

South Benfleet

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



Essex County Council



castlepoint

benfleet | canvey | hadleigh | thundersley

Front cover illustration: The Close, South Benfleet

This document was produced by Essex County Council for
Castle Point District Council.

Contributions to this document were made by the following
officers in the Essex County Council Historic Buildings &
Conservation Team:

David Andrews BA, IHBC
Michael Hurst BSc(Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC
Robin Carpenter
Corrie Newell

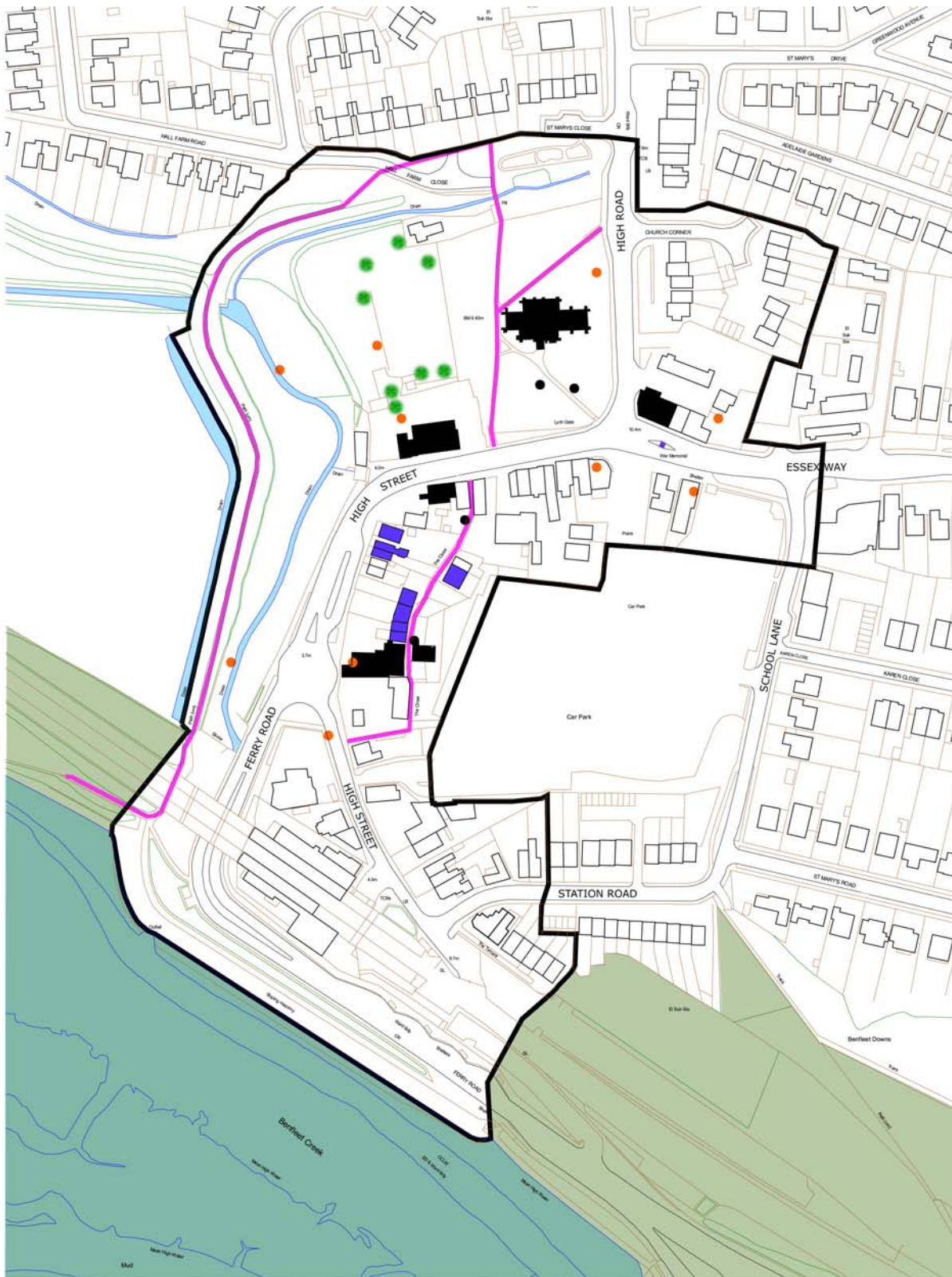
With document production by Cathryn Thaiss

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Planning policies	3
3.	Character statement	3
4.	Origins and development	4
	<i>Location and landscape setting</i>	4
	<i>Historical development</i>	4
5.	Materials and detailing	9
6.	Uses	11
7.	Spatial interrelationships, views and character zones	13
8.	Area analysis	15
	<i>The High Road</i>	15
	<i>Footpath round the west and south side of the village</i>	16
	<i>Essex Way</i>	18
	<i>The High Street</i>	18
	<i>The Close</i>	24
	<i>Ferry Road, the station and the railway</i>	25
9.	Evaluation of the contribution of individual buildings to the conservation area.	27
10.	Change in the conservation area. Current planning proposals	30
11.	Management proposals	32
	<i>Public open space</i>	33
	<i>Building maintenance and advertisements</i>	33
	<i>Boundary treatment and tree planting</i>	34
	<i>Street enhancement and street furniture</i>	34
	<i>Additional planning controls</i>	35
	<i>Locally listed buildings</i>	35
	Bibliography	36
	Appendices	
	1 Listed buildings in the conservation area	37
	2 Locally listed buildings in the conservation area	42
	3 Essex Historic Environment Record sites in the conservation area	43

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Conservation areas are 'Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The conservation area in South Benfleet was designated in November 1988, since then there have been no revisions to the boundaries.
- 1.2 The conservation area (Fig.1) covers the historic centre of the village, including St. Mary's church, the High Street, the station and the open land adjacent to the creek side. There are nine entries on the statutory list of listed buildings, including the grade I listed church and grade II* listed Anchor public house; the remainder are grade II listed and include two lamp posts and five grave stones (see Appendix 1). There are no scheduled ancient monuments, but the conservation area is of considerable archaeological importance because of the battle of Benfleet in 894 AD. To the south of the conservation area, the Benfleet Creek is Green Belt, whilst to the east is the Hadleigh Marshes Special Landscape Area and Hadleigh Castle Country Park.
- 1.3 Designation of a conservation area extends planning controls over certain types of development, including extensions, boundary treatments, the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees. However, it does not prevent any change and it may be subject to many different pressures (good and bad) that will affect its character and appearance. South Benfleet faces continual pressure for development. 'Modernisation' and 'improvement' have affected its character to a considerable extent; the most noticeable changes being alterations to individual buildings carried out as permitted development within the provisions of the General Development Order.
- 1.4 Castle Point District Council commissioned Essex County Council to prepare this conservation area appraisal and management plan in April 2005. The research and fieldwork were carried out between June and November 2005.
- 1.5 The document provides a brief history of the conservation area, an assessment of its character, and recommendations for future management. Any issues which affect the protection of its character will be highlighted and opportunities for enhancement identified. A possible minor alteration to the boundary of the conservation area is suggested, and some additions to the local list of buildings of architectural interest are recommended.



South Benfleet Conservation Area Designation Map

- | | |
|---|--|
| ● TPOs | ■ Listed buildings |
| ● Essex Historic Environment
Record sites | — Public Right Of Way |
| ■ Locally listed buildings | ■ Green belt |

Fig. 1 Designation map showing conservation area boundary, listed buildings, tree preservation orders, locally listed buildings, rights of way and the Green Belt.

2. CHARACTER STATEMENT

- 2.1 The character of the South Benfleet conservation area has been shaped by a variety of factors, notably the creek and fishing port, the church, the railway, the 19th-century housing that developed close to the station, and the road through to Canvey Island. Only the centre of the conservation area is residential and commercial; it includes large areas of open space with walks along Church Creek and Benfleet Creek, the churchyard, and areas of mature trees. The railway and Ferry Road are busy transport links with a significant visual impact on the southern part of the conservation area.

3. PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 A fundamental principle of the Castle Point Local Plan adopted in 1998 is the 'creation and protection of a high quality environment'. The Plan policies are intended to achieve the 'protection of natural resources and the conservation of historic and other features' whilst 'new development should achieve a high standard of design and enhance the quality of the local environment' (3.1). These policies are formulated in *EC2 Design*, and *EC7 Natural and semi-natural features in urban areas*.
- 3.2 The following policies are designed to ensure the effective management of the Borough's conservation areas: *EC25 Principles of control*; *EC26 Design and development*; *EC27 Planning applications*; *EC29 Control of demolition*; *EC30 Shopfront design*; and *EC31 Advertisements*. Policy *EC28 Restrictions on permitted development* envisages the use of a direction under article 4 of the Town and Country Permitted Development Order to control certain features of the conservation area such as windows and doors to prevent the continual erosion of architectural character.
- 3.3 The Local Plan also contains policies relevant to the protection and conservation of listed buildings (EC32-EC36). At Appendix 11, there is a *Local list of buildings of architectural or historic interest*, and these are protected under policy EC37. Within the conservation area, the war memorial by Nicholson, nos. 43-51 High Street, and the Close, are on the local list.

4. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Location and landscape setting

- 4.1 Much of south-east Essex is London Clay lowland, but in Castle Point District the sandy Bagshot Beds have formed low hills running down towards the coast. The old village centre of South Benfleet lies at the foot of this high land, sandwiched between the steep side of the Downs on the east and an inlet from the Benfleet creek to the west. To the South lies the creek itself; to the north the land rises more gently. The 5m contour coincides approximately with the west side of the High Street, whilst the east side of the street, and the east side of the conservation area, lie close to the 10m contour or between it and the 15m contour.

Historical development

- 4.2 The rich natural resources, and ease of communication, afforded by the marshland and creeks have made the coastal areas of Essex attractive for human settlement from prehistoric times. The Essex Historic Environment Record lists the discovery of Roman pottery from the area of the creek and High Street.¹ In the Anglo-Saxon period, coastal areas were particularly important and this is the period when Benfleet figures most prominently in the historical record. In the 880s and early 890s, a Danish army, often assisted by the Danes settled in East Anglia, crossed regularly from France and made raids into Kent and up the Thames estuary to London and further afield. The Danes used Benfleet as a base and one of their leaders, Hastein, built a fortification there, which was captured by king Alfred's army in 894 in the battle of Benfleet. The site of the fortification has been identified with St. Mary's churchyard where it has been alleged that it was possible to recognise low banks. Furthermore, when the railway bridge over the inlet from the creek was constructed, charred ships and skeletons, identified with the remains of the Danish fleet and soldiers defeated by Alfred's men, are said to have been found.² Archaeological evidence for the Anglo-Saxon period in Essex is rare. Discoveries of this sort, if authenticated, would make the South Benfleet conservation area a site of national or international archaeological importance.
- 4.3 In the Domesday Book, South Benfleet is identified with a manor which belonged to Barking Abbey before the Norman Conquest, but which king William I gave instead to Westminster Abbey. The manor house, South Benfleet Hall, was located just to the north of the church but has been demolished. The site of the church dates from the 12th century and probably earlier. Medieval settlement was probably concentrated around the church, and the road junction just to the south-east of it. The High Road was formerly North Street, Essex Way was East Street, and the High Street was Church Street.³ 11th- to 12th-century pottery, and probable evidence of medieval occupation, was found in the High Street north of the Anchor public house when the Church Corner development was built in the 1990s. Stone footings thought to belong to a medieval building were found in trenches for an extension at 10 Essex Way (Mumtaz Muhal restaurant).⁴ The Anchor is the oldest surviving domestic building in the village,

¹ For Essex Historic Environment Record sites in the conservation area, see Appendix 2 and *Fig. 1*.

² See J.C. Spurrell in the *Essex Naturalist* iv, p.153, and the *Archaeological Journal* xlii, p.294.

³ For a brief outline history of Benfleet, see Chisman 1991. For more detail, see Priestley 1984.

⁴ Lavender 1991; Essex Historic Environment Record 7237/8.

dating from the 14th century (*Fig. 2*). It is an unusual building, not a normal house, possibly a hall for the manorial court or else for a religious guild attached to the church. The only other medieval building in the conservation area is the Hoy and Helmet public house which is 15th- or 16th-century in date.

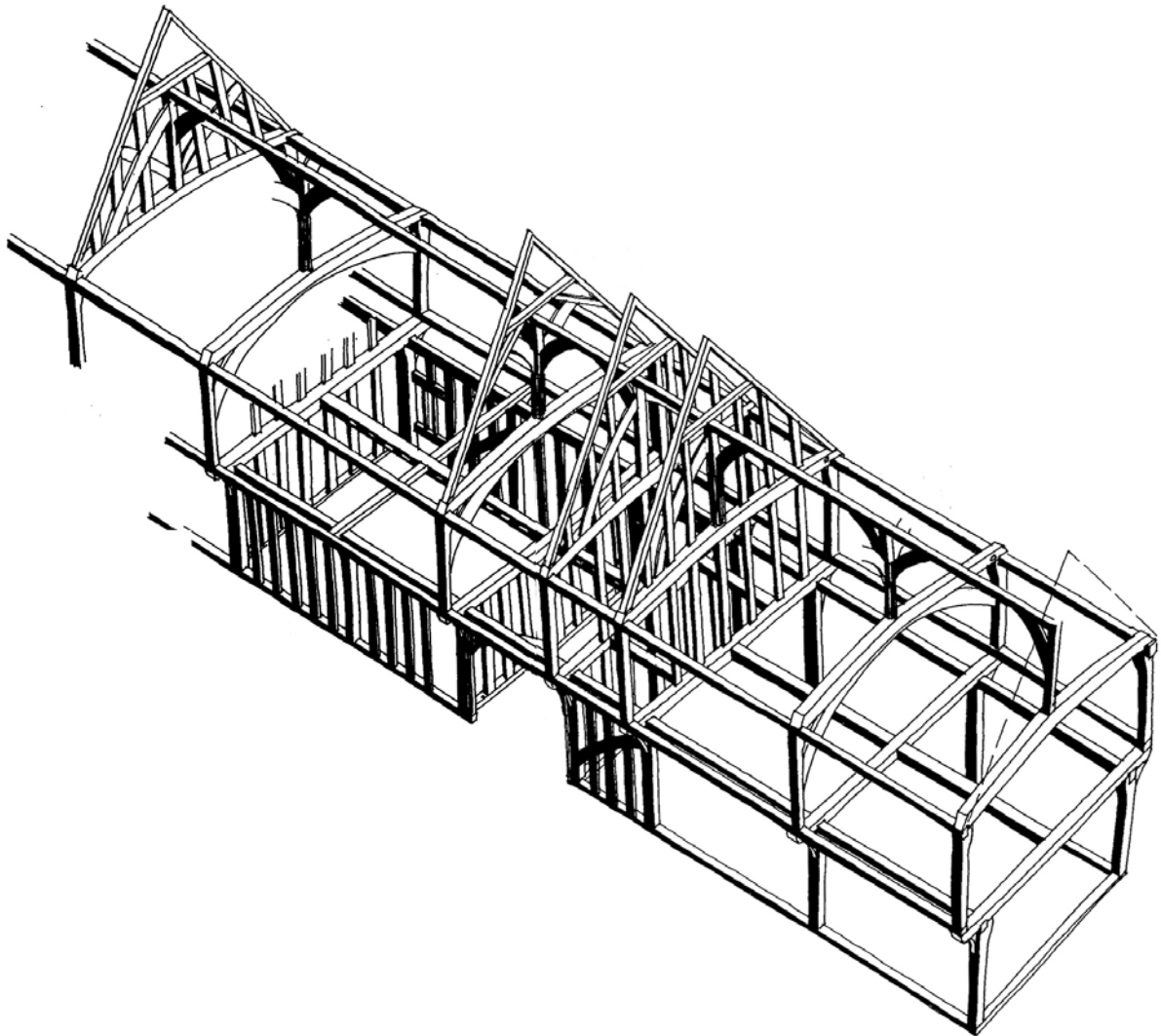


Fig. 2 The timber frame of the Anchor (D.F. Stenning).

- 4.4 The earliest map to show the village centre, that published by Chapman and André in 1777, indicates only a scatter of houses, probably only 20-30, in the village centre (*Fig. 3*). This is consistent with the 1671 Hearth Tax evidence which indicates that there were little more than 20 households.⁵ It is probable that the settlement had shrunk back from its full medieval extent. The village is little changed on the tithe map of 1841, apart from development to the south down by the creek, presumably reflecting growing commercial activity (*Fig. 4*). Only a very few of the buildings on the tithe map survive today. These maps show the main east-west road, now Essex way and the north end of the High Street, leading down to the hard or 'helmet' on Church Creek. The north-south part of the modern High Street was effectively undeveloped as a residential area, being occupied by wharves and sheds associated with the port activity. Houses did however extend down The Close, already a significant component of the built-up area. It probably originated as a track off the main road into the fields which became slowly built up.

⁵ ERO Q/RTh 5.



Fig. 3 South Benfleet as shown on the 1777 Chapman and André map of Essex.

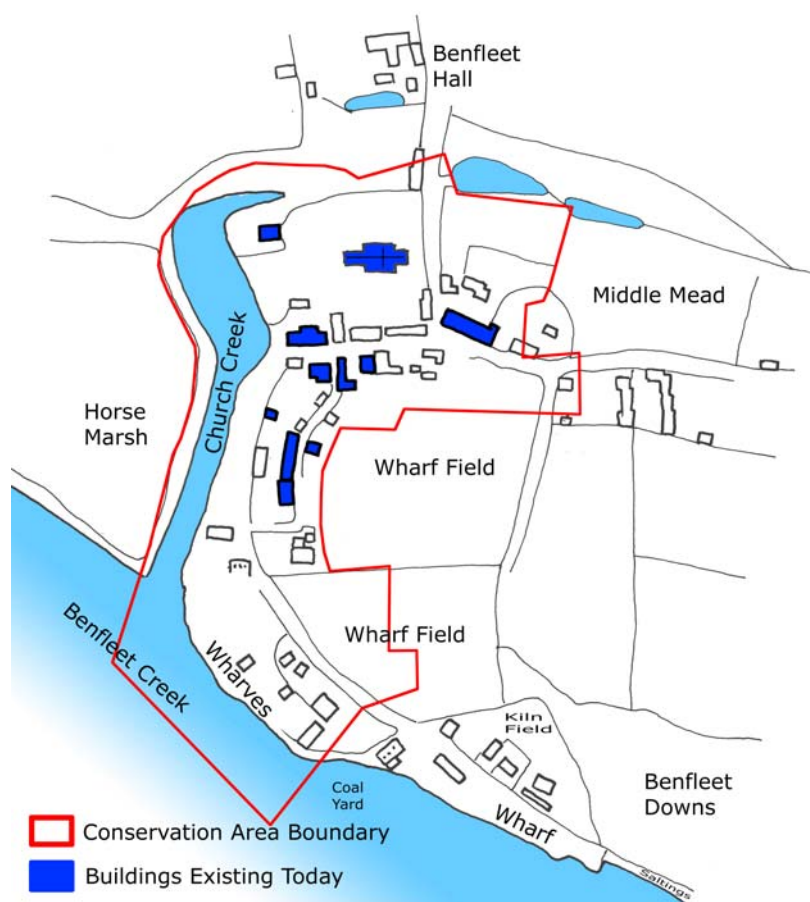


Fig. 4 South Benfleet from the 1841 tithe map.

- 4.5 The most significant change evident on the first edition OS map of 1867 was the construction of the railway in 1855 along the north side of the creek which must have involved the demolition of some buildings by the creek and some quite drastic reshaping of the side of the Downs. The railway attracted development: houses were built on the High Street in the vicinity of it, and the 1897 map (Fig. 5) shows Station Road connecting the southern end of the High Street with School Lane. Sheds and houses had also been built on the west side of the High Street flanking the creek. Old photographs indicate that the northern east-west stretch of the High Street was still essentially a way down to the hard at the creek (Fig. 6). Initially further to the south-east by the ferry to Canvey, the railway station was moved to its present position in 1912.

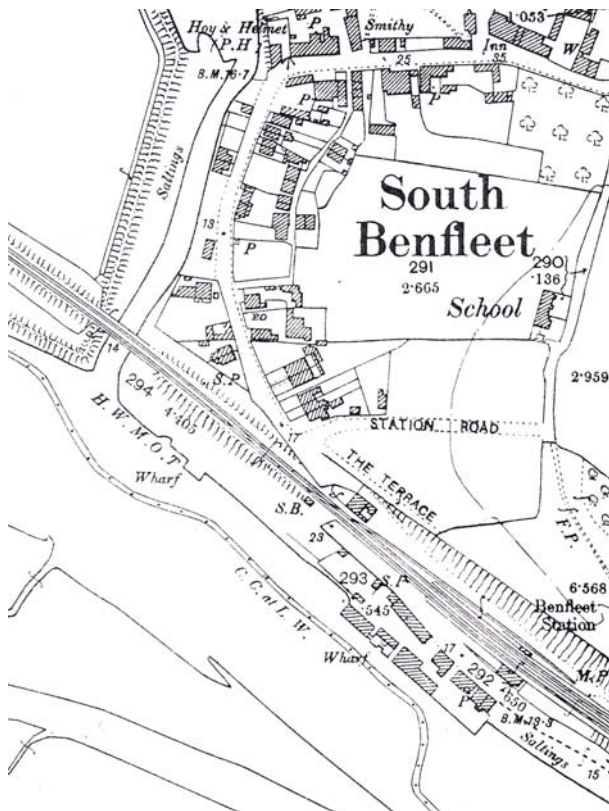


Fig. 5 South Benfleet on the 1897 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map.



Fig. 6 This old photograph shows the former relationship between the High Street and the creek, the road originally terminating in a gangway or landing place.

- 4.6 Between the wars, and after the Second World War, housing estates were built in the surrounding countryside. The population rose from about 1000 in 1901 to about 15,000 in 1991. In 1929, Benfleet Urban Borough Council was formed through the amalgamation of Benfleet and the neighbouring villages of Hadleigh and Thundersley. The village centre, however, corresponding to the conservation area, has only seen piecemeal development. Indeed, it has lost some buildings, notably those on the west side of the High Street and the cottages on the east and south sides of the churchyard, which were removed between the wars.
- 4.7 South Benfleet has associations with Sir Charles Nicholson, one of the outstanding church architects of the 20th century. His family lived in Benfleet and he is buried in the churchyard. He was architect to many cathedrals, including Chelmsford, and built several churches in the Southend area. He designed the screen and gallery in St. Mary's church, the war memorial, and the former parish room in School Lane.

ADDENDUM

- 4.8 Excavation for an extension to the rear of no. 83 Hall Farm Road discovered a Byzantine coin dated c.850-950AD. This is an important find which suggests the identification of the churchyard with the Viking camp is correct, though it is curious that it comes from the area north of the creek. The coin is illustrated in R. Hallmann, *South Benfleet*, Phillimore, 2005.

5. MATERIALS AND DETAILING

- 5.1 The older buildings are timber-framed. Most timber-framing is now concealed. The Anchor has been clad with brick at the ground floor, and rendered above. The Hoy and Helmet, and Dickens restaurant, have false timber framing at the first floor. Old photographs (*Fig. 7*) indicate that there were once many weatherboarded houses, but very few of these survive. Weatherboarding was, and still is, a characteristic material of southern Essex, especially the coastal areas. There is little red brick, the 18th-century façade of the Half Crown Inn being a notable exception. Most of the 19th-century buildings are of yellow London stock brick. These bricks were probably made locally as there were brickworks at Benfleet in the 19th century. The later 19th-century housing in the village comprised semi-detached Victorian cottages built of yellow stock brick with slate roofs and sash windows (*Fig. 8*). Most of these brick buildings have now been painted, usually white. Combined with replacement windows of various types and concrete tiles, this has led to an unfortunate loss of character. The Close has developed its own distinct late 20th-century aesthetic of white painted brick walls and black joinery (*Fig. 9*).



Fig. 7 An old photograph looking west down the High Street. Weatherboard is the predominant building material.

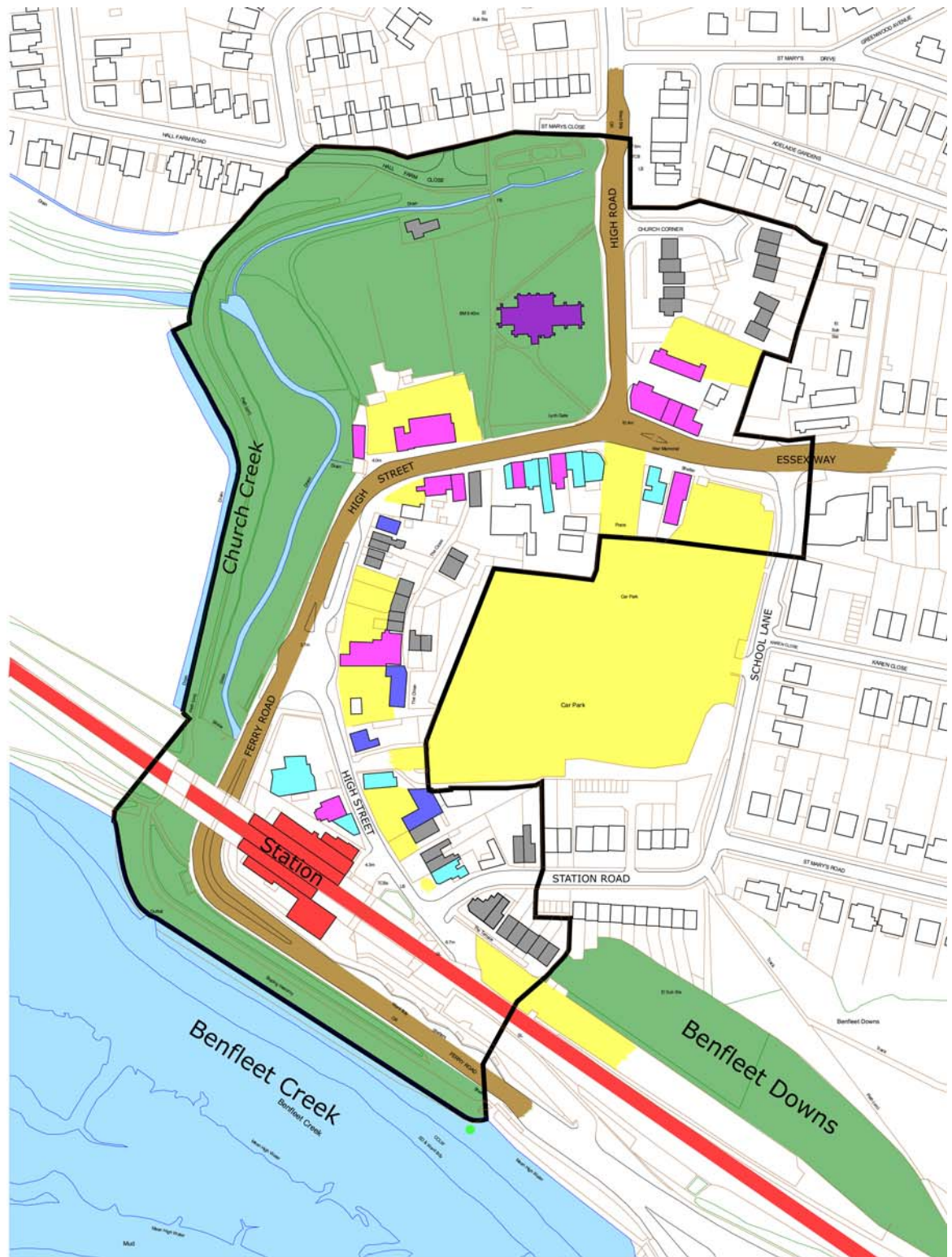


Fig. 8 No. 103 High Street, a well preserved Victorian cottage typical of the late 19th-century development at the southern end of the village in the vicinity of the station. Brickwork and windows are intact but it has lost its slate roof.



Fig. 9 The Close looking south. White painted walls with black woodwork contribute to the distinctiveness of this alleyway.

6. USES



South Benfleet

Building & Land Uses in the Conservation Area

Major through roads	Business, professional	Car parks or parked cars
Residential	Retail	Railway
Food, catering, public houses	Religious	Open space

Fig. 10 Map showing building and land uses in the conservation area.

- 6.1 Almost half the conservation area is public open space, comprising the churchyard, woodland, and creek-side dikes and footpaths. The built-up part of the conservation area is not primarily residential. Most of the buildings scattered along the High Street are commercial of one kind or another, public houses, restaurants and takeaways being the most significant single use. The conservation area is a major thoroughfare. The central axis, High Road, Essex Way, High Street and Ferry Road, is a very busy route frequented by traffic to and from Canvey Island. The railway in the south of the conservation area has had a considerable effect on its appearance and development. It has also accentuated the need for car parking. Some of the business uses, especially those involved with catering, are dependent on car parking, though people apparently come to eat and drink by public transport. There are large areas of parked cars in the conservation area, and a very large car park for the station adjacent to it on its east side. There is also significant pedestrian and bicycle traffic. People walk or cycle to and from the station, using in particular the footpaths through the churchyard.

7. SPATIAL INTERRELATIONSHIPS, VIEWS AND CHARACTER ZONES

7.1 The conservation area is distinct from its suburban hinterland, identifiable by open spaces with mature trees, older buildings, the creeks and the railway. The boundaries are mostly well defined. They include the churchyard and woodland to the north, the Church Creek on the west, the railway and Benfleet Creek to the south, and a large car park on the east. The Close, which is little more than an alleyway, forms a discrete area of residential development.

7.2 From the north and east, there are good views into the conservation area, with wider carriageways and frontage spaces lined with trees. The churchyard is a very important component in these views. At the south-east corner of the conservation area, there are views out over the creek and up to the Downs. The views into the conservation area from this approach are not so satisfactory, being of the modern station lobby building and the busy road under the railway bridge. Most sight lines between the village and Church Creek are now unfortunately obscured, and this historic relationship, which played a key role in the development of the village, has been lost (*Fig. 11*).



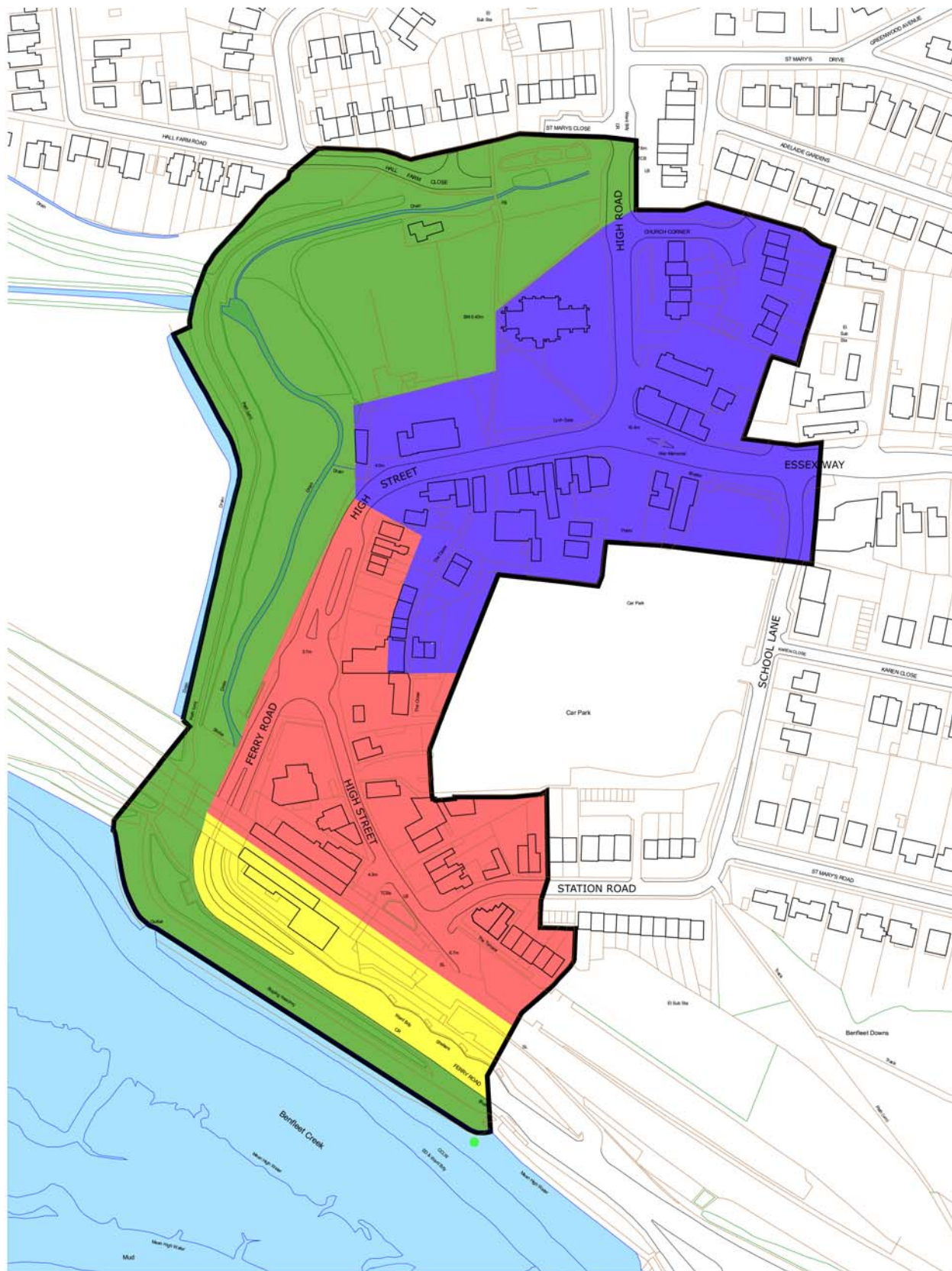
Fig. 11 Looking down the High Street to the west today: the visual relationship with the creek has been lost.

Since Church Creek has been cut off from the main tidal creek by a sluice, the water levels in it are low and its significance as a landscape feature has been reduced.

7.3 Within the conservation area there are four distinct *character zones* (*Fig. 12*):

- the old centre at the road junction by the church, including the Close
- the open space round the churchyard and creeks
- Victorian development in the form of the building up of the High Street on the land adjacent to the creek leading down to the station
- the railway line and associated station buildings

The open space varies from a wooded appearance to open scrub and marsh. The northern part of the conservation area has the appearance of a traditional village centre focused on the church, and a scatter of older buildings represented by the public houses. The spaces are enclosed by buildings and trees. As the High Street bends round to the south, the spaces open up with the creek to the west, and late Victorian development to the east, comprising cottages built on the road down to the station. In more recent times, the station has attracted related businesses such as taxi services and food outlets, whilst a bus terminus has been installed on its southern side. Combined with Ferry Road which sweeps under the railway and round the station, this area has become a major transport interchange. This is a striking contrast with the northern part of the conservation area..



South Benfleet Character Zones

- | | |
|--|--|
| Old village centre | Victorian development |
| Public open space | Railway station and associated transport links |

Fig. 12 Character zones identified in the South Benfleet conservation area.

8. AREA ANALYSIS

The High Road

8.1 The approach into the conservation area down the High Road from the north is very good, with the parish church to the west and the Essex Design Guide style houses of the mews-type **Church Close** development to the east (*Fig. 13*). Church Close is set back from the frontage and nos. 1-5 are screened by trees and hedges, which mirror those of the churchyard. Car parking is to the rear and does not impinge on the street scene



Fig. 13 Church Close, a 1990s development in the Essex Design Guide style.

8.2 The church and the churchyard are a major landmark in the conservation area and more than anything else contribute to giving it a sense of place. The **churchyard** is large, about an acre, and forms a significant open space within the conservation area, being continuous with the woodland north of the Hoy and Helmet and the footpath alongside Church Creek. It is bounded by a low Kentish Ragstone wall capped with a brick soldier course, and also by lines of mature trees, mostly planes. An avenue of limes leads to the south porch. Part of the brick wall dividing the churchyard from the Hoy and Helmet beer garden is broken down. In the south-west corner adjacent the Hoy and Helmet car park, there is an unattractive rendered breeze block structure of uncertain function (*Fig. 14*). On the north side, there is the surprisingly deep valley of a stream which runs into Church Creek. A rather decrepit notice board fronts on to the High Road. The churchyard contains many tombstones of mostly later 19th- and 20th-century date. It is closed for burials and now maintained by Castle Point Borough Council. In appearance it strikes a satisfactory balance between looking naturalistic and being excessively tidy. Having said that, some of the graves are ivy covered and sprouting elder trees which need to be kept under control, and many of the larger trees have ivy growing a long way up them which should be removed. The very well used footpaths through the churchyard are tarmac and in fair condition, except for those on the south side of the church, especially that leading to the porch, which is badly cracked. The paths would look much better if they were surfaced with bound gravel, like the new stretch of path to the recently re-opened north door of the church. The church is floodlit by lights



Fig. 14 Breeze block structure and decrepit boundary wall at the edge of the churchyard, seen from the Hoy and Helmet car park.

attached to trees. The footpaths in the churchyard, like those round the creek, are lit by Victorian-style lamp standards

- 8.3 The **church** is a large, imposing but rather sombre building constructed mainly of Kentish Rag with levelling courses of brick and tile (*Fig. 15*). It dates from the 12th century, but is largely Perpendicular or 15th-century in appearance. Its outstanding external feature is the 15th-century south porch, a richly decorated and carved timber-framed structure with a hammerbeam roof (*Fig. 16*). It is exceptional by national standards, but the splendour of its carpentry is difficult to appreciate because of its current shabby appearance. Its roof has slipped tiles at the junction with the main church building and needs repair.



Fig. 15 St. Mary's church.

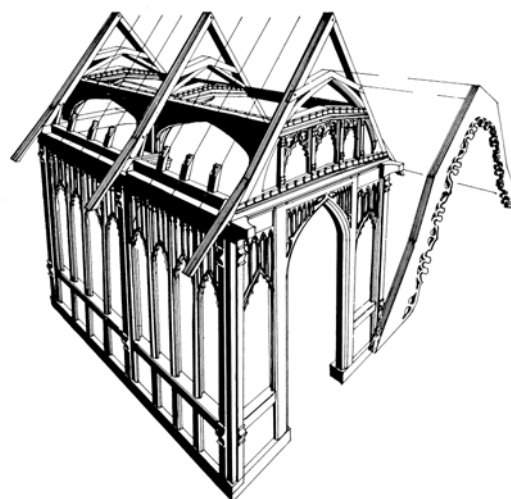


Fig. 16 St. Mary's church, the south porch (C A Hewett)

Footpath round west and south of the village

- 8.4 To the north of the churchyard, at the junction of St. Mary's Close and the High Street, a footpath leads to Hall Farm Road. A line of hornbeams has been planted along the side of the stream valley, and the approach to the path is via an area of formal planting which is not particularly well maintained. The crazy paving has subsided badly at one point. Wooden railings painted with flaking white paint flank steps up to the churchyard. **Brook Cottage** nestles into the side of the little valley and is surrounded by trees. Apparently marked on the 1841 tithe map, this could be added to the local list of buildings.
- 8.5 On the west side of the village, the tarmac footpath follows what was an old dike or embankment enclosing the field known as Horse Marsh on the tithe map. This is now a playing field much used by walkers. Being well mown it is rather sterile in appearance. There is a ditch at the foot of the embankment on this side. To the east, is Church Creek, now partially choked by nettles and reeds, its supply of water cut off from the main Benfleet Creek by a sluice to the south. Views towards the village are largely screened by trees, mostly self-sown sycamore (*Fig. 17*). The only building clearly visible is the shellfish stall in the Hoy and Helmet car park. This natural landscape is attractive and an amenity, but would be capable of improvement. The total visual separation from the village is to be regretted.



Fig. 17 Church Creek today contains little water and is overgrown. Views through to the village have been closed off by trees.



Fig. 18 View across Church Creek to the south end of the High Street and the station car park.



Fig. 19 View looking north up Church Creek from the sluice.



Fig. 20 Amenity area on the footpath between Church Creek and Ferry Road.

- 8.6 Further south, opposite the High Street and Ferry Road junction, there are unobstructed views into the village, but they are across a chain link fence above a concrete wall to open vistas of parked cars (*Fig. 18*). This part of the footpath terminates at the sluice, where there is an area of block paving (tegula or similar) surrounded by railings. This was presumably created so that people could enjoy the view to the north up the creek (*Fig. 19*). However, the seats that once existed have been removed, the paving is weed grown, the black painted railings are utilitarian, and the space is dominated by two large litter bins (*Fig. 20*). Steps lead down to the pavement which passes under the railway bridge, the iron substructure of which is rusting and ugly. Here there is a steady stream of traffic up and down Ferry Road, the B1014 from Canvey Island. Beyond the bridge, the path on the embankment resumes. There are good marshland views over Benfleet Creek. To the north is the station and railway.

Essex Way

8.7 Nicholson's war memorial forms a focal point at the T-junction between the High Road, Essex Way to the east (formerly East Street), and the High Street to the west. The stonework of the memorial is soiled such that the lettering has become difficult to read, and it is dwarfed by a tall double lamp standard. The Anchor opposite it helps to give this junction a sense of place. It dates from the 14th century and is listed grade II*. The cladding in brick at the ground floor and render (previously with false timbering though this is now lost) at the first floor conceal an impressive heavy timber frame (*Fig. 2*). To the rear of it is a yard with good 19th-century stock brick stables and outbuildings. As with the other pubs in the conservation area, the intensive commercial use has not always proved compatible with good maintenance.

8.8 On the other side of Essex Way, a cast iron finger post points to Hadleigh and Canvey. Here there is an attractive single storey brick building, the **Essex Gallery**; an Indian restaurant, the **Mumtaz Mahal**, the oriental remodelling of which is an instantly recognisable exotic feature in the townscape; and a redundant bus shelter clad in waney edged weatherboarding. The shelter is worthy of preservation. However, this side of the road is dominated by the semi-open spaces of the station car park. There are long views of parked cars, of the terrace of tall modern houses in Station Road, and of Canvey Island. The aspect of the car park has been improved by the construction of a brick wall with railings above it, including an attractive brickwork panel with a cast iron plaque recounting the history of South Benfleet (*Fig. 21*). But in general this boundary treatment is too low to be a very effective screen, and further landscaping and planting is required here. This is particularly true of a patch of waste ground opposite the High Road which forms a separate smaller car parking area.



Fig. 21 Brick boundary wall with interpretive sign, and conservation area road name, in Essex Way outside the car park

The High Street

8.9 Opposite the churchyard there is a late Victorian building flanked by single-storey buildings, occupied by small businesses. A single storey wine merchants with modern fascias and shopfront borders the car park described above. Render, paint and large shop fronts with poor signage have eroded the character of the Victorian building, which could make a positive contribution to the street scene. The aggressive replacement UPVC windows of the **Benfleet Tandoori**, which occupies one half of it, are an example of how damaging these features can be to an old building. Another single storey building, all metal framed windows and plastic fascias, separates this building from **Dickens restaurant**, the false timber framing of which conceals an old building of the 17th or 18th century. A low narrow brick fronted timber-framed building with a large shop window flanks the entrance to the alleyway known as the Close. It has been partially remodelled and converted to residential use (2005).

- 8.10 The High Street slopes down to the creek where it turns to the south. The slope, the bend, and the presence of the Hoy and Helmet and the Half Crown, make for an interesting view. But the total separation of the creek, both physically and visually, from the village is a loss. Originally, the slope opened out into a hard or beach where boats were drawn up, and the High Street effectively terminated here. The pavements in this, the best part of the High Street, are much repaired where service trenches have been cut through them.
- 8.11 Combining elements of differing shape and size, with roofs of varying height and pitch, the **Hoy and Helmet**⁶ is the most picturesque building in the conservation area, and the only one with a recognisably late medieval exterior (*Fig. 22*). The



Fig. 22 The Hoy and Helmet.

central part of the building is clearly an H-plan medieval house with a hall flanked by two cross-wings. Similarly, the **Half Crown** on the other side of the road is the only building which is Georgian in appearance, having a red brick façade of the first half of the 19th century.

The land around both public houses is now given over to hard land-scaping with seats or car parking, and invaded by advertising boards. These are problem areas of bleak open space. In particular, the car park of the Half Crown occupies the inside of the bend in the High Street, a focal point in long views down the street (*Fig. 23*). The spaces round the Hoy and Helmet are contained and to some extent screened by its wooded environs. Hard landscaping and boundaries would all benefit from redesign and maintenance.



Fig. 23 The Half Crown car park.

The wall between the beer garden to the rear and the churchyard has been broken down. The woodland to the north is effectively waste, neither garden or public amenity, an ambiguity that means its future as important public open space is open to question. The shellfish stall in the car park is a traditional business, but the stall is in poor repair and on the line of views to and from the creek.

⁶ Local words, hoy a sailing boat, helmet the hard or landing place.

- 8.12 Where the High Street turns to the south, it is only built up on its east side. The west side has been cleared of buildings long ago and now presents neither townscape nor landscape views, being screened from the creek by scraggly trees, mainly self-sown sycamore, and dilapidated chain link fencing. Beyond the bend, there are two late 19th-century buildings gable-end on to the street, probably replacing earlier buildings on medieval narrow plots. The **Belle Vue** dentist's surgery has been painted with a white plastic coating and had its windows replaced. The semi-detached **Ivy and Rose Cottages** form one of the best preserved Victorian buildings in the village and are almost unspoilt by improvements, their UPVC sash windows being very discreet (*Fig. 24*). They still have a slate roof and, with their polychrome brickwork and weatherboarded side walls, look very picturesque. The next building is also late Victorian but has been painted and given less sympathetic new windows. All these buildings are locally listed.



Fig. 24 The bend in the High Street, with Rose and Ivy Cottages.

- 8.13 From this point, the High Street opens out into a waste land of tarmac, lamp standards, street signs, overhead wires and stationary cars (*Fig. 25*). It is divided by two traffic islands, one of which creates a one-way system parking lot in front of nos. 55-65 which are set a long way back from the frontage. This space in front of the houses was originally gardens but is now car parking for them and the Conservative Club immediately to the south. The car park is bounded by a brick wall with railings, but nevertheless this area appears as a gap in the High Street frontage, with which the houses have a poorly defined relationship (*Fig. 26*). Instead they belong to the Close, onto which they back.

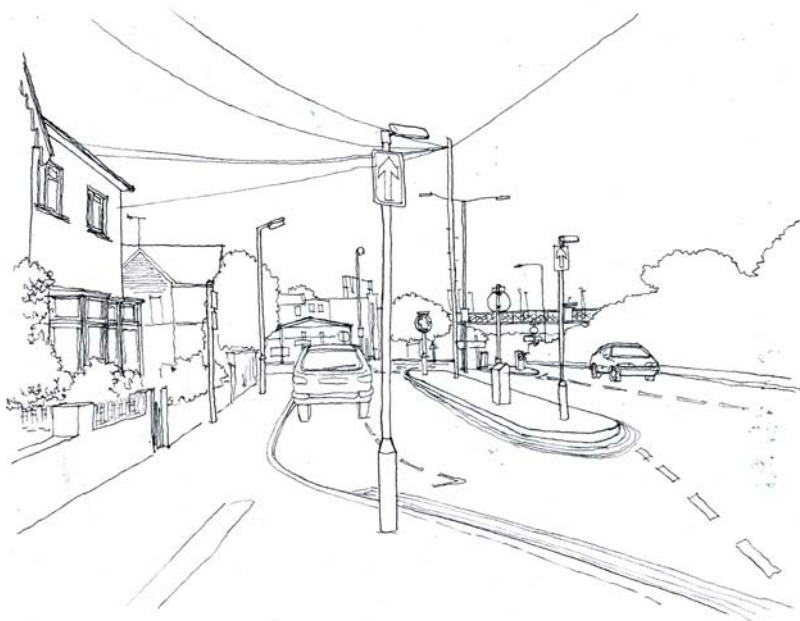


Fig. 25 View looking down the High Street to its junction with Ferry Road.



Fig. 26 Nos 55-65 High Street are set well back from the frontage, with which they have a poorly defined relationship.

The houses comprise two semi-detached pairs, that to the north (**nos. 53-55**) being double-fronted, those to the south (**no. 65**) being smaller with end-stacks. The difference in size apart, they are of a similar pattern, and all now have their brickwork painted white and the woodwork black. However, they still have slate roofs and the southern pair still has its original windows. The houses are in the ownership of the **Conservative Club** located immediately to the south, a large grade II listed

building comprising a 17th-century timber-framed house set back on the line of the Close (see below, 8.26), linked by a flat-roofed extension to a gabled building on the High Street frontage.

- 8.14 The High Street is now punctuated by a roundabout, beyond which it curves round to the south-east where it is truncated by the embankment for the railway and reduced to a backwater. The main through route is Ferry Road which runs south from the roundabout and under the railway (Fig. 27). The development of this end of the High Street was determined by the presence of the station, with commercial yards and a scatter of late Victorian housing. Today, of course, the railway does not function in the same way, but the spaces remain and have been taken up for other uses. The commuter trade has been targeted, in particular being offered taxi services and take-away food. Compared to the busy Ferry Road, the end of the High Street has a human scale to it, being characterised by small businesses and a variety of uses. But it is also something of a problem area, with low visual quality, terminating in a car park for the station.



Fig. 27 View of the southern end of the High Street, looking north from below the railway bridge in Ferry Road.

- 8.15 Where the two roads divide, there is a large open triangular-shaped retail area, currently a **garden centre**. The array of objects for sale and multi-coloured signs is typical of a business of this sort and not without visual interest, but so prominent a site warrants a well designed building and boundary treatment, something better than the existing chain link fencing.⁷

⁷ Planning permission has been given for housing on this site, see section 10.

- 8.16 Separating the garden centre from the station is a pair of Victorian cottages and an adjacent single storey building which are used as a **Chinese restaurant** and a food shop (**no. 82**). The cottages have been rendered, white painted, refenestrated, and have concrete tile roofs. The north half of the pair seems currently to be unused. The restaurant operates from the single storey building, also rendered with concrete tiles, which runs south to the station.
- 8.17 The entrance into the **station** on this side is through an early 20th-century building dating from when the station was moved to this position in 1912. It is a pleasant building which retains much of its original appearance despite some replacement windows. The area outside this building and the pedestrian tunnel beneath the railway line to Ferry Road is defined by cast-iron bollards and has block paving. A cast-iron fingerpost gives directions to the main landmarks in the village. The station platforms are attractive with their original cast iron columns supporting wooden canopies. Because the railway is elevated on an embankment, they cannot, however, really be seen from outside.
- 8.18 Over the road from the garden centre are two more extensive areas of parked cars, the forecourts to two car dealerships, separated by a modernised pair of Victorian semi-detached cottages, and a set-back area used for disabled parking. That to the north has to the rear a large steel framed tin-clad shed in poor condition, a working building formerly characteristic of the area.⁸
- 8.19 A newly redefined footpath along the side of the forecourt leads to the southern end of the Close. Although paved in tegula, it is flanked with close boarded fencing with ugly concrete posts and gravel boards (*Fig. 28*).



Fig. 28 Footpath through to the Close from the High Street.

⁸ Planning permission has been given for housing on this car dealership site, the tin shed being retained. See section 10.

- 8.20 The Victorian cottages (**no. 81**) have been rendered, white painted, and refenestrated. They are currently used by a taxi business. The **disabled car park** area is an unfortunate gap in the frontage with a bleak view into the station car park. It is marked out with an abundance of yellow lines and surrounded by a mixture of boundary treatments, including more concrete posts (*Fig. 29*).



Fig. 29 Disabled parking area on High Street with view through to the main station car park.

- 8.21 The other car dealership uses a weatherboarded single storey building which was once a shop and dates from the early years of the 20th century if not before. It is attractive and well maintained, though its walls have been opened up to create large plate glass windows. To the rear of this forecourt is a modernised row of Victorian houses, with replacement windows throughout and the ground-floor bay windows rebuilt under a lean-to roof.
- 8.22 There follows a terrace of three Victorian cottages, the first with replacement windows, the middle one (**no. 103**) being one of the few in the village to preserve its original appearance (*Fig. 8*), and the third a shop on the corner where Station Road climbs steeply up the edge of the Downs.⁹
- 8.23 Beyond the junction, in **The Terrace** on the edge of the Downs, there are more modernised Victorian cottages, rendered and refenestrated, and then a terrace of five 1970s or 1980s three storey houses characterised by a deep-section plan, brown brickwork, projecting first-floor bay windows, white painted joinery now largely replaced in UPVC, and integral garages. Housing of the same pattern is to be found in Station Road. Because they are built up the hillside, these houses are accessed by a footpath. The High Street continues at a lower level, ending in a car park.
- 8.24 Only the end of **Station Road** is included within the conservation area. It rises abruptly up the hillside; at the top, there is a footpath into the Hadleigh Castle Country Park. On the north side of the road there are old outbuildings associated with the shop on the corner with the High Street, and then a house, a single dwelling formed from the conversion of a pair of Victorian cottages.

⁹ Closed in November 2005.

The Close

8.25 This alleyway with no vehicular access is one of the unusual features of the conservation area. The Close as an entity is included on the local list. It also contains two listed buildings (no. 7 and the Conservative Club) and two listed gas lamps, which must date from 1926 when gas was laid on. From the southern end, it is approached from the High Street by a footpath, enclosed by the unsympathetic fencing already noted above. There is also footpath access here into the station car park where there is a walled enclosure for rows of bicycle stands of uniquely ugly design, made of white painted and rusting box-section steel posts (*Fig. 30*). The steps up to the cycle park ascend an earth bank which shows no evidence of planting or landscaping.



Fig. 30 Cycle stands on the footpath to the Close from the High Street.

8.26 The southern end of the Close is fully built up with a tight sense of enclosure between the black-painted tin shed and the white painted buildings facing on to the High Street and the black weatherboarding of no. 7 (*Fig. 31*). None of these buildings individually are of particular merit, but framing the sides of the slightly curving alleyway and unified by the use of black and white paint, they form a successful architectural composition. The old part of the **Conservative Club** presents some timber-framing externally at first floor level, as well as more inside. Its windows on the Close are a mixture of sashes and timber replacements of various types. Originally it was probably a lobby-entry house. One room has 18th-century panelling with remarkable painted scenes, a feature not noted in the list description. Nos. 53-65 have their rear elevations on the Close. The southern pair of cottages (**no. 65**) preserve their original sashes but the brickwork is painted; the northern pair (**nos. 53-55**) are rendered and have replacement timber windows in poor condition. **No. 7**, grade II listed, is a nice double-fronted 18th-century weatherboarded house with sash windows. It has been extended fairly recently on the north side where its garden is enclosed with close-boarded fencing with concrete posts and gravel boards.



Fig. 31 The Close looking south, no. 7 on the left, the Conservative Club on the right, the corrugated tin shed in the distance.

- 8.27 Further north, The Close is more open. A stock brick wall delineates the gardens of the High Street buildings on the west. A vacant plot to east has permission for a house (see section 10). Beyond this are **nos. 1-3**, originally a 19th-century semi-detached pair of cottages with a symmetrical façade, the latter now unbalanced by the extension of no. 3 to the south. The cottages are white painted (*Fig. 9*); both have UPVC windows, those of no. 3 mahogany coloured. There follows a new development built in 2005 on land to the south and east of a narrow building at the north end of the Close fronting the High Street. **No. 1 Attwell Mews**, an Essex Design Guide style house, fills a former gap in the side of the Close. It contributes strongly to the sense of enclosure and is well designed, though it's white weatherboard and red brick do not respect the very strong palette of materials and colours found in the rest of the alleyway. Opposite this new house is the beer garden of the Half Crown, enclosed by ugly concrete fencing.

Ferry Road, the station and railway

- 8.28 The road from Canvey sweeps in to Benfleet in the shadow of the wooded Downs, but then encounters a stark contrast in the form of the station, an uncompromisingly modern building presenting an angular wall in pale concrete brick to the highway (*Fig. 32*). Just before the station is a landscaped area with informal planting above low brick walls which has been created to enhance the side of the railway embankment and to improve the setting of the lay-by which accommodates three bus stops at this busy transport interchange (*Fig. 33*). The planting looks neglected, and is not enhanced by the utilitarian grey track-side railings above them. In front of the lay-by and station, there are robust curving railings which could look stylish but which are rusting through their white paint. On the other side of the road opposite the station, there is the embankment at the edge of Benfleet Creek.



Fig. 32 Benfleet station.



Fig. 33 Landscaping and planting outside Benfleet station.

Its side is plain, bare, bald of anything except grass, and would benefit from a few low shrubs or small trees to give it visual interest. From the footpath at the top of the embankment, there are good views over the creek (*Fig. 34*) with its moored boats and up to the Downs.



Fig. 34 View over Benfleet Creek from the footpath to the south of the station.

- 8.29 As Ferry Road turns to the north, it drops down below sea level and beneath the railway in a concrete-sided underpass. The bridge is in sorry condition, its metal rusting. Netting has been suspended on the north side to prevent debris injuring pedestrians or damaging cars.¹⁰ Fixed incongruously to the roadside concrete where the road emerges from under the bridge, is a handsome cast iron name plate identifying Ferry Road as being in the conservation area. Beyond the bridge, an ugly concrete revetment with rusting tubular concrete railings at the top of it encloses the sluice controlling the flow of water to and from Church Creek (*Fig. 35*)

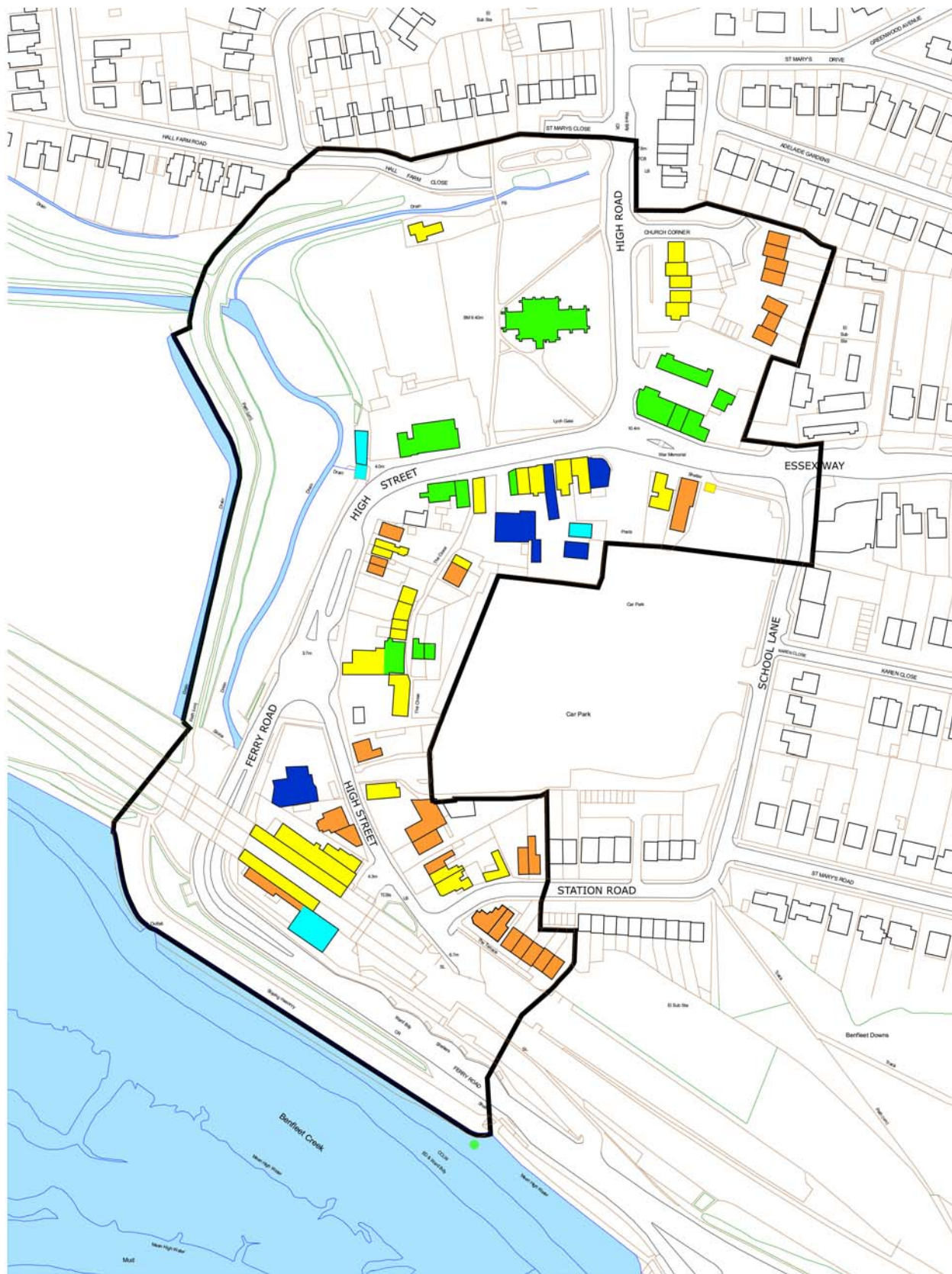


Fig. 35 Ferry Road, concrete revetment around the sluice at the end of the creek

¹⁰ Repairs are programmed for winter 2005/6.

9. EVALUATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS TO THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 9.1 The principal listed buildings (church, Anchor, and Hoy and Helmet) are all landmark buildings which have a material effect on the appearance of the locations in which they are situated. In addition, the station, although unlisted, fulfils a comparable role because of its size and impact on the development of the south side of the village.
- 9.2 A map (*Fig. 36*) has been prepared assessing the contribution made by individual buildings to the appearance and character of the conservation area. Although a subjective process, the map can be a helpful guide in the planning process. Buildings have been graded on a scale of five according to the following criteria:
1. Negative, buildings of no architectural quality detrimental to the character of the area, either by reason of mass, design, materials or siting.
 2. Negative, buildings of indifferent design or unsuited to the character of the conservation area.
 3. Buildings which have a neutral presence in the conservation area, fitting satisfactorily into it, and buildings which have suffered unsympathetic alteration or improvement.
 4. Positive contribution through design, age, materials or detailing.
 5. Positive, listed buildings or landmark buildings.
- 9.3 *Fig. 37* is a map indicating areas of negative townscape within the conservation area or adjoining it, and good and bad views which can be seen within it or from it.

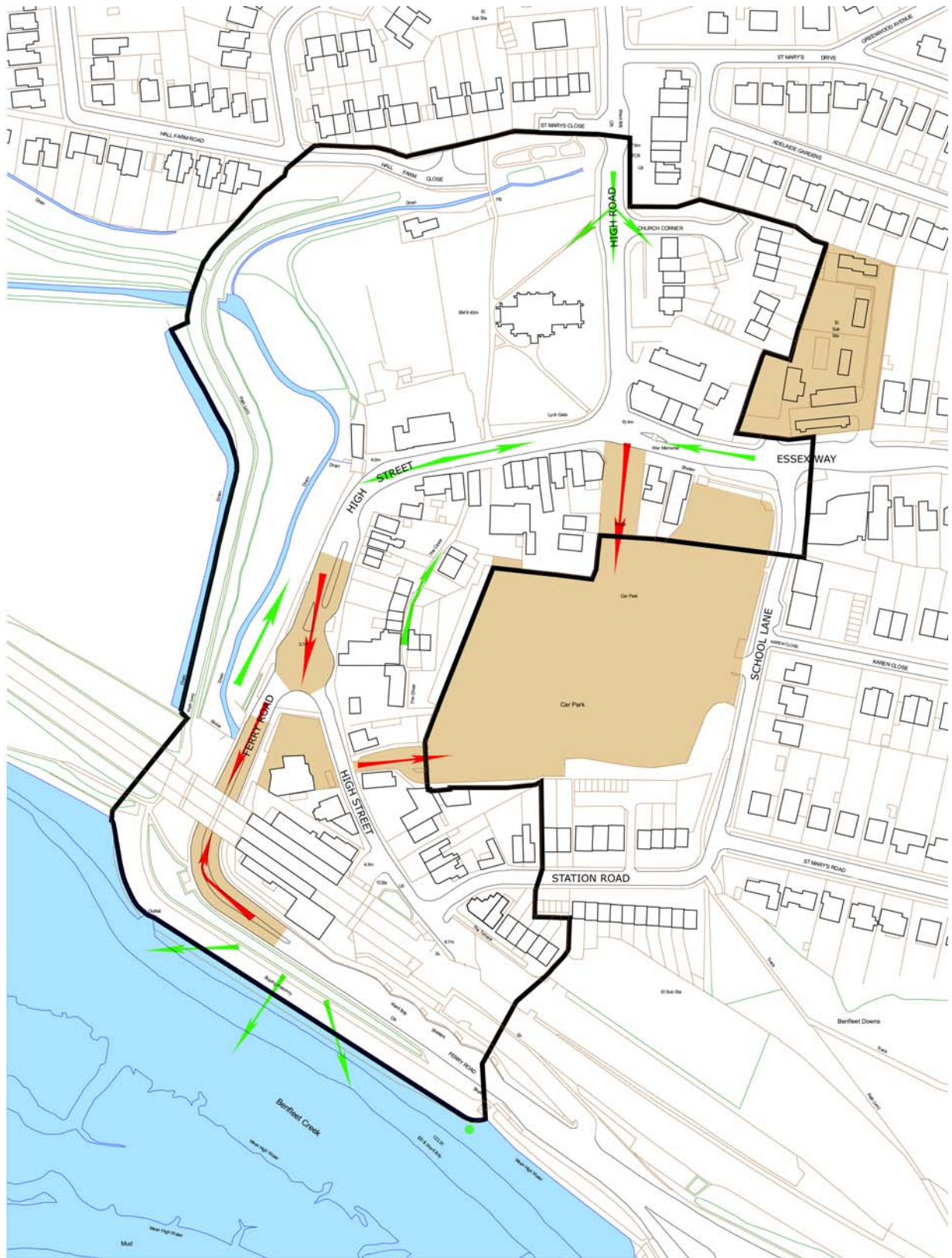


South Benfleet

Map illustrating the individual contribution to character



Fig. 36 Map illustrating the contribution of individual buildings to the character of the conservation area.



South Benfleet
Negative townscape, good and bad views

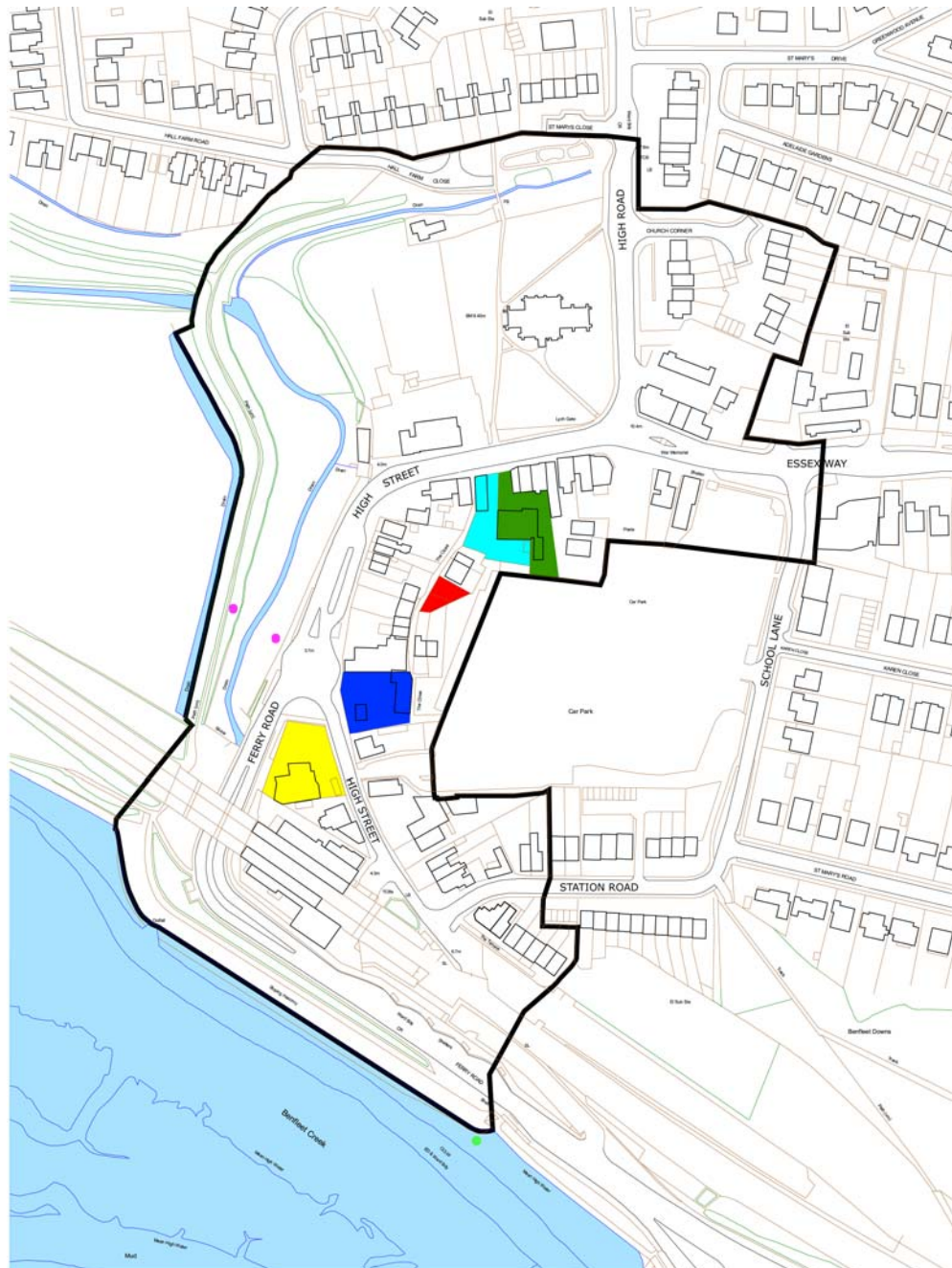
- Negative townscape
- Negative views
- Good views

Fig. 37 Negative townscape, and good and bad views.

10. CHANGE IN THE CONSERVATION AREA. CURRENT PLANNING PROPOSALS

- 10.1 Examination of photographs held by the County Council of the conservation area dating from 1985, the time of the accelerated resurvey of listed buildings by the Department of the Environment, indicates that there has been relatively little change in the conservation area, certainly not since it was designated.
- 10.2 In 2005, the conservation area is in a state of flux: four out of five planning applications for the development of substantial sites within it have all received permission, whilst another for the installation of public sculptures was submitted as this appraisal was being prepared (*Fig. 38*). They are as follows:
- At the north end of the Close, the narrow old building opposite the Half Crown is being refurbished for residential use, a pair of cottages has been built just to the south of it, and a house has permission on an adjacent piece of land (CPT/391/04).
 - Immediately to the east, application has been made for outline permission for five cottages to the rear of Dickens restaurant (no. 21 High Street) on a large backland plot, involving the removal of a light industrial building (CPT/751/04/OUT). The conservation area advice given on this scheme was that it was unsuitable in the proposed form.
 - Further south down the Close, application has been made to renew permission for a house on the vacant plot between nos. 3 and 7. The conservation area advice in this case recommends that the design should be reconsidered.
 - The open retail area, currently the garden centre, at the junction of Ferry Road and the High Street, has permission for a pair of semi-detached cottages, and a two storey block containing two two-bedroom flats and two one-bedroom flats (CPT/682/04).
 - In the High Street, at nos. 75-77 at its southern end, permission has been given for a detached cottage, and a pair of semi-detached cottages, on the forecourt of the car dealership next to the Conservative Club (CPT/651/04). The large shed clad in corrugated iron to the rear will be retained.
 - It is proposed to set up a bronze sculpture in the shape of the prow of a Viking ship on Council owned scrub land between Ferry Road and Church Creek, together with four York stone sculptures located on the side of the embankment on which the footpath is located (CPT/627/05/FUL).
- 10.3 By building up frontages, these proposals will fill up unsightly gaps along street edges and complete a sense of enclosure to the benefit of the townscape. This will be particularly true of the Close, where the gaps afford views out to the car park, and in the southern part of the High Street where areas of parking and nondescript retail space will be improved. Thus some of the main problem areas within the conservation area, in terms of visual quality and unsatisfactory spaces, should shortly have been addressed.
- 10.4 The proposed backland development to the rear of 21 High Street is more problematic. Backlands are a characteristic feature of historic village centres, but one under threat of being submerged by pressure for development. If development is permitted, it should respect as far as possible the historic grain of the settlement.

- 10.5 When these applications are realised or resolved, there will be few empty spaces left available for development in the conservation area, which could be regarded as having reached a mature condition which should be stabilised for the foreseeable future. The conspicuous exception is the wooded land north of the Hoy and Helmet; applications to develop this area have been refused. It should be recognised that this too is a backland area forming an important open space at the junction of the churchyard and creek and should be preserved as such.



South Benfleet

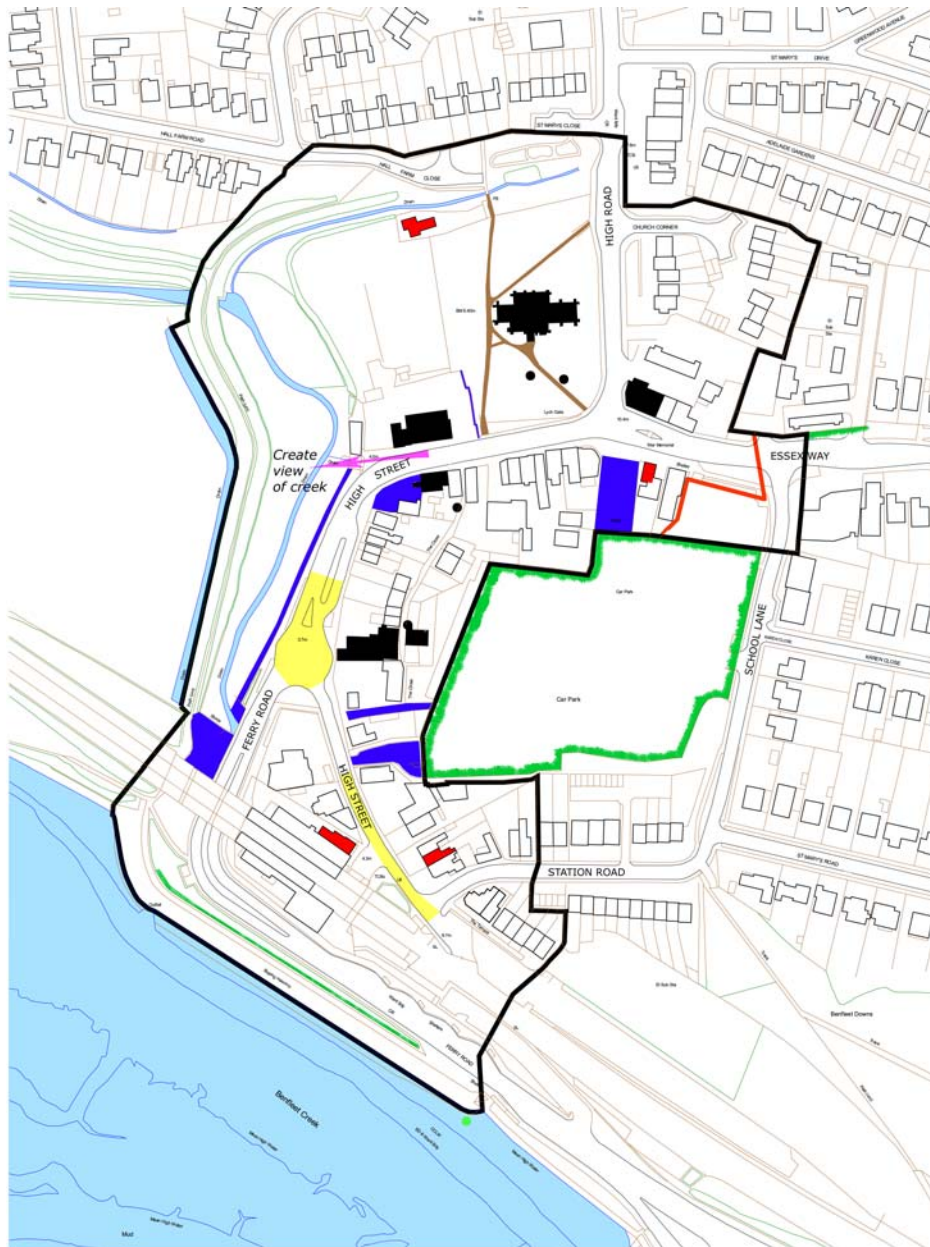
Conservation area sites affected by current (2005) planning permissions or applications

■ 5 Houses CPT/751/04/OUT	■ 1 House CPT/638/99/REN	■ 2 Houses, 4 Flats CPT/682/04/FUL
■ Refurbishment & 3 Houses CPT/391/04/FUL	■ 2 Houses, 3 Flats CPT/710/04/FUL	■ Proposed Sculptures CPT/627/05/FUL

Fig. 38 Conservation area sites affected by current (2005) planning permissions or applications.

11. MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

- 11.1 The South Benfleet conservation area is a historic centre within a visually interesting landscape setting, and is popular for its public houses and restaurants. It is also a major thoroughfare, with the railway station and road from Canvey Island, and many people pass through it daily. For these reasons it is important that its character is conserved and enhanced. A series of proposals are outlined below (*Fig. 39*). They mainly comprise improvements to maintenance of open space, some enhancement work, application of existing policies, and measures to prevent the further erosion of the character of the older Victorian buildings and possibly to achieve their restoration.



South Benfleet

Recommended areas for enhancement and improvement

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Listed buildings | Highway improvements | Revision to Conservation Area boundary |
| Add to local list | Footpath in bound gravel | |
| Trees / soft landscaping | Enhancement / boundary treatment | |

Fig. 39 Recommended areas for enhancement and improvement.

Public open space

- 11.2 The open space around the churchyard and creek is important not only visually and for amenity, but is also of symbolic and historic significance to the community. It is the probable site of the Danish camp, and in the more recent past has been the harbour where boats were drawn up on the beach by the Hoy and Helmet. The creek, churchyard and adjacent woodland should therefore be identified as areas particularly worthy of conservation and protection. They are also of great potential archaeological importance.
- 11.3 Public open space is a very significant element in the conservation area. Very little of it could be regarded as formal spaces, with perhaps the exception of the war memorial, the lych gate and south approach to the church, and the south side of the station. Informality is more appropriate in the context of the small houses, pubs and restaurants, and busy traffic and pedestrian routes. Elaborate planting or street enhancement schemes would in many ways be misplaced.
- 11.4 A number of improvements have been made in recent years to the public open space in the conservation area and are still clearly recognisable today. They include the boundary treatment on the north side of the station car park, the footpath to the north of the churchyard, the seating area at the south end of Church Creek, the landscaping on the south side of the station, and the handsome conservation area cast-iron street signs. These schemes are low key and in keeping with the conservation area. However, maintenance was identified as an issue which needs addressing.
- 11.5 When the conservation area was visited, most of the areas of planting, which generally comprise low growing shrubs and bushes (e.g. pyracantha, rosemary, viburnum) had an air of neglect. Once landscaping of this sort has been created, maintenance is essential: if it becomes unkempt, it has an adverse effect on its surroundings as it is immediately identifiable as something intended to look good.
- 11.6 The amenity area at the south end of Church Creek (*Fig. 20*) needs better maintenance. The block paving should be weeded, one of the litter bins removed, and a seat re-instated. It would benefit from better railings.
- 11.7 Vegetation in the churchyard should not be allowed to get out of control. Ivy should be removed from the trees and monuments, as should small trees from the monuments. The churchyard paths should be resurfaced in bound gravel, some, such as that to the south door, as a matter of urgency.
- 11.8 The crazy paving round the planting on the footpath north of the churchyard should be repaired, if only on grounds of health and safety.

Building maintenance and advertisements

- 11.9 The condition of some of the landmark buildings in the conservation area is less than ideal. The church porch is depressing and its roof in poor condition. The boundary walls round the churchyard on the north side, and where it adjoins the Hoy and Helmet, have collapsed in places. The roof of an outbuilding at the Anchor is in poor condition. The Half Crown and the Hoy and Helmet face each other in open commercial warfare, each plastered with signs about the latest special offers. Shop signs generally are not to a high standard, not consistent with policy EC30.

Boundary treatment and tree planting

- 11.10 There is much scope for improving boundaries and using trees for this purpose and to soften landscaping. The concrete wall round the electricity substation in Essex Way could be partially screened by low trees or espaliers. Because of its size and its location on rising ground, the station car park is an inseparable adjunct of the conservation area. Tree planting at its perimeter and within it could soften the views into it from the conservation area. In particular, trees could be used to effect on the boundaries of the small area of adjacent but separate parking in Essex Way, and of the disabled parking area adjacent to it which opens off the High Street.
- 11.11 The disabled car parking area is partially bounded by a concrete wall and close boarded fencing (*Fig. 29*) which could be replaced to advantage in brick; a higher wall would help to screen the station car park beyond. The parking lots are indicated with yellow lines for which more sympathetic marking out could be substituted. The close boarded fencing of the nearby footpath through to the Close could also be replaced with brick walls. At the least, the concrete posts should be replaced with timber and the fences stained consistent colours. The Close could be improved by use of better materials for some of the boundaries adjoining it.
- 11.12 The boundary along the west side of the High Street consists of a low concrete wall with a chain link fence above it and a hedge of self-sown trees. Not only does this look unattractive, but it obscures the historical relationship between the village and the creek. A new boundary should be constructed with a properly planted hedge behind it, with gaps to allow views through to the creek. Careful planting of trees such as pollarded willows along parts of the creek could restore a traditional appearance to it. Views out of the conservation area on the west side from the path along the creek could be enhanced by tree planting within and at the edges of the sports field. Trees could screen the base of the large and very prominent electricity pylon. The embankment at the edge of Benfleet Creek opposite the station would acquire visual interest if small trees or bushes were planted on it.
- 11.13 The car park of the Half Crown occupies a very prominent position in the conservation area, on the bend where the High Street rises up to the church. Its appearance would be improved by a greater sense of enclosure, which could be achieved by a wall and tree planting.

Street enhancement and street furniture

- 11.14 In the north-south part of the High Street and at its junction with Ferry Road, there is scope for reducing the number of road signs and for laying telephone cables underground (*Fig. 25*).
- 11.15 The tarmac surface of the pavements in the northern part of the High Street, in the visually important area of the slope down between the Half Crown and Hoy and Helmet, are much cut about for service trenches. They would benefit from relaying, and would look better in bound gravel than tarmac.
- 11.16 The road layout of the High Street north of the junction with Ferry Road is unattractive, with the diversion into the lay-by opposite the cottages nos. 55-65 set back from the road, a triangular road island and then a roundabout. These features could be constructed in more sympathetic materials. The lay-by in front

of the cottages could also be enhanced by the use of different materials. This could improve the appearance of the area and also possibly make the road layout less confusing for the motorist.

- 11.17 The curious cycle stands in the station car park, close to the footpath that leads into the Close, should be replaced with a more suitable design.
- 11.18 The south-eastern end of the High Street is in effect a cul-de-sac with no through traffic, though there is a lot of traffic to and from the station. A street enhancement scheme here would help give this visually and physically separate area a distinct sense of identity.

Additional planning controls

- 11.19 Under the 1990 Planning Act, permitted development rights within conservation areas can be restricted through the use of an Article 4(2) Direction. This has the effect that planning permission is required for certain defined categories of works which normally do not need it. An Article 4(2) Direction was introduced for the South Benfleet Conservation Area in 1997. It covers works to chimneys and roofs, porches, buildings within the curtilage, hard surfacing, satellite dishes, fences, walls, and external painting. A copy of the Article 4 Direction can be found in Appendix 4.

Locally listed buildings

- 11.20 It is recommended that four buildings are added to the local list:
- Brook Cottage on the north side of the churchyard, a picturesque house that seems to be marked on the tithe map of 1841.
 - The Essex Gallery, 8 Essex Way, a single storey building with a pedimented façade and unusual brickwork with courses made up of tile. It was originally a branch of the Westminster Bank.
 - No. 103 High Street, the only Victorian cottage which retains its appearance largely unaltered
 - Building to the rear of the station, probably formerly a house and offices. It dates from about 1912 when the station moved to its present position. Although some windows have been replaced, and parts of it have been altered, it retains some of its original character and makes a useful contribution to the appearance of the south end of the High Street.
 - The weatherboarded bus shelter in Essex Way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chisman, N.M. 1991 *Bygone Benfleet*, Chichester: Phillimore

ERO Essex Record Office

Lavender, N. 1991 *An archaeological evaluation at the Anchor public house, South Benfleet, Essex*, Essex County Council Field Projects Section
unpublished report

Priestley, H.E. 1984 *A history of Benfleet. Book One. Early days*, Castle Point
District Council

APPENDIX 1 Listed Buildings in the South Benfleet conservation area

In the entry for the following:

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

ESSEX WAY

1/10

The Anchor Inn and
building attached to right

the grade shall be upgraded to Grade II*

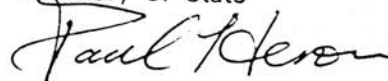
and the description shall be amended to read:

Public building, now public house. Late C14 with C17 range added to rear and early C18 outbuilding to right; refronted in late C19. Render over timber frame, formerly jettied on west, north and south sides; late C19 brick cladding to ground floor of front (south) range; hipped and double-gabled old plain tile roof with right-end stack having stone base with late C16 brick shaft and flue and internal stack (to left) finished in C19 brick. Late C14 building of 2 storeys with central staircase, truncated at east end; C17 parallel range to rear. South front of 2-storey, 5-window range. Two C20 half-glazed doors, late C19 transomed 2 and 5-light windows and two late C19 bay windows with similar windows; late C19 brackets to coved jetty, which has late C14 brattished cornice; transomed 2-light windows to first floor; formerly jettied left gable wall underpinned by late C19 brick. Late C19 and C20 casements to 2-storey rear (north) range. Outbuilding attached to right, with C20 plain tile roof, of one storey and attic with mid/late C19 sash and 2 catslide dormers. INTERIOR: late C14 building formerly jettied on 3 sides with dragon beam to west bay and arch bracing to every bay (some arch braces remain); exposed close studding with wall bracing to ground and first floors; plain and stop-chamfered ground-floor beams indicating that ground floor was divided into four chambers with arched carriage entry and adjoining stairwell and cross-passage in second bay from right (east); plain 3-light diamond-mullioned window to east; chamber to east (right) had fireplace and was probably a kitchen, and the rest of the ground floor probably had a storage/commercial use. First floor composed of two large chambers each side of central access stair with smaller chamber to west end: remains of 2 moulded wood-mullioned windows with cusped heads and 'shouldered' cills; formerly open to 6-bay cross-quadrate crown-post roof with soulace pieces to arch bracing; each open truss had wide arch braces (some remain) with soffit chamfering and engaged shafts to storey posts; tie beams and arch braces retain extensive remnants of late C16 wall painting with coloured heraldic shields and black-painted arabesques and guilloches, which form part of late C16 alterations when stairwell filled in and first-floor partitions moved or repositioned. Mid C18 dog-leg staircase with turned balusters to rear left: first-floor room to left (west) has mid C18 panelled dado and dentilled cornice; mid C18 plank and panelled doors. Unusual plan form and use of ground first-floor chambers indicates probable original use as Guild Hall, Court Hall or similar late medieval public building: manor belonged to Westminster Abbey. Alternatively, Morant, the 18th century historian, indicates the presence of a College of Canons in the parish, which may explain its proximity to the church.

DRAWING AVAILABLE IN TANK.

DFS Oct '89.

Signed by authority of the
Secretary of State



P. J. HERON

A Senior Executive Officer in the
Department of the Environment

Dated : 6th December 1989

Parish church. C12 west end of Nave. C13 Chancel arch. Early C14 west tower. During C15 the Chancel, Chancel arch, south arcade and south aisle were rebuilt. Late C15 south porch, c.1500 north aisle and clerestorey. C17 repairs and C19/C20 restorations. Ashlar, rubble, flint and Roman brick, timber south porch, red plain tiled roofs. Chancel, east wall, angle buttresses, C19/C20 3 light window with roundel over under 2 centre arched head, label and stops. North wall with angle and centre buttresses, 2 repaired C15 windows of 2 cinquefoiled lights, tracery over under 2 centre arched heads, labels over, 2 similar south wall windows with a chamfered 2 centre arched doorway of the same date between. Crenellated north aisle, angle and 2 centre buttresses, the latter with a blocked 2 centre arched doorway between. East wall C20 window of 2 cinquefoiled lights with quatrefoil in a 4 centred head, west wall window similar to those in Chancel north wall. Western north wall window similar to that in east wall, eastern window of 3 cinquefoil lights under a 4 centred head. Clerestorey 3 C15 windows of 2 cinquefoil lights under square heads. Nave eastern gable, 3 small C16 windows with rounded heads, one blocked. West tower of 3 stages. Each face of ground floor has a small trefoiled light with square head, similar second stage south and west windows, belfry north, south and west windows of 2 trefoiled lights under square heads and labels, some restored. Clock faces to north and south walls, flint flushwork bands to upper stage, first stage buttresses to west, north west and south west angles. Crenellated south aisle. 4 C15 windows similar to those in Chancel. Between the 2 south wall windows is a C15 doorway with moulded jambs and 2 centred head. Clerestorey with 3 lights similar to those in north wall. Fine south porch, of 2 bays each with 4 cusped side wall lights. Moulded and chamfered 2 centred arch with traceried spandrels, ogee side lights with vertical tracery over. Moulded and crenellated tie beam with 3 panels over, each with moulded mullions and traceried head. Moulded bargeboards. Interior, with central moulded hammer beam, moulded arched braces, moulded wall plates, moulded and crenellated side purlins. Side seats. C20 wrought iron mullions to all lights and C19/C20 restorations. Segmental headed stoup east of doorway. Interior. Chancel, roof of 4 bays, 4 armed octagonal crown posts with moulded capitals and bases, moulded wall plates. C15 piscina, moulded jambs, cinquefoiled arch in square head. C19 and C20 stained glass windows. C20 dado panelling to choir walls. Painted reredos designed by Sir Charles Nicholson and painted by his mother, Lady Nicholson. Traceried screen by Sir Charles Nicholson, the lower panels painted by his daughter, Miss Barbara Nicholson, rood beam with Christ and the 2 Maries. Early C15 2 centred Chancel arch of 2 hollow chamfered orders, mid C13 responds with 3 attached shafts, continuous moulded capitals and bases. Nave. C20 3 cant roof with 4 plain tie beams. 4 carved face corbel stones to north and south walls. C20 octagonal pulpit. Font. C13 Purbeck marble stem with C19 square bowl, 3 roundels to each face, foliate carved soffit, 4 side shafts, moulded base. West wall, C12 doorway with round head, imposts and jambs of 2 orders. High up are 2 blocked C12 round headed windows with wide splays. C20 organ to specification of Sir Sidney Nicholson by Harrison and Harrison of Durham. North arcade of 2 centre arches of 2 chamfered orders, columns with 4 attached shafts, moulded capitals and bases. North aisle. Niche at angle to north and east walls. Rood loft stairway. Medieval glass quarries and borders to east and north west windows. Since 1945 many windows throughout the church have been filled with stained glass figures. Piscina, chamfered segmental pointed head and round drain. South arcade, 2 centred arches of 2 chamfered orders, octagonal piers and semi-octagonal responds, moulded capitals and bases, some capitals are re-used c.1300 work. Square headed niche in east respond.

South aisle. Niche with pointed head in south wall. Piscina. Moulded jambs, trefoiled ogee head. C13 coffin lid, inscription in Norman French said to read "Here lies Marcelie, Pray for her soul". West tower with south east internal spiral staircase of timber with octagonal newel. A monumental slab is reputed to be under the Chancel floor, directly in front of the altar. The slab was re-discovered in 1978. Indents and 3 pairs of trefoils adjoining the bracket stem were all that remained of the bracket brass, fragments from elsewhere have since be relaid. The slate commemorates Thomas Blossme and his wife Olive, the stone was laid circa 1400 when she died, Thomas died 1440. John Dobson, Guide to the Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

HIGH STREET

1/13

Table tomb approx. 14 metres south of south porch of Church of St. Mary the Virgin

GV

II

Table tomb. Circa 1728. Red brick base, black header diapering, stone slab with moulded edges. The inscription, much worn in some places to James Matthews, farmer and hoyman, who served in almost every parish office between 1706 and 1728. "Sixty three years our Hoyman sailed merrily around. Forty four lived parishioner where he's aground. Five wives bear him thirty three children. Enough, land another as honest before he gets off." At the head of the inscription is a circle with foliate scrolls and a stork with folded wings, said to be the Matthews Coat of Arms.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

HIGH STREET

1/14

Group of 4 headstones between 18 and 22 metres south east of south porch of Church of St. Mary the Virgin

GV

II

A group of 4 headstones. C18. All with curved and angled heads and carved with cherub heads, skull and crossbones or angels with trumpets. (1) Catherine Hewson, wife of Robert Hewson, June 1776; (2) Mary Nash, 1760; (3) John Greenway 1736; (4) head carved with skull and crossbones, lichen covered name and date.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

HIGH STREET

1/15

Nos. 25, 27 and 29. (The
Half Crown Inn.)

GV

II

Public House. C18 of possibly earlier origin, with later alterations and additions. Timber framed, red brick faced, plastered returns, gabled rear wings. Hipped red plain tiled roof. Off centre right and end left red brick chimney stacks. 2 storeys. 5 small paned vertically sliding sashes with gauged brick arches to first floor. 3 similar windows to ground floor, except that to right, a C20 small paned casement. 3 doorways with moulded surrounds, friezes, dentilled soffits to moulded pediments, that to left with a 6 panelled door, C20 doors to right.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

HIGH STREET

1/16

Nos. 67 and 69 Benfleet
Conservative Club

27488

GV

II

Formerly a house, now a club. C17 or earlier with later alterations and additions. Timber framed and plastered. Red plain tiled roof. 2 storeys. Hip with gablet range to left, central attached chimney stack to right range. Forward C20 right range. 1:2 window range of various casements and sliding sashes. Entrance through C20 extension or rear face to The Close. This face with 3:2 windows to first floor, 1:1 to ground floor, all C20 casements, lean-to C20 porch to right. RCHM 7.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

HIGH STREET

1/17

The Hoy and Helmet Inn

7-8-52

GV

II

Public House. C15/C16 or earlier hall house and crosswing with later alterations and additions. Timber framed and plastered. Red plain tiled roofs. 3 chimney stacks, one off centre right to central hall, one to left of left crosswing and one to left of single storey left extension. Central hall house and crosswings, the crosswings of 2 storeys, roofs hipped to road face, central one storey and attic hall with gabled dormer. C18 2 storey addition to right with hipped roof. Single storey C19/C20 addition to left with C20 door and fanlight over. First floor window range 1:1:1:2 ground floor, 1:1:2:1 of mainly C18 small paned vertically sliding sashes, excepting angled bay to ground floor left and 2 small C20 windows to right crosswing. C20 door with top light to left of bay, right crosswing panelled door with 2 top lights, moulded surround, flat canopy on brackets, right addition panelled door, fluted surround and frieze, moulded and dentilled pediment on brackets. RCHM 2.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

THE CLOSE

1/18

Nos. 5 and 7

15-1-80

GV

II

Pair of cottages. Early C19. Timber framed and weatherboarded, hipped grey slate roof, central red brick chimney stack. 2 storeys. 2 window range of various sashes with glazing bars to west (The Close) and south faces. C20 panelled doors with pentice boards over to right and left of south face. There is a 2 storey extension to north face of similar materials, one window range and C20 door to north.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

THE CLOSE

1/19

Street Lamp
outside 7 The Close

GV

II

Gas lamp. C19. Cast iron. The fluted stem with moulded capital and base, large lighting handles above capital, lamp with 4 faces, narrowing to base which is supported by incurved brackets, hipped head with acroteria and ventilator with pointed acorn finial.

TQ 78 NE

SOUTH BENFLEET

THE CLOSE

1/30

Street lamp to West
of No.23 High Street

GV

II

Gas lamp. C.19. Cast Iron. The fluted stem with moulded capital and base, large lighting handles above capital, lamp with 4 faces, narrowing to base which is supported by incurved brackets, hipped head with acroteria and ventilator with pointed acorn finial.

APPENDIX 2 Locally listed buildings in the conservation area

War Memorial, Essex Way,

Reason: Designed in 1919 by Sir Charles Nicholson and unveiled by Colonel C W Collingwood on 30th May, 1920.

Nos. 43-51, High Street

Reason: A group of five dwellings, located within the Conservation Area and forming an attractive feature in a frontage which otherwise lacks residential interest.

The Close

Reason: A group of dwellings located within the Conservation Area, along the line of a medieval street. The area is one of pedestrian scale with attractive rendered and timber clad dwellings, retaining some of the character of Old Benfleet. Whilst with the exception of the building used as a Conservative Club, and the street lamps, none of the buildings are individually of great merit, their value lies in the group.

APPENDIX 3 Essex Historic Environment Record Sites in the South Benfleet Conservation Area

Ref	Site Name	Record	Monument Types	NGR
14425	Anchor Public House, South Benfleet Fragments of Roman tile and a single Roman pottery sherd.	FS		TQ 7790 8610 Roman
16807	Land to the rear of the Hoy and Helmet Public House Three trenches excavated on the site of proposed development to the rear of the Hoy and Helmet Public House retrieved medieval pottery	FS		TQ 7777 8610 Medieval
7086	South Benfleet In 1926 large tiles and a spring, possibly a Roman well, were found 4 to 5ft deep in erecting a petrol pump.	MON	Well	TQ 7775 8600 Roman
7087	South Benfleet - High Street Roman pottery found in High Street.	FS		TQ 7774 8597 Roman
7088	South Benfleet 14th century and later pottery found by Mr Chandler.	FS		TQ 7776 8613 Medieval
7089	South Benfleet - High Street 47 Pottery and animal bones reported by builders from trenches to the rear of this property.	FS		TQ 7770 8600 Medieval
7094	South Benfleet - High Street RB pottery, med.	MON	Human remains	TQ 7789 8607 Roman
7173	South Benfleet "Roman brick seen during recutting of stream".	FS		TQ 7772 8612 Roman
7237	South Benfleet - Mumtaz Mahal Restaurant (10 Essex Way) Part of a possible medieval stone ?undercroft revealed in footings of extension to restaurant.	MON	Floor, undercroft, wall	TQ 7785 8608 Medieval

APPENDIX 4 Article 4 Direction

CASTLE POINT BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL OFFICES, KILN ROAD, THUNDERSLEY, BENFLEET, ESSEX SS7 1TF

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT) ORDER 1995

DIRECTION MADE UNDER ARTICLE 4(2)

WHEREAS the Council of the Borough of CASTLE POINT being the appropriate local planning authority within the meaning of article 4(6) of Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, are satisfied that it is expedient that development of the description(s) set out in the Schedule below should not be carried out on the land within the South Benfleet Conservation area, shown edged Red on the attached plan, unless permission is granted on an application made under Part III of Town and Country Planning Act 1990,

NOW THEREFORE the said Council in pursuance of the power conferred on them by article 4(2) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 hereby direct that the permission granted by article 3 of the said order shall not apply to development on the said land of the description(s) set out in the Schedule below.

SCHEDULE 1


the erection, alteration or removal of a chimney on a dwellinghouse or on a building within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse; and any of the following permitted development rights for development which would front a highway, waterway or open space:-

- a) the enlargement, improvement or any other alteration of a dwellinghouse:
- b) the alteration of a dwellinghouse roof:
- c) the erection or construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwellinghouse:
- d) the provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a building, or enclosure, swimming or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such, or the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of such a building or enclosure:
- e) the provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a hard surface for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such:
- f) the installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite antenna on a dwellinghouse, or within its curtilage,
- g) the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement, alteration or demolition of any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse: and,
- h) the painting of the exterior of any part of a dwellinghouse or a building or enclosure within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse.

Given under the common Seal of the Borough Council of
CASTLE POINT

this 29th day of October 1997

The Common Seal of the Council was affixed to
this Direction in presence of



Ram Rollins

Mayor

Chief Executive Officer

