

Pelham Road/The Avenue

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



Pelham Road/The Avenue 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 Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area comprises part of a distinctive 19th century suburb to Gravesend, with predominantly large houses laid out in generous plots. The suburb was developed on former farmland, around one of the principal arterial routes from Old Road into the town of Gravesend. Pelham Road itself is a former country lane that once connected the Earl of Darnley's Manor Farm in the north to the small village of Perry Street to the south of Gravesend. It is located close to the site of the former Parish Church of Gravesend, as well as an early Saxon settlement.

The high quality 19th century buildings within the Conservation Area are represented by detached and paired houses which provide an eclectic range of elaborate architectural detailing. Many of the buildings are constructed from red brick, with detailing supplied by decorative render, terracotta, and applied timber-framing. The variety of the architecture, which contains references to the late 19th century Arts and Crafts Movement and the Gothic Revival style, contributes considerably to the special interest of the Conservation Area. The large garden plots, many of which contain mature trees, add considerable character, and are complimentary to the many street trees. All of these soften the effect of the urban landscape and add to the special interest of the Conservation Area.

By contrast, Bycliffe Terrace, Pelham Terrace and the White Post Public House are the earliest buildings in the Conservation Area, and were built in around 1844 on the site of St Mary's Parish Church. They are arranged in

terraced form with a low eaves height, and are built from local flint and red brick.

The buildings and layout of the Conservation Area have survived relatively unaltered since their construction in the late 19th century, when the area was developed as a desirable suburb to the more industrialised and urban town centre. With the trees and gardens, the whole area provides a good example of a well preserved late 19th /early 20th century suburb and the designation as a Conservation Area is well justified.

2. PELHAM ROAD/THE AVENUE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Background

The Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area was designated on 15th February 1995 by Gravesham Borough Council and was extended on 14th February 2001. The Conservation Area's boundary includes the central part of Pelham Road, which is one of the connecting roads between Gravesend town centre and the Old Dover Road. The adjacent roads of Bycliffe Terrace, Pelham Terrace, to the west, and The Avenue and Lennox Road East to the east, are also included in the designation. The Conservation Area is part of the extensive 19th century residential suburbs to the south of Gravesend and is located close to the site of the Saxon settlement of Gravesham and a former parish church.

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 Pelham Road/The Avenue 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 that of the two other 19th century suburban Conservation Areas in Gravesend, i.e. Darnley Road and Windmill Hill, will lead to a management plan, setting out policies and actions to conserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the two conservation areas and to mitigate the effects of negative features. The appraisals and management plans are to be included as background papers in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) and, as such, will be a due consideration in the planning process. In due course the appraisals and management plans may also be adopted as a separate Development Plan Document within the LDF.

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

2.3 Planning policy context

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

Broadly, the effects of designation are:

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

Further, more detailed information is provided in the management plan.

As well as receiving statutory protection, conservation areas are protected by regional, county and local planning policies. Relevant policies include:

- **Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9)** (published March 2001), Key Development Principle No.9; Policy Q2; Policy Q5; Policy Q7; Policy E1.
- **Regional Planning Guidance 9a: The Thames Gateway Planning Framework** (1995), Paras. 5.4.7 & 5.4.8: Built Heritage, Annex 1: Planning Framework Principles No.13.
- **Draft South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy)** (submitted to Government on 31st March 2006), Section D8 Management of the Built and Historic Environment: Policy BE1; Policy BE2; Policy BE7; Section E4 (Kent Thames

Gateway).

- **The Kent and Medway Structure Plan** (adopted 6th July 2006), Policy QL1: Quality of Development and Design; Policy QL6: Conservation Areas; Policy QL7: Archaeological Sites; Policy QL8: Buildings of Architectural or Historic Importance; Policy QL9: Historic Landscape Features; Policy QL10: Heritage Assets – Enabling Development.
- **Gravesham Local Plan First Review** (adopted November 1994), Policy TC0, TC1, TC2, TC3, TC4, TC5, TC6, TC7, TC8, TC9, TC10, TC11, TC12, Policy R3, Proposal PM13, Policy AP3.

Thames Gateway

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

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

new connection at nearby Ebbsfleet, now completed) and several major road building schemes such as the widening of the A2 to the south of the town.

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

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 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 the Pelham Road/The Avenue 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 29th November 2007. Leaflets were also displayed in public places. The meeting included a description of the principal and desired outcomes of appraisals and management plans and led into a general discussion. The meeting was attended by various representatives of the Borough Council and local interest groups.

Following the meeting, the outcomes were discussed by Gravesham Borough Council and The Conservation Studio, and the

3. LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 Location

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

Gravesend is about 35 kilometres to the east of central London, with Canterbury approximately 65 kilometres to the south and east. The A2 and M2 trunk roads link these locations, and because of the proximity of the M25 and M20 motorways, and the rail link to the Channel Tunnel, Gravesend is very well connected to other parts of the country and beyond.

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

The Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area is approximately half a mile to the south west of Gravesend town centre and includes the 19th century residential houses in Pelham Road, Lennox Road East and The Avenue as well as some later infill development.

3.2 Activities and uses

The buildings in the Conservation Area are

predominantly in residential use. Lennox Road East, The Avenue, Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace retain a strong residential character, whereas some of the larger properties on Pelham Road have been converted. New uses introduced into these buildings include a doctor's surgery in what was formerly Kent County Council offices, an education centre, a driving test centre, a nursery school and several residential care homes. Gravesend Grammar School for Girls lies immediately to the south of the Conservation Area boundary, the school generating an intense amount of pedestrian and vehicle traffic in the surrounding roads at particular times in the day.

Whilst there is a reasonable amount of pedestrian movement around the streets of the Conservation Area in the daytime, most of the activity is related to the car, van and lorry traffic on Pelham Road, which is usually passing through the area. The Avenue is generally relatively quiet.

3.3 Topography

This part of Gravesend has a level topography, and a flat landscape therefore characterises both Pelham Road and The Avenue. To the north of the Conservation Area, the land eventually descends to the river Thames, and to the south-east it rises up to the peak of Windmill Hill. To the south, the ground level falls away slightly from the White Post Public House, and descends gradually to the junction with Old Road.

The main routes within the Conservation Area are generally very straight and wide, although the connecting road of Lennox Road East has a noticeable kink towards its west end.

3.4 Geology and Biodiversity

Gravesend 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 the South Downs in Sussex. The area between the two is the Weald, notable for its heavy clays and sandstone outcrops.

The abundant availability of chalk in Gravesend and Northfleet 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. Other natural deposits, such as flint, have been utilised in construction, notably in the Conservation Area for the cottages and boundary walls in Bycliffe Terrace.

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.

3.5 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

The immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area are suburban townscape.

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

- To the south: The grounds of the Gravesend Grammar School for Girls

and mainly rows of 19th century terraced housing and shops along Old Road and Dover Road, with occasional churches and other community buildings;

- To the west: Further residential roads, a disused chalk pit and the mainline railway tracks;
- To the north: More spaciouly arranged buildings, including ‘Mayfield’ (now Bronte School), built in 1875 and one of the earliest concrete houses. The area also includes increasingly commercial premises such as a modern car showroom at the junction of Darnley Road, where the highway leads across the railway tracks into the Transport Quarter of Gravesend town centre. Most of the area to the north and east is included in the Darnley Road Conservation Area;
- To the east: 19th and 20th century residential buildings lining the roads, and the open space of the Bat and Ball Cricket Ground leading to the slopes of Windmill Hill.

4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Archaeology

Evidence of prehistoric activity in and around Gravesend and Northfleet is rich. Many finds from the lower Palaeolithic period having been made in the Ebbsfleet valley including the richest Levallois site in Britain (containing distinctive knapped flints), and there have been prehistoric finds of flint axes and pottery sherds. The remains of a substantial Roman villa complex has been discovered in Northfleet and a Roman road found close to the river 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. A hoard of 552 Saxon coins and a silver cross were found in 1838 to the south of the Conservation Area.

Archaeological evidence points to the existence of a Saxon settlement a short distance to the south of the Conservation Area, and Bycliffe Terrace is the site of the former Parish Church of St Mary. The area including Bycliffe Terrace and the southern part of Pelham Road is within one of Kent County Council's designated *Areas of Archaeological Potential*.

4.2 Historical development

Pelham Road and the surrounding area developed as part of the suburban expansion of Gravesend. Earlier phases of suburban development had occurred on land to the east in the early 19th century, such as along Darnley Road, but the development of Pelham Road did not occur until the end of the 19th century. The road was originally a meandering

lane traversing open countryside and connecting through to the Dover to London stagecoach route which ran along Old Road. This was maintained by the Turnpike Trustees from 1711-1801, when the New Road was opened and the milestones were moved there.

Pelham Road was not named as such until the mid 19th century. It was earlier called Manor Road (as on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1870), after Gravesend Manor Farm which lay at the junction of Pelham Road and Darnley Road. Sometimes it was called Style's Lane after the farmer, and also White Post Lane after the white posts which surrounded the glebe lands in this part of the settlement. The Pelham Road/ The Avenue Conservation Area forms part of the south-western suburbs of Gravesend; the 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.

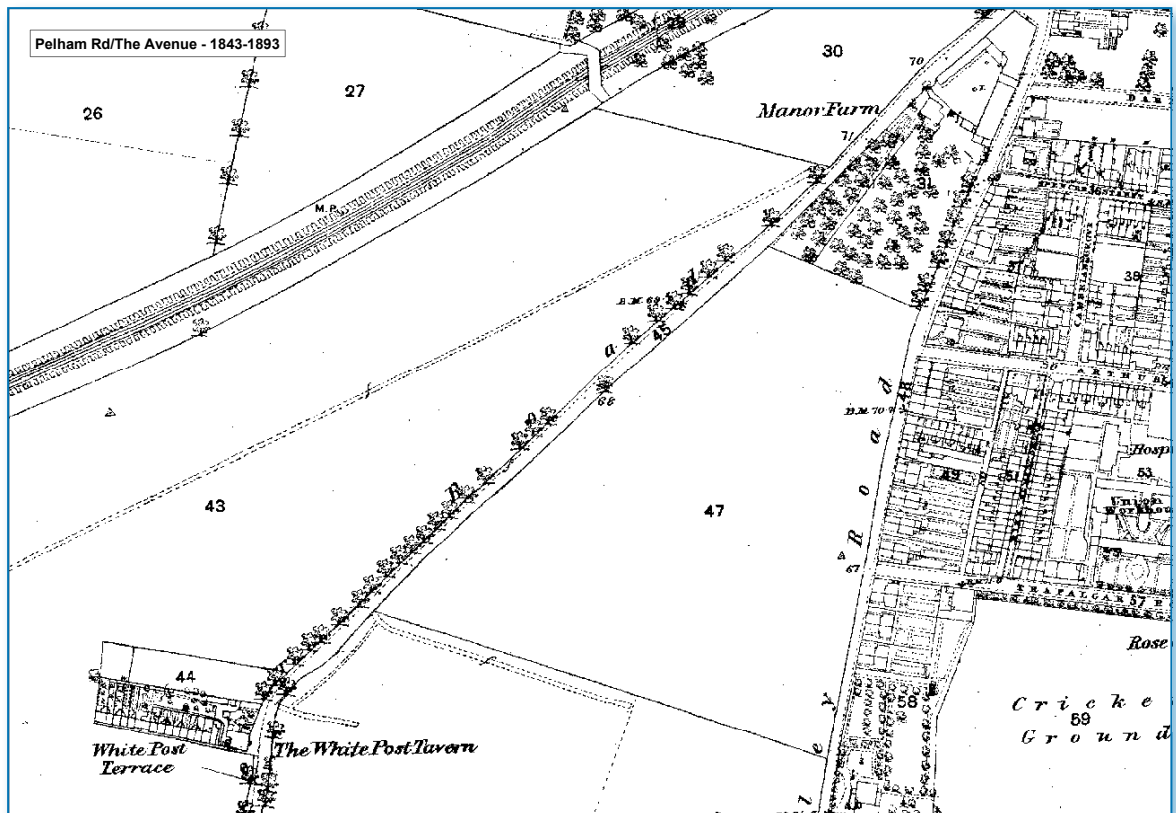
The name "Gravesend" is derived from Gravesham, itself meaning "*graaf-ham*", the home of the reeve or bailiff of the Lord of the Manor. The earliest written recording of the settlement is a reference to *Gravesham* in The Domesday Book of 1086, which attributes ownership of this agricultural estate to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (the brother of William I). It noted that the Manor had been split under the ownership of three Saxon thanes (or lords) before 1066. The Saxon settlement had grown around the Old Dover Road where the Parish Church of St Mary was built. It is thought that this Parish Church lay to the rear of the White Post Public House, as this was the site of a number of churches until the 16th century. The settlement surrounding the church remained rural through the centuries. With the granting of the first market charter in 1356, a market was located on the corner of High Street and

West Street, providing a new focus for the town closer to the river and away from the Parish Church inland. This development led to the redundancy of the church and instead a chapel was built behind High Street in 1544; the chapel was located on the present day site of the Parish Church of St George. St Mary's fell into ruin during the 16th century and in 1797 the ruins and the churchyard walls were removed by a tenant of Manor Farm.

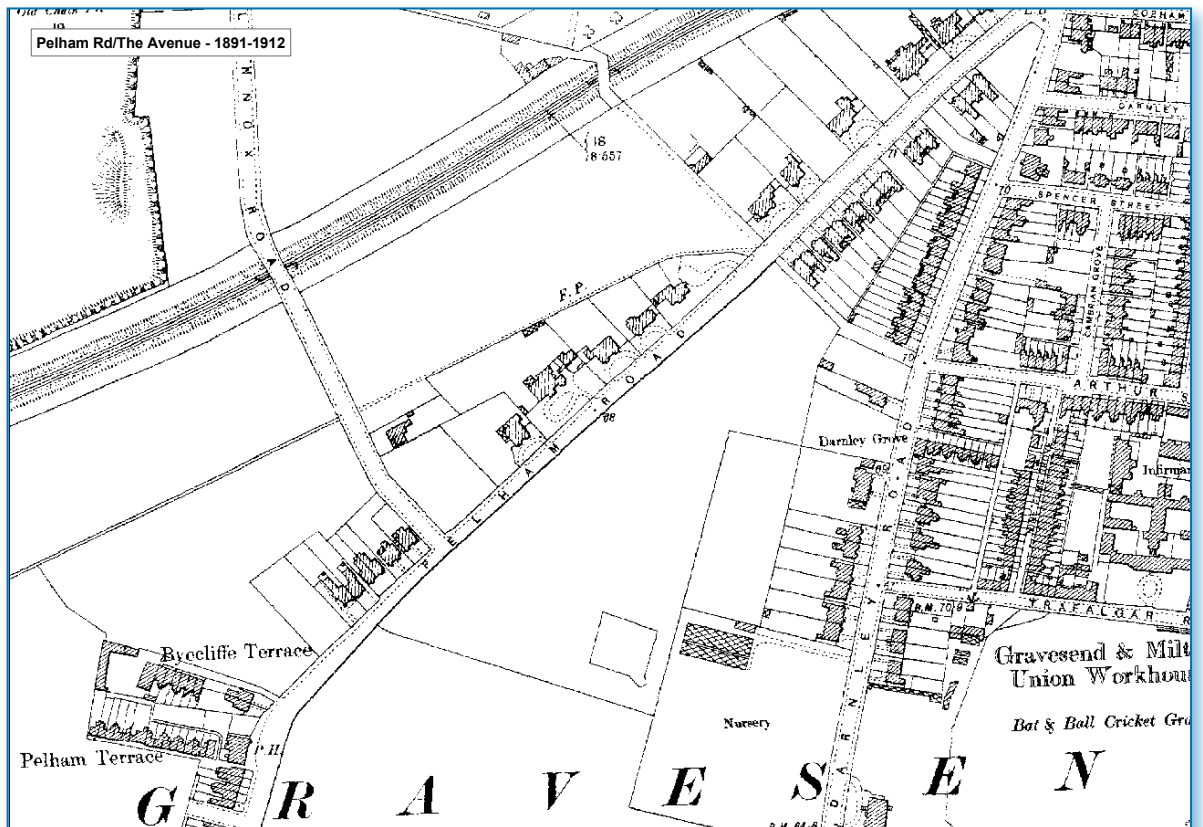
The land to either side of Pelham Road remained undeveloped until the second half of the 19th century. The first buildings to be erected were the White Post Public House and the cottages to the rear (White Post Terrace, now Pelham Terrace), which were built in 1844 following the sale of the land of the site of the former parish church, St Mary's. The White Post became fully licensed in 1846, when an extensive fire in the High Street necessitated the removal of the licensee from the Black Horse. This group of buildings are clearly visible on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1870, with only open fields surrounding them.

The next phase of development occurred along the western side of Pelham Road in the 1870s. A number of large houses and Bycliffe Terrace had been constructed by the 1897 edition of the Ordnance Survey map. The last roads within the Conservation Area to be laid out were Lennox Road East and The Avenue. These two roads are visible on the 1907 Ordnance Survey map, which shows that The Avenue had been almost completely developed on either side, but that Lennox Road East was only developed on the south side. In the early 20th century the loop of the electric tramway ran south along Pelham Road, continuing onto Old Road West.

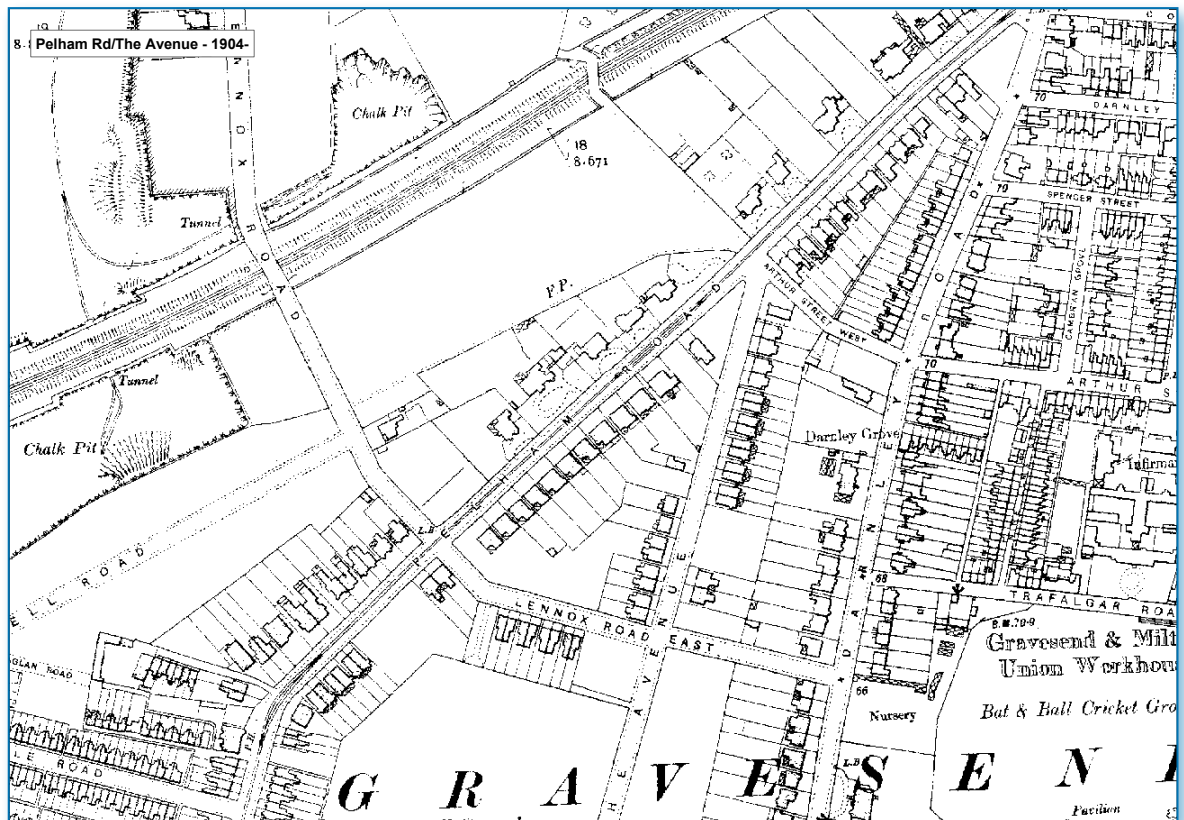
The majority of the buildings within the Conservation Area were constructed as single family dwellings, however a number of the largest buildings on Pelham Road have subsequently been subdivided. It is likely that this subdivision began to occur in the early 20th century, as there were fewer domestic staff available to serve such large premises. Within the Conservation Area there are also a number of small houses which were erected post-war, as infill on plots not previously developed, or on which properties had been bomb damaged.



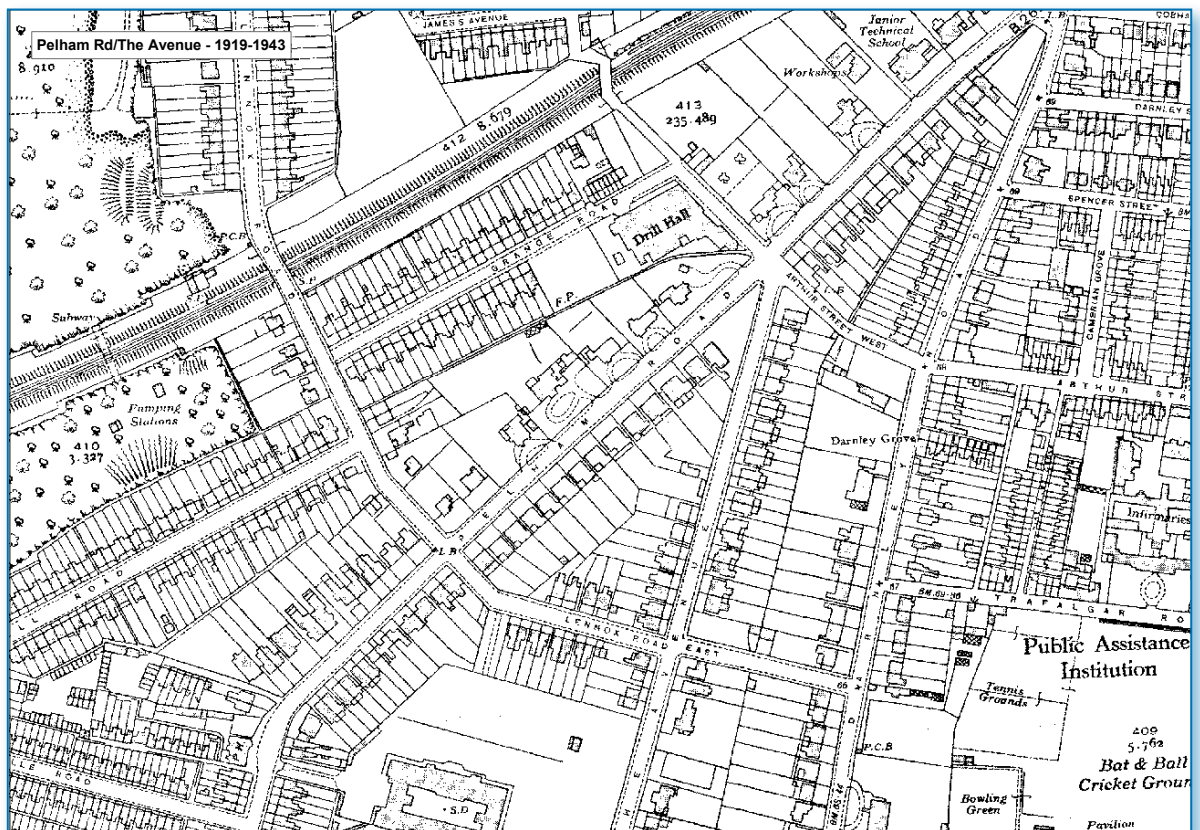
1843 - 1893



1891 - 1912



1904



1919 - 1943

5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Layout and spaces

The residential roads that make up this Conservation Area are former country lanes or completely new routes that were laid through fields and glebe land in the 19th century. Pelham Road did not receive its present name until the mid 19th century. Prior to this date it was known variously as: Manor Lane, from the Manor Farm extending along its southeast side; Style's Lane, after the farmer who worked the land; and later White Post Lane, possibly after the white posts which used to demarcate this former glebe land. Lennox Road East and The Avenue were built on an extensive area of pasture between Arthur Street West and Old Road West.

The principal route through the Conservation Area is formed by a section of Pelham Road. This route is orientated in a south westerly direction, until turning directly southwards by the White Post Public House at the southern end of the Conservation Area. The roadway is broad, with houses arranged on either side and set back from the pavements behind generously sized front gardens. Buildings are typically detached or semi-detached. No. 25 Pelham Road is particularly distinctive, being set on a very large plot, and recessed back from what is otherwise a near-continuous building line along Pelham Road. The scale of the plot provides an appropriate setting for this imposing building.

At the northern end of the Conservation Area, the junction of Pelham Road, Arthur Street West and The Avenue creates a generously scaled open area. This sense of spaciousness is enhanced through the large corner plots surrounding the intersection, with houses which are set back from the junction

within large gardens. Nos. 17, 19 and 34 Pelham Road stand on particularly large plots. The Avenue is a wide, straight road which diverges from the junction with Pelham Road. Lennox Road East and Arthur Street West, run mainly east-west, connecting between the principal arterial routes from Old Road into Gravesend, such as Pelham Road and, to the east of the Conservation Area, Darnley Road.

Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace predate the suburbanisation of Manor Lane into Pelham Road. They are short, narrow lanes containing tightly-knit small-scale development. Pelham Terrace is a narrow footpath onto which nos. 3-16 face. The southern side of the path is tightly enclosed by the rear boundary wall of buildings on Granville Road, outside the Conservation Area boundary. Bycliffe Terrace is a wider lane, but a cul-de-sac. Nos. 1-9 also face directly onto the lane.

There are no significant public open spaces in the Conservation Area. The extensive playing fields of the Gravesend Grammar School for Girls lies immediately to the south of the Conservation Area, but are generally hidden from view within the Conservation Area by the residential buildings which line the streets.

5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

The buildings in the Conservation Area are predominantly set back behind front gardens which lie to either side of the wide roads and generously sized pavements. This distinctive relationship of buildings to spaces reflects the suburban character of this part of Gravesend. The groups of houses on the two principal thoroughfares, Pelham Road and The Avenue, are interrupted by the junctions with the side roads, with roads from the south east (Grange Road/ Arthur Street West) and north

west (Lennox Road/ Lennox Road East).

Some of the widest plots were originally laid out along the west side of Pelham Road, although some of these important gaps between the buildings have been infilled with further houses. Two examples of such infill development are to be seen in the terraces comprising nos. 23-23c and 29a-29c. The east side of Pelham Road, Lennox Road East and The Avenue, were laid out more intensively in the late 19th century and the spaces between the detached houses and semi-detached pairs are much smaller. In this part of the Conservation Area the relationship of buildings to spaces is characterised by the regularity and fairly close proximity of the pairs of houses. Late 20th century infill development, including side and rear extensions, has removed some of the original openness between and behind the properties, and is most noticeable at the northern end of The Avenue where the rear elevations of the Pelham Road properties are clearly in view.

In Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace the two terraced rows of 1840s artisans' cottages are in clear contrast to the large family houses in the rest of the Conservation Area. These tightly-knit terraces do not have front gardens and instead access directly onto the lane, creating a strong sense of enclosure within these areas.

5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

The special interest in the Pelham Road/ The Avenue Conservation Area is largely created by the group value of its buildings and their architectural features including turrets, castellated towers, porches, prominent gables and Arts and Crafts detailing, rather than by the landmark qualities of specific buildings. However, some individual buildings do make a

significant impact on the streetscene and lend themselves to be called landmarks:

- Nos. 17, 25, 34, and the group of nos. 41-43, 45-47 and 49 Pelham Road;
- The White Post (former) Public House;
- No.1 The Avenue.

These landmark buildings provide focal points within the Conservation Area through their position as individual or corner buildings. There are important long views along the straight, broad roads of Pelham Road and The Avenue, and these are framed by the fine mid to late-19th century houses which line both sides of the road.

Due to the relatively close proximity of buildings to one another, and also to the flat topography, the views into and out of the Conservation Area are generally limited to the vistas along roads and across the main road junction. The principal positive views are:

- Along Pelham Road and The Avenue in both directions;
- Along Bycliffe Terrace;
- Along Lennox Road East to Darnley Road;
- From the north of Pelham Road to the gable of No. 34;
- From the south of Pelham Road to the turret of no. 49;
- From Grange Road to the castellated tower of no.1 The Avenue.

5.4 Trees, boundaries and planting

Trees make a significant contribution to the leafy suburban character of the Conservation Area. Trees in front gardens are particularly noticeable on the west side of Pelham Road and help to frame views along the street. Street trees line The Avenue and Lennox Road East, and despite the fact that they

have been severely lopped, they continue to make an important impact on the attractive appearance of the streets. Important trees are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. The only significant planting in the area can be seen in the many private gardens within the Conservation Area.

Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area stand behind front gardens which are enclosed by a variety of boundary treatments, such as brick walls, railings and trees or hedging. Historically, these boundaries were usually created using brick; some of them were low walls topped with ornamental cast iron railings. A number of boundaries display the use of stone copings for the walls and caps for gate piers, such as no. 33 Pelham Road. Important stretches of historic flint walling still remain along Bycliffe Terrace and just outside the Conservation Area in Granville Road. A number of the boundary treatments have altered or replaced, or have been removed altogether to allow for vehicle access to hardstandings.

6. STREETSCAPE

6.1 Public realm

Pavements

The pavements in the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area feature modern materials (concrete slabs, tarmac or poured concrete with concrete kerbs). The pavements are fairly wide along Pelham Road and The Avenue, although the connecting roads of Lennox Road East and Arthur Street West are slightly narrower. Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace have no pavements and their roadways and footpaths are covered in concrete block paving, concrete pavements or poured concrete.

Wherever there are pavements, the traditional relationship of raised pavement to road surface has been maintained. Generally, the pavements are fairly well maintained although there is a patchwork effect along most of the roads due to the replacement of specific areas with differing materials.

Street furniture, signage and other features

There are a few surviving historic street signs within the Conservation Area and these make an important contribution to the special historic interest of the area. Signs can be found for: 'Arthur Street' attached to the gable wall of no. 32 Pelham Road; 'The Avenue'; 'Lennox Road'; and 'Pelham Terrace' attached to no. 63 Pelham Road.

Highway signage is mainly limited to small triangular warning signs fixed to lamp posts, although there are some modern signs fixed to buildings and boundary walls in Pelham Road related to businesses and services. These are most prominent on the

pharmacy at no.17 Pelham Road and on other business forecourts located to the north of the Conservation Area. Overall the area is relatively free from the clutter of extraneous visual signage which would be detrimental to its suburban appearance.

Street lighting

Street lighting in the Conservation Area is all modern, featuring hockey-stick style street lights on tall steel columns in Pelham Road, and on shorter columns in the other roads in the Conservation Area. Bycliffe Terrace is unlit and Pelham Terrace has two lamp posts featuring semi-circular lamps on steel columns.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths

Pedestrian access throughout the Conservation Area is generally good and a zebra crossing in busy Pelham Road is a useful facility. Generally, the pavements are level and straight, which makes pedestrian movement easy.

Traffic and parking

The traffic through Pelham Road is intermittently heavy due to its location on a route into and out of Gravesend. On-street parking is not permitted, which has led to a large number of the front gardens being paved over and the loss of many boundary treatments. Such works are detrimental to the appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Avenue and connecting streets have low volumes of traffic due to their residential status away from the major road and this gives them a quieter residential character. Parking is generally limited to traditional kerbside parking although many of the houses

in The Avenue have also converted their front gardens to hardstandings. There are some limited parking spaces in Bycliffe Terrace and some of the modern Bycliffe Mews houses have garages.

7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Building types

Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area are substantial family houses of 19th century date, typically arranged in semi-detached pairs. One of the key characteristics of the Conservation Area are the small groups of houses built to an identical design, with clusters of these different style buildings running along a street. The east side of The Avenue is notable for this – for example, nos. 11-29 form a group as do nos. 31-37. The houses on Pelham Road are some of the most substantial buildings in the Conservation Area and a number of them have been converted to alternative uses, such as residential care homes. No.36 Pelham Road, now used by the Red Cross, has been considerably extended to the rear but has retained its original details on the front elevation, confirming its original residential use. Other houses along Pelham Road which have been converted to business uses include no.17, which once served as Kent County Council offices and is now used as a surgery and pharmacy. The largest mid 19th century house within the Conservation Area, no.25 Pelham Road, is currently in use as an educational facility and Driving Test Centre.

There are other residential buildings in the Conservation Area which have less historic interest, including a number of houses from the 1930s (no.31 Pelham Road) as well as some later infill development. These Post-War houses are mostly rows of four or five narrow terraced houses built in an unassuming modern style. Bycliffe Mews is a more recent infill development, and is arranged as a cluster of connected houses incorporating garages at the end of Bycliffe Terrace.

The White Post Public House of 1844 is currently vacant, and the Church of the Latter Day Saints at no.21 Pelham Road, designed by architects Butler and Robinson in the 19th century, is now a nursery school.

7.2 Building form

The buildings in the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area are arranged in short rows of terraced, paired or detached houses that are predominantly two or three storeys in height.

Pelham Road has a mixture of semi-detached and detached houses. These are set back from the public realm behind generous front gardens, and together create a near continuous building line. The houses are generally two storeys high, although some have attic floors, and range from two to five windows wide, faced with brick, with pitched tiled or slated roofs. The large detached houses, nos. 17 and 25, stand in extensive grounds and are set slightly further back from the road than the neighbouring buildings.

The east side of Pelham Road, Lennox Road East and The Avenue contain pairs of more modestly proportioned semi-detached houses than those on the west side of Pelham Road. They are set back behind slightly smaller front gardens and maintain a also common building line.

Tightly packed terraces line the north side of Pelham Terrace and the south side of Bycliffe Terrace. These terraces are narrow one-bay cottages, two storeys high with a low eaves height. The historic row of flint cottages on Bycliffe Terrace date from around 1844, and immediately to the west of them lie a late 20th century development (Bycliffe Mews) which

has been built around a small courtyard.

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 Gravesend or elsewhere, although all buildings that were identified in the 1974 Listed Buildings Survey for their architectural or historic interest, but were not awarded a listing status, have been treated as ‘Buildings of Local Interest’ ever since when considering planning applications. Following the importance the Government places in its Heritage White Paper on the compilation of Lists of Buildings of Local Interest, Gravesham Borough Council’s list is due to be reviewed soon.

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

7.5 Key unlisted buildings

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

- Pelham Road: nos. 20-40, 48-64, 70-92, 17-19a, 21, 25, 27, 33-53, 57-59 and The White Post Public House;
- The Avenue: nos. 1-43, 2 -18, 51;
- Lennox Road East: nos. 1-7 and 2 -16;
- Bycliffe Terrace: nos. 1-6;
- Pelham Terrace: nos. 3-16.

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

Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area are built using local materials, particularly red and yellow stock brick, although the slate which is commonly used to cover roofs was imported from elsewhere in the country, usually Wales. No. 25 Pelham Road also

has a porch decorated with ornamental terracotta. A local material that is used in the Conservation Area is flint and some remaining 19th century flint boundary walls stand in Bycliffe Terrace.

Many of the buildings, particularly the late 19th century properties, have projecting bay windows and other architectural features which utilise a cement render which would have been produced in the factories close by in Northfleet. This part of Kent 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.

- Corner turrets;
- Ridge tiles;
- Tile hanging;
- Bishops chimney pots;
- Tiled front pathways;
- Flint boundary walls and flint faced buildings (Bycliffe Terrace).

7.7 Local details

The buildings in the Conservation Area display a number of varied details typical of the late 19th century. These include:

- The use of red, yellow and brown stock brick;
- Decorative terracotta ornament;
- The use of cement render for details such as castellated bays;
- Slate roofs;
- Canted or square bays;
- Shaped gables on some properties;
- Rendered window dressings replicating stone;
- Recessed porches or timber fret-cut projecting porches (e.g. The Avenue);
- Applied timber-framing;
- Projecting porches to the older properties in Pelham Road;
- Brick chimney stacks;
- Small dormer windows;
- Vertically sliding timber sash windows;

8. CHARACTER AREAS

8.1 Summary of Character Areas

Within the present boundaries the Pelham Road Conservation Area can be divided into three Character Areas according to landscape, topography, historical development, layout, building type, and uses. Positive features that contribute to the character of each area, or negative features that detract from it, are summarised at end of each section. The Pelham Road/ The Avenue Conservation Area can be divided into three Character Areas according to historical development, layout, building type, and uses. These are:

Character Area 1: Pelham Road

Character Area 2: Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace

Character Area 3: The Avenue and Lennox Road East

8.2 Character Area 1: Pelham Road

The buildings of Pelham Road have a varied appearance although consistency in the streetscene is provided by their common building line behind front gardens on this relatively broad suburban highway. The buildings were constructed from the 1870s to a variety of different designs. There are small groups of buildings which share a design and type of architectural detailing and this demonstrates the phased development along the road.

The first Pelham Road properties were built in distinct groups, mainly on the west side of the road, and many of these survive today. Six houses of the earliest phase of development stand to the south of the junction with Lennox Road, another group is around no.25 Pelham Road, and a final group in the north which

has largely been redeveloped and lies outside the Conservation Area boundary (except no.17 Pelham Road). These properties are the grandest properties in the Character Area and feature lavish decorative features. For example no. 25 Pelham Road is designed in the French Renaissance style, featuring a tower with a distinctive French mansard roof, and gables with elaborate scrolled decoration.

The design features and the materials used to build the houses vary greatly within these small groups. Common details shared by nos. 41-43, 45-47 and 49, suggest that they were built together by the same builder. These are three storey paired red brick houses with yellow brick banding, while to the north, nos. 37 and 39 are more squat brown brick houses, with red banding and shaped gables.

Along the western side of Pelham Road the variety in the building styles, which is reflected in the eclectic range of architectural detailing, makes an important contribution to the special interest of the character area. Small groups or pairs of fine late 19th century buildings are punctuated by lavish individual buildings such as no. 25. In some cases, such as with nos. 23 to 23c Pelham Road, the unsympathetic design of the infill buildings, featuring uncharacteristic details such as bulls eye windows and mansard roofs, does not blend in well with the historic character of the adjacent buildings. Also, their harsh modern materials contrast insensitively with the softer tones of the historic bricks and slate roofs of neighbouring historic buildings. Hidden behind no. 33 Pelham Road, a well preserved 19th century brown brick coach house is a rare survival which should be preserved.

The east side of Pelham Road has more continuity in building styles, although there are a number of variations on the theme of

the paired group. At the northern end of the Conservation Area, nos. 20 to 32 provide an important group of historic buildings featuring canted bays, attractive doorcases and original dormer windows. South of these buildings the street opens out significantly at the junction with Grange Road and The Avenue. Extensive views across the long garden of no. 34 stretch southwards and the tall mature trees in the garden of no. 19 enhance the vista.

The building line is continued by no. 34, a later 19th century house constructed using a dark red brick, which borrows details such as the turrets used on the earlier properties. This is followed by wider, two bay detached houses, set close to one another in a row. They have full height canted or square bays and rendered dressings that display a variety of Arts and Crafts decoration. The row is interrupted by nos. 42 and 44a to 44c, modern houses which are set well back from the building line. Nos. 44a-44c have no discernible architectural link to the existing historic buildings in Pelham Road and their massing and unassuming design creates a negative feature within the Conservation Area.

At the southern end of the Character Area three three-storey houses, nos. 41-49, introduce another new style to the streetscene and provide a solid gateway to the Conservation Area. The scale and elaborate architectural detailing of these buildings make them key focal buildings within the area. However the removal of boundary treatments, such as at nos. 41-43, and the paving over of the front garden has been detrimental to the character of this group and is an endemic issue across the character area.

The principal positive features of Character Area 1: Pelham Road are:

- Good example of a mainly late 19th century suburb;
- A variety of building form, style, scale, materials and age;
- The arrangement of historic buildings which face each other across the road;
- Nos. 17, 25, 34, 41-43, 45-47 and 49 are landmark buildings;
- The buildings are arranged with a common building line behind the front gardens;
- The buildings are mainly of a domestic scale;
- Attractive pitched or hipped roofs covered in slate or tiles, sometimes including decorative ridge tiles;
- The use of yellow stock and red brick, enlivened by patterning, banding and the occasional addition of blue brick detailing;
- The use of rendered window and door details, to replicate stone;
- Some use of terracotta for decoration (nos. 41-49 Pelham Road);
- Shaped gables, turrets and (sometimes castellated) full height canted and square bays;
- Arts and Crafts details on some buildings, particularly the east side of Pelham Road, such as terracotta detail and applied timber-framing;
- Original well detailed dormer windows;
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis.

The principal negative features of Character Area 1: Pelham Road are:

- The poor choice of materials for the construction of some modern buildings with the use of unsuitable materials (nos.

- 23 to 23c Pelham Road);
- Some modern infilling (nos. 44a to 44c Pelham Road) with the newer buildings providing a more horizontal emphasis, contrasting with the vertical emphasis of the historic buildings.
- Some loss of original architectural features, notably timber sash windows and their unsympathetic replacement with uPVC;
- Inappropriate CCTV and signage on no.17 Pelham Road;
- The loss of original boundary treatments to create car parking, or their replacement with unsympathetic modern materials (for example the red brick wall and closeboarded fence around the garden of no.19 Pelham Road);
- The loss of front gardens and late 19th century tiled front paths due to building owners creating off-street car parking;
- A lack of continuity in the pavement materials;
- The speed and volume of the traffic.

8.3 Character Area 2: Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace

This Character Area includes the oldest buildings in the Conservation Area (Bycliffe Terrace dates to around 1844) and is close to one of the oldest religious sites in the Borough, the site of a Saxon and later medieval church of St Mary's. The appearance and position of the buildings in Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace confirms their existence before Pelham Road was developed into a suburban street in the later part of the 19th century. The White Post Public House, along with the pair of houses to the north of it, is more modest in terms of scale and details than the later 19th century buildings further along Pelham Road, the building retaining the appearance of a small

rural inn facing what was once just a country lane.

Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace are modestly sized and are densely packed, with minimal garden space. The flint cottages of Bycliffe Terrace are the most attractive structures in the group, and the flint walls which line the narrow lane contribute to the character and setting of the group. The use of this traditional material contrasts with the modern roadway of brick paviors and the brick garden walls of nos. 7-8, a pair of 20th century properties. The end cottage in the terrace has been refaced with timber weatherboarding, a traditional Kentish building material which has been copied as a facing material for Bycliffe Mews, a more recent addition to the Conservation Area.

Nearly all of the Pelham Terrace houses suffer from a loss of historic character through the application of render or paint to the original brickwork, and most have also had their original timber windows replaced with modern alternatives. The significance of the terrace therefore lies in its historic interest as an example of mid-19th century artisan cottages, together with the narrow alleyway which connects it to Granville Road.

The principal positive features of Character Area 2: Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace are:

- Semi-rural character despite later development;
- The flint cottages in Bycliffe Terrace with red brick window arches;
- Flint boundary walls;
- The historic interest of Pelham Terrace;
- A surviving mid-19th century inn;
- A pair of mid-19th century houses facing Pelham Road.

The principal negative features of Character Area 2: Bycliffe Terrace and Pelham Terrace are:

- The poor condition of the former White Post Public House, currently boarded up and vacant;
- The graffiti on Pelham Terrace walls;
- Modern road surfaces;
- Unsympathetic modern infill development close by;
- Inappropriate alterations to the Pelham Terrace properties, reducing their architectural interest;
- Poor quality street lighting.

8.4 Character Area 3: The Avenue and Lennox Road East

This character area lies directly to the east of Pelham Road. The northern end of the road connects with Pelham Road and Arthur Street West at a wide junction. A well detailed house (no.1), with a castellated tower, is an important landmark building.

The Avenue has a more peaceful character because most of the car traffic passes along neighbouring Pelham Road. However, there is noticeable activity in the street at the beginning and end of each day during term time, due to the pedestrian entrance to the Grammar School in Lennox Road East.

The Avenue was laid out in the first years of the 20th century and is characterised by fine semi-detached late 19th century houses that line some sections of the road. The Conservation Area boundary extends to just beyond the Lennox Road East junction, where more houses were added in the Inter-War period.

The Avenue features a series of small groups of houses that share a similar built form and building line, but have varying styles and building details. Nos. 1-9 face the back gardens of properties on the east side of Pelham Road which stretch across to The Avenue. These gardens lend a great sense of spaciousness to the street, which is furthered by the wide tree-lined pavements. The houses are two storeys plus attic high, and are constructed from red brick with attractive white painted render detailing on the canted bays and porches.

Next to them, nos. 11 to 29 are larger, two storey plus attic semi-detached houses, with attic windows set in the gables of the

half hipped slate roofs. Nos. 11-21 also face the back gardens of houses fronting Pelham Road, whilst nos. 23-29 face more modern development of no special historic interest. They whole group features canted bays but with more elaborate render details and are very similar in style to nos. 82 to 92 Pelham Road. Further south, Inter-War and 21st century infill development emulates some of the typical historic features found in the Conservation Area, such as full height bay windows and turrets in semi-detached red brick houses. No. 51 is an interesting interpretation of the Arts and Crafts style.

Eight early 20th century houses (nos. 2-16) line the west side of The Avenue, leading north from the corner of Lennox Road. Similar pairs of houses line either side of Lennox Road East. They feature canted bays and projecting timber fret-cut porches. They are plainer in detail than many of the houses that stand opposite them, but introduce an historic integrity to this side of the street. Nos. 2a-2d adjoining to the north are unsympathetic Post-War infill development that together with the hard surfacing of the front curtilage create a negative feature within the area.

This character area displays an abundance of mature street trees planted at regular intervals along both The Avenue and Lennox Road East. However, during the time of survey the trees had been severely lopped and their stunted trunks did not enhance the Character Area.

The principal positive features of Character Area 3: The Avenue are:

- Good example of a mainly early 20th century suburb;
- No. 1 The Avenue is a local landmark;
- Semi-detached early 20th century houses

with attractive details;

- The use of red and brown brick;
- Render details emulating stone;
- Square or canted bays;
- A variety of interesting early 20th century porches;
- Tiled paths (black and white or black and red chequerboard) up to the front doors;
- Brick boundary walls, particularly in Lennox Road East;
- Buildings set back from the road with a common building line and front gardens;
- A domestic scale of building;
- Pitched and half hipped roofs covered in slate or plain tiles;
- Tall brick chimney stacks;
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;

The principal negative features of Character Area 3: The Avenue are:

- Some front gardens have been paved over to create car parking spaces;
- The poor maintenance or the total replacement or loss of some front boundaries;
- The negative appearance of the rear elevations of some of the Pelham Road properties which back onto The Avenue;
- The appearance of the low quality fencing around pedestrian entrance to the school in Lennox Road East;
- Some inappropriate modern infill (nos. 2a to 2e The Avenue and the garages behind no.60 Pelham Road).
- Loss of original architectural features, such as windows, doors and roof tiles, and their unsympathetic replacement;
- Tress trees have been severely lopped, leaving ugly stumps (though these will soften with time).

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 some scope for alterations to the boundary of the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area even though the designated area already includes most of the best preserved and architecturally most cohesive remaining parts of the 19th and early 20th century development in Pelham Road and The Avenue. The remaining late 19th century houses in the north of Pelham Road (nos. 2 to 14) belong historically and architecturally to this Conservation Area should be included despite the need to also include the Post-War houses at nos. 16 and 18. Their inclusion would allow the boundary to be extended to include the grade II listed Bronte School (Mayfield), one of the earliest concrete buildings dating to 1875. It would also allow the inclusion of important surviving large detached houses on the west side of Pelham Road.

Furthermore, the transfer of nos. 2 to 6 Pelham Road from the Darnley Road Conservation Area should be considered. The properties relate more to the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area in terms of their orientation and architecture.

Another option would be to combine the Darnley Road Conservation Area and the Pelham Road/ The Avenue Conservation Area, a designation that would be justifiable on the grounds of the common appearance and development stages of the two areas. A new Conservation Area that encompassed all of these roads would remove the need to make arbitrary decisions on where boundaries should be drawn along connecting roads such as Lennox Road East.

9.3 Education and information

Active measures for promoting better understanding of Gravesend and Northfleet and their places in history underpin the regeneration of the towns 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 Uses/ vitality

The late 19th century residential character of the Conservation Area suffers from the use of Pelham Road as a through route between Old Road and Gravesend town centre, as well as from some of the business uses of properties in the same street. For instance, the Driving Test Centre in no.25 Pelham Road generates more traffic in the Conservation Area, and has resulted in the hard surfacing of the entire former garden in front of the buildings. Other non-residential uses have also led to the use of modern signage which can be garish and unsightly (e.g. no. 17 Pelham Road) or lead to the overdevelopment of plots (e.g. no.36 Pelham Road). However, the mixed use of the area also brings a welcome

vibrancy to this part of the Conservation Area.

9.5 Enhancement potential

Despite the fact that the buildings and spaces of Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area are generally in a good repair, there is some scope for their enhancement.

The character of the area would be improved by the removal or appropriate replacement of the following features:

- Caravan to the front no. 36 Pelham Road;
- Extension to the back of No. 36 Pelham Road.

The following buildings would benefit from improvement or repair:

- The White Post Public House, currently boarded-up and vacant;
- Nos. 2a -2c The Avenue and 44a to 44c Pelham Road;
- No. 55 Pelham Road (remove unsympathetic alterations to gables and encourage re-instatement of timber sash windows);
- The garages to the rear of no. 60 Pelham Road.

Other elements in the Conservation Area require enhancement or increased planning control:

- Many of the boundary treatments would benefit from a more sympathetic use of materials, particularly around The White Post Public House and no.19 Pelham Road;
- The loss of front gardens to vehicular hardstandings.
- The general appearance and condition of the pavements across the Conservation

Area;

- The prominent siting of satellite dishes;
- The control of obtrusive signage on commercial and civic properties;
- The poor appearance of the tall wire fence at the pedestrian entrance to the school in Lennox Road East.

9.6 Highways and traffic management

Traffic management is an important, if already well regulated, issue in the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area. The busy traffic along Pelham Road can detract from the character and amenity of the area, although as it is a relatively minor road the Conservation Area does not suffer as greatly as some other parts of Gravesend. The zebra crossing on Pelham Road aids pedestrian movement and the wide junction of the five roads is not so busy that it requires any crossing facilities. In the future, highway signage should be kept to the minimum required, to maintain the historic appearance of the Conservation Area.

9.7 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.

9.8 Trees and Landscaping

Trees make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Mature specimens stand along the west side of Pelham Road, The Avenue and Lennox Road East, and a Tree Management Strategy, that

considered issues of amenity, practicality and, importantly, sensitive lopping and succession planning, would reduce the need to take *ad hoc* decisions on a case-by-case basis.

9.8 Archaeological potential

Part of the Conservation Area, mainly contained within Character Area 2: Bycliffe and Pelham Terrace, falls within one of Kent County Council's designated *Areas of Archaeological Potential*. Any development in the area should be carried out following a full archaeological evaluation and investigation of this archaeological potential and would add to the understanding of Gravesend's past.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 History of Gravesend
- Appendix 2 Townscape Appraisal Map
 - Age of buildings Map
 - Character Areas Map Designations Map
 - Conservation Area Boundary Map 2009**

Appendix 2

History of Gravesend

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

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

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

The oldest building in Gravesend, Milton Chantry, dates from the 14th century and stands in the Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area next to the fort. It was a religious institution that owned considerable land in the area, on the outskirts of the fledgling town.

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

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

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

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

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

to the international destinations beyond.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 18th century saw the town grow into a bustling centre that mixed commercial and

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

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

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

By the end of the 19th century, fashions had changed and the improved railway network

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

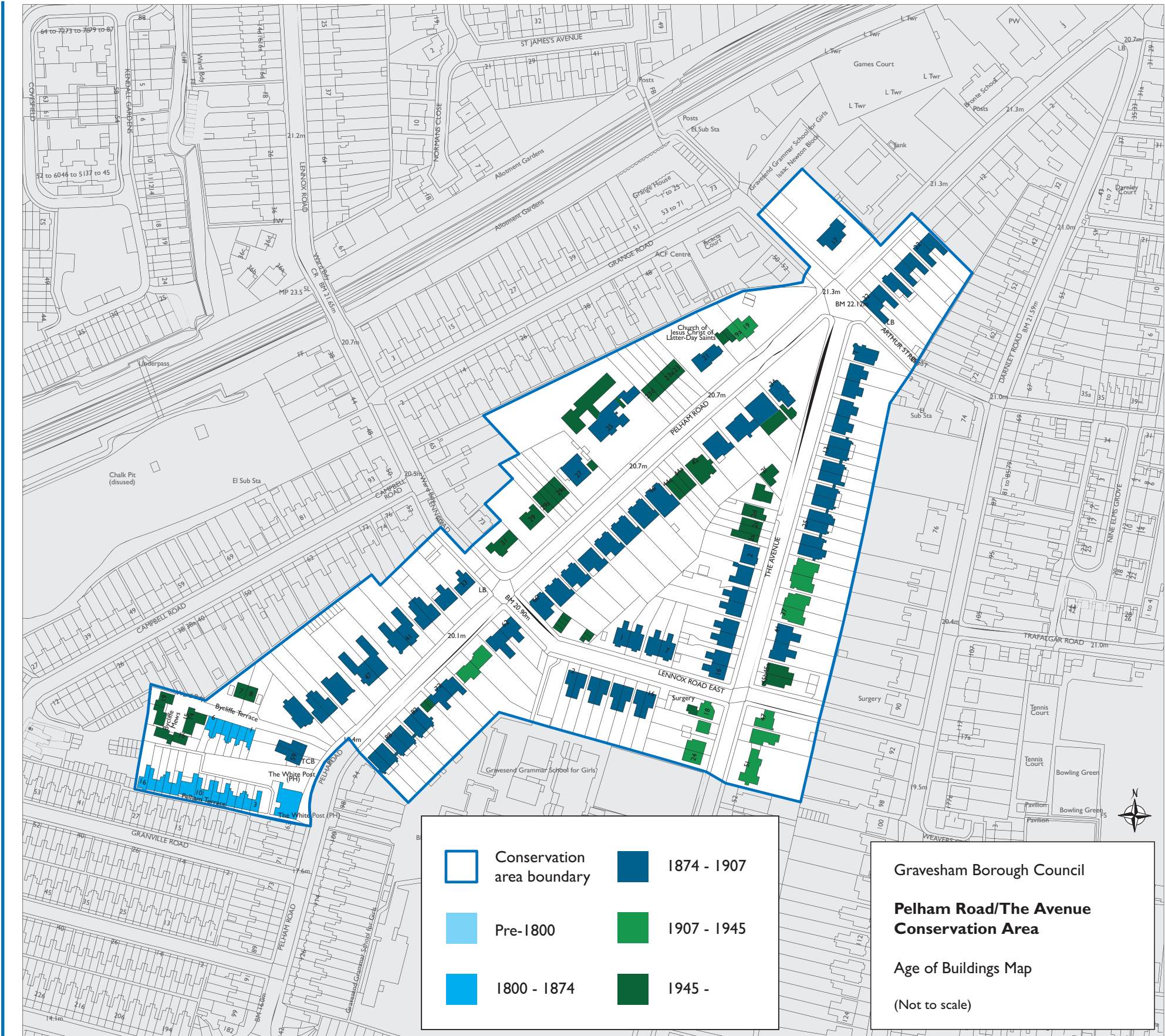
The opening of the Tilbury docks in 1886 provided some alternative means of employment. Travel to work was made possible by the ferry service between the two ports, which was converted to steam power in 1855. The industrialisation of the north shore of the Thames continued into the 20th century and in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

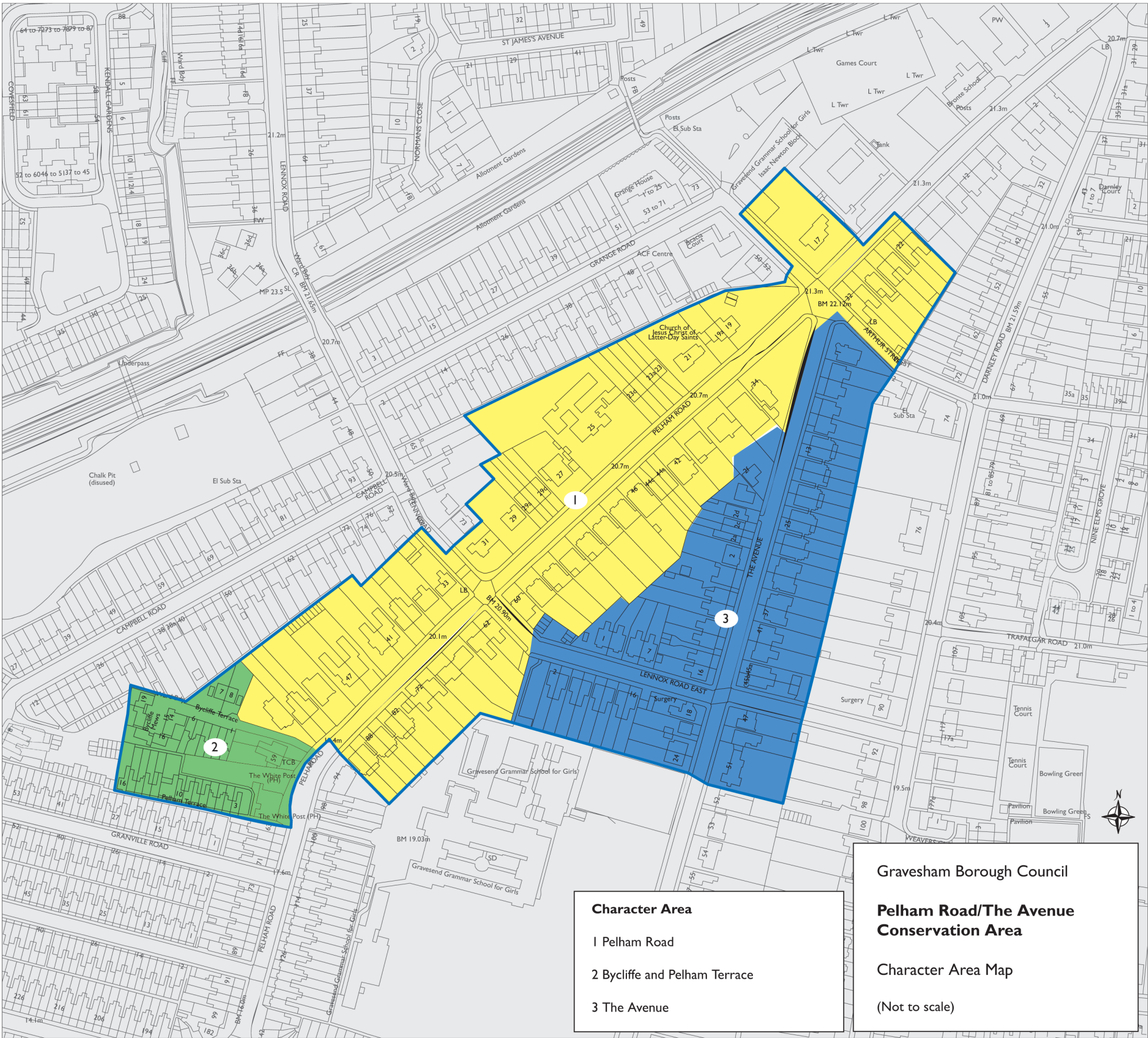
In the 20th century Gravesend continued to grow as a small market town with areas of light industry. Much of the industry was occupied with producing building materials which were often used to build houses in nearby London. As transport links to the city improved, Gravesend became a commuter settlement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

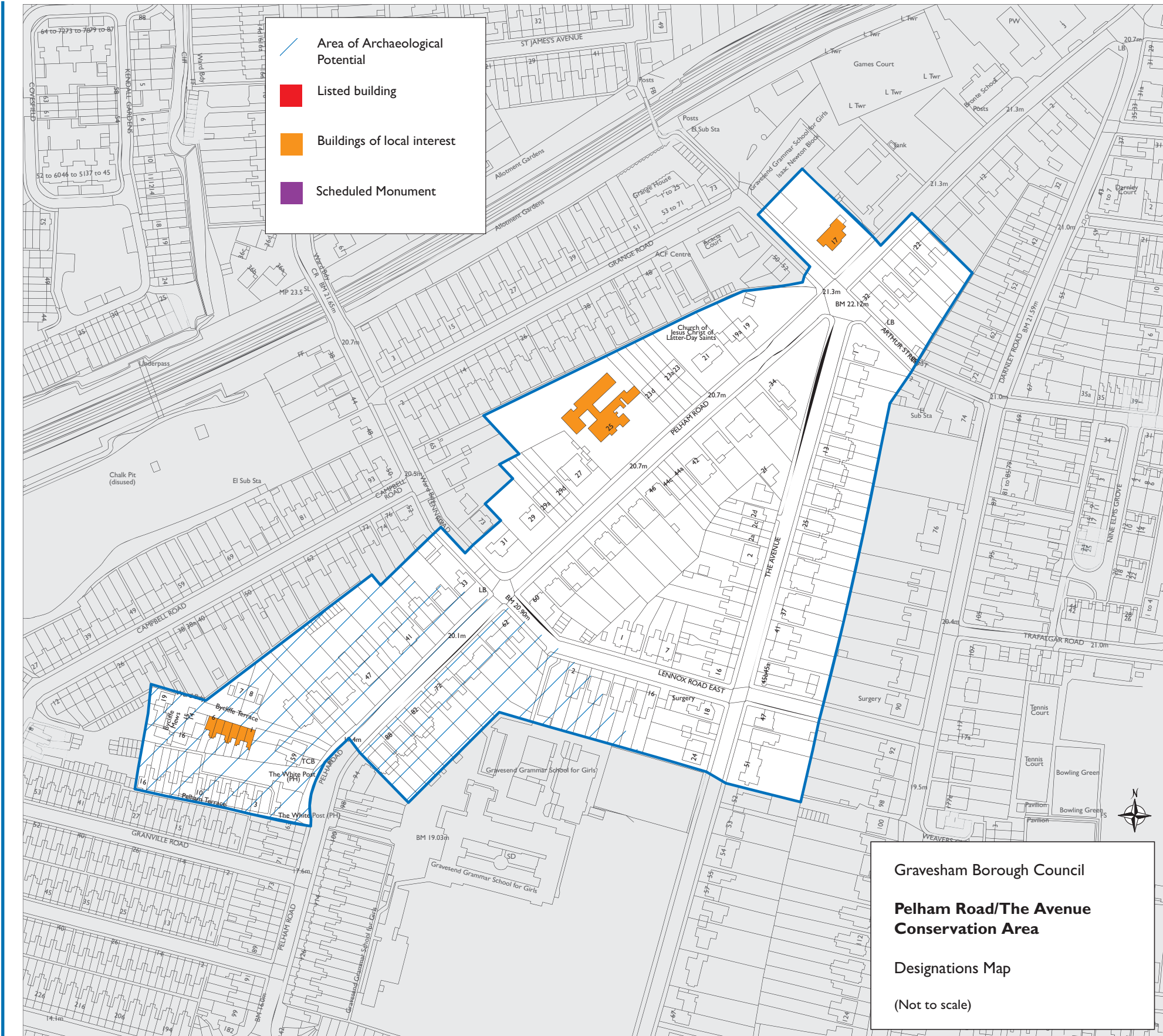
the passenger service was moved to West Street Pier. Many of the wharves and houses, especially those between the river and St Andrew's Chapel were cleared when the inner ring road was created. Other residential roads were also removed to make way for the St George's Shopping Centre.

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









Designated Boundary Map 09.02.09

