

# Strood Town Centre Masterplan

Final Report - December 2009



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How can new development contribute towards meeting shared objectives in Strood?



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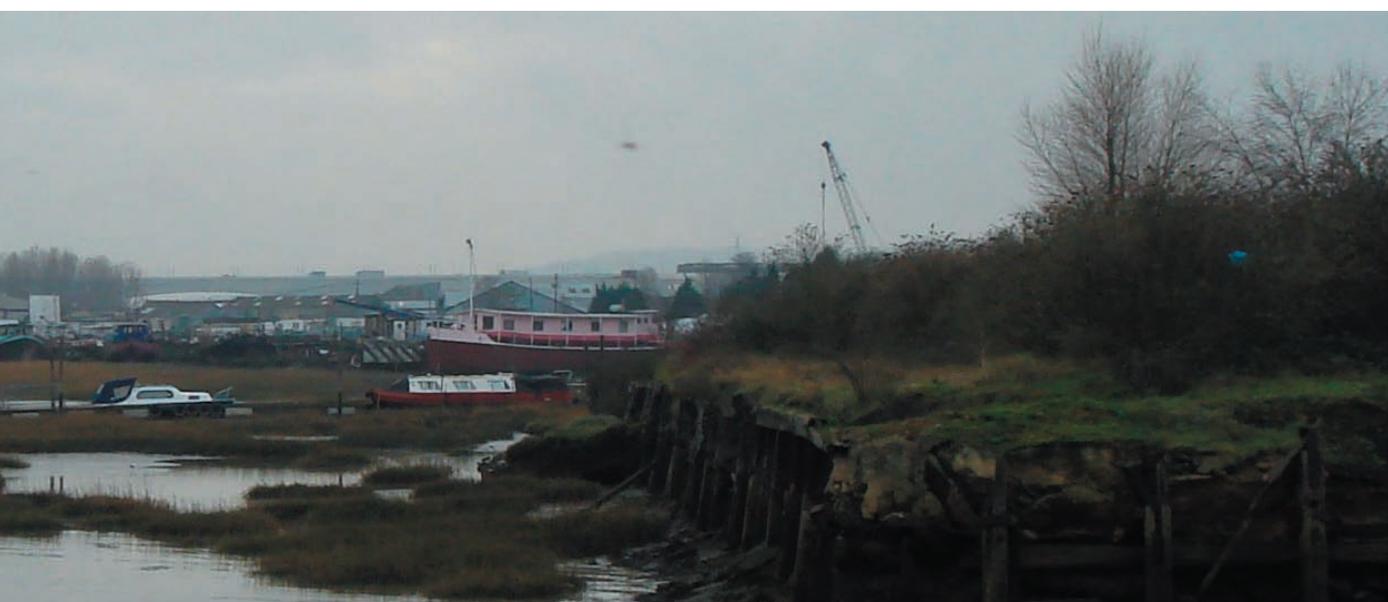
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# Introduction

## The need for a masterplan

Medway Council has commissioned a masterplan to provide a long-term vision for future development and regeneration of Strood town centre. Strood has changed greatly in recent decades, with significant decline in manufacturing industry and growth in retailing accompanied by a general perception that the town centre environment is in decline.

Medway has more recently been the focus of regeneration plans within the context of the Thames Gateway, forming a key component of the Kent Thames Gateway sub-regional plans for urban regeneration and growth. Within this context, and the Medway Waterfront Regeneration Strategy, a number of major development opportunities in Strood town centre have also been identified and progressed through area masterplanning and the adoption of supplementary planning guidance.

Technical studies have also been undertaken to examine how the road infrastructure and public realm in Strood could be improved. However, there remains a lack of a clear vision for how these major development opportunities relate to the heart of the town centre and can contribute towards achieving wider improvements.

The masterplan therefore draws together and builds upon the broad range of spatial planning work undertaken to date in Strood. It seeks to clarify the relationship between major development sites and the rest of the town centre, and the opportunities that arise for improvement of the environment through both development and streetscape improvements.

The masterplan will inform the preparation of an area specific policy for Strood town centre within the Medway Core Strategy DPD, providing a clear spatial planning framework for investment and decision making.

## Methodology & public consultation

The masterplan brief set out a structure for the preparation of the study based upon the following key stages:

- Stage 1: Data collection, review and analysis
- Stage 2: Draft masterplan and site options
- Stage 3: Stakeholder and community engagement
- Stage 4: Revisions and finalise masterplan
- Stage 5: Publication and dissemination

A stage 2 Draft Masterplan was presented to members on July 7th 2009 to seek endorsement for the analysis of issues and opportunities, and the emerging masterplan, for the purposes of undertaking public consultation.

The Draft Masterplan was then subject to a period of public consultation between 1-31 October 2009, consisting of:

- Masterplan leaflets posted to every home and business within the town centre
- An exhibition (unstaffed) at Strood Library for the full consultation period
- Four day-long staffed exhibitions in town centre locations, spread through the consultation period
- A dedicated website where the exhibition material could be viewed

The consultation events were publicised in the local press and on local radio, as well as by posters placed in local shops and other public buildings. The consultation events were well attended and a range of responses were received by email and via the feedback forms provided.

Following analysis of the consultation responses and appropriate changes and clarifications to the masterplan, this final summary report has been prepared.



Masterplan public consultation event,  
October 2009

# Context & analysis

## Strood Profile

The masterplan takes as its departure point a number of existing plans, policies and evidence base studies that have been recently completed, providing a sound understanding of the issues and opportunities facing Strood, and the context within which development and improvements needs to be considered. These include, but are not limited to:

- Regional and sub-regional plans and strategies
- The Medway Waterfront Regeneration Strategy
- The emerging Medway Core Strategy, and its supporting evidence base
- Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to large development sites in Strood
- Analysis work undertaken in preparation of the Strood Area Action Plan (2007)
- Medway Economic Statement 2009-12
- Recent site specific studies and planning applications
- Issues raised during public consultation (October 2009)
- The Medway Strategic Land Availability Assessment

A summary of the key findings of the context analysis for the masterplan are outlined below and illustrated on the accompanying plan (right).

## Economy

- High levels of out-commuting, likely to increase with High Speed Rail
- Low skilled workforce
- Insufficient variety of economic activities
- Lacking evening economy
- Poor image of the town centre
- Continued loss of employment sites for housing led regeneration projects has led to shortage of good sized urban employment sites
- Limited tourism offer

## Built Environment

- Overarching lack of character and sense of place
- Underutilisation of key assets – River and Temple Manor
- Poor pedestrian environment discourages walking
- Surface car parking dominates much of the streetscape

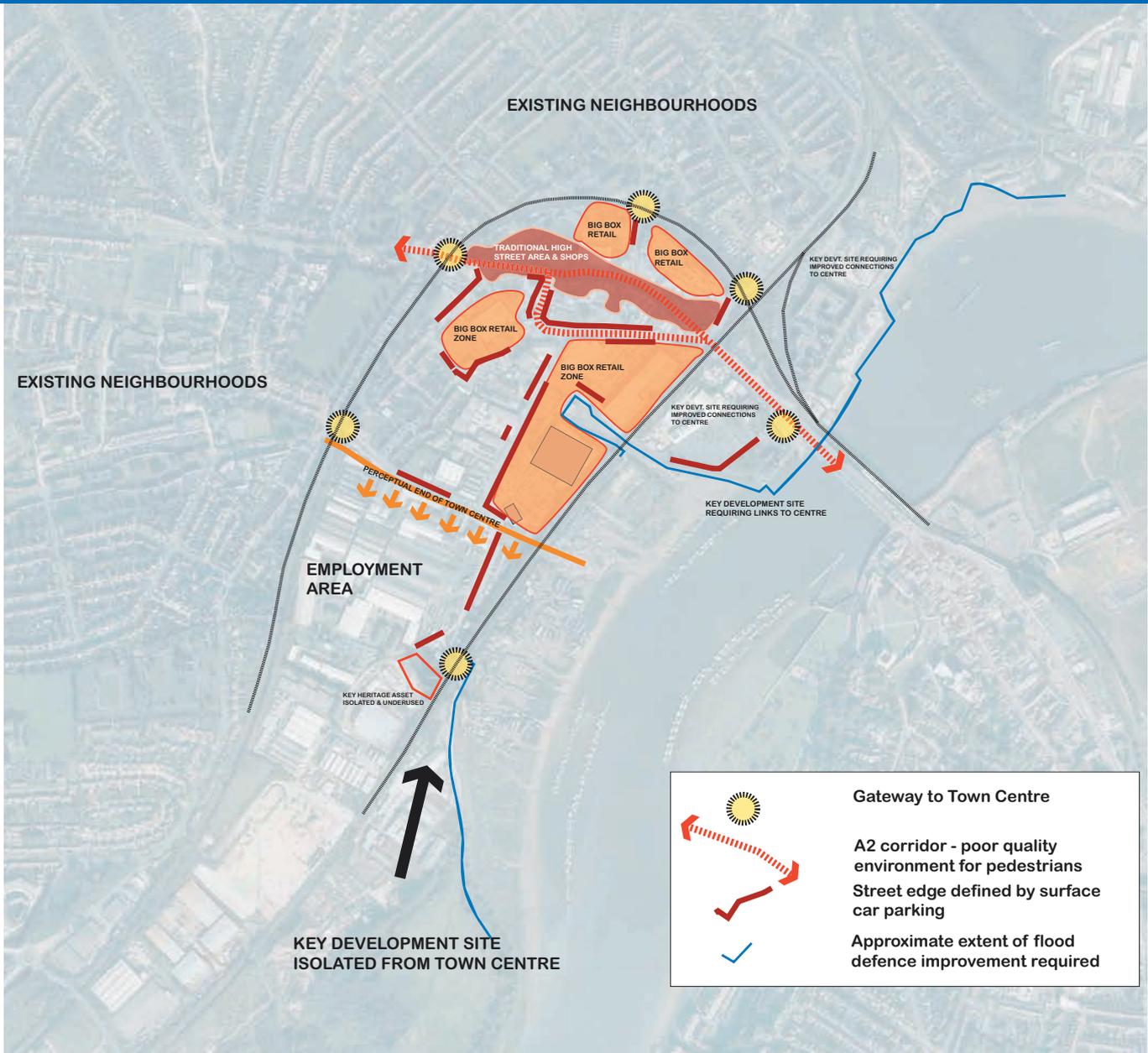
- Employment and retail uses tend to contribute little to the townscape
- Lack of variety in the townscape leads to poor legibility
- No identifiable destination(s)
- Lack of usable open space within the town centre
- Flood risk
- Limited housing within the town centre contributes to the lack of identity and character

## Transport

- Perception of lack of parking, despite substantial provision
- Public transport options not preferred for variety of reasons (price, convenience)
- Localised vehicle congestion at peak times
- Poor provision of dedicated facilities for cyclists
- Rail station not well connected / legible to town centre
- Opportunity of fast rail connection on HS1 route

## Retail

- Current retail facilities operate as discreet zones, with limited connectivity
- Dominance of vehicles discourages pedestrian movement
- Slightly above average vacancies
- General perception of run-down shopping environment
- Recent investment in major Morrisons store and Netto
- Opportunity to link stores into cohesive shopping / leisure circuit



In summary, the following strengths and issues have been identified:

**Strengths:**

- Good accessibility by rail and road
- District retail centre with many top national retailers and pressure for expansion
- Established employment base
- Waterfront regeneration area within Thames Gateway
- Major sites available for residential led development in attractive locations
- Potential to secure benefits from and capture market of new residential growth

**Issues:**

- Disjointed town centre – a series of retail ‘islands’ and struggling High Street
- Generally poor quality streetscene environment that discourages pedestrian movement
- Dominance of surface car parking on the streetscene
- Flood risk
- Need to integrate edge of centre new developments

# Context & analysis

## Property & Economy context

### The Kent Economy

As has the rest of the country Kent and Medway have suffered the continued effects of the credit crunch and subsequent recession. Unemployment rose sharply in Kent over the past year, with an increase of 105% in the year to May 2009, although this increase is from a relatively low base and unemployment in the county remains below the national average.

Kent and Medway's proximity to London and investment in major infrastructure such as High Speed 1 are likely to increase the county's attractiveness as a business and residential location and improve its long term growth potential.

### Property Market

#### Residential

Kent, Medway and Strood have experienced a substantial slowing of the residential property market with reduced values and volume of sales. However, the fundamentals for the residential property market remain strong due to the combined forces of growing population, changing demographics and restricted supply. Strood's location in Medway and proximity to London are likely to make it a more desirable place to live subject to improvements in environmental quality and leisure offer.

As can be seen from table 1 the average property price fell substantially to £130,944 from the peak in 2007 of £156,338, with the number of transactions falling to almost a third. This reduction can be seen across all types. Strood's residential property market (based on post codes: ME2 2, 3 & 4), broadly reflect that of the larger Medway council area, although with a relatively higher average and some variation in type. The majority of the higher value properties are located in the established residential areas surrounding Strood town centre where there is little existing residential property. In addition as with the rest of Medway there is a relatively undeveloped flat / apartment market. The demand for residential development land in Kent has reduced significantly since the peak in the third

quarter of 2007, with values to date having reduced by between 40% - 50%. Developers are still present in the market.

#### Office

The UK office market has been substantially affected by the continued recession with falling rents and softening yields. In 2008, rental values in Kent offices outperformed the UK, with rental growth of 0.4%, compared to a national average of -3.8%. However, this growth has flattened in 2009. Take-up for smaller office premises has remained stable, whilst demand for larger suites has reduced. Strood has a relatively undeveloped office market; however a number of developments are offering small hybrid space (industrial / office) on flexible short term leases. These types of spaces have often been extremely useful in offering start up company's flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions.

#### Industrial and Distribution

Historically, industrial rental values in Kent have outperformed the UK and the south east. However, Kent values suffered in 2008, declining by -0.2%, whereas they were flat in the UK. Kent industrial yields rose by 240bps to 9.1%, while the UK yields rose by 240bps to 9.3% and by 260bps to 9.4% in the south east. Strood has a number of large sites with extant planning permissions for industrial and distributions and it is assumed these will be developed following an upturn in the market and a successful pre let.

#### Retail

Over the past year High Street rental values across the UK have softened, with values on the IPD Monthly down by 2% in the year to March 2009. Rental values in retail warehouses have also followed suit, falling by 2.7% over the last year and shopping centres by 3.2%. However, Kent at only 9.9% compares substantially better than the national average at 11.5%. Supermarket and other large format shops are still actively pursuing sites and development opportunities.

## Strood Market Research

Residential

### Value for residential land (per hectare)

	Small building	Bulk land	Sites for flats
South East	£2.47m	£2.37m	£2.59m
Medway Towns	£2.1m	£2.0m	£2.0m
England and Wales (excluding London)	£1.9m	£1.77m	£1.96m

### House Price Index Medway Council (1999 to 2009)

Year	Index	Average Price	Monthly Change	Annual Change	Sale volume
1999	112.9	£ 64,012	0.6	6.6	550
2000	135.2	£ 76,644	0.8	19.7	571
2001	149.6	£ 84,787	1.2	10.6	737
2002	180	£ 102,340	3	20.7	688
2003	218	£ 123,633	-0.1	20.8	506
2004	244	£ 138,628	1.5	12.1	600
2005	250	£ 142,211	0.4	2.6	422
2006	260	£ 147,715	0.4	3.9	553
2007	281	£ 159,432	0.4	7.9	684
2008	275	£ 156,338	-1.6	-1.9	232
2009	231	£ 130,944	1.2	-16.2	215

### Household Type - breakdown - medway council (1999 to 2009)

Year	All	Detached	Semi	Terraced	Flat
1999	£ 64,000	£ 128,000	£ 76,000	£ 54,000	£ 45,000
2000	£ 76,000	£ 158,000	£ 91,000	£ 65,000	£ 54,000
2001	£ 84,000	£ 169,000	£ 101,000	£ 72,000	£ 60,000
2002	£ 102,000	£ 204,000	£ 122,000	£ 87,000	£ 73,000
2003	£ 123,000	£ 247,000	£ 148,000	£ 105,000	£ 88,000
2004	£ 138,000	£ 277,000	£ 166,000	£ 118,000	£ 98,000
2005	£ 142,000	£ 284,000	£ 170,000	£ 121,000	£ 101,000
2006	£ 147,000	£ 295,000	£ 177,000	£ 125,000	£ 105,000
2007	£ 113,000	£ 319,000	£ 191,000	£ 135,000	£ 113,000
2008	£ 156,000	£ 312,000	£ 187,000	£ 133,000	£ 111,000
2009	£ 130,000	£ 262,000	£ 156,000	£ 111,000	£ 93,000

### Strood - Average house prices (2009)

Post code		Detached	Semi	Terraced	Flat
ME2 4	No. of sales	3	22	18	6
	Average value	£ 318,333	£ 164,773	£ 146,861	£ 77,333
ME2 3	No. of sales	8	29	32	3
	Average value	£ 248,188	£ 154,878	£ 121,557	£ 96,000
ME2 2	No. of sales	4	39	62	15
	Average value	£ 181,875	£ 137,153	£ 136,635	£ 114,632

# Vision and masterplan elements

## A Vision for Strood Town Centre

The Masterplan vision for the future development of Strood Town Centre is:

**“A dynamic and high quality town centre that provides a range of services and facilities for residents, businesses, and visitors, is easily accessible to all, and is proud of its waterfront location and heritage”**

## Masterplan - an introduction

As outlined above, the context for preparing a Strood Town Centre masterplan is quite unique. A series of major development projects associated with the wider Medway Waterfront Regeneration Strategy are at advanced stages of planning, and offer the potential to bring substantial new investment and development confidence to the town. The masterplans for these sites have been the subject of consultation and are at various stages within the planning process. These major developments are embedded in the masterplan at their respective stages of approval, and form a key consideration in formulating an overarching spatial strategy.

Other planned major developments in the town centre away from the waterfront are also important considerations for the masterplan, with some large sites having been the subject of recent planning approvals or pre-application discussions with the council. These proposals demonstrate that the market for development in Strood is active and that demand, particularly for employment space, remains strong.

The challenge for the masterplan is to provide a spatial framework to enable:

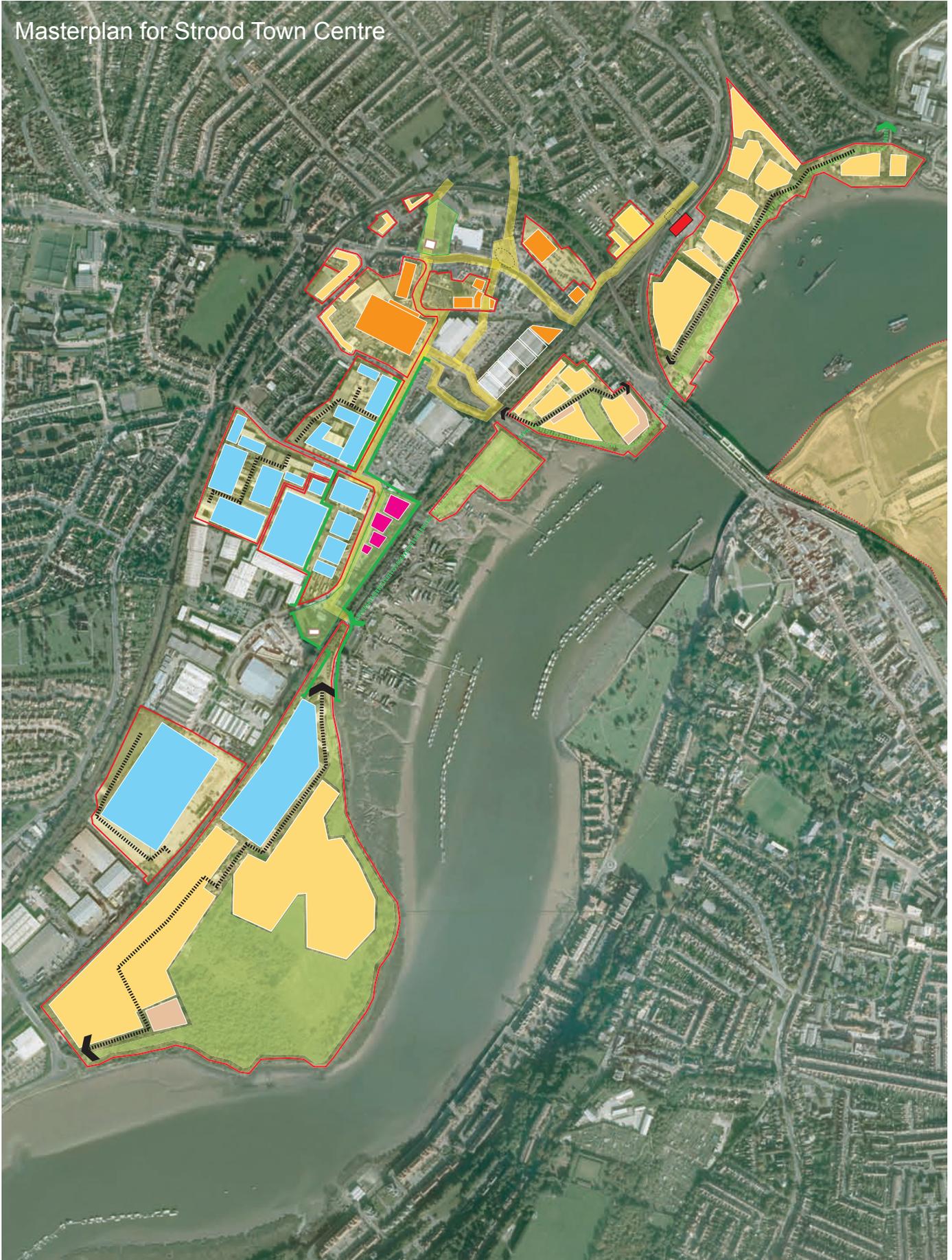
- The major waterfront developments to relate to and support the town centre
- New development in the town centre to contribute significantly towards improving the character and quality of the local environment
- New development and public realm improvements to transform the town centre into a place that will attract, support and benefit from housing growth in the area, whilst also better serving the needs of existing residents, businesses and visitors

The masterplan for Strood Town Centre is formulated as an overarching spatial strategy, and a series of discreet development sites and projects that together deliver that strategy.

The vision for Strood Town Centre will be delivered through the key elements of the masterplan.

- 
- A legend box with a grey background containing nine items, each with a colored square or line and a text label:
- Employment (light blue square)
  - Housing (yellow square)
  - Neighbourhood facilities (light orange square)
  - Retail (orange square)
  - Office / leisure (pink square)
  - Street improvements (yellow-green square)
  - Key green spaces (green square)
  - Pedestrian / cycle link (dashed green line)
  - New road connection (dashed black line)

# Masterplan for Strood Town Centre



# The masterplan - key elements

## Masterplan - key elements

### 1. Capitalise on major developments

To ensure that the planned housing-led development of major sites at Strood Riverside and Temple Waterfront, and future redevelopment of the Civic Centre are all well connected to the heart of the town centre to enable them to support the role and function of the centre.

### 2. Strengthen the role of Strood's town centre

To improve the retail 'circuit' in the town centre through better connections between the key anchor stores and the High Street, encouraging more linked trips by pedestrians from a single point of access / parking and utilising the redevelopment of the Tesco store to secure an improved retail frontage to the High Street / Commercial Road area. Secure better leisure offer in the heart that will contribute to the vitality of the centre.

### 3. Improve the appearance of the town centre

To ensure that redevelopment of sites within the Town Centre area contributes to improving the street scene and public realm improvements to key streets and spaces. A number of sites on prominent corners currently make a poor contribution to the street environment, together with key streets that are lined with surface parking. New development should provide buildings that address the street, with parking and servicing located to the rear.

### 4. Secure Strood as a working town

To protect, enhance and promote employment uses and opportunities in Strood to strengthen and grow the local economy, reduce the need to travel, and promote a sustainable community.

### 5. Managing the Medway – improving access and flood defences

To ensure that waterfront developments, and other areas affected by flooding contribute to providing broad improvements to the flood defences for the town. New development should also seek to recover and provide physical links to, and along the waterfront, contributing to an accessible and attractive river walk, to improve movement and well-being.

### 6. Rediscovering heritage assets – promoting distinctiveness

To recover the lost and hidden heritage of Strood and ensure that heritage assets contribute to a high quality townscape and strong sense of place.

### 7. Enabling improved access and movement

To ensure that all new development and streetscape improvements contribute to improving safer and more attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists, facilitate better public transport, and minimise the impact of private vehicles on the functioning of the town. Improvements to access for pedestrians to the rail station, and between key shopping facilities, should be prioritised.

### 8. Promoting open space and urban green space

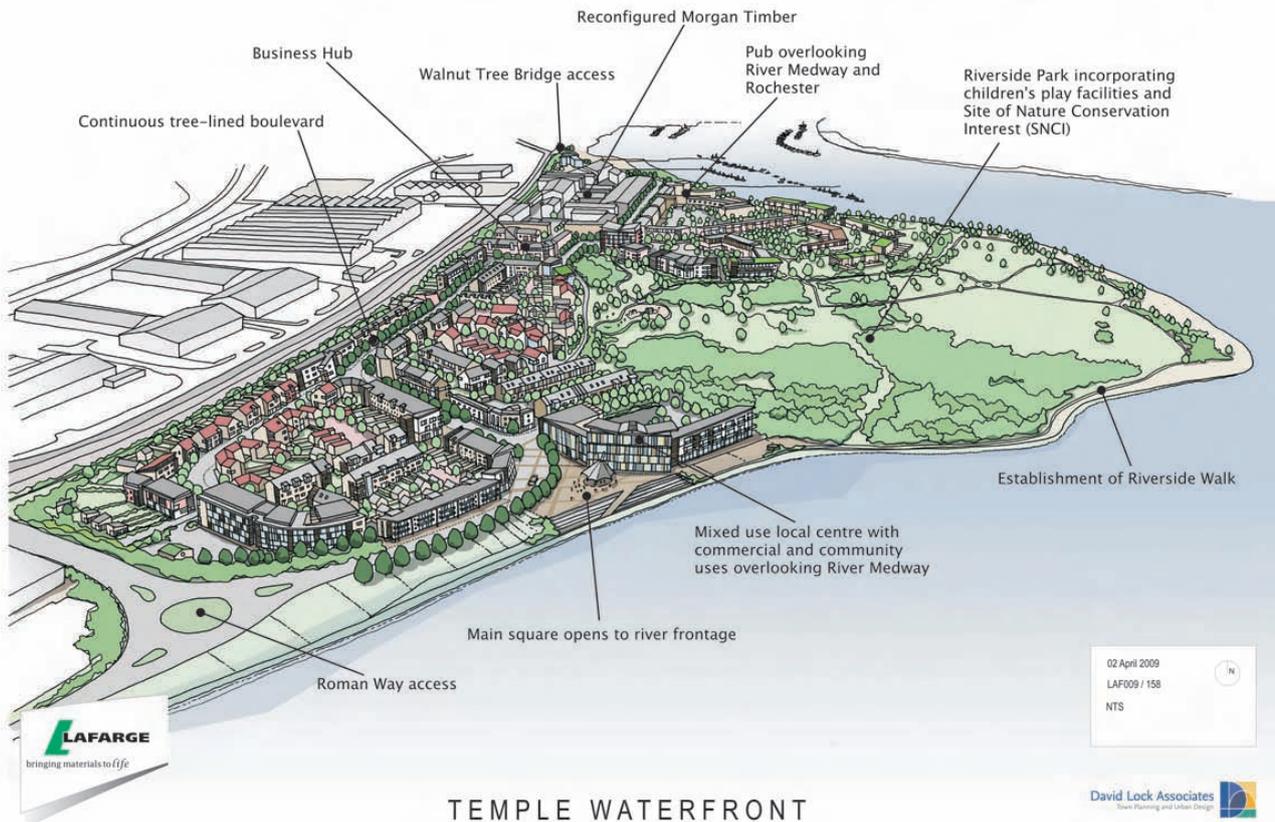
To ensure that the redevelopment of the waterfront also respects the ecological and recreational benefits of the area, and to encourage the waterfront landscape to inform landscape design and new and improved open spaces within the town centre.

## Capitalise on major developments

At the core of the masterplan for Strood Town Centre is an acceptance that major planned developments – mixed-use waterfront projects, large employment proposals, potential retail development, together with improved rail services – all have the potential to have a positive impact upon Strood Town Centre. It is essential that all new developments are all well connected to the heart of the town centre to enable them to support the role and function of the centre.

The remaining seven elements of the masterplan strategy all work towards this aim.

### ILLUSTRATIVE AERIAL PERSPECTIVE



### TEMPLE WATERFRONT

Temple Waterfront development (image: David Lock Associates)

# The masterplan - key elements

## Strengthen the role of Strood's Town Centre

Strood Town Centre is one of five traditional town centres in Medway, and is identified in the recent Medway Retail Study as an important District Centre, providing bulk convenience food shopping and comparison shopping facilities and services (NLP, 2009). A number of national multiples are represented including Tesco, Morrisons, Netto, B&Q, Matalan, Next and Iceland, alongside an Aldi store under construction, with units ranging in size from large retail-park stores to a range of High Street units. An open air market two days per week is well visited and adds to the character and vibrancy of the centre.

The Medway Retail Study also identified a number of weaknesses in Strood Town Centre, including a poor representation of A3 and A5 units, negative impact of busy roads on pedestrian movement, and a general feeling the centre is disjointed with poor linkages between different areas.

Future scope for increases in both comparison and convenience retailing are identified to 2021, over and above existing commitments. It is recognised, however, that much of the future capacity will need to be focused in Chatham if it is to compete as the main comparison shopping destination. With sizeable population growth identified in Strood through major residential-led waterfront development, the opportunity exists to capture increased local spend, consolidate and extend the service offer, and secure environmental improvements from retail development. The Medway Retail Study identifies a number of potential development opportunities, and includes 'Tesco Store and environs, Strood' as a priority.

The masterplan envisages new retail development focused on the High Street and immediate surroundings, supporting the future role of a redeveloped Tesco store on Commercial Road as a key anchor at the north-western corner of the retail circuit. Other opportunities are limited to this core area, with some infill / edge sites having potential for rounding-off development that could contribute to the street scene. The future improvement of the market on Commercial Road may support more permanent market structures, which could provide food / drink uses throughout the week, capitalising on strong pedestrian movement on Tolgate Lane, and improving the image of Commercial Road. Public realm improvements within the core area of High Street / Commercial Road / Knight Road / Tolgate Lane will be crucial in securing a better linked shopping experience for pedestrians, reducing vehicle movements, and encouraging people to spend time in the centre.

### Key sites / projects:

#### **Tesco Store**

Reconfiguration and expansion of store, to provide retail frontage to Knight Road / Commercial Road / High Street, with car parking beneath store level. Potential for residential development to rear as part of a comprehensive approach. Potential to improve the street environment at Knight Road / Commercial Road.

#### **High Street**

Recent vacancies in the High Street have often been short-term, with new occupiers trading within 6 months. The variety of unit sizes in the High Street should be capitalised upon, with further food and drink uses encouraged to provide a diverse centre that encourage shoppers to spend time in Strood.

#### **Tolgate Lane / Commercial Rd**

Improve the market environment through more permanent facilities and supporting small stores providing frontage to Commercial Rd and defining entry to Tolgate Lane. Relocation of car parking outside of core area may also reduce vehicle movements in the inner core and capture vehicles in peripheral parking sites.



...with its superb riverside sites, strategic location, maritime heritage, new university campus and town centre regeneration plans, Medway is well placed to emerge as an international city of learning, culture, tourism and enterprise.

Kent Thames Gateway Partnership



Artists impression of Commercial Road area improvements (image: SEW / MSA)

#### Other sites

Further small scale retail / leisure opportunities are identified at:

- Open air element of B&Q store, having potential for a new built form provide a key definition to the High Street / Station Road junction
- Station Road – car dealership
- Small scale retail and A3/A4 uses within the waterside

element of the Civic Centre redevelopment

#### Related strategy elements:

- Improve the appearance of the town centre
- Capitalise on major developments
- Enabling improved access and movement

# The masterplan - key elements

## Improve the appearance of the town centre

A series of recent studies have consistently identified the run-down appearance of Strood Town Centre as a concern. Feedback gained from the masterplan public consultation has confirmed that the image of the town is a key concern for residents, visitors and businesses also.

Whilst Strood does have a number of good quality buildings (many of them historic), and recent improvements have been made to some limited areas of streetscape, the overarching picture is one of:

- Extensive surface car parking providing poor street frontage
- Vehicle dominated streets that are not attractive to pedestrians or cyclists
- A number of town centre employment buildings that present a run-down appearance
- Empty buildings or underutilised sites at key 'gateway' locations
- Unregulated and extensive building and street signage

Redevelopment of sites within the Town Centre area must contribute to improving the street scene and provide financial contributions to public realm improvements to key streets and spaces. A number of sites on prominent corners currently make a poor contribution to the street environment, together with key streets that are lined with surface parking. New development should provide buildings that address the street, with parking and servicing located to the rear.

## Key sites / projects:

### General approach

Improvements to the appearance of the town centre will be secured through all future developments identified in the masterplan, through the use of urban design principles in the decision making process. Specific opportunities that should be prioritised to achieve this objective are:

### Cuxton Road / London Road corner site

Currently occupied by a petrol station and other business uses, this prominent site is underutilised and presents a negative image at a major junction / entry point to the town. Redevelopment for residential use above commercial ground floor offers potential for significant enhancement and definition to this boundary of the centre.

### Strood Rail Station

Planned improvements to the station will in the short term will provide a better arrival experience at Strood.

### Public Realm Improvements

Feasibility work relating to streetscape improvements in Strood is ongoing, and will explore options for traffic routing, alongside significant public realm enhancements. Progression of this work in the short term will be an important means of delivering improvements to the appearance and experience of the town centre.

### Related strategy elements:

- Capitalise on major developments
- Enabling improved access and movement



Important corner sites that currently present a poor frontage to the street

“ I totally agree that Strood Town Centre needs redeveloping. Being a Strood citizen for nearly nearly 40 years (most of my life) I really feel that Strood Town Centre, especially the High Street area, needs to be put at the heart of the community again. ”

Resident feedback



New development on key gateway sites can help define the Town Centre

# The masterplan - key elements

## Secure Strood as a working town

Strood has traditionally provided a wealth of employment uses within the town centre area, particularly focused around waterfront locations and the established industrial area along Knight Road. Recent relocations, including Medway Council's departure from the Civic Centre, alongside other major industrial closures on Priory Road have reduced the employment base in the town.

Recent studies examining the future employment requirements and trends in Medway identify the scarcity of suitable employment land within urban areas, partially as a result of allocations for the mixed-use development within wider housing led regeneration strategies (State of Medway Report, Economy and Employment, 2009).

Strood has retained a large core area of employment land within the heart of the town, presenting a major opportunity to provide for future demand, to strengthen and grow the local economy, reduce the need to travel, and promote a sustainable community.

A number of key sites have recently been the subject of planning approvals for major employment development

- Former Alloy Wheels site, Priory Road
- Gazeley development, accessed from Roman Way
- Employment component of Temple Waterfront development

Knight Road currently performs an important role as a 'spine' for the employment area. The development of Temple Waterfront in the short and medium term will place a new emphasis on Knight Road as street that will need to link Temple Waterfront to the heart of the town centre. Securing a change in the character and role of Knight Road is therefore a key element of the masterplan. This can be considered in two sections.

### Key sites / projects:

#### **Knight Road – Commercial Road to Priory Road**

Redevelopment of the Tesco store, together with potential redevelopment of the employment area to the south will secure an improved building line defining the street, and contribute to public realm improvements. Some buildings of good industrial character could be considered for retention in redevelopment. All car parking and servicing should be located to the rear of the buildings, providing a spatial buffer to the existing housing.

#### **Knight Road – Priory Road to Temple Manor**

The masterplan identifies this as a key hub of activity and movement, with significant landscape improvements creating a quality environment for business and pedestrian movement. The concept of 'Strood Business Park' is exactly that – it's business uses located within an urban park. The opening up of Temple Manor will provide a focal point in the landscape, and new business development of 3/4 storeys will define a human scale to the street.

#### **Related strategy elements:**

- Capitalise on major developments
- Improve appearance of the town centre
- Enabling improved access and movement



Existing employment buildings tend to have a poor relationship with the street



Upper Knight Road - new employment development

# The masterplan - key elements

## Managing the Medway – improving access and flood defences

The Medway is a key part of Strood's heritage, and has historically been a locational factor for some industries in the town. Unlike other Medway towns, Strood is relatively isolated from its waterfront, with the elevated railway forming a major physical barrier between the town and river.

The Medway is a major environmental asset for the town, and has more recently been a key driver for residential-led waterside development. It is also a major constraint upon development, with tidal flood risk events predicted to increase in the future requiring improved strategic flood defences for the town.

The key waterfront developments – Temple Waterfront, Strood Civic Centre, and Strood Riverside – all have site masterplans that seek to maximise the local relationship with the river to the benefit of the community. All new development should seek to recover and provide physical links to, and along the waterfront, contributing to an accessible and attractive river walk, to improve movement and well-being. Waterfront developments, and other areas affected by flooding will need to contribute to providing broad improvements to the flood defences for the town.

The strategy outlined in the masterplan seeks to unite the waterfront developments with a new waterfront walk, and draw the benefits of the waterfront environment inland, using the landscape improvements to Knight Road and the Commercial Road / High Street to establish a clearer sense of place and encourage access to and use of the waterfront.



Concept image - Strood Civic Centre

## Key sites / projects:

### Major waterfront developments

- Temple Waterfront, Strood Civic Centre, and Strood Riverside

### Riverside walk

Connecting to strategic Medway Valley network, and providing a new high quality north-south link within the town. The route of the riverside walk involves a number of land ownerships and will require acquisitions / negotiations.

### Flood defence policy

The Council and the Environment Agency are commissioning a detailed study to examine the options for securing improved flood defences.

### Related strategy elements:

- Capitalise on major developments
- Enabling improved access and movement

“ A continuous footpath (and cycleway) along the river front is a not-to-be-missed opportunity. ”

Resident feedback



Concept image - Strood riverside boardwalk (Image: SEW / MSA)

# The masterplan - key elements

## Rediscovering heritage assets – promoting distinctiveness

The masterplan seeks to recover the lost and hidden heritage of Strood and ensure that heritage assets contribute to a high quality townscape and strong sense of place. Strood's most important historic building – the Temple Manor – forms a key component of the wider strategy to achieve better connections between the north and south areas of the town through improvements to Knight Road.

The Temple Manor, a Grade 1 listed building, is at present largely isolated from public view, hidden amongst various industrial uses. The masterplan identifies the opportunity to open up the wider setting of Temple Manor, allowing it to form a key landmark on Knight Road, and a marker of the entrance to the Temple Waterfront development.

### Key sites / projects:

#### Temple Manor

Temple Manor could form the southern edge of 'Strood Business Park' landscape. Delivering this element of the plan will require investment in land acquisition and business relocation.

#### Related strategy elements:

- Capitalise on major developments
- Enabling improved access and movement



“ Temple Manor is a hidden jewel that needs to be in a better setting. ”

Resident feedback



Concept image - Strood Business Park - delivering a new urban street

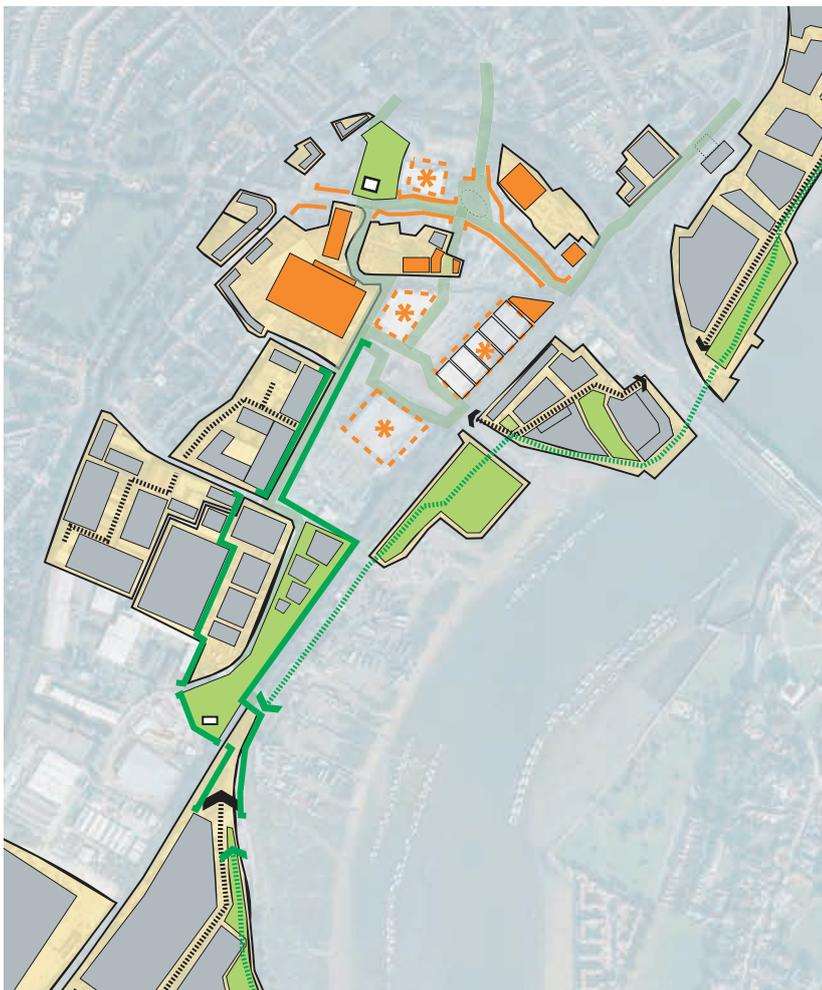
### Enabling improved access and movement

Movement in Strood Town Centre has been identified as an important issue through the masterplan public consultation, and the emerging Core Strategy identifies predicted further traffic growth as a result of development in Medway over the plan period.

Ongoing studies are examining the potential for road reconfiguration to reduce the impact of traffic congestion in Strood Town Centre, as identified in Action 2.3 of the Local Transport Plan. Any major changes to the road network will be progressed through this process.

Infrastructure investment in the short term should be focused on improvements to the street environment in the key movement corridors:

- High Street
- Commercial Road
- Station Road
- Knight Road



	Retail (proposed)
	Existing major retail
	Key retail frontage

Core retail area - public realm improvements will link stores and services

# The masterplan - key elements

## Promoting open space and urban green space

To ensure that the redevelopment of the waterfront also respects the ecological and recreational benefits of the area, and to encourage the waterfront landscape to inform landscape design and new and improved open spaces within the town centre.

Strood enjoys a distinctive location within the landscape of the Medway Valley, providing good access to wider regional green and blue open space networks. However, at a local level the Medway Countryside and Open Space Strategy (2007) identified Strood Town Centre as having a below standard level of open space per unit of population. Feedback gained from the masterplan public consultation confirmed this deficiency with many respondents identifying a lack of usable open space.

Within the context of future growth within Strood town centre, the opportunity exists to

- Create new urban green spaces within major developments, including equipped areas of play
- Open up new landscape corridors, enhancing legibility and sense of place, and encouraging pedestrian movement and well-being
- Create a new waterfront square at the Civic Centre site as a focal point for new commercial and leisure uses
- Establish a new waterside eco-park on the site across Jane's Creek
- Deliver significant improvements to open space at Temple Waterfront as part of the area development
- Create a linear public space around Knight Road, anchored by Temple Manor and its parkland setting
- Unify all of the above into one continued landscape network as a riverfront walk



The current waterside environment is poor quality with limited access - but the potential is huge

“ There should be more green open spaces and facilities for young people and the population as a whole. ”

Resident feedback

### Open space network - proposed enhancements



# Schedule - development capacity

## Strood Town Centre - development capacity

A high level assessment of the development capacity of sites within the masterplan area has been undertaken. Where sites benefit from recent planning permissions or adopted planning guidance the established capacities are carried forward.

A number of projects that relate to public realm works and improvements are not included in this schedule as they do not create additional floorspace. The final column identifies an expected phase during which the project will be delivered, based upon 0-5yrs, 6-10yrs, 11-15yrs (short, medium, and long).

					Development capacity			
Site Ref	Site name	Location	Site area (ha)	Residential units	Employment (m2)	Retail / leisure (m2)	Other (m2)	
SMP1	Gazeley	Knight Road (south)	5.5	0	25,745	0	0	
SMP2	Temple Waterront	Land between Roman Way / Knight Road	27.2	620	10,300	1,800	200	
SMP3a	Civic Centre (1)	Esplanade Road	3.4	398	2,000	2,000	560	
SMP3b	Civic Centre (2)	Land to south of Jane's Creek	1.7	0	0	0	Park	
SMP4	Strood Riverside	Canal Road	9.3	580	tbc	500	0	
SMP5	Former Hobourne site	Knight Road / Priory Road	2.9	0	35,000	0	0	
SMP6	Former Alloy Wheels site	Priory Road	3.6	0	16,150	0	0	
SMP7	Knight Road (opp. Morrisons)	Knight Road	2.2	0	27,500	0	0	
SMP8	Tesco	Cuxton Road / Commercial Road	2.7	20	0	8,175	tbc	
SMP9	Corner London Road / Cuxton Road	London Road / Cuxton Road	0.7	60	1,000	1,000	0	
SMP10	Corner Bryant Road / Gun Lane	Bryant Road / Gun Lane	0.14	30	0	0	0	
SMP11	Gun Lane	Gun Lane	0.2	35	0	0	0	
SMP12	Strood Market	Commercial Road	1	0	0	1,000	0	
SMP13	Aldi Supermarket	Rear of High Street	1	0	0	1,881	0	
SMP14	Car dealership	Corner Station Road / High Street	0.2	20	0	200	0	
SMP15	Bellway Homes	Station Road / Marsh St	0.4	91	555	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>62.1</b>	<b>1,854</b>	<b>118,250</b>	<b>16,556</b>	<b>760</b>	



Nottingham University - simple buildings in a landscaped street setting

Current status of development	Phase (Short / Medium / Long)
Planning permission granted subject to completion of legal agreement	Short
Planning permission granted subject to completion of legal agreement	Short / Medium
Council owned site. Preliminary development studies are ongoing	Medium
Council owned site. Access and land stability issues make development unfeasible	Medium
Site development brief adopted as SPG. Planning permission granted for flood defence wall	Medium
Site currently occupied - likely to come forward for development	Medium
Site cleared. Planning permission granted subject to completion of legal agreement	Short
Site currently occupied. Previous pre-application discussions regarding development	Short / Medium
Land assembly underway. Pre-application discussions have been held	Short
Site in various land ownerships. Could be delivered in stages.	Short / Medium
Site currently in business use.	Short / Medium
Site currently in business use. Adjacent to Grade II listed building	Short / Medium
Subject to further detailed study of market requirements	Short / Medium
Planning permission granted. Development commenced	Short
No discussion of redevelopment has taken place. Existing business use on site.	Medium / Long
Planning permission granted. Development commencing	Short

# Implementation

## Delivering the Masterplan

The masterplan for Strood town centre sets out a framework for change that will help to inform the Council's planning policy for the area, which is anticipated to be an area specific policy for Strood Town Centre within the Core Strategy DPD.

The Core Strategy will provide the key spatial planning policy document for Medway, and will guide both development and investment decision making over the next 15 years. An area specific policy for regeneration of Strood in the Core Strategy will provide a powerful tool for implementation of the masterplan vision and objectives.

Progress in delivering development on key sites within the masterplan will be critical in terms of confidence building in the market, and delivering a step change in the perception of Strood. These key sites will also be required to make significant contributions towards wider infrastructure and public realm improvements to ensure that new development is well integrated with, and supports the economy of the town centre, as identified in the masterplan.

The role of the Council in delivering the masterplan will extend beyond a statutory planning function, as the Council is a key partner in all three of the largest development projects – Temple Waterfront, Strood Riverside, and Strood Civic Centre.

## Taking forward the projects - key actions

### 1. Public realm improvements and highways works

Delivering improvements to the streetscene in the heart of the town centre will be fundamental in changing perceptions of those who use and may invest in Strood. The following should be prioritised:

- securing the funding allocated from DCLG to improve infrastructure in Strood and progressing the High Street / Commercial Road improvements
- detailed feasibility study of opening up Temple Manor and improvements to surrounding area
- detailed feasibility study of waterfront walk
- progression of transport improvements through the Local Transport Plan Process

### 2. Secure progress on delivering key sites

Many of the larger projects have slowed down in the recent economic climate, with housing led regeneration projects amongst the most affected. Continued partnership working with central government agencies including the Housing and Communities Agency and Environment Agency to secure necessary assistance in delivering progress on the ground will be essential in the short term. Many of the wider town centre improvements will either flow directly from (in terms of financial contributions) or benefit from the additional market from this growth.

### 3. A pro-active approach to the heart of Strood

A great deal of the potential for change resides in a series of relatively small, discreet projects. Developments such as the key corner sites in and around the town centre can be brought forward on an individual basis in the short / medium term and should be encouraged through a flexible approach to development management.



# Appendix - site reference plan



