



Eltham Town Center



Eltham High Street by East Architecture, Landscape, Urban Design LTD

## Introduction

This comprehensive urban site analysis seeks to investigate the physical context of the town centre of Eltham. Eltham is a district in Southeast London, within the Royal Borough of Greenwich, located a little over 7 miles from London Bridge. This document highlights the development potential of Eltham, and examines the progress and failures since the publication of the Eltham Town Centre Masterplan SPD in 2012.

As Eltham is highlighted as a major town centre in the 2021 London Plan, it is important to recognise its value and potential as a destination for residential, commercial, leisure, and cultural activities. The analysis will go into depth into which features that gave Eltham the designation of a major town centre and what can be done to make it stand out to future developers.

Character areas, land usage, transport connectivity, building heights, and the state of the real estate market are factors which will dictate the development potential of Eltham and provide a context for what the community and its stakeholders would approve of.



Eltham 1910



Eltham 1950

## Historical Context

Eltham began as a small village on the route between London and Maidstone. Its location between London and shipping ports Kent made it a strategic location for the monarchy beginning as early as 1305 with the construction of the original Eltham Palace, first home to Edward II, and his successors for the next 300 years.

By the 1600s, Eltham Palace began to fall out of favour with the monarchy, while Eltham remained a small village until the opening of the Dartford loop railway line in 1866 which brought trains to Eltham for the first time. This led to the growth of Eltham into a suburb of London with the development of several housing estates.

In the Inter-war period, four large estates were built: the Progress Estate, the Page Estate, Middle Park, and Horn Park. In the 1930s, Eltham Palace was restored with an Art Deco addition by Stephen Courtauld. The Blitz and rocket bombings during the 1940s impacted Eltham with damage being recorded throughout the district.

Eltham recovered quickly and replaced damaged buildings leading to a diverse mix of housing stock as well as the establishment of new estates such as Coldharbour, Pippenhall, and Strong-bow Crescent. Today, Eltham is now a well established major town centre for southeast London in which tens of thousands live, shop, and visit.

## Sites for Development and Progress since 2012

In the eleven years since the Eltham Town Center Masterplan was completed, there has been development in three of the selected sites, and include Eltham High Street, Passey Place, and part of Orangery Square. The other sites have not seen any development and remain in a similar state in which they were in 2012. The Mecca Bingo site, Eltham Approach (Car Dealership), and other parts of Orangery Square including the Eltham Church Primary School, High Street single storey shops, and the lot between the Marks and Spencer parking and Merlewood House, are no longer available for development. The Mecca Bingo site has received community backlash regarding development and is no longer viable. The car dealership and Eltham Church Primary School are not viable due to the lack of will to relocate. The lot between the Marks and Spencer parking and Merlewood House is currently under development.

### *Progress Since 2012*

The first major development since the Eltham Town Center Masterplan was published was the Orangery Studios in 2013, being built in the area highlighted as Orangery Square in the masterplan. Orangery Studios occupies a small area in the Orangery Square development area, but provides offices in a previously neglected area just off of Eltham High Street. This development was partially successful as it provided office space and new real estate on Orangery Lane, but did not spur any further development on Orangery Lane until quite recently. There is currently construction of council housing on Orangery Lane across from Orangery Studios which will provide affordable housing to Eltham Town Centre. The development is still in the early construction process and it has yet to be seen how this will add to the Eltham Town Centre.

The most impressive improvement since 2012 has been the reimagining of Passey Place in 2016-2017 which has developed from a small concrete town square into a valuable community asset. Passey Place is the name of the street in which the town square was at the north end of, meeting with Eltham High Street on the other side of the square.

The square expanded further into Passey Place which created more pedestrian space, provided more public seating, allowed restaurants to provide outdoor seating, and established a larger space for community events.

This improvement was done alongside the widening of the pavement along Eltham High Street in the same time period. However, the success of the pavement widening was not as pronounced as many of the issues associated with the High Street continued after the improvement. The main issue that has plagued Eltham High Street is the emphasis on parking and car dependence over pedestrian space. Eltham High Street before the improvement works had thin pavements with the High Street being bidirectional with a lane of traffic in each direction with street parking on both sides. The improvement sought to widen the pavement to improve pedestrian space and potentially create spaces for cafes and restaurants to have outdoor seating. The project was successful in terms of infrastructure, however, much of the pavement is being used as car parking with no room for cafe/restaurant outdoor seating. The potential for a pedestrian friendly pavement with room for retail activity is present given the infrastructure, but enforcement of new parking laws would need to take place to reclaim this space for pedestrians.

### *Potential for future development.*

The seven sites which have seen no development, along with the continued development of the three sites that have seen progress is vital in the continuation of improvement and growth within Eltham Town Centre. This urban analysis will provide an outline for future developers on how to build the best possible assets for Eltham which will improve the urban form, community, and regional significance of Eltham.



## Character Areas & Morphology

Eltham has important historical roots dating back to the 15th Century. Of specific importance, Eltham Palace is located some 400m southwest of the High Street. Notwithstanding the historical significance of the area, Eltham High Street is not designated as a conservation area but the area to the south is. The Town Centre is not absent of historic buildings and varied characteristics which have over time contributed to the formation of different character areas within Eltham. The map below demonstrates a visual representation of these clustered character areas...



High  
Street

Cafe  
Culture

Industrial &  
service

Suburban  
residential

Eltham High Street presents a concentrated area of various commercial development with active frontages along the main road (A210) which runs laterally east to west. Highstreet characteristics are also found to the west of the main High Street on the A210 south side of the road. Eltham high street feels fast-paced with lots of movement from pedestrians and the flow of traffic moving through the high street.



Image 1 facing East



Image 2 facing West

The A208 which runs north to south - the approach from Eltham Station to Eltham Palace also displays high street character with active shop frontages but which is less intense as is focused mainly to the east side of the road and only in close proximity to the main high street. The high street characteristics on the A208 becomes sporadic, dispersing amongst clusters of residential development away from Eltham Town Centre and there is significantly less pedestrian footfall and greater vehicle flow.



## Character Areas & Morphology

Passey Place, a pedestrianised extension of the high street, has a different ambience to the main high street leaning more towards slow paced commercialism and entertainment, adopting a slight 'cafe culture'. Passey Place is a reasonably attractive urban area of Eltham Town Centre for locals to assemble due to mature trees, contemporary seating, paving which draws pedestrians in from the high street and there is a variety of contemporary and historic buildings such as the 'Eltham GPO' public house formerly post office. The area is also used to host market stalls.



Image above: Market adjacent Eltham GPO. Above right: Passey Place

Outside of the high street and industrial and service areas, Eltham radiates out to an inherently suburban character. There are a mixture of housing types such as high rise residential buildings to the west fronting the A208, but predominantly dwellings are two storey of various style and age. The older dwellings are sited closer to Eltham High Street with newer dwellings sprawling outwards.



Image above: Residential flat block on A208. Above right: Victorian town houses

The areas to the north and south of Eltham High Street behind the main active frontages have an industrial characteristic providing service areas and car parking. These areas bridge the gap in character from the fast paced High Street to the predominantly residential surrounding areas. The areas lack local flavour and visual interest. To the north of the high street, there is a Grade II listed building 'The Orangery', however, the surrounding environment is unreflective of this locally historic building.



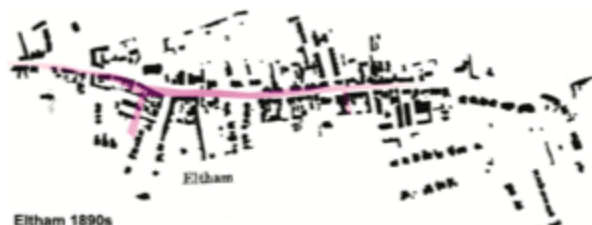
Image above: Car park opposite The Orangery. Above right: Alley behind high st.

To the south of the high street, there are clusters of victorian cottages which abut the service areas behind the active frontages of Passey Place and the high street. These dwellings in close proximity to central Eltham are older and are characterful, however do not fall within the conservation area - which is further south to encompass the grounds of Eltham Palace.



Image above: Service area south of Argos. Above right: Service area adjacent victorian cottages.

## Character Areas & Morphology



Eltham 1890s



Eltham 1950s



Eltham July 2023

Historical figure ground maps of Eltham from the 1890s and 1950s when compared with a recent Ordnance survey map (July 2023), draws out the morphological evolution and characteristics of Eltham. The pattern and grain of development drawn out through these historical figure ground maps is reflective of the periods of which Eltham has been subject to development.

The 1890s figure ground map clearly shows that there were clusters of development somewhat densely located adjacent Eltham High Street which runs laterally east to west. These buildings appear to be sited in an unorganised fashion and are irregularly shaped. This map also shows little development further away from Eltham High Street, however there are the beginnings of a few residential roads, though not well established at this point in time. The dwellings that have been erected by the 1890s (of which many still exist today) are of victorian style. These dwellings are predominantly two storey semi-detached and of exposed brick.

In the 1950s, the number of dense clusters of development along the high street has increased and it appears that these buildings in some areas have coalesced. The main roads now identifiable as the A208 and A210 appear better established and new roads branching off of the High Street also appear to have formed by this point in time. It is clear that residential areas outside of Eltham High Street have become more established, and the pattern and grain of development in these residential areas appears organised in a linear and regular grid like fashion. The figure ground map shows that these dwellings to the north of the High Street appear to be of uniform scale and mainly semi-detached of symmetric external footprint ('L-shaped' from outriggers to the rear or front).

The present day Ordnance Survey map represents the built form of Eltham in the beige colour. Buildings adjacent the high street are of larger footprint in depth and have coalesced, however, alleyways from the high street to the north and south of the A210 have been retained. The residential development surrounding Eltham High Street can be clearly seen on this map, and the boundaries demarcating the sites show this well established rectilinear pattern and grain of development which has been maintained since the 1950s. Other clusters of residential development have formed which have infilled and connected these areas of residential development. The more recent areas have not followed such a strict rectilinear pattern of development and modern dwellings are of varying scale, form, design and external facing materials. There has also been the introduction of contemporary designed higher rise flat blocks.



## Local Land Uses and Activity

This map gives an indication of the land uses in the area within a close catchment of the high street. The users in the immediate vicinity of the high street are those from 2012, the next map provides updates.

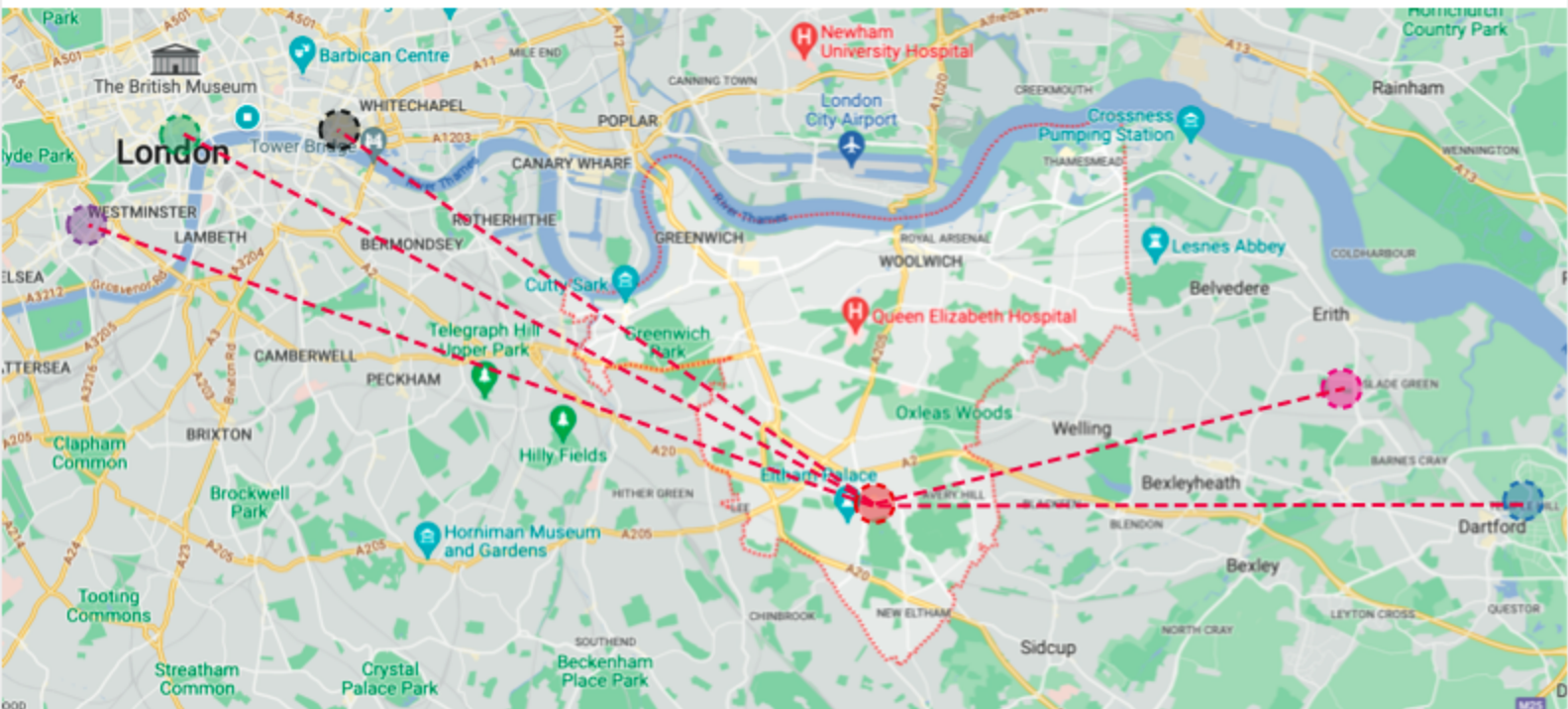




## Local Land Uses and Activity



## Connectivity, Transport and Movement



London Victoria Station



London Charing Cross



London Cannon Street



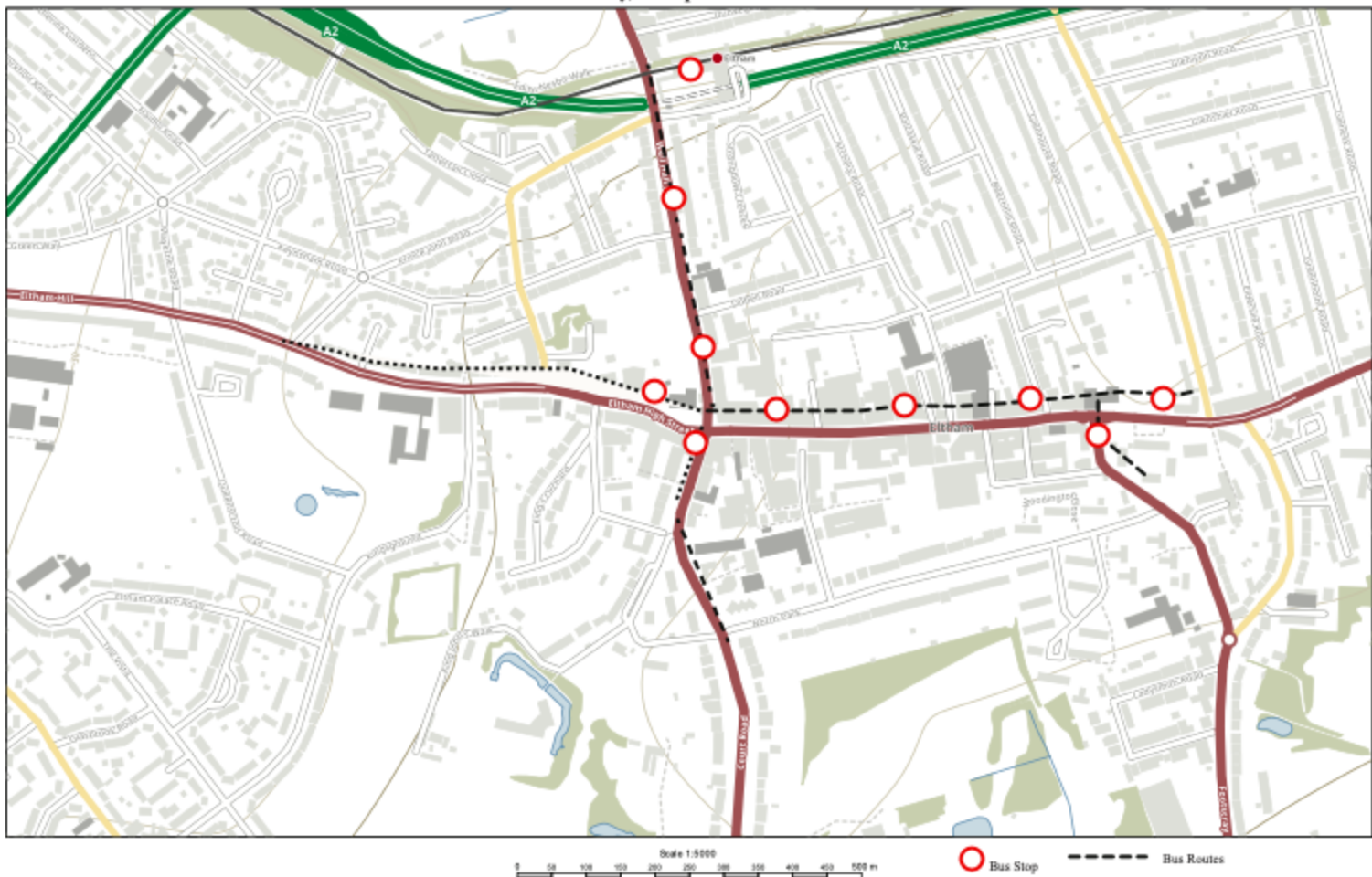
Slade Green



Dartford

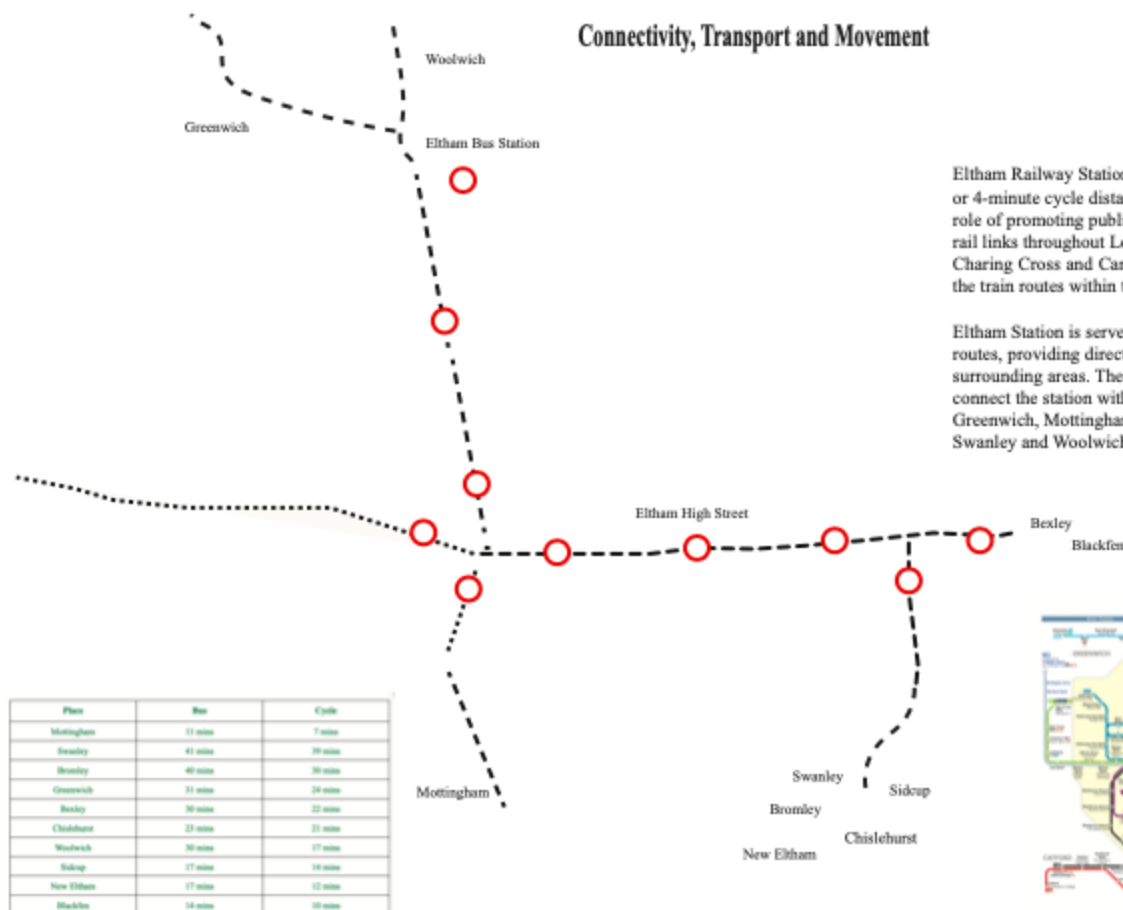
Train routes in and from Eltham Rail Station

## Connectivity, Transport and Movement





## Connectivity, Transport and Movement



Eltham Railway Station is located within 10 minutes walking distance or 4-minute cycle distance from the high street and plays an important role of promoting public transport within Eltham by providing rail links throughout London, including London Bridge, Charing Cross and Cannon Street. However it is important to mention that the train routes within the Royal Borough of Greenwich is poor.

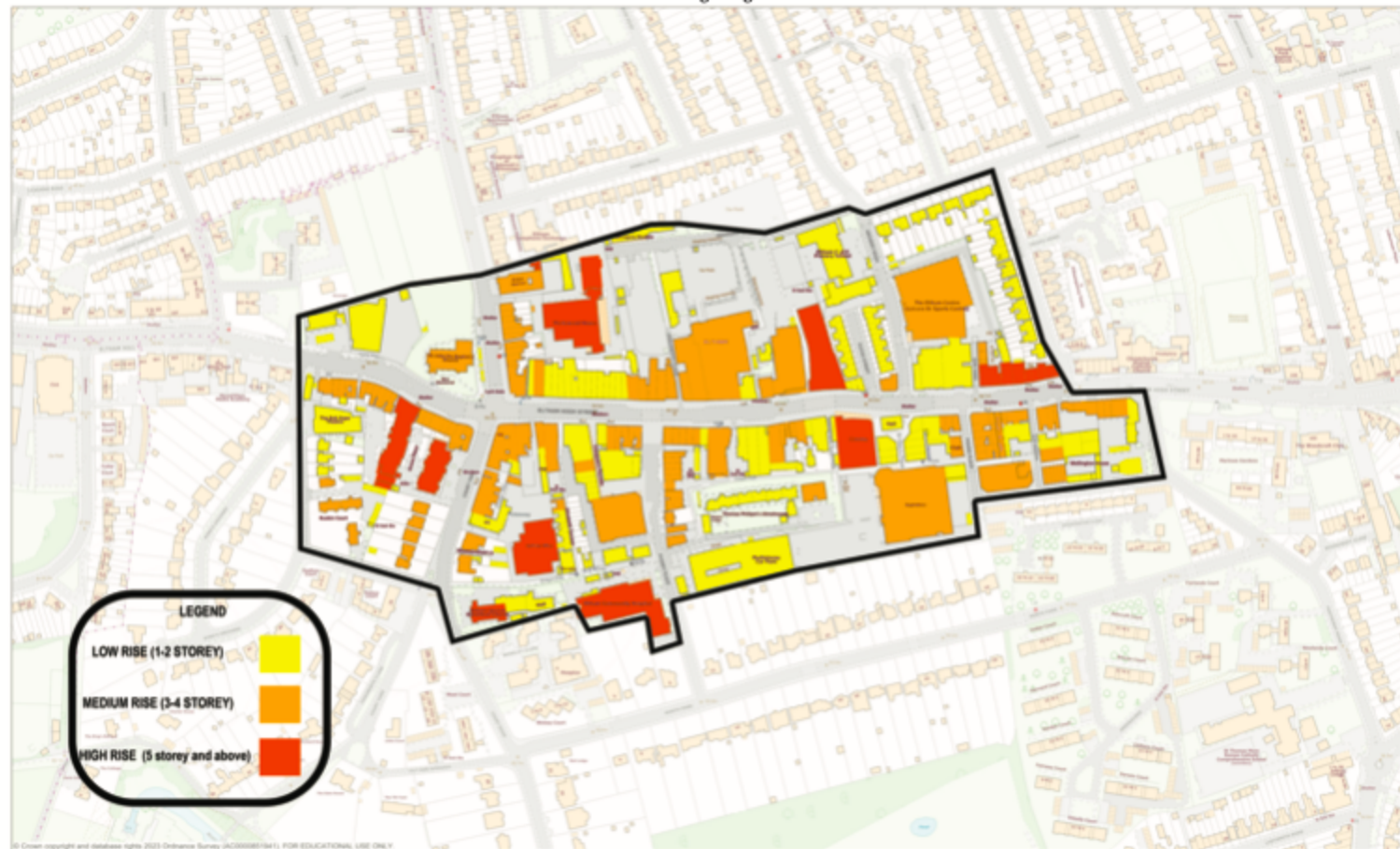
Eltham Station is served by several Transport for London bus routes, providing direct bus links throughout the city and surrounding areas. The 132, 161, 162, 233, 286 and 314. These connect the station with Bexley, Bromley, Blackfen, Chislehurst, Greenwich, Mottingham, New Eltham, Sidcup, Swanley and Woolwich.







## Building Heights



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## Building Heights



Based on examination and this map, the majority of buildings are low rise (one and two storeys), then medium rise (three and four storeys), and at last there are some buildings with high rise (five storeys and above). This can show that there is the possibility of developing residential developments in this area as one of the core aims of SPD.



## Residential and Commercial Property Market in the Town Centre Area

Currently, Eltham town centre is in a reasonably healthy commercial state with a wide range of businesses including independent retailers and large retailers such as Marks & Spencer, JD Sports and Sports Direct. The Town Centre also hosts a Vue cinema with restaurants such as Nandos and Pizza Express below. However, it was identified that there was some small vacant units within the Town Centre area and a small amount that were closed during the day.

The redevelopment of Passey Place which was included in the Eltham Master Plan includes a restaurant which offers an “al fresco dining” experience and a Pub which was previously a post office. This space within the town centre which hosts a monthly farmers market greatly improves the environment of the town centre and contributes massively in improving Eltham’s commercial property market.

The £6.6 million Improvement scheme to the high street public realm has brought a wide range of benefits to the town centre and has generally improved the environment of Eltham town centre with the addition of trees and street gardens. According to a Eltham High street Evaluation Survey conducted by Greenwich Council (Royal Borough of Greenwich, 2018), the Public had stated that the Wider pavements has resulted in a more pedestrian-friendly town centre and has increased pedestrian safety. It was also mentioned that the public believed that new seating throughout the town centre encouraged social interaction and was welcomed by the public of Eltham. Overall, these responses show that the town centre has become more inviting and accessible to the wider public which may lead to an increase in pedestrian footfall and therefore lead to a stronger commercial property market.

In regards to the residential market within Eltham Town Centre, the area has seen little residential development. The Site on Orangery Lane is currently under construction which will provide 40 affordable units and a commercial unit. The Arcade also has prior approval for change of use to residential and an application to develop the car park into a five storey residential block. Nevertheless, the Town Centre still lacks a strong Residential Market.

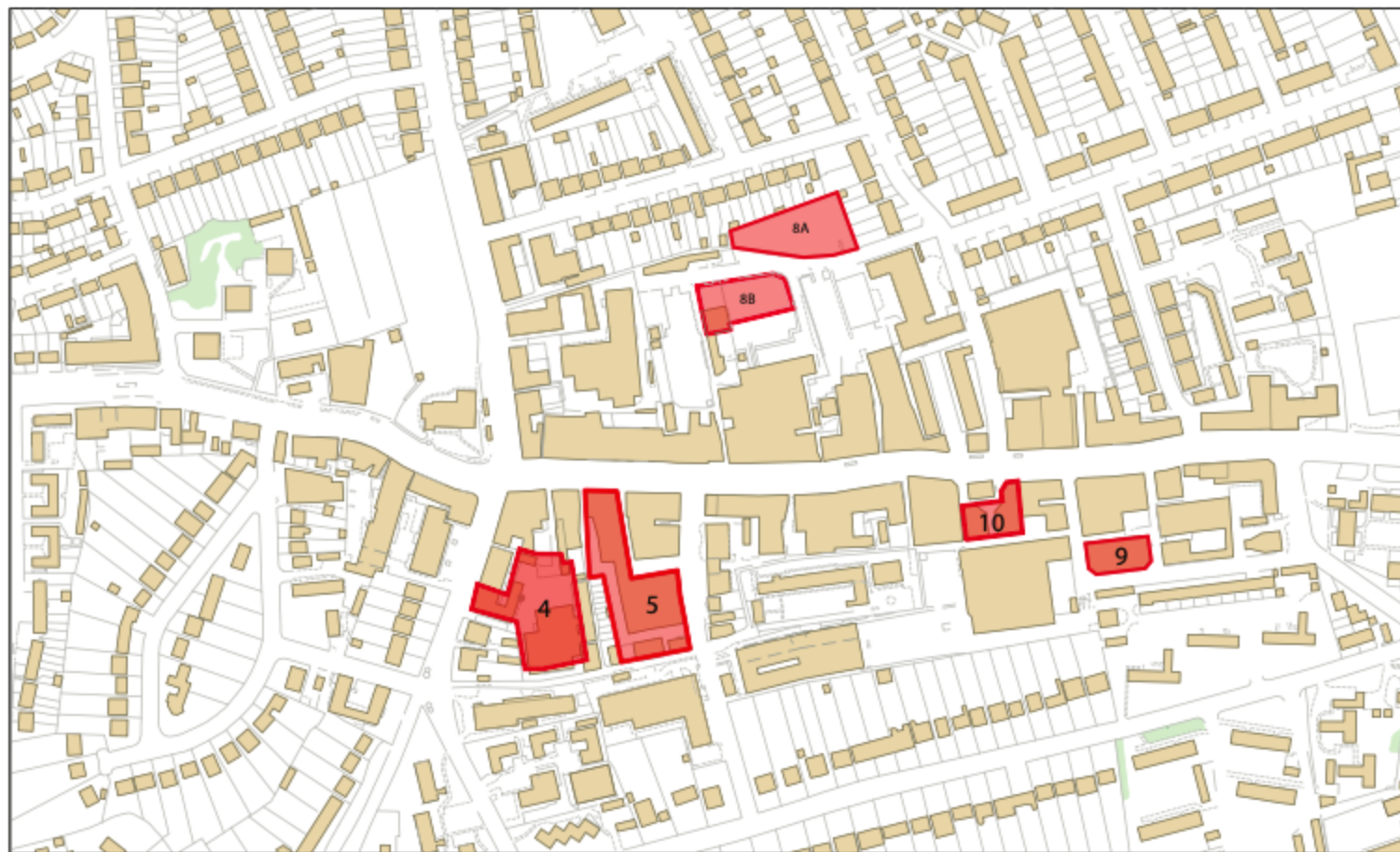
When looking at the property values in the locality of Eltham town centre, it was found that property prices within Eltham were up 11.7% from the previous year highlighting a growth in the Eltham residential market. Houses accounted for the majority of the sales with the average price being £591,708. Flat prices in the locality of the town centre have grown throughout the years reaching an average of £357,000 in 2023 compared to £314,000 in the previous year which suggests that the residential market will continue to grow in the Eltham. These property values can therefore show us that the Residential Market within Eltham is reasonably strong and that residential development within the Town Centre of Eltham could potentially be successful. This idea would be based on the house prices surrounding the town centre and also the improvements to the public realm of the town centre which has improved the town’s environment, therefore making it more desirable for residential units.



<https://www.dailymirror.co.uk/profiles/orangery-lane/>



## Sites Analysis



Scale 1:2500



## Site 4: Royal Mail sorting office

### Strengths

The Site location is in the heart of Eltham Town Centre and has vehicular access to the site via Court Road.

The site is in close proximity to Bus stops which would promote sustainable travel.

The site is in close proximity to shops and restaurants within the town centre providing convenience to the site and therefore promoting sustainable forms of transport such walking and cycling.

### Opportunities

The Site is appropriate for residential development with retail and other mixed use fronting Court Road. This would therefore be in accordance with the Local Plan which states at paragraph 4.3.21, that residential development will be encouraged within the town centre as it would increase activity within the centre.

There is potential for pedestrian access to the site via Philipot Path. There should be active frontages on the ground floor in order to increase pedestrian safety on Philipot Path.

Open green space could also be considered on the site as Eltham town centre lacks open space with Passey Place being one of the only spaces. With that being said, the space could be used for markets and Gatherings.



A view of the site from Philipot path



A site plan highlighting the site's boundaries and surroundings



A view of the site's access

### Weaknesses

Currently, there is only one vehicular access on Court Road. This, therefore, may cause congestion at peak times if parking is provided alongside the residential units.

The site is currently occupied by the Royal Mail. If this was to relocate, similar provision should be provided in order for the public to collect parcels if needed.

If development was to take place on the site, demolition of existing buildings and clearing of the site would need to occur. This may impact the surrounding residential units at the east of the site.

### Threats

There could be potential disturbance due to construction noise to the existing residents to the east of the site.

Within the Greenwich Local Plan, they require at least 35% affordable housing. This may create financial viability issues if residential development should take place.

If open green space is developed on the site, the site may be subject to higher crime levels such as anti social behaviour.

## Site 8A: Orangery Lane North Car Park



3D Aerial View of site from southwest



View facing north and east residential site boundaries



View facing west of the site



View of south site entrance and exit

### Strengths

The site provides valuable parking provision to reduce on-street parking pressure. It sitting northwest of the school may assist with easing traffic during school drop-off periods.

The site is located within an area with good road network connections outside of heavy traffic flow from the high street.

The site can be easily accessed by pedestrians and local residents via alleyways south of the site (through site 8B).

### Opportunities

The site has been identified within the Eltham Town Centre Masterplan as being suitable for residential development, office use and a decked car park. The masterplan identifies these opportunities referring to a wider area which also includes this brief's identified 'Site 8b'. The area would be suitable for extension of the existing adjacent residential development to meet the local housing need.

If retained as a car park, there would be potential for improved layout and opportunities to include Electric Vehicle Charging points for improved local sustainability. There would also be potential for a short stay drop off area to facilitate traffic easement during school drop off periods.



Site above outlined in red

### Weaknesses

The site is bordered to the north and east by residential boundaries.

West of the site 'The Orangery' is a listed building. The site should be visually sensitive to the historic building. Parking is unsightly and appears cluttered.

Is the furthest site to north of the Town Centre Master Plan identified for development.

### Threats &/ Risks

Development of the site to alternative uses may result in further on-street park stress within the wider area due to lack of parking provision, in particular for residents collecting children from 'Eltham Church of England Primary School'.

The site adjoins many residential boundaries to the north and east. Development of the site would need to be of use sensitive to the amenity of the existing occupiers of the adjacent residents.

Development should be visually sensitive so as to not affect or enhance the grade II listed building 'The Orangery' to the northwest of the site, which provides an area of local historic interest. The site also accommodates a communal refuse & recycling point which residents may not wish to remove.

## Site 5: Argos

### Strengths

The site is located within walking distance (9 minutes) from Eltham Rail Station.

It has direct pedestrian access to High Street to the north of the site via an alleyway and Passey Place to the west.

It's surrounded by buildings of different uses, ranging from residential to commercial, that are typically 2-3 stories high.

Passey Place car park is located 2 minutes from the site, which adds additional benefit if a commercial use would be a part of future development scheme.

The wider surrounding area consists of residential dwellings to the east and west, cafes and restaurants, and Eltham communal hospital to the south, which creates a wider range of possibilities for future development schemes.

The site has good car access via Passey Place (south).

### Opportunities

As the site has direct access to Passey Place, it could offer potential for new open space that Eltham lacks. The open space could be used for markets, fairs, or gatherings as the Eltham Town Center masterplan identifies.

The site could also be redeveloped as a mixed commercial use like restaurants and cafes with office spaces, leisure, culture, or community spaces at the higher level thanks to its accessibility.

If sites 4 and 5 were redeveloped at the same time, it could be an opportunity to improve the access via Philipot Path, offering more secure access to both sites.



### Weaknesses

The potential building works, demolition, and construction would potentially have a negative impact on the business, residential dwellings and the hospital regarding noise and pollution.

As the site can be accessed only from North Park and Passey Place, the construction works and constant vehicle movement associated with it would have a negative impact on highway users.

As the Eltham Town Center masterplan allocated the north side of the high street for residential use, the site has limitations with what can be proposed there.

### Threats

The redevelopment of the site could potentially add to the already congested North Park and increase traffic along Passey Place.

Due to the limitations on how the site can be redeveloped, there might be issues regarding financial viability. Furthermore, if site 4 is redeveloped before site 5, this could add to the limited opportunities within it.

If the current pedestrian access to the high street is not improved, it might create antisocial behavior due to its narrow width and depth.



## Site 8B: M&S Car park

### Strengths

The site is set back from the high street but benefits from both vehicle access and easy pedestrian access to the high street.

The site is adjacent to some of the tallest sites to the west and south and is separated from the low storey school and residential blocks to the east and north, by roads.

The site is within 10mins walking distance of Eltham High Street Station and benefits from the bus stops on the high street.

The site is flat ground and allows for freedom in design as well as reduced costs of having to demolish existing structures.



### Opportunities

The original masterplan suggested residential and office use while incorporating the car park into a decked format, indicating the car parking provisions may be retained but the site allocation submission impresses on more pedestrianised spaces. More recent policies suggest it may be open to a car free development.

Any submission for the site should then be suitable for mixed uses incorporating elements significant to the vision and identity proposed by the plan and policy documents.

### Weaknesses

The area leading between the Orangery and the High Street has long been a very jumbled arrangement of spaces and ownerships, a further key consideration is that the Grade II listed Orangery, one of the key historic buildings in the town centre, any development plans should pay attention so as not to have adverse effect.

It is set within a major centre for regeneration as noted by the London Plan but according to the core strategy not identified for tall buildings

### Threats

The car park in site 8a is unchanged, as is the school which has recently undergone extension and refurbishment works.

As suggested by the site allocations submission density should be offset by public squares/spaces adjacent to the Grade II listed Orangery.

The proximity of the site to residential properties and the possibility of developments overlooking the school should be considered. The residents are vocal in submitting objections and are development adverse especially when it affects the existing amenities provided within site significant to the local area and community.

The loss of car parking spaces would compound on a lack of parking close to a major high street that has recently had reduced car lanes to create pedestrianised areas.

## Site 9 : The Arcade

Site 9, The Arcade, on the eastern end of Eltham High Street, is highlighted in the Eltham Town Centre Masterplan as an area of interest in the regeneration of Eltham. A part of this site has been allocated in the plan as prime for development. The area specified is a building which used to house the furniture store Stacks, but is now abandoned. The former commercial building is 3 storeys tall and the lot footprint is approximately 1000 metres squared. The site is adjacent to The Arcade shopping centre to its north, Elm Terrace to its east, Messeter Place to its south, and Pound Place to its west. The opportunity for this site has been sought out by Skillcrown Homes to build 36 flats and new commercial space but the plan has fallen through.

### Strengths

The potential for this space is high due to its location right off of Eltham High Street and the amenities it offers.

The site currently has no tenants and development would not displace any residents or businesses.

Plentiful public transit opportunities to facilitate car free transportation.

### Opportunities

The development of residential space adjacent to Eltham High Street would diversify the function and character of the High Street.

Bring new life to The Arcade by providing a destination on the side opposite of Eltham High Street.

Increase the attractiveness of the eastern end of Eltham High Street with new development.



### Weaknesses

Existing building would prove difficult for residential conversion, would require demolition or intensive renovation.

Surrounding streets are used intensively by lorries to stock the Sainsbury's superstore.

Green space is limited in the development area, investment would be needed to increase attractiveness.

### Threats

Road congestion would occur if residential tenants have automobiles, gridlocking an already intensively used low-width street.

Development market for the site is volatile, as one plan has been proposed and has subsequently stalled.

Potential local backlash from new construction as there are many homes on Messeter Place which could be affected.



Northwest Corner



Southwest Corner



Northeast Corner

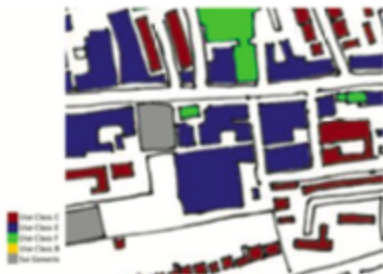


Southeast Corner

## Site 10 : St Mary's Place

St Mary's Place is in the middle of Eltham High Street. At the north of this site is the high street and Eltham Hall, while at the south it meets Sainsbury's superstore and car park. The cinema is in the west of this site. Other buildings are mixed-use (residential and commercial).

To examine the building height, it can be seen that the cinema is high rise, the superstore is medium rise, and the other buildings are low rise.



### Existing Situation of St Mary's Place

After comparing the proposal Eltham town centre plan with the existing situation, can be understood that the proposed development has not happened, and the issues can still be seen.



Sainsbury's site

### St Mary's Place Proposal Plan

Based on the Eltham Town Centre City Master Plan, Sainsbury's and the associated car park are the functional components of the town centre. Authorities mentioned some issues on the master plan to tackle:

1. Achieving better integration of Sainsbury's with the High street
2. Improving the accessibility of the parking from the High street
3. Consolidating the footprint of the store and car park to release valuable town centre development potential.



## Site 10 : St Mary's Place

### Strength:

The presence of some landmarks such as Sainsbury's, Car Park, Cinema, and Eltham Hall makes people visit this site.

The presence of small retail businesses.

A bus stop just near the Eltham Hall.

Direct accessibility to High street.

### Opportunity:

Increasing the accessibility to the High Street.

Increasing residential development.

Opening a new entrance for the superstore from High Street at the end of the corridor.

Enhancing the streetscape: investing in beautification, improving signage and lighting.



### Weakness:

Lack of active retail shops such as café's, restaurants, bars.

Lack of safe and welcoming accessibility.

Lack of green spaces, trees.

Lack of accessibility to car park.

### Threat:

Lack of lighting.

Low width of the route.

Lack of sense of liveability due to lack of accessibility.

Probability of crime due to lack of safety.