

High Street & Queen Street

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



High Street

Conservation Area Appraisal

This document was prepared on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council based on an extensive survey dated 2007 by:

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1. STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The High Street Gravesend Conservation Area lies in the historic centre of the town of Gravesend in Kent, connecting with the River Thames. The setting, close to London and at the mouth of the Thames estuary, defined the importance of Gravesend for many centuries. The town was the first port coming up the river toward London and a natural breaking point for ships on the tide. Traditionally, ships would land here on entering the river or complete victualling or embarking passengers before leaving. The connection with the river is still one of the key characteristics of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area extends north and east from High Street to include the Town Pier and the abutting riverside areas, and recognises the important historic link between the commercial heart of Gravesend and the maritime activities along the Thames.

High Street was established by early medieval times due to its position next to the river landing stage (later developed into the pier). This street became the hub of the settlement for many centuries and its special character is defined by its long straight path rising from the riverside with tall, tightly packed historic buildings lining either side.

The life of the town flourished around the crossroads of Town Pier Square, East Street, West Street and High Street. This was the location of one of the early markets in the town as well as a chapel that predated the parish church close by. The river brought travellers from overseas, and innovations in transport methods also led to the beginning of a golden era in the 19th century when Gravesend became the most popular resort

used by day-trippers coming from London by steamboat.

However, the commercial life of High Street suffered greatly with the closure of the car ferry service from the Town Pier in 1969. This event, along with the discontinuation of many river related activities, led to the refocus of the centre of the town away from High Street and Town Pier Square. New stores and shopping centres were constructed around King Street and New Road and the economic decline that accompanied this transfer of status can still be felt today. The northern half of High Street is relatively quiet despite the retention and reinstatement of many traditional features in the buildings, shopfronts and streetscene in general. Also in the latter half of the 20th century a large amount of commercial and residential properties on the riverside were demolished and replaced with a new road system and St Andrew's Gardens. This broke up the urban setting of The Three Daws Public House and began the process of cutting the High Street off from the river.

Despite these difficult circumstances, and through a concerted Council-led regeneration programme in the 1990s and 2000s, the traditional appearance of the High Street has been strengthened, with individual specialist shops notable for their good quality shopfronts, signage and distinctive features. The surrounding roads, lanes and yards, including the "backsides" of High Street (now called Queen Street and Princes Street), have also retained an historic form and character.

In the Gravesend Town Centre Strategy of 1998, High Street Conservation Area and adjacent areas are identified as the 'Heritage Quarter' of the town. The quarter is currently the focus of a major regeneration scheme and High Street is undergoing a renaissance as a

hub for specialist shops. The regeneration of the Town Pier also marks the resurrection of the main focal point of the Conservation Area.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area

The High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area was designated on 16th January 1970 by Kent County Council. The Conservation Area's boundary contains the historic thoroughfare of High Street and a stretch of the riverside including part of West Street, the Town Pier, St Andrews Gardens and the Clarendon Royal Hotel. Also included within the boundary is the Parish Church of St George.

2.2 Purpose of the appraisal

This conservation area appraisal has been written by The Conservation Studio on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council. It was prepared in July 2007 and was followed by a process of community engagement, which informed the content of this document. This appraisal defines the special architectural and historic interest for which the High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area merits designation. It identifies the positive features that should be protected and highlights the negative factors that detract from its character and appearance. It will be used by the Borough Council in considering proposals for demolition or alteration of buildings, as well as for new developments. It will also help property owners and developers to take account of the importance of buildings, features, spaces and landscape within and adjacent to the Conservation Area.

This conservation area character appraisal, and those for seven other conservation areas in Gravesend, will lead to a Management Plan, setting out policies and actions to conserve and enhance their special

architectural and historic interest and to mitigate the effects of negative features. The appraisals and Management Plans are to be included as background papers in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) and, as such, will be a due consideration in the planning process. In due course the appraisals and management plans may also be adopted as separate Supplementary Planning Documents within the LDF.

Preparation of the appraisal involved an extensive survey of the conservation area undertaken in June 2007. The omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

2.3 Planning policy context

Conservation Areas are defined as '*areas of architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*' in the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* (The Act). Local Planning Authorities are required by the Act to identify the parts of their area that should be designated as conservation areas and to formulate and publish proposals to preserve or enhance them. Local authorities must submit proposals for the protection and enhancement of conservation areas for consideration at a public meeting within the relevant area. They must also have regard to any views expressed by people attending the meeting.

Broadly, the effects of designation are:

- Conservation Area Consent must be obtained from the local planning authority or Secretary of State prior to the substantial or total demolition of any building or structure within a conservation

- area, with some exceptions;
- The local planning authority must consider the desirability of *preserving or enhancing* the character or appearance of the conservation area when assessing applications for change in conservation areas;
- Permitted development rights are slightly different in conservation areas;
- Permission is required from the planning authority to fell or lop a tree over a certain size.

Further, more detailed information is provided in the Management Plan.

As well as receiving statutory protection, conservation areas are protected by regional, county and local planning policies. Relevant policies include:

- **Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9)** (published March 2001), Key Development Principle No.9; Policy Q2; Policy Q5; Policy Q7; Policy E1.
- **Regional Planning Guidance 9a: The Thames Gateway Planning Framework** (1995), Paras. 5.4.7 & 5.4.8: Built Heritage, Annex 1: Planning Framework Principles No.13.
- **Draft South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy)** (submitted to Government on 31st March 2006), Section D8 Management of the Built and Historic Environment: Policy BE1; Policy BE2; Policy BE7; Section E4 (Kent Thames Gateway).
- **The Kent and Medway Structure Plan** (adopted 6th July 2006), Policy QL1: Quality of Development and Design; Policy QL6: Conservation Areas; Policy QL7: Archaeological Sites; Policy QL8: Buildings of Architectural or Historic

Importance; Policy QL9: Historic Landscape Features; Policy QL10: Heritage Assets – Enabling Development.

- **Gravesham Local Plan First Review** (adopted November 1994), Policy TC0, TC1, TC2, TC3, TC4, TC5, TC6, TC7, TC8, TC9, TC10, TC11, TC12, Policy R3, Proposal PM13, Policy AP3.

Thames Gateway

In addition to the various conservation areas in the towns, the Northfleet and Gravesend conurbation is recognised as being in a Growth Area within the Kent Thames Gateway Sub-region by the Draft South East Plan of the South East Regional Assembly. The various policy documents outlined above have, since RPG9 (1994), recognised Gravesham's important place in the Thames Gateway (incorporating the former East Thames Corridor). RPG9a emphasizes the importance of Gravesham in achieving the Thames Gateway's overall vision (para. 6.8.1).

The Thames Gateway is an overarching term for the regeneration of large parts of East London and parts of Essex and Kent, including Northfleet and Gravesend. The Thames Gateway London Partnership estimates that the expected investment in the whole region will provide 150,000 jobs and 200,000 homes over the next 10 years. The large scale of this scheme will see a great deal of change across the area, including the introduction of new transport infrastructure including a Channel Tunnel Rail link (with a proposed connection to Gravesend) and major road building schemes such as the widening of the A2 south of the town.

The policies included in the local and regional guidance, as outlined above, seek to guide this period of change and the specified

policies all recognise the importance of retaining Gravesham's heritage. The Management Plan that accompanies this document will propose how Gravesham's special character can be preserved and enhanced while these large scale changes take place.

2.4 Community involvement

The survey of the Conservation Area has included a process of public consultation to identify the following:

- The special characteristics of High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area;
- The key negative features and issues;
- A range of possible actions that would mitigate or offset these detractors.

The consultation began with the notification of key stakeholders in Gravesend at the beginning of the appraisal process. It was followed by the distribution to every property in the conservation areas of an invitation to a public meeting held on 5th September 2007. Leaflets were also displayed in public places. The meeting included a description of the principal and desired outcomes of appraisals and management plans and led into a general discussion. The meeting was attended by various representatives of the Borough Council and local interest groups.

Following the meeting, the outcomes were discussed by Gravesham Borough Council and The Conservation Studio. Subsequently, a four week period of full public consultation was held after which revisions were made to arrive at this final agreed document.

3. LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 Location

Gravesend is the administrative capital of the Borough of Gravesham, which contains 25,000 acres of countryside and is generally rural in appearance, containing a number of attractive historic villages. The town lies in north-west Kent 40 kilometres to the east of central London. Canterbury is approximately 65 kilometres further along the Thames estuary coastline to the southeast and the major A2 and M2 trunk roads link the settlements. Due to the major transport infrastructure in the area, including the M25, M20 and the rail link to the Channel Tunnel, Gravesend is very well connected to other parts of the country and beyond.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit's Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001), commissioned by Kent County Council and English Heritage, notes that: *"The process of 19th and 20th century urbanisation is particularly marked in the northern areas of Kent"*. The Dartford and Gravesham Conurbation is characterised as *"a well defined urban conurbation with some limited marshland and horticulture along its edges"*.

The High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area lies at the centre of the historic town, an area that was identified as the 'Heritage Quarter' in the Gravesend Town Centre Strategy of 1998. The Conservation Area is to the north of the modern shopping area, which is focused around the St George's Shopping Centre in New Road. The Conservation Area extends further north to the River Thames, including the parish church, Town Pier, part of West Street and a stretch of the riverside.

3.2 Activities and uses

Gravesend is a large residential settlement with a substantial commercial centre. Industrial areas border the commercial centre, particularly in the west towards Northfleet. There are also other activities in the town relating to its riverside setting, including those linked to the headquarters of the Port of London Authority and the coastguard station.

The core of the High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area contains many commercial premises in a range of shops with living accommodation above. These include a number of catering establishments and public houses as well as other local businesses such as hairdressers, beauty salons and gift shops. Very few of the shops on High Street are part of national chains. High Street also contains public buildings such as the Old Town Hall, which connects with the Borough Market Hall, and St George's Parish Church.

The riverside area at the bottom of High Street contains some large residential blocks next to the historic buildings that cluster around the 19th century Town Pier. The former ferry terminal on the pier is now partly in use as a bar and restaurant. The Town Pier Square is a small paved open space that connects with a large area of open green space behind The Three Daws Public House. St Andrews Gardens run eastwards to a small group of dispersed historic buildings from different periods and with different uses including a former chapel (now an arts centre) and the Clarendon Royal Hotel (to be converted into residential units).

3.3 Topography

Gravesend lies on the relatively shallow slopes of the south bank of the River Thames,

close to where it widens into the estuary. The land rises gently from the riverside to give far reaching views from High Street across the broad river to the north bank of Essex.

To the south of High Street the landscape levels off, but further south, on the outskirts of the town, it rises again to Windmill Hill. Moving towards the edge of the town and beyond the hilly countryside of north Kent is covered in rich arable land and scattered with historic hamlets and villages.

The high density of tall three or four storey buildings within the narrow High Street and around the town in general inhibits further views. However, along the riverside the flat topography and opening up of the streetscape allows for extensive views along the river. These views are enhanced by the elevated promenade and the sparse siting of buildings around formal, public gardens. The gardens slope up fairly sharply towards the town from the riverside and steep steps run down to the beach around the Town Pier and St Andrew's Arts Centre.

The close proximity of the Conservation Area to the river and its situation close to sea level has resulted in the need for flood defences, most notably a large concrete wall, to be constructed. Gravesend has experienced flooding into the latter half of the 20th century: in 1960 the saloon bar of The Three Daws Public House became waterlogged.

The position of the settlement on a shallow hillside running into the river valley floor has encouraged the development of a series of straight roads, including High Street, running down towards the river with a network of shorter roads, alleyways and passages interconnecting with them.

The topography has resulted in a distinctive and interesting roofscape for the tall buildings of High Street that adds to the special character of the area. Also, the Church of St George achieves some prominence in the landscape, especially when approached from the west, due to its elevated position.

3.4 Geology and Biodiversity

Gravesend lies on the thick belt of chalk that is the most famous geological trademark of this part of Kent. Otherwise, the geology of Kent is varied and lies on a "crumpled dome" of sedimentary rock which also lies under Sussex and Surrey. The dome's peak has eroded exposing the rocks below, while the chalk along the edge has been more resilient to erosion and formed the North Downs in Kent and South Downs in Sussex. The area between the two is the Weald, notable for its heavy clays and sandstone outcrops.

Gravesend also lies close to areas of Thanet beds which contain clay and together with the London Clay found on the nearby Hoo Peninsula to the east produced the raw materials for brickmaking. Therefore, this area supplied the London stock bricks that were used for the intensive building programmes in London and Gravesend in the 19th and 20th centuries.

While chalk is also found locally it is too soft to be used for building large structures, although it supplied the raw materials for lime and, later, cement. Flints, found with chalk, are also evident in parts of Gravesend, and are sometimes used as a walling material. Kentish Ragstone, quarried from neighbouring areas, is also found in the architecture of the town.

There are no formal designations of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Conservation Area or, indeed, in the immediate vicinity of Gravesend, although

there is the large South Thames Estuary & Marshes SSSI, which extends to the area a short distance to the east of the town.

Farmland around Gravesend is largely permanent arable and pasture, with some hedgerows that support an abundance of wild plants and attendant wildlife.

Some invasive non-native plants including self seeding sycamores and, more worryingly, Japanese Knot Weed, are notable within the conservation area.

3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

The immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area are urban townscape to the east, west and south and these are also largely designated as separate conservation areas. The wide River Thames flows to the north, defining this boundary.

The following features form the immediate setting of the Conservation Area:

- To the south: commercial centre of the town along New Street & King Street with large national department stores bordering the Conservation Area and large shopping centre, i.e. St. Georges Centre, pedestrian link through St Georges Centre to Jury Street and St. Georges Church;
- To the west: Borough Market and large areas of car parking;
- Inner Ring Road (Crooked Lane) running through, isolating north-eastern part of the Conservation Area;
- To the east: unsightly modern industrial (Blockbuster) building and roundabout;
- To the north: The River Thames, Tilbury Fort and the Essex shore.
- High Street forms part of the designated

Heritage Quarter, which also includes adjacent areas, such as New Swan Yard that lie just outside the conservation area designation.

4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Archaeology

Evidence of prehistoric activity in and around Gravesend is limited to individual finds of items such as Neolithic axe heads and Iron Age coins, although there are indications from recent excavations at Gravesend Hospital that this site was close to an area of prehistoric occupation.

A number of excavations, including those at Gravesend Hospital, have revealed evidence of Roman and Saxon occupation in the area. It is likely that Gravesend has sustained habitation since the early part of the Roman occupation of Britain. In 1979 a large Roman occupation site, possibly military, was uncovered to the south and west of the Parish Church along with a stretch of Roman road passing through the *High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area*.

The most important and extensive excavation in recent years, at nearby Springhead on the path of the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link, has uncovered the Roman town of *Vagniacae*, an Iron Age settlement that the Romans occupied in 43 AD. The excavation has yielded 150,000 artefacts and shows Gravesend's importance as a centre from these early times.

Hoardings of Saxon coins and early Saxon pottery have also been found at various locations around the town. By the late Saxon period a church had been established to the north of the crossroads of Pelham Road and Old Road, and excavations in the area have revealed burials and masonry from early medieval times.

Archaeology from later periods includes the Tudor Blockhouse on Royal Pier Road. This

was a vital component of the early defences of this part of the river, which were established to protect London from attack. Parts of the remaining walls of the Blockhouse are open to public view.

4.2 Historical development

The name "Gravesend" is derived from Gravesham, itself meaning "*graaf-ham*", the home of the reeve or bailiff of the Lord of the Manor. The High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area forms part of the historic core of Gravesend, whose historical development has been covered in detail in a variety of publications, details of which are included in the Bibliography at the end of this document. A summary of the development of the town is included in Appendix 2.

The principal features of the historical development of the *High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area* are as follows:

ROMAN (43 AD to 410):

- 56 AD - Roman occupation commenced soon after invasion of Britain. Roman town constructed at Springwell;
- A camp and road were situated around current location of the parish church.
- 300AD - Temples at Springhead rebuilt.

ANGLO-SAXON AND NORMAN (450 – 1200):

- 798AD - Archbishop of Canterbury acquired a large landholding in Northfleet
- Saxon settlement grew around the Old Dover Road where the Saxon Parish Church of St Mary was built (a mile to the south of the location of High Street).
- Small community established next to Thames centred around a landing place

("hithe") close to the location of the Town Pier.

- 1086 - reference to *Gravesham* in The Domesday Book: an agricultural estate in the ownership of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (the brother of William I).

MEDIEVAL (1200 – 1485):

- 1258 - Richard de Gravesende made Bishop of Lincoln. The change of name from Gravesham was established for the town.
- 1286 - Causeway or bridge (site of Town Pier) used by passengers from London destroyed by flooding.
- 1292 - Causeway repaired on order of Justices of Assizes.
- 1300 - Gravesend had grown into a small market town based on its trade on the river and abundant supplies from neighbouring agricultural land.
- 1350 - Course of High Street established. It stood at the centre of a network of streets, a direct route from the river to the old Parish Church.
- 1356 - First market charter. Market sited on the corner of High Street and West Street next to the landing stage.
- A chapel was built behind High Street on the present day site of the Parish Church of St George.
- 1368 - Edward III built a manor house, probably to the north of the current parish church.
- 1380 - French and Spanish warships attacked Gravesend. Most of the town was destroyed. In recompense Richard II granted the people of Gravesend sole rights to ferry passengers to London giving rise to Gravesend's growth as a maritime centre and trading port.
- Gravesend Watermen operated open barges, the Long Ferry, and transported

passengers to and from the Pool of London. Larger, ocean-going vessels continued out along the estuary to the international destinations beyond.

- 1418 - West Street first mentioned.
- Many inns, stables and shops were established in the town, but regularly destroyed by fires.
- 1445 - The Christopher Inn established on the site of the Pier Hotel in Town Pier Square.
- 1456 - High Street was known as King's Way.
- Gravesend was a sizeable town centred on High Street, with a variety of wharves and quays established around the landing stage.

TUDOR AND JACOBAN (1485 – 1714):

- 1510 - St George's Chapel consecrated by Bishop of Rochester.
- 1528 - Flemish defend fishing fleets off Gravesend from French warships.
- 1539/ 40 – Blockhouses erected at Gravesend, Tilbury, Milton and Higham to defend London from attack.
- Inns such as the Christopher were used by travellers and explorers such as Sebastian Cabot.
- 1544 - St George's Chapel became the Parish church.
- 1562 - Charter of Incorporation united the two parishes of Milton and Gravesend - the parish boundary runs down the centre of High Street.
- 1565 - The Three Daws Inn was established (under the name the Three Cornish Choughs).
- 1573 - First Town Hall built. Common Market held once a week behind the Town Hall.
- 1588 - Defences against invasion at Gravesend strengthened.

- Many instances of Gravesend tilt-boats sinking with loss of life in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.
- 1614 - James I dined with King of Denmark in the Ship Inn in High Street.
- 1617 - Princess Pocahontas died on return voyage to Virginia and was buried in the crypt of St George's Church.
- 1633 - County Assizes held at Gravesend.
- 1650 - All landing stages except for the common bridge (Town Pier) removed.
- 1665 - Residence of Duke of York (later James II) built, to be incorporated into Clarendon Royal Hotel.
- 1711 - Turnpike Act led to stagecoach route along the top of High Street.
- 1798 - Town illuminated twice: to celebrate Nelson's victory at Aboukir Bay and over the Dutch.
- 1799 - The Playhouse Theatre operated in Chapel Lane (between West Street and St George's Church).
- As the 19th century progressed, Gravesend became a leisure resort.
- Large fishing community grew around Bawley Bay.
- 1815 - First regular service of pleasure steamers from London to Gravesend.
- 1821 - Over 27,000 recorded visitors in Gravesend.
- 1834 - Town Pier opened.

VICTORIAN (1837-1901):

GEORGIAN & REGENCY (1714 – 1837):

- 1714 - George I arrived in Gravesend from Germany.
- 1717 - Congregational Chapel built in Princes Street.
- 1727 - Fire destroyed most of High Street, surrounding streets and the 15th century parish church. The town was rebuilt and a new church was erected.
- 1749 - Other fires blighted the town and citizens started a subscription for buying fire engines.
- 1750s/1760s - Many improvements made by the Corporation – High Street was first paved, The Town Quay rebuilt and a new stone bridge replaced the old wooden causeway. Also, the Town Hall was replaced and the parish church extended.
- 1755 - High Street first paved.
- 1773 - The Paving Act states that High Street, West Street and East Street must be "paved, lighted and cleansed."
- 1779 - Fortifications rebuilt in Gravesend. Construction of New Tavern Fort.
- 797 - Gravesend population was 4,000. Princes Street Chapel enlarged.
- 1837 - Clifton baths rebuilt in grand style. Clifton Parade was a pleasant stretch of promenade.
- 1840s Rosherville Gardens opened. More piers and promenade established along the riverfront.
- Commerce boomed: banks and companies founded. Commercial area spread to include King Street, New Road, Queen Street and Windmill Street. Also, many chapels were built.
- 1845 - Gravesend & Rochester railway opened. Clarendon Royal Hotel opened. Another fire destroyed parts of High Street.
- 846 - Another fire. Construction of Jury Street.
- 1850 - Fire destroyed a bank: Bank Street created in 1852.
- 1851 - Population of Gravesend and Milton had risen to 16,633.
- 1855 - Tilbury ferry converted to steam power.
- 1856 - Metropolitan Board of Works scheme to discharge London sewage onto the Thames at Crossness led to end of

Gravesend's status as a resort.

- 1857 - Another fire at the northern end led to the widening of East Street. Also, 20,000 visitors went to Rosherville Pleasure Gardens in August Bank Holiday week.
- 1860s - General Gordon's residency in Gravesend. New Tavern Fort rebuilt.
- 1886 - West Street Station opened.
- 1893 - Fire in West Street destroyed the town's flour mills. Royal Terrace Pier was rebuilt and reopened.
- 1890s - Improved railway network took day trippers to other resorts such as Margate and Ramsgate. Gravesend became more industrial. The marine industries, such as fishing and shrimping, survived.
- 1886 - Opening of the Tilbury docks. Workers travelled on ferry from Town Pier.

20th / 21st CENTURY:

- The industrialisation of the north shore of the Thames continued into the 20th century.
- 1914 - Parishes of Gravesend and Milton merged to form Borough of Gravesend.
- 1916-39 - Station Pier used
- 1920s - Slum clearance between West Street and St George's Church
- 1950s - A large power station constructed at Tilbury. Its giant structure and smoking towers has dominated the view out of Gravesend ever since.
- Gravesend continued to grow as a small market town with areas of light industry. Much of the industry was occupied with producing building materials for houses.
- 1969 - The Town Pier closed. Car ferry discontinued and passenger service moved to West Street Pier. The river lost its relevance to life in the town. The commercial centre shifted from High

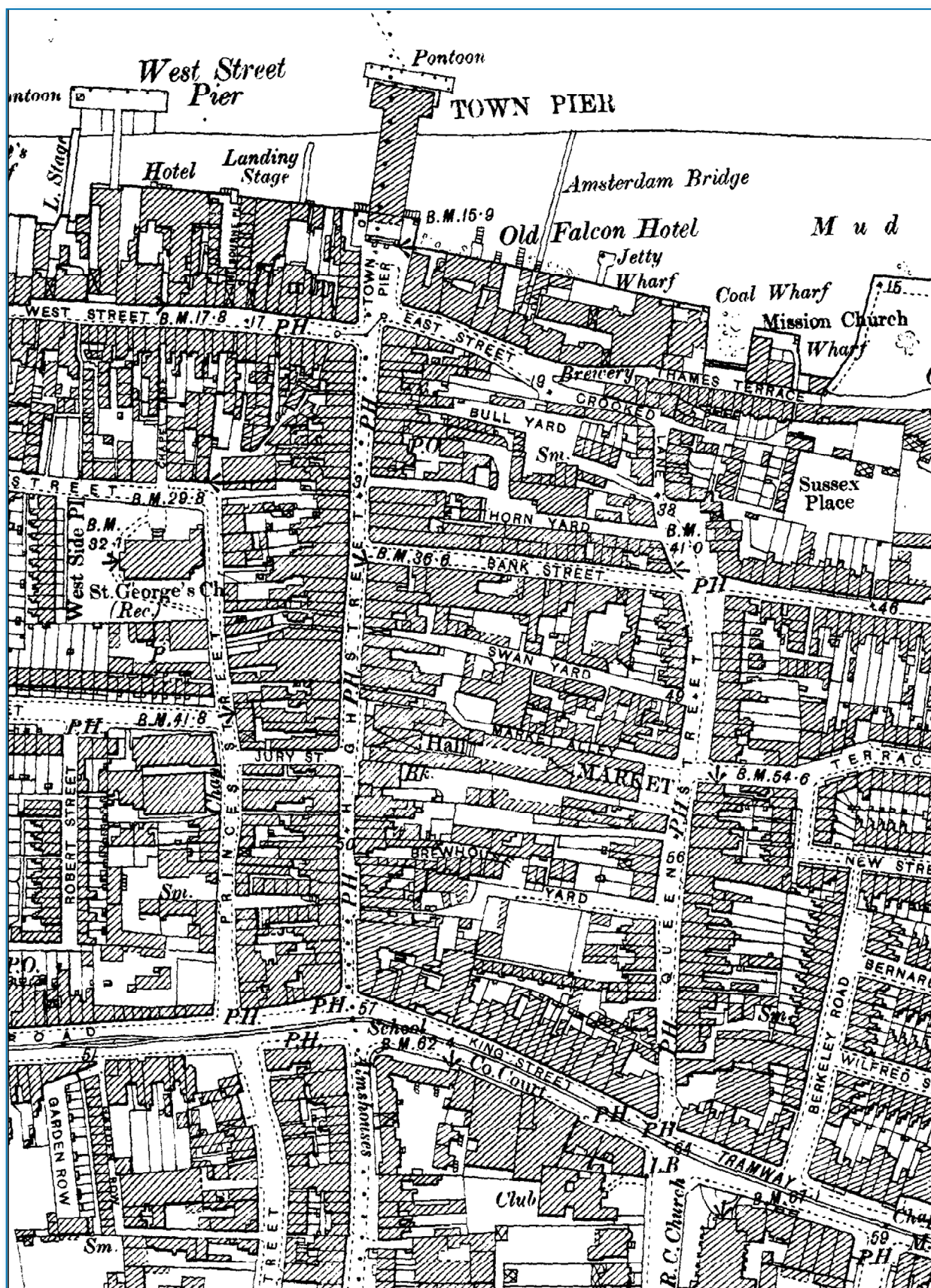
Street to New Road and King Street.

Large shopping malls built in New Road.

- Large scale demolition of buildings to the east of Town Pier Square, between the Three Daws PH and St. Andrews Arts Centre/Mission House and Clarendon Hotel, in order to create St. Andrews Gardens.
- 1958 - Creation of Inner Ring Road removed East Street, the counterpart to West Street, and Nos. 1 & 2 and 81-83 High Street. 81-83 High Street remained an unsightly gap site until they were rebuilt in the 1990s.
- 1970s/80s - Declining economic viability of shops at northern end followed by physical decline. Northern end of High Street became a run-down area.
- 1984 - ongoing: High Street became the focus of public funded environmental improvements/regeneration schemes. Many buildings at the northern end rebuilt or restored and brought back into use. The regeneration of the area also includes the restoration of the buildings surrounding Town Pier Square, including the Town Pier.



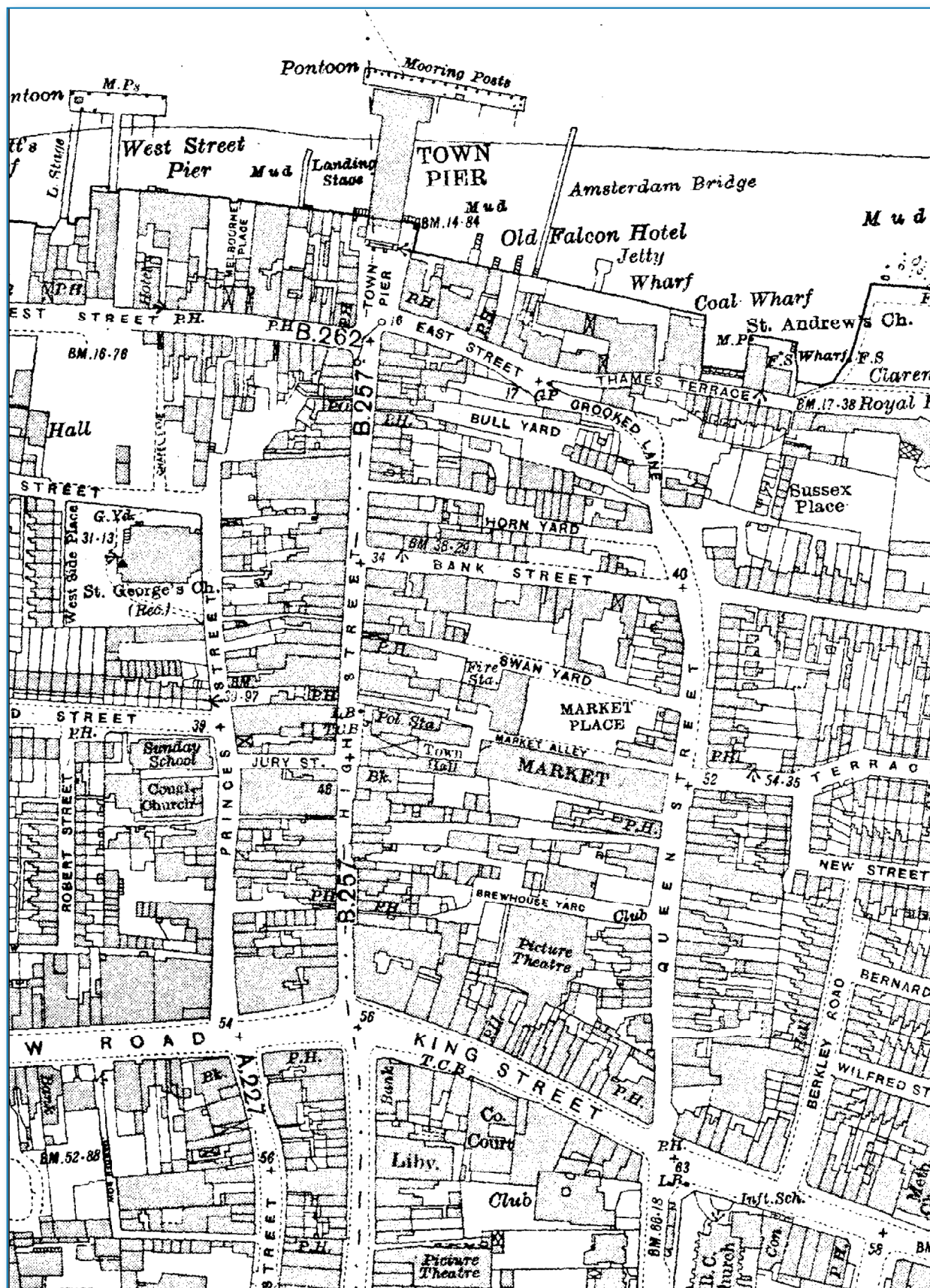
1843 - 1893



1891 - 1912



1904 - 1939



1919 - 1943

5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Layout and spaces

High Street was established by the early medieval period and became the focus of the settlement with regular markets which took advantage of the riverside location. The High Street provided the direct route from the landing stage southwards into the village and beyond towards the ancient route of Watling Street. This explains the strong north-south orientation of High Street and the roads to either side of it. Princes Street and Queen Street were formerly called the “Backsides” to High Street intersecting with New Road and King Street which are part of an old stagecoach route.

The layout of other roads in the Conservation Area has also been influenced by the town’s relationship to the River Thames. A series of roads, starting with West Street and Crooked Lane (part of the latter was formerly known as East Street) run along the same orientation as the course of the river. These east-west routes radiate out to the Old Road, which runs through the residential areas on the outskirts of the town.

Other important east-west routes are the narrow streets and alleys that connect with the High Street. Many of these, such as Church Lane, have existed for many centuries. Others, such as Jury Street and Bank Street, were created after one of the many fires in the 19th century destroyed the buildings that were in their place in High Street.

While these historic routes have remained, they have seen considerable development which has resulted in a tightly packed building line, except around the parish church. By the river, the once heavily developed area behind

East Street and Crooked Lane, some of which was linked with the fishing community of Bawley Bay, was demolished in the 20th century in order to form the Inner Ring Road and create the recreational space of St. Andrew’s Gardens. The earlier street pattern and urban character in this area has largely been obliterated except for a few landmark buildings along Royal Pier Road. The latter is now a dead-end street to the west.

The result of the modern inner ring road scheme is that the High Street has become separated from the area by the river, weakening the historic links between the two. The new road layout and the demolition of neighbouring buildings has resulted in The Three Daws Public House marking the limits of commercial streetscape in this direction. The ring road also creates a separation between the more residential and commercial parts of the town, which is most noticeable in the west of the Conservation Area. Here, the church is visually removed from the riverside commercial quarter and the hospital by large areas of tarmac, the wide ring road, and a large roundabout.

In the commercial centre around High Street some of the residential streets have been replaced with modern shopping centres, such as the St George’s Centre. This has meant that more of the historic framework of the town has been lost.

Overall, the town is predominantly laid out in a high density grid with little public open space, except St Andrew’s Gardens and Gordon Pleasure Grounds, which lie next to the river. The location of this open space at the valley floor level means that it has a minimal visual impact within the townscape. Other historic areas of open space exist on Windmill Hill to the south, traditionally a Gravesend

visitor attraction. Otherwise, the 19th century Rosherville Pleasure Gardens, an extensive open resource on the boundary with Northfleet to the west, was given over to industrial use at the beginning of the 20th century.

5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

In the High Street almost all of the buildings stand on the back edge of the pavement. The only exception to this is the Old Town Hall, whose classical frontage is set behind large columns, creating a small forecourt. Otherwise, the narrowness of the road is accentuated by the height of the buildings and the crowding effect of irregular shopfronts on the ground floor.

The road between the rows of buildings is not cluttered with any significant street furniture. The central roadway (generally not open to motor traffic) is on the same level as the pavements although the division between the two areas is still marked by differing road treatments. This division gives the impression of the traditional urban commercial street arrangement and visually creates two parallel lines that accentuate the straight path of the road and the slope as it heads down towards the Town Pier. It also complements the view out across the Thames.

The buildings and spaces have a slightly different relationship in Town Pier Square. The tight built form is maintained on three of the corners, although the continuity of the north east corner is weakened by the gap left by the demolished nos. 4 and 5 Town Pier Square. The fourth corner contains the large detached building of The Three Daws Public House. As a result of the demolition of the waterside inns and industrial buildings along East Street, this historic building now marks a change in character within the Conservation Area as

the main shopping street gives way to the riverfront. The building is set further back from the road and surrounded by open space, as is the pier next to it, which is surrounded by the waters of the River Thames. Its isolated position is not historic, and in the past it was the busy centre of activity in a crowded urban space rather than its current relaxed open setting to the east.

The presence of fewer structures in more generous spaces is continued into St Andrew's Gardens. The landmark buildings beyond the gardens face out across the Thames and appear in an informal arrangement as a result of the many buildings that have been demolished around them. St Andrew's Arts Centre and The Mission House are the only surviving buildings set on the river's edge. They have no private gardens but are adjacent to the public gardens and Royal Pier Road. The Clarendon Royal Hotel dominates the streetscene with a connected row of mews houses that line the south side of the road. A large open space (formerly the hotel garden) separates them from the river and mature trees add to the character of the area. The remains of another structure, Gravesend Blockhouse, now form a wide gap in the streetscene.

In the other direction, along West Street, the continuous building line of High Street is continued, also interspersed with small alleys and openings. The buildings are also tall, even taller than those in High Street, although their effect is somewhat mitigated by the increased width of the road and the existence of a few tall mature trees on the pavement. The additional space in West Street opens out even further just beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area with a large roundabout providing a significant gap in the streetscape and views across to Gravesend Hospital.

There is further open space behind the tall buildings, next to the river, in Elizabeth Gardens.

The additional space is also carried through into the modest, but attractive Gardens of Rest that surround the Parish Church of St George. The church towers over both Pocahontas Gardens and the low profile modern commercial premises that have been inserted further down the hill next to West Street.

5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

The principal landmarks in the *High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area* are:

- St George's Parish Church;
- The Town Pier;
- The Three Daws Public House;
- The Old Town Hall;
- Clarendon Royal Hotel;
- St Andrew's Arts Centre.

St George's Parish Church's tall spire can be seen from many locations within and outside of the Conservation Area, although it is not visible from High Street itself due to the scale of the buildings and their tight positioning along the road. However, the squat Town Pier provides a focal point at the bottom of High Street as it stands against the open space of the River Thames with views across the water to Essex. The pier is also a considerable landmark when approached from St Andrew's Gardens or the river itself. Other focal points include the junction of High Street and Town Pier Square, including the square itself, and St Andrew's Gardens. The weatherboarded Three Daws Public House dominates the corner of Crooked Lane and Town Pier Square.

The principal landmarks further along the riverside are the former chapel of St Andrew that is built of ragstone and stands on the edge of the riverbank. Beyond it, the Clarendon Royal Hotel is a large historic building that has lost some of its splendour but still retains a visual dominance over the area.

The Town Hall on High Street is a significant building, although because of its position back from the building line of neighbouring structures, it is not immediately visible within the streetscape. This effect is countered by its classical details including large stone columns along the frontage, which help the building impose itself as a local landmark. Also, the variance in the building line helps single the Town Hall as being a building of note and separation from the neighbouring properties. Until the 1990s it served as the local magistrate's court and police station.

Gravesend is characterised by its riverside location and there are extensive views across and along the Thames. The level gradient along the riverside means that there are extended views to the east and west but views from the River Thames and from the Essex shore toward the town are equally important. The spire of St George's, for example, is best appreciated from the water and, as historical illustrations of Gravesend show, has determined the townscape for centuries. The rise of the land towards Windmill Hill also means that there are long views into and along streets such as High Street, which head inland.

Within the Conservation Area, there are extensive views from both High Street and the riverside out over the pier and river. The view of the pier is particularly special because it is framed by the tall buildings that line High Street, which is especially visually pleasing

when considered in conjunction with the slight kink in the straight road, the fall of the road down toward the river level and the river traffic that also passes through the scene. Short, deflected views exist along the alleys and yards. Other important views are those across the gardens to St George's Church and the backs of the densely packed buildings in High Street, both from Princes Street.

The principal positive views are:

- Along High Street in both directions, particularly towards the Town Pier and river;
- The Town Hall from the mouth of Jury Street;
- From St Andrews Gardens:
- St George's Church spire;
- Town Pier;
- The river and Tilbury;
- From Crooked Lane into St Andrew's Gardens;
- From Elizabeth Gardens: the river and Tilbury;
- North along Princes Street;
- St George's Church from:
- West Street;
- Princess Pocahontas Gardens;
- Grass area next to Towncentric
- The River Thames;
- Along terrace into Bank Street;
- From Royal Pier Road to:
- River and Tilbury;
- The Mission House;
- From the rear of the Three Daws Public House to Town Pier,
- From the River Thames and Essex shore to the Town Pier, St. George's Spire and into the Conservation Area in general.

5.4 Trees, boundaries and planting

The absence of trees in High Street is in marked contrast to the mature groups of trees in the St Andrew's Gardens and St George's Church areas on either side of it. This reinforces the difference between the character areas: a tightly packed, treeless commercial core bordered by green spaces in the west and in the north-east.

Very few buildings have individual gardens, and therefore there are few boundary treatments. The only one of note is no.29 Royal Pier Road which has a substantial front garden with shrubbery and a low stone wall that leaves clear views up the stone steps to the four storey house.

The garden space is instead reserved for public areas: St Andrew's Gardens, Elizabeth Gardens and Princess Pocahontas Gardens. These are well maintained with modest amounts of bedding and trees. The largest and most densely packed group of trees is next to the parish church lining the edge of Princes Street.

6. STREETSCAPE

6.1 Public realm

Pavements

The public realm in the High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area reflects its traditional urban setting. An enhancement project across the town has seen large areas of paving replaced and High Street, which is now pedestrianised, has particularly good quality traditional materials.

While the traditional relationship of raised pavement to road surface has not been maintained in terms of levels, this relationship has still been marked by the wide range of the materials used. Riven yorkstone flags are used for the pavement with wide (300mm) smooth granite kerbs lining the “road” edge. Three rows of square roughly hewn granite setts are laid next to the kerbs and slightly depressed to form shallow gutters on either side of the central stretch of road.

The former road surface in the High Street is covered in modern concrete blocks in muted tones which have distressed edges to soften their visual impact. The effect of this arrangement across the width of the area between the two lines of buildings is notable. Wide lanes run on each side of the “road” down towards the river, the three sections visually breaking up the mass of solid surface so that it does not compete with the built form all around it. This arrangement also serves to lead the eye along the rows of buildings and down the vista towards the river, or up towards the rest of the commercial centre of Gravesend.

Around Town Pier Square and West Street the paving changes, with modern concrete

paviours being introduced along with pink textured paving around the pedestrian crossing. After the crossing, along West Street and Crooked Lane, the level of the roadway is lower than the pavements either side (in the traditional manner) and this stretch is part of Gravesend’s internal ring road. Wide granite kerbs continue along West Street although they are replaced with narrow concrete kerbs on Crooked Lane.

St Andrew’s Gardens and the riverside walk feature a mixture of paving materials, all modern and mostly poured concrete and concrete paviours. The car park at the end of Royal Pier Road is tarmac, like the road itself.

Royal Pier Road features a mixture of paving treatments, including concrete slabs, red brick setts and poured concrete. It also has narrow (200mm) riven granite kerbing. Large metal studs indicate the former line of the Tudor Blockhouse in the roadway outside the Clarendon Royal Hotel.

Street furniture, signage and other features

Street signs are modern although there are a number of traditional style signs marking historic landmarks in the area such as The Mission House and Bawley Bay next to the former chapel. Modern tourist signs stand on freestanding posts at The Blockhouse and by the river to describe historical events and key points along the river. Alleys in the Heritage Quarter that are named often have traditional style metal signs with black on white lettering.

Other features include low level black painted litterbins. The bins in Princess Pocahontas Gardens carry emblems of the St George Cross.

Street lighting

Gravesend has utilised street lighting in one form or another since the 19th century. This has usually been achieved through the installation of lighting columns and at other times via wall mounted lamps. High Street has modern wall mounted Victorian style lamps fixed intermittently along the building facades. These large lamps have elaborate brackets and are fixed above the height of the ground floor shopfronts. However, an original Victorian lighting column has survived hidden away in the Three Tuns Yard alleyway next to the Market Tavern. Between the bottom of High Street and Jury Lane, on the west side of the street, there are modern up-lighters, which illuminate the full extent of the facades in the evenings.

Additional lighting in High Street and Town Pier Square includes interactive lighting that has been incorporated into the paving scheme. This was carried out during the transformation of the area into the “Heritage Quarter”, as part of an early 21st century Borough Council improvement scheme.

In the riverside area there are a mixture of different lighting columns, including short traditional cast iron examples with lantern style lamps close to the riverside walk, and tall “hockey stick” units further back in the gardens and along Crooked Lane.

Lighting in Pocahontas Gardens currently consists of unusual 1970s cuboid frosted glass lamps set on tubular columns positioned within the lawns.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths

A network of footpaths supplements the main routes through the town and many radiate

from High Street in the form of narrow, dark alleys or wider yards.

There are other more recreational footpaths in St Andrew’s Gardens and the riverside walk connects with Elizabeth Gardens to the west. The pathway through Pocahontas Gardens from West Street provides a pleasant route past former warehouses to the modern shopping centre beyond.

All of these footpaths have modern concrete surfacing.

Traffic and parking

High Street is gratifyingly free of traffic due to the restrictions in place. The feeling that this is a shopping area secure from cars and other traffic is reinforced by the elaborate iron Heritage Quarter gates at the northern end of the street and on Bank Street. Heavy cast iron bollards painted black and featuring Kent and Gravesham crests embossed on them block other entrances. The absence of cars, both parked and in motion, enhances the traditional character of High Street.

West Street and Crooked Lane, on the other hand, form part of the current scheme to circulate traffic around the town. However, the traffic is not usually heavy, except at peak times, and is slowed by the large speed table next to Town Pier Square. Restrictions limit the parking on this route too and the large surface car park which stands just outside the boundary of the Conservation Area.

St Andrew’s Gardens is traffic free and Royal Pier Road, essentially a cul-de-sac, is quiet with parking only allowed in a designated area next to the river.

The “Heritage Quarter”

The redevelopment of High Street has been particularly focused on integrating the once rundown sections with the rest of the town centre while restoring traditional appearance. This has been achieved through the wholesale improvement of the public realm as well as the introduction of new, but traditional style shopfronts, and high quality refurbishment of the exteriors of buildings.

The reinstatement of a new, cohesive and traditional style of paving and street furniture has played an important part in this scheme. While the gates and gate piers at either end of High Street, Town Pier Square and at the end of Bank Street have a functional role, their elaborate styling, including Victorian-style lanterns is decorative and make a statement that this is an area of historic quality that is set apart from the standard modern town centre. Equally, the lighting effects utilised in High Street are not merely functional but show off the grandeur of the building facades, create a welcoming atmosphere in the evening time and draw attention to the good quality public realm.

7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Building types

The historic buildings in the Conservation Area are typical of a town that has developed in a series of stages and with a variety of uses: they have a range of architectural styles, building form, details and materials. Many of the buildings to be found in the Conservation Area today are historic, and most stand on the sites of much earlier buildings that have been periodically destroyed by fire, flood or other causes.

Despite this history of destruction, Gravesend, and High Street in particular, has retained a long history of buildings lining these historic routes. Since the early medieval period these buildings have been a mix of commercial and residential buildings and today they form tightly packed rows of tall buildings, mostly with shopfronts to the ground floor.

Other types of buildings in the Conservation Area include the fine 18th century Parish Church of St George, the Old Town Hall and the large Clarendon Royal Hotel. These important buildings are all reminders that this area was once the religious, administrative and commercial centre of the town. Buildings such as St Andrew's Arts Centre on the riverside, which was originally built as a mission chapel for seamen, and the adjoining Mission House point to the town's long connection to seafaring and ferrying.

The Town Pier is a unique style of building in Gravesend in terms of both function and style. It is also the world's oldest surviving cast iron pier and serves as a centre for social gatherings as well as being an important piece of architecture in its own right.

Many of the historic public houses in Gravesend have been demolished or converted to other uses. However, there are six remaining public houses in the Conservation Area, the most visually dominant being the Three Daws in Town Pier Square.

7.2 Building form

The historic buildings of High Street are generally grouped in long rows on either side of the road with alleys punctuating them at ground floor level. The row is occasionally broken by lanes, such as Jury Street (in the west) and Bank Street (in the east). Both of these roads were inserted in the 19th century after fires destroyed the buildings on these sites. Prior to this, High Street was only intersected by footpaths, alleys and yards. Towards the southern end of High Street, the buildings are more obviously late 20th century in date, but still retain this densely packed appearance.

The building line is maintained almost throughout, and also creates an interesting continual roofscape. This arrangement is followed in West Street, although in Royal Pier Road the buildings have been left detached or arranged in pairs, with spacious gardens established between them since the widespread demolition of buildings there in the 1950s and 1960s. Overall this results in two areas of distinctive built form: the commercial core around High Street, including Princess Street, Bank Street, West Street and Town Pier Square, and the Riverside.

7.3 Listed buildings

There are 28 listed buildings or structures in the *High Street, Gravesend Conservation*

Area, all of them listed grade II, except for the Town Hall, Town Pier and Nos. 79 and 80 High Street which are all listed grade II*.

They have a variety of uses including shops with residential accommodation above, houses, public houses, a pier, the parish church and a former chapel, an hotel, warehouses and the Old Town Hall. The High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area includes the highest concentration of listed buildings in Gravesend town centre.

There is also a Scheduled Monument, Gravesend Blockhouse, on Royal Pier Road. This important Tudor fortification protected the town for many centuries although only the partially uncovered foundations of part of the structure now remain.

The listed buildings in the Conservation Area are grouped in various locations that roughly correlate to the Character Areas that will be identified in the next chapter. They include a cluster around the Clarendon Royal Hotel, around Town Pier Square, along West Street and along High Street.

7.4 Locally listed buildings

Government advice is that the preparation of a List of Locally Significant Buildings is a useful planning tool. "Locally Listed" buildings are valued for their contribution to the local scene, or for their local historic associations, but are not considered to be of national importance, so they are usually not eligible for statutory listing. Policies to control them can be included in the Local Development Framework.

Gravesham Council does not currently maintain a formal list of locally significant buildings (usually called the 'Local List')

either in Gravesend or elsewhere, although all buildings that were identified in the 1974 Listed Buildings Survey for their architectural or historic interest, but were not awarded a listing status, have been treated as 'Buildings of Local Interest' ever since when considering planning applications. Following the importance the Government places in its Heritage White Paper on the compilation of Lists of Buildings of Local Interest, Gravesham Borough Council's list is due to be reviewed soon.

The Management Proposals for the Gravesend conservation areas contain a list of buildings which might be considered for inclusion in a Local List, once the Council have approved the criteria to be used for selection. All of them are considered to be key unlisted buildings.

7.5 Key unlisted buildings

A number of unlisted buildings have been identified as being buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as having 'townscape merit' will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded. Key unlisted buildings include:

- Nos. 15-19, 21-28, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46-54, 62-69, 74-76 High Street;
- Nos. 88, 89-95 West Street;
- Nos. 22, 24, 30 & 40 Princes Street;
- No.1 New Road.

Government guidance in PPG15 '*Planning and the historic environment*' advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area (paragraph 4.27). The guidance note states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings.

7.6 Building Materials

The historic buildings of Gravesend, including those outside the conservation areas, have been built using mainly local materials, particularly red and yellow stock brick. Some key buildings, however, have used other materials such as Kentish ragstone and even sandstone ashlar (Town Hall). The most common roofing material is Welsh slate although many buildings have had their roofs unsympathetically replaced with concrete tiles.

Gravesend was at the centre of some innovation in construction techniques in the 19th century, including the claimed invention of Portland cement. Many cement works and chalk pits were established in the area and therefore there was no shortage of supplies at this time, notable buildings in this Conservation Area to feature an external render coat include The New Falcon Public House and the Royal Clarendon Hotel. The material is also used for the quoins found on some of the High Street buildings. Many of the early 18th century buildings along High Street and elsewhere in the town received replacement brick frontages in the 19th century. Many of these still remain and contain some surviving timber frame structure.

Another significant building material is the

timber weatherboarding (with boards usually fixed horizontally) still found on some of the buildings in the Conservation Area. Like shingling, weatherboarding has been a characteristic of Kent for many centuries and is associated with more modest houses, being more affordable than tile-hanging or facing with brick. The use of boarding also underlines Gravesend's maritime history and hints at an early period in the town's history when it was economically linked with the river and riverine industries such as fishing. The boarded frontages of buildings are painted white according to the traditional Kentish practice, while the side and the rear elevation are black stained.

7.7 Local details

Some of the details on buildings in the Conservation Area are particularly distinctive. These include:

- Weatherboarding;
- Iron balconies;
- Red and yellow brick;
- Medieval alleyways with flagstone paving;
- Tuck pointing;
- Quoins
- Round corners on corner buildings;
- Sash Windows;
- Variety of good quality shopfronts of traditional design, some of them are historic, others are reinstatements;
- Emblematic street furniture: litter bins with St George cross around the church; bollards with local crests.

8. CHARACTER AREAS

8.1 Summary of Character Areas

Within the present boundaries the High Street Conservation Area can be divided into four Character Areas according to landscape, topography, historical development, layout, building type, and uses. Positive features that contribute to the character of each area, or negative features that detract from it, are summarised at end of each section. The four character areas are:

Character Area 1: High Street

Character Area 2: Town Pier & West Street

Character Area 3: St George's Church

Character Area 4: Riverside

8.2 Character Area 1: High Street

This is the main historic route between the former landing stage (now the Town Pier) on the River Thames and the Saxon centre of Gravesend a mile to the south. This road became the focal point of the settlement from the early medieval era due to its proximity to the river. This key location became the site of a new market on the corner of West Street, and later behind the Town Hall. The parish church also stands close by.

The commercial centre has spread southwards from the northern end of High Street, most notably in the 19th and 20th centuries, with the buildings being regularly lost to fire and rebuilt. The once sporadic grouping of buildings along the narrow streets developed to produce the continuous frontages there today.

The principal features of the High Street area are its commercial uses and densely urban character. The overall character is historic,

and is complemented by the use of traditional materials and patterns used for the road surface. Also important is the relationship of buildings to spaces, with continuous rows of tall buildings divided by narrow alleys and lanes. This arrangement has survived the insertion of some modern buildings and been invigorated by innovations such as pavement lighting.

The traditional appearance of the northern part of the High Street belies its history. Many of the buildings were rebuilt towards the end of the 20th century, albeit in a traditional style, and the last 20 years has seen extensive improvements to a run down area. At the same time, the southern part of the High Street, has adopted a more modern appearance with the 20th century style shopfronts having spread from the King Street and New Road developments. The contrasting appearance between the two ends of High Street is a result of the Town Pier closure in 1969 when High Street ceased to be an important thoroughfare in the town and the northern end of the street became neglected and underused.

The steadily sloping gradient down the High Street and the extensive views out over the pier to the river and Tilbury beyond make a strong impact and play an important role in creating a special character in this shopping street. However, it is also the tall buildings set close to the edge of the pavement with a variety of ground floor shopfronts that frame the view and accentuate the fall of the road. Rows of three and four storey buildings line the road and cluster around The Old Town Hall positioned halfway up the street.

The Old Town Hall was erected in 1836 and replaced another C. Sloane building. It is built in the Classical style with four large

fluted Doric columns standing at the entrance onto High Street underneath a portico with a decorative entablature bearing the Gravesend Borough Arms. The building is constructed of a pale sandstone ashlar and is complemented by the splash of red and blue on its frontage introduced by modest signage for the Borough Market and the telephone kiosks and letter box positioned around the columns. The building extends back towards the market with a plain ashlar wing to the north containing former police cells, and another wing to the south is built of a dark grey brick with elaborate brick details around the windows and door. A modern mosaic fills the wall facing the market above the passageway leading back through to High Street. The building served as a magistrate's court until the 1990s and currently houses a local museum.

Opposite the Town Hall, some of the older buildings in High Street have survived. These are now shops with living accommodation above, although some were once hotels or inns. Like many of the key unlisted buildings (as marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map in Appendix 1) they retain the standard form of buildings in High Street, such as their scale and position close to the road, but also have individual features. These include the different decorative gablets on nos. 40 and 42, or the more ostentatious dressings on no.24, which include an upper storey cornice with elaborate console brackets.

Other building features of note include: the red brick façade contrasting with the light quoins on The Market Tavern and some other buildings, the shaped gable on No.62 and the iron balconies on nos. 4 and 5. These features add some historic flourishes, especially to the heavily modernised southern end of High Street. There is a charming range

of windows openings in the brick facades in the upper floors as the buildings step up the sloping street: mostly with flat brick window arches. A great range of architectural features are on view from first floor level upwards as the visitor or shopper makes their way down towards the Town Pier or back up the hill towards King Street, however, the 19th and early 20th century style shopfronts on the ground floor are directly at eye level and make the most immediate visual impact.

The shops in High Street are of local distinction because they contain many quality specialist sellers. There is also a character distinct from other shopping streets in Gravesend because of the topography and the cohesiveness of the built form. Some traditional shopfronts remain which are built of timber with stall risers and glazing partitioned with mullions and transoms. Other features such as the hanging projecting signs at first floor level are distinctive in the High Street. The Kent Public House is a good example of the traditional style and is one of a number of pubs that survive in the Conservation Area.

Behind High Street, in New Swan Yard, are a number of new developments such as the Gravesend Medical Centre. These are not always built to a traditional style, but they have a sympathetic scale and face the large open area of car park and open air market rather than High Street itself. Therefore, they do not necessarily have a detrimental effect on the character of the Conservation Area.

One of the challenges for the High Street area is continuing to allow the redevelopment and regeneration to continue while at the same time enhancing the traditional characteristics.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Cohesive qualities with three or four storey terraced buildings, dating to the 18th and 19th centuries, many of which are listed buildings;
- Buildings mainly arranged in terraces, with a common building line on the back of the pavement;
- Mainly a “domestic” scale of building on narrow plots;
- Shallow pitched roofs covered in slate or artificial slate, visible from behind the buildings;
- Roofs have similar ridge and eaves height, but there is variety, with some hipped and gabled roofs;
- Brick axial stacks and end stacks, simply detailed, but largely hidden from view in the High Street;
- Use of red and yellow brick, which is sometimes rendered, painted or clad in weatherboarding;
- Simple rectangular shapes, with a mixture of modern and historic shopfronts;
- Mainly sash windows, some retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes;
- Some modern infill (nos. 6 to 10) of a more horizontal built form, contrasting to the height and slender width of the majority of buildings;
- The use of local brick, and the variety of sash windows and shopfronts, all add interest;
- Hanging signs projecting from the buildings above the shopfronts at first floor level are an important feature of High Street.

Negative features/issues:

- Poor design and modern materials of many shopfronts and shop signs;
- Some unsympathetic rebuilding/ conversion of historic buildings, e.g Nos. 6 to 10 High Street, that have been lost through fire or otherwise;
- Lack of continuity/ poor quality of the public realm, e.g waste bins;
- Some poorly maintained buildings such as nos. 31 to 33 High Street;
- Disconnection of the town pier and Town Pier Square from the life of the town;
- Graffiti – on the tops of some buildings and above the door hood of nos. 6 to 10 High Street.

8.3 Character Area 2: Town Pier & West Street

This area was for many centuries the engine room of the town, bringing people and goods in and out of the town, providing work and a place to congregate next to the market and shops and inns of High Street and along the riverside. It has lost much of its vibrancy since the discontinuation of the ferry service to Tilbury in the 1960s and although, there is a public house, a bar and men’s hairdressers in the square, the number of customers appears to be fairly modest at the date of survey.

The area is characterised by fine buildings which continue around the corner into West Street. These tall buildings line the road with the small public Elizabeth Gardens behind them next to the wide River Thames. They are a mixture of historic buildings with sympathetic infill that hide large apartment blocks of Melbourne Quay, a late 1980s development, which stand behind them and tower over their riverside location and the West Street Pier beyond the Conservation Area boundary.

In West Street, on the edge of the Conservation Area, is a well preserved grade II listed public house, The New Falcon. It stands on the edge of the Conservation Area, a 19th century three storey yellow brick Italianate building with rendered first floor and parapet. Despite its rich details and scale it is still upstaged by the larger buildings either side of it, and these include some modern flats. Also incorporated into one façade is a traditional Gravesend pub frontage featuring brown glazed tiles and pub signage. It is set next to a short row of other tile and timber shopfronts that are painted in traditional colours (deep red, green and blue) but are no longer in commercial use. The row of tall buildings leads back to Town Pier Square in a constant line and historic buildings wraparound into the square. Nos. 1 to 3 are the former Pier Hotel which has had some previous aggressive work to its façade repaired with tuckpointing.

The Town Pier extends out into the river and there are far reaching views out over the river from the pedestrian walkway on the eastern side of the structure. The Town Pier was built between 1831 and 1834 to a design by W T Clark. It was purchased by the Borough Council in 2001 and has been comprehensively remodelled although the principal grade II* listed structure remains. This short pier has attractive white painted timber balustrades with a central covered area. The frontage of the building is visible from a great distance along High Street and visually connects the two parts of the Conservation Area. It has a large overhanging canopy with steps leading down to the square and the pier deck is currently fitted out to accommodate a restaurant, bar and along its eastern side, a public walkway.

The design is unashamedly modern, with

large glazed openings and neutral colours, and decorative cast iron columns alongside the two original pavilions at the T-head, with their cast iron cupolas, the central lighthouse and the white balustrade on both sides.

Public access has also opened up new views of the river, riverside buildings and open spaces to the public that have not been available for many years. The clock on the western pavilion has also been restored by public subscription and chimes the hour. The original stone causeway remains beneath the pier. Relocation of the line of the flood defence wall and the insertion of flood gates, have also opened up new views through the pier and to the river immediately to the east of the pier.

The Three Daws Public House is mainly of 18th and 19th century construction and utilises more traditional materials. It is partly clad in white painted weatherboarding over a sprawling, partially timber framed, structure that has seen much extension and modification over time. Other elevations are rendered or painted brick and the striking appearance of the building is partly created by the contrast between the stark white elevations and the black painted timber first floor frontage. The building is entered via a large modern external staircase rising to the first floor of the Crooked Lane elevation. The mixture of wall and roof materials, the height of different sections (it rises to three storeys), the varying roof profiles and the irregular arrangement of features such as chimney stacks adds to the character of this historic building.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban riverside character;
- Cohesive qualities with three or four storey

buildings, some modern, some dating to the 18th and 19th centuries, including listed buildings. A pattern broken by the single storey Town Pier;

- Buildings mainly arranged in terraces along West Street, with a common building line on the back of the pavement and backing onto the river;
- In Town Pier Square contrasting buildings styles face each other across the public open space;
- Variety in terms of materials, design and roof style;
- The use of local brick and weatherboarding, and the variety of sash windows and shopfronts, all add interest;
- Other materials are used such as the steel and plate glass in the refurbished Town Pier and a concrete flood barrier behind the Three Daws Public House..

Negative features/issues:

- Under utilisation of the public areas, notably the use of Town Pier Square for car parking;
- Poor visual quality of the flood defence wall and the open area behind The Three Daws;
- Disconnection of West Street from the rest of the town;
- Proximity of a major road, which has divided a once a bustling commercial centre.

8.4 Character Area 3: St George's Church & Princes Street

This area is based around the set-piece of the 18th century parish church and its setting. The building stands apart from any other in Gravesend and is located behind the tall continuous frontage of High Street and next to a large modern shopping centre, providing

a unique setting. Next to it, Princes Street is one of the backsides of High Street. It has character quite distinct from that of the shopping street, with warehouses facing the church and access to the backyards. The river-related commercial/industrial activity in the area has now ceased and most of the warehouses have been converted to residential use. Others have been demolished and replaced with sympathetic modern infill development. There are more gaps in the building line than in High Street offering clear views through to the back of the High Street terraces and their various extensions.

The architecture of the church is handsome but not overly ostentatious. The Church of St George replaced an early 16th century church (dedicated to St Mary) which had been burnt down on this site in the Great Fire of 1727. The new building was part-financed by King George II, designed by C. Sloane and was finished in 1733. It is an imposing brown brick built structure with stone quoins and spire. The quoins dress the corners of the nave as well as the square brick west tower that rises impressively above the surrounding trees to the white stone spire, which is inset with a clock and has a gold ball finial and weather vane at the apex. This handsome early 18th century church is a fine surviving example of its type and its grade II listed status may be worthy of reconsideration by English Heritage. However, both exterior and interior has undergone some remodelling in the 19th and 20th centuries. The church is also notable for its historic associations with Princess Pocahontas as the site of her burial, commemorated with a grade II listed statue.

The churchyard has been cleared of gravestones to form Princess Pocahontas Gardens, although two obelisks remain in the south-east corner. Also in this corner is a

locked iron gate that once provided access to the churchyard from Princes Street. Instead, pedestrian access is now from the triangular open green space beyond the railings next to St George's Shopping Centre to the south-west. Other notable fixtures in the gardens include a flagpole bearing a St George's cross flag.

Perhaps due to the disconnection of the area from the rest of the town it has a peaceful atmosphere, and is the only green open space open to the public so close to the commercial centre. Currently the green space adjoins another open area beyond the railings of the churchyard to connect with the edge of Princes Street.

Of particular note is no.28, a three storey red brick warehouse that directly fronts the road on the corner of Jury Street. The 19th century building is grade II listed and notable for, despite its conversion to residential, the retention of its original commercial character and not been modified like the rendered warehouse at no.22/24. The buildings are some of the rare survivors of the areas maritime links and also dominate the streetscene through their scale and position close to the road. Further north only no.40 remains, with neighbouring buildings having been replaced with the modern blocks of flats of the White Hart Yard development towards the end of the 20th century. However, the modern buildings retain the strong built form and a sympathetic scale close to the pavement.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Impressive 18th century parish church;
- Contrast of narrow Princes Street with dense built form to the east and St

George's Church in spacious grassed area to the west;

- Mature trees and amenity space;
- Remnants of riverine industrial character in Princes Street with converted warehouses;
- Variety of building shapes and sizes and roof profiles combines with the irregularity of the rears of properties in High Street, which are visible through the gaps in buildings;
- Strong presence of red brick 19th century buildings, interspersed with modern brick built apartments and offices;
- Absence of any shops which reinforces the impression that this is a "backside".

Negative features/issues:

- The appearance of the electricity substation to the south of Princess Pocahontas Gardens within the neighbouring open green space;
- The lack of accessibility to High Street and the river;
- Poor quality of the public realm;
- Lack of encouragement for people to use the public space.

8.5 Character Area 4: Riverside

The riverside character area primarily covers St Andrews Gardens and the few remaining buildings at the eastern end along Royal Pier Road. The gardens cover a large area including a "promenade" along the riverfront. The openness of this area, along with the large gaps between buildings further east as far as the remains of Gravesend Blockhouse, means that there are extensive views across the river throughout.

Historically, the area which is today covered by the gardens was never used for

recreational purposes, with the exception of the area to the north of Clarendon Hotel, which was used as hotel garden. Otherwise the riverside was densely packed with water side inns, industrial buildings and warehouses. A significant amount of historic fabric was lost to create the leisure space of St Andrews Gardens in the 1960s. The remaining buildings now appear to be informally or picturesquely arranged, detached or arranged in pairs.

The area also includes the area of the 19th century fishing town that housed shrimpers who worked from Bawley Bay. This small beach was used for many centuries as a disembarkation point for the ferry boats taking cargo and passengers to and from the ships anchored at Gravesend Reach. St Andrew's Arts Centre and The Mission House, which stand apart from other buildings in the Conservation Area, represent the only remnants of this small fishing community centred on Bawley Bay. The rest of the housing in this area was cleared during the construction of the ring road and now partly forms St Andrew's Gardens.

The arts centre, formerly St Andrew's Waterside Chapel is a mission chapel for seaman built in 1870-71 on the very edge of the riverbank. It is built of ragstone in the gothic style and has bathstone dressings and a slate roof. This quaint building has a beach on one side and the 18th century Mission House on the other. The Mission House is a three storey stock brick built house with fine sash windows, modern door, fanlight and, typically for Gravesend, rounded corner walls. It was originally a waterside inn, the Spread Eagle Tavern. The bell tower of the chapel rises above the height of the house's parapet. The house and the chapel make an incongruous, but architecturally intriguing, pair

of listed buildings.

Thames House stands opposite them on the rising bank and is a four storey rendered building of circa 1820. Its regular window openings and first floor balcony provide an enjoyment of the river views and a certain degree of opulence. The row of rendered two storey terraced houses in front of Thames House are also listed because of their attachment to the Clarendon Royal Hotel.

The Clarendon Royal Hotel stands partly on the site of a former house built by James II when he was Duke of York and Lord High Admiral. It was rebuilt as a hotel in the mid 19th century and is a grand four storey building with windows looking out over the river. It features elaborate details such as a Tuscan porch, iron balconies, quoins, a modillion cornice and moulded window surrounds. However, the whole effect is reduced by the poor state of the building. It has been poorly maintained in recent years and fallen into disuse. Its impending conversion to residential use will see much change to the buildings and an injection of activity into this quiet corner of the Conservation Area.

Although the area appears today quite isolated from the historic core of the town around High Street, historically

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban riverside character;
- Extensive public gardens with benches, a promenade and grassed areas;
- Buildings with differing scales and features scattered across the stretch of riverside as a legacy of widespread 20th century demolition in the area;
- A large 19th century hotel facing the river with more modest buildings attached;

- Variety of building materials, design and roof style;
- Building origins ranging from 17th, 18th and 19th centuries;
- The use of local brick, and the variety of sash windows add interest;
- Use of other traditional materials such as the ragstone of St Andrew's Arts Centre (formerly St. Andrews Chapel);
- Predominant finish being render (Clarendon Royal Hotel).

Negative features/issues:

- Some poorly maintained buildings such as Clarendon Royal Hotel;
- Need to upgrade some of the public realm in St Andrew's Gardens;
- Need to improve access to the gardens from both Town Pier Square and Crooked Lane;
- Under utility of land opposite Clarendon Royal Hotel.

9. ISSUES

9.1 Definition of Issues

The following 'Issues' have been identified by the appraisal process (via extensive survey work) and have been modified to include the views of the local community as part of the public consultation exercise, including a public meeting and four week period of consultation. They provide the basis for the Site Specific Actions in the management proposals for the eight Gravesend town centre Conservation Areas (see *Gravesend Town Centre Conservation Areas: Management Plan, February 2008*). These issues will be subject to regular review by the Council and new ones may be added in the future.

9.2 Conservation area boundary review

It is suggested that to extend the boundary to incorporate the Queen Street into the High Street Conservation Area, since Queen Street and High Street are in terms of historic development, lay-out and use closely connected form the historic core of Gravesend.

The transfer of the western part of Royal Pier Road and St. Andrews Gardens, including the St. Andrews Arts Centre, Mission House, Thames House, Clarendon Royal Hotel and remains of the Gravesend Blockhouse, from the High Street Conservation Area into the Riverside Conservation Area should be considered. This would combine much of the Gravesend's riverside areas into one Conservation Area and also re-combine all the land that was historically in ownership of the Board of Ordnance comprising all archaeological and upstanding remains of Gravesend's historic river fortifications.

9.3 Education and information

Active measures for promoting better understanding of Gravesend and its place in history underpin the regeneration of the town by drawing in external interest and resources.

Gravesend Borough Council has recently published a number of guides in order to help promote this understanding and to encourage an improvement in standards in the borough's conservation areas. These include guidance on:

- Shopfronts
- Windows and Doors

9.4 Buildings at Risk

There are some buildings in the Conservation Area that would benefit from repairs or redecoration:

- The ground floor shopfronts of 97/98 West Street;
- The Old Town Hall colonnade;
- Clarendon Royal Hotel.

The Clarendon Royal Hotel is in urgent need of refurbishment. More generally, however, the buildings are in good condition and the greatest threat is from well intentioned property 'improvement'.

9.5 Alterations to buildings

It is clear that a considerable amount of property alteration takes place in Gravesend, and it is evident that well-intentioned changes, but unsympathetic changes, especially to doors, windows and roofs, have begun to have a cumulative effect that is damaging to the character of High Street conservation areas. In residential conservation areas

this could be controlled more effectively by the designation of an Article 4 Direction which would bring further works to dwelling houses under the control of the planning system. However, most buildings in the *High Street, Gravesend Conservation Area* are in commercial use and the greatest threat to their character is the introduction of unsuitable shopfronts and shop signage.

9.6 New development

In the Gravesend Town Centre Strategy of 1998, High Street Conservation Area and adjacent areas are identified as the 'Heritage Quarter' of the town. The quarter is currently the focus of a major regeneration scheme.

There appears to be little scope for any more infill development in the Conservation Area without compromising some of the open space which adds to the special interest. Some opportunities may exist by replacing some of the less successful examples of late 20th century architecture, such as nos. 6-10 and nos. 31-34. Also, some areas on the edge of the Conservation Area, such as New Swan Yard, are the subject of redevelopment plans.

9.7 Uses/ vitality

Gravesend is well-served by shops and pubs, but a number of shops in the wider town centre have fallen into disuse, which indicates a decline that could continue. Measures to support existing business and promote the vitality of the town have been in operation and are ongoing. These contribute to maintaining the character of the Conservation Area.

High Street is fortunate in that it has less vacant units than some of the other streets. Vacancy can also lead to an increase in estate agency boards fixed to the buildings.

These, along with other large garish signage in modern materials, do not enhance the Conservation Area and it may be worth considering the designation of an Area of Special Control under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations, 1989. Firm policies governing the requirements of advertising to respect the character and appearance of conservation areas in the Borough in the emerging Local Development Framework would also help tackle this problem.

9.8 Locally Listed buildings

There is no adopted comprehensive Local List for Gravesend (nor indeed, for Gravesham Borough generally) and the identification of buildings or structures for a Local List is considered to be a priority, once the criteria have been agreed. Any Local List should be drawn up with the full consultation of the local community.

9.9 Enforcement

During the survey work for the Character Appraisal, a number of sites or buildings were identified where works have taken place that may not have been authorised and where enforcement action may be relevant. These are typically visible satellite dishes and modern windows or doors and they include alterations to listed buildings.

9.10 Highways and traffic management

Traffic management has been effectively tackled in the commercial hub of Gravesend, to the benefit of High Street and some surrounding streets. The lack of vehicles in High Street enhances the character of the area. Also, the riverside and Town Pier Square are gratifyingly free of traffic. However, the

two areas are separated by a main road, and although the traffic speed is well controlled through a speed table at the bottom of High Street, the traffic does create an unwelcome separation in the Conservation Area. Traffic speeds need to be reduced further and pedestrian links restored.

9.11 Archaeological potential

As a result of excavations in the 1970s, it is known that there was some Roman and Saxon settlement around the Parish Church. Any development close to this site should only be carried out after a desktop assessment and a full archaeological evaluation.

The other areas in the Conservation Area have been continually occupied since the early medieval period and it is likely that other archaeological potential lies here, particularly around St Andrew's Arts Centre where a number of buildings linked to the local fishing community are known to have once stood. Further east lies the Tudor Blockhouse and any development in that area should respect the setting of a Scheduled Monument and be carried out following a full archaeological evaluation. There is likely to be evidence below ground and investigation of this archaeological potential would add to the understanding of Gravesend's past.

9.12 Enhancement potential

There is a strong case for the continued maintenance of the comprehensive scheme that has regenerated the public realm of Gravesend, and to extending it further through the town. High Street has benefited from the scheme although some could still be improved. Enhancement projects that have been successful include the renovation of the pier and the Town Pier Square. This could be

carried through to improve the appearance of the area behind The Three Daws (including the concrete flood defences) and the open area that connects with St Andrew's Gardens. Access could also be improved, especially via a very steep set of concrete steps that leads down to the gardens.

Also, outside of the Council's direct control, there is still room for improvement of building repairs along the High Street. The renovation and reuse of the Clarendon Royal Hotel is one of the most pressing issues in the Conservation Area. Another is the repair and reuse of the Town Hall.

Recent buildings in High Street, including the complete rebuilding of two listed buildings, have been designed to complement the scale and design of the existing buildings, but this has not always been the case. Nos. 6 to 10, a 1970s office block with shops on the ground floor, shows little respect for the traditional character of High Street and the appearance could be enhanced with a suitable replacement building should this opportunity ever arise.

The appearance of the area could be further enhanced by the replacement of some modern shopfronts, particularly those at the southern half of High Street, such as nos. 53 and 55, with shopfronts of more traditional design, building on existing good examples. This could help foster a cohesive traditional shopping streetscape.

Other features whose improvement would strengthen the character of the area are:

- Restriction of traffic flow, particularly heavy goods vehicles, through West Street and Crooked Lane;
- Improvement of the pedestrian crossing at

the junction of High Street and Town Pier Square;

- Infilling of gap next to no.3 Town Pier Square;
- Open spaces of Elizabeth Gardens and behind The Three Daws Public House;
- St Andrews Gardens;
- Land in front of the Clarendon Royal Hotel;
- Outbuildings in Princes Street/ Chase Square.

9.13 Trees

Trees make an important contribution to the character of the riverside character area and around St George's Church, but are less significant elsewhere. A tree strategy that considered issues of amenity, practicality and, importantly, succession planning would reduce the need to take ad hoc decisions on a case-by-case basis.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 History of Gravesend

Appendix 2 Bibliography

Appendix 3 Townscape Appraisal Map
Age of Buildings Map
Character Zones Map
Designations Map
Conservation Area Boundary map 2009

Appendix 2 History of Gravesend - High Street

The earliest written recording of a settlement here is a reference to *Gravesham* in The Domesday Book of 1086. The name most likely means “graaf-ham”, the home of the reeve or bailiff of the Lord of the Manor.

The Book refers to Gravesham being in the ownership of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (the brother of William I) although it notes that the Manor had been split into three under the ownership of three Saxon thanes (or lords) before 1066. The Saxon settlement had grown around the Old Dover Road where the Saxon Parish Church of St Mary was built. There was also a small community to the north centred on a landing place (“hithe”) close to the location of the Town Pier, at the head of what was to become High Street.

In the 11th century Gravesham was an agricultural estate but by the 14th century it had grown into a small market town. By the end of the 13th century it had adopted the name *Gravesend* and the Bishop of London was Richard de Gravesende at this time.

The oldest building in Gravesend, Milton Chantry, dates from the 14th century and stands a few hundred metres to the east of the Queen Street Conservation Area boundary next to the fort. It was a religious institution that owned considerable land in the area, on the outskirts of the fledgling town.

The course of High Street had been established by the middle of the 14th century. It stood at the centre of a network of streets and created a direct route from the river landing stage southwards out of the town towards the old Parish Church. It seems that at the time of the town’s first market charter, in 1356, the town re-established itself in a

new position closer to the river and it is likely that the market itself was sited on the corner of High Street and West Street next to the landing stage. This development led to the redundancy of the church and a chapel was built behind High Street on the present day site of the Parish Church of St George.

The town grew under various lordships including the crown, nobility and the Cistercian Abbey of the St Mary Graces in London. Although the location of the manor house has never been discovered, it would have been close to the church and possibly within or adjacent to the boundary of the Conservation Area.

In the medieval period most of the buildings were constructed of timber and therefore susceptible to fire damage. Although the houses and shops that lined the rising gradient of High Street would not have been as densely packed or as tall as they are today, the threat from the spread of fire was still great. Towards the end of the 14th century the town was almost completely destroyed by a combined French and Spanish force that sailed as far as Gravesend before retreating from an attack aimed at London. The resultant destruction led to the first rebuilding of the town.

In recompense for the attack, Richard II granted the people of Gravesend sole rights to ferry passengers to London and this gave rise to Gravesend’s growth as a maritime centre and trading port. The suitability of Gravesend in this regard was supported by its location as the first settlement after the estuary, the deep anchorage in the area and the relatively short crossing to the north bank at this location. Open barges transported passengers to and from the Pool of London and larger, ocean-going vessels continued out along the estuary

to the international destinations beyond.

By the end of the medieval period Gravesend was a sizeable town centred on High Street, with a variety of wharves and quays established around the landing stage. River related occupations, including, ferrying, victualling, rope and sail making and boat building and repairing, occupied the majority of the town's inhabitants. Many inns, stables and shops were established in the town, although none of these remain due to the regular outbreak of fires, which continued into the 18th and 19th centuries. Gravesend was surrounded by agricultural land, the produce of which continued to sustain those within the town, as it had done for many centuries before.

The important strategic position of Gravesend at the entry point to the river from the estuary led to Henry VIII constructing defences in the area. Five blockhouses were built between 1539 and 1540: two on the north bank near Tilbury and three on the south bank at Gravesend, Milton and Higham. The remains of the Gravesend Blockhouse stand on the eastern perimeter of the Conservation Area.

In 1562 a Charter of Incorporation united the two parishes of Milton and Gravesend, although the parish boundary runs down the centre of High Street, dividing it in terms of religious jurisdiction. Early maps therefore tend to show one side of High Street or the other, depending on which parish they relate to. The inhabitants of the newly unified areas were required to meet to transact municipal business and the first Town Hall was built in 1573. The Charter also required a Common Market to be held once a week and this was established behind the Town Hall next to Queen Street (at one time known as Milton Backside) and this arrangement still exists

in the 21st century. The market and fairs were confirmed in various Royal Charters by subsequent reigning monarchs and the commercial life of the town grew.

National and international trade also grew and Gravesend became a busy port. The Long Ferry was established by the 17th century, which took passengers who had disembarked from ocean voyages from Gravesend to Billingsgate. It also brought outward bound passengers including colonial settlers, twice a day. Pocahontas, the famous daughter of a Native American chief, died at Gravesend, and was buried in the crypt of the Church of St Mary.

The Great Fire of 1727 destroyed most of the High Street, surrounding streets and the 15th century parish church. The town was rebuilt and a new church (St George's) was erected by the Corporation. Gravesend was prosperous enough to recover from this and many other subsequent fires. Later in the century the town's standing was further boosted when the Duke of York, later King James II, built a Lord High Admiral's residence here. The house was on the site of the current Clarendon Royal Hotel, next to Gravesend Blockhouse, in the eastern corner of the Conservation Area.

Although the river remained the easiest route to trade and ferry passengers to and from London, the roads in England improved in the 18th century with the advent of the turnpikes. At the southern end of High Street, New Road and King Street were part of the stagecoach route from London to Rochester. The staging point at the New Inn would have encouraged further trade and activity at this southern end of High Street.

The 18th century saw the town grow into a bustling centre that mixed commercial and residential uses, and the adjoining streets catered for the varying needs of residents. A Congregational chapel opened in Princes Street in 1717.

In response to increased international tension at the end of the 18th century, the defences at Gravesend were strengthened with the construction of the New Town Fort to the east of Gravesend Blockhouse, and new taller stone walls were built, connecting the two fortifications. The fort remained in use and was substantially rebuilt in the 19th century by Gravesend resident General Charles Gordon, whose famous deeds in China and Africa epitomise the image of the heroic Victorian military commander. His connection with Gravesend reinforces the town's link with the maritime military, and the riverside area even retains the Mission House in which Gordon once taught.

The 19th century also saw the development of the town in other ways. Gravesend became a destination for day trippers from London and visitors would arrive by steam boat and would then walk up Windmill Hill to take in the views and enjoy the entertainment. In the 1840s Rosherville Gardens were also opened. These pleasure grounds were created to the east of the town, ran up to the river's edge and wound up the cliffside to give impressive views across the river to Tilbury. In its heyday 20,000 visitors came to Gravesend every year, many of whom would have to pass from the newly built Town Pier through the Town Quay (now Town Pier Square). Engravings from the time show visitors on the promenade along the riverfront, and many would have continued to walk up High Street to Windmill Hill.

By the end of the 19th century, fashions had changed and the improved railway network took day trippers to further afield resorts such as Margate and Ramsgate. Gravesend became more industrial as chalk pits and brickworks were opened in the surrounding areas, particularly Northfleet. Eventually Rosherville Gardens was closed and transformed into a cement works (utilising the local chalk). The marine industries, such as fishing and shrimping, which had supported the community in earlier centuries, came back to the fore, although modern advancements in shipbuilding meant that many ancillary trades were no longer required.

The opening of the Tilbury docks in 1886 provided some alternative means of employment. Travel to work was made possible by the ferry service between the two ports, which was converted to steam power in 1855. The industrialisation of the north shore of the Thames continued into the 20th century and in the 1950s a large power station was constructed at Tilbury. This giant structure and its smoking towers has dominated the view out of Gravesend ever since.

In the 20th century Gravesend continued to grow as a small market town with areas of light industry. Much of the industry was occupied with producing building materials which were often used to build houses in nearby London. As transport links to the city improved, Gravesend became a commuter settlement and with the addition of large retail parks close by, commercial trade has waned in the town. However, there has also been much development in the town, mostly residential. The majority of construction has been beyond the boundary of the *Queen Street Conservation Area*, although some historic buildings have been lost and replaced within the Conservation Area in the late

20th century. The Town Pier closed in 1969 when the car ferry was discontinued and the passenger service was moved to West Street Pier. Many of the wharves and houses, especially those between the river and St Andrew's Chapel were cleared when the inner ring road was created. Other residential roads were also removed to make way for the St George's Shopping Centre.

In the 21st century the town is the focus of large residential building projects to meet the needs of the people in the area, although the historic commercial centre of High Street has been retained and seeks to attract shoppers that have more specialist, individual requirements.

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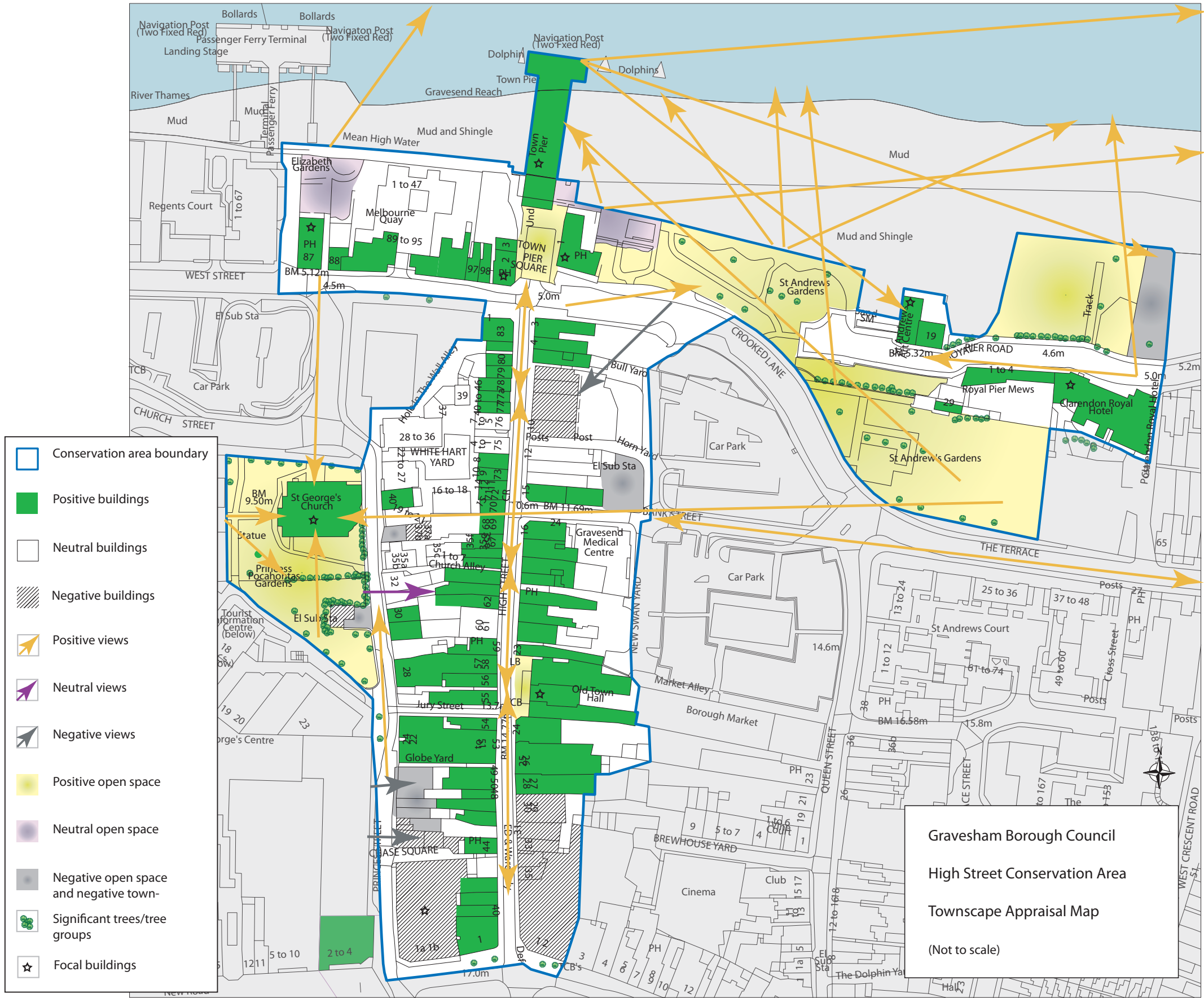
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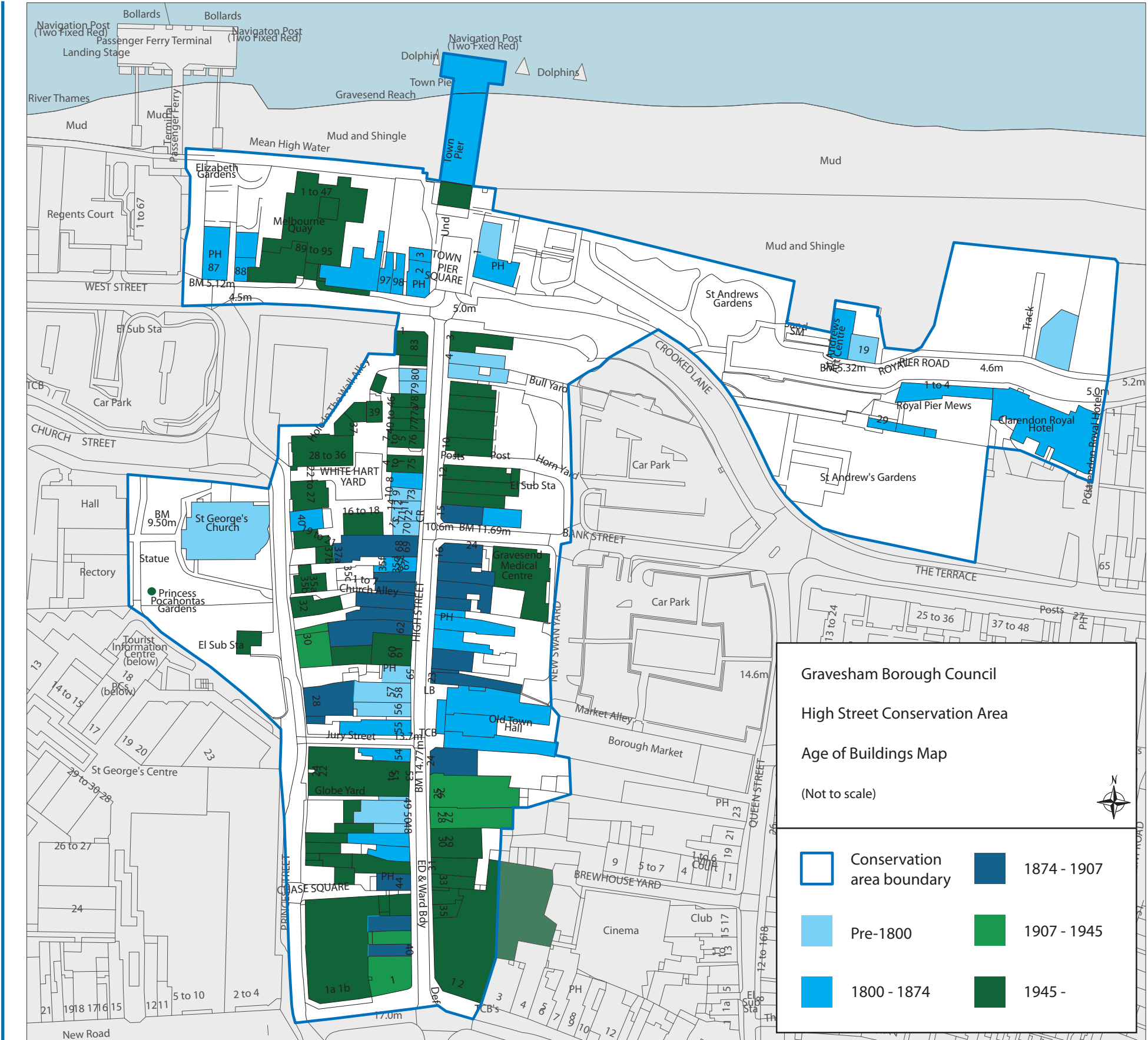
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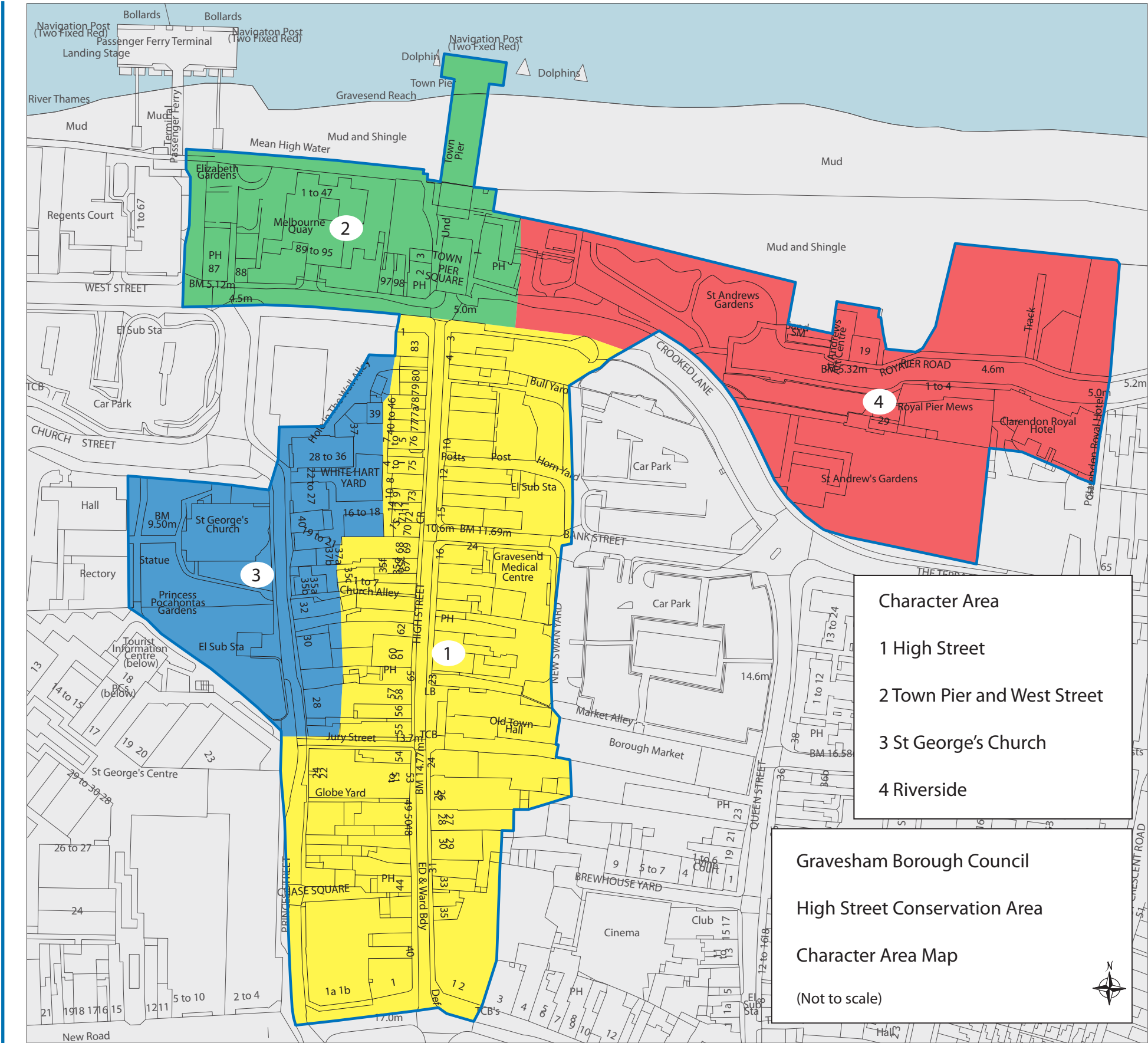
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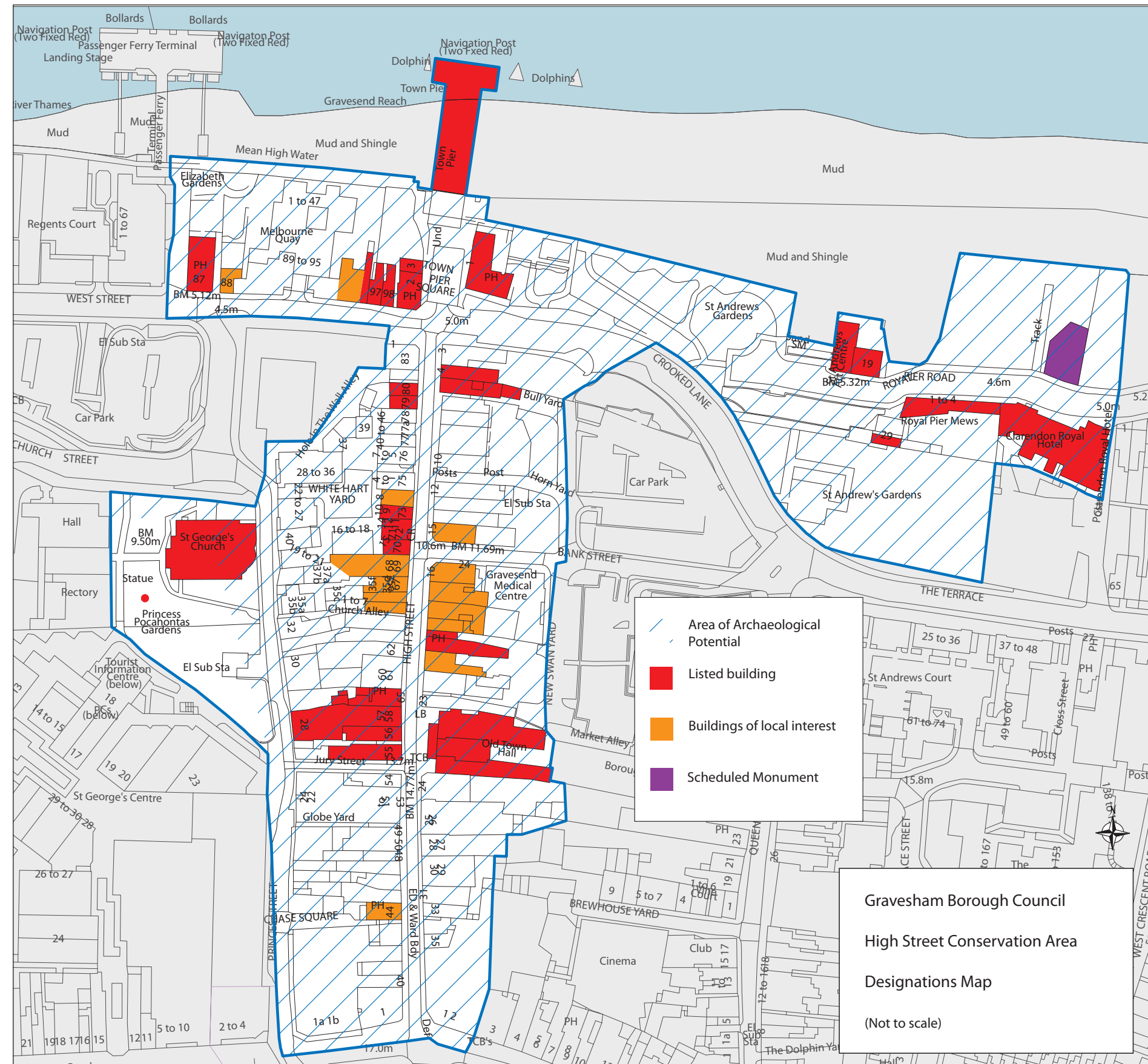
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