

South Benfleet Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



South Benfleet Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and Management Plan Consultation Draft

Project Details

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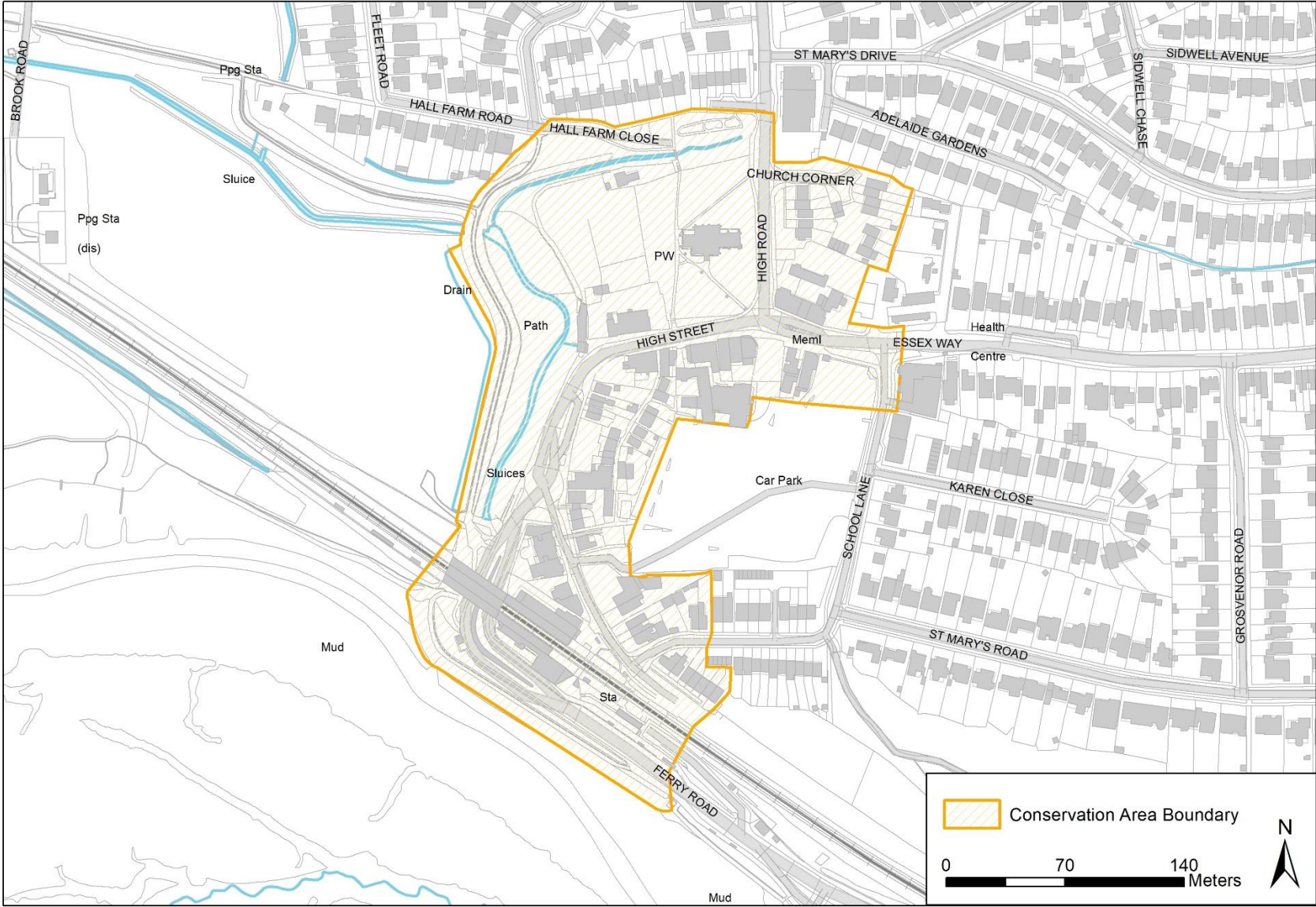


Figure 1: Map of South Benfleet Conservation Area

1.Introduction

1.1.Summary of Special Interest

South Benfleet Conservation Area covers the well-preserved historic settlement of South Benfleet which developed as a result of natural local resources and ease of access to the Thames Estuary provided by the marshland and creeks. The arrival of the railway in the nineteenth century had a significant influence on the character and morphology of the settlement. The Conservation Area is relatively small yet comprises areas of distinctive character that allow for an understanding of the intrinsic characteristics and historic development of South Benfleet. The core of the settlement comprises commercial and nineteenth century residential development around the station, with earlier development centred closer to the Church, and it is surrounded by large expanses of open space along Church Creek and Benfleet Creek and later developments to the west and north. Its relationship with the surrounding countryside is represented by a semi-rural area in which historic waterways are located, to the west and northwest of High Street.

The principal building of architectural interest in the area is the Grade I listed Church of St Mary the Virgin which is of twelfth century derivation. The oldest surviving domestic building is The Anchor, a Grade II* listed building dating from the fourteenth century. A number of eighteenth and nineteenth century properties at The Close and High Street further add to the architectural interest of the area and an appreciation of its vernacular architecture. The open spaces and walks along the creeks provide a rural feel to the area, while the creeks and railway are reminders

of the reasons for the development and evolution of South Benfleet.

1.2.Purpose of the Appraisal

This document is to be used as a baseline to inform future change, development, and design with regard to the sensitivities of the Conservation Area and its unique character.

The appraisal recognises designated and non-designated heritage assets within the area which contribute to its special interest, along with their setting. It will consider how the area developed, and its building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, alleys, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks, and topography. These qualities will be used to assess the key characteristics of the area, highlighting potential impact future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the character and appearance of South Benfleet Conservation Area. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and analysis of the individual character areas.

This appraisal is designed to enhance understanding of South Benfleet Conservation Area and its development, informing future design. Applications that demonstrate an understanding of the character of a conservation area are more likely to produce appropriate design and positive outcomes for agents and their clients.

This character appraisal has informed the baseline of a Design Code for South Benfleet Conservation Area, which should be followed for any future planning applications within the area.



Figure 2: Selection of photographs taken throughout the South Benfleet Conservation Area: The Church of St Mary the Virgin: shops on to the High Street and infill development to the rear; Lamppost on The Close; The Close; The Anchor Inn: Church Creek

1.3. Location

South Benfleet Conservation Area encompasses a small area at the southern end of South Benfleet and located along the eastern boundary of Castle Point Borough. The Conservation Area is approximately 2.5 kilometres south of South Benfleet Town Centre. It is bounded by agricultural land and East Haven Creek to the west and twentieth century development to the east and north. The Conservation Area includes all or part of the following roads:

- Ferry Road
- High Road
- High Street
- School Lane
- Station Road
- The Close

The topography of the overarching area is formed of gentle low hills running down towards the coast. The Conservation Area is located at the foot of this higher land at only 8 to 10 metres above sea level, between the steep side of the Benfleet Downs to the east and an inlet from Benfleet Creek to the west. To the south is the Creek, and the land rises gently to the north.





Figure 3: South Benfleet Conservation Area within its wider context

1.4. Land use

North, west and southwest of the Conservation Area is open space, comprising the churchyard, woodland, and creek-side dykes and footpaths. The core of the village is mixed commercial and residential development. The majority of the buildings dotted along the High Street are commercial, with the most notable single uses being public houses, restaurants, and takeaways. The majority of the residential buildings are along The Close. There are a few modern residential blocks towards the south end of High Street and on plots to the rear of the High Street.

High Road, Essex Way, High Street, and Ferry Road form part of a major route to and from Canvey Island, which makes the central axis of the Conservation Area very active with traffic. The railway in the south of the Conservation Area has an influence on its appearance and development pattern, whilst several car parking areas within and outside the Conservation Area have a considerable adverse impact on the character of the area.

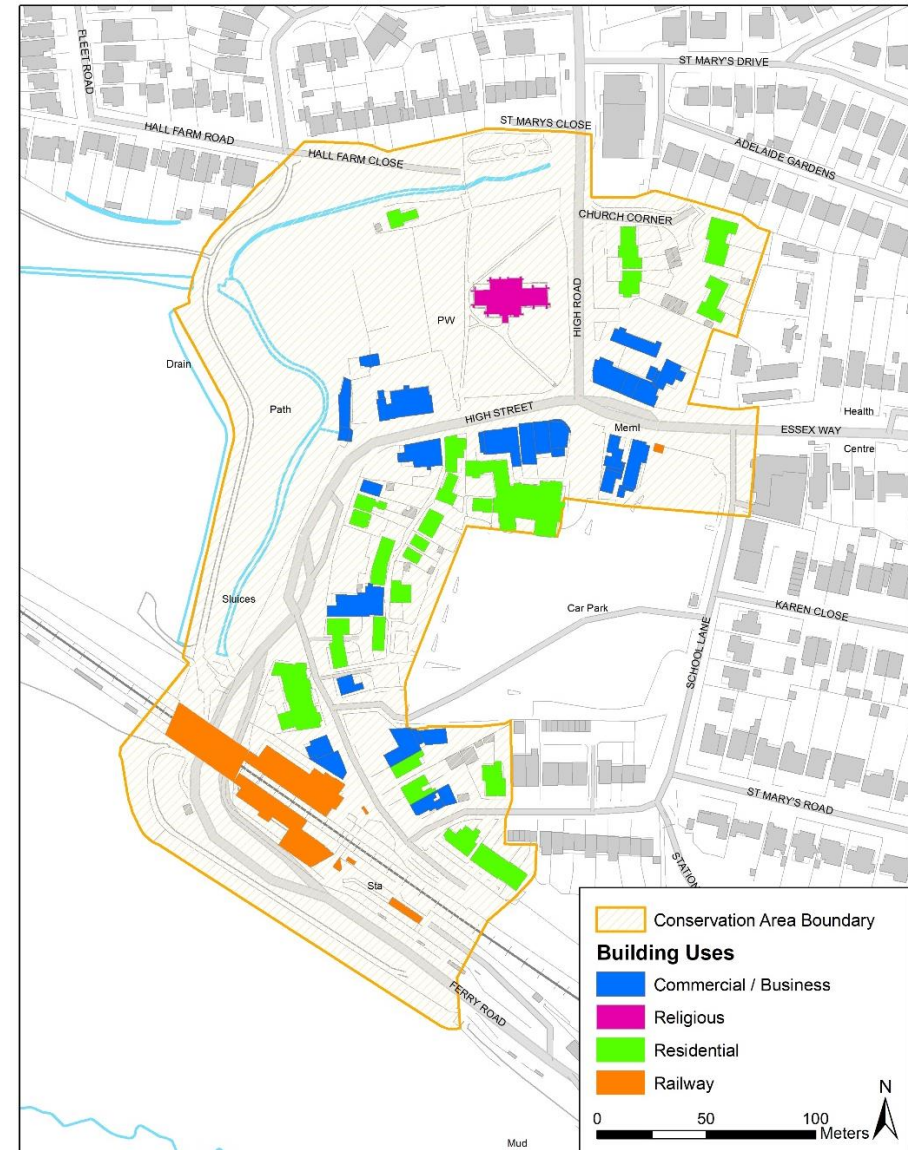


Figure 4: Building uses within the Conservation Area

2. Planning Policy Context

2.1. Planning Policy and Guidance

National Policy

The national legislative framework for the conservation and enhancement of conservation areas and listed buildings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (HMSO 1990).

Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider to be of architectural and historic interest as conservation areas, and Section 72 requires that special attention should be paid to ensuring that the character and appearance of these areas is preserved or enhanced. Section 71 also requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

National Planning Policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in Chapter 16 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF (DCLG December 2023). The NPPF highlights good design as one of twelve core principals of sustainable development. Sustainable development relies on sympathetic design, achieved through an understanding of context, along with an appreciation of the immediate and larger character of the area in which new development is sited.

Local Policy

Local Planning Policy is set out within the saved policies (since September 2007) of Castle Point's Local Plan adopted in November 1998. The fundamental principle of the current local plan is the '*creation and protection of a high quality environment*' and to achieve the '*protection of natural resources and the conservation of historic and other features*'.

The policies relevant to heritage assets, good design and the South Benfleet Conservation Area itself include:

- Policy EC2 - Design
- Policy EC15 - Control of Permitted Development in Sensitive Areas
- Policy EC25 - Principles of Control
- Policy EC26 - Design and Development
- Policy EC27 - Planning Applications
- Policy EC28 - Restrictions on Permitted Development
- Policy EC29 - Control of Demolition
- Policy EC30 - Shopfront Design
- Policy EC31 – Advertisements

The emerging Local Plan for Castle Point will seek to have policies that are consistent with the NPPF in terms of heritage.

2.2. Designation of the Conservation Area

South Benfleet Conservation Area was designated in November 1990. A conservation area appraisal and management plan was adopted in 2006. The document provided a brief history of the Conservation Area, an assessment of its character, and recommendations for future management.

This document has reviewed the Conservation Area's boundary and special interest to account for changes that have occurred since the boundary was drawn and provides an accurate account of the settlement as it is today.

2.3. Article 4 Directions

An Article 4 Direction, covering the extent of the South Benfleet Conservation Area, has been in place since October 1997, which removes several permitted development rights for development within the Conservation Area. This relates to works to chimneys and roofs, porches, outbuildings, hard surfacing, satellite dishes, fences, boundary walls and external painting.

3. Heritage Assets

3.1. Designated Heritage Assets

There are twelve designated heritage assets within the South Benfleet Conservation Area boundary, including the church, residential properties, public houses, a war memorial and two streetlamps. The twelve designated heritage assets are:

- Church of St Mary the Virgin, Grade I (List Entry Number: 1123690);
- The Anchor Inn and Building Attached to Right, Grade II* (List Entry Number: 1123689);
- South Benfleet War Memorial, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1392466);
- 5 and 7, The Close, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1306209);
- Benfleet Conservative Club, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1170069);
- Group of 4 Headstones between 18 and 22 metres south east of south porch of Church of St Mary The Virgin, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1170051);
- Street Lamp outside 7 The Close, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1123693);
- Street Lamp to west of Number 23 High Street, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1248002);

- Table Tomb approximately 14 metres south of south porch of Church of St Mary The Virgin, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1337694);
- The Half Crown Inn, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1123691);
- The Hoy and Helmet Inn, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1123692); and
- Tombstone of Sir Charles Nicholson and family, Grade II (List Entry Number: 1472162).

These buildings and structures have been listed due to their special historic and architectural interest under Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Further information about the listing process can be found on the Historic England website at <https://historicengland.org.uk/>.

Listed buildings are protected by government legislation and there are policies in place to ensure that any alterations to a listed building will not adversely affect its special architectural interest. It is possible to alter, extend or demolish a listed building, but this requires listed building consent and sometimes planning permission.

A full list of all the designated heritage assets within the Conservation Area is included in Section 8.3 and they are shown on the map in Figure 5. Prominent listed buildings are also highlighted in the description for each character area, as appropriate.

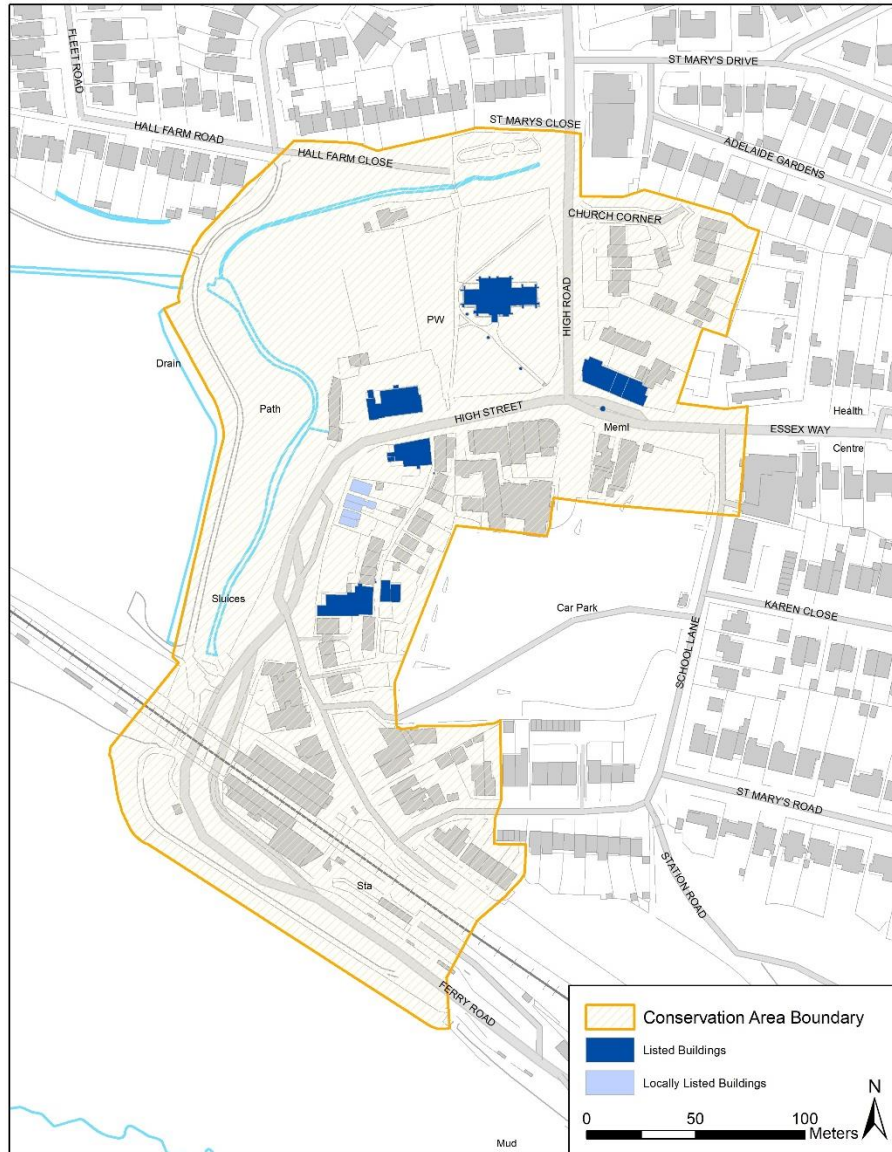


Figure 5: Designated and non-designated heritage assets within the Conservation Area

3.2. Non-Designated Heritage Assets

All buildings, features and planned landscapes within a conservation area make a contribution to its significance. These can be measured on a sliding scale of positive, to neutral, to negative contributors.

Heritage assets are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) as ‘a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.’

Not all heritage assets are designated, and although a building may not be included on the list, this does not mean it is of no heritage value. Buildings and other smaller features of the built environment such as fountains, railings, signs and landscaping can make a positive contribution to the appreciation of an area’s historic interest and its general appearance.

Local listing is an important tool for local planning authorities to identify non-listed buildings and other heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the locality. A number of buildings and structures have been identified on Castle Point’s *Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest* (1998) as they are considered to be good examples of their type or architectural style, demonstrating local design features, are relatively complete in their survival and illustrate the history of the settlement.

The following buildings within the Conservation Area are currently listed locally:

- War Memorial, Essex Way, South Benfleet (NB. in 2008 this was listed at Grade II);
- Nos. 43-51, High Street, South Benfleet; and
- The Close.

As part of the appraisal of the Conservation Area, this document has identified heritage assets, which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and should be considered for local listing in the future. The following buildings are considered to have sufficient architectural interest and could be assessed for inclusion in the local list:

- 8 Essex Way (Aurora Salon);
- 53 & 55 High Street;
- 63 & 65 High Street; and
- 101 – 105 High Street.



Figure 6: 8 Essex Way, Aurora Salon



Figure 7: 53-55 and 63-65 High Street



Figure 8: 101-105 High Street

3.3. Archaeological Potential

Relatively little archaeological investigation has taken place within the settlement, however archaeological fieldwork has demonstrated the survival of medieval and postmedieval settlement remains and provided some evidence for Roman activity in the vicinity.

There are no prehistoric finds from within the Conservation Area. There is low potential for prehistoric finds or settlement.

Roman tile and brick, pottery, human remains and a possible well have all been recovered, these are suggestive of at least a small settlement, possibly a farm, with an accompanying cemetery,

located within the Conservation Area. There is high potential for further finds of Roman material within the Conservation Area.

Within the Conservation Area, there is high potential for survival of early medieval and medieval remains relating to the development and growth of the settlement. The Danes are recorded as having constructed a fort at Benfleet and moored their ships there, these were captured and burnt by King Alfred's Army in 894 at the Battle of Benfleet. Charred timbers and skeletons are reputed to have been found when the railway bridge over the inlet was built in the mid-nineteenth century, these have been identified as the defeated Danish fleet and soldiers.

The current church is believed to date from soon after the Norman Conquest. Evidence for an earlier small church constructed after the Battle of Benfleet may survive below the present church or within the church grounds. The churchyard has also been suggested as the possible site of the fort. There is the potential for remains of former buildings to survive in the churchyard.

The medieval core of South Benfleet was probably centred around the church. The medieval manor of South Benfleet Hall lay to the north of the church on the eastern edge of the Town Mead but this has been demolished. Eleventh to twelfth-century pottery and probable settlement evidence was found in the High Street north of The Anchor public house. The Anchor is the oldest surviving residential building in the settlement, dating from the fourteenth century. There is potential within open areas for preservation of further medieval remains.

Post-medieval development can be tracked from map sources, which show that in 1777 (Figure 10) there was a scatter of houses along the High Street. The 1840 Tithe map (Figure 11) shows

development down by the Creek, probably reflecting commercial growth. These buildings no longer survive. There is some potential for remains of other buildings to survive in open areas beside the road near the railway station.

The drains leading into the Creek may have the potential to preserve waterlogged remains as well as potential for earlier structures relating to water management and associated industrial activity along the river. Waterlogged deposits may also survive in deeper features such as wells and cess-pits and have the potential to preserve a greater range of archaeological remains to provide insight into the inhabitants of the town. The potential for survival of a wide range of archaeological material is likely, including coins and metal objects as well as bone, ceramic and building material.

3.4. Heritage at Risk

Historic England publishes a yearly list of Heritage at Risk. To be included on the list, buildings must be Grade II* listed or above, with the exception of Grade II listed places of worship and Grade II listed buildings in London.

Other designated heritage assets can also be included in Historic England's 'At Risk' Register, including conservation areas, Scheduled Monuments and Wreck Sites. Non-designated heritage assets are not considered by Historic England for inclusion on the Heritage at Risk Register.

There are no designated heritage assets within the South Benfleet Conservation Area on the Heritage at Risk Register at present.

4. Historical Development

The following section provides an overview of the history of South Benfleet Conservation Area and the surrounding area.

Prehistory (-500000 BCE – 43 AD)

The rich natural resources, and ease of communication, provided by the marshland and creeks have made the coastal areas of South East Essex attractive for human settlement from prehistoric times. Prior to the Romans, the area north of the Thames was occupied by the Catuvellauni and Essex was the eastern extent of their territory. However, no prehistoric finds have been discovered from within the Conservation Area to confirm prehistoric settlement in this location.

Roman (43 – 410 AD)

In May A.D. 43 the Romans made a successful attempt to invade the shores of Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. The fabric of the Church of St Mary the Virgin contains Roman tiles (Hallmann, 2005). The Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) lists the discovery of Roman pottery from the area of the Creek and High Street.¹ There may have been a small settlement or farm within the Conservation Area during this period.

¹ Essex HER ref: 14425, 7086, 7087, 7094 and 7173

Early Medieval (411 – 1065 AD)

Anglo-Saxons migrated to England about A.D. 500 and founded the Kingdom of Essex about A.D. 527. Coastal areas of Essex were particularly important in the Anglo-Saxon period, and this is the period when Benfleet was first referenced 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 within St. Mary's churchyard, which was believed to have been protected by water on three sides. Furthermore, when the railway bridge over the inlet from the Creek was constructed, charred ships and skeletons, identified as the remains of the Danish fleet and soldiers defeated by Alfred's men, are said to have been found².

Benfleet was mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (A.D. 963) as *Beamfleote*. *Beam* is an early form of *Baum* in present German meaning 'tree' and *fleote* is believed to be a word for 'flowing stream' or *Fluss*.

Medieval (1066 – 1540 AD)

Prior to the Norman Conquest, Benfleet was part of *Barstable Hundred* and part of the Parish of Benfleet belonged to the nuns

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

of St Mary at Barking during the reign of Edward the Confessor. In the Domesday Book, South Benfleet is identified as a manor which belonged to Barking Abbey. After 1066, William the Conqueror gave Benfleet to the Abbey of Westminster. The manor house, South Benfleet Hall, was located just to the north of the church but has been demolished. According to Sir Charles Nicholson, there was probably a small church constructed after the Battle of Benfleet and led by a priest from Barking Abbey. The present church is believed to date to soon after the Norman Conquest. The parish magazine in 1928 provided a likely description of the twelfth century church. Benfleet's vicar was appointed by Westminster Abbey and the earliest known vicar was John de Cornubiensis (1189-98) (Hallmann, 2005).

The Medieval village core of South Benfleet was probably centred on the church, and the road junction just to the south-east of it. The High Road was formerly known as North Street, Essex Way was East Street, and the High Street was Church Street (Chisman, 1991). Eleventh- to twelfth-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 Mahal restaurant)³.

The Anchor Inn is the oldest surviving domestic building in the village, dating from the fourteenth century (Figure 20). It was constructed by Westminster craftsmen and was possibly a hall for the manorial court or for a religious guild attached to the church. It

is thought to have been a stopover for pilgrims departing for Kent and Canterbury in the post-medieval period. The only other domestic medieval building in the Conservation Area is the Hoy and Helmet public house, which is fifteenth- or sixteenth century in date (Figure 28).

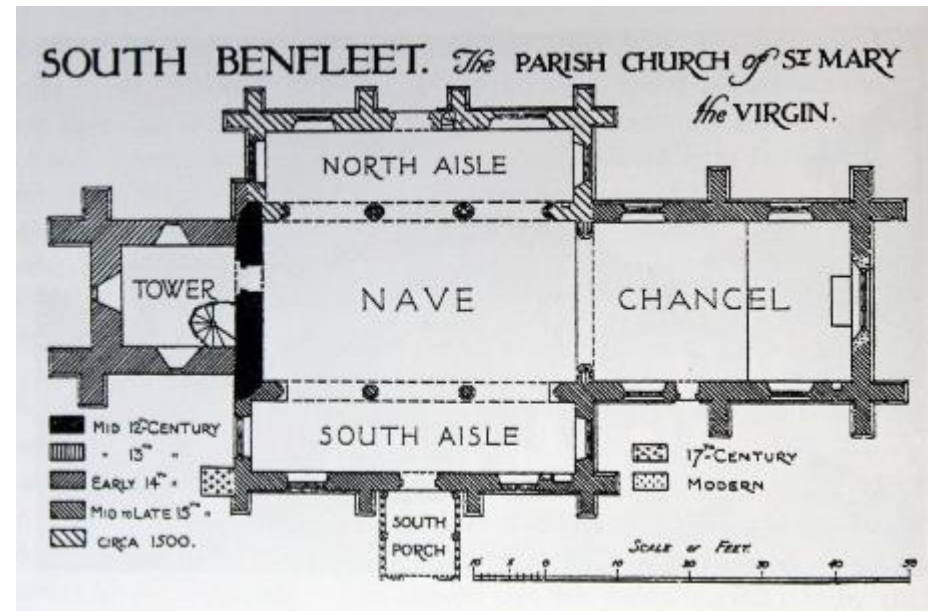


Figure 9: Phasing plan of St Mary's Church (Hallmann, 2005)

Post-Medieval (1541 – 1901 AD)

The Chapman and André map of 1777 depicts the village centre comprising houses lining the main streets (Figure 10). This is

³ Essex HER Ref: 7237/8

consistent with the 1671 Hearth Tax evidence which indicates that there were little more than 20 households⁴. The Tithe map of 1840 (Figure 11) shows more development to the south by the Creek, presumably reflecting growing commercial activity. Only a few of the buildings on the Tithe map survive today. Both 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 occupied by wharves and sheds associated with the port activity representing South Benfleet's economy of the medieval and post-medieval periods. Houses were constructed in The Close, formerly South Street, which was historically the residential core of South Benfleet and 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. It accommodated commercial activities such as farm agents, shoemakers, a poulterer, a blacksmith, a dressmaker, and a carrier (Hallmann, 2005).

The arrival of the railway to South Benfleet in 1855 brought a significant change in the morphology of the settlement, which is first evident on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1867 (Figure 12). The introduction of the railway infrastructure entailed the removal of some buildings by the Creek and the reshaping of the side of Benfleet Downs. The monopoly of the harbour in the movement of people and goods was over. Maritime commercial activities were reduced and consequently many jobs and business premises along the Creek were lost.



Figure 10: Extract from the Map of Essex (1777) by John Chapman & Peter André

⁴ Essex Record Office Ref: Q/RTh 5



Figure 11: Extract from the Tithe Apportionment map of 1840

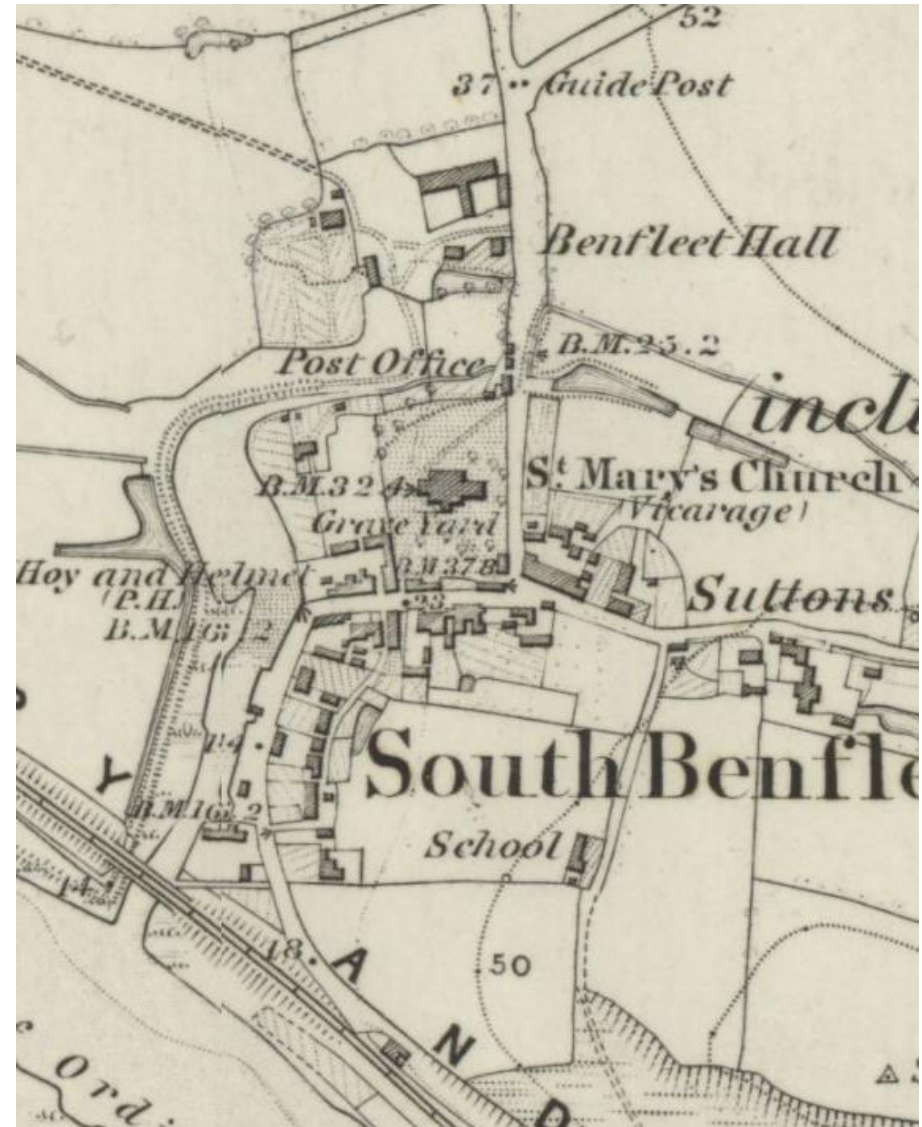


Figure 12: Extract from the OS Map of 1867

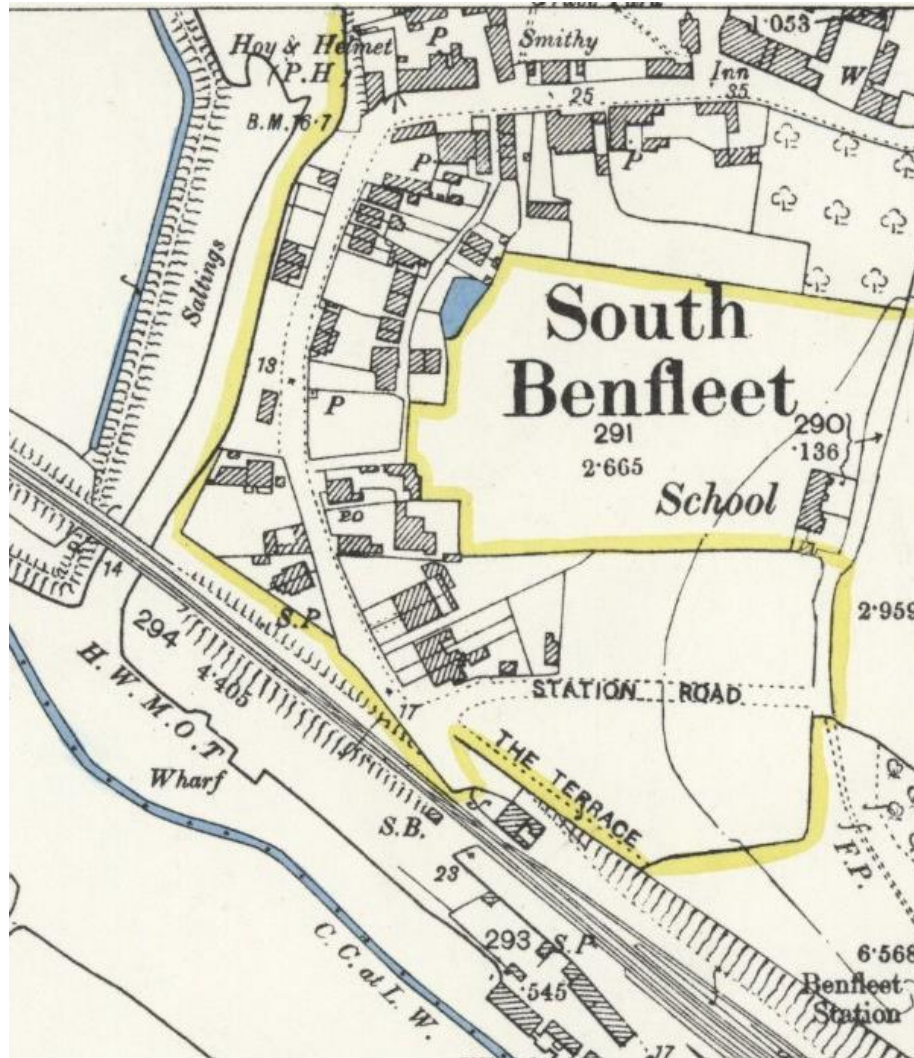


Figure 13: Extract from the OS Map of 1897

At the south end of the village, between High Street and School Lane, a new residential street - Station Road - was laid out in the last quarter of the century, first shown on the 1897 OS map (Figure 13). The original railway station was located further south-east by the ferry link to Canvey. The station was moved to its current location in 1912. New plots of residential and possibly commercial development too were added to the west side of the High Street on the bank of the Creek.



Figure 14: A historic photo looking southeast across the Creek © Peter Gillard Collection, Benfleet Community Archive (<https://www.benfleethistory.org.uk/content/browse-articles/topics/historic-benfleet/bellevue-43-high-street-south-benfleet>)

Modern (1902-Present)

The twentieth century brought some infill developments within the Conservation Area. Buildings on the west side of High Street, a smithy and possibly other craftsmen's premises, and cottages on the east and south sides of the churchyard were demolished between the wars.

South Benfleet has associations with Sir Charles Nicholson, one of the outstanding church architects of the twentieth century. His family lived in Benfleet, and he was buried in the churchyard. He was the architect of 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.



Figure 15: Sir Charles Archibald Nicholson, 2nd Bt (1867–1949), Architect and Inhabitant of Porters [Porters Grange?], Image credit: Southend-on-Sea City Council

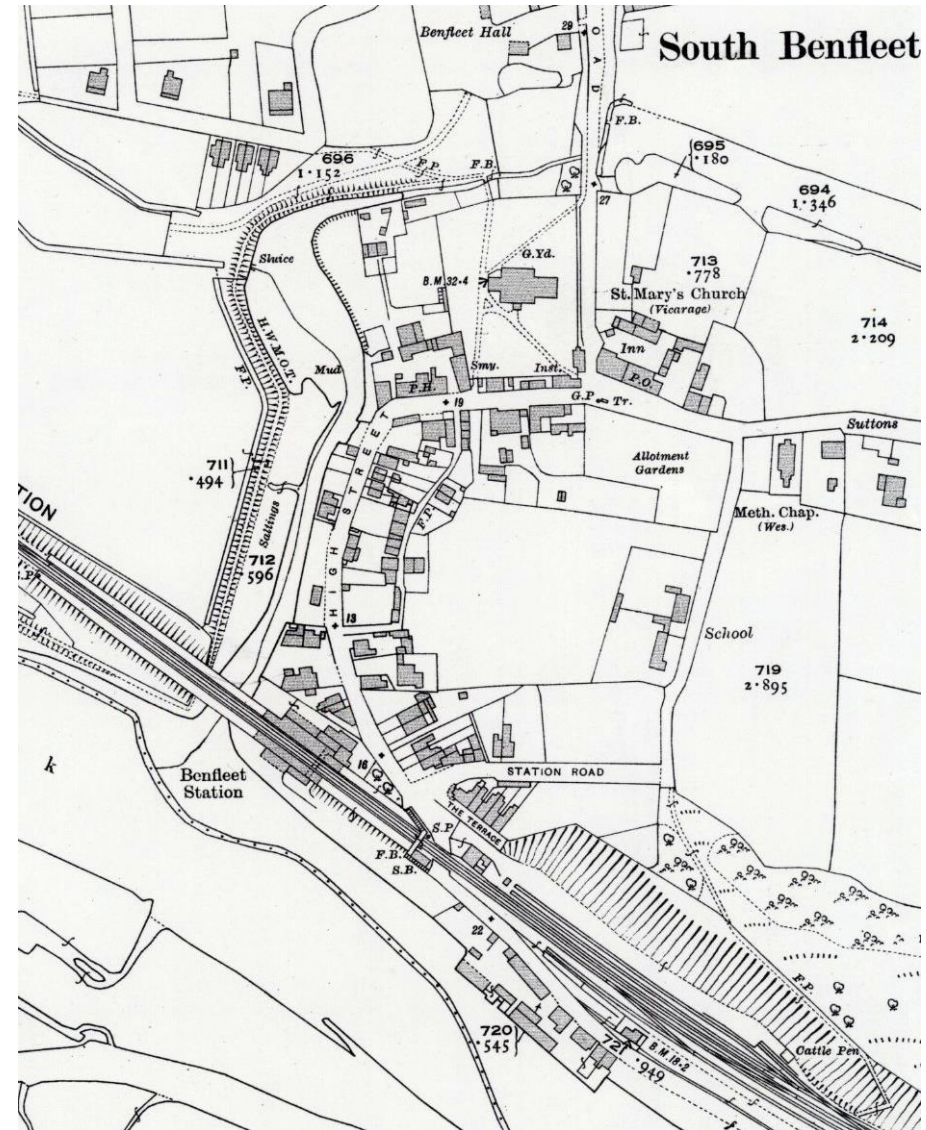


Figure 16: Extract from the OS Map of 1919

5. Assessment of Significance

5.1. Architectural and Historic Interest

Conservation areas are designated due to their special architectural or historic interest. Many conservation areas have both architectural and historic interest although the level of each varies. These values can be summarised as:

Architectural interest: An interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures.

Historic interest: An interest in past lives and events.⁵

Further information regarding how historic and architectural interest is assessed can be found in *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12*, published by Historic England (2019).

The historic and architectural special interest of South Benfleet Conservation Area is derived from its development from a medieval village, based on the natural resources and maritime communication facilities, and its evolution through the post-medieval period due to changes in industry and transport.



Figure 17: The Close

Significant traces of the medieval settlement of South Benfleet and its rural setting are still legible. Historic buildings, the creeks, the railway and open spaces distinguish the Conservation Area from its surrounding areas. Despite large scale twentieth-century developments in the surrounding countryside and significant urbanisation, the historic village centre comprising the Conservation Area has only seen piecemeal small-scale developments, mostly sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area. As a result, South Benfleet's inherent form

⁵ Paragraph 006, ref: 18a-006-20190723, 'Historic Environment', *National Planning Policy Guidance*, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019.

and pattern of development have not been diluted. The extent of the early settlement is still clearly defined by the surviving historic buildings, streets, lanes, alleys and spaces, which provide evidence of the area's historic character and a gradual evolution over the centuries.

Despite being a small village, South Benfleet has a wealth of attractive historic buildings ranging in date from the twelfth to the nineteenth century. The medieval core of the village, centred on St Mary's Church, and the Victorian expansion towards the south provide the form of the Conservation Area.

The historic core of the village was and remains the commercial buildings on High Street and the tightly knit residential buildings along The Close. The principal historic buildings within the Conservation Area are the Grade I listed St Marys Church, Grade II* listed The Anchor, Grade II listed Hoy and Helmet and the Half Crown Inn, which are significant to the special architectural interest of the area. These are all landmark buildings and have a positive effect on the character and appearance of the area.

The arrival of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century had a considerable impact on South Benfleet. The harbour-based commercial activities gradually reduced while more houses were built to the south of the village.

The open spaces to the west and south of the built up area and the semi-rural setting also make an important contribution to the understanding of the historic core of the settlement and its character.

Overall, the character and appearance of South Benfleet are derived from its historic buildings, streets and spaces, providing a strong sense of place.



Figure 18: High Street, looking north



Figure 19: St Mary's Church



Figure 21: Victorian Buildings at the south end of High Street



Figure 20: The Anchor Inn



Figure 22: View West from Station Road

5.2. Character Areas: Overview

As part of this appraisal, South Benfleet Conservation Area has been divided into three Character Areas:

Character Area One: Old Village Centre

Character Area Two: Victorian development

Character Area Three: Open Space

The areas have been determined by building typology, historical development, land use and appearance. Many of the defining characteristics of each character area are present and repeated in other parts of the Conservation Area, which emphasises the overriding character and significance of the Conservation Area. The following descriptions are not exhaustive, aiming instead to provide accessible accounts of each character area, which will allow for an informed understanding of the Conservation Area's special interest and defining features.

Prevailing architectural styles, building materials, spatial planning, landscaping and boundary materials are detailed in the description of each character area to highlight their special architectural and historic value. Photographs are included to aid the descriptions, providing examples where appropriate to inform the understanding of this document.

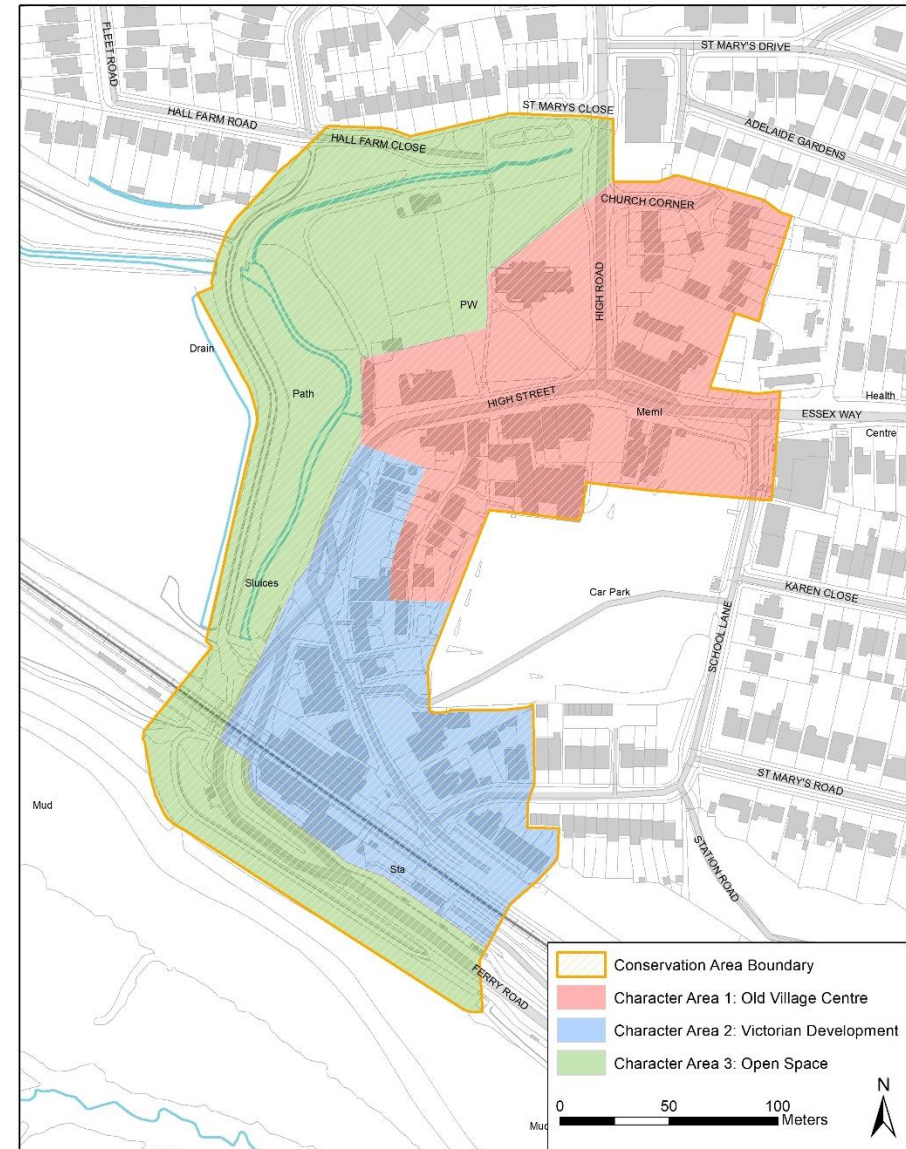


Figure 23: Map of Character Areas identified in the Conservation Area

Designated buildings or structures, which make a notable contribution to each character area are described in the following sections. However, the omission of any buildings from the description does not mean they make no contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Non-designated buildings or features deemed to reflect and enhance the special interest of the Conservation Area are also identified in the descriptions of each character area.

Key views have been identified within each character area, and views from outside the Conservation Area from which its special interest can be recognised are also highlighted where appropriate. There may, nevertheless, be other views of significance within or beyond the Conservation Area's boundary which contribute to how the area is appreciated and understood. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or its environs, should thus not only consider the views identified within this document but also any others which may be relevant or highlighted as part of a bespoke assessment of that proposal.



Figure 24: Close-knit built-up area of the Old Village Centre



Figure 25: Open spaces west of High Street

5.3. Character Area One: Old Village Centre

Description

This area encompasses the medieval core of the village and is characterised by a close-knit development at the north end, on the relatively higher ground close to St Mary's Church. The junction between High Road, Essex Way to the east and High Street to the west forms a focal point of the village centre.



Figure 26: Benfleet war memorial

The buildings within this character area are located on narrow long plots, with the commercial buildings fronting onto High Street and Essex Way. The row of modern houses in Church Corner, fronting

on to High Road, is constructed on the former site of a historic cottage and garden associated with The Anchor Inn. All other residential buildings within this character area are located along The Close, a discrete historic lane with a tight sense of enclosure. Historically, however, The Close (formerly South Street), accommodated commercial activities such as farm agents, shoemakers, poulterer, blacksmith, dressmaker, and a carrier (Hallmann, 2005). Although only a few of the buildings shown on the Tithe Map survive today, the concentration of the built-up area within the historic core is still legible. Almost all existing buildings within this character area have rendered or weather-boarded exteriors reflecting the earlier timber-framed buildings with tiled roofs.

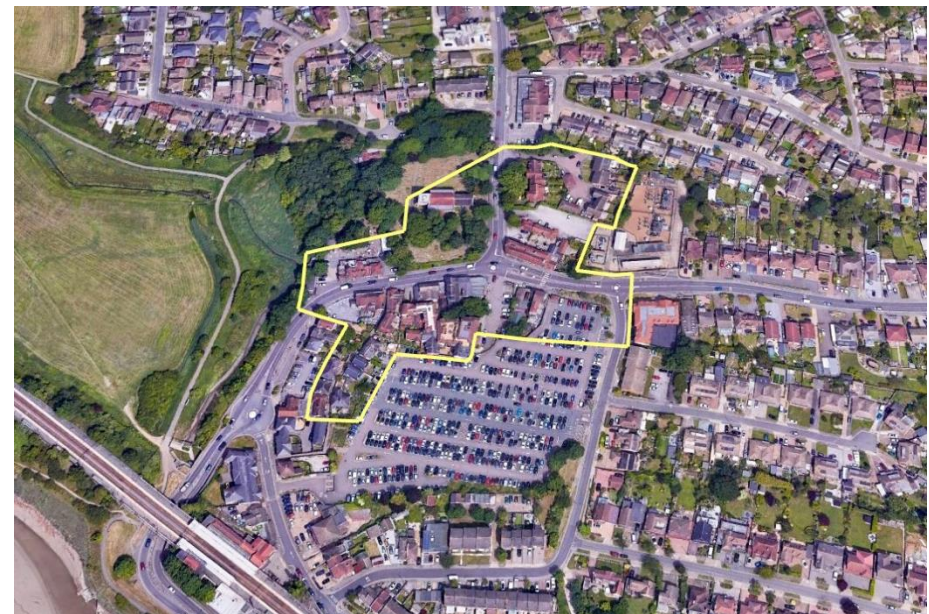


Figure 27: Aerial View (Google) shows the high concentration of buildings within the Old Village Centre Character Area

The High Road part of this character area provides a more spacious and verdant feel at the northern entrance into the Conservation Area. The modern properties at Church Corner have a considerable set back with deep front gardens and boundary hedges and mature trees fronting High Road. To the west of High Road is the churchyard, with a low stone boundary wall and mature trees. St Mary's Church and the churchyard are an important element of the character area. The churchyard is large and accessed from the junction of High Road and High Street and an avenue of lime trees leads to the church's south porch. A north-south footpath through the churchyard connects High Street with Hall Farm Close and a spur off to the northeast leads to High Road. The footpath has a number of Victorian style street lamps.

Layout and Land Usage

There is a mix of residential and commercial buildings in the village centre. Most of the structures lining High Street are used for commercial purposes, with residential flats on their upper floors. Public houses, restaurants, and takeaways are the most prominent single uses. The Close is lined by solely residential buildings with the exception of The Conservative Club. A few contemporary apartment buildings can be seen in the wider setting. The business uses, predominantly catering, are dependent on car parking. As a result, there are several car parks within the character area.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

St Mary's churchyard to the north of High Street and the car parks are the only unbuilt areas within the character area. There is very limited landscaping at the core of the village. There are rear gardens to 43 to 51 High Street and a few properties on The Close

have private gardens. The front gardens of the modern development at Church Corner and the hedges and treelined boundaries of St Marys churchyard make a significant contribution to the greenery of this character area.

Landmark and Key Buildings

Designated

The Grade I listed St Mary's Church (Figure 19) is the principal landmark building of the Conservation Area. It is a large and impressive building constructed mainly of grey Kentish ragstone with levelling courses of brick and tile including Roman brick and tile. The church dates from the twelfth century, but the majority of its fabric is from the fifteenth century. The chancel arch is thirteenth century and the tower is early fourteenth century. The twentieth century chancel screen was designed by the architect Sir Charles Nicholson. The tower has angle buttresses at the base and an eighteenth century spire housing six bells. The bells are from various dates from 1636 onwards and the latest one was added in 1949. The north aisle and clerestory date to circa 1500. The fifteenth century porch to the south is a very attractive feature of the church. It is an elaborately decorated carved timber-framed structure with a hammerbeam roof. The front gable panelling and traceries of the lights on each side are of considerable interest.

The churchyard includes a group of Grade II listed funerary monuments: Tombstone of Sir Charles Nicholson and family; a Table Tomb Approximately 14 Metres South of the South Porch; and a group of four headstones between 18 and 22 metres southeast of South Porch.

The Anchor Inn (Figure 20), located northeast of the junction between Essex Way, High Road and High Street, is a Grade II* listed timber-framed building of fourteenth century derivation. The rear range dates from the seventeenth century and the outbuilding to the right dates from the eighteenth century. To the rear of the public house is a yard (staff car park) formed by nineteenth century stock brick stables and outbuildings. The pub building has a jettied first floor that is rendered and late nineteenth century brick cladding at ground level. The building has considerable landmark quality owing to its prominent position and attractive wide façade. It makes a significant contribution to the townscape and gives the busy junction a sense of place.

The South Benfleet War Memorial (Figure 26), located east of the junction, is Grade II listed. The portland stone memorial forms a focal point at the junction. It was designed by Sir Charles Nicholson and carved by Percy Def Smith in 1920 to commemorate the men of South Benfleet, who lost their lives in the First World War. A nearby memorial to those killed in the Second World War was added later. A tall grey lamppost and several other highway paraphernalia detract from the architectural interest of the memorial.

The Hoy and Helmet Inn (Figure 28) is a Grade II listed Public House. It was originally a fifteenth century or earlier hall house. Several later additions of variable shapes and sizes resulted in a long frontage on a plot which slopes downhill. The roofscape comprising varying heights and pitches of red plain tiled roofs and three tall brick chimney stacks makes it an attractive and picturesque building in the Conservation Area. It is highly prominent too, as the only appreciable building on the northwest

side of High Street and the only building in the village with a clearly recognisable late medieval exterior.



Figure 28: The Hoy and Helmet



Figure 29: The Half Crown

The Half Crown Inn at 25-29 High Street (Figure 29) is a Grade II listed timber-framed building with red brick Georgian façade. The building is believed to date from the eighteenth century or earlier. It is located opposite the Hoy and Helmet Inn, just before High Street takes a sharp bend to the south. Its prominent red brick façade contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Conservative Club at 67-69 High Street is a large Grade II listed building comprising a seventeenth century timber-framed house on The Close linked by a flat roofed structure to a twentieth century building fronting High Street. The earlier part is timber-framed and plastered. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal from 2006 reported internal timber framing and eighteenth century timber panelling with remarkable painted scenes.

Nos.5 and 7 The Close are a pair of early nineteenth century timber-framed cottages with timber weatherboarded exteriors and sash windows. They have been extended at two-storeys to the north, but as vernacular cottages make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

There are two Grade II listed nineteenth century street lamps on The Close. These have cast iron fluted stems with moulded capitals and bases. The lamps are four sided, flared at the top and capped with hipped heads and acorn finials. They are rare survivals of historic street furniture which contribute to the historic character of The Close.

Non-designated

The buildings lining The Close are locally listed as a group (Figure 30). The attractive rendered and timber clad elevations facing on to the medieval lane provide an attractive pedestrian route that contributes to the local character and distinctiveness of South Benfleet. The two semi-detached pairs of houses 53 & 55 High Street and 63 & 65 High Street, both backing on to The Close, are also of interest. These buildings are among the few surviving buildings that were shown on the 1840 Tithe map. Both were originally double-fronted buildings and, although 53 & 55 High Street have been altered, they retain their architectural interest and character. 63 & 65 High Street still have their original timber sash windows.



Figure 30: Buildings at The Close are locally listed as a group

No. 8 Essex Way (Aurora) is an attractive late nineteenth century building located opposite The Anchor Inn. Despite some unsympathetic alterations and additions to the building, the distinctive brick and tile courses, red brick arches above the openings and the brick parapet contribute positively to the streetscene and the local townscape. This building should also be assessed for inclusion in the local list.

Building Materials

Roofs

The roofs of the earlier buildings within the old village centre are hipped or gabled and are predominantly covered in red clay plain tiles. The Victorian buildings and some of the modern buildings have slate roofs. The large apartment block Hoymans Wharf at 21

High Street, developed recently to the rear of 9-19 High Street, has an unusual narrow sunken crown roof.

Walls

The earlier buildings are timber-framed with render and timber weatherboard or red brick cladding. The Anchor Inn has been clad with red brick at the ground floor and rendered above. The Hoy and Helmet has applied timber and render at first floor level. The Half Crown Inn has an eighteenth-century brick façade. The seventeenth century part of the Grade II listed Conservative Club has original timber-framing exposed externally at first floor. The later additions within the core of the village respect and reinforce local character with rendered or timber clad exteriors. The Victorian buildings have brick and render exteriors. St Mary's Church is constructed of grey Kentish ragstone with occasional brick and tile courses.

Windows and Doors

The older buildings have good quality timber sash and casement windows, although most have been replaced and only a few original timber sash windows survive. Surviving timber windows make a positive contribution to the area's architectural interest. The majority of the later buildings have timber windows, while some of the Victorian buildings have replacement uPVC windows which detract from the character and appearance of the area. The first-floor window openings of Mumtaz Mahal at 10 Essex Way have ogee arched heads, remodelled to reflect historic South Asian architecture.

Boundary Treatments

The most notable boundary treatment within this character area is the low stone wall of the churchyard along High Road and the T-junction. The churchyard has a hedged boundary with High Street. There is a metal fence on concrete plinth along High Road opposite the churchyard. The small section of brick wall with piers and metal railings opposite The Anchor Inn provides some screening to the Station Car Park. This features an attractive brick panel with a cast iron plaque recounting the history of South Benfleet (Figure 31). However, the metal palisade fence behind the brick panel is a poor-quality boundary treatment. The close boarded fence behind the Half Crown, which features in an important northwest view on the bend of High Street, including the Hoy and Helmet and the church tower, is a detracting feature.



Figure 31: St Marys Churchyard wall and brick panel with a cast iron plaque

Public Realm

The public realm largely consists of the main roads. It is generally free from clutter aside from street furniture and advertisements. Road name signs include the words 'South Benfleet Conservation Area' which is beneficial in raising awareness of the designation.

Views

Important views within Character Area One, which contribute to the overall significance of the Conservation Area, including how it is interpreted and understood, are highlighted on the Views Map (Figure 43).

Views looking from north to south at High Road with the churchyard to the right and the verdant front gardens of 1-5 Church Corner to the left provide a sense of entrance to the historic settlement. In the westward view from Essex Way towards the T-junction, the war memorial is a focal point, flanked by The Anchor Inn, Mumtaz Mahal and Aurora (Salon). The northwest view on the bend of High Street is picturesque, including the Half Crown, the Hoy and Helmet and the church tower in the backdrop. Both north and southward views at The Close are important and provide a sense of the tightly knit residential development in the historic village. However, views of School Lane Car Park from the junction of High Street and Essex Way are negative in their contribution to the area's character and appearance.



Figure 32: Positive views within Character Area One: view east along Essex Way; and view northwest along High Street

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths and weaknesses within the character area are highlighted in the following table. These elements have been identified to help guide future development and are discussed in further detail within Section 6: Opportunities for Enhancement and Section 7: Management Proposals of this document.

The terms are defined as:

Strength: an element of the character area which makes an active and positive contribution to the overall special interest of the conservation area.

Weakness: a detracting element which dilutes or undermines the special interest of the conservation area.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Surviving late medieval and post medieval buildings	Loss of original windows
Sense of place due to the pattern of development	Use of uPVC windows
Good quality, traditional building materials	Heavy traffic through the village
Sympathetically designed modern infill developments	Poor quality street furniture
The church as a landmark building	Poor quality shopfronts and signs, some with internal illumination
The tranquil green space provided by the churchyard	Car parking on the forecourt to 8 Essex Way (Aurora)

5.4. Character Area Two: Victorian Development

Description

This character area is defined by the development and southward expansion of the village in the late nineteenth century following the arrival of the railway. The railway infrastructure and Victorian houses built along the southern end of High Street have a clearly different layout, built character and appearance from the old village centre. High Street and Ferry Road separate the character area from the open spaces and creek to the west (Character Area Three). Ferry Road runs south and under the railway beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area. The southwest part of the character area is dominated by the railway and associated buildings.

Few Victorian buildings survive and a number of larger buildings in this part of the Conservation Area date to the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Taller frontages, the use of stock brick, hipped slate roofs, gauged brick arched windows and canted bay windows distinguish the Victorian development from the buildings within the historic core of the Conservation Area. Where late nineteenth and early twentieth buildings survive, even if altered, they are positive in their contribution to the area's historic and architectural interest in permitting an appreciation of its growth and development at this time. The more recent developments within this part of the Conservation Area largely follow the principles of the Essex Design Guide and are easily recognised as new development.

The houses built on the west side of High Street in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century no longer survive. 43 to 51 High

Street, described below, are examples of surviving Victorian houses towards the north of the village. 81-83 High Street (a taxi firm and a barber shop) is a late nineteenth century semi-detached pair, which probably had a double fronted composition originally but have been subject to significant alterations.



Figure 33: Aerial View (Google) showing the clear domination of the railway and more loose-knit Victorian development of Character Area Two.

The large building (Ross Wharf) south of the junction between High Street and Ferry Road is a modern development which replaced a former garden centre. Further south is a pair of double fronted Victorian cottages (nos. 80-82 High Street), which currently accommodate shops at ground floor level and have been subject to unsympathetic alterations. A single-storey range comprising a restaurant and café (84 High Street) is an early twentieth century

addition. The station building dates to the early twentieth century from when the station was moved to this position in 1912. The building retains its original form and legibility and is a positive contributor.



Figure 34: Nos. 43-51 High Street



Figure 35: Unsympathetically altered Victorian properties.

The semi-detached pairs at 95-97 High Street and the terrace 101-105 High Street represent typical Victorian dwellings of the character area. To the southernmost end of High Street, after the junction with Station Road, two cottages from a late Victorian terrace of five cottages survive. A late twentieth century terrace of five houses was erected in the location of the former cottages. A group of historic outbuildings related to the corner shop at 105 High Street are located on the north side of Station Road, followed by a nineteenth century pair of semidetached houses that have been heavily modernised.

The southwest side of the railway comprises a number of modern railway buildings and structures, a number of mature trees and the railway bridge.

Layout and Land Usage

The majority of the buildings in this character area are residential with the exception of The Belle Vue dental surgery and the Conservative Club (the front of the building is within Character Area Two). The south end of High Street is comparatively less busy, and the commercial activities are based on small businesses. A taxi service and barber shop at nos. 81-83 High Street, a car garage with forecourt for used car sales at no. 95 High Street, a café and a beauty salon 80-84 High Street, and an estate agent's office at 105 High Street. The station building east of the railway has two small shops. There is a triangular car parking area east of the station building behind 80 High Street.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

Apart from the grass lawn to the south of the junction between High Street and Ferry Road and two small patches of shrubs to the west and north (next to the Conservative Club), there is no significant landscaped area within the public realm. Limited landscaping is provided along the car park in front of 55-65 High Street, which is separated from the traffic island by a red brick wall with railings. This small area of landscaping helps to soften the views to the south, otherwise there is excessive unsightly hardstanding and tarmac. The communal garden area for the flats at Ross Wharf and the private gardens of a few properties at High Street have green areas. The conversion of the rear gardens of 81-83 and 95-97 High Street to hard landscaped car parks has adversely affected the amount of local green space. The front gardens of 43-51 High Street, 1-2 The Forge and the hedges and trees to the front of The Terrace at the southern end of the Conservation Area provide small areas of important greenery for the character area.

Landmark and Key Buildings

Designated

There are no listed buildings within the character area.

Non-designated

Numbers 43-51 High Street are locally listed. The nineteenth century row comprises two semi-detached pairs and a detached building. The northern-most is now Belle Vue Dental Surgery and the adjoining Ivy and Rose Cottages (43-47 High Street) retain their original form with pronounced gables on to High Street. Both gable ends feature decorative barge boards and finials. The

shallow arched headed window openings with keystones at first floor, the front door with a semi-circular fanlight and keystone, and the ground floor bay window at number 43 contribute to its architectural interest. The replacement uPVC windows detract from its appearance. Ivy and Rose Cottages are symmetrical with good brick detailing articulating the door and window openings. The large chimney stacks and weather-boarded side elevations are of interest. Although the replacement windows are regrettable, it is one of the most well-preserved Victorian buildings of the area. Nos 49-51 retain their original form, but the rendered exterior and chimneystack and unsympathetic windows detract from their architectural interest. All three buildings have gardens with low brick walls to the front. The buildings all contribute to the area's character and appearance.



Figure 36: A historic photo of these locally listed buildings © Peter Gillard Collection, Benfleet Community Archive (<https://www.benfleethistory.org.uk/content/browse-articles/topics/historic-benfleet/bellevue-43-high-street-south-benfleet>)

The Victorian terrace of cottages at 101-105 High Street represents is typical of development in the south end of the village. These properties retain their original form and architectural features and make a positive contribution to the streetscene and local townscape.

Building Materials

Roofs

The Victorian houses have hipped roofs and it is likely they would originally have had slate roof tiles. However, the majority of the nineteenth-century buildings now have clay tile roofs. The early

twentieth century single-storey range next to the station currently has an unsympathetic concrete tiled roof. The recent infill developments within the character area have slated hipped roofs which reflect the nineteenth century building stock.

Walls

Most of the Victorian buildings are of yellow London stock brick. These bricks were probably made locally as there were brickworks at Benfleet in the nineteenth century. The majority of these brick buildings have now been rendered and/or painted. The late twentieth century additions within the character area are brick buildings with part render or timber weatherboard. The only example of a tile-hung exterior in this character area is 7 Station Road, which has been subject to significant alterations.

Windows and Doors

The Victorian properties would originally have had timber sash windows. Most would have had two-over-two lights. Aside from 101-105 High Street, which retain their original windows, unfortunately, all other nineteenth century windows have been replaced with unsympathetic uPVC windows. The replacement windows at 81- 83 High Street are metal. Where traditional timber windows survive, they are of particular interest.

Boundary Treatments

The low brick wall to the front of 43-51 High Street and the brick wall with railings bounding the car park next to the Conservative Club are good examples of boundary treatments in the character area. However, the close-boarded fence with concrete posts in front of 63-65 High Street detracts from the area and the close-

boarded fence on concrete base and concrete posts on both sides of 81-83 High Street are also unsympathetic. The boundary wall between the School Lane Car Park and the disabled parking area accessed from High Street is currently a concrete plank wall which is incongruous and unsympathetic to the local character.

The modern developments at The Forge and Ross Wharf have low brick walls to the front. The nineteenth century brick wall with engineering brick coping and plinth to the front of the terrace gardens probably separated these houses from the approach to the original railway station. The boundary wall itself has local historic and architectural interest.

A large section of boundary treatment within this character area is the metal railing on concrete base along the west side of High Street and Ferry Road. Towards the south end, the concrete base is significantly higher and topped with metal palisade fencing. This boundary treatment does not make a positive contribution to the local townscape and affects the visual relationship of the village with the Creek and open landscape to the west. A metal sculpture representing a Viking horse head has been installed just outside the fence opposite the junction of High Street and Ferry Road to commemorate the Battle of Benfleet, and this contributes positively in enhancing understanding of the area's history. The metal palisade fences around the railway station buildings are a poor-quality boundary treatment.



Figure 37: Excessive metal fencing along Ferry Road

Public Realm

The public realm largely consists of the main roads. It is generally free from clutter, aside from street furniture and advertisements. Road name signs include the words 'South Benfleet Conservation Area' which is beneficial in raising awareness of the designation.

Views

Important views within Character Area Two, which contribute to the overall significance of the Conservation Area, including how it is interpreted and understood, are highlighted on the Views Map (Figure 43).

Approaching from both north and east, and after passing through the older part of the village, the views to the south at the southwestern bend of High Street reveal the Victorian developments and railway infrastructure of South Benfleet. The nineteenth century built character and appearance of this part of

the Conservation Area is clearly legible in these views. Further along High Street, the southeastern views towards the station from the junction of Ferry Road give a more local feel and the appearance of a Victorian residential area. A similar localised impression and the domination of the railway infrastructure is experienced in views of the Conservation Area from the steep rise of Station Road. Views of School Lane Car Park from the south end of High Street detract from the significance of the area.

Views looking northeast at Ferry Road are also important, as they provide unobstructed views into the village and the impression of entering a historic settlement through the Victorian development with the medieval church tower in the backdrop.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Well preserved Victorian properties	Loss of original windows and replacement uPVC windows
Surviving architectural features of Victorian houses i.e., decorative brickwork, hipped roofs, canted bay windows.	Render and other interventions to the original brick exteriors
Low brick boundary walls to the front of the houses	Loss of front gardens and boundary walls

	The car garage and forecourt opposite the station
	Loss of rear gardens to hard landscaping for car parking
	Poor quality shop fronts and signage
	Poor quality boundary treatments
	Detracting car parking area, commercial bin storage and palisade fencing to the rear of the station building

5.5.Character Area Three: Open Space

Description

This character area includes a significant portion of the Conservation Area, including part of the churchyard and woodland to the north and northwest and Church Creek and associated open landscape to the west. The open space in this part of the Conservation Area varies from a wooded appearance to open scrubland and marsh. The northern part of the churchyard is accessible from High Road by a footpath up to Hall Farm Close. This open space includes landscaped areas of formal planting and is continuous with the woodland beyond the churchyard boundary. North of the churchyard there runs a stream connected to Church Creek by a ditch coming down from Benfleet Marsh. Brook Cottage at No. 2 Hall Farm Close is the only building in the character area and believed to be one of the earlier buildings in the Conservation Area.

The remaining linear section of the character area to the south comprises Church Creek and a tarmac footpath on the old dyke or embankment along the west side of the Creek. There is a ditch on the west side of the footpath. The nineteenth century maps illustrate Church Creek as wide and tidal. However, its legibility and significance as a landscape feature that had considerable influence on the development of the settlement have been diminished since it became isolated from the tidal Benfleet Creek. It is now relatively narrow with a low water level and its former relationship with the village is not recognisable. Due to boundary screening along High Street and Ferry Road the visual connection between the village and the Creek has been lost. The only building clearly visible from the character area is the Gambero D'oro

restaurant adjacent to the grounds of the Hoy and Helmet. The public footpath, however, provides access to this important open space within the Conservation Area, including attractive views of the natural landscape. Towards the south end, the footpath splits leading down to the pavement of Ferry Road via concrete steps and also continues southeast along the bank of Benfleet Creek. A large amount of hardstanding and the concrete revetment of the sluice gate at the south end of Church Creek are detrimental to the appearance of the character area.



Figure 38: Aerial View (Google) showing the Character Area Three consisting of extensive open space and woodland.

Notwithstanding the changes to the landscape within this character area, it makes an important contribution to the Conservation Area's character and appearance. It is of historic interest in permitting an understanding of South Benfleet's origins as a settlement and the

importance of the waterways in the growth of the settlement, prior to the construction of the railway.

Layout and Land Usage

The character area comprises open green space and footpaths. It also includes the northern part of St Mary's Churchyard and the grass verges along Hall Farm Close. The only building in the character area is 2 Hall Farm Close (Brook Cottage) which is a detached single storey residential property.



Figure 39: 2 Hall Farm Cottage

Landscaping and Open Spaces

The whole of the character area is an area of open landscape through which Church Creek runs. It is an important area of open space with natural landscape features which contributes to the historic interest of the Conservation Area. There are formal planting and landscaped areas to the north of the churchyard.

Landmark and Key Buildings

Designated

There are no listed buildings in the character area.

Non-designated

The only building in the character area is Brook Cottage at 2 Hall Farm Close. A single-storey white rendered brick building with half-timbered gable and large window openings. It is believed to be one of the two cottages marked to the north of the church on the 1840 Tithe map. The cottage is a good example of a modest vernacular cottage within the Conservation Area, and it makes a positive contribution to the area's character and appearance. 2 Hall Farm Close is not locally listed.

Building Materials

With only one building, building materials are not a prevalent feature of this character area. However, the cottage at 2 Hall Farm Close features a number of traditional materials and details. The roofs are clay pantiles, walls are rendered, and the windows are double and triple light casement windows with glazing bars. The gable ends also feature some timber framing detail.

Boundary Treatments

The churchyard boundary within this character area is its only notable boundary treatment. The low Kentish ragstone boundary wall along High Road and to the north has a brick soldier course capping and contributes positively to the setting of the church and the appearance of the Conservation Area. The churchyard boundary with the Hoy and Helmet Public House is a brick wall. 2 Hall Farm Close has a timber fenced rear garden and a small section of the fence is visible in the public realm. To the south end of the public footpath between Church Creek and Ferry Road there is poor quality steel fencing.

Public Realm

The public realm largely comprises public footpaths and is generally free from clutter aside from the unsightly metal fence at the southern end of the character area.



Figure 40: Landscaped footpath north of St Marys churchyard

Views

Important views within Character Area Three which contribute to the overall significance of the Conservation Area, including how it is interpreted and understood, are highlighted on the Views Map (Figure 43).



Figure 41: Open space and footpath to the west of High Street

The views from the footpaths within St Mary’s churchyard are important, as the churchyard is a significant component of the Conservation Area. Views of the public footpath looking both south and north include Church Creek and help understanding of its former relationship with the village. Views in both directions from the footpath on the south side of Ferry Road offer a sense of a historic settlement along the Thames Estuary.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
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Large amount of open spaces and natural landscape	Visual separation from the village
The public footpath along Church Creek	Large amount of concrete revetment and metal fencing at the south end of the creek
Churchyard footpaths and formal landscaped areas north of the churchyard	

5.6.Positive, Neutral or Negative Elements

The map showing the positive neutral or negative elements within the Conservation Area (Figure 42) should be read in conjunction with the key notes below. These outline the broad descriptions of positive, neutral and negative attributed to buildings within the Conservation Area. It should be noted that just because a building is positive it does not mean it cannot be enhanced. Some positive buildings may have intrusive aspects, but these are more widespread across the Conservation Area (such as inappropriate windows) and are addressed in the management plan. The buildings identified as 'Positive with opportunity for enhancement' tend to have more bespoke or fundamental issues that are not generally observed or widespread across the area.

Positive: these are buildings that have been identified as positive contributors to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Whist identified as positive there are likely to be enhancements which can be made to better reveal the architectural interest of the building and improve its contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These general enhancements are noted in the management plan. One example for South Benfleet Conservation Area would be the replacement of windows. The buildings here have a vast quantity of uPVC and other inappropriate windows and doors, and the upgrade of these items would be beneficial as a general rule.

Positive with opportunity for enhancement: these are buildings which have been highlighted as they are positive contributors, however, they have been compromised due to intrusive alterations or additions. These buildings can be enhanced through the removal, replacement or redesign of intrusive or unsympathetic

alterations. In the case of South Benfleet Conservation Area, buildings have been highlighted, which require changes that go further than the widespread issues such as inappropriate windows and can include buildings with unsympathetic shop fronts.

Neutral: These buildings make no beneficial or adverse contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Negative: These buildings make an adverse or intrusive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

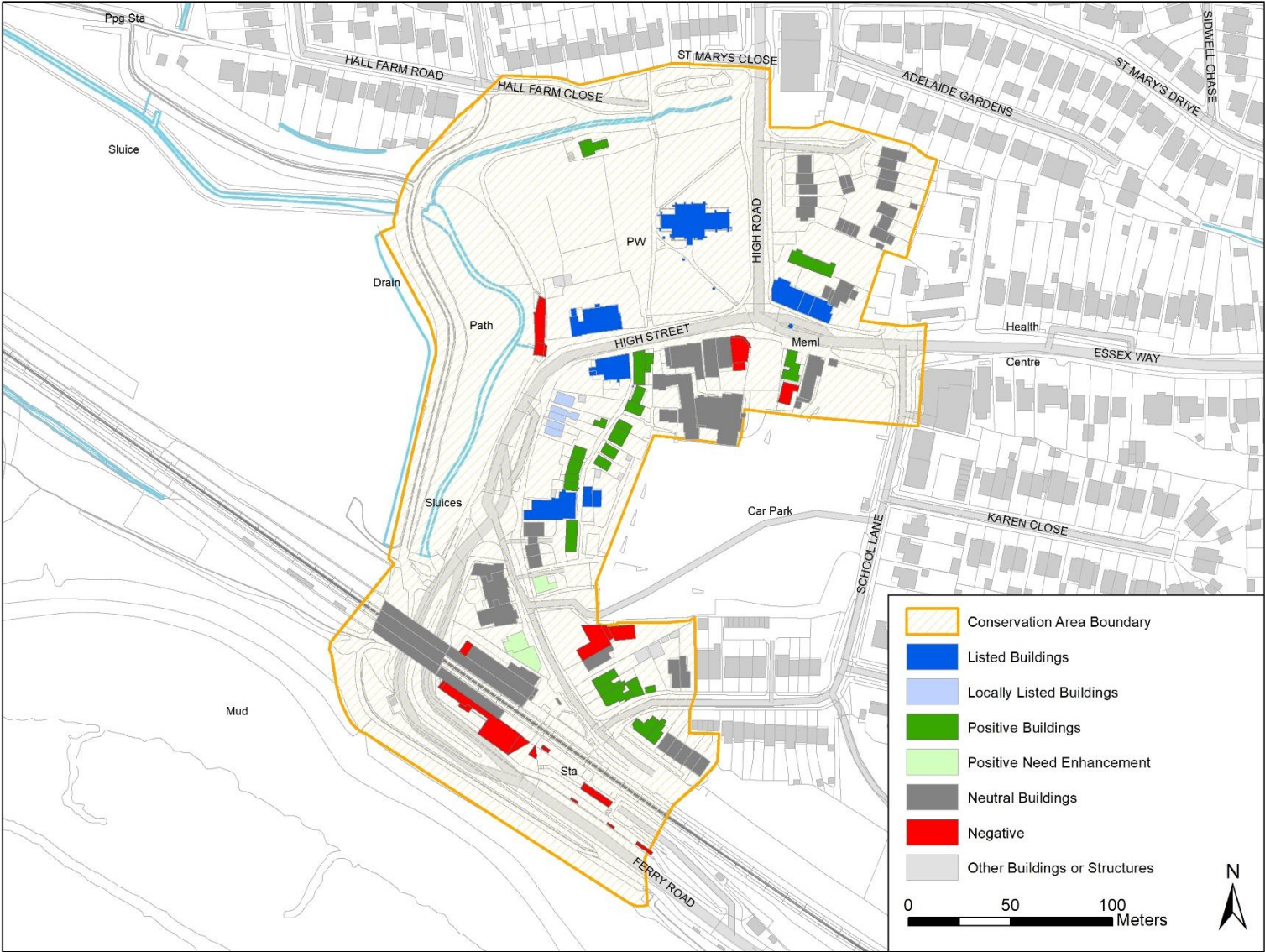


Figure 42: Contribution of buildings within the Conservation Area

5.7. The setting of South Benfleet Conservation Area

All heritage assets have a setting, which is defined within the NPPF (2023) as:

*The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.*⁶

The setting of South Benfleet Conservation Area is a contributor to its significance, allowing the Conservation Area to be understood and appreciated. The contribution of its setting varies in different parts. The most significant part of its setting is Benfleet Creek and the associated landscape. The extensive marshland and tidal creek to the west, southwest and south contribute positively to the significance of South Benfleet Conservation Area as the basis of its historic development and growth. The open spaces to the west of the Conservation Area also have a strong visual connection with the wider open landscape.

To the north, the landform rises and has been subject to twentieth century suburban residential development separated from the Conservation Area by the churchyard and woodland. The twentieth-century developments to the north and northeast have a clear difference in character and appearance. These

developments make no particular contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area other than to highlight the historic character of South Benfleet by their contrasting character. To the east, the large School Lane car park forms the immediate setting of the Conservation Area and features in many long and short range views from within the Conservation Area due to the steep rise of land to the east. Consequently, it makes a negative contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. The unsightly electrical sub-station at the bottom of Essex Way is also a detracting feature in the immediate setting of the Conservation Area.

To the southeast, the setting of the Conservation Area is dominated by the railway and also Benfleet Downs which contribute to the understanding of the historic context of South Benfleet. The station car park, however, disrupts the relationship and lessens its contribution.

Views

Key views both within and outside the Conservation Area are illustrated on the following map, Figure 43, and illustrated within the description of each character area where appropriate.

The views illustrated here have been described in their respective character areas. However, these are not exhaustive and there will be other views not highlighted on this map which contribute to how the significance of the Conservation Area is understood and

⁶ 'Annex 2: Glossary', *The National Planning Policy Framework*, The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, December 2023

appreciated. All planning applications for development in the Conservation Area, and within its setting, should consider if there are any contributing views which will be affected and seek to mitigate against any harmful impacts.

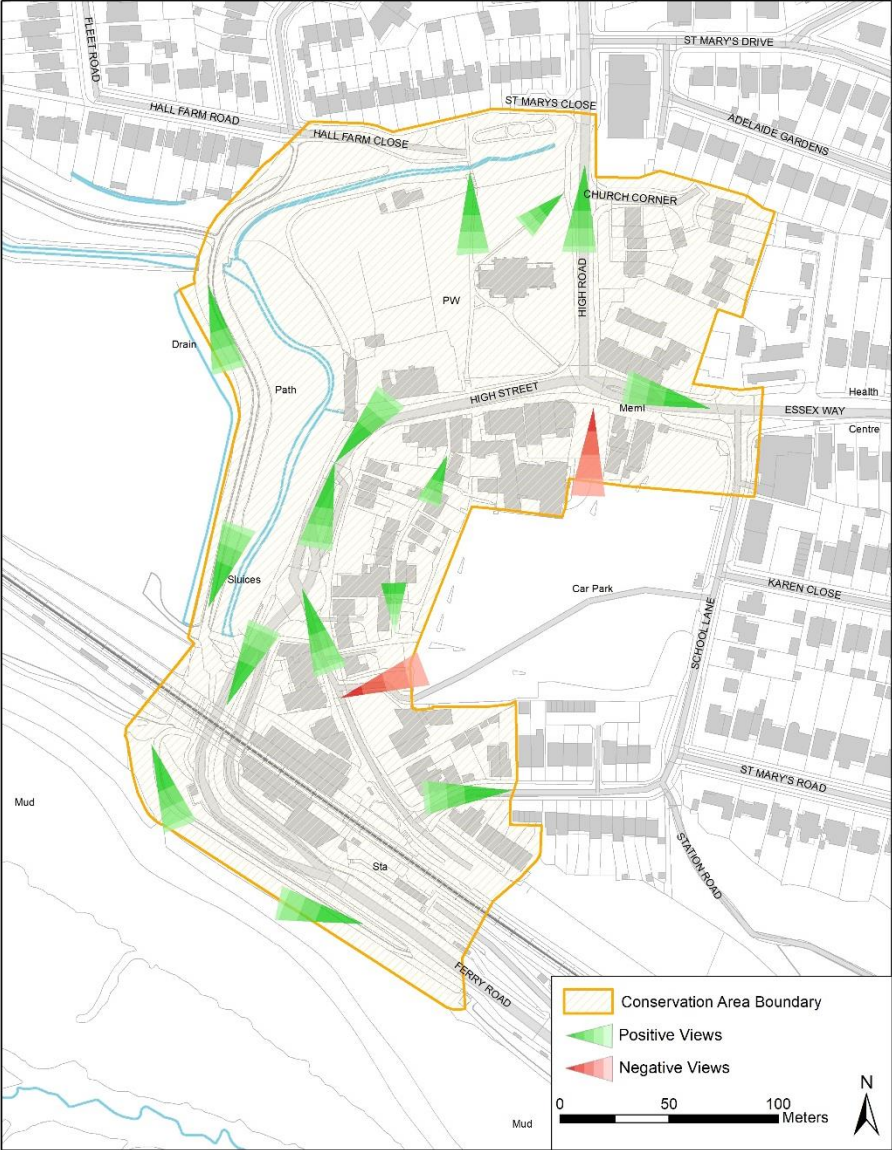


Figure 43: Positive and negative views within the Conservation Area

6. Opportunities for Enhancement

6.1. Overview

The following key issues have been identified as elements of the Conservation Area which could be improved. The list is in no way exhaustive, and neither are the issues identified unique to South Benfleet Conservation Area, with many being shared with other conservation areas across the county.

These aspects draw upon the strengths and weaknesses described in each character area in Section 5.

6.2. Access and Integration

The Conservation Area is easily accessible via road and railway, on foot or by vehicle. Entry to the Conservation Area is not readily discernible from Essex Way or High Road and better acknowledgment of the Conservation Area could be achieved. The existing cast-iron street signs and the large brick panel bearing a plaque detailing Benfleet's history make a significant positive impression. More interpretation boards and the creation of an integrated approach to the streetscape, utilising uniform signage and specific types of street lighting and paving throughout the Conservation Area, or character areas, would allow for improved public awareness. Interpretation boards could be installed on the footpath along Church Creek and at the south end of Church Creek to explain the significance of the historic landscape here.

6.3. Car Parking

Car parking is an issue that currently has an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Despite the very large School Lane car park to the east of the village core, several hardstanding parking areas within the Conservation Area impact negatively on the street scene and general experience of the public realm. The small car park south of Essex Way and staff car parking for Aurora are particularly an issue and present an opportunity for enhancement.

6.4. Inappropriate and Unsympathetic Alterations

There are examples of inappropriate and unsympathetic alterations within both of the built character areas of the Conservation Area, which have a cumulative negative impact. Poor quality replacements of historic windows and doors and alterations to the exterior of the buildings harm the historic character and qualities of the area. The use of modern materials, especially uPVC windows and doors, detract from the area's character and appearance and should be avoided. Care should be taken to ensure that unsympathetic additions do not have an impact on views along historic streets and the character of groups of historic buildings is preserved.

6.5. Unsympathetic Boundary Treatments

The installation of unsympathetic, poor quality and piecemeal boundary treatments can harm the immediate setting of historic buildings and spaces and the use of inappropriate railings, walls, and fences causes cumulative harm to the appearance of the streetscape and the character of the area. Poor quality boundary

treatments have been identified as a weakness within South Benfleet Conservation Area and those mentioned in Section 5 should be replaced with traditional, higher quality boundary treatments.

The appearance of the metal fence on concrete plinth along the east side of High Road could be improved by planting hedges behind. There is scope for additional boundary treatments to soften the views of the large School Lane Car Park particularly at the disabled parking area next to the car garage. The concrete plank boundary between the main car park and the disabled parking area could be replaced with a more sympathetic brick wall. The close boarded fences to the front of 53-65 High Street could be replaced with a low brick wall and hedges for additional screening. The close-boarded fence with concrete posts behind The Half Crown public house could also be replaced with a brick wall. The metal fence and concrete boundary to the west of High Street and Ferry Road is of poor quality and not well maintained. The trees along this boundary could be better managed so a visual relationship with the natural landscape to the west is reinstated.

6.6. Shopfronts and Advertisements

The commercial properties within the Conservation Area, almost all front on to the main streets. The removal and replacement of poor-quality plastic and vinyl signs is considered to be an opportunity for enhancement. The use of overly large signage, particularly of modern plastic and vinyl, can create a visually cluttered and jarring streetscene and detract from the historic character of the area. The use of these materials should be avoided.

The display of large window vinyl is also a concern within the Conservation Area, as these adversely affect the traditional character and appearance of the area. One of the most prominent shops within the Conservation Area is the Costcutter, positioned at the junction of High Road, High Street and Essex Way, which has a poor-quality frontage with several internally illuminated box fascia and projecting signs, as well as an excessive number of vinyl posters across the shop windows. There is scope for a considerable improvement to the appearance of the shopfront which would be highly beneficial for the Conservation Area.

The use of internally illuminated shop signs should be resisted within the Conservation Area with subtle externally mounted illumination providing a more sympathetic solution.

6.7. Maintenance

The majority of the properties within the Conservation Area are generally well maintained. The lack of maintenance to the commercial properties at 3-7 High Street, however, is notable. Examples of elements which detract from the Conservation Area and result from a lack of maintenance include:

- Flaking or failed paintwork, on walls, windows and doors;
- Cracked render or brickwork which requires repointing;
- Broken or failing fascia boards, eaves or guttering;
- Cracked and patch repaired driveways; and
- Cluttered or crowded front gardens, with vehicles or other domestic paraphernalia.

6.8. Negative, Neutral and Positive buildings in need enhancement

A number of buildings make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of South Benfleet Conservation Area. These have a diluting effect on the positive buildings and further dilution may lead to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

A few buildings within the Conservation Area have been identified as making a negative contribution to the character and appearance of the area as shown on the map in Figure 42. There are opportunities for enhancement of these buildings and some of these could present an opportunity for redevelopment.

There are also a small number of positive buildings with the opportunity for enhancement, which could include reinstating historic architectural features to improve their contribution to the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area.

6.9. Public Realm

Street Furniture

Aside from the notable green spaces, the public realm of the Conservation Area primarily comprises the roads which form a busy route to and from Canvey Island. There are many tall lampposts and road signs. Streetlights are particularly inconsistent in height and colour and mostly modern in design and could be enhanced through replacement with more consistent and traditional streetlights which respect the historic character and architectural interest of the area. The Grade II listed lamppost on The Close could provide an example design. There is also scope

for reducing the number of road signs and rationalising overground communication services to reduce visual clutter in the streetscape.

The road name signs within the Conservation Area are generally uniform, featuring a black background with white lettering and borders. Some of these signs also include the words "South Benfleet Conservation Area," which helps to raise awareness of the area's designation. However, the current sign for "The Terrace" does not conform to this standard and should be updated to have a black background, consistent with the other signs in the Conservation Area.

Hard Landscaping

The road and pavement surfaces within the Conservation Area are modern and no vestiges of historic surface materials appear to survive. The roads are generally in good condition; however, the pavements have been subject to many interventions and refilled and patched in an inconsistent manner.

Hard landscaping of the car parks and in front of the commercial properties currently makes a negative contribution to the character and appearance of the area. There are also some private front gardens which have been converted for car parking in a piecemeal manner and are inconsistent with their neighbours which detracts from the appearance of the Conservation Area.

Open Spaces

The churchyard of St Mary's and Character Area Three are open and green spaces in the Conservation Area which are integral to its identity and make a significant positive contribution to its

character and appearance. The long-term maintenance needs of these spaces should be considered and, where appropriate, opportunities taken to enhance them and ensure access is maintained through roadside pathways and public rights of way. Measures should also be taken to reinstate the historic visual connection between Character Area Three and with the adjacent built areas of the village.

Maintenance of street furniture and increasing positive public engagement with these spaces through interpretation should be considered.

Trees and Planting

Appropriate levels of maintenance need to be ensured and, where required, opportunities for enhancement sought to maintain and manage the trees within the Conservation Area.

7. Management Proposals

There are a range of issues facing the South Benfleet Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This section seeks to recommend management proposals which respond to the opportunities for enhancement which have been identified in Section 6 above, and which can address these issues in both the short and long term. The proposals are divided into themes in the sections below and are in no particular order of importance.

7.1. Development Management Tools

Enforcement

Where the necessary permission has not been sought for alterations, such as advertising signage and building alterations which are not contained within the General Permitted Development Order or restricted by the current Article 4 Direction, the Local Planning Authority's powers of enforcement should be considered. This could assist in reinstating any lost character or architectural features whose loss may have a negative cumulative effect on the Conservation Area, as well as avoiding a precedent being set for similar, unsympathetic works.

Article 4 Directions

The Article 4 Direction (Section 8.4) means that planning permission is needed for certain works and, in granting or refusing planning permission, consideration will be given to the proposed

works to ensure they preserve, or where possible enhance, the special interest of the Conservation Area.

It introduces additional control over the types of development which are potentially the most harmful to the area's significance. It is adequate in allowing change to be managed to the area's houses, ensuring any alterations or additions are appropriate and sympathetic. Further details on the additional controls can be found on the Council's [website](#).

However, it is recommended that the Direction is updated to reference the 2015 Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (GPDO) rather than the now superseded 1995 Order. The Article 4 Direction should also reflect the revised Conservation Area boundary.

Heritage Statements, Heritage Impact Assessments and Archaeological Assessments

In accordance with the NPPF (2023, Para. 200), applications for planning permission must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, trees or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the Conservation Area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This

should be in accordance with Historic England's *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017)*. Applications which fail to have assessed any impact upon views and setting should not be validated.

Local Heritage List

A Local List identifies buildings and structures of local architectural and/or historic interest, and these are considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' under the provisions of the NPPF. Local Lists can be beneficial in ensuring the upkeep and maintenance of historic buildings that contribute to the character of settlements. There is an existing Local List which is currently under review and could be utilised as part of a public engagement strategy to improve awareness and understanding.

Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be reviewed from time to time to monitor change and inform management proposals, as per the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary should continue to be assessed as part of future reviews of the Management Plan to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area.

7.2. Managing Future Change

Opportunity Sites

There are limited opportunity sites for redevelopment and new development within the South Benfleet Conservation Area. Potential sites for redevelopment are the car garage site opposite the railway station at High Street and the single-storey restaurant building west of Hoy and Helmet. These sites could be developed with buildings that are more in keeping with the character of the area and to enhance its appearance. The car garage site would be appropriate for a residential building with commercial space on the ground floor. The existing restaurant building could be replaced with a good quality single-storey range designed in vernacular form and traditional materials.

Any successful new development will:

- Relate to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land;
- Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it (including public footpaths);
- Respect important views;
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings; and
- Use materials and building methods which are as high in quality of those used in existing buildings.

Further guidance on appropriate new development within the Conservation Area is contained within the South Benfleet Conservation Area Design Code (2024).

Shop Frontages

There is scope to raise awareness of the importance of historic shopfronts and traditional signage, including the contribution they make to the special interest of the Conservation Area. Some shop frontages and signage within the Conservation Area could be improved and enhanced. The South Benfleet Conservation Area Design Code (2024) provides some guidance on traditional shopfronts and appropriate signage.

High tenant turnover can be detrimental to a high street, with empty shops detracting from the Conservation Area, encouraging anti-social behaviour and sometimes resulting in material damage and decay to buildings. If this becomes an issue in South Benfleet, the local authority should seek to engage with building owners and interested parties to implement an empty shop scheme, using empty frontages as exhibition spaces or painting seasonal murals on empty sections of glazing, for example, in order to encourage public engagement with the high street, even if the unit is vacant.

Views and setting

Redevelopment or alteration to buildings and spaces outside the Conservation Area's boundary must carefully consider any potential impacts on the Conservation Area's character or local distinctiveness, including aspects such as the uniformity of groups of buildings within the setting of the Conservation Area or links and views to outlying landscapes.

The key views analysed in Section 5 of this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, trees, or highways on key views should be considered by the local planning authority when determining planning applications. This includes development outside the Conservation Area, particularly due to the gradient of the landform in the wider area. Where appropriate, views should be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England's *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017).

7.3. Public Realm and Highways

General

There is an opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area through investment to improve the wider public realm. This can be achieved through continuing to improve and rationalise existing street furniture.

Better maintenance of areas of public space, through weeding, planting and the maintenance of existing features through the creation of an integrated management plan, combined with developers, landowners and the local authority would be of benefit. Encouragement for removing car parking from the forecourts of commercial premises and providing outdoor seating for pubs, restaurants and cafes will encourage renewed public engagement with the commercial areas of the village.

Through the agreement of a standard good practice within the Conservation Area between relevant Local Authority teams and other landowners, long term goals can be set to promote good

design within the public realm, such as avoiding excessive road markings or signage and agreeing a standardised street furniture within Character Areas to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or replaced.

Access and Integration

The Conservation Area is easily accessed by public transport, foot and vehicle. There is scope for the creation of an improved cycle network, which, when combined with footpaths, would allow for an improved level of engagement between visitors and residents to the village.

At present there are examples of interpretation boards and signs within the Conservation Area aimed at improving understanding and awareness. Updating, upkeep, and enlarging their reach would be an effective way to improve the awareness of South Benfleet Conservation Area's significance.

The creation of a heritage trail and introduction of additional interpretation board in the open spaces to the west of the Conservation Area could be beneficial.

Car Parking

This should begin with a car parking survey to establish the need for car parking within the Conservation Area. Once the level of necessary car parking has been established a strategy could be created by Castle Point Borough Council in conjunction with local stakeholders. Considering the large car park at School Lane is under five minutes' walk from the centre, parking for the

commercial premises could be allocated to reduce car parking within the Conservation Area.

Further information on parking standards can be found within the Castle Point Plan.

Tree Management

In line with the Town and Country Planning Act, all trees in conservation areas are afforded the same protection as a Tree Preservation Order. Trees which have a trunk diameter of more than 75mm, at a height of 1.5m from the ground, may not be felled or lopped unless six weeks' written notice has been given to the Council. Six weeks' notice has to be given to the council under S211 of the Act.

It is also considered that any prominent trees, street trees, and trees with amenity value on private land throughout the Conservation Area should be monitored and maintained appropriately. This will maintain the green character of the area. Any tree that makes a positive contribution to the area should be retained, maintained and, if felled (only if dead, dying or dangerous) replaced with an appropriate new tree.

Further information on Green Infrastructure and ecology matters can be found within the Castle Point Plan.

7.4.Cultural Heritage

Public resources

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area. In addition, a maintenance guide would assist property owners in caring for their property in an appropriate manner.

Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and results in a loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of South Benfleet's built heritage. At present there is a range of information boards and signage within the Conservation Area, aimed at improving understanding and awareness. These must continue to be maintained and updated where appropriate to ensure awareness and reinforce the identity of South Benfleet as a historic settlement.

8. Appendices

8.1. Bibliography

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Historic England, *The National Heritage List for England*. Historic England, Online Archive:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/heritage-assets/nhle/>,
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'South Benfleet', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex*, Volume 4, South east, (London, 1923) pp. 136-139.
British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/essex/vol4/pp136->, accessed 14/05/2024.

8.2. Legislation, Policy and Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023.	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	Planning Practice Guidance, November 2016 (last updated February 2024).	Historic Environment
National Guidance	Historic England, <i>Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Historic England Advice Note 1</i> . Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2019.	

National Guidance	Historic England, <i>The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3</i> . Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2017.	
Local Policy	Local Plan, adopted November 1998	<p>Policy EC2 - Design</p> <p>Policy EC15 - Control of Permitted Development in Sensitive Areas</p> <p>Policy EC25 - Principles of Control</p> <p>Policy EC26 - Design and Development</p> <p>Policy EC27 - Planning Applications</p> <p>Policy EC28 - Restrictions on Permitted Development</p> <p>Policy EC29 - Control of Demolition</p> <p>Policy EC30 - Shopfront Design</p> <p>Policy EC31 – Advertisements</p>

Local Supplementary Planning Document	<p>Residential Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (November 2012)</p> <p>Draft Castle Point Design Code (2024)</p> <p>Draft South Benfleet Conservation Area Design Code (2024)</p>	
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8.3. List of All Designated Heritage Assets within the Conservation Area

List Entry Number	Address	Grade	Date of Designation
1123690	Church Of St Mary The Virgin, High Street	I	06-Aug-1952
1472162	Tombstone 2m south-west of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, High Street, Benfleet, Essex	II	09-Nov-2021
1337694	Table Tomb Approximately 14 Metres South Of South Porch Of Church Of St Mary The Virgin, High Street	II	21-Jul-1986
1170051	Group Of 4 Headstones Between 18 And 22 Metres South East Of South Porch Of Church Of St Mary The Virgin, High Street	II	21-Jul-1986
1123689	The Anchor Inn And Building Attached To Right, Essex Way	II*	21-Jul-1986
1392466	South Benfleet War Memorial, Essex Way	II	28-Feb-2008
1123692	The Hoy And Helmet Inn, High Street	II	06-Aug-1952
1123691	The Half Crown Inn, 25, 27 And 29, High Street	II	21-Jul-1986
1248002	Street Lamp To West Of Number 23 High Street, The Close	II	21-Jul-1986
1123693	Street Lamp Outside 7 The Close, The Close	II	21-Jul-1986
1306209	5 And 7, The Close	II	15-Jan-1980
1170069	Benfleet Conservative Club, 67 And 69, High Street	II	21-Jul-1986

8.4. 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:-

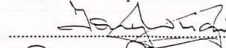
- a) the enlargement, improvement or any other alteration of a dwellinghouse:
- b) the alteration of a dwellinghouse roof:
- c) the erection or construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwellinghouse:
- d) the provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a building, or enclosure, 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.

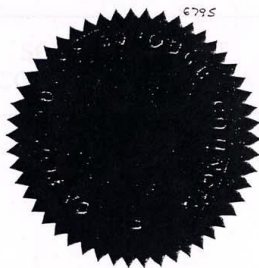
Given under the common Seal of the Borough Council of
CASTLE POINT

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



8.5. Frequently Asked Questions

A selection of frequently asked questions is below. If you require further advice, please contact Castle Point Borough Council's planning department.

What is a conservation area?

Conservation areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority as areas of special architectural and historic interest. There are many different types of conservation area, which vary in size and character, and range from historic town centres to country houses set in historic parks. Conservation area designation introduces additional planning controls and considerations, which exist to protect an area's special character and appearance and the features that make it unique and distinctive. Although designation introduces controls over the way that owners can develop their properties, it is generally considered that these controls are beneficial as they sustain and/or enhance the value of properties within conservation areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) regards conservations areas as 'designated heritage assets.'

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act specifies the general duty of Local Authorities, in the exercise of planning functions (Section 72). The 1990 Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

How are conservation areas designated and managed?

The designation process includes detailed analysis of the proposed conservation area and adoption by the local planning authority. A review process should be periodically undertaken, and the Conservation Area assessed to safeguard that it retains special architectural or historic interest. Threats can be identified, and the boundary reviewed, to ensure it is still relevant and appropriate.

This Conservation Area is supported by an appraisal and management plan. The appraisal describes the importance of an area in terms of its character, architecture, history, development form and landscaping. The management plan, included within the appraisal, sets out various positive proposals to improve, enhance and protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

How can I find out if I live in a conservation area?

Boundary maps of all conservation areas in the district can be found on Castle Point Borough Council's website. Full details, including contact details for the local authority, can be accessed via this [link](#).

What are the Council's duties regarding development in conservation areas?

The Local Authority must follow the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These set out in clear terms how development proposals within conservation areas should be

considered on the basis of whether they preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Applications which fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area are likely to be refused as a result. An authorities Local Plan also typically includes a specific policy on conservation areas.

Do I need permission to alter a property in a conservation area?

Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, certain minor works and alterations are considered 'permitted development' and can be carried out without planning permission. However, some permitted developments rights do not apply in conservation areas, and some buildings may not have any permitted development rights at all, such as blocks of flats. Different rules also apply if a building is listed.

Permission is required for any external alterations which involve cladding, rendering, or adding pebble dash, artificial stone or tiles to the exterior of a dwelling within a conservation area. All alterations to the roof of a dwelling within a conservation area also require planning permission.

Extensions to the side of buildings in conservation areas will need planning permission, as will all two storey rear extensions. Porches, subject to size and relationship to the highway, may need planning permission. In all cases, the Local Planning Authority will be able to provide advice as to how to proceed.

In addition, South Benfleet Conservation Area is covered by an Article 4 Direction which restricts permitted development rights further.

What is an Article 4 Direction?

South Benfleet Conservation Area is covered by an Article 4 Direction, which brings certain types of permitted development back under the control of a local planning authority. This allows potentially harmful proposals to be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications.

The Article 4 Direction has been written specifically for the area is used to control specific works that could threaten the character of the area. Details of the Article 4 Direction can be found on Castle Point's website via this [link](#).

Do I need to make an application for routine maintenance work?

If routine maintenance works are to be carried out using authentic materials and traditional craft techniques, on a like-for-like basis, it is unlikely that you will need to apply for permission from the local authority. However, it is strongly recommended that you contact the local planning authority for clarification before commencing any works. The use of a contractor with the necessary skills and experience of working on historic buildings is essential. Inappropriate maintenance works and the use of the wrong materials will cause damage to the fabric of a historic building.

Can I demolish a building in a conservation area?

Demolition, or substantial removal of part of a building within a conservation area, will usually require permission from the local

planning authority. It is important to speak to them before beginning any demolition works, to clarify if permission is required.

Can I remove a tree within a conservation area?

If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work, the local planning authority must be notified six weeks before any work begins. This enables the authority to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the Conservation Area and, if necessary, create a specific Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect it.

The legislation relating to trees is included within Part VIII of the Town and Planning Act 1990 which is supplemented by The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012.

Further information on TPOs and trees in conservation areas can be found on Historic England's [website](#).

How do I find out more about a conservation area?

Historic England's website has information on conservation areas and their designation. Further information on the importance of conservation areas, and what it means to live in one, can also be accessed via their [website](#).

Historic England has also published an advice note called *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* which sets out advice on the appraisal of conservation areas and managing change in conservation areas.

In addition, Castle Point has information on the conservation areas within borough available on their website.

What is setting?

The “setting of a heritage asset” is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral (NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary).

A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not.

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic

connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. This will vary over time and according to circumstance.

When assessing any application for development which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its on-going conservation (PPG, paragraph: 013, reference ID: 18a-013-20140306).

8.6. Glossary

Term	Description
Archaeological interest	There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
Conservation (for heritage policy)	The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
Designated heritage asset	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Historic environment record	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.
Local List	Local listing is a concept that is designed to ensure that the historic and architectural interest of buildings that are of local importance but do not meet the criteria for being nationally listed is taken account of during the planning process. Local lists can be used to identify significant local heritage assets to support the development of Local Plans.
Non-Designated heritage asset	Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. Only a minority of buildings have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets.

Setting of a heritage asset	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
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Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
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