

PART 3: RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

10 RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

10.1 INTRODUCTION

EDAW | AECOM were commissioned by Crawley Borough Council to undertake a rapid baseline assessment of the character of present day Crawley comprising a desk top study, development of a rapid assessment toolkit, field assessments and photography, GIS survey and data capture and the production of a report.

Eight strategic character areas covering the borough were identified comprising:

- Town Centre
- Historic Settlements
- Pre New Town Expansion
- New Town Phase 1a
- New Town Phase 1b
- New Town Phase 2 / Expansion of Phase 1
- New Town Phase 3 / Regeneration
- Employment Areas.

Summary of recommendations

The detailed analysis of the town centre, historic villages and thirteen New Town neighbourhoods has revealed a number of areas that would benefit from enhancement, additional protection or regeneration/redevelopment. This chapter pulls the findings together to identify priority areas across the borough which would benefit from further detailed study.

Three areas offer significant potential for enhancement or regeneration. These are the Town Centre, Broadfield / Bewbush, and on a smaller scale the Three Bridges Station area (Refer to figure 31 for details of the locations).

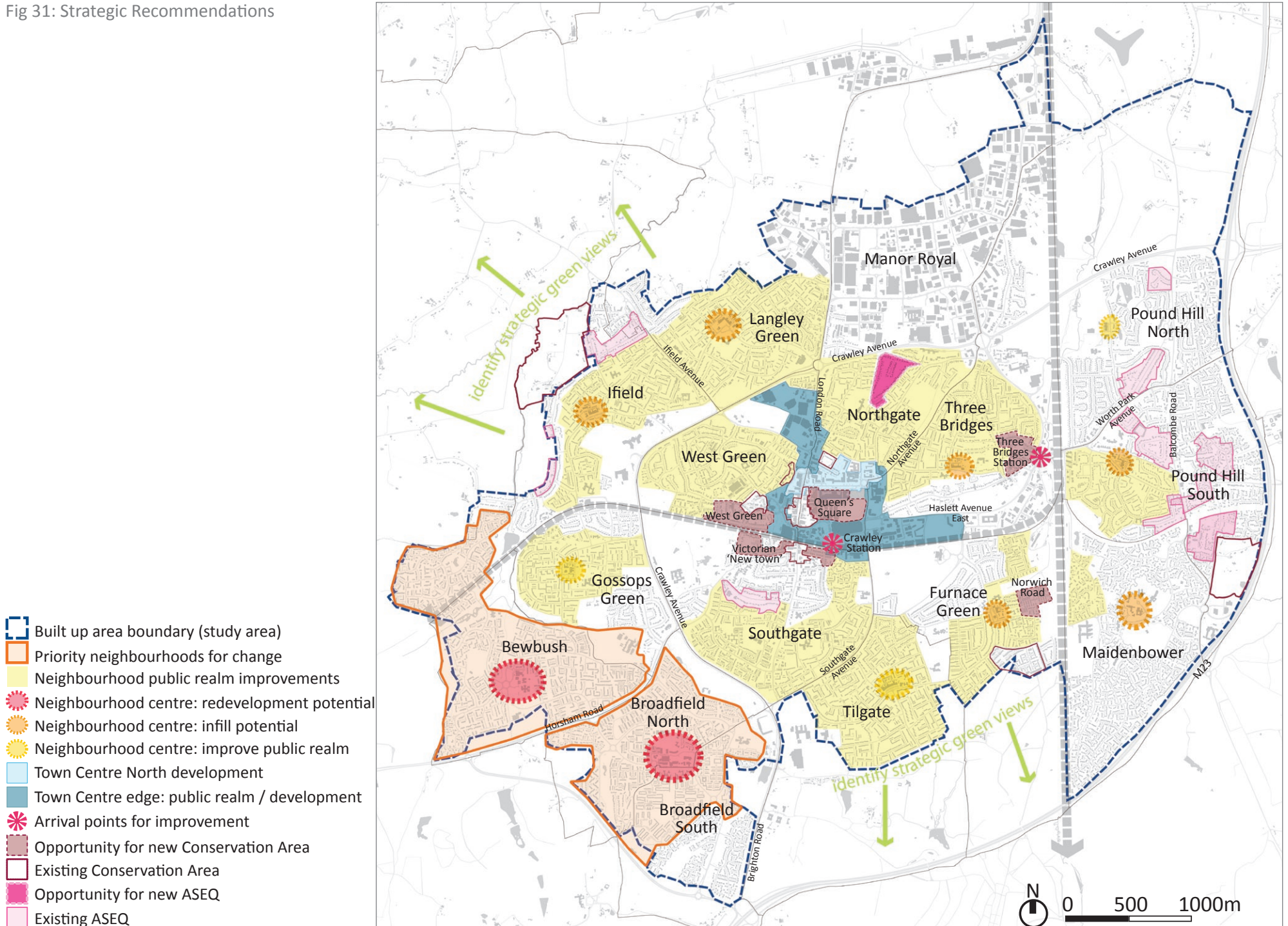
10.1 Bewbush and Broadfield

These neighbourhoods were built during the 1970s and contain a number of experimental housing layout styles which depart from the traditional arrangement of streets and perimeter block development, and instead separate pedestrian and vehicle traffic, creating cul-de-sacs and semi-public amenity grassed spaces within the development block. The creation of poorly overlooked walkways, abundance of semi-public open space, parking courts and a lack of vehicle access to properties is a management burden and encourages anti-social behaviour.

Neighbourhood regeneration

Bewbush and Broadfield could benefit from regeneration delivering a greater scale of change than in other neighbourhoods. The existing low

Fig 31: Strategic Recommendations



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density layouts with internal poorly used amenity spaces within the pedestrianised layouts mean that opportunities for infill development are relatively limited because the available space is often within the centre of a loose block structure. Selective clearance of poor quality properties within the neighbourhoods could have the potential to open up these internal sites and bring greater land forward for development than piecemeal infill development. The resulting development could increase the mix of housing types and introduce a more traditional street layout based on sound urban design principles.

This approach would need to be underpinned by a more detailed regeneration masterplanning exercise including a study of the structural quality of existing housing, ownership patterns, the potential for sites to deliver change through the release of land for development and importantly, the priorities of the local community.

Neighbourhood Centres

The neighbourhood centres of Bewbush and Broadfield offer potential for regeneration to overcome the existing flawed layouts, poor connectivity to the adjacent residential areas (Broadfield) and poor architectural quality. Recent residential development in Broadfield has gone some way to introduce increased activity into the centre but the remaining parade is dominated by service areas, car parking and poor quality retail parade architecture and has further potential for redevelopment.

The Heart of Bewbush regeneration project will deliver new sports, housing and community facilities in Bewbush neighbourhood centre and development on site is underway and will bring positive change to the neighbourhood. Care should be taken to avoid reinforcing the existing poor layout and increasing the dominance of highways infrastructure. A more fundamental change to the neighbourhood centre in the longer term could deliver greater benefits in terms of increased retail and employment space, an increase in pedestrian priority and the creation of an attractive focus for the community.

10.2 Town Centre

Proposals for the town centre are covered in detail within the adopted Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document. The character review of the town centre has identified a number of priorities which could help inform the more detailed proposals for the town centre as they come forward and which support the findings of the SPD.

Improve connections

Pedestrian links from the historic high street across Haslett Avenue to the south and to the east into the New Town Centre are poor. The dominance of the highway at Haslett Avenue abruptly terminates the high street, while the tired appearance of the Broadwalk on the walk from the Queen's Square acts as a discouragement to visitors. Detailed study of visitor movement patterns could identify new routes and opportunities for wayfinding signage to encourage a wider retail loop within the town centre as a whole taking in the historic High Street.

Within the High Street itself the public realm is tired and uninspiring and would benefit from improvement to create an appropriate setting for the historic townscape. A unified approach to street and public realm design including a coherent palette of materials and street furniture would be appropriate and help improve the overall quality and appearance of the town centre.

Prioritise arrival points:

The railway station is a key arrival point for visitors to the town, but the immediate environment outside the railway station is of particularly poor quality. Staggered, guard railed pedestrian crossings over Station Way and the blank facade of the County Mall are unwelcoming and the route to the town centre is uninviting and unclear. The public realm includes a mixture of incoherent furniture and surface finishes, street clutter, and areas of bare ground. Improvements to this route from the station past the bus station into Queen's Square could have a major positive impact on visitor

perceptions of Crawley.

Detailed studies could assess the potential to reduce the dominance of the highway, to increase pedestrian priority and potentially release land for development to create a new street frontage in this area. The bus station would also benefit from improved public realm and built frontage.

Town centre edge

The town centre edge is separated from the town centre core by Station Way, Haslett Avenue and College Road and acts as a barrier between the town centre and residential neighbourhoods to the south, east and west. The area contains a number of important community related uses and is poorly connected to the town centre core. There is potential for considerable enhancement in this area through a programme to increase pedestrian priority, remove unnecessary highways clutter, plant street trees and introduce single stage crossings to reduce the emphasis on car based travel as the means to reach the town centre and facilities.

Rethinking the arrival experience in parallel with enhancements to the public realm, the large plots, and amount of space given over to surface car parking present opportunities for redevelopment on a site by site basis. Redevelopment could introduce a denser, finer grained scale more suitable to a town centre location and allowing better connections to adjacent neighbourhoods in this transitional area.

Protection and enhancement of the New Town plan

Queen's Square formed the core of the 1950s New town centre design and alongside The Boulevard and Broadwalk forms a 'set-piece' of 1950s town planning. Although the northern part of Queen's Square will be impacted upon by the town centre north proposed redevelopment, the Council may wish to consider some level of protection for Queen's Square as a reflection of its importance as a key element of the New Town masterplan.

Within the square itself the upper storeys of the 1960s blocks are tired and would benefit from refurbishment. The public realm could be sensitively redesigned to introduce a street furniture strategy and additional tree planting in keeping with the original plaza design.

Frontage to the Memorial Gardens

The Memorial Gardens are an important green space within the town centre but are currently hidden away from the main centre of activity and edged by the blank facade of County Mall to the south, the rear of the Martletts to the west and College Road to the east. Any future development in this area should front onto the park to encourage activity and increase security.

10.3 Three Bridges Station

Similarly to Crawley railway station, arrival at Three Bridges presents a poor first impression due to the tired public realm and boundary treatments, lack of greenery and dominance of the highways, and adjacent poor quality architecture. A detailed study of this area could reveal potential for enhancement to the station area to provide an improved setting for the nearby Victorian residential streets and a gateway to Crawley by road from the north and east and by rail.

10.4 Protection / Recognition of Importance

Crawley contains eight conservation areas covering the best of the historic settlements and the New Town development. In addition, Crawley has nine Areas of Special Environmental Quality (ASEQ) which have been identified as having a special environmental quality either because of the presence of a particular style or type of dwelling or a layout that retains a substantial proportion of the existing tree cover, often creating a particularly green and distinctive character. The character assessment has identified the following additional areas which could benefit from further study to establish whether protection as conservation area, ASEQ or other classification would be appropriate.

Fig 32: Recommendations & conclusion:
Illustrative photos



Large swathes of low function amenity grassland surrounding flats on Gasson Wood Road, Bewbush.



Poor quality public realm and pedestrian access bridges at Broadfield neighbourhood centre.



Opportunity for Conservation Area assessment Hazelwick Road, Three Bridges.



Rear fences creating a poor quality street environment, Bewbush



Segregated pedestrian and vehicle access, Dampier Walk, Broadfield.



Opportunity for ASEQ assessment Green Lane, Northgate.



Car parking dominating the neighbourhood centre at Langley Parade, Langley Green.



Grassed verges adding to the positive green character of Buckswood Drive, Gossops Green.



Opportunities for enhancement of the public realm, parking improvements and potential protection in West Green.



Poor quality public realm and dominant car parking at Tilgate Parade.



Grass verges of low value on narrow streets in Tilgate.



Poor quality amenity spaces, parking and public realm in Gossops Green.

Notable architecture / town planning

- Queen’s Square and surrounds. As mentioned above, this area is a set-piece of 1950s town planning which could benefit from some form of protection or recognition.
- Norwich Road, Furnace Green. This discrete estate area has a notable, distinctive architectural style and layout that typifies the era in which it was designed. It may warrant some form of protection as a set-piece of experimental housing design dating from the late 1960s to encourage sensitive improvement and enhancement
- The Victorian ‘new town’ streets within the Southgate neighbourhood around East Park. A new Conservation Area around Brighton Road has recently been designated. The surrounding streets which grew during the late Victorian period contain a number of original properties but have been subject to incremental infill and redevelopment. Potentially the Conservation Area could be extended, or guidance could be provided on appropriate infill and property conversions, to protect the remaining streets which mark this important stage of historic town growth.
- The West Green pre New Town expansion around Albany Road. This area between the rail line and the St Peters Conservation Area contains a number of Victorian properties of varying quality and design. Further study of this area would be beneficial to identify any streets of particular merit that could lead to the extension of the existing conservation area. The area would benefit from guidance focusing on appropriate property conversions, parking arrangements, street tree planting/public realm improvements and infill development.
- Three Bridges pre New Town expansion around New Street. The pre New Town expansion character area within Three Bridges also contains an interesting collection of Victorian / early 20th century residential buildings which could merit further investigation. In particular New

Street and Hazelwick Road may benefit from some form of protection to ensure property conversions and infill developments are appropriate and add to the historic character of the area.

Notable environmental character

Hollybush Road and Green Lane in Northgate have a high quality street setting with numerous large mature trees and large front gardens to properties. The area is distinct from adjacent streets due to the mature tree coverage and for this reason could potentially benefit from designation as an Area of Special Environmental Quality to ensure this character is protected.

10.5 Opportunities across the borough

There are a number of potential opportunities for improvement that are applicable across wider areas of the borough and would benefit from more detailed feasibility and opportunities studies to identify priority areas.

New Town neighbourhood centres

Many of the neighbourhood centres offer opportunity for increased intensity of development and activity due to the loose urban grain and land given over to surface car parking, non-equipped amenity grassland, highways verges and highways themselves which could selectively be released for development. An increased density of development - housing, retail, employment and community facilities would support the existing retail units and encourage increased use of local facilities. It would also add emphasis to the hierarchy of the neighbourhood centres as the focus for the neighbourhood - where currently the centres are often of a similar scale and density to adjacent residential streets. It is therefore appropriate that any development that comes forward in the neighbourhoods should be focused around the neighbourhood centres where possible.

The appropriate level of intervention at each centre would require further detailed assessment to review land ownership, highways, green space

requirements and local needs. As previously noted Bewbush and Broadfield appear to be in greatest need of major change, whereas in the remaining neighbourhood centres the current centre layout could be retained and enhanced through public realm improvements or appropriate infill development.

At West Green, Southgate and Northgate neighbourhood centres, public realm improvements have had a positive impact, creating a more attractive setting for retail. This low level change would be appropriate for neighbourhood centres which are performing well or have little to offer in terms of available development land, for example: Peterhouse Parade in Pound Hill North, Gossops Green parade and Tilgate parade.

Langley Green provides an example of a neighbourhood centre where development sites have been identified and proposals are now in place to deliver new residential and community facilities to improve the quality of the centre.

Our rapid visual survey identifies that Maidenbower neighbourhood centre, Pound Hill parade, Gales Drive in Three Bridges, Furnace Green parade and Ifield Parade also have potential to bring forward development of this type on adjacent land parcels or through the redevelopment of some existing poor quality buildings.

Future proposals for neighbourhood centres could look to focus on prioritising pedestrian and cycle travel to neighbourhood centres, simplifying the highways layout, increasing the street frontage of retail and community uses and in doing so increasing the land available for development.

Neighbourhood centre regeneration should also focus on ensuring high quality pedestrian and cycle links from the wider neighbourhood into the centre to reduce the need to travel by car.

Existing green spaces within local centres offer the potential for increased functionality, for example through the introduction of play equipment, sports uses or community gardens.

Public realm, security and parking interventions

In neighbourhoods where redevelopment is not a priority, there is considerable potential to improve the quality of the residential environment through public realm, landscape, parking and security improvements. This applies to the majority of phase 1 and 2 new town character area neighbourhoods which include a high proportion of terrace and flatted development i.e Langley Green, West Green, Ifield, Gossops Green, Southgate, Tilgate, Furnace Green, Northgate, Three Bridges and Pound Hill South.

Verges and amenity grassland

The New Town neighbourhoods were designed with generous space given over to amenity grassland, highway verges and other 'leftover' areas of public realm.

Large verges are particularly prevalent along the major distributor routes e.g. Horsham Road, Ifield Avenue and Crawley Avenue, especially around major roundabouts. Potentially these corridors and junction locations could provide opportunity for development fronting the road, linked to improved crossing points and reduced space given over to highways and the provision of suitably sited and functional green space such as neighbourhood parks or spaces.

Within the neighbourhood block structure and along neighbourhood distributor roads, amenity grassland includes small public grassed squares, triangles and smaller grassed verges running alongside the access roads, often to the side or front of properties e.g. Martyrs Avenue, Langley Green. The wide open roads and grassed verges are a feature of Crawley and create a suburban, low density character across the new town areas; however this

style of landscaping also increases the feeling of low rise monotony within the housing layouts and limits the potential for buildings to create a strong street frontage or landmarks along the main routes.

In some areas verges are planted with street trees in informal or formal arrangements which give the street an attractive green character e.g. Tilgate Way, Tilgate. Verges also work well in areas of grander detached housing e.g. Buckswood Drive, Gossops Green.

In other areas planting is limited and the open swathes of grass can appear bleak e.g. Gasson Wood Road, Bewbush. In these latter areas, the potential to increase tree planting or add function to the amenity grass areas through the installation of play equipment, tree planting, habitat creation or sustainable urban drainage interventions, infill development or parking could be explored.

In some narrower streets or those in which car parking is in short supply, the grass verges have been overridden by vehicles and degraded to an extent that their value is questionable e.g. Friars Rookery, Three Bridges. Where this is the case the most positive course of action may be to remove the verges to allow for car parking to serve the needs of existing residents.

The Council has undertaken a survey of over 100 streets compiled from resident requests and identified the following priority streets which suffer from the most severe parking problems in the borough and which would benefit from increased parking provision, improved circulation/access and enhancement and protection of the street scene.

- Southgate Drive/Fletcher Close, Southgate
- Cedar Close/Hazel Close, Langley Green
- Bodiam Close/Spring Plat, Pound Hill South

- Latimer Close, Langley Green
- Medway Road, Gossops Green
- Friars Rookery, Three Bridges
- Ely Close, Tilgate

Security

In Radburn based layouts it is common for pedestrian access to be separated from vehicle access and for properties to be served by pedestrian footpaths e.g. Fox / Squirrel Close, Langley Green. Where residential neighbourhoods have incorporated areas of remnant forest or waterways within their layouts it is also common for these features to form pedestrian routes eg. rear of Atkinson Road, Maidenbower. However in many cases pedestrian footpaths along landscape corridors and internal to housing layouts include sections which are poorly overlooked, backed onto by properties or obscured by woodland. These footpaths can be subject to anti-social behaviour. Opportunities to increase overlooking by creating new development frontage, or by providing alternative more visible routes for pedestrians could be explored across the neighbourhoods.

In many areas, properties are served by rear or internal parking courts, e.g. Sylvan Road, Furnace Green. These rear areas can be of poor quality and lack security. As part of a programme of neighbourhood regeneration, the potential to introduce secure parking areas, alley gates or improved public realm in these rear areas could be explored.

Green views and edges

Waterways, forested corridors and large areas of amenity grassland form green breaks within and between the southern neighbourhoods of Bewbush, Broadfield, Gossops Green, Tilgate, Furnace Green and Maidenbower. In the majority of cases, housing backs onto these spaces, often with high boundary fences, which limits natural surveillance of the

parkland and creates unattractive parkland edges. Housing fronting the parks would benefit from the improvement of these attractive views, perhaps through the softening of development edges with additional vegetation and tree planting.

Future development across these neighbourhoods should be sensitive to the opportunities that the attractive landscape setting can offer residents. Views towards the Country Parks to the south of the town should also be protected and maximised in any new development.

Views over the rural hinterland and protected green spaces to the north west of the town are particularly important to the character of Ifield. Further study may be beneficial to identify particular view corridors which should be protected across the borough to ensure that any new development does not negatively impact on the character that these views bring to existing areas.

10.6 Summary and conclusion

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 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 ASEQ).

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.

Conclusion

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 1948. 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 character of the landscape as a key to delivering attractive and characterful neighbourhoods.

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