

# GRAVESHAM CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE STRATEGY



*Together - Proud to be Gravesham*

**Gravesham**  
Borough Council



# INTRODUCTION

Gravesham has a rich and diverse heritage that is irreplaceable, and which is widely valued and celebrated by both local communities and visitors. The Borough's historic environment and heritage assets form a key element of the Borough's character and are safeguarded via national and local designations, the Development Plan and material considerations such as the National Planning Policy Framework.

In addition to making a significant contribution to the Borough's character, our heritage makes the Borough a welcoming place to live, visit and work. Delivering social, cultural and economic benefits by adding a sense of beauty and distinctiveness to the Borough that attracts people, businesses and investment.

Research commissioned by Historic England, has identified that in the South East the heritage sector accounted for the second largest GVA contribution in England with a contribution of £2.6 billion in 2022, with only London's heritage sector being higher and contributing £4.2 billion. With the heritage sector in the South East estimated to have supported 78,000 jobs<sup>1</sup>. 2.4m domestic overnight heritage-related trips are estimated to have been made in the South East during 2022, with these trips accounting for £960m in overnight trip spend. Historic England's analysis also shows that in the South East 34 million heritage-related day visits were estimated to have been taken in 2022, accounting for £ 1,626m in spend.

These figures clearly demonstrate the importance of heritage assets in deriving economic benefits to our regional and national economies. Our Tourism and Heritage Strategy: Destination Gravesham covers the vision to protect and preserve Gravesham's history and identity through its community assets and tourism. In this strategy this vision is enhanced by looking at protecting and enhancing our heritage assets and offer from a planning policy perspective including via conservation and conservation areas, the Borough can also ensure that greater economic benefits are derived locally whilst ensuring that we continue to protect, conserve, appreciate and enjoy our heritage.

The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation has been set up to speed up delivery of the homes and create a 21st century Garden City in north Kent. The Corporation is working with us and local communities to develop a shared vision for the area.

The Corporation is now responsible for deciding planning applications, giving pre-application advice and carrying out planning enforcement in its area.

As such, this strategy does not apply within the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation's area. The area covered by the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation is shown below.

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<sup>1</sup><https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2024/heritage-sector-england-impact-on-economy-2024/>

# VISION

Gravesham will be a place where our rich heritage is celebrated, conserved, and cherished for both present residents and visitors, and future generations. We will protect and conserve this history and identity while creating a vibrant and engaging environment where our history is woven into the fabric of our community, enriching the Borough and the lives of our residents and visitors alike.

# AIMS

- **Preserve and Protect:** To safeguard our designated heritage assets which include conservation areas, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, scheduled monuments, archaeological sites and non-designated heritage assets both public and private, ensuring their long-term survival and preservation of the Borough's identity.
- **Enhance and Interpret:** Working with partners to improve the understanding and appreciation of our heritage and identity through innovative interpretation and engaging storytelling.
- **Promote and Celebrate:** To actively promote our heritage, attracting visitors and boosting the local economy and celebrate the conversation of our history and identity.
- **Engage and Empower:** To involve the community in the conservation of our heritage, fostering a sense of pride and ownership. Including through encouraging community involvement in conservation and heritage projects through volunteering and partnerships.
- **Sustain and Develop:** To ensure the sustainable management of our heritage, balancing conservation with the needs to support a growing and thriving Borough and educating our communities and business on their responsibilities.

# CONSERVATION AREAS

Gravesham has a long history with many historical assets and areas that are designated as Conservation Areas. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) for designating as conservation areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. These are areas of high townscape quality and historic interest, each with its own distinctive character, which gives cohesion to buildings of intrinsic merit and creates a sense of place. The council also has a duty under the Act to review its conservation areas from time to time and to consider whether there is merit in amending their boundaries, removing them or in designating additional conservation areas.

Gravesham has a total of **23 conservation areas**, 11 of which are in the rural areas of the borough. The 11 rural conservation areas were reviewed in 2016 and adopted on 21 February 2017 as Rural Conservation Areas Appraisals and Management Plans Supplementary Planning Document. The Appraisals and Management Plans for the urban conservation areas are from 2009.

Conservation area designation can help to protect the special architectural or historic interest by providing:

- **a statutory requirement for the local planning authority to consider the impact of proposed development on the character of the area**
- Details of all existing conservation areas, including boundaries and their appraisals are published on the Council's website.
- Living in Conservation Areas mean some extra planning controls and considerations, these exist to protect the historic and architectural elements which make the place special.
- Being in a conservation area might mean that your house is affected by special controls (called 'Article 4 Directions'). These restrict work you can normally do without planning permission such as replacing a door or window or altering gutters and downpipes.
- Through the council's pre-application process, the Council will continue to give owners of buildings in Conservation Areas advice on the appropriateness of proposed works and alterations, and whether planning permission is required. Wherever possible, owners will be referred to publications that set out council policy and/or technical guidance which will be available in an easy to understand format on our website and in accessible formats.
- In listening to residents we understand that some further work needs to be undertaken to make planning more accessible to those that are in conservation areas including
- **the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of the character or appearance of an area (as defined by the conservation area appraisal which should accompany any designation)**
  - **control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees**
  - **stricter planning controls**
  - **Providing additional information via our website, setting out properties that fall within Conservation Areas, and clear advice regarding what can/ cannot be done under permitted development**

- Review of Technical Appendix Documents as part of this strategy to expand on policies (such as colours or doors and windows) and what is needed and when.
- How to make sure residents (no matter the type of tenure) are aware about their responsibilities when it comes to living in a conservation area with regards to their property.

- Understanding planning enforcement and enforcement powers and consequences for not following conservation area restrictions.

Throughout the lifetime of this strategy the Council will work on this.

Map showing the location of Conservation Areas in Gravesham



# CONSERVATION AREA REVIEW

Reviews of conservation areas gives consideration to the boundaries of conservation areas and whether any additional streets, land or properties should be included and whether any should be removed. The boundaries may be extended where evidence and evaluation demonstrate that the additional streets or land possess similar special interest as the existing area. Streets or land may, on the other hand, be removed where their special interest has been irreparably lost or eroded, for example as a result of inappropriate development or neglect. In addition, the Council can use this opportunity to designate new conservations areas.

The NPPF states that "when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest".

Designating any part of the Borough as a conservation area also carries significant resource implications for the council. Additional designations will therefore need to be informed by:

- does the area reflect the architectural style and details present within substantial parts of the Conservation Area?
- does the area represent an important phase in the historic development of the town/village?
- is the development of similar massing, bulk, height and scale to a significant proportion of the development within the Conservation Area?
- does the area represent a notable piece of town/village planning?
- does the area include good examples of the work of well known architects?
- does the development within the area date from a similar period to substantial parts of the Conservation Area?
- is the development the work of the same architect or developer active elsewhere within significant parts of the Conservation Area?
- do the current uses within the area reflect prevailing or former uses of substantial parts of the Conservation Area?

## Architectural Quality And Historic Relevance

The majority of buildings must have some strong intrinsic architectural or historic merit by virtue of age, design, materials and/or whether they were designed by a known architect or by the same developer etc. The following criteria should be considered;

## Townscape/Public Realm Quality

Consideration is also given to the townscape quality of the area and whether there is sufficient justification for the introduction of additional controls. In particular, the proportion of the buildings within the area which would be defined as positive contributors if located within the Conservation Area. Issues to consider are;

- does the street/area substantially retain its original fabric and appearance relating to features including front gardens/soft landscaping (if relevant); front boundary walls/railings (if relevant);
- do the buildings in the street/area retain original features (doors, windows, porches, stucco detailing; decorative panelling, chimney stacks, survival of brickwork or stonework that has not been rendered or painted etc.), which overall remain predominantly intact;
- is the original roofscape of the street/area predominantly intact;
- are there any original shop fronts (if relevant);
- are there few instances overall of inappropriate alterations and extensions (introduction of inappropriate dormers; infilling between properties; over prominent rear extensions)?

It will also be necessary to take into account the extent of any uncharacteristic alterations or other damage to buildings within the area in order to assess an area's suitability for designation.

## Boundaries

In establishing the boundaries of Conservation Areas a number of factors (as well as the criteria set out in Tests 1 and 2) must be considered and their significance reassessed. The result could be that the boundary of the Conservation Area remains unchanged, areas are deleted from the designation or part of the surrounding area may be included in the Conservation Area designation. When assessing the boundaries of Conservation Areas it is important to consider the following;

- does the area under consideration retain its original boundary lines,

including historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares?

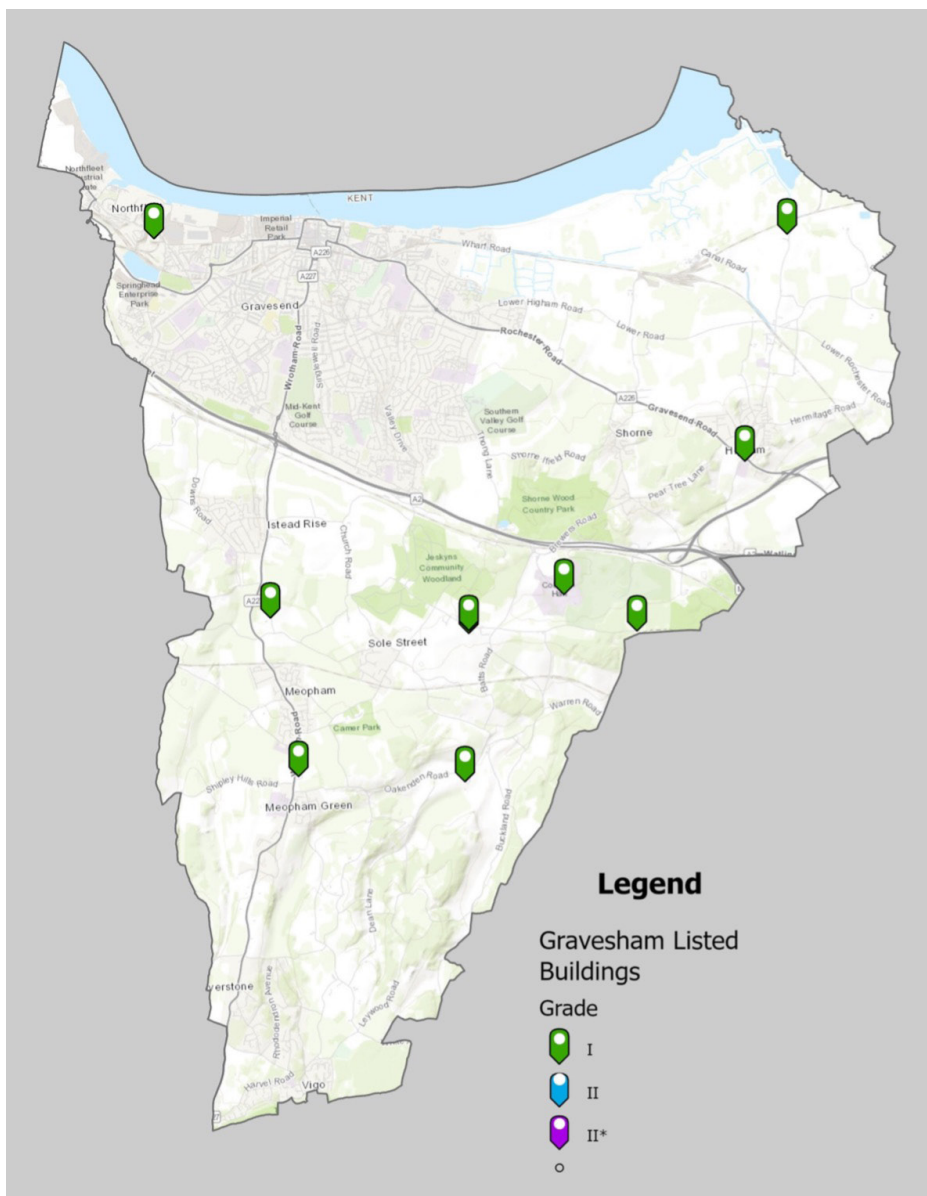
- when reviewing the boundary of the Conservation Area and its relationship to neighbouring areas, it is important to consider the following factors:
  - o are there discernible and distinct changes in the character and quality of the adjoining open spaces and/or landscaping between the two areas?
  - o is there a particular 'mix' of uses common to the Conservation Area and surrounding area?
  - o are there topographical townscape and/or landscape features common to both areas which form an integral part of the setting of the historic built environment?

Requests for Conservation Area Reviews can be submitted to the Council via the planning service and a formal mechanism shall be created for this request with the above criteria needing to be met and evidenced and these requests will be subject to periodic review within a reasonable timescale which shall be determined on a case by case basis depending on the request and time required to consider this request in full.

Submission of a request for a review that can include new conservation areas, altering of boundaries or removal of conservation areas does not guarantee that this will be successful as all requests shall be considered fully and if the criteria is not met or evidenced as such then this may be refused at this stage. This does not mean that this area should not be conserved but that the evidence does not at this stage support the request. A request that is resubmitted can be made the following financial year.

# CONSERVATION OF OUR LISTED BUILDINGS

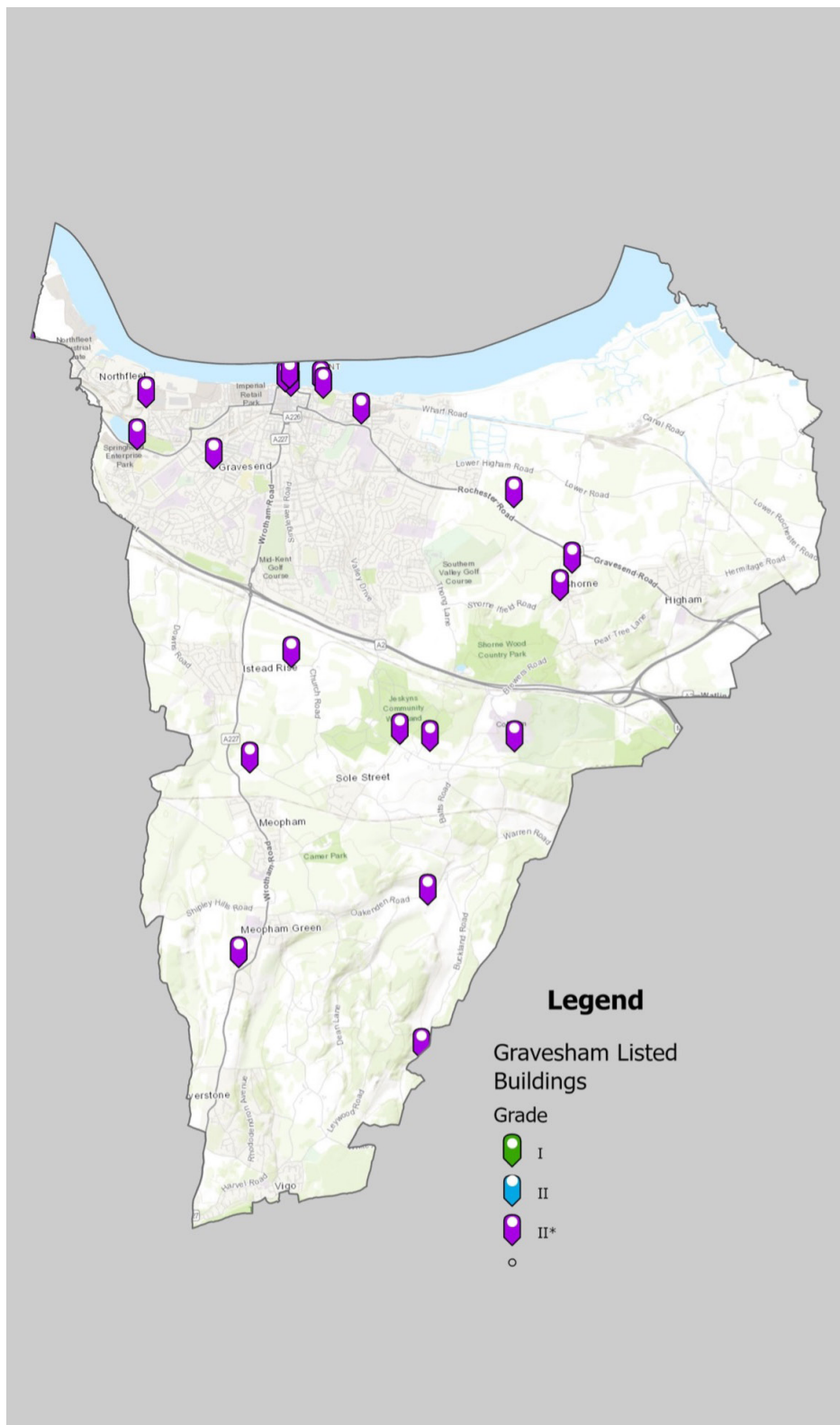
The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) maintained by Historic England is the only official, up to date, register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England. At present, it identifies that there are 310 listed buildings in the Borough. Of these listed buildings, 10 are Grade I, and these are:



- Parish Church Of St John The Baptist
- Gadshill Place
- Parish Church Of St Botolph
- Cobham Hall (Including Kitchen And Stable Court)
- The Mausoleum, Cobham Hall
- Cobham College
- Luddesdown Court
- Church Of St Mary
- Nurstead Court
- Parish Church Of St Mary Magdalene

Map showing the location of Grade I Listed Buildings in Gravesham

The Borough also has 21 Grade II\* listed buildings, and these are:

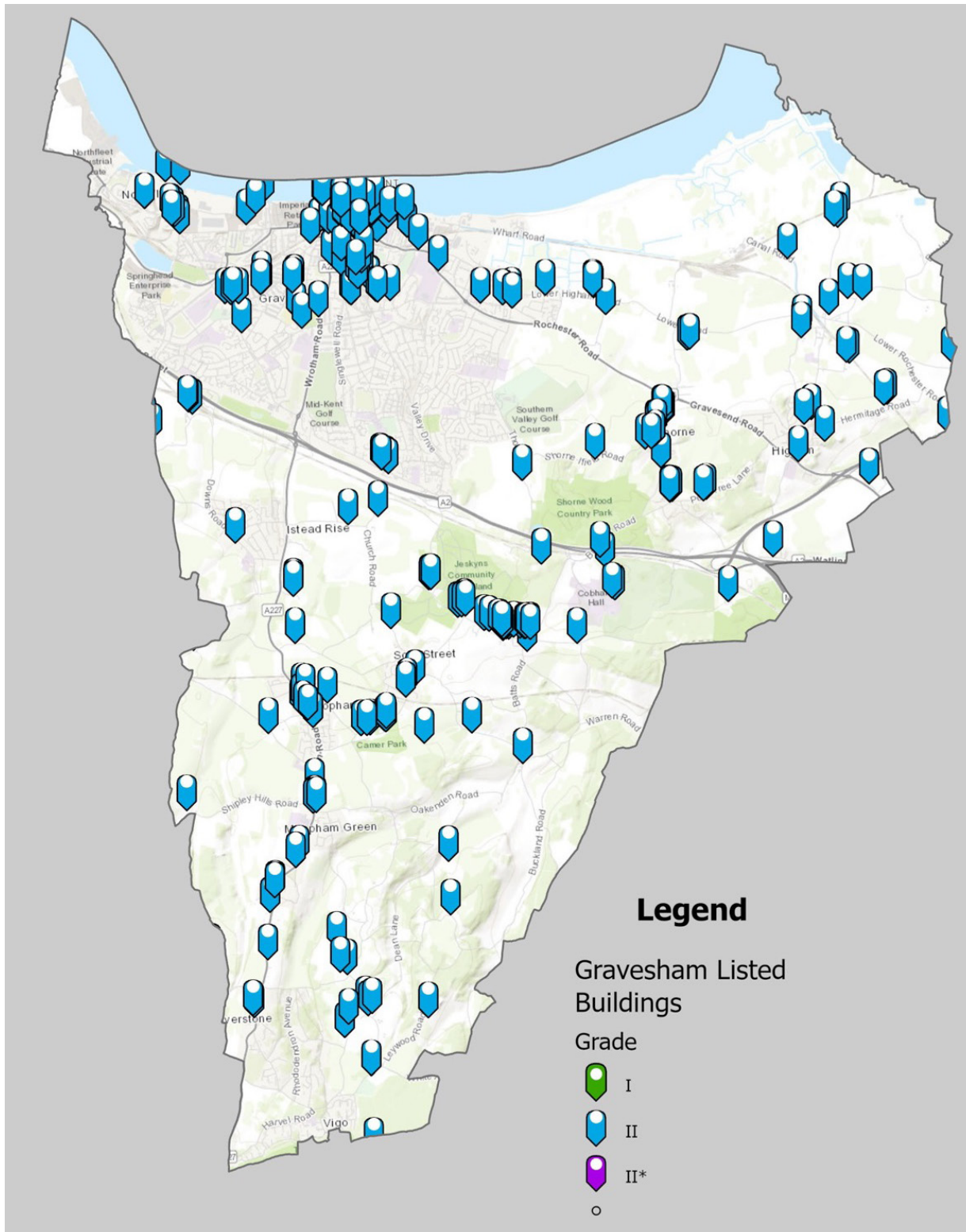


- Owletts
- Meopham Windmill
- The Town Hall
- The Old Rectory House
- Church Of Our Lady Of The Assumption
- Church Of St Peter And St Paul
- Little St Katherine's
- The Town Pier
- Church Of St George
- Church Of St Mary
- Milton Chantry
- 79, High Street, Gravesend
- Parish Church Of St Peter And St Paul
- Church Of St Mildred
- New Tavern Fort
- Church Of St Peter And St Paul
- Church Of All Saints
- Ifield Court
- The Dairy, Cobham Hall
- 80, High Street, Gravesend
- Meadow House

Map showing the location of Grade II\* Listed Buildings in Gravesham

Finally, the Borough has 279 Grade II listed buildings, the details of which can be found on Historic England's National Heritage List, please see

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>



Map showing the location of Grade II Listed Buildings in Gravesham

Occasionally the council receives suggestions for buildings to be added to the statutory lists, however, as the listing body is Historic England the Council in such instances will consult Historic England to ascertain their views in order to advise of the likelihood of the building being considered by Historic England. The Council will also encourage local amenity groups/ interested parties to take the lead on applications for making applications to Historic England to get a building listed

The council itself will only seek to have a building added to the statutory lists in exceptional cases: where new evidence demonstrates clearly the significance of the building; where it is at urgent risk of demolition or major change.

Through the Land Charges process the Council will continue to ensure that prospective owners of buildings, are made aware if their property is listed, and that new purchasers are made aware of their consequential responsibilities, as 'guardians' of this valued heritage.

Through the council's pre-application process, the Council will continue to give owners of historic buildings advice on works requiring listed building consent and on appropriate ways to carry out such works of alteration or repair to their property without harm to its special interest. Wherever possible, owners will be referred to publications that set out council policy and/or technical guidance.

Listed buildings can be enjoyed and used, like any other building. The listing of a building does not prevent any change or freeze a building in time, it simply means that listed building consent must be applied for in order to make any changes to that building which might affect its character as a building of special interest. It may also

be necessary to apply for planning permission in addition to listed building consent in order to carry out works to a listed building. Listing status covers the entire building, so works which require consent might include the replacement of windows and internal alterations, for example.

In making a decision on all listed building consent applications, the Local Planning Authority must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, in line with the requirements of legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Carrying out works to a listed building without listed building consent is a criminal offence.

Historic England are responsible for maintaining the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), it is the up-to-date register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England. Historic England also consider proposals for adding new heritage assets to the NHLE, anyone can recommend a building, site, monument, designed landscape, battlefield or wreck site for inclusion on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE).

The Council also will consider making submissions and representations to Historic England for sites or buildings to be formally listed on an as and when basis.

# LOCAL LIST

A local list identifies historic buildings, spaces and features that are valued by the local community. They also add to the Borough its distinctive identity. The list identifies parts of the historic environment that are not already designated in another way. For example, an unlisted building which still adds to a sense of place, local character and civic pride.

To be considered for inclusion on the Local List nominations should satisfy, one of the following criteria:

- Architectural significance
- Historical Significance
- Townscape Significance
- Social Significance

The Council, will subject to resource prepare a list of buildings and structures of local interest. This will include buildings, urban or green spaces, archaeology and other structures of local interest. The local list will be made available via the Council's website once completed.

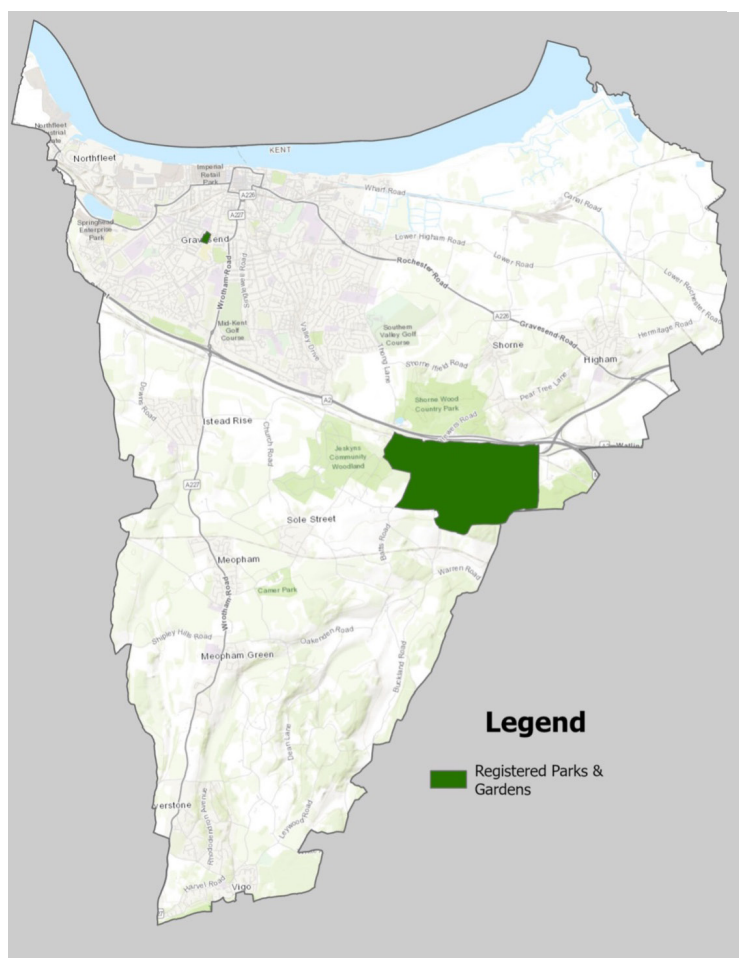
# REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS

The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England is maintained by Historic England. These are designed landscapes that are considered to be of national importance.

Registered Parks and Gardens are designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF. Consequently, the effect of any proposed development on the significance of a registered park or garden or its setting is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

The Borough has the following Registered Parks and gardens:

- Gravesend Cemetery
- Cobham Hall



Map showing the location of Registered Parks and Gardens in Gravesend

# SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

There are 10 nationally designated Scheduled Monuments in the Borough, these are:



- Neolithic sites near Ebbsfleet
- Aspdin's kiln
- Gravesend blockhouse
- St Mary's Priory: an alien Benedictine priory 100m east of St Mary's Church
- Deserted medieval manorial settlement of Cossington
- Bowl barrow in Ashenbank Wood south of Cobham Park reservoir
- Romano-British villa and 19th century reservoir in Cobham Park
- New Tavern Fort, Gravesend, including Milton Chantry
- World War II Heavy Anti-aircraft gunsite (TS15), 250m east of Cobhambury Farm
- Shornemead Fort

Map showing the location of Scheduled Monuments in Gravesham

Scheduling includes a wide range of sites and structures including fogous (tunnels found in West Cornwall from the Iron Age and Romano-British period), First World War training trenches and Anglo-Saxon burial mounds.

While some deliberate change to a monument may be possible, there is a presumption that they will be handed on to future generations in much the same state (or a better state) than we have found them. As a result, Scheduled

Monument Consent is needed to carry out works to a Scheduled Monument. Scheduling derives its authority from the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. Under the terms of this Act, the Secretary of State has a duty to compile and maintain a schedule of ancient monuments of national importance.

Scheduled Monuments are designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF and afforded significant protection.

# COMMUNICATION AND PROCESS

The Council acknowledges that effective communications play a vital part in engaging with our residents and businesses, to provide them with relevant

information and to provide a channel for obtaining their views. With regards to Conservation and Heritage, Members already recognise the need to improve how we communicate with residents and businesses, so that they can understand:

- The Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
- The difference between Designated and Non-Designated Heritage Assets
- The protections in place for the Historic Environment, Heritage Assets and Archaeology
- Protections afforded to nature within the Historic Environment and within Heritage Assets i.e. Conservation Areas and Trees
- The consequences of Heritage Harm and Heritage Crime

This strategy is intended to assist with in this endeavour by providing a clarity on Council's vision and strategic direction for conservation and heritage in the Borough, whilst acknowledging that more work can be done on our communications, especially the information available on the Council's website. As part of this, further information will also be published in relation to process e.g. how to request that a building be listed or delisted, the process for reviewing an existing Conservation Area, and requesting the consideration of a new Conservation Area.

## OUTCOMES

- Up-to-date information and guidance about the historic environment that is easily accessible, including updating the information available on the Council's website so that it is accessible and in plain English
- Make it easier for residents to identify if they live in a Conservation area and the Article 4's directions that apply to their property
- Produce a guide to Planning Enforcement's approach to heritage assets and the legal duties of owners, setting out the consequences for not following relevant duties and responsibilities
- Review of Technical Appendices as part of this strategy
- Commence a review of Conservation Areas (Urban, then Rural), and set out the process for taking into consideration the inclusion, removal, additions to a Conservation Area
- Number of heritage assets at risk reduced through improved conservation management and maintenance

- Significance of designated heritage assets and their settings effectively protected from inappropriate development
- Locally valued heritage assets and intangible heritage recognised and taken into account in decision-making
- Aims and objectives of the Strategy incorporated into the emerging Local Plan as appropriate
- Building on Design for Gravesham, high quality new architecture and public realm that contributes positively to historic places
- (tourism strategy role) (tourism strategy role) Enhanced public awareness and appreciation of Gravesham's heritage

An action plan will be created to enact this strategy and regular reporting of the progress of this strategy will be made to the Cabinet Member and also to the relevant Cabinet Committee.

## Technical Appendices

Supplementary Planning Documents and informal guidance

[Accessible via https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/local-plan-policy/supplementary-planning-guidance](https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/local-plan-policy/supplementary-planning-guidance)

## Conservation Areas Maintenance / Replacement Windows and Doors Guidance SPD

This design guidance explains the principles of good practice for the care of original windows and doors:

- why repair is preferable to replacement
- why some modern replacement windows and doors are considered unacceptable in unlisted buildings in conservation areas

## Conservation Area Appraisals

There are 23 conservation areas in the Borough. Conservation Area Appraisals and a Management Plan have been prepared for each of these areas. These are material considerations and will be taken into account when considering planning applications within and adjacent to these areas.

## Article 4 Directions

Conservation areas, individual properties and woodland can have an Article 4 Direction which removes certain permitted development rights.

<sup>1</sup> An Article 4 Direction is an order made by a local planning authority to remove certain permitted development rights in all, or part of, its area. When adopted, the effect of the Article 4 Direction is that planning permission is required for certain types of development that would not otherwise require an application for planning permission.

