

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 The SPD masterplan area has been sub-divided into a series of districts, within which more detail is provided with regard to their distinguishing characteristics, including layout, uses, scale and movement. The districts, outlined within this section are:

- Town Centre Core and Station Gateway Area;
- Milton Creek;
- Western Gateway;
- Eastern Gateway; and
- Mill Way Transition / Fringe area.

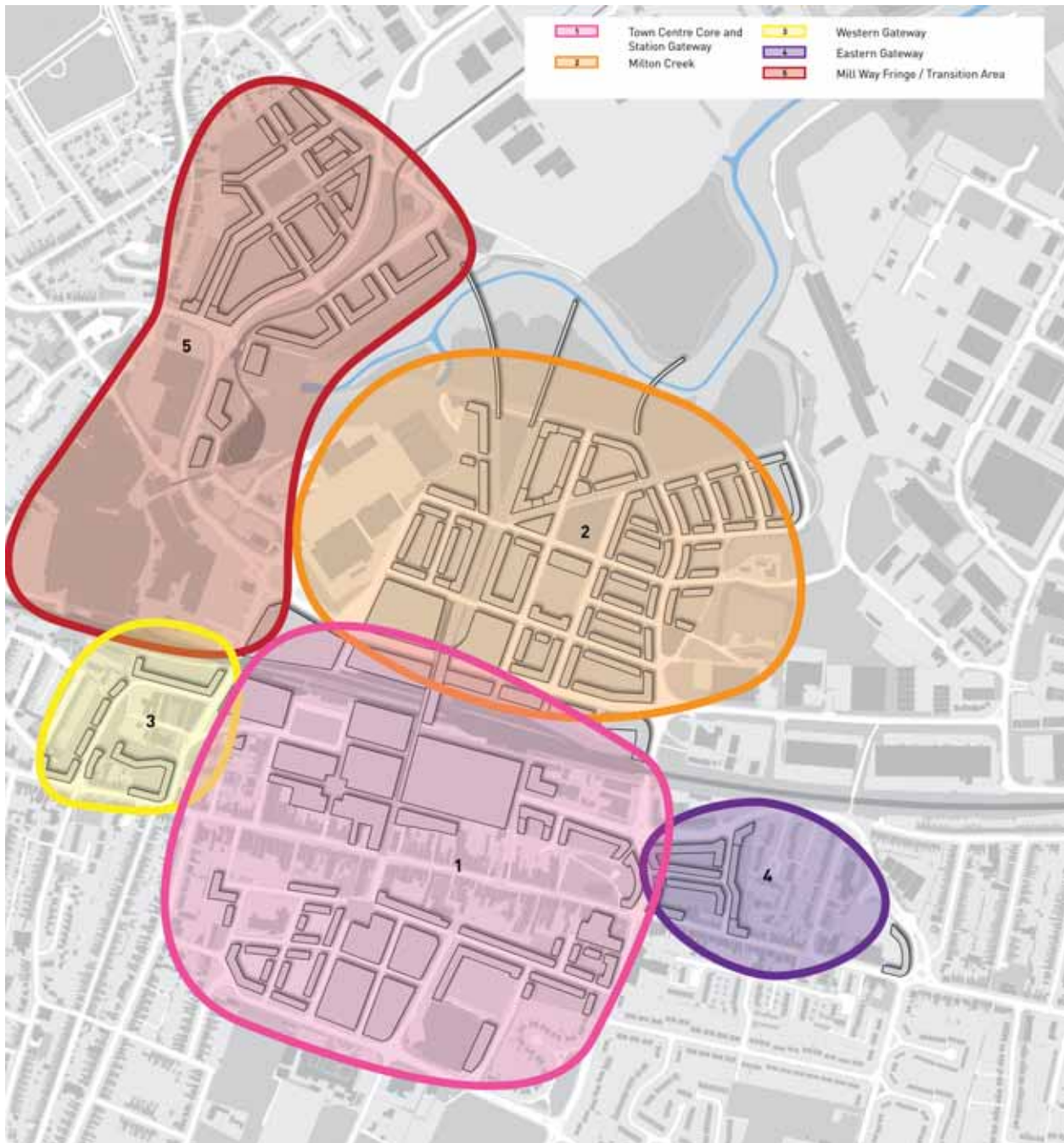
5.1.2 The extent of these districts is illustrated overleaf. The existing characteristics and proposed transformation of the districts are summarised in the associated tables below each district section, with more detail contained in the text and accompanying plans in subsequent sections (Sections 5.2 – 5.6). The borders between these areas are not rigid, but rather they blend together. In many cases

they are stitched together by the network of streets and routes in the town. This section should thus be read in conjunction with Section 6 of the SPD, which focuses on the movement strategy for the town centre and Milton Creek. The districts have been identified to ensure that bespoke solutions and proposals are developed that have regard, where appropriate, to the inherent qualities and opportunities in each area, including topography, views and vistas and existing development patterns. The development quanta shown for each quarter are estimates and are of course likely to vary in accordance with the flexibility in land use afforded by the SPD and the precise design and layouts which come forward. Overall, the development quanta for the town centre area represent a significant regeneration opportunity and the Borough Council will expect to see proposals which make efficient and logical use of the land supported through good design and layout and joint working between landowners and between public and private sector.

Figure 5.1 3D Visualisation of masterplan looking north through the town centre core towards Milton Creek



Figure 5.2 The SPD Masterplan Districts



5.2 TOWN CENTRE CORE AND STATION GATEWAY

INTRODUCTION

5.2.1 The town centre core and station gateway district is critical in bringing forward development and regeneration in Sittingbourne. This SPD identifies a number of major development opportunities for the area which can be summarised as follows.

- To create a new focus for the town centre through the provision of a town square in the vicinity of the Station and the Forum Centre;
- Redevelopment of the Forum Centre; and provisional of additional retail space;
- Linking the new development back into the High Street and strengthening the attractiveness of the High Street;
- Linking the town centre to the new development to the north of the railway

via a high quality land mark pedestrian and cycle bridge .

- Reconfiguring the east -west route south of the railway (St Michael's Road) to allow for these improvements and reducing its role for through traffic.

Redevelopment of the Forum Centre and St. Michael's Road

5.2.2 In line with the Local Plan (2008) retail development should take place both north and south of the railway with development to the north along Eurolink Way seamlessly linked to the retail development to the south of the railway in the town centre by way of a landmark bridge. Local Plan policy envisages this as retail lined, and whilst this is still regarded as an ideal, the viability of this may not be practicable in the foreseeable future. However, the guiding principle that the existing town centre should have a strong and high quality link to any new development to the north of the railway is critical to achieving a successfully unified and regenerated town centre. The phasing of development will be critical in achieving this objective. Development and refurbishment of the existing town centre core to the south of the railway should therefore come forward in advance of any new town centre development to the north, or at least simultaneously with it.

5.2.3 The new bridge link will require an innovative design solution as it will need to cross both the railway line and Eurolink Way before landing on the north side of the railway. It will need to be able to carry pedestrian and cycle traffic; and to be safe and accessible 24 hours per day.

5.2.4 The major development opportunity within the town centre is represented by the Forum Centre, adjacent car park and associated land. The redevelopment of this site will improve its relationship with the High Street and surroundings, providing large retail footplates for modern activities and maximising the efficiency of land.

Adjacent to this, the current Forum Centre car park should be redeveloped for retail uses. This currently sits at an important location between the railway station and High Street. New development will enhance the quality of a key point of arrival into the town and routes between the High Street, railway station and on to Milton Creek. The creation of larger development blocks will allow for a large quantum of retail floorspace to be accommodated in the town centre, meeting modern retail needs and requirements. Retail development could include a large foodstore, anchor stores and comparison retail units.

5.2.5 The illustrative masterplan indicates the main routes and links in the town, thus defining development blocks suitable for new retail space. Given the town centre location, development should be of a density that reflects this inherently sustainable location. The Council will therefore encourage retail space to be spread across more than one floor: developers will be encouraged to think innovatively, providing mezzanine and multiple retail floors.

5.2.6 This SPD allows for regeneration on the south side of the railway through the closure of St. Michael's Road between Dover Street and Crown Quay Lane. Creation of a major new retail footprint south of the railway could be facilitated by replacing the Network Rail car park to the north of the railway. In this event, a new east west pedestrian and cycle link would need to be created closer to the railway line that is wide enough to allow limited vehicular access for emergency services and maintenance purposes. It will also act as a corridor for utilities and services. The benefit of this is that it will allow larger retail footprints to be created through the redevelopment of the Forum Centre. The land gained through closure of St. Michael's Road would provide an unbroken retail circuit that integrates the new retail

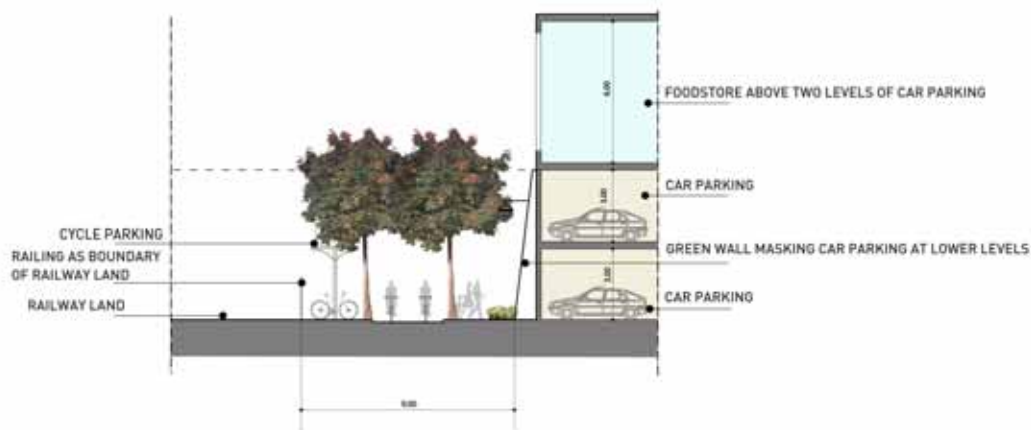
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development seamlessly with the High Street. The treatment of the elevations of these buildings (especially northern and eastern sides facing the town square and railway) will be critical in achieving a real step change in the appearance and feel of the town centre.

5.2.7 The new east west route should have a shared surface treatment which allows for cycling in each direction. A planting strip should be provided on either side of the route. The total dimension of this route should be in the region of nine metres. The route should be open and safe with good surveillance and care should be taken to address blank walls along this

route with appropriate lighting, landscaping (particularly on the edge adjacent to the railway line), public art and/or façade treatments, including the use of planted green walls, to avoid any forms of anti-social behaviour. As the building frontage along this link is north facing developers should ensure that green walls should be composed of vegetation that can survive and thrive in such locations ⁽⁵⁾. The street should be fronted with active uses which could include entrances to housing above, shopfronts to the station square that are returned along this street frontage and windows to security booths and payment points for the car park below.

Figure 5.3 Cross section through the new east west link



Cycle parking can be accommodated along the east west link



The link should comprise a shared surface treatment



5 Shade tolerant climbers such as ivy and other similar species would be appropriate in this location. It is important that the green wall is regularly maintained.

Green Walls can be used for screening purposes



The façade along the east west route should be well lit



5.2.8 An alternative approach, should the closure of St Michael's Road not prove feasible, is to reconfigure it in front of the station such that a station / civic square can still be provided, and still allow for some limited east - west vehicular movement, although the majority of though traffic and industrial traffic accessing Eurolink Industrial Estate would be using the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road and or Eurolink Way. Regardless of whether this route is closed to vehicular traffic or 'calmed', the amenity and attractiveness of the town centre will be considerably improved.

The New Station Square

5.2.9 The railway station and its surrounds are a key element of the future success of the town. Improvements to the train services have already taken place with the provision of High Speed domestic services to London St. Pancras, and better station facilities and platform access arrangements.

5.2.10 Building on these improvements, the SPD promotes a new or improved / extended station building, potentially provided to the east of the current station building, fronting a new station square to the south which will provide an attractive and welcoming arrival point into the town centre. Not only will this be the gateway into the town for visitors and commuters, but also for those people arriving by foot or cycle across the proposed new bridge linking the town centre with Milton Creek.

5.2.11 Should a new station building come forward, the old building could be reused or redeveloped as a new bus station, forming an integrated public transport hub for the town. Even if a new station building is not provided, a square must be allowed for between the current building and the alignment of the new bridge, allowing integration and ease of movement between these elements. As part of the new station facilities and town centre development, a new commuter car park will be provided to the north, accessed via Eurolink Way.

5.2.12 The exact east west dimensions of the square are not set, however a square must be located outside the railway station: either the existing station or a replacement. The masterplan shows this stretching from the western edge of the existing station building across to the new bridge, providing a generous space for different activities and functions to take place.

5.2.13 The square should be at least 50 metres deep building front to front i.e. between the station building and retail development. This will form the main new civic square in the town centre and should be landscaped appropriately, including street furniture and public art and tree planting. Buildings lining the southern side of the square should be in order of four storeys, although scope may exist for taller elements at important locations, helping to frame the square and define the public space. Outside the station an arrival and

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orientation space should be provided. Bus setting down and pick up points as well as taxi waiting facilities should also be provided in close proximity.

5.2.14 There is potential for the Station Square to be a location for civic, cultural, community and leisure such as new Council offices and other civic and public services, a hotel, a Learning Campus, Cinema and Arts complex and weekly market. Some of these facilities could be housed in landmark buildings that would provide a distinct entrance to the town. A feasibility study on developing cultural infrastructure as part of the town centre regeneration has been carried out and there is a clear need for a cinema, an art centre / performance space and the town square itself as a focal point and space for outdoor events. There is substantial public support for these facilities, some of which would need to be privately funded and some through public /private partnership, and through the development process.

The SPD promotes new and improved station facilities



New bus waiting facilities should be integrated with the station



The SPD promotes a new Station Square



Potential exists to use the new square for the weekly market



The square can accommodate space for performing art



The square can provide spill out space for cafes and restaurants



5.2.15 The new station square will be an important public transport interchange for the town, acting as a node for bus services (and as a focus for sustainable travel within and to and from the Borough in future). From this point, people will be able to walk to the High Street and new retail development. The station square should not be undermined by traffic accessing town centre car parks or delivery vehicles accessing service yards (further detail on the transport strategy is provided in Section 6).

5.2.16 The enhanced station square complex should be designed to inspire, to change the image and perception of Sittingbourne. As important developments at the heart of the town these must be of architectural excellence, reflecting the scale, form and character of the town. This should not though preclude innovative and contemporary interpretations to be designed.

Figure 5.4 Artist's impression of the new Station Square, looking eastwards



Figure 5.5 3D Visualisation looking south east towards the new station square



New Bridge Link

5.2.17 A new bridge across the railway line is essential to the future development and unification of the new and older parts of the town centre, creating a visible link from the High Street, encouraging movement between the town centre, the station and Milton Creek. Policy B27 of the Swale Borough Local Plan (2008) expects the bridge link to be retail lined. However, it is recognised that cost, viability and practicability issues suggest that a retail lined bridge may not be appropriate in this location. In these circumstances, there will need to be a full review of design options for the bridge, aimed at maximising the integration of the Milton Creek area with the existing town centre to the south of the railway.

5.2.18 The bridge should be seamlessly integrated with the town centre, station and station square and should be an attractive focal point and secure the potential for a well used pedestrian and cycle friendly route. The bridge will need to be a minimum height of at least six metres above the railway line. In order to achieve a seamless link with the town centre, developers may need to create gradual ramped approaches leading from the High Street and through the redevelopment of the Forum Centre up to the bridge. It is essential that all frontages along this new north south bridge approach be active and that the bridge and all routes onto it should be accessible to all at all times of day. It is important that where the bridge meets street level it is part of an open street rather than a covered mall.

5.2.19 Through the redevelopment of the Forum Centre the north south link leading up to the bridge should be approximately twelve metres wide building front to building front, allowing for a comfortable pedestrian retail shopping environment relating well to the scale of buildings along this and accommodating the level changes necessary to rise between the High Street, station square and the bridge. Towards the

bridge the ramped approach of the north south route could separate, with part running back down to the station square and part running on and up to the bridge.

5.2.20 The width of the bridge should be approximately eight metres. Retail and other building entrances should be provided on all parts of the north south route, ensuring activity at all times of the day.

5.2.21 Where the ramped approach to the bridge runs alongside the station square retail units should be provided on both the ground floor and ramp levels, activating this edge. Pedestrian entrances to stores and car parking could be provided directly onto the station square.

5.2.22 On the bridge itself a secondary connection will be required to integrate with the station and square. This could be provided by the means of lifts and escalators running into the station. This additional access point to the station will encourage the bridge to be used at all times of the day. It will also provide a connection to the east west pedestrian and cycle connection, maximising pedestrian permeability around the town.

5.2.23 On the northern side of the railway line the bridge should integrate with the new and retail provision either side of Eurolink Way, ramping down to ground level. A stepped approach to the bridge should also be provided directly from Eurolink Way to maximise pedestrian permeability and access.

5.2.24 All approaches to the bridge should be DDA compliant and could comprise a range of different access measures including ramps, lifts, escalators and steps.

The High Street and Surrounds

5.2.25 Along the High Street there are a number of opportunities for intervention, either where new retail space could be provided or where improvements to the quality of the public realm could be made. Specific development opportunities include the Bell Centre to the east of the High Street which has an unimplemented permission for refurbishment and reuse. North south routes through the town must be strengthened to connect the High Street with the core new retail development, with the High Street forming an essential component of the retail circuit.

New north south shopping routes in the town centre



5.2.26 To the south of the High Street, the Council recognises the need to address the collection of exposed backs to properties. Potential exists to provide a new route running parallel to the High Street, linking the Magistrates Court through to the Bell Centre, connecting a series of existing but disconnected paths, alleys and spaces. Fronted with development along its northern edge, this will enclose the exposed properties and also create a continuously lined street frontage. Development here could accommodate a mix of retail, commercial, civic and or live/work space and / or residential units.

Potential exists to accommodate live/work space to the rear of the High Street



5.2.27 This new route will increase the permeability of the town and provide stronger connections to Sainsburys and the cluster of Civic and Community buildings located around Central Avenue. The cluster of civic uses could be retained and, over time, be redeveloped in situ. The area should be considered holistically, with new uses and improvements to existing facilities in a coordinated fashion, with shared parking and logical entrances. There is scope for joint provision of public services at a 'gateway' building on the town centre. The first preference for this would be a focal point of the station square core area. The facilities could include a Learning Campus; performing arts space; and a health centre as well as a relocation of civic buildings and services to house Kent County Council, Borough Council and other public service providers. The contribution of public services to the vitality of a town centre is important and therefore the SPD allows for some flexibility in the location and provision of this. The Borough Council, will undertake a full options appraisal on the way forward in partnership with other public sector bodies and developers.

5.2.28 In the event of relocation of public services to the town centre core area, there would be scope for the redevelopment of the area to the south of the High street for a new residential quarter.

5.2.29 Potential may also exist to expand the existing Sainsburys foodstore to the south of the town centre. This could include new mezzanine floorspace and the decking of the car park, contributing to the supply of town centre spaces. Any new parking should be wrapped with development to ensure active street frontages.

5.2.30 New residential development will be encouraged in the town centre, providing life and activity at all times of the day. Opportunities for living above the shop should be explored in new development proposals. Development in the core area will be primarily apartments, taking advantage of the sustainable town centre location supported by a mix of facilities, services and public transport provision. At the periphery, there is opportunity to provide some town house to merge in with the surrounding scale and character of development.

Table 5.1 Summary of the potential for the Town Centre Core and Station Gateway district

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic town centre on east-west orientation, with fine grid of alleys and passageways running north south • Scale of buildings in town centre core primarily two – three storeys • Quality of high street environment undermined by surface car parking and unsympathetic buildings including the Forum Centre and Bell Centre • Vacancies and small units not suited to modern retail needs • Environment around the station dominated by roads and vehicles with poorly defined pedestrian routes • St. Michael's Road, Eurolink Way and the railway line form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An enhanced retail focus for Sittingbourne with approximately 51,256 sqm gross new retail floorspace (equating to 26,600 sqm net floorspace when converting from gross and allowing for that existing floorspace subject to redevelopment) with a greater retail offer and choice, including new foodstores, anchor and comparison goods stores • The Forum Centre could be redeveloped allowing for larger floorplates (through the closure of St. Michael's Road between Crown Quay Land and Dover Street) and ensuring that active uses front street level. This could be achieved through closure of the road, or reconfiguration of the space in front of the station and new civic square which would still allow for some limited east - west vehicular movement, but the majority of through traffic will be using the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road and / or Eurolink Way. • Repairing vacant sites, rationalising car parking and providing an improved retail offer with new supporting leisure, cultural, commercial and civic uses with new and increased parking to the north of the railway line • A new retail lined bridge seamlessly linking the town centre with Milton Creek • New station square integrated with a new retail lined bridge and new retail development in the town centre with the old station building potentially being reused or redeveloped for a bus station.

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EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
<p>barriers to north-south pedestrian movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No celebration of arrival into Sittingbourne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New and improved civic and cultural facilities including a new Learning Campus and possibly a new Town Hall, potentially located by a new station square. Residential development will be encouraged (approximately 550 new homes in stand alone developments comprising a mix of apartments and town houses) to enhance vitality. Further potential exists to accommodate residential use above retail development, subject to more detailed design. Improvements to the public realm and pedestrian environment and creation of a permeable network of attractive streets and spaces creating new routes across the railway line to Milton Creek, safe and direct pedestrian links to the town centre and a new east west pedestrian and cycle link close to the railway line. Restructuring of the Civic Quarter with enhanced leisure and cultural and community uses and a new east west link improving connections between the Bell Centre and Civic Quarter. There is an opportunity to redevelop this area for residential use if the civic and community uses are consolidated around the town square area. Revitalised Bell Centre accommodating retail and residential uses Potential for the expansion of the Sainsbury's Store Potential for the long term redevelopment of Eurolink Way for commercial and employment space

5.2.31 In the town centre, new buildings should be in the order of three to four storeys, respecting the existing scale and grain of the High Street. In the Sittingbourne High Street Conservation Area due regard shall be had to the intrinsic qualities of the buildings and their setting. But this does not preclude buildings of innovation and contrast that respect the historic urban grain.

The SPD promotes living above the shop in the town centre



Town Centre Car Parking

5.2.32 The quantum of new retail to be provided in the town will require significant new parking provision (in line with parking ratios in PPG13) and this should be accommodated in a sensitive manner, reducing land take and visual impact on the townscape. There are a number of approaches to achieving this. For example undercroft parking; parking provided above retail units or a multi storey car park. The topography of the land in the town centre allows for underground / undercroft parking, and possibly servicing, to be explored. With any of these approaches, it will be important to ensure an active street frontage wherever possible (More detail on car parking is provided in Section 6).

5.2.33 To the north of the railway line a new multi-storey station car park should be provided, increasing the amount of spaces currently available. This car park will be accessed via Eurolink Way and be linked back to the station via the new retail lined bridge. Where plot depths allow, the car park should be wrapped with development to create active frontages to the street.

Multi-storey car parking should be well lit and safe to use



Figure 5.6 Illustrative Masterplan: Town Centre Core and Station Gateway



5.3 MILTON CREEK

5.3.1 The Local Plan identifies the Milton Creek area as a location for a mix of uses including retail, residential, commercial and leisure; as well as any necessary supporting community facilities as part of an expanded town centre and creating a new community. This retail should be located next to Eurolink Way and be integrated with the bridge link to the town centre. It should be brought forward either concurrently with development in the town centre core or as a second phase.

5.3.2 Development immediately to the north of the railway is expected to be retail led, but the mix of uses should include other appropriate uses which will achieve a vibrant mix as well as being economically viable. The masterplan allows for large and medium sized retail units to be accommodated within the Milton Creek area. The development blocks illustrated in the masterplan are designed with flexibility in mind: they can be combined to create a larger store if necessary or split to allow for other uses, including leisure and community uses. The retail uses should

accommodate an appropriate level of car parking space and this should be integrated within the development block, either in undercroft with retail above or on top of the retail unit. Car parking should be screened where possible, potentially with development, to create active frontages to the street.

5.3.3 Between the railway line and Eurolink Way a new multi storey car park will be provided. This will provide commuter parking for the station, replacing the current surface car park to the south of the railway line. Vehicular access to the car park should be via Eurolink Way. The car park should ideally be located close to the new bridge, and provide quick access over the railway line and directly into the station.

5.3.4 Elsewhere along Eurolink Way and backing onto the railway line the potential exists to accommodate commercial units, providing a diverse range of employment opportunities in the town. The viability of these uses may depend on the current economic conditions and thus these may be a longer-term opportunity for the SPD area.

5.3.5 The quality of Eurolink Way should be transformed, with buildings fronting onto the street, enclosing the space and improving the quality of the pedestrian environment. Tree planting along this route will enhance the character and appearance of the street.

5.3.6 The Milton Creek area should be developed upon a logical grid network of streets and spaces. A tree lined boulevard will form the central spine to the development area, leading from the retail lined bridge to the creek. A landscaped central reservation will accommodate flood mitigation measures such as SUDS and swales. This route will form part of the 'Paper Trail' concept, linking the qualities of the creek back through to the town centre. Links from Milton Creek to the town, to the Church Marshes Country Park and Milton Regis will further integrate the new community with the rest of the town and recreational areas. The central spine will be fronted with buildings of up to three and four storeys in height, especially at the railway end of the site.

Figure 5.7 Cross-section and plan through central spine



5.3.7 In addition to the retail and commercial elements the area should accommodate a range of housing types and tenures in line with the recommendations of the Councils Strategic Housing Market Assessment, providing

opportunities for all. A large proportion of homes will be for families, responding to the needs and demand of the area. Some smaller apartment units should also be provided, on the corners of development blocks, in close proximity to the retail

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development. Residential parking will be integral to the units and all homes will have access to either private or communal / semi-private open space. At the heart of the area a new green space should be provided, fronted by homes and community uses. This will provide recreation and play space for the community.

5.3.8 The Council will encourage developers to provide life-time homes, providing accessible and adaptable accommodation for everyone, from young families to older people and individuals with a temporary or permanent physical disability. The provision of such accommodation will allow the community to grow and develop over time.

Housing fronting the central green space



5.3.9 Subject to sufficient need arising from the new development, the Milton Creek area will be served by new community facilities including a new primary school. This should be developed in parallel with new housing being completed, so that it is ready for the new community to use.

5.3.10 The Milton Creek area is identified as being at risk from flooding and thus measures to manage and mitigate this risk should be included within all development proposals. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), swales and water efficiency measures are to be incorporated within the development of the area (see section 7 for more information). Further work on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will provide additional guidance on flood management and mitigation - general principles are set out in Section 2.5 above .

5.3.11 The Creek is a unique natural asset for Sittingbourne, although potentially sensitive in biodiversity terms because of its proximity and supporting role to the internationally designated sites in the Swale and Medway estuaries. Enhancements are being made to the green grid of recreational areas at the Church Marshes Country Park and footpath links to and within these areas. The Milton Creek Parkland project identifies possible provision of one pedestrian /cycle link over the Creek to link with the Saxon Shore Way, although it may not be possible to deliver more, given ecological sensitivities along the Creek. Green routes should also be provided within the Milton Creek area, bringing the qualities of the Creek back through to the development area and across the new bridge into the town centre. Care will be needed to ensure that adequate green space is provided within the new development, although recreation space will need to be focused away from ecologically sensitive areas at the Creekside itself. Development proposals should also avoid disturbance of Creek bed sediments. These will be matters to be addressed in detail through design and layout and Environmental Impact Assessment at planning application stage. Addressing the need for open space , biodiversity protection and functional flood plain issues, may need a consortium

approach to reconcile these matter satisfactorily for the Creekside sites covered by this SPD.

Potential exists for a new Creekside pavilion



5.3.12 This district also includes the Sittingbourne Retail Park, an out-of-town style retail destinations comprising large footprint retail outlets and associated

surface car parking. This is likely to be retained in its current arrangement in the longer term.

5.3.13 In the Milton Creek area, residential development should generally be in the order of three to four storeys, including town houses and some apartments (this would also accord with the flood risk mitigations suggested in Section 2.5) . Taller buildings might be appropriate adjacent to Eurolink Way and the new retail uses as well as along the Creek-edge subject to consideration of long views into and out of the area. Two storey residential buildings may be appropriate within the residential areas, where mews style development is proposed and detailed flood risk assessment indicates that this would be acceptable.

Table 5.2 Summary of the potential for the Milton Creek district

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large area of vacant and redundant industrial land • Includes ‘out-of-town’ style retail park • Divided from town centre by presence of railway line • Opportunities potentially exist to extend the town centre northwards • Turns back on and restricts public access to the Creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 11,500 sqm gross new retail development located next to Eurolink Way and integrated with the new bridge and town centre retail development. This equates to approximately 8,000 sqm net retail floorspace. This is flexible and could include a range of retail unit sizes or other uses including leisure. • Capacity exists for a major new neighbourhood for Sittingbourne with approximately 1,070 new homes comprising mainly townhouses but with some apartments closer to the station on Eurolink Way. Further potential exists for new residential uses above retail uses subject to more detailed design. • Inclusion of new education and health facilities to serve the new community. • New link created across the railway line and down through the development area towards the creek, which is linked to the Milton Creek and Church Marshes Parklands. • Potential for the development of small scale office and commercial uses along Eurolink Way in the longer

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EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
	<p>term, which could have an important complementary role in supporting the town centre regeneration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Realignment of traffic junctions along Eurolink Way enhancing the townscape and accessibility for all users.

Figure 5.8 3D Visualisation of masterplan looking south over the Milton Creek development area



Figure 5.9 Illustrative Masterplan: Milton Creek



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5.4 WESTERN GATEWAY

5.4.1 To the west of the town centre, the vision sees streets and spaces defined and enclosed, with highways and traffic movement re-orientated. This sees left over spaces and inactive backs of properties addressed, gateway locations enhanced and development related to local assets represented by Cockleshell Walk and Holy Trinity Church.

5.4.2 Two of the sites within the western gateway are currently surface car parks run by the Council. Release of these for development is dependent upon implementing the car park strategy outlined in Section 6 of the SPD. Land backing onto the railway line at the junction of St. Michael's Road and Dover Street is also dependant upon changes to the highways being implemented. Realignment of traffic junctions and rationalisation of highway movements will be needed to improve the legibility of the area and access for all users. This is also required as part of the wider redevelopment of the town centre and the movement issues associated with this redevelopment (see section 6 for further detail).

5.4.3 Achievement of these changes will help create a town centre residential quarter focused around the Church. Residential units here should comprise a mix of types and tenures, are likely to be primarily town houses. The scale of development should respond to surrounding buildings and thus primarily be three storeys high, though opportunities exist for taller buildings on corner plots and adjacent to the railway line. All homes will have access to either private or communal / semi-private open space with parking integral to the development.

Table 5.3 Summary of the potential for the Western Gateway district

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposed backs of properties, service areas, surface car parking, car sales and some vacant properties undermine setting of Cockleshell Green and the church. • Incoherent townscape and building typologies represent an unattractive arrival point into town and inefficient use of land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationalisation of the street network and removal of surface car parking allows for repairs to be made to the urban fabric, defining this entry point into the town centre. • Approximately 150 new houses, developed in a way that addresses left over spaces and inactive backs of properties. • Potential for some secondary retail floorspace on the ground floor of new residential development fronting West Street should demand exist. • Enhancement of the setting of Cockleshell Green and Holy Trinity Church.

Figure 5.10 Illustrative Masterplan: Western Gateway



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5.5 EASTERN GATEWAY

5.5.1 Opportunities to the east of the High Street relate to the future of the Council offices, Cinema building and the potential for restructuring this part of town. The illustrative masterplan envisages a major improvement to the setting of St. Michael's Church, with a phased refurbishment or replacement of the inactive and unattractive buildings that enclose the space with actively fronted buildings to define the limits of the Church yard and enliven its edges. Uses here will be primarily residential, though may also include some ground floor retail, commercial and or civic uses, including a new community hall (replacing the existing hall within the church grounds). Buildings here will need to reflect the high architectural qualities of the Sittingbourne High Street Conservation Area. Town houses could front the northern side of the Church yard, with taller apartment buildings fronting onto St. Michael's Road.

5.5.2 The Council is considering options for its future accommodation. A new office building adjacent to the new station square or within the Civic Quarter may be appropriate options, which would then release the current site for redevelopment. To the rear of the council offices is a cluster of sites which comprises several vehicle showrooms and a vacant site which benefits from a lapsed planning application. Opportunities now exist to reconsider its use. These sites should be addressed comprehensively, though potential does exist to develop part of the site prior to the Council offices being vacated.

5.5.3 The structure of this development opportunity should be closely related to opportunities to improve the Sittingbourne High Street Conservation Area afforded by the possible improvement or redevelopment of the Bell Centre and Cinema building. The former is allocated in the Local Plan for mixed use including residential, community (including an education facility), offices or retail use.

5.5.4 The structure of any development should address the surrounding exposed backs of properties, enclosing spaces with attractive shared surface streets and spaces. A mix of residential townhouses apartments and some commercial development is appropriate in this location. The scale of building here should be in the order of three to four storeys.

5.5.5 At the far eastern end of East Street a smaller scale opportunity exists to define the eastern gateway into the town centre at the junction of East Street and St. Michael's Road. Development on this corner benefits from a Local Plan allocation for housing. It would help to strengthen the enclosure of the street which otherwise begins to break down in this area. This could be a modest apartment led scheme arranged over four storeys, with potentially some commercial activity on the ground floor. All new homes in this area will have access to private or communal / semi-private open space with parking integral to the development.

Table 5.4 Summary of the potential for the Eastern Gateway district

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Offices and car park • Vacant land and vehicle showrooms, comprising an inefficient use of land, which could be relocated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential relocation of the Council Offices provides a development opportunity, taking in under-utilised and vacant land for the development of approximately 224 new homes comprising a mix of houses and

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surrounded by residential or low-grade retail of two-three storeys Adjacent to St. Michael's Church, Cinema building and Bell Centre. All could be improved to enhance the setting of the Sittingbourne High Street Conservation Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apartments based around a network of well-defined and attractive mews style spaces. Development is orientated to enhance the setting of St. Michael's Church at the heart of the eastern end of the High Street. New development defines the junction of St. Michael's Road and East Street, enhancing this gateway location into the town and acting as a 'bookend' to improvements to the Western Gateway.

Figure 5.11 Illustrative Masterplan: Eastern Gateway



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5.6 MILL WAY TRANSITION / FRINGE AREA

5.6.1 Towards the north and western edge of the SPD area, this is where the regeneration and development opportunities bleed into surrounding communities and character areas. This area currently comprises a mix of different use types, including industrial and employment uses, including the former Paper Mill site and associated service corridor and steam railway.

5.6.2 The main part of the redundant Paper Mill site falls outside of the SPD boundary but is recognised as a significant redevelopment opportunity. Potential future uses will be guided by the Local Plan and the Council's employment land review, although it may provide scope for residential and supporting mixed use facilities. The Council may in due course prepare a Masterplan SPD for this site, providing more information on the mix, quantum and layout of development. However, it is important that the opportunity here is not seen in isolation and must compliment the wider development opportunities in the town centre and Milton Creek areas.

5.6.3 Associated with the former Paper Mill is the service corridor, which runs north towards Kemsley. This is an important link to the historic legacy of Sittingbourne and Milton Regis. The presence of the Steam Railway is an interesting and potentially important tourist attraction connecting the town centre with the Church Marshes Country Park. Operation of the Steam Railway should be retained, unless it is proved unviable. In this event, the Council will seek to retain the route of the railway as a green corridor, providing walking and cycling routes from the area along the Creek and up to the Country Park.

5.6.4 At present, the Steam Railway terminates by the Retail Park in the area at the Creek head. The aspiration within this

SPD is to encourage this area to be developed as a cluster of cultural, heritage and tourist attractions. This will though require external funding and partnership working arrangements to be established. A small centre, including cafes and bars will also be encouraged in this location, with uses orientated to take advantage of the waterside location.

5.6.5 The masterplan also illustrates a cluster of employment uses around the Steam Railway and adjacent to the retail park. Moving northwards, between the Creek and Steam Railway the masterplan identifies potential for new residential development, taking advantage of the south facing aspect and views across the creek. This development should be responsive to its creekside location and make provision for public access along the waterfront. Paths here should connect with the Saxon Shore Way, providing a recreational route to the Church Marshes Country Park.

5.6.6 This area includes the Milton Pipes concrete works, which is currently based on two sites. Both sites fall within the Milton Creek Policy AAP8 area identified in the Local Plan (2008). There is potential for the activities to be consolidated on the Creek Side site, thereby releasing the Mill Lane / Cooks Lane site for redevelopment. However it will also be important to secure the future of Craft Marsh on the north side of the Creek for its nature conservation value. The Mill Lane / Cooks Lane site could be suitable for a mix of housing in the longer term.

5.6.7 A mix of housing types and sizes will be encouraged throughout the area, though these should primarily be family housing with some apartments alongside the main road frontage, helping to define the corners of development blocks. Links through the area will allow for improved connections between Milton Creek and Milton Regis.

5.6.8 Through the Mill Way transition area, buildings should be in the order of three to four storeys tall, though some two storey residential buildings might be appropriate within the residential areas, particularly where mews style development is proposed.

Table 5.5 Summary of the potential for the Mill Way Transition / Fringe area district

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	VISION / PROPOSED USES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of industrial uses some of which are redundant (Paper Mill) or underused. • Steam Railway runs through middle of the area: a feature of local distinctiveness but also a barrier to the Creek • Mill Way a vehicle dominated route 	<p>Development of approximately 628 new homes comprising a mix of town houses and apartments.</p> <p>Creation of an active street with residential and employment uses, connecting Milton Regis to Milton Creek and the town centre and enhancing accessibility for all users.</p> <p>Retention of steam railway as a local attraction and it's role strengthened with a cluster of heritage and cultural attractions at its southern terminus and around the Creek head (subject to viability and external funding), reflecting the historic legacy and nature of the Creek environment</p> <p>Access to the Creekside path and Church Marshes Country Park.</p> <p>Future use of Paper Mill site subject to separate assessment and possible future SPD</p>

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Figure 5.12 Potential scale of new residential development in the Mill Way area



Figure 5.13 Illustrative Masterplan: Mill Way Fringe / Transition Area



