

Local Plan Spatial Strategy Technical Paper

Applying a local approach to define Bexley's sustainable development locations

- 1.1. Both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the London Plan stress the need for a plan-led approach to a pattern of development that is sustainable. The NPPF notes in paragraph 23 that 'broad locations for development should be indicated on a key diagram, and land-use designations and allocations identified on a policies map.'
- 1.2. The methodology that has been used to define the sustainable development locations in policy SP1 is based on **The London Plan 2021** policies **D1** and **H1**. These set criteria for assessing areas and propose that the most sustainable locations are sites with existing or planned public transport access levels (PTALs) 3 to 6 or that are located within 800m distance of a station or main town centre boundary. In addition, paragraph 4.2.4 notes that the incremental intensification of existing residential areas within PTALs 3 to 6 or within 800m distance of a station or town centre boundary is expected to play an important role in contributing towards the housing targets for small sites.
- 1.3. In order to generate a spatial strategy for the Local Plan, the London Plan methodology has been applied and a diagram [Figure 1] created that illustrates these locations as indicative bubbles. The 800m distances have been measured as circles from point locations (e.g. the 'dot' on the GIS base layer that represents a railway station or from end points of town centre boundaries. A GIS layer identifying all parts of the borough within PTALs 3 to 6 has been created to further inform the sustainable development locations. In this iteration the London Plan Opportunity Areas in Bexley have not been included except where they fall into areas within the 800m distances from town centres and railway stations.
- 1.4. With the base area generated, local evidence has been applied to determine constraints or opportunities for sustainable development. London Plan paragraph 4.1.7 notes that housing targets are a reflection of the variations in the constraints and opportunities affecting development on large sites and the capacity for development on small sites. This includes: transport connectivity; the availability of large brownfield sites; scope to accommodate higher residential densities around town centres and stations; planning designations for industrial land, Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and other protected open spaces; environmental constraints; heritage assets; and the need to accommodate other land uses.
- 1.5. Local Plan evidence on the character and connectivity of the borough's town centres (including local centres) and railway stations has been used to refine the London Plan methodology in order to define sustainable development locations for Bexley. This evidence also supports specific walking distances that are set out in Local Plan policies (in particular, setting locations for maximum building heights, distance from local shops, and amount of parking to be provided).
- 1.6. Therefore, the sustainable development locations will be set out as specific walking times and distances from town centres and railway stations, as well as any parts of the borough within PTALs 3 to 6. If the indicative 'bubbles' were retained it would be difficult to translate the final sustainable development locations from the Key Diagram to the [submission policies map](#). It will be useful to have definitive boundaries to allow applicants, planning officers and members of the public to see how Local Plan policies will be applied to development proposals.

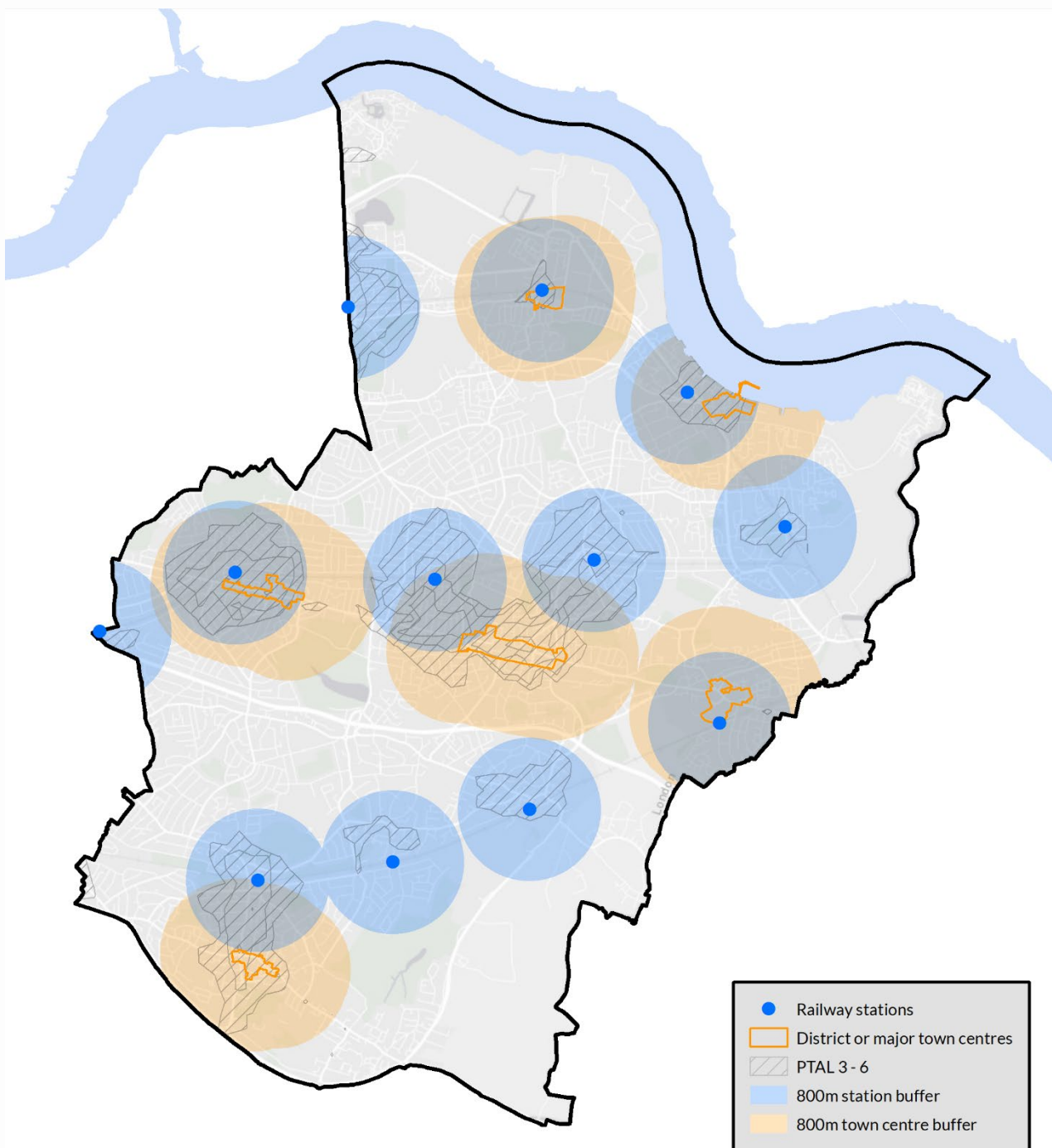


Figure 1: Generating the base area by applying London Plan methodology

- 1.7. An exercise has been undertaken to measure walking distances (e.g. along a road or footpath) in GIS. The results of this first step in the exercise are illustrated in Figure 2. This has changed the shapes of the indicative 'bubble' sustainable development locations – the main effect is that they have contracted as barriers to access have revealed themselves through the measurement exercise.
- 1.8. Local centres have been added to the methodology and as a consequence there are new sustainable development locations. Local centres are below district centres in the town centre hierarchy and, where on their own without a railway station nearby, are considered to provide a reduced level of access to services and facilities.

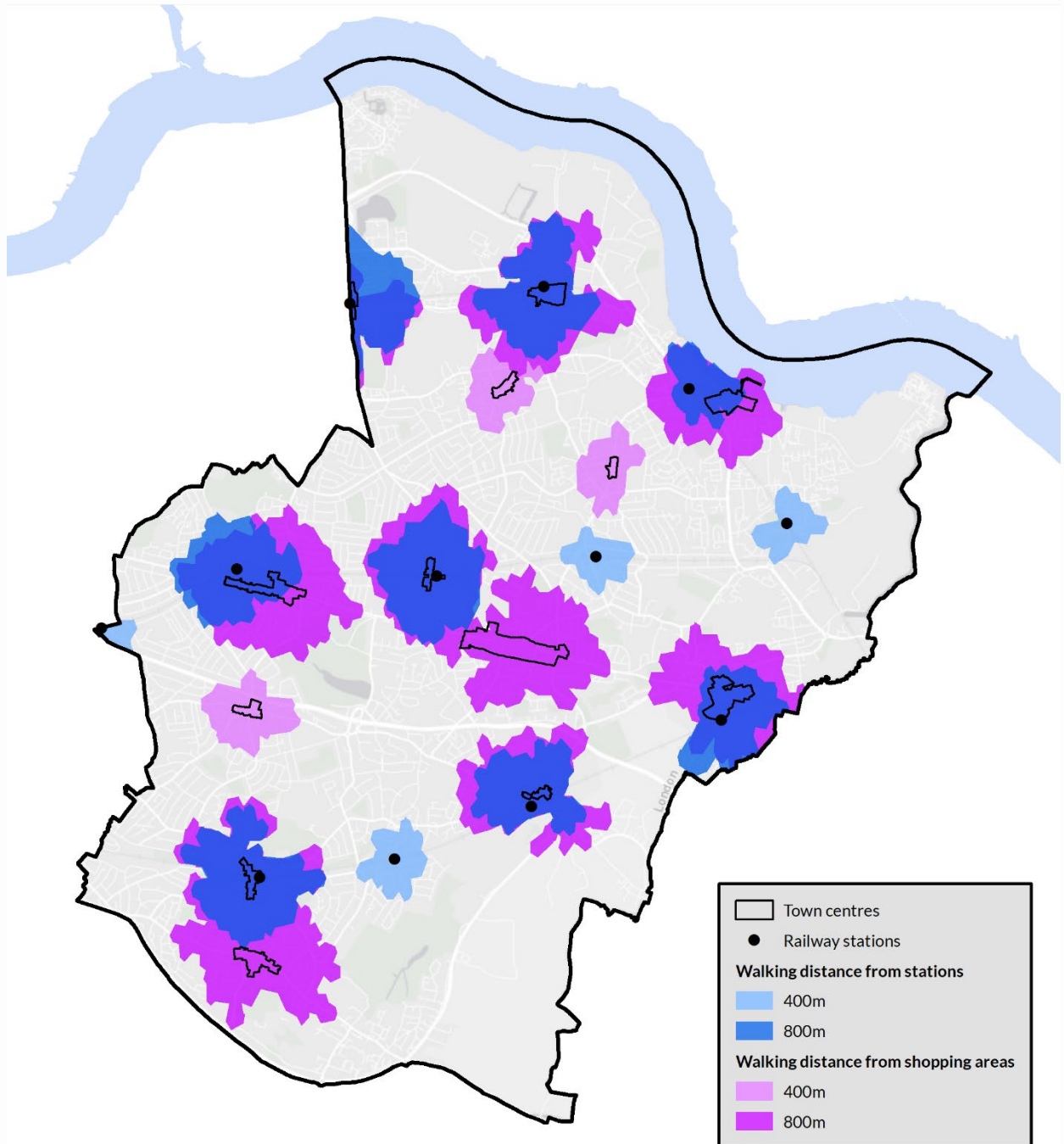


Figure 2: measured walking distances from town centres and railway stations

- 1.9. 10-minute walking distances (800 metres) have been mapped for the six main town centres of Bexleyheath, Crayford, Erith, Lower Belvedere, Sidcup and Welling; as well as for railway stations where they are adjacent to a main town centre, and for local centres where they are adjacent to a railway station.
- 1.10. It is considered appropriate to reduce the walking distance for smaller shopping areas ('local centres' in the town centre hierarchy) and for railway stations that are isolated. Local centres do have some choice in shops, and may include a library or community centre, but there will be some services and facilities missing. Railway stations on their own provide a level of connectivity but not necessarily to the shops, services and facilities residents need to access.

- 1.11. These constraints reduce the distance people will walk to these locations and as a consequence the sustainable development location has been reduced from a 10-minute walk to a 5-minute walk (400m). Four railway stations in the borough – Albany Park, Barnehurst, Falconwood and Slade Green – do not have a designated town centre nearby and three local town centres – Blackfen, Northumberland Heath and Upper Belvedere – do not have a railway station nearby; therefore, a 5-minute walking distance of 400m has been mapped for these locations.
- 1.12. The entrances to the railway stations and the main shopping areas within the town centres are used as starting points for the walking distances. Using this instead of the town centre boundary ensures that the walking distance is to the shops and facilities that people want to access. In addition, the parts of the borough within PTALs 3 to 6 have been mapped. Figure 3 illustrates these areas, laid on top of the walking distances. Almost all correspond with a town centre or railway station.

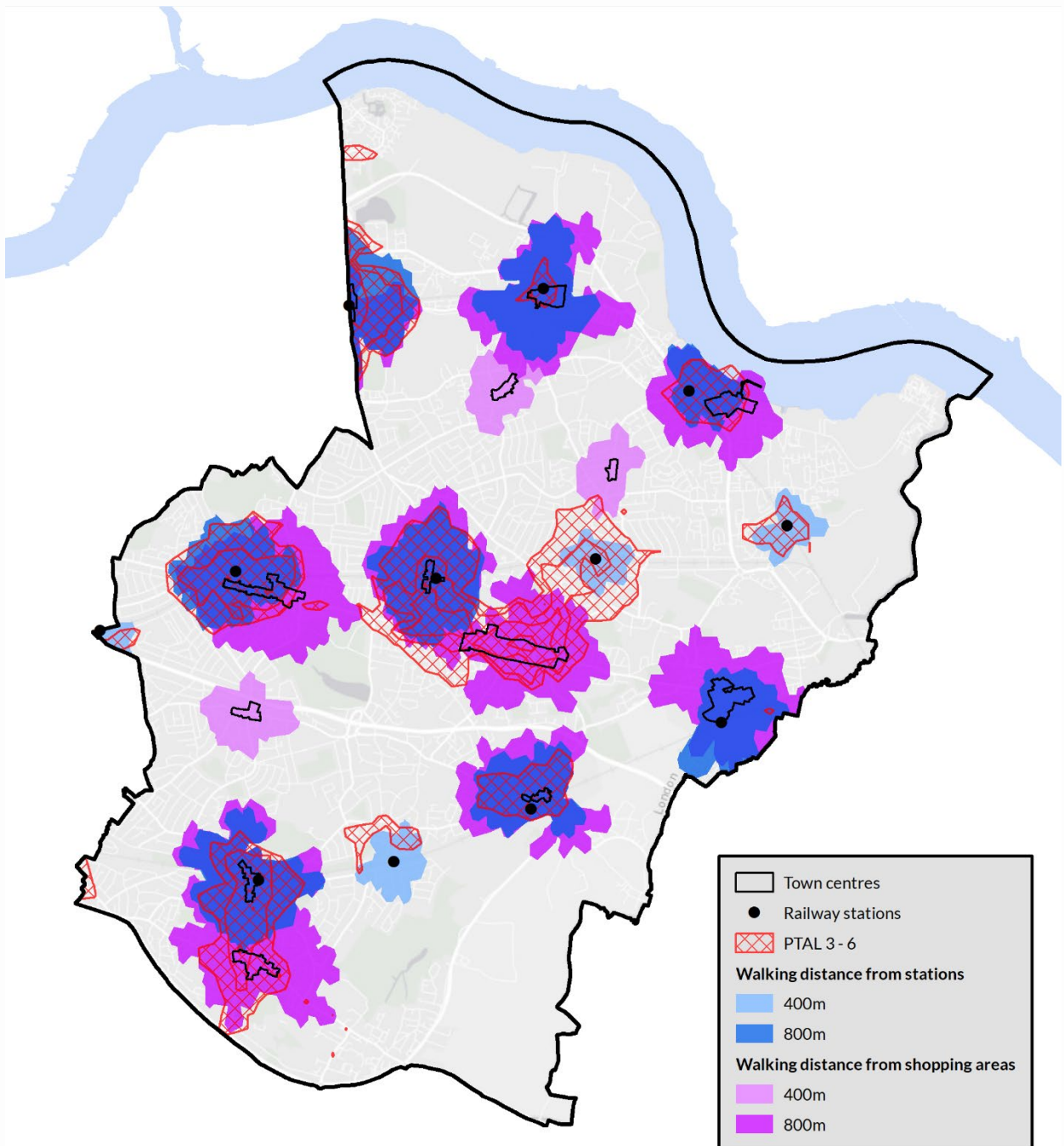


Figure 3: areas of the borough with a PTAL of 3 or higher overlaid on the walking distances

1.13. All main town centres, with the exception of Crayford, fall into these higher PTAL areas. Of the four railway stations without centres, Barnehurst has the best connectivity. Both Albany Park and Falconwood have small parts in the higher PTAL, and strong neighbourhood parades. Slade Green has the least services and facilities. Of the three local centres without a railway station, Blackfen has the least connectivity – both Upper Belvedere and Northumberland Heath are contiguous with other sustainable locations.

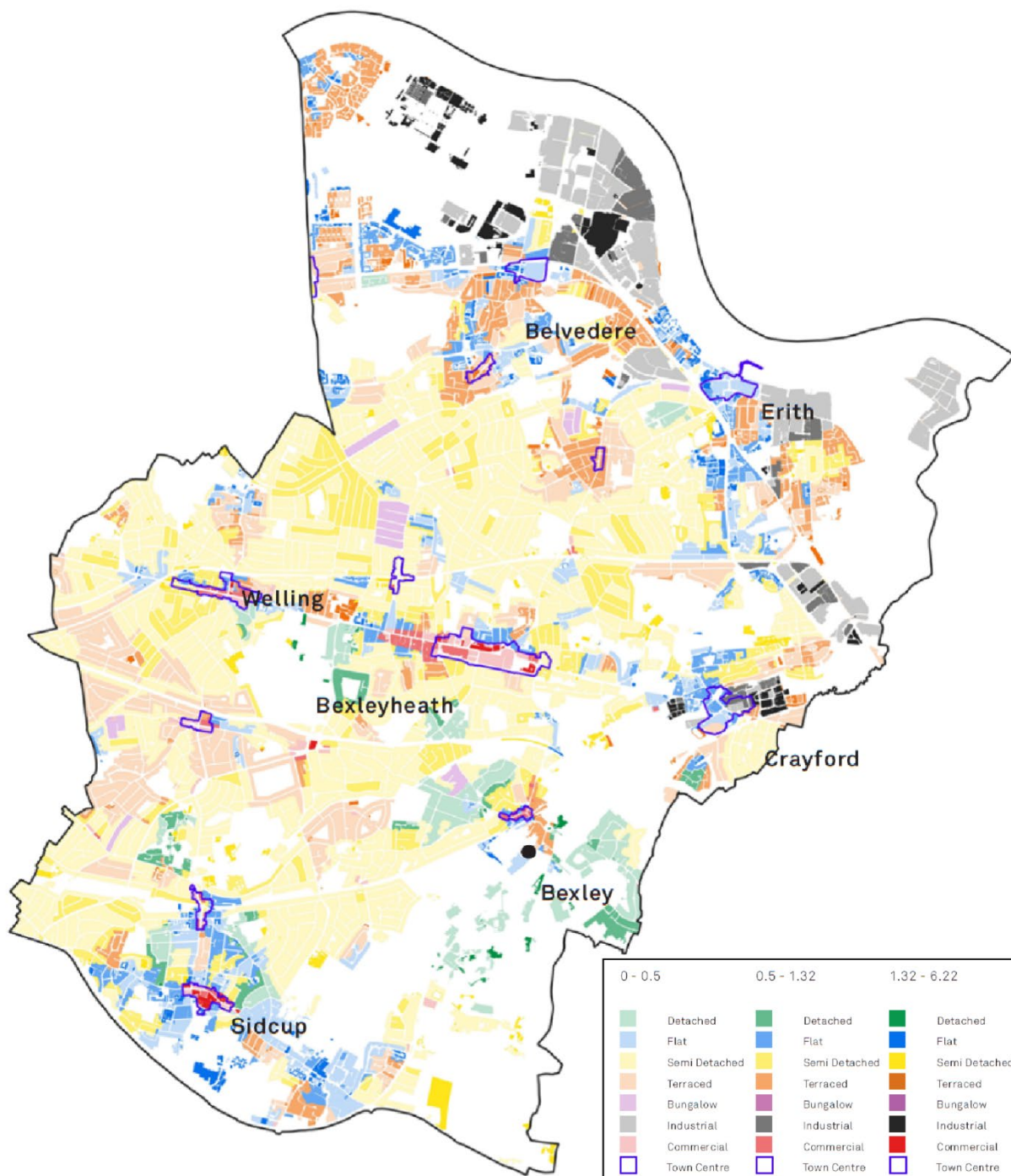


Figure 4: building typologies illustrated by floor area to plot size

1.14. After mapping the walking distances and overlaying the PTAL, the character of each potential sustainable development location was assessed against the urban grain of the borough and a small sites exercise carried out to demonstrate that these locations have the capacity to meet the London Plan small sites target for Bexley . A map [Figure 4] from the Urban Morphology Study plots the

building type (e.g. detached, semi-detached, terraced) against the footprint of the building on its site, thus illustrating density and typology. This study was produced to support the Bexley Local Character Study, a key document underpinning the Draft Local Plan.

- 1.15. Certain typologies have the best opportunity for sensitive residential intensification – the best is a semi-detached house on a large plot. The areas of detached housing in the borough, including bungalows, do not provide as much intensification potential as these are often located outside of the sustainable development locations or are in conservation areas. Areas that already have a fairly dense typology however can work well for small infill sites, for example parades of shops with flats above within town centres or neighbourhood parades.
- 1.16. Areas of higher density flatted, or terraced housing will already be optimising sites and therefore will not produce a large uplift in new homes through intensification. Terraced housing on large plots may provide some intensification opportunities, but only where matters such as independent access to the new housing are addressed.
- 1.17. Based on analysis of the local evidence, a refined methodology, set out in the following boxes, has been applied to define the sustainable development locations in the borough, based on walking distances. Figure 5 then compares these locations against the London Plan areas of search.

Within 800m of and including Bexleyheath, the borough's strategic centre

Bexleyheath has the greatest amount and widest variety of shops, services and facilities offering variety and choice and increasing the likelihood of meeting needs whilst offering an alternative to the car when travel is required. It has a night-time economy and the highest PTAL in the borough, although the two closest railway stations are more than 1.5 km away from the centre of the shopping area. There is a masterplan being prepared for the area that allows for a planned approach to growth and change in the area including new employment opportunities. There are a good number of large housing sites identified in and around the town centre and the small sites exercise demonstrates good capacity in this area.

Within 800m of and including the district centres of Crayford, Erith, Lower Belvedere, Sidcup and Welling

All the other main town centres in the borough have railway stations relatively close to their shopping areas with the exception of Sidcup. However, Sidcup has a dense urban grain that marries up well with the 800m walking distance area as there will be opportunities for small sites intensification particularly on brownfield sites close to the High Street. Lower Belvedere is a new main town centre designation with a good amount of development opportunities demonstrating the area's growth potential – this location is one of only two in the borough considered appropriate for tall buildings (up to 45 metres in height).

Within 800m of and including local centres with railway stations

The four local centres of Abbey Wood Village, Bexley Village, Bexleyheath Station and Sidcup Station provide a good variety of shops, services and facilities and are well connected, with PTALs of 3 or higher. The small sites exercise demonstrates good capacity in and around these centres, and all but Bexley Village include large site allocations. Most of Abbey Wood Village the GLA Housing Zone immediately to the north is one of only two locations in the borough considered appropriate for very tall buildings (up to 45m).

Within 400m of railway stations with no nearby town centre (but with a neighbourhood parade)

Albany Park, Falconwood and Slade Green are constrained by road or railway barriers and the small sites exercise did not demonstrate much capacity in these locations, but the typologies of the areas do lend themselves to sensitive residential intensification, and therefore the five-minute walking distance of 400m is considered appropriate. The services and facilities provided at neighbourhood centre level are not adequate to justify a longer walking distance. Barnehurst is the exception: the higher PTAL around the station extends further than a five minute walking distance and therefore the PTAL boundary has been used to set the sustainable development location.

Within 400m of and including local centres without railway stations

Both Northumberland Heath and Upper Belvedere local centres were contiguous with, but outside of the London Plan areas of search. They have a dense urban grain that would support small site infill and redevelopment of shops with flats above. These areas would be appropriate to add to the sustainable development locations, providing additional growth opportunities and enhanced choice. Blackfen is possibly the least appropriate local centre for consideration as a sustainable development location; the PTAL is low and there is no physical continuity with other development locations. It is, however, a well-performing local centre for shops, services and facilities. It is identified on the map with a walking distance of 400m as it meets the same definition as the other local centres without railway stations.

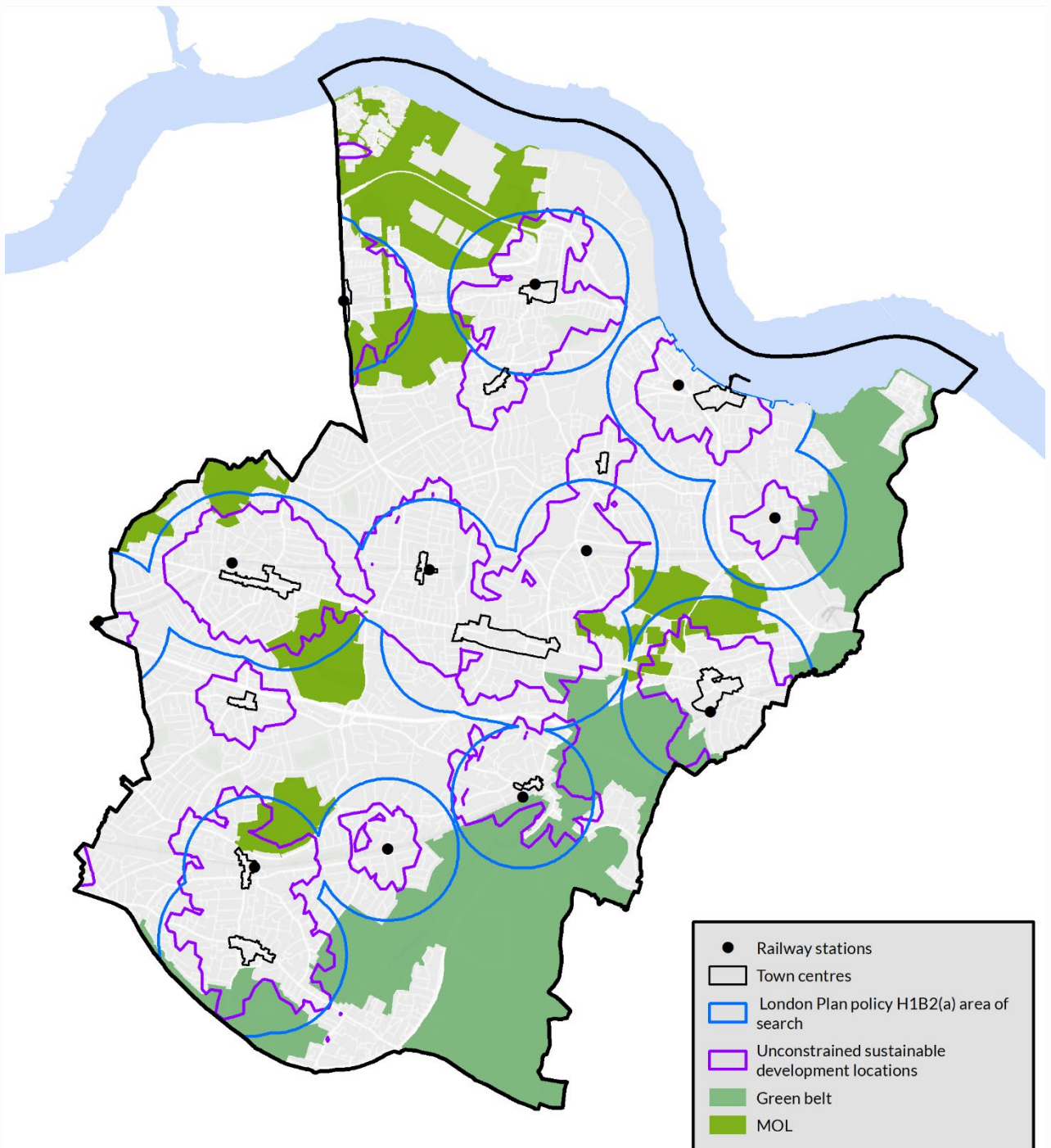


Figure 5: Amalgamating the recommended walking distances and higher PTAL areas to create the unconstrained purple boundaries, and comparing these with the original London Plan methodology areas of search

- 1.18. Following this, the boundaries of the new sustainable development locations have been rationalised and amalgamated where appropriate. Land with Green Belt or MOL designations has been excluded.
- 1.19. The final definitive boundaries for the sustainable development locations have been included on the [submission policies map](#). The resultant Local Plan Key Diagram [Figure 6] illustrates Local Plan policy **SP1: Achieving sustainable development – the spatial strategy**.

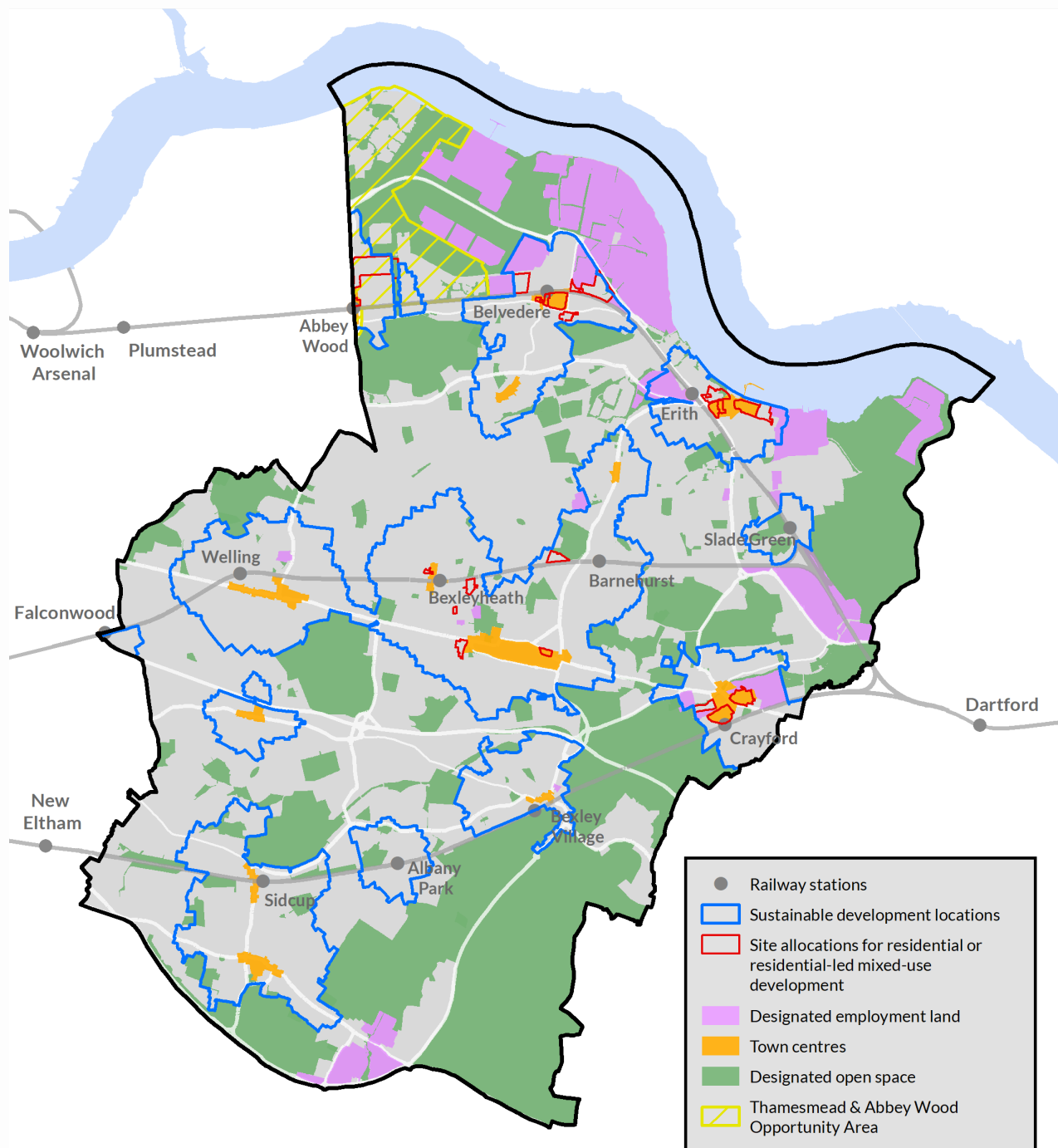


Figure 6: Draft Local Plan Key Diagram illustrating sustainable development locations and site allocations

- 1.20. The Bexley Local Character Study provides the context for the different parts of the borough. Detailed guidance and information will be set out in the Design Guide SPD on appropriate types of development, particularly for small sites, within the sustainable development location hierarchy.

- 1.21. Specific local plan development management policies are based on the methodology that has been applied to determine the final sustainable development locations, including suitable locations for tall buildings (DP12) and the spatial approach to parking management (DP23).
- 1.22. All the site allocations in the Draft Local Plan are within the sustainable development locations. These areas demonstrate enough capacity through the site allocations, the potential development of small sites, and through sensitive residential intensification, to meet Bexley's London Plan housing targets.
- 1.23. Table 1 summarises the different walking distances, with average walking times, for the sustainable development location hierarchy.

sustainable development location type	relevant locations	maximum walking distances (average time to walk)
major town centre (with or without a railway station)	Bexleyheath	800m (10-minutes' walk)
district town centre (with or without a railway station)	Crayford Erith Lower Belvedere Sidcup Welling	800m (10-minutes' walk)
local town centre with a railway station	Abbey Wood Village Bexley Village Bexleyheath Station Sidcup Station	800m (10-minutes' walk)
railway station with just a parade of shops	Albany Park Barnehurst Falconwood Slade Green	400m (5-minutes' walk) (the area around Barnehurst Station has a larger area of PTAL 3, which has defined the sustainable development location)
local town centre without a railway station	Blackfen Northumberland Heath Upper Belvedere	400m (5-minutes' walk)

Table 1: sustainable development location hierarchy