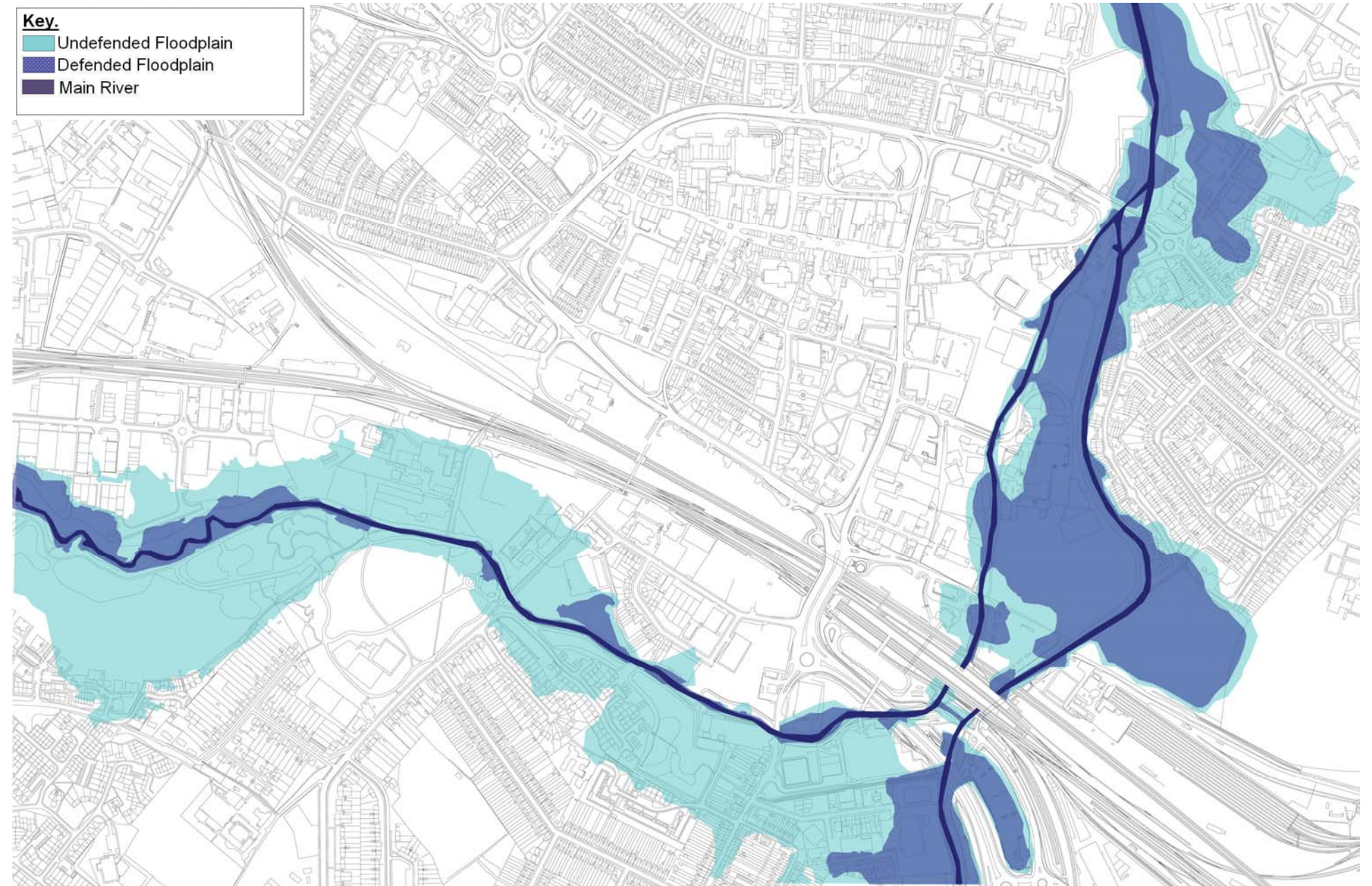


## 2 baseline analysis — floodplain

### the flood plain

- The East Stour and Great Stour join to the immediate east of Ashford High Street
- The catchment of the East Stour is predominantly clay soil area. Excessive rainfall usually results in a rapid increase in flow and water levels, a short peak, and a rapid subsidence. This leads to short but high impact flood events.
- The catchment of the Great Stour is a predominantly clay soil area. Excessive rainfall usually results in a slow increase in flow and water levels, a long drawn out peak and a slow subsidence.
- Flood defences are located at Hothfield and Aldington. Both of these schemes are intended to store and release water slowly thereby reducing flood levels. The storage scheme at Hothfield reduces potential flooding on the Great Stour, and the Aldington scheme reduces potential flooding on the East Stour.
- The flood map has recently been updated and does affect a number of the key opportunity sites in the town centre.
- Inventive upstream solutions and ways of dealing with the local flood plain will be a key challenge
- See appendix a2 for further detailed information

### Issue 2 Opportunities and Constraints of the flood plain



## 2 baseline analysis — physical analysis

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) were appointed concurrently with the ATCDF team to prepare a *Character Appraisal of Ashford Town Centre*. BDP was issued a draft report in November 2003. This section of the analysis recognises the findings and key principles from that study which in turn informs the development framework.

### Townscape analysis

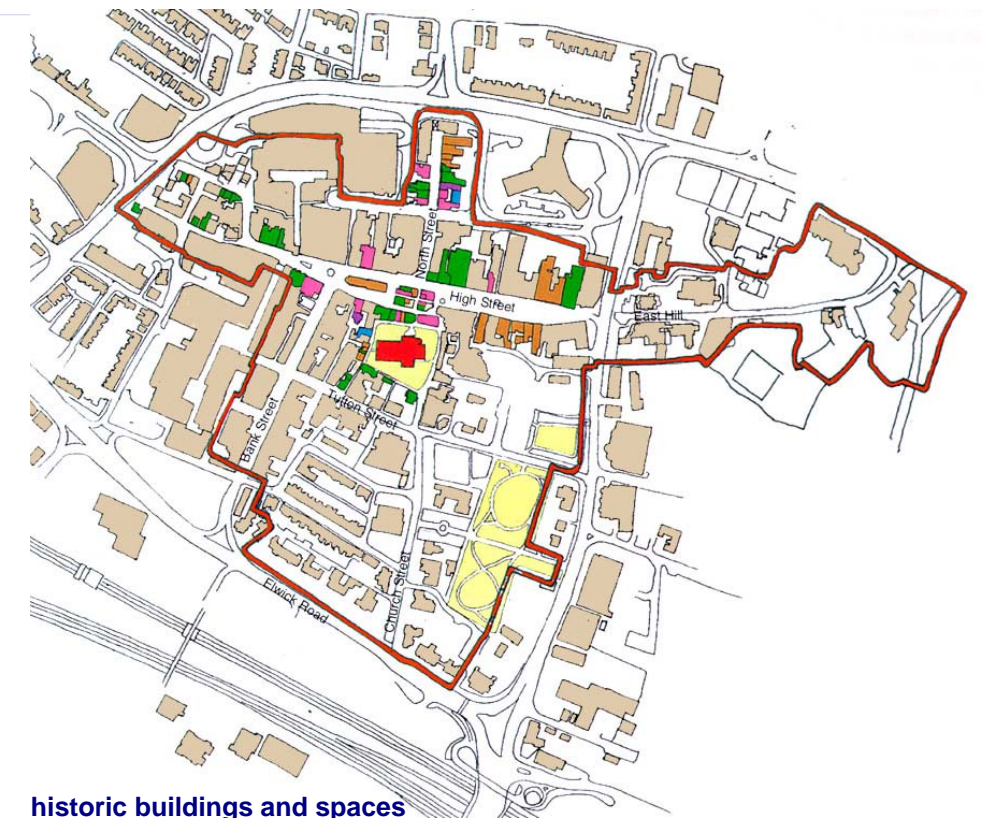
This diagram provides a general analysis of the townscape to support the analytical descriptions of the twelve character areas identified in the Character Appraisal.

### Historic buildings and spaces

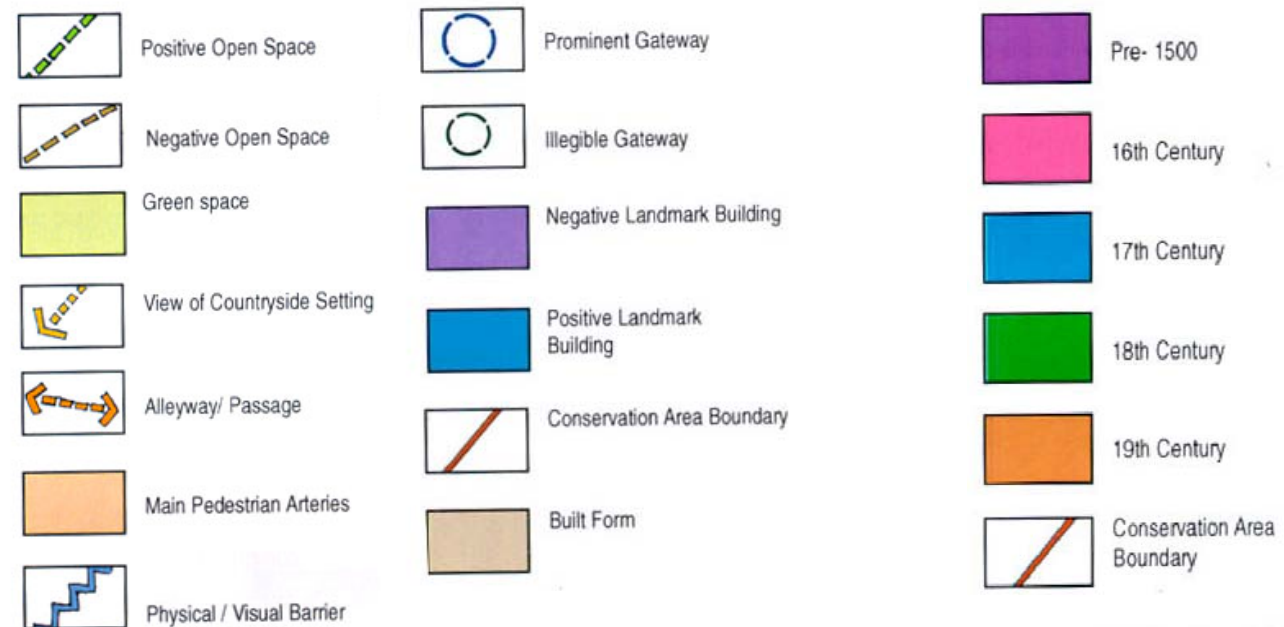
The Historic Buildings and Spaces diagram identifies the buildings that have been 'listed' in recognition of their special architectural or historical interest in Ashford Town Centre. The overall contribution of these to the character of the Town Centre and conservation area is considered in the Character Appraisal.



townscape analysis



historic buildings and spaces



## 2 baseline analysis — physical analysis

### Districts of character and identity

CBA's townscape analysis divided the Town Centre into 12 zones of distinctive townscape character and include;

- A - The Churchyard
- B - Middle Row
- C - Bank Street, County Square and car park
- D - High Street and North Street
- E - New Rents
- F - Tufton Street
- G - Memorial gardens
- H - Tufton Street car park and graveyard
- I - Queen Street, Norwood Street, Lower Church Road and Elwick Road
- J - Regents Street, Apsley Street and East Street
- K - Charter House
- L - East Hill

#### A - The Churchyard

The Churchyard and the Church, together, represent the heart of the historic centre of Ashford. It is virtually un-compromised in scale or visual presence by other buildings and offers a significant focal point and restful enclosed green space.

#### B - Middle Row

Located at the heart of the retail core, Middle Row is an island of medieval buildings dating from the 14th and 16th Centuries. The area has a particularly strong relationship with the Church and Churchyard and retains its medieval street pattern, with only a narrow passage to separate the buildings.

#### C - Bank Street

Whilst lacking the historic charm of the High Street, North Street and Middle Row, Bank Street is one of the primary pedestrian arteries into the historic core as well as being one of the most prominent streets within the core. Its upper end has something of a boulevard feel, while the southern part of lower Bank Street is dominated by traffic.

#### D - High Street and North Street

The High Street has a strong and well-defined urban form, which widens at the centre. One of its key characteristics are the laneways which connect it to the wider area, though these can often feel unsafe and under maintained. North Street once provided one of the most impressive vistas into the core, but this has now been compromised by modern development on its edge and through its dissection by the ring road.

#### E - New Rents

Despite its Medieval origins, New Rents has significantly less townscape merit than that of the historical core. While New Rents still retains some historic frontages on its northern side, these are greatly compromised by insensitive modern development on the southern side.

#### F - Tufton Street

Tufton Street is one of the main thoroughfares from the eastern ring road edge through to the retail core, and its buildings are of varying character and quality. It sits rather uncomfortably within its surroundings, with its contemporary architecture of The Courts, Police Station and Library contrasting with the adjacent Church and quaint domestic architecture.

#### G - Memorial Gardens

The Memorial Gardens has a formal municipal park character, whose predominant features are the war memorials and cast iron railings, but are an underutilised and isolated resource.

#### H - Tufton Street Carpark and Graveyard

The area is dominated by the tarmac carpark, by vehicle movement and noise and by large commercial office developments on the east side of the ring road. The value of the garden (graveyard) as a place of relaxation is also impacted on by these factors.

#### I - Queen Street, Norwood Street, Lower Church Road and Elwick Road

This is an area of Victorian housing development on a rectilinear street pattern. Church Road retains much of its leafy Victorian character, while Elwick Road has lost this charm. The area slopes to the south with good views and prime sites have been used for siting large detached and semi-detached Victorian (and Edwardian) villas, which are now used as offices.

#### J - Regents Street, Apsley Street and East Street

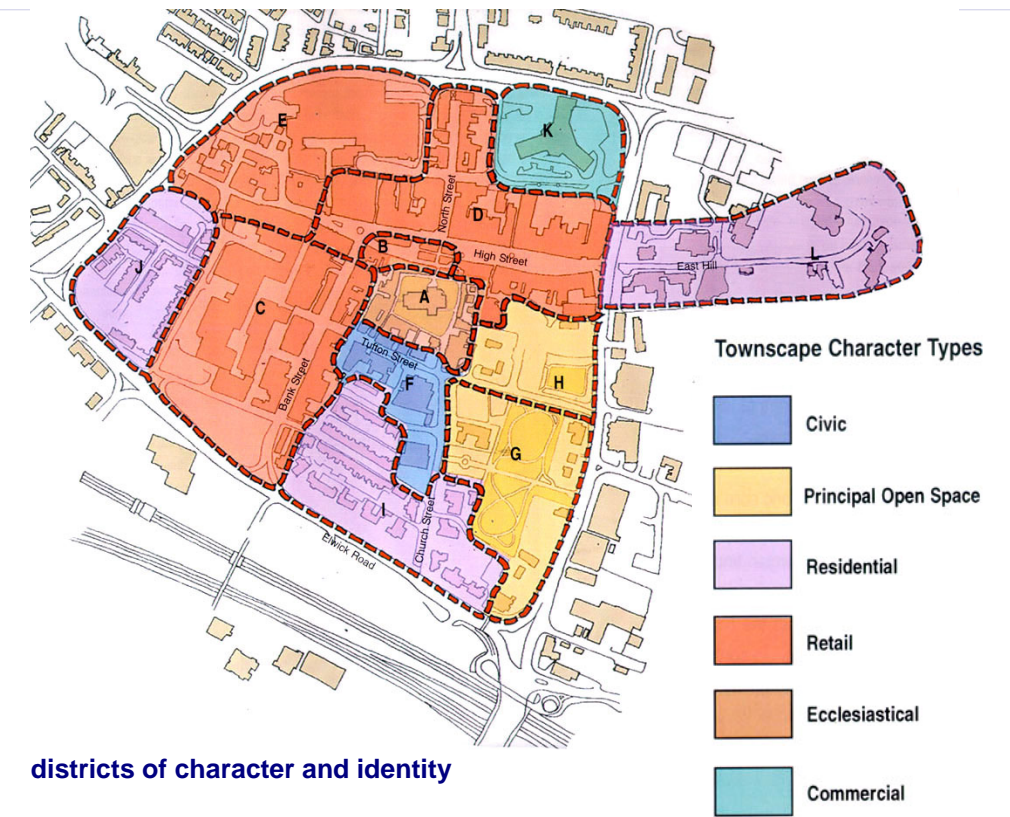
The area lacks the charm of the town centre's other residential area, and has an uncomfortable relationship with the town centre and wider area. It comprises two storey cottages that are either flat fronted or with small bay windows, fronting directly onto the pavement with no front gardens.

#### K - Charter House

Charter House, built in 1975, stands on an independent site surrounded by roads and offers little visual, architectural or planning relationship to the town of Ashford. Within the context of Ashford it appears alien and aggressive.

#### L - East Hill

Originally an upper class residential quarter, East Hill has a distinctive historic character deriving from the houses, high walls and raised balustraded pavement. It has a reasonably strong visual relationship with the High Street through its continuation of the Medieval street pattern. However, towards the bottom of the hill the condition of properties is poor.



districts of character and identity

## 2 baseline analysis — physical analysis

Further physical analysis was undertaken by BDP to inform the ATCDF.

### View corridors

Ashford has historically occupied a key site being located atop a hill and surrounded to the south and east by the Stour River corridor. This location provides a good setting for views into and vistas away from the town. From the surrounding area, three landmarks are prominent on Ashford's skyline, Charter House, International House and St. Mary's Church. Of these three landmarks only St. Mary's Church contributes to the positive appearance of Ashford. The three main view corridors towards St. Mary's Church are from the south through Church Street, from the west along New Street and from the north along North Street.

There are two main vistas from the town centre. The first is from the High Street, along East Hill towards the east. The second is towards the South Downs from Bank Street, Church Street and Apsley Street.

### Landscape

The town's principal green spaces are to be found along the margins of the Rivers Great and East Stour, and in the Memorial Gardens and Victoria Park. The rivers create a soft edge to the south and east of the town with its course visually disrupted by the route of the railway. The character of the river changes along its course. To the north of Victoria Park its margins are predominantly of mown amenity grassland used for sport and recreation. The land here is generally level and prone to flooding. Areas of river bank have become colonised with pockets of dense scrub and in association with the adjacent areas of vacant land give the area a naturalised appearance, which creates the opportunity for significant urban habitats. The railway line then forces the river into a tight artificial channel with pedestrian access guided through an intimidating underpass. To the north of the railway the river opens out into a broad plain occupied by the Stour Centre before flowing on towards the old Flour Mill. Footpaths follow the line of the river but there is little relationship between the two. Existing premises to the west of the river have traditionally turned their backs to the water course creating an unattractive picture. Throughout its town centre course, the river presents a major amenity that has yet to be exploited.

In addition to the semi-natural landscape of the river, the town possesses more formal green spaces at Victoria Park and in the Memorial Gardens, together with incidental spaces such as that surrounding St Mary's Church. These add greatly to the character of Ashford, but have limited attractions and are not seen as destinations in their own right. They do however retain the potential to play a significant role in the expansion of the town centre, creating settings for new development and providing locations for additional recreational pursuits.

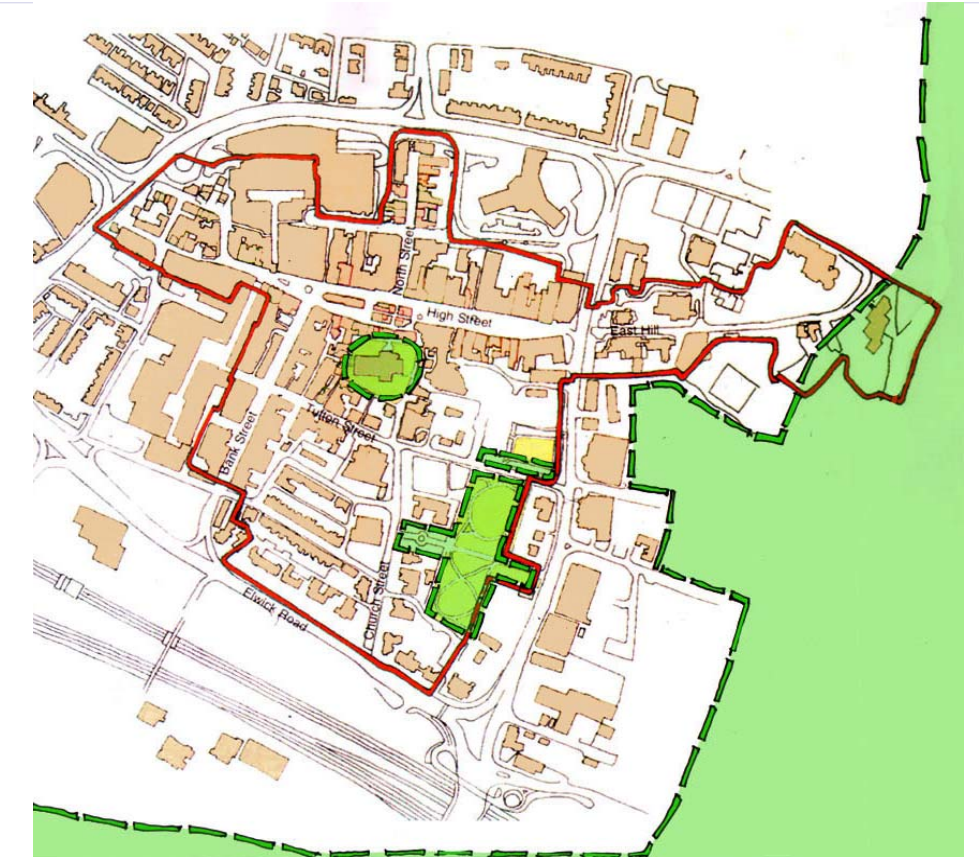


view corridors

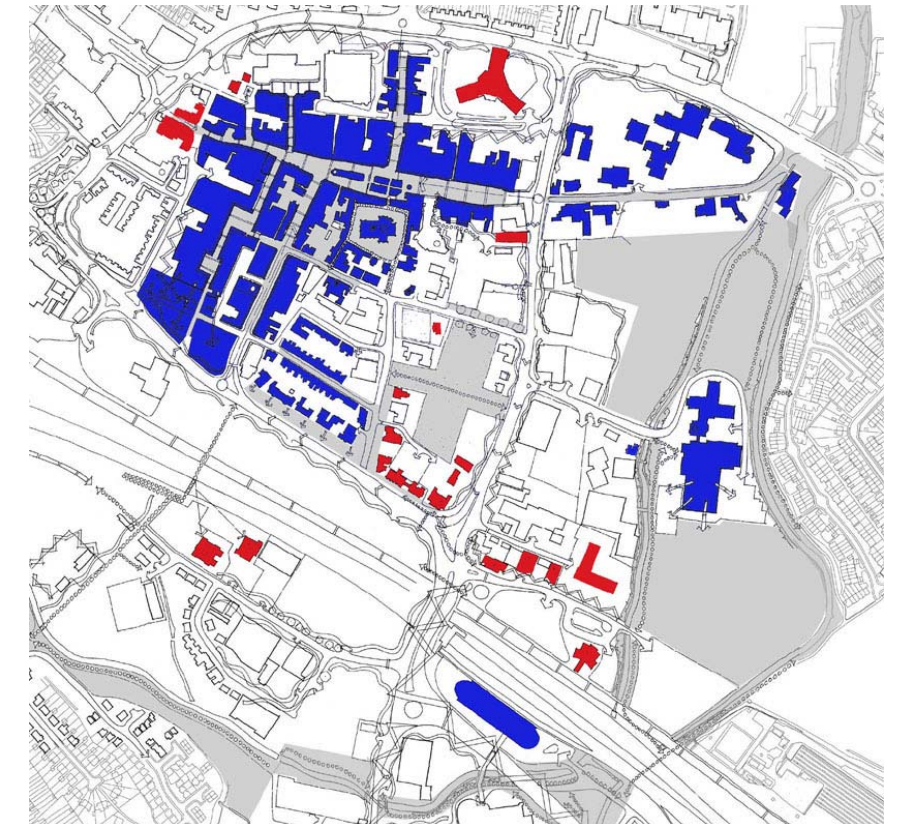
### Assessment of buildings and spaces

Generally the town centre Conservation Area (incorporating High Street, North Street, Bank Street, Church Street and East Hill) contains the majority of Ashford's attractive buildings.

Surrounding districts contribute in terms of single listed buildings, small pockets of well landscaped areas and streets whose character is reliant on a collection of buildings (i.e. residential streets). However, there are a large number of properties that contribute little to the positive image, physical environment or spatial quality of the town. These buildings often line the ring road, major trunk road and railway which form a large proportion of Ashford town centre's area.



landscape

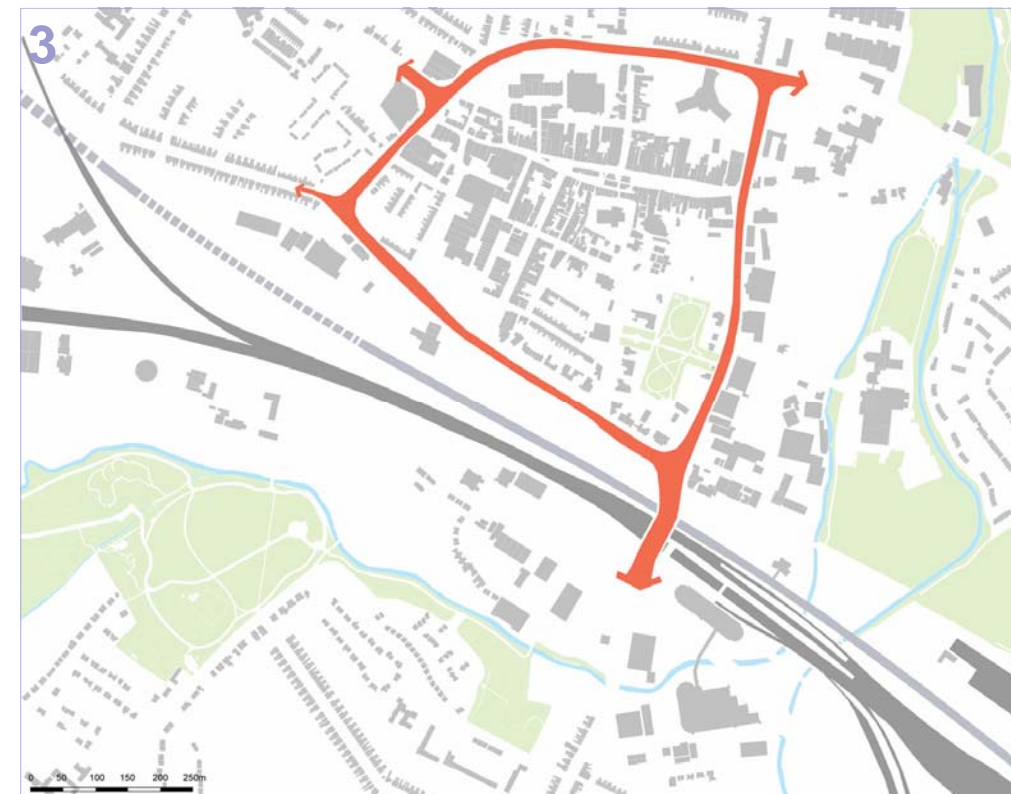


assessment of buildings/spaces

## 2 baseline analysis - transport

### the ring road

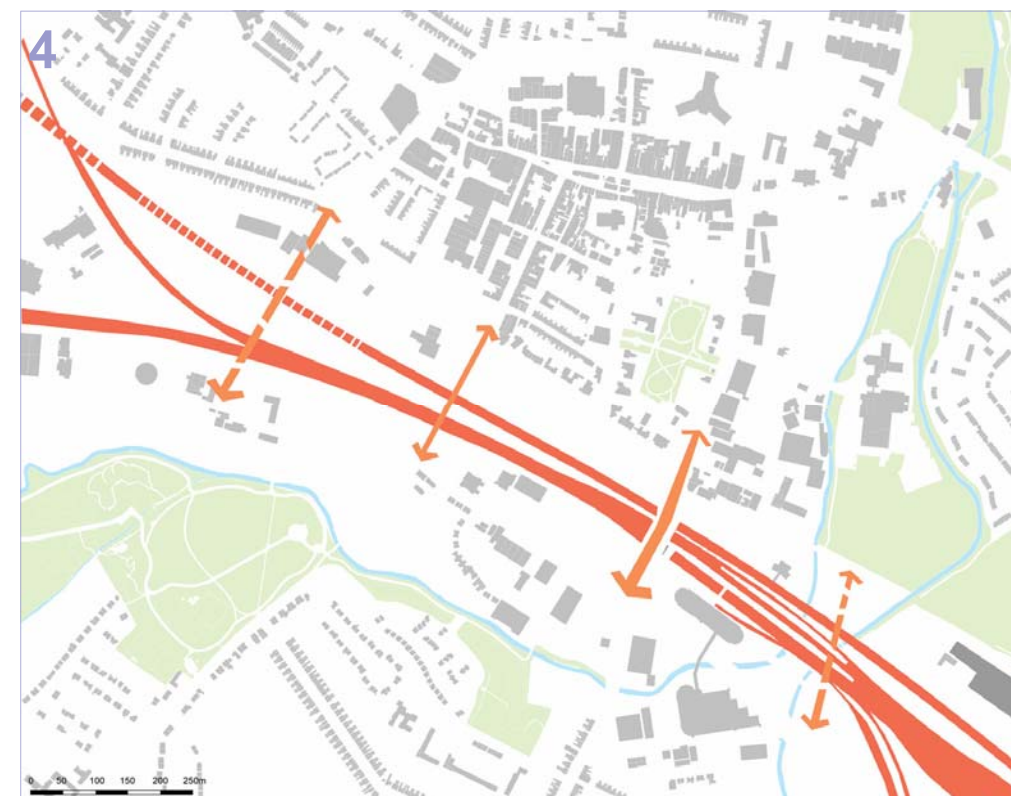
- Commonly perceived as one of the most negative features in Ashford
- Described as a 'collar' to the town's expansion
- One way traffic—hence fast moving and between 2-4 lanes wide. Difficult to cross. A real 'barrier'.
- Changing the character and possibly route of the ring road could dramatically improve the town.
- Wider reaching traffic implications of any changes to the ring road need to be considered.



*Opportunities and Constraints of the ring road*

### the railway lines

- Ashford's railway lines separate the town centre from the residential districts to the south.
- Restricted road crossings of the railway—Beaver Bridge Road the only central road crossing.
- CTRL has made the railway 'barrier' more extreme in terms of distance and impact.
- New pedestrian/cycle connection provides a good link from the town centre to Victoria Park.
- In discussions with the Strategic Rail Authority and CTRL, it has been shown to be too expensive to bridge the railway line either by a new crossing or with development. Further potential crossings of the railway are therefore limited.



*Crossing the railway—existing and potential solutions*