

Darnley Road

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



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

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1. STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The Darnley Road Conservation Area includes part of the 19th century residential expansion around the site of the Earl of Darnley's manor farm to the south of Gravesend town centre. The Conservation Area features two relatively distinct parts: Darnley Road, a broad highway leading south to Old Road; and Cobham Street and Darnley Street, two east-west residential roads that connect Darnley Road and Wrotham Road. The special interest is provided by the historic layout, including remnants of the manor farm (the open green), since overlain with a 19th century urban street pattern. These streets contain small groups and terraces of high quality two- and three-storey 19th century houses, many of which display elaborate architectural detailing.

Until the end of the 18th century Darnley Road was a country lane which led through fields from the riverside settlement of Gravesend to the Dover to London stagecoach route. In the early 19th century the fields became market gardens and from the mid 19th century the rural setting was transformed by the suburban expansion of Gravesend. During this period the town became a fashionable leisure resort. By the end of the 19th century most of the houses in the Conservation Area had been built. The area was served by good transport links to London, with Gravesend railway station located immediately to the north. It was a leafy suburban area, with small shops established in converted houses and a large cricket ground, the Bat and Ball, situated close by. The demolition of the Manor Farm in 1890 and the creation of a small green on its remaining land in the early 20th century completed the transformation of the area into its current suburban appearance.

The buildings of the Conservation Area represent high quality 19th century architecture typical of an affluent Victorian and Edwardian suburb such as this. Many of the buildings are generously scaled terraced houses or paired villas and display a wealth of architectural ornamentation. The early houses on Cobham Street and Darnley Street are predominantly raised above a basement, with the front door approached by a flight of stone steps, thereby increasing the visual status of the buildings. In contrast, the later 19th century buildings on Darnley Road make a grand statement by being set within large plots, thereby reducing the density of development along this thoroughfare. These large gardens, many of which contain mature shrubs and trees, make a significant contribution to the suburban character of Darnley Road, and this is reinforced by the area of open green space at the junction with Pelham Road.

2. DARNLEY ROAD CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Background

The Darnley Road Conservation Area was designated on 1st February 1990 (extended on 14th February 2001) by Gravesham Borough Council. The Conservation Area's boundary contains Darnley Road, Darnley Street and Cobham Street, as well as three houses in Pelham Road.

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 Darnley Road 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 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 proposed connection to Gravesend) and major road building schemes such as the widening of the A2 south of the town.

The policies included in the local and regional guidance, as outlined above, seek to guide this period of change and the specified policies all recognise the importance of retaining 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.

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 Darnley Road Conservation Area;
- The key negative features and issues;
- A range of possible actions that would mitigate or offset these detractors.

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

Following the meeting, the outcomes were discussed by Gravesham Borough Council and The Conservation Studio. Subsequently, a period of full public consultation was held after which revisions were made to arrive at this final agreed document. A Public Consultation Report is attached to this document as Appendix 3 for information.

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 form 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 Darnley Road Conservation Area abuts the south west of Gravesend town centre. It is characterised by 19th century suburban residential development in Darnley Road, Darnley Street and Cobham Street. The eastern part of the Conservation Area adjoins the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area. The western boundary of the Conservation Area is contiguous with the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area.

3.2 Activities and uses

The Conservation Area is predominantly residential, although there are some shops and other commercial activities around the junction of Pelham Road and Darnley Road. Most of the buildings were constructed as substantial single family dwellings, but many have since been subdivided into smaller units, notably those on Cobham Street and Darnley Street.

Buildings in commercial use include some late 19th century houses which have had shops inserted at ground floor level; these shops form a small parade fronting a wide stretch of pavement created through the removal of the original boundary treatments to the front areas of these houses. Commercial activities include a dental surgery, a financial services company, a car hire firm, a laundrette, a newsagent, a restaurant, a boutique and funeral directors. Opposite them; on the west side of Darnley Road and just outside the Conservation Area boundary is a car sales showroom with a large forecourt filled with vehicles.

While 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 Darnley Road, which is usually passing through the area. The narrower side streets of Cobham Street and Darnley Street are relatively quiet although they provide connections between Darnley Road and Wrotham Road and are used by occasional traffic via a one way system.

3.3 Topography

This part of Gravesend is relatively flat and the Darnley Road Conservation Area has

few changes in topography. The land to the east of the Conservation Area climbs gradually along Upper Windmill Street to the high ground of Windmill Hill. To the north of the Conservation Area the ground eventually slopes down to the river Thames.

The main routes in the Conservation Area are generally very straight and wide, particularly Darnley Road, which is one of the principal arterial routes into Gravesend from the south.

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 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.

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 Conservation Area is surrounded by an urban townscape, with the following features forming the immediate setting of the Conservation Area:

- To the south: The continuation of Darnley Road leading down to Old Road, featuring mainly late 19th and early 20th century houses as well as some post-war infill development;
- To the west: The residential houses in the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area;
- To the north west: Modern commercial uses frame this setting of the Conservation Area with views across to the two towers of a factory in Northfleet;
- To the north: Gravesend Transport Quarter and Gravesend historic town centre and riverside beyond;
- To the east: The Civic Centre and Woodville Hall and the residential houses in the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area.

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 evidence of a former Roman road was 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.

The Darnley Road Conservation Area is not within any of Kent County Council's designated Areas of Archaeological Potential.

4.2 Historical development

Darnley Road and the surrounding area developed as part of the suburban expansion of Gravesend during the first half of the 19th century. The development occurred in incremental stages along Darnley Road, which, until the close of the 18th century, had been a lane (Ruck's Lane, after Lawrence Ruck, a grocer who lived at Ruckland Hall) connecting the riverside town of Gravesend to the Dover to London stagecoach route which ran along Old Road. The lane lay within a field and was closed by gates at either end; in 1797 the Vestry ordered the gates to be

removed. The Darnley Road Conservation Area forms part of the southern suburbs of Gravesend, whose historical development has been covered in detail in a variety of publications, details of which are included in the bibliography at the end of this document.

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 close to Bycliffe Terrace, off Pelham Road and immediately to the west of the Conservation Area. 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.

Within the Conservation Area, at the junction of Pelham Road and Darnley Road, lay Manor Farm. This was the farmstead for Gravesend Manor Farm which belonged to the Earl of Darnley; the tenant farmed the land from the Northfleet boundary to Windmill Street. A large

triangular pond lay at the junction. The farm can clearly be seen on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1870, with buildings ranged around three sides of a courtyard, and an area or orchard lying to the south. Manor Farm was almost completely demolished in 1890, and the surviving granary burnt down in 1911.

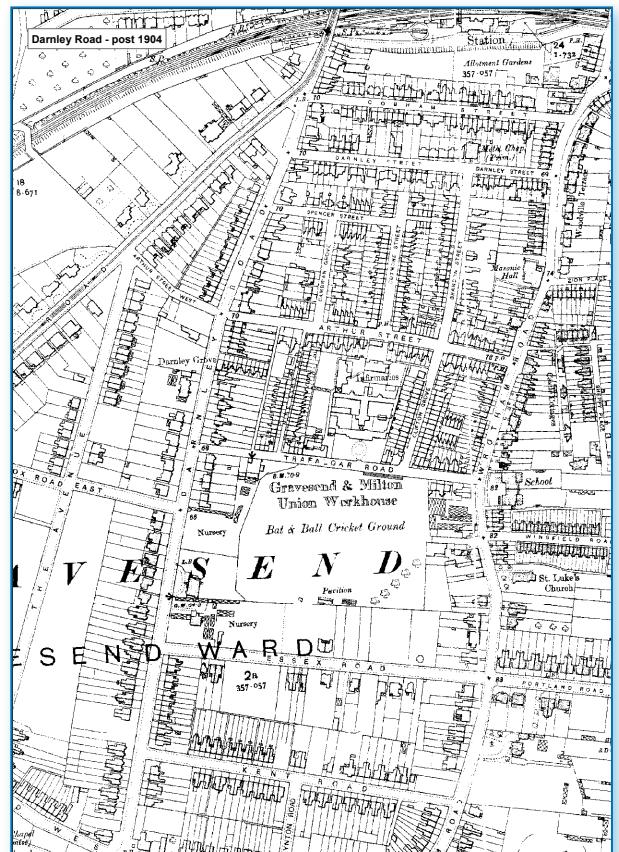
The area around Darnley Road was used for market gardens and open fields during the 19th century. For example, in 1810 James Clarke opened a nursery on five acres of land between Wrotham Road and Darnley Road. The suburban development of Gravesend gradually encroached on these fields and gardens. The east side of Darnley Road was fully occupied by houses along the central stretch of road by 1870, while there were no buildings, aside from Manor Farm, located on the west side of the road at this date. The land between Darnley Road and Wrotham Road had been laid out with side streets many of which had been developed as a part of the residential suburb. In 1870 houses had been laid out along the north side of Cobham Street, but Darnley Street was yet to be divided into plots and developed. By the 1897 Ordnance Survey the streets had been developed in a pattern recognisable today.

With the suburban development of Gravesend during the 19th century, large single-occupancy dwellings were erected. Today, the buildings are predominantly subdivided into smaller units. It is likely that this subdivision began to occur in the early 20th century, reflecting the social changes of that time. 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.





1891 - 1912



Post 1904



◀1919-1943

5 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Layout and spaces

Darnley Road is one of a number of former country lanes that has connected the old London to Dover road (Old Road) and the centre of Gravesend since at least medieval times. A main north-south route (Wrotham Road) runs to the east and connects with the Town Pier on the Thames riverside; the lane to the west (Pelham Road) led to St Mary's Parish Church which, until the 16th century, stood close to the Old Road.

The northern end of the Conservation Area contains the junction of Darnley Road and Pelham Road; the Earl of Darnley's manor house was once located here on the site of no. 2 Pelham Road. Darnley Road forks at a small triangular green, with the eastern branch of the road continuing southwards as Darnley Road and the western branch being Pelham Road. The green was originally part of the ponds and garden of the Manor Farm. It is the only public open space in the Conservation Area. The junction of the two roads is broad and this sense of spaciousness is increased by a further wide junction with the side street that is Cobham Street. To the south of Cobham Street, Darnley Street runs parallel with it and was laid out in the 19th century to provide an alternative route for the increasing traffic.

Darnley Road leads south with a fairly continuous built form of paired villas and short terraces. It is regularly interrupted by junctions with the neighbouring residential streets, particularly on the eastern side, which connect through to Wrotham Road. Buildings are predominantly set back from the thoroughfare behind generous front gardens; the gardens become increasingly spacious as the road

progresses southwards away from the town centre. Darnley Road is fairly broad and straight while the connecting roads (Cobham Street, Darnley Street, Spencer Street, Arthur Street, Trafalgar Road and Lennox Road East) are all narrower, more secondary routes.

5.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

The relationship of buildings to spaces in Darnley Road, which forms the greater part of the Conservation Area, is characterised by the wide road lined by similarly wide pavements. This is bordered on either side by large houses, set back from the pavement behind front gardens. The buildings at the northern end of Darnley Road, nos. 13-27, are set close to or at back of pavement line; there are a few surviving front areas bounded by railings, but otherwise the boundaries have been removed to create an area of hardstanding in front of a small parade of shops. The groups of buildings on Darnley Road are separated by the junctions with roads on both east and west sides, as well as the gap site to the north of no.76 Darnley Road.

Most of the buildings in Darnley Road were built on narrow plots and grouped in pairs or short terraces. Plot sizes on the western side of Darnley Road are noticeably more generous in terms of both depth and width than those to the east, with no. 76 being a particularly wide plot. Here the house, until recently, has been particularly imposing, as was befitting the larger garden. This effect might in future no longer be appreciated to the same extent since the gap between no. 76 and no. 78 was in the process of being infilled at the time of survey. Many of the gaps between the 19th century buildings have been infilled with extensions, or stand-alone buildings such as the flats between

nos. 85 and 87. A narrow back lane runs along the rear of the plots to nos. 69-105 Darnley Road, providing access to a number of outbuildings situated at the end of these gardens. Redevelopment of the land to the east of the lane, outside of the Conservation Area boundary, has eroded any sense of continuous enclosure to this side of the lane.

Cobham Street and Darnley Street are mainly filled with continuous rows of terraced houses or tightly grouped paired villas. The visual effect of the concentrated placement of the buildings in these two roads is accentuated by the narrow front gardens, the height of the buildings (typically of two or three storeys over a raised basement), the kerbside parking of vehicles; and the narrower streets and pavements. Darnley Street has a slightly more spacious appearance, due to the lesser height of some of the buildings, and breaks in the building line, such as at the entrance to Brandon Street.

5.3 Landmarks, focal points and views

The special interest in the Darnley Road Conservation Area is largely created by the group value of its buildings, their relative positions to each other, and their architectural features rather than the landmark qualities of specific buildings. However, some individual buildings do make a significant impact on the streetscene and therefore can be described as 'landmarks':

- No. 55 Darnley Street (former Primitive Methodist Chapel);
- Nos. 29 and 31 Darnley Road;
- Nos. 65 and 67 Darnley Road;
- Nos. 69 and 71 Darnley Road;

These landmark buildings, as identified above, provide focal points within the Conservation

Area through their position as individual or corner buildings. There are important long views along the straight, broad Darnley Road, which encompass the fine mid- to late-19th century houses which line it.

Due to the relatively close proximity of buildings to one another and the flat topography, the views into and out of the Conservation Area are limited to the vistas along roads and across the main road junction at the green, from where the factories of Northfleet in the north-west are visible. The principal positive views are:

- Along Darnley Road, Cobham Street and Darnley Street in both directions;
- Along Lennox Road East;
- No. 2 Pelham Road from the northern boundary of the Conservation Area;
- Nos. 67 to 79 from the north-west.

5.5 Trees, boundaries and planting

There are a number of mature trees in the front gardens of properties in Darnley Road. These provide an increased sense of enclosure in this suburban thoroughfare and serve to soften the hard edges of the urban landscape. Tree groups are most noticeable around the front boundary to the empty plot between nos. 74-76, and in the rear gardens of nos. 2-6 Pelham Road which back onto Darnley Road. There are further important individual trees in a number of the front gardens on Darnley Road.

There is a noticeable absence of street trees in the Conservation Area except in Lennox Road East where they have been severely lopped. There are no trees at all in Cobham Street, and very few in Darnley Street.

Important trees are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map.

All of the residential buildings in the Conservation Area stand behind front gardens or front areas giving access to the basement areas. The plots are edged by a variety of boundary treatments, comprising a mixture of brick walls, railings, timber fencing and trees or hedging. Traditionally, most of the boundaries were formed by dwarf walls of stone or rendered brick surmounted by cast iron railings. Cobham Street in particular retains many of the original decorative cast iron railings, together with some examples of high-quality modern replacements. Darnley Street also retains attractive stretches of cast iron railings, with a floral head detail, but many of the boundary treatments have been demolished or replaced with inappropriate late 20th century brick walls. Many of the houses on these two streets are approached up a set of stone steps, and in a number of instances these are edged by decorative cast-iron railings and handrails, such as can be seen at nos. 37-38 Cobham Street. The frontages of the properties in these streets are too shallow to allow for any vehicular hardstandings, and in some cases contain basement accommodation access, so the integrity and continuity of the boundary treatments has survived to a much greater degree than in Darnley Road.

One of the few surviving 19th century boundary treatments in Darnley Road is at Darnley House (no.41), and consists of low rendered brick wall topped with cast iron railings. The original gate piers remain. However, most of the original boundary treatments to houses on this road have been replaced with modern railings or hedging, have been painted or otherwise adapted. Others have been removed altogether. These incremental changes have been detrimental to the special character of the roads. Boundary walls have also been removed to allow

the provision of areas of hardstanding, for example to the front of nos. 21-27, which has provided an area of car parking in front of a small parade of shops.

Most of the significant planting in the Conservation Area can be seen in private gardens. The triangular green on the corner of Pelham Road features a small area of raised bedding in the centre of the lawn, but no trees or other planting.

6. STREETSCAPE

6.1 Public realm

Pavements

The pavements in the Darnley Road Conservation Area feature modern materials (concrete slabs, tarmac or poured concrete with concrete kerbs), although there are some remaining 19th century granite kerbs at the northern end of Darnley Road. Overall, the traditional relationship of raised pavement to road surface has been retained. The pavements are fairly wide along Darnley Road, and narrower on the side streets. A fragment of historic setts survives at the junction of Darnley Street and Brandon Road.

Generally these pavements are well maintained although the back lane which runs to the east of Darnley Road, between Arthur Street and Trafalgar Road, is in poor condition, with heavily patched tarmac.

Street furniture, signage and other features

The Conservation Area has a small amount of street furniture, which is mainly sited by the green space on the corner of Pelham Road. It includes two modern timber benches and two litter bins. At the time of survey there were also two large metal containers which were being used in association with some adjoining building work, but it is assumed that these are temporary structures. However, the habitual temporary use of the only open space in the Conservation Area for such unattractive features is detrimental to its amenity and appearance and should be avoided if possible.

Signage, including directional signs for traffic and also shop fascias, is modern. Traffic

signage is particularly intrusive at the busy road junction of Darnley Road and Pelham Road. Granite bollards bearing the street name are also fixed to the pavement at the eastern entrance to Darnley Street and were part of a traffic calming measure linked to Gravesham Borough Council's "Place To Live" regeneration scheme which began in 1998.

There are no surviving historic road signs in the area. However, a red pillar post box at the apex of the junction of Pelham Road and Darnley Road provides an attractive focal point.

Street lighting

Street lighting in the Conservation Area is all modern, featuring hockey-stick style street lights on tall steel columns in Darnley Road and on shorter columns in the other roads in the Conservation Area. In some cases, the taller examples visually compete with the roofline of buildings in Darnley Road, although this effect is mitigated by the considerable depth of the front gardens to the properties.

Pedestrian movement and footpaths
Pedestrian access throughout the Conservation Area is generally good, and is helped by the wide pavements and straight roads, although there are no actual pedestrian crossings. While there is a steady amount of vehicle traffic throughout the area, particularly around the junction of Darnley Road, Pelham Road and Cobham Street, the long sight lines throughout the area aid pedestrian movement. Also, the traffic calming scheme in Darnley Street and Cobham Street has helped ease traffic volume in those streets and, therefore, made them more useable for pedestrians.

Traffic and parking

The traffic on Darnley Road is intermittently heavy due to its location on a route into and out of Gravesend, and the traffic along Cobham Street and Darnley Street would be busier as a cut-through to Wrotham Road if traffic calming measures had not been installed. The difference between the two character areas of this Conservation Area (as defined in section 8) is partly the result of the contrast between the long, busy urban/suburban corridor of Darnley Road and these shorter, less frequently used streets.

On-street parking is only permitted in designated bays and this means that the south sides of both Cobham Street and Darnley Street are constantly lined with parked cars. The parking bays along Darnley Road are more spaced out which, coupled with the increased width of the road, means that the presence of parked cars has a reduced visual impact on the streetscene. However, the generous front garden space has led to many frontages being converted to vehicular hardstandings, and this has resulted in the loss of many boundary treatments, trees and areas of bedding. This has had a detrimental effect on the character of this Conservation Area, particularly around the car parking in front of the shops at the northern end of Darnley Road. Some of the building plots have been large enough to accommodate garaging at the rear of the plots, with access provided by a back lane. This small scale development, while not always of an appropriate design, has allowed some cars to be removed from view.

7. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Building types

The Darnley Road Conservation Area predominantly contains 19th century residential buildings, some of which are very substantial. A number of these large houses have been subdivided into flats. There are also examples of former domestic buildings which have been converted to commercial uses, such as shops; however, residential accommodation is often retained on the upper floors.

There are other residential buildings in the Conservation Area which are of less historic interest and include 1950s and 1960s infill development constructed on the remaining open land between the 19th century properties. A row of such buildings lines part of the north side of Darnley Street, including no. 38.

No. 55 Darnley Street is a former Methodist Chapel which was built in 1863 and is now in residential use. A small workshop lies to the north of no. 32 Darnley Road, which occupies what appears to be a former coach house to no. 6 Pelham Road.

7.2 Building form

The buildings of the Darnley Road Conservation Area are predominantly arranged as short terraces and pairs of villas, with occasional instances of larger detached houses. The buildings are typically of two or three storeys in height, and on Cobham Street and Darnley Street are notable for being raised up above a basement by a flight of steps, which provide the approach to the front door.

The buildings on Cobham Street and Darnley Street, while being arranged as distinct groups, follow a coherent building line. The continuity of the building line along the street, together with the predominant common construction dates and styles, contributes to the group value of the terraces and pairs of villas. Many of the buildings have a parapet, behind which the roof is concealed, and this contributes to a strong linearity along the street. On Cobham Street, for example, the two bay two-storey buildings, arranged to classical proportions, create a regular rhythm of windows, doors and canted bays in views along the street, despite slight variances in height and design detail. This rhythm is more consistent on Cobham Street than on Darnley Street, where there is greater variance between building heights and styles and more Post-WWII infill development. There is stronger coherence between the buildings at the eastern end of Darnley Street, where the terraces are longer, for examples nos. 1-12. This terrace also presents an elevation to Wrotham Road, no. 10.

Paired villas and detached houses are the more common form of buildings on Darnley Road, with buildings of three bays and two-storeys. Short terraces occupy nos. 13-27, 45-51, and 69-85. The paired villas and detached houses are predominantly set beneath a hipped roof, which in occasional instances is pierced by gables or dormer windows, particularly at the southern end of the Conservation Area. Good examples of these features can be seen at nos. 92-94 and 96-98 Darnley Road.

7.3 Listed buildings

There are no listed buildings in 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:

- Darnley Road: All buildings except nos. 81 to 85 and The Fireplace (single-storey shop extension to the front of no. 117a);
- Cobham Street: All buildings except the extension to no.7 Wrotham Road;
- Darnley Street: All buildings except nos. 22, 23, 27, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 48;
- Pelham Road: nos. 2 to 6.

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. Another local material that is used in the Conservation Area is flint, and some remaining 19th century flint boundary walls stand next to no. 32 Darnley Road.

Many of the buildings are faced in a stucco render which would have been produced

in nearby Northfleet. Northfleet was at the centre of some innovation in construction techniques in the 19th century, including the invention of Roman and Portland cements. Many cement works and chalk pits were established in the area, so it is not surprising that the Conservation Area retains buildings which use these materials. Many of the historic buildings in Cobham Street and Darnley Street are rendered, sometimes over the original facing brick, and the render is also moulded to create architectural detailing such as window surrounds and quoins. On Darnley Road there are numerous examples of distinctive brown Kentish brick, with some later red brick buildings. Decorative terracotta elements provide attractive detail on the late 19th century buildings, such as crested ridge tiles, for example at nos. 92-94.

- Distinctive tripartite first floor windows with thick first floor render window dressings including keystones;
- Round headed ground floor windows;
- Vertically sliding timber sash windows;
- Pointed window arches (shops in Darnley Road and a small terrace in Cobham Street)
- Small dormer windows;
- Brick chimney stacks;
- Basement accommodation (Cobham Street)

7.7 Local details

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

- The use of yellow and brown stock brick, sometimes with red brick detailing (Darnley Street);
- The use of stucco render either across whole facades or for details such as quoins, parapets and window surrounds;
- Render faced canted bays and doorcases sometimes with dentil cornice;
- Shaped gables, turrets and full height canted bays;
- Slate roofs;
- Steps up to front doors featuring cast iron railings and low walls (Cobham Street and Darnley Street)
- Cast iron railings and low boundary walls;
- Flint boundary wall outside the former coach house next to no.32 Darnley Road;
- Cast iron balconies;

8. CHARACTER AREAS

8.1 Summary of Character Areas

Within the present boundaries the Darnley Road Conservation Area can be divided into two 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 two Character Areas are:

- Character Area 1: Darnley Road
- Character Area 2: Cobham Street and Darnley Street

8.2 Character Area 1: Darnley Road

Darnley Road is one of a number of former country lanes that connected Gravesend with the former London to Dover stagecoach route. This was partly developed by the end of the 18th century (as shown on Hasted's map of 1797) although none of the early buildings survive. Most of the buildings on the east side of Darnley Road were built by 1865 and, like the late 19th century houses on the west side, hold a common position facing the broad highway from behind generous front gardens, and this regular orientation and domestic scale gives consistency to the streetscene. The current appearance of the thoroughfare has largely been in place since the road was fully developed at the end of the 19th century. Architectural interest is introduced to the character area by both the fine quality traditional materials and designs used in construction, and by the variety of styles employed by the designers of the small groups of houses.

The northern end of Darnley Road has the least coherence and sense of enclosed street space given that it is dominated by the broad highways that meet at the junction of Darnley Road, Pelham Road and Cobham Street. However, the striking mixture of architectural styles and the scale of the buildings on the eastern side of Darnley Road attractively frame the open green space at the junction of these routes. The Georgian-style Nos. 13 to 19 Darnley Road are of three-storeys and present elegant, brick faced facades, featuring cast iron balconies, to the road. To the south lie a row of two-storey late 19th century houses, which while they have had shopfronts inserted at ground floor level, continue to make a positive contribution to the area through their well-detailed brick elevations, featuring contrast brickwork to created banding and window surround details. The four buildings are arranged in a stepped formation to address the subtle shift in the orientation of the road at this point.

The entrances to Cobham Street and Darnley Street more emphatically separate the small groups of tall three storey semi-detached houses that face across the triangular green. These retain details such as tripartite windows and find a number of parallels with the buildings on the two side streets.

The open character of the space around the green ends at the boundary line of the garden of no. 2 Pelham Road. To the south of this, the road becomes much more enclosed by built development on either side of the thoroughfare. Part of the west side of Darnley Road is not included in the Conservation Area although the late 19th century terraced houses add a certain historic character and sense of enclosure. Nos. 2-6 Pelham Road are a small group of red and stock brick 19th century houses that provide a strong visual

landmark next to the green. They mark the former site of the manor farm.

On the east side of Darnley Road a range of 19th century buildings are an attractive mixture of styles and forms all standing behind front gardens in the leafiest part of the Conservation Area. Intersecting roads such as Spencer Street and Arthur Street provide breaks in the building line as well as permeability through the character area. The imposing buildings at the junction with Arthur Street architecturally stand out amongst the development along the street. One of these, no. 67, presents an elaborate stucco façade to the road, designed in a Jacobethan style, featuring hood-moulds to the windows and elaborate gables surmounted by finials. The original rendered boundary walls and gate piers survive and retain a large amount of Gothic-style cast iron railings. The eclectic range of architecture continues on the next corner where nos. 69 and 71 feature lavish stucco detailing, cast iron balconies and retain vertical sliding timber sash windows. The variety of facade treatments and window arrangements continues along the road although a fairly continuous grouping of semi-detached houses leads to the southern edge of the Conservation Area.

The west side of the road is lined by later 19th century houses. No. 76 is the largest house, a double fronted brown brick building with a 19th century side extension which blends in with original building and stands under the same hipped slate roof. The house is simply detailed with flat window arches painted white, canted brick bays, two small dormers and a number of tall brick chimneystacks. The gap between the house and an attractive pair of late 19th century gault brick villas has recently been infilled with a new building. A vacant plot lies to the north of no. 76, and the

boundary trees on this plot make an important contribution to the suburban character of the road. To the south of no. 76 are ranged tightly grouped pairs of buildings, with the exception of no. 90 which is detached. A tree-lined view along Lennox Road East contributes to the spacious, green suburban character of the area.

At this southern end of the character area are found large semi-detached Edwardian houses. The architectural style and general built form of these houses are also found further to the south along Darnley Road and in The Avenue, to the west. While some of the front gardens have been lost to create areas of hardstanding for vehicle parking, historic boundary walls, often with a hedge behind, retain the distinctiveness between the public realm and private gardens, while also contributing the green suburban character of this stretch of Darnley Road.

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

- Suburban character;
- Variety of building form, style, scale and materials;
- Arrangement of rows of semi-detached buildings or short rows of terraces facing each other across the road;
- Nos. 29/31, 65/67, 69/71 and 76 Darnley Road are landmark buildings;
- Buildings arranged with a common building line behind front gardens;
- Domestic scale of building;
- Pitched or hipped roofs covered in slate or tile, sometimes with decorated ridge tiles;
- Use of yellow stock and red brick, sometimes with patterning;
- Use of render for window and door details;
- Shaped gables, turrets and full height canted bays;

- Gothic details on some buildings (nos. 65-67 Darnley Road);
- Historic dormer windows (no. 76 Darnley Road);
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;
- Brick chimneystacks (including the row of stacks on nos. 34 to 72, which are not included in the designation);
- Elaborate ironwork on top of low boundary wall outside no. 88 Darnley Road;
- Cast iron balconies (nos. 13 -16 Darnley Road)

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

- Some modern infill (between nos. 19-21 Darnley Road and behind no. 90 Darnley Road) with a more horizontal emphasis and using modern materials, contrasting with the proportions and materials of the historic buildings (no. 74 Darnley Road);
- Infilling of gaps between the semi-detached houses;
- The general appearance of the lane between Spencer Street and Arthur Street and the outbuildings and garages in the rears of Darnley Road properties at this location;
- General rundown appearance of properties due to sub-division; e.g. nos. 29/31 and 37/39 Darnley Rd, and No. 2-4 Pelham Road;
- Vacancy, or part-vacancy, and under-maintained condition of no. 84 Darnley Road;
- Loss of architectural features, notably sash windows;
- Modern shop signage (no.31a Darnley Road);
- Impact of neighbouring commercial

- activities (car sales in Darnley Road);
- The loss of original boundary treatments for vehicle access or the replacement with unsympathetic modern materials (for example the fence around the empty plot next to no.76 Darnley Road);
- Loss of front gardens which have been converted to hardstandings;
- Lack of continuity in the pavement surfaces;
- Clutter of hydrant marker, street and traffic signs, litter bins, lamp columns, telegraph pole etc around the green;
- The volume of traffic.

8.3 Character Area 2: Cobham Street and Darnley Street

This Character Area includes two of the short roads that adjoin Darnley Road to the east, linking through to Wrotham Road. They were laid out in the mid-19th century. Two clusters of houses (one centred on nos. 36a to 42) were built on the north side of Cobham Street by 1865, along with the buildings at the west end of the road (nos.29 and 31 Darnley Road). Much of the subsequent development occurred by the close of the century.

Both Cobham Street and Darnley Street are characterised by the rows of tightly packed terraces and semi-detached houses that line each side of these narrow side streets. The pavements are narrow and the buildings are set back from these public routes behind small front gardens or basement areas. The density of the development and the lack of planted gardens and trees give this character area an urban appearance. This is furthered by the views eastwards, to the busy route of Wrotham Road, and the Woodville Hall and Civic Centre. The unattractive 1960s rear extension to no. 7 Wrotham Road encroaches into the character area and detracts from

an otherwise strong continuous grouping of historic buildings along the street.

While there is a near-continuous building line along the streets in this character area, the variety in scale and design of the buildings indicate the different phases of development. The oldest buildings are the two storey terraces on the north side of Cobham Street which are relatively plain in detail. The later buildings on either side feature round-headed first floor windows and more elaborate dressings. Many of the stucco-rendered houses feature detailing such as parapets and dentil cornices, providing visual interest on the upper floor levels. In addition, there are the modest late 19th century red brick houses at the west end (nos. 30-33) which add a further layer to the architectural history of the area and retain characteristic stylistic details such as pointed window arches.

Darnley Street also has some imposing buildings, notably nos. 1-5 which have a strong vertical emphasis and share the style found in the contemporaneous Cobham Street and Darnley Road properties (round headed first and second floor windows with heavy dressings and keystones) as well as the addition of shaped gables at either end of the row. There is even more variety of style in Darnley Street and less enclosure as the buildings on the south side are generally two storeys and to the west they include some 20th century houses. The most notable landmark is the former Methodist chapel which helps anchor this character area as part of a late 19th century development. This has recently been accompanied by a new three-storey house to its east, which has greatly reduced the size of one of the last gaps in the streetscene in this Conservation Area.

The principal positive features of Character Area 2: Cobham Street and Darnley Street are:

- Urban/suburban character;
- Variety of building form, style, scale and materials;
- Arrangement of tightly packed rows of buildings facing each other across the road;
- No. 55 Darnley Street (former Methodist chapel) is a landmark building;
- Buildings arranged with a common building line behind frontages with steps leading up to the front doors (Cobham Street);
- Mainly a domestic scale of building;
- Pitched or hipped roofs covered in slate or tile, sometimes with decorated ridge tiles;
- Use of yellow stock and red brick, sometimes with patterning;
- Use of stucco render (mainly on the north side of Cobham Street);
- Use of stucco for window and door details. Three storey properties with rendered tripartite round headed windows to the first floor and two light round headed windows to the second floor. Also featuring dressings including quoins and keystones;
- Use of shaped gables;
- Use of canted bays;
- Use of traditionally proportioned dormer windows (Darnley Street);
- Sash windows, retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis;
- Brick chimneystacks;
- Cast iron railings on low rendered brick walls.

The principal negative features of Character Area 2: Cobham Street and Darnley Street are:

- Some poorly maintained buildings including graffiti, notably the garage to the west of no. 29 Cobham Street;
- Loss of original features such as sash windows and their unsympathetic replacements;
- The painting of properties in inappropriate colours;
- Modern pavement treatments;
- Satellite dishes on front elevations;
- Loss of original boundary treatments;
- General rundown appearance of properties due to sub-division; rubbish in alley next to no. 27 Cobham Street;
- The appearance of parked cars lining one side of each street
- The appearance of the rear extension to no.7 Wrotham Road.;
- The appearance of the rear of no. 15 Wrotham Road, including the modern garage;
- Lack of maintenance, i.e. many of the painted elevations on buildings are in need of renewal.

9. ISSUES

9.1 Definition of Issues

The following 'Issues' have been identified by the appraisal process (via extensive survey work) and have been modified to include the views of the local community as part of the public consultation exercise, including a public meeting and four week period of consultation. They provide the basis for the Site Specific Actions in the Management Proposals. 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 Darnley Road Conservation Area even though the designated area already includes much of the best preserved and architecturally most cohesive parts of the 19th and early 20th century development in the area. The remaining late 19th century houses in the south of Darnley Road belong historically and architecturally to this Conservation Area and should be included. This could extend the boundary to the junction of Old Road while avoiding some of the modern development such as Weavers Close. Also, the terrace of houses nos. 34 to 72 Darnley Road have some merit as late 19th century houses, despite the loss of many original details, and have townscape value in the vistas along Darnley Road, particularly when approached from the south. They should also be considered for inclusion in the designation.

Another change to the boundary that should be considered is the transfer of nos. 2-6 Pelham Road to the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area, as these

properties relate more to the neighbouring 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.

Finally, no.35a Arthur Street is modern infill development with no special character and should be considered for exclusion from the Conservation Area.

9.3 Education and information

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

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

9.4 Uses/ vitality

The late 19th century residential character of the Conservation Area suffers from the use of Darnley Road as a through route between Old Road and Gravesend town centre, as well as from some of the business uses of properties to the north and west of the Conservation Area boundary.

Also, sub-division of properties into flats, particularly in Cobham Street and Darnley Street, has led to some erosion of special character of the buildings (through lack of maintenance by landlords), their settings (through rubbish and other detritus) and increased number of parked cars (cluttering the streetscene).

9.5 Enhancement potential

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

The following buildings and spaces require attention:

- No.84 Darnley Road (appears to be vacant and has an overgrown front garden);
- Infill buildings next to no.90 Darnley Road;
- The hardstanding area to the rear of no. 2 Pelham Road;
- Garages and outbuildings to the rear of Darnley Road between Spencer Street and Arthur Street;
- The appearance of garages at no. 27 and 31 Darnley Street, no. 29 Cobham Street (graffiti) and no.15 Wrotham Road. Also, the group of garages next to no. 48 Darnley Street;
- The workshop next to no. 32 Darnley Road, including structural problems to the gable;
- A number of painted elevations on buildings in the Conservation Area which are in need of re-painting.

The following improvements would also be welcome:

- Many of the boundaries would benefit from the use of more traditional materials, and the restoration of the original style of railings and low walling;
- Improve the unkempt appearance of many of the front gardens, most notably in Cobham Street);
- Replace the fence boundary to the vacant plot to the north of no. 76 Darnley Road.

Other elements in the Conservation Area would benefit from a range of improvements:

- Remove prominently located satellite dishes;
- Improve the appearance and condition of pavements across the Conservation Area – for instance, the replacement of tarmac with traditional style slabs would complement the streetscene, particularly in Cobham Street and Darnley Street;
- Improve planning controls over signage on commercial and civic properties;
- Remove clutter around the green on the corner of Pelham Road and consider a landscaping/planting that could make the area more attractive. Also unsuitable uses such as the temporary siting of storage units should be prevented;
- Consider ways to improve the existing parking arrangements outside the shops (nos. 21-27) in Darnley Road.

9.6 Highways and traffic management

The impact of the motorcar on the character of 19th century suburbs in general has been acute. In the Darnley Road Conservation Area it has resulted in the loss of front gardens and boundaries to create off-street car parking areas, and the crowding of the streetscene

as a result of intensive kerbside parking in others. Both of these outcomes should be monitored and reviewed.

A previous traffic calming scheme in Cobham Street and Darnley Street has eased some of the highways problems in these roads, and traffic and parking is also managed effectively in Darnley Road. However, the speed and volume of traffic, the effects of car parking, and the potential introduction of new controls and highway signage in the future are important factors in the successful retention of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. They should be taken into consideration in any future private or public realm schemes.

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 Character Area 1. Mature specimens can be seen in the central part of Darnley Road and in 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.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Bibliography

Appendix 2

Townscape Appraisal Map

Age of Buildings Map

Designations Map

Character Areas

Conservation Area Boundary Map 2009

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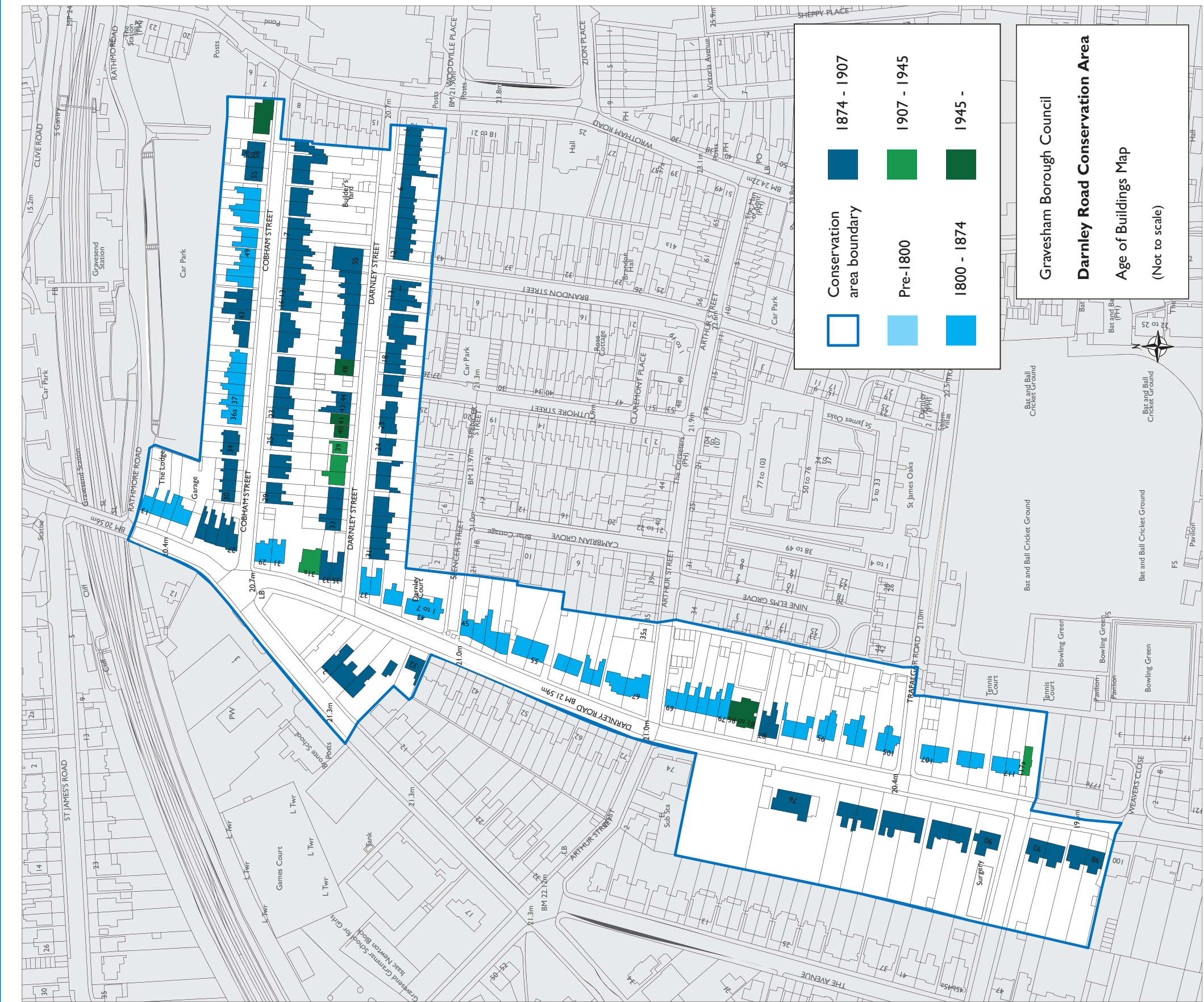
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