BATTLE CIVIL PARISH
Design Guidelines

AECOM



FINAL REPORT
Referendum Version

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locality
the power of community

Quality information

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Introduction

01

1. Introduction

This section provides context and general information to introduce the project and its location.

1.1. Introduction

Through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Neighbourhood Planning Programme led by Locality, AECOM has been commissioned to provide design support to Battle Town Council. The support is intended to provide design guidelines and masterplanning assistance to the group's work in producing the Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan (BCPNP).

1.2. Objective

The objectives of this report are twofold, and were agreed with Battle Town Council at the outset of the project:

Design

This report provides design guidance that will influence the form of any development that will come forward in the Neighbourhood Plan area. The guidance is based upon observations of the town's rich historic character and feedback from engagement already undertaken by Battle Town Council. The design guidelines are intended to inform the design of the Blackfriars site as well as any other development proposals in the parish.

Masterplanning

The masterplanning work focuses on the Blackfriars site selected for housing allocation in the Local Plan. Drawing on the design guidance, it gives strategic recommendations on how it might best accommodate the new development. Particular attention was given to the preservation of open space and trees within the site, and the enhancement of Battle's historic townscape.

1.3. Process

Following an inception meeting and a site visit, AECOM and Battle Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members carried out a high level assessment of the town. The following steps were agreed with the group to produce this report:

- Initial site visit;
- Urban design analysis;
- Desktop research;
- Preparation of masterplanning for the site at Blackfriars;
- Preparation of a draft report, subsequently revised in response to feedback provided by Battle Town Council; and
- Submission of a final report.

This work complements a Site Options Assessment (SOA) prepared by AECOM for Battle Town Council in February 2019. The findings of the SOA are summarised in a separate study and will not be the subject of this report.

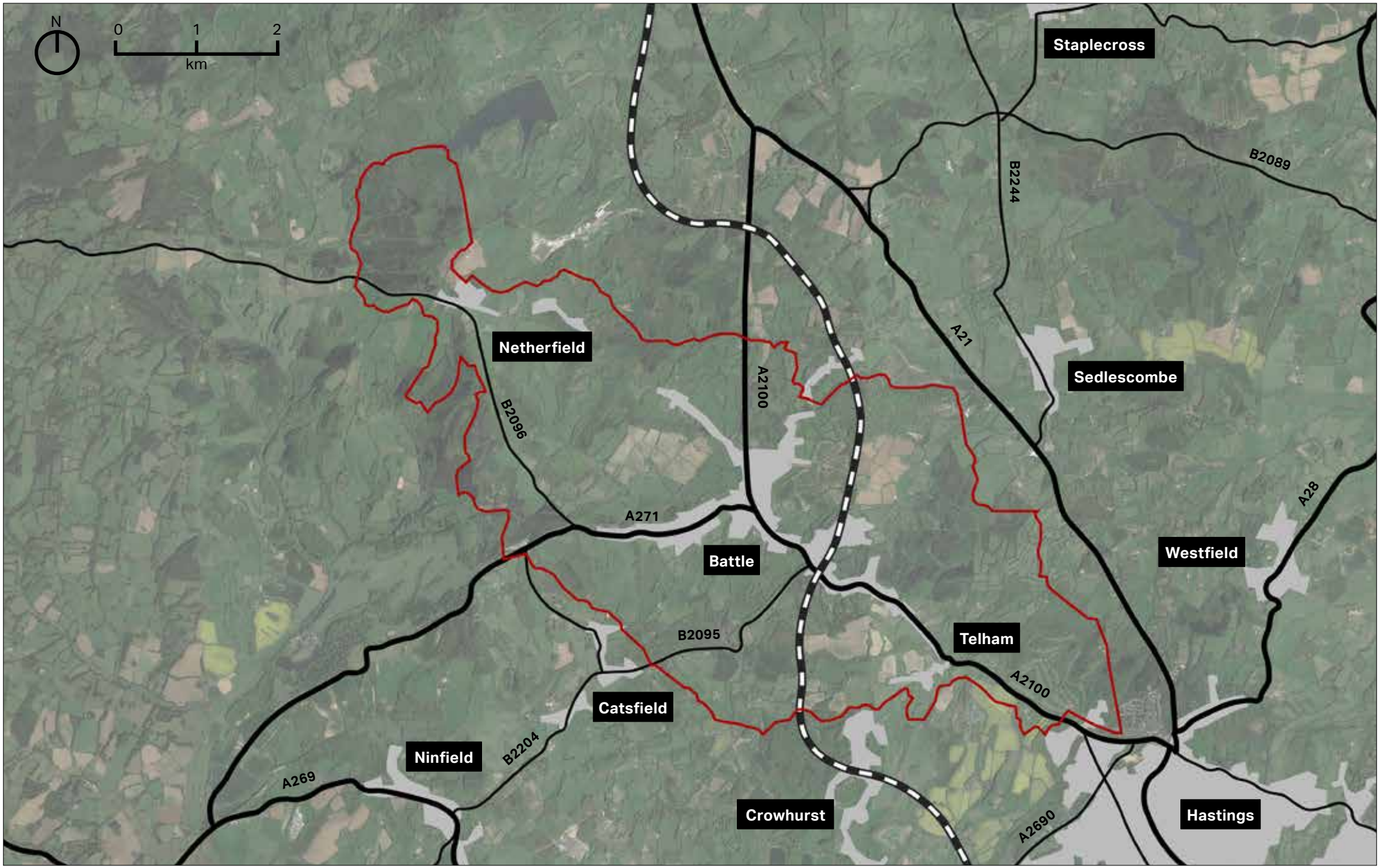


Figure 1: Battle Parish area, with parish boundary shown in red (source: Google Earth).

1.4. Area of Study

Location

Battle is a small town and civil parish in the district of Rother in East Sussex. It is located 9km north of Hastings and Bexhill, 45km east of Brighton, and 80km south of London. It is situated at the junction of the A2100 and A271. The parish includes the town of Battle as well as the settlements of Netherfield to the north west and Telham to the south east, the former being separated from the main settlement by woodland and open spaces. The main settlement occupies an elevated position along a ridge that dominates the surrounding countryside and woodland area. This topography constrained the expansion of the settlements, which usually follow ridge lines and roads that result in a mostly narrow and linear settlement pattern.

The town is famous for being the site of the Battle of Hastings in 1066 from which it derives its name. The existing settlement began in the 11th century in conjunction with the erection of Battle Abbey on the site of the battle; the Abbey gatehouse remains the dominant feature of the town centre. The settlement of Netherfield to the north west of the parish was also settled in the Middle Ages but mostly developed with the growth of mining activities from the 19th century onward. The settlement of Telham to the south east developed from the 19th century onward.

The parish has a railway station with direct links to London, Hastings, and Tonbridge. Battle has a library, a fire station, a police station, and several health centres and care homes, in addition to numerous shops and businesses. The town has several schools, including Battle Abbey School, Claremont School, Battle & Langton C of E Primary School, Netherfield C of E Primary School, and Claverham Community College. Due to its association with the Battle of Hastings, the town is an important tourist destination. Tourist sites include the Battle of Hastings battlefield, the Abbey, and the Battle Museum of Local History.

At the 2011 census the resident population was 6,673 in the parish and 6,054 in the built-up area.

Designations

The parish is located inside the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the High Weald National Character Area (NCA). A Conservation Area was established in 1970 and covers most of the town centre and the battlefield. There is a total of 174 listed buildings within the parish, and the 1066 Battlefield is both a Registered Park and Garden and a Registered Battlefield. The town centre also contains many unlisted buildings of architectural interest.

Some of the most prominent listed buildings and landmarks include:

- Battle Abbey gatehouse, school, and precinct walls (Grade I)
- Battle Abbey ruins (scheduled monument)
- The Parish Church of St Mary (Grade I)
- The Almonry (Grade II*)
- Battle Abbey grounds and 1066 battlefield (Registered Park and Garden and Registered Battlefield)

In addition, the parish contains three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), including Blackhorse Quarry, where many fossils of prehistoric animals have been unearthed. A fourth SSSI at River Line abuts the parish boundaries.



Figure 2: Grade II listed former Battle Hospital.



Figure 3: View into the open countryside from Marley Lane.



Figure 4: House with white weatherboarding and red brick façade.



Figure 5: Historic streetscape along Mount Street inside the Conservation Area.





Local Character Analysis

02

2. Local Character Analysis

This section outlines the broad physical, historical and contextual characteristics of Battle. It analyses the pattern and layout of buildings, hierarchy of movements, topography, building heights and roofline, and parking. Images in this section have been used to portray the built form of Battle.

2.1. Introduction

The array of listed buildings reflects the architectural diversity and historic quality of Battle, whose town centre has been protected by a conservation area since 1970. There are 174 listed buildings within the parish boundaries of Battle, five of which are Grade I listed, as well as a number of noteworthy (unlisted) buildings such as that containing the Library and Battle Memorial Hall. In addition, the parish is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).



Figure 6: Battle Library building and Market Square.



Figure 7: Grade I listed Battle Abbey Gatehouse.



Figure 8: Grade II listed windmill on Caldbec Hill.



Figure 9: Single family house built with traditional local materials.



Figure 10: View from the Emmanuel Centre on the Blackfriars site.



Figure 11: The High Street in the Battle Conservation Area.

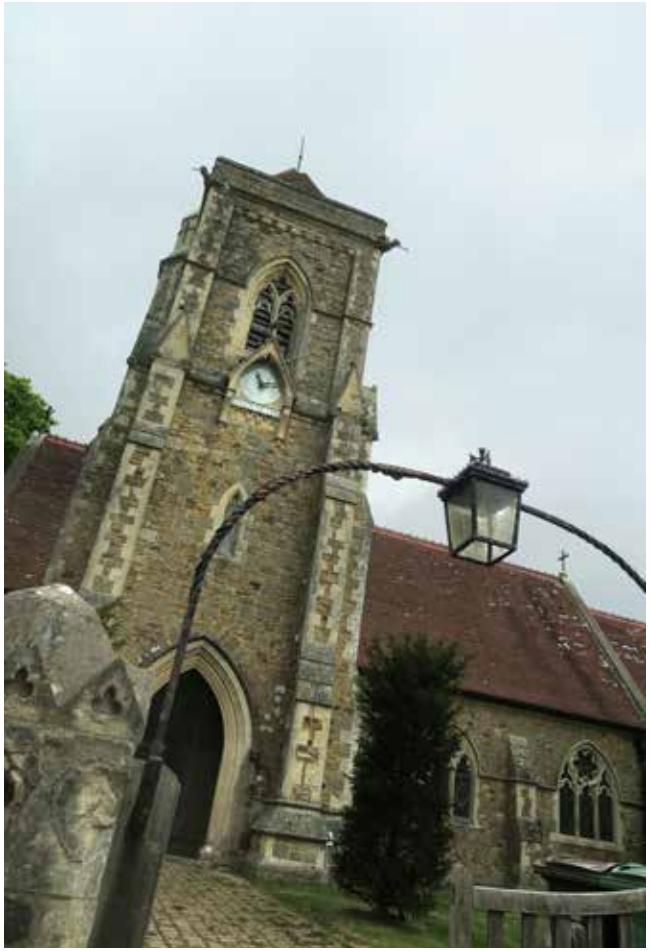


Figure 12: St John the Baptist Church in Netherfield.

2.2. Local Character Analysis

2.2.1. Streets and Public Realm

The organic, meandering layout of most streets is mainly constrained by natural features and the hilly topography of the parish. Many residential streets built in the 20th and 21st centuries follow loop and cul-de-sac layouts. Streets in the town centre are usually narrow and framed directly by buildings with little or no setbacks. Outside the historic centre and in outlying settlements, they are bordered with landscaping, mature trees, or low walls, and some include planted verges. Some roads in Telham and Netherfield lack pavements on one or both sides. Although the street connectivity in Battle is constrained by its particular topography, it is complemented by a dense network of interconnected footpaths that provide pedestrians with a wider choice of routes than the road network suggests.

2.2.2. Pattern and Layout of Buildings

The pattern and layout of building is heavily shaped by topographical constraints throughout the parish, giving the settlements a distinct narrow and linear pattern with houses clustered along the main roads.

The historic town centre is marked by long, contiguous narrow "burgage" plots arranged in a herringbone pattern along the road. Buildings have a variety of heights and widths but are usually aligned directly along property lines, giving the centre an introverted and enclosed character. Some 20th and 21st century residential buildings are clustered around cul-de-sacs and loops with vehicle accesses branching away from the main road, although most retain the one-house deep linear pattern.

Outside the town centre and in the settlements of Netherfield and Telham, most houses are detached or semi-detached buildings sited on wide plots. Recesses of varying depths in the building line enable the formation of large front gardens or yards. There remains a high degree of openness to the open countryside and green spaces.

Outside the built up areas, settlement patterns are characterised by dispersed farmsteads.

2.2.3. Building Height and Roofline

Building heights typically vary between two and three storeys in the centre, and between one and two elsewhere. Typically the roofline is pitched and punctuated by gables, mansards, half hip roofs, dormers, and chimneys. There is a high diversity of roof and gable orientation, height, and materials - the most common being clay plaintiles, hung tiles on gables and upper storeys, and some concrete on more recent buildings. In many places the hilly topography adds visual interest to the roofline.

2.2.4. Car Parking

Car parking solutions vary depending on the location. The town centre has very little on-street parking, but provides large car parks concealed behind the main roads and a minority of small courtyard car parks. More recent residential areas have a combination of on-street and on-site parking in the form of parallel parking bays, garages, and driveways respectively. Some front yard parking is partially screened by hedges.

2.2.5. Open Space & Landscape

The parish is set in an undulating landscape within the High Weald AONB. The heritage designation of the Abbey grounds and the 1066 battlefield has preserved a large area south of the town centre as green open space. Due to the linear settlement pattern of the parish, many properties back on open fields with long views towards the countryside. Settled areas are punctuated by smaller fields and woodland areas. A strategic green gap is maintained between the built up edge of Telham and the larger conurbation of Hastings to the south-east. The abundance of tall trees and hedges at the back of properties partially screens the settlements from inward views.

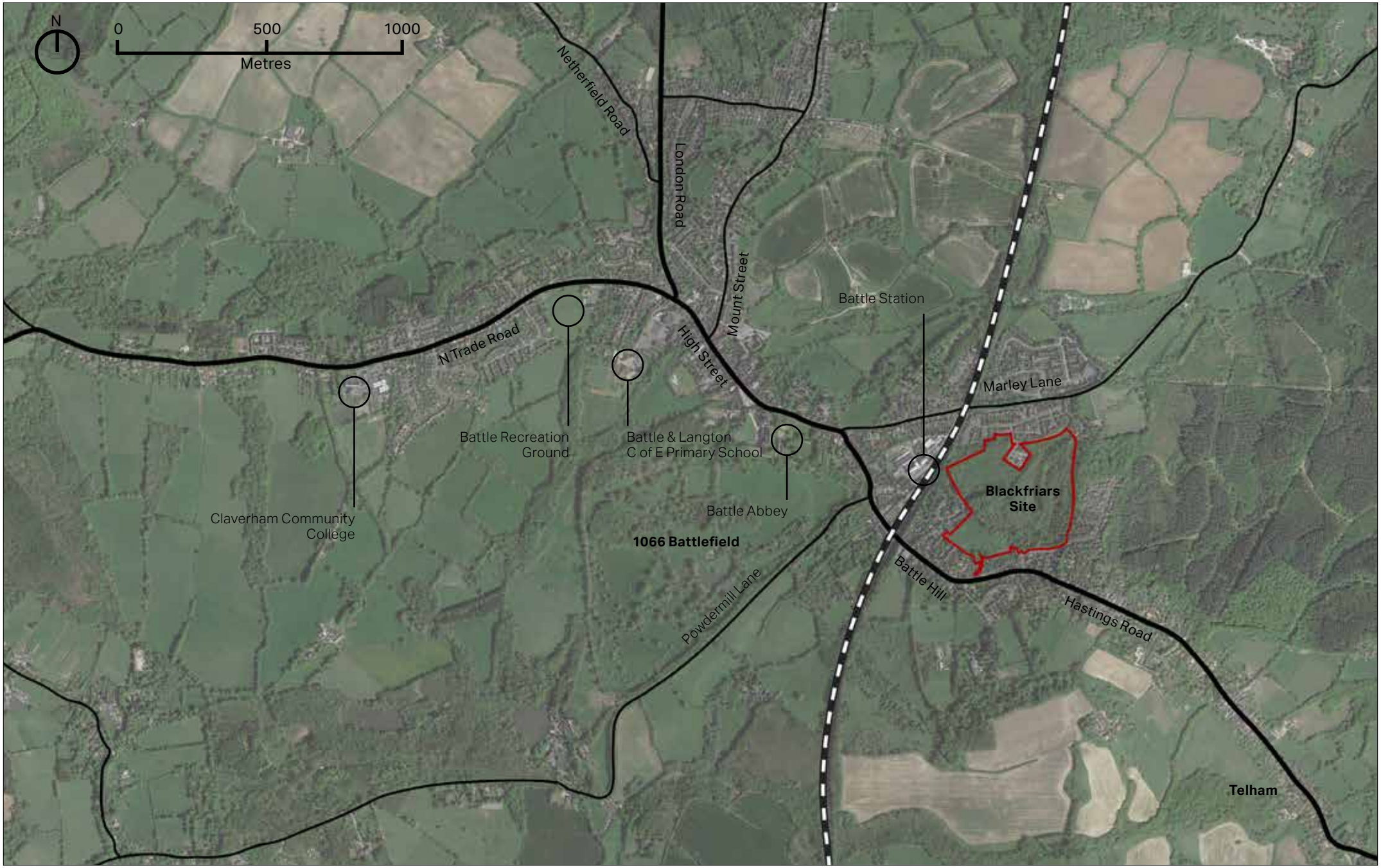


Figure 13: The main settlement of Battle, with roads in solid lines and the Blackfriars site in red lines (source: Google Earth).

2.3. Architectural Details

The following section showcases some local building details which should be considered as positive examples to inform the design guidelines that follow.



Contemporary development with brick infill, sandstone trim, and jettying gables.



Sandstone crenelated church tower of St Mary the Virgin.



Details of a clay plaintile roof and a gable covered with hung clay tiles.



Bracketed door hood.



Grey-rendered façade with parapet wall.



House with white rendered walls, multi-pane casement windows, and shed dormer.



Battle Abbey Gatehouse - Gothic pointed carriage archway and ornamental first floor arcading.



Gothic Tudor gateway of Battle Hospital.



Clay plaintile roof with shed dormers and decorated weather vane.



Half-timbered building with plaintile roof and front garden.



Half hip clay plaintile roof, hipped dormer, white painted façade, and gable clad with hung clay tiles.



Façade cladding with clay hung tiles (upper storey) and bicolour brick (ground floor).





Design Guidelines

03

3. Design Guidelines

This section outlines key design elements and principles to consider when assessing a design proposal.

3.1. Design Guidelines

Pattern and Layout of Buildings

- The existing character of the town and outlying settlements must be appreciated when contemplating new development, whatever its size or purpose.
- Where an intrinsic part of local character, properties should be clustered in small pockets showing a variety of types. The use of a repeating type of dwelling along the entirety of the street should be avoided.
- Boundaries such as walls or hedgerows, whichever is appropriate to the street, should enclose and define each street along the back edge of the highway, adhering to a consistent property line for each development group.
- Properties should aim to provide rear and front gardens or at least a small buffer to the public sphere where the provision of a garden is not possible.





Figure 14: Continuous street frontage composed of buildings sited on narrow "burgage" plots arranged in a herringbone pattern along the High Street (source: Google Earth).



Figure 15: 20th century semi-detached houses with a building line set back from the street.



Figure 16: Contemporary residential buildings on Sunny Rise arranged in small clusters and terraces around mews and courtyards.

Street Layout and Connectivity

- Where permitted by the topography, new streets should be laid out to form a permeable and interconnected network. A permeable street network at all levels provides more: route choices, even traffic distribution across the network, direct pedestrian routes and viable public transport. As a result, permeable and interconnected street networks are key in encouraging walking and cycling as well as the use of public transport.
- New streets should tend to be linear with gentle meandering where the topography allows, providing sustained visual interest and evolving views. The combined layout of streets and buildings should encourage ease of navigation by articulating the environment in terms of memorable links, nodes, and landmarks.
- Pedestrian paths should be included in new developments and be integrated with the existing pedestrian routes. Any cul-de-sacs should be relatively short and include provision for onward pedestrian and cycle links.
- Design features such as gates to new developments and footpaths between high fences should be kept at a minimum and the latter should be avoided.

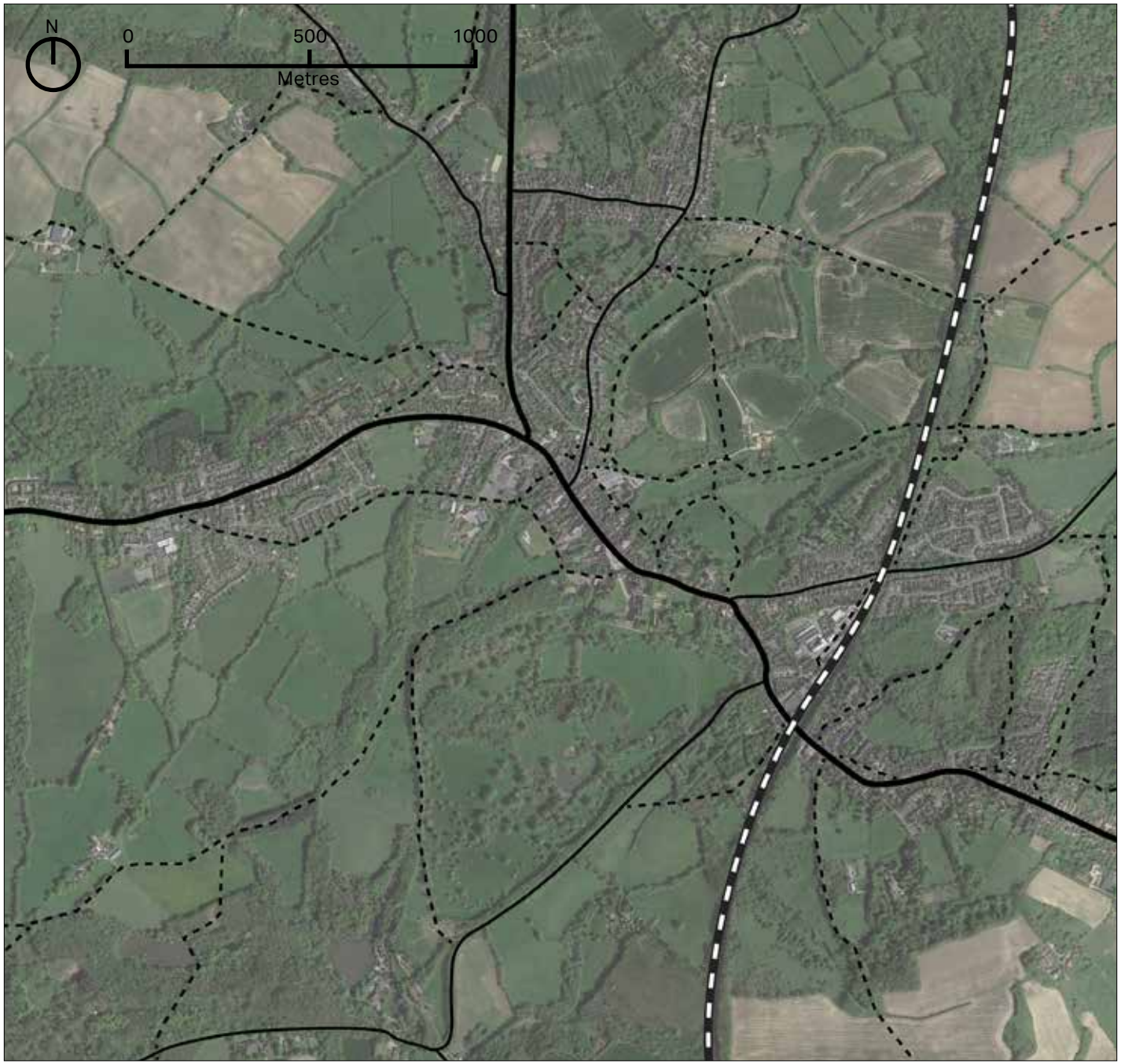


Figure 17: Aerial photo showing the limited road network (solid lines) and the more interconnected network of public rights of way (dotted lines). Source: Google Earth.

Street Design

- Streets must be considered a 'place' to be used by all, not just motor vehicles. It is essential that the design of new development should include streets that incorporate needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and if applicable public transport users. It is also important that on-street parking, where introduced, does not impede the access of pedestrians and other vehicles.
- Within the settlement boundaries, streets should not be designed to maximise vehicle speed or capacity. They must ensure the safety and accessibility of vulnerable groups such as children and wheelchair users, and may use a range of traffic calming measures such as raised junction tables.
- The distribution of land uses should respect the general character of the area and street network, and take into account the degree of isolation, lack of light pollution, and levels of tranquillity. Access to properties should be from the street where possible.
- Streets should incorporate opportunities for public seating, landscaping, green infrastructure, and sustainable drainage.



Figure 18: Street in the historic town centre with an organic layout and continuous building frontages.



Figure 19: Residential street in a 20th century development with planted verges, footways, and large front gardens.

Junctions and Pedestrian Crossings

- Crossing points that are safe, convenient, and accessible for pedestrians of all abilities must be placed at frequent intervals on pedestrian desire lines and at key nodes.
- Junctions must enable good visibility between vehicles and pedestrians. For this purpose, street furniture, planting, and parked cars must be kept away from visibility splays to avoid obstructing sight lines.
- Traffic calming measures should be introduced at crossing points to increase safety and discourage speeding. For example, kerb build outs can be used reduce pedestrian crossing distances. Carriageways can also be raised across a pedestrian crossing or an entire junction to prioritise pedestrian movements. In low-traffic lanes and residential streets, crossing points can be more informal, for example through shared use surfaces.
- Traffic signals, where they are introduced, must be timed to enable the elderly, children, and disabled to cross safely.



Figure 20: Example of a raised mid-block pedestrian crossing on a 20 mph street on Goldsmith Street, Norwich (note: many local authorities require blister tactile pavers at crossings to guide visually impaired pedestrians).





Figure 21: Example of a raised crossing across a main road in Cambridge, with contrasting paving materials and space for low-level planting and street furniture.

Local Green Spaces, Views, and Character

- Development adjoining public open spaces and important gaps should enhance the character of these spaces by either providing a positive interface (i.e. properties facing onto them to improve natural surveillance) or a soft landscaped edge.
- Any trees or woodland lost to new development must be replaced. Native trees and shrubs should be used to reinforce the more rural character of the settlements of Netherfield and Telham.
- The spacing of development should reflect the character (town or outlying settlement) and allow for long distance views of the countryside from the public realm. Trees and landscaping should be incorporated in the design.
- The existing quiet and peaceful atmosphere of areas outside the town centre should be preserved.
- Green gaps between settlements and built up areas must be retained to avoid coalescence.
- Landscape schemes should be designed and integrated with the open fields that currently border the town.



Figure 22: Allotment gardens and open fields at the back of Mount Street.



Figure 23: View of the open countryside from Cedarwood House in Telham.



Figure 24: Village green on Darvel Down in Netherfield.



Figure 25: Northward view of the open countryside from a gap in the built frontage on Marley Lane.



Figure 26: Footpath, open fields, and cricket pitch (background) at the settlement edge.



Figure 27: Church yard of St Mary the Virgin.

Vehicle Parking

- When needed, residential car parking can be a mix of on-plot side, front, and garage parking, complemented by on-street parking.
- For family homes, cars should be placed at the side (preferably) or front of the property.
- Car parking design should be combined with landscaping to minimise the presence of vehicles.
- Parking areas and driveways should be designed to minimise impervious surfaces, for example through the use of permeable paving.
- When placing parking at the front, the area should be designed to minimise the visual impact of vehicles and to blend with the existing streetscape and materials. The aim is to keep a sense of enclosure and to break the potential of a continuous area of car parking in front of the dwellings. This can be achieved through high quality landscaping.
- Where provided, garages should not dominate the street scene and should not create long blank façades. Garages should be large enough to accommodate storing spaces to avoid the loss of the parking space to other uses.



Figure 28: New garage built with local traditional materials.



Figure 29: Contemporary development with a mix of courtyard parking (centre) and garages (right).



Figure 30: Disabled parking bay in Cambridge with ramp for easy wheelchair access.



Figure 31: Single-family houses with side garages set back from the main building line.



Figure 32: Apartment building with undercroft parking entrance partly screened with landscaping.

Bicycle Parking

- A straightforward way to encourage cycling is to provide secured covered cycle parking within all new residential developments and publicly available cycle parking in the public realm.
- For residential units, where there is no garage on plot, covered and secured cycle parking must be provided within the domestic curtilage. The use of planting and smaller trees alongside cycle parking can be used to mitigate any visual impact on adjacent spaces or buildings.
- Bicycle stands in the public realm should be sited in locations that are convenient and that benefit from adequate natural surveillance. They should be placed in locations that do not impede pedestrian mobility or kerbside activities.



Figure 33: Example of public cycle parking (left) and sheltered cycle parking garage (right) in Cambridge.



Figure 34: Example of kerbside on-street cycle stands.



Figure 35: New roofed cycle rack with rail indicator screen and CCTV at Battle Station ©Bev Marks, 2019.

Enclosure, Fronts and Backs

It is the sense of enclosure contributes significantly to an attractive environment. Buildings and/or large trees should define and enclose spaces that lie in between them. Focal points as well as public squares and spaces in new developments should be designed in good proportions and provide continuous frontages. Clearly defined spaces help in achieving cohesive and attractive urban form, and help in creating an appropriate sense of enclosure.

The following principles serve as general guidelines that should be considered towards achieving satisfactory sense of enclosure:

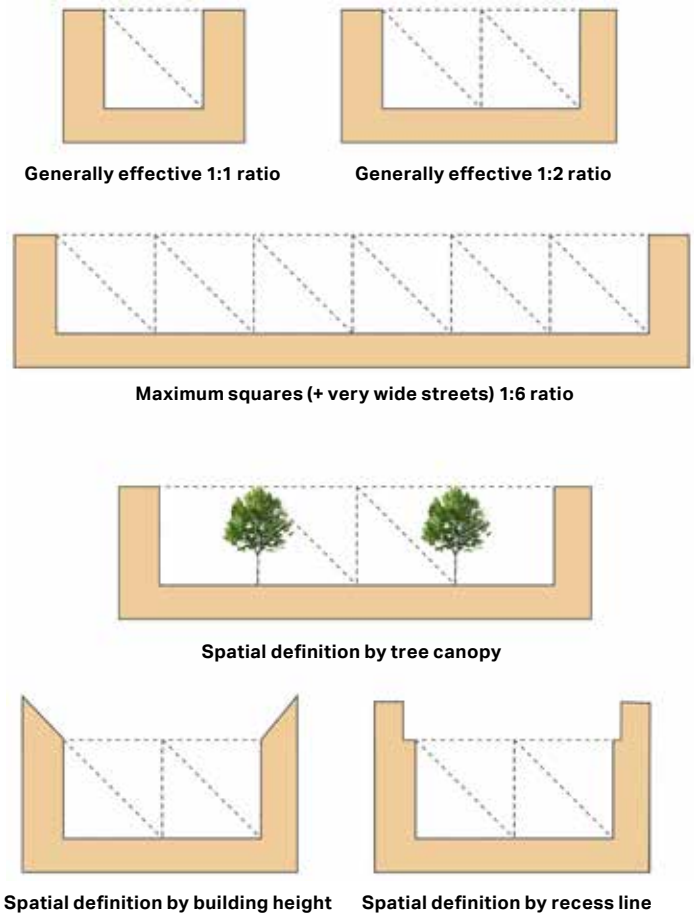
- Façades should have an appropriate ratio between the width of the street and the building height (see diagrams opposite).
- Buildings should be designed to turn corners and terminate views.
- Building façades should front onto streets. Variation to the building line can be introduced to create an informal character.



Figure 36: The building enclosure in the town centre changes sharply where the High Street meets the Abbey Gatehouse, reinforcing the importance of the main square.



Figure 37: Gradual increase in enclosure along Upper Lake, highlighting the transition from the outskirts of Battle to the historic town centre.



Images from Urban Design Compendium (Homes England)

Building Line and Boundary Treatment

- Buildings must have their main façade and entrance facing the street where this is in keeping with local character. The building line should have subtle variations in the form of recesses and protrusions but will generally form a unified whole.
- Buildings should be designed to ensure that streets and/or public spaces have good levels of natural surveillance from buildings. This can be ensured by placing ground floor habitable rooms and upper floor windows facing the street.
- High quality boundary treatments should reinforce the sense of continuity of the building line and help define the street, appropriate to the character of the area. Boundary treatments strike a balance between privacy and natural surveillance.
- Front gardens should be included where this is characteristic of the area.
- If placed on the property boundary, waste storage should be integrated as part of the overall design of the property. Landscaping could also be used to minimise the visual impact of bins and recycling containers.



Figure 38: Suburban street characterised by large building setbacks and property lines defined by landscaping.



Figure 40: Terrace houses with small elevated front gardens and boundary treatments defined by low brick walls and planting.



Figure 39: Historic town centre street edge defined by a continuous alignment along the property line and the absence of building setbacks.

Building Scale and Massing

- Buildings should be sympathetic in scale to the surrounding context.
- Subtle variation in height is encouraged to add visual interest, such as altering eaves and ridge heights. Another way of doing it could be by variation of frontage widths and plan forms. The application of a uniform building type throughout a development should be avoided.
- The massing of new buildings should ensure adequate privacy and access to natural light for their occupants, and avoid over shadowing existing buildings. This is particularly important in areas of historic character.
- A variety of plot widths and façade depth should be considered to create an attractive townscape.



Figure 41: Examples of buildings in Battle demonstrating a variety of heights and plans.

Building Heights/ Roofline

Creating a good variety in the roof line is a significant element of designing attractive places. There are certain elements that serve as guidelines in achieving a good variety of roofs:

- The scale of the roof should always be in proportion with the dimensions of the building itself;
- Monotonous building elevations should be avoided, therefore subtle changes in roofline should be ensured during the design process. Roof shapes and pitches must however remain consistent for any given building; overly complex roofs must be avoided;
- Locally traditional roof detailing elements should be considered and implemented where possible in cases of new development; and
- Dormers can be used as a design element to add variety and interest to roofs. They must be proportional to the mass of the building roof, be vertically aligned to the windows, and be of consistent style across an elevation.



Figure 42: Overlapping half hip roofs on a corner building.



Figure 43: Contemporary development with variations in roof height and upper storey treatments that break the monotony of the row.



Figure 44: Houses on Abbey Green showing a dynamic roofline with a diversity of roof orientations, pitches, and edge treatments. Buildings on the High Street are typically 2-3 storeys high, compared to 1-2 storeys in most of the town and outlying settlements.

Gateway and Access Features

- In the case of any future development, the design proposals should consider placing gateway and built elements highlighting the access or arrival to the new developed site.
- The gateway buildings or features should reflect local character. This could mean larger houses in local materials with emphasis on the design of chimneys and fenestration, as well as well laid and cared for landscape.
- Besides building elements acting as gateways, high quality landscaping features could be considered appropriate to fulfil the same role.



Figure 45: Battle Hospital Gatehouse flanked by hedgerows and low walls.



Figure 46: Arches marking the entrance to contemporary residential mews.



Figure 47: Entrance to Isherwood. ©Bev Marks, 2021.

Fenestration

- Fenestration on public/private spaces increase the natural surveillance and enhance the attractiveness of the place. Long stretches of blank (windowless) walls should be avoided. Overall, considerations for natural surveillance, interaction, and privacy must be carefully balanced.
- Windows must be of sufficient size and number for abundant natural light.
- Site layout and building massing should ensure access to sunshine and avoid overshadowing neighbouring buildings. New developments should also maximise opportunities for long distance views.
- Consistent window styles and shapes must be used across a given façade to avoid visual clutter and dissonance.
- In proximity to historic areas, fenestration must reflect an understanding of locally distinctive features such as scale, proportions, rhythm, materials, ornamentation, and articulation. This should however not result in pastiche replica.



Figure 48: House displaying consistent window colour and styles.



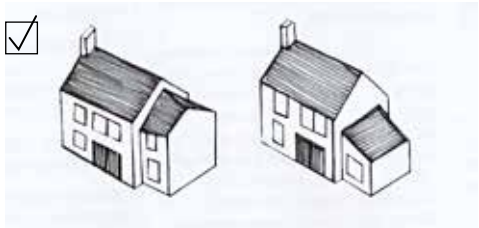
Figure 49: Building displaying a consistent traditional window style and shape across the main elevation.

Household Extensions

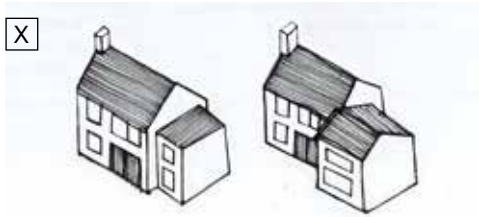
- The original building should remain the dominant element of the property. The newly built extension should not overwhelm the building from any given point.
- Extensions should not result in a significant loss to the private amenity area of the dwelling.
- Designs that wrap around the existing building and involve overly complicated roof forms should be avoided.
- Extensions should be compatible with the pitch and form of the roof to respect the existing building's character and dimensions.
- Extensions should demonstrate an intelligent understanding of the materials, architectural features, window sizes, and proportions of the existing building in order to match and complement the built environment.
- In case of side extensions, the new part should be set back from the front of the main building and retain the proportions of the original building. This is in order to reduce any visual impact of the join between existing and new.
- In case of rear extensions, the new part should not have a harmful effect on neighbouring properties in terms of overshadowing, overbearing, or privacy issues.



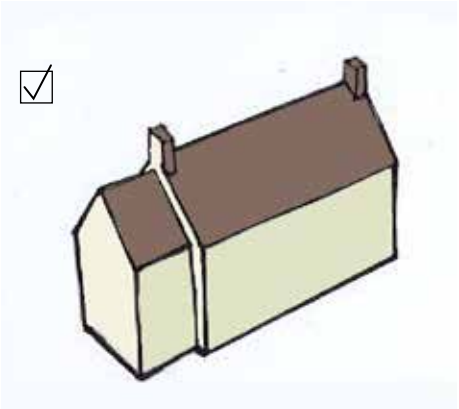
Figure 50: Examples of positive designs for side and rear extensions in Cliffe, Kent.



Good example for side extensions, respecting existing building scale, massing and building line.



Both extensions present a negative approach when considering how it fits to the existing building. Major issues regarding roofline and building line.



The extension has an appropriate scale and massing in relation to the existing building.

Materials and Building Details

The materials and architectural detailing used throughout Battle contribute to the historic character of the area and the local vernacular. It is therefore important that the materials used in proposed development are of a high quality and reinforce local distinctiveness. Any future development proposals should demonstrate that the palette of materials has been selected based on an understanding of the surrounding built environment.

This section includes examples of building material that contribute to the local vernacular of Battle which could be used to inform future development.



Red brick



White weatherboarding



Clay hung tile on upper storeys



Black weatherboarding



Red brick infill with sandstone trim



Off-white render



Sandstone



Half hip roof



Parapet wall



Multi-pane sash window



Rendered/painted brick



Hip dormer



Bracketed door hood



Multi-pane casement window



Clay plaintile roof



Shed dormer



Multi-pane shopfront display window



Hanging shopfront sign

Paving Materials

- High quality landscaping and building materials should be used across the new development.
- High quality stone, gravel, granite, and bricks can provide durable and attractive hard surface throughout the public realm. Special materials such as sandstone and limestone could also be used to further enhance the quality of particular spaces such as conservation areas.
- Variations in materials, colours, and textures can be used to define boundaries between different highway uses - pavements, parking bays, cycleways, and carriageway. Special care should be taken when considering finishes and textures to avoid impeding the mobility and safety of disabled and visually impaired users.



Sandstone/Yorkstone flags



Granite setts



Granite kerbs



Clay pavers



(Concrete) imitation stone setts



Bound gravel

Street Furniture

- The appearance of street furniture elements should be coordinated and contribute to the overall public realm and placemaking strategy.
- Opportunities should be sought to consolidate different functions to reduce street clutter, for example by combining lighting columns with electric vehicle charging points.
- Public seating must be provided in convenient locations at regular intervals, especially in high footfall areas. The siting must not impede pedestrian mobility or conflict with kerbside activities such as loading, refuse collection, and parking.



Figure 51: Street furniture item decorated with the town crest.



Figure 53: Bus shelter built with traditional local materials.



Figure 54: Signpost in the conservation area.



Figure 52: Bollard with colour chosen to match most other items of street furniture.

Contemporary Architecture

Within the neighbourhood plan area, there are a few examples of successful contemporary architecture that blend harmoniously with their physical context. It is suggested that this trend continues to further expand with additional eco design features incorporated in future developments. New buildings, when referencing traditional architecture, must however avoid combining elements from too many different architectural styles or employing low-quality imitations of traditional materials. A clear understanding of local and non-local styles and materials is also required.





Figure 55: Contemporary homes on Whatlington Road. ©Bev Marks, 2019.

Eco Design

Energy efficient or eco design combine all around energy efficient construction, appliances, and lighting with commercially available renewable energy systems, such as solar water heating and solar electricity.

Starting from the design stage there are strategies that can be incorporated towards passive solar heating, cooling and energy efficient landscaping which are determined by local climate and site conditions.

The aim of these interventions is to reduce overall home energy use as cost effectively as the circumstances allow for. Whereas, the final step towards a high performance building would consist of other on site measures towards renewable energy systems.



Figure 56: Example of ecological housing using traditional and contemporary materials (source: Studio Partington)

Rainwater Harvesting

Rainwater harvesting refers to the systems allowing to capture and store rainwater as well as those enabling the reuse in-situ of grey water. These systems involve pipes and storage devices that could be unsightly if added without an integral vision for design. Therefore some design recommendation would be to:

- Conceal tanks by cladding them in complementary materials;
- Use attractive materials or finishing for pipes;
- Combine landscape/planters with water capture systems;
- Underground tanks;
- Utilise water bodies for storage.





Figure 57: Examples of tanks used for rainwater harvesting. © Wikimedia Commons (right).

Permeable Pavement

Pavements add to the composition of the building. Thus permeable pavements should not only perform its primary function which is to let water filter through but also:

- Respect the material palette;
- Help to frame the building;
- Create an arrival statement;
- Be in harmony with the landscape treatment of the property;
- Help define the property boundary.







Figure 58: Examples of permeable paving (© Wikimedia Commons).

Servicing

With modern requirements for waste separation and recycling, the number of household bins and size have increased. This issue poses a problem in relation to the aesthetics of the property if bins are left without a design solution.

Waste and cycle storage, if placed on the property boundary, must be integrated with the overall design of the boundary design. A range of hard and soft landscaping treatments such as hedges, trees, flower beds, low walls, and high quality paving materials could be used to minimise the visual impact of bins and recycling containers.

The images on this page illustrate design solutions for servicing units within the plot.





Figure 59: Combined bin and cycle storage in Cambridge.



Figure 60: Bin storage integrated with front entrance.

Solar Roof Panels

The aesthetics of solar panels over a rooftop can be a matter of concern for many homeowners. Some hesitate to incorporate them because they believe these diminish the home aesthetics in a context where looks are often a matter of pride among the owners. This is especially acute in the case of historic buildings and conservation areas, where there has been a lot of objection for setting up solar panels on visible roof areas. Thus some solutions are suggested as follows:

On new builds:

- Design solar panel features from the start, forming part of the design concept. Some attractive options are solar shingles and photovoltaic slates; and
- Use the solar panels as a material in their own right.

On retrofits:

- Analyse the proportions of the building and roof surface in order to identify the best location and sizing of panels;
- Aim to conceal wiring and other necessary installations;
- Consider introducing other tile or slate colours to create a composition with the solar panel materials; and
- Conversely, aim to introduce contrast and boldness with proportion. For example, there has been increased interest in black panels due to their more attractive appearance. Black solar panels with black mounting systems and frames can be an appealing alternative to blue panels.



Figure 61: New building with solar roof panels in Diss, Norfolk.



Figure 62: Existing building retrofitted with solar panels in Eye, Suffolk.

3.2. General questions to ask and issues to consider when presented with a development proposal

Because the design guidelines of this chapter cannot cover all design eventualities, this section provides a number of questions based on established good practice against which the design proposal should be evaluated. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below. Not all the questions will apply to every development. The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment as to whether the design proposal has taken into account the context and provided an adequate design solution.

As a first step there are a number of ideas or principles that should be present in the proposals. The proposals or design should:

1. Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
2. Reinforce or enhance the established town or smaller settlement character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
3. Respect the rural character of views and gaps;
4. Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
5. Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long distance views;
6. Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness;
7. Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
8. Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
9. Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
10. Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
11. Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
12. Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
13. Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours; and
14. Positively integrate energy efficient technologies.

Following these ideas and principles, there are number of questions related to the design guidelines outlined later in the document.

Street Grid and Layout

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity over cul-de-sac models? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists, and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern? Are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

Local Green Spaces, Views and Character

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design; i.e. what are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance any identified views or views in general?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?

- Has the proposal been considered in its widest context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- In rural locations, has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
- How does the proposal affect the character of a rural location?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
- Can any new views be created?
- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?
- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity spaces be created? If so, how will this be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?

Gateway and Access Features

- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between settlements?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

Buildings Layout and Grouping

- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?

Building Line and Boundary Treatment

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Have the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?

Building Heights and Roofline

- What are the characteristics of the roofline?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing, and scale?
- If a higher than average building is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?

Household Extensions

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, or does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing, or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
- In case of side extension, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?

Building Materials and Surface Treatment

- What is the distinctive material in the area, if any?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local material?
- Does the proposal use high quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves, and roof been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Do the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?

Car Parking Solutions

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Have the need of wheelchair users been considered?

Architectural Details and Contemporary Design

- If the proposal is within a conservation area, how are the characteristics reflected in the design?
- Does the proposal harmonise with the adjacent properties? This means that it follows the height, massing, and general proportions of adjacent buildings and how it takes cues from materials and other physical characteristics.
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing landscape features?
- Has the local architectural character and precedent been demonstrated in the proposals?
- If the proposal is a contemporary design, are the details and materials of a sufficiently high enough quality and does it relate specifically to the architectural characteristics and scale of the site?

Erratum: the photograph and caption on page 32 (Figure 47) has been replaced with a new image and text.





Applying the Guidelines

04

4. Applying the Guidelines

This section seeks to apply the design guidelines set in the previous chapter to the Blackfriars site to ensure it integrates with its natural and historic setting.

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to apply the design guidelines of the previous chapter to the Blackfriars site, taking into account the town's need for housing as well as complex site constraints including topography, vegetation, neighbouring land uses, and the historic setting of the site.

The 15 ha site was allocated for housing, education, and open space purposes in the 2006 Rother District Local Plan (Policy BT2: Land at Blackfriars). Two areas totalling 7.3 ha are allocated for housing, for an expected number of dwellings totalling 224 units, 40% of which would be affordable, at a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph). The rest of the site is allocated for a new spine road and open space, with the original requirement for a school subsequently dropped. The Local Plan also identified the opportunity to provide a pedestrian link to the nearby train station.

Proposals for a residential development and a spine road connecting Harrier Lane to the north and the Spinney to the south were submitted as part of an outline application in March 2019 (planning ref. RR/2019/604/P). The application included detailed layouts for the spine road, an illustrative masterplan, and a design and access statement. Under that plan, 6.62 ha of land would be used for housing at an average density of 33 dph, and much of the woodland retained. As of June 2019 Rother District had yet to determine the application.



Figure 63: Northward view from the Emmanuel Centre.



Figure 64: The Emmanuel Centre, located immediately north of the site.



Figure 65: View from the Emmanuel Centre to the north-western edge of the site.



Figure 66: Potential southern site entrance from the junction of the Spinney and Starrs Mead.



Figure 67: Western uphill view of the site.

4.2. Site Analysis

The site is a 15 ha greenfield site located in the east of Battle.

Natural constraints include a sloping terrain and a dense tree cover. The rest of the site consists of grassland and shrubs. The site is not affected by any tree preservation orders, although one area bordering the north of the site is subject to one. A 2019 tree survey noted many trees of high arboricultural and landscape value to be considered for retention. Only a thin area located along a stream is subject to risks of surface water flooding. A small pond is located on the south of the site.

There are three abandoned farm buildings on the southernmost part of the site - one bungalow and corrugated iron outbuildings. The Emmanuel Centre, a Methodist church and community centre, forms an exclave on the north of the site. The site adjoins the back gardens of residential properties on many sides, including two listed buildings to the south-west and the north-east.

The neighbouring area is predominantly characterised by detached and semi-detached houses no higher than 2 storeys. The north-west and north-east border ancient woodland. The train station is located 50m west of the site but there are no existing pedestrian connections with the site. The immediate vicinity of the station hosts a mix of housing, light industries, and the Battle Health Centre. The nearest available retail consists in a petrol station and the adjoining Tesco Express supermarket to the south-west.

The site contains footpaths that connect with Kingsdale Close, Harrier Lane, and Starrs Mead, but no roads. The only roads that border the site are residential streets and lanes: Harrier Lane to the north, and Starrs Mead and the Spinney to the south. The nearest bus stations are located on Marley Lane to the north and on Battle Hill and Hastings Road to the south. The nearest public car parks are located off Marley Lane, and in front of the train station, as the one adjoining the Emmanuel Centre is for private use only.

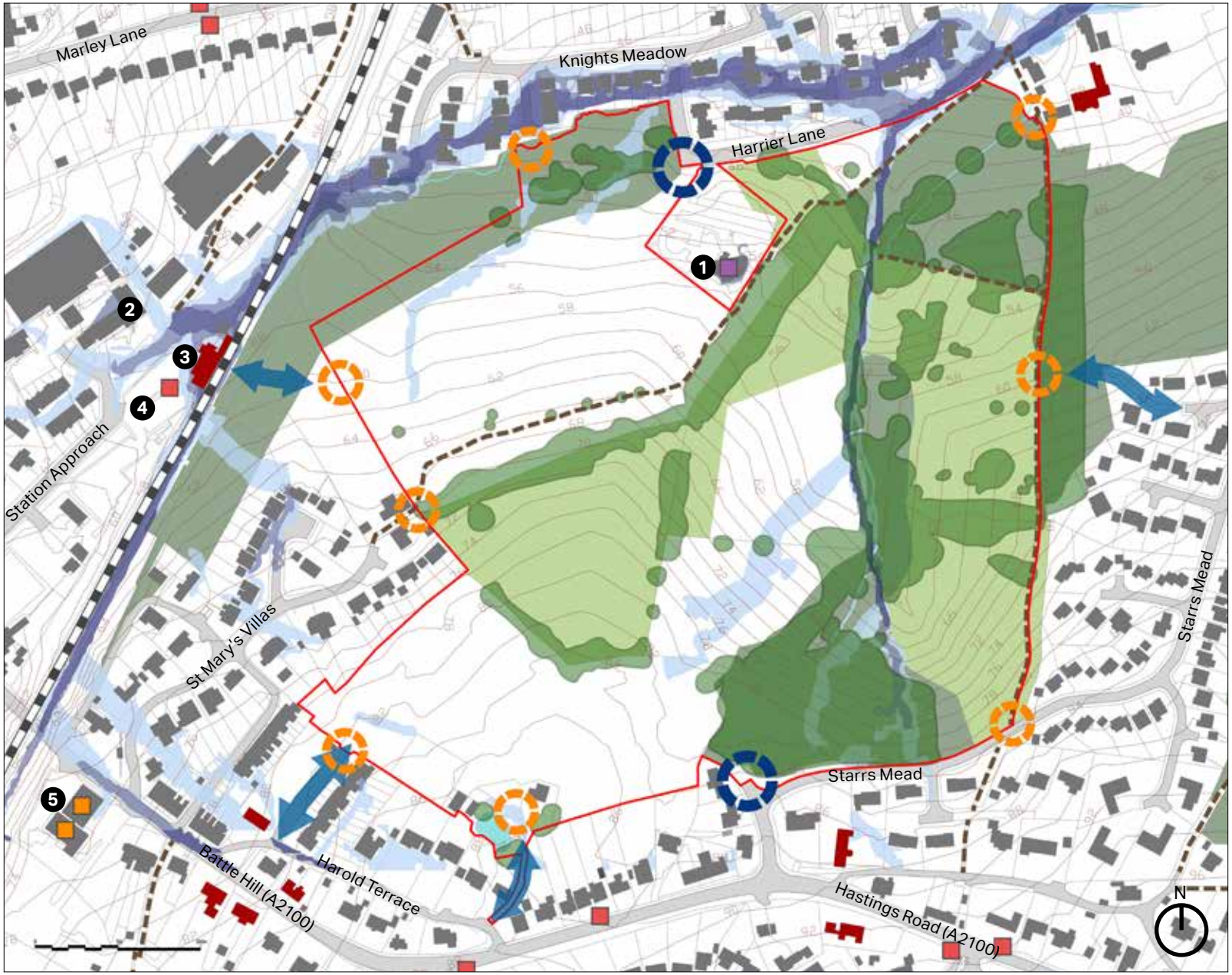
The main site accesses are located off Harrier Lane to the north, and Starrs Mead to the south. There is potential to improve existing pedestrian access points via footpaths and to create new ones to link the site with the town. In particular, a direct pedestrian link to the train station would be highly beneficial. Subject to further studies, other new pedestrian links could connect the site to the northern edge of Starrs Mead to the east, and Harrold Terrace near the junction with the A2100 to the south.



Figure 68: Residential buildings on Knights Meadow north of the site.



Figure 69: Starrs Mead, a residential street east of the site.



Key

- Site boundaries
- Contour lines
- Ancient and/or broadleaved woodland
- Low density woodland
- Trees with high to medium quality and value
- Water
- High surface flooding risk
- Medium surface flooding risk
- Low surface flooding risk
- Buildings
- Listed buildings
- Community centre
- Retail
- Bus stops
- Roads
- Public rights of way
- Railway
- Potential main site access
- Potential pedestrian access
- Potential pedestrian link, subject to agreement with third party landowners
- 1 Emmanuel Centre
- 2 Battle Health Centre
- 3 Battle Station
- 4 Battle Station Car Park
- 5 Esso petrol station and Tesco Express

Figure 70: Blackfriars site analysis (© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 09121572, 0100031673)

4.3. Masterplanning

This section presents a masterplanning option, created to illustrate the application of the design guidelines introduced above. The plan allows for the retention of most trees and woodland, which would be integrated into a scheme for up to 244 new housing units on 7.3 ha of residential development at an average density of 31 dwellings per hectare. New roads and footpaths, including one pedestrian connection to the train station, are proposed. The three abandoned farm buildings to the south of the site should be demolished, subject to agreement with the owner. The main characteristics of the proposal are summarised below.

4.3.1. Pattern and Layout of buildings

- Buildings should front the streets with slight variations in setbacks and enclosure that extend the town's historic fabric. In particular, the south side of Harrier Lane should be fronted with houses to create an appealing northeastern entrance into the site.
- The layout of building should strike a balance between privacy and natural surveillance, especially along pedestrian links.
- At edges with neighbouring properties, the vegetation should be reinforced to create green buffers to retain the privacy of existing back gardens.
- Architectural details and construction materials should demonstrate an intelligent understanding of the local vernacular.
- The building pattern should be articulated by landmark and gateway buildings placed at strategic points to reinforce the sense of arrival and help with orientation within the site.

4.3.2. Open Space and Landscape

- Most woodland and trees of high quality should be preserved and integrated into the landscaping of the new development. New trees should compensate for the loss of existing ones.
- The pond at the south of the site should be integrated into the landscaping of the site.
- A large area in the centre of the site should be retained to serve as a new central green space connected by pedestrian trails.
- Small local green spaces with play areas should be placed within development areas.

4.3.3. Streets and Public Realm

- The site should be served by three new vehicle access points on Harrier Lane and Starrs Mead, and two new main roads. Most properties would be reached via access roads and courtyards.
- New streets should retain the organic layout that characterises most of the historic town.
- Existing footpaths and public rights of way should be integrated into the new development and form a permeable network that complements the road network.
- Eight new pedestrian-only site access points should connect the site with the surrounding area, subject to third party agreements with neighbouring properties. This is particularly important for the pedestrian link with the train station to the west of the site.
- At key footpath nodes, landmarks and gateway treatments should guide pedestrians, especially where the topography and vegetation do not allow clear sight lines.
- Traffic calming options should be considered along the main roads to prevent speeding, especially in the downhill direction. More informal shared surfaces should be considered for low-traffic areas.

4.3.4. Building Height and Roofline

- The height of new houses should be sympathetic to the existing tree line and the location of the site within the High Weald AONB.
- The massing and height of buildings should take advantage of the irregular topography to extend the informal vernacular character of the town.

4.3.5. Car Parking

- Vehicle parking should consist in a mix of on-street, courtyard, and on-plot solutions.
- The edges of parking areas should be softened by soft landscaping in the form of hedges, trees, and low-level landscaping.



Figure 71: Blackfriars site masterplan (© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 09121572, 0100031673)





Delivery

05

5. Delivery

The Design Guidelines will be a valuable tool in securing context-driven, high quality development on the Blackfriars Site. They will be used in different ways by different actors in the planning and development process, as summarised in the table.

Actors	How They Will Use the Design Guidelines
Applicants, developers, and landowners	As a guide to community and Local Planning Authority expectations on design, allowing a degree of certainty – they will be expected to follow the Guidelines as planning consent is sought.
Local Planning Authority	As a reference point, embedded in policy, against which to assess planning applications. The Design Guidelines should be discussed with applicants during any pre-application discussions.
Town Council	As a guide when commenting on planning applications, ensuring that the Design Guidelines are complied with.
Community organisations	As a tool to promote community-backed development and to inform comments on planning applications.
Statutory consultees	As a reference point when commenting on planning applications.



Figure 72: High Street shopfronts and listed buildings.

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