

**“Regeneration is what you can change. What you can make different for all the people because it is for the better”**

George Stalley age 9



**“The plan is good because we can change the way (the) big boys behave and there are going to be more things for them to do”**

Rhyanna age 8



## Context



**“I think it will make the Island better because it's going to be easier to get to school, more people are going to want jobs and there will be more jobs, the roads are going to be changed”**

Devon Dumont age 9



**“Things are not very good at the moment because people are building new things and some teenagers are writing all over stuff. We need some hospitals and doctors nearer to us. It will affect my future by more houses being built and I would like to live near my mum and dad so I wouldn't have to go a long way to visit them”**

Matthew Neal age 9

# Context



Aerial photo of the masterplan area and context

# The Place

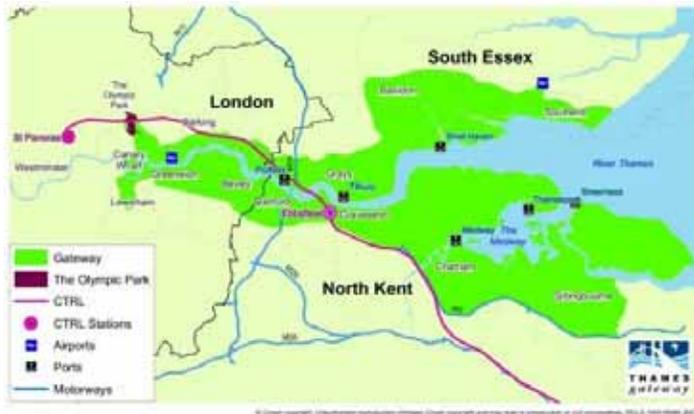
## Analysis: The Place

The Isle of Sheppey sits within the context of the Thames Gateway and major change in North Kent. It has a strong character resulting from a variety of factors but in particular isolation, history and landscape have been major influences on the place today.

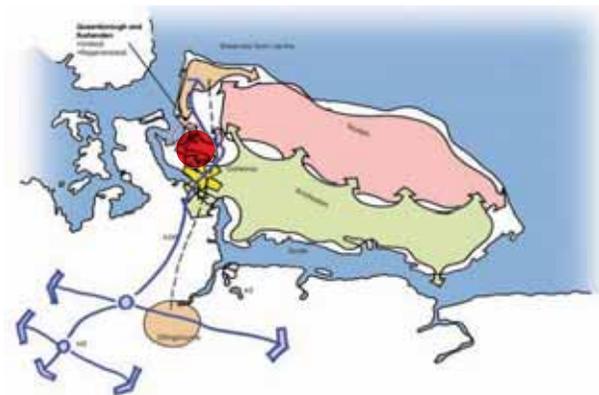
Sheppey is located in north Kent with the Thames Estuary to the north, the River Medway to the west and the Swale separating the island from the mainland to the south and west. The island is accessed from the south by road on the A249 and by rail from Sittingbourne. The A249 has been upgraded with a new bridge ("Sheppey Crossing") and dual carriageway crossing to the island. This now provides a fast road link between the M2 and the Island.

The Isle of Sheppey has a long history of industry and maritime activity with Queenborough being the oldest town on the Island and Sheerness having one of the UK's major ports. This activity has been in decline for many years and a combination of poor transport connections and declining employment has resulted in a high degree of deprivation and poor image.

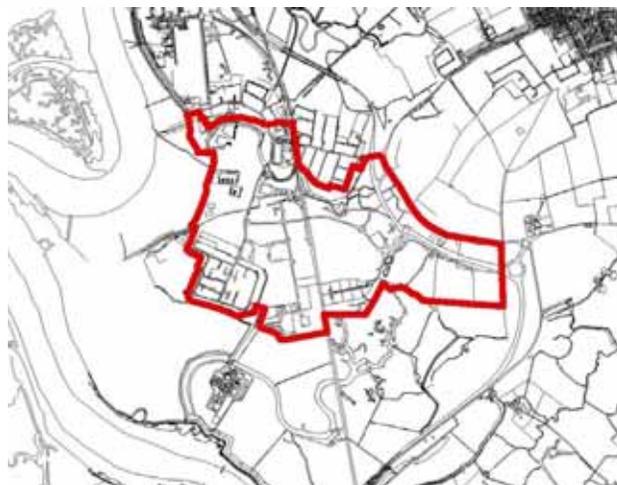
This negative aspect can be countered by the positive aspects of a rich history, attractive setting and landscape and a great deal of potential which awaits unlocking.



The Thames Gateway - Kent Context



The Isle of Sheppey in context



The Queenborough and Rushenden area.

- Queenborough & Rushenden Regeneration
- New A249 bridge
- Rushenden Relief Road
- Swale Ecotourism Study
- Learning Hub
- Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road
- Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration

The regeneration of Queenborough & Rushenden will set a marker for high quality development and regeneration for the Isle of Sheppey.



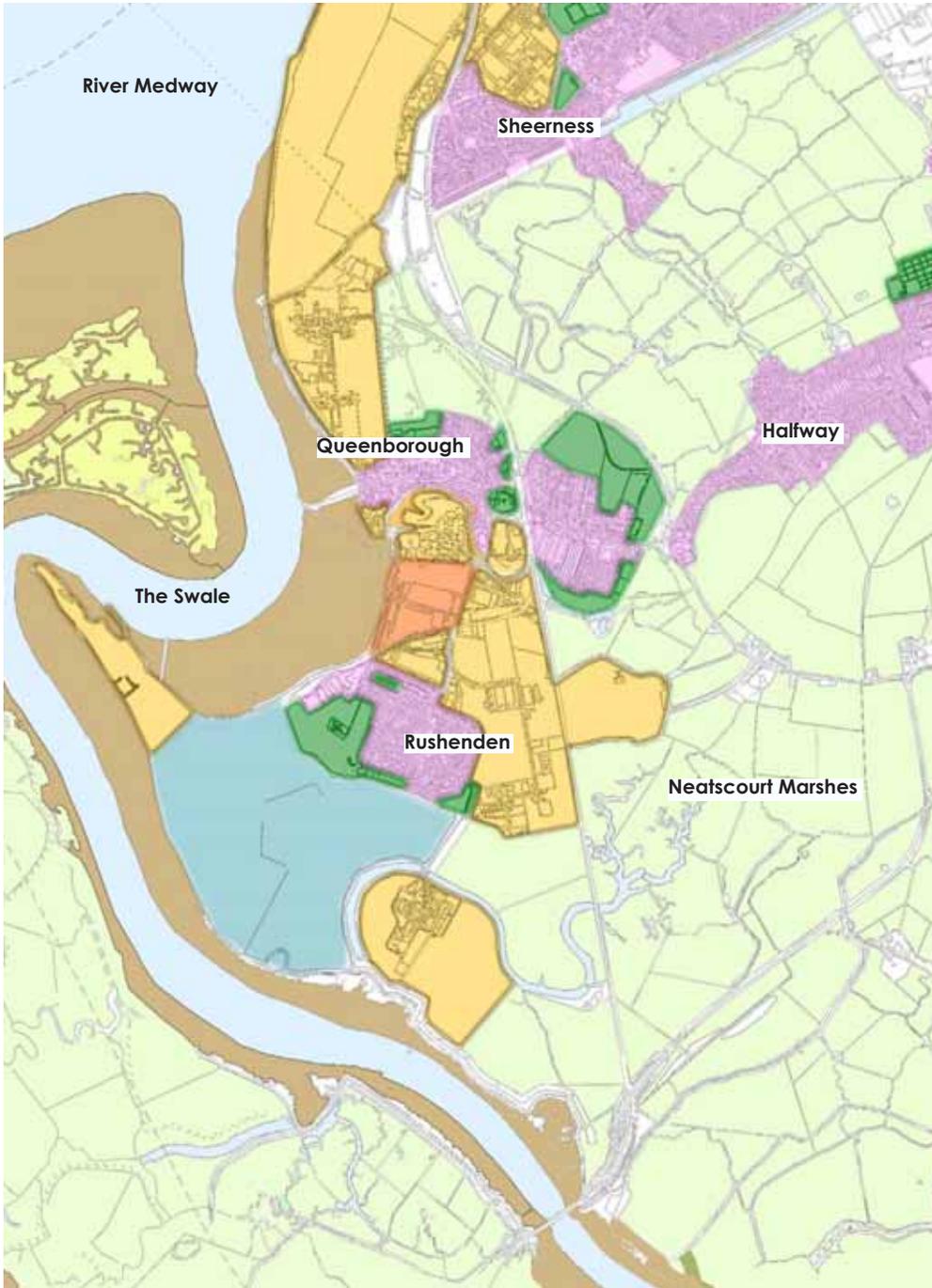
# Context - Land Use

## Existing Land Use

Queenborough, Sheerness, and the Isle of Sheppey have land uses that are tied primarily to maritime, industrial and agricultural activities, with the largest land areas occupied by grazing marsh and by storage associated with the Port of Sheerness (primarily car storage). Industry unrelated to maritime activity has also been central to the economy, though this has been in decline for some years.

Other uses include the sewage treatment plant to the south of Rushenden, dredging landfill (also to the south of Rushenden) and mixed residential areas at Queenborough, Rushenden, Halfway, and Sheerness. There are also areas of brownfield land and existing and historic industrial activities, where due regard should be given to the potential for contamination. Advice should be sought from the relevant bodies to ensure future developments conform with any relevant planning policies.

The wider context is mainly open agricultural land, often grazed and with a marshland character. This open landscape is very distinctive and is typical of the island.



- Water
- Mudflat
- Saltmarsh
- Agricultural land
- Residential and mixed use
- Public open space
- Industrial and distribution
- Brownfield / derelict land
- Landfill

# Context

## Queenborough and Rushenden today

Today Queenborough and Rushenden presents a mixed physical and social picture. Physically the historic centre of Queenborough and the surrounding landscape of marshes and agricultural land contributes to a strongly defined character. Existing industry and the historic traces and remnants of a worked landscape contribute to this strong sense of character although in some cases this is negative where there are derelict sites or expanses of cleared brownfield land. The impact of a declining industrial base and historically poor connectivity has led to low employment opportunities. In addition some development over the most recent few decades has not been of the highest quality and perhaps reflected perceptions of the place as one of low aspirations and opportunities.

### Physical Indicators

There are physical manifestations of the changing economic fortunes of the area. One of the most striking is the existence of substantial areas of derelict and under-used industrial land between Queenborough and Rushenden. These areas offer no positive use in their current form, and detract from the general environment and amenity of the area. They do however offer a significant opportunity in terms of their potential re-use for new development.

Another feature is the extent of land used solely for car storage in connection with the port. Whilst the port remains an essential local business, and a key part of the economy, its storage requirements are extensive, but generate a relatively low density of employment compared to more intensive business uses. The extensive car storage areas also impact on local amenity.

The area has been subject generally to relatively low property values (both commercial and residential) owing largely to its relative isolation in the past, and this can also lead to a lack of investment in existing buildings.

## Socioeconomic Indicators

There are a variety of recognised indicators of relative economic and social prosperity. Key indicators include economic activity, employment, wages, education, and health.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a measure that combines statistics from six 'domains' of deprivation, being income, employment, health and disability, education, housing, and access to services. The IMD identifies the Isle of Sheppey as being the most deprived part of Swale Borough, which is itself one of the most deprived districts in Kent. The Queenborough and Rushenden area is ranked the 35th most deprived area out of 8,414 areas in the country. This relative level of deprivation according to the IMD is corroborated by the Primary Care Trust's own deprivation profile, which identifies the Queenborough ward as falling within the 20% most deprived wards in England for child poverty.

Education achievement is relatively low, with only 7.3% of the population educated to degree level or above, compared to 12% for Swale and 19.8% for England and Wales.

For the Rushenden area in particular, it is also noticeable that the housing profile is unusual. There is a significant concentration of social rented housing at Rushenden, which comprises some 43% of the total housing stock, compared to an average of 15% across Swale as a whole and 14.5% across Kent. The concentration of a substantial stock of social housing has clearly resulted in an equivalent concentration of persons on lower incomes.

# Context

## Queenborough

Queenborough's sense of place derives largely from its long history - in particular its maritime history. A variety of attractive buildings and spaces make strong connections to the Creek and the Swale. The intimate scale of the town and its high density of building make a strong and welcome contrast to the expanses of surrounding marshland. The recent English Heritage report goes into a great deal of detail about the development of Queenborough and confirms its importance. This is reinforced by the fact that the Creekside area of Queenborough is within a conservation area boundary. Queenborough Creek is one of its most striking assets and is still a working creek. Water plays an important part in the character and history of Queenborough whether it be sailing and navigation or the control of flooding and drainage. Its location is traditionally favoured by visiting sailors and regeneration and development opportunities will include a positive response to the opportunities that this historic and present use provides. The adjacent images capture some of the qualities of Queenborough today.

### Heritage and character

Today, the historic core of the town comprises a handsome High Street which follows its original route from the castle to the Swale on the north side of the creek. The oldest surviving building in Queenborough, of a similar age to the castle and built of stone, is the church of Holy Trinity. There are a number of fine Georgian houses in the High Street, mostly of brick, evidence of a period of rebuilding and expansion, and a handsome late 18th Century Guildhall, historically the centre of the town's administration. The High Street contains the majority of Queenborough's listed buildings and is the heart of the town's conservation area.

The legacy of the planted settlement can be found in the castle site, the line of the High Street and the plot boundaries of some of its houses, the harbour and creekside: the elements that make up Queenborough's historic core. This historic core has national significance. (Queenborough Historic Area Appraisal, English Heritage, 2006.)

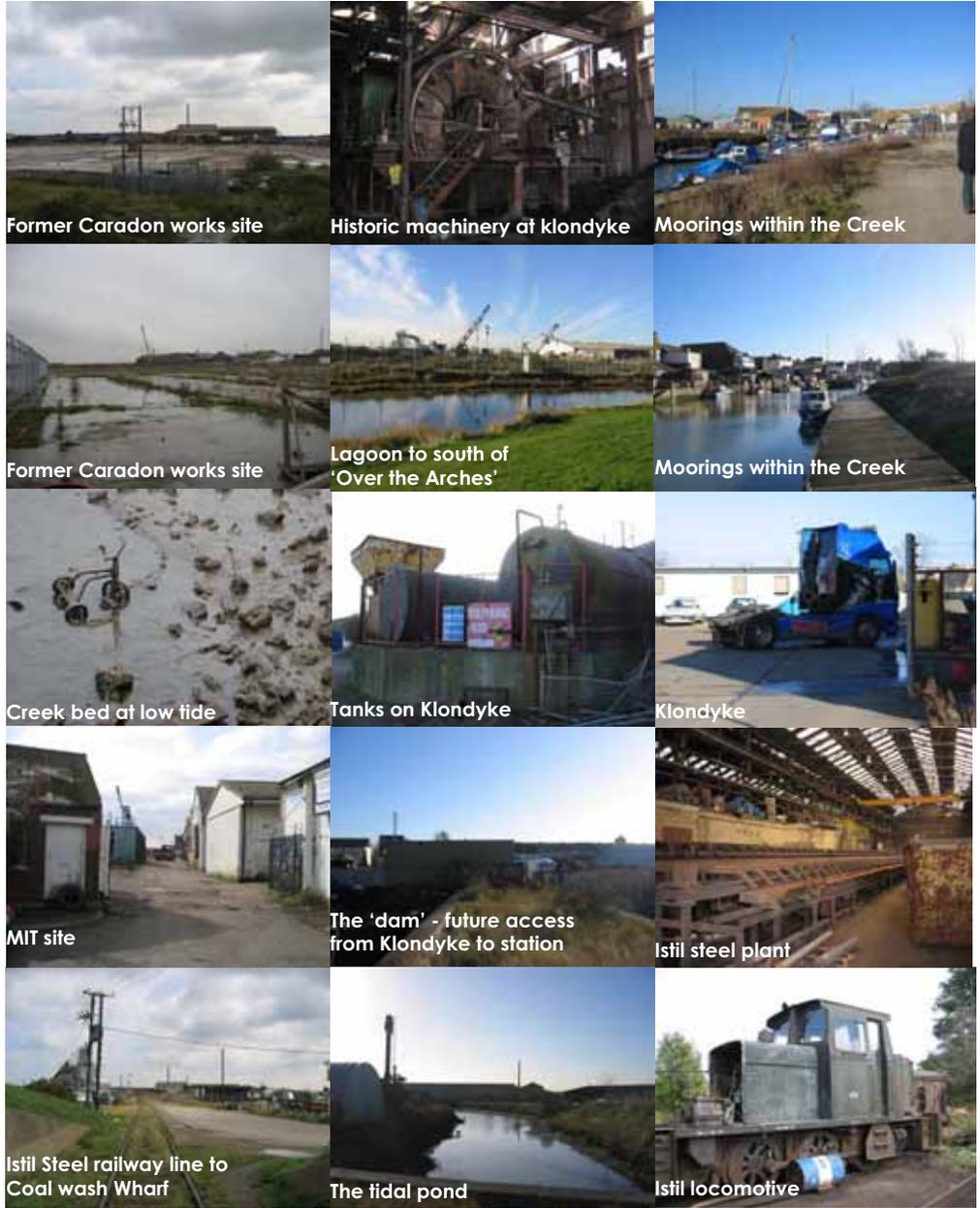


# Context

## Works sites

The land between Queenborough and Rushenden contains the remnants of much of the area's industry. Today it is a mixture of semi derelict and cleared lands with existing employment on old and poor quality sites. The existing Klondyke site and the empty former Caradon works sites are a testament to the waning influence of industry in the area. The former Jewsons building is now being usefully employed for community use and skills training and its location, close to the proposed Rushenden community hub, suggests future possibilities. To the east of these areas the existing steel works and other employment uses are still viable albeit in old buildings and with poor infrastructure. Regeneration at Queenborough and Rushenden will impact these sites creating improved access. There is no doubt that over the long term these areas will change further and may create opportunities for redevelopment and regeneration in the future.

SEEDA are significant land owners here having acquired the former Caradon Works site and have worked with adjacent landowners to formulate the masterplan proposals.



# Context

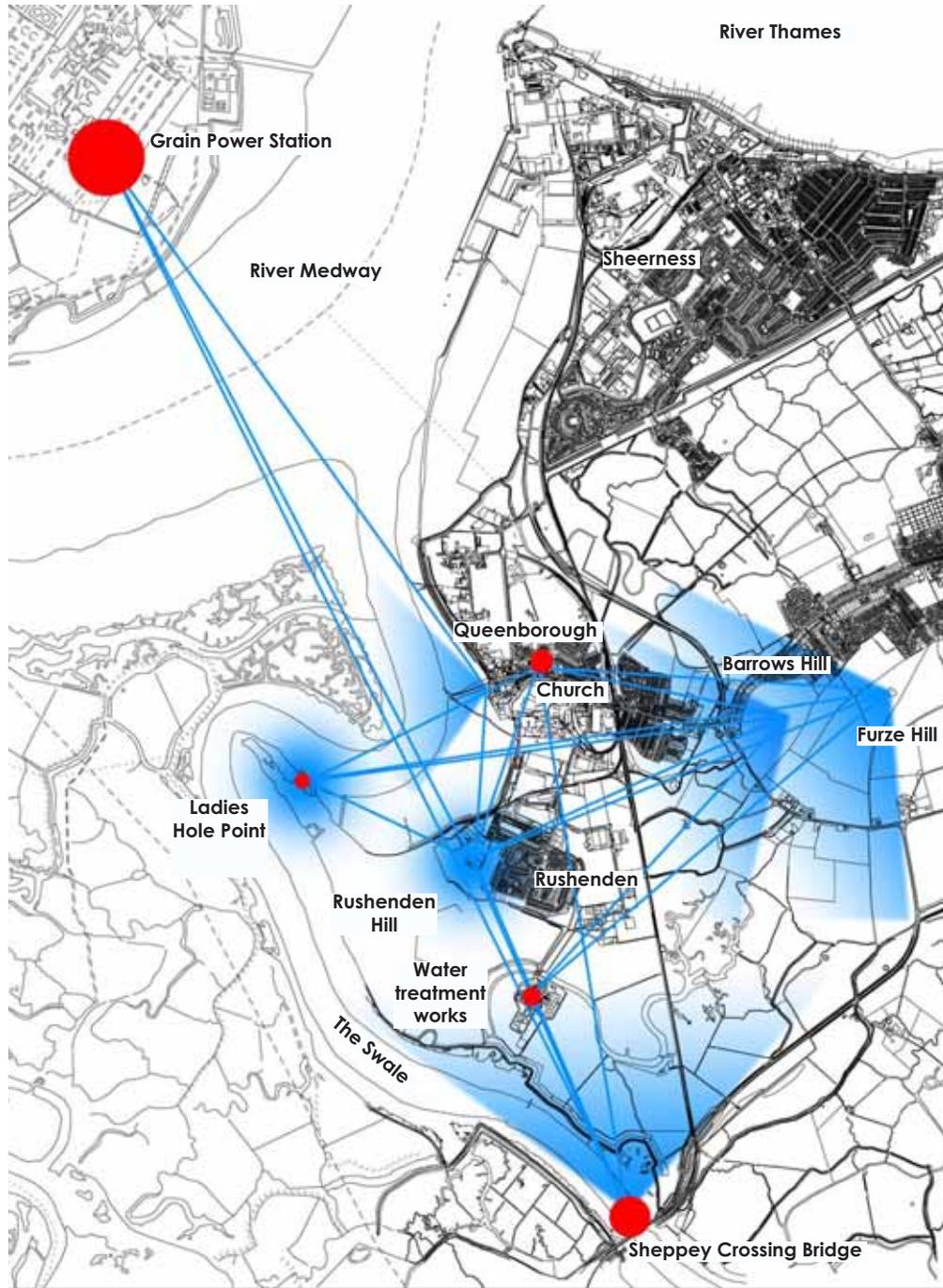
## Rushenden

Rushenden is an area primarily comprising housing of which some dates from the 1800's but with the majority dating from the 1960's. It suffers from isolation, poor infrastructure and poor local facilities. It is approximately 43% social housing built at a very low density. It has broad roads and gardens are generous but Rushenden lacks any other basic amenities necessary to make a good community. The Rushenden Road is the only approach (for all modes of transport) to Rushenden, and it is windswept and noisy. There are large quantities of public open space but much of it is of a low quality and some not with obvious reason or use. With better connectivity this public space could be of greater value to the wider area.

The social housing provider Amicus Horizon manages much of the stock at Rushenden and has established the local community facility here - the CARE House. Amicus Horizon are engaged with other partners in the regeneration plans for Queenborough and Rushenden and are playing a key role in formulating improvements to Rushenden.



# Context



Aerial view of the marshland landscape



Water as a key definer of character



A largely flat landscape

-  Landmarks
-  Views from high points

# Topography, Views & Landmarks



*Queenborough Church is a local landmark and will be clearly seen from the proposed regeneration areas. The townscape of Queenborough can lend character and authority to any new development which fall within its influence*



*Rushenden Hill is an excellent viewpoint and valuable public open space. The masterplan proposals include opportunities for greater access to the wider population*

## Topography, Views, and Landmarks

There are relatively few high points in the immediate area but any elevated areas allow sweeping views. In particular Rushenden Hill public open space is an excellent vantage point. This also means that relatively low structures can become quite significant landmarks. Queenborough's Holy Trinity Church, for example, is a small church with a low tower, but it is a clear and visible marker of Queenborough's centre for the whole area.

In the wider area the new A249 Swale crossing is a prominent landmark and views from this are also important - this is the visitors introduction to the island. Also the imposing chimney of the Grain Power Station, which is visible from almost all points in the area, and which has become an important orientation feature. Lesser landmarks include the cranes of the Coal Washer Wharf at Ladies Hole Point and the sewage treatment plant south of Rushenden (this last will need steps taken to reduce its prominence and enhance Sheppey's gateway).

Excellent views into Queenborough and Rushenden and of the surrounding marshes are available from Rushenden Hill (elev 18m), Barrows Hill (elev 26m), and Furze Hill (elev 42m). Clear views across the marshes and the Swale may also be had from the train, from the A249, and from the sea walls on either side of the Swale. It will be important not to compromise any of these important linear views and to enhance them wherever possible.



# Context: Transport Routes



- A249
- Major secondary road
- Major secondary road/cycle route
- Rushenden Relief Road
- Rail
- Footpath

Transport Routes

# Traffic, Access and Footpaths

## Traffic, Access and Footpaths

Queenborough and Rushenden suffer from poor connectivity and access. Infrastructure limits access to regenerate former employment sites and to develop new employment and housing opportunities. The recently opened Swale Crossing has made a very significant positive impact to island wide access but Queenborough and Rushenden will require significant improvements in this area to aid regeneration and kick start development of brown field land sites.

An integral and essential strand of the master plan is a range of highway and transportation improvements to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users, cars and commercial vehicles throughout the regeneration area and to provide access to public transport and the National Highway Network as appropriate.

Current problems have been identified and the impact of the proposed regeneration assessed in traffic and transport terms. The traffic and transportation strategy has been developed with input from Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council Technical officers, Arriva, the local bus operation and Network Rail. Discussions have been held with the Highways Agency at various stages of the scheme development and it is anticipated that these will continue as detailed proposals come forward.

## Identification of Existing Problems

### Main Road

At the current time Main Road provides the only local means of access to the National Highway Network. Traffic counts have shown that it has insufficient capacity to accommodate existing flows and is regularly congested. A significant number of vehicles are heavy goods which increase the environment impact of the congestion.

Main Road also provides the only pedestrian/cycle route to and from the local primary school and Queenborough Station. It also forms part of the bus route between Sheerness, Queenborough and Rushenden.

### Rushenden Road

Rushenden Road provides the only means of access to the community of Rushenden and a significant area of industrial uses. It has a high proportion of heavy goods vehicle use. It does not suffer the levels of congestion experienced in Main Road. Nevertheless, as the only route for all vehicles, it significantly reduces the connectivity of Rushenden to the remainder of the Queenborough and the National Highway Network as a whole.



Rushenden Road

## Pedestrians and Cyclists

At the present time there is no alternative dedicated footway/cycleway strategy in the area. Consequently all such highway users must use Main Road and Rushenden Road which, given the discussion in 2.1 and 2.2 above significantly reduces pedestrian and cyclists safety. It also further exacerbates the problem due to the community of Rushenden's lack of connectivity (perceived and actual) to Queenborough as a whole.

## Bus Services

A total of six bus routes operate in the area of Rushenden and Queenborough. Of those only two operate reasonable frequency services of up to 2 buses per hour. The remaining services have frequencies down to as low as one per week. Evening and weekend services are lower still. There is one London commuter bus service but it only stops at the junction of Main Road and the A249 approximately 2.0km from the community of Rushenden.

## Rail Services

The use of the Sittingbourne/Sheerness Railway by the residents of Queenborough and Rushenden does provide access to the National Railway Network via Sittingbourne.

## Benefit of the New A249 and Fixed Crossing

The opening of the high level 'fixed' Swale Crossing and improvements to the A249 have clearly significantly improved access to the Isle of Sheppey. Unfortunately this has had little positive effect on Queenborough and Rushenden due to the constraint of Main Road.

# Context: Density



Existing Housing Density

## Existing Housing Density

A key element in the creation of character in residential development is the density of the development. Many of the historic towns and cities much admired in the UK and abroad are actually fairly or very dense. For instance Georgian housing in central London is amongst the densest ever built in Britain. High and higher density is often associated with poor quality of place and environment however, in reality, it is the quality of design and the public realm - streets, squares, parks and gardens that makes the place work or otherwise.

Existing densities at Queenborough & Rushenden are illustrated on the adjacent plan. It shows that the 20th Century development of Rushenden is low density housing at approximately 20-30 dwellings per hectare (dph) while the oldest part of Queenborough along the high street (Main Road) represents some of the higher density areas (up to 80 dph). Similarly the terraced streets of 'Over the Arches' are higher density areas up to 80 dph. The open spaces of the Swale, Castle and Creek amongst others create breaks in the built fabric and help with orientation and identity. This suggests that characteristics of place and density are closely related and that, in particular, areas of Queenborough & Rushenden seen as particularly attractive are the most dense.

# Existing Housing Density



Queenborough - higher density



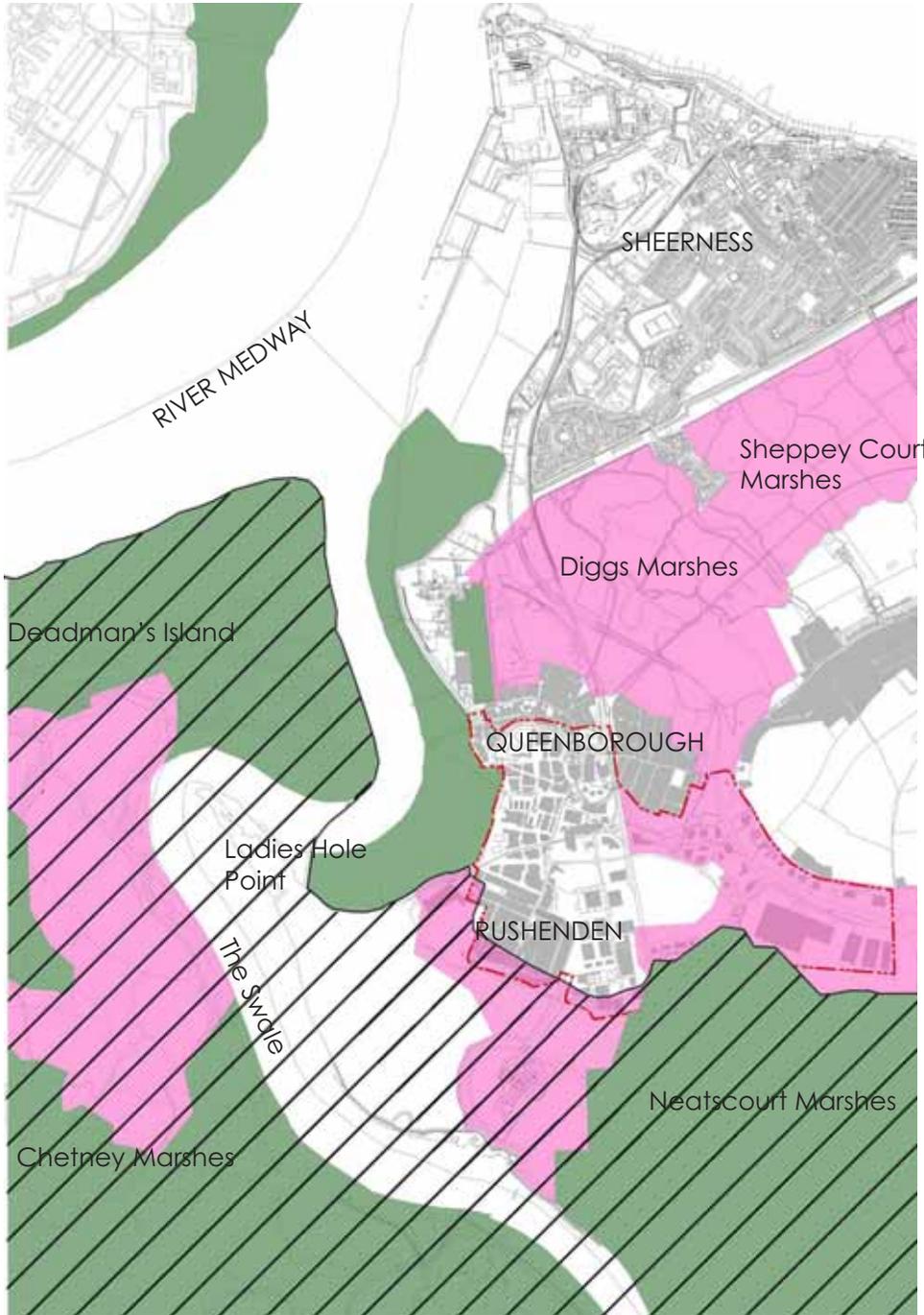
Queenborough - higher density



Rushenden - lower density



# Context



## Environmental Factors

The environment of Queenborough and Rushenden is the result of many hundreds of years of man's influence combined with a low lying and water dominated landscape. The Isle of Sheppey sits at the confluence of the Medway and Thames Rivers and is formed of alluvial clays in an impervious layer over deep chalk. Six elements comprise the natural landscape at Queenborough and Rushenden:

- **Inter-tidal mudflats** - exposed at low tide, these mostly unvegetated tracts of sediment support large numbers of invertebrates, waders, and wildfowl.
- **Saltmarsh** - as mudflats mature and become vegetated they form saltmarshes, which provide roosts and breeding grounds for birds.
- **Grazing marsh** - this habitat is the result of containment, drainage, and grazing, and forms one of the most important areas in England for breeding waders.
- **Ditches** - are used to control water levels and to fence livestock. They also provide important habitat.
- **Sea walls** - these, and their associated 'borrow-dykes' provide important reedbed and upper salt marsh zone vegetation.
- **The waters** - the brackish estuarine waters provide valuable habitat for feeding, breeding, spawning and growing of migratory and non-migratory fish.

These interdependent elements conspire to create an immensely rich ecosystem, exhibiting great biodiversity, including superior bird and fish habitat.

- Key:
- Environmentally sensitive areas
  - SSSI, RAMSAR, and SPA sites
  - Masterplan boundary
  - SLA

# Landscape Character & the Natural Environment

The landscape character is varied but with the predominant one being low lying marsh and grazed pasture. A large part of the island is of ecological significance with the southern part in particular a significant habitat and extremely popular with bird watchers and ornithologists. The centre of the island is higher ground and where a significant part of the population lives. To the east the town of Leysdown supports a tourist industry based around the beaches there while to the north the port of Sheerness lies.



Marshes

In particular the new Swale Crossing is a prominent structure, as is the chimney of the Grain Power Station on the Isle of Grain. The chimney has long been the area's most prominent landmark, but it is now joined by the Swale Crossing bridge. Queenborough's Holy Trinity Church is a local landmark and Rushenden Hill forms an ideal viewpoint.



View north from Rushenden Hill

While the island may seem flat there are relatively significant changes in level. Both Queenborough and Rushenden are located on higher ground while the land rises significantly towards Minster in the east. Long distance views are available from many points and large man-made objects form important markers in the landscape.

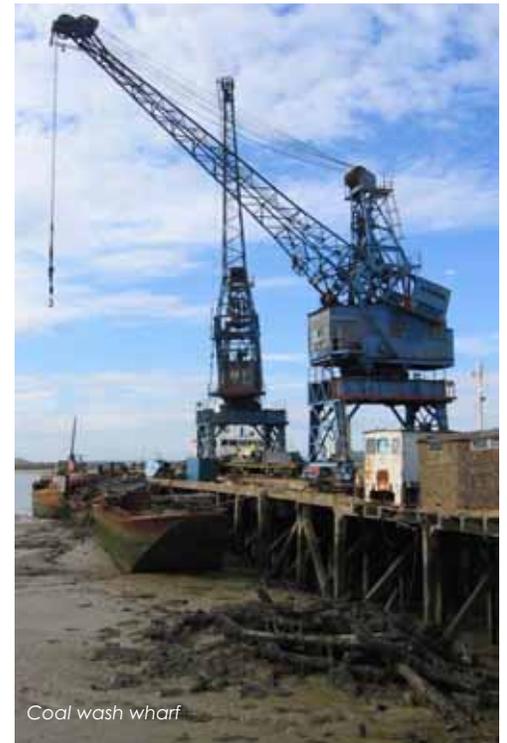


Neatscourt marshes

A long history of human habitation and land use has left its mark in drained and managed marshland, existing and remnants of former industry and significant archaeological sites. In particular the dockyard at Sheerness has several important buildings while the town of Queenborough has the remains of an important castle and evidence of occupation at least since Saxon times.



View to Rushenden Hill from the north



Coal wash wharf



View from the new Swale Crossing bridge towards Rushenden



View northwest from the new Swale Crossing

# Context

## The Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

### Introduction

The Masterplan, and its supporting documents, has been assessed and appraised in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC on the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (commonly referred to as the SEA Directive) and guidance from the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in the form of a Consultation Paper: Sustainability Appraisals of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks (September 2004). The culmination of this appraisal and assessment process is a joint Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

### Background to environmental assessment

As has been discussed previously, the Masterplan is being submitted to Swale Borough Council for eventual adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that will form an over arching guide to the future development within the Queenborough and Rushenden Regeneration. Following the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the ODPM guidance advises that SA should be undertaken for SPDs and that among other functions, the SA should incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive. The guidance also confirms that SEA and SA can be combined into one document.

The Masterplan is, a strategic document that is prepared at an early stage in the development proposals and as such not include specific detail about elements such as the design of individual buildings or the specific nature of end users, which can have an important influence on the resultant environmental effects and sustainability.

Whilst it is appropriate to assess and appraise the Masterplan using the SEA/SA approach, there will also be requirement for further assessment of specific elements of the Masterplan as these are progressed through the planning system as detailed planning applications. The scale, nature and location of many of these applications will be such that full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be required under the provision of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. It is envisaged that these future EIAs will be able to make reference to the issues considered within the SEA/SA where relevant and will assess specific elements of the respective applications to a greater level of detail than has been undertaken at the strategic level. Each subsequent EIA will require consideration of the cumulative impacts of that development area in conjunction with others in the Masterplan and known developments in the surrounding area.

### Approach to the SEA/SA

The ODPM guidance suggests that where the local planning authority, in this case Swale Borough Council, has developed a SA Framework as part of its assessment of Development Plan Documents (formerly the Local Plan), it is appropriate for the SA of SPD to adopt such a framework as the basis for further appraisal.

Swale Borough Council has provided its framework that was developed along with the sustainability objectives therein and this, including the scoping process and review of applicable policy which lead to the formation of the objectives has been adopted, has formed the basis for the SEA/SA.

Baseline information has been collated for the issues identified through the previous SBC SA/SEA to provide a context for the appraisal and assessment at two levels. The first level draws upon baseline information presented within the SBC SA/SEA for the borough as a whole and the second with information that is specific to the site and its surrounding areas. This second tier of baseline information has been drawn from assessments undertaken by SEEDA and its consultant team over the past two years as part of the masterplanning process

The appraisal and assessment has considered each of the sustainability objectives against the information set out in the Masterplan, with the appraisal focusing on the strategic elements of the development proposal and the principles of development proposed by the Masterplan. Those objectives which have been assessed to have a negative influence are considered further and recommendations are made regarding mechanisms to reduce the negative influence of these elements.

### Key findings of the SEA/SA

The key summarised findings of the SEA/SA undertaken are shown in the following table. For the majority of sustainability objectives within the appraisal and assessment, the Masterplan and its supporting documents is considered to have either a 'strongly positive', 'positive' or 'neutral' influence. The assessment demonstrated that the Masterplan is will have a particularly positive influence with respect to objectives associated with housing, employment and deprivation.

The Masterplan will however require changes in land use including the loss of an area of grazing marsh. In common with all urban development schemes, there will also be an increase in population, both residential and employment, with the associated increases in traffic, emissions, energy and resource use. The Masterplan and Sustainability Charter acknowledge the 'negative' influence associated with these elements and include performance standards for factors such as energy efficiency, waste generation and resource use such that the negative influences can be minimised. Compensatory habitat will be provided for habitat lost through the development process and where there is uncertainty associated with mitigation measures proposed, monitoring will be undertaken to determine its effectiveness and any remedial action required.

The SEA/SA represents and assessment and appraisal of the Masterplan and its supporting documents at this stage in the development process. The sustainability of the development proposals will however be considered throughout the life of the development through the Sustainability Charter.

# Project Delivery

**Table: Summarised conclusions of the appraisal and assessment**

Objective	Appraisal and assessment conclusions				
	Urban	Rural	Outside the Borough	Within the plan period?	Beyond the plan period?
1. To ensure that the opportunity is provided for decent homes to be provided for all the community	Strongly positive	Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes
2. To improve human health and wellbeing	Positive/Strongly positive	Positive	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
3. To reduce the gap between the most disadvantaged communities and the rest and to increase prosperity	Positive/Strongly positive	Positive/Neutral	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
4. To raise education levels and develop opportunities for everyone to find the skills needed to find, remain, and progress at work	Positive	Positive	Unknown	Yes	Yes
5. To promote social inclusion and cohesion including creating a safe and secure environment	Strongly positive	Positive/Strongly positive	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
6. To encourage development and participation in culture, sport, and the arts and enjoyment of the countryside	Positive/Strongly positive	Positive	Neutral	Yes	Yes
7. To sustain and improve vibrant rural communities	Neutral	Positive/Neutral	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
8. To maximise the use of previously developed land for development and to use land efficiently	Positive/Strongly Positive	Negative/Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes
9. To improve the quality of land and reduce contamination	Strongly positive/Neutral	Negative/Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes
10. To improve the overall air quality of the Borough	Negative	Negative	Negative	Yes	Yes
11. To improve water quality	Positive	Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes
12. Will it maintain hydrology / coastal processes?	Positive/Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes
13. Will it reduce or minimise greenhouse gas emissions?	Positive/Negative	Negative	Negative	Yes	Yes
14. To effectively manage the risk of flooding	Positive/Neutral	Positive/Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes
15. To conserve and enhance biodiversity	Positive/Negative	Positive/Negative	Neutral	Yes	Yes
16. To promote the use of sustainable forms of transport and reduce travel by car / lorry, where options are available	Positive/Negative	Positive/Negative	Negative/Neutral	Yes	Yes
17. To protect, enhance, and make accessible the historic environment and assets, including landscapes (the quality and character), townscapes and settlement settings	Positive/Strongly positive	Positive/Strongly positive	Neutral	Yes	Yes
18. To maintain and enhance geological and geomorphological sites	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
19. To ensure the sustainable use and management of natural resources	Positive/Strongly positive	Neutral	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
20. To reduce generation and disposal of waste, and achieve sustainable management of waste	Positive	Neutral	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
21. To enhance quality of, and access to, employment opportunities for everyone	Positive/Strongly positive	Positive/Strongly positive	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
22. To increase the economic performance of the Borough	Strongly positive	Positive	Positive	Yes	Yes
23. To encourage investment in local services and facilities	Positive	Positive	Positive/Neutral	Yes	Yes
24. To encourage sustainable design and practice	Strongly positive	Strongly positive	Neutral	Yes	Yes

# Context



## Background

The development of this Masterplan has taken on board the requirements of all members of the team, the policies at the time of its development and all aspects required of the regeneration process. Given the unique characteristics of the Isle of Sheppey, a key input to this process includes account of 'Flood Risk'. The agreed Masterplan, which included input at all stages from the Local Authority and Environment Agency, sets out the proposed areas for development as well as development type and in this context is understood to meet the Sequential element of Planning Policy Statement 25. However, it is recognised that information on flood risk may change through time (for example the recently published SFRA for SWALE) and there is therefore a need to take account of such change within any individual development proposals undertaken as part of the overall Masterplan.

More than 50% of the Isle of Sheppey lies below high tide level and depends on substantial sea defences to manage flood risk. A sea defence strategy, developed for the Environment Agency in 1998, recommended measures to improve the defences. A scheme to protect the towns of Sheerness, Queenborough and Rushenden from tidal inundation was implemented in 2001 (the Isle of Sheppey Northern Defences Project) and in 2002, the Isle of Sheppey Western defences project was initiated.

Recently, the Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) has been published and this sets out the policy that is to be adopted for the sea defences around the Isle of Sheppey. The policy for the northern and western defences is to 'HOLD THE LINE' – i.e. to maintain the existing standard of sea defence. There will therefore a need to upgrade these defences to

take account of future climate change impacts if the existing standard of protection is to be maintained over the design life of existing, and any proposed, development. The SMP policy for the southern defences between Rushenden and North Elmley Island is 'Short Term (20 years) HOLD THE LINE', followed by 'MANAGED REALIGNMENT'. The impact of this policy on future flood risk - taking account of the impact of climate change - will therefore need to be considered in any development proposals.

## The SWALE Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The Swale Borough Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Levels 1 and 2 was published in October 2009. This SFRA informs the planning process of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Core Strategy. The Level 1 SFRA provides flood risk policy recommendations and guidance on the application of the Sequential Test, Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Drainage specific to the area while the Level 2 SFRA includes more detailed assessment of site specific flood risk.

Drawing WBSWLE – FZ-001, reproduced here from the SFRA, provides a comprehensive summary of the current Environment Agency Flood Zonation for the area, the historical flooding record (in particular the 1953 and 1978 events), areas considered to be at risk of Surface Water and Ground Water flooding, as well as guidance on potential evacuation routes where required. It should be recognised that these flood zonation maps take no account of the exiting flood defences, showing all areas below the predicted tidal event as being within the floodplain.

In reality the sea defences along the western shoreline provide protection to events in the order of 1 in 200 years. There is a local weak point in the western defences is at the entrance

to the Queenborough Creek (where only a 1 in 5 year level of protection is afforded) and it is recognised that the level of defence provided along the southern coast of the Isle of Sheppey is considerable less.

Recent two dimensional modelling undertaken as part of the Level 2 SFRA takes accounts of climate change impacts and existing shoreline defence. This modelling has provided a more detailed understanding of potential future flood risk and should be used inform future development proposals.

## Conclusions and way forward

Given that the SFRA identifies much of the area as being within flood Zone 3a there is a need for all development proposals undertaken under the overall Masterplan to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The FRA must demonstrate that the development will be safe, have an acceptable level of flood risk, and does not detrimentally impact on flood risk elsewhere. The FRA will also need to address access/egress at times of the design flood and demonstrate that it is in line with local Borough Council Emergency Planning policy.

A site based Sequential approach to development location should be adopted - to direct more vulnerable uses to areas with lowest flood risk - and measures will need to be incorporated such as raising finished floor levels above the design flood, using lower vulnerability uses on ground floors with residential above (it is unlikely that basement dwellings will be acceptable), and adopting flood resilient/resistant/repairable designs where appropriate. Minimum finished floor levels should include a 300mm freeboard above the climate change adjusted design flood level.

Given the local SMP policy of holding the line along the western shoreline the SFRA confirms



Flood defences opposite the Caradon site



Queenborough Creek entrance



Queenborough all tide landing and flood defences



# Context

## Planning Policy Context

The town of Queenborough and Rushenden has been identified as an area in need of positive action to achieve economic regeneration for many years. As indicated previously, the area has suffered in the past from a relatively isolated location and poor economic performance resulting from the decline of local industry. In planning policy terms, the town also lies within the Thames Gateway growth area.

In recognition both of its location within the wider Thames Gateway growth area and the local needs for economic regeneration, the town has been identified as a location for significant new development in successive strategic and local planning documents. This section outlines the relevant planning policies that underpin the preparation of this Masterplan.

### Regional Planning Policy – Thames Gateway

A large part of Swale district, including Sittingbourne and the whole of the Isle of Sheppey, falls within the Thames Gateway area. Regional policy for Thames Gateway is set out in Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9 - 2001), the Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG9a - 1995), and the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan (2003). These documents identify the Thames Gateway as a nationally important sub-region for the delivery of new development, including the new homes required to house the increasing number of households that form each year, particularly in the south-east of the Country, alongside local economic growth and the provision of new infrastructure to serve the expanding communities.

### The Emerging South East Plan

The South East plan is a document that sets out changes needed to improve the quality of life in the South East England region over the next 20 years. The Plan has been developed by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and underwent wide scale consultation and examination in public, was published in May 2009, but has now been rescinded by the coalition Government.

## Strategic Planning Policy – The Kent and Medway Structure Plan

Policy NK3 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006) identifies Queenborough and Rushenden as a strategic development area with the objective of supporting economic regeneration and diversification. It identifies the area for mixed-use development for housing, employment and community facilities in conjunction with environmental improvements and transport measures, including the Rushenden Link Road.

Policy FP3 of the Structure Plan identifies Neatscourt as a strategic employment location, and a priority for delivery. Policy QL13 supports the delivery of new community facilities in association with residential development.

### Local Planning Policy – The Swale Borough Local Plan and Swale Borough Local Development Framework

In addition to the above Structure Plan Policies, the adoption of this Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document is based upon a number of existing and emerging Local Plan policies, being:

The Adopted Swale Borough Local Plan (2000), in particular:

- Policies B21, B25 and B26 in respect of employment land at Neatscourt, Queenborough and Rushenden;
- Policies H28 and H29 in respect of residential development north and south of Queenborough Creek; and
- Policy E64 in respect of environmental improvements within Queenborough High Street area and Rushenden area following completion of the Rushenden Link Road;
- Policy IN33 in respect of the provision of the Rushenden Link Road;

The adopted Swale Borough Local Plan (2008), in particular:

- Policies AAP6, MU5, and MU6, in respect of the regeneration of the Queenborough and Rushenden areas, in the context of a Masterplan framework, which should include a developer contributions strategy
- Policy B21 in respect of employment at Neatscourt; and
- Policy T9 in respect of the Rushenden Link Road.

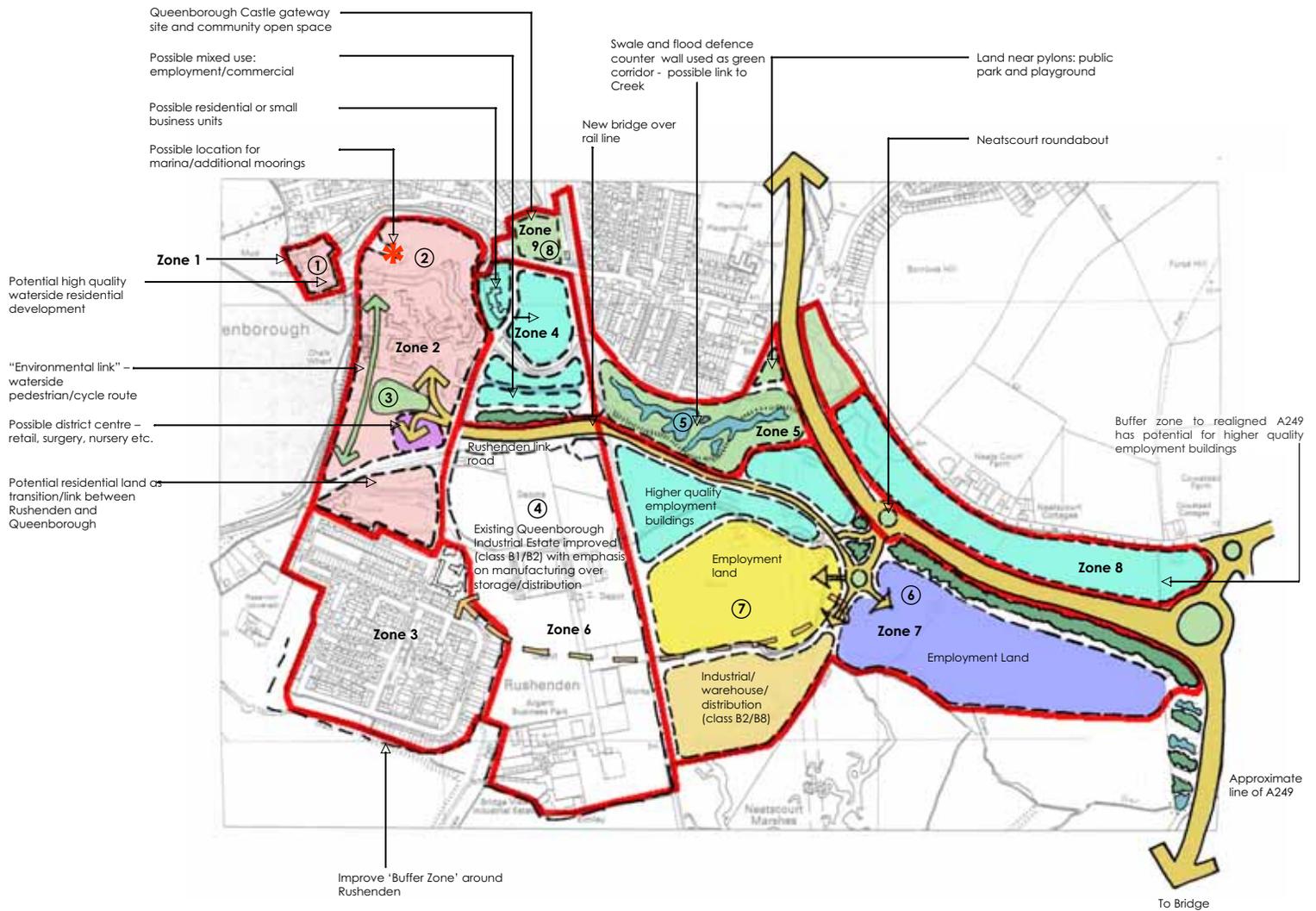
### Supplementary Planning Policy – The Queenborough and Rushenden Development Framework

A Development Framework for the Queenborough and Rushenden Area was adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document in December 2004. The Development Framework establishes key principles and a vision for the area, and the purpose of this Masterplan is to take that existing adopted Framework forward in more detail. It therefore provides greater guidance than the Framework on matters including:

- the scale, the mix and distribution of development within the agreed development areas;
- the layout and design of new development;
- the phasing and provision of social and physical infrastructure; and
- the strategy to be used to collect financial contributions from the development to fund that infrastructure.

The Masterplan is consistent with the overall vision and objectives as set out in the existing approved Development Framework.

# Planning & Policy



Supplementary Planning Policy:  
The Queenborough and Rushenden  
Development Framework

## LAND DESIGNATION

- ① MIT Ltd.
- ② Klondyke, Sheppey Ltd.
- ③ Caradon, SEEDA
- ④ Queenborough Industrial Estate
- ⑤ EA flood defence
- ⑥ Neatscourt, Crown Estate
- ⑦ Existing car distribution . storage
- ⑧ Queenborough Castle / gateway open space

