

Leigh Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal

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Southend-on-Sea: Leigh Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal

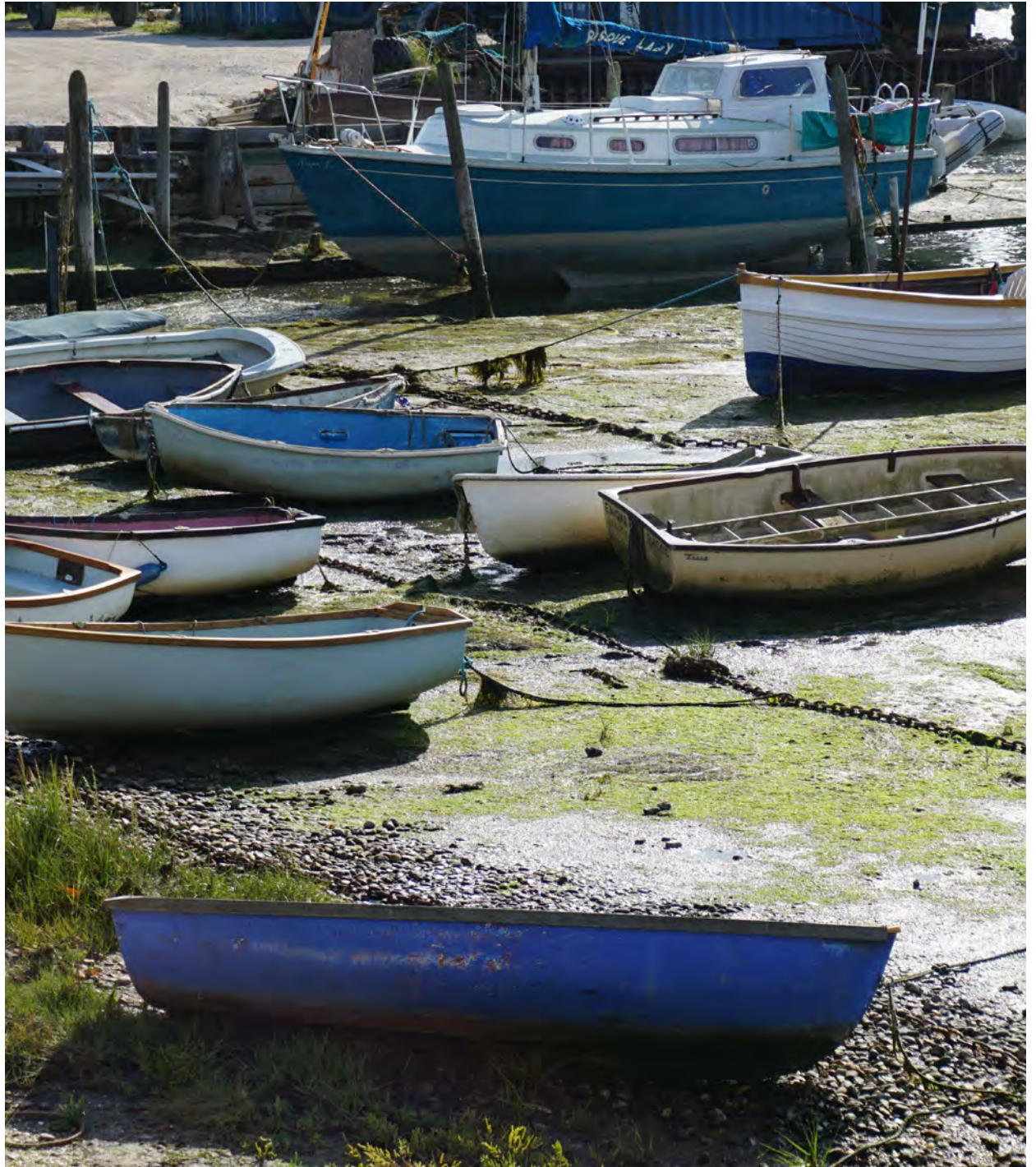
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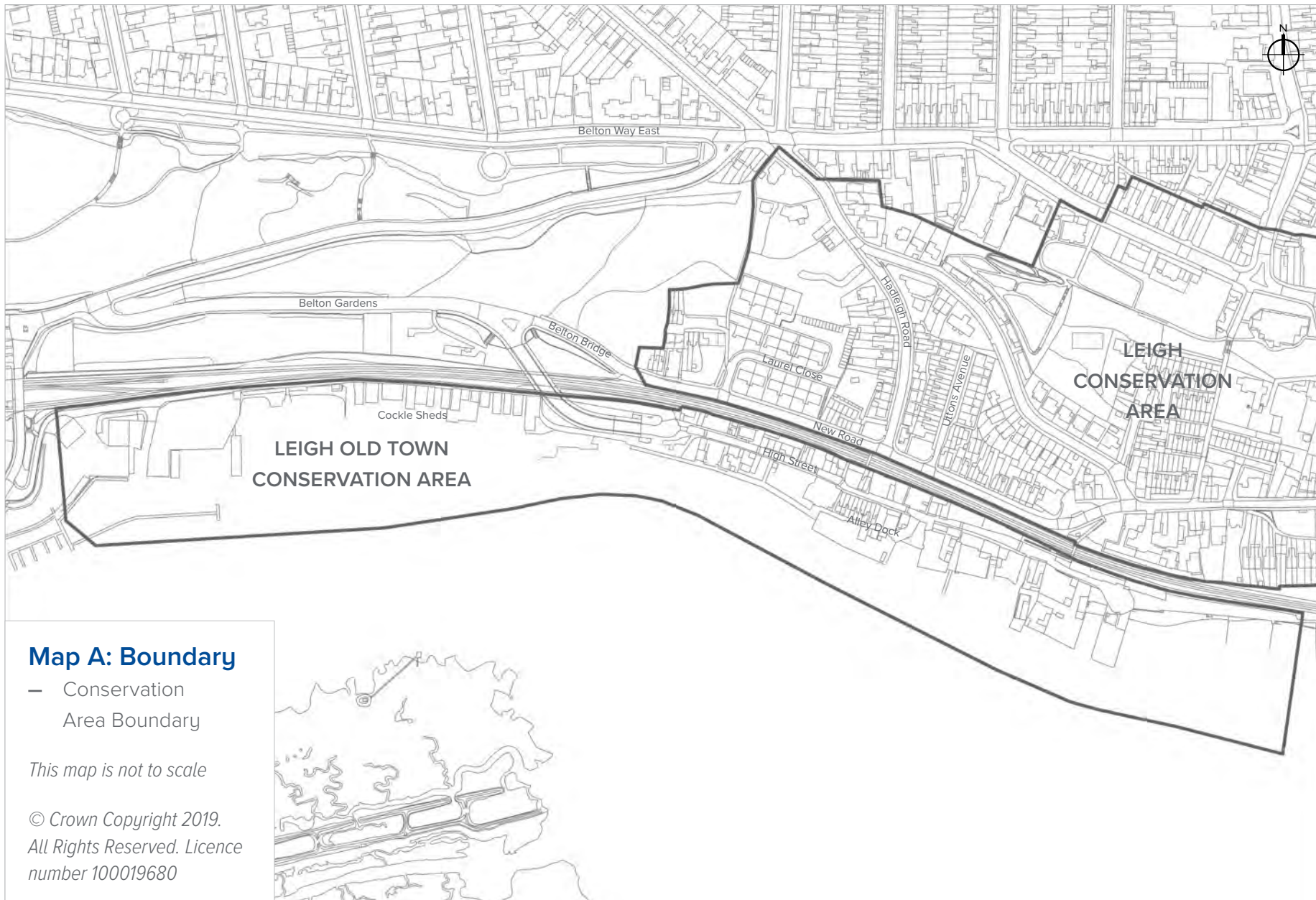
Section 1.0

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Introduction



Introduction

1.1 What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas are ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’, which is defined in the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**.

1.1.1 The designation of a Conservation Area recognises the unique qualities of an historic place which make it special in terms of its architecture and history, as well as its role in defining local distinctiveness. Contributing factors include individual, or groups of buildings, streetscapes, the public realm, the scale and massing of buildings, the pattern of streets and open spaces, and landscaping.

1.1.2 As the aim is to conserve and enhance the significant qualities of a Conservation Area so that owners, occupiers and visitors to the place can experience a high-quality historic environment, designation extends planning controls over certain types of development, principally the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees, although an area’s status as a Conservation Area is a material

consideration for all planning applications. Southend Borough Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), also has policies within its *Core Strategy* (December 2007) and *Development Management Document* (July 2015) that seek to conserve the character of its Conservation Areas. The emerging Local Plan, which will review the *Core Strategy* and *Development Management Document*, will set out a policy approach to managing the historic environment.

1.1.3 However, it should be recognised that designation does not prevent change from occurring within Conservation Areas, and over time they will be subject to many different pressures (both positive and negative) that could impact upon their character and appearance. LPAs have a duty to conserve and enhance their Conservation Areas and will consider this when determining planning applications.

1.1.4 Southend Borough Council (SBC) will also review each Conservation Area from time to time to monitor its condition and ensure that it has an up to date Conservation Area Appraisal which sets out its special architectural or historic interest.

Introduction

1.2 Aims of the Conservation Area Appraisal

1.2.1 This Conservation Area Appraisal:

- Identifies the area's special interest;
- Reviews existing Conservation Area boundaries;
- Assists with preparation of the emerging new Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans (if and when these are brought forward), and forms part of their evidence base; and
- Provides a basis for implementing policies, making informed development management decisions, and preparing management proposals for the area.

1.2.2 The character analysis in section 5.0 will inform a management plan for the area (see section 6.0), which will:

- Assess the need for enhancements to public spaces, highways and private property;
- Review the need for Article 4 Directions to limit permitted development rights;
- Assess buildings at risk;
- Assess the need for enforcement action; and
- Establish a programme and procedures for implementing and monitoring proposals.

1.3 Background and Methodology

1.3.1 The Leigh Old Town Conservation Area was designated in 1977 for its special interest as a working marine village with hundreds of years of history. The Conservation Area Appraisal for Leigh Old Town updates the former document adopted in 2009. It has been prepared by Purcell, a firm of specialist heritage consultants, on behalf of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. The research and fieldwork for the Appraisal was carried out in September 2019. The methodology for the work was based on Historic England's *Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation Management: Historic England Advice Note 1 (second edition)*, February 2019 and also references *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (second edition)*, December 2017. Consultation was also carried out with Richard Owen and Alan Crystall, formerly of the Leigh Society, and with Leigh-on-Sea Town Council.

1.3.2 All photographs within this report were taken in 2019 unless otherwise stated.

Introduction

1.4 Overview and Location

- 1.4.1 Leigh Old Town Conservation Area lies to the west of Southend-on-Sea on the southern edge of Leigh-on-Sea. Leigh Old Town is a compact settlement huddled at the base of steep cliffs, which give it a sense of isolation from the rest of Leigh-on-Sea, a feeling that is reinforced by the railway that runs along the whole northern boundary of the Conservation Area. The area is elongated and curves with the shape of the coastline. Its location at the bottom of the cliffs means that it has spread almost exclusively sideways along the High Street only.
- 1.4.2 The whole Conservation Area has a feeling of animation and industry about it and walking around it is clear how the topography has affected the community. The rest of the world seems rather remote and this is reinforced by the limited views out of the area, apart from those of the estuary. To the west there is green space stretching into the distance, to the north there is housing, but this is cut off by the railway line. At the far east of the area the coast curves away so views are curtailed and the eye is drawn more to the sea than elsewhere. The whole southern edge of the area is bounded by the Estuary, although oddly, and in contrast with what would be the case in a seaside town or port, the buildings do not face it. Instead there is a row of wharves along the seafront and the buildings face the High Street.
- 1.4.3 Leigh Old Town is the southern part of a village that was bisected by the railway and its development has been irrevocably affected by this. The urban setting can be broken up into several distinct character areas, which will be fully explored in section four. Briefly the western end of the Conservation Area is mainly taken up with cockle sheds and has a primarily industrial character, while from the Crooked Billet to the east there is a mix of some industry, residential and leisure uses. The area between the cockle sheds and the Crooked Billet is mainly taken up by a rather unattractive concreted area under Belton Bridge, the bridge itself and car parking.

Section 2.0

Summary of Special Interest



Summary of Special Interest

- 2.1 Leigh Old Town derives significant special interest from its industrial past, which continues to drive the Conservation Area today. Leigh dates back to Domesday and has been a small fishing settlement from the earliest times. Its fishing industry peaked in the 18th century before being overtaken by the oyster and shrimp industry, whilst the 20th century brought the growth of the cockle industry, today's dominant industry. This industrial nature is the defining aspect of Leigh Old Town's character today; upon arrival at the west end of the Conservation Area the visitor is met by the metallic sound of masts and halyards in the wind, the smell of fish and the sight of fishing boats, as well as fishmongers spreading out their wares in the cockle sheds.
- 2.2 The Conservation Area draws important historic interest from its former boat-building industry and position as an important port. From the 16th century, the town was described as a 'principal port' for trade and was well reputed for its boat-building and mariners. It is even speculated to have been the birthplace of the Pilgrim Fathers' *Mayflower*, the ship that took an initial group of English Puritans to the New World in 1620. At the very least, the ship certainly anchored here to pick up Essex pilgrims en route to America.
- 2.3 The town has an atmosphere of great age, despite the dating of most buildings to the Victorian period and the 20th century. This is partially owing to the grain of the town and its plan, although extended, which remains much as it has been throughout its history, albeit cut off from the rest of Leigh by the arrival of the railway line. The settlement is orientated around a long, curving main street and narrow alleyways. The nature of the settlement is of particular interest owing to the contrast of the concentration of domestic and retail buildings at the east end along the High Street proper and the larger and more dispersed industrial buildings to the west.
- 2.4 The town's mix of dwellings, public houses, workshops, club houses, cafes and restaurants as well as other visitor amenities means that the town caters to residents, local workers and tourists, which contributes to the Conservation Area's diversity and special interest. Plenty of open spaces, wharves, seafront pedestrian walkways and communal seating areas between pubs and cafes where customers can dine on local produce enliven and energise the Conservation Area. Today the town manages to combine catering as a utilitarian working town and a picturesque seaside resort attracting tourists.
- 2.5 Part of the visual charm of the Conservation Area stems from its feeling of intimacy and enclosure, relieved by glimpsed views between buildings. Wide views of the Estuary are afforded from the wharves, which are historically the most open spaces within the village. Long views can also be obtained to the east and west along the High Street with some longer views of Belton Hills in the distance.
- 2.6 Leigh Old Town's architectural interest lies not in ornate decoration but in its consistent palette of materials employed including brick, weather-boarding (shiplap and feather-edge), corrugated iron and slate. Simple decorative features such as brick arches to openings, mouldings to window and door surrounds, decorative ridge tiles, string courses, friezes and ornate pub signs also add to its picturesque quality.

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Planning Framework

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1.1 The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) came into effect in March 2012 and was most recently updated in July 2021. It establishes the planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking, including the principle that to that these: *‘assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations’*.⁰¹
- 3.1.2 Section 16 of the NPPF sets the policy framework for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 191 of the NPPF stipulates that, *‘When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.’*
- 3.1.3 Further guidance regarding the implementation of the policies in the NPPF can be found in the chapter on ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ in the *National Planning Practice Guidance* (NPPG), July 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>.

Definitions

In the context of the NPPF for heritage policy, a **‘Heritage asset’** is defined 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. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).’*

‘Significance’ is defined as: *‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only to a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.’*

‘Setting’ is defined 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.’* Further advice on the assessment of setting can be found in *Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (second edition), December 2017.*

‘Historic environment’ is defined as: *‘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.’*

⁰¹ NPPF, 2021, para.189, p.55

Planning Framework

3.2 Local Planning Policies and Guidance

3.2.1 On a local level, the planning policy which SBC use to determine planning and listed building consents is contained within the **Core Strategy** (2007), **Development Management Document** (2015) and **Southend Central Area Action Plan** (2018). Proposals for development within the Conservation Area or within its setting will need to adhere to the criteria set out in these policies to ensure the conservation of the special interest of the Area. Policies specifically related to the historic environment are listed below and should be referenced when planning change.

3.2.2 Core Strategy (2007)

- Strategic Objective SO14: Deliver high quality, well designed and attractive urban and natural environments which are safe, people friendly and distinctive, and which respect and enhance existing character and local amenity
- Policy KP2: Development Principles
- Policy CP4: The Environment and Urban Renaissance

3.2.3 Development Management Document (2015)

- Policy DM1: Design Quality
- Policy DM4: Tall and Large Buildings
- Policy DM5: Southend-on-Sea's Historic Environment
- Policy DM6: The Seafront (and Policy Table 1: Seafront Character Zones)

3.2.4 The production of the Southend New Local Plan will provide an opportunity to review the Core Strategy, Development Management Document and SCAAP, and will set out a new suite of planning policies for the Borough, including for the management of the historic environment.

Planning Framework

3.2.5 Further supplementary planning guidance is contained within the Council's:

- **Design and Townscape Guide (SPD 1)** (2009), which sets out guidance on creating high-quality urban design and includes advice on the historic environment in Section 9;
- **Planning Obligations: A Guide to S106 & Developer Contributions (SPD 2)** (2015), which gives guidance on Section 106 Agreements which can be made to balance out negative impacts of development through other enhancements, such as conserving or enhancing the historic environment; and
- **Streetscape Manual (SPD 3)** (June 2015), provides guidance about creating high-quality streetscapes, including those within Conservation Areas.

3.2.6 All of these documents can be found on SBC's website: www.southend.gov.uk/planning, and will be reviewed as part of the production of the Southend New Local Plan.

3.3 Designations

3.3.1 As a Conservation Area, Leigh Old Town is a designated heritage asset in its own right. It also contains other designated heritage assets, including listed buildings, and non-designated heritage assets, such as locally listed buildings. These are shown on Map B.

3.3.2 Further information on Southend's listed and locally listed buildings and article 4 directions can be found on the Council's website www.southend.gov.uk/planning.

Planning Framework



Map B: Designations

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Grade II
- Grade II*
- Locally Listed
- Public Open Space
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
- Article 4 Directions

This map is not to scale

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Planning Framework

Listed Buildings

3.3.3 Buildings of special architectural or historic interest are designated as Listed Buildings by the government under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* for their special architectural or historic interest. Listing ranges from Grade I (the highest level of protection) through to II* and II. Listing also applies freestanding objects and structures within the building's "curtilage" (i.e. its grounds) which have been there since before 1st July 1948, for example, a wall attached to a Listed Building or a garden building where the main house is listed.

3.3.4 Protection is provided through the Listed Building Consent procedure, which is required by owners or developers when they apply for change to their property, including alterations, additions or demolitions. Work to a Listed Building should conserve and enhance the building's special architectural or historic interest.

3.3.5 There are three Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area, which are all Grade II listed. The Crooked Billet Public House was built as a timber-framed house in the late 16th century, later refronted in brick. Similarly, the other two listed buildings, 62 and 63 High Street, were built in the 16th century as a timber-framed single dwelling and refronted in brick in the 19th century.

Address	Listing
The Crooked Billet Pub, High Street	Grade II
62 and 63 High Street	Grade II

3.3.6 These properties are shown on Map B and their list descriptions are in Appendix A.

3.3.7 Listed Building Descriptions can be found via the National Heritage List for England: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/> and for Leigh Old Town these have been included in Appendix A of this report.

Planning Framework

Locally Listed Buildings

3.3.8 Southend has a wide range of historic buildings and structures. For those which do not meet the criteria for national listing, the Council can identify them as 'Locally Listed'. These are non-designated heritage assets. The purpose of the Local List is to identify buildings, structures and monuments of local architectural or historic importance and to take action as far as possible to preserve them.

3.3.9 SBC's criteria for the designation of Locally Listed Buildings requires buildings to:

- Demonstrate the Borough's history, particularly during its main period of growth. This includes buildings important for its social history such as schools, churches, public buildings, leisure, entertainment and commercial buildings.
- Have architectural interest - be designed by a well-known architect, be a good example of a particular style or period, contain good architectural features or be important for the townscape.

3.3.10 Change to Locally Listed Buildings needs to be carried out in a sympathetic manner. A building's Locally Listed status will be a material consideration for all planning applications affecting it and, as with Listed Buildings, applications involving loss or harm to a Locally Listed Building will normally be resisted although a balanced judgement will be made, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss, the significance of the asset and any public benefits.

3.3.11 There are four Locally Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area. These are:

Nos.2 and 3 Plumb's Yard

Nos.74-74a High Street (The Custom House)

No.39a High Street (Wharf Cottage)

3.3.12 These buildings are shown on Map B.

Planning Framework

Article 4 Directions

3.3.13 An Article 4 Direction removes the right of householders to undertake some minor forms of development, such as alterations to windows or the installation of hardstandings, which would normally be classed as permitted development under the planning legislation and therefore would not require planning permission. The Article 4 Direction is needed to ensure that minor alterations to the appearance of the houses are not made in a way which would be out of character and harmful to the Conservation Area.

3.3.14 Within Leigh Old Town Conservation Area the Direction covers the following properties:

- High Street, Leigh (all properties except the cockle sheds and boatyards adjacent to Leigh Station)
- Bell Wharf
- Strand Wharf
- Alley Dock (all properties)

3.3.15 Planning permission from the Council is therefore needed for the following types of development:

Dwellinghouses:

- *The alteration of any window*
- *The rendering of brickwork of any part of a dwellinghouse (other forms of cladding already need planning permission)*

- *Re-roofing with different materials*
- *The installation of a roof light to any part of the roof*

(Similar alterations to other properties already need planning permission from the Council.)

All Buildings:

- *Painting over facing brickwork on any part of a building*
- *The erection, extension or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure to any part of a property*

For 19-24 High Street and 3-5 Theobalds Cottages only (in addition to the above types of development):

- *The erection of an extension to any part of a dwellinghouse*
- *The erection of a balcony to any part of a dwellinghouse*

3.3.16 The Article 4 direction does not cover the whole of the Conservation Area but is restricted to the area shown on Map B in pink.

Planning Framework

Other Designations

- 3.3.17 The Leigh Conservation Area is located adjacent to the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area on the other side of the railway line.
- 3.3.18 Map B also shows tree protection orders (TPOs) in green, which are placed to prohibit works to cut down, uproot or damage important trees. All trees within Conservation Areas, whether they have a TPO or not, are protected and consent must be given by SBC prior to works being carried out so that the Council have sufficient time to decide whether the designation of a TPO is needed. The three TPOs in the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area are located at the eastern end of Belton Bridge.
- 3.3.19 Areas designated as public open spaces are shown on Map B in green. These are located within the Leigh Conservation Area and to the north-west which covers the Belton Hills Nature Reserve. The nature reserve forms an important part of the setting of the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area, together with the green belt land to the south of Belton Way West.

Section 4.0

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History and Archaeology

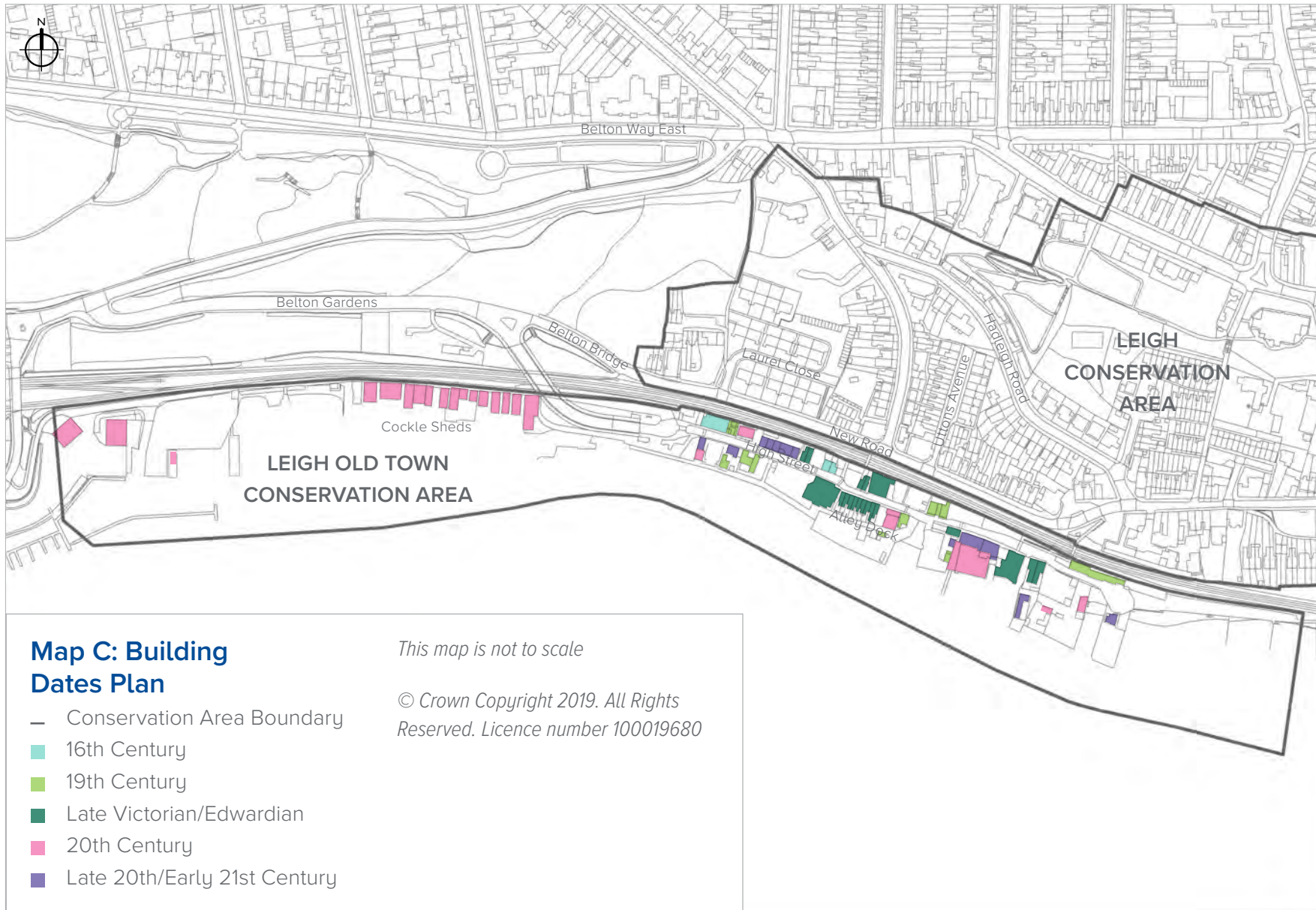
4.1 Archaeological Interest

- 4.1.1 Although two hoards of Late Bronze Age objects have been found in Leigh, neither was within the Old Town Conservation Area. There have also been discoveries of Roman coins and Romano-British pottery but apparently no trace of any Roman building has been found.

- 4.1.2 There has, however, been recent archaeological investigation on the site of No.2 Plumbs Cottage which was carried out when it was being rebuilt in 2006. This revealed evidence of at least two earlier buildings on this site, one Georgian and an earlier Tudor building.

History and Archaeology

4.2 History of Leigh Old Town



History and Archaeology

Early History

4.2.1 Leigh is first recorded in the Domesday Book (1086), where it is entered as a manor with the name Legra. Its principal inhabitants are listed as two villeins and two smallholders, and five smallholders “*above the water who do not hold land*”. The latter, an unusual entry, implies that there was already a little port, although unlike some other places there is no mention of a fishery. The Domesday also records pasture for 100 sheep. Its importance as a place for trade is attested by references to Godfrey the Merchant, resident there in 1206, and to the death of a ‘merchant stranger’ killed there in 1255.⁰¹

Leigh’s Port and Boat Building Activity

4.2.2 By the 16th century Leigh was becoming a place of some significance as “*the principal port between Gravesend and Harwich and ... the landing place for merchandise destined for south-east Essex*”.⁰² Its significance was recognised in 1565 by the Examiner of Customs at Harwich who described Leigh as “*a very proper town, well furnished with good mariners, where commonly tall ships do ride, which town is a common and special landing place for butter, all manner of grain and other things*”. Another report in the same year records 31 vessels with 32 masters and owners and 230 mariners and fishermen.

4.2.3 Leigh has a long history of boatbuilding ranging from traditional trading ships and cockle craft to the modern pleasure craft seen in the boatyards today. The first recorded ship built at Leigh was the Speedwell, built in 1579 and weighing 105 tons, and between 1594 and 1599 eight ships of between 180 and 340 tonnes were recorded

as being built at Leigh.⁰³ During this time subsidies were paid by Henry VII and Elizabeth I for ships over 100 tonnes to encourage the building of ships that could, if necessary, be used as war vessels and this is likely to have been an incentive for the shipbuilding industry in Leigh. By present day standards tonnages are microscopic but in Tudor times they were far from small. The number and size of vessels built therefore indicates that Leigh was well equipped for shipbuilding during this period.

4.2.4 Many sailors from Leigh achieved great distinction. These included Richard Haddock, whose family can be traced back over 400 years and during this time provided ten captains and two admirals. Richard Haddock was knighted by Charles II, after the Battle of Sole Bay, and was made Commissioner of the Navy. Sir Richard Haddock and his son Admiral Nicolas Haddock were born at what is now the Crooked Billet Pub but which at that time was a house. In addition to the Haddocks there were other admirals and many captains who lived in Leigh, such as the Goodlads, Witakers, Bundocks, Salmons, Rogers and Bonners, and many London merchants owned ships which were built in Leigh, and their masters and crews were Leigh men.

4.2.5 During the 16th and 17th centuries there was a close association between Leigh and the Trinity House. The first official record of Trinity House is the grant of a Royal Charter by Henry VIII in 1514 to a fraternity of mariners called the Guild of the Holy Trinity, “*so that they might regulate the pilotage of ships in the King's streams*”. The Trinity held this responsibility until 1987 when it was transferred to the Port and Harbour Authorities. Between 1588 and 1638 two members of

⁰¹ Bride, 1994, p. 5.

⁰² Bride, 1994, p. 6.

⁰³ Bride, 1994, p. 9.

History and Archaeology



The Crooked Billet Public House, early 20th century

the Salmon Family as well as Sir Richard Haddock, Richard Chester and William Goodlad all held the honour of Master of the Trinity House. This association is commemorated on a memorial plaque in St Clements Church (now in the Leigh Conservation Area).

- 4.2.6 The 16th century seems to have been the hey-day for shipbuilding in Leigh but records show that this industry was still flourishing more than 50 years later. Leigh is one of several places reputed to have built the Pilgrim Father's 'Mayflower' and, although no firm documentary evidence has yet been found, the balance of expert opinion is weighted towards Leigh rather than Harwich. The Port book records show that in 1606 Robert Bonner was master of the

Mayflower of Lee and in 1607 Christopher Jones was the master of the Josan of London, but in 1608 Robert Bonner is listed as the master of the Josan and in 1609 Christopher Jones is recorded as being the master of the Mayflower of Harwich. The transposition of names of masters and vessels means that there may have been an exchange of masters between these two vessels. In that case the Mayflower of which Robert Bonner was the master in 1606-7 could have become Jones' and the pilgrim ship that sailed from Harwich via Southampton in 1620.⁰⁴ There is no firm evidence to prove this but there is no contradictory evidence either so it is a possibility. It is also worth noting that John Vassall, one of the backers of the Pilgrim Father's expedition lived at Eastwood in Cockethurst Farm, which is still standing today and lies two miles north of Leigh. It is, however, recorded that the Mayflower anchored off the Strand at Leigh in July 1620 to pick up pilgrims from Essex and replenish its stores before going to Plymouth, Massachusetts in America.⁰⁵

- 4.2.7 In 1652, after the first two battles of the Dutch War, Admiral Blake brought his crippled ships to Leigh for refitting. It is not apparent why Leigh was chosen in preference to the Medway and the choice did not meet with the approval of the Council of State, but the admiral persisted. Probably the repair facilities at Leigh were good, for at the end of a couple of months of strenuous work, Blake sailed down the Thames with 60 men-of-war, the most numerous, the best equipped and the most ably-commanded fleet the Commonwealth had ever sent to sea. The Dutch were engaged off Portland Bill in a running fight extending over three days and they lost forty vessels.⁰⁶

⁰⁴ Burrows Paper, 1932

⁰⁵ Williams, 2002 p. 15.

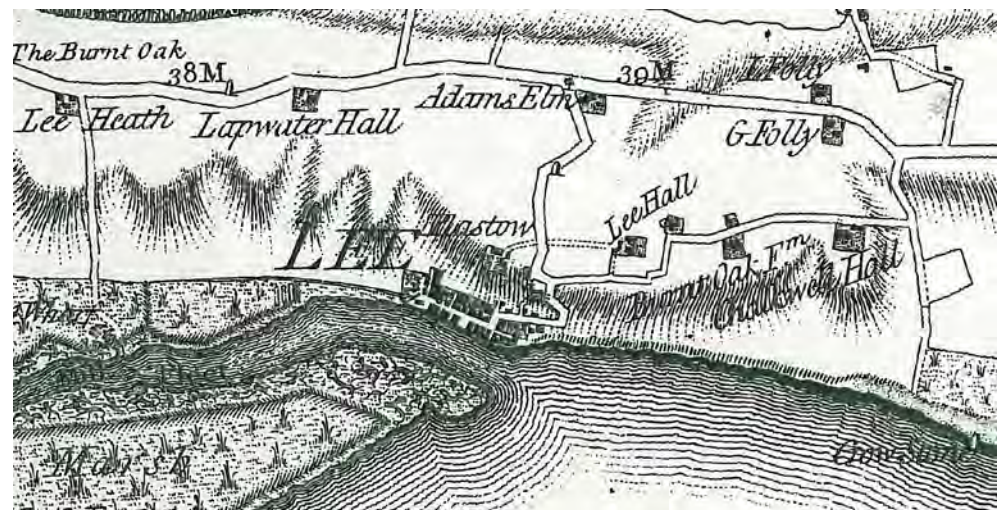
⁰⁶ Bride, 1994 p 7.

History and Archaeology

- 4.2.8 There are one or two buildings dating from the 16th century remaining today, including the Crooked Billet and Nos.62-63 High Street. The Peterboat public house was another building dating back to the 16th century until it burned down in 1892 and was subsequently rebuilt.
- 4.2.9 The silting up of Leigh Creek in the 18th century meant that large ships could no longer get into Leigh. This led to a sharp decline in its fortunes, which was slightly abated by fishing but not reversed until the arrival of the railway.
- 4.2.10 From 1712 brick lined tank on the High Street, supplied by a conduit, was used to supply the town with fresh water. The site still survives with a plaque indicating that the spring was reinstated in 1825 by public subscription. The site was again restored in 1975 to commemorate the European Architectural Heritage Year.
- 4.2.11 Map D, Chapman and André's map of Essex, 1777 shows Leigh, or Lee as it is marked, as a settlement closely hugging the coast and creeping up Leigh Hill. The High Street is lined on either side with a single row of buildings and features a couple of short streets leading away from it at right angles. One dock or wharf is clearly shown. At this time, it is estimated that there were about 100 families living in the town.



Site of the 18th century water supply on the High Street



Map D: Detail from Chapman and André's map of Essex, 1777

History and Archaeology

Fishing and Smuggling

- 4.2.12 The fishing industry has been part of Leigh's history for a long time. It reached its peak in the 18th and early 19th centuries but significantly declined in the latter part of the 19th century when the deep water of Leigh Creek silted up. The oyster and shrimp trade became important in the 19th century when oysters were harvested all along the foreshore. Oysters appear to have been the foundation of much of Leigh's early prosperity. As early as 1650 the foreshore was discovered to be an excellent site for fattening young oysters and by 1773, 800 acres of Southend were being used in this way. This continued well into the 19th century.
- 4.2.13 Fishing has always been a precarious livelihood and Leigh fishermen, like others, often found it necessary to supplement their income with smuggling. There has been a long history of smuggling around Leigh dating back as far as 1344 and continuing for at least 500 years.⁰⁷ Leigh, along with Paglesham, was one of the main centres of this illegal activity in Essex. Smugglers were fishermen and sailors, people who could handle boats and who knew the creeks, tides and sandbanks, and on shore they liaised with owners of large houses and inns with cellars where goods could be hidden. Boats would sail out from Leigh into the Thames Estuary and after boarding foreign vessels would return by stealth, in the darkness, with their contraband.
- 4.2.14 Smuggling flourished in Leigh during this period despite being well known to the customs officers who regulated the goods coming into the port at this time. In 1786 the then customer officer John Loten claimed he was aware of 10 vessels from Leigh that carried illicit traffic. To combat them he armed a small vessel with a few guns and made many seizures. Another customs officer at Leigh claims to have made captures every day in July 1802. The goods coming in included gin from Switzerland, brandy from France, port from Portugal, tea from India, silk from China, coffee from South America and so on.
- 4.2.15 In 1892 a fire at the original 'Peter Boat', a 17th century inn, revealed a large underground room with a waterside entrance which contained evidence of smuggling. This inn, as the new Peterboat does today, adjoined Alley Dock where a narrow path once led up the hill to Dawes Heath, an area well known for the concealment and dispersion of illegal goods and a notorious rendezvous for highwaymen⁰⁸. The small pantiled building that can be seen in Mikes Boatyard of Alley Dock today may have been used to stable horses for this purpose.
- 4.2.16 The last recorded smuggler to be apprehended by Leigh customs officers was in 1856.

⁰⁷ Bride, 1994, p. 5.

⁰⁸ Bride, 1994, p22

History and Archaeology

Victorian Development

4.2.17 In the 19th century Leigh was, like other small towns, a largely self-sufficient community. The following trades are recorded as being operational in 1846:

- eight bakers;
- three butchers;
- grocers;
- boot or shoe manufacturers;
- two drapers;
- three milliners;
- four coal merchants;
- two boatbuilders;
- two carpenters;
- two basketmakers, one of which was also a cooper; and
- a blacksmith, a gardener, a plumber, a bricklayer, a furniture broker, a hairdresser, three teachers at national schools and three at Lady Sparrow schools.⁰⁹ Lady Sparrow was Leigh's best known benefactor who sunk wells and founded a school in the mid-19th century.¹⁰

4.2.18 Most pre-20th century buildings in Leigh Old Town date to the 19th century. The most prominent of these is the Old Custom House, which was built in 1815. In its side is preserved the red brick wall and fireplace of a now demolished earlier building.

⁰⁹ Bride, p.41

¹⁰ Yearsley, p. 77.



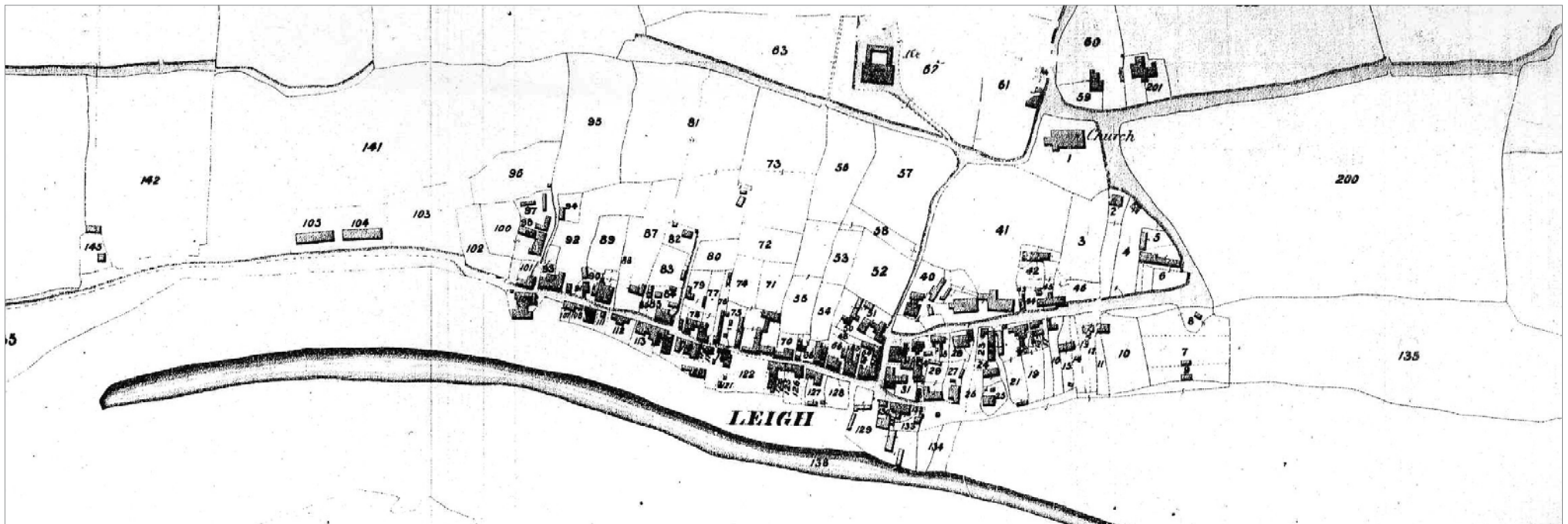
The Old Custom House



The fireplace in the west external wall of the Custom House

History and Archaeology

4.2.19 The Tithe Award map for the Parish of Leigh 1847 (Map E) more clearly shows the settlement pattern, which by this time had begun to extend up Leigh Hill towards the church. The number of wharfs has increased to three and the oyster pits are identified within the creek and foreshore area, reflecting the prevalent industries at the time. The original customs house and the original Peter Boat and Smack pubs are also labelled. The railway, which would soon hem in the north side of the Conservation Area, had not yet been built.

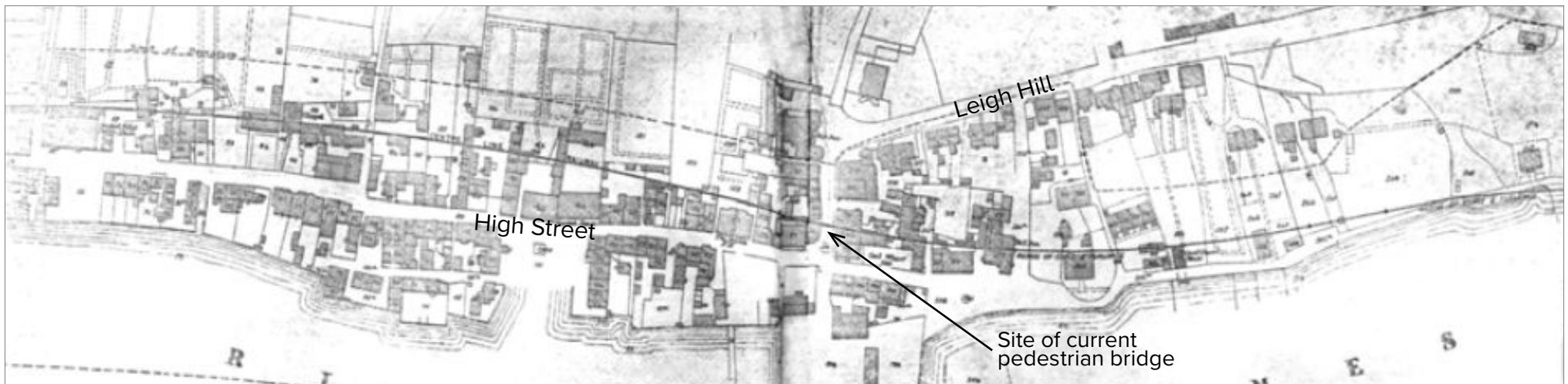


Map E: Tithe Award Map for the Parish of Leigh, 1847 (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Record Office: D/CT 217)

History and Archaeology

4.2.20 The railway was originally intended to follow a route up Belton Hills to a station on the site of the present Salvation Army Citadel, which accounts for the naming of Station Road but it in the end was considered more financially expedient to lay the track along the coast rather than tackle a steep hill. This decision had a devastating effect on the old town as the railway literally cut the settlement in half in the 1850s when many of the buildings were demolished to make way for the tracks and station. This included the loss of the original Smack Inn which was situated in the path of the railway (see Map F).

The rear of the Crooked Billet was also lost but luckily the front of the building still survives. The railway development also meant the demolition of the Bell Inn whose bricks were used to build up the Kings Stand, now known as Bell Wharf and another Inn. The Kings Head was cut in two and for a while trains ran through the middle until it too was demolished to make way for the new booking office.¹¹ The railway clearly had a devastating effect on the town buildings but many of those lost were described as ‘hovels’ and would have meant unsanitary conditions for the occupiers.



Map F: This map shows the proposed line of the railway cutting through many of the town's buildings

¹¹ Williams, p. 53.

History and Archaeology

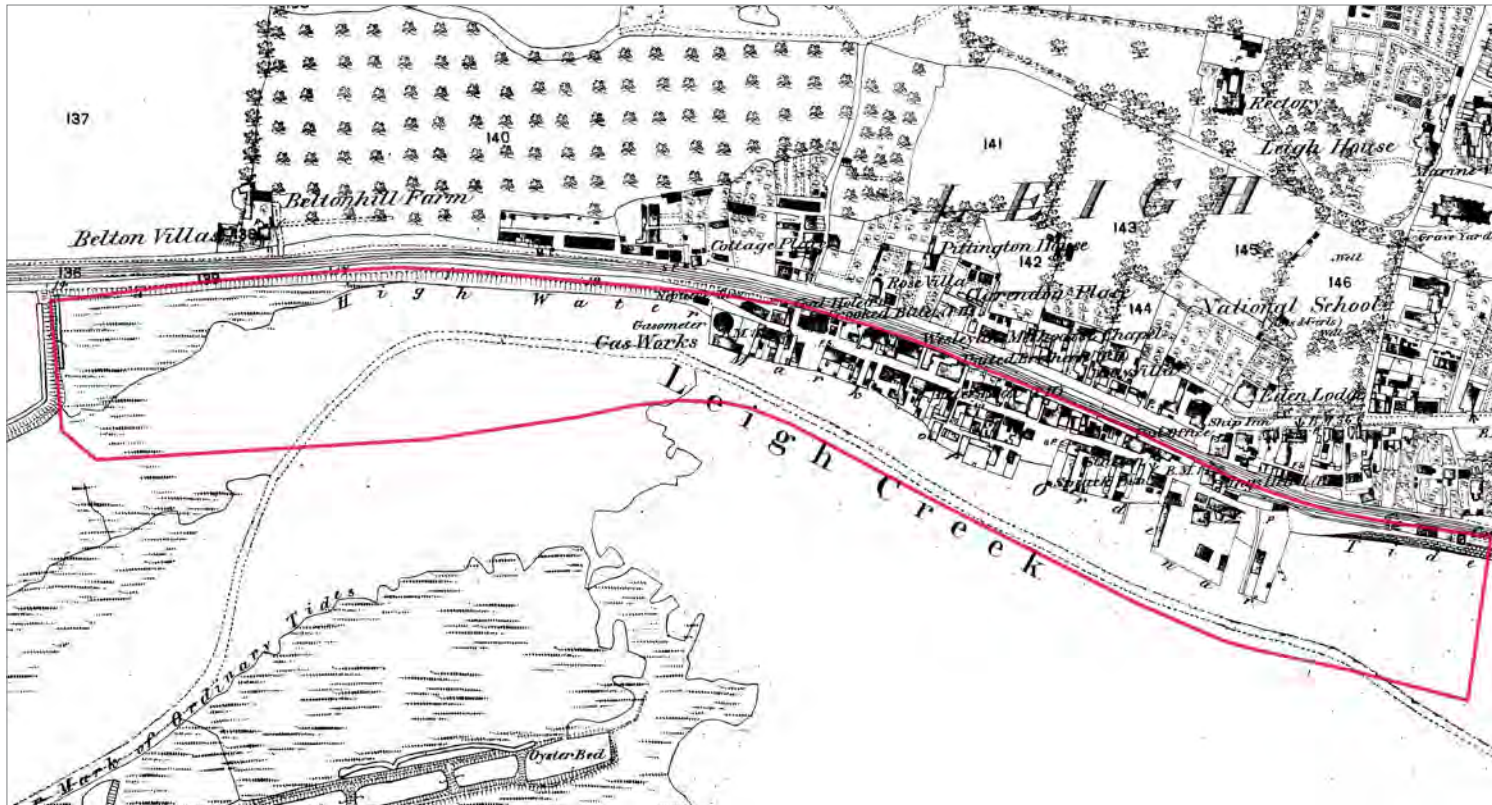
4.2.21 The railway opened in 1855 and was of particular benefit to the local fishermen who were able to transport their catch to London much more quickly and reliably than the night carts or sailing boats previously used. In 1855, when it was first possible to transport shellfish to London, with the opening of Leigh Station *“467 tons of oysters and 29 tons of winkles, mussels and shrimps were transported”* and by 1864 *“oysters and shrimps had increased to 704 tons.”*¹² However, by 1872 oyster and shrimps had been abandoned and the breeding grounds were devoted to winkles and mussels. The original station building still remains at the eastern end of the High Street and is now the base for Leigh Sailing Club. It was replaced as the station for Leigh by the current station in 1934.

4.2.22 The arrival of the railway created unprecedented access to Leigh from the wider area, which historically had been isolated by its location at the base of high cliffs. It also coincided with an explosion in population. The 1801 census recorded a population of 570; by the 1861 census this had risen to 1400. However, the railway created a barrier dividing the old town from the expanding new areas of Leigh to the north. Roads that led out of the old town were dissected and the division was made even stronger when the level crossing was replaced by a footbridge. Since this time the Old Town has had a certain independence from the rest of Leigh and even today conversation with those that live and work there reveals this to still be the case.

History and Archaeology

4.2.23 Map G, the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1874, shows Leigh Old Town, which by this point had largely adopted its modern appearance. Any undeveloped plots facing the seafront had been infilled. The railway line was, by this time, long established. This map shows no signs of the cockle sheds that are now such a strong feature of the western end of the Conservation Area; these do not appear on the maps until the third edition Ordnance survey map of 1922.

4.2.24 Although the cockle sheds were not yet in place the first edition OS map indicates disused fishponds and an oyster bed among the mudflats in Leigh Creek south of the Conservation Area. In the early 19th century and before, fish were stored in these shallow pits filled with water on the foreshore until it was time to send them to market.¹³ This was an effective means of storage, keeping them fresh as long as possible close to hand and with straightforward access.



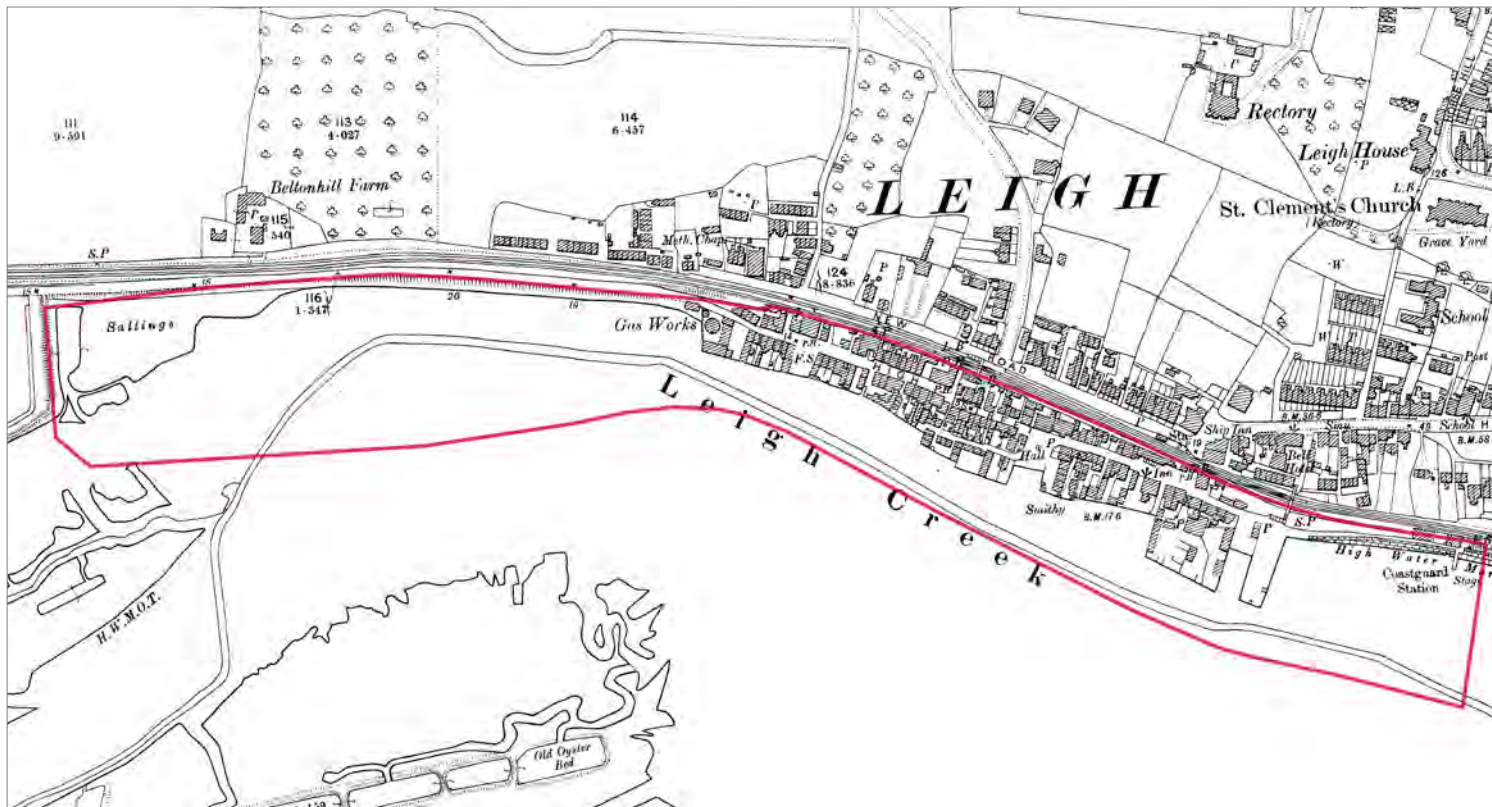
Map G: 1874 OS map. © Crown Copyright 2019. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100019680.

¹³ Ibid.

History and Archaeology

4.2.25 Leigh Old Town was not much altered between the 1874 (Map G) and 1897 (Map H) OS maps, largely owing to the abrupt termination of development to the north enforced by the railway line. However, to the north of the railway line Leigh had extended with new development along Horse Hill (current Leigh Hill) and to the east of Church Hill. This development was partly owed to a Southend mayor,

Frederick Francis Ramuz, who bought over 300 acres of land on the hill above Leigh, including Leigh Hall Farm and Victoria Pottery, and began to sell it off for development. As development continued, a new centre developed around a new shopping street, The Broadway (formerly Leigh Hall Road), reinforcing the divide between the 'Old Town' or 'Old Leigh' as it became known.¹⁴



Map H: 1897 OS map. © Crown Copyright 2019. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100019680.

¹⁴ Yearsley, p. 77.

History and Archaeology

4.2.26 The following images record the High Street in Leigh Old Town at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries; the town was characterised by weather-boarded or brick buildings (dwellings, public houses and a mission house) and dirt or cobbled roads.



The west end of the High Street, Leigh-on-Sea, c.1900



The west end of the High Street, Leigh on Sea, 1900

History and Archaeology

Cockling

4.2.27 The cockling that Leigh is known for today overtook fishing in the 20th century. Originally cockles would be raked from the seabed between the tides and then carried ashore in wicker baskets on yokes. Raking was eventually replaced by mechanical dredging in 1967 but the yokes were still used as a method of unloading them well into the 1980s.



Cockle sheds, Leigh-on-Sea, early-20th century

The Endeavour and WWII

4.2.28 At one time the cockle boats would have been constructed in Leigh but this is no longer the case. The Endeavour is the last remaining Leigh-built fishing boat. It was built in 1926 and was the first cockle-boat to be launched with an engine fitted in addition to sails and marked the transition to the style of fishing seen in Leigh today.

4.2.29 During World War II, Endeavour, along with five other Leigh craft, was commandeered by the Royal Navy to go to Dunkirk. Because of their shallow draught, the boats were used to rescue British and French soldiers from the beach and ferry them to larger boats offshore. They went from Southend at 11.00 hrs on the 31st May 1940 under the control of Sub Lieutenant M H B Soloman RN. They worked the Dunkirk beaches for some time and were returning when one of the other Leigh boats, 'The Renown', struck a mine. The crew of four perished in the explosion. The Endeavour also suffered with smashed rudder and had to be towed back by the coaster Ben and Lucy, arriving safely in Ramsgate with her load of soldiers.

4.2.30 Unfortunately, the Endeavour sank in the great storms of 1987, when tied up at Thunderbolt pier off Chatham Historic Dockyard, but was recently raised and brought back to Leigh to be restored and is now moored in Leigh Creek and is a valuable link to Leigh's boatbuilding and fishing heritage. The Endeavour is the only surviving Leigh-built fishing boat that went to Dunkirk.

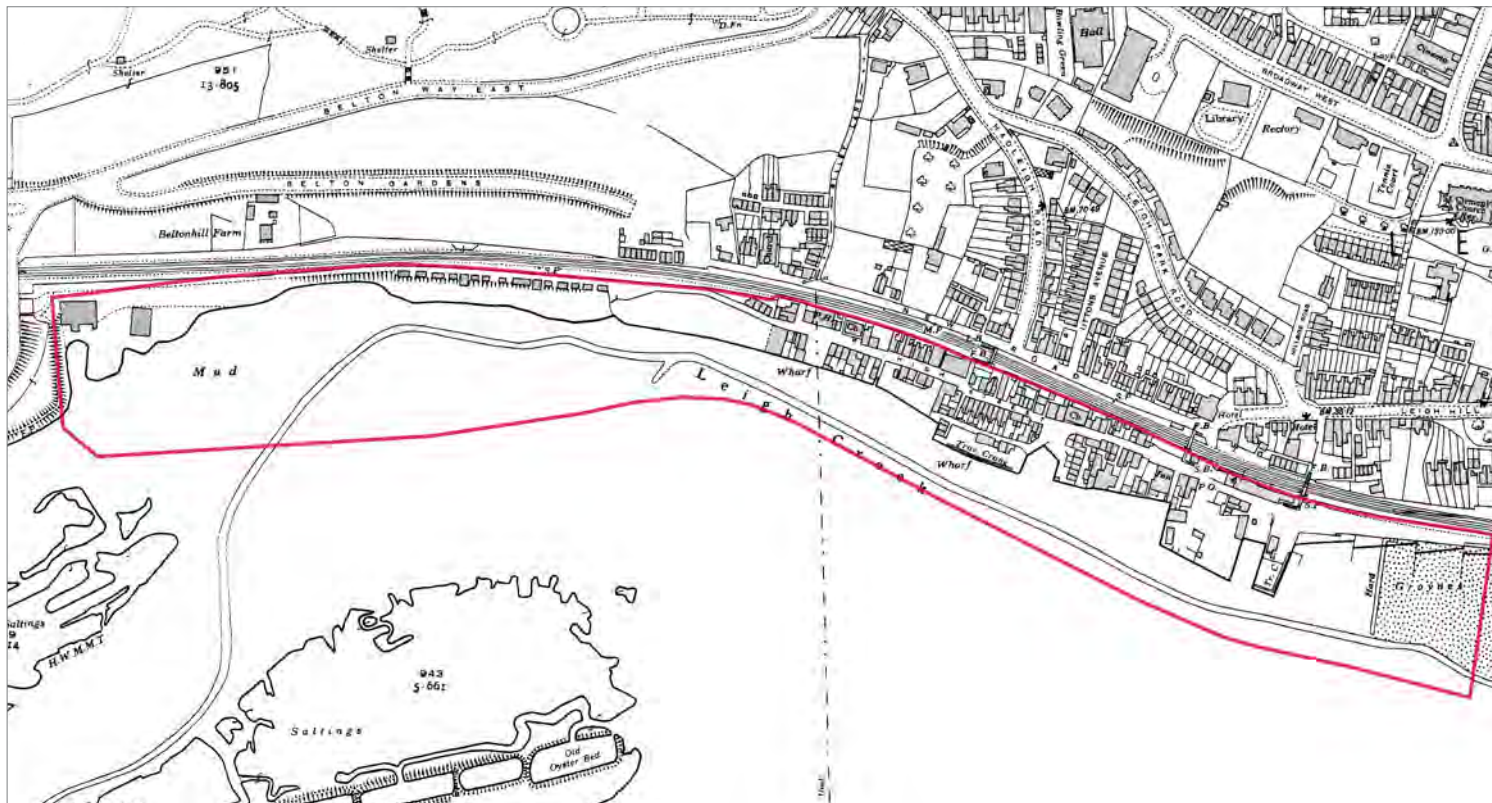
4.2.31 During World War II sea defenses positioned along the coast, consisting of six foot concrete blocks and barbed wire, meant that the only place a boat could access the water in Southend was at

History and Archaeology

Bell Wharf in Leigh. In 1944 local residents remember an amphibious tank, the Water Buffalo LVT (Landing Vehicle, Tracked) was therefore brought to Leigh to be demonstrated to several high ranking army officers (as well as some of the 3rd Chalkwell Sea Scouts).¹⁵ The amphibian was later used on D-Day.

4.2.32 Whilst the main thread of the Conservation Area did not change significantly in the early 20th century, Map I shows a line of cockle sheds had been built on the seafront at the west end of Leigh Old Town. Just beyond the Conservation Area, the farmland to the north of the cockle houses had begun to be laid out with a series of roads (Belton Way East, Belton Gardens) and development in Leigh had burgeoned around new roads Leigh Park Road and Broadway West. More drastically, new development beyond Leigh meant that the settlement had been absorbed into Southend.

¹⁵ Owen, Richard, pers. comm.



Map I: 1939 OS map. © Crown Copyright 2019. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100019680.

History and Archaeology



Cockle sheds, Leigh-on-Sea, early-20th century

Mid-Twentieth Century to Present

4.2.33 Another threat to the fabric of the old town was posed when the 1955/6 Town Development plan proposed the construction of a new road which was to cut right through it. The new road was to be the extension of Chalkwell Esplanade to Leigh Station, which was originally planned to run on the northern side of the railway track, but was later redesigned on the southern side when the British Transport Commission contributed to the cost of a flyover to the west of the High Street. The flyover, Belton Bridge, was constructed but public opposition to the scheme proved to be too great and thankfully this project was never completed.

4.2.34 Few pre-19th century buildings remain in the Conservation Area, although from looking at old photographs and maps it is clear that the texture and grain of the town has changed little. The Old Smithy, which was built in the 1860s, was converted to Leigh Heritage Centre in the late 20th century. Plumbs Yard, also built in the mid-19th century, was rebuilt (the building collapsed during a restoration project) in 2007. The Boatyard restaurant, which is a converted boatshed, featuring a new glass façade, is a good illustration of how modern design can be integrated into a group of old buildings.

Section 5.0

Character Analysis

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Character Analysis

5.1 Architectural Overview

5.1.1 The urban setting of Leigh Old Town is easily broken down into five distinct character zones, each with its own typical building materiality, scale and spacing of buildings, general building uses and architectural features. Owing to these varied characteristics, the architecture of each zone will be fully explored and illustrated in sections 5.2; this overview provides an overarching description of the architecture in the Conservation Area to capture variety yet also cohesion across the Area.

5.1.2 There are two very distinct parts of the Conservation Area. The western end is more industrial in character and the materials in use are correspondingly utilitarian, although in some cases, in order to attract more tourism trade, they have begun to assume a more commercial and retail appearance, for example Simply Seafood at No.1 Cockle Shed Row. The cockle sheds typically have well painted shiplap boarded walls and corrugated iron roofs, where more modern materials have been used, such as felt roofs, which has harmed the character of the Conservation Area. There are some fine hand-painted business signs, which add interest to the rather repetitive rows of sheds. Further to the east, beyond Belton Bridge, the character of the Area is more varied with a range of different businesses and housing, although the fishing industry upon which Leigh's wealth is founded is still very prominent, with several seafood outlets. Map J shows the uses within the Conservation Area.

5.1.3 Despite the informality of its layout and the variety of the buildings, the materials and details in the area are generally harmonious. Materials make an important contribution to the character of the Area and an understanding of them is essential to protect its special interest. Prominent materials include timber sash windows, slate roofs, yellow stock bricks with decorative red brickwork and feather edged weatherboarding on domestic buildings. Shiplap boarding features appropriately on non-domestic properties but feather-edged weatherboarding is the more common detail on older properties, particularly houses, and it is important that this distinction remains. The new houses at Nos.53–58 High Street have shiplap boarding and this is out of character for non-commercial buildings in the Area. Corrugated iron is another prominent building material especially for industrial or formerly industrial buildings and important to maintain.

Character Analysis

General materials palette



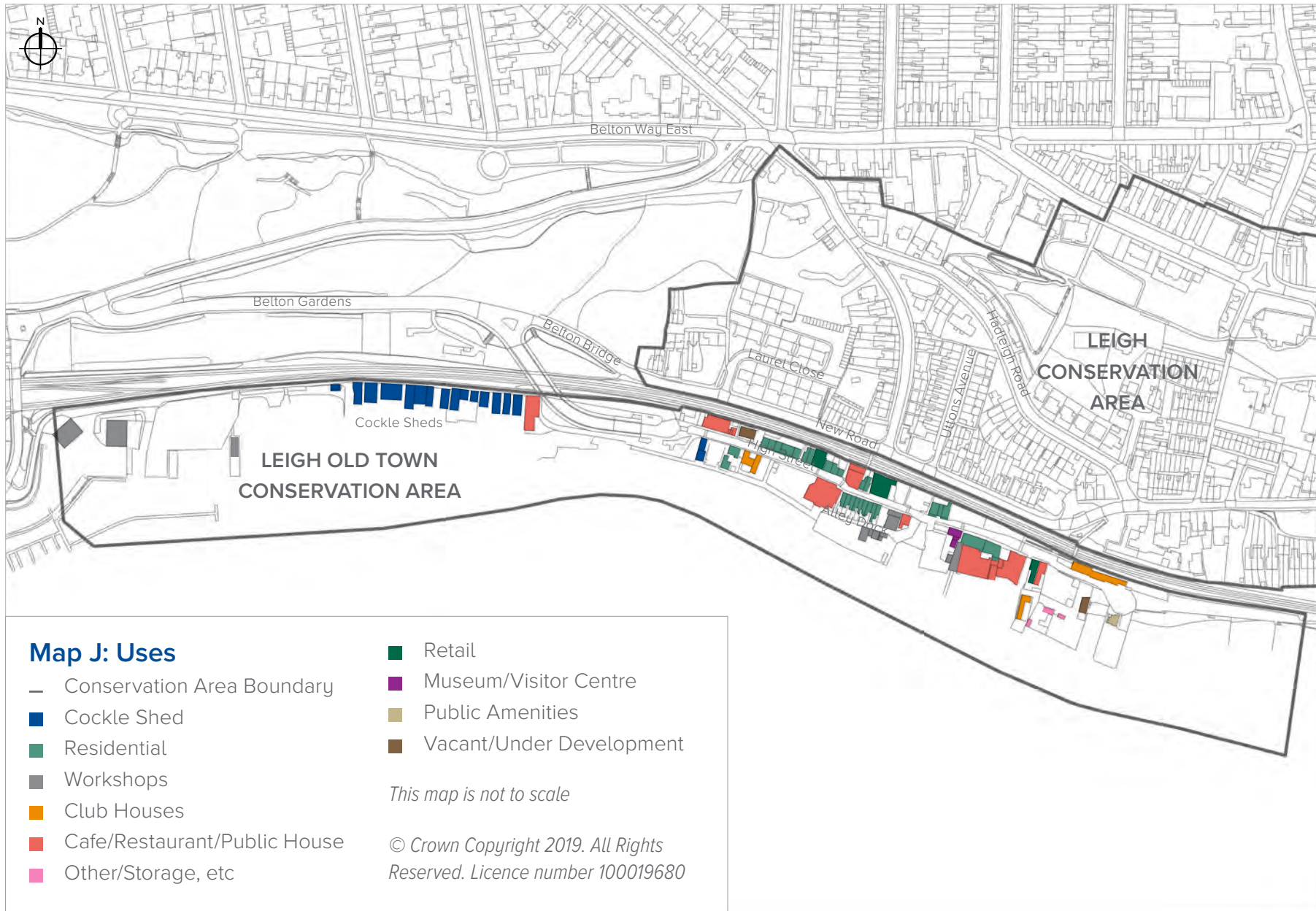
Character Analysis

5.1.4 Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area are traditionally built, domestic in form, of modest size and also of traditional construction, some of which have now been converted to other uses. The scale of the Conservation Area is generally fairly modest. Almost all the buildings are only two storeys high, although a few larger buildings such as Nos.62-63 High Street and The Crooked Billet have rooms in the roof, giving a third floor, which is unusual for the Conservation Area. The industrial buildings are generally light-weight sheds.

5.1.5 Roof pitches in the Area tend to be shallow, as is appropriate for the predominance of slate roof coverings. However, there is some considerable variation, with steeper pitches featuring on older buildings, such as The Crooked Billet, Nos.62-63 High Street which have, or originally had, roofs covered with hand made plain clay tiles. Generally there are shallow pitched slate or clay plain tiles on older buildings and corrugated sheet metal on the more industrial buildings.

5.1.6 Leigh Old Town seems largely to have escaped the replacement of traditional timber sash windows and doors with uPVC units. Unfortunately, there are some exceptions, most prominently the one on the west elevation of Osborne Bros opposite the Crooked Billet, although there are a few others on the rear elevations of some buildings. It is particularly important in this Area where the escape from uPVC has been so comprehensive, not to allow one or two windows to detract from this success. Certain historic shopfronts have survived for example that the Strand Tea Rooms (No.16 High Street), which retains its traditional stall riser, projecting bay windows and canted side entrance.

Character Analysis



Character Analysis

5.2 Character Areas And Architecture

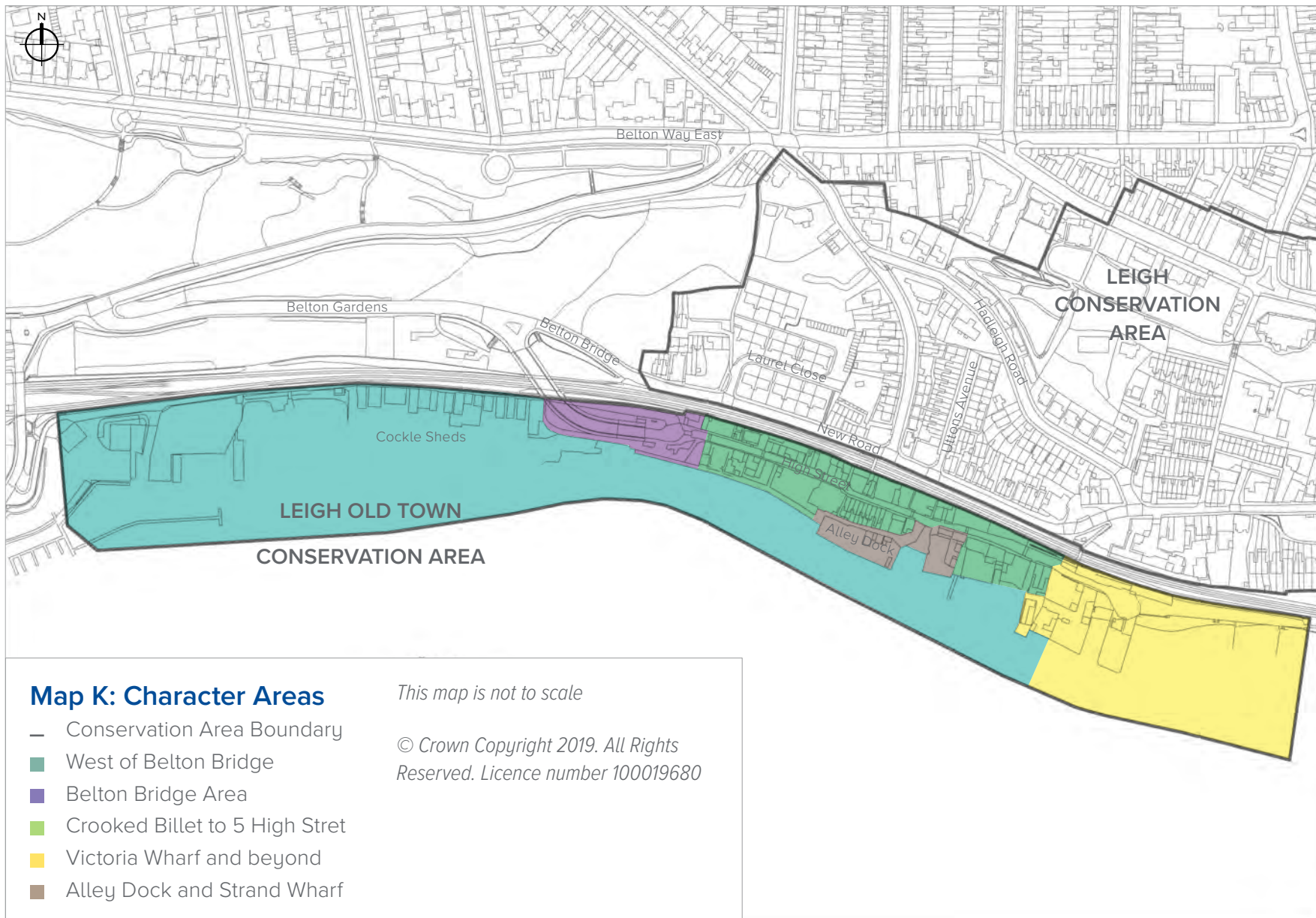
West of Belton Bridge

- 5.2.1 This character area provides the opening impression of Leigh Old Town for those arriving from the railway station or the west. It largely comprises the industrial land to the west of Belton Bridge along one long narrow road stretching to the end of the Conservation Area and beyond. The character area continues further east as far as Victoria Wharf on the seaward side of the sea wall. The predominance of fishing boats and other industrial activity on the water means that this area is most closely related in character to the western part of the Conservation Area.
- 5.2.2 The most typical buildings in this area are the 20th century cockle sheds, which sit immediately to the west of Belton Bridge. These are one-storey industrial sheds, most are clad in shiplap boarding and have flat or slightly sloping roofs, enlivened by a few pitched roofs and the occasional market style front with a display of seafood on sale. The cockle sheds are mostly well maintained and cared for with

their weatherboarding recent painted in shiny dark gloss colours that are clearly chosen to be hard wearing and durable. Although less picturesque than the ramshackle sheds depicted in old photographs of the area, the old sheds would not have been suitable for today's industry. The effect of this is relieved in places with colourful painted signs that advertise their wares and some modest areas where seafood can be eaten. The seaward side of the cockle sheds, which at the time of the last appraisal in 2008/09 had recently been provided with a new waterfront and surfaced to enable car-parking and larger plant and machinery to operate, is presently untidy and cluttered with containers and machinery. The containers and an area of palisade fencing in particular are detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area.

- 5.2.3 Further to the west, towards the western boundary of the Conservation Area and the railway station beyond, are much larger industrial buildings, also built in the 20th century. These are simple and utilitarian in appearance, with corrugated iron materiality, pitched roofs and large barn-like doors. These are also still in industrial use and serve the shipyards along the coastline. There are also numerous shipping containers in the close setting of these buildings, although a number of these are just outside the Conservation Area boundary to the west. There are also many boats moored or stored on land which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

Character Analysis



Character Analysis

West of Belton Bridge: Materials and Details Palette



Negative Aspects of the Character Area



Character Analysis

Belton Bridge Area

5.2.4 This is the smallest character area, restricted to the area between the cockle sheds and the beginning of the High Street proper (at the mini-roundabout just before the Crooked Billet public house). It is dominated by the vast concrete Belton Bridge and car park beneath, which seems to sever the cockle sheds and the west end of the Conservation Area from the rest of the High Street. It therefore feels like an interchange between the two parts of the Conservation Area with no defining or key characteristics. The area is utilitarian, unsightly and feels unwelcoming, although the relatively large area of open space affords attractive views over the Estuary, which encourages visitors to turn their back on the bridge and the car park and to look out across the water and Leigh Creek. In an effort to address the poor townscape of the area, there are benches lining the base of the bridge, as well as two large, mooring buoys that have contributed to the seaside character of the Conservation Area. This character area would be an ideal location for some enhancement to the Conservation Area without any detrimental impact on the industry that underpins the local economy, such as improved street and pavement surfacing. This could be linked to the proposals in the Old Leigh Port and Two Tree Island Spatial Plan (June 2019) which proposes a new taxi/car drop off point near the buoys and a pop-up event space underneath Belton Bridge.

Belton Bridge Area: Materials and Details Palette



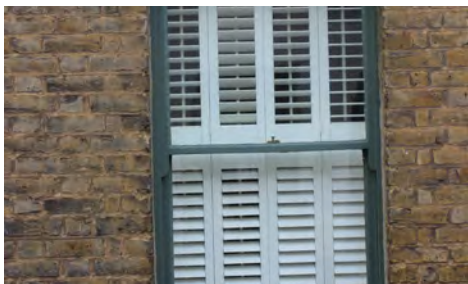
Character Analysis

Crooked Billet to No.5 High Street

- 5.2.5 This character area includes the Leigh Old Town centre and the High Street proper. It comprises a more mixed-use character. There are still some cockle merchants' outlets and two boat building workshops, but this is mixed in with housing, retail and a variety of pubs, cafes and restaurants. This area, which caters to residents and tourists, is lively in character with its own distinctive identity. There are spaces for people to sit outside at pubs, at the sea-food merchants and various cafes, such as Sara's Tea Gardens and The Strand Tea Rooms, creating a relaxed, holiday atmosphere. The footbridge to the rear of Sara's Tea Garden is unattractive but its impact is reduced by being set back from the street behind the cafe. The buildings are generally modest in scale and the general effect is both positive and in tune with the character of the area.
- 5.2.6 The Listed Crooked Billet public house dates back to the 16th century when it was a house, its former residents include members of the local Haddock family. Its timber-frame structure was refronted in the 19th century. The remaining frontage, which is distinctive on the High Street, was lucky to survive the mid-19th century arrival of the railway, which caused the demolition of the rear of the building. The two-storey, rendered building has a pitched roof with a gable end, ground floor bay windows, a central entrance and sliding sash windows. There is a small pub garden to the west with a backdrop of trees (which are subject to TPOs), which provides one of the few open/green spaces in this character area. The picket fence to the garden adds character.
- 5.2.7 The weatherboarded No. 52 High Street, formerly a fishermen's chapel, is currently under conversion to a restaurant.
- 5.2.8 The Peterboat public house and Theobalds Cottages were rebuilt after a disastrous fire at the end of the 19th century and these are very attractive, situated at a bend in the street where the road narrows and the area takes on a more intimate feel, which continues until the road opens out again by the car park opposite The Strand Tea Rooms. Where there are buildings on both sides of the road there is a strong sense of enclosure. The pub is characterful for its combined timber-framed, painted brick and rendered materiality, as well as its pitched roof and sliding sash windows. Theobalds Cottages are attractive for their diminutive scale (two storeys), mix of brick and painted brick materiality and contrasting coloured lintels. The rear elevations feature later first floor terraces overlooking Alley Dock.
- 5.2.9 The Customs House (Locally Listed) is another important building, with views afforded from the open space on Strand Wharf and a grander scale than the typical High Street cottages. Built in 1815, the building is brick (with subtle variation of colour), with a slate roof, sash windows and large central double doors painted blue.
- 5.2.10 There is some modern adaption, for example the conversion of an old boat building shed to the Boatyard Restaurant, which has been successfully integrated into the street scene. The Old Smithy has been converted to Leigh Heritage Centre, with sensitive retention of the sliding double doors and workshop windows. The terrace at Nos.53-58 High Street is moderately successful with its appropriate scale and good choice of materials although this is let down by rather bland overall design and fenestration.

Character Analysis

Crooked Billet to No. 5 High Street: Materials and Details Palette



Character Analysis

Victoria Wharf and Beyond

5.2.11 This character area comprises the eastern end of the Conservation Area, which on passing No.5 High Street takes on a more spread out disjointed character with plenty of open space in the form of wharfs, car parking and a small stretch of beach. Buildings are laid out more sparsely and the clearly defined building line of the High Street is lost. Instead buildings, such as The Den, the former sail loft shared between the Leigh Fishermen's co-op and the police (recently fire damaged), the public WCs and the Sailing Club, are laid out on an informal square made up of Victoria and Bell Wharves. The area is negatively impacted by the footbridge to the west of the Sailing Club. The buildings, which are built in brick or timber, are generally of larger scale and massing than those lining the High Street. Beyond Bell Wharf the part of the area that is on dry land narrows considerably, following a path east towards Leigh Cliff. Beyond dry land this zone has a leisure-based character and it is largely employed by the Sailing Club and in summer, close to the 'beach' area, by families paddling.

Victoria Wharf and beyond: Materials and Details Palette



Character Analysis

Alley Dock and Strand Wharf

5.2.12 This character area does not contain many buildings but covers Alley Dock, the only other road in the Conservation Area besides the High Street. The area stretches from behind the Peterboat public house to the large open space of Strand Wharf. After the public house the promenade turns away from the sea and becomes a back alley between Mike's Boatyard at Theobalds Wharf and Theobalds Cottages. Alley Dock is very narrow, constricted between high fences, yet feels intimate and with visual interest largely owing to the granite sett surface treatment, despite some unattractive boundary treatments, which include a mixture of brick, rendered brick, timber paling and barbed metal fencing. Near to Strand Wharf, Alley Dock widens and the lane returns to the High Street beside the Strand Tea Rooms.

5.2.13 Strand Wharf was historically the only publicly owned wharf in Leigh. Strand Wharf is a tidy, hard-surfaced space (the paving is a significant improvement to the previous concrete area which attracted unauthorised parking) with recently and well-restored cottages on its east side, one which has been converted to form part of the heritage centre (the principle heritage centre building is included in the High Street character area) and another a workshop. These buildings are characterised by small scale (two storeys), weather-boarding, shallow pitched roofs and sash windows. Behind these cottages the relatively huge Sea King boat-builders looms large, an abrupt reminder of the Area's industrial character.

Alley Dock and Strand Wharf: Materials and Details Palette



Character Analysis

5.3 Townscape

5.3.1 Features discussed in this section are shown on the Townscape Map (Map L) on p.62.

Topography

5.3.2 The Conservation Area itself is fairly flat, with any natural slope towards the sea eradicated by sea defences and wharves, enabling boats to be docked without running aground and the town to be protected from regular flooding. Beyond the Conservation Area, to the north of the railway line, the land slopes steeply upwards, with Belton Nature Reserve and the buildings of Leigh forming important aspects of Leigh Old Town's setting.

Industrial Character

5.3.3 The whole Conservation Area has an industrial character. The west end of the High Street is almost exclusively industrial and though less picturesque has the character of a working coastal location. The hard-working nature of the village, with the utilitarian cockle sheds, the narrow road that serves them and the cockle beach, fishing boats and equipment are a vital part of the Area and prettiness would be entirely inappropriate. The nature and vitality of Leigh Old Town is entirely based on the sea and the industry associated with it is essential to its character. However, the road at this end of the High Street can feel unwelcoming with a lack of proper pavement, the chain-link fence of the railway and storage areas filled with scrap metal, grounded boats and workshops.



The industrial (west) end of the Conservation Area

Character Analysis

Views and Vistas

- 5.3.4 At the eastern end of the Area, glimpses of the sea are afforded at intervals, often appearing unexpectedly between buildings. The buildings in the centre of the settlement and the cockle sheds at the west end also frame glimpse views out to sea and marshland. The clearest views are provided from the more open spaces, such as from the road at the east and west end of the Conservation Area, where views are unimpeded by buildings, and from the wharves, where you can stand on the water's edge, allow wider panoramic views and vistas of the open Estuary, Leigh Creek and Leigh Marshes featuring bobbing fishing boats and buoys, and the remains of former jetties.
- 5.3.5 Views inland, over the railway and up the cliffs are more readily obtained and are less picturesque, as they are always compromised by the detritus of the railway, such as overhead lines, pedestrian footbridges, chain-link fencing and its associated untidiness. The Area feels remote from the rest of Leigh, divided off, as it is, by the railway.
- 5.3.6 From outside the Conservation Area, for example from the Belton Hills Nature Reserve and Marine Parade Gardens to its north, Leigh Old Town can be seen in the context of Leigh Marshes, Leigh National Nature Reserve and the Estuary.

Glimpse views of the sea from the High Street



Character Analysis

Views of the sea from the wharves and footpaths



Views into the Conservation Area



View from Belton Way East



View from Belton Bridge



Character Analysis

Open and Green Spaces

5.3.7 The main High Street is winding and narrow, and the other paths and alleyways around it are still smaller and often quite enclosed. This street orientation creating the feeling for enclosed spaces which are opened out to, and relieved by, wider spaces provided by the wharves and outdoor seating areas as you move through the area.



The enclosed feeling of the main High Street at the east end of the Conservation Area

5.3.8 Green spaces in the town are very few, particularly in the public realm. The most prominent green spaces are Sara's Tea Garden, which is attractive but in private ownership, and the garden of the Crooked Billet. Despite few green spaces, there are several open spaces within the Conservation Area. Between the cockle sheds and the Crooked Billet there is a large expanse that is dominated by Belton Bridge. The space below the bridge, used for car parking is unattractive and would benefit from enhancement but some good views of the town, small boats and the Estuary can be obtained from standing on the bridge itself and from sitting on the benches beneath it.

5.3.9 To the east of the Belton Bridge area the open spaces are mainly wharves, including Billet Wharf, Strand Wharf, Bell Wharf and Victoria Wharf as well as the open eating areas. Beyond the Leigh Sailing Clubhouse at the east end of the Conservation Area, there is a small area of beach and a footpath that runs beside land belonging to the sailing club. The wharves all have hard surfaces, such as tarmac or brick. Strand Wharf, which was the only publicly owned quay even from earliest times,⁰¹ has recently been tidied and improved, now providing an attractive open area with limestone surfacing, planted beds and brick and timber benches.

⁰¹ H N Bride, p. 27.

Character Analysis

5.3.10 At the west end of the Conservation Area, the land between the cockle sheds and the sea is an open area, which is publicly accessible, occupied with plant and machinery associated with the cockle sheds. The area is further cluttered by old containers and the machinery and yard are unkempt. Between the cockle sheds and the larger industrial buildings towards the station there is a harbour, allowing expansive views from the road out to Leigh Creek and Marshes.



Small harbour at the west end of the Conservation Area



Beach at the east end of the Conservation Area



Strand Wharf

Character Analysis



Billet Wharf with a communal eating area in front of the Crooked Billet Public House and Osbornes



Land behind the cockle sheds

Trees

- 5.3.11 Very few trees exist in the Conservation Area and this is appropriate for its industrial seaside character. However, there are trees in Sara's Tea Garden, the Crooked Billet garden and around the footbridge, which act as welcome breaks in views and serve to soften the Area. These are generally small, deciduous and tucked into occasional corners. The three trees at the Crooked Billet are the only large trees (and subject to TPOs).
- 5.3.12 Much of the boundary to the railway line is covered in greenery, mainly weed growth, but serving an important function by disguising an unsightly fence. This is one place where more planting would contribute considerably to the appearance of the Area, although encouraging more plant growth along the fence could only be considered if the plants were not to invade the railway line itself.

Boundary Treatments

- 5.3.13 Most buildings along the High Street front directly onto the public realm or have only very tiny front garden areas. Boundary treatments where they are required at the fronts of buildings are diverse and include white picket fencing at No. 65 and Sara's Tea Garden and metal palings at the Hatch Cafe. Boundary treatments are more commonly found at the sides and rear of buildings, for example those backing onto Alley Dock. These vary in type and include park-style iron railings, close boarded fencing, municipal style railings, concrete slabs, ugly chain link fencing, rendered walls and even decking fixed vertically. There is also some temporary 'Heras' fencing, which is particularly unsightly and inappropriate. The railway is bounded by municipal metal fencing, which contributes negatively to the Conservation Area.

Character Analysis

5.3.14 Old photographs of Leigh Old Town reveal an interesting mix of fencing including picket fencing, some of which was tall, vertical boarded fences, with narrow spaces between each vertical, and a few brick walls. All these could be employed in a way that is secure, while respecting the character of the Area.



Metal palings outside 66 High Street



Railway line boundary

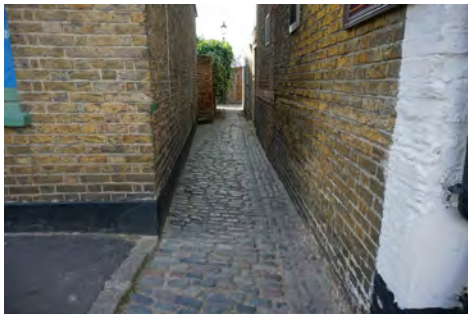
Character Analysis

Surface Treatments

5.3.15 Road surfaces to the east of the Area beyond No.16 High Street are made of granite setts. This surface is a precious survival, almost unique amongst Essex towns and contributes greatly to the historic feel of the Area. It has the effect of slowing the speed of traffic, allowing pedestrians to share the road with the intermittent traffic. The rest of the Area features predominantly tarmac surfaces, which are heavily patched and need repair, though granite setts have been added for speed bumps and at some junctions, which adds to the character of the Area. The many necessary repairs to tarmac could be seen as an opportunity to improve and upgrade all road and path surfaces within the Conservation Area, perhaps even reinstating cobbles in locations where they have been lost. Footpaths are similar in most cases, although Alley Dock also features granite setts, which add substantial character to the street. One or two paths and wharves have brick surfaces. The yellow lines along the High Street are unfortunate and some alternative solution should be sought to prevent parking. The surface behind the cockle sheds is of ground up cockle shells, which is in keeping with the use of the area.

Character Analysis

Different surface treatments



Character Analysis

Street furniture and signage

- 5.3.16 The street furniture in Leigh Old Town is very varied both in style and in contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. There are several benches located around Leigh Old Town, some of which are well placed, although others are located seemingly at random, particularly those at the bottom of Belton Bridge, many of which are memorial benches, which, though having an attractive view out to sea, are in a bleak location so that, while they are well used, some enhancement of the space with better landscaping and surfacing would provide a more pleasant experience for users. The benches on Victoria Wharf and the ones just beyond Bell Wharf on the promenade leading east are more attractively located, although the latter are of an anonymous municipal design. Those on Strand Wharf, which include benches addressing the square on the east and planters with benches around upon entry to the wharf, are sensitively designed and add some interest to the square.
- 5.3.17 The streetlights in the Area are primarily low-level traditional style. Taller ones by Belton Bridge are modern but of a traditional type. The streetlamps in the High Street are an attractive traditional style and should be valued for their contribution to the Area's historic character. They are in need of repair and maintenance, with many being lopsided and requiring painting. There is a traditional telephone box located next the Ye Olde Smack.
- 5.3.18 The historic water supply on the High Street is set behind a wall with metal gates set in two doors. A plaque of 1846 commemorates an early-19th century restoration, while a modern plaque inside the enclosure commemorates the 1975 restoration. A stone marker with worn out carved wording also stands within the enclosure.



New benches on Strand Wharf



Crowded benches around Belton Bridge

Character Analysis

5.3.19 As a town that receives a large number of visitors each year Leigh Old Town is provided with many rubbish bins. These exist in a range of styles and many are rundown or redundant; a more unified choice of design would unclutter and enhance the Conservation Area. There are some which are traditional in style and conform to guidance in SPD3, though some dual bins for recycling and general waste are partly blue where they should be all black.

5.3.20 There are many bollards in the Area and this is understandable given the extreme proximity of many buildings to the road. Some of these are very shabby and makeshift, others are damaged, and do not contribute anything to the appearance of the town.

5.3.21 Shop and business signs are generally sympathetic, with a good proportion of hand painted wooden signs that add character and individuality to the town and to the businesses within it. These are let down by some unsightly signs such as advertisement posters and signs. Most of the signs by the cockle sheds are sympathetic and traditional in materiality, colouring and font. There are some plastic signs that are unfortunate. The signs are currently of proportionate scale and are not visually intrusive but a discernable trend to larger plastic signs should be resisted to prevent loss of character. There are a few interpretive signs, of a municipal style, in the Conservation Area; these have aged badly or rusted and would benefit from an upgrade.

5.3.22 There are several areas where highway and foreshore signposts are cluttered together creating a muddled appearance that is inappropriate for a conservation area. This is particularly true of the bottom of Belton Bridge, which acts as a gateway into the Conservation Area, and along

the promenade area at the eastern end of the Area. Both these parts of the Conservation Area are in need of enhancement and cluttered signage only detracts further from that appearance.



Marker stone for the 18th century conduit



Wall enclosing the site of the 18th century water supply, with 19th century plaque

Character Analysis



A graffitied bin on the pavement above the beach (the blue bin should be black within CAs as per SPD3)



A traditional style of bin by the Old Custom House



Un-uniform and untidy bollards



Sensitive signage to one of the cockle sheds



Sensitive signage to the Sailing Club



Municipal style interpretation panel

Character Analysis

Overhead cables

5.3.23 There is a profusion of overhead cables in the Area. The overhead distribution of electricity or telecommunications is not considered to be good practice and does not enhance the appearance of the street.

Car parking

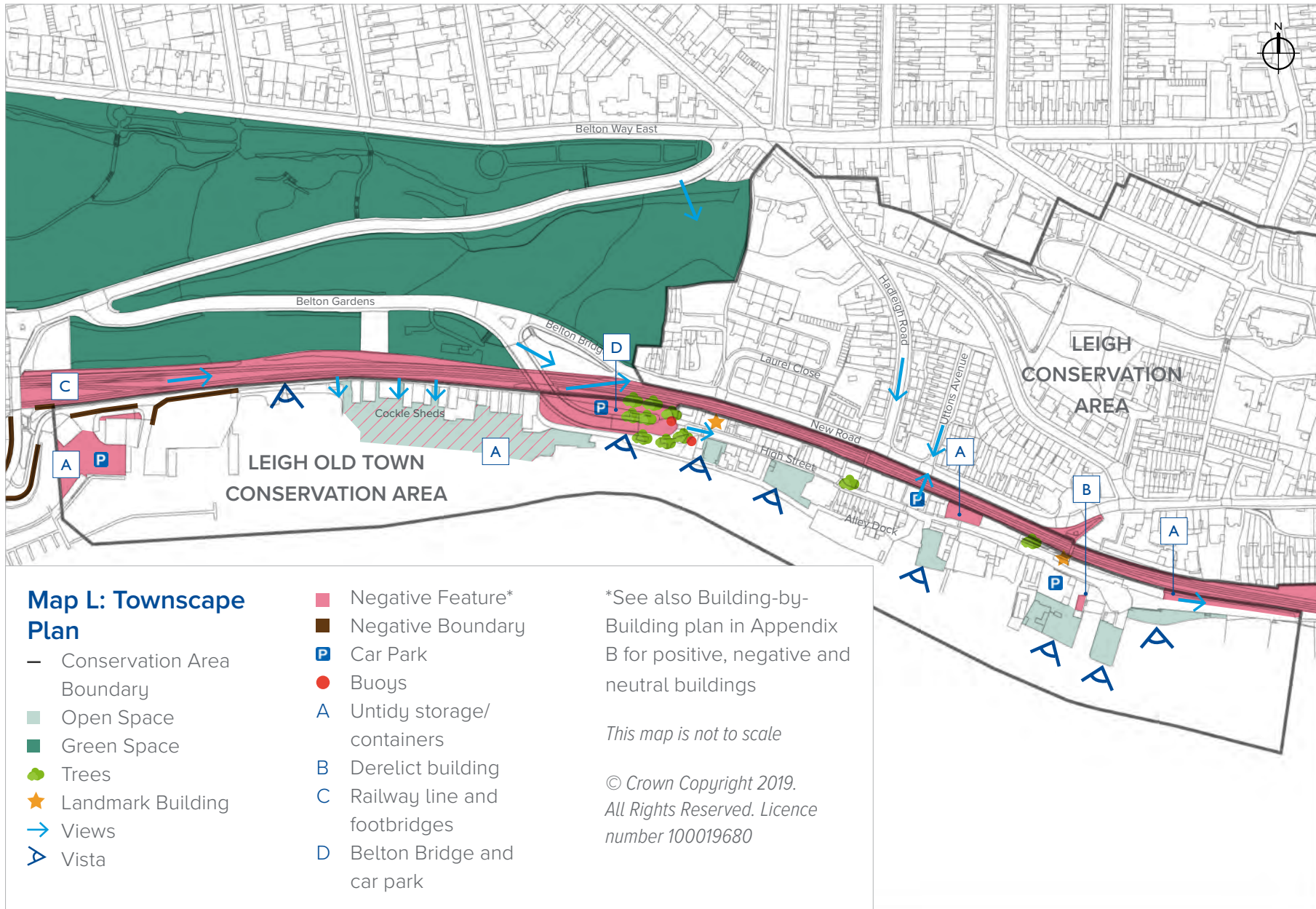
5.3.24 As a coastal settlement with only one road into it, parking can be a problem in Leigh Old Town and at times cars can dominate the streetscene and detract from the pedestrian experience, when driving through the High Street to access the small visitor car parks within the Old Town. A clear effort has been made to reduce parking on the High Street, with parking provision around Belton Bridge, which, while being unattractive, serves to protect the main part of the town from being swamped in parked cars although there are small public car parks within the main part of the High Street, one adjacent to the Old Customs House (Leigh Foundry) and one on Victoria Wharf which do attract some visitor traffic to the High Street. The former features a patched tarmac surface, a concrete rear boundary wall and plenty of plastic signage, the latter has a better brick surface, but has untidy planting and poorly maintained iron railings.

5.3.25 The Boatyard restaurant and the Sailing Club have their own private car parks, and several other small spaces are used for car parking at the sides of buildings. Of the designated car parks, few of these have the benefit of sympathetic surfacing, boundary treatments or landscaping.

5.3.26 Parts of the Conservation Area have a very distinct seaside feel, although, appropriately, more of a fishing village than a seaside resort. This distinction is important for the character of Leigh Old Town. The slight shabbiness and untidiness is part of this and despite the enhancements suggested in this appraisal there should be no temptation to create a sanitised version of a fishing town. Important contributions to this character include the following:

- Continuing industry throughout the Area with all the associated evidence of this
- Seafood outlets across the Area
- Other retailers appropriate to the character of the town selling ice-cream, sticks of rock and buckets and spades
- Road surfaces that reduce speed of traffic and emphasise a historically slower pace of life
- A healthy mix of building uses in the Area
- Outside seating areas to pubs and cafes
- Seafront promenades, albeit of limited extent
- Large mooring buoys and anchor positioned between the Belton Bridge and entry to the High Street proper by the Crooked Billet

Character Analysis



Character Analysis

5.4 Setting

- 5.4.1 Leigh Old Town is the southern part of a village that has been bisected by the arrival of the railway and its development has been irrevocably affected by this. The remainder of Leigh sits back from the coast, behind the railway line; whilst this railway and the coast have restricted the development in Leigh Old Town, Leigh itself has expanded significantly and the town's development includes a number of tall tower blocks, which are particularly noticeable from the lower-lying Leigh Old Town.
- 5.4.2 Whilst green spaces with the Conservation Area are sparse and open space not overly abundant, open green spaces are much more important in views out of the Area, for example the views toward the west with Leigh Marsh, the Belton Hills and Two Tree Island in the distance. These are designated as Local Wildlife Sites, some of which have European importance as birdlife habitats. Leigh Cliffs East sits within the setting of the east end of the Conservation Area. These extensive green spaces make an important contribution to the Conservation Area's setting.
- 5.4.3 The railway line, besides bisecting Leigh Old Town from Leigh, is an intrusive element to the aesthetic and character of the Conservation Area. At times at the west end of the Conservation Area, between the railway line and the cockle sheds in particular, the visitor feels hemmed in and trapped owing to the proximity of the railway line to the road and the unwelcoming boundary fencing. The associated train noise as well as the overhead wires and footbridges also detract from the picturesque quality of the Conservation Area, though in some ways are characteristic of its industrial nature.



Tall buildings in Leigh visible from Strand Wharf in Leigh Old Town



View across Belton Hills Nature Reserve (foreground), to the west end of the Conservation Area (middle ground) and Leigh Marsh (back ground)

Section 6.0

Management Plan

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Management Plan

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section highlights where there are issues and threats within the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area, as well as where there are opportunities to enhance its special historic and architectural interest. It begins with a Conservation Vision, summarising the aims for the future of the Conservation Area. Issues and opportunities are described, and recommendations provided for the reduction or removal of threats to the Area's special interest. The section concludes with guidance on how to go about the sensitive repair and alteration of materials, details and features characteristic of the Conservation Area. Alterations, repairs or new development should follow this guidance to help preserve the special interest of individual properties and the Conservation Area.

Management Plan

6.2 Conservation Vision

- 6.2.1 The historic seaside character and special interest of Leigh Old Town Conservation Area, a working port town, will be conserved and enhanced, making it an appealing and attractive place for people to live, work and visit. It will maintain its seaside charm and working port character while ensuring it continues to be an attractive, safe and functional place to live, work and visit.
- 6.2.2 The buildings will be in good condition, with inappropriate alterations reversed and traditional materials and details used for features such as walls, roofs, windows and doors.
- 6.2.3 New development will be of a scale and form, with materials and details, which reflect the characteristics of the Conservation Area. Redeveloped buildings within the setting of the Conservation Area will also be designed appropriately for its special interest. The industrial character of industrial areas shall be maintained and will not be lost through over-development and inappropriate introduction of residential buildings in these areas.
- 6.2.4 The feeling of moving from enclosed and open space will be retained through the preservation of glimpsed views between buildings along the High Street and the panoramic vistas opened up from wharves and along pedestrian footways of Leigh Creek, Leigh Marsh and the Estuary.
- 6.2.5 The open areas, namely Billet Wharf, Strand Wharf, Bell Wharf and Victoria Wharf, will be maintained as open, publicly accessible areas, which will benefit from good quality public realm and surfacing.
- 6.2.6 The stretch of open land between the cockle sheds and the sea will maintain its working port character and function but will be tidy and uncluttered.
- 6.2.7 The railway line will feature less physically and visually on the edge of the Conservation Area owing to tree and shrub planting along its boundary, which will minimise its impact on the northern boundary of the Conservation Area.
- 6.2.8 The Conservation Area's visibility to and from the Belton Hills nature reserve and Marine Parade Gardens will be protected from insensitive development, including telecommunications.
- 6.2.9 Derelict buildings will be sensitively restored to their former characterful appearance.
- 6.2.10 Leigh Old Town Conservation Area will be accessible, with good quality pedestrian and cycle routes connecting the area with surrounding places, including the railway station, Leigh District Centre and the neighbouring Leigh and Leigh Cliff Conservation Areas, and nearby car parks.

Management Plan

6.3 Issues, Opportunities and Recommendations

Condition of Public Realm and Buildings

- 6.3.1 Maintenance of the public realm could be significantly improved. Roads and paths are heavily patched in places especially under the Belton Bridge and the pedestrian walkway by the beach at the east end of the Area. The poor quality of this walkway, combined with untidy plant growth around the railway line fence, has encouraged the parking of old vans and trailers. Double yellow lines are intrusive, particularly along the High Street, its side alleys and in Alley Dock, alternative should be sought such as the use of narrower yellow lines, which are more appropriate for Conservation Areas.
- 6.3.2 Street furniture is frequently ill-chosen, lacks cohesion in design and is often in a poor state of repair. The many bollards are far from uniform; many are makeshift and shabby, others are more permanent but damaged. There is some bench provision but their design lacks consistency and there are arguably too many by Belton Bridge, which, resultingly, are underused. Victoria Wharf only has minimal bench provision and would benefit from more with a coherent design.

Strand Wharf, which was recently upgraded, has a coherent design of benches some of which are incorporated around the outside of large planters. The bins vary in design with some plastic and some more permanent; many of the latter are degraded and unused, contributing negatively to the Area. There is also a high concentration of brightly coloured plastic bins at the west end of Alley Dock, associated with the Peterboat public house, which clutter this narrow street and detract substantially from the character of the Conservation Area. In certain areas, signage is cluttered or excessive and should be rationalised; there is also a lack of good quality interpretation panels in the Conservation Area.

- 6.3.3 Likewise fencing varies in materiality (concrete panels, timber boards, iron posts, brick) and condition. Many of these need upgrading and the iron posts need repair and repainting. Unsatisfactory boundary treatments look worse when in poor condition and shabby, for example those along Alley Dock, which lack any sort of cohesion and are in poor repair. The few green spaces in the Area provide limited greenery to the Conservation Area and would benefit from enhancement, including potential for more formal planting.

Management Plan

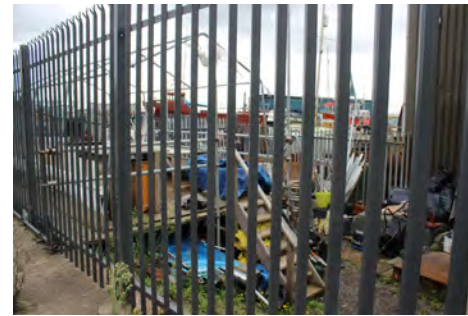
Degraded or unattractive public realm



6.3.4 In terms of buildings, whilst those along the High Street are generally well-maintained and looked after, some of the industrial buildings at the west end of the Conservation Area and their immediate setting are more neglected in terms of maintenance and others are poor-quality makeshift structures.

6.3.5 Shipping containers are also frequently used for storage which are unsightly and generally unauthorised. They are located mainly in the western portion of the Conservation Area, around the Cockle Sheds, but there are also one or two located on the High Street. They are particularly intrusive when they are stacked to form two storey units. Concealing these with timber clad sheds has, in some cases, been granted though not carried out. This is an appropriate solution if the containers cannot be removed, as it would give the containers the appearance of a traditional cockle shed and blend well into the character of this part of the Conservation Area.

Untidy industrial sites and poor storage at the west end of the Area



Management Plan

6.3.6 Some of the buildings at the east end of the High Street, east of No. 16, are in need of repair and maintenance, namely those around Victoria Wharf. The Fisherman's Co-op in particular, which was recently damaged by a fire (September 2019); the roof has almost entirely collapsed and the rest of the building has been boarded up creating an unwelcoming presence at this end of the Conservation Area. Also on Victoria Wharf, the small block associated with Anglian Water and the walls around the Wharf are in poor condition and degraded by graffiti, peeling paint or render. There is also unsightly weed growth around these structures and an untidy patch of planting in the car park behind, made worse by plastic tape and commercial sized bins. The modern extension abutting the east end of the Sailing Club is also in poor condition with its render in disrepair. The hulking pedestrian footbridge behind is unsightly and unattractive.

Untidy buildings and structures on Victoria Wharf and within its context



Management Plan

6.3.7 The poor boundary treatments throughout the Conservation Area have a negative effect on its appearance. The most prominent inappropriate boundary treatments include the municipal railway fence running along the entire northern boundary of the Conservation Area and the similarly unwelcoming fences bounding boatyards on the south side. At the west end of the Conservation Area, the proximity of the railway and boatyard fencing, combined with the lack of pavement, makes the visitor feel trapped and unwelcome. The chain link fence around the Coal Hole is also a detracting feature: it looks temporary and is unattractive. The boundary treatments to Alley Dock are varied in materiality including a mixture of timber paling, brick wall (both exposed and painted), rendered wall and metal fencing. These are either rundown or seriously degraded, making them detrimental to the character of the street and the Conservation Area.



The unwelcoming fencing bounding the west end of the High Street



Insensitive chain link fencing

Management Plan

Inconsistent boundary treatments along Alley Dock



Recommendations

- 6.3.8 Keeping buildings in good condition will ensure the area is an attractive and desirable place to live, work and visit.
- 6.3.9 Undertake regular maintenance and checks to prevent problems from occurring and protect original features. This will also ensure small problems do not become bigger, more costly issues to fix.
- 6.3.10 Maintain or resurface damaged street surfaces and, if funding opportunities present themselves, extend the granite sett surface along the full length of the High Street in order to enhance the character of the Conservation Area.
- 6.3.11 Seek alternatives to intrusive double yellow lines or reduce the width of the lines (to 55 mm).
- 6.3.12 Repair, repaint and maintain street furniture including street-lighting columns and metal pole fencing.
- 6.3.13 Remove excess bins and benches where cluttered but also introduce more benches along the wharves with a coherent design to enable better appreciation of the views across the Estuary. Remaining bins should be of a style appropriate to the Conservation Area, agreed with the Council.
- 6.3.14 Rationalise and reduce plastic signage where excessive and introduce better-designed interpretation panels relating to the history and special interest of the Area.
- 6.3.15 Enhance the area below Belton Bridge in order to reduce the oppressive effect of the concrete bridge, possibly through planting, lighting schemes, interesting paving and sensitive interpretation panels.
- 6.3.16 Encourage the sensitive rebuilding of the Fisherman's Co-op in order to re-energise this end of the Area aesthetically and physically.
- 6.3.17 Picket fences and brick walls are the most appropriate boundary treatments for the Conservation Area, as well as simple good quality railings and timber vertical boards. All boundary treatments should be regularly maintained and repaired where needed.
- 6.3.18 Planting by the railway line should be considered to soften its appearance in views from within, and into, the Conservation Area.
- 6.3.19 Remove or appropriately screen shipping containers, to ensure they blend well into the working character of the Conservation Area both behind the Cockle Sheds and on the High Street.
- 6.3.20 Follow guidance in Section 6.4 to ensure repairs and alterations are carried out in an appropriate manner.

Management Plan

Inappropriate Alterations

6.3.21 There has been little encroachment of plastic windows and doors into the area but continual vigilance is required to ensure this remains the case. There are some exceptions where uPVC units have been installed in rear elevations, for example the rear elevations of Theobalds Cottages, visible along Alley Dock. Some buildings have suffered erosion of character in other ways, such as the painting of brickwork, which has occurred to some cottages, as well as flat roofed extensions.

6.3.22 Over-modernisation has led to some loss of character. This has particularly happened to the cockle-sheds around the Area where the plasticized paints in use on the cladding to make them durable have led to a shiny plastic appearance, which conflicts with the original rustic appearance of the sheds. The modern shipping containers also conflict with the traditional character of the sheds.



uPVC units on rear elevations of Theobalds Cottages visible from Alley Dock

Management Plan

6.3.23 The primary pressure on the Conservation Area is the need for the businesses to operate in a modern and profitable manner. This is resulting in loss of character owing to increasingly inappropriate advertising and signage. Whilst most fascia boards are not too oversized, many are in inappropriate materials such as plastic and use non-traditional colours. Business needs also drive cheap and poor-quality additions to buildings, for example around the cockle sheds, inappropriate boundary treatments and large commercial bins amongst other problems.

6.3.24 There are certain ad-hoc additional features such as satellite dishes, security cameras and burglar alarms, which erode the character of front elevations; overhead cabling also detracts from the character of the Conservation Area. Solar panels on some of the cockle sheds are somewhat incongruous and would benefit from being located only on flat roofs or in concealed where they cannot be seen from the High Street.

Recommendations

6.3.25 Take opportunities to enhance properties when considering alterations, for example by restoring any missing historic features and improving poorly designed alterations of the past.

6.3.26 Solar panels should be located where they are not visible from the public highway.

6.3.27 Follow guidance in Section 6.4 to ensure repairs and alterations are carried out in an appropriate manner.

6.3.28 The Council will not approve applications for alterations which detract from the special interest of the Conservation Area.

6.3.29 The Council will use enforcement powers where necessary to prevent or reverse inappropriate alterations.

6.3.30 The rear elevations and rear boundary treatments of some terraces are visible to the public from streets, mews or alleys and their treatment also needs to respect the traditional designs, materials and boundary enclosures.



The retained shopfront is negatively impacted by pigeon deterrent spikes, redundant lights and plastic signage

Management Plan

New Development

6.3.31 There is little scope for development in the main settlement of Leigh Old Town as the existing development is of relatively tight grain. However, business and industrial needs may apply pressure in the future for development. The wharves should not be developed but should remain open spaces, however, there are a few gap sites comprising car parks, which could offer potential sites for redevelopment. Whilst the west end of the Conservation Area is less developed and comprises more open space, this area should not be overdeveloped as this would erode its industrial character. The area south of the cockle sheds, for example, should only have industrial development and it should not hold many more buildings than at present.

Recommendations

- 6.3.32 New buildings within or in the setting of the Conservation Area should be appropriate in materials, scale, detail and massing to the street on which it is located and should preserve important views.
- 6.3.33 The Council will not approve applications for new developments which detract from the special interest of the Conservation Area.
- 6.3.34 The Council will use enforcement powers where necessary to prevent or reverse inappropriate new development.
- 6.3.35 Heritage Impact Assessments should be undertaken for new development in the Conservation Area.
- 6.3.36 Whilst sensitive modern design can fit easily into an industrial context, the character zone around the High Street proper will best accommodate traditional design.

Management Plan

What is a Heritage Impact Assessment?

Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process used when proposals are put forward for change to the historic environment. It is usually a requirement of listed building consent or planning consent for proposals within a Conservation Area. It identifies what is historically and architecturally important about a heritage asset, in order to be able to assess whether proposed changes will have a positive, negative or no impact on the heritage values of the place. Advice is usually given by a specialist heritage consultant and the resulting conclusions presented in a report, which should include:

- Identification and description of the proposals site and its setting;
- Identification of any designations, such as listing, which the site is subject to or which are within the setting of the site;
- Description of the history of the property;
- Identification of the 'significance' of the site, i.e. its historic and architectural interest;
- Assessment of the impact the proposals will have on the significance of the site, as well as recommendations for any changes to the scheme that will reduce any negative impacts that are identified.

Management Plan

Open Space and Views

6.3.37 Whilst there is little green space or planting in the Conservation Area, there are several intervals of open space in the forms of wharves, communal seating areas and pedestrian walkways along the seafront, as well as the yard between the cockle sheds and the sea. Some of the wharves would benefit from upgraded street furniture and public realm, to make them feel more welcoming. When occupied, the two large seating areas (Billet Wharf and that adjacent to the Peterboat public house) feel lively and are attractive spaces, but certain superfluous structures and insensitive street furniture and signage, as well as car parking, clutters the open spaces and dilutes their character.

6.3.38 The area between the cockle sheds and the sea at the west end of the Conservation Area is cluttered with plant and machinery associated with the cockle sheds. There are many storage containers which look temporary which are an eyesore and a more sensitive solution should be considered. There are also insensitive modern extensions and ventilation systems to the cockle sheds and unattractive fencing. The area could be enhanced with improved housekeeping, particularly with regard to storage of rubbish and scrap materials, which would make the area more attractive and accessible.

Recommendations

6.3.39 Street furniture, signage and landscaping of open places should be good quality and well-maintained.

6.3.40 Open spaces, including the sense of moving from enclosed to open spaces, should be maintained.

6.3.41 The cluttered streetscene should be rationalised, including removal of containers.



The seating area adjacent to the Peterboat, which is cluttered by stacked benches (in winter only), kiosks and car parking



Yard behind the cockle sheds showing untidy containers, machinery parts, modern extensions and unwelcoming fencing

Management Plan

Tourism and Parking

- 6.3.42 Like many seaside destinations, the number of tourists visiting puts pressure on the town. This has an impact on car parking and traffic levels as well as pubs and cafes, which must stretch to accommodate the increased capacity.
- 6.3.43 Since the previous appraisal (in 2008/09)- there is now very little parking on wharves owing to recent improvement schemes (for example, there is now restricted parking at Strand Wharf). The car parks at Belton Bridge, Leigh Foundry, the Boatyard and Victoria Wharf appeared to accommodate the visitors, at the time of visit although this may be a different matter on the weekends and public holidays, particularly within the summer months. Cars driving to find spaces in the car parks can be an issue because of the narrow pavements, restricted space and number of pedestrians. Many of the car parks are unattractive with poor surface treatment, street furniture and boundary treatments (particularly Leigh Foundry and Belton Bridge).

Recommendations

- 6.3.44 All parking areas would benefit from improved maintenance and care.
- 6.3.45 Simple planting schemes would help soften the appearance of the car parks.

Boundary Proposals

- 6.3.46 Councils have a duty to review the boundaries of Conservation Areas every so often to ensure that the special interest is not devalued by the inclusion of areas which are not of special interest. The interest can change over time as negative alterations take place or as more understanding is gained of the importance of areas adjacent to the boundary that were not previously recognised as having special interest.
- 6.3.47 The area immediately surrounding the Conservation Area was reviewed as part of this Appraisal. However, the railway line to its north and the sea to the south mean that the Conservation Area is relatively limited in its potential for expansion, and land to the north of the railway is already designated as the Leigh Conservation Area and the Belton hills Nature Reserve. At the east and west edges of the Conservation Area the development trails off and there is nothing of special interest immediately beyond the boundaries.
- 6.3.48 Therefore, there are no boundary amendments proposed to the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area as part of this Appraisal.

Management Plan

6.4 Guidance on alteration and repair

6.4.1 The following advice applies to the features of particular importance to the character of the Leigh Old Town Conservation Area, where they are visible to the public. Those with properties in the Conservation Area should follow this guidance when considering changes to help keep individual properties and the area special.

Key Principles for Guiding Change

6.4.2 Maintenance: regular maintenance is needed to protect original features. But if more extensive work is found necessary, repair rather than replacement should be the first option and will often be better value.

6.4.3 Materials and Designs: when considering alterations or repairs to the property, original materials and designs should be respected.

6.4.4 Enhancement: take the opportunity to enhance properties when considering alterations, by restoring any missing features and improving poorly designed alterations of the past.

Windows

6.4.5 Traditional windows, especially timber sliding sashes on Victorian buildings, are vital for the character of the Conservation Area. Original windows can be given a new lease of life by overhauling them and installing draught proofing brushes in the sash rebates. Secondary glazing may also be acceptable if it is unobtrusive. Advice should be sought from the Council's Planning Department.

6.4.6 If replacement or reinstatement is necessary, purpose-made windows to match the original materials and external appearance should normally be installed and advice sought from the Council's Planning Department before undertaking any works, should planning permission be required. For most buildings, slimline double glazing within timber frames may be acceptable if the external appearance is unaltered, and the metal frames and seals are not visible. This will need to be demonstrated in planning application drawings including existing and proposed large scale sections of key elements. Non-traditional materials, especially plastic, cannot match traditional timber windows and are normally not acceptable.

6.4.7 Historic shopfront windows should be retained as an important feature in the High Street; where possible large shop windows with mullions and transoms and associated stall risers, fascia boards and entrances should be preserved and looked after. Leaded lights should also be preserved, for example those at the ground floor of the Peterboat pub.

Management Plan

6.4.8 To safeguard the building's character, new windows should normally:

- Be of good quality softwood;
- Be painted (not stained);
- Copy the original pattern of glazing bars and horns, if any;
- Glazing bars should be built into the sash and not stuck on to the glass;
- Use the original method of opening;
- Retain or restore the dimensions of the original window opening and the position of the frame within the opening. Most openings are well-proportioned and most frames in older brick buildings are well set back from the face of the wall to give weather-protection, shadow and character;
- Give adequate ventilation which is not visible (e.g. trickle vents);
- Retain historic leaded/stained glass; and
- Retain decorative surrounds.

6.4.9 For good quality softwood, Historic England's recommendation of slow grown Scots Pine or Douglas Fir should be followed. This has greater durability than other softwoods. However, Chemically modified and stabilised softwood can also offer the same durability.

6.4.10 Where uPVC replacement windows already exist, the Council may consider replacement with uPVC provided that there is an enhancement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, for example an improved design which better reflects the original detailing.

6.4.11 For further guidance, see Historic England's guidance on the maintenance and repair of historic windows: Traditional Windows, Their Care, Repair and Upgrading, <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading/>

Doors

6.4.12 Original front doors of Victorian and Edwardian buildings are well proportioned and have good detailing. In this Conservation Area, they tend to be larger than standardised modern doors, set slightly recessed into the wall and sometimes feature a fanlight above to help give the property distinction. Original front doors should normally be retained and repaired when necessary. If this proves impossible, the new door should be solid timber, painted not stained, similar in design and dimensions to the original and should not have an over emphasis on glass. Original decorative surrounds to doors or entrances should be retained, for example that to No. 6 High Street.

6.4.13 Industrial and former industrial buildings generally have large sliding or double doors; this style of entrance should be retained.

Management Plan

Outside Walls and Decoration

- 6.4.14 Yellow or brown stock brick and soft red brick are typical local materials and give attractive 'warm' tones and texture to façades. They are occasionally combined for decorative effect. Traditional (feather-edged and shiplap) weather-boarding is also an important local building material and should always be retained, feather-edged for domestic buildings and shiplap for industrial buildings.
- 6.4.15 Facing brickwork should not normally be rendered or painted. If it suffers from damp, dirt or deterioration, alternatives should first be considered, such as cleaning with an appropriate solvent and repointing. Cement-based render and non-porous masonry paints might increase problems of damp by trapping moisture within the brickwork. If brickwork has already been painted, it may be possible to clean it off, and in such instances discussion should be had with the Council's Conservation Officer in the first instance before works are undertaken to ensure that the proposed method will not damage the face of the bricks.
- 6.4.16 Repointing also needs care. It should match the colour and style of the original and not extend over the face of bricks or make joints appear wider. To achieve this, it may need to be slightly recessed. The mortar mix needs to include lime and be the right strength for the bricks. Too strong a mix will force damp into the bricks and damage their surface.

- 6.4.17 Details on buildings are understated and mostly discreet. This overall simplicity is an important aspect of the appearance of the Old Town. There are a few crested ridges and occasionally coloured glass can be seen. Dormers and roof-lights are rare. Dormers would generally be inappropriate. Windows and doors are usually plain, although some have lintels painted or rendered a different colour. Brickwork is simple and rarely decorative apart from the occasional band of coloured bricks and some openings or entrances feature brick arches. Façades tend to be plain and unassuming with generally utilitarian details and only modest embellishment. This is particularly true of the cockle sheds, where often decoration is limited to a hand painted sign. Decorative wrought iron signs add interest to pub buildings.

Roofs and Chimneys

- 6.4.18 Welsh slate is the predominant material used for historic buildings in the Conservation Area, although some older buildings have plain clay tiles. Both are natural materials, which weather well to produce attractive roof surfaces. The slate particularly gives unity to the terraces, semi-detached buildings and detached buildings making up the main settlement of the Conservation Area and helps establish the character of the Area. Decorative ridge tiles occasionally feature on larger Victorian buildings, for example the Sailing Club, which used to be the station; these should be retained and maintained. Sheet metal is more typical for industrial buildings and the common use of this material contributes to the working and functional character of the Conservation Area.

Management Plan

6.4.19 Re-roofing should put back the original materials and designs. For slate roofs, it may be possible to re-use some of the existing slates to help keep costs down. Spanish slate may be a possible cheaper alternative to Welsh slate.

6.4.20 Stacks and pots usually emphasise the roofline and in most cases should not be removed. Some stacks have simple detailing, which adds to the character of the property and should be retained. Chimneys are an important part of the character of the buildings and should not be removed.

Timber Framed Buildings

6.4.21 Very few of the buildings in the Conservation Area are timber-framed owing to their relatively recent history. However, the Peterboat public house, which was rebuilt after destruction in a fire in 1892, contains mock timber-framing. Original timber framing, for example to the listed buildings, is now concealed by brickwork. The timber frame of the buildings must be preserved and alteration, other than essential repairs, would not normally be acceptable.

Boundaries

6.4.22 The Conservation Area does not feature many front gardens. The very few that exist should be maintained as planted areas wherever possible and should not be replaced by hardstanding.

6.4.23 Most of the boundary treatments are reserved to the side and rear elevations, generally these have not been lost and an effort should be made to retain these boundaries. The boundary treatments, however, are often rundown and in disrepair and these should be repaired or upgraded sensitively in order to enhance the character of the Conservation Area. Brick walls are likely to be the most appropriate boundary treatment.

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Appendices

A: List Descriptions

B: Building-by-Building Descriptions

Map K: Character Areas Plan

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Appendix A

List Descriptions

The Crooked Billet Public House, High Street

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1112684

Date first listed: 26-Jun-1975

HIGH STREET 1. 5219 LEIGH-ON-SEA The Crooked Billet Public House TQ 8485 1/11 II 2. A late C16 timber-framed house with a cross wing at the east end. Refronted in the late C19 in brick (painted). 2 storeys. 5 window range double hung sashes with single vertical glazing bars, in plain reveals. The ground storey has 3 canted bays. Roof C20 concrete tiles. There are 2 chimney stacks each with 3 square shafts set diagonally. The lower part is old brick. (Rebuilt). The interior has exposed ceiling beams (1 is encased and panelled) and some exposed framing. There are also C18 features. A first storey room has a good bolection moulded fire surround.

Listing NGR: TQ8372985762

62 and 63, High Street

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1322357

Date first listed: 08-Jan-1987

Date of most recent amendment: 19-Aug-1993

High Street, Old Leigh 1. 5219 TQ 88 NW No 61 1/91 II 2. Shop and two cottages, formerly single house, mid C16. Timber framed and black weatherboarded with gault brick front of 1849. Former 'baffle entry' plan with two rooms on each floor, about central stack and staircase. Original attic floor over with extended main posts and plates at first floor and eaves level. Substantial hard-wood frame with some pegging and straight diagonal braces interrupting studs. Original large central stack has back to back fireplaces on ground level and becomes rectangular brick stack on ridge line. C19 front has three arched headed window openings on the first floor, the central one infilled. Ground floor has similar central window and 19/20 century shop front either side. Pair of old spiral staircases behind stack. Roof has heavy principal rafters and butt purlins with the rafters morticed into the latter. Fragments of pargetting stickwork on rear elevation and C17 window frame all under the raised roof of a lean-to rear extension. To the east is a single storey C19 painted brick extension with a hipped roof, added when the building was a public house. Appears to be unusually late example of plan form and carpentry technique with very interesting 'habitable attics'.

Listing NGR: TQ8381985724

Appendix B

Building-by-Building Description

Descriptions of streets and buildings relate to the situation at the time of survey in September and October 2019. They are intended to guide decisions on conservation area boundaries, on future development control, and on the need for enhancement. They relate to buildings and other structures adjacent or close to the named streets. They are not necessarily comprehensive and other features not mentioned may nevertheless have value for the character of the area.

The List Descriptions for Listed Buildings are included in Appendix A.

Properties are assessed according to their value to the area's character.

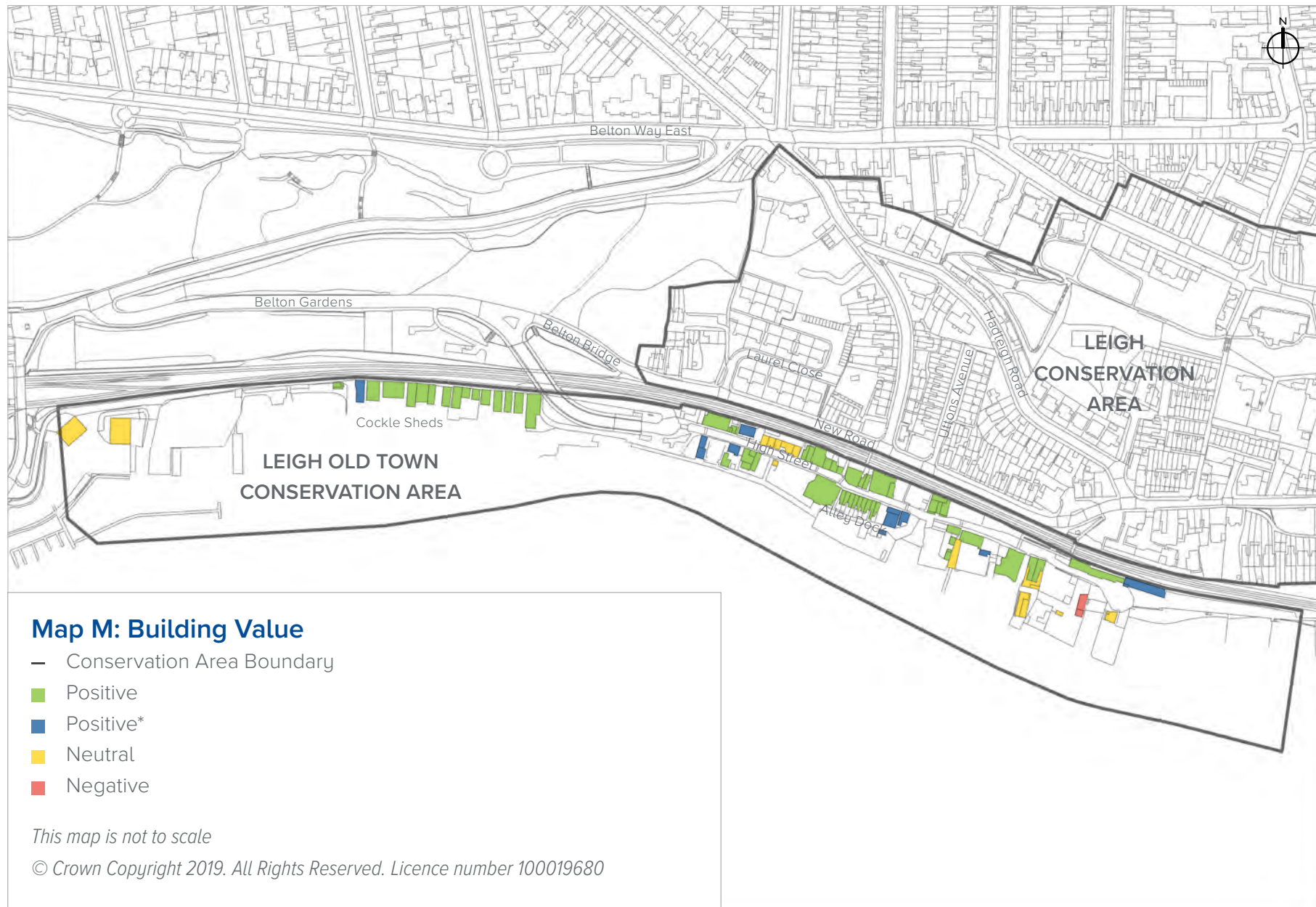
Values are:

- positive – the building contributes to the area's character
- positive* – the building is potentially positive but needs improvement or restoration. For example, it could be in poor condition or it could have later alterations which are inappropriate to the Conservation Area in terms of materials, design or scale (this list is not exhaustive). Often the rating is given because of the cumulative impact of several inappropriate changes.
- neutral – the building neither harms nor contributes to the area
- negative – the building harms the area's character and has little potential for improvement

These values are shown on Map M on the following page.

Buildings can be negative by reasons such as mass, design, materials or siting. Unsympathetic alterations can have the effect of moving a building down a grade. Similarly, reversal of such alterations could restore its original character and move it up a grade.

Building-by-Building Description



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Leigh Sailing Club	Positive*	Article 4

Comments

The sailing club is located in the old railway station and is a fine Victorian building of yellow stock bricks with red brick detailing around the windows, on the chimney and forming decorative string courses, with some grey brickwork on the sloped entrance road. Slightly out of character for the area owing to its scale and bulk, but is offset by the quality of design and the brickwork, its age, and the important part that the railway plays in the history of Leigh, contributes positively to the Conservation Area. It has a plain tile roof, which is unusual for the Area, but suits the building. The building features New Concept brick arches with decorated keystones that tie into the brick string course above. At the west end is a timber clad canopy surviving from the railway use of the building. The details of the building have been carefully considered throughout and contribute to its success.

The building has a modern addition on the roof at the eastern end which is not sympathetic to the original design or structure. It is flat roofed with inappropriate white uPVC windows along its length. There is none of the Victorian attention to detail and the addition fails aesthetically as a result.



Beyond the eastern end of the building is an adjoining shed and storage area for boats. The façade of the adjoining shed is in a poor state of repair with crumbling rendering and peeling paint. The storage area, formerly the railway goods yard, is unattractive and would benefit from a more appropriate boundary treatment which would improve the overall appearance of the club and the area surrounding it.

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Public Lavatories	Neutral	N/A

Comments

The public lavatories are situated in a modern building constructed in materials characteristic to the Conservation Area. The roof is slate with decorative ridge tiles at the apex and Fleur de Lys finials at either end; the walls are primarily pale yellow stock brick, with areas of white rendering. There is some mid blue shiplap on the recessed half of the gable. The fascia boards are dark blue.

The building does well to blend in with the surrounding aesthetic of the neighbouring shed buildings. However, the heavy-duty, utilitarian doors are out of place and would be improved by painting or replacing with doors more in keeping with the surroundings.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Leigh Fishermen's Co-op & Southend-On-Sea Pier and Foreshore Division	Negative (due to fire damage. With restoration has potential to be Positive)	Article 4

Comments

The 2009 CA Appraisal description states:

This building was a former sail loft that sits alone on Victoria Wharf. Rectangular in shape, its style and materials are sympathetic with the surrounding area. It has a slate roof with a shallow pitch and feather-edged weather boarding on the first floor above black painted brickwork. The fenestration and doors are successful. The windows are plain and practical but have enough detail to fit in with other windows in the Area. The doors at ground level are simple double-hung doors that create a large inviting opening for customers but when are closed look unobtrusive and appropriately workman like. The doors at first floor are glazed and more modern in appearance. There are grey painted external stairs leading up to the first-floor entrance with a small balcony space at the top. This is roofed in corrugated clear plastic, which feels makeshift.

The signage for the fisherman's co-op consists of black chalk boards with brightly coloured writing that seems to change each day. This is lively and charming, and very appropriate for the Area. The only permanent sign is a black timber sign painted white, which integrates well into the overall appearance of the building.



At the time of writing, in 2019 this building was subject to severe fire damage. The building has lost most of its roof due to fire and was fenced off. All doors and windows were boarded up and there was a temporary metal fence surrounding the property. Smoke damage could be seen to the external elevations. There are currently no plans to rebuild or develop this site but sensitive restoration would be very beneficial and the building could once again make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
The Den, High Street	Neutral	Article 4

Comments

The Den is a large building on Victoria Wharf that resembles an industrial workshop or ship building shed. The first floor is painted black shiplap boarding over a concrete cantilevered slab which sits on a pale-yellow stock brick ground floor. The ground floor area currently only partly fills the floor plan. Permission was granted in 2019 for the infilling of the whole ground floor (19/00444/BC4). The roof is constructed of plain clay pantiles. Window frames are black painted timber.

While the building is modern in date it is not entirely unsympathetic to its surroundings and appears to blend in well with the industrial nature and aesthetic of the Wharf.

The boundary treatment of black metal railings and brick walls are appropriate for the character area and fit in with the overall character of the surrounding area.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
5 High Street (Mayflower)	Positive	Article 4

Description

Early 20th century building currently used as a fish and chip shop and public house (linked internally), with the entrance to the fish and chip shop fronting onto the High Street and the public house fronting along the side road to the rear of the property. The shop features double fronted sash windows with a central front door and is part of a pair of villas (adjoining The Rock Shop next door) with a central decorative front door archway leading to the residential property above. The buildings are brick but have been painted, and the roof is original slate and of the low pitch that is most commonly found in the area. There is a painted sign advertising the Mayflower public house above the central door.

The windows are timber framed sashes painted white, with the addition of a modern timber and glazed ground floor side entrance next to the earlier window to the side elevation.

The signage to the front is hand-painted and there is a jaunty model of a giant ice-cream attached to the corner of the shop and traditional style streetlight attached to the top front of the building which provides a solution to placement of lighting on such a narrow street.



In 2019 planning approval was granted to extend the buildings to the rear and sides with single storey pitched roof extensions and to convert most of the ground floor (except for the fish and chip shop) given over to the pub use).

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
6 High Street (The Rock Shop)	Positive	Article 4

Description

This building is the pair to No. 5 and is a sweet and souvenir shop. Details are as No.5. The west elevation exhibits a doorway which presumably allows access into the building.

In 2019 planning approval was granted to extend the buildings to the rear and sides with single storey pitched roof extensions and to convert most of the ground floor (except for the fish and chip shop) given over to the pub use).



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
The Mayflower PH	Neutral	Article 4

Description

At the rear of No. 5 is the main entrance to the Mayflower public house, which is modern in date, set back from the side road by a small beer garden. The extension is well proportioned and detailed including new double-glazed sash windows and a large attractively painted pub sign which is externally lit.

The modern extension is sympathetic to the original early 20th century buildings along the High Street and blends in well causing no harm to the Conservation Area.

The beer garden appears tidy and well maintained. There is a low rendered boundary wall with stock brick piers.

In 2019 planning approval was granted to extend the buildings to the rear and sides with single storey pitched roof extensions and to convert most of the ground floor (except for the fish and chip shop) given over to the pub use).



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
7 High St (Ye Olde Smack)	Positive	Article 4

Description

This is a good example of a classic pub with a charming surviving frontage. The building is situated on the corner of the High Street and a small side road with the pub front of a good arrangement with several double saloon doors, arched and leaded windows and interesting joinery. The hanging sign is attractive, as are the large traditional style coach lamps which are fixed to the wall by decorative metal brackets and overhang the pavement. The large and ostentatious former front door at the western corner of the building is no longer in use though the porch remains. A small section of black and white tiles in front of the door contributes positively. To the west side of the building is a small yard/ beer garden with a basic ground floor extension to the rear and a large outdoor umbrella in the centre. Though not immediately noticeable or intrusive, the extension features an unattractive glass roof and is clearly not built from the same good quality material as the public house.

The western wall boundary features a row of storage sheds in brick, constructed to conceal commercial bins.

Advertising boards along the front and featuring heavily on the walls of the yard could be reduced to improve the overall appearance.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
8 High St (The Boatyard Restaurant)	Positive	Article 4

Description

This building is a modern interpretation of a previous 16th building that was on the site known as 'the Junipers'. The building features two distinct parts, a white feather-edged weather boarded building with a steeply pitched plain tile roof, similar to that of the old building, and the newer industrial style conversion. The main part of the restaurant is within a converted modern boatyard and remains true to its original form featuring metal cladding and corrugated iron roofing. The High Street fronting elevation features a glass curtain wall and garage style rolling door that acts as a shutter when the restaurant is closed. This opens on to a tidy cobbled forecourt. The roller shutter is unsympathetic to the character of the Conservation Area.

Unattractive posters and leaflets in the windows and on walls and doors of the weather boarded building give it the appearance of being vacant. The paintwork on the weather boarded façades and rendering is somewhat tired.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
8a High St	Neutral	Article 4

Description

Boat yard is not visible from the High Street, aside from a limited view down a narrow alleyway that runs between the Boatyard restaurant and The Smithy Heritage Centre. The building can be seen from Strand Wharf, where it is visible behind 2 and 3 Plumbs Yard, a pair of locally listed 19th century weather boarded cottages. The building continues on beyond 3 Plumbs Yard towards the sea wall.

It is constructed of modern materials with a shallow roof and wide span construction with brown painted horizontal metal cladding over a ground height brick wall that is coated in a cement render.

The boat yard can be seen behind the Plumb Yard cottages but is not intrusive.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
13a High St (Leigh Heritage Centre)	Positive	Article 4

Description

Building dates to the 1860s and was originally the town smithy. It is a small rectangular brick building that has been rendered to mid-height on the ground floor, with the rest left as brick, that has been painted. It still has the appearance of a working building though it has since been converted into a local heritage centre, with characterful timber sliding double doors which speak of the building's industrial heritage, and large workshop windows in timber frames on both floors. Another good timber door is on the ground floor, which is a single door of painted timber planks. It has a shallow slate roof and a chimney at the eastern end. Doors and windows painted dark green. Sympathetic timber painted signage. Its western elevation is black painted shiplap.

To rear, heritage centre is of modern design, constructed of yellow stock brick and strong vertical detailing, large windows and areas of black shiplap, which blend with 2 & 3 Plumbs Yard.

Link through to 2 Plumbs Yard.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
2 Plumbs Yard	Positive	Locally Listed Article 4

Description

Locally listed. Small fisherman's cottage linked to the Leigh Heritage Centre. Black feather-edged weatherboard walls with white painted timber vertical sliding sash windows with a pentice board detail supported on small brackets, which is matched by the doors. The roof is tiled in red hand-made plain tiles with plain ridge tiles and chimney set off-centre into the ridge. The four-panelled wooden front door is set slightly off-centre and painted white.

The building was rebuilt in 2006 after partial collapse during refurbishment works

External fire exit door has been fitted at first floor level to the south side of the property, facing No. 3. Painted black metal, it has been integrated discreetly and is not intrusive.

Lack of boundary between the cottage and Strand Wharf is fitting to the character of the Conservation Area.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
3 Plumbs Yard	Positive	Locally Listed Article 4

Description

Locally listed cottage, part of a pair with No. 2, although it is slightly different in appearance. The cottage is double fronted with a centrally located front door, of painted white wood. It is clad in black feather-edged weather boarding, with painted white timber framed vertical sash, six pane, three over three windows. They have similar pentice board detail to No.2.

Low pitched slate roof looks like it has had repair work carried out with new dark grey ceramic ridge tiles and a single arrow shaped metal finial at the sea end. No chimney visible.

External weather board needs to be repainted.

Property fronts directly onto public realm and is generally well kept and tidy.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
16 High St (Strand Tea Rooms)	Positive*	Article 4

Description

Corner building occupied by the Strand Tea Rooms. It is reminiscent in style to 5 High Street, with a similar window in the east wall. Typical for the area, with a low-pitched slate roof, brick walls painted white and small paned sash timber windows. Painted timber entrance door set into corner and partially glazed. The ground floor projects forward slightly from the line of the original building and is roofed with slates. Upstairs windows painted black. Black weatherboard section on eastern elevation. Modern outhouses/sheds to rear.

Rear of property painted white with well-kept tea garden. Railings overly ornate for the area, however overall appearance is pleasant.

Exterior walls and wood-work in need of repainting. Looks shabby.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
17-18 High St (Mikes Boatyard)	Positive*	Article 4

Description

The entrance to Mike's Boatyard is from the High Street, yet opens out into a large area behind the high walls that divide Alley Dock from Theobald's Wharf. A single storey shop fronts onto the High Street, with the gable end of a large black weather boarded shed just visible behind it, which is the main building of the boatyard. The shop front is cream painted render with two timber windows to the left of the front door, and one to the right, all of which are stained dark brown. Large banner sign over shop front which is unsympathetic, as is the plastic fascia to the shop front. Both could be improved. Timber painted signage would be more appropriate. To the side of the shop is a small yard stacked with chains and other marine related items, reflecting the nature of a working boatyard and are in keeping with it.

Timber could be painted in colours more in keeping with the local Area

Flat roof not particularly in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area.



The yard itself has a main entrance onto Alley Dock, with industrial-style metal security gates with hand painted boatyard signs that are not out of context for the Area. Within the yard, there is a small brick and pan tiled building, mostly hidden from public view except for the north wall which forms part of the boundary to Alley Dock.

This building may have been used as a stable block for the horses used to pull wagonloads of goods from the wharves up the hill for inland distribution. Parts of this building are in need of repainting.

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
19-24 High St & 3-5 Theobald Cottages	Positive	Article 4

Description

This is a well preserved terrace, three of which have painted brickwork, a few have replaced doors or windows but no uPVC at all. The terraces are uniform in appearance of yellow stock brick, with steep pitched slate roofs. The windows are all timber framed sashes, one-over-one or two-over-two with stone lintels and the front doors to one side, which are timber with two glazed upper panels, some with fanlights..

The houses carry group value and are well kept and tidy. See below for further details of individual properties.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
19-20 High St	Positive	Article 4

Description

Reginald Cottages are a pair of semi-detached cottages. Slightly taller than the rest of the terrace of which they form a part. They are constructed from yellow stock brickwork, with a slate roof. Their dividing wall can be seen projecting above the neighbouring property's roofline. Chimneys are located at either end of the building. A stone name plaque sits over the front doors.

Timber sash windows appear to be original. Lintels and cills to No. 19 are painted which would benefit from careful removal. Timber doors with two glazed upper panels.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
21 High St	Positive	Article 4

Description

This cottage features timber doors and windows (both possibly sympathetic later replacements), and slate roof and is well maintained.

Could be improved if exterior paint was carefully removed restoring original brickwork. Stone name and date plaque shared with No. 22.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
22 High St	Positive	Article 4

Description

This cottage appears in good state of repair and is almost entirely unchanged with exposed brickwork and lintels.

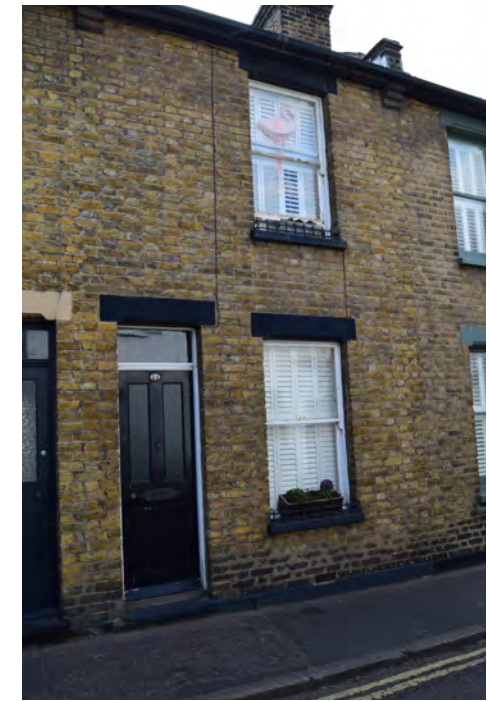


Address	Value to area's character	Designation
23 High St	Positive	Article 4

Description

This cottage is virtually unchanged from the original, with the door and windows intact.

Painted black lintels are unattractive and could be improved by repainting or careful removal of paint.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
24 High St	Positive	Article 4

Description

Mid-terrace, nicely preserved with original door and windows.

Lintels and cills are painted, which would benefit from careful removal.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
3 Theobalds Cottage	Positive	Article 4

Description

Part of three cottages rebuilt after a fire that also destroyed the Peter Boat pub in 1892. The cottages were designed to match the rest of the terrace. This one retains original doors and windows. No. 3 has been painted cream with painted black lintels and a pale blue front door.

The careful restoration of exterior walls to exposed brickwork would be an improvement.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
4 Theobalds Cottage	Positive	Article 4

Description

No. 4 Theobalds Cottage is painted white, with black painted window, doors and lintels. The front door is of original style and painted yellow. Again, the careful restoration of exterior walls to exposed brickwork would be an improvement.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
5 Theobalds Cottage	Positive	Article 4

Description

The third of Theobalds Cottage is closest in aesthetic to the original design and blends in well with the row. The lintels, window and door frames have been painted in an attractive green which compliments the colour of the stock brickwork, though careful removal of the painted would be desirable.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
27 High St The Peterboat Public House	Positive*	Article 4

Description

The Peter Boat was rebuilt after it was destroyed by fire in 1892. A large, irregular shaped building which blends in well with the Area. The building comprises white painted brick to mid-height with rendering above at first floor level again, painted white. The exterior of the building features faux timber beams which are painted dark grey, as are the timber doors. Windows at ground floor level are leaded and glazed with obscure glass. The central panes bear the name of the brewery Mann Crossman and Paulin Ltd and a motif of a knight on a rearing horse on a red background. The upstairs windows are plain timber vertical sashes. The low pitch roof is of slate and it has two brick chimneys at either end of the main building.

There is a flat roofed extension to the west elevation of the pub, which houses small food stalls which feature hand painted signs. It is well maintained and is covered with planters of flowers which improve and soften its appearance. The extension is clad with black painted shiplap boarding which helps it to blend in with the surroundings.

The pub has an extensive beer garden that is well maintained and tidy. There is an extensive covered area at the rear of the beer garden which looks onto the water.

Multiple commercial bins on Alley Dock are intrusive, as is the boundary treatment made up of concrete panels, timber, barbed wire and metal doors



(though an application to apply timber cladding to the concrete was under consideration at the time of writing in 2019). Flues and air-conditioning units also add clutter to the rear of the building.

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Ivy Osbourne's	Neutral	Article 4

Description

A small flat-roofed shed of modern composition. Painted in white shiplap to blend in with the surroundings, it reflects a typically traditional seaside or estuarine seafood shack but is actually a food and coffee stall. The roof is felted and it has black retractable awnings.

Signage appears temporary and in bad repair, could be improved. Metal ducts to the roof are obtrusive, as are metal roller shutters to the kiosk windows.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
35-36 High St (The Coal Hole)	Positive	Article 4

Description

The Coal Hole comprises two buildings of stock brick, the majority of which is painted white with a section in the centre of exposed brick. Building appears recently painted. The buildings have low pitched slate roofs and white painted timber sash windows, all very typical of the area. The rear of the property exhibits a black painted timber balcony with external staircase leading to access.

No. 36 has a string course at first floor level of decorative terracotta tiles. An oriel window above adds interest and is unusual for the Area.

The central section of the building is recessed behind a stock brick wall. The space created behind this enclosure houses an 18th century conduit which used to supply the town's water. A painted metal plaque from 1846 on the outer wall describes that the conduit was rebuilt after a fire in 1825. A modern plaque within the enclosure describes a further restoration in 1975. A stone marker is also situated within the enclosure, though the carved lettering on it has worn so it is illegible.

A chain link fence marks the boundary of the property to the east and south, fencing in an area used for boat storage for the 4th and 6th Sea Scouts. The fence is not attractive per se but does reflect the nature of a working riverside community. Chain link and wooden fence to rear along river path, could be replaced with something more suitable to improve appearance.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
37 High St	Positive*	Article 4

Description

This is a large and unusual building for the Area which stands on the corner of Billet Wharf and High Street. It dates from the late-20th century. The front elevation is dominated by a large artificial slate gambrel roof with three dormer windows hooded with an extension of the roof above and a pentice board supported on a molded bracket.

At ground floor level the whole gable end is covered in white feather-edge weatherboarding, as is the ground floor front elevation with black painted brick courses at the bottom.

The painted timber door is on the west elevation and covered by a small lean-to roof. There is an unsympathetic metal roller garage door on the north elevation. Garage doors could be improved by replacement with hinged timber double doors.

The building is in need of repainting as much of the white weatherboarding is peeling and shabby.

Windows and doors would also benefit from repainting.



The lead flashing around the first floor dormers has come loose.

The artificial slate is weathered and there appears to be weeds growing on the top of the middle dormer. Overall appearance could be improved by general repair and maintenance.

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
39 High St	Positive	Locally Listed Article 4

Description

Locally listed. Slate roof with red ceramic ridge tiles and a substantial central brick chimney. Two elevations, the west and south, are covered in white painted feather-edged weatherboard, with the north and east elevations painted black weatherboarding.

The windows are single glazed timber sashes with pentice board detail above, painted dark green, as is the timber front door and timbers of the porch. The front door is set slightly centre-left.

There is a small two-storey extension to the south side, which is set back slightly, but otherwise matches the rest of the building.

Southern elevation has white metal Juliet balcony with anchor motif. East elevation has a black timber balcony supported from the ground.

Black timber sheds are at ground level and look like recent additions, though they are discreet and blend in with the rear of the property.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Osborne Bros Billet Wharf	Positive*	Article 4

Description

A pair of fisherman's / seafood sheds that are rather quirky in character. Shed closest to sea is characterful with shallow pitched red-painted corrugated iron roof over green painted shiplap. The shed next to the High Street is more unusual in character with a mono-pitch corrugated metal roof and green painted shiplap boarding. Blends well from both eastern and western elevations. Dark green painted doors blend in well with the dark green shiplap walls.

uPVC windows are not attractive and could be improved with replacement in timber.

Well maintained and recently painted. Timber painted signage is appropriate. Outside seating area is tidy and well maintained with good metal boundary treatment.

Marks entrance to Conservation Area and is opposite listed building.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
51 High St The Crooked Billet	Positive	Grade II Listed Article

Description

Grade II listed. List Entry Number 1112684. English Heritage description summary:

- A late 16th century timber framed house with a cross wing at the east.
- Refronted in the late 19th century in brick (painted).
- Two-storeys, five window range.
- Double hung sashes with single vertical glazing bars, in plain reveals.
- The ground storey has three canted bays.
- There are two brick chimney stacks each with three square shafts set diagonally. The lower part is old brick (rebuilt).
- The interior has some exposed ceiling beams (one is encased and paneled) and some exposed framing. There are also 18th century features – a first storey room has a good bolection molded fire surround.

Building is large and has a steeply pitched roof of machine-made tiles that has one modern dormer which is note entirely in-keeping though fairly discreet. The building has two embellished triple flue chimney stacks. The walls are rendered and painted pale yellow to the front with the western elevation similarly painted feather-edged weatherboard.



A small single storey pitched roof extension to the east elevation is covered by a corrugated iron roof and is rendered and painted to match the main building. There is a small wooden hatch in the extension gable. The windows are timber framed, white painted timber sash windows. There are also three white painted bay windows along the front elevation, two on the gable wall and one to the left of the main steps and door. Applied lettering used for the pub signage is gold in colour and appropriate. Hanging baskets look attractive and soften the front.

Wooden benches along the street out the front look inviting and pleasant.

Beer garden to the west is enclosed by a white picket fence and looks well maintained with good trees to the rear.

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
52 High St Chalkwell Bay Sea Scouts	Positive* – though likely Positive once renovation works complete	Article 4

Description

This former fisherman's church is rather unusual in style for the Area. It is a rectangular building set up from the road by a concrete plinth. The materials used are in keeping with the Area: black painted weatherboard, double timber framed doors and timber sash windows appropriate.

At the time of survey, the building was undergoing renovation to convert it to a restaurant. Once works complete this should be a building which makes a positive contribution.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
53-58 High St	Neutral	Article 4

Description

Modern infill terrace. The buildings have taken several references from the surrounding buildings and integrated them into the new design. The terraces are yellow stock brick with decorative red brick window arches. There is also a section of shiplap weather boarding which is appropriate for the area. Slate roof. Windows of dark brown timber. Painted timber doors accessed up steps. First floor has three projecting oriel windows. Painted timber doors accessed up steps. First floor has three projecting oriel windows.

Some window frames and doors are in poor condition. Render above middle window needs repainting.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
59-60 High St	Positive	Article 4

Description

Pair of semi-detached cottages, one of several similar pairs in the Conservation Area. Well preserved, although cement repointing to one property has led to a visible difference in appearance between the two. The cement point would benefit from careful removal and repointing with lime mortar. The larger chimney stack to the left, along with an odd extension of bricks extended beyond the roof line and hanging slates on the gable suggests this was part of a larger terrace of which these are the only two remaining buildings. Constructed of yellow stock brick with red brick flat gauged lintels. There is also a string course of red brick at first floor level and both front doors have red brick flat gauged decorative lintels above. Windows are original timber sashes. Front doors are not original and have been replaced, though are painted timber and sympathetic to the Area.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
61 High St (Old Leigh Studios)	Positive	Article 4

Description

Former industrial workshop, once belonging to Southend Marine Engineering. Low pitched corrugated iron roof, gable end facing High Street. Three small round windows with red brickwork frame, decorative leadwork and coloured panels, which provide a contrast to the spartan frontage of the building. Large glazed double doors are centrally placed and set within side and fanlights. It is slightly recessed with terracotta steps up.

Recently painted dark grey with black door frames and fascias. Red brickwork windows have also been painted.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
62-63 High St	Positive	Grade II listed Article 4

Description

Grade II listed cottages. List Entry Number 1322357. Historic England description summary:

- Mid-16th century shop and two cottages, formerly a single house of timber frame and black weather boarded, with gault brick front of 1849.
- Former 'baffle entry' plan with two rooms on each floor, about central stack and staircase.
- Original attic floor over with extended main posts and plates at first floor and eaves level.
- Substantial hardwood frame with some pegging and straight diagonal braces interrupting studs.
- Original large central stack has back to back fireplaces on ground level and becomes rectangular brick stack on ridge line.
- Nineteenth century front has three arched headed window openings on the first floor, the central one infilled.
- Ground floor has similar infilled central window and 19th/20th century shop front either side. [replaced with tripartite timber sash windows since the list description was written]



- Pair of old spiral staircases behind stack.
- Roof has heavy principal rafters and butt purlins with the rafters morticed into the latter.
- Fragments of pargetting stickwork on rear elevation and 17th century window frame all under the raised roof of a lean-to rear extension.
- To the east is a single storey 19th century painted brick extension with a hipped roof, added when the building was a public house.
- Appears to be unusually late example of plan form and carpentry technique with very interesting 'habitable attics'.

The slate roof, brickwork, weatherboarding and windows are all typical of the Area. Newly painted and well maintained.

Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Sara's Tea Garden	Positive	Article 4

Description

Small tea hut surrounded by chairs and tables and potted plants. Featuring some of the only trees in the main part of the Conservation Area. Surrounded by a white painted picket fence. The hut is a simple white painted weather boarded shed with flat roof of felt and corrugated metal.

The garden and extensive planting is a positive feature within the Conservation Area. Well maintained.

Advertising signage is unobtrusive, with hand painted sign over front entrance gate.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
64-65 High St	Positive	Article 4

Description

Pair of cottages typical to the Conservation Area, small in scale and relatively plain in design. Original timber sash windows. Slate roof. Both cottages have painted brickwork.

Window frames and doors also recently painted.

Front doors are not original, but are painted timber and sympathetic to area.

Cottages have small front gardens fenced off from the street. No. 65 has a small white picket fence that blends well with the area. No.64 has new frontage with railway sleepers for a boundary treatment and slate paving.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
66 High St (The Old Foundry)	Positive	Article 4

Description

Former Foundry converted to a cafe. Comprises three ranges, each with their gable facing onto the street. Slate roof with yellow stock brick and red brick row-lock window arches which are typical features within the Conservation Area. The western most gable features red brick round window at first floor level. The two remaining central and easternmost bays are fully glazed and subdivided by heavy timber glazing bars. Ground floor windows are 3-by-3 casements. Doors are timber with glazed upper panels.

The central bay has a recessed wall at ground floor and the roof is supported by two barley-twist columns, which are not original to the frontage but an interesting feature.

Woodwork is weathered and needs repainting.

Garden to east elevation is well maintained and tidy. Has undergone some updating with new paving and garden furniture.

Garden surrounded by decorative metal railings and gate. Planting or a sympathetic screen would be beneficial to disguise commercial bins to the rear of the garden.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
74-74a High St	Positive	Locally listed Article 4

Description

Locally listed. The old Customs House built in 1815. Symmetrical structure with low pitched slate roof and of yellow stock brick construction. Yellow brick string course at first floor level, with square brick relief pilasters either side of door and ground floor building ends. Large timber sash windows and large timber central double doors painted blue. Large over-door fanlight and timber lintel. The windows have gauged brick arches, rendered on first floor. Roof-lights visible but discreet.

Paintwork to windows is in poor condition and would benefit from repainting.

A low plinth indicates the former presence of small areas to the front of the house formerly enclosed with metal railings. Reinstatement would be beneficial.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
1 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Occupied by Simply Seafood. Black painted shiplap weather boarded shed with glazed doors and windows along eastern façade. Mono-pitched felted roof.

Seafood restaurant with large outdoor seating area with metal and glass treatment boundary. Has undergone considerable extension to the south. Well maintained, appears to be newly renovated.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
2 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Dark green shiplap shed with roller shutter and corrugated pitched roof. No signage. Typical of the industrial character of this part of the Conservation Area.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
3 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

West's Seafoods Ltd. Flat roofed dark green painted shiplap shed with plastic company sign. A painted timber sign would be more appropriate for the Conservation Area. Large roller shutter facing onto High Street, though not inappropriate for this industrial part of the Conservation Area. Example of a traditional cockle shed with monopitch roof.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
4-5 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Two flat roofed cockle sheds, modern and square in profile. Made of a timber frame and walls painted a vibrant green, with corrugated iron roof connected via a small porch with a flat roof. No visible signage.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
6 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Flat metal roofed, dark green shed of faux shiplap, also metal on a breeze block base. Roller shutter door. No signage.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
6a Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Flat roofed shiplap boarded wooden shed, painted dark green. The side elevations have concrete render. Fascia board possibly once had a sign but is now painted dark green.

Shed has two windows, covered with hinged timber shutters and a dark green door, with metal grille security gate. This is also painted dark green and blends in well.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
7 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Large pitch roofed shed. Corrugated iron roof. Solar panels located on the roof somewhat obtrusive. Painted dark green shiplap it features a side door, also painted dark green and a large metal roller garage door.

Over the garage door a new sign in gold lettering spells 'Osborne's, No. 7' is appropriate.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
8 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Large flat roofed shed on the corner of the ramp leading to the yard behind. Made of timber dark green painted shiplap weather boarding, the front has a full width roller shutter with a similar gold sign above reading 'Osborne & Sons'. This conceals the interior of the shop and is open when the shop is in use. The western elevation has five large windows and a door with tiled steps and wheelchair access up to it. Well maintained and recently painted.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
9 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

A flat roofed shed similar in style to the corner cockle shed belonging to Osborne & Sons. Dark green painted shiplap boarding. Timber painted doors. Corrugated metal roof. This also features an Osbornes sign in gold lettering.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
10-11 Cocklesheds		N/A

Description

Larger pitch roofed building, painted in the same colour as Nos.7, 8 and 9. One metal(?) sign. There is a small loading hatch at first floor in the gable. Roller shutters to large openings. Timber painted single door.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
12-14 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Flat roofed, dark green painted shiplap, with modern sign reading 'Thames Shellfish Co. Ltd'. Sign not hand painted, but sympathetic and in keeping with surroundings.

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
15 Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Pitched, corrugated iron roof. Newly painted dark green shiplap timber shed. Attractive and jaunty hand painted timber sign reads 'Deal Bros'.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
16 Cocklesheds	Positive*	N/A

Description

Large shed in dark green timber shiplap. Corrugated pitch roof.

Entrance to High Street has exposed metal roller shutter. Side entrance with roller shutter has been added to western elevation. Both would benefit from painting dark green to blend in with the rest of the building.

Shed has been extended to rear. Warning signs on the west elevation are somewhat obtrusive.



Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Hut adjacent to Cocklesheds	Positive	N/A

Description

Belton Way Small Craft Club clubhouse. Comprising a small timber hut cantilevered over the foreshore. Dark green shiplap with black felt roof. Has quaint and pleasant appearance.



Building-by-Building Description

Address	Value to area's character	Designation
Lower Thames Marine & Johnson and Jogo Ltd, High St	Neutral	N/A

Description

Large industrial sheds and associated boatyards. More exposed than the other boatyards within the main part of the Conservation Area. Although not entirely attractive it is representative of the industrial character of this part of the Conservation Area.

Large plastic sign added reads 'Leigh Marina'. Replacement with a painted timber sign would be more sympathetic.

Dark green corrugated metal sheds with portacabins in front. Cabins are intrusive and removal or some form of appropriate cladding would reduce their impact.

Grey metal boundary treatment enclosing extensive boatyard.



Management Plan

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