

High Street & Queen Street

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



QUEEN STREET CONSERVATION AREA

Character Appraisal

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

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1. STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The Queen Street Conservation Area lies close to the historic centre of Gravesend in Kent. Queen Street was a back lane to the medieval High Street and these routes were linked by a variety of yards and alleys. From the 16th century the town's market place was located in Queen Street and this development led to the continued growth of the road.

Queen Street was also connected to an ancient landing place on the Thames riverside via Crooked Lane. The narrow, winding route was a minor alternate route to High Street. This connection with the riverside was opened up when the historic maritime buildings and residential streets next to them were removed in the 20th century. The southern part of Queen Street and the Borough Market Hall remain intact and are the focus of a Conservation Area that celebrates part of the later 18th and 19th century town that grew away from the river.

Since the 18th century Queen Street has become a more established commercial street as part of the expanding trading centre of this market town. The Borough Market Hall is at the social and economic centre of the Conservation Area on a site that has seen market trade since at least the 16th century. The Market Hall connects Queen Street to High Street in a manner that has been lost at many other locations through infill development or by the removal of the historic street pattern. This corner of the Heritage Quarter of Gravesend plays an important role in the commercial history of the town with the market at one end and Dolphin Yard and Brewhouse Yard at the other. These yards were once occupied by forges, smithies and

other small specialised industries that were tucked away from the main routes through Gravesend.

Due to the changing needs of the people of Gravesend, the buildings of Queen Street have been rebuilt and altered many times. This has led to a variety of architectural styles and forms, although a number of buildings retain their early 19th century features from the first floor upwards. Today, Queen Street has the character of a small specialist shopping area, with none of the modern national retailers in its shopping parades. The 20th century has seen the introduction of new buildings and the insertion of modern shopfronts, often with bright modern signage. These developments have altered the appearance of this shopping street, though it still retains a strong 19th century character.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Queen Street Conservation Area

The Queen Street Conservation Area was designated on 17th May 1990 by Gravesham Borough Council. The Conservation Area's boundary contains part of the historic thoroughfare of Queen Street and the Borough Market.

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 Queen 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.

to arrive at this final agreed document. A public consultation report is attached to this document as Appendix 3 for information.

2.4 Community involvement

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

- The special characteristics of Queen 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

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 Queen Street Conservation Area lies in the centre of the historic town, in an area that was identified as the 'Heritage Quarter' in the Gravesend Town Centre Strategy of 1998. The Conservation Area connects to the historic commercial High Street via the Borough Market Hall.

3.2 Activities and uses

Gravesend is a large residential settlement with a substantial commercial centre.

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

The core of the Queen Street Conservation Area contains many commercial premises in a range of shops with living accommodation above. These include a number of catering establishments and public houses as well as other local businesses such as an office supplier, household goods suppliers and other specialist shops. None of the shops on Queen Street are part of national chains. Many are occupied by traders selling a variety of cheaper goods, giving the street a bazaar-like character.

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 steadily from the riverside to give far reaching views from Queen Street across the broad river to the north bank of the river and to the Essex countryside beyond. The gradient levels off inside the Conservation Area boundary, close to the Borough Market, although the road continues to rise very slightly as it connects with King Street in the south.

The relatively flat topography, along with the high density of tall three or four storey buildings within Queen Street, inhibits views to the east and west. However, there are views through to the rear of High Street and King Street Shops from Brewhouse Yard and from the Borough Market.

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.

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

plants and attendant wildlife.

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

3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

The immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area are urban townscape and these are also largely designated as separate conservation areas.

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

- To the south: commercial centre of the town along King Street and Milton Road with large national department stores, some smaller shops and other buildings such as churches and public houses;
- To the west (and north): High Street and the Heritage Quarter;
- To the north: Surface car parks in New Swan Yard and around the open air market, and the Inner Ring Road (Crooked Lane). This is the location of an earlier historic layout that has been removed. Beyond is the public open space of St Andrew’s Gardens, and the River Thames;
- To the east – historic residential roads and modern infill development in the form of flats, notably bordering the north eastern part of Queen Street and The Terrace.

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.

Although Queen Street falls within Kent County Council's designated Area of Archaeological Potential in Gravesend, no recorded finds have been made here.

4.2 Historical development

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

included in Appendix 2.

The principal features of the historical development of the *Queen 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 *Gravesham* in The Domesday Book: an agricultural estate in the ownership of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (the brother of William I).

MEDIEVAL (1200 – 1485):

- 1258 - Richard de Gravesende made Bishop of Lincoln. The change of name from Gravesham was established for the town.
- 1300 - Gravesend had grown into a small market town via its trade on the river and easy supply of supplies from neighbouring agricultural land.
- 1350 - Course of High Street established. It stood at the centre of a network of streets, a direct route from the river to the old Parish Church. Queen Street was a back lane to High Street.
- 1356 - First market charter. Market sited on the corner of High Street and West Street next to the landing stage.
- 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.
- Many inns, stables and shops were established in the town, but regularly destroyed by fires.
- Gravesend was a sizeable town centred on High Street, with Queen Street and Princes Street on either side connected by alleys and yards.

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 – Queen Street lies just inside Milton Parish.
- 1573 - First Town Hall built. Common Market held once a week on current site of Borough Market.
- 1633 - County Assizes held at Gravesend.
- 1650 - All landing stages except for the common bridge (Town Pier) removed.
- 1680s - Sheriff of Kent's house was located on west side of Queen Street.
- 1711 - Turnpike Act led to stagecoach route along the top of Queen Street.
- Early 18th century - Queen Street known as Milton Backside: the street backing onto High Street.

GEORGIAN & REGENCY (1714 – 1837):

- 1727 - Fire destroyed most of High Street, surrounding streets including Queen Street. The town was rebuilt.

- 1749 - Other fires blighted the town and citizens started a subscription for buying fire engines.
- 1750s/1760s - Many improvements made by the Corporation – including the Town Hall being replaced.
- 1773 - Queen Street not included in plans to pave Gravesend's streets, but was to be lighted.
- 1797 - Gravesend population was 4,000.
- 1790s - Milton Backside renamed Queen Street.
- 1806 - Queen Street was paved with "36 tons of pebbles" by this time.
- 1815 - First regular service of pleasure steamers from London to Gravesend.
- 1818 - Market area partially roofed for the first time.

VICTORIAN (1837-1901):

- 1840s Rosherville Gardens opened. A promenade established along the riverfront along with more piers.
- Commerce boomed: banks and companies founded. Commercial area spread from High Street to include Queen Street, New Road, King Street and Windmill Street.
- 1845 - Gravesend & Rochester railway opened.
- 1850 to 1900 - Established stables, livery and blacksmiths forge continued to operate in southern end of Queen Street.
- 1840s/ 50s - Many fires in the area. Construction of Bank Street.
- 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.
- 1890s - Improved railway network took day trippers to other resorts such as

Margate and Ramsgate. Gravesend became more industrial. Craftsmen and small traders, including ornamental metalworkers and herbalists continued to work in Queen Street until 1960.

- 1897 - Market Hall built between Queen Street and High Street.

viability of shops in Queen Street.

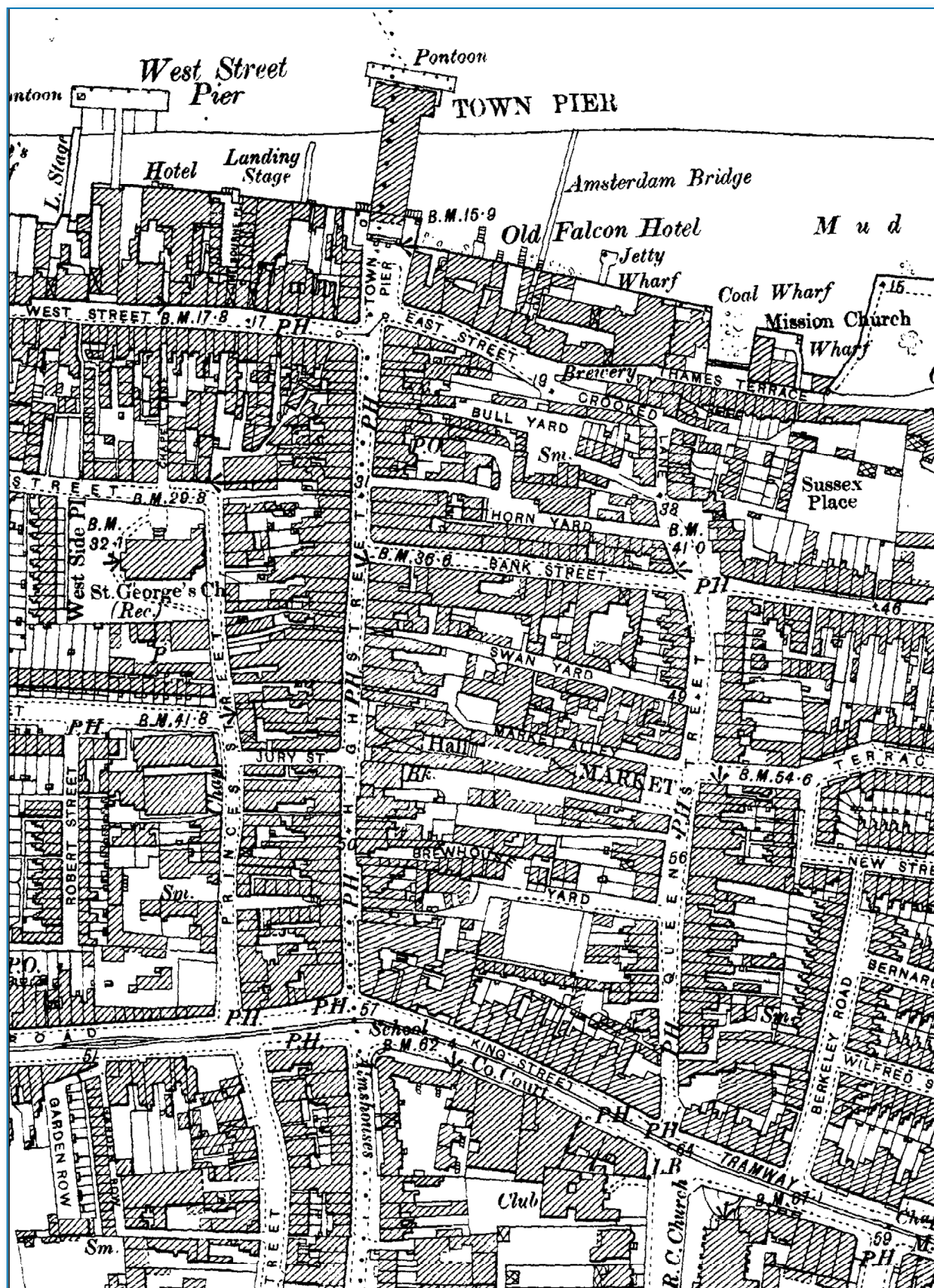
- 1990s - Market Hall extended towards Queen Street.

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.
- Post 1945 - area to the north of the market cleared of all residential and commercial buildings as far as the river.
- 1950s - A large power station constructed at Tilbury.
- 1951 - Sheriff of Kent's house in Queen Street demolished.
- As transport links to the city improved, Gravesend became a commuter settlement.
- 1958 - Creation of Inner Ring Road removed East Street and changed appearance of Crooked Lane from narrow short street with sharp turns to broad modern highway.
- 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 – Lower part of Queen Street and Terrace Street demolished for redevelopment.
- 1970s to present - Declining economic



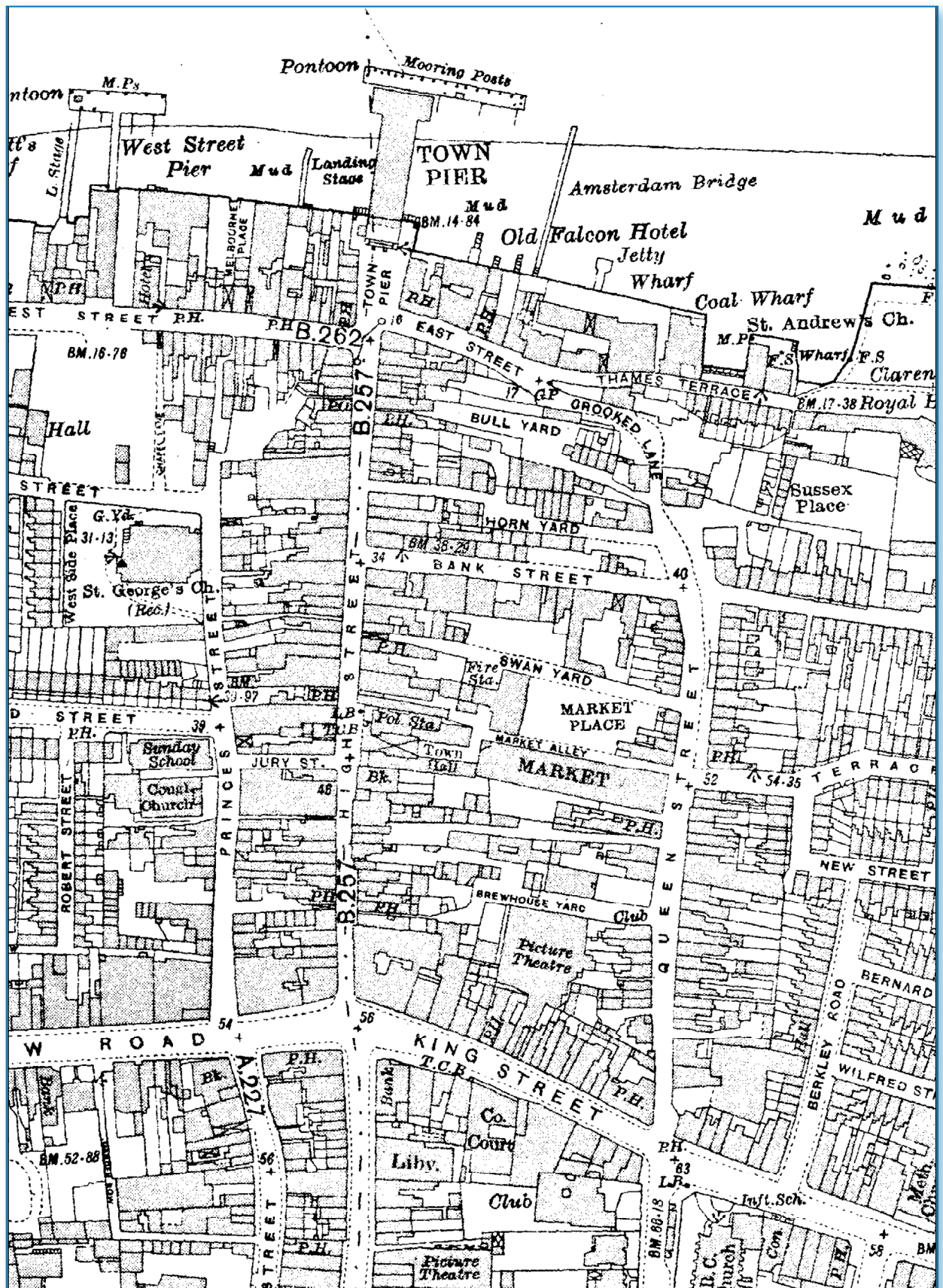
1843 - 1893



1891 - 1912



1904 - 1939



1919 - 1943

5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Layout and spaces

Queen Street was a back lane running parallel to High Street by the early medieval period. The importance of this area to the east of High Street was settled when the market was established here in the 16th century. Queen Street provided an alternative winding route, via Crooked Lane, from the landing stage southwards towards the ancient route of Watling Street. This explains the strong north-south orientation of Queen Street and the roads to either side of it. Princes Street and Queen Street were called the “Backsides” to High Street by the early 18th century and intersect with New Road and King Street, which were part of the stagecoach route from London.

The Conservation Area includes the southern half of Queen Street. This road forms a gentle “S” as it connects King Street to the market hall and continues beyond the Conservation Area boundary towards the river and slopes down towards the shore. This area, outside the Conservation Area boundary, has had the historic street layout and buildings removed and now provides car parking and an open air market space.

East-west routes in the form of narrow streets and alleys that connected with the High Street have, in some cases, been infilled. As a result, Brewhouse Yard, which connects with Queen Street, has become a cul-de-sac. However, the access from the market through the arches of the Town Hall remains an important link between the commercial areas.

Terrace Street joins with Queen Street from the east and was an historic residential street that once connected with Berkley Road and

Harmer Street. Post-war town planning led to the demolition of all of the houses, which have since been replaced by blocks of flats, outside the Conservation Area.

Queen Street is laid out in a high density arrangement with no public open space and few gaps between buildings. The other notable gaps in the building line are Dolphin Yard on the east side of Queen Street and a small access road between nos. 1a and 5.

5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

In Queen Street nearly all of the buildings stand on the back edge of the pavement in mainly continuous rows. A notable exception is no. 24 which is a 20th century addition, a wide two-storey building of markedly horizontal proportions that is set back from the established building line. Due to their commercial use none of the buildings have front gardens; only The George Inn has a small forecourt. The building marks the point where the street formerly widened, and then linked with a number of small residential streets, including Crooked Lane. These small residential streets and surrounding historic development at the northern end of Queens Street were demolished in the second half of the 20th century and have since been redeveloped with housing and a car park.

The narrowness of Queen Street is accentuated by the height of the three to four storey buildings in some places, although there is a more open appearance around the single storey shops at nos. 1 and 1a and Borough Market Hall. At ground floor level there is a crowding effect of irregular shopfronts sitting directly on a narrow pavement lined by cast iron bollards and parked cars. However, the street widens slightly at the northern end next to the single

storey market building and a large open space which is used for car parking and a weekly street market. This break in the streetscene is in marked contrast to the tight building line in the rest of the Conservation Area and is accentuated by the further break in the streetscape created by the entrance to Terrace Street. The additional width of Queen Street from The George Inn northwards is depicted on a map of 1826 and it is likely that this was an early location for the market before it was sited in its current location.

5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

The principal landmarks in the Queen Street Conservation Area are:

- Borough Market Hall;
- The Comrades Club (nos. 15/17 Queen Street);
- Barcode (no.23 Queen Street, formerly The Town Arms Public House);
- The George Inn.

The market and public houses form an interesting group of buildings. The George Inn is probably the oldest and has a square façade over three floors. Its plain appearance is accentuated by its painted render walls and black painted sash windows. Its height, double pile depth and corner location give it landmark qualities. No.23 is a narrower building and stands next to the Market Hall. Partly render and with pale yellow brick, the four storey structure towers over the market and features intact historic features such as a stone balustrade and ball finials. The Borough Market Hall achieves landmark status through its large bulk as it stretches westwards from Queen Street to the Old Town Hall. While architecturally unremarkable, it is an important social focal point in the town.

Gravesend is partly characterised by its riverside location and there are extensive views from Queen Street across and along the Thames. The rise of the land towards Windmill Hill means that there are long views from the river into and along streets such as Queen Street, which lead inland.

The principal positive views are:

- Along Queen Street in both directions;
- The Borough Market Hall building from Queen Street and High Street;
- North across St Andrew's Gardens and the River Thames to Tilbury.

5.5 Trees, boundaries and planting

There are no trees in this urban commercial street, nor is there much scope for their introduction due to the narrow pavements and lack of open space. Some tree planting on the forecourt of No.24, in order to soften the horizontal emphasis of the building, may be possible.

6. STREETScape

6.1 Public realm

Pavements

The pavements in the Queen Street Conservation Area contain a mixture of traditional and modern urban treatments. Along Queen Street, wide (300mm) granite kerbs give a traditional appearance to the pavements although they are set close to the same level as the road. Next to the kerbstones run three rows of square roughly hewn granite setts. These are slightly depressed to form shallow gutters on either side of the central stretch of tarmac road. The main pavements themselves are covered in modern red concrete block paving. The kerbing and brick-shaped paving is replaced with square setts outside the market hall entrance. This treatment extends across the roadway to the junction with Terrace Street where eight rows of raised brick shaped stone cobbles mark part of the Conservation Area boundary.

In Brewhouse Yard, the wide kerbs are replaced by modern 200mm concrete kerbing. Also, the southern side of the road has a pale yellow coloured concrete pavement.

Street furniture, signage and other features

The public realm of Queen Street was refurbished in the late 1980s that saw the introduction of traditional style street lights and cast-iron bollards featuring the Gravesham crest on them, all in a unifying blue colour scheme.

Street lighting

Queen Street has a total of four street lamps along its length which are evenly spaced between the Comrades Club and the southern end of the road. They have a traditional style with a Victorian lantern above cast iron columns. There is one “hockey-stick” style 1970s street lamp in Brewhouse Yard.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths

Access along the pavement is good in the Conservation Area. There is additional pedestrian movement through the market hall which links to High Street. Other footpath links, such as one through Brewhouse Yard are no longer available for public use.

Traffic and parking

Queen Street is only open to one-way traffic entering from the south. The volume of traffic is relatively modest as the road is not part of the inner ring road. Parking along Queen Street and Brewhouse Yard is controlled by single yellow lines, although some cars temporarily line the road, particularly on the eastern side close to the market. The narrowness of Queen Street and the plentiful parking available in the market place deters parking here. Also, the parking of vehicles on the pavement is prevented by the bollards that line the kerb edge.

7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Building types

The historic buildings in the Conservation Area are typical of an historic commercial street that has developed along with changing tastes over many centuries. This has resulted in a range of architectural styles, building form, details and materials. Some of the buildings to be found in the Conservation Area today are historic, and many could stand on the sites of earlier buildings.

Since at least the 17th century, Queen Street has had a mix of commercial and residential buildings and today they form tightly packed rows of mainly tall buildings, particularly at the northern end, mostly with shopfronts to the ground floor. The juxtaposition of short and tall buildings is a particular feature of the Queen Street Conservation Area.

The buildings in the Conservation Area are all shops with accommodation above, public houses, restaurants and the market. The oldest surviving buildings appear to be of early 19th century origin and include The George Inn and nos. 19 & 21. Queen Street has been developed on both sides since at least 1826, although all the buildings have been remodelled or completely replaced in the intervening years. As in other parts of the town most of the earlier 19th century buildings seemed to have originally been houses that had their ground floor converted during the later part of the 19th century. 20th century addition and replacements, such as nos. 24, are purposely built commercial buildings.

7.2 Building form

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

The building line is maintained almost throughout, although the Borough Market Hall and The George Inn are set back. The buildings generally have a domestic scale and vary between single, two, three and four storeys in height.

7.3 Listed buildings

There are two listed buildings in the *Queen Street Conservation Area*, the statue to Queen Victoria in the Market Hall, and nos. 26 and 28 (included in the same designation), which are both listed grade II. The stone statue of Queen Victoria is dated 1898 and was sculpted by J. Broad. Nos. 26 and 28 are a pair of three storey stuccoed buildings dating from 1831. Their impressive scale and remaining features such as the original glazing bars in sash windows and the decorative window heads with shell mouldings, are not enhanced by the modern shopfront on the 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 that the importance the Government places in its Heritage White Paper on the compilation of Lists of Buildings of Local Interest, Gravesham Borough Council's list is due to be reviewed soon.

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

7.5 Key unlisted buildings

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

- Nos. 4 to 10 (even), 5 to 17 (odd), 19 & 21, 23, and 30 to 38 (even) Queen Street;
- Borough Market Hall.

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 Queen Street have been built using mainly local materials, particularly red and yellow stock brick. Some key buildings close by, however, have used other materials such as Kentish ragstone and even sandstone ashlar (Town Hall). The most common roofing material is Welsh slate and many buildings have retained this roof treatment (Comrades Club, The George Inn, Borough Market Hall).

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 George Inn and the two listed buildings (nos. 26 and 28). The material is also used for the architectural details found on no.23 Queen Street.

7.7 Local details

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

- The historic yards and alleyways;
- Round corners on corner buildings;

- Emblematic street furniture: cast iron bollards with local crests;
- The use of red and yellow brick;
- Console brackets and stone ball finials on shopfronts and public house facades;
- Sash Windows (a few remaining).

8. CHARACTER

8.1 Summary of Character

The Queen Street Conservation Area is a relatively small designation, centred on the part of Queen Street that stretches in a slight curve from King Street to the Borough Market Hall. Further north the street has lost any sense of enclosure and its historic character due to comprehensive clearance and re-development in the second half of the 20th century. At the northern side of the Market Hall where the Conservation Area boundary ends is today a large car park. The openness of the area however enables wide views across the river to Tilbury, rather than the glimpses that would have been originally available between the closely packed buildings and narrow streets that once characterised this area. The views are enhanced by the topography which slopes down towards the river banks.

Queen Street is shown on historic maps as mostly fully developed with properties on both sides as early as 1769 though most of the existing buildings seem to date no earlier than from the 19th century. Only one building on the street, nos. 26 & 28, can be dated with some degree of accuracy as it carries the date '1831'. Further investigation is needed to establish whether this is the date of construction or date of refurbishment of an earlier structure. There have been some 20th century replacement buildings at the western side of the street at the southern end and at the corner with Brewhouse Yard, and opposite the property no. 24 which dates from the 1930s.

The principal impression on entering the Conservation Area from either the north or southern end of Queen Street is at street level of a modern urban shopping street,

regrettably, much of any previous historic detail has been lost due to unsympathetic renovation and updating. On the upper floors the buildings have retained much more historic detailing; the narrowness of the street lined with continuous rows of predominantly two to three storey buildings, most of them no more than one or two window bays wide, gives a strong 19th century impression. There is a variety of building styles and forms that reflect different development stages and uses in the 19th and 20th century.

Moving north from King Street, Queen Street initially has a rather modern urban appearance with a number of two or single-storey post-war buildings on its western side that are of no special interest. These are followed by a row of four semi-detached two-storey 19th century houses with modern shopfront at ground floor level. Some architectural details such as the recessed brick panels above the windows and a saw tooth cornice on nos. 7 and 9 remain.

Further along, the Comrades Club is a three to four storey Edwardian building with Dutch gables. It towers at the corner of Queen Street and Brewhouse Yard and is a key building on this curving street. The run down appearance of the club, along with the considerable amount of alterations that have been made to it, is typical of many buildings in Queen Street. While some have good quality architectural features such as the elliptical window arches and double hung timber sash windows on the façade of no.4, many others have lost such details.

No.4, which is in the east side of the street next to Dolphin Yard, also has a well maintained restaurant frontage with deep red square tiling, and is less intrusive on the historic streetscene than some of the

neighbouring shopfronts. Nos. 6 to 10, for instance, have garish signage with modern shopfronts featuring large amounts of plate glass and steel roller shutters. These unsympathetic features are in contrast to the remaining historic character at first floor level. The handsome Victorian buildings retain their yellow and red brick appearance with cast iron guttering, although a variety of modern window replacements have been introduced.

Queen Street continues north in this fashion: a mixture of 19th and 20th century buildings of varying heights and roof profiles with modern shopfronts on the ground floor. All of the 19th century buildings have had some degree of adaptation, including the grade II listed nos. 26 and 28, which features some attractive six-over-six sash windows with decorative shell motifs in the round window arches on first floor level.

Nos. 12 to 20 constitute the most cohesive group of buildings within the street, a terrace of five buildings of classical proportions built in circa 1850 in yellow stock brick with cornice and parapet detail in render. On the western side of the street, nos. 19 and 21 are an interesting pair of three-storey semi-detached houses with yards to the rear, built in the late 18th century, possibly in circa 1780. They have a double-pile hipped roof featuring Kentish peg tiles – one of the few examples left in the town – and although the buildings have been heavily altered and are now in a poor condition, they must have had originally some considerable status.

At the junction of Terrace Street the character changes as two relatively intact 19th century public houses stand tall and removed from neighbouring buildings. Additionally, the Borough Market Hall is single storey and there are views across the car park and the former

New Swan Yard and Horn Yard. This change in character is due to the remodelling of the street layout and the removal of a number of roads, signalling the end of the special character and the natural boundary of the Queen Street Conservation Area.

The steady buzz of activity in the Borough Market Hall is contained within a sturdy 19th century structure that has been subsequently renewed and extended in the 20th century. The Queen Street elevation has large blue painted timber doors that are functional and show that this is a working market with practical needs. At the western entrance there is an ornate 19th century doorcase that is more indicative of the civic character of the Old Town Hall that it faces.

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban character;
- Variety of building form and architectural styles, dating from the early 19th to the early 20th century;
- Buildings arranged with a common building line almost exclusively on the back of the pavement;
- Mainly a “domestic” scale of building on narrow plots;
- Roofs have variable ridge and eaves height, and a mixture of hipped and gabled roofs;
- Roofing materials are slate for shallow pitched roofs; Nos. 19 & 21 have a peg tile roof
- Use of red and yellow brick, which is sometimes rendered or painted;
- Simple rectangular shapes, with a mixture of modern and historic shopfronts; Mainly sash windows, some retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;

- Some modern infill (nos. 1, 1a, 24) of a more horizontal built form, contrasting with the height and slender width of the majority of buildings;
- Hanging signs, or remnants of them, projecting from the buildings above the shopfronts at first floor level (e.g. Comrades Club, no. 23).

Negative features/issues:

- Poor design and modern materials of many shopfronts and shop signs; cluttered shop frontages and garish window displays;
- Some unsympathetic alterations to historic buildings and loss of original architectural features, e.g. windows, replacement of historic roof coverings with artificial materials etc.;
- Inconsistent surface treatment of pavements;
- Some poorly maintained buildings and spaces such as the former Comrades Club at nos. 15 to 17 Queen Street and Brewhouse Yard ;
- Boarded up shopfronts: nos. 19 Queen Street;
- Some unsympathetic 20th century development: nos. 0,1 & 1a Queen Street;
- Lack of connection with High Street e.g. via Woolworths building and Brewhouse Yard, resulting in decreased vitality.

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

Queen Street bears a historic link with the High Street in terms of historic development, layout and use since the road developed as a back lane and service road to the established historic heart of Gravesend. The market itself has been of intrinsic commercial and social importance to the town since the settlement's incorporation in the 16th century and has a visual as well as historic link with the Old Town Hall in the neighbouring High Street Conservation Area. It is therefore suggested to combine the Queen Street and High Street Conservation Area as this would more effectively recognise the close relationship of these two streets.

9.3 Education and information

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

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

9.4 Buildings at Risk

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

- The Comrades Club at nos. 15 to 17 Queen Street;
- Nos. 2 & 12 to 16 Queen Street;
- Nos. 5 to 9 Queen Street;
- Nos. 19 & 21 Queen Street.

The Comrades Club is particularly in urgent need of repair and refurbishment.

9.5 Alterations to buildings and shopfronts

It is evident that well-intentioned changes, especially to doors, windows and roofs, have begun to have a cumulative effect that is damaging to the character of some conservation areas in Gravesend. 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. However, most buildings in the Queen 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 largely controlled by existing planning legislation.

9.6 New development

In the Gravesend Town Centre Strategy of 1998, the Queen Street Conservation Area

and parts of the adjacent area are identified as the 'Heritage Quarter' of the town. The Heritage Quarter is currently the focus of a major regeneration scheme which has the potential to significantly revitalise the appearance and economy of this part of Gravesend.

Any new development in this location will have a significant impact on the Queen Street Conservation Area and a sympathetic design will have to play a large part in restoring Queen Street's position close to the centre of the town's activity. Market Alley and Horn Yard are a particular focus to improve the links between Queen Street and High Street. There are a number of other lost pedestrian linkages which could be re-instated to good advantage if a sympathetic scheme of regeneration could be promoted taking in the former cinema site in King Street, 'negative' townscape buildings to the southern end of High Street, and the spaces lying between Brewhouse Yard and the Market Hall.

The Gravesend Heritage Quarter Business Plan for Regeneration (2003) recommends a comprehensive action plan for Queen Street itself. This could involve environmental improvement and the restoration of buildings and may follow on from the completion of similar enhancements in High Street. Ideally, the 20th century developments in Queen Street will also be included.

9.7 Uses/ vitality

Gravesend is well-served by shops and public houses, but a number of shops in the secondary shopping areas of the town centre have fallen into disuse. Measures to support existing business and promote the vitality of the town have been in operation and are

ongoing. Queen Street is fortunate in that it has less vacant units than some of the other streets in Gravesend, where numerous estate agency boards reveal the lack of investment.

9.8 Locally Listed buildings

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

9.9 Enforcement

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

9.10 Highways and traffic management

Traffic management has been effectively tackled in the commercial hub of Gravesend, to the benefit of Queen Street and some surrounding streets. The one way traffic in Queen Street enhances the character of the area in terms of reduced traffic flows, although Queen Street has become something of a 'rat run' for eastbound traffic. However, this has only been achieved to the detriment of other parts of the town, including Crooked Lane, where wholesale demolition has taken place to create the Inner Ring Road.

9.11 Archaeological potential

Due to the early origins of settlement in Gravesend, and Queen Street's proximity

to the centre of the town, it is likely that archaeological evidence lies beneath the roads and buildings. Any development within the Conservation Area should therefore only be carried out after a desktop assessment and a full archaeological evaluation.

9.12 Enhancement potential

There is a strong case for the continued maintenance of the comprehensive scheme that has regenerated the public realm of Gravesend and for extending it further to areas such as Queen Street, which was given new street furniture and resurfaced in the late 1980s.

Also, building repairs and enhancements are needed throughout this Conservation Area. The renovation and reuse of the former Comrades Club is one of the most pressing issues in the Conservation Area. Another is the continued use and enhancement of the Borough Market Hall. Uptake rates for grant aid in the Conservation Area in the 1990s were poor and, therefore, opportunities for owners to improve the appearance of properties in this way have been missed in the past. Further enhancements to the Market Hall building to those carried out in 2000 and 2002 would be welcome.

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

- Improvements to the public realm (particularly the pavements) into all the streets in the Conservation area;
- Effectiveness of parking restrictions in Queen Street;
- The yard behind nos.1 and 1a Queen Street;
- The entranceway into Brewhouse Yard;
- Dolphin Yard;
- Shopfronts in general.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 History of Gravesend
- Appendix 2 Bibliography
- Appendix 3 Townscape Appraisal map
Age of Buildings map
Character Zones map,
Designations map
Conservation Area Boundary

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 a few hundred metres to the east of the Queen Street Conservation Area boundary next to the fort. It was a religious institution that owned considerable land in the area, on the outskirts of the fledgling town.

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

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

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

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

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

to the international destinations beyond.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 18th century saw the town grow into a

bustling centre that mixed commercial and residential uses, and the adjoining streets catered for the varying needs of residents. A Congregational chapel opened in Princes Street in 1717.

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

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

By the end of the 19th century, fashions had

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

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

In the 20th century Gravesend continued to grow as a small market town with areas of light industry. Much of the industry was occupied with producing building materials which were often used to build houses in nearby London. As transport links to the city improved, Gravesend became a commuter settlement and with the addition of large retail parks close by, commercial trade has waned in the town. However, there has also been much development in the town, mostly residential. The majority of construction has been beyond the boundary of the *Queen Street Conservation Area*, although some historic buildings have been lost and replaced within the Conservation Area in the late 20th century. The Town Pier closed in 1969

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

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

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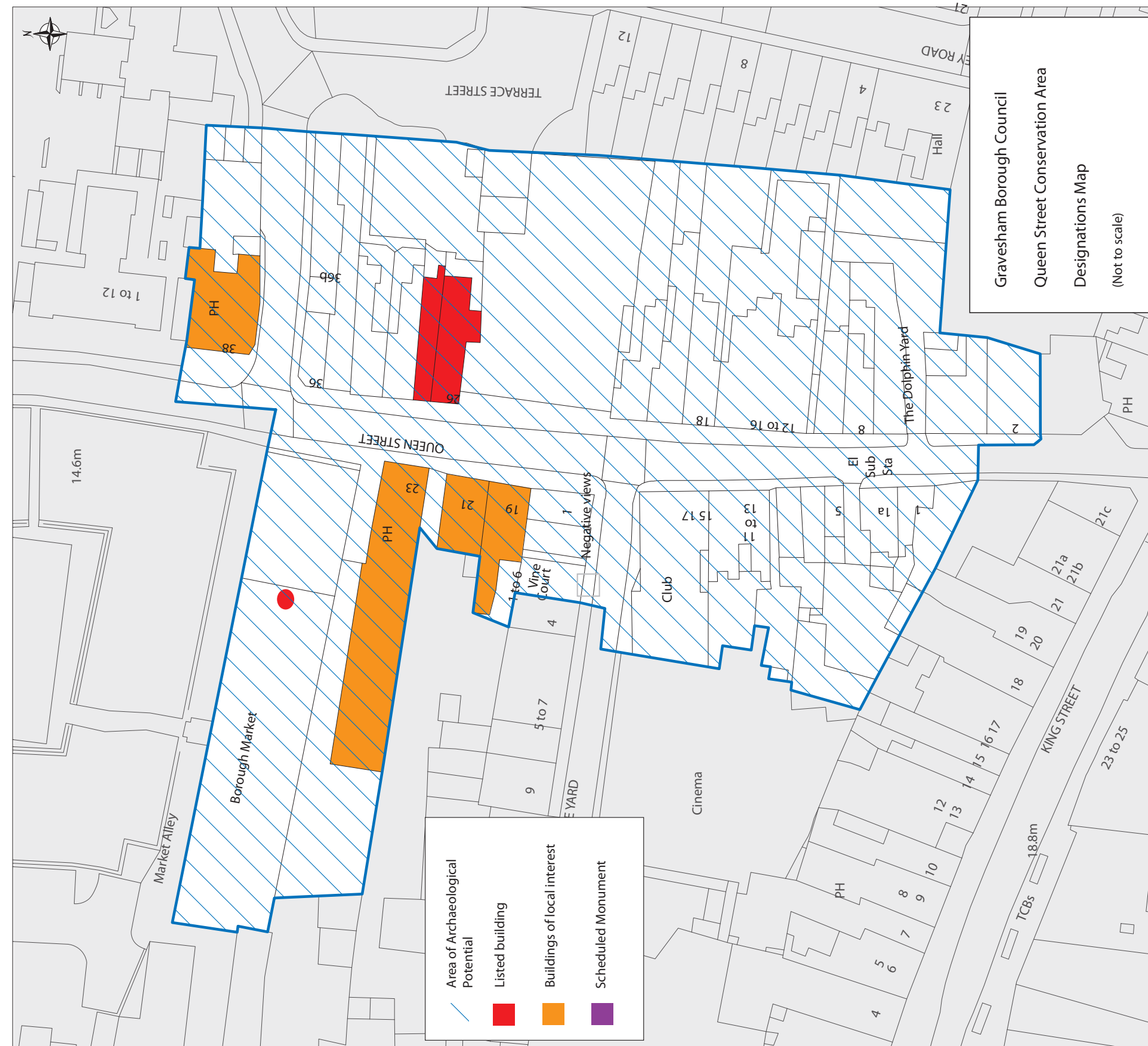
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