

Upper Windmill Street

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



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

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1. STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area lies to the south of the historic centre of Gravesend. Windmill Street links directly through to the High Street and Town Pier in the north, and became the principal thoroughfare for visitors arriving to the town by steam boat in the 19th century and proceeding to the resort attractions on Windmill Hill. The Conservation Area contains part of Wrotham Road, created as a turnpike road in 1825, and Stone Street. Some small side streets, such as Zion Place, are also included in the designation.

The buildings which line the streets contained within the Conservation Area were principally laid out during the first half of the 19th century, many of which are to the design of a local architect or builder. For example the paired villas on Sheppy Place were constructed by the builder William Wood to house his workmen. The buildings are typically of two, three and four storeys in height, some of which are raised above a basement. They are characterised by the use of stock brick, stucco and sash windows, with underlying or overt references to the Classical style. Non domestic structures were erected to serve the needs of the growing population, such as the Emmanuel Baptist Church, and the tourists arriving in the town, such as Tulley's Bazaar, now Milton Hall.

The topography also contributes to the character of the Conservation Area; the land rises gradually along the length of Windmill Street to Windmill Hill in the south. Views southwards along Windmill Street encompass an aspect of terraces and villas gently climbing up the slopes of the hill. Changes in topography also contribute to the clear views

through the Conservation Area, around Zion Place and Sheppy Place.

At the centre of the Conservation Area lie three 20th century civic buildings. These were built on land cleared of early 19th century houses, and while the scale and materials of the buildings is in contrast to the historic townscape, streets through the area, Woodville Place and Zion Place, allow a degree of visual permeability through to neighbouring streets and important landmark structures. The Civic Centre forecourt lends to the spacious character at the northern end of Windmill Street, where the street widens out onto Woodville Gardens. Here, mature trees and planted beds and containers soften the hard urban form and the impact of the busy traffic routes at this point.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area

The Upper Windmill Street, Gravesend Conservation Area was designated on 16th January 1970 by Kent County Council. The Conservation Area's boundary contains the northern stretch of Windmill Street, the historic thoroughfare between the river and Windmill Hill. Running parallel to Windmill Street a section of Stone Street and Wrotham Road define the conservation area's western boundary. A number of secondary roads branch off these two linear spine roads, such as Zion Place, South Street and North Street. The east-west tracks of the railway terminate the conservation area's northern end.

Included within the Conservation Area are the Civic Centre and Woodville Halls, and Gravesend Police Station.

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 Upper Windmill 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.

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 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 Upper Windmill 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 Gravesham Borough Council and The Conservation Studio. Subsequently, a four week period of full public consultation was held after which revisions were made to arrive at this final agreed document. A Public Consultation report is attached as Appendix 3 to this document 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 Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area lies on the edge of the historic town of Gravesend. The area developed along one of the principal arterial routes into the town, Windmill Street, through the 19th century. The area also includes part of Wrotham Road and Stone Street.

3.2 Activities and uses

The Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area contains the administrative core of the borough, the Civic Centre. The building,

and the attached Woodville Halls Theatre, addresses a large public forecourt to the north, on which flags and banners are located. While the forecourt provides an important open space in the town, the lack of attractive landscaping makes it an uninspiring area, and one which lacks a focal point or directional emphasis for pedestrians. To the south of the Civic Centre lies Gravesend Police Station, and the offices of Cygnet House, forming a group of large administrative buildings. These three buildings have provided a magnet for smaller offices to cluster in this part of the Conservation Area, such as those at the northern end of Wrotham Road.

The large open forecourt of the Civic Centre is balanced by Woodville Gardens to the north, which contains raised flowerbeds and benches. Surrounding these open spaces on the eastern, western and northern sides are commercial premises, serving the needs of the passing footfall between the amenities of Gravesend town centre, such as the Civic Centre, the station, the main commercial district and the public car parks of Parrock Street and the multi-storey on Clive Road. They are principally small local businesses, some with residential accommodation on the upper floors. There are two public houses in this part of the Conservation Area: The Railway Tavern and No. 24 Stone Street (formerly The Station Inn). There are two further public houses elsewhere in the Conservation Area.

A limited number of commercial premises have spread south along Windmill Street, such as the beauticians in the former Milton Hall. The Emmanuel Baptist Church is the only building in religious use in the Conservation Area. Windmill Street becomes increasingly residential toward Windmill Hill. Along Windmill Street, many of the large 19th

century buildings are in multiple-occupancy, although there are some single dwellings. Further residential enclaves include nos. 1-9 Zion Place; nos. 1-6 Victoria Avenue, and nos. 2-16 Sheppy Place, and these are almost all retained in single residential use.

3.3 Topography

Gravesend lies on the relatively shallow slopes of the south bank of the River Thames, close to where it widens into the estuary. The land rises gently from the riverside, levelling off toward the southern end of High Street, but then climbing increasingly steeply along its continuation through Windmill Street, up to Windmill Hill on the southern outskirts of the historic town. Further out of the town the hilly countryside of north Kent is covered in rich arable land and scattered with historic hamlets and villages.

Windmill Street, and the surrounding streets are lined with tight-knit development of typically three-storey buildings. These buildings inhibit views across the wider townscape. The elevated forecourt of the Civic Centre is an exception, permitting extensive views westwards through a break in the building line to the chimneys of the Northfleet power station.

The streets become increasingly steep south of South Street, permitting interesting views over the townscape to the north, particularly from Sheppy Place.

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.

3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

The immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area are urban townscape. The King Street Conservation Area borders the north of this Conservation Area, while Windmill Hill Conservation Area borders the area to the south.

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

- To the east: the Parrock Street surface car park and a vacant plot of land soon to be developed with residential units. Also a surviving historic terrace on Clarence Row, leading to an area of 20th

- century comprehensive redevelopment surrounding Gravesham Court;
- To the west: streets of 19th century terraced houses, within Darnley Road Conservation Area. Wrotham Road, which contains 19th century terraced houses, and 20th century infill development.

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.

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 Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area is centred around Windmill Street, the dividing line between the ancient parishes of Gravesend and Milton. Windmill Street was developed during the first half of the 19th century as the town expanded southwards. It was the principal approach route for visitors to Windmill Hill, and a number of buildings were erected to serve this tourism industry. 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 Upper Windmill 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):

-
- 1258 - Richard de Gravesend made Bishop of Lincoln. The change of name from Gravesham was established for the town.
- 1300 - Gravesend had grown into a small market town via its trade on the river and easy supply of supplies from neighbouring agricultural land.
- 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 JACOBETHAN (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
- 1650 - All landing stages except for the common bridge (Town Pier) removed.
- 1709 - Gravesend to Rochester Road created.

GEORGIAN & REGENCY (1714 – 1837):

- Throughout this period Gravesend grew to the east, but was often destroyed by fires.
- 1788 – ground (now Woodville Gardens) acquired by the churchwardens of Gravesend as a burial ground to supplement that at St George's Church.
- 1797 - Gravesend population was 4,000, with 700 houses in nine streets, including The Terrace.
- 1815 - First regular service of pleasure steamers from London to Gravesend.
- 1825 – Wrotham Road constructed as a turnpike road.
- 1828 - Gravesend and Milton Steamboat Company formed.
- 1834 - Blockhouse Fort site sold and

developed as Terrace Gardens.

- 1835 – Tulley's Bazaar founded as a leisure and entertainment venue on Windmill Street.
- 1855 – Burial ground landscaped to become Woodville Gardens.
- 1859 Milton Hall erected on the site of Tulley's Bazaar.

VICTORIAN (1837-1901):

- 1842 - Royal Terrace Pier opened. A promenade established along the riverfront along with more piers.
- 1843 – Emmanuel Baptist Church built
- 1845 - Gravesend and Rochester railway opened.
- 1849 – Level crossing built at Milton Road.
- 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.
- 1850s to 70s – Terrace Pier used as embarkation point for Royal voyages.
- 1865 – General Gordon comes to Gravesend to take charge of the New Tavern Fort.
- 1883- Horse drawn tramway opened between Northfleet and Wellington Street.
- 1893 - Royal Terrace Pier restored.
- 1895 – Customs pier built.

20th / 21st CENTURY:

- The industrialisation of the north shore of the Thames continued into the 20th 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.

- 1902 - Electricity installed by Gravesend Town Council and electric trams replace horse drawn trams.
- 1903 – trams introduced along Windmill Street.
- 1906 – Clarence House, formerly the Clarence Hotel, was demolished and nos. 70-72 Windmill Hill erected;
- 1914 - Parishes of Gravesend and Milton combined to form the Borough of Gravesend. Double decker buses run along Milton Road.
- 1940 – Gravesend fire station and police headquarters erected, demolished 1973.
- 1950s - A large power station constructed at Tilbury.
- As transport links to the city improved, Gravesend became a commuter settlement.
- 1965 – Cygnet House erected as the divisional headquarters of Kent County Council.
- 1968 – Civic Centre and Woodville Halls opened.
- 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.
- 1976 - New pilot station opened on Royal Terrace Pier.
- 1977 – Woodville Gardens redesigned as a garden for the blind.
- 1975 - Gravesend police station opened.
- 1990s – Traffic circulation in town re-organised. King Street and New Street

pedestrianised while Parrock Street, Lord Street, Windmill Street and Stone Street made part of the inner ring road, introducing high levels of traffic into the northern part of the conservation area.

1843 - 93



1891 - 1912



1904 - 39



1919 - 43



5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Layout and spaces

Windmill Street was not developed until the 19th century, although the route had existed prior to this as an historic route into the town from the London to Rochester Road. Wrotham Road was created as a turnpike road in 1825. Both routes were developed with speculative housing as the town expanded southwards. Terraced houses and paired villas line the streets, many of which are set back from the pavement behind front gardens.

Windmill Street widens out at its northern end, linking to the public open space of Woodville Gardens, and Stone Street. Here the pavements are wider, the result of the removal of front garden areas to create forecourts in front of commercial premises. Large scale clearance of early 19th century houses to provide a site for the Civic Centre and Woodville Halls has created a break in the traditional layout of streets, houses, and front gardens. The Civic Centre fronts a large forecourt to the north. While the two other large 20th century buildings, the police station and Cygnet House, are surrounded by car parks.

5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

In the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area almost all of the buildings are set back from the public thoroughfares behind front areas and gardens, thereby enhancing the wide, open character of the roads. In certain stretches the front gardens have been lost, particularly in front of the commercial premises on the east side of Windmill Street, from the junction with North Street to the railway line in the north. Public realm improvements have introduced bollards to

these areas to prevent car parking. These wide, spacious pavements are a characteristic of this part of the Conservation Area and are vital to create distance between pedestrians and the busy traffic intersection of Windmill Street and Wrotham Road.

Where front areas and gardens are retained, the space is predominantly delineated by traditional cast-iron railings set into stone plinths or rendered brick walls. The front gardens and their boundaries play an important role in separating public from private space, but more importantly create an appropriate setting for the buildings. In some instances stylistic characteristics of the principal building are introduced, such as corresponding ironwork detail between railings and balconies. At the southern end of the Conservation Area there are a few buildings notable for the size of the plot in which they are set; the plot sizes generally accord with the scale of the building and provide necessary 'breathing space'. Key examples are no. 17 Sheppy Place and nos. 109-110 Windmill Street.

The coherence of the building line established by the terraces and paired villas, set back from the pavement line behind front gardens, breaks down along rear plot lines and some of the side lanes. Many of the rear boundary walls have been lost from the buildings on Windmill Street, so that the former garden can be used for car parking, and in some instances the entire rear garden has been built over. This loss of a strong rear plot line and delineation between the public and the private realms has created a much more open, ragged, character to these spaces.

The spaces around two of the large 20th century administrative buildings, i.e. the Gravesend Police Station and Cygnet House,

have been conceived in functional terms to provide large areas of surface car-parking. The car parks have not been landscaped to enhance the setting of the buildings they surround. In contrast, the forecourt to the Civic Centre has been conceived as a public amenity space and landscaped accordingly; the car park is concealed beneath. The forecourt is raised above the surrounding pavement level, creating a sense of grandeur and arrival on approaching the Civic Centre, and an appropriate scale of setting to the built mass of the Civic Centre. The forecourt contains some raised flowerbeds and a pond, all created from concrete. Street furniture is clustered in small groups across this vast space, and differs from the heritage-designed furniture in the rest of the conservation area. However, the forecourt lacks a sense of enclosure, in particular at the northern end, and a creative, vibrant landscape design which would help to mitigate the current negative visual impact that such a large, unbroken expanse of paving has on the Conservation Area.

5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

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

- The Civic Centre;
- Gravesend Police Station;
- Cygnet House;
- The Railway Tavern;
- Emmanuel Baptist Church;
- Milton Hall;
- Nos. 70-71 Windmill Street;
- Nos. 109-110 Windmill Street;
- No. 16 Wrotham Road.

The scale of the Civic Centre, Gravesend Police Station and Cygnet House make them the principal landmarks within the

Conservation Area. These three 20th century buildings are six storeys at their highest, dwarfing the surrounding 19th century development.

The Conservation Area is focused around the linear route of Windmill Street. The land rises as the street progresses south up towards Windmill Hill, giving extended views north and south along the street. Looking south up Windmill Street, Tivoli House, just outside this Conservation Area, is set high above the surrounding buildings, and provides a termination point to the view.

The northern end of Windmill Street widens out onto the open space of the Civic Centre forecourt and the Woodville Gardens, with short views across this open space between the terraces of Windmill Street and those on Wrotham Road. The raised forecourt of the Civic Centre provides extended views north-eastwards through a break in the building line. The principal view of the Civic Centre is achieved from the forecourt.

The meandering course of Wrotham Road provides a series of deflected views. These are tightly framed by the continuous domestic building line on the west side of the road, and the line of trees on the east side of the road. The Prince Albert public house sits on a prominent corner site and is an important feature in views along Wrotham Road. Side roads link east-west between Wrotham Road and Windmill Street. The Emmanuel Baptist Chapel provides a strong termination point to the view east along Zion Place. From Wrotham Road views west along the side streets run along rows of terraced houses, outside of the Conservation Area boundary.

The principal positive views are:

- Southwards along Windmill Street toward Tivoli House;
- Views across the Civic Centre forecourt and Woodville Gardens to the buildings on Stone Street and the northern end of Windmill Street;
- East along Zion Place toward the Emmanuel Baptist Church;
- North from Zion Place toward Sheppy Place;
- Northwards along Wrotham Road to the Prince Albert public house.

sweeping lawns, flower beds and shrubs.

Nos. 1-6 Victoria Avenue have imaginatively designed and well-kept front garden displays, which instil an atmosphere of cottage garden charm on this secluded lane.

5.5 Trees, boundaries and planting

Despite being a built-up urban area trees are an important feature of the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area. Some of the trees have been planted to enhance the streetscene, and are concentrated at the northern end of the Conservation Area, around Woodville Gardens, designed as a garden for the blind. Another strong line of trees runs along the western edge of the Civic Centre and police station. The public realm at both Woodville Gardens and the Civic Centre forecourt is enhanced by the use of raised flower beds to define and protect the spaces. Further raised planters are located on the wide pavement to the north of The Railway Tavern.

Many of the buildings have front gardens. These are typically bounded by traditional cast iron railings set in stone, or rendered brick, plinths. Substantial front gardens of note include nos. 109-110 Windmill Street, no. 116 Windmill Street, and no. 115 Windmill Street. In the case of the later two examples the houses are well set back from the street, on higher ground than the neighbouring terrace, permitting clear views of their attractive

6. STREETSCAPE

6.1 Public realm

Pavements

The pavements in the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area contain a mixture of traditional and modern surface treatments and the traditional relationship of raised pavement to road surface has been maintained in terms of levels.

Windmill Street retains wide granite kerbs along much of its length, although the pavements are of tarmac. Few historic surfaces remain, an exception being the setts laid along the gutter on South Street. Where Windmill Street widens out to the north of the Civic Centre, there is an eclectic range of hard-surfacing materials, much of which is laid in front of retail premises, on former domestic front garden areas, and has become part of the public realm. The appearance of this area, and that in front of nos. 20-23 Stone Street could be improved if a uniform paving scheme were adopted. Part of the public footpath on Stone Street is laid with red bricks, which does not correlate with surrounding surface treatments.

The forecourt of the Civic Centre is laid with textured concrete paving slabs, with lines of stone slabs introduced to divide the large surface area into squares and add textural interest. Woodville Gardens, to the south of the Railway Tavern was landscaped in 1977 as a garden for the blind; the central area is surfaced with random stone paving between raised planting beds. The street surfaces surrounding the garden are tarmac, which is laid immediately up to the base of the mature trees; such a treatment detracts from the quality of the public realm in this area.

Street furniture, signage and other features

Two distinct styles of street furniture characterise the public realm in the areas to the north of the Civic Centre. On the raised Civic Centre forecourt itself benches and litter bins in silver metal, are in a modern style. A row of flag poles fly local, national and international standards, while tall vertical banners display local government slogans. In contrast the street furniture situated along the pavements at the junction of Windmill Street and Wrotham Road is traditional in design; the bollards, railings, litter-bins and benches of cast-metal are painted blue and embellished with a raised and painted Gravesend coat of arms. These armorial bearings were granted to the borough in 1975, just prior to Gravesham Borough Council being constituted.

Street signs are generally modern. Large directional highways signs proliferate at the busy junction of Windmill Street and Wrotham Road. A few historic cast iron street signs survive at Zion Place, Victoria Avenue and Railway Place.

A double-slot post box provides an attractive feature on the eastern side of Woodville Gardens.

Street lighting

The street lamps in the Conservation Area vary in design, but are all from the late 20th century. These include tall standards with “hockey stick” style lamps in Windmill Street and Wrotham Road, and a smaller-scale example, which appears to be a modern interpretation of a historic gas lamp on some of the side streets. All are set in the pavement rather than being wall mounted.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths

Pedestrians within the Conservation Area generally have to contend with narrow footpaths, the sense of narrowness exacerbated by the high traffic levels along Windmill Street and Wrotham Road. At the busy junction of these two routes, pedestrian movement is protected and managed by kerbside railings, pedestrian crossings and traffic islands. The pavements are wider at the northern end of Windmill Street and on Stone Street, where former front garden areas of the original domestic buildings have been incorporated as part of the public realm; this makes for a pleasanter experience for the visitors to the shops in this area.

The single footpath within the Conservation Area that does not border a roadway is Victoria Avenue, which provides a route through between Sheppy Place and Wrotham Road. Sheppy Place itself provides a pleasant back lane for pedestrians, with little through vehicular traffic.

Traffic and parking

Windmill Street and Wrotham Road are very busy traffic routes, forming two of the principal routes into the town from the A2, and a part of the traffic circulation scheme for the town. The junction of Lord Street and Windmill Street has heavy traffic levels, with traffic being brought into the town along Parrock Street, to Lord Street. The Conservation Area is adjacent to two of the town's large public car parks, the Parrock Street surface car park and the multi-storey on Clive Road, which attract a large number of vehicles to the vicinity.

There are no public car parks within the Conservation Area. There is a restricted access car park for the Civic Centre, and both

the police station and Cygnet House have car parks. There is a residents-only car park to the rear of nos. 127-130 Windmill Street.

Private parking is either on-road on the quieter roads, such as Sheppy Place, but is predominantly created off-road from former garden spaces to the fore or rear of buildings. Many of the front gardens and boundary treatments on Zion Place have been replaced with vehicle parking spaces.

Pavement bollards prevent cars parking on the wide pavements in front of the commercial premises, thereby making a much safer and pleasanter environment for pedestrians.

7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Building types

The buildings in the Conservation Area are largely historic and predominantly date from the 19th century, developing along two of the arterial routes into the town, Windmill Street and Wrotham Road.

The buildings which line these two principal routes are generally a mix of residential and commercial buildings, comprising three- and four-storey terraces, some with shopfronts to the ground floor. Domestic terraces of a smaller scale are found on Zion Place and Victoria Avenue. The paired villa is a building type found in the Conservation Area in a variety of forms. Nos. 109-110 are an imposing pair of houses, united under a parapet and pediment, and with strong Classical detailing. The paired villas on Sheppy Place are of a smaller scale, with Classical proportions but minimal architectural detailing.

There are four public houses in the Conservation Area, the most visually dominant being The Railway Tavern, despite this building sitting with its rear elevation to the rest of the Conservation Area. Other building types within the Conservation Area include Milton Hall and Emmanuel Church.

The three large civic administrative buildings within the Conservation Area all date from the second half of the 20th century. The Civic Centre is the most architecturally ambitious of the group and addresses a contemporary forecourt.

7.2 Building form

The buildings of the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area are predominantly arranged as short terraces of two, three and four storeys. Many of the buildings are set above raised basements, with the front door approached up a flight of steps. In addition to the terraces, there are a number of paired villas. Nos. 2-9 Sheppy Place comprise four pairs of houses of uniform design, arranged in a terrace formation. There are occasional instances of a pair of houses of unique design, and these introduce an element of variety into the streetscene and act as local landmarks, such as nos. 109-110 Windmill Street and nos. 70-71 Windmill Street.

Many of the buildings are set back from the street behind small front garden areas, although there are a few examples of much deeper gardens, for example no. 116 and no. 118 Windmill Street. The building line varies with each terraced group. Nos. 8-15 Wrotham Road are ranged in stepped formation to reflect the curve of the road.

The northern part of Windmill Street has a continual terrace of buildings set at the back of the pavement line. This is the result in the greater part of the loss of front garden areas as houses have become shops, and the pavement being widened. There is a mixture of historic and modern shopfronts, some of which are in a traditional manner.

The Civic Centre, the Police Station and Cygnet House are all large detached buildings, placed in forecourt and car park settings, which are proportional to the scale and massing of the buildings.

7.3 Listed buildings

There are 31 listed buildings or structures in the *Upper Windmill Street, Gravesend Conservation Area*, all of them listed grade II. The listed buildings in the Conservation Area are all on Windmill Street. Adjacent unlisted terraces of a similar date, or slightly later, strengthen the attractive streetscene through maintaining the established building line, materials, proportions and detailing.

Four groups of listed buildings comprising nos. 38-50, nos. 51-54, nos. 55-59. and nos. 68-69 Windmill Street are of mid-19th century date, and built from yellow stock brick giving them a cohesive appearance. The terraces are of three and four storeys, some raised over a basement. Most of them are set back from the pavement behind front garden areas, except Nos. 38-43 where the historic boundaries were removed in order to create hardstanding areas an access to the shops. Stucco is used across some of the ground floor levels and to create architectural detailing, such as the rusticated window surrounds at nos. 51-54, imitating alternating large and small blocks of stone.

No. 70 and 71 Windmill Street are two of the grandest buildings in the Conservation Area, both in scale and as an ambitious architectural statement. This mid 19th century pair are of four storeys over a basement. The façade is articulated by a parapet and moulded eaves cornice, and a further cornice below the third floor, with a central pediment supported on four composite columns, with an anthemion motif on the capital, through first and second floor levels. Doors are contained within two projecting porticos, each having a pair of Ionic columns, a pair of square Doric columns and two Doric pilasters. This decoration and the intricate cast iron balconies make this a focal

building on Windmill Street.

Nos. 109 and 110 Windmill Street date from circa 1840, of ashlar stone, although no. 110 has been painted. They are in the Classical style, with a central pediment supported on four pilasters, and a rusticated ground floor.

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:

- The majority of buildings on Windmill Street, Wrotham Road and Sheppy Place
- Nos. 1-9 Zion Place;
- Nos. 1-6 Victoria Avenue.

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 Upper Windmill Street, Wrotham Road, and the associated side streets within the Conservation Area have been built using mainly local materials, particularly red and yellow brick. Some key buildings have employed other materials, such as the sandstone ashlar on nos. 109-110 Windmill Street. The most common

roofing material is Welsh slate although many buildings have had their roofs replaced with concrete tiles.

Gravesend was at the centre of some innovation in construction techniques in the 19th century, including the claimed invention of Portland cement. Many cement works and chalk pits were established in the area and therefore there was no shortage of supplies at this time. Many buildings within the Conservation Area feature an external render coat or architectural details that use this material. Good examples of stucco renders include nos. 70-71 Windmill Street and on the Emmanuel Chapel. The Civic Centre, police station and Cygnet House demonstrate a wide range of later 20th century building methods and materials. In particular the Civic Centre utilises reinforced concrete to great effect for this Brutalist statement.

Cast and wrought iron is found throughout the Conservation Area, principally for front area railings (cast iron), but also for decorative balconies and balconettes at first and second floor levels (wrought iron). The metal is formed into a variety of motifs.

7.7 Local details

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

These include:

- The use of yellow brick, with polychrome detailing;
- Front areas, many of which are surrounded by dwarf walls and cast iron railings;
- Italianate and classical ornamental details;
- Render applied to all or part of elevations, and to create architectural detailing;
- Wrought iron balconies;
- Sash windows, including sashes with round heads on the ground floor.

8. CHARACTER AREAS

8.1 Summary of Character Areas

Within the present boundaries the Upper Windmill 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: Windmill Street and Stone Street (the commercial area);

Character Area 2: Windmill Street (residential);

Character Area 3: Zion Place, Sheppy Place and Victoria Avenue;

Character Area 4: Wrotham Road;

Character Area 5: The Civic Area.

8.2 Character Area 1: Windmill Street and Stone Street (the commercial area)

Windmill Street developed as one of the principal arterial routes into Gravesend and to the river from the old London to Rochester road. The linear route connected directly to High Street and the Town Pier, running through open fields, market gardens, and brick fields to the riverside town. In the 18th century part of the route was known as Upper High Street, and prior to 1801, when New Road was constructed, Stone Street was regarded as part of Gravesend Backside (now Princes Street). With the development of Gravesend as a resort in the 19th century Windmill Street became the

principal thoroughfare between the Town Pier and Windmill Hill, and the town spread increasingly southwards.

Buildings in this area date from the first half of the 19th century, as do those at the southern end of Windmill Street (Character Area 2). However, the commercial use of many of the buildings, linking with the principal commercial district of the town on streets such as Princes Street and New Road, and the large civic buildings on the west side of Windmill Street, set this character area apart from the southern end of Windmill Street which is principally residential buildings on both sides of the street.

Woodville Gardens, together with the forecourt of the Civic Centre (Character Area 5), provide a large amount of public open space. The gardens, together with the wide pavements create a spacious character, and allow clear views across this space to the buildings facing over the gardens. Woodville Gardens are the site of one of the town's burial grounds; the land was acquired in 1788 by the Vestry and churchwardens of Gravesend to supplement the graveyard of St George's Church. A few relocated tombstones survive grouped along the rear wall of The Railway Tavern and provide a reminder of the area's origins. The site was closed for burials in 1855 and laid out for gardens; the current garden scheme was laid out in 1977 as a garden for the blind, provided by the Rotary Club in dedication of its 50th Jubilee. Raised planters of red brick with metal grip rails are attractively planted, and together with the mature trees which edge the plot, help to create a sense of enclosure and protection from the busy traffic routes which border the garden.

Rows of shops face across Woodville Gardens. Nos. 21-23 Stone Street are some of the oldest buildings in the area, constructed in 1789 as Gravesend and Milton's workhouse. However, the buildings have been incorporated into a coherent block, with no. 20, and the former Station Inn public house, now Bar 24, behind a stucco façade, with a moulded cornice and parapet. Eclectic detailing between each building creates interest and variety, such as rusticated ground floor elevations, but overall the buildings are presented as a coherent historic group, and are an important backbone of the townscape in this area. Unfortunately modern shop signage, boundary treatments and pavement surface treatments undermine the historic character and appearance of the terrace.

The row of buildings on the east side of Windmill Street, running from the railway to Lord Street, comprise two- and three storey buildings, many of which were built as houses, but now all of which contain commercial premises. Any former front garden areas and their means of enclosure have been lost; shops now sit at the back of an extra wide pavement. Nos. 15-20 appear to be some of the earliest buildings in the row. The two storey buildings form a terrace of single-bay structures; the rhythm of the bays has been lost at ground floor level with the introduction of modern shopfronts, some of which span across more than one bay, but is retained at first floor level, where some original multi-paned sash windows survive.

Historic shopfronts, and new shopfronts in the traditional manner are to be found further south on Windmill Street. An interesting example is no. 33 Windmill Street which has a two-storey timber shopfront. An important group of traditional shopfronts are found at nos. 40-42 Windmill Street, articulated with

pilasters beneath a scalloped fascia board. Signage has been sympathetically designed to enhance these attractive frontages.

The east side of Windmill Street, between Lord Street and South Street contains a number of buildings which remain intact to the original residential form, without shopfronts inserted at ground floor level. These buildings are in a mixture of office and residential use. The majority of these buildings are grade II listed: nos. 38-50 (St George's Terrace); nos. 51-54; and nos. 55-59. They date from the mid 19th century and are characteristically of yellow stock brick, of three storeys and with a stuccoed ground floor. The character of the streetscape alters as many more of the buildings retain, or have had their area walls and railings reintroduced, for example at nos. 51-54 as part of a grant under a Historic Environment Regeneration Scheme.

The Emmanuel Baptist Church forms an important landmark building between the terraced rows. Built in 1843, to the designs of John Gould, with his father as builder, the rendered church is a tall two storeys, articulated by giant order pilasters. The whole sits beneath a plain entablature and pediment. The church and the buildings form an important streetscape group which sits comfortably together, partly because of an underlying system of Classical proportions and details on each structure.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Two and three storey terraced houses;
- Many buildings set at back of pavement line as the result of the destruction of front area boundary treatments;
- Other buildings, predominantly residential, set back from the pavement behind front

gardens

- Areas bordered by dwarf walls and cast iron railings;
- Terraced houses typically of two bays wide, constructed of stock brick, some of which are rendered at ground floor level;
- Multi-paned sliding sash windows;
- Large number of grade II listed buildings on Windmill Street;
- Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1843.

Negative features/issues:

- Loss of architectural features, such as doors, windows;
- Loss of front garden areas, boundary walls and railings;
- Variety of surface treatments used for pavements and for former front garden areas, some of which are in a poor state of repair;
- Accretions on the principal elevations of buildings, such as satellite dishes and burglar alarms;
- Some of the slate roofs have been replaced with concrete tiles;
- Modern shopfronts and signage which is not of a design that reflects or enhances the historic building on which it is inserted;
- Volume of traffic and congestion at intersection of Windmill Street/Wrotham Road.

On this part of Windmill Street the land begins to rise increasingly steeply towards Windmill Hill in the south. Views southwards along the street take in the groups of terraces which climb the gentle slope, and look towards the focal building of Tivoli House, outside of the Conservation Area boundary. All of the buildings are set back from the pavement line behind front gardens, many of which are enclosed by walls and cast iron railings. Many of these front gardens are attractively planted; the foliage of plants has a softening effect on the hard urban townscape. The building line recedes and projects with each short terrace, creating a sense of movement to the streetscene.

Three pairs of buildings on this stretch of Windmill Street are grade II listed: nos. 68 and 69; nos. 70 and 71 and nos. 109-110. Each pair is distinct in terms of its architectural detailing, and often grandiose design statement, but in scale and proportional arrangement of the components of the elevation there is an underlying reference to the Classical style, between these and the unlisted adjacent 19th century terraces and paired villas. Nos. 109-110 were known as 'North House' and 'South House' and were originally surrounded by cast iron railings and gate standards decorated with the town arms; these were originally part of the railings of the Town Pier.

8.3 Character Area 2: Windmill Street (residential)

This character area is focused in the section of Windmill Street which runs between South Street and Clarence Place. It is characterised by terraced buildings ranged on both sides of the street, and some paired villas, which are arranged to create a unified group. The buildings are predominantly in residential use, as a mixture of single dwellings and flats.

Building heights range from two to four storeys, and some buildings are additionally set above a raised basement. Yellow stock brick is the prevalent building material, rendered in part or in entirety. Nos. 77-84 Windmill Street are four pairs of villas of uniform design, although subject to various later alterations, such as the public house and shop built over the front gardens of nos. 77-78. Each pair of houses is two bays wide, and

set beneath a hipped roof with large central stack. Sliding sash windows articulate each bay, and the entrance door is concealed on the return. The buildings have a render coat, which is defined as banded rustication at ground floor level on nos. 79-80 and nos. 83-84. Nos. 83-84 also has a decorative strapwork pattern applied in render to the elevation. The buildings feature attractive cast iron balconies and balconettes.

No. 116 and no. 117 Windmill Street form an attractive pair of buildings which are visually distinct from the three-storey yellow brick terraces which characterise the west side of the street. The buildings are of different heights, with distinct architectural identities, but an underlying reference to the Classical style and the use of a stucco render coat unifies the two buildings. These two houses are set back from the pavement line behind large front gardens; these gardens recess this pair of buildings behind the common building line of the street. No. 117 is a narrow, two-bay three-storey house, with a stucco porch articulated as flat pilasters. The rectangular fanlight above the door and the windows feature marginal glazing. No. 116 is a two-storey three-bay building, set beneath a mansard roof. A particularly attractive feature is the three cast iron balconies at first floor level; each window retains a decoratively scalloped blind box.

Nos. 71a and b, 72, and 72a and b, are of a different period and character from much of Windmill Street, which dates from the 1830s and 40s. These three buildings date from 1906, and were erected on the site of the demolished Clarence House, formerly the Clarence Hotel serving visitors to the town travelling to the resort attraction of Windmill Hill in the 19th century. The houses are presented as three terraced houses, but a

pair of entrance doors indicates that there are two flats internally. They appear as suburban terraced houses, with diluted references to the vernacular style, with large chimneystacks, applied timber-framing to the gables, and terracotta crested ridge tiles and finials decorating the slate roofs.

An important focal building in this area, distinct in both function and design, is Milton Hall. This was originally erected as a timber building in 1835 as Tulley's Bazaar, as a place of leisure and entertainment for tourists to the town. The existing Milton Hall was built in 1859, and has since been a drill hall for the Local Artillery Volunteers, and in 1890, a grocery known as Milton Hall Stores. The building has a distinctive stucco façade with a curved pediment, and corners encased in Corinthian pilasters.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Terraced houses and paired villas, arranged as small groups;
- Houses set back from pavement behind front gardens;
- Use of stock brick, with stucco render used to cover entire buildings and architectural detailing;
- Multi-paned sliding sash windows.

Negative features/issues:

- Loss of original architectural features, such as windows, doors and boundary features.

8.4 Character Area 3: Zion Place, Sheppy Place and Victoria Avenue

This small character area encompasses the residential buildings of Zion Place, Victoria

Avenue and Sheppy Place. The area is characterised by two-storey buildings of the first half of the 19th century, which were laid out on newly constructed roads as the town expanded southwards during this period. The land rises quite steeply southwards in this area; the terrace of nos. 1-6 Victoria Avenue are set on much higher ground than nos. 1-9 Zion Place to the north. Clearance of the land for the erection of Cygnet House (Character Area 5) and the surrounding large car park, together with the change in topography, permits clear views into and through this area. For example, the rear elevations of the terraced houses on Zion Place are visible looking northwards from Sheppy Place, and vice versa, the paired villas of Sheppy Place are seen clearly stepping up the hillside looking southwards from Zion Place.

Zion Place was originally known as Woodville Street, but was changed in the later 19th century; the Baptist Zion chapel constructed opposite the eastern end of the street was erected in 1843. The houses are of two storeys raised above a basement, and approached up a flight of steps. The short terrace of nine houses were built in identical form with a rounded headed door and sash window at ground floor level, with two square-headed sash windows at first floor level, and a single square-headed window at the basement storey. Yellow brick was used for the construction of the terrace, laid in fine gauged work above the door and windows. A rendered cill band adds interest to each facade. The buildings are set back from the pavement line behind front garden areas, although many of the boundary walls and railings have been demolished and the gardens used for vehicle-parking. Zion Place is an important group of 19th century houses, which survived the clearances in the vicinity in the 1960s, however they have lost number of

architectural features which has eroded some of their architectural interest.

Sheppy Place was laid out as an approach to Baynard Castle, a castellated Gothic house, formerly Lacey Castle. It was built in the early 19th century by Edward Lacey, a former mayor and was demolished in 1952. The four paired villas which line the west side of Sheppy Place were constructed by William Wood, the builder, for his workmen, and a further terrace was erected to the south of these in the last quarter of the 19th century. The two storey houses are of a simple form; each house is of a single bay with a square-headed sash window at each floor and with the entrance concealed on the returning elevation. However, the arrangement of the buildings in pairs, set beneath an imposing hipped roof, with central chimneystack, increases their visual status in the street. The paired villas are predominantly of yellow brick, although some houses have an applied render coat, applied as banded rustication at ground floor level. At the southern end of Sheppy Place stands no. 17, a large three-storey detached house, set in extensive grounds. It is an important landmark when viewed southwards along the street, but close-range views are largely obscured by the high retaining wall and mature trees which occupy the large garden.

The 19th century terrace of six houses, ranged along the north side of Victoria Avenue, have a parallel appearance to the villas on Sheppy Place. They are constructed of yellow brick, with render applied in the pattern of banded rustication at ground floor level. However, the character of Victoria Avenue is quite different; the buildings are set facing a narrow pedestrian footpath which links through to Wrotham Road, and have well-tended front gardens, resulting in a quieter, leafier,

car-free, residential enclave.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Early 19th century terraced houses and paired villas, constructed of yellow brick;
- Buildings set back from the pavement line behind front garden areas;
- Buildings have both round-headed and square-headed timber sash windows.

Negative features/issues:

- Loss of architectural features, such as doors and windows;
- Loss of front garden areas, boundary walls and railings, to create vehicle parking areas; this is notable on Zion Place;
- Some of the brick buildings have been rendered or painted, which disrupts the visual continuity of the terraces;
- Some of the slate roofs have been replaced with concrete tiles;
- Loss of rear gardens to create vehicle parking areas, notably at Sheppy Place (rear of properties Nos. 119-126 Windmill Street);
- Under-maintained garage buildings at Sheppey Place

8.5 Character Area 4: Wrotham Road

This character area comprises a short stretch of buildings on the west side of Wrotham Road, facing eastwards across to the Civic Centre and Police Station (Character Area 5), connecting to Stone Street in the north (Character Area 1). The buildings, of various designs, date from the last quarter of the 19th century, with the exception of no. 6 which is possibly from earlier in the century.

Wrotham Road was constructed in 1825 as a

turnpike road, providing a new route into the town from the London to Rochester road. It is a very busy route, connecting to the inner ring-road, and traffic noise and fumes have a detrimental impact on the atmosphere of the street.

Terraced houses characterise this stretch of Wrotham Road, with occasional paired or single houses in between. All of the buildings are set back from the pavement behind small front areas surrounded by rendered dwarf walls and cast iron railings. Nos. 8-15 and no. 16 Wrotham Road comprise a unified group; an identical terrace is to be found on Darnley Street, just outside of the Conservation Area's boundary. The area around Darnley Street was laid out by Messrs Pillow & Pollock in the 1840s. The buildings are of three storeys over a raised basement, and of two bays wide. At first and second storey level sit a pair two round headed windows and at ground and basement level, there is a centrally placed canted bay. Front doors are recessed from the principal elevation by a lobby area. A distinctive treatment of yellow brick walls laid in Flemish Bond are enlivened by a stucco coat to the lower two storeys and detailing to the window surrounds above, creating pilasters and keystones. Cill bands and a cornice are also articulated in stucco. Each house of the terrace of nos. 8-15 Wrotham Road is set back slightly from its neighbour, creating a stepped arrangement to the row that reflects the curve in the road at this point. No. 16 Wrotham Road has a front to Wrotham Road, but also a front to Darnley Street, where it terminates a terrace of matching design; its impressive Dutch gable provides an important landmark on the street.

To the north of this terrace on Wrotham Road sits no. 7 Wrotham Road, a building of a similar date and architectural conception,

but with individual design flourishes. The building is of two storeys over a raised basement, with centrally placed canted bay at basement and ground floor levels. The building is constructed from yellow brick, with distinctive raised red and blue brick detailing of architectural features, such as quoins and a cornice. Unfortunately this building has been the subject of a large box roof extension, which has undermined the well-considered proportions of the historic building.

Polychrome brickwork is found on other buildings in this area, for example nos. 18-24 Wrotham Road. In this instance the yellow brick has been decorated with flush red brick bands, quoins and diamond patterns. Detailing of the double-height canted bays, including the Corinthian columns on the corners of the bays, has been painted white.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Residential buildings dating from the last quarter of the 19th century;
- Buildings typically of two and three storeys;
- Buildings set back from pavement behind front areas;
- Areas bounded by dwarf walls and cast iron railings;
- Buildings constructed of yellow brick, with detailing in stucco, and polychrome brickwork.

Negative features/issues:

- Volume, speed and associated noise of traffic;
- Some of the slate roofs have been replaced with concrete tiles
- Demolition of boundary walls to create off-road vehicle parking areas has eroded the

immediate setting of historic buildings.

8.6 Character Area 5: The Civic Area

This is the principal administrative centre of Gravesend, containing the Civic Centre (offices of Gravesham Borough Council) and Gravesend Police Station. Cygnet House is a large office block, containing some functions of Gravesham Borough Council. It was erected in 1965 as the divisional headquarters of Kent County Council. Leisure facilities are offered by the Woodville Halls Theatre. The Civic Centre, designed by H. T. Cadbury Brown opened in 1968, when this part of Gravesend was comprehensively redeveloped.

The three buildings form this character area, together with the forecourt of the Civic Centre, Woodville Place, and the car parks associated with the administrative buildings. The area does not contain any historic structures and is characterised by the three buildings from the second half of the 20th century. The area is bordered to either side by the busy arterial routes of Wrotham Road and Windmill Street. The three buildings are expressive of a particular period in architecture, and the Civic Centre in particular makes a strong statement with its Brutalist idiom and use of reinforced concrete. The raised forecourt is constructed in concrete, including the planting beds and pond, forming a contemporary but uninspiring setting to the Civic Centre. A row of mature conifers softens the western edge of the forecourt. The forecourt's distinct identity from the surrounding townscape is reinforced by the unique design of the street furniture; the furniture includes benches and litter bins of modern design in slatted silver metal. The ensemble sits well together as a set-piece composition, although the scale of the buildings dominates the surrounding historic

built form and street pattern.

While the scale and massing of the three buildings in this character area neither reflect nor enhance the surrounding historic townscape, the retention of streets between the buildings has ensured a degree of visual permeability. Woodville Place and Zion Place, both allow views through this area, for example the clear view eastwards along Zion Place to the Emmanuel Church on Windmill Street.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Three large civic buildings dating from the second half of the 20th century;
- Buildings clad with concrete panels;
- Civic Centre has a hard-landscaped forecourt to the north;
- The police station and Cygnet House are surrounded by hard standing and car parks;
- Two narrow streets run between the buildings, allowing a degree of visual permeability to the surrounding historic townscape.

Negative features/issues:

- Volume of traffic and congestion at the northern end of Civic Centre forecourt;
- large, unbroken expanse of paving and lack of enclosure of the Civic Centre forecourt;
- The three civic buildings are of a scale, mass and materials that neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the surrounding historic townscape.

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 not recommended that the boundary of the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area is extended, as the designation covers the special architectural and historic interest of Windmill Street and the surrounding area. Other areas of importance are contained within adjacent conservation areas.

It is proposed that The Railway Tavern is removed from this Conservation Area and added to the King Street Conservation Area. The building faces Railway Place, and sits with its back to the rest of the Conservation Area; the orientation of the building creates a relationship of this building with the buildings on the north side of Railway Place.

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 shopfronts, windows and doors.

9.4 Alterations to buildings

It is clear that a considerable amount of property alteration takes place in Gravesend. It is evident that well-intentioned, but unsympathetic changes, especially to doors, windows and roofs, have begun to have a cumulative effect, causing loss of original architectural features that gradually erodes the character of some conservation areas.

Except for the last extension to the area, made in 2001, there is an Article 4 Direction in place for the Upper Windmill Hill Conservation Area which has brought many of those small incremental changes under the remit of the planning system. It enables the authority to give proper care and thought to any proposed alteration and to suggest less damaging ways where appropriate.

9.5 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.

9.6 Enforcement

During the survey work for the Character Appraisal, a number of sites or buildings were identified where works have taken place that

may not have been authorised and where enforcement action may be relevant. These include visible satellite dishes and modern windows or doors and they include alterations to listed buildings.

9.7 Parking

The issue of car parking needs to be addressed in the Conservation Area. There is minimum on-street residents parking, and the area is heavily congested by parked cars. In turn this has resulted in off-road parking areas being created in front garden areas and at the rear of plots. The loss of front gardens, and boundary walls and railings is detrimental to the appearance and historic character of the area.

9.8 Boundary walls

Boundary walls and railings make an important contribution to the appearance and character of the Conservation Area and their removal should be resisted.

9.9 Enhancement

There are a number of areas in the Conservation Area which could be enhanced through a programme of improvements, such as:

- the maintenance and reinstatement of architectural features such as windows and doors, ornamental detailing and boundary features;
- the re-landscaping of the Civic Centre forecourt to create a sense of enclosure, to break up the expanse of the space, and to introduce a sense of visual pathways through the space;
- improvements to the surface treatment of the area surrounding Woodville Gardens

- and the forecourts of the shops;
- improvements to, or replacement where appropriate, of unsympathetic modern shopfronts and signage;
- the repair or appropriate replacement of garages at Sheppy Place;

Various grant schemes run in the area have already helped to enhance the character by funding the re-instatement of railings, architectural features and appropriate shopfronts, and the continuation of such schemes as well as those that help owners with the repair of their historic buildings is desirable.

Appendices

Appendix 1 History of Gravesend

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

Appendix 1

History of Gravesend - High Street

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

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

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

The oldest building in Gravesend, Milton Chantry, dates from the 14th century and stands 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









Designated Boundary Map 09.02.09

