

Chatham Centre Design Code

SPD

Medway Council
BPTW
June 2024



About this document

Medway Council was selected as one of twenty five places in England to develop a local design code as part of the **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)** Pathfinder Programme.

This document has been developed in collaboration with a wider consultant team, led by **BPTW**, providing urban design, design coding and architectural services with a range of team support, including, **Create Streets** on community engagement, **HTA, Landscape** on public realm and landscape, **Urban Movement** on transport and highways and **Lyall Bills & Young Architects** on testing the design code.



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Compliance Checklist
Baseline Analysis
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1.1 Design Code

Design codes have been used for a long time to define rules and expectations about built form – from buildings and streets to entire settlements – to identify how future development will look and function.

In recent years, design codes have been an important tool in the planning system to ensure the quality of development on larger scale planning applications, usually led and submitted by landowners and developers to the local authority. However, local authorities are now being encouraged by the Government to develop design codes that are created in collaboration with local communities. To facilitate this, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) released the National Model Design Code, which defines the process to assist local authorities.

The National Model Design Code, or NMDC, defines design codes as a collection of design principles which help local authorities and communities to define what good looks like in their area. It states that a design code should set out exactly what is expected by developers and others in a clear and visual manner, which will lead to more beautiful and sustainable places.

Therefore, the NMDC states that local authorities, in collaboration with their communities, establish the design principles that define the exact parameters for those who deliver change must follow to create more successful places.



Fig.01 National Model Design Code Part 1 - The Coding Process Cover Page



Fig.02 National Model Design Code Part 2 - Guidance Notes Cover Page

Design guidance vs. design code

The general term 'guidance' refers to both design guidance and design coding. Design guidance typically is more general and requires interpretation, as often is found in our discretionary planning system. Design guidance may state: 'New development should be contextual to existing, adjacent heights'. Design coding aims to be more specific, binary and measurable, and might instead state: 'New development must be a minimum of 3 storeys and a maximum of 4 storeys in height'.

Design parameters within a design code aim to be more specific, which adds certainty for local authorities, communities, developers and others in delivering expectations on development that is greener, more sustainable and fits into the local context. With this certainty, the planning process should be quicker enabling new development to come forwards sooner, facilitating regeneration in places such as Chatham Centre.

1.2 Design Code Approach

National Model Design Code (NMDC) Process

The NMDC defines a seven-step process that is defined by Analysis, Vision and Code stages, which will help to develop a local design code for the centre of Chatham:

> Analysis Stage 1A: Scoping

Scoping refers to agreeing on the geographic area that the design code will cover as well as the policy areas it will address.

> Analysis Stage 1B: Baseline

Baseline addresses the analysis of the place that will need to be undertaken to underpin the code and inform its design principles and design guidance and coding.

> Vision Stage 2A: Design Vision

The Design Vision sets out an overall vision for the area, as established within local authority policy. The vision will extend to a series of Area Types, or places with similar characteristics.

> Vision Stage 2B: Coding Plan

The Coding Plan maps out the Area Types addressing the area covered by the design code.

> Vision Stage 2C: Masterplanning

Masterplanning refers to areas where a greater vision can be established by working with adjoining strategic sites (and their corresponding landowners and developers).

> Code State 3A: Guidance for Area Types

Guidance for Area Types refers to the design guidance and design coding that relates to each specific Area Type.

> Code Stage 3B: Code Wide Guidance

Code Wide Guidance refers to design policy, guidance and design coding that relates across the entire area of the design code boundary.

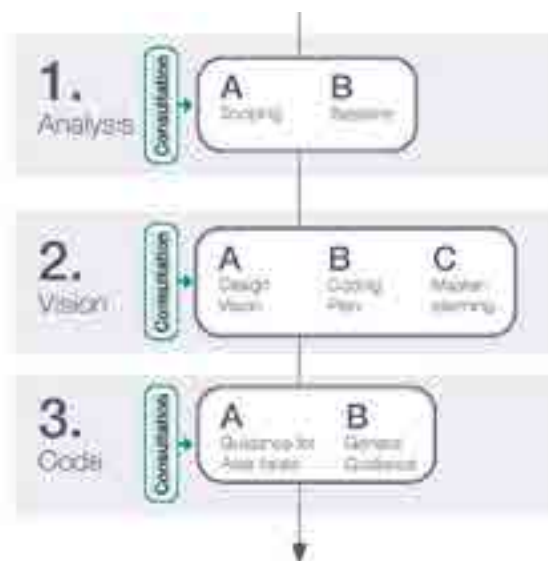


Fig.03 The seven-step coding process addressing Analysis, Vision and Code

The NMDC embeds a series of place characteristics from the National Design Guide illustrated within a wheel. These ten characteristics of a well-designed place form an important foundation to guide the possible coverage of a local design code. These characteristics are defined and detailed in the National Design Guide and provide an overarching framework for design, addressing Context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and life span.

A range of these characteristics typically form the basis for a design code.



Fig.04 The wheel of 10 Characteristics of Well Designed Places

1.3 Design Code

Chatham and the DLUHC Pathfinder Programme

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) launched the Pathfinder Programme following the release of the NMDC and after completing the Testing Programme, where 14 local authorities were selected to test the draft design code process locally in a wide range of contexts.

The Pathfinder Programme was developed for a range of communities to develop exemplar design codes and design coding processes, which could be used by other areas to follow.

Following a competitive process, DLUHC announced in mid-2022 that Medway Council was selected to develop an exemplary design code for Chatham, along with 24 other authorities and neighbourhood planning groups.

Medway Council identified the centre of Chatham as the preferred area to develop a local design code. This would contribute to the urban regeneration of Medway's primary centre whilst identifying the expected quality of development to better reflect local character and to enhance the natural environment.

Throughout the programme, DLUHC provided support to Medway Council officers, which included:

- > One-to-one monthly sessions to guide the design code process
- > Collective round table sessions with other Pathfinder teams
- > Design review/ workshop sessions to provide independent advice, and
- > Thematic workshops on critical topics for design coding

The draft design code developed at the conclusion of the Pathfinder Programme formed the basis for this SPD document.

1.4 How to Use This Document

Document Structure

The Chatham Centre Design Code has been developed by following the NMDC process based on Analysis, Vision and Code stages. However, the document is structured to ensure the required information is upfront within a more concise and visual design code document with a simple overall narrative, whilst other additional information is located within an appendix

The introduction section of the document includes the findings from the Baseline stage information, whilst the subsequent vision includes corresponding design coding at each scale, which begins with the area-wide vision with design coding, followed by the more place-specific Area Type visions with associated design coding. The document concludes with a series of masterplanning areas.

This structure is detailed below:

> Introduction

The Introduction gives the context to the development of the design code, approach to community engagement and a summary of Analysis 1A Scoping and Analysis 1B Baseline findings, whilst additional Analysis detail located in the Appendix.

> The Chatham 2050 Vision

The design code focuses on an area-wide vision for the Centre of Chatham for the year 2050, illustrating the Stage 2A Design Vision. Projecting to the year 2050 can help to demonstrate transformational change, often delivered through a series of stages and interrelated developments,

such as down grading and enhancing a busy street into a beautiful urban avenue whilst the local transport network is enhanced, which then may reduce local traffic demands. As stated within local policy, Chatham is the city centre for Medway and the 2050 vision illustrates how the current town centre can be transformed into a city centre. It bases this transformation on five key themes:

- Healthy & Connected City
- Heritage Maritime City
- Green Sustainable City
- Vibrant City of Culture
- City to Learn and Grow

> Area-Wide Guidance

This vision is followed by the Area-Wide Guidance (Coding Stage 3B), which is set out in four sections, corresponding to five of the ten Characteristics of a Well-Designed Place: Movement, Public Spaces & Nature, Built Form and Uses.

The Area-Wide Guidance provides design principles and corresponding guidance to deliver the Chatham 2050 vision. It also underpins the Area-Type Guidance below.

> Coding Plan and Area-Type Guidance

This section introduces a Coding Plan for the whole of Medway Council, using some of the example Area Types set within the NMDC. This highlights Chatham Centre as the only City Centre Area Type, as Chatham is defined as a City Centre in local policy.

A Chatham Centre Coding Plan is then developed to highlight a range of bespoke Chatham Centre Area Types with a corresponding design vision for each (NMDC Vision Stage 2B-Coding Plan) that is based on the local characteristics related to street hierarchy:

- Chatham Cross
- Waterfront
- Urban Avenues
- Streets and Spaces
- Residential Streets, and
- Green Edge

Each Area Type section concludes with specific design coding to address Movement, Public Space and Nature, Built Form and Use (NMDC Code Stage 3A – Guidance for Area Types). This provides detailed design coding that must be addressed for any sites located within each Area Type boundary.

To identify a site's area type, refer to Section 3.2 Chatham Area Type and Coding Plan in the Area Type Guidance Chapter of this design code. For further detail and a coding plan with lower opacity colours that may assist in locating sites within Chatham Centre, refer to Section 6.1 Chatham Centre Coding Plan in the appendix.

Applicants must create a 3D massing model that represents the particular design code requirements that addresses the relevant guidance applicable to their site.

> Masterplanning

There are four Masterplanning Areas identified in locations where a coordinated approach across sites will enable a transformational change. Each masterplan area defines a vision for the area that will deliver a series of new or enhanced routes linking to High Street and a series of public spaces. The high-level vision is illustrated in an aerial artist sketch and concept plan (NMDC Vision Stage 3C – Masterplanning). A series of corresponding Parameter Plans identify routes and spaces required to deliver each masterplan area vision and resulting blocks and plots that are colour-coded to identify the corresponding Area Type Guidance that must be followed.

> Next Steps

Whilst the Chatham Centre Design Code aims to identify a comprehensive vision and the associated design guidance required to deliver it, additional, wider work is required to facilitate this transformational change for Chatham. A series of initial next steps are identified in the concluding section of the document.

Supporting documents:

> The Appendix

Additional information is located in an appendix, which gives additional information for each coding stage (Analysis, Vision and Code) and additional information on community engagement that has supported the development of the design code.

> Compliance Checklist

A Compliance Checklist is available in PDF and Excel format to enable Planning applicants to respond how their proposal:

- Contributes/ delivers on the five key themes underpinning the 2050 Chatham Vision, where appropriate
- Adheres to Area-Wide Guidance, where appropriate
- Adheres to Area Type Guidance, or how the proposal justifies variances, and
- Adheres to Masterplanning Parameter Plans, where sites are located within a Masterplanning Area

Using the Design Code

Users focused on public space in Chatham

There is likely a wide range of people and groups who will use the Chatham Centre Design Code. The widest group includes those who contribute to the transformation of Chatham leading towards the 2050 vision.

These users will primarily focus on the public streets and spaces, whose focus may include one of more areas such as landscape and public realm; highways, movement and public transport; meanwhile, temporary uses and events; public art and performances; reanimating and engaging the River Medway; and other wider objectives that can range from tackling loneliness to promoting biodiversity.

These users likely will focus on the Chatham 2050 Vision and the series of key themes to guide their work:

- Healthy & Connected City
- Heritage Maritime City
- Vibrant City of Culture
- City to Learn and Grow
- Green Sustainable City

Certain design code sections will likely be more relevant to some groups than others. For example, future street improvements will need to reference and adhere to Movement and Public Space and Nature design coding – including Area-Wide Guidance and Area Type Guidance, and possibly Masterplanning area parameters plans depending on their geographic focus. Others might instead simply engage with a specific area of the higher-level Area Guidance, such as contributing to the

Meanwhile Use strategy as defined under Built Form.

Furthermore, the focus of Officers, Members, community groups, amenity groups and others can also contribute to the future new and enhanced streets and public spaces, as defined in the Masterplanning Areas as well as the future public realm that may be associated with future development.

As part of this, Medway Council will be focusing on a Governance and Delivery strategy and will be developing processes and approaches for individuals and groups to engage with the Council to help to contribute to the delivery of the overall vision established within the Chatham Centre Design Code.

Users focused on private land in Chatham

Other users will be those who primarily focus on developing on private land who engage in the planning, design and delivery of new buildings. This includes landowners, developers, their design teams; Medway Development Company; design review panels; Planning Officers and related Officers contributing their professional advice (such as Highways, Landscape, Conservation, etc); Members, including those on the Planning Committee; community members and groups that comment on Planning submissions; amongst others.

Landowners, developers and their design teams will be responsible for fully embracing the design code and responding to the 2050 Chatham Vision key themes, adhering to Area Wide Guidance, applicable Area Type Guidance and Masterplanning

area parameter plans, where land holdings sit within one or more of the defined areas. They will be responsible for completing a compliance checklist to demonstrate adherence to design coding or highlight areas of divergence with design justification, which would need to positively respond to the spirit of the design code or stated rationale.

Others that respond or engage with Planning proposals will be able to use the design code to guide their work to ensure new development is beautiful, sustainable and reflects the local character and preferences. As the design code does not codify all requirements for new development, there remains an important element of discretion to guide development to deliver high quality places.

How to read the Design code (As a developer or landowner)

Identify

- > Use the Chatham Coding Plan (refer to Ch 3.2) to
- > Identify location of site and which Area type (or possibly which range of Area Types) apply.
- > Identify the Character Area within the Area Type, where applicable, that addresses their site (under the respective area type in Ch 3). This will help guide the details of the design response for the developer or landowner design team to address Context and Identity, from the 10 characteristics of a well-designed place from the National Design Guide. Additional information is located in the Appendix detailing qualities of each Character Area.
- > Identify if the site is located in one of the four Masterplanning Areas (refer to Ch 4).

Analyse

- > Study and positively respond to the context through the baseline and Character Area analysis (more detailed analysis for Area Wide and Area Type analysis can be found in the Appendix)

Vision

- > Understand the five key themes within the vision for Chatham 2050 (refer Ch 2.1) and identify how your proposal could promote each of these themes.
- > Understand the Area Wide and specific Area Type vision for the site's location and identify principles to guide the developer or landowner design team.
- > If your site is located within one of the four Masterplanning Areas, understand the overall

vision for the Masterplanning Area and ensure any required new or enhanced routes and spaces will need to be incorporated into your proposal.

Code

- > Understand, and follow where appropriate, the guidance and coding within the Area Wide Guidance (Ch 2.2 – 2.5). Note that whilst the Built Form and Use sections will directly apply, some or all of the guidance in coding with the Movement and Public Space & Nature sections will likely be relevant to your site.
- > Comply with the specific Area Type Guidance that applies to your site, addressing Movement, Public Space & Nature, Built Form and Use sections (Ch 3.1 – 3.8)
- > If in a Masterplanning Area, comply with any path, street or space requirements and other guidance that may take priority over the Area Type Guidance. Where identified, respond appropriately landmark sites if located within your land area.

Design Review

- > Agree with Medway Council at an early Pre-application stage, the likely requirements for design review, including the likely number of reviews (typically a minimum of one design review) and at which stage this will be required.

Code Breaking: Exemplary Design Process

The Chatham Centre Design Code establishes a vision and identifies the design coding required to deliver it. For development sites, the design coding within the Area Type Guidance is specific, measurable and binary. The design coding rules have been created to deliver contextual and high-quality places that contribute to the wider place. These rules are common rules that are expected to be followed as part of the development management process. As these have been agreed and embedded into the Planning process, adhering to the rules will also speed up the Planning process and associated Planning outcomes and permissions.

However, in exceptional circumstances, it may be beneficial to allow for limited code-breaking where one or more design code rules may be purposefully stretched or broken to deliver exemplary design.

Examples of distinctive buildings that break the common rules can be found throughout our towns, cities and villages. The tower element of the Brook Theatre celebrated the original civic use of the building by breaking the low-rise townscape to draw attention to the civic use and location.

A more contemporary example is the Command of the Oceans building where the distinctive angle of the roof rises above the immediate context and dark vertical cladding purposefully contrasts with the horizontal white weatherboarding of adjacent sheds, which references the historic context yet purposefully uses contrast in colour and roof angle to introduce a contemporary element to its design composition. Each example demonstrates a wilful and individual design whilst promoting a place-

specific and contextually-driven high-quality design response.

An Exemplary Design Process (EDP) has been defined as part of the Chatham Centre Design Code to promote exemplary design in certain locations, which would enable a design proposal to break certain design code rules in order to deliver exemplary design. Whilst landmark locations, key corners and vista stops have been identified and embedded within the design code, other sites may also be proposed/ chosen to pursue the EDP, but each proposal must undergo a special design process, based on a robust and considered design review process.

The Exemplary Design Process

Where schemes seek to diverge from the Chatham Centre Design Code, applicants will be required to demonstrate an Exemplary Design Process (EDP) to be agreed through a PPA. The exemplary design process must include **at least two** successful design review panel meetings, as set out below. Examples of divergences or 'code breaking' that would trigger an exemplary design review process would include height that diverges from the range of permissible heights for the sites relevant area type or the expression of scale within elevations of an area type, among many other potential deviations.

What is a successful design review process?

- > The applicant must engage with Medway Council's preferred independent design review service provider; currently Design South-East. Reviews undertaken by alternative service



Fig.05 The Brook Theatre in Chatham is a cherished local landmark



Fig.06 Command of the Oceans in The Historic Dockyard Chatham is a contemporary landmark that sits well within its context

- > Providers or design review panels **will not be given weight in planning decisions** made by Medway Council. This is because the preferred provider brings deep understanding of the Chatham Centre Design Code and extensive familiarity and experience with the local context, that garners confidence from Medway Council's Planning Service and Planning Committee. A rigorous panel member selection / induction process tailored to individual projects is carried out by Design South-East for all reviews.
- > Costs for design review(s) will be borne by the applicant and will be set by the design review service provider, who will make all the necessary arrangements for design review meetings to take place within an agreed time frame and in collaboration with the applicant and Medway Council Planning Service.
- > There will be a 5-person panel required for the first review in all cases and then, at the discretion of the service provider, a '3' or '5' person panel for the second and any subsequent reviews. The panel will consist of experts from across a range of relevant disciplines acting as a multi-disciplinary panel, selected according to the emphasis of issues, typology of scheme and / or nature of the review required. Disciplines might for example include but not be limited to Architecture, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, Street Design, Conservation, Environmental Sustainability, Transport & Movement etc.

How should divergence from the code be presented?

The applicant must set out for the first review:

- > Which specific aspects / parameters of the design

code are proposed to be 'broken', with details of the proposed layout, form, scale, height & massing, proportions etc to illustrate how the proposal deviates from the code requirements.

- > The rationale/justification for breaking the code on design grounds, taking into consideration:
 - Townscape and visual impact analysis / assessment, demonstrated through a range of agreed strategic, high, medium and low-level views (refer to Area-Wide Guidance - Built Form Section, page 56-60 of the Chatham Centre Design Code)
 - Relationship with surrounding / neighbouring buildings, streets and spaces, demonstrated through a full set of plans, sections, street elevation drawings and 3D models.
 - Daylight/sunlight studies of internal and external spaces demonstrating impact on neighbouring buildings and spaces.
- > Descriptions of how divergence from the code translates into an exceptional overall design proposal and responds positively to the spirit of the design code and to the five themes within the 2050 Chatham Vision, articulated within the Chatham Centre Design Code.

How will the panel's assessment inform decision-making?

- > Panel reports will clearly state the panel's view of compliance / non-compliance with the code and will then suggest key recommendations that will need to be addressed through further design development and for review in subsequent design panel meeting(s). Timing of the second & subsequent reviews will be advised by Medway Council Planning Service based on pre-app and

related discussions/PPA with the applicant.

- > A RAG (red, amber, green) scheme will be used at the second review to monitor the design team's response to each of the key recommendations. For clarity a full set of green scores will indicate a fully successful response. Any red scores will automatically trigger a further follow-up review, and any amber scores will be at the discretion of Medway Council Planning Service as to whether a further design panel meeting will be required.
- > As the design develops and at the second design review, further key recommendations relating to elevational treatment, materials and detailing among other more detailed matters may be introduced. This is to ensure the highest design quality proposals that break with the requirements of the code are fully articulated at varying scales / levels of detail, regardless of whether reserved matters or further condition discharge applications will be required. An exemplary design process and exemplary design quality outcome is required of all schemes that seek to exceed or vary the requirements of the Chatham Centre Design Code.
- > The decision as to whether the applicant has demonstrated a successful design process and exemplary design quality outcome that breaks the code in a way that justifiably contributes to Chatham Centre with an exemplary response to context and design across the full range of interdisciplinary concerns, will rest with Medway Council who will draw on the panel's recommendations.

Note: DSE is a registered charity in England. Their independent design review panels act in an advisory capacity to support the delivery of design quality across Chatham.

1.5 Public Engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement has been embedded within the design code process. As set out within the NMDC, when preparing design codes, communities need to be involved at each stage of the process. With regular engagement from initial baseline information through to the final draft design code, the Chatham Centre Design Code aims to reflect local views on what Chatham should look like in the future and how it can function better for a wider range of people whilst also being a more healthy, sustainable, safe, and beautiful place.

Four key groups have been engaged with the design code process at each stage:

1. Local community

A digital platform was chosen to reach as many people as possible, whilst face-to-face events were also held to seek views and feedback from those who are less tech savvy or do not have online access. These in-person events were planned on weekends in busy locations, such as at the Pentagon Centre.

2. Key stakeholders

A series of small group workshops and one-to-one sessions were organised to engage with a range of key stakeholders, such as youth groups, amenity groups, landowners and community organisations, to seek their views.

3. Members

Members sessions were organised to brief Members on the design code approach, seek feedback on local issues and opportunities, identify views on the short to longer term vision for Chatham, and to share rules of the design code and discuss how it will be delivered.

4. Officers

A range of smaller Officer group sessions to wider Officer workshops and themed focused groups sessions contributed to baseline information, overall vision and feedback to guide the design coding.

The overall public and stakeholder engagement, along with contributions from Members and Officers at each design code process aims to demonstrate what is locally 'provably popular', reflecting local views and preferences to guide Chatham's future.

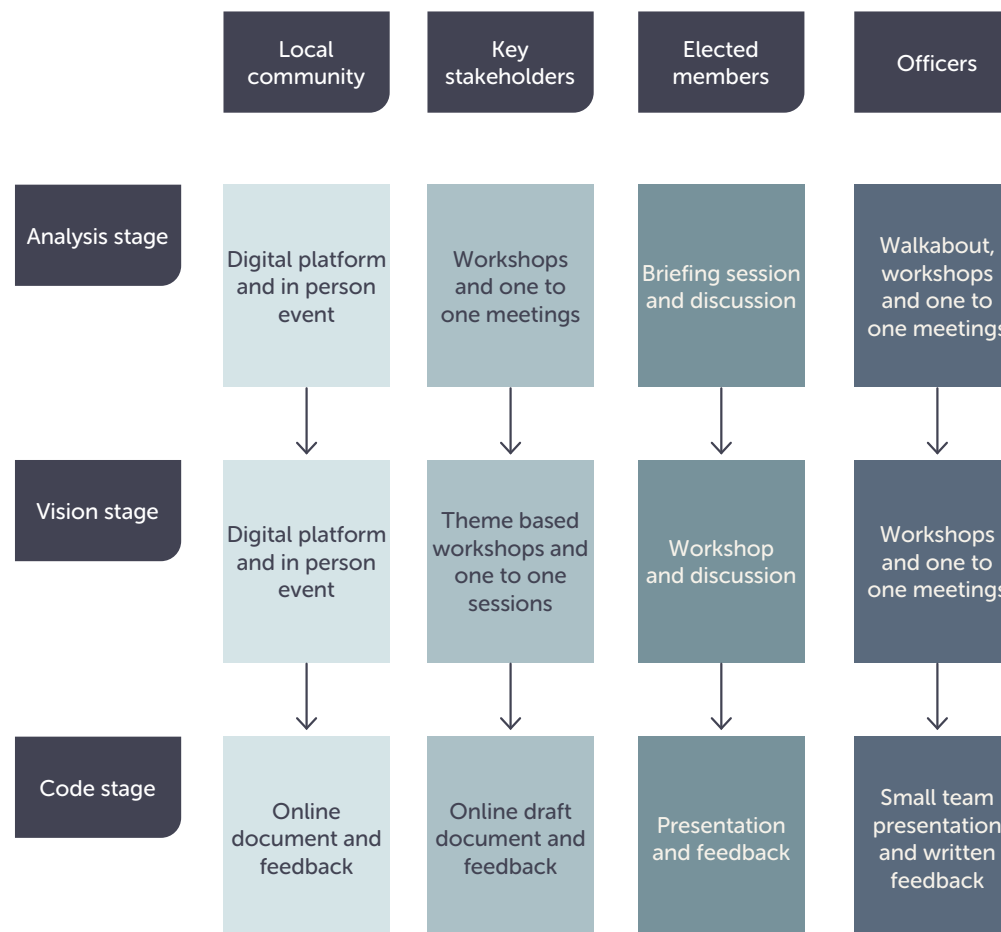


Fig.07 Community engagement approach identifying engagement techniques uses with the four key engagement groups at each design code stage

1.6 Summary of early community engagement

Digital engagement and face-to-face sessions were developed to specifically understand local views of successful places, and those needing improving as part of the Analysis stage of the design code. In addition, a series of one-to-one interviews were undertaken with a range of community groups and Medway Council teams to provide a wider understanding of Chatham, including a range of challenges and opportunities.

Summary of Analysis stage

Early in the design code process, community-wide feedback was sought from an online digital platform and in-person event in order to understand local views of successful places, and those that needed improving. In addition, a series of one-to-one interviews with a range of community groups and Medway Council teams helped to develop a greater understanding of Chatham, including a range of challenges and opportunities.

The digital survey was held online over four weeks in December 2022 and January 2023. A total of over 1,900 unique responses were received and were analysed. The format enabled comments on any place within Chatham Centre but focused on 14 'fixed points' referencing a building, street or public open space and sought views on each.

One-to-one interviews were held between 19th December 2022 and 13th February 2023 and sought views on both positive and negative aspects of the Chatham Centre from both a professional and personal view. They were asked to share their vision for Chatham, thoughts on local character as well as buildings, spaces and streets they liked and disliked, and why.

Fixed Point Survey

How do you feel about this street/building/public space?



Total # responses: 1,955

1. The High Street
2. The Brook
3. New Road (dual carriageway)
4. New Road (single carriageway)
5. Railway Street
6. Seating area by The White Lion pub
7. Riverside Gardens
8. The Lines
9. Bank Chambers
10. Castor and Hawke House
11. Regent House
12. The Brook Theatre
13. Halifax building
14. Railway Street and Arches
15. New flats, The Paddock

Fig.08 Fixed Point Survey Diagram | Extract from digital platform

The following is a list of themes that emerged based on common responses from both the deep and wide engagement:

1. Highlight existing naval heritage to celebrate Chatham's creative community
2. Existing development needs to focus on quality and delivering wider community benefits

3. Chatham currently is a town not a city and its unique character should be celebrated

4. Create welcoming and safer gateways into Chatham

5. New development should be in keeping with the town's low-rise character

6. The town should make more of its assets, both historical and natural
7. There is a need for more trees, greenery and landscape in the town centre
8. Public space should focus on people by enhancing accessibility, dwell spaces and places to play
9. Wayfinding and legibility in the town should be improved
10. Chatham should grow local pride of place, addressing appearance and maintenance of buildings and spaces

Summary of Vision stage

For the Vision stage, a second digital platform was created, and an in-person event was hosted, to seek feedback on the 2050 vision and associated themes, Area Type visions for a variety of street types and views on different types of buildings.

Further information on engagement findings can be found in the appendix.



Fig.09 Create Streets Pentagon public consultation

Chatham Design Code Consultation 2023 Summary of community responses

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed Chatham Design Code vision that "By 2050, the centre of Chatham will develop into Medway's City Centre"?



Key themes

"... if Chatham becomes the city centre where does that leave Gillingham and Rainham and Strood? Rochester will always have history and Dickens!"

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following themes will contribute to achieving the proposed Chatham Design Code vision:

A healthy and connected city, that promotes well-being and prioritises walking, cycling and public transport



A vibrant city of culture, that is a diverse and creative place that celebrates culture in all its forms



A heritage maritime city, that celebrates the River Medway and its naval legacy



A city to learn and grow, by promoting lifelong learning and opportunities to grow and prosper



A green sustainable city that promotes nature and a low energy and zero carbon future



1

Fig.10 Summary of community responses for Vision Stage consultation

1.7 Location of Chatham



Fig.11 District diagram showing location of Chatham within Medway Council boundary

Chatham is a town located within the Medway unitary authority in the ceremonial county of Kent, England. The town forms a conurbation with neighbouring towns Gillingham, Rochester, Strood and Rainham.

The primary focus of this Design Code is Chatham Town Centre, which will be referred to as Chatham Centre.

Key

- Primary Road Network
- ||||| Railway Network
- Primary Focus of Design Code
- ⊗ Area of Influence

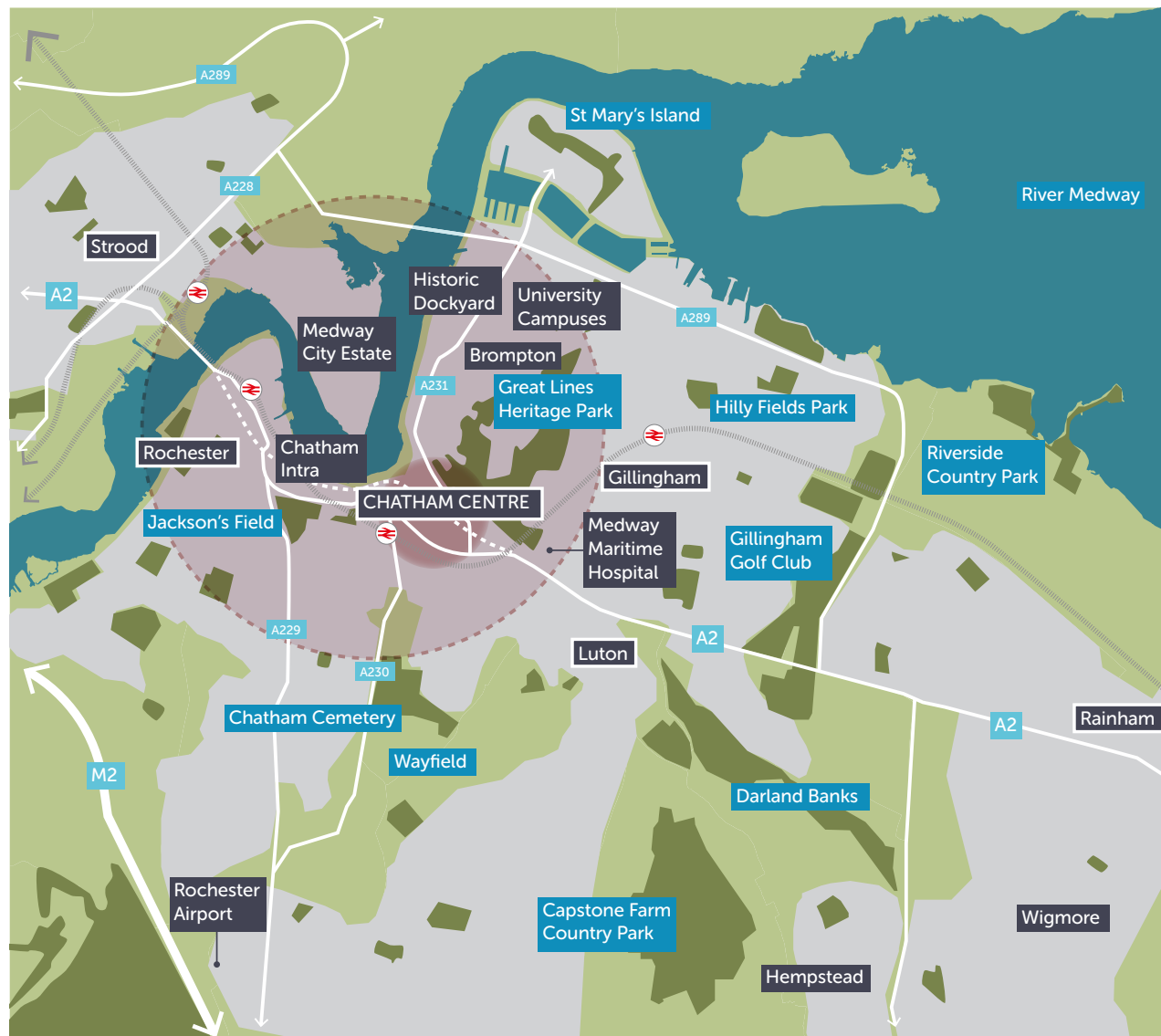






Fig.12 Location diagram illustrating area of influence of the Chatham Design Code includes surrounding areas of Strood, Rochester, Chatham Intra and Gillingham

1.8 Design Code Boundary

The design code boundary expands the Chatham Retail Centre Boundary and Medway's City Centre Boundary as established in existing policy. The larger footprint coverage of the Chatham Centre Design Code aims to include natural and built form boundaries whilst responding to the unique local topography.

This expanded boundary includes the central valley that generally aligns with High Street and The Brook with the River Medway becoming a natural boundary to the north west and the Luton Arches as a built form edge to the south east. This area also includes the sloped edges that step up to the north east and south west to define the 'Chatham Bowl'.

Key

-  Chatham Retail Centre Boundary
-  Medway's 'City' Centre Boundary (existing policy)
-  Design Code Immediate Context
-  Design Code Boundary

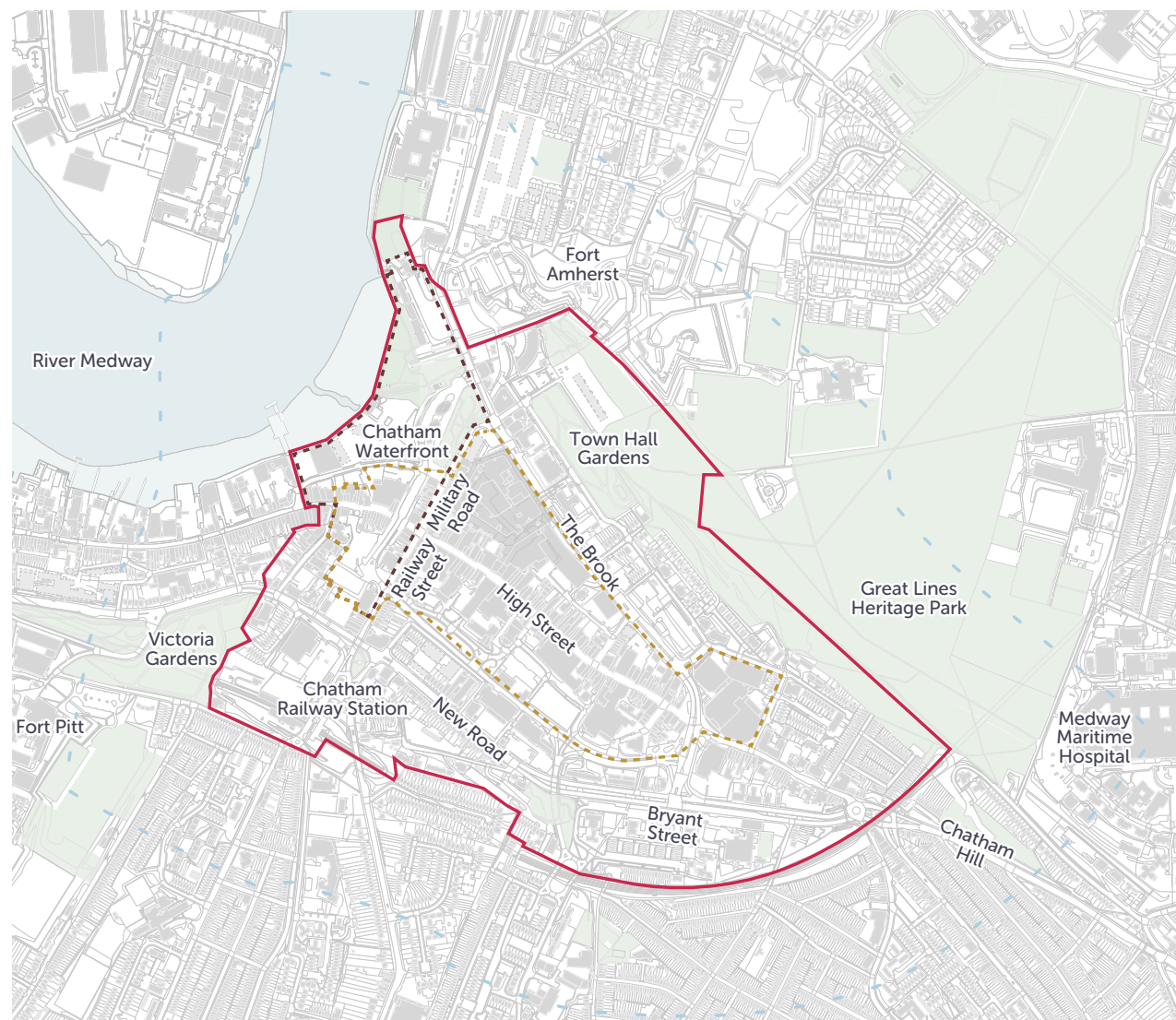


Fig.13 Red-line boundary

0m 100m 

1.9 History of Chatham

Chatham likely originates as a mid-Saxon settlement that followed on from earlier small-scale Roman occupation associated to nearby Rochester. Chatham appears in the Domesday Survey of 1086 recorded as the manor of Ceteham. The original location for the village of Chatham was around St Mary's Church on Dock Road.

In the 16th century the Royal Navy dockyard was established in Chatham that went on to influence development in the area for the next 400 years. Soon after the arrival of the Royal Navy a series of fortifications were constructed to defend the approaches to the dockyard, initially focussing on the river approaches and latterly the landward. Both the dockyard and fortifications evolved both in their

scale and complexity over the following centuries, leading to the acquisition of additional land and resulting in Chatham essentially relocating to the area of the present High Street. At the same time other areas of high ground around the dockyard, such as at Fort Pitt, were occupied by military, diverting most civilian development to the lower lying areas, such as along the river's edge towards Chatham Hill, and along what is now the Brook.



Fig.14 Painting 'Chatham, Kent' 1832, after Joseph Mallord William Turner | Tate Museum

One of the key components to the defence of the dockyard was Fort Amherst and the Chatham Lines which command the high ground above Chatham. As part of this elaborate network of earthworks and gun positions, a large 'field of fire' was established as an elevated, open landscape that allowed unobstructed views out of the fortifications and denied cover to an approaching enemy. This later became the Great Lines Heritage Park and forms the important and dramatic green backdrop to Chatham today. Alongside this, civilian development within the lower lying areas of central Chatham remained low and small-scale, allowing for clear visibility from the fortifications of an approaching enemy, and with guns of the fortifications trained across the town below.

To house the many sailors of the Royal Navy and various army personnel, a series of barracks were established at Chatham. First was the Chatham Infantry Barracks in 1757, followed by the Royal Marines and Royal Artillery/Royal Engineers soon after.

Throughout this period Chatham benefited significantly from the economic stimulus of the dockyard and growing military garrison. Supporting industries and services established and grew as a result, and civilian settlement expanded considerably. By the mid-18th century the layout of Chatham was beginning to reflect the layout today.

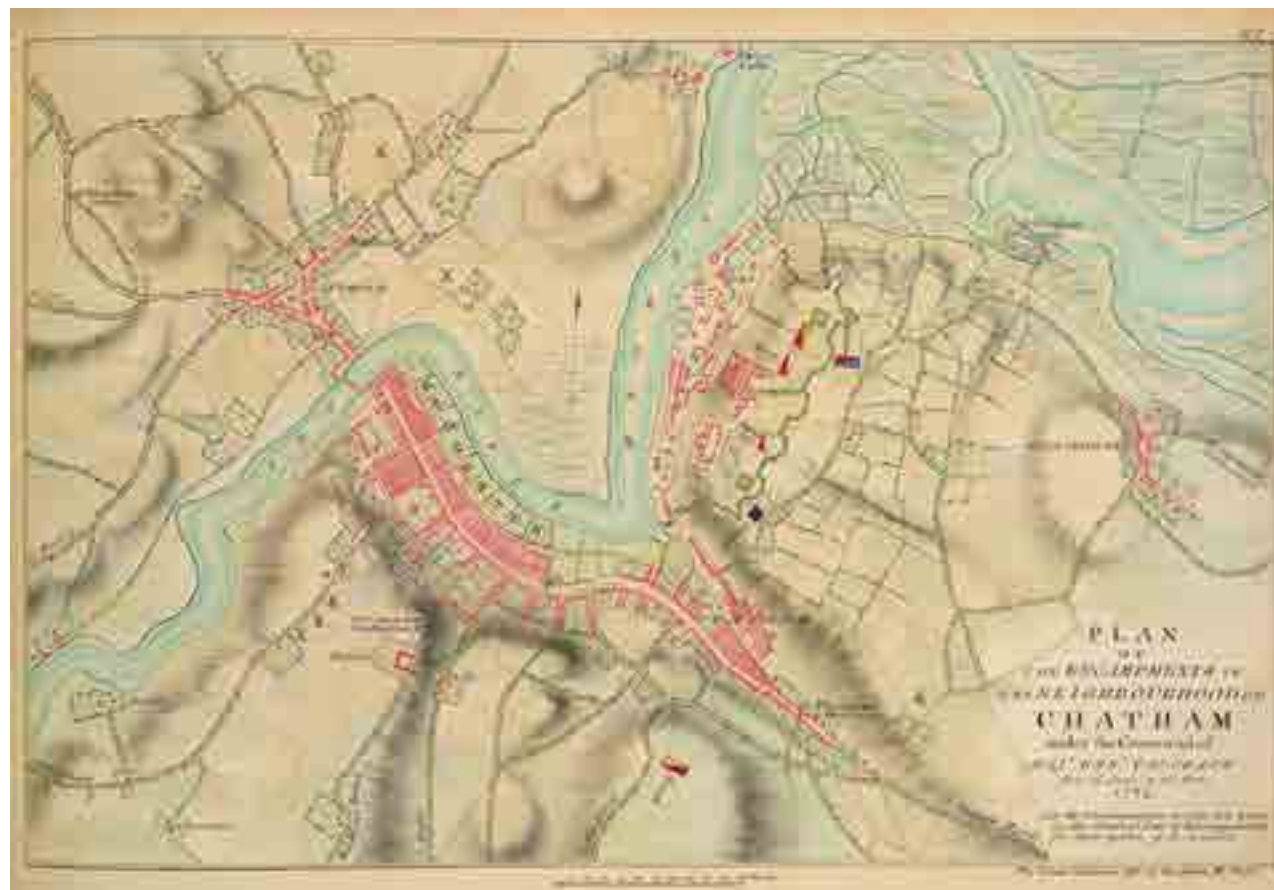


Fig.15 Encampments near Chatham and Rochester, 1782 | Royal Collection Trust

The second half of the 20th century saw a gradual reduction in the military presence in the area, and due to the considerable reliance of the local economy on the military, Chatham suffered as a result. Following the Royal Marines leaving Chatham in 1950, the dockyard finally closed in 1984, ending the 400-year relationship between the Royal Navy and Chatham.

The dockyard retains a legacy of international importance, while at its peak was at the forefront of shipbuilding, industrial engineering, and architectural technology through the 18th and 19th century. Over 500 ships were constructed at Chatham, including Lord Nelson's flagship HMS Victory.

The dockyard is now the highly regarded Historic Dockyard Chatham, an exemplar of regeneration excellence in a heritage setting that successfully combines a mix of uses and acts as a major regional visitor attraction.

Chatham Centre retains much of its heritage significance in both its structure and fabric. This includes the layout of the town, with its core defined by High Street and bisected by Military Road that historically linked Fort Amherst to Fort Pitt; its large open green spaces such as the Great Lines Heritage Park, the Town Hall Gardens, Victoria Gardens; and its fine historic buildings, many of which are recognised as nationally important and feature on the National Heritage List for England, and those that are recognised locally for the heritage importance.

This rich heritage must be celebrated and form a basis for Chatham's future.



Fig.16 Gun Wharf and Marine Barracks Chatham, approx. 1900 | Image Courtesy of Medway Archives Centre



Fig.17 Military Road Chatham, approx. 1906-8 | Image Courtesy of Medway Archives Centre



Fig.18 High Street Chatham, approx. 1900 | Image Courtesy of Medway Archives Centre



Fig.19 High Street Chatham, approx. 1898 | Image Courtesy of Medway Archives Centre

1.10 Chatham Today

Baseline Analysis Conclusions - Natural form

As part of developing the baseline information within the Stage 1 Analysis, information was compiled and analysed to address natural form, built form, movement and heritage across the design code area to understand the layers that underpin Chatham today.

Natural form

Chatham is a distinctive centre with strong roots within its setting. Located in a valley, it has strong topography to the north east and south west. This extraordinary context enables a range of upper level and lower level views with associated larger scale open spaces (located in the grounds of former military defences) at higher levels. Both Victoria Gardens and Great Lines Heritage Park are located on the periphery of the centre, and due to topography, are less accessible than their proximity would suggest.

One of the largest open spaces within Chatham Centre is Riverside Gardens, fronting onto the River Medway, which is located to the north west of the centre. Located at a bend in the river, views across this significant blue feature give a sense of expanse, however, the river currently creates a barrier as the Riverwalk beyond Chatham Centre terminates to the north at Gun Wharf and prematurely ends beyond Sun Pier to the south west. Furthermore, river crossings are limited to Rochester Bridge and Medway Tunnel.

Historically Chatham Centre had another river, the Old River Bourne and its associated marsh land, which was a tributary that flowed into the River Medway. It ran along the approximate alignment of The Brook. Due to the lower levels in this area

today, this part of Chatham is still prone to flooding. The Old Brook Pumping Station (now a museum), and the subsequent more modern facilities along The Brook and within Riverside Gardens, assist with pumping excess storm water into the River Medway.

Other open spaces are limited to more formal gardens, including Town Hall Gardens and The Paddock as well some other smaller green spaces. Whilst these green spaces allow for a significant coverage of mature trees, there are more limited street trees within the centre and few Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) to protect those that do exist.

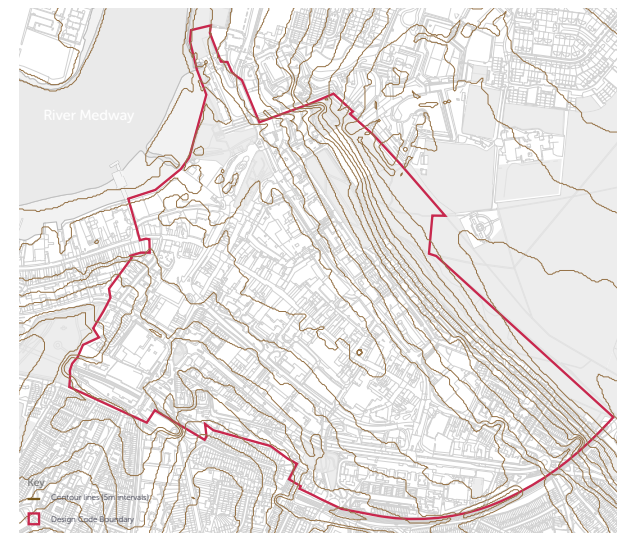


Fig.20 Topography illustrating the 'bowl' nature of Chatham Centre

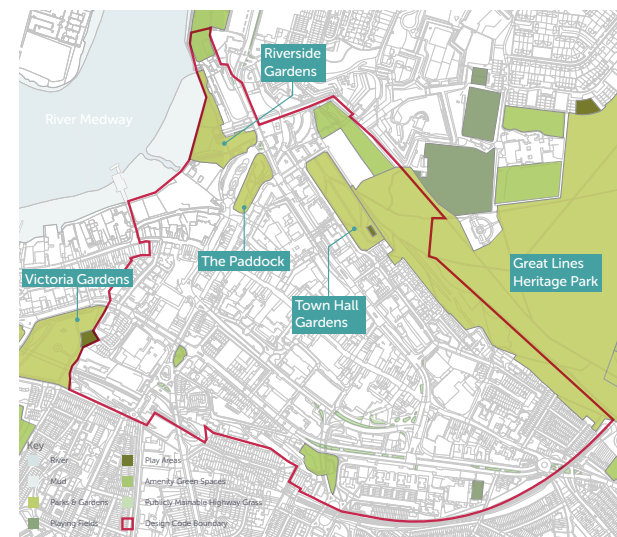


Fig.21 Green Space Diagram

Baseline Analysis Conclusions - Built form

The layout of Chatham is centred on its central High Street, which continues through Chatham Intra, Rochester and Strood to the north west and is defined by the Luton Arches to the south east. Railway Street and Military Road act as an important point along High Street, linking to the railway station and Fort Amherst. Much of the centre's fine grained, heritage buildings front onto these streets, reflecting traditional low rise buildings with mixed uses fronting onto key pedestrian routes. Most buildings within the centre have mixed uses, including retail, café, office, leisure and creative uses on ground floors, however there are smaller pockets of residential-only uses near to the red line boundary to the north, south and south west.

Heritage

The centre of Chatham contains an abundance of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Conservation Areas

Three Conservation Areas (Brompton Lines, New Road Rochester, and Star Hill to Sun Pier) bound central Chatham, and one lies within the study area (New Road Chatham).

- > Brompton Lines Conservation Area adjoins the northern and eastern edges of Chatham and primarily comprises the former defences of the Royal Navy Dockyard, including the Great Lines Heritage Park and Gun Wharf.
- > New Road Rochester Conservation Area adjoins the western edge and primarily comprises the historic townscape of New Road, and Fort Pitt with its surrounding green spaces.
- > Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area lies to the

west and comprises a historic and characterful high street and industrial maritime hinterland that straddles the boundary between Chatham and Rochester.

- > Wholly within the Design Code area is the New Road Chatham Conservation Area which comprises a fine residential suburb constructed between 1790 and 1820 and is one of the last remaining areas of the 18th century townscape in Chatham.

Conservation Area Appraisals have been adopted for Brompton Lines and New Road Chatham, and one is currently being prepared for the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area.

Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings

Within the Design Code area there are currently 23 entries on the National Heritage List for England, comprising 20 Listed Buildings and 3 Scheduled Monuments.

An example of the higher graded (Grade I and Grade II*) Listed Buildings and the Scheduled Monuments are as below (refer to Section 5.2 Buildings and Structures of Heritage Interest for more detail on these listings:

- > Fort Amherst, Brompton Lines, Chatham Lines, and Gun Wharf (Scheduled Monuments)
 - A key contributor to settlement in Chatham from the 18th century, with the military occupying the high ground surround the Dockyard and civilian settlement in the lower areas of land below.
- > Brook Low Level Pumping Station (Scheduled

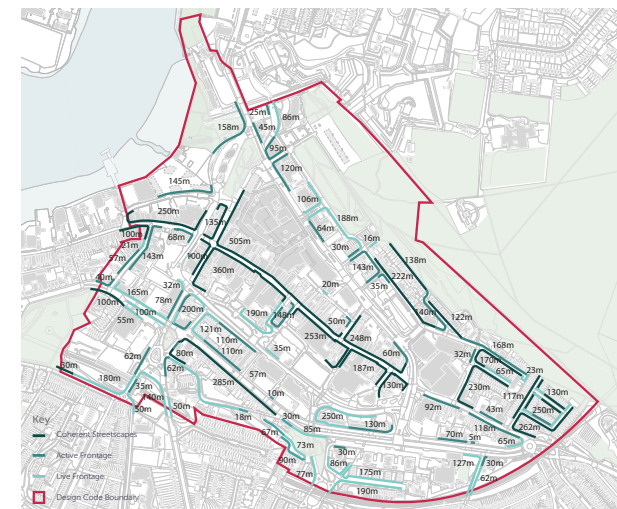


Fig.22 Contributing Frontage Diagram showing existing active and live frontages



Fig.23 Urban Voids Diagram showing existing inactive and void frontages

0m 100m

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

As part of the assessment of Chatham, several Non-Designated Heritage Assets have been identified. Non-Designated Heritage Assets are those that do not quite meet the criteria for statutory designation but display a degree of heritage significance that is worthy of recognition at a local level.

One notable contributor to Chatham's 19th and early 20th century townscape was the architect George Edward Bond. A handful of George Bond's buildings have already been recognised for their heritage importance and now feature on the National Heritage List for England, such as the

Brook Theatre and the Theatre Royal, both of which are Grade II Listed. Due to their heritage significance, where buildings designed by George Bond are identified within the Design Code area, they are considered to be Non-Designated Heritage Assets.

Other Non-Designated Heritage Assets have also been identified through the Design Code process and in conjunction with the local community, as identified in Fig.24 (refer to Section 5.1 Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings along with Section 5.2 Buildings and Structures of Heritage Interest in the appendix for more detailed diagrams). It is likely that others will also be identified through the Planning processes.

Mix of styles and scales in time

Whilst traditionally low rise, the character and scale of Chatham changed with modernist buildings including The Pentagon Centre, Mountbatten House, Bryant Street towers and the former

Debenhams building. Several large format retail stores were also introduced, acting as out-of-town retail within the centre with façades with blank and inactive frontages with adjacent surface car parking. Examples include Halfords and B&M stores.

Due to strong topography in the centre, there are a number of upper-level strategic view corridors that capture the valley setting of Chatham centre along with views across the River Medway. These highlight the importance of protecting views down from and up to green ridge lines. However, there are additional views that provide important lower, mid- and upper-level views that frame key buildings and monuments, such as lower level views from Chatham towards the Grade I Listed Chatham Naval War Memorial. Punctuating the townscape, a number of landmarks contribute to the local sense of place and assist with wayfinding and legibility. Many of these are celebrated heritage buildings, such as The Brook Theatre, Church of St John the Divine, Luton Arches and Sun Pier whilst others are more modern and act as landmarks due to their sheer scale, such as Mountbatten House.

Future change

There's significant change planned for in the centre with a range of emerging developments coming forward. Some like Garrison Point and Chatham Waterfront, will be prominent and aim to be landmarks of the future. Others are smaller in scale and likely will form part of new streetscapes along routes that have missing frontage, like recent construction along The Brook or overlooking Best Street. Some of the planned projects are likely to progress slowly, change design or perhaps

not even not come forward in the shorter term. However, Medway Council have a significant land holding in Chatham Centre, and can likely lead by example through their development company, delivering quality on the ground in accordance to the design code.

A large challenge (and opportunity) is addressing the significant number of inactive and void frontages, where surface level car parks, empty sites and buildings with blank frontages create a poor-quality streetscape. Over 35% of all frontages within Chatham centre are 'dead' frontages and fail to contribute to a thriving and vibrant centre, which amounts to nearly four miles, or over six kilometres! This contrasts with the nearly eight miles (or over 12 kilometres) of active and live frontage that contribute to positive, urban streetscapes.

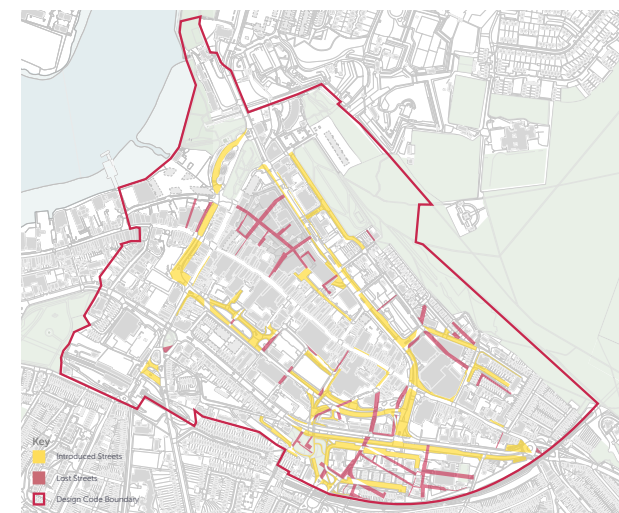


Fig.25 Diagram of Historic Changes in Urban Fabric compared to the early 20th Century

0m 100m

Baseline Analysis Conclusions - Movement

At the heart of Chatham is a series of pedestrianised streets focussed on High Street (up to Union Street), Military Road and part of Railway Street. Pedestrian-only paths are focussed along the River Medway within Riverside Gardens and along the Riverwalk, within The Paddock and Town Hall Gardens and across Great Lines Heritage Park. They are also located along several shorter routes to the south of the centre.

There are limited cycle facilities in Chatham, even though National Cycle Route 1 crosses the north western portion of the centre. However, there are a number of traffic-free cycle routes within Great Lines Heritage Park leading towards Medway Maritime Hospital and Gillingham.

Chatham Railway Station, located to the south west of the centre, is served by South-eastern High Speed 1, South-eastern Chatham Main Line and Thameslink North Kent Line services. The corridor links adjacent Medway Town stations: Strood, Rochester, Gillingham and Rainham. Across Chatham Centre, the railway station is within a 10 – 15 walk from any address. Furthermore, the bus station is currently fronting Mountbatten House and The Pentagon Centre, with numerous bus stops located adjacent to the railway station and located along Waterfront Way, The Brook and the eastern portion of High Street. With convenient access across the centre, Chatham is well-connected by public transport, which can be enhanced with improved services, facilities and quality of service.

Whilst a significant number of visitors use active or public transport, many people also chose to drive into the centre of Chatham, utilising Chatham's roads and car parking infrastructure.

New Road and The Brook act as strategic, wider area through routes and Best Street, Railway Street and Maidstone Road are also key traffic corridors. These routes are dominated by vehicular traffic. Waterfront Way is a bus-only route, linking to the bus station. Combined, these routes create a 'concrete collar' around the pedestrian-priority centre, limiting ease of access and undermining key desire routes for pedestrians due to limited and offset crossings, level changes and barriers.

Car parking is generally provided within surface car parks as well as a limited number of older multi-storey car parks. Access is generally located along the key traffic corridors. Many are perceived as unsafe or isolated with little overlooking and they often do not create a welcoming gateway into the centre.

An initial space syntax study by Medway Council officers suggests that High Street isn't the most accessible street within the centre. This contrasts with the concept that retail and mixed uses streets should be as accessible as possible with strong permeability and direct connecting routes, which help to contribute to a high street's vibrancy and use. This suggests that additional links and connections to High Street and enhancing or introducing missing links to wider area residential areas may help create better connections to support the Centre of Chatham.

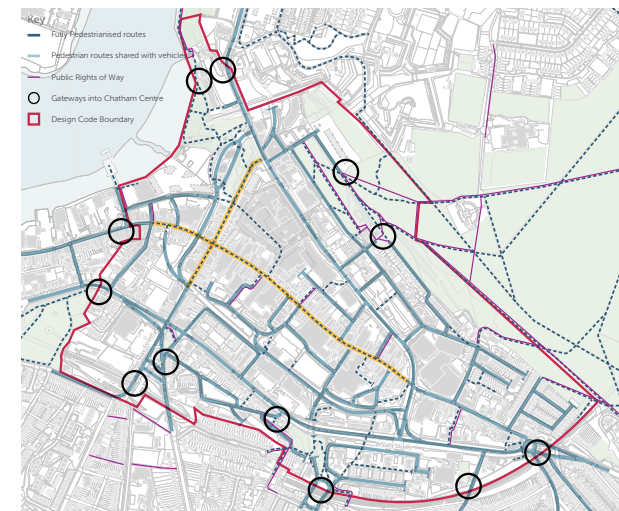


Fig.26 Pedestrian Movement Diagram showing the central hierarchy focused on High Street, Military Road and Railway Street and gateways into the centre

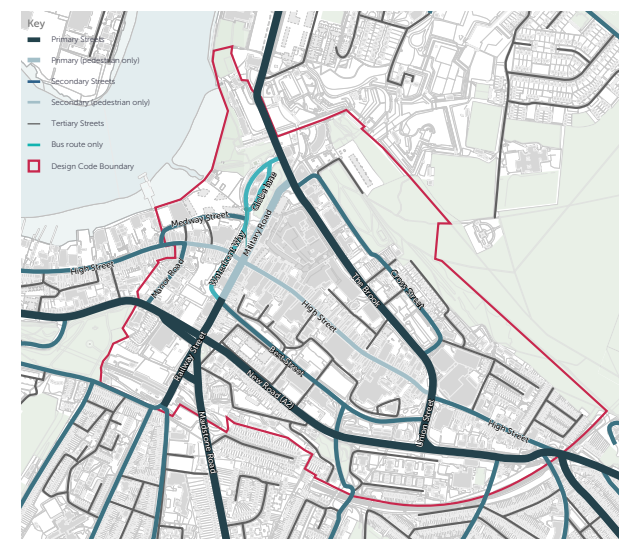


Fig.27 Street Hierarchy Diagram highlighting the severance caused by primary traffic routes

1.11 Uses

Primary centre

Chatham centre acts as the primary centre within Medway, including the largest retail centre with uses located along High Street and within The Pentagon Centre. Evidence supporting the emerging local plan suggest there is growth potential in a number of centre uses, including:

- > Comparison retail floorspace
- > Convenience retail, and
- > Leisure (predominately on commercial leisure, such as restaurants and cafés).

As the primary local centre, it will be important to support new retail and leisure uses by enhancing Chatham's setting through public realm improvements, identifying areas and locations for new uses and by planning for a stronger evening economy.

Opportunities also exist to provide new employment opportunities, especially in the edge of centre locations.

Creative uses

Within and across Medway, there is a thriving creative industries scene, which is strongly supported by the Council. Additional spaces within Chatham Centre that cater to a range of creative industries can help to nurture and grow this sector, especially by delivering a range of spaces catering to different needs, offering micro to larger sized spaces and providing affordability in the shorter to longer term.

Supporting adjacent uses

Near to Chatham Centre are several uses that can offer synergies to further develop Chatham as the primary centre for Medway. Further enhancements to access (such as new and improved routes), wayfinding and wider environmental improvements to create more attractive streets and spaces can create strengthened links to the following nearby uses to draw more visitors from Medway and beyond:

> Visitor heritage destinations

- There are significant heritage destinations that draw thousands of visitors each year to the area just outside Chatham Centre including The Historic Dockyard Chatham, Fort Amherst Chatham Intra and Great Lines Heritage Park, which are based on Chatham's historic, strategic defensive role. This role is intrinsically linked to Chatham Centre and this narrative should be strengthened to draw further visitors to visit and dwell in Chatham Centre.

> Universities

- To the north of the Chatham Centre is a single campus still within Chatham developed in collaboration with the University of Greenwich, the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University. With around 10,000 students visiting the campus each year, Medway can aim to draw additional students within Chatham Centre through a more diversified mixed-use offer catering to their needs.

> Medway Maritime Hospital

- The hospital is Kent's largest and busiest

hospital, with around 400,000 patients attending the hospital annually. It is located nearby in Gillingham to the east of Chatham Centre and Great Lines Heritage Park, but topography and the existing street pattern create actual and perceived severance with Chatham, however there is opportunity to create stronger connections that could be aimed for while creating greater synergies with mixed uses in Chatham Centre.

Residential uses

As a centre with a diverse range of uses and modes of transport, Chatham offers significant potential to increase residential accommodation to take advantage of an urban and sustainable location. With an increased residential population, additional neighbourhood uses and services should be provided, whilst a growing urban neighbourhood will be able to further support existing and future retail, leisure, and other mixed uses.



Fig.28 High Street serving a primary retail role for Medway

1.12 Planning Context

This draft Chatham Design Code will be adopted as an SPD in early 2024 with the intention of creating a basis for future SPD processes.

The following Initiatives form the policy context from national to local reach. Full information can be found in the Appendix - Baseline Report.

National & Regional

- > National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) references to design codes, paragraphs 133 and 134, and design review panels, paragraph 138 (2023)
- > The National Design Guide (2019)
- > National Model Design Code (2021)
- > Thames Gateway Parklands Vision (2008)
- > Thames Gateway Kent Plan for Growth 2014-20
- > Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission 2050 Vision (2018)



Fig.29 The National Model Design Code (NMDC) has guided the overall process in developing the Chatham Centre Design Code

Medway-wide

- > Medway Local Plan (2003)
- > Medway's Cultural Strategy (2014 – 2019)
- > The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Medway (2012 – 2017)
- > Medway Council Plan (2016-2021)
- > Medway Local Plan 2040 (emerging)
- > A Guide to Good Practice in Shopfront Design
- > Guide to shopfront advertising for historic buildings (2015)
- > A building height policy for Medway Part 1 and 2 (2006)
- > Shopfront security: A guide to Medway Council's planning policies (2015)
- > Medway Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) - consultation January to March 2024
- > Medway Town Centres Strategy



Fig.30 Front page of the Chatham Town Centre Concept Masterplan and Delivery Strategy Report (2019)

Chatham

- > Gun Wharf Masterplan SPD (2010)
- > Chatham Placemaking Masterplan (2016)
- > Chatham Intra High Street Heritage Action Zone
- > Chatham Future High Streets
- > Chatham Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Strategy Report (2019)
- > Arches Chatham Neighbourhood Plan 2022 – 2040 (2023)
- > New Road Chatham Conservation Area Appraisal (2004)
- > Brompton Lines Conservation Area Appraisal (2006)
- > Chatham Dockyard and its Defences Planning Policy Document (2015)