

Brightlingsea Conservation Area

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been produced by the District Council but is based on earlier work by consultants Smith Stuart Reynolds in 2001. These earlier documents contain the views of the consultant and did not necessarily reflect the Council's Officer's views. Although these documents have existed for some time they had no formal, planning status.

The Council subsequently agreed in 2005 to prepare Conservation Area Character Appraisals for each of its Conservation Areas and as a forerunner to updating the above consultant's documents a consultation exercise took place in late 2005 / early 2006. This involved town and parish councils and certain local amenity bodies. The results of the consultation exercise were reported to the Council's Planning Portfolio Holder when the document was formally considered for adoption as Council planning policy. As a result of this consultation the Appraisal documents have been amended and updated in the light of the comments received from consultees and as a result of certain changes which have taken place since 2001. Much of the descriptive material used in the original SSR documents has been retained.

Proposals originally put forward by the Consultant involving suggested changes to Conservation Area boundaries, enhancement works or proposed Article 4 Directions have been retained in these latest documents. However, it is recognised that town or parish councils do not support some of these suggestions and this is referred to in the appropriate document. Their inclusion in the documents as suggestions only does not indicate that the District Council supports such proposals at this time. They will be subject to further consideration by the Council in due course. Indeed all such proposals for boundary changes, and any new Article 4 Directions will be required to go through quite separate, statutory processes which will also be carried out with further public consultation.

This document has been formally adopted by the Council as part of its planning policies for this conservation area under the provisions of Section 71 of the Planning [Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas] Act 1990. It will therefore be an important material consideration in relation to the assessment and determination of planning and related applications in the Conservation Area.

SUMMARY

Brightlingsea is in essence a medieval town with historic maritime connections. This history lends a unique character to the High Street flanked by ancient greens, and to expansion from the medieval core during the 19th century, most notably to connect the town with its historic waterfront. The Area recognises this evolution, which has created a sequence of streets and spaces closely defined by a range of mostly-two storey buildings with a strong family relationship.

Brightlingsea Conservation Area

LOCATION

Brightlingsea lies seven miles to the south east of Colchester at the mouth of the River Colne. The town occupies the crest and the southern slopes of a slight ridge defined by the river and by its tributaries Alresford Creek to the north and west and Brightlingsea Creek/Flag Creek to the south and east.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The Brightlingsea promontory framed by salt marshes, the river and its creeks was settled from an early date. Indeed, the parish was an island until the later 16th century. Brightlingsea was a Royal *vill* in late Saxon times, the parish church appearing to date from this time or the early Norman period.

Medieval Brightlingsea is a typical Essex polyfocal settlement, with the church and hall providing one focus overlooking Arlesford Creek, further foci at Hearse Green and North End Green, and a number of isolated large farmsteads, connected by a network of lanes.

Brightlingsea's High Street is framed by triangular greens. To the east was Hearse Green with three windmills: to the west, Street Green stretched to the south west into Gandergoose Green and into the marshes. Lanes ran from the High Street down a gentle slope to the water's edge, where trade was carried on in oysters, fish, copperas (green pigment from naturally-occurring bisulphide of iron) salt and bricks from the brickfields between Brightlingsea and St Osyth. Roman cement created from local septaria (metamorphosed clay nodules) was also traded following its discovery and patenting in 1796. Brightlingsea is still a non-corporate member of Sandwich, the Cinque Port, and the only Cinque Port member outside Sussex and Kent.

The advent of the railways altered trade patterns and introduced tourism. Brightlingsea obtained a branch line from Wivenhoe in 1866, which supplied two daily services from the 1870's. The town's population of 2,585 in 1861 climbed to 4,501 by 1901. The branch line carried oysters, fish and trippers, and enabled massive numbers of sprats to be exported by train ferry from Harwich to Eastern Europe. The line was always susceptible to flooding, and three miles were lost in the storm of January 1953. The branch closed in 1964.

The 1874 Ordnance Survey provides a snapshot of Brightlingsea at this time. The medieval settlement along the High Street and around the greens is balanced by the laying out of New Street and Sidney [sic] Street, though only the land between them is fully developed down to the Water Side at this date. Queen Street and Spring Road were beginning to be developed, while houses were spreading northwards and eastwards from 'Hearse Green'. The water front itself is marked by ship building yards, smithies, a copperas yard and the Cinque Port Warehouse between oyster beds.

Since this date, Tower Road has also been laid out between the High Street and the waterfront, with considerable residential development in late Victorian times between the waterfront and the railway station. Twentieth century expansion has mainly occurred to the north of the medieval settlement, around the main access road leading in past the parish church.

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The Brightlingsea Conservation Area was originally designated in June 1975 and was extended in September 1985 and again in September 1987.

The current Area boundary at its eastern end takes in the properties surrounding Hurst Green, with extensions westwards along Mill Lane and northwards up Chapel Road to include the Methodist chapel and the former

school. Running westwards, the Area includes High Street properties as well as Florence Cottages to the south and older properties in John Street to the north. The north western boundary is formed by including the church hall and vicarage and properties in Queen Street as far as the junction with Spring Road.

Running behind buildings facing Victoria Place and Lower Green Gardens, the Area boundary takes in properties in Station Road as far as the surgery and the Co-op, the northern part of Duke Street, parts of Nelson Street and the whole of New Street and Sydney Street. Waterside is also included in the Area, along with the jetties and landing stages.

REPLACEMENT LOCAL PLAN POLICY CONTEXT

The whole Conservation Area is within the Development Boundary of Brightlingsea. It covers the town centre including the Main Shopping Area, protected shopping frontages and town centre car park, which is safeguarded from development for other uses. The Area also includes protected open spaces, one in the town centre and the other at Hurst Green.

The southern corner of the Area includes the former James & Stone Shipyard which is being developed for housing with moorings. Southern parts of the Area are identified as land subject to flood risk. Policies seek to protect the town's riverside setting and the town is surrounded by the Coastal Protection Belt designation. Brightlingsea Creek is protected by national and international nature conservation designations. Parts of the Conservation Area adjoining the waterside fall within an Urban Regeneration Area.

The Local Plan indicates that the District Council would consider using an 'Article 4 Direction' to protect the Conservation Area from unsympathetic alterations to domestic properties.

AREA APPRAISAL

The subdivision of the Area is indicated on Map 1.

1. Hurst Green, and High Street to John Street

This is the eastern end of the Area, and comprises principally domestic properties arranged informally around the historic open space of Hurst Green itself, its connecting streets to north and east, and the broad eastern end of High Street.

Hurst Green is a triangular common surrounded in a very relaxed way by mostly two storey houses. The earliest are no.1, the former White Lion Inn in a forward position on the High Street corner, and an attractive group at the Green's northern corner with Chapel Road with exposed timber framing, a substantial roof of old clay tiles and prominent chimneys. The next oldest seem to date from the middle of the 19th century: there are two attractive three bay cottages with central door-cases at the south eastern corner, associated with a low barn with a pantiled roof, and a taller barn with a corrugated iron roof and timber weatherboarding. There is another attractively modest house near the centre of the north side of the Green.

The two most prominent buildings on the Green are mid-Victorian, and stand together on the east side. They have symmetrical three bay frontages under hipped roofs, though that to the north is taller with a decorative eaves detail and roof copings and cast iron finials. Its rendered front garden wall topped with a privet hedge is also a significant feature. The remaining houses round the Green are detached or formed into small groups.

Detracting features include the altered windows prominent on the four properties to the south of the larger Victorian houses on the east side, Hurst Green Garage as an unexceptional two storey 1960's building, the fake stone cladding to a property on the centre of the south side, and a bungalow in the centre of the north side which doesn't really fit in with the general style of the development. There are one or two trees within the Green, and some timber posts on the south side, but they are incidental.

A short gravel track at the south east corner leads to Mill Farm and to a significant view over the creek and to Point Clear East. Next door are the attractive houses mentioned above. The first is Mill House, of two storeys, with sash windows in brick elevations behind a picket front boundary fence. The west gable is clad in panels to mimic weatherboarding, while the rendered windowheads suggest other hidden complications in the building structure. No.2 next door has a tuck pointed façade behind an attractive frontage wall with half round copings:

this rises up to form a screened yard with double gates and a garage to the rear.

Mill Street runs off the south eastern corner of Hurst Green. Only the south side is in the Area and comprises a range of two storey properties mostly of 19th century date. Some original doors and doorcases survive. The final houses are quite a pretty pair of mid Victorian houses, much altered and with varied arrangements to accommodate car parking. Mill Street swings southwards past this pair, with a limited vista north eastwards over fields to mature trees and rough scrub. Development on the north side of Mill Street is part of an unexceptional housing estate east of Hurst Green.

At the north east corner of the Green, Chapel Road exits between a small row of two storey cottages and the prominent brick side garden wall of the end property in the attractive 17th century group. The small cottages continue on the inside of the bend and close to the road frontage although even here some run ins are contrived, with varied frontage treatments. This narrow section of street is dominated by the façade of the United Church, Methodist URC, an imposing building in red brick with plain gothic details and quadrant corners. A plastic cross has unfortunately been placed over the date stone (1843) in the centre of the front gable. The church has a bland tarmac forecourt which leads with insufficient demarcation to another tarmac forecourt fronting what was the Wesleyan Methodist School, now painted in yellow ochre with red trim. The Area ends opposite the Methodist Church with a small drive with a poorly-considered side garden wall in concrete panels. The street continues with pleasant two storey Victorian houses.

Near the western apex of the Green as it leads into High Street there is a short drive with a very good view over to Point Clear East. To the west, a pair of modern bungalows do not unfortunately respond to the relative pinch point created by no 1. Further west, Florence Cottages are reached along Back Waterside Lane. The nine cottages were originally accommodation for coastguards and are now occupied by retired officers of the Salvation Army. They are attractive in yellow brick, and are well-maintained with consistent roofing and dormer details (though using synthetic modern materials) and an immaculate communal garden. The entrance to the diminutive rear yards and their out-shuts is framed with corrugated sheeting.

Opposite the lane, on the north side of High Street, Flagstaff Cottage appropriately displays a flagstaff and a weather vane showing a traditional barge. Continuing westwards is a pleasant row of six two-storey cottages. Three now have porches and all have window alterations and small front gardens variously delineated with masonry and timber front walls. Beyond no 91, a single much-altered house fronting a tiny property, there stands an interesting group, the centre piece of which is an old two-and-a-half storey house with a good doorcase, a clay tiled roof and dormers. To the right an additional pair of two-and-a-half storey cottages have rendered walls painted bright colours, while to the left the brick frontage style of the central block is taken across the front of a different type of building with a slightly lower pitched slate roof. One of these two properties still has original small pane sashes in segmental head windows.

On the south side of this wider part of the High Street is a group of mostly Victorian properties with slate roofs. The pair at the eastern end are smooth rendered while the offices of Ruddocks Limited are in grey brick. Following that is The Shambles, a small house of red brick with altered window details. No's 90 and 92 have full height casement windows with small cast iron balconies, though all the ground floor details are altered. No.88 next door is of a charming scale, with old small pane sash windows and its original door. The door-case has hefty columns which may be a local artisan version of a classical design.

2. High Street from John Street to New Street/Richard Avenue

This is the narrowest part of the High Street and retains a character distinct from the wider residential section to the east and the broader, more urbane commercial section to the west. It contains a number of fine period buildings. Properties are often built at the back edge of the pavement, or else stand behind small front gardens with incidental planting which softens building lines.

Facing John Street is nos 80-86, a very fine half timbered house comprising a central hall with side wings. That to the west is a full height gable in close studding, while the eastern has a hipped roof. Both projecting gables have arched braces: there is a subsidiary gable of poor framing to one side. Opposite, no.77 with its former shop front fills the corner well, closes down the width of the street and makes the transition between the two character areas. The Area includes the first two groups of houses on the west side of John Street: the first pair appear to have retained their original door-cases. The next group - four cottages in a group set back from the road - display many more alterations with only the first property retaining its small pane sashes: there is a multiplicity of garden frontage treatments as well. On the other side of John Street is a fairly prominent side garden wall and a modern house. The rest of John Street is varied, mostly of unexceptional two storey cottages, with prominent

'wirescape'.

The narrowness of the old High Street, is reinforced by the projecting two storey gable of no 78 on the south side which has been built out virtually to the back of footpath from the previous building line. Next door, no 76 is gable end to the road with a little lean-to front extension, while no.74 is a pretty three bay house with a central door-case set in cream painted render under an old clay tiled roof with gabled dormers. Further along on the south side, beyond a couple of tiny yards, is Centuries, a one-and-a-half storey gambrel-roofed weatherboarded house. Its gable end right on the back edge of footpath is dwarfed by the adjacent late Victorian no.64 which itself gives way beyond a gravelled drive to a small two-storey cottage with sash windows and very delicate pargetted panelling. A gravel drive leads to no 60, a modern house with aluminium windows at right angles to the High Street.

Facing these on the north side of the High Street is nos 69-73, a medieval house re-cast in brick. No 73 at the right hand end has a crazy paved forecourt, otherwise the front boundaries are of brick and with picket fencing. Further west is Bellfield, a house of two-and-a-half storeys with flat roof dormers in a clay tiled roof behind a parapet with robust cornice detailing in brick. The front facade has brick headed openings with interesting keystones. This building stands behind a short front garden with a picket fence in brown stain and some trees. Next on the north side is a post-war newsagents with a garage to one side and an open forecourt in in-situ concrete. Opposite, the rough track known as Lime Street has a very rural air with hedgerow trees down the right hand side. It leads round a T junction to an interesting though rather shabby array of parking and garages at the backs of Tower Street properties. The house on Tower Cut nearest the corner with Lime Street is quite old though significantly re-cast, although it retains Yorkshire sliding sashes to the first floor. Next door is the rear frontage of a flats development, with a rather plain central parking area rescued by a silver birch tree with a walk-way through to the High Street.

The High Street frontage of the flats continues the building line of the houses immediately adjacent to the west which happily reveals much of the flank elevation of Jacobs although the resulting triangular forecourt in front of the flats has not been properly thought through and could be more attractive. Jacobs itself is a wonderful building, the fine half-timbered facades contrasting with the distinctive brick staircase tower dating from the early 16th century. It is one of the few Grade I listed buildings in the District. Opposite is a District Council car park in plain tarmac with neatly marked out spaces surrounded by trimmed hedges. At the far end, the YMCA building is of one-and-a-half storeys, with decorative cresting to the ridge of the slate roof. It has a rather unkempt space to the east of it and where hedging gives way to the fenced or concrete panelled side boundaries of adjacent properties. Next to the car park and opposite the flats is The Cottage, a five bay, two storey brick house, plain though with interesting brick band-course and cornice details. The facade retains small-pane sashes but is chiefly notable for its filigree iron-work porch behind a relatively modern low frontage wall in brick.

Further west again, No. 49 is extremely prominent with a gable jutting out on the back edge of the pavement. This building is very attractive with a good modern shop front and original small pane sashes set in facades painted a deep russet colour. Next door is a continuous row formed firstly by a group of weatherboarded two storey cottages with slate roofs with a concrete hardstanding outside the fishmonger's, and then a pair of houses the front gardens of which were under reconstruction at the time of survey. Further along is a two-and-a-half storey rendered property of three bays and a central door-case; a rather shambling picket fence divides it and the previous weatherboarded house and it has a modern low-brick wall to the street frontage. This little group is completed by another two storey house, rendered with modern windows and some fake half-timbering on the gable. The row is closed by another group of buildings on the back edge of the pavement, on the inside of a curved slightly northwards as the High Street progresses towards the wider green area at the eastern end.

Opposite this last group before the junction with Tower Street are nos 34-38, Victorian two storey properties with hipped roofs and much evidence of earlier shop fronts. No 32 on the other side of the Tower Street junction may date from the 1920's, and is followed by a substantial Victorian building, with a prominent original gable and robustly detailed shop fronts. Unfortunately both properties are now empty. The rest of the block between Tower Street and Sidney Street consists of a much-altered two storey property with its modern frontage, a continuous old shop front and then Barclays Bank set back with a slight widening of the footpath. This is again of two storeys, with brick eaves details to the frontage and painted brickwork facades surrounding decorative window details.

Opposite, and significant on the back edge of the footpath is a financial management office, a two storey hipped-roof building finished in modern rough render, although some original windows remain at first floor level. This is next to two more two-storey hipped-roof Victorian buildings: no 25 has a modern shop front while no 29 is a

dwellinghouse with a good door-case. Going westwards is another individual hipped-roof building with an original shop front with a residential property to one side again with a good door-case and probably the original door. This is all in an excellent state of preservation and paintwork. Unfortunately there is only one chimney stack remaining unaltered in all these hipped roof structures.

Staying on the north side, no 17 is gable end to the road with a hipped roof. It retains an old shop front below what is probably an early 20th century bay window. Next door is The Old Swan, a late 16th century house with cross-wings, recast in 1905 to 'Stockbroker Tudor' designs with rather thin fake timbering in the gables. The masonry is more robustly detailed, and ornate ironwork carries a lean-to roof over the entrance between boldly-projecting bay windows. The small pub forecourt is an important feature in the street with its trimmed privet hedge. The last group before the entrance to Richard Avenue is an early 20th century block with a rather bland paved forecourt and then a post-war house and shop with an even blander tarmac forecourt and a dull return elevation to Richard Avenue.

The High Street block between Sidney Street and New Street is all of two storey except for the single storey former Lloyds Bank in the middle. Elevations are mostly of yellow brick or render under hipped roofs. The tallest ridge belongs to the marine equipment stores which occupies a gabled building dating from the early 20th century with diamond roof tiles and an old shop front with olive green faience details.

3. Victoria Place

This triangular area was originally Street Green, complementing Hurst Green at the other end of the High Street. Commercial properties, organised parking, a small gyratory system and the layout of the central triangle as a War Memorial garden make this the town's foremost formal space.

The link with the High Street is signalled first of all on the north by St. James' Church, in a pivotal position in townscape terms. Though a relatively plain design in yellow brick, the tower is an important vertical accent contrasting with the otherwise horizontal lines of its surroundings, and is furthermore a significant landmark from the estuary. The clock commemorating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 is a delightful feature. Its opposite is the Brewers Arms, an attractive vernacular three bay building of two-and-a-half storeys, with rendered walls and old clay tiled roof. The main frontage has small grassed pub garden with a low rendered wall, probably originally topped by railings. Part of the former Seabrook's brewery is housed to the side in a pretty listed building at the back edge of footpath. Other particularly distinctive buildings include the Kings Head on the west side, dating back at least to the 16th century, and the National Westminster Bank and Victoria Pharmacy, where attractive ground floor treatments are matched by pleasant facades overall.

The positive features of this space are the general quality of buildings: nothing is grand, but most contribute to the scene. A good example is the modern group on the south side which includes a restaurant and a travel agents: this is of two-and-a-half storeys in yellow brick with a rendered central section. The War Memorial itself is by the Richard Goulden, one of the leading monumental sculptors of his day. The only wholly negative feature is the Lloyds Bank building on the north side which is of two storeys under an overbearing mansard. One might say there is rather too much tarmac visible in this part of the Area, particularly where the gyratory system gives out at the north eastern corner relating to Queen Street and Ladysmith Avenue.

4. Queen Street

This street has been a thoroughfare for many centuries, but was chiefly built up in the 19th century. A small group of vernacular cottages survive at a dog leg, now the junction with Spring Street.

The former Post Office building is very prominent on the corner and has an attractive pyramid-roofed extension to the rear. To the north is the Brightlingsea New Church, an imposing building dating from 1868 in plain Romanesque style with a small front area with two yew trees. The chain-link fence boundary between it and the delivery office is a disappointment. Much of the rest of Queen Street is comprised of two storey Victorian houses, either individuals, pairs or individual houses butting-up to other houses of different design. Frontages are mostly in red brick with white painted details. A significant proportion of sash windows and other original details have survived. Problems in the southern part of the street are the replacement windows to No. 6 with its brick frontage wall with California blocks, the frontage treatment of house next door to it and on the other side of the road a bungalow with a trimmed cupressus hedge. Colne Lodge, no 10, is of a common Brightlingsea pattern: it is of two bays, one bay having a boldly projecting timber portico while the other has a canted bay window at ground floor level. The facade is of brick with corner pilasters and a central pilaster dividing the two bays. The design includes a wide overhanging eaves and a hipped slate roof. No 16, the former manual telephone exchange constructed in 1929, is an interesting inter-war variant of an early design, being of three bays, with a

central door-case and small-paned metal framed windows. A completely unkempt frontage makes it an unwelcome neighbour. The Area takes in an electricity sub-station and a set of double garages in Windsor Court, presumably to create a simple boundary alignment.

Queen Street continues its sinuous course with houses on the inside edge fairly close to the back edge of pavement: those on the outer edge have small front gardens with brick wall frontages. At the top of Queen Street is a small group of listed buildings. Firstly there is no. 57 and its neighbour, originally one cottage with a single central stack. The houses and their front gardens are rather unkempt. Next door is no 59, Anchor Cottage, formerly the Anchor public house, is a very pretty vernacular house of one-and-a-half storeys, with elevations in black weatherboarding under a gambrel roof of old clay tiles and a prominent central stack. Opposite on the east side is no. 44, originally timber-framed, with weatherboarded sides and a brick re-facing of the principal facade. It is of two storeys, with small pane sashes and a very pretty door-case. The front garden has a modern front wall with brick piers and dark stained picket fencing with a holly and rose hedge. Regent Road continues from the top of Queen Street to become a rather pretty Victorian suburb with some good houses and quite a lot of period detail remaining. Spring Road is much more mundane and more varied in date with less intrinsic interest. The small group of vernacular listed buildings forms an effective termination of the Area at this point.

5. Lower Green Gardens and Station Road

The wide southern arm of what is now Victoria Place is another long-established feature of the town.

Development in the 19th century was hastened by its later function as the main access to the railway station.

On the west side of Lower Green Gardens is Lower Green House, Council flats in an unsympathetic post-war mansard building. Next door is Sayers House, an attractive Victorian building with a prominent octagonal tower, decorative barge-boards and unusual rock-faced elevations. Just to the south of this and at an interesting angle to the main road is Lower Green Cottage, with pebble-dashed walls, sash windows and Yorkshire sliding casements, and a gambrel roof in slate. The front garden contains some prominent and important trees including a conifer on the corner of Sayers House, which make a group with street trees, notably the oak tree at the southern end of the Lower Gardens.

On the eastern side of Lower Green, there are individual shop fronts, mostly in premises with gable ends to the road. The largest is a supermarket and Post Office a substantial 19th century building, though beyond it is a single storey building with a regrettable flat roof. Next again is another old property, of two-and-a-half storeys under a gambrel roof. The elevations are now rendered with modern window details. The prominent corner into Wellington Street is just an open tarmac forecourt leading behind to a series of single storey sheds with a variety of antique businesses.

Hall Cut leads eastwards from Lower Green. The outer part has the appearance of a service yard, with double yellow-lines and a yard to the Post Office and Spar Grocers which is barely large enough for requirements. At the inner end the tarmac is still 'wall-to-wall', serving a small development of 'Design Guide' houses finished in brick and coloured render. Beyond a pair of detached houses, Hall Cut ends in a little group of back garden areas with garages and run-ins in various materials.

Station Road runs away from the southern end of Lower Green, opens up quite rapidly with modern housing on the left hand side behind modern railings and a series of Victorian and earlier cottages, two storeys, mostly very close to the road edge. Facing the entrance to Wellington Street are more mid-Victorian houses: two of them have lost most of their chimneys which is a disappointment while no 27 seems to be an empty shop with a derelict shop front and an open frontage.

Further development of Station Road is mostly of unexceptional Victorian housing. St James' Court, constructed on the site of the town's National School, is a prominent modern development which is perhaps too reticent in townscape terms though it has more visual impact on Duke Street to the east. Station Road widens considerably as it approaches Lower Park Road. A surgery in a distinctive modern building faces the Co-op on the corner of Silcott Street, a plain and purposeful brick building with sash windows above an attractive continuous shopfront.

6. The 19th century extension to Waterside: the original Conservation Area

The western lane connecting the High Street with the waterfront provided the genesis for this distinctive area with its grid of streets mostly developed during the 19th century. The northern section down to Francis Street was initially designated. Most buildings are simple and unassuming two storey dwellings, though there are many examples of a particular distinctive pattern of detached house with pilasters.

New Street: northern section

New Street is one of the earlier straight roads running from the High Street down to the quayside. At the top end on the west side is the back of the Brewers Arms: this has an open tarmac forecourt with a derelict planting box and some chains linked between beer barrels - an open pub frontage typical of the District. To the south is Brightlingsea Library, a single storey building with a prominent projecting cantilevered roof painted in purple. Parking bays and the entrance path are neatly laid out with different sorts of paving materials. This makes a strong contrast with the BT premises next door, a utilitarian building with a plain tarmac frontage and a low brick wall.

On the other side of the road is a terrace of two storey properties. Those at the top end are the return elevation of the shopping frontages on High Street. The most prominent building has a gable to the main road, but the rest of the street down to the next crossroads are simply two storey groups, in singles or pairs, with slightly varying roof profiles and elevations in red or yellow brick or in render: some original windows remain. South of the BT building are nos 18 and 20, built in 1814 as the Church of the New (Swedenborgian) and now in a prominent location with a wide front gable. The subsequent house has a central doorway and a low crazy brick front wall. The property on the Wellington Street corner is a former shop front with very altered details.

Wellington Street

The north side is once again of two storeys, either individual or groups of houses, mostly red brick, though one or two rendered with some bright paintwork. A significant number of original windows and doors remain. Perhaps the most significant feature on the north side is Cockleshell House, no. 10, with arabesque ironwork sporting cockleshells on the first floor window balconies. This is also one of the special 'Brightlingsea type' houses, and is also prominent in the street scene because it faces down Nelson Street.

Nelson Street

The immediate sensation is of less prosperity than New Street; the houses are smaller and the street and its pavements are narrower. Development is once again of groups of two storey terraces with the usual blend of red brick and painted render. A combination of vehicle parking and a single flat roofed garage produce a rather dead section of street north of nos 18 and 20, which are set at an angle and relate to a slight widening in the street and form the edge of the Area. A small side alleyway connects Duke Street and New Street.

The eastern side of Duke Street is built up in a similar manner, with individual houses making relatively consistent groupings. An interesting feature is the southern orientation of the front facade of no 17, making full use of the greater depth of the available plot to generate a symmetrical facade about a central doorcase.

New Street: central section

On the Silcott Street corner with New Street is perhaps the most important building in this part of the Area. The former Royal Hotel, it is of three storeys, with classical detailing and inventive window tracery to the ground floor elevations. Facades of cream painted render are topped by a prominent octagonal roof turret with a lead cupola. It forms the most significant town landmark from the sea and is a major feature of the town's skyline. Otherwise, this part of New Street consists mostly of pairs of houses faced in red brick or render. Yellow brick is more common towards the Silcott Street junction on the west side. These properties are set back from the pavement edge with small front gardens with brick walls and various kinds of bay windows. No 85 in red brick with small -pane sash windows and has astonishingly been clad in brick-slips while no 73 is one of the special pattern houses but spoilt by a new plastic door-case, front door and windows. Opposite, no 76 has unsympathetic modern windows and a rough rendered facade. No 61 on the east side looks to be of relatively early build: it is a three bay house, with a central front door, while the sash windows have their cases flush with the front wall. On the west side, no. 58 is said to be a residential conversion of a former Wesleyan chapel with a rough unfinished vehicle entry to a new garage. Next door no. 56 has a stone-cladding facade, whilst no. 53 opposite has a significant proportion of its defunct shop front surviving.

James Street

No 2, at the north east corner is the return of the terrace from New Street: apart from this, James Street houses an array of side garden walls and incidental parking. The premises on the south side have an in-situ concrete apron which is not particularly appealing.

Francis Street

Francis Street formed a significant part of the original southern boundary of the Conservation Area. The north side 'Boarded Row 1882', consists of three groups of four and one of five properties giving the effect of a continuous terrace. All were originally weatherboarded, some side elevations survive but all frontages are now rendered in attractive colours while one or two properties still retain their small-pane sashes. One property with fake half-timbering has a rendered sign stating On the south side is a small terrace of three red brick houses set between rear garden gates and some parking associated with the former pub on south-west corner of Francis Street and Sidney Street. The street corners are a good place to view the attractive enamelled street names which are a pleasant feature of this part of the Area.

Sydney Street

This street has a more ad-hoc flavour than New Street, with slightly more random building lines and building types. The pavements are edged with blue brick kerbs and there is a slight curve half way down which with altered building lines put a set of side gables into greater prominence in views from the north.

On the east side of the central section between James Street and Francis Street, nos. 83 and 85 masquerade as a single house, no. 85 having the central door while no 83 is reached down a little alleyway with the glazed bricks which are an important survival in other historic locations in the District. To the north again is another garden area, unfortunately fronted with gates with corrugated metal sheets and leading to a yard with a very large series of outbuildings at the rear. This is all associated with no.79, again of the special town type, but with a extremely heavy columned portico with flowery capitals. Red Roses (no.50) breaks the prevailing development pattern by being set gable end to the road: it has a garden with a close boarded fence to the south and a significant run in area and garage to the north. On the north corner of James Street there is the side garden to no.28, which with a frontage in concrete block with timber fencing above rather breaks the line of the street.

The northern end of Sydney Street narrows significantly into a distinctive area of townscape. Significant buildings include the Ancient Order of Foresters Society, with a big gabled frontage set back behind a more modern brick wall, and The Freemasons Arms opposite, of two storeys with rendered brick and half timbering above a traditional pub frontage with pilasters and painted faience tiles. North of the Ancient Foresters, the Royal British Legion Club façade narrows the street further, though this is not matched by the open side curtilage to the Freemasons Arms and the set-back of the adjacent modern houses.

Thomas Street

This is a short street connecting Sydney Street and New Street behind the High Street frontages and is now a series of access ways to rear of properties, some brick walls and fencing and various kinds of paving materials.

7. The 19th century extension to Waterside: the Area as extended

The Area was subsequently extended to include the southern part of the 19th century expansion, including Waterside and the water frontage. Less consistent in townscape terms than its northern neighbour, this part of the Area has a distinctive character with many attractive buildings associated with the town's maritime history.

Silcott Street and Nelson Street

At the corner of Silcott Street and Nelson Street, buildings added to the Area since 1980 are in red brick with plain door-cases. There are unfortunately a significant number of replacement windows and a considerable number of reroofings in concrete profile tiles. The southernmost section of Nelson Street leads past the prominent return of the property on Silcott Street. The Area contains a pair of cottages on the west-side and a terrace of cottages on the east-side: these are of red brick and are constructed on the edge of footpath and may be relatively early.

New Street

The southern end of New Street has on its western side a terrace of more prosperous Victorian houses with bay windows set behind small front gardens, some of which seem to have their original rendered front walls. The east side is more like Sydney Street, with pairs and groups of houses with a very variable building line as seen from the south. No's 127a and b are red brick modern infills with a weatherboarded central section over a vehicular drive: the facades are however set back behind a forecourt of concrete blocks and patched tarmac,

failing to respect the building line which is repeated to the south. On the corner with Colne Road is The Sun, a diminutive two storey building with a slate roof. The principal building has rendered walls over weatherboarding, with a weatherboarded side extension running northwards. The pub garden to the north is screened by a high brick wall, but with a prominent and important tree. North again is the workaday yard of A P Engineering.

Sydney Street

The southern section of Sydney Street is more haphazard than the northern or central sections. On the east side to just beyond Ophir Road there is a fairly continuous development of single or paired houses, although north of Ophir Road these are of early 20th century design. There are also pairs of houses on the west side, but the building line is broken up. Development becomes more consistent around and south of Ophir Road: the most delightful element is a probably timber-framed house placed gable-end to the road and set back slightly from the frontage. It is finished in pink weatherboarding with a simple Tuscan doorcase. Further south again on the east side, the Area excludes the former Gas Works site, a derelict and unkempt area with a poor frontage of masonry walls. Opposite is a much-altered terrace set back from the road with some fancy door-cases: these lead to an interesting group including the Cinque-Port Board of Trade Wreck Warehouse with its prominent weatherboarded tower, a cottage with dark-stained weatherboarding and a pebble-dashed cottage with all decorative details hidden. To the south is a large boatyard behind a tall rendered wall, and beyond is a very pretty courtyard at the back of The Galleon, now trading in antiques.

Waterside

Waterside is a purposeful, workaday street. Buildings on the north side generally date from the Victorian period: they are typically of two storeys, and detached with hipped roofs. The Yachtsmans Arms breaks its building line with a small single storey front extension, Westwards past The Galleon and The Mariners restaurant is a small boatyard with a frontage of chain-link fencing, which leads on to a former boat shed with modern up-and-over garage doors below a large glazed frontage. On the New Street corner is a house and take-away: the return to New Street is more attractive, with some small pane sash windows remaining and a good door-case. The small area in front has utilitarian railings shielding an informal parking area surfaced with concrete pavers. The boatyard opposite has a utilitarian close boarded fence which is prominent given the bend in the road but of little visual appeal.

Fieldgate Dock leads southwards between the blank brick wall of the James and Stone yard and old boatyards of considerable historic interest clad in weatherboarding and corrugated iron. A three-storey block of post war flats of no visual merit closes the view.

On the south side of Waterside there a prominent boatyard on the frontage with anti-climb galvanised railings. The adjacent boat centre itself is of two storeys, and is a post war flat roofed building with a virtually continuous and colourful shop frontage. Beyond the public conveniences and a sub-station are the main gates and large structures of the James and Stone yard, followed by the gables of two old boat sheds, one in brick with a projecting crane and the eastern one faced in weatherboarding, These turn the corner very elegantly and lead to the eastern end of Waterside which is basically a large triangle, the centre filled with Harbour buildings and offices. Opposite on the north-side is another boathouse, the University of Essex Sailing Club with a veranda and projecting railings: beyond this is the Cinque-Port House of mid-Victorian date with a modern picture window at ground floor. The corner with Tower Street is dominated by the end gable of a bland three storey block of maisonettes outside the Area.

The south side of this section of road, which is the north side of the triangle, is a rather motley group of buildings, the finest of which is the Brightlingsea Harbour Commissioners building, a weatherboarded two storey property with a slate roof. Next to it is a small boat shed, also weatherboarded and painted in burnt sienna. At the eastern end of the triangle is a paved area laid out with very large parking bays, next to the former Anchor Hotel, a flamboyant building dating from 1901 with ornate half-timbering above a stone base, and replacing the former Anchor Inn which dated back to the 1630's. Other significant elements on the water front are a typical seaside shelter in the centre of the triangle looking towards the slipways, a pretty octagonal harbour office and look-out, the important survival of the Wreck House, and the Colne Yacht Club, a modern building on *pilotis* with a boatyard behind. Also prominent though slightly detached from the public realm is the Customs building, a tall three storey structure on the end of its own jetty, and faced in brown weatherboarding with a flat roof. This particular section of waterfront is further defined by the large plain buildings of the former James and Stone yard, and by the Point Clear promontory which prevents open views out to sea.

APPRAISAL PLAN

The above analysis has been used to generate Maps 2 , 4 and 6 indicating the essential structure of the Conservation Area and Maps 3, 5 and 7 its relative quality. Included in the latter are features regarded as either negative or neutral compared to the character and appearance of the Area, as follows.

Negative factors

New Street

The BT building is a negative factor given its bulk and open forecourt in this context.

Victoria Place

Lloyds Bank on the north side is unduly prominent and fails to relate to the bulk or form of its setting. It is therefore regarded as a negative factor.

Neutral factors

Hurst Green

The bungalow on the north side of Hurst Green (18 Chapel Road), Hurst Green Garage and the dormer bungalows opposite No 1 (Brown Owl House) are neutral factors because their bulk and form do not relate to their neighbours or their surroundings.

High Street

The flats west of Jacob's are a neutral factor: while they pick up the bulk of high Street properties quite well, their precise siting does not follow the street frontage and the resulting wedge-shaped front area has not received any particular consideration.

St James Church Centre

This modern building is set in an open area including parking and a simple grassed area. It is associated with the Vicarage to the north, a modern house in a secluded setting, while another post war house of no conservation quality stands on the frontage to Richard Avenue. This entire area is considered to be neutral in terms of the character and appearance of this part of the Area.

Waterside

The Boat Centre is strictly a neutral building, because its substantial flat roof and eaves fascia detail are at odds with the prevailing character of this part of the Area. In all other respects this building is an important part of the Waterside scene.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: BUILDINGS

James and Stone Yard

The redevelopment of this important site underway comprises mainly housing development with associated moorings.

41 – 43 High Street

These listed weather boarded cottages have been vacant for some years and should be repaired and brought back into use.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: CURTILAGES

Chapel Road

The setting and appearance of the former Methodist School could be improved with more sympathetic consideration of the open forecourt and some form of front boundary treatment.

New Street

Greater enclosure for the BT building would be an enhancement in this closely-developed street.

Thomas Street

The rear yards of High Street properties have developed with a medley of styles and materials. Greater consistency in approach with stronger screening of the yards themselves would be an improvement.

Victoria Place

The restoration of an appropriate railing detail to the pub garden in front of the Brewers Arms would be an enhancement of the listed building and the street scene.

SUGGESTED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Hall Cut

The inner end of this lane could be very attractive with comprehensive treatment including unit paving.

New Street/Waterside/Colne Road

The dog leg at the junction of these streets is significant as it is the effective gateway to the waterside area and the road alignment throws the surrounding facades into greater prominence. On the south west is the bland frontage to a booyard, while on the opposite side an attractive 19th century facade is compromised by some standard pedestrian guard rails. Further consideration should be given to visual improvements here.

BOUNDARY REVIEW

Current Area boundaries appear to be drawn around the spaces and buildings of historic interest and includes most of the town as it developed in the mid 19th century from its medieval beginnings. This accounts for the extensions from Hurst Green along Mill Street and Chapel Road, the northwards extension along Queen Street, and the south western extension along Station Road.

While there is considerable justification for this, there are two suggestions to be made. The first concerns the deletion of St James Church Centre, the vicarage and the Richard Avenue frontage, which lack historic interest and are visually divorced from the original street pattern. The second relates to Station Road, as its constituent buildings lack the particular interest of those of the rest of the Area, and the space created by the street itself has little visual appeal as it widens to meet the spacious areas associated with Lower Park Road.

The precise boundary of the southern part of the Area leading down to Waterside has also been reviewed. The current boundary is supported because it tends to reflect the earlier buildings and any immediately subsequent development with any architectural pretensions. The use of pilasters on elevations, or designed doorcases for front doors, are among the features reflected in the current designation. This is the important distinction in the area of Nelson Street, Silcott Street and Colne Road.

Tower Street shares the plan form of, and has a superficial similarity with, the older streets to the west. Development is however later, less distinctive and tends to include front gardens leading to a more diffuse character overall. Some individual houses appear to date from even later into the 20th century. Tower Street is thus a pleasant, undemonstrative late Victorian or early 20th century street, but does not possess the slightly earlier and tighter character of the streets within the Area.

Ladysmith Avenue has been suggested as an extension. It is one the main routes into the town centre, giving rise to a certain amount of traffic with parked cars either side. The houses are either singles or pairs, mostly of red brick although there is some render. Roofs are mostly hipped and of slate, though there are a few gables. Few buildings retain their original windows. Front gardens are generally bounded with brick or masonry front walls: there are a number of run-ins, a certain amount of crazy paving and a little picket fencing. The most notable building is perhaps the former Police Station of 1908, now a housing conversion in Jacobean style a little like a miniature London Board School. The short return at its southern end leading into the High Street area is perhaps the least attractive part of the street with 20th century bungalows on the south side. Given the number of alterations, the street is not considered of particular architectural or historic interest. It would not fit in easily with the character and appearance of the rest of the Area with its historic street pattern. The street is a pleasant residential environment, but is not recommended for designation.

The suggested changes are indicated on Map 8.

ADDITIONAL CONTROLS

The character of Brightlingsea is derived from the varied character of its constituent buildings and the sequences of spaces they enclose. These properties have been subject to continuous evolution, sometimes over many centuries. There are no largely unaltered set pieces or formal layouts which might obviously benefit from additional controls to retain or promote consistency.

The evolution of buildings has included the rendering or pebbledashing of elevations, the replacement of original roofs usually with concrete profiled tiles, and the removal of original windows in favour of modern variants, most recently in uPVC. A survey of all properties in Sydney Street as part of this review showed that out of 124 buildings, 64 (52%) had been rendered or painted, 86 (69%) had replacement windows, and 46 (37%) had replacement roof coverings. A small number of buildings are free from any of these alterations, while others exhibit more than one kind. Given this level of attrition, it is doubtful that additional controls can be considered a reasonable response.

On the other hand, the character of the area around Sydney Street and New Street is so distinctive, and the role played by the particular style of buildings so prominent, that the considerable additional burden represented by further controls might in these special circumstances be justified. Such controls would be worthless without the explicit support of the residents affected. It is recommended therefore that further consideration be given to an Article 4(2) Direction for the New Street/Sydney Street area, including public consultation. Such controls would cover windows, doors, and facing materials for roofs and walls, to preserve original patterns where they survive and otherwise to promote suitable patterns when these components are altered or come up for renewal.

The suggested area of search of an Article 4 Direction is shown on Map 8.