Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Ashford Road Maidstone

Maidstone Borough Council

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MAIDSTONE
Borough Council

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MAIDSTONE ASHFORD ROAD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Definition, Purpose and Effect of Conservation Areas

1.1.1 The concept of conservation areas was first brought into being by the Civic Amenities Act 1967, but the relevant legislation now is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This Act places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate and defines a conservation area as "an area of architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

1.1.2 Designation as a conservation area makes additional controls available to the local authority. Briefly these include the control of demolition of unlisted buildings, more restricted permitted development rights for single dwelling houses and protection of trees.

1.1.3 In addition to these enhanced powers, the local authority is also required when dealing with applications for planning permission to have special regard to the question of whether or not the proposed development would either preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area. (Section 72.1 of the Act) There is a presumption that developments which would not preserve or enhance this special character should be refused planning permission.

Aerial view of Conservation Area

1.2 Background to the Appraisal

1.2.1 Local authorities are required, by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to carry out reviews of conservation area boundaries (Section 69.2 of the Act). This is to consider whether the boundaries should be increased or decreased depending on the continued contribution that the areas within the boundary contribute to the special character of the area. It will also assist in the process of making informed decisions on planning applications where it is important to value and take into account the special character of conservation areas and to preserve or enhance them.

1.2.2 The clear understanding of the conservation area's qualities which such an appraisal produces will provide suggestions for future actions and improvements as well as providing a framework against which decisions on individual proposals may be assessed.

1.2.3 Maidstone Centre Conservation Area Appraisal was initially published on 26 March 2008. This document reviews, updates and expands on that earlier version. The Conservation Area has remained largely unaltered in any material sense since the 2008 appraisal.

1.3 Scope and Nature of the Appraisal

1.3.1 This appraisal will set out the key historic forces which have led to the village developing to its present day form and the resulting characteristics which describe the conservation area today and which are significant in any development decisions.

1.4 The Definition, Purpose and Effect of Conservation Areas

1.4.1 The concept of conservation areas was first brought into being by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967,

1.4.2 but the relevant legislation now is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. This act places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate and defines a conservation area as "an area of architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

1.4.3 Designation as a conservation area brings additional powers to the local authority. Briefly these include the control of demolition of unlisted buildings, more restricted permitted development rights for single dwelling houses and a notification system relating to works to trees not covered by a tree preservation order.

1.4.4 In addition to these enhanced powers, the local authority is also required when dealing with applications for planning permission to have special regard to the question of whether or not the proposed development would either preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area. There is a presumption that developments which would not preserve or enhance this special character should be refused planning permission.

1.5 The Purpose of the Appraisal

1.5.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to review their conservation areas from time to time in order to consider the possibility of revising their extent and to identify changes and pressures which may affect the original reasons for their designation. In order that informed decisions can be made on planning

applications it is important to identify the special character of conservation areas which it is sought to preserve or enhance.

1.5.2 The most appropriate form for fulfilling these requirements is the production of a conservation area appraisal for each individual conservation area. Historic England published updated guidance on the form which conservation area appraisals should take in 2019, and this document has been prepared in accordance with these guidelines. It is intended to identify the key elements which combine to produce the special historic and architectural character of the conservation area, to analyse how they interact and impact upon one another and to explain how the area has developed into its current form. It will also seek to identify pressures and developments which threaten the special character of the conservation area and sites and features which detract from its character and appearance.

1.5.3 The clear understanding of the conservation area's qualities which the appraisal produces will provide suggestions for future policies and improvements as well as providing a framework against which decisions on individual proposals may be assessed.

1.6 History of Designation

1.6.1 The Maidstone (Ashford Road) Conservation Area was first designated by Maidstone Borough Council on 19th October 1977 as part of a general review of conservation areas in the Borough. It includes properties on both sides of Ashford Road from its junction with Albion Place as far as No. 24 as well as Clarendon Place on the north side of King Street between the junctions of Queen Anne Road and Albion Place and outbuildings to the rear of the Clarendon Place fronting Brooks Place.

1.6.2 Short of a brief statement that the area was considered to be of "special quality" there is no indication of the precise reasons for designation. However, it may be assumed that these reasons would relate to the concentration of listed buildings in this location together with the general quality of the unlisted buildings within the area. This small area also forms a homogenous late Georgian/early Victorian suburb adjacent to the medieval town centre with few modern intrusions.

The Conservation Area as currently configured

2 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 The Conservation Area lies immediately to the east of the pre-Georgian town centre on the north side of the valley of the river Len and is underlain by the Hythe Beds, part of the Lower Greensand formation of sandstone which produce the Kentish Rag building stone. From east to west the route of Ashford Road is almost level, rising from 19.4 metres to 19.9 metres AOD. To the south of the road the level falls away quite sharply to the river Len which forms the southern boundary of the conservation area. To the north the land rises more gradually towards Penenden Heath.

3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Archaeology

3.1.1 The Conservation Area lies outside the pre-Georgian town and archaeological potential is therefore low. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Conservation Area, and the Kent Historic Towns Survey volume for Maidstone, published by Kent County Council in 2004, only notes one instance of archaeological remains in its vicinity – a late Iron Age cremation group dating from the 1st Century AD found in 1963, the site now being beneath Andrew Broughton Way just to the north-east of the conservation area.

3.2 Development History

3.2.1 Prior to the early 1800s the land now covered by the Conservation Area lay beyond the eastern extent of the town of Maidstone and Ashford Road did not exist. From the town centre

eastwards, King Street (formerly East Lane) only continued as far as Queen Anne Road – to travel towards Ashford entailed the use of Queen Anne Road and Sittingbourne Road to Penenden Heath and then taking the road through Bearsted to Hollingbourne. From the sharp bend where King Street turned in Queen Anne Road a track existed more or less following the current line of Ashford Road. The alternative route from town went from Wrens Cross and Mote Road then via what is now the main drive through Mote Park (passing close to the north side of the mansion) and then via Madginford to Hollingbourne.

3.2.2 The making of the existing Ashford Road dates from 1814/1815, when East Lane was also improved and renamed King Street, and was probably at the instigation of Lord Romney of Mote House. The old road past the mansion presumably came too close for comfort and its closure and the movement of the road further north enabled the expansion of Mote Park as well as providing a more convenient route out of the town centre. Albion Place followed in 1822, giving a straighter and broader approach to the Sittingbourne Road than Queen Anne Road.

3.2.3 Browns Map of Maidstone (published in 1823 but surveyed in 1821) shows that development at first was slow. Within the Conservation Area the only buildings shown are No. 4 (Lenworth House) and nos. 13/15, the latter on land owned by J Whatman, the paper manufacturer of Turkey Mill. However, by 1839 when J Smith, printer and bookseller of Week Street, published his Topography of Maidstone and Environs the (albeit rather schematic) map included suggests that the road was built up on both sides as far as Square Hill. That this was not entirely the case is shown by the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Maidstone published in 1848 where it can be seem that a gap existed on the south side of the road between nos. 6 and 24. However, by 1867, map evidence shows that this gap had been filled and the development of the Conservation Area was complete.

Extract from Brown's Map of 1823 **showing curre**nt conservation **area overlaid**

3.2.4 In terms of the character of development, this typically took the form of detached or semi-detached villas in spacious grounds, although there is one example of a terrace at Clarendon Place at the end of King Street (but even this is in fact a composition of houses butted up to each

other rather than a single unified design). There is also a subtle difference between development on the north and south sides of Ashford Road which probably reflects different land ownerships – land on the north was owned by G H Foote, who at the same time was developing the Brewer Street area; land on the south appears from Brown's Map of 1823 to have been in use as market gardens and may not have been subject to so rigorous a development policy.

3.2.5 The 18th Century saw substantial growth for the town and a rise in its regional importance such that by the early 19th Century it had overtaken Canterbury as the most populous and the preeminent town in Kent. The growth was based on its rise as a retail centre and an industrial and trading hub. Already by 1780 Maidstone's shops were assessed as being on a par with Canterbury. A 1794 trade directory for Maidstone lists 22 grocers plus stationers, ironmongers, tobacconists, silversmiths, linen-drapers, brandy merchants and china sellers amongst the shops then in existence. The late 18th Century also saw the foundation of two private banks in the town – Brenchley, Stacey, Parker, Springate and Penfold (The Kentish Bank) in premises at the top of Bank Street. Important industries at this time were brewing, distilling, paper making, the manufacture of Fuller's Earth and of cloth and thread.

3.2.6 The rise of Maidstone's importance as a trading centre resulted in a growth of both cultural facilities and civic pride and by the end of the 18th Century Maidstone had two theatres while its streets were paved with Kentish rag or York stone slabs and were universally lit by new street lighting. With all this wealth creation there was an inevitable rise in the presence of a middle class residing in the town and with industry concentrated to the north west of the town (to take advantage of the wharves on the Medway) it was probably equally inevitable that the discerning resident of Maidstone would seek refuge away from the noise and smoke by locating themselves in the south east.

3.2.7 The area around Ashford Road developed the character of a well heeled suburb, with housing aimed to suit the more well off residents. Smith's Topography of Maidstone and Environs of 1839 lists numerous members of the "nobility, clergy and gentry "as living in Ashford Road, with no entries at all for tradesman. It was thus exclusively a middle class residential area to begin with, and seems to have developed something of the character of a professional enclave – Steven's Directory of Maidstone 1882 lists four surgeons within the area (at nos. 1, 7 and 18 Ashford Road and 1 Clarendon Place). Three surgeons and a dentist, plus a clergyman, are listed in the Kent Messenger Directory of Maidstone in 1903, as well as a high class boarding and day school for girls (The Fellenberg School) at no. 18 Ashford Road. By 1921, although two surgeons are still listed, occupations are becoming more diverse and include a solicitor, a motor car proprietor, an accountant and the governor of Maidstone Prison.

3.2.8 The first indications of a real change in the exclusively residential nature of the area appear circa 1930 – professions are still represented by a doctor at no. 7 and an architect at no. 24 Ashford Road and an accountant in Clarendon Place, but no. 1 Ashford Road is listed as vacant, no. 3 is occupied by a draper and no. 5 has become a builders yard. By 1937/8 further changes include no. 1 becoming an annexe to the Girls Grammar School in Albion Place, no. 10 the offices of the Southern Counties Car Club Ltd and no. 7 an antique dealership. Only one professional remains in Ashford Road (a dentist at no. 24), but a doctor, a dentist and an accountant are still listed in Clarendon Place. Perhaps even more telling of a decline in the area's fortune is the existence of four vacant properties at nos. 4, 18 and 15 Ashford Road and 1 Clarendon Place.

Typical property developed in Ashford Road for middle class residents

3.2.9 Change in character had become quite radical by the early post-war years, as shown by entries in Kelly's Directory of Maidstone 1947. Only two addresses are occupied by professionals and a number of buildings have been converted to flats (nos. 1, 8, 10 and 11) and nos. 4 and 5 Clarendon Place have become a boarding house. Two drapers are listed (at 1 Clarendon Place and 3 Ashford Road) and a turf accountant at 3 Clarendon Place. Nos. 7 and 15 Ashford Road have become offices and No. 4 the Maidstone Ex-Services Club. In one of the decreasing number of single dwelling houses left, no. 13 Ashford Road, a certain Leonard James Callaghan (the future Prime Minister) is listed as resident.

3.2.10 By 1964 the entire north side of Ashford Road had been taken into office use with the exception of no.13. Further changes included the use of no.2 Clarendon Place as staff accommodation for the Royal Star Hotel and no.5 Clarendon Place as an Army Information Office with a flat above.

3.2.11 By 1973 the sole professional still in residence in the area was a dentist at no. 24 Ashford Road and the other houses on the south side of the road had become predomin antly converted to flats. Clarendon Place retained no residential accommodation at all other than for staff of the Royal Star Hotel (this facility having moved from no. 2 to no. 6). Indeed, by the 1970s the area was designated in the Maidstone and Vicinity Town Map for office use.

3.2.12 Interestingly in a reversal of the trend of conversion to office use number No.6 Clarendon Place is currently being converted back from office use to a residential function. In this case the intention is to provide 4 independent single bedroom flats. This does mirror the picture

outside the conservation areas where there are numerous plans in train or in the pipeline to convert usually large framed office buildings to provide apartments.

3.2.13 Nos. 1 and 3 Ashford Road had been listed as buildings of special architectural or historic interest in 1951. In 1973 nos. 7, 9 and 11 were also spot-listed, and at the re-survey of listed buildings in 1974 nos. 13/15, 6 and 24 were added along with Clarendon Place. In 1973 no. 5 Ashford Road was demolished. The whole area had been blighted by County Council road proposals since 1965 and some buildings (notably nos. 8-18) had been acquired by the County Council for demolition in connection with such schemes. In 1980 Kent County Council applied for listed building consent to demolish nos. 13/15 and conservation area consent to demolish nos. 8-18. Strong objections to these proposals were received form the Victorian Society and the Ancient Monuments Society together with a petition with 1103 signatures, and Maidstone Borough Council raised objections to the scheme, resulting in its abandonment in favour of a less extensive and less destructive road improvement scheme subsequently implemented some ten years later.

3.2.14 However, the abandonment of the scheme did not immediately help the properties at nos. 8-18 Ashford Road, which remained vacant in County Council ownership until sold to developers in 1990. By this time the houses had become largely derelict, and permission was granted on appeal in 1990 to demolish no. 10, convert the remainder to flats and erect new blocks of flats on the garden land to the rear. By 1991 these buildings were largely roofless and a further application was made to demolish them and replace them with facsimile buildings to provide office accommodation with further office development on the site at the rear, but this application was withdrawn. In the same year, the Borough Council took action under the emergency repairs procedure available under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which resulted in the restoration of these important buildings.

3.2.15 Despite the reduced nature of the eventually built scheme, there is no doubt that the new road system as laid out circa 1990 has had a major impact on the character of the conservation area, principally because of the creation of the major junction at Wat Tyler Way which interrupts the flow of the street and isolates nos. 1/3 Ashford Road on an island site. However, apart from this (and the loss of no. 5 for the road route) the Conservation Area retains all of its original buildings. The only new developments are the three blocks of flats built in the rear gardens of nos. 8-18 Ashford Road circa 1990s, but because of their situation deep in the valley of the Len they have only a restricted impact on the character and appearance of the area.

4 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

4.1 General Townscape Character

4.1.1 The Conservation Area consists of properties built over a very short space of time. It is a suburban expansion to the east of the medieval town centre which took place in the first half of the 19th Century. The buildings, which survive in their entirety with the exception of No. 5 Ashford Road (demolished in the 1960s), share a consistent of appearance which is late Georgian in style. The Conservation Area acts as an important gateway in the approach to the historic town centre from the East.

4.1.2 In contrast to the Holy Trinity Conservation Area, which lies immediately to the north-west and was developed at approximately the same time, the predominant form of development is the detached or semi-detached villa rather than the terraced house. In fact, the one example of a terrace within the Ashford Road Conservation Area, Clarendon Place, is a number of buildings

butted up to each other. Building is therefore in the newly-fashionable villa style popularised in the 1820s by such developments as John Nash's Park Village to the north of Regents Park in London.

4.1.3 Building heights are contained at 2 or 3 storeys, but all the houses have considerable presence, built for the middle class market, with no houses within the current Conservation Area providing accommodation for other sectors of society. In form, the Conservation Area is ribbon development laid out along the new main road out of town constructed in 1815, although it is noticeable that there is a subtle difference between development o the north and south sides of the road which reflects different land ownerships in the early 19th Century. The north side seems to have largely developed earliest and is slightly more spaciously laid out than the south side.

4.1.4 The dominant architectural style is a restrained classicism, and most buildings are characterised by such features as small-paned vertically-sliding sash windows of painted timber, panelled doors (often with fanlights above), door-cases or canopies and fine rubbed-brick arches or Italianate cornices over openings. The predominant building materials are yellow stock brick and natural slate roofs of low pitch, although there are some examples of stucco and red brick. Large, multiple-flued chimney stacks with chimney pots (some original), often positioned on flank walls, are noticeable features of the area.

Ashford Road – a restrained Classical style

4.1.5 The individual merits of a high proportion of the buildings in the Conservation Area has been recognised as a total of 16 properties are statutorily listed as buildings of special architectural and historic interest. Virtually every other building in the Conservation Area also makes a positive contribution to its character.

4.1.6 The width of the roads in the conservation area along with the flow of traffic makes it difficult to appreciate the assembly of buildings as a consistent whole. The very spaciousness which is a feature of the design, a God send for the traffic planners, works against any feeling of enclosure. The volume of traffic tends to give a sense of isolated blocks of accommodation.

4.1.7 Small details can impact on the character of the Conservation Area. Street furniture, where it is historic or of good design, can make a positive contribution and add to local distinctiveness. Unfortunately, there are no such good examples within the Ashford Road Conservation Area, and the street furniture which does exist detracts from the character of the area. Particularly intrusive is modern highway clutter, especially at the junction of Ashford Road and Wat Tyler Way where the combination of standard guard railings, traffic lights, traffic signs, street lights, control boxes and tactile paving results in a visual cacophony which severely interrupts the flow of the street and adversely affects the settings of a number of listed buildings. The use of standard grey plastic-coated poles for much of the signage and the poor maintenance standards also result in a loss of character – e.g. poles out of vertical or in need of repainting.

4.1.8 There is no surviving original paving within the Conservation Area and the use of black tarmac is all pervading. No record remains of previous paving materials, although it is known that the original road surface was ragstone blocks, replaced in the later 19th Century by granite setts.

4.1.9 Side boundary walls were traditionally constructed of brick, and some of these remain. A particularly important one forms the side boundary to no. 1 Ashford Road, where it defines the eastern edge of the bottom section of Albion Place. Front boundaries were originally largely of cast-iron railings on dwarf walls, and a few examples survive or have been replaced with modern railings, but in a large number of cases this original boundary treatment has disappeared, sometimes leaving open tarmac forecourts which detracts from the streetscape and adds to visual confusion.

4.2 Approaches and Views/Townscape Analysis

4.2.1 The view into the conservation area as it is approached from the east is quite disparate. There is a feeling of arriving into an urban context from a semi-rural one but that is due almost entirely to the continuous row of houses, both in advance of the conservation and within it, on the southern side of Ashford Road. Those houses on the north side are initially concealed by the bend in the road which curves towards the north. In any case the properties on the northern side of Ashford Road have a more open aspect and are set somewhat further back from the street. There is a strong sense of order and calm about the view with its continuous string courses and roof lines and soft colours of brown and white. Then, as Ashford Road meets Watt Tyler Way there is a very loose 'gateway' formed by 1, 3 and 7 Ashford Road on the north and Lenworth House to the south. This is a gateway to what is very clearly the way into the town centre. Much of the interest is to the north of Ashford Road (as is recognised by the conservation area boundary) where Nos 1 and 3 make a striking contrast to the general feel of the streetscape with their startlingly bright white stucco facades. Beyond Clarendon Place King Street narrows down markedly and the vista is closed off by Maidstone House which rises above the Mall shopping centre.

Clarendon Place

4.2.2 The approach from King Street is marked by the sudden widening of the road and change in architecture bought about by the presence of Clarendon Place terminated by the two curving bays. The vista is closed by the curve of Ashford Road so what can be seen is the consistent elevations on the southern side referred to above. As one progresses to the east views leak away into the indeterminate area of traffic engineering and garage uses around the junction of Andrew Broughton Way and Ashford Road. In this area the bulk of Victoria Court (which replaced two early 19th Century villas) is, although outside the conservation area, a discordant feature.

Entering the Conservation Area from the west the road widens significantly

4.2.3 From the south, along Watt Tyler Way, the gateway buildings referred to above are equally striking but give little clue of the nature of the adjacent streets. They form a block which expresses solidity and permanence which is in contrast to the open landscape and modernity of the area which precedes it. The sweep of Watt Tyler Way is dominant and one is through and beyond the conservation area before its existence can be realised which in any case requires a deliberate decision to turn away from the main 'drag'.

4.2.4 Approaching from the north requires passing through a very mixed streetscape on Albion Place but one that is marked out by large brick built commercial buildings. Following the continuation of Albion Place there is a delightful row of late Georgian houses – Nos. 7-21. They have a certain amount in common with the houses in the Conservation Area. They are contemporary with each other and display typical Georgian features – principal level at first floor marked by taller windows, continuous string courses across several properties, a high degree of symmetry (sometimes with a very deliberate element of asymmetry) and very calm detailing. The houses on Albion Place exhibit very individual elevational treatment suggesting each plot had a different developer where the buildings in the conservation area are generally designed to show a unified streetscape.

4.2.5 Taking a detour from Albion Place it is possible to follow the A249 and then Watt Tyler Way. This route brings the traveller past the buildings which form such an impact from other directions – 1-3 and 7 Ashford Road. Here, however, the approach is to the rears of the buildings and in a way in which they were never intended to be seen since No. 5 was removed to allow the new road to be cut through. The impact is further impaired by the sea of cars on either side of the road in the car parking areas which the rears of many properties in this area have become. The vista is far more open than it would have been traditionally and the buildings rise out of the resulting bleak landscape like odd teeth in otherwise empty gums.

4.2.6 The townscape exhibits a strong sense of enclosure, largely brought about by the limited set-back of the building line but enhanced by the curve of the road; buildings in Ashford Road but outside the Conservation Area are important factors in maintaining the closed nature of the view to the east. Buildings are the dominant features in the townscape, with few trees existing, although those at Clarendon Place, no. 6 Ashford Road and between nos. 7 and 9 Ashford Road do make some contribution. Within the Conservation Area, the uniformity of building age, scale and materials together with the high quality of all the buildings form the defining features giving it its special character.

4.2.7 Apart from the features previously mentioned as detracting from this special character, one other area has a poor visual quality – this is Brooks Place, behind Clarendon Place. In part the problems of this street stem from the fact that it only ever formed a rear access to properties in Clarendon Place and was never developed along its frontage. However, it would have originally had high walls on the street edge to define it, but most of these have been demolished to provide car parking, resulting in a lack of enclosure and the opening up of views of the backs of Clarendon Place seen over a sea of parked cars. The varied rough surfaces and use of unattractive and uncoordinated bollards and barriers add to the visual confusion of the streetscape.

4.2.8 The most significant feature detracting from the area, however, has been the cutting through of Wat Tyler Way, with its heavy volume of traffic, which has effectively divided the conservation area into two halves, interrupting its sense of place.

The tangle of barriers, road signs and lights where Watt Tyler Way crosses Ashford Road

4.2.9 As outlined above, the Conservation Area has changed in character from a wholly residential environment of high quality to a largely commercial area. This change took place before the Conservation Area was designated, and in its favour it can be said that it has probably enabled the preservation of the original buildings. On the downside, however, it has resulted in some problems of signage clutter and the giving over of forecourts and rear former gardens to car parking.

4.3 Detailed Analysis and Description

4.3.1 A detailed description of all buildings and sites within the Conservation Area follows. These descriptions are based on examination from the street and historic map analysis.

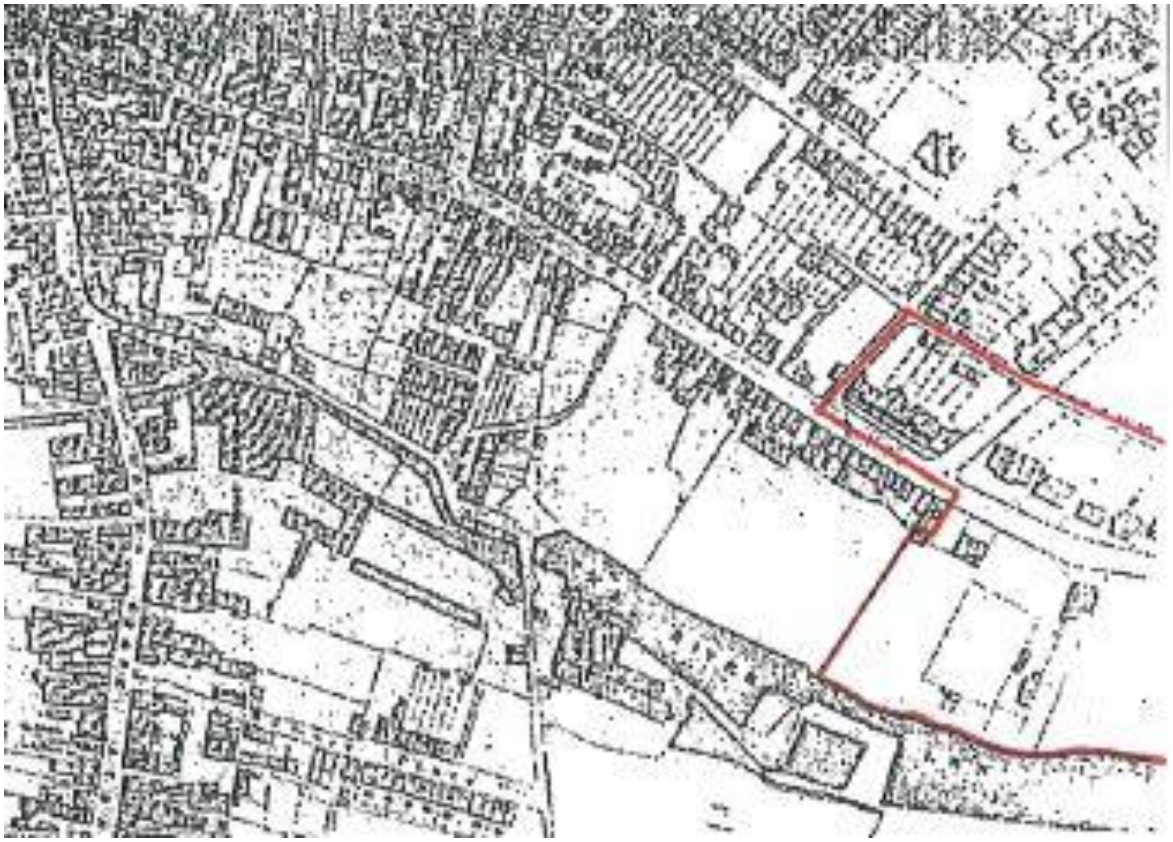
4.3.2 Buildings and structures have been assessed according to their value to the character of the Conservation Area. They have been graded as follows:

- Essential – buildings which because of their high architectural or historical interest or townscape function must be retained.
- Positive – buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and interest of the Conservation Area and whose retention should be encouraged wherever possible. Some buildings in this grade may have suffered from unsympathetic alteration but could be restored to their original appearance relatively easily.
- Neutral – buildings which do not harm the character of the area but whose retention is not necessary.
- Negative – buildings/sites which harm the character of the area and where redevelopment could be advantageous.

4.4 Ashford Road General Character

4.4.1 After it was first laid out in 1815, Ashford Road appears not to have developed very quickly for about the first ten years. By the time that Brown's map was produced in 1823 the only buildings shown are nos. 4 and 13-15. By 1848, the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map shows the north side of the road to be fully developed and nos. 6 and 24 added on the south side. The 1867 map shows development to be completed. Both sides of the road show a mixture of detached and semi-detached properties with spacious gardens, although plots tend to be wider on the north side of the road than the south (with the exception of no. 4 which had the widest plot of all, most of it to the east of the house and now buried under Wat Tyler Way). There was also a more generous building line to the north side, with curving carriage drives being evident on the 1867 map – this difference has been subsequently lessened by road widening on this side of the street which has particularly eaten in to the front gardens of nos. 7-11. Buildings on the south side of the road originally had long narrow plots running down to the millpond on the river Len – these have only been truncated in the late 20th Century with the development of blocks of flats in River Bank Close.

4.4.2 The importance of buildings on the south side of Ashford Road, but currently outside the Conservation Area, to the creation of an enclosed street scene has already been noted. As these buildings all appear to date from prior to 1848 a case could be made for the extension of the Conservation to include them, despite their generally more modest character.



Extract from Ordnance Survey of 1848 showing current conservation area overlaid

Ashford Road	Listing	Description/Comments	Value
Nos. 1-3	Grade 2 1086381	An impressive pair of semi-detached houses designed as one composition, probably circa 1830. 3 storeys with parapet of which the central section is balustraded. Central 3 bays project. Stuccoed to front elevation, with rustication to ground floor; yellow stock brick to other elevations. First floor windows have cornices above, central 3 with console brackets. Large arched chimneybreasts to side elevations. Slate roof. The tall original brick boundary wall to Albion Place is an important townscape feature providing enclosure.	Essential
Sterling House No. 7	Grade II 1086382	Probably circa 1830. 3 storeys in yellow stock brick and slate roof. Bold projecting painted cornice and parapet, painted string courses above ground and first floor. Probably originally designed as a symmetrical detached villa with a central door and flanking two storey bays, but extended in matching style by an additional bay to the west (added by 1867). Lunette dormer to roof. Sash windows, glazing bars missing, under gauged brick arches. Now forms focal point in views from Wat Tyler Way approach to Conservation Area.	Essential
No. 9	Grade II 1086383	Probably circa 1840. 2 storeys yellow stock brick and slate roof. Canted bay window to west side of front elevation. Sash windows with glazing bars intact under gauged brick arches. Raised string course between ground and first floors	Essential
No. 11	Grade II 1086384	Probably circa 1830. A narrow 2-storey building with pedimented gable facing road. Yellow stock brick with slate roof. Sash windows that to 1st floor in main central portion having gothick glazing bars.	Essential
Nos. 13/15	Grade II 1086385	Early 19th Century (before 1821). A pair of 2 storeyed stuccoed houses under a hipped slate roof. No. 13 retains original form of central door-case with reeded pilasters and cornice with a sash window to each side on each floor (but western ground floor one replaced by Victorian 3-light canted bay window). No. 15 has rustication to the render and bay	Essential

Ashford Road	Listing	Description/Comments	Value
		windows with slate roofs and a steeply-pitched pediment above the door.	
No. 4 Lenworth House	Unlisted	Circa 1820. A large detached house of yellow stock brick. 3 Storeys, roof hidden behind parapet. Two full height bays (one rounded, one canted) facing east towards former garden (now occupied by Wat Tyler Way). Ashford Road elevation refaced in red brick and openings altered and two storey red brick fore-building added in later 19th Century – these alterations have adversely affected the street frontage, whereas east and south elevations remain in original attractive form. 2 storey late 19th to west side. Vacant at time of survey.	Positive
No. 6 Wellington House	Grade II 1238949	Fine building of circa 1830. 3 storeys, yellow stock brick with slate roof. 3 bays wide, sash windows with glazing bars intact to all floors under gauged brick arches. Central porch with fluted engaged Tuscan columns. Painted plat band between ground and first floor, moulded eaves cornice. Large chimney stacks to centre and east end of roof. Later 19th Century 2-storey single bay extension to east side, with lean-to roof hidden behind parapet, has sash windows with glazing bars intact under gauged brick arches.	Essential
Nos. 8-18	Unlisted	3 pairs of semi-detached houses in a matching Italianate style, circa 1850-1860. 3 storeys, yellow stock brick with hipped slate roofs. Bracketed eaves cornices. Sash windows with glazing bars intact set within moulded architraves. Large tripartite sashes to ground and first floor of no. 16. Central paired doorways under continuous bracketed cornice. Moulded cornice over central pairs of windows to nos. 12-14 and 16-18. Projecting painted string courses between each floor	Essential
Nos. 20-22	Unlisted	A semi-detached pair designed to appear as a single dwelling (no. 20 has centrally-placed door to street elevation, no. 22 has door on side elevation). Probably circa 1830 but altered, with a mix of red and yellow stock brick to front elevation. 3 storeys. No. 22 retains slate roof but	Positive

Ashford Road	Listing	Description/Comments	Value
		no. 20 has replacement concrete tiles. Sash windows with central vertical glazing bar only.	
No. 24	Grade II 1086389	Circa 1825-1830. 2 storeys stuccoed with slate roof behind parapet. Projecting stringcourse between ground and first floor and block cornice to parapet. 2 sash windows to each floor with glazing bars intact, central window blank to first floor.	Essential

4.5 Brooks Place General Character

4.5.1 Brooks Place is a short street running between Queen Anne Road and Albion Place, which originated as a rear access way to the Clarendon Place buildings in King Street. As such it never developed any primary frontage buildings, its north side being bounded by the flank walls and garden boundaries of properties in Queen Anne Road and Albion Place and its south side being defined by the rear boundaries of Clarendon Place together with mews type buildings such as stables or coach-houses serving those properties. By 1848, such buildings are shown to exist at the rear of nos. 2, 3, 5 and 6 Clarendon Place, and by 1867 these had been joined by a smaller building to the rear of no. 4.

Fig 3 Extract from Ordnance Survey of 1867 showing current conservation area overlaid

4.5.2 Only the south side of the street lies within the Conservation Area. Recent demolition and the opening up of rear gardens in Clarendon Place to form car parking areas have resulted in an unsatisfactory environment. This has been exacerbated by the late 20th Century demolition of

corner properties on the north side by the junction with Queen Anne Road and the creation of a small public car park, resulting in further loss of street enclosure.

4.5.3 Within the Conservation Area only one building survives, no. 5 Brooks Place. This appears to be the original outbuilding to nos. 5 and 6 Clarendon Place shown on the 1848 Ordnance Survey Map, albeit with a late 20th Century flat-roofed 2-storeyed extension in non-matching style added to its northern side.

Brooks Place

Address	Listing	Description/Comments	Value
No. 5	Unlisted	Circa 1830-1840 but with late 20th Century 2-storey extension to north side. 2 storeys, yellow and red stock brick (partially rendered) with gable-ended roof (originally slate). Blind roundel windows to west elevation at first floor level. Probably a former stable/coach house.	Positive

4.6 King Street General Character

4.6.1 Only a small part of King Street lies within the Conservation Area – just the northern side between Queen Anne Road and Albion Place, the area occupied by Clarendon Place. Prior to 1815, King Street (formerly known as East Lane) only stretched as far east as the junction with Queen Anne Road, and this marked the eastern boundary of the town until the early 19th Century. Brown's Map of 1823 (surveyed in 1821 – Fig 1) shows the site of Clarendon Place as occupied by a single large dwelling set back behind a landscaped forecourt. Its form, with a central block and two forward-projecting wings, is similar to nos. 31/33 Earl Street which date from the early 17th Century and it is possible that this building was of similar date. The map shows it to have possessed extensive grounds stretching as far east as the boundary with no. 13 Ashford Road and back up Queen Anne Road as far as the junction with Union Street, and to have been in the ownership of G H Foote Esq. It must have been demolished in 1822 when Albion Place was built

on its grounds, but it is highly probable that archaeological remains of it may exist below the rear garden areas of Clarendon Place.

4.6.2 Brown's Map shows the south side of Ashford Road at this point to be fully developed by 1823, largely by buildings which still exist but which currently lie outside the Conservation Area. Clarendon Place itself was probably developed between 1825 and 1830, following the laying out of Albion Place to which no. 7 Clarendon Place addresses itself in its return elevation. It does not form a unified terrace, but is united by a common painted projecting stringcourse at sill level to the first floor windows and by the consistent use of yellow stock brick and slate roofs. The development is set back from the established older building line to the west (as still shown by nos. 91/93 King Street), marking a transition to the more spacious layout of the new suburb which is not echoed by the slightly earlier development on the opposite side of the road. In general, therefore, King Street has a tighter, more urban feel than the development just to the east in Ashford Road, with continuously built-up frontages and smaller distances between the fronts of buildings on opposite sides of the street. This, together with the straightness of the street, gives it a more dynamic feel than Ashford Road.

4.6.3 The existence of early 19th Century development (and older) on the south side of King Street and also extending further west along it may justify extensions to the Conservation Area, subject to further study work.

Clarendon Place looking west towards the centre of Maidstone

Address	Listed/ Unlisted	Description/Comments	Value to Character
1-4 Clarendon Place	Grade II 1086320	Circa 1825-1830. A three-storeyed terrace in yellow stock brick with slate roof. Ground floor windows in round-	Essential

		headed arched recesses, upper floor windows under gauged brick arches. Projecting string course linking first floor window sills, with fine original incised lettering reading "Clarendon Place" on no. 1. Porches with Tuscan columns and cornices above, those to nos. 2 and 3 paired.	
5 and 6 Clarendon Place		Circa 1825-1830. Designed as a semi-detached pair but contiguous with nos. 4 and 7. Three-storeys yellow stock brick with rendered band at top with cornice and parapet. Each house has a full height curved bay. Projecting painted stringcourse linking first floor window sills. Paired central porch with engaged Tuscan columns and cornice over. Forecourts have lost original railings to street (except for short section to side boundary of no. 6), forecourts now open and tarmac surfaced	Essential
No. 7 Clarendon Place		Circa 1825-1830. Three storeys yellow stock brick in matching style to nos. 5 and 6. One bay facing King Street, curved corner to Albion Place and 3 windows facing Albion Place. Windows facing Albion Place have gauged brick arches. Porch facing King Street with Tuscan columns and cornice over. Open forecourt surfaced in tarmac.	Essential

4.7 River Bank Close General Character

4.7.1 River Bank Close, which is accessed off Square Hill Road, is a modern development built during the 1990s taking the place of part of the long back gardens of properties on the south side of Ashford Road. It consists of four blocks of flats, only three of which are situated within the Conservation Area. Although these flat blocks are of larger scale than the historic development of Ashford Road, their situation at a considerably lower level in the deeply-incised valley of the River Len means that they have only a minor impact on the character of the Conservation Area and they can be assessed as having a neutral value to the character of the Conservation Area. It may, however, be appropriate to consider an amendment to the Conservation Area boundary to exclude this development.

River Bank Close

5 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

5.1 The character of conservation areas can suffer significantly from the cumulative impact of 'minor alterations' which can be carried out to single dwelling houses as permitted development under the General Permitted Development Order without the need for planning permission. Such alterations can include replacement windows and doors and re-roofing using inappropriate non-traditional materials.

5.2 The Local Authority can seek to bring such minor alterations under planning control by the use of Directions under Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order. Article 4 directions can increase the public protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings. They are not necessary for works to listed buildings and scheduled monuments as listed building consent and scheduled monument consent would cover all potentially harmful works that would otherwise be permitted development under the planning regime. However, article 4 directions might assist in the protection of all other heritage assets (particularly conservation areas) and help the protection of the setting of all heritage assets, including listed buildings

5.3 In the case of the Ashford Road conservation area many of the properties are listed and so are protected by this designation. Many former residential buildings are now in commercial use and so do not have the benefit of permitted development rights. The issue of protection through an Article 4 direction is therefore not as pressing as in other conservation areas

5.4 There are no Article 4 Directions currently in force in the Ashford Road conservation area.

6 PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTION AND GUIDANCE

6.1 The Conservation Area is a fine example of a late Georgian/early Victorian suburb for the well-to-do just outside the confines of the medieval town. It exhibits a very consistent character in terms of building materials, scale, architectural style and layouts, and development was completed largely between 1820 and 1860. Within the Conservation Area itself all the original buildings remain except for no. 5 Ashford Road, demolished in 1973 and whose site now lies under Wat Tyler Way; new buildings are confined to the recent development of River Bank Close which, because of the topography, has limited impact on the character of the Conservation Area. There are, however, other unfortunate losses of original buildings just outside the Conservation Area, particularly at nos. 17 and 19 Ashford Road where the loss is exacerbated by the dominant replacement building which impacts on the setting of the Conservation Area.

6.2 The Conservation Area has been fortunate in not being subjected to great pressure for redevelopment – much of this has been diverted to the eastern side of Albion Place in the late 20th Century. Although its character as an exclusively residential area was lost in the inter-war years to its present largely commercial function, this has at least so far secured the preservation of the historic buildings. The low incidence of buildings remaining in use as single dwellings has also meant that there have been few depredations caused by minor alterations carried out under permitted development rights. There are, however, several examples of replacement of architectural elements with inappropriate alternatives. Particularly affected are window bars, front doors and porches, boundary treatments and surfacing.

6.3 The major damage which has occurred within the Conservation Area since its designation has been the new gyratory road system involving the construction of Wat Tyler Way and Andrew Broughton Way. The former in particular causes significant damage by cutting in two Ashford Road incorporating a large junction with a considerable amount of highway street furniture and signage. The new road system has also resulted in additional traffic being routed through the Conservation Area, making it a distracting element detrimental to the ambience of the area.

6.4 The detailed street and building analysis carried out in Section 4 of this Appraisal provides a basis for considering future proposals for redevelopment or alterations. All buildings except for the flats in River Bank Close have been assessed as “essential” or “positive” and it is therefore considered that redevelopment proposals will generally be inappropriate. Some small scale development may be appropriate in Brooks Place to form a street frontage to improve the character of the street.

6.5 Trees are not a major feature of the townscape, but it will be important to seek the retention of the limited number of trees which do make a significant contribution. Within the Conservation Area it is necessary for six weeks notice in writing to be given regarding any proposed works to trees with a trunk diameter greater than 75mm measured at a height of 1.5 metres above ground level. Where expedient the Council will seek to protect suitable trees by the making of Tree Preservation Orders.

6.6 The production of this Appraisal has suggested a number of areas for investigation regarding the enhancement of the Conservation Area. These are: -

- Improvement to paving surfaces.
- A programme of re-instalment of original boundary railings etc.
- Improvements/rationalisation of road traffic signage, street lighting and safety railings.
- Action to replace boundary divisions to Brook Place and the rear of 1-3 and 7 Ashford Road

6.7 Studies carried out in connection with the historical development of the area and with the townscape appraisal have also suggested that there may be justification to amend the boundaries of the Conservation Area. The following areas may be appropriate for inclusion in the Conservation Area, subject to further study and survey: -

- The south side of Ashford Road from no. 26 to the junction with Square Hill, together with the western side of Square Hill.
- Nos. 70-106 King Street, 91-93 King Street and 2a Ashford Road.
- The western side of Albion Place as far as no. 23.

6.8 In addition, the modern development in River Bank Close may be considered for exclusion from the Conservation Area.

Sterling House No 7 Ashford Road

CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Section 69 of the 1990 Act also imposes the duty on the local authority to determine from time to time whether any further parts of the borough should be included within a conservation area.

1.2 Recent guidance from English Heritage (Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management – 2016) suggests that proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas should take the form of a mid- to long-term strategy setting objectives for addressing issues and recommendations for action arising from a previously published conservation area appraisal and identifying any further or more detailed work needed for their implementation. Such a strategy is generally given the title of a conservation area management plan.

1.3 It is important to note that a conservation area management plan cannot introduce entirely new planning objectives. Instead it will need to refer to the original legislation; to government guidance (mainly National Planning Policy Framework for listed buildings); to the adopted local plan policies; and to the emerging Local Development Framework. It can interpret established legislative provisions and planning policies and explain how they will be applied within the conservation area to ensure its preservation and/or enhancement. If any particular issues are identified which do require new policies to be drawn up, the management plan can indicate these and set a programme for their development as part of the Local Development Framework process

1.4 This Management Plan for the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area sets out the means proposed for addressing the issues identified in Section 06 of the above Conservation Area Appraisal, and outlines the proposals for boundary changes as also suggested by the Appraisal.

2 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 National Policy

2.1.1 National policy and advice regarding conservation area matters is given in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is available to at the link given below (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf).

2.1.2 Paragraph 186 of the NPPF points out that the quality and interest of areas rather than individual buildings is the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas . Paragraph 185 sets out the benefits that accrue from preserving the historic environment whether it be the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental advantages, the desirability of new development to make a positive contribution or the opportunities arising from an understanding of the intrinsic character of a place.

2.1.3 The Historic England guidance document (Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management – 2016) refers to the importance of keeping the boundaries of existing conservation areas under periodic review to ascertain whether any changes are required.

2.1.4 The document suggests that designation of a conservation area in itself is unlikely to be effective without the formulation of specific policy guidance, and reminds local planning authorities of the duty imposed on them by Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and for these to be submitted to a 'public meeting' in the area. Paragraph 4.16 points out that such proposals cannot realistically seek to prevent all new development and should instead concentrate on the controlled and positive management of change; indeed, it is suggested that there may be instances where redevelopment will be a means of enhancing character.

2.2 Local Policy

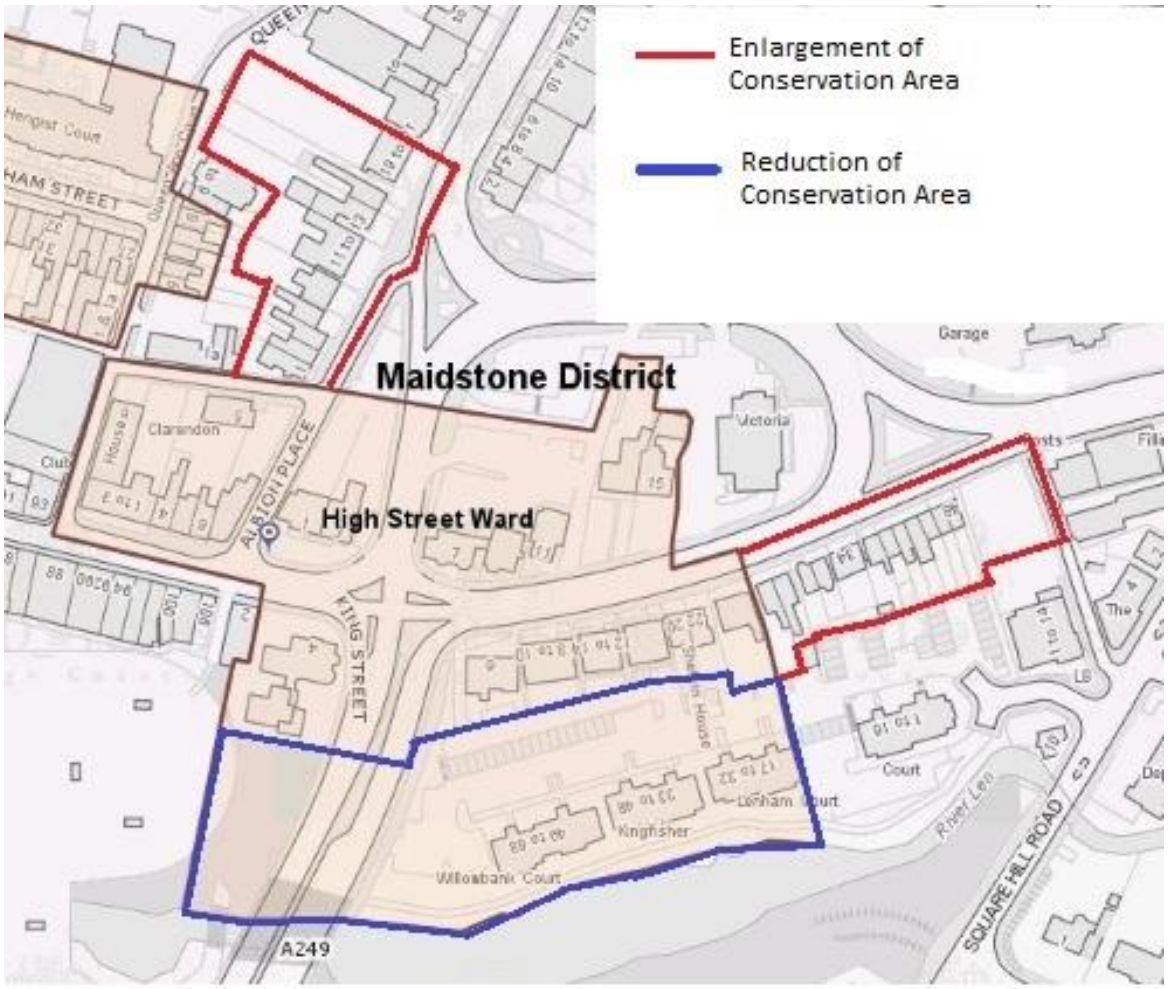
2.2.1 Maidstone Borough Council published its Local Plan in 2017. (http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/planning-and-building/primary-areas/local-plan-information) A supplementary planning document to cover conservation areas has not yet been produced but there will be specific reference to heritage assets in the reviewed Local Plan due to be published in 2022. While this Management Plan indicates how national and local policies will be applied in the on-going management of the conservation area, it is not in itself a planning policy document but Local Plan policy DM4 refers to conservation area appraisals and management plans as supporting documents so they are material to planning considerations.

3 PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES

3.1 Studies carried out in connection with the historical development of the area and with the townscape appraisal have suggested that some adjustments to the boundary of the Conservation Area may be justified in two of the three instances but not in the third. They are:

- The south side of Ashford Road from no. 26 to the junction with Square Hill, together with the western side of Square Hill to include the locally listed public house This would give some protection to the setting of the Conservation Area and views of it in the approach from the east
- The western side of Albion Place from No.1 to No.21. Although the style of these properties is more playful than those already within the Conservation Area they do have a lot in common and are contemporary with the other Georgian properties. They do give a fanfare to the Conservation Area as you approach it and are significant scene setters in the approach from the North
- Further consideration of the inclusion of Nos. 70-106 King Street, 91-93 King Street and 2a Ashford Road has come to the conclusion that these buildings would not add to the conservation area in a cogent way since they do not share the Georgian features which are characteristics fundamental to its establishment.

View of Albion Place



Proposed changes to Conservation Area boundary

4 PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

4.1 Planning Considerations

4.1.1 Sensitive and responsive management of development pressure is required in order that new developments do not spoil the character and appearance of the conservation area. To this end, the Council will adopt the following principles when dealing with planning applications within the conservation area or on sites affecting its setting:-

4.1.2 The Council will apply the principles, guidance and regulations set out by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the further guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework and any subsequent revisions, additions or replacement government guidance.

4.1.3 The Council will apply the relevant policies from the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2017 until such time as these policies are replaced by a future Local Plan or by policies in the emerging Local Development Framework.

4.1.4 The Maidstone website gives advice on the content of a planning application – see validations checklist. Applications will not be validated until sufficient information has been submitted.

4.1.5 Applications for planning permission or listed building consent should be supported by a Design and Access Statement setting out the reasons for the development, explaining how the design has been evolved and showing how it will preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area; it should also cover any access issues which exist. There is guidance on preparing a Design and Access Statement available from the Design Council. (https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/design-and-access-statements-how-write-read-and-use-them). Cases affecting heritage assets will also require a Heritage Statement. Historic England have published guidance on this aspect in 2019 (https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/statements-heritage-significance-advice-note-12/).

4.1.6 Applications must be accompanied by clear and accurate scale drawings showing the proposed development in detail and illustrating how it fits in to its context. Drawings should clearly indicate materials to be used in producing the external finish and architectural details of proposed buildings. Site plans should accurately depict the positions of trees on or adjacent to the site and show clearly those which will need to be removed and those which will be retained. Where trees are affected by the proposals the application should include a survey by a professional arboriculturist to comply with current British Standard BS5837, 'Trees in Relation to Construction – Recommendations'. It should also include details of any proposed works to, and methods for protecting, any retained tree. Photographs and other illustrative media are encouraged.

4.1.7 Outline planning applications will not be accepted for proposals within the conservation area or on sites affecting its setting.

4.1.8 The Council will make use of technically experienced and qualified officers in guiding the assessment and determination of all applications within the conservation area or affecting its setting.

4.1.9 The overriding consideration in dealing with any proposal for development will be whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. Any proposal which fails to do so will not be considered favourably. The Council will not insist on any particular architectural style for new buildings, but the quality of the design and its execution will be paramount. The Council encourages the use of high quality contemporary design, subject to proposals being appropriate to their context in terms of scale and use of materials; however, there may be instances where a traditional approach is appropriate –in such case, designs should be high in quality and well-researched, resulting in a scheme which accurately reflects the design, scale, massing, detail and materials of local tradition. The council encourages the use of the pre-application process which ensures that planning officers are aware of a proposal at an early stage and can give advice to ensure the appropriateness and quality of any design. See pre application guidance.

4.1.10 In dealing with applications for the redevelopment of existing buildings, the Council will have regard to the detailed building assessments as set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal and in this Management Plan. Except in the most exceptional circumstances, planning consent will not be granted for the demolition of buildings identified as being 'essential' to the character of the conservation area, and is unlikely to be granted for those rated as 'positive'; buildings cited as 'neutral' may be considered appropriate for redevelopment, subject to the quality of any replacement scheme constituting an improvement over current circumstances; the redevelopment of sites and buildings judged to be 'negative' will usually be encouraged so long as any scheme is appropriate to its context. Permission will not normally be granted to demolish buildings in the absence of an approved scheme of redevelopment.

4.1.11 It will be necessary for any development proposals to illustrate that it is appropriate within the context of the conservation area and will not harm its special character. It is considered that the scope for new developments within the conservation area is very limited, but in dealing with any proposals the Council will have regard to the following considerations in addition to those set out above:-

4.1.12 Development should respect the differing spatial forms of different streets and parts of streets in the conservation area. Spaces between buildings, the character of the buildings themselves, and the contribution of local and longer-distance views are an important factor contributing to the overall character of the conservation area.

4.1.13 New developments should utilise building materials appropriate to the particular site within the conservation area and used widely on nearby buildings–these include:-

- Red or buff stock bricks.
- Natural stone, including ragstone
- White lime render
- Natural Slate for roofs.
- Painted timber windows.

4.1.14 New development should respect the predominant scale of buildings, which is generally modest and of 2-3 storeys across most of the conservation area. Buildings should not generally exceed 3 storeys in height, although there is considerable variety across the area which allows for site-specific approaches based on careful assessment.

4.1.15 Developments should preserve trees which are healthy and make a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area, whether or not they are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

4.2 Proposals for extensions and other alterations to existing buildings

4.2.1 In dealing with proposals for extensions and other alterations to existing buildings, the Council will have regard to the following considerations:-

4.2.2 Extensions should normally be of sympathetic materials, design and detailing to the host building, and should be subservient in scale. See also Extensions SPD.

4.2.3 Dormer windows may be acceptable, depending on their position, number, scale and design. No more than one or two dormers per elevation will normally be considered appropriate and as a general rule a dormer should not occupy more than about one third of the overall height of the roof. Depending on circumstances, dormers should either be covered by a pitched clay tiled roof or, in the case of smaller or shallower roofs, a flat lead roof above a traditionally-detailed cornice. They should not appear crowded together or be located too close to hip or gable lines. Large 'box' dormers will not be considered appropriate; neither will dormers which extend above the existing ridge height.

4.2.4 Roof lights may be considered acceptable and will be subject to the same provisos as dormers in relation to numbers, position and scale. 'Conservation' roof lights which sit close to the roof slope should be used.

4.2.5 Porches can have a disruptive effect on the appearance of regularly designed terraces and semi-detached buildings, and on all buildings if too large or poorly designed. The Council will consider all proposals for porches carefully and where necessary will resist them. Where appropriate in principle, porches should be of modest size and be of appropriate design for the building to which they are to be attached.

4.2.6 Satellite dishes will only be considered acceptable when they cannot be readily seen from the streets or other public spaces

5 ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

5.1 Unauthorised development may seriously harm the character of the Conservation Area as well as causing other problems. The Council is therefore fully committed to using its powers under Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to serve enforcement notices, where expedient, to allay breaches of planning control. Section 9 of the Act sets out the relevant offences. Parallel powers to serve listed building enforcement notices regarding unauthorised works to listed buildings also exist by virtue of Section 38 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and these too will be used to their full. In suitable cases the Council may also exercise the legal provision to seek a prosecution for unauthorised works to a listed building or the unauthorised demolition of an unlisted building

6 ENHANCEMENT PROPOSALS

6.1 Apart from these considerations pertaining to redevelopment there are a number of areas which merit investigation regarding the enhancement of the Conservation Area. These include:

- Introduce a repaving programme to cover those streets which currently exhibit poor floorscapes.

- Encourage the reinstatement of appropriate boundary divisions and railings

- Seek to reduce street clutter and generally rationalise traffic signs and other highway – related paraphernalia.

- Seek general elevational improvements to buildings which have been insensitively altered in the past, and prevent such alterations from occurring in the future.

- Seek to ensure the good repair of buildings.

- Continue to look at ways of reducing the impact of heavy traffic on historic streets.

- Investigate ways of improving the appearance of side streets and exposed flank walls.

6.2 Buildings in Disrepair

6.2.1 This is currently not a significant issue in the Ashford Road Conservation Area. However, there are examples where sub-standard or inappropriate works have been carried out which diminish the quality of the conservation area. The council has a number of powers which the Council can and will use should any building fall into a state of disrepair serious enough for it to significantly adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area or to endanger the future of a listed building. These powers are:

6.2.2 Urgent Works Notices (Section 54 and 76 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Such notices can be served in respect of any vacant building or, with the prior approval of the Secretary of State, a vacant unlisted building whose preservation is considered important to the maintenance of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Works specified can only be the minimum necessary to make the building wind and weathertight and are thus essentially temporary in nature. The owner must be given at least seven day's notice, after which the Council may carry out the specified works and reclaim the costs from the owner.

6.2.3 Listed Building Repairs Notices (Section 48 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. These can only be served in respect of listed buildings. Full and permanent repairs can be specified. If an owner fails to commence work on the specified works within 2 months of the service of a Repairs Notice, the Council may start compulsory purchase proceedings in relation to the building; no other recourse is made available by the legislation.

6.2.4 'Untidy Site' Notices (Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). Such a notice can be served in respect of any land (including a building) which the Council considers to adversely affect the amenity of the surroundings. The necessary steps to remedy the condition of the land and building need to be set out in the Notice and at least 28 days given for compliance. Failure to comply is deemed an offence and is punishable by a fine.

6.3 Trees

6.3.1 There are very few trees within the conservation area and their contribution to its character is not significant. Most trees are located in the southern extreme close to the boundary in the area that is recommended for removal from the conservation area. However the council is keen to protect those trees that are present and has certain powers in hand. Trees with a stem diameter generally above 75mm at 1.5 metres above ground level are protected under Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and six weeks formal prior notice to the Council is required for any proposal to cut down or carry out other work to such trees (a Section 211 Notice). If a tree is considered to be dead or dangerous the person proposing to remedy the problem is required to give the Council 5 days prior notice in writing to establish whether an application is required. New developments will be expected to retain existing trees of merit and, in most cases, suitable new tree planting will be required to mitigate any losses. A full planning permission which details works to protected trees overrides the requirement to give notice or obtain consent separately for such work. However, anyone who otherwise carries out unauthorised to protected trees is likely to be guilty of an offence punishable by a fine. There may also be a duty to plant a replacement tree of appropriate size and species in the same place as soon as can reasonably be done. This duty may also apply if the tree has been removed because it was dead or dangerous.

6.4 Traffic Management

6.4.1 Heavy traffic is an unfortunate aspect of the conservation and, given the significance of the main roads that pass through it there is certainly no prospect in the short term of any major initiative to reduce volumes to improve the pedestrian experience, the air quality and the appreciation of the calm qualities of the architecture.

6.5 Reinstatement of Original Features

6.5.1 There are examples of damage caused to the character of the conservation area caused by injudicious alterations to properties. Such alterations include re-roofing in inappropriate materials; replacement windows, doors and display windows of inappropriate design or materials, removal of railings, treatment of forecourts or plastic rain water goods. The Council would like to see a process of reversal where this has happened though it can only be by persuasion as there are no provisions to enforce reinstatement where the alterations are covered by permitted development. Nevertheless the Council will encourage property owners to appreciate their value and to reinstate traditional forms and materials as part of ongoing maintenance.

6.6 Public Realm Improvements

6.6.1 The character appraisal identifies the condition of the public realm throughout the Conservation Area, and how this has a significant impact on the character of different streets and spaces. Recent enhancement works in the more central part of Maidstone to the west have made a considerable difference to the appearance of High Street, Bank Street, Week Street, Gabriel's Hill and part of King Street, but to date nothing has been activated in this part of the town.

6.6.2 The public realm improvements would usefully extend beyond Ashford Road and King Street to pick up the lacklustre approaches – those parts of Albion Place, Queen Anne Road and Wat Tyler Way which lie within the conservation area.

6.6.3 With or without the impetus of public realm works occupiers of properties should be encouraged to reinstate building frontages with railings and paving more in keeping with the buildings to which they lead.

6.7 Article 4 Directions

6.7.1 The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) enables local planning authorities to make directions to withdraw permitted development rights. The individual permitted development rights which can be removed are limited to specific classes of development.. Government guidance on the use of Article 4 Directions is given in Department of the Environment Circular 9/95, which states that permitted development rights should only be withdrawn where firm evidence exists that damage to the character and appearance of a conservation area is likely to take place or is already taking place because of the exercise of such rights. Within Ashford Road Conservation Area there are a number of listed buildings which are protected from unsuitable alteration by listed building legislation. In addition, non-residential buildings enjoy little in the way of permitted development rights. There is no Article 4 direction in place in this conservation area and currently no perceived need to introduce one.

7 REVIEW AND PRACTICE PROCEDURES

7.1 The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be reviewed after an appropriate period of not less than five years and any required amendments will be incorporated.

8 ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

ISSUE	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
Boundary Changes	Bring forward suggested boundary alterations for approval of SPI Committee. Conduct public consultation	HLD Head of Planning Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee
Traffic Management	Liaise with Kent County Council to determine approach	HLD
Enhancement of Public Realm	Liaise with Kent County Council to investigate options	HLD Kent County Council Head of Planning
Reinstatement of original features and good repair and maintenance practice	Consultation with relevant stakeholders	HLD

Useful Contacts

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The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) South East branch SEBranch-Secretary@ihbc.org.uk
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) 37 Spital Square
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