

How to realise the vision:

“To build on the **strengths** of Dartford, making it a **better place** for all, whether they are coming to shop, to work, to live or to visit.”



1. **Improve the retail offer:**
A lot of good shops have left Dartford and we need to get them back.

The variety of shops in Dartford will always change, partly due to national trends but also as a result of local influences. If we want to improve shopping in the town centre we can do something about it – for example by changing the layout of our town to make it easier for shopping - with the aim of attracting more household-name retailers to join with the smaller independents in the town.

Our early regeneration efforts have already attracted new larger stores, like TKMaxx to Prospect Place and Waitrose to the Orchards Shopping Centre. The Lowfield Street proposals have helped to generate more interest in the town centre and we want to help shape that enthusiasm. So we need your help in deciding what type of shops people want in Dartford and what else we can do to persuade visitors and shoppers to explore all the shopping areas in our town.

The challenges:

- a. To attract the variety of retailers we have lost, back in to Dartford by providing the modern, flexible, and high quality retail space they need.
- b. To link new shops in Lowfield Street to the rest of the town centre
- c. Improve existing shopping areas

Q What sort of shops would you like to see in Dartford?

2. **Develop the evening economy:**
Dartford closes down at 5.30 in the evening! Can't we make our town a place which is attractive throughout the day and into the night?

There are lots of benefits to improving Dartford's evening and night-time economy. Having people and families using the town centre throughout the day and into the evening will make the streets safer and more attractive and help improve the economy of the town. This will encourage more, better quality retailers to Dartford and encourage extended shopping hours. Everyone wins.

Dartford's Orchard Theatre is the brightest beacon of the 'night-time' economy but other attractions are needed to support the theatre.

The challenges:

- a. Improve and support the Orchard Theatre
- b. Attract new leisure facilities to the town centre
- c. Create a safe and secure environment for all users in the town centre especially in the evening and at night

Q What would you like to see Dartford offer during the

evening?

3. **Dartford is an historic town that doesn't make the most of its assets and history. Why?**

Dartford was one of the great market towns of Kent but the history of the town is hidden. The River Darent runs through the heart of Dartford and used to attract people for boating and playing but for years it has been forgotten, and in some areas fenced off and virtually derelict. The river could be attractive once more. Earlier this year the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) funded Dartford Council to buy land which will enable it to double the size of Central park and facilitate Council plans to restore the river and park to its former Edwardian Glory.

The historic charm of Dartford's High Street makes the centre of Dartford stand out from neighbouring towns. New developments should at least be equally attractive so that the town builds on its architectural strengths.

The challenges:

1. Create a new town square in Market Street, providing an attractive setting for the library and the War Memorial and a new focus of activity
2. Improve links between the town centre and Central Park
3. Encourage good architecture and design in the town centre
4. Secure our historic buildings for the future
5. Create riverside walks, and attractive new developments alongside the river

Q What features would you like to see restored, or introduced to Central Park? Are we right to focus on the River Darent? What activities would attract you to the new Town Square, centred on Market Street?

4. **Improve pedestrian and disabled routes**
Some of the routes around Dartford feel threatening and are unattractive. How can we improve things for pedestrians?

Pedestrian access into Dartford can be difficult. The alleys and passages that link the town's different areas, for example between the station and the high street, are definitely not inviting. Improving these links would encourage shoppers and visitors to spend more time, and money, in the town centre.

The challenges:

- a. Dartford needs attractive pedestrian routes that serve as gateways to the town centre.
- b. Develop logical paths between key destinations in the town centre – linking places like the railway station, bus stops, One Bell Corner and the Park.
- c. Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, particularly in Market Street

Q Which pedestrian routes do you think are most important in the town centre? How would you make them more inviting?

5. **Dartford used to be bustling, vibrant and full of life. People used to live in the town centre - sharing the space with shops and businesses. Can we restore Dartford's sense of place?**

By encouraging more people to live in and around the high street and above shops, as they have done for centuries, the town becomes a busier place in the evening and at night. This would help to make the town feel safer and support local businesses too.

We must also encourage non-retail businesses to the town – they can be major employers and provide a huge base of customers that can encourage those working in the town to use shops and services within the town centre.

The challenges:

- a. Create more homes in the town centre
- b. Provide community services for the extra population
- c. Encourage a mix of uses in the town centre

Q How do we encourage more people to live in the town centre? What community facilities would you like to see in the town centre?

6. **Too many cars in the heart of our town clog up the roads but we all know that is how most people prefer to travel. What are the alternatives?**

Dartford's parking problems cannot be solved by just building more car parks - better public transport is also needed. Improving public transport and making it go where people want to shop or work can encourage more people into the town and make shopping easier. Making road crossings safer will also increase the numbers of pedestrians walking into the town.

The challenges:

- a. Integration of Fastrack
- b. Create a new, central bus stopping area.
- c. Improve pedestrian routes across busy roads
- d. Create better connections to the North of the railway
- e. Improve parking throughout the town centre.

Q How would you improve public transport into and around the town centre? Where is the best place for a bus stopping area?

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What sort of shops would you like to see in Dartford?

What would you like to see Dartford offer during the evening?

What features would you like to see restored, or introduced to Central Park? Are we right to focus on the River Darent?

What activities would attract you to the new Town Square, centred on Market Street?

Which pedestrian routes do you think are most important in the town centre? How would you make them more inviting?

How do we encourage more people to live in the town centre?

What community facilities would you like to see in the town centre?

How would you improve public transport into and around the town centre?

Where is the best place for a bus stopping area?

* If you have any further comments please note them on a separate sheet and post to the address overleaf. Following receipts of comments a public meeting will be held in the town to present the final masterplan document sometime in the Autumn. Details of the date and venue will be advertised nearer to the time.

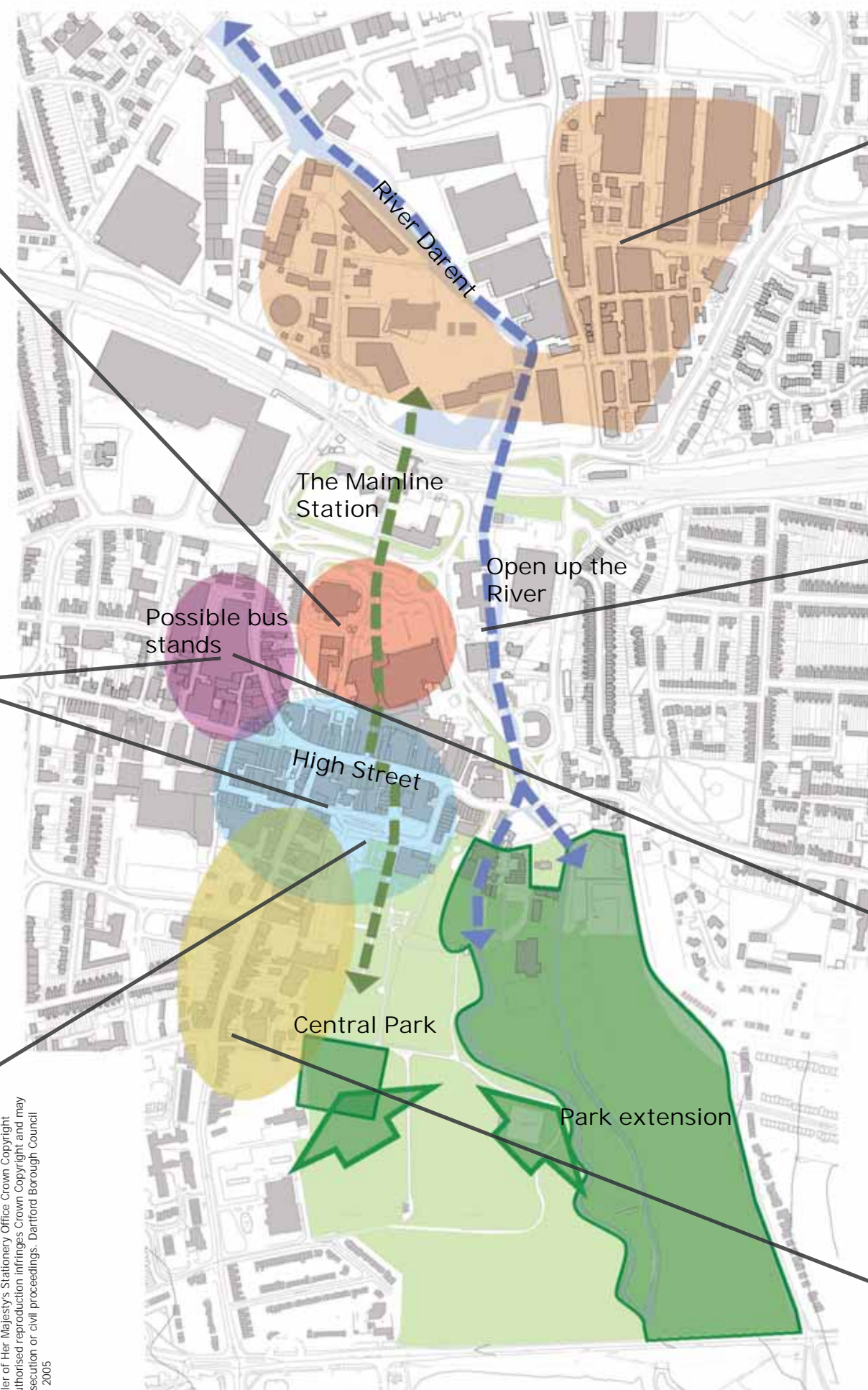
Suggested improvements around the Orchard Theatre



Stronger and safer pedestrian routes



Proposed new town square



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Dartford Town Centre: some early ideas...

Mixed use development areas



Riverside housing



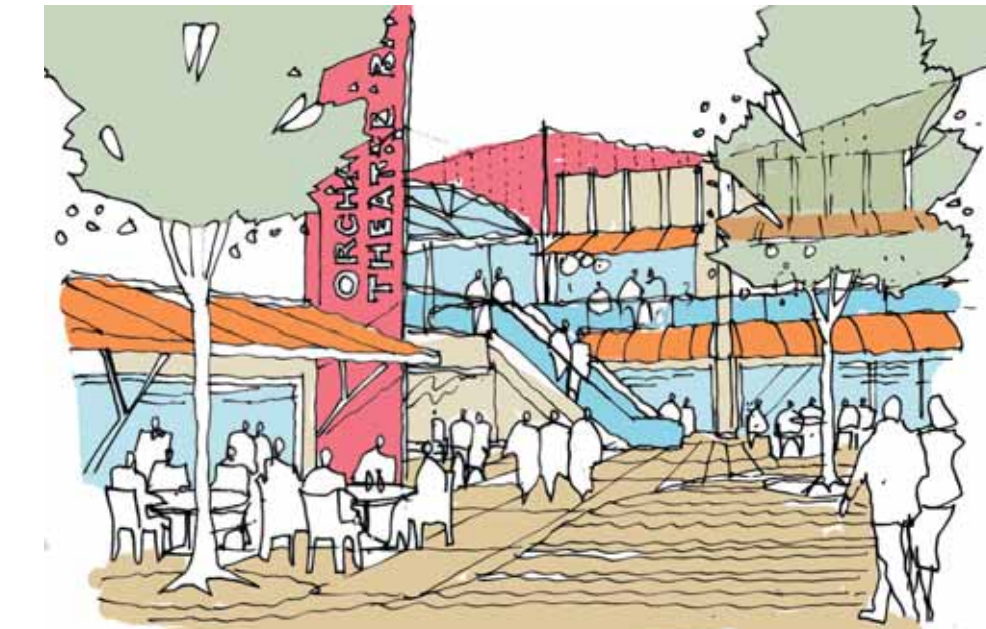
Possible site for bus stands



Lowfield Street mixed use development



The Vision for Dartford - have your say



Over the years, Dartford Town Centre has inspired strong feelings as a thriving town. Unfortunately, these once positive feelings have now become negative with comments that there are not enough good shops, that the streets feel unfriendly and unattractive. Almost all agree that the town is looking tired. Our traders continue to offer high quality services but without urgent attention our once proud market town may be heading for irreversible decline.

However there are exciting opportunities in Dartford, coinciding with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's commitment of over £20 million to Dartford's Town Centre - highlighting the town's key role in the Thames Gateway

Dartford Town Centre is uniquely positioned to benefit with its existing location, history and physical features. The town has the opportunity of becoming a truly great place to live and work, or to visit - and your views can help to make that future a reality. We CAN change Dartford for the better but it means upheaval and tough decisions. Some of those decisions will be difficult and controversial.

That's why we need your help.

Should the town centre be a place to shop?...to work?...to live?...or all of these things? Your views, comments and ideas can help to shape your town. Bringing Dartford back to life will need commitment, energy and, above all, courage. Courage to break out of its decline and give it the boost to make it a vibrant, attractive and welcoming location.

Dartford Borough Council, Kent County Council and partners already have some initial ideas and they're outlined in this leaflet. We also have the financial and expert backing of the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) to assist in the delivery of the regeneration of Dartford Town Centre. Some of this money is funding experts in this area, Donaldsons LLP, to carry out this consultation and to provide a draft masterplan for the town. With so much going on in the area, and with more planned over the next few years, now is the time to really make a difference and build the town centre for your future. Please take a few minutes to read through this leaflet, then write down your ideas for your town centre and reply by tearing off the attached response form or send comments by email to dartfordtowncentre@donaldsons.co.uk.

Your help in the shaping of the future of Dartford Town Centre will inform the Council's new Local Development Framework, which will set out policies for future development in Dartford.

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