

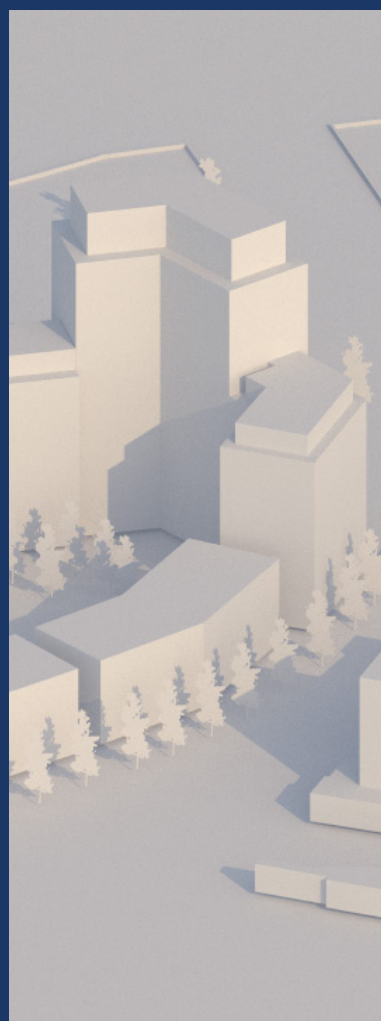
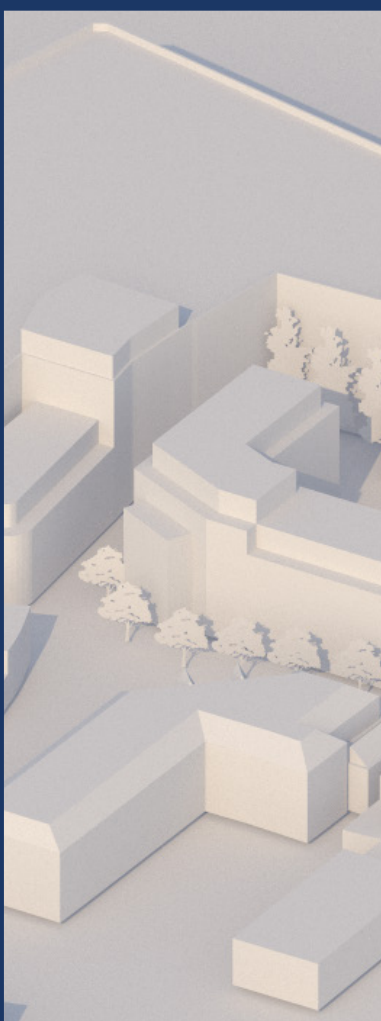
Technical Appendices

Supporting Technical Studies for Maidstone Town

Centre Sites Planning Guidelines | July 2019

OPPORTUNITY SITES

MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE



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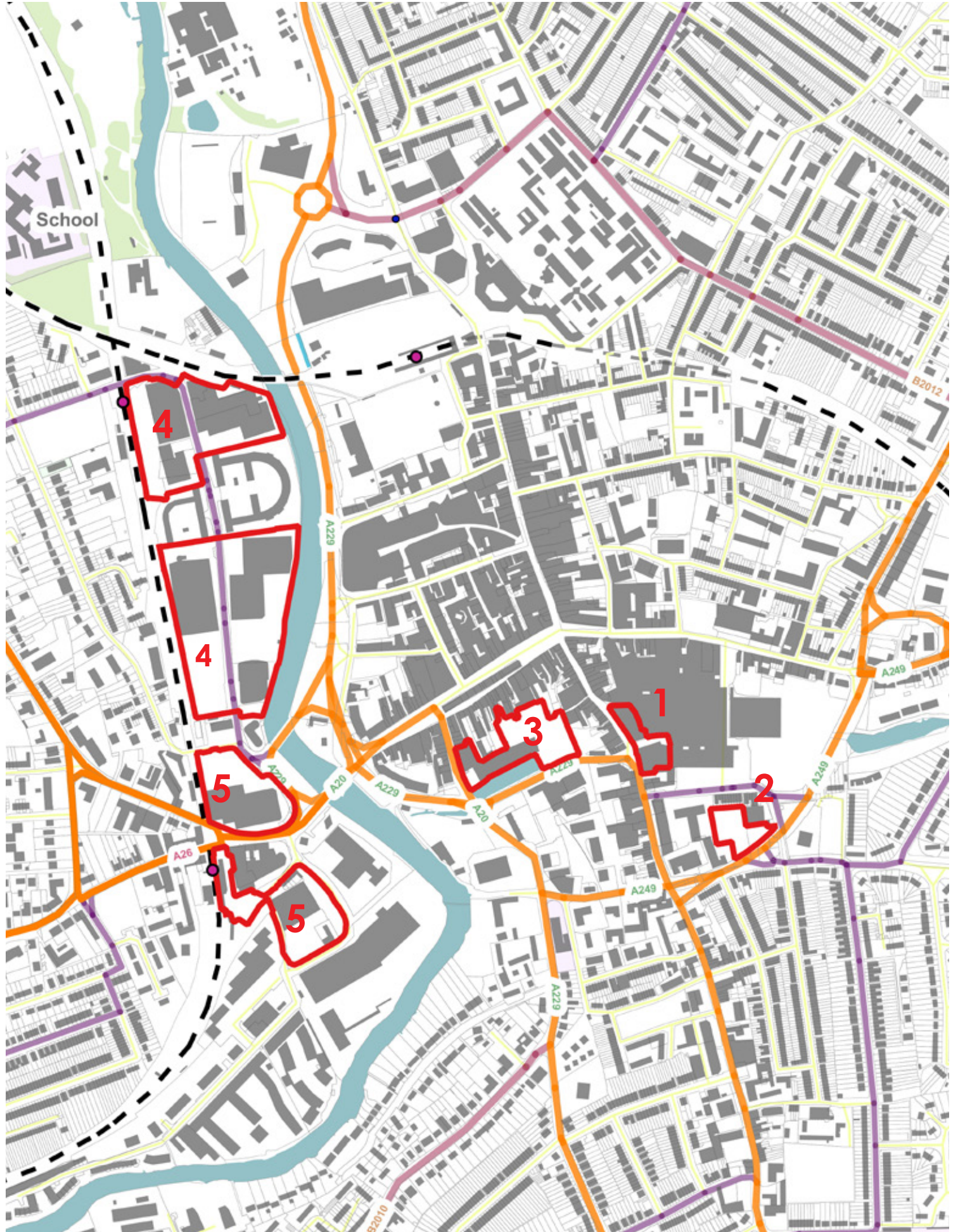
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Opportunity Sites

Key

- 1** Granada House + Gala Bingo
- 2** Mote Road
- 3** Len House
- 4** Maidstone Riverside
- 5** Maidstone West



Purpose and Context

Role of the Appendices and Planning Guidelines

This Appendix document summarises the technical evidence prepared to support the five Town Centre Sites Planning Guidelines. These have been prepared by lead consultant Savills for Maidstone Borough Council. The purpose of the Planning Guidelines is to encourage, promote and facilitate the redevelopment of key opportunity sites within the town centre.

These opportunity sites consist of:

- Site 1. Gala Bingo and Granada House
- Site 2. Mote Road
- Site 3. Len House
- Site 4. Maidstone Riverside
- Site 5. Maidstone West

This document is broken down into the technical analysis for each of the five sites. This includes summary analysis of the existing context, and presentation of potential opportunities and constraints

The analysis and separate Planning Guideline documents for each site are a culmination of an extensive design and feasibility study undertaken by Savills for five 'Maidstone Town Centre Opportunity Sites' during the period April- August 2018.

Site 1: Gala Bingo & Granada House

Appendix 1A: Planning Context

National Policy Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was most recently updated in February 2019. This, together with relevant Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) now represents the most up-to-date national planning policy and guidance.

The NPPF Revision and the PPG place importance on the need to deliver sustainable development. This includes the delivery of necessary development to ensure that local planning authorities can sustainably meet the development needs of their area.

Key objectives within the NPPF Revision include:

- Significantly boosting the supply of homes including affordable homes and maintaining a five year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- Building a strong, competitive economy, placing significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity, and taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres, and supporting the role that town centres play at the heart of local community by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

The site is within flood zone 3 and therefore has the highest risk of fluvial flooding. The NPPF Revision is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (paragraph 155). Different types of development have different vulnerabilities, and therefore are regarded as being

appropriate or inappropriate. Developments and land uses that are regarded as being “more vulnerable” are not appropriate in flood zone 3. The PPG is clear that such development should be directed towards areas of lower flood risk.

Depending on the type of development being proposed, it may be necessary for the sequential and exceptions tests to be passed. A flood risk assessment will certainly be required if a development is progressed (see the PPG and NPPF Revision footnote 50). This will need to be considered early on, as it will have the potential to affect the scheme, type of development and also quantum.



Local Policy Considerations

Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017)

Maidstone Borough Council adopted the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 ('MBLP') in October 2017. The MBLP comprises both the strategic aims and policies for the borough, and specific site allocations.

The borough assets, together with its good access to London and the channel ports for Europe, make Maidstone an attractive location for people to come to work and live. This creates a high pressure for development, so the MBLP focuses strongly on sustainability. Maintaining sustainable communities for the borough's urban and rural residents and businesses is at the heart of the MBLP's objectives.

The MBLP seeks to strike an appropriate balance between the national call for homes and the local need for housing (including affordable housing) and employment for a growing population. Development in the borough has been planned with supporting infrastructure to make proposals acceptable and to maintain residents' quality of life.

Relevant policies within the MBLP include:

- Policy SP4 – Maidstone Town Centre
- Policy SP18- Historic environment
- Policy SP20 – Affordable housing
- Policy H2– Broad locations for housing growth
- Policy DM1 – Principles of good design

- Policy DM4- Development affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets
- Policy DM16 – Town centre uses
- Policy DM19 – Open space and recreation
- Policy DM23/Appendix B – Parking Standards
- Policy DM28 – Secondary shopping frontages
- Policy DM29 – Leisure & community uses in the town centre

The MBLP advises that attention should also be paid to providing sufficient green spaces, not only for people to enjoy, but also to the value we should place upon our natural environment for its own intrinsic worth.

Policy SS1 includes a housing target of 17,660 dwellings over the 20 year Plan period. This equates to a target of 883 dwellings per annum. In addition, the spatial strategy for the borough identifies a need for:

- 39,830m² floorspace for office use
- 20,290m² floorspace for industrial use
- 49,911m² floorspace for warehousing use
- 29,800m² floorspace for retail use

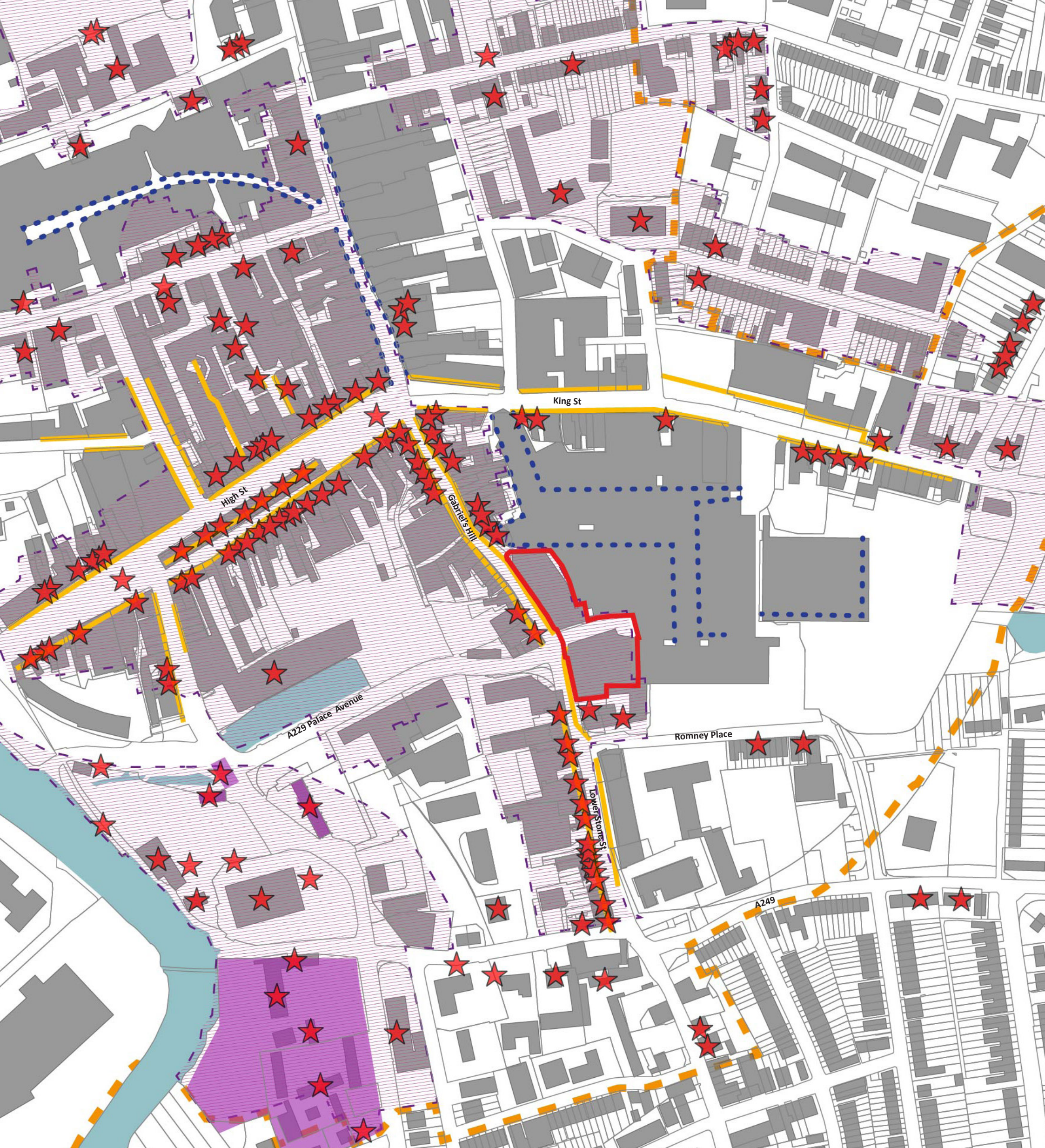











Fig. 1.1 Designations and Features

scale 1:2500 @ A3

Key

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Conservation Area |  MBLP Policy DM27 Primary shopping frontage |
|  Scheduled Monuments |  Built Form |
|  Listed Buildings |  Water Bodies |
|  MBLP Policy DM28 Primary shopping frontage |  MBLP Town Centre Boundary |
| |  Site Boundary |

Policy SP4 Maidstone Town Centre seeks to retain and enhance a variety of well integrated attractions including shopping, service sector-based businesses, leisure and cultural facilities that the town centre offers and also to retain the best quality office stock, whilst allowing for the redevelopment of lower quality offices. Policy SP4 of the MBLP supports a comprehensive retail redevelopment centred on The Mall, immediately to the north of the site.

The MBLP, paragraph 4.65, also supports the town centre as a suitable place for residential use: *“Whilst commercial uses are the priority for the town centre, residential development can have a supporting role, in particular as part of mixed use schemes. Additional*

residential development in the town centre will help to promote town centre vitality, especially during the evening.” Policy SP 4(vii.) promotes *“Select opportunities for residential redevelopment”*.

The MBLP seeks to focus retail uses within the primary and secondary shopping frontages policy areas of the town, especially protecting and consolidating retail use in the primary shopping frontage areas. **Policy DM28 ‘Secondary Shopping Frontages’** promotes the continued vibrancy of these streets, with their predominance of small units and independent shops.

The frontages along Gabriel’s Hill and Lower Stone Street are designated as secondary retail frontages

Policy SP4: Town centre vision

By 2031 a regenerated and sustainable Maidstone town centre will be a first class traditional town centre at the heart of the 21st Century County Town that has maintained its place as one of the premier town centres in Kent by creating a distinctive, safe and high quality place that has:

- Retained its best environmental features, including the riverside and the enhanced public realm;
- Provided a variety of well-integrated attractions for all ages including new shopping, service sector based businesses, leisure, tourism, and cultural facilities;
- Improved access for all.

Key components in realising this vision are:

- Enhancing the diversity of the retail offer, supporting a continued balance between independent and multiple retailers;
- Creating a highly sustainable location resilient to future climate change;
- Establishing the town centre as an attractive hub for business building on the town centre’s assets and environment;
- Creating a stronger mix and balance of uses within the centre to support long term viability including where appropriate residential development; and
- Tackling congestion and air quality issues through improvements in provision for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, including public transport.

where retail, office and food and drink uses are appropriate and which establish or retain an active frontage to the street.

Policy DM19 Open Space and Recreation covers the provision on new housing sites. It requires a standard of 0.7ha amenity green space, 0.25ha space for children and young people and 1.6ha publicly accessible outdoor sports space per 1000 residents. The policy also requires 0.2ha allotments and community gardens and 6.5ha of natural/semi-natural areas of open space per 1000 residents. Given the compact nature of the site and the high density context, it is recognised that it will not be feasible to provide the required amount of open space on the site. Paragraph 6.89 of the MBLP allows for a financial contribution to be made to improve existing sites and enhance the capacity of existing provision if suitable opportunities for new open space cannot be identified within the specified accessibility standards due to site constraints.

Parking standards are set out in **Policy DM23/Appendix B** of the MBLP. Maidstone has approved vehicle parking standards published by Kent Highway Services as an interim measure for Development Management decisions, and the county gives advice on development proposals that generate a need for parking provision.

There is a significant need for affordable housing within the borough and a clear justification for the council to seek affordable dwellings through new development schemes. In order to respond to the identified need

for affordable housing of different tenures through the period of the plan, the MBLP has a target rate of 30% affordable housing for new developments within the Maidstone Urban Area (**Policy SP20 Affordable Housing**), with indicative targets of 70% affordable rented housing, social rented housing or a mixture of the two and 30% intermediate affordable housing (shared ownership and/or intermediate rent). The inclusion of this quantum of affordable housing on the site may not be achievable due to economic viability, however, and in such cases the policy recommends developers to enter into negotiations with the council's Housing department, in consultation with registered providers at the earliest stage of the application process. Given the costs of demolishing or refurbishing Granada House and Gala Bingo, viability of any development is likely to be a challenge, and early discussions relating to affordable housing provision are therefore highly recommended.

It will also be necessary to consider the impact of proposals on heritage assets. Whilst neither site contains a listed building, there are a number of listed buildings in the immediate area, notably those fronting the western side of Lower Stone Street. The site also lies within the Conservation Area. Any scheme will therefore need to be designed having regard to the setting of these heritage assets and the sites' situation within the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area. A more detailed review of the policy implications relating to these heritage assets is provided in Appendix 1C Heritage Review.

Neighbourhood Plans

There are no made Neighbourhood Plans impacting upon the site.

Relevant Planning History

Since 1996 there have been a number of planning applications and applications for certificates of lawfulness for the gradual conversion of offices above the retail units to flats.

The Gala Bingo building (formerly ABC cinema) has been the subject of a number of planning applications since the 1980s including the creation of a bingo area (1979) alterations to form a fourth cinema screen (1981) new discotheque/restaurant (1983) and change of use of part of the former cinema to retail and/or food and drink (2001).



Site 1: Gala Bingo & Granada House

Appendix 1B: Site Analysis

1B:01 Land Use

Gabriel's Hill is a relatively busy pedestrianised street that has benefited from recent public realm improvements, and a number of small, independent shops, whilst Lower Stone Street is a busy one-way street, with traffic running in a north to south direction. Uses on Lower Stone Street include retail, office and restaurants at ground floor with mixed uses above. To the immediate west, Palace Avenue also forms part of the busy one-way system, with vehicle users having a clear view of Gala Bingo. To the immediate east, The Mall shopping centre abuts the rear of Granada House, whilst the associated multi-storey car park is situated to the east of Gala Bingo.

To the east of the site, The Mall is occupied by a variety of retail units on the ground, first and second floors with parking above. Part of this upper level is also occupied by Maidstone Borough Council offices. Whilst visits to the Council offices, shops and car parking during helps create daytime vibrancy, there is limited restaurant/leisure uses that stimulate the evening economy. In 2014, its owners, Capital and Regional, proposed a potential redevelopment scheme for The Mall and its surrounds including new retail, leisure and residential uses. However, to date, this has not been taken forward.

16 Granada House comprises a three storey art deco building fronting on to Gabriel Hill. It has 12 retail units on the ground floor and 20 apartments above (1 x 1 bed and 19 x 2 bed). These flats are all let on short-hold tenancies and managed by an agent.

Gala Bingo is owned and managed by Buzz Bingo. The majority of the ground floor is in use as a bingo hall, however the remainder of the building retains the screens, seating, projection rooms, offices and ticket/confectionery sales areas associated with its previous cinema use. This includes a foyer area on the ground floor fronting Lower Stone Street (now boarded up), a small cinema screen/seating on the first floor and a large cinema screen subdivided into two seating areas/screens on the first/second floor. Projection rooms occupy the fourth floor.

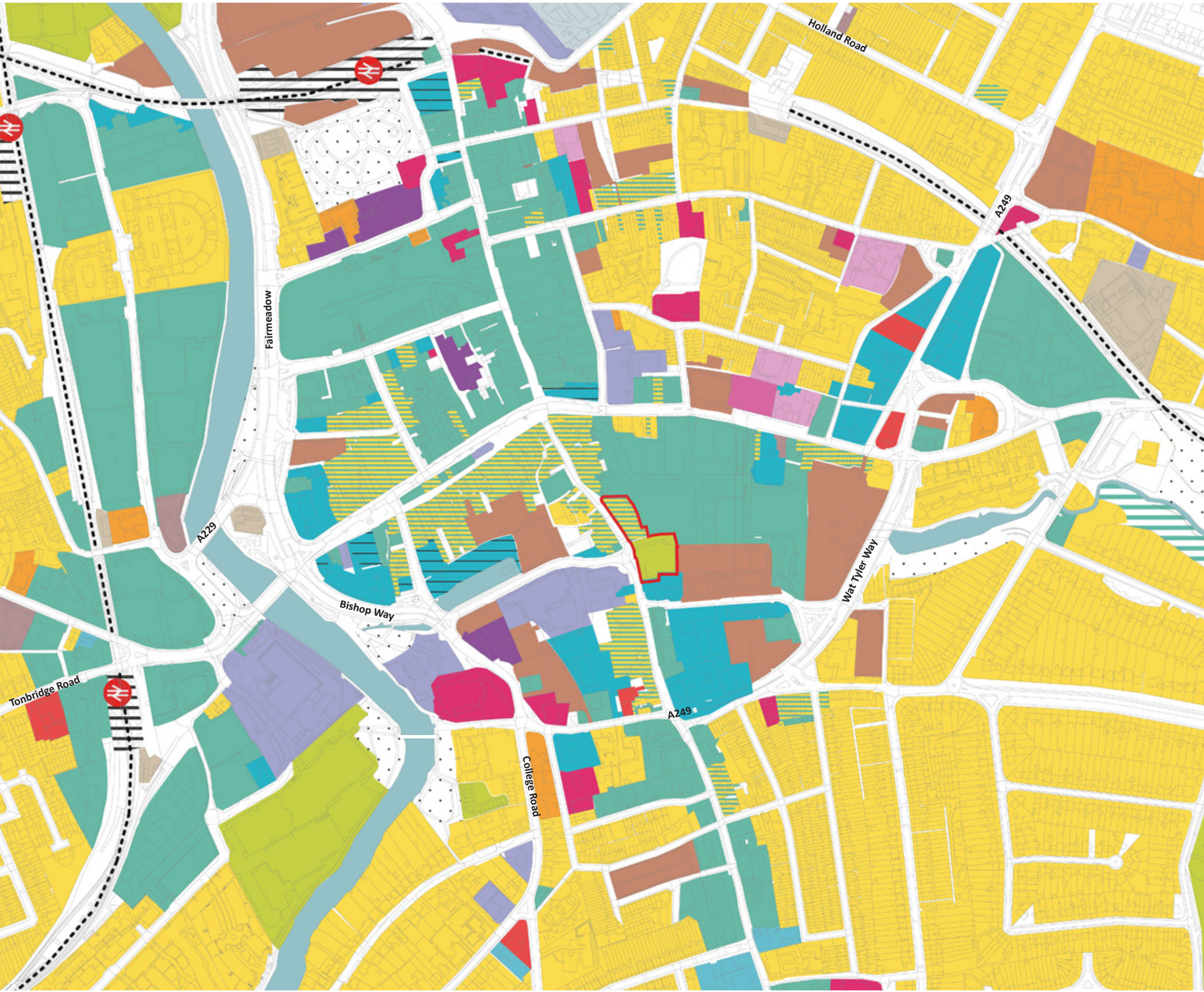


Figure 1.2 Land Use & Local Facilities

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Residential | Civic | Allotments |
| Retail | Cultural | Place of Worship |
| Mixed-use (Ground Floor Retail + Residential or Employment above) | Leisure | Car Parking |
| Employment | Hotel | Industry and Electricity |
| Mixed-use (Retail and/or Employment) | Prison | Hospital and Doctor's Surgery |
| Education | Park and Open Space | Train Station |
| | Community Centre | Site |

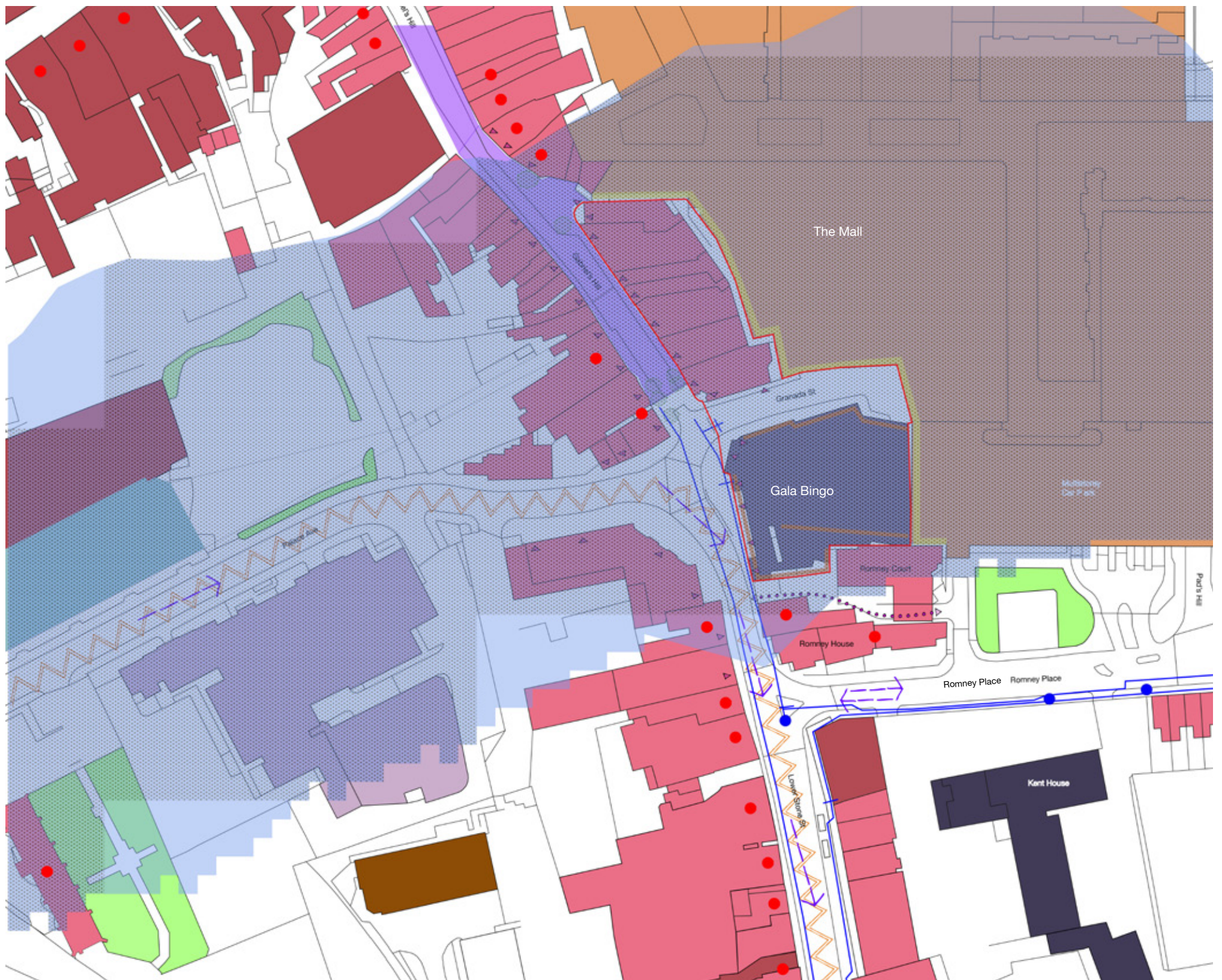
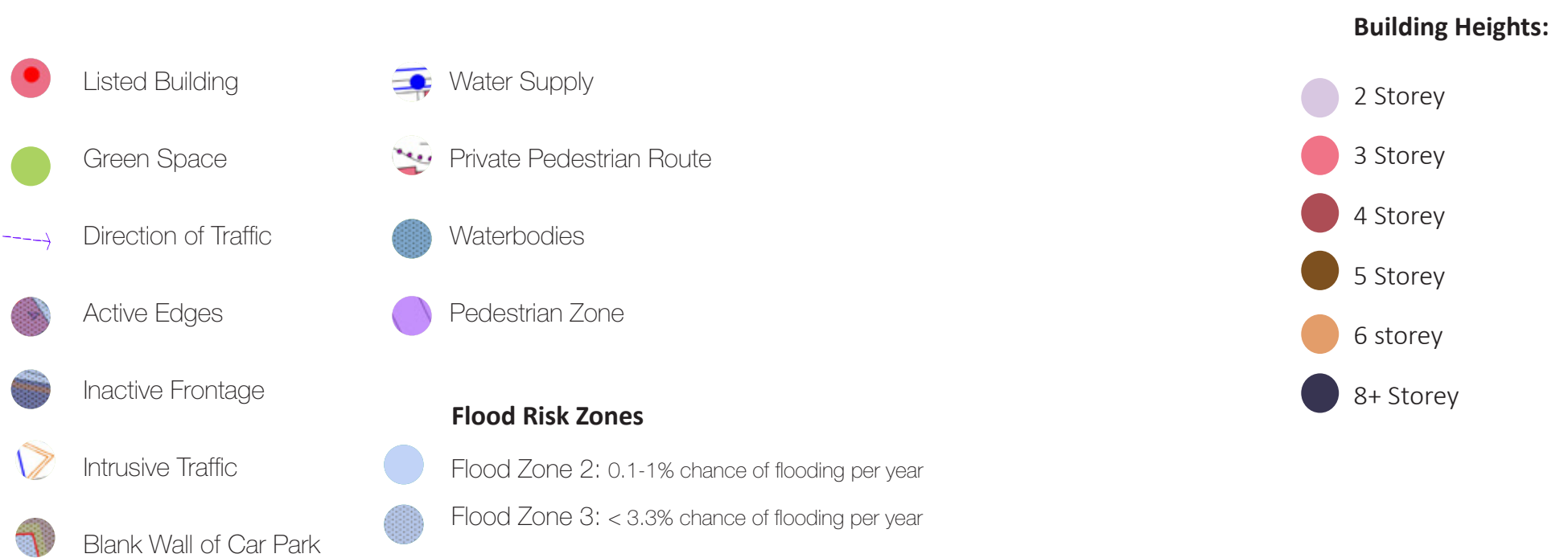


Figure 1.3 Contextual Analysis



1B:02 Built Form

The site comprises two separate buildings, Granada House and Gala Bingo, separated from each other by Granada Street.

Granada House is owned by Maidstone Borough Council and comprises a three storey art deco building fronting on to Gabriel Hill. It has 12 retail units on the ground floor and 20 apartments above (1 x 1 bed and 19 x 2 bed). These flats are all let on short-hold tenancies and managed by an agent. Access to the apartments is via a shared entrance hall off Granada Street, as well as a rear external staircase off Gabriel’s Hill, adjacent to The Mall. This access is via a private gate and narrow alley giving it a dark and inhospitable character with poor surveillance.

The apartment element of the building occupies a narrower footprint than the retail units below, providing a roof terrace overlooked by shared external access balconies. Views from this rear elevation are dominated by a blank brick wall forming the western elevation of The Mall, which rises to the equivalent of approximately five storeys.

Gala Bingo is an imposing building set over four storeys. This is higher than adjacent buildings on Gabriel’s Hill and Lower Stone Street, which are generally three storeys high (see Figure 1.3). There are a number of taller buildings within the town centre, including:

- The Mall- 5 storeys
- The Mall Multi-storey car park – 8 storeys
- Coleman House, King Street – 11 storeys
- Kent House, Romney Place – 9 storeys
- Medvale House, Mote Road – 8 storeys
- Midhurst Court, Mote Road- 13 storeys
- Miller House, Lower Stone Street- 13 storeys
- MBC + The Mall-10 storeys
- Sunningdale Court, Square Hill – 14 storeys

1B:03 Heritage and Architecture

The site does not contain any Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings, however it has a strong historic context, lying within the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area and containing two buildings of historic interest. A more detailed heritage analysis has been undertaken by Savills Heritage and is included at Appendix 1C.

Historic mapping from 1876-1895 (Figure 1.4) shows that the River Len ran through the centre of the Granada House site. In the 1876-1895 mapping, the river is also present to the east of the site, running parallel to a street known as Water Lane, reflecting the dominance of the river in the area. A brewery occupied the area to the east of the site, and Granada Street generally follows the historic route of 'Lower Brewery', which provided access to this riverside brewery. By 1896-98, the river appears to have been culverted beneath Water Lane, east of the site, but is still above ground within the Granada House area and it is not until the 1936 mapping that the river appears to have been culverted, allowing for the construction of Granada House.

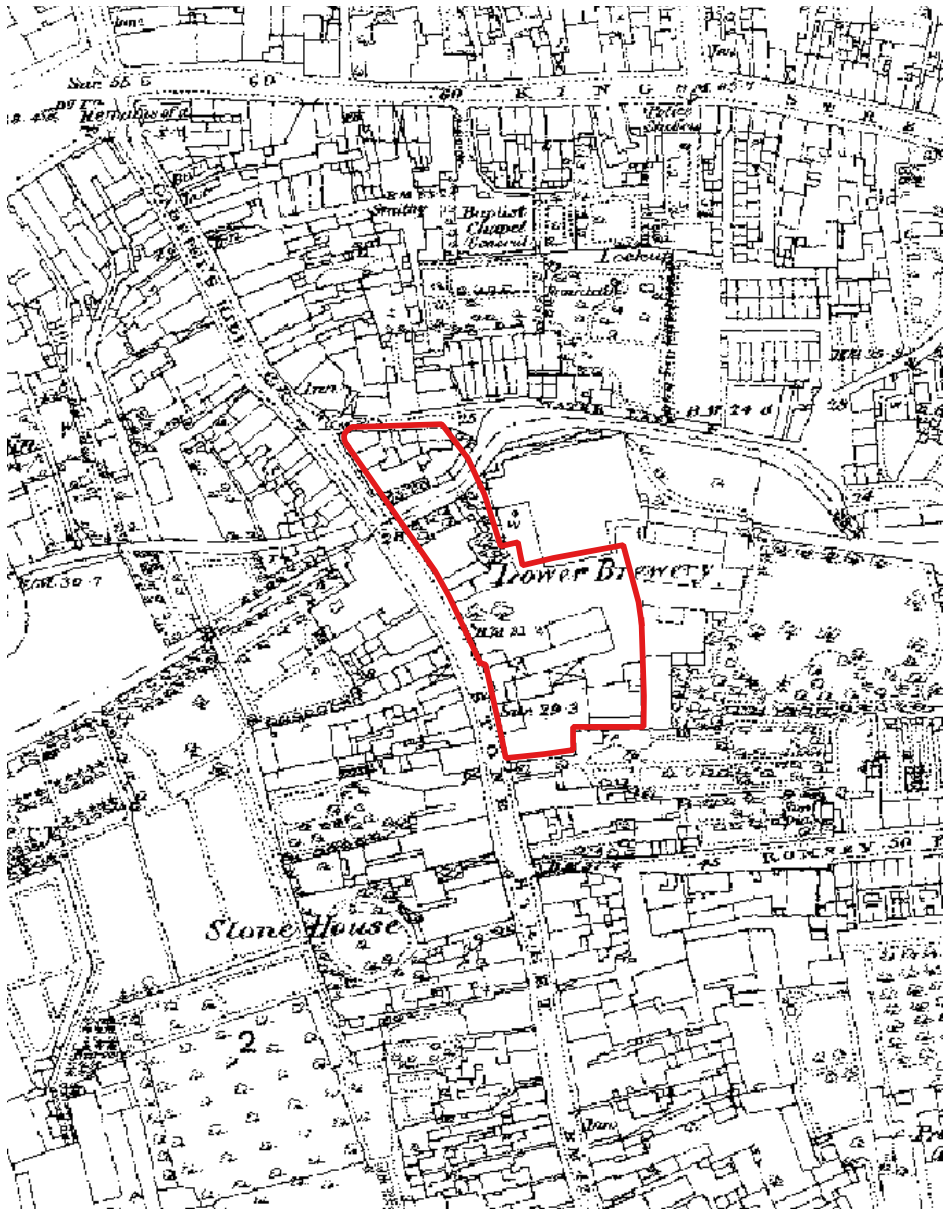
As late as the 1908 historic mapping, Gabriel's Hill and Lower Stone Street formed a continuous main north-south route through the town past the site, with no east-west route in the position of Palace Avenue.

Gala Bingo

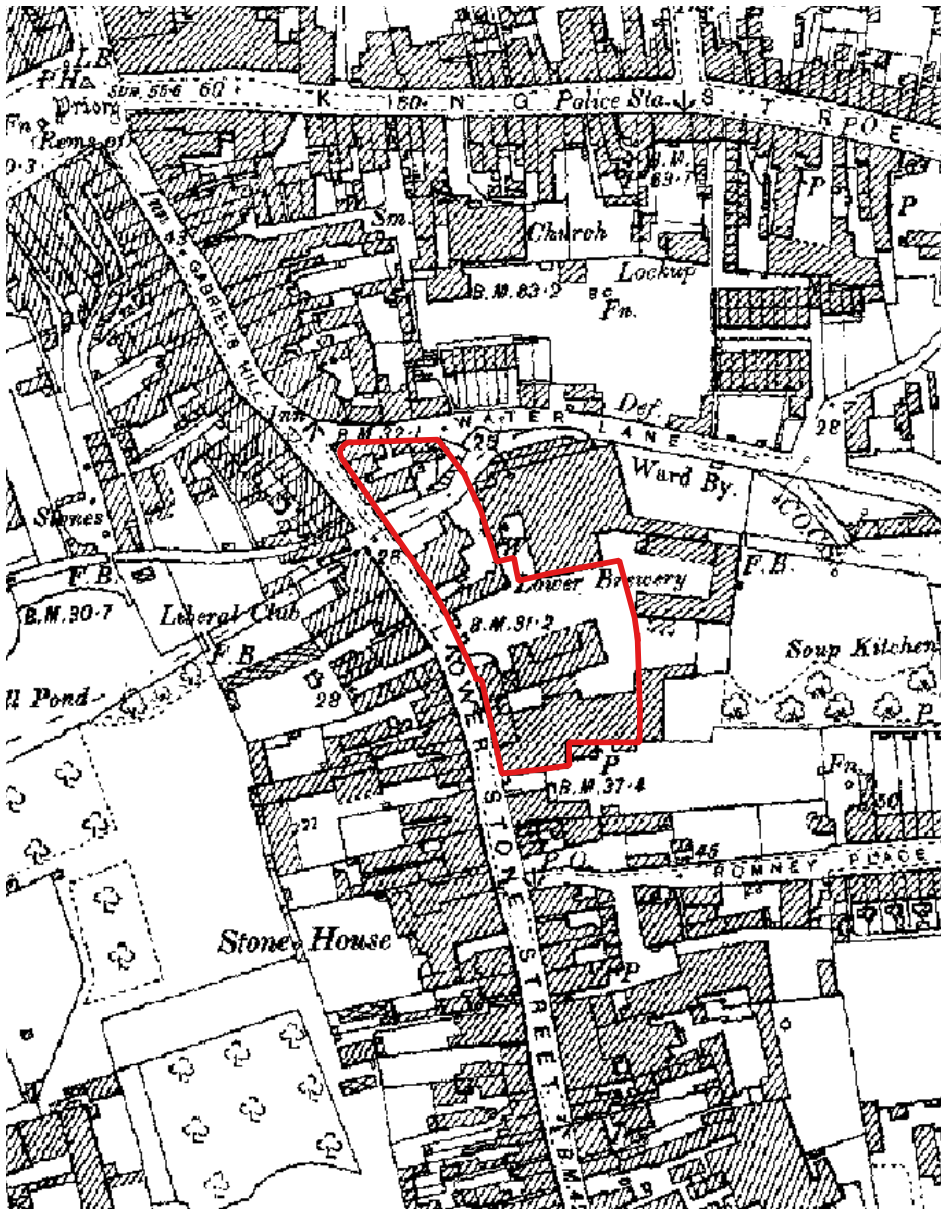
Gala Bingo is classified as an 'essential' building in the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area Appraisal. The Appraisal describes its main architectural focus being the: *"main entrance front built on the splay on the corner of Lower Stone Street and Granada Street, which has a giant order of four prostyle Corinthian columns at first floor level and an eaves cornice with Egyptian detailing. This frontage partially closes views from Gabriel's Hill and Palace Avenue and is extremely important in townscape terms. The frontage to Lower Stone Street has tall round-headed windows to the first floor in metal-framed neo-Georgian design which served the original restaurant."*

Further details relating to the history and features of the Gala Bingo are provided in Appendix 1C.

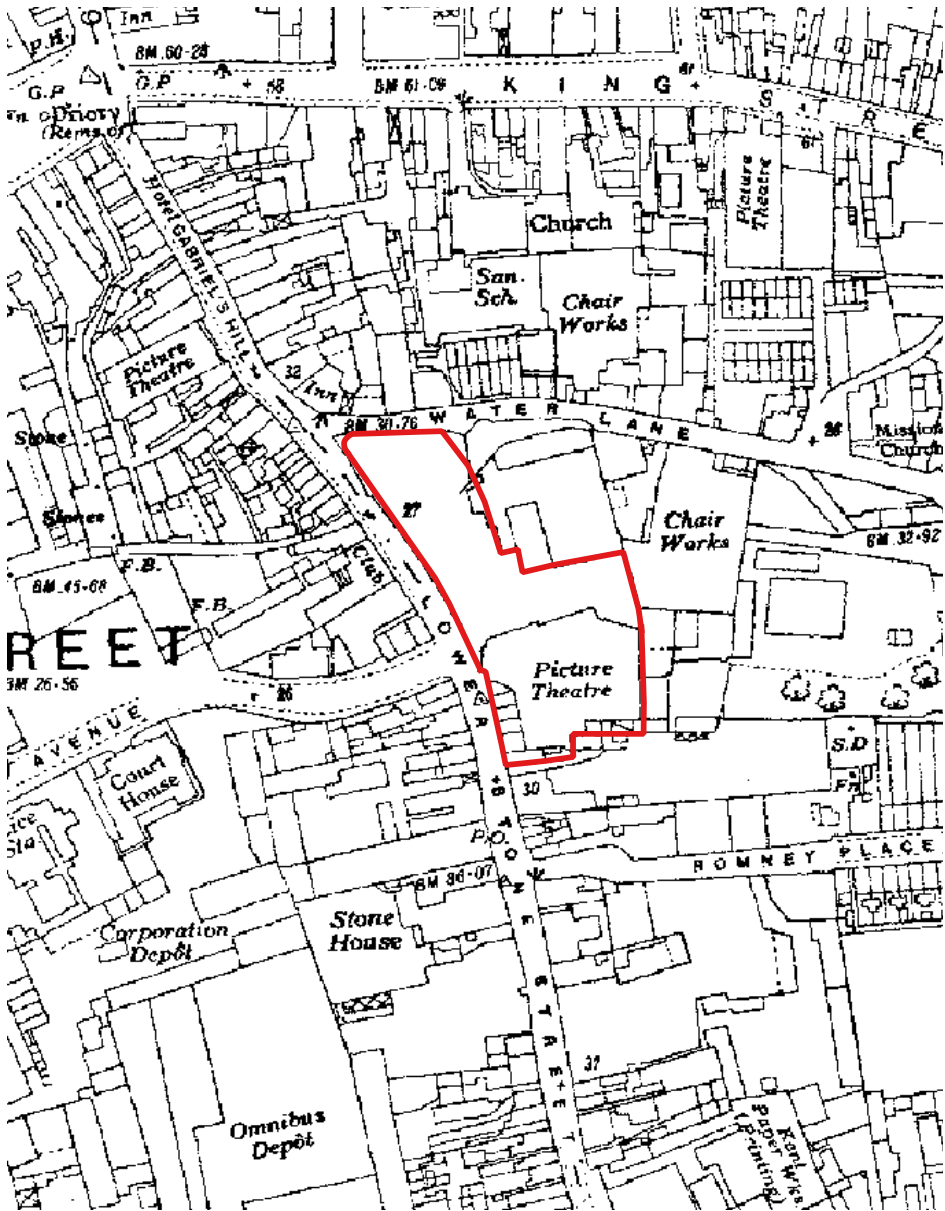
Figure 1.4: Historic Mapping



Historic Map: 1876-1895



Historic Map: 1896-1898



Historic Map: 1936-1946



Granada House, Gabriel's Hill



Granada House

Granada House was built in 1937 and comprises a building of three storeys in brown and red brick with cement banding. The rounded street corners at each end are typical of the 1930s Art Deco architectural style, as are the metal crittal windows. The Maidstone Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal lists the building as making a 'neutral contribution' to the character Conservation Area. As such, the principle of demolition would be acceptable if the replacement building was able to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area through design, scale, mass and use of materials. Further details relating to the history and features of the Gala Bingo are provided in Appendix 1C.

1B:04 Landform, Hydrology, Noise and Air Quality

The site occupies a flat, floodplain area, lying at approximately 10m Above Ordnance Datum (see Figure 1.6).

The River Medway presents a relatively high flood risk to developments along its banks and the entire site lies within the Environment Agency's Flood Zone 3. This is a 'high' risk area, with a 3.3% chance of flooding in any one year. The Granada house part of the site lies directly over the culverted River Len, a tributary of the River Medway, and the Gala Bingo building is known

to have experienced significant flood damage in 1968. Given the likely flood risks, it would not be appropriate to have residential uses at the ground floor level.

Given its town centre location and the proximity of Palace Avenue and known concerns relating to air quality in the immediate area, noise and air quality assessments will be required as part of any planning application, together with the delivery of appropriate mitigation measures.

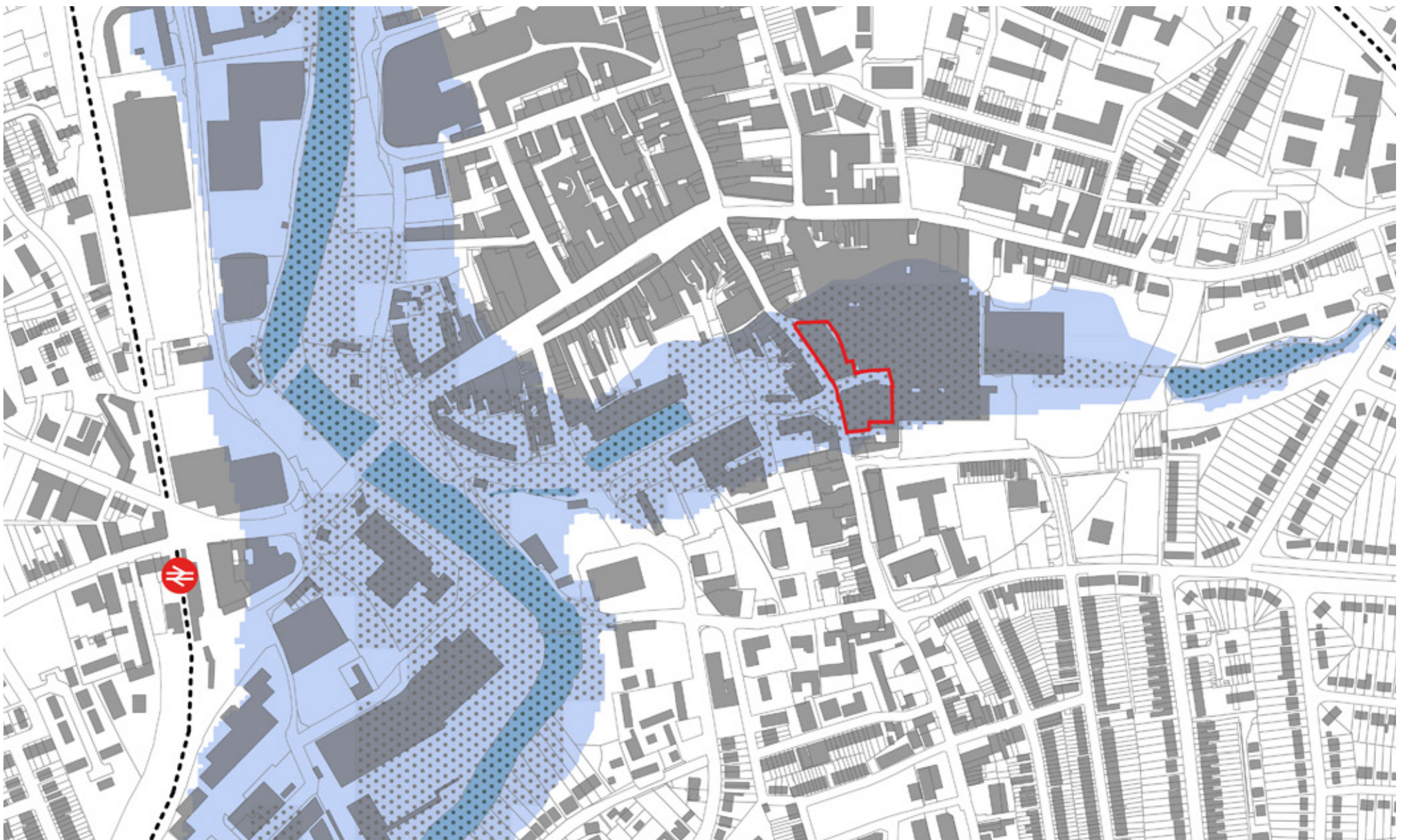




Figure 1.5: Hydrology

Flood Risk Zones

-  Flood Zone 3: < 3.3% chance of flooding per year
-  Flood Zone 2: 0.1-1% chance of flooding per year




- | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|---------------|
|  | Built Form |  | Train Station |
|  | Contour 5m |  | Water Bodies |
|  | Railway |  | Study Area |
|  | Primary Road | | |

Figure.1.6: Landform



Fig.1.7 Movement and Access

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|---|
| ■ Railway Line | — Pedestrian Street | ● Bus Station |
| — A Roads | ↔ Public Rights of Way | ○ 400m radius (5 min. walk) from Station |
| — B Roads | ● Train Station | ○ 800m radius (10 min. walk) from Station |
| — Minor Roads | ● Bus Routes | ○ Site Boundary |
| ... Local Street | ● Station carpark | |

1B:05 Movement

This site is situated to the north of Maidstone's one-way system on the corner of the A229 Lower Stone Street / Gabriel's Hill / Granada Street. The A229 Lower Stone Street is a dual-carriageway, one-way road which runs in a north-south alignment between Rochester in the north, and Hawkhurst in the south. Within the vicinity of the site, Lower Stone Street acts as an arterial route, with a 30mph speed limit.

Lower Stone Street is a busy one-way street forming part of the through-route around the town centre.

Gabriel's Hill is a narrow, one-way street which forms a part of the main retail core in Maidstone, with commercial frontages lining both sides of the street. It is restricted for car access at all times but allows servicing and disabled access between the hours of 5:30pm – 10:30am. It is one way from the Granada House end. The street has been undergoing a series of public realm enhancements, extending the redevelopment works completed for the High Street in 2012/13 as far as the junction of Gabriel's Hill with Palace Avenue. Designs within the paving here include a time trail reflecting the history of the town.

Granada Street is a dead-end road used by visitors to Gala Bingo. Whilst there are gates to the road from The Mall at its eastern end, there is no regular access required and owners of The Mall agree that, subject to legal checks, access to The Mall need not be retained.

In terms of the pedestrian environment, Lower Stone Street has varied pavement widths, and, outside of the Gala Bingo building, are particularly narrow. The footway surfaces do, however, benefit from dropped kerb crossovers across accesses and junctions, most of which have tactile paving and the appropriate colouring.

Immediately opposite the existing Gala Bingo building, a signalised pedestrian crossing is present, allowing for safer crossing of the highway.

There are no designated cycling routes within the site's immediate vicinity.

Maidstone has good transport links, with direct connections to London and the channel tunnel via the M20 and M2 motorway, and rail connections to London, the coast and Medway towns through three central railway stations in the town. There are approximately six trains per hour departing from Maidstone East Station, including direct connections to London Victoria and Ashford International, with interchanges to a number of destinations available. Expected improvement to links direct to the City of London via Thameslink in 2019 will further improve the site's connectivity and attraction as a commuter location, whilst improvements to Maidstone East and West (HS1) stations could further unlock potential.

The site lies on the southern edge of the heart of Maidstone town centre and is approximately 9 minutes' walk distance from Maidstone East Station and ten minutes from Maidstone West Station. The closest bus stops are on Lower Stone Street (50m away) and Maidstone Bus Station (80m away). Further details on connectivity with Maidstone's railway stations and bus stations are provided at Appendix 1D.

The closest taxi ranks are on High Street and King Street, both within a 200m walk to the north.

The site is immediately adjacent to the The Mall public multi-storey car park.

1B:06 Landscape and Visual Context

The site has a hard, urban character, with no vegetation. Current enhancements to the public realm of Gabriel's Hill are significantly improving the visual and physical quality of the street, including high quality paving and street furniture.

With regards to its visual context, Gala Bingo terminates a vista along Palace Avenue, a one-way street which forms part of the busy route running around the town centre. Its monolithic massing and art deco architecture mean that it is a memorable landmark, reinforced by its place in the recent cultural history of the local community. As Granada House fronts on to Gabriel's Hill, it is less visible to passing traffic, however its adjacent location to one of the entrances to The Mall mean that it forms a relatively memorable element in the streetscape of Gabriel's Hill. By virtue of their listing by English Heritage/Historic England, the visual setting of a number of properties on the western side of Gabriel's Hill are of greater importance than that of Granada House, in planning terms.

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Granada House & Granada Street, from multi-storey car park



Granada House from Gabriel's Hill



Granada Street, between Granada House & Gala Bingo



Gala Bingo and Palace Avenue, from roof of Len House



Lower Stone Street, looking north towards the site

Site 1: Gala Bingo & Granada House

Appendix 1C: Heritage Review

Heritage Review: Gala Bingo and Granada House

The current Gala Bingo building was formerly known as the Granada Theatre and is located on the corner of Lower Stone Street and Granada Street, within the Maidstone Town Centre Conservation Area.

The importance of this theatre lies in that it was the template for what came to be known as the 'standard Granada', and was the first of the 12 so-called 'standard' Granada Theatres to be built as a circuit for the Granada Theatres chain outside of London, after the splendours of Walthamstow Granada in 1930 (Grade II* Listed) and Tooting Granada in 1931 (Grade I Listed) in London.

The interior at Maidstone was designed by noted Russian theatre set designer Theodore Komisarjevsky in the Italian Renaissance style, which he had previously used at the Phoenix Theatre in London in 1930 (designed also by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and Cecil Masey, on behalf of Sidney Bernstein, Grade II Listed). There were three decorative grilles on each side of the proscenium at Maidstone, which had a narrow frieze across its top, depicting charioteers, and which were inspired by the classical friezes used by Komisarjevsky at The Phoenix. Other features incorporated into the Maidstone Granada, and which replicated those at the Phoenix, also included the large main chandelier in the auditorium and the undulating balcony in the circle, which was a trademark design of Cecil Aubrey Masey, the architect appointed by Sidney Bernstein to design

his Granada Theatres. It is possible that much of this original fabric remains in situ, although hidden behind later partitions and suspended ceilings, as the building evolved from a theatre to a cinema and then, finally, a Bingo Hall. Bernstein had worked with Masey at the Phoenix Theatre along with Sir Giles Gilbert Scott; Masey was himself an accomplished architect, having designed the New Wimbledon Theatre in 1919 (Grade II listed) and also the Granada theatres at Walthamstow (Grade II*) and Tooting (Grade I). He also went on to design the Granada Cinema at Woolwich (1937) (Grade II*) and that at Clapham Junction (1937) (Grade II*).

The Granada Theatres were vast leisure facilities situated throughout Great Britain and played host to, not only films, but also live shows and pantomime in particular, and were developed during the 1930s by media and leisure mogul, Sidney Bernstein, who later went on to establish Granada Television in 1954, as well as a whole leisure empire. Bernstein was an entrepreneur and recognised the burgeoning interest in cinema during the 1920s and 1930s, and, after seeing the grand 'picture palaces' in America, he decided to introduce the concept to the UK. By 1939 Bernstein, in conjunction with his brother Cecil, owned 39 theatres and, by 1949, the number had increased to 56. By the mid-1950s, the total number of theatres eventually rose to over 60 and formed what was to be the first of

a number of leisure-orientated ventures that the two brothers would oversee. The Bernsteins’ company, Granada Limited, did not limit its portfolio of companies to theatre-owning and managing, but went on to diversify and develop interests in real estate, motorway services, publishing, retail shops, bowling alleys, Bingo Social Clubs (formed in 1960 by conversion of many of the theatres as a result of the decline in cinema going) and a television rental business.

The Granada Theatre Maidstone opened on 10 January 1934 with Tom Walls in “Cuckoo in the Nest” and John Barrymore in “Reunion in Vienna”. Organist Alex Taylor opened the Christie 3Manual/8Ranks organ, which had a French style console. There was a stage, but no fly tower for scenery. There was also a popular cafe-restaurant, and a car park, and the cinema itself could seat 1,600. As Allen Eyles states in his book, The Granada Theatres, it was proclaimed as a monument to British materials, bought with British Capital and handled by British workmen, and that the only foreign items needed were fifteen tons of marble from Rome and Verona and five cork bases for the electric motors from Jerez in Spain.

The Granada Theatre was closed on 15th September 1968 due to flooding, and it re-opened the following week, using the 650 seat circle area only. The building was closed in April 1971 for conversion by



Bingo Hall, ground floor



Refreshments kiosk, first floor



Screen 3, First floor

the architectural firm George Coles & Partners into a Granada Bingo Club in the former stalls area, and a twin screen cinema in the former circle and cafe, using a new side entrance. Granada 1 & 2 opened on 26th December 1971 with 560 and 90 seats. The cinema was then tripled by twinning the former balcony in December 1974, with seating now provided for 258, 259 and 90. The Christie organ was removed and shipped to Australia, where it now resides at the Kelvin Grove High School, Brisbane.

Taken over by the Cannon Group in January 1989, the cinema was re-named Cannon; it became the MGM in May 1993 and Virgin from July 1995. In May 1996, it was taken over by ABC and was closed on 15 April 1999. The bingo club still remains open in the former stalls area, and the building is now owned by Gala Bingo.

Several plans have been proposed for the former cinema spaces since closing, which include a youth club, shops and a theatre company, and a Wetherspoon's pub but these never materialised and the upstairs cinemas remain empty and unused.

Within the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (2009) the portico of the old Granada cinema (Gala Bingo) is mentioned as one of the few "landmark" buildings in the Conservation Area (CAA, 2009, p.29) and which partially closes views from Gabriel's Hill and Palace Avenue. The building is described as performing an important townscape function, with its grand elevated portico being a focal point in views along

Lower Stone Street from the north and along Palace Avenue (ibid. p.69), and its value to the character of the Conservation Area is described as 'essential'.

Granada House was built in 1937 and comprises a building of three storeys in brown and red brick with cement banding. The rounded street corners at each end are typical of the 1930s Art Deco architectural style, as are the metal crittal windows. The building comprises various retail outlets in the ground floor with a variety of modern shopfronts and residential flats above. The Maidstone Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal lists the building as making a 'neutral contribution' to the character Conservation Area. As such, the principle of demolition would be acceptable if the replacement building was able to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area through design, scale, mass and use of materials.

Planning Policy Context

As neither Gala Bingo nor Granada House are listed buildings, they are deemed to be heritage assets of local/regional significance. That said, with research having revealed the historic significance of the original Granada Theatre, now Gala Bingo, its potential would merit consideration (in planning terms) as if it were a Grade II Listed Building, should it be desirable to restore the building to its former glory as a leisure attraction, with theatre and café area, as per its original form. Advice on its suitability for potential listing and conversion/restoration could be sought from the Historic England Designation Team.



Granada Street



Interface of Bingo Hall and The Mall multi-storey car park, Granada Street



Lower Stone Street

Historic England is a statutory consultee regarding any demolition works within a Conservation Area, and it is advised that the LPA or any applicant for a scheme affecting these buildings consult with Historic England at the earliest opportunity.

In Planning Policy terms, the revised NPPF (February 2019) Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) states at para 192 that *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and, c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”*

It also states that *“Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.”* Moreover, at para 191 the revised NPPF states that *“Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset,*



Roof terrace at first floor level of Granada House. The side wall of The Mall dominates this space



Granada House and entrance to The Mall: an opportunity for enhancements



Granada House: important frontage at junction of Gabriel's Hill and Granada Street

the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.”

Para 193 of the revised NPPF states: *“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”*

Para 194 of the revised NPPF states: *“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”* It further goes on to state that substantial harm to or loss of grade II listed buildings should be exceptional.

Para 196 states: *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”*

Para 197 states: *“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm*

or loss and the significance of the heritage asset”.

However, as noted at footnote 62 of the revised NPPF, the policies set out in chapter 16 relate, as applicable, to the heritage-related consent regimes for which local planning authorities are responsible under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as to plan-making and decision-making. In particular, Section 66 states that *“In considering whether to grant planning permission [or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State, shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”* Similarly, Section 72 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area, although the revised NPPF 2018 does state at para 200 that *“Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably”* and also goes on to state at Para 201 that *“Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance*

of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.”

Finally, para 202 of the NPPF 2018 states: *“Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.”*

A new addition to the revised NPPF at para 198 states: *“Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred”*, thus making viability assessments a key part in balancing the decision making process. In terms of finding an ‘optimum viable use’ for heritage assets this will not always be the most profitable solution, but the one which delivers a viable outcome with the least harm to the asset, and secures a sustainable future.

In local planning policy terms, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (adopted 25 October 2017) sets out the framework for development in the Borough until 2031. Relevant policies include SP4 Maidstone

Town Centre; SP18 Historic environment; and H2 (1) Maidstone Town Centre broad location for housing growth. Policy DM1 Principles of Good Design is also relevant, stating that *“In order to achieve high quality design, it is expected that proposals will positively respond to and, where appropriate, enhance the character of their surroundings. It is important that development contributes to its context...Key aspects of built development will be the scale, height, materials, detailing, mass, bulk and site coverage...These features should relate well, and respond positively, to the context in which they are seen...New development should integrate well into the built, natural and historic environment...”* Para 6.5 of policy DM1 also notes that *“In assessing the appropriateness of design, the council will have regard to adopted Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Character Area Assessments and the Kent Design Guide, which provide specific information about local character and distinctiveness and give guidance on design principles.”* Policy DM4 details the approach to development affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets, which defers to national legislation (P (LBCA) A 1990 and NPPF 2018).

The Gala Bingo site, whilst not designated, must nonetheless be considered as a heritage asset of some significance. It retains not only its impressive façade but also preserves some important architectural features within its interior, despite being largely disguised as a result of its later subdivision and use as

a bingo hall and multi-screen cinema. Such features include the large main auditorium, now split in two, but with original features remaining, such as the curved art deco balustrades, cornicing, original skirtings, ceiling details and original floor plan which relate to its past as a Granada Theatre. The office rooms upstairs remain untouched, and other original features can be expected to be preserved behind the suspended ceilings and partitions of the original stalls, now used as the bingo hall. The building is declining, especially those elements of the former cinema which are currently sealed off and closed to the public. The building has a strong historical and associative value for its links to the development of the Granada Theatre Circuit and important individuals, such as the architect Cecil Masey and interior designer, actor and director Theodore Komisarjevsky. It operated not only as a sumptuous 'picture palace' but also had a restaurant on the first floor and café, as well as a car park. As a theatre it showed not only films but also live performances, in particular pantomime, and the first pre-WWII pantomime ever staged was "Dick Whittington" at Maidstone.

As the Gala Bingo building is not designated, the potential effects of any redevelopment will need to be appraised in accordance with paragraph 97 of the NPPF. This states that a 'balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'. Key elements of the building which contribute to its significance include its external portico, architectural features and plan

form associated with its Granada Theatre era. As an alternative to full redevelopment, consideration may therefore also be given to either demolition and façade retention only or 'saving' the building and reinstating its leisure use. For interest and comparison, a former Granada cinema (Grade II* listed) in Walthamstow is being purchased and redeveloped by Waltham Forest Council:

<https://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/waltham-forest-council-purchase-historic-former-granada-cinema-and-work-soho-theatre-bring>

Equally, any new development within the setting of the Gala Bingo building would also have to respect the setting and integrity of this building and those which characterise the Town Centre Conservation Area. The Granada Building could be demolished and rebuilt as long as the new development respects the non-designated Gala Bingo site and Conservation Area with sympathetic and appropriate design, scale, mass and use of materials.

Few buildings within the Conservation Area as a whole exceed three storeys in height, and the CAA states that *"it is unlikely that in any location development above four storeys will be considered acceptable"* (CAA, 2009. p.103).

Site 1: Gala Bingo & Granada House

Appendix 1D:Connectivity with Public Transport

Distances & Journey Times to Bus Stops & the Bus Station*

Bus Stop	Location	Distance	Mode		
			Walk	Cycle	Number of Services Within a 20-Minute Walk
	Gala Bingo / Granada House / The Mall				
Mill Street	Mill Street	300m	4-Minutes	2-Minutes	71
Chequers Bus Station	Romney Place	150m	2-Minutes	1-Minute	
	Mote Road				
Lower Stone Street	Lower Stone Street	240m	3-Minutes	1-Minute	70
Chequers Bus Station	Romney Place	400m	5-Minutes	2-Minutes	
	Peugeot Building (Len House)				
Mill Street	Mill Street	17m	1-Minute	1-Minute	71
Chequers Bus Station	Romney Place	450m	5-Minutes	2-Minute	
	Maidstone Riverside				
Rocky Hill	A20 London Road	400m	5-Minutes	2-Minutes	71
Chequers Bus Station	Romney Place	1km	13-Minutes	4-Minutes	
	Maidstone West Station				
Broadway	A20 Broadway	270m	3-Minutes	1-Minute	71
Chequers Bus Station	Romney Place	1km	11-Minutes	3-Minutes	

*(Markides Associates, June 2018)

Distances & Journey Times to Maidstone Rail Stations*

Rail Station	Distance	Mode		
		Walk	Cycle	Public Transport
Gala Bingo / Granada House / The Mall				
Maidstone Barracks	1.2km	15-Minutes	6-Minutes	13-Minutes via Maidstone West
Maidstone East	750m	9-Minutes	4-Minutes	9-Minutes via Kings Hill Connect X1 / Sapphire 101 / 130 / 150
Maidstone West	800m	10-Minutes	3-Minutes	8-Minutes via 503 Maidstone P&R / Greenway 71 / Greenway 72 / 3 / 7
Mote Road				
Maidstone Barracks	1.5km	18-Minutes	7-Minutes	16-Minutes via Maidstone West or 15-Minutes via Greenway 71 / Greenway 72 / 58
Maidstone East	1km	12-Minutes	6-Minutes	10-Minutes via Sapphire 101 / 155
Maidstone West	1km	13-Minutes	4-Minutes	7-Minutes via Greenway 71 / Greenway 72 / 3 / 7
Peugeot Building (Len House)				
Maidstone Barracks	1.2km	14-Minutes	5-Minutes	10-Minutes via Maidstone West or 12-Minutes via Greenway 71 / Greenway 72 / 79A / 79C
Maidstone East	800m	10-Minutes	4-Minutes	10-Minutes via Kings Hill Connect X1 / Sapphire 101 / 79 / 155
Maidstone West	550m	7-Minutes	3-Minutes	5-Minutes via 503 Maidstone P&R / Greenway 71 / Greenway 72 / 1 / 3 / 6 / 6X / 7 / 8 / 79A / 79C
Maidstone Riverside				
Maidstone Barracks	500m	7-Minutes	2-Minutes	n/a
Maidstone East	950m	12-Minutes	5-Minutes	12-Minutes via Sapphire 101 / 79 / 150 / 155
Maidstone West	550m	7-Minutes	4-Minutes	n/a
Maidstone West Station				
Maidstone Barracks	1.1km	14-Minutes	6-Minutes	14-Minutes via Greenway 71 / Greenway 72 / 58 / 60 / 78 / 79A / 79C
Maidstone East	1.2km	16-Minutes	8-Minutes	12-Minutes via Kings Hill Connect X1 / Sapphire 101 / 79 / 150 / 155
Maidstone West	270m	3-Minutes	1-Minute	n/a