4.0
TALL BUILDING APPROACH

4.1 DEFINITION OF ‘HIGH’ BUILDING

The Croydon Replacement UDP (July 2006) defines a ‘high’ building as being one that is significantly higher than most of the surrounding buildings or in excess of six storeys or 25 metres.

Key Messages from Policy and Evidence Base

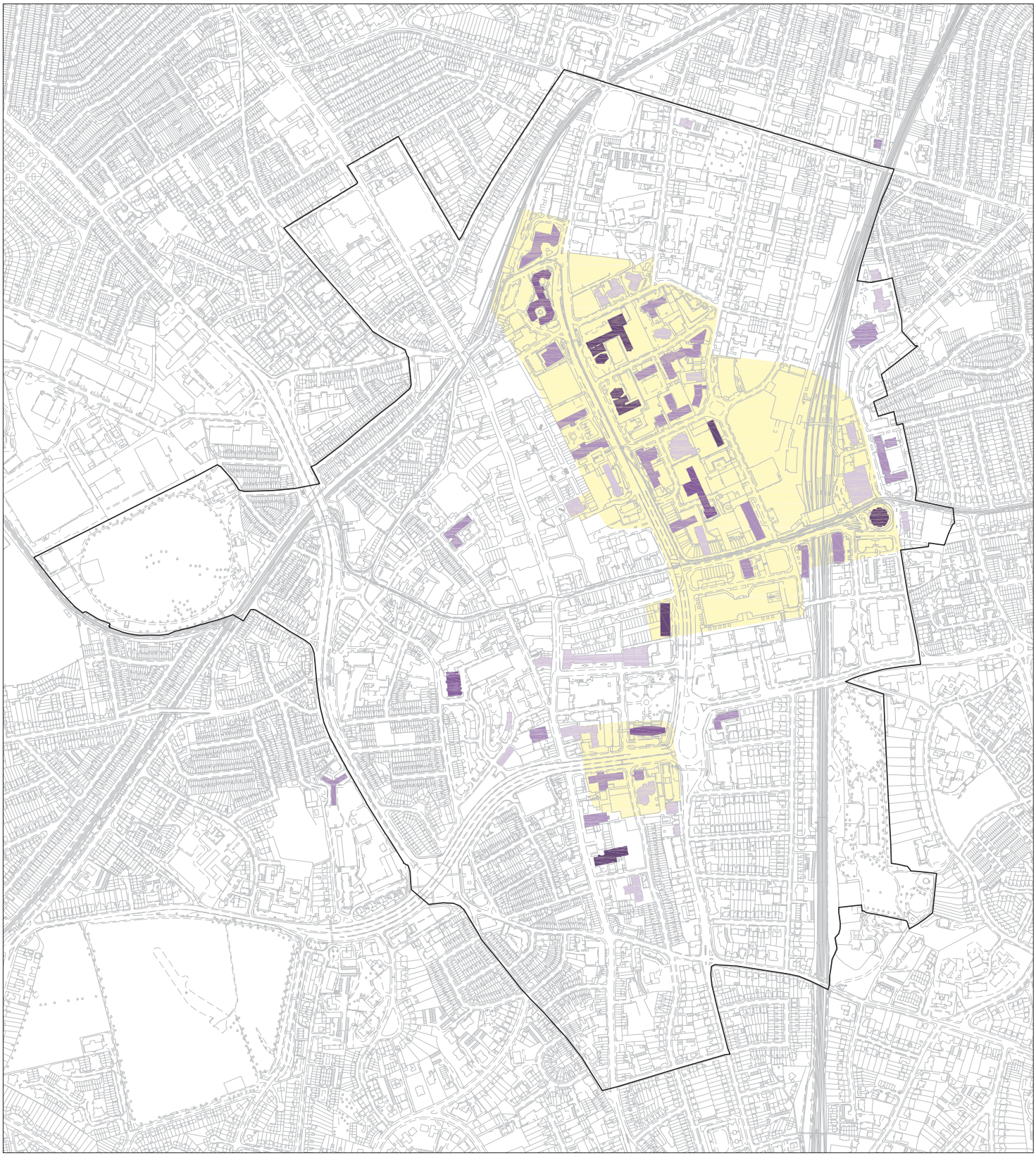
- The adopted/published and emerging policy and guidance which has been taken into account in the work to date is set out in Appendix XX . The key messages that this provides can be summarised as follows:
- The need to avoid harm to various interests (including historic and valued environments, important views and the vitality and micro-climate of surrounding public realm, buildings and uses);
- The need to use tall buildings as a positive tool to help regeneration (including their siting relative to public transport accessibility, the formation of ‘landmarks’ and an attractive skyline and the creation of new civic spaces and enhanced permeability); and
- The particular need for high quality architecture and environmentally sustainable design (given their scale and prominence).

The first strand, relating to harm, focuses on development management and the need to set out environmental criteria for judging the acceptability of the adverse impacts that tall buildings may have on existing assets. This is particularly important for managing the edges of the CMC area and the transition from suburban streets and houses to town centre.

The second strand, relating to regeneration, has clear linkages to the objective of accommodating significant amounts of family housing in the CMC and the need for tall buildings in order to achieve this. This is about the positive use of tall buildings to deliver offices, housing and new public space in the right place and to help people navigate their way around the town by improving legibility. Here the concepts of ‘gateways, ‘landmarks’ and ‘marker’ buildings are important to understand how tall buildings can be used positively as part of place-making.

The third strand, relating to the need for high quality architecture and design, will need alignment with the emerging decentralised energy strategy and the identification of mechanisms to ensure that beautiful buildings are built (for example by insisting on detailed planning applications, as opposed to outline, using pre-application discussion and design review and avoiding ‘trophy architecture’).

4.2 ORGINAL TALL BUILDINGS AND UDP TALL BUILDING ZONE



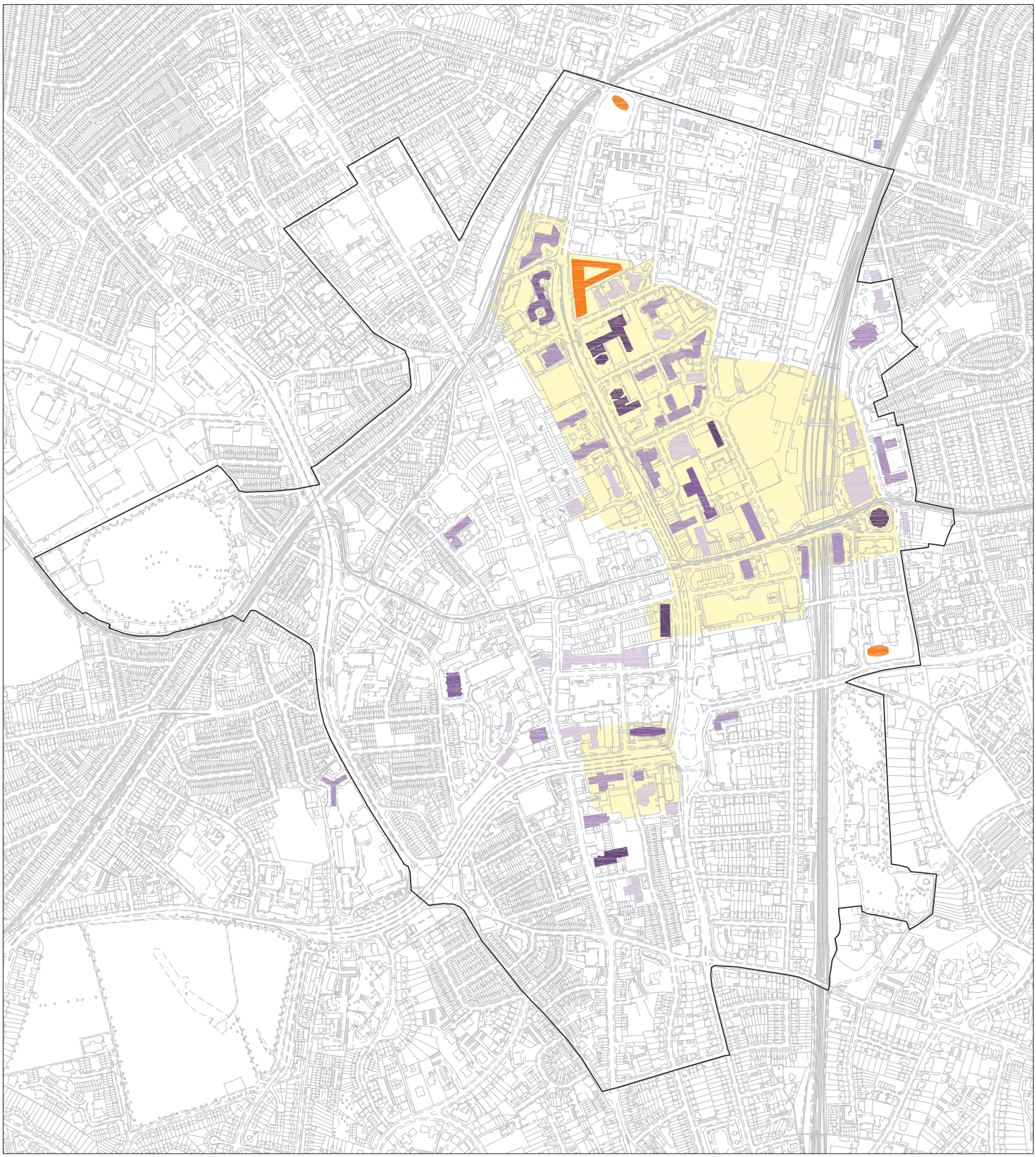
Aerial view of central Croydon

Croydon has a considerable amount of tall building stock and they form an important element in the image and identity of the CMC. Mainly from the 1960s they centre in the New Town area right and left of the Wellesley Road. The established typology is office buildings of long slab volumes.

‘Original’ tall buildings (left):

- UDP zone (2006)
- 7-9 storeys
- 10 - 14 storeys
- 15 - 19 storeys
- 20 storey

4.3 CONSENTED TALL BUILDINGS IN CROYDON

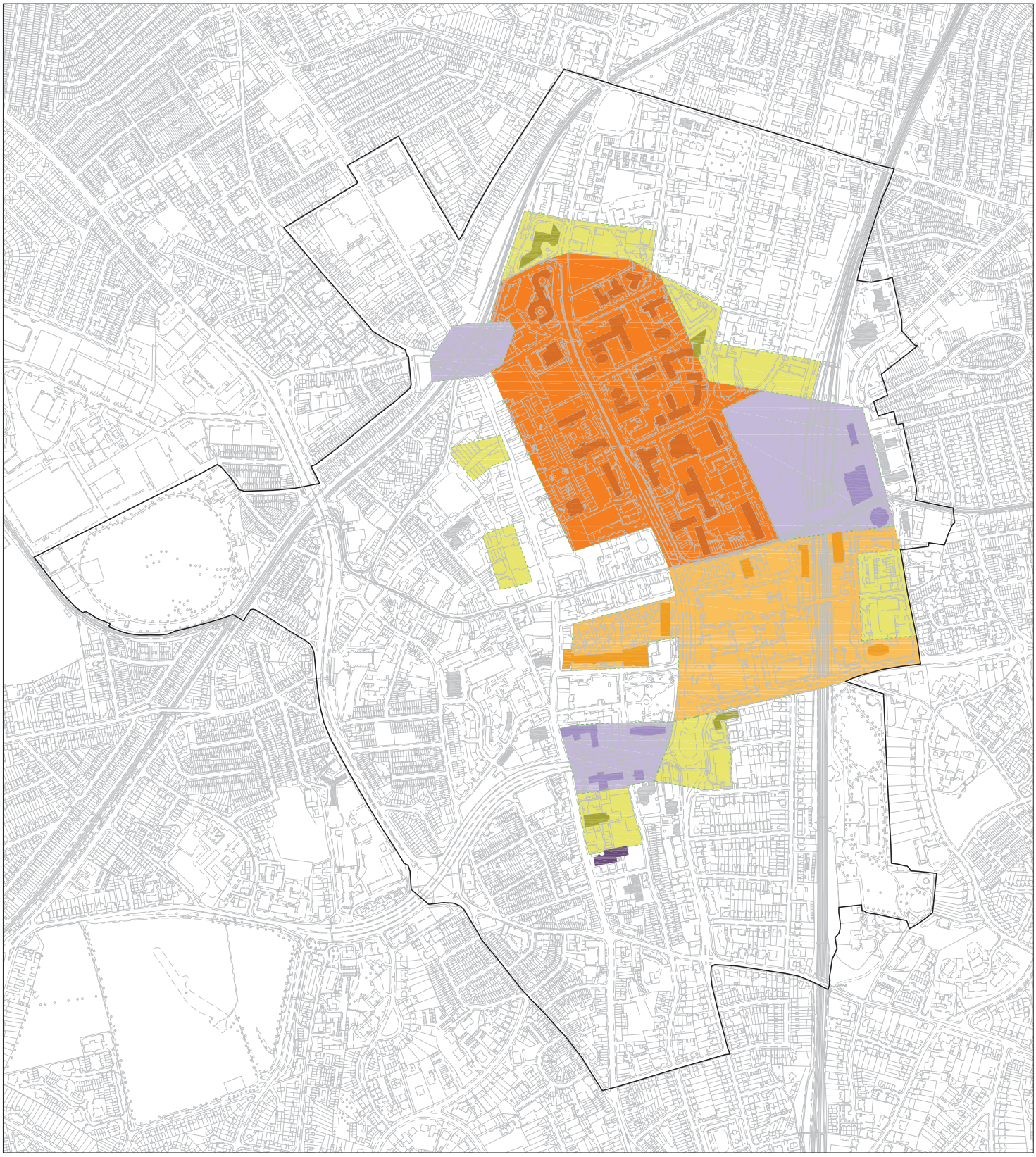


In recent years a number of planning applications for new tall buildings have been granted permission. It is noticeable that some of these are located outside the tall building zone set out in the UDP. Most of the proposed new towers are residential, which is a shift from the previously established typology of tall office buildings in Croydon.

‘Original’ and consented tall buildings (left):

- UDP zone (2006)
- 7-9 storeys
- 10 - 14 storeys
- 15 - 19 storeys
- 20 storey
- Newly consented buildings

4.4
AREAS SUITABLE FOR TALL BUILDINGS



1.) CORE TALL BUILDING ZONE:
Tall buildings are encouraged in this area, in which most of Croydon's current tall buildings are found. Located in the centre of Croydon it covers large parts of the Retail Area and the New Town located either side of Wellesley Road. It stretches between the stations at West and East Croydon and forms the commercial heart of the city. It offers the opportunity to build on and improve Croydon's identity and further shape it's skyline.
The area is well connected to public transport, tall buildings form an established context, there is an opportunity to improve the permeability through large urban blocks. The current tall buildings are mostly slab like and interrupt the view of the sky. The redevelopment of these sites gives the opportunity to introduce more slender towers. The introduction of residential towers is promoted to introduce a mix of uses into an area which is currently commercially focused.

2.A) WEST CROYDON CLUSTER
A cluster of tall buildings is encouraged in this area to mark the location of West Croydon station as an important node and entry point into central Croydon. (Subject of West Croydon masterplan). The area is currently an intersection of different areas with varying character and building scales, which reach from large office buildings near Wellesley Road over a four storey high street to two storey terraced houses. A cluster of tall buildings could provide the area with a clear identity of its own.

2.B) EAST CROYDON
Tall buildings are encouraged in this area around East Croydon station to mark Croydon's main transport hub. The proximity to public transport justifies a high density of commercial and residential uses. Large development sites offer the opportunity to restructure important connections between east and west and to introduce a new bridge across the railway. The adjacency to residential areas to the east have to be carefully considered. (Subject of East Croydon masterplan)

2.C) CIVIC CENTRE CLUSTER
A cluster of tall buildings is encouraged in this area to mark the civic centre of Croydon and the entry point into central Croydon from the south.

3.) CIVIC CENTRE
The potential for tall buildings in this area is to be discussed.
The Civic centre currently includes two of the largest tall buildings in Croydon Tabener House and Nestle Tower. Besides it includes the two of the main open green spaces in central Croydon College Green and the Queen's Gardens. To it western side it borders the Old Town conservation area and it includes important listed buildings such as the Town Hall. Large areas are being considered for redevelopment and therefore, as no main scale prevails, the future character of this area can be directed. This study encourages a more consistent scale of buildings to strengthen the area's character and to differentiate it from the Retail Area and the New Town to the north and the residential areas to the south. Volumes of a consistently lower height are being proposed in order to ensure that the open spaces are not overshadowed and to give the Civic Centre Cluster presence. The area offers an excellent opportunity to creating a civic centre with high quality public amenity space, which could encourage the introduction of private residential family accommodation in its vicinity.

4.) FRINGE AREAS
This study encourages the intensification of current tall building zones and the creation of clusters in areas of specific importance. This follows the idea that tall buildings act as markers of particular areas and aims to limit the general spread of tall buildings over a larger area. The fringe areas are locations between tall building zones and low scale residential neighbourhoods and this study suggests that buildings of a mediating scale might be considered for this location. However, either tall buildings or low buildings might also be suitable, but have to be carefully justified and the impact on the adjacent area has to be studied.

Areas suitable for tall buildings (left):

Core tall building zone

Civic centre

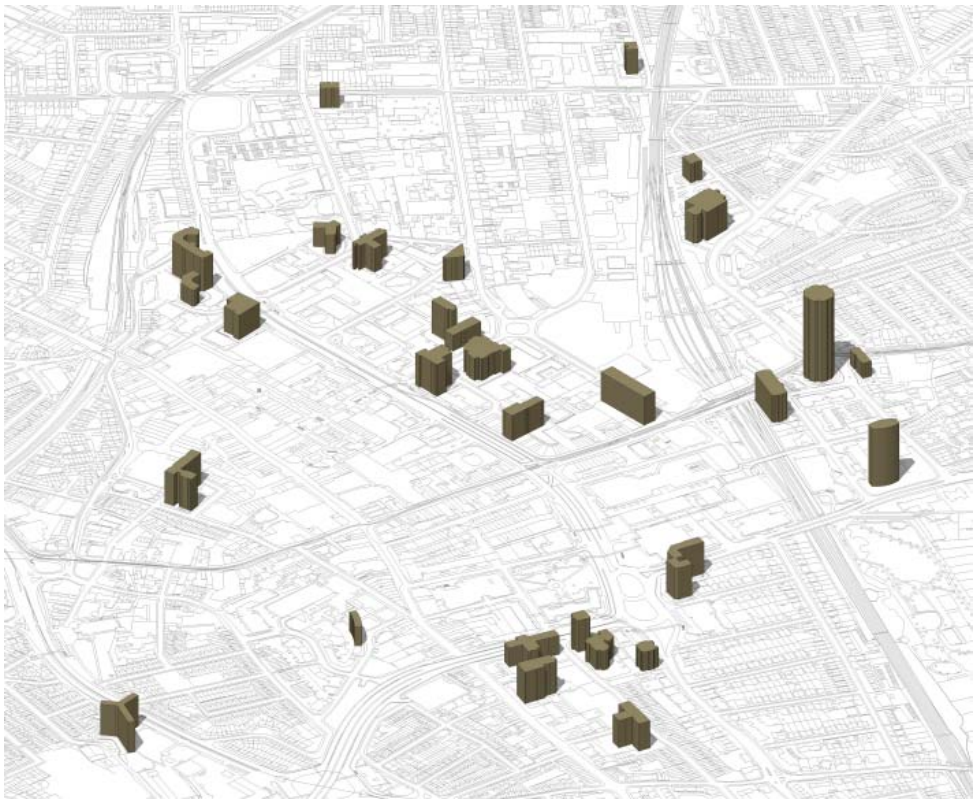
Clusters

Fringe areas

4.5 THE FUTURE CHANGE OF IMAGE OF CROYDON AND ITS SKYLINE

Croydon's current image of is strongly defined by the tall office buildings either side of Wellesley Road and around the civic centre. The diagrams opposite highlight that a significant number of these buildings are being considered for redevelopment. This implies that the image and skyline of Croydon might be set to change over the next 20 years.

Tall buildings within opportunity sites (in green)



The remaining tall buildings with those on the oportunity sites removed

4.6 TALL RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

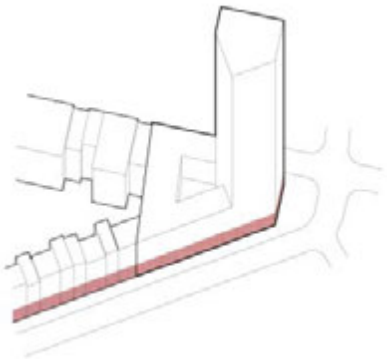
The Key Messages from Policy and Evidence Base referred to above applies to all kinds of tall buildings and for all types of uses. However, tall residential buildings raise particular issues that must be reflected in a tall buildings strategy and the application of policy/guidance. The key issues are addressed below.

DESIGN

Any proposed new tall building should be of 'first class design quality' given the visual presence they would have both individually and collectively. However, proposed residential towers need an additional investment of design quality in their architectural language if they are not to be too readily associated with unpopular examples from the past.

CABE has identified three recurring design themes in the consideration of proposals for residential towers:

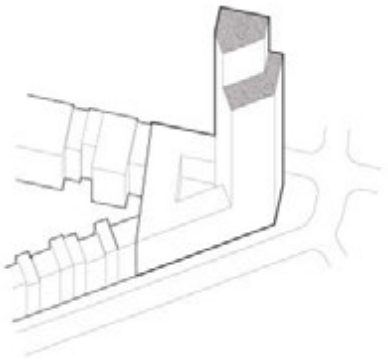
- The relationship of form to height
- The relationship between a tower's upper and lower parts
- The nature and top of tall buildings



Continuation of active street frontage

A key aspect of any tall building is how it is brought down to the ground and tall buildings should be designed from the ground-up. The base needs to make sense in the context of the rest of the building's lower floors and to have a relationship with the scale of architecture nearby. Use of the ground floor in a town centre environment such as the CMC area will be particularly important so that a tower is grounded in the function of the place and not isolated from other uses .

The importance of form and its effect on the skyline is nowhere more apparent than at the tops of tall buildings. For residential tall buildings, the possibility exists to introduce alternative accommodation on upper floors (such as duplex apartments) to avoid the need for lift-over-runs and keep the design at this level simple and calm



Articulated but uncluttered building tops

It is also important that there is no discernible difference in external appearance of housing of different tenures in dense and tall development and that market and affordable housing are fully integrated.

SPACE AND DESIGN STANDARDS

Whilst generously sized accommodation, at least meeting minimum overall floorspace and storage standards and floor-to-ceiling heights, is an important ingredient of all successful housing, it is particularly true for homes in dense and tall development. The same is true for good sound insulation between homes and the preference for dual-aspect homes and relatively short communal corridors from stair/lift cores to front doors.

SEPARATION / PRIVACY DISTANCES

Privacy requirements for housing are greater than that for non-residential uses. Put crudely, two tall office buildings can be placed closer together than an office and residential building and closer still than two residential buildings. Two tall office buildings of 20 storeys can be comfortably located around 20m apart (a, see diagram). Office and residential buildings of this height should be separated by around 30m (b) and 20 storey high residential buildings should normally be at least 40m apart (c) (measured between facing habitable rooms (living rooms and bedrooms). Separation distances should generally increase with the height of the buildings. The CMC will be developed incrementally and it is important that the development of a particular site safeguards the development potential of adjoining land.Distances between tall buildings safeguards view permeability between them and allow views of the sky.

a b c

SLENDERNESS

The impact of a tall building is relative to its height and proportion. The taller and wider a building, the greater is the impact of the building. The impact of the building depends on the height of the buildings around it. Slender towers are encouraged to allow views of the sky between them.

Ground Floor Open Space

Tall buildings provide the opportunity to 'free up' space at ground floor, improve the permeability of an area and create additional open space. This is particularly true for tall residential buildings, which bring with them demands for additional recreational space. As outlined above, the preference is for tall residential buildings to be grounded in a perimeter block. This still provides opportunities for new positive public realm space to be created at the front of a building and private courtyard space at the rear. It is important to ensure that such spaces are useable and not dominated by servicing or car parking.

The Council has a policy to secure either new public open space or financial contributions towards its provision off-site in relation to proposed new housing ('extended' UDP Policy RO12) and the emphasis should be on securing on-site provision of additional high quality publicly accessible open space wherever possible.

AMENITY AND PLAY SPACE

The policy framework seeks to secure a reasonable amount of amenity and play space – with the later relating to family-sized housing. For high density tall residential schemes it is particularly important that such spaces at least meet the minimum standards, with the priority being for private space. Imaginative solutions are encouraged, including incorporating communal amenity and/or play areas for younger children on the roof tops of lower buildings in staggered schemes and the inclusion of private enclosed 'sky gardens.'

public and private amenity space

SUNLIGHT/DAYLIGHT AND OVERSHADOWING

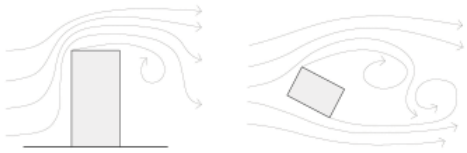
The scale and massing of proposed tall buildings will need to be tested to ensure that they would not have unacceptable impacts on the daylight and sunlight enjoyed by existing housing on neighbouring land and that the proposed new homes themselves would meet the required minimum standards. As with privacy, it will be important to ensure that the development of a particular site for a tall building or buildings safeguards the development potential of adjoining land.

The location of a tall residential building(s) on a particular development plot is important in terms of its potential to overshadow amenity space (balconies, roof terraces and courtyards) and play areas. If we want families to chose to live in tall buildings in Croydon, it is important that we create as an attractive and child friendly residential environment as possible.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that taller building elements, including towers, are located so as to minimise the overshadowing of open spaces and play spaces – particularly in the afternoons outside of summer.

WIND

The prevailing wind at Croydon is from the south-west. Existing and future tall buildings are likely to cause abnormal wind patterns, with eddies and downdrafts. It will be essential that any application for major new residential tall buildings in the CMC area is accompanied by an assessment of the development in terms of wind turbulence. Particular issues relating to housing include the usability of roof top terraces and play spaces (which are likely to become less usable and safe the higher they area) and the attractiveness and comfort of ground floor open spaces and entrance areas. Potential mitigation measures include the inclusion of 'wind gutters' at the top of buildings, high quality landscaping (planting and porous screens) in open spaces and canopies above entrances.



Eddies caused by wind turbulence

SAFETY

The safety of children living in tall buildings will be a particular concern of their parents/carers and needs to be carefully safeguarded, particularly in places where children are encouraged to play.

ACCESS

All homes in tall buildings should be served by at least two lifts and where on-site car parking is provided, it should be prioritised for 'blue badge' holders (including people living in wheelchair housing) and families.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The location and orientation of tall residential buildings should seek to minimise energy use and brise soleil, screens and soft landscaping should be used to help provide shading and prevent over-heating. As referred to in Space and Design Standards above, dual aspect homes should be maximised. All new homes should meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 as a minimum. Dense and tall residential buildings in the CMC area should help the financial viability of decentralised energy networks (by increasing demand for energy in evenings and weekends) and all new buildings should be designed so that they are able to connect to the proposed networks in the future.

MANAGEMENT

The day-to-day management of dense and tall residential schemes is particularly important due to the high level of use of common areas and open spaces and the high number of people living in a relatively small space. The presence of on-site management on larger schemes, such as a concierge, would be welcomed. Mixed-tenure housing schemes work best where owner occupiers and tenants share common facilities and those facilities are managed and maintained by a common management company. However, management costs, rents and service charges tend to be higher in dense and tall residential schemes and this may be particularly challenging for RSLs. These issues need to be considered at the design stage to ensure the creation of successful places that work well over time.

4.7
VIEWS TOWARDS LANDMARKS

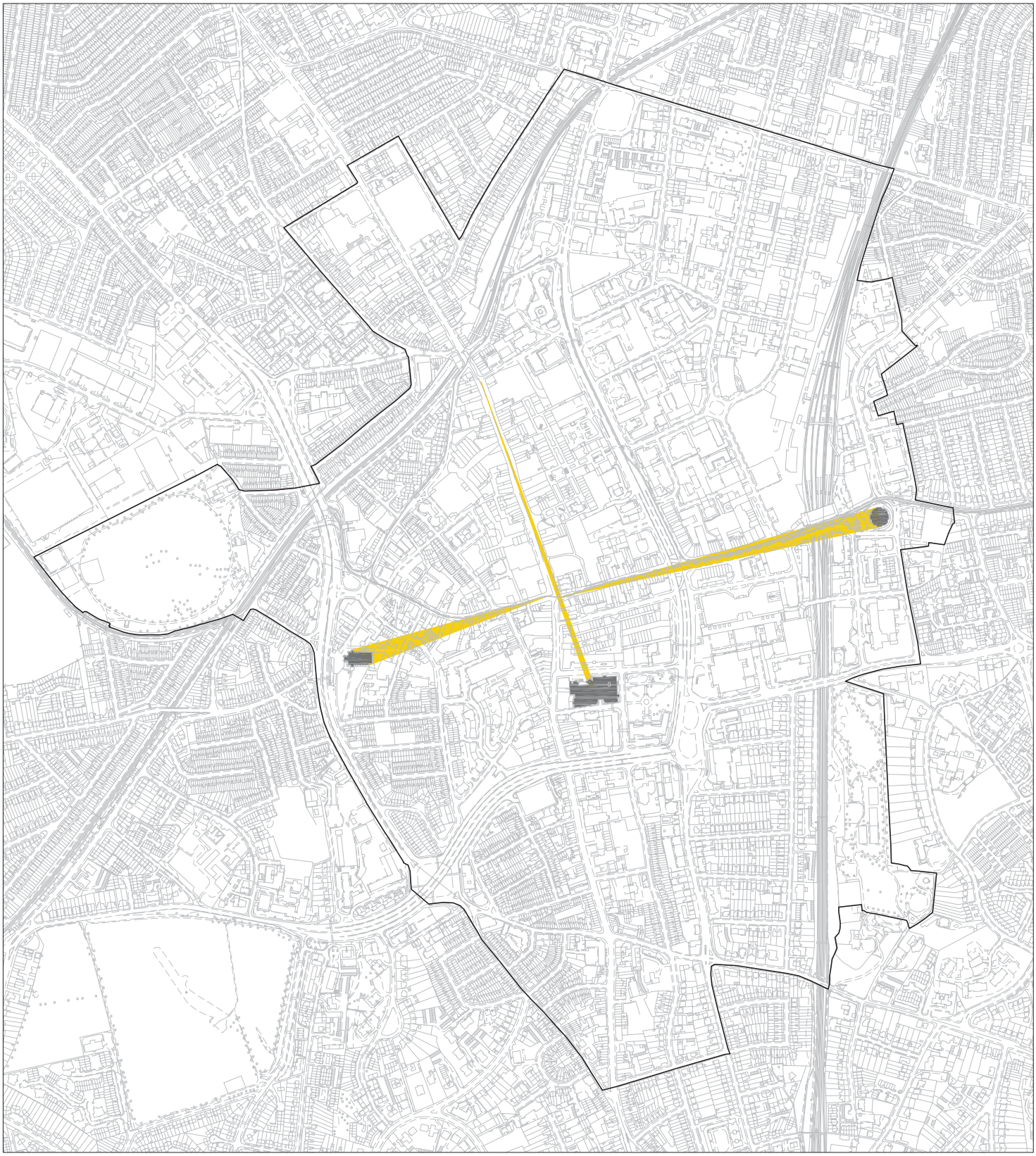
St. John the Baptist's Parish Church

Landmark vistas within the CMC:*

line of sight

landmark building

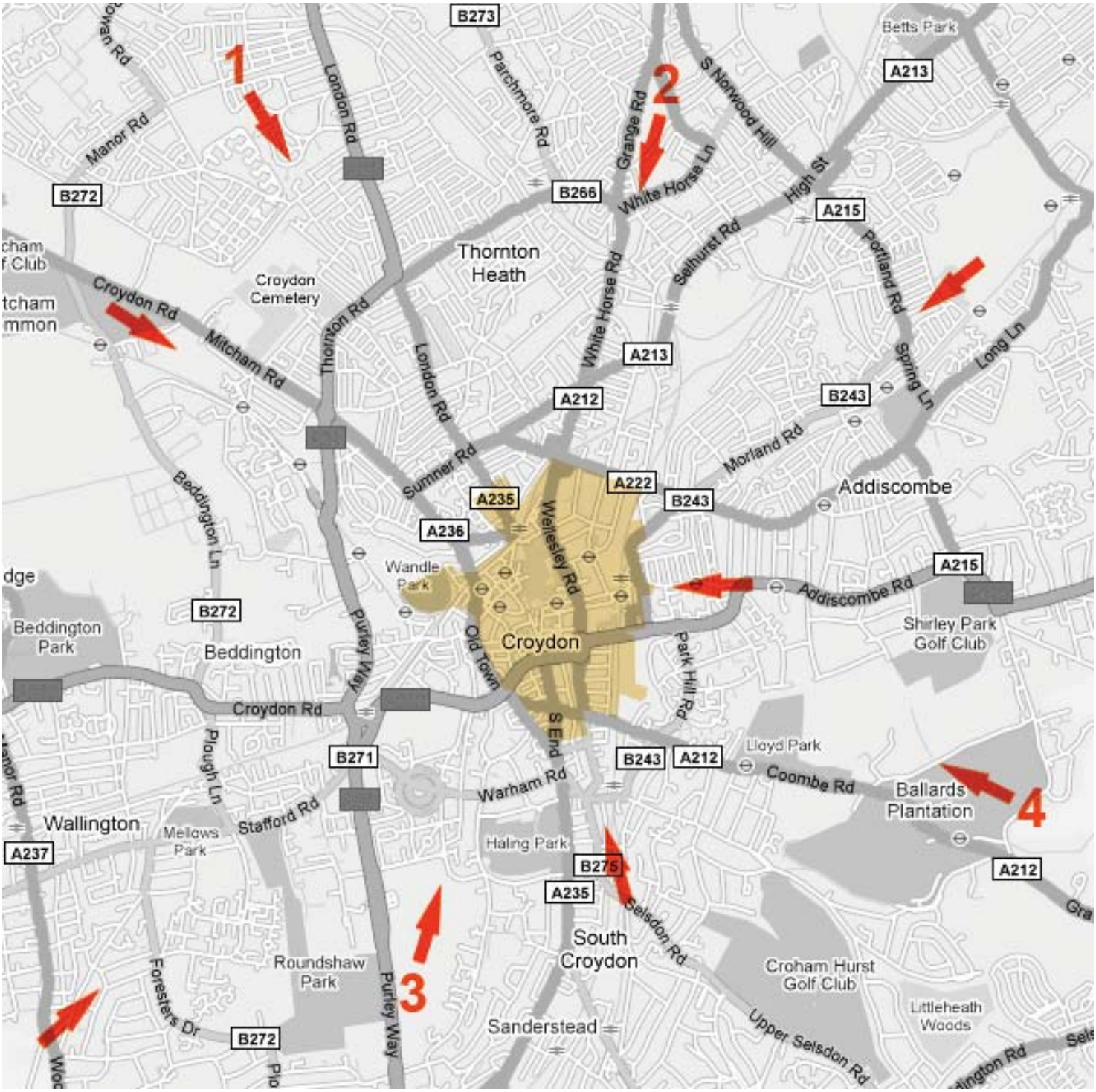
*as set out in the UDP (2006)



Locations of key viewpoints of the CMC:

CMC

Viewpoint



1. View of CMC form Pollards Hill

2. View of CMC form Ross Road

3. View of CMC form Purley Way playing fields

3. View of CMC from Addington Hills