



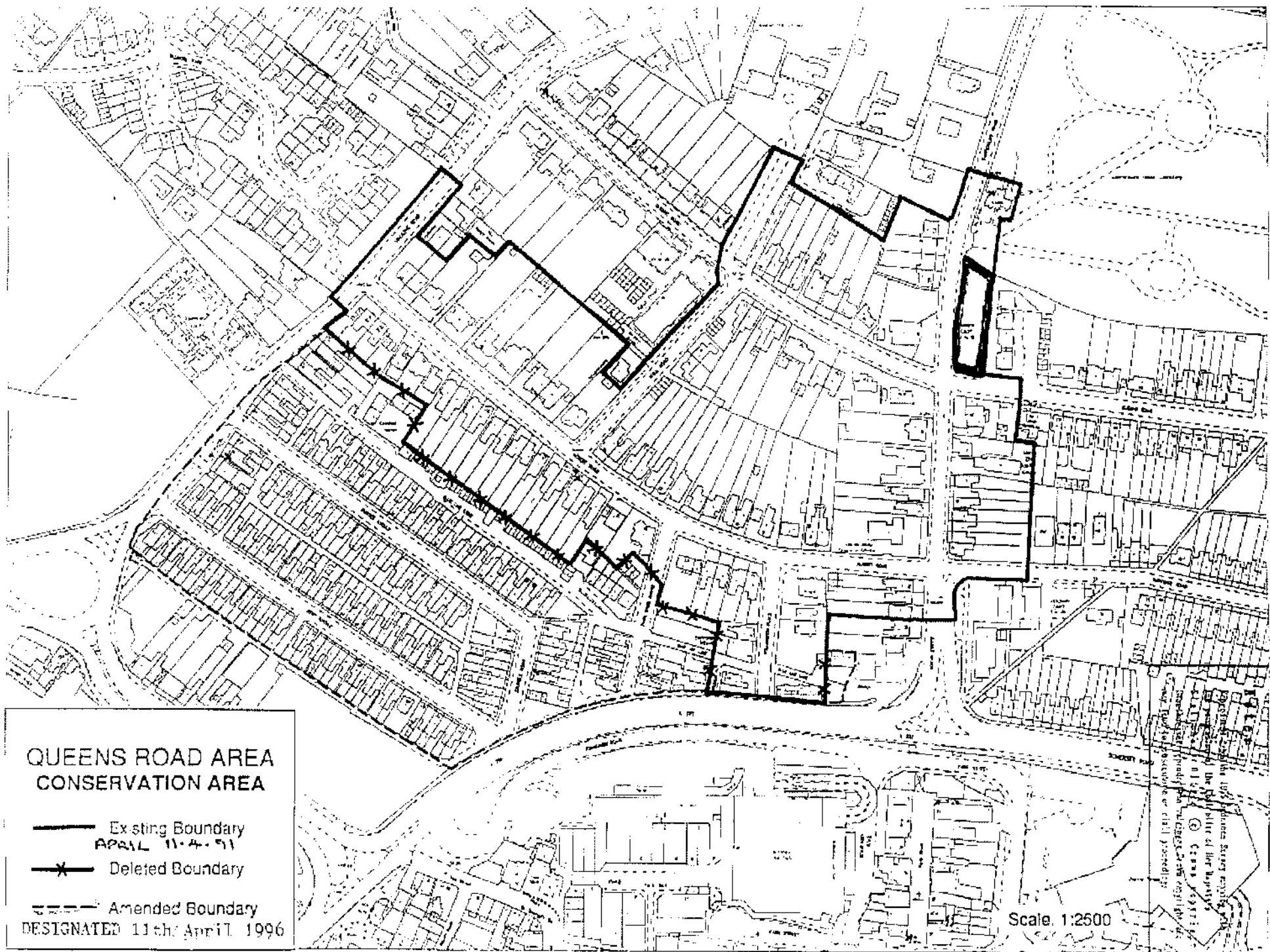
Conservation Area Assessment

Ashford - Queens Road

Conservation Areas are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve all aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

There are 43 Conservation Areas in Ashford Borough.



ASHFORD QUEENS ROAD (ASHFORD TOWN CENTRE NORTH) CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

AREA APPRAISAL [Brief, objective description of Conservation Area - scale, location, other special characteristics]

The Conservation Area is located on the northern periphery of Ashford Town Centre and is entirely urban in character. It can be divided into two distinct parts, namely:-

1. Existing

Queens Road/Albert Road which is characterised by its tree-lined avenues and the large scale Edwardian Arts and Craft style houses following a linear pattern of development.

2. Proposed

Kent Avenue/Sussex Avenue which whilst also being uniform and cohesive in terms of the Victorian/Edwardian building style are of a much smaller scale than Queens/Albert Roads and there is a general lack of trees and shrubs.

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	The area slopes gently downhill in an east/west direction. The physical building pattern is one of ribbon development following a linear road framework, orientated along an east/west axis. The density of development is high in respect of Kent and Sussex Avenues and medium/high for Queens and Albert Roads. Properties are mainly north/south facing. The degree of setback from the road is minimal in the case of Kent Avenue/Sussex Avenue where small enclosed private areas have little in the way of planting behind. Queens/Albert Road properties have a larger setback and several planted front garden areas yet there remains a distinctive building line closely following the highway.
archaeological significance and potential of the area	There is a large archaeological safeguarded area within the Conservation Area relating to a Roman cremation site. There are however few remaining opportunities to excavate finds because the area is predominantly urban and developed.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.	<p>There are very few open spaces within the built form. Those that exist are formed by gaps between individual buildings, terraces and streets. Most spaces are private areas, predominantly gardens and access ways and private driveways. In Kent/Sussex Avenue there are virtually no spaces of a formal or informal nature and the urban morphology is one of a mass of buildings fronting the highway. There are very few views out of the area except towards the east where the land falls gently away enabling long views across roof tops towards Willesborough.</p> <p>There is a cohesion and uniformity of the built form due to the architectural design of the buildings and the predominance of Edwardian/Victorian styles interspersed with only a few modern developments. One Listed Building is located on the periphery of the Conservation Area, at the former Cemetery Lodge and this is also a landmark building which introduces the Conservation Area from the north. The general state of repair of buildings is good and there is a predominance of residential as opposed to other uses in the area.</p>
the use of distinctive and traditional building materials	<p>Dominant materials are red bricks and slate/concrete tiles. There is evidence of loss of roof slates to concrete tiles on many dwellings, although many original architectural features exist such as wrought iron railings, sash windows, moulded cornice and eaves details. Street furniture is modern but not over-dominant in the street scene. Roads and pavements have been tarmacked and painted road markings are intrusive particularly in the restricted parking areas and in Queens/Albert Roads where a one-way traffic system has been introduced.</p>
the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area	<p>In Queens/Albert Roads, trees dominate the character of the street scene particularly within the highway helping create an "avenue" environment and a sense of place. Dominant species are Lime and Rowan but there are a variety of native and ornamental species within private garden areas. The general health of trees is very good and opportunities exist for greening Kent/Sussex Avenues where there is a paucity of landscaping which has created a rather harsh environment. Here the roads are relatively wide and there is ample space for planters/trees as long as these do not conflict with on-street parking facilities. Very few window boxes/planters/hangers exist in all parts of the Conservation Area.</p>
the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types	<p>Prevailing uses are residential with some larger dwellings having been converted into flats/houses in multiple occupation. Traditional façades appear intact.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
historical evolution	The linear road structure remains unchanged and is a dominant feature in the built form. The introduction of modern blocks of flats and some individual dwellings spoils the vertical emphasis of the architecture in Albert/Queens Roads in places. Evidence of traffic calming exists in these two streets by way of the introduction of a one-way system but generally the road and the car dominates because there is lack of on-site parking in most cases.
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside	The Conservation Area is peripheral to the Ashford Town Centre. Therefore an urban and built form dominate and there is no relationship to any landscape or open countryside. Views to the east from the Canterbury Road are extensive and help provide a sense of context within the Ashford town area.
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	Traditional road surfaces have been lost to tarmac. Whilst there are few visual intrusions in respect of hoardings or advertisements there is a major problem associated with on-street parking due to the lack of on-street facilities. There is a high level of background noise from traffic both inside and outside the Conservation Area due to its proximity to the Town Centre. Many of the road surfaces in Kent and Sussex Avenues are deteriorating.
identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Blue Line Lane, which demarcates the two distinct architectural styles of the existing and proposed Conservation Areas, is a rear accessway with parking for properties in Sussex Avenue and Albert Road. Here the road surface is uneven and has deteriorated. There is a plethora of garages/car ports of varying states of repair which detract greatly from the rest of the area. In addition, Kent and Sussex Avenues have poor road surfaces which require upgrading and recladding in more traditional materials. 2. The periphery of the proposed Conservation Area bounded by the ring road has several open spaces which could be planted to provide more pleasing views into the Conservation Area. 3. The terrace of properties between Queens Road and Albert Road to the east of Canterbury Road is in a poor state of repair. Here façades have been allowed to deteriorate due to the introduction of flats and bedsits. Upgrading is required to improve the visual appearance of these dwellings as they are highly visible on this important entrance in to and out of the Town Centre.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area	The trees along the north-west side of Maidstone Road, whilst framing the Conservation Area particularly from views out of Albert Road, do not contribute functionally or visually to the Conservation Area and are physically distinct from it particularly when travelling along Maidstone Road.
the existence of any threats to the area	<p>The main threats to this area relate to (1) traffic and (2) changes to the built form as a result of individual alterations to dwelling houses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traffic congestion remains a problem in the area and in the recent past. Albert Road and Queens Road have been used as through routes for non-residential traffic passing between Magazine Road and Canterbury Road. Whilst this problem has been reduced by the introduction of one-way systems there is still heavy demand for on-street parking and congestion. Opportunities for curtilage parking is poor due to the lack of front amenity areas particularly in Kent and Sussex Avenues. However, where space is available there is a threat of further loss of soft planting and which could add to the harsh environment of some streets. <li>2. Individual household preferences for upgrading external façades of dwellings could lead to the loss or alteration of traditional and attractive architectural features. Where changes of use have occurred, particularly on properties fronting Canterbury Road the general fabric of buildings has deteriorated significantly and further changes of use of larger properties could detract from the quality and appearance of the surroundings.

OUTCOMES

Area boundary	It is suggested that the existing Queens/Albert Road Conservation Area be extended to the south-west to include Blue Line Lane, Sussex Avenue and Kent Avenue. This is because of the cohesion of architectural styles of the terraced houses within the area and the many examples of historic features which remain intact. A further small extension is suggested to the east of Blue Line Lane to include a workshop building, part of the Chambers Garage. This Edwardian building is visible from the ring road and has attractive features similar to the style of adjoining buildings in Blue Line Lane and Albert Road.
Potential Article 4 Directions	It is suggested that an Article 4 Direction is made in respect of Sussex Avenue and Kent Avenue to protect the original architectural features inherent in many of the dwellings and to avoid unacceptable external alterations, such as roof tile replacement, painting and other ornamental decorations which would undermine the quality of the existing built form.
Site Policies (proposals and protection)	None suggested.
Potential improvement schemes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Upgrading of terrace of properties between Albert Road and Queens Road on the east side of Canterbury Road to improve the external façades. 2. Upgrading of roads and hard surfaced areas within Blue Line Lane, Sussex Avenue and Kent Avenue. Use of traditional materials would be an advantage. 3. Re-introduction of original architectural features on properties particularly in Kent Avenue and Sussex Avenue e.g. railings etc. 4. Significant planting could take place particularly in Kent/Sussex Avenues to soften the hard environment and to reduce the visual impact of on-street parking by, for example, the introduction of planters within the highway.

Officer: G Eglintine

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