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GRAYS TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

GRAYS TOWN DEAL BOARD

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FOREWORD BY

JUSTIN THOMAS

CHAIRMAN OF GRAYS TOWN DEAL BOARD:

Signature: 

As the Chair of the Grays Towns Fund Board and as a Director of NewRiver REIT, the freehold owner of the Grays shopping centre, located in the heart of the town centre, I have actively engaged with the Board and the community to identify the challenges posed and the transformational economic potential within Grays and its resident communities.

The Boards' collective vision for Grays by 2030 is to be:

".... reconnected with its Riverside and maritime heritage. The Riverside will be both a transport and a recreational gateway. By improving access and visibility the River will unlock transformative green space to be enjoyed by the whole community. This will make Grays a happier and healthier place to live. "

Our TIP from the Towns Deal Fund is in support of the following transformational capital projects:

- Project 1: Station Gateway
- Project 2: Active Riverfront Connectivity
- Project 3: Grays Riverfront and Beach
- Project 4: Grays Beach Riverside Park & Kilverts Field: Leisure Destination
- Project 5: Riverfront Activities Centre
- Project 6: Grays Town Jetty

The proposals are presented to show the continuity of experience from initial arrival at the station with safe movement southwards to the riverfront and beyond. Our projects will enable economic diversification and growth and enhanced connectivity between the town centre, riverfront and green spaces. These proposals are critical to the delivery of our vision and key strategic objectives for the town, and will add amenity value, health, well-being and economic diversity to the whole town offering.

In February 2020, NewRiver held a five day community planning weekend to engage with the local community and explore the real needs for a town wide regeneration. The event was attended by our own team of architects, planners and highways consultants to conduct a 'Design Charette', which is a hands-on open workshop where residents, shoppers, local businesses, students and visitors are invited to join in and share their thoughts and opinions on what changes are needed. Participants are encouraged to draw and sketch onto plans of the town to express how a regeneration programme should help deliver the desired changes.

There was a huge turnout to the weekend, and there were some clear themes that came out of the exercise, with many of the participants recalling a previous era when the town centre was a thriving, mixed use hub, a place for the entire community to come together. Although the town is well located, with a busy railway station and a wide range of facilities, it was widely felt that the town had lost its appeal for many, who often choose to shop and access leisure activities elsewhere, with Lakeside being a key destination. Participants wanted to see investment in regenerating both the town centre and the wider town to bring back life and activities, day and evening so that the community are attracted back in to "reclaim the town".

Another key theme that emerged was the sense that the town centre lacks greenery and has a hard, urban feel. Participants wanted a greener, softer and more natural environment in the town centre linked to the Thames and the wider town, for human well-being, biodiversity, air quality improvement, carbon reduction and shelter. It was felt that this greening strategy could provide employment and volunteering opportunities.

Many participants felt that Grays town centre has been "left behind" and they want a regeneration to take Grays into the future, but at the same time respect the best of the town's heritage. In particular a key theme was the need for regenerating the area around the railway station and connecting the town centre to a new mixed use waterfront development, with public spaces and walks along the river and back into town, which would raise the image of Grays as a desirable place to be.

The Towns Fund project proposals, which will reconnect the town centre with its riverside heritage, enhance the riverside experience and create lasting social and economic impact for the town helps to address these key issues that our community planning weekend brought to the fore.

The project proposals contained within the Towns Fund initiative will combine with the other council led initiatives such as the expansion of South Essex College, the Civic Offices improvements and the railway underpass to properly deliver regeneration of the whole town, adding both amenity value, health, well-being and economic diversity to the whole town offering.

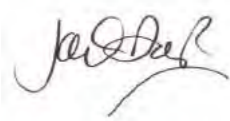
The town centre of Grays has seen very limited investment over the past decade, which is not reflective of its geography, being located only 35 minutes by train into the City of London and with historic frontage onto the River Thames. I strongly believe that with the proposed investment planned by the Towns Fund, together with the other proposed regeneration initiatives, Grays is now well positioned to become the desirable town centre destination for people to live and work that it deserves to be.

I therefore fully support the Board's vision to reconnect the town centre with its riverside heritage, utilising the fund to create lasting social and economic impact for the town.

FOREWORD BY

JACKIE DOYLE-PRICE
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THURROCK & VICE
CHAIRMAN GRAYS TOWN DEAL BOARD:

Signature:



As someone who lives in Grays, it has always struck me that the River Thames is the jewel in the crown of our town. Yet our community looks away from this major asset which can offer so much to make Grays a better place to live, work, play and learn. This Towns deal will enable Grays to embrace the Thames and harness it in pursuit of the well-being of the entire community.

Historically the wealth of Grays rested on its connection to the River and as a market town. Whilst the industry has left, the wharves remain as a reminder of Grays maritime heritage and a focus for reinventing the Riverside as a driver of our future.

Our flagship project is the delivery of a new jetty to encourage new transport links by river. Given the huge ambition to exploit the economic potential of the Thames Estuary for new homes and new jobs, the time has come to make better use of the River for passenger transport travelling east towards the Estuary, south to Kent and west to Canary Wharf and the City.

This proposed jetty will sit directly opposite the proposed London resort. As Grays station will be the closest rail connection we intend that this jetty will enable visitors to travel by public transport from London using rail and sail.

Central to our ambitions is the restoration of Grays Beach Riverside Park as a leisure destination for the whole community able to host outdoor events as well as provide everyday amenity space. At its heart will be the recreation of a proper beach on the banks of the river. This ambition has attracted significant support. We will also develop a new Riverside activity centre to encourage activity on the river as well as provide for event space and educational facilities.

The role of Grays town centre as a retail hub has been in decline for a number of years as shopping habits have changed. The future of Grays must surely rest on it shifting away towards a mixed use town centre with residential, retail, hospitality and leisure. That is the focus of this Town Investment plan. Taken together with the new South Essex College; the planned investment in the new railway station and civic buildings and the planned investment in new homes, these plans will deliver significant enhancements to the environment and public realm in Grays. This is 'building back better' a town that has needed a boost for some time. Thanks to the Town Fund I look forward to playing my part in making this vision a reality.



FOREWORD BY

ROBERT GLEDHILL
LEADER OF THURROCK COUNCIL

Signature:



I've been proud to be the Leader of Thurrock for the last five years and in that time we have made huge improvements to the Borough.

History Thurrock's rich history spans the whole borough In the west, with its Olympics legacy making Purfleet a cultural hub built around Royal Opera house, High House Production Park and studios. In our heartland Tilbury and its heritage of the two forts built to save England from the Spanish armada and Napoleon, and where Elizabeth I made her famous "heart and stomach" speech, to the mass post war influx of people from the cruise terminal and history many years of history trade to the rest of the world. Further to our east, famous for Watt Tyler and the place the peasants revolt started is a wide-open space of open parkland and RSPB reserves regenerated after many years landfill waste from London via the River Thames. It is also home to three international ports, Europe's largest Amazon distribution warehouse and is a bed of innovation and entrepreneurialism that sit's at the core of the South Essex story today.

Grays is the centre of Thurrock and has always been the Civic heart of Thurrock even before becoming a Unitary Authority in 1998. However residents regularly ask when it will be improved, not just the high street but the whole town and its offer to local residents. This town bid will help ensure Grays moves forward and finally delivers the long called for changes. Residents not just from Grays but from Thurrock as a whole will benefit from a new Grays that has leisure and entertainment at its heart, has a regenerated high street with improved shopping and dining, is a place for all ages to enjoy a better riverfront, a new sandy beach and entertaining parks. Not only this but a capital town where you can jump on a ferry into the centre of London or just on to a dingy or yacht and enjoy 'Old Father Thames'.

Grays is an important cog in the economy of the South East. Both its advantageous strategic position and its current socio-economic challenges are very evident and it is through an acknowledgement of the challenges and opportunities of the place that organisations like my own have been inspired to invest in its regeneration over recent years. The projects in this Investment Plan will literally turn heads. As the town looks more to the river, it will draw inspiration, attract visitors like never before and start to raise the aspirations of those that reside here and choose to visit here. The strong sense of ownership that local residents have in Grays has become very clear to me through the Towns Fund process; and this plan promises to be a very important step in providing those local residents with the amenity that they deserve. This Towns Fund submission builds on recent investment into a town whose transformation will be an important part of the future of the wider estuarine and, indeed, South East economies. We have been delighted to be involved in the process and look forward to playing our own part in supplementing the investment in future years as we work with partners to continue to make the strongest possible case for the town.

ADAM BRYAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SOUTH EAST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP



TERESA O'KEEFFE



Grays sits on the bank of the River Thames but until now, has faced away from the river. This Towns Fund and the ensuing Town Investment Plan will enable Grays to develop its relationship with the river in a magnificent way.

Love Grays is about supporting our town and we can't think of a better way of doing it!

Our Towns Fund projects will create a thread, drawing visitors and residents alike from the railway station and the town's High Street to the riverside attractions - which will include a fantastic park full of family activities and riverfront pathways with stunning panoramic views over to Kent.

Encouraging visitors to our town is exciting, and we look forward to being a great host as we share our shops, cafés and restaurants with people as they head to the river to play, walk, sail or to catch the boat from the jetty to continue their travels. The river connects us with our neighbouring towns, including those across the Thames and along the length of it to London and beyond, so it is only right that we lay out a fitting welcome mat. This plan allows us to raise our game, to bring in visitors to enjoy our position as a town with a great leisure offer.

Grays looks forward to properly celebrating our position on this great river and being able to welcome visitors with our arms open.

MARK COXSHALL

CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION
AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

I am pleased support the Grays town bid and was honoured to be part of the board. The projects in this document will be transformational to Grays and open the Riverside to fantastic leisure opportunities.

For many years, residents of Thurrock have said the River Thames is unused with walls and buildings deliberately blocking views and access to its biggest forgotten asset.

With our plans to deliver a new jetty in Grays, we can look forward to River trips connecting Thurrock with Kent, London and beyond. We aspire to a beach; a Riverside activity centre just for river based activities; and an updated Grays Beach Riverside Park with outside entertainment space. There will be a promenade to walk along the riverside with a view of the Thames instead of the current concrete wall. All these projects put together will deliver great leisure opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages.

This fund will accelerate the transformation that is already in progress in Grays. This includes the relocation of South Essex College into the town centre which has brought in young adults; a new Civic Centre that will bring public services all together in one space; as well as the plans for new homes, just 35 minutes from London. Taken together all these initiatives will bring additional footfall into our town and breathe life back into it. This plan will deliver the missing link of leisure opportunities and the projects in this bid will complete the regeneration of Grays.

LUCY-EMMA HARRIS

My family have lived and worked in Grays for over 100 years and they have seen it go through many changes.

Grays was once a thriving market town and had a High Street that people enjoyed. The changes in infrastructure, technology and retail development mean that shops have moved out of the High Street leaving it sad and unsupported.

The construction of South Essex College has started to bring people back to the town, but it is a town that now needs more of a 'leg up', in creating an environment that is going to keep those people, encouraging them to stay for longer.

It is time for change; and like other towns we need to build on the connectivity and relationship residents and visitors have with the river. The river has been forgotten as one of our most valuable assets in connecting with nature, heritage and place. We have explored our industrial riverside heritage and we seek to create a resilient future relationship with the town and the river.

The Towns Fund will create the riverside, helping it to become a public gathering space, rediscovering the qualities and benefits of waterside activity and reinventing the way people relate to it.

Creating this new face of the river and drawing people into the town increases the quality of life for all the surrounding neighbourhoods and becomes a major attraction and public space for everyone.

ANGELA O'DONOGHUE

PRINCIPLE AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SOUTH ESSEX COLLEGE

The Grays Town Fund projects will provide a clear line of sight from the High Street through to the River front. South Essex College invested £45m in a new town centre campus on the Southside of the railway, and we currently train approximately two thousand 16-19 year old and adult students. This development has contributed to the beginnings of the Town Centre regeneration.

The Towns Fund projects, alongside the investment already secured from SELEP to provide a walkway under the station, will build on our initial development. They will improve and enhance connections to the High Street and the river as a destination space for study, shopping, walking, cycling, rest, and enable students and residents to take part in a range of cultural, heritage and leisure activities including access to digital connectivity and opportunities to meet and enjoy a vibrant interesting environment for all ages.

The young people and adults studying at the college are excited about this development as it will provide easy access to the river and the jetty, opening up opportunities to travel via the river to London and Kent, improving their access to employment and leisure opportunities.

It will also improve the area surrounding the college, providing eating and music venues alongside micro and start-up business opportunities for the student population.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Grays is the civic heart of the Borough of Thurrock, situated on the northern bank of the mighty River Thames. Formerly a small port, with chalk quarries and brickworks, its current landscape is reflective of its natural geography created by the river and an artificial topography generated by excavation. Its heritage is fundamentally underpinned by a relationship to the River Thames which has a strong and persistent presence in the history of Grays.

It is ironic that today the Thames can be observed from the High Street, but the closer you get the less it becomes visible or accessible due to raised embankments. Connectivity to and use of the riverside asset is poor. It seems that sometime during the 20th century, possibly with the arrival of the train station, Grays turned its back on the river.

The town centre itself has reasonable transport connectivity via rail and bus, but it has lost its appeal for many who often choose to shop and access activities elsewhere. Until the 1990s, the centre remained vital and viable, but its gradual decline commenced after the opening of Lakeside Shopping Centre a few miles away. The current pandemic has really accelerated the decline in High Street retail and has had a marked impact upon the local economy, which has too heavy reliance on a few key sectors.

Grays has become a shell of its former self. It does not live up to its true potential as a fantastic place to live, work, play and learn, making the most of its proximity to both the river and the capital, as well as playing a key role supporting the economic growth of the wider Thames Estuary.

Our residents value and want to make better use of our inherent assets, particularly the riverside, in a post-pandemic world. The town centre lacks greenery and the community wants a greener and more natural environment linked to the Thames and the wider town, for their well-being, biodiversity, air quality improvement, carbon reduction and shelter – they want to turn Grays green.

The town lacks an evening economy, despite a relatively young population. There is a need to inject diversity and activities, day and evening to reclaim and reconnect the town centre to its relevant parts and especially the riverside - its key forgotten asset. Connectivity and transformation of the riverside are key for Grays post-pandemic recovery.

The economic challenges faced by Grays need investment to diversify and adapt, taking account of what the local community wants. As the TIP sets out, some projects are already underway which address some of our challenges. But the market has shown that further public investment is needed to really drive further growth and maximise our

The riverside area has the potential for real growth as a new destination for both locals and visitors, offering a mix of provision against the backdrop of the Thames. This can be a key area for enterprise, leisure and well-being tapping into cultural activities building on the existing diverse community and building enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit. Investment here can leverage community strengths and networks to produce place-based cultural programming that reaches and inspires more people and further enables excellence in arts and culture within a nationally important creative cluster.

In parallel, there is a need to improve connectivity to and within the town, providing seamless permeability from all parts of Grays to the riverside as well as reintroducing connectivity along the river itself with the introduction of new boat services into London and across the water to Kent.

It is against this background that the Grays Town Deal Board (GTDB), in partnership with Thurrock Borough Council (TBC) has prepared this submission - the Grays Town Investment Plan (GTIP). It is informed by wide-ranging consultation and engagement with the community, businesses and other public-private sectors organisations. The GTDB was formed in January 2020 following formal agreement on leadership, governance and structure in compliance with Government guidance¹.

Our vision for Grays by 2030

"Building on its history as Chartered Market town and its connection to the River, the ambition is to transform Grays and deliver a high quality destination to live, work, learn and play.

The future of Grays will see it reconnected with its Riverside and maritime heritage. The Riverside will be both a transport and a recreational gateway. By improving access and visibility the River will unlock transformative green space to be enjoyed by the whole community. This will make Grays a happier and healthier place to live.

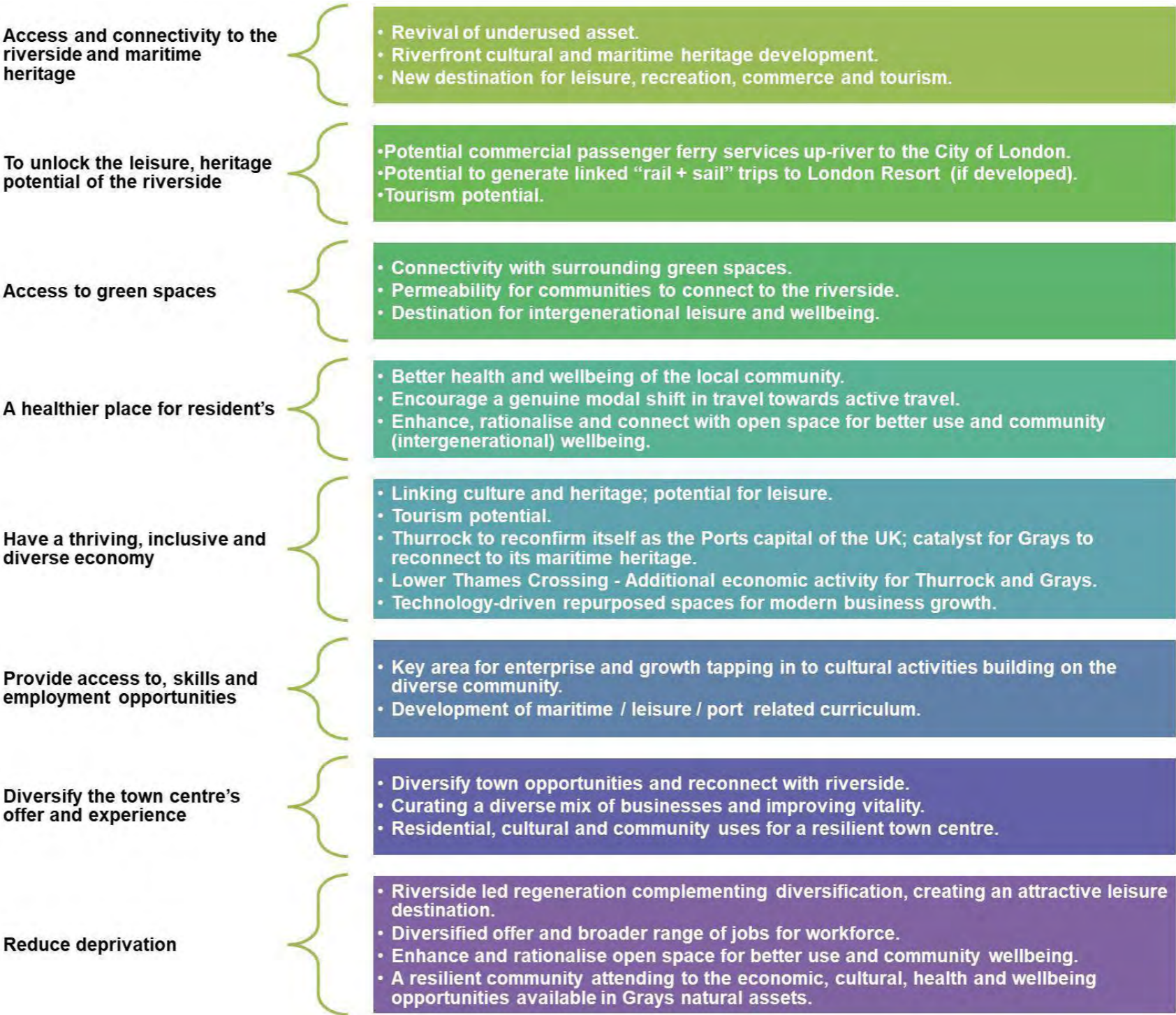
The reanimated Riverside and improved links with the Town will stimulate greater integration between the resident, student and business communities and foster growth in both the day and night-time economy. Cafes, bars, restaurants, shops and markets will combine with the potential for culture, entertainment and events in new indoor and outdoor venues which will provide attractive spaces for people to meet and socialise.

The interconnected town and Riverside will support jobs, learning and entrepreneurship and boost the prosperity of this historic town."

Our vision has been developed through comprehensive stakeholder consultation over time and contextual analysis leading to eight key strategic objectives prioritised by our community as shown opposite.

Working with the community and other partners we believe we can make a significant contribution and difference to the future development of Grays. A move toward a more diverse town centre offer is essential to remain competitive, vital and viable.

We anticipate that confirmation of the new London Resort across the river on the Swanscombe Peninsula and the opportunities this will bring, alongside this TIP, will boost the opportunities for longer term private investment.



8 prioritised strategic objectives

The Towns Fund will help us to deliver the projects that are needed to support the next steps in our growth journey. We are placing social value at the heart of our proposal contributing to health, well-being and attractiveness of the town for living, working and visiting. This will set the trajectory for a post-pandemic recovery.

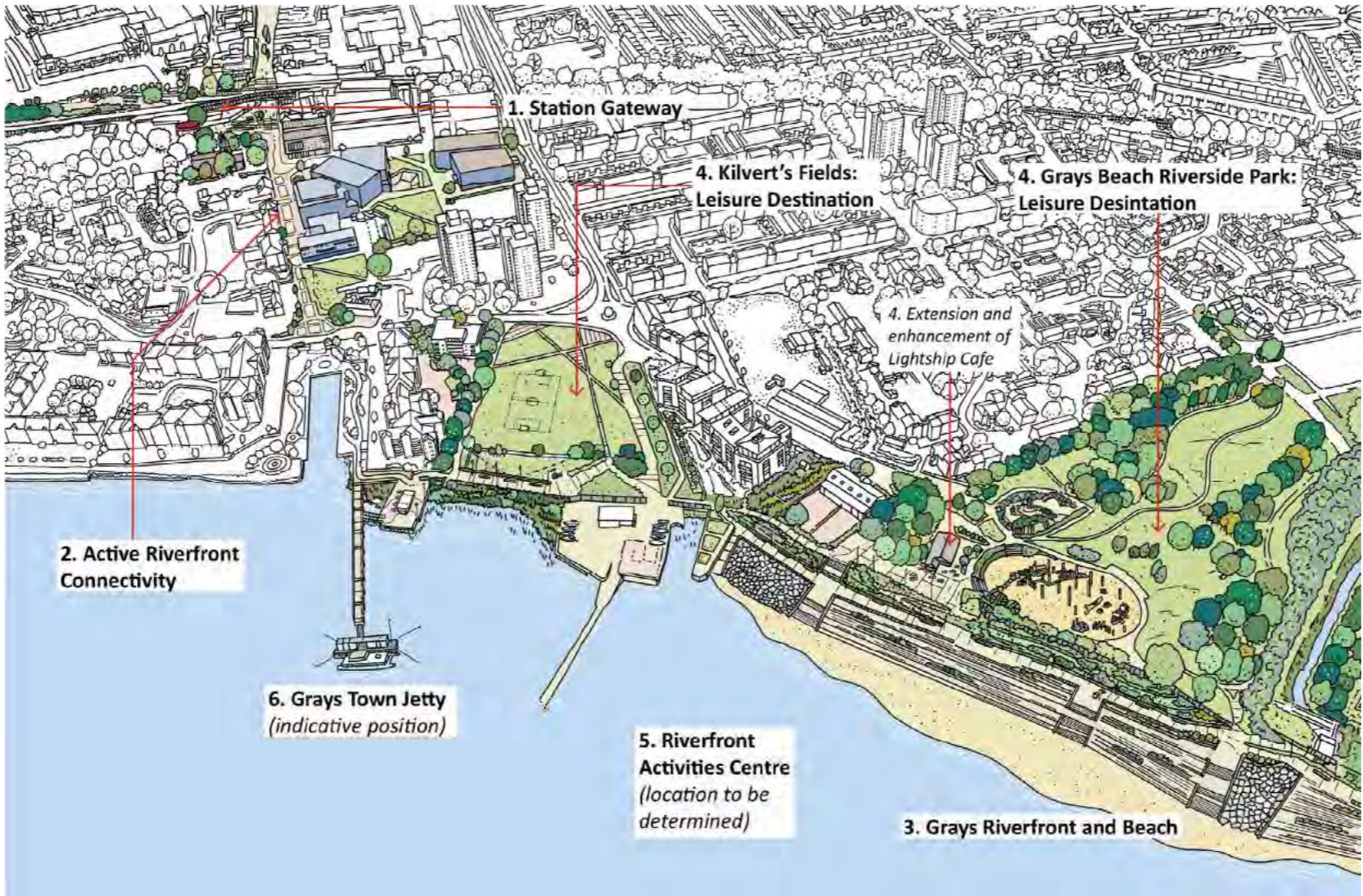
- **Project 1: Station Gateway** - The station is an important gateway for Grays and this project will provide new commercial / start up space (e.g. new food and beverage concepts) at ground level to support the adjacent railway station.
- **Project 2: Active Riverfront Connectivity** - Building on Project 1, this intervention seeks to extend the continuity of the High Street to the riverfront. This route represents a 'central spine' connecting the north of the town centre, station gateway buildings (Project 1) the riverside destination (Projects 3, 4, 5) and proposed jetty (Project 6).

- **Project 3: Grays Riverfront and Beach** - Our aim is to reanimate the riverfront and give it prominence with modern amenity and infrastructure. It will provide a quality environment and a publicly accessible beach reconnecting the community with nature and aiding a range of social benefits
- **Project 4: Grays Beach Riverside Park & Kilverts Field: Leisure Destination** - Building on Project 3, we seek to embrace the natural uses of the riverfront further by connecting existing open spaces and the riverfront. Grays Beach Riverside Park and Kilverts Field are public open spaces serving a wide community but suffer from a lack of facilities or activity. We will address this by making the area more visually permeable, create access up to the river and make existing amenity space more desirable through the provision of physical event infrastructure to enable provision of intergenerational activities all year round.

- **Project 5: Riverfront Activities Centre** - To enhance the riverside destination we are also seeking to provide a dedicated 1,200 sq.m (Gross Internal Area (GIA)) riverside activities centre. This will facilitate community use of the river for leisure and maritime activity and provide event and education space.
- **Project 6: Grays Town Jetty** - Our flagship project will be a new jetty, proactively planning for future river traffic and a major driver for economic activity and growth. It will provide new transport links by river consistent with the desire to make the Thames Estuary a more significant economic driver.

All of these projects for Grays align with wider ambitions for Thurrock and wider regional growth.

Our Towns Fund 'Ask' is for **£24.947m** to deliver these projects. You will see that a journey of much-needed regeneration has already started in Grays. The Towns Fund represents a timely catalyst to deliver and accelerate the next phase of Grays regeneration, to reconnect with and harness the economic benefits of the riverside, as its communities recover from the impact of the global pandemic and resulting changes in the economy. We believe that working with the diverse community in Grays we can make a 'once-in-a-lifetime' change to the future focus and development of Grays.






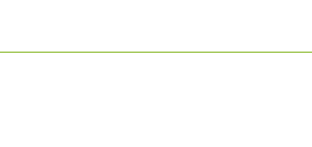


Project overview visual

Town Investment Plan: Summary Figure



Town Investment Plan: Our Projects

GRAYS TOWN DEAL	PROJECTS	OUTCOME / IMPACTS	ASK
	1. STATION GATEWAY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing diversity in economy / jobs • Developing a visitor economy, alternative economy, and night economy • Support start-up businesses • Support the spatial definition of the new public space • Improved physical and social connectivity. 	£2,640,000
	2. ACTIVE RIVERFRONT CONNECTIVITY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More active movement patterns for residents, reducing car dependency. • Reconnecting the town to the train station and riverside • Enhancements to a key public space. • Promote COVID-19 recovery objectives through enabling new and enhanced public spaces and better health outcomes. • Better integration of Seabrooke Rise estate to riverfront. • Promote access to services in an area suffering from pedestrian and cycle disconnect. 	£2,510,000
	3. GRAYS RIVERFRONT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting accessibility to the riverside. • Positive health & wellbeing through connection with Kilvert's Field and Grays Beach Park. • Enhanced community space. • Addressing climate change through greater naturalisation of the river edge. • Improved physical and social connectivity. • Improvements to embankment and flood resilience. 	£5,590,000
	4. GRAYS BEACH & KILVERTS FIELD: LEISURE DESTINATION 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activating the poorly perceived riverside • Provision and diversity in the economy and jobs. • Developing a visitor economy and alternative economy. • Positive health & wellbeing through provision of green lungs. • Enhanced community space. • Improved access, and appeal to wider audiences throughout the year. • Addressing climate change through greater biodiversity. • Improved physical and social connectivity. • Improvements to embankment and flood resilience. 	£4,570,000
	5. RIVERFRONT ACTIVITIES CENTRE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated centre for providing to maritime and leisure activities for all of Grays communities. • Fostering leisure and visitor economy • Positive health & wellbeing through active riverside activities such as canoeing / kayaking / paddle boarding. • A leisure space for the community. • Enhance social value through partnership working with the community, employers, college, entrepreneurs, etc. 	£3,037,000
	6. GRAYS TOWN JETTY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformative economic gateway. • New sustainable public transport mode on the Thames • Job creation / new skills development (e.g. construction & maritime). • Increasing tourism potential / employment in tourism for local people. • Supporting social objectives through an improved location that local people can use and be proud of. • A new focus for cultural, educational, marine, leisure, and tourism activities. 	£6,600,000

Section 1 : Introduction:

Our Town

Our Community

Our Story

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Grays is the **civic heart** of the Borough of Thurrock with its administrative, educational and cultural functions. Its distinctive sense of place is underpinned by its location on the River Thames, its landscape setting and its historic fabric. The river and riverside have a strong and persistent presence in the history of Grays, but remain an underutilised asset with weak connections, views and accessibility.

The figure opposite shows the agreed geographic area that covers the town centre including the railway and bus station(s) and importantly the expansive riverside area. The figure shows the Grays 'Built-Up-Area' as defined by the Office National Statistics and used to make the initial allocation by MHCLG. This also includes Purfleet and West Thurrock. Grays is the eastern portion of this map with the town centre being the key focus for the Board with its various functions and the ability to complement ongoing regeneration and funding initiatives. Today, it is one of the six 'economic growth hubs'² in Thurrock.



Grays: MHCLG Town Fund Area³

Grays remained a vital and viable town centre for its resident community until the opening of Lakeside Shopping Centre (in 1990) which saw the start of the gradual decline and change in the role for Grays.

As a result of this decline, Grays has been a longstanding priority for the Council with a focus on growth in jobs and homes together with a need to accommodate a diverse range of complementary uses that can create a vibrant town centre. Projects the Council has fostered include:

- **South Essex College (Grays Campus):** working with the college and delivered the campus on its land in the town centre. It continues to work with the college to coordinate education and training and to identify opportunities for expansion. The location of the college has increased footfall in the town centre considerably attracting approximately 500 young people and adults per day. The College has been key to addressing skills needs in Grays and the wider Thurrock area.
- **Grays South Regeneration Area:** with funding from the South East Local Economic Partnership (SELEP) Local Growth Fund (LGF) the Council is working with Network Rail and operator C2C to develop an underpass for pedestrians to cross the rail line that severs the town centre. The scheme includes a joint residential and mixed use development around the station.
- **Grays Magistrates Court:** working with Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Services Ltd (NWES) to refurbish the vacant building owned by the Council as a business centre. This is intended to support skills development and help to diversify the economy by supporting new business.
- Working with **NewRiver REIT**, the owners of Grays Shopping Centre, with proposals for a reduction in their retail footprint and the potential introduction of 500+ town centre residential units. This will contribute to the growth in community and diversification required for the town.

The vision is that Grays town centre will becoming more focused on residential accommodation rather than retail provision. Housing surveys regularly show that Grays is the best value place to live if you work in the capital and it seems safe to assume that more people will wish to make their home here. This Plan is therefore designed for the existing community and in anticipation that the residential community is likely to grow significantly.

Recently⁴ Grays was unsuccessful in securing Future High Street Funding (FHSF) intervention support investment to: redevelop existing commercial/retail space (creating flexible spaces); provide 207 additional housing units; and implement digital infrastructure in the town centre. The FHSF projects, focussing primarily on the north of the railway station, would have been complementary to this Town Investment Plan (TIP) as our focus is southwards particularly the riverside. The Council is investigating other opportunities to progress the FHSF projects and MHCLG have suggested the Levelling-Up Fund as one possibility.

This TIP sets out an ambitious plan for Grays, a 'next step,' that is exclusive but complementary to current strategies and other regeneration activity. We want to re-engage with the riverside to support multiple agendas including helping to develop communities and places that are sustainable, attracting residents and business, supporting healthy lifestyles and encouraging the change that contributes towards the success of Grays in social, economic and environmental terms. Diversifying Grays, and delivering a riverside-led regeneration, will aid in driving recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and "build back better" by creating a strong inclusive community.

Our ambition is to encourage the flow of street life between the riverside and town centre. The maritime highway of the river needs to become a public space that the community can easily see and access, where cultural and leisure activities surround it. As communities grow, there will be a latent demand for creative, cultural services and spaces where they can operate, interact and develop. Grays is well positioned to deliver a resilient community attending to these economic, cultural, health and well-being opportunities.

We want to re-establish the vibrancy that Grays enjoyed in the past and provide adaptable indoor and outdoor spaces that can be used for a variety of beneficial activities and effectively diversify and future proof the town centre in a rapidly changing economic environment. As the town evolves and repurposes itself for the future with the new college, residential space and business centre, those initiatives will enable communities in Grays to "learn", "live" and "work" locally. Missing in this equation is also the need to "play" locally which is important now more than ever for health and well-being.



South Essex College



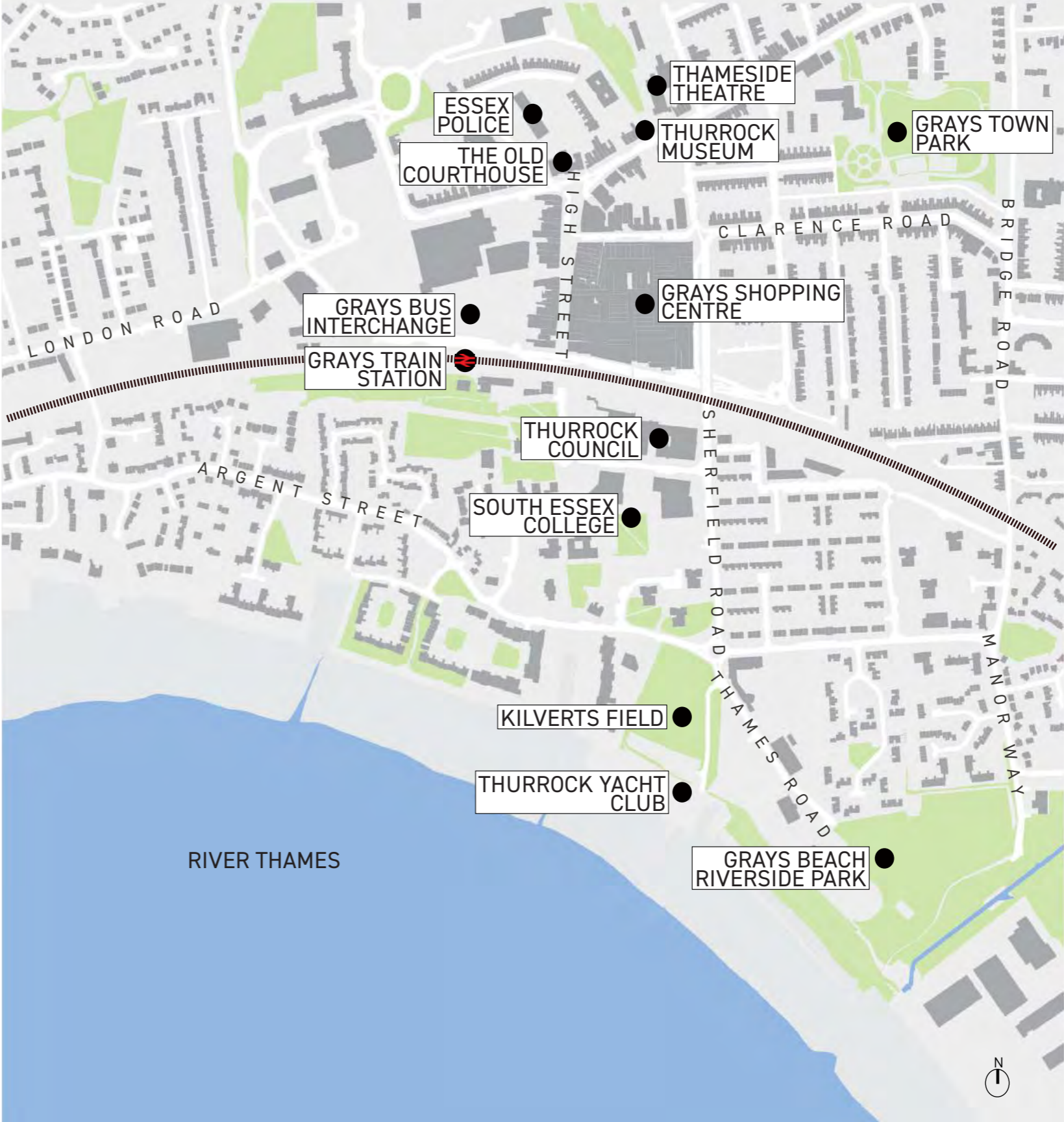
Grays Town Centre



1.2 GRAYS TODAY

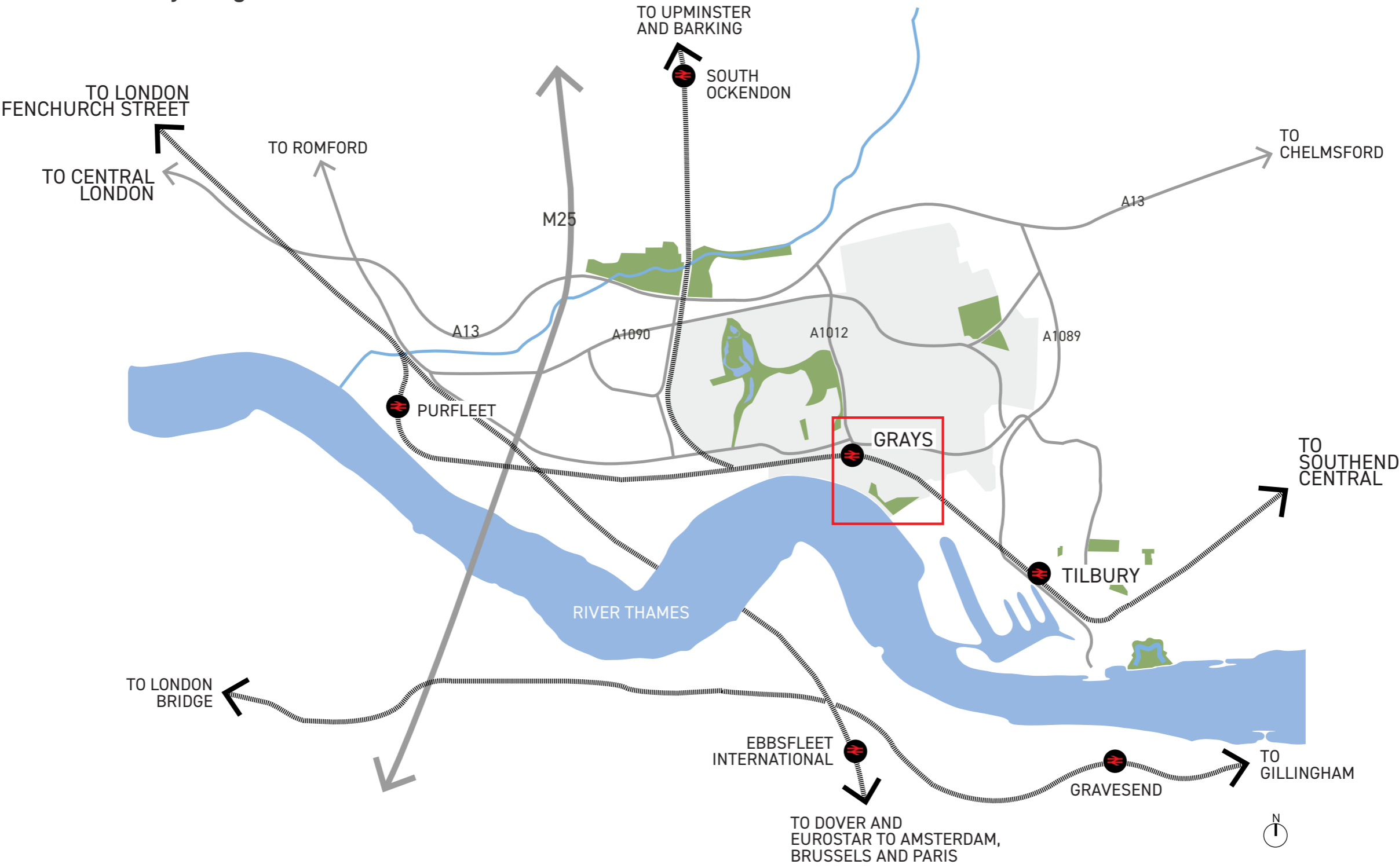
Grays is in a strategic location with excellent transport connectivity. The town is well connected by road and rail. It is 5.6km north-west of the town of Tilbury, 19.5km south-west of Basildon, and 32km east of central London. It is also approximately 23km north of the Kent Downs – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It lies just outside the M25 boundary (3.2km to the west) and the A13 connects Grays to the west towards central London and to the east towards Southend-on-Sea. The A126 London Road is the main artery linking the town centre with Lakeside Shopping Centre, Purfleet and Tilbury. Its train station is located in the heart of the centre and directly adjacent to the main bus interchange serving the Borough with immediate access to the main retail area.

Trains run approximately every 15 minutes between Grays, London Fenchurch Street and Southend. Rail services from Grays to Fenchurch Street take approximately 35 minutes. The station and line is busy accommodating 3 million passenger movements⁵ each year, and as such, Grays is an important – and growing - commuter town. The rail station is directly adjacent to the main bus station interchange, serving the Borough and provides a sustainable transport interchange.



Grays Town Centre Area and Landmarks

Grays Regional Context Plan



Grays is also part of the wider SELEP region encompassing the local authority areas of East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock – the most significant economic gateway and strategic route between London, the rest of the country, Europe and global destinations. Grays also forms part of The Thames Estuary – a significant economic growth area.

Despite these assets Grays continues to be hindered. In the past, Grays has been a thriving town centre, a mixed use hub, and a place for the local community to come together. Although the town is well located, with a busy railway station and a wide range of facilities, the town centre has lost its appeal for many who often choose to shop and access leisure activities elsewhere, with Lakeside and Bluewater Shopping Centre(s) being key destinations. Despite its proximity to London, Grays has not seen significant improvements in land and rental values affecting the development returns necessitating public sector intervention to address market failure. The town centre lacks an evening economy and there is a need to bring back life and activities, to reclaim and reconnect the town centre, its relevant parts and especially the riverside – its key forgotten asset.



South East Local Enterprise Partnership - SELEP area

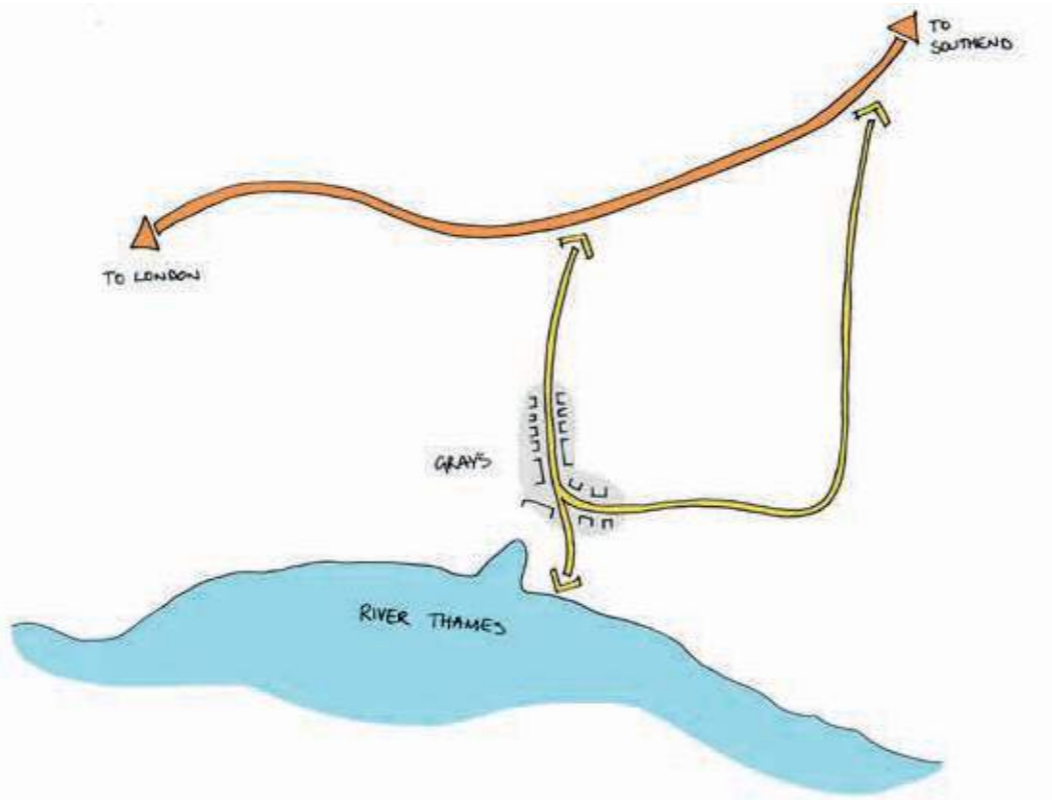


1.3 SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

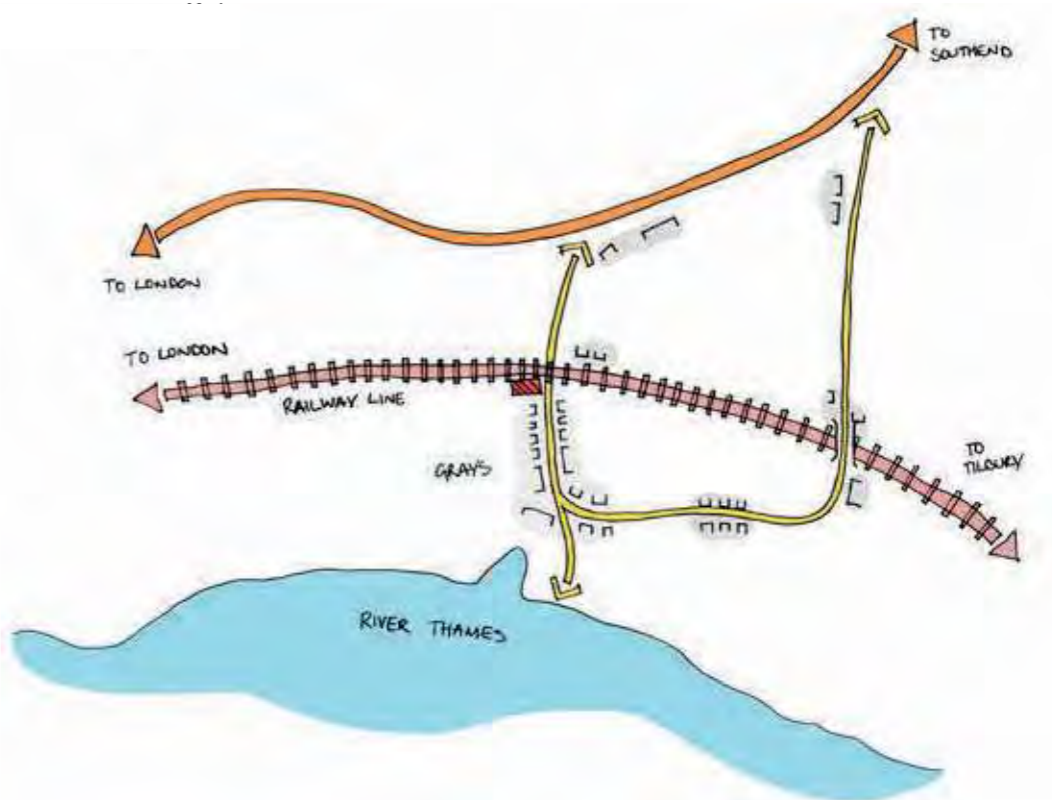
Grays historical spatial development is detailed at **Appendix 1**. It received its market charter in 1221 and began expanded beyond its medieval shell between 1871 and 1901. This was in part due to the establishment of the railway, the development of local quarries and the opening of nearby Tilbury docks. Extensive quarrying, mainly in the 19th century, altered the natural landscape, as well as influencing the pattern of settlement.

Throughout the 19th century, Grays' its port supported a fishing village and the largest fleet of sailing barges in Britain. There is no sign of that fishing now. Today's town centre developed from the 1850's with the opening of the rail line, serving industry based around minerals extraction and riverside wharfs. The retail and social role of the town centre grew in tandem to serve the growing population and became established as the main district shopping and social centre.

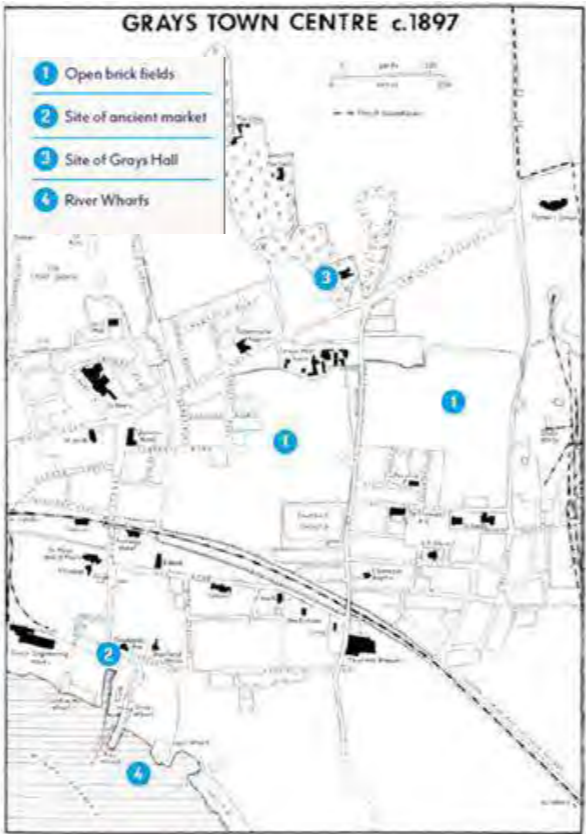
The contemporary shift of the High Street, towards the north (from its original focus to the south)took place following the opening of the rail station in 1854 and was consolidated following the extensive redevelopment which took place in the 1960s and 1970s. The 1970s modernisation programme led to redevelopment north of the railway line, with the construction of Grays Shopping Centre. The northward shift from the riverside in this period crystallised the urban form of Grays today which was further consolidated with the opening of Morrisons' third store in the south-east of London in May 2002.



Historic growth of Grays (source: NewRiver REIT charette stakeholder output 2020)



Influence of railway on historic growth of Grays (source: NewRiver REIT charette stakeholder output 2020)



Grays Town Centre c1897 (source: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/>)



Grays Town Centre c1904 (source: Steer Consulting)



1.4 REGENERATION

We recognise that heritage as a market town and retail centre will not be enough for the future of Grays. It is entirely dependent on regenerating as mixed use residential/retail/hospitality and leisure destination. Our regeneration journey has already started and has been boosted further by the Accelerated Funding. We set out below how the Towns Fund can support Grays to complete the next phase of this journey.

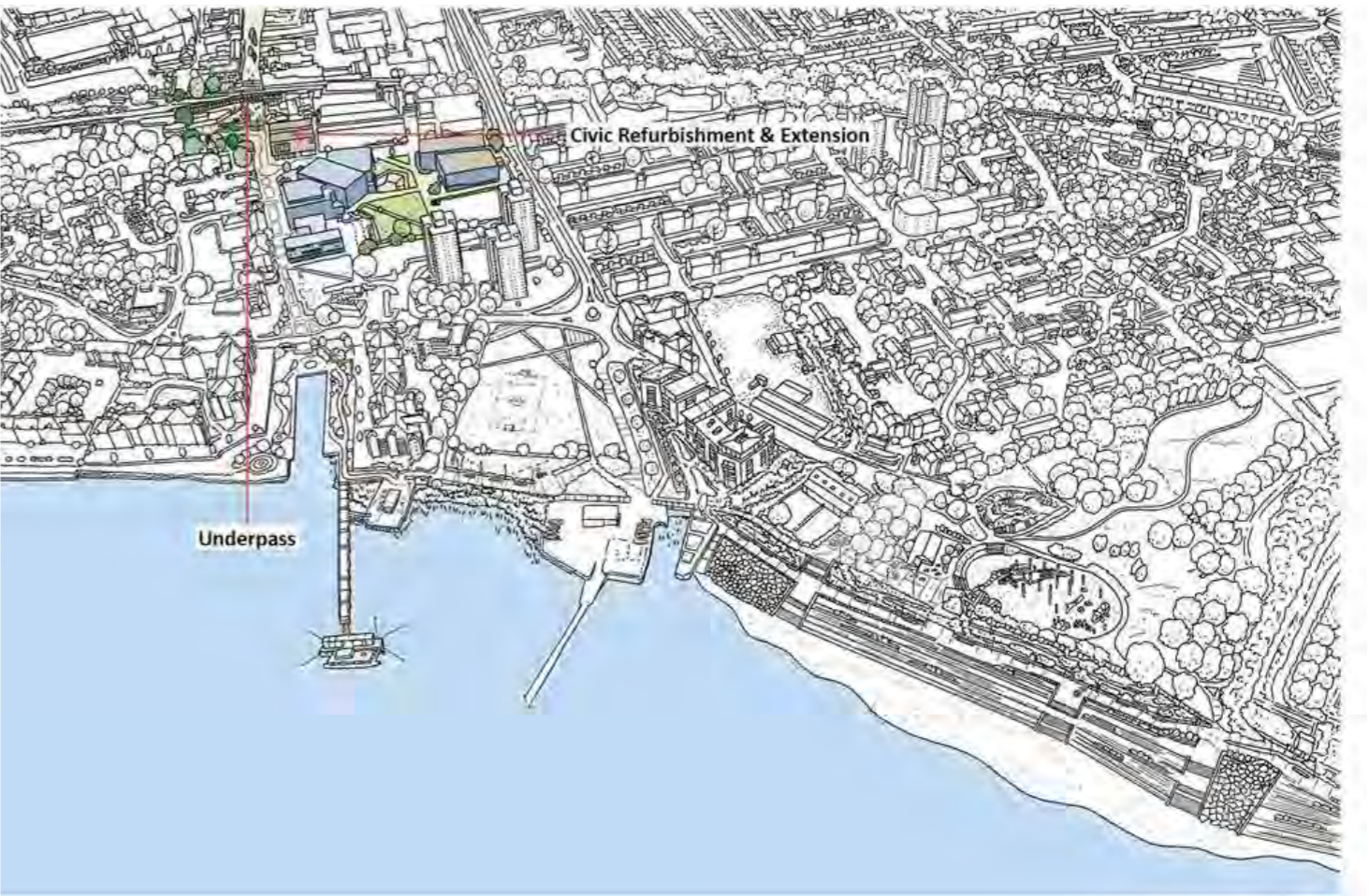
Completed



South Essex College Grays Campus: The Council worked with the college to construct on its land in the town centre and continues to work with the college to coordinate education and training and to identify opportunities for the college to expand.

Grays Magistrates Court: The Council worked with Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Services Ltd (NWES) to convert the vacant building as a business centre. As land owner the Council provided the bulk of the funding and a loan also from the Local Growth Fund (LGF).

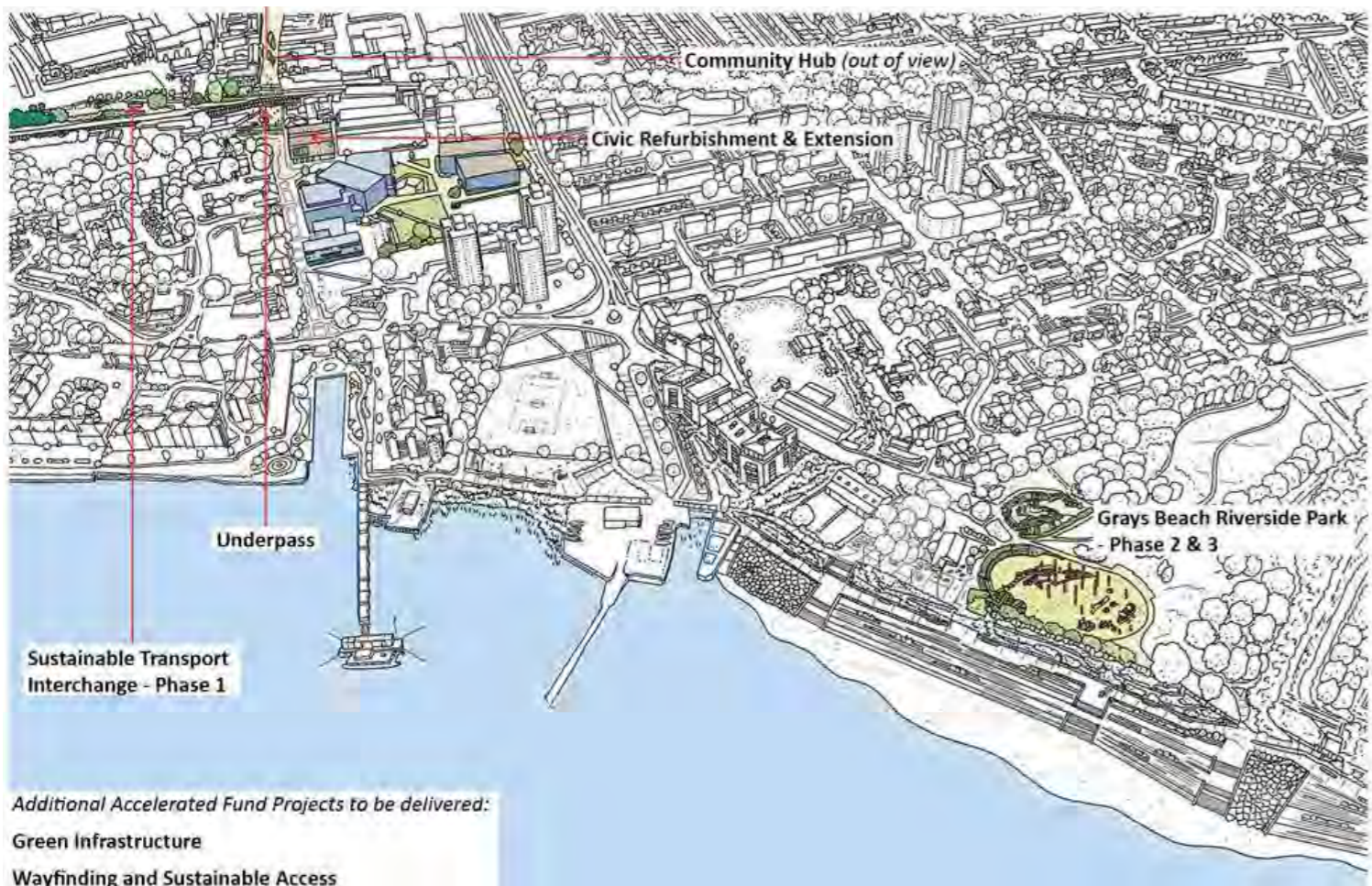
In progress



Civic refurbishment and extension - provide a modern, effective building in which our residents can easily access key services. Support and contribute to the aims and ambitions of the South Grays. Support the Development Framework, which includes the building of a new pedestrian underpass and regeneration of the High Street. Vacating of the older site to free up land to be developed for town centre residential accommodation

Grays Underpass: The Council is working with Network Rail and C2C to develop an alternative means for pedestrians to cross the rail line that severs the town centre. Funding is provided by the Council's, Network Rail, and a grant from the LEP Local Growth Fund. The Council is investigating with Network Rail and C2C opportunities for a joint residential and mixed use development around the station.

In progress and accelerated fund projects



- Sustainable Transport Interchange – Phase 1 (Grays Bus terminus)** - To increase the capacity and quality in the provision of passenger transport access points at the Grays Transport Hub, alongside supporting enhancement works.
- Grays Beach Park / Riverside phase 2** - Replace play equipment that has reached end of life, upgrade other equipment.
- Grays Beach Park / Riverside phase 3** - Remove out dated skate park and install a new outdoor sports area / health fitness area.
- Green Infrastructure** – Green seating along riverfront
- Community Hub** - Provide accessible location for community engagement and information on Towns Fund.
- Wayfinding and sustainable access** - To provide enhanced signage across Grays town centre and beyond into surrounding neighbourhood areas to enable and encourage active travel into town centre.

Project	Funding	Description
Grays Bus terminus	£299,000	To increase the capacity in the provision of passenger transport access points at the Grays Transport Hub, alongside supporting enhancement works.
Grays Beach phase 2	£175,000	Replace play equipment that has reached end of life, upgrade other equipment.
Grays Beach phase 3	£137,500	Remove out dated skate park and install a new outdoor sports area / health fitness area.
Green Infrastructure	£33,500	Green seats and structures along riverfront and from riverside park to town centre
Community Hub	£60,000	Provide accessible location for community engagement and information on Towns Fund.
Wayfinding and sustainable access	£45,000	To provide enhanced signage across Grays town centre and beyond into surrounding neighbourhood areas to enable and encourage active travel into town centre.
Total	£750,000	

Accelerated funds projects

The role that Grays has played in the lives of its resident community has changed over the years and is continuing to do so. As part of the repurposing for a viable future we aim to address the long standing, but unrealised opportunity focussed on the riverside. Encouraging a seamless flow from the town; surrounded by leisure, culture, open spaces and resurgent maritime activity.

The Towns Fund projects



Future projects



Development north of Railway Line - Densification of residential; Space for skills and training: adult community education. Space for business: expanded business centre. Intend to retain control of units so businesses can scale up from incubator (see next item). Supports town centre economy, ground floor adaptable spaces.

C01 Redevelopment for Flats - Residential densification.



Section 2 : Context

Section 2 : Context

Grays: Key Indicators



Maritime Heritage Strong

Landscape setting, historic fabric defined by Thames



Riverside Assets Good

Includes Kilvert's Fields and Grays Beach



Transport Connectivity: Good

Key station on the Essex Thameside Line (Grays to London: 34 minutes)



South Essex College Emerging hub

£45m Campus is Grays and Thurrock's educational hub.



Population: Growing

2018: 74,800 (ONS)



Population Growth: High

+9.9% between 2018 -2028
Almost twice England average (5%)



Population: Young

33% aged under 25



Community Support Good

Grass roots community interest and support for local businesses



Employment Diversity Poor

Employment drivers: retail, transport & storage, business administration & support services. Employment in 'at risk categories' stands at 57.6% compared with a national average of 48.9%.



Employment Growth Low

-0.1% compared with an Eastern regional average of 5.8% and a national average of 3.7%



Skills and Qualification: Gap

A fifth (21%) of the population do not have a single qualification



Digital Connectivity: Limited

Constraining economic growth and economic diversity



Social Class Profile:

AB category 18% – GB average (23%)



Deprivation: Mixed: Includes LSOA in 10% most deprived

Particularly in the domains of:

- Income Deprivation;
- Education, Skills and Training;
- Barriers to Housing and Services; and
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index.



Child obesity High

In the wards(s) of Grays Thurrock and Grays Riverside stand at 23.1% and 25.8% (English average is 19.3%).



Smoking High

Thurrock and Grays Riverside ward(s) stand at 21.1% and 22.6% respectively (English average is 18%)



Healthy Streets Comparison Poor

- Not easy to cross centre
- Inadequate places to stop and rest
- Poor perception of safety
- Lack of things to do and see



Quality of Public Realm: Poor

- Poor visual appearance of streetscape.
- Resulting in negative perception



Town centre connectivity Poor

Local accessibility hindered by inadequate pedestrian and cycle routes



Congestion & Pollution High

Air Quality Monitoring on Orsett Road, Grays at 12 micrograms



Town Centre Greenery: Low

Only 4% of the town centre area is designated as having a green space



Intergenerational Facilities / Space Limited

For community generally



Vacant Outlets High

2019: Vacancy Rate of 11.8% comparable to then average of 11.9% but increasing further

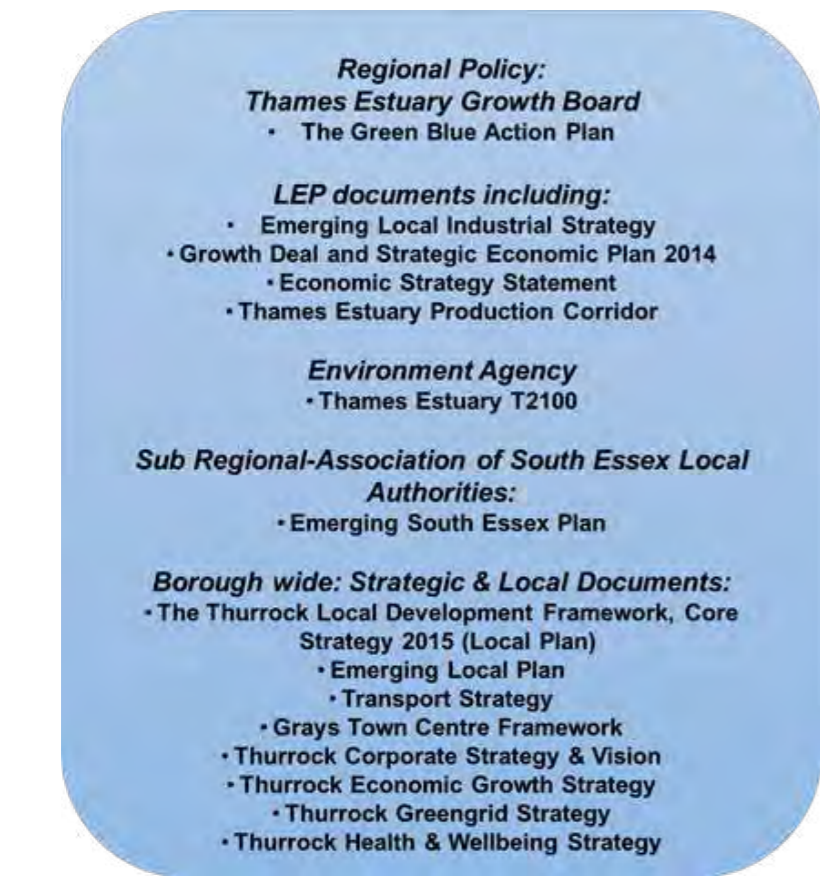


Retail Yields High

Commercial Retail Yields between 9% - 11% indicating low investor confidence

2.1 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The GTIP has focused on prioritising proposed interventions which complement other existing and planned regeneration and growth initiatives. This means that interventions are shaped to support the outcomes of existing plans to which the Council and associated partners are fully committed.



National and Regional Policy Alignment

In formulating the GTIP, we have referred to the relevant national and regional policy documents to ensure effective strategic alignment. The figure below provides a summary of the relevant policy documents that are closely aligned to the preparation of this TIP.



Regional Policy



- **Thames Estuary Growth Board:** Its action plan "The Green Blue" sets out plans for fulfilling the potential of the region, comprising east London, north Kent, south Essex and the Thames itself. The Green Blue includes key plans to attract business and investors, boost connectivity to and in the area, bring clarity to the housing debate, regenerate infrastructure, and create jobs. The plan is called "The Green Blue" because it signifies good, green growth using the important, blue waterway of the Thames that connects the UK with the rest of the world.
- **SELEP's Economic Strategy Statement** aims to deliver growth in the South East and is the pre-cursor to their Local Industrial Strategy. It identifies the Thames Estuary as one of its top priorities for growth and sets out that the Thames Estuary Production Corridor should be a key part of this. Significance is also placed on developing the creative and cultural industries across the LEP area.
- **Thames Estuary Production Corridor:** This strategy aim to unlock and maximise the creative potential of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor. The Thames Estuary Production Corridor has the potential to double the size of the production sector across the Estuary, supporting the delivery of more than 50,000 new jobs and creating additional economic output (GVA) of over £3.7bn per annum. The report references the Thameside Theatre in Grays as a 'local spark' that that can support Town Centre revitalisation with an increasingly visible presence of creative production.
- **Thames Estuary TE2100 Plan:** produced by the Environment Agency it provides a flood risk management plan for London and the Thames Estuary into the next century. The Plan is supportive of the concept of reconnecting Grays Town Centre to the River Thames by way of improved public access to the river; use of the river as an amenity and habitat creation as part of a complementary riverside strategy.

Borough wide Policy Alignment

At the Borough level, Thurrock's growth and regeneration is being managed and driven forward by the Council's Local Development Framework, and the suite of (adopted and emerging) evidence-based strategies and policies that will help deliver this. The projects proposed as part of this TIP are an integral part of the framework and represent an important step in Grays contemporary evolution which will help to catalyse further growth. Alongside local ambitions, these interventions will help Grays to capitalise on its inherent opportunities.



Local Policy

The Thurrock Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2015

The core strategy outlined several key drivers of change within Thurrock. It is cognisant of the challenges faced by Grays especially the development of Lakeside (as a strategic employment location) has necessitated the need to securing the health and vitality of Grays through alternative means:

Core Strategy: Spatial Policies

- **CSSP1: Strategic Housing Provision**
- **CSSP2: Strategic Employment Provision**
- **CSSP3: Sustainable Infrastructure**
- **CSSP5: Sustainable Green Grid**

Core Strategy: Thematic Policies

- **CSTP1: Strategic Housing Provision**
- **CSTP5: Neighbourhood renewal**
- **CSTP6: Strategic Employment Provision**
- **CSTP7: Network of Centres**
- **CSTP8: Vitality and Viability of Existing Centres**
- **CSTP9: Wellbeing: Leisure and Sports**
- **CSTP10: Community Facilities**
- **CSTP12: Education and Learning**
- **CSTP14: Transport in the Thurrock Urban Area**
- **CSTP18: Green Infrastructure**
- **CSTP20: Open Space**

Emerging Local Plan

The new Local Plan's 'issues and options' consultation (stage 1) took place in 2016 and stage 2 ended in 2019. This plan responds to strategic pressures for higher growth in housing and employment and strategic projects such as Lower Thames Crossing and expansion of ports capacity in the Borough.

Local Policy Alignment

The local policy context is led by the Grays Town Centre Framework which was refreshed in 2017. The GTIP demonstrates clear alignment with the Framework's aspirations for the riverfront and can be a vehicle for the delivery of some of these key projects.

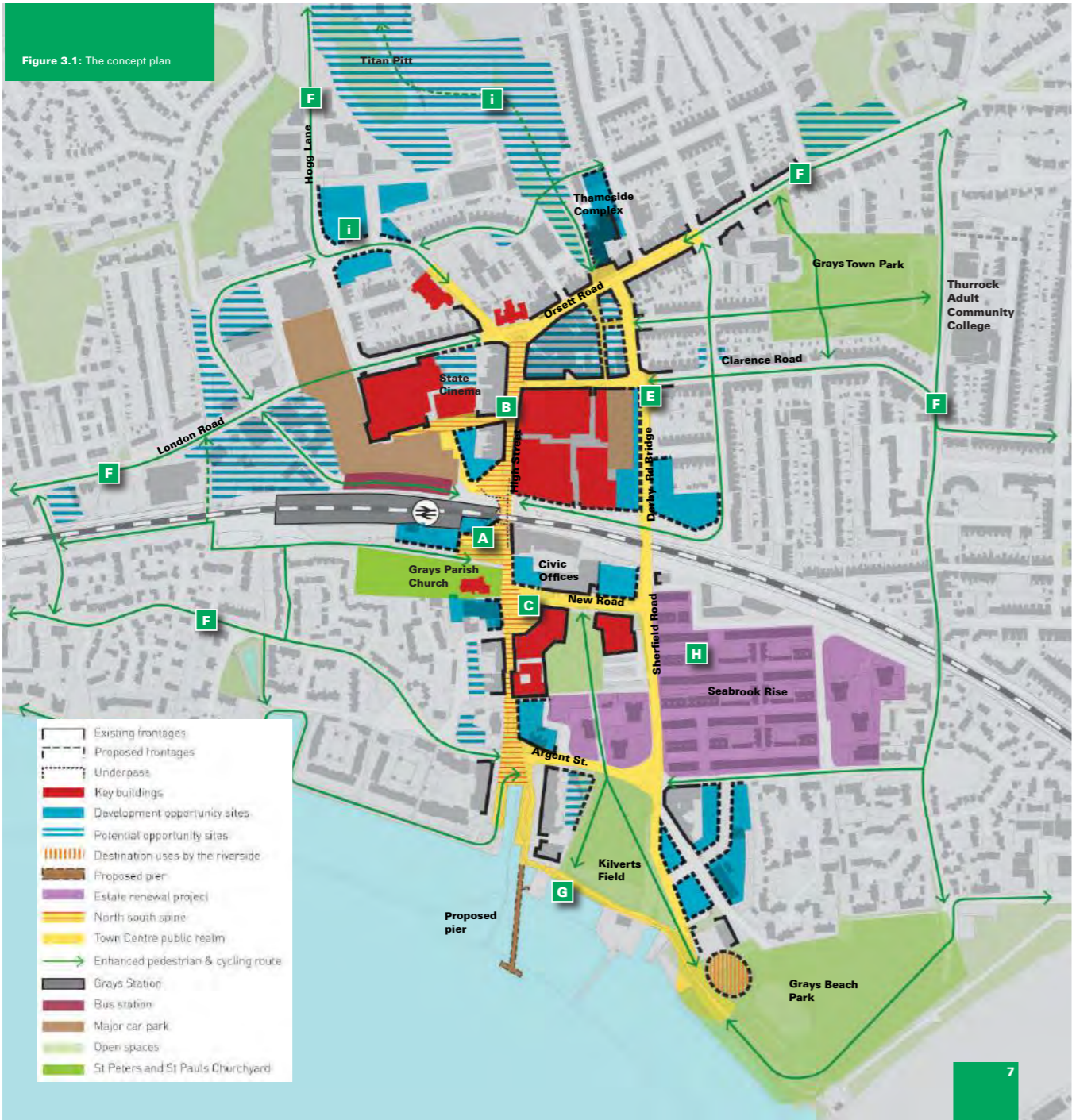
Grays Town Centre Framework 2017(Refresh)

This sets out a framework for the physical and social regeneration of the town centre. Its purpose is to provide a spatial concept to guide development and enhancement. The framework features a variety of uses which provides a base to address the declining importance of retail and a High Street structured around civic, cultural and leisure uses. It highlights a number of projects and potential development sites, including:

- A new pier with riverboat services;
- The reconfiguration and expansion of the Civic offices;
- An underpass;
- Relocation and expansion of cultural services, either at Thameside Complex, or part of civic offices extension, or in a new location at the riverside;
- An improved movement network;
- Infill sites along and around the High Street; and
- Larger available development sites at Titan Works and within the Western Gateway.

Grays Town Centre Concept Plan

Since 2017, some of these sites have come forward with some developments under construction. The underpass and surrounding sites form a core focus for new development, to activate new public realm, especially towards the railway station. This area also includes the Grays Shopping Centre, which due to inefficient use and landowner ambition, has become a significant potential development site in a strategic town centre location. This is not part of this TIP but provides an indication of the scale of change required to transform Grays.



Grays Town Centre concept plan (source: Grays Town Centre Framework 2017)



Local Residents



2.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT









Our detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan is set out in full in Appendix 2. It describes the “who, how, when and why” of our engagement with key stakeholders; ranging from local residents and representatives of community/voluntary organisations, to businesses and third-party stakeholders. Critically it sets out the engagement planned beyond the submission of this TIP

In identifying specific needs and interventions that could address these issues, local communities within Grays have been on a journey through several community focussed consultations as illustrated below:







Community consultation and project selection journey

For the GTIP we have used engagement techniques ranging from virtual workshops to digital platforms; including the responses to the Grays #MyTowns campaign and our Grays Towns Fund website (Graystownsfund.co.uk)

 <p>2013: Grays Town Centre Regeneration - Stakeholder Vision Workshops</p> <p>Respondents: 1,500</p>	 <p>2017: Grays Town Centre Framework (Refresh)</p> <p>Respondents: 300</p>	 <p>2019: Thurrock's Local Plan Consultation Issues & Options (Stage 2) Consultation</p> <p>Responses: Organisations / Individuals: 700 Comments Received: 3,000</p>	 <p>2020: Grays Underpass, Design Guide and Project Bank</p> <p>Website User/hits: 1,200 Active Engagers: 89 Informed visitors: 518</p>
 <p>2020: NewRiver REIT Design Charette</p> <p>Respondents: 500</p>	 <p>2020/21: Advisory Group Workshop(s)</p> <p>Comprising members: 26</p>	 <p>Graystownsfund.co.uk website</p> <p>Website 1,769</p>	 <p>#Grays MyTown</p> <p>Suggestions Received: 32 Comments received: 47</p>

Consultation Metrics

The transformation of Grays is an ongoing process. It requires commitment and partnership-working to help maximise our collective resources and work towards a common goal to help deliver tangible economic and social benefits for the community, businesses and stakeholders.



**BUILDING A LOCAL ECONOMY
BASED ON:**

- Markets, convenience and specialist retail, cafés, leisure and events during the day;
- Entertainment, culture and places to eat and drink during the evening;
- Maximising the benefit to the town centre from opportunities to develop high quality housing and commercial buildings; and
- Creating space for businesses to grow.

**IMPROVE MOVEMENT AND
ACCESS TO THE TOWN BY:**

- Delivering a high quality pedestrian underpass to facilitate easy pedestrian and cycle movement across the railway connecting the town centre and the River Thames;
- Enhancing the transport interchange around the rail station; and
- Improving road, bus, cycle and pedestrian links into and around the town centre.

**SUPPORTING THURROCK'S
COMMUNITIES BY:**

- Improving Council owned assets such as the Thameside Complex and Civic Offices to provide a better facilities - whilst maintaining continuity of cultural and community services;
- Creating opportunities for community activities and Pop up uses;
- By ensuring that regeneration activity meets the needs of local communities;
- Supporting existing businesses; and
- Building upon the existing character of the town and making the most of its assets.

**ENHANCING THE QUALITY
OF THE PUBLIC REALM BY:**

- Creating public squares and greener spaces;
- Creating active spaces for markets, street cafés, and events;
- Taking advantage of the river frontage; and
- Identifying priority areas for landscape improvements in conjunction with improvements to road, bus, cycle and pedestrian links.

Grays Town Centre Framework Refresh 2017



Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government The RT Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Jackie Doyle-Price MP and Thurrock Council leader Robert Gledhill

~ YOUR GRAYS ~ ~ YOUR VOICE ~



PLACE STORYBOARD



BETTER PAID JOBS
SMALL LOCAL ENTERPRISE
SPECIALISED SHOPS
access to FRESH & QUALITY FRUIT & VEG

MORE GROCERY SHOPS

encourage BIG NAME SHOPS & CAFES



A NEW SHOPPING CENTRE

we need more OFFICES DO WE?

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

PARKING SOLUTIONS NEEDED - MULTI STOREY for RESIDENTS?

SUITED & BOOTED PUBLIC SPACES

INCENTIVISE walking and community activities

FRESH AIR!

COUNTRY PARKS
I'D LOVE TO SEE FAMILIES & KIDS PLAYING OUTSIDE

OPEN SPACES

PHOTOGRAPHY COMMUNITY DARK ROOM

PRESERVE all OLD BUILDINGS
e.g. PUBLIC HOUSES & RITZ CINEMA
reuse them for THEATRE ARTS & CULTURE

Good LOCAL Schools YOU CAN WALK TO

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS GROUP
PRO ACTIVE - PREVENTATIVE
LOCAL VOICES THAT ARE LISTENED TO

ENTERTAINMENT & SPORT
LEISURE GALLERIE + ART

DANCING SHOWS to combat loneliness
TAI CHI - GENTLE ACTIVITIES
HUB

MAKING + CRAFTS
LEARNING

MORE HANDS ON ENGINEERING courses

INCUBATOR spaces

LIVE, WORK, PLAY

our memories OF GRAYS IN THE PAST

VISION

UNIQUE
DUTCH BARN
RELAXED
FRESH OPEN QUIET

HIGH STREET was a HIVE of ACTIVITY

SMALL LOCAL ENTERPRISES SMEs

BUZZING & ALIVE
OPEN

STATE CINEMA

ENTERTAINMENT

I used to sit WATCHING the WORLD go BY!

ORGAN SAFE



Sense of ownership
FEELING PROUD
Residents · Shops · Schools
Working together.....

CLEANER STREETS!

Organize Community
Working parties?

I want to feel safe in the town centre
MORE POLICE PRESENCE
MORE PEOPLE AROUND.

Nothing is open at night...
ONLY TAKE AWAYS!

Promote more than the town centre!
SOCKETS HEATH...
the Parks...

this is a historic place,
it needs celebrating!
• A UPDATED MUSEUM
• EVENTS
• ACTIVITIES
• We need to look after
our memorials.

THE THAMESIDE
THEATRE
IS GREAT!

There used to
be 4 cinemas.
SHOULD BE
A CINEMA
AGAIN! ... an affordable one!
2200 seats.

Weatherpoons.
BUT WHEN?!

Multi-functional
**A PROPER
LIESURE CENTRE**

evening
entertainment

more **OPPORTUNITIES**
to bring people together

COMMUNITY
EVENTS

WE ARE A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Need to
HONOUR &
RESPECT
different
CULTURES

NEED: forums

Womens groups

THE INTERPRETER
translating outreach
materials... Polish etc...
Community translators

LANGUAGE
LESSONS

Facebook has
become the Community
Noticeboard

need more
INTEGRATION

GET RID of the GADGETS
People stay
indoors, they don't
talk to each other.

How to
limit?

YOUTH
CLUB

YOUNG PEOPLE
need more things
to do!
[esp 12-18y olds]

A BETTER
SKATE PARK

A YOUTH
SAILING
CLUB
Somewhere to learn skills

MORE GREEN
SPACE

A COMMUNITY ALLOTMENT
involve schools &
other groups
"GORILLA GARDENING"

GROWING
FOOD in
SCHOOLS

Afternoon tea
at St Mary's
Coffee Pot

Knit &
Natter

Sense of **COMMUNITY**

People have a cup
of tea & stay all day...
Cafe at the Beach

NEED MORE
& affordable
PARKING

GRAYS TOWN WHARF

Make a 'Historic Trail' along the River front

THE BIG LOCAL
Theres a lot going on in
Grays but we have to start
shouting about it!

YOUR GRAYS
your voice

PLACE STORYBOARD
VISION

The vision and specific interventions are not static and will be tested through the dedicated Grays Towns Fund website (<http://graystownsfund.co.uk/>). The website forms part of a forum for continual engagement not only for this current submission but also for the future as business cases evolve for each intervention.

The consultations have signified that it is critical to create more reasons to be in a safe Grays town centre; to increase the number of people there and to re-establish the vibrancy that Grays enjoyed in the past especially with its connections with its riverside. They further indicate the desire for a mix of uses including green spaces, shopping, eating, leisure, cultural, housing and places to work.

Graystownsfund.co.uk: Top 3 Suggested Improvements:

Daytime	Evening	Weekend & Bank Holiday
Tackling antisocial behaviour, Police, Security (39%)	Tackling antisocial behaviour, Police, Security (36%)	Events and activities (33%)
Better shops (20%)	Quality Food & Drink Offer particularly for families (20%)	Tackling antisocial behaviour, Police, Security (16%)
Quality Food & Drink Offer particularly for families (9%)	Arts, culture and entertainment (11%)	Provision of Leisure Facilities (9%)

The town centre lacks greenery. Residents wanted a greener and more natural environment in the town centre linked to the Thames and the wider town, for their well-being, biodiversity, air quality improvement, carbon reduction and shelter. The use of such space for intergenerational activity and participation has come through strongly especially during the current pandemic.

Graystownsfund.co.uk: Social Media Engagement: Frequently Suggested Improvements

Tackling antisocial behaviour, Police, Security (23%)
Better Use and Provision at Riverfront (14%)
Better connectivity, pedestrian and cycle access (14%)
Keep centre clean and tidy (14%)

2020-21: Grays Towns Fund: Response to Social Media Campaign

The communities want to have more things happening in the evening. Grays town centre is more than just a place to go to the station and commute into London. It has to function beyond a commuter hub and where there is an ecosystem consisting of communities and local businesses that can thrive and grow.

Grays town centre seems that it has been “left behind” and there is a need to renew the town's confidence, built heritage and develop buildings and spaces to raise perception and take Grays into the future.

In summary, from our engagement the frequently mentioned “strengths” included:

— Support for regeneration;

“Thurrock and Grays has changed and is still changing. The Town Centre has not kept up with the times. Relying on retail to bring people in to the town centre is not going to work and we need to think out side the box!”

2020: Grays MyTown Campaign

— Proximity to riverside;

“Riverside Facilities.. Due to our fantastic location investment in this area would give a boost to the area... A couple of restaurants would bring in people and income. It’s a tough call but the area by the yacht club and the wharf is a suggestion.!”

2020: Grays MyTown Campaign

— Location, town is well located, with a busy railway station and a wide range of facilities;

“It’s a fine location – 30 minutes to London and 30 minutes to Southend beach!”

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)

— Unique identity;

“we are not Lakeside, we are not Basildon... we are Grays”

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)

— Diversity and strong community spirit;

“the cultural mix is really exciting”

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)

The main “weaknesses” include:

- Tackling antisocial behaviour and perception of crime;
- Grays sits with its back to the River Thames;
- Physical barriers to the river edge;
- Empty shops / vacancies;
- Lack of evening economy;
- Quality of food & drink provision;
- Poor air quality;
- Congestion and parking; and
- Lack of greenery.

When asked what potential “opportunities” would help to transform Grays over the next 5-10 years, the following were identified:

- Stimulating growth on the riverside;
- Riverside with green spaces;
- Link riverside to town centre;
- More choice of food and drink places to meet all different groups of people;
- Events and activities;
- Tackling antisocial behaviour and address security;
- Create intergenerational spaces;
- Promote active by design;
- Opportunity for river taxis, boat services;
- Incubator spaces for start-ups needed;
- Connecting the community;
- More professional / highly skilled jobs and creative industries.

“More greenery on Grays High Street; replacing paving... It's part of the reason Grays is looking a bit tired”

2020: Grays MyTown Campaign

We aligned and tested this local perspective against existing evidence-based strategies and the available empirical research to check whether it could be robustly evidenced and supported. From this review we have identified the following five critical themes that have provided the structure for our assessment of Grays strengths, assets and challenges as well as helping to identify the potential opportunities and needs for future transformation and growth.

We consider each of these below in more detail.



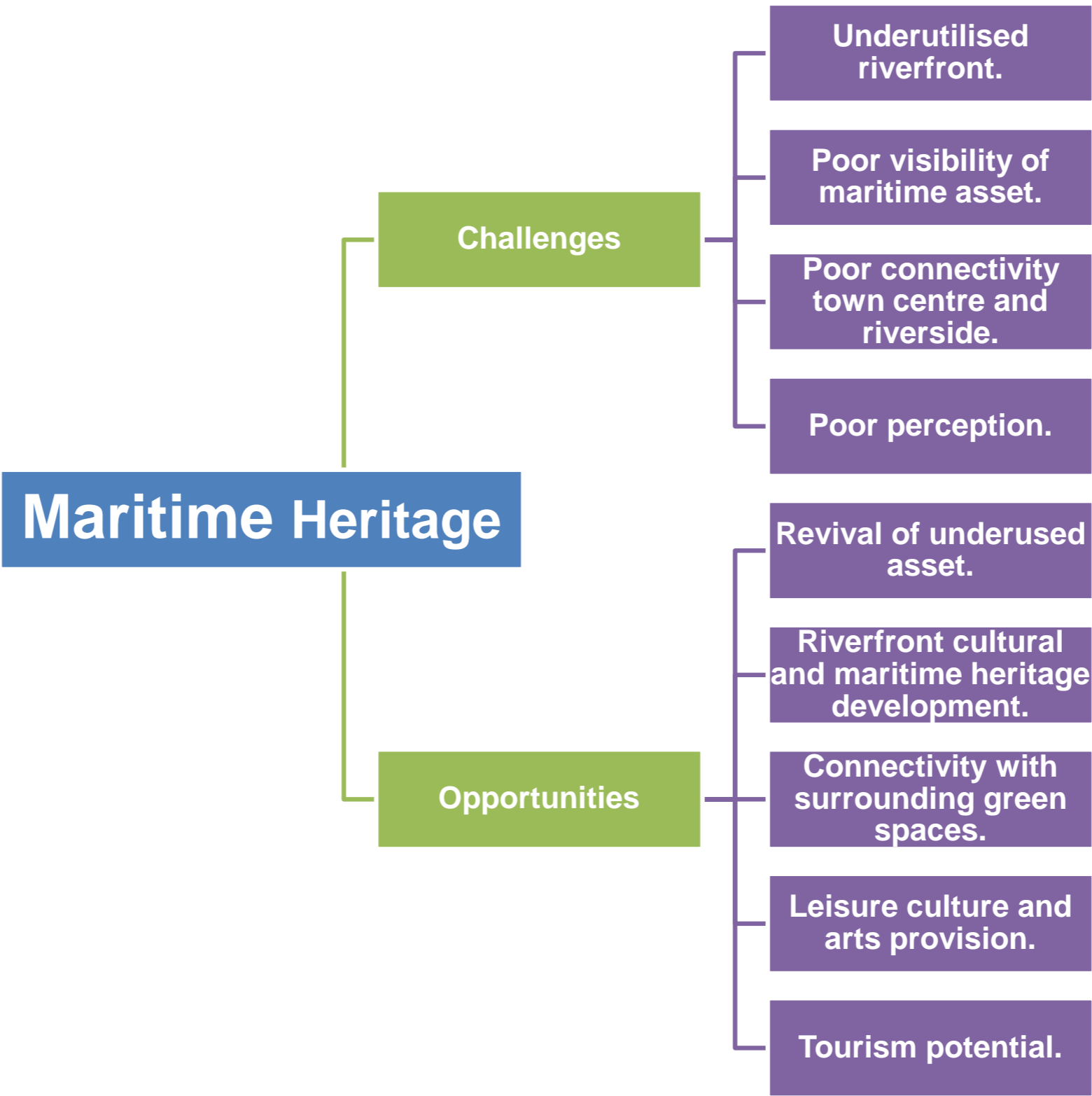
2.3 MARITIME HERITAGE

Assets and Strengths

Grays distinctive sense of place is underpinned by the landscape setting, historic fabric, and the River Thames. The maritime heritage defines the landscape of the riverside. In the 19th Century, boats for passage of goods and people docked at Grays and thriving establishments brought work and prosperity to Grays. These included, amongst others, barge building (Goldsmiths), corn factors⁶ (Cole and Lequire), timber importers (Bruce's Wharf), ship breakers (Wards Wharf), coal (Grays Co-operative) wharf and drum manufacturers (Kilvert's Oil, Lard factory and Drums Oil)⁷. There were diverse industries for their time and Grays is now ready to capitalise on contemporary and curated opportunities in creative and cultural industries based on its riverside setting and heritage.

Challenges

Grays has turned its back on the River Thames. Today, high embankments and poor connectivity limit the ability to see, access and use the riverside. Connectivity to and use of the riverside remains poor.





Boats on River Thames



Maritime Themed Public Art



Grays Town Wharf Views Towards Kent



Sandpit at Grays Beach Riverside Park

Opportunities

Within the contemporary urban context, the riverside represents an underused asset with potential to become a new destination for leisure, recreation, commerce and tourism. There is the opportunity to reconnect the town centre with its riverside heritage, enhance the riverside experience and create lasting social and economic impact. New boat services and increased visitor numbers will catalyse growth in the local economy attracting and retaining people to the town centre, creating a community pride in the recovered association with the river.

The improved quality of offer will support densification of housing in the town centre - average housing prices in Grays are at £225,000⁸, less than half the London average of over £500,000⁹. This combined with the connectivity by road, rail and river will make Grays an increasingly attractive residential location.

The riverside can be promoted as a continuous route and key public realm asset for the town. From this inherent asset there is the opportunity to develop a riverfront culture that seamlessly flows from the town centre.

Collectively the riverside and Grays Beach area has the potential for a mix of leisure provision within the backdrop of the Thames. This can be a key area for enterprise and growth tapping in to cultural activities, building on the diverse community and bringing independent enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit.

Associated with the riverside is the future potential for tourism including a commercial passenger ferry services across the river and also up-river to the City of London. This would represent a greener form of transport than by road and relieve the pressure on the road network thereby also reducing air pollution.

Over the longer term, Grays is also strategically positioned on the north bank of the River Thames opposite Swanscombe Peninsula in Kent, which is the site for the proposed London Resort¹⁰ - a theme park and one of Europe's largest construction projects. The London Resort aims to initially open with just one 'gate'¹¹ in 2025 with a second planned to open in 2029. It is anticipated to create the following number of jobs¹²:

- Gate One (2025) - 5,880 total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) (4,835 gross additional);
- Gates One & Two (2029) - 8,720 total FTE (7,675 gross additional); and
- Maturity (2038) - 11,215 total FTE (10,170 gross additional).

A resort of this scale and size is anticipated to attract visitors from across the country and internationally. The London Resort has proposed a new ferry crossing across the Thames Estuary boarding customers at Tilbury. This notwithstanding, they have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding¹³ with the Council with the prospect of exploring and developing potential future linkages with Grays riverside, railway and town centre. For Grays, there is the prospect that any multiplier effect would boost the local economy through jobs and as a potential staging post for any future rail and sail (boat) services to the resort. Grays rail station is the closest station on the north side of the Thames and therefore has the potential to be a sustainable access point for the resort.

"Link culture and heritage..."

Grays Advisory Group Workshop November 2020

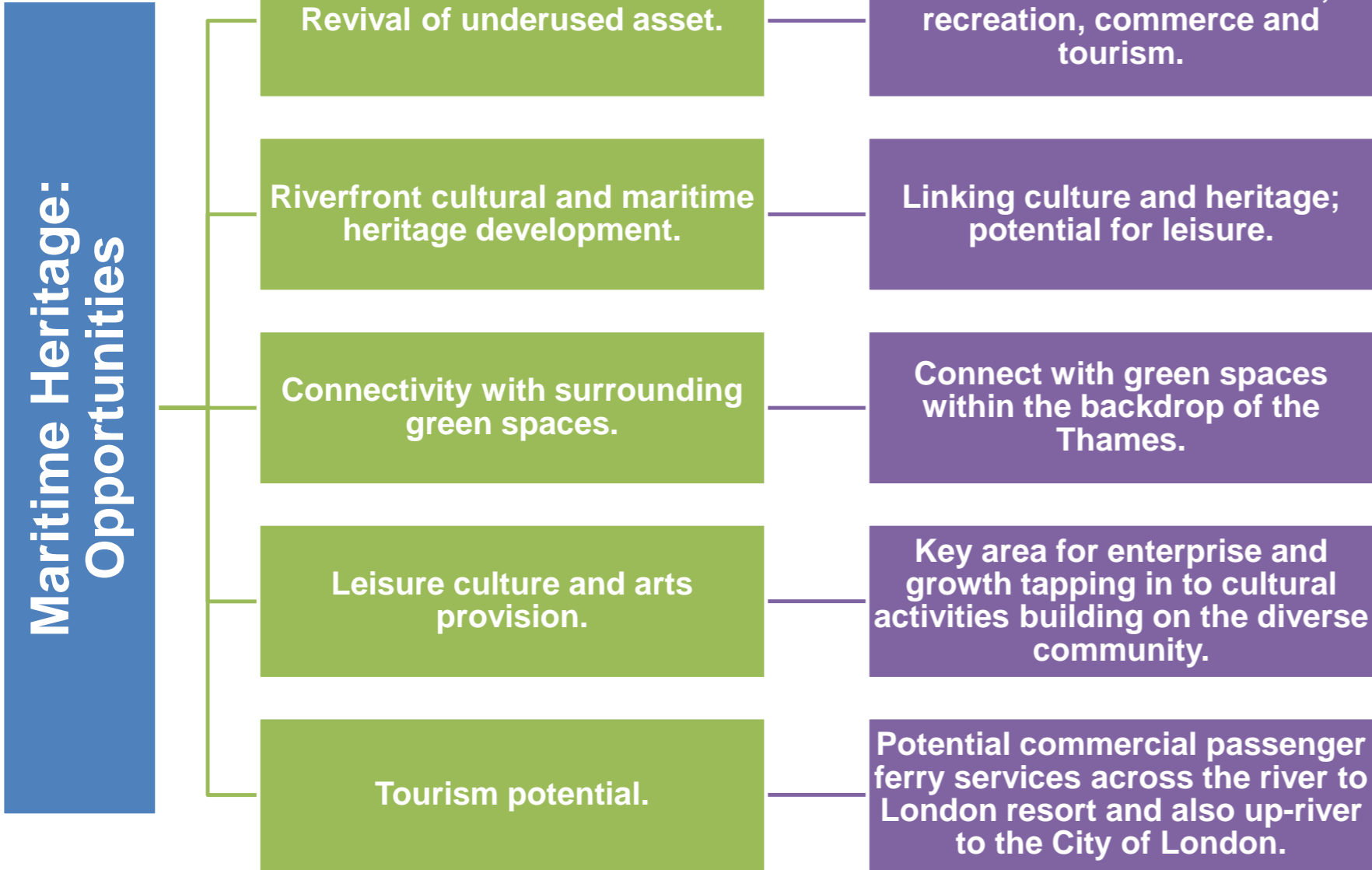
"opportunity for career growth in marine sector from deck hand to captain..."

Grays Advisory Group Workshop November 2020

"We need to bring in people to spend money... A restaurant by the yacht club. A clipper boat to London. A Victorian cafe at beach like the original...." 2020: Grays MyTown Campaign



Grays Riverside



Grays Beach Existing



Sailing Boats On The Thames

2.4 CONNECTIVITY

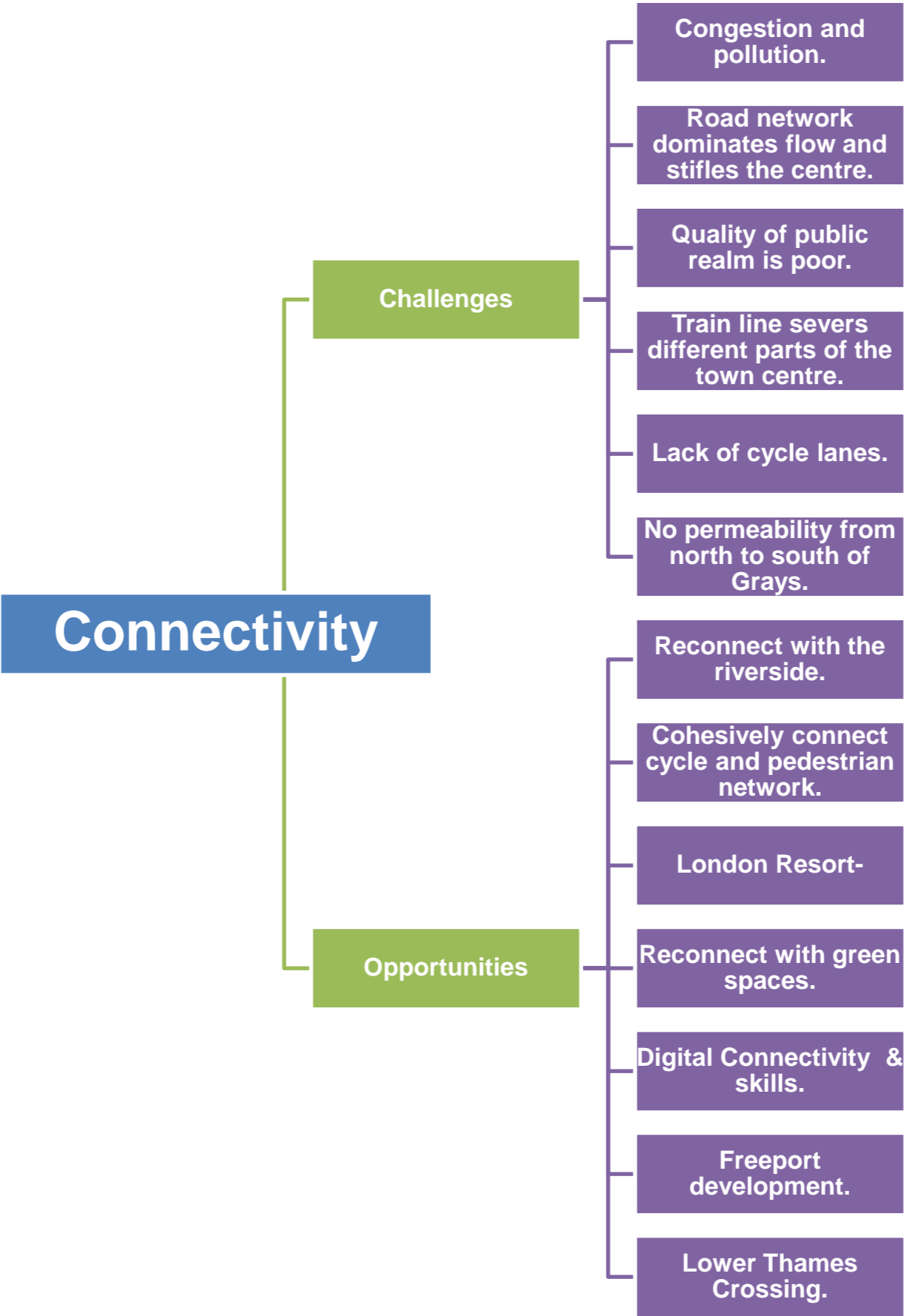
Assets and Strengths

Grays is identified as one the key transport hubs in South Essex creating an attractive gateway to the region and improving the convenience of moving between public transport modes and active travel routes¹⁴.

These transport connections influence business location and have a positive impact on the local economy and labour market. There is a net inflow to Grays Town Centre¹⁵ from workers, young people and adults coming to study. This means there is a net increase in Grays each day. All of these groups present opportunities for the town centre and help drive footfall at different times of the day. The main destinations for the Grays workforce are other areas in Thurrock, comprising over half of all commuters, and the remaining destinations for work are primarily London boroughs, reflecting good transport links into the capital.

Grays benefits from being well connected to London and the wider regional economy with good links by road and rail:

- It is a key station on the Essex Thameside Line (operated by C2C) connecting London, Tilbury and Southend reaching several stations in London and the wider south East within 35 minutes. The rail station is directly adjacent to the main bus station interchange serving the Borough and provides a sustainable transport interchange.
- In the future, the rail connection also has the potential of being a key disembarking point for any development on the Swanscombe Peninsula.
- It lies just outside the M25 boundary (3.2km to the west) which provides good connectivity to the South East and the rest of the country.
- The A13 connects Grays to the west towards central London and to the east towards Southend-on-Sea.
- The A126 London Road is the main artery linking the town centre with Lakeside Shopping Centre, Purfleet and Tilbury.
- The town also benefits from a comprehensive bus network. Buses run from the town centre run to a range of places including Lakeside, Purfleet, Tilbury, Basildon, West Horndon and Brentwood.



Grays: Rail Connections





Challenges

Although a higher proportion of Grays' residents travel to work by public transport than the regional and national averages, over 40% travel by car. This causes congestion and pollution. The borough of Thurrock is rated joint third in the UK with air pollution levels recorded at 14 micrograms per cubic metre. Grays is shown at 12 micrograms¹⁶.

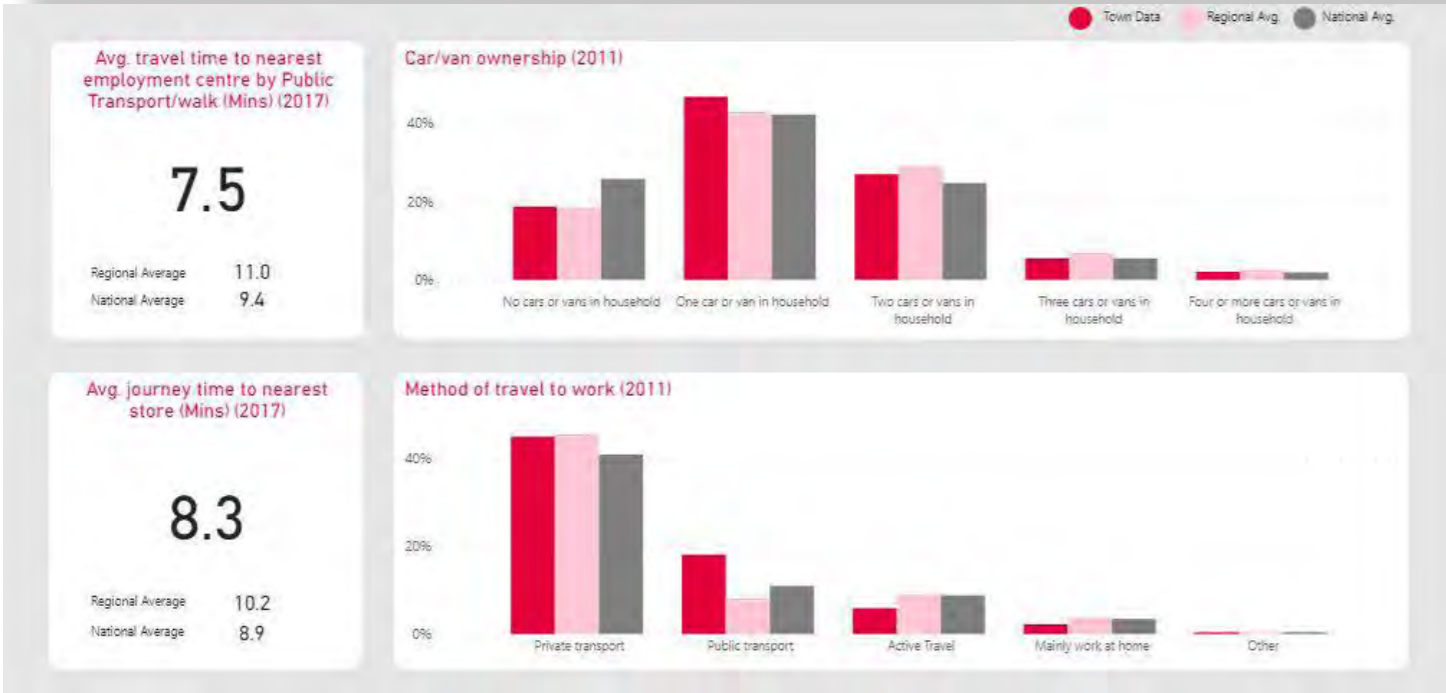
The road network dominates flow and the quality of public realm is poor immediately to the south of the railway line.

“Removal of the one way system: 69% support or strongly supported .”
 2017: Grays Town Centre Framework (Refresh)

Another major weakness is the severance caused by the rail line and regular stopping of pedestrian movement between the High Street and south of the line due to the very high frequency of trains – rated as one of the most dangerous crossings in the East of England¹⁷. The delivery of a new underpass is expected to overcome this severance and will improve accessibility for pedestrians.

There is also no seamless connectivity or permeability for communities from the north and south to connect, e.g. by cycleways and especially towards the riverside.

“I would like proper cycle infrastructure and secure (indoor) cycle storage to encourage use of cycling to visit the centre”
 2020: Grays MyTown Campaign



Grays connectivity and mobility (source: Towns Fund Dashboard 2020)



Grays Connectivity (source: NewRiver REIT charette stakeholder output 2020)



Opportunities

Green Spaces - There is a need for better green spaces and making use of existing assets such as those surrounding the riverside for better health and well-being of the local community. Associated with this is the need or better interconnectivity within the town.

“More greenery on Grays High Street; replacing paving... It's part of the reason Grays is looking a bit tired”

2020: Grays MyTown Campaign

“Look outside, Grays IS grey, it matches the name and we want it to be green.”

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)

“enhance green areas and make environmentally rich”
“Few times I’ve been there, the riverside is quite bland and concrete, could be softed up to make greener”

Grays Advisory Group Workshop November 2020

There is a need to **improve internal connectivity** by providing seamless cycleway and pedestrian permeability from all parts of Grays to the riverside and beyond. Thames Clippers has aspirations for Grays as a stopping point which would open-up the riverside as an important gateway for locals and visitors. Grays rail station is also the closest north of the Thames to the proposed London Resort and there is the future prospect to generate significant river traffic through a rail and sail service to the resort.

Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)¹⁸ - Highways England is proposing to build a new crossing that will include major highway through Thurrock. It will provide an alternative route for Dartford Crossing and Blackwall Tunnel users linking with the M25, A13 and A2. Destined to open in 2027, the river crossing linking Kent and Essex is anticipated to cut journey times and the route is expected to bring additional economic activity that Thurrock and Grays may benefit from.

Freeport - In the context of a future outside of the European Union, the role of ports and associated maritime areas becomes important as part of the 'levelling up' agenda. Thurrock seeks to reconfirm itself as the Ports capital of the UK and a partnership has been established to bid for a Freeport¹⁹. At a borough level it will be a catalyst in areas of deprivation and economic need and it is therefore important and beneficial for Grays to reconnect with its maritime heritage.

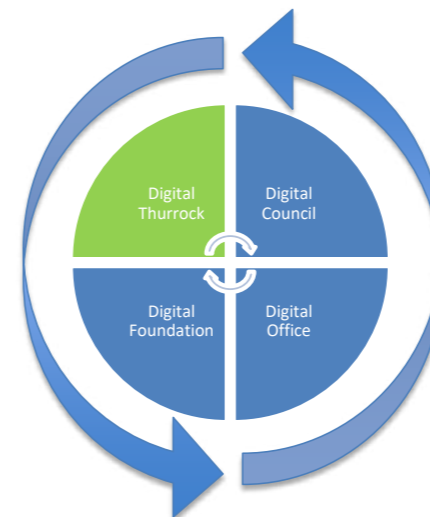
Digital Connectivity – The increasing importance of digital technology in driving the future of the economy also means that digital communications networks will need to become ever faster and more sophisticated.

“include superfast 5G”

Grays Advisory Group Workshop November 2020

Investing in digital and advanced technology, to support increasingly sophisticated communications networks and the applications associated with them is therefore essential. SELEP and the Council have all prioritised digital connectivity as helping to deliver future economic benefits that Grays can benefit from.

Digital Thurrock



We will create a connected place where technology brings people together, generates economic growth, improves quality of life and contributes to place shaping.

We will work with our partners to create new infrastructure and connectivity such as ultra fast broadband and widely available Wi-Fi. We will also share our existing infrastructure, technology and data to redesign our services and enable a broad range of solutions to be developed that better meet community priorities and needs.

Intended digital outcome

- Thurrock becomes a smart place that is connected to the Internet of Things
- More people in Thurrock have better access to the Internet
- Thurrock has a digitally capable population who can access the jobs of tomorrow and employers can access a locally grown technology savvy workforce
- Thurrock develops a vibrant digital business sector that contributes to the economic growth of the Borough
- New developments are designed for a digital future



Digital connectivity (source: Thurrock Borough Council)



Proposed Lower Thames Crossing Route
(source: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/our-work/lower-thames-crossing/route/>)

Connectivity: Opportunities

Reconnect with the riverside.

New leisure destination and reconnect with maritime economy.

Cohesively connect cycle and pedestrian network / current and future communities.

Permeability for communities to connect to the riverside.

London Resort

Potential to generate linked “rail + sail” trips (if developed).

Reconnect with green spaces.

Better health and wellbeing of the local community.

Digital Connectivity /improved digital skills.

Deliver future economic benefits.

Freeport development.

Thurrock to reconfirm itself as the Ports capital of the UK; catalyst for Grays to reconnect to its maritime heritage.

Lower Thames Crossing.

Additional economic activity for Thurrock and Grays.



Grays Railway Station (source: C2C website)

Panoramic of Grays Riverside and Beach



2.5 PEOPLE, EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Assets and Strengths

The growing population and developing educational hub South Essex College are key assets for the town.

Population Growth - The population in Grays is currently estimated at 74,800²⁰. The total growth between 2011 and 2018 was 11.2% which is almost double the regional (5.8%) and national growth (5.4%) over the same period.

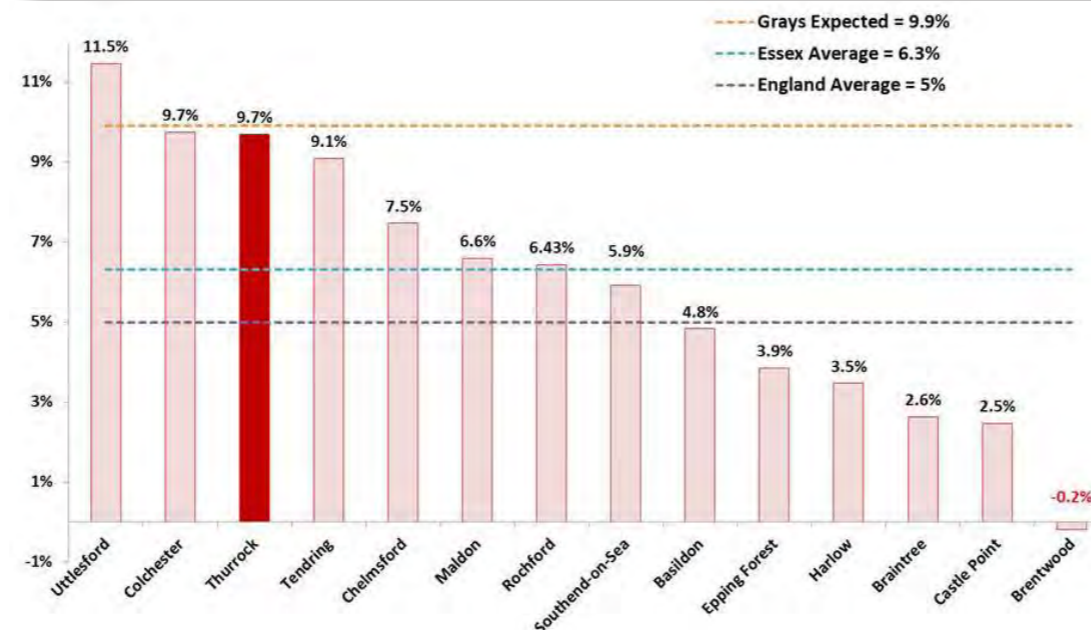
Grays population growth between 2018 and 2028 is expected to increase by 9.9%, which is marginally higher than the Thurrock average (9.7%) and substantially higher than the projections for Essex and England population projections (6.3% and 5% respectively) being driven by anticipated housing and population growth.

Of the current population, 73% are aged under 50 (33.1% aged under 25 and 39.9% aged between 30 and 49 years); 16.1% are aged between 50 and 64 with 10.8% being aged 65+. The town therefore has a younger age profile with a need for jobs, amenities, space and economy to flourish locally.

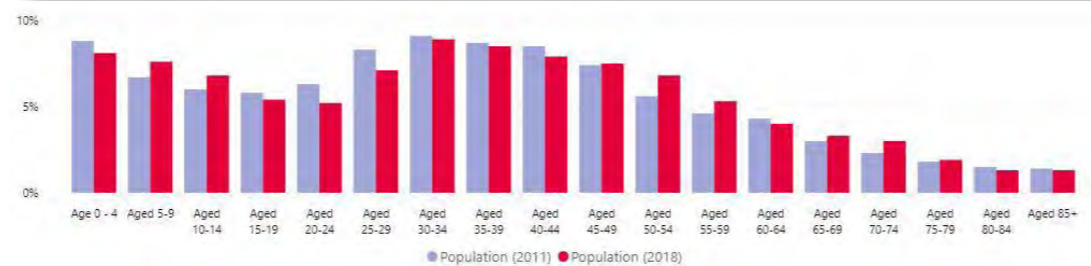
Grays is growing; this TIP seeks to make it an attractive place for both existing and new residents to work, live, play and learn.

Love Grays' - There is grass roots community interest and support for local businesses. Love Grays' has been created by businesses in the town centre. It is a 'one stop shop' for all information on what's happening in Grays but also as a community driven entrepreneurial hub²¹. This helps to develop effective business functions and networks to support economic growth locally. This spirit of active participation and support for local growth is echoed in the stakeholder engagement.

South Essex College - The College is Grays' educational hub. The £45 million Thurrock Campus boosts the economy of Grays and is providing education for 2,000 students and supporting 200 jobs²².



Grays population forecast 2018 - 2028 (source: ONS Sub-national Population projections for England, 2018 based)



Grays population by age group 2011 - 2018 (source: Towns Fund Dashboard 2020)

"What we need is for the community to take back the centre of town, we need to reclaim it for everyone in Grays"

"We need somewhere for people to feel they've got ownership of the place – try and get a multi-generational thing going so that everyone feels welcome"

"I want to be able to walk through the town and down to the water to enjoy the restaurants and whatever else is down there"

"It has to be good for the environment – we're thinking about the future and this is about our kids too"

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)

People, Employment, Health & Wellbeing

Challenges

- Population growth.
- Growing need for jobs, amenities, space.
- Lower social grading.
- Employment Stagnation.
- Lower levels of NVQ4+ qualifications.
- Deprivation domains.
- Levels of child obesity and smoking.

Opportunities

- Diversification of local economy
- Access to riverside.
- Improving access to Riverside Beach and Kilverts Field.
- Growing educational hub.
- Greening and connecting Grays.
- Active travel by cycling and walking.



Challenges

Although an undoubted strength, the growth in its population also represents a significant challenge for Grays in terms of the impacts on the existing and future infrastructure. This projected increase in population will present a challenge locally having an impact on the availability of housing, jobs, and services.

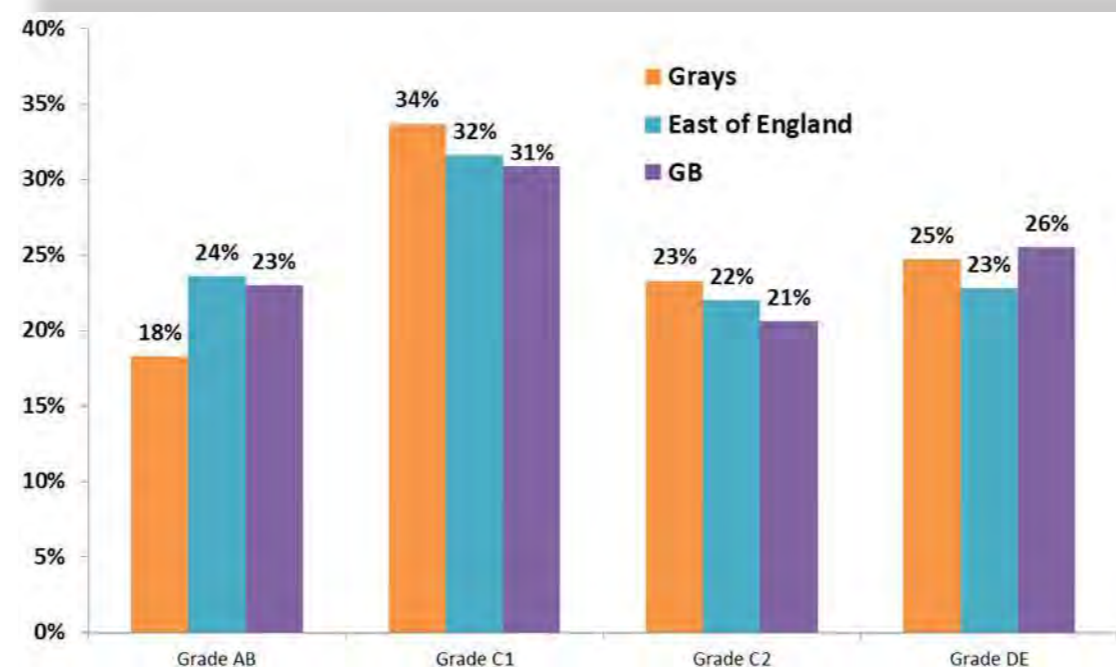
Socio Economic Profile - The composition of the population by social grade shows that this primarily comprises within Grade(s) C1, C2 and DE with a much lower proportion in the AB category. Lower social grading also correlates with indicators such as lower educational achievement and poverty which ultimately affect the well-being of the community.

The three current drivers of the **employment economy** are in retail, transport & storage, business administration & support services. The make-up of the economy means that the largest employing sectors in the area are amongst the least productive in economic terms. Combined with the retail or 'high street' decline this has had a marked impact upon the local economy. In fact, the localised data indicates that employment in 'at risk categories' stands at 57.6% for Grays compared with a regional average of 49.6% and national average of 48.9%²³.

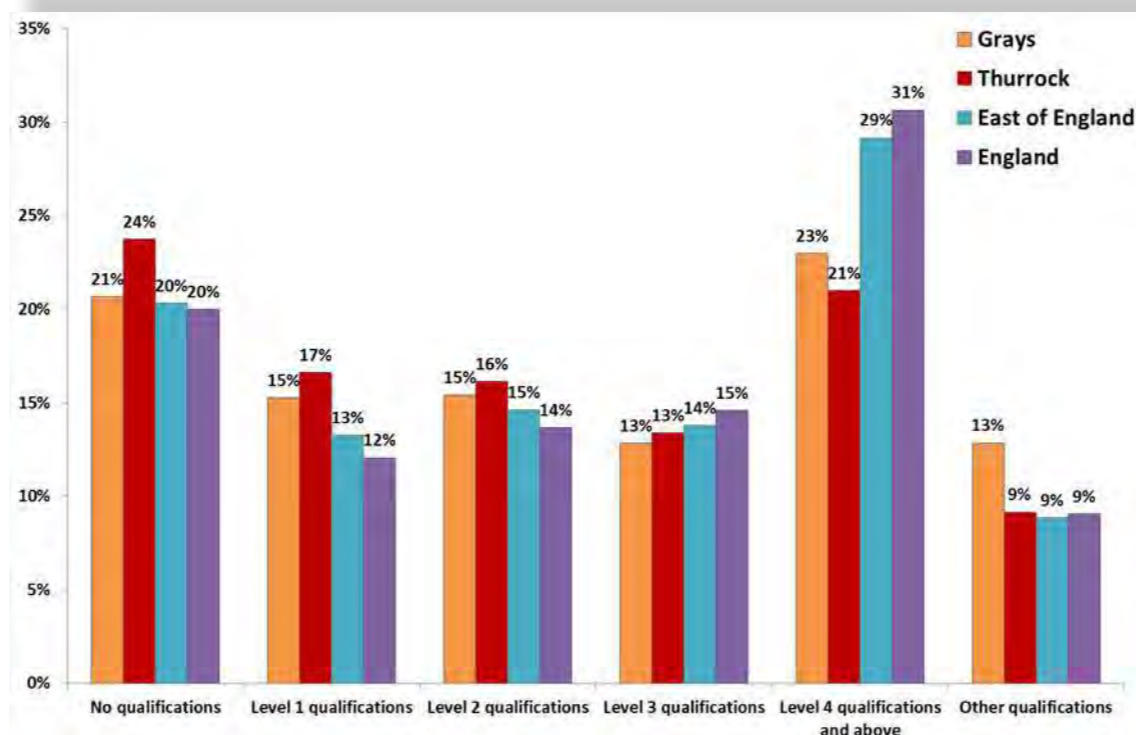
Employment Stagnation - Total employment in Grays Town Centre has stagnated in recent years despite high employment growth in Thurrock. Employment growth in Grays between 2015 and 2018 stood at -0.1% compared with an Eastern regional average of 5.8% and a national average of 3.7%²⁴.

Skills Profile - Grays has a young working age population, but issues of low skills levels and access to employment are constraining opportunities in the labour market.

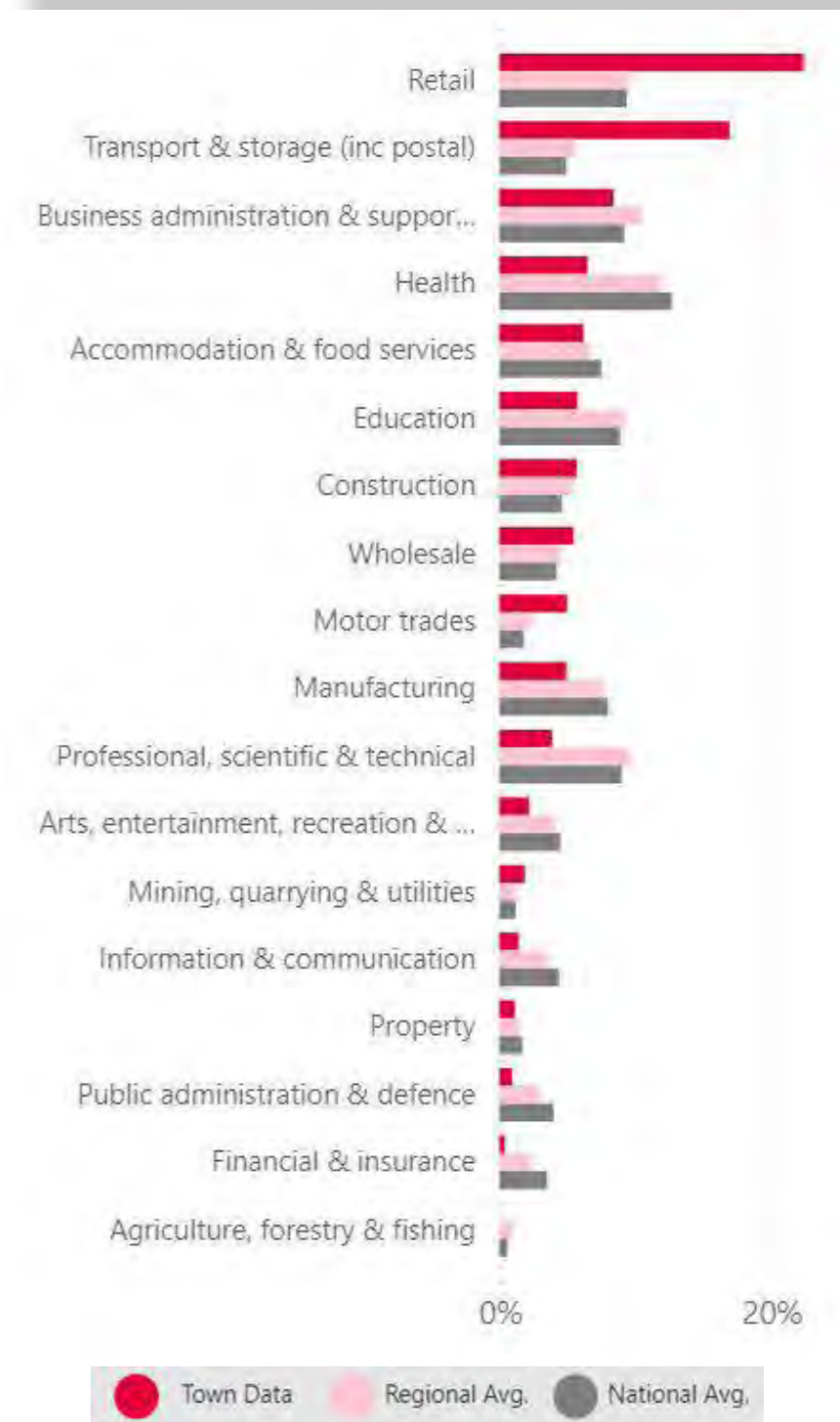
21% of the population in Grays have no qualifications; lower than the Thurrock average (24%) but higher than East of England and GB (both at 20%). Only 23% of the Grays population has Level 4 qualifications, which is higher than Thurrock (21%) but significantly lower than East of England (29%), and England (31%).



Social status by grade (source: ONS Census 2011)



Grays qualifications (source: ONS Census 2011)

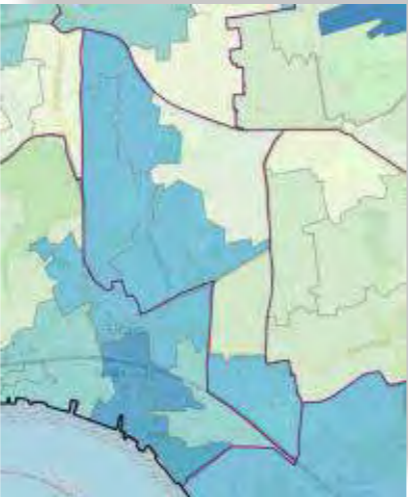


Proportion of total employment by sector 2018 (source: Towns Fund Dashboard 2020)

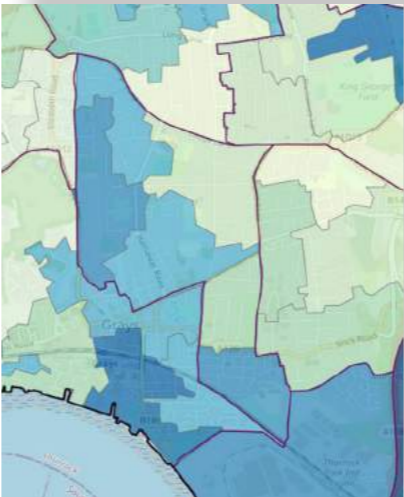


Index of Multiple Deprivation Outputs²⁵ - Areas close to the town centre have levels of deprivation within the 10% most deprived areas in the country especially in relation to the domains of Income Deprivation; Education, Skills and Training; Barriers to Housing and Services; and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index. Whilst this varies across parts of the town, it is clear that the southern part (towards riverside) has the highest levels compared to the rest of the town.

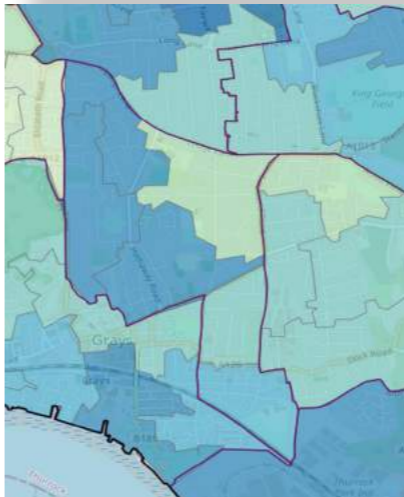
Key IMD domains affecting Grays²⁶



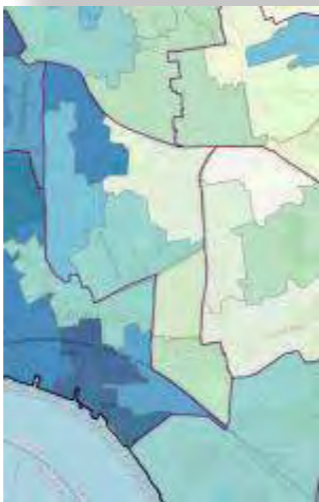
Overall deprivation



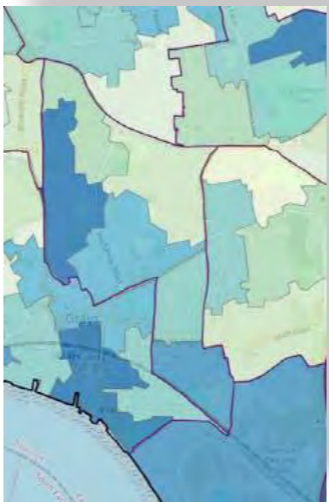
Income deprivation



Education, skills and training



Barriers to housing and services



Income deprivation affecting children index



Key

“Our vision for improving the health and wellbeing of Thurrock people is to:
Add years to life and life to years”
Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2021

“Everyone in Thurrock can achieve and maintain a healthy weight, lead an active life, eat a healthy diet and reach a healthy long life expectancy”
Thurrock Whole Systems Obesity Strategy (2018 -2021)



Opportunities

The local economy is dominated by the retail sector²⁷ and needs to **diversify** to remain sustainable in the long term. Curating a better mix of businesses would support the economy and improve the overall vitality of the town centre. Attracting new types of businesses should also help to address the prevailing stagnation of employment growth.

Education - South Essex College is an educational hub for Grays and Thurrock having the potential to offer for more courses and skills development. It has recently secured SELEP funding to develop a new logistics training academy to support the skills needs in the local economy and support the Freeport development with longer term aim to offer higher level technical skills training. The College already offers programmes in marine engineering and works closely with many of the users of the river. Expansion of this provision to meet local need is already planned. The College is already working closely with the proposed London Resort on the Swanscombe Peninsula, to train and provide large numbers of employees to build and then run the resort at the Grays Campus. All of these developments and opportunities will be available for the community to re-skill especially those affected in sectors that have declined during the pandemic.

Additionally the Council through its Inspire Skills²⁸ service enables employers to work with schools to shape the local skills agenda through the Economic Skills Development Partnership (EDSP) - an employer led forum with representatives from Education sector and employers groups.

'Gray' to Green - Only 4% of the town centre area is designated as having a green space²⁹. Grays is composed of both a natural geography created by the river, and an artificial topography generated by excavation.

Surrounding the core centre is green space. However it is of mixed quality and doesn't form an effective strategic network in terms of provision. There is an opportunity to enhance and rationalise this provision for better use and community well-being. The open spaces and green infrastructure make a very significant contribution to local quality of life and good mental health, and is regarded very highly by the local community. Grays Riverside Beach Park and the separate Grays Beach on the riverside are catalysts for resurgence in the use of green space and crucial 'green lungs' in an otherwise 'grey' centre.

There is a need to encourage a genuine modal shift in travel towards **active travel** by cycling and walking over the use of cars within the town. This should be within the town itself and wider connectivity to surrounding areas recognising that Kilverts Park is only a 5 minute walk from the railway station. Investment in active travel has the potential to overcome many of the concerns raised during key stakeholder and community consultations in terms of poor air quality³⁰, car parking and congestion within the town. Improving the physical activity environment and getting the inactive active is also key objective of the Thurrock Whole Systems Obesity Strategy (2018 - 2021).

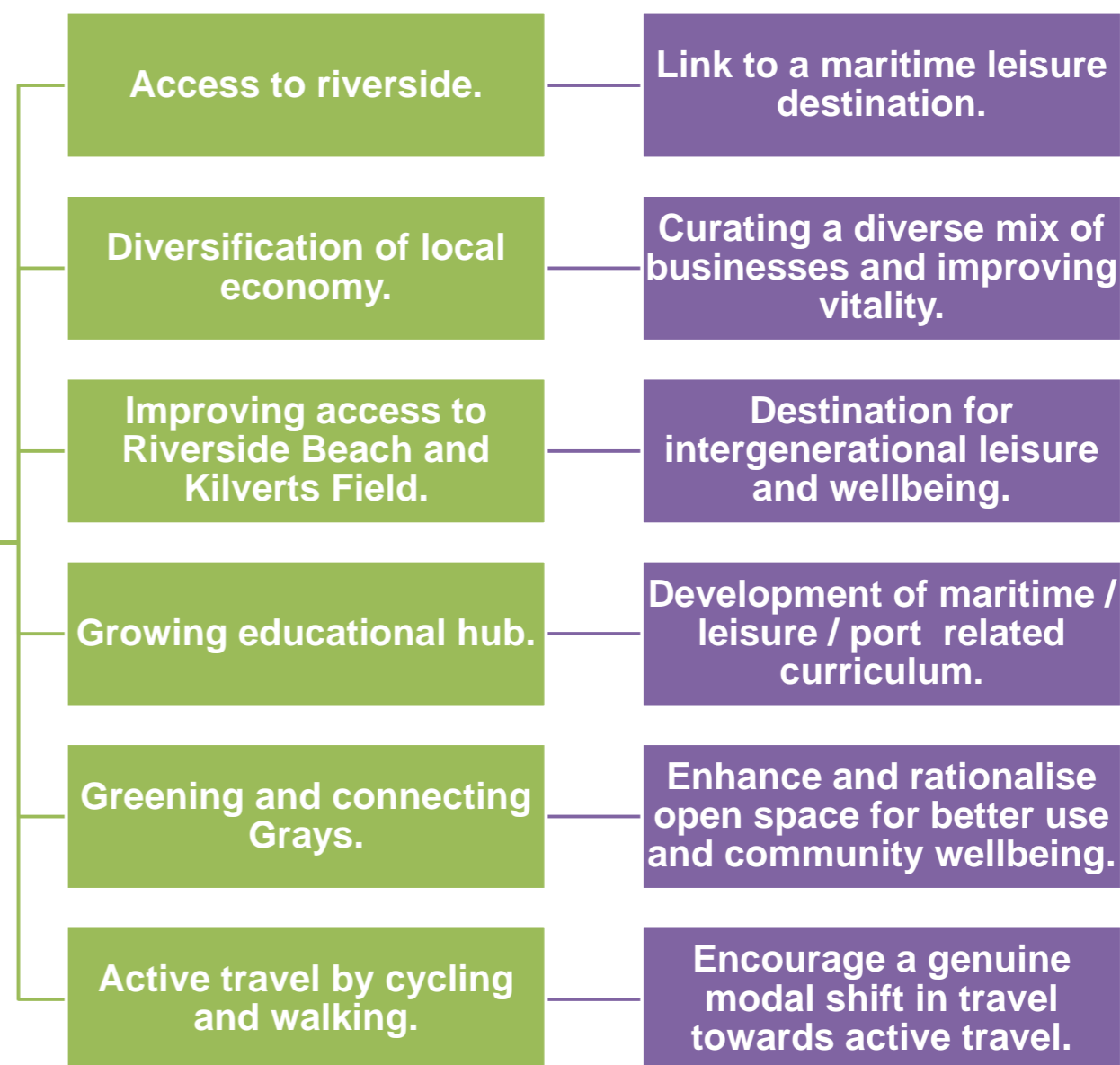
As promoted by Sport England, sustainable, well designed, thriving communities where healthy behaviours are the norm provide a sense of belonging, a sense of identity and a sense of community. The environment and economy are interlinked and have a profound impact to health and wellbeing³¹. To create a shift to prevention the built environment has to be 'nudged' to:

- Bring together built form and community development;
- Improve health benefits, productivity and support economic growth; and
- Make active travel part of daily routines including



Greening and connecting Grays (source: NewRiver REIT community engagement charette output 2020)

People, Employment, Health & Wellbeing: Opportunities



2.6 GRAYS TOWN CENTRE

Strengths and Assets

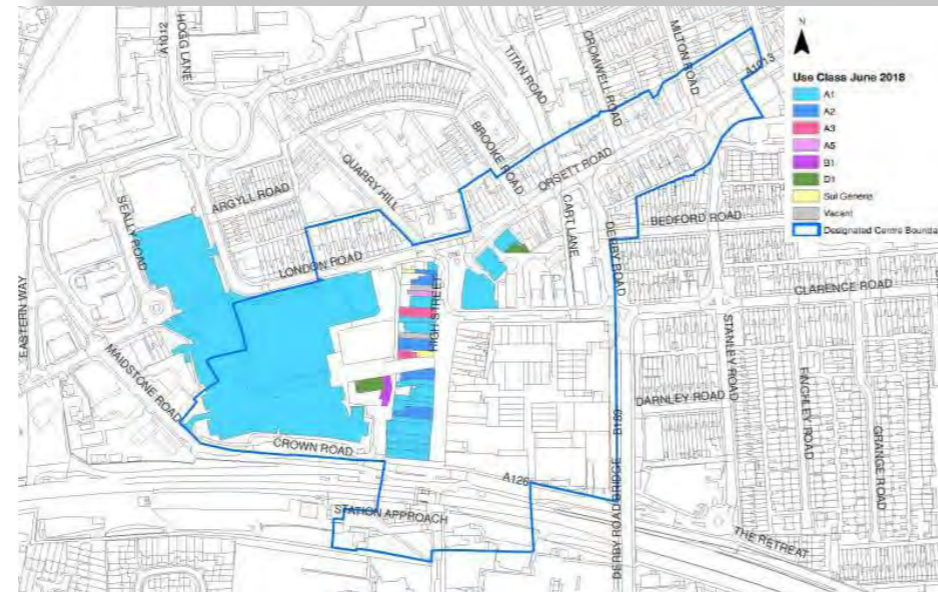
Grays is defined as the largest town centre with borough wide significance. The scale of the centre means that Grays largely meets local short to mid-term needs, and especially for those who may find it difficult to access more distant shopping locations.

The Core Shopping Area of Grays comprises of the eastern side of the High Street, north of the railway line, and the indoor shopping centre. The Primary Shopping Area comprises of the west and north eastern end of the High Street.

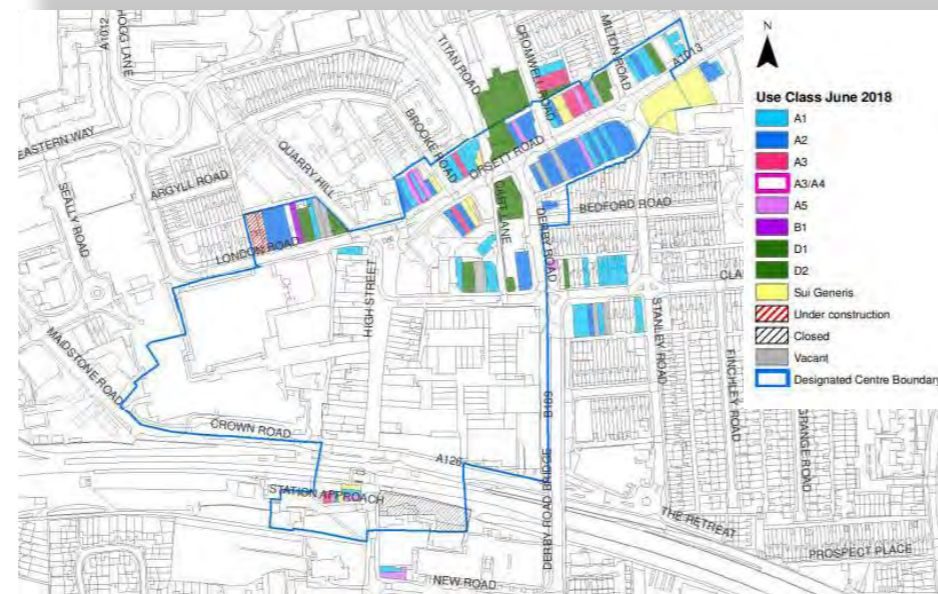
The Secondary Shopping Area of Grays includes London Road/Orsett Road, which is directly north of the High Street and Clarence Road, which is off the High Street to the east. Both roads have units on either side and both are largely affected by traffic, as they are part of the town centre's one way system.

Grays market (held every Friday and Saturday) is also spread along the High Street and George Street. It draws people into the town, contributing to footfall and making the town busier than on other days of the week.

Looking forward, it is anticipated that the underpass and associated wider projects will enhance physical regeneration and support the town centre. This includes areas of new public realm, new residential and commercial space all aimed to bring more residents into the heart of the town and create a positive environment for growth.



Grays: primary shopping area (source: Thurrock town and local centre health check assessment 2018)



Grays: secondary shopping area (source: Thurrock town and local centre health check assessment 2018)

Challenges

Competition from Lakeside.

High vacancy rates / high yields.

Online shopping.

Limited evening economy.

Poor perception of safety.

Disconnected green spaces.

Town Centre

Opportunities

Diversification of town centre uses.

Development of business services.

Regenerate riverside.

Creative and cultural development.

Digital connectivity.

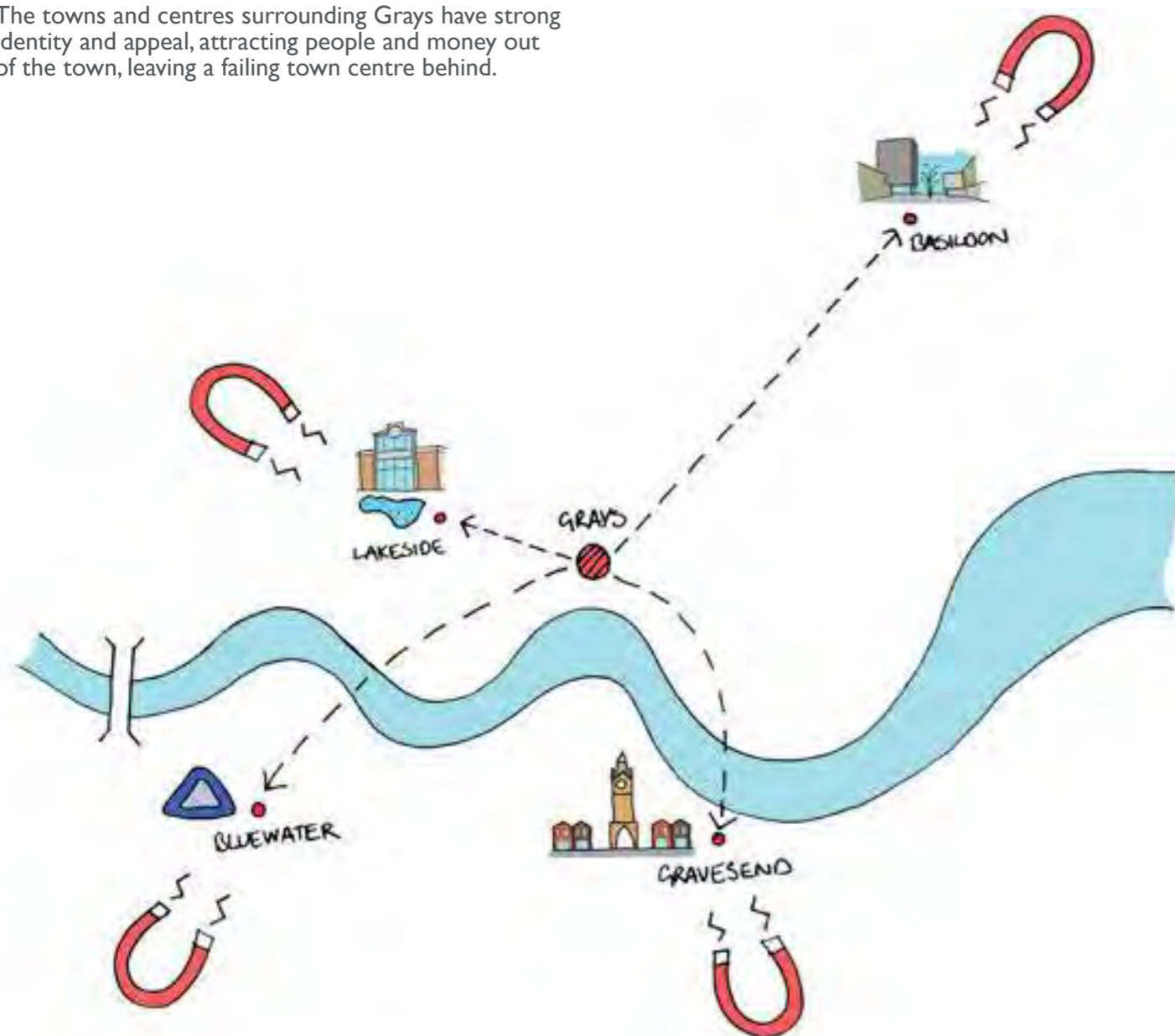
Creating resilient day and evening economy.

Strengthening Grays pedestrian and cycle routes.

Challenges

Grays town has suffered from decline over a number of years and faces a myriad of challenges to its current and future vitality and viability.

The towns and centres surrounding Grays have strong identity and appeal, attracting people and money out of the town, leaving a failing town centre behind.



Nearby destinations with critical mass (source: NewRiver REIT community engagement charette output 2020)



Grays Town Centre

- **Competition** - Grays was the dominant retail centre in the Borough until the opening of Lakeside Shopping Centre in 1990. It has suffered from decline in recent years due to shifts in retail patterns as well as the growth of Lakeside which has ten times more floor-space than Grays³². Marks and Spencer ceased trading in Grays town centre shortly after Lakeside opened for business. At present, there are plans to expand the existing Lakeside shopping centre and surrounds into a new regional town centre, with new leisure facilities, residential developments, commercial facilities and an extension of the current retail offer. The Council supports the proposed expansion of Lakeside Shopping Centre but recognises that this expansion and the wider structural changes in the way we shop continue to challenge the role of Grays. This makes it clear that positive intervention is required for Grays future.
- Lakeside and Bluewater are within easy reach of Grays Town Centre and are key attractors for residents and visitors. While the town centre has a local offer with an emphasis on affordable convenience and service uses, more could be done to differentiate and diversify the offer creating an attractive leisure destination with a vibrant high-time economy.
- **Vacancies** - The extent of vacant retail property is an important health indicator. In December 2019, the vacancy rate in Grays stood at 11.8%³³. The overall vacancy rate has been persistently high in Grays (12.1% in 2012, 9.2% in 2014 and 11.1% in 2018); typically a stronger centre would have a vacancy level of around 4-5%.
- Zone 'A' **rents** have fallen from a relatively low £484/sqm (£45/sq ft) in 2008 to £412/sqm (£38/sq ft) in 2018. Additionally, over the last 20 years retail **yields** in Grays have generally varied between 9% to 11%, indicating low, and falling, investor confidence.
- **Structural changes** are impacting heavily on retail uses especially the traditional core town centre activity – and are largely being driven by technological advances. Mid-sized town centres are facing very substantial challenges as the changes to the way we live and shop. Grays is considered to be a centre facing this challenge. This is compounded by the growth in **online shopping**, the long-term attraction of larger format and cheaper retail space in competing out-of-centre locations, and increasingly fragile retailer, investor and business confidence in the post Covid-19 world. This has created a perfect storm that is bearing down on Grays.
- **Poor Perception** - Negative perceptions of the town centre are reflected in extensive public consultation, precipitated by the declining retail offer, lack of attractions, weak evening economy, preponderance of low value retail, poor quality of the town centre environment, perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Weak **evening economy** with most outlets in the town centre are closed by 6pm. Grays receives commuters but there is not sufficient reason for those commuters to dwell or even come and live in the area – this represents an opportunity for Grays to capitalise upon.

"Increase Police and Security presence around the town"
 "Regenerate community spirit and accountability"
 "Address the perception of crime that exists"

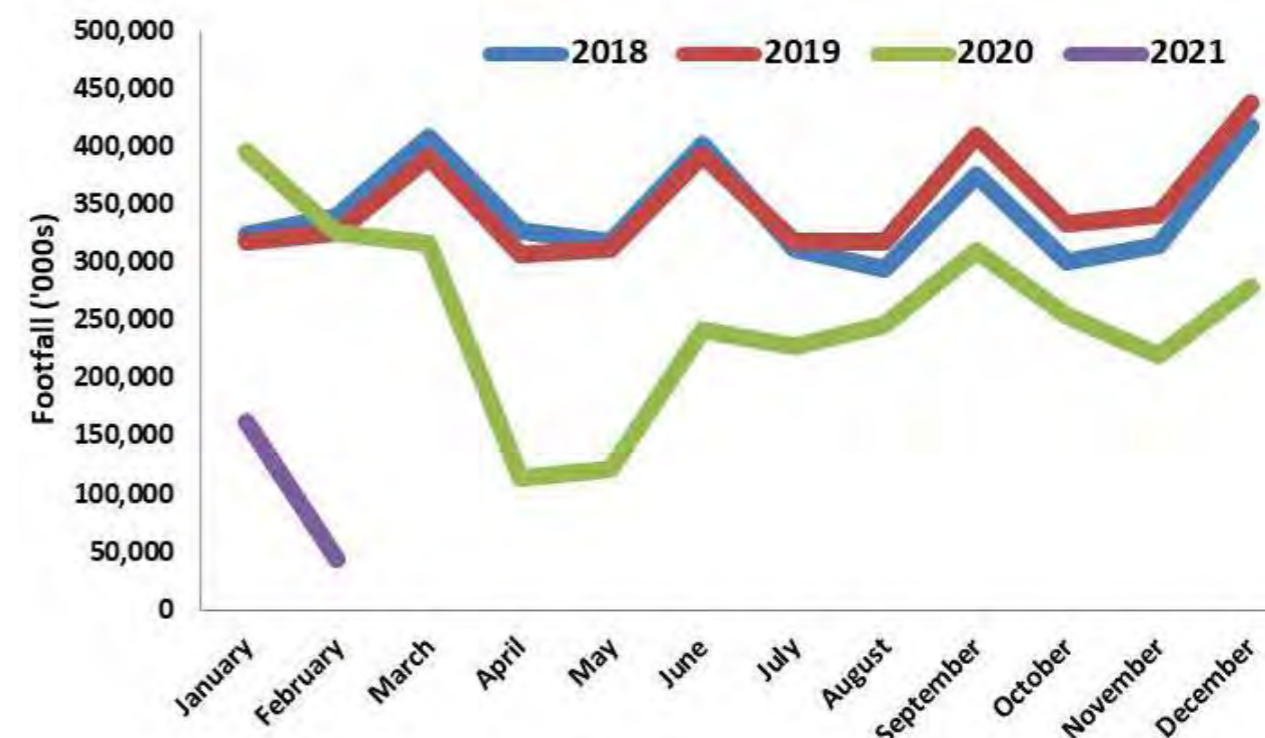
2013: Grays Town Centre Regeneration - Stakeholder Vision Workshops

"More policing in the town, security in the centre is the priority"

2020: Grays Underpass, Design Guide and Project Bank Consultation

"Grays is a no-go zone at night."

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)



Footfall data for Grays Town Centre (source: NewRiver REIT 2021)

"Increase footfall."

2020: Grays MyTowns Campaign

A further issue that causes the town to be perceived as uninviting is the perception of crime; MyTown respondents specifically refer to:

- Threat from others in the town centre
- Poor lighting
- Need more and better CCTV
- Crime
- Lack of police presence
- Need to deal with antisocial behaviour arising due to alcohol and drug consumption
- Need programmes for drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

2020: Grays MyTown Campaign



Analysis³⁴ shows that against measures of **'Healthy Streets'** Grays performs poorly against a number of measures including:

- Easy to cross – The trainline crossing and busy road to the north of the crossing creates a distinct barrier for pedestrians travelling north or south of the high street.
- Places to stop and rest – There is some green space to the south of the railway tracks but limited seating in the high street and lack of a focal seating area for congregation or events. There are few cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating or terraces. Other green space (e.g. Grays Beach and Riverside) are disconnected and detached from the main town centre.
- People feel safe – There are a number of inactive areas in the town centre, particularly south of the train station moving towards the river and contributes to a feeling of unease in places.
- Things to do and see – There are few landmarks or clusters of uses and very few food and drink businesses with outdoor seating, contributing to a lack of vibrancy.

Graystownsfund.co.uk: Top 3 suggested improvements:

Daytime	Evening	Weekend & Bank Holiday
Tackling antisocial behaviour, Police, Security (39%)	Tackling antisocial behaviour, Police, Security (36%)	Events and activities (33%)
Better shops (20%)	Quality Food & Drink Offer particularly for families (20%)	Tackling antisocial behaviour, Police, Security (16%)
Quality Food & Drink Offer particularly for families (9%)	Arts, culture and entertainment (11%)	Provision of Leisure Facilities (9%)

"More different facilities to meet the needs of different groups and make them accessible"

"Use the town's heritage to develop leisure facilities"

2013: Grays Town Centre Regeneration - Stakeholder Vision Workshops

"Opportunity for a night-time economy with more leisure and entertainment"

2019: Thurrock's Local Plan Consultation Issues & Options (Stage 2) Consultation

"a credible night time economy plan"

2020: Grays Underpass, Design Guide and Project Bank Consultation

"People want experiences and memories, so yeh high street needs to be a place for celebrating and exploring creativity, culture and heritage with festivals, events and a night time economy - no one of which are happening right now"

2020: Grays MyTown Campaign



Grays Railway Footbridge



Local Residents



Opportunities

There are several opportunities to grow and regenerate Grays. The proposals for the Underpass, Civic Complex and Thameside Complex closely align with other projects in the Grays Town Centre Framework to overcome challenges and unlock a range of positive benefits for the area. The riverside represents a complementary but untapped area to encourage more visitors and drive economic growth.

Diversification - The persistent high vacancy rate indicates there is simply insufficient retail demand in Grays and this supports the view that a move toward a more diverse town centre offer is essential to remain competitive.

The centre is struggling, facing declining retailing with a predominance of value retailing and a lack of an evening economy and leisure activity in the evenings. A reduction in comparison shopping function requires a need to diversify, attract and sustain a greater range of leisure, cultural and civic uses to remain as a vibrant and vital place.

With the decline in high street retailing, there has been a strong call to shift toward community, health, housing, arts, education, entertainment, leisure, business / office space uses – together with retail – in order to create more resilient town centres. Providing a more diverse range of attractive and active services, uses and facilities that help to support the town's daytime and evening economy. The riverside is the key area to support this diversification to create an attractive leisure destination with a vibrant night-time economy and town centre connectivity. Government policy (NPPF) and the emerging new Local Plan, recognise that promoting diversity in town centres can help maintain their wider economic and social function, as well as ensure that their physical and environmental fabric does not decline due to a lack of investment.

Diversifying the role of the town centre and what it has to offer are central to establishing a unique offer and are crucial to its long term vitality and viability as it evolves to connect its communities, build confidence and addresses agendas such as health and well-being.

Leisure - Diversifying Grays will aid in driving recovery from the Covid-19 crisis and 'build back better' by creating strong community led, inclusive and resilient growth. As communities grow, there will be an increase in latent demand for creative and leisure services.

With the general contraction in the UK retail high street market and the shift towards mixed use schemes – and especially residential, leisure, cultural and community uses. This will ensure that there is a more broad range of jobs available for the local workforce, but also an influx on new residents into the town centre will support convenience retailing and the leisure economy.

Grays is a well established cultural location. There is now the opportunity to build on leisure opportunities particularly on the riverfront.

Additionally, better **digital connectivity** is transforming the way that we work: home working is easier, flexibility is expected, and there is much greater demand for easily accessible, flexible work and meeting space. At the same time, town centres have suffered from technology-driven changes to retail patterns – so, there is an opportunity to repurpose spaces to provide new opportunities for modern business growth.

"We need to attract people back to the town centre."

"The town centre needs to find a new purpose."

"What we need is for the community to take back the centre of town, we need to reclaim it for everyone in Grays."

"We want more from our town centre than just shops."

"Make it better, but leave no one behind."

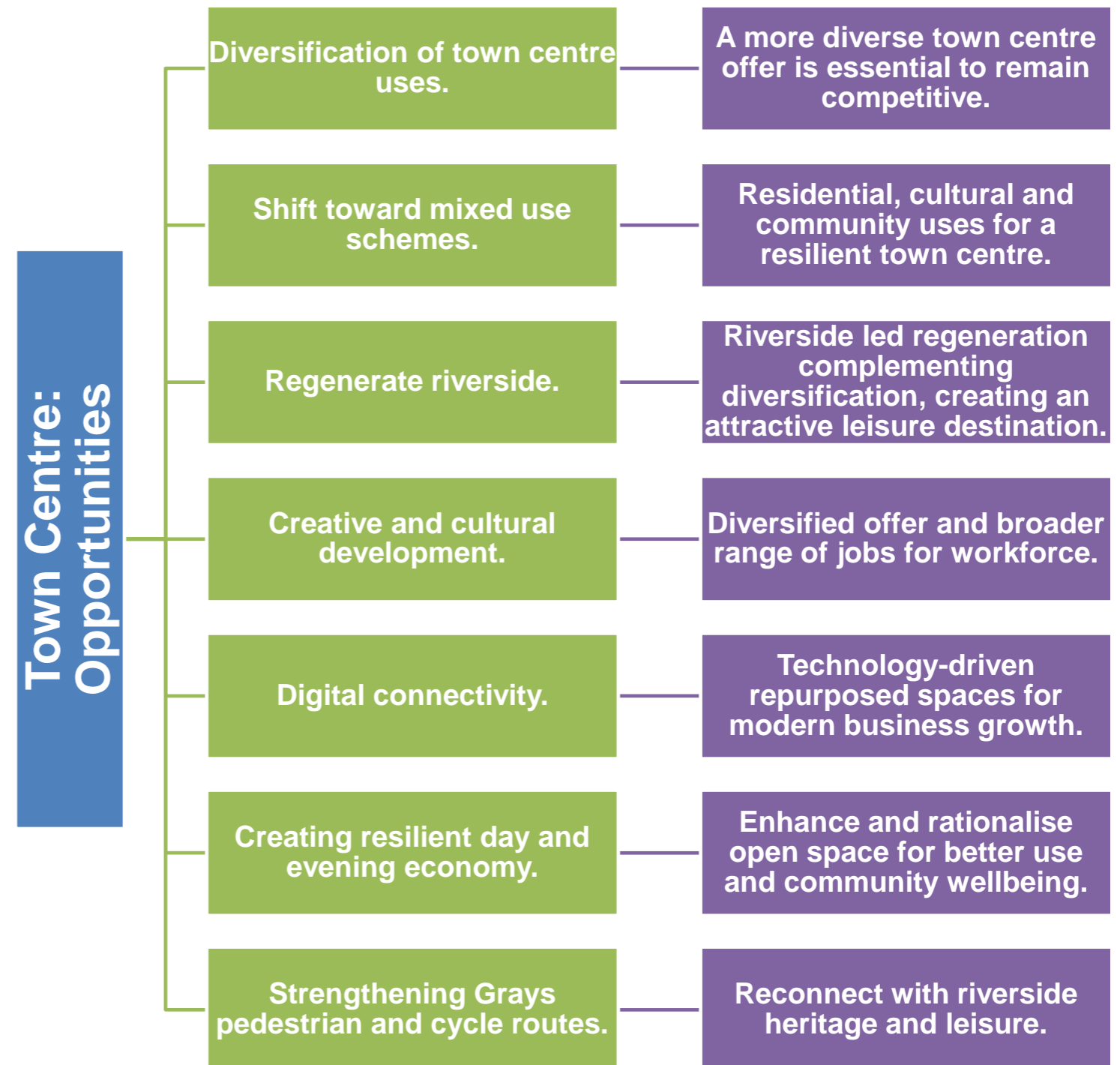
"It has to be good for the environment – we're thinking about the future and this is about our kids too."

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)

"the town centre needs more spaces to socialise. Restaurants, bars and coffee shops would attract more people. More activity spaces especially for young families. Use of the water front and other end of the town centre down towards the wharf area."

"Thurrock and Grays has changed and is still changing. The Town Centre has not kept up with the times. Relying on retail to bring people in to the town centre is not going to work and we need to think out side the box"

2020: Grays MyTown Campaign

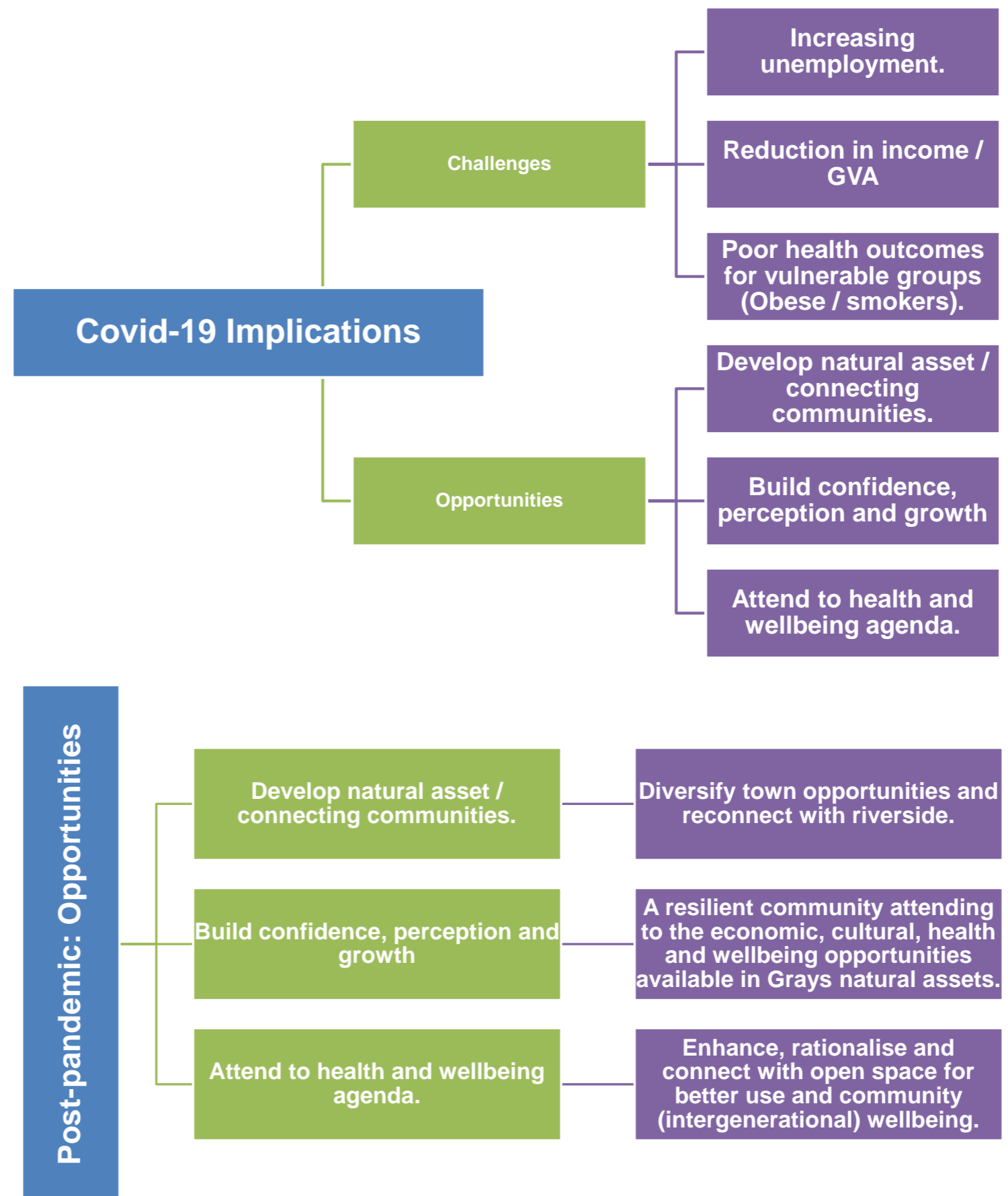




2.7 COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS

During the pandemic the importance of societal basics has come to the fore, especially the sense of community swathed in the technological essential of modern-day living, proximity to family, social value, sustainability, green spaces, community and culture. The pandemic has placed importance on health-conscious spaces in built-up areas. The national lockdown had a large impact on mental well-being, highlighting the importance of outdoor space e.g. people found going for walks to be an indispensable coping mechanism. With the pandemic expected to have a long-term impact on mental health, increased responsibility to maximise the availability of outdoor space, particularly green space becomes important. At the Riverside, Kilverts Field and Grays Riverside Beach Park represent large public green open spaces and their enhancement will serve to deliver substantial benefits for the health and well-being of the local community.

Grays is well positioned to deliver a resilient community attending to the economic, cultural, health and well-being opportunities available through its natural assets. It is our aim to give communities better access to recreational space and achieve a green recovery from the pandemic.



2.8 SUMMARY

The figure below summarises our analysis of Grays' strengths, the challenges it is facing and the opportunities for growth and transformation.

Theme	Strengths & Assets	Challenges	Opportunities
2.3 Maritime Heritage	Riverside and connection to Thames. Distinctive sense of place. Rich maritime history.	Underutilised riverfront. Poor visibility of maritime asset. Poor connectivity town centre and riverside. Poor perception.	Revival of underused asset. Riverfront cultural and maritime heritage development. Connectivity with surrounding green spaces. Leisure culture and arts provision. Tourism potential.
2.4 Connectivity	Good links by road and rail. Key transport hub in South Essex.	Congestion and pollution. Road network dominates flow and stifles the centre. Quality of public realm is poor. Train line severs different parts of the town centre. Lack of cycle lanes. No permeability from north of centre to south of the centre.	Reconnect with the riverside. Cohesively connect cycle and pedestrian network / current and future communities. London Resort- future potential to generate linked trips (if developed). Reconnect with green spaces. Digital Connectivity /improved digital skills. Freeport development. Lower Thames Crossing.
2.5 People, Employment, Health & Well-Being	Growing Population Love Grays and entrepreneurial spirit. Good community spirit & identity Growing education provision – South Essex College	Population growth Growing need for jobs, amenities, space Lower social grading Employment Stagnation Lower levels of NVQ4+ qualifications Deprivation domains higher in Income Deprivation; Education, Skills and Training; Barriers to Housing and Services; and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index – especially towards Riverside Levels of child obesity and smoking	Diversification of local economy Access to riverside. Improving access to Riverside Beach and Kilverts Field. Growing educational hub. Greening and connecting Grays. Active travel by cycling and walking.
2.6 Grays Town Centre	Local Centre. Street market. Underpass works and regeneration potential. Community focus.	Competition from Lakeside. High vacancy rates / high yields. Online shopping. Limited evening economy. Poor perception of safety. Disconnected green spaces.	Diversification of town centre uses. Shift toward mixed use schemes. Regenerate riverside. Creative and cultural development. Digital connectivity. Creating resilient day time and evening economy. Strengthening the pedestrian and cycle routes across the town centre.
2.7 Covid-19 Implications	—	Increasing unemployment. Reduction in income / GVA Poor health outcomes for vulnerable groups (Obese / smokers)	Develop natural asset / connecting communities. Build confidence, perception and growth Attend to health and wellbeing agenda.

Section 3 : Vision, Strategy and Projects

Drawing on the key opportunities for Grays, this section develops the strategic objectives, vision, spatial strategy and inter-related (priority) projects that we believe will provide the catalyst for the next phase in the sustainable transformation and growth of the town over the next decade and beyond. It will address the challenges faced and build on initiatives being brought forward.

3.1 OUR VISION

Our future vision for Grays is as follows:

"Building on its history as Chartered Market town and its connection to the River, the ambition is to transform Grays and deliver a high quality destination to live, work, learn and play.

The future of Grays will see it reconnected with its Riverside and maritime heritage. The Riverside will be both a transport and a recreational gateway. By improving access and visibility the River will unlock transformative green space to be enjoyed by the whole community. This will make Grays a happier and healthier place to live.

The reanimated Riverside and improved links with the Town will stimulate greater integration between the resident, student and business communities and foster growth in both the day and night-time economy. Cafes, bars, restaurants, shops and markets will combine with the potential for culture, entertainment and events in new indoor and outdoor venues which will provide attractive spaces for people to meet and socialise.

The interconnected town and Riverside will support jobs, learning and entrepreneurship and boost the prosperity of this historic town."

3.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The vision is underpinned by the following inter-related strategic objectives that have been shaped by the wider contextual analysis and stakeholder engagement to:

These will drive positive change locally. Connecting the town centre to river and back with green public spaces, walks and cycleways will raise the image of Grays as a desirable, healthier and connected place.

The vision has been developed, tested and refined by the different layers of engagement and consultation carried out since 2013. Taken together this engagement has confirmed the needs, wants and aspirations of Grays community and all stakeholders who have a vested interest in securing a transformational future for Grays.

The figures provide examples of some of the headline comments received from the stakeholder engagement and the common words forwarded to describe this potential future.



2020: NewRiver REIT Charette

"We need to attract people back to the town centre."

"We are not Lakeside, we are not Basildon... we are Grays."

"It would be nice for communities to talk to each other."

"The cultural mix is really exciting."

"Grays is a no-go zone at night."

"The town centre needs to find a new purpose."

"What we need is for the community to take back the centre of town, we need to reclaim it for everyone in Grays."

"We want more from our town centre than just shops."

"We want to see colour and trends and make it much more family friendly for all ages."

"Look outside, Grays IS grey, it matches the name and we want it to be green!"

"There's a strong community, but where can we come together?"

"We need somewhere for people to feel they've got ownership of the place – try and get a multi-generational thing going so that everyone feels welcome."

"Make it better, but leave no one behind."

"What we create needs to be accessible for everyone."

"It's a fine location – 30 minutes to London and 30 minutes to the beach!"

"It has to be good for the environment – we're thinking about the future and this is about our kids too."

"I want to be able to walk through the town and down to the water to enjoy the restaurants and whatever else is down there."

Responses to Grays #MyTown Campaign as at 23/12/2020

"I would like proper cycle infrastructure and secure (indoor) cycle storage to encourage use of cycling to visit the town centre."

"We need to bring in the right sort of people to spend money... A restaurant by the yacht club. A clipper boat to London. A victorian cafe at beach like the original....."

"Riverside Facilities.. Due to our fantastic location investment in this area would give a boost to the area... A couple of restaurants would bring in people and income. Its a tough call but the area by the yacht club and the wharf is a suggestion."

"The town centre needs more spaces to socialise. Restaurants, bars and coffee shops would attract more people. More activity spaces especially for young families. Use of the water front and other end of the town centre down towards the wharf area.."

"Increase footfall." "Invest In community centres."

"Better facilities more shops and more things to do for the community."

"More greenery on Grays High Street; replacing paving... It's part of the reason Grays is looking a bit tired."

"Local cultural centre development - investing in a more exciting local cultural offer (gallery and/or theatre) could help bring people into the town centre and drive local growth. Whilst London is easily accessible by train, I don't feel the current local provision is adequate. It could help build a sense of local cohesive community, which I feel is in need of development."

"there isn't anywhere in grays for mothers and babies, there are a few parks in Grays but more suitable for older children.."

"Regeneration led by Creativity & Culture."

"Thurrock and Grays has changed and is still changing. The Town Centre has not kept up with the times. Relying on retail to bring people in to the town centre is not going to work and we need to think out side the box"

Urban Regeneration

“everything looks tired, everything looks uncared for...there is a backdrop here of perception that is going to be a really key thing to reverse”

“lack of diversity in the shopping experience”

“Grays town centre decline due to Lakeside”

“perception of community towards town centre is poor”

“enhance green areas and make environmentally rich”

“intergenerational and play spaces where communities can interact”

“design ‘bumping’ (socialising) spaces”

“Few times I’ve been there, the riverside is quite bland and concrete, could be soften up to make greener”

Connectivity

“Grays riverfront: Pier in this location close to the High Street is important”

“link culture and heritage”

“include superfast 5G”

“Grays represents opportunity to holistically counter local health challenges”

“lots of opportunity to get people active”

“active by design”

Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure

“opportunity for marine sector from deck hand to captain”

“strength of labour pool to create employment and supply chain”

“hub for learning and skills”

“reskilling for a post-Covid world”

“adult skills front and centre”

Grays: Advisory Group consultation 2020

3.3 PROJECT PRIORITISATION

In addition to the engagement activities undertaken since the Towns Fund was launched, we have an extensive body of consultation evidence to draw upon (as detailed in Section 2). In combination this has steered our proposals for key opportunities and projects. Our project selection and prioritisation journey is summarised in the diagram opposite.

The Board has adopted a collaborative, partnership-working and wide-ranging engagement model with key organisations, businesses and the community through which transformational projects have been prioritised. We have used the following process to identify and prioritise projects.

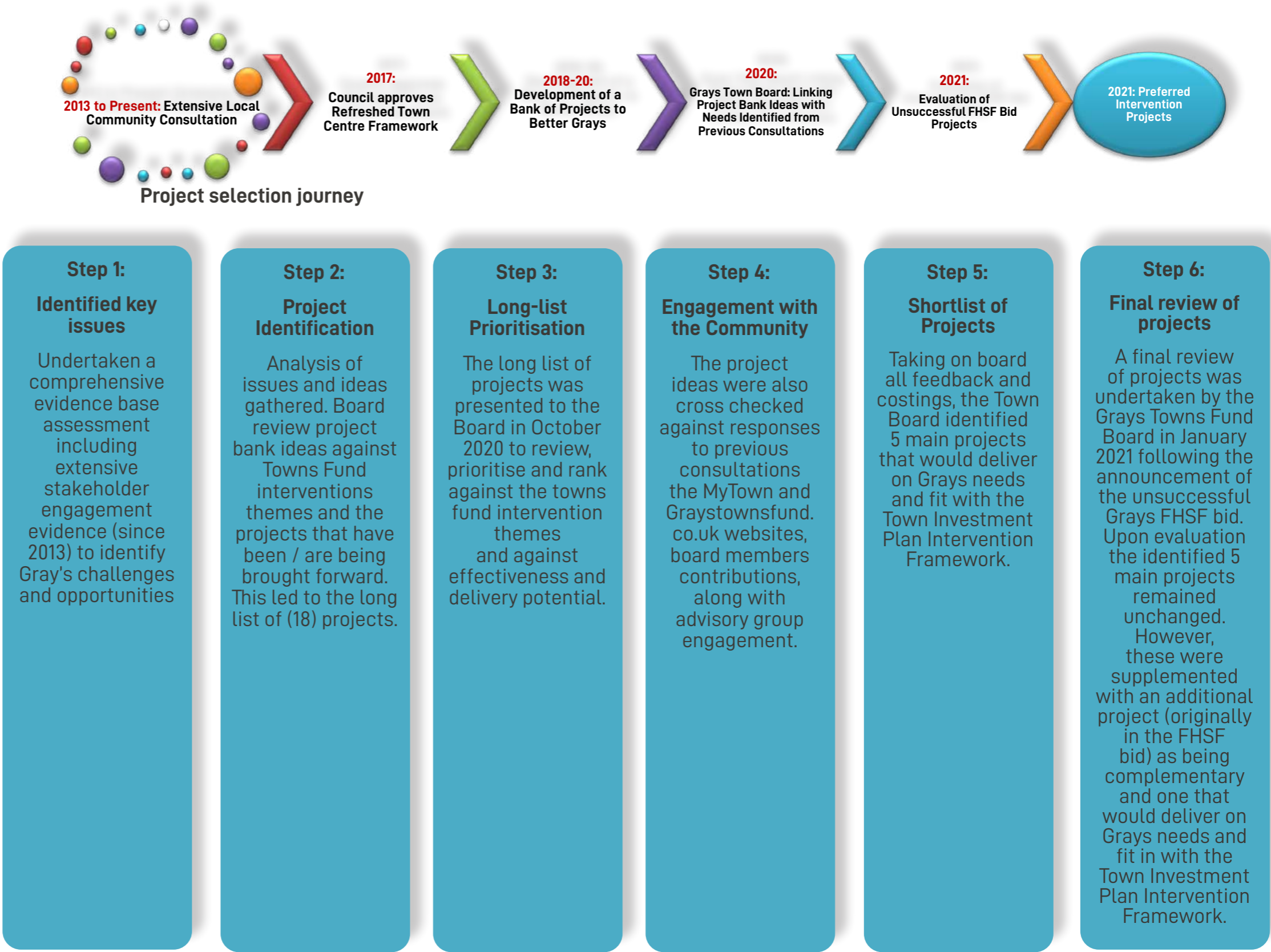
At the outset, a call for potential projects aligned with the Towns Fund went out to Board Members, the Council and other key stakeholders, creating a long-list of project ideas (18 in total-Appendix 3).

These projects were initially assessed against a series of prioritisation criteria informed by the Towns Fund Delivery Partner's Project Prioritisation Tool. The criteria included an initial assessment of whether the projects were:

- Aligned with the Towns Fund; and
- Whether they were: available; affordable; achievable, commercially viable; deliverable; and, critically, supported.

The project ideas were also “tested” against responses to the #myTown and Grays Towns Fund websites, the ongoing feedback with Board members and wider engagement with the community and businesses through surveys and workshops (see Appendix 2).

Building on the consultation, the Board identified a number of areas for focus themed around the Riverside as a key focus for regeneration, diversification and a catalyst for change.



This sieving process ruled out several projects from the long-list. Further analysis and distillation of issues/ideas was gathered through a review of strategic documents and priority intervention themes defined by the Board. This led to the development of a refined list of 5 projects.

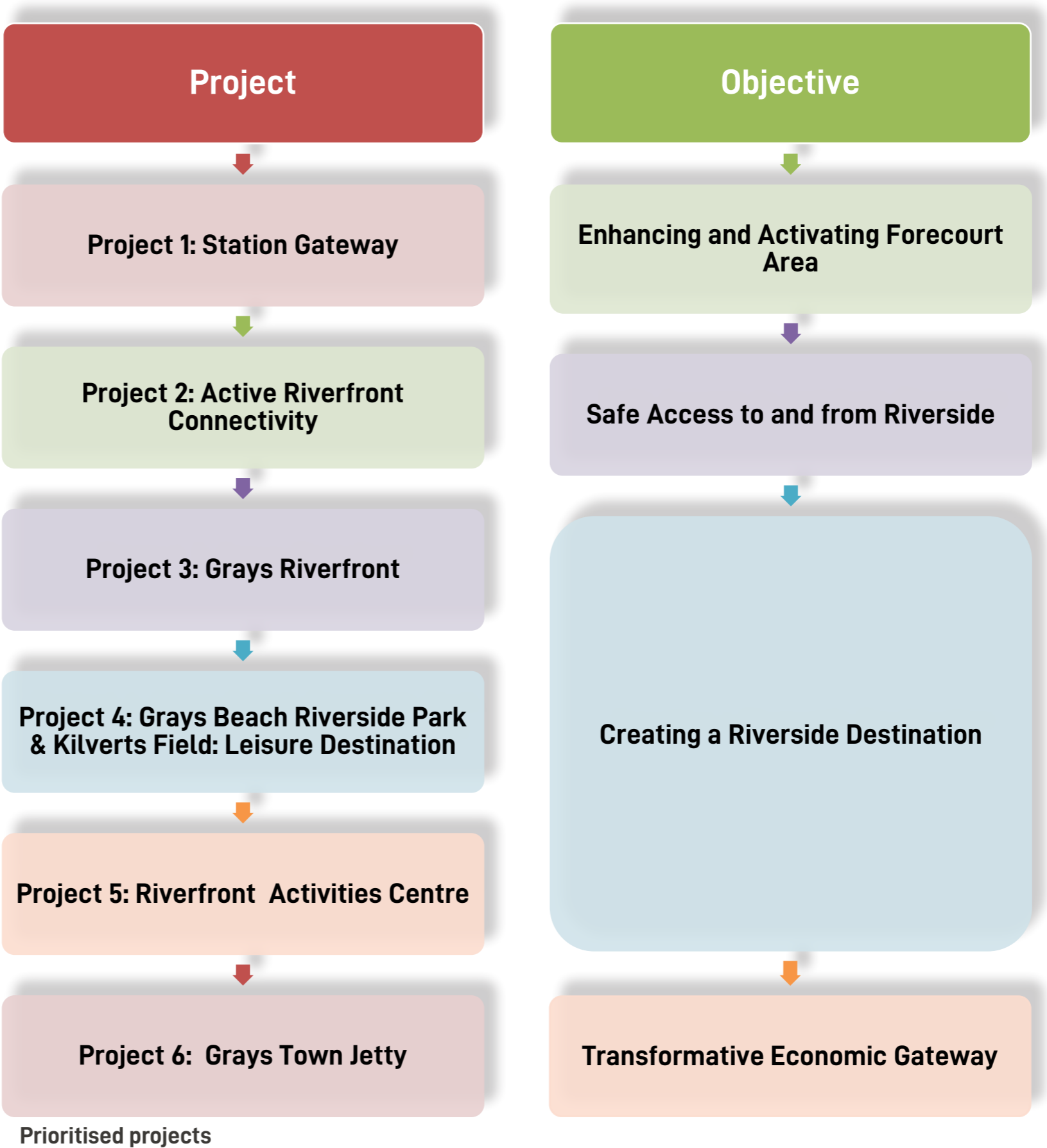
This refined list was reviewed again in January 2021 after Grays was unsuccessful in its FHSF bid. The Board then considered the potential for inclusion of FHSF projects. Upon analysis, one additional project was selected that was complementary to existing projects and with the broader theme of reconnecting with the Riverside.

Following the project selection process, the following projects have been agreed and prioritised.

The aim of these projects is to redefine the identity of Grays by re-establishing linkages between the town centre and riverside and improving the functionality of the riverside. The intervention projects will serve to transform Grays and create growth and value in a number of ways:

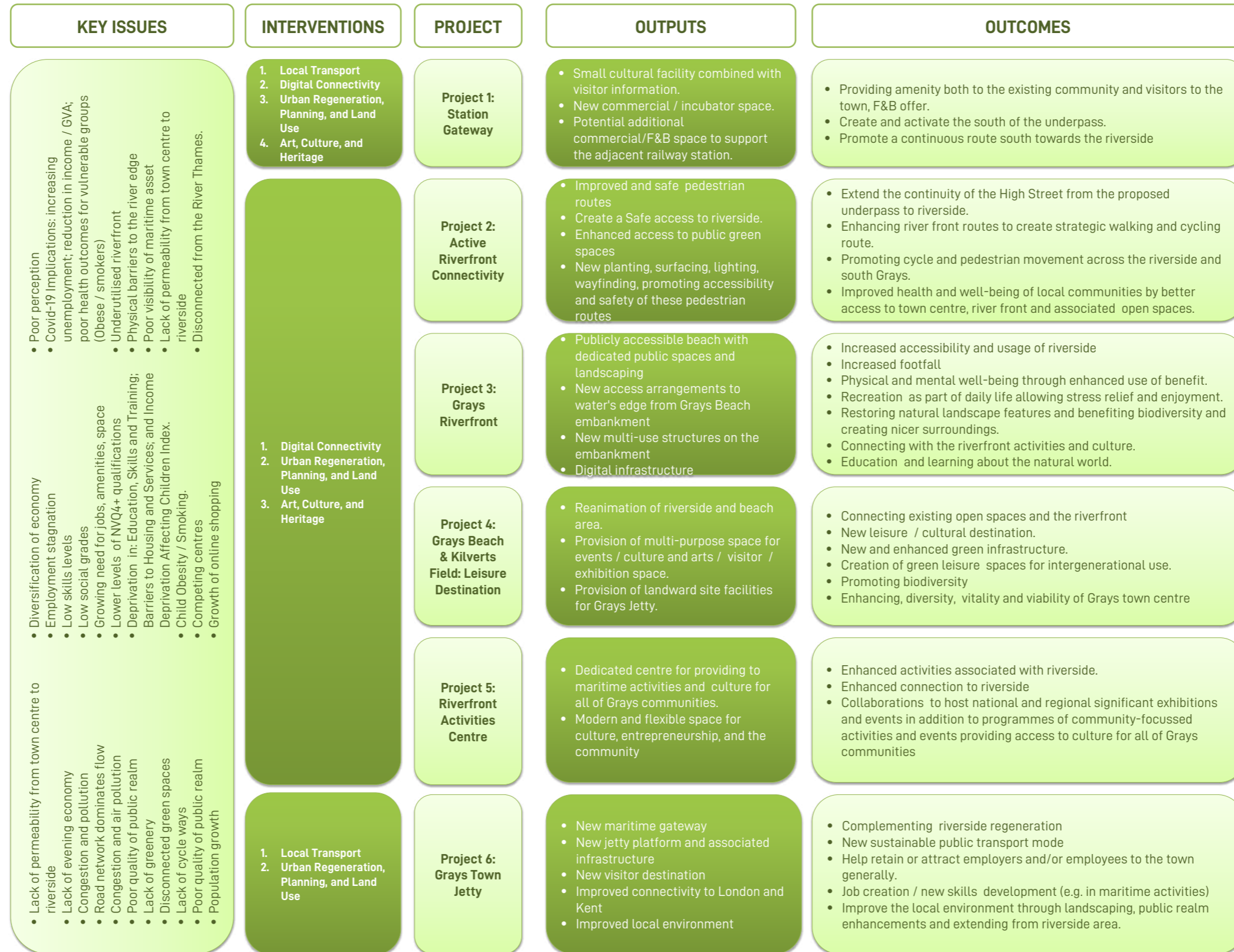
- Social value: connecting communities, building confidence and perception, attending to agendas such as health and well-being, law and order and education.
- Economic value: building on its riverside heritage to develop a market for diversified businesses and experiences as a means to support job creation and business growth; and to spark awareness of Grays as a place of cultural vibrancy, opportunity and integrity, and thus as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

It is acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges and has shown we need to invest in the environment. It is our aim to give communities in Grays better access to recreational space and achieve a green recovery from Covid-19. We want to also ensure that local businesses bounce back quickly from the pandemic.



3.4 OVERARCHING THEORY OF CHANGE

To show how the project proposals presented in GTIP Section 2 will help to address Grays challenges and capitalise on the major opportunities outlined here, we have completed a 'programme level' theory of change model.





3.5 SPATIAL STRATEGY PLAN

Our focus is to create a destination at the Riverside through new leisure infrastructure and improved connectivity with Grays town centre and beyond.

This will be underpinned by a jetty to enable new transport links by river to Kent and to central London. Our plans will deliver a significantly enhanced riverside environment to attract visitors of all ages who will benefit from improved access by foot, bicycle, rail and river. This will be a transformational investment to encourage more visitors and drive economic growth.

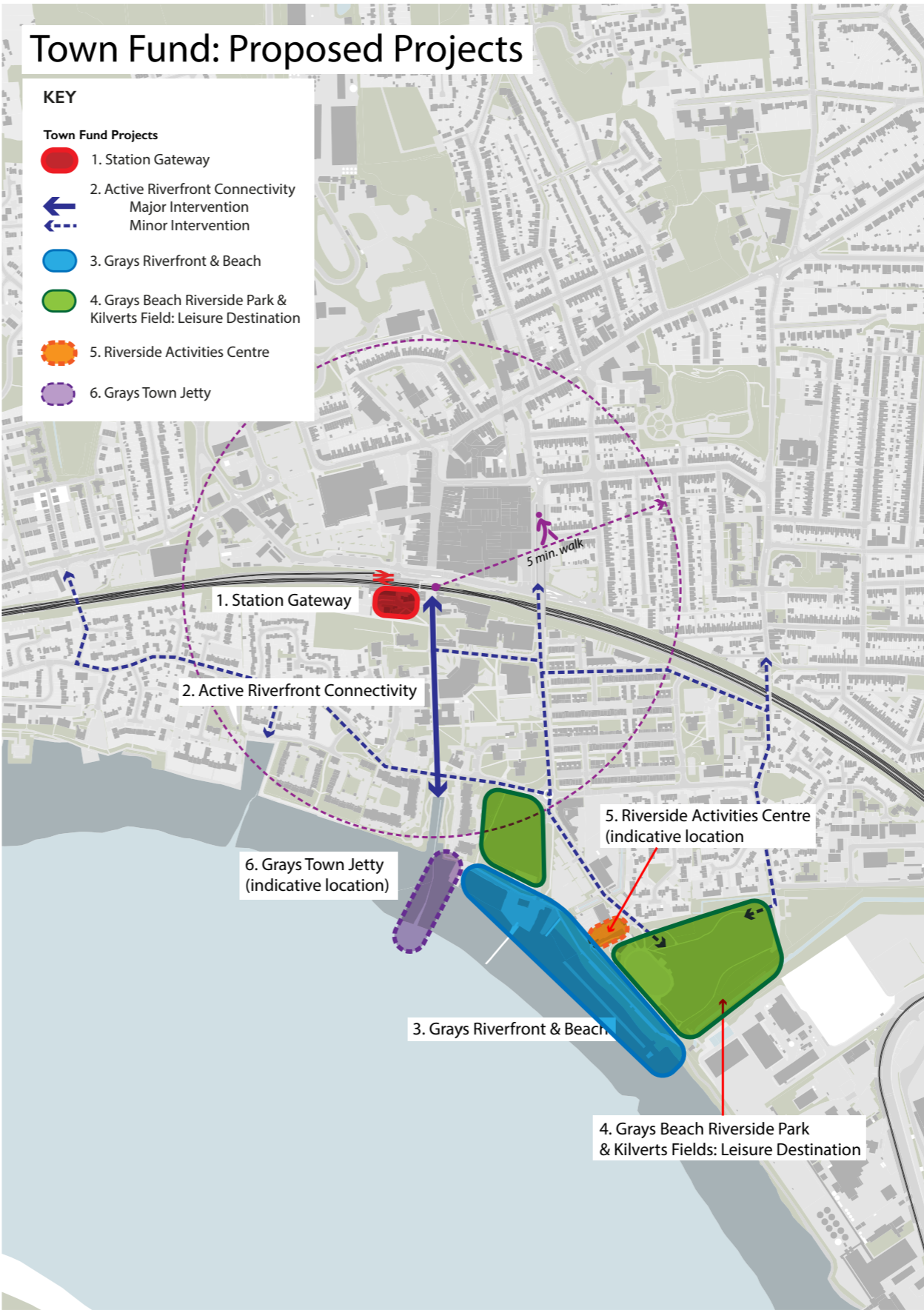
Grays is already well positioned on the north bank of the River Thames to benefit economically from:

- The enhancement of the Heritage offering at Tilbury Fort and Tilbury Cruise terminal;
- Thames Estuary Production Corridor with its creative and cultural cluster at Purfleet in Thurrock;
- The proposed underpass and improvements to Grays railway station;
- The proposed development at London resort immediately across the river from the proposed jetty; and
- The economic potential of the wider SELEP region and proximity to London.

Our proposals are presented to show the continuity of experience from initial arrival at the station with safe movement southwards to the riverfront and beyond. Our projects will enable economic diversification and growth and enhanced connectivity between the town centre, riverfront and green spaces.

Through our projects we want our communities to be able to reconnect with open spaces and green infrastructure as they make a significant contribution to quality of life locally. The pandemic is expected to have a long-term impact on mental health and there is an increased responsibility to maximise the availability of outdoor space. Grays Beach Riverside Park and Kilverts Field are catalysts for resurgence in the use of green space and crucial 'green lungs' in an otherwise urban and densely populated residential area.

The spatial context of our TIP interventions is shown opposite.





THURROCK COUNCIL

Welcome to

Grays Beach Riverside Park

THIS PARK WILL CLOSE HALF AN HOUR BEFORE DUSK AND WILL RE-OPEN AT 8AM

Notice of Events & Activities

Roast Every Sunday 12pm To 4pm

OAP Day Every Wednesday 1pm To 4pm

After School Dinners Every Friday 4pm To 6pm

Please respect the park by disposing of your litter in the bins provided.

In the interest of safety, please do not bring Glass or Alcohol into the area.

To report any damage or vandalism to the equipment, or in the event of an accident, please contact a member of staff or call Parks & Open Spaces on (01375) 652308.

The nearest public telephone box is located in: Grays Town Centre.

An emergency telephone is situated within the cafe.

Have fun and enjoy your time spent in the park. This is your facility, please help us to keep this site in good condition.

HISTORY OF THE PARK

Grays Beach Riverside Park had previously been Victoria Park with a swimming pool (some pictures are situated within the cafe). The main part of the park which included the swimming pool had been largely derelict until 1999. The new look re-developments for the new park took place. The new look swimming pool for the new park opened in May 1999. The main area of the new park is centred by the Grays Beach Riverside Park. This was totally re-developed and filled with 5,000 tonnes of play grade sand. Other new developments in the park included: Adventure Golf, Junior Driving School, Pedal Go-Karts, Splash Pool with interactive features, extensive re-planting, Cafe, Toilets and disabled access.



3.6 PROJECTS



Grays Riverside Panoramic



Grays Beach Existing



Grays Beach circa 1930



Grays Riverside and Beach Existing



1. Station Gateway

**4. Kilvert's Fields:
Leisure Destination**

**4. Grays Beach Riverside Park:
Leisure Destination**

**4. Extension and
enhancement of
Lightship Cafe**

**2. Active Riverfront
Connectivity**

**6. Grays Town Jetty
(indicative position)**

**5. Riverfront
Activities Centre
(location to be
determined)**

3. Grays Riverfront and Beach

Our Projects

Project 1: Station Gateway

The station is an important gateway for Grays. Currently, the busy C2C line runs through the town centre dividing the High Street into north and south. Services travel through a pedestrian level crossing which has a footbridge connecting both sides of the street. The Council working with Network Rail and C2C will separately deliver a new lower level concourse below the railway to improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

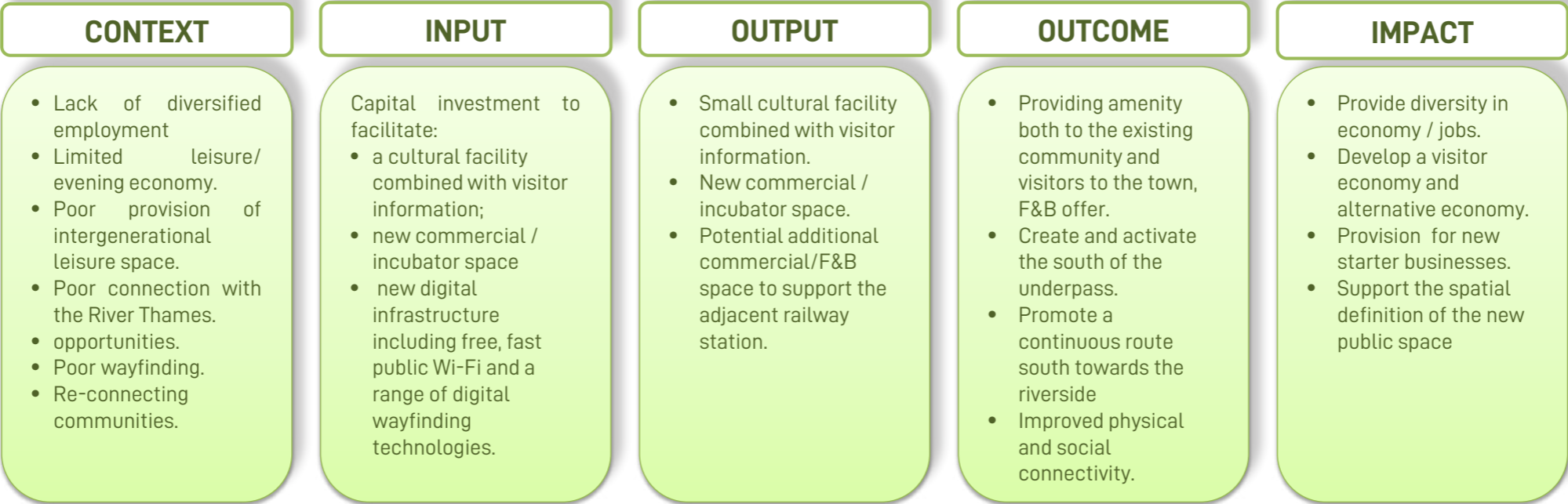
As part of this development, the proposed lower level concourse will create space in the form of a station forecourt or 'piazza' area. This area represents an important opportunity where the Towns Fund assistance is sought to provide:

- A visitor information facility providing amenity both to the existing community and visitors to Grays;
- New commercial / start-up space (e.g. new food and beverage concepts) at ground level to support the adjacent railway station;

- New digital infrastructure including free, fast public Wi-Fi and a range of digital wayfinding technologies.
- This intervention is essential to:
- Support the spatial definition and arrangement of the emerging new public space in front of the train station, to establish a new gateway to the town centre;
 - Promote diversification of businesses and economic growth;
 - Provide active commercial frontages and wayfinding enhancements to animate the lower concourse in order to optimise connectivity between north and south High Street;
 - Define and promote a continuous route south from the town centre towards the riverside.



Station Gateway: Proposal Sketch



Station Gateway logic map

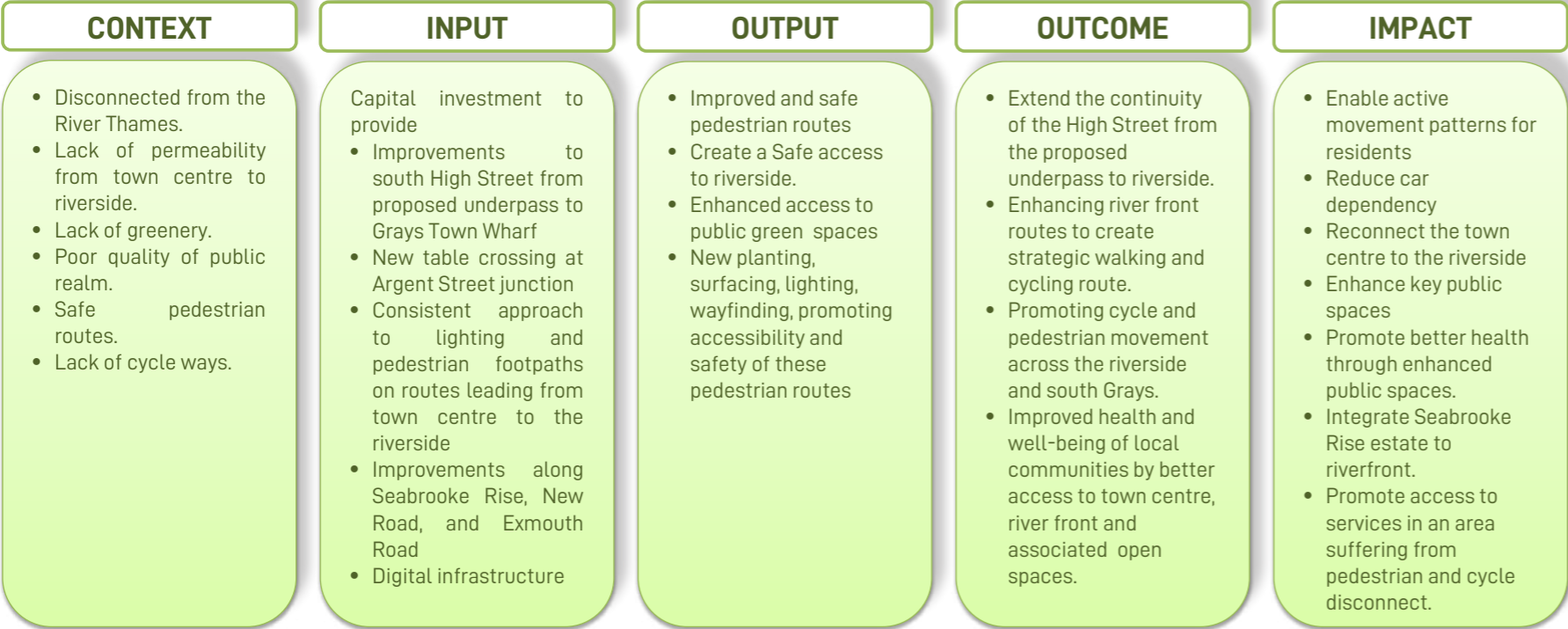
Project 2: Active Riverfront Connectivity

Building on Project 1, this intervention seeks to extend the continuity of the High Street from the proposed underpass to Grays Town Wharf. This route represents a 'central spine' connecting the town centre, the station gateway (Project 1), South Essex College (£45m investment), the riverside destination (Projects 3, 4, 5) and proposed jetty (Project 6).

We believe that the riverfront must be accessible, clearly signposted and secure for users. Our project aims for better connectivity and promotes active modes of travel between town centre and riverfront. It will improve the legibility and sense of place south of Grays town centre and the surrounding residential areas. The project seeks to deliver:

- A new table crossing at Argent Street junction in front of the Grays Town Wharf gates, and improved planting, surfacing, lighting, wayfinding, promoting accessibility and safety of pedestrians;

- Consistent approach to lighting and pedestrian footpaths on routes leading from town centre to the riverside, principally High Street but also Wharf Road, Derby Road, Bridge Street;
- Feature lighting of St Peter and St Paul's Church to aid wayfinding and extend functionality of High Street route into the evening in a safe and inclusive way that will encourage pop up activities and commercialisation along the lower High Street; and
- Digital infrastructure including free, fast public Wi-Fi and a range of digital wayfinding technologies.



Active Riverfront Connectivity logic



Active Riverfront Connectivity: Proposal Sketch

Project 3: Grays Riverfront and Beach

The River Thames is a key defining asset for Grays, yet the town looks away from it. Together these proposals are designed so that the town embraces its connections to the river and so that it can be enjoyed by all.

The riverfront consists of disconnected public spaces of varying quality and is under-performing as a destination and leisure amenity. The high railings, walls and flood defences impede sightlines. Elevation of the riverside pathway will enable the transformation of the riverside to a welcoming destination with amenities. Specifically this will include:

- Recreating a publicly accessible beach along the water's edge at the original Grays Beach Riverside Park with dedicated public spaces and landscaping that also promotes ecology and biodiversity;
- Allowing new access arrangements (steps and ramps) to the water's edge from Grays Beach embankment to re-engage the riverfront with the river;

- New multi-use structures and associated infrastructure, including digital, on the embankment to provide shelter and enable small events and new uses along the riverfront; and

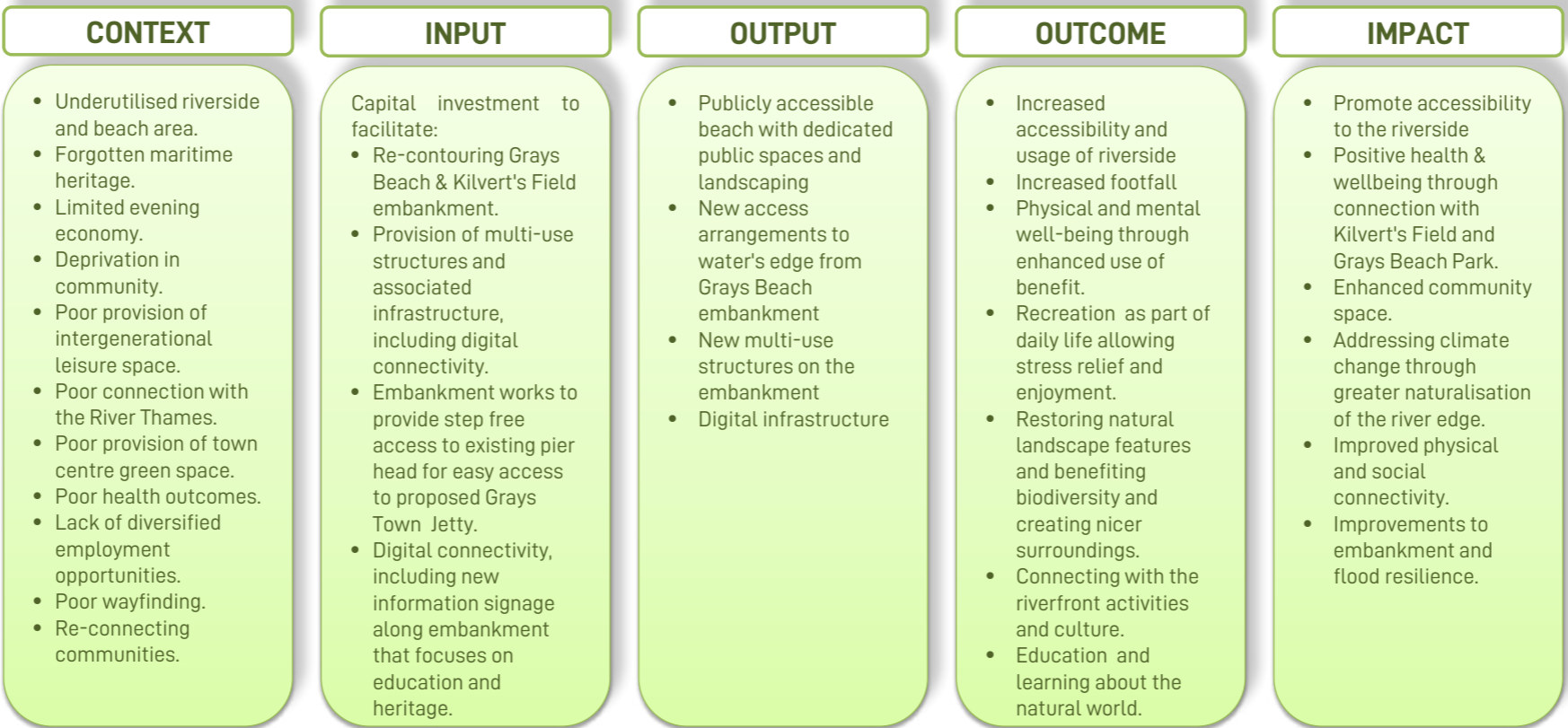
- Digital connectivity, including new information signage along embankment that focuses on education and heritage.

To make this happen will be predicated by a range of infrastructure works including:

- Re-contouring of Grays Beach and Kilvert's Field embankment to address severance and promote accessibility to the riverside;
- Resurfacing and enhancement of riverside walk, including widened footpath, new surfacing, removal of railings;
- Embankment works to provide step free access to existing pier head for easy access to proposed Grays Town Jetty (Project 6) from Kilverts Field.

Our aim is to reanimate the riverfront and give it prominence with modern amenities and infrastructure. It will provide a quality environment reconnecting the community with nature and aiding a range of social benefits including:

- Physical and mental well-being – recognising benefits of being outside, among green spaces, which is particularly relevant as our community recovers from virus and ensuing economic downturn;
- Recreation – leisure is increasingly important as part of daily life allowing stress relief and enjoyment;
- Aesthetic enhancement – restoring natural landscape features and benefiting biodiversity and creating nicer surroundings, allowing people to connect with the river and the vista across to Kent;
- Education – encouraging adults and children alike to learn about our natural world; and
- Leisure – reconnecting the urban environment of Grays town centre with the riverfront activities which has been long part of Grays heritage, and enhancing the desirability of Grays as a place to live and work.



Grays Riverfront and Beach logic map



Project 4: Grays Beach Riverside Park and Kilverts Field: Leisure Destination

Building on Project 3, this intervention seeks to embrace the natural uses of the riverfront further by connecting existing open spaces and the riverfront. Grays Beach Riverside Park and Kilverts Field are public open spaces serving a wide community but suffer from a lack of facilities or activity. We seek to address this by making the area more visually permeable, create access up to the river and make existing amenity space more desirable and usable through:

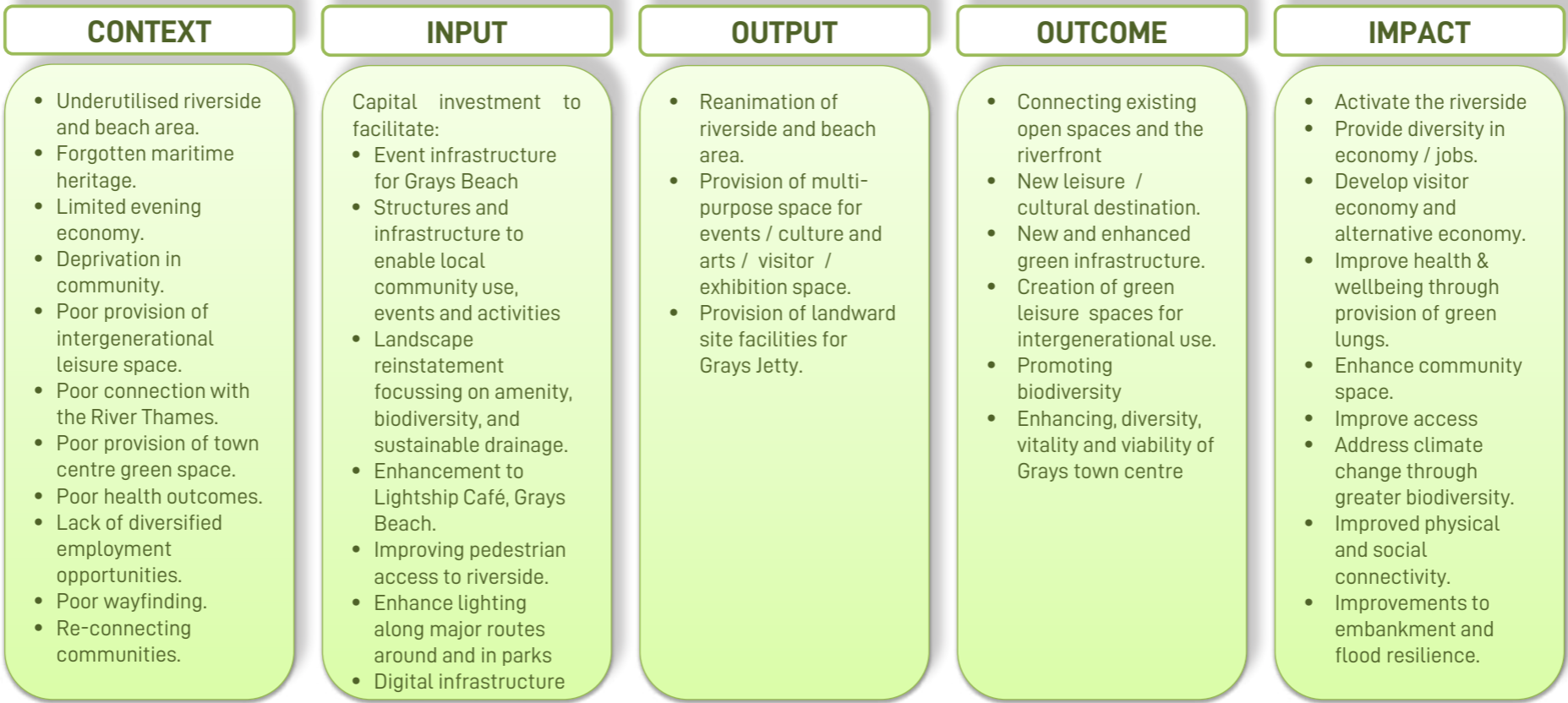
- Provision of physical event infrastructure including landscaped auditorium seating; plug-in electricity and digital utilities; provision of temporary and movable structures, such as additional seating and staging areas;
- Provision of small multi-use structures that can provide shelter and seating incorporating community-led public art displays. These structures could also provide space for seasonal local businesses such as kiosks serving visitors and users of the public green open spaces by the riverfront; and

- Reconfiguration of the existing Lightship Café within Grays Beach to provide multi-use food and beverage.

To enable this level of provision it will further require:

- Landscape reinstatement within Grays Beach and Kilverts Fields, with a focus on amenity, biodiversity and sustainable drainage enabling the community to connect with nature;
- New and enhanced lighting along major routes around and in parks, including digital connectivity, to extend functionality of spaces into the evening while promoting inclusive, accessible and safe movement; and
- Rationalising and redesign of Thames Road access and improving pedestrian access to riverside.

The interventions will enhance perception and use of these green spaces and contribute to thematic programming such as festivals and performances. It will enable provision of intergenerational activities all year round and help establish a convivial setting for social interaction. It is anticipated this will additionally reinforce the provision of cultural events in Grays and be a key contributor to the cultural provision under the wider Thames Estuary Production Corridor.



Grays Beach Riverside Park and Kilverts



Grays Beach Riverside Park and Kilverts Field: Proposal Sketch

“People want to more than a cloned high street found anywhere else in the U.K. ... People want experiences and memories, so yeh high street needs to be a place for celebrating and exploring creativity, culture and heritage with festivals, events and a night time economy - no one of which are happening right now”
2020: Grays Advisory Group Workshop



“I have been running regular fitness classes and personal training sessions on Kilverts Field for over 2 years and the investment in the area will be a huge asset to the local community. The regeneration will attract more people and it would be fantastic to get people outside to enjoy all the benefits. My aim is to encourage more people to exercise outdoors and enjoy the surroundings that are on their doorstep and the investment in the area will definitely help with this”

Louise Ince
Personal Trainer | Group Exercise Instructor
dotty about fitness
(2021)

Project 5: Riverfront Activities Centre

To enhance the riverside destination, we are also seeking to provide a dedicated 1,200 sq.m (GIA) riverside activities centre. This will facilitate community use of the river for leisure and maritime activity and provide event and education space.

It will be sited in an accessible location with enhanced connection to the riverfront (Projects 3 and 4). The aim is provide modern and flexible space with digital infrastructure for a range of activities including:

- Use of the River for sports and leisure for all generations improving access to sailing, sports and maritime activity;
- An educational facility to enable young people to learn about the Thames through our history; as a driver of economic wealth; as a focus for nature and conservation; as well as for sport and leisure;
- An events space to enable cultural activities such as events and gallery space; local art, music and theatre; river festival;
- Education, entrepreneurship, skills and training activities working with community partners including South Essex College.

The centre will act as a focal point for the revitalised riverfront destination bringing together a collaborative partnership between the community, employers, entrepreneurs and education. This will additionally nurture social value by way of local employment, better health outcomes and appreciation of public green spaces. Engagement has commenced with the Yacht Club and Sea Cadets but further engagement needs to take place before location can be finally agreed. The delivery of the activities centre will be in partnership with both organisations.

“Use colour, light and art to make a statement, allow residents to take ownership and to be proud of where they live!”

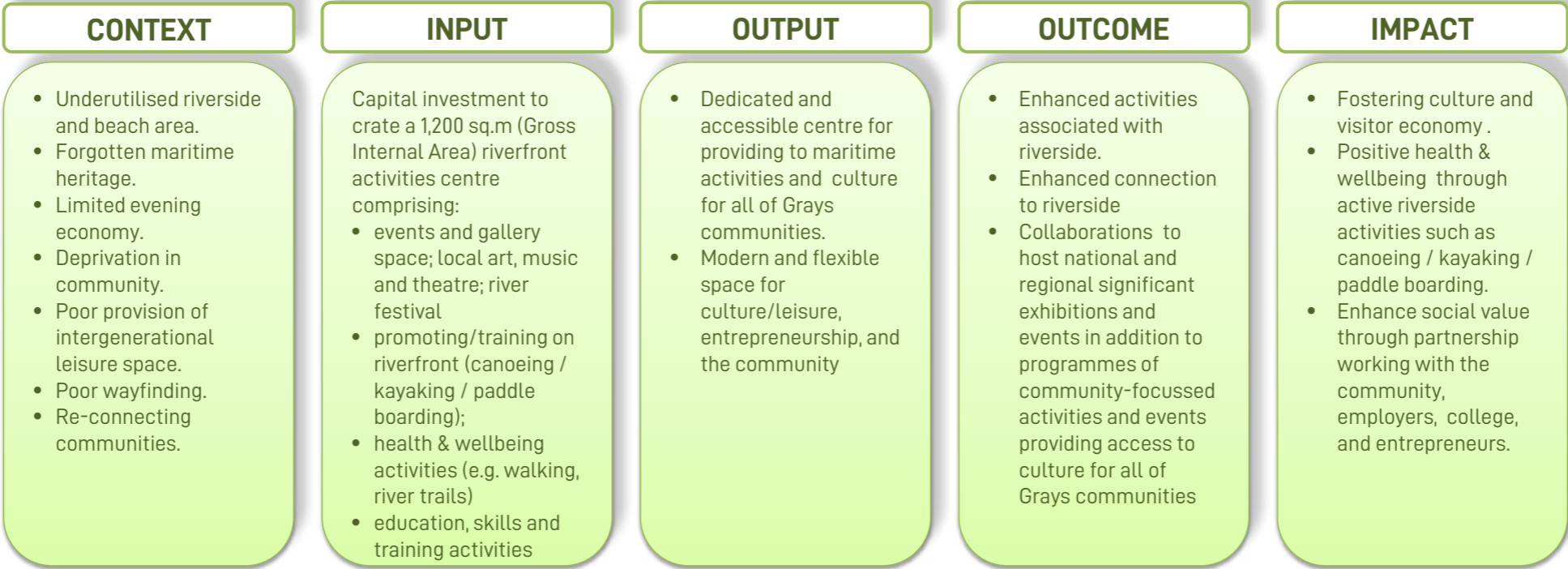
2020: Grays MyTowns Campaign

““We want to see colour and trends and make it much more family friendly for all ages.”

NewRiver REIT Community Engagement Charette Output (2020)

“link culture and heritage”

2020: Grays Advisory Group Workshop



Riverfront Activities Centre logic map

Project 6: Grays Town Jetty

The River Thames itself is the greatest asset for Grays. Historically, its wharves were the focus of river traffic and a major driver for economic activity and growth. We believe this can be restored by proactively planning for future river traffic. We seek to unlock this potential by providing a jetty from the riverside built deep into the River Thames to harness the untapped environmental, social and economic value of Grays' riverside setting.

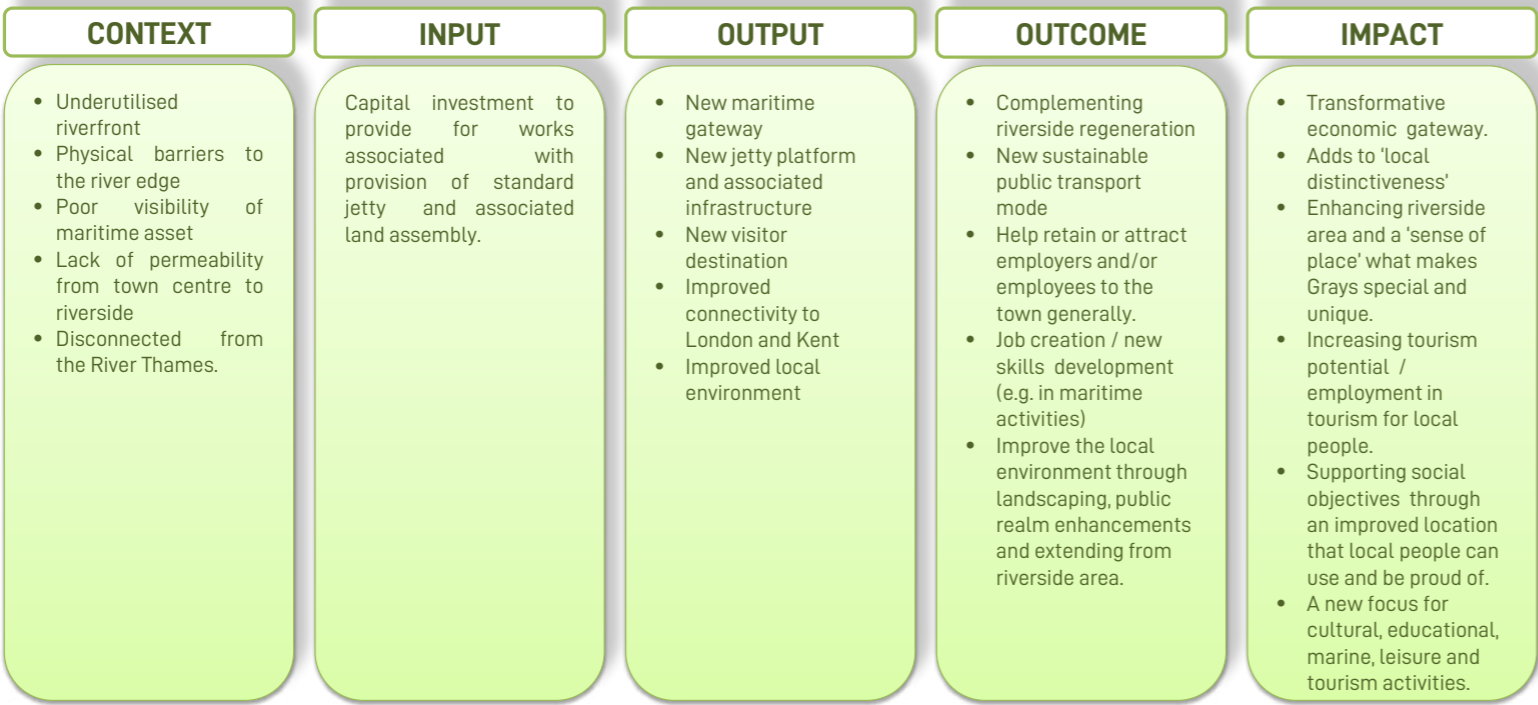
This fundamental maritime intervention is needed to enable:

- Greater connectivity between the north and south banks of the Thames; greater connectivity beyond to the East to Tilbury³⁵ and to the West to Canary Wharf and the City of London;
- Transport along the river consistent with the desire to make the Thames Estuary a more significant economic driver. Thames Clippers has provided a letter of support³⁶ with Grays as a stopping point which would open-up the riverside as an important gateway for locals and visitors;

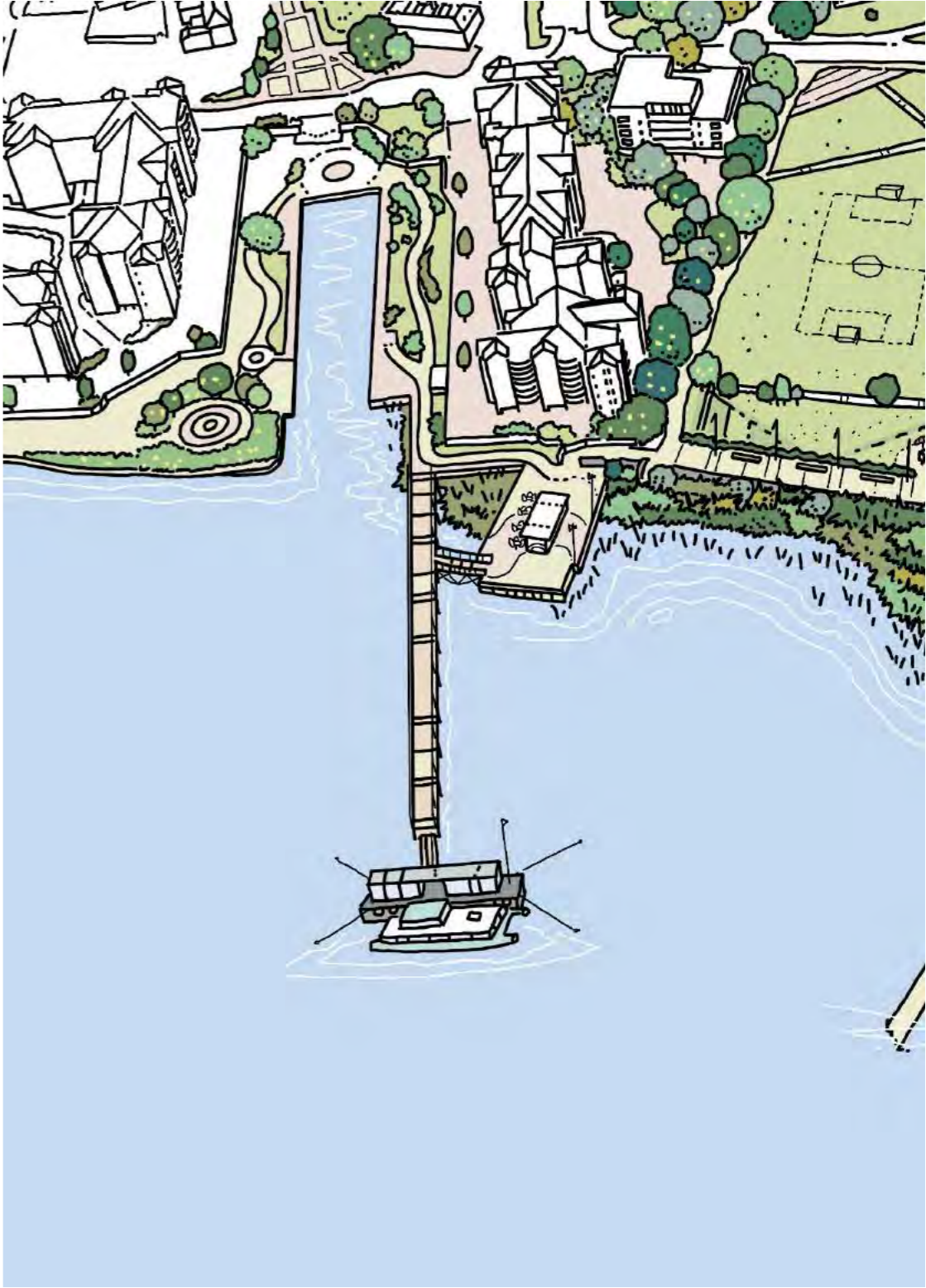
- Developing a visitor economy - as Grays rail station is the closest north of the Thames to the proposed London Resort³⁷, there is the future prospect to generate significant river traffic through a rail and sail service to the resort and a collaboration agreement has been signed between Thurrock Council and London Resort to further that intention; and
- Employment opportunities coming from the construction and operation of the proposed London Resort, easily accessing the workforce in Grays

As for the other projects, new digital infrastructure will help to connect with other riverside projects and will include free, fast public Wi-Fi and a range of digital wayfinding technologies.

This undertaking will be at the heart of our vision to reanimate the riverside area into a truly functional transformative location.



Grays Town Jetty logic map



Grays Town Jetty: Proposal Sketch

3.7 PROJECT COSTS

Initial feasibility studies have indicated the following overall costs per project.

Project	TOTAL TOWNS FUND ASK
Project 1: Station Gateway	£2.64m
Project 2: Active Riverfront Connectivity	£2.51m
Project 3: Grays Riverfront and Beach	£5.59m
Project 4: Grays Beach & Kilverts Field: Leisure Destination	£4.57m
Project 5: Riverfront Activities Centre	£3.037m
Project 6: Grays Town Jetty	£6.6m
TOTAL TOWNS FUND ASK:	£24.947m

Grays Town Fund Ask: Indicative project programme and timeline.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Project 1: Station Gateway						
Project 2: Active Riverfront Connectivity						
Project 3: Grays Riverfront and Beach						
Project 4: Grays Beach & Kilverts Field: Leisure Destination						
Project 5: Riverfront Activities Centre						
Project 6: Grays Town Jetty						



Section 4 : Delivery

Section 4 : Delivery

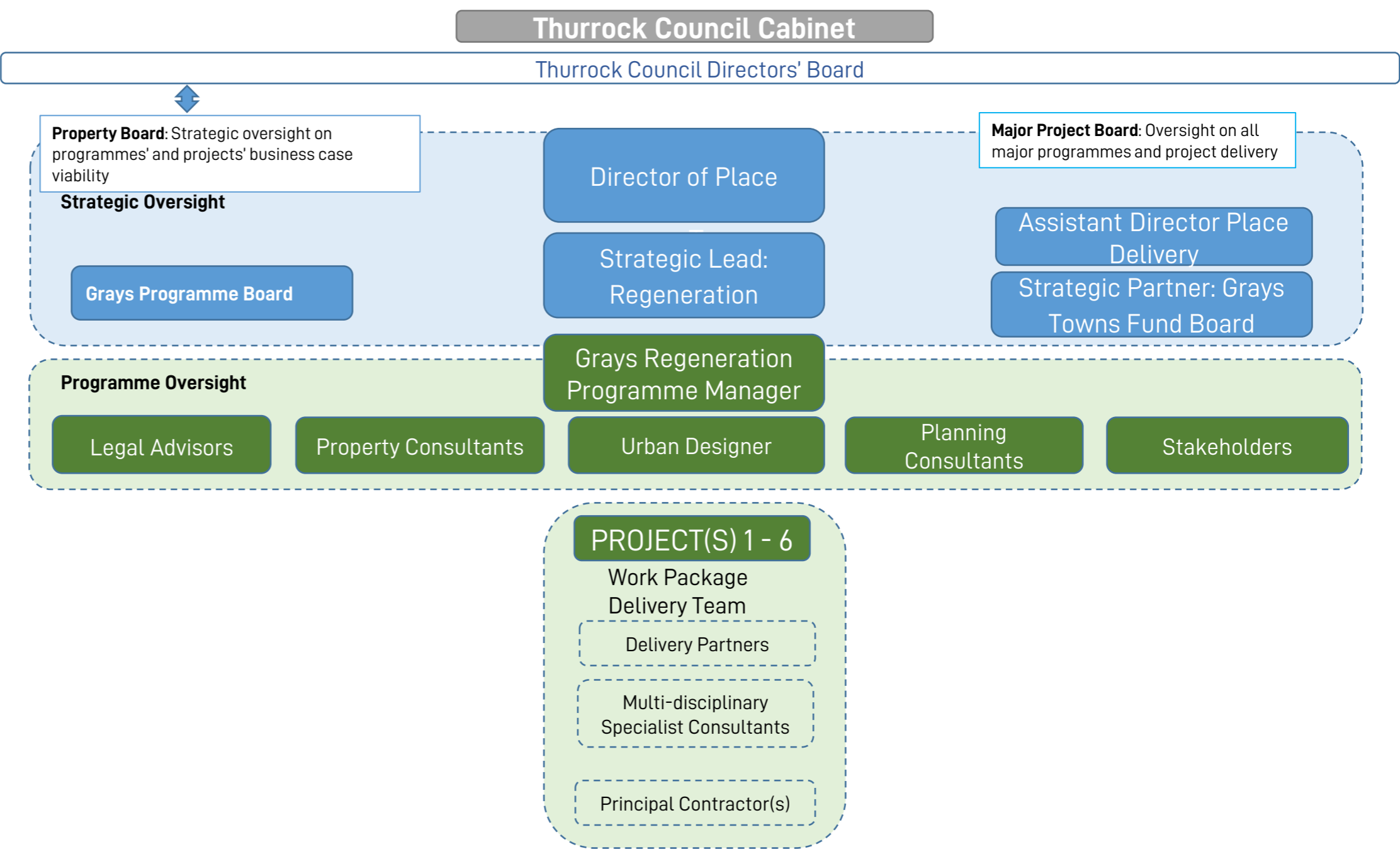
4.1 MANAGING DELIVERY

A centrally managed programme will be established with appropriate methodologies adopted, at project level, to set up and deliver projects in the most effective way.

This will ensure that the Council (the **Accountable Body**) can monitor and deliver projects consistently, to address agreed priorities and government targets, whilst retaining some flexibility of approach. Prince 2 principles and gateway decision stages will be followed, as applies to all major projects introduced by the Council.

4.2 PROGRAMME BOARD AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Board will act as the over-arching 'client' function to lead, manage, and monitor all projects centrally. They will be supported by a Project Management & Delivery Officer (PMDO) or Officers who would take day-to-day management of delivery of the projects.



Programme board and programme management

4.3 POST GTIP SUBMISSION: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

It is our intention to ensure that the local community in Grays is continually involved as we progress our vision, strategy and projects.

Once MHCLG confirms that the GTIP has been successful, the Board will initiate Stage 2 of its Engagement and Communication Strategy with the Board's Communications sub-group.

Should the GTIP be successful, then we envisage carrying out (diagram below).

There will also be scheduled interaction with the delivery team and ongoing governance function.

We will review the different stakeholders previously represented as part of this TIP submission to ensure we continue to capture all of Grays communities and amend representation should this be required.

Where possible we will seek to identify project champion/champions to help communicate project progress to a wider audience, provide feedback, and thereby provide direct input into the development and delivery of the projects. This will help to strengthen stakeholder buy-in and support for the projects as they are progressed, and post-delivery.

4.4 GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Governance and accountability will follow an established approach for managing major projects with the establishment of an internal working group from Council departments, including: regeneration, highways, finance and legal to support the project delivery team.

The Treasury's 'Five Business Case Model' process will be followed to secure final business case approval to proceed from the relevant accountable body.

The Council's constitution will guide all governance, due process, and reporting requirements for the programme, including Cabinet approval of key business cases, the publication of decisions and authorisation of delegated authority to proceed with investment.

The relationship between the Council and the Town Deal Board will be managed carefully to ensure that the key principles of public life are enshrined in its governance arrangements. This will ensure transparency of decision making, a code of conduct, a register of members' interests and appropriate management of any conflicts of interest.

4.5 BUSINESS CASE DEVELOPMENT

Whilst a three-phase Strategic, Outline, and Full Business Case approach is normally used for major projects, MHCLG has confirmed that once the TIP is submitted and approved, towns will need to develop one strong business case per project to secure funding within 12 months of agreeing Heads of Terms.

This will include the right options and scenarios, commercial insights, modelling of economic and social impacts, and a clear strategic narrative throughout the business case. This will be based on the 2020 HM Treasury Green Book Guidance document³⁸.



Post GTIP submission: stakeholder engagement plan

4.6 COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

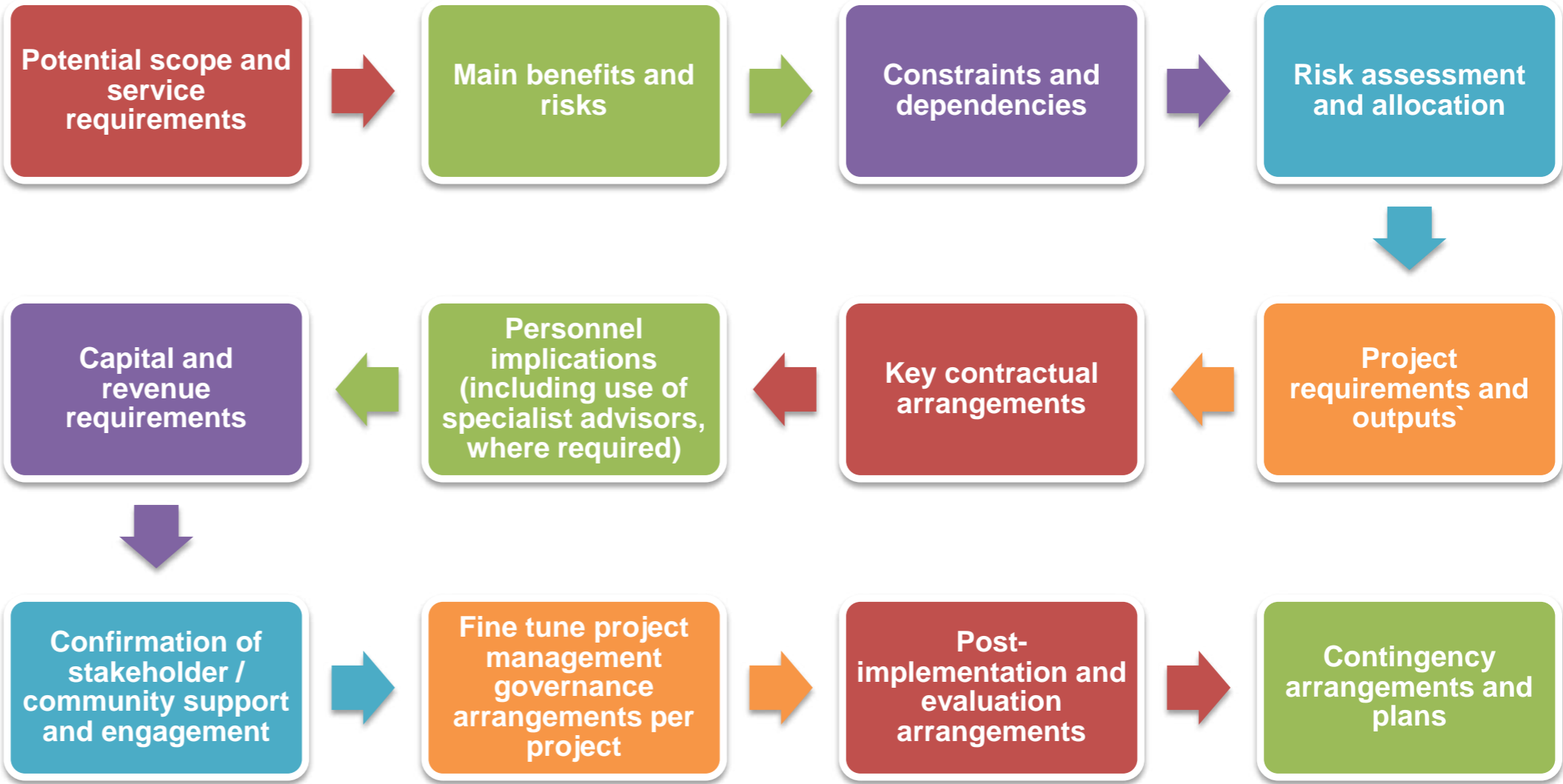
We acknowledge that the vision and objectives of the GTIP will be best delivered through cohesive and coherent partnerships. The Council has a good track record of collaborative working and as detailed in **Section 1**, Grays is on a long term transformational journey. Supported and bid projects in the recent past include:

SELEP has supported projects in Grays town centre and has awarded:

- £1.5m loan to enable the conversion of the former magistrate's court in to support business space; and
- £10.8m from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) to fund works to replace a level crossing of the rail line.
- The Council has committed £9 million from its Capital programme towards the underpass, along with development returns from its developments and £1.2m in Section 106 funds. Further Section106 funds have been used for road improvements and open space improvements.
- This TIP therefore set out an ambitious plan for Grays Town Centre that builds on current strategies and compliments other regeneration activity in the Town Centre including the underpass supported by funding from the LGF, Civic Offices extension. The TIP capital ask is exclusive but complementary to these initiatives.
- The TIP ask also builds on the projects funded under the Towns Fund Accelerated Fund (TFAF) that has provided £750,000 to support initial projects that can be delivered by the end of March 2021 detailed earlier in this TIP.

4.7 HIGH-LEVEL DELIVERY PLAN

With support from the PMDO function, the Board will ensure appropriate protocols are followed on all Towns Fund projects. Each project will be expected to follow some, or all the basic requirements outlined below:



To be continued...



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