

Brentwood Town Centre

Design Plan & Feasibility Studies | November 2017



Levitt Bernstein
People.Design

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PROJECT
CENTRE

GVA

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All the background information used for the purposes of this work can be found in a separate appendix section.

An aerial, grayscale photograph of a city street grid, likely New York City, showing a dense pattern of buildings and streets. A large, bold, yellow text overlay is centered in the image.

1 - Introduction

1 - Introduction

Responding to the brief

The brief calls for a strategic design-led plan for Brentwood Town Centre, to complement the *Local Development Plan* (2016) for Brentwood Borough. The Plan places importance on the Town Centre’s role as the focus for economic growth, and for the town’s ambition to continue to be a great place to live, work and visit.

Central to this vision is the role of identifying opportunity sites and how redevelopment can help meet a variety of local needs and future growth.

The original brief set out the following objectives:

- To create policy and guidance to shape future development opportunities and how these best fit and improve the Town Centre.
- Explore the key sites of William Hunter Way car park, the Baytree Centre and the Chapel Ruins (classified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument), as identified by Brentwood Borough Council and Design Council. These sites are seen as strategic in order to link and improve permeability and the overall appearance of the High Street and wider Town Centre.

- A range of issues need to be considered alongside development opportunities, which include access, economic development, heritage, retail spaces, and stakeholders needs.

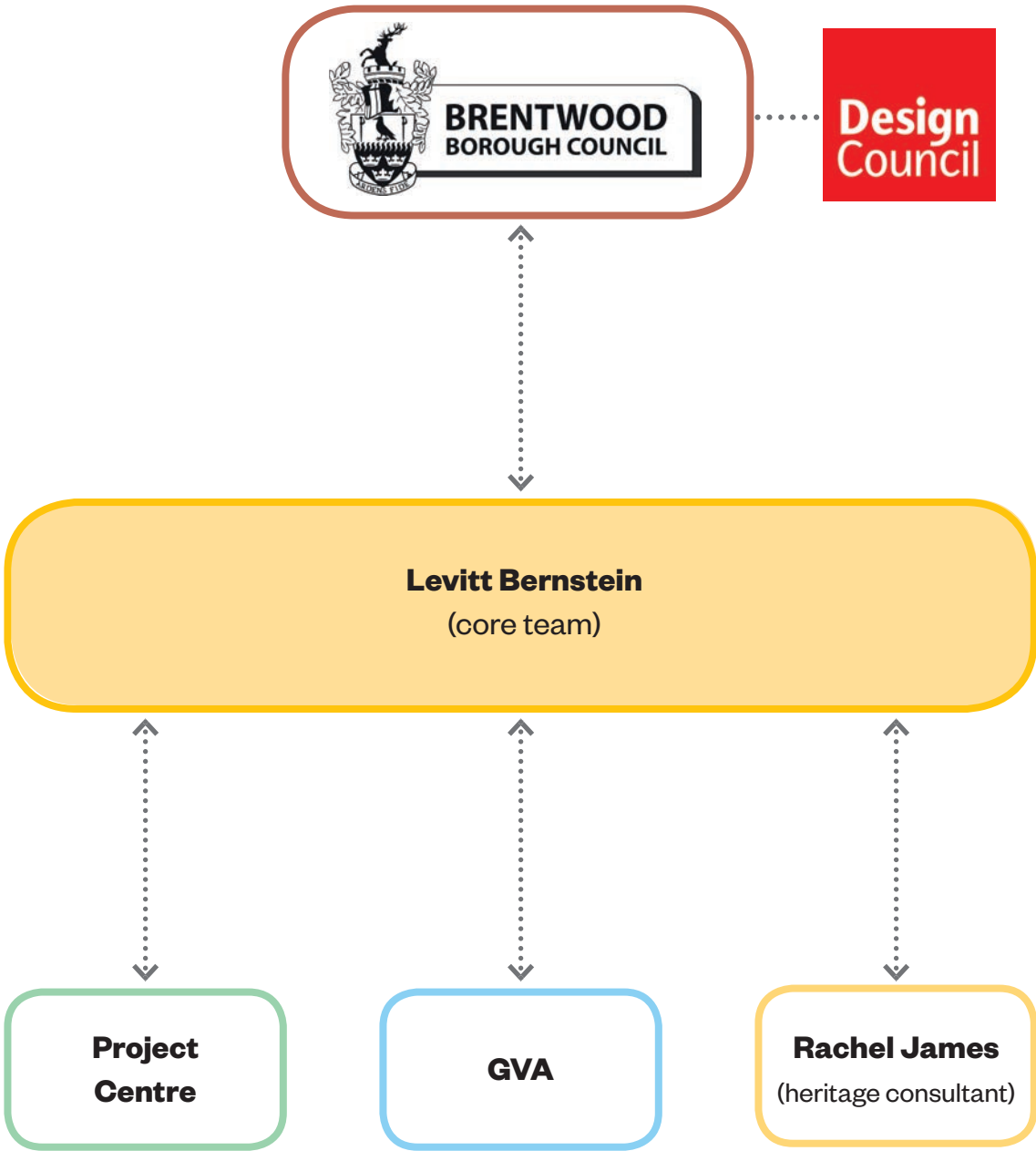
These in turn, need to inform the Design Plan and development briefs for individual sites.

The project team delivering this strategy and site proposals, is led by Levitt Bernstein (vision, masterplanning, urban design and site feasibilities, landscape and sustainability) with the following consultants:

- GVA - viability, retail and market analysis
- Project Centre - transport advice
- Rachel James - heritage consultant

“The work will compliment the Local Development Plan for the borough, which places importance on the Town Centre’s role as the focus for economic growth, and for the town’s ambition to continue to be a great place...”

- Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan Consultants Brief | July 2016 -



1 - Introduction

Structure of the document

The document is structured into five parts:

Analysis

This section focuses on the analysis of Brentwood and its environs in terms of the following components:

- Urban Design Analysis
- Market and demand analysis
- Transport analysis

The focus of this work is predominantly on the Town Centre.

The purpose of this section is to provide a thorough understanding of the key sites and their relationships with the wider Town Centre; understanding the current transport and parking issues. It also includes a baseline study of the current socio-economic and market findings.

The analysis has led to some key findings for the Town Centre and its current situation. Based on these findings some early options for the strategic sites are highlighted in this section.

Design Ideas and Options

This section focuses on developing the various massing options for the individual sites.

The options and development scenarios for the sites have been tested and these have been presented in this section.

The design options cover the following:

- Wider vision for the Town Centre, and how the development sites can be integrated to create a connected and permeable destination.
- Site layouts indicating various land uses and how they integrate and link into the wider extended context.
- Three-dimensional massing exploring indicative heights, urban forms and scale showing sense of enclosure to public spaces, key routes and connections.
- Proposed public realm strategy.
- Viability analysis and delivery strategy.
- Quantum of development, specifying areas for non-residential uses and residential uses.

The Design Plan: Returning to the whole

This section forms a summary of the design ideas and options. It explains the vision for the Town Centre as a whole.

Individual sites and their developments will have a long term impact on the Town Centre setting.

Phasing Strategy

This section focuses on the phasing approach. It looks at sites and parcels of land or interventions that could be implemented in stages to help realise the Design Plan and vision in the long term.

As part of the refined options, the GVA team, have worked with the design team to provide an

overarching strategy for retail/commercial uses within the Town Centre, inform the long term approach to the Town Centre as a whole, and key sites in particular. This has helped to draw together the urban design, transport and viability analysis to identify the most appropriate (and commercially attractive) locations for different uses to be brought forward.

The Way forward

This provides a summary to the work embedded within the document with some suggestions for progressing the strategies of the Design Plan.

1 - Introduction

Approach & Methodology

We have set out below our methodology statement which has helped to deliver the Design Plan for Brentwood. This identifies the key milestones and deliverables of the plan and its phases.

Inception meeting

The first meeting took place with the Council’s project team officers, the Design Council and all relevant stakeholders to discuss and confirm our understanding of the key drivers of the brief. This contributed to set out the parameters and deliverables for the first stage of work and to agree on key milestones, a schedule of proposed meetings and the project programme.

This was combined with a site visit to the key development opportunity sites with the Principal Urban Design officer to discuss issues, opportunities and how these sites and their scope for development and improvements can contribute to the wider Town Centre offer.

Milestone 1: Background analysis and early options

- **Urban Design analysis**

We analysed Brentwood and its physical and design context. The purpose was to ensure that the Design plan and development strategies were underpinned by a thorough understanding of key sites and relationships with the wider Brentwood Town Centre.

The urban analysis concluded with a Spatial Framework which identifies key opportunities for improving connections; priorities for public realm investments and key development opportunities.

These were then presented at a client and stakeholder meeting. Review and comments received at this meeting, steered us towards starting to develop the options for the individual sites and their scenarios for development. The urban design principles for individual sites and a wider ‘place making’ strategy for the Town Centre was agreed at this stage and various options were then developed based on the scenario requirements.

- **Market and Demand Analysis**

It was critical to build a full understanding of the local retail, employment and residential property dynamics in order to underpin the design and the delivery strategy. Outcomes have influenced phasing, land use mix and typologies for the individual sites.

The progress of new and proposed schemes elsewhere in and around Brentwood was reviewed. This has helped to inform potential values, absorption rates and competing locations.

Milestone 2: Developing the options

- **Develop options and early workshop with relevant stakeholders**

Through this stage of work we developed the various massing options for individual sites - quantum of residential, non residential areas, active uses and frontages and public realm network/ spaces were a key component for every option. The leisure and cultural aspirations of the town and sites identified for Town Centre living were carefully assessed in terms of quantum, location of uses and how the various sites could

be unlocked through a mapped out phasing strategy that will be an outcome of the viability and deliverability analysis in future stages of work.

The various options/scenarios for the individual sites were shared - starting with the larger, more complex sites. We presented options for specific sites and refined these at meetings and presentations.

Options were presented as a Draft Plan document for review and comment at project meetings/workshops and circulated to the stakeholders. Discussions, review and comments helped us to start refining these layouts, massing models and overall proposals to prepare material for the final Consultation event which took place in mid March 2017.

As part of the refined options, the GVA team worked with the design team to provide an overarching strategy for retail/ commercial uses within the Town Centre. This helped inform the long term approach to the Town Centre as a whole, and key sites in particular. This draws together the urban design, transport and property analysis to identify the most appropriate (and commercially attractive) locations for different uses to be brought forward.

Project Centre were our transport consultants and advised us closely on transport issues and strategies, and helped to prepare a desktop study to go with the Draft Plan document.

Milestone 3: Final Design Plan

- **Refine options, prepare material for final exhibition**

After receiving feedback and comments from the Council officers and the Design Council and other key stakeholders, we agreed on the revisions that were needed for the final Design Plan vision, the public realm strategy and the various site development options.

These now form part of this final document which includes the design solutions that explain the vision with plans, suggestions from our transport workshop and a summary section on retail/ commercial uses strategy for the longer term development of the Town Centre.

This material was also used for the exhibition of the vision for the Town Centre. This took place on the 17th and 18th of March 2017 at a pop-up shop within the Baytree Centre - organised by Brentwood Borough Council.

The Design Plan looks at the various layers of the Town Centre and concludes with a set of strong strategies for the future phased development of a place that will be exciting, liveable and vibrant.

2 - Analysis

2 - Location

Regional Scale

Brentwood is located in the south-western end of Essex, which falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt surrounding London.

It is surrounded and connected by a system of villages, giving the town the unique function as the main town of Brentwood Borough.

Regionally, the town forms part of the A12 transport corridor (A12 motorway & Great Eastern railway to London Liverpool Street). The town is therefore well located and connected with good transport links and public transport to other surrounding centres of Essex, Kent and London, the legacy opportunities areas in and around the Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park , and airports at Stansted and Southend.

From May 2017, Brentwood will form part of Phase 1 of Crossrail that will be introduced between Shenfield and Liverpool Street. Once complete it will be named the Elizabeth Line.

In December 2019, direct links with Heathrow, West London and Reading will be open. This will reinforce accessibility, connectivity and provide more choice to and from Brentwood, making it a more attractive destination to live and work.



2 - Location

Sub-regional Scale


The town is predominantly surrounded by a system of large green open spaces of regional status (i.e. Weald Wooded Farmland, Doddingtonhurst Wooded Farmland & Heybridge Wooded Farmland).

The town is well served with easy access by the A12 and M25, as well as the railway line to the south of the town.


Brentwood Town Centre's footprint is small in area, with a consolidated Town Centre and residential expansion along the historic routes. East of Brentwood, the small town of Shenfield is suburban in character, with a small Town Centre near the train station.

Over time Shenfield has extensively developed closer towards Brentwood. Although perceived by most people as 'two towns in one', it is very clear that the towns are separated by a clear green space (in a north-south orientation).


Key




Green Metropolitan Green Belt



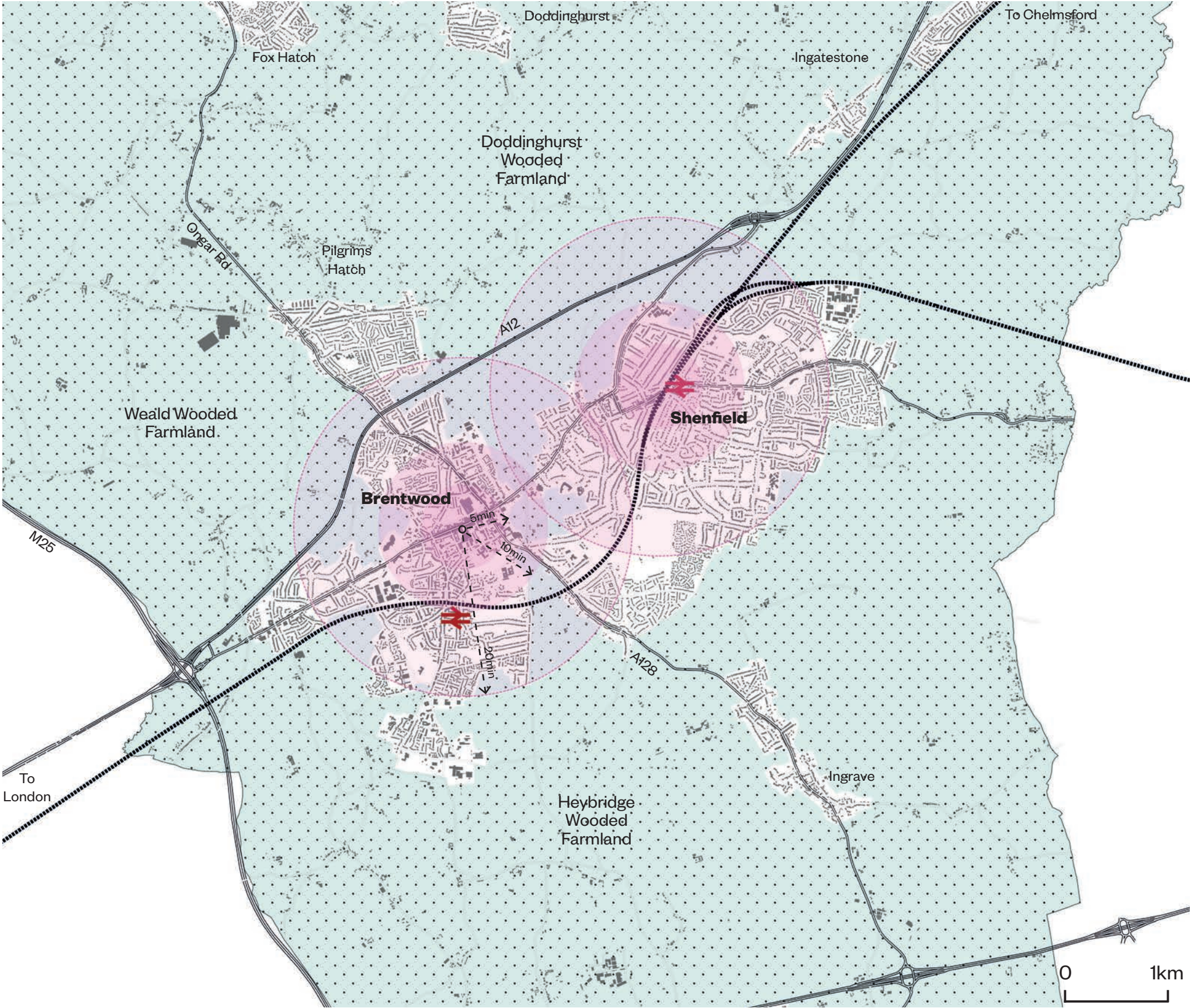
Major arterial



Railway line



Railway station



2 - Location

Town Scale

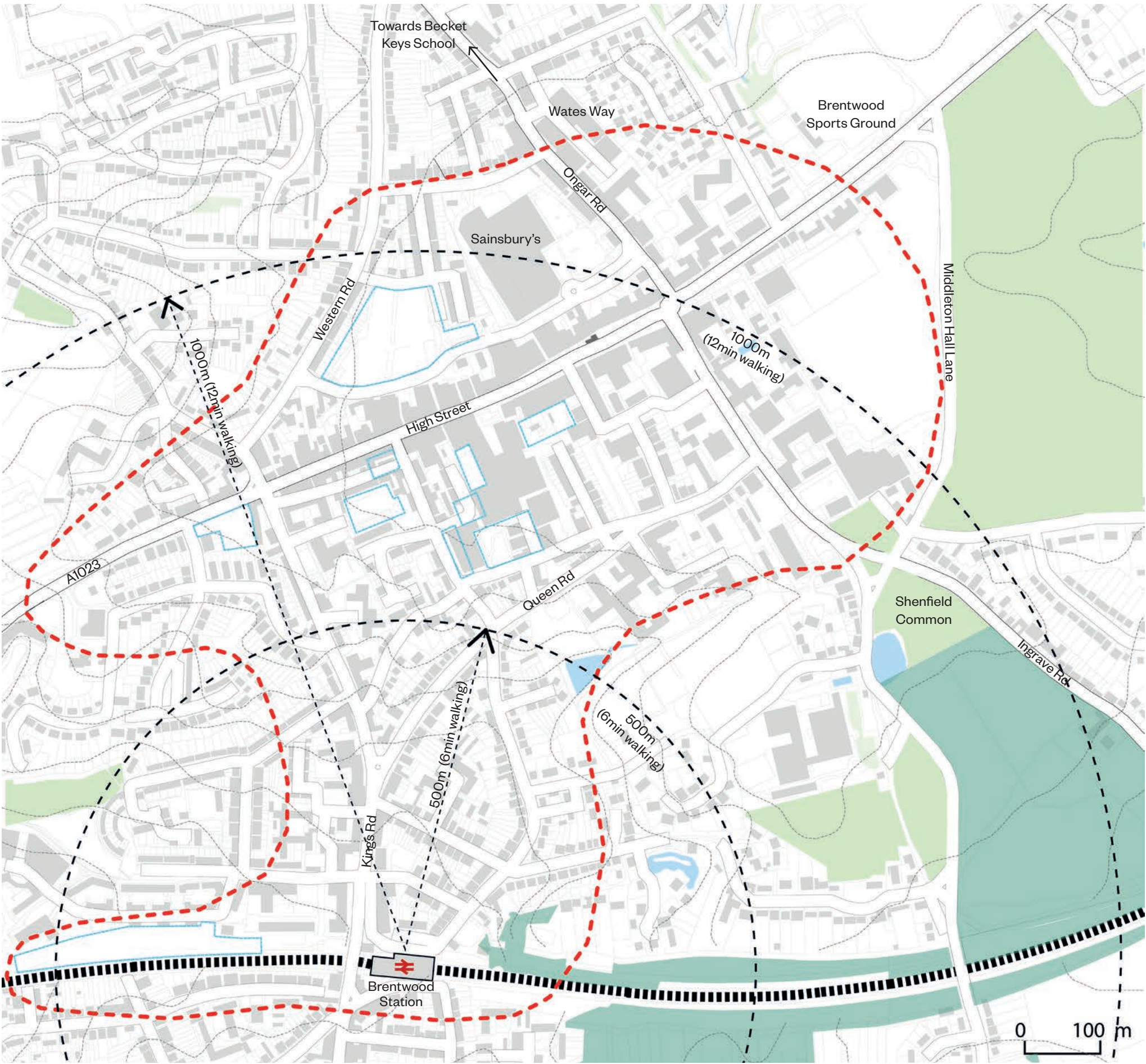
The Town Centre originated on top of a hill. Around the High Street, the urban fabric has a fine grain and it is quite dense. Towards the periphery, the urban fabric becomes looser and has a suburban feel to it.

Although the Town Centre is in close proximity to the station, topographically there is a significant level difference between these two parts of the town, making walking a less attractive option for the elderly.

As identified on the previous diagram, regional woodlands are in close proximity to the Town Centre.

The study area as indicated for Brentwood Town Centre is indicative. Although the Town Centre is focused around the High Street, the boundary extends to the wider context.

- Key
- Indicative study area
 - Contours (5m intervals)
 - Potential development sites
 - Open green space
 - Woodlands
 - Waterbodies



2 - Urban Design Analysis

Existing Site Sections

A series of sections are selected to understand the relationship between the existing buildings and townscape character to the topography of the Town Centre.

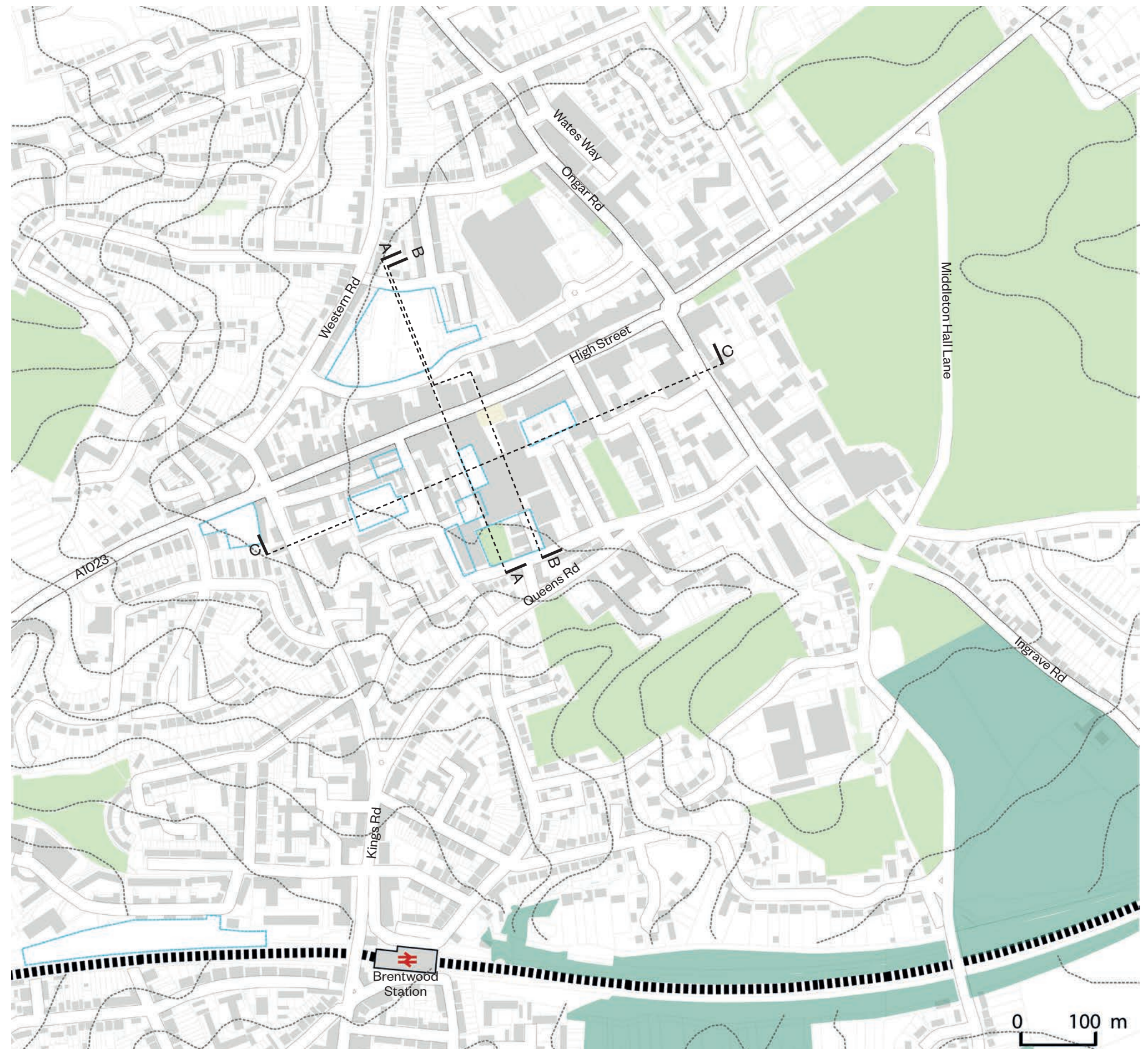
Section AA + BB cut through north-south direction along the William Hunter Way parking site through South Street and the Baytree Centre.

Section CC cuts through in an east-west direction through the Chatham Way parking site, Baytree Centre and the service yards.

The north-south sections clearly show the tight urban grain along the High Street with potential development opportunities adjoining this stretch.

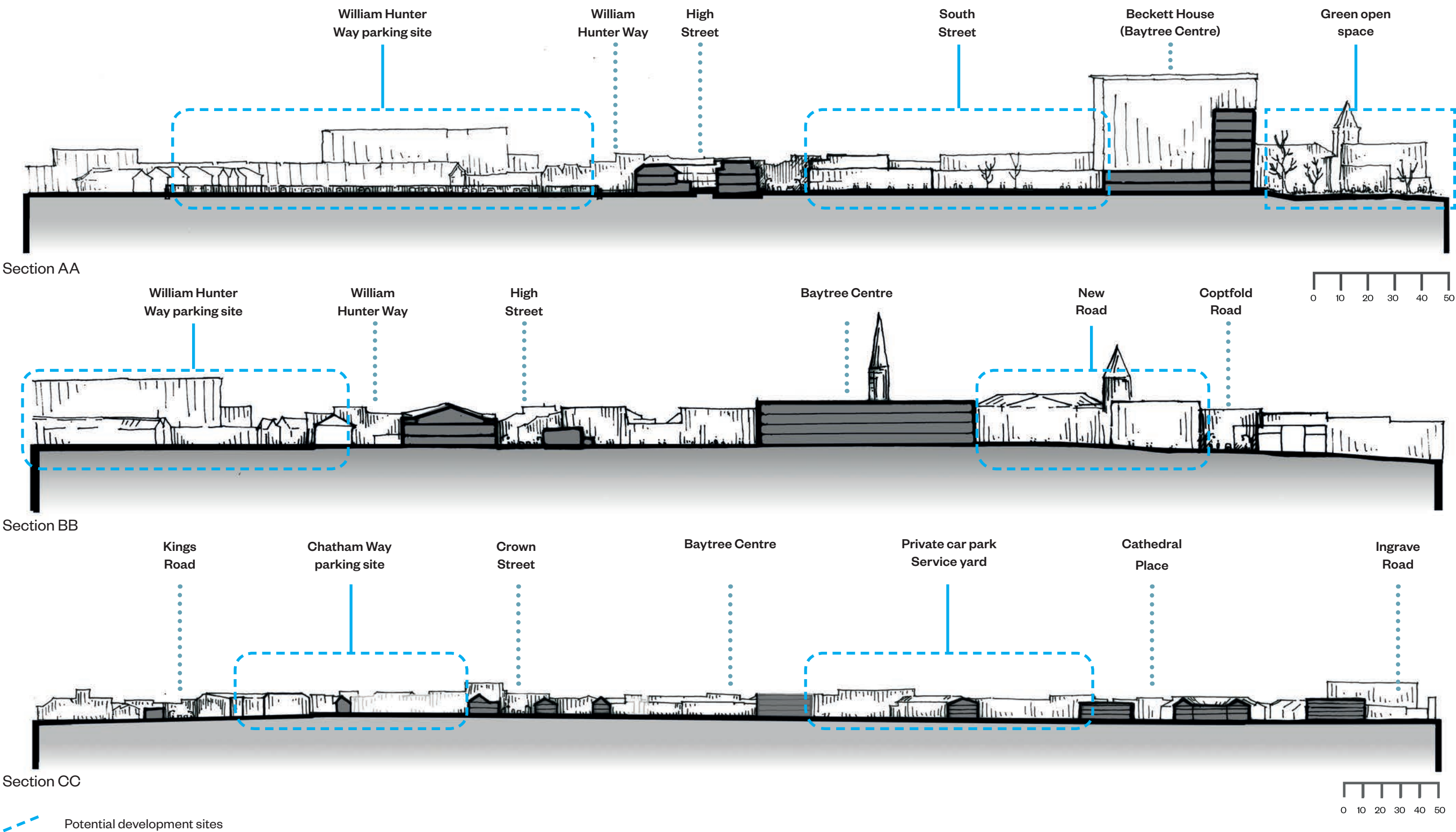
The east-west section shows the fine grain of streets along Crown Street and Cathedral Place, with similar scope for development on sites adjoining these streets.

Key
Section Line



2 - Urban Design Analysis

Existing Site Sections



2 - Urban Design Analysis

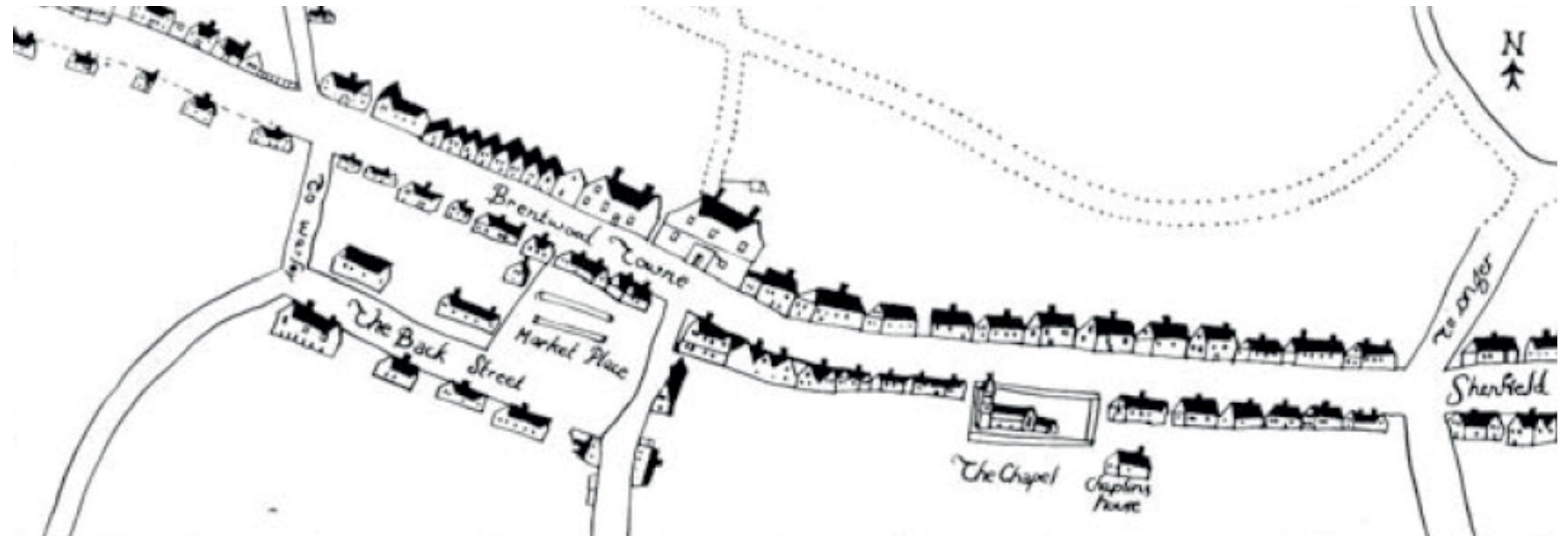
Historical Evolution

Brentwood is, at its heart, a medieval town that developed along the old Roman road from London to Colchester which followed a series of ridges on higher ground.

The town was a successful trading point and developed as a series of burgh plots congregated around the market place. This plan form is still extant today.

In 1840 the Eastern Counties Railway arrived. The station was located on the lower ground to the south of the medieval town and led to urban expansion in this direction.

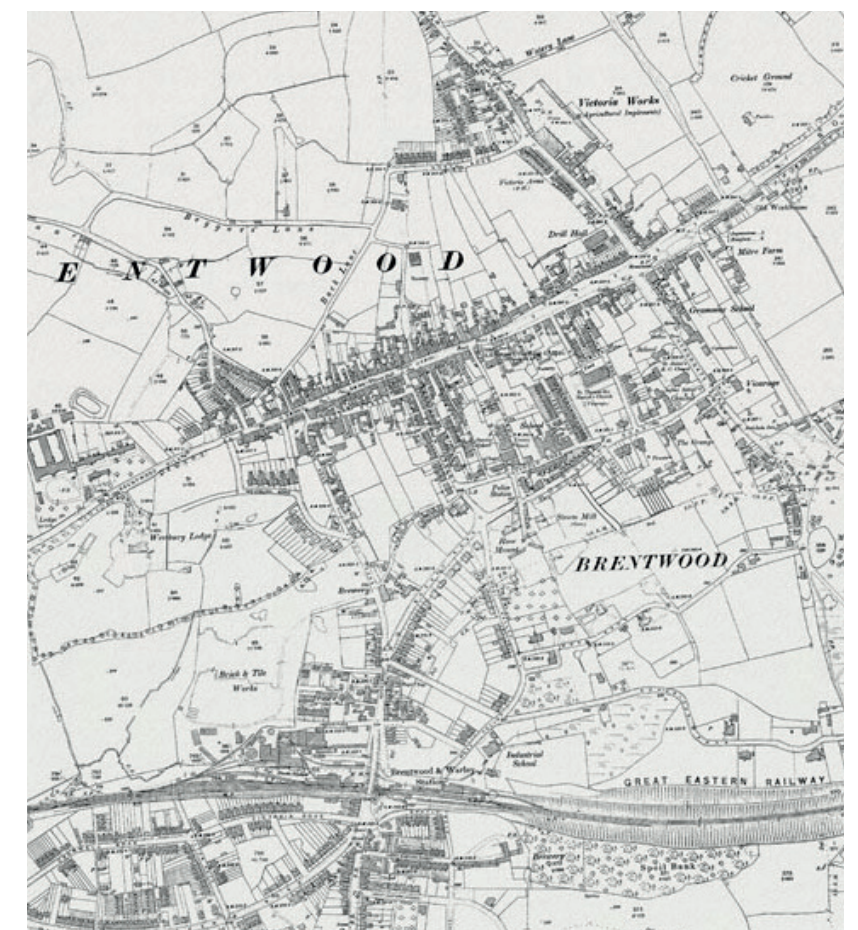
A detailed analysis of the historical evolution can be found in the *Brentwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* as produced by Essex County Council for Brentwood Borough Council (2007).



1717



1872



1897

Source:

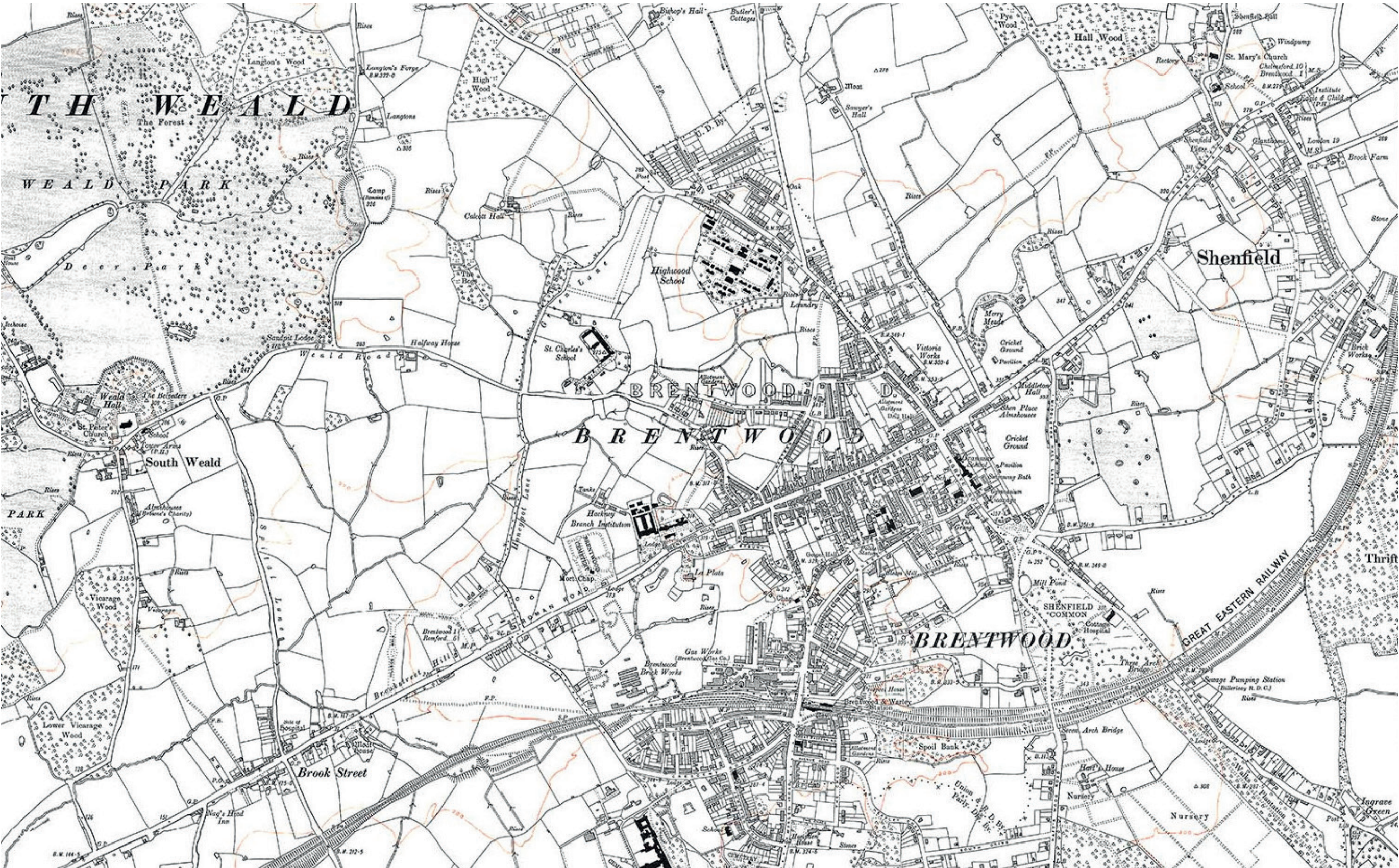
1717 - Brentwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

1872 - Brentwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

1897 - www.oldtowns.co.uk/Mapshop-Essex/Brentwood%201897.jpg

1921 - cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0510/1197/products/71-sw-1921.jpg?v=1424880760

2 - Urban Design Analysis



1921

2 - Urban Design Analysis

Historical Images



Memorial to protestant martyr, William Hunter at Brentwood erected in mid-Victorian era.



Brentwood High Street, c. 1906, showing the Town Hall of 1864 on the right.



St Thomas' church, Brentwood; drawing by W.W.Brown.



St Thomas' Chapel when it was used as a schoolroom.



The fire which destroyed Wilson's store in 1909.

2 - Urban Design Analysis



Brentwood High Street early 20th century. The absence of motor cars enables cyclists to travel abreast.



Brentwood Station in Edwardian times - note the absence of motor vehicles.



The Parade cinema near Brentwood.



Kings Road c. 1907.