

King Street

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



King Street

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

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

The Conservation Studio
1 Querns Lane
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1RL

Tel 01285 642428
Email: info@theconservationstudio.co.uk
www.theconservationstudio.co.uk

CONTENTS

1. Statement of Special Interest of the Conservation Area	1
2 The King Street Conservation Area	2
2.1 Background	
2.2 Purpose of the appraisal	
2.3 Planning policy context	
2.4 Community Involvement	
3 Location and Landscape Setting	5
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	7
4.1 Archaeology	
4.2 Historical development	
5 Spatial Analysis	10
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	12
6.1 Public Realm	
7 The buildings of the Conservation Area	14
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	17
8.1	Summary of Character Areas	
8.2	Character Area 1: King Street, Parrock Street (north) & Milton Road	
8.3	Character Area 2: Windmill Street & Stone Street	
8.4	Character Area 3: Manor Road	
8.5	Character Area 4: Berkley Road, Bernard Street & Wilfred Street	
8.6	Character Area 5: Parrock Street (south) & Saddington Street	
9	Issues	24
9.1	Definition of issues	
9.2	Conservation area boundary review	
9.3	Education and information	
9.4	Buildings at Risk	
9.5	Alterations to buildings & shopfronts	
9.6	Uses/ vitality	
9.7	Enforcement	
9.8	Locally listed buildings	
9.9	Highways and traffic	
9.10	Enhancement potential	
	Appendices	27
Appendix 1	History of Gravesend	
Appendix 2	Bibliography	
Appendix 3	Townscape Appraisal Map	
	Age of Buildings Map	
	Designations Map	
	Character Map	
	Conservation Area Boundary Map 2009	

1. STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The King Street Conservation Area encompasses much of the 18th and 19th century commercial expansion of Gravesend. It is focused on the central east-west highway of New Road, King Street and Milton Road that was firmly established when New Road was laid in 1801, as part of a stagecoach route to London via Northfleet. The streets are lined with commercial buildings, most of them ground floor shops and accommodation above, interspersed with civic buildings and some residential houses.

The new carriageway through the town led to the establishment of many inns and coaching houses, some of which remain in King Street and Milton Road. Prior to the 19th century, the activity of the town had mostly been focused around the Town Quay and High Street to the north due to the reliance on trade via the River Thames. The new developments to the south, further strengthened by the coming of the railway in the 1850s, led to the transformation of this area from rural hinterland to tightly packed urban commercial and residential streets as part of the next phase of the expansion of Gravesend. The streetscape is dotted with landmark 19th century buildings, such as St John's Church on the corner of Parrock Street and the County Court buildings. These reaffirm the historic and architectural special character of the area.

King Street itself is a broad shopping street with two, three and four storey buildings on either side in continuous rows. The mix of 19th and 20th century buildings have a range of styles and heights but retain a solid frontage that presents a firm enclosure to this wide busy shopping street. The historic character of

the road is enhanced by its pedestrianisation scheme, which excludes most motor traffic, and promotes a more relaxed environment. The traditional treatment of the pavement and the sympathetic enhancement of the public realm, a result of a considerable regeneration effort in the centre of Gravesend, has also reinvigorated King Street's historic character. The Conservation Area continues east and south along Milton Road and Parrock Street, other large commercial roads, which are also used by motor traffic and, therefore, have a more modern urban appearance.

Next to these major highways, smaller urban shopping streets interconnect with each other. Windmill Street and Stone Street lead south from the stagecoach route, while Manor Road connects Windmill Street to Parrock Street. These have smaller scale buildings and even more variation in styles and shopfronts design, which adds depth to the character of the Conservation Area.

Since the street pattern and building line was established in the 19th century, there has been an ongoing replacement and alteration of buildings. Many residential properties, such as those in Parrock Street, have been converted to retail use and subsequently their front gardens have been lost. Also, New Road and the west side of Stone Street have been largely redeveloped into late 20th century shopping centres and car parks. This has led to a rich variety of architecture and the appearance of the buildings is mixed although there are many key historic buildings, such as the County Court and some 19th century banks and inns remaining. The mixture of shopfronts and building styles is accommodated within a spacious streetscene, particularly in King Street, that has enjoyed varying degrees of regeneration to promote a cohesive character and quality design.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The King Street Conservation Area

The King Street Conservation Area was designated on 18th December 1980 by Gravesham Borough Council. It was extended on 9th September 1998 and 14th February 2001. The Conservation Area's boundary includes all or parts of the shopping streets of King Street, Milton Road, Parrock Street, Windmill Street, Stone Street and Manor Road. It also includes the adjacent residential streets of Berkley Road, Bernard Street and Wilfred Street.

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 September 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 King Street 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 July 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.

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.

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:

Thames Gateway

In addition to the various conservation areas in the town, Gravesend 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 and Gravesend'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) and that future development of industrial sites should "avoid adverse impacts on the historic townscape of Gravesend town centre and its relationship with the River Thames" (para. 6.8.14).

The Thames Gateway is an overarching term for the regeneration of large parts of East London and parts of Essex and Kent, including Gravesend. It was first embarked on as a major planning concept in the 1980s and has developed at various stages since then. 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 large scale transport infrastructure such as the 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 the built as well as natural heritage of Gravesend. This document identifies the special character of Gravesend's built heritage and the accompanying Management Plan will propose how that special character can best be preserved and enhanced in the light of the large scale changes that are currently taking place in the area.

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 King Street 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 Gravesend 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. A Public Consultation Report is added at the end of this document as Appendix 3 for information.

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, and 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 King Street Conservation Area lies to the south and east of the High Street, which is the mediaeval core of Gravesend. It includes commercial and residential roads that were established with buildings along both sides during the 18th and 19th century expansion of the town.

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 King Street Conservation Area lies at the heart of the commercial core of the town. Retail uses predominate although there are also other services such as food outlets, public houses, banks and estate agents, as well as the town library and two churches. Further to the south there is an area of shopping on Parrock Street that also includes a car showroom.

Most of the commercial premises have residential accommodation above. However, to the north, the Conservation Area also includes three completely residential streets.

Therefore, the Conservation Area has a mix of shoppers, office and shop employees and residents who pass through its streets. King Street and Windmill Street are particularly busy with pedestrians in the daytime, when the roads are closed to most traffic. These roads link the shops and the train station and car parks.

3.3 Topography

Gravesend lies on the shallow slopes of the south bank of the River Thames, close to where it widens into the estuary. The land rises steadily from the riverside along High Street and Queen Street to meet with King Street and Milton Road. The topography is relatively flat within the Conservation Area.

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 brick making. 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.

3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

The immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area are urban townscape, some of which is designated in separate conservation areas. The following features form the immediate setting of the Conservation Area:

- To the south: Large surface car parks, part of which are to be developed into residential units and the civic area of town including the Civic Centre and police station leading up Windmill Street and Parrock Street to Windmill Hill;
- To the west: Large multi-storey car park and modern shopping centre;
- To the north: High Street, Queen Street and the River Thames;
- To the east: the New Town of Gravesend with further commercial and residential streets.

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. 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. Hoards of Saxon coins and early Saxon pottery have also been found at various locations around the town.

Most of the King Street Conservation Area lies within Kent County Council's principal designated Area of Archaeological Potential (AOP) that covers central Gravesend.

4.2 Historical development

The name "Gravesend" is derived from Gravesham, possibly meaning "graaf-ham", the home of the reeve or bailiff of the Lord of the Manor. The King Street Conservation Area is split across the neighbouring parishes of Gravesend and Milton. The settlement of Milton initially grew independently but was eventually subsumed into Gravesend, first as Milton-next-Gravesend and then within the town itself. The name of Milton

is of unknown origin, although it was called "Meletune" in The Domesday Book of 1086. Milton was always the smaller neighbour of Gravesham, mainly given over to farmland and the monastic order that founded Milton Chantry. Large fortifications were built close to the Chantry in the 18th century. With the development of the New Town in the 19th century, the area became a conurbation with Gravesend and began to form the greater urban area there is today. The historical development of Gravesend and Milton 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 King Street Conservation Area are as follows:

ANGLO-SAXON AND NORMAN (450 – 1200):

- 798AD - Archbishop of Canterbury acquired a large landholding in Northfleet.
- Small community established next to Thames centred on a landing place ("hithe").
- 1086 - Reference to the Manors of Gravesham and Meletune (Milton).

MEDIEVAL (1200 – 1485):

- 1189 – Hospital founded on the future site of Milton Chantry.
- 1258 - Richard de Gravesende made Bishop of Lincoln. The change of name from Gravesham to Gravesend was established for the town.
- 1300 - Gravesend had grown into a small market town based on its trade

on the river and abundant supplies from neighbouring agricultural land.

- 1322 - Milton Chantry founded by Aymer de Valence.
- The town grew under various lordships including the crown, nobility and the Cistercian Abbey of the St Mary Graces in London.
- 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.
- River related occupations, including, ferrying, victualling, rope and sail making and boat building and repairing, occupied the majority of the town's inhabitants.

TUDOR AND JACOBAN (1485 – 1714):

- 1539/ 40 - Blockhouses erected at Gravesend, Tilbury, Milton and Higham to defend London from attack.
- 1562 - Charter of Incorporation united the two parishes of Milton and Gravesend.
- 16th century – King Street was called Holy Water Street as pilgrims stopped at water houses at a shrine to Thomas Becket that stood here.
- 1580 – Free School established on site of Woolwich and Abbey building societies.

- 1650 - All landing stages except for the common bridge (Town Pier) removed.
- 1709 - Gravesend to Rochester Road (in part Milton Road) created.
- 1711 - Turnpike Act led to stagecoach route along Milton Road at the top of Milton Place.

GEORGIAN & REGENCY (1714 – 1837):

- Throughout this period Gravesend grew, but was often destroyed by fires.
- 1726 - 160 houses at Milton.
- 1773 – Public streets in Gravesend were lighted.
- 1780 – House on corner of Milton Road and Queen Street acquired and opened as The New Inn. Became a halt for stagecoaches.
- 1797 - Gravesend population was 4,000, with 700 houses in nine streets (including King Street). St Thomas's Street renamed King Street.
- 1800 – First Act of Parliament passed granting the construction of the Thames and Medway Canal.
- 1801 – New Road laid as a direct route to Northfleet, breaking up continuous frontages of buildings along Princes Street and Stone Street to create a new opening. Windmill Street still largely undeveloped at this time, although Saddington Street was lined with buildings. Became part of stagecoach route and became the liveliest part of town.
- 1812 – Ebenezer Chapel (later Wesleyan Chapel) in Milton Road built.
- 1815 - First regular service of pleasure steamers from London to Gravesend.
- 1824 – Town lit by gas.
- 1834 – St Thomas's almshouses built.
- 1835 – King Street School demolished and rebuilt as a National School.

- 1836 - Gravesend Freehold Investment Company formed to create Milton Park Estate, including Harmer Street.

VICTORIAN (1837-1901):

- 1840 - Harmer Street completed.
- 1842 - Royal Terrace Pier opened. A promenade established along the riverfront along with more piers.
- 1845 – Single line railway opened between Canal Basin and Strood to transport coal.
- 1847 – Coaches from London to Dover had dropped from 70 to one per day.
- 1849 – North Kent Railway line and Gravesend Station opened.
- 1851 - Population of Gravesend and Milton had risen to 16,633.
- 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 – Large fire in King Street.
- 1876 – Nelson Hotel (now McDonalds) on corner of New Road and Windmill Street refronted.
- 1878 – County Court built.
- 1896 – St Thomas's almshouses demolished and replaced with a bank and public library.
- 1898 – London and County Bank Co. (now National Westminster) built on site of almshouses. Opened in 1901.
- 1902 - Electricity installed by Gravesend Town Council and electric trams replaced horse drawn trams.
- 1903 – First electric street lighting in Gravesend. Tram service started from Windmill Street to Old Road.
- 1905 – Gravesend Public Library, funded by Carnegie, opened.
- 1906 – New Methodist Church built in Milton Road.
- 1911 – The Cinema in Windmill Street opened.
- 1914 – Parishes of Gravesend and Milton merged to form Borough of Gravesend.
- 1928 – National School demolished and replaced with bank buildings.
- 1931 – Majestic Cinema opened in King Street.
- 1958 - Creation of Inner Ring Road created increased traffic along Milton Road and Parrock Street.
- 1969 - 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.
- 1971 – The Mitre Public House on corner of Queen Street (now nos.20 to 21c King Street) demolished.
- 1970s to present - Declining commercial viability of the east end of town.
- 1990 – New Road and King Street pedestrianised.
- 1990s – 2000s – Building of new blocks of flats on Lord Street. General regeneration of the riverside.

20th / 21st CENTURY:

- 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 for houses.

5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Layout and spaces

The layout of the Conservation Area has been established over different periods, although the existing street pattern was in place by the early 19th century.

The first street to have been laid was Windmill Street, a southerly extension of High Street (and at one time called Upper High Street) that formed part of the ancient path between the Saxon settlement in the south and the river landing place in the north. Stone Street and Parrock Street are southerly extensions of the medieval back lanes that run parallel to High Street. Stone Street lost its historic enclosure with the construction of a new multi storey car on its western side in the late 20th century.

King Street and Manor Road connect the north-south routes. King Street is a broad carriageway that continues eastwards along Milton Road as part of the old stagecoach route. Until the end of the 18th century it was a narrower winding path that snaked through the town to the east to connect with Milton Road via Saddington Street. When New Road was cut across open fields to Northfleet in 1801, the road through King Street was straightened and widened and from this point connected directly with Milton Road in the east.

There is very little open space in the Conservation Area. The only open areas are the yards that can sometimes be found behind the main streets, most notably in Manor Road. Also, the width of King Street, Parrock Street and Railway Place does give some feeling of openness, particularly in King Street where some trees and benches have been

introduced to the streetscene in recent years.

5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

Almost all of the buildings in the Conservation Area stand on the back edge of the pavement, mainly in continuous rows. The only variations to this are the two churches, no.194 Parrock Street and the Conservative Club, which are set back from the pavement. The other buildings on the west side of Parrock Street, nos. 195 to 204, originally had front gardens but these are now incorporated into the wide pavements.

None of the commercial properties have front gardens, nor do the residential houses to the north of the Conservation Area. This arrangement gives a strongly defined division between the built form and the open space of the roads. The tall buildings tower over the road in the wide main streets and enclose the streetscape. Some small alleys break up the continuous rows on Parrock Street and Windmill Street and there is a larger break in the streetscene at the location of the railway tracks. The rows of buildings in King Street and Milton Road are broken by the openings to the north-south routes that intersect with them.

The other roads in the Conservation Area have a similar tight built form although they are generally smaller scale buildings and the roads are narrower and more meandering, particularly Manor Road.

At the south of the Conservation Area, in Railway Place, there is a more open appearance with a widened pavement at the corners, some car parking bays and the two storey Railway Tavern set back from the road beyond the Conservation Area boundary.

5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

The principal landmarks in the King Street Conservation Area are:

- The New Inn;
- County Court;
- Nat West Bank;
- Gravesend Library;
- St John's Church;
- Methodist Church.

The Conservation Area includes a range of landmark buildings, as identified above. Landmark buildings all make an impression on the streetscape, either through their position as corner buildings (e.g. The New Inn), their historic character and architecture (e.g. County Court buildings), or their different building form to their neighbours (e.g. Milton Road Methodist Church, or for a combination of these reasons (e.g. St John's Church).

Key focal points are the central shopping parades of King Street and the quieter historic thoroughfares of Windmill Street and Manor Road.

The principal positive views are:

- Vistas including historic buildings along all the streets;
- North into Queen Street and beyond to the River Thames;
- From the corner of King Street to St John's Church.

and outside St John's Church. This urban townscape is well suited to having a modest number of tree specimens and some fit into the broad King Street without diminishing the views of the architecture around them.

The boundary treatments on the few buildings that have open front areas are a mixture of low brick walls and railings. There is attractive planting in beds around St John's Church and in large concrete planters outside the Railway Tavern in Railway Place.

5.5 Trees, boundaries and planting

Trees provide a subtle part of the character of the Conservation Area as they are few in number, but provide an important splash of green on certain key sites, such as the corner of Windmill Street and Railway Place

6. STREETScape

6.1 Public realm

Pavements

The pavements in the King Street Conservation Area generally feature concrete paviours and wide (300mm) granite kerbs, although Parrock Street has some sections of poured concrete pavement in areas used for car parking. Milton Road has small sections of pink tactile paving at the opening to Berkley Road.

King Street and Windmill Street were completely repaved in the 1990s when the area was partially pedestrianised. Buses still pass through King Street and other traffic is allowed to enter in the evenings and early mornings. The traditional relationship of raised pavement to road surface has been preserved in some parts of King Street, while in Windmill Street this relationship has still been marked by the wide range of the materials used.

The refurbishment consists of high quality York stone paviours, square granite setts and concrete bricks across the main roadway. The granite kerbs and some stone cobbling at the junction of King Street and Milton Road have been preserved.

Windmill Street closely follows the treatment laid out in the connecting High Street with three rows of square granite sets running down the edge of the pavement to form a shallow gutter with York slabs on the pavement side and concrete brickwork on the road surface.

Manor Road has a different treatment with concrete blockwork pavements, narrow (200mm) granite kerbs and stone cobble

gutters. A large stretch of road at the junction with Parrock Street is also cobbled.

Street furniture, signage and other features

The street furniture (waste bins, benches, bollards) in King Street and Windmill Street are well maintained and have a coherent appearance. A blue paint scheme has been adopted for round freestanding metal bins, narrow tall bollards lining the pavements and cast iron benches with timber seats and backrests. There are also modern bus shelters with a similar blue trim and modern telephone kiosks, as well traditional grade II listed K6 kiosks outside the County Court buildings. Additionally, there is a metal gate at the eastern entrance to King Street to control traffic. The gate is manually opened for buses during the day and a booth standing next to it is provided for the operative. The gate and booth are painted blue. There are also large blue square CCTV poles positioned on the corners of King Street.

Parrock Street also features the slender blue painted bollards extending as far as the parade of the shops to the south of the railway tracks, and some blue pedestrian barriers near the controlled crossing towards the south. Milton Road also has some of these blue railings, and so both streets are subtly tied in with King Street.

Manor Road and Stone Street have no street furniture, although Manor Road has some blue freestanding signage giving information about shops at its western entrance. The sign links it in with the King Street commercial refurbishment. A traditional metal street sign is fixed to the brick wall surrounding the railway tracks. The Berkley Road residential area has two modern parking meters fixed to the pavement.

There is a good deal of signage in the Conservation Area including a mixture of standard highway signage and pedestrian directions. The highway signs are fixed to grey freestanding poles and the directional signs are often fixed on cast iron poles painted blue with blue coloured pointing signs. The highway signs are occasionally cumbersome, such as outside no. 171 Parrock Street, and detract from the appearance of the area. Some freestanding café signs are also placed on the pavement in King Street and Parrock Street during the daytime.

Street lighting

The street lamps in the Conservation Area vary in design, but are all from the late 20th century and are mostly painted to fit in with the blue King Street scheme. These include steel standards with “hockey stick” style lamps in Stone Street and Victorian style cast iron lamps in Windmill Street and King Street. Some very tall cast iron lamp standard is fixed at the corner of King Street and Queen Street and has three overhanging lamps.

Milton Road has tall blue standards and overhanging lamps lining the highway. Parrock Street has tall “hockey stick” style lamps on blue painted poles. Manor Road has no street lighting except for a few Victorian style lanterns fixed to buildings at first floor height.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths
Access along the pavements is good in the Conservation Area and there are a number of pedestrian crossings. The partial pedestrianisation of King Street and Windmill Street also aids movement.

Traffic and parking

Traffic through Windmill Street and King Street is well controlled by the restrictions in place. In the residential roads to the north and the commercial centre is generally light and limited to local residents and buses. However, Milton Road and Parrock Street are very busy as part of the Inner Ring Road.

There is little car parking space available in the Conservation Area during the daytime hours, although much parking is located on the perimeter. In the evenings Windmill Street tends to fill up with parked cars, and during the daytime there is some limited parking on the former pavement area outside nos. 200 to 204 Parrock Street. There are also four parking bays outside the Railway Tavern in Railway Place.

Berkley Road, Bernard Street and Wilfred Street have a permit holders and meter fee parking scheme, which manages the parking along these residential roads.

7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Building types

The historic buildings in the Conservation Area are typical of an historic commercial and residential town centre that has developed along with changing tastes over the 19th and 20th centuries. They offer a range of architectural styles, building form, details and materials. Most of the buildings to be found in the Conservation Area today are historic but have been altered in a variety of ways.

The principal building type in the Conservation Area is the two or three storey terraced shop with accommodation above (although some of these buildings were formerly residential use, notably those along Parrock Street).

In addition, there are other types of buildings: churches, inns and taverns, a library, a cinema and a Conservative Club.

7.2 Building form

The buildings of the Conservation Area are grouped in rows on either side of the road with yards and small streets punctuating them.

The building line is maintained almost throughout, with the exception of the buildings on the western side of Parrock Street which appear set back as they were originally constructed with front gardens. The boundaries to these properties are now lost and the former garden area has been annexed into the pavements. The buildings generally have a domestic scale although some of the infill development such as nos. 21 to 21c King Street has a modern commercial appearance. The buildings vary between single, two, three and four storeys in height.

7.3 Listed buildings

The listed buildings in the King Street Conservation Area are all grade II listed:

- County Court;
- Two telephone kiosks (one K2 and one K6) outside the County Court;
- Nat West Bank;
- Gravesend Library;
- The New Inn;
- The Grapes Public House;
- Nos. 157 & 158 Milton Road;
- St John's Church and school rooms;
- K6 telephone kiosk on the corner of Milton Road and Parrock Street;
- Nos. 188 to 192 and 195 & 196 Parrock Street.

The County Court is a single storey stone building of 1870. Its construction signalled a move in emphasis of the town centre's functions away from the riverside in the 19th century and its architecture is lavish with stone dressings in a Jacobean style featuring pilasters and round headed doorcases. The securing of a future use for this redundant building will be vital for restoring its standing in the streetscene, which at present is secondary to the set of bus shelters that stand next to it.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the architecture in the Conservation Area revitalised and the bank buildings and library that are listed feature fine features such as stone and brick dressings, pediments and pilasters, which throw the deep red brick elevations into relief. No.30 King Street is an authoritative corner building that asserts itself with this style as a bank building.

A number of the earlier listed buildings in the Conservation area have lost some historic

charm as a result of the alterations made to them. This includes The New Inn which has painted brick elevations and a chunky timber applied frontage on the ground floor. The building was originally a private house built in the early 18th century, along with the buildings to the east of it which form part of the original range. It was converted to an Inn in the late 18th century, when the premises were moved from the New Tavern Fort, hence the name New Inn. On the opposite corner, St John's Church is a stock brick building with stone dressings. In its stern gothic style it sits close to the pavement on the Milton Road elevation with long thin windows and a sheer tower dominating the street scene. On the Parrock Street elevation the church is set behind a small garden but still fill the skyline. The church forms a group with the attached school, which has a smooth stone façade and leads into an interesting row of tall early 19th century buildings that terminate with The Grapes Public House.

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 will be reviewed in due course.

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:

- No.19 King Street (Carpet Time);
- Cinema façade, King Street;
- The King's Head Public House, King Street;
- Range attached to the New Inn (nos. 2- 5 Milton Road);
- Methodist Church, Milton Road;
- Nos. 2 to 6 Railway Place;
- The Little Wonder Public House, Saddington Street.

- Former Nelson Inn (McDonalds), Windmill Street/New Road;
- The Robert Pocock Public House, Windmill Street.

Photographic examples inserted here.

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 Conservation Area have been built using mainly local materials, particularly yellow, red or brown stock brick. Some key buildings, however, have used other materials such as stone dressings (St John's Church). The most common roofing material is Welsh slate, although many buildings now have replacement 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 Grapes Public House. The material is also used for the architectural details found on nos. 195 and 196 Parrock Street.

The large 20th century developments have used modern construction methods and facing materials. Many of the historic buildings have also been altered with modern, untraditional materials, notably the painting of elevations, and the use of concrete tiles for roof coverings, and aluminium and uPVC for shopfronts.

7.7 Local details

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

- Variety of architectural styles and embellishments;
- Round corners on corner buildings;
- The use of red, brown and yellow brick (and brick patterning in residential areas);
- Ashlar and stone dressing for walls and architectural details;
- Wrought iron railings as boundary treatments (a few remaining);
- Sash windows;
- Round headed doors and windows in 19th century residential streets;
- Glazed tiling on public house exterior walls.

8 CHARACTER AREAS

8.1 Summary of Character Areas

Within the present boundaries the King Street Conservation Area can be divided into five 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 five Character Areas are:

Character Area 1: King Street, Parrock Street (north) & Milton Road

Character Area 2: Windmill Street & Stone Street

Character Area 3: Manor Road

Character Area 4: Berkley Road, Bernard Street & Wilfred Street

Character Area 5: Parrock Street (south) & Saddington Street

8.2 Character Area 1: King Street, Parrock Street (north) & Milton Road

King Street, Milton Road and the northern end of Parrock Street comprise much of the eastern half of the town's commercial and retail centre. The three roads were created in their current form to provide a stagecoach trade and their wide, busy appearance still suits their historic role in Gravesend. They are lined with large tall buildings and are comparatively broad which affords them a spaciousness that can accommodate the steady flow of pedestrian and motor traffic without appearing too congested. The continued trade of many inns along the route is in keeping with their history as part of a staging point.

King Street stands out from the rest of the

predominantly 19th century town centre due to its variety of architectural styles. There are some fine examples of late 19th and early 20th century architecture that replaced earlier buildings, particularly in the western part of the street. They tend to be larger in scale and rich in architectural embellishment, notably the Nat West bank at the junction with Windmill Street, which retains much of its late Victorian elegance. This landmark building signals a change in the streetscene from the predominantly modern development in New Road when approached from the west. The existence of 18th and 19th century structures behind later facades, for example at No. 19-21 King Street, cannot be ruled out.

Very few late 19th and early 20th century shopfronts remain although some good later examples have not been replaced, such as at no. 22b King Street, no.151 Milton Road and No. 198 Parrock Street. The appearance at street level is very modern with plate glass frontages and large plastic signage, to which the stone faced frontages of the County Court and the bank buildings no. 30 and no. 3 King Street provide a welcome exception.

Milton Road and Parrock Street take on a busier character as they are part of the Inner Ring Road and traffic passes through regularly. The buildings of Milton Road link the town centre with Harmer Street, part of the early 19th century expansion of Gravesend. The shops here are generally smaller concerns interspersed with historic inns.

The New Inn, at the corner of Milton Road and Queen Street, together with nos. 2 – 5 Milton Road was originally a private house until it was acquired in 1780 for the purpose of being converted into an inn. It became the halt for stage coaches on the 1801 created Chatham to London Road.

The six terraced houses nos. 9-14 Milton Road are some of the earliest structures along the stretch between the New Inn and Harmer Street/Berkeley Crescent, built in the early 19th century. They are two storey houses plus attic in a mansard roof framed at each end by a three storey end of terrace house. In historic maps they are named as 'Five Bench Place' next to the Ebenezer Chapel, which was replaced in 1906 by the present Methodist Church. The appearance and contribution of the terrace to the character of the area is somewhat diminished by the many unsympathetic alterations that have been made.

Nos. 157 and 158 at the south side of Milton Road form one of the finest houses in the street. The grand ashlar façade with classical details clearly distinguishes it from the modest scale and treatment of the early 19th century terraces opposite.

Parrock Street is largely 19th century and features some fine four and three storey townhouses, some of which are listed. Most of them have been changed to retail and office use, though some have retained their mid-19th century residential character with details such as timber sash windows and iron railings. The prestige of this street is signalled by the position of the grand 19th century Catholic Church on the northern corner. The place of worship and its gardens face Parrock Street, which leads southwards to the wealthy suburb of Windmill Hill, rather than the more workaday stagecoach route of Milton Road.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Variety of building form and architectural styles (King Street);
- Cohesive qualities of three storey

terraces, dating mainly from the 19th century (Parrock Street);

- Purpose built commercial buildings of the late 19th and early 20th century (e.g. bank building in King Street) as opposed to former residential buildings of the early and mid-19th century that were adapted at a later stage for commercial use (Milton Road and Parrock Street);
- Ashlar facades and stone dressings;
- Landmark mid 19th century County Court and late 19th century bank buildings and churches;
- Continuous building line on the back of the pavement;
- Mainly a "domestic" scale of building;
- Use of red and yellow brick;
- Large modern retail blocks;
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;
- Some surviving historic shopfronts .

Negative features/issues:

- Poor quality shopfront and signage;
- Under-utilisation and/or poor maintenance of upper floors;
- Empty buildings, some of them very prominent, e.g. the cinema;
- Loss of architectural features, notably some front gardens and iron railings on Parrock Street;
- Replacement of slate roofs and timber doors and windows with unsympathetic modern materials (i.e. concrete, uPVC);
- Inconsistent treatment of private forecourts (Parrock Street);
- Car parking on private forecourts (Parrock Street);
- Redundant and deteriorating public

conveniences next to St. John's Church (Parrock Street);

- Volume of traffic along Milton Road and Parrock Street;
- Impact of unsympathetic retail developments within and on the edge of the Conservation Area (e.g. corner of Queen Street);
- Graffiti.

8.3 Character Area 2: Windmill Street & Stone Street

Windmill Street runs directly north across King Street, into High Street, the medieval heart of Gravesend, and to the Town Pier and the river beyond. It has grown as a subordinate to the High Street, only coming into its own once the town had expanded with the construction of a stagecoach route in 1801. Before this time Windmill Street was mainly open land with a few houses and perhaps businesses, although the road itself was a long established southerly route to Watling Street. Since the 19th century the northern end of the road has established itself as a secondary trading centre in the town, while retaining its residential character as the road continues up towards Windmill Hill.

The architectural mix in Windmill Street is notable as many buildings that stand side by side have been built to different styles or have been altered. Towards the junction with New Road and King Street the buildings are noticeably grander in scale, most of them dating from the late 19th and early 20th century and purposely built for commercial and public use. The Robert Pocock Public House is a fine late 19th century building over three storeys whose solid appearance next to the equally grand former hotel (now McDonalds) is complemented on the other side by the listed Nat West Bank building

and the public library. Following the style and fashion of their time of construction they are built in red brick with stone dressings and rich architectural detailing that distinguishes them from the earlier, comparatively unadorned yellow stock brick buildings at the southern end of the street and elsewhere in town.

A range of styles, heights and façade treatments accumulates and is continued along the road. The roofline dips and rises, and the building line shifts slightly on the western side. Some buildings feature painted brick, others are rendered, and even quoins decorate one building. At the southern end of Windmill Street some cohesive appearance is restored on the western side, although the eastern side continues in a characterful muddle around the corner into Manor Road.

Although the appearance at street level is dominated by predominantly modern shopfronts, the street features some of the finest original pub and shopfronts in Gravesend. The early 20th century shopfront of Munns, nos. 8-9 Windmill Street, is the best preserved example of its time and date, while the delicate glazed tiles at the entrance to the Trocadero Public House, dating from around 1898, are unmatched in quality within the town.

Stone Street acts as a back lane to Windmill Street, just as Princes Street is the back lane to High Street. It contains a mix of building styles and forms, some of which are the single storey rear extensions of Windmill Street buildings. Enclosed on its western side by the rather forbidding blank walls of the Thamesgate Shopping Centre, Stone Street gives the impression of a forgotten service road.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Inconsistent roofscape, style of façade and appearance of buildings;
- Continuous building line on the back of the pavement;
- Mainly a “domestic” scale of building;
- Use of red and yellow brick;
- Sash windows.

Negative features/issues:

- Poor quality shopfronts and signage;
- Loss of architectural features, notably on refronted buildings;
- Under-utilised and under-maintained upper floors;
- Empty shops;
- Redundant appearance of Stone Street;
- Appearance of multi storey car park in Stone Street.

8.4 Character Area 3: Manor Road

Manor Road has a very different character to the larger commercial streets on either side of it. This narrow winding east-west route has the appearance of a back lane connecting more established highways, although up to the end of the 18th century it was part of the main route through the town before the stagecoach route was cut.

Buildings line the road with taller three storey 19th century structures on the north side contrasting with a parade of single storey 1930s shop units on the south. Former small industrial and service buildings, such as nos. 13 and 15, complement the street scene. An alleyway on the southern side leads to a footbridge over the railway tracks and the small scale of the buildings on this side of the

road does create the impression that this is a typical service road or arches development next to a train station.

The quality and retention of original features is variable in Manor Road, however, its considerable charm remains intact through the curve of the street, the retention of some small specialist shops and the intriguing glimpses of yards and 19th century industrial buildings behind the buildings on the north side. There are also minor features such as terracotta decorations and Victorian style wall mounted streetlights that contribute to the historic character.

Of particular note is the entrance to the road from the west, where the green tiled Manor Shades Public House leads the eye towards the first kink in the road where a few two storey 19th century buildings cluster on the southern side of the road. Deflected views, a light commercial use and modest 19th century buildings are instrumental in forming the special character of Manor Road that is sometimes undermined by the unattractive shopfronts that have been inserted in some locations.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Variety of building heights, forms and styles in general;
- Cohesive groups of buildings within the street scene contrasting with each other in height, form and style, e.g. the three storey nos. 7-11 and the single storey shop units (nos. 8-18) opposite;
- Simple rectangular shapes, with a mixture of modern and historic shopfronts;
- Buildings arranged with a common building line on the back of the

pavement,

- Rear courtyards with industrial and commercial buildings accessible from the street
- Mainly a “domestic” scale of building on narrow plots;
- Variety of roof types and ridge and eaves heights, mainly shallow pitched and covered in slate or artificial slate;
- Use of red and yellow brick, which is sometimes rendered or painted;
- Mainly sash windows, most of them plain, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;

Negative features/issues:

- Poor design and modern materials of many shopfronts and shop signs; cluttered shop frontages and garish window displays (Urban Nails);
- Some unsympathetic alterations to historic buildings and loss of architectural features, e.g. the replacement of timber sashes with uPVC windows;
- Some poorly maintained buildings and spaces (nos.10 & 12 and 13 & 15 Manor Road);
- Empty shops;
- Unauthorised traffic;
- Graffiti.

8.5 Character Area 4: Berkley Road, Bernard Street & Wilfred Street

This character area at the north of Milton Road is a self-contained late 19th century residential area that marks a phase of development in the town that followed the creation of the New Town. Here, small terraced houses have been inserted in an open area (a bowling green behind the New Inn) that separated the town of Gravesend

and Milton-next-Gravesend.

These relatively short rows of yellow brick houses have none of the extravagant scale of the Harmer Street properties that they stand next to, but do have nonetheless quality features such as round headed sash windows and doors, key stones, window sills and imposts in stone, and the use of polychromatic brick for decorative effect at window and door surrounds. Many of the windows and doors have been replaced with uPVC which has undermined the historic character of these streets, although their consistent building line on the pavement edge and other rhythmical features such as chimneystacks do survive.

The area’s characteristic as a modest neighbourhood to the more prestigious developments next to it is reinforced by the views along Wilfred and Bernard Street into the unkempt rear yards of the Harmer Street properties. The former coach house to the rear of No. 29 Harmer Street provides an interesting termination point to the view down Bernard Street. The modest size of the properties and tight lay-out reinforces the area’s character as a small working class housing development squeezed onto what was then the only available open space left in the centre of the town in order to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding population after the coming of the railways.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban residential character;
- Cohesive qualities of two storey terraced houses, dating from the late 19th century;
- Distinctive corner buildings;
- Continuous building line on the back of the pavement;
- A domestic scale of building;

- Use of red and yellow brick and patterning;
- Round headed sash windows and doors;
- Landmark Anglo Saxons Friendly Society buildings and large yard doors in Berkley Road;
- Rear elevation of Milton Road Methodist Church.

Negative features/issues:

- Loss of architectural features, i.e. replacement of slate roofs, replacement of timber doors and windows with uPVC;
- Addition of satellite dishes on front elevation of properties;
- Crowding of streets through car parking;
- Views into the rear gardens of Harmer Street properties, which have a ramshackle arrangement of outbuildings, car parking areas and unattractive rear elevations to the principal properties.

8.6 Character Area 5: Parrock Street (south) & Saddington Street

The part of Parrock Street to the south of the railway tracks stands apart from the rest of the Conservation Area, connected only by a small channel of road. It covers part of a small self-contained shopping area that continues southwards towards Windmill Hill with the later phases of the New Town development bordering it to the east.

The part of the shopping parade included in the designation includes a much altered early 19th century inn (the 'Swan With Two Necks', now Star Carpets) on the corner of Saddington Street and a row of late 19th

century three storey houses with ground floor shops attached to it. These all have 20th century shopfronts and a wide stretch of pavement as a forecourt, bounded by cast iron bollards. The opposite side of the road was lined with terraced houses in the early part of the 20th century, but is vacant land at present. The area, formerly Lord Street car park, is to be developed into residential accommodation which will restore an element of enclosure to Parrock Street at this location.

The entrance to Saddington Street with a car showroom on the northern corner sees the urban character softened slightly with more regular planting of street trees which seemed to have been part of the original street lay-out. The buildings on the northern side (outside the conservation area boundary) are a lower two storey and terminate with an unattractive concrete shelter before the streetscape opens up with views over the railway tracks to the rear of Edwin Street properties.

On the southern side of the road is a characterful group of 19th century commercial properties that include large timber gates and a 19th century public house on the corner. The Little Wonder Alehouse has a distinctive rounded corner with a curved timber sash window, but stands rather forlornly on the corner where it marks the southern extent of the area before the streetscape gives way the network of residential roads, interspersed with small chapels and commercial premises that fill the New Town.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Cohesive qualities of three storey terraced buildings, dating from the 19th century (Parrock Street);
- Landmark mid 19th century corner

public house;

- Continuous building line on the back of the pavement;
- Mainly a “domestic” scale of building;
- Use of yellow brick, which is sometimes painted or rendered;
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;
- Wrought iron balconies.

Negative features/issues:

- Loss of architectural features, notably windows with uPVC;
- Volume of traffic along Parrock Street;
- Impact of unsympathetic development on the edge of the Conservation Area (e.g. no.5 Saddington Street);
- Poor quality shopfront and signage;
- Poorly maintained buildings (e.g. a tree growing out of the chimneystack of The Little Wonder Public House);
- Inconsistent treatment of private forecourts (Parrock Street);
- Unauthorised parking to forecourts;
- Under-utilised and under-maintained upper floors;
- Empty shops;
- Large highway signage on Parrock Street.

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 there is some scope for a revision of the boundary of the Conservation Area. The bank building (London City and Midland Bank built 1912) on the corner of Stone Street and New Road complements the late 19th century red brick corner buildings located along King Street and should be considered for inclusion. The Railway Tavern in Railway Place should also be considered for inclusion in the King Street Conservation Area. It is currently within the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area, although its orientation and relationship to Railway Terrace would seem to relate it more to the area to the north.

The south of Parrock Street and Saddington Street (Character Area 5) are separated from the core of the Conservation Area and should be considered for designation as part of a separate ('Parrock Street') Conservation Area, which could include some of the remaining 19th century residential houses and the grade

II listed Zoar Chapel on Saddington Street.

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.

Gravesham 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 windows and doors.

9.4 Buildings at Risk

There are a number of buildings in the Conservation Area that are at risk or in a deteriorating condition, or show a lack of maintenance and their condition needs to be watched:

Buildings in urgent need of repair and refurbishment:

- No. 200 Parrock Street.

Building at risk:

- No. 169 Parrock Street (empty and in a poor condition);
- The Cinema (empty, partly demolished, deteriorating condition).

Buildings under-maintained and/or part-empty, particularly at upper floor level:

- Nos. 2, 4 and the Little Wonder Public House, Saddington Street;
- Nos. 10, 13, 14 and 15 King Street;
- No. 1a & 2a Windmill Street (part of Gravesend Library);

- The Robert Pocock Public House (cornice and parapet only), Windmill Street;
- No. 15 Manor Road.

Buildings in need of a new use:

- County Court building, King Street.

The sorry condition of the shop unit of Nos. 10-12 Manor Road, with broken and boarded up windows, affects the amenity of the area.

9.5 Alterations to buildings and shopfronts

It is evident that well-intentioned, but unsympathetic changes, especially to doors, windows, roofs and façade treatment, have begun to have a cumulative effect that is damaging to the character of the conservation area. These changes include the replacement of timber sash windows and doors with uPVC, which leads to a loss of the original appearance of properties. Also, the addition of features such as satellite dishes can harm the character of a conservation area.

There are a number of historic buildings whose appearance has been changed by those incremental alterations to an extent that their contribution to the character is now a neutral rather than a positive one, e.g. nos. 1 – 4 Berkley Row and no. 23 Berkley Road as well as nos. 10-14 Milton Road, no. 15 Manor Road and no. 1 Parrock Street. However, this effect could be reversed by the re-instatement of appropriate traditional architectural features.

To prevent further deterioration of the Conservation Area's character, where these properties are in use as single family dwelling houses an Article 4 Direction

can be served by the Borough Council to bring such changes under planning control. Some Article 4 Directions already exist in the Borough of Gravesham. However, most buildings in the King Street Conservation Area are in commercial use and the greatest threat to their character is the introduction of unsuitable shopfronts and shop signage, which are already controlled by the existing requirements for planning permission.

9.6 Uses/ vitality

Most of the Conservation Area is in commercial, primarily retail, use which accounts for much of the vitality of the area during day-time. The pleasant shopping environment is enhanced in King Street and Windmill Street where motor traffic access is restricted and there are areas to sit and relax along with some modest amounts of tree planting.

In the evening, the Conservation Area is mainly used by the residential occupiers of buildings and the patrons of the local public houses. The town centre streets are generally quiet after 5:30pm, although there is a degree of traffic through Milton Road and Parrock Street throughout the day and night. The difference between the vitality of the areas with traffic restriction and those without is noticeable.

9.7 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. These were generally the placement of satellite dishes in unsuitable locations and the replacement of timber windows and doors with uPVC units.

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 Highways and traffic

The traffic regulations throughout the Conservation Area, and the strict parking controls, have had beneficial effects on the amenity of the area. However, Parrock Street and Milton Road have a large volume of traffic as part of the Inner Ring Road.

9.10 Enhancement potential

There is a strong case for the continued maintenance of grant schemes that help owners with the upkeep and repair of historic buildings, including the re-installation of historic architectural features. The installation of shopfronts of a traditional design at various businesses in King Street has already contributed in raising the visual quality of this shopping environment. Other issues that offer opportunity for enhancement to the character of the area include:

- To carry through the improvements to the public realm (particularly the pavements) into all the streets in the Conservation area;
- Improvements to the traffic flow through Parrock Street;
- Improvement of the pedestrian crossing at the junction of King Street and Parrock Street;
- The restoration or new use or removal

of the public conveniences outside St John's Church;

- Removal of unsympathetic shop signage which has no planning approval;
- General improvement in the appearance of Stone Street;
- Reuse of the County Court, Cinema and Little Wonder Public House;
- Improved appearance of the builders yard behind Manor Road.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

History of Gravesend

Appendix 2

Bibliography

Appendix 3

Townscape Appraisal Map

Age of Buildings Map

Designations Map

Character Map

Conservation Area Boundary Map 2009

Appendix 1 History of Gravesend

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 in the Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area 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.

Appendix 2 Bibliography

Gravesend Library

Gravesend Chronology 56AD – 2000
2000

Gravesham Borough Council Gravesham

Local Plan First Review

1994

Riverside regeneration in Gravesham

1996

A strategy for the Heritage Riverside

1998

Grierson, Douglas W

Gravesend in old picture postcards

1993

Hiscock, Robert H

A history of Gravesend

1981

Gravesend in old photographs

1988

Gravesend & Northfleet revisited

1998

A historical walk through Gravesend and Northfleet

2006

Kent County Council

Kent Historic Towns Survey:

Gravesend

2004

Pevsner, N & Newman J

Buildings of England: Kent

1983

Solly, Raymond

Gravesend: a photographic history of your town

2002

Streeter, Eve

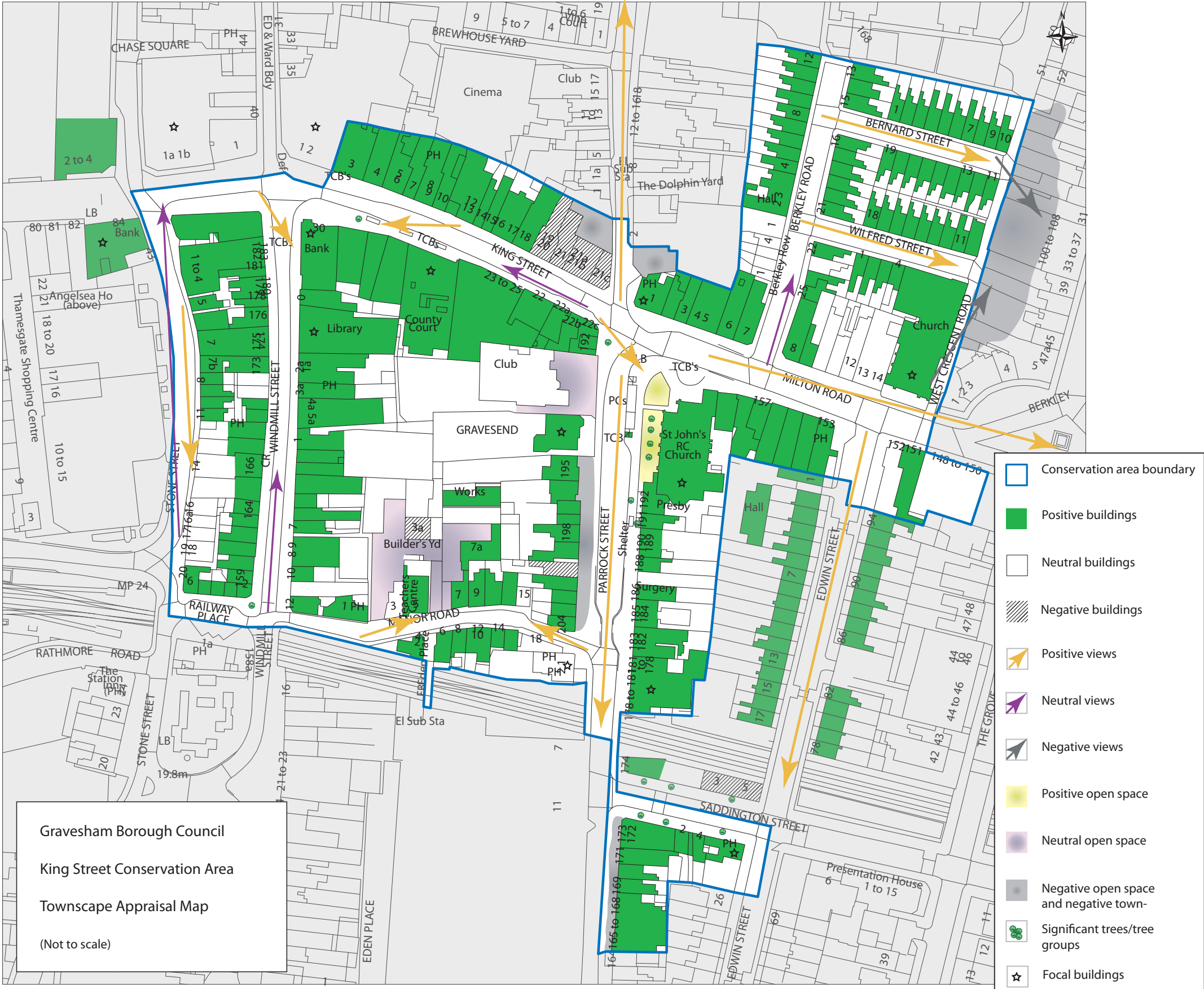
Gravesend: then & now

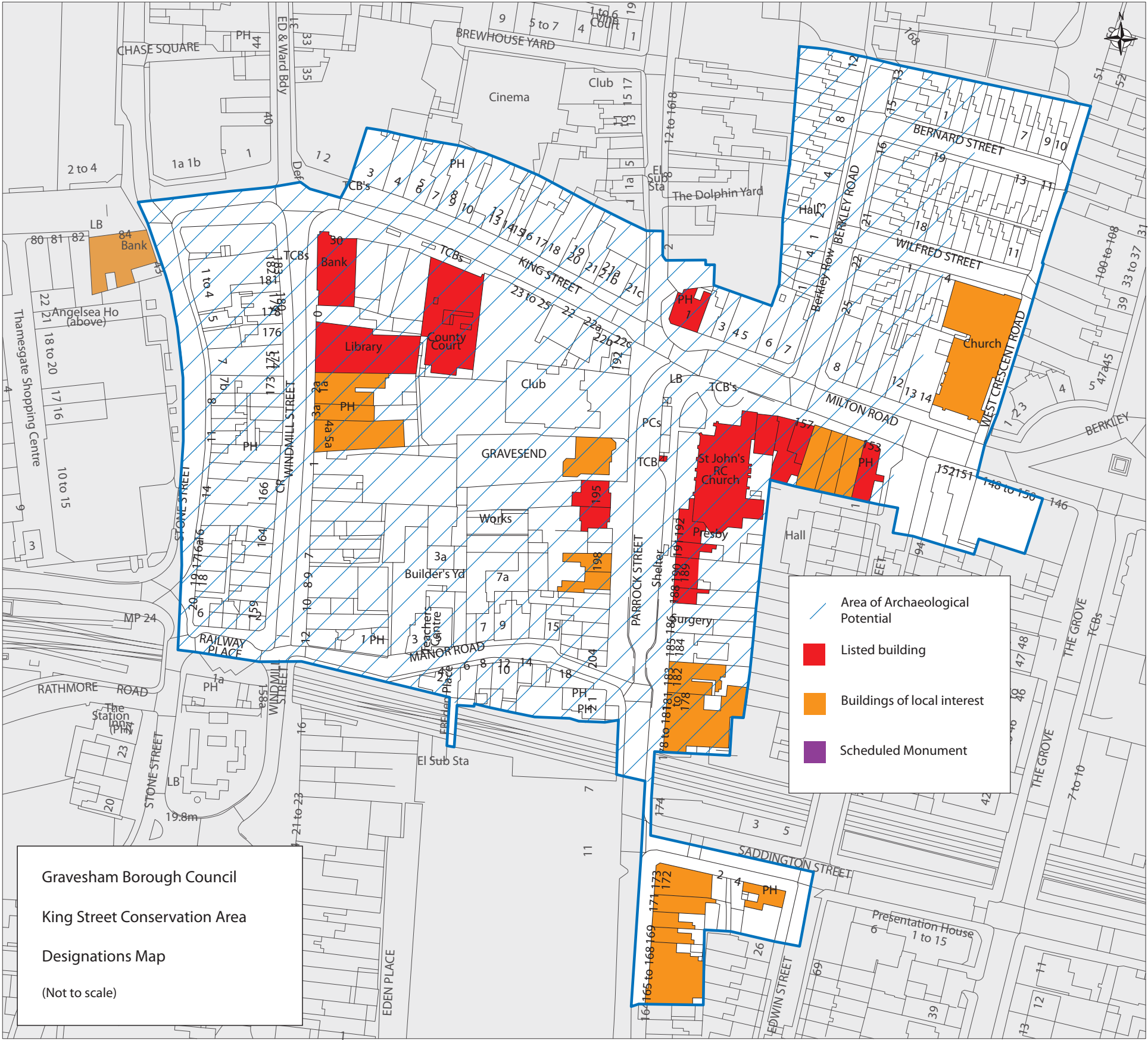
2001

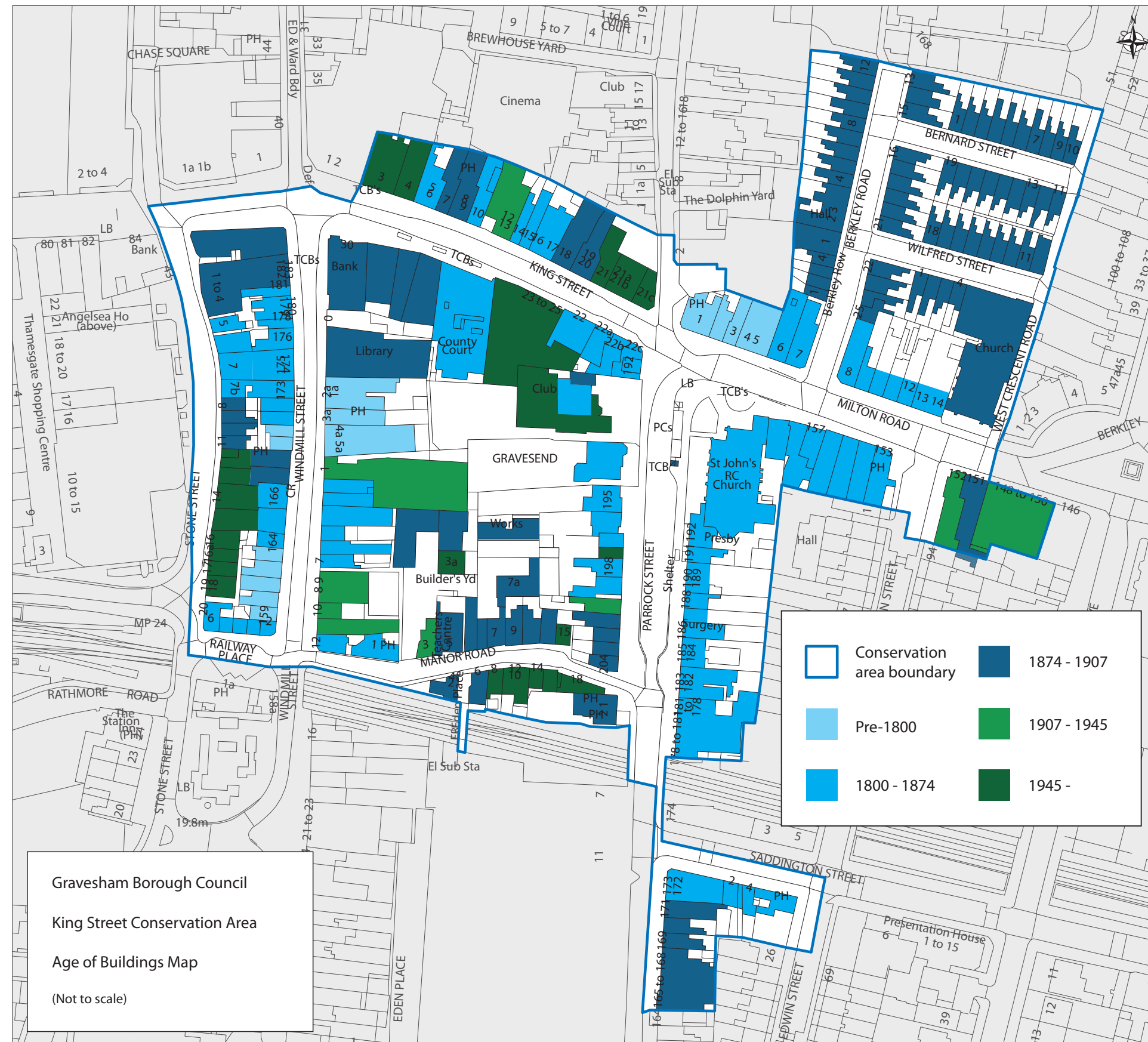
The Architecture Centre

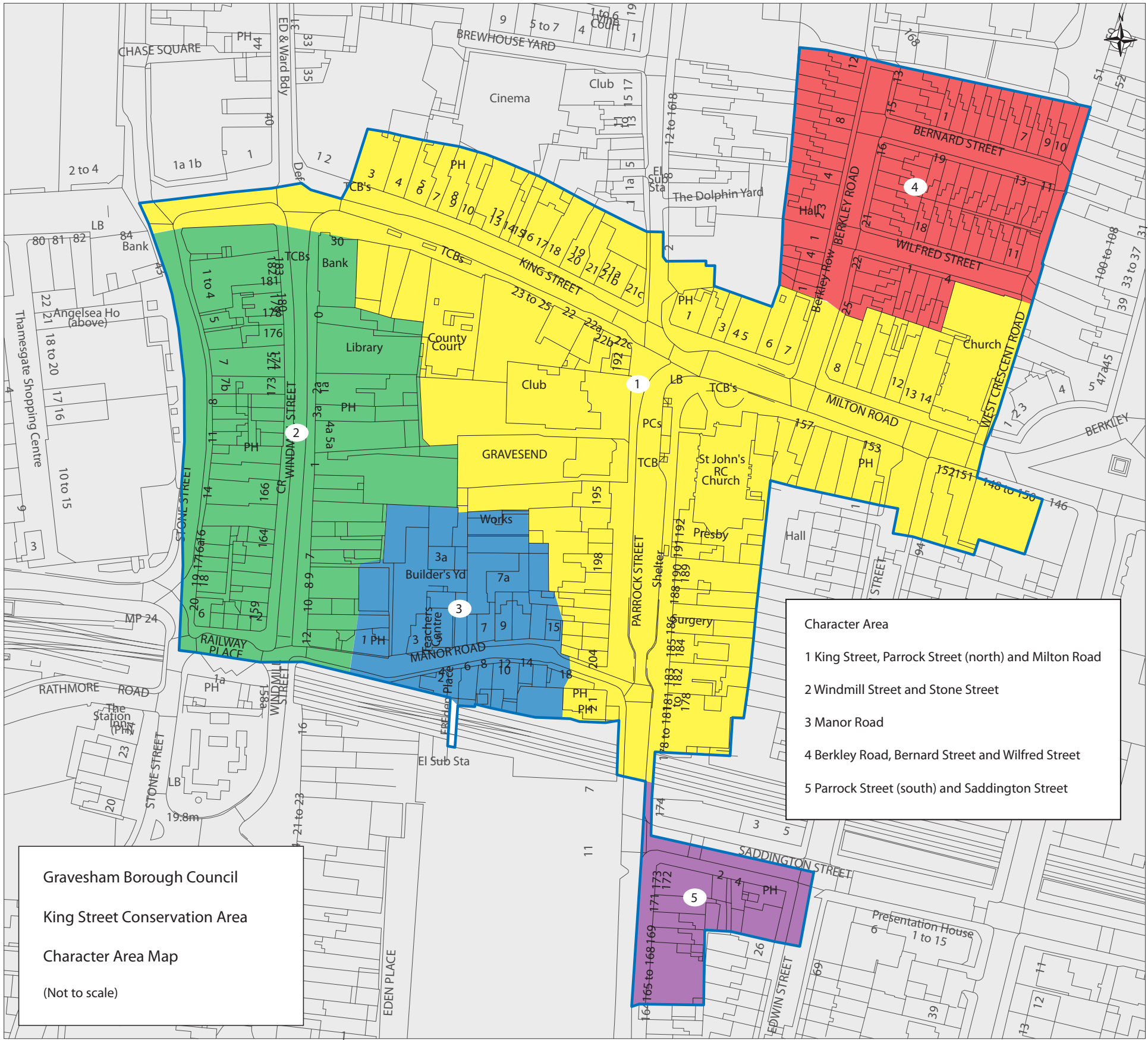
A Business Plan for Regeneration for Gravesham Borough Council

2003









Designated Boundary Map 09.02.09

