

# Lansdowne Square

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal





# Lansdowne Square

## Conservation Area

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 Lansdowne Square Conservation Area is centred on the historic core of the Rosherville New Town. This was a small residential development overlooking the River Thames, built from the 1830s onwards on land owned by the Rosher family. Rosherville was the vision of a wealthy local industrialist called Jeremiah Rosher, who aspired to build a prestigious suburb to Gravesend. The development was planned to cater for businessmen who would be able to commute to London by steamboat from development's private pier. The area was also associated with the Rosherville Gardens that were laid out in 1837 over old chalk pits next to Lansdowne Square. They became some of the most popular pleasure gardens in Victorian Times and during their mid 19th century heyday were visited by thousands of day-trippers, arriving by steamboat from London at the Rosherville Pier.

Building works for Rosherville New Town commenced with the construction of Lansdowne Square at the riverside and with residential development along London Road further south, with Burch Road and Pier Road connecting the two parts. It seems that after an initial building phase works came to a halt. The scheme was never fully realised, and much of the land along Burch Road and Pier Road was not developed until about 100 years later with modest terraced housing that has nothing in common with the 19th century ambition for this area. The southern part of the Rosherville New Town is today also protected by Conservation Area status, being part of the Overcliffe Conservation Area.

During the 19th century, the Northfleet foreshore transformed to a base for heavy industry that gradually encroached from both sides on Lansdowne Square. While the pleasure gardens eventually fell victim to the industrialisation of the area, much of the original Rosherville residential development and lay-out is still in place and is the focus of the Conservation Area. Lansdowne Square consists of four detached three storey villas arranged symmetrically two behind two, with a wide square next to them. The square once provided access from the pier to the Rosherville Gardens, the entrance of which lay in the south-western corner opposite the pier. Originally, the group of villas and the square were enclosed to the east and west by a terrace of houses, though only the buildings along Pier Road are still in place. The buildings at the western side of the square, comprising the Lansdowne Terrace and the Rosherville Hotel, were demolished in the 1960s.

The architectural composition is best appreciated from the water with the detached villas standing on a raised level with a prominent balustraded terrace to the front. Below that, the riverside lane The Shore rises from the east and west culminating in the pier entrance at the highest point of elevation. While the villas make an impression through their scale and arrangement, the Pier Road terrace houses appeal through their rich Italianate architectural embellishment. Despite some significant losses, notably the western enclosure of the square, Lansdowne Square has retained the character of an prestigious 19th century riverside development. This character has been strengthened by the recent restoration of the villas, including the re-building of Nos. 3-4, and the refurbishment of the square.

At its western extremity the Conservation Area includes two buildings that are connected with the industrial history of the area. The main office building of the former Henley Telegraph Works provides a striking landmark and is a monument to the long-standing history of the area as a base for one of the main national engineering industries.



## 2 LANSDOWNE SQUARE

### 2.1 Background

The Lansdowne Square Conservation Area was designated on 27th July 1995 by Gravesham Borough Council and was extended on 14th February 2001. The Conservation Area lies on the south bank of the River Thames and contains the remains of the Rosherville Pier. The boundary has been drawn to contain a significant area of 1830s and later residential development in Lansdowne Square and Pier Road, as well as the 1920s Henley Works and Victorian Old Sun Public House. The Conservation Area also contains an area of industrial buildings which occupy the former site of the Rosherville Hotel and the adjoining terrace. These buildings originally defined the west side of the square and were demolished in 1968.

### 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 January 2008 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 Lansdowne Square Conservation Area merits designation. It identifies the positive features that should be protected and highlights the negative factors that detract from its character and appearance. It will be used by the Borough Council in considering proposals for demolition or alteration of buildings, as well as for new developments. It will also help property owners and developers to take account of the importance of buildings, features, spaces and landscape within and

adjacent to the Conservation Area.

This conservation area character appraisal, and those for the two other conservation areas in Northfleet, will lead to a management plan, setting out policies and actions to conserve and enhance their special architectural and historic interest and to mitigate the effects of negative features. The appraisals and management plans are to be included as background papers in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) and, as such, will be a due consideration in the planning process. In due course the appraisals and management plans may also be adopted as a separate Development Plan Document within the LDF.

Preparation of the appraisal involved an extensive survey of the conservation area undertaken in October 2007. The omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

### 2.3 Planning policy context

Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act). Local Planning Authorities are required by the Act to identify the parts of their area that should be designated as conservation areas and to formulate and publish proposals to preserve or enhance them. Local authorities must submit proposals for the protection and enhancement of conservation areas for consideration at a public meeting within the relevant area. They must also have regard to any views expressed by people attending the meeting.



Broadly, the effects of designation are:

- Conservation Area Consent must be obtained from the local planning authority or Secretary of State prior to the substantial or total demolition of any building or structure within a conservation area, with some exceptions;
  - The local planning authority must consider the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area when assessing applications for change in conservation areas;
  - Permitted development rights are slightly different in conservation areas;
  - Permission is required from the planning authority to fell or lop a tree over a certain size.
- 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.

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).

### Thames Gateway

In addition to the various conservation areas in the towns, the Northfleet and Gravesend conurbation is recognised as being in a Growth Area within the Kent Thames Gateway Sub-region by the Draft South East Plan of the South East Regional Assembly. The various policy documents outlined above have, since RPG9 (1994), recognised Gravesham's important place in the Thames Gateway (incorporating the former East Thames Corridor). RPG9a emphasizes the importance of Gravesham in achieving the Thames Gateway's overall vision (para. 6.8.1).

The Thames Gateway is an overarching term for the regeneration of large parts of East London and parts of Essex and Kent, including Northfleet and Gravesend. The Thames Gateway London Partnership estimates that the expected investment in the whole region will provide 150,000 jobs and 200,000 homes over the next 10 years. The large scale of this scheme will see a great deal of change across the area, including the introduction of new transport infrastructure including a Channel Tunnel Rail link (with a new connection at nearby Ebbsfleet, now

completed) and several major road building schemes such as the widening of the A2 to the south of the town.

The policies included in the local and regional guidance, as outlined above, seek to guide this period of change and the specified policies all recognise the importance of retaining Gravesham's heritage. The management plan that accompanies this document will propose how Gravesham's, and more specifically, Northfleet's, special character can be preserved and enhanced while these large scale changes take place.

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

## 2.4 Community involvement

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

- The special characteristics of Lansdowne Square Conservation Area;
- The key negative features and issues;
- A range of possible actions that would mitigate or offset these detractors.

The consultation began with the notification of key stakeholders in Northfleet and Gravesend at the beginning of the appraisal process. It was followed by the distribution to every property in the conservation areas of an invitation to a public meeting held on 29th November 2007. Leaflets were also displayed in public places. The meeting included a description of the principal and desired outcomes of appraisals and management plans and led into a general discussion. The meeting was attended by various representatives of the Borough Council and local interest groups.

Following the meeting, the outcomes were discussed by Gravesham Borough Council

### 3 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

#### 3.1 Location

The Conservation Area stands on the boundary between the parishes of Gravesend and Northfleet. Gravesend is the administrative capital of the Borough of Gravesham and lies about 35 kilometres to the east of central London. Canterbury is approximately 65 kilometres to the south and east. The A2 and M2 trunk roads link these locations, and because of the proximity of the M25 and M20 motorways, and the rail link to the Channel Tunnel, Gravesend is very well connected to other parts of the country and beyond. Northfleet is located on the western outskirts of Gravesend. The Borough is generally rural in appearance with a number of attractive historic villages, Northfleet and Gravesend forming the only urban area in the locality.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit's Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001), commissioned by Kent County Council and English Heritage, notes that: "The process of 19th and 20th century urbanisation is particularly marked in the northern areas of Kent". Within this study, the Dartford and Gravesham Conurbation is characterised as "a well defined urban conurbation with some limited marshland and horticulture along its edges".

Lansdowne Square is located on raised ground on the south bank of the River Thames and only separated from the water by The Shore roadway. There are extensive views up and down river and across to Tilbury and the Essex countryside. The Lansdowne Square Conservation Area includes the core of the uncompleted 19th century planned development, Rosherville New Town.

The River Thames makes a significant contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area, and clear views of the waterway are particularly impressive taken from the broad balustraded terrace on the north side of Lansdowne Square. The fragmentary remains of Rosherville Pier are visible as a flight of stone steps descending from The Shore; the pier served the many visitors who arrived by steamboat to visit Rosherville Gardens. These extensive gardens lay to the west of Lansdowne Square, together with the Crete Hall estate; following the closure of the gardens in the 1930s the land has become an industrial area.

#### 3.2 Activities and uses

The eastern half of Lansdowne Square is in residential use, with nos. 1-8 Lansdowne Square and nos. 42-52 Pier Road all providing accommodation. These buildings were constructed as single residential dwellings, but have subsequently been subdivided to form flats. There is limited activity during the working day because the residential properties are generally unoccupied.

The western half of the Conservation Area is occupied by commercial and industrial uses. Some of the industrial buildings are vacant, such as the Henley Works. The former public house, The Old Sun, is used as offices. However, the Conservation Area is a through-route for large industrial vehicles which use The Shore as a route to connect the large industrial estates around Crete Hall Road in the west to Thames Way in the east. Vehicles also occasionally pass through Lansdowne Square and Burch Road to connect with London Road in the south.

River-based activities have a considerable visual impact on the Conservation Area, including the many boats (of varying sizes) which pass along the Thames. These vary from small pilot boats to large, ocean-going, cargo ships and cruisers. The lack of any landing place on or near the defunct and dismantled Rosherville Pier means that there is no longer any direct relationship between the Conservation Area and the shipping on the Thames, although the designated area does include a section of shoreline. The houses on Lansdowne Square have extensive views across the river to Tilbury, and there are similar views from the wide terrace in front of these buildings and also from the pavements of The Shore below. These elevated pedestrian areas provide the passer-by with a strong visual connection to the river, enhancing the attractions of the Conservation Area.

### 3.3 Topography

Northfleet has a remarkable topography as a result of the extensive quarrying of the chalk cliffs that has taken place since the 18th century. Neighbouring parts of Northfleet (to the west) and Gravesend (to the east) have had their hilly shorelines cut right back to the line of London Road and Overcliffe through excavations, and today, much of the flatter low lying areas have been built over to provide retail and industrial space.

Much of the original excavation around Lansdowne Square was carried out by Jeremiah Rosher in the 19th century, but he left the land where Lansdowne Square is now sited undisturbed so the levels are relatively unaltered by excavation works. Unlike the neighbouring areas, the ground level therefore follows its natural level and slopes gently from London Road down to the

banks of the river in the north. At The Shore the land drops steeply onto the foreshore as a low cliff. At Rosherville Pier, The Shore forms a promontory that was established at the time of the construction of the pier and Rosherville Gardens in the 1830s. Before this time, historic maps show how the land gently decreased in level at the end of a chalky outcrop into the river Thames.

### 3.4 Geology and Biodiversity

Northfleet lies on a thick belt of chalk that is the most significant geological trademark of this part of Kent. Otherwise, the geology of Kent is varied and lies on a “crumpled dome” of sedimentary rock which also lies under Sussex and Surrey. The dome’s peak has eroded, exposing the rocks below, while the chalk along the edge has been more resilient to erosion and has created the North Downs in Kent and South Downs in Sussex. The area between the two is the Weald, notable for its heavy clays and sandstone outcrops.

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

This abundant availability of chalk has had a considerable effect on the area as it has been excavated for many centuries and used for various activities associated with the construction of buildings. While chalk itself is too soft to be used for building large structures, it supplied the raw materials for lime and, later, for cement. Flints, found with chalk, are also evident in parts of Northfleet,

and have been used as a walling material. Brick and lime kilns were established on the Northfleet foreshore in the 18th and 19th centuries. The settlement lies close to good sources of sand and these, which together with the London Clay found on the nearby Hoo Peninsula to the east, provided the raw materials for brick making. The 19th century houses within the Conservation Area are unsurprisingly therefore constructed from brick, which is then concealed by a render coat, also made from local materials.

### 3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

The immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area are the River Thames, urban townscape and the industrialised foreshore.

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

- To the south: Burch Road and Pier Road run southwards to connect with London Road; these streets include mainly early 20th century rows of terraced housing, with parades of shops and an occasional religious building.
- To the west: The large factory site of the former Henley Telegraph Works on the site of the former Rosherville Gardens; beyond are the print works and shipyards of Northfleet;
- To the north: The river Thames, with views across to the Essex riverside;
- To the east: On the edge of the Conservation Area, Warren Hastings Court is a Post-War residential development on the site of the former Rosherville Place. Further east stands more industrial buildings with some surface car parking, including the former lime works and Imperial Paper Mill.

## 4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 Archaeology

Evidence of prehistoric, Roman and Saxon activity in and around Northfleet is rich, but mainly located well to the west and south of the Parish, outside the Conservation Area. Other archaeological remains include a bottle kiln (a Scheduled Monument) which survives from Aspdin's Portland Cement Factory on the foreshore, also to the west of Lansdowne Square. Other finds, including a Roman road, had been found to the east in Gravesend. The most important and extensive local excavation in recent years, at nearby Springhead on the path of the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link, has uncovered the Roman town of Vagniacae, a former Iron Age settlement that the Romans occupied in 43 AD.

Lansdowne Square Conservation Area is not within Kent County Council's designated Areas of Archaeological Potential.

### 4.2 Historical development

Lansdowne Square and the surrounding area developed as a planned residential development from the 1830s onwards. The land lies within the parish of Northfleet, but almost adjacent to the western boundary of the parish of Gravesend. The name 'Northfleet' refers to its position to the north of the creek that rises from Springhead to form the river Fleet or Ebbsfleet.

The 1838 Northfleet Tithe map shows how undeveloped this part of the riverside was at that date, with predominantly open land lying between the new Dover to London stagecoach route (London Road) and the River Thames. The single largest building in the area in the 1830s was Old Crete Hall,

built by Benjamin Burch in the 18th century. It stood close to the riverside and was at that time surrounded by extensive parkland. Burch's son-in-law, Jeremiah Rosher, later occupied the house and subsequently built a new house, Crete Hall, in 1818. The Rosher family were important local landowners and patrons, for example paying for a new church (St Mark's) and vicarage in 1855. The church stood on the corner of Burch Road and London Road, until its demolition in 1976, the vicarage having already been demolished in 1964.

The Tithe map also shows that by 1838 only a few new roads had been laid out including Pier Road, running from London Road to a wharf or pier on the riverside (not Rosherville Pier, which was not built until 1840). However, instead of the linear course represented by today's Pier Road, the map shows a lane meandered into a curve at the northern end; this curved stretch of road represents what is today the western side of Lansdowne Square.

Pier Road and Burch Road were laid out as part of a scheme for Rosherville New Town, developed from the 1830s onwards on land owned by the Rosher family and designed by the architect H. E. Kendal. A prospectus of the period states that 'this spot will ultimately become to Gravesend what St. Leonards is to Hastings and Broadstairs to Margate'. The development of Rosherville New Town (although the scheme was never completed) was contemporary with the creation of Rosherville Gardens, and the estate, with Burch Road, Pier Road and Lansdowne Square, is clearly visible on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1870.

Rosherville Gardens was laid out in 1837 by George Jones in a disused chalk pit that he leased from Jeremiah Rosher. The



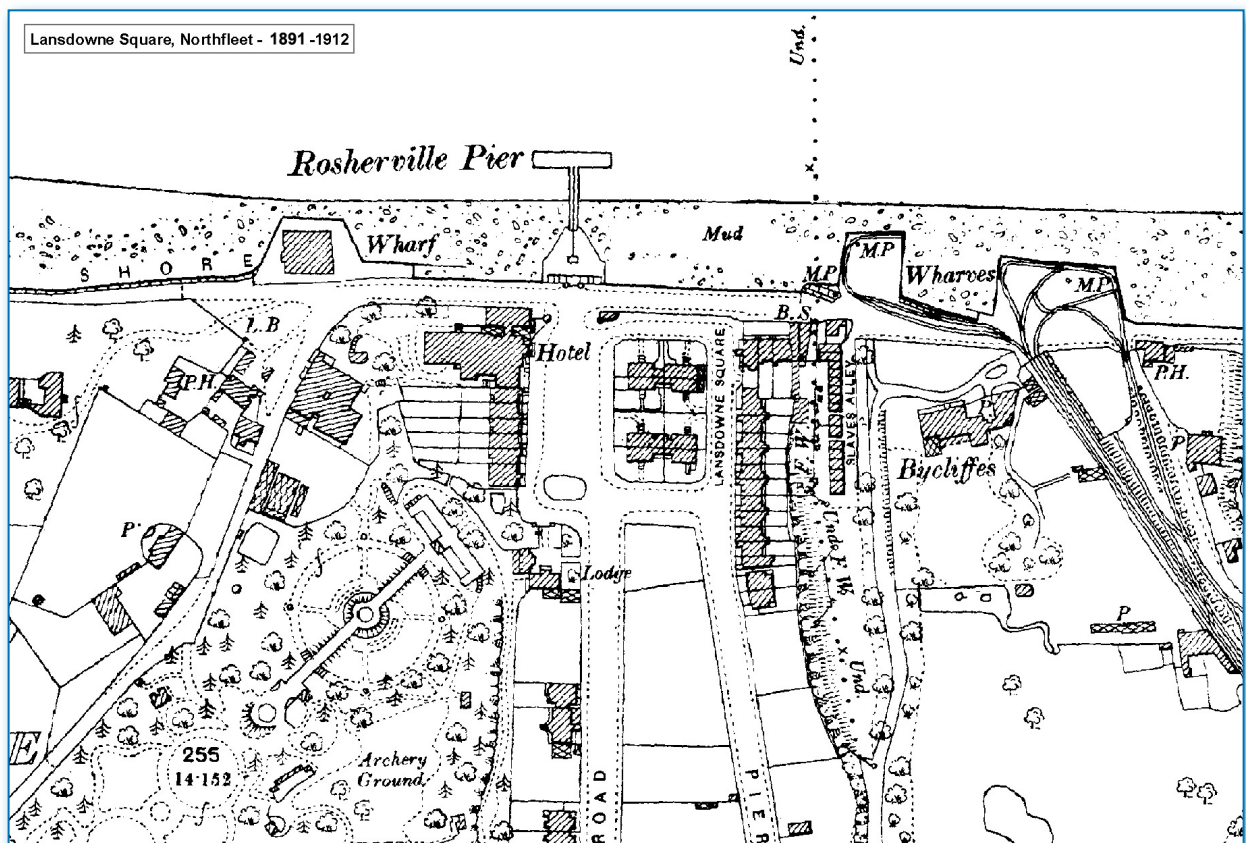
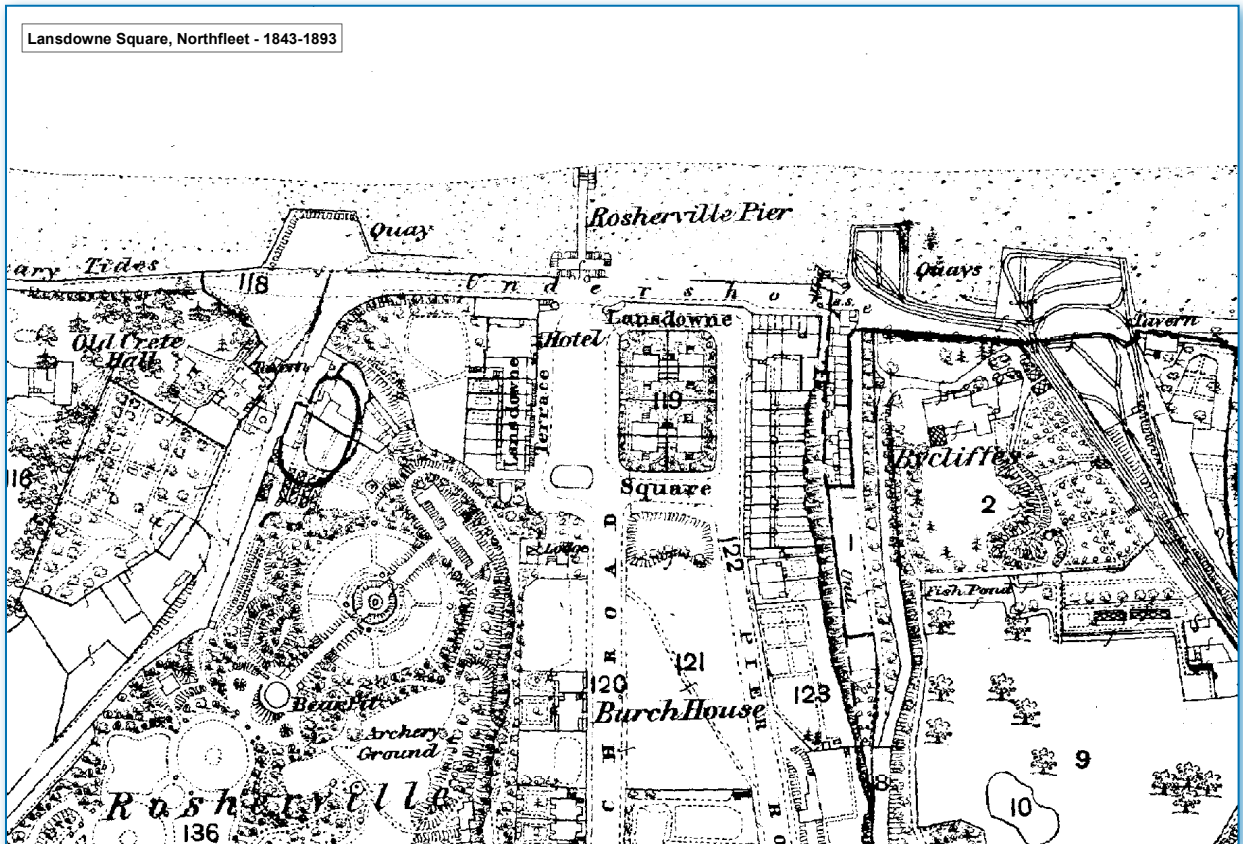
quarried land lay between Crete Hall Road, to the south of the Crete Hall estate, and London Road. For people who arrived by steamboat the gardens were accessed via an entrance on the south-west corner of Lansdowne Square, marked by an imposing set of gate piers topped by sphinxes designed presumably by Henry Rose, the original architect for the Gardens. A second entrance existed from London Road in the south. The Gardens were at their peak in the 1880s, but closed in 1901. This was a reflection of the decline in the number of visitors to Gravesend, the result of increased competition from other resorts.

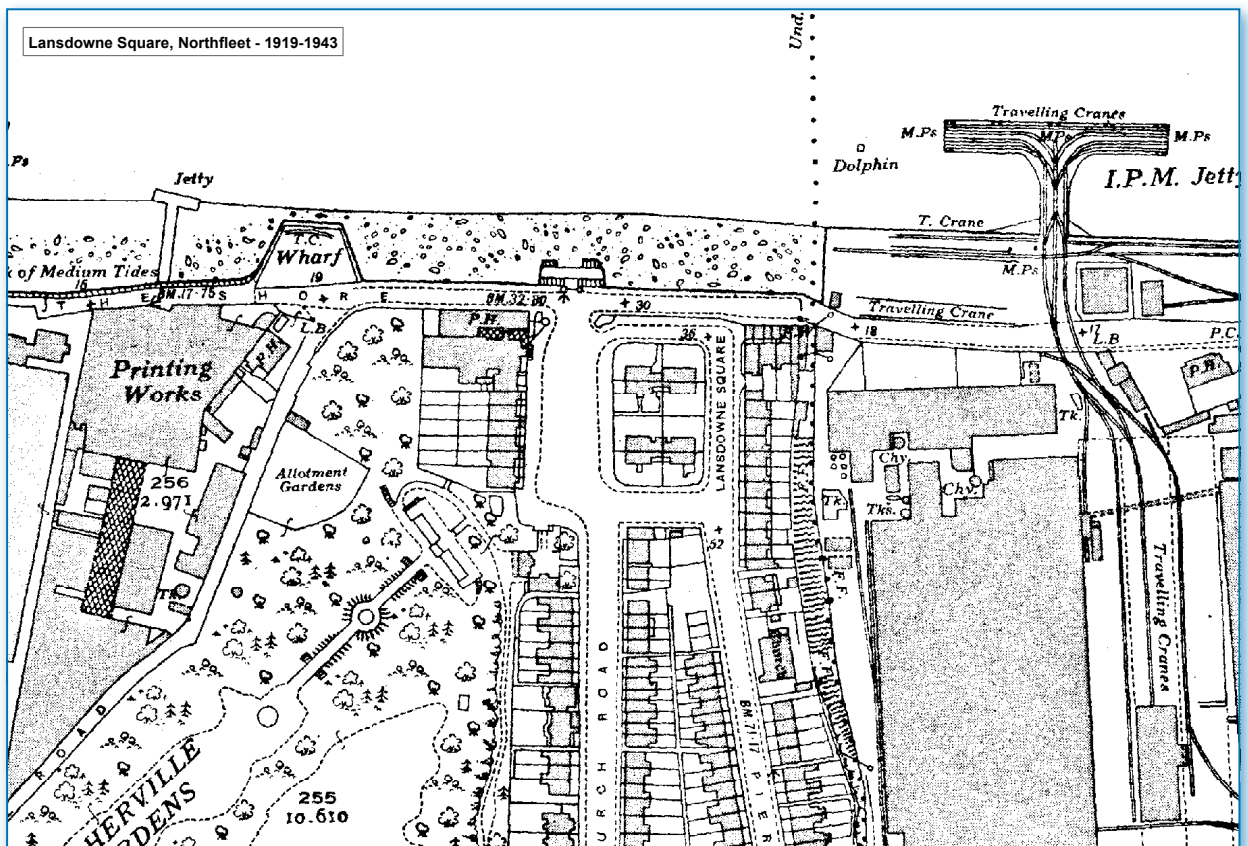
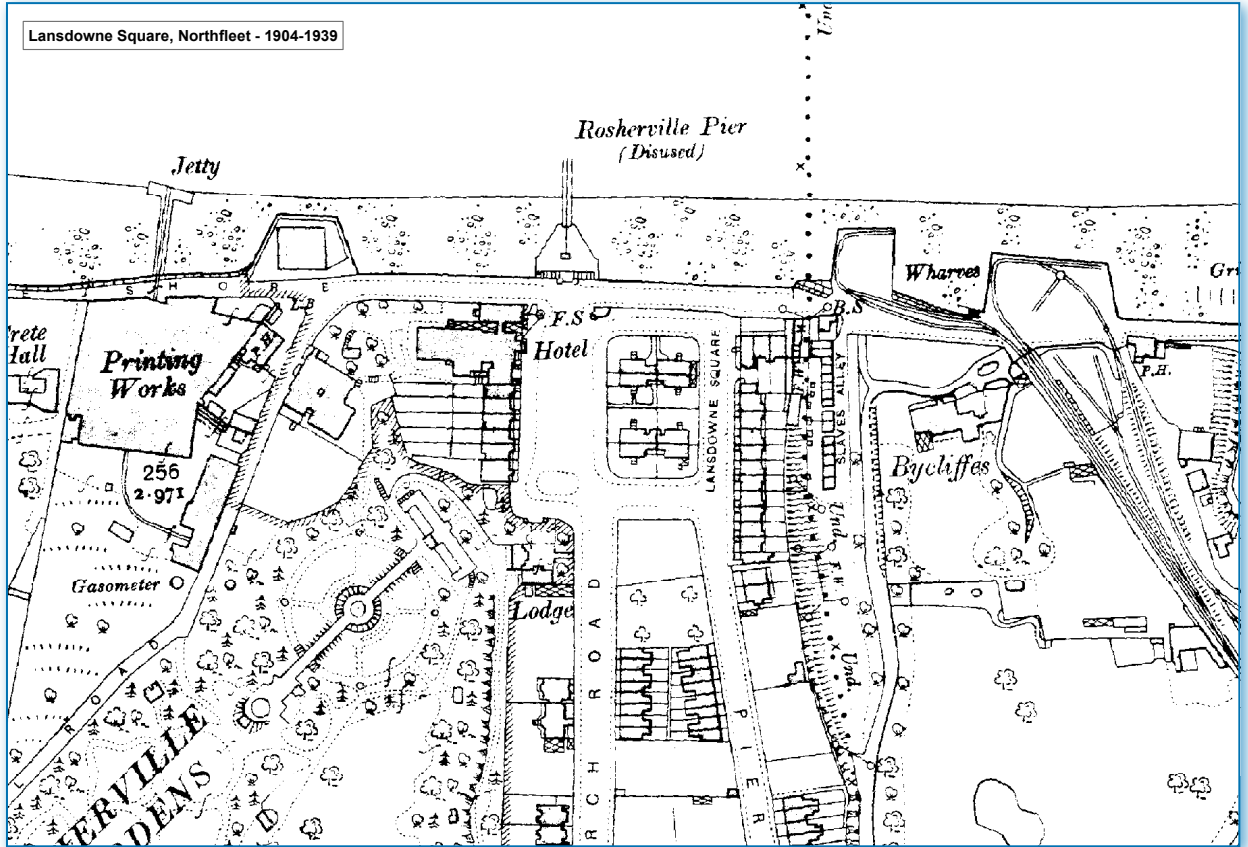
Numerous buildings and structures were erected to serve the Rosherville Gardens, including a pier and a station. Rosherville Pier was built in 1840 to serve the boats which brought visitors to Rosherville Gardens. In addition, a ferry ran from the pier across to Tilbury, transporting London commuters to the London, Tilbury and Southend railway. Rosherville railway station opened in 1886 on the south side of London Road, opposite the junctions with Pier Road and Burch Road. The station was closed in 1933. The Rosherville Hotel, set on the west side of Lansdowne Square, was an important local landmark. Like the surrounding development on Burch Road and Pier Road, it was laid out by H. E. Kendal and was located conveniently close to the Rosherville Pier and the entrance to the gardens. The building served as a hospital during the First World War, and was subsequently converted to flats. It was demolished, along with the adjacent terrace, in 1968.

The Conservation Area and its immediate surroundings bear witness to the incremental sale of the Crete Hall estate and the land and buildings associated with Rosherville

Gardens, and the development of industry in the area, from the second half of the 19th century until the early 20th century. In c1860 the western part of the Crete Hall estate, including the lodge, was purchased by George Sturge, and he built a house called 'The Mount', which is visible on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1870. The rest of the estate remained within the Rosher family until it was sold to Edwin Thomas in 1891. However it was sold again in 1899 and the Harmsworth printing works, which later became the Amalgamated Press, was built. In 1905 the remainder of the Crete Hall estate was acquired by W.T. Henley's Telegraph Works Ltd and they erected their cable works in the grounds. The first length of cable was produced in July 1906. In 1921 they added a tyre and rubber works. Crete Hall became the home of the local manager, then a canteen and offices before being demolished in 1937. In 1926 Henley's acquired part of then derelict Rosherville Gardens and in 1938 they purchased the remainder to expand the factory, cutting the chalk cliffs back further in the process. During the Second World War Henley's played the leading role in the production of the PLUTO project to provide a pipeline under the Atlantic, and in the war against magnetic mines. The main office building of the Henley Works stands at the western extremity of the Conservation Area and provides a significant historic landmark building within the area and when seen from the river.







## 5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Lansdowne Square stands overlooking the Thames riverside and was part of a planned new town development of the 1830s. Rosherville Pier and Lansdowne Square comprised the early centrepiece of the development, with Pier Road and subsequently Burch Road extending southwards to connect with the east-west course of London Road. Early development clustered at the northern and southern parts of the roads.

The principal feature of Lansdowne Square is the symmetrically arranged group of four large detached buildings, positioned in pairs, one behind the other, and surrounded by small enclosed gardens. To the east of these, Lansdowne Square is bounded by a terrace of houses, facing Pier Road. To the west lies a broad open area of pavement and road, originally enclosed by a terrace of six houses (Lansdowne Terrace) and the Rosherville Hotel. This connected the pier to the main entrance to Rosherville Gardens, and was wide enough to allow the crowds of visitors who arrived by boat to flood into the gardens unimpeded. Lansdowne Terrace and the hotel were demolished in 1968 and therefore the sense of enclosure of this side of Lansdowne Square has been lost, although the recent regeneration scheme of the square seeks to break up the open area and to retain some sense of the former extent of the original layout.

The area of land around the four principal buildings in Lansdowne Square provides the Conservation Area's most significant open space. In addition to the square there is a wide area of pavement along the northern side, forming an elevated terrace overlooking the river, contained by an ornate balustrade.

This terrace forms an important part of the setting to nos. 1-8 Lansdowne Square and would have clearly been seen as a significant part of the planned design of the houses when viewed from the river or the opposite foreshore. The terrace also provides panoramic views in the opposite direction, looking northwards across the river. The Shore is a busier road which runs at a lower level than the terrace, and similarly provides opportunities to view the river and the Essex foreshore.

Only a few fragmentary remains survive of Rosherville Pier, located on the riverside edge of The Shore. An original flight of stone steps, together with boundary walls and a late 20th century pair of gatepiers, mark the location of the original entrance gate piers. The Rosherville pier tunnel leads southwards from the pier. At the south-western corner of the square the modern road is laid out in a distinctive curve which reflects the historic curve of Burch Road where originally the entrance to Rosherville Gardens was located.

To the north east of the Conservation Area, Warren Hastings Court stands on the site of another early 19th century terrace, now demolished, which formerly looked out across the river. At different times it was called Rosherville Pier Parade, Pier Place and Rosherville Place.

The historic integrity of the spaces breaks down on the western side of the square, where the Lansdowne Terrace and Rosherville Hotel have been lost, and the former site of the historic terrace and their rear gardens has become an industrial area of warehouses and a car park. The Shore and Crete Hall Road are both surviving historic routes, and although buildings of historic interest survive, such as the main

office building of the Henley Telegraph Works and The Old Sun Public House, the spaces surrounding them have become fragmented by more modern infill building and the creation of areas of vehicular hardstanding.

### 5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

The centre of Lansdowne Square was originally planned as an architectural entity with four large villas, surrounded by large open spaces which were themselves enclosed by terraced buildings to the east and west. The eastern part of the Conservation Area is characterised by the strong built form which still lies within a clearly planned pattern of development. However, the western enclosure has been lost due to the demolition of the historic buildings and their partial replacement with single storey industrial buildings.

The centrepiece of the Conservation Area is therefore nos. 1-8 Lansdowne Square. These are four large detached villas, although maps show that the eastern and western blocks were connected from at least the 1860s. The gaps between these buildings now afford views through to the Thames. The buildings are surrounded by small mainly communal gardens, with a car park located at the centre of the four blocks. These grounds are enclosed by a perimeter fence of railings set in a dwarf stone boundary wall, and surrounding this are wide pavements. On the northern side of nos. 1-8 the pavement is abutted by a wide terrace overlooking the river; the terrace is bordered to the north by the original cement rendered balustrade. The terrace lends a spacious character to this part of the Conservation Area and is important to the setting of nos. 1-8 as well as providing expansive views over the river.

This spacious character continues to the east and west of nos. 1-8, through the generously proportioned roads and pavements. The eastern side of the square is bordered by an unbroken terrace of 11 houses (nos. 42-52 Pier Road). These two-storey houses have a shallow attic storey set beneath the eaves, with ground floors which are raised above street level, providing a half-basement lower floor. Steps lead down to these 'basements' from the road. Some of the historic layout of this part of the Conservation Area has been lost through the demolition of a group of historic buildings and the erection of Warren Hastings Court, which is located immediately outside boundary of the Conservation Area. Overall, however, the relationship and sense of enclosure of the historic buildings on Pier Road and the eastern side of Lansdowne Square continues to be clearly legible.

In contrast, the containment of the western side of the square has been lost due to the demolition of the Rosherville Hotel and the adjoining Lansdowne Terrace. The street and the western edge of the square are now defined by a modern brick wall surrounding an area of low-lying industrial units. These commercial structures back onto the important landmark building, the Henley Works office building and factory behind. These buildings combine to form a dense group of buildings with very little open space between them.

### 5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

The principal landmarks in the Lansdowne Square Conservation Area are:

- The four Lansdowne Square buildings (nos. 1-8);
- Henley Works;
- The former entrance to Rosherville Pier;
- The Old Sun Public House (now offices).



These landmark buildings provide focal points within the Conservation Area, either through their position as individual buildings (e.g. The Old Sun), their architecture (e.g. Henley Works), their dominance within the streetscene (e.g. The Lansdowne Square buildings) or their position within an important vista out of the Conservation Area (e.g. the former pier entrance).

The buildings of Lansdowne Square, the adjacent terrace and the remains of the Rosherville Pier all provide key focal points within the Conservation Area, and are directly connected with expansive vistas across the river. Despite the scale of the Henley Works office building, the principal views of this landmark from within the Conservation Area are obtained from The Shore, directly in front of the building. With its main elevation addressing the river, this building was clearly meant to be appreciated in long views from the water.

The principal positive views are:

- Across the river from:
- The Shore;
- The Old Sun;
- Pier Road;
- The gap between the buildings in Lansdowne Square;
- The terrace in Lansdowne Square;
- The Henley Works office building from The Shore and from the river;
- The Old Sun from The Shore;
- Into the Conservation Area from the river.

#### 5.4 Trees, boundaries and planting

Trees play a relatively minor role in contributing to the special interest of the Conservation Area. This once semi-rural suburb was laid out next to the Rosherville

Gardens, but is now characterised by an more urban landscape, which relates to the surrounding riverside and the industrial setting. There are two mature trees located to the north-west of nos. 1-3 Lansdowne Square; these provide an important reminder of the area's 'leafier' past. Two avenues of street trees have been planted more recently along the square to the west of the houses. These avenues frame the view through toward the former entrance to the Rosherville Pier with the river beyond. There are small areas of self-seeded trees and shrubs which have grown up on patches of neglected land, such as in the former rear garden to Rosherville Hotel (to the back of Shawline House), or even on structures, e.g. the remains of the pier. The uncultivated appearance of this vegetation detracts from the appearance of the Conservation Area and, in case of the pier, not only conceals, but also damages important historic features.

There are a number of important surviving historic boundaries within the Conservation Area. Some of the terrace (nos. 42-52 Pier Road) retain their original low rendered boundary walls defining the front basement areas, and a number of the original gate piers also survive. No. 49 is the sole example of a surviving balustrade as a boundary wall; the style of this boundary treatment reflects the Italianate detailing of the terrace. A similar cement rendered balustrade marks the edge of terrace which lies to the north of nos. 1-2 and 3-4 Lansdowne Square, and is an important original historic boundary within the Conservation Area. It provides a sense of enclosure to the north side of the square and is an integral part of the setting to nos. 1-8. Below the balustrade the wall functions as a retaining wall between the higher ground of Lansdowne Square and The Shore below. The retaining wall is formed from base courses

of coursed stone, surmounted by a rendered frieze, which is then topped by the decorative balustrade. Along the river foreshore at The Shore the historic embankment is another important stone boundary wall, attractively finished with large coping stones and ending in a bulky pier where The Shore turns into Clifton Marine Parade.

To the west of Lansdowne Square, the former terrace and colonnade of Rosherville Hotel has been converted into Shawline House (now redundant) and creates the boundary to the southern side of The Shore, with the historic railings on the top of the former terrace still in place. The tall concrete rendered wall beyond seems also to be a relict of the original development.

Nos. 1-8 Lansdowne Square are surrounded by modern steel railings and gates, designed to replicate the appearance of 19th century cast iron railings, set into a dwarf stone wall. Late 20th century metal railings, set into a rendered wall, are also used to surround the Henley Works. Gates of a corresponding design are hung between two imposing sets of rusticated stone gate piers.

## 6. STREETSCAPE

### 6.1 Public realm

#### Pavements

The pavements in the Lansdowne Square Conservation Area feature mainly modern materials. The paving in the eastern part of Lansdowne Square consists of concrete slabs with wide (300mm) granite kerbs. The western part of Lansdowne Square has a buff coloured embedded gravel treatment, narrow (200mm) concrete kerbs and car parking bays surfaced with square granite setts arranged in fantail patterns. There is also a cycle path of red tarmacadam set into the pavement from The Shore to Burch Road. The Shore and Pier Road have poured concrete and tarmac pavements with narrow (200mm) concrete kerbs.

The pavements similarly vary in terms of width. Along Pier Road they are narrow, especially compared to the broad road itself. Around Lansdowne Square they are generally broad, while in The Shore they are a standard two metre width. These pavements are generally well maintained although the sporadic repair of The Shore paving has left a patchwork effect. There is also a notable degradation in the road surface at the northern end of Pier Road.

The traditional relationship of raised pavement to road surface has been maintained in terms of levels, with the existence of kerbs and street gutters.

Street furniture, signage and other features The Conservation Area contains very few examples of street furniture. There are numerous granite bollards on the pavements which help to distinguish areas restricted to

vehicles.

All of the signage within the Conservation Area is modern. It is most visible at the junction of Lansdowne Square and The Shore where there are 'Give Way' signs, two-way traffic signs and cycle path signs on separate freestanding columns. Such a collection of signs introduce detrimental visual clutter into what is otherwise a fairly clutter-free area. There are two brass information plaques fixed to the 20th century gate piers which indicate the former entrance to the Rosherville Pier, and these give a brief, but informative, history of the area.

#### Street lighting

Street lighting is all modern and of steel construction. Tall columns line the square with circular lamps. In The Shore there are tall, hockey-stick style modern street lights.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths Pedestrian access through Lansdowne Square is relatively safe and easy due to the pedestrianisation of the area in the immediate vicinity. The traffic along The Shore can feel threatening to pedestrians using this riverside walk, due to the size and speed of the many industrial vehicles which use the route.

#### Traffic and parking

The traffic through the Conservation Area is infrequent, although lorries and other commercial vehicles do use The Shore and sometimes Burch Road and the square itself. This can have a detrimental effect on pedestrians due to noise and visual intrusion, although generally, traffic is minimal because Lansdowne Square and Pier Road do not lie on key through-routes through the area. The Conservation Area has a generous provision



of on-street parking bays in the square and off-street parking for the occupants of nos. 1-8, both of which serve the area well.

## 7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 7.1 Building types

There is a distinct division of building types in the Lansdowne Square Conservation Area. Large historic residential buildings on Lansdowne Square and Pier Road, which were part of the original Rosherville New Town development, characterise the eastern half of the Conservation Area. These houses were originally constructed as single family dwellings but have subsequently been subdivided into flats, and unattractive accretions on the front elevations reflect this use, such as intercom systems and gas meter cupboards.

Buildings on the western side of the Conservation Area are commercial and industrial, both historic and modern. The main office building of the former Henley Telegraph Works is an important local landmark building. This cable factory also contained research laboratories, for the company founded by WT Henley in London in 1837. The factory was completed in 1906 but the prominent building now seen from the road dates to the 1920s. The Old Sun, a late 19th century public house, is now an office. There is a large area of single storey industrial units on the former site of the Lansdowne Terrace and Rosherville Hotel.

### 7.2 Building form

The historic residential buildings of Lansdowne Square and Pier Road have a domestic scale and are arranged in one group of four large houses and one continuous terrace of 11 residences. Nos. 1-8 Lansdowne Square comprise four villas arranged symmetrically in pairs standing back-to-back. They are three-storeys in height set above

a raised basement, and each house is near square on plan, being of three by four bays. Each pair of villas is set beneath a wide hipped slate roof with deep overhanging eaves.

The terrace comprising nos. 42-52 Pier Road is a designed composition of Italianate-style buildings. They are two storeys high, set above a raised basement and with a shallow attic storey beneath the deeply overhanging eaves. The height and the narrow two bays of each house give a strong vertical emphasis to the group.

The Old Sun appears to have been constructed as a 19th dwelling house, with a single-storey projecting extension on the front elevation added soon thereafter to accommodate the bar of the public house. The principal building is a three-bay building, two storeys in height, with further accommodation in the gabled attic.

The Henley Works is an imposing factory and offices in the Art Deco style, suggesting a date of construction in the 1920s. The nine-bays of the front elevation create a strong horizontal emphasis, which is pierced by a tall central tower.

### 7.3 Listed buildings

There are no listed buildings on the Conservation Area.

### 7.4 Locally listed buildings

Government advice is that the preparation of a List of Locally Significant Buildings is a useful planning tool. "Locally Listed" buildings are valued for their contribution to the local scene, or for their local historic associations, but are not considered to be of national

importance, so they are usually not eligible for statutory listing. Policies to control them can be included in the Local Development Framework.

Gravesham Council does not currently maintain a formal list of locally significant buildings (usually called the 'Local List') either in Northfleet or elsewhere, although all buildings that were identified in the 1974 Listed Buildings Survey for their architectural or historic interest, but were not awarded a listing status, have been treated as 'Buildings of Local Interest' ever since when considering planning applications. Following the importance the Government places in its Heritage White Paper on the compilation of Lists of Buildings of Local Interest, Gravesham Borough Council's list is due to be reviewed soon.

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

### 7.5 Key unlisted buildings and structures

Nearly all surviving historic building and structures in the Conservation Area can be considered as being buildings of townscape merit. Buildings and structures identified as having 'townscape merit' will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings and structures 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. The key unlisted buildings and structures are:

- Nos. 1 to 8 Lansdowne Square;
- Nos. 42 to 52 Pier Road;
- Henley Works;
- The Old Sun;
- The terrace/retaining wall along the northern side of Lansdowne Square;
- The embankment wall along The Shore;
- The remains of the former pier.

Government guidance in PPG15 'Planning and the historic environment' advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area (paragraph 4.27). The guidance note states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings.

### 7.6 Building Materials

The historic buildings of the Lansdowne Square Conservation Area have been built using local materials, particularly yellow stock brick which was manufactured locally. Brick is only visible as a building material at The Old Sun, otherwise, throughout the Conservation Area, buildings are covered with cement render. This would have been produced in the factories only a few hundred metres away. Northfleet was at the centre of some innovation in construction techniques in the 19th century, including the invention of Roman and Portland cements. Many cement works and chalk pits were established in the area, so it is not surprising that the Conservation Area retains buildings which use these materials.

Slate is the predominant roofing material and would have imported from elsewhere in the country, usually Wales. Another local material that is used in the Conservation Area is stone. This features on the walling on both side of The Shore.

### 7.7 Local details

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

- The use of yellow stock brick, which is usually rendered;
- Slate roofs;
- Timber sash windows (Lansdowne Square);
- Timber eaves detailing (Lansdowne Square);
- Distinctive brick chimney stacks (Lansdowne Square);
- Projecting bay windows overlooking the river (Lansdowne Square);
- Shell mouldings over round headed windows (Pier Road);
- French windows (Pier Road);
- Cement door and windows surrounds featuring decorative pilasters and capitals (Pier Road);
- Cement render first floor balconies with curved balustrades (Pier Road);
- Console cornice brackets (Pier Road);
- External steps to porches and front doors;
- 19th century projecting public house frontage;
- Dressed stone boundary walls;
- Cement render balustrades as boundary features.

## 8. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

This relatively small Conservation Area has two distinctly different characters - residential and commercial/industrial - which in a way reflect the historic development of the area from an attractive riverside location and fashionable tourist attraction in the 19th century to an industrial base for heavy industry in the 20th century..

The 19th century residential development comprising nos. 1-8 Lansdowne Square and nos. 45-52 Pier Road make up the core of the Conservation Area's special interest. There is a sense of spaciousness as the result of the wide roads and pavements that surround the villas, together with the open aspect northwards across the River Thames. The large terrace along the northern side of the square, with its prominent balustraded boundary wall, further enhances this spacious character and is important as part of the setting to the historic buildings. It is also significant in views into the Conservation Area from the river and Essex foreshore.

Since the last appraisal was undertaken, the four prestigious villas have undergone comprehensive refurbishment, including the complete re-building of nos. 1-3 on the north-west corner. Although there are some minor differences in building details such as the design of the projecting bay windows overlooking the river, the scheme has re-instated the integrity of the overall composition of four imposing detached riverside villas. The surrounding area was also subject to a landscaping scheme, creating areas of communal or private gardens and providing the group of buildings with a unifying boundary. The private gardens in the centre were turned into an area of off-road car parking, the large undivided tarmac area of

which currently detracts from the character and appearance of the area. Overall, the 1990s restoration project has greatly enhanced the Conservation Area.

Nos. 42-52 Pier Road are an important group of Italianate style buildings which step up the road as it too gently slopes up away from the riverside. These buildings display a high degree of attractive architectural detail created by moulded cement render, such as balustraded balconies and round-headed window openings. The continuous terrace creates a strong sense of enclosure to the eastern side of the Conservation Area. Some of these buildings have suffered from an incremental loss of historic details and some unsympathetic modern additions which have degraded the group value of the structures, particularly facing Pier Road. Examples include new front porches and the loss of cornicing and other architectural embellishments. The use of uPVC windows is another regrettable feature.

Apart from the square and the remains of the pier, all structures and buildings associated with the Rosherville Gardens have disappeared. Of the entrance at the south-western corner of the square nothing remains but the peculiarly curved line of the boundary. At the north-western corner of the square the single-storey extension and terrace to the hotel, formerly used as a bar (Rosherville Shades), was converted into Shawline House and is still in situ, though redundant and under-maintained. The pier, which was once one of the centre-pieces of the development, has partially survived and is in a deteriorating condition. It is an important surviving structure contributing to the character of the area and understanding of its history, and its restoration and renewed public use is desirable.

The square to the west of the Lansdowne Square houses, originally designed to serve as a reception area to the Rosherville Gardens for visitors arriving by boat, has recently been refurbished to provide car parking spaces interspersed with trees. While this square was always meant to be broad, the demolition of the Rosherville Hotel and neighbouring terrace in the 1960s had a significant effect on its appearance by widening it further. Previously the buildings on the western side blocked the view through to the industrial buildings of the Henley Telegraph Works that were beginning to encroach on the Rosherville Gardens by the late 19th century. The sense of enclosure these buildings brought to the square reinforced its residential and resort character, and focused views northwards towards the river. This character has been eroded by the loss of the buildings, and despite the introduction of modern residential style walling and railings in front of the units to the west, the industrial character of the neighbouring area further west now infiltrates the residential character of the square. The industrial units that have replaced the Lansdowne Terrace and Rosherville Hotel are of utilitarian character and in themselves have no special interest. However, the area once formed an integral part of the original lay-out of the development and has been included in the Conservation Area for the purpose of promoting its redevelopment and creating an enclosure that would consolidate the character of Lansdowne Square, should the opportunity arise.

The western boundary of the Conservation Area extends to include two buildings that are connected to the industrialisation of the Northfleet foreshore during the late 19th and early 20th century. Both the Art Deco style office building of the Henley Works and the

Victorian Old Sun stand out with aesthetic qualities among the surrounding warehouses and factories. The former Henley Works office building is a striking landmark in the area and conveys much about the rapid growth and economic success of the cable and communication industry at the time of its construction.

The improvements to Lansdowne Square have gone some way towards helping the Conservation Area find a new identity that respects its origins and responds to current needs. Finding new uses for vacant industrial buildings and resolving the currently unsatisfactory visual link between the two sub-areas would restore vitality and identity to the Conservation Area. However, it remains a pleasant, relatively quiet corner of the Northfleet riverside that has otherwise resisted the move towards the total industrialisation of the foreshore.

The principal positive features of the Conservation Area are:

- An urban riverside character;
- The continuity of the built form in the planned residential parts of the Conservation Area;
- The current arrangement of the four large villas and a terraced row in and around Lansdowne Square;
- Mainly a domestic scale of building on narrow (Pier Road) or wide (Lansdowne Square) plots;
- Buildings in along Pier Road are arranged with a common building line set back from the pavement behind light wells;
- The remains of the pier as a reminder of the importance the river Thames once had as a means of transport;
- The Henley Works is a landmark building;
- Pitched or hipped roofs covered in slate;

- Use of yellow stock brick, which is usually rendered;
- Sash and French windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;
- Italiante or classical style architectural embellishment;
- Balustraded boundaries and balconies;
- Dressed stone retaining walls facing the river;
- Extensive views across the Thames to the Essex foreshore and Tilbury.
- Lack of accessibility to the pier;
- Graffiti (e.g. on The Shore wall);
- Sub-division of properties and the effect that multiple-occupancy has on the streetscene, such as increased rubbish bins and additional paraphernalia attached to buildings such as meter cupboards;
- Loss of historic boundary features and their unsympathetic replacement;
- The passing industrial traffic;
- Weeds growing out of the cycle path by Shawline House.

#### Negative features/issues:

- The poor design of the modern industrial buildings;
- The lack of a coherent division between the industrial and residential areas;
- Some poorly maintained and/or vacant buildings with no identified use, notably Shawline House and Henley Works;
- The need to enhance and repair the terrace along the northern side of Lansdowne Square and to make better use of the open space;
- The loss of architectural features, notably French windows and cornice details in Pier Road;
- Unsympathetic alterations to buildings, e.g. change of window openings, in Pier Road;
- Unsympathetic window and door replacements;
- Street clutter created by freestanding signs on the highway and vent pipes on the pavement;
- Need to carry through public realm improvements (e.g. pavements, soft landscaping) across the Conservation Area;
- The deteriorating state of repair of the remains of the pier;



## 9. ISSUES

### 9.1 Definition of Issues

The following 'Issues' have been identified by the appraisal process (via extensive survey work) and have been modified to include the views of the local community as part of the public consultation exercise. They provide the basis for the Site Specific Actions in the Management Proposals. These issues will be subject to regular review by the Council and new ones may be added in the future.

### 9.2 Conservation area boundary review

It is suggested that there is little scope for extension of the boundary of Lansdowne Square Conservation Area as the designation already covers most of the special architectural or historic interest related to the early 19th century planned development of Rosherville New Town. Other buildings which have been included, such as the landmark office building of the Henley Telegraph Works and The Old Sun Public House are built evidence of the industrial history of this area. However, historic maps indicate that nos.40 and 41 Pier Road are one of the first houses to built in the area, in fact the first to be built at the northern end of Pier Road and may be considered worthy of inclusion, together with the neighbouring tall flint wall outside the gospel church.

### 9.3 Education and information

Active measures for promoting better understanding of Northfleet and its place in history underpin the regeneration of the town through the drawing in of 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 Buildings at Risk

There are a number of buildings and structures in the Conservation Area that are vacant, and/or in need of repair and refurbishment. These factors pose a risk to the future survival of these structures. The remains of the former pier are at grave risk, showing severe lack of maintenance with self-seeded shrubs dislocating the masonry. Similarly, the embankment wall along The Shore shows vegetation growth in places. The office building of the former Henley Works is redundant and in need of a new use. So is Shawline House, which has been built into the colonnade/terrace of the former Rosherville Hotel. It should be preserved as boundary feature and refurbished. No. 51 Pier Road shows lack of maintenance and is in need of refurbishment.

### 9.5 Uses/ vitality

The conflict of uses in the Conservation Area is one of the principal issues that should be addressed. Northfleet riverside is largely an industrial settlement, while the residential roads of Northfleet are generally located further inland. However, in the Lansdowne Square Conservation Area the two uses are found side by side. The division between the two has been eroded by 20th century demolition of historic buildings and this has resulted in an uneasy visual relationship between the residential parts of the Conservation Area and the industrial parts which now encroach right up to the western side of the square.

The large area of car parking, which is often lying empty, has an underused appearance that could be further enhanced with sensitive planting and other improvements.

### 9.6 Enhancement potential

There is considerable scope for further enhancement of both the buildings and open spaces in Lansdowne Square Conservation Area. While property owners should be encouraged to make suitable improvements, wide ranging enhancement can probably only be achieved if other factors, such as the vacancy of commercial and residential units in the area and the appearance of public open spaces, are addressed as part of a further more comprehensive scheme to improve the whole area. Also, there is a strong case for a Council-led grant scheme that would help owners with the upkeep and repair of historic buildings or enable environmental improvements, including the re-installation of historic architectural features in the area.

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

- Shawline House;
- The industrial buildings on the site of the former Lansdowne Terrace and Rosherville Hotel.

The following buildings would benefit for minor improvements or repairs:

- Pier Road: nos. 43 (uPVC windows), 45 (lost eaves cornice), 46 (lost cornice and window openings), 47 (modern porch), 48 (lost cornice and window openings), 51 (general condition).
- All of the Pier Road properties would benefit from at least some improvement to their boundary treatments.

The following open spaces would benefit from improvement or enhancement:

- The terrace to the north of Lansdowne Square;
- The car parking area and forecourt to the industrial buildings on the site of the former Lansdowne Terrace and Rosherville Hotel;
- The large tarmac area for car parking in between the houses nos. 1-4 and 5-8 Lansdowne Square;
- The forecourts and frontages to the Henley Works and The Old Sun.

Other elements in the Conservation Area would benefit from improvement:

- The visual sense of enclosure in Lansdowne Square and the screening of unattractive modern industrial units which is currently lacking;
- Some of the walling and railings along The Shore could be more attractively finished;
- Highway signs could be more sensitively placed;
- Continuity of public realm improvements;
- Quality of pavement and road repairs;
- The appearance of the pier entrance;
- The appearance of front gardens in Pier Road;
- The appearance of Old Sun Yard;
- The appearance of Warren Hastings Court;
- Some unfortunate placement of television aerials (e.g. nos. 42 and 43 Pier Road);
- Clutter on the elevations of buildings and around front doors associated with multiple-occupancy dwellings (e.g. intercom systems).

### 9.7 Highways and traffic management

Traffic management is already well controlled in the Conservation Area. The entrance to The Shore from Lansdowne Square is restricted by concrete bollards which limits the access to large vehicles. Some through traffic does still pass through the square, although the main volume of industrial traffic is along The Shore. While the close proximity of this traffic to the residential square is not ideal, this is probably the best compromise and an unavoidable consequence of the location between two large industrial areas.

Unfortunately, landscaping with bedding is minimal and further planting might be advantageous.

### 9.8 Locally Listed buildings

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

### 9.9 Trees and Landscaping

Trees make a modest contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Mature specimens next to the terrace give a softer appearance to this side of the residential square. The newer trees on the west of the square will help give increasing vitality to the area as they mature, however, they have been planted well in front of the industrial buildings and other trees planted further back could create a better screen to divide the two areas (as established to the north of no.53 Burch Road). The wilder groups of trees that appear to be self-seeded do not enhance the Conservation Area.

## 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 Map 2009**

## Appendix 1 - History of Gravesend

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

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

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century Gravesham was an agricultural estate but by the 14<sup>th</sup> century it had grown into a small market town. By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 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 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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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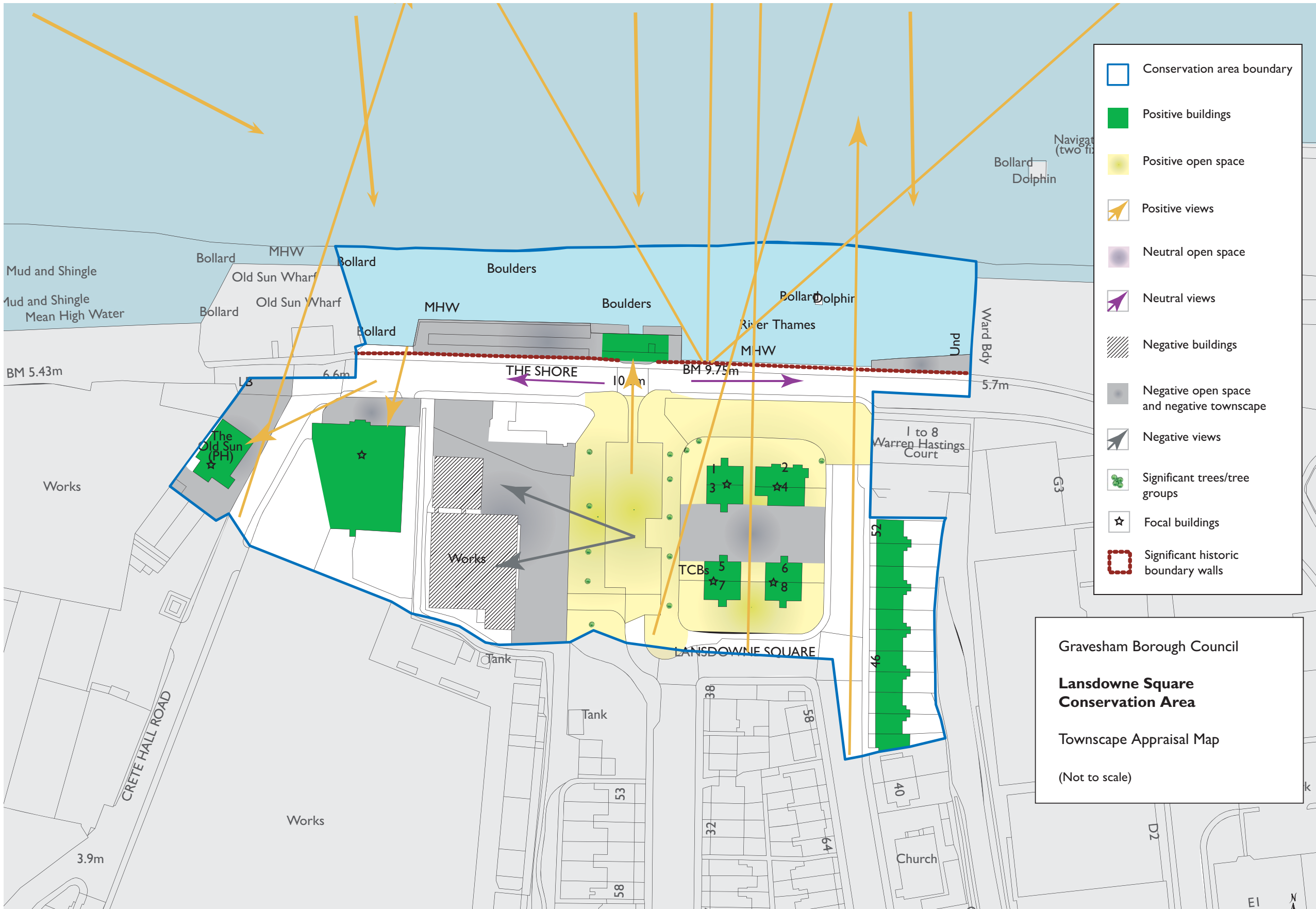
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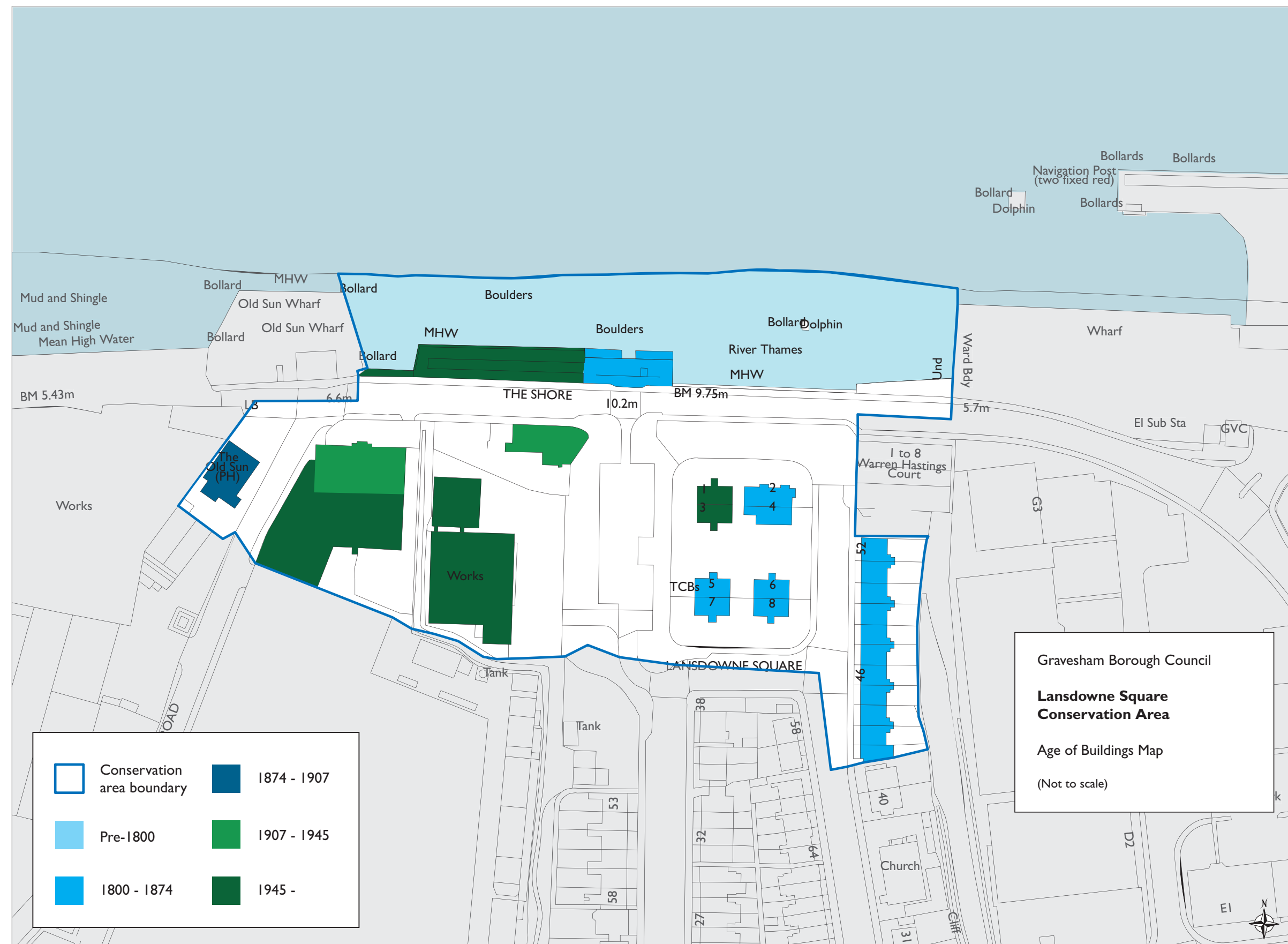
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