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St Andrews Gardens,
Gravesend.
Heritage Impact Assessment

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St Andrews Gardens, Gravesend, Kent Heritage Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of proposals for the St Andrews Gardens, Gravesend Kent, on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council.

Historic Context

- 1.2 Gravesend's importance lay in its being the first main stop down the Thames from London.
- 1.3 The High Street was established by the early medieval period due to its position next to the river landing stage (later developed into the pier). The street became the hub of the settlement for many centuries, flourishing around the crossroads of Town Pier Square, East Street, West Street and High Street.
- 1.4 In 1401 a royal charter was granted allowing the men of the town to operate boats between London and the town – a preferred method of transport due to the perils of road travel. John Evelyn (1620-1706), the celebrated writer and diarist, when he went abroad, regularly *'took oars for Gravesend'*.
- 1.5 A fire in 1727 swept away much of the old town, including the parish church of St George (and rebuilt 1731-3) but though the town was quickly rebuilt, the population began to increase only a century later.



Figure 1: Gravesend, engraving dated 1811 (The Tilbury Magazine)

- 1.6 The 1830s were the period of Gravesend's greatest civic pride, with a new town hall, new piers and a planned development joining the neighbouring village of Milton to Gravesend. In 1821 there were 6,583 inhabitants. Twenty years later the population had more than doubled.

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- 1.7 With the coming of the steamboats and the construction of the piers at Northfleet and Gravesend thousands of day-trippers poured in from London. This was Gravesend and Northfleet's "Golden Age". Business boomed and bathing establishments and pleasure grounds opened up, the most famous of these being Rosherville Gardens, which rivalled the Vauxhall Gardens in London and attracted thousands of visitors. Windmill Hill too became a popular attraction.
- 1.8 Even as late as the 1860s records indicate that within a 1700 metre stretch of the Gravesend riverside there were no less than 11 taverns or hotels, with a further 13 in the High Street and the alleyways behind. There was also a high concentration of coffee houses, dining rooms and tea rooms in this area.
- 1.9 When the railways came the trippers preferred to go further afield in search of their fun, particularly after the sewers of London brought pollution to the rivers and made "sea bathing" impossible.
- 1.10 In the wake of the trippers, in the mid to late 19th Century, came the first commuters, London businessmen who were responsible for building many of the fine houses in the area. The railway also opened up the hinterland and attracted industry to this now thriving and rapidly developing area, which had deep-water berthing facilities and was in close proximity to the new Tilbury Docks, which opened in 1886.

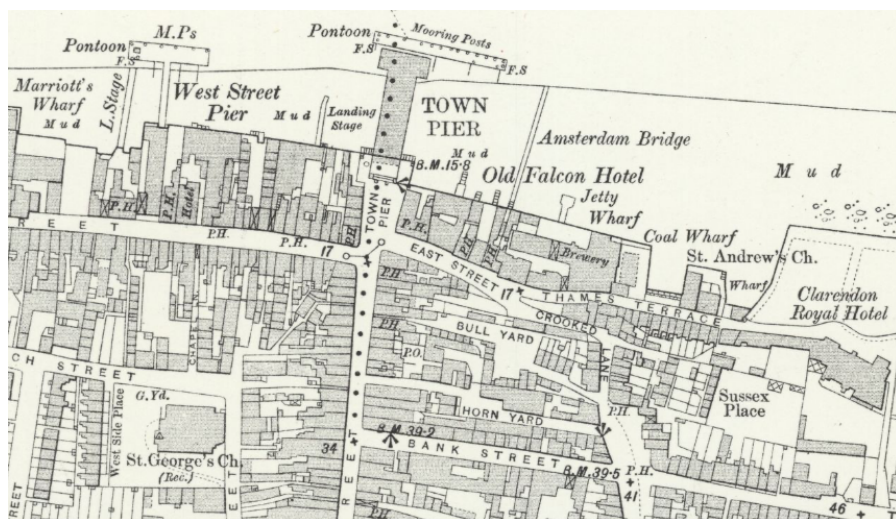


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey Map surveyed 1907

- 1.11 Despite a steady economy as a small market town, the second half of the 20th century saw considerable physical change in the centre. In 1969 the Town Pier closed and the car ferry was discontinued, with passenger services being moved to West Street Pier. The river started to lose its relevance to life in the town and the commercial centre shifted from High Street to New Road and King Street – with large shopping malls built in New Road.

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- 1.12 During the 1960s there was also large-scale demolition of buildings to the east of Town Pier Square, between the Three Daws Public House and St Andrews Arts Centre/Mission house and Clarendon Hotel in order to create St Andrew's Gardens.

Gravesend Riverside

- 1.13 Historically, the area which is today covered by St Andrews Gardens was never used for recreational purposes, with the exception of the area to the north of Clarendon Hotel, which was used as a hotel garden. Otherwise the riverside was densely packed with waterside 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 – but this was not historically the case.

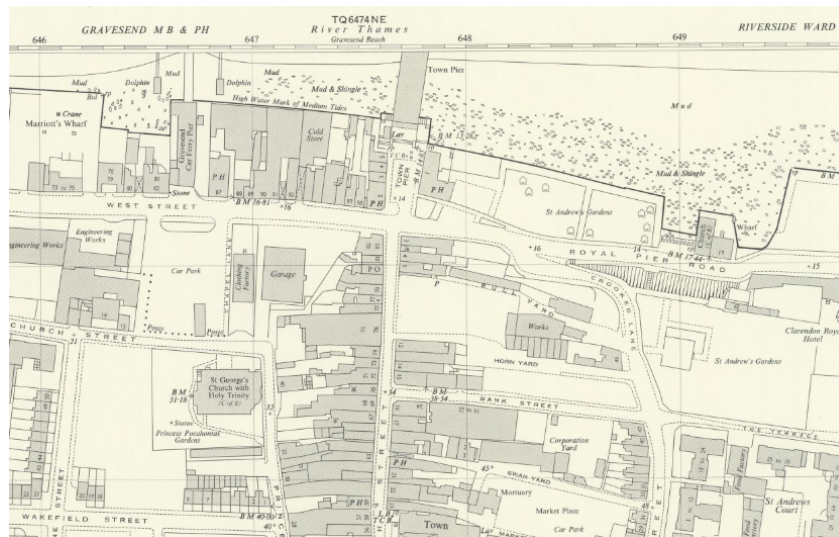


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 1964

- 1.14 This part of Gravesend is also 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 Andrews Arts Centre and The Mission House represent the only remnants of this small fishing community centred on Bawley Bay. The rest of the housing was cleared during the construction of the ring road and now partly forms St Andrews Gardens.
- 1.15 The arts centre, formerly St Andrews Waterside Chapel and Grade II listed, is a mission chapel for seaman built in 1870-71 and designed by GE Street. It sits on the very edge of the riverbank. Built of ragstone in the gothic style with Bath stone dressings it has a simple rectangular plan. Recently leased to a local brewery this feels like an appropriate connection to the past uses in the area – as shown in the 1907 Ordnance Survey Map above with a brewery historically located close to the west.
- 1.16 Adjacent is the Grade II listed Mission House, dating to the 18th century and formerly the Spread Eagle Tavern.

- 1.17 Close by, to the east, are Thames House – a four storey rendered house of c.1820 – and beyond that the Grade II listed Royal Clarendon Hotel – the current building dating to 1860, but on the site of a house once occupied by James II when Duke of York and Lord High Admiral.
- 1.18 To the west, the Grade II listed Three Daws Public House is one of the remaining historic hostelry's that would once have been one of many on the riverfront. With a brick frontage to Crooked Lane (showing the scars of adjacent demolition on its eastern flank) the public house is otherwise weatherboarded and its rear garden now backs directly on to St Andrews Garden.
- 1.19 St Andrews Garden is a new recreational space created in the 1960s following the demolition of a densely urban area of river frontage. It replaced a myriad of different buildings and uses including housing, two further public houses and a brewery as well as the river-related jetties, wharves and warehouses. It contains the Mahinder Singh Pujji Statue – unveiled in 2010 in commemoration of Mahinder Singh Pujji – the longest-surviving fighter pilot from a group of 24 Indians who arrived in Britain in 1940. The statue is intended to represent all the service personnel from across the world who have fought for Britain in conflicts since 1914.

Heritage Context

- 1.20 St Andrews Gardens lies within the High Street Conservation Area and specifically Character Area 4: Riverside. There are no other heritage designations within the Gardens themselves.
- 1.21 There are, however, a number of listed buildings in the immediate vicinity, including
- The Three Daws Public House – Grade II
 - 3& 3A High Street – Grade II
 - St Andrew's Arts Centre – Grade II
 - The Mission House – Grade II
 - Thames House – Grade II
 - Royal Clarendon Hotel – Grade II
- 1.22 Listed buildings and conservation areas are 'designated heritage assets', as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF). Other buildings and structures identified as having heritage significance, such as locally listed buildings, can be considered as 'non-designated heritage assets'.
- 1.23 Heritage 'significance' is defined in the NPPF as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic'. The Historic England 'Historic Environment Good

Practice Advice in Planning Note 2' puts it slightly differently – as 'the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest'.

1.24 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment' (English Heritage, 2008) describes a number of 'heritage values' that may be present in a 'significant place'. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.

1.25 With regards these proposals, the key relevant heritage assets to be considered are High Street Conservation Area and the setting of any nearby listed buildings.

1.26 The significance of the conservation area is identified through its special 'character and appearance. This is articulated in the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal (2009). The character of this particular area is summarised as follows:

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.

1.27 The principle features are identified as:

- Urban riverside character;
- Extensive public gardens with benches, a promenade and grassed area;
- 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 Andrews Arts Centre
- Predominant finish being render (Royal Clarendon Hotel)

Negative issues identified included:

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

- 1.28 The setting of St Andrews Gardens is entirely modern and has very little historical or associational relevance – being entirely happenstance following the wholesale demolition of the buildings that once formed this part of Gravesend’s riverfront.
- 1.29 To the east the Garden is sided by St Andrew’s Arts Centre and to the west by the rear gardens to the Three Daws pub. The north is bounded by Crooked Lane.
- 1.30 For the reasons given earlier in this report, the setting of the surrounding listed buildings has been considerably altered and the buildings no longer sit within their historic contexts. Where they are seen within the context and setting of St Andrew’s Gardens this is mostly coincidental rather than design and there is an opportunity to improve these connections.
- 1.31 These buildings are, nevertheless, very important as remnants of historic Gravesend – allowing (with interpretation) an understanding of the town before the changes wrought by 20th century.
- 1.32 The Character Appraisal makes clear that there is an opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the area through an upgrade to the Gardens and there is the potential to better connect the gardens to the historic High Street.

The Proposals

- 1.33 The proposals are described in detail in the designs and plans prepared by Mei Loci as part of the submission documents.
- 1.34 The assessment of heritage significance above articulates how this part of Gravesend, while close to the heart of the historic town and containing a number of important historic buildings, has seen massive change in the last 60 years.
- 1.35 Not only has it lost its street pattern and cartographical connection with the High Street – with multiple changes to road layouts and routes, but also the dense urban grain of buildings and uses – which once typified its character – leaving it isolated from the historic core.
- 1.36 The Gardens now contribute a new character to the area – one which has become degraded over recent years and these proposals offer an opportunity to re-focus this character and purpose – to reconnect the gardens to the rest of the town.
- 1.37 The proposals seek to deliver the following improvements:
 - Re-work the gardens to make them accessible, well lit and flexible as a space for events and markets etc.
 - Retain the existing trees as far as is safe and practicable,
 - retain the existing monument and create a more accessible and flexible space around the monument for events/gatherings.
 - Protect the existing access and frontage of the River Thames

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- Where possible eliminate any unsafe areas/secluded areas (the side of the existing steps
 - visually and physically integrate the main area of garden with the town and the adjacent public spaces.
 - Maintain, though slightly realign, the existing Thames Walk to maintain safe and accessible route.
 - Undertake community engagement and workshops as part of a heritage interpretation strategy which can be integrated into interpretation and wayfinding on site.
- 1.38 The proposals seek to create more meaningful connections between the adjacent buildings – particularly St Andrews Arts Centre – and the Gardens with the landscaping, wayfinding and seating visually connecting and relating to its context.
- 1.39 The designed visual inter-connection between the Gardens and the High Street/town will help to integrate the space back into the heart of the historic town.
- 1.40 The recent leasing, over the summer, of the Arts Centre to a local brewery demonstrates the potential of the Garden to work with the surrounding heritage as part of a destination and the proposals seek to create opportunities for cross-benefits.
- 1.41 The strong formation lines of the planting terraces along the floor wall are inspired by and reminiscent of Tilbury Fort and New Tavern Fort, located nearby, reflecting the area's defensive and industrial heritage – while responding to the existing flood infrastructure in a contemporary way.
- 1.42 The connection with its context is continued with the choice of materials – high-quality York stone pavers; corten steel edging – reinforcing the site's industrial history and complementing the historic red brick prevalent within the gardens and concrete seating which matches the Phase 1 scheme.
- 1.43 Overall, the proposals have had full regard for their sensitive heritage context and have been designed to stitch both the gardens and the fragments of wider heritage back together.
- 1.44 Overall, we believe that the proposals will have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

Compliance with legislation, policy & guidance

- 1.45 The conclusion of our assessment, contained in previous sections of this report, is that the proposals, preserve the special interest (and setting) of the nearby listed buildings and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and thus complies with S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 1.46 This report has provided a description and analysis of the significance of the site and its heritage context, as required by Paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy

Framework. In addition, the report, and others, describes how the proposed scheme will affect that heritage significance.

- 1.47 The proposed scheme complies with paragraph 214 of the NPPF – it certainly does not lead to ‘substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset’. We believe that it also complies with Paragraph 215 for the reasons given above. The contribution that the Gardens make to the conservation area will be enhanced by these proposals.
- 1.48 Overall, we believe that the proposals strike the right balance between creating a modern fit-for-purpose park with re-connecting the space to its historic surroundings, celebrating its more recent past – such as the statue to Mahinder Singh Pujji – as well as its historic relationship to the town and the River Thames.

The author of this report is Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC.

Nick is a Director of Portico Heritage. He has thirty years experience in the property sector, including working with KMHeritage and as a Project Director in the conservation team at Alan Baxter & Associates.

Nick spent nine years at Historic England where he was a Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas leading a specialist team of historic building inspectors, architects, and archaeologists on a wide range of heritage projects in East & South London. Previously a Conservation Officer at the London Borough of Bromley, Nick began his career at real estate consultancy Jones Lang LaSalle as a Chartered Surveyor.

Nick is a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and sits on the Historic England London Advisory Committee.

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