



Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses
Conservation Area Appraisal

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MEMORY OF THE
LONG AND BENEFICENT REIGN OF
QUEEN VICTORIA
THESE ALMSHOUSES WERE FRECTED
BY
THOMAS DOWSETT
J.P. FOR ESSEX AND THIS BOROUGH

Southend-on-Sea: Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses Conservation Area Character Appraisal

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Section 1.0

Introduction

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Introduction

Map A: Boundary

- Conservation Area Boundary

This plan is not to scale

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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 to this are individual or groups of buildings, streetscape and public realm, scale and massing, open spaces and street pattern, 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 City 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 they will over time 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 City Council (SCC) will also undertake reviews for new Conservation Areas from time to time in order to ensure that areas not previously identified as having special architectural or historic interest are designated appropriately. Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses underwent an initial review for its suitability for designation as a Conservation Area and this Conservation Area Appraisal was subsequently prepared to assess in more detail the character and special interest of the Almshouses in order to allow for a period of public consultation before a final decision to designate the area was made by SCC.

Introduction

1.2 Aims of the Conservation Area Appraisal

1.2.1 This Conservation Area Appraisal:

- Reviews the potential for a new Conservation Area for the Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses and its appropriate boundary;
- Identifies the area's special interest;
- Assists the preparation of the emerging new Local Plan 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 This Conservation Area Appraisal for Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses follows on from consultation on an initial report in 2022, followed by consultation on a draft Conservation Area Appraisal in 2023. It has been prepared by Purcell, a firm of specialist heritage consultants, on behalf of Southend-on-Sea City Council. The initial research and fieldwork for the Appraisal was carried out in the 2019- 2020, with further site survey and research carried out in 2022. A survey of the rear elevations of the buildings was not possible due to restricted access.

1.3.2 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.

1.3.3 The boundary for the Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses Conservation Area is shown on Map A, taking in the eight almshouses themselves.

Introduction

1.4 Overview and Location

- 1.4.1 The Almshouses are located on the east side of Chelmsford Avenue towards its southern end. It is situated to the south of Prittlewell, which has its origins as a historic Anglo-Saxon village, which, together with the surrounding fields, were absorbed into the urban area of Southend-on-Sea during its rapid expansion as a seaside resort and residential town from the late-nineteenth century onwards.
- 1.4.2 Eight single-storey cottage style houses are arranged around a garden courtyard which contains the plinth of a sundial erected to commemorate the benefaction of the almshouses by Thomas Dowsett, the first Mayor of Southend-on-Sea, in 1904. The buildings are set back from the road and a boundary wall of brick and metal railings separates the almshouses from the pavement. The buildings are still in use today as almshouses, associated with the Dowsett Trust.
- 1.4.3 Immediately to either side of the almshouses are two two-storey pairs of semi-detached houses. These were part of the original development and were rented to fund the almshouses, though one pair is now in private ownership. These properties have undergone many changes since they were first constructed. The wider setting of the almshouses, along Chelmsford Avenue, consists of two-storey semi-detached houses dating to the early twentieth century with gabled fronts and bay windows.

Section 2.0

Summary of Special Interest

2.1 Summary of Special Interest

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Summary of Special Interest

2.1 Summary of Special Interest

2.1.1 The distinctive, special quality of the Chelmsford Avenue

Conservation Area derives from the attractive group of cottage style almshouses which have survived relatively unaltered and retain their original character and use.

2.1.2 The almshouses have a strong historical association with their benefactor Thomas Dowsett, the first mayor of Southend. This association continues today as the buildings are still administered by the same Trust in their original use as almshouses. The buildings also have an association with local architects Burles and Harris, who appear to have been prolific in Southend at the time which contributes to their local historic interest.

2.1.3 The almshouses have aesthetic interest as attractive, modestly sized cottages with a consistent design. They are single-storey and arranged around a small courtyard garden which sets them apart from the two-storey semi-detached houses lining the rest of Chelmsford Avenue. Key features which add to their aesthetic interest are the gabled porches with latticework joinery above and to the sides, built-in benches within the porches, and dentils to the main cornices and gables. The consistency of these architectural features on each almshouse increases the aesthetic interest through repetition. The tall roofs, with red/brown tiles, dividing ridges between properties and prominent chimneys are also a key design feature. The windows are of lesser aesthetic interest due to their replacement with uPVC equivalents. However, the leaded lights mirror the original design and they are good quality with flat frames which lessens their impact on the overall aesthetic interest of the façade. The original doors appear

to have survived and contribute to the aesthetic interest, although stained glass glazing has replaced the original leaded lights. The almshouses have high group value having been built at the same time and they still retain their uniform appearance.

2.1.4 The boundary wall of red brick with concrete capping appears to be made of more modern materials but it is good quality and well-kept. This is also true of the railings topping the wall. Together with the hedge behind the wall, this forms a pleasant boundary enclosing the garden and delineating the almshouses. The grass and planting in the garden are attractive. The sundial with its original inscription is an interesting feature and focal point in front of the almshouses, though has lost the actual sundial from the plinth.

2.1.5 The almshouses were built to provide affordable housing for the elderly and those in need and continue to do so today. This gives local interest through their continued prominent role within the community. The almshouses design encourages a sense of community as they are set around a communal green and have built-in benches within the porches to encourage sociability between the residents.

2.1.6 Immediately adjacent to the almshouses are two pairs of semi-detached houses, also originally associated with Thomas Dowsett and rented out to provide funds for the almshouses themselves. These two-storey properties form part of the wider streetscape setting of the almshouses, which is characterised by similar two-storey residential properties.

Section 3.0

Planning Framework

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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 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 'Historic Environment' in the *National Planning Practice Guidance*, last updated July 2019. <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 SCC use to determine planning and listed building consents is contained within the Core Strategy (2007) and Development Management Document (2015). 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

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 City, including for the management of the historic environment.

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 within Conservation Areas.

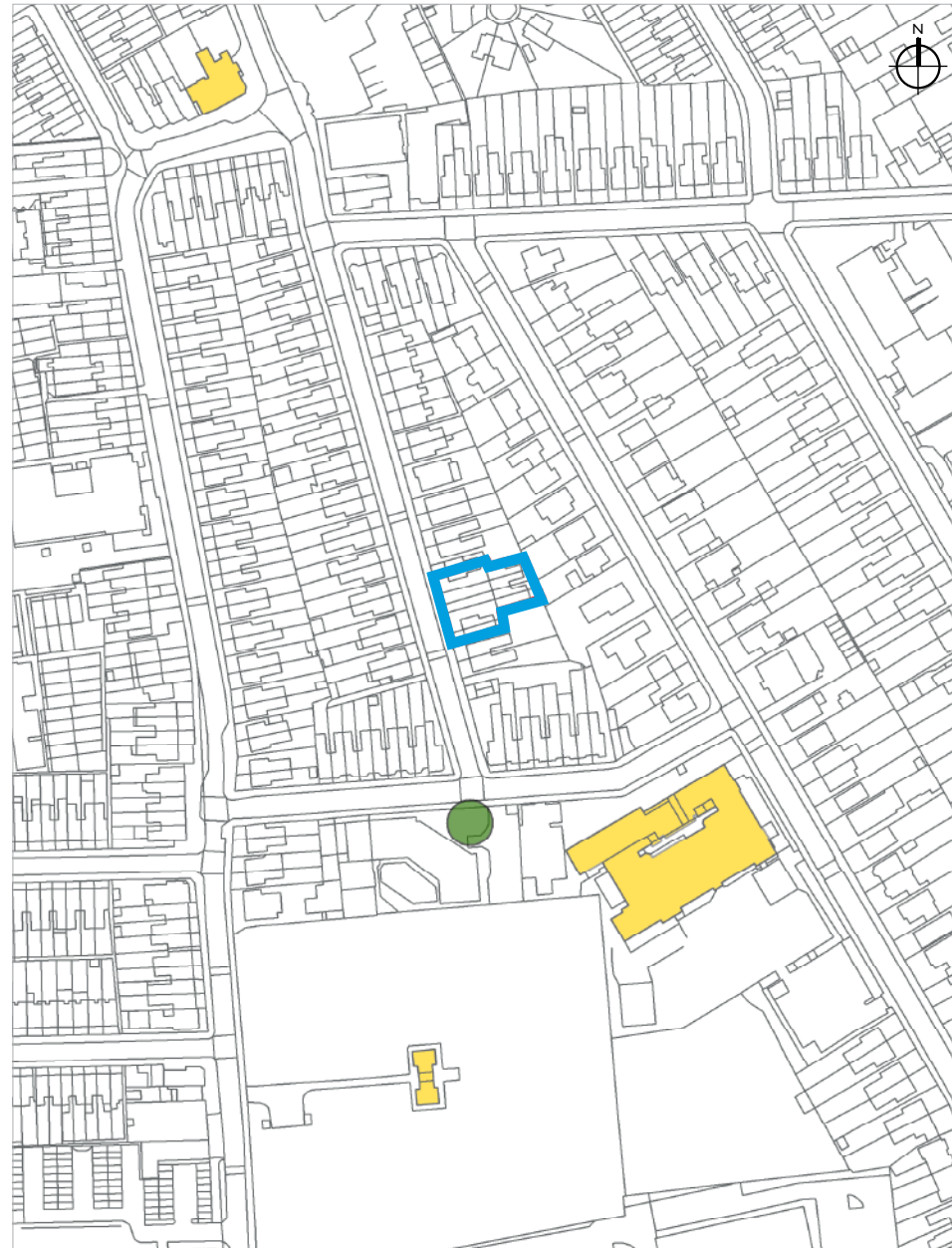
3.2.6 The Council also has two additional adopted SPDs, the Essex Coast RAMS SPD and the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure for new Development SPD.

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

Planning Framework

3.3 Designations

3.3.1 Within the conservation area and its setting, there are no designated heritage assets such as listed buildings.



Map B: Designations

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Locally Listed
- TPOs

This plan is not to scale

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Planning Framework

Locally Listed Buildings

3.3.2 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.

3.3.3 SCC's criteria for the designation of Locally Listed Buildings requires buildings to:

- Demonstrate the City'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.

3.3.4 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.

3.3.5 There are no locally listed buildings on Chelmsford Avenue. In the wider vicinity the cemetery chapel at the North Road Burial Ground and Prittlewell Junior School, to the south of Chelmsford Avenue, are locally listed buildings, as is the former Nelson Hotel (now Shamsuddin Court) to the north of Chelmsford Avenue.

3.3.6 Further information on Southend's locally listed buildings can be found on the Council's website www.southend.gov.uk/planning

Article 4 Directions

3.3.7 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.

3.3.8 There is currently no Article 4 Direction covering buildings within the Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses Conservation Area but one is proposed as part of this Conservation Area Appraisal. See Sections 6.3.35-6.3.39 and Map J. While there are few inappropriate changes within the Conservation Area, an Article 4 Direction would ensure that minor alterations to the appearance of buildings and their setting are not made in the future in a way which would be out of character and harmful to the Conservation Area.

Planning Framework

Other Designations

3.3.9 Map B also shows tree protection orders (TPOs) in green, which are placed to prohibit works to cut down, lop, uproot or damage important trees. One is located at the southern end of Chelmsford Avenue, within the setting of the almshouses. All trees within conservation areas, whether they have a TPO or not, are protected and consent must be given by SCC prior to works being carried out so that the Council have sufficient time to decide whether a designation of a TPO is needed.

Section 4.0

History and Archaeology

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History and Archaeology

4.1 Archaeological Interest

- 4.1.1 There is no known below-ground archaeological interest in the Conservation Area. Historic mapping records no historic development on the site until the current buildings which suggests archaeological interest will be limited.
- 4.1.2 Paleolithic and Neolithic axes have been found in locations to the south of the Conservation Area, on Sweyne Avenue, Boston Avenue and North Road Burial which suggests that there was human activity in the area at this time.⁰¹

4.2 History of Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses

Early Development of Prittlewell

- 4.2.1 The almshouses are located near the Saxon village of Prittlewell (although today lies within the Victoria Ward of SCC). Evidence from a burial ground in the vicinity of the later Prittlewell Priory records that a Saxon settlement was certainly established at Prittlewell by the sixth century around the church. Prittlewell's church is the only one in the Rochford Hundred (roughly south-east Essex) mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086), suggesting that by this time Prittlewell was a locally important settlement.

Early Development of Southend

- 4.2.2 Southend itself was a small fishing village, first recorded as 'Stradende' in 1309, until around 1700 when it was discovered that the foreshore provided an excellent breeding ground for oysters. Within a few years the whole of the foreshore from Hadleigh to Shoeburyness was being utilised for breeding oyster. This industry lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century. With this discovery and the growth of the London barge trade, the settlement began to expand. In 1767 the first brick buildings in South End were built at Pleasant Terrace (now demolished).
- 4.2.3 From the mid-eighteenth century, the settlement also began to develop as a resort for sea-bathing. The modest resort catered mostly for local gentry but by the 1790s it was attracting people from London via new stage-coach services and the development of New South End emerged.

⁰¹ HER numbers: 9644, 9645, 9643

History and Archaeology

Southend and Prittlewell in the 18th and 19th century

4.2.4 The village of Prittlewell is shown on Chapman and Andre's 1777 map (Map C) of Essex. Buildings line East, West and North Streets, with Earls Hall and Prittlewell Priory to the north beyond Prittle Brook. The land which the almshouses later occupied is located to the south-west of Prittlewell. The 1841 Tithe Map (Map D) depicts a similar arrangement. The almshouse site was a field named 'North Field' owned by John Bayntun Scratton who owned a large amount of land in this area at this date.



Map C: Detail from Chapman and Andre's Map, 1777 with the approximate location of the Conservation Area indicated in red. (<https://map-of-essex.uk/>)

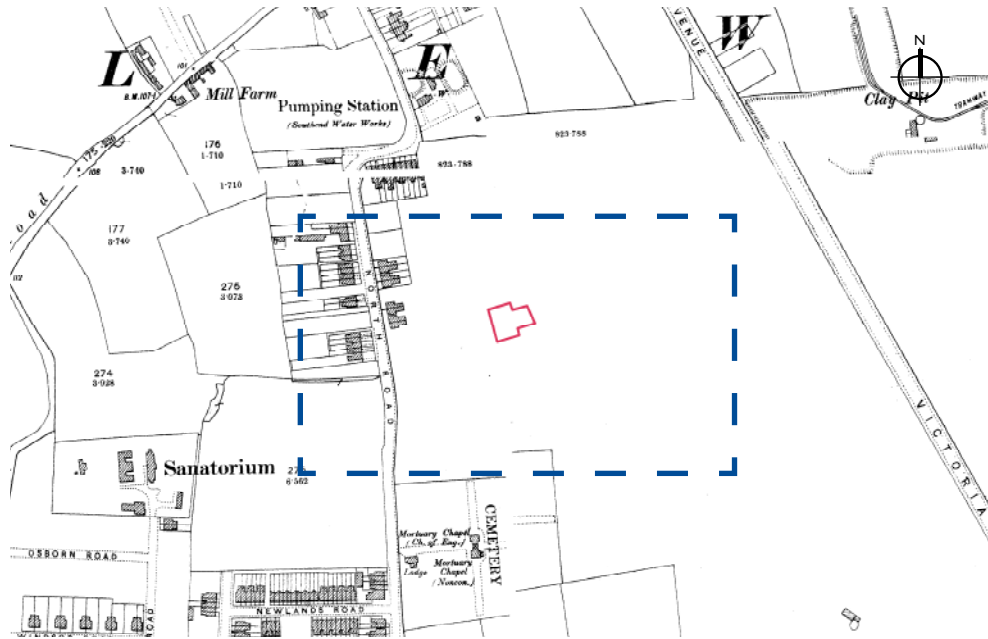


Map D: Detail from Tithe Map, 1941 with the approximate location of the Conservation Area indicated in red. (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Record Office: D/CT 276/1)

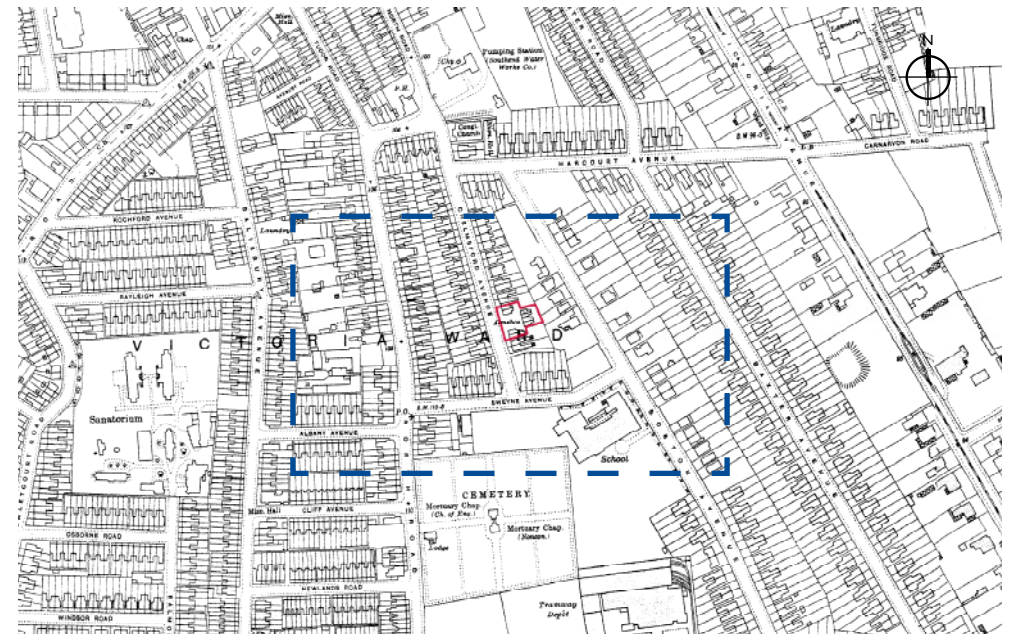
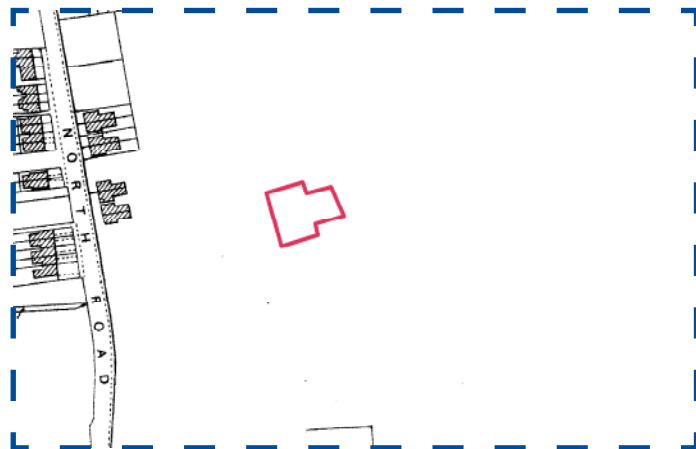
History and Archaeology

- 4.2.5 In the 1790s a concerted effort was made to create a more exclusive and fashionable resort at 'New South End'. However, the new development failed to attract fashionable clientele and the main area of the resort remained in 'Old' South End. From the mid-nineteenth century, however, three factors changed the situation. Increasing wealth and leisure time for the middle classes (compulsory Bank Holidays were introduced in 1871), greatly improved access by rail and boat, and the rise in popularity of excursions and holidays all helped to make Southend (as New and Old South End together came to be known from the early-nineteenth century) an attractive destination, especially for Londoners. The first railway from London was completed in 1856, which included a station located at the edge of Prittlewell village, and the Pier (originally constructed in wood in 1829-1830) was intermittently improved and extended, and eventually rebuilt in 1889, making Southend an even more welcoming prospect, allowing day trips from London.
- 4.2.6 Southend's growth and popularity was acknowledged in 1892 when it became recognised officially as a town and its role as a seaside resort town was indicated the year after by its renaming as Southend-on-Sea. The seafront promenade was laid out and new housing spread over the surrounding area for people attracted to live permanently in the resort. The late-nineteenth century was a boom period of growth and by the early-twentieth century Southend had become London's largest seaside resort. Urbanisation resulted in much redevelopment and new buildings in and around the village, mostly in the form of small, terraced housing, shops and commercial uses. By the end of the nineteenth century Prittlewell had been absorbed in the larger urban area of Southend-on-Sea.
- 4.2.7 The 1897 OS map (Map E) records that development had reached as far as Prittlewell by this date with houses beginning to line North Road, to the west of Chelmsford Avenue. Chelmsford Avenue itself had not yet been set out and much of the surrounding area remained open fields. By the 1922 OS map (Map F) Chelmsford Avenue, the almshouses and all the surrounding roads had been built and were lined with predominantly semi-detached houses.

History and Archaeology



Map E: 1897 Ordnance Survey map. 1:2,500 OS Map, © Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100019680



Map F: 1922 Ordnance Survey map. 1:2,500 OS Map, © Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100019680



History and Archaeology

The Development of the Almshouses

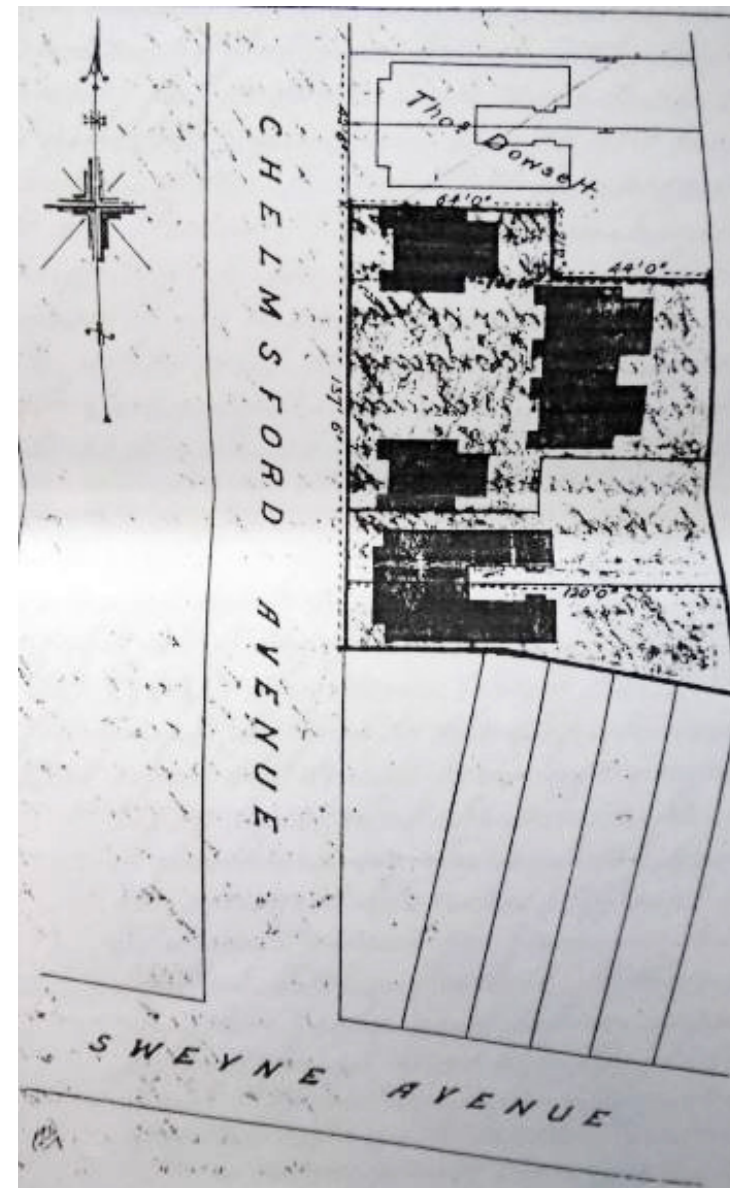
4.2.8 In 1892 a Town Council was officially formed in Southend-on-Sea, replacing the old Local Board. The first Mayor elected was Thomas Dowsett. He owned much land in the town through his company, the Southend-on-Sea Estates Company, and was a philanthropist, donating money to schools and the hospital.⁰² One of his philanthropic gestures was to establish almshouses on Chelmsford Avenue.

4.2.9 Conveyance Plans from 1904 detail a list of Trustees who had been appointed to oversee the running of the almshouses:

- The Reverend Edward Hamilton, Minister of Cliff Town Congregational Church
- The Reverend John Moore Fergusson, Minister of St. George's Presbyterian Church
- The Reverend James McCleery, Minister of Avenue Baptist Church
- Thomas Dowsett the Younger, glass and china dealer
- Walter Bradley Dowsett, fancy warehouseman
- Herbert Arthur Dowsett, ironmonger and house furnisher
- Arthur Herbery Smith, baker
- Robert Langton, solicitor⁰³

⁰² Yearsley, 2001, pp.50-51

⁰³ ERO, TS 409/1



Conveyance plan for Dowsett's almshouses, (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Records Office TS 409/1)

History and Archaeology

4.2.10 The Trustees had a duty to insure the properties, maintain them in good condition, pay all taxes and rates, and let them for periods not exceeding 21 years at the best rent that could be obtained.⁰⁴ The Trustees would also pay each almshouse seven shillings and sixpence per month during December, January and February (presumably for additional heating costs in the winter months). People had to fulfil certain conditions to be eligible for residence in the almshouses:

A A husband and wife or two women to each almshouse;

B Each of the almspeople must be the age of sixty-five years at least;

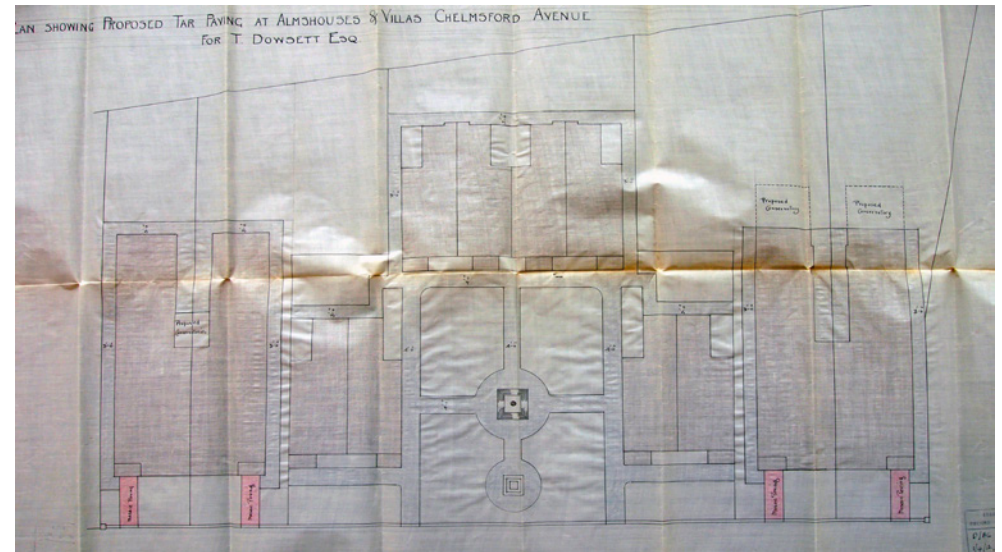
C Each must have resided in the Parish of Prittlewell (now within the aforesaid Borough) for ten years at least preceding the time of appointment;

D Each person appointed must have an income from investments or guaranteed by third persons of not less than five shillings weekly but otherwise all those appointed must be poor persons of good character who, from age, ill-health, accident or infirmity are wholly or in part unable to maintain themselves by their own exertions;

E Each must be a member of one of the Protestant Free Churches in the said Parish of Prittlewell.⁰⁵

4.2.11 The architects were Burles and Harries, who appear to have worked a lot in Southend during the period (over 1000 records appear in a search for 'Burles and Harris' on the Essex Records Office catalogue). Two of their buildings are locally listed: Southchurch Hall School and The Cornucopia.

4.2.12 Burles and Harris' original plans of 1902 show that eight almshouses were arranged around a central courtyard. Two semi-detached almshouses were located to either side of the courtyard and a row of four almshouses were located to the rear. Either side of the almshouses were two larger semi-detached houses.



Site plan of the almshouses and semi-detached houses. (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Records Office, D/BC 1/4/12/3367)

⁰⁴ ERO, TS 409/2

⁰⁵ Ibid.

History and Archaeology

4.2.13 The plans show that each of the single-storey houses were entered into a living room, which interconnected with a bedroom (both heated by fireplaces), which in turn connected to a scullery and WC. Presumably it was intended that cooking was carried out over one of the fireplaces as there does not seem to have been provision for a stove or range in the scullery. The elevations show the decorative porches which still survive today, though a cartouche design is sketched in the gables above which no longer survive (it is not known if these were ever built) and leaded lights to the front doors which do not match the stained-glass panels in the doors today. A seat and tree are shown in the centre of the garden, with the sundial to the west.

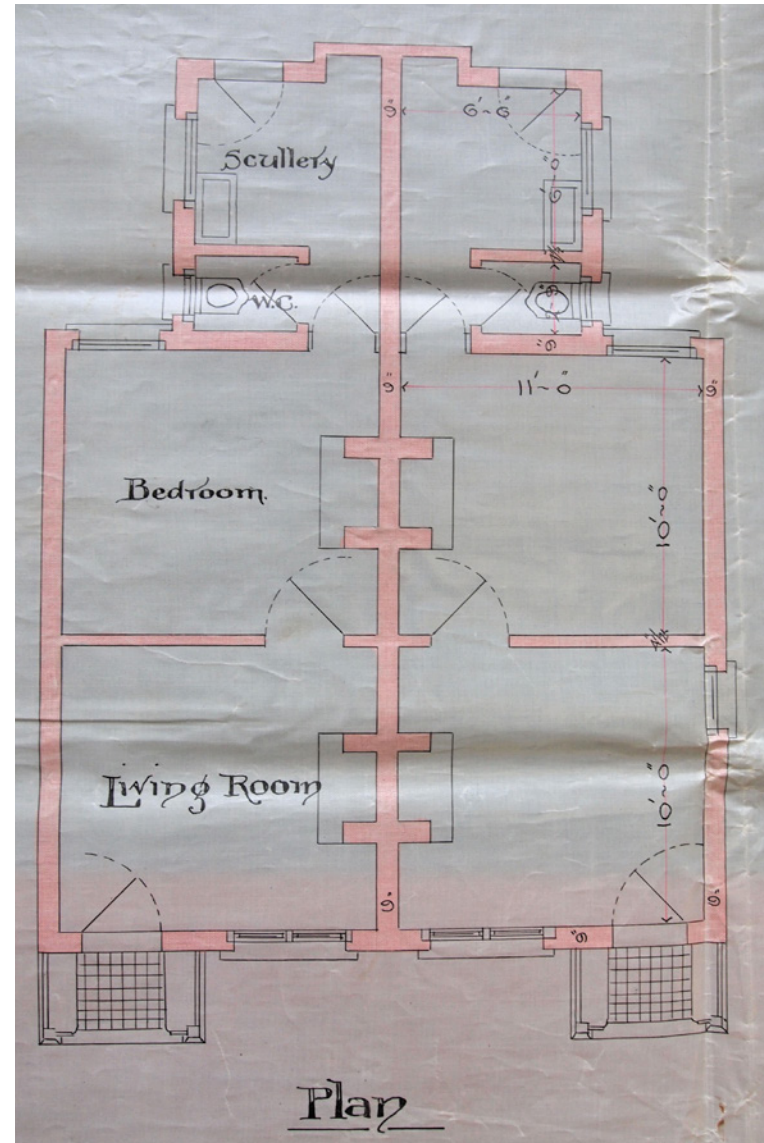


Original design of the external elevations of the almshouses numbers 6, 8, 18 and 20,1902, (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Records Office, D/BC 1/4/12/3367)

History and Archaeology



Original design of the external elevations of the almshouses numbers 10, 12, 14, 16, 1902, (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Records Office, D/BC 1/4/12/3367)

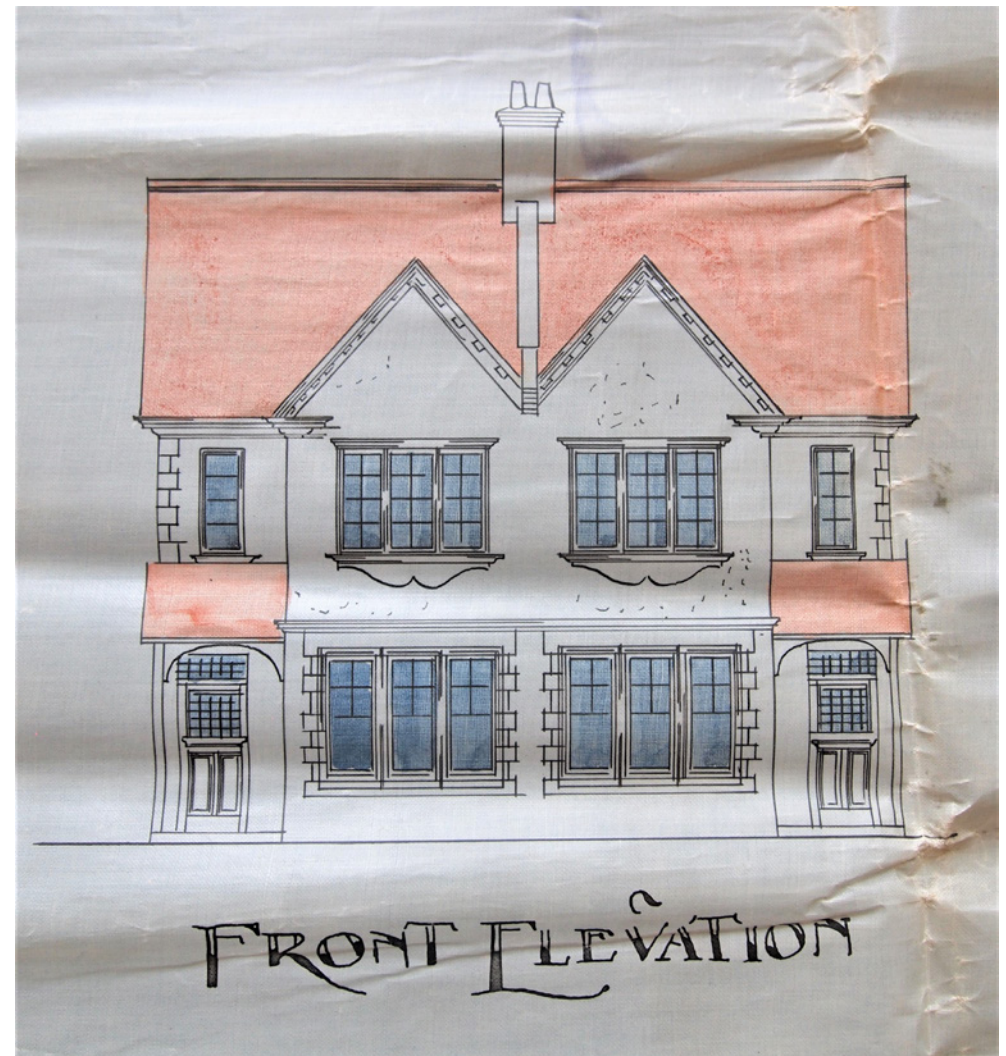


Original plan of the almshouses, 1902, (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Records Office, D/BC 1/4/12/3367)

History and Archaeology

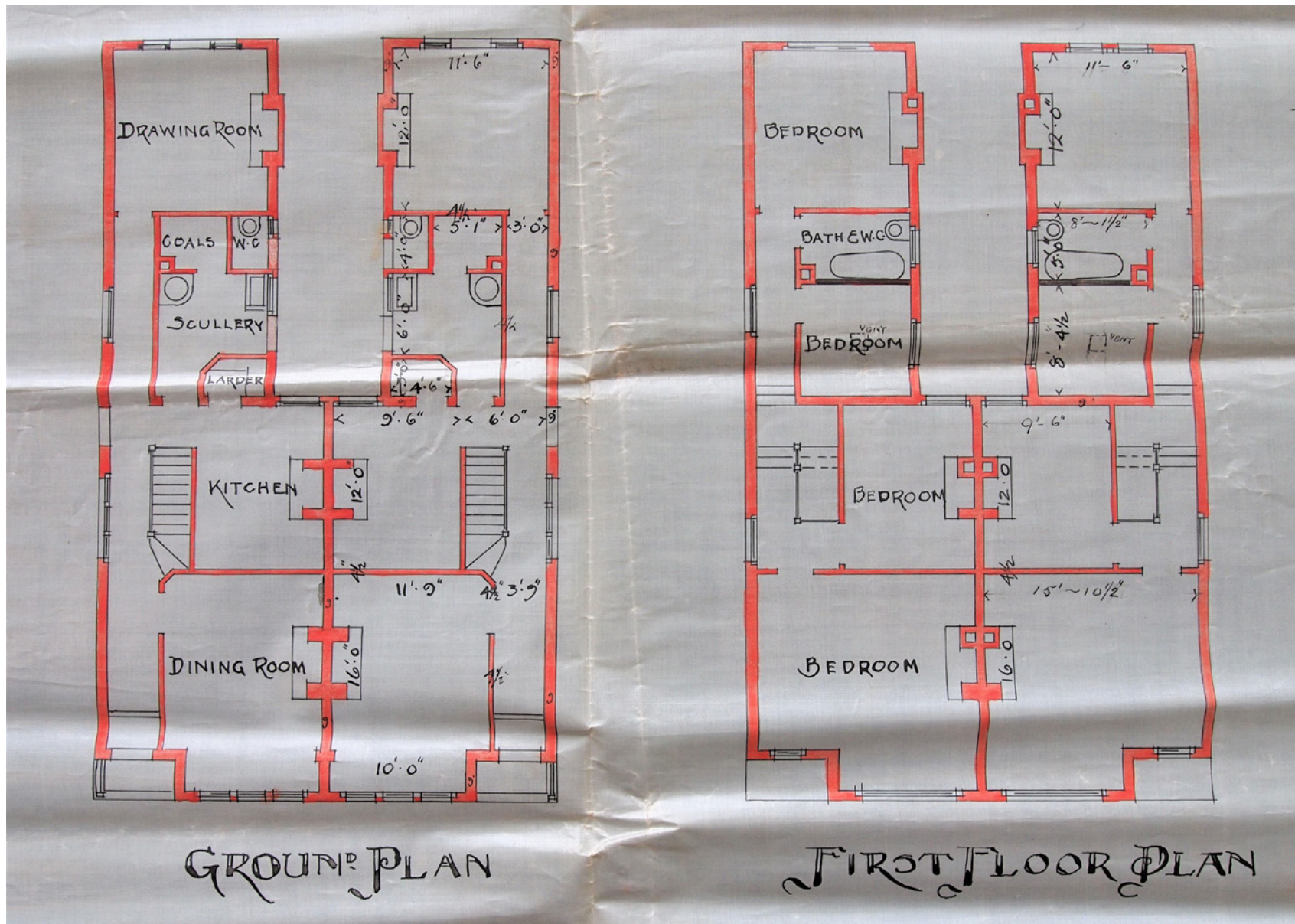
4.2.14 Four semi-detached houses, two on either side of the almshouses were included in the development. These had more accommodation: a dining room, kitchen, larder, scullery, WC, coal store and drawing room on the ground floor, with four bedrooms and a bathroom on the upper floor. These were to be rented and the income derived from the letting used to fund the upkeep of the almshouses and almspeople. An extract from a conveyance between T. Dowsett Esq. and the Trustees dated 6th July 1904 sets out the use for the income derived from the semi-detached houses:

- i Pay all rates, taxes, insurance and other outgoings and cost of repairs for the proper maintenance and up-keep of the messuages and almshouses and premises and any expenses of management of the first.*
- ii Pay in respect of each almshouse to the almspeople occupying the same during the months of December, January, and February in every year the sum of seven shillings and sixpence for each of the said month.*
- iii Provide in respect of each almshouse for the almspeople occupying the same at Christmas yearly half a ton of coals and also to the value of ten shilling a joint of beef and other provisions and also to each of the almspeople half a crown in cash.*
- iv Accumulate the balance of income, which however shall, as to any excess beyond Twenty Pounds, be at the entire disposal of the Trustees for the time being for the benefit of the property of the almspeople. ⁰⁶*



Original design for the external elevation of the houses adjacent to the almshouses, 1902, (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Records Office, D/BC 1/4/12/3367)

History and Archaeology



Original plan of the houses adjacent to the almshouses, 1902, (Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Records Office, D/BC 1/4/12/3367)

History and Archaeology

4.2.57 The houses were constructed in 1904 and an opening ceremony took place on 8th September of that year, attended by the Trustees and other local dignitaries. The proceedings included a hymn specially composed for the occasion and the unveiling of the sundial with the dedication inscription as follows:

*TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND THE MEMORY OF THE
LONG AND BENEFICENT REIGN OF
QUEEN VICTORIA
THESE ALMSHOUSES WERE ERECTED
BY
THOMAS DOWSETT
J.P. FOR ESSEX AND THIS BOROUGH*

4.2.68 Minutes from the meetings of Trustees record that the almshouses were repainted and repaired in 1917 and in 1924 it was agreed that the almshouses should be painted and repaired outside. In both instances no details are provided about the nature of the repairs. In December 1924 it was also agreed to install gas points in each house, and this was completed by the following year.⁰⁷

4.2.17 Little mention is made of the semi-detached houses either side of the almshouses. In December 1917 it was agreed to render the north wall of No. 4 Chelmsford Avenue in cement and in March 1936 it was agreed to carry out decorations to the same property.

4.2.18 The almshouses have continued in the same use until this day and are now administered by the Dowsett Almshouses Trust. One pair of the semi-detached properties have passed into private ownership and both sets of semi-detached properties have undergone alterations such as replacement windows and doors, and re-rendering/painting of brickwork. The almshouses themselves have had a few changes, such as replacement windows (though in a good matching style) and glazing to the doors. They were also extended to the rear at some point in the late-20th century, presumably to provide proper kitchen facilities. However, they retain the original character of their frontages arranged around their courtyard garden.

Section 5.0

Character Analysis

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Character Analysis

5.1 Architecture

Overview and Use of the Buildings

5.1.1 The almshouses on Chelmsford Avenue are an early-20th century scheme commissioned by Thomas Dowsett, the first Mayor of Southend Town Council in 1892. They were built as a group of eight almshouses set around a courtyard with a row of four houses set back from the road and two pairs of houses to either side. The single-storey houses are small in scale and distinctive from the larger two-storey semi-detached houses which dominate the road in both their scale and setting around a courtyard. The almshouses are in residential use and have been since they were first built.



Character Analysis

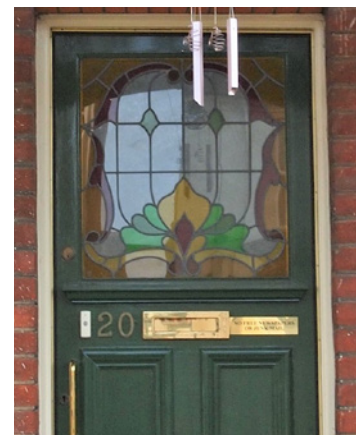
Scale and Massing

- 5.1.2 The almshouses are single-storey, one-bay houses, two rooms deep with a further single-storey modern extension to the rear. They are characterised by their small domestic scale, with each property being single-storey, and their arrangement around a square. Both features are distinctive from the double-storey semi-detached houses flanking the almshouses on Chelmsford Avenue.
- 5.1.3 The almshouses are very compact, with those either side of the courtyard in a semi-detached form and the ones fronting onto the courtyard forming a row of four. The roofs are steeply pitched with a shared chimney stack rising above the roof ridge. The later extensions to the rear, visible from the street on numbers 8 and 18, are single-storey and flat roofed and are subservient in scale to the main house and as such have a very minimal impact.

Materials

- 5.1.4 The almshouses present an attractive group of red brick houses. White painted wood is used for the porches' latticed detailing and side benches. The porch pediments are pebbledashed and the roof has red clay tiles. The doors are painted wood with stained-glass windows. There is a concrete rendered plinth which is visible on the side elevations and some front elevations. The later extensions to the rear are cement rendered with white painted decorative iron grill gates over the side doors.

Materials Palette



Character Analysis

Roofs

5.1.5 The roofs of the main almshouses and the porch are of red clay tiles. The chimney stack is red brick with terracotta chimney pots. There is a prominent ridge capped with clay ridge tiles between each of the properties.

Windows

5.1.6 The original windows of the almshouses were casement cross windows with square lead lights, as seen on the original plans. These would have had wooden frames and leaded glazing. Six of the houses have one double width window to the side of the porch on the front elevation, while the central houses to the rear of the courtyard each have a single casement window to either side of the porch. There are also single width casements on the side elevations of numbers 8 and 18. All the almshouse windows have now been replaced with uPVC windows, though they are in a sympathetic design with flat frames and leaded lights, which match the original style. This was done collectively so that the almshouses retain a unified character.



uPVC casement windows



uPVC casement windows
either side of the porch

Character Analysis

Doors

5.1.7 The entrance doors were originally wooden two-panelled doors with recessed panels and square upper glazed window of simple square leaded lights. The timberwork of the current doors appears to be original. They are painted either green or red and now have more elaborate stained glass windows than the leaded lights seen in the original designs. The rear extensions have a side door with a white painted iron grill gate.



Door and entrance porch to No.10



Door and entrance porch to No.20



Rear extension side door

Character Analysis

Other Details

5.1.8 There are several other architectural details which provide interest to the design of the almshouses. Each house has a projecting gabled porch in white painted timber and timber latticework panels on the sides and over the arch. They have a pebbledashed gable and a pitched roof in clay tiles. There are two built-in wooden benches with decoratively shaped ends which are a prominent feature of each porch. Decorative features in brick include stepped bricks at the top of the chimney stacks, corbels at the base of the ridges and rubbed brick lintels to the windows. There are terracotta chimney pots. The cornices are dentilled and painted white on the main buildings and the porch gables.



Detail of the roof showing stepped brick at the top of the chimney stack and corbel at the base of the ridges.



Entrance porch with timber latticework panels and benches.

Character Analysis

5.2 Townscape

5.2.1 Features described in this section are shown on Map H: Townscape.

Street and Plot Pattern

5.2.2 The almshouses are arranged around a square formal garden, set back from the street. All almshouses face the street with small front gardens to the outer pairs of houses. Each house is on a narrow plot with a yard behind.

Views

5.2.3 Due to the small scale and set back position of the almshouses, clear views of the Conservation Area, especially including the four terraced houses to the rear of the central garden, are limited when approaching from either end of Chelmsford Avenue. The best views of the almshouses are gained once opposite the central garden.



View of the almshouses looking northwards, demonstrating that there is limited visibility of the buildings from further up the road



View of the almshouses from directly opposite

Character Analysis

Green Spaces and Planting

5.2.4 The central garden provides an attractive outlook for buildings and helps to give the area a peaceful and open atmosphere compared to the larger scale domestic buildings dominating the residential road. The majority of the garden is taken up by lawn with a palm tree planted in the centre and four, square flower beds positioned around it. Shrubs line the perimeter of the garden and the boundary wall is lined with a well maintained box hedge on the east side of the wall. A mature tree is planted just off centre of this box hedge. There is a rectangular patch of grass in front of each of the almshouses which sit closer to the street.

5.2.5 Historically, the sundial to the front of the central square would have formed a focal point for those approaching the almshouses from the street and informed passers-by of the charitable nature of the houses. It is now in poor condition with the plinth sitting unevenly on the lawn and missing its sundial top.



View of the sundial plinth



View of the green square, flowerbeds, and sundial (2019)

Character Analysis

Hard Landscaping

5.2.6 There is a utilitarian tarmac path which runs around the central garden to the north, east and south sides. The tarmac path continues along the properties fronting onto the street. Along the sides of the path there are some remaining edging tiles with rope topped details. The floors of the porches are concrete, some of which have been painted red. There are also remnants of red paint on the stones underneath the two front gates suggesting these were once also painted.



Remains of an existing path and red surface



View of the existing path with rope topped edging tiles

Character Analysis

Boundary Walls

5.2.7 The almshouses have a modern, uniform low boundary wall of red brick with concrete slab coping. Low metal railings are attached to the top of the wall. There are three breaks in the wall: two for metal entrance gates and one to accommodate the tree in the centre of the wall. This wall neatly defines the boundary of the almshouses and visually separates them from the rest of the street.



Detail of the boundary wall

Character Analysis

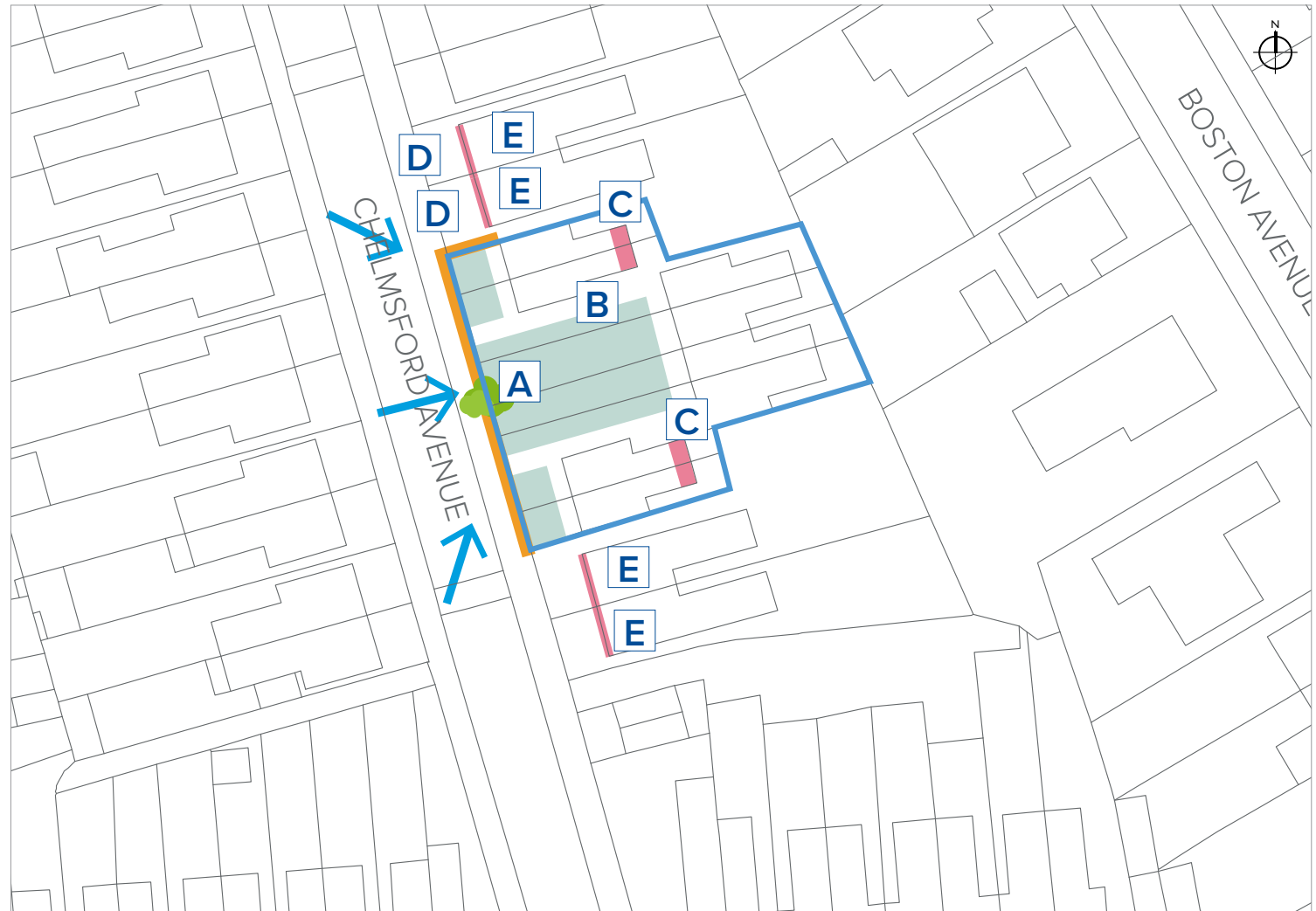
Map H: Townscape Plan

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Private open space/ green space
- Trees
- Positive Boundary
- Views
- Negative Feature

- A Broken sundial
- B Utilitarian tarmac path
- C Cement rendered extension
- D Garden used for parking
- E Unsympathetic uPVC window at first floor

This map is not to scale

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Character Analysis

5.3 Setting

5.3.1 The semi-detached houses to either side of the almshouses were commissioned by Thomas Dowsett at the same time as the almshouses themselves. Their larger double-storey form reflects their intended use as houses to rent out in order to provide funds for the almshouses. The houses remain in residential use today, although only one of sets of semi-detached pairs remains associated with the Trust. The properties have undergone a number of alterations, including the loss of front boundaries to provide off-street parking, re-rendering/ painting over of brickwork/ pebble dashing, replacement doors and windows (particularly noticeable at first floor). While they have some interesting features, they do not retain the same uniformity of character as the almshouses, being more in keeping with the character of the surrounding streetscene which is comprised predominantly of two-storey residential properties.

5.3.2 Chelmsford Avenue creates an overall positive setting for the Conservation Area. It forms part of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century residential development to the north of Southend, a period of growth in which the almshouses were also constructed. The character of Chelmsford Avenue is in keeping with the surrounding roads developed at this time which are populated with predominantly semi-detached houses with single or double-storey bay windows and gabled fronts. Plots along Boston Avenue, to the east of Chelmsford Avenue, are slightly larger with grander early-twentieth century detached houses.

5.3.3 The semi-detached houses along Chelmsford Avenue are separated from the street by small front gardens which have almost all been

paved over to allow for parking. Occasionally a boundary wall and front garden remains which positively impacts the residential character of the street.

5.3.4 The pavements outside the almshouses and along Chelmsford Avenue have basic street lighting and signage including a parking notice on the pavement opposite the almshouses which interrupts the view towards it. Views toward the houses are also disrupted by on street parking outside. The pavement surface treatment is red tarmac in good condition and trees are planted at sporadic points along the road. Four of these trees are to the south of the Conservation Area and have a positive impact on its setting. At the south end of the road is a large evergreen tree with a TPO.



View of the semi-detached houses to the south of the Conservation Area

Character Analysis



View of the semi-detached houses to the north of the Conservation Area



View towards the Conservation Area with trees planted on the pavements



View south down Chelmsford Avenue



Houses on Chelmsford Avenue opposite the almshouses

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 Chelmsford Avenue 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.

6.2 Conservation Vision

- 6.2.1 The historic character and special interest of the Chelmsford Avenue Conservation Area will be conserved and enhanced, making it an appealing and peaceful place for people to live.
- 6.2.2 The buildings will remain in residential use.
- 6.2.3 The buildings will be in good condition, with inappropriate alterations reversed, and traditional materials and details used for features such as walls, windows, roofs and doors.
- 6.2.4 Front gardens will be attractively planted and/or landscaped. The central garden will be maintained as an attractive pocket of green space in an urban area. Boundary walls will be maintained and the plinth will be restored and well maintained.
- 6.2.5 New and redeveloped buildings or public realm works within the setting of the Conservation Area will be designed appropriately in terms of scale, form, materials and details reflecting the special interest of the area.

Management Plan

6.3 Issues and Opportunities

Condition

- 6.3.1 The buildings in the Conservation Area are in good condition. However, the sundial is in poor condition. As well as the loss (or perhaps removal for safety reasons) of the sundial, the plinth is in need of some minor repointing work and is also leaning slightly. The iron bar which held the sundial on top is rusty and would need replacing before the sundial was added back on. The base below is rendered in concrete, possibly over brick, and this is cracked and breaking away at the corners.
- 6.3.2 There are some broken and dislodged edging tiles lying behind the front boundary railings.

Recommendations

- 6.3.3 Restoration of the sundial would have a positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area.
- 6.3.4 Remove dislodged edging tiles.
- 6.3.5 Keeping buildings in good condition will ensure the area is an attractive and desirable place to live.
- 6.3.6 Follow guidance in section 6.4 to ensure repairs and alterations are carried out in an appropriate manner.



Leaning sundial with missing dial and in need of repairs to the base



Dislodged edging tiles behind the front boundary railings

Management Plan

Inappropriate Alterations

- 6.3.7 The windows are uPVC. Though the design of these is sympathetic because of the flat frames (as opposed to chamfered), leaded lights and conformity to the original design, the material is not usually suitable for historic buildings as it prevents the building from breathing and can exacerbate any issues with damp. While timber windows within a Conservation Area are normally preferred, as the windows have previously been replaced with uPVC it may be acceptable to replace them again with uPVC when they reach the end of their life. The stained glass to the doors is also non-original but is attractive and enhances the character of the Conservation Area and should be retained. Window and door changes have been done in a co-ordinated programme, which is beneficial in retaining the character of the properties as a group.
- 6.3.8 The extensions to the rear which can be seen in places from the street (although views are limited) are utilitarian in design, with grey render that contrasts poorly with the well-built brick of the original houses.
- 6.3.9 Minor ad-hoc additions are diluting the character of the buildings to a small extent. These include wall mounted lighting, handrails and aerials. Electricity boxes beside each front door are incongruous.
- 6.3.10 There are small filled in holes towards the base of one of the properties, which indicates an injected damp proof course. This is an inappropriate solution to damp in historic buildings due to the possibility of it trapping moisture within the building and reducing its breathability. Repointing is visible underneath windows.



Example of minor additions to the properties including wall mounted hangings, fairy lights and recycling boxes



Small filled holes indicating an injected damp proof course

Management Plan

Recommendations

- 6.3.11 As the windows of the almshouses have already been replaced with uPVC, when they require replacement again in the future, the preference will be for replacement in timber in a design to match the original. However, it may be acceptable to replace existing uPVC with uPVC provided that the quality matches the ones currently there or the design provides an enhancement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Replacements also must:
- o Be of a design which is as similar as possible to the design of the original window as possible.
 - o Windows should have the appropriate method of opening for the period of the building, in this case, side hung casements.
 - o Window frames should not have trickle vents.
 - o Window frames should have flush, not chamfered, frames.
 - o Glazing bars should be integrated into the window, i.e. not stuck on to the glass.
 - o Windows should have a painted wood effect finish if possible.
- 6.3.12 These replacements will be judged on a case-by-case basis. At the almshouses the replacement of windows should be co-ordinated so that all the windows match, ensuring the group value of the properties is retained.
- 6.3.13 Retain stained glass to doors. If the glazing is in poor condition, it should be repaired wherever possible. If the stained glass has reached the end of its lifespan, it should be replaced on a like-for-like basis in terms of materials and design.
- 6.3.14 Injected damp proof courses are usually not suitable for historic buildings. Advice on understanding damp in historic buildings can be found on Historic England's website: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/damp-in-historic-buildings/>
- 6.3.15 Take opportunities to enhance properties when considering alterations, for example by restoring any missing historic features and improving poorly designed alterations of the past.
- 6.3.16 Follow guidance in section 6.4 to ensure repairs and alterations are carried out in an appropriate manner.
- 6.3.17 The Council will not approve applications for alterations which detract from the special interest of the Conservation Area.
- 6.3.18 The Council will use enforcement powers where necessary to prevent or reverse inappropriate alterations.

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.

New Development

6.3.19 There is limited scope for new development on the site due to the existing form and layout of the buildings which forms the special character of the site. However, there is scope for the improvement of the extensions to the rear of the almshouses, should these be rebuilt or altered. This is especially important for the extensions of numbers 18 and 6 which are visible from the street. The potential future replacement of these extensions presents an opportunity to enhance the character of the Conservation Area with the provision of good quality extensions which relate well in terms of scale, form, materials and details to the existing buildings.

Recommendations

6.3.20 New buildings within or in the setting of the Conservation Area should be appropriate in materials, scale, detail and massing to the existing buildings on Chelmsford Avenue and within the Conservation Area.

6.3.21 Replacement extensions should reflect the character of the Conservation Area and the scale of the existing extensions. Any potential replacement of the extensions in the future should be of appropriate scale and massing, remain single-storey and use appropriate materials.

Management Plan

Public Realm, Greenery and Boundary Treatments

6.3.22 Paving to the paths around the site is a mix of utilitarian tarmac, paving slabs or concrete which has a utilitarian character. These could be improved through the use of a single material more appropriate to the character of the Conservation Area. The attractive rope topped edging tiles should be retained and, if possible, replaced where they have been lost to give consistency to the appearance of the paths.

6.3.23 The boundary wall, though a modern replacement, is in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area and delineates the boundaries of the properties from the street, as well as providing containment to the central garden. The boundary wall should therefore be retained.

Recommendations

6.3.24 It would be beneficial for the character and appearance of the Conservation Area to improve the surfacing of the paths around the almshouses. The current edging should be retained and replicated where lost, if possible.

6.3.25 Retain the boundary wall and railings.

Uses

6.3.26 The best use for an historic building is usually the one it is designed for, as typically this means fewer demands for alterations, and the almshouses are no exception. The almshouses were built to provide affordable almshouse housing for elderly and in need from Southend. Today the almshouses are still in this historic use today, administered by the Dowsett Almshouse Trust, and should remain in this use.

Recommendations

6.3.27 Maintain the historic residential use of the almshouses.

Management Plan

Locally Listed Buildings

- 6.3.28 The Chelmsford Avenue almshouses are an interesting set of buildings for their social value, demonstrating a charitable aim of providing accommodation for local elderly people of Prittlewell. This use has continued for over 100 years which adds to the buildings' interest. Associative value comes from the establishment of the almshouses by the first Mayor of Southend, Thomas Dowsett, which provides an interesting local connection. The buildings were also designed by local architects Burles and Harris. These factors demonstrate elements of Southend-on-Sea's history, therefore fulfilling the first of SCC's criteria for locally listed buildings (see paragraph 3.3.3).
- 6.3.29 Additionally, the almshouses have architectural interest, being an attractive set of houses that are little altered, with interesting architectural details, such as porches, doors with stained glass and distinctive steeply pitched roofs. Therefore, the buildings also fulfil the second of SCC's criteria for locally listed buildings regarding architectural interest.

Recommendations

- 6.3.30 Numbers 6-20 (even) Chelmsford Avenue (the Almshouses) (shown on Map I) are recommended for consideration for the Local List.

Boundary Proposals

- 6.3.31 The eight almshouses are a very good group of well-preserved dwellings, with a consistent architectural style and set in attractive gardens. As such the Council commissioned a review to analyse the suitability of the area for designation as a conservation area. This Conservation Area Appraisal is the culmination of this process. The finalised boundary includes the almshouses, central garden, the yards behind the dwellings (to conform with property boundaries) and the boundary wall to the front of the buildings.
- 6.3.32 Though originally built as part of the same scheme, the character of the two pairs of semi-detached houses either side of the almshouses has been diluted to a greater degree than the almshouses. Though they still retain elements of their original design it is now not immediately obvious that these houses are all part of the original plan as the almshouses because later changes mask the original design details. For example, brick quoins and plinths have been painted or rendered over and elements of the porches have been lost. The windows on all four houses have been replaced with white uPVC windows. Sometimes these replicate the form of the original windows, e.g. with sliding sashes on the ground floor containing glazing bars on the upper sash only, though often these have deviated negatively from the original design. Two of the original doors has been replaced with, one with timber and one with uPVC.

Management Plan

6.3.33 On the northern houses, both properties have converted all or part of their front garden to driveway, with the unsympathetic loss of the boundary wall.

Recommendations

6.3.34 That the almshouses, central garden, yards to the rear and boundary wall to the street are created as a new Conservation Area (see Map I).

Management Plan

Map I: Boundary Review and Proposed Locally Listed Buildings

- Conservation Area Boundary
- ▨ Proposed locally listed building

This map is not to scale

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Management Plan

Article 4 Directions

6.3.35 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 planning legislation and would not require planning permission. While there are few inappropriate changes within the Conservation Area, an Article 4 Direction would ensure that minor alterations to the appearance of buildings and their setting are not made in the future in a way which would be out of character and harmful to the Conservation Area.

Recommendations

6.3.36 An Article 4 Direction should be considered for the area, particularly for the replacement of windows and doors, and the rendering/painting of the exteriors. The properties which it would cover (shown on Map J) are:

6.3.37 Nos.6-20 (even) Chelmsford Avenue.

6.3.38 The removal of permitted development rights should include:

All Buildings

- o The installation of hardstanding for vehicles.
- o The alteration, demolition or construction of a means of enclosure which fronts a highway (walls, gates, fences, etc.).
- o The enclosing of recessed porches which front a highway.
- o The rendering of any brickwork which fronts a highway (other forms of cladding already need planning permission).
- o Painting over facing brickwork of any part of a building which fronts a highway.
- o The alteration of any window or door visible from a highway.
- o Re-roofing with different materials.
- o Loss of chimneys.

6.3.39 These Article 4 Directions are recommended but their designation lies outside the scope of this appraisal.

Management Plan

Map J: Proposed Article 4 4 Directions

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Proposed Article 4 Directions

This map is not to scale

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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 Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses 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 The current windows in the Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses Conservation Area are uPVC but in a sympathetic design which appear to have followed the original fenestration pattern. Traditional style windows are vital for the character of the Conservation Area. On the almshouses, the original pattern would have been pairs of timber side hung casements with leaded glazing and a top panel of glazing above.

6.4.6 As the current design of uPVC windows is sympathetic, should these need to be replaced in the future if they come to the end of their useful life, the Council may consider replacement with uPVC provided they are of the same design which matches the originals, though timber would be preferable. Advice should be sought from the Council's Planning Department before undertaking any works, should planning permission be required. If timber replacement windows were used in the future, 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.

Management Plan

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

- Be of good quality softwood (unless in the case of this Conservation Area if replacements in uPVC can be shown to be of the same or better design than existing);
- Be painted cream or white (not stained);
- Copy the original pattern of glazing bars;
- Glazing bars should be built into the frame 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); and
- Retain decorative surrounds.

6.4.8 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.

6.4.9 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-repairupgrading/>

Doors and Porches

6.4.10 Original front doors of these Edwardian buildings are well proportioned and have good detailing. They are larger than standardised modern doors, with two vertical moulded panels to the bottom two thirds of the door and stained glass panels to the top third of the door, and help to give the property distinction. Original front doors should normally be retained and repaired when necessary. If this proves impossible, the new door should be similar in design and dimensions to the original and should include glazed panels in a design to match the originals. Original stained glass should be retained wherever possible, or sympathetically replicated if replacement is necessary because the windows have reached the end of their life.

6.4.11 The attached porches on the almshouses areas give shadow and interest to the face of the buildings and should not normally be enclosed with doors, gates or new porches. New porches are unlikely to be acceptable unless they are in poor condition and are replaced like-for-like in terms of materials and design.

Management Plan

Outside Walls and Decoration

- 6.4.12 Soft red brick is the material used for the almshouses which gives attractive 'warm' tones and texture to façades. There are also panels of pebble-dash in the pediments above the porches which should be retained unpainted.
- 6.4.13 Facing brickwork, therefore, 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 discussions should be had with the Council's Conservation Officer in the first instance before works are undertaken, to first be ensured that the proposed method will not damage the face of the bricks.
- 6.4.14 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.
- 6.4.15 Decorative features, like the rubbed brick lintels and stepped brick corbels, which add interest to the buildings, should be retained.

Roofs and Chimneys

- 6.4.16 At the Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses, red clay tiles are used. Clay tiles are made of a natural material which weathers well to produce attractive roof surfaces; it gives unity to the group of buildings and helps establish the character of the Area.
- 6.4.17 Re-roofing should put back the original materials and designs. The stacks and pots emphasise the roofline and should not be removed. The stacks on the almshouses have brick courses which step out at the top 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 normally be removed.

Hardstandings and Boundaries

- 6.4.18 Front gardens should be maintained as planted areas wherever possible. Hardstandings in front gardens or forecourts harm the appearance of individual properties and the area's character if badly designed. Parking in the central garden of the almshouses is therefore not appropriate because of the significant impact this would have on the character of the Conservation Area. Landscaping to front gardens should not involve the loss of or harm to the roots of mature trees.
- 6.4.19 The almshouses have a low brick wall topped by metal railings which creates a sense of enclosure to the site. The removal of the boundary would be inappropriate. Should it be necessary to repair or replace it due to issues with condition, this should be done in a similar design and materials as the wall there currently.

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Appendix A

Building-by-Building Description

Descriptions of streets and buildings relate to the situation at the time of survey in September 2022. They are intended to guide decisions on conservation area boundaries, on future development control, and on the need for enhancement. They relate to the main street frontages unless specifically stated. They are not necessarily comprehensive and other features not mentioned may nevertheless have value for the character of the area.

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 K 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

Map K: Building Values

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Positive
- Positive*
- Neutral
- Negative

This map is not to scale

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Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|---------------------|----------|--|
| 6 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse built in a pair and mirrored in design with no.8 Chelmsford Avenue. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original windows have been replaced with a modern uPVC casement window on the façade and a single uPVC casement window on the side elevation. However, these are in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.8. Red brick ridge between the two properties capped with ridge tiles. Modern low shared boundary wall of red brick with concrete slab coping and metal railings. In front of the house is a concrete path, a small lawn and a box hedge against the boundary wall. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear, not visible from the street, is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods, a white gas-meter box under the front window, an aerial projecting from the chimney and a white plastic grab rail has been added to the righthand side of the door. Minor ad-hoc additions dilute the character of the building to a lesser

extent such as a plastic doorbell. Although these are mostly necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|---------------------|----------|--|
| 8 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse built in a pair and mirrored in design with no.6 Chelmsford Avenue. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original windows have been replaced with a modern uPVC casement window on the façade and a single uPVC casement window on the side elevation. However, these are in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.8. Red brick ridge between the two properties capped with ridge tiles. Modern, low shared boundary wall of red brick with concrete slab coping and metal railings. In front of the house is a concrete path, a small lawn and a box hedge against the boundary wall. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods, an aerial projecting from the chimney and a white plastic grab rail has been added to the righthand side of the door. Minor ad-hoc additions dilute the character of the building to a lesser extent such as a key box next to the door. Although

these are mainly necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|----------------------|----------|--|
| 10 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse. Part of a row of four almshouses with the design mirrored in the centre. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original windows have been replaced with a modern uPVC casement window. However, this is in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.12. Red brick ridge between each property capped with ridge tiles. In front of the house is a tarmac path and a large, shared lawn bordered with low shrubs. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear, not visible from the street, is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods, a white gas-meter box under the front window, an aerial projecting from the chimney and a white plastic grab rail has been added to the righthand side of the door. Although these are necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|----------------------|----------|--|
| 12 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse. Part of a row of four almshouses with the design mirrored in the centre. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original single casement windows to either side of the front door have been replaced with modern uPVC casement windows. However, this is in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.10. Red brick ridge between the two properties capped with ridge tiles. In front of the house is a tarmac path and a large, shared lawn bordered with low shrubs. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear, not visible from the street, is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods, a white gas-meter box under the front window, an aerial projecting from the chimney and a white vent on the roof. Although these are necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|----------------------|----------|--|
| 14 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse. Part of a row of four almshouses with the design mirrored in the centre. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original single casement windows to either side of the front door have been replaced with modern uPVC casement windows. However, this is in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.16. Red brick ridge between the two properties capped with ridge tiles. In front of the house is a tarmac path and a large, shared lawn bordered with low shrubs. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear, not visible from the street, is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods, a white gas-meter box under the front window, an aerial projecting from the chimney and a white vent on the roof. Although these are necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|----------------------|----------|--|
| 16 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse. Part of a row of four almshouses with the design mirrored in the centre. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original windows have been replaced with a modern uPVC casement window. However, this is in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.14. Red brick ridge between each property capped with ridge tiles. In front of the house is a tarmac path and a large, shared lawn bordered with low shrubs. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear, not visible from the street, is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods, a white gas-meter box under the front window, an aerial projecting from the chimney and a white vent on the roof. In addition, a white plastic grab rail has been added to the righthand side of the door. Minor ad-hoc additions dilute the character of the building to a lesser extent such as a key box next to the door and a hanging planter on the wall. Although these are mainly necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|----------------------|----------|--|
| 18 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse built in a pair and mirrored in design with no.20 Chelmsford Avenue. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original windows have been replaced with a modern uPVC casement window on the façade and a single uPVC casement window on the side elevation. However, these are in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.20. Red brick ridge between the two properties capped with ridge tiles. Modern, low shared boundary wall of red brick with concrete slab coping and metal railings. In front of the house is a concrete path, a small lawn and a box hedge against the boundary wall. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods, an aerial projecting from the chimney, a white vent on the roof and white plastic grab rails have been added either side of the door. Although these are necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



Building-by-Building Description

| Address | Value | Designation |
|----------------------|----------|--|
| 20 Chelmsford Avenue | Positive | Proposed addition to the Local List as part of a group with the other almshouses |

Description

1902. Single-storey, two-bay red brick almshouse built in a pair and mirrored in design with no.18 Chelmsford Avenue. Projecting gabled porch of painted timber with timber latticework panels, pebbledash gable and wooden benches to either side. Painted wood door with two recessed panels and a stained-glass window light above. Original windows have been replaced with a modern uPVC casement window on the façade and a single uPVC casement window on the side elevation. However, these are in keeping with the original window design. Rubbed brick lintols above the windows. Red clay roof tiles and red brick chimney stack with terracotta chimney pots shared with no.18. Red brick ridge between the two properties capped with ridge tiles. Modern, low shared boundary wall of red brick with concrete slab coping and metal railings. In front of the house is a concrete path, a small lawn and a box hedge against the boundary wall. A small single-storey, flat-roofed, cement rendered extension to the rear, not visible from the street, is not consistent with the character of the building. Inappropriate fixtures and fittings have been added such as black plastic rainwater goods. Although these are necessary modern additions to the house there could be scope for improvement in their appearance through better placement, more appropriate materials or colouring.



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