



## 2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

### Global Policy

#### Environment and Resource Conservation

Planning has always been concerned primarily with the quality of the environment, reinforced in recent years by growing public interest in both local and global issues. In the wake of the United Nations Earth Summit in 1992, the role of planning has broadened to consider issues such as energy and other resource conservation more closely. Community involvement in environmental concerns - encouraged in the UN's Local Agenda 21 initiative - has strong links to local planning issues and is a key ingredient of a more sustainable future. The close links between the health of the environment and the local economy have also become apparent (source: Ashford Local Plan).

#### National Policy

##### City Centre Development

Government policies at the national level reinforce the importance of city centres as the focus for social and economic life in cities. The large out of town retail centres and decentralisation policies of the 1980s and early 1990s have weakened the economic vitality of some town centres and have resulted in an economic and social imbalance. Government today is seeking to reverse this trend via a number of measures including the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance on Town Centres and Retail Developments (PPG 6). This guidance note is also a key driving force for the provision of high quality pedestrian environment to complement the diverse retail, commercial and residential activities in the town centre.

In addition, the following planning policy guidance

and statements also reinforce the development of high quality designed public realm in town centres:

PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPG 3: Housing  
PPS 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas  
PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks  
PPG 13: Transport

#### Local Policy

##### The Local Plan

The Ashford Local Borough Plan (June 2000) identifies a number of guiding policies for the development of the borough as well as the town centre. The policies that inform the principles for the design of the public realm are the following:

- To encourage high design quality and an appropriate 'sense of place' in new development in the design of buildings, their relationship with each other, and the spaces and landscape around them.
- To reinforce the attractions of the town centre by encouraging a wide range of uses, including shopping, employment, housing, entertainment, tourism, arts & community services, coupled with a balanced approach to transport that reduces unnecessary car use, congestion and pollution.
- To plan within a long term vision and

coherent structure for the future planning of the town and its surroundings based on a framework of rivers and attractive open spaces, improved wildlife habitats and pedestrian and cycle routes.

##### Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework is replacing the current planning system and was introduced as a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Ashford Local Plan will be superseded with a portfolio of local development documents, which will collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the Borough. ([http://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning/local\\_dev\\_framework.asp](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning/local_dev_framework.asp))

#### Local Context

The public realm strategy sits alongside and has been informed by a variety of other strategies and documents. It is intended to be able to be read alone, but further information can be found in the following documents:

##### Greater Ashford Development Framework

The Greater Ashford Development Framework report outlines the process of developing and selecting masterplan options for Ashford. The preferred masterplan sets out some primary structuring elements that establish a framework within which the town can expand.

## Ashford Town Centre Development Framework

In parallel with the GADF work more detailed work has been undertaken for the town centre. It is expected that during the early years of development much of the growth will occur in the town centre, this being the principle of 'mend before extend'. A draft Development Framework for the town centre was produced in August 2005 and this sets out a number of key structuring elements for the town centre. These build upon those defined in GADF.

## Ashford Town Centre Character Study

This study consolidates and extends previous studies of Ashford's Urban Fabric. The study report provides a comprehensive appraisal of Ashford's special cultural interest, urban form and townscape and is intended to inform future development and regeneration schemes.

## Kent Historic Towns Project Ashford –Kent Archaeological Assessment Document

This study aims to provide an evaluation of the archaeological and historical remains of the town. The study provides useful background information and has fed into the Character Study. There is nothing in this document that might inform the design of streetscape improvements.

## Kent Design Guide and Kent Design Highway

## Technical Appendix

The Kent Design Guide and Appendices provide guidance for us in the design of new developments. This primarily relates to new residential developments in Kent on green or brownfield sites. The guide contains much urban design guidance as well as specific highways standards for different categories of road.

## Space Syntax Ashford Town Centre Public Realm Project (Phase 1)

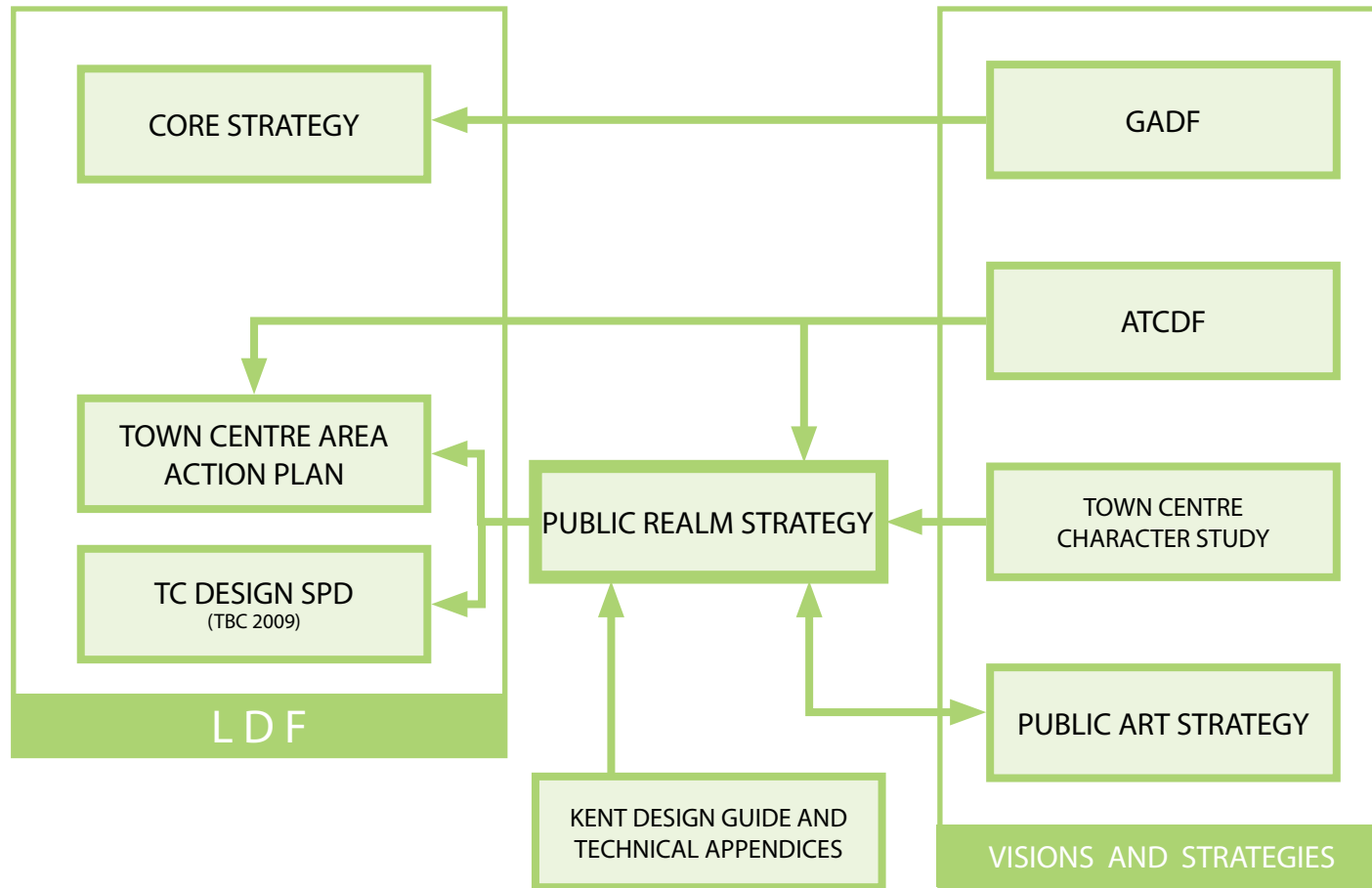
The Space Syntax project analysed the physical characteristics of the existing network of public spaces and land uses, the pedestrian activity, the effect of the spacial structure of Ashford, and developed a strategic design framework for the town.

## Ashford Town Charter 2004

The Ashford Town Charter sets out the principles for growth for Ashford. It is a document written and endorsed by the people of Ashford for the benefit of current and future residents of the town. It is intended to inform decisions about the town and act as a basis for attracting investment and commitment to Ashford. It highlights the challenge, aspirations, and themes for growth. It also looks in detail at seven workstreams: the civic domain, the environment, infrastructure, movement, neighbourhood, urban core, and the workplace, and identifies beliefs, principles, issues and drivers for each area. A model for growth is presented as well as the key generators and projects to deliver this model.

## Implications for the Public Realm

The above policies and documents supported by Ashford's Local Borough Plan call for a high quality public realm that supports a wide range of uses and users, with a balanced approach to transport. This calls for an innovative approach that balances transport engineering, landscape design and the management and maintenance of streets and places. The public realm strategy should also be based on a long-term vision and structure for the future of the town, reinforcing the key structuring elements and spaces.



Local Policy Context Diagram