

**STAR HILL TO SUN PIER
CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

Pre consultation draft Aug 2016 V5



**Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area Appraisal
Pre consultation DRAFT August 2016**

	Page
1 Introduction	
- 1.1 Purpose of the document	3
- 1.2 The Area	3
- 1.3 Planning Context	5
2 Location and topography	7
3 Historic development and archaeology	
- 3.1 Historic development	8
- 3.2 Archaeology	12
4 Views	13
5 The character of the conservation area	
<i>East of the railway bridge (Chatham Intra)</i>	
- 5.1 Character area 1: High Street	16
- 5.2 Character area 2: Historic Wharves	24
- 5.3 Issues and Opportunities	29
<i>West of the Railway Bridge (St Margaret's Banks and the High Street)</i>	
- 5.4 Character Area 3: Rochester suburbs	33
- 5.5 Issues and Opportunities	39
6 Management Plan	
- 6.1 Introduction	40
- 6.2 Policies and actions	40
- 6.3 Boundary review	48

Appendix:

Listed buildings within the conservation area

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of document

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as:

'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

The Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area was designated a conservation area by the City Council of Rochester Upon Medway in 1995. This document is the first full appraisal of its special qualities since designation. By laying out what is important about the area, this appraisal will:

- 1) assist the Council and others in judging whether development proposals *preserve or enhance the character or appearance* of the area; and
- 2) help to ensure that the architectural and historic significance of the area is taken into account when considering development proposals.

A management plan accompanies the appraisal. This sets out a strategy for preserving and enhancing the special character of the area.

1.2 The Area

Summary: The special interest of the area.

The Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area is a linear riverside hinterland based around an historic high street that stretches between Star Hill at the edge of the historic City of Rochester (dating back to Roman times) and Sun Pier at Chatham (largely built following the establishment of the adjacent Naval Dockyard in the 16th C).



It has an outstanding setting on a narrow flood plain between the River Medway to the north and a steep escarpment to the south. A prominent railway bridge divides the conservation area into two main character areas.



The western half, towards the historic Rochester city centre, consists of Georgian and early Victorian houses mainly on traditional narrow plots on the raised bank of St Margaret's Banks which bounds the south side of the High Street. The northern part of the High Street in this area was developed alongside the new railway from the 1860's and consists mainly of commercial premises, many in an attractive Arts and Crafts style.

The area to the east of the railway bridge, historically known as Chatham Intra, became a commercial district under the economic stimulus of the Naval Dockyard at Chatham from the Dockyard's inception in second half of the 16th Century. Its hey day was the age of sail in the 18th Century through to the establishment of the Naval Dockyard as a fleet base for the steam navy in the 19th Century. The area featured fine shops and houses along the High Street, with brewing, ship repair and other industrial activities taking place between the High Street and the River Medway.

The High Street remains a narrow and constricted thoroughfare with narrow frontage buildings on traditional narrow plots serving to unite disparate historic buildings. Its rich history is evidenced today by remaining 16th century town houses (albeit in altered form), Georgian terraces, and commercial shops and tenement buildings from the high Victorian era along the narrow High Street.

The hinterland between the River Medway and the High Street is the sole survivor of the traditional industrial development that would once have stretched along much of the riverside of the Medway towns. It retains a jumbled character with a range of buildings and scales but all functional and built to serve the commercial needs of their owners. The strong 'herring bone pattern' imparted by the alleyways between the High Street and the river remains a key characteristic.

With changing retail trends and the closure of the Dockyard, Chatham Intra had become a secondary area. Buildings became run down and there was an attendant loss of architectural features plus unsightly gap sites and some poor quality modern buildings. However, with the introduction of planning controls to stop further loss of traditional windows and other features, plus a major grant scheme which finished in 2015, the area is beginning to see a transformation towards a leisure and arts based economy.

1.3 Planning context and rules

Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area- planning rules

Special planning rules apply to the Star Hill- Sun Pier conservation area as follows:

1) In line with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council will pay special attention, when considering planning proposals within the Star Hill to Sun Pier area, to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the area's character and appearance.

This means that alterations to existing buildings and proposals for new buildings must be designed to be sympathetic to the character of the area.

2) Planning permission is required for small changes to buildings (i.e for changing windows, doors, shop fronts or roof coverings). This covers all types of buildings- shops and other commercial buildings, flats, and, since the introduction of special planning controls in 1998, houses as well.

In line with Section 72, the Council will judge small changes as to whether they will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area. In general, this means that any new windows, roof coverings, doors, shopfronts etc. must match historic patterns and details, and be in traditional materials.

Further information on the Council's approach to managing change in the area is included in the **Star Hill to Sun Pier Management Plan** that accompanies this appraisal.

In addition to this all planning applications will be judged against the Council's own policies on the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment in Medway. These are as laid down in the Medway Local Plan, 2003 as follows:

- BNE 12: Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- BNE 13: Demolition in Conservation Areas
- BNE 14: Development in Conservation Areas
- BNE 15: Advertisements in Conservation Areas
- BNE 16: Demolition of Listed Buildings
- BNE 17: Alterations to Listed Buildings
- BNE 18: Setting of Listed Buildings
- BNE 19: Advertising on listed buildings
- BNE 21 Archaeological sites

The Council has also produced the following Supplementary Planning documents that lay down planning and conservation policies of specific relevance to the area. These are as follows:

- Star Hill to Sun Pier Planning & Design Strategy SPG (adopted May 2004)
- Star Hill to Sun Pier Public Realm Strategy (2015)
- A Building Height Policy for Medway Supplementary Planning Document, adopted 2006- Part 1: General Policy Guidance, Part 2: Area Policies, Appendix 1- View Management,
- Corporation Street Development Framework SPD (adopted November 2008)
- Shopfront Advertising in historic areas, October 2015
- Shopfront Security, October 2015.

Government Policy:

The Government has laid down its own policies for the nation's historic environment in the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, published in 2012. This introduces the concept of 'heritage assets' and defines a heritage asset as:

'a building, monument, site, place or area, or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest'

The NPPF states that heritage assets are 'an irreplaceable resource'. It highlights:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets;
- the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the conservation of historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

This document, the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area Appraisal, will be of use to the Council and applicants in that it:

- defines the historic and architectural significance of the heritage asset of the conservation area and its constituent buildings and parts;
- defines what is distinctive about the area;
- outlines the social, cultural and economic issues of the area;

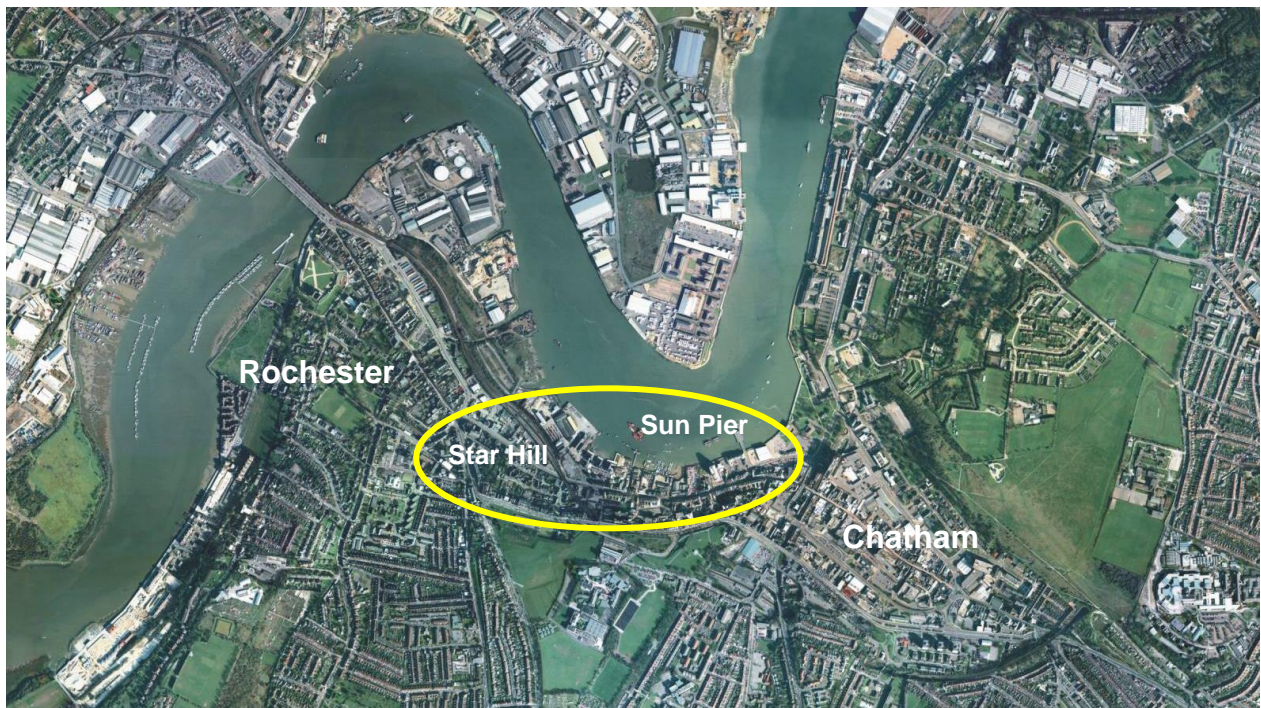
such that development proposals can be measured against the requirements of the NPPF.

2. THE AREA: LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area lies between the historic settlements of Rochester and Chatham in the valley of the River Medway about 12 kilometres upstream from its confluence with the Thames. The towns were established on the flood plain of the river where it cuts through the rolling hills of the North Downs.

The natural constriction of the river to the north and escarpments of North Downs to the south meant that the medieval expansion of both Rochester and Chatham was confined to a narrow strip of formerly marshy land by the river. This led to the very intense development of a linear hinterland based around a narrow and very long High Street connecting the two centres. Industrial uses were squeezed between the High Street and the river. Today, the constricted linear quality of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area remains a key defining characteristic.

The area was eventually by-passed by the Georgian development of New Road in 1784 at the top of the escarpment to the south. Subsequent development of the towns extended onto a series of ridges and dry valleys which run in a north-south direction along the dip slope of the Downs.



3. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

3.1 Historic Development

Medieval origins

The Domesday Book of 1086 states that the Manor of Chatham was formerly in the possession of King Harold and that following his death it passed to William the Conqueror's half-brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. At this time the manor included 1,600 acres of land, 20 acres of meadow, a small amount of woodland, a water mill, a church and six fisheries.

During the Medieval period the area is thought to have been open land attached to the Manor. At this time Rochester was a substantial fortified city with a cathedral and at least three other churches. Chatham was a small hamlet focus on the parish Church of St Mary's. Below this was a tidal watermill where a stream latterly known as The Brook reached the River Medway.

The first known settlement in the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area between Rochester and Chatham is thought to have been a hospital for lepers established by Bishop Gundulf of Rochester in 1078, and placed in an area away from existing settlements. Named after St Bartholomew, the hospital consisted of a large hall with an adjacent chapel. Its remains now comprise part of the south wall of the present St Bartholomew's Chapel.

In addition, the extra-mural suburb of the Parish of St Mary expanded to the east of the then walled City of Rochester into the Star Hill to Sun Pier area.

The Navy

Like other small rural estates, Chatham's medieval economy was predominantly agricultural. However, the winding, sheltered estuary of the River Medway was found to be ideal for mooring ships when not in use, and by 1547 the Royal Navy had started to rent storehouses on '*Jyllingham Water*'. During the second half of the 16th Century Chatham became England's main fleet anchorage and from 1570 onwards the Royal Dockyard was created, the effect of which was to transform the town and define its character for the next four centuries.

With the foundation of the Dockyard the development of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Area became inextricably linked with the development of Chatham. The town's population quickly trebled from around 200, with carpenters, shipwrights, caulkers, mast makers, anchor smiths, labourers, teamsters (who drove cart horses), scavellers (responsible for earthmoving) and sawyers all being employed at the Dockyard.

The centre of population moved from around the Church of St Mary to the former Manor House (on the High Street east of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area), which became an inn and the focal point for a new high street. Sites along the river within the conservation area began to be developed from about 1600. One of earliest available

maps (1633) shows linear development along the road with substantial properties fronting the street and with river access at the rear.



A naval victualling yard was set up in the seventeenth century (on the site of present student residences at Doust Way and survived until the early part of the nineteenth century (by that time the Dockyard was a repair yard and so did not need to victual ships ready for sea). Two houses of this period, the North Foreland and Ship public houses, still survive, albeit in altered form.

Sir John Hawkins

By 1585, it is reported that Sir John Hawkins, Controller of the Navy and a Vice Admiral at the Spanish Armada, owned much of the riverside between Foundry Wharf and Medway Street. The remains of a Tudor building that survives within Featherstone House may be a part of a house that he had in the area. This building lies immediately adjacent to the Sir John Hawkins Hospital, which he founded in 1591 to support '*poor mariners or shipwrights who might be maimed or brought into want or poverty*', and which, in rebuilt form, still marks the start of Chatham's High Street.

Riverside Industry

By the 17th Century Chatham Dockyard had become the Royal Navy's pre-eminent ship building and repair yard. Further growth took place during the 18th Century when, aside from a brief period of peace in the early 1700's, Britain remained on a more or less permanent war footing. By 1742 there were over 1,700 employees within the Dockyard. By mid-century the population of Chatham was swollen still further by the need to serve large army and marine garrisons in new barracks as Chatham became a fortified dockyard and a recruiting centre for troops being sent overseas.



During this period the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area began to be intensively developed, with buildings spreading along the road linking Chatham with Rochester. A good surviving example, probably late 18th or early 19th century, is 365-377 High Street, Rochester, a large timber-framed terrace, weather boarded at the rear and faced in brick at the front.

There are other 18th century town houses remaining such as Nos. 35 and 37 High Street, Chatham, both of which were later converted into shops. These smaller houses tended to have archaic plans of the type that one might have found in London at the beginning of the 18th Century.

The backland between the High Street and the river remained a hive of activity with workshops, stores, boat building and repair, chandlers, two breweries and offices. Many of the industrial buildings of this period have since been demolished, although the extensive complex of the former Lion Brewery still survives including the early Georgian mansion of the brewery owner at No.351 High Street.

The Jewish Community in Chatham Intra

A Jewish community was well established in Rochester during medieval times. The community assumed some importance during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when some members were listed as admiralty agents, deriving profit from the purchase of prize money shares from Royal Naval ships' crews. When the practice ceased, they became ships' chandlers, military tailors, and bankers located in what is now the conservation area.

A synagogue was built on St Bartholomew's Hospital land probably round about 1750. It was rebuilt in a distinctive and grand high Victorian style in 1869 and is listed Grade 2*. It remains a focus for Jewish communities across Kent.

18th Century Squalor

As the 18th Century progressed, development became more intense with the gaps between existing properties being infilled. Wharfs and associated industrial buildings filled the riverside. Eventually the two towns of Rochester and Chatham met at Sir John Hawkins Hospital at the heart of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area.

As Chatham rapidly grew the absence of a town council (affairs were in the hands of the parish vestry) coupled with ad hoc development led to the town becoming increasingly squalid with overcrowded and unsanitary conditions along with litter, crime and traffic.

In an attempt to address this, a group of affluent residents lobbied for an Act of Parliament that would enable rates to be levied to employ night watchmen, street cleaners and lamp lighters. Once the Act was passed in 1772, oil lamps were placed along the High Street, and watch boxes erected for the use of night watchmen. A new toll road (New Road) was created on the top of the escarpment above the High Street to enable travellers to avoid crowded and dangerous lower road. These improvements did not encompass all of Chatham, concentrating instead on the wealthier parts that could afford to pay rates. Poorer areas, such as the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area, were excluded and social divisions became more entrenched as a result.

19th Century redevelopment.

On the 30th of June 1800 a fire broke out in a small warehouse between the High Street and the river and quickly engulfed the neighbouring properties. Damage was centred on the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area, with around 100 buildings on both sides of the High Street, mostly to the east of St Bartholomew's Chapel, being completely destroyed. A second fire in the same area twenty years later destroyed a further 34 dwellings. Vernacular buildings, many of which would have been constructed from weather-boarded timber by jobbing wrights, were replaced by simple Georgian brick terraces. The character of the High Street was changed entirely as a result



In 1888, Chatham ratepayers voted for a Charter of Incorporation. The Charter was granted in 1890 and a formal town council constituted. Within the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area this resulted in the widening of the High Street, including the wholesale redevelopment of much of its southern side from its eastern end almost as far as the railway bridge. Surviving photographs taken around 1900 show that, towards Chatham, this was a prosperous shopping area with grand buildings with elaborate architectural detailing and impressive shopfronts. A recently restored example is Nos. 39-40 with an elaborate neo Jacobean style shopfront.

As with the rest of Chatham, the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area contained a vibrant population swelled occasionally by demobilised troops. It is unsurprising that the area sustained not only a disproportionate number of pubs and brothels but also a number of theatres and music halls, the largest of which was The Gaiety (1890). The frontage block of another, the Theatre Royal (1899) is still standing is immediately adjacent to the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area.

20th Century decline.

At the turn of the 20th century a tramway was constructed between Chatham and Gillingham. This involved the removal of several remaining bottlenecks in the area. Other improvements included the demolition of Best's Brewery to create Manor Road with houses along one side and a Masonic hall on the other, and the widening of Medway Road.

From the end of World War II, there was a steep downturn in the fortunes of the Naval Dockyard and, as a consequence, Chatham. The Marine Barracks were closed in 1950 and the Ordnance Yard eight years later. In 1984 the Dockyard itself was closed along with the town's naval barracks. As the overall economy of Chatham, declined, so too did that of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area. In addition changes in retail patterns have led to retail and commercial activity concentrating on Rochester and Chatham centres. The Star Hill to Sun Pier area has become a rather forgotten hinterland.

However, the long history of the area is manifest in the survival of buildings from all periods along the High Street. In addition, the riverside area retains the ad-hoc and jumbled industrial character that must once have typified much of the riverside of Rochester, Chatham and Strood.

3.2 Archaeology

The Medway Towns are long established urban areas. There is therefore potential for below-ground archaeology. Consequently, a number of areas of archaeological potential have been identified in the Kent Sites and Monument Record compiled by Kent County Council. The sites are shown on [Map ?](#), and listed as follows:

- (1) probable extent of Roman and Early Medieval Settlements of Rochester City Centre;
- (2) Roman roads leading to Canterbury and Maidstone;
- (3) early urban centre, Chatham;
- (4) medieval Almshouse, Chapel and Hospital and Post Medieval Almshouses/Hospital around and to the rear of Featherstone House;
- (5) below ground remains of medieval tower at junction of High Street with Manor Road.

In addition there is potential for archaeology along the riverside at Chatham Intra. The riverside in that location has been realigned in many phases with each phase pushing further out into the river. As a result older and possibly more interesting wharves dating back to medieval times are likely to be preserved inland of younger examples. Waterlogged conditions may have allowed for exceptional preservation.

Some of the later sites such as the former victualling yard could also be of archaeological interest.

4. VIEWS

Views into the conservation area

The conservation area is visible from many places along the River Medway, including from Chatham Waterfront and the key regeneration site of Rochester Riverside. In these views it is the riverside which predominates and which very obviously retains its traditional ad-hoc small scale industrial character complete with occasional piers, jetties and moorings. Within this area, the former complex of the Lion Brewery at Hulkes Lane stands out as a distinctive landmark. Moored boats and ships also contribute to the character of the area.



Some unfortunate gap sites along the riverside allow views to the traditional terraces of buildings that line the south side of the High Street. Apart from this the huge concrete Anchorage House, a 1970's office block that stands within the centre of the riverside portion of the conservation area (but with the boundaries of the area drawn to exclude it), imposes itself very unfortunately in many views.



Views over the river and the low-lying conservation area to the backdrop of the escarpment to the south are a key part of the setting and topography of the area.



Conversely views over the conservation area to the Medway Estuary from roads that climb the escarpment to the south of the conservation area are a conspicuous and attractive feature of the area.



Views within the area

The gently curved alignment of the High Street limits views along it both to the east and west.

From the former wharves along the riverfront fine views can be obtained up and down the river towards Rochester Cathedral and Castle to the west, and the Dockyard and Fort Amherst to the east. Glimpses of the river can be obtained from the alleyways that lead down to the former wharves.

Although views of the Medway City Estate on the opposite bank are uninspiring, it is the historic connection to the river which is important and which is still extant.



Where buildings still exist and have not been replaced by gap sites, defined views up historic alleys to wards the High Street are another important characteristic.

5. THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The main Dover to London Victoria railway line crosses the High Street at high level and forms a visual barrier that divides the eastern and western halves of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area. There is also a marked change of character at this point with the eastern quarter being rather more commercial both along its High Street frontage and within its riverside area. In contrast, the western part has a higher proportion of houses and, instead of a riverfront, is enclosed to the north by the railway line and embankment.



The railway bridge separates the eastern and western halves of the area

Rather confusingly this east/west division does not coincide with the historic boundary between Rochester and Chatham - which is indistinguishable in townscape terms.

The area of Rochester to the east of the railway bridge up to its boundary with Chatham was known as *Chatham Intra*. For the sake of simplicity, the whole eastern part of the conservation area (including that part within Chatham) up to the conservation area boundary at Sun Pier, is referred to in this appraisal as Chatham Intra.

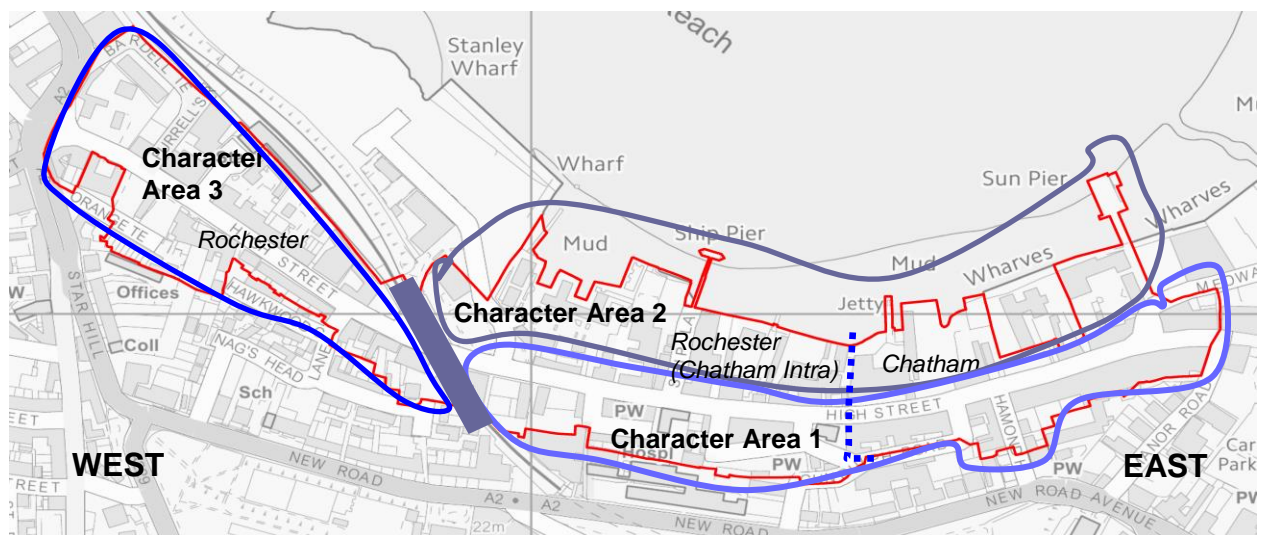
The character areas are:

East of the Railway Bridge: Chatham Intra:

- Character area 1: High Street
- Character area 2: Historic Wharves

West of the Railway Bridge:

- Character area 3: St Margaret's Banks and the High Street



EAST OF THE RAILWAY BRIDGE: Chatham Intra

5.1 Character Area 1: High Street

Summary of special interest:

- Dense, fine grained development on narrow plots centred on a long and gently curving High Street between the centres of Rochester and Chatham, intersected on the north by narrow lanes and alleys leading to the river.
- Raised bank and footway of St Margaret's Banks
- Remaining pre- 19th century buildings, often much altered but with timber frames and weatherboarding in places.
- Terraces, constructed in the Georgian and early Victorian periods, as the predominant architectural form, with some fine Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts as a testament to the commercial activity that once dominated the area.
- Substantial Victorian terraced buildings with decorative brickwork and often with impressive shopfronts
- Several 18th and 19th century houses with shops on the ground floor
- St. Bartholomew's Chapel (Grade 2*), the only surviving portion of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, founded in 1078
- Chatham Memorial Synagogue of 1865
- The Hospital of Sir John Hawkins for *decayed shipwrights and seafaring men*, originally established in 1592



Street pattern and townscape

The historic street pattern, of a narrow and gently curved High Street lined with by buildings set on narrow plots, by and large survives intact, as do the alleys that lead down to the riverfront to the north.

This underlying pattern has provided an overall structure that lends coherence to the area, despite the varying periods of architecture. This, along with the near continuous frontages (especially on the south side of the High Street) and generally 3-storey buildings which are high relative to the width of the street, give the area an enclosed urban character.

The sense of enclosure is dissipated in places by gap sites. A large second hand car lot exists between the river and the High Street adjacent to 35 High Street. Close by, the 13 storey modern building of Anchorage House is set back from the High Street to create a further sizable gap in the built-up frontage. Together these two sites fracture the character of the north side of the High Street towards Chatham. However, the gaps sites offer an opportunity for development which is sensitive to the scale and character of the area and which will bring back a living and working population to the area.

There is also a sense of openness at the western extremity of the character area where it meets the railway bridge. The Doust Way car park, on the site of the former Chatham Central Station (see box below) and at the entrance of regeneration site of Rochester Riverside constitutes an unfortunate gap in the townscape. However, it provides visitor parking and is therefore important in sustaining the economy of the area.

Chatham Central Station, on the site of the present Doust Way car park, was the terminus of the Chatham Extension from Strood serving the towns of Rochester and Chatham. The terminus was opened by the South Eastern Railway in 1856. It merged with the London, Chatham and Dover Railway in 1899 to become the South East and Chatham Railway. After the merger it was decided that the Chatham Extension was an unnecessary duplication of the line. The extension and its stations, including Chatham Central, were closed in 1911.

Apart from the present railway bridge (part of Rochester Bridge) and the openness of Doust Way no trace of the station or the Chatham Extension is evident today.

Opposite the car park a degree of enclosure is provided by the brick wall and railings of the raised footway and road of St Margaret's Banks (see next section).



However, unlike its continuation to the west of the railway bridge, only a few buildings remain with the empty plots mainly given over to second hand car dealing. Those that do remain however, are with one modern exception, typical of the Victorian narrow frontage commercial buildings that exist in the wider area, and are valuable as a result.

Open spaces and trees

Within the conservation area, the landscape is highly urbanised. The only green open spaces are a small garden adjacent to the synagogue (originally the garden of No.351 High Street on the opposite side of the street) set above the street behind walls and cast iron railings and gates, and the open space that constitutes the grounds of the delicate small landmark of St Bartholomew's Chapel and which marks the division between Rochester and Chatham.

The only street trees are those that line the small front garden of the Synagogue. These have grown to an impressive size relative to the space they inhabit and hide the architecture of the Synagogue to an extent. They do however form a prominent and attractive feature in the views up and down the high street.



Landmarks:

The enclosed, highly developed nature of the High Street means that although there is much of architectural interest, there are relatively few buildings or spaces that really stand out within the street scene.

The most notable exception is St Bartholomew's Chapel (listed Grade II*) which sits within its own grounds and is set up from the general level of the High Street. This gives the building gives the additional emphasis as befits its function as building of religious importance.



Just opposite St Bartholomew's Chapel on the north side of the street are the Sir John Hawkins' Almshouses (listed Grade 2), a picturesque of group of small redbrick cottages set round a tiny courtyard. It was established for 'decayed shipwrights and sea faring men' in 1594 and rebuilt in its present form in 1789. The Almshouses mark the division between Chatham and Rochester. "

The Synagogue (Listed Grade II*) also stands out as an imposing building of religious importance built in a highly decorative Byzantine style.



Of the domestic buildings in the area, it is the Georgian mansion of No. 351 High Street (Grade II*) that stands out on account of its scale and grandeur. It has lost what once must have been a very grand portico and railings at ground level and is currently unoccupied. It does however remain substantially intact.



Not far from No.351 High Street is No. 363- 365 High Street (Grade 2 listed) which stands out as tall weather-boarded building with an archway over the entrance to the wharf behind. It features a particularly fine mid Georgian porch and an equally fine Regency balcony on its rear facade. Its unusual form and tall flank marks the end of fine row of Georgian buildings and give it particular prominence.

Architecture:

The architecture of the area is varied and reflects the long and interesting history of the area. Although many buildings have suffered from unsympathetic replacement shop fronts and windows, much original architectural detail remains above ground floor level. A few buildings are of individual interest, but it is as a group that they derive their importance.

Architecture: North side of the High Street:

Overall, the north side of the High Street has a greater variety of buildings of all eras as compared to the south side of the High Street. This gives it a more disparate architectural character. It is the location of the few surviving older buildings- the Alms Houses, North Foreland, The Ship, plus the very grand No.351 High Street, all of which stand out as individual buildings, and a range of mainly Georgian terraces.

Though not of the best quality, these plain, orderly and well-proportioned terraced Georgian terraced buildings are nonetheless well constructed from yellow stock brick, very often with clay-tiled hipped roofs hidden behind parapets, six-over-six sash



windows and a mixture of domestic and retail ground floors. Some have subsequently been given stucco frontages or have had their brickwork painted. Clay tiles have been replaced with concrete in more recent times, but some of the original and very attractive clay tile roofs remain.

Even within this overall style however, the character of groups of buildings varies greatly along the north side of the High Street. Nos. 363 -367 High Street Rochester have been given a Georgian brick built front, whilst at the rear the original weather-boarding is evident. This particular terrace appears as single and quite grand unified terrace. Elsewhere, terraced buildings are set in short runs between the narrow entrances to the lanes leading towards the riverfront.



Towards the east (central Chatham) the buildings on the north side of the High Street are more continuous, with the narrow building frontages and proportions becoming a dominant feature.

Towards the west of the area, near the railway bridge, is St Bartholomew's Terrace - a modest single row of 1887 workers' houses. Although the buildings have some unfortunate modern additions such as pvc windows and concrete tile roofs, they nevertheless form a cohesive single group which forms a distinct character pocket within the area.

Architecture: South side of the High Street



The south side of the High Street features more continuous lines of three storey terraces built on narrow plots. The plot widths dictate the overall tall and narrow proportions of the individual buildings and serve to unify the eclectic mix of Victorian and Georgian buildings. The delicate St Bartholomew's Chapel standing within its own grounds forms the chief break in the street frontage.

Buildings are generally robustly constructed often in a darker red brick and sometimes with generous sandstone margins and details, and originally had slated roofs. Their north facing aspect than means that they are in shadow much of the time. This gives them a rather severe quality.

The south side also features some very impressive and fine late Victorian rows of commercial buildings with matching worked frontages to the street and gables, dormers, arched and bay windows and elaborate corner features all enriching the townscape. Their uniformity of each row adds considerably to their architectural power.

348-364 High Street, Rochester is a composition of decorative gable ends in a competent and attractive Arts and Crafts style predominantly in red brick. Nos. 378-384 feature similar detailing but with oriel bay windows projecting from beneath polychromatic brick arches.



Nos. 386-392 Rochester High Street is a rather more plain set of buildings in yellow stock brick with decorative red brick arches to window openings and reveals, with a fine shopfront to Nos.390-392 in a prominent corner location.

Nos 32-38 High Street, Chatham is an impressively grand row with tripartite windows which feature classical stone surrounds and entablatures and a roof which overhangs the main façade on projecting stone corbels. The buildings within the row are wider and taller than is the norm in the area. This adds additional grandeur. The overall composition is spoilt by the add hoc replacement of shopfronts and the painting of the main facades. Other features remain intact.



Nos 82- 100 High Street, Chatham is a large and richly ornamented tenement block that was built on the site of Best's Brewery between 1898 and 1909. It features redbrick with stone banding and an assemblage of assertive curved windows and arches, projecting bay windows, and gable ends. It is spoilt by adhoc replacement of shopfronts including a continuous shopfront with a deep fascia running between Nos.94-100 High Street, but otherwise remains impressively intact and grand.



Roofs

Whilst the roofs of the Georgian buildings and early Victorian buildings remain obscured by parapets, those of the taller Victorian buildings and terraces to the south are easily seen, their coverings and stacks contributing significantly to the character of the area. The roofscape of the area is a significant feature as viewed from the higher ground of the New Road area.

Modern buildings:

Interspersed along the High Street are some more modern infill buildings, generally of poor architectural quality. Of these it is the huge 13-storey bulk of Anchorage House (carefully excluded from the conservation area when the conservation area boundaries were drawn up in 1994) which dominates the area and which causes the most damage. There are however a couple of worthwhile modern buildings which are detailed below.



Nos. 3-19 High Street, Chatham stands out as a good example of 1950's garage which is still in its original use. Its linear form and its setback from the street front are in complete contrast to the narrow frontages of traditional buildings in the area, and are thus destructive of historic street pattern and character. The building nevertheless has an interesting, if rather plain, Art Deco style. Suitably converted, with its forecourt brought back into use, it could be an interesting pub, club or restaurant.



Although run down, Nos. 337-341 High Street, Rochester remains a unique example of a building with a full-on Art Deco façade. It has an attractive shop frontage recessed slightly from the building line. The recessed porch area has terrazzo flooring and an original Art Deco door. Pressed steel windows remain to main elevation. The building abuts a mid 19th century brick warehouse at the rear.

Shopfronts:

A number of original shop fronts of varying condition survive within the area. Earlier shop fronts, from the early to mid 19th Century, feature very fine and delicate joinery. Some of late Victorian shop fronts towards along the eastern end of the High Street are especially grand and stand as a testament to the era when central Chatham was a bustling area of commerce. A number shopfronts have been replaced with modern shop fronts, however their frames (the pilaster and cornice surrounds) often survive, although often in poor condition. Overall shop fronts make a very important contribution to the townscape quality of the area.



Behind the High Street



A steep escarpment rises directly behind the High Street up to the elevated Georgian by-pass of New Road to the south.. This topography provides a dramatic backdrop to the buildings of the conservation area. Overall, however, the area is dominated by massive rear façade of the redbrick Victorian St Bartholomew's Hospital which lies on the escarpment to the south of and above the conservation area and which looms over it.

There are three steep and narrow streets from the High Street to New Road- Nags Head Lane, Five Bells Lane and Hammond Hill. For the most part these are too steep for intensive development, but they give fine views over the conservation area towards the river.

There is a very small row of undistinguished Victorian terraced houses at Gundoph Road just behind the High Street, and some rather older buildings, sometimes with warehouse type doors on upper level, line less steep parts of the streets.



Within the conservation area and between the hospital and the High Street is the Grade 2 listed castellated 'Gothik' building, now a part of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and known as *The Mortuary*. This was originally a water tower built in the early 1800's to serve the brewery to the north of the brewery owner's mansion at No.351 High Street. It is visible from the High Street across the small public garden adjacent to the synagogue.

5.2 Character area 2: Historic wharves

Summary of special interest:

- A confined setting on a narrow river plain between the River Medway and the High Street. Prominent in many views across and along the river;
- A former industrial hinterland between the High Street and the river with jumble of former workshops, sheds and larger buildings including an impressive and large Georgian and Victorian brewery complex;
- Remains of former slipways and wharves;
- Historic alleyways and lanes between the High Street and the river.

Street Pattern, townscape and architecture.

The area between the High Street and the river was once a hive of industry organised around a series of narrow lanes leading from the High Street to the river. Several are named, for example, Ship Lane, Hulkes Lane and Nicholson's Yard. The others are untitled though no less important, providing essential access to clusters of workshops and stores, and the wharves and piers beyond. The pattern of these lanes has survived almost entirely unaltered and they continue to provide highly important visual links between the High Street and the River Medway.



1898 Maps

Despite some modern patching and replacement, many of the original sets and flags that surfaced the lanes and alleys survive intact and contribute significantly to the special character of the zone.



There are a number of 19th century workshops, stores and bonded warehouses, especially around Hulkes Lane, Foundry Wharf and Sufferance Wharf, and a few other survivors scattered through the area along with more modern sheds. Some have been converted to houses, although many are underused. These buildings are overwhelmingly functional with little architectural decoration and have their own qualities as a result. Most are brick built, but a small weather boarded range remains behind No. 363 High Street in an attractive location adjacent to a small slipway.

Suffrance Wharf has a rather different history than the other wharfs in that it was a licenced private wharf where dutiable goods could be kept until duty was paid.



Within this scattered form of development, the complex of the former Lion Brewery at Hulkes Lane stands out. It abuts the rear of No.351 High Street (the brewery owner's house) and leads all the way down to the river on a linear site hemmed in by the alleyways of Ship Lane and Hulkes Lane. It is a substantial brick built range of buildings of considerable bulk and presence. Its tall gabled bays, side on to Hulkes Lane, form a distinctive skyline that is prominent in many river views from the east. This is an outstanding example of an 18th and 19th century industrial complex (see box overleaf for more details).



Hulkes Lane and the Lion Brewery

There has been a brewery on this site at least since the mid seventeenth century. A lease from 1778 records a *Mansion House and garden* and a *large brewhouse* served by a spring rising in what was once meadow land south of the High Street (Hospital Lane); there was also a *commodious wharf* fronting the riverside.

Between 1786 and 1795 Isaac Wildish and Thomas Hulkes formed a partnership as brewers. Two inventories dating from this time reveal the extent of the brewery premises. There was a malt room, cooperage, well house, hay loft, dog kennel and a smithy with a furnace, while over the High Street the site sprawled out to include a stable and coach house across the road (the Ordnance Arms, rebuilt in the late 1800s and now known as the Britannia).

The constituent parts of the complex remain intact. The brewery owners house, No. 351 High Street, a Grade 2* listed building of the late 1700s (see previous section) provides a suitably grand frontage. Part of an earlier house was retained at the back and this became the *counting house* for the brewery entered directly from the mansion. To the east of this is a fine *chapel*, with an ornate moulded plaster ceiling, lit by a lantern.

At the rear of the counting house are *the grain rooms*, which survive today in a remarkable condition. To the west of these is the *Ale Store* and *Tun Room* built alongside at a later date. Both of these buildings are of red brick construction, in Flemish bond, and with dentilled cornices.

The main *brewery building* is a five bayed yellow brick dating from 1837 of considerable height and bulk. It is divided into five bays along the western side. Immediately south is a single storey structure, replacing an earlier coal store, with moulded render decoration, apparently used as a shop or office.

Towards the end of the 1800s a narrow yellow-brick range on a trapezoidal plan, with red-brick details and steel-framed windows, was built down the north side of the Malt House and, soon afterwards, the whole northern section of the brewery was rebuilt in a very similar, but slightly more ornate style. This latter part is now *The Bonded Warehouse*. It is a high two-storey building with an integral *lean-to* to the north and with its back wall facing the backyards of the small wooden houses which fronted Ship Lane as late as the mid 1900s.

On the other side of Hulkes Lane a long, narrow suite of *brewery stables* was built in the late 1870's. These have recently undergone a fairly sympathetic conversion to residential use. The road surface leading down to river consists of granite setts with two rows of white granite slabs for the wheels of the vehicles.

There is certainly a great deal more about the development of the brewery complex awaiting discovery and any future schemes for regeneration should make full use of this surviving heritage.



Most of the stores and workshops that once clustered around the wharves of Coal Wharf, Sun Pier and Mid Kent Wharf in the eastern part of the area have been cleared to leave empty sites now given over to second hand car lots or else unused. Some workshops remain and although plain and workmanlike, they are a testament to the area's history.

The western extremity of the area, adjacent to the railway bridge at Doust Way, was the site of the former Chatham Central Station and the former boat-building premises of Nicholson's Yard. A single remaining original warehouse on the site has been converted to student accommodation and the rest of the site developed with new student blocks. Whilst the blocks are ostensibly in a sympathetic 'historical' style, they are lumpen, unconvincing and contribute little to the character of the area.

Overall, the riverside area retains something of its jumbled workaday character with a disparate range of buildings from large and bulky brewery complexes to small shacks, but all functional and specifically built to serve the commercial and industrial needs of their owners. The very strong 'herring bone pattern' imparted by the alleyways also remains and is a key characteristic.

Large areas of the riverfront in Medway were once similarly developed but, today, the area is the sole testament to Rochester's, Strood's and Chatham's traditional riverside industry. Although not picturesque or pretty, it is all the more valuable as a result.



The major challenge will be to ensure that new forms of development on open riverside sites respect the area's character. This may best be done by relatively compact development on small sites, alongside the retention of individual buildings (however modest), rather than large comprehensive schemes.

The riverfront

In the past, the riverfront was valuable as a means of transferring goods, repairing ships or for other marine activities. As a result, it was privatised with landholdings extending from the High Street right down to the river. Public access remains very limited to this day.

The river walls and embankments are faced with a mix of steel sheet piling, concrete timber, ragstone rubble, and, in a couple of places, by old barges. A few buildings are built right on to the riverfront. This ad-hoc character is typical of the way the area would have developed to meet a variety of industrial and maritime uses.

Ship Pier, in private ownership, is accessed from the alleyway of Ship Lane- the only 'adopted' and therefore public alleyway in the area. The pier has a floating pontoon that allows access to boats at ships at all stages of the tide.



Adjacent to this is Letley's Yard- a series of moorings on small-scale pontoons together with a slipway adjacent to a picturesque row of small-scale workshops behind Featherstone House.

The publically owned Sun Pier, an impressively large cast iron structure, marks the western end of this distinctive part of the riverfront.

The whole area is below the 200-year flood level. It is therefore likely that new development will require to be raised above this level. In addition, the Council has aspirations to see a river walk established along the riverfront wherever practical and to see this connected to the High Street by existing alleyways. In providing the river walk and flood defenses it will nevertheless be important to maintain views out from alleyways, to ensure that existing buildings are retained and that some semblance of the intricate and haphazard character of the riverside remains. Maintaining the moorings and slipways served by the narrow alley ways will also be important.

The Council has provided further guidance on the riverfront in the Star Hill- Sun Pier Public Realm Strategy.

5.3 Chatham Intra: Issues

The area today:

The closure of the Royal Naval Dockyard in 1984, plus the general decline of industry, has meant that the wharves have become redundant. Much of the riverside area is now given over to low value uses such as second hand car lots and there are a significant number of empty or underused buildings, plus gap sites.

In addition, changing retail trends have led to the concentration of retail activity towards the centre of Chatham, and the development of a tourist and leisure economy in historic Rochester. As a consequence, the retail and commercial economy of the area has declined. This has led to many of the retail buildings along the High Street becoming run-down and in need of repair. Buildings and sites between the High Street and the river are similarly underused. In addition, their deep plan, functional nature means that they can difficult to convert to residential or other uses. This accounts for further vacancies and underuse of building stock.

However, rents in the area were, and remain, cheap. This had led to the establishment of a range of small businesses- some more successful than others. A number of restaurants had also set up in the area making it an evening destination.

Between 2004 and 2014 the Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund ran the Townscape Heritage Initiative- a grant scheme for the repair and restoration of buildings. This has had an observable impact on the regeneration of Chatham Intra. A real difference has been made to the character of the area by the restoration of several complete rows of buildings.

The removal of much dereliction and the now more obvious architectural quality and interest of the area has begun to make it an attractive location for the creative and cultural sector which has begun to colonise some of the buildings in the area. In addition further new restaurants have opened and some of the pubs in the area have become the focus of a student and gay pub scene. Upper floors are being brought back into use as dwellings. In addition, the Empire Reach and the nearby Theatre Quarter (currently just out of the conservation area) are the first new build developments to be completed in many years.

Poor quality modern buildings.

A number of poor-quality buildings have been constructed within the area since the 1950s, none of which preserve or enhance the character of the area. The buildings are spread throughout the area and include: -

- numbers 320, 336-8 and 353-7 High Street, Rochester, all poor quality 1960's buildings;
- numbers 14-16 and 24 High Street, Chatham, all poor quality buildings from the 1970s/80's;

- an array of buildings to the rear of 363-377 High Street, Rochester, mostly sheds and 1970's buildings;
- Anchorage House (standing outside the boundary) dominates the eastern side of the area and is unquestionably the building that is most damaging to the local townscape. The building is currently underused. Reuse or replacement of the building has the potential to bring a substantial residential population back to the area and, at the same time, to improve the area's character and appearance.

Vacancy and lack of maintenance:

Despite improvements, the area cannot yet be described in any way as vibrant. Vacancy rates remain high (although these have declined sharply since the introduction of the grant scheme in 2006) and there is still a general lack of maintenance and care for buildings throughout much of the area.

Loss of architectural features:

With the economic decline of the area there has been an attendant loss of original architectural features such as windows and shop fronts, and on some sites, some cheap and unsympathetic modern replacement buildings.

The Council removed '*permitted development rights*' from front facades in the area by introducing Article 4 Directions under the Planning Acts in 2004. This means that planning permission is required to remove or change windows, doors, roof coverings and other architectural features. Since that date the Council has required historic features on front facades to be kept, and has taken legal action against building owners and occupiers who have ignored this rule (see appendix for a copy of the Article 4 Direction).

The recent grant scheme has seen the reinstatement of traditional windows, shop fronts and other features on over 30 buildings in the area.

Development potential

The redevelopment of key underutilised riverside sites within the area has the potential to remove dereliction, and to bring a new living and working population in to sustain the area. There is also considerable potential to develop smaller gap sites between the High Street and the escarpment to the south.

However, the riverside sites are subject to flooding and both these and gap sites to the south are in many cases contaminated, and therefore expensive to develop. Property prices in the area are generally low.

A key regeneration challenge is therefore to create the conditions for viable development whilst ensuring that such development is sympathetic to the special qualities of the area. Getting the balance right will not be easy.

On the plus side, development is beginning to happen on the riverside and at the periphery of the area. In addition, the development of the very large cleared brownfield site of Rochester Riverside (earmarked for 1500 houses) which abuts the conservation area is, after considerable delay, underway. It is likely that high quality development on this site will change perceptions of the conservation area and make it more attractive to developers.

Creative industries

There is real scope for the area to become a 'creative quarter', with a range of interesting creative and leisure businesses in existing buildings interspersed with new bespoke new housing. Such a quarter would become valued for its fascinating history, its historic buildings and its 'alternative' character.

As importantly, encouraging small businesses to set up in the area is probably the key way of utilising otherwise difficult to re-use historic warehouses and commercial buildings. In turn, the reuse, and hence preservation, of such buildings will be a key part of preserving and enhancing the special character of the area- as required by statute.

However, the nascent creative and cultural industry needs support if it is to flourish. There is scope for the Council, possibly in partnership with the University of the Creative Arts and The University of Kent, and with landowners and other partners to introduce a range of incentives to help artists and small business to establish themselves in the area.

Traffic and the Public Realm

Despite its narrow high street, a considerable volume of through traffic, including heavy lorries, used to pass through the conservation area. However, in 2008 a major flyover was removed in Chatham and the main through roads were converted from one way to two way traffic. This meant that the High Street through the conservation area became a less convenient through route. There has been a corresponding drop in traffic.

There were fears that the drop in through vehicular traffic would lead to a drop in trade. However, this does not appear to be the case. On the plus side, there is no doubt that the conservation area is a more pleasant place to walk around and that pedestrian connections to central Chatham are more pleasant and convenient. There is nevertheless a need to upgrade the public realm in the area and an opportunity to open up connections to the riverside. This has been outlined in a recently compiled document, the *Star Hill- Sun Pier Public Realm Strategy*.

Flood defences and public access to the riverside

New development along the riverside will almost certainly require some form of flood defence. Associated with this is an opportunity to establish a new riverside walk that

stretches from Chatham to the new development of Rochester Riverside, connected back to the High Street by existing alleyways.

However, the still extant historic character of the riverside is one of privatised landholdings with buildings and industry built right up to the river. There is therefore a tension between the provision of flood defences and riverside walks and the need to preserve the character of the conservation area. In addition there will in some places be a need to investigate and possibly preserve the archaeological remains of historic riverfronts. This may well dictate the design of the river walks and flood defences, and that of development behind.

In practice, flood defences and riverside walks are likely to be provided on a piecemeal basis as sites come forward for development. Different approaches to the design flood defences and the public realm will be necessary to address the peculiarities and unique qualities of each site. In some places, for example around Sir John Hawkins' Almshouses, a river walk will probably not be possible. All of this puts more emphasis on the role of future development and land uses in bringing back vitality and interest to the historic alley ways that connect the High Street to the river.

More details on this are laid out in the *Star Hill- Sun Pier Public Realm Strategy*.

WEST OF THE RAILWAY BRIDGE

5.4 Character Area 3: St Margaret's Banks and the High Street

Summary of special interest:

- Raised bank of St Margaret's Bank backed by a picturesque mix of early Georgian to modern terraced houses on narrow traditional plots;
- A number of distinguished, individual 18th century townhouses on St Margaret's Banks, eclectic largely Georgian development elsewhere plus sympathetic modern infill.
- Impressive Edwardian red brick commercial buildings along the north side of the High Street in an Arts and Crafts style interspersed with mid Victorian Terraces.
- Former County Court of 1862 (Grade 2), an impressive red brick building
- Former Rochester Railway Station and station forecourt.
- Railway arches adjacent to the railway bridge.

Street Pattern and townscape

To the west of the Railway Bridge the narrow and enclosed High Street continues to the Star Hill junction. There is a major difference, however, in that the majority of south side of the street is elevated on a large brick retaining wall which rises above the High Street. The narrow street which serves the buildings at this higher level is known as St Margaret's Banks.

St Margaret's Banks began as suburban expansion of Rochester. The buildings within the area were therefore almost all domestic. This remains the case today- in contrast to the mainly commercial frontages of buildings to the east of the Railway Bridge. The street pattern here, as might be expected, is very similar to historic Rochester, with both places sharing the same narrow traditional building plots.



St Margaret's Banks

The narrowness of the eleven arches of Rochester's old 14th century bridge caused in-coming tides to back up, much like the old London Bridge. It was thus expedient to build houses at a higher level- hence St Margaret's Banks. Until the construction of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway line in 1858 the houses on the raised bank would have commanded a view over marshland and some minor wharfs.

With the construction of a new Rochester Bridge in 1856 and the concurrent construction of the embankments of the new railway line to the north, the problems of flooding eased, and the area between the High Street and the railway embankment was able to be developed intensely for the first time. The charming anomaly, of the brick retaining wall and the houses above, remains.

Below and to the north of St Margaret's Banks, the area is low lying and hemmed in between the High Street and the railway embankment. Narrow streets, Bardell Terrace and Furrels Lane once connected the High Street to wharves and yards at the river, but were cut off by the construction of the railway in 1858. The area was largely undeveloped until the 1850's when it was developed mainly for commercial buildings on large plots. This gives this side of the street a quite different character.



The extreme western end of the High Street adjacent to the Star Hill junction was once a jumble of narrow frontage buildings similar in character to parts of the historic Rochester High Street (of which it was a direct continuation). However, it was cleared to make way Star Hill/ Corporation junction that still dominates area today and to provide space for the former Bourne and Hillier Dairy. The site is now the location for a motor company and has modern, utilitarian sheds and open areas of car parking. The setting of such a negative complex at the entrance to the conservation area detracts from the character of the area.

Smaller gap sites, now Council car parks, also exist on the western end of St Margret's Banks where it slopes down to join the High Street. This part of the area is rather dominated by the modern and bulky development of Rochester Gate just outside the conservation area.

Open spaces

As with the rest of the High Street, the area is densely developed. The planned forecourt the now former Railway Station to the north of the High Street, provides the main open space to the area. Its orientation, at right angles to the High Street, and mature street trees give it a degree of formality.

Architecture: St Margaret's Banks

The buildings along St Margaret's Banks form a picturesque collection of domestic styles and eras, ranging from small weather boarded cottages, to larger more formal Georgian brick-built town houses. Many are listed.



The fine mid 18th century Georgian town houses of No. 252 and 254 High Street, complete (unusually for this area) with small front gardens, stand out as being particularly grand. Adjacent to these is the relatively undisguised mid Georgian façade of Medway Little Theatre, which is given prominence by a boxy Victorian front extension over what must have been its front garden.



A large proportion of St Margaret's Banks, from No.258 to No. 280, has been rebuilt in recent times in a sympathetic if rather plain Georgian style that sits reasonably comfortably in the overall area. No.276, Anchor House, remains in the middle of this development as another fine early 18th century terraced town house.

St Margaret's Banks slopes down to merge with the High Street close to its junction with Star Hill. Beyond Rochester Gate is a 3-storey row of mid Victorian buildings (No. 212-208, currently McGees B+B) with oriel windows at first floor level. Although not particularly distinguished these buildings stand out as having retained most of their historic features- windows, shop fronts, eaves- and are therefore worthwhile examples of their era.

The building on the south of side of the High Street terminate at the traffic dominated Star Hill junction with an assertive crescent of gable-ended red brick buildings addressing the junction (Nos. 200- 206) in an Arts and Crafts style. Although rather overbearing these buildings remain intact with original windows and shop fronts. Immediately adjacent to these, on Star Hill, is the Star Inn, built in the same era and style, but altogether more domestic in scale.

Materials and detailing: St Margaret Banks

The materials used to construct the buildings along St Margaret's Banks are a mixture of the red/ brown brick that typifies much of Georgian architecture (and earlier) in historic Rochester, intersperse with timber framed buildings with weatherboarding.

Roofs, particularly on the earlier buildings feature steep pitches, sometimes in mansard form, with traditional clay roof tiles. The more set piece Georgian buildings sometimes

feature shallower pitched slate roofs, often behind parapet walls. As with the High Street to the east, chimney stacks are a significant townscape feature.

Irrespective of style or size of building, most buildings along St Margaret's Bank feature sash windows with small panes divided by delicate glazing bars. Casement windows with dormers, and occasional traditional timber pub and shopfronts provide the main variety.

Architecture: north side of the High Street

The north side of the High Street features a range of commercial buildings dating from the late Victorian era on amalgamated, wide plots. Many feature a distinctive and attractive Arts and Craft style with assertive and complex brick detailing and fine joinery. They lack the small scaled delicacy of buildings on St Margaret's Banks opposite, but stand out being quite grand. The County Court and Nos. 207-217 stand out particularly in this regard. Towards the railway bridge, tall three storey terraces of housing begin to predominate. The High Street terminates with an attractive but plain and workmanlike range of Victorian workshops, the Leach building, and then a series of railway arches.

Landmarks: north side of the High Street.



The former County Court of 1862 is the main extant building at the eastern end of this part of the conservation area. The surrounding open space of the Bourne and Hillier site gives it a rather open setting. It is nevertheless an impressive red brick building with gault and black brick details, and stone dressings under a Welsh slate roof. It is now in use as a dental surgery.



Further to the east, the High Street frontage of the former diary site has a terrace of Edwardian commercial buildings in a uniform Arts and Crafts style complete with fine joinery and decorative red brick facades. The terrace is rather marred by the insertion of modern car showroom shop fronts on the ground floor but still stand out as a powerful architectural composition.

The range terminates with the impressive joinery of a double height shop front of Nos. 215-217 High Street which still bears the original signage, AE Smith and Sons.



Rochester Station and forecourt were built on a gap site between the County Court and *Medway Terrace* (Nos. 237-257 High Street). It is set back against its railway embankment with a narrow tree lined forecourt from the High Street. The building is a yellow brick two-storey structure with simple classical detailing. It is a typical example of railway architecture of the period, if rather lacking in panache.

The forecourt with the classical building of the former railway station as a backing forms an attractive space within the area. It will assume some historic importance as the former station.



The Leech Limited building, 277 High Street, Rochester, is a recent refurbishment of a Victorian workshop. The building retains its solid proportions and metal windows set within thick brick walls. Traditional painted business advertisements have been retained and restored.

Further east, the arches of the railway bridge and the railway bridge itself form the boundary to the area. Although not high, the arches, as with all brick railway arches, are impressively solid and massive. A small disused triangular site in front of the arches gives them additional prominence, as does the recent opening up of one of the arches to form a new pedestrian walkway into the regeneration site of Rochester Riverside. However, the rest of the arches are redundant and are in search of a new use

Other buildings:

To the east of Rochester Railway Station is a former key gap site now redeveloped for housing. Although contemporary in style, the scheme echoes the traditional plot widths of the conservation area. The existing three-storey high-Victorian commercial block at No. 233 has been retained within the modern perimeter block. With its upper floors converted to housing, it still stands out as tall and decorative miniature landmark.

Medway Terrace, Nos. 237-257, is an early Victorian terrace of three storeys plus basement town houses, with typical Georgian features of roof parapets, paired sash windows at each level and gauged brick arches over window and door openings together with platt bands at each level. Unlike most terraces in the wider area, the row of buildings is set back slightly from the street to provide small front gardens and light wells to its basement. The terrace is rather run down, with some modern windows and a variety of non original boundary treatments.

Bourne Court, Nos. 245-253 High Street, is a modern mid terraced infill development in an early Victorian style which is a reasonable copy of Medway Terrace. An additional feature is a *carriage arch* which provides access to off-street, and out of view, parking. The terrace is ended by Nos. 255 and 257 High Street- two early Victorian terraced townhouses which are notable for their plainness of detailing.

Overall, and apart from the still rather bright brickwork of modern portion of the development, Nos 237- 275 High Street reads a single coherent block with a uniform architecture. This uniformity is a key characteristic to preserve.

Between Nos. 259-261 High Street, Rochester, there is a modern single-storey, flat-roofed building used for plant and machinery hire which has a strong horizontal emphasis, in contrast to the adjacent three-storey terraced form. This provides a break in the urban form that is out of keeping with the character of the area.

Materials and detailing: north side of the High Street

The grander commercial buildings along the High Street are in the smooth red brick typical of the late Victorian/ Edwardian 'Arts and Craft' style. They feature stone dressing in plat bands and to windows. Windows in these building are often casement windows with thick mullions and sections, again typical of the Arts and crafts style.

Elsewhere, buildings are rather more plain in a more typical late Georgian/ early Victorian style, mainly in yellow stock brick. Windows are usually timber sash, but with each sash divided into fewer panes (one over one, or two over two) as compared to the older buildings on St Margaret's Banks.

The area was developed after the coming of the railways. It was therefore possible to import materials from elsewhere. Slate roofs, in contrast to the more locally sourced clay tiles on the roofs on the St Margaret's Banks buildings opposite, are therefore a feature of almost all buildings. As elsewhere, chimneys are on prominent feature on domestic buildings, but less so on some of the commercial buildings.

5.5 St Margaret's Banks and the High Street: Issues and Opportunities

St Margaret's Banks

St Margaret's Banks remains by and large an attractive and viable residential area with few heritage problems. Modern development has adhered to the narrow frontage pattern of historic development and has used historic materials, especially brick. Although some of the imitation is somewhat clumsy, in general the new development is sympathetic and has maintained the character of the area. Only towards the noisy junction with Star Hill do gap sites and unsympathetic development begin to appear, and the attendant townscape qualities begin to dissipate.

The High Street

The quite different buildings that line the north side of the High Street have not fared so well. Historic features have in some cases been lost and some of the older residential buildings in particular are run down. However, the high quality commercial and former commercial buildings that contribute so much character of the area remain in use and in good condition.

The recent closure of the railway station represents both a threat and an opportunity. It could affect the commercial viability of the area and lead to increased vacancies. It may also affect the desirability of the area as a place to live. On the other hand, a converted railway station, together with the adjacent motor site represents a major development opportunity which could help mend the fractured townscape at the Star Hill junction and bring its own commercial opportunities.

The potential reuse of the railway arches at the eastern end of the area at Doust Way could result in a commercial development that adds to the vibrancy and attractiveness of the adjacent Rochester Riverside development.

Star Hill junction

The junction of the High Street with Star Hill and Corporation Street is busy, intimidating for pedestrians, and serves to cut off the area from Historic Rochester on the opposite side of the junction. It is highly desirable, in so far as is possible whilst allowing for traffic movement, to downgrade this junction so that it is less of a physical and psychological barrier.

6. STAR HILL TO SUN PIER CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Background

This management plan has been prepared alongside the conservation area appraisal for Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area. The management plan is the key tool for fulfilling the statutory duties in respect of reviewing the conservation area and its boundary. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990. This places a duty on local authorities to review their conservation areas and to *'formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas'*.

The conservation area appraisal concentrates on assessing the character and appearance of the conservation area i.e. defining its existing special interest rather than defining a vision for its future. The management plan in contrast includes mid or long term strategies that address the issues that arise from the appraisal.

The aims of the management plan are to:

- 1) maintain the special interest of the conservation area.
- 2) encourage and shape sympathetic 'conservation led' regeneration in order to secure a long term future for the area.

6.2 Policies, guidance and actions:

The issues affecting the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area identified in the conservation area appraisal include:

- Vacancies and lack of maintenance
- Poor quality modern buildings
- Loss of architectural features
- Reuse of existing buildings
- Creative and cultural industries
- Development potential
- Traffic and the public realm
- Flood defences and access to the riverside.

The following policies and actions address the issues set out above.

Policy 1: Vacancy and lack of maintenance:

<i>Issue</i>	Within the Chatham Intra area many buildings are poorly maintained and some are vacant. This detracts from the character and appearance of the area. This also has a negative affect on its viability.
<i>Policies / Planning Guidance</i>	<p>The Council requires buildings to be 'tidy' and requires historic buildings to be maintained such that they do not deteriorate further.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council will treat the Chatham Intra as a Vacant and Derelict buildings 'priority area' and will serve, where necessary, Section 215 'untidy land' planning notices on building owners. These require owners to repair and redecorate the facades of their buildings. - The Council will serve, where necessary, listed building 'urgent works' notices on building owners to prevent listed buildings from deteriorating. - The Council will encourage building owners finding imaginative new uses for unused and difficult to let buildings. - The Council will accept the conversion of commercial buildings to residential use, including the ground floor of buildings, where this does not compromise historic features such as shopfronts.
<i>Actions</i>	<p>With other partners the Council will investigate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the possibility of a grant scheme for the repair of buildings, particularly where this allows them to brought back into a viable use. - 'meanwhile' uses of derelict shops and buildings

Policy 2: Poor quality modern buildings.

<i>Issue</i>	Some modern buildings detract from the character and appearance of the area.
<i>Policies/ Planning Guidance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council encourages planning proposals for the replacement of unsympathetic and poor quality modern buildings with buildings that are sympathetic to the special qualities of the area. - Anchorage House will become vacant. Whist the building is out of scale with the area and is of a very low architectural quality, it may not viable to replace the building. The Council will therefore encourage a high quality refurbishment that improves its appearance and which brings a residential or working population back into the area. As a quid-quo-quo for the retention of this unsympathetic building, the Council will expect parallel proposals for a High Street frontage building to 'mend' the gap in the High Street caused by the setback of Anchorage House.

Policy 3: Loss of architectural features:

<i>Issue</i>	Original features such as historic shopfronts and sash windows have been replaced in some cases with unsympathetic modern equivalents.
<i>Policies/ Planning Guidance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commercial buildings and flats do not benefit from permitted development rights. In addition, permitted development rights have been removed from householders by way of the introduction of special planning rules known as Article 4 Directions. <i>This means that building owners are required to seek planning permission for all small scale changes to buildings.</i> - The Council will refuse planning applications for the use of modern materials and detailing in place of traditional materials and detailing. Conversely it will encourage proposals for the ‘architectural reinstatement’ of historic features. - Where necessary, the Council will take legal action against building owners who make unsympathetic changes to their buildings in order to force them to reinstate traditional features.
<i>Action</i>	The Council will treat the Chatham Intra area as a planning enforcement ‘priority zone’ and will therefore enforce the planning policies set out above

Policy 4: Retention of existing buildings

<i>Issue</i>	Most buildings within the area are a testament to the long and interesting history of the area. Whilst some of the commercial/ industrial buildings many be relatively modest in architectural terms they are an intrinsic part of the area’s architectural and historic interest. However, some buildings are in poor condition and are difficult to reuse, or sit within gap sites which it is desirable to develop.
<i>Policies/ Planning Guidance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unless there is a very strong reason otherwise, there will be a presumption in favour of retaining all historic buildings. - Comprehensive development proposals will be expected to incorporate historic buildings and bring them back into use. This may require cross subsidy by the new build parts of a scheme. - The Council recognises that new build developments will be an essential part of bringing vitality back to the area such that historic buildings can be retained. New build developments that are sympathetic to the scale and character of the area will therefore be strongly encouraged.
<i>Action</i>	With partners, the Council will investigate the development of repair grant and business incentive schemes to bring buildings back into viable use.

Policy 5: Creative industries

<p><i>Issues</i></p>	<p>The Chatham Intra area in particular is becoming attractive to artists, graphic designers, photographers, film makers, graphic artists, print makers and other 'creatives'. Micropubs and small restaurants add to the attractiveness of the area for these groups, and are in turn patronised by them. The area has been dubbed 'The Creative Quarter' in some Council documents.</p> <p>The continued development of the area as a creative quarter has the potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bring back vitality - create an interesting alternative quarter that adds to the attractiveness of Chatham as a whole for new and existing residents and new and existing businesses, and as a general location o regeneration schemes. - enable the reuse of interesting a valuable historic buildings. <p>However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the creative industries need nurturing if they are to become sustainable in the long term - New development, alongside small scale employment and creative uses, will be an essential part of the regeneration of the area. Ensuring that new development is viable whilst also being sympathetic to the special character of the area (and which attracts creative business in the first place) will be a challenge.
<p><i>Policies/ Planning Guidance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council strongly encourages the reuse of existing historic buildings for creative industries. New build developments will be expected to incorporate such buildings and activities as a condition of planning permission. - Through planning polices, the Council will encourage pubs, restaurants, small scale performance venues, galleries etc. that add to the attractiveness of the area.
<p><i>Actions</i></p>	<p>With the Universities and other partners, the Council will investigate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the development of business incentive schemes to help artists and other small businesses to become established. - 'meanwhile use' schemes for the temporary reuse of buildings for new and small businesses. - Branding and marketing the area in order to make it attractive to small businesses and creative industries. - Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council grant schemes that could helps creative industries to become established in the area.

Policy 6: Ensuring sympathetic new development

Note: This policy is divided into two columns. Developers or their architects are encouraged to respond to the issues and planning guidance laid out in the table in the right hand column, and then cutting and pasting the table into the Design and Access Statements as a part of any planning application for development.

<i>Issues:</i>	<i>Developer's response</i>
<p>The redevelopment of key underutilised riverside sites within the area has the potential to remove dereliction, and to bring a new living and working population in to sustain the area. In addition, the development of unsightly gap sites along the High Street has the potential to enhance the special character of the area.</p> <p>However, it is essential, in securing the future of the area as valued historic and creative quarter, that the special qualities of the area are preserved and enhanced. These special qualities are detailed in the Conservation Area Appraisal. The following characteristics are development are particularly pertinent to new build development and should be taken into account when designing schemes.</p> <p><i>Views:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from the east, west and north to and over the low lying conservation area to the New Road escarpment beyond; - from the south over the conservation area from New Road to the River Medway. - Down narrow alleyways from the High Street to the river. <p><i>High Street:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dense finely grained development generally two to three storeys high on narrow plots, intersected by narrow lanes and narrow site entrances; - Raised bank and footway of St Margaret's Banks; - Landmark status of St Bartholomew's Chapel and of 351 	

<p>High Street in views along the High Street.</p> <p><i>Historic Wharves:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Herringbone pattern established by historic alleyways - Jumble of building types and scales, but generally two to four storeys;. - Jagged waterfront, slipways, moorings and the remains of wharves. - Landmark status of the Georgian and Victorian brewery complex of Hulkes Lane. <p><i>St Margaret's Banks and High Street</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raised bank of St Margaret's Banks - Finely grained, narrow frontage development along St Margaret's Banks - Historic Commercial development on north of High Street on larger plots. - General scale of between two and four storeys 	
<p><i>Planning guidance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The grain of the area will best be protected by compact individual developments fitted between existing alleyways and buildings. The flair, skill and expertise of designers should come into play in addressing issues of privacy, overlooking and surveillance. - The scale and form of development requires careful consideration if it is to add to the current interest and variety. The building heights of new development should normally relate to their immediate neighbours and context (i.e between two and four storeys). - There may be scope for creating interest and variety along the riverfront with taller buildings as carefully considered focal points, but these should do so on a narrow footprint characteristic of the area. In no circumstances should such 	<p><i>Developer's response</i></p>

<p>buildings appear 'slab' like or monotonous in design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Views over, through and to the area should be preserved and retained. - New buildings along the High Street frontage should match the general heights of adjacent buildings and should have a rhythm that matches the narrow frontages of traditional buildings. They should be built along the same building line. - The use of traditional materials, particularly brick is encouraged in order to reinforce local distinctiveness. - The infilling of gaps along the High Street with sympathetic in-scale design proposals is strongly encouraged. New development should not create or retain gaps along the High Street building frontages. - Carefully considered sympathetic and muted contemporary design is encouraged. Where new build is of an appropriate scale, convincingly detailed and proportioned pastiche will be also be acceptable. 	
--	--

Policy 7: Traffic and the Public Realm

<p><i>Issues</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is an opportunity to open up the High Street to the river by making much more of the historic alleyways, and, where feasible introducing new alleyways. - At present most of the riverfront is inaccessible for members of the public. There is an opportunity to create river walks as a part of development proposals. - Some of the alleyways still have historic surfacing materials. This adds very much to their attractiveness and interest. - The quality of the public realm along the High Street is best described as variable. There is a mix of ill matched different concrete slaving slabs, traditional York stone and tarmac. Pavements are often narrow. - Entrances to sites between the High Street and the river are narrow and difficult to use with poor site lines.
----------------------	--

<i>Policies / Planning Guidance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where practical, developers will be required to open up river access for the public by creating Definitive Rights of Way' (ROW) over private land along alleyways and creating riverwalks along river frontages. These will also be designated as rights of way. - Historic paving materials within alleyways, where existing, will be retained and restored. - The Council's Highway's Department will use a standard palette of high quality paving slabs and granite kerbs for repair, maintenance and replacement along the High Street. High quality yorkstone paving will be retained. - Where required 'build outs' should be provided at junctions of alleyways along the High Street in order to improve vehicle site lines. Demolition of buildings to improve junction site lines and improve site access will in general not be acceptable. - Further guidance is contained within the Star Hill- Sun Pier Public Realm Design Guide.
<i>Actions</i>	The Council will consult developers, landowners and other stakeholders on the Public Realm Design Guide before adopting it as design guidance for the area.

Policy 8: Flood defences

<i>Issues</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The majority of the land between the High Street and the River is well below the 200year predicted flood level. Some of the High Street is also below this level. - The provision flood defence has the potential to cut the area of from the river and damage its historic character. It will also be a significant expense. - It will not be possible to flood defend all buildings and sites. In those areas where it is not possible, it may also be also not be possible to provide a riverwalk associated with the flood defences.
<i>Policies / Planning Guidance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flood defence will be required as a condition of new housing development in the area. - Where practical, the Council will expect developers to provide a publically accessible riverwalk with a right of way associated with flood defences. - Flood defences should be bespoke to each site so as to preserve, in so as is possible, the historic character of the area and its buildings. They should also allow public access to the riverfront and be integrated with riverwalks. It may be that the flood defences of individual; buildings and sites is more practical than a single flood defence across the entre riverfront of the area. - Further guidance is contained within the Star Hill- Sun Pier Public Realm Design Guide.
<i>Actions</i>	The Council will consult developers, landowners and other stakeholders on the Public Realm Design Guide before adopting it as design guidance for the area.

6.3 Boundary review

Eastern extension of the conservation area to Waterfront Way

At the extreme east of the conservation area, the junction of the historic Medway Street with the High Street creates a break in the streetscape. A little further to the east, the junction of the Manor Road with the High Street constitutes a further break. This break is further emphasised by the pedestrianisation of the High Street to the east of this point.

However, the High Street continues in much the same way to the east as that in the conservation area with fine Victorian commercial buildings on the same narrow traditional plots. The character of the area remains substantially intact up to the relatively new and wide gap of Waterfront Way (occupied until recently by a concrete flyover), with traditional windows, and other detailing remaining, at least above shopfront level.

The stand out building along this section of the High Street is the assertive and decorative landmark of the Theatre Royal built at the turn of the 19th C in a highly decorative free renaissance style by well know local architect GE Bond. The auditorium has recently been replaced with a modern apartment development but the front of house facilities have been restored to their former splendour. The adjacent Bank Chambers is in a much more solid Italianate style, but is of almost equal grandeur on account of the building's scale and solidity.

A large gap site exists on the south side of the High Street just beyond the Bank Chambers where the former Army and Navy stores were demolished (now the site of the temporary Theatre Square). The historic character of the area is also rather damaged by the modern and bulky Argos store on the north side of the street. This building spans several traditional plot widths with an alien horizontal emphasis. Despite this, is a strong case for expanding the conservation area to take in this portion of the High Street.

Division of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area in two separate areas.

This appraisal has highlighted the difference in history and character between the eastern and western halves of the conservation area. Both areas face different issues and require a different approach to the management of change. There is therefore a strong argument for dividing the conservation area into two:

- 1) Chatham Intra to the east, and
- 2) St Margaret's Banks and the High Street to the west.

Appendix 1: Listed buildings within the conservation area

A listed building is one that is included on the government's Statutory List of Buildings of special Architectural or Historic interest. These buildings are protected by law and consent is required from Medway Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out. Further information can be found in the Council's publication Listed Buildings in Medway – a guide for owners and occupiers.



	Grade
High Street, Rochester:	
Former County Court	II
House at rear of 321	II
329-331	II
333-335	II
343-345	II
347-349 (The Ship Inn)	II
351	II*
359-361	II
365	II
367, 369 and 371	II
373, 375 and 377	II
246	II
250-254	II
276 (Anchor House)	II
286, 292 (The Nags Head)	II
294-300, 300A, 302	II
304-312	II
Chatham Memorial Synagogue	II*
Walls, piers, railings and steps between 368 and 374	II
High Street, Chatham:	
St. Bartholomew's Chapel	II*

	Sir John Hawkins Hospital (1-12 consecutively)	II
	35 High Street	II
Hospital Lane:	Cottage to rear of 374 High St Mortuary of St Bartholomew's Hospital	II II
Hammond Hill:	4	II