

The Hill, Northfleet

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



THE HILL, NORTHFLEET CONSERVATION AREA

Character Appraisal

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

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CONTENTS

- 1 Statement of Special Interest of the Conservation Area
- 2 The Hill, Northfleet Conservation Area
 - 2.1 Background
 - 2.2 Purpose of the appraisal
 - 2.3 Planning policy context
 - 2.4 Community Involvement
- 3 Location and Landscape Setting
 - 3.1 Geographic location
 - 3.2 Activities and uses
 - 3.3 Topography
 - 3.4 Geology and Biodiversity
 - 3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings
- 4 Historical Development
 - 4.1 Archaeology
 - 4.2 Historical development
- 5 Spatial Analysis
 - 5.1 Layout and spaces
 - 5.2 Relationship of buildings to spaces
 - 5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views
 - 5.4 Trees, boundaries and planting
- 6 Streetscape
 - 6.1 Public Realm

7 The buildings of the conservation area

- 7.1 Building types
- 7.2 Building form
- 7.3 Listed buildings
- 7.4 Locally listed buildings
- 7.5 Key unlisted buildings
- 7.6 Building Materials
- 7.7 Local Details

8 Character Areas

- 8.1 Summary of Character Areas
- 8.2 Character Area 1: The Hill
- 8.3 Character Area 2: St Botolph's Church
- 8.4 Character Area 3: London Road

9 Issues

- 9.1 Definition of issues
- 9.2 Conservation area boundary review
- 9.3 Education and information
- 9.4 Buildings at Risk
- 9.5 Uses/ vitality
- 9.6 Enhancement potential
- 9.7 Highways and traffic management
- 9.8 Locally Listed buildings
- 9.9 Trees

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Bibliography
- Appendix 2 Townscape Appraisal Map
 - Age of Buildings Map
 - Designations Map
 - Conservation Area Boundary Map 2009**

1. STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The Hill Conservation Area encompasses the core of the ancient settlement of Northfleet and is notable for its clusters of historic buildings, centred on a triangular-shaped former green. Some of these buildings have origins that can be traced back to the original Saxon settlement, the medieval manor of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the post-medieval coaching trade, or the post-17th century industries which operated along this part of the North Kent coast. There are also a small number of well detailed early 19th century residential villas, prominently located on the south side of the main road which runs along the top of the chalk cliff. Intermixed with these historic features are examples of later 20th century infill development. The age, use, scale, position, orientation and materials of the built form are therefore all distinctly varied.

The special interest of the Conservation Area is heightened by the topography of the area, with the principal feature being the chalk cliff which overlooks the River Thames, created by the quarrying of chalk over the past two hundred years. However, the sheer 80 foot cliffs that lie all around the Conservation Area and the extensive views over the river and the countryside are largely hidden from the core of the settlement by trees and buildings.

The main road, The Hill, snakes through the cliff tops above the industrial areas that line the foreshore. It is lined predominantly by commercial buildings, although there are also two prominent historic churches. The Parish Church of St Botolph is a grade I listed building and sits set well back from The Hill behind a lych gate and churchyard. The paved open space between the churchyard and the

road was once a village green which held markets and fairs. The 20th century Church of Our Lady of the Assumption provides a bold landmark at the southern end of The Hill.

The Hill has been part of the main London to Dover route since medieval times and the passing traffic has been instrumental in the development of the settlement. The introduction of a stagecoach route in the 18th century gave rise to coaching inns and resulted in the reorientation of the road to ease the sharp bend at the junction of Granby Road. Later, horse-drawn trams ran from Northfleet to Gravesend along London Road, passing the newly built villas which had been added in the early part of the 19th century. Throughout this period, Northfleet became increasingly industrialised, mostly through shipbuilding, chalk workings and cement and paper production.

The rural village green was paved over in the late 19th century and Northfleet incrementally lost its village character and became the more urban settlement it is today. In the late 20th century, modern shopping facilities were built in Gravesend and gradually many of the small local shops in Northfleet, such as the butchers and grocers, closed. However, the former Northfleet Urban District Council offices remain on The Hill and one of the large houses in London Road was used as a public library for many years, and both are important survivals of this former administrative centre.

The advent of out-of-town stores built close by saw further losses, although a few retail businesses still survive in the Conservation Area. These are also somewhat blighted by the heavy traffic which passes through the settlement. However, the survival of historic layout, the many historic buildings, and the dramatic location on the top of the chalk cliff,

all provide more positive features which justify this conservation area designation.

2. THE HILL, NORTHFLEET CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Background

The Hill Conservation Area was designated on 1st February 1990 by Gravesham Borough Council and was extended on 14th February 2001. The Conservation Area's boundary encompasses the core of the historic settlement of Northfleet, including The Hill, the Parish Church of St Botolph, and small parts of London Road, High Street and Dover Road. To the north, between the Conservation Area and the river Thames is a large industrial area.

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 December 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 Hill 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 the two other conservation areas in Northfleet and 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 a separate Development Plan Document within the LDF.

Preparation of the appraisal involved an extensive survey of the conservation area undertaken in October 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 new connection at nearby Ebbsfleet, now completed) and several major road building schemes such as the widening of the A2 to the 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, and more specifically, Northfleet's, special character can be preserved and enhanced while these large scale changes take place.

to this document for information.

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 The Hill 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 Northfleet and 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 29th November 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, and the documents were drafted. Subsequently, a period of full public consultation was held after which further revisions were made to arrive at this final agreed document. A Public Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 3

3. LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 Location

The Hill Conservation Area includes the core of the historic settlement of Northfleet, which is located on a chalk hill overlooking a heavily industrialised part of the Thames riverside. Further industrial estates and residential streets lie to the east, south and west.

Northfleet lies on the western outskirts of Gravesend, the administrative capital of the Borough of Gravesham in north-west Kent. The Borough is generally rural in appearance with a number of attractive historic villages, Northfleet and Gravesend forming the only urban area in the locality.

Gravesend is about 35 kilometres to the east of central London, with Canterbury approximately 65 kilometres to the south and east. The A2 and M2 trunk roads link these locations, and because of the proximity of the M25 and M20 motorways, 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"*. Within this study, the Dartford and Gravesham Conurbation is characterised as *"a well defined urban conurbation with some limited marshland and horticulture along its edges"*.

3.2 Activities and uses

There is a good deal of heavy industry in Northfleet, which can be traced back to the early mining and quarrying of the abundant natural resources in the area. These activities have grown in scale over the centuries and large works and industrial units are in operation to the north and east of the Conservation Area. The neighbouring industry results in a substantial amount of heavy goods traffic along The Hill and connecting roads. It has also led to the establishment of a number of light industrial suppliers on The Hill, such as car and van hire companies and motor part specialists. However, some of these businesses have closed and overall there has been a notable decline in trade in the Conservation Area.

The shops that still remain in The Hill include two fast food outlets, a convenience store, a pharmacy, bookmakers, a café and three public houses. There are also some other commercial businesses and services such as a funeral directors and a large medical practice. Two large churches and a veteran's club also serve the community. The remaining uses within the Conservation Area are residential, often provided in flats rather than family houses.

3.3 Topography

Lying on a chalk elevation The Hill area, Northfleet has a remarkable topography. Until the 19th century the ground used to slope down from the village to the Thames foreshore on the north and to Ebbsfleet in the south, but chalk quarrying during the 19th century has left the village standing exposed at the top of the chalk cliffs with some of the buildings being precariously close located at the edge of 80-foot-high cliffs. The major routes through

Northfleet (London Road, Dover Road, Springhead Road and The Hill) rise slightly to the north-west on a narrow wedge-shaped chalk ridge with sheer cliffs on either side. Views from Church Path look down into a disused chalk quarry where the ground level is 80 feet lower than in the Conservation Area. To the north, cliffs drop down to the shore to a variety of large industrial works on the banks of the river Thames, most memorably punctuated by a pair of tall industrial chimney stacks which provide a focus in views from the top of the cliffs.

3.4 Geology and Biodiversity

Northfleet lies on a thick belt of chalk that is the most significant 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 has created 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.

In 1797 Hasted described Northfleet: *“Its situation, from its neighbourhood to the marshes, is accounted unhealthy, and was it not for the burning of such quantities of lime so close to it, it would be much more so. The soil is in general good tillage land; the northern part, which is bounded by the river Thames, is chalk; the rest of it is still loam, though some of it has a strong mixture of gravel with it.”*

This abundant availability of chalk has had a considerable effect on the area as it has been excavated for many centuries and used for various activities associated with the construction of buildings. While chalk

itself is too soft to be used for building large structures, it supplied the raw materials for lime and, later, for cement. Flints, found with chalk, are also evident in parts of Northfleet, and have been used as a walling material.

Brick and lime kilns were established on the Northfleet foreshore in the 18th and 19th centuries. The settlement lies close to good sources of sand and these, which together with the London Clay found on the nearby Hoo Peninsula to the east, provided the raw materials for brick making. Gravesend therefore supplied many of the London stock bricks which were used for the intensive building programmes in London and Gravesend in the 19th and 20th centuries.

3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

The immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area are urban townscape, industrial foreshore and disused quarry.

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

- To the south: Mainly late 19th and early 20th century rows of terraced housing, parades of shops with occasional church buildings. The roads taper downhill defining the extent of chalk excavations either side;
- To the west: Disused chalk quarry spanned by a footbridge to other parts of Northfleet;
- To the north-west: Northfleet High Street featuring large gap sites, a few large individual buildings such as the Factory Club and modern rows of shops;
- To the north: Large industrial works and warehouses by the river;
- To the east: More industrial units lie along the shore, with the main road connecting

to Gravesend being defined along its south side by substantial 19th century villas.

4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Archaeology

Evidence of prehistoric activity in and around Northfleet is rich. Many finds from the lower Palaeolithic period having been made in the Ebbsfleet valley including the richest Levallois site in Britain (containing distinctive knapped flints). There have been prehistoric finds of flint axes and pottery sherds, and a late Saxon cemetery was found close to the Conservation Area in the 19th century. In 1911 the remains of a substantial Roman villa complex was discovered 700 metres to the west of St Botolph's Church. Other archaeological remains include a bottle kiln of 1848 (a Scheduled Monument) which survives from Aspdin's Portland Cement Factory on the foreshore. The most important and extensive local excavation in recent years, at nearby Springhead on the path of the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link, has uncovered the Roman town of *Vagniacae*, a former Iron Age settlement that the Romans occupied in 43 AD. However, The Hill Conservation Area is not within Kent County Council's designated *Areas of Archaeological Potential*.

4.2 Historical development

The name "Northfleet" is derived from "north creek" due to its position to the north of the creek that rises from Springhead to form the River Fleet or Ebbsfleet. From Saxon times until the 18th century Northfleet was a small rural settlement on the North Kent coast. The distinctive hilltop township sits above the Ebbsfleet valley, which lies to the west. The valley itself has supported human habitation since early prehistoric times. The Parish of Northfleet is large and provided plenty of natural resources to sustain settlers from the earliest of times.

While evidence of earlier human habitation exists in other parts of the parish, the earliest permanent settlement in Northfleet was established in the 5th century. At this time a Saxon church was built on the current site of St Botolph's Parish Church at the top of the hill overlooking the River Thames to the north. The settlement grew as the principal focus of the Manor of Norfluet, which in 748 was bought by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Its name is derived from Old English "nord" (north) "fleet" (creek).

By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 there were around 200 villagers, a mill and a rebuilt church, all under the control of the Archbishop. A manor house, home farm and tithe barn stood to the north west of the church and village green, possibly with a small market hall to the south. No market charter was ever granted to Northfleet, although weekly markets did run from medieval times until the end of the 18th century. Although three chartered annual fairs ran in Northfleet from 1201, it was the neighbouring settlement of Gravesend, with its landing place on the river Thames that was to develop into the larger market town. Northfleet has no records of medieval inns, although some of the establishments such as The Leather Bottel and The Coach and Horses that were recorded later may have medieval origins.

The slow development of Northfleet from a rural farming settlement was hastened by the fact that the main road from London to Dover, the Roman Watling Street fell out of use in medieval times and was replaced by the road that now includes Northfleet High Street and The Hill (A226). Northfleet grew slowly and by the 16th century a new community, Northfleet Hythe, had become established as a result of the burgeoning river related industries. It

was situated in the shadow of the towering chalk cliffs on the foreshore. Northfleet and Gravesend are located on a crucial stretch of the Thames where it meets the Estuary and large ships unloaded wares and passengers at Gravesend to be transported to The Pool of London by tilt boat. The rowdy waterside inns of Northfleet foreshore became notorious.

The benefits of the riverside location were further harnessed in the 18th century when shipyards and waterside inns were established in and around Northfleet Hythe. Many great ships were built at Pitcher's Shipyard for the East India Company, Royal Navy and international customers. This coincided with the large-scale excavation of the white chalk cliffs that had stood close to the riverside and some large houses were built for wealthy industrialists who started operations in the area, such as Old Crete Hall built for Benjamin Burch. The gaping chalk pits created new scars in the landscape, notably across the old Fair Field and parts of the foreshore became filled with factories and mills. Cement production was established in Northfleet by the turn of the century, by which time the Turnpike Commissioners laid a new road across the cliff top to connect Northfleet and Gravesend.

The Commissioners also made adjustments to the road layout around The Hill at this time to improve the passage for stagecoaches travelling between London and Dover. This, the oldest settlement in Northfleet became Upper Northfleet and was still a fairly small village surrounded by fields (Barrack Field housed billeted soldiers waiting for transportation to the Napoleonic Wars from 1806) although the chalk excavations to the west were starting to remove large parts of the hillside.

Another large area of chalk excavation close to the eastern boundary with Gravesend Parish was transformed into the Rosherville Gardens in the 1830s. At this time there were a number of ventures to develop Northfleet into an exclusive Gravesend suburb and isolated pockets of houses were built in newly laid roads and along the Overcliffe.

Rosherville Gardens (Kent Zoological and Botanical Gardens Institution) was the brainchild of Jeremiah Rosher, a local industrialist who had built a new Crete Hall in 1818 and was keen to capitalise on the burgeoning fashion for taking day trips by steamboat from London to Gravesend. The gardens were lavish, featuring cliff top walks, a bear pit, a bijou theatre, a lake and illuminations. A new pier was built to receive the growing number of visitors and a grand hotel was built between the pier and the entrance to the gardens. The opening of this new visitor attraction coincided with the reopening of the Clifton Baths and the construction of the Town Pier and Gordon Promenade in Gravesend. Rosher's plan was to make Rosherville a prestigious residential area that would mirror the Milton New Town development based around Harmer Street on the other side of Gravesend.

The gardens were attracting 20,000 visitors a week by the 1850s and continued to be popular until the end of the century when other resort towns in the South East became more easily accessible due to the improvements in the railway. Large houses were built along the south side of Overcliffe overlooking the Thames towards Tilbury and more residential roads were laid running south towards the Old Dover Road.

At the end of the 19th century industry was firmly established in Northfleet with the large scale production of cement and paper and

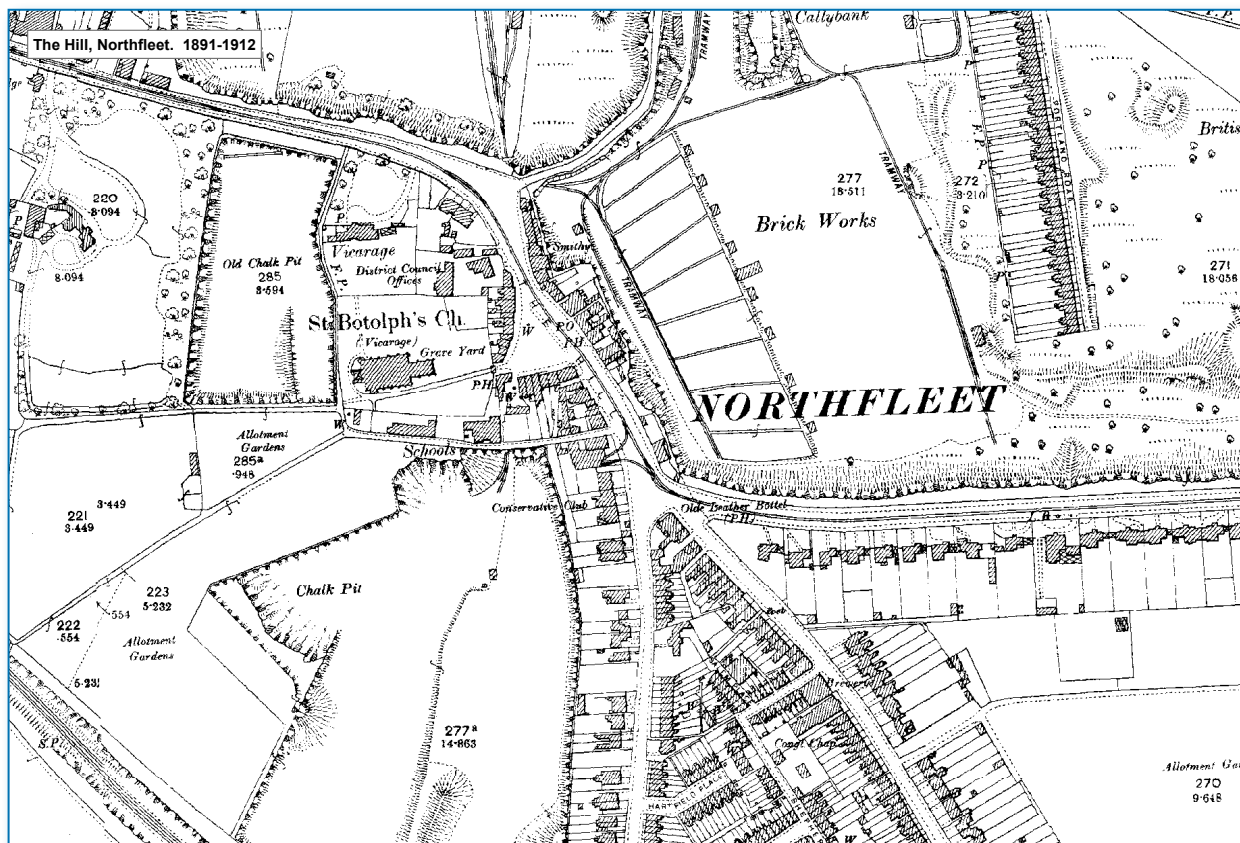
the appearance of the landscape had been transformed by chalk excavation. At this time the Northfleet Urban District Council was formed and the last elements of the rural settlement were removed as pavements and kerbs were laid and trams installed on the roads.

As the twentieth century progressed, Northfleet struggled to hold onto its tourist trade and the Rosherville Gardens and its dedicated branch train line were eventually forced to close. The industrialised parts of Northfleet then spread to fill the void and, among them, the Henley Telegraph Works was established, which played a vital role during the Second World War. Henley's produced trans-Atlantic submarine Telegraph cables in Northfleet and the company helped to develop Operation P.L.U.T.O, the cross Channel pipeline that supplied the Allied Troops with fuel during their advance across the continent after the invasion of Normandy. Northfleet has continued to exist as a heavily industrialised conurbation with factories and mills located close to the river and residential roads spreading inland.

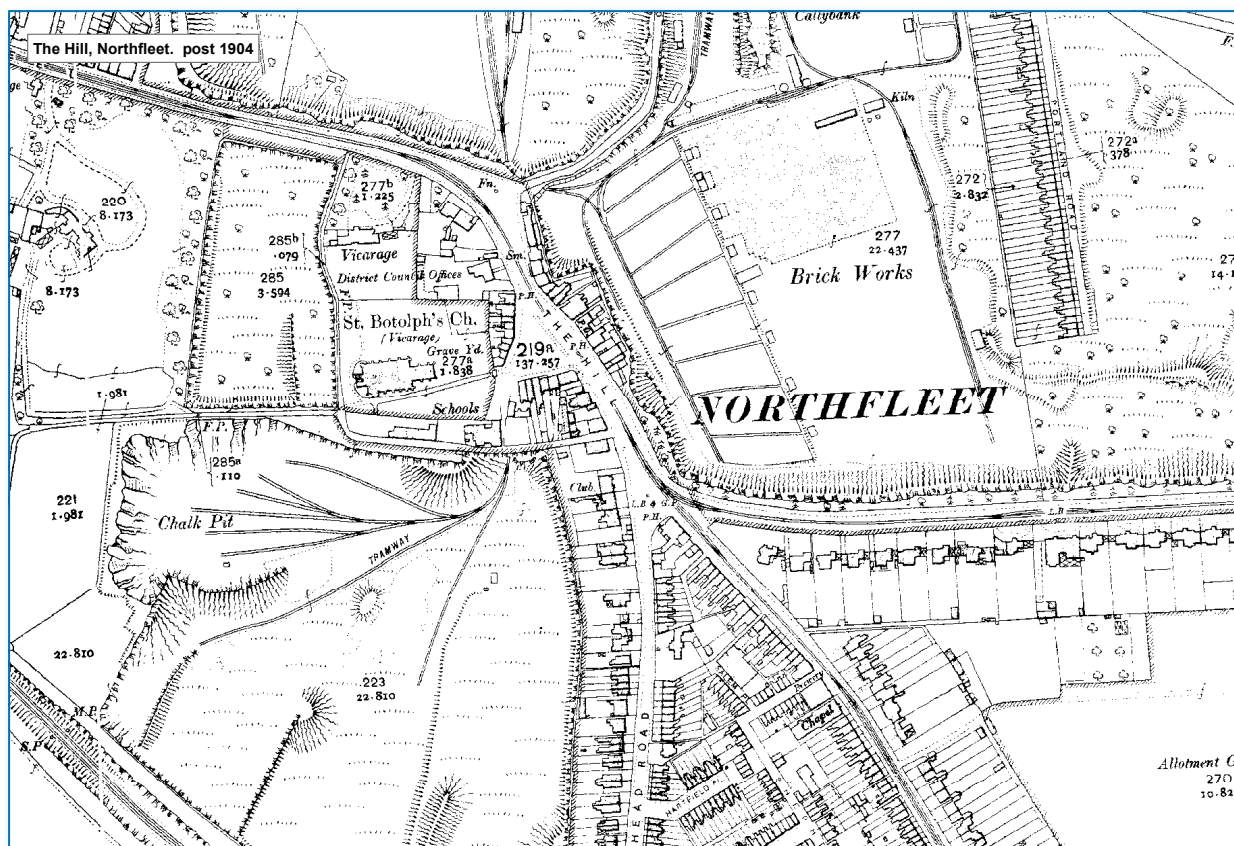
Northfleet's location on the top of considerable chalk deposits has led to much of the landscape being cut away during the past two centuries which has substantially altered its appearance and paved the way for the industrial and commercial use that has dominated the northern part of the parish ever since.



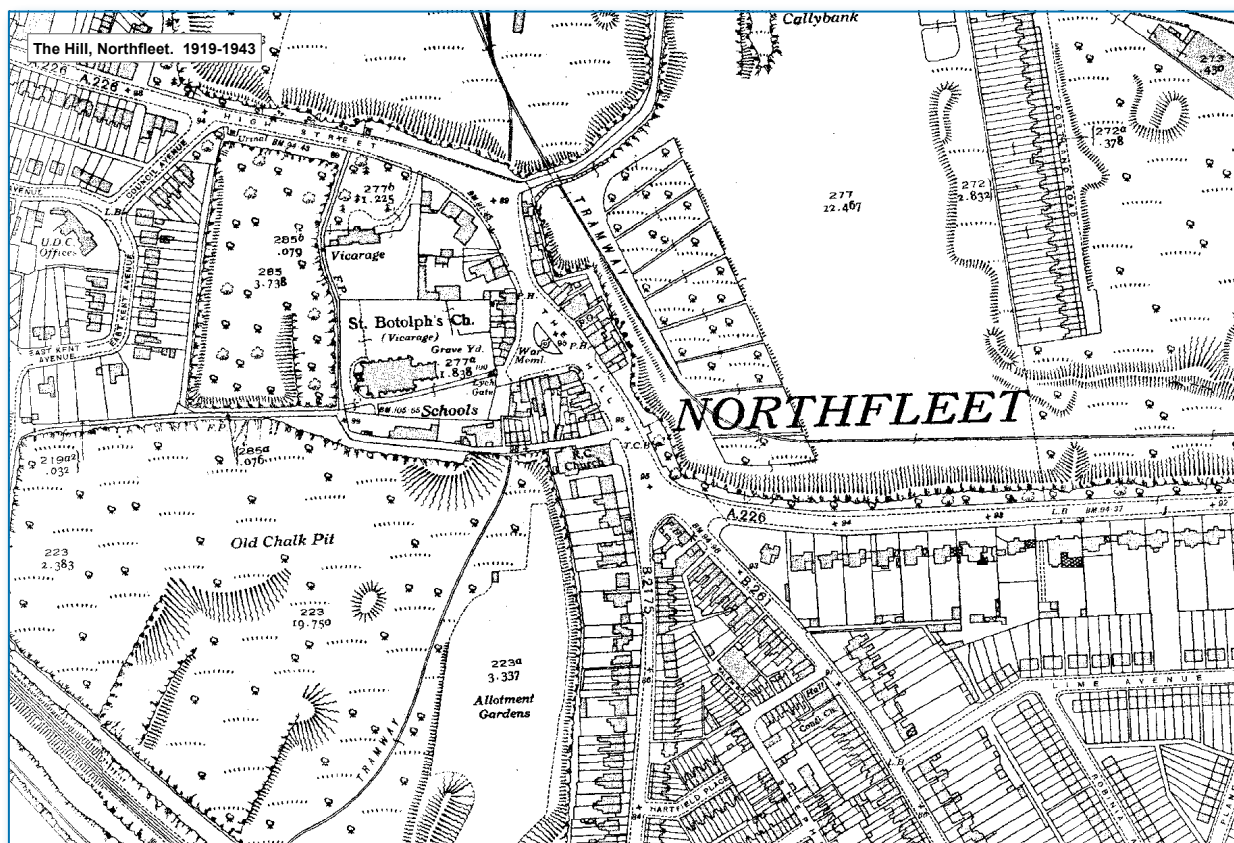
1843 - 1893



1891 - 1912



Post 1904



1919 - 1943

5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Layout and spaces

The Hill is part of an ancient route along the cliff tops overlooking the River Thames. The road connected London to Canterbury then to Dover and first came into prominence when the Roman Watling Street fell into disuse in the medieval period.

A variety of buildings line the main stretch of The Hill, which widens at the former site of the village green outside the entrance to the parish church. This triangular open space was first paved in the late 19th century. The buildings that line the green directly front the pavement, although there is a large gap in the building line in the south-west where there are views to the parish church. A War Memorial and some mature trees stand close to the lych gate and church wall. The other parts of the former green include car parking spaces, a central pedestrian area with planting, seating and a canopied shelter. On the other side of The Hill a line of buildings of varying ages and styles line the pavement providing the streetscene with a sense of enclosure.

The road widens markedly again at the junction with the three main access roads from the south and west, Springhead Road, Dover Road and London Road. The latter was not laid out until the early 19th century when it was created to form a direct connection with Gravesend. Large detached villas with front gardens were built in the 1830s on the southern side of the road, and The Leather Bottel Public House still stands on the corner of Dover Road and Springhead Road. This part of the Conservation Area is marked by large areas of tarmacadam, which fill the various spaces formed by the road system and pavements. At the broadest section of

road at the corner of The Hill and London Road is a viewing platform with views across Northfleet to the river Thames and which features a 6-seater early 20th century wrought iron bench

Green open space is mainly restricted to the churchyard and gardens surrounding the parish church, and partly on the corner of The Hill next to the entrance to Granby Road. Before the 19th century this area was the route of The Hill and was lined by cottages, which were demolished when the road was realigned. It now contains a small section of grass, an area of flint stones set in concrete, and a large mature tree.

5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

The varying phases of development have resulted in clusters of buildings of differing arrangements, some of them facing directly onto the pavement, and others are more dispersed and orientated in a less formal way. The earliest building is the parish church, which was built on the site of an earlier Saxon church and incorporates some pre-Norman structure. It is set within a generous grassed churchyard that is well stocked with trees and retains a rural appearance. Some of its green space has been relinquished for the building of a modern parish hall. At the northern side, car parking, utility buildings and the modern residential block at Vicarage Drive intrude into the rural setting. They were built on the grounds of two historic buildings that once stood out in status within the village scene: the Old Vicarage (demolished in 1961) and the Northfleet Manor House (demolished end of 19th century).

The frontages on the western side of The Hill generally follow a line on the back edge of the pavement although Granby Place is

set further back from the road. At the time of Granby Place's construction the road ran further east to leave space for two cottages in front of it. The eastern side of the road remained unchanged when it was re-aligned. The modern buildings at the northern end were built on the footprint of earlier buildings, hence they lead towards the corner of Granby Place, rather than following the present day curve of the road.

Narrow alleys run between the row of buildings on the eastern side of The Hill, which form a strong sense of enclosure around the former village green. The alleys lead to short back gardens, which in turn give way to the sheer cliffs that drop to a large paper factory on the foreshore. There is a fairly regular building line, although the principal structures of nos. 31 to 34 are set back and only their later added shopfronts bring their frontages to the pavement edge.

Beyond the Queen's Head Public House the continuity of the row begins to fragment, and it ends with a single storey modern red brick building followed by railings and trees that line the edge of the chalk cliffs. Opposite, the western side of The Hill retains a fairly continuous built form with some gaps as it leads out of the Conservation Area. The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption towers above the street and the narrow entrance to Church Path.

Along Church Path a short row of 1930s houses faces southwards and some modern garages and parking areas fill the space behind the shops at nos. 4 to 7 The Hill. Tucked away further west along Church Path is the 1960s built Vicarage with a generous garden that is fenced off from the churchyard and footpath.

Following south from The Hill the streetscene opens up at the junction of the four roads. Visually, space dominates over built form as The Hill broadens to three lanes with a concrete central reservation and trees lining the eastern side of the road. However, the large weatherboarded Leather Bottel Public House is a strong landmark along with the Catholic Church. Densely packed terraced housing stretches away to the south beyond the Conservation Area boundary. Contrary to the buildings in The Hill the large villas that lead to the southern boundary of the Conservation Area in London Road stand in generously sized plots, facing towards the Thames and looking out over the relatively wide road.

5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

The principal landmarks in The Hill Conservation Area are:

- The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption;
- The Leather Bottel Public House;
- The Queen's Head Public House;
- St Botolph's Parish Church;
- Granby Place;
- 26/27 The Hill (former Northfleet Council Offices);
- The Heritage.

These landmark buildings provide focal points within the Conservation Area, either as individual buildings through their architecture (The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption), their different building form to their neighbours (e.g. The Queen's Head Public House) or as distinctive corner buildings (e.g. The Leather Bottel Public House. Nos. 26/27 The Hill (former Northfleet Council Offices) make an attractive addition to the streetscene set close to the pavement edge with an elaborate shop

frontage and striking white dressings

The key view is north-south along the curving length of The Hill with the former village green area as a focal point. This layout provides a traditional village arrangement which is reinforced by features such as the adjoining lych gate followed by the churchyard and medieval parish church beyond. The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption is due to its impressive scale and architecture the unchallenged landmark of the area, seen from within The Hill Conservation Area as well as in long-distance views from all directions.

The principal positive views are:

- From the War Memorial to St Botolph's Church;
- Towards the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, from London Road, Granby Road, the parish churchyard and along The Hill;
- From Church Path across the chalk quarries;
- From the viewing platform at the corner of The Hill and London Road across the foreshore to Gravesend and along the Thames;
- Along London Road towards The Leather Bottel Public House.

5.4 Trees, boundaries and planting

Trees play a very important role in creating a sense of enclosure in the Conservation Area and terminating views out across the chalk excavations on the perimeter. Important tree groups are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map but are most notably situated on the north side of London Road (continuing into the west side of The Hill), and along Church Path and in the parish churchyard around the Granby Pace car park, and in the

Granby Place garden. Other trees on the northern boundary of The Hill as it runs into High Street are also significant. Some young trees have more recently been planted on the former village green.

Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area abut the pavement and the most noteworthy departure from this can be seen in London Road where the large rendered villas have generous front gardens behind brick and flint boundary walls. Some of these frontages have been given hard surface treatments to create parking spaces for cars. Granby Place and the presbytery are similarly situated behind front gardens and brick boundary walls and greenery. Green painted iron railings line the back of the pavement in front of the trees that mark the cliff edge in The Hill and London Road. A wall featuring many different materials including brick, flint and concrete blocks extends from the entrance to Granby Road and joins with the High Street to the north.

St Botolph's church features distinctive boundary treatments on most sides of its churchyard. Facing The Hill is a red brick and flint wall and timber lych gate that was restored under an IMPACT scheme in 1991. To the south and west older red, yellow and blue brick walling rises to around two metres high with gateways onto Church Path. Low blue painted railings have replaced some sections of wall. The northern side lacks a boundary feature though some of the headstones of the churchyard have been removed and laid along the bank leading down to the church car park

There is some planting on the former village green, which was refurbished in the early 1990s to provide an improved public open space with some designated parking spaces. Another open area to the south of

the churchyard has modest planting in brick planters. Substantial areas of the pavement outside the presbytery on The Hill and to the north east of The Leather Bottel Public House have been converted into flower beds.

6. STREETSCAPE

6.1 Public realm

Pavements

The pavements in The Hill Conservation Area feature modern materials (concrete slabs or poured concrete with concrete kerbs) although the traditional relationship of raised pavement to road surface has been maintained in terms of levels. The pavements are fairly narrow alongside the shops that directly front them, but widen out at each end of The Hill and around the village 'green'. Generally, the pavements in the Conservation Area are poorly maintained with many broken or cracked slabs, probably due to vehicles being parked on them.

The central part of the "green" features some red block paving and roadside gutters constructed of rows of square granite setts. The square setts have also been laid in the pavement outside the parish church to delineate a winding path leading up to the lych gate. Another variety of pavement materials are the flint cobbles set in concrete around the entrance to Granby Road and outside no.29a The Hill.

Street furniture, signage and other features

The Conservation Area retains a mixture of mostly modern features, some of them using traditional materials and details, such as cast iron. The majority of street furniture in The Hill is located in the village green area, where there are timber posts set in the pavement to prevent off street parking, a large steel framed shelter, some low timber benches and a few steel waste bins. There are further benches in the churchyard and the small gardens next to Church Path.

Timber and cast iron bollards prevent car parking on the pavements outside nos. 26, 27, 30, 31 and 31a The Hill, The Coach and Horses Public House and outside the Catholic Church on Church Path. Steel pedestrian barriers are fixed to the pavement and central reservation outside the Granby Place surgery and a steel white painted barrier blocks the entrance to Granby Road to motor traffic. On the southern corner of Granby Road and The Hill is a large billboard that faces up the High Street, next to which a former street lamp stands half-removed from the pavement.

Other street furniture in the Conservation Area includes modern bus shelters and a bus stop, a 20th century post box, a grade II listed K6 telephone box and an iron bench overlooking the foreshore opposite the Catholic Church. An early 20th century electricity cabinet stands on the corner of The Hill and London Road.

Additional clutter exists in form of freestanding shop signs and pub tables that are placed outside some of the businesses on The Hill, most notably the convenience store at no.5 and the Coach and Horses Public House. Also, a number of traffic island illuminated columns are fixed to the various crossing points on The Hill.

Highway signs are fixed to freestanding poles around the Conservation Area and the southern end of The Hill also has road directions painted onto the street surface. One very large highway sign is set in the stone treatment on the corner of The Hill by Granby Road.

Street lighting

Street lighting is all modern. Tall hockey-stick style modern street lights predominate

in the Conservation Area and fully light the busy highway of The Hill and London Road. Elsewhere are some other examples of street lighting, including shorter columns around the former village green which all have round clear glass lamps. In the churchyard there is a taller streetlight with a conical lamp with two floodlights attached lower down its standard. CCTV cameras are also fixed to the church and church hall. Church Path has a single modern street lamp outside the Catholic Church.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths

Pedestrian access through the Conservation Area is generally good although there are no controlled crossings across The Hill or London Road. The former village green area has been made more pedestrian-friendly by allowing only limited car parking, and by the provision of wide pavements with shallow access ramps for the disabled and mothers with buggies. However, pedestrian movement is sometimes hindered by the A boards placed on the narrower sections of pavement which lie in front of some of the shops.

Church Path is under-maintained and under-lit, while providing access to other parts of Northfleet via the pedestrian bridge across the chalk quarry to the west. The poor maintenance of the route, coupled with the harsh security fencing on the southern stretch of the path, creates a rather hostile environment.

Traffic and parking

The heavy traffic through the Conservation Area is constant and its overall effect is detrimental to the character of the historic settlement. However, it is difficult to remove the traffic due to the proximity of Northfleet to

nearby industrial sites, and also to its location on a major route out of Gravesend. Although significant controls are in place to prevent unwanted car parking in the Conservation Area, illegal or dominant parking is still a major issue. Many front gardens and forecourts have been converted for car parking purposes and this has had a negative effect on the appearance of the Conservation Area.

7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Building types

The historic buildings in the Conservation Area have been built at different periods in the development of the area and have served a variety of uses, often changing over time to another use. There is a great variety of building types: the two churches, inns of varying ages, 19th century shops, a 20th century clubhouse, 19th century houses, 20th century offices and 21st century flats. The predominant building type is commercial, including public houses, shops and businesses. These range from an early Tudor timber framed building (no.31 The Hill known as The Heritage) to a 1960s office block. Many of the buildings also have accommodation above ground floor shops, although other than on the eastern side of The Hill, there are some solely residential properties: e.g. the large detached 19th century villas on London Road, the block erected to the rear of no.2 London Road, and The Cloisters.

7.2 Building form

The buildings of The Hill have a domestic scale and are arranged in short rows of terraced and individual buildings that are single, two or three storeys tall. The most tightly packed of two and three storey terraced buildings are in The Hill around the former village green. These tend to be two bay structures, built of brick and with pitched tile or slate roofs.

Further away from the village green, the building form varies more with larger individual buildings such as churches and the Granby Place, the latter now being a surgery and care

home. The residential buildings on London Road are large squat buildings, rendered and painted white with projecting bay windows. Modern infill development has created a further variety of building forms such as the large residential development behind no.2 London Road. This is a wide four storey structure, set at a 45 degree angle to the road, with a modern arrangement of window openings.

7.3 Listed buildings

The Hill Conservation Area contains eleven listed buildings and structures including two churches. The parish church of St Botolph's is the only grade I listed building in Northfleet, and is largely medieval in origin, although it has some earlier structure incorporated into it, most notably part of the west tower. The fine flintwork is the church's most distinctive feature.

The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption is a grade II* listed building designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and built between 1913 and 1916. The church is a considerable landmark at the southern end of The Hill and its tall square tower can be seen in long-distance views from all directions. It is built of reinforced concrete, an experimental technique at the time, and faced in brown Crowborough brick. This impressive church has a strong vertical emphasis. On the opposite side of the road stands a grade II listed K6 telephone box, also designed by Scott.

The other listed buildings in the Conservation Area are all grade II and include a 15th century open hall (The Heritage) and 17th and 18th century inns (The Leather Bottel and The Coach and Horses). These buildings have been much altered over the years and

feature some local historic features such as weatherboarding and distinctive chimney stacks as well as a modern extension and signage. In the case of The Heritage, the petite two storey building is sandwiched between later shops, and most of its historic structure is only visible from the inside of the building. The two public houses are more prominent features within the streetscene: The Coach and Horses occupies the north-eastern corner of the former village green while The Leather Bottel stands on a key corner site at the junction of Dover and Springhead Road providing a strong focus in views south from The Hill.

No.7 The Hill is also listed grade II. It is an 18th century house built of red brick that rises to two storey plus attic, and stands on the corner of the former village green with a canopied 19th century shopfront that has been heavily modernised. Granby Place is a pair of semi-detached two storey brick houses with a fine hipped slate roof, built around 1830. This key building in the Conservation Area stands on the corner of The Hill and High Street behind a front garden and high brick boundary wall, the latter of which is listed in its own right together with the gate piers.

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 Northfleet 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 Northfleet 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:

- The Hill: nos. 3, 5 to 12, 26 & 27 (former Northfleet Council Offices), 30, 31a to 37 and The Queen’s Head Public House;

- Church Path: nos. 1 to 4;
- London Road: nos. 1 to 5;
- War Memorial.

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 The Hill and London Road have been built using local materials, particularly yellow stock brick, although the slate which is commonly used to cover roofs was imported from elsewhere in the country, usually Wales. Another local material that is used in the Conservation Area is flint. This features on the parish church, the boundary wall of no.1 London Road, the top of the wall running into High Street and the resurfaced areas close to the entrance to Granby Road. Older buildings, such as The Heritage, retain vestigial remains of a timber frame, using oak or elm taken from the nearby forests of the Weald.

Some buildings, including those in London Road, have a cement render which would have been produced in the factories on the foreshore only a few hundred metres away. Northfleet was at the centre of some innovation in construction techniques in the 19th century, including the invention of Roman and Portland cements. Many cement works and chalk pits were established in the area, so it is not surprising that the Conservation Area

retains buildings which use these materials. Another example is the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, which is built of reinforced concrete with brown Kentish brick.

7.7 Local details

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

- The use of yellow and red stock brick;
- The use of concrete render;
- Hipped and gabled slate roofs;
- Timber weatherboarding;
- 19th century shopfronts, some projecting;
- Brick chimney stacks;
- Small dormer windows;
- Sash windows;
- Cement tripartite windows with applied columns on the first floor above shops;
- Flint boundary walls;
- Cast iron early 20th century rainwater goods;
- Square and canted bays (London Road);
- Hood moulds over windows (London Road and the Presbytery);
- Steps up to front door (London Road);
- 6-seater early 20th century wrought iron bench on viewing platform.

8. CHARACTER AREAS

8.1 Summary of Character Areas

Within the present boundaries The Hill Conservation Area can be divided into three 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 three Character Areas are:

Character Area 1: The Hill

Character Area 2: St Botolph's Church

Character Area 3: London Road

8.2 Character Area 1: The Hill

This character area is notable for the varied character of the buildings and their arrangement around the former village green. There is a contrast between the heavily built up perimeter, with buildings clustered along the edge of the pavement, and the open space at the centre which is filled with only an open shelter, some seating, young trees and parked cars. Also, different parts of The Hill vary greatly in their architecture and appearance.

The southern end of The Hill is dominated by the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption. The small presbytery next door, a former tram manager's house, is dwarfed by it and its dainty proportions and features such as hood moulds over the windows are in stark contrast with the austere and expansive scale of the church. This is the most obvious example of the juxtaposition of styles within the Character Area.

Beyond the entrance to Church Path, the

modern flats of The Cloisters lack any features that would complement the historic character of the area; the light yellow brick, soldier courses and mansard roof have no particular relationship to the architectural features found elsewhere in the Conservation Area. This is an example of how the special interest of a Conservation Area can sometimes be devalued by inappropriate modern redevelopment

Further north, the pair of late 19th century houses retain some character at first floor level with tripartite windows and applied columns. However, the garish modern shopfront and signage detracts from the historic appearance of the building. Bordering the former village green, no.7 The Hill, now a pharmacy, is an 18th century house, formerly a butcher's shop and slaughterhouse. This has fine quality brickwork and an altered 19th century canopied shopfront. Its neighbours, which also face the green to the north, are two three storey two-bay Georgian houses, one of which (No. 8) has been unsympathetically altered. They are adjoined by a terrace of four two-storey 19th century buildings, in which on ground floor level a longstanding funeral director's business has a traditional style shopfront across and a pair of timber cart doors. Minor features such as small dormers in its slate roof add to the historic value of this group of buildings.

The buildings on the other side of the green have an entirely different appearance. With their backs bordering the churchyard they feature the single-storey 1950s Veteran's Club and a pair of two storey 17th century buildings, one of which is The Coach and Horses Public House. Historic and modern are placed side by side, the historic buildings with traditional features such as weatherboarding and sash windows, the 20th century insertion built to

less appealing standard design with modern materials.

The Hill continues north with a range of buildings including the 19th century former Council Offices with an attractive converted shopfront, and the grade II listed Granby Place with its fine brickwork set behind a small garden. On the other side of the road, uninspiring modern single storey shops have been constructed alongside far more historic buildings including no.30 The Hill. This 19th century building is attached to the 15th century former inn known as The Hermitage, with other 19th century buildings serving as shops continuing the parade. These buildings have some interesting features remaining at the first floor and roof level (such as prominent brick chimney stacks) but generally have poor quality modern shopfronts and garish signage at ground floor level.

Nos. 36 and 37 have late 19th century shopfronts projecting from early 19th century houses, and their diminutive scale next to the rebuilt Edwardian Queen's Head Public House (with its bold applied timbered frontage) reinforces the haphazard appearance of the architecture in The Hill.

The principal positive features of Character Area 1: The Hill are:

- Urban character;
- Variety of building form, style, scale, materials and age along The Hill;
- Arrangement of rows of buildings facing each other around the former village green;
- The Catholic Church and Leather Bottel public house are landmark buildings;
- Buildings arranged with a common building line on the back of the pavement;
- Mainly a domestic scale of building on

narrow or wide plots;

- Hipped or gabled roofs covered in slate;
- Use of yellow stock and red brick, which is sometimes weatherboarded (either on brick or on timber frame) or rendered;
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;
- Some modern infill (The Veteran's Club, nos. 4, 29 and 29a The Hill) with a more horizontal emphasis, contrasting with the height and narrowness of the buildings on the main streets;
- Some 19th century shopfronts.

The principal negative features of Character Area 1: The Hill are:

- Many modern shopfronts inserted in 19th century buildings, which are often poorly maintained. Unsightly additions include roller shutters and garish signage;
- A number of poorly maintained frontages;
- Unsympathetic alterations to front elevations such as pebble dash rendering at No. 8 and The Forge, white ceramic tiling at No. 31a, and use of unsuitable facing bricks at No. 29 The Hill;
- Unsympathetic, poor quality 20th century development, i.e. The Cloisters, no. 29a and No. 41 The Hill, the church hall and the Veteran's club;
- Some poorly maintained and/or vacant buildings with no identified use, notably Sales of Northfleet;
- The negative appearance of poorly maintained alleyways and the rear of properties on the east side of The Hill;
- Loss of architectural features, notably sash windows at first floor level;
- Street clutter created by freestanding signs outside shops;

- Placement of satellite dishes on the front elevations of properties;
- The recent closure of many businesses and shops in the area;
- Prominent billboard by the junction with Granby Road;
- Bent and twisted pedestrian railings outside Granby Place;
- Unsympathetic boundary features and security measures, e.g. steel fence along Church Path and next to Granby Place;
- Some repairs are required in the former village green area, notably the steel canopy;
- Red block paving of the former village green,
- The speed and volume of the traffic.

8.3 Character Area 2: St Botolph's Church

The area around the church is distinctly rural in appearance and, therefore, differs greatly from the more urban parts of the Conservation Area. It includes the churchyard, parish church and hall, and the vicarage.

The main entrance to the churchyard is through the attractive timber lychgate which is attached to a low brick and flint wall. The churchyard is well maintained and a number of the headstones in the eastern part have been removed so that there is a large area of open grass next to the car park. The 1960s built church hall is connected to the church and its rigid design and brown brick walls visually jar against the dark grey flint of the medieval church.

The Church itself is the focal point of the character area and extends westwards to Church Path. Graves, an obelisk memorial and chest tombs can be seen in the churchyard and there is public access

around each side of the church. In the northern part of the churchyard, many of the grave markers have been removed and a tightly packed line of mature trees runs adjacent to the churchyard wall and Church Path.

To the south, the small church garden is grassed and has a welcome seating area. However, its general appearance could be improved with further landscaping and maintenance. Here, the tall brick churchyard wall has been dismantled and there are some views through the trees that line Church Path across to the Ebbsfleet valley. Next to it to the south of the churchyard stands the modern vicarage on the site of a 19th century National School. It is surrounded by gardens which positively contribute to the setting.

The principal positive features of Character Area 2: St Botolph's Church are:

- Rural character;
- The medieval flint parish church;
- Gravestones and chest tombs;
- Church garden;
- Concrete memorial obelisk;
- Timber lych gate and brick and flint wall;
- Mature trees and historic boundary walls, some of which mark the curtilage of buildings that have long been demolished.

The principal negative features of Character Area 2: St Botolph's Church are:

- Litter in the churchyard and gardens;
- Graffiti on the rear of the church hall;
- Removal, laying-down and neglect of the gravestones and chest tombs;
- Loss of some of the boundary wall around the church garden;
- Unsympathetic design of the church hall and the vicarage;

- Floodlighting and CCTV cameras fixed to the church and church hall;
- Appearance of the car park and Church Path.

8.4 Character Area 3: London Road

This character area covers the south of the Conservation Area including The Leather Bottle Public House at the junction of the four roads and some early 19th century suburban development along London Road.

The Leather Bottel is a bulky landmark corner building that features white painted weatherboarding applied timbering and a square tile roof with small dormer windows and a number of stout brick chimney stacks. To the north and west it abuts the road and there is a small area containing flower beds set in the pavement to the north east. Behind the public house is a large surface car park, occupying the former garden to the pub, which is dominated by a large billboard fixed to the gable wall of no.1 Dover Road. Although being technically outside the Conservation Area, the billboard has a considerable negative visual impact on the streetscene.

Nos. 1 to 5 London Road are a group of handsome 19th century villas. They are large residences with angular facades including projecting bays, front steps and distinctive roofs that accentuate their solid appearance. Their white painted render exteriors give a certain group value as do features such as hood moulds. Their special interest is also discernible in their large plots and the gaps and views between them. Unfortunately some of these gaps have been reduced by infill development, most notably, a large development which has replaced an earlier extension to the former library behind no.2 London Road. However, the retention of the

flint wall around no.1 London Road adds considerably to the charm of this corner of the Conservation Area.

London Road has the character of a modern highway, with defined cycle lanes and dominant road markings. There are extensive views down the straight road to Gravesend, although the views north towards the river are blocked by tall trees.

The principal positive features of Character Area 3: London Road are:

- Suburban character;
- The Leather Bottel Public House – a local landmark;
- Detached prestigious houses;
- Concrete render;
- Weatherboarded and painted exteriors;
- Square and canted bays;
- Hood moulds over windows;
- Steps up to the front doors;
- Flint and brick boundary walls;
- Gaps between buildings;
- Buildings arranged with a common building line behind front gardens;
- A domestic scale of building on wide plots;
- Steeply pitched roofs covered in slate;
- Tall chimneystacks;
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;
- 6-seater early 20th century wrought iron bench.

The principal negative features of Character Area 3: London Road are:

- Paving over and lack of soft landscaping of front gardens;
- Poor maintenance or replacement of some boundary treatments;

- Billboard on no.1 Dover Road;
- Density and scale of the 21st century infill development behind No. 2 London Road;
- Speed and volume of traffic.

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. They provide the basis for the Site Specific Actions in the Management Proposals. 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 there is little scope for extension of the boundary of The Hill Conservation Area as the designation already covers most of the special architectural or historic interest related to The Hill. However, the former club building and Methodist church on Dover Road have special architectural and historic interest and consideration may be given to a southern extension to the Conservation Area.

9.3 Education and information

Active measures for promoting better understanding of Northfleet are lacking and would be welcome. Promoting an understanding of Northfleet's place in history would underpin the regeneration of the town by drawing in external interest and resources. However, Gravesham Borough Council has recently published a number of guides in order 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 a number of buildings in the Conservation Area that are not necessarily in need of repair and refurbishment, but which are vacant. Should vacancy become a long term situation, this poses a considerable risk to the future survival of buildings. The buildings include: Sales of Northfleet (nos. 34, 35 and 37 The Hill).

9.5 Uses/ vitality

Northfleet retains a limited number of shops and some units have fallen into disuse. Their vacancy has led to a loss of vitality and an increase in estate agency boards fixed to the buildings or displayed in the windows, which detracts from the character of the area.

Recent developments have often been residential and this does not encourage the revitalisation of The Hill as a commercial centre. One of the challenges for vacant commercial properties, such as Sales of Northfleet, is finding a suitable use that will not have a negative impact on an area which has very limited car parking.

9.6 Enhancement potential

There is considerable scope for enhancement of both the buildings and open spaces in The Hill. While property owners should be encouraged to make suitable improvements, wide ranging enhancement can probably only be achieved if other factors, such as the vacancy of commercial units in the area and traffic issues, are addressed as part of a comprehensive scheme to improve the whole area. Also, there is a strong case for the introduction of Council led grant schemes that would help owners with the upkeep and repair of historic buildings or enable environmental

improvements, including the re-installation of historic architectural features in the area.

The most immediate areas for improvement are the modern shopfronts added to historic buildings and unsympathetic alterations to front elevations, which currently detract from the character and appearance of the area. These include: nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 29, 31a, and 32 The Hill.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the loss of original architectural details such as windows and doors and roof coverings, even on listed properties (Granby Place and no. 7 The Hill). Historic boundary walls have also suffered in the Conservation Area through lack of maintenance or inappropriate treatment (e.g. rendering).

The following buildings would benefit from large scale improvement or replacement:

- The Hill: Nos.29, 29a, 30 (The Forge), 40, 41, public conveniences, The Veteran's Club
- The church hall;
- The garages along Church Path.

The following buildings would benefit for minor improvements, repairs or suitable replacement of unsympathetic features:

- No. 7 The Hill: windows, concrete roof tiles;
- No. 8 The Hill: pebble dashed render and uPVC windows;
- Nos. 31a to 33, 34 and 35 The Hill: uPVC first floor windows;
- No.37 The Hill: general maintenance, weeds growing on flat roof.

The following shops have modern shopfronts which should be improved in terms of design,

materials and signage:

- No.8 The Hill: plate glass shopfront and modern signage;
- No.29a The Hill: modern signage, roller shutters;
- No.31a. The Hill: unattractive shopfront and signage;
- No.40 The Hill: roller shutters and overlarge signage.

The following traditional shopfronts would benefit from maintenance or improvement:

- Nos. 5 and 6 The Hill: replace modern signage; remove roller shutters, blinds
- No.7 The Hill: painted shopfront panels, remove modern extension, replace modern signage;
- No.24 The Hill: replace/remove obscured glass and satellite dishes;
- No.32 The Hill: remove roller shutters;
- Nos. 34, 35 and 37 The Hill: subdivide plate glass, remove overlarge lettering or signage;
- No.36 The Hill: general maintenance required.

The following open spaces would benefit from improvement:

- The gardens to the south of the churchyard;
- The flowerbeds in the pavements next to the Presbytery and The Leather Bottel Public House;
- The former village green: steel canopy, paving;
- The junction of The Hill and Granby Road;
- The parking areas between the parish church and The Hill;
- The alleyways and backyards behind The Hill.

Other elements that detract from the character of the Conservation Area and whose removal or improvement would be desirable:

- The walling leading to Granby Road;
- Large billboard signs;
- Illegally sited satellite dishes;
- Hardstandings in front gardens in London Road;
- The level of lighting and general appearance of Church Path;
- Security fence along the cliff edge at Church Path;
- Security measures to the back of the Veteran's Club;
- Under-maintained state of Church Path
- Backyards along Church Path;
- The condition of highway street furniture such as pedestrian railings and concrete central reservations;
- Street clutter (bin storage and shop signs at some locations)
- Siting of notice board next to the lychgate, which currently spoils the view to the church from the former green.

drawn up with the full consultation of the local community.

9.9 Trees

Trees make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Mature specimens along the edge of the boundary and newer specimens in the former village green area should be monitored and maintained.

9.7 Highways and traffic management

Traffic management is an important issue in The Hill. The constant and very busy activity detracts from the character and amenity of the area. The breadth of the road network around the junction of the four roads and the lack of adequate crossing facilities are detrimental to the amenity of the area.

9.8 Locally Listed buildings

There is no adopted comprehensive Local List for Northfleet (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

Appendices

Appendix 1 Bibliography

Appendix 2 Townscape Appraisal Map
Age of Buildings Map
Character Zones Map
Designations Map
Conservation Area Boundary Map 2009

Appendix 1 Bibliography

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