



# EOHS MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

## **East of High Street Masterplan Framework Report**

**Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council**

11 June 2025

v2.4



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Figure 1: Masterplan Framework

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (the Council) has an exciting opportunity to enhance Tonbridge as a successful town to ensure it continues to be a thriving, sustainable urban community. The Tonbridge town centre masterplan framework aims to support the Council to transform council-owned land and buildings, focusing on the area east of the town's high street, surrounding Sainsbury's supermarket. The land is currently home to numerous surface car parks and the well-supported but ageing Angel Leisure Centre (the Angel Centre).

The Council is in a strong position to support the delivery of much-needed homes while enhancing the character and identity of the East-Of-High-Street (EOHS) area of the town centre. Building on Mace's

work during Phase 2, the approach to the masterplan has been housing and landscape-led and has also been significantly influenced by identifying a suitable location for the replacement leisure centre within the 'red line' of the EOHS area. The parameters used to establish an agreed location of the new leisure centre has been informed by the work done independently by leisure centre specialist, Alliance Leisure Services.

The UK Government is moving ahead with its plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) of local authority structures across England; this will likely include change within Kent. These anticipated political changes, coupled with the condition of the existing leisure centre, which requires significant investment to even maintain the current standards, have brought an urgency for the new replacement leisure centre to ensure Tonbridge residents continue to benefit from continued service of leisure facilities. The masterplan framework has shifted focus to meet this new challenge and help the Council deliver the most value to its residents before any LGR changes happen.

The masterplan framework balances the demand for new housing with the town centre's character and identity. Engagement with the local community and stakeholders has been vital to shaping a masterplan framework that can meet both local aspirations and the Council's corporate objectives.

## Masterplan framework

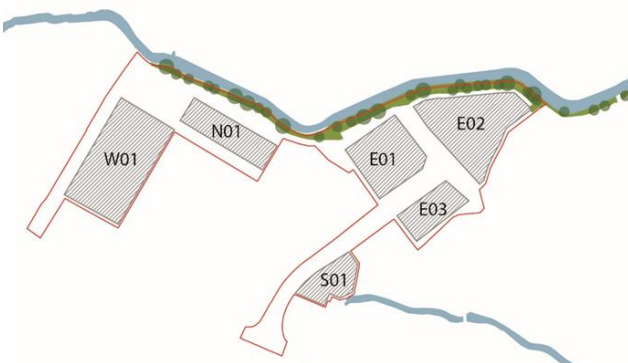


Figure 2: Site key

The EOHS Masterplan Framework sets out a transformative vision for Tonbridge town centre, aiming to create a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive urban environment. The framework integrates key elements from three tested development options to optimise housing, leisure, and public realm outcomes.

Central to the plan is the relocation of the Angel Leisure Centre to Sovereign Way Mid Car Park (E01), activating the River Medway frontage and enhancing connectivity through improved pedestrian and cycling routes.

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Key features include:

- **122 new homes** at Sovereign Way North (E02), with flood-resilient design and undercroft parking.
- A **new leisure centre** at E01, designed for accessibility, flood resilience, and active public engagement.
- A **primary healthcare facility** at E03 and a **budget hotel** at Vale Road (S01) and supporting commercial space where appropriate.
- Enhanced public realm, including a **linear river park**, active frontages, and improved east-west connectivity.
- Design strategies that prioritise sustainability, flood mitigation, and placemaking.

## Delivery

The Council has committed to delivering the new leisure centre first, recognising its catalytic role and the urgency posed by potential LGR. Each development plot has been assessed for delivery options, including unconditional sales, developer procurement, or Council-led investment. In summary:

- **E01:** Leisure centre delivery is prioritised and fully funded by the Council.
- **E02:** Most market-attractive site, with multiple disposal and development options.
- **E03:** Partially used for leisure centre parking; potential for a new medical centre.
- **N01:** Angel Centre to be demolished post-leisure centre completion; site suitable for housing or hotel.
- **S01:** Independent hotel development opportunity.
- **W01:** Retained for parking in the short term; potential for future mixed-use development.

## Future opportunities

Several strategic opportunities are identified to enhance long-term viability and community benefit:

- **Flood risk mitigation:** Post-2025 Leigh Barrier upgrades could reduce flood constraints, improving development viability.
- **Build-to-Rent (BTR):** Alternative investor models could unlock rental housing potential.
- **Planning framework:** Adoption of a site-specific masterplan into the Local Plan is recommended to maintain design quality and control.
- **Viability improvements:** Future market conditions, grant funding, and placemaking benefits from early developments may enhance financial feasibility.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Continued collaboration with Network Rail, Sainsbury's, and healthcare providers is essential for integrated development.
- **Public engagement:** Further outreach is needed, especially to younger residents, to build trust and ensure inclusive planning.

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# CONTENTS

<b>1. The brief.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Market insight &amp; benchmarking.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Development of the masterplan framework.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Progressing a viable development.....	31
<b>4. Masterplan framework.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>5. Delivery.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>6. Future opportunities.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>7. Appendices .....</b>	<b>60</b>
Appendix 1: Public Engagement .....	60
Appendix 2: Stakeholder Engagement .....	64



1

## THE BRIEF



# 1. THE BRIEF

The Council is seizing a key opportunity to build on the success of Tonbridge town centre, aiming to ensure it remains a vibrant, sustainable urban hub. At the heart of this ambition is a masterplan framework focused on unlocking the potential of council-owned land and buildings, particularly the area east of the High Street, surrounding the Sainsbury's supermarket. This location, currently occupied by surface car parks and the well-used but ageing Angel Centre, presents a prime site for regeneration and transformation.

Mace has worked with architects, Periscope, and commercial property agency, Vail Williams, to outline a framework for change in the Council's flagship regeneration site. Mace and Periscope were responsible for preparing a masterplan framework and spatial development proposals, supported by viability and delivery analysis from Vail Williams to ensure the assumptions made were grounded in deliverability. The team made sure to consider the housing and employment growth requirements for the area and engage closely with emerging national and local planning policy.

The brief for the EOHS masterplan framework outlines a comprehensive plan for the development and regeneration of the town centre. The focus is the creation of a high-level masterplan framework, supported by viability and delivery analysis, to meet housing and employment growth requirements.

Key components include strategic diagrams, sketch views, viability assessments, and stakeholder engagement summaries. The framework seeks to emphasise the integration of the river into the town's life, the provision of physical and social infrastructure, and the implementation of sustainable design and climate change mitigation strategies. Urban design principles focus on creating a sense of place, enhancing permeability and connectivity, and establish a positive relationship with the town centre conservation areas. The brief also required engagement activities with elected members, internal council teams, the public, and wider stakeholders to ensure a collaborative and inclusive approach. See outline of the engagement in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

The Council sees the framework as a starting point and recognises that the brief needs to evolve in response to a shifting political landscape. As the work to develop the masterplan framework has been undertaken, the brief has evolved as follows;

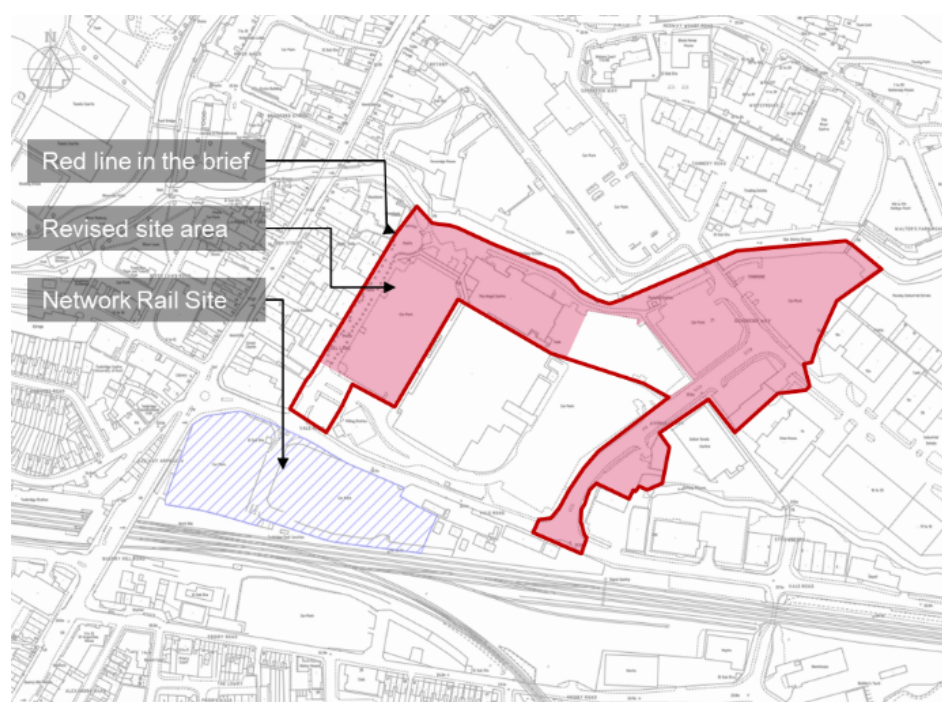


Figure 3: Changes to site red line

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- A change to the redline due to the complexities of the Sainsbury's lease agreement on the parking east of the Sainsbury's and adjacent to the Angel Centre.
  - Omitting the small parcel of land adjacent to the filling station that is not owned by the Council.
  - Prioritisation of the new leisure centre programme due to existing building condition and potential for reorganisation. This shifted the initial options for the masterplan framework to focus on 3 possible locations for a new leisure centre.
  - Acknowledging the longer-term opportunity for Network Rail to integrate their sites into a broader masterplan. However, given Network Rail internal decision-making processes and the relative lack of maturity of their development plans, it was decided not to focus on integration with their sites.
  - Additionally, given the need to keep the framework high-level, it was agreed that highways pre-application discussions and Design South East Panel design review would be explored at a future stage.



# 2

## MARKET INSIGHT AND BENCHMARKING



## 2. MARKET INSIGHT & BENCHMARKING

Vail Williams provided market insight and benchmarked values for potential development of EOHS and explored various commercial aspects including market research, developer interest and soft market testing. The primary objective was to provide approximate gross development values (GDVs) for different uses such as residential, retirement, care, Build-to-Rent (BTR) and hotel accommodation. The findings and insights are crucial for understanding the potential and viability of proposed development, ensuring that it aligns with the broader economic and market trends.

The overview of the current economic climate highlights the impact of global trade tensions and geopolitical issues on the UK housing market. Despite these challenges, the UK housing market has shown resilience, with rising property prices and strong demand for new mortgages.

The local market research focuses on Tonbridge, providing detailed analysis of housing prices and trends, which are essential for estimating GDVs for various residential units. Additionally soft market testing has been undertaken to gauge developer interest in retirement, care, BTR and hotel sectors, offering valuable insights into the potential demand and financial considerations for each sector. The conclusions drawn from this market testing are pivotal for shaping the masterplan framework and ensuring the successful delivery of development.

### The UK residential market

The UK residential market has shown resilience despite various economic challenges. A Halifax report indicates that the housing market started 2025 positively, with average property prices rising by 0.7% in January, recovering from a slight dip in December 2024. This increase pushed the average property price to a new record high of £299,138. However, annual growth slowed to 3.0%, the slowest rate since July 2024.

Affordability remains a significant challenge for many potential buyers, but the market's resilience is noteworthy. Despite geopolitical uncertainties and waning consumer confidence, other key indicators for the housing market look fairly positive. The Bank of England has made its first base rate cut of the year, and household earnings are expected to continue outpacing inflation, easing some financial pressure from the cost-of-living squeeze.

Mortgage rates are likely to hover between 4% and 5% in 2025, influenced by global financial markets and domestic monetary policy. Buyers have been adjusting to this new normal, understanding that rates are unlikely to return to historical lows of 1%. The fundamental issue in the housing market remains the lack of supply, which, coupled with a gradual improvement in affordability, should support further modest house price growth this year.

### Housing types

Several general assumptions were outlined for residential development, including the provision of parking spaces, limited demand for 3-bed flats, and the potential for premium pricing for units with balconies and river views. It recommends excluding 1-bed houses from the mix and replacing them with 2-bed houses or flats to optimise return on cost. Additionally, there is an emphasis on the importance of building insurance availability and the impact of flood risk on viability.

- **Houses** - Consideration was given to development of new houses in Tonbridge, for example Cala Homes' Barden Croft and Skillcrown's Priory Mews. Barden Croft offers estate housing with gardens, averaging £576/sqft, while Priory Mews, a higher density town centre development, averages £495/sqft. The expected gross development values (GDVs) for new houses in this location are approximately £340,000 for a 1-bed unit, £455,000 for a 2-bed unit, £575,000 for a 3-bed unit, and £625,000 for a 4-bed unit. These values reflect the urban town centre design and the specific characteristics of each development.

- **Flats** - Analysis of new flats on the market in Tonbridge was undertaken, including converted office buildings and new developments. Riverbank House, a converted office building, averages £448/sqft, while The Nave, built over a Morrisons store, averages £444/sqft. Law House, a high-quality new build development, averages £540/sqft. The expected GDVs for new flats in this location are approximately £270,000 for a 1-bed unit, £355,000 for a 2-bed unit, and £415,000 for a 3-bed unit. These values incorporate factors such as parking availability and the quality of the development.
- **Maisonettes** - Maisonettes are a less common residential typology in the local market, with no direct evidence for new developments. The recommendation was for a mid-point rate between flats and houses for financial modelling, considering the advantages of an own front door and forecourt for parking. The expected GDVs for maisonettes are approximately £535,000 for a 3-bed unit and £585,000 for a 4-bed unit. The exercise noted the importance of securing building insurance on acceptable terms and conducting sensitivity analysis to ensure viability of maisonettes.
- **Affordable Housing** – The findings noted that the affordable housing market is currently not strong, with typical blended affordable prices as low as 50% of private market value. It suggests modelling affordable housing at 55% of private sale rates, with sensitivity testing at 50% for a worst-case scenario and 60% for a best-case scenario. The need for central government policy support and funding was noted to improve the affordable housing market and ensure the inclusion of affordable units within EOHS.

## Market engagement

Market testing for EOHS has revealed promising opportunities, particularly in the care home sector. There is strong potential for care home development, with premium land values estimated between £1.7 million and £1.9 million per acre for a serviced site. This sector's demand is driven by the town's higher residential sale values and an ageing population, making it a viable option to include in the masterplan. Incorporating care uses could significantly improve viability and align with the Council's objectives.

Interest from later living developers is currently low, with numerous major operators indicating that the town has sufficient supply for now. However, this is expected to change over time as market conditions evolve. It is advisable to conduct full market testing at the appropriate time, including a wider range of later living and care developers to ensure comprehensive coverage and future interest.

The viability of BTR tenures appears marginal at this stage. Developers have expressed concerns about the economic feasibility of multi-family housing in this location, suggesting that rents may not justify the build costs. Despite this, continued dialogue with interested developers is recommended to explore potential joint ventures or alternative strategies. Widening the marketing efforts based on further responses could also help in identifying viable opportunities.

The site shows suitability for budget hotel operators, with a budget hotel operator expressing interest in an 80-room hotel. However, their offer highlights some viability challenges, particularly regarding rental terms. Further market testing with additional budget operators is suggested to explore better options and ensure the project's success. The overall aspect and nature of nearby occupiers make EOHS more suitable for budget hotels rather than luxury accommodation.

General consideration for all sectors include understanding the flood risk solution as part of any detailed proposal. This is a significant constraint that needs to be addressed to ensure successful development. Care and retirement uses may require lower parking provisions compared to traditional residential uses, which could be beneficial in terms of land use and generating employment. These factors should be carefully considered in the masterplan to optimise EOHS's potential and meet the Council's objectives.

Later living market	
<b>Developers contacted:</b> 2 x Developers	<b>Findings:</b> <p><b>Developer 1:</b> Currently, there isn't a strong requirement for a new retirement development in Tonbridge due to recent projects. However, they indicated potential future interest, particularly in the eastern plot EO2.</p> <p><b>Developer 2:</b> They have a positive view of Tonbridge but are currently engaged in other projects. They might consider a new site in 2-3 years.</p>
<b>Interest:</b> <p>Currently low interest from major operators, but this is expected to change over time.</p> <p>Full market testing recommended at the appropriate time to include a wider range of developers.</p>	
Care home market	
<b>Developers contacted:</b> 2 x Developers	<b>Findings:</b> <p><b>Developer 1:</b> Expressed interest in part of the site for a care home, contingent on flood risk solutions and project timelines. They provided a formal expression of interest.</p> <p><b>Developer 2:</b> Strong interest in the site, particularly the Sovereign Way North Car Park for a care home. They estimated a developer might pay around £2.6m for the site, assuming planning consent for 80 beds over 3 storeys.</p>
<b>Interest:</b> <p>Strong potential for care home development, with premium land values estimated at £1.7m to £1.9m per acre for a serviced site.</p> <p>Recommendation to include care uses in the masterplan to improve viability and align with client objectives.</p>	
BTR market	
<b>Developers contacted:</b> 2 x Developers	<b>Findings:</b> <p><b>Developer 1:</b> Indicated that multi-family housing might not be viable due to rent not justifying build costs. They suggested a joint venture with the council could be more attractive.</p> <p><b>Developer 2:</b> Did not respond, suggesting either a lack of interest or capacity to take on new projects.</p>
<b>Interest:</b>	

Marginal viability for BTR use, but continued dialogue with interested developers is advised.  
Potential to widen marketing efforts based on further responses.

### Hotel market

#### Developers contacted:

2 x Developers

#### Findings:

**Developer 1:** Showed interest in an 80-room hotel but highlighted viability challenges due to rental offers. They provided a formal offer with specific terms.

**Developer 2:** Did not respond, likely due to existing representation in the area.

#### Interest:

Suitable for budget hotel operators, with further market testing recommended to explore additional operators.

An interested operator's offer indicates some viability challenges, but further testing could yield better results.

The East of High Street site offers a valuable opportunity to deliver a balanced mix of uses that go beyond residential development. Incorporating a range of complementary uses will help create a vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient town centre that meets the evolving needs of the community.

- **Care Home:** The site is well-suited to accommodate a modern care facility, responding to the town's ageing population and the growing demand for high-quality, purpose-built care environments. This use can also contribute to local employment and provide essential services within walking distance of the town centre.
- **Budget Hotel:** There is potential to introduce a budget hotel, which would support tourism and business travel while increasing footfall in the town centre. A hotel in this location would benefit from proximity to shops, leisure facilities, and public transport, enhancing the area's appeal to visitors.
- **Build-to-Rent (BTR):** While current market conditions present some viability challenges for BTR schemes, the site's central location and connectivity make it a strong candidate for future rental housing. Alternative delivery models and changing investor appetite may unlock opportunities for this tenure in the medium to long term.

This broader mix of uses will support the Council's placemaking ambitions, diversify the local economy, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the town centre.



# 3

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

## 3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

To expand on the relationships developed in Phases 1 and 2 that shaped the Council's priorities and design principles, wider community stakeholders were engaged. Through this evolving engagement, the consultant team gained a deeper understanding of community needs while fostering awareness and enthusiasm for the Council's plans for the EOHS area.

With the support of the Council's project team, the consultant team connected with the Tonbridge community using a two-pronged approach: hosting focus groups at the Angel Centre with selected diverse groups and conducting wider public digital engagement.

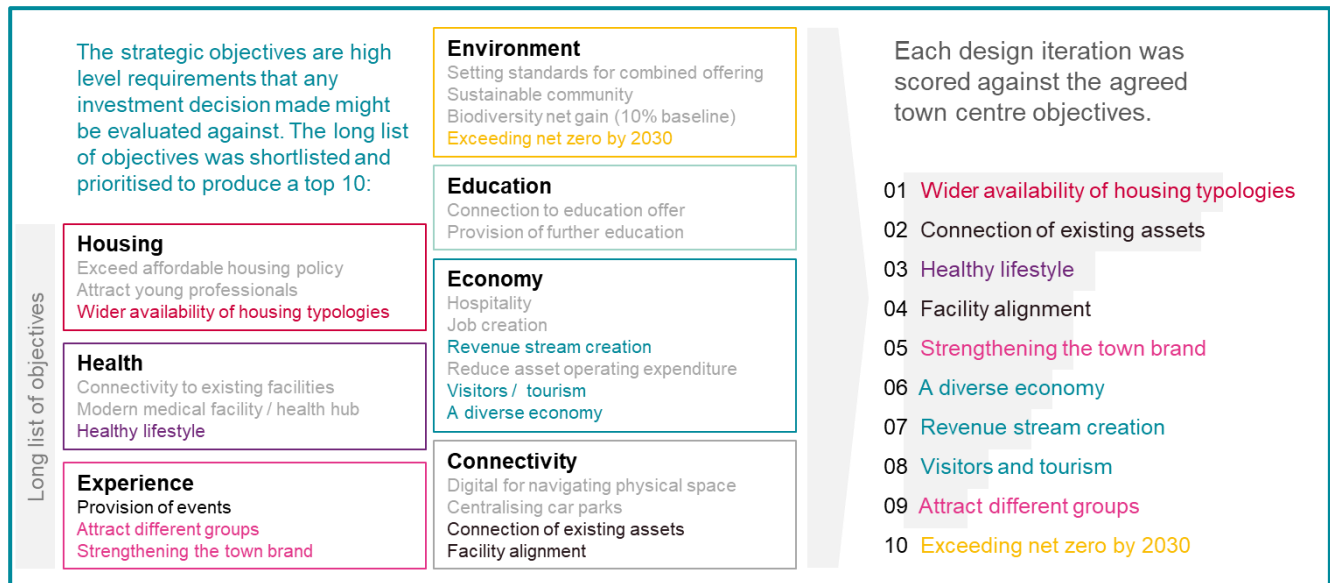


Figure 4: Phase 1 Development priorities

Net Zero by 2030 – setting an example for private sector to follow which meets the town plan.	Ensure a sustainable positive revenue baseline, net of operational maintenance costs	Meet Affordable Housing Policy; balance of type and tenure to reflect project requirements
<b>Baseline assumptions identified by stakeholders as essential considerations for any development</b>		

Figure 5: Phase 1 Baseline assumptions

Building on the work done during Phases 1 and 2, the public engagement simplifies the 10-priority programme objectives into five discussion themes. These themes retain the original principles but are more accessible for public and stakeholder groups.

The aims of these themes are to:

- Group issues into broader topics for holistic discussion
- Encourage open discussions at events and online engagement through questionnaires
- Make themes relatable to everyday experiences
- Gather quantitative feedback to inform the masterplan design
- Reflect the broad status of the masterplan
- Focus on reasons behind lifestyle, transport and behaviour choices rather than design opinions.

This engagement formed the foundation from which a masterplan framework could be developed.





Figure 6: Priorities to themes

In summary, the framework must present a clear vision for EOHS, emphasizing the most important and distinctive qualities that should be preserved and celebrated in future developments. It should establish design principles that guide more detailed planning stages, ensuring high-quality outcomes in the delivery of new homes, commercial spaces, and community facilities. Additionally, the framework must acknowledge the Council's commitment to providing a new leisure centre within EOHS and identify site-specific challenges that could impact successful delivery.

The framework marks the beginning of a longer journey. It is vital that development proposals are inclusive, relevant and aligned with the aspirations of those who live, work, and spend time in the town centre, to maximise benefits for the whole community. The framework communicates the outcomes of scenario-testing and the application of urban design principles. The plans and diagrams are intentionally indicative, exploring potential approaches to the transformation of EOHS.



*Figure 7: Benchmark development: Meridian Water Phase 1, Enfield Council, London  
The phasing and objectives of the masterplan had to be ambitious, yet deliverable. Photo credit, Enfield Council.*



## The site and its context

The area identified for the masterplan framework is located east of the High Street and sits within the town centre. The boundaries are defined by the banks of the River Medway, the east frontage of the High Street shops, Vale Road on the south, and Avenue Du Puy on the west. The site excludes Sainsbury's supermarket and the car park located east of the supermarket (but includes the car parks located east of Avenue Du Puy and a car park east of Sovereign Way).



Figure 8: Project site with the existing Angel Centre highlighted in yellow



Figure 9: The high street

The site forms part of Tonbridge town centre, which presents a great variety of uses, shaped by history and by nature. Within the town centre boundary, the traditional streets are complemented by open spaces, flood plain in Tonbridge Park and productive uses on the east.

The town identity is tied to its heritage features and leisure assets associated with the natural landscape. It is rich in historic character, with two conservation areas located within the town centre. There are significant opportunities to better connect with the surrounding landscape, community and leisure assets.

## Site constraints

There are three main constraints for EOHS:

- **The River Medway** provides an ecological structure of Tonbridge, supporting lush green spaces, historic landmarks and recreational opportunities. The river is also a source of flooding and a movement barrier in certain areas of the town, including the EOHS site.
- **The railway:** Tonbridge benefits from being well connected by rail with frequent, direct, high-speed connections to London, Hastings, Ramsgate and Dover. At the same time the railway creates a barrier to north-south permeability and directs people and cars toward few crossing points.
- **The High Street** is the heart of the old market town which develops along its length. The listed buildings and their route are unique elements of the town, but create a close, long frontage which tends to define a "back front" on the project site.

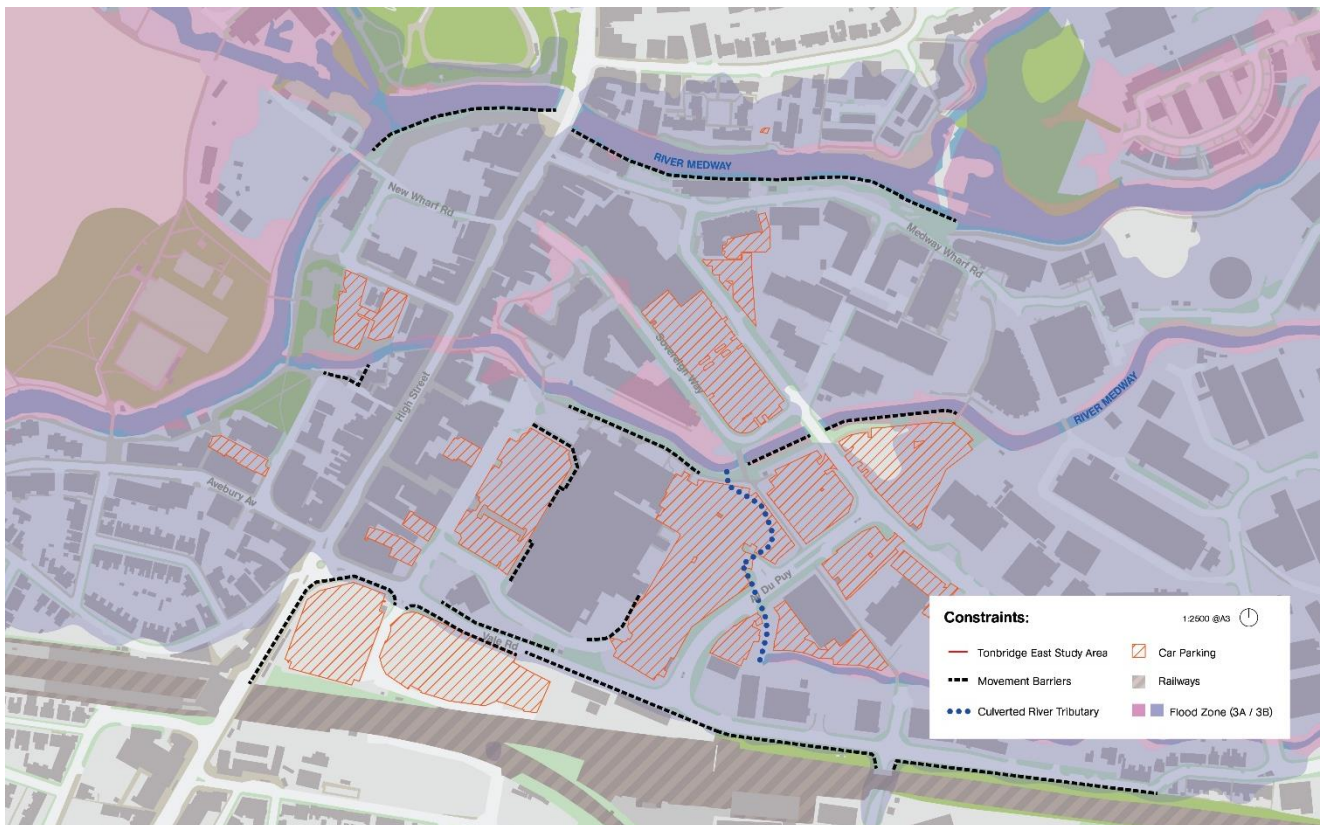


Figure 10: Site Constraints diagrammatic plan



Figure 11: The River Medway from the north edge of the site

The history of Tonbridge's foundation and growth can be traced back to a crossing over the River Medway, in use since the Iron Age. The river has consistently played a crucial role in the town's development. When the Medway was made navigable in the 18th century, it significantly boosted the local economy. However, as river transport declined, the town's relationship with the waterway weakened.



The historical core of Tonbridge – including the strategic positioning of the castle – is closely linked to the river. Yet, in more recent developments, the integration of waterways has been less considered. The river is hidden from view in public spaces, with private developments built up against the banks. Some stretches of the river lack public footpath access, resulting in a fragmented experience of the river within the town's key public areas.

Nonetheless, the river – both visible and concealed – remains a valuable asset, offering opportunities to reconnect with nature and providing vital traffic-free connections. For instance, the Medway serves as the starting point of the Medway River Walk, a 28-mile hiking route through the Kent countryside. The river and its surrounding spaces have the potential to act as a catalyst for a greener, less congested and more climate-resilient future. The masterplan framework explores ways to enhance and better integrate this linear open space into the wider project site.



Figure 12: Diagram showing the south bank of the Medway transformed into a linear park.

The River Medway to the north and the railway line to the south create significant movement barriers, with only a few bridges and underpasses providing crossings. The Sainsbury's superstore and the Angel Centre further reduce permeability, as their combined massing forms a large, low-rise block.

The finished floor level of the site is elevated above the existing level of the Angel car park, and long ramps have been constructed to provide access to the buildings. These further restrict ease of movement through the area.

The community garden to the west of the Angel Centre is poorly overlooked, underused by local residents, and shows signs of anti-social behaviour. The presence of large surface car parks contributes to a car-dominated environment.

In addition, the scale of the retail box and the inactive secondary frontage along Angel Lane contribute to the perception of the site as the "back" of the high street, lacking a clear connection with the most recognisable features of the town centre.

While the River Medway is a significant natural and landscape asset for future development, its presence also introduces substantial constraints for the site:

- The river presents a physical barrier to north–south movement across the site
- The entire site falls within an area of high flood risk.

Fluvial flooding represents the most significant physical constraint, as the site lies within Flood Zone 3b. The site is also affected by surface water.

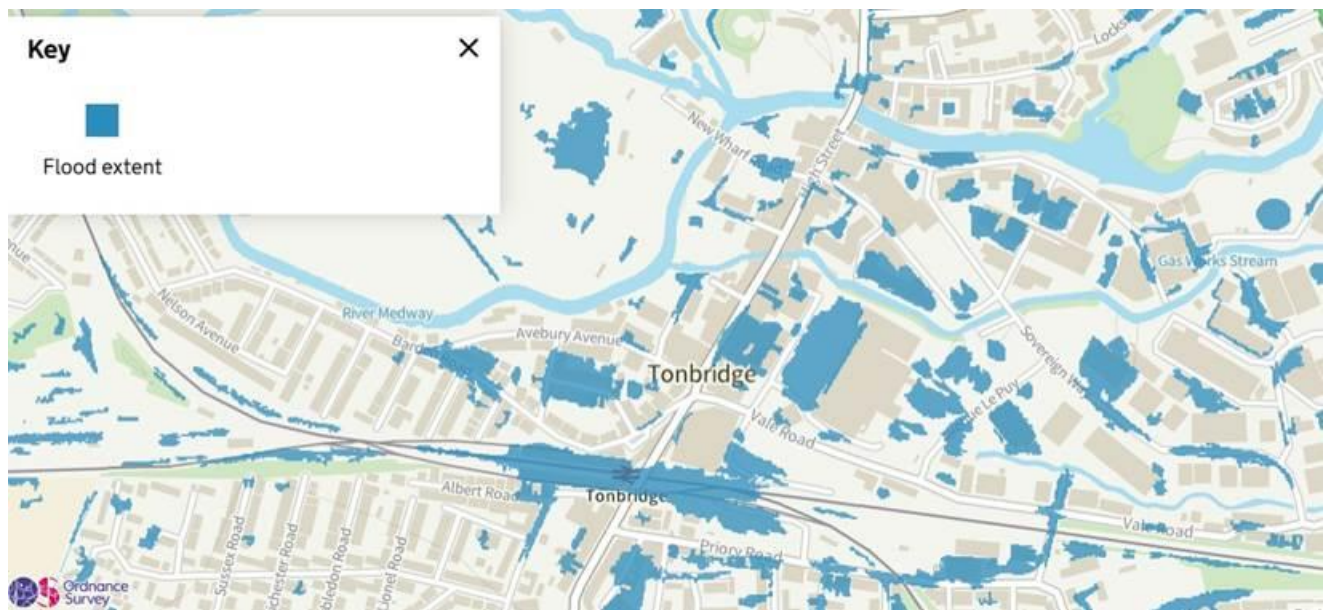


Figure 13: Flood map for planning Gov, surface water 1 in 100

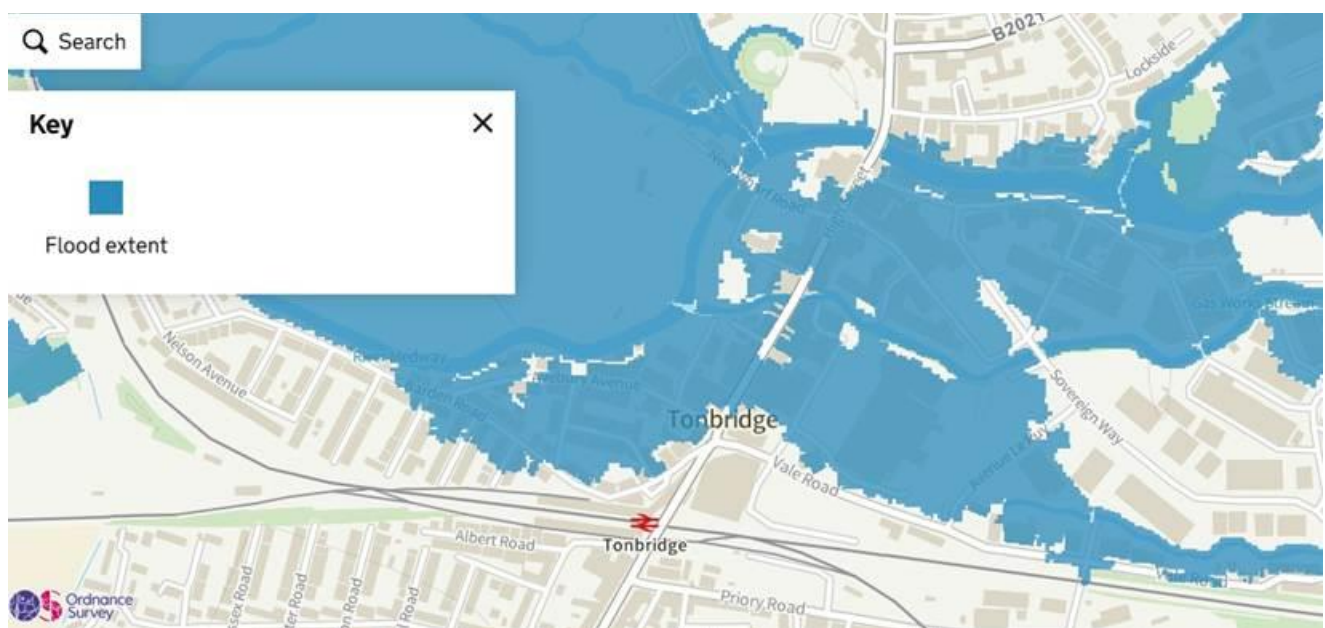


Figure 14: River flood map for planning Gov, river 1 in 100 years

According to the *Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment* (2016), Tonbridge has experienced notable flood events, most recently in 2013, which severely affected the town centre.

Any development proposals on this site will require a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to flood risk management, including:

- Engagement with fluvial flood risk management specialists at the earliest stage
- Site-specific hydraulic and hydrological modelling to assess the baseline flood risk and to demonstrate the safety and viability of proposed development



- Detailed Flood Risk Assessments (FRA) and supporting evidence for all planning applications, demonstrating compliance with national and local planning policy.

Prior to the introduction of any development, substantial infrastructure works are required to address baseline flood risk, including:

- On-site mitigation strategies to reduce flood impact across proposed land uses
- Floodplain compensation measures to ensure no net increase in downstream flood risk
- Integrated water management solutions designed to enhance resilience to surface water flooding.

It should be noted that the complexity and scale of required flood mitigation interventions exceed the scope of this masterplanning exercise however, the development scenarios outlined in the framework are informed by high-level assumptions regarding flood management feasibility.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the implications of the ongoing upgrades to the Leigh Flood Storage Area (FSA), which are scheduled for completion by the end of 2025. These improvements are designed to increase upstream water storage capacity, allowing attenuation of peak flows and controlled downstream release. Upon completion, these works are expected to reduce flood risk to Tonbridge town centre, including the eastern site area. Consequently, the assumptions and strategies within this framework will need to be reviewed and updated in line with revised flood risk assessments post-2025.

## Site opportunities



Figure 15: Site opportunities diagram

At the outset, it is important to emphasise EOHS's strategic role in the sustainable development of Tonbridge. Benefiting from established road and energy infrastructure, strong public-transport links

and an infill location between productive industrial land and the town's historic core, the site presents a pivotal opportunity for growth. Developing here avoids extending services and utilities into agricultural land or the Green Belt, thereby containing Tonbridge's outward suburban sprawl. A well-planned, mixed-use scheme would optimise land use and public investment, broaden the area's housing offer and reinvigorate local businesses on the High Street by increasing footfall and bringing more residents to their doorstep.

The site presents a rare chance to broaden the town centre's residential, social and commercial offer. To the north, the River Medway creates a clear, attractive frontage, and its densely planted banks could be enhanced to form a valuable linear habitat for wildlife. Existing roads already deliver good access to all parts of the site, keeping the need for any additional highway infrastructure to a minimum.

Its proximity to Tonbridge railway station—and the direct services to London—makes the location highly desirable for those who wish to enjoy the town's human scale while staying well-connected to the wider South East. Although the plot lies within walking distance of the conservation area and several listed buildings, it is not itself subject to heritage designations. Even so, any development must adopt a scale, massing and architectural character that sits comfortably within its surrounding context.

## Design considerations in response to site constraints

For this framework, the implications of flood risk for future development have been based on the current conditions. Additional investigations have been undertaken, including a review of precedent approaches and technical strategies applicable to similar high-risk contexts.

Key mitigation measures have been taken as part of the design assumptions for the residential development from planning applications recently submitted within the town centre. These measures have a double objective: to ensure the site is safe for users, and to ensure the development doesn't increase the risk of flooding for third parties. The main measure consisted in locating all residential units at the same height and propose a resilient ground floor design.

In one of the planning applications submitted in proximity to the project site, an acceptable level for residential units has been 600 mm above the Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) level of maximum flood event 1 in 100 years, with an additional 70% increase due to climate change of 23.70 m AOD.

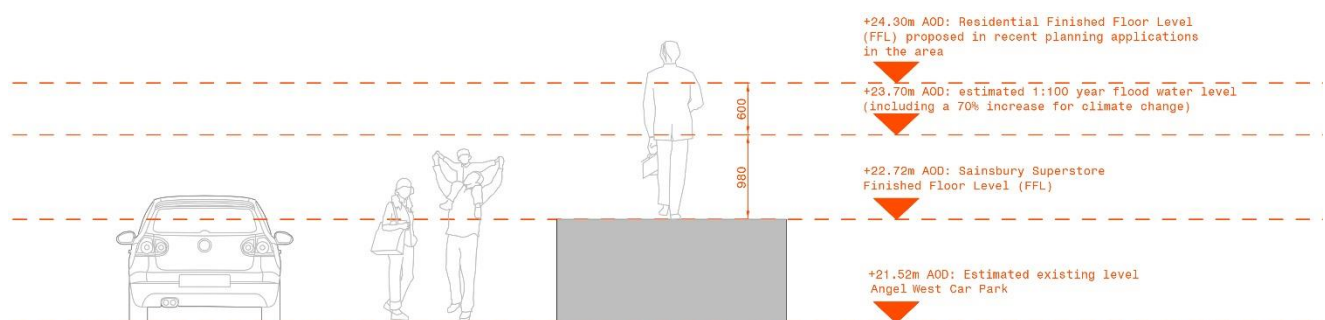


Figure 16 Illustrative section of different ground levels and estimated residential finish floor level (FFL) taken as assumption for the new development.

These requirements are especially challenging in the Angel West car park, which is believed to be the lowest point of the project site and is most affected by surface water. This location also presents complex interface issues with the adjacent Sainsbury's superstore, which has a raised finished floor level.

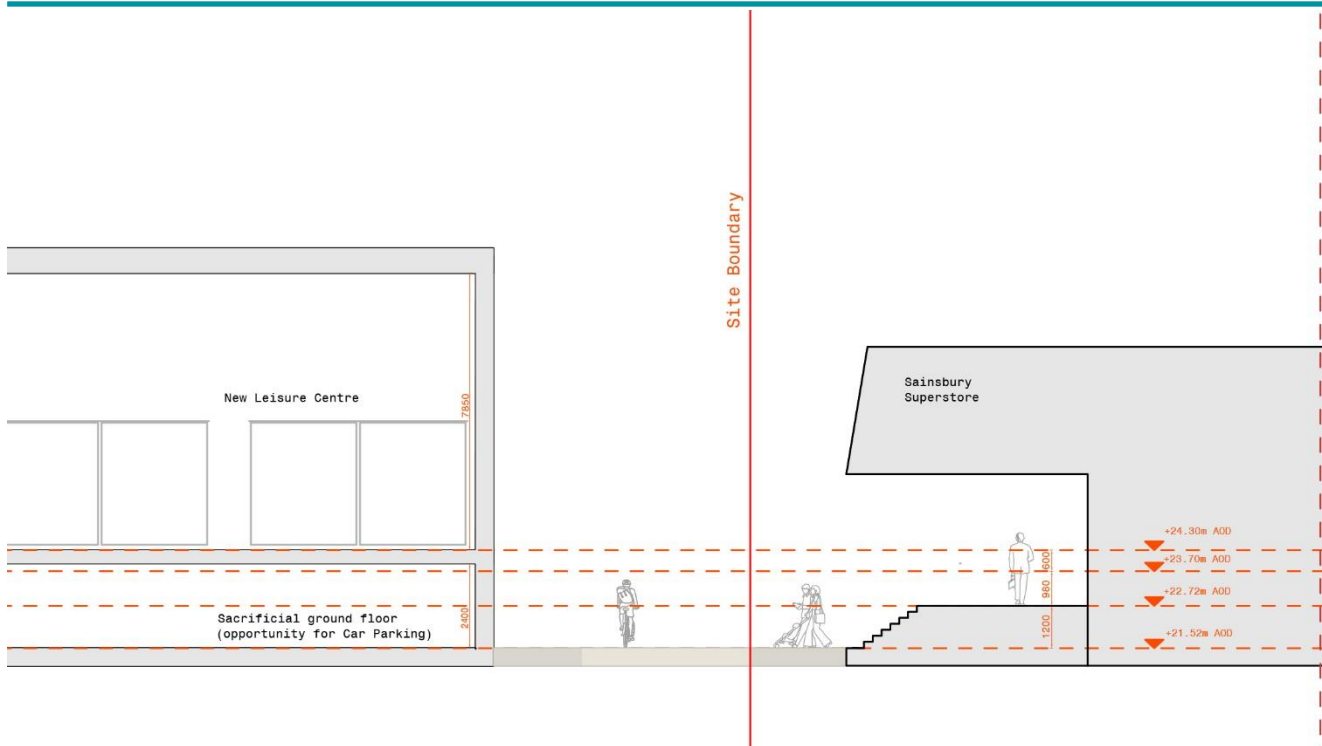


Figure 17: Illustrative section showing how the ground floor relationship between Angel Lane (left) an indicative massing of a new leisure centre (centre) and Sainsbury superstore (right) may result because of flood mitigation measures.

Due to projected increases in flood levels from climate change, it is assumed that residential development on the site would need to begin from the first floor upwards. There is also significant uncertainty regarding the viability of providing commercial spaces at street level without additional flood protection measures, as flood events pose a serious risk to electrical systems and merchandise

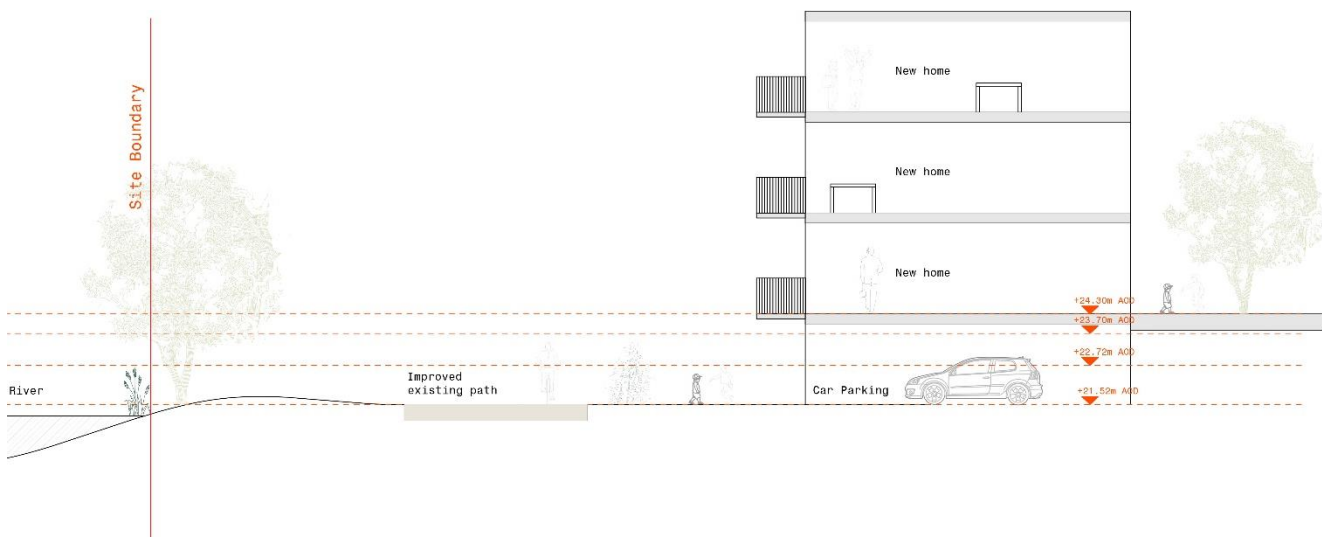


Figure 18: Illustrative section of the river park with a residential building fronting the river. The location of the car park on the ground floor and the new dwelling on the first floor upwards reflects the current masterplan assumptions and highlights the risk of delivering large portions of blank and inactive facades with the new development.

The vertical distribution of building uses shown here, driven primarily by flood risk mitigation, presents significant challenges from an urban design perspective:

- Car parks create "dead edges": Unlike retail, cafes, or residential windows, parking doesn't engage pedestrians. There's no visual interest or social interaction, no sense of arrival, enclosure, or character along a river path.



- Missed opportunity for place-making: River paths are prime public assets. Turning their edges into blank walls or garage doors wastes their potential to be vibrant, active, and safe.
- Active frontages improve perceived and actual safety. A parking garage gives no passive surveillance—no one's watching, which can encourage anti-social behaviour.
- They fail to create a sense of arrival, enclosure, or character along a river path.
- Car-centric design near sensitive ecosystems can harm biodiversity and water quality.

Design solutions can mitigate some of these negative effects by re-establishing active frontages and improving the sense of safety associated with the public realm along the river edge. The following examples are appropriate for the Tonbridge project site and should be further explored as the development progresses and more detailed design work is undertaken.

#### Design solution 1

Provide private amenity space on an “outdoor mezzanine” level, which could bridge the homes on the first floor with the river towpath level. This would offer a degree of privacy for residents while also enabling passive surveillance along the river and high-quality outdoor space for the new dwellings.



*Figure 19: On the left, illustrative section showing the new homes along the Medway with the "outdoor mezzanine" private amenity. On the right side, a similar solution was designed for outdoor amenities in Brannan Street by David Baker Architects, San Francisco,*

#### Design solution 2

Provide individual front doors at ground level, leading to a private staircase up to the first floor. The ground floor space, located below the recommended flood level, would be limited to non-habitable uses such as storage and circulation. To ensure safe evacuation during a flood, the first-floor dwelling would also include a secondary entrance at that level.



Figure 20: Illustrative section showing the new homes along the Medway with the individual front doors facing the riverfront.

The two design solutions presented here are based on a scenario where flood risks remain unresolved and unmitigated. In contrast, implementing offsite flood compensation combined with additional flood defense measures could significantly expand the range of viable development options, including a broader mix of housing types and building typologies.

## Options testing

The consultant team tested a range of options based on an initial set of assumptions, while exploring variables within the defined scope of the exercise. These assumptions were:

- Existing site constraints and, where possible, preferred strategies to address them
- Opportunities presented by the site
- Proposed transport and utilities infrastructure to be introduced
- Housing mix and tenure for the residential provision
- Car parking for the new housing delivered on site and, where possible, public car parking
- Proposed land uses to be incorporated on the site, including:
  - Residential units
  - Leisure centre
  - Health centre / GP practice
  - Hotel (optional)
  - Commercial ground floor uses in mixed-use buildings (optional).
- E01, E02 and W01 were the only sites suitable for the Leisure Centre

The outcomes were evaluated against the relative performance of each option, including viability considerations. As required by the brief, the assessment began with identifying the optimal location for the new leisure centre, as this use is prioritised for early delivery and presents the most demanding spatial requirements among the proposed land uses. Next, the net developable land was defined from the gross site area, excluding existing roads, new roads needed to access the plots,



Figure 21: Development parcels for the Tonbridge EOHS masterplan framework.

and a minimum offset for the river linear park:

These development parcels have codes associated with them:

E01 – Sovereign Way Mid Car Park: 0.29 ha  
E02 – Sovereign Way North Car Park: 0.43 ha  
E03 – Sovereign Way East Car Park: 0.16 ha  
S01 – Vale Road Car Park: 0.1 ha  
N01 – Existing Angel Centre: 0.21 ha  
W01 – Angel West: 0.55 ha

There are 938 car parking spaces currently managed by the Council across the 5 car parks in EOHS, plus the car park located east of the Sainsbury's. Parking is an important service provided to the local community as it gives access to the town centre, especially people who live in areas not well served by public transport.

The framework explored parking provision under the new leisure centre. The car parking provision for new housing is assumed to target a 1:1 ratio provided on plot. Surface parking solutions have been avoided because they are not allocated to homes, and the site has limited capacity. The masterplan testing established a few, key fixed strategies that could frame the different options explored:

- The protection and enhancement of the public open space on the south bank of the river Medway
- The strengthening of the active travel east-west connections along the river as main movement route across the site
- The optimisation for site permeability: bigger development parcels should include break points and parcels adjacent to site boundaries should not obstruct access road corridors

## Land Use

The following options compared three different land use distributions, exploring a good distribution of non-residential uses a higher footfall in the public realm around them and a high degree of public realm activation. Option 1 concentrates non-residential uses (the leisure centre, the hotel, the health centre) on the western side of the site to establish stronger connections with the High Street. Option 2 distributes the uses along the River Medway to maximise the activation of the improved linear park. Option 3 brings non-residential uses away from the high street to better use existing roads, to avoid congestion and to maximise the quantity of residential units facing the riverfront.

## House Types

All residential typologies are capped at 18 m—around seven storeys—striking a balance between optimising density and enabling swift design and delivery. Since the Building Safety Act came into force, the performance gap between low-rise and high-rise schemes has grown: buildings under 18 m benefit from simpler approvals, while taller blocks face longer programmes, higher costs and heavier administrative requirements.

In terms of housing types, the masterplan options explored a perimeter arrangement of gallery-access apartment blocks. This layout delivers a high proportion of dual-aspect homes and creates south-facing courtyards that provide shared amenity space and a visual buffer between new residences and the adjacent industrial area. The same solution is proposed for the residential parcels north of Sainsbury: the south facing open courtyards will offer a visual threshold against the norther blank facade of the superstore.



### 3. Development of the masterplan framework



## Option 1

Number of homes: 289

Types of dwelling: ground floor maisonettes, gallery access and internal double-loaded corridor flats, town houses (E02 only)

Net plot density: 167 d/ha

Site density: 100 d/ha

Number of public parking spaces: 307 (in East Angel car park)

Number of residential car parking spaces (on plot provision): 327

The back of the high street is transformed into a civic hub, fronting an improved community garden on the riverfront. All non-residential uses are located around the western car park to extend the activities of the high street within the site through the arcades. The new residential quarter is located on the eastern side of the site, defining a quiet cluster around an enhanced Sovereign Way.



Figure 22: Option 1 aerial sketch view and ground floor plan

## Option 2

Number of homes: 246

Types of dwelling: ground floor maisonettes, gallery access and internal double-loaded corridor flats, town houses (E02 only)

Net plot density: 142 d/ha

Site density: 85 d/ha

Number of public parking spaces: 357 (in East Angel car park and in E03, serving leisure centre and health centre)

Number of residential car parking spaces (on plot provision): 308

Non-residential uses are distributed along the river to maximise the activation of the Medway path as a key linear public space. The Angel Centre is located at the centre of the new development next to key cycling and walking links. A mix of housing typologies opens opportunities to a wide range of potential new residents.



Figure 23: Option 2 aerial sketch view



### Option 3

Number of homes: 275

Types of dwelling: ground floor maisonettes, gallery access and internal double-loaded corridor flats

Net plot density: 159 d/ha

Site density: 95 d/ha

Number of public parking spaces: 307 (in East Angel car park and in E03)

Number of residential car parking spaces (on plot provision): 296

The western car park is turned into a low-rise high-density area with mews streets and a mid-rise apartment block screening the area from the traffic of Vale Road. Angel Centre's new location celebrates the riverfront of the Medway with green open spaces complementing the indoor leisure facilities. In the same plot the new leisure centre is co-located with a residential block. Health and commercial uses are located on the existing main road.



Figure 24: Option 3 aerial sketch view

## Design development

The design development phase was instrumental in shaping a masterplan framework that is both visionary and grounded in deliverability. This phase built upon the strategic objectives established in earlier stages and was informed by detailed site analysis, stakeholder engagement, and scenario testing. Several key considerations significantly influenced the evolution of the framework, helping to refine land use distribution, spatial relationships, and design responses to site-specific challenges.

### Key design considerations:

- **Angel West Car Park (W01): A complex but valuable opportunity**

Residential design solutions for the Angel West car park were found to be sub-optimal in initial testing due to the site's irregular geometry, flood risk, and adjacency to the Sainsbury's superstore. However, this does not preclude residential use. Instead, it highlights the need for a bespoke, context-sensitive design approach that can unlock the site's potential while addressing its constraints. Future development here should explore innovative typologies and public realm integration to enhance permeability and activate the river edge.

- **Leisure Centre at Sovereign Way Mid (E01): A strategic anchor**

The selection of Parcel E01 as the preferred location for the new leisure centre, particularly as proposed in Option 2, was a pivotal decision. This location offers excellent connectivity and the ability to positively address the river edge. Its placement at the intersection of key pedestrian, cycling and vehicular routes ensures it will serve as a civic anchor and catalyst for wider regeneration. Key considerations include:

- **Proximity to the existing Angel Centre:** The new facility maintains close proximity to the existing leisure centre, preserving its established relationship with the town centre. This ensures continuity for existing users, who will experience minimal changes to their regular travel patterns.
- **Site suitability:** The plot's size and configuration are well-suited to accommodate a standalone building, allowing for an efficient and optimised footprint without the need for compromise or subdivision.
- **Contextual flexibility:** The surrounding plots present no significant constraints, allowing the leisure centre to act as a catalyst for regeneration. Rather than being shaped by its context, the facility will define and influence the future development of this part of the town centre.
- **Strategic connectivity:** The site sits at the intersection of two key pedestrian routes: the improved east–west active travel corridor running along the river, and the north–south public footpath connecting Sovereign Way (adjacent to Waitrose) to the southern railway line, with onward links to Priory Road via Strawberry Vale. Although the footpath is currently narrow and in need of upgrades, it holds strategic value as a traffic-free connection to the High Street, enhancing the leisure centre's accessibility and role in promoting active travel.
- **Flooding:** The leisure centre's design must also respond to flood resilience requirements while maintaining inclusive access and active frontage.

- **Primary healthcare facility: Prioritising accessibility**

A new medical facility is best located along existing roads rather than the riverfront. This ensures convenient access for patients using all modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and private vehicles. The design development process recognised that health facilities must be legible, accessible, and integrated into the town's movement network, rather than isolated within scenic but less practical locations.

- **Encouraging east–west movement and public realm activation**

A core objective of the framework is to strengthen east–west connectivity between the High Street and the riverfront. This is achieved through a carefully considered land use distribution and public realm strategy that encourages movement across the site, particularly through the western park

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and arcades. The design promotes permeability, active travel, and social interaction, helping to stitch the new development into the existing urban fabric.

#### **Broader design principles and responses:**

- **Flood-responsive architecture:** All residential units are elevated above the floodplain, with ground floors designed for non-habitable uses. Innovative solutions such as outdoor mezzanines and dual-access homes were explored to maintain active frontages and ensure safety.
- **Mixed-use and flexibility:** The framework supports a mix of residential, leisure, health, and commercial uses. Parcels such as E02 (Sovereign Way North) are optimised for medium-density housing, while others like S01 (Vale Road) are suited for standalone uses like a hotel.
- **Public realm integration:** The public realm adjacent to the river is envisioned as a continuous linear park, connecting all plots and enhancing biodiversity, recreation, and climate resilience. Each development parcel is expected to contribute to this network through doorstep greenspaces and active frontages.
- **Phased and viable delivery:** The design development process was grounded in viability testing, ensuring that proposals are realistic and deliverable. Building heights were capped at 18m to avoid the cost and complexity of high-rise construction, and each parcel was assessed for its development potential and market attractiveness.

## **Progressing a viable development**

Bringing forward viable schemes is a complex challenge faced across the country, and Tonbridge is no exception. Tonbridge's proximity to London, coupled with its excellent transport links and access to green spaces, should theoretically bolster its property values more robustly than many other places in the UK. Despite these advantages, Tonbridge like many other places across the country is not immune to viability challenges.

While certain areas of the town centre require improvement, there is no indication of market failure in Tonbridge. The primary driver of viability challenges is the significant inflation in construction costs, which has not been matched by corresponding increases in property values. This disparity creates a financial strain on development projects.

Moreover, the introduction of new fire safety regulations for taller buildings has further increased costs. Buildings above six storeys are particularly affected, as the construction methods required for these structures are more susceptible to cost inflation. For the East of High Street site, the need to mitigate flood risk will add additional costs to the development. However, these abnormal expenses typically do not render developments unviable in a town like Tonbridge under normal circumstances. It is essential to consider these factors comprehensively to understand the viability challenges and opportunities in Tonbridge.

In developing the masterplan framework for the Tonbridge EOHS site, several factors complicated the determination of viability for a fully developed scheme. A significant driver in testing options was the location of the new leisure centre, which was evaluated in three suitable locations. Although the quantum of deliverables on the remaining sites varied slightly, the differences between the options, including the types of housing delivered, were not substantial enough for one option to clearly deliver more value than the others.

The choice of location for the leisure centre was influenced more by placemaking impact and deliverability than by viability. Besides housing, the proposed uses included a hotel and a new primary health facility, both of which would be delivered as stand-alone elements. To gain a more accurate understanding of overall site viability, a practical method was to assess each individual plot and evaluate the specific types of housing that could be feasibly delivered on them.

### **New Leisure Centre**

The new leisure centre is being delivered and funded by the Council. All the sites have similar flood conditions and later design stages would consider the shape of the building. To ensure continuity of



service the new leisure centre will be completed before the Angel Leisure Centre is decommissioned and demolished. Funding for the demolition of the Angel Leisure Centre is not included in the cost of delivering the new leisure centre and will need be funded from other sources or receipts from land disposal.

## Public Realm

The key intervention that will connect all the plots within the wider site is improving the public realm along the riverbank into a linear public space for not only movement but also other leisure amenities.

The improvement of the public amenity along the riverbank is consistent across all the options that were tested.

One might think that the Council could deliver this public realm as one single intervention however given how the development is likely to progress over approximately a 10 year programme it would make sense to include these improvements within the delivery of the respective plots, or for the developers to make contributions for the Council to procure and deliver the public realm

The estimated minimum cost for the site wide infrastructure requirements is £2.65m, including £2m for the river walk public realm, £250k for new pelican road crossings and £340k for energy infrastructure upgrades. The latter could increase significantly depending on the available capacity in the network.

It is proposed that these infrastructure costs are funded by the application of a Section 106 agreement to each development plot. An allowance of 2.25% has been included in the financial modelling of the viability for each plot.

## Primary Healthcare Facility

A new primary healthcare facility, approximately 1400 sqm across two floors, could be established at various locations within the site. Due to the complexities and funding structure associated with this type of facility, a specialist developer would be necessary, as rental income is supported by government funding through the NHS. Currently, there is a disparity between the rent levels paid by the NHS and the construction costs, although this is under review.

## Hotel

The site demonstrates potential for budget hotel operators, with one expressing interest in establishing an 80-room hotel. This hotel could be situated on various sites and developed independently.

Feedback from the market engagement suggests interest in a 25-year lease for a budget hotel. The viability of a budget hotel is closely tied to the development model, Council's role and the Council's expectation for financial returns. A basic valuation of the asset based on current yields and the proposed annual rent from the operator suggests that it may not be commercially viable, however if the Council acted as investor and acted as landlord this could deliver a regular income to help subsidise service delivery. The ability to include a small retail or café unit on the ground floor could reduce the impact of having to raise the hotel to the first floor due to the flooding risk. Further design development, market engagement and financial modelling is recommended once the appropriate site has been finalised.

## Housing

When evaluating the viability of housing across the site sales values and not rental yields were considered. For affordable housing, a policy-compliance scheme of 40% at a blended 65% of market value was assumed.

As with other similar developments, lower rise housing types have the most optimal efficiencies, higher values and lower cost construction methods thus tend to be more viable. Conversely, higher

buildings are the opposite and are more challenging to achieve a viable scheme. Six storey flats are roughly marginal.

Finding the right balance between delivering necessary housing numbers (higher densities) and viable schemes (lower densities) is a tension many local authorities are facing and is not unique to Tonbridge.

	E01	E02	E03	S01	N01	W01
Site Area (ha)	0.29	0.43	0.16	0.1	0.21	0.55
% of development land	17%	25%	9%	6%	12%	32%
Uses	Leisure Centre / Housing	Leisure Centre / Housing	Housing / Hotel / Medical	Housing / Hotel / Medical	Housing / Hotel / Medical	Leisure Centre / Housing / Hotel
Low rise - below 4 storeys	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Midrise - 4 to 6 storeys	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
High rise - above 6 storeys	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

Figure 25: Summary of plots and use options



# 4

## MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK



## 4. MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

### A bold new vision for Tonbridge's future

The East of High Street (EOHS) Masterplan Framework is more than a development strategy—it's a transformative vision for Tonbridge town centre. It reimagines underused land as a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable neighbourhood that reconnects the town with its river, its heritage, and its people.



Figure 26: View of the new Leisure Centre from the river side public realm.

### A Place Reimagined

At the heart of the framework is a powerful ambition:

“An ambitious and evolving town centre, where new leisure amenities enhance everyday life for the community, and thoughtfully designed homes invite more people to call Tonbridge home - helping to energise the high street and to rediscover the relationship between the town, the river and its open spaces.”

This is not just a framework; it is a blueprint for transformation. It's about unlocking the full potential of the EOHS area to deliver a place that is active, accessible, and alive with opportunity.

### Key Moves That Shape the Vision

- **A new civic heart:** The new leisure centre at Sovereign Way Mid (E01) will be a landmark destination—flood-resilient, inclusive, and seamlessly integrated into the riverside park. It will anchor the regeneration and act as a catalyst for wider change.
- **Homes that bring life to the centre:** Over 275 new homes will be delivered across key plots, designed with sustainability, flood resilience, and community in mind. These homes will bring new energy to the town centre and support local businesses.

- **A river reimaged:** The River Medway becomes a central spine for movement, nature, and leisure. A new linear park will transform the south bank into a green corridor for walking, cycling, and socialising.
- **Health and hospitality:** A new primary healthcare facility and a potential budget hotel will diversify the town centre offer, supporting both residents and visitors.
- **Public realm with purpose:** Every corner of the site contributes to a safe, welcoming, and characterful public realm—designed to encourage interaction, movement, and pride of place.

## Design That Delivers

The masterplan is underpinned by a series of smart, site-specific strategies:

- **Building heights** are capped at 18m to ensure deliverability and avoid the complexity of high-rise construction.
- **Flood resilience** is embedded in every design decision, with elevated residential floors, undercroft parking, and adaptable ground-floor uses.
- **Active frontages** and corner treatments ensure that every street and path feels safe, welcoming, and full of life.
- **Connectivity** is enhanced through new pedestrian and cycling routes, linking the High Street to the river and beyond.
- **Public realm** is prioritised, with each development plot contributing to a cohesive, high-quality network of open spaces.



Figure 27 Ground floor illustrative plans of the masterplan. Not to scale.





Figure 28 Roof level illustrative plans of the masterplan. Not to scale.

## Masterplan themes: a framework for everyday life

The framework is built around five core themes that reflect the aspirations of the community and the Council's strategic goals:



Figure 29: View of new public realm along the river

### Living in Tonbridge 2050

The scheme seeks both to increase the number of people living within the town-centre boundary and to draw residents from the wider urban area back into the centre for social, leisure and health activities. A new hotel, planned as part of the land-use mix, will also attract tourists and business visitors from farther afield.

### Rediscover Tonbridge Town Centre

Suburban neighbourhoods at the edge of Tonbridge often treat the High Street and its heritage assets as remote from day-to-day life. This masterplan puts the River Medway, the castle and the High Street quite literally on residents' doorsteps by framing them with new homes and public realm. A higher intensity of use will, in turn, support local shops, cafés and cultural venues and encourage more frequent, everyday engagement with the town's historic core.

### Open Spaces for Nature and Community

An upgraded linear park along the south bank of the river will invite walking and cycling, provide the most direct route to the new leisure centre and establish an ecological corridor of native planting and riverside habitats. Pocket parks and community gardens set within the development will give every household easy access to shared open space.

### New Homes and Much More

Residential and residential-led plots will test a range of housing models, sizes and layouts to meet the needs of different age groups and household types. By offering variety in tenure and design, the plan aims to foster a genuinely mixed community that can make this part of Tonbridge its own.

### Make Tonbridge the Most Sustainable Town in Kent

The site's infill location, served by existing roads, utilities and public transport, allows growth without encroaching on agricultural land or the Green Belt, containing outward sprawl and shortening everyday journeys. A carefully balanced, mixed-use programme will optimise land use, reduce car dependence, broaden the housing offer and boost High Street trade by bringing more people within a short walk of its shops and services.

## Housing density: smart growth for a thriving community

Parcel name	Parcel area	Residential density tested	Number of new homes
E01 – Sovereign Way Mid Car Park	0.29 ha	n/a (leisure centre)	0
E02 – Sovereign Way North Car Park	0.43 ha	284 dwelling/ha	122 homes
E03 – Sovereign Way East Car Park	0.16 ha	n/a (health centre)	0
N01 – Existing Angel Centre	0.21 ha	270 dwelling/ha	56 homes
S01 – Vale Road Car Park	0.1 ha	n/a (hotel)	0
W01 – Angel West	0.55 ha	180 dwelling/ha	99 homes
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>277 homes</b>

Figure 30 Residential density site capacity

The masterplan embraces a thoughtful approach to density, one that balances ambition with liveability. Each development parcel has been tested to optimise the number of homes while ensuring high-quality design, daylight access, and flood resilience.

- **E02 – Sovereign Way North:** Up to 122 homes at a density of 284 dwellings/ha, with dual-aspect layouts and undercroft parking.



- **N01 – Former Angel Centre:** Around 56 homes at 270 dwellings/ha, with potential for ground-floor commercial uses.
- **W01 – Angel West:** Up to 99 homes at 180 dwellings/ha, subject to future feasibility.

This approach ensures that new homes are not only deliverable but also desirable, designed for real people, real lives, and real communities.

## Site strategies: design that responds to place

### Buildings heights and massing

The masterplan proposes a varied skyline that respects Tonbridge's character while introducing contemporary architecture. Heights range from 2 to 6 storeys, with taller elements carefully positioned to maximise views, light, and urban legibility.

Parcel name	Primary Use	Maximum Height
E01 – Sovereign Way Mid Car Park	Leisure Centre	2
E02 – Sovereign Way North Car Park	Housing (284 dwelling/ha)	6
E03 – Sovereign Way East Car Park	Primary Health Facility	3
N01 – Existing Angel Centre	Housing (270 dwelling/ha)	6
S01 – Vale Road Car Park	Hotel	5
W01 – Angel West	Housing (180 dwelling/ha)	5



Figure 31 Illustrative massing and land use distribution.

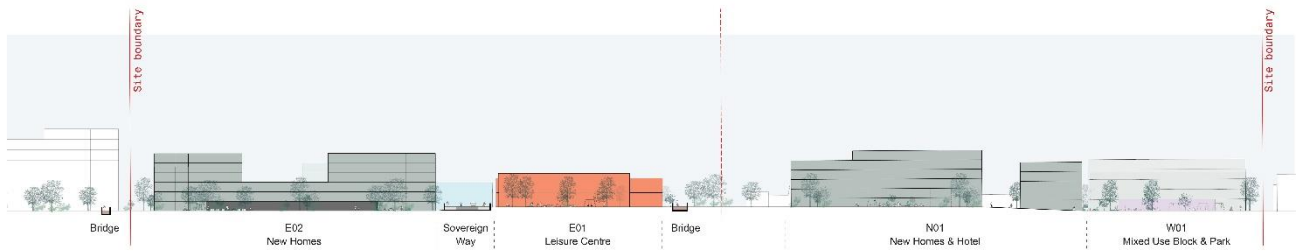


Figure 32 Masterplan illustrative elevation from the river north bank looking south

## Subdivision for Permeability

Large plots are broken down to avoid monolithic blocks and encourage walkability. These breaks create opportunities for pocket parks, courtyards, and informal gathering spaces, fostering a sense of neighbourhood and openness



Figure 33: Development parcel sub-division diagram.



## Connectivity: stitching the town together

The framework enhances Tonbridge's urban fabric by improving existing routes and introducing new connections:

- **East–west links** between the High Street and the river are strengthened through new pedestrian crossings and active travel corridors.
- **North–south permeability** is improved with better access across the site and toward the railway station.
- **Cycling and walking** are prioritised, with safe, attractive routes that encourage sustainable travel and healthy lifestyles.

This is a masterplan that puts people first, making it easier, safer, and more enjoyable to move through the town.

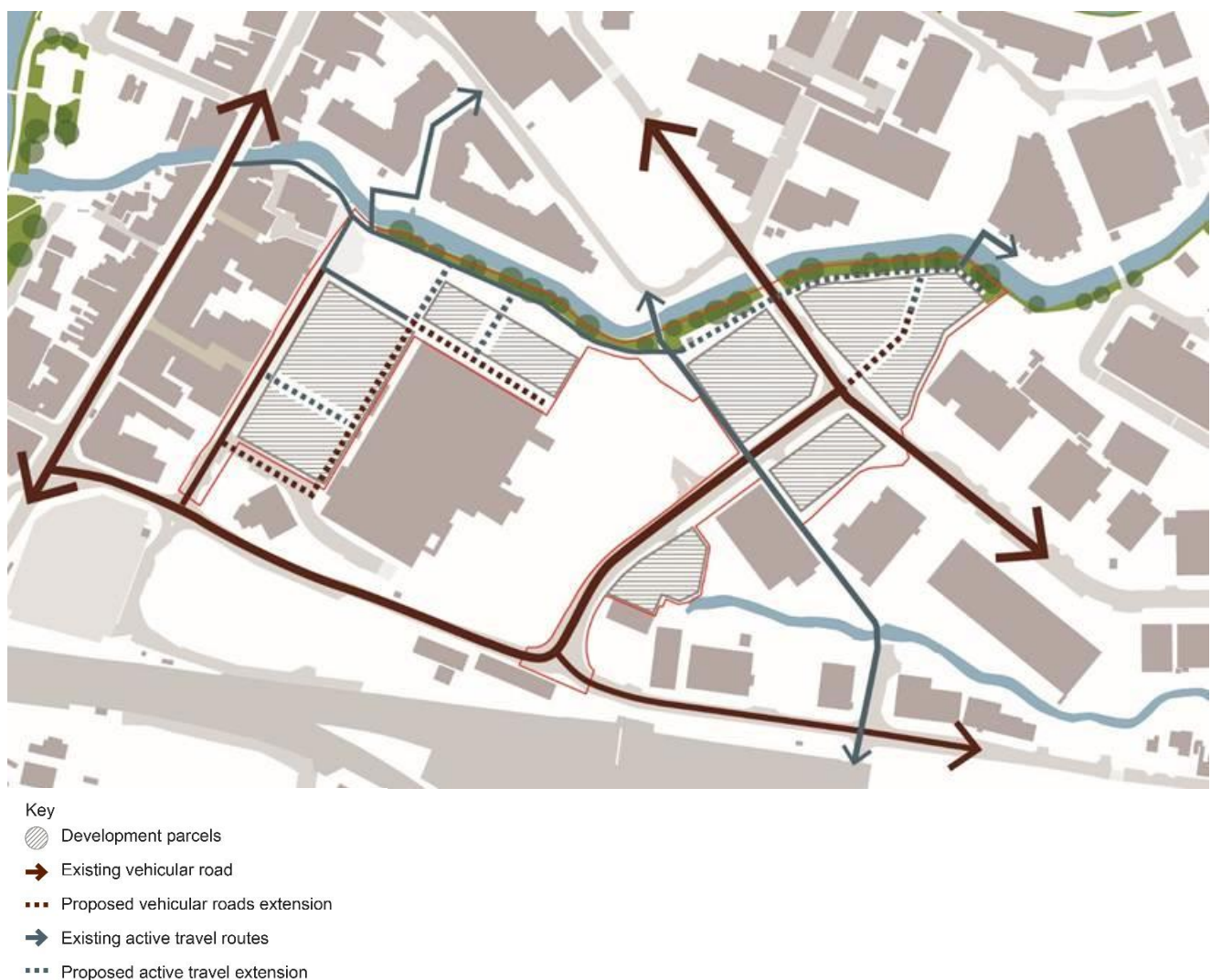


Figure 34: Connectivity and movement diagram.

## Public realm: a landscape for living

The river becomes the centrepiece of a new linear park, an ecological and social spine that connects every part of the site. This green corridor will:

- Support biodiversity with native planting and habitat creation
- Provide space for walking, cycling, play, and relaxation
- Act as a climate-resilient buffer that enhances flood mitigation

Each development plot contributes to this network with doorstep greenspaces, active frontages, and high-quality materials that reflect Tonbridge's heritage and future.



### Key

- New public realm delivered on plot
- Riverfront linear park
- Play provision
- Existing road improvement
- Improved pedestrian space

Figure 35: Public realm diagram with main play provision.



Figure 36: Restoration of an historic canal, envisioned as a catalyst for a healthy city. Catharijnesingel, Utrecht, The Netherlands, studio OKRA.

Existing main roads must be improved by adding pedestrian crossings in line with the river walk, active travel routes and the leisure centre main entrance. Further improvements along Avenue du Puy and Vale Rd can be introduced in later stage but it would be in line with the masterplan objectives and the project ambition to make the roads safer for cyclists and pedestrians.



Figure 37 Milton Road, Cambridge. The project was commissioned by Greater Cambridge Partnership with the aim to improve the existing road with public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure to make these sustainable travel options a more attractive alternative to the use of private cars.



## Land use: a balanced, mixed-use neighbourhood

The EOHS masterplan is designed to deliver a **diverse and dynamic mix of uses** that reflect the evolving needs of Tonbridge's community. This is not just about building homes, it is about creating a **complete neighbourhood** where people can live, work, relax, and thrive.



Figure 38: Land Use diagram.

At the heart of the plan is a **carefully curated land use strategy** that balances residential, leisure, health, hospitality, and commercial functions across the site. Each use has been strategically located to maximise accessibility, support placemaking, and ensure long-term sustainability.

- **Leisure:** The new leisure centre at E01 is the flagship civic anchor of the development. Its riverside location and integration with active travel routes make it a destination for health, wellbeing, and community life.
- **Healthcare:** A new primary healthcare facility is proposed at E03, positioned along Avenue du Puy for maximum accessibility. Co-locating this with the leisure centre creates a health and wellbeing hub that supports everyday convenience and holistic care.



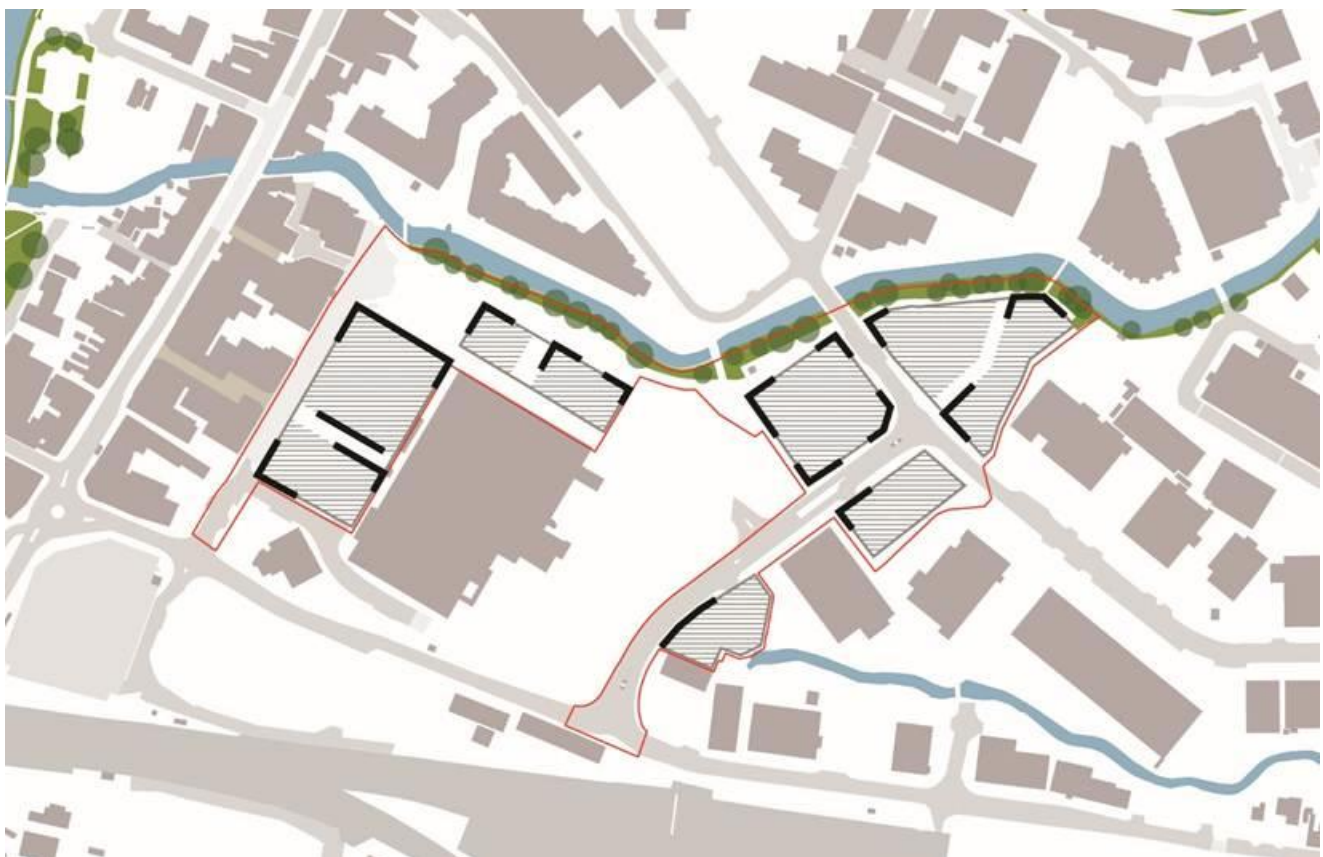
- **Residential:** The majority of the site is dedicated to delivering high-quality, flood-resilient homes. E02, N01, and W01 are identified as key residential parcels, offering a mix of typologies and tenures to support a diverse and inclusive community.
- **Hospitality:** S01 is earmarked for a potential 80-bed budget hotel, enhancing the town's visitor offer and supporting local businesses. If not delivered here, the hotel could be accommodated at N01, offering flexibility in response to market demand.
- **Commercial:** Ground-floor commercial uses are encouraged in key locations—particularly along Avenue du Puy and near the leisure centre—to activate frontages, support local enterprise, and create vibrant, people-friendly streets.

This land use strategy is **flexible yet focused**, allowing for adaptation over time while ensuring that each plot contributes meaningfully to the overall vision. It supports a **walkable, mixed-use environment** that reduces car dependency, encourages social interaction, and brings new life to the town centre.

### Active frontage: streets that feel alive

To create a safe and welcoming environment, the framework prioritises **active frontages**—windows, entrances, and uses that engage with the street. Special attention is given to:

- **Corners**, which offer long views and natural surveillance
- **River edges**, where blank walls are avoided in favour of vibrant, people-friendly design
- **Ground floors**, which are designed to be flood-resilient yet animated, using creative solutions like outdoor mezzanines and dual-access homes



#### Key

- Development parcels
- Active frontage

Figure 39: Active frontage diagram

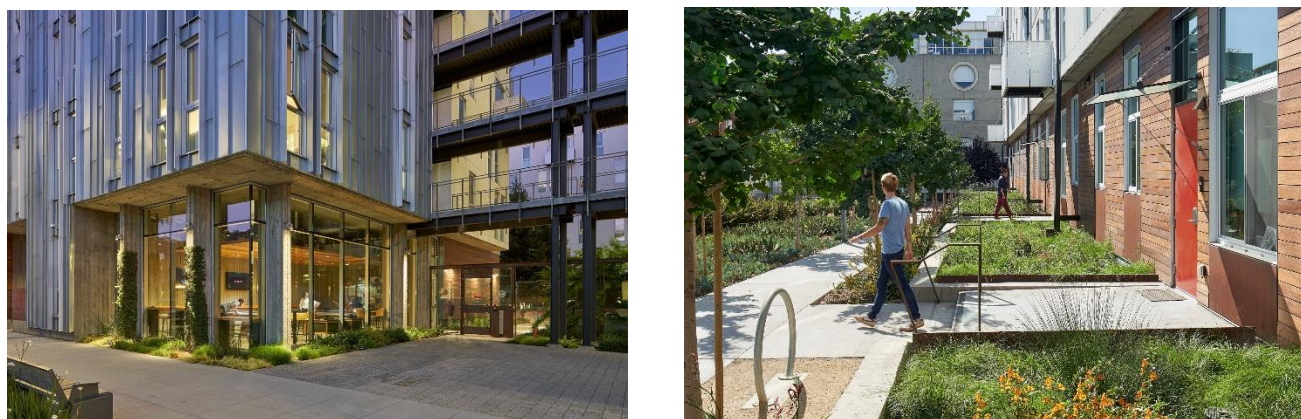


Figure 40 Brannan Street by David Baker Architects, San Francisco, US. Active frontages can take the form of non-residential uses at street level with generous opening overlooking the public realm, but also of individual homes entrance doors and kitchen windows.

## Designing for resilience and inclusion: the leisure centre as a civic beacon

Flood risk is not just a constraint, it's a design driver. The new leisure centre must rise to this challenge, setting a benchmark for how civic architecture can be both resilient and welcoming. Every aspect of the building's design should reflect a commitment to accessibility, safety, and social value.

### Inclusive Access and Circulation

The leisure centre must be effortlessly accessible to all. This means:

- **Step-free access** from surrounding public spaces to the main entrance, ensuring ease of movement for everyone.
- **A level internal lobby** aligned with the external approach, eliminating the need for lifts to reach reception.
- **Pedestrian-friendly design** that considers gradients, widths, and surface finishes to support wheelchair users, parents with prams, and those with limited mobility.
- **A clearly articulated entrance**, using massing, canopy design, glazing, and lighting to create a welcoming and intuitive arrival experience.
- **A vibrant forecourt** that encourages social interaction, with seating, informal play features, and views of the river to promote dwell time and community engagement.

### Active Frontage and Urban Safety

To ensure the building contributes positively to the public realm:

- **Avoid blank walls**, service areas should be integrated with active uses like cafés, studios, or even climbing walls to animate the river edge and key pedestrian routes.
- **Maximise natural surveillance** through generous windows, low planting, and well-designed lighting that eliminates glare and shadow.
- **Connect seamlessly** to existing footpaths and wayfinding strategies, positioning the leisure centre as a gateway to the river park, not a standalone object.
- **Provide secure, covered cycle parking** along key desire lines, supporting sustainable travel and convenience.

By meeting these principles, the leisure centre will not only be flood-resilient and inclusive—it will be a socially activating space that strengthens the town's identity and public life.

### Safeguarding the Riverfront: A Strategic Design Priority

As the river becomes a central feature of the masterplan, it's essential that development along its edge enhances, rather than compromises, its value. The riverfront is a natural asset and a strategic corridor for active travel, biodiversity, and public enjoyment.

To protect and elevate this space:

- **Design controls** should be maintained for all buildings fronting the river, ensuring high-quality architecture and public realm integration.
- **Future flood risk improvements**, such as the Leigh Barrier upgrades, may unlock new opportunities, but until then, development must proceed with caution and care.
- **Residential and non-residential buildings** should be designed to contribute positively to the river park, avoiding blank facades and prioritising active, engaging edges.

This approach ensures that the riverfront remains a defining feature of Tonbridge's identity—green, accessible, and full of life.



## Plot-by-Plot Vision

**E01 – Sovereign Way Mid Car Park:** A new leisure centre that anchors the site, activates the riverfront, and sets the tone for future development.

**E02 – Sovereign Way North Car Park:** A flagship residential site delivering around 120 homes with undercroft parking and strong public realm integration.

**E03 – Sovereign Way East Car Park:** A health hub and parking node that supports the leisure centre and improves access across Avenue du Puy.

**N01 – Former Angel Centre:** A mixed-use opportunity with housing, potential hotel use, and commercial ground floor activation.

**S01 – Vale Road Car Park:** A standalone hotel site or alternative residential plot, with potential for café or retail at ground level.

**W01 – Angel West:** Retained as parking in the short term, with long-term potential for innovative mixed-use development.



Figure 41: Masterplan framework key

## E01 – Sovereign Way Mid Car Park

### New leisure centre

- To be delivered prior to the decommissioning of the existing to Angel Leisure Centre to ensure continuity of leisure services
- Flood resilient designs required to mitigate impact and future maintenance costs
- Active front onto the river/pedestrian network that is accessible and an easily identifiable entrance
- Responds to wider connectivity and active travel infrastructure
- Site has a number of significant sight lines through and beyond the masterplan area, therefore building design must consider these and how the building responds to the context
- Required accessible parking and electric car charging stations likely to spill over onto E03.





## E02 – Sovereign Way North Car Park

### Medium Density Housing

- 1 Medium density housing (in the range of 275 to 295 dpa), delivering around 120 new homes
- A market driven solution that responds to the Council's placemaking and housing policies, including delivery of affordable housing
- Flood resilient design
- Undercroft parking
- Careful consideration of heights to ensure dual-aspect and light into the public spaces
- Mix of public and semi public outside spaces
- Building heights of 3 to 6 storeys
- Responds to the active riverwalk public realm through frontage activation and lighting



## E03 – Sovereign Way East Car Park

### Primary Health Care Facility

- Delivery of a Primary Healthcare facility at c.1400 sqm facility
- Remainder of the site delivers parking provision to meet specific requirements for the new leisure centre
- Connectivity across Avenue du Puy to ensure access to the masterplan area and the wider town centre is essential
- Height of 3 storeys



## N01 – Existing Angel Centre

### Medium Density Housing / Hotel / Commercial

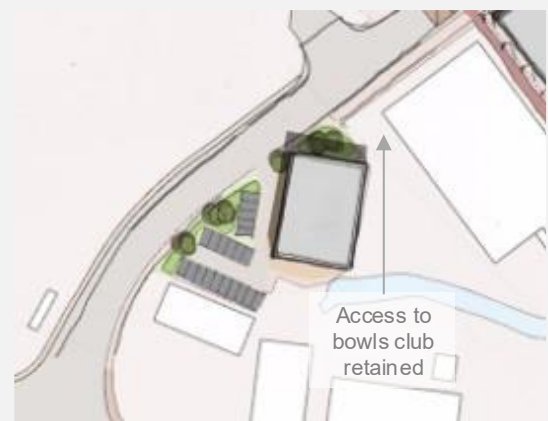
- Existing Angel Leisure Centre demolished once new facility is operational
- Delivery of around 55 new homes at a medium density (in the range of 260 to 280 dpa) with the possible inclusion of commercial uses at ground floor to assist with activation of frontages.
- a market driven solution that responds to the Council's placemaking and housing policies, including delivery of affordable housing
- Flood resilient design
- Responds to the active riverwalk public realm
- Potential for mixed use solution and budget hotel (should this not be deliverable on S01 site)



## S01 – Vale Road Car Park

### Hotel

- Suitable site for 80 bed budget hotel
- Alternatively, could be used for housing
- Up to 5 storey height
- Possibility of additional supplementary commercial uses
- Access to the Bowls Club retained



## W01 – Angel West

### Parking / possible future mixed-use development

- Sub-optimal site to deliver housing so will remain parking in the short to medium term
- May be the opportunity for limited other mixed-use space however this is not a priority





5

DELIVERY





## 5. DELIVERY

The Council has reached a significant decision to construct a replacement leisure centre on the Sovereign Way Mid car park site (E01). This new facility will be the first development to be delivered. This strategic move will eventually free up the site currently occupied by the Angel Leisure Centre for future development. **The full masterplan framework is expected to take over 10 years to deliver, reflecting the long-term vision and phased approach required for its successful implementation.**

Each site involved in this decision presents unique options, challenges, and opportunities.

### Plot by Plot Options

#### E01 – Sovereign Way Mid Car Park

The Council will directly develop the replacement leisure centre on this site.

#### E02 – Sovereign Way North Car Park

Representing the most attractive development plot to the market, the Council has multiple options to consider:

- Retention of the existing car park (do nothing)
- Masterplan adoption,
- followed by unconditional sale – in advance, or in parallel, to an unconditional sale the Council could strengthen the planning policy through adoption of a masterplan. This would provide a greater level of control over any future development via the statutory planning process without triggering the requirement of a procurement process for a development agreement. The restrictions of the adopted masterplan may reduce the land value. This option would give the Council as landowner limited control over the eventual design and housing mix on site.
- Disposal of the site alongside masterplan adoption following a de-risking process of intrusive surveys and (ideally) service connections/diversions. This would incur an upfront cost to the Council but would maximise the capital value in the development market.
- Conditional sale / developer procurement – select a developer through a compliant procurement process that allows the Council to dictate or influence the subsequent development through a legal agreement (likely a development agreement). The restrictions of such an agreement will narrow the available market that would be available and reduce the residential land value that the Council may receive. The time required for a procurement process is unlikely to be completed prior to the anticipated date for local government reorganisation and hence TMBC may not be able to commit to a future legal agreement.

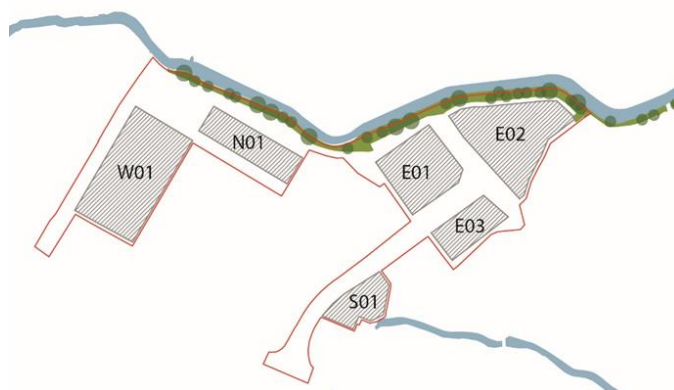


Figure 42: Development plot key

#### E03 – Sovereign Way East Car Park

Part of this site will necessarily be developed as part of the new leisure centre in the provision of allocated accessible parking and required electric car charging stations. Once the site area for these has been confirmed during design development of the leisure centre, the Council has options:

- Retention of the remaining car park.

- Disposal of the remaining site for development of a new medical centre would deliver improved facilities for residents on an accessible site and is deliverable within the time window prior to local government reorganisation (site area, satisfying best value obligations and NHS business case approvals process allowing).
- Further consideration of the site for alternative development uses at a later date

## N01 – Existing Angel Centre

At the point at which the existing building is empty, the Council will directly procure and manage the demolition funded directly by Council borrowing, or through the disposal of another development plot (for example E02 or S01).

After this exercise, the options for the site are broadly similar to those for the Sovereign Way North site.

## S01 – Vale Road Car Park

This plot represents the most deliverable opportunity for the Council given it sits independent to the other plots and is not dependent on any other activities; as a long-term car park it also represents the least costly to the Council in terms of lost parking revenue. The size of the plot restricts opportunities, however there are options:

- Retention of the existing car park.
- Unconditional sale – subject to further engagement with the market, there is sufficient space to site an 80-bed budget hotel on the site. As noted in this report, a footprint of a hotel this size would require building over the existing culvert and therefore would prevent potential future de-culverting of the stream. In order to ensure only offers from hotel developers are received, the Council may be prudent to adopt the masterplan.
- Conditional sale / developer procurement – again an option however current timescales mean that this may not be achievable
- Council as investor – the Council could fund and retain the hotel, subject to a pre-let agreement with a budget hotel operator. This could generate a long-term revenue income stream. Clearly, the future changes to the local authority structure is likely to impact the ability for TMBC to commit to this opportunity.



# 6

FUTURE  
OPPORTUNITIES

## 6. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

In the short-term, the delivery of the new leisure centre is the key priority. This project will serve as a catalyst for further development and investor interest in the wider area. It is acknowledged that the current environment presents challenges, including the uncertainty of LGR and viability issues. Despite these challenges, there are several opportunities for the Council to consider, as outlined below.

### Flood risk mitigation

The viability and relationship between internal and external spaces across the wider masterplan are significantly driven by the risk of flooding. It is possible that the recent amendments to the 'Leigh Barrier' will have permanently partly or fully redistributed the risk of flooding and that subsequent modelling may confirm that fewer mitigation measures are required, having a bearing on viability.

### Build to Rent (BtR) market

Market engagement has confirmed that there is strong demand for rental property in the town centre and the location, however the current BtR investment structures are not targeting Tonbridge, despite the town having some of the qualifying attributes.

In addition to Vail Williams's market insight, Mace has made preliminary enquiries with a specialist BtR consultant. The consultant has indicated that there may be alternative investor solutions that may well be more viable.

### Planning framework

In the absence of procurement of a developer under a development agreement, a degree of control over the quality of the development is highly recommended because the current site constraints may easily drive the design response to poor outcomes in terms of urban design and placemaking.

Options to strengthen the planning framework:

1. Development of an Adopted Masterplan
2. Development of Supplementary planning Document

Of these options, Option 1 is recommended, adopted masterplan, because:

- may be quicker to be compiled and approved because site specific (because supplementary planning document needs to take into consideration a greater range of variables)
- but it will need to be in line with the Local Plan, if not the recommendation is an supplementary planning document instead.

### Viability

Viability challenges are not unique to Tonbridge; they are proving difficult across the country. This is especially true for buildings over six stories, where construction cost inflation has been more acutely felt, along with the impact of new fire regulations on the efficiency of taller buildings. However, there are several opportunities to improve viability.

As the development progresses, starting with the new leisure centre, there is an expected placemaking uplift in values. This will bring improvements to EOHS, including the public realm immediately adjacent to the river, making the remaining sites more attractive to developers. Additionally, the need to deliver more affordable housing may lead to new government grant funding opportunities to progress housing delivery. Developments of this nature are delivered over many



years, and as such the wider economic environment may change to enable more favourable development opportunities.

Tonbridge remains a favourable location due to its well-connected status to London, indicating no market failure. Furthermore, flood defence infrastructure may positively improve the site from a flooding perspective, reducing costs and allowing for a wider range of housing types. When tested in more detail with the market, there may be developers who can bring forward innovative construction and funding solutions to deliver housing on some of the sites

## Public engagement

During the public engagement, residents expressed that the council has not meaningfully consulted them on the development plans. There is concern over the future of the Angel Centre and the facilities that will be provided in the new leisure centre. Additionally, there is worry that parking provision will be significantly reduced.

It is understood that there will be public consultation regarding the delivery of the new leisure centre through the planning process. Further to this the council may wish to hold further engagement and communication events to keep Tonbridge residents informed about plans for the town centre. The engagement struggled to involve younger people in Tonbridge, which may be an area to focus on in future public engagement efforts.

## Network Rail

Network Rail have potentially developable sites on both sides of the railway line, the site to the north of the line is across Vale Road from East of High Street and could thus be incorporated into a wider masterplan.

Network Rail needs to evaluate the operational assets on the site to determine what space can be released or rearranged. Collaboration between internal Network Rail property and operational colleagues is essential to test high-level opportunities for the sites. Numerous commercial tenants must be considered, and while more detail is needed on parking utilisation, there has been a steady increase in parking usage across their portfolio. Furthermore, any reduction in parking numbers would require approval from the Department for Transport (DfT). As such, Network Rail have more internal work to conclude in the short to medium term however there is the opportunity to include the Network Rail site within future detailed masterplanning work.

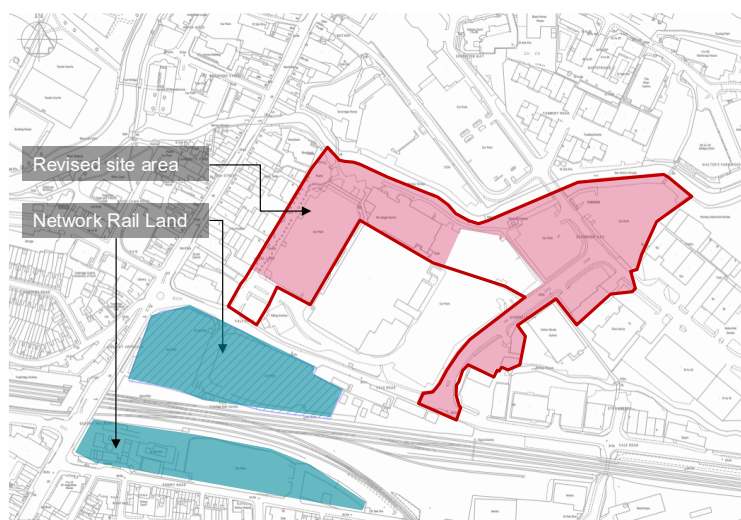


Figure 43: Network Rail sites

## Sainsbury's

The consultant team and the Council recognise that Sainsbury's have a significant interest in the plans for the EOHS site adjacent to their store where refurbishment plans are being developed. As such it is vital that there is further engagement with Sainsbury's to best align the interests of all parties.

The northern part of the Sainsbury's Eastern car park that falls within the Sainsbury's lease and in part services the Angel Leisure Centre could help connect the existing Angel Centre site (N01) to the Sovereign Way Mid Park site (E01) where the new leisure centre will be located. This would have a significant positive placemaking potential. The Council owned Angel West (W01) is also used regularly by Sainsbury's customers and those accessing the high street. There is an opportunity for further discussions on how these sites can best utilised moving forward.

## Angel West

In addition to the recommended upgrade of the public realm at the northern edge of the plot, the Council should consider the following options:

- Include in the masterplan as a residential development plot.
- Continue discussions with Sainsburys about lease areas to ensure that regeneration and place shaping opportunities are maximised'

## Kent County Council

Kent County Council (KCC) are in ongoing discussions with TMBC with respect to proposed plans for EOHS.

A key opportunity with respect to the delivery of the new leisure centre on the Sovereign Way Mid Park site (E01) is to optimise the site through the release of KCC owned land.

## Local Plan update

In July 2024, TMBC paused the updating their Local Plan due to changes in national planning policy. The council decided to wait for more details before proceeding. In February 2025, they discussed the Local Plan update and Local Development Scheme at a Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee meeting, following the publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024.

The Council is now able to advance the new Local Plan, with the EOHS site playing a crucial role in this. This site is considered vital due to its strategic location and potential for development, which aligns with the council's long-term vision for sustainable growth and community enhancement. As part of developing the new Local Plan, the council will need to engage with the public throughout the process to ensure transparency, gather valuable feedback, and foster community support. The masterplan framework can play a part in this engagement by providing a structured approach to planning and communication, ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and involved in the decision-making process. This collaborative effort aims to create a comprehensive and inclusive plan that meets the needs and aspirations of the community.



# 7

## APPENDICES



## 7. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Public Engagement

#### Focus Groups



Figure 44: Focus group workshop and collage

An in person focus group was held from 10:00 to 13:00 on Saturday the first of February 2025 at the Angel Leisure Centre. Select stakeholder groups were invited to attend and partake in a series of activities and discussions to voice their needs and concerns with respect to the future of the EOHS site and the broader Tonbridge town centre.

The groups that were invited to attend included:

- Tonbridge Civic Society
- Tonbridge & Malling Seniors (TAMS)
- Age UK (Tonbridge)
- Angel Lane CIC
- Active Kent and Medway
- Disability Assist for Independent Living
- University of the Third Age

The workshop took place over 3 hours on a rolling basis with participants able to drop in as and when they can. Participants were able to partake in ongoing group / individual exercises along with better understanding the site through concise background information. The activity was designed to be fun, interactive, and creative.

Though best efforts were made to engage with a younger audience through the support of Active Kent and Medway and their respective reach into local schools there was limited interest from younger residents.

#### Tonbridge Civic Society

The consultant team and TMBC client team held an in-person Q&A session with the Tonbridge Civic Society at the Angel Centre on Saturday the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2025.



The Tonbridge Civic Society is dedicated to preserving the heritage and enhancing the environment of Tonbridge. The society acts as a watchdog, reviewing and commenting on planning applications and policies to ensure the conservation of the town's historical fabric. It maintains a strong link with the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council planning department.

## Wider Public Engagement

### Digital Campaign

To reach out to as wide an audience as possible the team, with the support of the Council conducted a digital communication campaign and online survey for the residents of Tonbridge.

The purpose of the digital public engagement is to provide:

- Tonbridge residents with information, on a landing page, illustrating the work the Council is doing to unlock value from the EOHS site, and
- To test the core themes that are being explored in the master planning work with Tonbridge residents.

It is important to note that the purpose of this engagement was not a formal public consultation. Using a digital format allowed the Council and the consultant team to reach a wider group in an easily accessible way. Furthermore, given the tight timescales of this work, using digital tools allowed for interpreting responses to happen more efficiently.

To reach a wide group of Tonbridge the Council used the following channels:

- A Special TMBC Newsletter – the Council has significant reach to residents who receive the quarterly newsletter.
- Physical QR codes were used to link to the town centre development page and online survey
- TMBC website homepage adverts and notifications via the TMBC app
- TMBC social media channels – Facebook, Twitter & Instagram linking to the digital engagement page.

Further amplifying the message there was coverage in numerous local news publications and on local radio broadcasts.

The campaign exceeded expectations with respect to reach and engagement, the Tonbridge Town Centre website received 10,812 views and there was a good engagement rate of 5.14% across the Councils social channels.

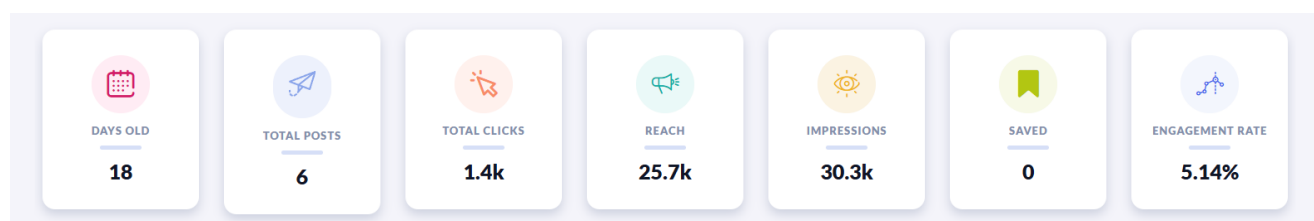
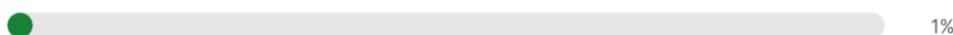


Figure 45: Campaign reach across all social channels

Of the 3,520 who linked through from the Tonbridge Town Centre website to the online survey, 2,321 (66%) completed the survey. When asked for any other thoughts and comments, 990 people submitted a written response. Of the responses 83% were from people living in Tonbridge, 14% from those within the borough and 3% from elsewhere.

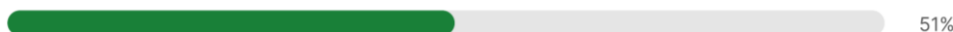
Under 20 - 18 votes



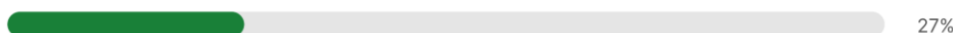
21 - 40 - 502 votes



41 - 65 - 1,178 votes



Over 65 - 623 votes



Positive Feedback	Negative Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Preservation of Green Spaces:</b> Residents appreciate the green areas and emphasize the importance of preserving them.</li> <li>• <b>Leisure Facilities:</b> The Leisure Centre and river are seen as valuable assets that encourage exercise and relaxation.</li> <li>• <b>Community Activities:</b> Events like music on the river and community hubs are valued for bringing people together.</li> <li>• <b>Retail and Leisure Facilities:</b> Suggestions to improve the variety of shops and enhance leisure facilities such as the Angel Centre.</li> <li>• <b>Public Transport:</b> Better public transport options, including more frequent bus services and improved access for mobility scooters.</li> <li>• <b>Community and Cultural Activities:</b> Incorporating more community events and cultural activities into the town's development plans.</li> <li>• <b>Affordable Housing:</b> The need for genuinely affordable housing, particularly for families.</li> <li>• <b>Environmental Considerations:</b> Recognizing the impact of climate change and the need for responsible development.</li> <li>• <b>Safety and Accessibility:</b> Improved lighting and safety measures along the river path.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Traffic and Parking:</b> Concerns about traffic congestion and the need for better access and parking facilities<sup>89</sup>.</li> <li>• <b>Housing:</b> Opposition to the construction of more expensive flats and the need for affordable housing.</li> <li>• <b>Retail and Leisure Facilities:</b> Too many charity shops, fast food outlets, and nail bars, and not enough variety in small independent shops.</li> <li>• <b>Public Transport:</b> Unreliable public transport and lack of drop kerbs for mobility scooters.</li> <li>• <b>Parking Charges:</b> High parking charges are seen as detrimental to the town and its businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Environmental Concerns:</b> Building houses close to the river where it floods is considered irresponsible.</li> <li>• <b>Survey Design:</b> Criticism of the survey design, with limited choice of answers and leading questions.</li> <li>• <b>Safety Issues:</b> Concerns about safety along the river path and the need for more lighting.</li> <li>• <b>Community Trust:</b> Residents feel that the council has not meaningfully consulted them on the development plans.</li> </ul>

The survey responses indicate a strong desire for sustainable development in Tonbridge, focusing on enhancing quality of life while addressing traffic, housing, and environmental concerns. Key issues include high parking charges, which some feel deter visitors and harm local businesses, and the need for free short-term parking.

The Angel Centre is seen as a valuable community asset that some believe should be modernised rather than relocated or demolished. Respondents also expressed frustrations with the lack of retail variety, traffic congestion, inadequate public transport, and the consultation process to date.

There is excitement about potential improvements, such as enhancing the river and castle areas, modernising the Angel Centre, attracting diverse shops, creating community spaces, and improving leisure facilities and public transport.

Overall, the feedback highlights the community's desire for thoughtful, inclusive planning that supports local businesses and enhances the town's appeal and accessibility.

## Appendix 2: Stakeholder Engagement

### Workshops

To effectively collaborate with key Council stakeholders, both officers and members, the consultant team held a series of workshops throughout the development process. The three design workshops and delivery workshop allowed the design team to reaffirm the Council's priorities, explore options for the site, particularly the location of a replacement leisure centre, agree the location of the leisure centre and discuss how to deliver a sustainable scheme. The starting point was the five themes:

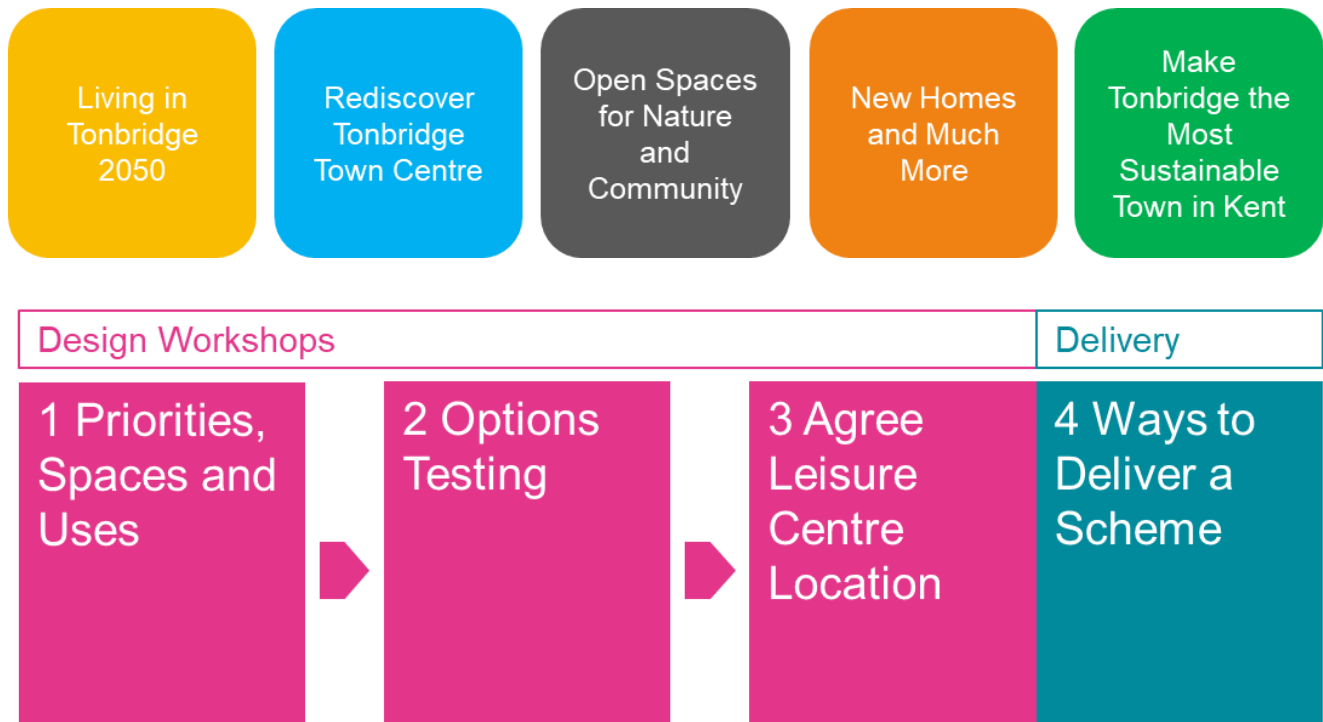


Figure 46: Design and Delivery workshops



Figure 47: Workshop 1





Figure 48: Workshop 2



Figure 49: Workshop 3 / 4

## Key External Stakeholders

### Alliance Leisure

The Council have commissioned Alliance Leisure to help the Council evaluate the needs with respect to a modernised leisure facility and whether to replace or refurbish the ageing Angel Leisure Centre to achieve this. Alliance Leisure have provided indicative block plans from their feasibility work for the new leisure centre which have been used to test the masterplan framework options.

Alliance Leisure is a UK leisure development partner, specializing in supporting local authorities to improve and expand their leisure facilities and services. Alliance Leisure has delivered many leisure projects, including new builds, large-scale refurbishments, and the activation of outdoor spaces. Their projects aim to make public leisure sustainable and build healthier communities. The company offers comprehensive support throughout the entire development process, from strategic planning to construction.

### Network Rail

Network Rail were engaged during phase 2 of the Tonbridge Town centre work to understand their ambitions to potentially develop their sites on the North and South sides of the railway.

The Northern site, across from EOHS would most likely be developed first given the challenges of more immovable operational infrastructures such as substations and track access points on the Southern Site. Network Rail showed interest during these early discussions in working with the Council in progressing a wider masterplan depending on where their internal teams had progressed in evaluating the opportunity.

Conversations with Network Rail were revisited with respect to the progression of the EOHS masterplan framework work and included Network Rail's operational and property representatives along with representatives from Southeastern Railways. Some key takeaways from the meeting include:

- Network Rail need to evaluate the operational assets on the site and establish what space can be released or rearranged
- Network Rail property and Operational colleagues need to collaborate to test high level opportunities for the sites
- There are numerous commercial tenants that need to be considered
- Though more detail is needed on parking utilisation there has been steady increase in parking usage across the portfolio in general and any reduction in parking numbers would require approval from the Department for Transport (DfT)
- It was agreed that more work needed to be done internally at Network Rail and that any collaboration would take place at a future time and not for this masterplan framework

### Tonbridge based Health Provider

Warders Medical Centre, and a specialist primary healthcare developer were engaged to understand typical requirements and commercial structures for a new primary healthcare facility

### Tonbridge Historical Society

The Tonbridge Historical Society, founded in 1960, serves as a hub for individuals with an interest in the rich history of Tonbridge and its surroundings. Unlike many local historical societies, it extends its focus beyond local history to include national history and archaeology. The society's Research Group delves into various aspects of the town's history, producing publications and maintaining extensive archives and collections of historical artifacts. With a commitment to preserving the town's heritage, the society actively monitors local building works for potential archaeological discoveries.

- The Tonbridge Historical Society's key concern with respect to development is that due consideration won't be given for the potential archaeological importance of the site.
- That the site which is within the floodplain, with exception of the Sainsbury's and Angel Centre, has had little in the way of development may contain archaeological artifacts. The site was in more history a cricket field and prior to this open fields.
- There have been other important historic and prehistoric artifacts found in the vicinity.
- There is a concern that planning requirements with respect to archaeology don't consider anything other than that related to human settlements and remains.
- The Tonbridge Society's recommendation is to appoint an archaeologist early in the process when initial site surveys commence.

### **Sainsbury's**

Given the level of detail, the decision to engage with Sainsbury's after the masterplan framework work is completed was taken. The consultant team and the Council recognise that Sainsbury's have a significant interest in the plans for the EOHS site adjacent to their store where refurbishment plans are being developed. As such it is vital that there is further engagement with Sainsbury's to best align the interests of all parties.

### **Kent County Council**

TMBC have ongoing discussions with Kent County Council (KCC).

