

# **Maidstone Centre** **Conservation Area Appraisal**



**Maidstone Borough Council**  
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# **MAIDSTONE CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

## **I Introduction**

### The Definition, Purpose and Effect of Conservation Areas

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

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

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

### The Purpose of the Appraisal

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

The most appropriate form for fulfilling these requirements is the production of a conservation area appraisal for each individual conservation area. English Heritage published an advisory booklet on the form which conservation area appraisals should take in February 2006, and this current appraisal has been prepared in accordance with these guidelines. It is intended to identify the key elements which combine to produce the special historic and architectural character of the conservation area, to analyse how they interact and impact upon one another and to explain how the area has developed into its current form. It will also seek to identify pressures and developments which threaten the special character of the conservation area and sites and features which detract from its character and appearance.

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

## History of Designation

The history of the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area goes back to November 1969 when the Bank Street Maidstone Conservation Area was designated by Kent County Council. This small conservation area covered Bank Street, Middle Row and the south side of the High Street between the top of Bank Street and the junction with Gabriel's Hill.

In July 1974 the Maidstone Borough Council extended this conservation area to include the Market Buildings/Earl Street area and Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street. It was renamed the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area. The committee report from that time reveals that the reasons for designation were the large numbers of buildings included on the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest or likely to be included in the revised List (produced in August 1974) and the definite local character and architectural interest of the area.

A further review of conservation areas which took place in 1977 resulted in a further extension to the Conservation Area to its present boundaries in October 1977.

## Location and Topography

Maidstone is the county town and administrative centre for Kent. The Maidstone Centre Conservation Area is situated on the east bank of the River Medway close to its confluence with its tributary, the River Len, whose valley largely defines the southern limit of the Conservation Area. The navigability of the Medway and the suitability of the Len for the location of watermills were important factors in the medieval growth of Maidstone. The town centre occupies land sloping from approximately 6 metres OD in the river valleys to 19 metres OD in Week Street. The town centre lies on a bed of Wealden clay, with bands of Atherfield clay and alluvium along the river edges; the highest parts of the Conservation Area, along Week Street and King Street, are underlain by the Hythe Beds which produce the Kentish ragstone building stone.

## Article 4 Directions

The character of conservation areas can suffer significantly from the cumulative impact of "minor alterations" which can be carried out as "permitted development" under the General Planning and Development Order in the case of single dwelling houses. Such alterations can include replacement windows and doors and re-roofing in inappropriate materials.

The Local Authority can seek to bring such minor alterations under planning control by the use of Directions under Article 4 of the General Planning and Development Order. There are no such Orders currently covering the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area; however, the dearth of single dwelling houses within the Conservation Area and the general lack of permitted development rights which exist given the predominantly commercial uses mean that the question of alterations carried out under permitted development rights is not a major issue within this particular conservation area.

## **II Historical Development**

### Archaeology

The earliest documentary evidence for settlement first appears in Saxon charters of c. 975 where it is named either as "de maides stana" or as "maegdan stane", probably meaning either "the maiden's stone" or "the people's stone" – possibly a megalithic tomb which was used as a meeting place. By 1086 the Domesday Book entry is for "Meddestane", and in 1159 the town is known as Maidestan. The first recorded use of the current spelling is in 1610.

The origins of settlement in Maidstone are not fully understood and there has been little systematic archaeological investigation carried out in the town. Much of what is known has depended on chance finds, many of them in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which were either never properly recorded or which did not benefit from the application of modern archaeological techniques.

First evidence for human activity in the Maidstone area dates from the Mesolithic period (c. 9000 – 4000 BC) and indicates the presence of nomadic hunter-gatherers. The area was obviously attractive to early settlers of the Neolithic period, as evidenced by surviving ritual monuments such as Kits Coty House and the other Medway Megaliths found to the north and west of the town. Works in advance of the construction of the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link have recently brought to light the existence of a Neolithic house at Bluebell Hill, not far away from Kits Coty House to the north of the town. A Bronze Age beaker was found at Tovil in 1892, some distance southwest of the Conservation Area, and post holes tentatively ascribed to the Bronze Age were found during archaeological investigations on the Palace site just to the south of the Conservation Area.

Late Iron Age activity in the general area is evidenced by large cremation cemeteries at Aylesford and Allington, and cremation urns and pottery of similar date have been discovered as chance finds in numerous locations in central Maidstone. In the years immediately preceding the Roman Invasion the oppidum (or proto-town) at Quarry Wood, Boughton Monchelsea, was established, and it is possible that some settlement focus may have occurred within its territory at the future site of Maidstone.

The Maidstone area is rich in remains of the Roman period, but there is no concrete evidence of there being a town here. Evidence from elsewhere, however, does suggest that it was common practice for settlement focussed on oppida to shift under Roman influence to more lowland sites served by rivers. There are two known Roman villas in the immediate vicinity of the town centre – one at The Mount just to the north of the Maidstone East railway line, and another southeast of the Conservation Area on the eastern side of Upper Stone Street. Many other villas are known along this stretch of the Medway Valley. Two large cremation cemeteries of Romano-British date were discovered during building operations during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. One was at the junction of Earl Street and Pudding Lane, where several urns containing ashes and other human remains were found in 1715 about which little is known – possibly associated with this cemetery were the two or more Romano-British urns found in St. Faith Street circa 1850 and the Romano-British burial group found in Havock Lane in 1932, as well as the 8 skeletons excavated to the rear of nos. 40-50 Earl Street in 2003 as part of the archaeological investigations carried out prior to construction of the Fremlin Walk development. These archaeological investigations also found various pits and ditch features dating from the Roman period as well as contemporary pottery. The existence of this extensive cemetery (together with

another one found in 1859-60 at Westborough, across the Medway, which yielded 25-30 skeletons and about 150 pottery or glass urns) suggests some form of reasonably substantial settlement – if such a settlement did exist, the cemeteries, in accordance with Roman law, would have been outside it.

Other finds of the Roman period include a 2<sup>nd</sup> Century jar found during the construction of Len House in Mill Street in 1937 and a possibly Romano-British building found during the construction of Colman House at the junction of Week Street and King Street in 1967.

Week Street/Gabriel's Hill/Stone Street mark the line of the known Roman road linking Rochester with the iron-rich Weald and the coast near Hastings (and by another road diverging from it at Chart Sutton to the Roman port at Lympne (Portus Lemanis). It has been suggested that the name of Week Street is derived from the Latin word "vicus", a term often applied to small Roman towns – although it should be noted that the direct derivation is from the medieval manor of Wyke, whose manor house stood close to the present-day junction of Week Street and Union Street. It has also been put forward that the "ston" element in various Kentish place names (i.e. the "stone" in Maidstone) – such as, for example, Folkstone, Lullingstone, Cuxton, Keston and Teston – is often indicative of Roman building in the vicinity, although as in many of these examples this may be related to substantial villas rather than towns or villages. In another example, however, at Stone-by-Faversham, there is conclusive evidence of a Roman religious building being incorporated into a Christian church by the 8<sup>th</sup> Century and lying close to the probable site of the small Roman town of Durolevum.

If a small town did exist at Maidstone in Roman times there are two possible reasons for its existence. The ragstone deposits in the area are known to have been exploited in Roman times and the product was used extensively in London to which it could have been easily shipped from Maidstone via the Medway and the Thames. It is possible that one or both of the villas in the vicinity were associated with the quarrying industry rather than agriculture (the villa off Stone Street not being that far away from the later Coombe Quarry). A small town could well have grown up to house workers and provide services for them, and to act as a port for shipping the stone, perhaps based around the confluence of the Medway and the Len.

The other possible impetus for the development of a small town may have been connected with facilities provided for the benefit of the *cursus publicus* or Imperial Post – the official Imperial messenger service. These included inns for overnight accommodation ("mansiones") and posting stations where horses could be changed ("mutationes") and known examples of both types of establishment have given rise to town development elsewhere. Written evidence from the Roman period exists to show that the development of an inn was considered to be a profitable sideline for a villa estate lying close to a main road, so it is possible that one of the Maidstone villas may have been tempted to set up one. Perhaps, however, a posting station is more likely, given the proximity of the major Roman town at Rochester which is more than likely to have possessed at least one inn. Research on Stone Street, the London-Chichester Roman road, has found that posting stations were spaced approximately 11-13 miles apart – a spacing which tallies quite well with the distance from Rochester to Maidstone.

Given the known location of the Romano-British cemetery in the area to the north of the present High Street, the focus of any Roman town which did exist is possibly most likely to be found in the Len Valley, possibly around Wrens Cross (at the extreme

southern end of the Conservation Area) or in the area around the church/palace complex which became the focus of activity in the Saxon period. However, small Roman towns were not always so regularly laid out as larger ones, and ribbon development was common. Such development along the Rochester-Hastings road may have occurred and could account for the remains found at the Colman House site.

Evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity in the area is rather more sparse but this is likely to be the result of the more fugitive nature of any archaeological remains. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was located in the area around the junction of Wheeler Street and Brewer Street to the north-east of the Conservation Area – several inhumation burials with weapons and jewellery dated circa 590-620 were found here in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, so the implication is that there must have been some degree of settlement in the vicinity.

It is likely that land around Maidstone formed a royal estate by this time. The centre of this was probably just to the south of the Conservation Area, around the area now occupied by the later medieval complex of All Saints' Church and the Archbishop's Palace which is now included in the separate All Saints' Conservation Area. All Saints' Church occupies the site of the earlier St. Mary's Church, an important pre-Conquest minster church. The date of foundation of St. Mary's Church is not definitely known, but in the Domesday Monachorum (which is roughly contemporary with Domesday Book but reflects pre-Conquest arrangements) it is recorded as being "mother church" to 17 "daughter churches". All 15 recorded pre-Conquest minsters in Kent were associated with ancient royal estates or estates granted by the crown to the church at a very early period. It has been noted that the original "mother churches" of Kent were often founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century (e.g. St. Mary's Reculver, founded on royal land with the old Roman fort in 633). A settlement of lay people, necessary to serve the needs of the minster, may have formed the nucleus of Saxon Maidstone, grouped around the church, manor house and the adjacent river crossing to its south. If nothing else, it was during the Saxon period that Maidstone acquired its present name.

### Development History

In the Domesday Book of 1086, the Archbishop of Canterbury held the manor of Maidstone which had 25 tenant farmers, 21 smallholders and 10 slaves and was worth £35 10s (as opposed to £14 immediately pre-Conquest). There were 5 mills, 2 eel fisheries and a church. There were also four sub-manors held by tenants owing military service (32 tenant farmers and 10 smallholders in total). The entries suggest an entirely agricultural community with no indication of urban characteristics, although a Sunday market was being held at St. Mary's Church by the 11<sup>th</sup> Century (and which survived until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century).

However, by 1200 Maidstone was a recognisable town, but its focus had shifted away from the church/manor complex to the higher land on the north side of the River Len. The 12<sup>th</sup> Century was a time of intense town formation throughout Western Europe as monarchs, barons and churchmen sought to cultivate the profits of urban property and markets. Between 1066 and 1190 about 100 new towns were created in England and Wales and one of the characteristic features of such places is often a planned gridded street pattern such as exists within the Conservation Area where the old Roman road was used to form an eastern base-line with main streets developed off it to the west (High Street, Earl Street and St. Faith's Street) linked by lesser cross streets (Pudding Lane, Havock Lane and Market Street, the last two now lost beneath

the Fremlin Walk development). The impetus behind the foundation of the "new" town was the Archbishop of Canterbury as Lord of the Manor, although the precise date is not known. The creation of a separate court for the people of the town (as distinct from the manorial court) indicates a formal act of foundation by the Archbishop, but unfortunately no record survives of the date of this creation.

It is possible that the High Street, which was laid out to a typically broad plan and acted as the market place, had been developed by the late 11<sup>th</sup>/early 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The market itself was more than likely founded before the mid 12<sup>th</sup> Century as after this date it could only have been established by Royal grant (the first extant charter for a market in Maidstone dates from 1261 but seems to relate to land associated with the hospital at Newark, of which St. Peter's church survives, on the opposite bank of the Medway). The grid plan to the north was probably complete by 1200 – its northern edge probably marked by the second medieval church of St. Faith, a dedication often found attached to churches at the entrances to towns. The present church is a Victorian re-build but the original church is likely to have been founded prior to 1200 as it possessed burial rights, which were jealously preserved by mother churches such as All Saints' after that date. It may also be relevant that the first documentary evidence of an archbishop's palace in Maidstone dates from 1207/08 – the movement of the focus of the settlement away from the old manor house/church complex and separated from it by the River Len may have produced a degree of seclusion conducive to the upgrading of the manor house to a palace for the archbishop's use and revenues from the "new" town may have helped to finance it. That commerce had developed is indicated by the surviving record of a shop being sold in 1248.

The streets of the "new" town and of Week Street and Gabriel's Hill were set out with typical long, thin burgage plots with narrow street frontages (to maximise the number of properties). In many places these are still identifiable today, particularly in High Street/Bank Street, Gabriel's Hill and Week Street, and still exert an influence on the physical form, grain and scale of the Conservation Area.

By the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century it has been estimated that the population of the town had reached about 2000 (about one third of the size of Canterbury at that time). Various occupations for townspeople are recorded between 1273 and 1479, of which tailors, shoemakers, skimmers/tanners, barbers and masons are particularly notable. Other occupations listed include clothmakers, dyers, smiths, carpenters, wax chandlers, butchers, bakers, mercers, vintners, spicers and glovers. This range of tradesmen suggests a thriving town catering for many of the needs of its inhabitants and of the surrounding rural hinterland. Archaeological evidence from the north end of Week Street, just beyond the Conservation Area, adds pottery production to the list of trades operating in the town at this period. The wool trade was also important at this time, and after 1331 when Edward III invited the Flemish clothworker John Kemp to England, where he settled in Cranbrook, the Wealden cloth trade began to develop. Fullers Earth, essential to the cloth-making process, was worked at Boxley and was used locally in fulling mills which developed along the River Len and the Loose Stream. It was also exported via the Medway and added to the importance of the port function of the town. Ragstone was probably still being transported via the river as it had been in Roman times. It is probable that the first bridge over the Medway from the bottom of the High Street was built sometime during the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, replacing the old crossing near All Saints' Church.

In 1331 the Franciscan Order embarked upon a project to build a friary in the town, which suggests that the town must have been considered to be large enough and



prosperous enough to support it. Two houses and 6 acres of ground were given to the Order as a site for the friary, which was reputedly founded by Edward III and his brother the Earl of Cornwall. The location of the friary has never been firmly established. There is a long tradition that it was sited at the junction of Gabriel's Hill and King Street, and indeed this location is marked on 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ordnance Survey maps as the site of a priory. It has also been suggested that the medieval stone cellars which still exist beneath the later building at this location are the physical remains of the friary. However, this siting seems unlikely for a number of reasons. Firstly, then as now, this must have been a prime commercial location; secondly, the surviving pattern of burgage plots shows no sign that there has been any aggregation of plots to form a piece of land large enough to support a sizeable establishment such as a friary; and thirdly, the topography, with land falling away steeply to the Len Valley, does not lend itself to a complex of large buildings. Furthermore, typical locations for friaries are either immediately outside of town limits or on undeveloped land just inside them – often land unattractive for development for one reason or another – e.g. liability to flooding. They also tend to occupy large precincts with space for large graveyards. The existence of the medieval cellars is also not persuasive – such cellars are relatively common in medieval towns, and at least two other examples survive within Maidstone. Possibly a more likely site is that now known as Corpus Christi Hall. The Guild of Corpus Christi was set up in the town in the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century, and in 1422 was given a pre-existing hall at the lower end of Earl Street – could this have been the remains of the friary which appears to have failed? Many of the friars were transferred to Walsingham Friary in Norfolk when it was founded in 1345. The site seems much more likely for a friary, being in a peripheral location away from the main commercial centre of the town, in an area possibly left free of previous development because of its liability to flooding from the nearby Medway. The fact that the land was originally given to the friars by a certain John atte Water may suggest a man with a connection to the river.



Corpus Christi Hall, Earl Street.

The Black Death of the 1340s probably affected Maidstone in much the same way as the rest of the country and it is estimated that the population may have fallen to around 1,700 by 1350.

The establishment of the Corpus Christi Guild by 1422, however, probably indicates a recovery and prosperity. It is likely to have been founded by leading townsmen to consolidate their positions as community leaders and to help settle town affairs. Although it supported religious observances and had a chapel on site as well as its own chantry chapel in All Saints' Church, it was largely a secular organisation, fostering trade in the town and dominating religious and cultural life. It also made provision for the old and infirm, with three almshouses in Pudding Lane and six more on the south side of the bridge. The 100-200 members of the Guild subscribed annually, the amount depending on their status, but about half its income came from rents on properties it owned in and around the town. The hall was the most important business centre in medieval Maidstone, and the complex also included a chapel, refectory, three cloisters and a garden.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, business connections were extending their contacts geographically – for instance the tanning industry had strong links with London.

By 1446 it is known that Middle Row had been developed, infilling the central market space of the High Street. Gabriel's Hill and Wren's Cross are also first recorded by their modern names during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, and a deed from 1485 names Pudding Lane. A further religious building, the chapel of St. John, had been built before 1457 on the east side of the road at the foot of Gabriel's Hill, probably associated with the crossing over the River Len. Such chapels were common in the medieval period and provided a place for travellers to pray for a safe journey (one still exists at Rochester); it probably marked the southern extent of the main commercial centre of the town.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Century was a period of significant change in Maidstone as it was for the country as a whole. Not least amongst these were changes consequent upon the political and religious reforms of Henry VIII – the Archbishop's Manor was surrendered to the Crown and the Fraternity of Corpus Christi dissolved in 1547. The 16<sup>th</sup> Century has often been seen as a period of urban decay and a number of statutes were passed in the 1530s and 1540s aimed at reversing this decay which described "decayed houses, desolate and vacant ground, pits and cellars left uncovered and many houses feeble and likely to fall down." Maidstone may have fared better than some other towns as John Leland described it in the 1540s as "a market town of one long street well builded and full of inns." In one other respect, however, it did reflect conditions in other towns – most towns by the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century had suffered a decline in population and sometimes were smaller than they had been in the Middle Ages – Maidstone's population in 1548 has been estimated as being probably between 1,900 and 2,000, no higher than it had been two centuries previously.

Before 1534, the town was administered by the Burghmote, headed by the portreeve assisted by twelve brethren, who governed on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This possibly Saxon arrangement was found to be "insufficient in law" in 1534, and the first Municipal Charter was granted in 1549. One of the first acts of the new corporation was to found a grammar school which was housed in the Corpus Christi Hall (where it remained until 1871).

A second charter granted by Elizabeth I in 1559 gave the corporation added responsibilities to maintain the banks of the Medway and ensure its navigability. The

importance of Maidstone as a port was increasing at this time, and in the 1560s a new stone wall was built at Fairmeadow by the corporation, presumably to act as a quay. Exports via the river included stone, grain and cloth, much of these goods going to London. Timber was also shipped to Chatham Dockyard and cannon from the Wealden ironworks to London, Chatham and abroad. Consumer goods were imported.

In 1566, according to figures quoted by Hasted in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there were 294 inhabited houses in the town. By this time the town was supplied by water brought in conduits from a reservoir at Rocky Hill on the opposite side of the Medway. The Great Conduit terminated at a lead cistern housed in an octagonal stone tower near the Star Inn in the High Street. There were also "four landing places, five hoys and ships and 22 persons wholly occupied in the trade of merchandise" in 1566.

From the mid 1560s onwards, towns all over Kent began to show signs of growth, often due to migration from the countryside. Maidstone certainly experienced such growth, but also actively sought immigrants from abroad. In 1567 the town petitioned the Crown asking for 60 refugee Walloon families from the Netherlands to be sent to the town. In doing so, it sought specific skills in clothmaking, pot-making, tile-making and paper-making of these immigrants. These religious refugees were granted their own church (St. Faith). They can be seen as catalysts for the rise of local industries, some of which, such as paper making, remained of long importance, although the Walloon population itself had largely dispersed by the 1630s. The population of Maidstone by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century was probably about 2,900-3,000.

It may be during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century that Maidstone began to gain on Canterbury as the primary urban centre of Kent. There is some evidence that Canterbury suffered a population decline, being particularly hard hit by the dissolution of the monasteries and the loss of the pilgrim trade, although the "extreme poverty, nakedness and decay" described by Lambarde in the 1570s may be something of an exaggeration, and Canterbury too benefited from Walloon immigration. By the end of the century, Canterbury was probably still nearly twice the size of Maidstone by population.

Urban growth during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century was not all good news for Maidstone. Epidemics of disease appear to have caused exceptional levels of mortality in the mid 1540s, in 1563/4, 1578 and 1592-1597. There was also the problem of vagrants, beggars and squatters who were attracted to the town. In 1596, Maidstone magistrates lamented that "the number of poor people inhabiting within this town (by means of the long time of scarcity and dearth...) is now grown and come to be so very great...that the lamentable cries and miserable estate and condition of the said poor people do require rapid and speedy relief." Maidstone, in common with other towns, took measures to try and keep out poor migrants, the streets being patrolled by the town's jurats.

The markets at Maidstone remained important during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, with the Corn Cross being located at the top of the High Street and the markets of dairy produce, animals and fruit being held in the Lower High Street near the junction with Mill Street. In 1599 the first documentary mention of Earl Street (as Earl's Lane) occurs. It seems that by the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century Lower Stone Street had acquired a high status residential character as it is known that Robert Balsar, twice the Chief Magistrate of the Borough, was living at number 34 at this time.

This sector of the town continued to grow in importance as a location for the town houses of the gentry in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century – in the mid 1600s, Stone House was being lived in by Lady Sackville. Elsewhere in the town centre there were a growing

number of specialist shops. Inns also became important trading centres and often had associated warehousing facilities and provided accommodation for assemblies, balls, meetings, etc. In 1610, six inns and 24 alehouses were listed in the town. Many of these would have originated in medieval times – probably The Ship, The Bull Inn and The George Inn in Gabriel’s Hill; the Chequers on the corner of Gabriel’s Hill and the High Street; The Swan, The Star and The Hart in the Upper High Street; and The Queen’s Arms in the Lower High Street. The Rose and Crown in the Lower High Street is also first documented in 1608. The most important inn, however, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century was The Star in the High Street which had a complex of rooms, stables and yards stretching all the way back to Earl Street. It also had a justice chamber where the County JPs met during the sessions and assizes for political debate, Maidstone having become the sessions town for West Kent by the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century and an assize town from the 1620s. A court house had been built at the top of the High Street by the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century which was replaced by a new building in 1608; the County Gaol and the West Kent House of Correction stood nearby.

These judicial functions were indicative of the increasing importance of Maidstone as an administrative centre, and by 1650 Richard Kilburne could say that it was “accounted the shire town...the fittest place for public meetings of the County.”

Maidstone’s importance as a trading centre was also growing. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century it was described as the “principal market town in the county” and the 1640s John Taylor wrote that it was “a fair, sweet, pleasant, rich and populous market town”. The whole length of the High Street had already been occupied by various markets by the mid 16<sup>th</sup> Century. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century, however, cloth sales had been lost to London (because of a Parliamentary decision). Conversely, the grain market had increased in importance, being second only to Gravesend in the county, and having strong links to London traders. The corn market moved from Corn Cross to the arcaded ground floor of the 1608 Court House, the fish market from the lower end of Middle Row to the Old Corn Cross, and the vegetable market to the old fish market site. The lower end of Middle Row also provided the home for the butter market, housed in a small, round building. Fruit and hop markets were introduced, and in 1682 Maidstone was granted the right to hold a monthly cattle market which took place in Earl’s Lane, which was renamed Bullock Lane as a result.

Industry continued to grow and diversify in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century the cloth trade sparked by the Dutch immigrants of the 1560s had been adopted by native townsmen producing “woollen cloth, fustians, linsey-woolsey and diaper”. However, by the 1630s the cloth industry was in decline, suffering from competition from London.

It was another textile industry introduced by the Dutch which flourished and became the major industry of Maidstone by 1622 – thread making. By 1640 Maidstone was the main thread-making centre in England after London, particularly linen thread made from flax. The flax was grown locally – Samuel Pepys saw “an old man beating flax” on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1669. Thread-making was labour intensive and supposedly employed 8,000 people in Maidstone in 1664, although this sounds rather a generous estimate as the total population of the town by mid century was probably still only about 4,000.

Another trade seemingly introduced by the Dutch, papermaking, also continued to grow. The availability of clear spring water enabled the production of high quality white paper, and the river port facilitated the import of rags from London also needed for its production, and also the export back of the finished product. Seven paper mills

were in operation in the vicinity between 1671 and 1700. Turkey Mill to the east of the town centre existed by 1681 when George Gill was described in the Parish Registers as a paper maker of that address. Like many other paper mills it had been converted from old fulling mills redundant in the wake of the decline in the cloth trade.

Fullers earth, however, continued to be worked at Boxley and Leeds and remained an important export by river. In 1640, a Mrs. Brewer of Boxley had three warehouses at Waterside for storing it. River trade in general expanded greatly in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, particularly important commodities being canons, canon balls, timber, corn, stone, hay, hops, wool and leather. A town charter of 1619 enabled the corporation to charge tolls on all vessels berthing at Maidstone, and Acts of Parliament in 1628 and 1644 sought to improve the navigation of the Medway by way of locks, towpaths and dredging.

Another industry to emerge in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century was brewing, the first brewery to open being the Lower Brewery in Lower Stone Street which comprised a "brewhouse, two malthouses, barns and stables" as well as an adjacent house. This brewery survived until 1930 – its land is now occupied by Granada House and the old Granada Cinema. Distilling also arrived, a property on the east side of Stone Street being sold in 1648 to Daniel Beckman, described as a distiller.



The chimney of the Lower Brewery can be seen in the background of this old photograph of the bottom of Gabriel's Hill.

Alongside these commercial and industrial elements, the town did not neglect to provide for recreational opportunity. A bowling green was laid out on the King's Meadow in 1642, and in 1699 a tree-lined and railed Public Walk was laid out at Fairmeadow – one of the earliest public “parks” outside London.

By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, rate books show there to have been 490 householders paying the poor rate, with the highest populations being in High Street (110 houses) and Stone Street (100 houses). There were also 60 houses in Week Street, 33 in East Lane (King Street), 25 in Gabriel's Hill, 13 in Mill Lane (Mill Street), 13 in Bullock Lane (Earl Street), 11 in Middle Row and 7 in Pudding Lane. By the 1690s, Celia Fiennes could describe Maidstone as “...a very neate market town...its buildings are mostly of timber worke, the streets are large the Market Cross runs down the street a good way, there being three divisions in it one good Cross for fruite another for corne and another for all sorts of things. 2 of which is built over for the town hall and publick use: there is also a large Gaol: this street notwithstanding the hall and cross stands in the midst, is yet a good breadth on each side and when it comes to meete in one is very broad and runs down a great length, quite to the bridge across the Medway which...beares Barges that bring up burdens to the town...there are very pretty houses about the town look like the habitations of rich men...there are severall pretty streetes.”

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century was to be something of a heyday for Maidstone, the time when it truly began to be regarded as the County Town. Much rebuilding and new building took place, a large amount of which survives within the Conservation Area to help define its character today. In the 1720s, Daniel Defoe described Maidstone as “a considerable town, very populous and the inhabitants generally wealthy.” He also considered it to be the best market in the county. In 1739 the Medway Navigation Company was set up to deal with improvements to the river, which resulted in making the Medway navigable by barges of up to 40 tons displacement as far as Tonbridge, which boosted Maidstone's trade as a trans-shipment centre to the extent that by the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century the whole of the Weald and much of Sussex received their groceries via Maidstone. Dr. Pococke, writing in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century, could state that Maidstone was “a town of considerable trade on account of its navigation together with good shops.”

In fact, by the late 1780s, Maidstone's shops were being assessed as being on a par with Canterbury, Rochester/Chatham and Greenwich as the best in Kent. They were mainly concentrated in High Street, Week Street and Gabriel's Hill. By this time, retailing was considered one of the most important occupations within the town, with grocers being particularly numerous. A 1794 trade directory for Maidstone lists 22 grocers plus stationers, ironmongers, tobacconists, silversmiths, linen-drapers, brandy merchants and china sellers amongst the shops then in existence. The late 18<sup>th</sup> Century also saw the foundation of two private banks in the town – Brenchley, Stacey, Parker, Springate and Penfold (The Kentish Bank) in premises at the top of Bank Street (and presumably giving the street its name) in 1793, and the Maidstone County Bank.

In terms of industry, the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw the decline of the yarn spinning/threadmaking trades which lost out to competition from the new factories of Northern England. Some businesses, however, continued by making matting and hop bagging using locally produced thread.

Brewing expanded to become a major employer, with Robert Heathorn opening a brewery in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century at the bottom of Earl Street. This was largely



engaged in the production of pale ale, much of it destined for export to India – there may be a link with the cavalry barracks which opened to the north of the town in the 1790s which was often used by troops en route to India. By the 1780s there were also some 52 inns in the town.

Distilling also continued as a noticeable industry – Maidstone was well-known in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century for the production of a blackcurrant liqueur know as gazle wine. Then in 1789 George Bishop built a “large brick building with yards and other premises” on the south side of Bank Street to produce gin, and “Maidstone Hollands” soon gained a countrywide reputation for quality.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century also saw barge building added to the riverside trades.

By the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the old market arrangements in the High Street were causing traffic congestion, and a new market hall for fish and vegetables was erected on the site of the old County Gaol in 1780. The old Court House nearby was replaced by the current Town Hall in 1764, which originally retained an open arcaded ground floor for market traders reflecting the previous arrangements.



The Town Hall of 1764 showing the now infilled ground floor arcade which originally provided covered space for market traders

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Maidstone had been known as a leading Puritan centre. Its tradition for religious radicalism was strengthened during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century with the growth of non-conformism. A Unitarian church was built in Market Buildings (Mitre Yard) in 1736 and survives to this day, and a Congregationalist church was built in

Week Street in 1747. In 1794 Hasted estimated that nearly half the population was nonconformist.

Town improvements continued in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, both in terms of cultural facilities (a New Theatre opening in the lower High Street in 1770, succeeded in 1798 by another one further up the street) and in terms of comfort – following complaints in 1791 the streets of the town were re-paved in Kentish rag and York stone in 1792 and street lighting was introduced. Notwithstanding this, John Byng in the 1790s could still describe Maidstone as “a large, ill-built old town”.

The late 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw the first threats emerge to the predominance of the river for transport. Turnpike improvements to the roads to Cranbrook, Wrotham and Tonbridge made the routes into the Weald and towards London easier, and by the 1790s Maidstone was served by 17 coaches a week to London.

By 1794, Hasted could estimate the population of the town at about 6,000, with 1,500 houses, with the town being about a mile in length on its north-south axis and three-quarters of a mile across from east to west – not substantially bigger in area than the medieval town. This was to change radically within a few years.

In the first national census of 1801, Maidstone had a population of 8,027. By 1831 this had doubled to 16,000 and Maidstone had become the largest and most important town in Kent, surpassing Canterbury. This expansion occurred outside the boundaries of the Conservation Area, but significant changes took place within it as the town modernised and adapted itself to its new more dominant role.

The medieval bridge at the foot of the High Street was widened in 1808 to ease traffic congestion at the sole river crossing into the town. In 1819 a town wharf was built to enhance the loading/unloading facilities for river craft, but the opening of the Thames and Medway Canal from Strood to Gravesend in 1824, which shortened the route to London considerably, was the harbinger of a change of fortune for the town. Initially it worked to Maidstone’s advantage, but the fact that it avoided the open sea meant that by 1828 the 40 ton barges which could navigate the river up to Tonbridge were able to cover the whole journey to London and Maidstone’s function as a trans-shipment centre weakened, resulting in a decline in the wholesaling trade. However, proper sea-going vessels were using Maidstone by this time and in 1822 a 130 ton schooner was bringing in coal from the north of England and exporting various goods back and to France and Holland. In 1834 there were 50-60 vessels belonging to the town employed in exporting hops, corn, fruit, paper, timber and stone. Coal, groceries and other consumer goods were imported. Also in 1819 some street widening was carried out within the town, drains were laid and the water supply improved by the use of iron pipes serving 17 public conduits. This was followed in 1822 by 196 gas-lit lamps being installed to serve public areas, supplied by gas from the gasworks across the river in St. Peters Street which opened in 1819.

In 1824 it was decided to concentrate the corn, fish, meat and vegetable markets into the same place and remove them from the streets. The old Mitre Inn and adjoining premises in the High Street were bought up and a new market hall, together with a replacement Mitre Inn, were built in 1826. These new premises also included grand new offices for the Kent Insurance Offices (which had opened on this site in 1803) and which still remain as one of the most impressive buildings on the High Street, designed by John Whichcord Senior, the noted local architect. To the rear of these new buildings accommodation was also provided for the company’s fire engine which had previously been housed in All Saints’ Churchyard and then in an engine house



near the bridge. The market itself was gas-lit but was not a great success, being described as "cold and dark" by contemporaries. It was soon replaced, in 1835, by the present Corn Exchange which had a covered market on the ground floor. The Corn Exchange itself was, at the time of its erection, the largest in Kent.

The livestock markets were also banned from the streets in 1824, moving first to Penenden Heath and Fairmeadow and eventually to Lockmeadow on the west bank of the Medway in 1879. "A Historical Descriptive Account of Maidstone and its Environs" published in 1834 stated that "the shops in every respect rival those of the capital and supply the inhabitant with almost every article which luxury can demand."

By 1839, when J. Smith published the "Topography of Maidstone and its Environs and Directory" the length of the town from north to south was "estimated to be about one mile and a quarter, and its breadth about three quarters of a mile. The principle streets and places adjacent are well paved, drained and lighted with gas; and abundantly supplied with excellent water conveyed by pipes from Rocky Hill...." This Directory shows that by this time Maidstone town centre contained some 435 shops, of which 105 were in Week Street and 84 in High Street/Bank Street. A further 50 premises were in Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street and 21 more were in Earl Street. Within Week Street the most numerous types of shop were grocers (10), butchers (9), tailors (6), boot and shoemakers (6), linen drapers (5), bakers (5), druggists (4) and booksellers (4). In High Street/Bank Street butchers were also important (6 shops), as were grocers (5), boot and shoemakers (4), bakers (4), corn dealers (4) and linen drapers (4). The most numerous type of outlet in Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street were tailors (6 shops), followed by grocers (5), butchers (4) and bakers (3).

By 1851, when the population had grown to 20,740, the number of shops had increased slightly to 475, and by 1872 there were 700 shops and the first indications of the arrival of national or regional chain stores – for example, George Mence Smith at 20 High Street, a London paint and varnish maker. Not long afterwards there are indications of the development of proto-department stores, with Frank King and Sons having three adjacent shops in Lower Stone Street selling clothing, hosiery, millinery, ladies' clothes and footwear, with further premises in Gabriel's Hill selling groceries and provisions. By 1882 Denniss Paine and Co occupied five shops in the corner of High Street and Pudding Lane selling millinery, drapery, boots and shoes and ladies' and men's clothes, with another tailoring and outfitting unit operating from two shops at the top of the High Street and an ironmongery department in a shop adjacent to the Queens Hotel in the lower High Street.

Steven's Directory of Maidstone for 1882 describes Maidstone as being "...a well-built town, having some fine business streets, the principal of which intersect each other in the centre of the place." It goes on to say that "Maidstone is...important as a trading and commercial town, and although the nobility and gentry are not so numerous as other towns of similar size, its productive nature and its commercial trade and exports make it more free from real poor than many other towns of equal population." The remarks about the nobility and gentry reflect the fact that by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century Maidstone had lost out to London as the gathering place for County society, which had resulted in a decline in status of Lower Stone Street. By this time, the medieval bridge over the Medway had been demolished and replaced by the existing structure designed by the famous engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette and erected in 1877-79.

In 1889 the town received a boost to its status when it was chosen as the headquarters of the newly-formed Kent County Council. As far as the town's own administration arrangements were concerned, the Kent Messenger Directory of

Maidstone and Surrounding Villages for 1898 laments that the "...Town Hall, erected in 1763, is a miserable specimen of the poverty-stricken architecture of those days, possessing no room adequate to the needs of a large town, and necessitating the scattering of the offices of the Corporation." This same Directory also illustrates the continuing influx of national chain stores – e.g. Singer Sewing Machines (Gabriel's Hill), Freeman Hardy and Willis shoes (High Street), Liptons (Week Street), Maypole Dairies (Week Street), Home and Colonial Stores (Week Street) and London and Provincial Meat Stores (Week Street). It also shows that Earl Street had by then acquired its present character with shops at the top end and offices at the lower, where solicitors' offices were particularly prevalent. The National Telephone Company also had offices and a public call facility here.

Apart from the new bridge over the Medway, various other improvements to transportation, improving the accessibility of the town, took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1815 the road towards Ashford was improved, giving a more direct route out of the town centre via East Lane (renamed King Street) without diverting northwards to Penenden Heath. In the 1830s there were nine coaches a day to London plus services to the Medway towns and other Kent towns. The existence of public transportation on a more local scale is suggested by the listing of an omnibus proprietor in the High Street in the 1839 Directory. The same Directory also advertised The Balloon, a fast stagecoach leaving the Queens Head in the lower High Street every day except Sunday at 9.00 in the morning and taking 3 ½ hours for the journey to the George Inn in Southwark.

At this time, the Town Council and Lord Marsham of Mote Park were actively opposing the construction of a railway line to serve the town, although proposals were mooted for a station at the top end of Bank Street. This opposition resulted in the building of the South Eastern Railway Company's line far to the south of the town. This line boosted the fortunes of rival towns such as Tonbridge and Ashford and it was soon realised that the commercial attractiveness of Maidstone was threatened by the lack of a rail connection. Pressure then mounted for a rail link to be built, resulting in the construction of the Medway Valley Branch from Paddock Wood to Maidstone West station, just across the bridge from the bottom of the High Street, which was opened in 1844. This line was extended to Strood in 1856. Whilst this later extension improved accessibility to London it was still not a particularly direct route. This was finally provided by the line to Maidstone East at the north end of Week Street, opened in 1874 and extended to Ashford in 1884. It has to be said that the resistance to the original proposals to bring a railway right into the heart of town prevented very significant losses to historic fabric and character.

On the industrial front the gin distillery off Bank Street closed down in 1820 and was converted to a steam-powered corn mill. With the virtual demise of the cloth trade most local fulling mills converted back to corn milling in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century or went over to papermaking; Springfield Mill, to the north of the town centre, was built by William Balston in 1806 and was the first paper mill to be driven by steam. One of the last remaining textile firms to survive was J. Clifford and Sons of Bank Street who specialised in the production of hop-bagging in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and diversified into coir matting from the 1850s (and in the First World War produced camouflage based on hop screening and in the Second World War made coconut matting for temporary landing strips).

In 1861, Ralph Fremlin bought the old Heathorn Brewery in Earl Street and built a new brewery complex in 1871 (but retained the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century brewer's house).

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century also saw the growth of an engineering industry, often based around agricultural machinery and building components – e.g. William Weeks and Son who had premises and a foundry at High Street and Waterside. A large tannery was established in Mill Street adjacent to the mill pond.

In 1851 the Theatre Royal in the High Street was demolished. A new concert hall was built as an extension to the Corn Exchange by the Town Council in 1865 (and survives as the Hazlitt Theatre). At the same time the market beneath the Corn Exchange was converted to provide small shops.

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, redevelopments kept to the scale of the medieval town, both in terms of overall height and the width of plot frontages. The incursion of larger-scaled buildings began with the Kent Insurance Office of 1827 which whilst only a little higher than its neighbours occupied a much wider frontage and introduced a grander scale of architecture than had previously existed. Most other 19<sup>th</sup> Century re-buildings still respected the scale of the medieval town, but some isolated examples such as the Post Office building in the lower High Street also introduced a larger scale which was to become much more common in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



The Post Office building erected in the High Street in 1871 was one of the earliest buildings to introduce a new, larger scale to the town centre.

By 1901 the population of Maidstone had increased to 33,516. The shopping centre appears to have continued along much the same lines as previously, but with the introduction of yet further chain stores – by 1910 these included Hepworths Tailors (High Street), Scotch Wool (Week Street) and Boots the Chemist (Week Street) in

addition to those existing in 1898. New uses to cater for new technology had also arrived, with a motor garage opening in Earl Street and Allcorn and Co's ironmongers at 30-32 Lower Stone Street expanding to cater for cyclists and motor car repairs. Other retailers were building larger and more impressive buildings, such as the outfitters G. H. Leavey Ltd. which redeveloped its premises on the corner of High Street and Mill Street in 1906 or the shops at 16/17 High Street (1907) and 6 and 7 Middle Row (1901). Banks also started to become more numerous and be housed in more impressive buildings – foremost amongst these was the Edwardian baroque of the London County and Westminster Bank at 3 High Street, but the neo-Tudor of the London Provincial Bank of circa 1905 at 10 Middle Row is also notable. Denniss Paine and Co. rebuilt its premises on the corner of High Street and Pudding Lane after a fire in 1911.

The years between 1900 and the First World War also saw some substantial changes to streets in Maidstone, largely engendered by the creation of electric tram services. The Borough Council had built an electricity station in Fairmeadow in 1900 which provided for street lighting in the town centre. The first tram route was opened to Barming in 1904, but routes proposed to serve Loose and Tovil were initially held up because Gabriel's Hill was too steep. The solution was to widen Mill Street and create an entirely new street (Palace Avenue) to link it to Lower Stone Street. The whole of the eastern side of Mill Street was demolished. So was the large 3-storeyed weatherboarded mill building spanning the Len, together with a 3-storeyed double-jettied building of probably 16<sup>th</sup> Century date adjacent to it on the west side of the street, around which the street formerly kinked. Palace Avenue was laid out through mainly open land (formerly a nursery), but a smaller corn mill on the south side of the mill pond and about four properties in Lower Stone Street were also demolished. It was utilised to provide a space for a new police station, for the Maidstone Borough Police Force, built in 1908 to replace former premises in King Street. The Loose and Tovil tram routes were opened in 1907 and 1909 respectively.



Mill Street prior to widening to accommodate tram lines.

The foundation and growth of Maidstone and District Motor Service also increased the catchment area of the town centre shops, giving further encouragement to the influx of national chain stores and redevelopment to provide shops with larger floorspace. The company was founded in 1908 and operated a route from Maidstone to Chatham with four second-hand buses. By 1913 there were seven routes, and eleven by 1914. The original bus garage was across the river in St. Peter Street, but it was superseded by one in Upper Stone Street until finally moving to Knightrider Street in the 1920s, where Knightrider House formed the company offices. This site was vacated by the company in the 1980s. A bus station was also built in Palace Avenue, opposite the Mill Pond, in 1922 and is thought to have been the first bus station in the country – the site is now a car park. A further bus station was opened later in the century at the junction of Palace Avenue and Lower Stone Street on the site now occupied by Gail House.

The growth of motorcar ownership also made the town more accessible but brought with it the familiar problems of congestion, particularly as the town centre formed the crossing point of two major routes – the A20 London to Folkestone and Dover trunk road running through High Street and King Street, and the A229 Rochester to Hastings road running along Week Street/Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street. In 1926 the Medway bridge was widened, and one-way traffic systems were introduced in the late 1920s. Allied to these, a new street was built diagonally between Earl Street and St. Faith Street (Museum Street) but this has now been subsumed beneath the Fremlin Walk development. A bypass was discussed in the 1930s but never progressed because of World War Two. Week Street and Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street became earmarked for road widening and widening lines were drawn up. New buildings erected between the 1930s and the 1970s, when the widening proposals were formally abandoned, were set back to the widening line, leading to the somewhat serrated frontages now apparent in Week Street and Gabriel's Hill.

By 1926 the further chain stores attracted by this increased accessibility included W. H. Smith and Son (High Street), MacFisheries (High Street), Woolworths (Week Street, but not on its later site), Halfords Cycles (Week Street) David Greig (Week Street) and Marks and Spencer (Week Street). Just outside the Conservation Area to the north, for adjoining shops were occupied by Dunning and Son, Drapers. In 1931, Dunning and Son redeveloped the property to form a large department store (which later became Army and Navy). In 1930, meanwhile, Denniss Paine and Co had been taken over by Chiesmans to form the other major department store of the town.

The 1920s and 1930s probably marks the time when Week Street started to gain ascendancy over High Street as the primary shopping street. New chain stores arrived – Burtons in purpose-built premises in Week Street in 1927, Timothy Whites, again in purpose-built premises, also in Week Street, in 1934. In the later 1930s both Marks and Spencer and Woolworths erected their current large stores in Week Street. Any such changes in the High Street were restricted to its upper end near the Week Street junction, with Barratts Shoes at 97 and Lyons Café at 96 having arrived before 1937.

In terms of industrial development in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the most important was the takeover of the old tannery site in Mill Street by William Rootes in 1917 and its conversion to the Len Engineering Works, first used for repairing aero engines and then for building charabancs. Rootes developed into major motor wholesalers and the country's largest motor retailer. However in 1928 the head office was moved to London and manufacturing in Mill Street ceased, leaving just a distribution and service centre. However, towards the end of the 1930s the Mill Street



premises were redeveloped with the large and impressive state-of-the-art showrooms and workshops which remain as such an important feature of the Conservation Area today.



The former Rootes showrooms in Mill Street erected in the late 1930s.

In the brewing industry, Fremlins bought Isherwood, Foster and Stacey in 1929 and closed the latter's Lower Brewery in Lower Stone Street, selling the site for redevelopment. It was replaced by the Granada Cinema in 1934 and Granada House, a development of shops with residential flats above, in 1937.

The Granada Cinema was, in fact, the last of the cinemas in the town centre to open. The first permanent cinema in Maidstone was the Empire Electric, opened in a converted shop in Station Road in 1910. This was succeeded by the New Empire Electric Cinema, opened in a purpose-built building in 1911 in Earl Street. It is unfortunate that this early cinema closed in 1957 and was demolished. The Maidstone Pavilion Skating Rink was opened in the Edwardian period but was converted to a cinema known as the Popular Picture Pavilion in 1911 – it later became the Ritz Cinema, but was burnt down in 1954 and the site redeveloped as offices. The Central Cinema opened in King Street in 1920.

For live stage shows, the concert hall attached to the Corn Exchange was supplemented in 1908 by the Palace Theatre Music Hall opened in Gabriel's Hill in 1908.

Maidstone did not escape from physical harm in the Second World War. Of greatest consequence to the character of the Conservation Area was bomb damage in Mill Street which resulted in the destruction of a number of historic buildings on the west side of the road.

The post-war years saw the trend for larger shops and more national chain stores continue, with Littlewoods opening a department store in Week Street on the site of the old Central Commercial Hotel by 1949. There was a continued drift of some of the more important outlets to Week Street, and by 1958 about half the outlets there were occupied by branches of national chain stores. The first supermarket in Maidstone came with Victor Value at the north end of Week Street in 1954 (beyond the Conservation Area) but most important was the larger Sainsbury's built on the site of the Palace Theatre in Gabriel's Hill in 1962. This was followed by a Pricerite supermarket toward the lower end of the High Street in 1964. Tower blocks made their first appearance in Maidstone in the late 1960s; one of these, Colman House, is sited immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area at the junction of Week Street and King Street where it has a most unfortunate impact on important townscape views. Other tall developments just outside the Conservation Area dating from the early 1970s also have detrimental impacts on views out of and within the Conservation Area, particularly the comprehensive redevelopment of the block bounded by Romney Place, Lower Stone Street and Mote Road which is not only highly detrimental to the immediate setting of the fine buildings on the opposite side of Lower Stone Street, but also in views down Gabriel's Hill. In 1974-6 a large tranche of land just outside the Conservation Area in the angle between Gabriel's Hill and King Street was redeveloped to form Maidstone's first indoor shopping mall – this resulted in the loss of some buildings in King Street such as the Congregational Church and the old Central Cinema and the obliteration of the historic Water Lane which ran from the bottom of Gabriel's Hill to Padsole Mill. The tall office building over this development (now Maidstone House) intrudes on some views, particularly from Palace Avenue, and the multistorey car park fronting Romney Place adversely affects views out of the Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II\* Romney House. Romney Place was itself widened at this time.

Beyond the northern boundary of the Conservation Area, the tall development of Brenchley House was carried out and is now prominent in views northwards along Week Street right from its junction with High Street.

The late 1960s and 1970s can be considered as forming a nadir in the quality of redevelopment in central Maidstone, a time when the greatest damage was done to the historic character of the town centre. In 1972 the Fremlins Brewery ceased brewing and became largely a distribution centre. This itself closed in the 1990s and paved the way for the development of the Fremlin Walk shopping development of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. All of the old brewery was redeveloped except for the office frontage to Earl Street and the Victorian gateway opposite Pudding Lane, but the development extends way beyond the old brewery site to include land behind the Earl Street buildings until it reaches the corner of Earl Street and Week Street where it re-emerges to form the frontage buildings. The twin circular turrets flanking the entrance to it on this corner have introduced new prominent features to the Week Street townscape, but it is unfortunate that the development involved the loss of a row of locally-listed buildings at the top end of Earl Street. The development also resulted in the loss of Market Street and Havock Lane, part of the medieval street plan. With this exception, damage to the historic and architectural character of the town centre has been limited since the designation of the Conservation Area, and

environmental improvements have been carried out associated with the pedestrianisation of Bank Street, Week Street and Gabriel's Hill.

### **III Character Appraisal**

#### General Townscape Character

The Maidstone Centre Conservation Area covers most of the medieval core of the town, with the exception of the area between Earl Street and St. Faith Street now occupied by the Fremlin Walk Shopping Centre.

The Maidstone Centre Conservation Area exhibits many of the classic features and forms of the traditional medieval market town and a gridded street plan which betrays its origin as a planned development by the Archbishops of Canterbury in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> Century. There is an overlay of some of the civic trappings of the later County Town function.

A cohesive historic character exists, most particularly in those places such as High Street, Bank Street, Gabriel's Hill, Earl Street, Market Buildings and Lower Stone Street where there remain large concentrations of historic buildings. In the Conservation Area as a whole there are some 93 statutorily listed buildings (9 of which are Grade II\*, the rest Grade II) as well as a further 14 "locally listed" buildings. The medieval street plan and much of the medieval burgage plot divisions remain intact. The latter still influence much of the grain and scale of the built development, particularly in the characteristic narrow frontages still evident in High Street, Bank Street, Gabriel's Hill, Lower Stone Street, Week Street and Earl Street. Building heights on the other hand, tend to vary from plot to plot, although few buildings exceed three storeys in height.

Within the Conservation Area there are examples of buildings dating from every century from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>. There is no dominant style, although 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century vernacular classicism is particularly evident, sometimes masking older buildings. Some major buildings such as Corpus Christi Hall, the old Kent Insurance Buildings and the National Westminster Bank at the top of the High Street eschew a more monumental scale and "politeness" of architecture, but such bold statements are rare. There are isolated examples of modern buildings which detract from the character of the Conservation Area.

There is no overall consistency of building materials, although the historic buildings exhibit a limited palette – walls are mainly of red or yellow stock brick or plaster/stucco. There are a few examples of exposed timber framing, some of it not original and applied to later frontages, often in an unauthentic pattern. Roofs of the older properties are generally of clay plain tiles or natural slates, but some have been replaced in concrete alternatives. Many roofs are not readily visible from street level where they are hidden behind parapets. A number of more modern buildings have



flat roofs. Some modern buildings are in inappropriate materials, e.g. dark blue brick, aggregate-faced concrete panels, glazed curtain walling.

The coherence of the character of the area as a whole and the appearance of individual buildings has been eroded by the presence of a large number of inappropriately-designed shopfronts and unconsidered advertisements throughout the town centre. Many of the former date from the 1930s to the 1970s, and since the designation of the Conservation Area attempts have been made to improve the standard of design when replacements have been proposed, with some degree of success. Advertisements are more problematic in that many do not require Express Consent under the Advertisement Regulations.



Poor quality shopfronts detract from the character of the Conservation Area in some places.

Small details can also impact on the character of the Conservation Area. Street furniture, for example, where it is historic or of good design, can make a positive contribution and add to local distinctiveness. Unfortunately, the Conservation Area has little in the way of historic street furniture which does make such a positive contribution. Street furniture such as litter bins and seating installed in recent years has been largely well-designed and expresses a corporate character, but other items such as planters and bollards are often of varied design quality and appropriateness to their surroundings. Streetlights are mainly standard modern designs or are in modern "heritage" styles, and traffic signage, often mounted on unattractive grey plastic-coated poles, is intrusive throughout the Conservation Area. Other problems include telecommunications cabinets, wirescapes (including externally-run wiring across the faces of buildings), masts for CCTV cameras, the large electronic information board at

the south end of Week Street, highway railings and traffic lights. Maintenance standards of some of these items also result in a loss of character – e.g. poles or lampstandards out of vertical or in need of painting.



Street clutter is a problem in some parts of the Conservation Area

Statues and monuments can add interest to the street scene and there are two good examples, both listed structures, in the High Street – the statue of Queen Victoria at the top end and the Russian cannon at the lower end. Elsewhere, the reclining female sculpture outside Gail House at the junction of Palace Avenue and Lower Stone Street adds some interest to a rather dead corner. Clocks can also add interest – of particular note are the projecting one on Marks and Spencer in Week Street and that over the old brewery entrance to Fremlin Walk at the bottom of Earl Street (near which the elephant weathervane on top of the old brewery offices also adds interest to the skyline). Old shop signs such as the large Golden Boot in Gabriel's Hill or the crossed guns above a shop in Bank Street are also valuable features. It is important to preserve small items such as these.

There is no historic paving within the Conservation Area, and materials vary considerably. Recent schemes have tended to use York Stone paving slabs and red/brown "Tegula" blocks – this is considered to be appropriate and should be expanded throughout the Conservation Area. Elsewhere the mixture includes concrete paving slabs, red brick pavers and black or red tarmac.



## Townscape Analysis

The Conservation Area, in general, is highly urban in character, with streets almost universally having strongly-defined edges resulting in a strong sense of enclosure. Buildings are built right up to the back edges of the pavements. The only exception to this character is Palace Avenue, which has the large millpond on one side and the Police Station and Court buildings on the other side set back behind shallow grass forecourts. Buildings are the dominant feature of the townscape, although street trees have been planted in various places. There are no open spaces.



Maidstone Town Centre is highly urban in character and the streets have strongly defined edges

The streets are regularly laid out on a planned grid running off the old Roman road followed by Week Street/Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street. Despite its Roman origins, these streets are not entirely straight, and their subtle curves add to the sense of enclosure, views along them being at least partially closed. High Street, although straight, is punctuated by the island development of Middle Row which prevents views along the whole length of the street. In fact, the only street which does allow an uninterrupted view along its whole length and out beyond it is Earl Street, from which development and the rising ground on the opposite side of the Medway are visible. Views along Mill Street from High Street are attractively terminated by the tower of All Saints' Church and the trees in its churchyard, the one fortunate side effect of the road-widening carried out in the early 1900s as this view would have been blocked by the mill buildings before then.



The most important views into the town are from the opposite bank of the Medway or from the slopes of Rocky Hill/Buckland Hill beyond. This was a favoured viewpoint for artists in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The town can be seen rising from the riverside to the high point at the Week Street/High Street junction, but unfortunately comparison with past views shows a loss of character in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries – whereas before the town's roofs rose gently to the focal point of the spire of Holy Trinity Church, the skyline is now dominated by tall modern blocks such as Colman House, Maidstone House and Brenchley House. From the riverbank the scene is dominated by the height and bulk of the Fremlin Walk shopping development and, to a lesser extent, the tall Barclays Bank development at the bottom of the High Street, as well as the traffic engineering of the Bridge Gyration System.

The view into the Conservation Area from King Street is probably the most satisfying, the kink of the alignment of King Street and High Street meaning that the impressive National Westminster Bank building forms a focal point at the hinge suggesting arrival in an important town centre. The view in from Wren's Cross could be attractive, given the fine run of listed buildings on the west side of Lower Stone Street, but is compromised by the tall block of Colman House which forms the termination to the view and the immediate impact of the tall modern developments on the east side of the road.

Colman House also forms an unfortunate focal point in views up High Street and Bank Street, competing unfortunately with the spire of Holy Trinity Church which would otherwise perform this function much more satisfactorily.



Colman House forms an unfortunate focal point at the top of the High Street.

Within the Conservation Area, apart from the National Westminster Bank mentioned above, there are few "landmark" buildings forming focal points to views. The most important are probably the Town Hall and the old Barclays Bank building at either end of Middle Row, the portico of the old Granada Cinema which partially closes views from Gabriel's Hill and Palace Avenue, the Peugeot garage (Rootes Building) which sits attractively alongside the Mill Pond at the southern entrance to the Conservation Area, and, to a lesser extent, the old brewery gateway to Fremfils Walk which terminates views along Pudding Lane.

Apart from individual buildings of inappropriate design and/or scale (which will be identified in the detailed street-by-street analysis below), the largest problems detracting from the character of the Conservation Area are:-

- i) Street clutter
- ii) Poor shopfronts
- iii) Inappropriate and excessive advertising
- iv) Traffic volumes, particularly in Lower Stone Street
- v) The poor condition of some of the historic buildings in Lower Stone Street and in areas to the rear of street frontages elsewhere
- vi) Two gap sites in Lower Stone Street
- vii) Quality of paving/road surfaces in some areas

Land uses within the Conservation Area can have a bearing on its character. In general, the Conservation Area is overwhelmingly commercial in nature, with shops or offices requiring a substantial footfall such as banks and building societies almost exclusively making up the uses of ground floor level, along with pubs, restaurants and cafés. This gives the Conservation Area a busy and vibrant character, with Week Street having the most activity; areas such as Market Buildings, Rose Yard and Pudding Lane form quieter backwaters.

#### Detailed Street-by-Street Analysis and Description

Descriptions will now be given of individual streets in the Conservation Area. A general assessment of character will be followed by detailed descriptions of all buildings. These are based on examination from the street, historic map analysis and other documentary research including old Council records.

Properties have been assessed according to their value to the Conservation Area's character. They have been graded as follows:

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



- Negative - buildings/sites which harm the area's character and where redevelopment would be advantageous.

## Earl Street



## General Character

Earl Street is one of the most important streets in architectural and townscape terms within the Conservation Area. It forms part of the planned medieval layout and was probably first set out in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. It is first recorded as Earl's Lane in 1599 and later became known as Bullock Lane because it served for many years as the town's livestock market, until that was transferred to Fairmeadow in 1826. Renaming as Earl Street took place before 1823.

Although probably always subsidiary in commercial importance to both Week Street and High Street, it is a noticeably wider street than Week Street. It runs almost dead straight downhill towards the River Medway, and is therefore a street of vistas rather than unfolding surprises. The buildings generally step down the hill, emphasising the slope of the street. They are mainly of 2 or 3 storeys, with occasional taller buildings forming punctuation marks within an essentially linear space.

The north side of the street has a consistent building line for the whole of its length; the south side follows a more varied building line and its buildings are of more varied quality.

Unfortunately the vistas in both directions are unsatisfactorily closed. The downward vista (to the west) is one of the few views within the Conservation Area which visually connects with areas outside the town centre on the other side of the river. However, there is no strong focal point to this view, and the river is unfortunately not itself visible because of the elevation of Fairmeadow which separates Earl Street from the riverbank. Looking east, the sense of enclosure is much stronger but the uninspired detailing of the 1930s building at 44-48 Week Street provides a disappointing centrepiece.

The upper section of Earl Street, beyond Rose Yard, is pedestrianised and has recently been re-paved with York stone paving slabs and red/brown "Tegula" blocks in association with the Fremlin Walk development. Whilst this is generally an improvement over the previous arrangements, it is rather let down by the thin and characterless bollards employed. Two large trees sit uncomfortably within brick surrounds and appear incongruous and unrelated to the form of the street, overshadowing adjacent buildings.

On the north side of the street, the York stone paving slabs continue as far as the old entrance to Market Street, beyond which the footway continues in red brick pavers, which also form the predominant pavement surface on the south side. The carriageway in between is of patched grey tarmac.

#### Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
1-3	Unlisted	A 2-storeyed red brick building with parapet and flat roof built in 1932. A weakly-designed building in a nondescript style with a poor modern shopfront. Appears to have replaced a 2-storeyed jettied timber-framed building. A building of stronger character would benefit this important corner site.	Neutral
5, 7 and 9	Unlisted	One building, probably of late 18 <sup>th</sup> /early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century date, of two storeys with a mansard roof behind a parapet. The brick front towards the street is currently painted and has four recessed windows to the first floor, sliding sashes to No 9 but top-hung upper lights to Nos 5/7. Italianate cornices supported on console brackets over those to No. 9. Clay-tiled roof with three dormers, the two left-hand ones being flat-roofed with vertically-sliding sashes with glazing bars; right hand one is segmental-	Positive

		headed with a 2-light casement. Poor modern shopfronts.	
11	Unlisted	A low 2-storeyed rendered building, gabled to the street. Steeply-pitched clay tile roof. 5-light Victorian canted oriel window to first floor. Late Victorian/Edwardian shopfront marred by plastic fascia and projecting box sign above. The left side elevation appears to show a slight jettling of the first floor, so this building may be of 16 <sup>th</sup> /17 <sup>th</sup> Century date.	Positive
13-15	Listed Grade II	The tallest building in this part of the street, which also steps forward slightly. A fine example of an early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century townhouse. 3-storeyed red brick front to a timber-framed structure with a heavy wooden modillion eaves cornice. Clay tile roof. 5 sash windows to each upper floor, smaller to top floor, most retaining glazing bars. Fine central doorcase with pediment. Adapted Victorian/Edwardian shopfront to No. 13, modern shopfront to No. 15.	Essential
17	Unlisted	Built 1958, architects Kenneth Wakeford, Jerram and Harris, as a bank. Replaces the New Empire Electric Cinema of 1911 – an unfortunate loss of an early purpose-built cinema. A poor building, two storeys with a flat roof faced in pre-cast aggregate-faced panels.	Negative
19	Unlisted	19 <sup>th</sup> Century corn merchants premises. 3 storeys painted brick with loading doors and hood at second floor level. Good modern shopfront. Slate roof.	Positive
21/23	Listed Grade II	Early/mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys yellow stock brick with hipped slate roof. 3 window openings to each of upper floors, central ones blind, others with sash windows with glazing bars. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> -century shopfront.	Essential
The Hazlitt Theatre	Listed Grade II	Part of the Corn Exchange complex, the frontage building to Earl Street dates from the late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 2 storeys, stuccoed with hipped slate roof. Central gable with a pedimented frontispiece. 3 sash windows with curved heads to first floor. Ground floor modern glazed canopy .	Essential



27	Unlisted	1971, architects Manning Clamp Partners. 4 storeys brown brick with flat roof. Ground floor almost entirely glazed forming shopfront. Vertically proportioned windows.	Negative
29	Unlisted	Designed 1963 by Dennis Darbison, built 1967/8 by Modern Blocks (Maidstone) Ltd. Curtain-walled design, recently refurbished and re-clad.	Negative
31-33	Listed Grade II	A major early 17 <sup>th</sup> Century townhouse, divided into two properties in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century when it was re-windowed. A typical Jacobean plan with a recessed central range between projecting wings. 3 storeys, now pebbledashed and painted. Plain clay tile roof behind parapet. Projecting wings have full-height canted bays with sash windows with glazing bars (those to ground floor of left hand bay being to gothick pattern). Paired doorcases under projecting cornice with panelled doors and semicircular fanlights with radiating glazing bars in central recessed range. Ragstone plinth continues as low wall across central recess with cast iron railings on top.	Essential
35 (County House)	Unlisted	1956, architects Read and McDermott. 5 storeys, red brick with projecting concrete cornice and flat roof. Stone ground floor. Vertically-proportioned windows. Too tall for its context.	Negative
37-41	Unlisted	1885 in a characterful Queen Anne style with shaped gables, pilasters and other typical features. 2 storeys yellow stock brick with plain clay tiled roof. Originally built as a wine and spirit warehouse, recently well-restored and converted to a restaurant and flats. A lively and attractive building occupying an important corner site and a rare example of this architectural style in Maidstone.	Essential
43	Unlisted	3 storeys red brick with steeply pitched clay tiled roof. Raised brick band courses between floors. Prominent corbelled chimney stack. Probably 18 <sup>th</sup> Century with 19 <sup>th</sup> Century alterations and additions.	Positive

		Possibly a recasing of an earlier building. Upper floors have 3 sash windows with central vertical glazing bars only. Ground floor has two Victorian shopfront windows consisting of curved-head tripartite sashes surmounted by fascias and cornices. Low 19 <sup>th</sup> Century brick garden wall along Pudding Lane frontage.	
45-47	Listed Grade II	17 <sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed house, restored 1892. Exposed timber frame with plaster infill on ragstone plinth. Plain clay tile roof. 2 overhanging gables to No. 45, lower flush gable to No. 47. Mullioned and transomed windows with 2-storeyed bays to No. 45.	Essential
49	Unlisted	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century building associated with Fremlin's Brewery. Yellow stock brick with red brick details. Left hand section has large wagon entrance (now infilled by glazing to form shop) spanned by an elliptical arch carried on brick pilasters. Bullseye window and shaped raised parapet over. Right hand section has pedimented gable facing street. Metal windows (round-headed to ground floor).	Positive
Corpus Christi Hall	Listed Grade II*	A large ragstone building with its gable end facing Earl Street. Gable above tie beam level is timber framed with brick nogging. Plain clay tiled roof. Built prior to 1422. Original windows are stone, cinquefoil headed. Later windows in a variety of styles.	Essential
Boundary wall to Corpus Christi Hall	Listed Grade II	Faces Fairmeadow. A tall medieval ragstone wall.	Essential
2-4	Unlisted	Part of the Fremlin Walk shopping development, early 21 <sup>st</sup> century. 2 storeys, yellow stock brick with artificial slate roofs. Small sash windows to first floor, poor modern shopfronts to ground floor. A bland, poorly proportioned design which is a poor replacement for the locally-listed terrace demolished to make way for it.	Neutral
No. 24, The Druid's Arms PH	Unlisted	Probably 17 <sup>th</sup> Century behind the frontage, remodelled in neo-Tudor style in 1929 by Fremlin's Brewery. Carriage entrance to right side. Brick ground floor with exposed timber frame and plaster to first floor. Leaded windows	Positive

		including one oriel with tiled roof. Clay tile roof with 3 flat roofed dormers.	
26-28	Locally Listed	Probably late 18 <sup>th</sup> /early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 2 storeys, yellow stock brick (painted to Earl Street elevation). Steep claytile roof behind parapet. No. 26 retains a 4-paned sash window to the first floor; no. 28 has a replacement cross-framed casement. Matching pair of good 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfronts.	Essential
30 – Earl’s Public House	Listed Grade II	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century, 3 storeys, stuccoed with slate roof. Splayed corner to former entrance to Market Street. Sash windows to upper floors with single vertical glazing bar only, with Italianate architraves – first floor windows facing Earl Street also have projecting cornices. Rusticated ground floor.	Essential
32	Listed Grade II	Built 1883 as the Conservative Club. A grand Italianate building of 3 storeys, but of much larger scale than adjacent development – it is the tallest building on this side of the street and forms an effective punctuation mark in vistas. Stone ashlar, painted on the ground floor. Pediment and balustrade to roof. Ground floor has 3 square-headed windows and round-headed doorway to right separated by pilasters supporting consoles with projecting balcony with wrought iron balustrade above. Tall round-headed first floor windows, segmental-headed sash windows to top floor.	Essential
36-38	Listed Grade II	A fine pair of 18 <sup>th</sup> Century houses, 3 storeys brown brick with red brick dressings, ground floor rendered. Hipped plain clay tile roof above wooden modillion eaves cornice. Fine joint porch with Doric columns and large pediment, panelled reveals and two 6-panelled doors with rectangular fanlights with curvilinear tracery. 5 bays wide, central ones to each upper floor blank. Sash windows with segmental heads (glazing bars missing to first floor windows). Modern shop glazing to ground floor.	Essential

40	Unlisted	3 storeys plus attic in gable end facing street, gable rising above adjacent eaves levels. Of Victorian appearance but may be older – the top storey was added to a pre-existing building in 1892. Sash windows under gauged brick arches. Plain clay tile roof. Modern shopfront to ground floor.	Positive
42-44	Listed Grade II	Two stuccoed buildings, probably of early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century date. 3 storeys, each separately roofed. Hipped roofs of plain clay tiles. Both houses 3-bays wide – original sash windows all replaced except on top floor. Good pedimented doorcase to No. 42, round-headed doorway to No. 44.	Essential
46-50	Locally Listed	2 storeys. Externally appears as 19 <sup>th</sup> Century with applied thin exposed timber framing, semi-dormers and dormers and a modern shopfront. Steep plain clay tiled roof. First floor jettied. In fact, this is a remaining wing of Earl's Place, a major 15 <sup>th</sup> -century courtyard house. The former carriage entry to the courtyard was via an archway (now infilled) beneath the oriel window (an original feature, remodelled) at the left hand end. Fine crown post roof survives internally.	Essential
56	Locally Listed	On the site of the hall range of Earl's Place. Circa 1830. 3 storeys, yellow stock brick, plain clay tiled roof. Original sash windows with glazing bars to upper floors; altered windows to ground floor.	Essential
60-62	Unlisted	Two tall storeys in red brick with hipped artificial slate roof. 4 sash windows to upper floor, shopfronts to ground floor. Early 21 <sup>st</sup> century, part of Fremlin Walk development. A bland but overscaled design.	Neutral
Gateway to Fremlin Walk	Unlisted	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century entrance to brewery, yellow brick with red brick details. Clock above elliptical wagon arch. Round-headed pedestrian arches to either side. Shaped parapet. Very similar in design to No. 49 opposite. Terminates view along Pudding Lane.	Essential
64-66	Unlisted	19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys stuccoed with hipped slate roof with turret and elephant weather vane. Built	Positive

		as offices for Fremlin's Brewery. Altered windows.	
68	Listed Grade II	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century house associated with Fremlin's Brewery. 3 storeys, yellow stock brick with slate roof. 3 bays wide, sash windows with glazing bars. Central recessed round-headed doorway.	Essential

## **Gabriel's Hill**



### General Character

Gabriel's Hill is one of the most characterful streets in the Conservation Area. It lies along the line of the Roman road which pre-dates the town and is first named in documentary sources in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. It must have been one of the earliest parts of the "new" town to develop.

The character of Gabriel's Hill is formed by a number of factors – its narrowness; its topography (running steeply downhill to the Len crossing); its sinuous nature resulting in closed views and the unfolding of new views as you progress along it; the continuously built-up frontages with nearly all buildings sited right up to the back of the footpath; and not least the high concentration of surviving historic buildings.

Gabriel's Hill was pedestrianised in the 1990s and this has enhanced its attractiveness for shoppers and browsers, and has also allowed for some outside seating for cafes. The pedestrianisation scheme has retained the proportions of the street by maintaining a tarmac "carriageway" and raised kerbs. Footways have been paved in small-unit concrete paving slabs. Street lighting is in the form of reproduction Victorian lanterns.

In the view down Gabriel's Hill from the High Street junction there is only one really jarring element – the mass of the tall office block of Kingsley House in Lower Stone Street which looms above the roofs of the historic properties at the foot of the hill.

#### Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
1-3	Listed Grade II	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century according to List description, but more likely to be 18 <sup>th</sup> Century with later alterations. 3 storeys, rendered, with raised quoins to No. 1; render to No. 3 channelled in imitation of stone. Bracketed eaves cornice. Clay tile roof. No. 1 has curved corner to King Street with curved single-light sashes; 19 <sup>th</sup> Century tripartite sashes to both upper floors facing Gabriel's Hill. No. 3 is 3 sashes wide, those to top floor only retaining glazing bars. Poor modern shopfront to No. 1. No.3 has triple-arched shopfront. This building has a fine medieval undercroft and is on the site of the medieval Bell Inn.	Essential
5-7	Listed Grade II	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, previously yellow brick, now rendered, with low-pitched roof. No. 5 is 3 windows wide – all are modern cross-framed casements with top-hung transom lights; No. 7 is 2 windows wide and retains sashes with glazing bars – first floor windows have raised arch detailing above. Poor modern shopfront to No. 5; altered late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront to No. 7 (the 1949 Provisional List mentions a good early/mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront at No. 5).	Essential
9	Listed Grade II	Now the Ethos Bar, formerly the Bull Hotel, one of the major medieval inns of Maidstone. 18 <sup>th</sup> Century according to the List description, but internal evidence of timber framing probably of 15 <sup>th</sup> Century date. 3 storeys,	Essential

		stuccoed with high parapet – original roof replaced by flat roof. Modern doors and windows to ground floor; 3 canted oriel windows to first floor contain sashes without glazing bars and have projecting cornices over. Top floor has small sash windows with central vertical glazing bars only.	
11-15	Listed Grade II	Presumably originally part of the Bull Hotel since the carriage entrance to Bull Yard passes beneath the building between Nos 13 and 15. 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys and attic, stuccoed. A single architectural composition, 4 windows wide, united by projecting parapet above moulded plaster coved cornice with foliage pattern (missing on No. 13). 4 dormer windows. Ground floor has modern shopfronts; upper floors retain sashes with glazing bars in moulded architraves to Nos 11 and 15. No. 13 has a first floor canted oriel window added in 1899 which has sashes without glazing bars; top floor sash has only single vertical glazing bar. Long and short quoining to either side of No. 13	Essential
17	Unlisted	1955, designed by Dennis Darbison. 3 storeys with flat roof. Steel framed with brick frontage, rendered except for exposed brick panel between first and second floor windows. Modern shopfront to ground floor. Upper floor windows extend to full width of building. Projecting concrete cornice to cap the elevation.	Neutral
19	Unlisted	Rebuilt 1936. 3 storeys, rendered with parapet. Two 3-light mullioned and transomed casements to each upper floor. Modern shopfront.	Neutral
21	Unlisted	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys yellow brick in Venetian Gothic style. First floor has three stilted-arched windows with exaggerated Keystones, second floor has three round-arched windows. Decorative parapet cornice. Modern shopfront.	Positive
23	Unlisted	A Grade III listed building in 1949. 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 4 storeys, stuccoed with parapet. Two sash	Essential

		windows to each upper floor, each with two vertical glazing bars only. Modern shopfront to ground floor.	
25/25A	Listed Grade II	Late 16 <sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed building refronted in early/mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stucco lined out to imitate masonry. Parapet and wooden cornice with tiled roof behind. Two windows to each upper floor, all 20 <sup>th</sup> Century replacements. Modern shopfronts to ground floor.	Essential
27	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century façade. 3 storeys, stucco lined out to imitate masonry. Cornice and parapet with clay tiled roof behind with 2 hip ends facing towards street. Two mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century sash windows to each upper floor. Good shopfront of 1937 to ground floor.	Essential
29-31	Listed Grade II	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 4 storeys painted brick with bracketed eaves cornice and hipped slate roof. 3 windows to each upper floor. First floor windows are tripartite sashes without glazing bars surmounted by curved pediments supported on console brackets. Second and third floor windows are single sashes with single vertical glazing bars only, those to second floor having cambered heads. Moulded string course linking third floor window sills. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront to ground floor. Large golden boot shop sign mounted on ornate wrought iron bracket at first and second floor level. The Randall's shoe shop has occupied this building since circa 1890.	Essential
33	Listed Grade II	Formerly the Ship Inn. An early/mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century re-fronting of an earlier building. Two storeys yellow stock brick with parapet, steeply-pitched clay tile roof behind. The building is cranked in plan at its midpoint, the right hand section set back and linked to the rest by a quadrant bay. Carriage entrance to extreme right. Windows are 19 <sup>th</sup> Century sashes with single vertical glazing bars only, with splayed flat stone arches with raised keystone over.	Essential



Entrance to the Mall Shopping Centre	Unlisted	This blocks off the route of the old Water Lane. Erected in the mid 1970s and subsequently altered. Largely glass and metal with the large bulk of the superstructure above built of alien Midland brown brick.	Negative
Granada House	Unlisted	Built 1937. 3 storeys in brown and red brick with cement banding. Slightly projecting central feature with taller parapet and two concrete fins rising through the top two storeys. Metal windows. Rounded at street corners at each end. Variety of modern shopfronts.	Neutral
4-6	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stuccoed with parapet and wooden modillion cornice. 4 sash windows to each upper floor, all without glazing bars except for the top floor of No. 4. First floor windows have cornices over. Good late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront to No. 6, modern shopfront to No. 4.	Essential
8-10	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, clad in roughcast and applied timber framing, probably in early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century. Parapet and modillion cornice. Three sashes to each of upper floors of No. 8 with vertical glazing bars only. Single sashes of wider proportion to each of upper floors of No. 10, that to top floor retaining all glazing bars. Good late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfronts.	Essential
12-14	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century but altered. 3 storeys, stuccoed with steeply-pitched clay tile roof and 2 hipped dormers. 2 windows to each of upper floors are wide mid 20 <sup>th</sup> Century metal-framed casements, out of character with the building. Extremely fine late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront with panelled stallriser. Attractive projecting sign on wrought iron bracket to first floor.	Essential
16-18	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys painted brick with parapet. Mansarded slate roof with 2 flat-roofed dormers. 5 windows to each upper floor, two blocked on second floor. Sash windows with glazing bars intact. Segmental heads with raised keystone to first floor windows. Very poor modern shopfronts.	Essential

20	Listed Grade II	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century according to List description but probably earlier. 3 storeys, painted mathematical tiled frontage to timber-framed building. Hipped clay tile roof at right angles to street. Two delicate early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century sashes to each upper floor, those to top floor retaining all glazing bars. Windows set in moulded architraves. Poor modern shopfront, possibly dating from 1937 alterations.	Essential
22	Unlisted	Built 1908, possibly as part of the Palace Theatre development on the adjacent plots to the south. 3 storeys red brick, parapetted roof above deeply projecting moulded stone cornice. Raised quoins to each corner, alternate ones rendered and painted white. Segmental-arched windows with large stone keystones rising above the tops of the brick arches. Cross-framed casement windows to first floor, simple double casements to top floor. Poor modern shopfront.	Positive
24-32	Unlisted	A large 3-storey building set back from the building line. Erected 1962 as a Sainsbury supermarket, architects Hooper, Belfrage and Gray. Occupies the site of the Palace Theatre (built 1907/08) and of Nos 30 and 32 (No. 30 was a Grade III listed building). A building of extremely poor design, faced in aggregate panels divided by projecting strips, with strips of small, square windows to the upper floors. Grossly out of scale with the surrounding grain of development.	Negative
34	Locally Listed	Probably 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys and attic. Timber-framed, clad in red mathematical tiles to front elevation – the blank rendered flank elevation to the side alley is a remnant of No. 32, demolished in the early 1960s. Clay tiled hipped roof at right angles to street, with 2-light dormer to hip end. Two sash windows without glazing bars to each of first and second floors, those to first floor beneath shallow projecting cornices. Modern shopfront of reasonably good design.	Essential

36	Unlisted	Apparently of 20 <sup>th</sup> Century date. 2 storeys, rendered with parapet and flat roof. Two 3-light mullioned and transomed windows to upper floor. Poor modern shopfront.	Neutral
38-40	Unlisted	A 19 <sup>th</sup> Century building, refronted and with a mansard roof added in 1976, architects Grayston Alan and Durtnell. 2 storeys and attic in yellow stock brick with clay tiled mansard roof with four large lead-clad dormers. Poorly proportioned sash windows with brick soldier arches to first floor; similar windows to dormers. Modern shopfront.	Neutral
42	Locally Listed	Probably late 18 <sup>th</sup> /early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys and attic, stucco lined out to imitate stonework. Parapet and slate mansard roof with single small dormer. Two windows to each upper floor are UPVC replacements in original openings. Modern shopfront and UPVC door to ground floor, but console brackets and fascia remain from late Victorian shopfront.	Essential
44-48	Locally Listed	3 storeys, yellow stock brick, clay-tiled roof behind parapet has three separate hips. Probably late 18 <sup>th</sup> Century, possibly re-fronting an older building. 5 sash windows with glazing bars intact to each upper floor under gauged brick arches. Painted moulded cornice to base of parapet. Modern shopfronts.	Essential
50-54	Locally Listed	1949 List describes it as 18 <sup>th</sup> Century, but probably a re-fronting of an older building perhaps of 16 <sup>th</sup> Century date. 3 storeys and attic, stuccoed. Built out timber parapet obscuring eaves to Nos 52 and 54 (front panel missing on No. 54). Conventional higher rendered parapet to No. 50. Each upper floor has four altered sash windows, only one on top floor of No. 50 retaining glazing bars to original design. Modern shopfronts, that to No. 54 of poor design. Large satellite dish mounted on flank of wall of No. 54. Stucco to Nos 52 and 54 in poor condition. Steeply pitched tiled roof with three flat-roofed	Essential

		dormers. Tall brick chimneystack between Nos. 50 and 52.	
56	Unlisted	The main building is set back from the street behind a bungalow shopfront. The original building is probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century – 3 storeys stuccoed with hipped slate roof at right angle to street – single sash window to each floor. Bungalow shopfront probably added circa 1890 and retains original moulded pilasters, consoles and fascia with decorative wrought iron balustrade above but poor modern shopfront within.	Essential

### **High Street/Bank Street/Middle Row**



### **General Character**

High Street forms the east-west backbone of the town and until the construction of the M20 bypass in the early 1960s constituted part of one of the main routes from London to the Channel ports. It was first set out as part of the planned medieval town development, probably in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, although the direct bridge link across

the Medway at its foot may not have existed until the mid 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the old crossing point near All Saints' Church remaining in use until that time – Brown and Son's map of Maidstone published in 1823 shows the medieval bridge offset from the High Street and on a different alignment.



High Street is one of the most important streets in architectural and townscape terms within the Conservation Area. It originally formed the primary commercial centre of the town, and in its form exhibits one of the classic morphologies of market town development. It is a very broad street, swelling slightly around its mid-point, so laid out to accommodate the erection of market stalls. Despite its width it is fundamentally still a linear space – a “market square” never existed. The linear characteristics of the space are given further emphasis by the development of Middle Row which grew up in the middle of the central market space. Such encroachments on market streets are a common feature of English medieval market town development and indicate where permanent development has supplanted temporary stalls, probably illegally in the first place. Middle Row is first mentioned in a deed of 1446, so it is evident that High Street/Bank Street/Middle Row had assumed their current basic form by that date. The effect of Middle Row on the townscape is to prevent exceptionally long vistas along High Street and to set up its terminal buildings at both ends as major focal points in the street scene. The minor thoroughfare created behind the Middle Row buildings, Bank Street, is one of the most characterful streets in the Conservation Area. It has a very intimate feel and a strong sense of enclosure which is enhanced by its narrowness, its gently curving nature and the relative tallness of many of the buildings flanking it.

Evidence of the medieval origins of the area's development lies in the fact that many of the characteristic long, thin burgage plots can still be identified both as property boundaries and in the rhythm of the townscape brought about by narrow individual buildings often roofed at right angles to the street. These plots are particularly well preserved in Bank Street. Although some of these plots retain undeveloped land at the rear, most have been built on over time with extensions, stores, stables, workshops, etc. A number of inns existed in this area and the land to the rear, approached via arches in the street frontages, provided courtyards with stabling and other facilities. Royal Star Arcade, Market Buildings and Rose Yard have all developed from such inn yards, and others can still be identified even where the inns themselves have long since ceased to trade. In some cases, the openings through to the street have subsequently been infilled, but all are betrayed by at least some evidence. Other alleyways only negotiable by foot also provided direct routes between the street and the rear of plots, some of these again passing beneath buildings. A number of these remain and are important features of the townscape and the historic character of the Conservation Area. Brown and Son's map of 1823 shows that a number of these had been utilised in the development of small back courts of low quality housing. Stevens Directory of Maidstone, published in 1882, shows that at least one of these still existed at that time – Wells Yard between Nos 30 and 31 High Street contained five houses. All have now gone.

Further physical evidence of the area's history is witnessed by many of the buildings themselves, a large number of which are listed for their special architectural or historic interest – High Street, Bank Street and Middle Row between them have a total of 43 listed buildings, considerably more than any other street within the Conservation Area. There are also a large number of unlisted buildings which contribute to the special character of the area. A great many timber-framed buildings survive dating back at least as far as the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, often hidden behind later re-fronting, and in a few cases medieval cellars remain.

Whilst much evidence of the medieval plot widths is reflected in the rhythm of narrow frontages throughout these streets, there is little consistency in terms of age, style or height of buildings. The street scene is therefore varied and often informal, with a serrated roof line caused by buildings varying between two and four storeys in height. Neither are storey heights in themselves constant. Building lines, however, are consistent throughout, with the single exception of the ex-Barclays Bank building at 14-19 Middle Row, rebuilt in the 1950s on a set-back line to accommodate potential road improvements which were fortunately never carried out.

Visually, the street falls naturally into three parts – the wide area at the top of the town around the Queen's Monument; the Middle Row/Bank Street section; and the lower High Street. All have their own distinctive character.

In the area around the Queen's Monument there is a strong "town centre" feeling – the street is very spacious but is lined by suitably-scaled and impressive buildings such as the National Westminster Bank (No.3), the old Royal Insurance Building (Nos 8/9), the Town Hall and Nos 93-95. The Queen's Monument itself forms a natural focal point, although at present it is unfortunately isolated on a traffic island. The other strong focal point is the Town Hall. An unfortunate feature is the mass of the tall block of Colman House which looms over the space and dominates it from the east. The mixture of shops and banks means that the area is always bustling with activity; the presence of a number of bus stops adds to this activity, and the area as a whole acts as a natural meeting place. There is a strong feeling of enclosure, helped by the fact that King Street does not continue the exact line of High Street but bends



to the south so that there are no views out of the space to the east. Trees outside the Town Hall and Nos 8/9 are now too large and too close to the building, obscuring views of its fine architecture and deeply overshadowing it. Paving is in a mixture of York stone paving stones, "Tegula" blocks and red brick pavers, and is generally satisfactory. A certain degree of visual clutter is apparent – bus shelters, bins and bollards outside the town hall, road signage (including a poorly-maintained "No Entry" sign at the top end of Bank Street) and the tall columns which support the Christmas lights but remain in situ all year and are all out of vertical. There is also an unfortunate CCTV mast and camera right outside the National Westminster Bank at the top of Bank Street, and various poorly-maintained planters of a rather rustic style adjacent to the Queen's Monument detract from its setting.

Middle Row/Bank Street have a different character, and Bank Street since pedestrianisation in the 1980s forms a quiet backwater near the heart of the town which is greatly enhanced by the high concentration of listed buildings which make it one of the most consistent historic streetscapes in the Conservation Area. It contains a mix of shops, bars, restaurants and offices giving it variety and life outside normal shopping hours. The Middle Row section of High Street is mainly comprised of "secondary" shops, banks and offices, although it does contain the entrance to the Royal Start Arcade which gives it focus. Building quality is a little more variable than in the Upper High Street, but there are few really discordant elements. Bank Street is surfaced in a mix of red brick pavers and small unit concrete paving stones, a scheme which now looks slightly dated; street lighting is by reproduction Victorian lanterns. In Middle Row and High Street, most paving is patched red tarmac which detracts from the character of the area.



The Lower High Street widens out again to give an area with an expansive, open feel to it, but which suffers from its fringe location and lack of adequate focus. It is far less busy in feel than other parts of the High Street and has suffered more from insensitive development. Despite the planting of London plane trees and the presence of the Russian cannon, a listed monument, the central space remains rather unresolved and underused. There is also a considerable problem of street clutter, particularly evident near the junction with Mill Street where equipment cabinets, telephone kiosks, bollards, litterbins, traffic signs and lights vie for a small piece of pavement. There are some old brick planters along the northern side of the street which are not very attractive and inhibit pedestrian movement. Paving is virtually all in patched red tarmac again. The potential for linking this area visually and functionally to the riverside has unfortunately been compromised by the construction of the gyratory road system which forms a substantial visual and physical barrier. Views towards the river are unfortunately terminated by the ugly mass of the Broadway Shopping Centre on the far side. Despite these drawbacks, this is an area of considerable potential – the basic space is well-proportioned, and there are a number of attractive buildings, both listed and unlisted. The old Barclays Bank building at the foot of Middle Row forms a well-designed feature dominating the eastern end of the space, and is balanced by the newly-restored tall building on the corner of Mill Street which is important to the townscape. The area also contains two of the town's important old coaching inns, albeit in altered form and no longer in their original uses – the Queen's Head and the Rose and Crown.

Although High Street formed the original commercial focus of the town, during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century this drifted to Week Street, and High Street is now very much of secondary importance, particularly west of the Town Hall. In many ways this has been fortunate for its townscape insofar as pressure for development from the 1930s onwards has been less than it might have been. Thus more of the medieval form and character has survived than in Week Street, although this is not to say that the High Street has escaped all disastrous redevelopments. As elsewhere in the Conservation Area, poor quality modern shopfronts and signage are significant factors detracting from its special character.

### Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
1-2 High Street / 1 Week Street	Listed Grade II	Formerly the Red Lion Inn. The current building dates from circa 1857 and replaced the old timber-framed inn which stood on an island site within the market place. It is of 3 storeys in red brick with a slate roof above a bracketed eaves cornice. Windows with Italianate architraves, those to first floor having projecting cornices supported on console brackets. The pub closed in the early 1960s and was converted to shops in 1964. The deep fascia of the shopfronts put in at that time cuts through the mouldings of the pilasters and cornice of the	Essential



		original pub frontage.	
3 High Street (National Westminster Bank)	Listed Grade II	Designed 1909 for the London County and Westminster Bank. Architect W. Campbell Jones, a well-known Edwardian bank architect. A very grand building in a florid neo-Baroque style, in Portland Stone with a slate roof. A building of major townscape importance. One of the ground floor arches gives access to Rose Yard.	Essential
5-6 High Street	Listed Grade II	Formerly the Rose Inn, although part of the building was lost to the bank development adjacent which explains the somewhat unbalanced design. The Rose was one of the major inns of Maidstone, probably medieval in origin, but first recorded in the mid 17 <sup>th</sup> Century. Rose Yard is the old inn yard. The current frontage is of 18 <sup>th</sup> Century date, but may mask an older building. 3 storeys, yellow brick with red brick details, parapet and dentilled cornice. Two giant brick pilasters rising the whole height of the building. Steep clay tiled roof with two hipped dormers. Ground floor has a good modern shopfront in traditional style, upper floors have segmental-headed sash windows with glazing bars. The building had been extensively altered before it was listed in 1974, but was restored to its original appearance in 1978.	Essential
7 High Street	Listed Grade II	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century or possibly earlier. 3 storeys, stuccoed with a hipped clay plain tile roof behind parapet. Sash windows with glazing bars in moulded architrave surrounds to upper floors. Modern shopfront of reasonable design to ground floor. The local antiquary, John Newington Hughes, lived here in the 1820s and collected a number of Gothic remains from buildings being demolished throughout Kent. Some of the larger of these were erected to the rear of the building and included a Decorated window from the old Mitre Inn, a porch from Ashford Church and a Perpendicular window from Sutton Valence Church. At least some of these architectural relics	Essential

		remain to the rear, hemmed in by buildings and very difficult to see.	
8-9 High Street	Listed Grade II*	Built 1827 to the designs of John Whichcord Senior as the Kent Insurance offices (later Royal Insurance). A fine Portland stone building with 8 engaged, fluted Ionic columns rising through the first and second floors over a rusticated ground floor. A double archway at the left end gives access to Market Buildings. A building of major townscape importance, well converted to a pub in the 1990s.	Essential
10-11 High Street	Unlisted	Built 1954 in neo-Georgian style. 2 storeys brown brick with red brick gauged arches over four sash windows with glazing bars to the upper floor. Plain clay tiles roof behind parapet. Poor modern shopfront and signage to ground floor.	Neutral
12 High Street	Listed Grade II	A building of greater interest than at first appears. List description ascribes it to the early/mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. Three rendered storeys with a single large window to the first floor and 3 small casement windows to the top floor. Hipped slate roof behind parapet. Formerly the Haunch of Venison Inn, which closed in 1918. Old photographs show it to be of four storeys rather than three, although the height of the building has not changed. At some stage in the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century the first and second floors have been combined internally, and the sash windows to the first floors have been removed and replaced by the current large window at an intermediate level, thus completely altering the proportions of the building. The inn formerly had an archway through to the inn-yard at the left hand side, but no evidence of this now remains to the street – the opening can however be traced at the rear. Internal details of the roof construction and a blocked window suggest that the structure may, in part, date from the 17 <sup>th</sup> Century.	Essential
13 High Street	Listed Grade II	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, 3 storeys, painted mathematical tile cladding to a timber-framed	Essential

		building. Bracketed eaves cornice and clay plain tile roof. Two sash windows to each upper floor with glazing bars missing. Modern shopfront of reasonable design.	
14 High Street	Listed Grade II	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, yellow stock brick. Hipped clay plain tile roof above modillion eaves cornice. Upper floors have 2 full height canted bays containing sash windows with glazing bars. Good modern shopfront in traditional style to ground floor (a replacement of 1987).	Essential
15 High Street	Listed Grade II	Formerly the front block of the Royal Star Hotel, one of the primary inns of Maidstone, first documented in the 16 <sup>th</sup> Century. Front façade of 18 <sup>th</sup> Century, 3 storeys red brick, but masking a timber-framed structure of probably 16 <sup>th</sup> Century date. The carriage entrance to the inn yard now gives pedestrian access to the modern development of Royal Star Arcade. A long building of 8 bays, having sash windows with glazing bars under gauged brick arches. Heavy bracketed eaves cornice, plain clay tiled roof. Ground floor has good traditionally styled shopfronts inserted in the 1980s as part of the Royal Star Arcade development. The large projecting sign advertising the arcade adds interest to the street scene.	Essential
16/17 High Street	Unlisted	Erected 1907, replaced a two-storeyed, double gabled timber-framed building of 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century date. 4 storeys, in a neo-Tudor design with exposed timber-framing infilled with roughcast. Canted oriel windows to first and second floors with mullioned and transomed windows. Attic storey jettied with two gables facing the street, and with plain casement windows. Tiled roof. Ground floor of rusticated stone with round-headed openings with voussoirs (recently modified) was probably first inserted in 1922 when the building was converted to a branch of the Midland Bank.	Positive
18 High Street	Unlisted	Probably erected soon after 1862	Essential

		when the previous timber-framed buildings were pulled down. Built for the London and County Bank. A very grand 3-storeyed Italianate design in yellow sandstone. First floor has plate glass sashes divided by pilasters supporting console brackets which hold up deep sills with cast-iron flower guards to top floor windows. Elaborate bracketed eaves cornice. Aprons beneath second floor window sills carry a raised foliage design incorporating the bank's initials (LCB). The bank moved out in 1910, having merged with the Westminster Bank, into the premises at 3 High Street, so the current extremely fine Art Nouveau shopfront must date from then.	
19-20 High Street	Unlisted	Possibly built in the early 1870s for George Mence Smith, one of the earliest chain stores in Maidstone. 3 storeys yellow stock brick with red brick patterning. Venetian Gothic details. No. 20 has a central oriel with slender columns under a flat canopy supported on heavy moulded brackets to the first floor, above which sits a double sash window beneath a pointed red brick relieving arch with a gablet breaking through the eaves above that. No. 19 has similar (but larger) double sash to first floor and a simpler double sash above with a bracketed sill with cast iron flower guards. Modern shopfronts to ground floor.	Positive
21 High Street	Unlisted	A very narrow two-storeyed flat roofed building dating from the late 1920s/early 1930s when Pudding Lane was widened on its eastern side. Faced in cream glazed faience with minimalist classical detailing and now in poor structural condition, this is a poor building on an important corner site.	Negative
22-26 High Street	Unlisted	Formerly Chiesman's Department Store, and before that Denniss Paine and Co. Largely rebuilt 1911 after a serious fire. Corner block to Pudding Lane of 4 storeys, stuccoed with large display windows to first floor and sash windows above. Bracketed	Positive

		eaves, façade divided by pilasters springing from corbels half way up the first floor. The rest of the building is of 3 storeys, of similar character except that the top floor is in neo-Tudor style with exposed timbers with roughcast infill, large mullioned and transomed windows and four small gables facing the street. A building of eclectic character which whilst not of a particularly high architectural standard is good fun and enlivens the townscape. It is also of historical interest as the site of Maidstone's earliest department store.	
27 High Street	Unlisted	A separate building, but also formerly part of Chiesman's store. Probably mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century, 3 storeys painted brick with parapet. Upper floors have sash windows, but those to the first floor are truncated at the bottom by a deep shop fascia. Boldly projecting cornice beneath parapet. Poor modern shopfront to ground floor.	Positive
28 High Street	Unlisted	Built 1964, architects Ronald Ward and Partners, as a supermarket with car parking on the upper floors and taller office block behind. Front elevation was originally clad in pierced ceramic blocks, but following failure of the blocks it was re-clad in the 1990s with yellow stock brick with ventilation openings for the car park treated as "windows" with gauged brick arches. This has resulted in some improvement to the appearance of the building. The large slab-like block of offices behind is too tall for its context and is prominent in views up the High Street, spoiling the roof silhouette of the frontage buildings and diverting attention from the more worthy distant landmark of the spire of Holy Trinity Church. Exceptionally poor modern shopfront to ground floor.	Negative
29 High Street	Locally Listed	Probably mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, yellow stock brick. First floor has two large tripartite sash windows with glazing bars in Italianate surrounds with projecting cornices over	Essential

		supported on console brackets. 3 sash windows with glazing bars to top floor, all in Italianate architraves, with moulded sills linked by slightly projecting painted string course. Heavy moulded projecting eaves cornice. Slate roof with 2 dormers with shallow-curved roofs. Poor modern aluminium shopfront (original shopfront had been of five stone arches).	
30 High Street	Unlisted	4 storeys rendered with parapet. Outwardly of 19 <sup>th</sup> Century appearance, but may be considerably older. First floor has Victorian display windows across whole frontage under fascia and shallow cornice. Upper floors have modern cross-framed casement windows. Poor modern aluminium shopfront.	Positive
31 High Street	Listed Grade II	Timber-framed building re-faced in stucco in mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. Bracketed eaves cornice. Plain clay tile roof, main part hipped towards street. First floor has 5-light mullioned and transomed shallow bay window with a cornice above flanked by double pilasters. Top floor has 2 sashes in Italianate architraves. Poor modern shopfront.	Essential
32 High Street	Listed Grade II	Timber-framed building with early/mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century front. 3 storeys, plastered. Wooden modillion cornice with steep plain clay tile roof over. One sash window to each upper floor. Good late Victorian shopfront to ground floor.	Essential
33 High Street	Listed Grade II	A timber framed building of 3 storeys, considerably altered. Previously formed the end unit of a single building of which No. 35 forms the other end. The building was seriously damaged by fire in 1928 and No. 33 restored. Presumably the timber framing to the front elevation was applied at this date as old photographs do not show it. Modern casements to the upper floor and a modern shopfront. Steep plain clay tile roof.	Essential
34 High Street	Unlisted	2 storeys with flat roof. Yellow stock brick now painted blue to front elevation. Built after the 1928 fire, but the present entirely	Negative

		glazed front elevation probably dates from the late 1950s/ early 1960s. A building of poor design.	
35 High Street	Listed Grade II	16 <sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed building with 19 <sup>th</sup> Century and later alterations. 3 storeys, first floor jettied, rendered. First floor has two closely set sash windows in architraves, single small sash in architrave to top floor. Roof altered so that it is now of asymmetric pitch with slate to the front and plain clay tiles to the rear. An exceptionally good shopfront of circa 1900 has curved windows and pilasters. Original decorative fascia remains beneath current sign.	Essential
36 High Street	Unlisted	1958, architects Read and McDermott. A 3 storey building with a flat roof. A framed structure clad in red brick and tiles, with large windows expressing the structural grid at first and second floor level. Shopfront to ground floor.	Negative
37 High Street	Unlisted	Before 1970 this was the Rose and Crown Inn, first mentioned in 1608, and the building retains its carriage arch to the left hand end giving access to the former inn yard. Present building front probably of 18 <sup>th</sup> or early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century date. 2 storeys in yellow stock brick with red brick details. Relatively unaltered at first floor level where there are four large tripartite sash windows under gauged brick arches. Ground floor has been covered in roughcast, with new windows and doors. Roof behind parapet covered in concrete tiles – structure beneath suggests a possible 16 <sup>th</sup> Century date. Two segmental-headed dormers.	Essential
38 High Street	Listed Grade II	List description suggests a building of late 18 <sup>th</sup> /early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century date, but it appears to be jettied so may be older. 3 storeys, stuccoed. Hipped plain clay tile roof. Victorian triple sash windows to upper floors, those to first floor being divided by pilasters with cornice over. Modern shopfront to ground floor.	Essential
39 High Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys plus attic, stuccoed with plain clay tile mansard roof containing a	Essential



		small dormer facing the street. A single sash window with glazing bars intact to each upper floor. Very poor modern aluminium shopfront.	
40-46 High Street	Unlisted	Designed 1986 by Isis Design Services. A tall 4 storey block of yellow stock brick with brown brick soldier-course bands. Steeply pitched, multi-gabled clay tile roof. Out of scale with adjacent buildings both in terms of height and width – it has failed to preserve the medieval burgage plot widths which were reflected by the previous 19 <sup>th</sup> Century buildings on the site.	Negative
53-54 High Street	Unlisted	A purpose-built commercial development of 1900. 3 storeys, orange brick, forming an effective corner feature to Bishops Way. Mullioned and transomed windows with stone surrounds to upper floors. Façade divided by pilasters extending through the parapet, which itself is raised in the centre of each bay to form small pediments. Ground floor has poor modern shopfronts inserted between the original pilasters and console brackets.	Positive
55 High Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stuccoed with hipped plain clay tile roof. Upper floors have sash windows with glazing bars, those to first floor taller and with projecting cornices above. Poor modern shopfront. The crazed stucco to the upper floors detracts from the appearance.	Essential
56 High Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, red brick with steeply pitched plain clay tile roof behind parapet. 3 sash windows to each upper floor with glazing bars under gauged brick arches. Good modern shopfront in a traditional style. Extensively rebuilt after a fire in 1985.	Essential
57 High Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. Two storeys, stuccoed, with half-hipped gable facing street. First floor has two sash windows with glazing bars. Good modern shopfront in a traditional style. Plain clay tile roof. Extensively rebuilt after fire in 1985.	Essential
58-59 High Street	Unlisted	Built 1871 as the Post Office. A large scale stone building in Italianate style. Carriage	Positive

		entrance off centre to ground floor. Integral fascia to ground floor carried on half-round attached columns. First floor windows have cornices carried on console brackets. Main entrance has a flat hood carried on large console brackets. Deeply projecting moulded eaves cornice.	
60-61 High Street	Unlisted	Built 1974 as a supermarket, architects Elsworth Sykes Partnership. Replaced a listed building at No. 60. Three/four storeys with flat roof, faced in grey aggregate concrete block. Strip windows. Of poor design and pays no heed to the grain of surrounding development, its excessive width emphasised by the horizontality of the design.	Negative
62-64 High Street	Unlisted (62 & 63) Listed Grade II (64)	Nos 62 and 63 formerly made up the Queens Head Hotel, one of the principle coaching inns of the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. The carriage entrance was formerly through No. 62, which is probably of early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century date and has a low-pitched slate roof. Nos 63 and 64 form a pair, probably of very early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century date, but only No. 64 is a Listed Building, as No. 63 along with No. 62 was extensively altered in 1934 by the application of a fake half-timbered façade with mullioned and transomed windows in place of the previous sashes. This has severely detracted from the character and appearance of these important buildings.	Essential
65-66 High Street	Unlisted	Built 1906 for G.H.Leavey: Outfitters. A large scale building of 4 storeys plus attic. Red brick with stone string courses and window surrounds. Slate mansard roof. Overscaled in comparison with adjacent development, but of major townscape importance on this prominent corner site where the corner turret with copper cupola roof partially closes the view from Bank Street. Recently well restored	Essential
68 Bank Street	Unlisted	Built 1905 following the widening of Mill Street. 3 storeys, red brick with stone dressings. Plain clay tile roof behind parapet. Large display windows to first floor,	Neutral

		sash windows to second floor. Poor modern shopfront. A weak design on an important corner site.	
69 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, painted mathematical tiles over timber frame. Sash windows with glazing bars intact to upper floors but very poor modern aluminium shopfront with oversized fascia to ground floor.	Essential
70 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Fine early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century front to older building. 3 storeys, stuccoed. Upper floors have sash windows with wide glazing bars set in heavy moulded architrave surrounds, those on the first floor having cornices over (and a pediment over the central one). Heavy moulded modillion eaves cornice. Clay tiled roof behind parapet. Good 1930s shopfront.	Essential
71 Bank Street	Unlisted	Built 1912 in neo-Tudor style. 3 storeys and attic. Above a fairly good modern shopfront there is a first floor in red brick. Top floor is jettied and plastered. Two gabled dormers rise from the eaves. Leaded mullioned and transomed windows. Plain clay tiled roof. Quite a good example of its age and type.	Positive
72 Bank Street	Unlisted	Built 1961, architects Riches and Blythin. 4 storeys with flat roof. Purple brick-clad framed structure with cream tiled infill panels and strip windows.	Negative
73 Bank Street	Locally Listed	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys painted brick. Modern replacement windows to upper floors (unauthorised). The most distinguished feature, however, is the spectacular shopfront added in 1897 when the premises were the Maidstone Restaurant – it features curved glazing, a panelled stallriser and a balustrade over the fascia surmounted by a central broken segmental pediment.	Essential
74/75 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	A timber-framed building retaining traces of a jetty – probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century. No. 74 has plastered upper floors with applied modern timber framing which detracts from the true historic character of the building. No. 75 has roughcast upper floors. No. 74 has sash	Essential

		windows to upper floors, those to second floor retaining glazing bars. No. 75 also retains sash windows with glazing bars to top floor but has large display windows to first floor – whilst these are not in character visually with the building they are of historical interest as in the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century the premises was occupied by a picture-framing business and these large windows were probably installed to facilitate access for large canvasses. Plain clay tile roof.	
76/77 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Timber framed houses, probably of 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century date, refronted in 18 <sup>th</sup> Century but retaining trace of continuous jetty. 3 storeys with parapet, No. 76 roughcast, No. 77 stuccoed. Both have canted oriel windows to first floor with sash windows retaining glazing bars. On second floor No. 76 has a modern cross-framed casement and No. 77 a sash window with glazing bars. Altered, probably early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront to No. 76; poor 1950s shopfront to No. 77.	Essential
78 Bank Street	Listed Grade II*	A four storeyed timber-framed house with an elaborate first floor which is fronted by four classical columns supporting the 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor jetty and between the centre two of which is a large early 17 <sup>th</sup> Century bay window with an arch-headed centre light. Below and to either side of this bay are panels of fine raised pargetting, highly coloured and including the Royal Arms, the Prince of Wales' feathers and the date 1611. The second and third floors are now flush-faced and stuccoed with sash windows with glazing bars, but prior to circa 1815 were treated in similar fashion to first floor and had two 2-storey canted oriels with gables over. Plain clay tile roof behind parapet. Good shopfront.	Essential
79 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century jettied timber framed building, refronted in 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. Three storeys, stuccoed with parapet. Sash windows with glazing bars to upper floors. Good modern	Essential

		shopfront.	
80/81 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century jettied timber-framed building, refronted in 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stuccoed with parapet. Canted oriels with sash windows to first floor, single sashes with glazing bars to second floor. Good modern shopfronts.	Essential
82 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century. Timber framed, plastered. 3 storeys with gable facing street. First and second floor has full-height canted bay with sash windows with glazing bars. Plain clay tile roof. 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront.	Essential
83/84 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century. Timber framed, plastered. 3 storeys with two gables facing street. No. 83 has full-height canted bay to first and second floors with sash windows; No. 84 has large modern display window to first floor and an altered tripartite sash window to the second floor. Poor modern shopfront. Plain clay tile roof.	Essential
85 Bank Street	Listed Grade II*	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century. Jettied timber-framed building, plastered. Gable facing street, top half of which is jettied forward and supported by large canted bay running full height of first and second floors which contains altered sash windows. Fine early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront with panelled stallriser. 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shop sign of two golden crossed guns at upper level adds interest to the street scene. Plain clay tile roof.	Essential
86 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century. Timber-framed, jettied and plastered 3 storeys. Gable end to street with moulded bargeboard and pendant. First floor has two sash windows under slightly-projecting cornices. Modern 4-casement window within gable. Good shopfront inserted 1980 as a copy of that at No. 85.	Essential
87/88 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> Century, timber-framed, refronted in early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, plastered. Heavy wooden	Essential

		modillion eaves cornice. Two central windows to first floor have pediments over, left hand window has cornice over, but windows themselves altered. Right hand window to first floor is a canted oriel with sash windows with glazing bars. Top floor has three tripartite sash windows. Poor modern shopfront. Plain clay tile roof.	
89/90 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Built 1913 as district offices for the Prudential Assurance Company. Architect probably Paul Waterhouse. An exuberant example of neo-Tudor design. 2 storeys plus attic with two gables facing the street. Ground floor of stone, upper floors black and white half timbering, double jettied. Elaborately carved timbers. At first floor level there are four statues in medieval dress representing Kent worthies set within ogee-headed canopies. Mullioned and transomed oriel windows to first floor. Plain clay tile roof.	Essential
91 Bank Street	Listed Grade II	Built 1927 for the National Provincial Bank, architect Frederick Charles Palmer. A fine example of "Bankers' Georgian" design. Impressively-scaled 2 storey building. Stone-arched ground floor, red brick with stone detailing above. Central pediment within which is a moulded cartouche containing an Invicta motif (the National Provincial Bank took over the Kentish Bank which had traded on this site since the early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century). Tall sash windows with glazing bars to first floor, central one with segmental stone pediment over. Plain clay tile roof. A building of considerable presence and townscape importance marking the entrance to Bank Street and balancing the Town Hall.	Essential
93-95 High Street	Listed Grade II	1855, architects Whichcord and Ashpitel. 4 storeys, cast-iron frame construction with green ceramic tile cladding. Elaborate moulded eaves cornice with hipped slate roof above. The two top floors have small sash	Essential

		windows. First floor has large full-height display windows separated by barley sugar twist cast iron columns supporting a bracketed cast iron cornice. Unfortunately other cast-iron detailing (including shopfronts) has been lost, and current modern shopfronts are poor. The building with its wide frontage breaks the rhythm of the upper High Street, but balances similarly-scaled buildings on the north side of the street.	
96 High Street	Unlisted	A "black and white" Tudor style building probably erected in 1926 for J. Lyons and Co. 2 storeys plus attic. Gable end facing street. Decorative timber framing to first floor with 5-light leaded mullioned and transomed window. Three-light leaded casement within gable. Poor modern shopfront. Plain clay tile roof.	Positive
97 High Street	Unlisted	A poor façade to the street of mock timber framing, erected before 1912, masks an older building whose plain clay-tile roof can be glimpsed above the parapet of the façade. Modern shopfront in poor neo-Georgian style.	Positive
97a/98 High Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 15 <sup>th</sup> Century. Timber framed, plastered. Two storeys, probably of hall and crosswing plan. Two gables facing the street, that to right (to crosswing) being larger and jettied on brackets, with canted bay window to first floor. Two sash windows to No. 98. Plain clay tiled roof. Poor modern shopfront to No. 97a; good Victorian shopfront to No. 98.	Essential
99/100 High Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 15 <sup>th</sup> Century. A tall and impressive double-jettied building of 4 storeys, probably originally an inn. Upper floors plastered. A variety of sash windows, but first floor display window to No. 99. Poor modern aluminium shopfront to No. 99. No. 100 has poor shopfront beneath fine curved fascia of early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century date. Plain clay tile roof. Medieval undercroft.	Essential
The Cannon, High Street	Listed Grade II	A Russian cannon captured at the siege of Sebastopol during the Crimean War. Constitutes one of	Essential



		the earliest war memorials and gives some degree of focus to the central space of the lower High Street.	
Statue of Queen Victoria and Drinking Fountain, High Street	Listed Grade II	Erected circa 1862, statue of seated queen by John Thomas under a Gothic canopy by Blandford. Decorative cast iron lamps at each corner. An important visual feature of the upper High Street.	Essential
The Town Hall, Middle Row	Listed Grade II*	Erected 1762-3. 2 storeys with a canted end facing north-east. Portland stone and red brick with parapet and plain clay tile roof. Arched ground floor originally open and used as market hall, probably infilled after 1835. North-west front to Middle Row has a pediment off-centre and a cupola with domed roof and a projecting clock which form important townscape features. Windows and doors altered at various times in the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century. A fine building which occupies a focal point at the end of Middle Row and which dominates the wide space of the upper High Street.	Essential
1 Middle Row	Listed Grade II	A tiny narrow building, probably dating from the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century but possibly with some remodelling circa 1900. 3 storeys, stuccoed with parapet above moulded cornice. Façade divided by tall, thin pilasters which continue above cornice and terminate in flat, moulded caps above the top of the parapet. Top floor has three very narrow sash windows in moulded architraves, with glazing bars to top lights only. First floor has one narrow sash to left with pediment over and one large bow window with unusual glazing bar pattern giving a fanlight effect to the upper third. Bow window is surmounted by a cornice and balustraded parapet. Ground floor has curved shop window beneath the bow, now containing plate glass. Doorcase with pilasters and rectangular fanlight with glazing bars forming a diamond pattern.	Essential
2-3 Middle Row	Unlisted	A 19 <sup>th</sup> Century building refronted in grp cladding in 1972. Upper	Neutral

		floors have sash windows set in box-like projections. Poor modern shopfront. The re-clad elevation to Middle Row is totally out of character with the street, but the rear elevation to Bank Street retains much more of its original character.	
4-5 Middle Row	Listed Grade II	Probably 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stuccoed to front elevation, tile-hung to side alley. Plain clay tiled roof. Fake applied timbers to No. 5. No. 4 has sash windows with glazing bars to upper floors and a canted oriel to the first floor; No. 5 has large display window to first floor and a single sash to second floor, both replaced with modern double-glazed units. Poor modern shopfront to No. 4; No. 5 has deep 19 <sup>th</sup> Century fascia with dentil cornice but modern shopfront below.	Essential
6-7 Middle Row	Unlisted	Dated 1901 on gable. A tall building of 3 storeys plus attic with a large shaped gable facing the street. Red brick with a steeply pitched roof in Westmoreland slate. A rare example of the Queen Anne style in Maidstone. Upper floors have central bay flanked by brick pilasters rising full height and breaking through gable coping to terminate in ball finials. Sash windows with glazing bars to first and second floors. Original dentilled cornice to shopfront survives, but very poor shopfront of 1963 inserted beneath it.	Positive
8-9 Middle Row	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> Century, refronted in 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, plastered with steeply pitched plain clay tile roof behind parapet. Second floor jettied on brackets. First floor has two 18 <sup>th</sup> Century bay windows with sashes with central vertical glazing bars only. Top floor has modern casements. Altered 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfronts.	Essential
10 Middle Row	Unlisted	Built circa 1905 for the London and Provincial Bank, architect George E. Bond (Illustrated in The Building News, December 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1905). A tall building of three storeys plus attic in a neo-Tudor style with exposed half-timbering and a plain clay tile roof. Two gables facing street. Second and	Positive

		attic floors are jettied, the lower one being coved. Large mullioned and transomed windows and prominent chimneystack. Modern shopfront. Site previously occupied by The Marquis of Granby public house.	
11 Middle Row (JP's Bar, formerly the Sun Inn)	Listed Grade II	Probably 16 <sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed building faced in stucco and roughcast. Two storeys plus attic. Attic floor jettied and with 3 gables facing the street with moulded bargeboards and pendants and triple-casement windows. Two tripartite sashes and a central single sash to first floor. Modern windows and doors to ground floor. Plain clay tile roof.	Essential
12-13 Middle Row	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century front to possibly older building. 3 storeys, faced in mathematical tiles. Heavy eaves cornice. Plain clay tiled roof with 4 flat roofed dormers containing sashes with glazing bars. Windows to first and second floors are sashes with central vertical glazing bars only. Good late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront. There are medieval cellars beneath the building.	Essential
14-19 Middle Row	Unlisted	Designed 1956 by Sir William Holford and Partners. A prominent 4-storey building forming the terminal point of Middle Row and dominating the wide space of the lower High Street. Exposed concrete frame with infill of grey brick and flint panels. Built for Barclays Bank, there are reliefs of coins on the south-west front and of the Barclays eagle emblem over the doors. A building of major townscape importance and one of the best modern buildings in Maidstone.	Essential

## King Street



## General Character

King Street was formerly known as East Lane, its name being changed after the visit of King George III to Mote House in 1799. It was a narrow medieval street, formerly lined with a fine collection of timber-framed, jettied and multi-gabled houses. Its very narrowness meant that it fell an early prey to a road-widening scheme in 1927 as it formed part of the main London to Folkestone road. This resulted in the demolition of the whole north side of the street between Wyke Manor Road and No. 91 King Street and the consequent loss of a large part of its historic character. Modern redevelopments in the 1970s on the south side have further depleted the remaining character, although a couple of buildings of 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> Century date remain and there is a good section (outside the Conservation Area) where the early/mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century character is relatively intact on the south side of the street. Overall, however, the townscape is rather disappointing, although views into the town centre are nicely closed by the southward bend of the High Street and the NatWest Bank's grand building at No. 3 High Street is of major importance in drawing the viewer onward. However, over everything in the street looms the tall mass of Colman House to the north and, to a lesser extent, the developments over The Mall Shopping Centre to the south. Colman House is not only visually intrusive; it also produces an unfortunate microclimate making this area of the town subject to high, gusty winds.

Because of all these unfortunate modern developments, only a small part of the southern side of King Street is currently included within the Conservation Area. The attractive group of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings just beyond the entrance to The Mall currently fall outside the boundary.

The part of King Street that is included in the Conservation Area has a busy character largely engendered by the significant pedestrian flows between the major shopping attractions of The Mall and Week Street and by the presence of main town centre bus stops.

Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
2 King Street	Listed Grade II	See description for 1-3 Gabriel's Hill, which forms part of the same building.	Essential
4-6 King Street	Listed Grade II	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stuccoed with slate roof. Sash windows, those to the first floor of No. 6 having unfortunately had their sills raised. Poor modern shopfront.	Essential
8 King Street	Unlisted	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys painted brick. Slate roof and prominent chimney stacks above dentil eaves cornice. Unusual Venetian Gothic windows to top floor, large display windows to either end of first floor. Good modern shopfront.	Positive
10 King Street	Unlisted	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century in Italianate style. 3 storeys, stuccoed with slate roof. Bracketed roof. Vermiculated quoins. First and second floor display windows under bracketed cornices, but modern replacement windows detract from the design. Good modern shopfront.	Positive
12 King Street	Unlisted	Probably 17 <sup>th</sup> Century with 19 <sup>th</sup> Century alterations. Two storeys and attic, with two gables facing the street. Timber framed faced in roughcast with applied timbering to attic storey. Tiled roof. One of the last survivors of a large number of similar buildings once to be found in King Street.	Essential

**Lower Stone Street / Knightrider Street / Palace Avenue / Romney Place**





## General Character

Lower Stone Street follows the route of the Roman road from Rochester to Hastings and forms the continuation of Gabriel's Hill on the south side of the River Len crossing (now hidden from view in a culvert). The first section as far as the Palace Avenue junction is now pedestrianised as part of the Gabriel's Hill scheme and has a town centre feel to it. To the south of the Palace Avenue junction the road assumes a different character – it has much more of the aspect of a fringe area, with a mixture of secondary shops, offices, restaurants, etc., and is also very badly affected by heavy traffic as it forms the main route out of town to the south. The two sides of this southern part of Lower Stone Street are also of two distinctly different characters beyond the junction with Romney Place, with the eastern side of the street having been comprehensively redeveloped in the early 1970s with major office developments in both slab and tower block forms on a set-back building line; in contrast, the western side of the street, with the exception of a couple of gap sites, is made up of one of the most continuous runs of historic buildings within the Conservation Area. This dichotomy is reflected in the Conservation Area boundary, only the western side of the street being included within it.

As the linking route between the original settlement focus around All Saints' Church and the new town centre based on the High Street, Lower Stone Street must have developed early and the west side of the street still preserves many of its long, thin burgage plots which are reflected in the grain of the built development, although some may have been merged early to provide larger plots for prestigious properties as at Stone House and Nos 30-32. In fact, until the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the street appears to have been one of the preferred locations for town houses of the gentry, some of which still survive. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the street appears to have lost this character and to have become more commercial in nature – evidence from street directories suggests that it was much more a part of the true town centre than now is the case.

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a hole was made in the street frontages on the western side of the road with the creation of Palace Avenue – a gap further widened some years later by the creation of the bus station at this corner on the site now occupied by Gail House. These works meant the loss of some fine 17<sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed houses.

With the closure of the Lower Brewery in 1929 a long-established industry (and its fine brewer's house) was lost to redevelopment in the 1930s. At least the Granada Cinema which formed part of this redevelopment did add a building of quality which now performs an important townscape function, with its grand elevated portico being a focal point in views along Lower Stone Street from the north and along Palace Avenue.

From the 1930s onwards the street was affected by road widening proposals which were never implemented but resulted in the blighting of the historic buildings on the western side of the street. The poor condition of many of these buildings today can be traced back to this blight, even though the road widening proposals were dropped in the early 1970s (which resulted in the mass spot-listing of the buildings).

With the exception of two unfortunate gap sites, the street within the Conservation Area is continuously developed, with buildings fronting directly onto the pavement with no forecourts, giving a highly urban feel. Buildings generally vary between two and three storeys in height and vary in scale, giving an informal and serrated skyline.

Some of the older properties maintain the medieval form with gables facing the street, whilst other buildings are roofed parallel to the street, sometimes with parapets forming strong horizontal features. This results in a varied townscape, which is further emphasised by the wide range of building dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Trees do not form an important part of this highly urban character, although some street trees have been planted in recent years, those at the entrance to the pedestrianised area being the most prominent (and possibly inappropriate in their impact).

There are no good examples of street furniture, and an excess of poorly designed and maintained furniture at the junction of Lower Stone Street and Granada Street forms a particularly disruptive visual feature, with standard galvanised traffic railings, a CCTV mast, a modern telephone kiosk, equipment cabinets and gates to prevent vehicular access significantly detracting from the character of this part of the Conservation Area.

Beyond the pedestrianised section of the road paving is in patched black and red tarmac which does nothing to enhance the character of the area.

Knightrider Street is possibly as old in its origin as Lower Stone Street, or may be even older as it leads to the site of the original river crossing. It may indeed have formed the main street of the early settlement. It is first mentioned by name in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century and like Lower Stone Street became a preferred site for town houses of the gentry. Only one of these, Knightrider House, now survives (situated just outside the Conservation Area) and the street in general has suffered much from poor quality 20<sup>th</sup> Century redevelopments meaning that its historic character has been almost completely lost. Only a short section of the northern side of the street is included in the Conservation Area, consisting mainly of a group of listed buildings.

Palace Avenue, as mentioned above, is not a historic street, being a new creation of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is a relatively wide street with a spacious feel. Its dominant feature on the north side is the large millpond formed from the River Len, this large expanse of open water being admirably set off by the white buildings of the Len Engineering Works of the late 1930s/early 1940s. On the south side the civic buildings of the Police Station and Magistrates' Court, built of ragstone, give it a formal character. The slight curve of the road gives the building at No. 12 some degree of incidental prominence, and the portico of the old Granada Cinema effectively closes the view at the end of the street.

Romney Place originated as a yard entrance to serve the fine Romney House which was set back behind the frontage development in Lower Stone Street. As a street it was probably laid out circa 1830 given the evidence of the terraces at its eastern end (outside the Conservation Area) and was probably a development by Lord Romney contemporary with his other developments around Marsham Street in the north-eastern quarter of the town.

Apart from Romney House, the western end of the street has been devastated by developments in the early 1970s. On the south side of the street the comprehensive redevelopment of Kent House with its inappropriate scale and dominant car parking has resulted in a complete loss of character; on the north the multi-storey car park forms another high and obtrusive development of poor quality design which has a severe impact on the setting of the Grade II\* listed Romney House.

Only the northern side of the street, including Romney House itself and the modern office block of Romney Court behind Romney House are included within the Conservation Area.

Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
Gala Bingo (formerly Granada Cinema), Lower Stone Street	Unlisted	1933, Architect Cecil Masey, interior design by Theodore Komisarjevsky. A large building in brown brick, the main architectural focus being the main entrance front built on the splay on the corner of Lower Stone Street and Granada Street, which has a giant order of four prostyle Corinthian columns at first floor level and an eaves cornice with Egyptian detailing. This frontage partially closes views from Gabriel's Hill and Palace Avenue and is extremely important in townscape terms. The frontage to Lower Stone Street has tall round-headed windows to the first floor in metal-framed neo-Georgian design which served the original restaurant.	Essential
Romney Court, 7-9 Lower Stone Street	Unlisted	An office block built in the 1980s. 3 storeys and attic. Brown brick. Clay tile roof with dormer windows. Brown aluminium sash windows. Set back from the street behind No. 11.	Neutral
11 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II*	Early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. One of the fine gentry houses concentrated in this part of the town. 3 storeys, timber-framed and stuccoed with raised quoins to corners. Clay tiled roof hipped on all sides above heavy modillion eaves cornice. Sash windows in moulded architraves with glazing bars intact. Doorway with fluted pilasters and console brackets supporting cornice. Door of 8 fielded panels beneath rectangular fanlight.	Essential
13-17 Lower Stone Street	Unlisted	Built in the 1980s. 3 storeys, brown brick with clay tiled roof. Upper floors project, end unit	Neutral

		stepped back to junction with Romney Place with higher eaves line. Aluminium sliding sash windows. A bland design on a prominent site between two Grade II* listed buildings.	
2 Lower Stone Street (Stone Street Club)	Listed Grade II	A fine house of circa 1800, in use as a club since circa 1890. 2 storeys, stuccoed with slate roof behind parapet. Ground floor rusticated with 3 round-headed sash windows with glazing bars. Single storey wings to either side with balustraded parapets over contain round-headed doorways with doors of 6 moulded panels with semi-circular fanlights over. Left hand door more elaborate with pilasters and projecting cornice mounted on console brackets. First floor has 3 tall sash windows with glazing bars intact, outer ones surmounted by moulded cornices on small console brackets, central one in moulded architrave with pediment over. All have decorative cast iron balconettes, recently re-instated after removal in Second World War. First floor extension over left-hand wing.	Essential
4-8 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century front to possibly older building. 3 storeys, stuccoed. Nos 4 and 6 have double storey bay windows to first and second floors plus central window to first floor with pediment over and one further window to each floor at left hand end – all are sashes with glazing bars intact. No. 8 has two sash windows per upper floor with glazing bars intact. Modillion cornice below parapet to all units. Plain clay tiled roof. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfronts.	Essential
Gail House, Lower Stone Street	Unlisted	Built in 1980s on former site of bus station. 2 storeys in red/brown brick with clay tiled mansard roof. Aluminium sliding sash windows to upper floors, aluminium shopfronts with pointed heads to ground floor. Entrance between two small towers. Built on the splay at the corner of Lower Stone Street and Palace Avenue, and set back from the building line of Lower Stone Street. A weak design in an	Negative

		important townscape location.	
22 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century front to probably older building. 2 storeys yellow stock brick. Steep plain clay-tile roof behind parapet. 4 sash windows to each floor, irregularly set out, with glazing bars to upper lights only. Door of 8 fielded panels with pilasters and projecting cornice over. Flat gauged brick arches to windows. One bay to north end removed in mid 20 <sup>th</sup> Century to make way for bus station.	Essential
24 Lower Stone Street	Unlisted	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century (possibly built 1881), rebuilt after fire 1929. 3 storeys red brick with corbelled parapet. 5 sash windows to each upper floor – single vertical glazing bars to upper lights only. First floor windows under segmental brick arches with raised brick keystones. Top floor windows under flat lintels. Raised brick string courses between first and second floors and linking sills of top floor windows. Slightly projecting brick pilasters to each end, central bay slightly recessed. Original shopfront pilasters, consoles and fascia remain but with modern shopfront within.	Neutral
26 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	A fine early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century house. 3 storeys, stuccoed with plain clay tile roof above heavy wooden modillion eaves cornice. Moulded cornice above first floor. 4 sash windows to each of upper floors with glazing bars intact, set within moulded architraves. Converted to a shop prior to 1882 and from the 1920s to the 1960s occupied by the Maidstone Co-op. Modern shopfront.	Essential
28 Lower Stone Street (Stone Court Hotel) (formerly Stone House)	Listed Grade II*	The grandest of the gentry houses in the street. A large and complex building of many periods. The frontage block is of 3 storeys, added in the early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. Stuccoed with plain clay tiled roof above heavy moulded wooden modillion eaves cornice. Ground floor has four sash windows with glazing bars and a central door of 10 fielded panels set in a fine doorcase with fluted Corinthian columns and a curved pediment whose tympanum is enriched with	Essential

		<p>pargetting of foliage and the date 1716. First floor has 5 sash windows with glazing bars, above which runs a moulded cornice supporting a curved pediment over the central window. Three sash windows with glazing bars to the top floor. This frontage was added to a timber framed building of 16<sup>th</sup> Century or older date, of two storeys plus attic. Substantial additions of the 1820s and 1880s to the rear in yellow brick. Once the town house of the Sackville family and the circuit judges' lodgings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century until the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.</p>	
30-32 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	<p>18<sup>th</sup> Century. 2 storeys and attic. Red brick, painted white on front elevation. Ground floor has modern shopfront across whole width. First floor of No. 30 has two tripartite sash windows, all without glazing bars. Heavy wooden eaves cornice. Steeply pitched plain clay tile roof with 4 hipped dormers containing sash windows. 3 chimneystacks. This building became one of the earliest motor car repair garages in Maidstone in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.</p>	Essential
34 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	<p>18<sup>th</sup> Century refronting of an older timber-framed building. 3 storeys, stuccoed with hipped plain clay tile roof. Upper floors have two full-height canted bays with tripartite sash windows, except for one to the first floor which has been replaced by a modern mullioned and transomed window. Modillion eaves cornice. Modern garage front to ground floor retains pilasters and fascia of the Victorian shopfront. Currently in poor condition with upper floors vacant. In garage use since before 1925.</p>	Essential
36 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	<p>18<sup>th</sup> Century stuccoed front to probably 16<sup>th</sup> Century building. 2 storeys and attic. Modified late Victorian or Edwardian shopfront to ground floor. Two sash windows with central vertical glazing bars only to first floor. Heavy modillion eaves cornice with moulding below. Steeply pitched plain clay tile roof with</p>	Essential



		two hipped dormers containing 4-paned casement windows. Chimney stack to rear. End wall to south retains a jettied fragment of the former No. 38.	
38 Lower Stone Street	Unlisted	The former site of a Grade III building in the 1949 List, demolished in 1958. Now an open forecourt to a modern single-storey garage building set back behind the frontage buildings to either side. Both this building and the gap in the built-up frontage are detrimental to the character of the street.	Negative
40-42 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	No. 40 is the Fisherman's Arms Public House, No. 42 is a shop. 16 <sup>th</sup> Century or earlier timber framed building, possibly of hall and crosswing plan. 2 storeys, plastered. Jettied first floor to No. 40 which forms the projecting crosswing range with a gable end facing the street. First floor to No. 42 is probably a 17 <sup>th</sup> Century addition to the front of the hall range to bring it flush with the front of No. 40 – this addition has a smaller gable of slightly shallower pitch also facing the street. Modern shopfronts to ground floor. First floor of No. 40 has a single sash window with central vertical glazing bar only and a small 4-paned casement in an offset location within the gable end. Large tripartite window to the first floor of No. 42. Steeply pitched plain clay tile roofs. Chimney stack to north flank elevation of No. 40.	Essential
44 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	17 <sup>th</sup> Century according to the list description but probably later. Currently there is a two storey building set back behind a bungalow shopfront. Building records show that the shop was rebuilt in 1934, and photographs before this date show a gable-ended building extending right to the front of the site. The two storey section now remaining may be a remnant of this building. It is rendered with a gable facing forwards containing a single triple casement of modern design. Tiled roof.	Positive
46 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	Timber framed building, probably of 16 <sup>th</sup> /17 <sup>th</sup> Century date.	Essential

		Rendered, 2 storeys and attic with gable end facing street. Modern shopfront to ground floor, tripartite sash window with glazing bars to first floor, triple casement in gable end. Concrete interlocking rile roof.	
50 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. A narrow 3-storeyed building, front elevation cement-rendered with a parapet. One window to each upper floor – originally sashes with cambered heads, now modern replacements of inappropriate design with top-hung fanlights. Modern shopfront retains reeded pilasters of its Victorian predecessor.	Positive
52-54 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, front elevation rendered and lined out to imitate stonework. Hipped roof clad in concrete interlocking tiles to front slope, plain clay tiles to side. Modern shopfront to ground floor. First floor has two single sash windows with central vertical glazing bars only; top floor has paired sashes, also with vertical glazing bars only.	Essential
56 Lower Stone Street	Unlisted	A vacant site formerly occupied by a Grade II listed building demolished circa 1990 because of its extremely poor condition. Permission was granted for a replacement building but was never implemented. This gap site is highly detrimental to the character of the street.	Negative
58-60 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	Probably early/mid 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, clad in painted mathematical tiles. Hipped plain clay tile roof. Timber framed. Modern shopfronts to ground floor. Two tripartite sashes with glazing bars to each upper floor.	Essential
62-64 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century with 19 <sup>th</sup> Century refronting. 3 storeys, rendered and lined out to imitate stonework. Raised long and short quoins to each end. Hipped plain clay tile roof. Bracketed eaves cornice. 3 sash windows to each upper floor without glazing bars, all with bracketed sills. Pedimented architraves to first floor windows. Poor modern shopfronts. Chimney stack to left	Essential

		hand end.	
66-68 Lower Stone Street	Listed Grade II	Probably 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, rendered with parapet above moulded cornice. Hipped plain clay tile roof. Poor modern shopfronts to ground floor. Tall floor-to-ceiling double casements with glazing bars to first floor. Two single narrow sashes with glazing bars to top floor. Chimney stack to rear.	Essential
70 Lower Stone Street (Ye Olde Thirsty Pig PH)	Listed Grade II*	15 <sup>th</sup> Century, restored. Exposed timber frame, jettied to front and side. Gable end facing Lower Stone Street. Two storeys and attic. Steeply pitched plain clay tile roof. Staircase turret to Knightrider Street elevation. Modern leaded casement windows. Tall chimneystack to roofslope facing Knightrider Street.	Essential
6-10 Knightrider Street	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stuccoed with hipped plain clay tile roof. Ground floors to Nos 6 and 8 have modern multi-paned windows and panelled doors with bracketed hoods; No. 10 has a poor modern shopfront. One window per upper floor to each unit – sashes with glazing bars intact to Nos 6 and 10, inappropriate modern replacements to No. 8. Stucco in poor state of repair at time of survey.	Essential
12 Knightrider Street	Unlisted	A modern office block, set back behind a forecourt. 3 storeys with basement car parking. Ground floor red brick, upper floors rendered. Aluminium sliding sash windows. A very weak design.	Neutral
12 Palace Avenue	Unlisted	Probably circa 1920. A two storey building in a weak neo-Georgian design. Red brick with stone banding linking window heads and forming a projecting cornice at the top of the first floor. Stone doorcase with Doric columns and entablature. Original sliding sash windows replaced in aluminium. Visually unfortunate tile-hung modern mansard addition to roof with extensive glazing.	Neutral
Police Station, Palace Avenue	Unlisted	Built 1908, architects Ruck and Smith. 2 storeys in ragstone in a neo-Jacobean style. Tiled roof.	Positive

		Tall hexagonal brick chimney stacks. Mullioned and transomed windows. Central coped gable with rounded oriel window to first floor. Now linked to Magistrates' Court by modern brick extensions.	
Magistrates' Court, Palace Avenue	Unlisted	1935, architects Ruck and Smith. 2 storeys in ragstone in a neo-Tudor style. Tiled roof with coped gable ends. Slightly projecting centre with coped shaped gable. Mullioned and transomed windows of Perpendicular style with hoodmoulds over. Now linked to Police Station by modern brick extensions	Positive
Romney House, Romney Place	Listed Grade II*	A fine early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century house. 2 storeys and attic. Red brick with plain clay tile roof. 5 bays wide, sash windows with glazing bars intact. Central doorway with pilasters, rectangular fanlight and large pedimented hood supported on heavy carved console brackets. Heavy wooden bracketed eaves cornice. 3 flat-roofed dormers. End chimney stacks. Later extensions to east end of weatherboard and render with plain clay tiled roof.	Essential

## **Market Buildings**

### General Character

This narrow street, accessed from the High Street by an arch through the former Kent Insurance Building, largely occupies the site of the innyard of the Mitre Inn which until the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century stood on the High Street frontage. The inn was demolished in the 1820s when the Kent Insurance Building was erected and replaced by a new building behind the street frontage. At the same time, market buildings were constructed and the corn, fish, meat and vegetable markets were moved from their original sites in the High Street. The first market was not a success, and it was rebuilt along with the new corn exchange in 1835.

The constrictions of the original innyard site have resulted in an interesting, tight streetscape with a strong sense of enclosure. Interest is heightened by a slight curve at the street's mid-point and a widening at its southern end. From the High Street, Market Buildings is entered via the archway through the Kent Insurance Building – this archway and the street's curvature are features which result in a changing sequence of views as one moves along the street in either direction. From the High Street end, the splayed corner of the corn exchange building juts into the thoroughfare, partially closing the view. This building, with its attractive colonnaded covered walkway, is a major feature of the street.

Market Buildings has a pleasant human scale and character and forms an attractive, largely pedestrianised route between the busier spaces of the High Street and Earl Street. Building quality is almost universally good, and the floorscape, in York stone flags and “Tegula” blocks is attractive, having been the subject of a re-paving scheme in the 1990s.

Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
1-5 Market Buildings	Unlisted	Really a modern extension to the rear of Nos 10 and 11 High Street. A 3 storey brick façade with unattractive fenestration, and a blank frontage to the ground floor, this building does little to entice people in from the High Street.	Negative
6-8 Market Buildings (The Ashes PH)	Listed Grade II	An attractive 2-storey mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century commercial building, recently successfully converted to a pub. Rusticated stucco ground floor with yellow stock brick above. A pivotal building of great townscape importance to this street. The phoenix statue above the doorway gives incidental interest.	Essential
9 Market Buildings	Unlisted	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 2 storeys with parapet. Yellow stock brick with sash windows to upper floor. Unfortunate recessed shopfront dating from the early 1960s.	Positive
10-12 Market Buildings	Listed Grade II	Early/mid 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys with parapet. Yellow stock brick. Sash windows to upper floors. Good 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront to Nos 10 and 11. No. 12 has a modern shopfront in an unauthentic neo-Georgian style.	Essential
Entrance to Royal Star Arcade	Unlisted	A modern pedimented entrance to the Royal Star Arcade shopping centre which makes an interesting addition to the street scene.	Positive
Unitarian Church	Listed Grade II	Dated 1736. A fine 2 storey building in red brick which steps forward into the street and marks its narrowest point.	Essential
13 Market Buildings	Unlisted	A 19 <sup>th</sup> Century church hall building, now converted to shop. Round arched windows and door echo the colonnade of the market buildings opposite.	Positive
MEI Lounge Bar	Listed Grade II	Originally the Mitre PH. When the original Mitre Inn was demolished	Essential

		<p>this replacement was built circa 1830 without a High Street frontage. 2 storeys, stuccoed with a slate roof. Rounded corner to left hand end. Sash windows to first floor, some with glazing bars. Ground floor altered, probably in 1882, and has four round-headed windows with keystones, 2 round-headed doorways and a wider window under a shallow arch.</p>	
<p>Corn Exchange / Market Buildings</p>	<p>Listed Grade II</p>	<p>1835, architect John Whichcord, plus later additions and alterations. This large building occupies about two thirds of the eastern side of the street and is of major townscape importance. 2 storeys stuccoed, but of large scale with first floor (which housed the Corn Exchange) treated as a piano nobile. Slate roof behind parapet. First floor has large sash windows with glazing bars set in moulded architraves. Ground floor colonnade of round-headed arches flanked by engaged Tuscan columns with keystones above each arch. Large additions to the north end of 1865 to provide a concert hall (now the Hazlitt Theatre) continue the colonnade but to a different detail. This colonnade forms a pleasant all-weather walkway, and the modern conversion of the market hall to shops has been tastefully handled with co-ordinated shopfronts within the arches.</p>	<p>Essential</p>



## Mill Street



### General Character

Mill Street links the original manorial centre upon which the Archbishop's Palace developed to the lower end of the High Street and probably dates from the foundation of the "new" town, although it may have already been in existence as a routeway even before this date. It certainly existed by the 14<sup>th</sup> Century as this is the date of the remaining bridge (now beneath the modern road bridge) which carried it across the River Len.

Mill Street gets its name from the two former watermills which stood on either side of it at the Len Crossing – mills which originally belonged to the Archbishops. Formerly known as Mill Lane (the name changed sometime between 1823 and 1876) the street was originally much narrower. It does not seem to have formed part of the main "shopping centre" of the town and by the 1880s appears to have been an area of mixed uses including professional offices for solicitors, architects, etc., private houses, workshops and fringe shops. A major 19<sup>th</sup> Century development was a large tannery works adjacent to the River Len on the site now occupied by the Peugeot garage.

From the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, Mill Street has suffered great losses to its historic form and fabric. Photographs of circa 1900 show that it completely retained its medieval and 18<sup>th</sup> Century character at that date, but all was soon to change. The

development of a tram route to link Maidstone and Loose resulted in a need to widen the street, and by 1905 the entire eastern side of the street had been demolished to facilitate this. Also demolished was the large 3-storeyed weatherboarded mill building on the west side of the road which jutted forward and around which the street formerly kinked.

A few years later, in 1917, William Rootes took over the tannery buildings and converted them to the Len Engineering Works, and the site was redeveloped at the end of the 1930s into the modern garage building which still remains.

Until the 1940s, with the exception of the mill building, the western side of the street remained relatively untouched. However, during the Second World War a bomb fell in Mill Street which resulted in the demolition of five historic buildings on the western side of the street.

As a result of all these 20<sup>th</sup> Century changes, much of the original historic character of Mill Street has been lost. However, a small group of listed buildings does still remain, and the 1930s Peugeot garage (formerly Rootes) constitutes an iconic building now of great townscape importance.

Mill Street provides attractive views out of the Conservation Area, focussed upon the tower of All Saints' Church and the trees around it. Ironically, this view never existed historically as the mill building demolished in the early 1900s would have obscured it. Looking into the Conservation Area down Mill Street, the view is less satisfactorily terminated by the façade of 28 High Street and the higher block behind it.

Unfortunately, the floorscape of Mill Street is unsatisfactory. Pavements are in a patched mixture of red and grey tarmac, as is the carriageway which is also disfigured by yellow lines, lines demarcating bus lanes and bus stops/parking bays, and painted road signs some of which are now incomplete because of surface patching. There are no good examples of street furniture, although clutter is relatively absent; however, the unattractive galvanised metal standard guard railings near the junction with Bank Street do nothing to enhance the character. The modern four-storey flat roofed office block of Mill House, just outside the Conservation Area, has an unfortunate visual impact.

#### Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
3-5	Unlisted	Built 1905. 3 storeys red brick with stone banding. Projecting moulded stone cornice with parapet above. Ground floor retains polished granite pilasters and large stone console brackets of the original shopfronts, but the shopfronts themselves are modern replacements. Deep casement windows to first floor with large undivided display window to centre. Sash windows to top floor with glazing bars to upper sashes only. Projecting pilasters at first and second floor	Neutral

		level. Part of the same architectural composition as 68 Bank Street	
7-13	Unlisted	Built 1906 as a terrace of shops with living accommodation above. 3 storeys, roughly-coursed stone infill between stone ashlar pilasters. Stone ashlar parapet with modillion moulding to base. Pilasters rise through parapet to terminate with urn finials. Stone pilasters and console brackets remain from the original shopfronts themselves are modern replacements of various designs, detracting from the unity of the terrace.	Neutral
Len House and Garage	Unlisted	Built 1937-8 for Rootes Garage. A good example of the modern style. 2 storeys faced in white faience blocks. Len House fronts onto Mill Street and has large showroom windows to ground floor with metal-framed strip windows to first floor and tall central tower with fin detail. At the south end the building curves back to form the forecourt for the main workshop buildings which then curve again to the long block rising directly from the old millpond formed by the damming of the River Len. This block has slightly projecting ends framing a grid of large windows. A building of major townscape importance and an excellent example of a specialist building of this period.	Essential
6-8	Unlisted	Designed 1951, built 1954 (architects Ernest Bates and William Sinning) as offices for the Pearl Assurance Company after the previous building on the site (probably of 17 <sup>th</sup> Century origins) was severely damaged by bombing in the Second World War. 3 storeys in a stripped classical style. Ground floor in stone with entrance door to offices on right side and original shopfront occupying the rest of the frontage. Upper floors in brown brick, each having 5 sash windows with glazing bars recessed within stone architraves, those to first floor taller to give piano nobile effect. Right hand window to first floor has moulded	Positive

		stone cornice above surmounted by stone coat of arms. Clay tiled roof behind parapet. A good example of its period.	
10-12	Unlisted	Built 1950-54, architect William Poole, as offices. Previous building on site destroyed by bombing in Second World War. 4 storeys, neo-Georgian. Red brick with stone plinth, doorcases, stringcourses and keystones to window arches. Six bays wide with sash windows with glazing bars. Two central doorways. Parapetted roof	Neutral
14	Unlisted	Built 1949, architect E.W. Grater. Previous building on site destroyed by bombing in Second World War. 3 storeys, red brick. Tiled mansard roof with dormer windows behind parapet. Weakly neo-Georgian design but with metal-framed windows under splayed brick arches with raised white keystones. Poor modern aluminium shopfront.	Neutral
16-20	Listed Grade II	18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, rendered, with wooden modillion eaves cornice and steep plain clay tile roof. Large chimney stack to front roof slope between No's 18 and 20. Ground floor to No's 16 and 18 has 2 restored round-headed sashes with glazing bars and painted doorcases with square pilasters and cornice over supported on console brackets; No. 20 has a poor modern shopfront dating from 1947. First floor has 3 Venetian windows with glazing bars. Top floor has 3 tripartite sashes, glazing bars intact only to No's 18 and 20.	Essential
22	Listed Grade II	17 <sup>th</sup> Century with later alterations. 2 storeys with attic. Two gables facing street with plain bargeboards and pendants. Rendered with plain clay tile roof. Reasonably good modern shopfronts to ground floor. Two Victorian tripartite sashes without glazing bars to first floor with cornices above. Triple casements within attic gables.	Essential



**Pudding Lane**



## General Character

Pudding Lane forms part of the Medieval grid plan, linking the major streets of High Street and Earl Street. Historically it was of much lower importance, being only a narrow lane of only about half its current width. Its first documentary mention is in a deed of 1485.

The name Pudding Lane is probably evidence of its medieval trade associations. Its more famous namesake in the City of London (where the Great Fire started) was said by John Stow, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century chronicler, to have "...obtained its name from the butchers in Eastcheap having their scalding house for hogs there; and their puddings with other filth being conveyed thence down to their dung boats in the Thames...." The original meaning of the word pudding appears to be sausage, and the presence of the livestock market in Earl Street and the meat market in the lower High Street suggests that Pudding Lane may have contained slaughterhouses where offal produced may have been used in sausage manufacture.

In 1663, Pudding Lane is recorded as containing 8 houses. Old photographs show the lane to have been lined with 2-3 storey houses of apparently 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century date. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century it appears to have been a mixed use area, with a number of private houses mingled with small workshops (e.g. cabinet maker, pipemaker, whipmaker, plumber/gasfitter) and some small shops. One larger undertaking was the contracting and carrying business of John Larking and Co. which operated from No's 17-21 – a site which was redeveloped in the early 1900s to provide a skating rink later converted to a cinema which burnt down in 1954. Between Pudding Lane and Corpus Christi Hall a couple of rear courts of small dwellings are shown in 19<sup>th</sup> Century maps but appear to have been cleared before 1936.

As with Mill Street, Pudding Lane was to fall victim to road widening in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, although this time it was probably the increased use of the motor car which brought about this change, rather than the needs of a tram route. The eastern side of the street was demolished in its entirety in the late 1920s, probably in association with the construction of Museum Street in an attempt to route traffic away from Week Street/Gabriel's Hill. This resulted in the loss of a number of historic buildings and an attractive colonnaded walkway beneath the building on the corner of the High Street. The virtual doubling of the width of the street in itself fundamentally changed its character, even leaving aside this loss of historic fabric.

When the widened street was redeveloped on its eastern side it seems to have sparked a spate of rebuilding on the western side as well, particularly at the northern end. Within a space of about five years the street had been transformed from a lane still retaining something of its medieval character, lined with old buildings, to a modern road largely lined with new buildings in the contemporary neo-Tudor style which act as a poor substitute for their genuine predecessors. The glaring exception to this overall style came in 1934 with the construction of Star House, uncompromisingly modern in its architecture and overdominant in its scale. Even the relatively tall office block built in the 1950s to replace the burnt down cinema does not approach this scale.



Uniquely amongst the main streets of the Conservation Area, Pudding Lane contains not a single listed building. There are some pre 20<sup>th</sup> Century survivals, however, whose rarity makes it even more important to seek their preservation.

Pudding Lane is a straight street, allowing views along its whole length. In both directions these views are satisfactorily closed by buildings, the old archway to the Fremlin Brewery (now forming an entrance to the Fremlin Walk shopping centre) at the northern end being particularly effective.

Floorscape is not very satisfactory in Pudding Lane, consisting in its entirety of patched red and grey tarmac. There are no interesting examples of street furniture, but neither is there any significant visual clutter. The street still has the feeling of something of a backwater on the fringe of the town centre, although the concentration of bus stops does result in a certain amount of animation, and the opening of the Fremlin Walk development with an access at the end of the street may produce a greater footfall.

### Buildings / Sites

The central section of the western side of the street is currently omitted from the Conservation Area. However, because of the impact of the buildings in this section on the overall character of the street, they have been included in the following descriptions.

### Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
1-5	Unlisted	Probably circa 1830-40. Four storeys painted brick. Sash windows with glazing bars under flat splayed arches. Modern shopfronts.	Essential
7-11	Unlisted	Possibly originally contemporary with No's 1-5 but greatly altered/rebuilt in early 1960s. 3 storeys painted brick (but same overall height as No's 1-5). Splayed corner to Medway Street in exposed red/brown brick. Entirely re-windowed in late 20 <sup>th</sup> Century. Modern shopfronts.	Neutral
13-15	Unlisted	Built 1936. 3 storeys rendered with flat roof, painted brown. A nondescript, weakly-designed building on an important corner site.	Negative
17-21 (Cornwallis House)	Unlisted	On the site of the Pavilion Cinema, burnt down in 1954. Built 1955. Four storeys with flat roof. Gridded frame elevation to street with strip windows and brick infill panels between projecting concrete verticals. Flank elevations in Fletton Brick.	Negative
23-25	Unlisted	Built 1934. 2 storeys neo-Tudor	Neutral

		with exposed applied timber-framing to upper floor. Plain clay-tiled roof with two gables facing street. No. 23 has first floor oriel window, No. 25 a 3-light mullioned and transomed window. Matching original shopfronts with Tudor arch detail. Replaced a 3-storey building of probable early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century date.	
27-29	Unlisted	Built 1932. Forms a matching pair with No's 23-25 and also retains original shopfronts. Replaced a 2-3 storey building, probably of 17 <sup>th</sup> Century date.	Neutral
31-33	Unlisted	Probably mid 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys red brick. Sash windows with glazing bars to upper storeys, those to first floor deeper and under flat gauged brick arches. Plain clay tile roof. Poor modern shopfront.	Essential
6	Unlisted	Built 1929 after road widening. 2 storeys neo-Tudor with exposed applied timber framing to upper floor. Two 4-light mullioned and transomed windows to first floor, but right hand one has lost its mullions below transom level. Two large gables facing street with smaller central gable squeezed between them. Plain clay tile roof. Original timber shopfronts with ragstone stallriser.	Neutral
8	Unlisted	Built 1929 after road widening. 3 storeys neo-Tudor with exposed applied timber framing of thin dimensions to upper floors. Leaded windows to upper floors. Full-width gable facing street. Plain clay tile roof. Original shopfront with timber framing and brick nogging infill.	Neutral
10 (The Old House At Home PH)	Unlisted	Built 1929 after road widening. 3 storeys neo-Tudor with exposed applied timber-framing to upper floors. 5-light mullioned and transomed window to centre of first floor, two pairs of leaded casements to second floor. Large full-width gable facing street with central panel containing pub name incised in plaster. Steeply pitched plain clay tile roof. Original pub frontage to ground floor has brick plinth and mullioned and transomed windows. A rather overscaled	Neutral

		design.	
Star House	Unlisted	Built 1934 after road widening. A large 5-storeyed block of offices above shops. Rendered front, painted brick flanks. Flat roof behind railings. One of the few examples of 1930s modern-style architecture in central Maidstone, with characteristic strip-window design and a concave recessed centre marking the office entrance and staircase hall which has a full-height window above ground floor level. The building is massively out of scale with the street, both in terms of its height and its width – it fails to preserve the medieval plot widths and so goes against the grain of the townscape. Mainly original bronze-framed shopfronts. The current brown-painted finish does little to enhance the building.	Negative
Invicta House	Unlisted	Built circa 1920, set back to take account of road-widening line. 2 storeys red brick, slate roof with 4 large and one small flat roofed dormers. Large windows to both floors with basket-handle detailing to heads. Window quoins, eaves band and moulded cornice to ground floor in stone, painted to ground floor. Central stone plaque to first floor with the words "Invicta House" inscribed. Purpose-built as offices.	Positive

## **Rose Yard**

### General Character

Rose Yard is a minor thoroughfare, largely of pedestrian character although there is some vehicular access to private car parks and for servicing. It developed from the inn-yard of the Rose Inn, which closed early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was partially demolished for the erection of the National Westminster Bank at No. 3 High Street. It is entered from the High Street via a narrow pedestrian-only tunnel under one end of the bank, beyond which it widens out to an irregular shape with no firm building line. It maintains a sense of enclosure because it does not run straight and because of the varied building line, with the occasional building jutting out to prevent through-views. At its northern end, approaching Earl Street, it narrows again between the opposing facades of former workshop and storage buildings.

Many of the buildings lining Rose Yard back on to it, being largely utilitarian buildings to the rear of properties in High Street, Week Street and Market Buildings. Some of these are in a neglected condition but others have been recently refurbished. The floorscape has been enhanced in recent years by a repaving scheme utilising "Tegula"

blocks, and Rose Yard now forms a pleasant pedestrian link between High Street and Earl Street, but one which could still be further improved.

Buildings/Sites

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
Small building on west side of Rose Yard to the south of The Source Bar	Unlisted	A modest building with a curved and stepped parapet holding a cartouche with the word "Invicta" at its base. Original large doorway now blocked with non-matching brick. This was the fire engine shed for the Kent Fire Office (later Royal Insurance) associated with their offices at 8-9 High Street	Positive
The Source Bar	Unlisted	A Victorian house and probably slightly earlier store building which still shows signs of its first floor loading door and hoist arm.	Positive
Rear extensions / additions to Hazlitt Theatre	Unlisted	Various additions to the theatre/Corn Exchange complex in a variety of materials and styles. Some recent refurbishment work has resulted in some improvement to the appearance.	Neutral
Ex furniture warehouses to rear of 11-15 Week Street	Unlisted	Buildings erected circa 1900-1920 but still in the Victorian tradition. Robustly detailed and characterful buildings of large scale which dominate the street with their quasi-industrial appearance. Yellow stock brick with red brick details.	Positive
Moore House / The Cottage	Unlisted	19 <sup>th</sup> Century yellow stock brick buildings of modest scale, but of streetscape importance as they jut into the otherwise wide central space of Rose Yard. Good new shopfront to the café recently opened in Moore House which has brought additional interest and activity to Rose Yard.	Positive

## Week Street



### General Character

The more or less straight alignment of Week Street betrays its origins as a Roman road which formed the base-line for the development of the medieval "new" town. One theory is that the name "Week" is derived from the Latin word "vicus" meaning a small town or settlement, but whether there was such a town and if so whether it was here is open to debate, the only firm evidence being the foundations of a probably Roman building being found in 1967 during building works at the corner of Week Street/King Street.

The whole of Week Street within the Conservation Area lay within the confines of the medieval town. In part the characteristic long, thin burgage plots of the medieval plan remain identifiable, but the street has suffered more from modern redevelopment and plot amalgamation than has High Street, for example.

The street was fully developed along its whole length by the 1820s, and a number of buildings erected before that date or soon after still survive. However, since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and particularly since the 1930s when Week Street finally achieved dominance over High Street as the main shopping street, there has been much

redevelopment, often of a poor architectural standard. As the street formerly acted as the main north-south vehicular route through the town, many of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century buildings have been set back to a previously safeguarded road-widening line on the eastern side of the street. This has resulted in an irregular stepped building line which is detrimental to the townscape and has left some buildings as isolated projecting elements in the street scene with unattractive exposed flank elevations.

Although roughly aligned on the Roman road there is in fact a subtle curve to Week Street which means that views along it are at least partially closed by the flanking buildings. This gives the townscape a dynamic rather than a static quality, and this character is particularly emphasised where the original building lines remain. The street is very narrow and acts as a foil to the wide open space of the upper High Street and, to a lesser extent, to the width of Earl Street. Buildings are for the most part modest in scale (2 or 3 storeys) but the tall mass of Brenchley House, beyond the northern boundary of the Conservation Area, is grossly overdominant in views along the whole length of the street. Although few buildings are Listed, a number of other historic buildings of value do survive and make important contributions to the character of the street. The main defining characteristics of the street, however, are its narrowness and continuously-built frontages with all buildings set on the back edge of the pavement.

When the Conservation Area boundary was drawn up in 1977 only the western side of Week Street as far as the United Reform Church was included, although the boundary runs along the face of buildings on the eastern side of the street. This presumably reflected the fact that the eastern side of the street had undergone more 20<sup>th</sup> Century redevelopment than the western side, but ignored the fact that some valuable historic buildings do still survive on the eastern side and that all the buildings contribute in some way to the overall character of the street. This rather unusual boundary has proved less than satisfactory in practical terms, leading to a degree of confusion over what protection, if any, it gives to the building facades on the eastern side of the street.

Apart from the damage done to the character of the street by unsympathetic modern redevelopments, Week Street also suffers (along with other parts of the Conservation Area) from a mass of poorly designed shopfronts and inappropriate or excessive advertising. Being the major shopping street in the town centre the problem is perhaps even more pronounced here than in other streets, and a number of the older surviving buildings are disfigured in this way or by other inappropriate alterations. Since the designation of the Conservation Area, the Council has attempted to secure improvements to shopfronts as and when applications have been made for replacements, and some degree of improvement has been achieved, albeit slowly.

Week Street within the Conservation Area has been pedestrianised and attractively surfaced recently in a mixture of York stone flags and "Tegula" blocks south of the junction with Earl Street. Northwards from here a less satisfactory older scheme with red brick pavers and patched tarmac remains. Street furniture, such as seats and litter bins, has also been replaced to a co-ordinated design. However, the large, electronic message board sited immediately outside the Listed Lloyds TSB Bank is an extremely intrusive feature.

As the major shopping street in the town, Week Street has a bustling and lively character which it is essential to maintain.

#### Buildings / Sites

The following descriptions include buildings on the eastern side of the street (even numbers). Although not currently within the Conservation Area these buildings contribute to the overall character of the space.

<b>Address</b>	<b>Listed/Unlisted</b>	<b>Description/Comments</b>	<b>Value to Character</b>
1-7	Listed Grade II	Formerly the Red Lion Inn. See description under 1-2 High Street.	Essential
9	Unlisted	A poor modern building of 3 storeys in brown brick with a flat roof.	Negative
11	Unlisted	3 storeys, the front almost entirely glazed on all floors to give large display windows. These alterations were carried out for S.P. Sanders China, Glass and Furniture shop in 1907, but some of the original decorative detail has been lost. Stripped classical detailing between the glazing remains. The whole upper frontage has the wide central bay slightly canted forwards. The top floor display windows have arched tops. Building behind not visible, but has U-plan clay tiled roof, probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century.	Positive
13	Unlisted	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys with parapet. Stuccoed front grooved in imitation of stone. Small-paned modern window set in moulded architraves extending through 2 storeys may be part of alterations carried out for F.W. Woolworth and Co. in 1924 (No's 13 and 15 formed the first premises in Maidstone for Woolworths between the 1920s and 1936). Plain projecting band below parapet may be remains of a moulded cornice. Tiled roof behind parapet.	Positive
15/15a	Unlisted	No. 15a (the right hand part) is similar to No. 13 but retains its original sash windows with glazing bars to the upper floors and a moulded cornice below the parapet. No. 15 was extensively altered in 1939 for Dorothy Perkins when it was given a mock-Tudor front with fake half-timbering, large leaded windows and a jetty at cornice level carrying a low, tiled false roof. Alterations are a poor piece of	Positive



		architecture, completely out of character with the street and disrupting the unity of the terrace of which it forms part. Modern  Shop front. Tiled roof behind parapet.	
17-19	Unlisted	Built 1927 for Montague Burton. Two tall storeys (equalling the 3 storeys of No. 15a), rendered and grooved to imitate stone, large metal-framed windows to first floor. Parapet with raised centre section with raised lettering reading "Montague Burton The Tailors To Trust". A typical Burton design of the period exhibiting various decorative features derived from Egyptian architecture. An interesting example of its period. Poor modern shopfronts.	Positive
21-23	Unlisted	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century, but upper floor re-fenestrated in similar manner to No's 17-19, probably in 1928. Rendered front with parapet. Poor modern shopfront, also extending without break across No. 25. Tiled roof behind parapet.	Neutral
25-27	Unlisted	Pair of buildings, probably of early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century date. 3 storeys, rendered with parapet. Upper floors originally contained 2 sashes to each floor – openings remain unchanged but two windows are now boarded over, one has had the lower three quarters blocked and one has a modern double-glazed replacement window. Poor modern shopfronts. Tiled roof behind parapet.	Positive
29	Unlisted	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. Two storeys, stuccoed with parapet. Shallow moulded cornice beneath parapet. Hipped tiled roof parallel to street visible behind parapet. Two Victorian 4-paned sash windows to upper floor. Very poor modern shopfront with over-deep fascia and excessive signage. Many exposed wires on the face of the building.	Positive
31	Locally Listed	Probably early 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys, stuccoed with boxed eaves cornice. Steep hipped plain clay tile roof at right angles to street. Large sash windows with	Essential

		glazing bars to upper floors. Modern shopfront of sympathetic design.	
33	Unlisted	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. 3 storeys painted brick with parapet. Hipped slate roof at right angles to street. Upper floors have sash windows with glazing bars intact, with gauged brick arches over. Sympathetic modern shopfronts.	Positive
35-37	Unlisted	Built 1932. Two storeys, red brick with parapet and flat roof. A weakly designed building in a modern style with a poor modern shopfront. It appears to have replaced a two-storeyed jettied timber-framed building. A building of stronger character is required on this important corner site.	Neutral
49-51 Week Street / 2 Fremlin Walk	Unlisted	Early 21 <sup>st</sup> Century, built as part of Fremlin Walk shopping centre development. Two tall storeys of yellow stock brick with parapet and large shaped "gable" facing Week Street and a large circular glazed turret with tented metal roof to corner of Fremlin Walk. Units facing Week Street each have paired timber sash windows to first floor. A bland design whose overall height is acceptable in the context of the street but whose storey-heights are overscaled. Proportion of wall to window at first floor level is too great, giving a top-heavy appearance.	Neutral
53	Locally Listed	3-storeyed Victorian frontage to a probably older building. Clad in painted mathematical tiles. Two pairs of paired sash windows to each upper floor, those to first floor surmounted by cornices. Bracketed eaves cornice. Slate roof. Upper floors possibly jettied, supported at each end on console brackets forming part of the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century shopfront design of which the fascia remains. This fascia has two separate cornices to each end carried on console brackets and has an arched canopy above the centre containing a clock (the premises were occupied by a watchmaker/jeweller from the 1880s to the early 1970s).	Essential

		Modern sympathetic shopfront.	
55-57	Listed Grade II	17 <sup>th</sup> Century. Three storeyed timber framed building with a plastered front and applied pargetting dated 1680 incorporating oval medallions, crude Ionic pilasters, swags and floral vase motifs. Heavy wooden modillion eaves cornice with plain clay tiled roof above. First floor jettied, moulded cornice between first and second floors. Two large sash windows with glazing bars to each upper floor. Modern sympathetic shopfront.	Essential
59-63	Unlisted	Erected 1899-1900. A 3-storey shop terrace development, larger in scale than adjoining buildings. Yellow stock brick with red brick giant pilasters to first and second floor terminated by ball finials. Moulded parapet with pediments breaking through it over each unit. Double storey canted bay windows to upper floors crowned by small curved pediments. Sash windows with glazing bars to upper lights. Pilasters and fascia topped by egg and dart moulded cornice survive from original shopfronts, but modern shopfronts inserted, that to No. 59 being poor and with an oversized fascia sign which has involved the removal of console brackets to pilasters. A rare example of the Queen Anne style in Maidstone and quite characterful.	Positive
65	Unlisted	Probably a fragment of a larger building, possibly timber-framed and dating from the 17 <sup>th</sup> Century. 2 storeys and attic. Rendered with plain clay tile roof. Attic gable facing street with carved bargeboards. First floor has 19 <sup>th</sup> Century tripartite sash windows, attic gable a single sash. Poor modern shopfront.	Positive
67	Unlisted	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century, front façade rebuilt in 1990s. 2 storeys and attic. Rendered with plain clay tiled half-hipped mansard roof behind parapet. Small sash windows to first floor with single vertical glazing bars only. Two dormers with modern casement windows. Modern shopfront.	Positive
67b	Unlisted	Built 1926. Two storeys, yellow	Positive

		stock brick with parapet and flat roof. Good original shopfront with curved glazing. Large display window to first floor.	
United Reform Church	Unlisted	Set back down a side alley so introduces an element of surprise into the Conservation Area. Originally built 1864 as the Week Street Congregational Church, architects Habershon and Pite. A large and imposing building in the Italianate style, constructed of gault bricks with stone dressings. Steps rise to a twin-arched portico which has Doric pilasters carrying an entablature and cornice above the central part of which is raised a small pediment. The two arches are round-headed with prominent keystones. Behind the portico the main building rises through two generous storeys above a semi-basement. It is gable-ended, with the central section breaking forward slightly and being surmounted by a pediment at a slightly lower level than the main roof. Façade is punctuated by large round-headed windows with prominent keystones. A fine example of Victorian non-conformist church architecture, restored after a fire in 1916, but now unfortunately marred by an unsympathetic front addition added in the 1990s.	Essential
10	Unlisted	Part of the Colman House redevelopment of the late 1960s, this property forms part of the podium to the tower block. 2 storeys with a flat roof, exposed concrete frame, set back from building line but with canopy above ground floor. Extremely poor design.	Negative
12-14	Unlisted	Built 1934 for Timothy Whites Chemists. 2 storeys, red brick in neo-Georgian style. First floor has sash windows with glazing bars in stone architraves with stone pediments over. Parapet with flat roof. Poor modern shopfront.	Neutral
16	Unlisted	Probably a 19 <sup>th</sup> Century refronting of an older building. Front	Positive

		elevation 3 storeys in yellow stock brick but with pointed red brick arches with spandrels infilled with herringbone red brick to first floor. Lower half of these windows blocked by oversized shop fascia. Two 4-paned sash windows to second floor beneath coggled cornice and parapet. Steeply pitched old clay tile roof behind modern shopfront.	
18 (Lloyds TSB Bank)	Listed Grade II	Built 1895 for Lloyds Bank. Tall 3-storey building of fine proportions. Stucco front, rusticated on ground floor and grooved in imitation of stone above with long and short quoining. Parapet above eaves cornice. Sash windows with glazing bars to upper floors set in Italianate architraves with keystones. Round-headed windows and doorway to ground floor.	Essential
20	Unlisted	3 storeys, rendered with parapet. Steeply pitched tiled roof behind parapet. Possibly 18 <sup>th</sup> Century but front elevation entirely remodelled in 20 <sup>th</sup> Century with wide metal-framed windows. Modern shopfront.	Positive
22	Listed Grade II	Outwardly of 19 <sup>th</sup> Century appearance, but building probably of 18 <sup>th</sup> Century date. Timber framed. 3 storeys rendered with a parapet and tiled roof. Sash windows without glazing bars to upper floors, set in moulded architraves. Raised quoins to each end of façade. Sympathetic modern shopfront. The building retains its integral through-passage giving access from the street to the rear yard, a common form of medieval plan but the only remaining example within Week Street, which should be preserved.	Essential
Water Pump r/o 22	Listed Grade II	A Victorian water pump in the rear yard.	Essential
24	Unlisted	Formerly The Fountain PH. The present front was added in 1899 to an older building. 3 storeys faced in terracotta, some of it glazed. Many decorative features including pilasters, consoles, volutes and sunflower motifs. Pedimented gable to street. Top	Essential

		<p>floor has triple sash window separated by square timber pilasters. First floor has curved 3-light oriel window. All windows are sashes with glazing bars to upper lights only. A fine example of late Victorian public house architecture in the Queen Anne style. It is to be greatly regretted that the fine contemporary pubfront to the ground floor was removed in 1970 and replaced by a shopfront with an excessively deep fascia.</p>	
26-28	Unlisted	<p>A Grade III Listed Building in the 1949 List. Formerly the Ancient Bell Hotel, converted to shops in 1921. One of the finest, most historic buildings in Week Street, but No. 26 architecturally vandalised by Freeman Hardy and Willis's Architects Department in 1957. No. 28 retains its original character of a 3 storey yellow stock brick front with red brick detailing around the window openings and in long and short quoins to the north end. Raised brick cornices over the first floor windows with gauged brick arches below which have raised brick keystones, the central one including the date 1711. Sash windows without glazing bars. Across the whole building runs a heavy wooden modillion eaves cornice. Beneath this, the façade of No. 26 has been completely removed and replaced in curtain walling with strip windows. The original building with its claytiled roofs remains behind. Modern shopfronts.</p>	Essential
30-32	Unlisted	<p>Built 1964, architects Robert Pain and Partners. Partially replaces another early 18<sup>th</sup> Century house at No. 30 which was Grade III Listed in 1949. Set back to the former road widening line. Wholly glazed double height façade with purple brick flanks, that to south end projecting forward along flank of No. 28 to original building line. Metal cladding above windows. Quite a good building of its age and type but severely out of character with the street.</p>	Negative
34	Unlisted	<p>Built 1965, architects North and</p>	Negative

		Partners. Another modern building set back to the widening line. 3 storeyed curtain-walled design with brown brick surround. Of no architectural merit.	
36	Unlisted	Mid/late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century front to a probably 18 <sup>th</sup> Century building. Façade is in yellow stock brick, 3 storeys with parapet. Large tripartite sash windows without glazing bars to upper floors, set in Italianate architraves. Those to first floor have moulded cornices supported on console brackets. Old plain clay tile roof of U-plan behind parapet.	Positive
38-42	Unlisted	Probably early 19 <sup>th</sup> Century, front remodelled mid/late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. Possibly originally a private house (1876 OS Map shows large gardens to rear). Converted to 3 shops in 1896, now one shop. 2 storeys stuccoed with parapet. Tiled roof of 2 parallel ranges. First floor has sash windows with glazing bars set in moulded architraves. 3 flat roofed dormer windows. Poor modern shopfront. The first premises in the town centre to be occupied by Boots the Chemist, from circa 1912.	Positive
44-48	Unlisted	Built 1935. 2 storeys with parapet and flat roof. Faced in white/cream blocks. Modern windows in vertically proportioned openings to first floor, central one with raised arch above from which projects an ornate clock which adds interest to the street scene. The building as a whole, however, which terminates the view up Earl Street, is rather bland.	Neutral
50	Unlisted	Built 1937. Two tall storeys, brown brick with parapet and flat roof. Neo-Georgian design with 3 sashes with glazing bars under red gauged brick arches to first floor. Modern shopfront.	Neutral
52-56	Unlisted	Built 1936 for F.W. Woolworth and Co. A very large scale building in Art Deco style with a front elevation of large white faience blocks with large projecting vertical fins separating tall thin windows to upper floor. An interesting period piece, if a little out of scale.	Positive
58	Unlisted	Two storeys in height but with a	Negative



		completely blank and featureless façade to the upper floor of painted tiles. Flat roof. Built 1972. Poor modern shopfront.	
60-64	Unlisted	On the site of the Palace Coffee House (1882) and the Central Commercial Hotel later, which occupied buildings dating back to the 16 <sup>th</sup> Century. The present building was erected in 1968 to the designs of Littlewoods Architects Department. A long and low building of two storeys with the first floor recessed. A poor design and a weak feature in the streetscape.	Negative
66	Unlisted	Probably early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century. Heavy-handed neo-Tudor design with exposed close-studded timber frame. Mullioned and transomed windows. Poor modern shopfront. Plain clay tile roof. Gable facing street.	Neutral
68-72	Unlisted	Replaces an 18 <sup>th</sup> Century stuccoed building, listed Grade III in 1949. Built 1969, architects Michael Lyell Associates. 3 storeys pink/grey brick. Flat roof. Strip windows. A poor design, especially out of place on this important corner site. Modern shopfront.	Negative
74	Unlisted	Dated 1888. Tall building of 3 storeys plus attic, built of gault brick. Prominent bracketed eaves from which rise very tall dormers. First floor has four round-headed windows. Sash windows without glazing bars.	Positive

## **IV Conclusions**

The Conservation Area covers the majority of a fine example of a medieval planned new town development which retains its original gridded street plan and a high concentration of historic buildings, both listed and unlisted, which give it a strong historic character despite modern redevelopments. In many places, evidence of the original medieval burgrave plots survive, resulting in a characteristic small-scale grain to development and a variety to street frontages. Most development is still of 2-4

storey height, with only a few modern exceptions to this. For the most part there is a relatively restricted palette of materials – red and yellow brick or stucco/render for walls, clay tiles or slates for roofs. Some individual buildings of high status exhibit ragstone or Portland stone elevations. Whilst buildings of all ages from medieval times to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are represented, the Georgian period has a particularly strong influence on the overall look of the Conservation Area, both in terms of buildings originally dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries and also in the refronting of older properties and the design of more recent buildings. It is a highly urban area, with continuously built-up streets with building lines being largely consistent and being set at the back edge of pavements, open forecourts being virtually non-existent.

The Conservation Area comprises a busy town centre, and this vitality is an essential part of its character. The maintenance of the importance of the shopping centre has not been without its negative impact on the special character, by way of redevelopments from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, either in terms of their scale or architectural design, but the historic character remains dominant, and for the most part, the most damaging developments pre-date the designation of the Conservation Area. Some modern developments just outside the Conservation Area also impact severely on its setting, the worst being Colman House at the Week Street/King Street junction and the Miller House/Kent House redevelopment on the eastern side of Lower Stone Street, both of which are prominent in close up and in longer views.

In the early 1960s, the former Maidstone Borough Council appointed Andrew Renton FRIBA to draw up proposals for a Civic Trust Scheme of street improvement for the High Street area. In his report, published in March 1961, he made the following observations: "...I see in the impressive sweep of the High Street and the charm of Bank Street a beauty overlaid at the moment with a skin of ugliness, bad design and neglect....The personality of the individual buildings must be rediscovered and related to the street as a whole....The 20<sup>th</sup> Century obtrudes also in the matter of advertising. The brash shop fascia is merely another aspect of the incessant clamour for attention....The demands of public utility services have brought a clutter of poles, wires, lights, boxes, railings, shelters, kiosks, signs....Guard rails, many of them badly bent, broken or rusty should be removed, redesigned and replaced only where strictly necessary for safety."

These comments remain largely pertinent to the Conservation Area as a whole today. Apart from a relatively small number of building developments, the major damage to townscape quality is caused by poor quality shopfronts and signs, street furniture clutter and poor paving materials. Other problems include alterations to fenestration, resulting in windows of inappropriate design or materials – often such alterations are "historic" insofar as they pre-date the designation of the Conservation Area or the listing of individual buildings. Given the entirely commercial nature of the land uses within the Conservation Area, which means that properties have little or nothing in the way of permitted development rights for such alterations where they materially affect the external appearance of buildings, it is a matter for planning control and enforcement to prevent further such changes from being perpetrated. In some cases these unsympathetic alterations have extended to entire elevational alterations, such as the rash of neo-Tudor which broke out in the early 1900s or the radical modernisation of No. 26 Week Street.

Heavy traffic can also be a negative factor in certain parts of the Conservation Area, in particular in Lower Stone Street and Palace Avenue. This may be alleviated if the All Saints Link Road proposals ever come to fruition. In the High Street, the

concentration of bus stops and the large number of buses serving them has some degree of detrimental effect on character which needs to be addressed whilst maintaining public transport penetration of the centre of town.

In some areas there is an issue relating to poor repair of buildings. This is most noticeable in Lower Stone Street where it is a legacy of lack of investment caused historically by road-widening proposals but now more likely to be related to the unattractive environment engendered by the current heavy traffic flows. Past grant schemes run by the Council in conjunction with English Heritage have been targeted at this particular area but have only met with limited success in tackling this problem. Elsewhere, there is often a problem with the condition of the rear parts of buildings or with outbuildings to the rear of frontage properties, for example in Bank Street and Gabriel's Hill, although there have been some recent conversions of such buildings to new uses which have begun to alleviate this problem. There is also an issue common to town centres of the vacancy or under-use of upper floors, resulting in maintenance issues to the roofs and upper parts of buildings.

The detailed street and building analysis carried out in Section III of this Conservation Area Appraisal provides a basis for considering future proposals for redevelopment or alterations. Those buildings or sites which are assessed as "essential" or "positive" will not generally be considered appropriate for redevelopment; proposals for redevelopment of neutral sites will need to result in an enhancement over the existing situation; the redevelopment of buildings or sites rated as "negative" will be positively encouraged wherever possible to achieve an enhancement to the Conservation Area. The encouragement of such redevelopment could also usefully be extended to include those areas/buildings currently outside the Conservation Area but which, in their present form, have a severe impact on its setting.

It will be important to ensure that where redevelopment is appropriate in principle it is of suitable scale, form and quality. It will need to take account of its context within the street and its relationship with adjacent buildings and it is unlikely that in any location development above four storeys in height will be considered acceptable. Buildings will need to adhere to the established historic building lines, and in some cases where buildings have previously been set back for road widening lines consideration should be given to re-establishing the original building line. Good quality building materials should be used, preferably those which are currently predominant (red or yellow stock bricks, render/stucco, clay tiles, slates). Redevelopment also needs to respect the grain and rhythm of existing townscape, particularly where the original burgage plot layouts remain in evidence.

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

- i. Improve shopfront design and signage in general, and preserve good examples of existing shopfronts.
- ii. Investigate possibilities for further partial pedestrianisation (particularly in the upper and lower High Street).
- iii. Extend the repaving programme to cover those streets which currently exhibit poor floorscapes.
- iv. Seek to reduce street clutter and generally rationalise traffic signs and other highway – related paraphernalia.
- v. Seek general elevational improvements to buildings which have been insensitively altered in the past, and prevent such alterations from occurring in the future.

- vi. Seek to maximise the use of upper floors and rear extensions/outbuildings.
- vii. Seek to ensure the good repair of buildings.
- viii. Continue to look at ways of reducing the impact of heavy traffic on historic streets.
- ix. In the short term, pending redevelopments, investigate ways of improving the appearance of exposed flank walls.



Good examples of shopfronts should be preserved

Studies carried out in connection with the historical development of the area and with the townscape appraisal have also suggested that some adjustments to the boundary of the Conservation Area may be justified. These include:

- i. Week Street – the existing boundary is unsatisfactory and a case can be made for the inclusion of properties on the eastern side of the road.
- ii. King Street – consider the case for inclusion of more of the southern side of the street up to No. 38.
- iii. Week Street/Earl Street – rationalisation of boundary to take account of the Fremlin Walk development.
- iv. General rationalisation of boundary to take account of property boundaries and developments which have taken place since the original designation.

Further study in regard of these possible changes and more positive proposals will form part of a subsequent Conservation Area Management Plan.