

# CLIFFE AND CLIFFE WOODS

## Design Guidelines



**DRAFT REPORT**

April 2019

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Introduction

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# 1. Introduction

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

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## 1.1. Introduction

Through the Ministry of Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Neighbourhood Planning Programme led by Locality, AECOM has been commissioned to provide design support to the Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

The Steering Group is working on the production of its Neighbourhood Plan, which is at an early stage. Early consultation events have already been carried out. Although the Local Plan has not allocated any new housing numbers to Cliffe or Cliffe Woods, the Steering Group has requested professional advice on design guidelines to ensure that any potential development within the parish fits with the character of the area. This document should support Neighbourhood Plan policies that guide the assessment of any future development proposals and encourage high quality design. It advises on physical development helping to create distinctive places integrated with the existing settlements.

## 1.2. Objective

The main objective of this report is to develop design guidelines that future development in Cliffe and Cliffe Woods should follow to retain and protect the rural, tranquil character and scenic beauty of the area. In particular:

- The design of new buildings should respond to the scale, density, and position of existing buildings in relation to the streets and plots. It should enhance local distinctiveness without limiting architectural diversity, originality, and innovation;
- Development proposals should avoid the loss of trees, hedgerows, or woodland, and should provide a clear commitment to replace this vegetation should any loss occur;
- Any development should conserve and protect heritage assets and their settings;
- Where new domestic access points are required, small-scale features such as hedgerows, walls, fencing, and entrance gates should respond to the local vernacular to promote and enhance local distinctiveness;
- Proposals to alter historic buildings should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the history and design qualities of the buildings and provide a clear rationale for how this has been taken into account in the design of the proposed alterations, without limiting originality and innovation.

## 1.3. Process

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

- Initial meeting and site visit;
- Urban design analysis;
- Preparation of design principles and guidelines to be used to assess future developments;
- Draft report with design guidelines; and
- Final report.

This work builds on a heritage and character assessment (HCA) prepared by AECOM for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The findings of the HCA are summarised in a separate report prepared in December 2018 and will not be the subject of this report.



Figure 1: View from the edge of the Cliffe built up area towards the marshland and the London Gateway Port across the Thames Estuary.

## 1.4. Area of Study

### Location

The parish of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods is located in Medway, Kent, about 5 km north of Rochester and 9 km east of Gravesend. It is situated in the north-west of the Hoo Peninsula and is bordered by the Thames Estuary on the north. The parish includes two main settlements, Cliffe and Cliffe Woods, which are about 2 km apart.

Settled areas consist in a mix of terrace, detached, and semi-detached residential properties. The built up areas are surrounded by scattered settlement, arable farmland, as well as the North Kent Marshes to the north. RSPB Cliffe Pools Nature Reserve and industrial areas occupy the west of the parish, and the south borders the Great Chattenden Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The west of the parish abuts the London green belt.

The parish is situated in the National Character Area (NCA) 81 Greater Thames Estuary and National Character Area (NCA) 113 North Kent Plain defined by Natural England.

Cliffe and Cliffe Woods are home to Cliffe Pre-School, St Helen C of E Primary School, Cliffe Woods Primary School, and Cliffe Woods Middle School. The Grade I listed Church of St Helen serves as the parish church. The closest train station is located in Higham 2 km west of Cliffe Woods.

### Population

At the 2011 census the population of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish was 5,370. The built up areas of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods had 2,403 and 2,662 inhabitants respectively.

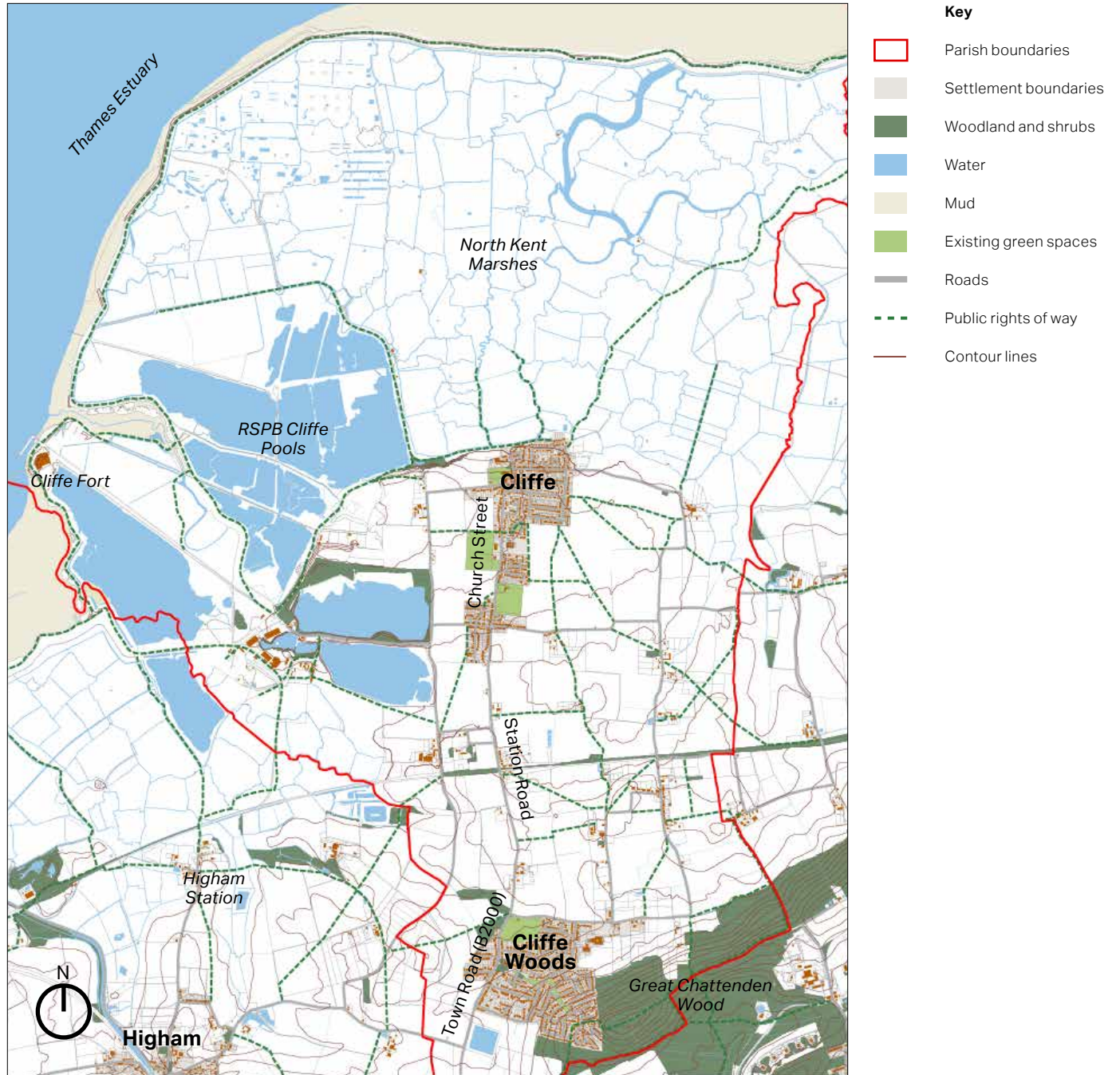


Figure 2: Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish area, with parish boundaries shown in red (© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 0100031673)





Figure 3: Listed buildings inside the Cliffe Conservation Area.



Figure 4: 20th century residential development in Cliffe Woods.



Figure 5: The 2 km unbuilt gap between the settlements of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods.





## Local Character Analysis

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## 2. Local Character Area

This section outlines the broad physical, historical and contextual characteristics of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods. 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 both settlements.

### 2.1. Introduction

There is a number of listed buildings that reflect the history and architectural diversity of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods. In total, there are 26 listed buildings within the parish boundaries. Cliffe Conservation Area was designated in 1973 and covers the historic core of Cliffe, including the Grade I listed Church of St Helen.

The early 20th century legacy of plotland development is still visible in the regular parcel layout of significant parts of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods, despite most of the original buildings having been replaced.



Figure 6: Listed building with white weatherboarding on Church Street



Figure 7: View of London Gateway port and the North Kent Marshes from the yard of St Helen's Church.



Figure 8: The Six Bells pub on Church Street



Figure 9: Central green space on Woodside Green



Figure 10: Deep front gardens and green verges on Swingate Avenue



Figure 11: New development and renovated agricultural buildings with a view on St Helen's Church



Figure 12: Listed gabled houses with jettying upper floors on Church Street

## 2.2. Cliffe Local Character Analysis

### Streets and Public Realm

The main streets are organic in nature and seemingly evolved from historic routes, natural features, and topography, especially in the older northern part of Cliffe. Victorian and 20th century streets form more regular patterns while the network is more sparse in the more recent southern part. Church Street and Station Road form the main village spine. Footpaths connect the built up area with the open countryside and marshes to the north.

### Pattern and Layout of Buildings

Buildings in the historic core form an informal pattern of continuous street frontages with little or no recess from the street line, creating a small scale and enclosed character. Some Victorian terraced houses have small front gardens.

Most 20th century buildings are detached and semi-detached houses sited on wider and more regular plots with larger front gardens. Some late 20th century infill sites, for example the development around Chesterton Road, form meandering cult-de-sac clusters.

Many houses in the west and south of Cliffe either face or back onto open space. Outside the settlement boundaries, the settlement pattern is characterised by dispersed farmsteads.

### Building Heights and Roofline

Building heights typically vary between one and two storeys. The roofline in the historic core is informal with a variety of roof heights and shapes. Victorian to mid-20th century terraced and semi-detached houses form continuous and uniform roof lines.

### Car Parking

Most houses have either front yard or garage parking, or front gardens converted into driveways. On larger plots along Buttway Lane and Church Street as well as on Chesterton Road, front yard parking is partially screened by hedges or low masonry walls. Plots in the historic core are usually too small to accommodate on-plot parking.

### Open Space & Landscape

Within the settlement, there are few large open spaces. Cliffe is divided from Cliffe Woods by a 2 km long stretch of open countryside. The settlement is surrounded by open fields, marshes, and artificial lakes with long views towards the countryside and the Thames Estuary. The unbuilt area is rich in biodiversity and a significant portion of the land to the north and west of Cliffe falls under a combination of several designations including Ramsar, special protection area, special scientific interest (SSSI), and RSPB reserve.

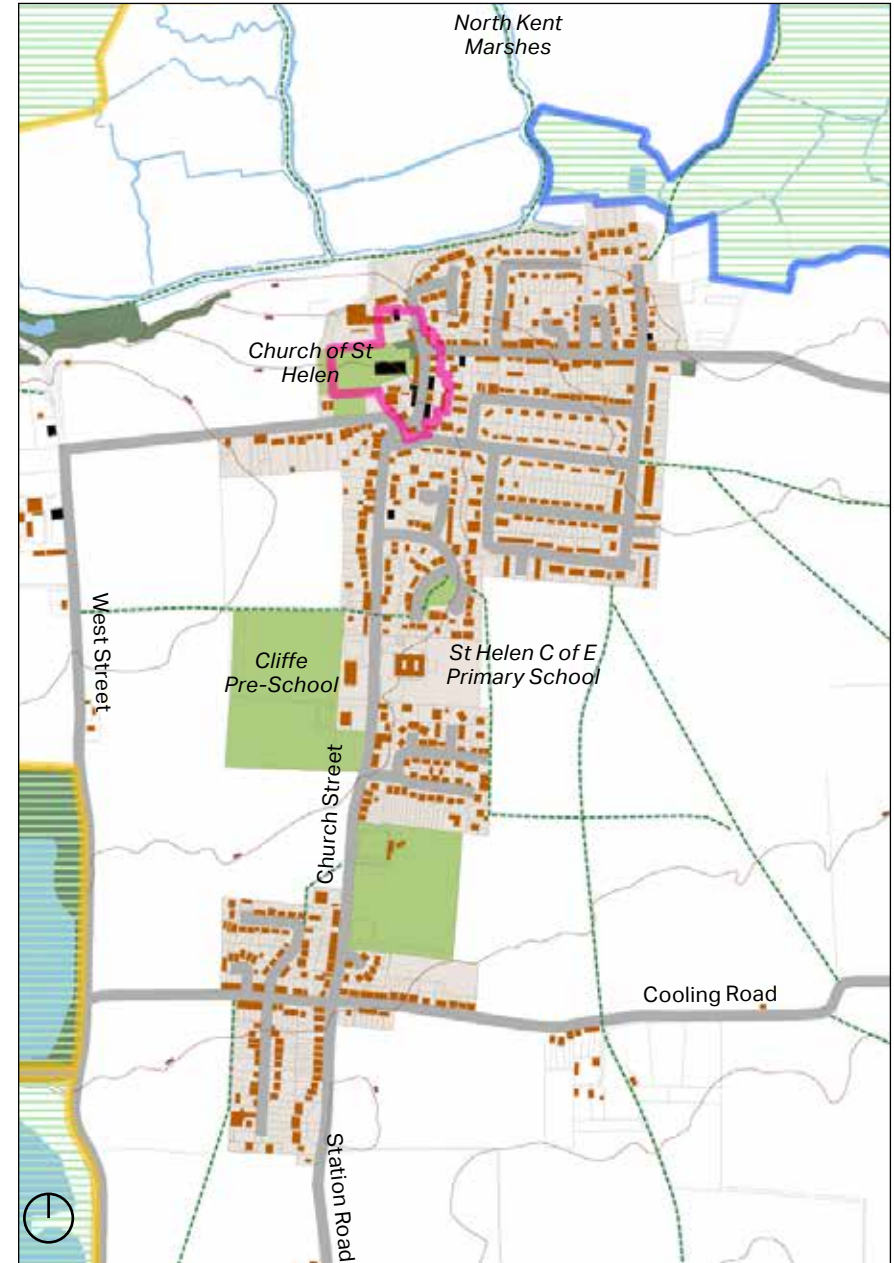


Figure 13: Map of Cliffe showing street patterns, building footprints, and open spaces (© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 0100031673)

## 2.3. Cliffe Woods Local Character Analysis

### Streets and Public Realm

The main roads, Town Road and Merryboys Road, have an organic nature. Mortimers Avenue and Ladyclose Avenue to the west of Cliffe Woods have regular orthogonal layouts typical of early 20th century plotland developments. Most other residential streets have sinuous loop and cul-de-sac layouts typical of postwar suburban developments. Streets are bordered with a combination of landscaped hedges, lawns, and low brick or wooden walls.

### Pattern and Layout of Buildings

Houses are typically detached and semi-detached, with a minority of terraces. Most buildings face the street with various recesses that usually include a front yard and garden. The dominance of detached and semi-detached houses with important recesses from the property line create a more open character than in Cliffe.

Many houses are arranged in clusters around a cul-de-sac, whereas those located west of Town Road demonstrate a regular orthogonal plotland arrangement. Overall, the pattern and layout of buildings is more homogeneous to the east of the settlement. A few isolated farmsteads are located north and east of the settlement boundaries of Cliffe.

### Building Heights and Roofline

Houses are typically two storeys high, with a minority of bungalows. The west of Cliffe has more variety in building heights and roofline. Houses to the east and south are more homogeneous in height, but the sloping terrain to the south adds dynamism to the roofline.

### Car Parking

Most cars are stored in on-plot garages and front yards. Those are partially screened by low masonry walls, wooden fences, or landscaped hedges to the west of the settlement, while properties to the east typically have no screening. Cul-de-sacs provide additional parking in courtyards. The commercial cluster in the village centre and the Primary School have car parks.

### Open Space & Landscape

A ribbon of green spaces bisects the village diagonally. Cliffe Woods also borders the Great Chattenden Wood SSSI to the east and south. The west of Cliffe is located close to the eastern edge of the London green belt. The playing fields to the north contain two football pitches as well as a children's play area. Due to its higher altitude, the south of Cliffe Woods offers views long distance views towards the open countryside and the Thames Estuary.

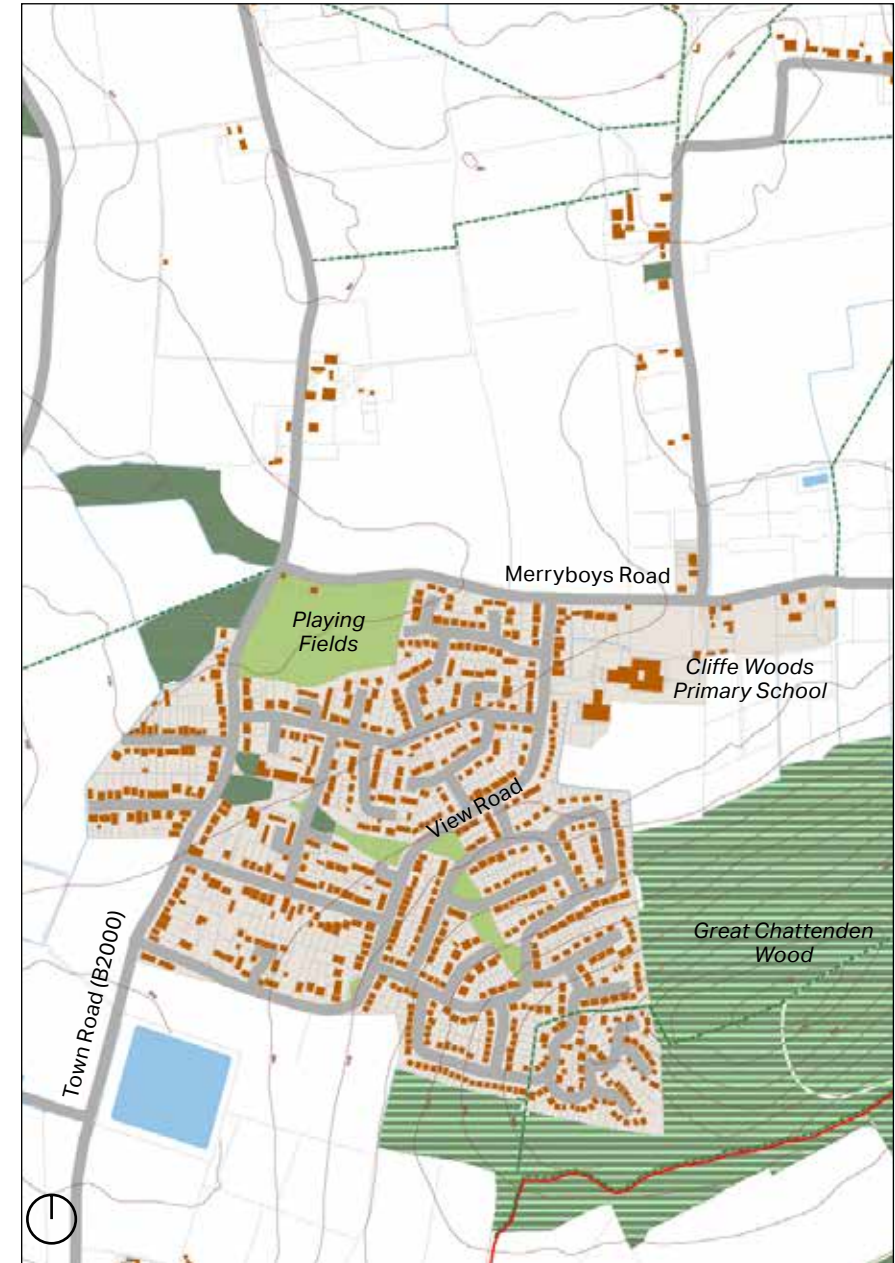


Figure 14: Map of Cliffe Woods showing street patterns, building footprints, and open spaces  
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## 2.4. Architectural Details

The following section showcases a good amount of local building details which should be considered as positive examples.



Churchyard and Church of St Helen with a crenelated parapet and walls composed of an alternation of flint and stone.



Gabled façade with white weatherboarding and jettying upper floors



Six Bells corner building with red and grey brick façade.



Renovated agricultural building with brick and black weatherboarding



Victorian terrace houses with painted brick façades on Reed Street.



Listed building with a half-hipped roof with clay plain tiles and white weatherboarding.





Façade with white weatherboarding and clay plaintiles.



Building with black weatherboarding and clay roofs



Contemporary building with grey and red brick façade and front yard planting.



Red brick façade with painted door and window frames.

AECOM



Listed buildings with clay plaintiles roofs, white weatherboarding, and black window and door frames.



Gabled dormer, brick chimney, and clay plaintile roof.

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ALES  
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SHEPHERD NEAME  
SIX BELLS

Design Guidelines

SCHOOL HOUSE

03

## 3. Design Guidelines

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

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

Based on established good practice, this section provides a number of questions 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 village 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 trees on or adjacent to the site?
- 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 space be created? If so, how this will 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 villages?
- 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, and 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?
- Does 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?

### **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?

## 3.2. Design Guidelines

### 3.2.1. Streets

- Streets must meet the technical highways requirements as well as be considered a 'space' 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.
- New streets, should any be built, should tend to be linear with gentle meandering - providing interest and evolving views. Routes should be laid out in a permeable pattern allowing for multiple connections and choice of routes, particularly on foot. Any cul-de-sacs should be relatively short and include provision for onward pedestrian links.
- Access to properties should be from the street where possible.
- 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.
- Pedestrian paths should be included in new developments and be integrated with the existing pedestrian routes.



**Figure 15: Church Street has an organic layout with gentle meander typical of the historic core of Cliffe**



**Figure 16: Swinggate Avenue, a road fronted with gardens and framed with planted verges.**



**Figure 17: Milton Avenue, Cliffe Woods, with footways and a variety of edge treatments - hedges, low-level landscaping, and wooden fences.**

### 3.2.2. 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.
- The spacing of development should reflect the rural character 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 Cliffe and Cliffe Woods should be preserved.
- Green gaps between settlements and built up areas, especially between Cliffe and Cliffe Woods, must be retained to avoid coalescence.
- Native trees and shrubs should be used to reinforce the rural character of the village.



Figure 18: View from the edge of the Cliffe built up area towards the marshland and the London Gateway Port across the Thames Estuary.



Figure 19: Buckland Lake Reserve





Figure 20: Green corridor running across the centre of Cliffe Woods



Figure 22: View of the Church of St Helen's clock tower from Pond Hill



Figure 21: The sloping terrain of Cliffe Woods offers views towards the surrounding countryside.



Figure 23: Green space in the centre of Cliffe

### 3.2.3. Pedestrian Connectivity

- It is important that all newly developed areas should provide direct and attractive footpaths between neighbouring streets and local facilities. These will usually be pavements alongside roads. Establishing a robust pedestrian network a) across any new development and b) among new and existing development is key in achieving good levels of permeability.
- A permeable street network at all levels, provides people with a choice of different routes and allows traffic to be distributed in general more evenly across the network rather than concentrated on to heavily trafficked roads.
- Design features such as barriers to vehicle movement, gates to new developments, or footpaths between high fences should be kept at minimum and the latter should be avoided. In particular, new developments should retain pedestrian accessibility to residents and non-residents alike.



Figure 24: Direct pedestrian path through a green space in Cliffe.



Figure 25: Direct pedestrian path through a green space in Cliffe Woods.

### 3.2.4. Way Finding, Legibility

- New developments should assure from the design stage that their movement network is fully integrated to the existing network of routes. Also, the width of pedestrian footpaths should be minimum 2 meters wide and should be aligned by lamp posts to encourage its use at all times.
- New development schemes should aim to create places that have identity and that are easy to navigate through. New design schemes should contain local landmark buildings to aid legibility.



Figure 26: Pedestrian wayfinding signs in Cliffe



Figure 27: Map of the Cliffe village centre showing the main landmarks

### 3.2.5. 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 28: Symmetry in building massing and roofline is used to form a gateway into the development and the village centre



Figure 29: The northern end of Pond Hill, a gateway framed by tall trees, landscaping, and brick walls opening into the open countryside.

### 3.2.6. Landmarks and Vistas

- In any new development, buildings should be designed to respond to existing view corridors or reinforce views of existing landmarks. It is important that building massing and architectural detailing should respect the local character and enhance the sense of place. The location of landmarks should be clearly justified as they contribute to the wider legibility of that particular area.
- Besides adapting to local heritage, landmark buildings should also be innovative and interesting. They should promote good architecture and ensure that places are distinct, recognisable and memorable.



Figure 30: View from Pound Hill towards St Helen's Church, Cliffe's main landmark



Figure 31: View from Church Street towards the Six Bells Pub



Figure 32: View from Church Street towards the Six Bells Pub

### 3.2.7. Pattern and Layout of Buildings

- The existing rural character 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.
- Plotland development patterns in Cliffe Woods should be preserved through the retention of rectangular curtilages and the ratio between the garden and the built portion of the plot.



Figure 33: Historic buildings on Church Street forming a consistent building line.



Figure 34: Semi-detached homes with large front gardens on Swingate Avenue.



Figure 35: Houses with front yard parking and front gardens in Cliffe Woods.

### 3.2.8. Building Scale and Massing

- Buildings should be sympathetic in scale to the context and should not pass 2-2.5 storey in residential areas.
- 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. This can be appropriate in both central and more suburban locations.
- The massing of new buildings should ensure adequate privacy and access to natural light for their occupants, and avoid over shadowing existing buildings.



Figure 36: A variety in massing used for house frontages.



Figure 37: Church Street is bordered by historic buildings that display a variety of scale and massing

### 3.2.9. Buildings at Corners

- 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.
- Streets should have strong continuity of frontage not only for being visually attractive and enhancing streetscape, but also for providing high levels of natural surveillance. Eyes on the street ensures that public space is well overlooked.
- Corner buildings should have both side façades animated with doors and/or windows. Exposed, blank gable end buildings with no windows fronting the public realm should be avoided.
- Decorative architectural elements also should be considered in treating these building types. It is not necessary for strong corner buildings to be taller than neighbouring buildings.



Figure 38: A prominent village centre corner occupied by the Six Bells Pub



Figure 39: Modern buildings oriented at an angle to face the junction.



### 3.2.10. Building Line and Boundary Treatment

- Buildings should 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.
- Boundary treatments should reinforce the sense of continuity of the building line and help define the street, appropriate to the rural character of the area. They should use local materials such as flint and red brick. The use of either panel fencing or metal or concrete walls in these publicly visible boundaries should be avoided. Also, boundary treatments should not impair 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, recycling containers, and vehicle parking.



**Figure 40: Façade orientations form a unified building line while allowing for subtle bends, recesses, and protrusions.**



**Figure 41: Edge treatments using a combination of brick walls and hedges.**



**Figure 42: A diversity of boundary treatments in Cliffe Woods formed by low brick walls, metal and wooden fences, and soft landscaping. The top of mature trees is visible above the roofline.**

### 3.2.11. 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 guideline 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;
- Locally traditional roof detailing elements should be considered and implemented where possible in cases of new development; and
- Dormers can be used as design element to add variety and interest to roofs.



Figure 43: Street elevations showing a dynamic roofline with a unified materials palette.



Figure 44: Back of buildings showing a diversity of roof styles, orientations, and pitches.

### 3.2.12. 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 minimised. 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 over shadowing as many buildings as possible. New developments should also maximise opportunities for long distance views.
- In proximity to historic areas, fenestration must reflect an understanding of locally distinctive features such as scale, proportions, rhythm, materials, and articulation.



Figure 45: Listed building with historic window features.



Figure 46: Contemporary building using variations in building rhythm and proportions to articulate the horizontal mass of the building

### 3.2.13. Development Edges with Open Space

Due to their unique location near the Thames Estuary, the west and north of Cliffe are located near environmentally sensitive habitat areas for a wide array of protected species. These areas benefit from various, often overlapping, European and national environmental protection designation: Ramsar, sites of special scientific interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Priority Habitat Inventory - coastal floodplain grazing marsh, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserve, and Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).

In other places, the settlements border large areas of open countryside that often enable long views due to the flat topography, especially to the east of both settlements and between them. There are also sites west of Cliffe Woods that are adjacent to green belt land.

New settlement extensions, should they come forward, will need to minimise disruptions to wildlife habitat areas as well as their visual impact on the rural landscape. The opposite page present two diagrammatic sections of potential new development layouts at their interfaces with either environmentally sensitive sites or the open countryside for more successful integration with the existing landscape and ecosystem.

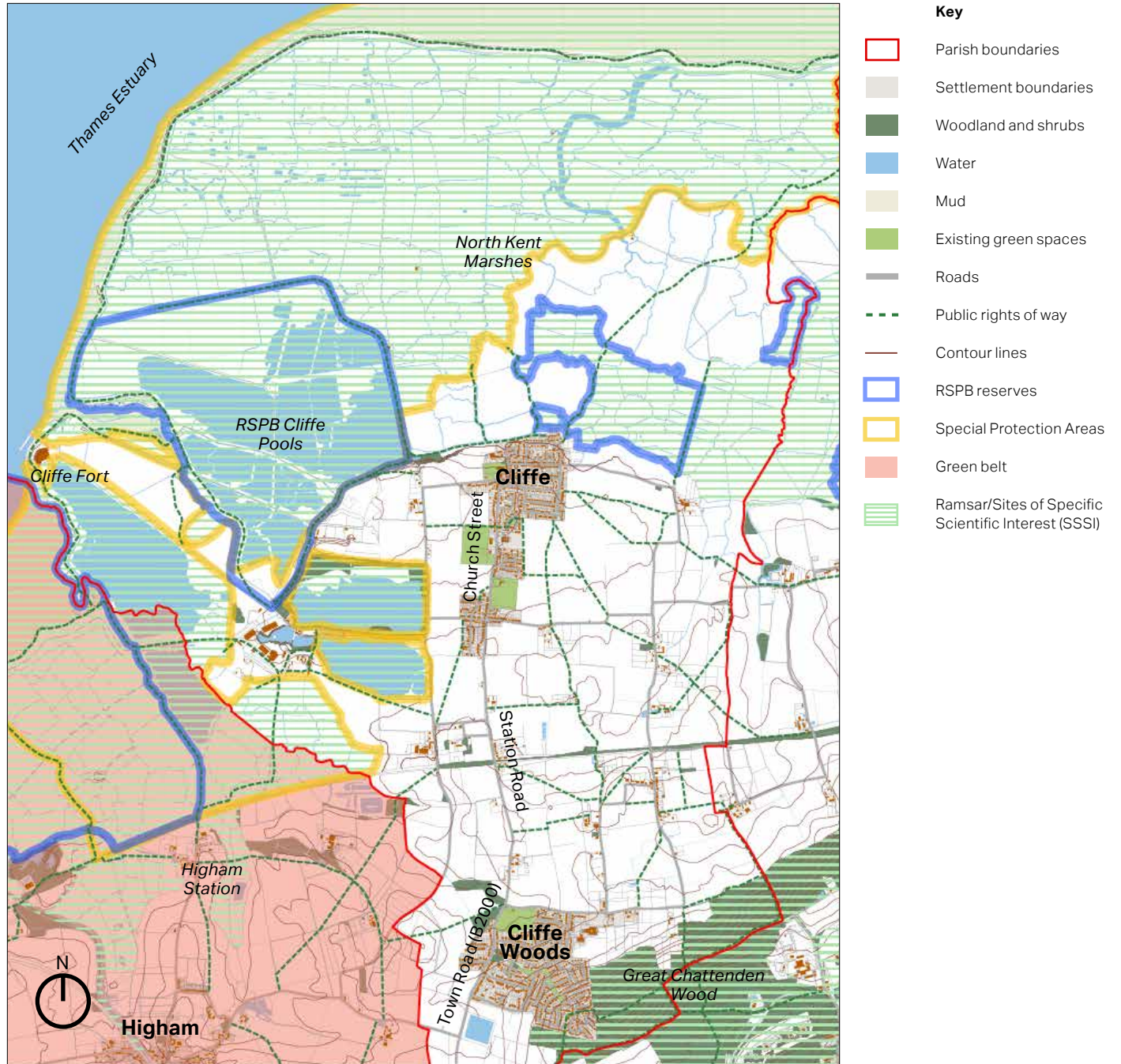
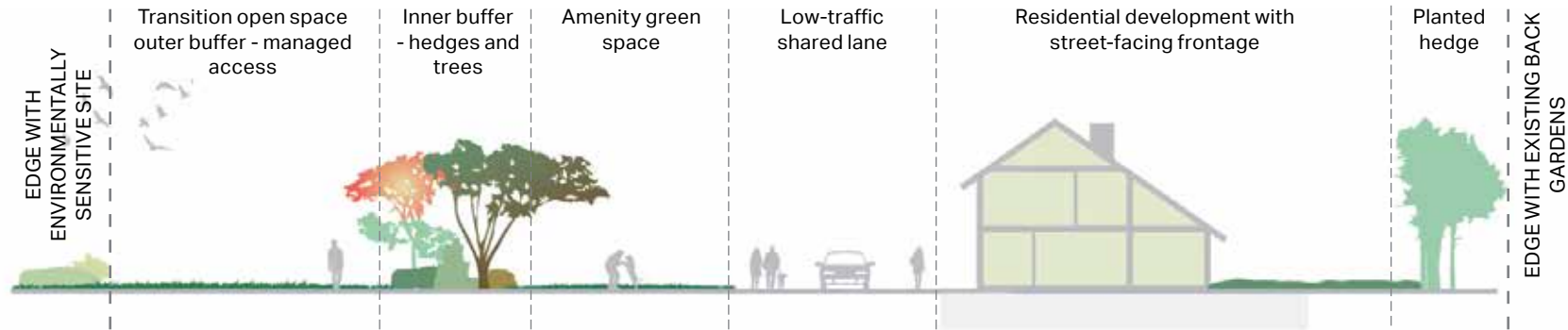


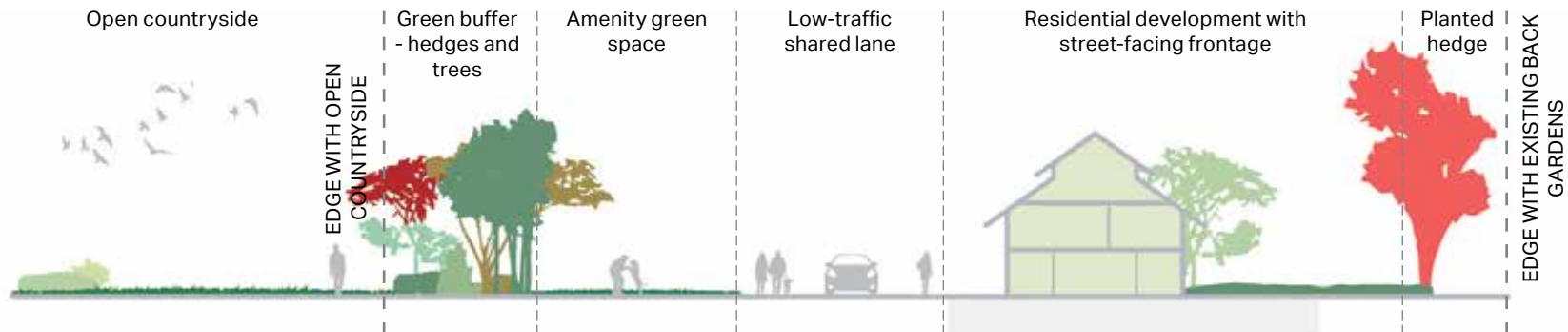
Figure 47: Parish map showing interface between built up and sensitive areas (© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 0100031673)

### Development edge with environmentally sensitive site



New developments should leave an undeveloped outer buffer at the edge with designated sites. Managed access in the forms of gates should be required to minimise disturbance to wildlife. An inner buffer planted with hedges and trees should provide additional physical and visual screening. This inner edge could also incorporate amenity green spaces. Residential areas should be designed with an outward-facing building that front low-traffic lanes. The internal layout of the site can be more flexible, however the back of houses at the interface with the existing settlement should include green hedges to avoid overlooking the back of existing properties. Where the site faces an existing street, the new access should incorporate gateway treatments, and new buildings should be placed to face the street.

### Development edge with open countryside



Due to the mostly flat topography and the rural setting of both villages, new constructions will be visible from long distances. A green buffer consisting in hedges and trees is needed to soften the impact of new extensions and ease the transition with the open countryside. Amenity green spaces could also be incorporated at the site edges. Low-traffic lanes at the perimeter of the development area should be fronted with outward-facing buildings. The back gardens of houses adjacent to existing residences should incorporate green buffers to avoid overlooking issues. New houses that border existing roads should face outward to increase natural surveillance.

### 3.2.14. Household Extensions

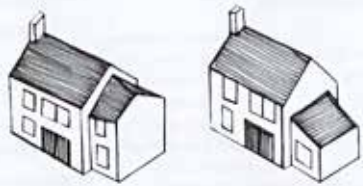
- The original building should remain the dominant element of the property regardless the amount of extensions. The newly built extension should not overwhelm the building from any given point.
- Extensions should not result in a significant loss to the private amenity area of the dwelling.
- Designs that wrap around the existing building and involve overly complicated roof forms should be avoided.
- The pitch and form of the roof used on the building adds to its character and extensions should respond to this where appropriate.
- Extensions should consider the materials, architectural features, window sizes, and proportions of the existing building and recreate this style to design an extension that matches and complements the existing building.
- 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 48: Successful side extension to a Grade II listed building.



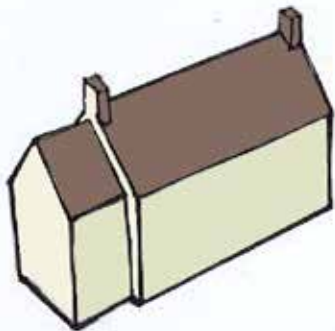
Figure 49: Positive design for a back extension for a red brick building.



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



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



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

**Design treatment in case of loft conversion:**



Loft conversion incorporating skylights.



Loft conversion incorporating gabled dormers.



Loft conversion incorporating a long shed dormer which is out of scale with the original building.



Original roofline of an existing building.



Loft conversion incorporating gabled dormers.



Loft conversion incorporating gabled dormers which are out of scale and do not consider existing window rhythm nor frequency.

### 3.2.15. Materials and Building Details

The variety of materials and architectural detailing used throughout Cliffe and Cliffe Woods contribute to the rural 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. New developments, regardless of size, should use a diversity of materials and building details to avoid monotonous developments and aid wayfinding by improving the legibility and imageability of the built environment.

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



WHITE-PAINTED BRICK



LOW BRICK GARDEN WALLS



CONTRASTING RED BRICK LINTELS AND TRIM



PAINTED DOOR FRAME



PAINTED WINDOW FRAME



GREY BRICK





RED BRICK



WHITE WEATHERBOARDING



LANDSCAPED HEDGE



BLACK WEATHERBOARDING



SLATE ROOF



BAY WINDOW



HUNG CLAY OR TIMBER TILES



SLATE ROOF



CLAY PLAIN TILE ROOF

### 3.2.16. Parking

- Car parking solutions should be a mix of on plot and garage parking.
- For family homes cars should be placed at the front or side of the property. For small pockets of housing a front or rear court is acceptable. Also, multiple garage parking is encouraged.
- Car parking design should be combined with landscaping to minimise the presence of vehicles.
- When placing parking at the front, the area should be designed to minimise visual impact 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 by means of walls, hedging, planting, and use of differentiated quality paving materials.



Figure 50: On-street inset parking and front yard parking with landscaped and masonry boundary treatments



Figure 51: Informal on-street and front yard parking on Chesterton Road. The landscaped boundaries prevent the creation of a car-dominated character.

### 3.2.17. Public Realm and Streetscape

- High quality landscaping and building materials should be used across the new development. Care should be taken when selecting the materials that will be used for the paved areas.
- High quality stone, gravel, granite, and bricks can provide durable and attractive hard surface throughout the public realm.
- More expensive materials such as sandstone and limestone could also be used to further enhance the quality of particular spaces.



Figure 52: Shared area with block and sett surfacing on Chesterton Road. The well-kept landscaping and footpaths also encourage walking.



Figure 53: Planted verges with street trees along Swingate Avenue.



Figure 54: Pond Hill, a de-facto shared low-traffic street in the historic core of Cliffe.

### 3.2.18. Traditional Architecture

The gradual evolution of the parish over the centuries has resulted in an organic character to development. Each building in the conservation area has its own individuality resulting in variations in construction materials, height, the pattern of openings, and detailing. Buildings are predominantly 1 or 2 storeys and the change in roof heights and the presence of chimneys contribute to the visual interest of the historic village.



Figure 55: Red brick buildings showing a variety of window treatment details.



Figure 56: Longford House, a Grade II listed building with jettied upper storeys and painted window frames.



Figure 57: Grade II listed buildings with traditional white weatherboarding and clay roof tiles on Church Street.



Figure 58: Grade II listed 18th century house with red brick façade

### 3.2.19. Contemporary take on Traditional Architecture

Within the parish there are a few examples of successful contemporary architecture. These buildings are usually refurbished agricultural buildings with a contemporary extension built in high quality building materials. Although their design is contemporary, they demonstrate an intelligent understanding of materials, massing, and local traditional architecture that blends harmoniously with their physical context.

It is suggested that this trend continues to further expand with additional eco design features incorporated in future developments.

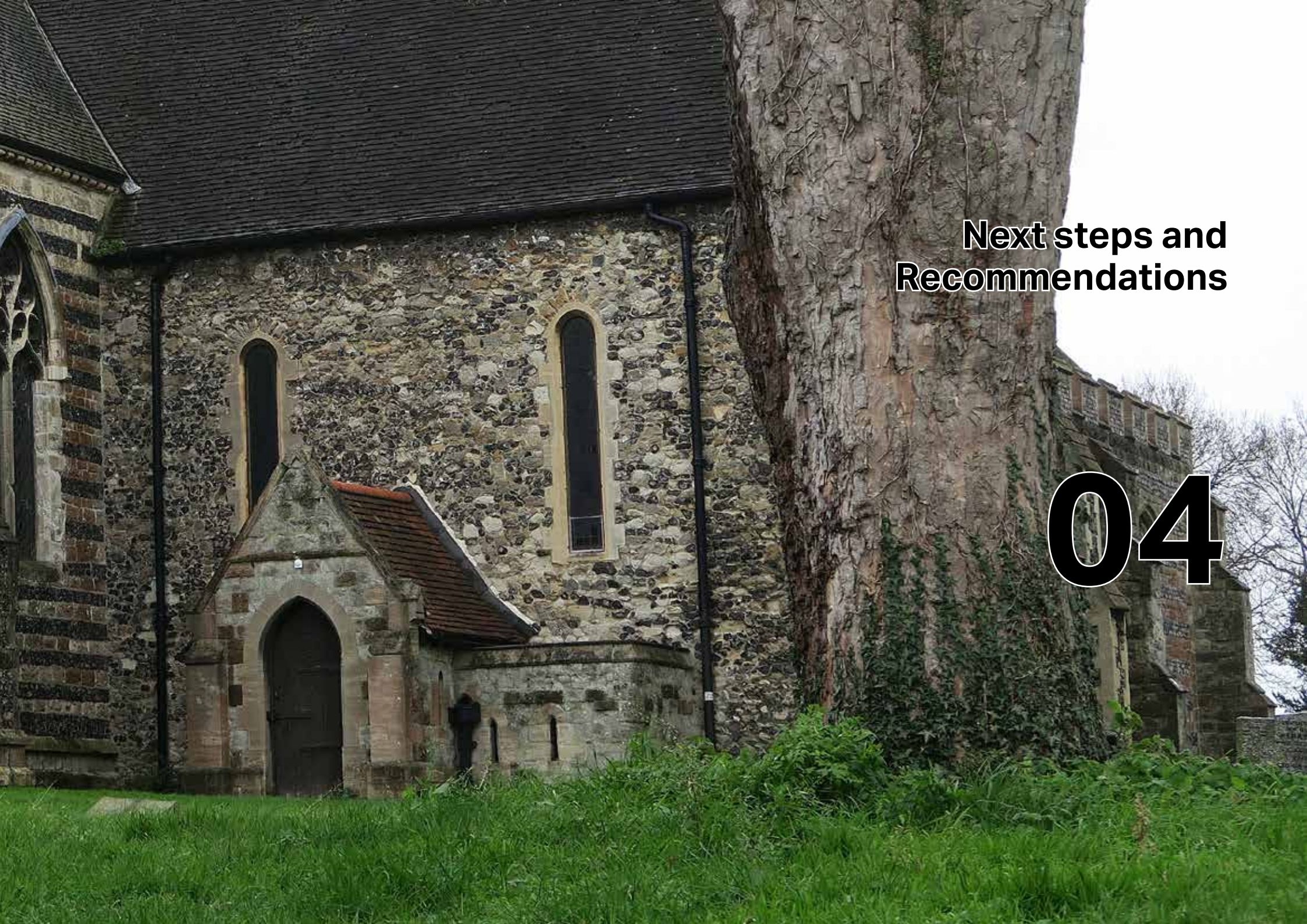


**Figure 59: Grey brick house with flat-arched red brick lintel, sash windows with white muntins, and slate roof**



**Figure 60: Building conversion on Pond Hill using high quality traditional building materials.**





**Next steps and  
Recommendations**

**04**

## 4. Next steps

This section concludes the report with recommendations on how to embed findings in the Neighbourhood Plan and engage with Medway Council to develop policies supporting the guidelines.

### 4.1. Embed the masterplan and guidelines in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan

The objective of this report is to develop a series of design guidelines for development possibilities in Cliffe and Cliffe Woods.

The report can be used as evidence to support the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan (and its draft policies) where the analysis highlights relevant issues and opportunities that can be influenced by land use planning interventions.

The focus of this report has primarily been on important local character assets and urban design guidelines to be considered in future development proposals. These suggestions should be considered alongside other non-design interventions, such as exploring opportunities for supporting or restricting certain types of development/land uses and allocating the key sites identified for development. Any policies put forward must be capable of meeting the basic conditions (e.g. having regard to national policies and general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan).

### 4.2. Engage with the Council to develop policies supporting the proposals

The inputs from the Council's policy and development management specialists would be invaluable in advance of formal consultation and submission. The Steering Committee should consider how our recommendations can be transposed into policy through discussions with Medway Council and use the best practice guidance from Locality to prepare draft policies for consultation. Locality's 'Writing Planning Policies' guidance sets out how different planning policies are designed to achieve different things. The guide describes the three most common as:

**Generic** – a simple policy which applies universally to development across the entire Neighbourhood Plan area;

**Criteria based** – a policy with a series of requirements that should be met by development proposals. These can be set out as separate bullet points; and

**Site specific** – this is where a policy applies to particular areas of land. One of the most powerful tools for a Neighbourhood Plan is to allocate land for a particular type of development. As well as allocating land you can use your plan to set out the principles which need to be followed in developing a particular site. This might include specifying what needs to be covered in a design brief to accompany any planning application. If you have site specific policies then you need to include a clear map showing the location and boundaries.

Site specific allocations are the hardest to do well. They would normally include associated policy related to land uses, quantum of development, configuration and design.

The Steering Committee should check with the Local Planning Authority that their emerging preferred options are planning matters (i.e. suitable for inclusion as land use planning policy). Those that are not can be considered as community projects or neighbourhood infrastructure to be included within a delivery and implementation section of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### 4.3. Additional Recommendations

Many potential development sites are located next to or in close proximity with areas with environmental protection designations (Ramsar, Special Protection Areas, RSPB reserves), or within SSSI impact zones. Should such sites come forward for development, early liaison and consultation with relevant agencies and non-profits such as Natural England and the RSPB is encouraged to mitigate potential negative impacts on the ecosystem.





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