy from the Examination process. This resulted from a decision to designate a Site of Special Scientific Interest on land proposed for strategic development in the draft plan. The draft policies therefore have no planning status. However the policy framework that was emerging through the Core Strategy process expressed the Council's vision for the Rochester Airport site.

Economic development

4.4 The Medway Sustainable Community Strategy, 2010-2026¹, set as economic development as one of its key ambitions: 'Medway to have a thriving, diverse and sustainable economy matched by an appropriately skilled workforce and supported by a higher and further education centre of excellence'. Actions to achieve this ambition include a focus on sector development and ensuring the

availability of employment space. The Rochester Airport site contributes to these activities.

4.5 The work that was carried out for the production of the Core Strategy entailed assessments of employment land supply and need in Medway. This analysis was used to inform the development of policies. Through this work on the evidence base, the Council confirmed the importance of the Rochester Airport site as a location for quality employment. This recognised the specific local opportunities generated by the presence of BAE Systems at this site, and particularly for development of a technology and knowledge based cluster of operations of considerable significance.

4.6 The Council's approach to the Rochester Airport site accords with the NPPF in relation to building a strong, competitive economy, particularly:

- the requirement in paragraph 20 for local planning authorities to plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century; and
- the requirements in paragraph 22 to: set out a clear economic vision and strategy; identify strategic sites for local and inward investment to meet anticipated needs over the plan period; and plan positively for the location, promotion and expansion of clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries.

4.7 The Medway Employment Land Review Consolidation Study identifies the amount of land and floorspace required to provide for 21,500 jobs up to 2026. This work is to be reviewed as part of the evidence base for a new local plan. For the moment, the requirements for the 'M2 Access Sub Area' are set out as 183,747 square metres (sqm) on 32.25 hectares of land. There is sufficient floorspace overall to meet the identified employment requirements. However, within the M2 Access Sub Area there is a deficit of potential employment land of some 134,000 sqm. From a planning perspective, therefore, land at Rochester airfield is important to meeting the M2 Sub Area's need for employment land.

4.8 Medway Council's Economic Development Strategy 2009-12 sets out its ambition, vision and strategic priorities for Medway's economic growth. Rochester Airport's future development accords directly with several of Medway's strategic economic priorities:

1 http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/sustainable_com_strategy_web.pdf

SP1 – sector development: This priority highlights a need to “*explore opportunities for inward investment that play to the area’s particular strengths...*” and also “*promote sector-specific interests in relation to other priorities, not least Skills Development and Employment Space*”.

4.9 Particular strengths at Rochester Airfield include BAE Systems and the Innovation Centre. The potential for opportunities for growth that relate to these two existing uses are explored in the property market chapter of this report.

SP2 and SP3 – skills development / higher education: These strategic priorities identify specific actions to “*link skills development with proposed physical developments and related short and longer term job opportunities*”, and to “*Encourage much higher numbers of graduates to stay within the area, whether to establish businesses or seek employment*”.

4.10 Development of new commercial infrastructure aimed at producing goods and services that demand higher levels of skills will increase the opportunity to retain locally trained graduates from Medway’s universities and Mid Kent College. A flexible masterplan can set a framework for a range of opportunities, including a mix of commercial and potentially some educational development.

SP4 – employment space: This strategic priority directly identifies Rochester Airport for future development consideration, recommending that an appraisal of the airfield and neighbouring sites is undertaken to identify any additional opportunities for employment space that do not prevent aviation use and are complementary to existing co-located businesses. This masterplan study provides this appraisal.

4.11 Tonbridge and Malling planning policy does not include specific policies relating to the airport. In terms of employment, the borough’s Employment Land Review indicates that:

- B1 office requirements are expected to increase, but existing supply already exceeds this need (although this is concentrated at Kings Hill);
- B2 requirement are set to decline, and there will be surplus of land for this sector across the borough; and

- requirements for B8 are expected to increase. However, this is expected to be accommodated on existing sites that become vacant as B2 demand decreases.

4.12 The main thrust of Tonbridge and Malling employment-related planning policy is therefore around retaining existing employment sites. The Laker Road Estate is identified on the Proposals Map as Safeguarded Employment Land. Those areas of the airport falling within TMBC’s area are identified as ‘Urban Areas’ - Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy seeks to direct new development to these areas.

Transport and movement

4.13 Policies T1 to T6 in the Medway Local Plan, 2003, promote management of the impact of development on the highway network and provision for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport travel opportunities.

Summary

4.14 This masterplan has been produced in order to meet the requirements of the above policies to secure high quality employment within the Rochester Airport area.

5 Design framework and guidance

Introduction

5.1 The purpose of this masterplan is to provide clear guidance on Medway Council's aspirations for the future of the area, setting out parameters for the type of development that will be encouraged and supported. The development of the area is likely to take place over several years and, as such, it is important that the masterplan is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in market demand, transport modes and building technology.

5.2 This chapter provides a series of design framework plans that set out the key parameters for future development. These are:

- Land use;
- Access;
- Building heights; and
- Urban design.

5.3 The chapter also provides design guidance for buildings and landscape. The framework plans and the design guidance will be used to inform future detailed designs for each part of the overall masterplan. These detailed designs will go forward as planning applications, each supported by a Design and Access Statement (DAS). Each DAS must demonstrate how the proposals accord with the principles set out in this masterplan.

Land use

5.4 Figure 5.1 sets out the Land Use Framework Plan. This plan sets out the land uses that will be permitted within each parcel. Land uses not identified on the plan and below will not be permitted.

A B1 and/or B2 employment uses will be permitted. B8 will only be permitted if it is ancillary to predominantly B1 and/B2 development.

B B1 and/or B2 employment uses will be permitted. B8 will only be permitted if it is ancillary to predominantly B1 and/B2 development.

C The existing Innovation Centre (use class B1) will be retained.

D Mixed-use development that supports the employment function of the wider masterplan area is encouraged in this area. Development that comprises two or more of the following uses will be permitted: B1 employment, C1 hotel, ancillary A3 (restaurant or cafe) and A4 gym.

E Woolmans Wood currently operates as a successful caravan park. Should the landowners wish to bring it forward for development, B1 and/or B2 employment uses will be permitted.

F The refurbishment and / or redevelopment of existing airport buildings will be permitted. New airport-related facilities will be permitted. B1 and/or B2 employment uses that are ancillary to airport operations (eg aircraft maintenance) will be permitted.

Mixed-use development at the 'gateway' to the site where it is easily accessible to the public will be supported. Mixed-use development may include the following uses: A3 (restaurant or cafe) and A4 (drinking establishment).

5.5 Operational airfield uses will be permitted within the remainder of the airport area.

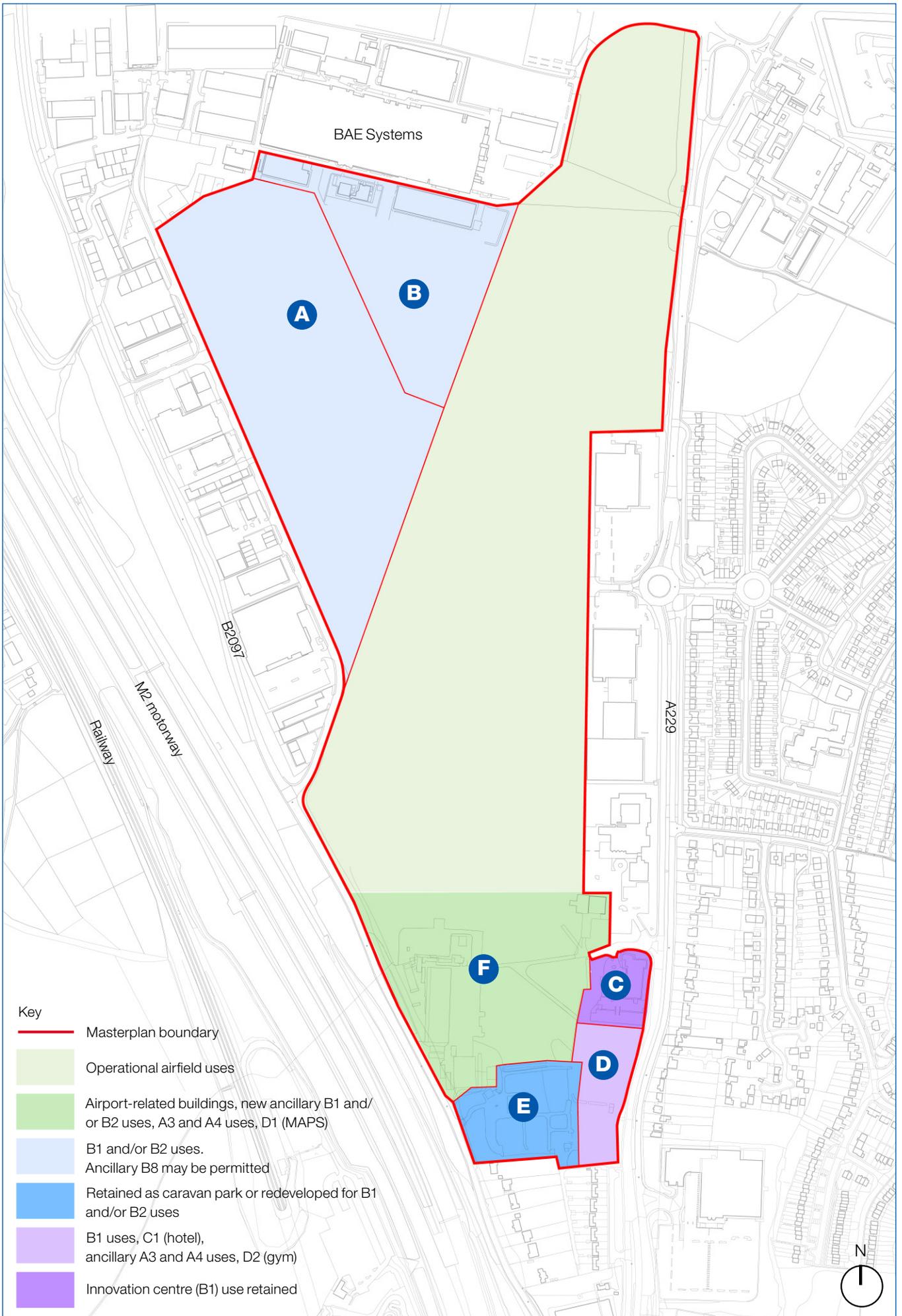


Figure 5.1: Land Use Framework Plan

Access

5.6 Access to the northern employment area (sites A and B) will be provided from the Maidstone Road, Rochester (B2097) via Laker Road and Lankester Parker Road.

5.7 A Transport Assessment (TA) will be required for planning applications in this area. The TA must assess traffic flows and junction capacity, and identify improvements if required. It is likely that the following junctions will require improvement:

1. Lankester Parker Way / Maidstone Road, Rochester
2. Laker Road
3. Laker Road / Rochester Road

5.8 Should the land leased to BAE come forward for development, the potential for a vehicular access to the masterplan area from BAE's land shall be explored.

5.9 Reducing reliance on the private car is important. There is an opportunity to create a dedicated pedestrian / cycle way alongside Laker Road. Together with improvements to the existing network north of the masterplan area, this has the potential to improve walking and cycling in an area that is currently very poor.

5.10 There is potential for working with the bus operator to improve services to the new employment area, including increasing frequency, improving bus stops and routing buses through the new development.

5.11 Should the Marconi Way access road be improved in the future, opportunities for a dedicated pedestrian / cycle route should be explored.

5.12 In addition to a TA, any planning application(s) must be accompanied by a Travel Plan. The Travel Plan should set out measures for reducing travel by private vehicle, including encouraging the use of public transport, car sharing, travel by cycle and on foot.

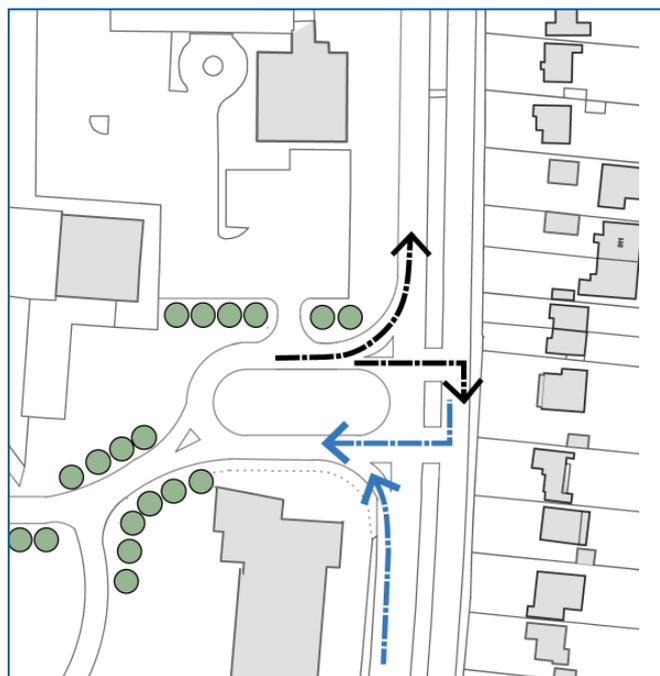


Figure 5.2: Illustration of potential junction improvements

5.13 Access to the airport and southern development area (sites C, D, E and F) will be provided from the Maidstone Road, Chatham (A229). The potential for improving this junction should be explored as part of more detailed design work for this area. Any planning applications must be accompanied by a TA and a Travel Plan.

5.14 Access to site D shall be provided via an access road along the western boundary of site C. This access road could be designed to provide future access to site E, should it come forward for development.

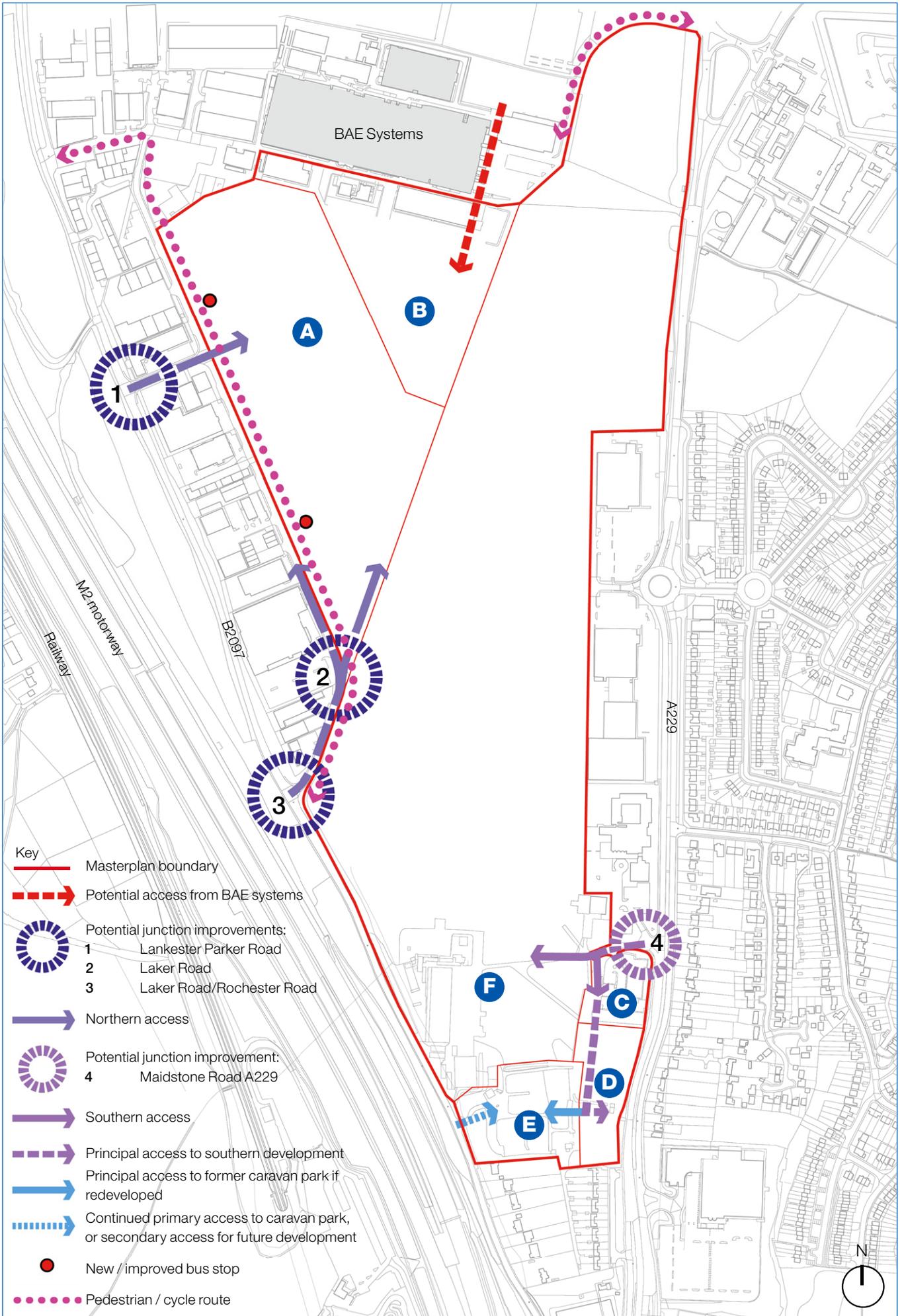


Figure 5.3: Access Framework Plan

Building heights

5.15 Detailed design of buildings and other structures will be established at planning application stage. Figure 5.4 opposite sets out the maximum heights that will be permitted for buildings in the masterplan area.

- A** Maximum building height normally two storeys. Up to four storeys permitted subject to:
 - B** ■ airport safeguarding considerations; and
 - urban design justification - i.e. fulfilling requirements to create a landmark building in a specific location.
- C** The existing Innovation Centre (use class B1) will be retained.
- D** Maximum building height three storeys. Relationship to a residential dwellings to the south of the site must be carefully considered and provide a suitable open gap.
- E** Maximum building height normally two storeys. Three storeys permitted subject to satisfactory relationship to adjacent residential dwellings.
- F** Maximum building height three storeys subject to airport safeguarding considerations.
- F** Height to be determined by operational requirements and airport safeguarding considerations.

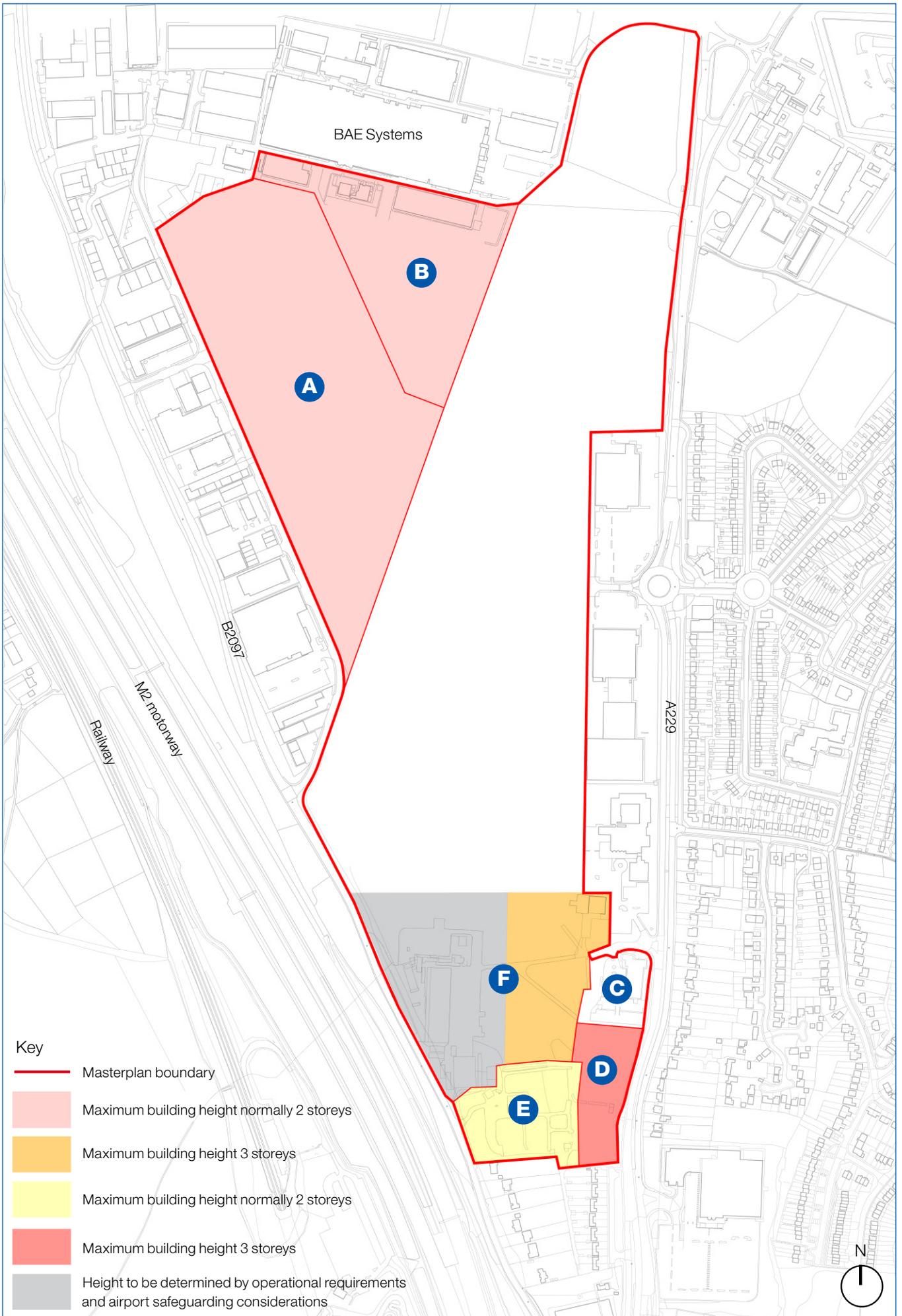


Figure 5.4: Building Heights Framework Plan

Urban design

5.16 There is an opportunity for new development to create a distinctive, high quality employment-focussed 'quarter' that improves the character of the area. Figure 5.5 sets out the key urban design principles that new development will be expected to incorporate, and these are explained below.

Northern area

- The key gateway from Laker Road must be designed to give a high quality approach to the employment area. Buildings and landscape must be designed as a coherent whole, so that the views northwards are of attractive buildings set within a green landscape. Tree planting along the new access road will help to reinforce the importance of this access.
- There is an opportunity to create a dedicated pedestrian/ cycleway along the Laker Road frontage. The landscape and route should be designed together.
- Key building frontages within this gateway area must be designed to respond appropriately and positively to the views into the area.
- Laker Road must be given a strong, positive character that upgrades the existing setting by:
 - creating a green landscaped strip along the eastern side of Laker Road, incorporating tree planting at regular intervals; and
 - locating new development so that buildings positively address Laker Road and frontages are set back a consistent distance for the whole length of the road.
- The road leading into the development from the Lankester Parker Way / Laker Road junction is an important access point, and must be designed so that it is perceived as a major access. This design approach must include:
 - designing tree planting into the street, so giving it a character and quality that contrasts with non-tree-lined streets. There will need to be designed to respect airport safeguarding height restrictions; and

- locating new development so that buildings positively address the road and frontages are set back a consistent distance for the length of the road until it meets the boundary with the land occupied by BAE.

Southern area and airport

- The gateway from the Maidstone Road, Chatham must be designed to give a high quality approach to the airport. Buildings and landscape must be designed as a coherent whole.
- Building frontages onto the Maidstone Road, Chatham must reflect the setback of the Innovation Centre, creating a similar positive relationship with the road.
- The wooded character of Woolmans Wood must be maintained. If any trees forming part of a TPOd group are proposed to be removed, a landscape plan shall demonstrate how this loss would be compensated through new planting.

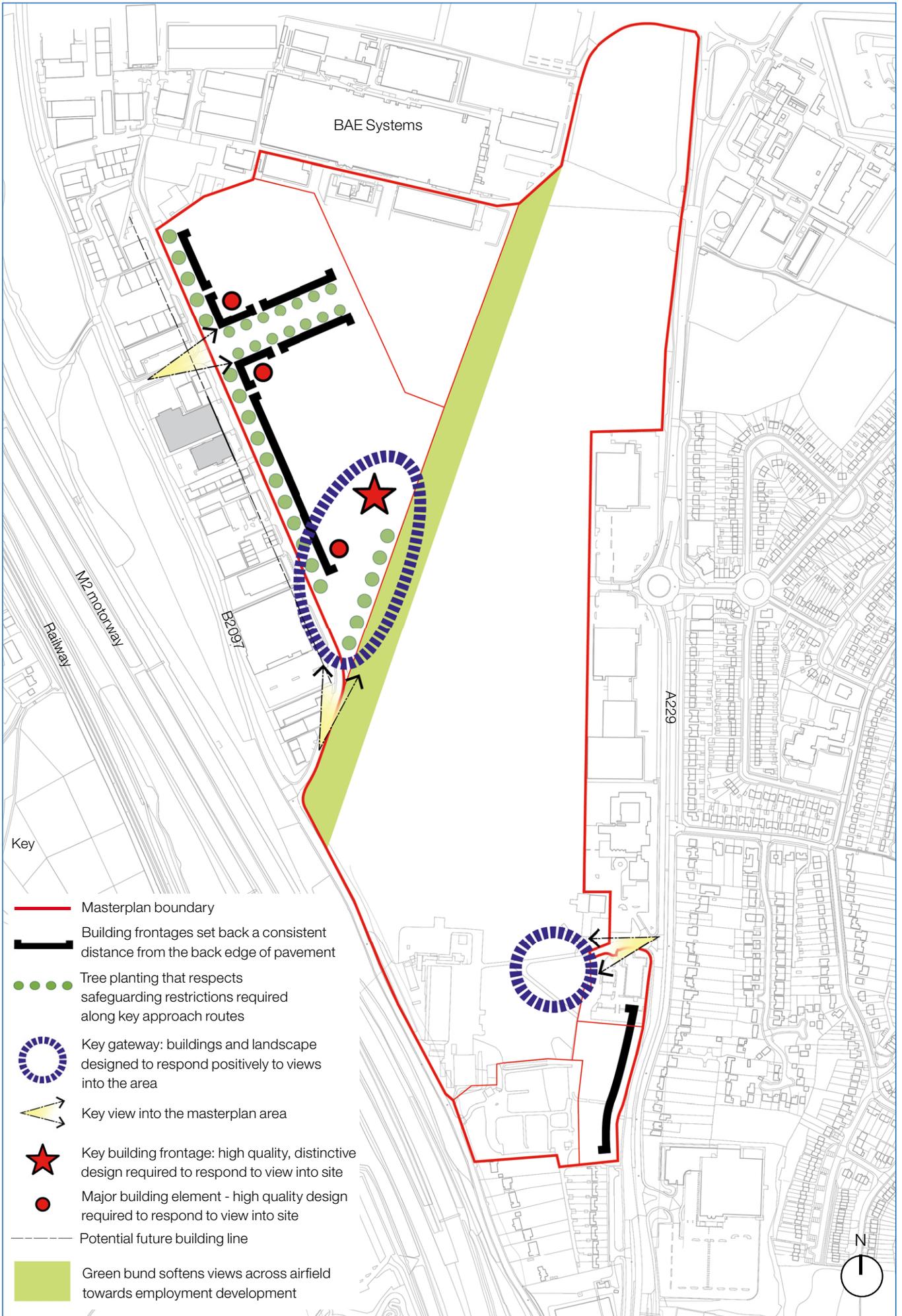


Figure 5.5: Urban Design Framework Plan

Design guidance

5.17 As set out above, the masterplan will not be developed in one go, but will be built out over time. The northern employment area, in particular, will be constructed in a series of phases. A consistent and coherent approach to the design of buildings, streets and spaces is important to achieving a high quality employment quarter.

Northern employment area

5.18 This section provides guidance for the northern employment area that focuses on:

- consistency of building frontages;
- consistency of height;
- materials and signage;
- landscape;
- street hierarchy and design; and
- parking and servicing.

5.19 **Consistency of building frontages:** The most important way of achieving a coherent layout is to design buildings so that the frontages are set back a consistent distance from the back edge of pavement. Secondly, building frontages must be designed to positively address the street that serves them. This means that:

- buildings should be setback a consistent distance from the back edge of the footway for the entire length of the street. This setback distance may vary between streets of different types within the overall layout;
- building fronts should face the street that serves them, with windows and a main entrance fronting onto the street. The rear of buildings must not address the street;
- wholly blank elevations to the street must be avoided - some windows and doors are essential;
- the setback from Laker Road is especially important to creating a high quality first impression to the employment area. The setback must accommodate a linear row of tree planting in a grass verge of similar vegetation and a pedestrian / cycle route.



Figure 5.6: Strong tree planting along the Laker Road frontage as in this example is important to create a high quality 'first impression'. NB: Height will need to respect airport safeguarding restrictions.



Figure 5.7: Above and left: Consistent building heights help to give a coherence even though materials vary.



Figure 5.8: Breaking the general maximum height is appropriate for 'landmark' buildings in specific locations.

5.20 **Consistency of height:** Figure 5.4 sets the maximum height parameters for each part of the Masterplan area, with the height within the northern employment area normally being two storeys. The following principles apply:

- single storey buildings will be permitted, but these must be located so that they form a coherent group;
- single storey buildings must not be randomly located amongst two-storey buildings;
- single storey buildings should not normally be located on key viewlines into the site. Where they are located on key viewlines, the buildings shall incorporate a two storey element specifically designed to respond to the viewline; and
- buildings higher than the normal two storeys will be permitted only where they perform a clear urban design function - for example, a cluster of three storey buildings defining a key junction of major streets.

5.21 **Built form, materials and signage:** Employment buildings are essentially simple rectangular buildings. However, there is a risk that very simple buildings are (i) monotonous in appearance; and (ii) difficult to understand - where exactly *is* the main entrance? Built forms that help to create richness and variety are encouraged, for example:

- defining the main entrance through the use of projecting bays and a change in materials;
- creating a vertical rhythm that breaks down the bulk of an otherwise large building - for example, by expressing the vertical structure that underpins the building; and
- creating strong corner elements that respond to viewlines.

5.22 Using a reasonably limited palette of materials can help support the coherence created through consistent building lines and carefully considered heights. Materials that endure over time (such as brick) are generally preferred. However, it is recognised that lightweight cladding is often appropriate to employment buildings. Where such lightweight materials are used, roof overhangs need to be carefully considered so as to ensure that cladding is protected and is not adversely affected by rainfall - i.e. overhanging roofs are preferred.



Figure 5.9: Building designed to respond to its corner location.



Figure 5.10: Different approaches to creating richness. Above: a clear corner and defined entrance. Right: vertical rhythm creating by projecting bays and a change in materials.



Figure 5.11: A limited palette of materials helps create a coherent development.

5.23 A consistent, limited palette of materials should be used for groups of buildings along the same street. The palette of materials may vary across the site, but must be used in a controlled manner to create distinct character zones, avoiding a random visual appearance.

5.24 Locations for company signage should be positively designed into building elevations, so that signs stuck onto buildings are avoided. The location of signage should normally be consistent across building groups. However, where a building is designed specifically as a landmark, its signage may vary from the buildings around it.

5.25 **Landscape and street hierarchy:** Good design of streets and spaces is critical to achieving a high quality employment hub. A key aim of this masterplan is to secure a development where the design of the streets helps (i) to promote a high quality identity; and (ii) people to understand where they are within the area and find their way around.

5.26 Figure 5.5 sets out the basic principles of the urban design framework, which seeks to:

- improve Laker Road through tree planting and consistent building frontages, so creating a high quality first impression; and
- create two key vehicular entrances, one from the corner of Laker Road and one from Lankester Parker Way.

5.27 The two streets that form the key vehicular entrances must be designed to look and function as the most important streets within the northern employment area - that is, be at the top of the hierarchy of street types. These streets must include tree planting to create distinctive boulevards that contrast with other streets in the area. This approach will not only create a high quality first impression but also help people find their way around the development - to use the urban design jargon, these two distinctive streets will help create a 'legible' place.

5.28 The area will include a large amount of car parking. Parking areas should be designed to be attractive by:

- avoiding large areas of tarmac, breaking up the surfacing with block paving or other appropriate materials;
- reducing the visual impact of parked cars through landscape such as trees and hedges; and



Figure 5.12: A The two main vehicular entrances must be designed as distinctive 'boulevards' that promote a high quality identity.



Figure 5.13: A The visual impact of car parking should be reduced - for example, through landscaping.



Figure 5.14: A Whilst the majority of car parking should be to the rear of buildings, it is helpful to locate a small amount of visitor and disabled parking at the front, along with cycle parking for visitors.

- creating clear, direct pedestrian routes through the car park to building entrances.

5.29 **Parking and servicing:** The location and design of parking and servicing areas can have a significant impact on the appearance of employment areas. The aim of this masterplan is to minimise the visual impact of car parking and servicing on the ‘public’ side of the buildings as far as possible by:

- locating the majority of car parking to the rear of buildings. Large areas of parking in front of buildings should generally be avoided;
- encouraging rear parking areas to be designed as positive courtyards that are shared by more than one unit;
- locating some visitor parking at the fronts of buildings and - where appropriate - on street so that visiting drivers can easily understand where they are meant to park;
- design delivery and maintenance areas so that they are to the rear or side of buildings, incorporating turning areas away from the main public ‘fronts’ of buildings.

5.30 The buildings onto Laker Road are unlike other buildings in this area, in that they need to positively front Laker Road but potentially will mainly be served from within the northern development. This means that they do not have clear ‘fronts’ and ‘backs’, and will therefore need to be designed to look two ways. Car parking in front of these buildings will be permitted, but must be well designed and landscaped to minimise the visual impact of parked cars and avoid a long, uninterrupted run of car parking. There are opportunities to locate servicing between the buildings.

5.31 Cycle parking for employees should be designed into the schemes. Cycle parking should ideally be provided within buildings. Where it is provided outside, it should be provided with a canopy and be well overlooked for security.

5.32 Cycle parking for visitors should be provided at the fronts of buildings. Such cycle parking need not be covered.

5.33 All buildings must include well-designed refuse stores that enable pallets and other refuse containers to be stored out of sight.

Existing employment buildings

5.34 The existing employment buildings on Laker Road are in a range of different ownerships. As and when proposals for improvements or redevelopment come forward, the Council will encourage these to be in line with the principles set out for the development of the northern employment area. That is:

- where possible, buildings should meet a consistent building line as shown in Figure 5.5 on page 25;
- the heights of buildings should generally be two storeys. Where single storey buildings are proposed, two storey elements (e.g. a corner providing office accommodation) are encouraged;
- use a limited palette of materials that reflects the material used in the new buildings on the opposite side of Laker Road;
- design refuse and servicing areas so that they are to the rear or side of buildings - avoid locating them on the Laker Road frontage;
- where refuse storage areas are visible from Laker Road, screen them to minimise their visual impact; and
- continue the approach of locating the majority of car parking between buildings rather than in front of them. Design boundary treatments onto Laker Road to minimise the visual impact of cars and reflect the landscape approach on the northern employment area - i.e. include tree planting where possible.

Southern area and airport

5.35 This section provides guidance for the southern area and airport that focuses on:

- building lines along the Maidstone Road, Chatham;
- built form, materials and signage;
- landscape; and
- car parking and servicing.

5.36 **Building lines along the Maidstone Road, Chatham:** The Medway Innovation Centre is a very positive building, projecting a high quality image and identity. New development to the south of it should reflect its quality. As set out above, a consistent building line helps to achieve a sense of coherence - new buildings should therefore be setback the same distance from the back edge of footway as the Innovation Centre.

5.37 **Built form, materials and signage:** Whilst this masterplan does not seek to dictate the style of new buildings within the southern area:

- the Innovation Centre's palette of materials should be used as the basis for new buildings along the Maidstone Road frontage; and
- the scale and massing of the Innovation Centre should be reflected in new buildings.

5.38 Signage should be positively designed into building elevations, so that signs stuck onto buildings are avoided.

5.39 **Landscape:** the frontage onto the Maidstone Road should be designed to extend the same landscape treatment as adjacent to the Innovation Centre.

5.40 Any future development of Woolmans Wood should preserve the wooded character of this site.

5.41 A green bund shall be provided along the western boundary of the airport land. This must be designed to soften views towards the employment area from the east. The highest part of the bund must be below five metres.

5.42 **Car parking and servicing:** Car parking and servicing must not be located between new buildings and the Maidstone Road. As with the existing Innovation Centre, parking to the sides of buildings is permitted so long as landscape is designed to minimise its visual impact on the Maidstone Road frontage.

5.43 **Airport gateway:** There is an opportunity for redevelopment of the airport to create a welcoming public gateway to the airport. This could include relocating the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society (MAPS) and including new uses such as a cafe / restaurant. High quality buildings that reflect the site's historic and current use as an airport will be welcomed.

6 Illustrative masterplan



Figure 6.1: Illustrative masterplan

