

Kent Historic Towns Survey

SHEERNESS

Archaeological Assessment Document

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KENT HISTORIC TOWNS' SURVEY

SHEERNESS - KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND.....	1
1.2 SITUATION.....	1
1.3 STUDY AREA	1
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA.....	1
2.1 BRONZE AGE.....	1
2.2 ROMANO-BRITISH	1
3 HISTORICAL RECORDS.....	2
3.1 ORIGIN OF PLACE NAME	2
4 HISTORICAL DATA.....	2
4.1 PRE-URBAN EVIDENCE	2
4.2 URBAN EVIDENCE	3
5 URBAN CHARACTERISTICS.....	7
5.1 POST-MEDIEVAL PLAN COMPONENTS AND URBAN FEATURES (FIGURES 7 AND 8).....	8
6 THE POTENTIAL OF SHEERNESS	10
6.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE OVERVIEW	10
6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	11
6.3 KEY AREAS FOR RESEARCH.....	11
7 REFERENCES.....	12
7.1 MAIN WORKS CONSULTED	12
7.2 REFERENCES FOR SMR AND URBAN FEATURES.....	13
APPENDIX I: KENT AND MEDWAY STRUCTURE PLAN – MAPPING OUT THE FUTURE: DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (SPG 3) ON ARCHAEOLOGY IN HISTORIC TOWNS.....	15

LIST OF MAPS AND PLANS

1. Map of Sheerness showing contours
2. Map of Sheerness showing geology
3. Andrews, Dury and Herbert's map of Sheerness 1769
4. Hasted's map of Sheerness *c.* 1798
5. The 1899 2nd edition 6" O. S. Map of Sheerness
6. Map of Sheerness town-centre showing historic buildings
7. Map of Sheerness town-centre showing post-medieval plan components
8. Map of Sheerness town-centre showing post-medieval urban features
9. Map of Sheerness showing Scheduled Monuments
10. Map of Sheerness showing Urban Archaeological Zones

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sheerness is a small market town and a dockyard of seventeenth century origin, situated on the north-west coast of the Isle of Sheppey at the confluence of the rivers Medway and Thames. It is some 37.5km east of London, 17.5km north-east of Rochester and 16km north-west of Faversham.

This study aims to provide an evaluation of the archaeological and historical remains of the settlement as a basis for informing decision-making in the planning process where archaeological deposits may be affected by development proposals. The Kent County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was checked for information relating to the study area (see below) and provided 58 entries. Many of the records relate to standing buildings, dockyard buildings, Sheerness defences, offshore sunken wrecks and late nineteenth and twentieth century structures. Only two sites relate to archaeological find-spots, of which one is of prehistoric date and one is Roman.

Sheerness is typical of many small towns in England in that there has, as yet, been no significant archaeological research within the town, or in the area of study. Thus, most of the history has been compiled from documentary evidence and secondary published sources. Most of the visible features date from the nineteenth century and later, although there are a few surviving eighteenth century structures. The town is seen as historically significant because of its built environment, its historic dockyard and its reasonably well-documented history, rather than its archaeological deposits.

1.2 Situation

Sheerness is situated on a promontory at the north-west extremity of the Isle of Sheppey, a point which commands both the mouth of the river Medway and the mouth of the river Thames. The settlement occupies an area of very low marshy land at about 2m OD, consisting of riverine alluvial deposits laid down by the Medway in the distant past (Figures 1 and 2). Today, much of the surrounding marshlands consists of low-lying rough grassland, protected from flooding by an elaborate system of dykes and sea defences.

1.3 Study area

The general area for study lies between TQ 900730 and TQ 930760.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

Very few archaeological data exist for Sheerness town or its environs and there has been virtually no archaeological work. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the area of study records the following evidence.

2.1 Bronze Age

TQ 97 NW 1 - A bronze age palstave disfigured by several blowholes, probably due to faulty casting, was discovered in *c.* 1933 within square TQ 9275 (Maidstone Museum Records).

2.2 Romano-British

TQ 97 NW 13 - A late second-century finger ring of bronze with an ovoid orange bezel was found at TQ 9175 during road works in 1964 (Henig 1977, 207).

3 HISTORICAL RECORDS

3.1 Origin of place name

The place name of Sheerness has been translated as ‘clear headland’ or ‘bright headland’ from the Old English *scir naess*. Its situation on a prominent headland makes the name very appropriate. The place-name can be traced thus:

Old English	<i>scir naess</i>	...	1203	<i>Scerhnesse</i>
1221	<i>Shernessee</i>	...	1462	<i>Shirenass</i>
1690	Sheerness			

4 HISTORICAL DATA

4.1 Pre-urban evidence

4.1.1 *The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries*

4.1.1.1 Fort and dockyard

During Henry VIII’s French wars of 1539-1547, a new fort with three blockhouses was built at Garrison Point on the unoccupied promontory of Sheerness, to protect the mouth of the Medway and the royal dockyard at Chatham. Constructed in 1545, it was strengthened in 1574.

In 1665, the first year of the Second Dutch War, the Navy Board ordered Chatham dockyard to equip Sheerness with the requisites for cleaning ships’ hulls and to supply a workforce. £700 was authorised to fit out an elementary dockyard on 1½ acres of land, with a 26-gun battery at the point. In June 1667 the Dutch fleet attacked the area. Sheerness fort offered little resistance and it and the dockyard were captured and burnt. Within months, work began on rebuilding both, the fort then being equipped with 30 guns.

As the dockyard lay within the bounds of the sixteenth century defences it was very limited in size, so land needed to be reclaimed if it were to expand. Hulks were sunk to form breakwaters on the mud flats in front of the dockyard wharves and were incorporated into new land as they broke up. Hulks were also used as storehouses, offices, and accommodation for workers at the yard. It was not until the 1680s that a house was built for the labourers, and in 1692 lodgings (resembling military barrack blocks) for shipwrights and other artificers were provided within the fort. The hulks, however, continued to be used for accommodation, its limited provision and poor standard enforcing much of the workforce to live elsewhere and travel daily from Chatham.

Sheerness, on its exposed and inhospitable promontory, was the most vulnerable of all naval dockyards and was surrounded by marshland liable to flooding on which structures could only be erected after extensive piling. There was also a lack of drinking water and almost every necessity, including timber, had to be brought by boat from Chatham. In addition, the unhealthy conditions for which the dockyard became renowned discouraged workers from seeking employment there.

By 1712, c. 234 men including 60 shipwrights were employed in the dockyard, with an increasing number residing at Sheerness, although there was still little accommodation for families apart from the White Horse Inn, which was also the local brothel. A market and some housing were established within the dockyard in the early eighteenth century, but there was no attempt to improve the supply of freshwater, which continued to be shipped in from Chatham and from a well at Queenborough c. 5km away. In 1724 Sheerness was reported to

be ‘a kind of town’ with several streets for the inhabitants who were virtually all connected with the fort and dockyard. Shortage of accommodation remained a problem throughout the eighteenth century, especially in times of war

4.2 Urban evidence

4.2.1 *The eighteenth to twentieth centuries*

4.2.1.1 The fort and dockyard

The dockyard was the main source of employment in Sheerness from small beginnings in the 1670s to 1960 when it was closed. As part of the defence schemes which were implemented during the 1780s, the Board of Ordnance purchased land encircling Blue Town on its landward side. Around the perimeter of this area a second line of fortifications was created, of which one, Fort Townsend, was in existence by 1782. In the eighteenth century the Dockyard grew steadily, but by 1808 a Commission looking into its condition reported on its defective state. A new dockyard designed by John Rennie began in 1815, was officially opened in 1823 and finished in 1827. Largely built of granite, it covered about 64 acres and had five bay docks, basins, machine shops and a large storehouse, all contained within stonewalls, with large cast-iron gates.

This reorganisation entailed expansion on to Ordnance land and the construction of new residences for military officers and dockyard workers to supplement housing in Blue Town and Mile Town (see below). The number of men employed in the dockyard grew as the yard expanded, from 234 in 1711 to 2,400 in 1905.

4.2.1.2. Urban development

Blue Town

No private houses were built in Sheerness until c. 1738, by which time the dockyard had been in existence for 60 years. They stood on private land, as close to the dockyard as possible without encroaching, and were probably constructed with timber taken from the dockyard as the labourers’ perquisites. These were planks less than 6 ft long, all painted in dark grey-blue dockyard paint, hence the name ‘The Blew Houses’, and Blue Town.

By 1760 the workforce at the yard had increased to 455, the settlement had grown slightly and *Sheerness* was described as ‘a strong and regular fortification, with apartments for officers of ordnance, navy and garrison, a town of three little streets, a market and a small chapel’.

Although the establishment of private housing caused the dockyard authorities to consider ways of closing down the hulks, in 1774 there were still 551 people living in 258 cabins. At that date Sheerness was reputedly the most fever-ridden place in the whole of England, the result of its being surrounded by undrained marshland which was a breeding ground for mosquitoes. These conditions were exacerbated by the lack of fresh drinking water and sanitation. In 1782 a new well was sunk down 328ft at Fort Townsend, and Sheerness finally acquired a plentiful supply of good quality water.

Blue Town grew rapidly in the second half of the eighteenth century, with sixteen houses in 1754 and 130 in 1792. The population also expanded. In the 1790s the authorities provided an alternative to the hulks by building the ‘Great Alleys’, barrack-like accommodation inside the fort. They remained in use until the 1820s when large numbers of workmen left them to hire cheaper accommodation in Blue Town or in the new settlement at Mile Town.

After 1800 Blue Town continued to expand to its maximum extent, fully occupying the triangular area adjacent to the fort. Its number of public houses and brothels to cater for sailors on shore leave gave it an unenviable reputation. When John Rennie began to construct the new dockyard in 1815, he proposed that Blue Town should be purchased, the houses demolished, and the land used for the dockyard expansion. Although this plan was not fulfilled, some temporary housing and dwellings on the north side of the High Street were demolished in 1818, exacerbating an acute housing shortage, which finally led to the development of Mile Town (see below).

In 1827 and 1830 about three-quarters of the timber houses in Blue Town were destroyed by fire. The remainder were demolished shortly afterwards and the town was largely rebuilt, with alleys, small dwellings and innumerable public houses.

Mile Town

There had been a small settlement at ‘Mile Houses’ from the early eighteenth century, but it began to grow after 1815 when many of its inhabitants were clerks and artificers displaced when the Blue Town houses were demolished. The track linking the dockyard with Mile Houses was built up on each side, becoming the High Street of Mile Town, and other small houses were constructed to the south. They were built of wood (ship-board houses) and arranged in courts without water or sanitation.

Sir Edward Banks, the owner of the land on which Mile Town was built, became closely involved with its development; part of it became known as Banks Town and he gave land for the construction of Holy Trinity Church. He also attempted to develop Sheerness into a seaside resort by introducing a steamboat service from London and paying for the restoration of the pier. From the 1820s onward Mile Town grew steadily from a small hamlet into a small town and, as its westward expansion began to encroach on the defences, the government purchased land in 1827 in order to form a buffer zone and curtail further expansion.

Marine Town

After Mile Town ceased to grow, Marine Town was established to its north-east. This was short-lived however, for in 1862 the dockyard defences were again expanded by building the Queenborough Lines, a huge rampart and ditch running south-eastwards from the coast east of Marine Town to the river Medway. The Queenborough Lines delimited the triangular area containing Blue Town, Mile Town and Marine Town, which merged to become the present town of Sheerness.

By 1860, the town of Sheerness had a railway, a pier, a steamboat passenger service, a church, a bandstand, an open-air swimming pool, bathing machines on the beach, a theatre, and an abundance of public houses, two newspapers, a flourishing dockyard, a modern garrison and a growing population. Nevertheless, there was still a lack of sanitation and a prevalence of disease, particularly malaria, cholera and typhoid, among the overcrowded population. On the whole, conditions were no better than they had been in 1849 when an inspection by the Public Health Authority issued a damning report of the squalor of Blue Town and Mile Town

4.2.1.3 The market

A weekly Saturday market was held in the Market Place, established on the Lower Camber inside the dockyard in the 1680s. By the early eighteenth century the market had a shambles and there were a few shops (a tailor, a shoemaker and a barber, for example) in portable stalls,

which could be moved around the garrison. The market was still being held on a Saturday in 1798. When Blue Town was rebuilt after the 1827 and 1830 fires, a new Market Place for a Saturday market was laid out in its High Street, and this continued until the 1960s when the weekly market was transferred to Beach Street, Sheerness-on-Sea (formerly Mile Town). Although the day was then changed to Tuesdays, the Saturday market was reinstated in 1978. Both are now held in the Rose Street Car Park.

4.2.1.4 The church

Constructed in 1836 as a chapel-of-ease to the church of SS Mary and Sexburga Minster-in-Sheppey (which served as the parish church for Sheerness until 1888), Holy Trinity in Mile Town, is an austere brick structure with a narrow west tower. It was licensed for marriages, baptisms and burials and acquired parochial status when Sheerness became an Urban District in 1888.

4.2.1.5 Other religious organisations

The garrison church of St Mary was built for the use of the Royal Navy in the seventeenth century. It was burnt down in the Dutch raid of 1667, and its two successors were also destroyed by fire, in 1828 and 1881. The final rebuilding took place in 1885. The garrison church has been used as a warehouse since the dockyard closed. St Paul's church, Blue Town, was built in 1873 for the soldiers of the garrison, later becoming the parish church of Blue Town. The Roman Catholic church of SS Henry and Elizabeth, The Broadway, Mile Town, was built in 1864 to replace a small, late eighteenth century building in Rose Street.

Nonconformist churches included the Bethel chapel with school rooms and a minister's house, erected in Chapel Street in 1787 as a replacement for the original small meeting-house built in 1763. The Baptist church was built in Strode Crescent Mile Town in 1878 and the Methodist church in The Broadway, Mile Town. A synagogue was built in Sheppey Street in 1832 but was abandoned before the middle of the twentieth century.

4.2.1.6 Trade and industry

Fishing

During the second half of the nineteenth century, fishing for whitebait, shrimps and eels played a significant part in the economy of the Isle of Sheppey, with Sheerness and Queenborough being the most important centres by 1900. Many of the fishing boats anchored at The Lappel off Blue Town and at Rats Bay near the pier.

Mills

In the early nineteenth century there were three corn-grinding windmills in Sheerness. The Great Mill (or Ride's Mill after the family who owned it from 1864 to its demolition in 1924), a large, white-painted, smock windmill, was built in the High Street in 1813. It worked until 1890 and steam-power was installed in 1899. After its sweeps were removed in 1905 it ran solely on steam-power until 1918, when it closed. The brick base still survives. The Little Mill, Mile Town, a small, tarred smock windmill, built in 1810 to the south of the High Street, was the first building in this part of the town. Nothing remained after a fire in 1862. The One Hundred Acre Windmill, a small brick-built tower-mill with cement wash, was built during the first half of the nineteenth century very near the sea front in Marine Town. It worked c. 1872, was demolished in 1878 but its brick base survives in the yard of the Seaview Hotel.

High Street traders and services

By the second half of the eighteenth century the High Street of Blue Town boasted numerous shops, but the monopolistic shopkeepers charged high prices and many inhabitants struggled to afford food. In 1816 the local workforce formed an ‘Economic Society’ as a protest against the high prices. Believed to be the country’s first Co-operative Society, it contracted with local butchers for meat, had flour ground locally in the three Sheerness mills and had its own bakery. After the 1830 Blue Town fire, the society set up premises in Broad Street, Mile Town, and even sold water from its own well on the premises. In 1849 a second co-operative society was formed and maintained a small confectionery shop, a dairy farm, a smallholding, a reading room and a library. The two societies soon amalgamated to form the Sheerness Co-operative Society.

By the 1860s Sheerness was well provided with retail premises, shops and craftsmen. A bank was opened by the London County Bank in a house in Blue Town, later to become Westminster Bank. There were several hotels, and a playhouse (The Theatre) opened in 1803 in a wooden building just outside the dockyard. The theatre was lost when the dockyard was enlarged 1815-1823, but by the mid-nineteenth century The Criterion music hall was opened, and the Hippodrome Theatre was built in 1851.

Steam boats and the seaside resort

A pier was erected in 1835 when improvements to the town, such as paving, lighting and cleaning the streets, were also initiated. The pier was nearly 500 yards long, extending beyond the low water level of the Medway so that steam packets could land and embark passengers at all times, and paddle steamers brought visitors from London and the coastal towns to Sheerness, which for a short time became a popular but small seaside resort.

Inns

Before 1800 all the inns, taverns and alehouses stood in Blue Town. The oldest was probably The Fountain Inn, and others included The Chequers Inn, The Granby’s Head, the Britannia Inn (a coaching inn), and the Three Tuns (on the site of the later Admiral’s House Gardens). By the 1860s there were c. 36 public houses and inns, and at least 17 beer-shops. The earliest public house in Mile Town was The Belle and Lion and there were also The Crown Hotel (a coaching inn), The Royal Hotel (built by Banks in 1825 opposite Trinity Church), The Parr’s Head and The Bricklayer’s Arms.

4.2.1.7 Schools

A school for dockyard apprentices was set up in the dockyard in 1843, by which time there also were schoolrooms attached to the Bethel Chapel and Holy Trinity Church. The children of military and naval officers and the wealthier tradesmen and professional men attended a number of dame schools in Edward Street and, after the Education Act of 1870, a National School was opened in Mile Town. A Technical School for Boys was opened in 1910.

4.2.1.8 Public utilities

The first gasworks was built in 1833. The High Street and other main areas of the town were illuminated and many of the dwellings in which gas lighting had been installed were still using gas as late as 1952.

The water shortage evident in Sheerness from its beginnings was not solved until 1857 when a water company was formed; it provided piped water to the town by 1864. This was only a

partial solution, however, as even in 1950 some of the old wooden houses arranged around courtyards shared a single tap.

4.2.1.9 The railway

In 1860 a branch line of the London, Dover and Chatham Railway Company was built from Sittingbourne to Sheppey, serving both Queenborough and Sheerness, the latter with a station for the dockyard. A spur to Mile Town, for the townspeople, opened in 1883. The Sheppey Light Railway opened in 1901, linking Sheerness East (*c.* 1km south-east of Marine Town), Minster-in-Sheppey, Eastchurch and Leysdown with the main line at Queenborough. It was closed in 1950.

4.2.2 *The modern town*

Set on a promontory at the north-west extremity of the Isle of Sheppey, overlooking both the mouth of the river Medway and the Thames estuary, Sheerness survives today as the largest town on the island. Although the naval dockyard and base ceased to function in 1960, they have been replaced by a trading estate with large industrial complexes and a freight port. Sheerness also maintains its popularity as a seaside resort.

Today, Sheerness comprises three main areas. Mile Town is the commercial and shopping centre, focused on the High Street and the seaside resort. Blue Town, the original settlement, lies to the west and is completely surrounded by industry, trading estates and the docks. Any surviving old timber houses and alleys were demolished in the early 1950s and the steelworks constructed on part of the site in 1972.

The development of Sheerness, particularly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, can be seen by comparing early maps (Figures 3 and 4) with the modern OS map.

4.2.3 *Population*

During the mid-sixteenth century the population of Sheerness was confined to the small garrison of troops at the fort, and even when the dockyard was developed over the next hundred years there were few inhabitants. Accommodation was very limited and most of the workforce travelled daily from Chatham. Settlement really began in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century when the first houses were built in Blue Town.

By 1774 Sheerness had a civilian population of *c.* 976, roughly half living on the hulks on the river. In the first census in 1801 the population of civilian Sheerness was combined with that of the parish of Minster; Sheerness Ville (the residential area within the dockyard itself) was calculated separately. Thus the true figure is not available but in all there were almost 6,000 people. By 1891 the population was 16,110, most living in Mile Town and Marine Town. By 1921 there were 22,214 inhabitants in Sheerness and Minster.

5 URBAN CHARACTERISTICS

The following summary of the principal urban characteristics in Sheerness is confined to the post-medieval period (i.e. post-dating *c.* 1540). The summary is not comprehensive as only the principal post-medieval features are included. Figure 6 shows the historic buildings in and around the town, some of which appear in the plan components section below as urban features.

5.1 Post-medieval plan components and urban features (Figures 7 and 8)

The major components of the modern town of Sheerness had been established by the mid-nineteenth century and comprised the three settlements of Blue Town, Mile Town and Marine Town, which amalgamated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Almost all of the eighteenth century buildings in the town have been demolished, although the basic street plan has remained virtually unchanged.

Sheerness was first occupied in the sixteenth century when a blockhouse fort (PC1) was built. The Royal Naval Dockyard (PC2) was founded immediately south of the fort and by 1680 barrack-like accommodation and a market were provided within the confines of the dockyard for some of the dockyard workers. Further defences were provided in the late eighteenth century with the Inner Lines and Musketry Wall and the Ravelin was added in 1816 (PC3). The first civilian settlement was Blue Town (PC4), built on private land just outside the dockyard, and by 1750 several small terraces of private houses had been constructed along the road from the dockyard to Minster. By 1800 it had expanded to its maximum extent, filling the triangular area bounded by the High Street, West Street and Brielle Way and criss-crossed by alleys and streets.

Between 1780 and 1823 the dockyard and its defences expanded eastwards to incorporate Fort Townsend. Further colonisation was encouraged to the east of the defences and Mile Town (PC5) was founded. In 1827 government acquired the adjoining land to the south and east of Mile Town which then had no room for further expansion, so Marine Town (PC6) was established on private land to the north-east.

The construction of the Queenborough Lines (PC7) in 1862 and Barton's Point Battery in 1890 (PC8) prevented further expansion of the settlements. Building was henceforward confined to infilling open areas in Marine Town and Mile Town. By the twentieth century all the settlements had merged into one large urban sprawl.

PC1. The Fort (Garrison Point).

- a) (PMUF1) The fort at Garrison Point. Originating as three blockhouses built in 1545, it was strengthened during the reign of Elizabeth I, in 1665 and 1667. It was demolished 1860 and replaced by a new fort, Garrison Point, in 1872. It is a Scheduled Monument (Kent SAM 172; Gulvin 1975, 24-25).

PC2. The Royal Naval Dockyard.

- a) (PUMF2) The Royal Dockyard Church of St Paul, built in 1828 and rebuilt after a fire in 1884 incorporating the old clock tower. Now Trinity Youth Centre (DoE 1978, 26).

PC3. Inner Lines including Musketry Wall, Fort Townsend and Ravelin (Kent SAM 172; Harris 1984 and RCHM 1993).

- a) (PMUF3) originally built in the eighteenth century as an outer defence to the dockyard. Extended in the late eighteenth century by a ditch and rampart across the neck of land, cutting off Blue Town.

PC4 Blue Town.

- a) (PMUF4) 40 High Street. A nineteenth century brick house of three storeys with a nineteenth century shop front. It was under restoration in 2002 (DoE 1978, 8).
- b) (PMUF5) 41 High Street. An early nineteenth century brick building with a nineteenth century shop window, now a cafe (DoE 1978, 8).
- c) (PMUF 6) The Red Lion Public House, High Street. An eighteenth century building of three storeys, weatherboarded, with a nineteenth century shop front (DoE 1978, 9).
- d) (PMUF7) Former County Court, High Street. Mid-nineteenth century asymmetrically planned brick building with stuccoed dressings, parapet and royal cartouche (DoE 1978, 9).
- e) (PMUF8) 3 West Street. Early nineteenth century facade, weatherboarded rear elevation and a partly slate roof.
- f) (PMUF9) The Royal Fountain Hotel, 15 West Street,. An eighteenth century hotel with a rough plastered front and a brick south elevation, with bow windows on first floor. The hotel is said to have had associations with Lord Nelson. Derelict 2002 (DoE 1978, 36-37).
- g) (PMUF10) Outbuilding to the rear of The Royal Fountain Hotel, West Street. Nineteenth century facade onto West Lane, but to the rear there is an eighteenth century tarred weatherboarded structure with a tiled roof. (DoE 1978, 37).
- h) (PMUF 11) North side of Union Street. An early to mid-nineteenth century building. Demolished 2002 (DoE 1978, 34).
- i) (PMUF12) Bethel Chapel, Union Street, now A. G. Smith Depository. Red brick building with date stone 1787 and initials WS; inscription ‘He shall establish his strength’ beneath the central window, and a sundial with the initials BST. Now used as a factory (DoE 1978, 35).

PC5. Mile Town.

- a) (PMUF13) 95 High Street. An eighteenth century building with wooden facade stuccoed and grooved in imitation of masonry. Now Sheerness Kebab House (DoE 1978,11).
- b) (PMUF14) 97 High Street. A late eighteenth or early nineteenth century weatherboarded building with modern shop added to front .
- c) (PMUF15) 111 High Street, in yard at rear. Remains of the Great Mill, an octagonal structure of stock brick (DoE 1978,11-12).

- d) (PMUF16) 6-10 Rose Street. A late eighteenth or early nineteenth century building of two storeys and weatherboarded. No.10 has a Victorian brick extension with a shop front, now Sheerness Heritage Centre (DoE 1978,25).
- e) (PMUF 17) Hope Street. The Bethel Chapel Sunday School dated 1832, of stock brick with a pediment and stone coping, now church hall for United Reformed Church (DoE 1978, 20-21).

PC6. Marine Town.

PC7. The Queenborough Lines.

- a) (PMUF18) The Queenborough Lines, built in 1862 as an extension to the Sheerness land defences and final stage of a process of fortified enclosures at Sheerness. Consisting of a wet moat, earth rampart on its inner (town) side and flanks, its rampart survives almost intact as a grassed bank and three-quarters of the wet moat survives (Saunders and Smith 2001). Rests on Barton's Point Battery in the north and on a planned battery to the south which was never built.

PC8. Barton's Point Battery.

- a) (PMUF 19) Barton's Point Battery, built in 1890s with deep concrete gun emplacements and underground magazines. Survives as earthwork slopes which have been built over by timber holiday chalets (Saunders and Smith 2001).

Not located in a plan component

- a) (PMUF20) The Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, The Broadway. Built 1835-1836 in stock brick, with a west tower and an internal gallery around three sides (DoE 1978,3).
- b) (PMUF21) One Hundred Acre Windmill, The Broadway. Built of stock brick and partly stuccoed, cylindrical and tapering towards the top (DoE 1978, 2).
- c) (PMUF22) The Roman Catholic church of SS Henry and Elizabeth, The Broadway. Designed by Pugin 1863-1864 (DoE 1978, 2).

6 THE POTENTIAL OF SHEERNESS

6.1 Archaeological resource overview

No modern archaeological excavations have so far been undertaken within the town or in its immediate surroundings. Modern industrial development has certainly had an impact in some areas and two nineteenth-century fires destroyed much of the old Blue Town, the historic core of Sheerness. Apart from the defences and some remaining structures within the dockyard, nothing remains of the initial settlement. A few late eighteenth-century buildings are the oldest surviving civilian structures.

The state of preservation of archaeological deposits is unknown. There is likely to be a substantial depth of deposit in the area of the dockyard although it is not known to what extent later development has destroyed remains of earlier periods. Within the present town centre the depth of deposit may well be more limited but this is uncertain. There is likely to be good local survival of palaeo-environmental evidence given the low-lying, originally marshland context for the settlement.

6.2 Research questions

The purpose of this document is to develop policy for Sheerness's urban archaeological deposits, particularly in the post-medieval commercial and residential areas and the dockyard and its defences. None of the post-medieval plan components has been subjected to any significant archaeological investigations and there is no archaeological evidence for the town's early economic base or plan.

6.3 Key areas for research

The following need to be investigated:

6.3.1 The origins of Sheerness

- the nature, date and extent of the earliest settlement remains at Sheerness;

6.3.2 Sheerness in the 16th to 18th centuries

- the construction, layout, use and development of the 16th C blockhouses and fort at Garrison Point;
- evidence for the first dockyard;
- evidence for the destruction of the dockyard and fort by the Dutch in 1667 and their subsequent rebuilding and development;
- evidence for an early market and church inside the dockyard;
- the development of living quarters within the dockyard.

6.3.3 Sheerness in the 18th to 20th centuries

- the later development of the dockyard including the work of John Rennie in the 19th century;
- the origins and development of the 18th and 19th century defences of Sheerness and the Naval Dockyard including the inner defences and musketry wall, Fort Townsend, the Ravelins and the Queenborough Lines;
- the origins and development of Blue Town, Mile Town and Marine Town;
- the origins of the track linking the dockyard with Mile Houses;
- the pattern of settlement and the relationship of individual plots to the settlement framework;
- the nature, extent and chronology of occupation within the urban core
- the form and character of individual properties;
- the economy of the town and its trading and commercial contacts;
- evidence for the 19th century corn-grinding windmills;
- the development of the pier and Sheerness as a seaside resort.

6.3.4 General questions

- the evidence of artefactual remains in interpreting the town's pre-urban and urban history;

- the palaeo-environmental history of the town including evidence about the environmental health of the early dockyard and associated settlement.

Small-scale archaeological sampling in individual properties in Sheerness would provide answers to specific questions. Consideration should be given, however, to large-scale excavations over a number of properties, which would provide a wider picture, if desk-top assessment and field evaluation demonstrate the case. The position and importance of Sheerness in the hierarchy of Kent towns can be solved only through excavation, field survey and consultation of historical documentation.

7 REFERENCES

7.1 Main works consulted

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Glover, J.	1982	<i>Place Names of Kent.</i>
Harris, T.M.	1985	Government and urban Development in Kent: The case of the Royal Naval Dockyard Town of Sheerness, <i>Archaeol. Cantiana</i> CI, 245-276.
Hasted, E.	1798	The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, VI, 229-233.
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Ormrod, D	1995	Industry: 1640-1914, in Armstrong (ed).
Richardson, T.	1995	Labour, in A. Armstrong (ed.).
Saunders, A.	1989	<i>Fortress Britain, Artillery Fortification in the British Isles and Ireland.</i>
Smith, V.	2001	<i>Front-line Kent.</i>
Tyler, L.	1994	<i>The History of the Isle of Sheppey.</i>
VCH III	1932	<i>The Victoria History of the County of Kent.</i>
Wallenberg, J. K.	1934	<i>The Place-Names of Kent.</i>
Whyman, J.	1985	<i>The Early Kentish Seaside (1736-1840).</i> Kent Sources VIII.

7.2 References for SMR and urban features

- DoE 1978 *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, Queenborough in Sheppey.*
- Gulvin, K.R. 1975 *The Medway Forts, a Short Guide.* Medway Military Research Group.
- Henig, M. 1977 *Archaeol. Cantiana* CXIII
- Saunders, A. and Smith V. 2001 *Kent's Defence Heritage.*



2

Figure 1. Map of Sheerness showing contours

1:45991

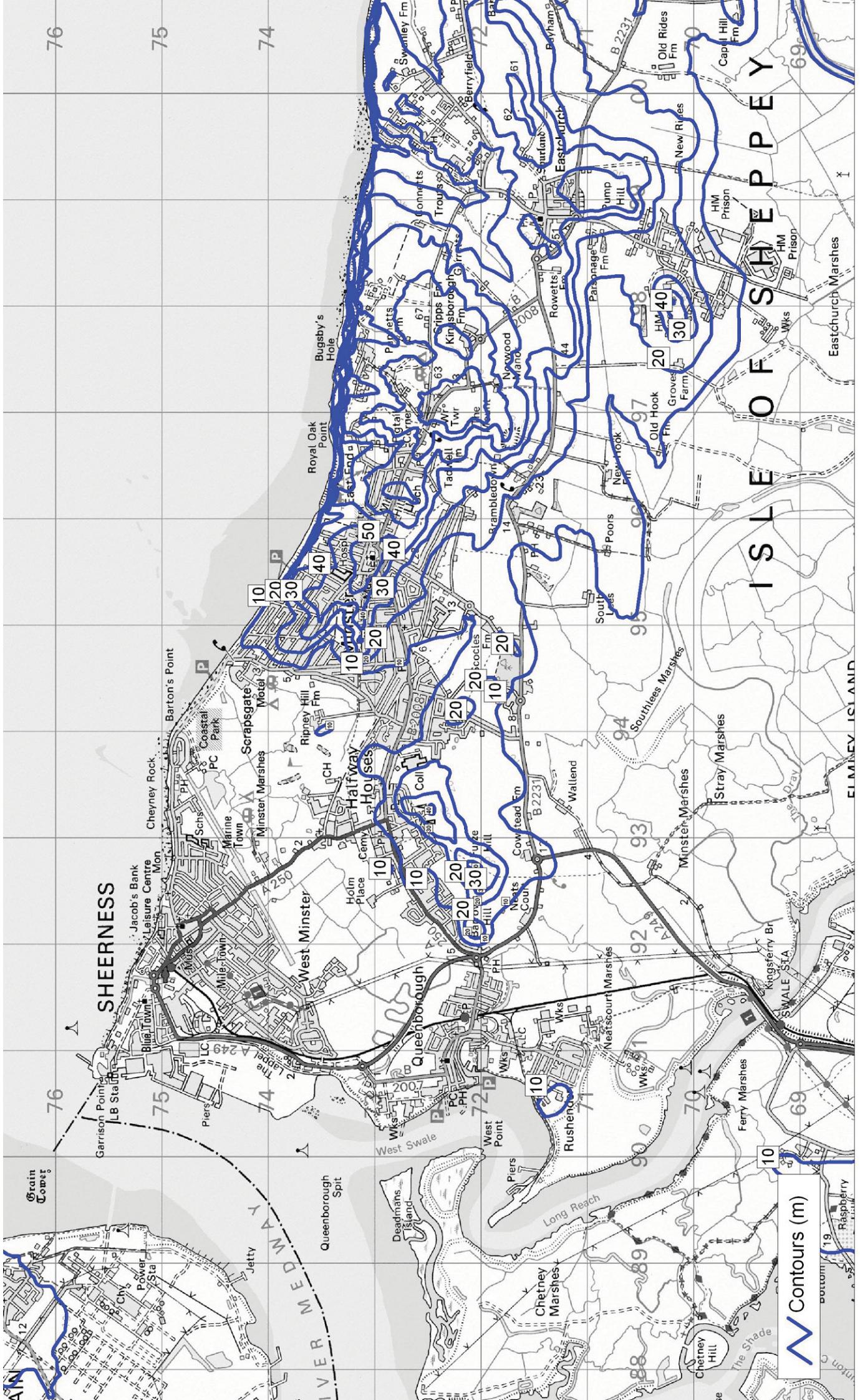




Figure 2 Map of Sheerness showing geology

Scale 1:15000



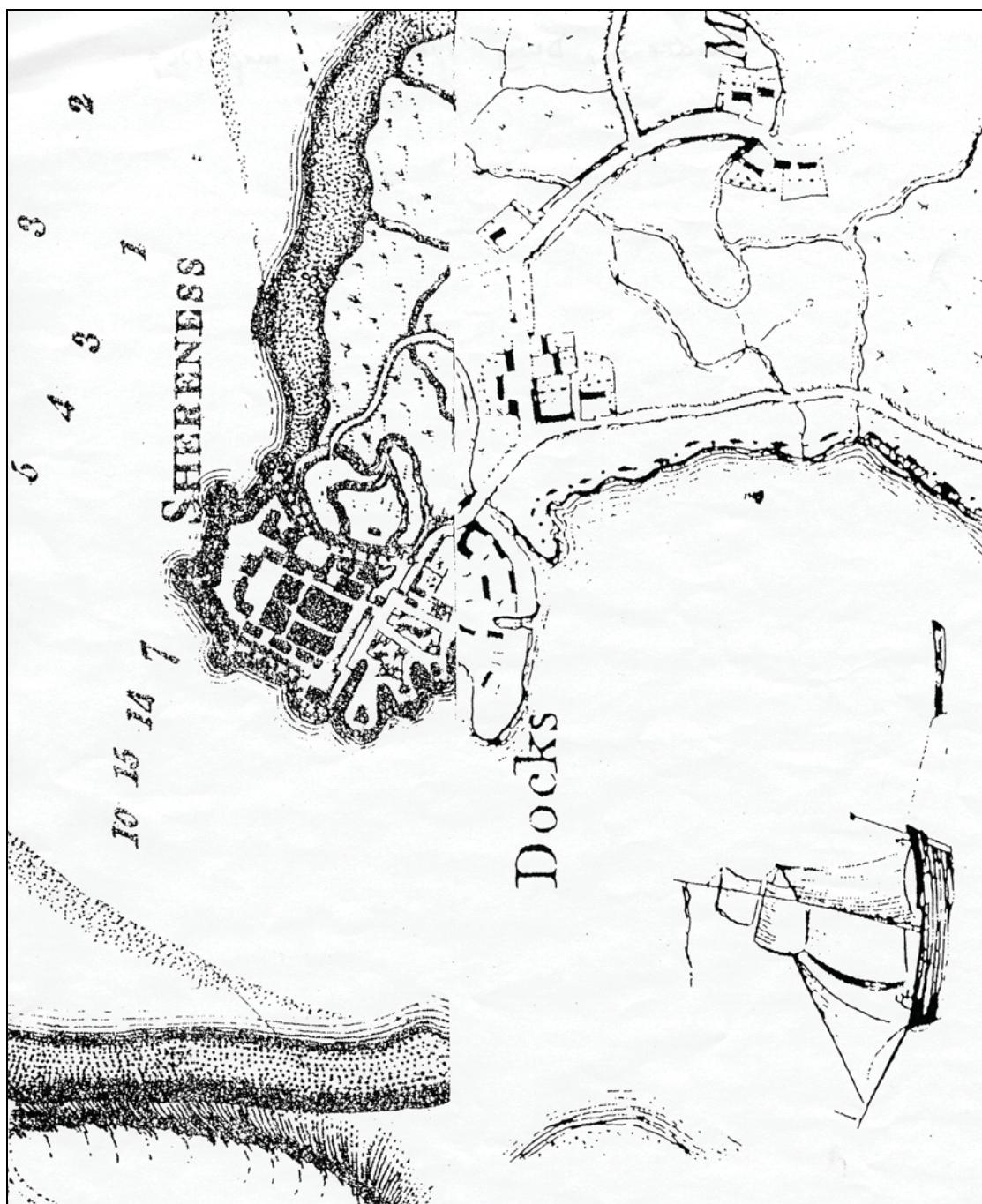


Figure 3. Andrews, Dury and Herbert's map of Sheerness, 1769

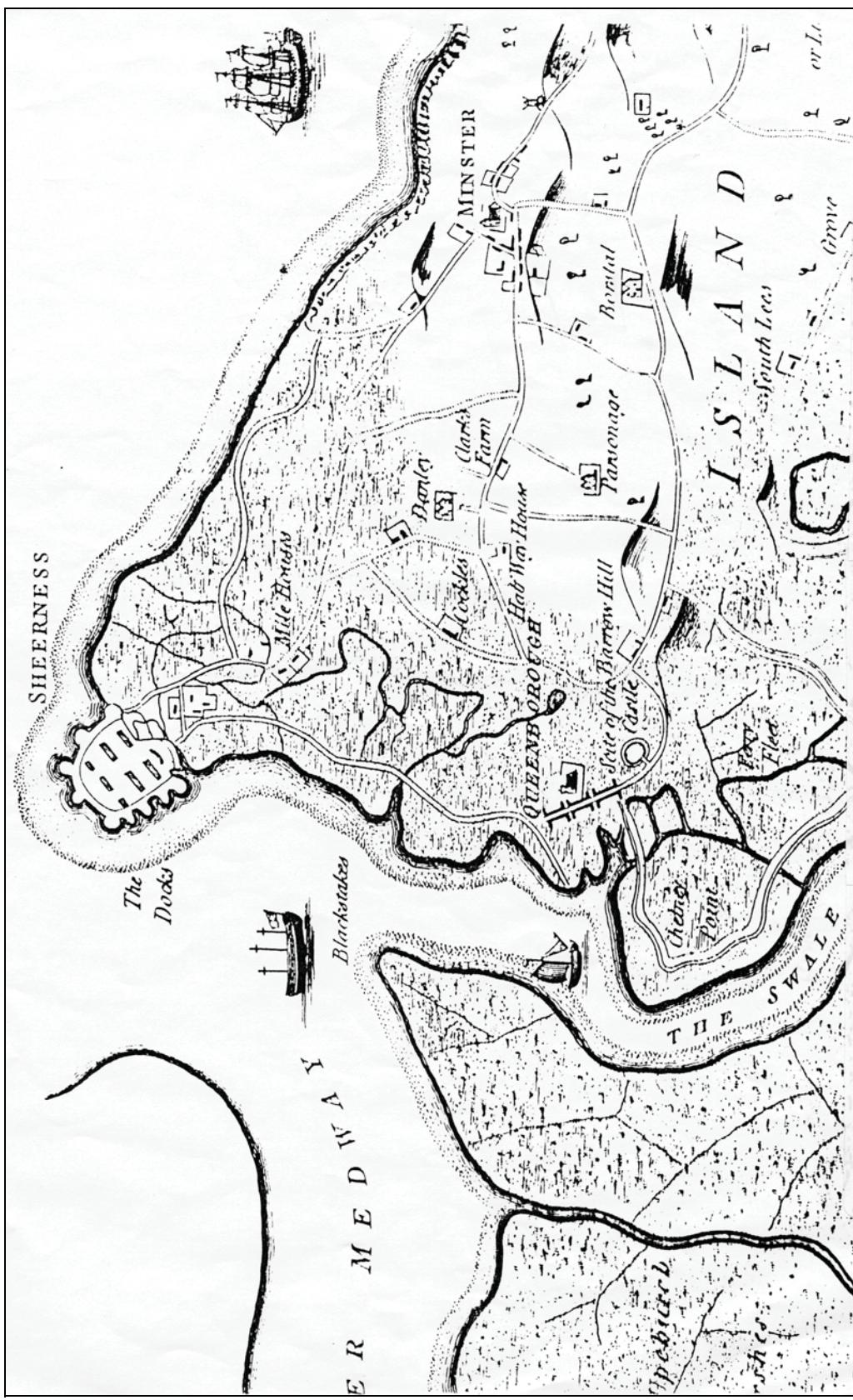


Figure 4. Hasted's map of Sheerness, c.1798

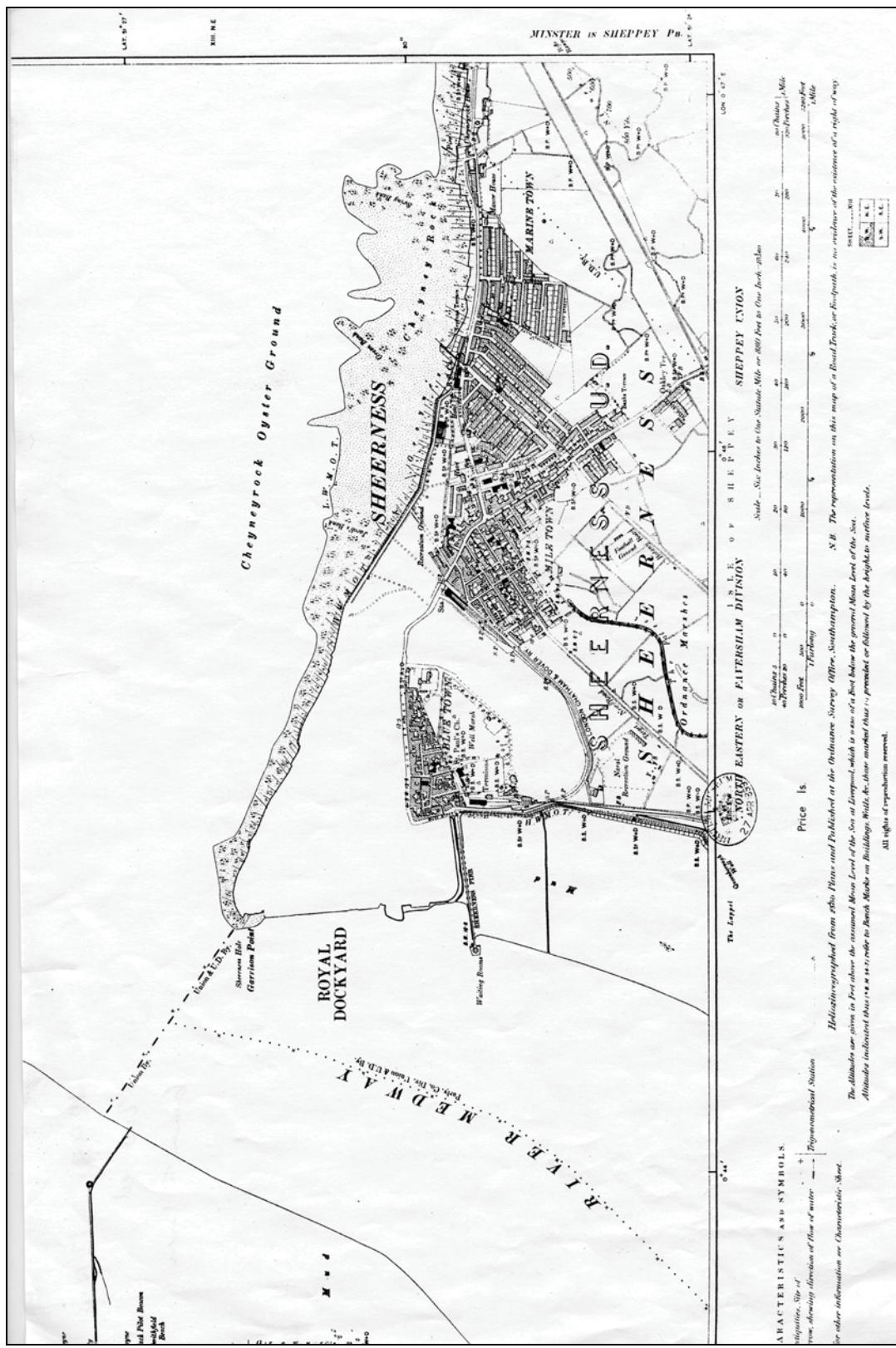


Figure 5. The 2nd Edition OS map of Sheerness, 1899

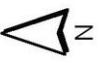


Figure 6. Map of Sheerness showing historic buildings

1:4599



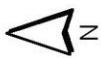


Figure 7. Map of Sheerness showing post-medieval plan components

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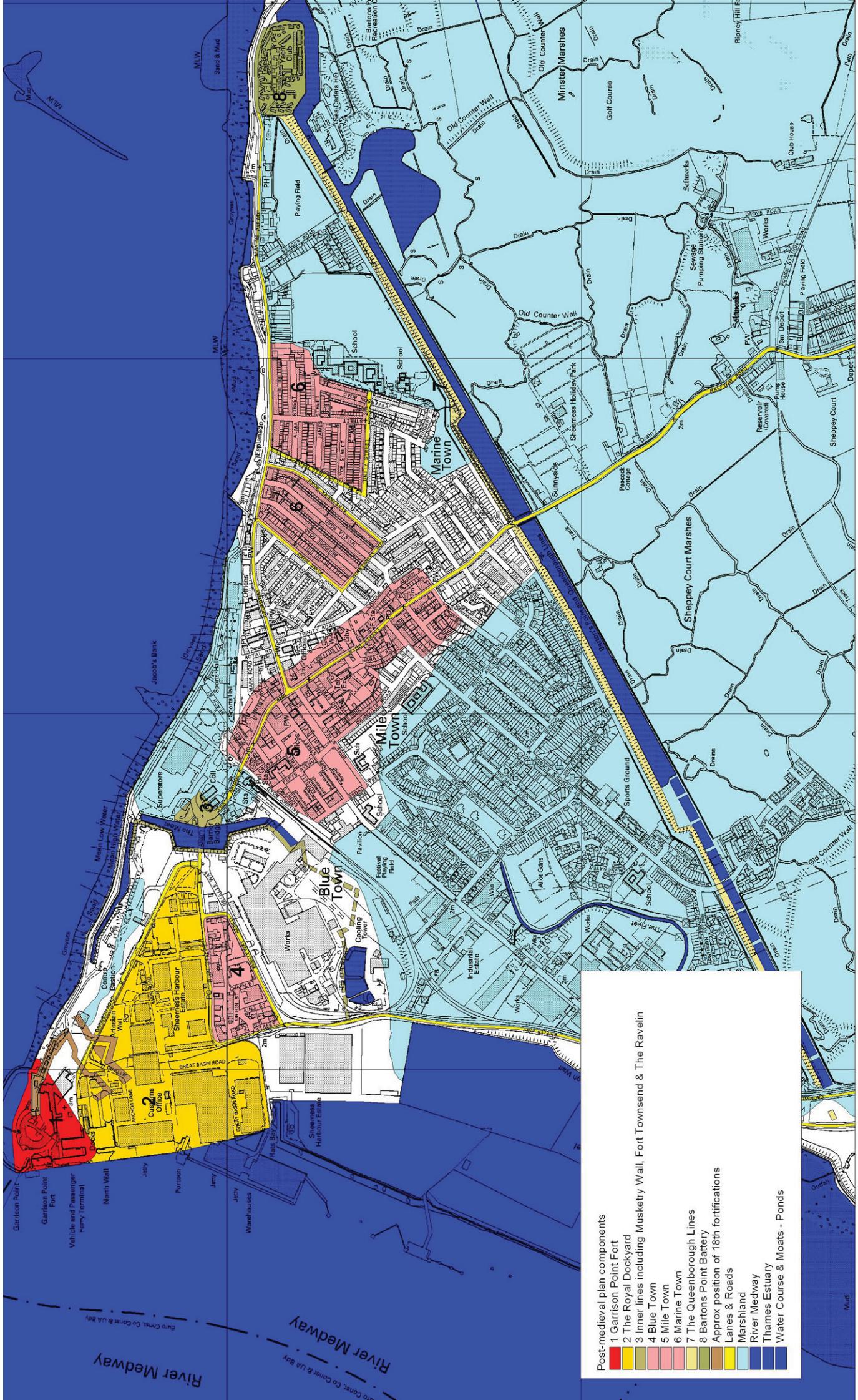
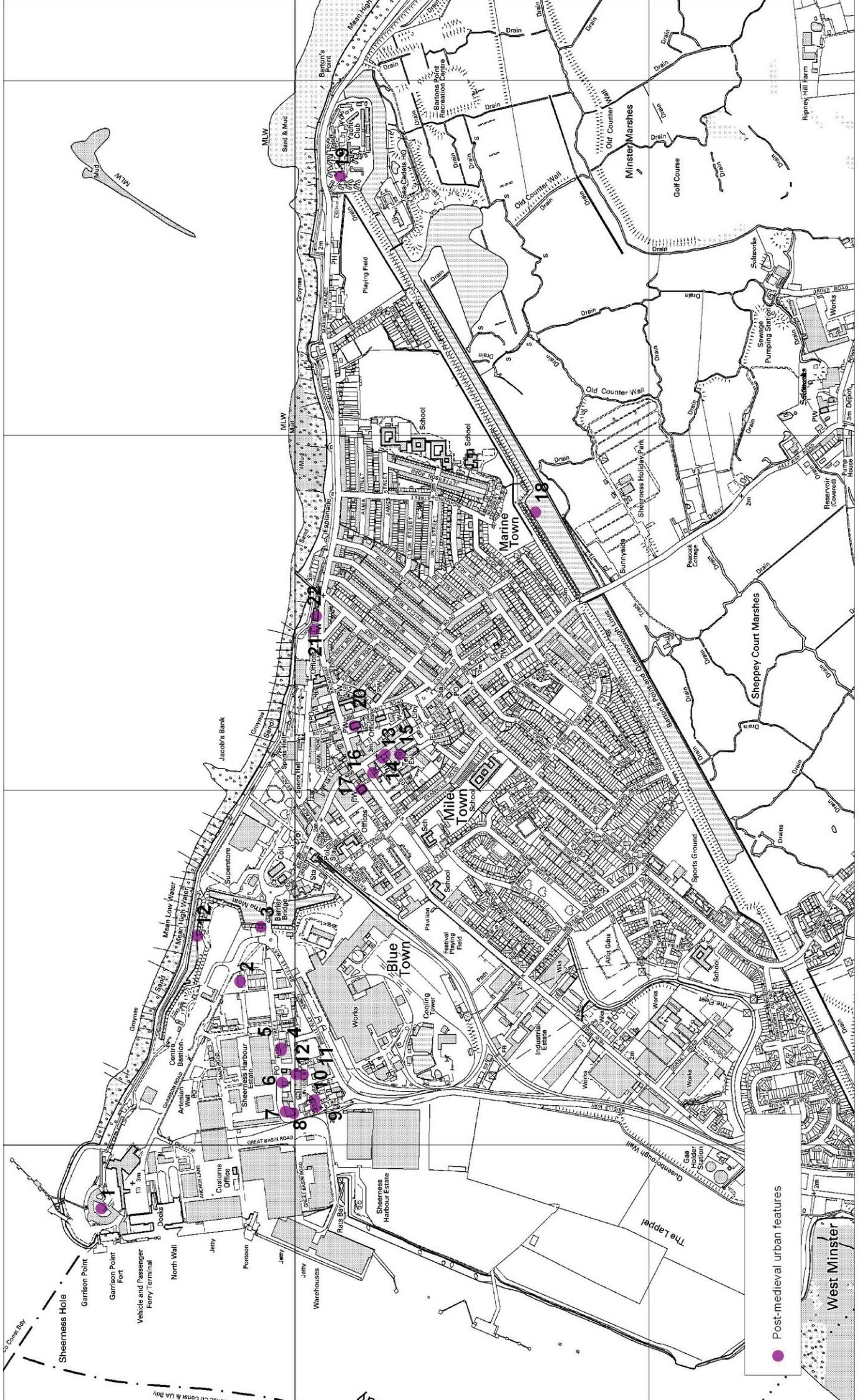




Figure 8. Map of Sheerness showing post-medieval urban features

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APPENDIX I: KENT AND MEDWAY STRUCTURE PLAN – MAPPING OUT THE FUTURE: DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (SPG 3) ON ARCHAEOLOGY IN HISTORIC TOWNS

1. Introduction

1.1 The Extensive Urban Archaeological Survey, undertaken by Kent County Council, assesses the archaeological potential of the historic towns in Kent and Medway, particularly in relation to potential impacts from development. It constitutes draft supplementary planning guidance (as revised following consultation). Following adoption of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (KMSP) (anticipated in late 2005) this draft guidance will be taken forward as Supplementary Planning Guidance to KMSP Policy QL8 [Archaeological Sites] which sets out the requirements for the conservation and management of archaeological sites and finds. The draft KMSP and the draft supplementary guidance on archaeology (SPG3) were subject to full public consultation in late 2003. The draft supplementary planning guidance has been revised in the light of the responses received to that consultation. Policy QL8 is also the subject of a Proposed Change put forward in 2004 prior to the Structure Plan Examination in Public.

Policy QL8: Archaeological Sites

The archaeological and historic integrity of scheduled ancient monuments and other important archaeological sites, together with their settings, will be protected and, where possible, enhanced. Development which would adversely affect them will not normally be permitted.

Where important or potentially important archaeological remains may exist, developers will be required to arrange for archaeological assessment and/or field evaluation to be carried out in advance of the determination of planning applications.

Where the case for development affecting an archaeological site is accepted, the archaeological remains should be preserved in situ. Where preservation in situ is not possible or justified, appropriate provision for preservation by record will be required.

Source : Kent and Medway Structure Plan:Deposit Plan September 2003 as amended by Proposed Pre – Examination in Public Changes: June 2004

1.2 Precisely defining what is a town is not straightforward; for the purposes of this study, places that can be seen historically to have fulfilled roles as central places socially and economically, and perhaps with a market, have been included. Inevitably the distinction between village and town is not always clear. The Extensive Urban Archaeological Survey includes some medieval towns that are no longer of urban character and extends to towns which developed in the eighteenth century. Roman towns that now only survive as buried remains in a rural context are not included. The Guidance is concerned with the impact of development on archaeological remains within towns rather than sites in the surrounding countryside. In particular it seeks to raise awareness of areas of archaeological importance

within a town, provide more accurate information on the extent of these areas and establish a consistent approach towards dealing with the impact of development proposals across Kent and Medway¹. Canterbury and Dover have not been included in the Extensive Urban Archaeological Survey, as a more detailed Urban Archaeological Database is being developed for Canterbury and one is proposed for Dover.

1.3 The Guidance is aimed at local planning authorities, developers and their advisers. It may also be of interest to landowners, householders and local historical groups. Pending adoption of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, this Guidance amplifies Policy ENV18 of the adopted Kent Structure Plan 1996. Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to take the guidance into account in the preparation of their Local Plans/ Development Plan Documents and site specific Supplementary Planning Documents. The Guidance does not apply outside the identified urban areas and should be read alongside existing Local Plan policies on archaeology. The Guidance has been issued both as a Kent and Medway edition containing maps for all the settlements to which it applies and a district edition containing maps only for those settlements falling in the respective district area. There is no difference in the wording or application of the Guidance in either edition.

2. SPG Background

2.1 Kent's historic towns, some of which have been occupied since Roman times or even earlier, contain a wealth of evidence of past ways of life. This may take the form of buried archaeological deposits, standing buildings or structures, such as castles or town walls, or the present street patterns which may reflect past urban forms. At the same time, our towns need to develop as thriving communities. The Guidance aims to reduce conflict between the need for development and the need to preserve important archaeological remains, through the preparation of an ongoing and integrated strategy for conserving the urban archaeological resource.

2.2 The Government's policy on archaeological remains is set out in PPG16: Archaeology and Planning. It states (para. 6) that:

'Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.'

2.3 Archaeological remains are not always buried below ground and in many cases historic buildings within a town will contain important archaeological information, irrespective of whether they are Listed Buildings or not. Indeed, as noted in PPG15 (para. 2.15):

'Some historic buildings are scheduled ancient monuments, and many which are not scheduled are of intrinsic archaeological interest or stand on ground which contains' archaeological remains.'

¹ Please note that Kent County Council provides an archaeological service for the Medway area on behalf of Medway Council.

2.4 The means by which provision for archaeological preservation or recording is secured is also discussed in PPG16. In the event that archaeological work may be required prior to a planning decision being taken (para 21):

'it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken.'

If the planning authority is willing to grant planning permission but requires that preservation in-situ or archaeological recording take place (para 30):

'it is open to them to do so by the use of a negative condition i.e. a condition prohibiting the carrying out of development until such time as works or other action, e.g. an excavation, have been carried out by a third party.'

3. Urban Archaeological Zones and Guidance

3.1 The Guidance relates to 46 towns in Kent and Medway as listed in Section 9. A plan has been produced for each town (for Sheerness here Figure 10) providing archaeological response zones based on the known importance of archaeological deposits in that town, which again derives from the Extensive Urban Archaeological Survey. The boundaries of these zones are related to the possible extent of archaeological deposits rather than modern boundaries. Key documents in assessing the archaeological potential of Kent's towns are the Ordnance Surveyors' Field Drawings of c. 1800 (held by the British Library). These provide consistent, fairly detailed cartography of the various towns before the population explosion of the 19th century. While they do not map the extent and layout of the towns in the medieval period, they nonetheless provide a useful baseline for assessing the extent and layout of the towns in the Middle Ages. In the case of applications for Listed Building Consent or where the building is historic in character, and where the proposal impacts on the historic fabric, then the Local Planning Authority will need to consider whether or not to consult the County Archaeologist in respect of considerations of archaeology or industrial archaeology. Similarly, developers considering proposals in these areas are encouraged to consult the County Archaeologist at an early stage in the design process. Four types of Urban Archaeological Zone have been identified although they will not necessarily be present in all the towns. The zones indicate:

Zone 1 – Areas of known national importance;

Zone 2 – Areas of known archaeological potential where clarification of the nature of this potential is required;

Zone 3 – Areas where archaeological potential is thought to be lower; and

Zone 4 – Areas in which archaeological remains have been completely removed.

Further information detailing the state of knowledge of the archaeology of each of these towns including analysis of their topography and historical development is available in the form of an Assessment Report. These reports can be purchased from the County Archaeologist (see section 7 for contact details).

3.2 **Zone 1** identifies, as suggested in PPG16 (para 16), archaeological remains of known national importance, and comprises both Scheduled Monuments and unscheduled remains. PPG16 (para 8) states that:

'Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.'

3.3 Scheduled Monuments (formerly known as Scheduled Ancient Monuments) are protected under Part 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, and prior consent from the Secretary of State is required for all works affecting such monuments, whether or not those works require planning permission. Local planning authorities should secure, through the development control process, the protection of nationally important remains that are not scheduled.

3.4 Development proposals within Zone 1 that are likely to affect nationally important archaeological remains whether scheduled or not, should include a detailed archaeological assessment of the remains and a mitigation strategy setting out how the remains will be protected. Buildings and foundations may need to be designed and/or located to allow preservation of archaeological remains. Such considerations should be addressed at an early stage in the design process, if possible before a planning application is actually submitted, in order to avoid unnecessary costs.

3.5 The archaeological and historic integrity of sites within Zone 1, together with their settings, should be protected and where possible enhanced. Where development would adversely affect them permission will normally be refused.

3.6 Where permission is granted, conditions will normally be applied, or agreements entered into, to ensure that any necessary mitigation strategy is implemented. Applications for planning permission and other consents that affect the fabric of historic buildings, or other historic structures or earthworks, and/or that disturb the ground, should be accompanied by the following:

- i.) a detailed report on the character and extent of any archaeological remains likely to be affected; and
- ii.) a mitigation strategy detailing how any possible archaeological impacts would be avoided.

3.7 **Zone 2** contains archaeological remains, some of which may be of national importance but whose precise extent, quality or level of importance is currently not clear, and where clarification of potential is required. Early consultation with the local planning authority, preferably prior to the submission of a planning application, will enable the implications of the proposals to be assessed, the appropriate course of action identified, and expensive redesign costs avoided.

3.8 The archaeological and historic integrity of sites within Zone 2, together with their settings, should be protected and where possible enhanced. Further information will be needed in this respect before informed decisions can be made. Therefore development proposals

within Zone 2 that affect the historic fabric of buildings, or other historic structures or earthworks, and/or that disturb the ground, should be accompanied by a detailed report on the character and extent of any archaeological remains likely to be affected. Field evaluation may need to be carried out and the results made available prior to the determination of a planning application.

3.9 If significant archaeological remains are found to be affected by the proposals, preservation *in situ* of the remains will normally be sought. In some cases the need to preserve important archaeological remains may result in planning permission having to be refused. If permission is granted, a mitigation strategy detailing how preservation *in situ* is to be achieved should be submitted to and agreed with the local planning authority. Where preservation *in situ* is not justified appropriate provision for archaeological investigation, recording, analysis, publication and archiving will be required, in accordance with a written specification and timetable to be agreed with the local planning authority. Conditions will normally be applied to permissions or agreements sought to implement the mitigation strategy or programme of archaeological work.

3.10 **Zone 3** contains archaeological remains which on current evidence are of lesser importance. Development proposals within Zone 3 that affect the historic fabric of buildings, or other historic structures or earthworks, and/or that will disturb the ground should include provision for archaeological investigation, generally in the form of monitoring and/or borehole investigation, and the recording of finds and information of archaeological interest. If extensive or particularly important archaeological remains are unexpectedly encountered during the development process, there may be a need to arrange for their physical preservation and/or a more detailed programme of archaeological investigation and recording. Where permission is granted, conditions will normally be applied or agreements sought to implement the archaeological work.

3.11 **Zone 4** comprises areas where archaeological remains are known already to have been entirely removed by previous development, or other activity, including archaeological excavation. This Zone is only defined on the plan where it lies within the study area.

4. Outside the Urban Archaeological Zoned Area

4.1 Archaeological remains may be known or thought likely to exist outside the areas covered by the Extensive Urban Archaeological Survey and the Urban Archaeological Zones. Developers considering proposals in these areas are encouraged to consult the County Archaeologist at an early stage in the design process.

5. Updating of the Urban Archaeological Zones

5.1 As new archaeological and historical information concerning the historic towns becomes available, it may be necessary for the County Archaeologist in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority to revise the boundaries of the Urban Archaeological Zones.

6. Glossary of Terms

Scheduled Monument

Under the Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 the Secretary of State has a duty to compile and maintain a schedule of monuments, such monuments having statutory protection. Monuments on the schedule are by definition of national importance and the

appropriateness of addition to the list is assessed against a set of criteria as set out in PPG16 Annex 4.

PPG15

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (Department of the Environment and the Department of National Heritage 1994)

PPG16

Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning (Department of the Environment 1990)

NB PPG15 and PPG16 are currently being revised and consolidated into a new Planning Policy Statement for the Historic Environment – PPS15

Assessment

This is normally a desk based activity bringing together all known evidence relating to the importance or potential of a given site or area.

Evaluation

This is normally supplementary work undertaken in the field (either non-intrusive such as fieldwalking or geophysical survey, or intrusive such as boreholing or trial trenching) to obtain further information on the character, extent, date and potential of a given site or area.

Mitigation

Archaeological mitigation aims to minimise the effects of proposed development and normally consists of either preservation *in situ* of the archaeological remains, and/or archaeological investigation, recording, publication and archiving, where preservation is not justified or possible.

7. Useful Addresses and Contacts

County Archaeologist
Heritage Conservation Group
Kent County Council
Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XX
Tel: 01622-221541

English Heritage
Eastgate Court
195-205 High Street
Guildford
GU1 3EH
Tel: 01483 252038

8. List of Settlements to which draft SPG3 Applies

Appledore
Ashford
Charing
Chatham
Chilham
Cranbrook
Dartford
Deal
Edenbridge
Elham
Faversham
Folkestone
Fordwich
Gillingham
Goudhurst
Gravesend
Headcorn
Hythe
Ightham
Lenham
Lydd
Maidstone
Marden
Margate
Milton Regis
Minster in Thanet
New Romney
Northfleet
Queenborough
Ramsgate
Rochester
Sandwich
Sevenoaks
Sheerness
Sittingbourne
Smarden
Tenterden
Tonbridge
Tunbridge Wells
West Malling
Westerham
Whitstable
Wingham
Wrotham
Wye
Yalding

Figure 9. Map of Sheerness showing Scheduled Monuments

1:10401

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