



EDAW | AECOM

Crawley

BASELINE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

May 2009



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EDAW | AECOM were commissioned by Crawley Borough Council (CBC) in December 2008 to undertake a rapid assessment of the existing character of the borough of Crawley. The study is complemented by the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey assessment of Crawley, by West Sussex County Council which explores the historic development of the town prior to its designation as a New Town in 1947.

The built up area of the borough of Crawley (excluding Gatwick Airport) has undergone a rapid survey to identify strategic character areas across the town. These character areas are described in more detail in part 2 of the report, with part 3 containing recommendations for areas of further study to inform policy making.

The methodology for the baseline assessment of character was based on the best practice guidance 'By Design' (DETR/CABE, 2000) which highlights the following objectives of good urban design:-

- Character
- Continuity and enclosure
- Public realm and boundaries
- Ease of movement
- Legibility

- Adaptability
- Diversity

A desk top review of mapping data and historic records was supported by on site survey and analysis.

Historic development

Crawley is located 30 miles due south of London, 20 miles due north of Brighton on the historic A23 route. The town today has a population of around 100,000 and is divided into 15 wards.

The area now covered by Crawley Borough Council has a long history of settlement dating back to the Neolithic period. Fifteenth century properties on the historic High Street reflect the role that Crawley played on the trading route between London and Shoreham. During the eighteenth century Crawley grew as a stop off point on the route to Brighton, and later as a commuter town to London following the arrival of the railway in 1848. West Green, Southgate, Ifield, Worth and Three Bridges have retained significant areas of pre-New Town character.

In 1947 Crawley was designated as the site for a New Town to take the overspill population from London following the destruction caused by the second world war. A masterplan was created by Anthony Minoprio in 1948 which proposed nine neighbourhoods ringing an expanded town centre. The first nine neighbourhoods were mostly complete by 1961 when a new

development plan was adopted. The second plan set out further areas of expansion including three neighbourhoods - Furnace Green, Broadfield and Bewbush which were constructed during the late 1960s to 1980s. The most recent, thirteenth neighbourhood, Maidenbower was designated in 1986 and built out during the late 1980s to 1990s.

Strategic character areas

Crawley urban area has been classified into eight strategic character areas based on urban and landscape character, predominant land use and development age. Each character type contains a number of distinct geographic areas spread across the borough that share similar characteristics. Details of each character area and sub-character area are provided in part 2 of this report.

The strategic character areas are as follows:-

Town Centre

Including the sub-areas of historic Crawley High Street, New Town centre and expansion, and the outer ring of commercial and community uses. These areas are grouped together due to their proximity to the town centre and /or focus on non-residential uses.

Historic Settlements

Historic residential villages, streets and hamlets with geographic sub-areas covering the historic hearts of Ifield and Worth. These areas retain a pre-Victorian character.

Pre New Town Expansion

Including geographic sub-areas covering Ifield, West Green, Southgate, Northgate, Three Bridges and Pound Hill / Worth where expansion in the Victorian and early part of the twentieth century occurred prior to the development of Crawley New Town.

New Town Phase 1a

This group of neighbourhoods (Langley Green, Ifield, West Green, Northgate, Southgate, and Three Bridges) were developed during the first five years of the New Town growth in line with the 1948 Minoprio masterplan. Sub-areas in this group are defined by the dominant landuse and residential typologies.

New Town Phase 1b

The second phase development of the original nine neighbourhoods identified in the Minoprio masterplan (Tilgate, Gossops Green) plus Furnace Green which was designed as a possible expansion area in the masterplan and designated for housing in 1956. Sub-areas in this group are defined by the dominant landuse and residential typologies.

New Town Phase 2 / Expansion of Phase 1

Extensions to phase 1 neighbourhoods (Pound Hill North, Furnace Green and Southgate West) share a similar character with two new neighbourhoods identified for development in 1961 – Bewbush and Broadfield. Sub-areas in this group are defined by the dominant landuse and residential typologies.

New Town Phase 3 / Regeneration

Covering Maidenbower, built out during the 1980s and the last of Crawley's current thirteen neighbourhoods. In addition this group includes recent infill and redevelopment on small sites around the town over the last two decades. Sub-areas in this group are defined by the dominant landuse and residential typologies.

Employment Areas

Covering Manor Royal and adjacent light industrial areas to the north of the town and land around Stephenson Way, Three Bridges. These areas are not covered in detail.

Recommendations & next steps

The rapid baseline character assessment of Crawley has identified eight strategic character areas, and a number of priorities for enhancement, protection or regeneration across the borough. These areas of opportunity could be subject to further detailed study and assessment to more fully understand the potential for them to deliver positive change, or their need for protection in the context of Crawley borough and the UK as a whole.

Priorities for regeneration and enhancement include:

- Bewbush and Broadfield - opportunities for residential and neighbourhood centre regeneration and potentially selective redevelopment.
- Town Centre - focusing on improvements to the quality of arrival points and the town centre edge, in addition to the Town Centre North redevelopment proposals.
- Three Bridges Station areas - focusing on improvement to the public realm and station surrounds.

Areas which may benefit from further study to understand whether they merit protection include:

- Queen's Square and surrounds, Town Centre
- Victorian 'new town' within Southgate neighbourhood
- West Green pre New Town expansion area
- Three Bridges pre New Town expansion area
- Hollybush Road and Green Lane in Northgate (as a proposed Area of Special Environmental Quality).

Across the borough as a whole, opportunities for enhancement to the existing character of Crawley focus on the New Town phase 1-2 neighbourhoods. Potential areas for future study across the neighbourhoods include:

- Neighbourhood centre public realm improvements and infill development
- Residential street security, parking and public realm improvements
- Assessment of the quality, function and value of amenity grassland across the borough to identify areas where function or value could be improved, and areas where other uses may be more appropriate.
- Identification of views over green spaces / rural hinterland which are of particular value or would benefit from development frontage.

Conclusions

Present day Crawley has a range of urban and landscape character areas reflecting the town's growth prior to and following its designation as a New Town in 1947. Pre New Town settlements including the villages of Ifield and Worth and the Victorian expansion areas around Three Bridges, West Green and Southgate stand out as areas of particular interest. Although many of these areas are already designated Conservation Areas there may be opportunities to expand the areas of protection to limit inappropriate development in the future.

The rapid growth of the town following the New Town designation and the dominant two storey housing typology presents a relatively monotonous character in many of the New Town neighbourhoods. Later neighbourhoods including Maidenbower are based on a maze of cul-de-sacs and small detached properties with poor pedestrian connectivity to the centre of Crawley. Priorities for regeneration in the New Town neighbourhoods include Bewbush and Broadfield, which suffer from poorly thought

through residential and commercial layouts. In the remaining New Town neighbourhoods there may be opportunity for infill development around the neighbourhood centres and to rethink the approach to amenity green space to encourage greater function and quality.

Crawley's green setting; its Country Parks, remnant moats, mill ponds, estate gardens, woodland corridors and waterways provide a distinctive and characterful quality. Many of the New Town neighbourhoods have failed to make best use of these spaces by developing housing which backs onto green areas creating poorly overlooked public spaces. Future expansion of the town that is planned to the South West should learn from the missed opportunities of earlier development and focus on the importance of the landscape as a key to delivering attractive and distinctive neighbourhoods.

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10. Recommendations & Conclusion

Bibliography

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

EDAW | AECOM were commissioned by Crawley Borough Council (CBC) in December 2008 to undertake a rapid character assessment of the Borough. This report contains the findings of the study.

1.1 Purpose of this study

Crawley Borough Council adopted a Corporate Heritage Strategy in June 2008, reflecting the fact that heritage has become a key priority for the Council. The Council identified the need for a baseline character assessment study to assess and evaluate the townscape and landscape character of Crawley at the present time to influence the Core Strategy Review and form a key part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework as a whole.

The study contains two parts: firstly an overall assessment of the town's character, and secondly a more detailed appraisal of individual character areas arranged by age and predominant land use.

This study is complemented by the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey assessment of Crawley which has been undertaken by consultants on behalf of West Sussex County Council (WSSCC), and which explores the historic development of the town prior to its designation as a New Town in 1947.

1.2 Study boundary

The character assessment covers the boundary identified in Figure 1

(essentially the built up area boundary taken from Core Strategy policy C1). The following should be noted:

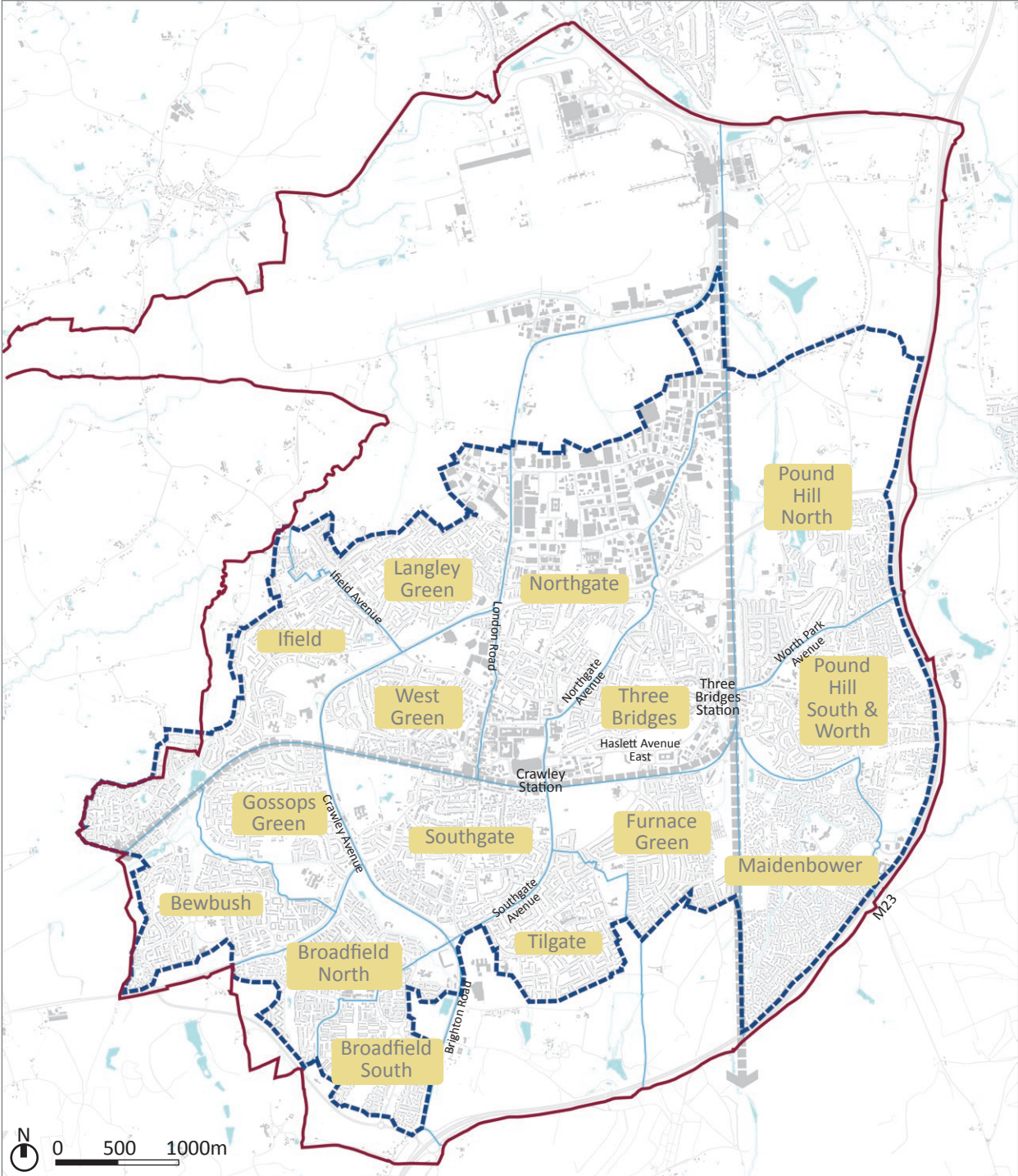
- Gatwick Airport and its environs are excluded from this study due to their distinct nature and detached location. It is considered that any significant development at Gatwick would be accompanied by an appraisal of its impact on the surrounding area.
- Manor Royal is only covered in the town wide analysis. Detailed review of this area is being undertaken by separate studies.
- Rural areas within the borough will be partly covered by the Historic Landscape Character Assessment which is being prepared by consultants on behalf of WSSCC, and are excluded from our study although their impact on the setting of the town is explored.

1.3 Assessing character

A checklist against which character has been assessed has been developed based on the seven objectives of urban design and eight aspects of development form identified in best practice guidance 'By Design' (DETR/CABE, 2000). In summary the following characteristics have been appraised:

- **Character:** policy designations, land uses, age, density, layout, urban grain, building heights, materials and overall quality.
- **Continuity and enclosure:** active and non-active frontage, vacant sites,

Fig 1: Study Area



- Borough boundary
- Built up area boundary (study area)
- Ward boundaries
- Ward names

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fronts and backs, continuity of built form, boundaries and relationship to the landscape.

- **Public realm and landscape:** street trees, public open space function and quality, private open space, historic landscape elements, parkland typologies and relationship to the rural edge.
- **Ease of movement:** connectivity, severance and barriers, street scale, traffic movement, pedestrian and cycle routes, car parking arrangements and access to public transport.
- **Legibility:** landmarks, views and vistas, topography and place hierarchy.
- **Adaptability:** flexibility of buildings and urban plots to accommodate change.
- **Diversity:** mix of uses, building and plot typologies.

1.4 Methodology

A desktop review of existing documentation on the planning and development of Crawley New Town, historic mapping, OS mapping and aerial photography was undertaken to identify strategic character areas of similar layout, age and land use.

This was underpinned by rapid field work in January 2009 covering the entire study area. A photographic record of the study area was taken using GPS linked camera.

Following data collection the boundaries of the strategic character areas were refined and sub-areas identified. The key characteristics of each area were assessed and potential strategic opportunities and threats identified. The results are presented in the following chapters through written description, diagrammatic illustration and photographs.

2. CRAWLEY STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Crawley is located 30 miles due south of London, 20 miles due north of Brighton on the historic A23 route. The town today has a population of around 100,000 and is divided into 15 wards.

2.1 History of development

Pre-1947 Settlements

The area now covered by Crawley Borough Council has a long history of settlement dating back to the Neolithic period. The Domesday Book of 1086 BC records the settlements of Ifield and Worth, with the first written mention of Crawley (Crauleia) dating from 1203 when a licence was granted to hold a weekly market. A number of historic buildings exist in the villages and on the High Street, including St Nicholas Church, Worth which is believed to date from between 950-1050 AD and has seen little alteration.

Crawley was an important location for the extraction of ore for iron working, (evidenced by over 100 Roman furnaces found in the Broadfield area) which fuelled the steady growth of the town in the medieval period. The town was on an important trading route between London and Shoreham. Inns dating from the 14th -16th centuries can be seen on the High Street for example, The George c1450.

Estates, farms and deer parks developed around Crawley, many featuring moated houses. Some historic estate parks have been retained as public parks for example at Worth Park and Tilgate Park and significant farmhouses and moats are evident at Mount Close, Pound Hill and Ewhurst Place, Ifield.

During the 18th century Crawley became popular as a stage coach stop-off on the route between Brighton and London. Ribbon development occurred during the Victorian period around the Three Bridges rail station and in West Green and Ifield. In 1848 the railway arrived in Crawley with the station located at the southern end of the High Street. This prompted

the growth of new commuter residential areas in the late 19th century, in particular in West Green and in new streets south of the rail line which became known as 'New Town' and today fall within the Southgate neighbourhood.

In the 1930s Gatwick Aerodrome opened nearby and by 1938 it was decided that a new bypass was needed to take the increased traffic travelling through the town. This was later incorporated into the New Town ring road.

Piecemeal growth continued up until the mid 1940s focusing on Ifield, West Green, Northgate, Pound Hill and Worth, Three Bridges and Southgate.

Figure 3 illustrates the historic development of Crawley from 1795 to 1932.

New Town growth

In January 1947, 6047 acres of land at the conjunction of the counties of Surrey, West Sussex and East Sussex were designated as the site for the creation of Crawley New Town, under the 1946 New Town Act. The designated area included the existing small town of Crawley and the neighbouring villages of Ifield and Three Bridges which were to be merged together by the new development.

Crawley was one of eight new towns created at this time in the countryside surrounding London, to take the overspill population from the bombed and overcrowded capital and provide an opportunity for new jobs and homes in an attractive environment.

The 1948 Master Plan for Crawley New Town prepared by Anthony Minoprio on behalf of the Crawley Development Corporation was approved by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in February 1950 (illustrated in Figure 2). The outline plan covered 4000 acres and proposed nine neighbourhoods, six of which were extensions of existing areas of settlement and retained the majority of existing houses. The

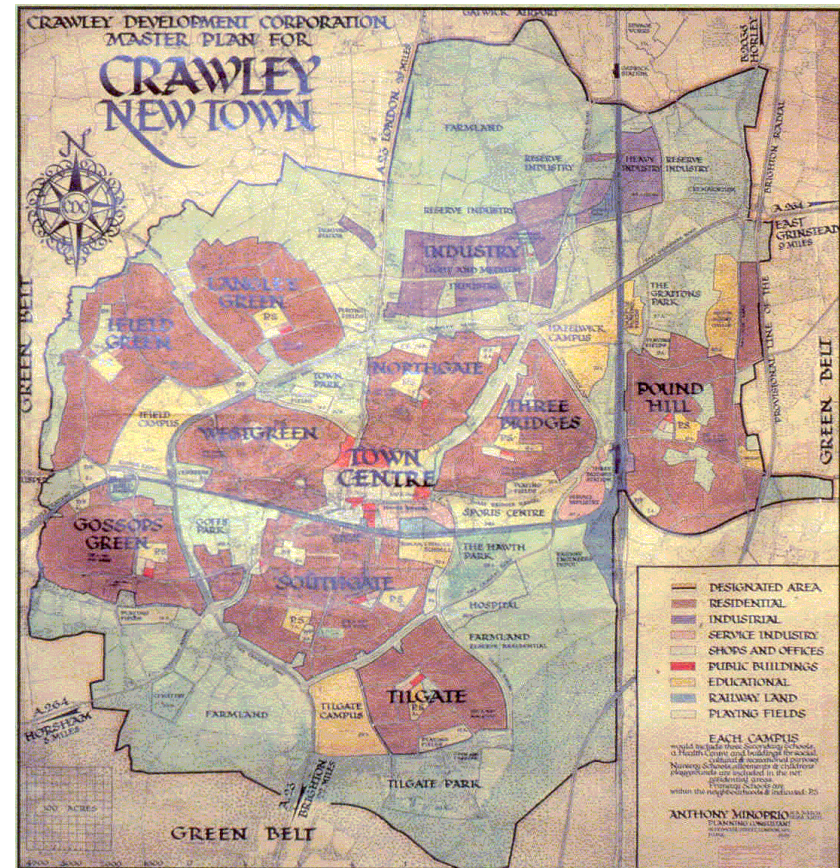
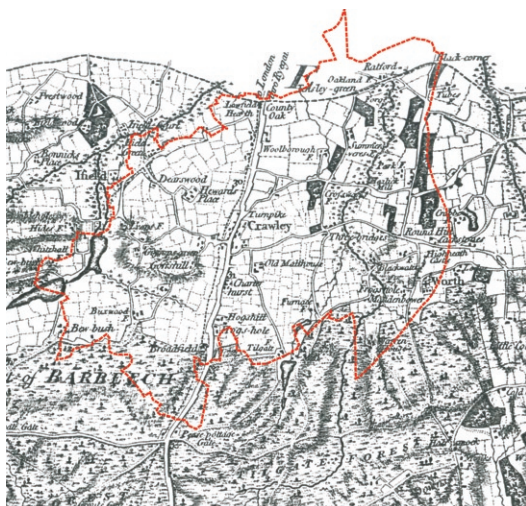
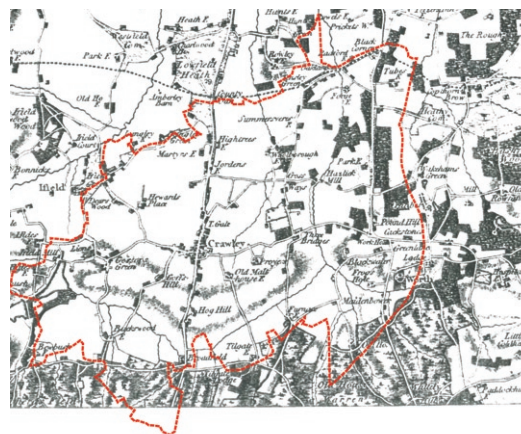


Figure 2: Minoprio 1948 masterplan for Crawley New Town

Fig 3a: Historic Development - wider area



1795 plan with 2009 built up area boundary superimposed



1813 plan with 2009 built up area boundary superimposed



1948 plan with 2009 built up area boundary superimposed



1874 plan of the Town Centre



1899 plan of the Town Centre



1932 plan of the Town Centre

Fig 3b: Historic Development - New Town



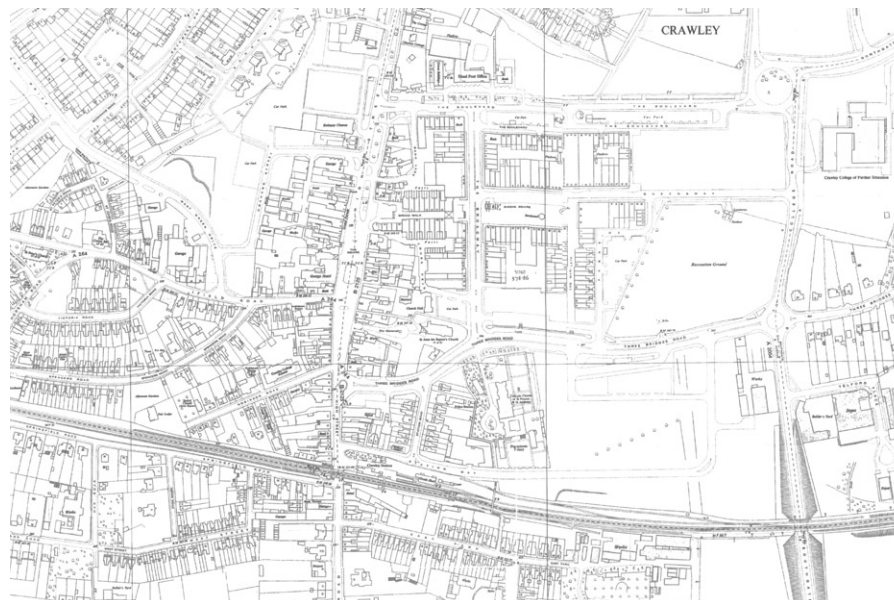
1947 aerial photograph



A visit by prospective residents in 1950 (taken from 'A History of Crawley' by Peter Gwynne).



1946 plan of the Town Centre



1961 plan of the Town Centre showing Queen's Square completed and The Boulevard laid out.

neighbourhoods were to ring the historic Crawley High Street which was to be linked to a new town centre. The town would be divided into five outer neighbourhoods and four inner neighbourhoods by the Crawley ring road, and neighbourhoods were separated by green corridors and radial roads. To the north an industrial area (Manor Royal) was designated. The plan was designed to increase the town's population to 50,000 with the remaining New Town land reserved for future expansion or designated as Green Belt.

Each neighbourhood was designed around a neighbourhood centre with local retail, pub, church and primary school. Secondary schools were located on the ring road. Houses were provided hand in hand with employment for migrants to the town and a high proportion were subsidised by the Commission for New Towns.

The original nine neighbourhoods (and approximate dates of construction commencement and completion) are:

1. West Green 1949 - 54
2. Northgate 1951 - 55
3. Three Bridges 1951 - 55
4. Langley Green 1951 - 56
5. Pound Hill 1952 - 56
6. Ifield 1953 - 57
7. Southgate (east) 1955 - 57
8. Tilgate 1956 - 58
9. Gossops Green 1958 - 61

Construction of the Manor Royal industrial area commenced by 1951 and plots were developed out throughout the 1950-1980s.

The town centre including the main shopping area of Queen's Square was completed by 1958 based on a plan by A G Sheppard. Civic buildings north of The Boulevard were completed during the 1950s and 60s.

In 1961 a development plan covering Crawley was produced by West Sussex County Council which identified expansion locations to take the town's population from 54,000 to 70,000. It identified areas in Pound Hill, Southgate, and a new neighbourhood in East Tilgate (which became Furnace Green) on land identified for expansion in the original masterplan.

10. Furnace Green 1968- 80s

In addition, the 1961 plan identified two new neighbourhoods to the south west of Crawley on greenbelt land.

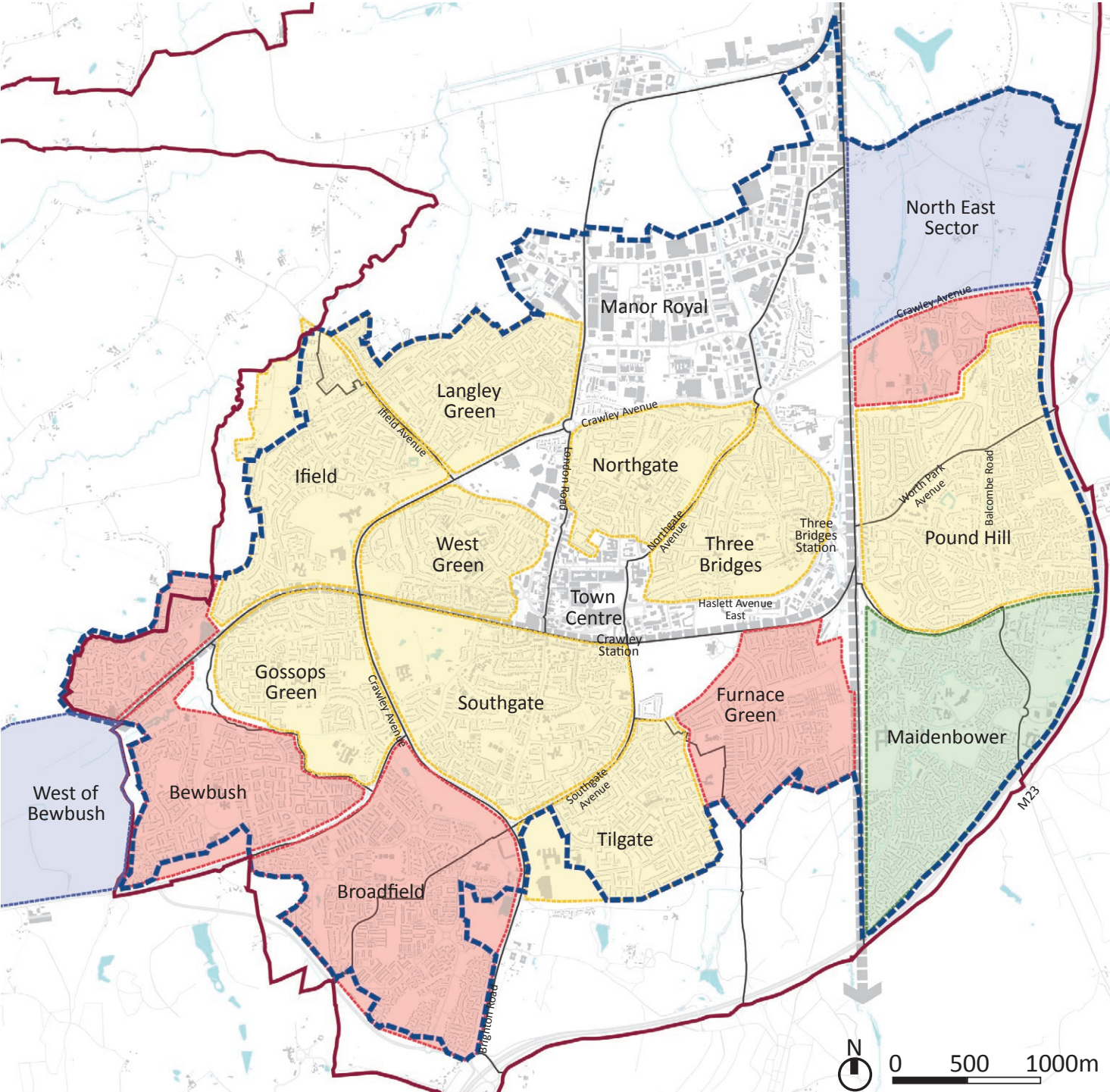
11. Broadfield 1969 - 80s
12. Bewbush 1973 - 80s

The neighbourhoods continued to be built out during the 1970s and 80s with infill in West Green including the new Crawley Hospital, completion of private developments in Pound Hill including Crabbet Park in the early 1980s, and in Bewbush at Hyde Drive.

In 1986 the most recent neighbourhood was designated, on land to the south of Pound Hill between the railway and M23 corridors.

13. Maidenbower 1986 - 90s

Fig 4: Neighbourhood Planning



- Borough boundary
- Built up area boundary (study area)
- 9 Original Neighbourhoods (planned 1948)
- 1961 development plan
- 1986 extension
- Potential future expansion areas



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2.2 Future growth

Planning for two new neighbourhoods is underway. The West of Bewbush neighbourhood proposals have been prepared as a Joint Area Action Plan with Horsham District Council and were approved following an examination in April 2009. The plan proposes 2500 new dwellings on Greenfield land to the West of Bewbush and north of the A264, with a new neighbourhood centre and employment uses.

The second new neighbourhood is proposed on Greenfield land to the north of Pound Hill / A264, west of the M23 motorway, east of the industrial area and including part of Tinsley Green, referred to as the North East Sector. The land is identified as having capacity to deliver up to 2700 dwellings and 500sqm of employment provision around a new neighbourhood centre, but it is currently on hold due to constraints relating to the possible expansion of Gatwick Airport and the corresponding impact on noise corridors.

Other major developments set to change the character of Crawley include the Town Centre North redevelopment. This scheme will see large scale change to the area around The Boulevard, Queen's Square, the northern end of the High Street and Kilmead impacting on New Town and pre-New Town areas. The area is identified in Policy TC1 of the Core Strategy for a major mixed use retail led development (around 50,000sqm of comparison retail floorspace), which will include new office accommodation, new town hall and around 800 new dwellings. A supplementary planning document has been prepared to guide development.

2.3 Social characteristics

The index of multiple deprivation is a commonly used measure of area level deprivation. The IMD combines 37 different indicators which cover specific aspects or dimensions of deprivation: Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education, Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment and Crime. These are weighted and combined to create the overall IMD 2007 Rank.

Overall the majority of the borough of Crawley is in the top 50% of the ranks across England. This is particularly prominent in the Pound Hill North, South and Worth wards on the eastern side of the borough. The south west corner of the borough is the most deprived area, particularly Broadfield North and South wards and Bewbush ward. The Income Rank follows a very similar pattern of deprivation across the borough as the Overall Rank. In fact the only dimension of the Overall Rank that dramatically differs is Barriers to Housing and Services. Three super output areas* in the borough fall in the 5% most deprived in the UK. One in each of; Broadfield North, Broadfield South and Pound Hill North wards.

2.4 Infrastructure

The layout and extent of the town to the east and south is defined by major transport infrastructure. To the east of the town the M23 forms a well defined boundary. To the north, Gatwick Airport marks the northern extent of Crawley Borough.

Within the town, the east-west railway line to Horsham and north-south line between London and Brighton divide the town into three portions and create barriers to movement.

The ring road is a divisive element originally designed to encourage easy vehicle movement to the industrial areas avoiding the town centre, but as a result causes severance and difficulties to pedestrian movement between the outer neighbourhoods, the inner neighbourhoods and the town centre. Minoprio recommended the use of ramped subways or light bridges to cross the ring road which were used and have since been shown to create uncomfortable pedestrian environments.









Access into the majority of neighbourhoods is via a number of looping neighbourhood distributor roads dividing the neighbourhood into smaller, discrete residential areas, served by minor roads.

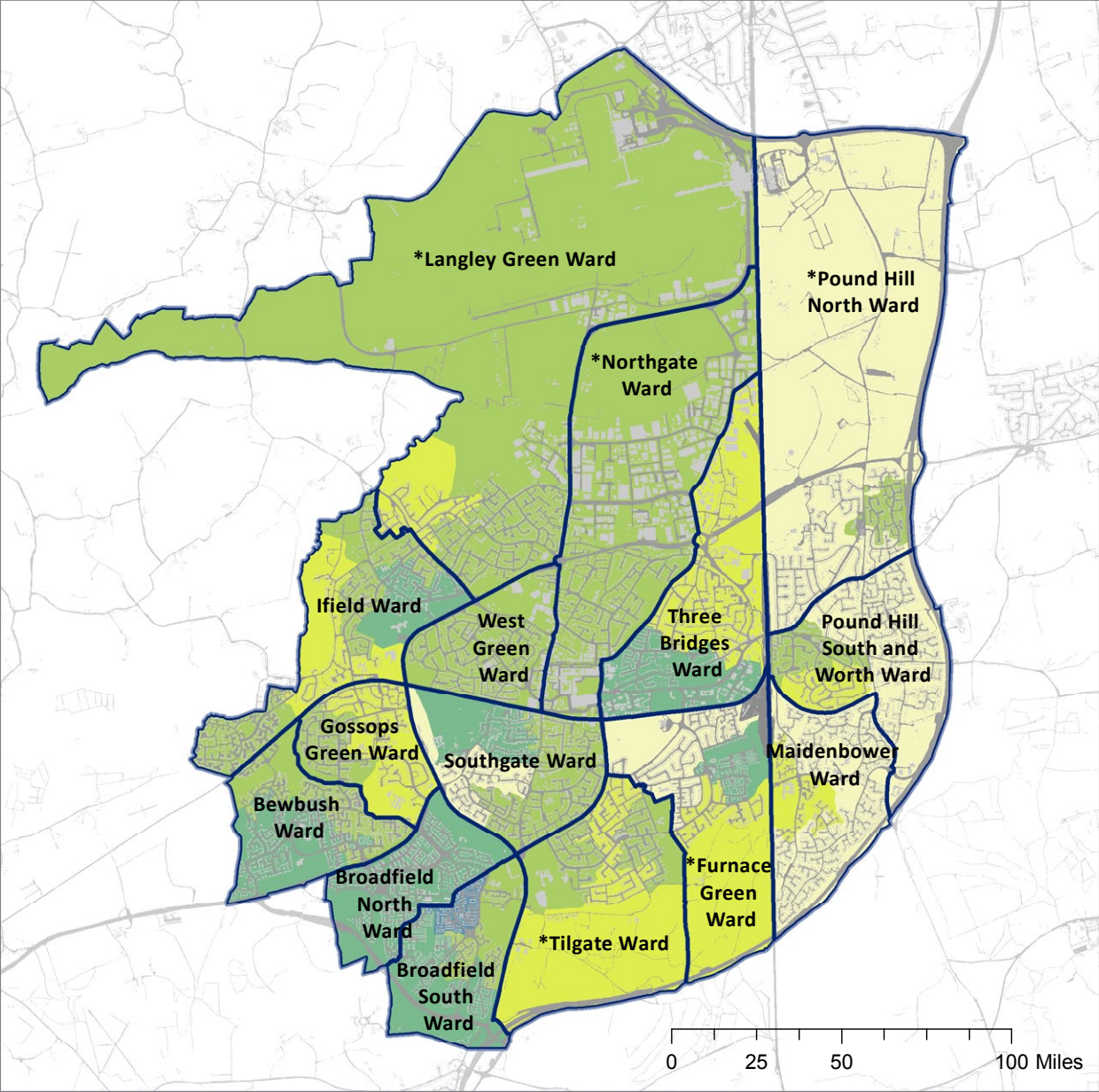
* Lower Layer Super Output Areas were built from groups of Output Areas (typically four to six) and were constrained by the Standard Table wards used for 2001 Census outputs. They have a minimum size of 1,000 residents and 400 households, but average 1,500 residents. Measures of proximity (to give a reasonably compact shape) and social homogeneity (type of dwelling and nature of tenure) were also included. They overcome some spatial issues that are a function of output areas and wards. They enable comparison of areas of a similar size nationally, where as wards vary dramatically across the country. Also LSOA's are much better at identifying the pockets of deprivation that are a feature of urban areas, which can be overlooked if only looking at data at ward level. They help to address some of the disclosure control issues, which can result from using smaller geographies. (Office For National Statistics, 2009).

Fig 5: Index of Multiple Deprivation - Overall Rank 2007

* Please Note: High proportion of non-residential uses in these geographic areas

Legend

-  Wards
- IMD Rank 2007
-  <5% - Most Deprived
-  5-10%
-  11-20%
-  21-40%
-  41-60%
-  61-80%
-  81%+ - Least Deprived



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Fig 6: Highways Structure

- Road Type
- Motorway
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - Local

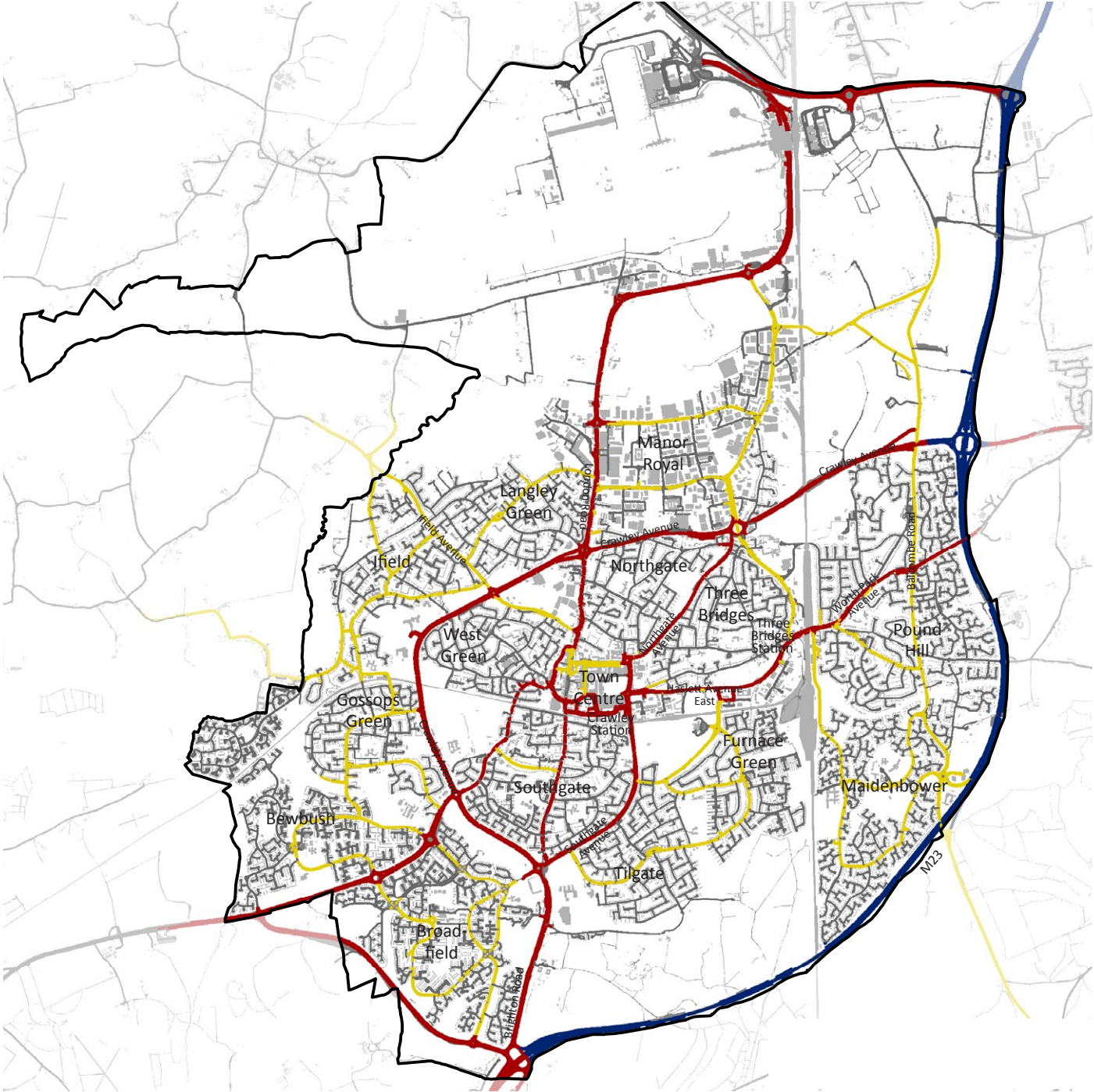
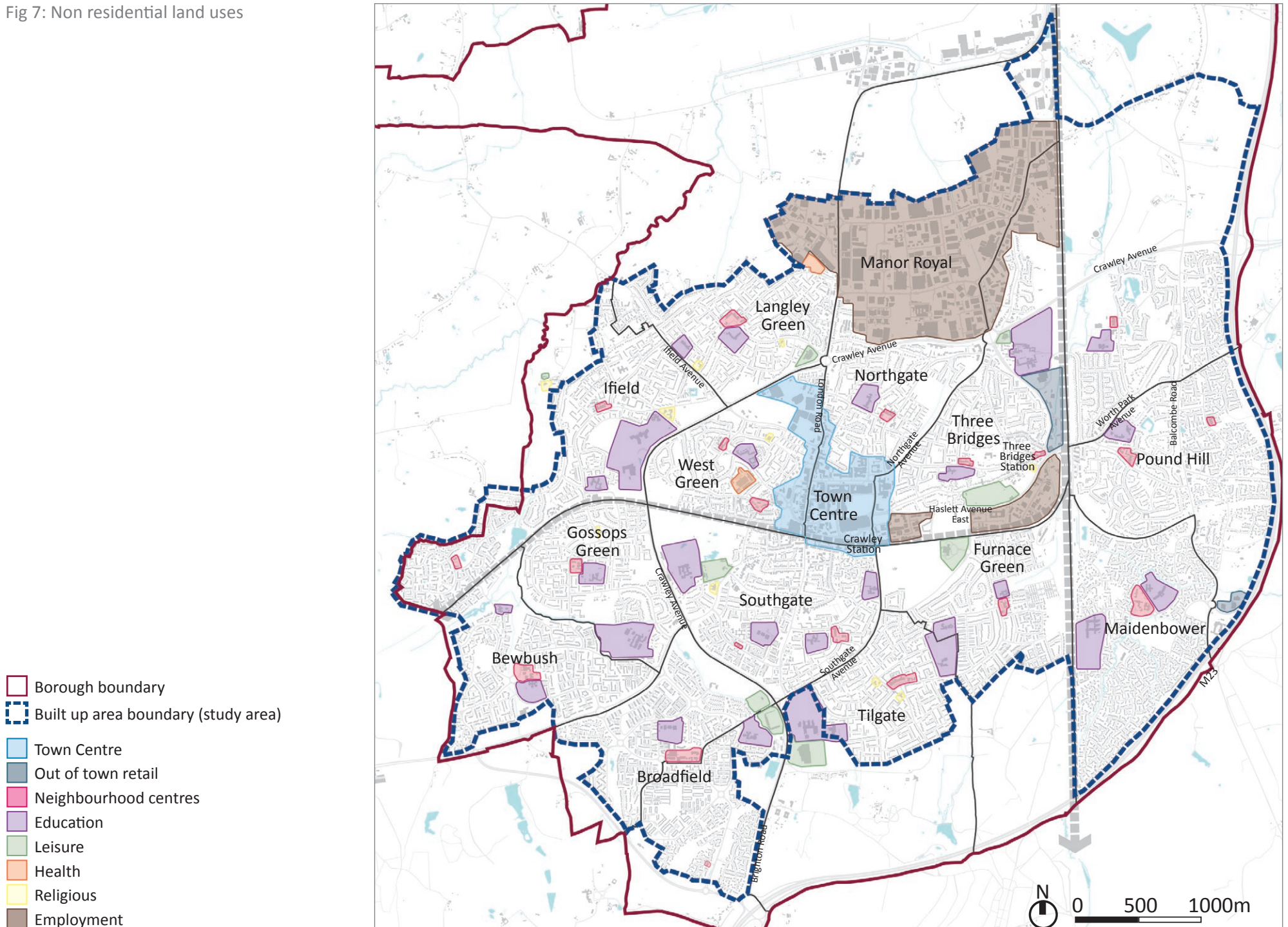


Fig 7: Non residential land uses



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2.5 Land use mix

The segregated arrangement of land uses in the Minoprio masterplan is generally intact i.e.

- Neighbourhoods are arranged in two rings around the town centre, and remain exclusively residential aside from the neighbourhood centre retail and community facilities.
- Employment uses are predominantly located in the town centre (office space), in the large Manor Royal industrial estate, and Stephenson Way, Three Bridges (light industry).
- Retail, civic and town-wide community facilities such as the library and Central Sussex College are located in the town centre/ town centre edge. Recent proposals for the redevelopment of the town centre aim to increase the mix of uses in the town centre including the introduction of a significant element of residential.
- Neighbourhoods, the town centre and Manor Royal industrial area are separated by green corridors, distributor roads and rail lines.

2.6 Residential neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood layout

Five broad types of residential layout are apparent in Crawley and are typical of the time at which they were designed and built:

1. **Medieval villages** – layouts are organic and loose, arranged around a church, large house or green and served by lanes e.g. Ifield and Worth.
2. **Pre New Town** – Victorian and Edwardian ribbon development of houses fronting the main streets or in a linear grid pattern of new streets e.g. West Green and Southgate.
3. **Early New Town (1950-60s)** – garden suburb influenced layouts based around irregular, curving perimeter blocks with houses fronting the street

and gardens to the rear, often with a cul-de-sac opening up the centre of the block for housing e.g. Northgate.

4. **Later New Town (mid 1960s-70s)** – Radburn* influenced layouts typical of many 1960-70s Council estate developments in the UK. Neighbourhood sub-areas are bounded by main roads, served by a network of dead-end minor roads, closes and cul-de-sacs. Houses often back onto the roads and are arranged in right angled corner blocks in a variety of orientations. Pedestrian routes are often segregated from the vehicle routes, poorly overlooked and suffer from anti-social behaviour, but are the only way to travel across the neighbourhood in a direct manner. E.g. Cowfold Close, Bewbush and Broadfield.

5. **1970-90s** – layouts have long curving distributor roads off which a multitude of winding cul-de-sacs serve property fronts. Typical of 1980s and 90s development across the UK and based on car based travel rather than direct pedestrian routes e.g. Maidenbower.

Housing type and tenure

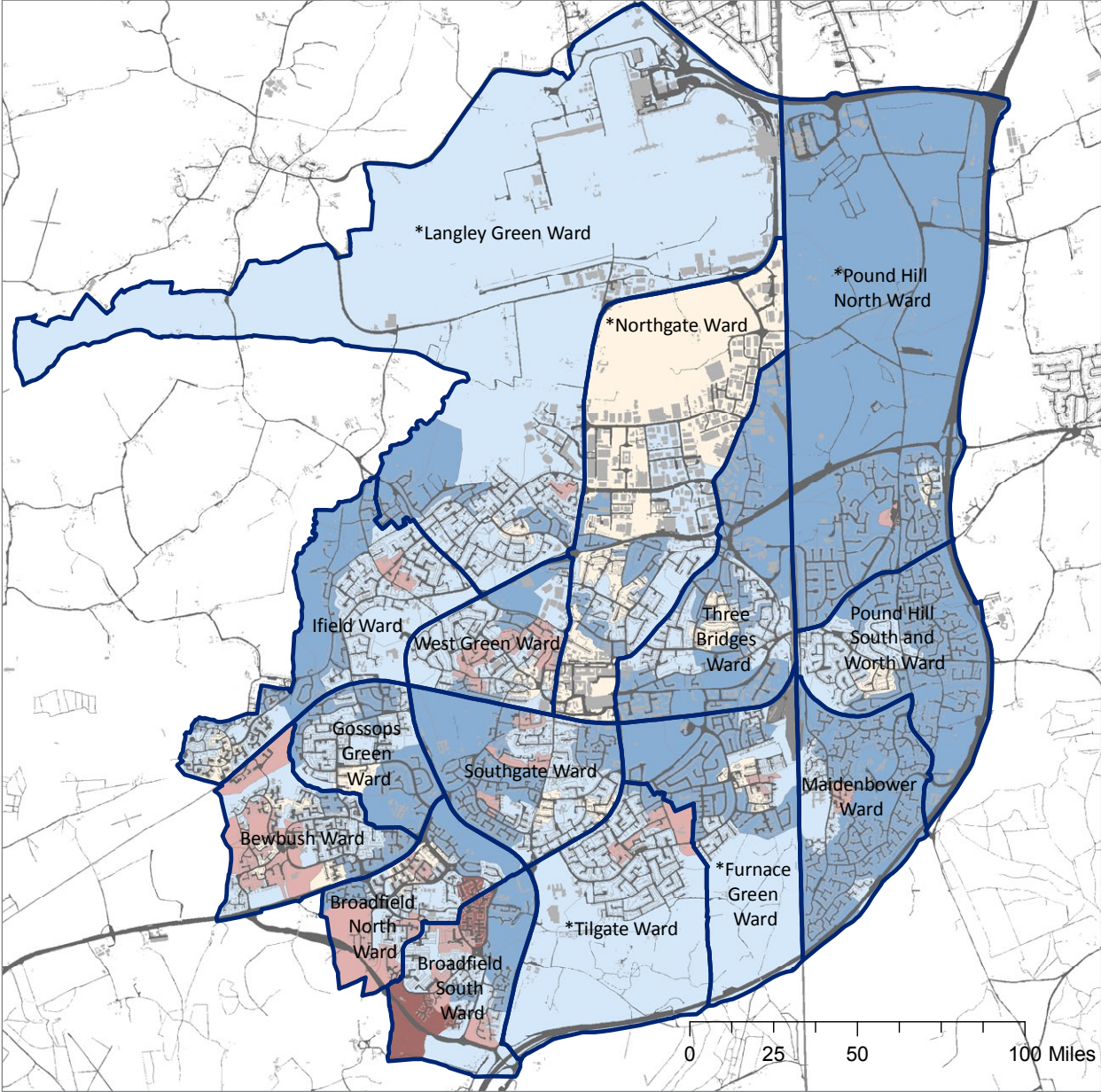
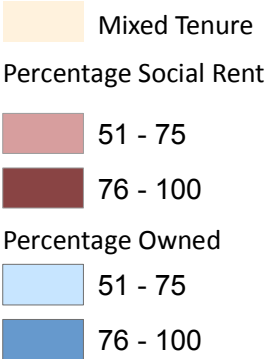
The 2001 census figures revealed that Crawley's overall housing mix was generally focused on family housing with gardens and 3 bedrooms. 46% of properties were terrace, 15% detached, 21% semi-detached and 18% flats across the whole of the borough, (Office for National Statistics, Census 2001). This low proportion of flatted accommodation throughout the town reflects the original mix of housing promoted by the New Town masterplan which focused heavily on building 3-bedroom housing with gardens for families. This data is reflected in figures 8 and 9.

Across the neighbourhoods there is variation: Pound Hill North, South and Maidenbower and areas of Three Bridges, Ifield and Gossops Green are predominantly detached / semi-detached properties, whereas Bewbush, Tilgate and Broadfield are predominantly terraced properties.

* Radburn layouts were inspired by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright's 1929 Garden City in Radburn, New Jersey. The style became popular in the UK in the 1950-70s for its cost efficiency in an era of mass public housing need. Complete separation of pedestrian and traffic ways is at the heart of the Radburn ideal, typically resulting in a series of introverted superblocks moving away from traditional grid and perimeter block townscapes.

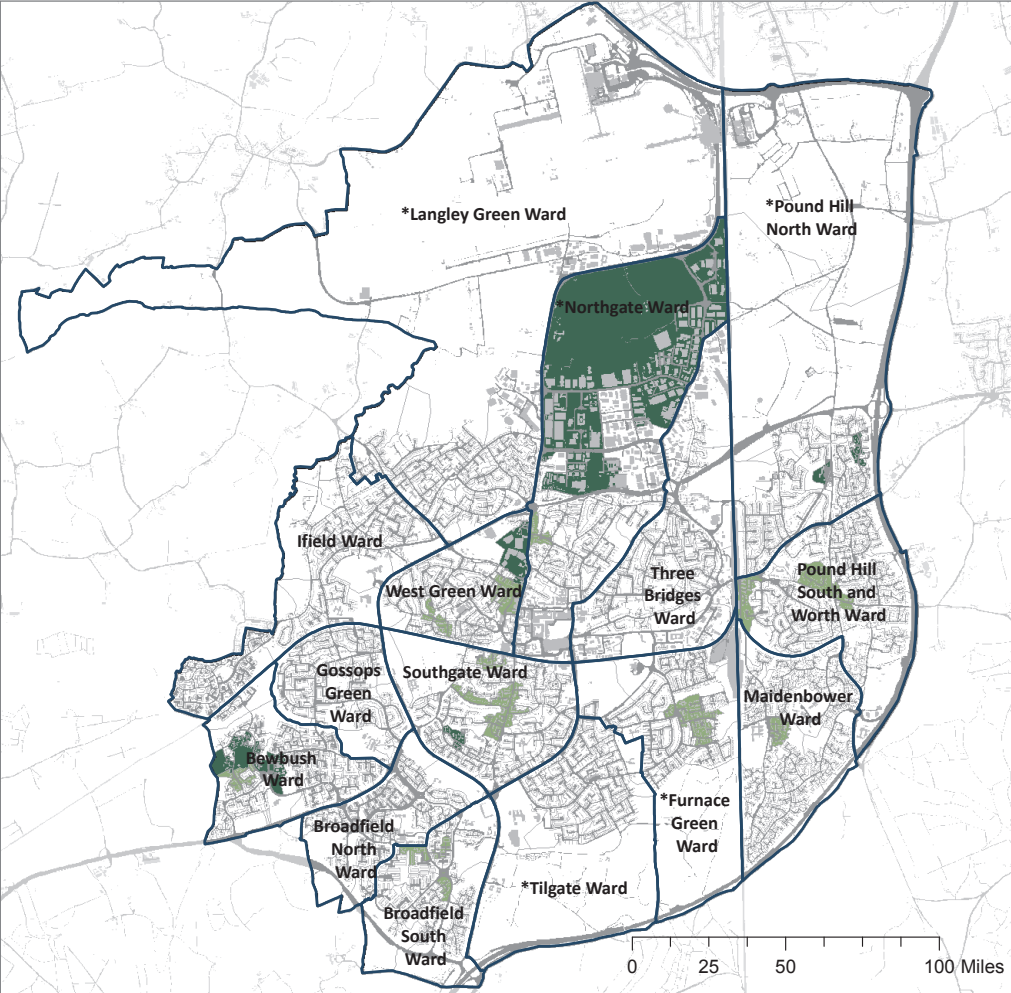
Fig 8: Housing Tenure (Census 2001)
(by Lower Level Super Output Area)

* Please Note: High proportion of non-residential uses in these geographic areas

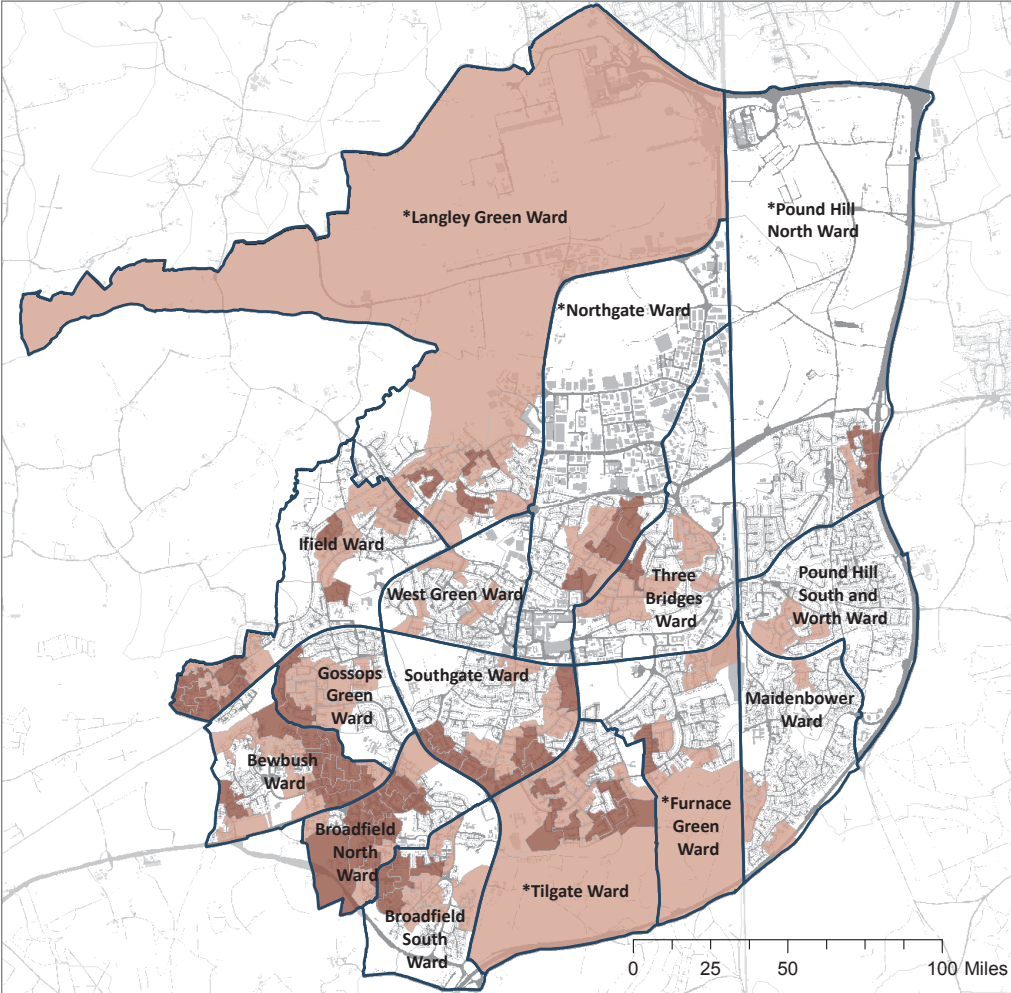


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Fig : Predominant Housing Type (Census 2001)
(by lower level super output area)



Predominantly Flats

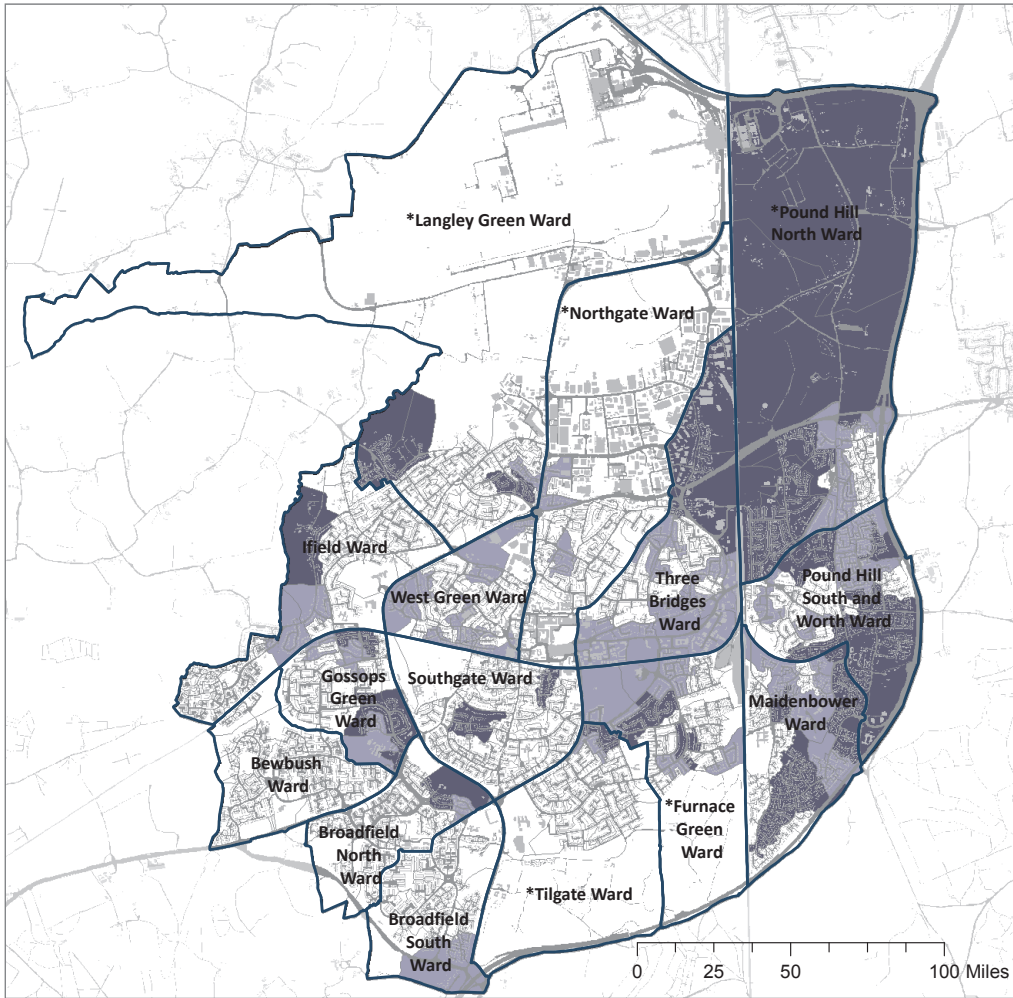


Predominantly Terrace

Percent Flats
 50.1 - 75.0
 75.1 - 100.0

* Please Note: High proportion of non-residential uses in these geographic areas

Percent Terraced
 50.1 - 75.0
 75.1 - 100.0

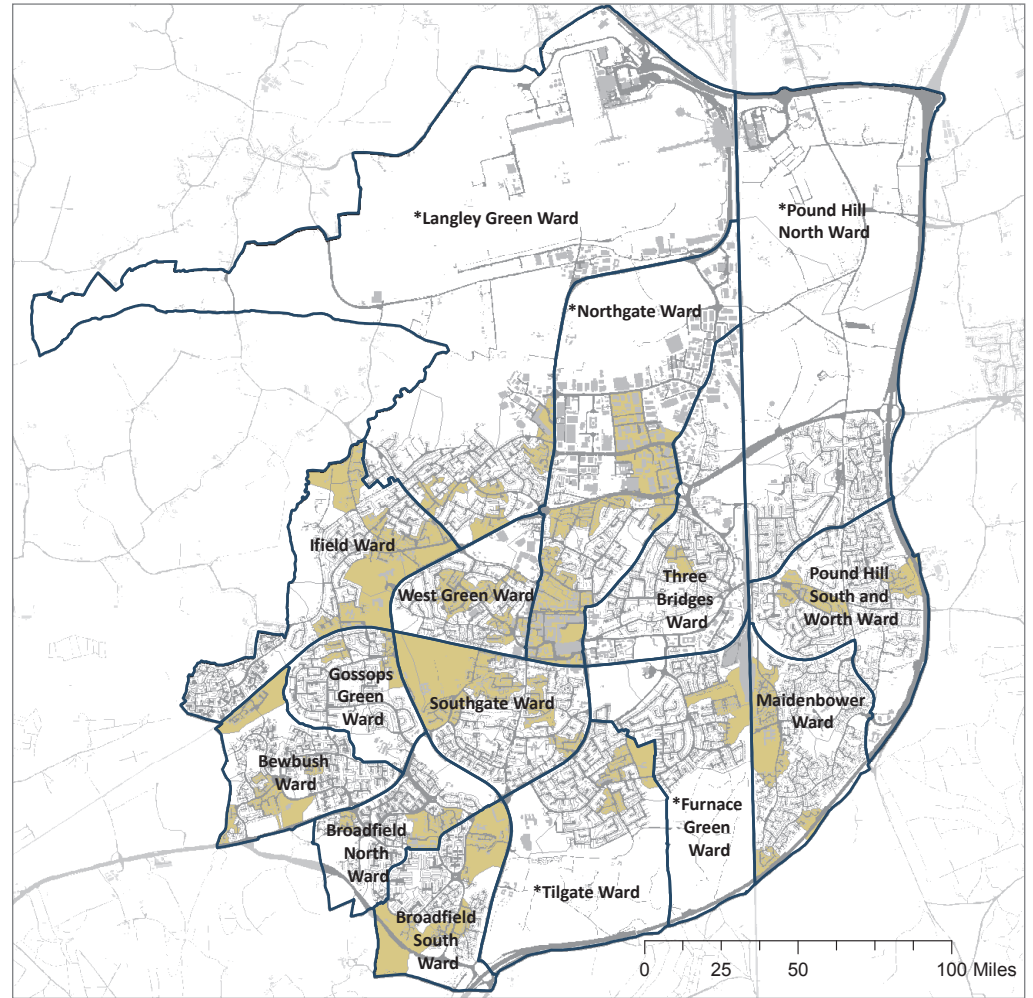


Predominantly Detached / Semi-detached

Percent Detached/Semi Detached



* Please Note: High proportion of non-residential uses in these geographic areas



Mixed



However, over the last decade the picture has changed with a shift towards delivery of small dwellings reducing the validity of the census data as a reflection of Crawley 2009. The emerging West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Assessment reports that the current housing offer in Crawley focuses on 3-bed terraced properties and flats. (GVA Grimley, West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Stakeholder Workshop, January 2009).

The 2001 census reveals that high levels of home ownership follow a similar pattern as high percentage of detached homes. The Broadfield North and South wards have the highest percentage of social rented homes in the district. Borough wide tenure split is 70% privately owned, 24% social rented, and 6% rented, (Office for National Statistics, Census 2001).

In comparison to the following historic split:

‘In 1966 about 64% of households in Crawley were tenants of the Commission for the New Towns, 29% were owner occupiers and 7% were local authority tenants.’ (Gwynn, History of Crawley).

Housing character

Pre-New Town housing in medieval and Victorian growth areas including Ifield, Worth, West Green, Southgate and Three Bridges has a character distinct from the later New Town growth neighbourhoods. Houses are generally brick built with pitched roofs and may make use of red tile hanging to front elevations and timber cladding. Housing typologies are varied and range from smaller Victorian artisan terraces (West Green) to larger Victorian /Edwardian villas and terraces (Three Bridges) and individual, detached pre-Victorian houses within the villages of Ifield and Worth. There is variety in height, set-back and roofline but houses generally front the street and form perimeter blocks creating a legible urban form. Parking is either on plot or on street and in more tightly knit areas such as West Green parking can be difficult to accommodate successfully.

The variation in housing types and age of properties; and the urban grain of these areas creating either a looser village character (Ifield) or fine grained urban character (West Green) give these areas a distinctive appeal. They provide a historic link to pre New Town Crawley and are attractive residential environments.

New Town housing in comparison is more monotonous in style and typology with the majority of housing being of two storeys in a loose urban grain with considerable land given over to amenity grassland onto road frontages. Neighbourhood centres are generally also low rise (2-3 storeys) and the housing layouts or style increase little in stature or density on the approach to these centres of activity resulting in a lack of place hierarchy and legibility. Some neighbourhood centres (eg. Broadfield) have flats within the development or adjacent but these are typically medium - low rise.

New Town housing is generally brick built and may have timber cladding, or coloured clad panels below windows. Roofs are shallow pitched or flat, and the arrangement to the street is either perimeter block or more commonly a loose geometric arrangement of short runs of terraces with large set-backs and grassed verges, often with a confused arrangement of property fronts and backs.

Parking in the New Town areas may be on street or driveway but rear garage courts are also common. In some areas front gardens have been paved to provide private parking while in other areas grassed verges have become informal parking areas degrading the character of the street environment.

Although there are no high rise residential towers in Crawley, there are a number of stand-alone flatted developments that due to their scale and landscape setting form landmarks – for example Milton Mount flats overlooking Worth Park.

In other areas flats are 2-3 storey and sit within the street setting adjacent to housing.